MOTOR SPORT
www.motorsportmagazine.com



SPIRIT *of* ADVENTURE

DISCOVERED: UNTAMED MOTOR SPORT THAT REFUSES TO CONFORM TO TYPE...

Featuring the Le Mans 24 Hours, Nürburgring 24 Hours and Isle of Man TT

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

DUNLOP
FOREVER FORWARD

I LIVE MY LIFE AT A 45-DEGREE ANGLE.



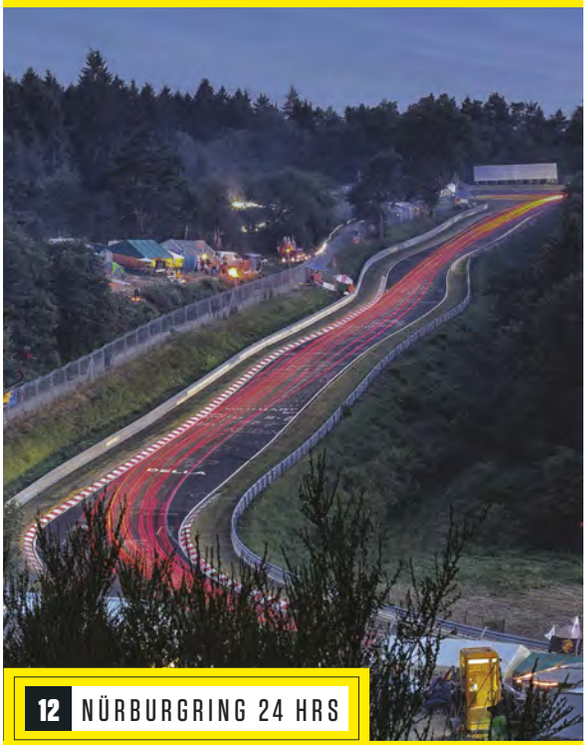
Dunlop tyres are dedicated to real riders. Those who never give up, and most of all, who enjoy the sheer passion and excitement of riding their bikes.
The Dunlop SportSmart² is made for them. The performance and confidence they'd expect on a racetrack, perfectly adapted for the road.

DUNLOP
FOREVER FORWARD

dunlopmotorcycle.eu



4 LE MANS 24 HRS



12 NÜRBURGRING 24 HRS



18 ISLE OF MAN TT

GET A GRIP ON THE WORLD'S GREAT MOTOR RACES



From free-thinking innovation and striking originality to ever more constrictive rule-making conformity: it's hard to deny that the rebellious spirit of adventure, which burned brightly at the heart of motor racing, has slowly dimmed over the past 30 years. The dual restraints of finance and safety have heralded the era of the 'spec racer' – one make, one supplier, whether it be for chassis, engines, electronics and even tyres. Tighter regulation is a fact of life in 2015.

Even so, open competition has not been extinguished completely in the modern motor sporting world. It's still there – you just have to look in the right places, as this special magazine, produced in association with Dunlop, investigates.

There are certain races and sporting arenas, all too few in number, that continue to survive on the edge rather than in the middle of the road. The Le Mans 24 Hours has been modernised, as it had to be, but remains untamed, a place to quicken the pulse of the bravest. Likewise, increased run-offs and ever-higher catch-fencing have yet to dilute the majesty of the Nürburgring Nordschleife. The essence of each is just as it was.

But surely no other motor sporting challenge remains as pure and potent as that offered by the Mountain Course on the Isle of Man. The TT, like the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the Nürburgring, stands apart from the sanitised template so common at lesser, newer – and shorter – race circuits.

It's no coincidence that Dunlop centres its competition season around this holy trinity. The tyre company embraces the relative technical freedom these arenas permit, enticed by the prospect of genuine rivalries. In the following pages, we delve deeper into these special races, plus others beyond, to discover how that spirit of adventure still thrives. Rather refreshing, when so much else in motor sport prefers to conform to type.

DAMIEN SMITH, EDITOR

PS: If you are reading this magazine in print, you might like to be aware that it is also available on iPad and Android tablet devices. Our digital version includes video clips to complement the features on Le Mans, the Nürburgring and the Isle of Man TT. To download, visit the app store. For more on these great races, go to ***www.motorsportmagazine.com***

Produced by Motor Sport, 38 Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ. Tel: 020 7349 8497. E-mail: editorial@motorsportmagazine.com

Editor Damien Smith **Written by** Gary Watkins, Sam Smith, Mat Oxley **Art Editor** Damon Cogman **Digital Designer** Zamir Walimohamed **Commercial Director** Sean Costa **Advertising** Mike O'Hare **Publisher** Sophia Dempsey

Printed by Precision Colour Printing, Shropshire.
© Motor Sport 2015. www.motorsportmagazine.com.



a SOUND PROVING GROUND

AS A FINISHING SCHOOL FOR YOUNG SPORTS CAR DRIVERS, THE OPEN COMPETITION OF LMP2 IS HARD TO BEAT FOR THOSE WITH AMBITIONS TO WIN LE MANS *by Gary Watkins*

BRENDON HARTLEY, Mike Conway, Olivier Pla and Harry Tincknell are proof positive of the LMP2 division's status as a – if not *the* – training ground for sports car stars of the future. Over the past two seasons, their recruitment by the factory LMP1 teams competing in the World Endurance Championship proves that the eyes of the manufacturers are clearly focused on the P2 prototype division in both the WEC and the European Le Mans Series. The message their presence in the P1 pack in 2015 sends out is that works teams don't have to look very far to find the next generation of talent.

Hartley and co have got their chance to compete at the very pinnacle of sports car racing on the basis of what they achieved in LMP2. They have all been race winners in P2 in either the WEC or the ELMS over the past few years and were among the stand-out drivers competing in an ultra-competitive open class in which they learnt the full range of skills required for their graduation to P1. »

Racing in P2 allows the driver to show off those skills in full view of the manufacturers. Which is exactly why the likes of Hartley, Conway and Tincknell chose the category after deciding to take the plunge and jump off the single-seater ladder.

Conway, who this season contests the full WEC with Toyota after three race appearances in 2014 in his role as test and reserve driver, makes it clear that he opted for LMP2 and the WEC in order to put his talents on display in front of the P1 manufacturers.

"The goal was always to try to attract the attention of a manufacturer and work my way in like that," says Conway. "LMP2 is a good stepping-stone to get to P1." Especially if you happen to win the class in four of the eight races and emerge as the stand-out driver in the division. Which is exactly what Conway did with the ADR/Delta-run G-Drive Racing squad in 2013.

Tincknell, who will race Nissan's new GT-R LM NISMO in the full WEC in 2015, followed Conway's example last season. He raced the Jota Sport team's Zytek-Nissan Z11SN and ended up winning the P2 class at Le Mans and finishing runner-up in the ELMS.

"The idea was to make an impression in P2," he says. "I chose the category because I knew that the factories were looking at it after Brendon and Mike's graduation," he says. "What I didn't think was that I could become a full-season driver with a factory straight away. I thought that was going to be a long shot."

> "P2 IS ABOUT GETTING THE MOST FROM THE CHASSIS-ENGINE COMBINATION YOU HAVE AND THE TYRES YOU ARE RUNNING ON"

Conway, Tincknell and Hartley agree that LMP2 is the perfect training ground for the higher prototype division.

Hartley, who last year was chosen by Porsche to be part of its line-up on its return to top-flight sports car racing for the first time since 1998, is sure that racing in P2 secured his P1 graduation. Not only racing the Murphy Prototypes ORECA in the ELMS and at Le Mans put him on "Porsche's radar", it taught him the skills he required for the move.

