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POLE POSITION

Ferrari form is the shot in the arm that F1 needs

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY FORMULA 1 HAS BEEN SO successful for so long? Because just when you think you know exactly what's going to happen, the unexpected catches you out. Sebastian Vettel's maiden Ferrari win was a bolt from the blue and a big shot in the arm for grand prix racing.

When new team principal Maurizio Arrivabene talked of wanting two wins this year, it seemed ludicrous. After all, Ferrari only managed two podiums last year. But the new broom at Maranello, and with it the new, aggressive approach, has yielded success.

A huge amount of credit should go to James Allison, a technical leader with the work ethic, vision and strength of character to have set Maranello back on the path to the top.

Then there is Vettel, an unfairly maligned character and a genuinely great driver. To see him and Lewis Hamilton fight for the title would be just what F1 needs.

The Malaysian GP was also a reminder that there is a lot right with F1. There are some serious weaknesses that must be addressed, but Ferrari re-emerging as a winning team after a two-year drought can only be seen as positive.



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COVER STORY



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This week in F1

ALONSO: STEERING CAUSED CRASH

Fernando Alonso is certain his McLaren's steering "locked" in his Barcelona test crash and dismissed suggestions he cannot remember the accident or that wind was a factor.

The two-time world champion missed the final pre-season test and the Australian Grand Prix following the crash, in which he suffered concussion, but returned to action in Malaysia where he retired with an ERS cooling issue.

After the crash, McLaren intimated that a gust of wind was a likely cause, but Alonso said: "Even a hurricane would not move the car at that speed. We had a steering problem in Turn 3. It locked to the right, I approached the wall, I braked at the last moment, I downshifted from fifth to third."

Alonso admitted the available data from the crash did not confirm the steering problem. "Unfortunately on the data, we're still missing some parts," he said. "It is clear that there was a

problem on the car. It's not been found on the data at the moment. There is not a clear answer."

In the aftermath of the crash there were conflicting reports about Alonso's level of consciousness and other symptoms, but the Spaniard said: "I remember everything."

"It was a sunny morning, [I remember] all the set-up changes, all the lap times. [Sebastian] Vettel was in front of me before Turn 3 but cut the chicane to let me go.

"After the hit, I was kissing the wall for a while, then I switched off the radio first because it was on, then I switched off the master switch. I was perfectly conscious at that time.

"I lost the consciousness in the ambulance or in the clinic at the track. The doctors said this is normal because the medication they give is for the helicopter transportation and the checks they do in the hospital."



4

In two weeks, you are caught and you lose the race fair and square on track. It is a bit of a wake-up call



Mercedes boss Toto Wolff after Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel beat Lewis Hamilton to victory in Malaysia.



Sutil becomes Williams reserve

Williams has named Adrian Sutil, who was dropped by Sauber at the end of last season, as its reserve driver for the 2015 season.

There was uncertainty about who Williams would use if one of its regulars was unable to race as neither test driver Susie Wolff nor development driver Alex Lynn was in an official 'reserve' role.

"I'm very proud to be a part of such a famous and great F1 team," said Sutil.

SUTIL IN 2014

Races	19
PTS	Points 0
	Best finish 11th (Australia & Hungary)
	Best grid position 9th (United States)
	Championship Position 18th

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F1 SET FOR AN EXTRA ENGINE

Engine allocation is set to be increased from four to five for the rest of the season.

Teams have discussed the proposal and agreed to the regulation change. The rule must now go through the usual approval process, culminating in it going to the FIA World Motor Sport Council.

AUTOSPORT understands the main motivation for the change is to allow more flexible use of engine-upgrade tokens.



DUNBAR/LAT

Malaysian GP extends deal

The Sepang International Circuit has extended its contract to stage the Malaysian Grand Prix until 2018.

The race has been a regular fixture on the F1 schedule since 1999, with Sepang having staged all 17 of the events.

REMEMBER WHEN



1999

Eddie Irvine won the inaugural Malaysian GP in '99. His Ferrari team was initially disqualified after stewards said the car's bargeboards were illegal. The Scuderia appealed and won, setting up a title showdown between Irvine and Mika Hakkinen.

THOMPSON/GETTY

RENAULT WEIGHING UP WALK-OUT PLAN

Renault admits it is considering leaving Formula 1, prompting Red Bull to suggest it could do likewise if its engine partner pulled out of the world championship.

Tensions over Renault's F1 plans were already high as it pondered whether it

should create its own works outfit again.

"I can confirm that we are looking at a lot of options, including getting out of Formula 1," said Renault's motorsport chief Cyril Abiteboul.

Horner claimed that Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko's recent suggestion the team could pull out of F1 had been misinterpreted but said: "I think what he

was trying to say was should Renault choose to withdraw, Mercedes wouldn't supply Red Bull with an engine and it's unlikely we would be in a position to take a Ferrari engine," Horner said. "So we could find ourselves forced out of the sport."



FIA Formula 1

STALEY/LAT

Red Bull's complaints about Mercedes are 'funny' – Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton says Red Bull boss Christian Horner's call for the FIA to take action to peg back Mercedes is "funny" considering his team's recent success.

Horner, whose team won both championships between 2010-2013, suggested engine performance should be equalised to close up the field.

"I find it quite funny," he said. "It's an interesting opinion coming from an individual who has had so much success."



ETHERINGTON/LAT



STALEY/LAT

ARRIVABENE WARNS AGAINST COMPLACENCY



THOMPSON/GETTY

Ferrari must remain grounded about its goals for this season despite a shock win for Sebastian Vettel in the Malaysian Grand Prix, according to team boss Maurizio Arrivabene.

"You have to be realistic," said Arrivabene. "I said at the beginning of the season that we wanted to take two victories and now we've won one race, one of two [held so far]."

"Sometimes if the victory comes too early it can be an advantage or a disadvantage. So we keep our feet on the ground."

BIG NUMBER

34

The number of races between wins for Ferrari, the longest for 21 years.

Pirelli buy-out won't affect F1 contract

Pirelli says its parent company's change of ownership will not affect its F1 deal.

CamFin, the controlling owner of Pirelli, has done a deal with ChemChina that gives the F1 tyre supplier greater access to the Asian region.

"Nothing changes," said Pirelli motorsport director Paul Hembery. "We see F1 as a medium- to long-term involvement for us."

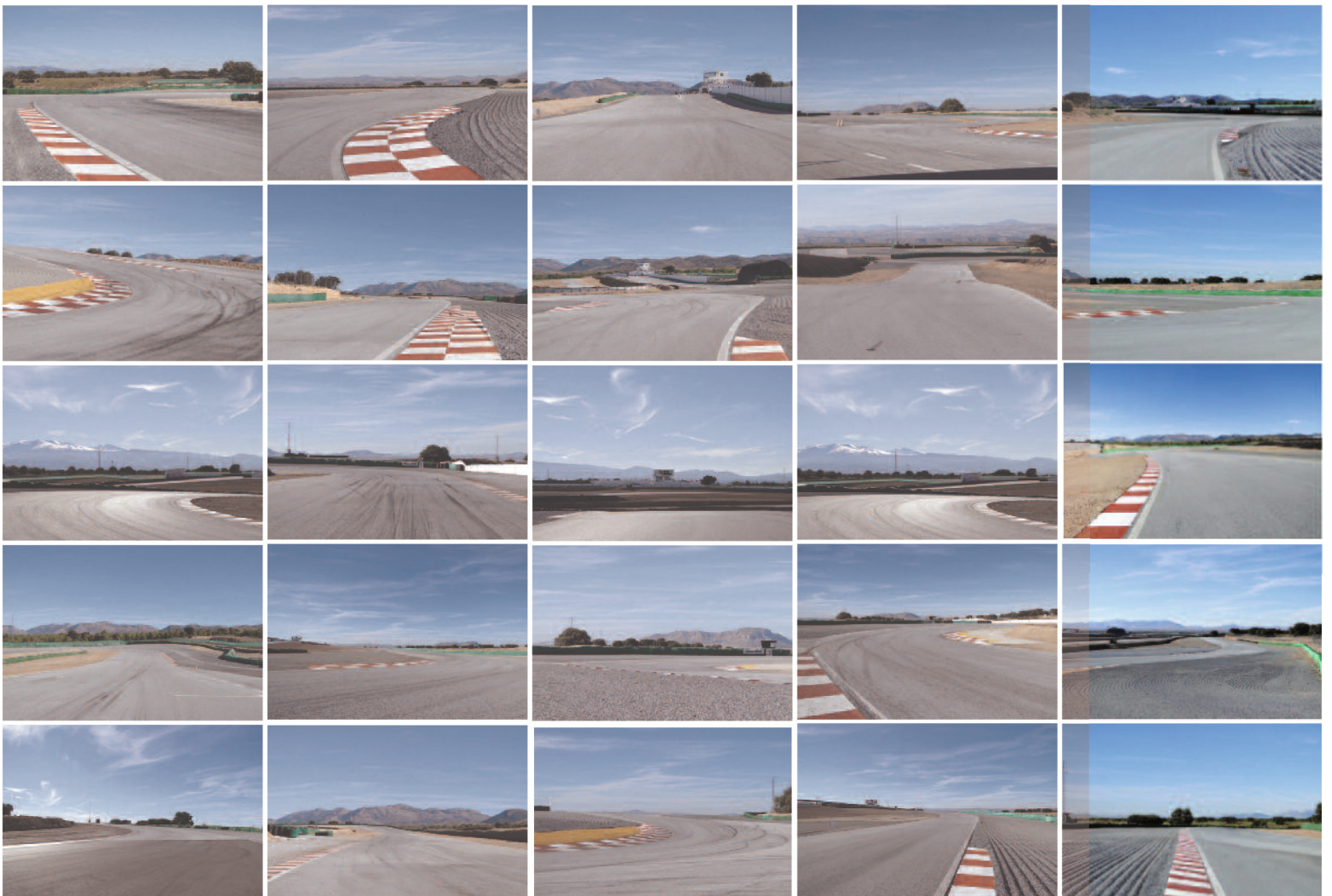
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Ben Anderson

From the paddock

Adding variables creates unpredictability – and that's a better way of generating excitement than equalising engine performance

After all the doom-mongering about the state of competition (or lack thereof) in Formula 1 in Australia, following another dominant one-two finish for the Mercedes drivers, last Sunday's Malaysian Grand Prix provided the perfect tonic.

Complaints about a lack of opposition and the need for the FIA to look at equalising engine performance were swiftly silenced, as Sebastian Vettel shocked the established order (and himself!) by beating Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg in a straight fight in Sepang. As Mercedes boss Toto Wolff admitted afterwards: "We were beaten fair and square".

The rise of Vettel and Ferrari from zeros to heroes in the space of one winter and two races is a wonderful illustration of how quickly the scene can change in Formula 1. Last year marked Ferrari's first winless season in the world championship since 1993, when Vettel was just six years old. That disastrous campaign prompted widespread change within Maranello.

