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# GUIDE

Gary Anderson's verdict on *all* the teams and drivers



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**POLE POSITION**

# Merc on top, but Hamilton title may not be academic

**MAKING PREDICTIONS IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS. BUT** based on the evidence of testing, there is no reason to bet on any team other than Mercedes to win the 2015 world championship. And that is why Lewis Hamilton is favourite to take a third title.

You just have to look at the final seven races of last season for the evidence to support that. So many times, Nico Rosberg got into winning positions, but six times it was Lewis Hamilton who turned it around to claim victory. He became a relentless winning machine during the run-in, and if he continues in that form Hamilton could prove to be an unstoppable force.

But it's important not to underestimate Rosberg. He's one of those drivers whose ruthless pursuit of self-improvement usually pays off. After regrouping over the winter, he will likely have made another step, ready to come back to push Hamilton harder than ever.

● This week, AUTOSPORT's cover price rises by 10p to £3.70. Apologies for the increase, but it's unavoidable. At least we can say our attempts to keep the price down over time have worked well: if we purely based that figure on inflation over the past 10 years, using early-2004 prices, we should be at £3.86 by now!



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**COVER STORY**

**"I always want to be able to enjoy the battle"**

Lewis Hamilton, p20



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# This week in F1

## ALONSO RULED OUT MAGNUSSEN IN FOR AUSTRALIA



Fernando Alonso has been ruled out of the Australian Grand Prix because of the potential risk of suffering another concussion so soon after his testing shunt at Barcelona last month.

The Spaniard will be replaced by reserve driver Kevin Magnussen, who gained experience of the 2015 McLaren during the final pre-season test.

A McLaren team statement said: "Fernando's doctors have recommended to him that, following the concussion, for the time being he should seek to limit as far as is possible any environmental risk factors that could potentially result in suffering another concussion so soon after his previous one, so as to minimise the chances of second impact syndrome."

It is hoped that he will return for the Malaysian Grand Prix.

4



### FORCE INDIA SEEKS HELP

Force India is in discussions with Bernie Ecclestone over financial support in the form of advance Formula One Management payments.

There had been speculation over Force India's participation in the 2015 season after it suffered a number of delays with the build of its new car, which only ran in the final two and a half days of testing.

Deputy team principal Bob Fernley told AUTOSPORT: "We have not had any help to date, but hopefully we will get some. We are in discussions on it. Bernie has been extremely understanding."

Fernley insisted the team will make Melbourne. "It's going to be tough, but as always we will get through," he said.

“They are unbelievably quick and we are obviously a long way off”



McLaren's Jenson Button on Mercedes' impressive testing form



### FIA in safety drive with high-speed cameras

Formula 1 chiefs are pushing through new rules that will force cars to be fitted with high-speed cameras from 2016 to help with crash investigation. The speculation surrounding the

cause of Fernando Alonso's Barcelona testing accident last week was fuelled by the lack of clear video footage.

AUTOSPORT revealed that only moving images of the crash were taken

from CCTV, but the footage is not very clear. Such uncertainty about the cause of crashes could be reduced if the rule is approved by the FIA World Motor Sport Council next month.

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

## SMALL F1 TEAMS PUSH FOR 'CORE CAR' COST-CUT PLAN

Formula 1's smaller teams are pushing to be allowed to share more car parts in the future.

Despite complaints last year from Force India, Sauber and Lotus that spiralling budgets threatened their survival, talks at executive level to identify ways to cut costs have come to nothing. So the smaller teams have now got together to pursue an

alternative path, introducing the idea of a 'core car', where major components such as the monocoque are jointly developed and shared between them to reduce costs.

The notion has been discussed at recent Strategy Group and F1 Commission meetings, but has not yet gathered enough support from the bigger teams.



## WOLFF URGES CHANGE ON LICENCE RULE

Susie Wolff has urged the FIA to reconsider Formula 1's superlicence criteria, set to be introduced next year, so that test drivers do not miss out on race seats.

Although the Williams test driver has done more than 600 miles of F1 running since 2012, she will not qualify for a superlicence.

Mercedes reserve Pascal Wehrlein would also not qualify despite having won races in European F3 and DTM.

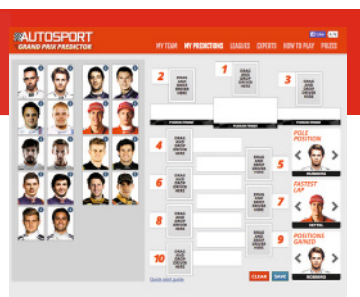
"It can't be like that," Wolff told AUTOSPORT. "Pascal is in a different place to me - he's an up-and-coming driver. It [the criteria] shouldn't limit the likes of him coming in."

## Hamilton rejects #1 as 'irrelevant'

World champion Lewis Hamilton is sticking with his permanent #44 race number for his title defence this year, because #1 is "irrelevant" to him.

New rules require all F1 drivers to pick a permanent race number to carry throughout their careers. But they are permitted to switch to #1 if they win the world championship.

"It [#1] is irrelevant for me," said Hamilton. "#44 means more to me than #1. It doesn't mean I'm not number one. #44 is my family number, it's the number I had when I first started racing; I won my first championship with #44. It means something to me."



## OUR GRAND PRIX PREDICTOR IS GO

The AUTOSPORT Grand Prix Predictor returns with a brand new look for 2015. Free to enter at [www.gppredictor.com](http://www.gppredictor.com) and now in its fifth year, more than 100,000 people have signed on to play the game since it launched.

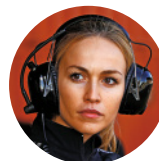
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I've been racing since I was 10 years old so it was my dream to drive a Formula 1 car since I was very young



GP3 driver Carmen Jorda after securing a development-driver role with Lotus for 2015

## GERARD DUCAROUGE 1941-2015

**LEGENDARY EX-MATRA, LIGIER AND Lotus Formula 1 designer Gerard Ducarouge died last week at the age of 73.**

The Frenchman started his racing career in the 1960s with Matra and played a part in the design of the

MS80 that won the 1969 constructors' championship and carried Jackie Stewart to his first world title.

Ducarouge, who also designed the Matras that dominated at Le Mans from 1972-74, subsequently moved to the newly established Ligier team, playing

a key role in it emerging as a leading grand prix force, taking its first win at Anderstorp (left) in 1977 with Jacques Laffite driving.

After working at Ligier throughout its glory years, Ducarouge moved to Lotus in 1983 where he designed the famous Lotus 97T that Ayrton Senna drove to his first victory in the 1985 Portuguese Grand Prix.

He remained at Lotus as its fortunes waned, but subsequently moved first to Larrousse and then to Ligier in the final years of his grand prix career in the first half of the 1990s.



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21 June	TunerFest (South)
28 June	Mini Festival
11/12 July	HSCC Historic Superprix (GP)
17-19 July	MCE British Superbikes (GP)
1/2 August	British GT/BRDC F4 (GP)
15/16 August	Lotus Festival (GP)
12/13 September	Supercar Challenge (GP)
10/11 October	British Touring Cars (GP)
16-18 October	MCE British Superbikes (GP)
7/8 November	Truck Racing & Fireworks

## OULTON PARK

4 & 6 April	British GT/BRDC F4
2-4 May	MCE British Superbikes
6/7 June	British Touring Cars
11 July	TunerFest (North)
18 July	Vintage Sports Car Festival
31 July/1-2 August	CarFest North
8 August	Mini Festival
29/31 August	The Oulton Park Gold Cup
4-6 September	MCE British Superbikes
7 November	Stage Rally & Fireworks

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29 March	Stage Rally
25 April	Modified Live Show
7 June	Vintage Sports Car Festival
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25/26 July	Cadwell Park International Classic
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15 November	Stage Rally

Please note all dates are provisional and subject to change

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27 September	The Snetterton Vintage Festival



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# Jonathan Noble

## F1's newshound

Mercedes is still the pacesetter, but a mood of quiet optimism surrounds McLaren even though its new car has yet to deliver

**Y**ou rarely find anything in Formula 1 upon which every team will agree. But, as the garage doors came down at the end of testing in Barcelona last Sunday, signalling the end of track action until free practice at the Australian Grand Prix, there was pretty much universal consensus about one thing.

The best has got better this year. Mercedes is everyone's out-and-out favourite for early glory.

Barring an unexpected incident or disastrous mechanical failure, no one in F1 is expecting anything other than a front low lock-out for Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton in Melbourne.

For much of testing the silver cars have focused on tyre evaluation, long runs and aerodynamic measurements, giving as little as possible away about the Wo6 Hybrid's relative performance. Then a stunning soft-tyre run from Rosberg last Friday afternoon, 1.2 seconds faster than the next closest man – Valtteri Bottas in the Williams, also on the soft tyres – made everyone sit up and take notice of just how much of an advantage Mercedes could have.

When Jenson Button was told that Rosberg had complained about being unhappy with how his car felt on that quick lap, all he could do was smile.

"I think he might be a bit spoiled, that one," said the 2009 champion. "Mercedes is miles in front of anyone."

Most worrying for the opposition is that Mercedes led the Barcelona times without ever trying the supersofts.

Regardless of what the official communications say, the early phase of McLaren and Honda's renewed relationship has not been as productive as either team or engine manufacturer would have liked. Niggling reliability problems – allied to Fernando Alonso's crash – have hampered it hugely and it is heading in to the year well behind schedule.

Few yardsticks could have provided such indubitable proof of how disrupted McLaren's winter has been than the fact that Force India managed just 31 miles fewer with its new VJMo8 than McLaren did with the MP4-30 during all of pre-season testing. The VJMo8 only arrived with two-and-a-half days of running left.

McLaren may well be facing some tough times at the start of the campaign, but still there remains a feeling that when the ingredients properly come together, the results will be good. On track we have seen very little of the full potential of the car and engine. But off track there are good clues about just why there remains this mood of quiet confidence at McLaren about what can be achieved in the latter stage of the campaign – despite the present headaches.

Button and Alonso have both talked of promise in the package, but it was Kevin Magnussen who gave us some more solid insight in Barcelona last weekend about just why there is this positivity.

It's all down to the car. Comparing the MP4-30 with its predecessor, he said: "It is not an evolution of last

**"There could easily be another few tenths in the W06 even if it was running on fuel vapours"**

Its winter-topping best lap was done on softs – so there could easily be another few tenths in the W06 even if it was running on fuel vapours...

While stunning one-off laps never tell the true story of testing, the longer-run data is just as promising for Mercedes. Race simulations from Williams, Red Bull and Ferrari all appeared quite close at times – but they were around 0.7 seconds per lap adrift of what Mercedes was capable of. That's not the sort of gap that is going to be closed down in the short term.

Testing might have given us a firm answer about what is going to happen at the front of the grid for Melbourne, but it has also left plenty of questions about how the competitive picture is going to develop elsewhere. In fact, the unshakeable conviction of how F1 is going to shape up for Mercedes at the start of the year is in complete contrast to the total uncertainty we have about what McLaren is going to be capable of by the end of the season.

year's car, it feels completely different. It is very consistent, very predictable, and very smooth in a way. Just driveable. Whereas last year's car probably had more downforce, it was much more sharp, on the limit and unpredictable. On many occasions that was a problem, because when you wear out your tyres and the rear starts to move around more, you want a predictable car. This year's car is more smooth and predictable and driveable."

It's the best confirmation yet that chief engineer Peter Prodromou's influence in abandoning McLaren's old mantra of chasing ultimate theoretical downforce could be ready to pay off in delivering a car that its drivers can use at the limit. There is a long way to go for the boys in Woking still, and even making the chequered flag is going to be achievement in the early races.

Right now, Mercedes is setting F1's benchmark for pace and reliability once again. It's just a question of how long it is going to take the opposition, including McLaren, to make up the gap – if they can. ❧

# This week in motorsport

## CHILTON BAGS FINAL NISSAN WEC BERTH

Ex-Formula 1 driver Max Chilton will race the new Nissan GT-R LM NISMO in the World Endurance Championship this year.

The 23-year-old Briton, who drove for Marussia in 2013-14, has landed a full-season drive and fills the final spot in Nissan's two-car LMP1 squad for the start to the season. He joins Marc Gene, Olivier Pla, Harry Tincknell, Jann Mardenborough and, for the first three races, Michael Krumm, but how they will line up across the two cars has yet to be announced.

Chilton, who will continue his involvement with Carlin's new Indy Lights team, said: "My aim has always been to race at the highest level and the technology that has gone into the Nissan GT-R LM NISMO is as impressive as a Formula 1 car."

Long-time Nissan driver Alex Buncombe (pictured with Chilton) has been announced as the final driver in the additional GT-R LM entered for Le Mans. The Briton will share the car with Tsugio Matsuda and Lucas Ordenez.



## Tandy joins KCMG as new ORECA LMP2 hits the track

New Porsche prototype driver Nick Tandy will contest six of the eight World Endurance Championship rounds with the

KCMG LMP2 squad this season.

The Briton will drive KCMG's new ORECA-Nissan 05 at the Silverstone WEC opener in April and then return

## Ogier: I can't win in Mexico

Sebastien Ogier has ruled out his chances of a 2015 World Rally Championship hat-trick at this week's third round, Rally Mexico.

Victories on the first two rounds of the series have left double WRC champion Ogier leading the field through the gravel-strewn stages around Leon, and he says two days of roadsweeping will mean him missing out on a third straight win in 2015.

"If you go to that rally as the leader and first on the road, you have no chance to win," said the Volkswagen star. "But I have the points – the pressure is on those behind me."



## MORBIDELLI IN TCR HONDA

Gianni Morbidelli has cemented his switch of tin-top codes for this year from the World Touring Car Championship to the new TCR International series.

The Italian ex-Formula 1 driver (above) will race a JAS Engineering-built Honda Civic run by Swedish team West Coast Racing in TCR, which kicks off at the end of this month with a Malaysian Grand Prix support date at Sepang.

American Kevin Gleason will also race with TCR, which plans a three-car team.

Meanwhile, Russian Sergei Afanasiev has joined the Craft-Bamboo Racing line-up to drive a SEAT Leon Racer. The ex-Auto GP, Formula 2 and Formula Masters frontrunner has competed recently in Blancpain GT contests.



## NASCAR racer found in wood

NASCAR racer Travis Kvapil missed the Atlanta Sprint Cup round when his Team Xtreme Chevrolet was stolen during an overnight stop. It was later found in a wood, and the team hopes to prep it for Las Vegas this weekend.

## Ocon looks set for GP3 switch

Formula 3 European champion Esteban Ocon has been linked with a switch to the GP3 Series with ART Grand Prix.

AUTOSPORT sources suggest that the 18-year-old Frenchman, who won the F3 title as a Lotus junior and tested for the Formula 1 team, will line up alongside Marvin Kirchhofer, who would be returning for a second season with ART after finishing third in his rookie campaign, and the already-announced Alfonso Celis Jr.

Kirchhofer will dovetail his GP3 activity with a European F3 campaign. The German has joined Italian team EuroInternational and will partner Dane Nicolas Beer, who contested some German F3 rounds with the squad last season.

## Chevy Cruze drive in BTCC for Clio Cup runner-up

Renault Clio Cup UK runner-up Josh Cook will graduate to the British Touring Car Championship this year driving a Power Maxed Racing-run Chevrolet Cruze.

The 23-year-old will race as part of the Racing for Heroes initiative, the motorsport fundraising partner of Help for Heroes.

Cook will partner BTCC race winner

Dave Newsham in the PMR line-up.

● Tom Ingram returns for a second BTCC season with Speedworks Motorsport, which has acquired a new Toyota Avensis.



For all the breaking news, visit [AUTOSPORT.COM](http://AUTOSPORT.COM)



## PIQUET BACK – IN A PORSCHE!

Formula 1 legend Nelson Piquet is moving ever closer to a full-time race return in the Brazilian Porsche GT3 Cup.

The 62-year-old, a three-time world champion, is due to drive in free practice prior to this weekend's season opener at Curitiba, but looks set to leave racing duties to his son, reigning Brazilian F3 champion Pedro Piquet, while he gets fit.

Piquet Sr, who turned some laps in a Porsche at Curitiba last year, has targeted the second round at Mogi Guacu on April 18.

to the Chinese entrant's line-up for the remainder of the season after contesting the Spa round and the Le Mans 24 Hours at the wheel of the third Porsche 919 Hybrid. He will share the ORECA with team regulars Richard Bradley and Matt Howson.

KCMG's ORECA 05, the first of two of

the new coupes to be delivered before the start of the season, was due to be given a shakedown at Paul Ricard today (Thursday). The first 05 completed its initial mileage at the southern French track on Monday in the hands of Stephane Sarrazin.

## In brief

### WALKINSHAW NISSAN

Sean Walkinshaw, son of legendary sportscar team boss Tom, will contest the full Blancpain GT Series with the German MRS Nissan team. The 21-year-old will share the Nissan GT-R NISMO GT3 with Craig Dolby in the Sprint Series, while they will be joined by a third driver in the sister Endurance Series.

### ABREU FOR BMW GT

Atila Abreu, runner-up to Sebastian Vettel in German Formula BMW in 2004, will undertake his first full season of racing in Europe in 10 years with the Team BMW Brazil Blancpain squad. The 27-year-old will race one of the team's BMW Z4s in both the Sprint and Endurance Series alongside fellow V8 Stock Car driver Valdeno Brito.

### FITTIPALDI'S F3 DEAL

Formula Renault BARC champion Pietro Fittipaldi, the grandson of two-time world champion Emerson, steps up to the Formula 3 European Championship this season with Fortec Motorsport. The team has also confirmed British F3 runner-up Matt Rao and plans to run up to four cars.

### FONTANA AT STATUS

Swiss GP3 regular Alex Fontana has become the first recruit for Status Grand Prix in 2015, his third full season in the category. Another GP3 signing is Pole Artur Janosz – the 2014 Euroformula Open runner-up graduates to join Italian team Trident Motorsport.

### ZETA IN FULL REGALIA

Facu Regalia, runner-up to Daniil Kvyat in the 2013 GP3 Series, has joined Italian team Zeta Corse for the Formula Renault 3.5 series. The 23-year-old Argentinian contested four GP2 rounds last year. Elsewhere in FR3.5, Oscar Tunjo has split with Pons Racing due to budget concerns.

## ROY KENNEDY 1937-2015

**TEAM OWNER ROY KENNEDY**, whose squad raced in Formula 2, Formula 3 and touring cars over three decades, died last month at the age of 77.

Notable alumni of Roy Kennedy Racing, set up for an F2 campaign in 1974, include David Purley, Jean-Pierre Jaussaud and Dave Coyne. The squad ran the Burke Ratcliffe Racing Can-Am Lola in Thundersports in the late 1980s.

Kennedy moved into the BTCC in 1990, then fielded Renault Spider Cup cars as Orbit Motorsport.



Ian Flux raced RKR Peugeot in '93 BTCC

## Rossi gets latest GP2 chance

Ex-Caterham and Marussia Formula 1 reserve Alexander Rossi (below) has completed the Racing Engineering line-up for this year's GP2 Series.

The 23-year-old Californian joins Briton Jordan King as the Spanish

team. "My ultimate goal remains F1, and GP2 with Racing Engineering is perfect for those objectives," he said.

Nathanael Berthon is another to be confirmed for GP2 this year, the Frenchman staying at Lazarus.



## 27 BIG NUMBER

The number Adrien Tambay has chosen for the DTM's new F1-style system, and carried to two GP wins by the Audi driver's father Patrick with Ferrari in 1982-83. Amusingly, ex-Lewis Hamilton rival Jamie Green is #44, while Gary Paffett has #2, Paul di Resta #3, and rookie Tom Blomqvist keeps #31 from Formula 3.



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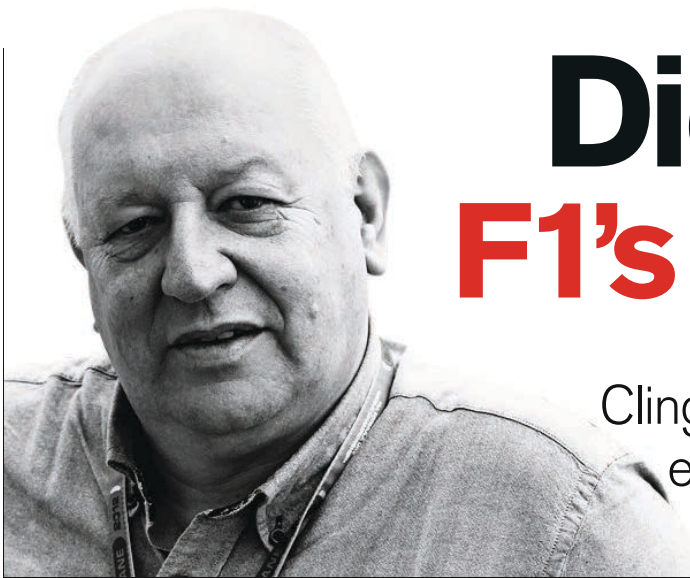
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# Dieter Rencken

## F1's political animal

Clinging on to outmoded notions of the sport's essence is putting some teams in jeopardy. Is it time for a more radical approach?

**A**lthough all parties sought to downplay the severe funding crisis faced by three independent teams, there is no doubt that Formula 1 risked coming catastrophically close to having but a dozen starters in Australia. That would have been the sparsest grid since the farcical US Grand Prix at Indianapolis a decade ago.

Although such suggestions have been contemptuously brushed aside, well-placed sources have informed this author that such disaster was averted only narrowly, after three teams sought advances on their share of revenues from Formula One Management. The uncomfortable truth is that this remedy, such as it is, can only be temporary. Disaster looms unless the root causes of the teams' financial pressures – inequitable revenue distribution, declining income caused by dwindling audiences, lop-sided governance and rampant cost inflation – are properly addressed.

The bottom line is that the trio – which stressed they were not 'striking' – urgently requested *ex gratia* payments of at least \$10 million each to fund their final preparations, including travel to the opening rounds. FOM's expedient solution of advancing their February/March paydays simply deferred the issue to another day. Think payday loans, and you get the picture.

Ironically, F1 faces this situation despite being a billion-pound business, with gross-profit percentages comfortably in the seventies. Even after expenses – the teams' collective share – FOM's parent company, the

they are "not in F1's DNA", or that they do not address the complexities of the all-important constructors' championship table used for revenue distribution.

This reasoning, though, is utterly disingenuous. How do you define the sport's double helix, anyway? Since when has F1 only been contested by pure constructors? Indeed, this championship was introduced in 1958, eight years after the drivers' equivalent, while since then proprietary chassis, customer teams and oddballs have competed (with some, crucially, winning races and titles).

The teams of Frank Williams twice started as customer operations, while Ferrari's Juan Manuel Fangio claimed the 1956 title in – whisper it – a rebadged Lancia chassis. Tyrrell, the team that begat the current all-conquering Mercedes operation, entered F1 with Matra and March chassis before building its own design, while Renault came into the sport in 1977 with a single entry. So much for two-car constructor DNA...

Since when was having off F1's commercial rights for exploitation by a venture fund in its DNA? These factors are conveniently overlooked as the anti brigade bangs on about the alleged characteristics of the sport's genome.

Nor is the constructors' championship crucial to F1's financial structure, or even critical to its existence, as the years 1950-57 and a variety of customer teams prove. Indeed, you could argue that the championship jeopardises F1's sporting elements, for teams are more concerned with earnings than outright on-track duels.

**“Of 15 constructors to win the title since its inception, just five survive to the present day”**

venture fund CVC Capital Partners, nets close to 30 per cent, or around \$400m (£300m) per annum. Two thirds of this flows straight out of F1 to settle loans taken by CVC to fund dividends.

Regular readers of this column will be familiar with my criticisms of CVC's lack of proactivity in reforming F1's financial structure. But the sport's other stakeholders must accept a share of the blame for the current state of affairs. During last week's Strategy Group/F1 Commission summits, about the only agreed motion was a ban on multiple helmet liveries during a season. Paris fiddles...

Virtually every cost-saving proposal, prepared by respected management consultancy McKinsey & Company after commission by the FIA, was rejected or delayed, blocking their introduction until 2017 at earliest. The proposals ranged from outright bans on windtunnels through single-specification chassis to "core cars" and customer teams; and, as usual, the reasoning advanced for the rejection of such proposals was that

In fact, payment by constructor standings is a relatively recent introduction, with teams earlier surviving on a mix of starting and prize monies. During the 1970s, the purse was distributed via a complex formula of grid positions, fastest laps, mid-race standings and the final results, and mid-season and final championship standings. That, too, is in F1's DNA.

The term 'constructor' has little relevance in today's world; do 90 per cent of fans recall which teams wore the crown over the past decade? Of 15 constructors to win the title since its inception, just five survive to the present day. Most sports have team championships, yet one that considers itself the most glamorous and progressive of all sticks doggedly to an archaic term.

Clearly the constructors' championship has outlived its original purpose and is a major impediment to the sport's future survival. It, not three (or more) independents, should be sacrificed as F1 faces up to its fraught future. Teams' world championship, anyone? ❧

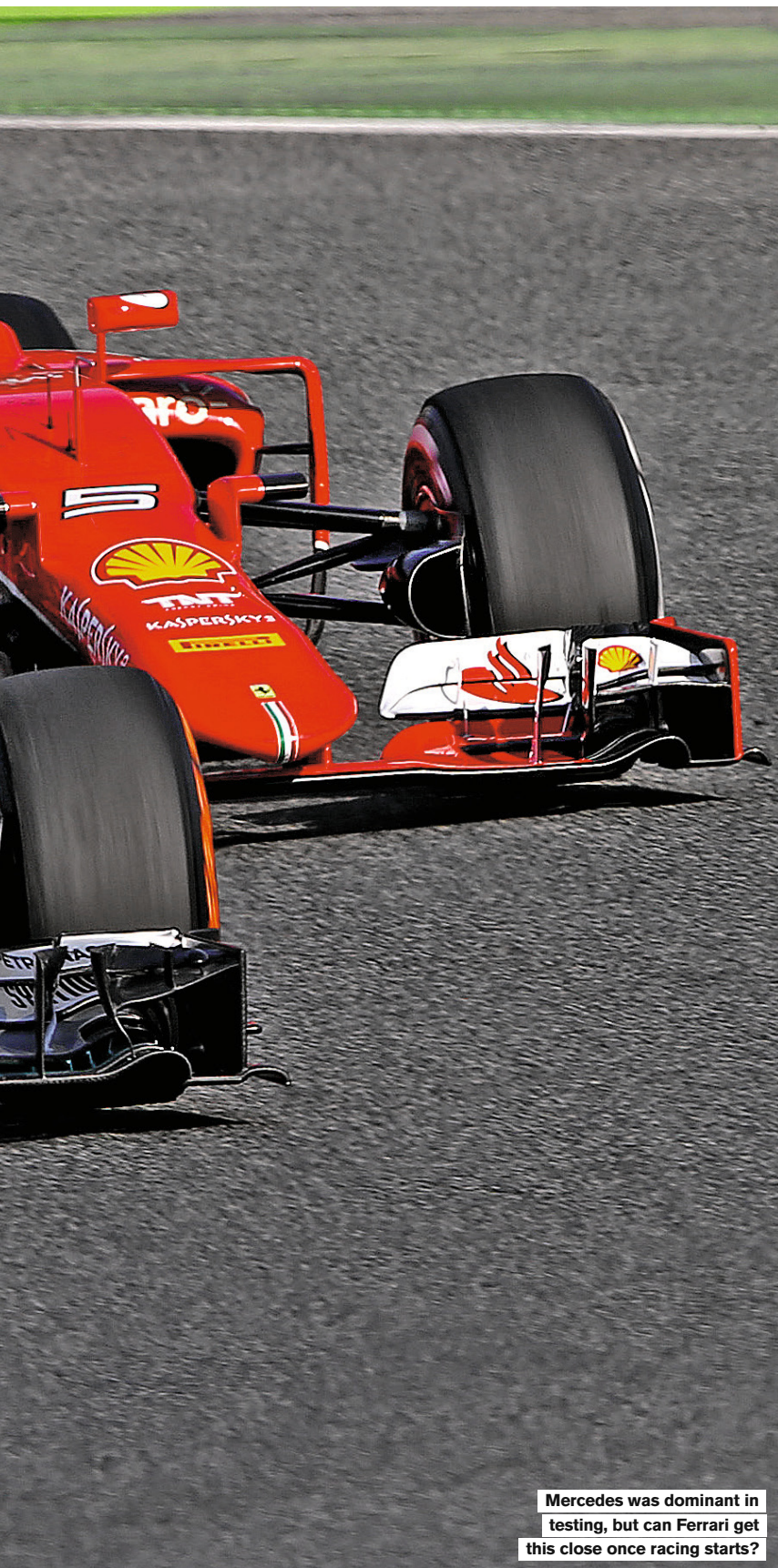
# Who won the test



12

# ing war?

**With 12 days of pre-season done and dusted, it's clear Mercedes has kept its place at the top of the tree. But where does everyone else slot in? By LAWRENCE BARRETTO**



Mercedes was dominant in testing, but can Ferrari get this close once racing starts?

**W**ith each new year comes new hope. That's what Mercedes' rivals will have been telling themselves after being forced into the role of supporting cast members in 2014 as main protagonists Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg stole the show.

Sixteen victories and 18 poles between them. It was dominant. Williams came close in terms of outright pace, but that was only towards the end of the season. A new year, then, couldn't come soon enough for most. Or could it?

Straight out of the box in pre-season testing at Jerez, the Mercedes W06 was quick and consistent. The team put hundreds of laps on the board and knocked off countless practice pitstops in quick succession. It was the perfect start.

Light relief for its rivals followed, as Mercedes started encountering minor blips. Hamilton missed a day with high fever, while a neck injury for Rosberg hampered his running. And there was even a mechanical issue to contend with as an MGU-K failure cut short Hamilton's first day of the final test. But blips were all they were.

Mercedes topped the charts in terms of mileage with 1340 laps – nearly 1000 more than McLaren managed. But it was when the team turned its attention to performance that the world champions really struck the killer blow. Rosberg set the fastest lap of the test on the soft tyre – a 1m22.792s – on day two of the final test. Hamilton was just over two tenths slower the following day.

The closest anyone got to Rosberg on the same tyre was Felipe Massa in

the Williams, but he was 0.7s adrift. Even when rivals turned to the faster super-soft, they couldn't beat Mercedes. Valtteri Bottas in the other Williams got closest, the Finn 0.25s off Rosberg.

Pirelli estimates that the super-softs are 0.8s quicker than the softs. If that's the case, and assuming comparable fuel loads, Mercedes is one second clear of its challengers ahead of the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

Having spent most of the test keeping expectations in check, Rosberg loosened the shackles on the final afternoon and said what everybody else had been thinking. "I am sure we will nail it completely in Melbourne," he said. "It has been a great winter for us. We got off to a running start with not many reliability problems and have been doing the mileage. Now we are able to extract performance from the car."

## STRONG PRE-SEASON FOR WILLIAMS AND FERRARI

For all Mercedes' apparent dominance, there are others who will be delighted with how their winter has gone. Chief among them is Ferrari, the team that looked broken in 2014 as it suffered its worst season in two decades. But signs that the Scuderia is being pieced back together are clear.

New team principal Maurizio Arrivabene has spoken about how the team is united in pursuit of glory – and with unity comes belief. New recruit Sebastian Vettel dumping the SF15-T in the gravel and a few "teething problems" are the only blots on a testing copybook that makes for very pleasant reading.

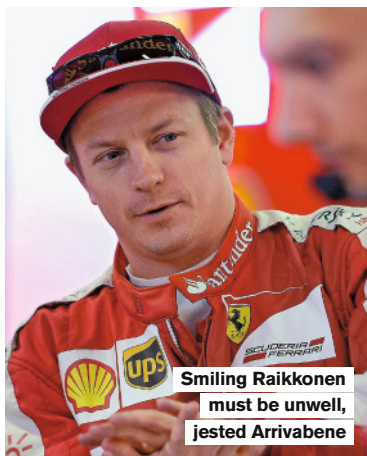
Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen ensured the team topped the times in three of the opening four days of testing at Jerez and, while those headline times have dropped off, the car's underlying pace has not. The drivers seem happy, with Arrivabene even joking with reporters that Raikkonen must be "sick" because he's smiling so much. And it's not hard to see why.

The new Ferrari has a stronger front end in mid-corner and more support from the rear under braking – different to last year, but a change of direction that suits Raikkonen and arguably team-mate Vettel.

"This year is a completely ▶

**"I'm sure we will nail it completely in Melbourne. It has been a great winter for us"**

NICO ROSBERG, MERCEDES



Smiling Raikkonen must be unwell, jested Arrivabene

“Mercedes has the best car, but we’re there. The car shows good performance”

FELIPE MASSA, WILLIAMS

► different story to last year,” said Raikkonen. “We’ve improved in all areas. Hopefully we are doing the right things and we will be happy when we get to the first race.”

Rivals have been queuing up to heap praise on the team, with Rosberg admitting that Ferrari has made the biggest step of all the teams over the winter. “We are keeping an eye on the opposition, especially Ferrari has been an eye-opener,” he said, a sentiment echoed by Red Bull’s Daniel Ricciardo.

And the fact that Williams chief test and support engineer Rod Nelson said he expects his team, which was Mercedes’ nearest challenger in 2014, to be “scrapping” with Ferrari in the early races shows just how far the Italian team has come.

Williams, though, cannot be discounted. The Grove-based team has shrewdly focused on refinement and ironing out the little creases in operational areas

such as pitstops and strategy that occasionally tripped it up last year. Aside from a few hiccups, such as an issue installing the Mercedes engine on day one and Susie Wolff’s crash with Felipe Nasr, which was unfortunate, Williams’s pre-season has gone well.

There were even times when it finished the day early, because it simply didn’t have any more work on the run plan. But as Nelson admits, challenging Mercedes will be a challenge. “Mercedes are looking incredibly strong on the basis of their running on Saturday and I’m sure it made a lot of people sit back,” he said. “It certainly made us think twice but we should be in the hunt for podiums.”

And Williams faces a challenge from Ferrari on that count. When Massa set his best super-soft-tyred time of 1m23.262s on day three of the final Barcelona test, Raikkonen responded soon after with a time that was just 0.014s adrift.

That advantage was greater on the final day, with Bottas’s lap four tenths quicker than Vettel on the same compound. But Nelson believes Vettel didn’t get the most out of his lap, suggesting the German pushed too hard at the start of the lap and “lunched” his tyres by the time he got halfway round.

Both Massa and Bottas have admitted they have work to do, but they remain upbeat. “I still believe Mercedes has the best car, but we are there,” said Massa. “The car is showing good performance but also good handling and good understanding.”

### RENAULT POWER STILL LIMITING RED BULL

Red Bull is a world away from 12 months ago, when the car could barely complete a lap without overheating or conking out. For a start, its Renault engine is more reliable and its chassis looks like another step forward.

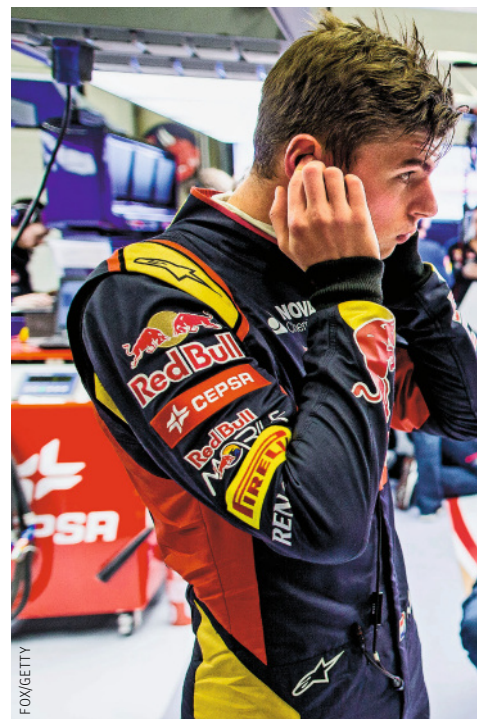
Ricciardo said the set of upgrades that were bolted onto the car at the final test in Barcelona had cured some of the car’s weaknesses, but question marks remain over the engine’s performance.

