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 **AUTOSPORT**

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quicker car"**

TOTO WOLFF

**But did Hamilton
throw it away?**



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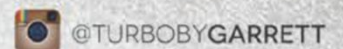
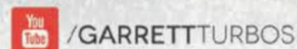
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Super Core Reference Data	Compressor				Turbine			
	Inducer	Exducer	Trim	A/R	Inducer	Exducer	Trim	
GTX3584RS Hose Bead Comp Outlet	67mm	84mm	64	0.72	68mm	62mm	84	
GTX3584RS V-Band Comp Outlet	67mm	84mm	64	0.72	68mm	62mm	84	
Notes:	Assembly Kit PN	Super Core PN	Turbine Kit PN	A/R	Inlet	Outlet	Wastegate	Divided
Hose Bead Comp Outlet:	856804-5001S	846098-5001S	740902-0067	0.83	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
	856804-5002S	846098-5001S	740902-0066	1.01	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
	856804-5003S	846098-5001S	740902-0052	1.21	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
	856804-5004S	846098-5002S	740902-0067	0.83	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
V-Band Comp Outlet:	856804-5005S	846098-5002S	740902-0066	1.01	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
	856804-5006S	846098-5002S	740902-0052	1.21	V-Band	V-Band	N	N

SPEED SENSOR STREET KIT PN 781328-0001

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Ferrari delivers for F1 as the new era begins

SO THEY DID IT! SEBASTIAN VETTEL AND FERRARI managed to follow up their testing form and defeat Mercedes to win the first grand prix of Formula 1's new, meatier era.

Ferrari did need a little help from Mercedes – and Max Verstappen – to overturn Lewis Hamilton's pole-position advantage, but the fact that the team was able to apply pressure and take victory when the opportunity arose is a good sign for the rest of the season. The legendary Italian marque now needs to be aggressive with its development to allow Vettel to consistently challenge the Silver Arrows. Will we get that Hamilton-versus-Vettel title fight at last?

The new F1 cars certainly look better than their predecessors, and it was clear that the drivers could carry a lot more corner speed than in 2016. The pole record fell, though it was perhaps a little surprising that the race lap record of 1m24.125s – set by the incredible Ferrari F2004 of Michael Schumacher 13 years ago – remained well out of reach.

Other lap records will probably be more vulnerable, but of greater concern is that it appears overtaking is more difficult with these more aero-dependent machines. It's true to say that Albert Park has never been the circuit most conducive to passing, and we should give it a few more races before drawing conclusions, but there were few wheel-to-wheel moments last weekend. And Hamilton never looked like passing Verstappen during those crucial laps following the Mercedes' tyre stop.

Having said that, if there is a genuine title fight between Mercedes and Ferrari, we may just get away with it while Ross Brawn works behind the scenes to fix one of F1's longest-standing problems.



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Batchelor,
Charniaux/XPB Images

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

A genuine threat to Mercedes

IN TERMS OF PREDICTING HOW A season will go, history shows it's a mistake to set too much store by what happens in Melbourne. For one thing, it's the first race of the year; for another, Albert Park is hardly a typical Formula 1 circuit.

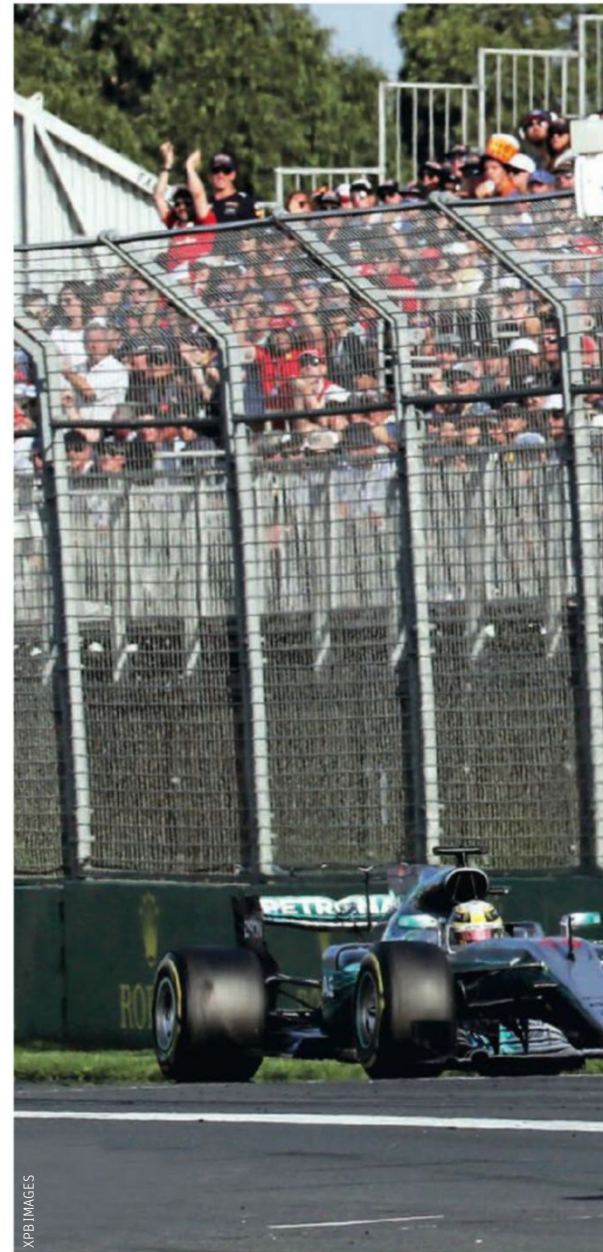
That said, the events of last weekend suggested that the Barcelona tests did not lie, that – Saints Be Praised – at last the endless Mercedes domination is under genuine threat. Yes, you can say that if Lewis Hamilton hadn't pitted early, then lost time behind Max Verstappen, he would have been ahead when Sebastian Vettel came back out after his stop, and you can throw in that 'track position' – with this latest generation of cars – is now more crucial than ever. You can say all that, but while it may be a different story in Shanghai or Bahrain, the fact is that Vettel and Ferrari won the Australian Grand Prix conclusively.

Despite the slight increase in allocation this year, drivers still reported the need for 'fuel saving', but a great plus is that the drivers, rather than pussy-footing around on ridiculous 'high-degradation' tyres, at last have Pirellis on which they can race, and for long periods at a

time. Thanks to the increase in downforce, it didn't take a Rhodes Scholar to predict there wouldn't be much passing last Sunday, but if the race was absorbing rather than thrilling, at least it felt like a contest again.

Already, though, the minds of Ross Brawn and others are on the next Formula 1, and with good reason. At a distance the latest cars, with their huge tyres, look good in a meaty sort of way, albeit festooned with unsightly appendages, including – new for 2017, folks – T-bars, which look like TV aerials. The wider front wings may be masterpieces of carbon sculpture, but do nothing to improve 'The Show' – quite the opposite, in fact, but then we expected that, didn't we?

When Bernie Ecclestone suggested that the cars needed to be way quicker, and the F1 Strategy Group meekly went along with him, immediately the holy grail became 'more downforce', even though Hamilton and others pointed out that it was the last thing Formula 1 needed. Problem was, given the whale-like cars of today, with their cumbersome hybrid power units, how else were they to be speeded up? "As I anticipated,"



XPBIMAGES



Stefano Modena parked after 30 laps on his debut

Lewis said at the weekend, "following another car is a lot worse than before..."

Albert Park, as we said, is something of an anomaly of an F1 circuit, so we should wait a while before passing judgement on the new cars, good and bad. It may be that when we get to more traditional tracks lap times will indeed be five seconds quicker, as suggested by some, but that was far from the case in Melbourne. Come to that, although it may be very different at Sepang or Singapore, on the podium the drivers looked anything but wiped out, something else that was predicted.

Down the road Brawn speaks of 'a more affordable power unit', such as could be produced by a company like Cosworth, thereby reducing reliance on the major manufacturers. To be more affordable, it would need to be simpler, although presumably retaining its 'hybrid' credentials. When asked in Melbourne what he would like to see, Vettel said "V12!", and no purist would take issue, but the high priest of political correctness Jean Todt recently came out with the fatuous comment that



Pitting later gave Sebastian Vettel the edge

‘the public wouldn’t stand for noisy engines anymore’. Ah yes, all that suburban housing alongside Becketts and the Curva Grande...

Through the winter Ferrari people maintained something of a vow of silence, and while this was manna for Kimi Raikkonen and nothing new for Maurizio Arrivabene, who – when not angry – comes across like a human press release, Vettel traditionally has plenty to say, not least on the radio. In Melbourne, not surprisingly, his sunny disposition made a welcome reappearance, but one wondered how it felt to James Allison, now installed at Mercedes, to see ‘his’ Ferrari ahead of Hamilton and the quietly impressive Valtteri Bottas.

At the other end of the pack, meantime, Fernando Alonso and Stoffel Vandoorne did not mince their words about the Honda situation. “I don’t think I ever drove a better race,” said Fernando, “but I’ve rarely sat in a less competitive car”. And a remark from Stoffel reminded one of his team-mate’s past comment that the Honda was ‘like a GP2 engine’: “We lack so much power that it’s impossible to fight – we’re really driving in another category.”

“If most people’s money remains on Hamilton, at least he will be in a fight with more than his team-mate”

Zak Brown may have galvanised McLaren, but can he – can *anyone* – galvanise Honda?

After coming through the second Barcelona test without apparent problem, Pascal Wehrlein, injured in January’s Race Of Champions, caused a surprise by declaring after the first day that he doubted his ability to complete the race, and was withdrawing.

I was amazed by this – just as I was in Adelaide 30 years ago, when Stefano Modena, making his F1 debut, came in after 30 laps, saying he was too exhausted to continue. Keke Rosberg’s comment was to the point: “In your first grand prix you *carry* the bloody car over the line if you have to. You can forget him...”

This wasn’t Wehrlein’s first race, of course,

but his decision allowed Antonio Giovinazzi into the Sauber, and – with only a single day of practice – he impressed in the Ferrari-engined car. At Maranello they think highly of Giovinazzi, and with Raikkonen’s contract up at the end of the year, some see him alongside Vettel in 2018.

One race down, 19 to go, and if most people’s money remains on Hamilton, at least this time he will be in a fight with more than his team-mate. As for the new Formula 1, more than ever one suspects that races will be decided by the sprint to the first corner. As Bottas said: “Once you get within a couple of seconds of another car, you lose so much grip – definitely more than before...” Not good. ❄



FORMULA 1

Sauber defends Wehrlein

SAUBER TEAM PRINCIPAL MONISHA Kaltenborn labelled criticism of Pascal Wehrlein's decision to withdraw from the Australian Grand Prix on fitness grounds "awful" and "appalling", as the Swiss team jumped to the defence of its under-fire driver.

Wehrlein missed the season opener last weekend after concerns over his fitness arose following Friday practice in Melbourne. The German suffered a back injury in January's Race Of Champions and had to miss the first test at Barcelona, but admitted he only realised after driving on Friday in Australia that the training setback left him short of full fitness.

Wehrlein, who was replaced by Antonio Giovinazzi, was subjected to substantial criticism, including claims that his decision was not very brave, that they don't make F1 drivers like they used to, and that he should have just given it a go.

"I think it's really awful how people think they have any sort of competence to say anything about him," Kaltenborn said. "They just have their weird views from wherever they come from and have no authority at all to judge anyone."

"It is rather appalling how people think they can judge; they should look at themselves first."

But if Wehrlein's setback was so problematic, why did he bother showing up at all? Surely he should have worked out in testing that his fitness was not up to snuff?

Kaltenborn said it was "very surprising" that he had been cleared to take part in testing, which made everybody believe he had returned to full fitness.

The fact is that Wehrlein completed four half-days at Barcelona in the second week of pre-season testing, but was limited to short runs as a precaution. He split driving duties with team-mate Marcus Ericsson throughout the second week, and logged more than 50 laps just once in four days. Only Fernando Alonso, driving a McLaren-Honda that had an aversion to regular track time, completed fewer laps in total.

Even more relevant is the fact that Wehrlein's minimal mileage was on a series of short runs. His longest run throughout testing was 12 laps, on day one. The next day his longest stint was 10 laps. Then 11 on day three, and nine on the last day.

It's not just that Wehrlein hadn't completed a race distance at Barcelona – he hadn't done any long running at all. And while it's easy to say with hindsight that he should have



XPB IMAGES

FORMULA 1

SECOND F1 GLOBAL FAN SURVEY LAUNCHED

MOTORSPORT NETWORK, the owner of Autosport, launched its second Formula 1 Global Fan Survey last Sunday.

The survey went live on the morning of the Australian Grand Prix to coincide with the start of the new F1 season. Launched in conjunction with the Grand Prix Drivers' Association and Repucom, it is one of the largest and most comprehensive fan-opinion surveys to be carried out by any sport.

Open for two weeks, the survey looks to gauge fans' opinions on every aspect of Formula 1, including the racing, the sport's structure, television coverage, track experience and media engagement.

The first survey was conducted in 2015, when it collated the views of 217,000 fans from 203 countries. This time it will be conducted in 15 different languages, with the hope that it will be able to attract opinions from across the world to provide a truer international picture of the state of F1.

Motorsport Network believes that its global expansion of the past few months, coupled with the changes to the sport's governing body, means the climate is right to invest in a wholehearted effort to engage with fans and continue efforts to improve the sport.

Motorsport.com Global Editor-in-Chief Charles Bradley said: "Engaged and passionate fans are crucial to the success of any sport, and F1 fans are the consumers of what happens on and off the track. We want to ensure they are heard."

Head to f1survey.motorsport.com to have your say.

FATEMA CHOWDHURY

after Oz withdrawal

completed more mileage in testing, Kaltenborn said that easing Wehrlein back into testing was the only sensible approach after his injury.

Sauber found out the hard way that something wasn't right. Wehrlein was almost half a second slower than Ericsson on outright pace in FP2 but, more tellingly, had an erratic and very slow long run. His average over 12 laps was two seconds worse than Ericsson's over 14 laps. Even cutting out the laps where he made obvious errors, or backed off, only brings that deficit down to 1.3s per lap.

Wehrlein's practice performance was not good enough. As a Mercedes junior, expectations are higher and the scrutiny more intense, so he would have been in a lose-lose situation if he had taken part and been uncompetitive.

He was asked directly why he couldn't continue when drivers have battled physical problems in the past, and his reply was "every situation is different". This situation was a driver returning too soon from injury while facing the prospect of the first race of a new era in which the talk has been of drivers

being pushed to the limit physically.

So it's understandable that niggling thoughts would have existed in Wehrlein's mind had he continued with a question mark still hanging over his fitness. Just look at Romain Grosjean's post-qualifying comments, where he called the cars "brutal to drive" and claimed "we are not far from 8g with the peak in fast corners" – "insane" figures, according to the Frenchman.

Ultimately, it is extremely unlikely that even a fully-fit Wehrlein would have nicked a point in Australia. Giovinazzi finished a twice-lapped 12th, while Ericsson was nearly a second slower than the others in Q2. Sauber's pace deficit was quite severe, but Giovinazzi's

result highlights how attrition-hit the season opener can be, so Sauber was right to ensure its driver's reliability was up to scratch.

The last thing Wehrlein would have wanted to do was not race in Melbourne, and only he truly knows whether the decision was right or wrong. But for that very reason, any criticism or mockery seems wildly misjudged.

SCOTT MITCHELL

“Criticism or mockery seems wildly misjudged”



FORMULA 1

HONDA POWER DEAL COULD MAKE SENSE FOR SAUBER

SAUBER TEAM principal Monisha Kaltenborn has confirmed that the Swiss team is still weighing up its engine options for 2018 – and both Honda and Mercedes are candidates.

Sauber has been a Ferrari customer since BMW pulled out of F1 at the end of 2009. But the team has been linked to a second Honda supply since last year, and speculation that Sauber could even become Honda's main entry has intensified since McLaren was linked to a switch back to Mercedes.

For Sauber, a second Honda supply is likely to be more commercially attractive than paying the market rate for Ferrari engines. If McLaren goes elsewhere and Sauber became the main Honda team the financial swing in its fortunes would be a game changer.

The appeal to Honda would be that Sauber still has a top-class facility from its BMW days, even if staffing levels have been reined in since then.

Unlike McLaren, Sauber would also be potentially amenable to taking a Japanese driver as part of a deal, such as Honda protege and Formula 2 racer Nobuharu Matsushita.

Meanwhile, Pascal Wehrlein's presence in

the Sauber camp has obviously opened up the possibility of a part-subsidised Mercedes supply, with the make having done similar deals to run the German and Esteban Ocon at Manor last year. But that would in effect be a short-term arrangement, with Wehrlein unlikely to stay at the team for more than two or three years.

The final decision has to be made soon, because under Appendix 9 of the sporting regulations the engine makers have to notify the FIA of the teams they wish to supply in 2018 by May 6.

"All I can tell you is yes, we have had discussions with them [Honda]," said Kaltenborn. "But we are open on our engine situation. I think we have a couple of options. We know that a call has to be made soon. We know that, and of course the sooner you have clarity, the better for development."

Regarding Mercedes she said: "It's also a possibility. Like I said, we have a couple of options, and we are simply not decided."

Kaltenborn said that a Honda deal could have a huge commercial impact on the team. "It depends what we finally agree on," she said. "We really have all the ways open."

ADAM COOPER

DTM

Berger wants rules tie-ups

The new boss of the DTM is settling in by declaring that closer cooperation with other series is key

Just as we went to press last week, the ITR – promoter of the DTM – announced that Gerhard Berger had been installed as its new chairman, a story Autosport first picked up on in January. Back then Berger hinted that he had too much on his plate with his non-motorsport businesses to take on such a role, so what's made the ex-Benetton, Ferrari and McLaren grand prix winner step into the hotseat after all? "I changed my mind, they changed my mind, whatever!" 57-year-old Berger told us. "But yes, we found a way. To be

honest I was always enthusiastic. My issue was my company, my family – I got another small child in December – so I wasn't sure to add another thing. But well, I always say it's a great platform, it's something that can develop for the future in a good direction. I'm committed to it."

German media has already speculated that Berger could take the DTM in an international direction – his nephew, Mercedes driver Lucas Auer, wants a Singapore street race – but the Austrian is playing this down. Instead he wants to push further ahead on a rules collaboration with similar-concept series around the world, such as Japan's Super GT.

"When they talk about international here, they mean Europe," said Berger. "But there is another important issue I think – to make the same regulations internationally, like the Japanese running the same rules except the engines [Super GT has already introduced the two-litre, four-cylinder turbo powerplants, but these are on the backburner for the DTM until at least 2019]. I always find that extremely important, because that's what keeps the synergies. You remember in Formula 3 [Berger was the architect of the current F3 European Championship as the former president of the FIA Single Seater Commission] that's what we tried to do, and what we did, and I'm still a big believer in trying to get other continents into the boat with the same regulations. That doesn't mean you need to run a series over the whole continent; it just means it's helpful if they have the same regulations."

Berger paid tribute to his predecessor as ITR chairman, HWA Mercedes boss Hans Werner Aufrecht, known as the 'father of the DTM' and who along with Walter Mertes and Abt Audi chief Hans-Jurgen Abt left the board over the winter. This leaves just Berger and CEO Florian Zitzlsperger, plus the three manufacturers – Audi, BMW and Mercedes – as stakeholders. "He [Aufrecht] did a great job over the years with the ups and downs," said Berger. "There were difficult moments, and he always managed to go on with it, to improve it, and to make the platform more interesting for all kinds of manufacturers and teams and drivers. Obviously I also have ideas, but the most important thing is first to go a bit deeper into it, to understand certain things, and then make a plan and try to make it happen."

MARCUS SIMMONS



SPY SHOT



WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP Spy pictures of Porsche's 2017 World Endurance Championship challenger reveal a revised front-end aerodynamic treatment in line with new regulations for this season. The images taken during testing at Paul Ricard of the latest-generation 919 Hybrid, which will be formally unveiled tomorrow (Friday) ahead of the official WEC test at Monza this weekend, show the higher front splitter mandated by the rules. The tip of the nose of Porsche's reworked LMP1 also appears to have been raised as a result of the 15mm increase in the splitter height. **Photograph by R1 Photography**

LEMANS 24 HOURS

Lapierre vindicated by Toyota call-up

NICOLAS LAPIERRE'S RECALL TO Toyota's World Endurance team two and a half years after he was dropped is at once bizarre and expedient. Why bring back a driver who it didn't trust to carry its title hopes in 2014? Because it knows that it can slot the Frenchman straight into its line-up in the third car for the Le Mans 24 Hours.

An opening arose in the additional TS050 HYBRID for Le Mans and the Spa WEC round in May when Toyota opted against promoting development driver Ryo Hirakawa to the LMP1 squad, despite grooming him for the drive with LMP2 programmes in the European Le Mans Series both this season and last. It was a late call and Lapierre was an obvious, short-notice replacement.

Toyota knows exactly what Lapierre can do. He did, after all, win six WEC rounds with the marque in 2012-14. His close links with ORECA, which is an integral part of the Toyota Gazoo Racing squad at the races, made it easy for him

to segue across despite having a contract to defend his P2 world title with Signatech Alpine – which runs ORECA chassis, even if they are badged Alpines.

So if Toyota didn't trust Lapierre after his back-to-back faux pas at Le Mans and Austin in 2014, why can it trust him now in the third car he will share with Stephane Sarrazin and Yuji Kunimoto? Because he was ultimately a scapegoat for Toyota's failure to win Le Mans in 2014, a year when it had something it didn't have on its near-miss last year – a clear performance advantage.

It was a kneejerk reaction at a time when it was under huge pressure to claim the title after the Le Mans failure. Toyota hasn't brought Lapierre back out of a sense of guilt, but his return is most definitely a tacit admission that it got it wrong when he was stood down from the car in which Sebastien Buemi and Anthony Davidson went on to take the crown.

GARY WATKINS

Lapierre's pen is back on a Toyota contract





EUROPEAN FORMULA 3

DENNIS: WILL HE RACE IN F3 OR NOT?

THE BIG QUESTION IN the Formula 3 European Championship as official testing kicked off last week at the Hungaroring was whether Jake Dennis will race with Carlin.

And it's not because anyone's being evasive or holding info back: it appears that neither Carlin nor Dennis knows.

The 21-year-old Racing Steps protege (above) began his Euro F3 career with the team in 2014, before switching to Prema Powerteam to finish third in '15. Last year he raced in GP3, and this year he is already confirmed in the WRT Audi line-up for the Blancpain GT Series.

He tested for Carlin last week, was also out with the team at the Red Bull Ring as Autosport went to press, and is believed to be very keen to add some F3 race outings. But a race deal – which would mean him lining up alongside Lando Norris, Jehan Daruvala and Ferdinand Habsburg – has not been worked out.

"He's working on our test and development process," said a Carlin spokesperson. "He's experienced, he's a great driver and we're familiar with him from F3. And the other drivers really enjoy working with him."

Harrison Newey topped the Hungaroring times, leading both sessions on the second day with Van Amersfoort Racing. Norris and fellow rookie Joey Mawson (VAR) headed the sessions on day one.

MARCUS SIMMONS



BLANCPAIN GT SERIES

Champions Buhk and Baumann split up by HTP

THE HTP MOTORSPORT MERCEDES SQUAD HAS SPLIT up reigning Blancpain GT Series champions Maximilian Buhk and Dominik Baumann for the defence its title in 2017.

Buhk and Baumann, who claimed the overall BGTS crown in 2016, will drive different HTP Mercedes-AMG GT3s in both the Endurance and Sprint Cups, in which they respectively finished second and third last season. Former Bentley driver Buhk will be partnered by Franck Perera and Baumann by former GP2 driver Jimmy Eriksson in the Sprint Cup, which begins this weekend at Misano.

HTP team manager Roland Rehfeld said: "We are reinventing a marriage and in doing this we believe we are making the team even stronger."

Eriksson, a frontrunner in GP3 in 2015, has made the

switch to GT racing after a single season in GP2. The Swede described GT racing as a "fantastic platform which opens up new opportunities for a lot of drivers" and said that he was "convinced that this is the right move for me".

HTP has yet to confirm its line-ups for the BGTS enduros, but it is expected that Eriksson will join Buhk and Perera. Baumann's team-mates seem set to be HTP returnee Maximilian Gotz and another ex-GP2 driver in the form of Marvin Kirchhofer, who is already confirmed with the team for the ADAC GT Masters series in Germany.

New Mercedes DTM driver Edoardo Mortara will also join HTP for an assault on the Nurburgring 24 Hours in May. He will be teamed with Buhk, Baumann and Edward Sandstrom.

GARY WATKINS



GP3 SERIES

Russell heads Estoril testing

MERCEDES FORMULA 1 PROTEGE GEORGE Russell earned the bragging rights from the first pre-season GP3 Series test at Estoril last week, setting the overall quickest time as rain marred much of the running.

The quickest times were set on the afternoon of the first day, with 2014 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Russell (above) – who has switched from European Formula 3 – edging ART Grand

Prix team-mate and second-year GP3 driver Nirei Fukuzumi by 0.079 seconds.

Third was ex-BRDC Formula 4 star Raoul Hyman; both Hyman and reigning Italian F4 champion Marcos Siebert joined Campos Racing for the test but neither has been confirmed for the season.

Russell topped the wet session on the second morning, 0.858s clear of another ART team-mate, Anthoine Hubert.

There was more rain in the afternoon, but the track dried out so that everyone finished on slicks. Yet another ART driver, Renault F1 junior Jack Aitken, emerged at the top of the pile, with Fukuzumi and Russell completing a top-three wipeout for the team.

The test also featured the first use of the new DRS system developed for GP3.

MARCUS SIMMONS



MCKLEIN

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Finland eyes chicanes

RALLY FINLAND CHIEFS ARE BEING forced to look for new measures in an effort to slow the latest-specification World Rally Cars down on the season's quickest World Rally Championship event.

While the FIA hasn't rewritten any specific regulations, event organisers are increasingly aware that average speeds above 130km/h (80mph) are being frowned upon. The governing body demonstrated its concern in Sweden last month, when the second run of the Knon test was canned after the fastest driver – M-Sport's Ott Tanak – registered an average of 137.81km/h (85.63mph) for the 20-miler in his Ford Fiesta.

Six of last year's Rally Finland stages were averaged at more than 80mph and this year's cars are reckoned to be a second per mile quicker than those that preceded them.

Clerk of the course on the July event Kai Tarkiainen admitted that chicanes in the stages could be the only answer, despite the protestations of the drivers.

"We will have to do something," he said, "that's quite clear. We have talked to the FIA, to Michele [Mouton, FIA safety delegate] and Jarmo [Mahonen, FIA rally director] about this and they're very much in favour of trying to use some natural kind of chicanes, by maybe taking the cars briefly onto a smaller road for a short loop or going to a long way around a junction. We're keen to do this to try to avoid dragging concrete or whatever's needed for a chicane into a stage in the middle of nowhere.

We are fully aware of the drivers' feelings towards chicanes and it's not ideal, but we can't risk stages being cancelled."

On seeing the route for this year's Rally Finland for the first time, Toyota driver Jari-Matti Latvala (pictured getting it wrong in a chicane on Rally Germany) admitted it had the look of being faster than ever.

"The second day's stages are really, really fast," he said. "In Ouninpohja the end of the stage, the narrow section, is not being used. This narrow section always brought the average speed down, but just using the wide road I wouldn't be surprised to see averages close to 140km/h [87mph].

"If that happens, I guess they'll have to think about the obstacles, the chicanes. I don't like those – they feel quite unnatural on the gravel roads like we have in Finland."

The narrow section of Ouninpohja is not being used, in order to make sure that Finland's most famous stage fits in to the WRC Promoter's schedule for a live television stage.

Finland wasn't the only WRC round issuing its route this week, with Rally Germany confirming its move south-east from its former base in Trier to Bosen, with the service park in Bostalsee. The mix of vineyard, lanes and military testing roads will remain largely the same, but the change of host town is born out of increased revenue from the Saarland region.

DAVID EVANS

IN THE HEADLINES

MELBOURNE: 'ADELAIDE CAN DREAM ON'

Australian Grand Prix promoter Andrew Westacott has stated that Adelaide can "dream on" if it thinks it can wrest the race away from Melbourne. Adelaide is to make a formal request to the South Australian State Government to investigate a return of the race to the city. "On one side I know we've got a very strong, mutually-agreed contract and a great partnership with Formula 1 until 2023 – that's a long time to continually get better and better," said Westacott. "And on the other side I'd say, 'Dream on Adelaide' because we've got this event."

RENAULT REVERTS TO OLD MGU-K

Renault reverted to its 2016 MGU-K system for last weekend's Australian GP following reliability problems in pre-season testing. Renault engine boss Remi Taffin explained that there was insufficient time to remedy the problems – understood to relate to the insulation on the MGU-K – in time for the race weekend. It means that Red Bull, Renault and Toro Rosso are expected not to use the new MGU-K until the first major engine upgrade of the season, around the fifth or sixth race.

PETROV IN LINE FOR MANOR SEAT

Ex-Formula 1 racer-turned-sportscar exponent Vitaly Petrov is tipped to fill the remaining Manor seat in the LMP2 class in selected rounds of the World Endurance Championship this season. The Russian was not on the entry list for this weekend's Monza test as we went to press.

MOLINA GETS WEC FERRARI DRIVE

DTM refugee Miguel Molina will drive for the Spirit of Race Ferrari team in this year's WEC. The Spaniard, who spent seven seasons in the DTM with Audi, has been given a place in the AF Corse-run Spirit of Race GTE Am class line-up after a try-out with Ferrari last month and will drive the #58 Ferrari 488 GTE with Francesco Castellacci and Thomas Flohr. The Spaniard will also contest the Blancpain GT Series under the SMP Racing banner with Davide Rigon and Viktor Shaytar.