"When I first got in the car, it wasn't difficult to drive, so I got on the pace pretty much straightaway," he recalls. "But once I started racing the car, I realised that I had so much to learn about endurance racing. I didn't really appreciate how different it was going to be after moving from single-seaters, but P2 gave me the right environment in which to learn.

"It taught me about sharing a car with other drivers and how you have to be a team player, and it taught me about dealing with traffic, which is such an important part of sports car racing, but it also allowed me to understand how you should approach a weekend of endurance racing."

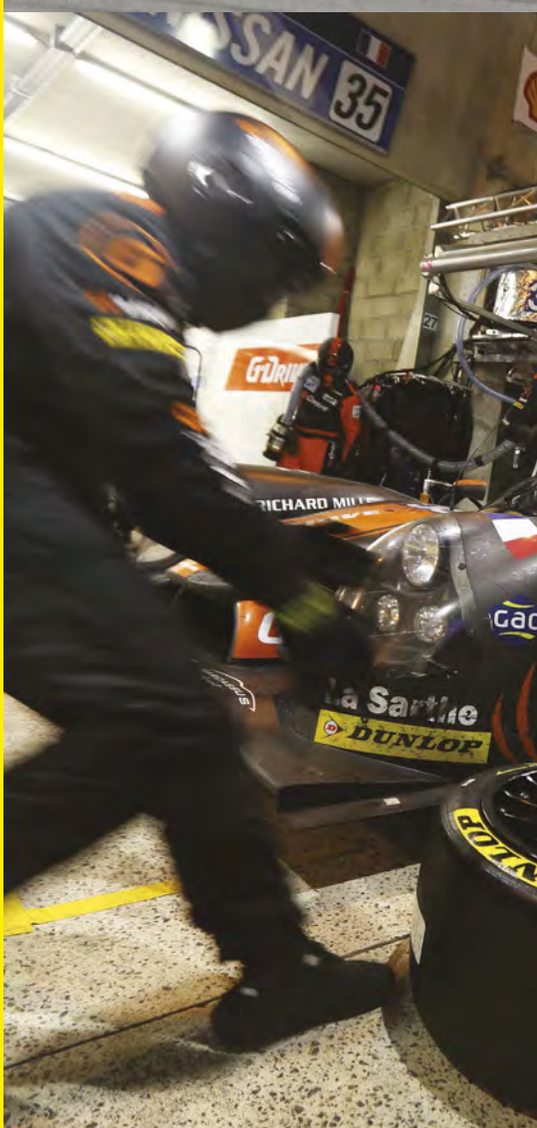
The open LMP2 formula, in which different chassis, engine and tyre manufacturers go up against each other in what can be regarded as a microcosm of P1, is an important part of that learning process, according to Conway.

"It gave me the chance to relearn how to develop a car, which is something I hadn't really done since Formula 3 times," he says. "P2 is about getting the most from the chassis-engine combination you have and the tyres you are running on. The competition is so tough that you have to maximise what you have to steal an advantage on the opposition. That's the key to success in P2."

The recognition of P2 as a training ground for future P1 drivers »



Harry Tincknell shared Jota's Le Mans-winning LMP2 last season... and has since signed for the factory Nissan team







LOWDOWN ON LE MANS 24 HOURS

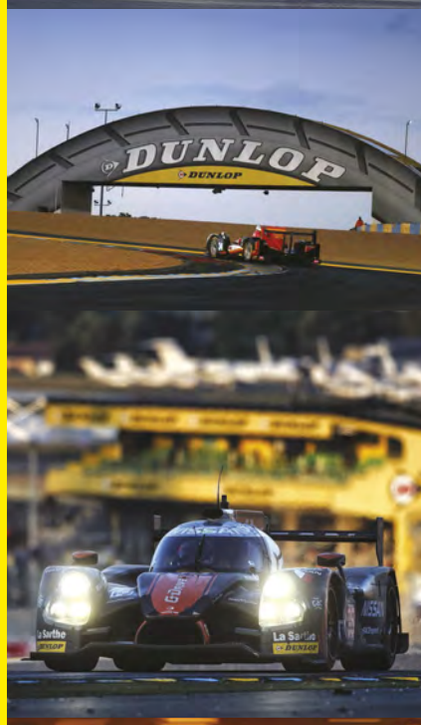
The LMP2 class is an essential and significant component of the grid for the Le Mans 24 Hours, the blue-riband double-points round of the World Endurance Championship and still, in its 83rd year, the most important sports car race in the world. P2 provides the biggest proportion of the 56-strong field with 20 cars on the entry list for this year's race on June 13/14.

P2, as its name suggests, sits under LMP1 in the class structure for the famous race. P1 is the home of the big-budget factory teams – the likes of Audi, Porsche, Toyota and Nissan who since 2014 must incorporate energy-retrieval technology in their contenders – and ambitious privateers such as the Anglo-Swiss Rebellion Racing squad and the German ByKolles team, which can run more conventional machinery. A P1 car produces in the region of 520bhp, which these days hybrid systems boost to more than 1000bhp.

The P2 car is aimed at the privateer and manufacturer teams are specifically prohibited. The regulations have been framed to limit costs and there are no expensive hybrid systems. The rules set a target power output of 450bhp for the mixture of V8 normally aspirated and V6 turbo engines that currently compete in the class at Le Mans.

An LMP2 lap time around the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe is somewhere in the region of 15-20 seconds slower than that of the fastest P1s. That puts them ahead of the GT machinery on the grid at Le Mans. The GTE class is split in two: GTE Pro is, as the name suggests, for all-professional line-ups and is fought out by factory teams from Ferrari, Porsche, Aston Martin and Chevrolet; and GTE Am runs to a pro-am format in which there must be two amateurs in each car line-up.







is being enshrined by the manufacturers, who are forging links with some of the best teams in the division. Audi placed Filipe Albuquerque with Jota for its 2014 ELMS campaign on his switch to P1 from the DTM, a relationship that is continuing this year, while Porsche has started a similar alliance for the benefit of another prototype newbie. Nick Tandy, who will race the third Porsche 919 Hybrid at Le Mans and the Spa 6 Hours, will contest the other six WEC races aboard Chinese entrant KCMG's new ORECA-Nissan 05 coupé.

Jota boss Sam Hignett, who for 2015 has taken on another young driver looking to forge a sports car career in Formula Renault 3.5 and GP3 race winner Nick Yelloly, believes that there is no better training ground for P1 than P2.

"Sports car racing is such a different discipline to single-seaters that these young guys have a lot to learn," he says. "I really believe that P2 offers the best possible educations. I'd go as far as to say it is the only true training ground for P1. They can learn all the tools that they will require should they get picked up by a manufacturer."

The importance of working with your co-drivers for the greater good of the team is perhaps the most important lesson P2 teaches ambitious young drivers arriving from single-seaters, Hignett feels. LMP2 in both the WEC and the ELMS is a pro-am category; a stipulation of the rules is that there must be a least one amateur – a silver or bronze-rated driver according to the FIA's system of driver categorisation – in each line-up. It brings the need to be a team-player – a state of mind exhibited by all the sports car greats – into sharp focus.

"I REALLY BELIEVE THAT P2 OFFERS THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATIONS. I'D GO AS FAR AS TO SAY IT IS THE ONLY TRUE TRAINING GROUND FOR P1"

"You quickly realise that you have to leave the single-minded approach you need in single-seaters at home," says Conway. "It's all about team work and making sure you, as a complete team, are the best you can possibly be. It is so important to make sure that the silver driver who is racing with you is up to speed and comfortable in the car. It's important because it can make a big difference to your overall performance."