Supplier Renault remains convinced of its potential, despite driveability concerns that have emerged following recent upgrades, but it admits it did not achieve all the work it wanted to do before heading off to Melbourne.

Toro Rosso had a frustrating start to winter testing, as a “stupid part” linked to Renault’s MGU-K water pump limited rookies Max Verstappen and Carlos Sainz Jr to

short runs at Jerez. But the two Barcelona tests were more straightforward and, once the team’s programme of getting the drivers up to speed was completed, it introduced what technical director James Key described as an “almost completely brand-new” car.

Both Sainz and Verstappen have been complimentary about the car and completed good mileage – the team’s tally of 1206 at the final test was only bettered by Mercedes and Sauber. Like its sister team Red Bull, a lot depends on the power of the Renault engine, but generally the early signs are positive.



Bottas showed the Williams FW37's pace on the final test day



SEBLOHAW/LAT

**MERCEDES BOOST FOR LOTUS**

The same can be said for Lotus, which looks like a team reborn after a miserable 2014. This time 12 months ago, it was stuck with a car that was unreliable and ultimately flawed. This time around the team has a stronger chassis, continuity in its staffing and the best engine on the grid in the Mercedes.

It's a measure of how far it has come that when Pastor Maldonado crashed following a brake problem on the final afternoon of testing, he said: "That was the only issue we've had like this during

testing so we can look to the positive. I think we have good potential this season."

Lotus's Romain Grosjean ended the second test with the fastest time, while the team topped the timesheets on three of the four days. "Certainly things are getting better and better," said the Frenchman. The team learned a lot last year and have made some positive changes. "There's no doubting the car has speed, though it does look like a bit of a handful out on track. Crucially, the team seems to have a better understanding of the car than before. ▶



Verstappen has ingratiated himself well at Toro Rosso ahead of his debut season

**FERRARI HAS TAKEN A CLEAR STEP FORWARD**

Ferrari's pre-season testing programme began superbly at Jerez and, apart from a few minor technical glitches along the way, has continued almost flawlessly.

While it's clear the SF15-T is not going to be an immediate Mercedes-botherer, rivals have noted the apparent step forward the Scuderia has made over the winter. Ferrari is now expected to be in a close fight with Williams and Red Bull for 'best-of-the-rest' status, rather than struggling to hang on to their rear diffusers.

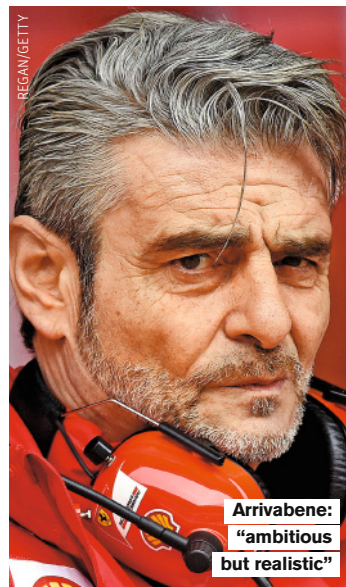
Both Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen endured troubled campaigns last year, but each has looked much happier driving this year's Ferrari. Significant gains on the engine side, which was largely blamed for Ferrari's terrible 2014 form, have created much cause for optimism inside Maranello.

"The targets are absolutely achieved," says team principal Maurizio Arrivabene, who still reckons it is "ambitious but realistic" for Ferrari to win two races this year. "[But] at the test everybody is on different settings, different fuel, different programme, so we don't get a clear idea. In Australia you have to go and to be serious."

When asked about gains made with the power unit, Arrivabene told reporters: "Seb was doing a

**"Seb and Kimi said they could feel the car's improvement"**

MAURIZIO ARRIVABENE



REGAN/GETTY

Arrivabene: "ambitious but realistic"

comparison with his old team and Kimi with last year's car. Both said they could feel the improvement."

So it seems the 2015 Ferrari will be a much more competitive beast, but progress at the Scuderia is not limited to the circuit. Massive management and technical restructuring over the winter has also produced a more productive working culture inside the team, which is designed to prevent the sort of infighting that made progress so difficult in 2014.

"If we are going to fail, this is a problem of aero, or engine, or chassis designer," Arrivabene adds. "I want to see calm, even if we have problems. I want to see discipline. If we fail, we fail all together."

Ben Anderson



Structure and culture are much improved at Ferrari, as is the car

## Q&A

DUNBAR/LAT



### ERIC BOULLIER McLAREN-HONDA RACING DIRECTOR

**How difficult and disappointing has pre-season testing been for you?**

I would not be so negative. We were not expecting to cover 100 laps every day. We tend to forget that last year it was the same situation for many teams. It is true we didn't do as many laps as we wanted; it is true it is going to hurt the car on the performance side, but we will recover. It's just a delay, if I may say this. There are many areas on the car where we know all the systems on the engine are working. Cooling is working, and the more mileage we do in the future the more problems we will discover, but the base is exactly as per plan. So that is a positive.

**You have a lot of problems on the Honda engine side, but what about the chassis?**

It is true we have some reliability issues around some ancillaries on the engine, and because we have not done the mileage we cannot say we have discovered all the issues we can face on the chassis. So, you have a running order unfortunately, and until the power unit is working we cannot develop the car as well.

**Have you solved the MGU-K problem from the previous test?**

When we have signed off all the reliability plan I will tell you yes – that is not the case now. You can see we did 101 laps [on Friday] with no issues, so there was a huge improvement in reliability. But we have some process to sign off that needs more miles. In terms of performance, we went through and we are very happy with everything as per design – we just need to make the car last on track longer.

**Is McLaren-Honda unlikely to be fully prepared for Melbourne?**

Yes, that is a fair assessment. We will not be as ready as we would like but we do our best. Reliability is still a concern and I don't know how long it is going to take. We have some plan in place now, which has been drastically improved in both our organisations working together, and I think it will take a few races, but we should be ready by Europe to be more competitive.

Ben Anderson



Force India turned up late to test with its new car. Nico Hulkenberg was impressed...

### SAUBER PAGE TAILS OFF

Sauber made headlines at Jerez as it topped the times once and finished second on the remaining three days. Marcus Ericsson denied the team was doing low-fuel 'glory runs', adding that Sauber had "quite a bit of margin," but its form has tailed off since then. Felipe Nasr had his clumsy incident with Wolff, while mechanical gremlins crept in that robbed the team of precious track time. But a smooth final test, which was littered with race simulations, ensured its lap count was healthy, ending the pre-season fewer than 100 laps shy of Mercedes.

Both Ericsson and Nasr believe progress has been made, which is encouraging considering the Swiss team encountered its first pointless season last year, although the car still looks to tough to drive, particularly on corner entry.

### FORCE INDIA FINALLY RUNS

The fact that Force India even made it to the final test is impressive. That the car ran reliably all the way through the three days of testing it was restricted to is remarkable.

The team had a troubled winter where cashflow issues with suppliers, delays with the manufacture of the chassis and a hold-up in gaining access to its chosen windtunnel held it up.

On arrival at Barcelona the car was super-reliable, completing 365 laps,

**"We took a big hit, but we believe strongly in the team that they can recover"**

BOB FERNLEY, FORCE INDIA

just 15 shy of McLaren's tally recorded across all 12 days of testing. But deputy team principal Bob Fernley admitted that the delay will make a "significant" impact on the team's form. "We are behind on the development programme," he told AUTOSPORT. "The key thing for us is damage limitation. We took a big hit, but we believe strongly in the team that they can recover from it."

While Nico Hulkenberg was "surprised" by the team's successful run, Sergio Perez admitted the team is "two steps behind" and "on the back foot" going to Melbourne.

### McLAREN IN THE MIRE

And that leaves just McLaren, which is arguably bottom of the pile in terms of performance because the car



...although Sergio Perez said the team is "two steps behind"

didn't run long enough to test whether it has any. Not the ideal start to a new partnership with Honda.

The MP4-30 spent most of the Jerez test in the garage, with a faulty seal on the MGU-K proving a particular headache, while returnee Fernando Alonso sidelined himself from the final test when he crashed heavily at Barcelona. Jenson Button delivered some hope by clocking 101 laps on day two of the final test – just over a quarter of the team's total tally – but that was a rare highlight.

Kevin Magnussen, who has experience of last year's car and tested the new machine for a day, was hopeful, suggesting the chassis definitely addresses the weakness of the 2014 car. "Last year's car was a bit more unpredictable. The direction we wanted to go has proved to be right for this car."

There is a feeling among the team that the car has serious potential, but a lack of mileage has stopped it from having the chance to unlock it. Button highlighted the gulf between his team and the current pacesetters when he said: "Mercedes are unbelievably quick and we are obviously a long way off."

But the killer line came from world champion Hamilton himself, when asked to describe the Wo6. "It feels good – similar to last year, but better," he said, ominously. ❧



Magnussen deputised for Alonso at the final test



# FULL PRE-SEASON TESTING DATA

JEREZ FEBRUARY 1-4, BARCELONA FEBRUARY 19-22, BARCELONA FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 1

SETS OF TYRES USED  
**706**



**22**  
DRIVERS



**32** RED FLAGS

**101,621**

WORDS IN  
AUTOSPORT.COM'S  
LIVE COVERAGE

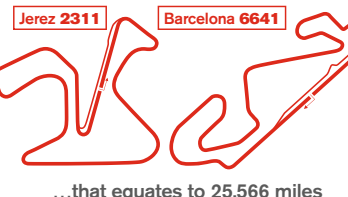


FEWEST LAPS COMPLETED  
**36**  
KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

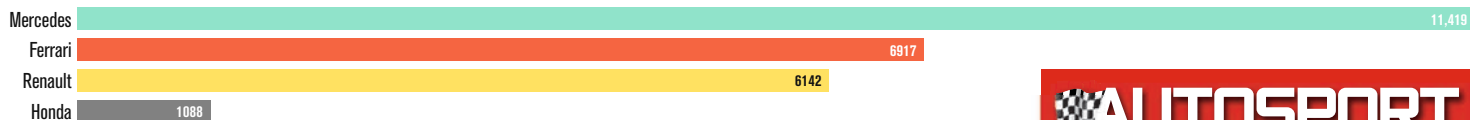
MOST LAPS COMPLETED  
NICO ROSBERG

**759**

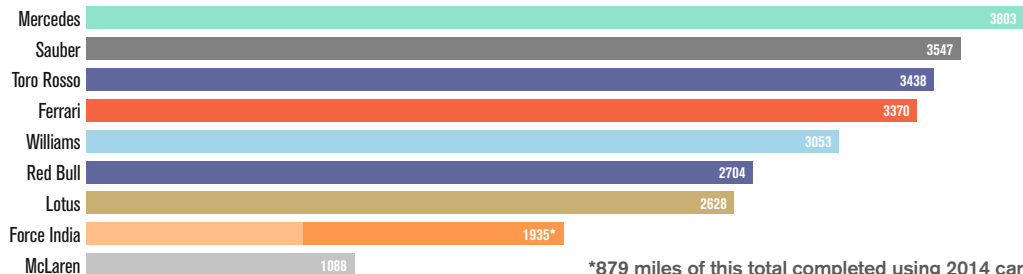
**8952**  
TOTAL LAPS COVERED



## TOTAL MILES COVERED ENGINE



## TOTAL MILES COVERED CAR



## AUTOSPORT

2015 TESTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Based on awarding points for end-of-day testing positions

### DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Kimi Raikkonen	102
2	Sebastian Vettel	96
3	Felipe Nasr	95
4	Lewis Hamilton	93
5	Nico Rosberg	87
6	Felipe Massa	86
7	Valtteri Bottas	80
8	Pastor Maldonado	78
9	Marcus Ericsson	76
10	Daniel Ricciardo	70
11	Max Verstappen	66
12	Romain Grosjean	53
13	Daniil Kvyat	49
14	Carlos Sainz Jr	43
15	Jenson Button	35

### CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Ferrari	198
2	Mercedes	184
3	Sauber	171
4	Williams	168
5	Lotus	135
6	Red Bull	119
7	Toro Rosso	109
8	McLaren	57
9	Force India	48

Force India's tally includes 2014 car

## F1 TEST TIMES BARCELONA FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 1

POS	DRIVER	CAR	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes F1 W06	-	1m22.792s (s)	-	1m25.186s (m)
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes F1 W06	1m24.881s (m)	-	1m23.022s (s)	-
3	Valtteri Bottas	Williams-Mercedes FW37	-	1m23.995s (s)	-	1m23.063s (ss)
4	Felipe Massa	Williams-Mercedes FW37	1m23.500s (s)	-	1m23.262s (ss)	-
5	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari SF15-T	1m26.327s (m)	-	1m23.276s (ss)	-
6	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari SF15-T	-	1m25.339s (s)	-	1m23.469s (ss)
7	Felipe Nasr	Sauber-Ferrari C34	-	1m24.071s (s)	-	1m24.023s (ss)
8	Carlos Sainz Jr	Toro Rosso-Renault STR10	1m26.962s (m)	-	1m24.191s (ss)	-
9	Romain Grosjean	Lotus-Mercedes E23	1m26.177s (s)	-	1m24.200s (ss)	-
10	Marcus Ericsson	Sauber-Ferrari C34	1m24.276s (ss)	-	1m24.477s (ss)	-
11	Max Verstappen	Toro Rosso-Renault STR10	-	1m26.766s (m)	-	1m24.527s (ss)
12	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull-Renault RB11	-	-	1m25.742s (m)	1m24.638s (s)
13	Nico Hulkenberg	Force India-Mercedes WMD8	-	1m28.412s (m)	1m24.939s (ss)	-
14	Sergio Perez	Force India-Mercedes WMD8	-	-	-	1m25.113s (ss)
15	Kevin Magnussen	McLaren-Honda MP4-30	-	-	1m25.225s (s)	-
16	Jenson Button	McLaren-Honda MP4-30	1m31.479s (m)	1m25.590s (s)	-	1m25.327s (ss)
17	Daniil Kvyat	Red Bull-Renault RB11	1m25.947s (m)	1m26.965s (m)	-	-
18	Pastor Maldonado	Lotus-Mercedes E23	-	1m26.705s (s)	-	1m28.272s (m)

Tyre key: ss=supersoft; s=soft, m=medium

DUNBAR/LAT



18

# Belatedly, the force awakens

**Production delays meant Force India's VJM08 wasn't ready for the first two pre-season tests, but it proved reliable once it finally hit the track in Spain. By GARY ANDERSON**

## FORCE INDIA-MERCEDES VJM08

It has been a long and tough winter for the Force India team from every point of view. Financially, they have been left playing catch-up and this is when you get the problems of the different objectives of management and design. The design side always wants to push on, but the team management's job is to ensure that the numbers add up.

I've been there myself many times and it's frustrating when the handbrake is on. But, to the team's credit, it got the car to the final pre-season test and managed to rack up 365 laps, which shows that the team is technically strong. It's a compliment to all involved.

It's difficult to say where the team is at financially but, if you look at the problems

McLaren has had, by contrast Force India has at least been able to produce a reliable car. It looks to be a neat and tidy package, showing the team has learned from 2014. Last year, it went down a developmental dead end, and when that happens you have to dig deep to find a new baseline. It seems that Force India has achieved this with the new car.

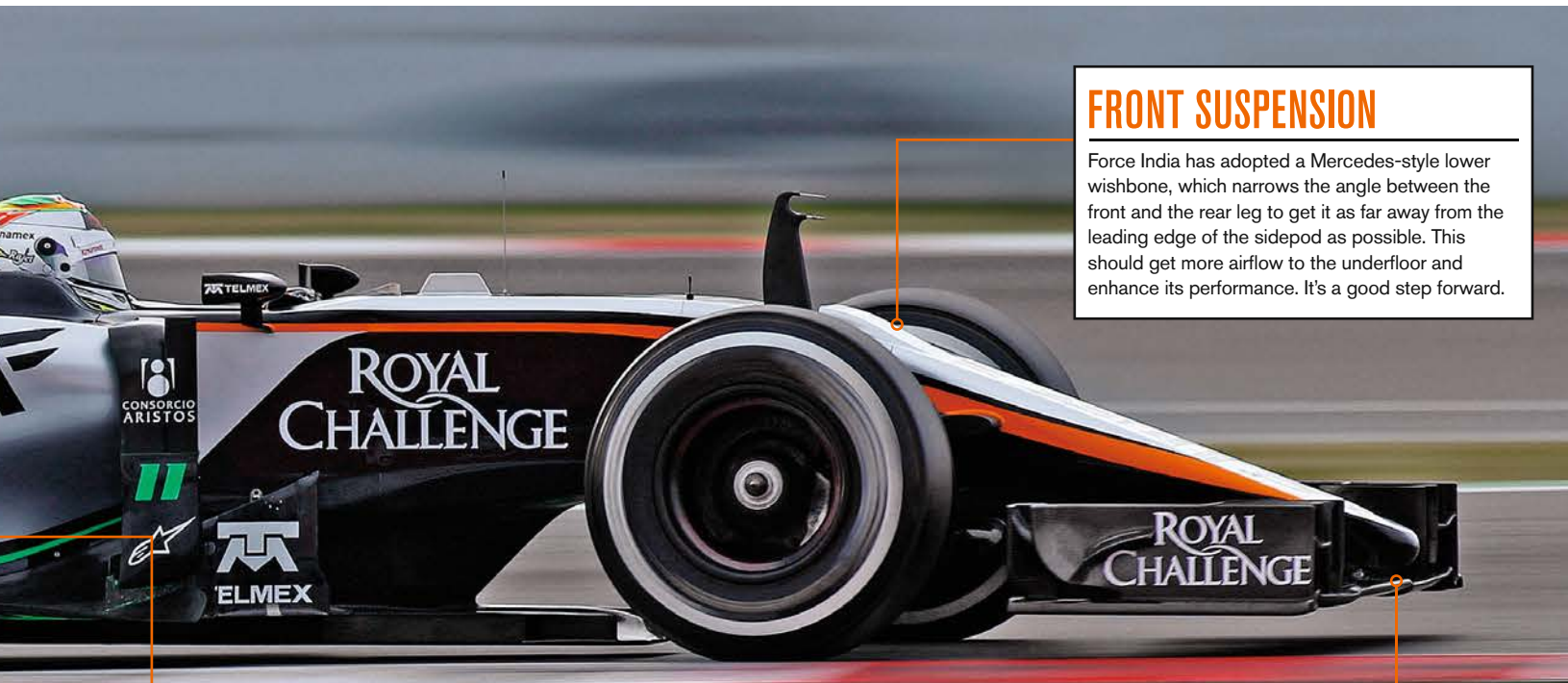
### B-SPEC CAR

The car has a lot in common with the 2014 Force India chassis, to the point where you could call it a b-spec version. But that's not a bad thing, because Force India has shown it can be an effective and innovative team. If the problems of last year have been eliminated, and the necessary refinements put in place, it should be an effective package.

S BLOXHAM/LAT



2014 CAR



## FRONT SUSPENSION

Force India has adopted a Mercedes-style lower wishbone, which narrows the angle between the front and the rear leg to get it as far away from the leading edge of the sidepod as possible. This should get more airflow to the underfloor and enhance its performance. It's a good step forward.

## SIDPOD/REAR-END PACKAGING

Force India has done a lot of tidying in this area. With the new regulations last year, there were inevitably some

compromises and it's only when you do a new car that you can tidy it all up. Everything is tighter and more efficient

in the sidepods and Coke-bottle area throughout the field, and Force India has done the same.



## NOSE DUCT

The relatively conventional nose has Red Bull-style S-ducting from the underside of the nose through to the upper surface, which helps get better airflow through the front of the car and make the neutral central section of the front wing work more efficiently. This should maximise the airflow between the front wheels and under the sidepods.

## MERCEDES ENGINE

It's good news for Force India that it still has what seems to be the best engine package. Not only will it give the performance, but it also means that things are stable from 2014. With the same engine, a strong driver line-up and a decent test, the team goes to Melbourne in good shape.

## AERODYNAMIC DETAIL

Force India has proved it has a very good understanding of the car. Details such as the louvres in the rear-wing endplate and the turning vanes on the leading edge of the sidepods were both ideas that came from within the team. The question is how much things are held back by the winter problems.





BlackBerry

REIDONS

NY



Hamilton v Rosberg

# TAKE TWO

The rivalry between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg dominated the 2014 F1 season. This year it could be even more compelling, says **BEN ANDERSON**

**A**ll the greatest sporting contests do not achieve such elevated status without some kind of grudge match – a chance for two titans to go toe-to-toe more than once.

When that happens, you have a true rivalry. When you have true rivalry, you have genuinely captivating sport. Think Muhammad Ali versus Joe Frazier in boxing, cricket's England versus Australia Ashes, or any number of high-level local derbies in football.

All the great rivalries tend to be binary – two giant teams or personalities (usually with contrasting styles and/or characters) pitting their respective wits against one another with more relish and grit than they might conjure up when faced with an alternative, more 'ordinary' opponent. Formula 1 has its own long list. Although technological competition has always defined grand prix racing (and all other motorsport) in a very particular way, it remains alluring for its human drama as much as anything else. But because F1 is simultaneously

an individual and a team sport, these sorts of pure, binary rivalries tend to be rare.

They usually require a period of sustained domination by one team, so that its two drivers can go head-to-head (think Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna at McLaren, 1988-89), or a sustained period of competition between two teams with stable line-ups, so that a dual dynamic can emerge (recall Michael Schumacher versus Damon Hill in the Benetton/Williams battles of the mid-'90s, or the Ferrari/McLaren duels that raged on and off-track before the turn of the decade). Now, thanks to the Mercedes squad's competitive advantage under F1's current V6 hybrid turbo engine regulations, Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg have the potential to become the latest great rivalry in F1.

Last season, Mercedes (laudably) allowed its two drivers to race hard for the title, knowing the constructors' championship 'battle' was – to all intents and purposes – a one-horse race. The prospect of a long-awaited second world drivers' title for one (Hamilton), or a breakthrough maiden success for the other (Rosberg), created a fascinating dynamic between two top athletes – one with a history of success but doubts about his legacy, the other with intense hunger but a point to prove to the world about his ultimate potential.

The dynamic of established champion and hungry pretender is important in creating a great rivalry. Prost and Senna had it when Senna joined McLaren in 1988, and their rivalry is arguably the greatest in F1 history. The fact that this dynamic remains unchanged between the Mercedes drivers this year, owing to Rosberg failing to deny Hamilton that second title, only adds emphasis to their personal battle. Hamilton now has the chance to add his name to a rare pantheon of great drivers who have won at least three world championships – only nine have managed the feat since 1950 – while Rosberg remains the precocious hopeful, determined to bounce back



When Lewis upped the pressure last year he was able to push Rosberg into making mistakes

from bitter defeat, spoil Hamilton's party and finally emulate the greatest achievement of his father Keke, world champion in 1982.

The difference between Hamilton and Rosberg in 2014, though massive in terms of points accrued (owing to the ludicrous double-scoring system for the season finale that is, thankfully, dropped for this year), was actually much smaller on performance than many expected before the season began. Hamilton came into the campaign with a reputation for winning by simply being faster than everyone else out there, while Rosberg was viewed as the cerebral, workaholic who would use his technical nous and intelligence to gain the edge.

As it turned out, Rosberg was surprisingly the quicker of the two more often than not on Saturdays, when F1 is about pure speed. The

Spa collision was moment rivalry boiled over





XPB/LAT

German outdid Hamilton 12-7 in their intra-team qualifying battle (including 11 pole positions), but it was Hamilton who usually had the upper hand when it came to the complex mixture of driving style and set-up that allows a driver to save fuel and maintain better pace over a race distance. Hamilton was undoubtedly the cannier racer in 2014, and was almost unstoppable when on the sort of roll with which he finished the year.

The challenge for Rosberg is to build on his phenomenal qualifying efforts of 2014, and convert more of his hard-earned poles into victories by cutting out the small errors that make all the difference when two quality drivers compete against one another in equal machinery. Poor reliability afflicted both at crucial times, but it was errors when presented with a golden opportunity to beat Hamilton in a straight fight

that sapped vital life out of Rosberg's challenge.

Usually – and critically – these errors came during moments when Hamilton would turn up the wick to put his team-mate under pressure. At Monza, Hamilton was told to sit back and save his tyres for a late-race attack, but decided instead to begin a charge that ultimately led to Rosberg outbraking himself (twice) at the first chicane, running down the escape road and conceding a race-winning advantage. In the United States GP, Rosberg converted pole into an early lead, but – once again – made a crucial mistake as Hamilton attacked, pressing the wrong button on his steering wheel while attempting to use some recovered energy from his hybrid systems to defend position. Another small error, but yet another race lost as Rosberg's early points lead was eroded and overturned.

Rosberg was clearly gutted to miss out on last year's championship. He completed the slowing-down lap after the Abu Dhabi finale with tears in his eyes as he brought his hobbled Mercedes back to the pits. But he is not vanquished. As any top sportsman should, he is determined to come back harder, better and stronger in 2015.

"Fortunately for me, in sport the success, the emotion, is always shortlived," he says. "In this case it was very fortunate for me, because that means life went back to normal very quickly, within one or two days. It was rather quick. And that's natural, that's the way it is with sports. It gives you these extreme highs, but they

don't last very long. And then it's straight back to pushing for the next one.

"I'm here for the challenge, so I'm always motivated, but I have an extra... it's just a natural, extra little bit of something to have this memory from last year with me. I know how awesome it feels to win races, and I know how great it is when I beat Lewis, and all these little things are a little bit of extra motivation.

"I want to become an even better driver again this year. That's my aim, my personal challenge, and it's a great challenge to push and try to get better and better all of the time. It started from the first moment after the race in Abu Dhabi last year. That's why I did the test right after the race – to try to learn some things, and I did.

"I learned some things from my training in the winter too. For example, that my breathing is something I could work on in the racecar. When we go through fast corners we hold our breath, because we have so

many g-forces that we can't really breathe properly, so I've tried to work on that in the winter. I think it could help to be that little bit fitter at the end of races, and be a little more on it, that one per cent, two per cent, which makes a difference in the end."

Rosberg won't reveal exactly how he will achieve this, but the breathing technique he refers to is believed to derive from the sort of practice fighter pilots employ to control their breathing ▶

**"I KNOW HOW GREAT IT FEELS TO BEAT LEWIS. IT'S EXTRA MOTIVATION"**

**NICO ROSBERG**



MASON/GETTY

**Merc PR machine pushes 'one-love' message to world**



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**Hamilton's spin in testing a rare blip in Mercedes' pre-season preparation**



XPB/IMAGES

► at high g to prevent blood flowing away from their brain. Technology also exists whereby oxygen can be recycled into the driver's/pilot's system, allowing them to breathe more efficiently over the course of a race distance and reduce muscle fatigue. Though it's not clear whether Rosberg is using this kit, focusing on these sorts of details of human performance is exactly the kind of approach he will need if he wants to overcome the challenge facing him on the other side of the Mercedes garage.

But a meticulous attitude to racing is not something unique to Rosberg. Hamilton has also learned – perhaps grudgingly – to look beyond his own personal box of tricks for a competitive edge.

Formula 1 teams measure every aspect of their cars' performance in extraordinary detail, and this includes the inputs the drivers make inside the cockpit. This means different drivers in the same team are able to see (in graphical form) exactly what their team-mate is up to. This is not an aspect of modern motorsport that someone like Hamilton, who believes his ability is God-given and unimpeachable, feels particularly comfortable with. Indeed, he seemed genuinely irked by the fact that Rosberg could use his data traces to improve his own driving. But, naturally, two can play at that game and, once Hamilton began fighting fire with fire, the team had to interject to prevent its drivers deliberately sandbagging during free practice in order to protect any competitive advantage each felt they had over the other. This is another example of the sort of personal dynamic that makes for a captivating sporting rivalry. However much a team's PR machine may like to portray a 'one-love' message to the outside world, if genuine needle exists between the two protagonists it helps make their rivalry worth watching. There was plenty of this between Hamilton and Rosberg in 2014.

It began with their 'duel in the desert' in Bahrain, where Hamilton's forceful defence of ►



**At first Hamilton hated sharing data, but soon learned to profit from it**

ETHERINGTON/LAT

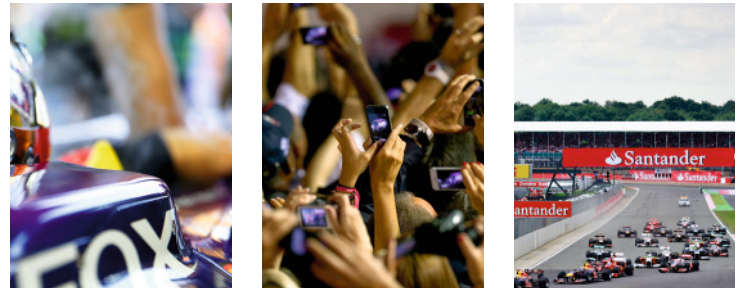


**Toto Wolff and Niki Lauda have to keep driver rivalry in check**

ETHERINGTON/LAT



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**Driver rivalry can spill over into relationships within the whole team**

► his lead upset Rosberg, and continued with arguments about Rosberg using ‘banned’ engine settings to try to beat Hamilton next time out in Spain. The ‘did-he-didn’t-he-drive-off-the-road-deliberately?’ qualifying controversy that clouded Rosberg’s pole position in Monaco – and infuriated Hamilton – only increased tensions further.

Around this point in the season, Hamilton gave an interview in which he suggested he was ‘hungrier’ to win than his team-mate, because of their contrasting social backgrounds. This (rightly or wrongly) helped paint a picture to the wider public of Hamilton as the tough, streetwise, underprivileged kid fighting against the odds to earn his crust at F1’s top table against the multilingual, Monaco-born Rosberg, who could have studied at university and enjoys the trappings of a privileged, tax-haven upbringing. The fact that they were friends as kids – racing for the same European kart team – and now live near each other in Monaco makes no odds. In terms of public perception of their rivalry (and thus fans’ enjoyment of it), it helps if they are cast as different characters, adversarial in life as well as racing.

Of course, the rivalry in 2014 strained their personal bond, and their respective relationships with the team. This is bound to happen when you are fighting exclusively against one another for the biggest prize in motor racing. Things finally came to a head when Hamilton refused a team order to let Rosberg pass him in Hungary. Mercedes publicly backed Hamilton’s ‘vigilantism’ (because it felt in retrospect that the order was unfair), which made Rosberg furious. After a three-week summer break spent stewing in his own bubbling broth of anger, Rosberg took the law into his own hands at Spa and was subsequently reprimanded by Mercedes for causing a collision that took Hamilton out of points-scoring contention and handed race victory to Red Bull’s Daniel Ricciardo. ►



**Relations between Hamilton and Rosberg were strained at times**



**Team-orders spat in Hungary further widened the split**



Ferrari aims to make 2015 more than just the Lewis/Nico show

► It was after this flashpoint that part one of the Hamilton/Rosberg rivalry seemed to (sadly) fizzle out. Mercedes came down hard on Rosberg, fining him part of his wages after a bizarre social-media poll asking fans how he should be punished for breaking the golden rule of professional motorsport: ‘don’t drive into your team-mate’. It’s not that Rosberg lost any of his speed (his qualifying form remained peerless), but errors in the races – that previously weren’t there – began to creep in. Meanwhile, Hamilton seemed galvanised by the team’s reaction to Rosberg’s petulance. For a driver who has seemed so emotionally driven in the past – displaying the sort of ‘you’re-either-with-me-or-against-me’ persona that defined his hero Senna – the realisation that Mercedes did not favour his team-mate in moments of conflict (something he certainly did not think after qualifying in Monaco) appeared to put Hamilton at ease. After Spa, Hamilton won six of the final seven races of the season, and could easily have made it a clean sweep

**“I WANT TO BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE BATTLE. THAT IS WHAT I LIVE FOR”**  
LEWIS HAMILTON

but for a small misjudgement adjusting his brake balance for fading tyres while hunting down Rosberg in Brazil.

In the past, Hamilton has been known to go off the rails when off-track matters unsettle him.

Anyone who watched his bizarre sequence of uncharacteristic mistakes and collisions during his penultimate season at McLaren in 2011 will attest to this. But when all is right with his world, Hamilton can be unstoppable. That’s the Hamilton we saw dominating F1 in the closing stages of last season, but he has since split up with his on-off celebrity girlfriend Nicole Scherzinger, while his contractual situation with Mercedes (his current deal with F1’s top team expires at the end of this year) remains unresolved heading into the new campaign. These are small, external details, but they can be significant with regard to mental and emotional stability, and are thus potential areas of weakness that Rosberg (happily re-signed to Mercedes last summer and expecting a child,

having recently married his long-time partner Vivian) could exploit.

Hamilton has not looked particularly happy during pre-season testing, but many racing drivers of high calibre find this task arduous. He has also been unwell, which won’t have helped his mood. Regardless of off-track matters, if Hamilton can retain the supreme ‘zen-like’ balance he found inside the car at the end of last season, there may be nothing in the world Rosberg can do to stop him winning a third world championship.

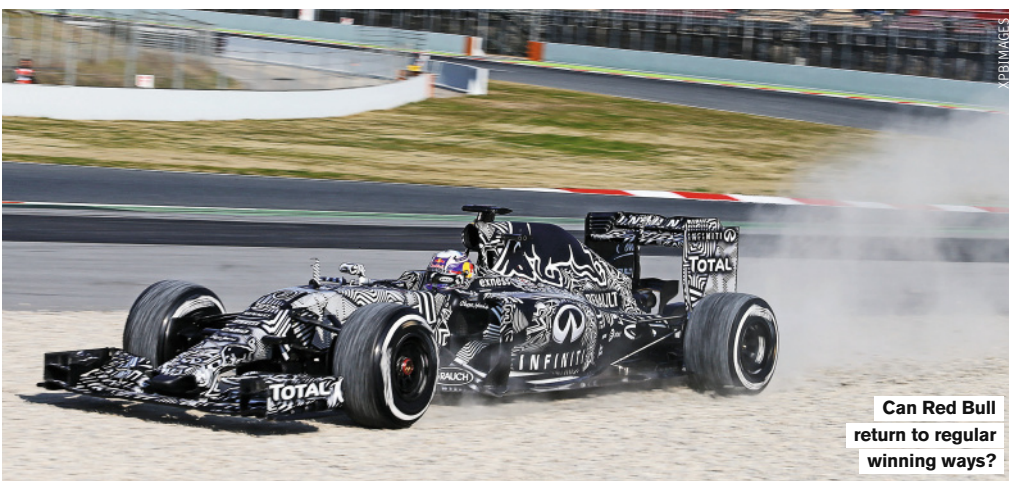
“It feels exactly like the start of 2014,” says Hamilton of the impending season. “I’m actually in a better position in terms of my approach to the software and set-up. I’m in a better position, but mentally it feels just like last year; I want to win, but how am I going to learn, to execute on race weekends, to improve?”

“It starts on Fridays, which was what impacted qualifying. This year I’ll be working to improve in FP1, FP2 and FP3; those are the areas that need to be strengthened. Last year, if I’d done better in qualifying, it would have made the races easier – not that I want to have it easy, but I’ll definitely try to improve those areas.”

Although Mercedes’ rivals are desperately trying to improve too, in an effort to make F1 more than an all-Mercedes battle for glory, there is something to be said in favour of the team retaining its dominant position in 2015. If – as many suspect it will – Mercedes increases its advantage over the rest, then Hamilton



**Williams' test form indicates it's kept 2014 momentum**



**Can Red Bull return to regular winning ways?**

and Rosberg can once again go wheel to wheel for the world title and cement their personal rivalry into the collective consciousness of F1 fans. If the chasing pack gets too close, Mercedes may be minded to interfere more often in this fight and sacrifice the hopes of one of its drivers to ensure it retains its place at the head of the constructors' table. While this would undoubtedly be a good thing for Mercedes' sponsors, if it came at the expense of a full-blooded fight for the drivers' championship it would be a huge turn-off for fans.