MCNISH TAKES THE COMMENTARY MIC

Three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Allan McNish has joined the TV commentary team for the WEC. McNish will be the expert analyst at all but two of the events. With the Geordie tones of John Hindhaugh returning to his first love of radio commentary, Martin Haven and Toby Moody will share the lead-commentator role.

PALMER LEADS THE WAY AT RICARD

Will Palmer (below), the 2015 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner, led the way in a rain-hit Formula Renault Eurocup test at Paul Ricard last week. Palmer topped the first afternoon in his R-ace GP car, while other sessions were headed by team-mate Robert Shwartzman, Josef Kaufmann Racing's Sacha Fenestraz and Arden's Dan Ticktum.



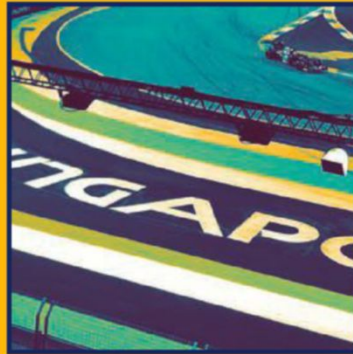
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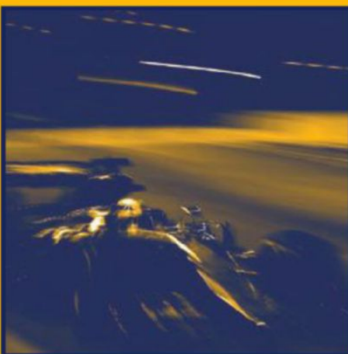
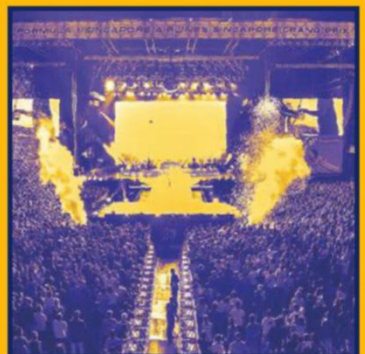


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INDYCAR SERIES

Montoya gets back in the IndyCar saddle

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA WAS ON THE pace as he returned to an IndyCar cockpit in testing with Team Penske at Barber Motorsports Park last week.

The ex-Formula 1 driver lost his full-time drive with Penske for this year, initially signing a one-race deal with the team for the Indianapolis 500. That arrangement was extended to include the Indianapolis road-course race before the 500.

Montoya finished the day with the fourth-fastest time, just 0.0888s slower than team-mate Will Power, who was at the top of the order. "I feel like I [last] drove the car yesterday," Montoya said at the end of the test. "It's kind of fun. I've been out of the car since September, but I feel fine.

"I have a new crew, new guys, new

engineer. It's working really well. There's a lot of focus on the Indy 500 and that's understandable, but the [road-course] grand prix has come a long way in a short time. More people need to discover it because all of the races have been very competitive with passing and lead changes.

"It's great to race at Indy, and I'll be excited to get in the car for the Month of May."

Power's last-gasp effort meant that Briton Max Chilton was denied the fastest time, his Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Honda the only interloper in a top four otherwise monopolised by the Chevrolet-powered Penske team, with Josef Newgarden third. Next were Andretti Autosport duo Marco Andretti and Takuma Sato.

GLENN FREEMAN



IMS

TCR INTERNATIONAL

Comini to race Audi

THE ONLY MAN EVER TO BE CROWNED TCR International champion has finally secured a drive with a team new to the series on the eve of the opening round.

Stefano Comini (below), who claimed the title with a Target Competition SEAT in 2015 and a Leopard Racing Volkswagen last year, will line up for this weekend's season opener at Rustavi in Georgia with the brand-new

Audi RS3 LMS, run by Comtoy Racing.

The Belgian squad, run by Jean-Michel Baert, has graduated from the Fun Cup for VW Beetle clones, and has hired Francois Verbist, who has played a big role in the logistics and management for top GT Audi squad WRT. The team plans to run a second car from the Spa round in May.

"This project has been launched at the last minute and we go to Georgia with very little preparation," said Swiss-Italian Comini. "But I must say that trying to conquer a third crown in a row, with a third different car brand, is a very exciting challenge!"

There are 16 cars entered for Rustavi, with the latest additions to the field including former WTCC racers Ferenc Ficza (Zele Racing SEAT Leon) and Pierre-Yves Corthals (DG Sport Opel Astra).

MARCUS SIMMONS



TCR

IN THE HEADLINES

DAVE STEELE 1974-2017

Former IndyCar racer Dave Steele was killed in a sprint-car crash in Florida last Saturday. Steele made three IndyCar starts in 1998 and also attempted to qualify for the Indy 500 in '99. He was a star of sprint-car racing, holding the third-highest number of USAC Silver Crown wins.

MENCHACA HEADS FV8 3.5 RUNNING

Fortec Motorsport rookie Diego Menchaca set the quickest time in two days of World Series Formula V8 3.5 testing at Jerez last week. The Mexican, who steps up from Euroformula Open, pipped Lotus-run Brazilian Pietro Fittipaldi by 0.052 seconds in the fastest session. The other sessions were topped by Fittipaldi's team-mate Rene Binder, RP Motorsport's Roy Nissany, and Damiano Fioravanti, who has made a late switch from RP to the revived Il Barone Rampante squad.

ERC OPENER GETS 28 R5 CARS

A total of 28 R5 cars are on the entry list for this weekend's opening round of the European Rally Championship, Reigning champion Kajto Kajetanowicz leads the field away for the Azores Rally in his Ford Fiesta, but the Pole is not sure whether he will commit to a full title defence.

OSTBERG TO SKIP CORSICA

Norwegian World Rally Championship contender Mads Ostberg will skip next month's Tour of Corsica because he has been unable to do sufficient testing in his new Ford Fiesta WRC. Ostberg made his season debut in Sweden, but missed Mexico for the birth of his first child. He plans to return for Rally Argentina at the end of April.

GP3 WINNER PALOU HEADS TO JAPAN

GP3 race winner Alex Palou has switched to the Japanese Formula 3 Championship for this season. The Spaniard will drive for the new-to-F3 Drago Corse team in a Dallara powered by the ThreeBond-backed Tomei engine, previously raced in the F3 European Championship and the Macau Grand Prix by British team T-Sport.

BERLIN TRACK'S NEW LAYOUT

Formula E has revealed a modified layout for its Berlin Tempelhof street circuit (below). The track, which hosts a double-header in June, now features a long back straight, while the majority of corners have been altered. Plans to run into the airport terminal building have been canned, presumably because the cars' batteries would have run out while drivers queued at the bag-drop.



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‘Proper’ F1 is back

The new-generation grand prix cars are spectacularly quick in a way that fully befits their place at the pinnacle of motorsport

By Damien Smith, European Editor-in-Chief

[@Damien_Smith](#)

“IT’S INCREDIBLE, THE BEST THAT I’VE EVER

experienced here,” enthused Lewis Hamilton after qualifying on pole at Albert Park on Saturday. “Obviously the grip is fantastic, the aero... it just makes such a drastic difference. You can really push deep into these corners. It’s amazing to not have the car skating around on the low-grip kind of tyres that we had in the past. So, very exciting and fun to drive.”

The lack of passing on Sunday made for a largely dull race, but that was hardly unexpected. We knew these regulations were ill thought through for the racing spectacle. But let’s look on the bright side. How pleasing it was to listen to Formula 1’s stars genuinely rave about driving grand prix cars again after so many years of tyre-deg coasting frustration.

It was even better to watch them in action. I wandered out to Turns 11 and 12 last Friday to witness the beginning of F1’s new dawn. The sense of anticipation had been brewing all week, palpably beyond the usual excitement of a fresh new season. Those who’d witnessed the Barcelona tests promised we’d not be disappointed. Happily, they were right.

Eleven and 12 is the blink-of-an-eye left-right flick that pushes mechanical and aerodynamic grip to its limit. Here, the increased downforce and fatter Pirellis would be tested in a manner befitting grand prix racing.

Carlos Sainz is on it right away, as usual. His Toro Rosso bites a chunk out of the yellow and green kerb that marks the small-target apex of 11, sparks showering from its floor as the front end is tugged against its will into a rapid left turn. As the session progresses he pulls it back, smoothing out the jagged changes of direction. Hamilton is another to relish how deep he can now commit to the corner, just like he used to when he first came here as a rookie 10 long years ago. In contrast, the Red Bulls flash left and right in one liquid movement. It’s less dramatic, but still stunningly impressive.

On-the-edge strawberry milkshake Force Indias dart through, and there’s Fernando Alonso finding some consolation for the disheartening lap time he knows will ultimately ping up. He’s fully committed, as ever, then his McLaren-Honda accelerates away out of our sight on its way to 13. And wait for it: there’s the comedy upshift ‘graunch’, caused by an engine vibration, that reminds us he’s pedalling a deeply troubled car unworthy of his awesome powers.

The next day, he’s happy to acknowledge F1 is back from the

wilderness, in a manner he hasn’t experienced since his V10 glory years when world championship titles were at his mercy.

“Yes, these cars are probably comparable,” he says. “They are much more fun to drive, the cornering speed is back to what F1 should be. The fans will love watching them from the grandstand, and also on television I think they look better. We are still missing the sound of F1, which was part of the DNA of the sport, but I guess that will not come anymore.”

It’s the only ingredient missing from the old shock-and-awe F1, although the hybrid turbo V6 still sounds racy. It just spares you the headache and post-session ringing in the ears. Early each morning at Albert Park – at 0730 no less! – the V10 two-seater Minardi breaks the peace and reminds us how F1 used to sound. The residents of St Kilda must bless the history lesson.

The five-second lap-time gain that was the target of these new regs has so far proven optimistic. Last year Hamilton took pole in 1m23.837s. This year he managed it in 1m22.188s.

But Alonso points out – notably with young team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne only a few feet to his side – that these

cars must be harder to drive. It’s been said that the previous generation made it too easy for rookies to jump in and go quickly straight away. On this day in Melbourne experience appears to count as Vandoorne,

Lance Stroll and co languish at the bottom of the times.

“We saw today how the teams split the drivers, one experienced driver [in front] and one rookie maybe behind on this kind of circuit: narrow, bumpy where you have to push the car, where it’s not easy to get into the speed,” says Alonso. “The cars are tougher and more difficult to drive. Also when you lose the car a little at the rear it’s difficult to recover because you’re faster in the corners. You have half a tenth of a second to react. Last year you had four seconds because in the corner you could take a coffee in those cars...”

“We are definitely in a different category. I’m happy that an F1 car now goes faster in the corner than a GP2 or a Japanese Super Formula car.”

Ultimate lap times are a red herring. What matters is the speed in the corner – and in this aspect, as Alonso says, these cars are properly *fast*. Aesthetically, they are in proportion for the first time in years, too. OK, overtaking is tough – but that’s an old F1 tradition as well!

Finally, ‘proper’ F1 is back. Make sure you catch them at a circuit near you this year and find out for yourself. 🏁

“Ultimate lap times are a red herring. Speed in the corner is what matters”



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FEEDBACK



Make overtaking next big fix for F1

The outcome of the Australian Grand Prix can hardly have been a surprise to anyone. I'm not talking about Ferrari beating Mercedes on genuine race pace, which was excellent, but on the almost complete absence of overtaking.

Increasing the durability of the tyres and their width is great, but increasing aero/downforce is pure madness – we're faced with a season of 'spectacular' pitlane undercuts and overcuts, but no on-track overtaking for the lead.

Ross Brawn, can you please bring some common sense to bear on this issue and make the long-overdue major cut to downforce, provide a smooth wake to facilitate close following, and while you're at it put some big race numbers on the cars so the fans (and Sky!) can quickly know if it's Max Verstappen or Daniel Ricciardo who has broken down?

Neil Millins
Byemail

Better racing beats speed

So the new F1 cars are wider, allowing larger and more complex aerodynamics giving more downforce and grip. Added to this straightline speeds

are lower and corner speeds higher, so braking distances are shorter. As a result overtaking is even more difficult than last year – what a surprise!

If Ross Brawn and his Liberty colleagues want closer racing and more overtaking, how about the following: get rid of most of the aerodynamic devices above the car's bodywork, allowing only simple fins and wings; get downforce through ground-effect aerodynamics, which are less affected by the dirty air from the car in front.

These changes should allow cars to follow more closely – slipstreaming should be possible even around corners.

Then get rid of carbon braking systems and replace them with cast-iron to increase braking distances, allowing the drivers to demonstrate their late-braking skills (or lack of them).

F1 fans want to see cars in close combat with more overtaking, and drivers clearly demonstrating their car-control skills. Lap speeds that are three to five seconds slower would be an acceptable price to pay for this, as 'lack of speed' would be compensated for by 'better racing'.

Steve Tan
Runcorn

All credit to Vettel, but is the pitlane the best place to take the lead of a grand prix?

Pay TV reduces the fanbase

I admire Ross Brawn, but think his reply about pay TV in the Q&A with Autosport was nonsense (March 23).

It will "reduce the audience, but the quality is higher". Firstly, that remains to be seen, and what does that even mean? Neither does it address the issue of F1 going behind a pay-TV wall, which will inevitably reduce viewing numbers. No point having 'higher quality' if few people will watch it.

If F1 is going to prosper it needs free-to-air, as many sports recognise. Cricket and golf in particular are suffering with less exposure, which entails less participation on and off screen, in particular with the young audience that is the future fanbase.

The other obvious result is that sooner or later sponsors are going to wonder if it's worthwhile being involved in a sport that only a small fraction of the population will see.

It is a very shortsighted move. Many F1 fans like me will balk at getting Sky, but will still follow the sport through radio, Autosport and other media. The general public will not. Where are the fans of the future going to come from?

Karl Schunmann
Cheshunt

An (almost) cliché-free zone

Could I please applaud the Goodwood commentary team for a superb, well-informed and largely cliché-free job all weekend. There was only one 'nip and tuck', and I thought we'd got away with it but then in the last race an 'in the mix' sneaked in. Brilliant.

Jonathan Moorhouse
York

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A high-angle, wide shot of a Formula 1 podium ceremony. In the foreground, a driver in a red Ferrari racing suit stands on the first-place podium, raising his right arm in celebration. Next to him, a driver in a white Petronas racing suit sits on the second-place podium. A man in a blue suit stands between them, clapping. The podium is surrounded by a large crowd of photographers and spectators, many holding cameras and smartphones. The background shows a massive grandstand filled with fans. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Vettel proves Ferrari is back

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



FORMULA 1'S NEW ERA IS ALL ABOUT BIGGER CARS, WIDER TYRES, MORE downforce, and greater performance than ever before. But this category remains one defined by small margins, and ultimately it was minor details that meant Ferrari rather than Mercedes went home victorious from the first grand prix of 2017.

The picture after Friday practice looked very different. Lewis Hamilton was out on his own in front, more than half a second clear of Sebastian Vettel over one lap, and a second clear over the longer runs. Mercedes looked in great shape. The W08 appeared stuck to the road and working well again after the tribulations of the second week of pre-season testing, when the floor fell apart and the car's pace suffered badly as a consequence.

By contrast, pre-season pacesetter Ferrari looked a bit lost. Vettel was unhappy with his car's balance, and it seemed that Maranello had a lot of work to do to rediscover the form that had raised expectations of a gloves-off title battle with Mercedes ahead of the Australian Grand Prix.

The first hint of a breakthrough came in final practice on Saturday morning, when Vettel lapped almost half a second faster than Hamilton and the sister Mercedes of Valtteri Bottas. The SF70H looked a healthier proposition in the hotter weather.

Vettel was in the mix in qualifying too, squeaking ahead of Bottas to claim second on the grid, and denied pole as the circuit clouded over only by a sublime last lap from Hamilton, who is the undoubted king of qualifying around the Albert Park circuit.

But Mercedes still held a decisive theoretical edge heading into Sunday's race. Hamilton was on pole and had displayed an

advantage of more than two tenths per lap on Vettel in pure pace. Provided he could ace the start, the race would be Hamilton's to lose, given how difficult overtaking usually is on this track – narrow, bumpy, and short on straights.

The FIA has acted to make the starts trickier for the drivers to manage this season, mandating a linear response from the clutches that requires drivers to handle the start procedure without the assistance of specific pre-programmed clutch settings.

The drivers appeared to have little trouble adapting to 2017's 'manual' starts. This was certainly true for Hamilton, for whom getaways had proved a persistent problem last season using the old procedures. The poleman was away cleanly into Turn 1 in the lead, while Vettel was busy resisting a challenge from Bottas.

"I had a bit of wheelslip off the line," explained Vettel. "Lewis was a tiny bit better and I had to take care of Valtteri in Turn 1, but I had a decent exit. After that I was really trying to keep the pressure on, to make sure they got the message that we are here, and we are here to fight."

Vettel stayed true to his words, applying relentless pressure to Hamilton through the opening sequence of the race. Over the first 15 flying laps, Hamilton was only 0.043 seconds per lap faster than Vettel on average, despite running in clean air at the front.



Hamilton got the jump on the return of 'manual' starts



Hamilton just couldn't shake Vettel during opening stint...



...and Mercedes was suckered into an early pitstop

Hamilton produced a burst of pace between laps four and 10, to stretch his lead north of 1.8s, but Vettel was hanging on gamely, and Hamilton was not enjoying the sort of easy ride to which Mercedes grew accustomed while leading races of the recent past.

"I was struggling with grip from the get-go," said Hamilton. "Sebastian was able to always answer in terms of lap time. Towards the end [of the stint] I got a bit [stuck] in traffic and the car started to overheat the tyres."

"I was struggling with grip and it was to the point that I needed to come in. The gap was closing up and I was sliding around. It was my call, because otherwise he probably would have come by anyway."

That seems unlikely, given how difficult overtaking is around this track, but Vettel was homing in on the Mercedes and clearly ruffling Hamilton's feathers. Hamilton dived into the pits at the

end of lap 17, which turned out to be six laps earlier than any other frontrunning car. Mercedes turned Hamilton around in 3.3s and sent him on his way on soft Pirelli tyres. He emerged fifth, behind Max Verstappen's Red Bull.

Hamilton unleashed the extra grip in his new tyres to pump in a new fastest lap of the race on lap 19, but thereafter spent a touch over five laps bottled up behind the Red Bull. Mercedes told Hamilton it was "race critical" for him to pass Verstappen, but Hamilton said there was "no way I can get past this guy."

Mercedes gambled on the expectation that Verstappen would pit much sooner than he did. Knowing that he was safe from any threat from behind, Red Bull gave Verstappen the choice and he chose to stay out until lap 25. During that time, Hamilton leaked a crucial 2.186s to Vettel's Ferrari. >>



Hamilton had led Vettel by just 0.944s when the Mercedes pitted on lap 17. This meant a 1.242s swing in Vettel's favour, despite Vettel losing time in traffic on his in-lap. Vettel's own stop (on lap 23) was also 0.3s quicker than Hamilton's, thanks to slick work by the Ferrari crew.

All of this meant Vettel emerged just over half a second clear of Verstappen – who briefly had a look at passing the Ferrari around the outside into Turn 3 – with Hamilton four tenths further back.

Vettel completed lap 24 more than three seconds clear of Hamilton thanks to the Verstappen roadblock, and by the time Verstappen eventually pitted that gap was out to nearly six seconds. The race had now swung decisively in Vettel's favour.

"I think Sebastian owes Max a beer, because the fact Lewis couldn't pass him dictated the race," said Red Bull boss Christian Horner. "It gave Sebastian the overcut, and put him in a position to win."

Verstappen's decision undoubtedly played a major role in denying Hamilton a 54th grand prix victory. In hindsight, perhaps Mercedes would have been better off leaving Hamilton to struggle on with his initial stint on ultra-softs, battling to maintain track position in the face of Ferrari's onslaught. We know from the way Ferrari threw away its chance to win last year's Australian GP that holding track position is crucial to success here.

"After the race is always easier, when you rewind and say what we could've done better," said Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, who thumped his garage desk in frustration when Vettel emerged in front of Hamilton. "But I think as a general summary we just weren't quick enough. The Ferrari was the quicker car – the

way Sebastian held on to Lewis. We were pushing flat-out and we were just not able to pull away.

"There was the risk of the undercut, and we also thought the tyres wouldn't last. All that led us to the decision to pit to avoid the undercut. You're trying to take on board all the information you have – what you see in terms of tyre temperatures and grip levels and sliding, and then of course how the driver perceives it. All of that leads to a decision, and in that case it was probably a couple of laps too early. Coming out behind Max, who was fighting his own race, just lost us the race.

"We hoped for Max to pit earlier and then be in free air, so it was a combination of variables that went against us."

Mercedes was naturally fearful of getting jumped by Vettel in the pits, given his ability to stay close to Hamilton without rooting his tyres through that first stint. Nervous about Vettel's pace in clean air, Mercedes would have

"The Ferrari was the quicker car. We were just not able to pull away"

known it was crucial to get Hamilton into the pits first.

But ultimately Mercedes blinked too soon. Perhaps it thought Hamilton would trigger a chain reaction of stops among the other frontrunners that never came... Bottas went as far as lap 25 before making his stop, but the Finn drove a more conservative first stint than Hamilton yet was still struggling similarly for grip.

You could argue that Vettel risked getting stuck behind Verstappen in the same way as Hamilton did had Ferrari attempted to jump the Mercedes with an earlier pitstop, but there's always the chance that Verstappen could have done what Mercedes expected him to do in the first place. Whatever, once he gets into the lead of a race Vettel rarely lets the opportunity escape his grasp. From



XPBIMAGES

The moment the race was won: Vettel emerges ahead of Verstappen and Hamilton

QUALIFYING



LAT IMAGES

IT WAS ALWAYS GOING TO TAKE SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL FOR anyone to beat Lewis Hamilton around Melbourne's Albert Park circuit in qualifying. No Formula 1 driver has taken more pole positions at this track than Hamilton, who duly took his Melbourne career tally to six with a consummate performance.

Hamilton looked on it from the moment the cars first turned wheels in free practice, lapping half a second quicker than anyone else on Friday. Although he was slightly off the pace in final practice, facing a sterner challenge from Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and new Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas, the triple champion ultimately proved beyond their reach.

Hamilton was three tenths up on Vettel after the first runs in Q3, with Bottas just two thousandths of a second slower in third, before Daniel Ricciardo's crash (which Ricciardo described as "weird") at Turn 14 caused the session to be stopped.

"I'd have loved to, but I don't think pole was up for grabs"

Sebastian Vettel

Hamilton went even faster on his final run once the session resumed, sealing pole position with a 1m22.188s lap – the fastest ever recorded by an F1 car around this circuit.

Bottas momentarily held top spot before Hamilton's improvement, despite a scruffy final flying lap

for the Finn, and Vettel then denied Mercedes a front row lockout by posting the second fastest time on his final run.

Despite setting the pace in final practice, Ferrari ultimately didn't quite have the speed to challenge the best of the Mercedes drivers. Vettel was quicker than Bottas but 0.268s down on Hamilton.

Vettel admitted to losing time at Turn 1 and Turn 9 on his final Q3 lap, saying over the radio that he "tried a bit too hard", but he also felt that Hamilton was out of reach even with a perfect effort. "I would have loved to, but I don't think pole was up for grabs," said Vettel. "Qualifying on the first row is a very good opening to a long, long season."

Bottas fell only 0.025s shy of beating Vettel to the front row. He said he failed to meet his own expectations after getting beaten by a Ferrari, admitting to taking too much from his tyres in the middle sector and struggling to hold on through the final few corners.

But Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff defended Bottas's maiden effort against "the strongest Lewis I have seen on track".

The second Ferrari of Kimi Raikkonen was fourth fastest, more than half a second further back, while the remaining Red Bull of Max Verstappen claimed fifth, almost half a second more behind. Verstappen complained of a lack of power and difficulty in getting the RB13 set up correctly.

Romain Grosjean produced a stunning effort to qualify a Haas inside the top six for the first time, nearly four tenths clear of the Williams of Felipe Massa, who admitted Grosjean's time was out of reach for the pre-event midfield favourites.

Massa was just 0.044s clear of Carlos Sainz Jr, who in turn narrowly beat Toro Rosso team-mate Daniil Kvyat to eighth.



LAT IMAGES

Ferrari sent engine man Luigi Fraboni to collect the constructors' trophy

there, the four-time world champion was always going to be a difficult target for Hamilton to aim at.

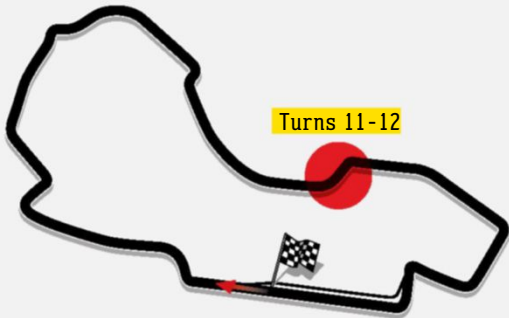
Mercedes initially switched Hamilton to a two-stop strategy after that early first stop, but reverted to 'plan A' when it became apparent that the soft Pirelli tyres weren't really degrading, leaving Hamilton no further strategic wriggle-room.

Hamilton traded tenths with Vettel on occasion through the second stint, when the Mercedes was working the rubber well, but Hamilton complained over team radio that the tyres were "dropping in and out", and he was unable to exert serious pressure on the Ferrari, in fact lapping slower on average over the second part of the race than team-mate Bottas.

"They [Ferrari] definitely have more pace on the ultra-soft tyre," said Hamilton. "I think I had more pace in the second stint, [it's] just I stopped so much earlier that I really didn't know how long >>>



“SHAME ALONSO’S TALENTS CONTINUE TO GO TO WASTE”



High-speed esses show off new cars' grip

INITIAL TRACKSIDE impressions of this new breed of Formula 1 car were a little underwhelming, but that was the first day of winter testing – everyone was cautious, the cars were underdeveloped, the engines detuned.

On to Melbourne a few weeks later and things are getting serious now. Albert Park is narrower and bumpier than Barcelona, and the cars, engines and drivers are winding up to their full potential ahead of race one.

Through the high-speed esses at Turns 11 and 12, the new breed of high-downforce V6 F1 cars are really motoring

on – even in first practice, when the track is gripless and the drivers are still searching for their groove.

For some this search takes longer than others. Lewis Hamilton is straight on the case – overcommitting to Turn 11 to find the limit, then bringing it back; doing the same experiment in Turn 12, before cracking on with his test programme. The W08 looks smothered in grip already, and Hamilton is much earlier back on throttle than his rivals through this section.

Daniel Ricciardo and Fernando Alonso are the other standouts. Ricciardo's elegant

style encourages the RB13 to flow through the transition from left to right to left, then right again, with minimal fuss and maximum precision.

Alonso manhandles the McLaren-Honda through these turns, trying everything in his power to compensate for the engine's lack of power. Lazier drivers should watch the way Alonso forces his car over to

the left to open up the entry to Turn 12, ensuring he has the maximum angle of attack to accelerate onto the straight.

When the rear of the McLaren protests, Alonso reacts instinctively to correct the slide, without a hint of a panicked lift off the throttle. This is all the more impressive now that the cars are travelling significantly quicker, giving

less time to correct problems.

“You have half a tenth of a second to react,” Alonso says. “Last year you had four seconds – in the corner you could take a coffee.”

Alonso looks as on it as he ever has, enthused by F1's new high-speed direction. Such a shame his talents continue to go to waste in uncompetitive machinery.



Vettel mugged Hamilton for the victory

“Thanks Seb, you’ve finally given us some opposition”



the tyres were going to last. I didn’t want to push to close the gap knowing I couldn’t really overtake, and then find I run out of tyres at the end and lose second. Once I came out behind Sebastian, it was really about damage limitation.”

Hamilton identified the Wo8’s tyre usage as a crucial area Mercedes needs to correct for future races. Team-mate Bottas, who eventually finished close behind Hamilton in third, also struggled with the ultra-soft tyres and suggested “the warmer temperatures at the start of the race could be part of the reason for our struggles”.

The Mercedes always looked more on a knife edge than the Ferrari during pre-season testing, whichever compound of tyre the two cars ran on, and Wolff conceded his team needs a “new calibration” when it comes to understanding how to extract the most from Pirelli’s new breed of bigger and stiffer tyres.

“I believe these tyres have a narrow window, and you need to keep them in that window in order for them to perform well,” Wolff explained. “If you’re below the window, or above the window, you lose performance.”

“Eventually the race came towards us. The temperatures dropped a little bit, we changed the tyre, and our pace was absolutely OK towards the end of the race, but not in the beginning.”

“I think in the conditions we underperformed. The difference is it was much hotter. We need to understand why we didn’t have the pace at the beginning of the race, in these conditions.”

Interestingly, Ferrari’s take on the new generation of Pirellis is different. Kimi Raikkonen – who endured his own struggles with

understeer through the first stint on ultra-softs – suggested that the 2017 rubber is actually *easier* to work with than the older tyres.

“If I’m comparing to last year they’re more easy to switch on and keep in the area,” Raikkonen said. “Maybe the area is bigger than it used to be and it will last better, so it’s not so critical what you do.”

Pirelli has worked to reduce the severity of degradation but it is still there, so good tyre management is still vital. Many teams and drivers also spoke during pre-season about how this new generation of F1 car is highly sensitive to set-up changes.

Perhaps the Ferrari set-up window is currently wider than the Mercedes one; perhaps Ferrari simply found a set-up that works better at certain track temperatures than Mercedes’ set-up does...

Whatever the definitive explanation, the gap between Mercedes and Ferrari is clearly small enough that fine details can make all the difference. Ferrari feels it is

still lacking two tenths to Mercedes in pure pace when the engines are cranked up to the maximum for qualifying, but in race trim it looks as though Ferrari has fractionally the better car – certainly better in the prevailing conditions last Sunday.