Ferrari has often been criticised for lacking patience when things are going badly, and resorting too readily to drastic action. On this occasion it would seem the Scuderia has played its hand well. Under the technical leadership of James Allison (arguably the best in the business now Adrian Newey has stepped back from full-time duties), Ferrari looks an entirely different proposition to the team Fernando Alonso left for McLaren. What must have gone through Fernando's

given Vettel a new lease of life. "With last year's car I was struggling a little bit, but with this year's car, since the first day, I was reasonably happy with the balance," he says. "In terms of how I feel and what I can do, I'm quite happy. I also think the rear tyres [Pirelli has beefed up the construction of its rear tyres over the winter] have helped a little bit. In general, I like the flow the car has."

Vettel's rapid success in defeating Mercedes means Ferrari is already halfway towards achieving its "ambitious" target of winning at least two races this season, but although Arrivabene is sensibly downplaying expectations after a race held in particularly extreme conditions, the hope for every F1 fan around the world will be for more of the same.

"Pirelli has said they were too conservative in Melbourne," reckoned Lotus head of trackside operations Alan Permane, whose team has pulled plenty of tyre-life masterstrokes. "And they won't be so conservative in future. I don't know how many of these races we'll have when it's between a two and a three [stop race]; we won't have many with these extreme temperatures."

Maybe not, but Pirelli admits it was conservative with its tyre choices last season, heading as it was into the great unknown of the first year of V6 hybrid turbo F1. This time around it has data to work with and largely stable regulations, so it can confidently pick tyre compounds that might create more of a headache for the strategists than they encountered last year.

"Ferrari's superior strategy, and Vettel's skill in executing it, seemed to throw Mercedes"

mind when he saw Vettel winning in a car he so easily could have been driving?

Vettel also appears reborn in the new environment created at Maranello under Maurizio Arrivabene. Last season Vettel looked lost at Red Bull – unable to drive the RB10 in the way that he prefers. The four-time world champion struggled to adjust to the rear instability created by the banning of exhaust-blown downforce, which was further exacerbated by the impact of new electronic braking systems. Suddenly, the "tricks" he used to such magical effect during the latter stages of his 2013 title run-in were no longer working.

His head dropped. He looked visibly unhappy with the direction Formula 1 had taken (remember those comments about the sound of the new V6 turbo engines being "shit?") and frustrated by Red Bull's (and his own) lack of competitiveness.

Moving to a fresh challenge at Ferrari – the boyhood dream of a committed Michael Schumacher fan – has

Last Sunday's event was a great indicator of the kind of variables needed to make grand prix races exciting. The extreme heat (Sunday's track temperature was higher than that seen at any other point in the weekend), plus an early safety car intervention, introduced the sort of booby traps that can make scrap paper out of F1 teams' carefully planned stratagems, and scramble some of the finest racing minds in the world.

Certainly Ferrari's superior strategy, and Vettel's skill in executing it, seemed to throw Mercedes, which suddenly had to contend with something it hasn't had to for much of the past 12 months – genuinely racing a car from another team. Last year, it only tasted defeat when its own technology malfunctioned, or its drivers drove into one another!

When you have lots of variables, you create unpredictability. When you have unpredictability, you have genuinely captivating sport. That's what we witnessed on Sunday. F1 needs more of the same. ❧

This week in motorsport

SPECTATOR KILLED IN NORDSCHLEIFE TRAGEDY

An immediate ban on GT3 machinery racing on the Nurburgring-Nordschleife has been imposed pending a full investigation into the accident in which a spectator lost his life in last Saturday's VLN long-distance race.

The decision was announced by the DMSB, Germany's motorsport authority, the day after the accident in which Jann Mardenborough's RJN/NISMO-run Nissan GT-R took off at the Flugplatz and cleared the debris fencing. One spectator died and several others were injured in the accident, while Nissan LMP1 driver Mardenborough (below) was released from hospital after checks.



DMSB boss Christian Schacht said: "We cannot and will not return to business as usual after an accident of this kind. The security of the participants and, in particular, the spectators must be a top priority.

"We need to analyse the details of what happened, discuss and then implement the necessary changes. Only after that can vehicles with similar specs as the car involved in the accident get back on the Nordschleife."

Schacht said that speculation into the outcome of the investigation would "lead to nothing".

The ban covers cars running in the SP7, SP8, SP9 (GT3), SP10 and SP-X classes. It is unclear whether the

investigation will conclude before the qualification race for the Nurburgring 24 Hours takes place on April 12.

The Nurburgring 24 Hours takes place on May 16-17, while the next VLN race is set for April 25.

Kobayashi back at Toyota

Former Toyota grand prix racer Kamui Kobayashi is returning to the marque as test and reserve driver for its 2015 World Endurance Championship programme.

The Japanese driver was given a try-out test at the Aragon circuit in Spain earlier this year, and will dovetail the programme with his Super Formula assault.

Nicolas Lapierre, who remains under contract to Toyota, will contest the Le Mans 24 Hours and the Spa WEC round when Nick Tandy is racing for the Porsche LMP1 squad.



Frijns gets Audi Blancpain drive

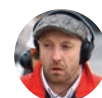
Ex-Caterham Formula 1 tester Robin Frijns will team up with reigning Blancpain GT Series champion Laurens Vanthoor for his maiden season of sportscar racing with the WRT Audi squad, contesting both the Sprint and Endurance calendars.

Frijns, 23, will be paired with Audi factory driver Vanthoor in the full BSS and in three of the five BES rounds, with Jean-Karl Vernay and Nico Muller filling the other spaces in the car.

McLaren factory drivers Rob Bell and Kevin Estre will also share in the BSS this year, driving a McLaren 650S GT3 for the German Attempto team.



I saw how good Robin was at the Ricard test. I'll be very surprised if he and Laurens aren't fighting for victories this year



WRT boss Vincent Vosse

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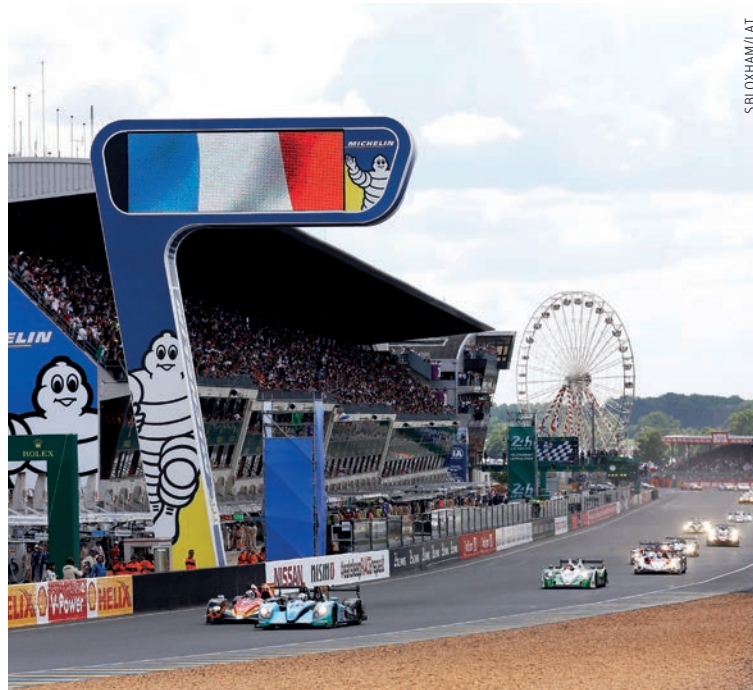
New pits to give Le Mans 60 cars

The grid for the Le Mans 24 Hours looks certain to increase to 60 cars from 2016 with the addition of four new pit boxes.

The organiser of the 24 Hours, the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, had evaluated increasing the number of garages from the current 56 for this year's event. It decided to delay the plans in order to build four more garages in one go, which is now "99.9 per cent certain" to happen for 2016, according to ACO president Pierre Fillon. Reorganisation of the paddock and a shift in parc ferme location will be required.

A new multi-storey structure to include the four new pits and replace the existing garages not encompassed by the main complex is also under consideration.

The ACO has no plans to increase the number of starters for the 24 Hours beyond 60, a figure that was achieved on four occasions in the early 1950s.



SBLOXHAM/LAT

In brief



ROZENDAM/LAT

COMTEC MISSES TEST

Formula Renault 3.5 team Comtec Racing's (above) future in the series remains unclear after it missed this week's test at Motorland Aragon. Meanwhile, Indonesian Formula Renault graduate Philo Paz Armand has joined Roberto Merhi in the Pons Racing line-up for the season.

YELLOLY IN GP2 RUN

British single-seater ace Nick Yelloly is getting his first taste of GP2 this week after joining Hilmer Motorsport for the Bahrain test. Yelloly, whose Jota ELMS deal recently fell through, is a race winner in both GP3 and Formula Renault 3.5.

TINCKNELL RECALLED

Nissan LMP1 driver Harry Tincknell will return to the Jota Sport ELMS squad after Yelloly's withdrawal from the team. Tincknell will again share Jota's Nissan-engined Gibson with Filipe Albuquerque and Simon Dolan.

SMP MISSES OPENER

SMP Racing's new BR Engineering LMP2 coupe will not be present for the ELMS opener at Silverstone. The team will race its ORECA O3Rs while it develops the BRE-Nissan BRO1.

LANAN LINE-UP IN LMP3

Ex-Le Mans 24 Hours racer Joey Foster returns to international competition with Lanan Racing's LMP3 Ginetta-Juno in the opening round of the European Le Mans Series at Silverstone. The Formula Ford folk hero joins sportscar irregular Charlie Hollings and Lanan's MSV F3 Cup ace Alex Craven in the line-up.

Montagny's drugs ban

Versatile French racer Franck Montagny has been handed a two-year motorsport ban after testing positive for a cocaine derivative at December's Formula E round at Putrajaya.

The ex-Super Aguri Formula 1 driver looked set to be an FE title contender with Andretti Autosport before the test, which came after the Malaysian race.

The suspension of 37-year-old Montagny will last until December 23 2016.



GIBSON/LAT



XPIB IMAGES

Toyota: three more seasons

Toyota will remain in the World Endurance Championship when it makes its re-entry into the World Rally Championship in 2017.

The Japanese marque, which claimed last year's drivers' and manufacturers' titles, has revealed that it is committed to racing in the LMP1 division for at least three more seasons. Toyota Motorsport GmbH team director Rob Leupens said that a continuation in the WEC beyond the end of the 2017 season was under discussion.

Toyota will again race in the six megajoule hybrid sub-class with the revised version of its TSO40 HYBRID. Porsche has moved up to the 8MJ division with its all-new 919 Hybrid.

Muller heads DTM Estoril test

The DTM tested for three days at Estoril last week, with Swiss Audi man Nico Muller setting the fastest time in a car shared with Jamie Green. Rookie Lucas Auer (Merc) and Green topped the first two days.



Doubt shrouds Circuit of Ireland

The long-term future of the Circuit of Ireland rally hangs in the balance despite a capacity entry for this week's event.