"I think last year was an exceptional year, if you look at the history of the sport," argues Hamilton.

"To be able to match that is going to be very tough. We're going into the second year of this kind of car and engine. For the others it will be easier to make steps forward, because our car was pretty amazing last year. For us to make steps is harder. It's almost like going up a mountain: the beginning is easy, then it gets steeper and steeper and steeper. We're almost at the end, and the others are not. The guys did a great job to improve the car even though we were ahead – it's easy to make it worse, harder to make it better.

"I don't mind [what happens], as long as there's a fight. I always want to be able to

enjoy the battle; the battles we had last year were really good fun. That's what I live for ultimately. Testing is all good, but when the lights go out on a Sunday, when all the work you've done comes down to split-second decisions, that's what I really love."

And that's what fans of the sport really enjoy too. Against a backdrop of monetary squabbling, smaller teams feeling the financial pinch, and internal handwringing over the future technical direction of the sport, there is still much to get excited about in F1 this year. Can Red Bull-Renault get back to winning ways regularly? Will Sebastian Vettel give Ferrari the new lease of life it desperately needs? Will Williams continue the revival it began last year? And, of course, can a Fernando Alonso-inspired McLaren-Honda eventually topple Mercedes from the top of the tree, once its early growing pains are out of the way?

But the question that trumps them all is that of who will become champion of the world in 2015. Most likely it will be Lewis Hamilton versus Nico Rosberg 'the sequel'. Rosberg will have to raise his game to make it happen, but only by the "one or two per cent" he mentions. If he can conquer the world and deny Hamilton a third crown, it would earn him a place among the true elite of the sport, while imbuing their rivalry with the potential to become one of the greatest in F1 history, and one of the most captivating in modern professional sport.

Seconds out! Round two! Sit back and enjoy. ❧

# WHAT'S NEW

Although the regulations are largely stable heading into the 2015 season, there are always some

## F1'S ENGINE UNFREEZE

The engine freeze was one of the most-talked-about subjects during the winter. Then, thanks to lobbying primarily from Ferrari, which was key in isolating the loophole in the regulations that allowed a different interpretation of the freeze, things became a little freer. But it's best to think of what has happened as a partial thaw, rather than the start of an all-out engine war.

Under the original interpretation of the rules, each manufacturer set down the design of their engine before the start of the season, with no changes permitted until the winter. This year, changes are allowed during the season, but there is one very important proviso: the regulations governing *how much* of the engine can be changed remain in place.

The engine is divided into a total of 42 different components, with each awarded a token value of between one and three. For 2015, a total of 32 tokens can be spent, which represents a change of 48.5 per cent of the power-unit package. Each year, the amount that can be changed is reduced.

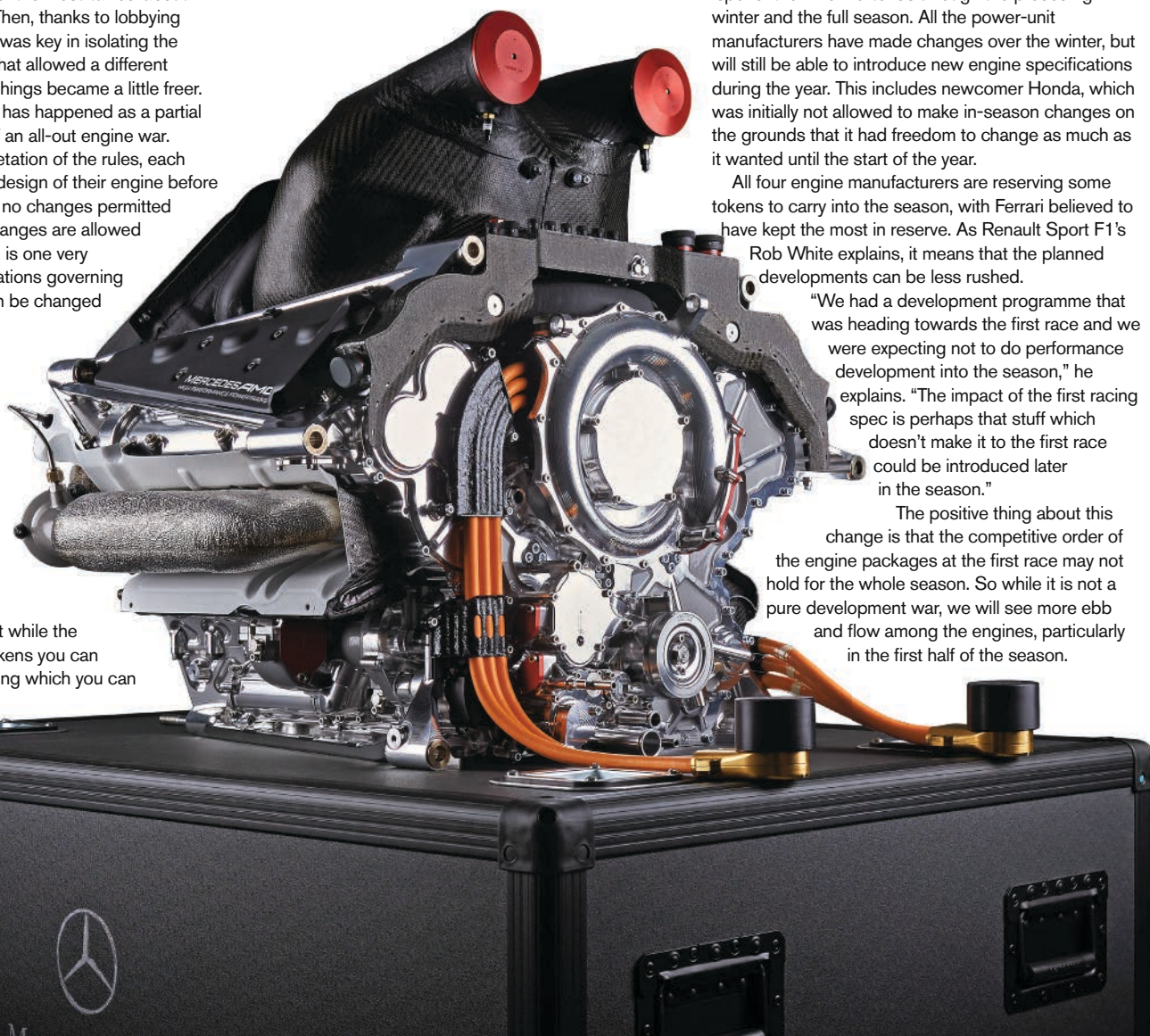
The difference now is that while the restrictions on how many tokens you can use remain, the window during which you can

'spend' them now extends through the preceding winter and the full season. All the power-unit manufacturers have made changes over the winter, but will still be able to introduce new engine specifications during the year. This includes newcomer Honda, which was initially not allowed to make in-season changes on the grounds that it had freedom to change as much as it wanted until the start of the year.

All four engine manufacturers are reserving some tokens to carry into the season, with Ferrari believed to have kept the most in reserve. As Renault Sport F1's Rob White explains, it means that the planned developments can be less rushed.

"We had a development programme that was heading towards the first race and we were expecting not to do performance development into the season," he explains. "The impact of the first racing spec is perhaps that stuff which doesn't make it to the first race could be introduced later in the season."

The positive thing about this change is that the competitive order of the engine packages at the first race may not hold for the whole season. So while it is not a pure development war, we will see more ebb and flow among the engines, particularly in the first half of the season.



# IN 2015?

changes in F1. **EDD STRAW** explains the main differences



DUNBAR/LAT



## NOSE RULES

To avoid the unsightly appendages that some F1 cars sprouted last year, the regulations governing nose shapes have been modified. For more detail on this, read Craig Scarborough's explanation on page 42.

## DOUBLE POINTS DROPPED

The decision to award double points for the 2014 championship finale in Abu Dhabi holds the distinction of being the most hated rule change in the history of grand prix racing. Thankfully, it ultimately made no difference to who won the championship – but it could so easily have done had things panned out differently.

Unsurprisingly, this rule has been dropped, meaning that every race will award points to the top 10 on the usual 25-18-15-12-10-8-6-4-2-1 system.



## VIRTUAL SAFETY CAR

Following Jules Bianchi's horrific accident under yellow flags at Suzuka last year, F1 has adopted a virtual-safety-car system. This will avoid the time-consuming deployment of the safety car for some incidents, while ensuring that speeds are more tightly controlled in zones that would previously have been covered by only double-waved yellow flags.

When the virtual safety car is triggered, a strict speed limit will be enforced through the parts of the track that are under these conditions. Stewards will punish any drivers who exceed that speed limit.

## IN-SEASON TESTING **REDUCED**

Last year teams conducted a series of four two-day tests during the season. To save costs, this has been halved, with two-day tests now held on the Tuesday and Wednesday after the Spanish and Austrian GPs.

Teams are also obliged to run 'rookie' drivers (defined as those with fewer than two grand prix starts) on at least two of those days.

## STANDING RESTARTS

Last year it was announced that safety-car periods would be followed by standing restarts in 2015. This rule change has been abandoned.



SEASON **13** PREVIEW

## FOUR POWER UNITS ALLOWED, NEW PENALTIES

For the first season of the new 1.6-litre turbocharged V6 hybrid engines, each driver was allowed five power units to cover the whole season. This year, that number reduces to just four.

The power unit is split into various elements, four of which can be used interchangeably. But as soon as a driver breaks into a fifth, grid penalties will be applied. But unlike last year, they will not be carried over to a second race if the driver has not qualified high enough to drop sufficiently far back on the grid.

Instead, a sliding scale of penalties, such as having to serve an early-race drive-through penalty, will be used on the same weekend.



PHOTO4/XPB IMAGES



## MEXICAN GP BACK ON THE CALENDAR

The Mexican GP returns to the calendar for the first time since 1992 at the revamped Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez. Initially the schedule included 21 races, but the return of the Korean GP has been abandoned. Doubt hangs over the German GP after the Nurburgring said it was unable to host it, with Hockenheim saying it too cannot step in. The GP is on the calendar, but without an official venue. It could yet drop out.

Button's back...





and ready to take on Alonso

After coming close to being dropped at the end of last year, the 2009 world champion is back for more with McLaren. But what can we expect from the popular British favourite as he lines up alongside Alonso? By BEN ANDERSON

**A**s the final weeks of 2014 loomed, Jenson Button's long career as a Formula 1 driver looked just about over. Christmas was fast approaching and McLaren *still* hadn't decided whether he or rookie team-mate Kevin Magnussen would be retained to drive alongside Fernando Alonso, as the Woking team prepared to enter a new era as works partner to returning engine manufacturer Honda. The wait was long and arduous, and took its toll on Button, but (eventually) he received his renewed contract. Now that he's been brought back from the brink, it's time to repay the faith McLaren has shown in his abilities.

On the evidence of last season, McLaren's decision really shouldn't have taken so long. Magnussen did a good job in his rookie season, and he will eventually become a fine grand prix driver, but Button brought home the bulk of McLaren's world championship points in 2014, and there is no evidence yet of his driving powers fading as he reaches his mid-thirties.

After much internal debate, McLaren eventually came around to this way of thinking and decided that having two experienced drivers in its racing line-up (while demoting Magnussen to the role of reserve) was the best move for its immediate future. On announcing his team's 2015 driver line-up to the world, McLaren chairman Ron Dennis enigmatically referred to "concerns" the team held about Button last year – concerns Button clearly convinced Dennis he was prepared and able to alleviate. Whatever these 'concerns' related to exactly (money, performance, both?), certainly Button looked unhappy at times last year. After two seasons of driving uncompetitive machinery (remember, he won the final race of 2012 in Brazil), you could forgive him for losing a bit of his cool internally, and wondering if maybe following Mark Webber into the World Endurance Championship might

not be such a bad idea after all...

But once Button accepted the imperfect situation, and just got on with the business of driving, things took a different turn. He put in a superb performance in last October's sodden Japanese Grand Prix, then (once the following weekend's Russian GP was out of the way) took some time off and headed to the beach. He arrived for November's United States race rejuvenated – relaxed about his future and determined to simply enjoy his racing.

Button knuckled down and worked even more effectively within the shortcomings of the MP4-29 – a car that was (arguably necessarily) too conservatively conceived after McLaren's disastrous efforts to go 'radical' in a vain effort to halt the Red Bull juggernaut in 2013. McLaren undoubtedly improved the MP4-29 through last season, but admits its potential was limited. Button, who has often been criticised for being too picky when it comes to the handling characteristics he demands from a car, looked to be finding some benefit from being a little more flexible behind the wheel.

In any case, the result is that Button now has a new, two-year deal with McLaren-Honda, and McLaren-Honda now has the most experienced line-up on the grid at its disposal. Two drivers with 500 grand prix starts between them will prove invaluable for Honda as it returns to Formula 1 after a six-season hiatus, and works to overcome the deficit to rival manufacturers that have already run the hard yards in developing engines for F1's new V6 hybrid turbo formula.

Early testing of the 'radical' McLaren-Honda MP4-30 shows that experience will be invaluable. Amid much aggressive rhetoric about the potential of the package, McLaren-Honda has endured a disappointing gestation. It began with recurring electrical problems when the Honda engine first ran in the back of an interim 2014 ▶



SBLOXHAM/LAT



"What do you mean I'm taking too long to decide on 2015?"

TEJUK



Button has new focus: working with Alonso

STALEY/AG



S.BLOXHAM/LAT

► McLaren in Abu Dhabi last November, and continued with a spate of minor but costly technical and operational difficulties during the first pre-season test of 2015 at Jerez. Then Honda encountered a serious problem with a seal on the MGU-K component of its 'ambitious' Energy Recovery System, which ruined the following test at Barcelona.

There is apparently no quick solution to this problem, which is understood to occur when the two ends of the specialist high-speed driveshaft in the MGU-K are not perfectly in balance. Apparently, this is a problem that afflicted Mercedes in the build-up to the first test of 2014, but it managed to solve it in time to avoid ruining its pre-season. Honda, which has not been involved in F1 since pulling its works team (ironically the foundations of that world champion Mercedes squad) out of the sport ahead of the 2009 campaign, has been caught on the hop. McLaren will use its

internal KERS expertise to patch up the Honda MGU-K temporarily, while the Japanese manufacturer works on a permanent fix.

In spite of all the difficulty and lost track time so far, there is quiet confidence within McLaren that its car will be a serious threat to Mercedes before this season is through. "The car works when you drive it," says Button. "The driveability of the engine has come a long way since the first

test, which is great from a driver's point of view, but you don't get to see it because we run into other problems we have to solve.

"The engine packaging on this car is fantastic, which helps the airflow for the aerodynamics. And that hasn't caused any issues at all in terms of temperatures.

"There have been some pretty tough pre-seasons before at McLaren. We had the 'hoover' exhaust in 2011, which just kept falling apart.

Pre-season testing for us has a lot of the time been very tough, but most of the time we can pull it together reasonably well.

"None of us knows what to expect when we arrive at the first race. I don't think there are any expectations on our side. It's about getting our heads down and focusing on the issues we have. In some areas we are very strong, but some areas are letting us down [at the moment]."

The initial focus is simply on making the MP4-30 work properly.

This is another reason

why McLaren has opted for an experienced driver line-up, because you can better rely on such drivers when things aren't running smoothly. But once they are running smoothly, attention will shift to the drivers, and who is gaining the upper hand. Kimi Raikkonen – like Button a one-time world champion – found out last year how difficult life could be racing Alonso in equal equipment, but Button appears

unperturbed. In a revealing interview with this magazine late last year, he declared the prospect of being Alonso's team-mate held no fear for him, and the man who outscored reigning world champion Lewis Hamilton during their three seasons as McLaren team-mates is maintaining that confident and relaxed attitude.

"He's the fourth team-mate I've had in four years, so I'm used to new team-mates, and pretty good ones at that," says Button of Alonso. "Working with an experienced driver is a good thing; something you always want. When you race, you're there to compete against your team-mate. That's been the same since F1 started, so nothing has changed."

Except something has changed this year, because Alonso – widely regarded as currently the very best all-round driver in Formula 1 – will be on the other side of the McLaren garage this season. But Button dismisses the received wisdom that places Alonso in an elite group of drivers operating on a higher level to the rest of the grid.

"There are always three people picked out as being better than the rest; I totally disagree with that," he told AUTOSPORT late last year. "I think they've found themselves in the right position at the right time on more occasions than others."

Soon the world will learn whether that statement was the faux confidence of a driver fighting for his future, or the result of deep inner confidence that will manifest itself once the McLaren-Honda is competitive. Perhaps the prospect of a second world title (to add to his 2009 success) will galvanise Button into becoming even better...

But we're getting ahead of ourselves here. The McLaren-Honda is not, and will not, be ready to deliver its two drivers that kind of success in 2015, so the Button-versus-Alonso battle for superiority will have to be put on ice. Indeed,

## "I'M USED TO HAVING NEW TEAM-MATES, AND PRETTY GOOD ONES AT THAT"

JENSON BUTTON

# THE RETURN OF THE ENFANT TERRIBLE

There was a time when the prospect of Fernando Alonso returning to McLaren was inconceivable. But when you think about it, the reunion is perfectly logical. Why? Because to be successful in Formula 1 you must be pragmatic, and for both team and driver it was the best possible move.

Alonso had run out of patience with Ferrari and burned his bridges with several key players in the organisation. You can't blame him after five years of struggles, culminating in managing just two podium finishes last year despite some high-quality drives. As for McLaren, with the restart of its much-vaunted alliance with Honda, the desire was to bring in a top-liner and Alonso was the only one available. This is a remarriage of convenience.

It hasn't started particularly well. Alonso's crash at Barcelona on the final day of the second pre-season test left him in hospital for three nights with a concussion, while problems with the Honda engine mean that this renewed partnership heads into the 2015 season very undercooked. But at least there have been no signs of the old tensions returning.

It remains to be seen whether Alonso back at

McLaren will work. Much will depend on how quickly Honda gets its engine up to speed. But it is worth remembering just how unpleasant the whole situation became in 2007, when the team was embroiled in the spy scandal and both McLaren and Alonso couldn't wait to see the back of each other.

The one factor that is not common is that Alonso is not up against a hot-shot rookie team-mate, as he was with newcomer Lewis Hamilton in 2007. In Button, he has a partner he knows all about and will back himself to outperform. Then again, many expected Hamilton to outdo Button and, while the younger Briton was the stronger qualifier and twice finished ahead in the world championship, the senior side of the garage actually scored more points during their three seasons together.

The bottom line is that Alonso is absolutely determined to win a third world championship. He turns 34 in July and knows that time is running out to do that. That's why his move to McLaren has to work.

*Edd Straw*



Testing at Barcelona: not enough laps have been turned in MP4-30

McLaren racing director Eric Boullier points out that they will have to work well together (at least in the short term), or else their personal ambitions will simply flounder on the bedrock of an uncompetitive car.

"It's true they are competitors and the main competitor will be their team-mate, but they are experienced, they have enjoyed past success, they are eager to have success again, and they understand they will build their success on the team's success," says Boullier. "The fact that they are old enough and have enough experience means there is a nice connection between them – they are clicking well together. They are also at a similar stage in life so they are much more mature. They are still selfish as champions, but they understand that to get where they want to be they need the team to be successful first."

But surely, after two seasons racing alongside inexperienced drivers in poor cars, Button will have to raise his game again, faced as he is with a driver of Alonso's quality, desperate to add a third world title to the double he managed way back in 2005-06...

"I don't think so," asserts Boullier. "But Fernando will push him. It's normal, because your reference is your team-mate. Emulation between team-mates is the best thing you can get in a racing team, because every weekend they will push each other against the others, and then you get where you want to go."

It's clear that the driver line-up is very much a secondary consideration for McLaren-Honda at the moment. But once the team is where it wants to go in terms of performance on the circuit, it will be all about 'Button versus Alonso' – the most experienced pairing on the grid going head-to-head for the first time in their long and distinguished careers.

That is a tantalising prospect for F1. ❧



TEE/LAT

# THE START OF A NEW FERRARI DYNASTY

**Sebastian Vettel's switch to the Scuderia is one of the biggest stories of the season, so what can we expect from F1's new German-Italian alliance?**

By **EDD STRAW**

**T**he comparisons with Michael Schumacher are inescapable. For years, there had been rumours and premature stories about Sebastian Vettel moving to Ferrari; last October, it was finally announced that the four-time world champion would be heading to Maranello. In one fell swoop, the 39 wins, the seasons of dominance, the pole positions, became little more than a prelude to what is sure to define Vettel's career when it is reflected upon 10 or 15 years down the line.

After all, when we talk about Schumacher's incredible achievements, those two titles with Benetton act as little more than a footnote to his Ferrari successes.

But while Ferrari was below strength when Schumacher joined, it had at least come off the back of a reasonable season – in 1995, when Schumacher signed on the dotted line, Ferrari had at least won a grand prix, whereas the Scuderia that Vettel has joined managed a paltry two podiums in 2014. But it's only a question of degree. The fact is that, separated by two decades, the story up to this point is ▶





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Schumacher was an influence on Vettel's Ferrari move



SBLOX/HAW/LAT

## “IT WILL BE A VERY SPECIAL THING, THE FIRST RACE FOR FERRARI”

SEBASTIAN VETTEL

► the same: a great champion joins a struggling team. But what happens now for Vettel?

Interestingly, Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene revealed during the first Barcelona pre-season test that Schumacher had, indirectly, played a role in Vettel's decision to head to Ferrari. While Schumacher remains in the fight of his life following his skiing accident, long-time manager Sabine Kehm was consulted by Vettel.

“He was asking about Ferrari and Sabine said the atmosphere she found at the time of Michael was that of a great team, like family,” said Arrivabene. “Seb was listening and said OK. The phone call made the difference. Without that phone call, Sebastian may not have come. This is the truth.”

That may or may not be true, because the bottom line is that Vettel needed a change. After four years of supremacy, his 2014 season was underwhelming. Having adapted brilliantly to the counter-intuitive driving style demands of the exhaust-blown-downforce Red Bulls of the previous era, he struggled with the more conventional characteristics of last year's car. This was puzzling considering the fact that adaptability had previously been one of Vettel's biggest strengths.

A great driver can be excused one disappointing season, but Vettel cannot afford a second. His switch to Ferrari must prove the hypothesis that his struggles last year were partly rooted in disappointment at not having the machinery to gun for the championship and struggling to find the determination to raise his

game. From 2010-13, his rigour, work ethic and determination to leave no stone unturned characterised the all-round excellence of a driver who combined stunning speed with the thoroughness all great champions need. But that seemed to be strangely lacking last year. With a move to Ferrari and a reputation to re-establish, if he's not fully motivated this year then he probably never will be again. That's what will make it so fascinating to follow his progress.

Pre-season has gone pretty well, with the performance of the Ferrari a clear step forward, even if the days when the car has been top of the timesheets probably will prove to have flattered

to deceive. Aside from Vettel's embarrassing trip to the gravel during the first Barcelona test, when he was “asleep”, things have gone very well for the German in his new environment.

He completed his final day of pre-season testing last Sunday and, while he is under no illusion that the Ferrari is capable of challenging Mercedes, Vettel believes that being best of the rest is a realistic possibility.

“It's clear that Mercedes is in front,” he said. “After that, there seems to be a little bit of a gap and then I think it's going to be closer. With many teams, it's difficult to say who is right behind. But it is probably very close between Williams, Red Bull and ourselves.

“The first two is easy [in terms of predicting the grid for Australia]: unless they have some issues the two Mercedes. And then I hope two Ferraris. And then, I don't care.”

Realistically, this would be a dream start for Vettel and Ferrari. Yes, in an ideal world he would fantasise about a win on his first outing in a world championship race for the Scuderia, something achieved for the Maranello team only by Juan Manuel Fangio, Giancarlo Baghetti, Mario Andretti, Nigel Mansell, Kimi Raikkonen and Fernando Alonso. But just as when Schumacher headed to Ferrari in 1996, this move is about long-term success rather than instant gratification.

As Schumacher has admitted in the past, his move to Ferrari was partly motivated by the fact that he knew the Benetton team would struggle to maintain its supremacy. While he could certainly have won the 1996 title, and perhaps even the '97 one, after that point the team slumped into the doldrums and didn't win another race until 2003.

Ferrari lacks nothing in terms of resources, and by dint of its size and prestige should be capable of fighting for the title year-in, year-out. The indications are that Ferrari is building itself around Vettel, just as it did with Schumacher. The raft of changes over the winter isn't directly analogous to 1996, for team boss Jean Todt had already been in charge for three years while the double act of Ferrari chairman Sergio Marchionne and team principal Arrivabene has only just been installed. But there are signs that this could emerge as F1's next superteam.

In James Allison, Ferrari has arguably the best full-time technical director currently working in F1 (Adrian Newey's withdrawal from frontline service disqualifies him from this position). If the

New car seems to be an improvement on the 2014 package





Vettel sometimes battled midfield runners in 2014



XPB IMAGES

## HIGH HOPES FOR RAIKKONEN

Pre-season form suggests that the Kimi Raikkonen we will see in 2015 will be very different to the one who sleepwalked his way through much of the previous season. In terms of results, last year was Raikkonen's worst in F1 (worse even than his first year with Sauber). For a driver with his fundamental ability, that simply isn't good enough. But right from the start of testing, he was far happier with life.

"This year is a completely different story to last year," he said. "It's a positive start and I had a good feeling straight away when I went out."

Talk is cheap, but what the Finn was saying was backed up by the body language of the Ferrari when he was at the wheel. Last year, there were times when he was all over the place trying to hustle a car that didn't give him the front-end response and feel he desired. At Jerez, watching him turn the car in to the chicane, he was smooth, decisive and confident. And this has continued throughout testing.

"He had problems because he was not feeling the car, especially the front, and it was not the

car that was adapted to the style of Kimi," said Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene. "Kimi did not, last year, become an old ex-F1 driver. He is demonstrating that these days, feeling the car better. He is smiling."

The struggle for front-end feel is nothing new for Raikkonen, who even in his pomp with McLaren – when there were days when nobody could get near his speed – used to push the team hard to deliver a car to work for him. While the understeer balance that has been prevalent in F1 since 2007 works against him, one development this year is the change in construction of the rear Pirellis to widen the contact patch under load. This will mitigate rear thermal degradation, which would be accelerated by setting up a car with a livelier rear to give better turn-in.

So things are lining up well for Raikkonen. At worst, he should be significantly better than last year. But if he can recapture the level of performance of his best years, he could give Vettel a real hurry-up. The trouble is, the mid-2000s were a long time ago.



Arrivabene (right) is also a recent arrival

management has the wherewithal to back Allison and give him what he needs – including the all-important stability that Ferrari has lacked, given that just about every major management role has changed over the past 18 months – then the nucleus is there.

Already, the signs are that Vettel is gelling extremely well with a team that had grown tired of the sometimes divisive Fernando Alonso. After his first day in the car at Jerez, Vettel made a point of shaking hands with each member of the team; a small touch but one that echoes the way Schumacher galvanised those around him. Right from the first moment he visited the garage during the post-Abu Dhabi GP test last November, Vettel has had a very positive impact on the Scuderia.

All of this is more important than results in the short term. Yes, it would be great if Ferrari can fulfil the stated objective of winning at least two races, which even with the progress made over the winter seems little optimistic given that it could depend on circumstances (namely Mercedes hitting trouble). But the key is that a foundation has been created that will allow Ferrari to attain the heights it has failed to scale since Felipe Massa's world championship near-miss in 2008.

Central to this will be the effectiveness of the power-unit package. Last year, this was Ferrari's Achilles' heel, and it would be foolish to expect the gap to Mercedes to be closed instantly. But Ferrari is believed to carry the most development 'tokens' into the season, meaning that we should see a couple of significant steps during the year, the first expected to be around the start of the European season.

This step-by-step improvement is what it's all about for Ferrari now. It will take several years for it to re-emerge as a title-winning force, just



Ferrari needs time to rebuild around Vettel

as it did when Schumacher joined, and Vettel has every confidence that the direction the team is heading in is the right one. One thing we can say with certainty is that Ferrari will achieve more than two podiums this season.

"I think it's a step forward," says Vettel of the new car. "I didn't drive last year's Ferrari, but I think compared to the car they had last year it's a massive step. People generally seem happy, but that doesn't mean we are satisfied. If you want to win, you have to beat Mercedes and that's the target."

For now, all the signs are that Vettel and Ferrari are now still very much in the honeymoon phase of their relationship. The lustre of being a driver for the Scuderia has yet to wear off for Vettel, for whom the past few months have been the realisation of a dream. The moment he becomes the 94th driver to

start a world championship race for Ferrari will be a very special one.

"The first time when I arrived last year I had the opportunity to test the car from 2012, which was already something magical. When the flag drops in Melbourne I think it will be a very special thing, the first race for Ferrari. Red is a very special colour, because it means so much."

What part Vettel will ultimately play in the history of Ferrari remains to be seen. So far, he's completed six days of testing and the honeymoon period has gone well. But you could say that about so many partnerships.

One thing is for certain: Vettel is in it for the long haul. In every way, this is the new start he seems to have needed. Success will be expected; anything else would reflect very badly on a driver who, despite what happened last year, still has to rank among the all-time greats. ❧

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

# FELIPE MASSA

**Felipe Massa almost won the 2008 world championship. But some think he's not been the same since his serious accident in '09. SCOTT MITCHELL talks to him about his Williams renaissance**

**W**illiams played its cards close to its chest during pre-season testing, during which its programme had all the hallmarks of a frontrunning team. It was confident, kept itself to itself and got on with the job it wanted to do.

And rightly so, because last year the former world-beater enjoyed its most successful season in more than 10 years. Felipe Massa was a big part of that.

He is as aware as anyone else that he became a shadow of his former self at Ferrari, but he was almost unrecognisable last season, taking pole in Austria and chasing down Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton in Abu Dhabi before narrowly falling short of victory.

Here, the 2008 world championship runner-up explains what's been key to

the revival, why it was satisfying to stick one to his critics last year, and why winning again is the main aim for this season.

**Scott Mitchell:** The FW36 was so nearly a race-winning car. What has the team looked to improve from last year to take it to the next level?

**Felipe Massa:** We've worked to try to make the car more stable, and it is. Not a big amount, but we do not have the full package anyway [in testing]. I think when we have everything we should understand if it's the step we expected or not. At the moment it's a little bit better, but we still have a lot to understand.

**SM:** And has Williams made a step forward as a team over the winter?

**FM:** Yeah, I think so. I think the team is still

growing and it's improving in areas we believe we still need to improve. But I think it's going in the right direction, so I believe the team will be much more ready and organised compared to how we were last season. We're pushing to maybe have new parts and improvements earlier than before, trying to organise the team to be more efficient. And this is something that makes a big difference. If you're the best, most efficient team doing a proper job, the result is improved.

**SM:** A couple of times last year you were knocked off your stride. How important will a good start and maintaining confidence be?

**FM:** I think a good start is always important. I was not very lucky in many races at the start of last year. It's a new season, so we need to prepare to do everything right, and getting

**“My relationship with the team is right. When I say something they listen and they try to do it”**



New car feels more stable than last year's FW36



Williams and Massa are a good fit; he feels valued within the team





XPBIMAGES

Massa says results are the best way to answer his critics

results straight away will definitely be better. And I think [after] what we did last year, we know how to be quick and competitive.

**SM: Speaking of confidence, was it pleasing that there were times last year you showed you still have it in you to fight for wins?**

**FM:** Oh, for sure. Definitely, it's pleasing to have that performance, to show that we were growing and having great races in the second part of the season with no mistakes, not just from my side but the team too. Everything was working well.

**SM: And did that end the questions over whether the 2009 accident held you back?**

**FM:** Yeah. I think the only answer you have for these people is the result. You don't need to say anything, you know? I checked many times with my doctors and they always said I was fine, so it's just the result. These people, one day they write good things and the other they write bad things. I just keep working, keep fighting to get the result. That's it! Then people change their mind very quickly.

**SM: Is there something different at Williams that has enabled you to achieve more than at Ferrari?**

**FM:** I think the relationship with the team is right. So when I say something, they listen and they try to do it. I was in a bit of a different situation in the last years at Ferrari. They were not listening to me. Then you lose confidence, you're not happy and it's not working in the best way. Here I cannot complain – everything we're doing together, everybody is listening to each other. I think that's the way you can grow. So I'm happy.

**SM: What do you think the partnership can achieve if it gets everything right?**

**FM:** Race wins are what we want. That's what we can achieve. The team is trying hard and doing a good job in many, many areas. We can see us in front, but we need to see what the others are doing. You can't close your eyes to Red Bull, or Ferrari. McLaren, we don't know because they have not been running properly yet. You need to be looking to these teams. They've won many championships and they can still win. And we cannot forget how Mercedes finished the championship last year – it's impossible not to put Mercedes there on top as well. I think honestly we need to have our feet on the ground, but I think we can be fighting with these teams.

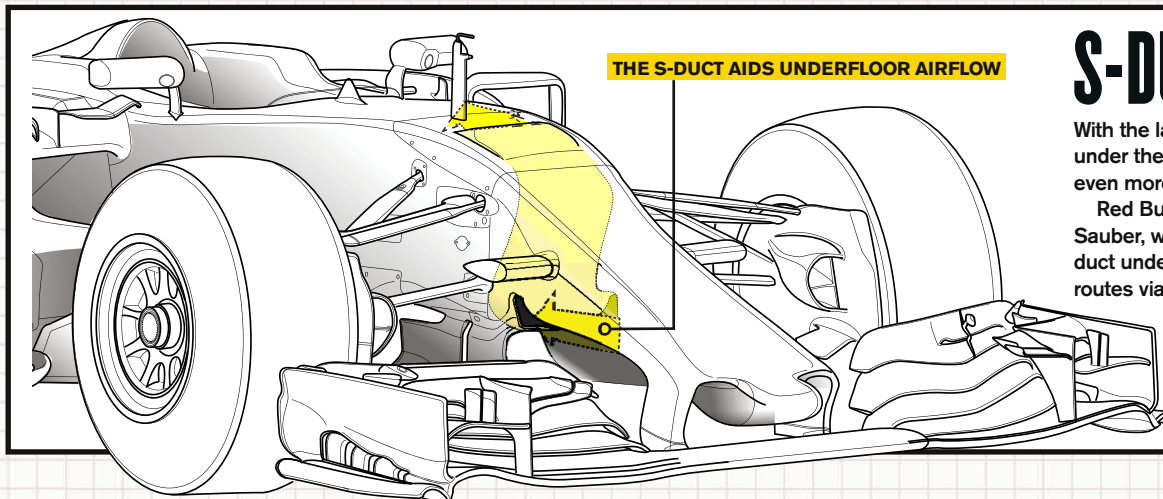
**SM: You mentioned being happier. Does that mean you want to keep going for longer?**

**FM:** I have no reason to stop. But I'm not here just to participate. I'm here to give something and to get something back as well. I think when I see I don't have that anymore, I will do different things. When you are competitive everything is going smooth, you know? So when you see that things are not going well, you start thinking about other things. I'm happy now and if things are going like that, I will stay here! 🏆

# THE SECRETS OF 2015 F1 TECH

What's been happening behind the scenes as designers perfect their challengers for 2015?

**CRAIG SCARBOROUGH** gives us a guide to five key technical themes to keep an eye on



## S-DUCT NOSE

With the larger nosecones, airflow over and under the raised section of the chassis is even more important this year.

Red Bull has retained an idea it took from Sauber, with its ducted nosecone. A 'U' inlet duct under the nose captures airflow and routes via an S-shaped duct to vent the air over the upper part of the chassis. This cleans up the airflow both under and over the nose, while also making the nosecone cross-section slimmer.

