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ALONSO AND MCLAREN

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POLE POSITION

Alonso at McLaren: it could go either way

WE'VE HAD OVER A YEAR TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE possibility of Fernando Alonso returning to McLaren. Given what happened in 2007, it's an extraordinary illustration of what two entities desperate for success and with limited options will do in pursuit of the ultimate goal.

Fernando Alonso is overdue a third drivers' championship. That grin he had when he failed to claim it for McLaren back at Interlagos back in 2007, when he could afford to revel in *not* winning a championship almost to spite his employer, seems hopelessly misplaced looking back at it. As for McLaren, it hasn't won a drivers' title since '08, and, incredibly, a constructors' crown since the last century. It's a cruel twist of fate that they really do need each other.

It will be a fascinating story to follow. As AUTOSPORT's cover recognises, it can work. But that doesn't mean it will. If Honda delivers, and McLaren gets the car right, there will be success.

But if Alonso finds himself struggling for a year or two, then the consequence of failure could be another acrimonious relationship.

As always in sport, it's all about the results.

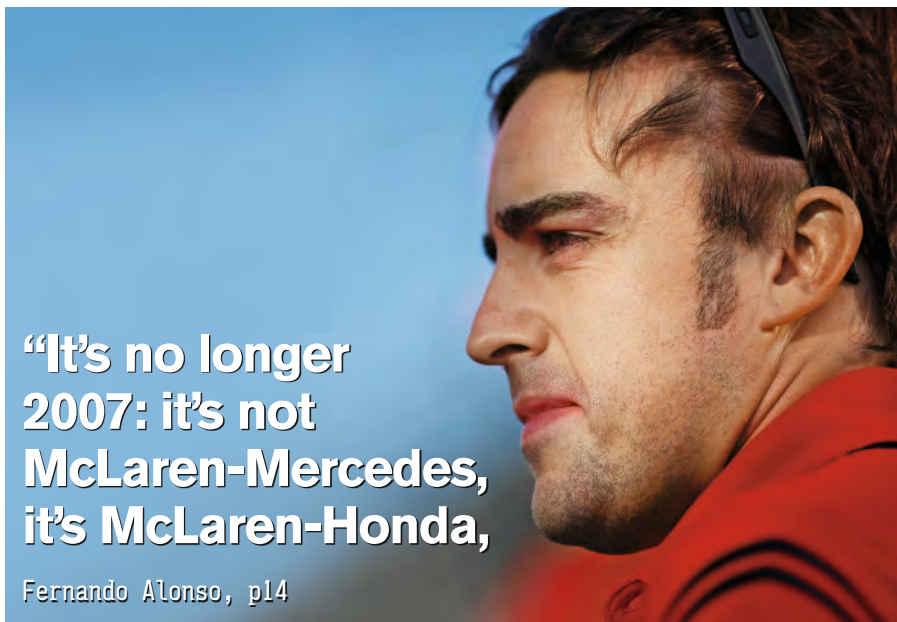


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COVER STORY



"It's no longer 2007: it's not McLaren-Mercedes, it's McLaren-Honda,

Fernando Alonso, p14

GIBSON/GETTY

FIND US ON



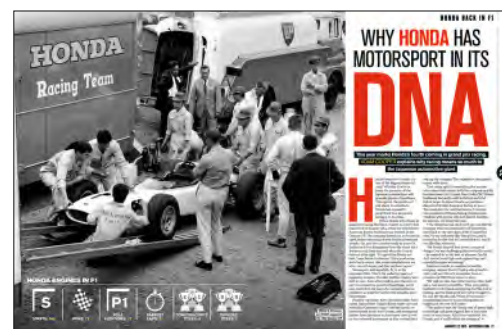
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- 6 THIS WEEK IN F1
- 9 JONATHAN NOBLE: F1 NEWSHOUND
- 10 THIS WEEK IN MOTORSPORT
- 13 INSIDE LINE: DAVID BRABHAM

FEATURES



14 ALONSO'S McLAREN RETURN



- 20 HONDA'S RACING DNA
- 24 F1 WILL GET FASTER IN 2015
- 28 INDY LIGHTS READY FOR REVIVAL
- 30 OLIVER JARVIS: AUDI'S NEW STAR
- 34 CAN AN LMP2 CAR WIN DAYTONA?
- 38 DAYTONA 24 HOURS: WHO TO WATCH
- 42 WORLD RALLY PREVIEW



- 52 OUR PICK OF 2015'S BEST EVENTS
- 58 DAKAR RALLY; TRS; ANDROS TROPHY

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 71 JARIER IN SHADOW AT GOODWOOD
- 72 KARTING STARS TO MSA FORMULA
- 77 LAST YEAR'S NEW SERIES RATED

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

76 GET AUTOSPORT DELIVERED TO YOU

THE BACK STRAIGHT

- 78 THIS WEEK
- 82 HAVE-A-GO HERO: DAVID COULTHARD



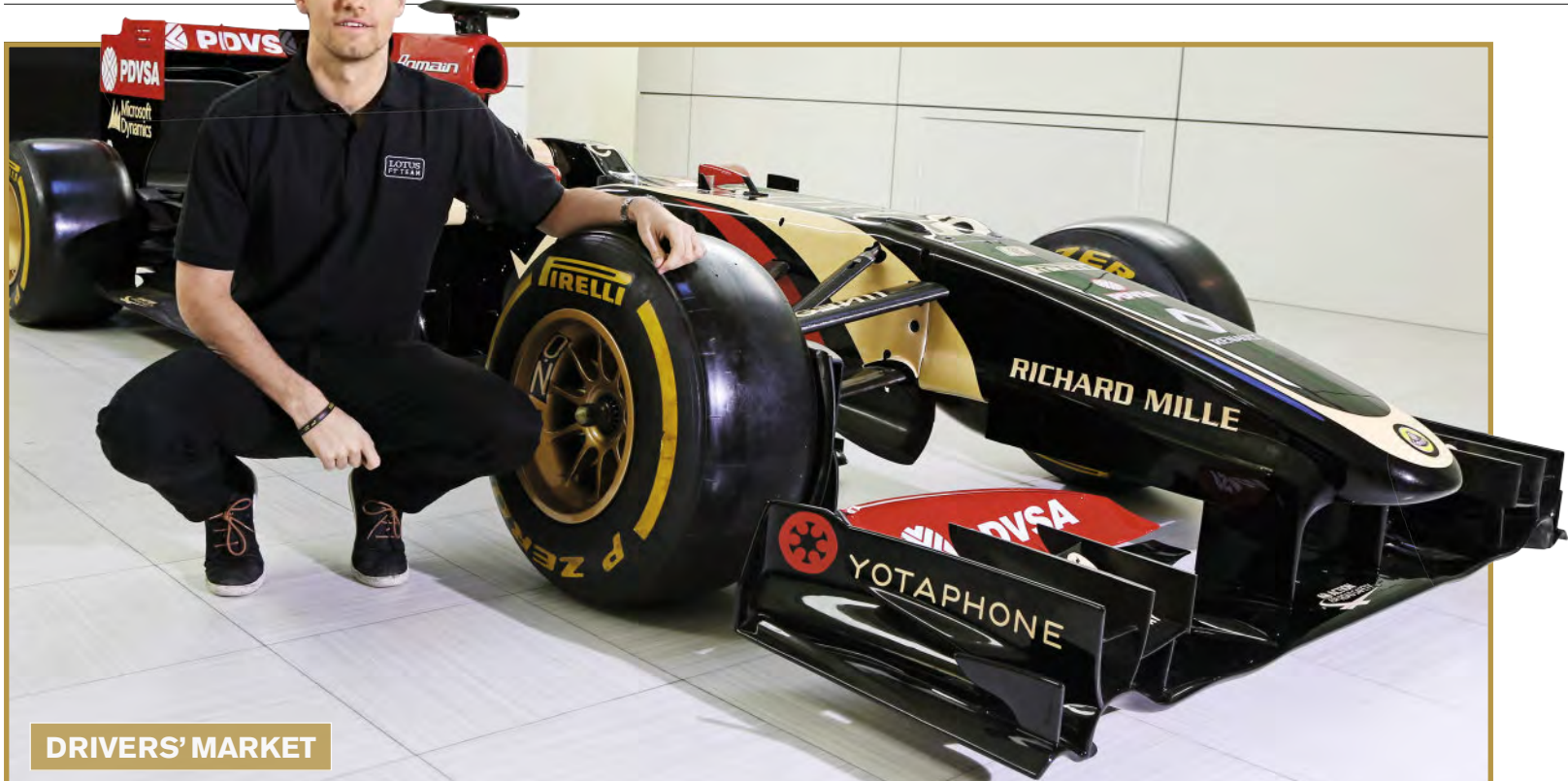
THE BIG PICTURE

Minis claimed four of the top five positions on the Dakar. Russians Vladimir Vasilyev and Konstantin Zhiltsov splash through stage 12 from Termas de Rio Hondo to Rosario





This week in F1



DRIVERS' MARKET

6

PALMER JOINS LOTUS AS THIRD DRIVER

GP2 champion Jolyon Palmer has joined Lotus as third driver for 2015.

The 23-year-old, who had his first Formula 1 test for Force India in Abu Dhabi last year, is assured a

“significant” number of Friday outings next season as part of his deal.

“My goal has been to become a race driver in a competitive team for 2016,” he said, “and Lotus F1 Team is a great

opportunity for me, particularly with Mercedes engines now. To be able to learn with a major F1 team by working closely with them in every area and getting a lot of mileage is the best way

possible, as Valtteri Bottas proved.

“I am delighted to be joining Lotus F1 Team at such an exciting time and my objective is to earn a long-term future with them.”



Pirelli: Wide tyres could boost F1

Tyre supplier Pirelli believes the return of wider tyres to Formula 1 would help bring the ‘wow factor’ back to grand prix racing, amid on-going discussions over making F1 cars more exciting.

Pirelli motorsport chief Paul Hembery told AUTOSPORT: “Wider tyres? That appeals. When you see images of the

1970s cars, it’s not so extreme that you think ‘dragster’, but you do think ‘Wow, look at that.’”

Hembery said a change would not be likely until 2017 at the earliest, because of the amount of work involved and the fact that the current tyre-supply contract ends after the ‘16 season.

400

BIG NUMBER

The minimum width in millimetres that Pirelli reckons the rear tyres on Formula 1 cars should be. Current F1 tyres are 245mm at the front and 325mm at the rear.



Honda to be allowed extra engine tweaks

Honda has convinced the FIA to allow it some engine development during the 2015 Formula 1 season.

The move comes after the Japanese manufacturer complained about rivals being allowed to introduce upgrades during the season, while Honda would have to keep to its homologated spec.

MERCEDES TO LAUNCH CAR AT JEREZ'S OPENING TEST

Mercedes will launch its 2015 car on the first day of pre-season testing at Jerez on February 1. Nico Rosberg will drive the F1 W06 Hybrid on the first and third days of the test. World champion Lewis Hamilton will take over for days two and four.



For all the breaking news, visit **AUTOSPORT.COM**

COATES/LAT



Hockenheim keeps German GP for 2015

Hockenheim will host the 2015 German Grand Prix after the troubled Nurburgring failed to complete an agreement with Formula 1's commercial-rights holder Bernie Ecclestone. "It's going to be at Hockenheim, we're in the middle of doing something with them," Ecclestone told Reuters. "It can't be Nurburgring because there's nobody there."

REMEMBER WHEN

1986



The last time the Nurburgring 'fell off' the F1 calendar. It lost the German GP to Hockenheim amid a push to force venues to commit to minimum five-year hosting deals.

FIA OPEN TO SUPERLICENCE RULES TWEAK



The FIA is open to tweaking its controversial new superlicence system, if it feels the weighting of junior championships needs to be adjusted or that worthy drivers might slip through the cracks.

Under the system, seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher would have been prevented from returning to Formula 1 in 2010, but the governing body said it would retain the power to refer "genuine exceptions" such as this to the World Motor Sport Council.

Renault has criticised the grading of its junior series, but the governing body defended its decision.

"The FIA's intention is to develop a clear streamlined ladder from the grassroots of motorsport," said a spokesman. "The future FIA Formula 2 will form an important step."

Hopes raised for Marussia

Marussia's bosses received a late boost to their hopes of saving the team after administrators agreed to stop an auction of its final assets. The team went into administration in October, but progress in discussions with one group of unidentified investors was encouraging enough for administrators to call off the auction scheduled for Wednesday January 21.



STALEY/LAT

7













VERSTAPPEN TIPPED TO SCORE POINTS ON DEBUT

Max Verstappen will score points on his Formula 1 debut if Toro Rosso is competitive, says team boss Franz Tost. "I'm convinced that if we provide him with a good car he will immediately score," Tost told AUTOSPORT.

STAR DEBUTS

A total of 70 drivers have scored points in their first world championship race, although the only winner is Giancarlo Baghetti, who triumphed in the 1961 French Grand Prix. Here are 10 other memorable debuts

 CLAY REGAZZONI 1970 Dutch GP - 4th	 JACQUES VILLENEUVE 1996 Australian GP - 2nd
 ALAIN PROST 1980 Argentinian GP - 6th	 KIMI RAIKKONEN 2001 Australian GP - 6th
 JOHNNY HERBERT 1989 Brazilian GP - 4th	 MARK WEBBER 2002 Australian GP - 5th
 JEAN ALESI 1989 French GP - 4th	 LEWIS HAMILTON 2007 Australian GP - 3rd
 EDDIE IRVINE 1993 Japanese GP - 6th	 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN 2014 Australian GP - 2nd

ROBERT MANZON 1917-2014

ROBERT MANZON, THE LAST survivor of the inaugural world championship season in 1950, has died at the age of 97. The Frenchman was a regular with the Gordini squad during much of the '50s, most famously claiming third in the wet 1952 Belgian Grand Prix for the marque and finishing sixth in that year's world championship.



LAT



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Jonathan Noble

F1's newshound

A thrilling title battle on the track was, for many, overshadowed by the virus-like negativity that plagued 2014. It's time to debug the sport

While there's been much chatter recently about the step forward that the new cars are going to make pace-wise in 2015, there seems little denying that it's off the track where Formula 1's biggest progress must come.

Last year was a bad one for the sport in this respect. Despite a thrilling campaign that in years to come will be reflected on as a classic, it was hard to escape the cloud of negativity that shadowed F1's every move in 2014.

Like a virus, it swept through the paddock, infecting team bosses, drivers, the media – and then grabbing hold of fans. The complaints about the new regulations, the lack of noise, the 'taxi-cab' racing, the falling television figures, the costs crisis and skewed financial distribution almost made the epic title battle a sideshow.

What it highlighted above all else was the lack of a coherent strategy with which to hit back at the doom-mongers: it's remarkable that F1 still doesn't have a centralised marketing department that's out there pushing the positives, doing its all to keep the current fans ever-more engaged and attracting new ones too.

As the new season approaches, it seems that little has changed, for F1 is again failing to drive its own itinerary and grab headlines for the right reasons. Instead of stories about a mouthwatering title battle, what to get excited about with new cars, or potential new driver and team rivalries, the agenda has been dominated again by negativity. The controversy over superlicences and



about a new Malaysian GP contract, but they talked too about what F1 can do better to help promoters in attracting a bigger audience.

Razali is well qualified to speak about where F1 is going wrong, for while the Malaysian GP has struggled to attract mega audiences, MotoGP's popularity at Sepang has gone through the roof thanks to its chief's eagerness to do all he can to promote the event.

There's the unified junior MotoGP ladder that means riders such as Marc Marquez arrive at the top level as heroes already. There's a packed racing programme at each event. There's more freedom for circuits to lay on attractions and vending areas that suit their audience better. And let's not even start on the approach to social media.

Razali knows small improvements can go a long way.

“It's not teams' duty to sort F1's wider failings.

They're in this game to win, not act as a charity”

the row over engine unfreezing that has got a returning Honda agitated are but two examples. In fact, the biggest excitement has been generated by the prospect of 1000bhp cars and wider tyres – things that are probably not going to happen for at least two years.

But whose responsibility is it to change this situation? Ultimately, while teams have a role to play in ramping up interest and delivering good story lines, it's not their duty to sort out F1's wider failings. They are in this game to win; not act as a charity to make all of F1 better.

This is something that falls at the door of Bernie Ecclestone and F1's owner CVC. They have to accept that a bit of investment in marketing, which is surely small change compared with the money being taken out of the sport, will pay back dividends in increasing interest. After all, the result will be bigger television deals and race promoters willing to pay more.

Last week, Sepang CEO Razlan Razali was in London to meet with Ecclestone. Part of their discussion was

“It's the role that Mr Ecclestone has to play,” he says.

“When we as a promoter pay so much to host that event, we want to make sure that the fans get value for money – and get to meet the drivers. It's like when a music concert comes to a country. As well as the artist performing, there are lots of promotional appearances, signing sessions and other activities to build the excitement up.

“The teams are so preoccupied with the race, or their sponsors, that they forget that us promoters need help. The commercial rights holder should help coordinate things with the teams to do more. We need to bridge the gap between the fans and the teams.”

It's clear that F1 needs to up its game off track, and we can but hope that the new Promotional Working Group that met again earlier this week will help push things forward. What's the downside to a bigger following, more-engaged fans and ramped-up interest? If there isn't one, then why is it not being done? ❧

This week in motorsport



PORSCHE'S NEW LMP1 IS REVEALED

Porsche has revealed its second-generation 919 Hybrid ahead of the start of the first development test of the new car this week.

Photographs of the 2015 World Endurance Championship challenger, which is a ground-up design based on the same concept

as the original 919, have been released of the car undertaking its shakedown at Porsche's Weissach test track in the hands of Marc Lieb in the run-up to Christmas.

Porsche is undertaking five days of testing in Abu Dhabi with the car this week.

10



MAUGER/LAT

Vandoorne back with ART

McLaren junior driver Stoffel Vandoorne will remain in the GP2 Series in a bid to win this year's title.

The 22-year-old Belgian, who was runner-up in his rookie campaign last season, will stay at ART Grand Prix.

Team manager Sebastien Philippe said: "He is part of that breed of naturally talented drivers, who work hard and are brilliant technically."

Vandoorne added: "I am confident because it will be my second year with a fantastic team I know well. The objective is clear: we want to win the title."

Dillmann joins Gelael at Carlin

Carlin's return to Formula Renault 3.5 will come with experienced French GP2 racer Tom Dillmann joining Indonesian Formula 3 graduate Sean Gelael.

Dillmann, 25, has replaced Tom Blomqvist on the Indonesian-backed Jagonya Ayam scheme for what will be his first FR3.5 campaign.

The 18-year-old Gelael steps up after making big progress in F3 and testing late last year in FR3.5.

Jagonya Ayam will also retain a presence in the F3 European

Championship, with Italian Antonio Giovinazzi returning to the Carlin fold to drive a Dallara-Volkswagen.

Giovinazzi (below), who won two races last season, will be a title favourite as the highest-placed driver from the 2014 standings returning to the series.

Blomqvist took the runner-up spot in Jagonya Ayam colours in Euro F3 last season. Although there is no confirmation of a 2015 programme for him, it is understood that he impressed in a BMW DTM test.



STALEY/LAT

New rules aid heavier drivers

Heavier LMP1 drivers (such as the tall Alexander Wurz, above) will not be penalised in the World Endurance Championship from this season.

If the average weight of the two or three drivers nominated for each car is below 80kg, that car will have to carry ballast.

A new qualifying procedure based on a two rather than four-lap average, restrictions on the number of sets of tyres used in the four WEC classes, and limitations on the number of engines used by LMP1 cars each season have also been confirmed.



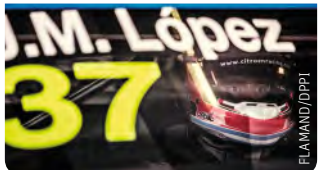
XPB/LAT

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BIG NUMBER

37

Reigning World Touring Car champion Jose Maria Lopez will retain the number he carried on the way to the 2014 title with Citroen for the coming season, instead of switching to the customary title holder's #1.



Rookies join 50-car F3 frenzy

A raft of rookies has been added to the Formula 3 European Championship grid at the same time as series organisers revealing that 50 entry requests have been submitted from 14 teams for the 2015 season.

McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award finalist and Thai national Alexander Albon (above) steps up from the Formula Renault Eurocup to partner French Formula 4 runner-up Dorian Boccocacci at Signature, the French team returning to F3 for its first full season since 2011.

Monegasque Charles Leclerc, who finished runner-up in Formula Renault ALPS last season, has joined Van Amersfoort Racing for his first F3 campaign after testing with many other leading teams.

Dane Mikkel Jensen, the reigning ADAC Formel Masters champion, has secured a seat with Mucke Motorsport as a junior driver of the squad's engine supplier Mercedes.

Meanwhile, American Ryan Tveter moves up from the FRenault Northern European Cup and will drive with Carlin.

Organisers have yet to decide at what level to peg the entry list, which will be revealed on March 2.

EcoBoost for BTCC Fords

Motorbase's trio of Ford Focuses will run EcoBoost engines in the British Touring Car Championship.

Engine developer Mountune has developed the Blue Oval's two-litre engine in recent months to bring the marque's flagship powerplant to the BTCC for

the first time.

The first engine has completed preliminary tests and Motorbase boss David Bartrum said the team would embark on an extensive pre-season programme.

"It's early days yet and we've obviously still got a long way to go



EBREY/LAT

Bamboo shoots back to WTCC

Craft-Bamboo Racing is to return to the World Touring Car Championship after a one-year sabbatical since it last competed as Bamboo Engineering.

The team will revive its relationship with Chevrolet builder RML and plans to run two Cruze TC1s. Frenchman Gregoire Demoustier switches over from the Blancpain Endurance Series as the first confirmed driver.

Elsewhere in the WTCC, Serbia's Dusan Borkovic switches from the Campos Chevrolet team to replace Sebastien Loeb Racing-bound Mehdi Bennani in the Proteam Honda squad for his sophomore campaign.



New WRC car get delayed

The Ford and Hyundai World Rally Championship challengers will not be launched until well into this season.

Volkswagen is the only team revealing its complete 2015 car on this week's Monte Carlo Rally, while Citroen's DS3 WRC comes with engine, aero and suspension upgrades, with more to follow in May.

M-Sport's new Fiesta (above) arrives in May, with the Cumbrian firm preparing a new engine on the RS WRC for the first time since 2011. Hyundai's brand-new World Rally Car, based on the new-generation i20 road car, will not be ready until the second half of the season.

TVR'S NEW LE MANS PLAN

TVR's new owner hopes to take the marque back to the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Computer games millionaire Les Edgar, who took control of TVR in 2013, has revealed that racing is very much part of his plans for the brand he is in the process of relaunching.

"Le Mans has to be a sensible target, although our racing aspirations are much broader," he



ROBERTSON/GETTY

said. "We will go racing with a GT car, but our plans have to play second fiddle to our road cars."

In brief



COATES/LAT

ARCTIC KOVALAINEN

Ex-Formula 1 star Heikki Kovalainen makes his rally-driving debut at this weekend's Arctic Rally. The 2008 Hungarian GP winner, who has co-driven on the event three times, will drive a Ford Fiesta R5. He faces, among others, Jari-Matti Latvala's dad, who drives a Mitsubishi Lancer.

FERRARI FOR LIGHTS!

Formula 3 team and ex-Indycar squad EuroInternational is planning a return to the US in Indy Lights. Team boss Antonio Ferrari says he aims to compete in 2016, and that he is close to confirming two drivers for European F3 this season.

MENEZES AT DAYTONA

American F3 racer Gustavo Menezes will make his second Daytona 24 Hours start this weekend. He joins Bruno Junqueira, Jack Hawksworth and Chris Cumming in the PC class with RSR Racing.

'ASSASSIN' CLAIM

NASCAR star Kurt Busch has testified in court that his ex-girlfriend is a trained assassin. Busch and Patricia Driscoll – who refutes the 2004 Cup champion's claims – are embroiled in a domestic assault case.

Russian joins Arden squad

Russian Formula Renault Eurocup frontrunner Egor Orudzhev has joined Arden Motorsport for his step up to Formula Renault 3.5.

The 19-year-old, who won a race on a British Formula 3 one-off last year, tested with Arden at Jerez and Motorland Aragon last autumn.



THANK YOU

Thank you to all those visitors and exhibitors that joined us to celebrate our 25th anniversary celebrations. Plans are already underway to make the 2016 show even better. We hope to see you at the NEC next year between the 14-17 January.



“A fantastic way to start the year.”

Anthony Davidson,
2014 FIA World Endurance
Champion.

“A phenomenal few days.”

Petter Solberg,
2014 FIA World Rallycross
Champion.



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David Brabham

The Inside Line

Project Brabham's crowdfunding exercise exceeded expectations. Now it's time to move on to the next stage, with the WEC the target

Bringing back the Brabham name through Project Brabham has been an interesting journey. Starting off with fighting to get the use of the name back, which took seven years of my life, it was then a case of what to do with it. I asked a branding expert to come in and do research on Brabham, interviewing people inside and outside the motorsport industry.

So what is Brabham? It's inspirational, it's pioneering, it's innovation, it's engineering. We had a clean sheet of paper and we went down many roads before we hit on Project Brabham. With all the feedback we got before we launched, we were always confident going to market, but even then we were unsure when it went live in September. But when that happened, it went mad and exceeded all expectations. The response has been fantastic from the media, the fans and the corporate world, because it's in line with the way they think business is going in the future. So the timing is perfect.

Phase one, which was to launch, do the crowdfunding and get a community involved, is complete. But we aren't going racing unless we can get the proper funding. So we are putting a prospectus together, which we are doing at the moment. From the middle of February we've got three or four months during which we will go into the marketplace of investors with our model. We now have a lot of data from the crowdfunding and we have an interesting model and potential partners that want to develop it.



and race an LMP2 car. There are other options, but that's not what we're focused on. The whole focus in the financial model is on LMP2. It's a world championship, which suits our product as it's global, and our number-one focus is the WEC.

Once we have a race team up and running, that will bring Project Brabham to life. The crowdfunding campaign has finished, but it's still up because we were invited by [crowdfunding engine] Indiegogo for forever funding, so people can still pre-purchase the three digital packages. The more people are involved, the more compelling the story is for an investor.

Long-term, we would like to produce our own car. Initially, we would buy a current LMP2 car, but we

“So what is Brabham? It's inspirational, it's pioneering, it's innovation, it's engineering”

The crowdfunding was the proof of concept and we never expected it to raise millions. It was about seed money and getting the ball rolling. We've got 3000 people from 64 countries involved in an idea that had very little marketing budget, so that bodes well.

A lot depends on how the investor discussions go. Racing is expensive, but the way we're going about it will create an open, transparent, knowledge-sharing platform. The e-learning platform has been picked up around the world by different people, be they fans, drivers, engineers or interested in human performance. Our team opens up a whole new world and that offers commercial opportunities. But we need to raise the funding from investors to make it all happen.

The aim is to compete in the World Endurance Championship, but it's not realistic to be at the first round. Looking at the timelines, ideally we would like to be racing by the end of the year to get everything prepared for 2016. The immediate objective is to buy

don't know which one yet. We have started speaking to people, but deciding won't be a problem and we want time to see how the cars perform.

The aim is to build an LMP1 car in the future and part of our model is to engage engineers around the world to help design it. You can only do so much in LMP2 because it's so restricted and there's a cost cap, but we can start developing our systems around it. Then, when we do design an LMP1 car, the systems will be in place and operational before we move it to the next level.