Director Bobby Willis said the rally, which is the UK's round of the European Rally Championship and dates back to 1931, needs a big backer.

"We have massive support for this

event locally," said Willis, "but we need a firm financial footing."

Local hero Kris Meeke backed the Belfast-based event, which runs from Thursday to Saturday: "We have the best roads in the world and Bobby's put a great infrastructure in place - with the right backing it could be the world's best rally."

2015 CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

SILVERSTONE GP	25th April
BRANDS HATCH GP	9th May
THRUXTON	13th/14th June
SPA FRANCORCHAMPS	26th to 28th June
DONINGTON PARK	4th/5th July
OULTON PARK	22nd August
SILVERSTONE GP	13th Sept
BRANDS HATCH	24th/25th October

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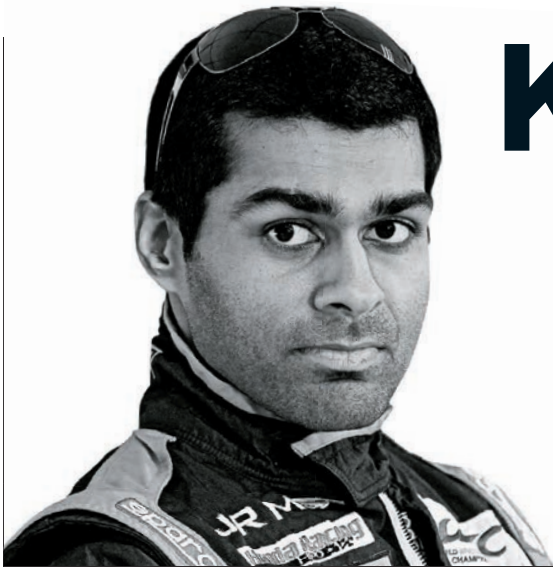
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Karun Chandhok

The racer's eye

Ferrari was confident in its strategy for Malaysia and stuck to its plan – but those circumstances may not prevail at every round

Wow! After the snoozefest that was the Australian Grand Prix, round two of the world championship brought out the very best in Formula 1. A fantastic battle full of strategy, an unpredictable outcome, plenty of on-track wheel-to-wheel action and a hugely popular winner. Two years ago at the very same venue, Sebastian Vettel was the most unpopular winner of a race since Michael Schumacher in Austria in 2002. This weekend he was being hailed as the saviour of the sport – a fickle business, this Formula 1.

For those of you who read my columns last year, you may recall how I repeatedly talked about Sebastian looking uncomfortable and unhappy with the 2014 Red Bull. It wasn't that he had forgotten how to drive, and whenever the theory came up that he was previously only winning because he had the best car, I swiftly pointed out a particularly wet afternoon at Monza in 2008.

In truth, Sebastian probably underestimated how different the 2014 Red Bull Racing car was when compared with the dominant ones he had in the past, didn't really make the effort to get his head around it, and also didn't factor in just how good Daniel Ricciardo was.

I've talked to people around him at Ferrari, and they're full of praise for his enthusiasm and motivation. After 15 years in the Red Bull stable, he needed a change in environment and this year's Ferrari seems to suit him.

Watching the on-board videos this weekend, it was clear to see that once again he could play to his

gave it a 20-second headstart over the Mercedes boys. The early safety car, while compromising his stint lengths, actually saved Lewis 10 seconds, because by the time he cleared Nico Hulkenberg and got back up to second place, he was only 10 seconds behind Seb.

It was at this stage of the race that I think the penny dropped on the Mercedes pitwall that Ferrari was genuinely quick. On used mediums, Vettel could drive around in the high 1m46s while the Mercs were only a few tenths quicker on the fresh hard tyres.

Kimi Raikkonen, with nothing to lose from the back, was flying in the 1m45s. By the time Vettel pitted for more mediums, the Mercs had started to struggle with tyre degradation and on fresh rubber the quadruple world champion did a 1m44.4s when they were mid-1m46s.

The plot was sort of revealed there, with the only unknown being how slow would the Ferrari be on the harder tyre. By running the harder tyre later, however, it was able to run it when the track had more rubber laid down, the car had less fuel and therefore the drivers were able to load up the tyre more and get it to work without sliding around.

This meant that they didn't suffer the degradation issues that the Mercedes drivers had, and so secured a very important win for the new Ferrari regime. The Mercs certainly hurt themselves by burning a set of mediums in Q1 on Saturday for a reason I haven't really understood, but ultimately it was struggling for wear on

“If Mercedes needs to make an extra stop, it's giving Ferrari a 20-second headstart every time”

strengths – that classic v-shape in the medium and slow-speed corners where he brakes in a straight line, applies a confident and sharp amount of steering lock, then winds it off quickly and gets on the throttle hard to propel himself out of the corner.

Mark Webber often talked about how he could be quicker than Seb in the high-speed corners, but this feel under braking and that balancing act of pitching the car on the nose and steering it into the apex in the slower corners was something very special.

Now one swallow doesn't a summer make. Ferrari now needs to prove that it is a genuine contender for the championship by matching Mercedes in a range of circuits and conditions. Can Ferrari do it? That really is the question on everyone's lips so I thought I would try to dissect the race and see what we learned.

First of all, Ferrari was very good on tyre wear. Right from the outset, it confidently chose a two-stop strategy, believed in it and stuck to the plan. That immediately

both the mediums and the hards and so it may not have made a huge difference anyway.

Looking ahead, here's what we have to consider – Malaysia is the first conventional circuit layout of the year and therefore that bodes well for Ferrari. The high track temperatures are atypical of the rest of the calendar so that raises a question mark. The Mercedes guys were struggling with rear-tyre deg and the next race in China is a front-limited circuit with a lot of load going through the front-left tyre in particular.

Does this mean that the superior front end on the Mercedes will allow it to be kinder to the tyres? Coupled with the fact that the track temperatures will probably be 20 degrees cooler, it could be a whole different scenario.

Ultimately, I still believe the Mercedes is the faster car by two-to-three tenths of a second, but if greater tyre wear means that it needs to make an extra pitstop every time, it's giving Ferrari a 20-second headstart straight away. A fascinating season lies ahead! ❧

MALAYSIAN GP

VET CURES PRANCING HORSE'S LAMENESS

Ferrari and Sebastian Vettel proved there's no mystery involved in beating Mercedes – just better tyre management and cooler tactical heads. **BEN ANDERSON** reports from Sepang



High track temperatures
took toll on tyres



14

THE RACE 15:00, 29.03.2015



Sebastian Vettel has split the Mercedes drivers by qualifying on the front row for each of the last two Malaysian Grands Prix. Last year – as a Red Bull racer – he inevitably slipped back to third as Lewis Hamilton drove off into the distance.

Vettel repeated his qualifying trick as a Ferrari man in 2015, but again no one expected him to win. We all thought he might, if he got everything right, give the Mercedes drivers something to worry about, and – maybe – finish second.

It is clear that Ferrari has made a massive step over the winter under

the blossoming technical directorship of James Allison, but not the sort of step that puts the Scuderia on a par with Mercedes. Best-of-the-rest maybe, but winning potential so early in the season? Forget it.

Although Vettel came within a tenth of a second of snatching pole position from Hamilton in the wet on Saturday, Mercedes still had a clear pace advantage in the dry – and Hamilton did actually secure pole. The race looked Hamilton's and Mercedes' to lose.

And lose it they did. Or did they? Would Ferrari have won this race regardless of an early safety car

intervention to retrieve Marcus Ericsson's overly ambitious Sauber? Would Mercedes have beaten Ferrari if it had not elected to pit both its drivers under that safety car and switch to the (slower) harder tyre? Or was Ferrari and its new star signing simply so good at managing their Pirelli rubber as to render Vettel's 40th career victory a mere formality?

Everything we saw during Friday practice suggested Ferrari had the edge over Mercedes on longer runs. Kimi Raikkonen managed to lap on average a tenth faster than Hamilton and three tenths quicker than Nico Rosberg per lap over comparable

stints on the medium tyre. Vettel did his longer running on the hard tyre, and perhaps this fact is crucial. By not splitting their Friday strategies in the searing 56C heat, perhaps Mercedes lacked crucial knowledge of the harder rubber heading into race day, where track temperatures soared as high as 62C.

Things started routinely enough, with Hamilton leading the race away from pole while Vettel braked deep into Turn 1 to fend off Rosberg.

Vettel remained within a second of Hamilton over the first three laps, before the safety car came out. Mercedes took this opportunity to pit both its drivers, stacking Hamilton and Rosberg one behind the other and switching them both onto the harder tyre.

This seemed a strange move so early in the race, given the harder tyre is slower and (although Mercedes didn't complete long runs with it on Friday) didn't appear to be particularly more durable than the medium.

When you add in the fact that both Hamilton and Rosberg then had to slice their way through traffic after the restart, to get back on terms with Vettel, choosing the harder tyre for this task seemed even stranger.

Perhaps – knowing it couldn't match Ferrari on the medium – Mercedes simply gambled on the

Ericsson's ambition got
the better of him at Turn 1



ETHERINGTON/LAT



Vettel nailed Ferrari's first win since 2013 Spanish GP

hard balancing out what team chief Toto Wolff later described as an “aggressive” set-up.

But in doing this Hamilton lost the advantage of track position over Vettel. Hamilton rejoined sixth, but it took him four laps to clear the slower cars and get back into clean air.

In total, he lost 4.115s during this sequence. Vettel's exuberant weaving at the finish means the end-of-race gap is best judged from the penultimate lap mark of 10.094s. Hand that traffic loss back to Hamilton under a normal racing scenario and he still winds up 5.979s behind Vettel in the final deficit, so safety-car strategy is not enough to explain his defeat.

Perhaps Mercedes simply underestimated how fast and consistent Vettel's Ferrari would be in race trim. After all, the SF15-T was designed under the influence of Allison, who produced cars for Lotus that allowed it to score top results by often stopping fewer times than rivals.

Vettel's 17-lap first stint on used mediums pretty much matched Hamilton's equivalent early stint on new hards for pace — once Hamilton was in clear air. Hamilton was 9.995s adrift of Vettel once he'd finally cleared the queue on lap 10, and Vettel was still 8.791s clear of Hamilton

Hamilton: “After the first stop I had so much ground to catch up, it was impossible”

before he made his own first stop on lap 17. Mercedes probably expected Hamilton to be quicker on new hard tyres than Vettel was on old mediums, but it simply didn't work out that way.

“We were not expecting them [Ferrari] to be as quick as they were today,” conceded Hamilton, who said he spent the race “doing everything I could” with the controls to combat understeer in his W06. “I don't know whether if I stayed out with him that would have made much of a difference.

“They were probably just as good if not a little better in terms of tyre deg, so it would have been very close. After the first stop I had so much ground to catch up, it was pretty impossible.”

It looks as though Mercedes could not have completed this race on two stops under any circumstances, so was already at a strategic disadvantage given Ferrari came into Sunday with what team principal Maurizio Arrivabene described as a “clear” plan.