## NEW NOSE RULES

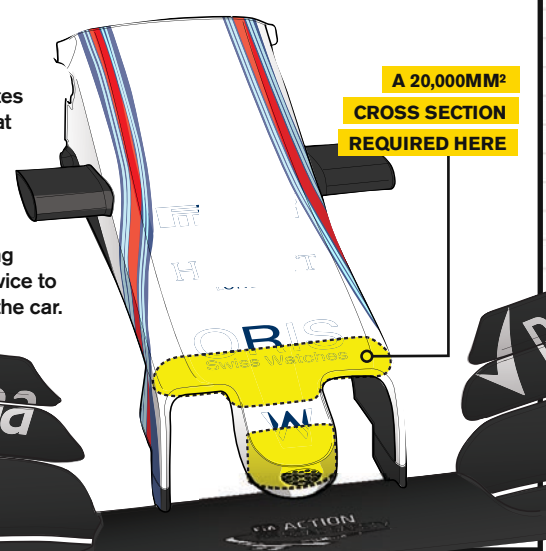
With more changes to the nose regulations demanding more-specific dimensions to be met by the frontal crash structure, the crop of 2015 noses are, so far, refreshingly different to each other. These new regulations demand not only a 9000mm<sup>2</sup> nose-tip cross section, as we had last year, but also demand a cross section of 20,000mm<sup>2</sup> 100mm behind that. This prevents teams having the unsightly noses seen last year.

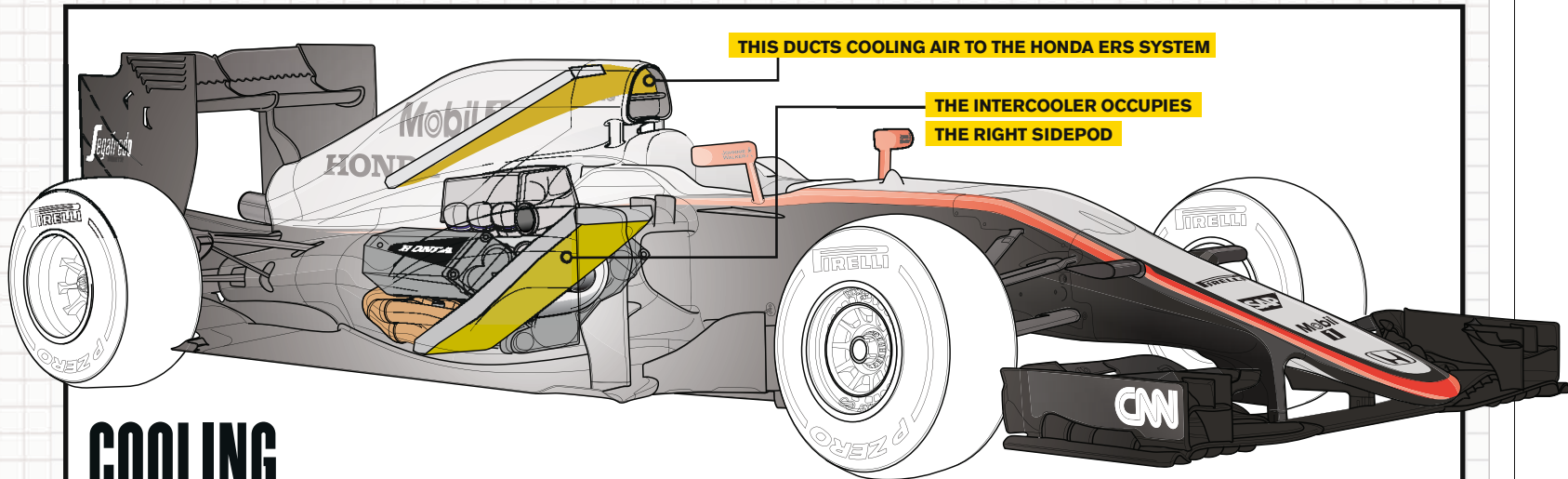
The nose is now also subject to a more-severe crash test. The front 150mm of the nose must meet a deceleration target when testing, forcing the teams to make the nose tip more substantial.

Most teams have opted for a short nose. While this makes it more difficult to pass the crash test, it prevents the nose tip compromising the front wing and allows more airflow to pass under the chassis's raised section.

Williams has been very aggressive in the way it has shrunk back the nose, with its shape taken back tightly around the two regulatory cross-sections (as highlighted). This creates the short thumb-tip that extends from the main nose structure.

Williams has worked hard to twist the front-wing mounting pylons into an aero device to aid airflow around the car.





## COOLING

With the introduction of the turbocharged and hybrid-based power units last year, there was also an increase in the heat put out by these power units. Requiring coolers for the turbo, as well as the energy-recovery system, the teams have had to compromise aerodynamics, with larger coolers inside larger sidepods. This costs aerodynamic efficiency not only because of the drag of the large

radiators and sidepods, but also the loss in downforce from the obstruction to the airflow of these sidepods.

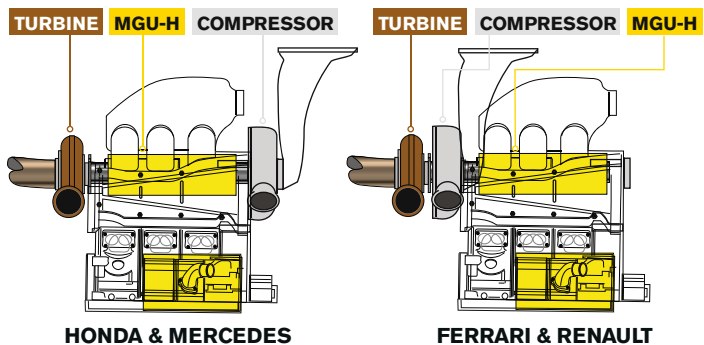
So engine manufacturers, along with their lubricant partners, have striven to run the engines hotter to reduce the cooling demand, while the chassis and aero teams have refined the packaging of the sidepods to reduce the negative effects of the cooling package.

Some teams have changed the placement of the coolers by moving them out of the sidepod to feed them from inlets around the rollhoop. One team doing this is McLaren; thanks to its bespoke Honda packaging, the set-up is different to other teams.

Whereas the right sidepod contains the turbo intercooler and the left sidepod houses the engine's oil and water radiators, its ERS system is then cooled by a larger radiator

mounted over the engine and fed by the top half of the rollhoop inlet.

This design does cost some rear performance and raises the car's centre of gravity somewhat, but the reduction is offset by the size-zero sidepods and rear-end packaging; McLaren-Honda has gained far more performance from the improved diffuser airflow.



## POWER UNIT PACKAGE

Last year, each of the three manufacturers chose to package their new power units in different ways, with Mercedes uniquely splitting its turbo between the front and rear of the engine, then placing the MGU-H on the same shaft linking the two parts of the turbo. This allowed Mercedes to run a far larger compressor for more power, while keeping the heat of the exhausts away from the compressor and minimising pipework to and from the intercooler.

Both Ferrari and Renault mounted their turbo more conventionally behind the engine, with Ferrari splitting the

turbo with the MGU-H. These rear turbo layouts are simpler to engineer, without the long shaft linking the turbo housings at over 100,000rpm, albeit at the cost of a smaller compressor size, hindering power production.

With much speculation over the winter, the manufacturers' new layouts were expected to follow Mercedes' lead, but only Honda has done so.

Even so, both Ferrari and Renault have repackaged their turbo installation, with Ferrari dropping its old design for a more closely coupled turbo set-up with the MGU-H mounted in the V of the engine just as Renault had done, albeit with a much larger compressor to regain the bhp missing from its 2014 set-up.

## BLOWN FRONT AXLES

The aerodynamic efficiency of any single-seater will be handicapped by open wheels. These add substantially to the car's drag, while the turbulent wake created can also be sucked in between the rear wheels and ruin the performance of the diffuser.

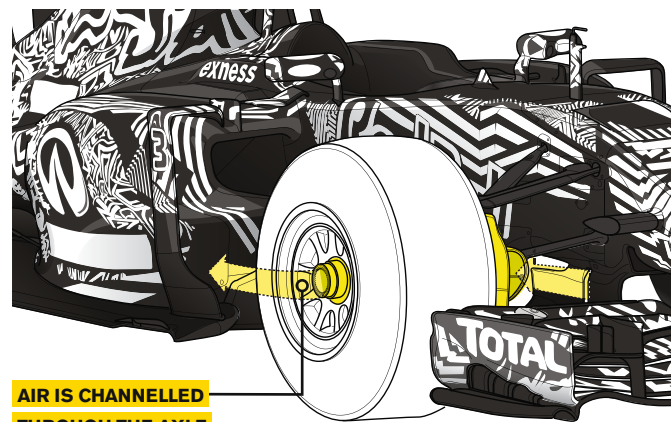
To offset these effects, the front wing can be used to create a powerful airflow around the outside of the tyres. This outwash prevents the tyres' wake tucking back in around the car's rear end.

Since last year the front wings have been narrow, so teams lost some of this outwash effect. As a result, for 2015 teams have reintroduced an old idea – that of

blowing airflow through a hollow front axle to create that outwash.

Larger front-brake-duct scoops capture air and pass it directly through the axle and out via the open end within the wheelnut. As this air is forced out of the axle it pushes the tyre's wake outboard. In effect, this is similar to the Frisbee wheel fairings we saw back in 2008-09.

One problem is there is no pointed end to the axle, making pitstops slower as the wheelgun has to be positioned more accurately. We can expect some wheelgun/socket design variety from McLaren, Red Bull and Ferrari, which all use this solution.





THOMPSON/GETTY



# CAN KVYAT DO A RICCIARDO?

Last season, a relatively unheralded Red Bull junior stepped up to the energy drinks giant's main team and took the Formula 1 world by surprise.

**BEN ANDERSON** asks if Daniil Kvyat can repeat the giant-killing trick

# T

hanks to Sebastian Vettel's decision to quit Red Bull and seek a fresh challenge at Ferrari, 20-year-old Russian Daniil Kvyat will this season step into one of the most coveted seats on the F1 grid, having previously competed in only 19 grands prix.

The comparisons with his new team-mate, Daniel Ricciardo, are inevitable. Twelve months ago Ricciardo was a relatively unproven driver (albeit with an impressive junior single-seater racing pedigree) who'd spent two years showing occasional flashes of speed and lower-points-scoring ability for Toro Rosso. Now he is feted as a three-time grand prix winner, vanquisher of Vettel, and an emerging Formula 1 superstar. Kvyat is the latest driver to come off the Red Bull Junior/Toro Rosso talent conveyor belt, essentially following in the smiling Australian's wheel tracks and aspiring to 'do a Ricciardo' in 2015.

But, just as questions about 17-year-old Max Verstappen's lack of experience dog the Dutchman at every turn, so doubts have been and are still being raised about Kvyat's suitability to drive for one of F1's most successful teams after just one season of racing at the highest level. The Russian does not have the benefit of Ricciardo's prior experience before graduating to Red Bull (50 races for Toro Rosso and HRT over two-and-a-half seasons), but if you compare their first full seasons driving for Toro Rosso (Ricciardo in 2012 and Kvyat in 2014) Kvyat compares favourably.

Results on his debut were similar, his qualifying peaks were similar, and his best points scoring finishes were similar. You could argue the midfield was less competitive in 2014 than two years previously, but there's no doubt Kvyat's debut season in F1 was highly impressive by any measure. Kvyat himself is certainly not fazed by the prospect of going up against one of F1's brightest emerging talents in the same team so soon in his career. Progressing from Formula BMW to the Red Bull F1 team in just five seasons? No problem.

"If you look at the amount of things that happened to me in the last 15 months it might look a bit crazy, it's true," says Kvyat, when asked if things ever feel like they might be moving a little too quickly. "Every time you have to keep adapting, keep changing your mind a bit. Yeah, it's not easy, but you have to know how to take the realities and it should be fine.

"I feel like the speed is there from my side, it's just about putting all the things together. I believe that all the things that are happening are meant to be – all the negative things, all the positive things – I take them as they are.

"There is no ideal world here, so you just have to take things as they are. If they are hard to you that means that something has probably gone slightly wrong and that means you have to correct your direction.

"In my situation right now there are all the things to find for myself. I see the team has some fantastic resources, and we just need to bring the team forward, that's it."

This simple, pragmatic attitude is typical of Kvyat. His is a no-nonsense character: young and raw, but mature beyond his years, and utterly focused on becoming one of the very best racing drivers in the world. Michael Schumacher worshipper Vettel has set the template for the sort of driver Red Bull wants inside its fold. Now Vettel has departed to try to emulate his hero and rebuild a debilitated Ferrari team, Kvyat has the chance to prove he is made of similar stuff. The fact that he is an admirer of Schumacher – and tennis champion Roger Federer – is an encouraging sign, for these are two individuals who haven't just dominated their respective sports, but defined them for a generation.

"I always liked the approach of Schumacher," explains Kvyat. "For me he is almost like an ideal driver in behaviour and the way he did things. Another great example is Roger Federer. His calmness, his attitude during the game is fantastic. The control of the emotions is huge,

and this is something that comes with experience because you cannot be gifted with experience. You can be gifted with talent, but you cannot be gifted with experience."

This is something of which Kvyat's paymasters are well aware. It is no secret that, ideally, Red Bull would have preferred to give Kvyat at least another season to develop at Toro Rosso (while Vettel saw out the final season of his contract with the senior team). To a certain extent, Vettel's early departure has forced Red Bull's hand. But then again, it could have opted to chase another bone fide

A-lister, such as Fernando Alonso.

Instead, it has opted to keep faith in its own ladder of talent. According to Red Bull boss Christian Horner, the superb campaign mounted by Ricciardo in 2014 has given everyone within the organisation faith that it doesn't need to draw upon the small pool of established pros to be successful as a racing operation. That's why it has promoted Kvyat instead.

"His disadvantage is experience – he's got 19 races to his name," admits Horner to AUTOSPORT. "But his learning trajectory has been very impressive. I think he'll surprise a few people this year.

"The transition that Daniel Ricciardo had from Toro Rosso gave us confidence to bring up the juniors from Toro Rosso. Dan had such a wonderful season last year, and Kvyat – against a very quick team-mate – did a very ▶

Off-track excursion at Jerez proved costly – the team only had one front wing



STALEY/LAT



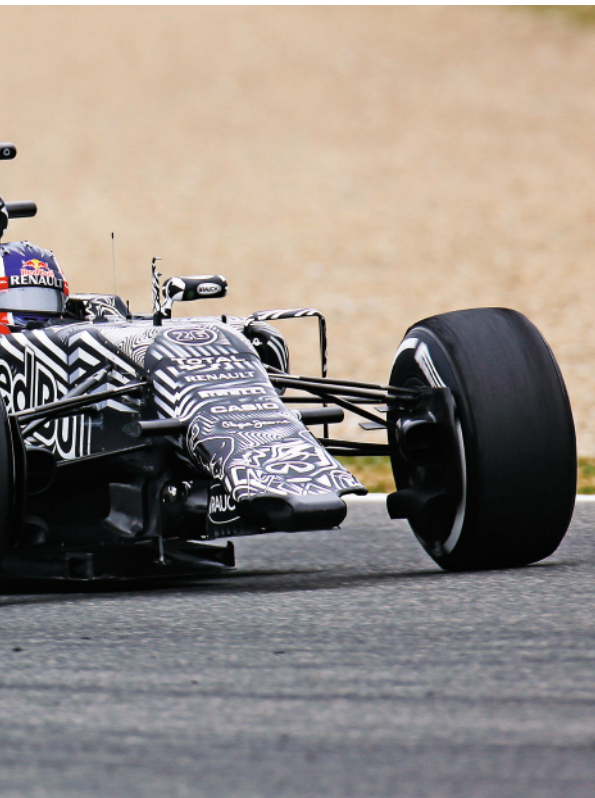
THOMPSON/GETTY

Team chose Kvyat rather than recruiting an established star driver

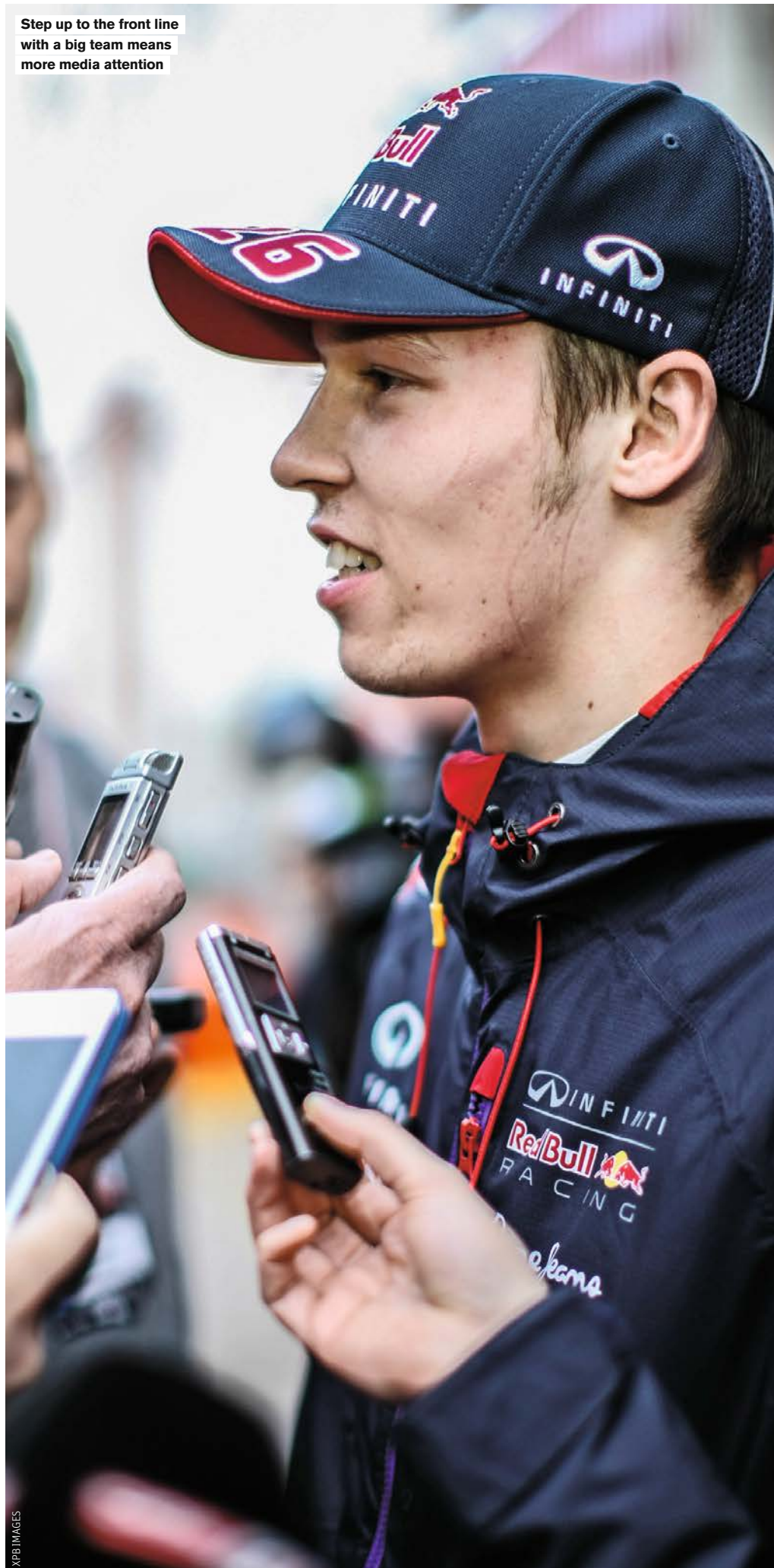
Final Barcelona test was hampered by technical "issues"



BLOKHAW/LAT



Step up to the front line with a big team means more media attention



Team boss Horner (centre) says Kvyat vindicates Red Bull's young driver scheme



► impressive job. He was very, very quick last year, the outstanding newcomer in Formula 1.

"If you just go for the established guys all the time, where does the next Sebastian Vettel or Daniel Ricciardo come from? It's always been a Red Bull philosophy to invest inwardly and nurture and develop talent, rather than paying for a hired hand. I think it's great that we're giving these guys a chance. If Red Bull hadn't given Sebastian Vettel a chance, who knows where he'd be today?"

But for all Red Bull's confidence in Kvyat, there is still a possibility that the promotion could be too much too soon for him. His rookie campaign was impressive – and his speed is unquestionable – but he has yet to really string races together consistently. True, the unreliable Toro Rosso STR9 let him down far too often on Sunday afternoons, but Kvyat was still comfortably outscored by team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne, an extremely accomplished driver in his own right who has been snapped up to become Ferrari's simulator pilot since being dropped by Red Bull.

Nevertheless, speak to those who worked with Kvyat inside Toro Rosso last season and you get the impression he has exactly the right approach to make the most of the opportunity laid out in front of him. In fact, Kvyat's attitude to racing is a key attribute that marks him out as a driver to watch. The Red Bull drive is the result of the application of that attitude, but the making of it arguably came during his title-winning campaign in GP3 in 2013. It was the impressive maturity and application he showed in turning a poor start to the season into championship glory that finally convinced his backers he was something special. Kvyat himself reckons it's the adaptability and resilience in adversity he has learned to employ – as a driver and a person – during his short career that has been the making of him.

"If you are having difficulty, you try to find an approach and overcome this difficulty," he explains. "You have to think how you work on the difficulty, then you think 'Ah! Next time I will try to face it in the same way'."

"Your personality can be creative in moments like that and we were creative that year [in GP3]. But not just in one click, it's many presences in Formula Renault 2.0, Formula BMW – you work with the people, you get good feedback from them, and all these things kind of build.

"Every person has a very different way. Some of them are similar, but building it from different memories, different actions in their lives. This has been happening in my life."

The challenge this season is to build himself into a driver capable of challenging for race wins and world championships. But he won't have much of a grace period, given what Ricciardo achieved last season. For his part, Kvyat seems mentally prepared for this challenge.

"It is not an ideal world here," he concedes. "Of course, ideally you want to say 'I'll take 10 years now to win the championship', or something easy! But it doesn't exist like this,

so you have to come in and be at the top of your game straight away.

"You try to see things which work better and you have to try and understand why and make them work in the same or a better way. It's early days, but I'm always here to do my best. I was doing this last year, and now with Red Bull I will do the same."

Kvyat recognises he will have to begin again in terms of learning a new team and the way its people work, all while his team-mate Ricciardo builds on the relationships that a breezy, happy-go-lucky attitude out of the car (combined with well-judged aggression inside the cockpit) helped cement so quickly in 2014. Kvyat is not Ricciardo. Indeed, their characters are actually quite different, but that doesn't mean both cannot be equally effective operators.

"Daniil is very, very focused, very hungry, he's quite intense – he's more probably like Sebastian [Vettel] in that respect," adds Horner. "Whereas Daniel Ricciardo is a bit more laid back out of the car – very happy-go-lucky. But as soon as he puts the visor down that killer instinct comes out in him.

"They're different characters and I think it will be a strong combination. It will be an exciting combination, that's for sure."

Ricciardo's advice for his new team-mate is to focus as much as possible on his own game, and not get distracted or "overwhelmed" by the different environment of a top team.

"He's in a similar position to me, but he's just younger, so I think he just has to do what got him here in the first place, which is driving fast – a bit like how I approached it last year,"

Ricciardo says. "We'll see. I'll be kind to him, but at the same time make life as difficult as I can and be as fast as I can on-track! Hopefully it works out well for both of us. We've got on pretty well since day one, so I'm pretty happy to have him alongside me this year."

Ricciardo defined his first season at Red Bull by grabbing every opportunity that came his way, from that superb drive to second (on the road) in Melbourne – after a disastrous pre-season – to collecting the pieces every time Mercedes dropped the silverware in front of him. It's a sign of

the inner steel and self-confidence Kvyat possesses that he already feels ready to do just as well if similar chances are presented to him.

"Last year there was no way we could be winning a race in ideal conditions, now we have to see how it is here," he says. "I don't know how it's going to look like with Red Bull, if we will or will not be capable. We will see.

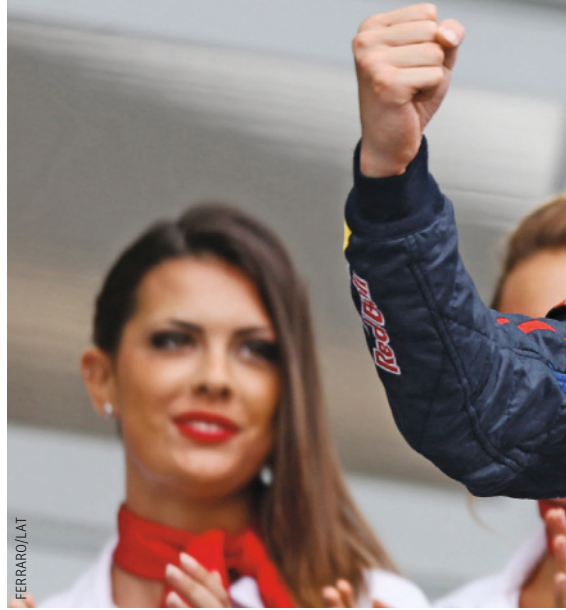
"But once the opportunity comes you have to grab it, and this is when you recognise a good or an average driver. If he can bring it to the end, yes he's very good. But if not, then maybe there is still some work to do, or he just cannot do it. It's all about getting there first.

"I have been winning in the past in my career many times. It's a new mental challenge, a new challenge here in F1, but it all can happen. I don't see anything that can stop me if there's going to be the chance." ❧

**"I'LL BE KIND TO HIM, BUT AT THE SAME TIME MAKE LIFE DIFFICULT"**

**DANIEL RICCIARDO**

**After winning the GP3 title Kvyat was promoted straight to F1 by Red Bull**



FERRARO/LAT

**Toro Rosso provided a launchpad for Kvyat's Formula 1 career**



HONE/LAT

**Red Bull's place in the 2015 order hinges on Renault's power unit**



XPB/IMAGES





Kvyat qualified fifth for his home grand prix in Sochi last year



Q&A



**JAMES KEY**  
**TORO ROSSO**  
**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

**What did you make of Daniil Kvyat in the season you worked together?**

You could see he was naturally very able to do this, but would be all ears if you had an idea or a different way of doing something. He came in from GP3, where the way you brake and turn into a corner needed a different approach to Formula 1.

We would go through that with him and he would adapt and sort it out. He was super-talented and really easy to work with, which is a brilliant combination to have. He was not too delicate and not too arrogant, with a brilliant sense of humour. The confidence is just something in him; it is not something he has to generate.

**Are there still some rough edges in his technique to smooth out?**

I think his awareness of tyre management is much better than it was. We struggled a bit at the beginning of last year, mainly because of a lack of winter testing. But I think he was pretty clear on that by the end of the year.

He definitely got qualifying sorted out from Monaco onwards – he definitely got that progression you expect with each new set of tyres. Often with a rookie you find that is not happening straight away, but by Monaco he had that pretty well fixed. He is not locked into any set of beliefs, and I think he will learn well from Ricciardo as well.

**Is he ready for the step up to Red Bull, or would another year at Toro Rosso have been better for him?**

I think another year with us would have been beneficial, because then you consolidate all that you've learned, and then in year three you are ready to go.

Year one is always a big learning process. Equally, given his natural ability and that he is devoid of ego, I think he will settle in well. The pressures are different because the expectation is a little bit higher, but I think he has the right character to deal with that.

# STORYLINES TO FOLLOW IN 2015

There will be plenty of big stories off track during the F1 season. **JONATHAN NOBLE** picks out six of the most intriguing plotlines to follow during the next eight months

## HAMILTON AT CENTRE OF SILLY SEASON

After a dramatic shake-up of Formula 1's driver market last year, the silly season is likely to be much more sensible in 2015. But let's not forget that even in the middle of 2014 there were times when it appeared things were going to be stagnant.

The focus for now will be on Lewis Hamilton and whether he can agree a fresh contract that will keep him at Mercedes for 2016 and beyond. Discussions to try to frame that deal had originally been delayed until the winter so they didn't overshadow the '14 title battle, but there are no signatures on the dotted line yet.

It's clear that both parties want to stay together. Equally, the money and terms have to work both ways. Mercedes doesn't need to rush, as a host of other drivers would jump at the chance of joining the team in 2016 if Hamilton does not sign up.

So it will be fascinating to see how hard the reigning champion is willing to push in holding out for exactly what he wants.



THOMPSON/GETTY

Hamilton has yet to commit to Merc beyond this season

## F1'S 2017 RULES REVOLUTION

Whether or not Formula 1 is actually broken remains a subject of debate. But one thing is clear: grand prix chiefs are pushing on with a radical overhaul for 2017. Team bosses, the FIA and Bernie Ecclestone agreed last month that more time was needed to conceive rules that would work, and the season ahead will be dominated by meetings to sort out a new identity for F1.

There appears to be a consensus on wider cars, bigger tyres and 1000bhp engines, but the devil is in the detail. F1 will have to finalise rules that

actually ensure the new generation of grand prix cars are more spectacular and harder to drive.

Invariably, the danger ahead is one of self-interest, as teams push for future rules that help their own cause. Mercedes will want the status quo; Red Bull will want aero to become dominant again; Ferrari will push for big engine tweaks.

If the teams are left to their own devices the end result could be a poor compromise, which is why all eyes must be on what the FIA and Ecclestone do to seize the initiative.



RONDEAU/GETTY

Wider cars and bigger tyres, as shown in 1992

# COST CONTROL

The collapse of Marussia and Caterham last year prompted a frenzy of panic in the paddock amid concerns that other teams could go under. But despite a call to arms from Lotus, Force India and Sauber, no concessions were made to help them, and further attempts to introduce cost cuts have failed.

With F1 budgets going ever higher, and new sponsors so hard to find, the chances of other teams hitting trouble is only likely to increase. It's hard to know what can be done though, with the bigger teams so determined to outspend each other in the quest for success.

Matters are also not helped by the fact that Bernie Ecclestone would appear to prefer the prospect of customer cars – or 'Super GP2' – than making changes to F1's business model to help current teams.

Perhaps it will take another team going under before something decisive is done.



'Super GP2': is this a right move for F1?

S. BLOKHAM/LAT

# F1'S FAN ENGAGEMENT



One fan who doesn't agree with Bernie

THOMPSON/GETTY

Formula 1's quest for more-exciting cars has been prompted by concerns about falling television audiences, but there are wider issues about fan interaction increasingly coming to the fore in discussions about the sport's future.

Bernie Ecclestone's now infamous comments last year – that F1 didn't need social media and a younger generation of fans – highlighted how the sport risks alienating a new generation.

There are efforts within Formula One Management to do more. Twitter is now getting some attention and the F1 App is being ramped up – but there's a long way to go.

Exactly how much progress is made this year will be critical, especially if F1 faces a fresh popularity problem should Mercedes repeat its domination of 2014.

# RED BULL AND RENAULT

After a troubled 2014 campaign, Red Bull and Renault had to face up to reality that divorce was no option. They had to make their marriage work for each other. The subsequent reshuffle at Renault, and renewed working relationship with Red Bull, has helped close the gap to Mercedes, even if there is still some way to go.

But how that pans out on track this season will be more significant, as team and engine manufacturer are currently plotting their long-term ambitions.

Renault is working out if its marketing efforts are better off being focused on another team – potentially as a key shareholder – rather than just as engine supplier to Red Bull and Toro Rosso.

For Red Bull, its key question is whether or not it can return to title glory with a Renault engine or needs to look elsewhere. After all, Honda will need a customer team soon, and Audi rumours refuse to go away.

This could be a key paddock talking point once the season gets going.



Renault's Abiteboul and Red Bull's Horner: still together, for now

THOMPSON/GETTY

# FERRARI FLEXING ITS MUSCLES

Ferrari heads into 2015 a very different animal to 12 months ago. On track, things certainly look better. But then again that wouldn't be too difficult considering last season was its worst for two decades.

But it's behind the scenes where Ferrari could really make a difference. The new axis of chairman Sergio Marchionne and team principal Maurizio Arrivabene certainly means business, and they're both determined to get Ferrari right back to the centre of F1's political prominence.

We got wind of Ferrari's determination to be more aggressive when it challenged the FIA over the engine-freeze rules last year. It was duly successful in its quest to open the door for in-season engine developments. Expect a similar edge to all it does from now, with Marchionne's and Arrivabene's hotlines to Bernie Ecclestone guaranteeing a louder voice for Maranello when it comes to the future of F1.



Arrivabene has a lot to do behind the scenes

XPB IMAGES



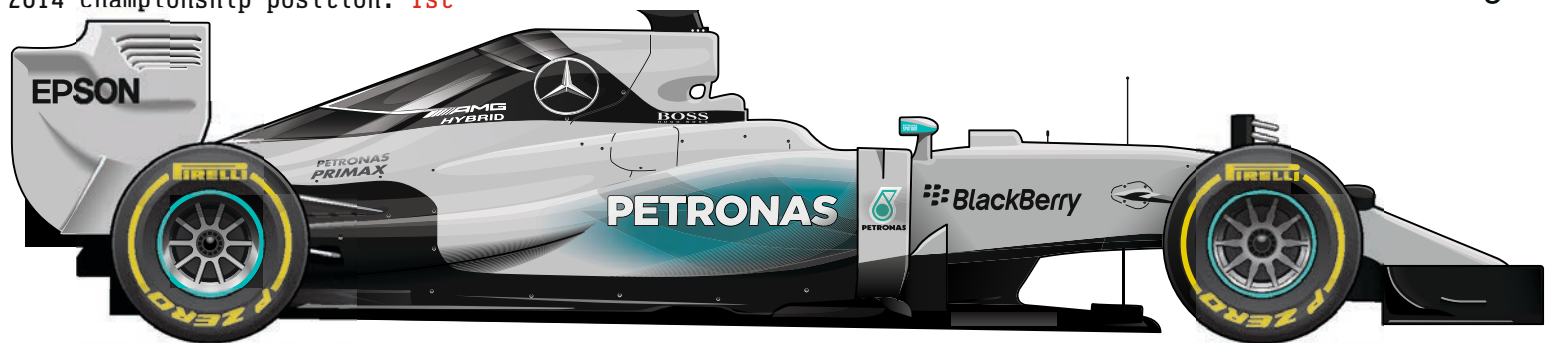
# Mercedes



Hamilton is a strong favourite for title #3

Starts: 96  
First GP: Bahrain 2010  
Wins: 20  
Poles: 27  
Fastest laps: 16  
2014 championship position: 1st

“The key question is whether Mercedes has made enough progress to maintain the level of 2014 advantage”



## Mercedes F1 W06

**M**ercedes did most things right last year and, judging by the smooth running it has enjoyed during testing, there are no obvious problems with the 2015 car that could prevent it from winning another constructors' world championship. The key question is whether it has made enough progress to maintain the level of its 2014 advantage.

There are some changes to the regulations that could cause some problems, such as the new nose rules that have an impact on the downforce levels, but these are relatively small. So a lot will depend on whether the teams in the pack behind have been able to make a bigger step.

The team certainly seems very happy with progress. Everyone kept talking about the focus on reliability early on, and that seems strong, but you always want to see a performance gain from the new car. But however big or small the gap is, it does seem that the Mercedes will be the car to beat when we get to Australia.

The team itself seems pretty stable. After the work done by Ross Brawn to build up Mercedes from 2010-13, Paddy Lowe and Toto Wolff have been able to keep the team working well both technically and operationally. There were a few weaknesses last year with reliability, which three times allowed Red Bull to win races it shouldn't have been fast enough to, so that could be a problem if things are closer at the front.

It's difficult to look beyond Mercedes. It has been able to improve what was the best engine and the development rate of the car late last year was also surprisingly strong, so if all that continues, it'll be another good year for Germany.