Amateur drivers have been an important component of just about every sports car grid throughout the history of long-distance racing. The pro-am rules, which were introduced into the ELMS (then known simply as the Le Mans Series) in 2012 and were part of the WEC rulebook from the rebirth of the series in the same year, enshrine the place of the amateur or 'gentleman driver' in the prototype ranges.

P2 gives them the chance to compete on the world stage and, in the ELMS, allows them to challenge for outright victories in a major sports car series that carries the Le Mans name. LMP2 became the top category in the European series for 2012 when the P1 division was removed from its class structure on the creation of the WEC. Hignett believes that this is a key component on the success of the ELMS, which has had an LMP2 entry that has been every bit as strong and often even stronger than that of the WEC since that time.



Diversity and fierce competition are LMP2 hallmarks – and the size of the field is expected to grow this season

The LMP2 category was created for the 2004 season as a replacement for LMP675, the class in which MG famously made a return to Le Mans with its Lola-built EX257 in 2001-02. The 675 division, which took its name from the minimum weight for the category, had been devised to offer an alternative route to overall victory. P2 was created as a cheaper category that would be a home for privateer and independent teams.

The division underwent major changes for the 2011 when the current formula, which is widely known as cost-capped LMP2, came into being. It was an attempt by the rules makers, the Automobile Club de l'Ouest at Le Mans and the FIA, to reduce costs at the same time as maintaining open competition between chassis constructors, engine builders and tyre suppliers. It was also, in part, a reaction to the Porsche RS Spyder LMP2, which had won the P2 division at Le Mans in the hands of privateer teams in 2008 and '09.

"The Porsche LMP2 at that time was within the rules but not clearly in accordance with the spirit of what we wanted in P2," »



DUNLOP DOWNLOAD

The Le Mans 24 Hours circuit includes a wide variety of surfaces, from low-grip heavily trafficked public road to bespoke high-grip race Tarmac – a perfect challenge for developing future tyre technology.

Thirty-four overall wins make Dunlop the most successful tyre manufacturer in Le Mans history, but in the past few years the tyre company has focused on the highly competitive LMP2 category. Dunlop claims this class, the only category at the race to feature a tyre war in 2014, is the best platform to prove its technology. The parity of the cars, despite the different marques, highlights the difference a tyre specification can make, arguably more so than in the more technically diverse GT and LMP1 classes. Three slick and two wet-weather tyre specifications are permitted in the regulations which need to meet the needs of all the Dunlop teams.

Weather is always a major factor in tyre performance. The same specifications of tyre used in the Le Mans 24 Hours have to perform at all of the 2015 World Endurance Championship and European Le Mans circuits, coping with track temperatures lower than 10 degrees (Silverstone) and higher than 40 degrees centigrade (Bahrain or Texas).

Having evolved the designs during the off-season, Dunlop's engineers work with the teams in testing before setting compounds and constructions for the season. Specifications for this year were decided with intensive LMP2 testing at Estoril and Aragon. The work, however, is far from finished with each test or race, as Dunlop engineers work closely with the teams to fine-tune set-ups to get the best performance for each individual team, car and driver combination. Suspension settings and tyre pressures directly affect performance in terms of both speed and durability. Lap times for the 24 Hours are getting faster year after year, but speed is just one requirement from the tyres. Dunlop designs rubber for multiple stints, with double-stinting now being taken for granted and triple- or even quadruple-stinting achievable.



says Vincent Beaumesnil, who helped conceive the cost-capped rules in his role of sporting manager at Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest. "The cost of buying and running this car was not affordable for privateer teams. One car like that can kill a category, so we had to act."

The revised formula aims to keep a lid on both the costs of entering the category and running in a series. The price of a rolling chassis with gearbox, for example, is set at €370,000 for an open-top car such as the Morgan LMP2 EVO or the Gibson 015S and €450,000 for one of the new coupés available from Ligier, ORECA, Honda Performance Development or Strakka Dome. There are also maximum prices for the engine and the cost of a rebuild (€80,350 and €37,500 respectively), while the price of the spares to build a car is set at 150 per cent of the cost cap.

The rules go much further in controlling costs, however. The number of engines that can be used over the course of the season is set at three for the WEC and only six sets of tyres can be used during a regular six-hour WEC event. In the ELMS, only one engine may be used over the course of five four-hour races, which is increased to two if the team is also racing at Le Mans. Four sets of tyres are allowed for ELMS events.

"I'M REALLY EXCITED ABOUT WATCHING WHAT IS GOING ON IN P2 THIS YEAR, I THINK IT IS GOING TO BE AN EXCITING SEASON"

LMP2 is now a non-development formula, which means there must be no costly upgrades for teams to buy through the course of the season. When a constructor enters the P2 market it homologates its chassis for three seasons and any changes during that period can only be related to safety, servicability or cost reduction. Only when a car is three years old can the constructor undertake a revision aimed at increasing their product's performance. It is a rule of which Gibson, formerly Zytek, and Onroak Automotive, manufacturer of the Morgan, have taken advantage of for the 2015 season.

Tyre development is also controlled in the name of cost. The suppliers can homologate up to three specifications of slick tyre ahead of the start of the season, of which two can be nominated for use in each event. Only one specification of wet tyre and one intermediate is allowed.

LMP2, which also provides cars for the Asian Le Mans Series and the United SportsCar Championship in North America, is booming under the current rules. There are six manufacturers competing in the WEC and the ELMS: ORECA, which will be represented by its new-for-2015 05 coupé and its existing 03R design; HPD with its new ARX-4b coupé; Gibson with the 015S; BR Engineering with the new closed-top BR01 to be run by SMP Racing; Onroak Automotive, which produces both the Ligier JSP2 coupé and the open-top Morgan LMP2 EVO; and Strakka Dome, the result of an Anglo-Japanese joint venture, with the S103 coupé.



Dunlop believes LMP2 is sports car racing's best proving ground. Below, the two ELMS GT classes switch to control Dunlops this season, although the WEC remains open

There is also diverse engine supply with powerplants from HPD/Honda, Nissan and Judd/BMW represented on the WEC and ELMS entry lists (and there are other manufacturers with suitable units available), while tyre suppliers Dunlop and Michelin compete against each other. The WEC LMP2 entry has grown to 10 cars after a disappointing 2014, while there will be a minimum of 12 P2s fighting it out in the ELMS.

There are new LMP2 rules on the way for 2017 that will retain the core elements of the class. "We want an even more cost-effective car," says Beaumesnil. "That's not necessarily in terms of price, but more the running costs over a season. We want to improve the performance as well, so we are aiming for a slightly faster car that will also be stronger."

The immediate and long-term futures of LMP2 look bright right now. So much so that one of the category's alumni is promising to keep a close eye on the division in 2015.

"I'm really excited about watching what is going on in P2 this year," says Conway. "With all the coupés coming, I think it is going to be an exciting season." ■





GT: DUNLOP IN CONTROL

The two GT categories, an essential part of the European Le Mans Series, will both run on Dunlop control tyres for the next three seasons. The switch from an open-tyre formula for 2015 is part of series organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest's drive to reduce GTE costs for the same cars that race in the World Endurance Championship and GTC, which is open to less sophisticated GT3 machinery.

"It was a good direction to go in at this moment for reasons of costs and logistics for the teams," says ACO sporting manager Vincent Beaumesnil. "It was part of our global discussion with the teams and they were very supportive of the move, and in Dunlop we have an excellent partner."

Dunlop Motorsport's James Bailey explains that its successful tender for the ELMS deal was part of a two-pronged approach to GT racing from a company that claimed GTE Pro championship honours in 2012 with the JMW Motorsport Ferrari team.