Mercedes could still have won, had Hamilton pitted slightly later than he did and Verstappen chosen not to block his path to victory. Equally, Ferrari had at least one of its cars set up well enough that Vettel could pounce when Hamilton and Mercedes slipped up.

F1 has always been about such details. Ferrari showed in Australia that it has taken care of enough of them that it could be a contender for the world title, if Mercedes doesn’t take care enough of its own. ❄

“We need to understand why we didn’t have pace at the beginning”

XPBIMAGES



Raikkonen blames ultra-soft understeer for poor race pace

FERRARI'S KIMI RAIKKONEN SAYS understeer in the opening stint was to blame for his disappointing performance in the Australian Grand Prix.

While team-mate Sebastian Vettel romped to a convincing victory, Raikkonen was largely a bystander in the Ferrari-Mercedes battle, qualifying and finishing a distant fourth.

The Finn finished the race 22 seconds adrift of Vettel, and said the damage to his race was done in the opening laps when he was in "nowhere land".

"Yesterday we suffered a bit with understeer on the car and it was a similar story on the first set of tyres," Raikkonen said. "Once we put the soft tyres on, the car turned very good and I was very happy – but obviously at that point we were pretty much in nowhere land."

"I really think we understood yesterday already why we were lacking but it was

too late. I think we know what we have to do and it should be OK."

Raikkonen came under pressure from Red Bull driver Max Verstappen in the latter stages of the race, but he insisted that this was down to him needing to manage the Ferrari's fuel.

Raikkonen acknowledged that the result fell short of his expectations, but said he was content to have made a solid start, having failed to finish the season-opener for the previous two seasons. "It's a bit disappointing where I finished but we know what we have to do – and at least we finished," he added. "For a few years we hadn't finished the race and obviously that wasn't the ideal start. This is not 100% what we wanted but I'll take it."

"Even if it's disappointing, I'm pretty happy that we've understood a lot of things. I'm pretty confident that we'll be back where we should be in the next race."



HAAS ANNOYED TO MISS POINTS

HAAS SHOULD HAVE LEFT the Australian Grand Prix with at least one car in the points, but came away empty handed after a double retirement.

Romain Grosjean qualified a stunning sixth on Saturday, surprising Haas by being best of the midfield runners, nearly four tenths clear of Felipe Massa's Williams.

Grosjean dropped behind at the start, but was running comfortably in seventh place when the car sprung a water leak, which forced him to retire to the pits.

Team-mate Kevin Magnussen started on the penultimate row of the grid after a difficult build-up, and collided with Marcus Ericsson's Sauber on the first lap, before retiring with a suspected suspension problem that turned out to be a puncture.

"I feel positive – I'm just annoyed with the missed opportunity," said team boss Gunther Steiner. "It was almost too easy to grab it, to finish seventh or sixth. It was there; we just had to get it to the end without a problem."

"With such a tight midfield, it's a lost opportunity. It's disappointing, but it could be worse. We could be slow. I think it's a lot easier to find reliability than speed."



Alonso drives the race of his life in Australia

FERNANDO ALONSO CALLED THE AUSTRALIAN Grand Prix "probably the best race of my life" after narrowly failing to score a point for McLaren-Honda.

The team came into the season opener with little hope of performing well, after a litany of reliability problems blighted its testing programme. Honda's engine proved more reliable in Australia, but was still short on power and efficiency. Nevertheless, Alonso made Q2 and outqualified Esteban Ocon's Force India to start an unexpected 13th on the grid, which became 12th after Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo was penalised for a gearbox change (see story, right).

Alonso then made a solid getaway and overtook Nico Hulkenberg's Renault on the first lap, moving into the points on lap 14 when Romain Grosjean retired. He held 10th until the end of lap 51, when Ocon attacked into Turn 15. Alonso defended, but was then overtaken by both Ocon and Hulkenberg in a three-wide moment on the main straight.

Alonso then retired to the pits with what he suspected was a suspension problem. McLaren later ascribed Alonso's retirement to floor damage.

"It was probably the best race of my life until that moment," said Alonso. "[There are] few times I've had such an uncompetitive car, without any winter preparation, having to save fuel in a brutal way – I think we had to lift about a second per lap – and even so we were in the points."

"It was a pretty big surprise what we were doing, but in the end we couldn't complete it."



LAT IMAGES

PODIUM FOR BOTTAS ON MERCEDES DEBUT

VALTTERI BOTTAS ENJOYED A SOLID FIRST GRAND PRIX as a Mercedes driver, finishing a close third behind new team-mate Lewis Hamilton.

Bottas struggled for single-lap speed in Friday practice, and was disappointed to qualify behind Sebastian Vettel's Ferrari and 0.293 seconds adrift of Hamilton.

He made a steady start to the race, but came on strong in the second stint, lapping faster than both Vettel and Hamilton on average and finishing just 1.275s behind Hamilton.

"I'm very impressed with Valtteri's driving all through the weekend," said Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. "He's under a lot of pressure, being in a Mercedes, being in Nico's [Rosberg] car, and he has really driven very well."

Q&A

VALTTERI BOTTAS MERCEDES DRIVER



Finishing third in your first race with Mercedes, not far behind Lewis Hamilton, is pretty good, isn't it?

"It's a start. As a driver, you can always find things to improve for the future. Qualifying I wasn't happy. I set a target very high and I didn't meet it, but that's where you learn. The race, particularly the second half, was very good and I was pleased with that. The pace was good and the car was feeling much better with the soft tyres. The main thing for us to understand is the ultra-softs. We were way off and sliding around and losing grip."

Third on Saturday, third in the race, yet you seem disappointed. Are you putting too much pressure on yourself?

"I always put very high targets but I think that works for me. It makes me work harder. I haven't felt any negatives on myself; it's only good for me to think of my weaknesses and strengths. I know there's more to come and I just need to keep doing what I do. I trust my skills."

Do you have a better idea about Lewis now – how good a driver he is and the way he goes about his work?

"No surprises, I was always expecting him to be really quick. Our work together has been very good. We work really well as team-mates and no bad words at all. He's a great reference and it's going to be nice battle through the season."



LAT IMAGES

Ricciardo's weekend hell

RED BULL DRIVER DANIEL RICCIARDO endured a torrid home race in Australia, crashing in qualifying and suffering technical problems in the race. It was an event his team boss Christian Horner described as a "weekend from hell".

Ricciardo crashed out of the final part of qualifying, an incident he described as weird, and was later hit with a five-place grid penalty for a gearbox change, which should have meant he started 15th.

But his rebuilt car ground to a halt on the reconnaissance lap to the pre-race grid on Sunday. A gearbox-sensor failure left him stuck in sixth and temporarily stranded on the track.

Ricciardo was eventually able to join the race from the pits, two laps after the start, but retired after 25 laps when a suspected fuel-pressure problem rendered him stationary once again.

Those woes compounded a frustrating weekend for Red Bull, which also struggled to dial a decent set-up into the RB13. Ricciardo said he was simply pleased to see the back of the event.

"I feel bad for the fans obviously – there are more people here supporting me than the others," Ricciardo said. "It just kind of snowballed from yesterday. I'm happy to move on. I'm disappointed, but I'll be ready to go for China [next month]."

Team-mate Max Verstappen fared better than Ricciardo but said he did not expect to keep Kimi Raikkonen in sight on his way to fifth.

"I was a bit surprised I was that close to Kimi," said Verstappen. "My pace was quite good compared with him, and behind me there was not much pressure."

"The car behaved quite a bit better in the race than in qualifying."

LAT IMAGES





Sauber very surprised by Giovinazzi's performance

SAUBER TEAM principal Monisha Kaltenborn admitted that the team was very surprised with the quality of last-minute debutant Antonio Giovinazzi's performance in the Australian Grand Prix.

The GP2 runner-up was drafted in by Sauber on Saturday morning, after Pascal Wehrlein reported fitness concerns following Friday's practice sessions.

Ferrari third driver Giovinazzi, who stood in for Wehrlein at Sauber for the first Barcelona test, qualified 16th and finished his first race 12th.

"It definitely surprised us," Kaltenborn said. "Yes, he's been testing, done things like the Pirelli test [for Ferrari], but that's

not the kind of testing other people have been doing. It's not like this level of motorsport, so it was very impressive."

Giovinazzi was quicker than team-mate Marcus Ericsson before their final runs in the first part of qualifying, but made a mistake and missed Q2 by two tenths.

In the race, he took advantage of an electrical problem for Stoffel Vandoorne to beat the McLaren-Honda.

"Yesterday I was just two tenths from Q2, and today just two positions from the points," Giovinazzi said. "To be on top of the rookie drivers, with the preparation I had before – nothing – I think was a pretty good weekend."

'Everything conspired against me' says struggling Palmer

RENAULT DRIVER JOLYON Palmer felt circumstances conspired against him after qualifying slowest for the Australian Grand Prix, and his misfortune continued into the race itself.

Palmer had a gearbox-related problem in first practice and crashed heavily in the second session. He was eliminated in Q1, after a fuel-surge problem left him with one run on ultra-softs, lapping 3.269

seconds slower than team-mate Nico Hulkenberg.

"Everything has conspired against me," said Palmer. "I'm really struggling everywhere – braking, balance and exit."

In the race, he rose from 18th to 14th but was then hit by a brake problem and retired after 15 laps. The brakes were sticking, but Palmer said the team didn't know why.

He also said he wanted

a thorough check of the car to make sure there was no lasting damage from the FP2 crash.

"It was a shame because it would have been good to do the race distance and see where we ended up, and also it would have been good to have more mileage," he said.

"We just need to have a good look and make sure everything is working as it should, but I trust the guys to do that."



Kaltenborn queries collision decision

SAUBER TEAM PRINCIPAL MONISHA Kaltenborn said she could not understand why Kevin Magnussen was not penalised for the collision that ruined Marcus Ericsson's Australian Grand Prix.

Magnussen tried to pass Ericsson on the inside of the Turn 3 right-hander on the opening lap, and his front-left wheel hit the rear of the Sauber's sidepod after the Haas driver clipped the kerb.

Ericsson spun into the gravel, and although he escaped he eventually retired with a hydraulic failure related to the impact, while Magnussen later retired with a puncture Haas mistook for suspension failure.

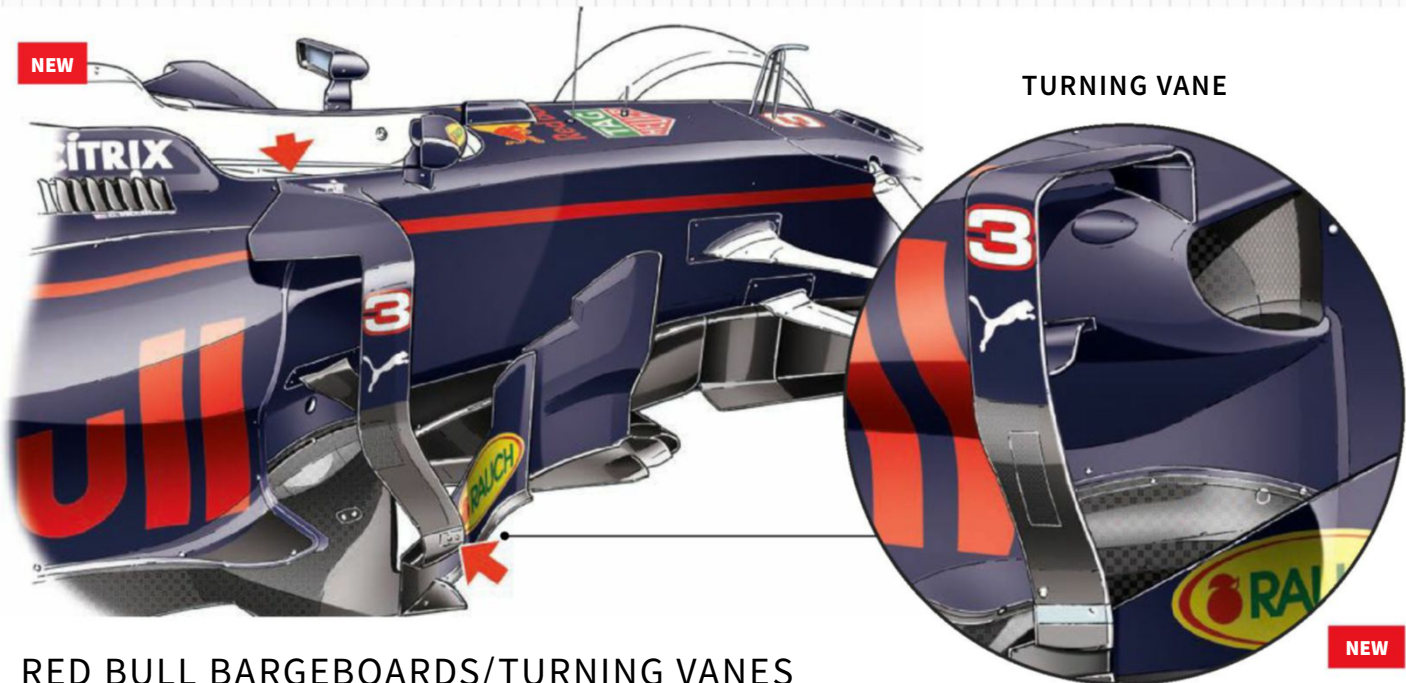
The FIA changed its regulations this year to penalise drivers only when they were "wholly or predominantly to blame", and Kaltenborn believes this was clearly Magnussen's fault.

"I don't understand why the FIA didn't react there," Kaltenborn told Autosport. "I don't know what else needs to take place because the situation was very clear."



DRAWING BOARD

By Gary Anderson and Giorgio Piola



RED BULL BARGEBOARDS/TURNING VANES

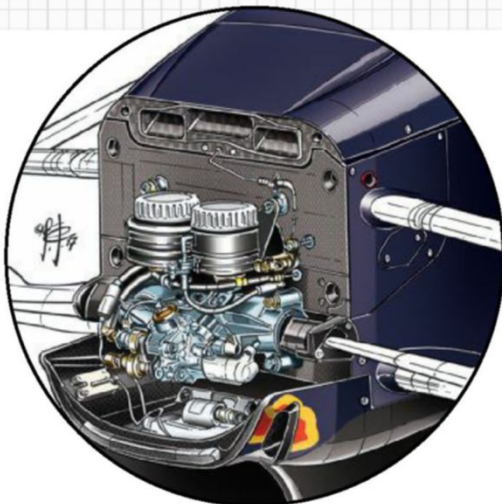
The vertical turning vane on the outer corner of the sidepods has a lot more work to do this season, mostly because of the wider front tyres. These naturally produce more turbulence than before,

especially when the driver applies steering lock. If this wake gets pulled into the sidepod leading edge and sidepod undercut, it will reduce its effectiveness in helping to scavenge the

airflow from under the front of the chassis and the trailing edge of the front wing. Red Bull has made this vane more three-dimensional where it connects to the leading edge of the

underfloor, and has increased the overall length where it passes over the sidepod top surface. This will reduce the lift induced when the airflow speeds up as it passes over this surface.

There is also more detail on the foot of the bargeboard to improve the performance of the underfloor leading edge. Compared with Mercedes and Ferrari, both these areas are still very primitive.



MERCEDES 'CHIMNEY'

Cooling without impacting the overall efficiency and downforce levels of the car is one of the biggest challenges on an F1 machine. To achieve cooling, a radiator of some sort needs to be placed in a duct with high-pressure air feeding the inlet, and the exit placed in a low-pressure area.

Airflow used for cooling will not be of any use to create downforce since it has been slowed down so much that it loses its energy. Mercedes has achieved some of its required

cooling by opening up the top of the engine-cover fin. Since the rear wing is lower this year, slow air leaving the fin has very little effect on anything downstream.

It is very similar in concept to the sidepod chimneys that were outlawed by the 2009 rules. Another benefit is that by making it a double-skin section, there is less potential for any lateral movement of the fin, which would have a detrimental effect on the rear wing's performance.

RED BULL DUCTS

The Red Bull RB13 features three small ducts at the top of the chassis.

These are connected to the 'S-duct', which has an inlet in the underside of the nose, with the exit visible just behind the nose-to-chassis interface. This extracts airflow from under the nose and feeds it over the top of the chassis, reducing lift on the top surface of the chassis and inviting more mass flow between the front wheels. The small ducts in the lower fairing provide cooling for electronics further downstream.



F1/AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX RESULTS

STARTING GRID

1 Hamilton #44 1m22.188s	2 Vettel #5 1m22.456s	3 Bottas #77 1m22.481s	4 Raikkonen #7 1m23.033s	5 Verstappen #33 1m23.485s	6 Grosjean #8 1m24.074s	7 Massa #19 1m24.443s	8 Sainz #55 1m24.487s	9 Kvyat #26 1m24.512s	10 Perez #11 1m25.081s	11 Hulkenberg #27 1m25.091s
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Race results / 57 laps - 187.822 miles

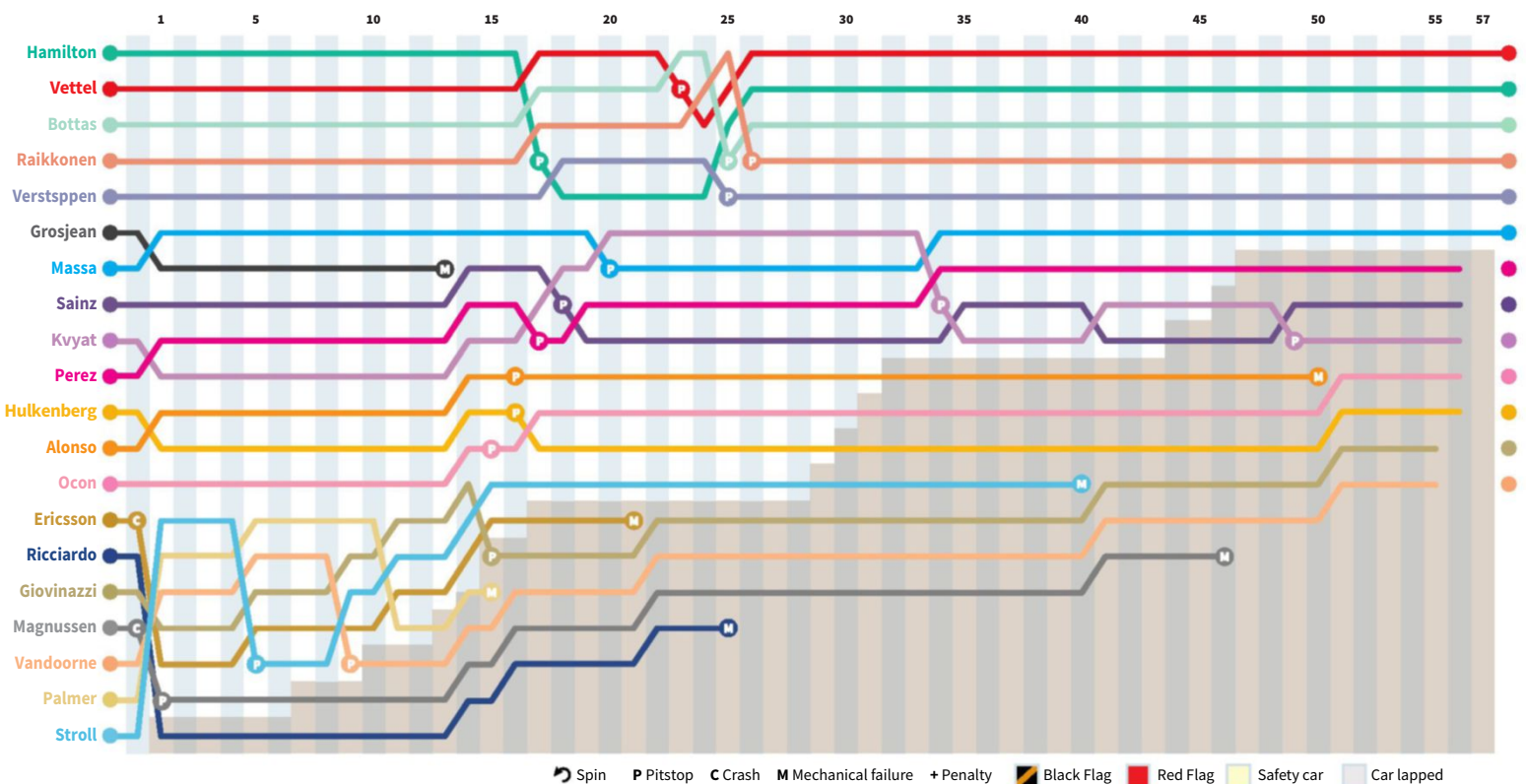
Fastest laps

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	TIME IN PITS	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	1h24m11.672s	38	○●●	21.988s	1	Raikkonen	1m26.538s	-	56
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+9.975s	16	○●●	21.709s	2	Bottas	1m26.593s	+0.055s	56
3	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	+11.250s	2	○●●	21.440s	3	Vettel	1m26.638s	+0.100s	53
4	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari	+22.393s	1	○●●	22.033s	4	Kvyat	1m26.711s	+0.173s	51
5	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Renault	+28.827s		○●●	22.208s	5	Verstappen	1m26.964s	+0.426s	43
6	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes	+1m23.386s		○●●	21.568s	6	Hamilton	1m27.033s	+0.495s	44
7	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●●	22.045s	7	Magnussen	1m27.568s	+1.030s	46
8	Carlos Sainz	Toro Rosso-Renault	-1 lap		○●●	21.762s	8	Sainz	1m27.677s	+1.139s	53
9	Daniil Kvyat	Toro Rosso-Renault	-1 lap		○●●	49.585s	9	Massa	1m28.045s	+1.507s	49
10	Esteban Ocon	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●●	22.154s	10	Perez	1m28.336s	+1.798s	56
11	Nico Hulkenberg	Renault	-1 lap		○●●	46.289s	11	Ocon	1m28.475s	+1.937s	55
12	Antonio Giovinazzi	Sauber-Ferrari	-2 laps		○●●	28.591s	12	Hulkenberg	1m28.486s	+1.948s	55
13	Stoffel Vandoorne	McLaren-Honda	-2 laps		○●●	39.562s	13	Giovinazzi	1m29.052s	+2.514s	51
R	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Honda	50 laps-suspension		○●●	22.484s	14	Stroll	1m29.389s	+2.851s	38
R	Kevin Magnussen	Haas-Ferrari	46 laps-suspension		○●●	53.525s	15	Vandoorne	1m29.440s	+2.902s	53
R	Lance Stroll	Williams-Mercedes	40 laps-brakes		○●●	44.673s	16	Ricciardo	1m29.447s	+2.909s	21
R	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Renault	25 laps-power unit		○●●	-	17	Alonso	1m30.077s	+3.539s	48
R	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari	21 laps-collision		○●●	-	18	Grosjean	1m30.183s	+3.645s	12
R	Jolyon Palmer	Renault	15 laps-brakes		○●●	-	19	Ericsson	1m32.052s	+5.514s	18
R	Romain Grosjean	Haas-Ferrari	13 laps-water leak		○●●	-	20	Palmer	1m32.195s	+5.657s	6

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 38C, air 23C WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 133.848mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 137.078mph ● New ○ Used ● Ultra-Soft ● Super-Soft ● Soft ● Medium ● Hard ● Wet ● Intermediate

6 Lewis Hamilton is now tied with Ayrton Senna for the most pole positions (6) in the Australian Grand Prix	44 This was Kimi Raikkonen's 44th fastest lap in F1. Only Michael Schumacher has set more of them, with 77	100 Hamilton became only the second driver to lead 100 grands prix during last weekend's Australian GP	334 Esteban Ocon has become the 334th driver to get on the scoreboard in the Formula 1 world championship	553 Days between this and Ferrari's last victory (Singapore 2015), its worst run since its 1400-day dry spell from 1990-94	2013 The last time a non-Mercedes driver led the drivers' championship was Sebastian Vettel at the end of 2013	15013 Fernando Alonso is only the fourth driver to break the 15k barrier for laps raced in F1. Schumacher leads on 16825
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Lap Chart / What happened, when





12 Alonso #14
1m25.425s



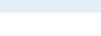
13 Ocon #31
1m25.568s



14 Ericsson #9
1m26.465s



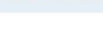
15 Ricciardo* #3
no time



16 Giovinazzi #36
1m26.419s



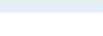
17 Magnussen #20
1m26.847s



18 Vandoorne #2
1m26.858s



19 Palmer #30
1m28.244s



20 Stroll #18
1m27.143s

* Started late from pitlane

Qualifying 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m24.191s
2	Raikkonen	1m24.352s
3	Verstappen	1m24.482s
4	Bottas	1m24.514s
5	Hulkenberg	1m24.975s
6	Perez	1m25.064s
7	Massa	1m25.099s
8	Vettel	1m25.210s
9	Ricciardo	1m25.383s
10	Grosjean	1m25.419s
11	Sainz	1m25.542s
12	Alonso	1m25.872s
13	Kvyat	1m25.970s
14	Ocon	1m26.009s
15	Ericsson	1m26.236s
16	Giovinazzi	1m26.419s
17	Magnussen	1m26.847s
18	Vandoorne	1m26.858s
19	Stroll	1m27.143s
20	Palmer	1m28.244s

Qualifying 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m23.215s
2	Hamilton	1m23.251s
3	Raikkonen	1m23.376s
4	Vettel	1m23.401s
5	Ricciardo	1m23.989s
6	Verstappen	1m24.092s
7	Massa	1m24.597s
8	Grosjean	1m24.718s
9	Kvyat	1m24.864s
10	Sainz	1m24.997s
11	Perez	1m25.081s
12	Hulkenberg	1m25.091s
13	Alonso	1m25.425s
14	Ocon	1m25.568s
15	Ericsson	1m26.465s

Qualifying 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m22.188s
2	Vettel	1m22.456s
3	Bottas	1m22.481s
4	Raikkonen	1m23.033s
5	Verstappen	1m23.485s
6	Grosjean	1m24.074s
7	Massa	1m24.443s
8	Sainz	1m24.487s
9	Kvyat	1m24.512s
10	Ricciardo	no time

Race briefing

GRID PENALTIES

RICCIARDO 5-place grid penalty for replacement gearbox

STROLL 5-place grid penalty for replacement gearbox

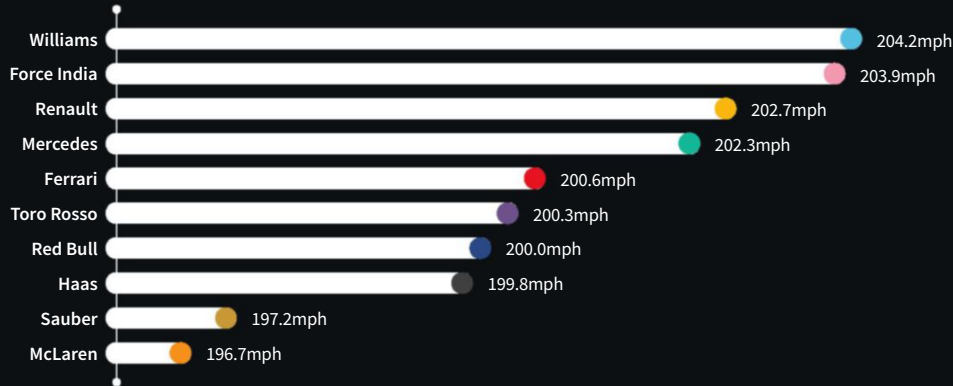
DRIVER CHANGE

GIOVINAZZI replaced Pascal Wehrlein following free practice 2

WEATHER Dry, cloudy; track 34C, air 29C

SPEED TRAP

Fastest for each constructor in qualifying



Free practice 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m24.220s
2	Bottas	1m24.803s
3	Ricciardo	1m24.886s
4	Verstappen	1m25.246s
5	Raikkonen	1m25.372s
6	Vettel	1m25.464s
7	Massa	1m26.142s
8	Grosjean	1m26.168s
9	Hulkenberg	1m26.183s
10	Perez	1m26.276s
11	Sainz	1m26.450s
12	Kvyat	1m26.514s
13	Stroll	1m26.734s
14	Alonso	1m27.116s
15	Ericsson	1m27.348s
16	Ocon	1m27.656s
17	Magnussen	1m27.667s
18	Wehrlein	1m28.539s
19	Palmer	1m28.585s
20	Vandoorne	1m28.695s

Free practice 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m23.620s
2	Vettel	1m24.167s
3	Bottas	1m24.176s
4	Raikkonen	1m24.525s
5	Ricciardo	1m24.650s
6	Verstappen	1m25.013s
7	Sainz	1m25.084s
8	Grosjean	1m25.436s
9	Hulkenberg	1m25.478s
10	Kvyat	1m25.493s
11	Perez	1m25.591s
12	Alonso	1m26.000s
13	Ocon	1m26.145s
14	Massa	1m26.331s
15	Ericsson	1m26.498s
16	Stroll	1m26.525s
17	Vandoorne	1m26.608s
18	Wehrlein	1m26.919s
19	Magnussen	1m27.279s
20	Palmer	1m27.549s

Free practice 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m23.380s
2	Bottas	1m23.859s
3	Hamilton	1m23.870s
4	Raikkonen	1m23.988s
5	Hulkenberg	1m25.063s
6	Ricciardo	1m25.092s
7	Grosjean	1m25.581s
8	Sainz	1m25.948s
9	Kvyat	1m26.049s
10	Magnussen	1m26.138s
11	Massa	1m26.237s
12	Verstappen	1m26.269s
13	Perez	1m26.457s
14	Alonso	1m26.556s
15	Vandoorne	1m26.699s
16	Ocon	1m27.103s
17	Stroll	1m27.327s
18	Ericsson	1m27.402s
19	Palmer	1m28.320s
20	Giovinazzi	1m28.583s

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 27C, air 21C

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 28C, air 23C

WEATHER Dry, sunny; track 31C, air 27C

SEASON STATS

Drivers' championship

1	Vettel	25
2	Hamilton	18
3	Bottas	15
4	Raikkonen	12
5	Verstappen	10
6	Massa	8
7	Perez	6
8	Sainz	4
9	Kvyat	2
10	Ocon	1
11	Hulkenberg	0
12	Giovinazzi	0
13	Vandoorne	0
14	Alonso	0
15	Magnussen	0
16	Stroll	0
17	Ricciardo	0
18	Ericsson	0
19	Palmer	0
20	Grosjean	0

Constructors' championship

1	Ferrari	37
2	Mercedes	33
3	Red Bull	10
4	Williams	8
5	Force India	7
6	Toro Rosso	6
7	Renault	0
8	Sauber	0
9	McLaren	0
10	Haas	0

Wins

Vettel	1
--------	---

Fastest laps

Raikkonen	1
-----------	---

Pole positions

Hamilton	1
----------	---

Qualifying battle

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

NEXT RACE



Chinese Grand Prix
April 7-9 2017, Shanghai

Full marks for superb Vettel

Our bloke down under couldn't fault Seb. Same goes for two other drivers...