Hamilton's third stint on new medium tyres only lasted 14 laps



Hamilton led before pitting under safety car

before he headed back to the pits, and his pace dropped off significantly after 10 of those.

Vettel managed an equivalent stint (slightly earlier in the race and thus with more fuel on board) of 20 laps, with the last 12 of those all comparable to Hamilton's final four but with a heavier car. If you compare their final stints on the harder tyre, Vettel managed 19 laps, Hamilton 18. Hamilton gained 4.4s on Vettel across the balance of that final stint. *Still* not enough to overturn the final result.

In short, even if Mercedes hadn't pitted Hamilton under the safety car, he would likely still have finished behind Vettel, despite having the

advantage of track position. In fact, even if the race had run normally (ie without a safety car) Vettel would have been quick enough — and his Ferrari kind enough on its tyres — to overturn Hamilton's early advantage.

The flexibility Ferrari's superior tyre management gave Vettel meant even if Hamilton had completed two ‘normal’ stints on mediums in the early part of the race, Vettel would still have overtaken him in the pits eventually — just much later than he actually did. The race would have been closer, but ultimately — as Toto Wolff conceded afterwards — the Ferrari was just a bit too good in these conditions.

“Remember last year we were ▶



Rosberg (third) lost time in traffic early

MASON/GETTY

► struggling against Vettel in the race and one of the explanations is the extremely high ambient and Tarmac temperatures that [meant] probably we have gone a bit too aggressive on set-ups and that pushed us into a direction of three stops," he explained. "Then we were stuck in traffic after pitstops, we damaged the tyres following cars, and you are not able to catch up any more.

"We need to find out why we were struggling for long-run pace in these hot conditions because I think that is the main point to look at. In terms of long-run pace, we were not the fastest car today."

But Mercedes still had the fastest car over a single lap, which suggests perhaps it should have left Hamilton out under the safety car. From there he could have at least enjoyed the advantage of superior track position for longer – perhaps backing Vettel into the pack as the tyres went off?

The point is Mercedes – whether it felt backed into a corner or not – could have made Ferrari work harder than it had to for its first victory since the 2013 Spanish GP. Certainly Vettel suggested after the race that Mercedes had given Ferrari a helping hand by pitting so soon.

"When they pulled in, I think we were a bit surprised," he said. "We saw on Friday they weren't too happy on the medium compound, [but] they probably struggled a bit with the heat more than expected.

Vettel: "We saw on Friday they weren't too happy on the medium compound"

"We didn't struggle as much as we expected. Both things made us competitive and able to beat them fair and square. But they are the ones who usually set the pace. Today we capitalised on their weakness a bit."

But the events of this race suggest tyre management in hot conditions is not the only potential weakness in the Mercedes package. Those questionable strategic calls made its race more difficult than it needed to be, and led to some palpably tense exchanges over the radio between the team and its drivers.

Hamilton for one couldn't understand why he'd been switched on to the hard tyre so early in the race, but Mercedes told him its calculations said it was the faster choice. Ultimately that looked like an error of judgment, but Wolff defended the call.

"Normally it [the harder tyre] is good – the more fuel you run, the harder the tyre [should be]. You have to put the prime [harder tyre] on once and it makes sense with a heavier car. What we have seen [in Malaysia] is a variant. We have seen an impressive



XPB/LAT

run from Kimi and Sebastian with the option [medium] – more than 15 laps – and on the second option they did 20 laps, which we were unable to match.

"We put the option on Lewis to see what was possible in the third stint, and after lap 14 the pace dropped massively, so we were unable to put another option on at the end. It needed to be a prime because it was 23 or 24 laps to go."

Wolff was prepared to concede that Mercedes should have handled its radio communications better. Hamilton complained about being spoken to while driving through corners, while Rosberg felt his messages were too "conversational". There was also one incident where Mercedes miscommunicated a message intended for Rosberg to Hamilton instead.

"We weren't particularly good on radio messaging today; we had a couple of weird calls," Wolff admitted. "Lots of action on the radio internally is something we need to look at. I guess if you see you are not able to catch up, there is a certain frustration that grows on you."

Wolff: "It is always to say in hindsight we could have done this or that better"

It did look as though Mercedes cracked slightly under the pressure being applied by Ferrari. This could be a consequence of spending the past 12 months with the fastest car, mostly racing by itself.

It tried a different strategy on Rosberg's car (running two hard-tyre stints before switching to the medium again for the closing stages), which allowed the German to regain some of the ground he lost early on, but he could only finish third.

Mercedes told both its drivers at one stage that they were on course to beat Vettel, by overtaking him on track. That was never even close to happening. In fact, Vettel was the one who did the on-track overtaking – passing Hamilton just as the reigning world champion dived into the pits for his second stop on lap 24.



Ferrari made better use of the medium tyre

TEE/LAT

QUALIFYING



Vettel finger made a surprise return



Ferrari was close to Mercedes on pace

COATES/LAT



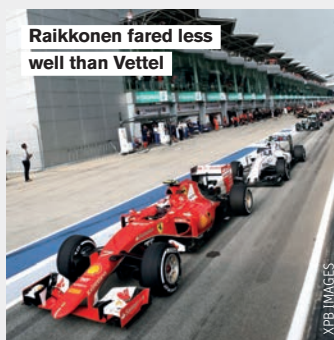
This was a qualifying session that so easily could have run away from Mercedes, but

Lewis Hamilton's excellent feel for finding grip on an uncertain wet track ultimately meant the reigning world champion and his team avoided being completely upstaged by Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari.

Vettel came tantalisingly close to claiming his first pole position since the 2013 Brazilian Grand Prix, but his final flying lap fell an agonising 0.074 seconds short. The consolation was beating Hamilton's team-mate Nico Rosberg to second spot on the grid for the second season in succession in Malaysia.

The sudden rainstorm that doused the track in the early stages of Q2 made the first flying lap of that segment critical. Hamilton found traffic, but did enough to make it through with the eighth fastest time. After a 30-minute wait to let the water subside, Hamilton headed straight out and trod where his rivals feared (or simply couldn't) on a completely unknown surface.

Nobody had done any running on wet-weather rubber until that moment, but Hamilton destroyed his remaining rivals on that first lap. His 1m49.834s effort (which stood as the fastest of the session) was 1.232s faster than Rosberg, 3.062s quicker than Max Verstappen's Toro Rosso, 3.344s faster than



Raikkonen fared less well than Vettel

XPB/IMAGES

Vettel, and 3.483s clear of Daniel Ricciardo's Red Bull. The rest of the top 10 started the session on full wets rather than intermediates, so didn't set representative times. No one got within a second of Hamilton until they got fresh intermediates and another crack later on a drier circuit...

"It was so unusual for an inter tyre to have [such] incredible grip and you need to be massively creative and adaptive to find the limits immediately; Lewis just did a lot better than the rest of us," conceded Rosberg, who found a chunk of time on his second run, but still finished more than four tenths adrift. "Me and Seb were miles off. I just didn't drive well enough. I'm annoyed by that."

During the second runs in Q3 the two Mercs appeared to trip over one another at Turn 7, but both played it down afterwards. Hamilton said he simply "bailed out" of that lap because he could see traffic ahead, while Rosberg said it was "very, very clear" they were both on slow laps.

Rosberg suggested Mercedes compromised the tyres on both cars by choosing to complete these extra slow laps before going for a final push at the end. Hamilton was more than three quarters of a second slower than his earlier best on his final flier, which almost allowed Vettel to steal pole away from him.



Hamilton was rather muted on the podium

GETTY IMAGES

"It is always easy afterwards to regret and say in hindsight we could have done this or that better, but we are taking these decisions together," explained Wolff. "We haven't done any strategic mistakes in last two years and this is why it doesn't make sense to point the finger."

"There is no panic. We had a new situation that we haven't had for a while, that we were not in control of things. Things didn't pan out the way

we expected them to pan out. It is clear the winning streak is not going to go on forever. Today [we were] beaten fair and square."

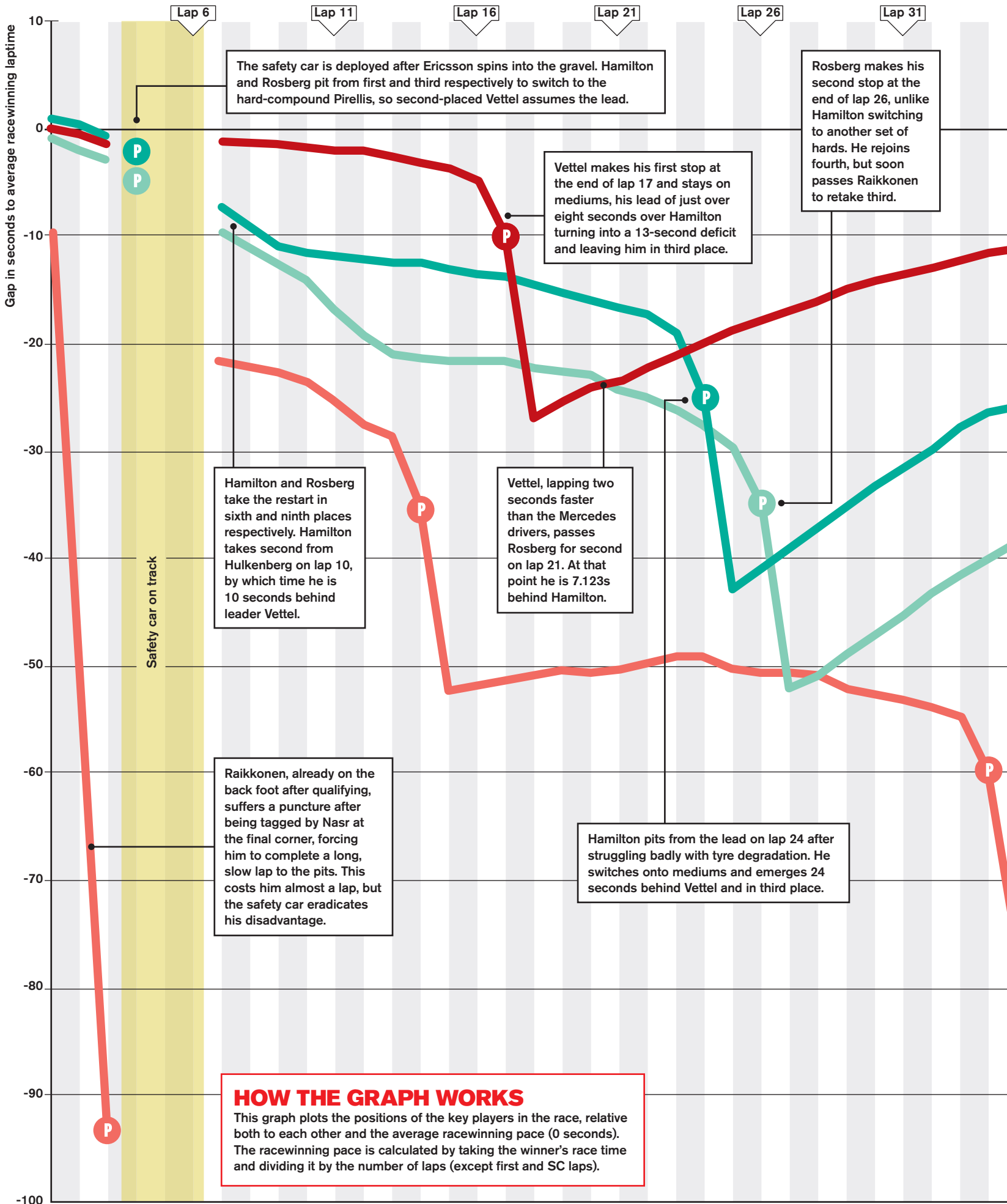
After a dominant one-two finish in the first race of the season in Australia, no one would have predicted Wolff uttering those words just two weeks later. The question now is whether Ferrari can maintain the form it showed here and make a race of this world championship. ❧