Obviously, I'd love to see Brabham back in F1 because it's in our DNA. When people talk about Brabham, it's F1 that comes to mind, so that's an objective. But with the current state of play in F1, it's not the best environment for a new team. Ten years down the road, after we have done LMP2 and LMP1, it could be possible with our model. But F1 is going to have to change direction. If it does, we'll be well placed. ❧

ALONSO AND McLAREN

THE IMPOSSIBLE REUNION

14

Seven years ago, the suggestion that Ron Dennis would even speak to Fernando Alonso again – let alone re-sign him – was unthinkable. **JONATHAN NOBLE** asks if it's a good idea

They say that getting back together with a former partner is like re-reading a book. No matter what you do, the ending will still be the same. For McLaren and Fernando Alonso this year, their challenge is in crafting a fresh storyline to their relationship to ensure it finishes very differently to 2007, when the denouement proved so ugly.

Just a few years ago, it would have been inconceivable to think that Alonso would find himself back at Woking. Such was the acrimony surrounding the remarkable single season he spent with the team that some senior McLaren figures subsequently struggled even to mention his name. One, who is no longer there, could only call him 'that boy'... ►

TEF/LAT





► Alonso's desperation to secure the number-one status he felt he'd been promised when he signed up pushed him to the edge as he bid to put new boy Lewis Hamilton in his place. This was a fight to be recognised. It fuelled public criticism of the team, the arm-waving in Indianapolis, the pits shenanigans in qualifying in Hungary – and then the threat (which was never seen through) to reveal to the FIA that McLaren had incriminating emails relating to the spy saga.

Time has moved on, though, and sometimes in F1 it's a case of needs must. For McLaren, too long now without a world championship, the loss of Hamilton at the end of 2012 meant it had to face a harsh reality: if it wanted the best driver available it would have to bury the troubles of the past. The ball was set rolling under previous boss Martin Whitmarsh's tenure, but progress was slow, especially because there seemed little reason for Alonso to give up his Ferrari dream for a team that appeared to have little better to offer.

The chances of an Alonso/McLaren partnership also appeared to take a dive at the beginning of 2014 when Ron Dennis – the focus of his rancour in '07 – returned to the helm of the team. After all, when Alonso had talked in recent years of



a potential reunion at McLaren amid Whitmarsh's overtures, the Dennis factor had always cropped up, although at the time his absence from direct management was actually viewed as a positive. Speaking in 2013, Alonso said: "There were so many rumours that we had a lot of problems that year ['07] but I always said that there are no problems with anyone, it was just the philosophy of the team, especially one man in the team that is not there [anymore]..."

So as F1 headed into 2014, there appeared little prospect of McLaren's grand ambition to recruit Alonso coming off. But even a remote chance was enough for McLaren racing director Eric Boullier to

keep up the push. There were regular talks with the Spaniard; clandestine hotel-room meetings and secret clear-the-air chats between Alonso and Dennis to ensure both parties could draw a line under the past. Then there was the waiting.

However much Ferrari's disappointing 2014 campaign boosted McLaren's hopes of getting the man it wanted, Alonso was in no rush to jump in Woking's direction. His desire was wider than that: he just wanted the best car available.

In the short term that meant Mercedes, but the door was firmly closed. That became clear when Alonso made an audacious bid to engineer a swap deal with Hamilton for this season. For it to happen



Alonso clashed with Dennis last time

BELLANCA/LAT

“I always said there are no problems with anyone. It was just the philosophy of the team, especially one man” **FERNANDO ALONSO**



Dennis revealed new Alonso deal with McLaren last month



Alonso needs a change after Ferrari stint

ALONSO'S 2007 F1 RESULTS

While his ill-fated 2007 season with McLaren is always regarded as a bad one for Fernando Alonso, he only finished one point behind world champion Kimi Raikkonen. His haul of 109 points, the same as team-mate Lewis Hamilton, hardly represents a disastrous year. Arguably, had he not crashed out of the Japanese Grand Prix after losing it in sodden conditions, he would have won his third world championship.

RACE	START	FINISH
AUSTRALIA	2	2
MALAYSIA	2	1
BAHRAIN	4	5
SPAIN	2	3
MONACO	1	1
CANADA	2	7
USA	2	2
FRANCE	10	7
BRITAIN	3	2
EUROPE	2	1
HUNGARY	6	4
TURKEY	4	3
ITALY	1	1
BELGIUM	3	3
JAPAN	2	DNF
CHINA	4	2
BRAZIL	4	3

it would have needed four parties to agree: Alonso, Hamilton, Mercedes and Ferrari. Unfortunately only one was willing to see it through...

When Ferrari found out about Alonso's Mercedes overtures, relations between the team and its star driver broke down. And, as the frustrations of yet another difficult campaign bubbled to the surface, the chain of events that would lead to Alonso walking away from his Maranello dream began.

The cutting loose of Alonso from Ferrari by Marco Mattiacci (still the team principal at the time) ahead of the Japanese GP effectively forced a decision for 2015. There was no vacancy at Mercedes, Red Bull had moved quickly to replace Sebastian Vettel to prevent Alonso launching a political bid to grab the seat alongside Daniel Ricciardo, and Williams was fully committed to Felipe Massa and Valtteri Bottas. So the choice for Alonso was clear: a year out of F1 and risk never coming back; or throw it all in with McLaren.

For a man so driven to win, a sabbatical was never really on the cards. But equally, in an ideal world, Alonso would never have wanted to commit himself to a project that may take several years to reach fruition, when there could be competitive

seats available at Mercedes, Williams and even Red Bull in 2016.

In the end, choice or no choice, a McLaren-Alonso reunion was the pragmatic solution for both parties. And for better or worse, both know that it's in their interest to make the most of this one. For Alonso, this is almost certainly the last chance he has to grab that elusive third championship he so craves. He's at a team that wants him, with a manufacturer that has the resources and brainpower to get it right. It's a chance for him to prove that he can be a team leader and a force for good, not just troublesome and destructive.

McLaren, too, knows that there will be pressure on the team and Honda to prove that all the overtures that convinced Alonso to join were not based on false promises. It knows there's unlikely to be instant success, but equally there's a pressure to keep the project moving forward and keep Alonso fully motivated.

Perhaps it's a case of both parties having something to prove: if this partnership works, it will in effect provide redemption for 2007. As Dennis said when Alonso's signing was announced: "We both want to win. This is a ▶



► different type of winning. This is a winning that has never been so underlined. We all have more to prove than ever before.”

That the spectre of 2007 still hangs over McLaren means that lessons have been taken on board and things will be done differently this time. But Dennis’s strong influence remains, and there is little that will prevent him from stepping in when he feels he must intervene. Even so, in Boullier McLaren has an effective buffer between Alonso and Dennis that can nip potential tension in the bud. The Frenchman will simply not allow any sources of conflict to run out of control.

Boullier is well versed in dealing with today’s

drivers. He kept Kimi Raikkonen in line at Lotus and, having handled much of the negotiating with Alonso, there is already a bond there. In the day-to-day running of the team, it’s Boullier who will have most dealings with Alonso.

Another glimmer of hope that things will work out this time comes from Alonso himself, who returns to McLaren a much more mature man than when he left. Back in 2007, as he flexed his muscles and pushed for what he wanted, there was the feeling that he felt McLaren should do things his way or he would take the high way. As a double world champion, there would be numerous opportunities for him to win the championship

in the future elsewhere. But those titles never came, even though there were near-misses at Ferrari.

Circumstances are different now, and getting things right with McLaren is no longer an option. It has to work: Alonso must do everything to make sure it does. He’s had plenty of time to reflect on things, and knows that time has moved on and his career no longer offers him all it did when he was last in Woking. This is a different era for him, a different approach... almost a different team.

“You have to be honest with yourself. As long as you are, you can think back and learn from the things you did,” he said at the end of last year. “It’s time to think of the future, and to be happy and competitive. That’s what we want from this partnership. The other side, it’s no longer 2007: it’s not McLaren-Mercedes, it’s McLaren-Honda,

‘In Boullier, McLaren has an effective buffer. He will not allow any sources of conflict to run out of control’



which is a completely different thing in my opinion. Jenson [Button] is not Lewis, and I'm not the same as in 2007."

It's that reference to Hamilton that perhaps offers a glimpse of the greatest differentiator. If the problems of 2007 can be traced back to one thing, it was Hamilton's speed. Had his team-mate been a walkover, then few of the troubles that derailed Alonso's relationship with team management – including his amazing threat to shop the team to the FIA – would have materialised.

In new team-mate Button, Alonso has someone who will still put him under pressure, especially on race days, ensuring he gets the best out of himself and the car. Beyond that, there will be none of the politics and push for supremacy that Hamilton unleashed in 2007, when he proved determined not to be submissive to Alonso.

While much has changed between Alonso and McLaren, a lot depends on how competitive the new Honda engine is going to be. Should the Japanese return to F1 descend to the kind of trouble witnessed during its frustrating Abu Dhabi test, then it doesn't matter how well Alonso ingratiates himself with the team, it will be a relationship soured by frustration. But should the fruits of Honda's labour pay off, then we should expect good things. Even amid the maelstrom of chaos in 2007, or the difficult recent times at Ferrari, the one thing that remained a constant was that when the lights went out, Alonso was sensational on track.

Get all the ingredients together, and the story of McLaren and Alonso will not just end differently – there could be plenty of pages to this tale that will need to be rewritten. But should there be trouble, and should the Honda challenge stall, then no amount of revision will stop the original book's inexorable progress towards its final chapter. ❧

ALONSO AND BUTTON: NO WORRIES

Jarno Trulli learned a lot during his long Formula 1 career, including, it seems, the art of diplomacy.

Trulli, who made 252 F1 starts between 1997 and 2011, is well placed to comment on the potential dynamic between Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso at McLaren. He was team-mate to Button at Renault in 2002, and then stayed on to partner Alonso for another two years when the Spaniard arrived in '03.

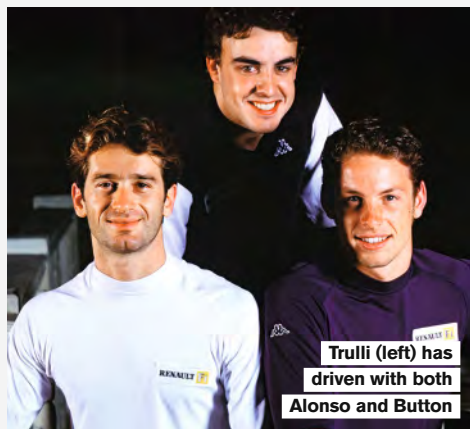
Who better to forecast the potential for any unrest? But if Trulli has concerns, he's keeping them to himself. "Jenson is a very nice guy, I worked very well with him," he says. "And Fernando as well, if you can take him, can be a strong driver and a good person. I don't think there will be any trouble.

"Fundamentally, yeah, they are two very different



Trulli and Button in '02

ETHERINGTON/LAT



drivers. Whether that's good or not I don't know, but they are both world champions so that's a very good driver line-up. At the moment I don't think that McLaren-Honda needs to look at its driver situation."

Trulli is a fan of stacking a team with as much driver talent as possible. ("If you have a lazy team-mate – which I've had – it's a mess," he says). But he does believe Alonso will have to work with Button's existing relationships at McLaren. It's not so much favouritism that could be the problem as a lack of knowing how to deal with a complicated chain of command.

"If you stay longer in a team you know how to relate better," he says. "A team like Toyota had over 1000 people. You don't communicate with all of them, but you still must make sure that your message gets to the right person.

"It matters politically as well. Every team has a political side, and you have to adapt to have the right communication. [Alonso] will need to listen to people and try to understand the reason behind some decisions. Then you better understand what kind of communication you need to feed the engineers, and what kind of political environment you have."

Mark Glendenning



Hamilton's speed helped prompt 2007 fall-out

HONDA

Racing Team



HONDA ENGINES IN F1



STARTS: 340



WINS: 72



POLE
POSITIONS: 77



FASTEST
LAPS: 57



CONSTRUCTORS'
TITLES: 6



DRIVERS'
TITLES: 5

WHY HONDA HAS MOTORSPORT IN ITS

DNA

This year marks Honda's fourth coming in grand prix racing.

ADAM COOPER explains why racing means so much to
the Japanese automotive giant

Honda's return to Formula 1 is one of the biggest stories of 2015. Whether it wins or loses, the presence of the Japanese manufacturer will generate plenty of headlines. Throughout the months of talk about its comeback, Honda has repeatedly underlined how important racing is to its ethos.

This is Honda's fourth era in grand prix racing, the latest chapter in a story that began back in August 1964, when the little known American Ronnie Bucknum was entered in the German GP. The company bowed out at the end of 1968, before returning for two further adventures in 1983-'92, and then most recently in 2000-'8. Each time it has disappeared from the scene for a few years and then returned when the time is deemed to be right. "It's good that Honda are back," says Bernie Ecclestone. "It's a good name, and they're racers. Not many manufacturers are what you call racers, and they are born racers."

Motorsport, and especially F1, is in the corporate DNA. That's the enduring legacy of legendary company founder Soichiro Honda, who died in 1991. Even after handing over the reins in 1973 he remained a powerful figurehead, and it says much that the men who succeeded him as president, at least for the first few decades, were his proteges.

Honda's top bosses have also traditionally been racers. Indeed both Tadashi Kume (1983-'90) and Nobuhiko Kawamoto (1990-'98) had hands-on involvements in the 60s F1 team, and subsequent leaders have also spent at least some time in two or four-wheeled motorsport as they worked their

way up the company. The experience they gained stayed with them.

That racing spirit is something that anyone who comes into contact with the company quickly becomes aware of. Current Force India CEO Otmar Szafnauer had spells with both Ford and GM before he got to know Honda as operations director of British American Racing in 2000. Two years later he switched camps to become vice president of Honda Racing Development. Working with people who had known Soichiro, he learned a lot about the man.

"The thing that has stuck with me was that the company ethos or personality will sometimes stem back to the early days of the founder," he says. "It was definitely like that at Ford, and it seemed to be like that at General Motors. And it was like that at Honda.

"Mr Honda himself was about a couple of things. One was challenging the best in the world – he wanted to be the best at whatever he did. And two he loved high-end engineering, and especially engine technology."

Szafnauer recalls an anecdote related by company veteran Shoichi Tanaka, who joined in 1966, and was Otmar's immediate boss as president of HRD from 2000 to 2005.

"He told me that one of the first cars they built was a two-seater convertible. They were giving feedback to Mr Honda and saying that the roof is leaking, and the bodywork isn't what it ought to be, and Mr Honda said, 'What are the people complaining about? I'm just selling them an engine and the rest of it's free!'

"The point is that Mr Honda was all about high technology and great engines, but at the same time, he was a racer. All of that embodied Mr Honda, and it's still within the company." ▶

Where it all began:
one RA271 appeared
for 1964 German GP

► Soichiro was an extraordinary character. In a country where consensus and a conservative approach is so often the way, his drive and personality fired the early success of the company (see sidebar).

After World War II there were dozens of nascent motorcycle manufacturers in Japan, but Soichiro made Honda stand out by entering a team at the Isle of Man TT races in 1959. With no experience of road circuits – Japanese races were on dirt – the Hondas were outclassed. The engineers took a close look at the competition, went home, and tried to do it better. Just two years later Briton Mike Hailwood won the 250cc World Championship. Honda would secure at least two titles, and sometimes three, for seven consecutive seasons.

The bike business expanded rapidly, especially in the USA. In 1963 Honda opened Suzuka, which would serve as a test facility for road and racing machines, and in 1964 came an entry into grand prix racing – a bold move for a company that had started making road cars just the previous year.

Its racing activities ensured that Honda was better known overseas than its bigger domestic rivals. The marketing benefits were obvious, but the key was improving the breed – and being seen to do so – by going racing.

“One of the reasons they race is because they want to take on the best in the world,” says Szafnauer. “And to Mr Honda it was a measure of how good his company was. If you measure yourself against local competition you don’t know how good you are globally. That was his thought process. And F1 is global competition, and it is the pinnacle in technology.”

Honda’s philosophy has always been to use motorsport to train engineers who then go back and do great things in other areas. The racing department is integrated within the company, which is not the case at Mercedes or Renault.

Despite the proven benefits Honda has withdrawn from F1 on three occasions, each time citing economic reasons and stressing that it was time to focus on production vehicles.

The first absence proved to be the longest. The company pulled out of bike racing in February 1968, and then at the end of a difficult year that included the death of Jo Schlesser at Rouen, the F1 project was also canned.

Remarkably, given the racing heritage, Honda remained out of top-level motorsport for over a decade. The marque returned to the bike world

Who was Soichiro Honda?

Born in 1906, Soichiro Honda was the son of a blacksmith who later expanded into bicycle repair. Honda Jr was thus fascinated by machines from an early age, and as a teenager he became an apprentice for a motor engineering company. His formal education had ended early, but he learned everything he could about cars and motorcycles. He first became involved in racing as early as 1923, helping to build and run cars



Soichiro Honda would build bikes before cars

for his bosses, the Sakakibara brothers.

A strong-willed individual with an enquiring mind, he made such an impression that aged 21 in 1928 he was given the task of managing a new branch in the city of Hamamatsu. It expanded rapidly, and he soon added man management to his skill set. By 1936 he had built a racing car of his own, and he entered it at the Tamagawa Speedway oval in Tokyo. Alas he had a huge crash that injured both himself and his brother, who was acting as riding mechanic. Family pressures forced him to give up.

He branched out on his own when he started a piston-ring manufacturing business. Initially he struggled, as Japan’s technology lagged behind, and he filled a gap in his education by studying metallurgy part-time. Eventually the company became successful, but he lost control of it during World War II, and subsequently US bombing destroyed the facility.

In September 1948 he started the motorcycle company that bears his name. It wasn’t long before the brand became involved in domestic competition, and in 1954 Soichiro travelled to the Isle of Man on a fact-finding mission. The trip was an eye opener, and he realised how far behind the Japanese industry still was. While in Europe he ordered machine tools that would help to raise his company’s game – then as now Honda understood the importance of having the best possible facilities.

championship in 1979 with an unsuccessful design, but in typical style the engineers worked away until they got it right. Freddie Spencer won the 500cc title in 1983, and Honda has been a regular presence, and a regular winner, ever since.

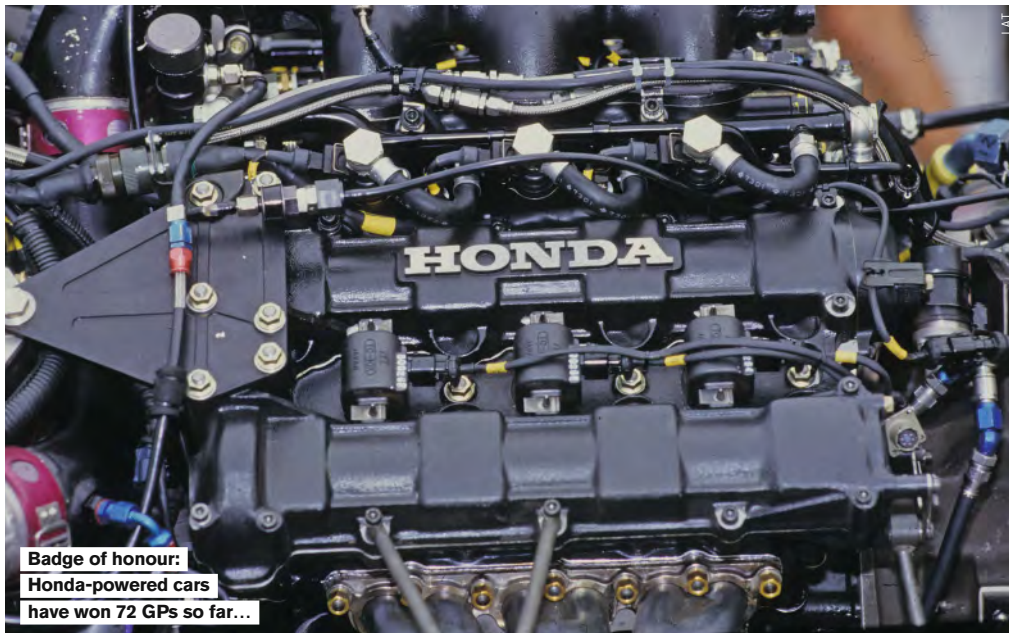
Its car racing activities have been less consistent on both counts. In 1980 a ‘skunk works’ engine project instigated by former F1 boss Kawamoto led to Honda moving into in F2 as a precursor to an F1 return in 1983 – this time solely as an engine partner. The company enjoyed huge success over the next decade with Williams, Lotus and McLaren, but once again there was a bigger picture, and it pulled out at the end of 1992. The road-car division needed extra attention,

and the specific challenge was to keep the company independent in an era when brands were being consolidated into global groups. It was time to take stock.

Through the nineties the company kept a toe in the F1 water via Hiroto Honda, son of Soichiro. His Mugen concern supplied various midfield teams, including Jordan.

“We paid £3m for our race-winning engine in 1998-’99, which was a fantastic deal,” says Jordan’s former commercial boss Ian Phillips. “I think you can say it was subsidised! And all the people involved were Honda people. It was a convenient way of them doing it on the quiet and keeping in touch with what was going on. At one stage Honda wanted to buy Jordan, and Eddie said no...”

Honda built and tested its own car in 1999, but the promising project was abandoned. The official return came with BAR in 2000. It went somewhat against the grain for Honda to choose an unproven team, albeit one with unlimited ambition, and there were conflicting views within the company. That was reflected by Jordan being granted works status in 2001-’02, an arrangement that ended



Badge of honour: Honda-powered cars have won 72 GPs so far...

DID YOU KNOW?

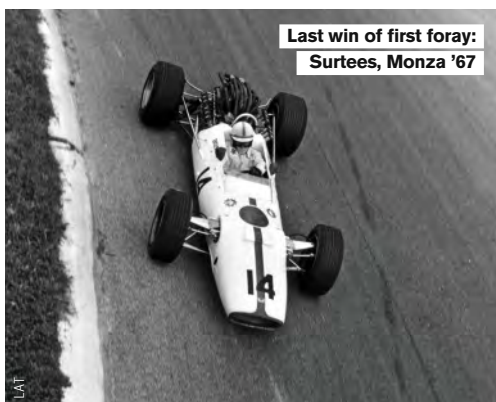
Jenson Button has started more F1 races using a Honda engine than any other driver, with 102.



Button, Hungary '06: Honda's last F1 win



Phillips reckons Honda gets it right – eventually



Last win of first foray: Surtees, Monza '67



“They lost a little bit of the racing spirit started by Mr Honda. They’ve realised they have to regain that”

FORMER HONDA RACING CEO NICK FRY

Honda had a lot of success with Williams in the mid-1980s

when Honda opted to focus on one partner.

The V10 was pretty good, and BAR finished second in the 2004 constructors’ championship, albeit some way behind Ferrari. That form encouraged Honda to agree to buy the team from relieved owner British American Tobacco at the end of the season. The philosophy of focusing on engine supply was abandoned.

With the purchase complete in 2006 the team was formally renamed Honda. The new V8 was disappointing, and form took a dive. Significantly, motorsport boss Shoichi Tanaka – one of the last managers who had worked directly with founder Soichiro – had by now retired.

“Mr Tanaka really was the flag bearer of what Honda stood for,” says former team CEO Nick Fry. My feeling is that after he retired they lost a little bit of that racing spirit.”

The next two seasons, when the Earth Dream concept disguised a lack of outside sponsorship, proved to be even worse. Did Honda’s management fumble the task of running the team, or was it let down by the key players at Brackley not getting the job done? It’s a complex question, but Fry acknowledges that the 2006 departure of Geoff Willis – after a Honda man was named technical boss – was a key moment.

The arrival of Ross Brawn as team principal in November 2007 moved the goalposts. While the following season was a washout, huge R&D resources were deployed in Japan to assist the UK team with the ’09 project. A Japanese Honda aerodynamicist came up with the concept of the double diffuser, and the team was confident that it would make a big step. However, the credit crunch shook the global economy, and on December 5, 2008 Honda announced its withdrawal from the sport.

“The revenue side of the business was shrinking significantly,” says Szafnauer. “They



Shoichi Tanaka worked with BAR and was last link to Soichiro Honda

didn’t see how they could stop the enormous spend of F1 without pulling out. It was, ‘we’re spending a lot of money, and it’s not our core business.’ It’s a publicly owned company, so they had to do what’s right for the business.”

“At the time the Swindon plant was shut down for nearly six months,” says Fry. “American dealers were refusing to take cars into stock. It was a crisis situation, and it’s fully understandable that something like F1 became discretionary. It’s a question of focus, and at that time Honda’s leadership had to focus on the basic things, and that was clearly preservation of the company.”

By handing the Brackley operation to Brawn and his management colleagues Honda appeared to be burning its bridges as far as F1 was concerned. However, the possibility of returning in its former role as an engine supplier was always there.

“Time goes on and you think, ‘should I be testing myself again?’” says Szafnauer. “And if it’s in your DNA, and that’s what your company is about, and they are not in the pinnacle of motorsport, it’s only a matter of time before some

big boss says, ‘shouldn’t we be doing this?’ Also at Honda you retire at 60, unless you have special circumstances. When they quit last time I said, ‘in five or six years when the guys who felt the pain of quitting have long retired, Honda will be back.’”

Improved economic times and the sport’s switch to the turbo power unit were the catalysts. Ultimately the possibility of recapturing a little of the magic of the Senna/Prost era by reuniting with McLaren proved to be irresistible.

Like all other car makers, Honda has endured rollercoaster commercial fortunes over the past five decades, but as it returns to F1 it remains proudly independent, and in respectable health. Last week’s launch of the spectacular new NSX was a great PR boost, and hinted at the future.

There are challenges, however. The recall of millions of cars since 2008 has proved both expensive and embarrassing, and it was reported in November that past presidents Kawamoto and Hiroyuki Yoshino (1998–2003) had both been to visit the current incumbent to tell him what he was doing wrong. Their ongoing influence is another sign that Honda is a special company, with a unique history.

“I think they had started to lose a little bit of the racing spirit that was started by Mr Honda,” says Fry. “The brand had become a little bit mundane and the products not as exciting as they should be. Now they’ve realised that they have to regain that position of being exciting and innovative, and success in racing is part of that.”

“It’s a wonderful company,” says Phillips. “I suspect the guys I knew have moved on and a new breed has come in, but the commitment from Honda is always fantastic, and it’s great that they are back. Their history is often that the first stab at it can be a bit wide of the mark. They work phenomenally hard, and they will get it right. Don’t underestimate them.”



F1 poised for speed leap in

After last year's criticism, development rates mean that F1 cars will be significantly faster this season. **JONATHAN NOBLE** explains why lap times are set to tumble

24

Formula 1 is poised to make dramatic steps forward in pace this year that should lay to rest accusations that modern grand prix cars are 'too slow', claim leading figures.

Ahead of the new cars running in public for the first time at the first pre-season test at Jerez in Spain on February 1, the development push undertaken by teams over the winter is predicted to have found substantial speed improvements.

Although F1 teams are understandably reluctant to reveal details about precisely how much

performance they have found, there are some indications about the impressive progress that has been made. Pirelli motorsport director Paul Hembery, whose company has close technical links with all teams, is one predicting that there could be as much as three seconds per lap improvement from 2014.

"Our initial data is suggesting there are going to be some big jumps," Hembery told AUTOSPORT.