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

[@BenAndersonAuto](#)

MERCEDES



9 LEWIS HAMILTON
Hamilton was untouchable in practice, and when it counted in qualifying it was he who made the difference in a tight battle with Ferrari. Chose to pit early rather than stick out the race with Vettel, which turned out to be the wrong call. Hamilton's pace on softs was also a little underwhelming, but the race was lost by then.

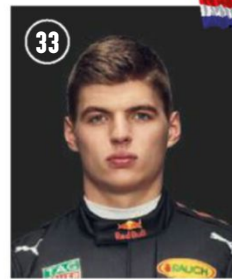


8 VALTTERI BOTTAS
Was hard on himself after qualifying fractionally behind Vettel and 0.293s slower than Hamilton, but Nico Rosberg never got closer than 0.360s here when he was Hamilton's team-mate, so in that context Bottas did well. Was quicker than Hamilton on softs and finished close behind. A very solid start.

RED BULL



5 DANIEL RICCIARDO
Was the faster Red Bull driver in practice, and fractionally ahead after Q2, but destroyed his weekend by binning his car in Q3 – a crash he called “weird” considering he wasn't trying hard through Turn 14 at the time. Problems with a gearbox sensor and the fuel cell on his car rendered the race a truncated waste of time.



9 MAX VERSTAPPEN
Lost track time to a couple of offs on Friday and wasn't happy after qualifying, complaining the car was difficult to set up, lacking downforce and down on power. Looked cast into a no man's land behind Ferrari and Mercedes, but was more competitive in the race and chased Raikkonen relentlessly until the brakes gave out.

FERRARI



10 SEBASTIAN VETTEL
Superbly split the Mercedes drivers and outqualified his team-mate by more than half a second. Didn't make a great start, but fended off Bottas and put Hamilton under such relentless pressure during a mega opening stint that he cracked. With a little help from Verstappen, that was job done.



6 KIMI RAIKKONEN
Loses marks for qualifying so far behind Vettel, admitting “all of my laps were not very good”. Struggles with understeer continued in the race's first stint, during which he was also too conservative with tyre management. The second stint was also underwhelming. Put this down to a need to save fuel.

FORCE INDIA

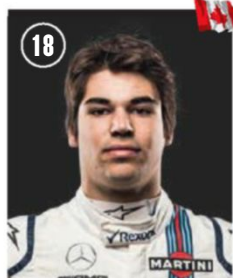


10 SERGIO PEREZ
Feels Force India lacks a bit of downforce compared to its midfield rivals, but missed the Q3 cut by less than a tenth, complaining of engine hesitations while shifting gears. Superbly beat both Toro Rossos in the race, lunging Kvyat at Turn 10 on lap one, and braving it round the outside of Sainz at Turn 3. Top job.



7 ESTEBAN OCON
Was steady on an unfamiliar track, not helped by a litany of problems (leaky brakes, leaky drinks bottle, short radio cable, loose mirrors) in FP1, but blamed the qualifying deficit to Perez on a mistake. Got stuck behind Alonso in the race, but did well to force an opening and brave out a three-wide moment with Hulkenberg.

WILLIAMS



4 LANCE STROLL
Was nowhere near Massa. In fact, 0.2s off in FP2 was as good as it got. Crashed in FP3, which meant only one run in qualifying. This was slower than Stroll went in Friday practice. Flat-spotted his tyres at Turn 1 in the race, which forced an early stop. Overtook Ericsson's Sauber, before a suspected brake failure forced an early bath.



10 FELIPE MASSA
First race since coming out of retirement was faultless. Outqualified by Grosjean, but Williams agreed Massa's Q3 lap was good, so the 0.369s gap was probably unbridgeable. Rendered it a moot point by nailing Grosjean at the start of the race, and was the only non-Mercedes/Ferrari/Red Bull driver to remain unlapped.

McLAREN



6 STOFFEL VANDOORNE
Recovered from a tough Friday to lap just 0.143s shy of Alonso in FP3, but fuel-pressure problems ruined qualifying, and cold front tyres and locking brakes left him nearly a second off and out in Q1. Race was a hard slog, not helped by needing to reset his engine in the pits due to electrical problems. At least he finished...



9 FERNANDO ALONSO
This was a heroic performance – Alonso looked on it from the moment he first hit the track. Defied a lack of power and manhandled his car into Q2, ahead of Ocon's Force India. He almost beat Ocon to the final point too, despite carrying damage, before retiring to the pits after making a mistake and finally being overtaken.



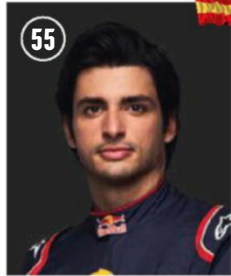
In the pink: top score for Perez

XPBIMAGES

TORO ROSSO

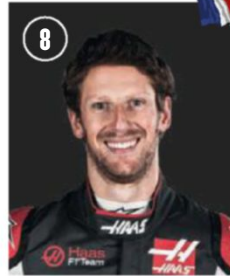


7 DANIIL KVIAT
A good start from Kvyat, who kept the pressure on Sainz all weekend. Qualified on the same tenth, but probably should have stayed ahead after beating him in Q2. Got jumped by Perez on lap one, but was coming back at the Force India before an unscheduled stop to recharge air in the engine spoiled the fun.

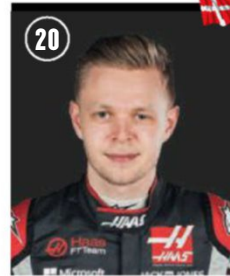


8 CARLOS SAINZ JR
A solid weekend, in which he was slightly quicker than Kvyat in every session bar Q2, despite losing his way with the car on Saturday. Made a solid start to the race, but lost out to Perez's bravery at Turn 3 just after the stops. Allowed Kvyat through to attack the Force India, and gained the place back when Kvyat pitted.

HAAS

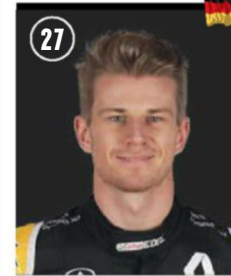


9 ROMAIN GROSJEAN
Was a bit wild in the early part of qualifying, but hooked it up brilliantly at the right moment to qualify Haas a best-yet sixth on the grid, showing what he is capable of when he doesn't overdrive. Reported a clutch problem before the start and lost a place to Massa, before retiring early when his car sprung a leak.

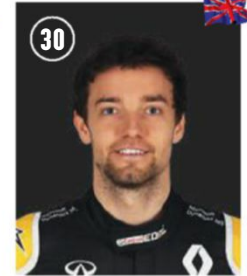


6 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN
A messy weekend for Magnussen, who only managed one run in FP3 before Stroll crashed, which meant flying blind in qualifying. Reckoned he was only a tenth off Grosjean before going off at Turn 12 on his best lap. Race was ruined by a clumsy collision with Ericsson, before a puncture forced him out while running last.

RENAULT

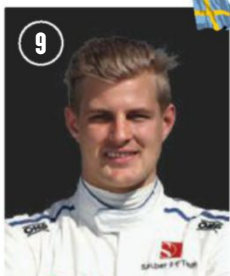


7 NICO HULKENBERG
Said qualifying was "decent", and that's probably a fair description of his first race with Renault. Got mugged by Alonso after Kvyat blocked his attempt to pass, and felt the team "shot ourselves in the foot" by pitting too late, losing another place to Ocon. Enjoyed going three-wide late on, but just missed out on 10th.

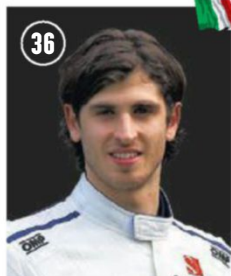


3 JOLYON PALMER
A nightmare weekend for Palmer, who managed only 22 laps in practice thanks to a gearbox problem and a crash. Suffered a fuel surge in qualifying, and Palmer's first and only run on ultra-softs was slower than his best Friday time on super-softs. He was more comfortable in the race, until the brakes jammed.

SAUBER



7 MARCUS ERICSSON
Was impressed by the job his rookie team-mate did at such short notice in qualifying, and admitted he needed a good lap to beat the Italian to the final Q2 spot. Made a bad start, then got turned around by Magnussen at Turn 3, which damaged the floor. Soldiered on for 21 laps until a hydraulic problem stopped him for good.

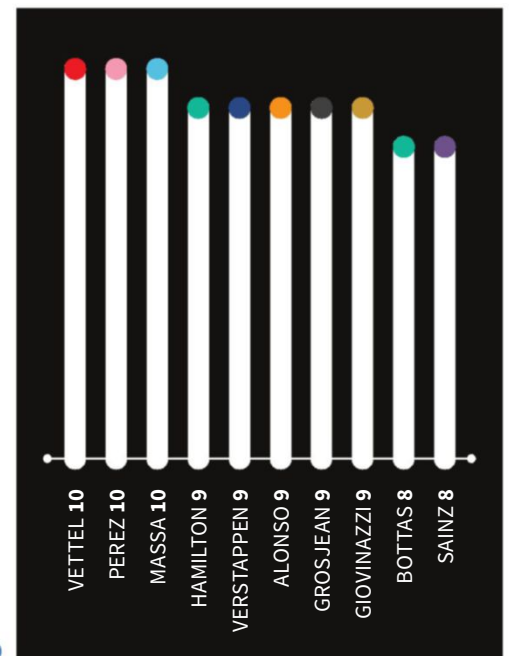


9 ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI
Faced tough odds subbing for Wehrlein at the last second, but did an outstanding job, getting up to speed so rapidly he was faster than Ericsson initially in Q1, ending up within two tenths when the Swede improved at the death. Drove a smart race, beat Vandoorne's McLaren, and seriously impressed Sauber.



"Not bad for an old man," says Massa

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATING





THE FIRM THAT MAKES MOTORSPORT TICK

While there's entertainment on the track, the events, cars and drivers need protecting. And there's no one better equipped than Integro.

THERE'S A REAL SENSE OF ANTICIPATION AND excitement around the launch of the new F1 season, new faster cars, new rules and new owners, and it really was a spell-binding start to the campaign in Melbourne.

Trackside and working Down Under were principal members of the team from Integro Sport, who are the insurance advisors to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. The motorsport team at Integro has a relationship with the race organisers reaching back more than thirty years.

Karen Ellis has worked in global motorsport insurance throughout her career and built the successful Lloyd's brokers Ellis Clowes which was purchased by Integro in 2015.

Integro Insurance Brokers rank in the top 25 brokers in the world with 1,200 colleagues operating from more than 40 offices in the UK, USA, Canada and

Bermuda. The Integro Entertainment and Sport Practice operates as one global team and works with many of the biggest names in film and tv, music and events, theatre and the global sports industry.

Karen has been a regular visitor to the Australian event.

"Since 1985, when the Australian Grand Prix was in Adelaide, we have placed the insurance programme into the London insurance market. We provide advice relating to all aspects of the event and place numerous coverages. Our team also provide advice and coverage to many of the teams, drivers and other stakeholders in the sport" explains Karen.

"We are specialists and understand the sport at all levels. Motorsport is a dynamic, fast moving and high risk industry and it requires specific expertise to fully appreciate and react quickly to the challenges."

"We have spent many years building out our team to

ensure we have the depth of expertise across all product lines and have built relationships with leading third party companies to ensure coverage is broad and robust and fit for purpose as the business changes and evolves."

Integro represents two and four wheeled clients in every major motorsport championship across the world. Members of the Integro team are regularly in attendance at testing, practice and qualifying events to support their clients and react if help is needed. They have an unrivalled reach across most major championships including but not limited to F1, F2, Gp3, Wec, Wrc, NASCAR, Indycar IMSA, MotoGP, Wsb, Bsb and all major UK club championships plus extensive reach across Europe and the rest of the world.

Their expertise extends to placing coverage for stakeholders at all levels including for governing bodies, commercial rights holders and corporate clients who sponsor and partner with the sport.



She and the whole team believe in offering a personal service, and because of the global nature of the industry, are available 24/7 for their clients.

“We make it our business to go to tracks, and visit clients face to face regularly, our team are at well over 100 events in any given calendar year.”

“This is so important when imparting knowledge of the complex risk requirements and gathering intelligence from each client to enable us to provide comprehensive information to insurers.”

The professionalism and immediacy of the way Integro handles claims is also a key element of the team’s service.

Karen was joined in Melbourne by Integro Executive Director Tim Nagle, another very well known and respected insurance broker in motorsport circles and a familiar face in paddocks across the world.

He says: “Integro has made strategic acquisitions in

recent years to develop and build an Entertainment and Sport powerhouse brokerage. This has given us a bigger presence in the global market and definitely brought benefits to our clients. However, our personal touch remains the same. “

“We draw on the expertise of the group to be able to offer a wider range of product requirements such as property, cyber, d & o etc. The service to the client has become even better as we have broadened our team, its expertise and scope.”

Often referred to as the sporting capital of the southern hemisphere, Melbourne always puts on a fantastic show.

Karen reflected: “It is a brilliantly organised and vibrant event. The people of Melbourne are great hosts, and are very proud of their association with F1. They are so passionate about it and this shines through from the minute the cars and drivers arrive in the City. Being

the first race of the season, there is always a real sense of anticipation and excitement, that was particularly true this year. Melbourne really know how to put on a fantastic show for all of their Sporting events, and this year was certainly no different.”

And while Karen and Tim were working hard at Albert Park, other key members of Integro’s motorsport team were doing just the same at events in the UK and in North America as the global motorsports season starts in earnest.

To learn more about Integro worldwide please refer to our website at www.integrogroup.com.

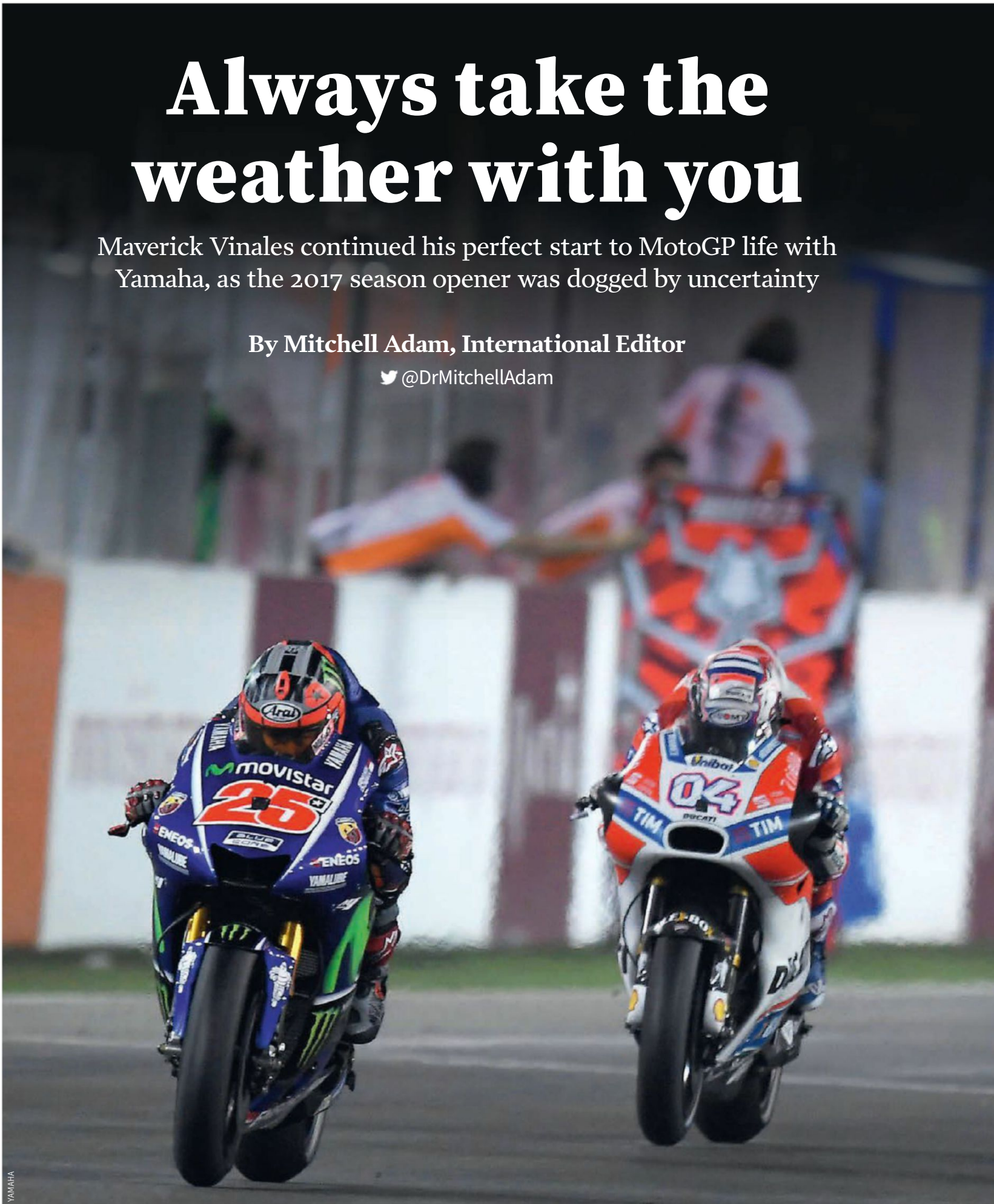
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Always take the weather with you

Maverick Vinales continued his perfect start to MotoGP life with Yamaha, as the 2017 season opener was dogged by uncertainty

By Mitchell Adam, International Editor

[@DrMitchellAdam](#)



YAMAHA



Yamaha's Vinales (#25)
and Rossi sandwich
Ducati man Dovizioso

Some sports are better at handling wet weather than others. Darts, for instance, is more weather-proof than cricket. Similarly, football compared to tennis. Motorsport generally fares OK, other than ovals in North America, or when monsoonal conditions are involved. So that MotoGP ended up with such a weather-dictated weekend, and in the desert, to start its 2017 season was a bit surreal.

The Qatar Grand Prix has been a night race since 2008, but it has never been run in wet conditions. Rain itself is generally no problem for MotoGP, but concerns from riders over the glare the Losail circuit's lights would create on a wet surface led to the race even being pushed back to the Monday in 2009.

Those reservations were just part of the perfect storm the championship found itself in. The chance of rain appeared on forecasts for the entire event at different stages, but the Thursday and Friday running was smooth. Especially if you were

“80% of the track was dry, but rivers ran across the rest”

Yamaha recruit Maverick Vinales, setting the pace to the tune of half a second. After the first session he went so far as to say “the bike is perfect and if I’m not fighting to win, it would be my fault”.

Then came a borderline shambolic Saturday, as storms lashed the circuit from early morning into the afternoon. The day was briefly considered a good chance to give riders an opportunity to try the floodlights-and-rain combination, and an evaluation session was scheduled.

But it never happened. In fact, nothing happened. Practice and qualifying for all three classes was delayed, delayed again and ultimately cancelled without a single wheel turning, for the first time since the 2010 Portuguese GP. This was despite 80% of the track being bone dry – the problem was that in the remaining 20%, rivers ran across the circuit, while runoff areas and gravel traps resembled lakes.

Drainage, or a lack thereof, was the problem. Despite suggestions that the race should move to Sunday daytime, the schedule stayed unchanged. The sort of downpour that rendered the track unusable – too wet for slicks, too dry for wets – on Saturday would have >>



been problematic in the day or the night.

The lack of Saturday running meant the grid was determined on combined practice times, with Vinales comfortably clear at the top of those, ahead of the man replacing him at Suzuki, Andrea Iannone, and world champion Marc Marquez. Valentino Rossi and Jorge Lorenzo were among those who would have liked a chance to improve on their lot, down in 10th and 12th, but riders agreed the cancellation was the right move.

All eyes were on the skies and weather forecasts on Sunday. The Moto3 and Moto2 races were run in the dry and, even with a couple of brief showers, everything looked good for MotoGP to go racing at 9pm. Until rain started to fall at 8.57pm...

The start was delayed and delayed again as the prospect of another Monday race loomed, but it eventually happened 45 minutes late, with the race cut by two laps to a neat 20. The threat of the regular dew forming on the track also loomed, but somehow we had a race at just about the scheduled time on the scheduled day. And it ended up being

a fine way to start the new season.

Vinales had stayed on his bike on the grid during the second, longer delay as others sought to discuss a wet stretch of track at the end of the layout, and it seemed as though nothing would stop the Spaniard from continuing his successful start to life with Yamaha.

That had included topping all four official tests over the winter, and then two of the three practice sessions in Qatar. But it did not extend to a good first-race start on an M1, one of the few weaknesses in Vinales's armour. He lost

Vinales (above) celebrates dream start to 2017. Rookie Zarco (below) was briefly on top of the world, leading the initial laps



out initially to Iannone, and was then shuffled down to fifth following an aggressive move by rookie Johann Zarco, who hustled his way from fourth on the grid to the lead by the end of the first lap.

Zarco opted to stick a soft rear tyre on his Tech3 Yamaha and he waltzed away at the front of the field in the sort of debut that riders dream of. After six laps he led by 1.6 seconds, but that would be the end of the fairytale, the double Moto2 champion crashing at Turn 2.

That handed the lead to Ducati's Andrea Dovizioso, who had made decent progress in the opening stages to pass Vinales, Iannone and Marquez – the Italian bike's noted straightline speed helping – and inherit the advantage when Zarco crashed.

Vinales was strangely quiet in that first phase of the race, running around in fifth place, just ahead of Rossi, off the back of Marquez and Iannone. But then things clicked into gear. He reeled them in, managed to avoid getting caught up in Iannone's Turn 5 crash, then passed Marquez. He made light work of Dovizioso's advantage, cutting it from a second back to three tenths within two



MICHELIN

LORENZO'S BLUES IN RED

WHILE MAVERICK VINALES BASKED IN THE glow of victory on his debut with Yamaha, the man he replaced was getting to grips with a “disappointing” start to life with Ducati.

Jorge Lorenzo had preached caution with his move away from the Japanese manufacturer, after nine years and three MotoGP titles, as he came to grips with the very different Desmosedici. The jump was bigger than the Spaniard expected, and getting on top of the riding style required to make the most of the package was taking more time than he anticipated.

But even with all of that considered, labouring to 11th place in the season opener will have stung. Especially at Losail, a Lorenzo and Ducati-friendly circuit. Fifth in first practice, albeit 1.291 seconds slower than Vinales in his old garage, was about as good as it got.

Across the three sessions, Lorenzo felt he made inroads with corner entry and exit, but at the expense of mid-corner speed, and on Friday night was bullish that he could still challenge for the front row, despite finishing practice 12th and missing out on an automatic Q2 berth.

He never got that opportunity, with Saturday's running washed out, and any hopes of making serious progress in the race were dented by an off at Turn 4 on the opening lap that left him 16th. Attrition helped Lorenzo get back up to ninth, but he lacked pace as his soft rear tyre wore and fell back, even having to fight Avintia satellite rider Loris

Baz on a 2015 Ducati to salvage 11th.

“The start was very good, I recovered three or four positions, I was behind [Dani] Pedrosa and Valentino [Rossi],” Lorenzo said. “Probably without this [off] in the fourth corner I could stay with them at the beginning, until the middle of the race. I was not able to keep the same pace all the race, because when I started dropping the rear [tyre], I was not able to stay in the 1m56s.

“At the beginning, I struggled so much to stay in the 1m56s – I was in 1m58s, 1m57s – but little by little with warmer tyres I was going to this time. I did five or six laps in this lap time, very close and almost faster than the top guys. But in a lot of moments in the race I was too slow to finish closer [to the leaders]. Conditions don't help, but to be honest I'm still not prepared to fight for something big.”

Ducati has a private test scheduled at Jerez – the scene of the first European GP in May – before heading to Argentina for the next round of the championship, and Lorenzo admits he has plenty of work to do. “I think today we were worse than we [actually] are,” he said. “We are not so bad. I tried to do the best, but sometimes the best is bad.

“I didn't do a good race, because of some mistakes, some bad feelings. You always try to do the best, and today the best gives me this 11th position, 20 seconds from the win.

“Nothing worked today and throughout the weekend. We spent three days trying to find grip and we never succeeded. And I do not think it was only our fault.”

laps, before moving into the lead for the first time on lap 14, six from home.

On most other circuits on the calendar, that would have been that. Vinales would have cruised into the artificially-lit distance, to start his Yamaha career with a commanding victory. But Ducati has always been strong in Qatar, and Dovizioso – like Zarco – had made a change to run a softer rear tyre, which was helping his pace.

“The gamble we took I think was completely right because we had good speed before the race but we couldn't race with Maverick – he had a different pace,” Dovizioso said. “That was the reality. We took the gamble because there was a lot of humidity. We thought the race would be slower, and if you don't push really hard you can save the soft tyre. After [Zarco's] crash I was leading and able to save the tyre.”

The Italian cruised past Vinales on the main straight the next time around. Vinales got back past him later in the lap, but then overshot his braking into Turn 1. Finally he made a move stick, only for Dovizioso to waltz by again >>

Lorenzo struggled to find adequate pace on his Ducati debut



MICHELIN

with three laps to go. “I didn’t know how to pass him,” Vinales admitted. “We had a great battle. I knew if I didn’t pull out a little bit he was going to pass me as he was so fast on the straight. I was just trying to be smooth, do my best laps at the end.”

In the end, as Dovizioso said his rear tyre was going off, Vinales was able to make a move stick on the penultimate lap. He put enough space between his bike and the Ducati exiting the final corner the next two times, and started his Yamaha career with his second MotoGP victory, going with his Silverstone win with Suzuki last year. The 22-year-old becomes the first man since eventual 2011 champion Casey Stoner, with Honda, to win on his debut with a new team.

“It’s so great, like being in a dream,” he said. “First race with Yamaha and winning, I could not ask for more.

When you have this type of pressure [as favourite] you push yourself, you give this extra that you can only give when you are motivated. You want to win. You want to have it.

“When it started to rain, I started to doubt because the first laps were really difficult. But then when I got my own pace I started to think, to concentrate, to try to save the tyre to the end of the race, and finally it worked. It’s not the same as last year, working for the top six. Working to win is totally different.”

Second for Dovizioso was a positive result for Ducati, which the veteran admits is still “missing something” as it targets a title. New team-mate Lorenzo struggled on his way to 11th (see p39).

While Lorenzo was unable to make an impression on the race from the fourth row of the grid, Rossi did. He had found testing with the 2017 Yamaha and Michelin’s revised tyres worrying, lacking feeling and confidence with the front end on corner entry. He found something in the set-up between Thursday’s and Friday’s sessions,



but even that did not work in Sunday’s extended warm-up session in the warmer daylight hours. But it did the trick in the night race, as Rossi settled in behind Vinales and then followed him past Marquez and towards Dovizioso.

Even though Rossi was only a spectator in the lead fight, third was a strong recovery from a situation he classed as “quite critical”.

“Something changed from Thursday to Friday, because on Thursday we still had the same problem I had during all the tests and it was very frustrating,” he said. “But Friday was better. I continued to go quite slowly, but I started to improve. From that moment I was quite optimistic about finishing in the first five. We changed the bike another time for the race and I felt good. I saw Maverick for all of the race. That never happened in the tests.”

Marquez fell away from the lead pack in the second half of the race, and later admitted that the decision to move from the hard front tyre to the medium on the grid – based on the later start and

Vinales had a quiet first phase of the race, here in fifth place stalking Marquez (#93) and Iannone

dropping temperature – was a mistake, as it overheated.

Honda stablemate Cal Crutchlow said the decision to make the same change on his LCR-run bike was “really taken out of my hands, which doesn’t usually happen to me, and it’s not really a correct thing” after crashing at Turn 16 early. Crutchlow attempted to rejoin the race, but his damaged bike did not want to comply and he fell again within a lap.

Finishing fourth was a much better outcome for Marquez, but he was dropped by the top three significantly in the closing laps, and only just held off team-mate Dani Pedrosa.

Alex Espargaro was a standout performer, moving from 15th on the grid to finish sixth, even getting ahead of Pedrosa briefly in the battle for fifth late in the race. Aprilia seems to have made a big step forward with its 2017 bike, and Suzuki refugee Espargaro described recording its best result since returning to MotoGP two years ago and fighting the Hondas as “like a dream”.

“It’s not going to be easy to fight in the top six and fight with Honda in every single race,” he said. “It’s stupid from my side to say this, but overall I think the Aprilia has improved a lot – I still need to understand the bike a lot more, but the bike is competitive.”