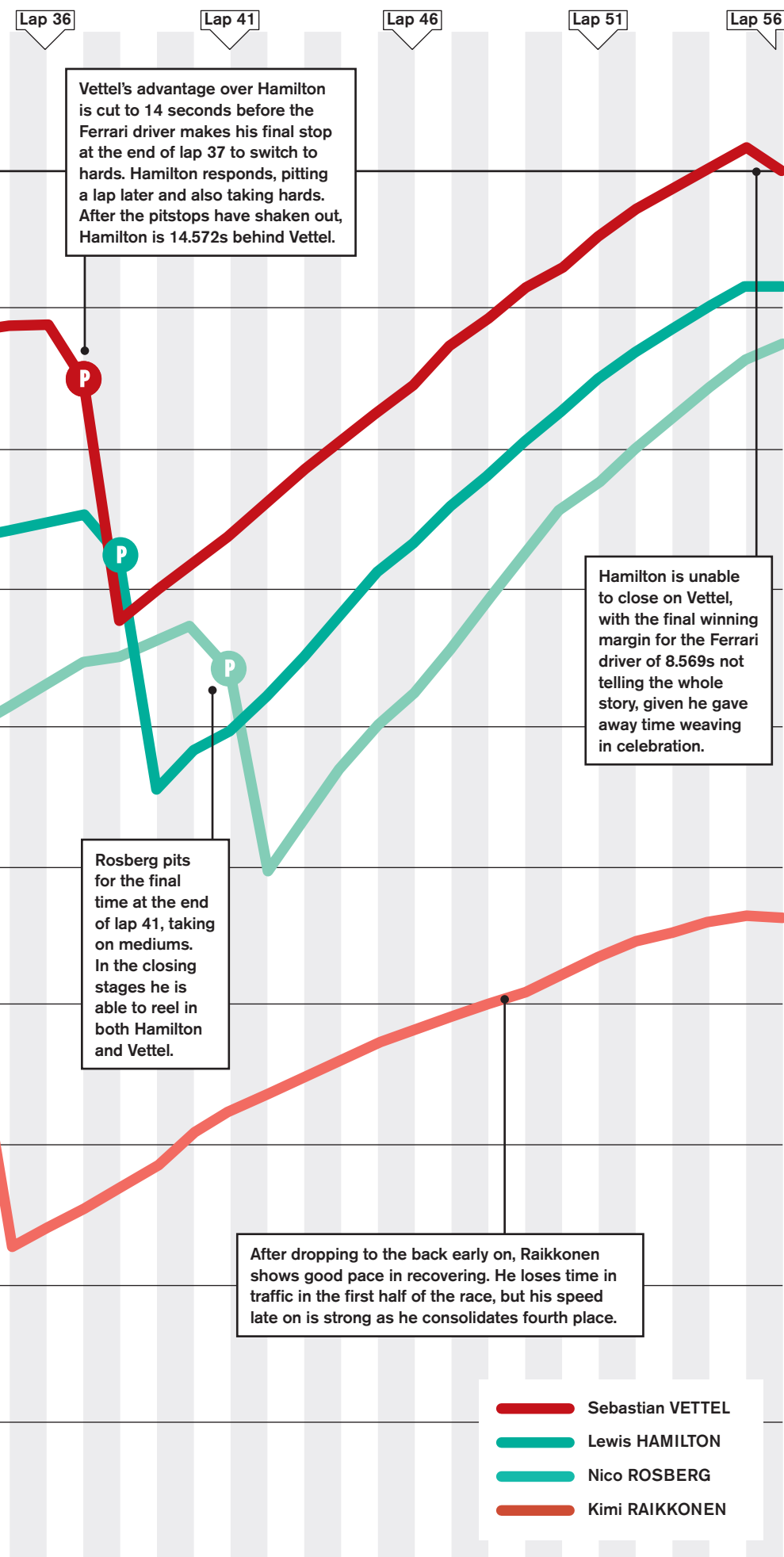


Verstappen qualified an impressive sixth

HOME/LAT

HOW THE RACE WAS WON



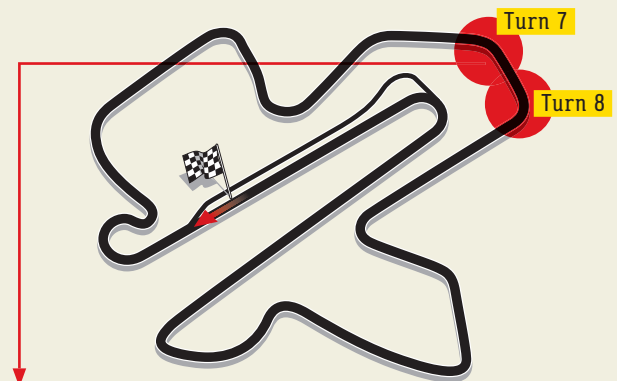


TRACKSIDE VIEW

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Regardless of the clamour for clarity concerning the mysterious testing crash that sidelined Fernando Alonso from the first race of the new season, there was certainly a unifying desire to see whether the double world champion had suffered any lasting effects when he finally got back behind the wheel of his McLaren at Sepang.

Whenever a racing driver suffers a serious crash, the first desire is to get straight back in the car and conquer any demons that may raise their ugly heads. Alonso had to wait more than a month for this moment. . .

From a vantage point on the inside of the rapid double right-hander at Turns 7 and 8, it certainly didn't appear to take him long to get back up to speed. After a few careful exploration laps in FP1, Alonso – who has always gone well around here – looked every bit his old self on track, hustling the car and exploring its limitations. He was also quicker than team-mate Jenson Button on his first day back in the MP4-30.

“Alonso looked every bit his old self, hustling the McLaren, exploring its limits”

The Spaniard declared himself happy, though suggested he felt a little underprepared physically after so long out of the car. “The conditions here are extreme – very hot – physically it is very demanding,” he explained. “I am not 100 per cent physically fit, but enough to enjoy. I missed the car with four weeks not driving. The simulator is OK, but it's never the same as the real car. I was very happy with the car [and] I felt good straight away.”

McLaren too was delighted. “He was up to speed, 100 per cent, from the first moment,” McLaren racing director Eric Boullier told AUTOSPORT. “Fernando is exactly as he was before [the crash] and he looks happy. That means everything is working fine.”

Nothing about this saga has been entirely straightforward. But as far as Alonso's return to action went, things couldn't have been smoother. Welcome back Fernando.



Alonso was straight back up to speed

STORIES OF THE RACE

Manor denies inability to run two cars

Manor GP insists it would have run Will Stevens' car in qualifying and the race at the Malaysian Grand Prix, if it could have possibly done so.

After solving the software problems that prevented the revived squad appearing in any of the sessions at the first race of the season in Australia, Manor took to the track for the first time in 2015 at Sepang.



MANOR'S MALAYSIA GP

Seconds off the pace

PRACTICE 1		
Stevens	8 laps	6.562s
Merhi	8 laps	7.559s
PRACTICE 2		
Stevens	12 laps	5.914s
Merhi	6 laps	7.439s
PRACTICE 3		
Stevens	6 laps	7.369s
Merhi	9 laps	6.957s
QUALIFYING		
Merhi	7 laps	7.408s
PRACTICE 1		
Merhi	53 laps	6.978s

Stevens was faster than Manor team-mate Roberto Merhi through the first day of practice on Friday, but his car developed what the team described as a "complex fuel system problem" in final free practice on Saturday. This prevented Stevens from appearing at all in qualifying and the race, but Merhi (who lapped too slowly to qualify) went on to start the race 19th – thanks to Stevens lapping within the 107 per cent cut-off in practice – and finish 15th on his F1 debut.

The team deliberately avoided running both cars simultaneously earlier in the weekend, to minimise the risk of making operational mistakes.

When Stevens failed to appear in Q1 or the race, there was speculation that Manor simply wasn't capable of running both cars at the same time.

But Manor sporting director Graeme Lowdon refuted these suggestions as "complete utter nonsense".

"I can guarantee you if that car could have moved, it would have raced," Lowdon told AUTOSPORT.

"The systems and the people were perfectly happy with the results of everything in [practice] one, two and three from that point of view, and if you look at the run plans we weren't going round and round and round in one, two and three because we had very specific tasks in ticking things off.

"For qualifying we had very clear run planning for both cars, and we would have definitely raced with two cars. Look at Melbourne – why would you not want to be in a race at the minute? You would drag the car kicking and screaming.

"It's complete utter nonsense. Elvis is not alive on Mars and all the rest of it. We'll just keep our heads down, crack on with what we have to do, and keep moving forward."



Verstappen is F1's youngest scorer

Max Verstappen became the youngest-ever points scorer in Formula 1 by finishing seventh in the Malaysian Grand Prix. Both Toro Rossos finished ahead of parent team Red Bull's cars.

Verstappen, 17, qualified a superb sixth in the wet on Saturday, after struggling with inconsistent front brake temperatures in the dry. The team changed brake material on the offending corner for the race, where Verstappen fell back in the early stages after being squeezed out on to the exit kerb at Turn 4 by Marcus Ericsson's Sauber.

But he recovered to finish seventh, passing team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr (who completed his own impressive charge from 15th on the grid to eighth by executing a two-stop strategy) in the closing stages.

STR technical director James Key said: "They're both really good considering this is race two, in really difficult conditions. They're both doing exactly what we want, and it doesn't feel like they're rookies in many respects."



Force India slams "unfair" penalties

Force India drivers Sergio Perez and Nico Hulkenberg both felt their penalties for collisions in the Malaysian Grand Prix were undeserved.

The pair were given 10-second time penalties in quick succession late in the race, after Perez tangled with Lotus driver Romain Grosjean at the high-speed left/right sequence at Turns 12 and 13, while Hulkenberg clashed with Red Bull's Daniil Kvyat while trying to re-pass at Turn 2.

Grosjean described Perez's driving as "dangerous" after they came together while he was completing an outside pass. But Perez said there was little he could do to avoid the Lotus.

"I was quite surprised with the penalty as I didn't have anywhere to go. I think it was a risky move," he said.