"Upgrading our standard GT racing tyre has been one strand of our development over the winter, alongside our Nürburgring programme focused on Mercedes," he says. "But there will be a spin-off in terms of development for any GTE teams in the World Endurance Championship [which remains an open tyre formula] who might want to benefit from that development."



a HARD DAY'S NIGHT

ONE LAP OF THE NÜRBURGRING IS TOUGH; A FULL 24 HOURS IS A GRUELLING, RELENTLESS BATTLE AGAINST TRACK, TRAFFIC AND HUMAN FRAILTY *By Sam Smith*

NORDSCHLEIFE. Be it in print or uttered in hushed tones, it is a word revered by millions of racers and race enthusiasts, a word that means just one thing. Bravery.

For almost 90 years now, the track carved into the foreboding Eifel Mountains has been seen as the most challenging on earth. Few who compete or even spectate there dispute that. Long, confined, fast and dangerous, the 15.76-mile track is the last untamed circuit that is still allowed to hold a car race of any meaningful stature. That event is the Nürburgring 24 Hours, and this year it will happen on the weekend of May 16/17.

First held in 1970, it has in recent years enjoyed a massive revival and become a stand-alone annual classic. If motor sport has an extreme event it is here at the Nürburgring 24 Hours. The danger elements of the race have an irresistible pull in what are, let's face it, mollycoddled times.

"Obviously a big part of the allure is the track, which is very old school, very challenging," says 2013 Nürburgring 24 winner Jeroen Bleekemolen. "The race has become more and more popular during the past few years. There is a big crowd and the place is full. Before the start the spectators are allowed to cross the barriers and see the cars on the grid; it is amazing, there is nothing like that anywhere else in motor sport. »



"For me though, the very best part of it is that this is a race won by the drivers," adds the Dutchman. "With Balance of Performance there's not too much between the cars, and with standard fuel fill times there's nothing to be gained in the pits, so the only way to make up time is to push like hell. It is almost all on the drivers and how they work with the car and the tyres."

Bleekemolen makes a good point about drivers having a natural attraction to challenging themselves, their cars and the tyres, which are so crucial at this race. But how and why has there been such resurgence for this epic event in recent years?

The simple answer is chiefly because of the machinery. GT3 cars are directly (visually and technically) relevant to the road cars that many aspire to own. The rise of its dominance, particularly on the European stage over the past decade, has sparked an upsurge in interest at the Nordschleife. Most, if not all, of the significant manufacturers have major development and R&D facilities at or around the fabled track, some under licence to specialist engineering firms. They are effectively used as 'halo products' to encourage brand loyalty to the mainly but not exclusively German manufacturers' road cars. A great many of the top-line GT3 teams get either direct or indirect manufacturer support (factory drivers and technicians, or in some cases full factory teams posing as customers). In many cases the GT3 programmes themselves are major commercial contributors to a company's overall and/or motor sport finances – Porsche has always done this and that successful model is now being matched by Audi, Mercedes and Aston Martin. The manufacturers are now fully aware of the marketing leverage that the Nürburgring 24 can muster, and are increasingly exploiting it. Interestingly this isn't necessarily via traditional advertising- and marketing-led activation, but by the level of on-event activity and hospitality that takes place.

"THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE UP TIME IS TO PUSH LIKE HELL. IT IS ALMOST ALL ON THE DRIVERS AND HOW THEY WORK WITH CAR AND TYRES"

After years of a German-focused and unsettled class structure in the 1990s, the advent of GT3 brought stability, something the bigger teams and manufacturers could count on without the risk of being ambushed by locally developed 'special entries'. The boom started with engagement by all of the major German marques – Porsche, Mercedes, BMW and Audi. They have gone head to head, each winning the event with GT3 machinery since 2010.

Technically the race is unique and it is this distinction that tantalises the competitive nature of manufacturers and technical suppliers the world over. "It is an immense challenge just to do the race, let alone win it," says Sean Breslin, who masterminded an epic 2013 win for Black Falcon and its Dunlop-shod Mercedes SLS AMG GT3 crewed by Bernd Schneider, Jeroen Bleekemolen, Nicki Thiim and the late Sean Edwards.

"We entered the race in 2013 thinking we could win it because we had never had that quality of driver line-up before," Breslin says. "Bernd and Sean were by far the best around the Nürburgring in an SLS, and with Jeroen and Nicki being quick and safe we had a great unit that made us very confident."

The Black Falcon team had been watching with keen interest in 2012 when another Mercedes GT3 team – Rowe Motorsport – had developed the Dunlop tyres in the VLN endurance series and shown them to be very competitive. »



The Nürburgring 24 Hours is a race within a carnival, with huge crowds – typically more than 200,000 – turning out to watch the action





LOWDOWN ON NÜRBURGRING 24 HOURS

The statistics from last season back up the truly epic nature of the Nürburgring 24 Hours. The overall distance record for the race was broken in 2014 with 159 laps and 2507 miles covered. No fewer than 165 cars took the start in three groups, all in front of more than 200,000 fans.

Everything is on a grand scale during the 24 Hours weekend. The driver briefing has to be held in two groups and there are more than 2000 officials on site.

The massive grid is divided into multiple classes, with the lead cars coming from the GT3 protagonists. Regular GT and Touring Cars are also accommodated, with most of these teams being regulars in the VLN (Veranstaltergemeinschaft Langstreckenpokal Nürburgring) enduro series that is held at the Eifel circuit throughout the racing year.

Historically the race has been a happy hunting ground for Dunlop, which has scored more wins in the race than any other tyre manufacturer. Of its 17 overall victories, Dunlop triumphed in the first four consecutively, with Hans Stuck (1970), Helmut Kelleners (1972) and a certain Andreas Nikolaus Lauda (1973) among the winning drivers. Indeed, no other tyre manufacturer got a look in on the top step of the podium during that decade!

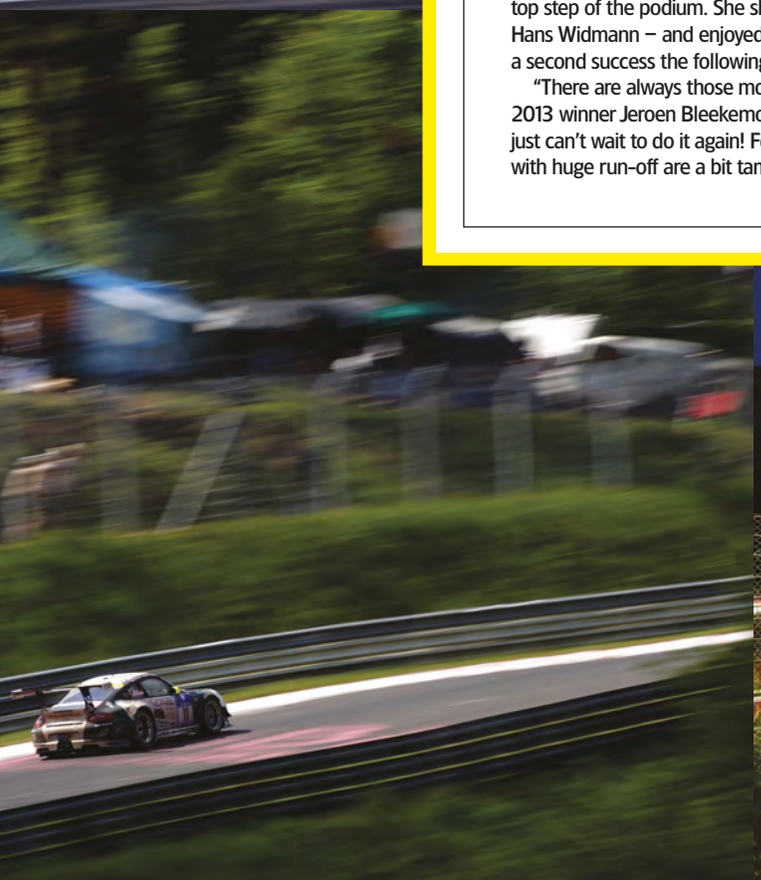
The race creates its own special 'Ring history. The 1996 event was especially memorable, when Sabine Schmitz (née Reck) became the only woman to stand on the top step of the podium. She shared the winning BMW M3 with Johannes Scheid and Hans Widmann – and enjoyed the taste of victory so much that she doubled up with a second success the following year.