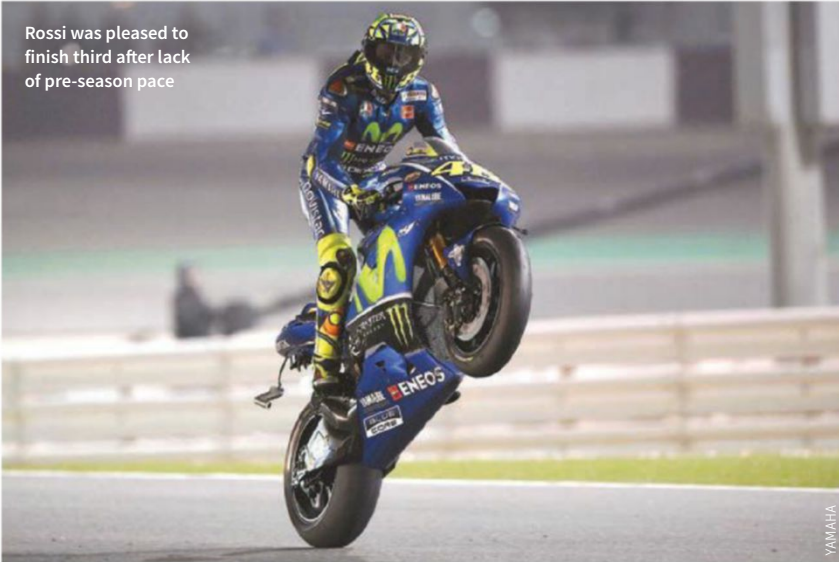
KTM got both of its machines home in the first weekend of its maiden MotoGP campaign, with Pol Espargaro and Bradley Smith 16th and 17th after qualifying at the back, but beating Aprilia rookie Sam Lowes. Espargaro crossed the line 33.6s after Vinales, but within four seconds of scoring a point, which Smith admitted was a quiet target, and only one further second off 14th and 13th places.

A cheeky point for KTM, like Aprilia’s result, would have been an outstanding outcome for MotoGP’s newest player. But given the way the weekend unfolded, at the mercy of the elements, they were perhaps fortunate to have had a game to play at all. ❄



Both KTM riders (this is Smith) made it home on team’s debut

Rossi was pleased to finish third after lack of pre-season pace



RESULTS ROUND 1/18, LOSAIL (Q), MARCH 26 (20 LAPS – 66.860 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Maverick Vinales (E)	Yamaha	38m59.999s
2	Andrea Dovizioso (I)	Ducati	+0.461s
3	Valentino Rossi (I)	Yamaha	+1.928s
4	Marc Marquez (E)	Honda	+6.745s
5	Dani Pedrosa (E)	Honda	+7.128s
6	Aleix Espargaro (E)	Aprilia	+7.661s
7	Scott Redding (GB)	PramacDucati	+9.782s
8	Jack Miller (AUS)	MarcVDSHonda	+14.486s
9	Alex Rins (E)	Suzuki	+14.788s
10	Jonas Folger (D)	Tech3Yamaha	+15.069s
11	Jorge Lorenzo (E)	Ducati	+20.516s
12	Loris Baz (F)	AvintiaDucati	+21.255s
13	Hector Barbera (E)	AvintiaDucati	+28.828s
14	Karel Abraham (CZ)	AsparDucati	+29.123s
15	Tito Rabat (E)	MarcVDSHonda	+29.470s
16	Pol Espargaro (E)	KTM	+33.601s
17	Bradley Smith (GB)	KTM	+39.704s
18	Sam Lowes (GB)	Aprilia	+47.131s
R	Danilo Petrucci (I)	PramacDucati	14 laps-battery
R	Andrea Iannone (I)	Suzuki	10 laps-accident
R	Alvaro Bautista (E)	AsparDucati	7 laps-accident
R	Johann Zarco (F)	Tech3Yamaha	6 laps-accident
R	Cal Crutchlow (GB)	LCRHonda	4 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 102.860mph. **Fastest lap** Zarco 1m55.990s, 103.756mph.

Free practice (formed grid as qualifying cancelled)

1 Vinales 1m54.316s; **2** Iannone 1m54.848s; **3** Marquez 1m54.912s; **4** Zarco 1m55.008s; **5** Dovizioso 1m55.042s; **6** Redding 1m55.085s; **7** Pedrosa 1m55.113s; **8** Folger 1m55.208s; **9** Crutchlow 1m55.211s; **10** Rossi 1m55.414s; **11** Petrucci 1m55.435s; **12** Lorenzo 1m55.461s; **13** Bautista 1m55.581s; **14** Baz 1m55.624s; **15** A Espargaro 1m55.634s; **16** Miller 1m55.959s; **17** Abraham 1m56.003s; **18** Rins 1m56.179s; **19** Rabat 1m56.368s; **20** Barbera 1m56.725s; **21** Lowes 1m56.854s; **22** P Espargaro 1m57.116s; **23** Smith 1m57.654s.

Riders' championship **1** Vinales 25; **2** Dovizioso 20; **3** Rossi 16; **4** Marquez 13; **5** Pedrosa 11; **6** A Espargaro 10; **7** Redding 9; **8** Miller 8; **9** Rins 7; **10** Folger 6; **11** Lorenzo 5; **12** Baz 4; **13** Barbera 3; **14** Abraham 2; **15** Rabat 1

Manufacturers' championship **1** Yamaha 25; **2** Ducati 20; **3** Honda 13; **4** Aprilia 10; **5** Suzuki 7.



IN THE HEADLINES



REDDING RECOVERS

Pramac Ducati's Scott Redding (leading, above) regrouped from a tough winter of testing to be the top satellite rider home in seventh place, ahead of Marc VDS Honda's Jack Miller. A change of forks on his year-old Desmosedici during the final test turned Redding's fortunes around.

RINS CYCLES

Suzuki's Alex Rins finished as the best of the four rookies stepping up from Moto2. Rins passed Tech3 Yamaha's Jonas Folger on the last lap to grab ninth. Folger's team-mate Johann Zarco crashed after his early heroics, while Aprilia's Sam Lowes was the last rider home in 18th.

MOTO-TOUCHE

For the first time in MotoGP history, the top four riders on the grid – Maverick Vinales, Andrea Iannone, Marc Marquez and Zarco – were all products of Moto2, which replaced the 250cc class in 2010.

ZARCO'S GRID ACHIEVEMENT

Zarco's fourth on the grid (admittedly with qualifying cancelled) was the best for a rider on their debut since the 2008 Qatar race, when Jorge Lorenzo and James Toseland were first and second.

JOAN BEATS JOHN

Joan Mir claimed his second Moto3 victory, holding off John McPhee to deny the new British Talent Team a victory on its debut. McPhee passed Mir at Turn 1 on the final lap, but the top 2016 rookie found a way back past three corners later. Polesitter Jorge Martin rounded out the podium.

MORBIDELLI ARROWS TO WIN

Franco Morbidelli (below) broke through for his maiden Moto2 win with a dominant performance. He started from pole for the first time and saw off an early challenge from Tom Luthi to win by 2.681s. Takaaki Nakagami was third, keeping Miguel Oliveira off the podium in KTM's first race in the class.





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2017 Renault UK Clio Cup Calendar

Rounds	Date	Circuit
1&2	Sat 1/Sun 2 April	Brands Hatch (Indy), Kent
3&4	Sat 15/Sun 16 April	Donington Park, Leicestershire
5&6	Sat 6/Sun 7 May	Thruxton, Hampshire
7&8	Sat 20/Sun 21 May	Oulton Park, Cheshire
9&10	Sat 10/Sun 11 June	Croft, North Yorkshire
11&12	Sat 29/Sun 30 July	Snetterton, Norfolk
13&14	Sat 26/Sun 27 August	Rockingham, Northamptonshire
15&16	Sat 16/Sun 17 September	Silverstone, Northamptonshire
17&18	Sat 30 Sept/Sun 1 Oct	Brands Hatch (GP), Kent

2017 Renault UK Clio Cup Junior Calendar

Rounds	Date	Circuit
1&2	Sat 3/Sun 4 June	Thruxton, Hampshire
3&4	Sat 1/Sun 2 July	Rockingham, Northamptonshire
5&6	Sat 22/Sun 23 July	Donington Park, Leicestershire
7&8	Sat 9/Sun 10 September	Snetterton, Norfolk
9&10	Sat 23/Sun 24 September	Brands Hatch, Kent
11&12	Sat 14/Sun 15 October	Pembrey, Carmarthenshire

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TURKINGTON AT BMW

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| ESSENTIAL INFO



BMW and Turkington

A match remade in heaven?

Colin Turkington has returned to WSR just as BMW has decided to come back to the BTCC. On paper, the others should be worried

By Matt James

[@MattJMNews](#)

There is an inevitability of success whenever two-time champion Colin Turkington and WSR team principal Dick Bennetts decide to do a deal. The pair have hit their greatest highs in the British Touring Car Championship together: they took their first championship back in 2009 and repeated the trick in '14; the combination has scored 30 wins.

So when Turkington – who left WSR to hitch his star to the well-funded Team BMR wagon in 2015 – was turfed out of the Subaru squad at the end of last season, it's no surprise that he knocked on the door of his former employer.

It didn't take long for them to do a deal. There was even better news to come when, at the end of February, BMW announced that it would support the team and become a fully fledged manufacturer entry.

"I told BMW that if it wanted to win, then it was vital that we had an established line-up," says Bennetts. "We had Andrew Jordan, but we told them that Colin was also key to that. [Long-term WSR man] Rob Collard is a great driver too, but we wanted strength across the board.

"We've got what we wanted. That means we're now representing the brand. There is pressure, but we always put pressure on ourselves to perform at the very top

of our game. That's no different, but the spotlight may shine a little brighter."

BMW has decided that motorsport is a key part of its ongoing marketing strategy, and has placed the BTCC at the front and centre of that. Hence the change of heart regarding the WSR programme.

Turkington, who began racing the German cars when WSR switched from the MG ZS model to the BMW 320si in 2007, knows it's been a long journey to become a factory-supported team. "Getting BMW on board is an endorsement of the journey that WSR and I started 10 years ago," he >>





PROFILE

AGE 20
From Ickenham, Middlesex

RESULTS

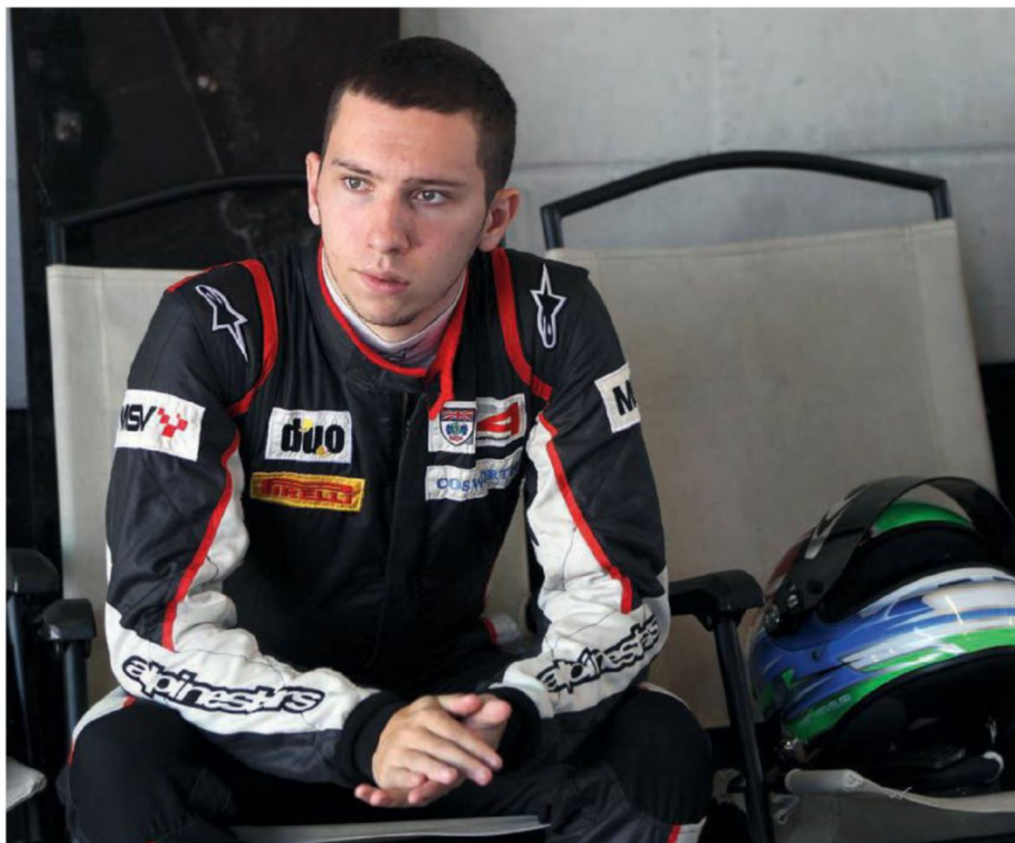
2016 Testing, class win on Hyundai Cup debut
2015 BRDC Formula 4 Championship, 18th
2014 Kent Kart Championship, Rotax Max Champion. MSA/Racing Steps Foundation Young Driver of the Year Award, runner-up
2013 Club 100 Lightweight Sprint Champion

CONTACT DETAILS

www.jamesreveler.com/

[@JamesReveler](https://twitter.com/JamesReveler)

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James Reveler

After a brief but promising single-seater career, James Reveler has his sights set on breaking into GT racing in the near future.

Most recently, Reveler impressed during his single season in the 2015 BRDC Formula 4 Championship, but came into cars with a stellar club karting pedigree.

Having not come from a racing family, Reveler got his first taste of competition by chance when a golfing trip in Wales was rained off and he instead was given a go at a local indoor karting circuit in 2011. By the end of his first-ever on-track session he was just fractions off breaking the lap record, leading the staff to recommend that he looked into starting racing.

That led to him joining the Brentwood Karting Academy in late 2011, and within a year Reveler had landed three championship titles at the Essex track. He also took part in endurance races, alongside now-Ginetta GT4 racer and close friend Ben Green.

Keen to continue his club karting success, Reveler moved into Club 100 for the 2013 season and dominated its Sprint Championship, winning nine of the 16 races and recording 14-straight podium finishes. By the end of the campaign Reveler had amassed the highest points total since the championship began back in 1992.

His next step was to tackle the Kent Kart Cup, which features races split between Buckmore Park and Bayford Meadows. Running in the Senior Rotax Max category with Project One, Reveler won the title at his first attempt.

Reveler also completed an MSA Academy Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) Programme between 2013-14 at Loughborough College. He gained recognition in '14 by finishing runner-up in the annual MSA Racing Steps Foundation Young Driver of the Year Award.

With a multitude of club karting titles behind him, Reveler made the jump to cars as soon as he could, joining BRDC Formula 4 for 2015. The year was an uphill struggle as he fought against a lack of resources running with one of the smaller teams on the grid.

"I learned a lot in F4 but it was a real fight," he explains. "The team and I were both inexperienced and I was constantly working on set-up to change the car and find pace. It wasn't simply a case of turning up and driving. I think we surprised a few people though as nobody expected us to be fighting within the top 10 like we did."

Reveler constantly showed the speed to fight in the top half of the field, but finished the year 18th in the points. A second season promised much, but when plans to upscale the category to become the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship meant a hike in budget, a second year was no longer an achievable option.

"I felt I could have done a lot better with a second year and I had some good pace during testing with the F3 car, but the budget was just too much so last year my focus shifted to thinking more long-term," says Reveler.

His year was reduced to some testing and a single appearance in a multi-class BARC saloon car race at Silverstone aboard a Hyundai Coupe Cup car. He won his class on the first outing.

"It was great to win on my first weekend in a tin-top as it shows that I can come into a different series and be on the pace," he says. "Going forward I want to break into British GT and GT4, so I'm working on securing some rounds in that this year then building to a full campaign for 2018."

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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Turkington is acknowledged as rear-drive ace



COLIN TURKINGTON
 AGE 35
 DEBUT 2002
 RACES 332
 WINS 41
 TITLES 2 ('09, '14)



ROB COLLARD
 AGE 48
 DEBUT 2000
 RACES 415
 WINS 13



ANDREW JORDAN
 AGE 27
 DEBUT 2008
 RACES 268
 WINS 16
 TITLES 1 (2013)

explains. “Getting a manufacturer deal is something that any driver works towards, and it’s great that we’ve managed to make it happen for the first time.”

That involvement from the Bavarian firm means it can switch the engine in the three 125i M Sports. Bennetts says that the financial input from BMW, plus access to engineers at Munich that it’s never had before, will ramp up the entire programme.

The cars of Jordan, Collard and Turkington will be fitted with the BMW B48 powerplant, which is a bespoke two-litre turbocharged motor. Without the support and resource from BMW, it’s unlikely that WSR would have been able to switch from its previous powerplant, which was a two-litre normally aspirated version that had been adapted to take a turbocharger. WSR has used the same engine since 2007.

The new motor has only run in Collard’s car so far at the championship’s pre-season media day at Donington Park on March 16. Turkington is excited about the prospects, even though he’s unlikely to get a chance to sample the unit before the series kicks off at Brands Hatch this weekend.

“Rob says he was impressed with the engine, but we have run out of time for me to try it,” says Turkington. “There are things we need to do to the car before the first round and it’s more important that we do those. But the engine is going to take the car forward – if we didn’t have the backing from BMW and the new engine, it would be essentially the same car as it was last year.”

Bennetts admits that some issues with engine

installation have led to delays in pulling the programme together, and the team is on the back foot slightly. “In everything I do, I like to be 100% prepared,” says Bennetts. “I don’t feel we quite are at the moment. It would be nice if they could push the opening round back by a couple of weeks, but that will never happen: [series director] Alan Gow is an Aussie and I’m a Kiwi... those things run deep!”

Even so, last year’s rear-wheel-drive car wasn’t a slouch – Sam Tordoff came within two points of taking the crown; team-mate Collard led the standings at mid-season before a slump, but he still won two races. And you don’t have to go back too far in the car’s lineage to find the machine that Turkington used to storm to title success in 2014.

Turkington will also be reunited with his ace engineer Kevin Berry, who was involved with the creation of the BMW 125i M Sport back in 2013. Berry followed Turkington to BMR, but he is back with WSR for ‘17.

“Kevin has been a huge part of my success over the past few years,” explains Turkington. “It seems like we come as a package these days. During the course of a race weekend, you have to make judgement calls on the cars and you have to make them quickly. I trust Kevin and his calls 100%.”

The two seasons that Turkington and Berry spent together with the 1-series at WSR yielded 13 victories. While the car has moved on for the fresh campaign with the new powerplant, the surroundings are known to him.

“It was a bit odd to get back into the car to begin with. It was unfamiliar and that was a bit of a shock,” says Turkington. “That’s because the VW CC I raced in 2015 was big, and the estate-shaped Subaru from last year was massive inside. But after an hour or so of testing in Spain, I was comfortable again. I could feel the smile returning to my face.”

With Jordan in the team’s line-up too, there is the potential for a huge fight for supremacy that could wipe the smile from Turkington’s face. Insiders assume that Turkington will top the three-car attack, but 2013 champion Jordan knows he’s in the right place to learn.

“I like Colin a lot and I’ve got huge respect for him,” says Jordan. “In British Touring Cars he is the man in rear-wheel drive, so of course he is going to be quick. I look at team-mates and look at how [Team Dynamics drivers] Gordon [Shedden] and Matt [Neal] work on track. They are by far the best team-mates working >>



Second crown (2014) was won in fine style

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On two class wins at Snetterton in
his first race weekend

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together. Colin and I can work very well together. I'm going to want to beat him and he is going to want to beat me, that goes without saying, but I think we'll be able to work together very well. He's a down-to-earth lad. I'd be surprised if we can't work up a really good relationship."

Turkington agrees that such a relationship between the pair will be essential to reap the big rewards. "I'm always open with everyone, and that will be the case with Andrew too," says Turkington. "We've both been brought up through motorsport and we have the same work ethics. I know we are going to want to beat each other, but the crucial thing is going to be doing our best for the team as a whole."

The reason the tipsters have Turkington ahead of Jordan in the pace stakes is because of the 35-year-old's experience with rear-wheel drive. But that's something that Jordan thinks will play to his advantage in the perception of others.

"He's the rear-wheel-drive specialist and it's my first year in rear-wheel drive," says Jordan. "If anything I feel less pressure with him signing, it's a win-win for me. If I get to Brands Indy and I outqualify him everyone will be, 'Bloody hell! If he outqualifies me, well he's the rear-wheel-drive expert. At this sort of level you're going to be up against good people – it shouldn't change your mentality."

Add into that mix Collard too. Although he is the only one of the trio who hasn't won an overall title, he's driven the BMW 125i M Sport since 2013 and was getting the most out of it in race conditions last season. If it hadn't been for some shockingly bad qualifying performances, he would have been pushing for the title come the finale in October.

Former WSR driver Nick Foster is with the team as a driver advisor or, as Turkington calls him, "the referee".

Bennetts knows he has a potentially explosive line-up, and will have taken measures before Brands Hatch to stamp out any problems. "We'll sit them all down before round one and have a chat," he admits. "Nick is good for us because he has been there and done it, but they need to realise that this is all about the good of the team. That message is going to be essential for them to understand."

However the odds stack up between the three drivers, it's Turkington who will have the spotlight firmly on him with expectations so high. He knows it too. With the new engine and Berry at his side, he has lofty ambitions.

"I have put myself in the best position to win," says Turkington. "WSR is familiar to me – when I walked back into the factory in 2017 it was just like when I walked out of it in '14. The key people are still here.

"I know it's a mountain to climb to win the BTCC, because I've done it twice before. It's a huge effort. But I'm better prepared than I have been before. It will take work, but I'm going to put that work in." ❄

Team aims to keep potentially explosive pairing of Turkington and Jordan under strict control, although both drivers know a good working relationship is essential to success

BMW'S RICH BTCC HISTORY

BMW HAS ALWAYS BEEN A major factor in touring car racing, especially in Europe, although in the UK its support has come and gone.

Back in 1973, Brian Muir won the season finale at Brands Hatch under the Dealer Team BMW banner and finished fifth in the points in a 3.0 CSL, but it was five years before another win: Tom Walkinshaw at Oulton Park in '78, entered by BMW GB in his 530i.

Fast forward to 1984, and Walkinshaw's Rovers were now pitted against a BMW squad, run by Dave Cook, of 635CSis for Vince Woodman and James Weaver under the BMW GB banner. Weaver won but once, at Oulton Park, the first non-Rover Vitesse winner in the Group A version of the BTCC.

When the M3 came on strong in 1987, Frank Sytner's pioneering car was entered by Prodrive, but the following year there was more tacit support from the manufacturer, with the

cars entered as Prodrive/BMW Finance Racing with Mobil 1. It was support, but not a specific manufacturer entry.

As Super Touring became the go-to category, so BMW increased its public involvement in the burgeoning category.

In 1992, the individual teams were all prefixed with the M Team badge, so M Team Mobil were the Prodrive-run cars, before BMW Motorsport Team in '93 and BMW Team Schnitzer in '96 left no doubt as to the firm's involvement. Will Hoy, Tim Harvey (pictured) and Jo Winkelhock all took titles in BMWs during the two-litre era.

After BMW's withdrawal, the firm also gave a hand to Mat Jackson's efforts in a BMW 320si in 2008 (it was called a BMW Dealer Team UK entry). He finished runner-up in the championship behind Vauxhall's Fabrizio Giovanardi.



2017 Stories to watch in

It's not all about BMW – there are plenty of other strong challengers, and some interesting plotlines too

By Matt James, BTCC Correspondent

[@MattJMNews](https://twitter.com/MattJMNews)



EBREY/LAT



JASON PLATO

AGE 49
DEBUT 1997
RACES 511
WINS 95
TITLES 2
(2001, '10)

Pressure for Plato

More to learn for Subaru

The BMR Subaru Levorg was unquestionably the car to have over the latter part of 2016. Between them, Colin Turkington and Jason Plato picked up six wins in the last 21 races – but only one of them went to Plato.

A divorce from Turkington has sent the Northern Irishman back

to the WSR BMW team, and the pressure is on Plato to perform.

The team's technical director Carl Faux explains that the estate-shaped Levorg GT is a different beast this year.

Firstly, rulemakers have cancelled out the advantage of the low-down weight of the boxer-style engine by

insisting on an equalised centre of gravity. And secondly, the team has had time to develop the car in the way it wants.

Faux: "We have tidied the car up a lot, and it will be a lot easier to work on, particularly around the engine. We have done mathematical modelling and worked on the dampers to

maximise the contact patch of the tyres.

"The centre-of-gravity change for the engine will hurt us. Other cars are lighter or shorter, which means they can place their ballast where they want to. Because we have an estate, it means the front-rear weight distribution is also sub-optimal, so this

change is going to hurt further. We just have to hope that the work we've done on the engine can counteract that."

While Faux steps up as de facto technical director this season, he will no longer directly engineer Plato, who will have the experienced Paul Ridgway in his corner instead.



GORDON SHEDDEN
 AGE 38
 DEBUT 2001
 RACES 317
 WINS 45
 TITLES 3
 (2012, '15, '16)



EBBREY

The reigning champion

Shedden and Neal at Honda



MATT NEAL
 AGE 50
 DEBUT 1991
 RACES 603
 WINS 59
 TITLES 3
 (2005, '06, '11)

When a combination strikes upon a winning formula, it takes a pretty significant reason to go down another route.

Consistency is the key, and that's certainly the case for Team Dynamics Honda drivers Gordon Shedden and Matt Neal.

They will again pilot the potent Civic Type R.

Most of the team's learning was done last season with a new engine in the car. Now it has got on top of that – pretty successfully too, winning seven of the 30 rounds in 2016 and carrying Shedden to the drivers' title – it can make some real strides with the chassis.

But Dynamics and its drivers have already identified one area that could knock them off their perch, and have been through a rigorous programme to eliminate uncertainty. Dunlop has delivered bigger tyres, with an increased contact patch and different degradation.

Shedden thinks the team is on top of the alterations: "We've been out doing a lot of testing, working through a programme and getting on top of the new tyres – we can't stand still because the game is constantly changing and everyone is moving forward."

"This is our ninth successive season together [with Dynamics and team-mate Neal], which is quite unheard of when you see the changes that happen year on year. We know how each other works and it's a proven package: if it isn't broke, then don't fix it!"



TOM CHILTON
 AGE 32
 DEBUT 2002
 RACES 270
 WINS 12



BUCKEL

The returning winners

Chilton and Vauxhall

Power Maxed Racing pulled off something of a surprise when it landed the deal to run the works-blessed Vauxhall programme in the BTCC this season.

The Luton-based manufacturer has a hugely successful background in the series thanks to Triple Eight Race Engineering.

It has previously lifted eight manufacturers'/constructors' titles with its previous operators.

PMR, however, is a relative newcomer: it only joined the BTCC in 2015. It picked up the remnants of BTC Racing and its Chevrolet Cruzes, and set about climbing to the summit.

"I had a plan for this

team, a five-year plan," says team boss Adam Weaver. "Getting a manufacturer like Vauxhall on board is a major staging post in that process, but it puts the pressure on us to perform now. We've recruited well to the engineering strength of the team, and the work that's been put in at the

workshop is staggering." Landing former Independents' Trophy winner Tom Chilton's signature to partner rookie Senna Proctor on the driving strength was yet another coup, and initial signs look good.

The Astra, built by the experienced Martin Broadhurst and his team, has run fault-free in

testing and Chilton was eighth in the media-day run at Donington with 44 laps under his belt.

The ever-bullient Chilton stepped from the car after his initial mileage and said: "I see no reason why we can't be on pole at Brands Hatch."

Now that really would be a story.



TOM INGRAM
AGE 23
DEBUT 2014
RACES 90
WINS 2



ASH SUTTON
AGE 23
DEBUT 2016
RACES 30
WINS 1



ANT WHORTON-EALES
AGE 22
DEBUT 2017
RACES 0
WINS 0



JAMES ROBERTS

The new wave

The youngsters who have the old guard nervous

Tom Ingram and Ash Sutton both made winning breakthroughs in the BTCC in 2016.

Sutton was a rookie and won in a Triple Eight MG, but has now been promoted to Team BMR's top table alongside Jason Plato in a Levorg GT. Last year he claimed he wanted to win the rookie-based

Jack Sears Trophy and take a win. He did both, which means it's worth listening when he sets out his 2017 targets.

"I want to be in the position to go into the final rounds at Brands Hatch in October with a shot at the overall crown," says the 23-year-old. "I believe I can do that with BMR."

He also has a single-seater background and should not be fazed by the step to rear-wheel drive.

Ingram, on the other hand, was in his third BTCC season last year, remaining loyal to Speedworks Motorsport. His first win at Brands was accomplished after soaking up pressure

from Gordon Shedden.

He has a revised Toyota Avensis, and topped the pre-season test at Donington Park. "The balance of the car is superb and we've done race runs," he says. "We're well prepared."

Of the rookies, Renault UK Clio Cup champion Ant Whorton-Eales is the

one with the spotlight.

He has signed to drive the AmD Tuning Audi S3 (above) and has set modest targets for the top-newcomer award.

"I'm out for the Jack Sears Trophy," he says. "If anything else comes after that, then that's all good. I know I have a lot to learn, but I'm here to do a job."



MAT JACKSON
AGE 35
DEBUT 2001
RACES 304
WINS 30



The nearly men

Don't mention the lack of a title!

Mat Jackson doesn't like the tag that he's now the BTCC racer who's won the most individual races without taking a championship title. In fact, he hates it.

Under the BTCC's equalisation formula, the Fords have less boost than last season. That's caused concern within Motorbase

already, but Jackson (above) is a driver capable of getting the maximum from the car.

If Adam Morgan and Ciceley's Merc A-class can find consistency, he's also a dark horse.

Testing has been trying, but the team thought it had found a breakthrough at the Donington media day.



ARON TAYLOR-SMITH
AGE 27
DEBUT 2011
RACES 151
WINS 4



The MG twins

All-change at Triple Eight

There's an all-new line-up at Triple Eight Racing. It will again field the MG6 model, but at the controls this year will be Aron Taylor-Smith (Aron Smith, now carrying his married name) and Dan Lloyd.