"The teams have had the ability to change things over the winter, particularly on the powertrain front, and we anticipate by the first race in

Melbourne, or at the latest China, we will see some pretty significant jumps compared with last season.

"We know we are always chasing a moving target, and I think we are talking about maybe being two to three seconds per lap quicker than last season. That is a massive difference. It means for our tyres that what was last year a conservative choice might actually be quite aggressive this season."

THE TIME DEFICIT

As soon as the new generation of F1 cars hit the track last year, drivers

were immediately critical of how much slower they were – or felt – than the 2013 ones.

Adrian Sutil said at the first test: "We have lost downforce, around 20 to 30 per cent from last year, and now also the tyres are one step harder. It makes it more difficult all the time. It is a shame because F1 is a bit too slow at the moment."

Fears of an F1 slowdown were realised at the start of the campaign when lap times proved well adrift of those seen in 2013.

Looking at the lap times at venues that have been unchanged for several

TIMELINE: F1 PACE 2004-2014

Using the unchanged Hungaroring as a reference, this shows the ebb and flow of F1 lap times during the past decade. In each case, the lap time is the fastest single lap set during the grand prix weekend, irrespective of session.

2004 1m18.436s

ALL PICS: LAT

Rubens Barrichello, Ferrari F2004

2005 1m19.882s

Michael Schumacher, Ferrari F2005

2006 1m19.504s

Felipe Massa, Ferrari 248 F1

Harder tyres and lower downforce slowed '14 cars



2015?

COATES/LAT

years (see below), it is clear that F1 cars were slower than they had been for more than a decade.

The deficit did fall towards the end of the campaign, though, as teams unlocked more speed from their cars. During the Brazilian GP weekend they were actually ahead on pace thanks to the high altitude not hurting the turbo engines as much as it would the old normally aspirated power units.

Should the predictions of a two-to-three-second-per-lap improvement come true, then it should put the 2015 cars back on



DUNBAR/LAT

Car performance could reach 2013 levels soon

a par with F1 from the final years of the V8 rules.

But they will still need a further big leap to be approaching some of the lap records that were set a decade ago.

At Monza, for example, Lewis Hamilton's fastest weekend lap from 2014 – 1m24.109s – was only four tenths slower than Sebastian Vettel's 2013 effort. Yet it was still some 4.5 seconds adrift of Juan Pablo Montoya's all-time record from 2004 of 1m19.525s.

RECOVERING LOST GROUND

Improvements in lap time for 2015 are likely to come despite minor rule changes serving theoretically to slow the cars down, including changes to nose design and revised minimum weight.

Force India technical director Andrew Green said: "There's a weight increase that's going to add a couple of tenths of a second, which has come too late so we are all going to carry a load of ballast."

"But aerodynamically we'll overtake that. We'll be faster for sure. I'm sure the engine side of it will take care of that."

Williams chief technical officer Pat Symonds was in agreement that all indications point towards some serious progress being made this year. "The cars will get faster

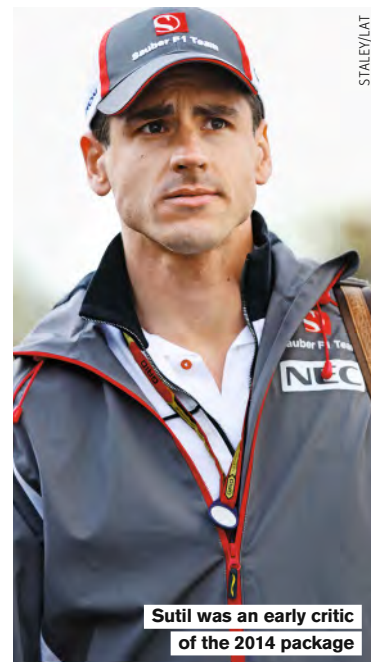


COATES/LAT

Pirelli's Hembery expects speed gain

"The cars will get faster because we are always evolving. We have taken a bit of a hit aerodynamically for 2015 but we will get over that"

Pat Symonds, Williams



STALEY/LAT

Sutil was an early critic of the 2014 package

because we are always evolving," he told AUTOSPORT. "We have taken a bit of a hit aerodynamically for 2015, but we will get over that. But I wouldn't mind seeing them faster, and I wouldn't mind seeing more power."

IN-SEASON RAMP UP

Last year, in-season development did not deliver as much of an improvement as had been predicted as the impact of the engine freeze and teams diverting resources to their 2015 cars was felt.

This season should be different, with teams having better knowledge of where gains can be made. Also, the FIA has ruled that limited engine developments will be allowed during the campaign. Although the engine-rule situation is viewed as being positive for closing the field up, it could also allow Mercedes to find more speed gains. That could have an impact on nudging closer to lap records.

As Symonds said: "It allows Mercedes more time [to develop] – and believe me these are clever guys. These are the guys who have done the best job so far. "Why would they not do the best job this year? So maybe we will keep the status quo, maybe we will move forward." ▶

2007 1m19.310s



Lewis Hamilton, McLaren-Mercedes MP4-22

2008 1m19.068s



Felipe Massa, Ferrari F2008

2009 1m20.358s



Mark Webber, Red Bull-Renault RB5

2010 1m18.773s



Sebastian Vettel, Red Bull-Renault RB6

Why 1000bhp F1 is possible in 2017

Formula 1 teams were due to meet again this week to press on with plans to push engine power beyond 1000bhp within the next few years.

A meeting of F1's Engine Working Group representatives earlier this month concluded that there was scope to deliver the dramatic power increase that grand prix chiefs have been demanding.

Following concerns last year that the current 750bhp cars appeared too easy to drive, F1's Strategy Group mandated a push to ramp up power and make grand prix cars more exciting – perhaps as early as 2016.

The result of these discussions is that F1's engine designers believe producing that target is possible without the need for an expensive overhaul of the current V6 turbo regulations. Instead, they claim minor design tweaks to the current engines – such as to crank firing – allied to an increase in the fuel flow rate, and a raising of the maximum 100kg fuel allowance, would be enough for F1 to meet or exceed the 1000hp target.

F1 technical directors were set to begin more detailed discussions on the matter this week to try to edge the changes closer to reality. Team bosses will meet next month.

Although it is thought that it is too late to put the changes in place for next year, sources with good knowledge of the situation think it is realistic to expect the new engines to be ready for the start of 2017.

CAR IMPROVEMENTS

F1 teams are not only evaluating a ramp up of engine power for the future, but also changes to the cars.

As part of the push instigated by the Strategy Group last year, technical chiefs are evaluating ways to make the cars faster, more challenging for drivers – and more visually appealing for fans.

These will go hand-in-hand with more powerful engines, but it is believed these targets can be achieved through bigger wings to improve downforce – as well as wider tyres to deliver increased mechanical grip.

HOW PACE DROPPED OFF FROM 2013 TO 2014

This graph compares the absolute fastest laps set across a race weekend on comparable circuits during the 2013 and '14 F1 seasons.

Pirelli hardened its tyre compounds for 2014, but the tyres are considered part of the overall car package and thus

discounted as a variable in this data.

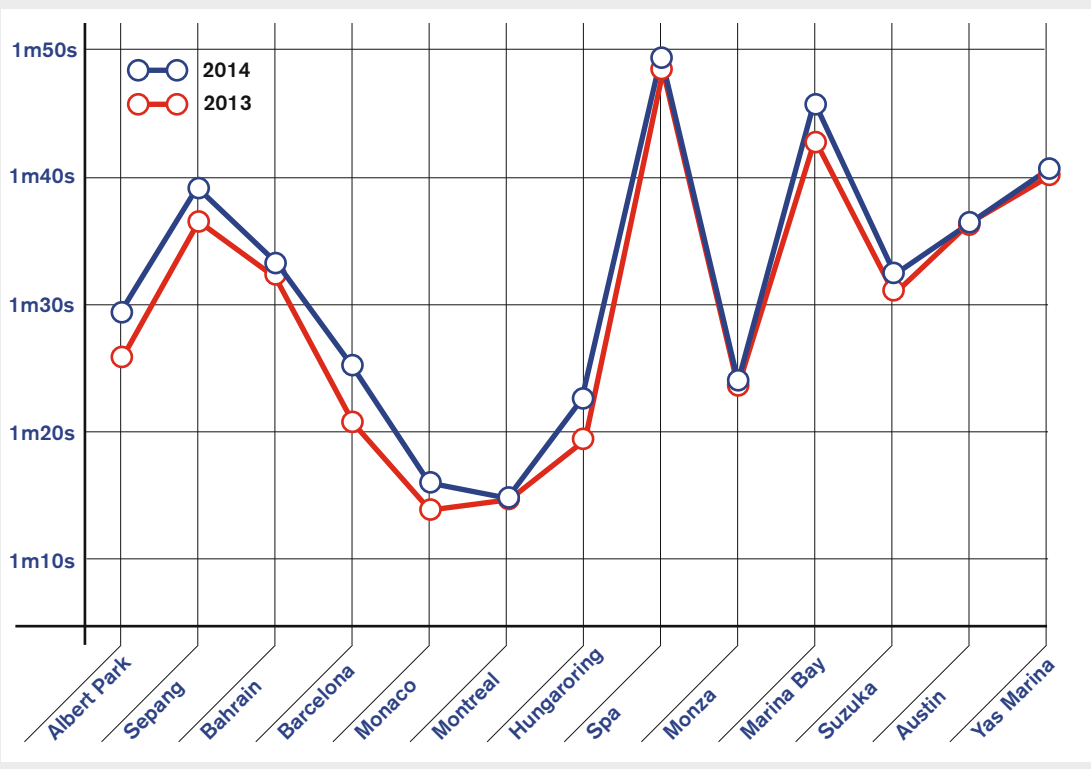
Circuits at which differing weather conditions year to year made it impossible for drivers to do roughly comparable dry qualifying runs (or qualifying simulations in practice) have also been

discounted. Therefore Interlagos, Shanghai and Silverstone have all been omitted from our calculations.

A few anomalies aside (most likely related to imperfectly comparable weather conditions and tyre allocations/track evolution), the general

trend shows 2014 cars gradually clawed back time lost to their '13 counterparts.

But they were slower overall. Only once (during the US Grand Prix in late October) was a 2014 car faster on pure pace than during the preceding season.



Pirelli motorsport director Paul Hembery said his company would be open to changing the design of tyres – but only from 2017 when a new F1 contract is due to be discussed.

He thinks there would be a double benefit to bigger tyres: cars would look better, plus there would be kudos to come from beating lap records again.

“I would love to see us break some track records because there is a

perception that over the past 10 years we have lost pace – although obviously for reasons of safety,” he told AUTOSPORT.

“I think the public like the idea of breaking records. We have seen a lot of records broken recently in terms of dominating performances and winning races, but I think lap times are something people still like.”

For Williams chief technical officer Pat Symonds, the desire has

to be to ensure that F1 cars remain the fastest current racing machinery.

“Is lap time important?” he asked. “I’m not sure. What matters is that an F1 car is the fastest car over a given circuit. But by how much doesn’t matter.”

“What we want to see is good racing, cars that are hard to control, and cars that are out of shape.”

F1’s plans for 2017 are currently on course to do just that. ❧

TIMELINE: F1 PACE 2004-2014

2011 1m19.815s



Sebastian Vettel, Red Bull-Renault RB7

2012 1m20.953s



Lewis Hamilton, McLaren-Mercedes MP4-27

2013 1m19.388s



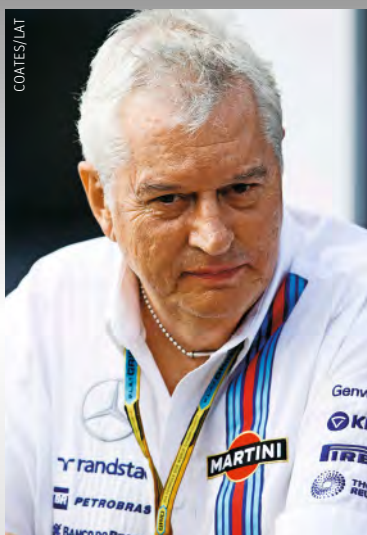
Lewis Hamilton, Mercedes F1 W04

2014 1m22.715s



Nico Rosberg, Mercedes F1 W05 Hybrid

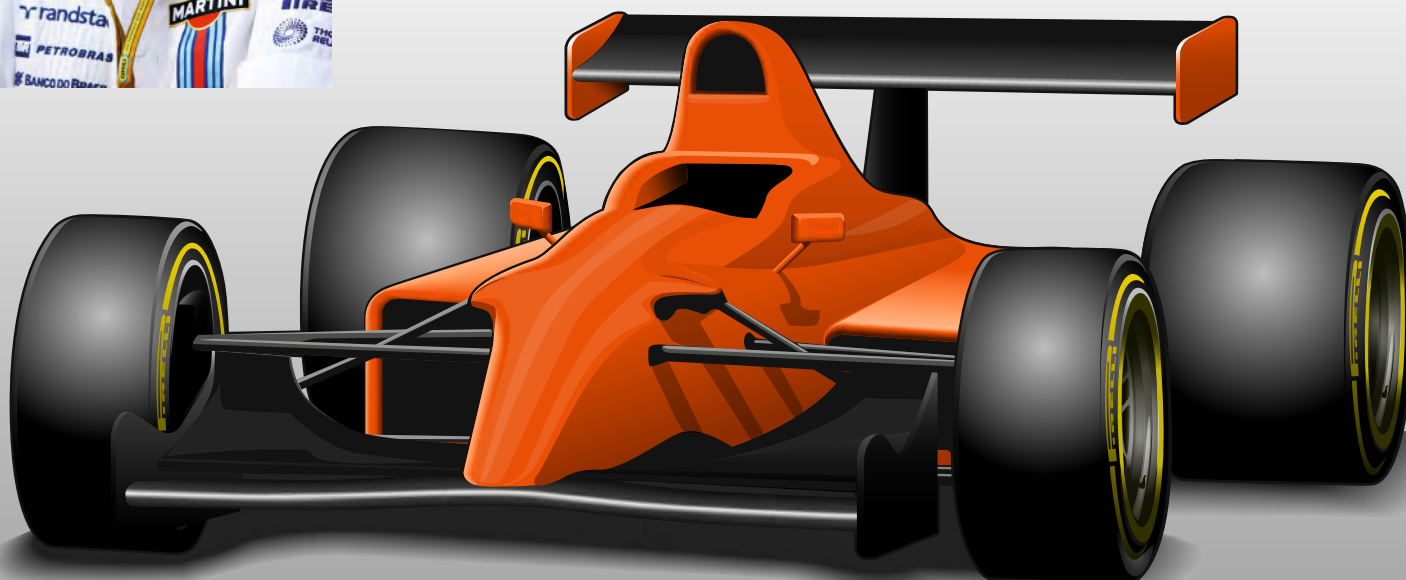
COATES/LAT



“Is lap time important? What we want to see is good racing, cars that are hard to control, and cars that get out of shape”

Pat Symonds, Williams

Bigger tyres and less aero could make racing closer



ALAN ELDREDGE

27

GARY ANDERSON'S BLUEPRINT



If F1 wants to introduce 1000bhp, there are several straightforward measures you could take to deliver this without creating huge cost.

1 Allow each driver five power units per year, not four

In reality, the cost of an engine is not what is driving up the budget; it is the research required before you end up with an actual component.

2 Remove the fuel-flow limit

By dropping the regulation limiting the cars to a 100kg/hour peak flow rate, you remove the problems posed by this invisible-to-the-public piece of kit. This valve is in use for one thing only: to control the amount of turbo boost that a driver can use (boost level is not restricted directly by the rules). So by

removing it you would be able to increase boost to whatever level you felt comfortable with.

By increasing the turbo boost, we could see for some of the time power outputs well in excess of 1000bhp. If the maximum fuel used during the race is kept at 100kg then the drivers would use that extra boost during qualifying and possibly at some time during the race, depending on what sort of strategy they were on. So it would be a game of cat and mouse.

All of this could be done with more or less what exists as a power unit now. Wouldn't it be exciting to see a driver using lots more horsepower for that last lap of qualifying? And similar to a boost button, more power would then be available when you do catch another car during the race; and as long as you don't use more than your allotted 100kg of fuel over the race distance, you have

still satisfied the need to demonstrate leadership on fuel efficiency.

3 Aerodynamics

Aerodynamics is the tricky one. The set of regulations that the Overtaking Working Group came up with a few years ago was a waste of effort. No matter what you do, aerodynamics will always exist. It's not easy to do, but we could aim for a reduction in downforce of something like 50 per cent while still keeping drag levels fairly high to control top speeds at a reasonable level.

Doing this would close up the grid, because the importance of aerodynamics on ultimate performance would be drastically reduced.

4 Bigger tyres

Wider and maybe even larger-diameter tyres, especially the rears, is an obvious step. Give the grip back via the black



stuff. Every team can then bolt the same amount of grip onto its car as opposed to the big-budget teams spending millions on aerodynamic development.

So do the above and you end up with cars with well in excess of 1000bhp some of the time, bigger and grippier tyres for everyone to transmit that extra power into the asphalt, and reduced downforce, which will close the grid up significantly and improve the racing.

And, vitally important in today's climate, it will dramatically reduce the cost of aerodynamic research.

Indy Lights: New car, new hope



IndyCar's main feeder category has been ailing for years. But there are signs that a new car will make it a more relevant category this season. By **MARK GLENDENNING**

28

Cost control has become one of the defining mantras of motorsport in the early part of the 21st century. But Indy Lights is an example of how slashing the numbers almost killed a series.

Some figures: at the St Petersburg season opener in 2012, there were 16 cars on the grid. The following year, that had fallen to nine. Last year at the same venue, the field had rebounded slightly to 12, with the grid size wavering between eight and 12 for the rest of the season. And all this despite continuing to run a car that was largely unchanged since its debut in 2002 amid pressure to keep costs down.

Something had to change. There's a brand-new car from Dallara, a new Mazda 2.0-litre twin-turbo engine developed by Advanced Engine Research, and

a new tyre supplier in Cooper.

There are also new teams, including European heavyweights Carlin and sportscar squad 8Star, to go into battle against powerhouses Schmidt and Andretti. Eight cars participated in the first pre-season test at Palm Beach and entries in the mid-teens are on the cards.

But crucially, there is a new mentality. Driving the whole thing is Dan Andersen, who took over a long-term lease on the series from IndyCar 19 months ago, with an option to buy. At the time he acquired control of the series, Andersen Promotions already ran US F2000 and Pro Mazda; adding Lights to the portfolio put Andersen at the head of all junior categories in the 'Road to Indy' ladder system.

And to Andersen, the key to rescuing Lights from oblivion was clear. Retaining the old car for so



Harvey returns after losing 2014 title on comeback

long kept costs down, but at the expense of relevance.

His solution was similar to the ghostly directive that prompted Kevin Costner to construct a baseball diamond on an Iowa corn farm in 1980s film *Field of Dreams*: if you build it, they will come.

"I told [the teams] from the very beginning that it isn't so much about lowering the cost of racing,

it's about increasing the value," Andersen says. "Everyone was saying that we need to keep lowering, keep lowering. But, frankly, the cost of an Indy Lights seat last year was about \$700k-\$750k. And compared to worldwide racing on that level, it wasn't numbers that were keeping drivers away, it was relevancy. "Drivers did not view the old car

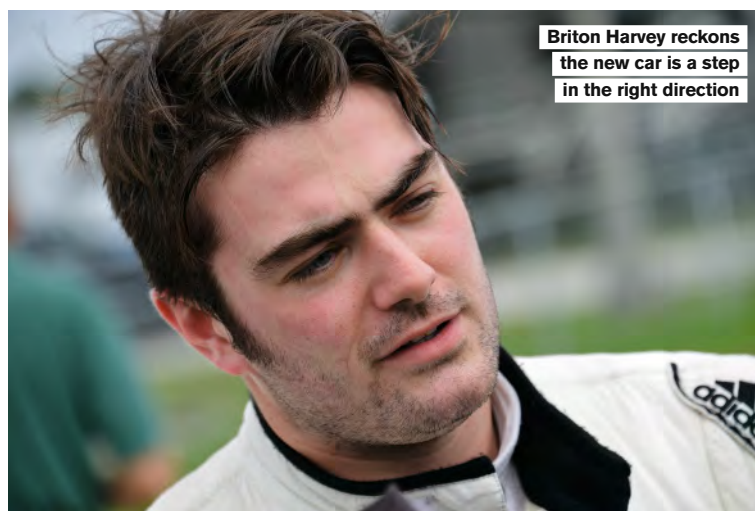
Pro Mazda champ Pigot steps up ladder to Lights



CHRIS OWENS

and the old series as something that would be beneficial to their careers, so they stayed away. We thought that if we introduced a car that was relatively state of the art, very high-end... that's something that drivers would want to drive."

Early signs are that he was right. Budgets have increased: a driver can expect to pay something between \$800,000 and \$1.2 million to contest the 2015 Indy Lights season.



Briton Harvey reckons the new car is a step in the right direction

"European drivers might be getting frustrated over there. They can see that Lights leads somewhere and they're taking a look"

DAN ANDERSEN

But without the new car, none of the new teams would have signed on, and the series wouldn't be on the upsurge it's enjoying now.

It also helps that the new car is a hit. The package completed its early shakedown at Palm Beach in Florida last week without any major glitches and lap times were close.

"The new car in every way is a big step forward," says Jack Harvey, who will return with Schmidt this year. "I think the series should be really proud of what they have achieved. We just have some bugs to work out just from the team's perspective on how to get optimal performance."

One of the big questions that remains unanswered is the extent to which the impact of the new car will resonate outside North America. The 'Road to Indy' programme has a long record of attracting drivers from elsewhere, but in recent times there has been a particular spike in interest from drivers who feared becoming trapped somewhere on the F1 ladder system in Europe.

Andersen does not like to draw direct comparisons between Lights and, say, GP2 ("We're a step towards IndyCar," he says. "We don't prepare drivers for Formula 1"). But he



Andersen: series relevancy outweighs cost-control fears

admits that they are increasingly competing for the same talent pool.

"Some European drivers might be getting a little frustrated at getting stalled in the pipeline over there," he says. "They're spending a lot of money to do GP3 and GP2 and finding that it's not necessarily giving them a career in open-wheel racing. In North America, even with the old car, we took a lot of drivers to IndyCar. Nineteen of the 33 starters at last year's Indy 500 came through the Road to Indy system. I think European drivers are starting to see that Lights leads somewhere, and they're taking a look."

That the upcoming Lights season is already a conversation point as early as January is a form of proof in itself of how dramatic the series' turnaround has been. That it threatens to become a real player in the ranks of global junior categories just underlines how much can be achieved with the right person at the helm. Bright as everything looks, Andersen isn't getting ahead of himself just yet though.

"I'm nervous about what's going to start going wrong," he says. "Because things have gone remarkably well so far." ❄

INDY LIGHTS TIMELINE

1977

USAC starts the 'Mini-Indy' series using Super Vee cars. The series closes when USAC stops sanctioning national events three years later.

1986

A vacuum in the formal US ladder system is filled by the formation of the American Racing Series as a feeder for CART. It gets renamed Indy Lights in 1991. The series initially uses a Wildcat chassis based on an F3000 March, but replaces that with Lolas from 1993 onwards. The same Buick V6 engine is used throughout.

2001

CART closes the Indy Lights category (below) at the end of the year, and Toyota Atlantic's rising prominence as a breeding ground for new talent helps it to fill the void.



LEVI TITANI

2002

The Indy Racing League begins the Infiniti Pro Series feeder series, using a Dallara chassis and a 3.5-litre V8 engine.



OSBORNE/LAT

2005

Infiniti Pro Series adds road courses to its schedule.

2006

Renamed Indy Pro Series.

2008

The Indy Lights name is revived.

2014

Andersen Promotions takes over promotion from IndyCar, which remains as sanctioning body.

2015

The original car introduced in 2002 is retired in favour of a new Dallara chassis powered by a turbocharged AER engine. Cooper replaces Firestone as tyre supplier.



Kaiser topped test for Juncos

PALM BEACH TEST TIMES, JANUARY 13-14

1	Kyle Kaiser	Juncos Racing	1m05.2689s
2	Scott Hargrove	8Star Motorsport	+0.2352s
3	Spencer Pigot	Juncos Racing	+0.3668s
4	Jack Harvey	Schmidt Peterson Motorsports	+0.6592s
5	Shelby Blackstock	Andretti Autosport	+0.6749s
6	Felix Serralles	Belardi Auto Racing	+0.7109s
7	RC Enerson	Schmidt Peterson Motorsports	+0.7993s
8	Ethan Ringel	Schmidt Peterson Motorsports	+1.0947s

WORTH THE WAIT

It's taken longer than expected, but Briton Oliver Jarvis has finally landed his dream

Audi drive. EDD STRAW talks to the marque's newest full-time World Endurance Championship ace

Oliver Jarvis has come a long way in nine years. In 2006 he started his first race in a sportscar, sharing a Maserati GranSport in the marque's one-make Trofeo series at Silverstone for an article in AUTOSPORT. That day he shared with an overweight, not especially quick and very amateur driver whose name appears at the top of this story. Now he is heading into a full season in one of the most coveted sportscar drives in the world with Audi, where he will share with drivers of an incalculably higher calibre than that day at Silverstone. "That was my first sportscar race," laughs Jarvis when shown the photo of him in the Maserati. "Who knew that nine years later we would be discussing a full World Endurance Championship programme?"

OLIVER JARVIS CV

Age 31

Born Burwell, Cambridgeshire

2002-04 Early seasons in car racing in Formula Ford and Formula Renault

2005 Formula Renault UK champion (Manor)

2006 2nd in British F3 (Carlin)

2007 Macau GP winner and 3rd in Japanese F3 (TOM'S); 2 wins in A1GP

Fourth Le Mans ended in retirement as sister cars took a one-two for Audi



It has taken a while, but the signs were already there and we all knew how good Oliver Jarvis was. He had already won the 2005 Formula Renault UK title and McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award and was about to start winning Formula 3 races in a career in the category that encompassed race wins in the British and Japanese championships, as well as the blue-riband Macau Grand Prix. And he had put the Maserati on pole at Silverstone. But with funding drying up, Jarvis gratefully accepted an Audi contract to race in the DTM in 2008, which was the start of a career with the marque now entering its eighth season. It's taken a long time.

"They say things that you really have to work hard for are more rewarding, and that's certainly the case here," says Jarvis, who can scarcely contain his enthusiasm for the season ahead. "When I moved across to the DTM, the first thing I did was make it clear to Dr Ullrich [Audi motorsport boss] that I wanted to be part of the LMP1 programme but I didn't realise it would take this long to get a full-time seat!

"Unfortunately, things conspired against me because at the end of that year they stopped their European Le Mans programme and the opportunities narrowed a bit. But now, with so few seats available, to be one of the six is

a huge privilege. It's easy to forget when you are with Audi just how coveted these seats are.

"We always think the competition is just about those in Audi, but I'd hate to see the amount of emails and telephone calls Dr Ullrich probably receives on a weekly basis from F1 drivers, ex-F1 drivers and everybody else wanting an opportunity."

That Jarvis has landed the drive against such tough competition tells you everything you need to know about his performance. In occasional outings in LMP1 machinery for Audi, he has already chalked up a Sebring win, sharing with Marcel Fassler and Benoit Treluyer two years ago, and two third places at Le Mans. But this will be his first full season.

He will share with Loic Duval and Lucas di Grassi, taking the seat vacated by the retired

Tom Kristensen. Considering the Dane won Le Mans a record nine times, on top of six Sebring wins, that's an enormous cockpit to fill.