"There are always those moments when you think 'Should I be doing this?'" says 2013 winner Jeroen Bleekemolen. "But then you finish the lap, the stint, or the race and just can't wait to do it again! For me it is exactly the kind of track I love. Modern tracks with huge run-off are a bit tame; the Nordschleife, though, is a real driver's circuit."













The Nordschleife allows little margin for error, but has ample space to accommodate beer kegs and barbecues

"The Dunlops were strong straight away and we were better than the Michelin runners for most of the race," Breslin says. "It was a strange event as it was stopped for nine hours because of the heavy rain and fog. Yes, we gained on the stoppage as they restarted without previous gaps, but we still had to make the most of it – and we did."

A magnet for drama, the Nordschleife had witnessed most things over the years. Rarely, however, had it seen anything approaching Jeroen Bleekemolen's weekend. As part of the winning team, he played an integral part but made the right decision halfway through the race to join his wife Nathalie in a maternity ward as she gave birth to twin sons – Oliver and Benjamin!

"Bernd and Sean were just fantastic," Breslin says. "Everyone raved about Maxime Martin, who was chasing us at the end, but Bernd was actually quicker for most of the race. He was an absolute master that weekend."

"We were adapting all the time to the track and the conditions. We actually made use of our second SLS, which had crashed early on but was fixed and rejoined the race. So we tested different Dunlop wets on that car and then we switched them to the lead car. The Dunlop development wets and intermediates were exceptional all race, very good indeed."

> "I THINK 80 PER CENT OF THE GERMAN BEER PRODUCTION IS WIPED OUT DURING THE WEEKEND. IT IS TYPICALLY GERMAN AND HELD IN A VERY GOOD SPIRIT"

In the new era of the Nürburgring 24 Hours more manufacturers started to arrive, with Aston Martin focusing its efforts on the race, then Nissan, and in 2015 Bentley will take on the challenge with a pair of its Continental GT3s that took two Blancpain victories in 2014. Additionally there are plenty of manufacturer efforts in the production classes, too, with the event now a recognised shop window for VW's new Scirocco, plus the Mini Coupé and others. At the most extreme end there is usually a mid-1980s Opel Manta in the field. The Nürburgring 24 Hours also has an open policy regarding new technology, accommodating this in a catch-all 'EXP class'. This has featured many highlights in recent seasons, including hydrogen-fuelled laps from Aston Martin CEO Dr Ulrich Bez in an Aston Rapide S, a near race-winning performance from a Porsche 911 Hybrid and other hybrids from Gumpert and Glickenhaus.

There are few events with quite so many different tyre manufacturers represented on the grid (usually well into double figures). Dunlop goes up against just about every possible rival that has a competitions department.

Having seen the Nordschleife up close as both a driver and team manager, Pierre Dieudonné is in a good place to describe this tumultuous weekend of racing. The Belgian has raced at the Nordschleife many times in a variety of machinery and also has first-hand experience of calling the strategy shots on the pitwall.

"The circuit is unique and there is just no rest at all for the drivers," Dieudonné says. "Strangely, when you are on the pit wall and the cars come around every six minutes or so, it is reasonably relaxed. For the drivers, however, it is just continuous pressure all the time.

"Changing lines with the grip levels available and the traffic on the circuit, especially with the speed differentials, means that it is very tough with the cambers and so on. I had the feeling of danger all the time when I raced at the Nordschleife – and that was 30 years ago when it wasn't as quick and the grids were much smaller!"

Dieudonné, ever the enthusiast as well as a rightful legend in touring and sports car racing, is also quick to acknowledge the fans' contribution to the unique atmosphere of the event.

"They are quite something! I think 80 per cent of the German beer production is wiped out during that weekend. It is typically German and held in a very good spirit. You get a sense of exactly where you are on the track all through the 24 Hours."

The strength of the entry has helped the race weather the very stormy economic and political turmoil surrounding the 'Ring in recent years. Like the competitors themselves, it has staying power.

Those that simply finish the 2015 race can be sure of one thing. They have conquered the most fearsome and challenging track in the world and emerged from 24 hours in a very special kind of green hell. ■



DUNLOP DOWNLOAD

Dunlop-shod cars have won the Nürburgring 24 Hours 17 times since 1970 – and the Nordschleife is the world's only circuit to feature such great elevation changes, extreme corners, long straights and multitudes of surface changes.

The track time and data-gathering opportunities are significant, with 10 VLN (Veranstaltergemeinschaft Langstreckenpokal Nürburgring – Nürburgring Endurance Cup) races in addition to the 24-hour race each season. No other facility can compete with the Nordschleife as the perfect proving ground for Dunlop to test and develop high-performance tyres for the track and road.

Dunlop's race to road strategy can be demonstrated by the progress of technology developed with racing partners at the German track. AMG appointed Dunlop as tyre development partner in 2010. Victory followed at the 2013 Nürburgring 24 Hours, where a Dunlop-shod SLS won with a comfortable margin having dominated during the wet-weather period. Dunlop and AMG returned to the Nürburgring to win more VLN Endurance races. Dunlop also partnered AMG to provide tyres for the fastest fully electric lap of the Nürburgring in 2013.

The compound technology used for Nürburgring race rubber can also be seen in the Dunlop Sport Maxx Race tyre, designed for the world's most powerful road cars and for discerning track-day drivers. Mercedes-AMG has chosen tyres from Dunlop's Sport Maxx range for its cars – including Sport Maxx Race for the C63 AMG Black Series and SLS, with Sport Maxx RT selected for the A45 AMG and CLA 45 AMG.

Winning open-tyre endurance races is fundamentally important to Dunlop and has led to extensive development in the GT tyre range over the past five years. Recent winter testing with AMG has assisted with the evolution of the 2015 specification tyres. That programme led to Dunlop being appointed as exclusive tyre supplier for the LM GTE and GTC categories in the European Le Mans Series.



DUNLOP { SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE }



CONQUERING *the* MOUNTAIN

THE ISLE OF MAN TT IS LITTLE CHANGED FROM ITS ORIGINS MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO. NOWHERE ELSE TESTS MAN, MOTORCYCLE AND TYRES IN QUITE THE SAME WAY. AND NO ONE KNOWS BETTER HOW TO CONQUER THE INFAMOUS MANX ROADS THAN JOHN McGUINNESS *By Mat Oxley*

JOHN McGUINNESS is a brave man. The 42-year-old has won 21 Isle of Man TT races, making him the second most successful rider in the event's 109-year history. His greatest successes have come in the fastest races: the Superbike and Senior. These races are awesome tests of guts, talent and endurance: six laps of the 37.75-mile Mountain circuit aboard a 200mph, 170 kilo motorcycle, averaging about 130mph for an hour and 45 minutes on narrow, twisting and bumpy back roads lined with dry-stone walls and everyday street furniture.

So there's no doubt that McGuinness is brave. But he's not fearless and there's nowhere more daunting at the TT than the 180mph charge down Bray Hill, just moments after the start.