Hulkenberg's tangle with Kvyat came as they went wheel-to-wheel through the opening complex of corners during a three-way dice also involving Daniel Ricciardo.

"Daniil didn't see me coming back across at Turn 2. I tried to pull out but it was too late and we made contact," explained Hulkenberg.

Kvyat was sanguine about the clash. "I think it was a racing incident," he said. "I have nothing against him."



Red Bull hindered by brake problem

The Red Bull-Renault RB11s both struggled with brake problems during the Malaysian Grand Prix, which consigned Daniel Ricciardo and Daniil Kvyat to the lower reaches of the top 10.

The Red Bulls started fourth and fifth, but Ricciardo damaged his front wing in a first-lap contact with Nico Rosberg's Mercedes, while Kvyat was delayed by a half-spin later in the race after being hit by Nico Hulkenberg's Force India.

Both drivers struggled with overheating brakes and slipped back to ninth and 10th by the finish.

"We've changed brake supplier this year and we need to understand how we've got ourselves into the position we're in and engineer ourselves out of it," said team boss Christian Horner. "As soon as we ran into traffic, temperatures started to get out of control, particularly managing the brakes, and we really didn't have any pace. There was quite a lot of brake dust from early on, and we were worried at one stage that we wouldn't get to the end."

Q&A

DANIEL RICCIARDO RED BULL DRIVER



How soon did the brake problem develop?

It developed pretty much after the safety car, and it was definitely worse in traffic. Once we got some clear air it was a bit better for us. We just struggled and then when we tried to fight we just had no cards to play with. Every time we tried to do something in a battle we just went wide and suffered for trying. We had no weapons.

Do you know what caused the problem?

We're not sure yet, a lot of brake dust was evident. I had some contact with Rosberg on the first lap, which didn't help – we damaged the front wing a bit. Pretty frustrating...

Could you have beaten Toro Rosso without the brake issue?

"I think we would have done a bit better but it's hard to know how much. Between the brakes and the wing we lost a lot of time. We struggled to manage the tyres. You have to brake a bit earlier and you start locking the front or losing the rears. Tricky.

Was the engine at least better this weekend?

We're definitely still on the back foot. We did improve from Melbourne but I think there was only room for improvement, to be honest! We've still got some stuff to learn and figure out for the next race.



Raikkonen laments Sepang performance

Kimi Raikkonen says he had a "poor" Malaysian Grand Prix, despite finishing fourth for Ferrari at Sepang. After he showed good long-run pace in practice his weekend took a turn for a worse during qualifying, when he was caught out by the rain and then got stuck in traffic, which led to him being eliminated in Q2.

A poor start and a puncture on the first lap of the race – caused by a hit from Felipe Nasr's Sauber – then dropped him to second from last on the road. Despite a strong recovery drive, which ended with him crossing the line fourth behind team-mate Sebastian Vettel and the two Mercedes drivers, Raikkonen's assessment was downbeat.

"We've had a very poor weekend in the sense of things going wrong," he said. "After the puncture we had damage to the floor, and that was really the maximum I could do."

Obviously we had a lot of bad luck on a few occasions this weekend. There's not much that I can do when I get touched from behind. It is what it is



Kimi Raikkonen

STORIES OF THE RACE

HONEY/LAT



Both car and operations must improve, Williams admits

Williams has to develop the whole car package and improve its team operations if it is to remain a frontrunner in Formula 1, according to performance chief Rob Smedley.

Valtteri Bottas finished the Malaysian Grand Prix 70 seconds behind race winner Sebastian Vettel in fifth. Team-mate Felipe Massa was sixth.

Williams ended 2014 as the second fastest team on merit behind Mercedes, but – after a close

fight with Ferrari in Australia – the race in Malaysia suggested it has dropped firmly back this year. The FW37 struggled with tyre management in the hot conditions at Sepang, forcing Williams into doing three pitstops while Ferrari was able to do two.

"There's a car-package pace deficit from both Mercedes and Ferrari and we have to work hard to improve that," said Smedley. "At the same time, we need to look at our tyre management. I think that

we were not the worst on using the tyres, but we certainly weren't the best."

Williams spent a whole day in pre-season testing working on pitstops to improve the team's operations, but there were problems for both cars in that department at Sepang.

Bottas was delayed by failure to remove a tyre blanket quickly enough, while Massa lost time to a rear jack problem.

22

STALEY/LAT



Marciello makes Friday debut

Ferrari junior driver Rafaele Marciello made his grand prix weekend debut for Sauber at the Malaysian Grand Prix, replacing Felipe Nasr in first free practice.

The Italian GP2 racer completed 13 laps and set the 13th fastest time, 0.557s slower than regular driver Marcus Ericsson.

"I didn't do many laps, but I think overall we did a good job with the team," he said. "The conditions were really tricky, it was really hot and the track was really green, but overall I was quite close to Marcus.

"Of course it's not my car, so in my head I'm a bit afraid to go out and do something bad, so you take some margin. But I was quite close in fast corners, in braking, so I'm happy with my driving."

McLaren DNFs mask progress on pace

McLaren says problems with power unit components were to blame for the retirements of Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso in the Malaysian Grand Prix. But despite not making the chequered flag, both drivers claimed to be encouraged by their pace in the race, which they said proved the progress the team is making.

Button was stopped by a turbo problem late in the race, while Alonso was called into the pits while running inside the top 10 after the team discovered a water leak in the ERS cooling system.

Button said: "You can see where the strengths and weaknesses are, and it is quite apparent compared with the Force India. But then you also compare us with the Sauber and even some of the quicker cars."

Button qualified 2.836s slower than the fastest Mercedes in Australia, but improved that margin to 2.366s in Malaysia. He estimated the difference to be more like 1.6s since Mercedes used the softer tyre in Q1 in Malaysia, which it didn't do in Australia.



TEE/LAT

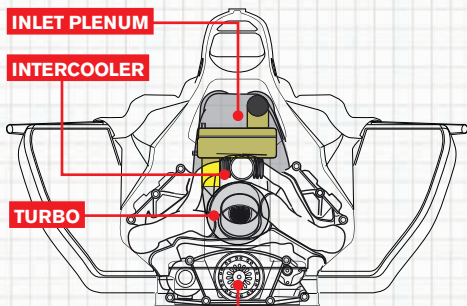
"We are not measuring the absolute performance yet, which is when you start to fight for a pole and wins, but we are measuring the relative one compared with Barcelona testing, Australia and here, and it was a massive difference"



McLaren racing director Eric Boullier

DRAWING BOARD

by Craig Scarborough



MERCEDES INTERCOOLER

The Mercedes squad is the only team to use a water-to-air intercooler. Unlike an air-to-air intercooler, this unit can be mounted anywhere near the engine since it doesn't need to be in the airflow.

Since the power unit uses a split turbo, with the compressor at the front of the internal combustion engine, Mercedes has neatly packaged the intercooler high up in front of the engine. This small shoebox-sized aluminium cooler sits above the turbo, so that the route of the air from the compressor to engine inlet is as short as possible to help reduce turbo lag. The water inside the intercooler is itself cooled by a radiator in the left sidepod.

Although water intercoolers are heavier and do not reduce the charge temperature by as much as an air-to-air type, they allow for slimmer sidepods because the water radiator is smaller than an air-to-air intercooler, improving aero efficiency.

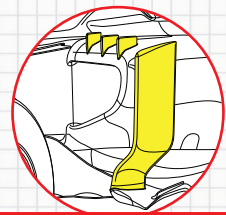
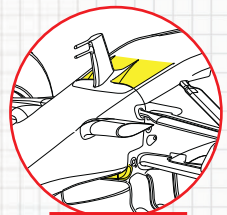
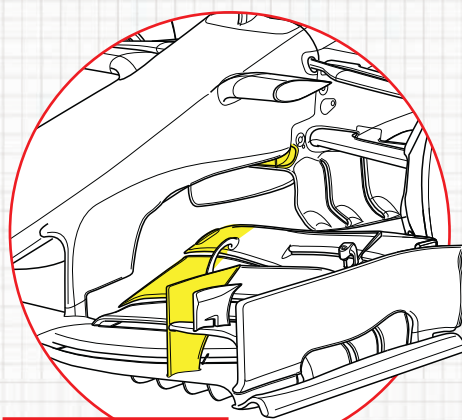
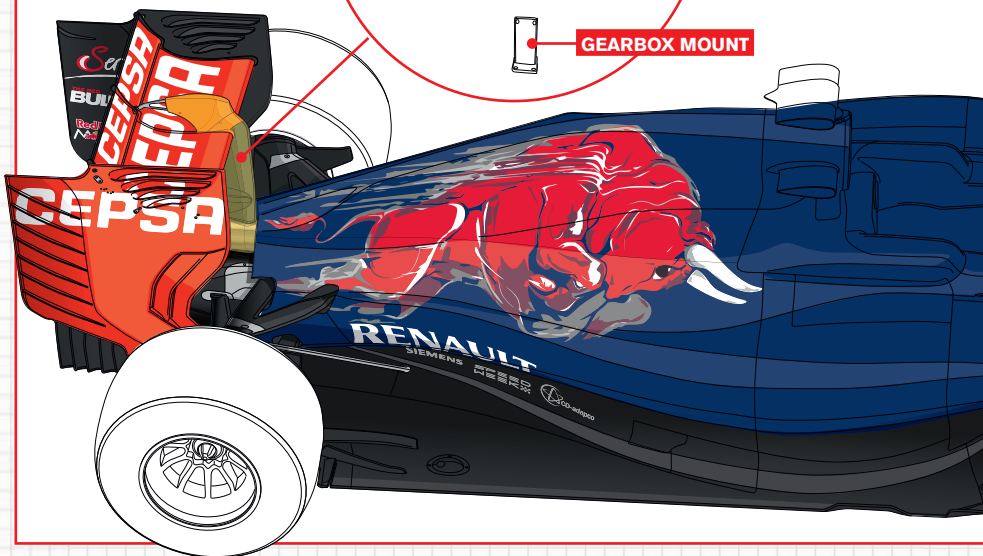
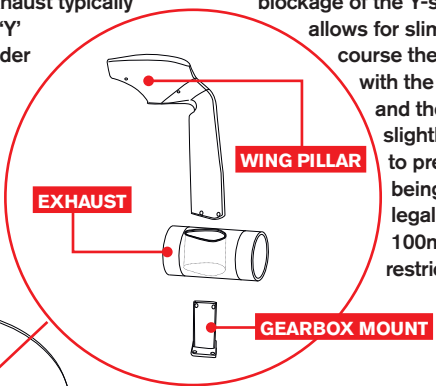
TORO ROSSO REAR WING MOUNTING

An innovative development added to the STR10 late in testing was a new rear wing mounting pillar. While it is structurally efficient to mount the rear wing with a slim single pillar, allowing this pillar to pass the central exhaust typically has required it to branch into a 'Y' shape around the exhaust in order to mount to the gearbox.

Toro Rosso has found a slimmer, tidier way: the pillar simply passes through the exhaust. A teardrop-shaped channel has been welded into the widened pipe. The carbonfibre upper pillar ends

just above the exhaust, and a gearbox mount extends up through the bifurcated exhaust.