### NICO ROSBERG

**6** Age: 29  
Starts: 166  
First GP: Bahrain 2006  
Wins: 8  
Poles: 15  
Fastest laps: 9  
2014 position: 2nd

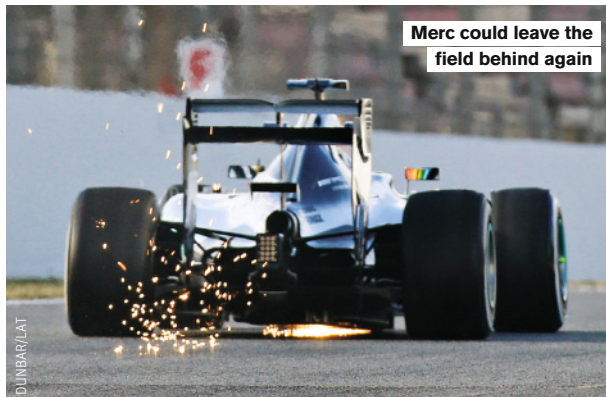
Last year, Rosberg always seemed to be having to try much harder than Hamilton to extract the speed from the car. That style worked well on Saturdays, but in the races it often meant he was unable to match Hamilton over a race stint. A very good driver, but he'll have to take it to another level to beat Lewis.



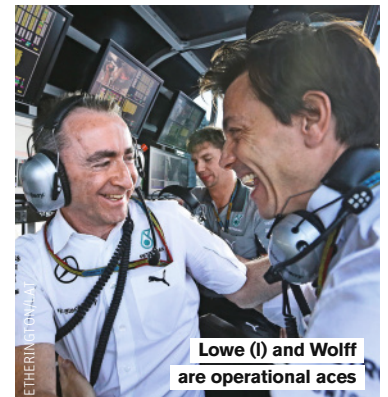
### LEWIS HAMILTON

**44** Age: 30  
Starts: 148  
First GP: Australia 2007  
Wins: 33  
Poles: 38  
Fastest laps: 20  
2014 position: 1st

Hamilton is very fast and not just over a single lap. In the final quarter of the season, there were times when Rosberg had no idea how to beat him on Sundays even with the advantage of pole position. As has always been the case, the most likely person to beat Lewis is Lewis. If he's there mentally, he'll be very strong again.



Merc could leave the field behind again



Lowe (l) and Wolff are operational aces

# Red Bull



RB11 looks good, but does it have the engine to match?

Starts: 184  
 First GP: Australia 2005  
 Wins: 50  
 Poles: 57  
 Fastest laps: 44  
 2014 championship position: 2nd

“The car looks good enough, but F1 has now become a power-unit formula, so will the latest Renault engine be up to it?”



## Red Bull-Renault RB11

The Red Bull is definitely a decent car, but the engine package is still a worry. During testing the car has looked solid enough, but nothing special, so the question is: what can Renault do? It doesn't seem that Renault is completely confident that the winter developments have paid off as they should have done. It's holding back some of its upgrade tokens for use during the season, so I can see Red Bull suffering for five or six races while Renault makes up its mind. We don't know exactly when we will see the definitive 2015 specification, and that means you would expect Red Bull to get stronger as the year goes on. While that's good in some ways, it also means that the early months of the season will be very tough.

It's hard to know what to make of Red Bull's direction though. After the years of winning race after race with Sebastian Vettel, things went wrong early last year, mainly with the Renault engine. The car looks good enough, but F1 has now become a power-unit formula, so will the latest version of the Renault unit be up to it? There's been a lot of change at Red Bull. The loss of Sebastian Vettel puts the spotlight more onto Daniel Ricciardo, while Adrian Newey has moved into a more part-time role with the F1 team. Well, you're either working for an F1 team every second of the day, or you might as well not be doing it at all. It's clear that he's not excited by the narrow regulations or making the tiny changes to front-wing endplates that count as development today, so it could be bad news for the team.

Expect Red Bull to do well but, given the power deficit, even matching last year's three wins could be quite a difficult task.



Renault has worked hard to catch Mercedes rivals



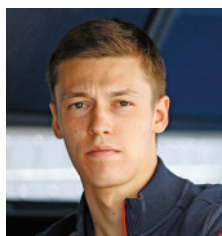
Horner is putting his faith in the two Dans



### DANIEL RICCIARDO

**3** Age: 25  
 Starts: 69  
 First GP: Great Britain 2011  
 Wins: 3  
 Best qualifying position: 2nd  
 Fastest laps: 1  
 2014 position: 3rd

He had a great 2014, but sometimes it's easier to perform well when there isn't the same level of expectation. He started the year as a support act to a four-time champion, but now Ricciardo has to be the main man at a team that expects to win. That doesn't mean he won't have another great year, just that the challenge he faces is different.



### DANIIL KVYAT

**26** Age: 20  
 Starts: 19  
 First GP: Australia 2014  
 Best finish: 9th  
 Best qualifying position: 5th  
 Fastest laps: 0  
 2014 position: 15th

I thought Kvyat was very good last year. Toro Rosso drivers are always difficult to assess because the team has never been very consistent, but there's no reason to doubt that he can do the kind of job Ricciardo did. Kvyat is very focused and knows when he's done a good job or a bad job; the question is how he deals with the pressure.

## GARY ANDERSON'S TEAM BY TEAM



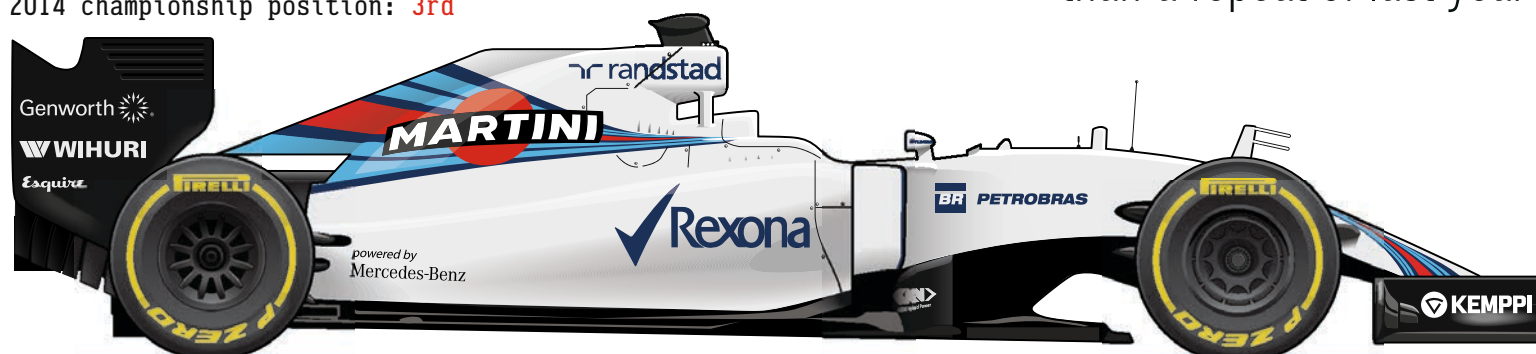
# Williams



Bottas is a potential star if he works on consistency

Starts: **617**  
 First GP: **Argentina 1978**  
 Wins: **114**  
 Poles: **128**  
 Fastest laps: **133**  
 2014 championship position: **3rd**

"I expect a good season from Williams, but it's hard to predict anything better than a repeat of last year"



## Williams-Mercedes FW37

SEASON 54 PREVIEW

**W**hat Williams achieved last year by jumping from ninth in the championship to third and being the closest challenger to Mercedes more often than not was remarkable. The question now is whether the team can repeat that championship performance or perhaps go further. Based on pre-season testing, that's a difficult thing to get a handle on.

The reason for this is that I don't see evidence of the kind of step forward that will allow Williams to compete with Mercedes, rather than being a little behind. The car is a good step forward, but there are no dramatic changes. The FW36 had a strong front end last year, and the drivers have been very happy with the improvements in overall stability, so that's encouraging, but I'm not sure that's going to be enough to make a massive difference.

But considering how up and down things have been for Williams in recent years, if it can stay in that kind of position it wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing. A lot has changed there, with Pat Symonds doing a great job as chief technical officer and Rob Smedley whipping the race team into shape, so the most important thing is for Williams to establish itself as consistently able to get podiums and finish well up in the title fight.

Williams's biggest problem is that it's still only a customer squad. You'd expect the four 'works' teams – Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull and McLaren – to be ahead, provided the engines are strong enough. How many of those can Williams beat?

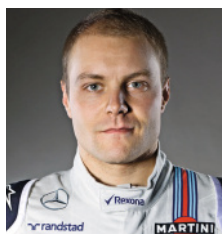
I expect a good season from Williams, but it's hard to predict anything better than a repeat of last year.



### FELIPE MASSA

**19** Age: **33**  
 Starts: **210**  
 First GP: **Australia 2002**  
 Wins: **11**  
 Poles: **16**  
 Fastest laps: **15**  
 2014 position: **7th**

Felipe is one of those drivers who needs to be in the right environment to get the best out of himself. He's very happy at Williams compared to how he was during the final years at Ferrari, so that's encouraging. He will have his ups and downs, because he always has done, but on his day there could be some big results.



### VALTTERI BOTTAS

**77** Age: **25**  
 Starts: **38**  
 First GP: **Australia 2013**  
 Best finish: **2nd**  
 Best qualifying position: **2nd**  
 Fastest laps: **1**  
 2014 position: **4th**

I'm a big fan of Bottas, who could be one of the stars of this year. He's a very hard driver and I expect his consistency to be improved. There were times last year when he was a bit erratic and fell away more than he should have done. He will have worked on that and he certainly has the ability to nail it lap after lap.



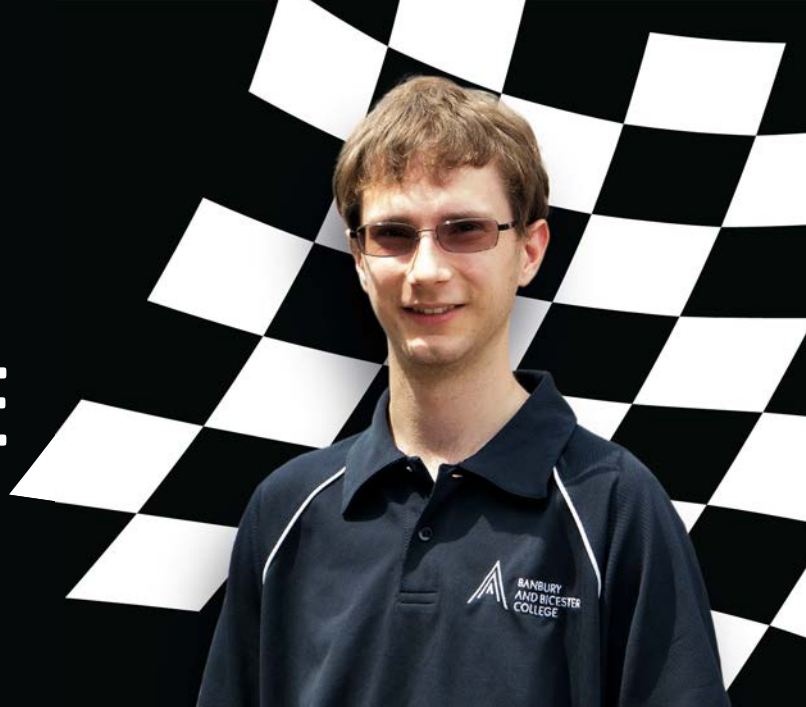
Symonds (l) and Smedley run a tight ship at Williams



FW37 features small tweaks, but enough?

# STUDENT PROFILE

## FACTFILE



**Student's name:** Dan East

**Course:** Foundation Degree (Engineering) in Motorsports: Performance and Automotive Technology

**Location:** Banbury and Bicester College - Bicester campus

**Year:** Second

### » What are your career plans for when you have completed your study at college?

I plan to do the BEng course at Oxford Brookes to achieve the full honours degree. I then want to do an MSc before going on to work with a firm such as Williams as a race engineer. I want to be able to work in a hands-on role, but then use my qualifications to make the move into management later on.

### » How has being at college changed your life?

The course is helping to make my dreams come true – it is making everything I have planned for possible. It is also giving me the knowledge and excuse to build my own rally car, which forms part of the course assessment.

### » What made you choose to study at an Activate Learning college, rather than somewhere else?

I had completed part of my GCSEs at Banbury and Bicester College, taking part in a day release scheme from school to achieve a Level 1 Diploma in Engineering. While I was at the college I got to know the staff and students and made up my mind that I wanted to come back and do the foundation degree.

### » Why did you select this programme of study?

I have known that I wanted a career in the motorsports industry since the age of about eight and I have carefully planned my route through. I have been part of Thame Motorsports Club for the last three years and want to progress to become an F1 race engineer. This programme suits my style of learning, because it is very practical, and combines my skills in engineering with my love of motorsports.

### » What do you enjoy about studying for this particular programme?

You do 150 hours of work experience during the programme and my first placement has been with Williams F1. Prior to the work experience placement I completed a one-week composites course (one of the course modules) which meant I could work in their composites department and be trusted to get on with the job. I felt part of the team and the experience has confirmed that this is the right career path for me. The college has excellent links with employers – it seems like they know everyone in the industry – so that really helps when it comes to building real experience.

### » What skills do you seek that will help you in your chosen career?

The Level 1 engineering course taught me about basic brakes and suspension systems on road cars, but this course is preparing me to work with F1 cars. We cover race preparation and aerodynamics and you can develop your composite skills using the on-campus facilities. The skills are completely aligned to working in the industry.



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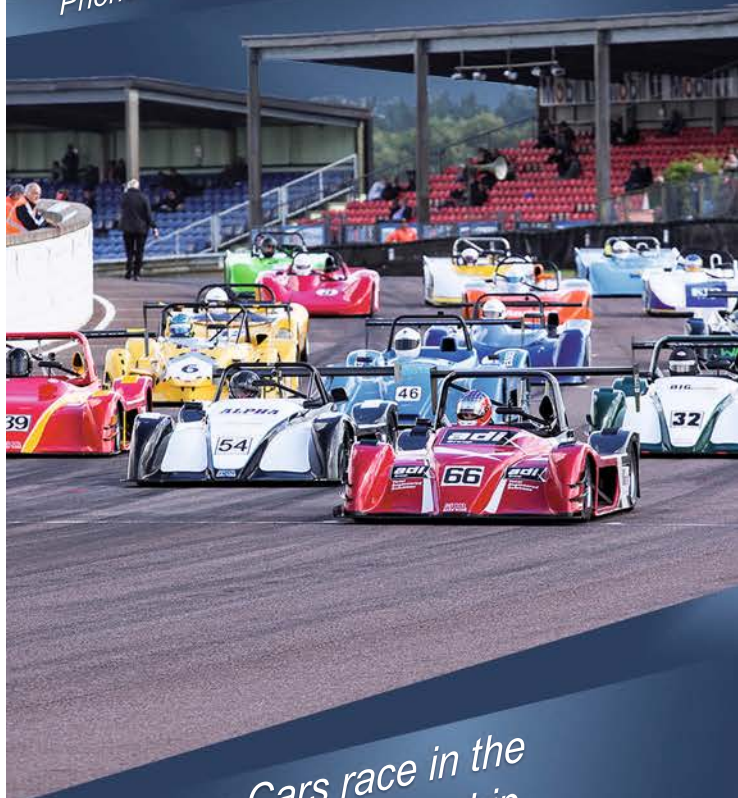


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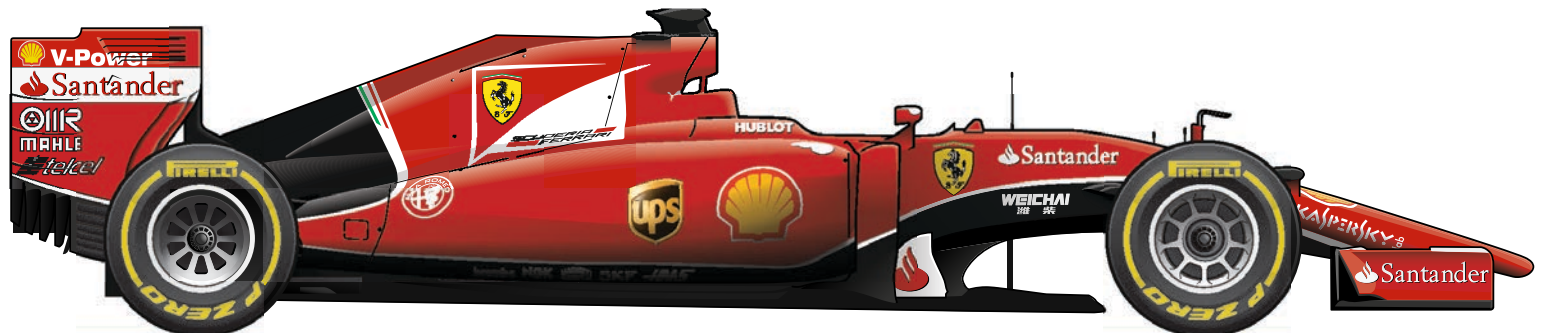
# Ferrari



The SF15-T has given a new-look Ferrari cause for optimism

Starts: **883**  
 First GP: **Monaco 1950**  
 Wins: **221**  
 Poles: **207**  
 Fastest laps: **230**  
 2014 championship position: **4th**

“Judging by the performance of the SF15-T in testing, Ferrari looks to be much stronger than last season”



## Ferrari SF15-T

**A** lot has changed at Ferrari over the winter, as often seems to be the case when things aren't going well at Maranello. But judging by the performance of the new SF15-T in testing, Ferrari looks to be much stronger than it was in 2014, when there were only two podium finishes. That was never going to be good enough.

It's important not to get too carried away with testing lap times. While Ferrari is certainly improved, it will still be a big ask even to be in position to get the minimum of two victories that the team has targeted. But this is the first car that has been designed and produced solely under the technical direction of James Allison, who joined in September 2013, so we are now seeing more of his influence.

But it will take time for the team to gel. Fernando Alonso has gone, along with Stefano Domenicali and Marco Mattiacci, who respectively started and finished last year as team boss, and Pat Fry has also gone on the technical side. The team will only really be tested once the season starts and things get tough.

The biggest problem Ferrari had last year was the performance of its engine package. Given that you would expect the performance of the V6 internal-combustion engine across the four manufacturers to be similar, that proves that the hybrid systems were the main weakness.

If Ferrari has made a big improvement there, and continues to make steps now that in-season development is allowed, it will climb the order. The signs are positive; I'm not saying Ferrari will be right up the front, but it does seem to have done enough at least to be knocking on the door.



### SEBASTIAN VETTEL

**5** Age: **27**  
 Starts: **139**  
 First GP: **USA 2007**  
 Wins: **39**  
 Poles: **45**  
 Fastest laps: **24**  
 2014 position: **5th**

Had Vettel made this move 12 months earlier, you'd be comparing it with Michael Schumacher going to Ferrari. But having shown great adaptability in the exhaust-blown-downforce era, surprisingly he struggled last year. Maybe the change of scene is what he needs, but it will be interesting to see how he stacks up against Raikkonen.



### KIMI RAIKKONEN

**7** Age: **35**  
 Starts: **211**  
 First GP: **Australia 2001**  
 Wins: **20**  
 Poles: **16**  
 Fastest laps: **40**  
 2014 position: **12th**

When Raikkonen is happy with the car and motivated, he is bloody quick. Nobody has ever doubted that. And he seems much happier with life based on testing, so that's encouraging for Ferrari. The question is whether he can stay in that state of mind and get the best out of himself rather than repeating his poor 2014.



Race engineer Dave Greenwood and tech chief James Allison (r)



Kimi Raikkonen needs a much better season in '15

## GARY ANDERSON'S TEAM BY TEAM



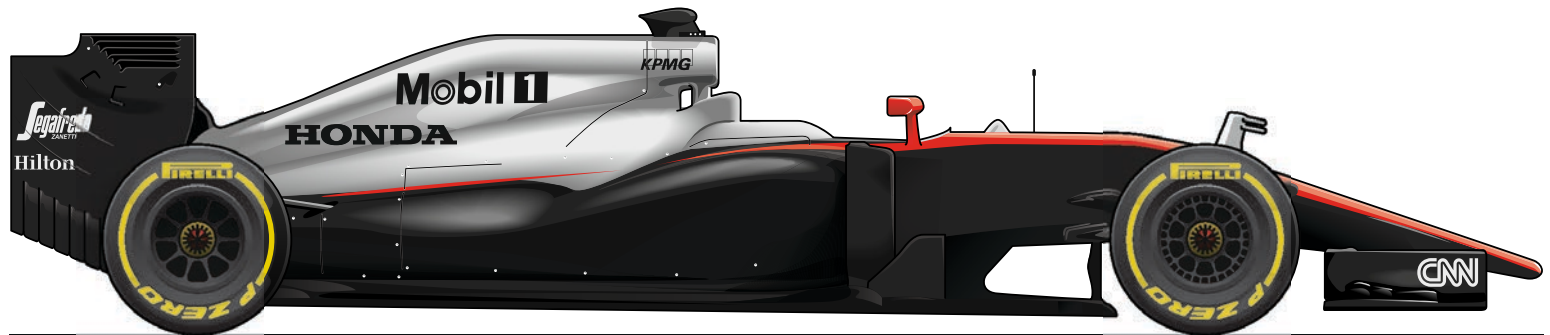
# McLaren



Drivers Button (pictured) and Alonso have done little mileage

Starts: **761**  
 First GP: **Monaco 1966**  
 Wins: **182**  
 Poles: **155**  
 Fastest laps: **152**  
 2014 championship position: **5th**

“There is a genuine risk McLaren will start the season battling with the smaller teams in the scrap for the minor points positions”



## McLaren-Honda MP4-30

60 PREVIEW SEASON

**M**claren goes into the season off the back of a very disappointing time in pre-season testing, with too many problems and not enough laps. I'm very disappointed to see how poorly things have gone and, while Honda has had plenty of difficulties, McLaren is its works partner so also has to shoulder some of the blame.

These problems mean that we haven't really seen what the car is capable of. There is a genuine risk that it will start the season battling with the smaller teams in the scrap for the minor points positions rather than where a team of McLaren's standing should be.

We always talk about McLaren as one of the top teams, but you have to question its record in recent years. There has only been one title in the 21st century, which is not good enough for all that money spent and it suggests that there are still wider problems there technically. And most worryingly, there always seems to be an excuse.

Yes, McLaren and Honda are still in the early days and yes, there is plenty of room for improvement but, given all the recent talk about aggressive cars and the engine being able to take on Mercedes, there are no excuses.

The most surprising thing was a pre-season comment made about the team's new head of aerodynamics, Peter Prodromou, who apparently pointed out McLaren had been focusing on 'peaky' downforce rather than aero consistency in recent years. That the problem has been recognised is positive, but you don't have to be Adrian Newey to know that downforce isn't worth anything if it's not there consistently.

McLaren has a lot to prove; the pressure is on.



### FERNANDO ALONSO

**14** Age: **33**  
 Starts: **234**  
 First GP: **Australia 2001**  
 Wins: **32**  
 Poles: **22**  
 Fastest laps: **21**  
 2014 position: **6th**

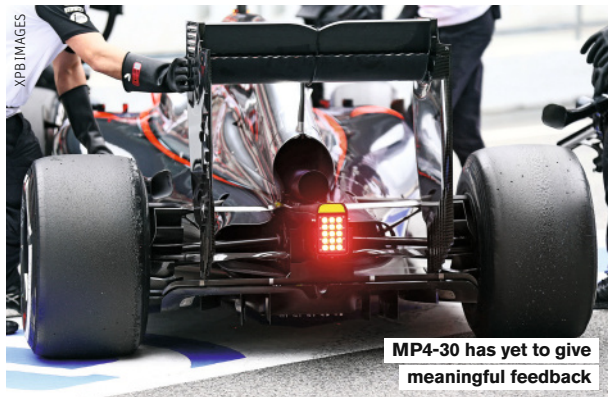
You know exactly what you are going to get with Alonso. He will drive the car to its maximum on race day and is still among the very best drivers out there. He seems happy enough on his return to McLaren, although the fact that he was kept in hospital for several days after his Barcelona crash and missed the final test is a concern.



### JENSON BUTTON

**22** Age: **35**  
 Starts: **266**  
 First GP: **Australia 2000**  
 Wins: **15**  
 Poles: **8**  
 Fastest laps: **8**  
 2014 position: **8th**

Button is one of those drivers who needs to have the car the way he likes it, with a stable rear end so he can carry the speed into the corner. If the McLaren isn't well suited to him, I can see him really struggling against Alonso. But as he showed when he was up against Lewis Hamilton, you can't underestimate Jenson.



MP4-30 has yet to give meaningful feedback



Alonso chats with Peter Prodromou

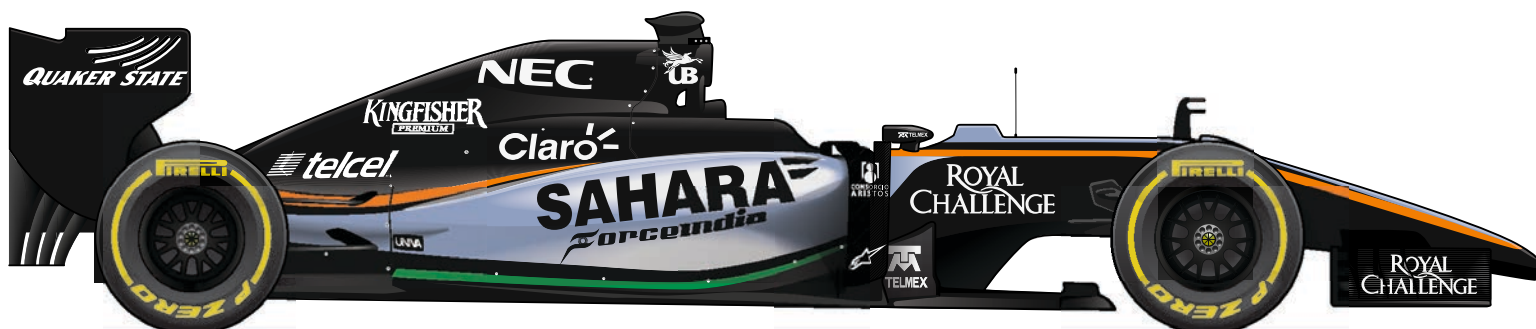
# Force India



The VJM08 won't have much mileage on it come Australia

Starts: 131  
 First GP: Australia 2008  
 Best finish: 2nd  
 Poles: 1  
 Fastest laps: 3  
 2014 position: 6th

"It's never good to be late with your car, but there are some positives in that it has the same engine supplier and drivers"



## Force India-Mercedes VJM08

The truth is it's never good to be late with your car and, by only making it for the final few days of testing, Force India goes into the Australian Grand Prix on the back foot. But there are, at least, some positives in that it has the same engine supplier and the same drivers, so there are no significant things to work through.

This is the situation the team faces, and it will be interesting to see how competitive the car is in Melbourne. Force India has done a good job in recent years to establish itself as a top-six team so it should be strong enough to recover from this late start. There's no chance that it will be able to get the maximum out of the car in Australia; it's just a question of making the best of it, trying to pick up some points and then build through those early races. When you're already behind, that's all you can do.

Obviously there are some question marks over the circumstances that have led Force India to be so late with the new car, but all you can do is judge the team based on what it has done in recent years, which has generally been pretty good. The question is whether it can make good on the hopes for more podium finishes after Sergio Perez's third place in Bahrain last year, or if it will slip back into the battle among the small teams, with Toro Rosso and Sauber both looking in reasonable shape and Lotus vastly improved by Mercedes engines.

Force India is a team I know well, so hopefully it can keep up the standards set in recent years. But we'll only really know what challenge faces the Silverstone-based squad once we get to the end of the first race weekend.



Team continuity remains with Merc and two drivers



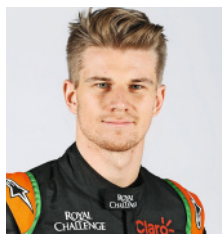
Hulkenberg can be relied on to maximise chances



### SERGIO PEREZ

**11** Age: 25  
 Starts: 74  
 First GP: Australia 2011  
 Best finish: 2nd  
 Best qualifying position: 4th  
 Fastest laps: 3  
 2014 position: 10th

You know what you will get from Perez. You just don't necessarily know in exactly what order you'll get it. He's proved he can be a strong racer, and his qualifying form picked up in the second half of last year, but there is still a problem with consistency. There will be some good days and some bad days.



### NICO HULKENBERG

**27** Age: 27  
 Starts: 76  
 First GP: Bahrain 2010  
 Best finish: 4th  
 Poles: 1  
 Fastest laps: 1  
 2014 position: 9th

Hulkenberg is, for me, one of the top drivers on the grid. He just hasn't had the right opportunity yet, which is very good news for Force India. Whatever the car is able to achieve, Hulkenberg should get close to the maximum, which could be very important if the team finds itself battling on the edge of a points finish.

## GARY ANDERSON'S TEAM BY TEAM



# Toro Rosso



STR's car looks like a simple but effective tool

Starts: 166  
 First GP: Bahrain 2006  
 Wins: 1  
 Poles: 1  
 Fastest laps: 0  
 2014 championship position: 7th

"The car doesn't have anything particularly trick on it, but it looks like a good package that should be consistent"



## Toro Rosso-Renault STR10

All the indications are that Toro Rosso has done a very sensible job with its 2015 car. It's always difficult to be the smaller team, the second team, like Toro Rosso is, but there's real ambition here and it's moving away from being under the Red Bull umbrella. Its aim of finishing fifth in the constructors' championship is not going to be easy to achieve given that it's one of the smaller teams out there, but there's nothing wrong with being ambitious.

Some will question Toro Rosso taking a pair of rookie drivers, but I think it's a great situation to be in provided you have the correct structure in the team to support them and they are very talented, as Max Verstappen and Carlos Sainz are. It's a bit like when I had Ralf Schumacher and Giancarlo Fisichella at Jordan in 1997, which didn't work out badly at all!

I worked with James Key, who is now technical director at Toro Rosso, when he was at Jordan and he knows what he's doing. He has experience with Force India and Sauber in similar roles, and showed he was able to tackle problems when he put his foot down over reliability issues during 2014; sorting the reliability problems made a big difference to the finishing rate.

The car itself doesn't have anything particularly trick on it, but it looks like a good package that should perform consistently. But delivering regularly has been a problem for Toro Rosso in recent years, as sometimes you see the cars up there in the top 10 on the grid, while on other days it's a battle to get out of Q1.

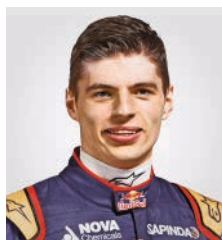
If Toro Rosso can improve on that and deliver consistency, then it could do better than last year's seventh in the constructors' championship.



Rookies Verstappen and Sainz will need reliability



Key hopes to unlock more-consistent form



### MAX VERSTAPPEN

**33** Age: 17  
 Starts: 0  
 First GP: -  
 Best finish: -  
 Best qualifying position: -  
 Fastest laps: -  
 Championship position: -

There have been lots of complaints about how young Max is, but I've always been much happier with a raw, young, talented driver than an old has-been with no motivation in the car. He drove very well in a strong European F3 grid last year, and looked comfortable in his Friday outings last season, so I'm going to enjoy seeing how he gets on.



### CARLOS SAINZ JR

**55** Age: 20  
 Starts: 0  
 First GP: -  
 Best finish: -  
 Best qualifying position: -  
 Fastest laps: -  
 Championship position: -

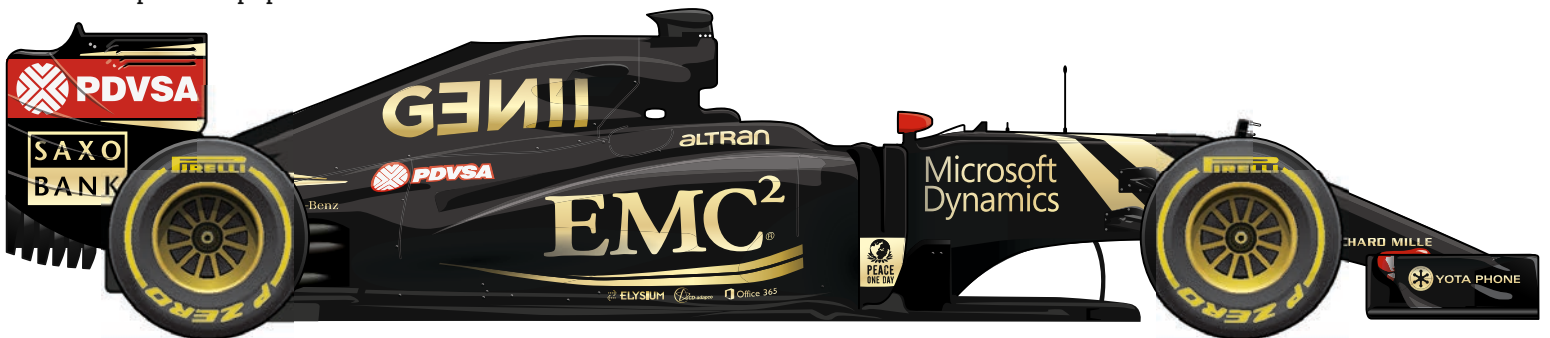
Sainz is clearly a decent driver, as you don't win the Renault 3.5 title without having a bit about you. He only got this opportunity after Daniil Kvyat was promoted to Red Bull, so he has a bit to prove. But Red Bull has clearly seen something in him. Having come so close to missing out on F1, he will be desperate to make the most of it.

# Lotus



Starts: 58  
 First GP: Australia 2012  
 Wins: 2  
 Best qualifying position: 2nd  
 Fastest laps: 5  
 2014 championship position: 8th

“It probably won't be recapturing its racewinning form of 2012 and 2013, but expect a much better year from Lotus”



## Lotus-Mercedes E23

Last year was terrible for Lotus, but there were clear reasons why it was struggling and it seems that the worst of it is over. There was so much change last year, with lots of key personnel leaving, which always has an effect: even if you replace them with the right people, it takes time for things to bed down and gel.

During testing the car has looked pretty good, albeit not as good as some of those very fast laps on super-soft tyres suggest! So I would expect to see Lotus making a good step, at least to be near the front of the battle of what you might call the second group of teams behind the 'works' squads.

You can see a lot of the progress that Lotus has made in the design of the car. It's a much more coherent package, with far tidier bodywork around the sidepods and the rear. This will partly be because of the switch of engine supplier, and partly down to better design work.

But the big change is that Lotus is now powered by Mercedes. This makes a huge difference. When running the troublesome Renault engine last year, Lotus struggled to get it to perform consistently, which on top of a car that seemed to have different aerodynamic characteristics almost from second to second often made it impossible to drive. With the Mercedes, there is every indication that this is a far more driver-friendly package.

In terms of resources, there's no reason why Lotus cannot get into the battle for fourth, fifth or sixth in the constructors' championship, which is exactly where it should be.

It probably won't be recapturing its racewinning form of 2012 and 2013, but you can expect a much better year from Lotus.



### ROMAIN GROSJEAN

**8** Age: 28  
 Starts: 64  
 First GP: Europe 2009  
 Best finish: 2nd  
 Best qualifying position: 2nd  
 Fastest laps: 1  
 2014 position: 14th

As we saw in the second half of 2013, when he was Sebastian Vettel's nearest challenger, Grosjean is capable of being one of the very best drivers in F1. And I think that, given how poor the car was, he did a very good job last season. If the car has a sniff of strong results, Grosjean will be able to deliver them.



### PASTOR MALDONADO

**13** Age: 29  
 Starts: 76  
 First GP: Australia 2011  
 Wins: 1  
 Poles: 1  
 Fastest laps: 0  
 2014 position: 16th

There are times when Maldonado drives like a madman, making very strange mistakes that can lead to some embarrassing crashes and collisions. But he is also capable of being very fast, so when he strings everything together there is the potential for strong finishes. Just don't expect him to be Mr Consistency.