"You are never going to replace TK," says Jarvis. "He's the best sportscar driver ever in terms of results and achievements and it would be unfair to expect anyone to do that. But what I am trying to do is to build my own niche with my two team-mates, because the most important thing to do is be able to gel with Lucas and Loic and pull a strong team together. It's not just about one driver."

Jarvis cites the famous Audi line-up of Kristensen, Allan McNish and Rinaldo Capello, Le Mans winners in 2008, as an example of how a trio can be perfectly balanced. There, Kristensen and McNish were the driving forces set-up wise, but Capello's genius was in his adaptability and ability to deliver in a wide operating window. It's not that Jarvis doesn't see himself as a driver able to push a team on, merely that in his first full year he has to learn from the more experienced drivers and help the team to knit together.

Victories will be expected, which is not necessarily an easy target given that the Audi R18 e-tron quattro was not the car of choice in the WEC in 2014. It only won twice, at Austin and Le Mans, so the challenge is very different to how it might have been when opposition was thinner. Now, Jarvis will have to fight for every position against the massed ranks from Toyota, Porsche and newcomer Nissan.

"There is always pressure when you drive at ▶



Celebrating first DTM podium with LMP1 predecessor TK

- 2008 Joins Audi Sport Team Phoenix in DTM
- 2009 9th in DTM, 1 pole position
- 2010 Promoted to works Audi Abt squad, Le Mans debut in Kolles Audi
- 2011 Final season in DTM: 10th in the points, one podium
- 2012 3rd at Le Mans in works Audi, selected GT outings for Audi
- 2013 1st in Sebring 12 Hours, 3rd at Le Mans, selected GT outings
- 2014 13th Super GT, DNF at Le Mans, selected GT outings



Jarvis was number one in Macau

► this level,” says Jarvis. “There is the external pressure, but the majority comes from within and the pressure you put yourself under as a driver. No doubt, I want to step in and perform so expectations are high, and it’s a challenge when you’re replacing Tom as people are going to be looking at how I’m getting on. But regardless of who I’m replacing, I’m on the world stage driving for Audi with a huge opportunity in front of me.”

“The important thing is to take the pressure

“Le Mans is on another level. So to drive a Le Mans car for Audi is a dream come true” OLIVER JARVIS

and use it as motivation, not to let it break you. Once I’m in the car, I’m very relaxed. Everybody gets nervous before they get in a car, whoever says they don’t is a liar. If you don’t, you should stop because it’s part of the excitement. Then once you’re in the car, you put that to the back of your mind and focus on the job in hand.”

Focus does not appear to be a problem for Jarvis. He mentioned his determination to be involved in the sportscar programme from the start of his association with Audi, so to remain focused on that for so long, even when he was not the one chosen to replace McNish (who retired at the end of 2013) for promotion, is



First sportscar race came in Maserati Trofeo outing with Straw at Silverstone

EBREY/LAT

EBREY/LAT

testament to his character.

His four years in the DTM – two very promising ones in two-year old machinery driving for Team Phoenix, then a couple of mildly disappointing ones in frontline Abt equipment – were just the start of that process. When he left the DTM at the end of 2011, he had banked valuable experience and was able to refocus on three years effectively as a jobbing sportscar driver. As well as his occasional LMP1 outings, there were plenty of chances to drive Audi GT equipment in events such as the Nurburgring 24 Hours, so he has banked a lot of knowledge from a period that could easily be

misinterpreted as time in the wilderness.

“If you had asked me two or three years ago, I would have thought the right time was then,” he says. “But having had the extra years, I’m going to enjoy it and also appreciate it more. The experience will help as sportscars is very different to single-seaters or the DTM. The key factor is not how quick you are over a single lap, although that helps, it’s how you handle traffic.”

“I love DTM and I still do,” says Jarvis. “I’m not one of the drivers who has come out of it and looked back with regret. I had two really strong years in the DTM but unfortunately when I did get the new car it didn’t work

JARVIS IN 2014 LEXUS LESSONS

Aside from Le Mans and Daytona, you had to look east to spot Oliver Jarvis in action in 2014. His main programme was with Lexus squad Team SARD in Japan’s Super GT series, a deal that came about through old TOM’S Japanese Formula 3 team-mate Hiroaki Ishiura.

The results were disappointing, with a best finish of fourth in the season opener at Okayama, but they don’t do justice to the pace of the car. That was showcased by pole position for the Suzuka 1000Km, a race Jarvis won back in 2007 on a one-off appearance in the series. But Jarvis is very appreciative of the leeway Audi gave him to compete, which required skipping the Spa WEC round and the pre-Le Mans test. He loved the experience of a season in a category that remains something of a hidden gem.

“The biggest shame is that they don’t televise it



Jarvis enjoyed his time in Super GT

ISHIHARA/LAT

live on the internet, because the interest is huge,” says Jarvis. “As a driver it’s fascinating and I can’t thank Team SARD enough for giving me the opportunity. Unfortunately the results weren’t what we deserved. We had some really strong races and there was a point where we were able to fight for the championship, but unfortunately at Suzuka the wheel fell off at the last pitstop when we were running third and that changed our whole year.”

The standard in Super GT is sky-high and his

experience there will stand him in good stead for his promotion to WEC.

“There’s a tyre war, which is fascinating – you are always trying to gain an advantage over your rivals,” he says. “What makes it so interesting is that you’re constantly in traffic overtaking GT300 cars. And the driver line-up is hugely underrated.”

“The competition is probably the highest level of any championship I’ve driven in, with the exception of WEC.”

out for whatever reason.

“But to me the LMP1 car is an F1 car with a roof. The DTM is extremely professional, but when you go to Le Mans it’s on another level. That’s the attraction. And I really enjoy having team-mates. But for me, it’s about the car. It’s a serious bit of kit and many spectators don’t realise what goes on underneath the skin. In terms of technology, we are more advanced than an F1 car and have more downforce. The only thing we lack is power and we are heavier, but in high-speed grip it’s right up there.”

When drivers excel in sportscars, the vast majority of whom started out in single-seaters with an eye on F1, extolling the virtues of what they are doing in comparison to grand prix racing brings scepticism. But Jarvis quickly developed a much broader view of the racing world and is sincere when he says that only a couple of F1 seats would be of any interest as an alternative to the Audi seat.

“I was always very realistic and I didn’t have the budget to go and do GP2,” he says. “All I ever wanted to do was to be a professional driver. When you’re young, the focus is on F1 but when the DTM opportunity came around it was incredible. There was this whole world of motorsport that fascinated me from the moment I test-drove the DTM car for the McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award.

“From that day my interest in Le Mans grew overnight. So to drive a Le Mans car for Audi is a dream come true. My time in single-seaters was very important because it’s where I developed my skills. But nowadays the budgets are crazy, even for F3, let alone GP2. Only a few drivers can afford it and things get diluted. One of the most competitive classes I ever drove in

was Formula Renault UK, because the majority of people could scrape together a budget for that. Beyond that, life becomes difficult.”

Jarvis is right to look at his single-seater career in those terms. Everything he has done since starting karting two decades ago has been about working to this point. He wouldn’t have been promoted to Audi if he wasn’t up to it and 2015 will surely be the most important season of his career.

Based on previous experience, expect him to seize the chance he has worked so hard for with both hands. Give it 15 years, and perhaps someone will be talking about the challenge of replacing Jarvis in the same terms that he talks of filling Kristensen’s shoes. ☘



RENE RAST NEXT IN LINE

Rene Rast reckons it was a surprise to get the call to test the Audi R18 e-tron quattro for the first time last November. It shouldn’t have been, given his performances at the wheel of the German manufacturer’s R8 LMS ultra GT3 contender over the past few seasons and a one-off prototype appearance in LMP2 with Sebastien Loeb Racing at the Le Mans 24 Hours last year, where he finished fourth. Nor should the fact that the test led to his promotion to the seat vacated by Oliver Jarvis in the third Audi for the Le Mans 24 Hours alongside Marco Bonanomi and Filipe Albuquerque.

Rast has been one of the stand-out names from Audi’s pool of GT drivers after signing a factory contract for 2013, which followed on from his completion of a hat-trick of titles in the Porsche Supercup and appearances at the wheel of the R8 since ’10.

Promotion to the Audi Sport Team Joest LMP1 squad, which this year will result in appearances at Le Mans and the Spa World Endurance Championship round in May, was his target on joining Audi, despite making his DTM aspirations clear when he was sweeping all before him over the course of a Supercup career that yielded a record 20 victories.

“The DTM would be good to do, but I really want to be in endurance racing,” says the 28-year-old, who completed a 24-hour double with the Audi R8 in 2014 in the Nurburgring and Spa classics. “I really like endurance racing and now I know that I really like Le Mans too.”
Gary Watkins



Rast starred in SLR ORECA at Le Mans

Le Mans debut came in Kolles-run Audi R10 TDI in 2010



BLOXHAM/LAT

CAN AN LMP2 WIN DAYTONA?

As the United SportsCar Championship heads into its second season, the competitive threat posed by the LMP2 cars to the Daytona Prototypes cannot be ignored. By **GARY WATKINS**

34

LEPAGE/LAT



Year two of the United SportsCar Championship begins this weekend at the Daytona 24 Hours with a new question on everyone's lips. Twelve months ago, when the USC burst into life, people were asking how close the LMP2 cars could get to the updated Daytona Prototypes. This time around, it's whether or not the European-style prototypes can win the big race.

The problem of balancing two very different types of racing machine has been the major talking point since the championship created out of the merger of Grand-Am and the American Le Mans Series was announced in September 2012. The rulemakers at IMSA, the USC's sanctioning body, didn't get it right ahead of the season opener last year, but a series of rule tweaks under its Adjustment of Performance regulations — which in Europe parlance would be known as the

Balance of Performance — brought the P2 cars into the game over the course of the inaugural season of the new championship.

It hasn't been an easy job, and still isn't. IMSA rules boss Scot Elkins, who has resigned his role and will leave the organisation straight after the race at Daytona, has used the words "apples and oranges" when he talks about balancing the DPs and the P2s because they achieve their speed in different ways. The heavier and more powerful DPs are quicker on the straights and out of the

corners, while the lighter and higher-downforce P2s have the edge in the corners. Getting to the point where they can race on equal terms, rather than just achieving similar laps times, has been the challenge facing IMSA since the word go.

WHAT ARE THE TEAMS SAYING?

Totally different things, of course. That was always going to be the case in a championship where rule tinkering — and therefore behind-the-scenes lobbying — is part of the game.

**Daytona Prototypes
are slower in corners
than the LMP2s**



DOLE/LAT



OAK's Ligier JSP2
was quick in last
year's final races

35



IMSA president Scott Atherton wants LMP2 to attract car makers

LEVITT/LAT

The P2 squads suggest that the more powerful DPs will be always be ascendent around the Daytona International Speedway, while those running DPs are of the opposite opinion.

Wayne Taylor, whose eponymous team topped the times at the pre-event 'Roar before the 24' test on the second weekend of January with its Dallara-Chevrolet Corvette DP driven by son Jordan, has no doubts that the P2s had the edge despite his machine's pace. He points out that

"There is no doubt that a P2 can win this year. If I were a betting man, I'd put my money on it now" WAYNE TAYLOR

the balance of performance has not been changed since the end of last season when the new Ligier JSP2 with HPD Honda power proved to be the fastest car at the final two races in the hands of the works OAK Racing squad.

"There is no doubt a P2 car can win this year because they have done no balance of performance with the new cars that have come in, and if you look at some of the races last year, like Austin, they qualified a second ahead of everyone else," he says. "If I were a betting man, I'd put my money on a P2 car right now."

Veteran Scott Pruett, who is bidding for a sixth US sports car title with Chip Ganassi Racing, reckons the P2s have an advantage of around a

second a lap over the 3.56-mile DIS.

"They were a second quicker on their theoretical bests laps," says the 54-year-old, whose Ganassi Riley-Ford EcoBoost DP was fastest on the first day of the Roar with full-season team-mate Joey Hand behind the wheel. "I think we are going to see the P2s with a small advantage on the banking and a big advantage everywhere else."

The P2 boys don't disagree that the AoP changes introduced ahead of the Austin USC round last September have given them a better than ever chance of beating the DPs. They even suggest that there won't be much between the two types of car over the course of a lap, but ▶



Michael Shank is the only DP team to defect to LMP2

LEVITT/LAT

“If the race falls as it normally does, with a caution in the final half hour, a P2 car will not win” ALEX BRUNDLE

► they do suggest that the advantages of a DP in terms of power and torque give the car an edge in a style of racing where safety-car periods and restarts are such an important part of the game.

This time last year the straightline speed deficit of the P2s was important in their failure to challenge. Scott Sharp, whose Extreme Speed Motorsports squad is giving its pair of HPD-Honda ARX-04b coupes their debuts at Daytona, thinks this has been more or less removed by the AoP changes and the arrival of the more aerodynamically efficient coupes.

“Towards the end of the test ourselves and Michael Shank Racing’s Honda-powered Ligier were getting close to the best DPs in terms of top speed, but it was taking us much longer than

them to plateau up there,” explains Sharp. “The DPs have such good grunt out of the corners that they are up to that speed much quicker and that obviously helps them get through traffic, hugely, and, of course, at the re-starts.”

Alex Brundle, who fell short by 2.3 seconds in Austin last September in his bid to give the Ligier coupe a debut win in the USC, reckons the odds are still stacked in the favour of the DPs because they are the more ‘raceable’ machine.

“If you look at the races that a P2 won last year, everything had to fall just right for it to happen,” explains the Ligier regular, who has been drafted in to drive Krohn Racing’s Judd/BMW-engined Ligier. “If the race at Daytona falls the way it normally always does, with



S BLOWHAM/LAT

Brundle: ‘normal’ Daytona race pattern will favour DP cars

a full-course caution in the final half hour of the race and then the big dash for the cash, a P2 car will not win.

“I was running together with Joao Barbosa in the lead Action Express Coyote [last year’s Daytona winner] and he was behind me at the Bus Stop chicane on the back straight, but he was ahead by the time we got to the start-finish line. I thought inside my crash helmet, well, if that was a restart, we’d have just lost the race.”

DP stalwart Oswaldo Negri Jr, who ended up third fastest in the Shank Ligier-Honda at the Roar, has been talking about the need for “some creative driving” at the restarts. “Our top speeds are fairly close, but they accelerate better than us because they have the mid-range torque,” he says of the DP’s advantage.

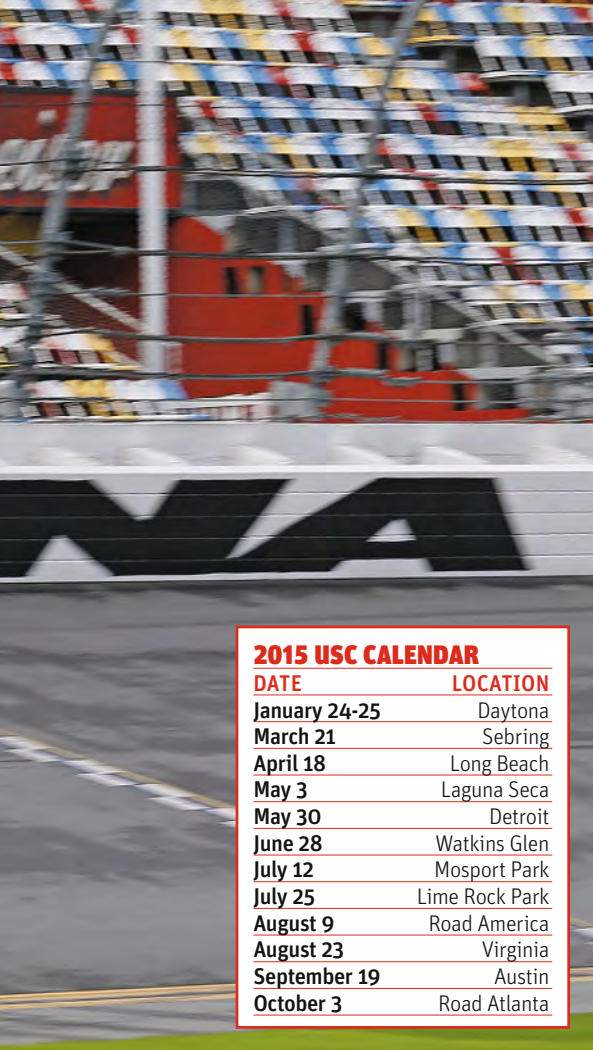
QUALITY OF THE TEAMS

A factor that can’t be ignored is the fact that the top USC teams with one exception are running Daytona Prototypes. Shank was the only DP stalwart to make the switch over the winter and the other P2 runners, excluding the full-season turbodiesel entries from the Speedsource Mazda squad that won’t be in the hunt, are only running the four North American Endurance Cup events or a portion of them.



The OAK Morgan won at Mosport last year

LEPAGE/LAT



2015 USC CALENDAR

DATE	LOCATION
January 24-25	Daytona
March 21	Sebring
April 18	Long Beach
May 3	Laguna Seca
May 30	Detroit
June 28	Watkins Glen
July 12	Mosport Park
July 25	Lime Rock Park
August 9	Road America
August 23	Virginia
September 19	Austin
October 3	Road Atlanta

THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF LMP2

The problem on the horizon, as the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA on one side and USC and IMSA on the other try to formulate a new LMP2 rulebook for 2017, are that their needs are diametrically opposed. LMP2 is a category for privateers from which manufacturers are barred in the WEC and Europe. The future P2 in North America would be as the top division of sportscar racing in which the involvement of car makers is not just encouraged, but is a necessity.

The two sides stress that they are very aware of this dichotomy. In fact, USC boss Scott Atherton says it was the starting point of the talks and has "been part of the discussions from day one, and all involved are committed to coming up with a solution that works for everyone".

Atherton insists that it is essential that the cars have a "direct link with manufacturer involvement, not only in name but also in styling". Achieving that with a carbon-chassis car "will be much more difficult" than with the semi-monocoque aluminium-chassis DPs, points out OAK Racing team principal Philippe Dumas.

Also on agenda when the two sides and interested parties, including the constructors, meet in Daytona Beach next Tuesday for the second roundtable meeting on the new regulations will be the use of more spec parts, a key tenet of the DP



GIBSON/LAT

rulebook. IMSA rules boss Scot Elkins has even suggested a spec monocoque design, as with the DTM. This is not something that is favoured on the ACO/FIA side of the fence.

"The DTM has given people ideas," says ACO sporting manager Vincent Beaumesnil (above). "From our side we are not convinced that more spec parts or even a spec chassis would result in a significant cost reduction and the constructors are not enthusiastic about it."

There appears still to be a long way to go in the rule-making process and relatively little time. The final rules, according to FIA statutes, would need to be in place by January 1 next year.



LEVITT/LAT

Taylor points out AoP rules have not changed for new cars

The two ESM HPDs and the Krohn Ligier both have amateur drivers on their roster, as does the Shank car in John Pew. That is obviously a disadvantage, but at Daytona it is less of a handicap than anywhere else. The high number of safety-car periods and the wave-around rule that allows savvy teams to gain back lost laps means that time lost can be recouped with relative ease.

"If you're a couple of laps down at half-distance, you can get those laps back by the time it all gets a bit racey towards the finish," explains Brundle. "If you are on the lead lap in the final hour, you never know."

THE TYRE FACTOR

USC rules allow for refueling and tyre changes to take place simultaneously, so there are no seconds to be gained in the pits foregoing a new set of tyres. The P2s are lighter on their tyres than the DPs, which puts them at a disadvantage in warming up the relatively hard Hoosier-made Continental spec rubber.

On the other hand, there is time to be made by double-stinting in the night because of that warm-up issue — getting temperature in fresh tyres that can't be pre-heated in the colder conditions. And the P2s can achieve that more



Daytona will be more of a test for ESM's late HPD

DOLE/LAT

easily than the DPs. This one is probably a case of swings and roundabouts.

IS IT TOO EARLY FOR THE HPD?

Probably. Honda Performance Development's new ARX-04b coupe, designed and built like its prototype predecessors in the UK by Wirth Research, didn't run for the first time until December, approximately a month behind schedule. What's more, its early testing before Christmas took place in uncompleted form.

The first HPD coupe delivered to ESM undertook tests at Moroso, Homestead and Sebring without key aerodynamic parts and its brake ducting. Only after the first day of the Roar was the lone HPD present — ESM's second car was being built up at its Florida headquarters at the time — fitted with the necessary ducting.

"Because of the lack of parts we had to run to 75-80 per cent of our potential: we couldn't push

because we'd overheat the brakes," explains Sharp, who is playing down ESM's chances. "People have turned up with brand new race cars and won endurance races, but we are thinking that this race will be more of a test for us."

COULD THERE BE AoP CHANGES BEFORE THE RACE?

Yes. IMSA reserves the right to adjust the AoP at any point up to the start of the race. The Ligier and HPD were both due in the windtunnel last Sunday as part of the AoP process, which means that there could be a new rules bulletin before practice starts. A weight break for the Judd/BMW-powered entries appeared on the cards.

IMSA can also penalise anyone who it believes was sand-bagging at the Roar with stop-go penalties in the race. It has made a lot of noise about those powers, just as it did last year. What it hasn't done so far is actually invoke them. ❧

RUNNERS AND RIDERS

The 2015 Daytona 24 Hours has a strong 53-car entry. **GARY WATKINS** runs the rule over the leading contenders for overall and class success in the Florida classic

This weekend, the Daytona 24 Hours will take place for the 53rd time. Appropriately, the United SportsCar Championship opener has attracted one entry for each of the runnings of the race, with 53 cars across four classes fighting for victory in 2015's first big race.

The pre-event test, in which six different cars in the prototype class topped a session and the fastest six were covered by just over three tenths of a second, suggests that the race will be closely fought. Last year, Joao Barbosa, Christian Fittipaldi and Sebastien Bourdais won by just 1.5s in the Action Express Coyote-Chevrolet Corvette. In 2015, it might be just as close.

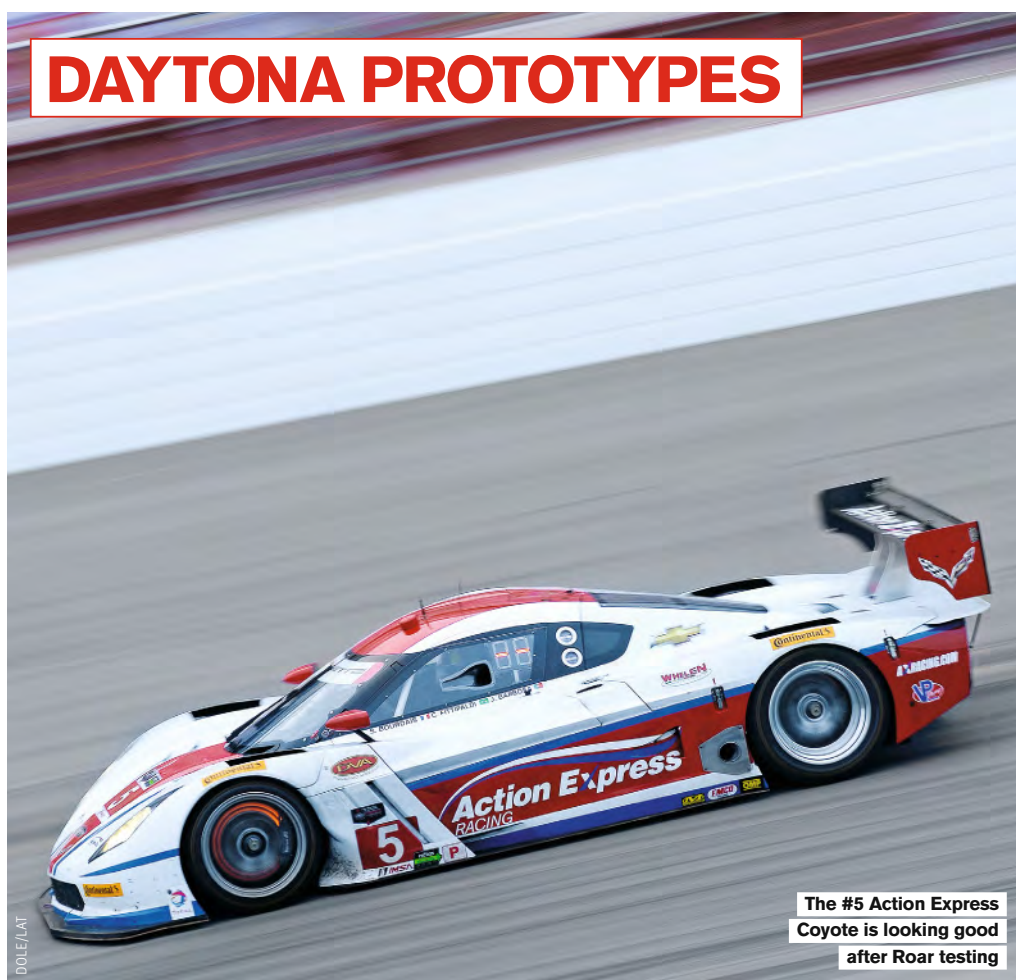
ACTION EXPRESS RACING

Coyote-Chevrolet Corvette DP

#5 Joao Barbosa/
Christian Fittipaldi/
Sebastien Bourdais

#31 Dane Cameron/
Max Papis/Phil
Keen/Eric Curran

The team that won both the Daytona 24 Hours and the inaugural USC Prototype title returns with two full-season entries thanks to a tie up with NASCAR sponsor Whelan. The title-winning duo of Barbosa and Fittipaldi, who completed every lap of every race last year, are again paired with Bourdais in the lead entry and are confident of their reliability in the wake of the pre-event Roar test. "We had a great test: we ran through our programme and put a lot of miles on the car," says Barbosa. "We have a great shot at winning, but we can't be considered the favourites — there are too many cars in with a shot for that."



DAYTONA PROTOTYPES

The #5 Action Express Coyote is looking good after Roar testing

CHIP GANASSI RACING

Riley-Ford EcoBoost DP

#01 Scott Pruett/
Joey Hand/
Charlie Kimball/
Sage Karam

#02 Scott Dixon/
Tony Kanaan/
Kyle Larson/
Jamie McMurray

The Ganassi team, five times a winner of the 24 Hours since it joined the sportscar ranks in 2004, endured a torrid Daytona last year after its switch to the Roush-Yates Ford V6. Its pair of Riley EcoBoost DPs lacked straightline speed and were both late retirements in the race. Twelve months on, the squad is heading to the DIS full of confidence. "We're



...that enjoyed a strong test

going to Daytona the way Ganassi is used to going there," says lead driver Pruett, who is bidding for a sixth victory in the US enduro. "We unloaded our car and ran through the Roar without any mechanical issues. It was a flawless test for us. We are very comfortable with where we are, especially compared with last year."