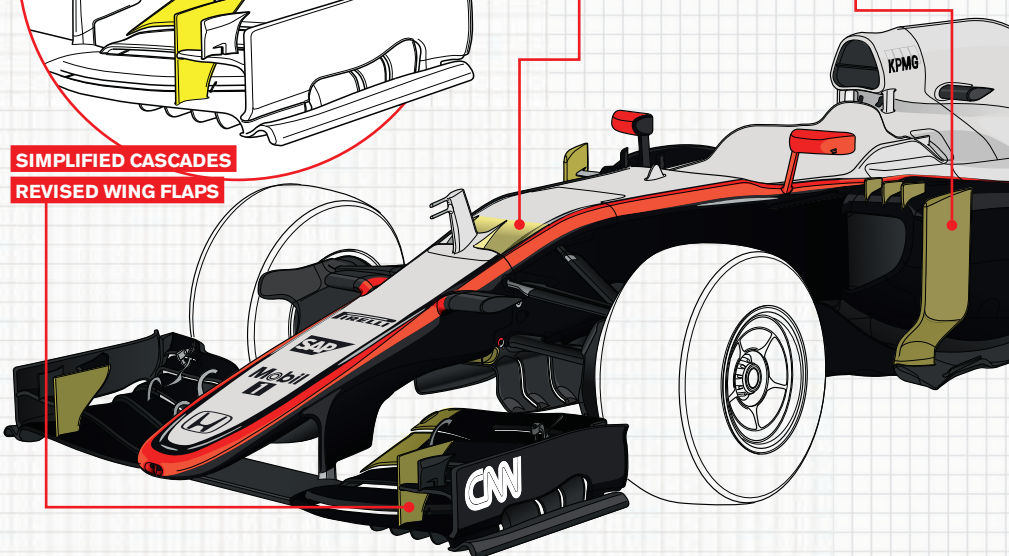
This creates the best structural shape for the pillar and rids the rear cooling exit of the blockage of the Y-shape mounting, which allows for slimmer bodywork. Of course the mount needs to cope with the heat of the exhaust, and the pipe needs to be slightly wider at the junction to prevent back pressure being generated. This is legal since only the last 100mm of the exhaust is restricted in shape and size.



SIMPLIFIED CASCADES
REVISED WING FLAPS

S-DUCT NOSE

REVISED SIDEPOD VANES



McLAREN PUSHES AERO DEVELOPMENT

McLaren brought a major aero update to the Malaysian GP. This consisted of a ducted nose, revised front wing and sidepod vanes.

McLaren calls its ducted nose the "S-Duct", and the unusual joint between the nose cone and chassis always suggested this as a development path for the MP4-30. So McLaren has added a wide letterbox inlet below the nose, which feeds air into two S-shaped ducts inside the bodywork, to exit backwards over the top of the chassis. This cleans up the airflows both above and below the nose, producing a "small but worthwhile" benefit.

Less obvious on the car were revised front-wing flaps, which had a subtly different shape to the inboard ends, while the cascade winglets have lost the secondary winglet. On the front of the sidepods, the tall vertical vane has been reshaped and a third vortex generator fin on the shoulder of the sidepod has been added.

These changes appeared to yield a small boost in performance.


DRIVER RATINGS

MERCEDES

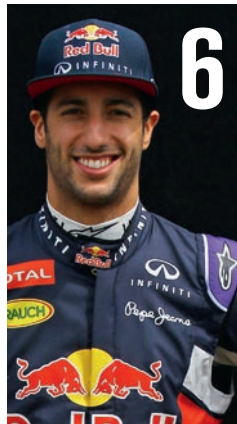



NICO ROSBERG 
 Had a much smoother start to his weekend than team-mate Hamilton but was still a tenth slower in Q1 and "miles off" in the wet conditions of Q3. Almost jumped Vettel's Ferrari at the start, but was rebuffed at Turn 1. Arguably could have been more incisive in traffic after his early stop, but was disadvantaged by being 'stacked' behind Hamilton in the pits.




LEWIS HAMILTON 
 Recovered well from engine and telemetry problems on Friday to set the pace in qualifying – in both wet and dry conditions. The world champion was hampered in the race by ineffective strategy and the W06's appetite for tyres. Would have been interesting to see whether Mercedes could have been more effective without those earlier problems.

RED BULL



DANIEL RICCIARDO 
 After another tough Friday beset by technical problems, Ricciardo again pulled his weekend back together on Saturday and qualified fourth in the wet – probably as high as he possibly could. Damaged his front wing by hitting Rosberg at the start and struggled thereafter due to a worsening brake problem, ending up with just one point for 10th. A race to forget.



DANIIL KVIAT 
 Renault returned to a testing specification of engine for this race, which made the RB11 more competitive over a single lap and allowed the Russian youngster to go fourth fastest on Friday. Wasn't quite as strong as Ricciardo on Saturday, but beat him in the race, despite getting tipped into a spin by Nico Hulkenberg's Force India at the second corner.

WILLIAMS




FELIPE MASSA 
 Williams was in a race of its own here, in a no-man's land between Ferrari and the Renault-powered cars. Massa wasn't as quick as team-mate Bottas in Q1, but outqualified him in the wet. Ultimately lost the battle for fifth place to the Finn in the closing stages of the race, after a close wheel-to-wheel fight, but came home well ahead of seventh-placed Verstappen's Toro Rosso.

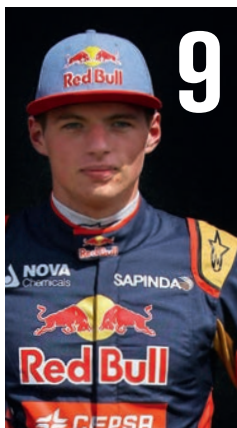


VALTTERI BOTTAS 
 Altered his driving position, in particular the pedals, to avoid a recurrence of the back problem he suffered in Australia. Was fourth fastest in Q1 but suffered for team's "tyre-operation" error in Q3. Completed the "worst first lap I've ever had" 14th in the race, but recovered brilliantly to fifth, passing Massa around the outside of Turn 5 on the penultimate lap.

TORO ROSSO




CARLOS SAINZ JR 
 Superbly matched Vettel's time (to the nearest one thousandth of a second) in the first segment of qualifying to set the fourth fastest time, but admitted to a "rookie error" lock-up at Turn 14 that caused him to ultimately qualify out of position. The Spaniard started the race strongly and managed his tyres expertly to pull off a second consecutive points finish.

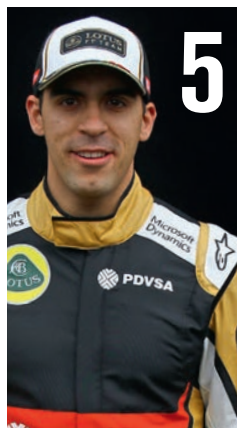



MAX VERSTAPPEN 
 Weaker than Sainz over one lap in the dry, but qualified a superb sixth in the wet, just behind Kvyat. He slipped back at the start but beat both Red Bulls in the race, dived with the both Williams, and repassed Sainz in the closing stages to finish as high as was reasonably possible given the machinery at his disposal – becoming F1's youngest points scorer to boot.

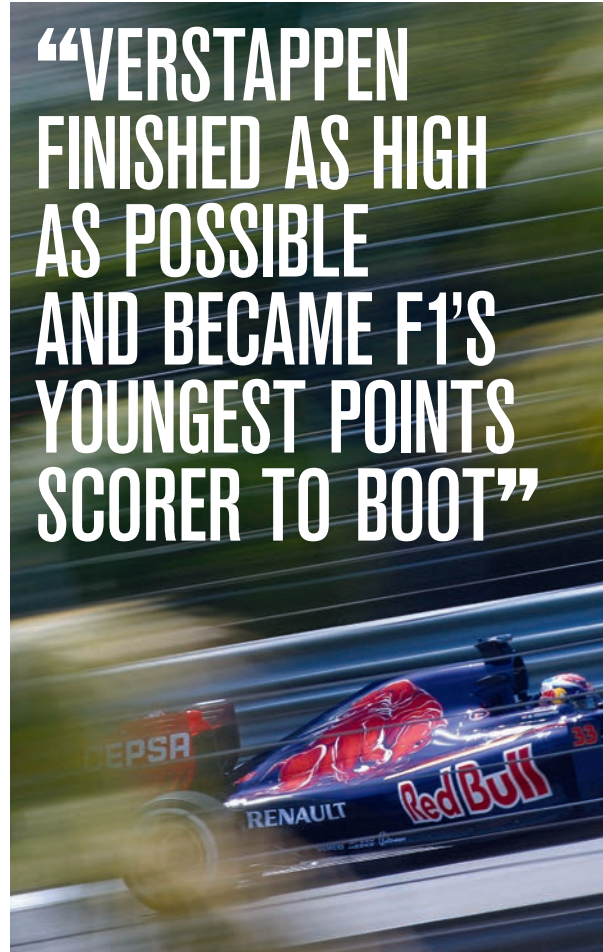
LOTUS



ROMAIN GROSJEAN 
 Revised turbo pipes and clips prevented a repeat of the Australia problem, but he suffered a separate engine problem that robbed the E23 of power and hampered his race here. Felt a "dangerous" move by Perez cost him "probably a point" and he lost six seconds for the resulting spin – not enough to haul him back ahead of Ricciardo's Red Bull.

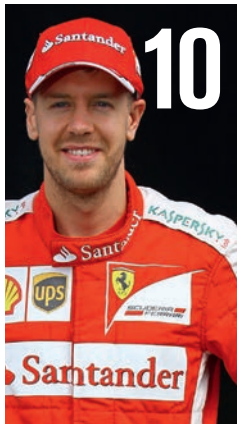


PASTOR MALDONADO 
 The Venezuelan was fractionally slower than team-mate Grosjean in Q1 and dropped out in the drizzling mayhem of Q2. A first-lap puncture consigned him to a race of his own at the back of the field, until a brake-by-wire problem intervened. He was also penalised 10s for speeding while under safety-car conditions to cap off a troubled race.



BEN ANDERSON reviews and rates each driver's grand prix weekend performance out of 10

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Form is temporary, class is permanent, and this looked like the Sebastian Vettel who won four consecutive world championships for Red Bull. The German got closer than anyone to the dominant Mercedes in Q1 and almost denied Hamilton pole in the wet in Q3. Executed his race perfectly to end the Scuderia's 34-race losing streak.



KIMI RAIKKONEN

His strong race-run on Friday indicated Ferrari might genuinely challenge Mercedes here. Saturday did not go to plan, leading to disagreement with his boss about the reasons for being delayed behind Marcus Ericsson's Sauber at a crucial moment in Q2. A poor start and an early puncture hampered his race, but he recovered well to take fourth place behind the two Mercedes.