"Every other race in the world you get a warm-up lap, so you get some sort of a feel for how the bike's going to react," says McGuinness, 'McPint' to his fans. "At the TT you don't get that, so you don't know what the bike's going to do. It's bucking and weaving and you're hanging on for your life. I've had a few moments down Bray Hill where my feet have been off the footpegs and it's a bit of a terrifying thing.

"There are junctions all the way down where the camber changes, so the bike's taking off. If you get a bit of a wobble, you're out of the throttle, then you're back on it again, then you're back off it again. Over the crest it's just terrifying, there's no other way of putting it. If your bike isn't good you're psychologically destroyed."

"I'VE HAD A FEW MOMENTS DOWN BRAY HILL WHERE MY FEET HAVE BEEN OFF THE FOOTPEGS AND IT'S A BIT OF A TERRIFYING THING"

Once past Bray Hill the road meanders through lush farming land, passes through sleepy little villages, twists this way and that alongside rivers and then charges across the moorland around Snaefell Mountain. The TT features every kind of corner but in general the course is fast, ridiculously fast, with a lap record of 132.298mph. Riders spend most of the lap wide open in fourth, fifth and sixth gears, threading the eye of the needle through hugely quick sweeping curves. Success is all about finding the fastest line through the kinks, maintaining a consistently high speed and resisting the natural urge to roll off the throttle as trees, hedges and telegraph poles rush past in a hyper-drive blur.

Some of the most important corners are out in the middle of nowhere, often with no name, like the missile-quick left-hander just past Shoughlaigue-e-Caine, a few miles before the village of Kirk Michael. It is at places like this that the brave, knowledgeable and talented make the difference.

"It's the second left after Handley's and it's maybe 170mph," says McGuinness. "If you spoke to a layman and said, 'Right, I'm in sixth gear there', he'd think you were taking the piss, but honestly you are; it's that quick. It's like motocross: you're pinned in sixth, the front wheel comes up, you get hooked right into the hedge and then the road opens up for you. Every time I go through there I get a rush."

In fact this corner does now have a name. McGuinness loves it so much that the TT organisers christened it after him.

The course is so fast and wild that it requires a different riding technique from short circuit racing such as MotoGP and World Superbike – and a very different mindset, too.

"You need an economical style," says the man from Morecambe. »







McGuinness has been racing on the Isle of Man since 1996... and winning on the famous Mountain circuit since 1999



LOWDOWN ON ISLE OF MAN TT

The TT was born in 1907, two years after the inaugural Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy car race on the Isle of Man. The small island in the Irish Sea became a global centre for motor sport for the simple reason that its governors allowed roads to be closed for racing, whereas mainland laws prohibited road closures.

Speeds have increased a lot since the first races, won at speeds of slightly less than 40mph, but the gruelling demands of the Manx roads have always made important contributions to motorcycle development. For example, the move to the longer Mountain circuit in 1911 – with its long climb past the peak of Snaefell – provided huge impetus to gearbox development.

In June 1949 the Island hosted the first-ever race of motorcycling's Grand Prix World Championships. The TT remained the world's most important motorcycle race until it lost World Championship status in the 1970s, by which time Grands Prix were mostly staged on safer, purpose-built short circuits.

TT classes have changed in recent years, with street-based machines now dominating. Race week, which is preceded by several days of practice, starts and finishes with events for highly tuned 1000cc Superbikes, producing more than 200 horsepower and nudging 200mph on the fastest parts of the course.

Most riders also compete in the other two major classes, for 600cc Supersport and 1000cc Superstock machines. The high-speed roads mean that these bikes also maintain huge average speeds: the 600 lap record stands at 127mph and the Superstock (for showroom-spec 1000s) at 129mph.

Even wannabe racers have something to look forward to: the super-fast Mountain section has no speed limit and is one way during race week.











McGuinness has taken 21 TT wins to date, second only to the late, great Joey Dunlop, who had 26 to his name

"A lot of people put that much energy into it that they're huffing and puffing and they don't breathe properly because they're holding on too hard.

"I don't move around much on the bike. A lot of the others do, but it's just the style I've adopted. There's certain bits where I do use my body as an airbrake – I sit up to scrub off some speed instead of jamming on the brakes, which unsettles the bike. I always think that moving around too much tires you out. I do a lot of counter steering, pushing and pulling on the handlebars. That takes all the skin off my hands – my left hand gets torn to pieces.

"Subconsciously I work really hard on the footpegs, but I'm not consciously thinking about it. I must push pretty hard because my boots are knackered by the end of the week.

"I use a lot of rear brake to keep the front end from coming up too far over leaps and so on. I've used a thumb-operated rear brake since 2006 because it's so hard to move your foot around at high speeds because the wind is pushing your feet back."

Setting up a motorcycle for the TT is a huge compromise – how could it be otherwise around a lap that includes about 250 corners? The art, of course, is to get the bike right for the fast corners and manage the situation through the tighter corners, which include a couple of 20mph hairpins.

"A FEW YEARS AGO I HIT A PHEASANT. IT SMASHED THE CLUTCH LEVER, THE BODYWORK, THE AIR SCOOP, THE CLOCKS, THE LOT. IT FELT LIKE SOMEONE HAD GIVEN ME A SMACK"

McGuinness knows that fiddling with set-up can be a waste of time. So long as he feels happy and comfortable, he prefers to leave the bike well alone and focus on riding.

"I've tried all kinds of things – different suspension links, wheelbases, gearing, traction control and all sorts of stuff – and I always go back to where I was in 2009."

Rear tyres have a particularly tough time at the TT. Super-high average speeds and several jumps taken at more than 150mph create huge stresses on both compound and carcass.

"In the old days the tyres used to grow a lot at speed, which would cause a lot of instability from the rear of the bike, which is just what you don't want at the TT. Dunlop fixed all that by putting a steel band in the rear tyres – I've used Dunlop for years and I see no reason to change. They're a good, friendly tyre and you know you've got the grip and the stability you need.

"The other big thing about tyres is the start. You get no warm-up lap, so we take off the tyre warmers as late as we can. Before the race I scrub in the tyres on the road. I'm really critical about my tyres being scrubbed and hot. Some people aren't that bothered but it psychologically does my head in if they're not hot. If I feel comfortable I can get stuck in."

Although the super-fast sections are the sections that win or lose TT races, every inch of the track matters. "Every single bit is important," McGuinness says, "from the start to the finish and for an hour and 45 minutes. There's nowhere you can kick back. When people kick back, that's when accidents happen. That's why you've got to keep on it right to the flag, you've got to keep on top of your game.

"I really work on my breathing, taking deep breaths where I can, because it's hard work and you're holding your breath a bit. You've got to get some oxygen into your blood because once the lactic acid hits, your muscles are gone and your mind goes to different places."

Unsurprisingly, McGuinness has had more than a few moments during his 20-year TT career.

"I had one of the biggest scares through a place called Glenduff, before Ramsey. It's probably 150mph and I had this tank-slapper. It snapped the steering damper and broke the bodywork. It went bang-bang-bang-bang on the steering stops and I was an absolute, total passenger. It was awful, absolutely terrifying. I've tried to find a smooth line through Glenduff but there isn't one. It's madness, like motocross, you're stood up on the footpegs all the way to Ramsey."

And there are other unexpected challenges. "A few years ago I hit a pheasant. It smashed the clutch lever, the bodywork, the air scoop, the clocks, the lot. It felt like someone had given me a smack."

The TT takes place over two weeks each June, but the event has a year-round hold on McGuinness, as well as most other riders who dare to take part in this most historic of racing events.

"It's always there in my mind," he says. "I'm always thinking about it. I admire the riders who do it privately, who've got to prep their own bikes, put their engines in and out. I'm lucky, I'm just strutting around, doing what I do.