The car was superb last season in mixed weather due to its hybrid of older-spec

GPRM parts and the newer RML kit. Now the RML kit is mandated, the saloon machines have been reworked.

Expect the cars to be fighting inside the top 10. Taylor-Smith is a race winner, while Lloyd shone with qualifying pace in bit-part outings in the Eurotech Honda Civic Type R last season.



ADAM MORGAN
AGE 28
DEBUT 2012
RACES 148
WINS 4



DAN LLOYD
AGE 25
DEBUT 2010
RACES 12
WINS 0



AND NOT FORGETTING...

SMILES FOR CHEVROLET

One of the talking points of the pre-season test at Donington was the pace of Chris Smiley in the BTC Norlin Racing Chevrolet Cruze (above). The cars are ex-Power Maxed Racing, and Smiley and team-mate Dave Newsham were both rapid. Despite his third place, just 0.198 seconds off the ultimate pace, Smiley is cautious. "You don't get any points for tests, and this is only the start of our programme," says the Northern Irishman.

TYRE CHANGES

The option-tyre rules are changing. Previously, the Dunlop softs were the go-to choice at most tracks, with hard-option rubber only seen at Croft and Rockingham. But that will be more mixed in 2017, with the soft tyres now being used at the Brands opener, Oulton Park, Snetterton, Knockhill and the Brands GP finale, and the hards everywhere else except Thruxton, where there will be no option. The tyre width has also increased by 20mm.

GOFF'S CIVIC SWITCH

Former BMW and MG driver Jack Goff is returning to front-wheel drive this season in the Eurotech Racing Honda Civic, fitted with the TOCA BTCC powerplant. It should be a strong partnership, and Goff was fifth during the pre-season test day after some running in Spain in February. "It is nice to go into a year with decent mileage," says the one-time race winner. "There's more pace to come, but it's hard to know what the others are up to."

CALENDAR

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 2	Brands Hatch Indy
April 16	Donington Park National
May 7	Thruxton
May 21	Oulton Park Island
June 11	Croft
July 30	Snetterton 300
August 13	Knockhill
August 27	Rockingham
September 17	Silverstone National
October 1	Brands Hatch Grand Prix

ENTRY LIST

WSR - BMW 125i M Sport

4	Colin Turkington
5	Rob Collard
77	Andrew Jordan

Team Dynamics - Honda Civic Type R

25	Matt Neal
52	Gordon Shedden
303	Matt Simpson

Motorbase Performance - Ford Focus

3	Mat Jackson
30	Martin Depper
300	Luke Davenport

Team BMR - Subaru Levorg

20	James Cole
28	Josh Price
99	Jason Plato
116	Ash Sutton

Triple Eight Racing - MG6

23	Dan Lloyd
40	Aron Taylor-Smith

Ciceley Racing - Mercedes A-class

33	Adam Morgan
----	-------------

Speedworks Motorsport - Toyota Avensis

80	Tom Ingram
----	------------

Laser Tools Racing - Mercedes A-class

16	Aiden Moffat
----	--------------

Handy Motorsport - Toyota Avensis

11	Rob Austin
----	------------

Eurotech Racing - Honda Civic Type R

31	Jack Goff
55	Jeff Smith

Power Maxed Racing - Vauxhall Astra

2	Tom Chilton
18	Senna Proctor

AmD Tuning - Audi S3

10	Ant Whorton-Eales
48	Ollie Jackson

Team Hard - Volkswagen CC

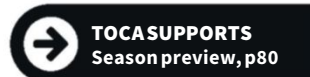
12	Mike Epps
24	Jake Hill
61	Will Burns

Team Parker (and with Maximum Motorsport) - Ford Focus

7	Stephen Jelley
66	Josh Cook

BTC Norlin Racing - Chevrolet Cruze

17	Dave Newsham
22	Chris Smiley





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BTCC SPECIAL FROM THE ARCHIVE

British Touring Car Championship, Knockhill, 1994: sparks fly as the BMW 318i of Steve Soper pursues the Ford Mondeo of Paul Radisich and Alain Menu's Renault Laguna. Race one at the Scottish track finished in that order, but in the second bout Soper turned the tables, taking the chequered flag ahead of Radisich and Menu.



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Coulthard wins twice for Penske

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
ALBERT PARK (AUS)
MARCH 24-26

DJR TEAM PENSKE FINALLY BECAME A Supercars race winner at Albert Park, with Scott McLaughlin and Fabian Coulthard sharing three of the four wins on offer.

The Penske squad had pushed Triple Eight hard at the first championship round in Adelaide, and the non-points Melbourne meeting was where it finally stepped up.

From the word go the two Shell-backed Fords were on the pace, Coulthard taking three of the four poles, the other going to T8's Jamie Whincup. But while Coulthard was the form man in qualifying, it was McLaughlin who took Penske's first Supercars win. The first race on Friday went the way of the young Kiwi, the win set up on lap one when Coulthard ran wide and McLaughlin snuck through. He was then able to hold off his team-mate to lead a historic team one-two.

A second one-two followed later on the same day, this time Coulthard getting the better of his team-mate to take his first win in Penske colours. The Penske



winning streak continued on Saturday, but the run of clean-sweeps was broken. While Coulthard cruised to his second win, Whincup was able to split the two Falcons and grab second spot.

It took until Sunday for Penske to be beaten. Coulthard was seemingly cruising to a third win when he had a tyre failure mid-distance, the same problem striking new leader Whincup two laps later. That left Prodrive's Chaz Mostert free to cruise to his first race win of the 2017 season.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

McLaughlin (17) just gets ahead of Coulthard in the opening race

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Scott McLaughlin (Ford Falcon) 13 laps in 27m13.5519s; 2 Fabian Coulthard (Ford) +0.3590s; 3 Chaz Mostert (Ford); 4 Jamie Whincup (Holden Commodore); 5 Michael Caruso (Nissan Altima); 6 Shane van Gisbergen (Holden). **Race 2 1 Coulthard** 11 laps in 27m09.0306s; 2 McLaughlin +1.7229s; 3 Caruso; 4 Garth Tander (Holden); 5 Will Davison (Holden); 6 Mark Winterbottom (Ford). **Race 3 1 Coulthard** 13 laps in 25m37.8132s; 2 Whincup +0.8063s; 3 McLaughlin; 4 Mostert; 5 James Courtney (Holden); 6 David Reynolds (Holden). **Race 4 1 Mostert** 13 laps in 25m38.1620s; 2 van Gisbergen +9.7197s; 3 Tim Slade (Holden); 4 Todd Kelly (Nissan); 5 Caruso; 6 Courtney.

Manthey 911 scores as Falken crash-lands

VLN
NURBURGRING (D)
MARCH 25
ROUND 1/9

HEARTBREAK FOR THE FALKEN Motorsports team meant joy for fellow Porsche squad Manthey Racing, which snatched the first four-hour race of the season on the Nurburgring Nordschleife in the closing stages.

Laurens Vanthoor was at the wheel of the Falken 911 GT3-R, which he shared

with Jorg Bergmeister and Martin Ragginger, in the closing stint. In the pursuing Manthey machine was Patrick Pilet, who was teamed with Romain Dumas and Frederic Makowiecki. Vanthoor lost a chunk of time to the chasing Pilet in a Code-60 area, meaning that the two cars were close together with two laps remaining. Vanthoor swept around the outside of a tin-top BMW he was lapping just before the Hohenrain chicane at the end of the lap, but got on the grass and made contact with the

barriers. The Belgian had to bring the car into the pits with a broken tie rod.

That left victory to the French-crewed Manthey Porsche by over a minute, with Chris Bruck, Christer Jons and Jordan Pepper second in their Abt Bentley for the marque's maiden VLN podium.

The Land Motorsport Audi of Christopher Mies, Connor de Phillippi and Markus Winkelhock was firmly in the hunt before a one-minute penalty in the pits for breaching the minimum pitstop time earlier in the race. That car just held on to third in a frantic last-lap scrap with the WRT Audi of Rene Rast, Frank Stippler and Frederic Vervisch. Top Mercedes, in seventh, was the Black Falcon car, which included Daniel Juncadella.

RESULTS

1 Romain Dumas/Frederic Makowiecki/Patrick Pilet (Porsche 911 GT3-R) 28 laps in 4h08m03.149s; 2 Christer Jons/Chris Bruck/Jordan Pepper (Bentley Continental GT3) +1m08.751s; 3 Christopher Mies/Connor de Phillippi/Markus Winkelhock (Audi R8 LMS); 4 Frank Stippler/Rene Rast/Frederic Vervisch (Audi); 5 Marcel Fassler/Robin Frijns/Rast (Audi); 6 Stippler/Nicolaj Moller Madsen/Dennis Busch (Audi).

Manthey Porsche squad was leaping for joy at the finish





Larson (42) gets the jump at a restart

Grand Larson in California

NASCAR CUP
FONTANA (USA)
MARCH 26
ROUND 5/36

AFTER FINISHING SECOND IN the previous three weeks, Kyle Larson finally broke through for his first Cup win of 2017, holding off Brad Keselowski in overtime at the two-mile Fontana superspeedway.

The win is just the second of the Chip Ganassi Racing Chevrolet driver's Cup career, and completed a sweep of the weekend's races, Larson having won Saturday's Xfinity Series race at the track.

Larson started from the pole and led 110 of the 202 laps. He's just the second driver to win from the pole in the track's 20-year history –

Jimmie Johnson was the first to accomplish the feat in 2008.

But Larson had to survive four restarts in the final 25 laps to clinch the win. On lap 193, Larson pitted from the lead with most of the leaders, while Martin Truex Jr, Denny Hamlin and Jamie McMurray remained on the track.

On the restart, Hamlin pulled out to take the lead, followed by Truex, but Larson took the high line and moved behind Hamlin. On lap 196, Larson pulled ahead on the inside and took the lead into Turn 2.

The final caution came out when Kasey Kahne ran into Ricky Stenhouse Jr and collected Trevor Bayne. The top 10 stayed on the track, and Larson led when the race went into overtime on lap 200. On

fresh rubber, Keselowski came through to take second in the Penske Ford ahead of Clint Bowyer, who took a season-high third, from Truex.

JIM UTTER

RESULTS

1 Kyle Larson (Chevrolet SS) 202 laps in 2h57m46s; **2 Brad Keselowski (Ford Fusion)** +0.779s; **3 Clint Bowyer (Ford)**; **4 Martin Truex Jr (Toyota Camry)**; **5 Joey Logano (Ford)**; **6 Jamie McMurray (Chevy)**; **7 Daniel Suarez (Toyota)**; **8 Kyle Busch (Toyota)**; **9 Ryan Blaney (Ford)**; **10 Chase Elliott (Chevy)**. **Playoff qualifying**
1 Larson 243/1 win; **2 Truex 205/1**; **3 Keselowski 179/1**; **4 Ryan Newman 123/1**; **5 Kurt Busch 118/1**; **6 Elliott 214**; **7 Logano 174**; **8 McMurray 162**; **9 Blaney 157**; **10 Bowyer 143**; **11 Kevin Harvick 137**; **12 Kyle Busch 136**; **13 Denny Hamlin 123**; **14 Kasey Kahne 122**; **15 Erik Jones 116**; **16 Trevor Bayne 114**.

Citroen on top on series debut

SUPER TC2000
BUENOSAIRE (RA)
MARCH 25-26
ROUND 1/12

JOSE MANUEL URCCERA GAVE the new Citroen team two wins on its debut Super TC2000 weekend at the former Argentinian Grand Prix venue.

In Saturday's 12-lap qualification event polesitter Urcera was stalked by Leonel Pernia's Renault Fluence from start to finish. These two rapidly edged away from the rest of the 30-car field, leaving a second duo tussling for the remaining

podium step. In this fight, Facundo Ardusso (Renault) looked set to find a way past Matias Rossi's wideish Toyota Corolla, especially under braking for the No 9 circuit variant's two hairpins, but the seasoned Rossi filled all the gaps and secured third.

Emiliano Spataro (Renault) won a battle with Mariano Werner's Peugeot for fifth, ahead of reigning champion Agustin Canapino's Chevrolet Cruze.

Urcera again led off pole in Sunday's 40-lap feature race, but down the main straight he and Pernia banged doors and they went into the Curvon side by side. The

doorbanging continued into the Esses, and in other sectors of the opening lap, before Urcera emerged in the lead. There he remained until the finish, despite his Citroen's damaged bodywork.

Rossi edged past Pernia and into second, with Pernia stalking the Toyota until the last lap, when the Renault reclaimed the runner-up spot, helped partly by a late safety car period. After getting past his team-mate Ardusso, Spataro spent a relatively lonely race in fourth, ahead of Werner's Peugeot and a troubled Ardusso.

TONY WATSON

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Jose Manuel Urcera (Citroen C4) 12 laps in 16m07.408s; **2 Leonel Pernia (Renault Fluence)** +0.722s; **3 Matias Rossi (Toyota Corolla)**; **4 Facundo Ardusso (Renault)**; **5 Emiliano Spataro (Renault)**; **6 Mariano Werner (Peugeot 408)**.
Race 2 1 Urcera 40 laps in 56m41.729s; **2 Pernia** +1.091s; **3 Rossi**; **4 Spataro**; **5 Werner**; **6 Ardusso**.
Points 1 Urcera 31; **2 Pernia 25**; **3 Rossi 21**; **4 Spataro 16**; **5= Ardusso & Werner 13**.



Urcera was on top form for new Citroen squad

SUPER TC2000

IN BRIEF

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES

Kyle Larson got his perfect Fontana weekend up and running with victory over Joey Logano in Saturday's race. Both Larson and Logano recovered from pitroad speeding penalties, and each took four new tyres at a late caution. But Logano re-emerged in third behind Spencer Gallagher, who had taken just two tyres. The time Logano spent working his way around Gallagher meant he ran out of laps to catch the Chip Ganassi Racing Chevrolet. Kyle Busch scraped the wall while chasing the leading Logano earlier in the race but took third, with Erik Jones fourth and William Byron the top points-scoring driver home in fifth.

AUSTRALIAN CARRERA CUP

Veteran racer Cameron McConville was declared the round winner at Albert Park thanks to a win, a second and a pair of thirds. The other race victories went to ex-British F3 Championship racer Nick McBride, who took out races one and two, while Alex Davison chimed in with a win on Sunday.

AUSTRALIAN GT

Audi factory driver Kelvin van der Linde took a pair of 'Pro' race wins supporting the Australian Grand Prix at Albert Park. The South African inherited the race-one win after on-the-road winner Ash Walsh – also in an Audi – was penalised for a startline infringement. Van der Linde (below) then comfortably won race three, while Daniel Gaunt took a pair of seconds in another Audi. Also in the field were Lewis Williamson (the Scot took a best of fifth in his McLaren) and Ivan Capelli (a best of 13th in his Lamborghini). The 'Am' race wins were split by Lamborghini driver Roger Lago and Porsche racer Liam Talbot. Lago now leads the series.



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HRDC 2017 RACE CALENDAR



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

* Please note these date changes!

KEY:

ACD:  ACADEMY	ALL:  ALLSTARS	ASC:  A-SERIES CHALLENGE	COYS:  COYS TROPHY	TG:  TOURING GREATS	JAG:  COOMBS	TC63:  TC63
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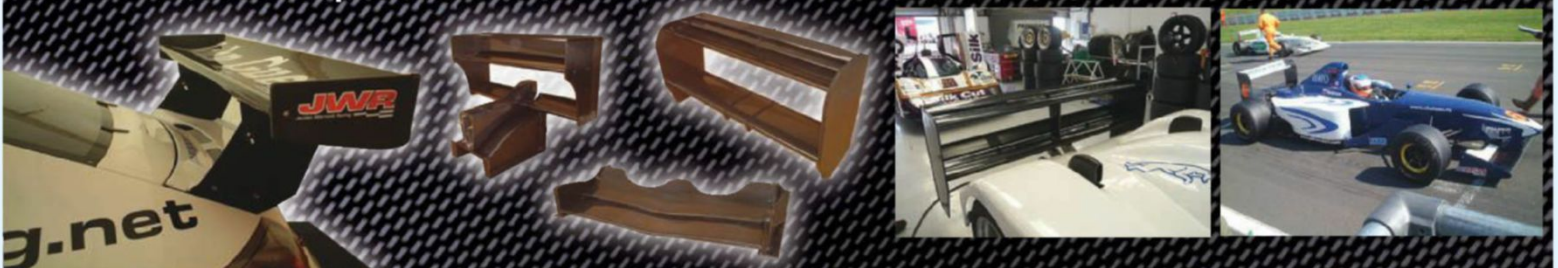
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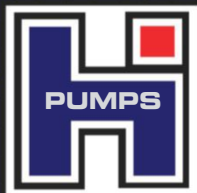
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SOFTWARE PROGRAMMER/JUNIOR SOFTWARE PROGRAMMER

We are currently recruiting for a Software Programmer to improve, innovate and develop the software and computational tools used by the Aerodynamics Department. The ideal candidate will have a Mechanical Engineering or Computer Science degree with experience within an engineering environment. They will have strong logical and mathematical problem solving skills and proven experience delivering production software, including C++, Python and Qt / PyQt. In addition some experience of the following would be beneficial: relational SQL database design, query and data management, C# / WPF, Html, Javascript and CSS.

SNR CFD METHODOLOGY ENGINEER

We are currently recruiting for a Senior CFD Engineer to join our team. This is a key position with the purpose of developing and improving the CFD methodology and correlation across the Aero department. Qualified to Masters or PhD level or equivalent, the successful candidate will ideally have relevant industry experience in F1, together with the ability to apply their academic knowledge within a fast paced engineering environment. Exposure to StarCCM+ and associated programming languages would be an advantage, and good communication skills are essential.

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Sowery is the highest-ranking 2016 driver to return

EBREY/LAT

BRITISH F3

Sowery targets F3 title on series return

TOBY SOWERY HAS TARGETED THE BRDC British F3 Championship title after confirming he will return for a second season with Lanan Racing.

The Cambridgeshire driver finished third in 2016 behind champion Matheus Leist and Ricky Collard. Neither of them will contest the series this year so Sowery starts as the driver to beat.

“There’s definitely a lot of pressure to go back and win,” said former McLaren BRDC Award finalist Sowery, who won five races in the championship last year. “Of all the people who are going back this season, we finished the highest so there’s an element of pressure.

“This season we are much better prepared, we’ve done pre-season testing and the form has been really good. If we can have consistent weekends it shouldn’t be too much of a problem.

“Obviously the other boys are very fast as well, but I think we’ve shown the pace. The preparation has been better.”

Last season Sowery didn’t get any pre-season testing, but the 2014 F3 Cup

champion has completed substantial running ahead of the ’17 campaign and believes Lanan and he have improved as a combination.

“Now we’ve got the experience from last year and we’ve learned from our mistakes,” said the 20-year-old. “We didn’t have a bad year but we definitely didn’t have the perfect year.

“We both pushed each other really hard, we didn’t have the resources of Carlin or some of the other teams. I think we’ve upped our game a lot and I think we’re better prepared and a better package all round this year.”

Lanan Racing boss Graham Johnson believes Sowery will be a title contender.

“The only reason to come back and do it twice is to win the title,” said Johnson. “I think he’s in pretty good shape. It’ll be a fight anyway.”

Other returnees include Enaam Ahmed (Carlin), Ben Hingeley (Fortec), and Jeremy Wahome and Omar Ismail (Chris Dittmann Racing). Sowery has picked out Ahmed as a key challenger.

2017 BRDC BRITISH F3 confirmed drivers and teams

DRIVER	TEAM
Enaam Ahmed	Carlin
James Pull	Carlin
Cameron Das	Carlin
Omar Ismail	Chris Dittmann Racing
Jeremy Wahome	Chris Dittmann Racing
Jamie Chadwick	Double R Racing
Harry Hayek	Double R Racing
Petru Florescu	Douglas Motorsport
Callan O’Keeffe	Douglas Motorsport
Ben Hingeley	Fortec Motorsport
Nicolai Kjaergaard	Fortec Motorsport
Manuel Maldonado	Fortec Motorsport
Jordan Cane	HillSpeed with Cliff Dempsey Racing
Chase Owen	HillSpeed with Cliff Dempsey Racing
Nick Worm	HillSpeed with Cliff Dempsey Racing
Toby Sowery	Lanan Racing
Aaron Di Comberti	Lanan Racing

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SILVERSTONE CLASSIC

Jones to reunite with Sierra at Classic

EX-BRITISH TOURING CAR RACER KARL Jones will return to racing a Ford Sierra RS500 at the Silverstone Classic in July, after taking part in the Group A demonstration at Goodwood.

Twenty-eight years after he last raced the Duckhams-liveried car in the BTCC, the Welshman drove the ex-Manuel Reuter Eggenberger Ringshausen RS500 on behalf of owner Paul Linfoot, a specialist in RS500 restoration and preparation.

"It's a long time since I last sat in a car like that and it was a little emotional," said Jones. "There are a lot of memories from 1988 and '89. It was a great era of touring car racing and I really hope to be able to race the car at Silverstone."

Jones has done selected historic races

over the past four seasons following a long break from the sport.

He raced Ben Eastick's Jaguar D-type in memory of his old friend Neil Cunningham and could race that car again this year.

"I really quit racing in 1995 and now I'm trying to get back into historic and classic racing," he added. "I'd love to do more."

Jones is using a crash helmet in the colours of Tom Pryce to mark the 40th anniversary of his countryman's tragic death in the 1977 South African Grand Prix.

Linfoot also appeared in the Goodwood Members' Meeting demo in his ex-Graham Goode Listerine RS500, which has been restored to 1988 livery after returning from Australia.

It has not raced in the UK since Sean Walker ran it in FAI colours in 1989.

Meanwhile, former Lotus Formula 1 driver Martin Donnelly has signed up to contest the Austin A35 race at the Classic.

Donnelly, 53, will share the car of Ray Low in a deal arranged by the car's preparer and Donnelly's old friend Jonathan Lewis.

"I drove a Sunbeam Rapier at Goodwood three years ago but I've done very little in saloon cars," said Donnelly, who ran for the first time in testing last Thursday. "It should be a bit of fun and the test was like going on a first date."

The celebrity drivers will compete on Saturday before the car owners take over for a race on Sunday.

BRITISH GT

Malvern targets podiums in Cayman GT4

SCOTT MALVERN IS targeting consistent podium finishes in his second season of British GT with the upgraded Porsche Cayman Clubsport GT4.

Malvern will again partner Nick Jones in the championship's sole Porsche, which has been extensively lightened, with carbonfibre doors and bonnet and Perspex windows.

The car will once again be run by Team Parker Racing.

"We're much more confident with the car now that we have most of the upgrades, but we still feel the car is down on power and heavier than the rest of the GT4 field," he said.

"We're not expecting much in qualifying, but we have good race pace and that's what counts. Nick has progressed well and he's more relaxed and focused than ever before, so the goal has to be to fight consistently for podium places."



LMP3 CUP

T-Sport aims to enter LMP3 Cup

FORMULA 3 OUTFIT T-SPORT IS HOPING to compete in this year's LMP3 Cup after taking delivery of a Ligier JSP3.

The Brackley outfit hasn't ruled out a return to Europe and Macau this year, but team boss Russell Eacott has identified the LMP3 Cup as a suitable series to keep the team racing in the interim.

"We wanted to do something to keep the race team functioning and we've been wanting to do this for quite some time," said Eacott.

"I think the LMP3 Cup is a brilliant idea. The cars are great, they're real race cars with aero and grunt. If you want to go down the sports car route, it's a great start. There's scope for the gentleman driver too, so it has all aspects covered."

The team is currently talking to drivers ahead of the Donington season opener on April 22/23.



BRITISH F4

Quinn to Arden for F4 part-season

BRITISH FORMULA 4 ROOKIE CLASS winner Alex Quinn has completed a last-minute deal to drive for Arden in the first four rounds of the F4 British Championship.

The 16-year-old finished seventh with Fortec last year, but has struggled to raise a budget for a full campaign this season. He will instead fill in for Olli Caldwell, since the Ginetta Junior graduate will be too young to compete in the first four events.

“I’m so happy to race for TRS Arden,” said

Quinn. “The aim is to make the best start I can at Brands Hatch to show people what I can do straight away.”

Quinn will join Ayrton Simmons, Yves Baltas and Oscar Piastrini in the four-car team and has showed good pace in testing at Brands Hatch.

“I want to race in British F4 for the whole season, so I need to perform in the first four meetings to attract sponsors and prove that I can fight at the front,” added Quinn.

IN BRIEF



CHARLIE WOODING

PITTARD TO RACE ELAN WITH WILSON

British GT racer David Pittard will split his time between GT racing and historics this season after being asked to race a Lotus Elan 26R with Graham Wilson. Pittard will partner Wilson in the Masters Gentlemen Drivers series at the wheel of the Andy Wolfe Engineering-prepared Lotus Elan. There is only one calendar clash with his GT campaign with a Lanan Racing-prepared Ginetta.

ISMAIL TO CHRIS DITTMANN FOR BRITISH F3

Omar Ismail has joined Chris Dittmann Racing for a full-time BRDC British F3 campaign this year. The Solihull driver was a race winner at Snetterton with the team in BRDC F4 in 2015, before competing in the opening and closing British F3 rounds last season at Snetterton (with HHC) and Donington Park (with Chris Dittmann Racing). He scored two top 10s at Donington.

WESTBOURNE BOSS WINS AFTER 25 YEARS

Renault UK Clio Cup team boss Richard Colburn scored a double podium in the Michelin Clio Cup Series at Silverstone last weekend, 25 years after his last race outing. The Westbourne Motorsport chief said he may have to get behind the wheel again after taking a win and a second place in the Road class.

GUEST RACES JOIN VSCC BILLING

A range of guest races will augment the schedule for the VSCC’s opening race meeting of the season at Silverstone on April 22/23. Alongside the regular VSCC races are the HGPCA, 50s Sports Cars, FISCAR and 500cc F3 series. On Sunday there will be a Pre-War Team Relay, Morgan Challenge and Historic Racing Drivers Club races.

F2 CLASSES HONOUR SERIES’ GREATS

The HSCC’s Historic Formula 2 Series will change to classes named in honour of some of the best-known period F2 racers. Class A for pre-’72 1600cc cars will be for the Jochen Rindt Trophy, while Class B for 1600cc Formula B and Formula Atlantic cars will honour Gilles Villeneuve. The Bruno Giacomelli Trophy is for Class C pre-’79 two-litre F2 cars, while Class D, for the early non-winged cars, will be renamed the Jim Clark Trophy.



LAT IMAGES

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Carrera Cup revamps scoring system

THE PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB will change its points-scoring system this year by reintroducing the concept of dropped scores.

The series previously featured dropped scores in 2012, but they have been brought back because the grid is too large to guarantee that everyone has a place in the

Le Mans 24 Hour support race, which is also open to French and Benelux Carrera Cup entrants.

“We saw that coming and the regulations have been worded quite cleverly – if we ended up with more entries in the series than we have spaces at Le Mans we will have a dropped score,” said Porsche GB motorsport manager James MacNaughton.

Another alteration will be that class pole positions and fastest laps will no longer yield any points.

Two-time champion Dan Cammish is expected to benefit from the move, since the Redline Racing driver will miss both races at Snetterton because of a clashing Supercup round at the Hungaroring.



EBREVI/LAT

GINETTA JUNIOR

Karter Jewiss steps up to Juniors

KARTING CHAMPION KIERN JEWISS HAS signed a late deal to make his car racing debut in Ginetta Junior with Douglas Motorsport.

The 14-year old won the WSK Champions Cup in the OK-Junior class last year and was Mini Max champion in 2015, but has only completed a limited amount of testing.

He joins fellow karting graduate Tom Canning – who beat Jewiss to the Honda Cadet crown in 2014 – at Douglas, along with Daniel Harper and Connor Grady.

“I haven’t set any targets – its more to improve week by week and put ourselves in the best position for 2018,” he said. “It will be a learning year for the season after.”

Team boss Wayne Douglas added: “He should be a good signing. It was all a bit last minute and he’s only done two test days, so for the first couple of meetings there will be a few things for him to get used to. The tests went pretty well and it’s a good story for the championship.”



HISTORICS Race-preparation company Rush Classic and Performance Services has joined forces with FIA European F3 and Indy Lights outfit Carlin Motorsport. As well as fielding customers' cars, Rush offers recommissioning and full restoration services, and is headed by David Pickering, who races the ex-Roberto Guerrero Argo JM6 in Classic F3 events. "We have the expertise and facilities at Carlin to be self-sufficient in everything bar engine building," said Rush lead engineer Chris Davies. "Working alongside its teams, with coaches and in-house simulators, will inspire everybody to achieve greater results." Rush Classics will operate from Carlin's facility in Farnham, Surrey. **Photograph by Marcus Pye**

MX-5 SUPERCUP BOSTON RETURNS TO MX-5 SUPERCUP

FORMER MAZDA MX-5 SuperCup champion Rob Boston will return to the series this season for the first time since winning the title in 2011.

Boston, who went on to race in the Lotus Cup and Ginetta GT4 Supercup, will contest the season-opening Brands Hatch and Cadwell Park meetings.

"I'm doing the first couple [of rounds] and then Jordan Stilp [who contested British GT4 last year] will get a couple and [Lotus racer] Adam Gore as well," he said.

"The aim is always to fight for wins and I just want to get stuck in – but I haven't raced the car since the 2011 season."

The Brands round of the MX-5 SuperCup on April 8-9 has attracted a full 32-car grid, with entries filling up within 20 minutes.

- Reigning Toyo Tires Porsche champion Richard Styrin prepared for his switch to the MX-5 SuperCup with a double win in the German sportscar series' 924 class. After racing a Boxster to the overall championship, he used the 924 to prepare for the loss of ABS when he switches to the MX-5.