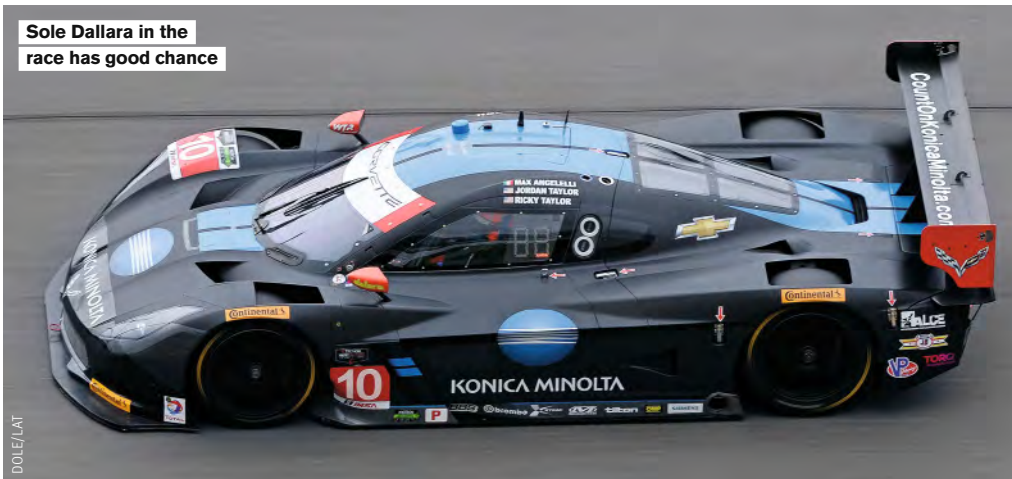
WAYNE TAYLOR RACING

Dallara-Chevrolet Corvette DP

#10 Jordan Taylor/Ricky Taylor/Max Angelelli

The winners of last year's Petit Le Mans USC finale maintained their momentum of the second half of last season into the new year by topping the times at the Roar test with the lone Dallara in the field. That bodes well for a team looking to improve on its second-place finishes at Daytona in 2013 and '14. "We haven't been in the garage once during 48 hours of racing and if Ricky, Max and myself can keep that run going and stay out of trouble, we're in with a chance," says Jordan Taylor. "We hadn't tested since Petit last October, but we came away from the Roar thinking that we are in good shape for the race."

Sole Dallara in the race has good chance



Barrichello has bolstered the Starworks line-up



STARWORKS MOTORSPORT

Riley-Dinan/BMW DP

#7 Rubens Barrichello/Brendon Hartley/Ryan Hunter-Reay/Tor Graves/Scott Mayer

The team that narrowly missed out on victory in 2012 is back for an attack on the four NAEC enduros with a Riley DP. Starworks has abandoned its tie-up with HPD, whose V6

twin-turbo it used at Sebring and Petit last year, and reverted to the Dinan-tuned BMW. Team boss Peter Baron has pulled off a coup in attaining the services of Barrichello for Daytona and reckons he has a line-up that can win even with two amateurs. "We proved in 2012 that you can run at the front without an all-pro line-up," he says. "It's all about staying on the lead lap until the last few hours and letting your pros do their job."

AND THE DELTAWING



The DeltaWing needs a reliability boost

DELTAWING RACING

DeltaWing-Elan/Mazda DWC13

#0 Memo Rojas/Katherine Legge/Andy Meyrick/Gabby Chaves

The DeltaWing showed its pace at last year's Petit enduro by leading the race and staying on the lead lap for half of the 10 hours on the way to fourth. Transmission issues curtailed its challenge, a problem that should be addressed in time for this year's 24 Hours in the shape of a new gearbox from EMCO. The 'box wasn't ready in time for the Roar, but Legge, who will share with team newcomer Rojas in the full season, ended up sixth quickest. "The performance is definitely there, so we should be in the mix," says Meyrick. "The question mark is reliability and hopefully the new gearbox will give us that."

Westbrook and co hope electronic woes are fixed



SPIRIT OF DAYTONA

Coyote-Chevrolet Corvette DP

#90 Richard Westbrook/Michael Valiante/Mike Rockenfeller

Spirit of Daytona was one of the frontrunners at last year's 24 Hours — until, that is, the race started. It struggled with an undisclosed set-up issue and was never truly in the hunt on the way to fourth. Its build-up to this year's race, for which Rockenfeller returns to join full-season drivers Westbrook and Valiante, was struck by electronic issues with the latest Chevrolet V8, but the team is confident they will be sorted for the race. "It was a challenging test for us, but the car handled really well," says Westbrook. "I think we should be OK."

P40 LMP2 & GT TEAMS AND DRIVERS

PROTOTYPE ENTRY

No	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR
0	MEMO ROJAS/KATHERINE LEGGE/GABBY CHAVES/ANDY MEYRICK	DELTAWING RACING	DELTAWING-ELAN/MAZDA DWC13
1	SCOTT SHARP/RYAN DALZIEL/DAVID HEINEMEIER HANSSON	EXTREME SPEED MOTORSPORTS	HPD-HONDA ARX-04B LMP2
2	ED BROWN/JOHANNES VAN OVERBEEK/JON FOGARTY	EXTREME SPEED MOTORSPORTS	HPD-HONDA ARX-04B LMP2
5	JOAO BARBOSA/CHRISTIAN FITTIPALDI/SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS	ACTION EXPRESS RACING	COYOTE-CHEVROLET COREVETTE DP
7	BRENDON HARTLEY/RUBENS BARRICHELLO/RYAN HUNTER-REAY/TOR GRAVES/SCOTT MAYER	STARWORKS MOTORSPORT	RILEY-DINAN/BMW DP
10	JORDAN TAYLOR/RICKY TAYLOR/MAX ANGELELLI	WAYNE TAYLOR RACING	DALLARA-CHEVROLET CORVETTE DP
31	ERIC CURRAN/DANE CAMERON/MAX PAPIS/PHIL KEEN	ACTION EXPRESS RACING	COYOTE-CHEVROLET COREVETTE DP
50	JIM PACE/BYRON DEFOOR/DAVID HINTON/DORSEY SCHROEDER	HIGHWAY TO HELP	RILEY-DINAN/BMW DP
57	TRACY KROHN/OLIVIER PLA/NIC JONSSON/ALEX BRUNDLE	KROHN RACING	LIGIER-JUDD/BMW JSP2 LMP2
60	JOHN PEW/OSWALDO NEGRI JR/AJ ALLMENDINGER/MATT MCMURRY	MICHAEL SHANK RACING	LIGIER-HONDA JSP2
66	ROBERT GEWIRTZ/SHANE LEWIS/MARK KVAMME/TBA	RG RACING	RILEY-DINAN/BMW DP
70	JONATHAN BOMARITO/TRISTAN NUNEZ/JAMES HINCHCLIFFE/SYLVAIN TREMBLAY	SPEEDSOURCE	LOLA-MAZDA SKYACTIV-D B12/80 LMP2
90	RICHARD WESTBROOK/MICHAEL VALIANTE/MIKE ROCKENFELLER	SPIRIT OF DAYTONA	COYOTE-CHEVROLET CORVETTE DP
01	SCOTT PRUETT/JOEY HAND/CHARLIE KIMBALL/SAGE KARAM	CHIP GANASSI RACING	RILEY-FORD ECOBOOST DP
02	SCOTT DIXON/TONY KANAAN/KYLE LARSON/JAMIE McMURRAY	CHIP GANASSI RACING	RILEY-FORD ECOBOOST DP
07	JOEL MILLER/TOM LONG/BEN DEVLIN/SYLVAIN TREMBLAY	SPEEDSOURCE	LOLA-MAZDA SKYACTIV-D B12/80 LMP2

Daytona kickstarts the 2015 season



LMP2

HPD ARX-04b may be a bit too new to mount a victory bid



EXTREME SPEED MOTORSPORTS

HPD-Honda ARX-04b

- #1 Scott Sharp/
Ryan Dalziel/David
Heinemeier Hansson
- #2 Ed Brown/Johannes
van Overbeek/
Jon Fogarty

ESM, the first team to take a victory with a P2 in the USC at Laguna Seca last year, is still taking in the NAEC enduros despite its switch to the WEC for 2015. The consequence of the pro-am nature of P2 in the WEC explains why it doesn't have an all-pro line-up for Daytona. It's early days for the

ARX-04b, which only ran in completed form during the Roar, which is why team boss Sharp is candid about ESM's chances. "Frankly for us, it has turned from a 24-hour race into a 24-hour test. But we are very excited about the car from the perspective of reliability."

Krohn is back in the prototype ranks and fancies its chances



MICHAEL SHANK RACING

Ligier-Honda JSP2

- #60 Oswaldo Negri Jr/AJ Allmendinger/
Matt McMurry/John Pew

Shank, which won the 24 Hours in 2012, is the first DP regular to switch to a P2 with the purchase of a Ligier. It had planned to give the car a first run at Sebring and race its Riley DP at Daytona, but the decision to use the HPD Honda engine in place of the Ford V6 allowed it to bring the debut forward (it is running the same chassis, JSP2 #2, that OAK fielded in the final two USC rounds last year). The team hit the ground running at the Roar and team stalwart Negri is confident of a strong showing. "It has been a seamless transition," he says. "We showed good pace and the car has good reliability."

KROHN RACING

Ligier-Judd/BMW JSP2

- #57 Olivier Pla/Alex Brundle/Nic Jonsson/
Tracy Krohn

Houston-based Krohn returns to full-time competition – after a NAEC assault with a Ferrari in 2014 – in the Prototype class and is contesting

Daytona and the Sebring 12 Hours ahead of a European Le Mans Series assault with its new Ligier. The car was in the mix at the test and Brundle reckons the team is a contender for victory. "We do have a chance," he says. "Even if we go two laps down by half distance, with the wave-arounds under caution, we can get those back. If you are on the lead lap, you never know what's going to happen."

MSR has switched from DP to P2 and is confident



CORE Autosport is PC favourite



PROTOTYPE CHALLENGE

CORE Autosport tops the entry list in the Prototype Challenge one-make class for the ORECA-Chevrolet FLM09 as it begins the defence of its USC class crown. It returns to Daytona with the same line-up – Mark Wilkins and James Gue joining full-timers Colin Braun and Jon Bennett – that took honours in the 24 Hours last year.

The opposition in the eight-car field is led by Paul Gentilozzi's RSR Racing squad, with a line-up including Bruno Junqueira and Jack Hawksworth, and the Starworks entry in which 2014 championship runner-up Renger van der Zande heads the line-up. The BAR1 and PR1 Mathiasen entries are also potential frontrunners.



GTLM

Porsche returns to Florida to defend its GTLM-class victory

If it's going to be close among the Prototypes for overall victory at Daytona, then it should be closer still in the battle for GT Le Mans honours. Five marques go head to head in the category we know as GTE over in Europe, and on the evidence of the Roar test each is very much in the hunt.

USC sanctioning body IMSA has tweaked the ever-controversial Adjustment of Performance in favour of the two marques, Chevrolet and BMW, that were struggling at the end of last season, while series returnee Aston Martin gets the benefit of one set of changes introduced last year and another ahead of this event. The Chevrolet Corvette C7.R and BMW Z4 GTE have each been given a 25kg weight break and larger-diameter engine air-restrictors, while the Aston Martin Vantage GTE was given more power and a 50kg weight reduction ahead of the Sebring 12 Hours last year (which came too late for it to reverse its decision not to contest the remainder of the NAEC after a

disappointing showing at Daytona) and has now been allowed to run its Le Mans splitter in the name of increased top speed.

Oliver Gavin is still unsure about the Corvettes' chances after the latest round of AoP changes.

"Things were really tough for us at the end of last year, but we are not going to Daytona thinking we don't have a chance," says the Brit. "We're open-minded on how competitive we are going to be."

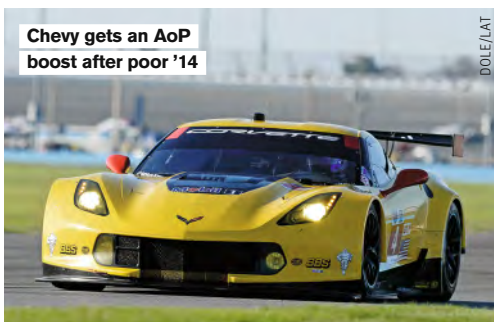
BMW stalwart Bill Auberlen reckons the German marque and the Rahal team wasn't unhappy with the AoP changes approved for the Z4, but he reckons that the breaks given to other cars effectively negate them.

"We said we could work with what we were being given, only to find out that the Corvettes were being given a bigger restrictor break than us," says the American. "And the Ferrari, which could run away from everyone last year, has got the same restrictor increase as us."

The Porsche 911 RSR, winner in GTLM at Daytona in 2014, retains the aerodynamic breaks that made it the dominant car over the second half of last season. That is a double-edged sword, because straightline speed was its key advantage this time last year.

"We are slower on the banking, but make up for it with the extra downforce at places like the Bus Stop," says Nick Tandy. "We haven't lost in lap time, but we have lost in the way we can race other cars."

"It has brought us in line more with the other cars, so it has probably levelled things up. We're set for a great race."



Chevy gets an AoP boost after poor '14

DOLE/LAT



Ferraris will be in the thick of the GTD action

LEVITT/LAT

41

GT DAYTONA

BMW, Porsche, Audi, Ferrari, Dodge and Aston Martin are represented in the GT Daytona class, which is numerically the strongest of the four USC divisions this weekend with 19 cars.

The Turner Motorsports BMW team defends the title it won last year with Dane Cameron. Finn Markus Palttala is now team leader after the American's graduation to the Prototype ranks with Action Express. Palttala is joined by Michael Marsal for the season, while BMW factory driver Andy Priaulx comes on board for three of the four NAEC enduros. Championship runner-up Paul Miller Racing leads the Audi challenge with full-season driver Bryce Miller and Christopher Haase, who are joined aboard their R8 LMS ultra at Daytona by Rene Rast.

Scuderia Corsa flies the flag for Ferrari with a driver roster boasting the talents of Andrea Bertolini and Townsend Bell, Riley Motorsports runs a pair of Dodge Viper SRTs with a line-up including Jeroen Bleekemolen and Marc Goossens and The Racers Group carries Aston's hopes with a pair of V12 Vantages.

Porsches make up nearly half the field, with nine 911 GT Americas run by six teams, including event stalwarts Alex Job Racing, Brumos and Magnus Racing.

GTLM ENTRY

No	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR
3	JAN MAGNUSSEN/ANTONIO GARCIA/RYAN BRISCOE	CORVETTE RACING	CHEVROLET CORVETTE C7.R
4	OLIVER GAVIN/TOMMY MILNER/SIMON PAGENAUD	CORVETTE RACING	CHEVROLET CORVETTE C7.R
17	WOLF HENZLER/BRYAN SELLERS/PATRICK LONG	FALKEN (WALKER)	PORSCHE 911 RSR
24	JOHN EDWARDS/LUCAS LUHR/JENS KLINGMANN/GRAHAM RAHAL	RAHAL	BMW Z4 GTE
25	BILL AUBERLEN/DIRK WERNER/AUGUSTO FARFUS/BRUNO SPENGLER	RAHAL	BMW Z4 GTE
51	FRANCOIS PERRODO/EMMANUEL COLLARD/GIANMARIA BRUNI/TONI VILANDER	AF CORSE	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
62	PIERRE KAFFER/DAVIDE RIGON/GIANCARLO FISICHELLA/OLIVIER BERETTA	RISI COMPETIZIONE	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
98	PEDRO LAMY/PAUL DALLA LANA/DARREN TURNER/STEFAN MUCKE/MATHIAS LAUDA	ASTON MARTIN RACING	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GTE
911	NICK TANDY/PATRICK PILET/MARC LIEB	PORSCHE NA (CORE)	PORSCHE 911 RSR
912	JORG BERGMEISTER/EARL BAMBER/FREDERIC MAKOWIECKI	PORSCHE NA (CORE)	PORSCHE 911 RSR

WRC 2015

HYUNDAI

Ready to break out in 2015

42

The South Korean manufacturer took its first World Rally Championship victory last year with the i20 WRC. **DAVID EVANS** assesses its chances of beating Volkswagen regularly in 2015



T

here must have been a moment last year in Germany, when the dust had settled and the champagne had gone flat, when Michel Nandan

wondered what he'd done. His team had, of course, just taken its first ever World Rally Championship victory. But Nandan still wasn't convinced the team should even have been there.

When he joined the South Korean firm two years ago as team principal and listened to its plans to go from absolutely nothing – as in not even having a home, let alone a workable World Rally Car – to the start of the first stage in Monte Carlo in under a year, he wasn't sure. His advice was to spend last year developing, testing and working on the car in private.

That's not the Hyundai way; if something can be done today, why wasn't it done yesterday?

Nandan and his team worked unbelievably hard to get to the start of the season, but didn't last a day in the French Alps. As journalists from across the world descended on the Principality to report on the i20 WRC's debut, the shutters were being pulled down on the team's grandiose service park facility in Gap.

Admittedly, Thierry Neuville had crashed and Dani Sordo's car was silenced by a simple electrical failure, but Nandan must have feared that this was the thin end of the wedge.

It wasn't.

Two rounds later a podium came in Mexico and then, incredibly, a maiden win was celebrated in Trier in the middle of the year. Surely that sent expectation in Seoul off the charts. If this car could win in 2014, why not the title in 2015?

Nandan smiles at such a suggestion. "They know how difficult it is to fight," he says, "and they appreciate what we do. They know where we are and how we still have to develop."

You get the feeling that managing expectation while encouraging the necessary patience required with a global motorsport campaign is something Nandan has become very good at.

And did Neuville's first win vindicate the decision to compete last year? "My official answer is 'yes,'" Nandan says, "but maybe we could also have concentrated on the development of the car with more flexibility and freedom. But OK, the decision was taken to go for it and do our testing in the real world and we did it."

As soon as the car was homologated, Hyundai was only permitted to test for 42 days outside of its own designated test site. That meant the car had to be very close to the ballpark when it was signed off, because further development was difficult as 2014 progressed.

Conversely, with a brand-new car coming – although now not until the second half of the year – Hyundai is free to test the new-generation i20 as much as it wants until the homologation date. This, it's fair to say, is a source of irritation to the other teams who are bringing evolutions of current cars into the new year.

If Nandan had got his way, Hyundai would have been starting its first full season now, fresh-faced and ready to go. Instead, the team arrives battle hardened and a wee bit weary. But that brings its benefits.

"For sure, this year the preparations will be more easy because we know what to do and where to go," says Nandan. "But still we have a lot to develop and we have more work to do. We still have evolutions on the current car, work to do with it."

Nandan talks for some time about the work on the current car, making the new-for-2015, coupe-based i20 WRC seem further and further away. "The new car I think will be more for the second half of the year," he says, "maybe to talk about it in the first half is too optimistic."

For this week's opener in Monte Carlo, Neuville and Sordo will notice improvements to the suspension and engine – with further evolutions to come. Surely the work being carried out in the short-term will carry over to the longer-term new car...

"No," says Nandan, "not really. The engine for the new car is very different, but I don't want to say too much about that yet. The cylinder block, the head, there will be a lot of difference – but it wouldn't have been possible to make the new engine like this without discovering what we did with the current engine."

There will be virtually no carryover from one car to the next, but what Nandan's big on is the philosophy. Competing last year and for the first half of this season will have given Hyundai unrivalled insight into what's required to win. You don't get that kind of perspective, context and understanding from testing, regardless of how much running you do.

That's not to say the test-until-you-drop approach doesn't work. Volkswagen's 23 wins from 26 world championship starts in its first two years would go some way to strengthening the argument...

In reality, Hyundai is now where Volkswagen was when the Polo made its debut in 2013. So, when the new i20 breaks cover, it'll be fair to compare, contrast and compete. ▶

Hyundai took its maiden WRC win in Germany last season, thanks to Neuville



Development of the i20 was done in the full glare of real competition

“Last year was more than we expected. This year we must reach that level or improve it” MICHEL NANDAN

► Nandan's not entirely comfortable with the potential for comparison with Volkswagen. “This year is about making more podiums,” he says. “Last year was experience, this year was always about podiums and then we see.”

He's not about to get drawn into what success means to the team. “Last year was more than we expected,” he says, “and that's also one of the reasons why this year can be more difficult – we must reach that level at least or improve on it.”

So, it's at least another win, if not two? He saw that one coming! “No, we will measure our success in terms of progression with the team and the car,” he says.

Can they beat Volkswagen? If not with the current car, what about the new one? “I don't know,” he says, “I would like to tell you yes. But we don't know what they have. We haven't seen their car yet. We work on our car, we focus the attention more on

the new-generation [i20] because this is our future. But we won't bring the new car until it is ready, until we have made the back-to-back test with the current one and we know it has more performance.”

Undoubtedly, the engine is the area the team has to work most on. If Neuville and Sordo are faced with a bone-dry Monte this week, they will struggle to match their rivals. They simply don't have the grunt.

Volkswagen's Polo R WRC, on the other hand, is the benchmark motor of the moment. Watching the trio of Hannover-built machines accelerate out of an asphalt hairpin in Spain last season, the difference was visible. Gears were grabbed earlier as the Polo gathered pace quicker than anything else.

Volkswagen's keeping its powder dry in terms of what's new with the 2015 car. At its launch in Wolfsburg last week, Heinz-Jakob Neuser, Volkswagen board member for technical development, offered a small insight.

“The new Polo R WRC has undergone intense further development,” he says, “Our engineers have also been working meticulously on technical innovations under the bonnet and have improved many detailed aspects of the package that has been so successful for the past two years. The focus of this further development was on efficiency, reliability and performance.”



Neuville (r) and co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul celebrate in Germany

NEUVILLE

Affectionately known as Terry Neville at M-Sport, Thierry Neuville can't help but smile when he talks of his time with the Cumbrian team. Leaving them at the end of 2013 wasn't an easy decision. Had he stayed, he knew he could have taken the fight to Volkswagen last year.

Instead, the Belgian took the longer-term view and headed east for a factory contract and a slightly fuller wallet.

His performance across the second half of 2013 was astonishing. He scored six podiums (four of which were runner-up spots) from the final eight rounds. And when he wasn't in the top three, he was fourth in France and Spain.

Neuville's good. But how good?

On this point, everybody seems aligned: good as in future-world-champion good.

M-Sport's Malcolm Wilson remains full of praise for the one that got away, while his new boss Michel Nandan takes on the role of the cat that got the cream.

"He's not bad..." smiles the Frenchman. "No, we know Thierry is good. He is very good. We know what we have given him in terms of the car and the performance and we have seen what he has



'Terry Neville' is one of the next-generation WRC stars

been able to achieve with this. When we can give him a bit more then we will really see; this is the reason why he is with us at Hyundai."

Neuville has the same fierce hunger for more pace, more development. In terms of single-mindedness, he's cut from the same cloth as a Sebastien Ogier, Kris Meeke or, going back a

generation, a Carlos Sainz or, further, a Walter Rohrl. He knows he has the ability to deliver and he's impatient for the opportunity to show the world just how good he is.

Not long now, Terry: your moment is coming. And when it does, success will be shared across the WRC service park.



Vastly experienced Nandan is happy with team's progress so far

Hearing that sort of message from such seniority must have chilled spines across the service park. Especially when he adds: "We can hardly wait to see the new Polo R WRC in Monte Carlo."

M-Sport has done a thorough job on the Ford Fiesta RS WRC, with Malcolm Wilson describing this as the biggest step ever for the car. Every aspect of the Cumbrian-built car has been worked on, with development coming



New-shape i20 will join the WRC ranks later this season

in the engine, transmission and suspension. Citroen's upgrades come in two parts. Kris Meeke, Mads Ostberg and the returning Sebastien Loeb get an improved engine and some more aero on their DS3 WRCs, while the next phase of development comes in time for Portugal in May.

Nandan's been around a while. He's heard the pre-season chatter too many times to be drawn into what may or may not be coming. And he's

seen it from both ends of the scale – from the ultimate success of his Peugeot 206 WRC to the abject failure of the Suzuki SX4 WRC.

But for now, he wouldn't be anywhere else. "The support we have from the mother company is incredible, fantastic," he admits. "This is something I have not seen so often in my life."

Nandan's worked miracles in two years. But you get the feeling that the real work is only just about to begin. ❧



The ultimate Monte fightback

Thirty years ago Ari Vatanen overcame a back injury, time penalty and trip into a ditch to win the Monte Carlo Rally. Vatanen's trusted co-driver, **TERRY HARRYMAN**, recalls the incredible recovery

I still can't believe it's 30 years since Ari Vatanen and I won the 1985 Monte Carlo Rally. But it is. And I remember it vividly, which is probably not surprising given how many incidents we packed into one event...

The excitement began well before the rally started. During the recce, Ari and I came upon a German crew who had slid off the road in their Volkswagen Golf. Ari and I pushed them back onto the road and carried on. Next morning, Ari didn't arrive at breakfast. I tried to call the room: no answer. Some hotel staff and I went up and got into the room to find him lying on the floor in terrible pain. The team doctor took Ari off to hospital.

He'd done something serious to his back.

He was in hospital for four days and I really wasn't sure we'd be starting the event at all. But the recce had to continue regardless, so Fred Gallagher – who was coming to work as one of four ice-note crews for us on the rally – came on the recce.

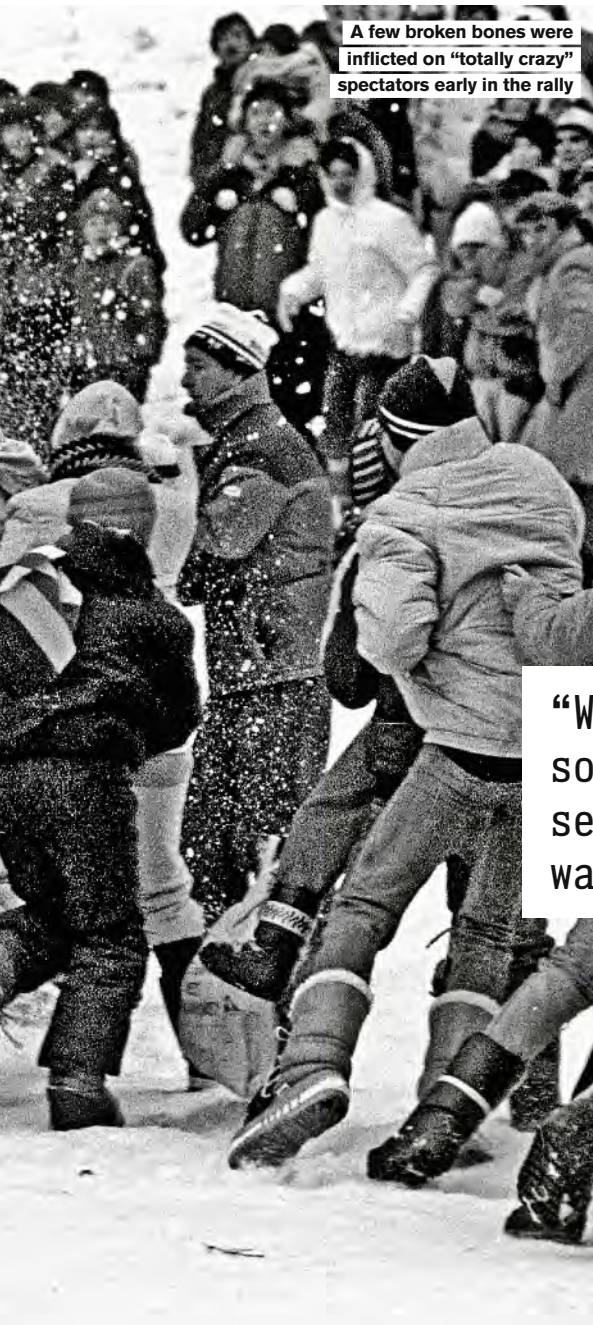
I drove our recce car – which was a plain-white Peugeot 205 T16 – and we got on with it. Going up a hill near Prunieres, we met an old lady in her Renault 5 on her way down the hill. She locked up and was coming straight at us, so I went to the verge on the right, which looked snowy, but OK. It wasn't. It was soft snow and the car dropped down and rolled onto its roof, where it stayed. The team had to get a crane in to lift it out while we carried on. I was

beginning to wonder what next...