"Even so, it's a hell of a lot of work, a lot of stress. But the buzz when you finish: you go around with the other riders, gibbering on at 200mph to each other, talking about what you've done, the moments you've had..." ■



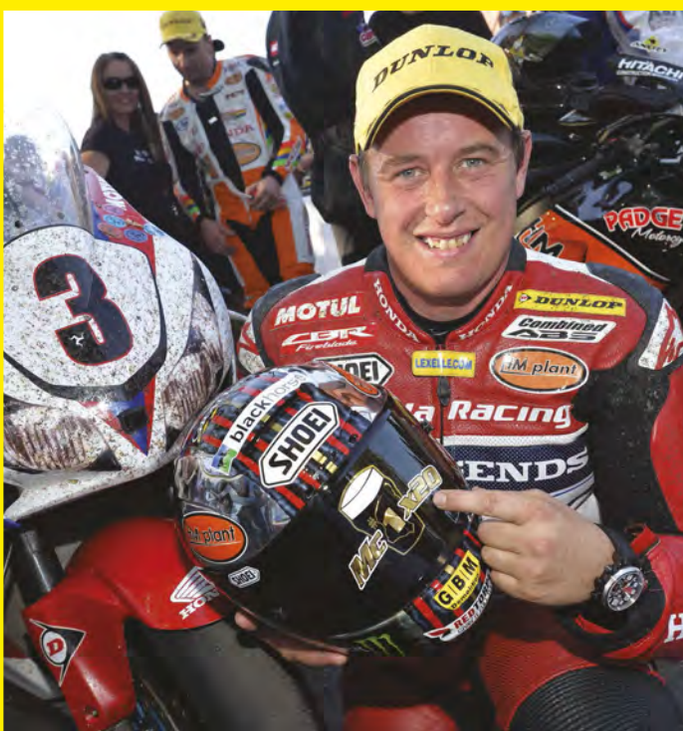
DUNLOP DOWNLOAD

Road racing is an ideal arena for Dunlop to demonstrate its road-going performance and durability to customers who ride on public roads every day of the year. No road races are better than the Isle of Man TT and North West 200, where Dunlop has won races and set lap records in every class.

Dunlop tyres have competed in all but two of the TT events since its 1907 beginnings. Since 2003 riders have chosen Dunlop to claim more than 60 victories and 150 podium finishes in the IOM TT alone including Superbike, Supersport, Superstock and TT Zero races. All of John McGuinness's 21 TT wins and 42 TT podiums (to date) were clinched on Dunlop tyres.

Dunlop's range of motorcycle tyres is constantly developed as a direct result of racetrack innovations. Tyres such as the road-going Sportsmart2 include many technologies developed for track and road racing. The high speeds of the TT circuit have helped create Dunlop's 'JLB' technology. Jointless Belt Construction reduces tyre growth due to centrifugal forces at high speeds from 15mm to 3mm. JLB results in smoother handling with straight line stability, and reduced 'weave' effect – a big advance for Dunlop's motorcycle customers.

Sportsmart2's Multi Treat compound technology has also stemmed from improving race performance. Road circuits such as the TT have high-speed straights and slow corners, a combination that's difficult to master. On the long straights, the shoulders of the tyre cool so when the rider leans through the corner, the colder compound material might not have the grip that's needed to carry speed through the corner. By introducing different compounds for different parts of the tyre, riders can have the best of both worlds – a centre compound that is durable, despite the high heat generation from straights, with a softer compound providing more grip through corners.



ROLLING *around the* WORLD

DUNLOP SUPPLIES RACING TYRES TO A RICH VARIETY OF TWO- AND FOUR-WHEELED MOTOR SPORT

RENAULT CLIO CUP
France, UK, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Netherlands and more... The Renault Clio Cup is a renowned touring car driver training ground. Dunlop's top-level touring car experience cascades to feeder series around the world. Clio racing offers strong grids and close racing for the turbocharged sequential-boxed mini-touring cars.



DUNLOP 24 HOURS AT SILVERSTONE
After a two-year absence, 24-hour sports car endurance racing is back in the UK on April 25/26. Silverstone hosts the nearest Britain has to the Nürburgring and Le Mans epics, featuring a diverse range of GT cars. The proactive and energetic Britcar team are determined to make the 24 Hours a British racing institution.







FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP - MXGP
American Supercross champion Ryan Villopoto joins the world championship this year on his Dunlop-shod Kawasaki. Pulling vast crowds, Motocross is truly spectacular, untamed world motor sport. In only the firm's third full season back in the championship, Dunlop riders (10 per cent of the grid) won nearly 30 per cent of the races.





EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES – GT CLASS
Dunlop has spent five years developing its most advanced GT tyres yet, derived from victories in ELMS, ALMS and the Nürburgring 24 Hours. A control tyre class from 2015, the ELMS designs focus on durability and performance. But there's more to winning than just rubber – Dunlop engineers work with each team to get the best set-ups and strategies.



FIM MOTO2 & MOTO3 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
Since their introduction in 2010 and 2012 respectively, Moto2 and Moto3 have used Dunlop tyres exclusively. The extreme conditions faced by Dunlop's riders push the firm's talented designers to produce competitive tyres for both the heat of Qatar and frequently cooler European venues. Dunlop's NTEC pressure-adjust technology helps riders gain grip at lower pressures.



AUSTRALIAN V8 SUPERCARS
2015 will be the 14th consecutive year that Dunlop has provided control rubber to the series – that's more than 130,000 tyres. The series goes from strength to strength with Nissan, Mercedes and Volvo now competing alongside Ford and Holden as 15 teams contest 14 events.

DUNLOP MSA BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
30 races, 10 weekends, 32 cars: more than just a tyre supplier to the British Touring Car Championship, Dunlop has also introduced new technologies such as Radio Frequency tags to monitor tyre use and a choice of rubber compounds to introduce a strategic variable to each race.

RADICAL
From entry-level SR1 to the Le Mans prototype speeds of the SR8, Radical has built a sports car and endurance racing ladder that now spans the globe. The latest RXC coupé is a road-legal LMP-light car for those who find McLaren P1s and LaFerraris a little pedestrian.







BMW M235i CUP
Dunlop created a brand-new specification tyre for the M235i Cup. Extensive testing at the Nordschleife, the venue for the 10-round VLN support series, led to a very competitive first season with a bespoke tyre for the variable weather and even more varied track surfaces.

NEVER *tire of* HISTORICS

THE PAST CONTINUES TO FASCINATE – AND THAT'S SOMETHING DUNLOP HASN'T FORGOTTEN IN THE BOOMING HISTORIC RACING SCENE

WHETHER it is the Goodwood Revival or Le Mans Classic, fans are drawn to heritage events by the history of cars evoking memories of legendary drivers and great races. In this environment authenticity is critical, and tyres play a major role in achieving this. It is unusual for a major modern tyre company to put so much focus on historic racing, but with 127 years of tyre manufacturing under its (steel reinforced) belts, Dunlop is very conscious of its heritage.

"Dunlop still supplies tyres for many vintage and historic classes, with a particular emphasis on the 1950s and 1960s cars – the era when Dunlop began a long period of leadership in the touring car and sports car racing championships," says James Bailey of Dunlop Motorsport.