CASTLE COMBE FF1600

Orgee gets a Ray for title bid

DOUBLE CASTLE COMBE FORMULA FORD 1600 champion Roger Orgee will return to the series in a Ray entered by Kevin Mills Racing.

Orgee won the 2016 title after a final-round clash with rival Michael Moyers, but has now sold his championship-winning Van Diemen RFoo in favour of the much newer Ray.

"The Van Diemen is 17 years old now, so we thought it was time for a change," said his father, Roger Sr. "We know Gavin Ray well and he seemed to want Roger in one of his cars, so we ended up

doing a deal there. I did a lot of research, and the Ray ticked all the boxes. The other alternative was a later Van Diemen, but we didn't really rate it."

- Highlights of the British Racing and Sports Car Club's Formula Ford 1600 National Championship will be shown on Motorsport.tv in 2017. All but one of the eight rounds will be broadcast on the channel, along with the new home of British GT, Frontrunner, and the motortrend.com channel. The series will also boast coverage in Europe.

MINI CHALLENGE

Mini Challenge JCW lures FF1600 ace and ex-BTCC racer

FORMULA FORD 1600 ACE Stuart Gough will contest his first season in front-wheel-drive machinery after joining the Mini Challenge JCW Championship.

Gough, 36, has spent 13 years in FF1600, and completed the triple of landing the National, Northern and Triple Crown FF1600 titles in 2014.

"The deal has come about quickly and has been a

surprise," said Gough. "I sat in a Mini Challenge car about five years ago and did about five laps around Brands Hatch, but they've changed a lot since then. I know I have a big learning curve."

Gough will join former FF1600 rivals Rob Smith and reigning JCW champion David Grady in the series.

Ex-BTCC racer Andy Wilmot

will also switch to the Mini Challenge JCW Championship this season, with Lawrence Davey Racing.

Wilmot, 36, has not raced regularly since his 2015 BTCC campaign in a Welch Proton. Like Gough, Wilmot has raced against Grady at junior level. He has targeted podium finishes by the end of the season.



Wilmot is back on track in JCW Mini Challenge



Grassroots racing is as appealing as ever

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@autosport](#)

THE COSTS OF COMPETING HAVE ROCKETED SINCE

I took my first tentative steps in Formula Ford 1600 with Clive Wood's Pine City Racing Van Diemen back in 1981, and the logistics have become more difficult. The enjoyment of club racing endures though, both on track for those fortunate enough to be able to take part, and on the spectator banks.

I'll be working at 750 Motor Club, Classic, Historic and Vintage Sports Car Club, Masters and BARC events at circuits nationwide this season, starting a long way from home at Oulton Park on Saturday. The anticipation is always great in the spring, so I'm looking forward to rocking up at MotorSport Vision's Cheshire outpost.

The 750MC has led the crusade to provide 'affordable' motorsport for members since 1950, when its Austin 7-based formula inspired future generations of drivers and engineers, many of whom would go on to shape the sport's highest strata. Charles Bulmer (A7 Ulster) was the inaugural champion, but without the likes of '51 runner-up Colin Chapman and Eric Broadley, Brian Hart and Arthur Mallock (all kings of the sister Ford-powered 1172 Formula, inaugurated in '53), it would have been immeasurably poorer.

Circuit-hire fees reflecting increased overheads, plus the professionalism of preparers, have pushed costs up over the past three decades, yet still competitors clamour to get involved. As a counterpoint, the availability of superbly engineered mass-produced saloons and sportscars has spawned numerous one-make classes that are within reach. These don't need to be basic. The M3 Cup, for great-looking E46 BMWs that have done their depreciating, breathes new

life into donor cars costing from a few thousand pounds plus a spec safety kit if you, or a mate, are a competent mechanic.

Should single-seaters trip your trigger, Oulton sees the start of the Formula Vee championship, which celebrates 50 years in the UK this season. Originated in 1962 in the United States, where 1200cc engines still power the SCCA class, the air-cooled category arrived here with Volkswagen GB support in June '67, a couple of weeks before FF1600's debut. Powered by 1300cc engines since '73, it's still popular under long-time promoter 750MC's wing, as a 28-strong entry proves.

With quadruple champion Paul Smith moving on this year to RGB, Vee looks particularly open, with stalwart Ian Jordan and seasoned hard-trier James Harridge, third and fourth respectively in 2016, the highest-placed returnees. Irishman Adam Macaulay, the only rival to beat Smith last term, must fancy his chances in the double-header too.

The remainder of the 13-race programme is all about those single-marque contests I mentioned, which guarantees plenty of slipstreaming on the demanding 2.69-mile International circuit and should provide some close finishes. Forty-five of the 1300cc Ford-powered Locosts are split into three groups, each of which race twice. Big Tegiwa Honda Civic Cup and Renault Clio 182 fields underscore the models' popularity, while the M3 Cup is growing strongly in year two. The 5Club Mazda MX-5 Cup pack bookends an entertaining programme.

Next on my agenda will be the HSCC's eagerly awaited opener at Donington, on April 8. This is shaping up to be a cracking event, with capacity Historic FF, Guards Trophy and Classic F3 races worth making the trip for. 🏁



AUSTRALIAN ARGOSPORT SPORTSCAR BACK ON TRACK

Almost 50 years after its last race, the unique Argo-Corvette was a fascinating returnee at Australia's recent VHRR Phillip Island Classic. Created by Ray Gibbs for Tony Osborne, around ex-Jack Brabham/Lex Davison Cooper T53 running gear, the Murray Carter-bodied sportscar debuted in 1966 and was subsequently raced by Ian Cook, Peter Macrow and Alfredo Costanzo. No relation to Swiss Jo Marquart's UK-built Argo cars, it has been restored by Historic F5000 racer Peter Brennan.



GURSTON DOWN HILLCLIMB'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

BARC South West Centre celebrates 50 years of speed hillclimbing at Gurston Down, the Hitchings family farm at Broad Chalke, near Salisbury, over the Tony Marsh Memorial Weekend on June 17-18. Six-time British champion Marsh set BTD at July 1967's inaugural event and it is hoped that sons Peter and Simon will demo their beloved 4WD Marsh Special (above). July 22-23's meeting, meanwhile, features the second Hillclimb FF Fest competition for pre-'94 Kent-engined FF1600s.



SILVERSTONE
BARC MARCH 25-26

Inches in it as Kendall sweeps Minis

A PAIR OF GRANDSTAND FINISHES meant that the new Super Mighty Mini season began in fine style. Scott Kendall timed his attacks to perfection for a double victory around the slipstream-friendly Silverstone National circuit.

Aptly, inches were what separated Louise Inch from victory in the first of two thrilling contests. Winner at the same venue last season, Inch was part of a tactical three-car squabble for race-one honours with Kendall and polesitter Adrian Tuckley, decided by a drag race to the line that Kendall edged by a mere 0.013 seconds over Inch.

“Louise had legs on me, but the wind helped me out on the run to the line,” said Kendall. “It’s all about picking your moment when lapping people.”

Kendall doubled up with a last-corner overtake during a frenetic second outing, Tuckley this time losing out by 0.120s. Traffic was decisive in both races, as reigning champion Tuckley had slipped to third in race one after a collision with a backmarker at Luffield.

Former Ginetta Junior champion Sarah Moore – one of six women competing in the series at Silverstone – was in the thick of two fierce Mighty Mini class duels. After a collision with Mick Grover left both their cars beached in the Luffield gravel in race one, Moore charged from the back to second in class behind double winner Damien Harrington on her first weekend with Agouti Motorsport.

Anton Spires was pleased to be back

in the Clio Series as he took a win and a second place on his return.

A sluggish start and a moment at Brooklands for Spires in race one handed the advantage to Ben Palmer, who then fended off Spires’s late attack.

The positions were reversed in race two, as Spires opened out a sizeable gap that Palmer was unable to bridge. Tyler Lidsey and Ben Colburn were the only retirements, involved in a collision at Becketts in race one that caused broken trackrods for both.

Colburn’s day got no better in race two. A spin at Brooklands sent him to the back, and he eventually finished last of the Race Class entries.

Road Class wins were shared between Richard Colburn – Ben’s dad in his first race for 25 years – and Nic Harrison, who bounced back from repeated ABS failures

Kendall (8) beat Inch – by inches! – in the Super Mighty Minis

to take a dominant race-two success.

Work on improving his starts paid dividends for reigning Classic Formula Ford 1600 champion Adriano Medeiros. The Bedford-based Brazilian claimed a clean sweep with pole position and a brace of race victories in his Van Diemen RF80.

Silverstone instructor Mark Armstrong (RF80) ran him closest after two hard-fought battles for second, while Nigel Lingwood’s Van Diemen spectacularly parted company with its right-rear wheel in race one after contact with Mark Bates at Brooklands.

Second-year drivers Will Dyrdal and Ethan Hammerton shared Junior Saloon Car Championship spoils. Dyrdal was denied a potential double triumph after his Citroen Saxo retired from the lead in race one with an electrical problem.



Spires made a winning return in the Clios



WALKER

In the British Superkart Championship, victories were shared between Stephen Clark, Tom Rushforth and Gavin Bennett. Seventeen-year-old Rushforth was making his first appearance in the Division 1 class and took victory despite suffering with a clutch issue causing “less than an inch” of travel before it engaged.

Simon Kendrick and Alan Forster shared success in the two MG Owners Club races. In race one, Kendrick came out best in his tiger-liveried MG F (a colour scheme designed by his son) after a race-long battle with Forster’s MG ZR and Mark Baker’s F.

Baker led much of race two, but rear-ended the barriers heavily at Copse after a spin he admitted was of his own making. That allowed Forster to inherit victory, with Kendrick on the podium again alongside the Martini-liveried MG F of Stuart Plotnek.

Alex Cursley dominated the Hyundai Coupe Cup, taking both victories. He managed his tyres better to fend off a late charge from William Taylforth in race one before taking commanding race-two honours.

Updated suspension and Dunlop rubber gave Jon Halliwell reason to smile in the Max5 Championship. He led both races from pole position ahead of the similar Mk4 of Paul Roddison. Ian Loversidge finished third in both races.

DAN MASON & JOE HUDSON

[→ P78 FULL RESULTS](#)

KIRKISTOWN
500 MRCI MARCH 25

O’HARA MADE TO WORK FOR DOUBLE WIN

A QUICK GLANCE AT THE RESULTS from the first two rounds of the Northern Ireland FF1600 championship may suggest total domination by Kevin O’Hara, but in reality he had to work very hard to emerge with a brace of victories at Kirkistown.

Fastest in qualifying with a time inside Ivor McCullough’s five-year-old record, O’Hara was in fine form. So too was James Roe, who shared the front row with a time just 0.119 seconds slower than O’Hara’s best.

Roe made the better start, leading the pack down into Colonial on the opening lap, with Niall Murray, Alan Davidson and Jake Byrne in hot pursuit. It took O’Hara a couple of laps to fight his way back onto Roe’s gearbox, by which time Byrne, Murray and Davidson were embroiled in their own battle, which remained unresolved for several laps.

It was the same with the lead struggle. Despite the pressure, Roe held on to the lead for lap after lap as O’Hara tried all the moves in the book to get past. Eventually he did find a way by, but Roe kept the pressure on and it was only in the final few tours that he dropped back.

Behind, Byrne had made sure of third spot ahead of Davidson. Murray, however, had dropped out of the picture; the reigning BRSCC champion was suffering the effects of an over-active rev limiter. The top six was completed by Keith Donegan and Andy O’Brien, who circulated virtually side by side for the full distance.

There was more of the same in race two. Roe led away, and again O’Hara was mugged by the pack on the run down to Colonial. This time, though, he was able to recover the lead a little quicker, while Davidson, Murray (his electrics now working properly) and Byrne provided more entertainment.

Byrne made it through to third, only to



O’Hara charged to a brace of FF1600 wins

DEMPSTER

be sidelined by a broken driveshaft, while Davidson found himself promoted to second a couple of laps from the end when Roe spun at the Hairpin. Roe eventually placed fourth behind Murray, but ahead of the on-going Donegan-O’Brien battle, which again raged throughout. Roe got the SuperSeries Driver of the Day nomination by way of consolation.

The evergreen Brian Hearty scored a hectic Formula Sheane race win, after a mighty tussle with Dave Parks, Mark Dunleavy and, until the last lap, Robbie Allen. Dunleavy took the honours in race two from Chris McCabe and Kevin Sheane, as Hearty, Allen and Parks all retired.

A smaller-than-usual Fiesta Zetec field nonetheless provided plenty of action, with Jonny Forsythe claiming both wins from Adrian Finnegan by less than half a second.

Poleman Thomas Agnew placed third in the first race, but a broken clutch sidelined him for race two, allowing his brother Stuart to take the final podium position.

Pat McBennett (Lotus Elise) and Andy Southcott (MG Midget) took a win apiece in the two Saloon/GT races, enjoying a frantic dice in race two until the Lotus faltered. Saloon honours twice went to the Honda Integra of Stephen Traub.

There were back-to-back wins too for Jim Larkham and his Radical in Roadsports, and for Patrick Dempsey in two poorly supported Ginetta Junior races.

RICHARD YOUNG

[→ P78 FULL RESULTS](#)



Hearty leads the Formula Sheane pack

DEMPSTER

BRANDS HATCH
BARC MARCH 25-26

Oliver hits the front in newly modified Volvo

THEY SAY THAT SUCCESS DOESN'T arrive overnight, but clearly nobody had mentioned it to 10-time British Truck Racing champion Stuart Oliver.

Equipped with a newly modified Volvo VH13 centred on a bonneted styling to increase aerodynamic performance, he duly claimed pole position and backed it up by becoming one of four different race winners at Brands Hatch to carry a slender two-point advantage to Pembrey next month.

"I'm over the moon," said Oliver. "It's a lot more than I expected, there's some good competition here and some new machinery. We've learned a lot with the set-up and what we need to do, so we can only go forward from here."

Shane Brereton and reigning champion Ryan Smith also claimed sizeable victories, though had Oliver not been frustrated behind Ray Coleman for a significant portion of the third race the potential was there to challenge Smith for the spoils in that one too.

Oly James hit trouble in the final encounter with the compressor on his Buggyra, allowing a train of six trucks to stream through on the penultimate tour and hand Mat Summerfield his first victory of the campaign.

Mika Mäkinen marked himself out as a clear championship favourite for Division Two honours in the Sisu SL250, dropping just a single point across the quartet of contests.

John Powell's Ford Cargo disrupted the Finn's winning streak, though Mäkinen may well feel robbed of a perfect record since the result of that second race was declared five minutes early by virtue of a red flag when Steven Powell's Sisu SL250



lost its front-left wheel and came to rest in the Paddock Hill gravel trap.

The Legends lived up to their billing, since the six races were covered by a cumulative winning margin fractionally above two seconds.

John Mickel claimed three victories to begin his title defence, underlining his pace with a podium in every contest. Stephen Whitelegg and Ben Power split the remaining honours; Whitelegg notably emerged victorious from a scintillating five-car fight on the final lap of the fourth encounter.

It proved to be a weekend of contrasts for Lea Wood in the Pickups, since a beautifully controlled victory in the opening race was juxtaposed with a failed alternator moments before the start of

Ten-time champ Oliver leads the standings after race-one win

the second, resigning him to a pitlane start. He recovered to finish fifth as Scott Bourne took victory and in doing so claimed the early championship lead. Mark Willis also starred with a brace of podium finishes.

Reigning Intermarque champion Malcolm Blackman opened the defence of his crown in perfect fashion with a pair of victories over Lewis Smith, though it proved anything but straightforward.

Smith crossed the line first in race one after overtaking Blackman under safety-car conditions at the conclusion, and the positions were reversed by the officials afterwards. Blackman made an equally dramatic late lunge to the inside of the sister Vauxhall Tigra at Graham Hill Bend in the second race to complete a



Mickel (4) and Power took Legends wins



Bourne capitalised on Wood's woes



HAWKINS

strong opening weekend.

The theme of double winners continued as Colin Wells won both Kumho BMW Class A contests in his CSL. Oliver Taylor (M3) was his closest challenger in a shortened race one, but a slow start in Sunday's encounter let James Card and Piers Reid through.

Robert Davidson's M3 took the overall victory in both races for Classes B, C and D, but a dominant Saturday performance wasn't replicated the following day as Brian Love – who missed the opener – stormed from the back to just three seconds behind Davidson at the flag.

Honda Civic drivers Chris Whiteman and Daniel Fisher shared the Tin Tops honours after two entertaining races, with Whiteman surviving a tap from polesitter Rod Birley's Honda Integra at Paddock in race one, before recovering to pass Fisher for a lead he didn't relinquish. Fisher retained second ahead of Robert Hosier, whose SEAT picked up the final podium spot when Birley slowed with electrical issues. Fisher beat Whiteman after a race-long scrap later in the day, with Birley third.

Dale Gent took a clean sweep in the Modified Saloons, despite running with no turbo for the entirety of race one in his Subaru Impreza. There were no such problems in the second encounter as he lapped the entire field, with Birley second on both occasions in his Ford Escort.

DAMIAN MEADEN & FERGUS REED

➔ **P78** FULL RESULTS



Baker was unstoppable in the Exige S2

SNETTERTON
MSVR MARCH 25

STYLES

Baker cleans up in Lotus Cup opener

THE COMBINED LOTUS CUP AND ELISE Trophy championships kicked off their 2017 seasons with a double-header on the Snetterton 300 circuit, and Jason Baker proved to be the man to beat.

The Exige S2 driver was fastest in practice, qualifying and both races with enough in hand to secure both victories.

Baker set the tone from the start, launching into a lead in race one that he never relinquished. He held a modest gap throughout, but always looked in control. "I just got a gap on the first lap and pretty much held it," he said.

Behind him, Ryan Savage secured runner-up spot in his 2-Eleven with a comfortable-looking run ahead of third-placed Simon Atkinson's Exige V6 Cup.

Further back, it was a much closer affair in the Elise Trophy field, with Craig Denman and William Stacey taking their scrap for top spot into the final seconds of the race. It was finally resolved as they battled side by side towards the finish, the balance tipping in Denman's favour when Stacey spun at Coram and had to settle for second.

Baker followed his earlier success with a blisteringly quick start to race two, setting him up for a lights-to-flag win. Among the Elises, Stacey made up for his earlier spin by beating David McNulty and Denman to class honours. "Luckily I managed to get a

gap – I was wilting towards the end but it was good enough!" he beamed afterwards.

Having defended a slender lead of barely a second almost throughout the race, Philip Collard looked like he'd done enough to hold off his rivals and guide his Mazda RX7 to victory in the opening race for the combined classes of the Nippon Challenge, Tricolore Trophy and Multi Marque. That was until the RX-7 came to a halt in a swirl of smoke and extinguisher foam less than a lap from home.

Collard's misfortunes made track conditions tricky, but didn't prevent Lee Gillard's Subaru Impreza claiming victory ahead of Richard Hockley's less-potent Honda Civic. Gillard's hopes of making it a double in race two ended with a differential failure, opening the door for Hockley to grab the win.

Ian McDonald scooped victory in a frantic opening race for the MSVR Allcomers. Prime mover in the early tussles was Nick Starkey, who charged from fourth on the grid to lead just after the halfway point. Sadly it came to nought, as his chances evaporated when his Caterham deposited its oil on the track two laps from home when the seal on his oil filter came off.

In the ensuing drama, McDonald navigated his Radical around the slick to snatch a decisive lead. Mark Murfitt (Porsche Cayman) followed suit, marking an impressive maiden race with runner-up. Starkey bounced back with race-two victory.

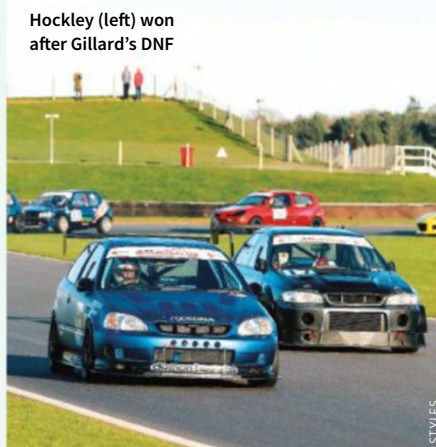
Arron Pullan set the pace in both legs of the double-header for the MR2 Series, beating Adam Lockwood by just one second at the chequered flag each time.

In the opening clash, Pullan looked like surging clear from the chasing pack in the early laps, only to be reeled back in again. "I had a few problems with the brakes and there was oil on the track – Adam and I were struggling like crazy," he explained.

The outcome was the same in race two, as Pullan converted pole to victory.

OLIVER TIMSON

➔ **P78** FULL RESULTS



STYLES



Smith and Williams share wins

JOSHUA SMITH AND LUKE Williams shared the victory spoils at Oulton Park in the opening rounds of the Northern FF1600 Post-'89 class.

Polesitter Smith was able to make a break on the first lap in his Firman RF16, but was soon caught by Tom Bradshaw's Oldfield Van Diemen, up from sixth.

Bradshaw made some lunges at Smith, but had to settle for second, with David McArthur just keeping Ross Martin at bay for third after brother Tom retired. Williams fought back to grab a late fifth from Matthew Cowley having been left behind at the start.

It soon became a three-way battle in race two, with Bradshaw heading the duelling Smith and Williams. After Williams secured second he attacked for the lead, passing Bradshaw around the outside at Druids to seal the victory. Smith followed Williams past Bradshaw, with Martin claiming third a lap from home.

Jaap Blijleven (Reynard) reigned supreme over a sparse Pre-'90 grid, and led both races from start to finish. It was much closer for second in race one, in which Nathan Parton was embroiled in a race-long fight with Chris Stones. When Parton exited Cascades on the grass, Stones was through, only to make a mistake at Island and hand the place back. Stones got his revenge in race two, albeit 25 seconds behind the winner.

No-one seriously challenged Ed Hayes' Boxster in the Toyo Tires Porsche races. Adam Southgate briefly led in race one, but a couple of grassy moments left him down in fourth behind the duel between James Coleman and Nick Hull, which went the way of Coleman.

Hayes was even more dominant in race two, but it was a three-way battle to the flag behind him.

Coleman just held on to the position, with Garry Lawrence and Hull in his wheeltracks.

Nevertheless, the Boxsters were overshadowed for entertainment by the 924 class. Richard Styryn (reigning overall champion in a Boxster last year) and Pip Hammond were inches apart in race one until Hammond made an unsuccessful move to the outside at Old Hall and left Styryn in the clear. The result was the same in race two, but Hammond had to come from the back this time.

Once Graham Seager's 147 GTV had expired, Roger McMahon (GTA) was on his own at the head of the BRSCC Alfa Romeo series. The McFie brothers, Chris and Simon, completed the podium in their Fiat Puntos after Ray Foley's 147 GTA overheated, while Tom Hill drove a very wide 156 to keep Andrew Bourke's GTC at bay for fifth and a class win.

Chris McFie comfortably won race two, and brother Simon's retirement left Hill in second – until he too pitted after spilling gearbox oil. That left Bourke and Simon Cresswell in 156s to complete the podium.

Regular XR Challenge race winner Mark Robinson took two victories at Oulton, but had to work hard for it. Michael Blackburn held second throughout race one, leaving Neil Waterworth and Justin Roberts to dispute the final podium position. Roberts quit the race with an air lock in his cooling system, leaving Waterworth clear of Greg Speight and Andrew Lennie.

Waterworth led from the start of the second race, but had to give best to Robinson from Old Hall on lap three. Blackburn snatched second a lap later, with Speight third after Waterworth pulled off.

PETER SCHERER

RESULTS

SILVERSTONE BARC

MIGHTY MINIS (BOTH 16 LAPS)

1 Scott Kendall (Super); 2 Louise Inch (Super) +0.013s; 3 Adrian Tuckley (Super); 4 Greg Jenkins (Super); 5 Alex Comis (Super); 6 David Kirkpatrick (Super). **Class winner** Damien Harrington (Mighty). **Fastest lap** Inch 1m15.159s (78.57mph). **Pole** Tuckley. **Starters** 32.

RACE 2 1 Kendall; 2 Tuckley +0.120s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Inch; 5 Steve Rideout (Super); 6 Comis. **CW** Harrington. **FL** Jenkins 1m15.061s (78.67mph). **P** Joshua Young (Super). **S** 32.

CLIO CUP SERIES (BOTH 18 LAPS)

1 Ben Palmer; 2 Anton Spires +0.190s; 3 Nick White; 4 Jon Billingsley; 5 Sarah Franklin; 6 Richard Colburn. **CW** Colburn. **FL** Palmer 1m06.845s (88.34mph). **P** Spires. **S** 12.

RACE 2 1 Spires; 2 Palmer +4.330s; 3 Tyler Lidsey; 4 White; 5 Billingsley; 6 Franklin. **CW** Nic Harrison. **FL** Spires 1m06.080s (89.37mph). **P** Spires. **S** 12.

CLASSIC FORMULA FORD 1600 (BOTH 19 LAPS)

1 Adriano Medeiros (Van Diemen RF80); 2 Mark Armstrong (RF80) +14.280s; 3 Stuart Kestenbaum (Crossle 16F); 4 Douglas Crosbie (RF80); 5 Mark Bates (Royale RP24); 6 Peter Chippendale (Royale RP26). **CW** Kestenbaum. **FL** Medeiros 1m04.143s (92.07mph). **P** Medeiros. **S** 17.

RACE 2 1 Medeiros; 2 Armstrong +25.953s; 3 Crosbie; 4 Bates; 5 Chippendale; 6 Kestenbaum.

CW Kestenbaum. **FL** Medeiros 1m03.621s (92.82mph). **P** Medeiros. **S** 15.

JUNIOR SALOON CAR (8 LAPS)

1 Ethan Hammerton; 2 Sam Kirkpatrick +0.234s; 3 Thorburn Astin; 4 Lydia Walmsley; 5 Gordon Mutch; 6 George Smith. **FL** Astin 1m13.760s (80.06mph). **P** Will Dyrdal. **S** 19.

RACE 2 (13 LAPS) 1 Dyrdal; 2 Mutch +2.897s; 3 Astin; 4 Hammerton; 5 Kirkpatrick; 6 Smith. **FL** Astin 1m14.000s (79.80mph). **P** Mutch. **S** 18.

BRITISH SUPERKART (ALL 16 LAPS)

1 Stephen Clark (Anderson/KTM 450); 2 Gareth James (Anderson/DEA) +14.033s; 3 Tom Rushforth (Spyda/VM); 4 Paul Platt (PVP/Gas Gas); 5 Dan Clark (Anderson/Redspeed Gas Gas); 6 Mark Gellately (Anderson/DEA).

CW James; Rushforth; Liam Morley (Anderson/DEA). **FL** Rushforth 58.063s (101.71mph). **P** Jack Layton (Anderson/DEA). **S** 40. **RACE 2**

1 Rushforth; 2 James +0.464s; 3 Platt; 4 Clark; 5 Tom Hatfield (Anderson/DEA); 6 Andy Waite (Anderson/KTM 450). **CW** James; Clark; Morley. **FL** Rushforth 57.589s (102.54mph). **P** Rushforth. **S** 40. **RACE 3 1 Gavin Bennett (Anderson/DEA)**; 2 Clark +3.154s; 3 James; 4 Hatfield; 5 Platt; 6 Rushforth. **CW** Clark; Rushforth; Morley. **FL** James 57.280s (103.10mph). **P** Rushforth. **S** 36.

MG OWNERS CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP (BOTH 17 LAPS)

1 Simon Kendrick (MGF); 2 Alan Forster (MG ZR) +0.120s; 3 Mark Baker (MGF); 4 Steve Williams (MG ZR); 5 Stuart Philips (MG ZR); 6 Phil Walker (MG ZR). **CW** Forster; Jim Baynam (MGB). **FL** Philips 1m11.629s (82.44mph). **P** Baker. **S** 15. **RACE 2 1 Forster**; 2 Kendrick +2.413s; 3 Stuart Plotnek (MG F); 4 Philips; 5 Williams; 6 Nick Golhar (MG ZR). **CW** Kendrick; Baynam. **FL** Kendrick 1m11.377s (82.73mph). **P** Kendrick. **S** 14.

HYUNDAI COUPE CUP (BOTH 13 LAPS) 1 Alex Cursley; 2 William Taylforth +2.542s; 3 Kevin Middleton; 4 Simon Miles; 5 James Goodwin; 6 Steve Kite. **FL** Miles 1m13.390s (80.46mph). **P** Cursley. **S** 18.

RACE 2 1 Cursley; 2 Miles +4.924s; 3 Taylforth; 4 Middleton; 5 Kite; 6 Neale Hurren. **FL** Miles 1m13.600s (80.24mph). **P** Cursley. **S** 18.

MAX5 (BOTH 18 LAPS) 1 Jon Halliwell (MX-5 Mk4 2000); 2 Paul Roddison (Mk4) +3.008s; 3 Ian Loversidge (Mk4); 4 Jeremy Shipley (Mk4); 5 Matthew Tidmarsh (MX-5 Mk3 2000); 6 Chris Webster (Mk3). **CW** Tidmarsh; Daniel Grist (MX-5 1600). **FL** Roddison 1m09.444s (85.04mph). **P** Halliwell. **S** 18.

RACE 2 1 Halliwell; 2 Roddison +1.718s; 3 Loversidge; 4 Shipley; 5 Tidmarsh; 6 Webster. **CW** Tidmarsh; Michael Kirk (1600). **FL** Roddison 1m09.193s (85.35mph). **P** Halliwell. **S** 18.

KIRKISTOWN 500MRCI

NORTHERN IRELAND FF1600 (BOTH 16 LAPS)

1 Kevin O'Hara (Van Diemen RF01); 2 James Roe (Van Diemen RF99) +0.811s; 3 Jake Byrne (Ray GR15); 4 Alan Davidson (Mondiale M89S); 5 Keith Donegan (Van Diemen JH013K); 6 Andy O'Brien (Van Diemen RF00). **CW** Davidson; Ian McCulla (Reynard FF83); Arnie Black (Crossle 32F). **FL** O'Hara 1m00.864s (89.43mph). **P** O'Hara. **S** 17.