Four or five days before the start, Ari came out of hospital and we completed the recce together.

Given that this was a Peugeot on the Monte and we were chasing a fourth straight world championship win with the 205 T16, we were told we would have a live television camera in the car for the first stage, which meant a helicopter flying unerringly close to provide the live signal. The stage was quite short and we were fastest.

St Bonnet le Froid was next, the first real one. Near the end of the stage we slid wide on a long right-hander and hit some spectators. I was sure it must have been serious, but it turns out the front of the car was quite spectator-friendly; a broken arm and one broken leg were the extent



A few broken bones were inflicted on "totally crazy" spectators early in the rally



Vatanen and Harryman were lauded as the comeback kings

"We slid wide on a long right-hander and hit some **spectators**. I was sure it must have been serious, but it turns out the front of the car was quite **spectator-friendly**..."



Rohrl and Audi were handed a huge lead, but lost out to a charging Vatanen

of the injuries. In all honesty, they were totally crazy standing where they were.

We suffered a damaged radiator and broken windscreen, which we put right after the stage. Once we put that behind us, we really got into a good rhythm and had built a very, very good lead – around four minutes – by the time we came out of SS18 and headed towards Gap for the overnight halt.

There had been a four-minute delay at the start of that Barillonette stage and I clocked us in four minutes early. In my defence, the time cards were quite different in those days and involved a deal of shuffling through pages – they were changed in format soon after this incident. We were hit with an eight-minute penalty.

I knew immediately. The cars around us didn't follow us into the control and I got that terrible feeling. Ari knew something was wrong. He knew something was going on. I told him.

He said: "Why have you done this to me?" I told him it was pure carelessness.

"OK, now we go..." was all he said. After that, it wasn't mentioned. It takes a very big man and big driver to react in such a way. We were a long way behind Walter Rohrl's Audi again.

Our team principal Jean Todt was just as



understanding. He could see exactly how it had happened. Jean gave me some sheets of plain paper and told me to write down the times we were due at the controls and then cross them out as we passed through. I did that and was so careful with the timing afterwards.

The following morning, the first stage was Montauban, and we took 38 seconds out of Rohrl. It carried on like that and at that speed.

When we came to the Col St Raphael stage, our spies told us Walter was going on slicks. Ari wanted the same, but the ice-note crews told us there was a lot of snow on the road up out of Puget Theniers. Jean, the ice-note crew and I

all tried to persuade Ari to go on snow tyres. We managed it, but it was a big call as we were still chasing Walter down.

Four or five kilometres into the stage, we caught him. Unbelievable! There was this Audi Quattro struggling up the mountain at a snail's pace. We flew by. Across the top of the col, there was the chance to look back down on the road we'd just come up. The stage was late in the afternoon and I kept looking for his lights; they never came. We'd taken minutes out of him.

But still we couldn't let up. It was an incredible run to get back into the lead. But even then it wasn't finished. On the Col de Porte stage, just before a short rest halt going into the final night, we slid off the road and into a ditch on a downhill hairpin right.

No spectators.

"Get out and give us a push..." Ari told me. I was sure it was a waste of time. I was sure we weren't going anywhere. Incredibly, after a couple of good shoves, we were back on the road.

Even Turini on the final night seemed quite tame after all that action. We got through the last few stages and drove into Monaco as winners by five minutes from Walter.

What an incredible event! ❧



SEASON GUIDE

Sebastien Loeb is back for the Monte, but elsewhere consistency reigns as Volkswagen's rivals give chase. **DAVID EVANS** has the score

WRC 2015
Round-by-round

1 BASED: GAP/MONACO

January 22-25
MONTE CARLO RALLY

Will it be a winter wonderland or a fourth asphalt round of the championship? Doesn't really matter, it'll still be the Monte. This event remains the best and only way to start the season, providing you're not the one sitting on slicks when it starts to snow.

2 BASED: KARLSTAD

February 12-15
RALLY SWEDEN

Like round one, this rally can be weather dependent. Here's the ideal: lots of snow about a month ago, a day or two of thawing then a Siberia-style chill to deep-freeze the melting snow into solid ice on the road. Then, more snow to build the snow banks. Not much to ask, is it?

3 BASED: LEON

March 5-8
RALLY MEXICO

No worries on the weather front, it's always seriously sunny in Leon. This is the first event where the points leader will be hung out to dry with two days and 198 of the planned 245 competitive miles sweeping the loose gravel clear at the front. Expect some shouting.



MCKLEIN/DE



Volkswagen

Making the best better is never an easy task, which is why there's a degree of nervousness around the Hannover squad this time around. Should there be? Probably not. Truth be told, the Volkswagen Polo R WRC hasn't had the biggest of overhauls, largely because it was a mighty fine piece of engineering to begin with. Expect these boys in blue and white to be at the front of the field from the start again this season. A third clean sweep of the titles is likely, but a third successive flop at home in Germany would be less than amusing...



2 JARI-MATTI LATVALA (FIN)
Age 29

WRC starts 143 WRC wins 12
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 47

Co-driver Miikka Anttila (FIN)

Getting closer and closer to Ogier and – as the asphalt in Spain showed last year – he's capable of beating his team-mate everywhere. Absolutely can't let the Frenchman have it all his own way early doors, so needs a podium in Monte and some quick wins to set up title tilt.



1 SEBASTIEN OGIER (F)
Age 31

WRC starts 84 WRC wins 24
WRC titles 2 WRC podiums 35

Co-driver Julien Ingrassia (F)

If he continues in the sort of form he showed on Rally GB, the title – his third in a row – could be done earlier than ever. Equally, running-order regulation change will play heavily on his mind and if he lets it get to him, he could find the going getting tougher than ever.



9 ANDREAS MIKKELSEN (N)
Age 25

WRC starts 52 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 5

Co-driver Ola Floene (N)

There's an argument for saying Mikkelsen's the man with the most pressure on his shoulders this season. The two-time IRC champion has enjoyed two years to settle in with Volkswagen, but now's the time to deliver rally wins and potentially a title threat. He's certainly got the speed.

4 BASED: VILLA CARLOS PAZ



April 23-26



RALLY ARGENTINA

One of the WRC's classics. Moving forward in the year means it'll be hotter with less likelihood of rain (it's in planet earth's southern half, don't forget). Shorter route than last year which is a shame, but any event finishing on the El Condor stage works for us.

5 BASED: MATOSINHOS



May 21-24



RALLY PORTUGAL

The much-talked about move has finally come: it's out with the Algarve and in with Porto. The north of the country has a much stronger rally heritage; it's home to Fafe and its enormous jump, but that comes with the double-edged sword of hundreds of thousands of fans...

6 BASED: ALGHERO



June 11-14



RALLY ITALY

Moving the event from the east to the west coast worked well last year, but long road sections were very unpopular – even if there are some decent stages at the end of them. Not a bad event, run in the sun with decent tucker and half a chance of a solid bottle of red.

7 BASED: MIKOLAJKI



July 2-5



RALLY POLAND

The soft, sandy Lithuanian stages around Druskinikai are highly unlikely to feature this year, which is good news. The roads close to Mikolajki are more than good enough. And they're quick enough – Poland was second only to Finland last year in terms of average speed.



Citroen

Upgrades on the DS3 WRC will be coming in stages this season, but the car starts Monte with improvements to the engine and the aerodynamics. It's fair to say that the

Versailles-built machine has been overtaken in recent years, but what Citroen really enjoys is strength in depth within the team. Like M-Sport, these boys have been around a long time and know

what it takes to win world titles in any and all conditions. Historically, the car has struggled in some of the rougher and more rutted conditions, so a suspension tweak or two would be nice.



3 KRIS MEEKE (GB)
Age 35
WRC starts 53 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 4
Co-driver Paul Nagle (IRL)

Last year showed how important experience is at this level and Meeke needs to pick and chose his battles in 2015. Starts events like Germany, Finland and Australia as a potential winner, but needs to temper his enthusiasm and take the points where he's still lacking knowledge.



4 SEBASTIEN LOEB (F)
Age 40
WRC starts 168 WRC wins 78
WRC titles 9 WRC podiums 116
Co-driver Daniel Elena (MC)
***Entered only for Monte Carlo**

Fantastic, more than fantastic, to have him back. Loeb is the WRC's benchmark and megastar. How will he settle back in? He'll be fine. This is Sebastien Loeb we're talking about; he wins rallies in his sleep. Can he win Monte? Of course he can. On these streets, anything can happen...



12 MADS OSTBERG (N)
Age 27
WRC starts 78 WRC wins 1
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 11
Co-driver Jonas Andersson (S)

Last season wasn't the fairest reflection on Ostberg's ability. A Sweden win early doors this year could give him just the lift and self-belief he needs to become a genuine contender across the spread of the season. Will need to find a tenth or two on asphalt if he wants the title.

Pick of the privateers



14 HENNING SOLBERG (N)
Age 42
WRC starts 117 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 6
Co-driver Ilka Minor (A)
Car Ford Fiesta RS WRC

What's his programme? Pass the crystal ball. But, wherever he goes, he will be pretty quick and enormously entertaining. A season without Henning Solberg would be much the poorer.



16 ROBERT KUBICA (PL)
Age 30
WRC starts 21 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 0
Co-driver Maciej Szczepaniak (PL)
Car Ford Fiesta RS WRC

As the man himself keeps trying to point out, he spent 20 years gathering experience to get to the top of F1 – it's not going to happen in the WRC in a single season. That said, vast natural talent will surely carry Kubica to a podium or two this season. Great to see him back.



8 BASED: JYVASKYLA
July 30-August 2
RALLY FINLAND

Still the daddy in terms of speed: last year's winner Latvala averaged 75.86mph across the event's 224 competitive miles... Jyväskylä is a proper rally town, with 1000 Lakes history around every corner and heroes like Alen and Vatanen mingling with the masses.



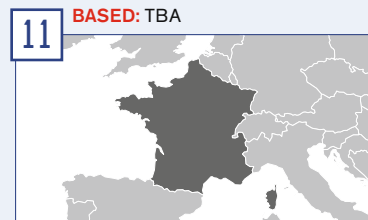
9 BASED: TRIER
August 20-23
RALLY GERMANY

The first pure asphalt round of the season comes in three distinct parts: the military roads around the Baumholder tank-testing area, the country lane-style stages and the vineyards – where a solid understanding of the handbrake is vital to get you through all the hairpins.



10 BASED: COFFS HARBOUR
September 10-13
RALLY AUSTRALIA

Small town, big rally. Much improved in the past few years, but the rally needs to consolidate a base within Coffs Harbour this season. Out of town, the stages are entertaining and hugely picturesque. But, with Rally New Zealand knocking on the door, this is a big year for the Aussies.



11 BASED: TBA
October 1-4
RALLY FRANCE

Much talk of a move out of Strasbourg after funding from the local council has apparently failed to materialise. Life after Loeb was always going to be a struggle for the Alsations and, for many, France's world championship home will always remain on Corsica...



M-Sport Ford

The Cumbrians have been working harder than ever through the winter and the upshot is the biggest-ever evolution for the Ford Fiesta RS WRC. Every area of the car has been worked on ahead of this season, but the big questions must sit with the drivers. What can be expected from a pairing that boasts just 70 WRC starts between them? Evans improved consistently through last season and will be pushing for podium finishes in the second half of the year, but Tanak... hmm, Tanak, if he found the form somewhere like Finland, who knows? Like Citroen, the team's big strength comes from its vast experience of competing at the front in the championship.



5 ELFYN EVANS (GB)
Age 26

WRC starts 30 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 0

Co-driver Dan Barritt (GB)

Will find the first half tough again, especially having to learn all-new roads in Portugal. A sensible head through such events will give him confidence and scope for a big push where he's been before. Needs to be looking to break the top three, most likely in Germany, France or, dare we say it, Wales...



4 OTT TANAK (EST)
Age 27

WRC starts 40 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 1

Co-driver Raigo Molder (EST)

Second chances don't come along very often and you don't need to tell the Estonian that. After crashing his way through 2012, he was unceremoniously dumped by M-Sport, but a change in attitude and even more speed last season brought reprieve. Pivotal season.

Hyundai

A clear season of two halves lies ahead for the Koreans. The year begins with the current i20 WRC, which has been worked into a consistent and worthy world championship competitor. The big question is all about its successor, the all-new i20, which is expected sometime in 2015. But that's the car that has to come good for the team, the next two years are riding on it. Having coped manfully with an astonishing workload last year, there's no reason the Frankfurt-based squad won't rise to the challenge this time. Hyundai will also field test driver Kevin Abbring in several rounds.



7 THIERRY NEUVILLE (B)
Age 26

WRC starts 45 WRC wins 1
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 10

Co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul (B)

Depending on the pace of development from the team, Neuville should be a regular rally-winning threat this season. There's no doubting the speed and ability, but he could sometimes do with tempering that – particularly on round one – he's started and retired from four Montes.



8 DANI SORDO (E)
Age 31

WRC starts 116 WRC wins 1
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 37

Co-driver Marc Martí (E)

Brings a massive amount of experience back for a second season at Hyundai. Can be counted on for points on most events and has real podium potential on rallies he knows and likes. Down for at least 10 of the 13 rounds this season. Can he add to his solitary WRC-event success?



20 HAYDEN PADDON (NZ)
Age 27

WRC starts 35 WRC wins 0
WRC titles 0 WRC podiums 0

Co-driver John Kennard (NZ)

Not competing on the opener in Monte Carlo, but will tackle at least nine rounds this year. Paddon's speed came on in leaps and bounds last year, particularly in Finland. He's well worthy of the extended programme he's landed for this year, but needs to use 2015 to cement his WRC presence.



12 BASED: SALOU



October 22-25

RALLY SPAIN



Expect a day on gravel and two on Tar again – why change a winning formula? Last year's crowd-pleasing Thursday-night stage in Barcelona was a huge hit and should be repeated this time around. One of the easiest and most comfortable rounds of the championship to cover.

13 BASED: DEESIDE



November 12-15

RALLY GB



Brilliant. Obviously, OK, we're not going to Kielder or Clatteringshaws yet, but Dyfi and Myherin are more than a match for anything else on planet earth. And Saturday night's party in Deeside is a great piece of mid-event entertainment. It's accessible and easy to find. So go.

MAKING SENSE OF THE WRC'S MANY FEEDER CATEGORIES

The World Rally Championship supports run on all rounds of the series. The WRC2 cars are turbo-charged and four-wheel drive – but slightly slower than World Rally Cars. These crews score points on seven of the 13 rounds, but don't have to nominate their scoring rallies at the start of the year.

WRC3 is for cars up to two litres (or 1600c turbo) with two-wheel drive. Seven scoring

rallies are on offer with drivers counting their best six results.

The scoring and technical regulations are the same for the Junior WRC, which is open to drivers aged 27 and under. The Junior winner gets six WRC rounds in a Citroen DS3 R5.

The Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy is contested by the all-new Fiesta R2. Thee winner will tackle seven WRC rounds in a Fiesta R5 in 2016.

TRY ONE OF THESE IN

Fancy broadening your horizons? Here are our top tips, from the natural amphitheatre



VILA REAL WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP



PAU GRAND PRIX



52



PETER MILLS
PICTURE EDITOR
@Peter_autosport

NOT CONTENT WITH taking on the Nordschleife this year, the adrenalin-seeking WTCC brigade will head to Vila Real in Portugal this July for a taste of old-school street racing. Situated in the hills inland from Oporto, the original Vila Real was a 4.3-mile circuit inaugurated in 1931.

After Pedro Carvalho's Renault Clio tragically crashed into spectators in 1991, the circuit was truncated to 2.858 miles. The new route does away with the original track's level crossings and two narrow bridges (the

second of which was over a ravine!), but should retain enough character to focus the attention of this year's WTCC crop.

Saddam Hussein was said to favour one of the region's prime exports, Mateus rosé wine, whose labels feature the Mateus Palace situated close to the circuit. Given Vila Real's stop-start history (the last international race was in 1974), the curious and those who share a fondness for the former Middle-Eastern dictator's favourite tippie should consider a trek north of Douro this summer.

2015

of Lydden Hill to Macau, via Californian wine country – and Austrian Red Bull country

MAY

15-17



LYDDEN HILL WORLD RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

MAY

22-24



MCKLEIN/LAT



**MARCUS
SIMMONS**
DEPUTY EDITOR

@MarcusSimmons54

ONCE YOU'VE BEEN to the Pau Grand Prix once, you'll never want to miss it. There's much more to it than its headlining Formula 3 European Championship round.

You also get single-seater thrills from Formula Renault ALPS and French Formula 4, plus a never-ending programme of French national tin-top action – 21 races in total last year, with Saturday action running up to 11 pm.

Pau is a lovely – and lively – little place near the foothills of the Pyrenees, with plenty of reasonable accommodation. As a student town, it's not pricey to eat or drink either, and there are plenty of bars along the main drag where racing people congregate

in the evenings, not to mention the typically French street marquees selling food and drink.

It'll take you two or three hours to get there from Toulouse or Bordeaux airports by road, or you can get the train from either (albeit usually with a connection from Bordeaux) all the way to Pau – the station is right next to the first corner. Just make sure the French transport workers aren't on strike... As long as you're staying in Pau, you'll only need to walk to get from A to B.

Take your pick of viewing spots: Virage de la Gare is recommended for overtaking, the Foch chicane for kerb-leaping madness!



HAL RIDGE
RALLYCROSS
CORRESPONDENT

@HalRidgeRX

IN AN ERA WHEN

motor racing is becoming increasingly focused on fuel-efficient and relatively quiet technology, the opportunity to stand just feet away from rorty, snarling 600-horsepower hatchbacks racing in short, sharp races on both gravel and asphalt is one not to be missed.

Lydden Hill's natural amphitheatre is a great venue to watch World

Rallycross Championship action. The entire circuit at Lydden is visible from almost everywhere, and there are no huge fences to spoil the view.

When WorldRX rolled into town (or village) last May, over 10,000 people turned out and were treated to some fantastic action. As the series escalates in popularity, the 2015 event should be even better.



RED BULL RING AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX

JUNE
19-21



EDD STRAW
EDITOR

@EddStrawF1

AUTOSPORT'S correspondents find themselves billeted in some unusual locations over the year, but a guest house in the middle of the thriving campsite just behind the Red Bull Ring's Turn 1 for last year's revived Austrian GP was one of the strangest.

Surrounded by well-lubricated Austrians (and a few bovines) we were in the thick of the party atmosphere of what instantly re-established

itself as one of the best F1 events of the year.

The track looks simple, but the gradients, kerbs and cambers make it a far tougher challenge than it looks. There are some good overtaking places too, so it's great for racing.

The only downside is that there were times during the weekend when the traffic was like Silverstone in the bad old days. But if you head to the Austrian GP, your patience will be rewarded.

ROMNEY/GETTY



F1 CALENDAR

March 15	Australian GP
March 29	Malaysian GP
April 12	Chinese GP
April 19	Bahrain GP
May 10	Spanish GP
May 24	Monaco GP
June 7	Canadian GP
June 21	Austrian GP
July 5	British GP
July 19	German GP
July 26	Hungarian GP
August 23	Belgian GP
September 6	Italian GP
September 20	Singapore GP
September 27	Japanese GP
October 11	Russian GP
October 25	US GP
November 1	Mexican GP
November 15	Brazilian GP
November 29	Abu Dhabi GP



SONOMA NASCAR

AUGUST
29-30

MILWAUKEE INDYCAR

JULY
11-12



**MARK
GLENDENNING**
AMERICAN
CORRESPONDENT
@m_glendenning

SONOMA IS SPOILT.

Not only is it one of the rare venues to host both Sprint Cup and IndyCar, but it's in an area ridiculously overloaded with distractions once the racing is over.

San Francisco, one of the liveliest cities in the US, is an easy drive over the Golden Gate Bridge to the south. The track is right at the gateway to

northern California's wine country: Sonoma and Napa are on the doorstep. If you prefer beer, you'll relish being in a stronghold for local breweries – AUTOSPORT is a fan of Lagunitas (Petaluma), Drake's (Oakland) and Bear Republic (Healdsburg). World-class restaurants? Try the French Laundry (Napa) or Chez Panisse (Berkeley),

now rebuilt after a fire. And if you're looking for a side trip, Tahoe, Yosemite and Big Sur are all within easy striking range.

MILWAUKEE IS A city that Americans are more likely to fly over than stop in, but for a racing fan it's worth a visit (in summer, at least).

Home of the Milwaukee Mile, this is a unique

chance to experience a real piece of racing history: the pancake-flat, one-mile oval in the middle of a fairground west of the city has been hosting races since 1903, and watching IndyCars hustle around it is a sight like no other: it's an oval with almost road-racing-style corners.

There are plenty of good bars and restaurants

along the canal that cuts through the city's downtown, with a particularly strong concentration around the Third Ward area. And don't be surprised if you encounter a lot of bikers: Harley-Davidson was founded here, and the associated museum is a popular pilgrimage site for heavily tattooed men in leather jackets.



KNOCKHILL BTCC



SCOTT MITCHELL
FEATURES EDITOR
@ScottMitchell189

THE APPEAL OF touring car racing is how cut-and-thrust the action is, and no circuit showcases that better than Knockhill.

Most fans will be limited to where they can visit by their location, and that's understandable – before last year, as someone born and raised in Kent, I'd never been to the Scottish track. But if you can get to one BTCC event all year I cannot recommend the August trip north of the border highly enough.

Walking the outskirts of the track, which boasts some spectacular viewing points and, thanks to the terrain's undulations, a general view of at least

three corners at a time, took me back to the days of karting. You're not confined to one place to watch, and wherever you do spectate from you're guaranteed to see more than most other circuits. Chances are you'll also witness something spectacular, such is the nature of the track.

August is a popular holiday time but who says you can't have a mini-holiday in Scotland? The bumper TOCA support package means there is almost always something on track over the two days, and there's no better place to take in that action than Knockhill.



BTCC CALENDAR

- April 5 Brands Hatch Indy
- April 19 Donington Park
- May 10 Thruxton
- June 7 Oulton Park
- June 28 Croft
- August 9 Snetterton
- August 23 Knockhill
- September 6 Rockingham
- September 27 Silverstone
- October 11 Brands Hatch GP

AUGUST

22-23



SILVERSTONE WORLD SERIES BY RENAULT

AUGUST

29-30



GLENN FREEMAN
AUTOSPORT.COM EDITOR
@glenn_autosport

THE WORLD SERIES by Renault free-ticket race weekend returns to Silverstone this year for the first time since 2011.

Headlined by the Formula 1 feeder series Formula Renault 3.5, the World Series weekends are typified by a busy on-track schedule of

single-seater and tin-top racing, plus plenty of demo runs (including F1), off-track entertainment for kids and completely open access to the paddock. There's a good chance of having some British success to cheer, as Oliver Rowland enters 2015 as the title favourite.

55



GOODWOOD REVIVAL

SEPTEMBER

11-13



J. BLOXHAM/LAT



HENRY HOPE-FROST
GOODWOOD AFICIONADO

@henryhopefrost

EVERY SEPTEMBER,

the South Downs reverberate to this retro racing recreation that since 1998 – the 50th anniversary of the Goodwood Motor Circuit's original opening – has wowed the period-costumed crowd.

Full-grid races for pre- and post-war grand prix cars, sports-racers, saloons, GTs and motorcycles offer thrilling combat for owners and many big-name international aces around what has always been one of Britain's quickest venues. And despite the venue's airfield origins, the elevation changes and off-camber corners around the back provide endless viewing opportunities.

And for the non-diehard historic racing fans, the carefully choreographed sideshow is as theatrical

as the on-track action.

Displays, themed garages and parades add to the magic of this festival.

It's an advance-ticket event and *always* sells out so don't wait until August to decide you want to try it.

A FRENETIC

adrenalin rush comprising speed hillclimb and forest rally stages, not to mention the family-friendly sideshows, the Festival of Speed is an assault on the senses for petrolheads of all persuasions. And the garden-party event brings former aces, many reunited with the cars in which they made their names, and current top names together in one happy place. Again, book early since it too is a sell-out. Just don't forget your autograph book and camera...



GOODWOOD FESTIVAL OF SPEED

JUNE

25-28



WARNER/LAT



MULL RALLY



DREW GIBSON

OCTOBER

9-11



DAVID EVANS
RALLIES EDITOR

@daviddevansrally

RALLY GB WAS TOO obvious. Unless you've undergone a horrific enthusiasm bypass, your trip to Dyfi and Deeside is a done deal. This is the perfect warm-up for the final round of the World Rally Championship.

Warm-up may be taking it a tad far. This is the Inner Hebrides in October. It's Scotland's fourth largest island you're after: Mull.

I know, I know, you've heard it all before: magical island rally full of the most intensely entertaining, not to mention beguiling and bewitching roads. It's all true. And probably underplayed.

I'm fortunate enough to have been twice, but not for a while now. That'll be put right this year. The chance to stand in a graveyard in the dead of night and listen to Calum Duffy's Ford Escort Mk II being hustled through the darkness, watching brilliant lasers darting, dancing and arcing across the Scottish sky, turning black to white; night to day.

A squeal of brakes, the shrill cry of rubber being locked on dry asphalt and boom... Duffy's come. And gone. It's worth the trip just to see what can be done with the modern incarnation of a motor first made in 1974.

Then stay for the rest. And a wee dram. Or two.



MACAU GRAND PRIX

NOVEMBER

19-22



JONATHAN NOBLE
GROUP F1 EDITOR

@NobleF1

ASK MANY OF THE

Formula 1 drivers to name their favourite street circuit, and the answer is not the obvious Monaco. Instead, it's Macau, the scene of Formula 3's traditional end-of-season blue-riband event.

But the attraction of the Macau GP runs far deeper than just the hugely challenging street circuit – which has a unique contrast of a tricky, twisty mountain section and a

long flat-out blast down to the famous Lisboa corner.

It's also about the high-pressure environment of an event where stars of the future bid to follow in the footsteps of former winners Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher.

Chuck in, too, cracking support races and the craziness of the bright lights of the world's biggest gambling hub, all just a one-hour ferry ride from Hong Kong.



BRANDS HATCH FORMULA FORD FESTIVAL

OCTOBER

24-25



MATT BEER
DEPUTY AUTOSPORT.COM EDITOR

@mattofautosport

MOTORSPORT'S PREFERENCE

for season-long slow-burn championships make truly significant knockout formats a rarity. That's why I find end-of-season FF1600 trophy events an impossible addiction to break.

Raw, uncomplicated and raceable single-seaters wielded by huge casts of the year's top regional contenders, great names from the category's past plus hand-picked rising talents from abroad. It's an accessible human drama too – as drivers' families plus eliminated racers throng to the best

vantage points for the final, every on-track incident has a visceral ripple through the crowd.

For the past decade the best place to experience this has been Silverstone's Walter Hayes Trophy, and it still thrives. But it's always been hard to shake the instinct that Brands is where an everything-on-the-line autumn FFord shootout *should* be, and the combination of recent format improvements, and removing the irksome distraction of a waning British FFord running to different rules, have made the Festival a must-see in its own right again.

Al-Attiyah is a Dakar winner for second time



MOUHARPOULOS/GETTY

DAKAR RALLY BUENOS AIRES (RA), JANUARY 4-17

Al-Attiyah stays out of reach for victory

NOTHING WAS GOING TO DENY Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah a second Dakar Rally title. Aside from a two-minute speeding penalty that cost him the lead on the very first stage, the Qatari and his French co-driver Matthieu Baumel controlled the rally in their Mini All4 Racing.