This year, Dunlop will be providing support at many major and national historic racing events. One of the highlights of the historic calendar in 2015 includes a BTCC revival double-header for 1958-66 cars. This will take place on successive weekends at Silverstone on April 25 (supporting the Britcar Dunlop 24 Hours) and on May 3/4 at the Donington Historic Festival. The latter event has played a major role in the revival of Donington and the 2015 weekend will also feature a 150-minute endurance race into the Saturday sunset. It is designed to recreate the fabulous 1000km sports car battles of



the early 1970s, when sports-prototypes of up to 5-litre capacity ran in some of the most spectacular races ever seen. In the spirit of the originals, it will also feature touring and GT cars of the period.

The growth of historic racing in recent years has been the result of many factors. Fans love seeing original cars in action, owners enjoy depreciation-resistant race cars and event organisers are becoming adept at marketing racing events as open, welcoming family days out.

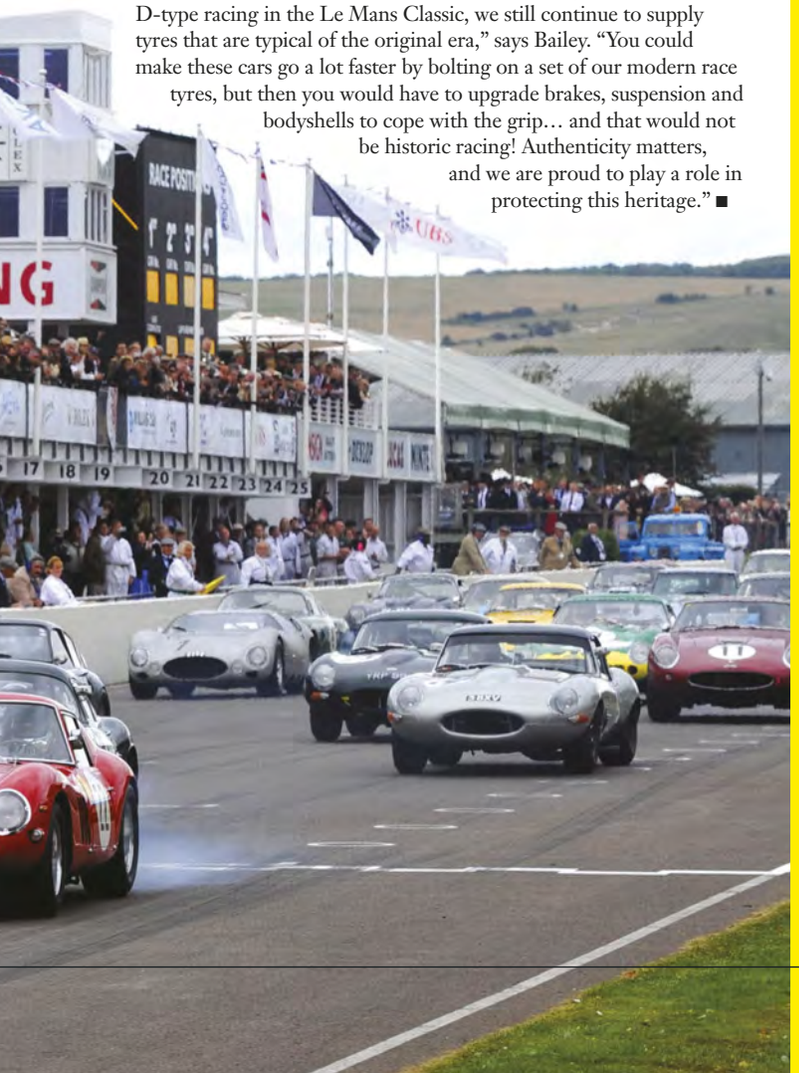
While events such as the Goodwood Revival are well known to fans as blue riband events, there are many other growing meetings around the world. Last year the Daytona Classic 24 Hours was launched, and its second edition will take place this November.

And then there's the Nürburgring 24 Hours in May, featuring the hugely popular three-hour Classic Endurance race on the Friday afternoon before the 24 Hours. What could be a better warm-up to the main event than a battle between BMW M1s and Porsche 930s around the Nordschleife?

Well, just a few days later, on May 22-24 in the nearby Ardennes, there is a strong rival to the Nürburgring's heady mix of historic endurance cars when the Spa Classic bursts into action. Our advice… stay and watch both and enjoy some of Northern Europe's best driving roads in between. Endurance racing returns to Spa in September for the six-hour race – one of the longest established classic endurance events.

The Dunlop CR65 tyres used by competitors in many of these events are built to the same specification as period tyres, with the only changes being the replacement of materials and compound ingredients that are simply no longer available.

"Whether it is a Lotus Cortina in classic touring cars or a Jaguar D-type racing in the Le Mans Classic, we still continue to supply tyres that are typical of the original era," says Bailey. "You could make these cars go a lot faster by bolting on a set of our modern race tyres, but then you would have to upgrade brakes, suspension and bodyshells to cope with the grip… and that would not be historic racing! Authenticity matters, and we are proud to play a role in protecting this heritage." ■



DUNLOP

2015 SEASON

APRIL	4/5	**BTCC** Brands Hatch
	10/11	**ELMS** Silverstone
	12	**Moto2 & 3** Austin (USA)
	18/19	**BTCC** Donington Park
	19	**Moto2 & 3** Termas de Rio Hondo (ARG)
	25/26	**Dunlop 24 Hours** Silverstone
MAY	2/3	**Aus V8 Supercars** Perth
	3	**Moto2 & 3** Jerez (E)
	9/10	**BTCC** Thruxton
	16/17	**ELMS** Imola (I)
	16/17	**Nürburgring 24 Hours** (D)
	16/17	**Aus V8 Supercars** Winton
	17	**Moto2 & 3** Le Mans (F)
	31	**Moto2 & 3** Mugello (I)
JUNE	6/7	**BTCC** Oulton Park
	6-12	**Isle of Man TT**
	13/14	**Le Mans 24 Hours** (F)
	14	**Moto2 & 3** Barcelona (E)
	20/21	**Aus V8 Supercars** Darwin
	27/28	**BTCC** Croft
	27	**Moto2 & 3,** Assen (NL)
JULY	11/12	**ELMS** Red Bull Ring (A)
	11/12	**Aus V8 Supercars,** North Queensland
	12	**Moto2 & 3** Sachsenring (D)
AUGUST	1/2	**Aus V8 Supercars** Queensland Raceway
	8/9	**BTCC** Snetterton
	9	**Moto2 & 3** Indianapolis (USA)
	16	**Moto2 & 3** Brno (CZ)
	22/23	**BTCC** Knockhill
	22/23	**Aus V8 Supercars** Sydney
	30	**Moto2 & 3** Silverstone
SEPTEMBER	5/6	**BTCC** Rockingham
	5/6	**ELMS** Paul Ricard (F)
	12/13	**Aus V8 Supercars** Sandown 500
	13	**Moto2 & 3** Misano (I)
	26/27	**BTCC** Silverstone
	27	**Moto2 & 3** Motorland Aragon (E)
OCTOBER	10/11	**BTCC** Brands Hatch
	10/11	**Aus V8** Supercars, Bathurst 1000
	11	**Moto2 & 3** Motegi (J)
	17/18	**ELMS** Estoril (P)
	18	**Moto2 & 3** Phillip Island (AUS)
	24/25	**Aus V8 Supercars** Gold Coast 600
	25	**Moto2 & 3** Sepang (ML)
NOVEMBER	8	**Moto2 & 3** Valencia (E)
	9/10	**Aus V8 Supercars** Auckland (NZ)
	21/22	**Aus V8 Supercars** Phillip Island

MY GOAL? THE NEXT CHALLENGE.



SPORT MAXX RT

dunlop.eu

Dunlop tyres are dedicated to real drivers. Those who push themselves to the limit, who never give up, and most of all, enjoy the sheer passion of driving.

DUNLOP
FOREVER FORWARD