RACE 2 1 O'Hara; 2 Davidson +4.920s; 3 Niall Murray (Van Diemen LA10); 4 Roe; 5 Donegan; 6 O'Brien.

CW Davidson; McCulla; Nicky Gibson (Crossle 40F). **FL** O'Hara 1m00.852s (89.45mph). **P** O'Hara. **S** 16.

FORMULA SHEANE (BOTH 16 LAPS)

1 Brian Hearty; 2 David Parks +2.537s; 3 Mark Dunleavy; 4 Chris McCabe; 5 Gary Corcoran; 6 Leslie Shaw. **FL** Hearty 1m00.848s (89.45mph). **P** Hearty. **S** 10. **RACE 2 1 Dunleavy**;

2 McCabe +7.378s; 3 Kevin Sheane; 4 Corcoran; 5 Richard Kearney; 6 Martin Rafferty. **FL** Dunleavy 1m01.069s (89.13mph). **P** Hearty. **S** 10.

FORD FIESTA ZETEC (BOTH 13 LAPS) 1 Jonny Forsythe; 2 Adrian Finnegan +0.547s; 3 Thomas Agnew; 4 Stuart Agnew; 5 Daniel Conlon; 6 Mark Stewart. **FL** T Agnew 1m16.537s (71.12mph). **P** T Agnew. **S** 13.

RACE 2 1 Forsythe; 2 Finnegan +0.218s; 3 S Agnew; 4 Conlon;



The team to take on Cammish

Will the expertise and experience of JTR boss Nick Tandy help put an end to the double champ's domination of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB?

By Stephen Lickorish, Special Contributor

[@sdlickorish](#)

A lot has been written about Dan Cammish during his past two seasons in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB – his incredible success means there has been a lot to write. But now there are some new threats to the Yorkshireman's supremacy. Le Mans 24 Hours winner Nick Tandy's JTR team has entered the series, and the squad's driver line-up is impressive.

Dino Zamparelli has been the one person to really pose a threat

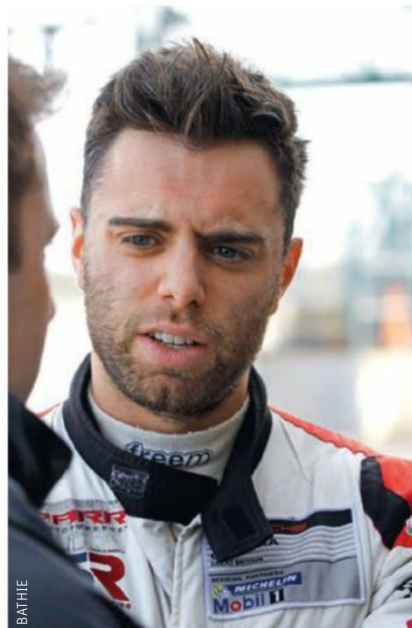
to Cammish's domination, and now he will benefit from the expertise of Porsche expert Tandy. Add in single-seater convert Tio Ellinas and the improving Lewis Plato, and you've got a team that could really challenge the champion.

Unsurprisingly, Tandy is feeling upbeat. "The ambition is the same and that's to win races and fight for the championship," he says. "Testing's been great – we've got high hopes. We've got a guy that's going for the rookie championship in Tio, which is important and that's why Porsche offers prizes for rookie drivers. Then we've got the experience of Dino as a championship

challenger and we've got a second-year driver in Lewis who will definitely build on his rookie season, so it's a good line-up."

So JTR has got the drivers to take the fight to Cammish and his Redline squad. But what will give Zamparelli the ability to challenge him throughout a season?

"It's down to hard work and preparation," states Tandy. "I helped Dan a lot when he first went into Porsches [having won the British Formula Ford title with JTR two years before] – the help and experience worked very well. He's become one of the dominant forces in the UK. We're hoping Dan does well,



“I’m not going to hold back this year. I’m not going for second or third, I’m going for the win”

ONES TO WATCH

DRIVER	TEAM
Dan Cammish	Redline
Dino Zamparelli	JTR
Charlie Eastwood	Redline
Tio Ellinas	JTR
Tom Oliphant	Redline
Tom Wrigley	In2Racing



but from the team’s point of view we are doing everything we can to beat him and his team-mates.

“We know from previous years the way to win championships and be a successful team is not just the work on the car but to work with your drivers, and make sure everything they do from a race-weekend point of view is as good as it can be. That’s something that differentiates us from other teams.”

Zamparelli is certainly looking forward to working with Tandy. He rattled Cammish at Croft last year by closing to within three points, but then an unidentified problem with the car meant he quickly lost ground again. Now with Tandy’s support that sort of issue should no longer be a problem.

“Nick Tandy is Nick Tandy – we know what he has done and what he’s achieved, so I’m going to use all of his experience and expertise,” Zamparelli says. “He is a person I can get in the car and see if there are any issues. He tested the car and developed it and he can say this is definitely how it should run.

Zamparelli’s move to JTR pairs him with Tandy – a combination that could threaten Cammish (above, right) this season

“We were giving Cammish a real battle [last year] and then we just didn’t get that issue sorted and weren’t able to bring it to him. Dan is a quick guy; if your car is not on point, he is going to take the win.

“I’m not going to hold back this year. I’m not going for second or third – I’m going for the win.”

Winning is something that JTR is certainly familiar with after taking three Fford titles in three years from 2012 – following earlier F3 glory – but the series’ move to an FIA Formula 4 format and the introduction of big-hitters Carlin, Arden and Fortec meant success was hard to find.

“It was the natural thing for us to do,” says Tandy of the switch to Porsches. “The Carrera Cup is the highest and most-backed manufacturer championship in the UK, and as a UK-based team that’s where we want to be. Being with Porsche for a few years, it makes sense with those links – and we wanted a change.”

Despite the challenge of dealing with

JTR’s arrival and having to miss the Snetterton round (which clashes with his Porsche Supercup commitments at the Hungaroring), Cammish remains unfazed.

“It’s going to be another tough year,” he says. “Everyone’s got a lot of experience – you’re looking at second or third-year drivers. [JTR’s] not a worry, I don’t think. I’m in a good team [Redline, one of only three squads to power drivers to Carrera Cup crowns] and if there was a way to magically go faster we would’ve found it by now. I think most of us have maxed out.

“JTR will come up to the same level, whether it takes them a couple of rounds or straight away. I can see them going the same speed, but I can’t see them going any quicker. I think it has plateaued now.

“Everyone knows about that [missing Snetterton]. I think this is a good opportunity for those guys – the pressure will be on them. I don’t feel the pressure. How can I when I’m already starting from less?”

It won’t be long until we find out. >>



BRITISH F4

Will 2017 be sweet for Caroline?

Few drivers have experienced as many highs and lows in their careers as Jamie Caroline, yet he's only been racing cars for three seasons.

In 2015 he endured the rollercoaster ride of being a shoo-in for the Ginetta Junior title, only to lose it by a single point after a jumped-start penalty in the final round, before being crowned champion after all following a protest.

Then last year in British F4 there was his incredible opening lap in the wet at Donington Park, where he surged up the order in sublime style only to throw his car off the road on the next tour. But through those peaks and troughs he has now emerged as favourite for this year's F4 title.

It's not hard to see why Caroline is a leading contender: at Carlin, he's driving for a team with an unmatched record in the category, and is a talented driver with excellent racecraft. But the main reason why he enters this year's F4 contest as favourite is that he will be the only one on the grid who has previously won in the category. There were an incredible 10 different winners in the series last year, but only Caroline has a full-season drive secured this time around.

So with all that weighing in his favour, you could expect him to be feeling the heat a little. Not a bit of it – Caroline is untroubled by the challenge ahead.

"I don't feel any extra pressure," he says. "If you start to worry about things too much, that's when you make mistakes."

Caroline is no stranger to being the favourite. He entered 2015 as a race

winner in Juniors the previous year and had switched to the frontrunning team. This time, however, he is without the flush of success that winning the Ginetta Winter Series brought two years ago. Instead he can only reflect on a disappointing 2016 – "I got messed around a bit throughout the year" is his take on Jamun's withdrawal and the switch to Fortec that disrupted his season. It finally came good at Brands Hatch as Caroline claimed his maiden win, but he doesn't believe that counts for much.

"It was a benefit – not having won for that long was bad!" he admits. "I was starting to forget what it was like leading a race."

But never in doubt was Caroline's ability to master a wet track. That lap at Donington, where he passed nine cars, was a bright spot. The YouTube video amassed more than 12,000 hits and won Caroline a fanbase.

"It was one of very few highlights last year," he says. "I know if it's a wet race I have a bit of an advantage. My dad [ex-TVRC ace Lee] used to teach me to drive around the fields, so I'm used to sliding. The second I'm on a track I want to get going – I've always been that little bit better on the first few laps when others are faffing around."

Caroline expects this F4 season to play out in a similar fashion to the last, with a variety of drivers in contention. Times in testing have been evenly matched – his team-mate Logan Sargeant, Arden's Oscar Piastrri, Double R's Linus Lundqvist and JHR's Billy Monger have all impressed. As for Caroline, his focus is ending the year with his biggest high yet.



Caroline heads into F4 season as a favourite

ONES TO WATCH

DRIVER	TEAM
Jamie Caroline	Carlin
Logan Sargeant	Carlin
Oscar Piastrri	Arden
Ayrton Simmons	Arden
Linus Lundqvist	Double R
Oliver York	Fortec

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Pyro bids to reclaim top spot

Team Pyro's record in the Renault UK Clio Cup is unmatched. Between 2012 and '15 its drivers claimed the title every season, with wins for Jack Goff, Josh Files, Mike Bushell and Ash Sutton. But last year the squad was knocked off its perch. A dramatic final round led to Jamsport and Ant Whorton-Eales emerging victorious, with Bushell and Pyro left deflated.

The disappointment of missing out on the crown by just eight points is one of the main reasons why Bushell has returned this year. And he's hungrier than ever to bounce back from last season's disappointment and restore Pyro to the top once more.

"The pain of losing is one of the biggest reasons why I wanted to return, as I feel like I've let my family down," he says. "This will be my third year with them now and there is no other team I would want to race with in Clios. It's like a little family."

Not that he wants reminding, but Bushell's title hopes were dashed in unbelievable circumstances at Brands Hatch last year when he spun off behind the safety car in race one and was then taken out after contact with Whorton-Eales in the finale. But he intends to use that disappointment to his advantage.

"After being so close, I have now won the championship and lost the

championship, so my experience has definitely gone up," he says.

Now he's back and is happy to remain in the series for another year – his fifth since 2012, with just one unsuccessful foray into the British Touring Car Championship in '15.

"I just love driving a Clio," Bushell says. "I don't have the budget to progress, otherwise I would be looking beyond that. I remember when we were going into my first year in 2012 and it was massive – there was an awe to it."

"With the new Michelin tyres [for 2017] the cars are a bit more lively and it makes it a bit more exciting. And there's a bigger grid this year, and you always want to win when there's a bigger grid."

But that grid will be without one Pyro driver who was expected to be on it. Josh Price claimed his maiden win in the Brands finale and was signed to remain with the squad for this year. However, Team BMR then came calling with a Subaru BTCC drive...

On the eve of the season, the news caught team boss Mark Hunt by surprise and left him trying to see if he could fill the hole. But Pyro does still have one youngster on its books: 16-year-old karting graduate Jack McCarthy has impressed Bushell in testing.

As for Pyro's other rivals for this year, there's one person Bushell singles out. "The one name I always put down at the top of my list is Paul Rivett," he



Bushell (above and below) is aiming to bring success back for Pyro this year

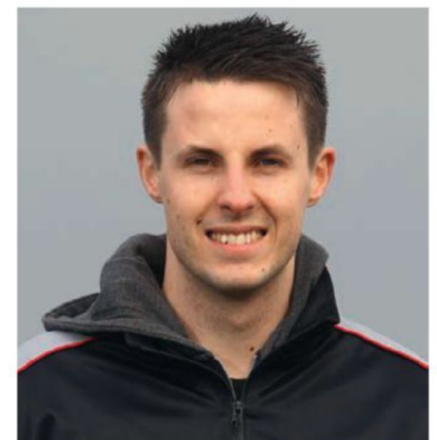
states. "He's hard to beat – last year at Thruxton was the first time I've ever managed to overtake him."

"It's nice to have a few other faces in there – [James] Colburn's coming back and [Lee] Pattison always has a good turn of speed, and Paul Streather too."

With so many strong contenders, you can be sure Pyro has a fight on its hands this year. >>



ALL PICS: EBREV/LAT



ONES TO WATCH

DRIVER	TEAM
Mike Bushell	Pyro
Paul Rivett	WDE
Max Coates	Ciceley
Lee Pattison	WDE
Paul Streather	WDE
James Colburn	PP

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

A turnaround in fortunes

The Ginetta GT4 Supercup has come a long way since Knockhill last summer. Just 14 cars turned up for that round, but entries have increased since then. At least 20 drivers should take part in this weekend's opener, with a wealth of new and familiar teams joining the grid.

For the past few seasons the Supercup has generally (save for the 2015 Brands finale, when a bumper entry was attracted) had the smallest grids of all the series on the British Touring Car Championship support bill. Not any longer, it seems.

"It will be the biggest first-round grid we have had since the G50 days, which is good," says championship manager Ash Gallagher. "It's getting better year on year. We made a few changes at the start of last year in terms of testing restrictions and Friday tyre restrictions, which are coming to fruition now.

"Generally we are starting to see a lot of people move up from the GT5 Challenge and Junior, and the ladder is really starting to help us now, which is nice. We've also got a strong Am class, so I don't think it's because of one single reason."

A significant proportion of those extra entries comes from the Xentek Motorsport squad. The team won the GT5 title with Ollie Chadwick last year and dipped a toe in the Supercup at the tail end of the season. A four-car entry suggests team co-owner Chris Richards was impressed.

"We tried it out and we have all worked in the TOCA paddock before, so it would be a natural progression,"



he says. "It's great for the drivers' sponsors with it being on live TV, and it's just a good championship run very well by Ginetta. It's a good place for us to go as a team with bigger GT cars.

"You've got to go in big or don't bother. We're not here to make up the numbers. We want to take it to JHR, HHC, Century, TCR and Rob Boston Racing – they've all won the championship, so it's going to be a good competition against the big boys."

Leading Xentek's fight is Carl Boardley, who is the only one of last year's top five drivers to remain in the series for this year (he was third in 2016). But he can expect a tough fight from the likes of Callum Pointon and George Gamble, who are representing the Supercup returns of Ginetta giants HHC and JHR.

Elsewhere Jack Mitchell (under the Laser Tools Racing banner) and Charlie Ladell will carry the fight for Rob Boston Racing, which took Tom Wrigley to the 2016 crown. "I don't feel any extra pressure," says Boston. "But we've got two different bits of equipment this year. Each car has its own quirks."

Although Mitchell is currently only down to contest six of the eight rounds because of clashing British GT commitments, Boston is hopeful that if a championship challenge materialises that may change.

So it's clear that with so much interest, the championship is doing something right – and that's without mentioning British Touring Car squad Team Hard's debut in the Am class with Dan Kirby. With so many great ingredients, it's sure to be a fascinating year.

ONES TO WATCH

DRIVER	TEAM
Carl Boardley	Xentek
Jack Mitchell	Laser Tools Racing
Callum Pointon	HHC
George Gamble	JHR
Ben Green	Century
Declan Jones	Century

Boardley is the highest-placed finisher from last year to return for 2017



ALL PICS: EBREVILAT



ONES TO WATCH

DRIVER	TEAM
Seb Priaulx	JHR
Daniel Harper	Douglas
Harry King	Elite
Tom Gamble	JHR
Tom Wood	HHC
Kiern Jewiss	Douglas

GINETTA JUNIOR

Priaulx under pressure

No driver who's won the Ginetta Junior Winter Series has finished outside the top two in the standings the following year if they've completed a full season. No wonder Seb Priaulx is feeling a little bit under pressure.

The 16-year-old son of three-time World Touring Car champion Andy was triumphant in last November's contest. Combined with his strong seventh in the points in his maiden season of car racing, that make him one of the favourites for this season.

"It's different to last year – I've got more pressure," Priaulx admits. "But I feel good; I feel very secure in the car at the moment. This year is going to be a tough year, but I'm quite good under pressure.

"The Winter Series was a good win for me, my first proper win. We've now got to perform like that every weekend. I do a lot of mind coaching and that really helps in the races, and visualisation as well,

and it helps with nerves before a race."

That last comment sounds just like his father, who is renowned for his methodical approach. But at the same time Priaulx is keen to find his own path.

"My dad helps me out a bit – he knows what it's like – but he doesn't come onto the grid sometimes," he says. "Some dads force their kids too much, but you've got to go your own way.

"The name can sometimes help, but in other cases it can make it harder. I've grown up around racing, but I just love it and not just because my dad's doing it."

That's clear from speaking to the JHR Developments driver – his love for the sport is obvious. But he faced a difficult decision for 2017: a test in an F4 car towards the end of last year whetted his appetite for a single-seater switch.

"I really loved the single-seaters – next year I would like to do F4, and I think that's on the cards," says Priaulx. "My dad taught me you've got to grind out and win a championship. Some

Priaulx (both pictures) carries the pressure of having won 2016's Winter Series

people jump out of Juniors to F4 to F3 without winning a championship and move up very quickly, but I want to try to get championships.

"I did some F4 testing and it was a difficult choice – the F4 car was awesome. It's a lot of money and you've got to work out what's best. As I knew the Ginetta, we thought we'd do that this year rather than jump into a car I didn't know, but I'm going to do some F4 testing alongside the Juniors."

Priaulx is far from alone in deciding to spend another season in the Ginetta series. He was part of a close three-way fight for rookie-class honours last season with (eventual winner) Daniel Harper and Harry King. All three are back, and have the continuity of staying with their respective teams.

There are some talented newbies on the grid for 2017 too, such as Douglas Motorsport's pair of karting stars Kiern Jewiss and Tom Canning, so it's sure to be a typically unpredictable year. ❄️

WHAT'S ON

VLN doesn't need to aim for the sky

IT WAS EASY TO MISS AMID SKY and Channel 4's blanket coverage of the Australian Grand Prix, but last Saturday heralded a new era for the VLN Endurance Series as the Nurburgring Nordschleife-based championship was broadcast in English for the first time.

VLN's USP is simple. Rather than staging a main event for the 34 GT3 runners in the SP9 class and organising support races for the rest, all 180 entrants share the track together, offering ideal preparation for the Nurburgring 24 Hours in May.

It's proved to be a hugely popular format, luring Sebring 12 Hours winner Alex Lynn and former F1 driver Will Stevens to join the ever-growing British contingent frequenting the Green Hell – and for good reason too.

“Its quirkiness is what makes VLN stand out”

Aside from the explosion of manufacturer involvement offering opportunities for employment – Mercedes, Porsche, Audi, Bentley, BMW and Aston Martin all had works teams at last year's race – the challenge of negotiating the hordes of slower traffic is almost unparalleled in modern motorsport. Leader Laurens Vanthoor discovered that to his cost with 10 minutes left on the clock.

With excellent racing, and top-drawer driving talent – Timo Scheider and Tom Onslow-Cole made their factory BMW debuts, while Edo Mortara turned out in a Mercedes for the first time – VLN has plenty going for it. A fascinating mix of cars, including Kissling Motorsport's 'foxtail' Opel Manta, is a bonus.

But even for those willing to devote four hours of their afternoon, it had always been a profoundly frustrating series to follow for anybody without the

luxury of a German GCSE to fall back on. The language barrier means interviews with the Ring's hardened veterans do little to aid understanding, and even live timing is of questionable use when each lap takes around eight minutes and neglects to say which driver is behind the wheel.

It made a pleasant change, therefore, to have English-language commentary this time. Radio Le Mans, on the international feed, introduced VLN to new audiences whose familiarity with the Nordschleife may be limited to computer games and Sabine Schmitz segments on *Top Gear*.

Coverage was as polished as could reasonably be expected for a first attempt. Since cameras are in thin supply around the Nordschleife, the commentators were often restricted to discussing what they could see from on-board. Without an on-site reporter to patrol the pitlane, there was no opportunity to follow up when teams had issues, or to gain extra insight into strategies as they unfolded. No mention was made of the Audi and Mercedes works teams experimenting with different tyre companies.

Yet while the addition of an English-language broadcast team improved the viewing experience and shone a light on those competing in it, this should be tempered with an element of caution.

The relaxed, low-key nature of VLN is a significant part of the appeal for manufacturers. They frequently use the series to develop new cars without needing to homologate them first, freeing them from the intense scrutiny that comes with entering a factory team in one of the more high-profile GT series. Would Lexus have been quite so patient with its troubled first-generation RCF GT3 if VLN races were as accessible as they are now? It's impossible to say.

VLN's quirkiness is precisely what makes it stand out from the crowd. The series would do well to consider international broadcasting as a missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle, rather than as the start of a crusade to turn it into an inferior copy of something else.

JAMES NEWBOLD



Eclectic mix of machinery part of VLN's charm

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VLN has attracted a big grid, but does that mean it needs coverage?

XPBIMAGES



Alexander Sims
one of growing
VLN Brit-pack

XPBIMAGES



HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube ALL THE BEST ACTION FROM OZ

Search for: Vettel Wins 2017 Australian Grand Prix Race Highlights

What a difference a new regime makes. For the first time F1's YouTube channel is running race highlights, kicking off with this six-and-a-half-minute round-up from Melbourne. It had already clocked up 600,000 views by Tuesday lunchtime...



TV PICK
OF THE
WEEK

BTCC BRANDS HATCH

ITV4

Sunday 1100

Combine a short Brands Hatch Indy circuit with a grid full of drivers eager to impress, and the British Touring Car Championship season opener makes must-see television. ITV4's traditional day-long coverage begins for another year this weekend, featuring support-race action too. Let the fun and games begin...

EBREVLAT

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

FIA FORMULA E

Rd 4/9

Mexico City, Mexico

April 1

WATCH ON TV

Live Channel 5 Saturday
2230

EUROPEAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Rd 1/8

Azores Rally, Ponta
Delgada, Portugal

March 30-April 1

BLANCPAIN SPRINT CUP

Rd 1/5

Misano, Italy

April 1-2

WATCH ON TV

Live BT Sport/ ESPN
Sunday 1045

V8 STOCK CARS

Rd 1/12

Goiania, Brazil

April 2

WORLD RALLYCROSS

Rd 1/12

Barcelona, Spain

April 1-2

WATCH ON TV

Live Motorsport.tv
Sunday 1300

JAPANESE FORMULA 3

Rd 1/9

Okayama, Japan

April 1-2

NASCAR CUP

Rd 6/36

Martinsville, Virginia, USA

April 2

WATCH ON TV

Live Premier Sport Sunday
1830

TCR INTERNATIONAL

Rd 1/10

Rustavi, Georgia

April 2

UK MOTORSPORT

SILVERSTONE 24 HOURS

March 30-April 2

24H TCE, Super 7 Series

OULTON PARK 750MC

April 1

Clio 182, Formula Vee,
Locost, Civic Cup, MX-5
Cup, M3 Cup

BRANDS HATCH TOCA

April 1-2

BTCC, F4, Carrera Cup,
Renault Clios, Ginetta GT4,
Ginetta Juniors

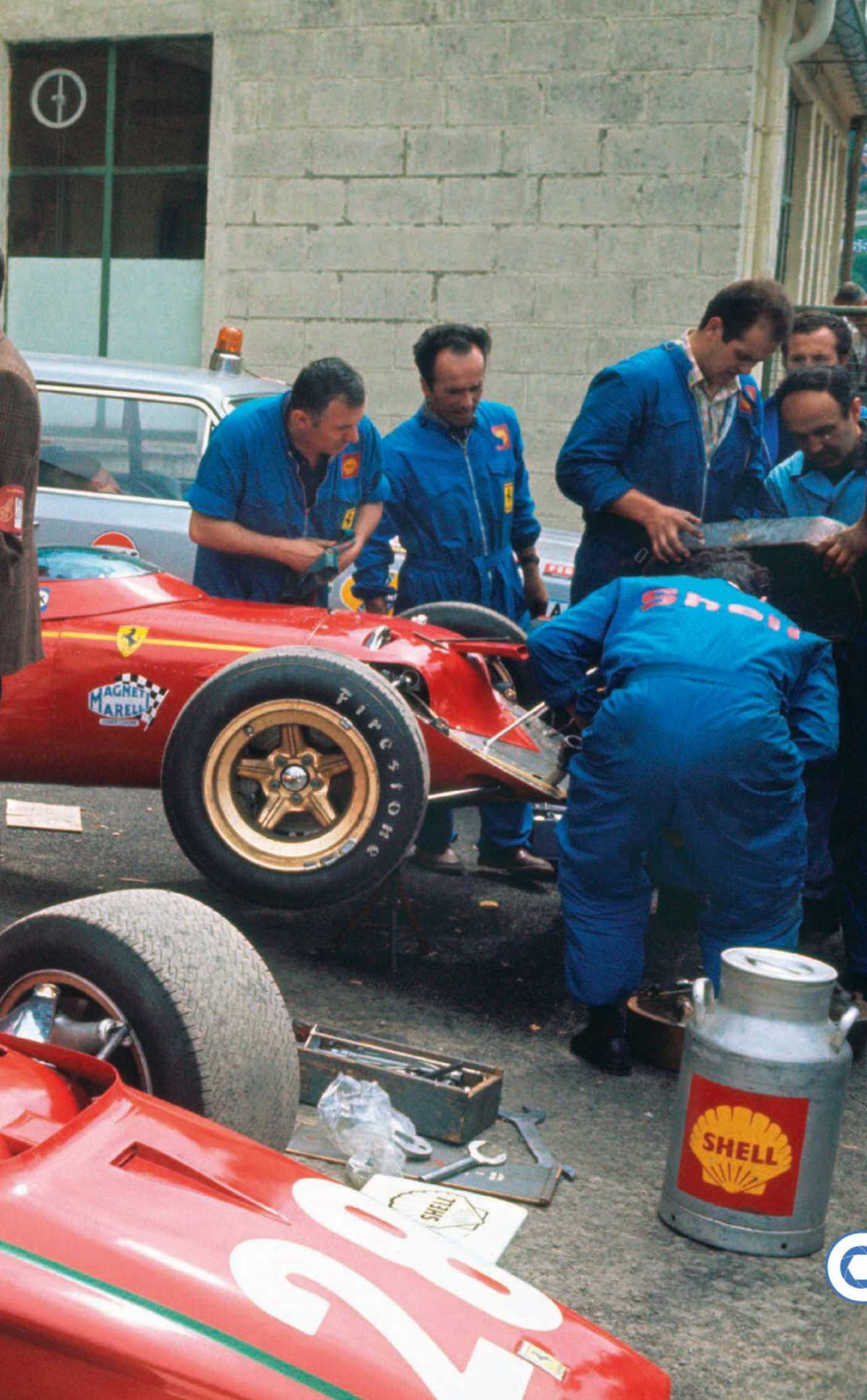
Live ITV4 Sunday 1100

SNETTERTON CSCC

April 1-2

Morgans, Jaguar Saloon/
GT, Tin Tops, Swinging
Sixties, Future Classics,
Magnificent 7s, New
Millennium, Open Series





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Doyen of Italian motorsport journalists – and one-time Ferrari team manager – Franco Lini (centre, right) quizzes Scuderia star Jacky Ickx and boss Mauro Forghieri in the Spa paddock at the 1970 Belgian Grand Prix. Ickx was classified in eighth place, after fuel leaking into the cockpit forced him to pit for new overalls, while team-mate Ignazio Giunti brought the sister #28 Ferrari 312B home fourth.



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STEPHANE SARRAZIN

IT MIGHT SEEM ODD TO SUGGEST THAT a rising French single-seater ace making his Formula 1 debut as a substitute driver at Minardi qualifies as a 'have-a-go-hero'. In the context of Stephane Sarrazin's subsequent career, though, the 1999 Brazilian Grand Prix is very much an anomaly.

In the late 1990s Sarrazin was an encouraging talent, backing up his 1994 French Formula Renault title by finishing runner-up in French Formula 3 in 1997 and winning in his first year in Formula 3000 the following season.

A second year, with the Prost junior team, beckoned. He complemented his campaign – another race-winning effort – with a serious testing programme for Alain's F1 operation. Five tests, and 13 days in total, made Sarrazin a busy man.

Then came the call-up – Luca Badoer had broken his leg and Minardi needed a driver.

"No!" sportscar ace Sarrazin answers when asked if he had any warning of his Minardi chance. "I was testing at Barcelona with Prost. They called me and I went to Brazil with no preparation. I met the team there. It was really exciting, I had a very good weekend with them."

Sarrazin qualified 17th, ahead of both Arrows and team-mate Marc Gene, and was running 11th until he lost his front wing. You may have seen the fan footage of the race-ending crash exiting the final corner...

Sarrazin laughs: "I hit the wall and did a lot of spins! It was a bad end, but it was a good grand prix – I was really quick in qualifying and in a good position. I was very happy. After that we decided to continue with F3000 and not race with Minardi in F1, so it was only one grand prix. I could have done much more."

Sarrazin has a swift and honest reply when asked why that didn't happen. "Because I made the wrong choice," he explains. "I should have continued with Minardi. I was 23, it's difficult to know what to do. When you miss your chance in F1 it's difficult to get another one."

"I had another chance with Prost and they closed the factory, and Toyota in 2002, but I never managed to get a seat. It's a part of the game, you know?"

"It's a good memory for me and a good part of my career." ❦

SCOTT MITCHELL



"Wrong choice" by Sarrazin meant his F1 outing with Minardi was a one-off

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