The pair won five of the special stages, scarcely put a foot wrong over some of the most demanding terrain that Chile, Argentina and Bolivia could throw at them, and reached the finish in Buenos Aires with a winning margin of 35m34s. It marked a fourth successful win for Sven Quandt's X-raid team and his fleet of Mini All4 Racings.

"We dominated the race from the beginning and were able to control the pace throughout," said Al-Attiyah. "I've got lots of people to thank for this. I came to the

Dakar in top-notch form, both physically and mentally. We managed to do our job day by day."

Giniel de Villiers and Dirk von Zitzewitz never gave up hope of giving Toyota a first Dakar win and they pushed Al-Attiyah all the way until a costly navigational mistake wasted 20 minutes and wrecked their challenge on the stage into Calama. De Villiers, a winner with Volkswagen in 2009, has now taken two runner-up places and a third and fourth with his trusty South African-built Toyota Hilux in the past four years.

Saudi Arabia's Yazeed Al-Rajhi was a revelation on his Dakar debut but, to achieve lasting Dakar fame, first you have to finish. The rookie won a special stage and held third overall for long periods until engine and exhaust issues sidelined his Overdrive Toyota Hilux

in Salta after 10 stages.

His exit opened the door for experienced Pole Krzysztof Holowczyc to claim an unlikely podium finish in a second Mini All4 Racing. Consistent from the start, it was a career-best Dakar finish for the former FIA European Rally champion and his new French co-driver Xavier Panseri.

Minis dominated the stage wins: German-built All4 Racings won 11 of the 13 specials. Dutchman Erik van Loon didn't win any stages, but still finished fourth, with Vladimir Vasilyev in fifth.

It was a successful rally for Belgian team Overdrive Racing, despite Al-Rajhi's retirement, with Frenchman Christian Lavieille reaching Buenos Aires in sixth and Dutchman Bernhard ten Brinke seventh. France's Ronan Chabot won the 2WD category, taking 10th overall in his SMG Buggy.

Peugeot's return to the Dakar after a 25-year absence was disappointing. Carlos Sainz crashed out during the first week and a catalogue of technical issues and delays cost Stephane Peterhansel a top-10 finish. The 11-time Dakar winner guided his 2008 DXR to the finish ramp in 11th, and former rider and five-time race victor Cyril Despres completed his debut on four wheels with 34th overall in the third Peugeot.

Last year's winner Joan Roma's miserable run came crashing down



De Villiers chased hard to second

MOUHARPOULOS/GETTY

on the 10th stage between Calama and Termas de Rio Hondo. The Spaniard had claimed a consolation stage win on the previous special before catapulting the Mini into a series of spectacular rolls. Unreliability proved costly for Orlando Terranova – the winner of four stages – and final stage hero Robby Gordon too. Both fleetingly showed promise and reached Buenos Aires in 18th and 19th positions.

Only 68 of the 136 starters made it to the finish.

● Neil Perkins

RESULTS

1 Nasser Al-Attiyah/Matthieu Baumel (Mini All4 Racing), 40h32m25s; **2 Giniel de Villiers/Dirk von Zitzewitz (Toyota Hilux)**, +35m34s; **3 Krzysztof Holowczyc/Xavier Panseri (Mini)**; **4 Erik van Loon/Wouter Roesegar (Mini)**; **5 Vladimir Vasilyev/Konstantin Zhiltsov (Mini)**; **6 Christian Lavieille/Pascal Maimon (Toyota)**; **7 Bernhard ten Brinke/Tom Colsoul (Toyota)**; **8 Carlos Sousa/Paulo Fuiza (Mitsubishi Racing Lancer)**; **9 Aidyn Rakhimbayev/Anton Nikolaev (Mini)**; **10 Ronan Chabot/Gilles Pillot (SMG Buggy)**.

Holowczyc encounters a South American!



Stroll won the historic Lady Wigram Trophy



TOYOTA RACING SERIES RUAPUNA (NZ), JANUARY 17-18 RD 1/5

It's a Stroll in the park for Ferrari starlet

CANADIAN FERRARI PROTEGE LANCE Stroll claimed the early lead in New Zealand's Toyota Racing Series with two victories from the three races at round one on the Ruapuna circuit near Christchurch.

The 16-year-old reigning Italian Formula 4 champion seized the lead on the first lap of race one after French polewinner Brandon Maisano ran wide and lost several places. Indian Arjun Maini took second, with Australian Formula Ford champion Thomas Randle completing the podium.

Stroll confessed he was not a great fan of the technical Ruapuna circuit but did like the series. "It's better to be competing in New Zealand than

sitting around at home," he said.

"You always learn something." Maini said there was "a bit of craziness" in front of him.

The meeting marked the debut of the new Tatuus-built Toyota FT50, which is completely different from the long-serving FT40 apart from the 1.8-litre Toyota engine.

Edinburgh Formula 3 driver Sam MacLeod, who qualified third and first in the two sessions, liked the new TRS machine. "The car is very light, you can throw it around; it's good fun to drive," he said.

Maisano took the lead at the start of the reversed-grid race two ahead of Austrian Ferdinand Habsburg. Belfast driver Charlie Eastwood

settled into third and these three placings remained the same till near the end, when Eastwood got past Habsburg after a safety-car period.

Race three carried the historic Lady Wigram Trophy. MacLeod started from pole but spun on the first lap — one of many to signal their errors with big clouds of dust as the cars went onto the bone-dry grass areas.

Stroll then took the lead, heading Kiwi James Munro, Maisano and Maini. Munro spun and Maisano pulled off, leaving Stroll with a big lead over Maini and Russian GP2 racer Artem Markelov.

"The first few laps were quite tricky as it got slippery, especially

when the wind blew dust onto the track," Stroll said.

On his car-racing debut, Hertfordshire driver Callum Iltott was slowed by car problems all weekend.

● Bernard Carpinter

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Lance Stroll, 15 laps in 20m25.131s; 2 Arjun Maini, +2.125s; 3 Tom Randle; 4 Charlie Eastwood; 5 Brandon Maisano; 6 Ferdinand Habsburg. **Race 2 1 Maisano**, 12 laps in 18m00.109s; 2 Eastwood, +0.587s; 3 Habsburg; 4 Stroll; 5 Santino Ferrucci; 6 Maini. **Race 3 1 Stroll**, 19 laps in 25m16.690s; 2 Maini, +4.065s; 3 Artem Markelov; 4 Ferrucci; 5 Sam MacLeod; 6 Randle. **Points 1 Stroll, 204**; 2 Maini, 179; 3 Ferrucci, 145; 4 Randle, 127; 5 Maisano, 124; 6 Eastwood, 121.

ANDROS TROPHY
LANS EN VERCORS (F),
JANUARY 16-17 RD 5/6

No cracks as icy Riviere slides home

WHILE OLIVIER PANIS KEPT UP HIS strong run of form to take victory in the event's first contest, no one could stop Benjamin Riviere from taking his first win of the season at the weekend's climax.

Panis topped the Friday heats to claim pole for the first final in his WRT Toyota, and gradually left behind the Mazda of championship leader Jean-Philippe Dayraut. In turn, Dayraut kept Riviere at bay.

Riviere then staked his claim to honours on Saturday by topping the heats with Team Overdrive's Citroen, and built up a one-second lead over Franck Lagorce on the opening lap. While the Sport Garage



Sodemo Dacia of Lagorce kept the lead margin pegged, there were no mistakes from Riviere.

It was quite close for third, with the Mini of veteran Bertrand Balas keeping Panis at arm's length and Dayraut claiming fifth.

With just one points-scoring round to go, the resurgent Panis still has an outside chance of denying Dayraut his sixth Andros Trophy title at Super Besse the weekend after next.

RESULTS

Final 1 1 Olivier Panis (Toyota Auris), 5 laps in 4m10.491s; 2 Jean-Philippe Dayraut (Mazda 3), +2.860s; 3 Benjamin Riviere (Citroen DS3); 4 Jean-Baptiste Dubourg (Renault Clio 3); 5 Franck Lagorce (Dacia Lodgy); 6 Andrea Dubourg (Renault). **Final 2 1 Riviere**, 6 laps in 4m44.587s; 2 Lagorce, +0.940s; 3 Bertrand Balas (Mini); 4 Panis; 5 Dayraut; 6 Toomas Heikkinen (Mazda). **Points 1 Dayraut, 545**; 2 Panis, 524; 3 Lagorce, 521; 4 Riviere, 508; 5 J-B Dubourg, 490; 6 Heikkinen, 458.

NZ V8 TOURING CARS

Australian Jason Bargwanna opened a big lead in the championship with three clear-cut victories in his Toyota Camry in round three at Ruapuna. He heads reigning champion Nick Ross, who was second overall for the round in his Nissan Altima, by more than 100 points.

NZ FORMULA FORD

The three races at Ruapuna produced three different winners. Michael Collins did well to win race one in an older Class 2 car, Michael Scott took race two, and Taylor Cockerton dominated the final race after failing to finish the first two heats. Scott won the round.

ANDROS ELECTRIC

It wasn't just a winning weekend for Olivier Panis, as son Aurelien won the first of the two Electric Trophy contests at Lans en Vercors, the Formula Renault hotshoe beating GP2 racer Nathanael Berthon. Vincent Beltoise, nephew of the late Jean-Pierre, won the second from series leader Berthon and Matthieu Vaxiviere.

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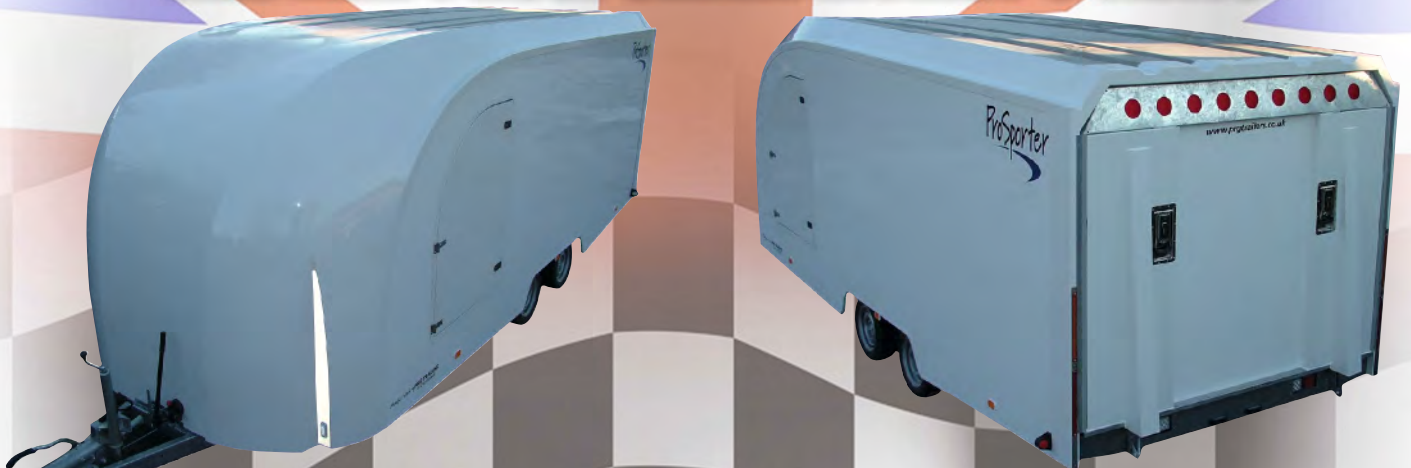
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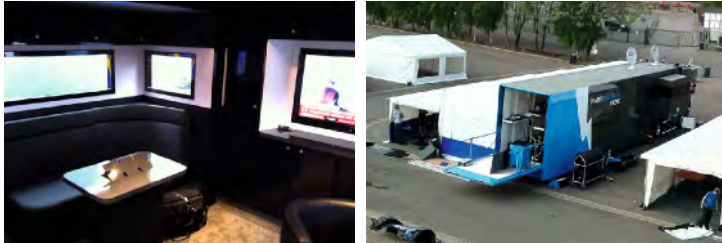
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RACE & RALLY

Solberg sells his 2nd RX beast

Newly crowned World RX Champion Petter Solberg will sell his 2nd Citroën DS3 RX Supercar. The car won 30 percent of the heats in its maiden RX season in the European Rallycross Championship series 2013.

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RACE & RALLY CARS

RACE & RALLY

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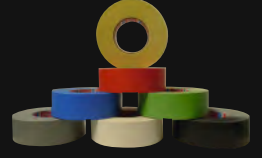
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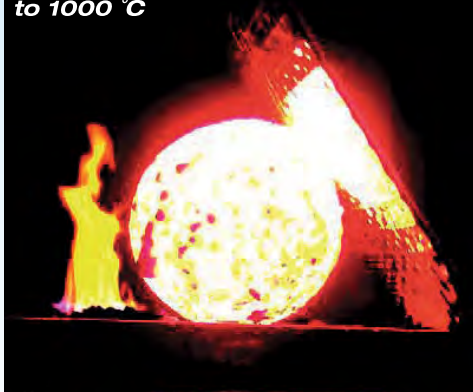
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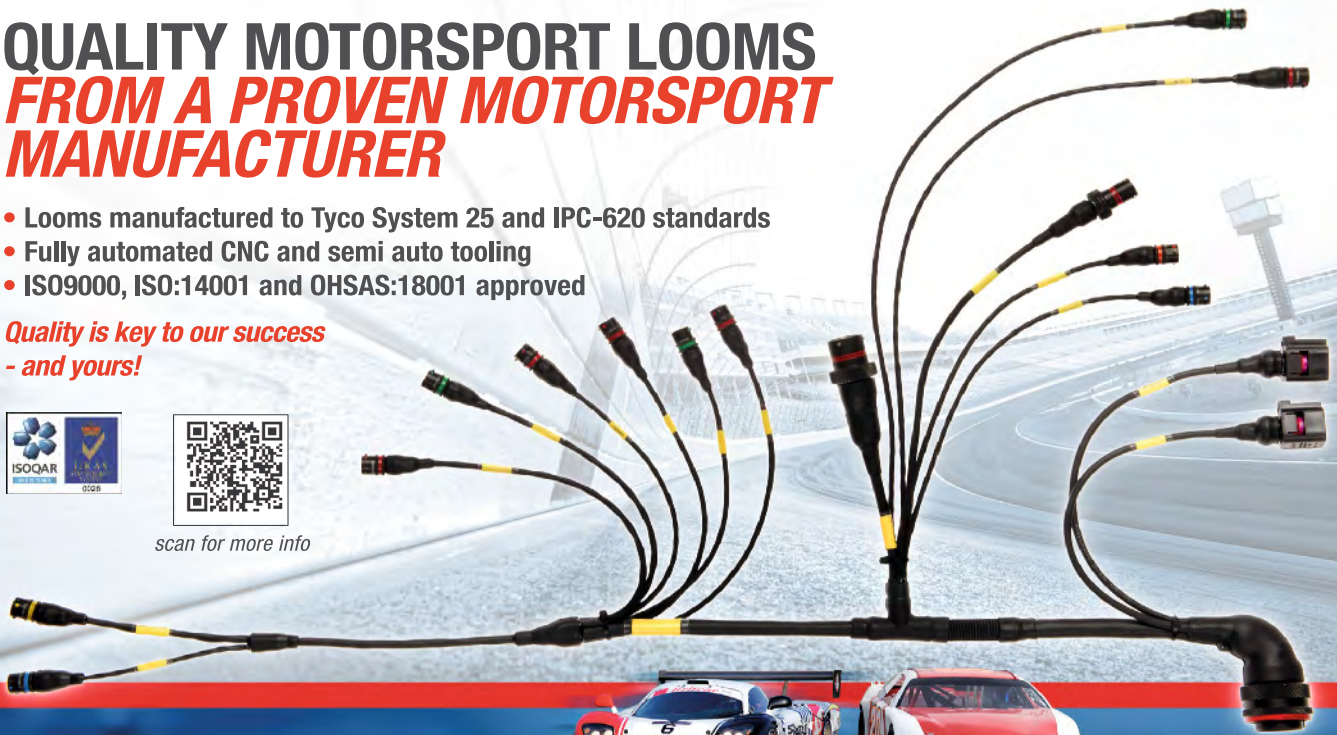
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Jarier will demo
his pole-winning
Shadow DN5



LAT

Jarier heads Goodwood cast

French F1 ace to be reunited with Shadow as tin-top stars sign up

EX-FORMULA 1 DRIVER

Jean-Pierre Jarier will be reunited with the Shadow in which he secured back-to-back pole positions at the start of the 1975 season at the Goodwood Members' Meeting.

The Frenchman score two of his three career poles in the Shadow DN5, topping qualifying at the season-opening Argentinian Grand Prix before failing to start the race, and retiring from the lead in Brazil two weeks later have qualified fastest again.

He destroyed chassis 1A at Monaco that year but the car has since been restored and competed at last year's biennial Monaco Grand Prix Historique.

Jarier will demonstrate the DN5 at the 73rd Goodwood Members' Meeting on March 21-22 as part of the high-airbox Formula 1 display, while the only Matra-engined Shadow will also be present.

The appearance of 1973 European Formula 2 champion Jarier follows the confirmation of a host of leading drivers who will contest a variety of races at the meeting.

British Touring Car champions Andrew Jordan, Tim Harvey and Robb Gravett will all take part in the event, as will factory Aston Martin GT driver Darren Turner.

Revival regular Jordan will make his Members' Meeting debut driving in the Gerry Marshall Trophy for Group 1 Touring Cars, sharing a

Swiftune-built 1979 Mini 1275 GT with Nick Swift.

Harvey, another Members' Meeting debutant, will share Anthony Robinson's ex-works Triumph Dolomite Sprint, the first version of the British Leyland machine to be converted to racing.

Alongside his own Turner Mk1, ex-BTCC driver Turner will race David Clark's Bastos Camaro Z28, the pole car at the 1981 Spa 24 Hours, while 1990 BTCC champion Gravett will drive Alun Edwards's Triplex Triumph Dolomite Sprint, the car in which Gerry Marshall won the 1979 Production Saloon title.

"It's just a fun little project," said Turner of his own car. "It's very much going back to basics, like when me and my dad went karting.

"I saw a picture of the Camaro in a magazine and phoned David to ask if he had a driver, it was that easy. I've driven Minis before and the Capri last year and I wanted to drive something different. It will be fun to see how it handles."

House captain Anthony Reid and Camaro ace Stuart Graham have also been confirmed. Reid will again share Tim Morley's Triplex-liveried Dolomite while Graham returns in the 1974 Chevrolet Camaro Z28 with which he almost won last year's GMT.



Turner will tame
feisty Camaro

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STAGGERING, ISN'T IT? NO,

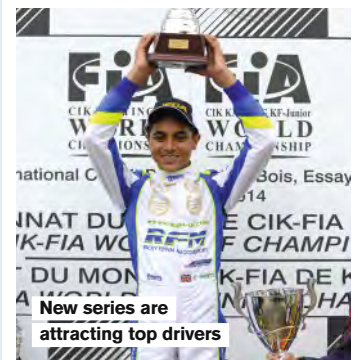
not the Shadow pictured left, though quite how that car was good enough to bag back-to-back poles but Jean-Pierre Jarier muster just 1.5 points over the season is worthy of the word.

I'm talking about the prospect of a season without a dedicated two-litre Renault category in Britain (page 74). The BARC attempted to salvage something with its Formula Libre concept, which would house the new Formula Renault currently in operation in the Eurocup and other continental championships as well as pre-2012 Formula 3 cars and Formula BMWs, but I understand that in that form it is a non-starter with the MSA.

Given the irrelevance of the Formula BMW and that type of F3 car already having a home in the MSV-run F3 Cup, you have to wonder whether it would ever be worth the effort. Especially when the BARC is trying to shoehorn the old Tatuus into another concept, Formula 5, alongside spaceframe Formula Ford chassis, and the two-litre Renault market is shrinking anyway.

With the FR UK plan dead and British Formula 3 collapsing at the end of 2014, two stalwarts of British junior racing are gone, but it has a new proven junior single-seater category in BRDC Formula 4 and now the much-vaunted MSA Formula, which has gained another big signing in karting star Enaam Ahmed (page 72).

The need to keep old cars in use on a national level needs re-evaluating, because it doesn't work. People just need to accept that the landscape is different now. It's no good looking to the past to define the future.



New series are
attracting top drivers



Arden boss Garry Horner oversees Ahmed's signing

MSA Formula

Karting sensation Ahmed joins Arden

JUNIOR WORLD KARTING STAR Enaam Ahmed will race for the Arden Motorsport team in MSA Formula this season.

The 14-year-old European and World karting champion, who turns 15 in February, has joined the leading international single-seater team for the debut season of the FIA F4-certified UK category. "I'm very excited to be with

Arden, they've had good pedigree so I'm sure we'll get on well," he told AUTOSPORT. "I couldn't really set high expectations. The first half of the year will be about learning, I think it will be good just to finish the first race! I think it's the hardest F4 championship in the world. It will be a good stepping stone." European KF karting champion

and Ginetta Junior race winner Lando Norris has already committed to Carlin and highly-rated youngsters Dan Ticktum and Josh Smith are also linked to the series, but Arden team boss Garry Horner said he is confident Ahmed can "hit the ground running". "I'm delighted," said Horner. "We'll do a good job for him, we've got a great depth of experience here.

We're excited about it." Arden's involvement in series like GP2 and Formula Renault 3.5 was a factor in the decision to race with them, according to Ahmed's management team Edge. "A big part of it was what it leads to next," said a spokesman. "Everything that goes with this deal can only be a positive for Enaam's future."

Clio Cup UK

Whorton-Eales 'challenged' to land brace of Clio titles

RENAULT CLIO CUP UK RACE winner frontrunner Ant Whorton-Eales will return to the series for a fourth year in 2015 to spearhead the title challenge of the SV Racing squad.

Whorton-Eales finished fourth in the Clio Cup last season with six podiums and two pole positions to his credit, but SVR team boss Danny Buxton believes he underachieved by not mounting a title bid. The former KX Academy driver will contest both the UK series and also the BARC club championship.

"It's make or break for him," said Buxton. "Last year there were few times when he threw it away. I've challenged him to show everyone how good he is, because he's seriously good." Whorton-Eales added: "There is an

expectation because of my experience, and some people will label me the title favourite – but I'm cool with that." Josh Cook has confirmed that 17-year-old Fiesta graduate Rory Collingbourne will race for his newly-formed Cooksport operation in the Clio Cup this year.



Mini Challenge

Mini Challenge title tilt for Charlie Butler-Henderson



SOMETIME BRITISH TOURING Car racer Charlie Butler-Henderson will compete in this year's Mini Challenge in the series' new-for-2015 car.

Butler-Henderson, who contested a part-season in the BTCC behind the wheel of a Gary Ayles-run Vauxhall Astra in 2004, will race the new F56-generation Mini for the race-winning Oakfield Motorsport team, which took Neil Newstead to second in the championship last year.

Despite it being his first full campaign

of racing since 2010, when he finished third in the Trofeo Abarth series, Butler-Henderson has high expectations for the year ahead. "We're going all out to win it," said the 35-year-old. "I've been working on it for three months, and I'm still completely buzzed up and loving it – I can't wait. "I've gelled with the team really quickly; we get on really well already. It would be nice to get a podium first time out."

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HUMBLE PYE

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Members' Meeting
kicks off three-event
Goodwood calendar

Goodwood's flashbacks more popular than ever

Nine weeks before year 23 of its modern era springs into life with the 73rd Members' Meeting at the spectacular motor circuit abutting Chichester, the vital signs of the Goodwood Road Racing Club's core products are extremely healthy. Following last month's unveiling of Qatar's 10-year title sponsorship for the Glorious Goodwood horse-racing festival (established in 1802 by the third Duke of Richmond), prospects couldn't look better for March 20-21 with touring car legends, 1000cc Formula 3 and high-airbox F1 cars topping the bill.

Bearing in mind that car racing at the estate's demobbed RAF Westhampnett airfield spanned just 19 years first time round (the inaugural 'season' comprised but a single experimental event), Lord March's ambitious retrospectives are a phenomenal success story. One that, against the odds – and initially in the face of much local opposition to the reopening of the circuit – has underpinned the magnificent West Sussex feature which, like many wonderful historic piles scattered throughout Great Britain, was battling for survival in cash-strapped times.

Last-year's re-ignition of the Members' Meeting series, lower-key [often sportscar-only] events run by the BARC between August 1949 and the circuit's closure in '66, was a slow burner in terms of ticket sales. Given Charles March's extraordinary record with its predecessors (the hillclimb-focused Festival of Speed and Revival Meeting, run annually since '93 and '98 respectively), that was a surprise, since the quality and detailed production of Goodwood's events is unsurpassed.

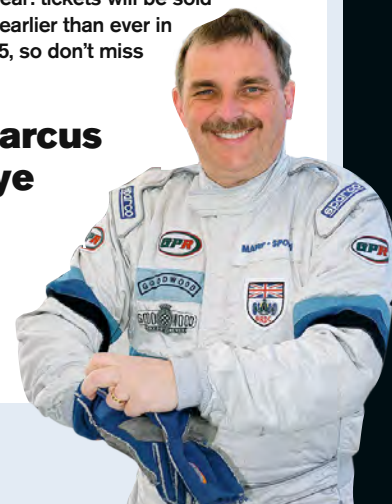
Having relaxed the admission criteria – engaging Facebook 'likers' among others to avoid financial embarrassment – more than 22,000 people came through the gates over the two days. What they witnessed was largely complementary to the Revival, stunning racing and demos both featuring 'post-period' cars built through to the '80s in a more relaxed atmosphere, an instant and

"Last year's event was an instant favourite with teams and competitors"

resounding favourite with competitors and teams.

Now enthusiasts (many still kicking themselves for fence-sitting last spring) know what to expect, the clamour for Members' Meeting passes has snowballed. Double last year's attendance is a realistic target. With advance sales for June's Festival of Speed and September's Revival well ahead of previous years, the message is clear: tickets will be sold out earlier than ever in 2015, so don't miss out!

Marcus Pye



Britcar/GT Cup

Riley to race ex-Le Mans Lotus in Britcar and GT Cup

ERSTWHILE BRITISH GT DRIVER

Kevin Riley will campaign an ex-Le Mans 24 Hours Lotus Evora machine in this year's GT Cup and Britcar Endurance Championship.

The machine acquired by Riley was run in the GTE-Pro class at Le Mans by the factory Lotus team in 2011. It was then shipped to the USA for use in the American Le Mans Series under the Alex Job Racing banner in 2012.

Riley, who has yet to test the Evora, will be assisted in the running of his car by the Staffordshire University Motorsport team, as well as students signed up to the National Motorsport Academy scheme.

"The car is a great piece of kit and I've got a big spares package, so we'll be running and developing it in both GT Cup and Britcar," explained long-time Mosler driver Riley.



Works Lotus ran in '11 Le Mans

STALEY/LAT

Formula Renault Eurocup

Eurocup runner-up returns

FORMULA RENAULT EUROCU

runner-up Dennis Olsen will return to the series for an assault on the title with Manor MP Motorsport.

The 18-year-old Norwegian, who took two victories in 2014 en route to finishing second in the points behind McLaren Formula 1 junior Nyck de Vries, joins Manor after departing Prema Powerteam.

"The plan was to move into Formula Renault 3.5 but we couldn't find the budget," admitted Olsen. "I am aiming for the championship for sure."