Switch to Mercedes power should pay big dividends



Team is starting to gel after 2014 reshuffles

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Entry Fee Cars less than 2000cc € 4.900  
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## **24H**

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Entry Fee Cars less than 2000cc TBA  
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**ROUND 6**

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**GARY ANDERSON'S  
TEAM BY TEAM**



# Sauber



New Sauber should ensure the team scores points this season

Starts: 292  
 First GP: South Africa 1993  
 Best finish: 2nd  
 Best qualifying position: 2nd  
 Fastest laps: 3  
 2014 championship position: 10th

“There have been some flashy times in testing, but I don’t believe for one minute that Sauber is suddenly a victory contender”



## Sauber-Ferrari C34

Sauber had an absolutely awful season in 2014, failing to score a point and rarely looking like it had a chance of doing so. The car was very difficult to drive, particularly in the first half of the season, and wasn’t great aerodynamically on top of the weakness of the Ferrari engine. Things will be better this year. But by how much?

Well, there have been some flashy times in testing, but I don’t believe for a minute that the Sauber is suddenly a victory contender. But it should at least be able to fight with Force India and Toro Rosso, which, other than Manor GP – if the team makes it to the grid – are, on size, the weakest teams.

Like all small teams, Sauber’s financial situation isn’t great, so a lot will depend on whether it’s on the right track with its development work. The car isn’t a dramatic step forward from last year, but if the major weaknesses have been addressed and the Ferrari power unit is stronger that should at least give it a tidy enough car to go racing.

The key for Sauber is to achieve stability and respectability this season. It couldn’t do that last year, finishing behind Marussia in the constructors’ points despite more resources. It’s also had to sign two drivers with backing, but in Felipe Nasr and Marcus Ericsson it has two drivers who know how to hold a steering wheel, so that’s not as big a weakness as some suggest.

A good season and Sauber will be scoring points again and having something to race for. Beyond that, it’s going to be difficult to see how it can do much better than seventh or eighth in the makes’ race even with a decent step.



### **MARCUS ERICSSON**

**8** Age: 24  
 Starts: 16  
 First GP: Australia 2014  
 Best finish: 11th  
 Best qualifying position: 17th  
 Fastest laps: 0  
 2014 position: 19th

Ericsson had a very tough debut season with Caterham last year, with too many crashes, as he often struggled to match up to his more experienced team-mate Kamui Kobayashi. But there were some improved performances in the final couple of races before Caterham dropped off the grid.



### **FELIPE NASR**

**13** Age: 22  
 Starts: 0  
 First GP: -  
 Best finish: -  
 Best qualifying position: -  
 Fastest laps: -  
 2014 position: -

We’ve seen Nasr win races in GP2, and he’s done a decent job when he’s had the chance to drive the Williams in the past, so he’s a driver who has got something about him. He seems to have settled in well during testing so, if the car is good enough to pick up some top-10 finishes, he should score some points.



Ferrari power unit will need to have improved



Ericsson makes the jump from Caterham

# MANOR GP

# RISING FROM THE ASHES



**As AUTOSPORT closed for press, the Formula 1 team formerly known as Marussia was attempting to get a car ready for Melbourne. JONATHAN NOBLE explains its survival plans**

**S**hould Marussia's ex-Formula 1 chiefs Graeme Lowdon or John Booth have wanted an easy life, they would have walked away from F1 years ago. But, as they showed during five tremendously challenging years running their grand prix team, they possess a steely determination that has kept them in the game despite everything that has been thrown at them.

That is why, as many in F1 lost hope last winter of ever seeing Marussia or Caterham again, Lowdon and Booth kept their heads down and worked harder than ever before to try to get the renamed Manor Marussia team back on the grid.

Their determination was helped slightly by the incentive of the £30 million prize money that

would be theirs if they could return. But just as powerful a motivator was their refusal to allow F1 to defeat them.

Pretty stable car regulations from 2014 to '15 boosted hopes of making it back to the grid. But even so, ramped up cockpit protection, tougher crash tests and changes to the nose regulations meant that it couldn't simply roll out last year's challenger and go racing.

There was an initial idea to be allowed to temporarily use its 2014 car for the first few races – a concept not instantly ruled out – but before even that could be considered for a team vote, money matters had to be sorted.

Progress to find sponsors and investors was slow at times, but by the middle of January the situation had advanced enough for the team's administrators to see hope that it could be saved. On the one side, creditors – including Ferrari and McLaren – were appeased by the

renegotiation of outstanding debts. Furthermore, Lowdon was starting to put together the investment package that could help fund the team. Key figures behind it are believed to be energy-company boss Stephen Fitzpatrick and former Sainsbury's CEO Justin King, whose son Jordan is racing in GP2 this year.

A mid-January online auction of Marussia's remaining assets – which would have sounded the death knell for the team if it had gone ahead – was called off at the last minute as talks ramped up with those backers. But while things slowly began slotting in to place on the balance sheet, the inevitable politics of F1's 'Piranha Club' created further obstacles as rivals fought for a share of Manor's potential prize-money pot.

Jules Bianchi's two points that he scored for Marussia in Monaco last year were enough for the team to finish ninth in the constructors' championship – yielding around £30 million



XPBIMAGES

EXPERT VIEW



**Gary Anderson**  
Technical consultant

With what is basically a 2014 car and an out-of-date specification of the weakest power-unit package of last year, Manor is simply in survival mode. The car will be at the back of the grid in terms of time, so the question is where is the team going? All credit to those involved for making it, but this needs to be about more than just being there to secure the £30 million or so FOM money.

It's degrading for F1 to have put a team in this position given the money the sport is making. Over the years, there have been endless talks but nothing has been done to reduce costs, we've already lost the Caterham team and others are in trouble. So while it's good to see the team on the grid, the situation is still concerning.

I've got nothing against Graeme Lowdon and John Booth, who are there for the right reasons and have worked very hard to get the team on the grid.



**Booth and Lowdon**  
have worked hard

But what exactly is the long-term plan? I'm concerned about the creditors, because this team dug itself deeper and deeper into financial trouble, whoever's fault that was, and this can't just be a continuation of the same thing.

It's going to be a long, hard season for Manor, if the team makes it to Australia, which is still not certain at the time of writing.



**Will Stevens**  
has been named  
on the entry list

XPBIMAGES



**Marussia began as**  
Virgin Racing

DUNBAR/LAT



**Bianchi points**  
earned £30 million

DUNBAR/LAT

**“REJECTING THE 2014 CAR ALLOWANCE WAS A BLOW TO MANOR, BUT NOT A FATAL ONE”**

of commercial-rights income for this season.

But the way the prize fund system works means that there are longer-term benefits, especially since Caterham's demise has left only 10 teams on the grid. If a team finishes in the top 10 in two out of three years, then that £30 million-per-year income is safe. Manor is guaranteed a top-10 finish this year, so cannot fall out of the prize pool until at least the end of 2017, irrespective of what newcomer Haas does when it arrives next year.

That is, unless, its rivals could derail its return. Which is exactly the opportunity that came up in February when F1's Strategy Group met to discuss the proposal to allow teams to run a 2014 car. Since rejecting this could prevent Manor's return – and in effect divide its income among the remaining teams – it was little surprise that there was not universal support. In fact, it was shot down by the first team to vote: Force India.

But, while rejecting the 2014 car allowance was a blow to Manor, it was not a fatal one. It just made life much more difficult.

The certainty of being able to race in Melbourne with a 2014 car was replaced with a

knife-edge push to modify the nose and crash structures so an interim car could be readied. The focus on doing that also meant that resources have had to be taken away from its bespoke 2015 challenger.

Manor knew that making it back to the grid was never going to be straightforward. It was always going to be a tightly focused effort, with little time to breathe and no room for things to go wrong. That's why there is still plenty to do. It has a driver in Will Stevens, and it has secured its place on the entry list. Crash tests were booked for this week after AUTOSPORT closed for press.

Yet it's going to take something to deliver a car that will comfortably qualify within the 107 per cent rule. There are still political fights to sort out – especially because of that prize money. Chief discussion point now is the chassis name, which ultimately will decide if Manor qualifies for Marussia's commercial-rights money or not. Watch this space.

Fighting is something that Lowdon and Booth are well used to, though. And until all hope is gone, they will keep battling away like they have always done. ☞

# FORMULA 1'S

Three drivers will join an elite band of racers to make it to the top of motorsport in 2015. **MATT BEER**



**T**his trio is about to bring the number of drivers to have started a world championship race to 756. Sounds a lot, but with the 66th title battle about to kick off – and far more than 756 Formula 1 aspirants battling in the hordes of single-seater ‘ladder’ and kart series around the world every year – it isn’t such a big number at all. Very few people will ever get to do what Max Verstappen, Carlos Sainz Jr and Felipe Nasr will accomplish in Melbourne next week.

One is the son of an ex-F1 racer, another is a long-time Red Bull protege with a rallying legend for a father, and the other is a GP2 stalwart who used to be Williams’s F1 test driver, so none of the trio is a fish out of water in a grand prix

paddock. But on the grid, in the cockpit, is another matter.

Do they appreciate the enormity of what they are embarking upon, the pressure and the honour? Or are they too well-schooled in the ‘it’s-just-another-race, just-another-racing car’ mentality of the lifelong competitor? Somewhere in the middle, reckons Sainz.

“It’s like an Olympic sprinter,” he considers. “You’ve spent four years preparing everything in your mind and body, really busting your ass for it, and then it’s just that 100 metres and that’s it. It’s pressure but you’ve done everything to be ready for it. This is that 100 metres for me.”

While Sainz has been a Red Bull junior since his car career started half a decade ago, and has had time to reconcile the balance of high pressure and intense preparation, you’d ordinarily think that wouldn’t be the case for a 17-year-old arriving in F1 barely a year after his first car race. But if there was anything ordinary about Verstappen, he wouldn’t be in the situation he is now.

Most of his 17 years have been spent preparing – in an extraordinarily meticulous fashion mapped out by his father Jos – for what he’s about to do. And rather than the result being a ‘racing robot’ devoid of personality beyond motorsport, Verstappen’s skills have become so intuitive that he has plenty of mental capacity spare for the rest of life. Engaging and self-assured rather than arrogant, he has an exceptional sense of perspective.

“That was already created when I was younger, by my dad,” he says. “Since I was very young we were talking about all those things [that set his preparation apart].”

“When we drove back from go-karting it was not like we shut off from racing. We were always talking about how to improve, what we learned that day. I sometimes can’t remember all the things because it’s so natural. Then my dad says, ‘You remember a few years ago, we were doing this...’ and then I go, ‘Oh yeah’, but it’s so natural I don’t even think about it anymore, or think that

# FIRST-TIMERS

talks to Felipe Nasr, Max Verstappen and Carlos Sainz Jr about their expectations for the year ahead



Verstappen is set to be youngest-ever driver to start a grand prix



It's third time lucky for Sainz as he takes up a Toro Rosso seat

**“MY DAD AND I TALKED ABOUT WHAT WE LEARNED THAT DAY. IT REALLY HELPED ME”**

**MAX VERSTAPPEN**

it's special.

“But then you start to realise, ‘That really helped me’. All those kinds of things gave me so much more experience compared to other 17-year-olds.”

However intense the junior-racing preparation, there's no substitute for actually settling into F1 surroundings, reckons Nasr. He should've been first stepping into a Sauber as a 17-year-old, with a test drive his prize for winning the 2009 Formula BMW Europe title, but the German manufacturer's F1 exit scuppered that. While he admits he can't help but wonder how that might've changed his career, he's very happy with his eventual Formula 3/GP2/Williams-reserve route to the grand prix grid.

“It feels much nicer than if I'd just stepped straight into F1 today,” he says. “It was very important to join Williams last year as a test driver, to get to know the environment, to be at every grand prix with them, to be listening to every meeting, every debrief, to understand

what the drivers are saying, the communication...

“I've worked all the way. I did win championships and races. It was a long process to arrive in Formula 1, but it's happened in the right time. I feel prepared as a driver and as a person. I know the environment I'm stepping into.”

Nasr has come into F1 almost under the radar – at least in that his arrival, unlike Verstappen's, hasn't been declared the “worst thing ever for F1” by Jacques Villeneuve and prompted a superlicence clampdown, nor, unlike Sainz's, come after two snubs from his mentors and an agonising ‘will-he-won't-he?’. He's a driver with personal sponsorship joining a team that needs money, but he's also an FBMW Europe and British F3 champion, a Daytona 24 Hours podium finisher and twice a GP2 title contender. He's “not a big fan” of the GP2 two-race/reversed-grid/tyre-choice format and hints at a feeling that it skewed perceptions of him (“It can confuse people when they're looking; you can rate drivers differently”), but ultimately he's not ▶

**Nasr puts the Sauber C34 through its paces in pre-season testing**



JSTITEN/BETTY

**Verstappen has belied his age with acclimatisation to life as an F1 driver**



XPB IMAGES

**Sainz reckons the pressure to prove himself is less now he's made it to F1 on merit**



XPB IMAGES

► bothered what or how much people write about his arrival in F1.

"It's not something that's in my head, to be in a spotlight. All I can say is I'm coming to F1 with a certain knowledge and a certain understanding, and I think I'm mature enough now to do it."

That rookie spotlight is pretty much all on Verstappen. He's triggered a fifty-fifty mix of excitement at the rise of a new talent and horror at the prospect of a 17-year-old in F1. "Maybe those people just look at it only from the last bit when I started to drive an F1 car," he says of his critics. "They have to look to my history – how I got there and how I have prepared. But they don't look at that, of course, they just want to be a bit critical. It's all right, I don't care. I just have to show them I'm different."

Verstappen, who initially saw F3 alone as a two-year programme, admits that coming into F1 so young was never on his radar until an unusual wake-up from Red Bull's talent guru one Monday last June. "The day after Norisring [F3 weekend, where Verstappen took three wins], Helmut Marko called my dad at eight o'clock in the morning and said, 'I want your son in F1 next year.' We were like, 'Whooooaaa. Is this a dream?'" It soon felt like reality over two months of split focus between intense meetings over F1 deals and trying to win F3 races, a process that crystallised into a Toro Rosso contract.

Nasr can't pinpoint a single defining moment where his status changed from 'F1 aspirant' to 'signed F1 driver' either, talking of a long process between his management and teams, without a decisive 'Christmas morning' where his dreams came true.

Not so for Sainz. Overlooked in favour of Daniil Kvyat in late 2013 and then Red Bull newcomer Verstappen in mid '14, he was up against incumbent Jean-Eric Vergne for the Toro Rosso chance twice denied him already. Wrapping up the Formula Renault 3.5 title ticked one box but a test with Red Bull in Abu Dhabi was the final clincher.

Then it was a matter of waiting for a phone call, one that his world rally champion father inadvertently pre-empted. "My father called Helmut Marko just for another reason, nothing related to Formula 1. But he used the opportunity to tell my father and in the end it was actually my dad who was waiting for me at the hotel to tell me." Was that call to Marko really a coincidence, the day after a make-or-break test...? "I promise! Sometimes they send wine to each other... It might've been one of those."

Once you've overcome an F1 audition test successfully, getting down to work as a confirmed F1 driver is comparatively stress-free, in Sainz's experience: "In Abu Dhabi I felt more pressure, more like I had to nearly surprise everyone – to do things perfectly, with no mistakes. At Jerez with Toro Rosso, I was more calm about everything. It was a test for us to improve together.

"Once you're there – and I didn't expect this – you feel much more calm, much more relaxed, you feel much less pressure. You don't need to demonstrate to anyone that you *must* be an F1 driver because now you are one of them."

Can that serenity carry through to Melbourne? "It's one of my targets to be calm in my first year. If I'm an F1 driver, it's because they've trusted me, they think I'm ready for this. It's not about surprising anyone, you don't have to change too many things. Be yourself, use the same methods that helped you to win the 3.5 title in a good way. That should be enough.

**“IT WOULD BE STUPID TO TELL YOU I WON’T BE NERVOUS. I WILL BE”**

**CARLOS SAINZ**

“Obviously it’s easy to be calm in testing... Look, it would be stupid for me to tell you I won’t be nervous. I *will* be nervous. But I was nervous before qualifying at Paul Ricard [FR3.5], knowing I had to score pole position to show Red Bull I am the one for the [F1] seat. But hopefully I’m ready for that nervousness.”

Verstappen admits, with a smile of slight surprise, that his path to F1 has had “many ups, not many downs” compared with Sainz’s journey. There was no audition required – the first time he drove an F1 car was as a signed 2015 racer. But he doesn’t think he would’ve done anything different had he needed to prove himself, and nor does he intend to this year.

“The first time I jumped into the car at Suzuka [in free practice for the Japanese GP] was still a bit ‘living the dream,’” he says. “But then afterwards they’re working more and more with you because you’re the driver next year and you’re getting into the team.

“I’ve never focused on impressing someone. If you start to do that, you will overpush, and even the team doesn’t like that. I always go into it thinking that if you do a good job it gives you chances, but the only thing I can do is my best. More than that is not possible. If you start to show off and pretend to be someone else to who you normally are, it’s not good.”

Surely lining up on the grid in Melbourne will test that composure? “Maybe when the lights are starting to go on at the start. But once they’re off, you are in race mode and trying to overtake everybody in front of you. I think in the end, when the adrenaline kicks in, you just do like you always did before.”

Everything they’ve done before has been leading to this chance, prompting emotions that the affable and open Sainz encapsulates with a grin, an eye-roll, an intense “you can’t imagine it” and some poignant nostalgia: “In karting, I used to watch the F1 races before jumping in the kart to race. You gave even more importance to watching the F1 race, especially Alonso and Hamilton in 2007. It was really intense, the feeling of one day wanting to go to F1.”

Next Sunday, thousands of karters around the world will get up to watch Sainz, Verstappen and Nasr make their F1 debuts, before pulling on their own helmets and trying to inch themselves another tiny step closer to tasting what F1’s 2015 rookie pack will feel in Australia. ❧



Nasr got vital mileage with Williams in 2014

**FELIPE NASR**

**WHERE DID HE COME FROM?**

The 22-year-old Brazilian graduates to F1 after three years in GP2, culminating in taking third in the standings last year for Carlin. He dovetailed that with five Friday practice outings for Williams in 2014, as well as completing three test days. Nasr won the British F3 title in 2011, two years after taking the Formula BMW Europe crown. He also finished third in the Daytona 24 Hours in 2012 in a one-off appearance.



Verstappen got Friday outings with STR last year

**MAX VERSTAPPEN**

**WHERE DID HE COME FROM?**

Verstappen, the son of 1990s F1 regular Jos, will become, by some distance, the youngest driver to start a grand prix. The 17-year-old karting graduate has only one season of car racing under his belt, finishing third in the F3 European Championship last year and winning the prestigious F3 Masters. He also drove three times for Toro Rosso during Friday practice. In 2013, he took World and European titles in the KZ shifter-kart class.



Sainz has previously tested with Red Bull

**CARLOS SAINZ**

**WHERE DID HE COME FROM?**

The Spaniard became the first Red Bull-backed driver to win the Formula Renault 3.5 series last year, taking the title with seven wins for DAMS. Prior to that, he won the 2011 FRenault 2.0 NEC title before going on to win races in British F3. His first experience of racing on the F1 support bill came in 2010, when he finished fourth in the Formula BMW Europe series. Sainz is the son of former double World Rally Champion Carlos Sr.

SEASON 12 PREVIEW



# WHY MERCEDES IS FAVOURITE

Former HRT and Lotus F1 driver **KARUN CHANDHOK** attended the final Barcelona test for AUTOSPORT, offering his expert analysis of how the cars looked on track



XPE/IMAGES

## 1ST MERCEDES

Mercedes starts the season as favourite. Both Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton were able to hustle the car around and really attack any real issues apart from tyre warm-up problems in the mornings. Viewed from the T1/2/3 complex, the front of the car responds more sharply on turn-in than anyone else's, but what's impressive is that the rear keeps up.

Even on the odd occasion when I saw Nico get the rear out of shape at the exit of Turn 2, the front end was so good that, despite being off-line on the entry, he could steer it back to where he wanted to for Turn 3 and just carry speed through.

When I went to watch down at Turns 11 and 12, where they change direction from left to right, it does look almost like the car is rolling

**"THE ENGINE IS STRONG, BUT I THINK THE MERCEDES IS ALSO QUICKER IN CORNERS"**

KARUN CHANDHOK

and generating front mechanical grip, yet gives the drivers confidence to lean on it.

Clearly the engine is strong, but I do think that Mercedes is also quicker in the corners than its rivals. The engine driveability seems totally sorted, and coming out of the medium and slow-speed corners the rear just stays beautifully in line.



S BLOWHAW/LAT





## BATTLE FOR 2ND, 3RD, 4TH WILLIAMS v FERRARI v RED BULL

The battle behind Mercedes looks to be very close and could well provide the entertainment for the season. The outcome of this battle could well be decided by in-season development of the three teams

### WILLIAMS

I was very impressed with the Williams, which still has great straightline speed, but also looks like it has picked up aero grip relative to the others over the winter. Both drivers looked comfortable and it seemed that they were driving well within the limit. The Mercedes engine could prove to be its trump card in this battle for best of the rest and, if you listen to the engine note and shift points, it wasn't a million miles away from the works team (and quite different to fellow Merc-powered team Lotus). I wouldn't bet against the odd win.

### FERRARI

The Ferrari looks much better than the 2014 car. Slow-speed front grip looked very good through the final chicane, and the driveability out of the slow Turn 5 hairpin seemed a huge step forward. The Ferrari did seem to have shorter gear ratios than the Mercedes teams, and whether that's something it feels is more suited to their engine or a choice that will change for Melbourne remains to be seen.

In the high-speed corners the car looks reasonably good, but the front grip on that initial turn-in isn't as good as on the Mercedes.

### RED BULL

The chassis itself looks as impressive as we've come to expect, and out on track it looked particularly good under braking for the slow-speed hairpin into Turn 10. On the longer runs Kvyat looked more ragged than I expected and it looked like he was really hustling the car around in an effort to get a laptime out of it. Perhaps there's a hint of frustration over straightline speed, but it couldn't have been good for the tyres.

I still don't believe that the Red Bull is quicker than the Mercedes in the corners. Front-end grip in the medium and high-speed turns doesn't look as good.

#### TALKING POINT



It's clear that Kimi Raikkonen is happier not just with the car but also with the new group of engineers in the race team. A happy Kimi is a formidable one, so the intra-team battle with Sebastian Vettel should be good to watch.



### 5TH LOTUS

In the build-up to the final test, I kept reading the drivers' comments about how great the car felt. Watching out on track, I have to say that it wasn't as convincing.

Yes, the engine driveability and power will feel a big step forward, but in terms of chassis balance it looked edgy: Grosjean and Maldonado didn't seem to be able to drive on the same line lap after lap.



### 7TH McLAREN

I really don't know what to make of the McLaren. The well-documented powertrain issues make it hard to judge the car balance out on track, because it isn't running with full power or close to the limit. If a car is running around a couple of seconds off the pace owing to a lack of power, it's bound to feel easy to drive and look balanced.



### 8TH SAUBER

Sauber's strategy at the moment is to ensure that the car is as reliable as possible and to sneak in some points at the start of the season. The team has done well to produce a solid, reliable car in a difficult situation towards the end of last year in terms of resources, and I do hope that they get some rewards in the early grands prix.



### 6TH TORO ROSSO

The car looks quite balanced and generally a tidy package. It seems to do what the drivers want, which is particularly confidence-inspiring when you have two rookies with a combined age of 37!

It was the first time I had seen Max Verstappen live on track and I have to say that my initial impressions are that he fully justifies all the hype.

He was very consistent in terms of lines, and I rarely saw a front wheel lock up, even into Turn 5, and he looked like he was driving well within himself. It was impressive to watch how he would carry a huge amount of speed into Turn 4, manage to sort it out by balancing the steering and brakes mid-corner, and still ensure he got on the throttle early.



### 9TH FORCE INDIA

Force India has joined the testing party quite late; we may need to wait until perhaps even the European season to see its real 2015 car. Out on track, it looked very much like a car doing its first test without any real set-up work done to it.



# CIRCUIT GUIDE

Twenty races to go... Here are the tracks, with last year's winners, lap records and TV info

## AUSTRALIA

### Melbourne

MARCH

15



#### 2014 winner

Nico Rosberg

#### 2014 polesitter

Lewis Hamilton

1m44.231s

#### Lap record

Michael Schumacher

1m24.125s (2004)

#### UK start time

0500

#### Live TV

Sky Sports

## MALAYSIA

### Sepang

MARCH

29



#### 2014 winner

Lewis Hamilton

#### 2014 polesitter

Lewis Hamilton

1m59.431s

#### Lap record

Juan Pablo Montoya

1m34.223s (2004)

#### UK start time

0800

#### Live TV

BBC & Sky Sports

## CHINA

### Shanghai

APRIL

12



#### 2014 winner

Lewis Hamilton

#### 2014 polesitter

Lewis Hamilton

1m53.860s

#### Lap record

Michael Schumacher

1m32.238s (2004)

#### UK start time

0700

#### Live TV

Sky Sports

## BAHRAIN

### Sakhir

APRIL

19



#### 2014 winner

Lewis Hamilton

#### 2014 polesitter

Nico Rosberg

1m33.185s

#### Lap record

Pedro de la Rosa

1m31.447s (2005)

#### UK start time

1600

#### Live TV

BBC & Sky Sports

## SPAIN

### Barcelona

MAY

10



#### 2014 winner

Lewis Hamilton

#### 2014 polesitter

Lewis Hamilton

1m25.232s

#### Lap record

Kimi Raikkonen

1m21.670s (2008)

#### UK start time

1300

#### Live TV

Sky Sports

## MONACO

### Monte Carlo

MAY

24



#### 2014 winner

Nico Rosberg

#### 2014 polesitter

Nico Rosberg

1m15.989s

#### Lap record

Michael Schumacher

1m14.439s (2004)

#### UK start time

1300

#### Live TV

Sky Sports

## CANADA

### Montreal

JUNE

7



#### 2014 winner

Daniel Ricciardo

#### 2014 polesitter

Nico Rosberg

1m14.874s

#### Lap record

Rubens Barrichello

1m13.622s (2004)

#### UK start time

1900

#### Live TV

BBC & Sky Sports

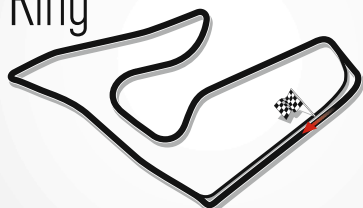


## AUSTRIA

### Red Bull Ring

JUNE

21



#### 2014 winner

Nico Rosberg

#### 2014 polesitter

Felipe Massa

1m08.759s

#### Lap record

Michael Schumacher

1m08.337s (2003)

#### UK start time

1300

#### Live TV

Sky Sports

## BRITAIN

### Silverstone

JULY

5



#### 2014 winner

Lewis Hamilton

#### 2014 polesitter

Nico Rosberg

1m35.766s

#### Lap record

Fernando Alonso

1m30.874s (2010)

#### UK start time

1300

#### Live TV

BBC & Sky Sports

**GERMANY\***   
Hockenheim

JULY  
19

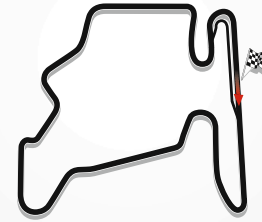


\* The German GP and venue were both still in doubt as AUTOSPORT closed for press

**2014 winner**  
Nico Rosberg  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
1m16.540s  
**Lap record**  
Kimi Raikkonen  
1m13.780s (2004)  
**UK start time**  
1300  
**Live TV**  
Sky Sports

**HUNGARY**   
Hungaroring

JULY  
26



**2014 winner**  
Daniel Ricciardo  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
1m22.715s  
**Lap record**  
Michael Schumacher  
1m19.071s (2004)  
**UK start time**  
1300  
**Live TV**  
BBC & Sky Sports

**BELGIUM**   
Spa

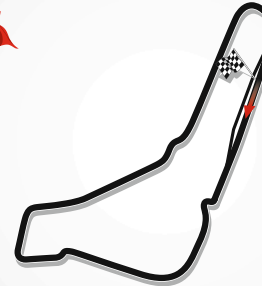
AUGUST  
23



**2014 winner**  
Daniel Ricciardo  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
2m05.591s  
**Lap record**  
Sebastian Vettel  
1m47.263s (2009)  
**UK start time**  
1300  
**Live TV**  
BBC & Sky Sports

**ITALY**   
Monza

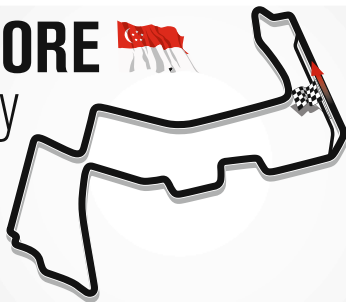
SEPTEMBER  
6



**2014 winner**  
Lewis Hamilton  
**2014 polesitter**  
Lewis Hamilton  
1m24.109s  
**Lap record**  
Rubens Barrichello  
1m21.046s (2004)  
**UK start time**  
1300  
**Live TV**  
Sky Sports

**SINGAPORE**   
Marina Bay

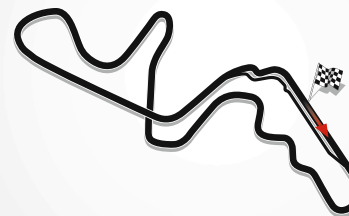
SEPTEMBER  
20



**2014 winner**  
Lewis Hamilton  
**2014 polesitter**  
Lewis Hamilton  
1m45.681s  
**Lap record**  
Sebastian Vettel  
1m48.574s (2013)  
**UK start time**  
1300  
**Live TV**  
Sky Sports

**JAPAN**   
Suzuka

SEPTEMBER  
27



**2014 winner**  
Lewis Hamilton  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
1m32.506s  
**Lap record**  
Kimi Raikkonen  
1m31.540s (2005)  
**UK start time**  
0600  
**Live TV**  
BBC & Sky Sports

**RUSSIA**   
Sochi

OCTOBER  
11

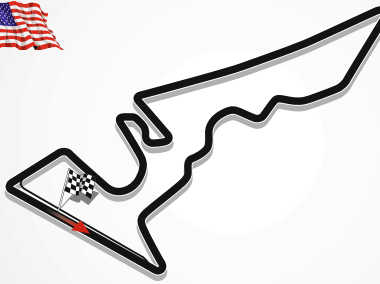


**2014 winner**  
Lewis Hamilton  
**2014 polesitter**  
Lewis Hamilton  
1m38.513s  
**Lap record**  
Valtteri Bottas  
1m40.896s (2014)  
**UK start time**  
1200  
**Live TV**  
BBC & Sky Sports



**USA**   
Austin

OCTOBER  
25



**2014 winner**  
Lewis Hamilton  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
1m36.067s  
**Lap record**  
Sebastian Vettel  
1m39.347s (2012)  
**UK start time**  
1900  
**Live TV**  
Sky Sports

**MEXICO**   
Mexico City

NOVEMBER  
1



**2014 winner**  
N/A  
**2014 polesitter**  
N/A  
**Lap record**  
Nigel Mansell  
1m16.788s (1991 – old layout)  
**UK start time**  
1900  
**Live TV**  
Sky Sports

**BRAZIL**   
Interlagos

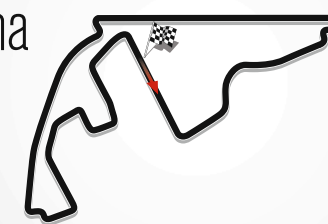
NOVEMBER  
15



**2014 winner**  
Nico Rosberg  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
1m10.023s  
**Lap record**  
Juan Pablo Montoya  
1m11.473s (2004)  
**UK start time**  
1600  
**Live TV**  
BBC & Sky Sports

**ABU DHABI**   
Yas Marina

NOVEMBER  
29



**2014 winner**  
Lewis Hamilton  
**2014 polesitter**  
Nico Rosberg  
1m40.480s  
**Lap record**  
Sebastian Vettel  
1m40.279s (2009)  
**UK start time**  
1300  
**Live TV**  
BBC & Sky Sports

# CAN THE VANQUISHED CHAMPION BOUNCE BACK?



76

The World Touring Car Championship kicks off in Argentina this weekend, and Yvan Muller bids to reclaim his throne from Citroen team-mate Jose Maria Lopez. He talks to **STUART CODLING**

**Y**ou could forgive Yvan Muller for being, at the very least, mildly irked. After all, nobody likes to be beaten by a newcomer – and certainly not by one with equal equipment. Not least when your own *palmares* includes four world championships with two different manufacturers, usually claimed from a position

of almost total on-track dominance.

But that's the scenario Muller found himself in last year when Jose Maria Lopez, also driving one of Citroën's new C-Elysees, usurped the number-one spot while Muller's relatively modest total of four race wins left him a distant second in the title standings. In 2013 six wins and a consistent run of podiums had been enough for Muller to secure his fourth world title in relatively humble circumstances, a Chevrolet privately entered by former works team RML. Such is the new era of the World Touring Car Championship, one of tight competition and marginal gains.

It's said that Muller's frustration led to some



With fellow veteran Coronel

rancour behind closed doors at Citroën, recently alluded to by series promoter Francois Ribeiro, who plans to spice up the TV package by promulgating such backstage soap opera.

"We will not hide this any more," Ribeiro told AUTOSPORT. "We will bring this to the screen, to the internet. What do you think people will remember in 10 years' time about the 2014 Formula 1 season? That the engine made less noise? No, they will remember the story between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg..."

Seated in a Granollers tapas restaurant on the eve of the series' media launch, and casually

pursuing a juicy-looking prawn around his plate with a fork, Muller raises an eyebrow, smiles and gives a Gallic shrug when apprised of his putative role in Eurosport's new character-based drama.

"Between two drivers who are fighting for a championship there is always tension," he says. "It's not particular to me – look at Hamilton and Rosberg, Loeb and Ogie, Senna and Prost in the past. There is always tension in these matters.

"He [Ribeiro] wants to tell some stories to the people, to put things more private in the story. Is it a good idea or not? [Another expansive Gallic shrug] I will tell you that at the end of the year."

Certainly sharing a garage with a competitive team-mate is nothing new to Muller, from early days in the British Touring Car Championship with the likes of John Cleland, James Thompson and Jason Plato, to world championship-level intra-team rivalries with such as Gabriele Tarquini, Rickard Rydell, Alain Menu and Rob Huff. He must be accustomed, AUTOSPORT suggests, to managing a strong character in the garage next door.

"I had no problems with [John] Bintlcliffe," he says. "He was not that strong! He was a nice guy.



Former champ Muller is out to regain the #1 spot in the 2015 championship

**“There’s not much politics in the WTCC. The atmosphere is quite friendly. There’s a bit of tension, but that’s normal”** YVAN MULLER

Cleland, it was OK with him. I had Thompson, too, a super guy. It was a bit more tight with Plato because he was a character...  
 “There’s not much politics in this championship, to be honest. The atmosphere is quite friendly. There’s quite a lot of older drivers – I’ve been friends with Gabriele [Tarquini] and Tiago [Monteiro] for a long time and we were team-mates at SEAT. I’ve known him [gestures at Tarquini, who is sitting at an adjacent table] for too long a time! Maybe there’s a bit of tension sometimes but that’s normal – we touch on-track occasionally. ▶

Testing has given the Frenchman his mojo back



► “It’s normal with a driver, even more when he’s in the same team, it creates some tension.

“We all know each other, we all know who can do what, and who you can’t do things with. It’s good to know that and it creates some respect.”

Muller admits to being not at the top of his game throughout 2014. He did not adapt as quickly as he could have done to a revised WTCC technical package that introduced a number of variables: more power; lower, lighter, wider cars; bigger wheels (from 17in to 18in); the freedom to run MacPherson-strut suspension all round; and new aero including flat-bottomed chassis and high-level rear wings.

Citroën did its part by designing the C-Elysee to the new regulations – actually committing before the World Motor Sport Council ratified the changes – while rivals had to modify existing \$2000 machinery, or, in the case of Honda, rush development and arrive with a sub-optimal car. But while Lopez and circuit-racing newcomer Sebastien Loeb were able to explore the C-Elysee’s theoretical performance in the simulator, Muller – like Michael Schumacher in the Mercedes simulator – found the contraption gave him motion sickness. At world championship level small differences can have a significant effect on results.

“Over this last winter I’ve been more focused to work on my own team, to prepare everything, to be a bit more free during the season,” says Muller. “One of the things I did more in the winter was to work more on the simulator, because that was one of my negative points last year. I was not able to do it because I was sick.

“So now it’s getting better. It’s not perfect but it’s better, and that was a disadvantage for me, I



Closer interaction with his team will help him, Muller claims

“Everyone says Citroën won too easily, but it was not easy, because to arrive at this level, that meant we had to work hard” YVAN MULLER

think, last season. Plus I was a bit unlucky as well; in Marrakech we crashed at the start and I lost 30 points; Salzburg some guy pushed me off; Japan I had a puncture. So all this cost me a lot of points. But still I was not on my best level. I was focused – I *am* focused to be on my best level during 2015.”

That ‘some guy’ who pushed him off at the Salzburgring was actually team-mate Lopez, who edged him on to the grass off the start, leaving him to become the collateral when the Ladas of Rob Huff and James Thompson got caught up with one another. Many observers feel that was the point where Lopez asserted himself as the alpha male of the Citroën clan – and from then on Muller was, if not defeated outright, then certainly wounded.

This season represents an opportunity for Muller to reassert himself, assuming Citroën retains its position of dominance, but that is by no means a given. Honda has put its Civic through an intensive programme of development to find more power and improve the chassis, and is currently assessing which combination will be most effective given the WTCC’s tight rules on changing homologated parts. Since Citroën and Honda have only run a limited number of laps on track at the same time, at the sparsely attended official test at Barcelona, it’s impossible to divine with any accuracy how much performance Honda has found – or will find. And the form of the ORECA-developed Lada Vesta is a complete unknown since it has been tested exclusively in private, at Magny-Cours.

Asking Muller how important he thinks Honda will be to the intra-Citroën battle causes him to bristle somewhat.

“I’ve no idea,” he says. “Everybody I’ve talked to has said, ‘Yeah, Citroën gained the championship

Ma, Loeb, Muller and Lopez are the quartet rivals are aiming for





## CAN ANYONE CHALLENGE CITROËN?

Last year the Citroën C-Elysee was the complete package, but the WTCC's well-tuned performance-balancing system helped other contenders remain in the hunt. Had the new rules been confirmed earlier it might have been more of a fight, but Citroën committed early and enjoyed greater rewards from greater risk.

By contrast, Honda waited until the rules had been ratified by the WMSC and therefore had less development time. Now its ability to catch up is constrained by the limited number of 'jokers' – each manufacturer can change the specification of five homologated parts per year.

"We are working on both sides – engine and chassis," says Honda's Gabriele Tarquini. "All of the winter we've tested a new solution.

"Part of the solution was already homologated for use at the first race. From the other elements, we must choose which to homologate.

"We have two problems: one is to try to improve the performance of the car, the other is to identify which are the right solutions to homologate – because we only have five 'jokers' during the season."

The engine now has a higher compression ratio and a new exhaust, according to Daisuke Horiuchi, Honda's Large Project Leader for Civic WTCC Development. The ignition is being painstakingly remapped too.

"With a higher compression ratio comes the risk of knocking [pre-ignition]," he says. "So good engine mapping is important – we are continuing to develop this every time we test.

"Last year we were able to fit a bigger air

restrictor [enlarged from 33mm to 36mm] but this did not raise our power so much."

If the developments work, Honda's works drivers will spearhead the challenge because most of their privateers have done little running, having only just taken delivery of their cars. Privateer Chevrolets may get in the mix, driven by such redoubtable talents as Stefano D'Aste and Tom Coronel but, since Coronel does not have the latest engine spec, he is likely to remain on the periphery, taking what he can.

The real enigma is Lada, having tested exclusively in private at ORECA's Magny-Cours base, the new Vesta is an unknown quantity. But, even though the car was finished late, two of the team's three drivers – James Thompson and Rob Huff – are proven winners.



too easily and it looks like they will win again.' First it was not easy, because to arrive at this level, that meant that we had to work *hard*."

He jabs a finger at the table repeatedly to emphasise his point.

"So that was not easy. We don't know how much they [Honda] have progressed over the winter. We know we've progressed a bit; how much, we don't know, because you're never sure how much you've gained. Imagine if you gain one tenth per day of testing. Does that mean 10 days, one second? Twenty days, two seconds? Thirty days, three seconds? It's impossible – it doesn't exist, it doesn't work like this. To calculate one or two tenths is difficult. I don't know how much they will progress or how much Lada will progress. Or the Chevrolet. We will only get a fix for the year when we're on the grid of the first race."

That's a fair point, but it glosses over some important nuances; chiefly that while works

Honda drivers Tarquini and Monteiro have had plenty of testing and will be in good shape, the Honda privateers have only just received their cars and will have to treat the opening races as tests. Norbert Michelisz ran briefly at Barcelona, but Rickard Rydell and Dusan Borkovic only had time for the briefest of shakedown in Italy before their Civics were air-freighted to Argentina for the first round. Six-foot-nine Borkovic will need further modifications to his cockpit before he can drive at 100 per cent.

Muller will also have to contend with other drivers running Citroën machinery as the works team expands to four cars. Ma Qing Hua will run a full campaign after contesting a handful of rounds last year, while Mehdi Bennani swaps his Civic for a C-Elysee to be run by Loeb's eponymous team.

"I'm used to this," says Muller. "I'm with Citroën now in this situation but I had the same

thing in the past with Chevrolet and SEAT, and before that with Vauxhall in the UK. It's always interesting and important to have some teammates at a good level because they push as well to get more out of the team. Lopez, Loeb and I are all very similar in terms of comments. We all go in the same ways. That's what we need. It's no problem, and so far it's even an advantage, to push the team."

Only Loeb drove at the Barcelona test, having missed other opportunities for seat time because of his run in the World Rally Championship-opening Monte Carlo Rally. But it was interesting to see – whether watching from the pitwall or nipping up to the hospitality unit for coffee – Muller was always there, soaking up every piece of information, only briefly nudging the team-radio headset away from his ears, while Lopez went shopping with his girlfriend. From such small nuances great results can come... 🏁

# RUNNERS AND RIDERS

Ahead of this weekend's season opener, **STUART CODLING** runs the rule over the 2015 WTCC grid



## CITROËN CITROËN C-ELYSEE

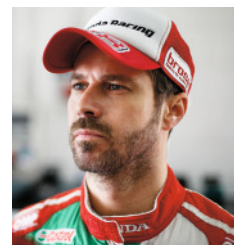
The C-Elysee may not set hearts aflutter in road-car form but it has been a devastatingly effective WTCC weapon, thanks to Citroën bravely pushing ahead with development early. Rivals have now had a chance to catch up, and qualifying in Argentina will reveal by how much.



## HONDA HONDA CIVIC WTCC

Development of the TC1 Civic suffered because of the short timeframe ahead of the 2014 season, but both engine and chassis-performance gains have been found, although the Barcelona test was inconclusive. Relatively late delivery of privateer cars may hold back the non-works drivers.

## CASTROL HONDA WTCC TEAM



**TIAGO MONTEIRO**  
The former Jordan grand prix driver was unlucky not to pick up a win in 2014, losing his power steering on the penultimate lap of Macau while leading. When the Civic ran reliably, he usually extracted the maximum performance from it.



**GABRIELE TARQUINI**  
Just the one race win last season, but the 2009 world champion remains a force to be reckoned with. Yvan Muller tips him as the most likely Honda driver to mix it regularly with the Citroëns, but much depends on how effective the Civic's development has been.

## CITROËN TOTAL WTCC



**JOSE MARIA LOPEZ**  
One-time F1 hopeful Lopez had a stellar first full year in the WTCC in 2014, exceeding all expectations. Ten wins speak for themselves, but equally impressive is his ability to engage in the physical side of tin-top combat without coming off worst.



**YVAN MULLER**  
Muller was not at the top of his game during 2014, held back by his inability to use the simulator. He appeared at the Barcelona test looking leaner than in previous years, which hints at how determined he is to regain his position as the WTCC's top dog.



**SEBASTIEN LOEB**  
By his own admission, Loeb struggled to adapt to racing on track with other people around him. That didn't stop him winning twice, though, and he is likely to win more in 2015 – provided he doesn't distract himself by trying to scratch his WRC itch again.



**MA QING HUA**  
A much-deserved full-time drive is Ma's reward for some great results in his part-season for Citroën during 2014, including a reversed-grid win in Russia. The former HRT F1 reserve driver now has the chance to show his full potential.

## SEBASTIEN LOEB RACING



**MEHDI BENNANI**  
Now in a semi-works Citroën, Bennani will be looking to build on his breakthrough victory in China last year.





# LADA LADA VESTA WTCC

Now backed by Russian state-owned oil company Rosneft and fielding a new car designed and developed in France by ORECA, Lada should no longer be an also-ran. The Vesta is new from the ground up and has tested extensively in private at Magny-Cours over the winter.



## LADA SPORT



**ROB HUFF**  
2012 champion Huff is competitive as ever, as evinced by his hustling of the overweight and aerodynamically bluff Lada Granta to finishes above its station last year, including a pair of hard-fought reversed-grid race wins. If the new Vesta is fast out of the box he will be a regular contender.



**JAMES THOMPSON**  
Twice a champion at British and European level, Thompson has struggled to match that form in the WTCC, last coming close at the wheel of an unfancied Alfa Romeo in 2007. Usually a match for team-mate Huff in qualifying in 2014, he was unlucky (or got involved in accidents) in races.



**MIKHAIL KOZLOVSKIY**  
After a largely unimpressive debut in 2013, the 25-year-old Russian showed better form last year. He still has much to do to match his team-mates.

## HONDA RACING TEAM SWEDEN



**RICKARD RYDELL**  
Having done very little since his Scandinavian title success in 2012, Rydell makes a welcome WTCC return for his first full-time campaign since 2009. First races will be a learning experience having only driven the Civic for a brief shakedown pre-season.

## PROTEAM RACING



**DUSAN BORKOVIC**  
The vertiginous Borkovic had a decent rookie season in 2014, including a podium finish, but is struggling to fit in his new Civic.

## ZENGO MOTORSPORT



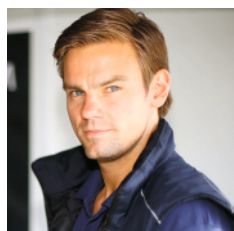
**NORBERT MICHELISZ**  
Often outqualified the works Hondas last year, leading to offers from elsewhere – which he turned down to remain with Zengo.



## CHEVROLET CHEVROLET CRUZE WTCC

Chevrolet left the WTCC at the end of 2013, but Ray Mallock Limited has kept the flame alive by supplying a TC1-spec Cruze to independents. The non-Citroens caught up in '14, but developments have been promised – if teams can afford them.

## ROAL MOTORSPORT



**TOM CHILTON**  
Now a tin-top veteran, Chilton remains with the legendary Roberto Ravaglia's ROAL team for a second season. Expectations will be high since he was the only non-Citroen driver to win a feature race in 2014, helping ROAL to take the Independent Teams' Trophy.



**TOM CORONEL**  
Perennially plucky privateer Coronel was late confirming his 2015 programme after contesting the Dakar Rally, but returns for another season with ROAL. His car will now run in DHL livery but funding is still tight, and his Cruze may not have the latest engine and chassis developments.

## MUNNICH MOTORSPORT



**STEFANO D'ASTE, TBC**  
Serial BMW privateer D'Aste sat out last season, citing the cost of the new TC1 cars, but returns in a Chevrolet. German team Munnich plans to recruit a second full-time driver.

## CAMPOS RACING



**HUGO VALENTE, JOHN FILIPPI**  
The impressive Valente, an occasional podium finisher in 2014, remains at Campos and is joined by 20-year-old Filippi, who steps up from the TC2 ranks.

## CRAFT BAMBOO



**GREGOIRE DEMOUSTIER**  
Craft Bamboo returns to the WTCC with GT convert Demoustier, a protege of ex-F1 driver Olivier Panis. The team may run a second car later in the season.



### AUSSIE CARRERA CUP

Steven Richards made a perfect start to his bid for a second successive title with three wins in Adelaide. The multiple Bathurst 1000 victor won the first race from David Russell and Nick McBride, the second ahead of Craig Baird and McBride and the third over Baird and Russell.

### V8 DEVELOPMENT

Paul Dumbrell (Holden) and Cam Waters (Ford) split the V8 Development Series wins in Adelaide. After Waters won the opening Friday encounter, reigning champion Dumbrell fought back to take the Saturday win. Chris Pither and Aaren Russell put their Fords on the podium in the respective races.

### USF2000 WINTERFEST

Frenchman Nico Jamin claimed the title at Barber Motorsports Park as there was heartbreak for Jake Eidson. Brazilian Victor Franzoni won the first of a reduced two races (the first fell victim to the weather) from Eidson, meaning the American only needed a seventh place in the finale to be crowned champion of the two-round mini-series. Eidson was running second to Franzoni on the opening lap when he fell victim to a fuel-pump failure. This promoted Jamin to second, and he took the lead when Franzoni made a small mistake with three laps remaining. This gave him the crown by five points from Franzoni.

### NASCAR XFINITY

Kevin Harvick won last Saturday's race at Atlanta in his Chevrolet after the Ford of pursuer Joey Logano suffered a left-rear-wheel vibration in the closing stages, causing the Daytona 500 winner to take it easy. Ty Dillon was the highest finisher registered for points, taking third from Chris Buescher and reigning champion Chase Elliott. Buescher now leads the points on countback from Dillon.

### NASCAR TRUCKS

Two-time champion Matt Crafton ramped up his bid for a title hat-trick by dominating at Atlanta on Friday, taking his ThorSport Toyota to an 8.7s win after a 74-lap stretch of green-flag racing. Ty Dillon came home in second place ahead of Ben Kennedy, while Daniel Suarez and Daytona winner Tyler Reddick completed the top five.



V8 SUPERCARS ADELAIDE (AUS), FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1 RD 1/14

# Courtney aces van Gisbergen in Adelaide's ripper gripper



Courtney takes early points lead

THREE DIFFERENT HOLDEN DRIVERS won three V8 Supercar races in Adelaide and it was James Courtney who left the city with the points lead.

The Holden Racing Team driver won the Sunday 250km race for the second year in a row but it was the manner in which he did it — snatching pole position and withstanding constant pressure over the final 20 laps — that marked him as a title contender. In perhaps his finest V8 Supercar drive, Courtney held out Shane van Gisbergen lap after lap to win narrowly.

The weekend did not start like that. Reigning champion Jamie Whincup was in a class of his own in qualifying for Saturday's two 125km races, taking both poles by huge margins. The Triple Eight man dominated the first race to win, but an untimely puncture dropped him from contention in the second, leaving Brad Jones Racing's Fabian Coulthard to take victory.

That, and the fact that Scott McLaughlin failed to start the opening race when his Volvo developed engine dramas on the formation lap, set up a fascinating Sunday. Courtney snatched pole by the narrowest of margins and was in contention to win for most of the race, particularly when a doubtful strategy and set-up problems put Whincup back in the pack. Courtney's team-mate Garth Tander worked his way up to third, but could only sit and watch the battle for the win play out in front of him.

Whincup took fourth but only



Coulthard leads van Gisbergen

after a last-lap drama, which saw him entangled in a multi-car pile-up involving Chaz Mostert's Ford and the Nissan of James Moffat. Mostert's car was badly damaged as Whincup sped home to fourth place, before both drivers were cleared in what was determined as 'a racing incident' post-race.

The Nissans scored some solid top-10 results but Mercedes-Benz struggled, Will Davison's catastrophic weekend offset only slightly by the speed of rookie Ash Walsh, who ran in the top 10 in race two. Marcos Ambrose had a mixed weekend in his V8 Supercar return, qualifying badly for the first two races before impressing team co-owner Roger Penske with a top-10 grid spot for the final race. Three mid-pack finishes were the best the former NASCAR man could manage.

Ambrose and the other V8 men will get some 'practice' at Albert Park's non-championship Australian GP support races before hostilities reconvene at the tight Symmons Plains track at the end of the month.

● Phil Branagan

### RESULTS

**Race 1** Jamie Whincup (Holden Commodore), 33 laps in 48m28.7493s; 2 Chaz Mostert (Ford Falcon), +0.8572s; 3 Fabian Coulthard (Holden); 4 Craig Lowndes (Holden); 5 Mark Winterbottom (Ford); 6 Shane van Gisbergen (Holden). **Race 2** 1 Coulthard, 39 laps in 59m05.6809s; 2 James Courtney (Holden), +1.9574s; 3 Lowndes; 4 Garth Tander (Holden); 5 Jason Bright (Holden); 6 Rick Kelly (Nissan Altima). **Race 3** 1 Courtney, 78 laps in 1h56m00.5102s; 2 van Gisbergen, +0.7602s; 3 Tander; 4 Whincup; 5 Winterbottom; 6 Coulthard. **Points** 1 Courtney, 258; 2 Coulthard, 241; 3 Tander, 237; 4 van Gisbergen, 222; 5 Whincup, 216; 6 Lowndes, 208.

Johnson took  
the flag at Atlanta



NASCAR SPRINT CUP ATLANTA (USA), MARCH 1 RD 2/36

## Johnson beats stars back to front

JIMMIE JOHNSON AND KEVIN HARVICK both had to start 2015's second NASCAR Sprint Cup race from the back, but that didn't stop the series' last two champions battling for victory on a misty and murky afternoon at Atlanta.

Johnson — along with fellow past champions Jeff Gordon, Matt Kenseth and Tony Stewart — was caught out by a stringent new technical inspection prior to qualifying, and was among a group of cars that didn't get through tech in time to even take to the track, leaving them at the back of the field.

Harvick's problem came later; he qualified second to Joey Logano but then blew an engine early in Saturday practice so had to fall to the rear.

He made the most rapid progress in the slightly rain-delayed race, taking the lead from the hitherto dominant Logano on lap 87. But Johnson came on stronger in the second half of the race and, after several exchanges with Harvick, made a decisive break in the 14-lap sprint that followed a late red flag after Greg Biffle and Joe Nemechek triggered the day's second pile-up.

Gordon had been a victim of the

first, collected along with second-place starter Jamie McMurray when long-time lead contender Denny Hamlin lost control in the cold conditions on a restart.

Dale Earnhardt Jr was a frontrunner for most of the day and got between Johnson and Harvick late on, but lost second to the champ in the closing laps. Logano faded to fourth ahead of Kenseth, another man on a charge from the back.

In a one-off for Michael Waltrip Racing before Brian Vickers returns following heart surgery, rookie Brett Moffitt impressed with eighth place.

### RESULTS

**1 Jimmie Johnson (Chevrolet SS)**, 325 laps in 3h49m06s; 2 Kevin Harvick (Chevy), +1.802s; 3 Dale Earnhardt Jr (Chevy); 4 Joey Logano (Ford Fusion); 5 Matt Kenseth (Toyota Camry); 6 Martin Truex Jr (Chevy); 7 AJ Allmendinger (Chevy); 8 Brett Moffitt (Toyota); 9 Brad Keselowski (Ford); 10 Ryan Newman (Chevy). **Chase grid**  
**1 Logano, 1 win/88 points**; 2 Johnson, 1/87; 3 Harvick, 0/86; 4 Earnhardt, 0/84; 5 Truex, 0/75; 6 Casey Mears, 0/68; 7 Kasey Kahne, 0/65; 8 Allmendinger, 0/62; 9 Aric Almirola, 0/62; 10 Clint Bowyer, 0/58; 11 David Gilliland, 0/56; 12 Sam Hornish Jr, 0/55; 13 Greg Biffle, 0/54; 14 Carl Edwards, 0/54; 15 David Ragan, 0/53; 16 Danica Patrick, 0/51.

PRO MAZDA WINTERFEST  
BARBER (USA), FEB 26 RD 2/2

## Aitken is all over Tan

LONDONER JACK AITKEN CLAIMED the title after a thrilling battle with Malaysian Weiron Tan thanks to claiming fastest lap in the Barber Motorsports Park finale.

The first race was rained off on a torrential day in Alabama, but conditions cleared for Thursday, with Team Pelfrey-run half-Scot half-Korean Aitken holding Tan at bay throughout. Reigning US\$2000 champ Florian Latorre was third from a second Brit, Raoul Owens. This race had a lengthy caution due to a first-lap shunt for Nicholas Latifi.

Aitken was only fourth on the grid for the double-points decider, but quickly made his way up to second behind Tan. Now the fastest lap bonus would prove all-important, and the honour was



traded between Aitken, Tan and Jose Gutierrez throughout the race before landing in the first-named's favour, with one point the final difference in the scores.

Dalton Kellett completed the podium this time as Tristan DeGrand made a late run to move from eighth to fourth.

### RESULTS

**Race 1** 1 Jack Aitken, 15 laps in 30m09.7370s; 2 Weiron Tan, +0.7712s; 3 Florian Latorre; 4 Raoul Owens; 5 Dalton Kellett; 6 Timothe Buret. **Race 2** 1 Tan, 17 laps in 30m11.6799s; 2 Aitken, +1.3897s; 3 Kellett; 4 Tristan DeGrand; 5 Garrett Grist; 6 Latorre. **Points** 1 Aitken, 167; 2 Tan, 166; 3 Kellett, 98; 4 Latorre, 96; 5 Grist, 91; 6 Will Owen, 83.

AUSTRALIAN GT ADELAIDE (AUS), FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1 RD 1/6

## Antunes out front in Audi

NATHAN ANTUNES HAS MARKED himself out as the man to beat after the opening three races of 2015.

The ex-Formula BMW UK race winner took the first race in his Audi R8 LMS ultra, ahead of Marcus Marshall (Porsche) and Peter Fitzgerald (Audi), and then drove solo to win the second, longer race from Tony Quinn/Klark Quinn (McLaren) and Jono Lester/Paul Kelly (Ferrari 458 Italia). But the final race was marred by a huge first-corner incident, triggered when Kelly lost control and crashed into a wall. Six cars, including the new

McLaren 650S of Tony Walls, were eliminated on the spot.

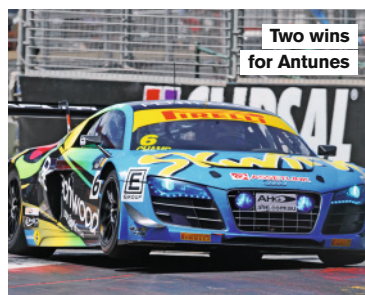
Tony Quinn won the restarted race from Trophy Class driver Theo Koundouris (Porsche) and Antunes.

Greg Taylor (Audi) edged Koundouris for Trophy honours for the weekend.

● Phil Branagan

### RESULTS

**Race 1** 1 Nathan Antunes (Audi R8 LMS ultra), 18 laps in 30m45.4579s; 2 Marcus Marshall (Porsche 911 GT3-R), +1.9281s; 3 Peter Fitzgerald (Audi); 4 Jono Lester (Ferrari 458 Italia GT3); 5 Tony Walls (McLaren 650S GT3); 6 Barton Mawer (Audi). **Race 2** 1 Antunes, 42 laps in 1h01m30.4992s; 2 Klark Quinn/Tony Quinn (McLaren MP4-12C GT3), +10.7678s; 3 Lester/Paul Kelly; 4 Walls; 5 Fitzgerald; 6 Michael Hovey (Ginetta G55 GT3). **Race 3** 1 T Quinn, 9 laps in 23m38.2082s; 2 Theo Koundouris (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup), +1.1442s; 3 Antunes; 4 Greg Taylor (Audi); 5 Jan Jinadasa (Lamborghini LP560-4); 6 Geoff Emery (Mercedes SLS AMG GT3). **Points** 1 Antunes, 150; 2 Quinn/Quinn, 104; 3 Lester/Kelly, 80; 4 Christopher Mies/Greg Crick, 78; 5 Marshall/James Koundouris, 71; 6 Emery/Max Twigg, 63.



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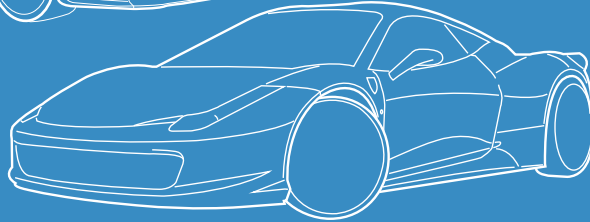
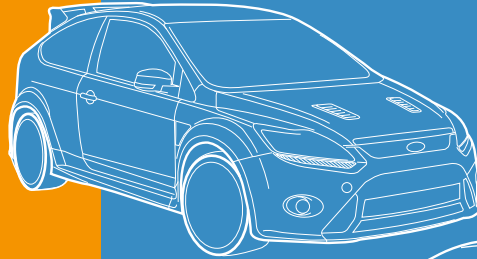
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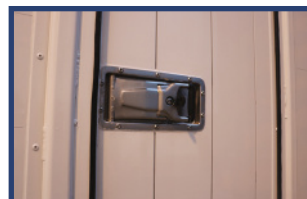
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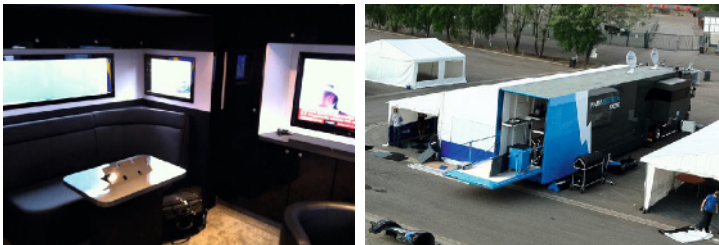
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The Easter Training Sessions are intensive one-week racing courses designed to develop young drivers of all levels and abilities, aged between 12 and 18 years. They are also an opportunity for students to get a taste of what they can expect from the full academic session starting in September.

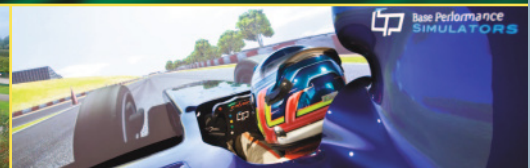
The Easter Academy course will provide classroom tuition on car control, racing techniques, fitness and nutrition, seat-time in professional simulators, as well as approximately 750 karting laps on track during the course of the week, culminating in a race day on the Friday.

Tutors include double Le Mans winner Darren Turner and Formula 1 Fitness Trainer Gerry Convy. Students will also have an afternoon away from the track to visit the fabulous Donington Collection of historic racing cars including the largest collection of McLaren Formula 1 cars outside Woking.

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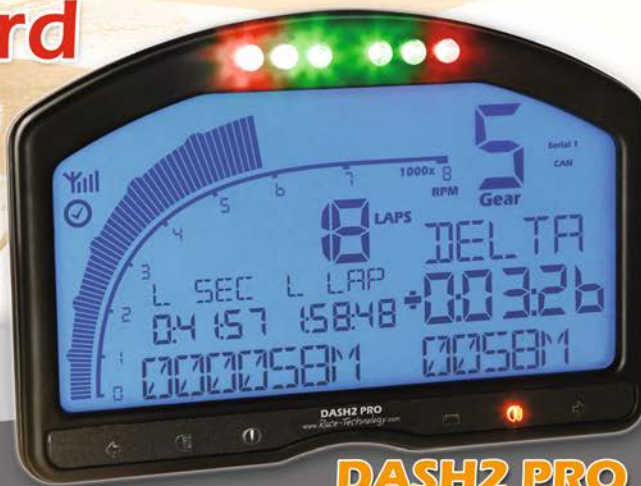


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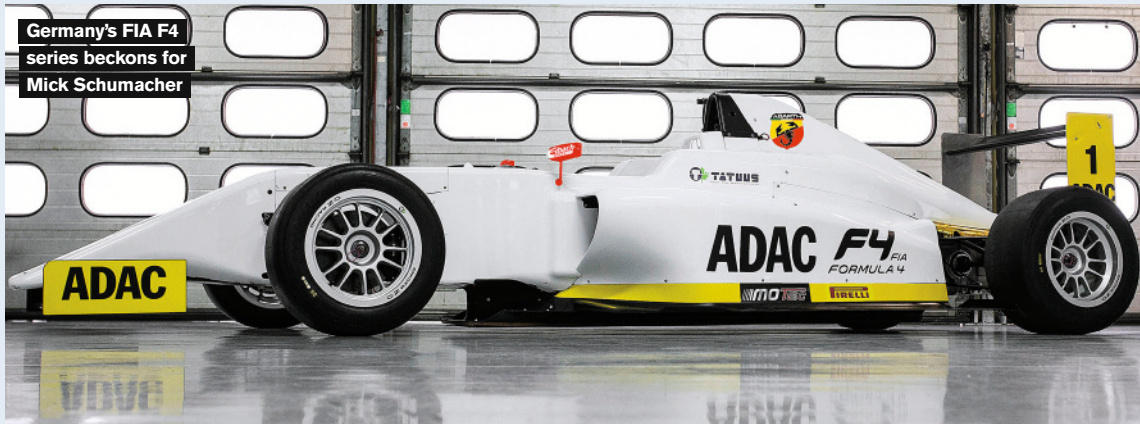
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## Schumacher Jr to German F4

Seven-time Formula 1 champion's son to make single-seater debut

**MICK SCHUMACHER**, THE 15-year-old son of seven-time Formula 1 world champion Michael Schumacher, will make his car-racing debut this year in the ADAC Formula 4 Championship in Germany.

Schumacher will race with Van Amersfoort Racing, the Dutch team that propelled Max Verstappen – son of Schumacher Sr's 1994 Benetton F1 team-mate Jos Verstappen – to prominence

in Formula 3 last season.

ADAC F4, Germany's new series for Tatuus-Abarth cars run to the FIA's new F4 concept, kicks off at Oschersleben on April 25-26, by which time Schumacher will be 16.

He has competed in karting under the names Mick Junior and Mick Betsch (his mother Corinna's maiden name) and last season finished runner-up to Briton Enaam Ahmed in both the World and European KF Junior title fights.

His maiden test in a car was in a French F4 Championship machine, while his first taste of an ADAC F4 Tatuus came at Valencia before Christmas with Jenzer Motorsport.



**SCOTT MITCHELL**  
FEATURES  
EDITOR

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@ScottMitchell189



### LAST YEAR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

that British GT would introduce all-Silver pairings split opinion. In fact, some of those it irked were so put out they considered whether they'd even continue in the series.

So, while it's great to see a marque like McLaren invest in youth, to have a new car in the series, and have two young guns in Ross Wylie and Andrew Watson land proper GT3 drives (see page 98), it's got the potential to cause some problems throughout the grid.

That pairing in that car, run by a team as capable as VonRyan Racing, should win the championship. In a 'straight' fight, the Pro-Am pairings would not compete. So they will have to be pegged back.

It's not as though it's something the championship officials have no experience of. After all, they've allowed Gold and Silver pairings in the past (though the partnership of Ahmad Al Harthy and Michael Caine is no longer, now that's been banned), and they didn't win the title last year. A Pro-Am pairing did.

How the Balance of Performance is weighted against the Silver Cup pairings will be crucial to retain a level playing field in what is predominantly a Pro-Am championship. While we'd all love to see GT3 machines being thrashed around by professionals for three hours, the bottom line is that British GT is where it is because of the gentleman driver.

Their value should not be underestimated and their irritations should not be ignored. Until then, let's not disregard what is very good news for two very promising young drivers.

### NEXT GENERATION The sons and nephews of Michael Schumacher's 1994 F1 rivals

#### Making it big

**Max Verstappen** After a stunning rookie F3 season, Jos's lad is into F1.

**Bruno Senna** Now racing for McLaren in GT after following uncle Ayrton to F1.

**Lucas Auer** Gerhard Berger's nephew moves from F3 to DTM with Mercedes.

**Alex Brundle** After inconclusive stint in single-seaters, Martin's boy is LMP2 ace.



#### Missing out

**Greg and Leo Mansell** Sons of Nigel haven't raced for some years.

**Josh Hill** Damon's boy looked decent to F3 level, but preferred drums to Dallaras.

**Anthony Comas** The son of Erik raced in Formula BMW without any great success.

**Sam Brabham** David's lad is a British Formula Ford winner unsure of next step.



#### Bubbling under

**Hugo Hakkinen** Mika's son, 14, has been karting in Europe for a few years.

**Pietro Fittipaldi** Cousin-once-removed of Christian moves from Formula Renault to F3.

**Louis Deletraz** Jean-Denis's son has won in Formula Renault NEC.

**Aurelien Panis** Olivier Jr, a Renault Eurocup race winner, heads to FR3.5.

**Giuliano Alesi** It's karting at the moment for Jean's 15-year-old son.

**Jules Gounon** Son of Jean-Marc has won French Carrera Cup scholarship.

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Wylie and Watson have tested extensively

EBREY

British GT

# McLaren juniors to race 650S in British GT

## McLAREN JUNIOR DRIVERS

Ross Wylie and Andrew Watson will share an all-new 650S GT3 in this year's British GT Championship.

Reigning British GT4 champion Wylie, 23, and Ginetta GT4 Supercup race winner Watson, 19, will race one of VonRyan Racing's two 650S machines following the car's competitive debut at December's Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi.

Wylie and Watson were unveiled as the first two members of McLaren's Young Driver initiative at AUTOSPORT International in January, although the British manufacturer has stressed it is not funding their British GT seats.

McLaren GT boss Andrew Kirkaldy has been impressed by the duo's progress in pre-season testing so far. "Andrew and Ross have shown

themselves to be extremely professional and motivated since joining the young driver programme," said Kirkaldy.

"The British GT championship has earned a reputation as one of the most competitive national series in Europe, and it will be a steep learning curve for them both, but I am confident they will be a formidable pairing."

VonRyan team manager David Ryan

added that he has been "very pleased" by the progress the pair has made.

The second VonRyan 650S will be campaigned by former Porsche Carrera Cup GB frontrunner Euan Hankey and Turkish driver Salih Yoluc.

The pair took GT4 class honours in January's Dubai 24 Hours driving an Optimum Motorsport Ginetta G55, along with Bradley Ellis and Adrian Barwick.

86

BRDC Formula 4

# Mealin eyes BRDC F4 title assault with Lanan Racing

## LANAN RACING HAS SIGNED

British Formula Ford podium finisher Chris Mealin as it bids to secure a third consecutive BRDC Formula 4 title.

The team has evaluated Mealin at Oulton Park and Donington Park in recent weeks, and the 21-year-old's dedication has impressed team boss Graham Johnson.

"He drove really well," said Johnson. "He went quick at Oulton and if you can go quicker there you can do it anywhere. It's a ballsy circuit.

"It's given me a massive boost of confidence. His awareness is very good and he's got an aptitude for it. He's really focused on being the best he can be."

Manx racer Mealin added: "Joining Lanan Racing and BRDC F4 is a great

move for me. They are the only team I wanted to join and I have to thank them for giving me the opportunity to demonstrate my talent.

"My aim is to finish in the top three of the championship as a minimum but my main goal is to win the title."



Mealin impressed in BRDC F4 test

WALKER

Renault Clio Cup UK

# James Hunt's son Freddie tests Clio Cup car for BKR



Hunt could race in Clios this year

WALKER

## FREDDIE HUNT, SON OF 1976

Formula 1 world champion James, could race in the Renault Clio Cup UK this year after a successful test with Bubble & Kick Racing at Brands Hatch.

The 27-year-old drove 2014 champion Mike Bushell's title-winning Clio at the Kent circuit last week, leaving a big impression on BKR team boss Nico Ferrari.

"From the moment Freddie arrived he was professional and meticulous in his approach," said Ferrari. "The more laps

he did the faster he became; he didn't put a foot wrong and left the team impressed with his ability."

Ferrari admitted there was no deal with Hunt in place yet, adding: "I'd love to get Freddie in the car for the season, but he is a sought-after driver with a lot of options."

Hunt returned to single-seaters last year in Formula Ford 1600, with sporadic appearances followed up by an MRF Challenge campaign later in the season.