Elsewhere, Force India protege Jehan Daruvala will join Fortec as he steps up from karting to compete in the FR 2.0

Northern European Cup.

Placing third in the World Karting Championship last year, the 16-year-old British junior karting champion has previously been tipped as India's next F1 driver by Force India team boss Vijay Mallya.



Olsen won in Eurocup

Ginetta GT4 Supercup

Burns in HHC GT4 switch

WILL BURNS HAS SWITCHED TO

the Ginetta GT4 Supercup-winning outfit HHC Motorsport as he looks to launch a title bid this season.

The 24-year-old took four podium finishes for Academy Motorsport in 2014 on his way to seventh in the points, and has now joined the team that took Charlie Robertson to last year's title crown.

"I had an incredible time in 2014 and really found my groove towards the latter

half of the season," said Burns. "I hope I can carry that through to challenge for the title this year, and who better to do it with than the current title holders?"

Burns will be joined at HHC by fellow Supercup podium finisher Jamie Orton, a line-up in which team commercial director Charlie Kemp has plenty of confidence.

"Consistent results are what is required, and I think that's what Will and Jamie are both capable of," he said.



Burns made his Supercup debut with Academy in '14

EBREV/LAT

FR NEC round
was planned as
part of UK series



Formula Renault

Formula Renault UK return scrapped

THE PLAN TO REVIVE FORMULA Renault UK has been dropped by the British Automobile Racing Club.

Last year AUTOSPORT revealed the push to relaunch Renault UK's flagship category by bringing the latest-spec Tatuus, used in the Eurocup, to Britain for the first time.

A breakdown in negotiations with organisers of the marque's Northern European Cup meant the initial plan to run one of the UK series' seven rounds alongside the NEC at Silverstone fell

through, and now the intended revival of the series, dropped in 2012, has been scrapped altogether.

The BARC initially hoped it could instead launch a Formula Libre series that would accommodate the FR2.0/13 alongside pre-2012 Formula 3 and Formula BMW machinery, but it is understood that this is likely to be rejected by the Motor Sports Association.

BARC general manager Ian Watson told AUTOSPORT: "We would have liked to have a full grid of Formula Renaults

this year but it just simply wasn't possible. The fact that Formula Renault UK hasn't returned as planned is a disappointment in no uncertain terms, but the single-seater market at the moment is fragile."

There is set to be no dedicated two-litre Renault category in the UK this year, with the older-spec Tatuus used in FR BARC possibly being absorbed into the BARC-affiliated Formula 5 series, along with spaceframe Formula Ford EcoBoost chassis.

Porsche Carrera Cup GB

Priaux protege to Carrera Cup

GUERNSEYMAN JACK FALLA will contest the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season with the champion Redline Racing team.

Falla, who is a protege of fellow Guernsey racer and three-time World Touring Car champion Andy Priaux, will make his UK racing debut having previously competed in the Australian GT3 Cup Challenge.

His 2014 campaign was cut short by a big crash at Mallala and he now intends to combine his Carrera Cup GB debut with selected Supercup appearances ahead of a planned graduation to British GT next season. He then plans to move to the Formula 1-supporting Supercup full-time in 2017.

"To be honest I just want to finish the season and make a good impression with the team," said Falla. "Every circuit in the UK is new to me with previously racing in Australia."

Falla will join
Redline stable



EBREY/LAT

BRDC Formula 4

Hoque joins, Jupp returns

BRDC FORMULA 4 NEWCOMER

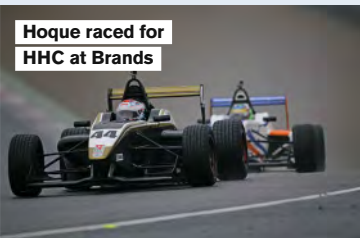
Zubair Hoque will contest the series with Sean Walkinshaw Racing after making his single-seater debut in the category's Winter Series last year.

Hoque scored a brace of fifth-place finishes at Snetterton and Brands Hatch during the two-round mini-series last November, and has switched from HHC Motorsport to Walkinshaw's team for his first full season of car racing.

"SWR are proven race winners, and with their support I'm aiming to be competitive from the first round of the championship," the 18-year-old said.

Connor Jupp, who bagged a second place at Brands Hatch for Mectech Motorsport at the F4 Winter Series finale, will continue with the Essex-based squad for the full championship this year.

Hoque raced for
HHC at Brands



Patch Fiestas will be
eligible for UK series

Ford Fiestas

UK open to Patch Fiestas

THE BRSCC FORD FIESTA

Championship will include a new class this year in an attempt to entice Irish drivers to compete in Britain.

Irish and Northern Irish Patch Fiesta cars will be accommodated in the new category, which is intended to bolster the struggling entry of the Class A, B and D races, for the older Fiesta Si, Zetec and new-generation Zetec S cars.

The burgeoning Class C for the newer Fiesta ST will remain separate.

Ford Racing UK's Kevin Shortis explained: "We want to boost numbers in the Class A, B and D races since that grid has suffered in recent seasons against the popularity of the Fiesta STs.

"The Fiesta Zetec is hugely popular in Ireland as it's a cheap and fun little race car, and drivers already come over for races at the Formula Ford Festival.

"The new class lets Irish entries race whenever with no modifications."

Bike Sports champion
will get an upgrade



Bike Sports

New Spire for 750MC ace Gray

MULTIPLE 750MC CHAMPION TIM Gray is out to recapture the Bike Sports title he won in 2013 at the wheel of a new works Spire chassis.

Richard Wise will graduate to Class B champion Gray's 2014 car, albeit powered by a larger 1585cc Suzuki Hayabusa engine. This will move him into Class A, at a higher minimum weight, from which Adrian Reynard won last year's championship in a Radical SR3.

Wise's one-litre two-seater Spire – in which he won a Cadwell Park round outright last autumn – is being reverted to treaded-tired Road-Going Bike-engined spec and is for sale. Drivers of Spire constructor Paul Nightingale's cars have won the past three RGB crowns.

British GT

Barnes back to British GT in GT3 Aston

EX-BRITISH GT CHAMPION JON

Barnes will return to the series this year in a GT3 Aston Martin V12 Vantage.

Barnes took the 2008 British GT crown in a Brookspeed-run Dodge Viper Coupe, sharing with James Gornall. He has not completed a full season since that campaign, although he has won a number of Caterham races.

Now the ex-Formula Palmer Audi champion and McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award finalist will team up

with Caterham racer Mark Farmer at 22GT Racing, which also returns to British GT with the Aston after five seasons away.

"It's been a while – returning to British GT is something that I have dreamt about for the past seven years," said the 31-year-old. "I'm happy to be back and I'm grateful to Mark for having me as his team-mate.

"It'll be a learning year to get used to the car and the team. We'll build up

slowly and hopefully go for the championship in 2016."

Farmer, 53, has three years of experience in Caterham racing. Barnes coached him last year in the R300 series and believes the duo can be competitive.

"Mark knows [22GT team boss] Tom Alexander, and it went from there," added Barnes. "Mark got on well with the Aston in testing. I really think he's got some potential and I think we'll be well inside the top 10."

In brief



AVATARS IN BUILD

Club-car builder Dylan Popovic believes his 2.7-litre Audi V6 bi-turbo-powered Avatar One race and track-day car launched at AUTOSPORT International will grow in number this year, having tested the prototype at Castle Combe last May. Further Avatar Ones will be made by Marlin Sportscars as another legacy of its director Mark Matthews, Popovic's team-mate, who died last April, aged 56.

OVAL TEAM TO JUNIORS

Karter Will Tregurtha will compete in this year's Ginetta Junior championship with leading oval racing team RCE. A frontrunner in the Junior Rotax Super 1 series in 2014, Tregurtha, who will turn 15 just before the start of the season, reached the final four of the Ginetta Scholarship last October.

CSCC'S NEW SERIES

The Classic Sports Car Club will run its New Millennium series on a full-time basis this year following successful trial events at Donington Park and Snetterton in 2014. The championship caters for post-2000 production-based cars and their racing variants, split into classes according to engine displacement.

F3 CUP WIDENS REACH

The F3 Cup will be opened up to MSA National B licence-holders from this season onwards, significantly widening the pool of competitors eligible to compete in the MSVR-run series. Championship coordinator Simon Davey said: "I'm sure the new licence requirement will result in an increase in grid sizes for 2015."

KAWASHIMA TO GT4

GT5 Challenge racer Osamu Kawashima will join the Ginetta GT4 Supercup field this season with Century Motorsport alongside series frontrunner Tom Oliphant. Kawashima made a one-off Supercup appearance at Brands Hatch in 2013.

VAR ENTERS ADAC F4

Top Dutch team Van Amersfoort Racing has joined the growing ranks in Germany's ADAC Formula 4 Championship. VAR will join fellow European F3 squads Mucke Motorsport and Motopark in the series' inaugural season.

Barnes took 2008 British GT title in Viper with Gornall



LAT

F5000

Smith tops Downs festival

KENNY SMITH'S CLEAN SWEEP

of the three feature races at last weekend's Howden Ganley Formula 5000 Festival at Hampton Downs was a reminder of the New Zealander's period mastery in a similar Lola T332.

At 72 Smith, seven months younger than ex-F1 and F5000 racer Ganley, was the only sub-minute qualifier in the 25-car field and romped to his treble on the undulating 1.67-mile circuit, steering clear of incidents that twice red-flagged Saturday's opening heat.

Clark Proctor (March 73A) finished

second in both preliminaries but stopped Sunday's 15-lap finale briefly when a sticking throttle fired him off. Former MSC NZ Tasman Cup Revival Series champion Steve Ross (McRae GM1) chased Smith home.

Visitors showed strongly, with Australian Paul Zazryn (T332) bagging third in heat two while 2013 FIA Masters F1 champion Greg Thornton qualified his Chevron B24 sixth. Thornton switched to his Surtees TS11 following a flywheel issue and finished third in the main race.



Rockingham enduro is back

Clio Cup Series

Clio Autumn Cup to return

THE CLIO CUP SERIES HAS

confirmed the return of the Autumn Cup 45-minute endurance race at Rockingham after a one-year absence.

Run for the first time in 2013, the one-day event will be held at the Corby circuit on October 17 after the conclusion of the 13-race season at Silverstone on September 19-20.

Rockingham will also be the venue for the championship's curtain-raising triple-header on April 11-12. This will be followed by five two-race events at Thruxton, Croft, Brands Hatch, Oulton Park and Silverstone.

Oulton's own planned 45-minute enduro has now been scrapped; two 25-minute races will take its place.



Smith led F5000 brigade in NZ

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RATED 2014'S NEW SERIES

There weren't as many new categories in Britain last year as there have been in the past, but the eclectic range still broadened in 2014. AUTOSPORT looks at how some of them fared



★★★★★

Production Porsche/Pumas

The Classic Sports Car Club's own creations are usually winners, as evidenced by the return of the popular Classic K series. Its adoption of the Puma Cup and Production Porsche categories was admirable but they both failed to take off. They attracted minimal entries, and at best were very minor additions to the CSCC's own, more successful grids.



★★★★★

MAZDA MX-5 CUP

Born out of the ashes of MaX5, which was behind the revival of MX-5 racing in the UK a decade ago, the first-ever Mazda offering from the 750MC performed superbly. It started life as the bigger portion of the joint grid with the Civic Cup, but by the final round was a standalone grid of more than 30 cars. The racing at the front was strong and it is a real threat to the BRSCC series.



★★★★★

Britcar Trophy Series

Britcar's sweeping revamp for 2014 included the introduction of its Trophy Series, designed to offer a sprint element to its package. It started slowly, with eight cars, and held steady at nine for most of the season – before a final-round surge to 15 entries at Donington. The format has been tweaked for 2015 but the jury is still out.

★★★★★

Ginetta Racing Drivers Club



A late dash from Ginetta ensured all its G40 Club Cars were ready for the season opener at Rockingham, where this new all-inclusive package for rookies was introduced to the world for the first time. Numbers were not stunning but they were constantly in double figures, and the racing was good as well.



★★★★★

Civic Cup

Very difficult to fault this series, which started life on the Time Attack package but only moved into the real national racing spotlight in 2014. One-make categories can struggle to stand out but the Civic Cup's multi-model philosophy and exciting racing meant it did exactly that. Grids dropped at times, but championship status and the arrival of new cars mean 2015 promises a great deal.

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THIS WEEK

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What you think of the motorsport news of the past week



Are reversed grids the way forward for F1?

Time for F1 to change format

It has become crystal clear that Formula 1 needs radical reform. Concerns over its governance, crippling costs and ludicrous distribution of funds have been well-documented. But I am convinced the main reason for the decline in TV audiences is the format of the race weekend.

A better format would be: Friday: FP1 and FP2 for two hours each. Late Saturday morning: qualifying. Mid Saturday afternoon: 45-minute total reversed-grid race, with reduced world championship points on offer. Sunday: grand prix as per usual.

There would maybe have to be a few

tweaks to the points system to make sure the GP winner is not outscored by anyone else over the weekend. But think of the advantages of the Saturday race. Apart from the obvious thrill factor, there would be more exposure and chance of a result for the smaller teams, heaps more for broadcast and print media to talk about rather than simply who is on pole for the GP, lots more action for fans and drivers alike to enjoy and the ultimate insight into which drivers are good at racing as well as lapping quickly. All this without actually affecting the GP itself.

Chris Hockley, Walton-on-Thames

With Sebastien Loeb returning to the World Rally Championship for the Monte, the question has to be asked: why is arguably the greatest rally driver of all not doing the whole season?

It's all well and good playing around in circuit racing, and he's shown he can win the odd World Touring Car race, but seriously Seb... stop wasting your talent and get back to where you belong.

If you did so, there's no doubt that a 10th world championship could be on the cards, even against your old mate Sebastien Ogier in the Volkswagen.

Hopefully you will win the Monte, remember why you loved rallying in the first place and then commit to doing the

full season rather than trying to make up for decades of lost learning on the circuits.

After all, it's what your fans want

David Stevens
By email

I was surprised to see the shape of the Formula 1 car noses AUTOSPORT is expecting to see in 2015. After all the talk of making the cars look less ugly, I hope you have just made a terrible mistake in believing that some teams will still have the pointy-finger thing at the front of their cars.

Much was made of the rule changes that would prevent this kind of thing happening. But once again, the rule makers seem to have got it wrong.

I honestly think that you could come up with much better rules by asking a group of enthusiastic fans to do it.

Sarah Mills
By email

For the last 24 years, TF1 has coordinated the Dakar Rally coverage on behalf of Eurosport, and what great coverage it has been. Full credit to all the Dakar production team in Paris and on site. It's proper thrilling motorsport and great credit must go to TF1 in Paris for producing any programmes at all during the recent terror attacks.

Gary Simpson
By email

BIG NUMBER

9 Chassis builder Riley Technologies is gunning for its 10th Daytona 24 Hours win. Aside from 2014, its cars have won since 2005.

MILESTONE

1966 The inaugural Daytona 24 Hours was held in 1966. It was won by Ken Miles and Lloyd Ruby driving a Ford GT40 run by Carroll Shelby



WHAT'S ON TRACK



Daytona will host its annual epic enduro

WEBB/LAT

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

United SportsCar Championship
Rd 1/10
Daytona, Florida, USA
January 24-25
imsa.com

TOYOTA RACING SERIES

Rd 2/5
Teretonga, New Zealand
January 24-25
toyota.co.nz



Toby Sowery will be in MRF action

MRF CHALLENGE

Rd 3/3
Irungattukottai, India
January 24-25
mrfacing.in

MY FAVOURITE DRIVER

Robert Kubica

Robert Kubica was a star performer in Formula 1 and still is in the WRC. But as **JAMES ROBERTS** explains, the Pole remains down-to-earth

Any man who cites snooker world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan as a hero has to be a pretty decent guy. When Robert Kubica was racing in Formula 1 he eschewed the stereotypical image of a spoilt superstar.

The Pole loved his ten-pin bowling, his snooker and his motorsport, be that Formula 1 or rallying. His was always humble despite the fact that in his native Poland he was lauded as a national hero and couldn't return home without being mobbed.

When he was growing up in motorsport, his home was Italy and with all his other attributes, it was there he developed a romantic notion of

speed: reminiscent of grand prix legends of a former age.

Having first witnessed his awesome pace in Formula 3, when he made the natural step to F1, I was fortunate to interview Kubica a number of times.

Once was during a pre-season test at Valencia where we mocked up a boxing ring in one of the garages for an *F1 Racing* feature. Dressed in his BMW overalls and with boxing gloves on each of his hands he didn't hesitate when we asked him to pose on his knees and roar just as Robert De Niro did to portray Jake LaMotta in *Raging Bull*. Top man.

Another time I was his passenger in a little Renault Clio R3 rally car he was driving around the tiny Parisian test circuit of Marcoussis. The machine barked and crackled into life as it kicked up the leaves and splashed through the puddles, its operator winding on the opposite lock with fingertip precision. Out of shape, but never out of control. This was a world away from billard-table-smooth F1 circuits, run-off areas, blown diffusers and shiny sculptured carbon fibre. And



Kubica competes in a privateer Ford in the WRC

MCKEIN/LAT

yet the grin on his face was as wide as Bernie Ecclestone's wallet. He'd only just started competing in rallying and was loving the new discipline. After 21 years of racing on the same European circuits, rallying offered a new challenge. Every stage, every inch of road was a new experience.

It was therefore devastating when the news filtered through in early 2011

"The chance to drive for Ferrari was denied this megastar"

that he'd been involved in a potentially lethal accident on the Ronde di Andora rally. He'd hit a metal guardrail head on, which pierced through the length of his car and almost severed his right arm.

Kubica was lucky to be alive, but his Formula 1 career was instantly over. It was a terrible shame that this one-time grand prix winner wouldn't get the opportunity to win more races. He still continues to compete in rallies with dignity to this day, but the chance to drive for Ferrari in F1 – contract in his back pocket – was denied this racing megastar. ❧



Kubica won for BMW

FERRAROLA

FROM THE SOFA

WHAT'S ON TELEVISION

Q&A

DAVID CROFT

SKY SPORTS F1 COMMENTATOR

@CroftyF1

AUTOSPORT: Why do you commentate?

David Croft: Because I love it. When I was a kid, I used to build football stadiums and horse-racing tracks with Lego. I used to put TV cameras and commentary boxes in and imagine myself as one of the commentators! So in the back of my mind, it was always something I wanted to do. As I grew up, I discovered more sports and watched Murray Walker on a Sunday afternoon and started to imagine myself doing F1. I love the challenge, the variety, the fact you can be prepared for anything but, especially in F1, things you have never come across happen. I get a buzz talking about sport and communicating my passion to those that share it. It's the greatest job in the world!

AS: You have something of an 'everyman' persona, so is that a deliberate choice?

DC: I'm not an F1 driver. Damon Hill, Johnny Herbert, Martin Brundle and Anthony Davidson know what it's like to drive these cars. So I'm just myself. Sky haven't told me to be a certain way. I just have to give people the most enjoyment and excitement with as much knowledge as I can provide. Sometimes it's my job to state the fact, sometimes it's my job to ask Martin a question.

AS: What's the secret to the art of commentary?

DC: I don't know there is a secret. Or maybe I haven't been told yet! All you can be is yourself. My theory is to



work hard and throw myself into everything that I do. When I first started on local radio, I just wanted to make a difference to one person's enjoyment of something. If it's more than one person, that's even better. So there's no great secret, it's just hard work. It's not easy and we all make mistakes, so you just have to pick yourself up when you do.

"Life costs and if you want premium, you pay for it"

to Sky and said 'help us out'. And Sky have given F1 fans a dedicated channel. We've put blood, sweat and tears into the coverage, and we've produced a magazine show, a round-up show, classic races... what F1 fans need and deserve. Life costs and if you want premium, you pay for it. And the BBC still has 10 live races and highlights as well. And I'm not decrying what they do, because they could have walked away.

AS: Can the criticism and abuse you get be difficult to deal with?

DC: I can't welcome Twitter interaction through #askcrofty and my Twitter account but then say that I don't like some of the negative comments. Sometimes people overstep the mark and they say things that, when you challenge them, they don't really mean and are in the heat of the moment. If people have a passion and they want to interact, then I'm not going to stop that and I welcome debate. *David Croft was talking to Edd Straw*

AS: Sky has been criticised for its subscription model and taking half of the live F1 season away from people. How do you see that?

DC: I have been a Sky viewer for the best part of 22 years now. I loved their output before I joined them and I love their output today. I can understand people feeling the pinch in these economic times and asking if they want to pay money to watch a sport. But you have to remember that the BBC came



TV pick of

Edited by Matt Beer



LIVE MONTE CARLO RALLY
BT Sport 1
Thursday 1900-2000

You can keep up with the 2015 World Rally Championship opener all weekend via daily highlights packages on BT Sport and Motors TV. But the highlight will be BT's live broadcast from the first stages of the new season, with classic after-dark Monte fare guaranteed.

Can Robert Kubica lead on day one again? Will Sebastien Loeb cause an upset on his one-off WRC comeback? Or will double champion Sebastien Ogier dominate for Volkswagen?



AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL
Motors TV
Friday January 23 1340-1445

Whether you're catching up after missing it or want to relive your memories, Motors TV's recap combines the best of the live action, news, exhibitions and star names from the spectacular start to the motorsport season in Birmingham. All the cars, stars and highlights of AUTOSPORT International are covered in full in this in-depth programme.

There are also separate programmes compiling the highlights from the AUTOSPORT Stage interviews.

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ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF the working week at autosport.com is when ex-Formula 1 designer Gary Anderson's weekly submission to the website lands in our in-boxes.

As a veteran of the F1 paddock who's been there and seen it all in motorsport, Gary doesn't mince his words, and it's always good fun to see how he tackles posers from our readers – no matter how left-field some of the questions are.

This week, look out for Gary's take on Ferrari's 2015 car being behind schedule, how to work out what's

really going on in testing next month, what he expects from Honda's return, his in-depth blueprint for reinvigorating F1's technical rules, and much more.

You can submit a question on Twitter using #AskGaryF1, or keep an eye on www.facebook.com/AUTOSPORT, where we'll let you know the next time he's taking your questions.

Away from F1, our rally expert David Evans gives his take on Sebastian Loeb's Monte Carlo comeback. That's bound to raise attention on the World Rally opener, for which we'll have live text coverage all weekend.

HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK
















YouTube NO COOLANT? NO PROBLEM... JUST USE BEER



SEARCH FOR: Rally Mexico 2014 Neuville Corona

With the World Rally Championship getting under way, now is a good time to remind ourselves of how resourceful the drivers are. Here, Hyundai driver Thierry Neuville saves his Rally Mexico third place by using Corona Extra as a coolant.

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the week



LIVE DAYTONA 24 HOURS
Motors TV
Saturday 1800-2230/2300-0205
Sunday 1200-1935

Motors TV's live feed from 2015's first endurance classic covers nearly two thirds of the Daytona distance. A day-and-night-long race it may be, but under its current format Daytona has a habit of building to grandstand finishes, so if you can't spare 16 hours, definitely tune in for the deciding laps on Sunday night. Last year, the winning margin was only a second and a half.



GP HEROES: PETER REVSON
Sky Sports F1
Friday 2000-2100

The pick of Sky Sports F1's array of re-runs and retro fillers this week is a Brunswick Films archive-fest profiling grand-prix-winning American star Peter Revson, a rarely heralded 1970s talent. The American only established himself in F1 relatively late in his career, going on to win two grands prix for McLaren.

In the equivalent slot on Sunday is a gem of a programme from the same stable focusing on Mika Hakkinen's rise to F1 via Formula 3.



DRIVEN
ITV4
Saturday 1945-2205

Back in the 1990s, US racing welcomed news that Sylvester Stallone was abandoning his plans to make an F1 movie and switching the film's setting to CART. Then everyone saw the finished film... If you haven't seen this moronic monstrosity before, pretend it's a deliberate satire on terrible sport-based movies and take a (brief) look for comedy value.

It's particularly worth watching for the increasingly overblown crash sequences, which regularly defy both the laws of physics and the rules of common sense.



JEREZ FRENAULT 3.5
BT Sport 2
Friday 0800-0830 (+ repeats)

BT Sport is reshowing highlights of the whole 2014 World Series by Renault this month, but the one to catch is the Jerez opener, which features the Carlos Sainz Jr/Roberto Merhi title denouement plus two Brits in a 1986-Senna/Mansell-style ultra-close finish for the race win and a top three covered by half a second.

For those eager to learn a little more about F1-bound Sainz, it's well worth a watch as he grafts his way to the crown during a difficult weekend.

HAVE-A-GO HERO

When drivers crop up in unexpected places



ALL PICTURES: LAT

Coulthard 'wins' Le Mans

In 1993 a Formula 3000 driver named David Coulthard took part in his first, and only, Le Mans 24 Hours. But his win was taken away

Some drivers turn to sportscar racing after their Formula 1 careers. But David Coulthard got his sportscar career out of the way in one week in 1993. And he still has a trophy to show for it.

Granted, the GT-class victory he took in the Tom Walkinshaw Racing-run Jaguar XJ220C in 1993 alongside John Nielsen and David Brabham was struck from the record. This was thanks to the car not running a catalytic converter, which stewards deemed necessary based on a rule stating that 'cars must meet European, North American or Japanese emission requirements in their roadgoing form'. The cars were allowed to race under appeal, but later disqualified.

"It wasn't the most refined car, I don't think it even had a synchromesh gearbox, but it was torquey with the V6 turbo engine," recalls Coulthard. "It was two metres wide and four metres long, quite a lump, but once you got it wound



up I think it could do 200mph on the Mulsanne straight.

"I remember sitting on the Mulsanne Straight at night and watching the door. It was disconcerting because you had an aluminium chassis with bits of carbonfibre stuck on and the door was carbon. There was a gap between it and the chassis, and the door was rattling all the time.

"You have nothing else to do on Mulsanne but sit there looking around. I had an aluminium container to drop the bladder for my drinks system in so I would sit on the seat with my leg up resting on it."

The Jaguar was quick, but not quite as quick as the factory Porsche 911 Turbo S LM. Early on, the Hans Stuck/Walter Rohrl/Hurley Haywood Porsche led before losing five laps with a stuck throttle in the second hour. After closing to two laps behind at quarter distance, Rohrl collected the Debora-Alfa Romeo prototype having been unsighted by another Porsche. This led to the engine seizing and gave Coulthard's Jaguar a clear run.

The car ran relatively cleanly, save for a fuel leak overnight and Brabham's seat time being restricted by an accident on Wednesday when the car fell off its jacks and landed on his foot. Nielsen, as the experienced hand, picked up much of the slack, but Coulthard also had

to put in plenty of extra work to get the car to the finish.

So why, after having such a successful Le Mans debut, did Coulthard never return?

"I got the perfect young-driver experience of Le Mans, and the experience of winning the class. Even though we were disqualified, that very much ticked all the boxes. I did one 24-hour karting event as well and didn't really enjoy that either; I was very happy when Le Mans had finished!

"It's a week of motorsport. I always said I don't want to party for 24 hours; I want to go out, have fun, go to bed then get up early and have the next day! In the same way, I don't want to drive for 24 hours. But it was a great experience."

Coulthard finished 15th overall, with the normally-aspirated Porsche of Joel Gouhier, Jurgen Barth and Dominique Dupuy that subsequently inherited victory two laps behind. **Edd Straw**

NEXT WEEK

Revealed: F1 power list

Plus: Monte Carlo Rally and Daytona 24 Hours

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