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Ginetta GT4 Supercup

# Breeze switches to HHC for latest GT4 Supercup attack

RECORD GINETTA RACE WINNER

Carl Breeze has joined the GT4 Supercup championship-winning squad HHC Motorsport for the 2015 season.

The 2012 Supercup champion will be reunited at HHC with race engineer Alan Mugglestone, who ran Breeze to the 2001 Formula Renault UK title with the Motaworld outfit.



Breeze is no stranger to Ginetta success

Breeze has won 37 races in Ginetta's flagship series' various guises since 2009, and has never finished lower than third in the points.

"I can't wait to get started. This year will be the first where I will have some pre-season tests before the first race, which will hopefully result in a great start to the year at Brands Hatch," said the 35-year-old, who raced in the British Touring Car Championship after his FR UK success and was also a race winner in the SEAT Cupra Cup.

"Last year HHC had by far the best car in the field, so I can't wait to drive it and try and win back-to-back championships for the team. With the team-mates I have alongside me we have a really strong line-up, so the teams' title challenge looks promising too."

Formula Renault Eurocup

# Eastwood in Eurocup move

BRDC FORMULA 4 PODIUM

finisher Charlie Eastwood will contest the Formula Renault Eurocup this year with Strakka Racing.

The 19-year-old finished 10th in the BRDC F4 points in 2014, his maiden season of car racing, and was seventh in this year's New Zealand-based Toyota Racing Series.

Karting champion Eastwood will now turn his attention towards the start of the

Eurocup season following a successful test with the Silverstone-based Strakka squad, which is embarking upon its first full campaign in the category.

"I tested really well and coming to see the workshop confirmed this is where I want to race," said Eastwood. "I just instinctively knew to sign there and then."

Team principal Dan Walmsley added: "Charlie is quick and has a great attitude, just what we look for in the Strakka family."



Eastwood showed well in BRDC F4 and TRS

Renault Clio Cup UK

# Mighty Mini ace to Clio Cup

LEADING RENAULT CLIO CUP UK

outfit SV Racing will run triple Super Mighty Mini champion Ben Seyfried in 2015 after securing backing from a sponsor new to the series.

SVR, which won the Clio Cup teams' title and took Josh Cook to the runner-up spot in the drivers' standings last year, has signed 40-year-old veteran club racer Seyfried as part of the tie-up with the Forex trading company CWM FX.

"I'm under no illusions; my undertaking is huge and I'll be up against some really good drivers," said Seyfried. "I will need to raise my game and I know there's still a lot to learn in the Clio Cup car, but I bring a cool, calm head and maturity."

CWM FX, title sponsor of the LCR Honda MotoGP team for which Cal Crutchlow will ride this season, said that a desire to gain exposure on the TOCA package was behind its decision to enter into a sponsorship deal with SVR.



SVR Clios will run in CWM FX livery

# HUMBLE PYE

## The voice of club racing

Members Meeting at Goodwood will be Pye's first UK event



HAWKINS/AT

# Australian trip signals the end of a long winter break

After a three-month lull, the mainstream British racing season is almost upon us, and competitors and enthusiasts alike are gearing up for an explosive start to 2015 at Goodwood's 73rd Members Meeting in a fortnight's time. News of world champion Mercedes-Benz's participation with an F1 car and other landmark machines bearing the three-pointed star has added a delicious twist to the unique event, which cleverly straddles the circuit's heyday.

A week later, that perennial champion of affordable motorsport, the 750 Motor Club, opens its programme with 11 of its 16 categories – including the highly competitive BMW Compact Cup, Honda Civic Cup, Locost and Mazda MX-5 slipstreamers, ultra-fast Bikesports and the remarkable 750 Formula – in action at Donington Park. RGB, Formula Vee, Stock/Classic Stock Hatch and the growing band of Renault Clio 182 combatants have another month to prepare before they get their seasons under way at Brands Hatch.

Moving into April, the Easter Bank Holiday weekend still gives loyal fans and marshals plenty of variety and choice. The Historic Sports Car Club's third Thruxton Easter Revival takes CEO Grahame White back to running the BARC's European F2 rounds at the Andover airfield track in the 1960s and '70s, and the co-promoters' season opener should attract its biggest entry yet.

I'll head from Thruxton to Castle Combe's Easter Monday kick-off – marking the third Howard's Day, remembering the Chippenham venue's late saviour Howard Strawford. Registrations for the CCRC's FF1600 and Saloon

championships, the latter providing some of the country's best racing in recent seasons, are strong, although the GT and Sports Racing brigades could do with reinforcements. Combe devotees are in for a shock, however, for the centre of the circuit is now a solar farm!

While domestic events are looming large, my first fix of 2015 comes this weekend in Australia. My

"My 38th full season

of reporting starts

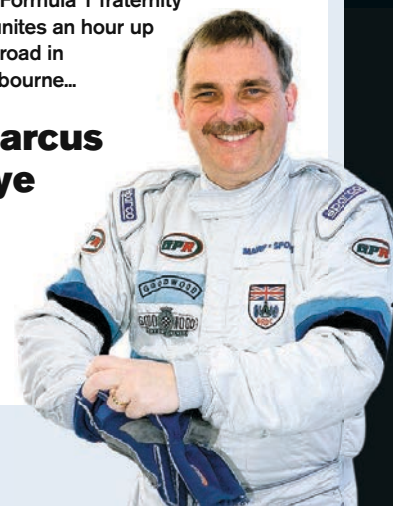
this weekend at

Phillip Island"

38th full season of reporting for AUTOSPORT starts at one of the world's most spectacular circuits; much appreciated help from the Victorian Historic Racing Register sees me return for the 25th anniversary of its blue riband Phillip Island Classic. It's 12 years since I last attended the meeting, which, by coincidence, fell during a family holiday on the Gold Coast.

Read about it next Thursday, as the Formula 1 fraternity re-unites an hour up the road in Melbourne...

## Marcus Pye



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In brief



Masters on US GP bill

The Masters Historic Racing series will feature on the support bill for October's United States Grand Prix at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. Organisers are hoping to attract entries from both sides of the Atlantic for the race, which will be the sole occasion historic grand prix machinery will race as part of a Formula 1 race weekend in 2015.

Wooder in Juniors move

Karting star Dave Wooder will make the step up to car racing after signing for Total Control Racing to contest this year's Ginetta Junior season. The 15-year old, who won the Kartmasters British Grand Prix and took the British Open title in 2014, joins Cameron Roberts and Matt Chapman at the West Midlands-based team.

Wenhams' new recruit

Brother-and-sister Fun Cup duo Zoe and Guy Wenhams have added series regular Stephen Johansen to their 2015 line-up. 2012 Fun Cup runner-up Johansen replaces Tom Pattle, who has been sidelined by his university studies, alongside the Wenhams siblings.

Carvells to Silverstone

Former British Touring Car driver David Carvell will contest April's Britcar 24 Hours at Silverstone in his factory-built Jaguar XF alongside sons Rob and Ian. "It's a diesel, so it will be a tortoise-and-hare game, but I'm looking forward to competing with the boys rather than against them in VWs," said Carvell Sr.

Britcar champ returns

Britcar Endurance champion Calum Lockie will return to the series in 2015 in FF Corse's Ferrari 458 GTC alongside David Mason. Lockie – who will also contest a variety of historic races this year – and Mason have lined up further endurance outings together in the team's GT3 car.



Chadwick has adapted easily to the Vantage

British GT

# Chadwick, Gunn join Beechdean

JAMIE CHADWICK AND ROSS

Gunn will team up for an assault on the British GT Championship's GT4 class with Beechdean Motorsport.

The reigning class champion team's Aston Martin Vantage will be entrusted to one of the youngest line-ups in the championship's history; Chadwick is 16, while Gunn recently turned 18.

Chadwick, who took five podium

finishes in two seasons of Ginetta Juniors, was surprised how easily she was able to adapt to the considerable step up in power during testing.

"To get the best out of the [Ginetta] G40 you had to be on the ragged edge," Chadwick explained. "But the Vantage needs a more balanced style and has a lot of electronic aids. I want to be fighting for wins and podiums."

BRDC Formula 4 race winner Gunn was forced to sit out 2014 due to a lack of funds, but has been testing in Spain in preparation for his racing return.

"Many single-seater racers move to GTs and drive too harshly; I'll need to change my mentality and learn how to be smooth and consistent," he said.

"I hope this is the start of a long career in GT racing for me."



Academy is now an official Aston Martin partner team

British GT

# Academy in Aston switch

LONG-TIME GINETTA TEAM

Academy Motorsport will switch to Aston Martin machinery for this year's British GT campaign after becoming an official partner team to the famous British marque.

Academy will run a pair of GT4-class Aston Martin Vantages, with Will Moore and Dennis Strandberg sharing one and Chris Webster and

James Harrison partnering one another in the second.

Academy also plans to compete in the Le Mans 24 Hours-supporting Aston Martin Festival, as well as the end-of-season endurance events in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Team boss Matt Nicoll-Jones said: "This is a great way of celebrating the team's 10th anniversary."

MSA Formula

# Collard, Ticktum set testing pace

RICKY COLLARD AND DAN

Ticktum set the pace during MSA Formula's first two pre-season tests.

Arden driver Collard, son of British Touring Car race winner Rob, topped the timesheets at the wet opening test at Brands Hatch last Thursday, lapping the Indy layout of the Kent circuit in 52.574s.

Daniel Baybutt was second quickest for JTR, less than a tenth of a second behind, with Colton Herta, Ticktum, Sandy Mitchell and Lando Norris next up.

Ticktum set the pace for Fortec in Monday's second test at Snetterton, leading the way with a best lap of 1m51.916s, almost seven tenths up on nearest challenger Norris.

Herta was the only other driver to lap within a second of Ticktum's time, with James Pull, Baybutt and Collard rounding out the top half-dozen.



Rees hopes to mount title challenge in '15

Porsche Carrera Cup GB

# Rees partners with Zamparelli at Parr

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

race winner Paul Rees will return to the series this year with Parr Motorsport.

The 28-year-old, who placed third in last year's Carrera Cup standings in his debut season in the category for the In2Racing squad, joins GP3 convert

Dino Zamparelli at the Crawley team.

"I'm really looking forward to working with Parr," said Rees. "I'm hoping to get some wins and challenge for the title.

"It will also be great to work with Dino too – he is a quick driver and hopefully we will be able to push each other

throughout the year."

Rees and Zamparelli take on the most-competitive Carrera Cup field in years, with Josh Webster, Michael Meadows, Stephen Jelley, Dan Cammish, Nicholas Latifi, Josh Files and Tom Sharp among the entries.

# Can a Saxo lead to the

102



# BTCC?

The BARC wants the Junior Saloon Car Championship to grow into something that develops touring car stars.

SCOTT MITCHELL and RUSSELL HAYES ask how

Even during its difficult mid-noughties struggles, the British Touring Car Championship retained its appeal for drivers. It's always been competitive at the sharp end and offers a marketing platform like few others in motorsport circles, and certainly stands on its own in Britain in car-racing terms. Whether you're looking to showcase yourself as a driver or promote a business, the BTCC has always been an attractive option.

Series director Alan Gow says the BTCC has the ability to make stars, not just attract them. Colin Turkington, Jason Plato, Matt Neal, Gordon Shedden, Andrew Jordan and others have the following they have because the BTCC introduced them to a wider audience and their talents did the rest.

In special cases, racing in the championship can be an end in itself, although for the time being at least the BTCC will not reach the same heights as it did in the 1990s, because manufacturers are no longer pouring money into it as they once did. But the budgets are, to a point, reasonable to compete in the BTCC, and the quality of driver not just winning races but fighting for podiums is now at a higher level than it has been since 2000. Triple world champion Andy Priaulx is back, after all, and that's a handy calibre of opposition for an aspiring racing professional to prove themselves against.

This, combined with the reverential status it enjoys with fans of national racing, is why more and more series are pushing to establish a link with it, to try to create a so called pathway to the BTCC.

So how do you get there? To use the five of the drivers named above as examples – via Renault Spiders (Plato), Ford Fiestas (Turkington), the National Saloon Car Cup (Neal), the SEAT Cupra Cup (Shedden) and the Renault Clio Cup UK (Jordan). So there is no obvious, definitive answer. But the British Automobile Racing Club is hoping that will change, and the last of those five examples has gone some way to helping that.

In recent years the Clio Cup has developed into a real feeder series ▶

JSCC champion Dorlin is moving up into Clios this season



It is hoped the JSCC will form the base of a BTCC pyramid

► for the BTCC. It's always been something that has the capacity to develop good tin-top drivers, because the slick-shod Clio (of varying models) is a good front-wheel-drive platform and the racing in the Clio Cup matches the paint-swapping, hectic style the BTCC is famed for. Skills learned here are arguably more relevant to touring cars than any other.

Renault Clios aren't the only way to gain appropriate front-wheel-drive experience. The bumper grids of the Volkswagen Racing Cup have been the training ground for several BTCC drivers over the years, while the Mini Challenge hopes its new F56 car will bring it closer to the BTCC in terms of performance and make it more relevant as a result.

Success in feeder categories isn't a guarantee of progression. But,

since the budget required to compete in the Clio Cup UK is at the top end of the five-figure bracket, you have to recognise that most competitors have backing. So if they can make the next step, one-make series are useful ways to hone the necessary skill set.

But does the ladder stretch a rung lower? Not really. And that's something the BARC wants to address with its Junior Saloon Car Championship. And while it's joining a market that's not exactly saturated, there is work to do to set it apart from the rest.

Since Lawrence Tomlinson took over Ginetta, the Yorkshire marque's Junior series for 14-17-year-olds has blossomed. It has a fine graduate record and is flourishing at the moment, but numbers haven't always been stellar and, since it's



Single-seater racing is the conventional way to start a career

difficult for drivers under the age of 16 to get car-racing experience in this country, it has often been the route aspiring single-seater drivers take just to get used to something bigger than a kart and gain experience on relevant circuits.

"I think the JSCC offers a different option to Ginetta Juniors,"

insists Ian Watson, BARC general manager. "This gives drivers a realistic option with good, close racing. I think it probably teaches you different skills, because the two cars [Citroen Saxo and Ginetta G40] are completely different in terms of the way in which they handle and what kids expect from them.

"The profile of running on the BTCC package brings its own expenses but Ginetta have done an excellent job in the way they look after the Juniors and place them in their other championships. That probably means that those kids are going to move out of Juniors and into GT racing rather than coming into saloons."

Like the BRSCC's Ford Fiesta Junior category (for 14-17-year-olds) and Ginetta Juniors, the JSCC does suffer from being forced to run on treaded tyres. It's unavoidable that not being on slicks requires a different driving technique. The JSCC also suffers in that the Fiesta

## THE PROVING GROUNDS



### JSCC

Car	Citroen Saxo
Engine	1.6-litre Citroen VTR
Tyres	Yokohama
Minimum weight	830kg
Average grid in 2014	13.5
Donington Park National laptime	1m29.126s
Estimated annual cost	£20,000



### GINETTA JUNIOR

Car	Ginetta G40 Junior
Engine	1.8-litre Ford Zetec
Tyres	Michelin
Minimum weight	890kg
Average grid in 2014	19.3
Donington Park National laptime	1m24.614s
Estimated annual cost	£60,000



### FORD FIESTA JUNIORS

Car	Ford Fiesta ST
Engine	2-litre Ford Duratec
Tyres	Dunlop
Minimum weight	1100kg
Average grid in 2014	8.1
Donington Park National laptime	1m25.982s
Estimated annual cost	£15,000



Clio and JSCC team  
Westbourne is investing  
in the BARC ladder



ST is more powerful and a chunk quicker than its Citroen Saxo, and the Ford is more BTCC-relevant than the Ginetta given its FWD.

But, and this is where the JSCC could gain momentum, the Fiesta Junior series has not gained popular traction. Grids are poor and, while it has a decent recent history of graduates (including Clio Cup racer Charles Ladell and youngest-ever BTCC debutant Aiden Moffat), there has been little indication that this series is the one to begin a tin-top career in.

That's why, while the concept of a series for 14-to-17-year-olds is nothing new and there are limitations in how transferable treaded-tyre experience is, the BARC is pushing hard for its JSCC to be a success and establish a link to its Clio categories. Last year's champion James Dorlin has already confirmed a drive in the Clio Cup Series, while Ben Colburn is the younger brother of established Clio Cup UK race winner James. The infrastructure the club and the teams are building is clear. Watson says it is "a natural progression".

"I think it makes sense to try and get kids started on that route as soon as we possibly can," he adds.

But not everybody is convinced. Mark Hunt – whose Team Pyro outfit has dominated the Clio Cup UK in recent years – is one who is concerned by the need for junior series to use treaded tyres. Budget allowing, he says that karting to



BTCC racer Smith is a Clio graduate

single-seaters to another discipline is "the old-fashioned way", but still "the best route to touring cars".

"I'm a race-team owner and I should be all for drivers coming to me earlier," he says. "The kids need time in the seat, and to do that in karting is much cheaper and it's got the right tyres on. The JSCC does give you track time and experience, but I don't think that helps.

"A driver couldn't learn the skills needed to move into touring cars by driving in Ginetta Juniors, because it's run on road tyres. In my opinion, that's not even relevant to proper racing. I think you go backwards by doing that. But by running in the Clios with slick tyres, then I believe you could be ready for touring cars."

Hunt's argument is also based on the principle that the people who were spending six-figure sums to compete in international karting, for example, aren't the sort of people looking to spending a fifth of that sum to put their child in a Citroen

Saxo. As such, Clios (upwards of £75,000) is not out of the question.

But Watson thinks something like the JSCC could become a target for drivers lower than the karting ladder, using the JSCC to get a grounding in car racing. He's also keen to stress that the real experience would then be gained by moving into the Clio Cup.

"There seems to be an awful lot of kids coming out of karting these days who want to move into car racing because the costs of karting at the top level are getting too expensive," he says. "Hence they are absolutely staggered that they can come and race in Junior Saloons at 14 or 15 years old and probably spend less than half the money they would have to do a season in karting.

"That then gives them the opportunity to learn about car racing which, although it has similarities, is considerably different to karts. It also gives them the chance to go through that learning phase on the

"The Clio Cup has become a feeder category for the BTCC. There's logic to what we're trying to achieve"

IAN WATSON

long circuits before moving on to a championship such as the Clio Cup, which has become a feeder category for the BTCC.

"I know that isn't what the karting industry wants to hear, but I think there's logic to what we're trying to achieve."

There is a lot to be said for the conventional path. Ginetta Junior champion Jack Mitchell is eyeing a touring car future, for example, but admitted last year he was considering single-seaters.

That path is not open to everyone, though. The budget for even the most entry-level of single-seater experience easily outstrips a tin-top alternative. So then it becomes a case of drivers making the decision that best suits them. Although a year on treaded tyres brings limited benefits, there's still track time and car experience – two invaluable factors in a driver's development.

That is what the BARC is hoping the JSCC can provide. ❧



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# THIS WEEK

LETTERS • ON TRACK • TV PICKS • FROM THE WEB • AUTOSPORT.COM

## What you think of the motorsport news of the past week



Ferrari deserves credit for free-thinking approach of F1 concept

## F1 must get its priorities right

So, with all the issues facing F1, what major aspect has been confronted by F1 chiefs? Banning changing drivers' helmet designs! It seems they have become concerned that fans can be turned off by such antics. Does this mean that someone within the holy citadel of F1 has actually undertaken market research to substantiate that this is indeed the view of the fans, or is it just another example of the ever tightening rules that plague motorsport and F1 in particular?

The next thing will be a 'working group' to evaluate the obscene costs of racing in F1 – oh, wait a minute, they've already

done that, and on a number of occasions.

You have to admire Ferrari, though, releasing the images of an F1 concept car just to show what could be done to break away from identikit cars, and possibly get those in power to look at alternatives and to talk about the long term rather than the current short-termism in which no decisions are made or thought put to what the fans want.

Any large organisation of any merit wants to know what its customers want; it's called market research. I guess such research is beyond the wit of F1!

Neil Davey, Ivybridge, Devon

**Dear F1 stakeholders, you are failing.** Your sport faces huge obstacles, yet you do not appear to be taking them seriously.

Cost caps exist in baseball and American football, and work, by and large. They keep the rich teams in check, enabling the poorer teams to survive and provide the occasional upset, which in turn keeps interest in the sport (and revenue streams) healthy.

The governing bodies trade heavily on their history and embrace their heritage, knowing that it's part of what makes their sports appealing. All stakeholders know that what is good for the sport will ultimately be good for them, and as a result they all make a sh\*tload of cash

(which is surely your main objective?).

This stands in stark contrast to the way you run your sport. You have failing teams, falling interest and a boss who told the fans last year that he doesn't much care for them. The heritage of our sport is eroded with each classic venue it loses. The power is split between bodies with opposing objectives, with neither holding ultimate power, leaving us with endless, boring, tedious, exasperating politics.

How do you address these issues? Guff about 1000bhp cars and banning helmet-design changes. Well done. That's big-picture thinking. Why address the real issues when you can just tinker?

William Thorling  
By email

**I was enjoying AUTOSPORT's**

history of the much-lamented British F3, but was a bit puzzled why Jonathan Palmer was penalised two race wins for putting "an innocuous piece of plastic on the ceiling" at Silverstone (p39). I could not remember a time when modifications to the garage were prohibited.

But substitute sealing for ceiling and all becomes clear. Dick Bennetts was no doubt experimenting with sealing the sidepods to the rear tyres. Simmons, see me after class.

Also lamented is the passing of legend Leo Geoghegan, who was a multiple Aussie champion and Tasman stalwart.  
Richard Owen  
Wappenham, Northants

BIG NUMBER

225

The WTCC enters its second decade, with Rob Huff holding the record for starts over the first 10 years. He's only missed one of the 226 races.

MILESTONE

Sebastien Ogier (right) is going for his fifth WRC win on the trot (including the last two rounds of 2014) in Mexico. What price another title?

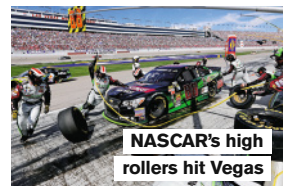


WHAT'S ON TRACK



Mexico hosts round three of the WRC

**RALLY MEXICO**  
**World Rally Championship**  
**Rd 3/13**  
**Guanajuato, Mexico**  
**March 5-8**  
[wrc.com](http://wrc.com)



NASCAR's high rollers hit Vegas

**WORLD TOURING CARS**  
**Rd 1/12**  
**Rio Hondo, Argentina**  
**March 8**  
[fiawtcc.com](http://fiawtcc.com)

**NASCAR SPRINT CUP**  
**Rd 3/36**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada, USA**  
**March 8**  
[nascar.com](http://nascar.com)

MY FAVOURITE DRIVER

Michele Alboreto

Initially seduced by the scarlet allure of Ferrari, a young PETER MILLS discovered a driver held in high regard for both his talent and character

**IN SINGLING OUT A FAVOURITE** driver, I'll choose someone I never met. Indeed, I attended just two race meetings in which he competed, and they were, objectively, totally forgettable outings in midfield Footworks.

Michele Alboreto was among the first drivers I followed. The chief reason my loyalties were pledged to the yellow-and-blue-helmeted driver had nothing to do with any recognition of his mixture of gentlemanly good grace out of the car and top-line ability behind the wheel. No, in my formative years I had bitten the same hook responsible for snaring countless others into the sport: I had fallen for Ferrari. Alboreto was the man doing the business in the red car, and I

rooted for him and team-mate Rene Arnoux.

I'm afraid I can't recollect the sensations of being a transfixed six-year-old during Alboreto's first season at Maranello in 1984, and so have few memories of the Milanese's prime. His spell at Ferrari lasted five years, and the final three wins of his career were achieved in the first two seasons when his star was in the ascendancy.

By the arrival of the swoopy Gustav Brunner-designed F1/87, Ferrari was only intermittently competitive. My levels of Alboreto appreciation were not so blinkered as to deny acknowledging that new arrival Gerhard Berger had asserted an edge. Early loyalties held, though, and when Alboreto made his way to Tyrrell for the '89 season, my interest in charting his progress on the pages of Ceefax (Google it, kids) or AUTOSPORT outweighed following the number 27 car's new occupant Nigel Mansell.

Pretty soon I'd have to wait for Ceefax to scroll to a second page, displaying the lower half of the grid's qualifying times, such was the rate that Alboreto's fortunes plummeted. Here was someone who loved driving and saw no reason to stop just because the limelight had shifted. It was during a period that I feared he might soon



Alboreto: top racer and a proper gent

disappear off the grid for good, rather than the intermittent events where he non-qualified tardy Footworks, that I splashed out on several season-review videos.

There followed a reassuring pleasure that I hadn't deluded myself over his abilities. Alboreto's flair in dazzling drives at Monaco in '85 and the Nurburgring later that season was first-rate.

I'll leave the psychology behind why

**"His death hit me with a mix of injustice and despondency"**

people resonate with the deaths of famous people they didn't know to someone better qualified, but Alboreto's fatal testing accident aboard his Audi R8 in April 2001 struck me with a mixture of shock, injustice and despondency.

The obituaries that followed echoed the same sentiment. Even those that made reference to culpability in a serious F2 accident with Kenny Acheson conveyed an overriding message that the sport had lost someone genuine and possessing a character worth aspiring to. ☘



Dazzling drive to second at Monaco '85

# FROM THE SOFA

## WHAT'S ON TELEVISION



Formula E is trying a different approach

## Sparks fly in electric spectacle

WITH ITS SCI-FI ENGINE SOUNDS, backing music and unique city-centre circuits, Formula E is doing things very differently – and that's both an opportunity and a challenge for the series' TV coverage, produced by Aurora Media Worldwide.

Each of the four ePrix races held so far this season (maybe not Beijing) has featured close and unpredictable racing. But the electric racers' pace is not yet a match for other top-line single-seaters, and that means Aurora has to use several 'tricks' to ensure the cars look fast on-screen.

"We had quite a privileged opportunity at the beginning to actually meet with Spark, who built the cars, about positioning the on-board cameras," explains Aurora's series director Westbury Gillett. "So we've got cameras that are completely unique, at the two furthest points of the car – in the nose of the car and

also in the rear rain-light – and they accentuate the speed."

Forward planning of camera locations also enables the crew to showcase the racing: "We put cameras in places that we think will show the speed of the cars," says Aurora's series producer Mike Scott. "We try to get close to the action and we try not to be very wide."

Gillett combines these two tricks with a quicker on-screen cut rate that emphasises the action: "I'll increase the cut rate in terms of what I'm directing so the sequence of cuts is a lot faster."

The Formula E team radio is also done differently from other forms of motorsport: it's live. "When we fade it up into the broadcast we're fading it up live, so it's

not a replay," says Scott. "We're not like Formula 1 where you know it was half a lap behind. So we can't predict when they're going to speak or what they're going to say, but it is real."

From the next race in Miami commentators Jack Nicolls and Dario Franchitti will be able to speak to the drivers directly from the commentary box: "We'll do it under the safety car and we'll brief a couple of drivers beforehand," explains Gillett. "We'll be able to call through and have a chat."

Aurora's TV coverage is also important to the teams. With no way of monitoring the car's telemetry, Aurora's battery life graphics are closely monitored to decide strategy. "The FIA takes the telemetry from the cars and gives it straight to television," says Scott. "The teams don't have it so they're poring over what we are showing."

Unlike the days of preparation for a Formula 1 race, Aurora has just one day and a limited number of staff and cameras to capture all on-track action, pre-show build up (including grid walk) as well as showcasing the colourful locations Formula E visits. "That's the biggest challenge we have," says Gillett.

Formula E is breaking new ground for motorsport, and that means its TV approach has to do the same. Like the cars themselves, it's going to evolve, but it's got off to a slick start and there's a clear determination to keep innovating.

**Alex Kalinauckas**

**"Formula E team radio is also done differently: it's relayed live"**

Broadcaster has just one day to set up



## TV pick of

Edited by Tom Van Klaveren



### RALLY MEXICO - LIVE

**BT Sport 2**

**Saturday 1800-1900**

Mexico's best live World Rally Championship offering comes on Saturday evening, although you could catch the opening superspecial at 1am UK time on Friday morning. Both BT Sport and Motors TV have daily highlights packages. Sebastien Ogier is unbeaten in 2015, but is adamant this event will be impossible for him to win under this year's running order regulations. That could help Jari-Matti Latvala, Andreas Mikkelsen and Thierry Neuville, but Kris Meeke and Robert Kubica have great road positions.



### BELGIAN GRAND PRIX 2014

**Sky Sports F1**

**Thursday 2200-2300**

Relive the moment where the Hamilton/Rosberg rivalry really reached boiling point as Sky Sports F1 continues to work through the highlights from the 2014 season in preparation for this year's looming season opener. With Nico Rosberg on pole at Spa last year, Lewis Hamilton was keen to make it past early – and Rosberg was equally motivated not to let him get away with it too easily... Cue the defining point in the championship race, no small amount of rancour, and another step in the rise of Daniel Ricciardo.

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# the week

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### WTCC ARGENTINA - LIVE

**Eurosport 2**  
**Sunday 1800-2000**

The new season of World Touring Car action gets under way in Argentina, with Jose Maria Lopez hoping home advantage can help him get off to the perfect start in his title defence. His shock win on his series debut at Termas de Rio Hondo just a year and a half ago launched his international touring car career, and he'll certainly have the crowd on his side. Citroen team-mates Yvan Muller and Sebastien Loeb will surely be his main opposition, although Honda should be closer to the pace this season.

XPB IMAGES



### NASCAR LAS VEGAS - LIVE

**Premier Sports**  
**Sunday 1900-2300**

NASCAR hits the progressive banking of Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the third race of the Sprint Cup Series. This time last year Brad Keselowski grabbed the win after plucky Dale Earnhardt Jr ran out of fuel only half a lap from the finish, so there's a bit of unfinished business for Junior, who has yet to win at Vegas in the top series. After the lottery element of Daytona and Atlanta's 'winter' event, Vegas could be where the 2015 pecking order begins to emerge.



### V8 SUPERCARS: ADELAIDE HIGHLIGHTS

**Motors TV**  
**Friday 1340-1650**

If you missed the opening round of Australia's premier tin-top racing series, or needed a bit of sleep last weekend, then fear not – Motors TV is rounding up the entire Clipsal 500 in three-hour highlights packages shown regularly through the week. It was another classic mixture of door-to-door racing and sporadic chaos on the streets of Adelaide, perfectly setting up another year of fire-breathing thrills from the rambunctious V8 pack – though Jamie Whincup already looks hard to beat.



DUNBARY/LAT

### THE F1 SHOW

**Sky Sports F1**  
**Friday 2000-2100**

It's now just a week until the Formula 1 field will be gathering in Melbourne ready to finally begin the 2015 season, and that means Sky's weekly magazine programme is firing up for the new year. The F1 Show can be a hit-and-miss affair depending on who's appearing on it, but with plenty of content gathered from testing and huge pre-Melbourne anticipation, this is going to be a good chance to summarise how F1 2015 is shaping up so far with Sky's line-up of in-house pundits and star guests.



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**DURING THE COURSE OF LAST** week's final pre-season Formula 1 test, the AUTOSPORT team was coming up with a ranking judging how we think the teams all stack up heading to Australia. It's not meant to be a prediction along the lines of "this is what we expect the final order in the constructors' championship to be" – that would be even harder to predict. But it reflects the here and now.

One of the main challenges we came across was deciding how to rank the teams. Initially our list was based on which team had enjoyed the

best winter, rather than which team looked in the best shape for Melbourne. Obviously the answer to the latter is Mercedes, and there's every chance the reigning world champion has more in the tank than it showed on those race runs or soft-tyre laps at Barcelona.

So who topped our original 'best winter' list? To let you in on a little secret, Mercedes was third, behind Ferrari (first) and Williams.

Does that mean either of those teams is likely to outperform the Silver Arrows next weekend? We doubt it.

## HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube **COURTNEY'S GUIDED TOUR OF ADELAIDE**



**SEARCH FOR:** GoPro – A lap with James Courtney  
 Holden Racing Team's James Courtney straps a bunch of cameras to his V8 Commodore for a wild ride around the Adelaide Parklands circuit. This is a man who clearly enjoys his job: "Sounds beautiful on the limiter, doesn't it..."

## AUTOSPORT'S TWEETERS

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# INTRODUCING

# Nobuharu Matsushita

## The Honda protege and Japanese F3 champ heads to GP2 with ART in 2015



### MATSUSHITA CV

**Born** October 13 1993  
**From** Tokyo, Japan



- 2015** GP2 Series with ART Grand Prix
- 2014** Wins the Japanese F3 Championship for HFDP Racing (6 wins), makes GP2 test debut in Abu Dhabi in late November
- 2013** Finishes fifth in first Japanese F3 season, with five podiums but no wins
- 2012** Wins the Formula Challenge Japan single-seater title (5 wins), beating now-Super Formula racer Ryo Hirakawa to the crown
- 2011** Finishes second in Formula Challenge Japan with one win
- 2010** First season in car racing, finishing sixth in Formula Challenge Japan as well as starting three races in Formula BMW Asia

Since it made its second Formula 1 coming in the 1980s, Honda has always been keen to develop Japanese drivers. Even when outside F1, the company has invested heavily in driver development, with plenty of home-based drivers carving themselves successful careers both nationally and internationally off the back of its support. Honda's return to grand prix racing with McLaren was always likely to fire further interest in junior drivers, hence the arrival of Nobuharu Matsushita at ART Grand Prix for this year's GP2 Series.

The 21-year-old's dream of F1 was fired by a trip to the Japanese Grand Prix with his father at the age of four. "Even now I remember clearly," he says. "The moment you enter the circuit and the unique, sweet smell of fuel, and the tremendous roar of the F1 machines going past in a flash. After that I never went on rollercoasters or to amusement parks – I would just put 100-yen coins into car-arcade games. So my father took me to the local kart track, and that was the beginning of my racing life."

Eighteen years later Matsushita replaces Takuya Izawa in an ART squad that has become effectively a McLaren-Honda junior team. Izawa, now 30, was never likely to emerge as the driver for Honda to take into grand prix racing, but Matsushita has a much greater chance of doing so having won last year's Japanese F3 Championship.

Traditionally, most domestic drivers would then switch to Super Formula and/or the thriving Super GT series. But, off

the back of a promising GP2 test in Abu Dhabi late last year, Honda has opted to dispatch 'Nobu' to Europe.

After a quiet first morning of running, ending the session slowest, Matsushita made a significant step the following afternoon, ending up 11th fastest, 1.3s off the pace. While it was not a dramatic start, he outpaced drivers with more experience both of the track and this kind of car.

"Nobuharu quickly integrated himself into the team at the Abu Dhabi test," said ART team manager Sebastien Philippe. "He will have many new things to discover and the start of the season will be marked by a learning phase for him, but ART has full confidence in his qualities and in the team's experience to help Nobuharu integrate very quickly."

### HIGH-PRESSURE COMPARISONS

What this means is that team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne, who finished second last year, is the team's title shot and that Matsushita will be given time to adapt. Realistically, it's going to be very difficult for him to make a big impression in 2015, even driving for a formidable team such as ART.

Matsushita is doing his best to settle in. "To win in F1 is the biggest goal," he says. "So far I have been running [through the sport], but now I have a further steep thorny path. Living alone in France I may struggle to get accustomed, but I'm always happy to have the challenge of new things."

If Matsushita can emerge as a consistent points threat in the season's second half, that would represent a good foundation for 2016.

Inevitably, expectations will be high, as they always are for an ART driver, but with a sensible progression in year one, then a big step in the second season, Matsushita could be in with a chance of becoming the first Japanese driver to race in F1 with Honda propulsion since Takuma Sato at Super Aguri in 2008. *Edd Straw*



Move to GP2 comes with top team ART

# NEXT WEEK

## Hamilton bids for greatness Plus: Rally Mexico action; WTCC season kick-off

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