McLAREN



FERNANDO ALONSO

Not feeling fully fit after more than a month out of the car, but showing no after-effects from his crash once behind the wheel. He was faster than Button on Friday, but he messed up Turn 6 on his quickest lap in Q1 so qualified behind his team-mate. Was on course to beat the Force Indias until an ERS cooling problem intervened and he was forced to retire.



JENSON BUTTON

Complained of understeer on Friday, but was happy with gains made with the MP4-30 through a new front wing and floor package. Required a fresh engine before Saturday's running and used it to good effect to outqualify Alonso. Lost crucial time at his first stop, but was closing down Perez in the race before the turbo broke, resulting in him joining Alonso as a retiree.

FORCE INDIA



SERGIO PEREZ

The Mexican was quicker than his team-mate Hulkenberg in the extreme heat of Friday, but a handful of tenths slower when it mattered in qualifying. He used his trademark deft touch with the Pirelli tyres to make the finish of the race on two stops to beat Hulkenberg, despite a penalty for an unnecessary high-speed collision with Grosjean's Lotus.

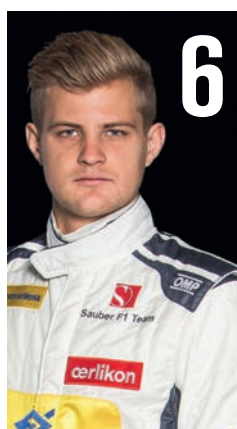


NICO HULKENBERG

Fractionally slower than Perez on Friday, but he turned the tables when it mattered on Saturday. He made a brilliant start to rise to seventh on the first lap, and ran as high as second by staying out under the safety car. The German wasn't able to make the finish on two stops, and slipped back further thanks to a penalty for clattering into Kvyat at Turn 2.



SAUBER



MARCUS ERICSSON

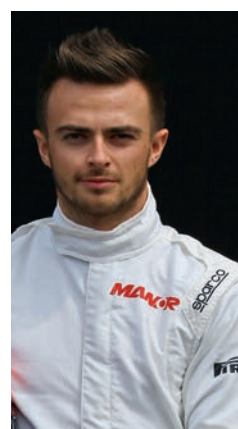
After a poor run in Australia Ericsson looked strong all weekend, putting a Sauber into Q3 for only the second time in the past 21 races. Unfortunately, he undid all that good work with an overzealous attempt to re-pass Hulkenberg's Force India at Turn 1 on lap four, which deposited his C34 in the gravel, and put paid to any chance of another points finish.



FELIPE NASR

Was disadvantaged by missing FP1, but the star performer of Melbourne (scoring a perfect 10 in these ratings) never recovered. The Brazilian struggled with the balance of the Sauber all weekend and was way off team-mate Ericsson. Hit Raikkonen on lap one and damaged his front wing and was the only driver who needed four stops to make the finish.

MANOR



WILL STEVENS

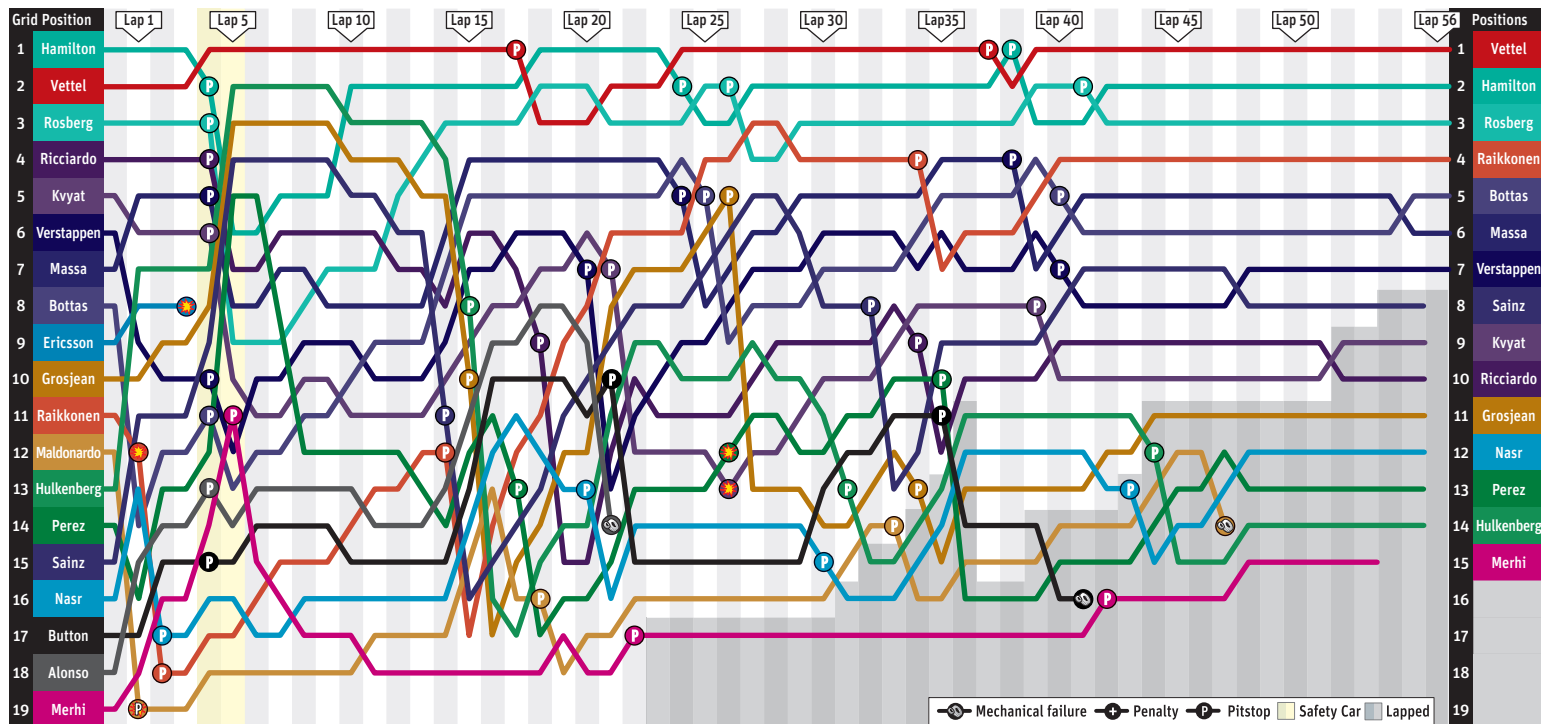
The software glitches that prevented the Briton from appearing in Australia were solved for Malaysia. He made a strong start on Friday, outpacing Merhi and lapping within the 107 per cent cut-off. Unfortunately, his car developed a "fuel system problem" on Saturday, which could not be rectified in time for qualifying or the race, rendering him a spectator.



ROBERTO MERHI

Was slower than team-mate Stevens and spun into the gravel on Friday, so not the most impressive of starts. He also failed to make the 107 per cent grade in qualifying, but was allowed to start the race on account of Stevens setting a time fast enough during practice in the other car. A thrice-lapped finish in the race boosted the team's morale.

RESULTS



PRACTICE 1: Friday

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	ROSBERG	1m40.124s
2	RAIKKONEN	1m40.497s
3	VETTEL	1m40.985s
4	GROSJEAN	1m41.543s
5	SAINZ	1m41.596s
6	RICCIARDO	1m41.787s
7	VERSTAPPEN	1m41.803s
8	BOTTAS	1m41.882s
9	KVYAT	1m42.055s
10	ERICSSON	1m42.064s
11	MASSA	1m42.103s
12	MALDONADO	1m42.567s
13	MARCIELLO	1m42.621s
14	ALONSO	1m42.885s
15	HULKENBERG	1m42.893s
16	PEREZ	1m43.054s
17	BUTTON	1m43.100s
18	STEVENS	1m46.686s
19	MERHI	1m47.683s
20	HAMILTON	no time

Weather: 30C, sunny

PRACTICE 2: Friday

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	HAMILTON	1m39.790s
2	RAIKKONEN	1m40.163s
3	ROSBERG	1m40.218s
4	KVYAT	1m40.346s
5	BOTTAS	1m40.450s
6	MASSA	1m40.560s
7	VETTEL	1m40.652s
8	VERSTAPPEN	1m41.220s
9	ERICSSON	1m41.261s
10	RICCIARDO	1m41.799s
11	MALDONADO	1m41.877s
12	NASR	1m41.988s
13	PEREZ	1m42.242s
14	SAINZ	1m42.291s
15	HULKENBERG	1m42.330s
16	ALONSO	1m42.506s
17	BUTTON	1m42.637s
18	GROSJEAN	1m42.948s
19	STEVENS	1m45.704s
20	MERHI	1m47.229s

Weather: 35C, sunny

PRACTICE 3: Saturday

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	ROSBERG	1m39.690s
2	HAMILTON	1m39.873s
3	RAIKKONEN	1m40.245s
4	VETTEL	1m40.266s
5	MASSA	1m40.391s
6	BOTTAS	1m40.406s
7	RICCIARDO	1m40.590s
8	SAINZ	1m40.601s
9	VERSTAPPEN	1m40.989s
10	ERICSSON	1m41.200s
11	GROSJEAN	1m41.206s
12	MALDONADO	1m41.592s
13	KVYAT	1m41.775s
14	HULKENBERG	1m41.804s
15	ALONSO	1m41.991s
16	PEREZ	1m42.099s
17	NASR	1m42.117s
18	BUTTON	1m42.319s
19	MERHI	1m46.647s
20	STEVENS	1m47.059s

Weather: 35C, sunny

FRIDAY TESTERS

1	MARCIELLO	1m42.621s
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QUALIFYING TIMES

POS	DRIVER	QUALIFYING 1	QUALIFYING 2	QUALIFYING 3
1	HAMILTON	1m39.269s (1)	1m41.516s (8)	1m49.834s
2	VETTEL	1m39.813s (3)	1m39.632s (2)	1m49.908s
3	ROSBERG	1m39.373s (2)	1m39.376s (1)	1m50.299s
4	RICCIARDO	1m40.504s (10)	1m41.084s (4)	1m51.541s
5	KVYAT	1m40.546s (12)	1m41.665s (9)	1m51.950s
6	VERSTAPPEN	1m40.793s (13)	1m41.430s (7)	1m51.980s
7	MASSA	1m40.543s (11)	1m41.230s (6)	1m52.473s
8	GROSJEAN	1m40.303s (6)	1m41.209s (5)	1m52.980s
9	BOTTAS	1m40.248s (5)	1m40.650s (3)	1m53.179s
10	ERICSSON	1m40.340s (7)	1m41.748s (10)	1m53.260s
11	RAIKKONEN	1m40.415s (9)	1m42.173s	-
12	MALDONADO	1m40.361s (8)	1m42.197s	-
13	HULKENBERG	1m40.830s (14)	1m43.022s	-
14	PEREZ	1m41.036s (15)	1m43.468s	-
15	SAINZ	1m39.813s (4)	1m43.700s	-
16	NASR	1m41.308s	-	-
17	BUTTON	1m41.635s	-	-
18	ALONSO	1m41.745s	-	-
19	MERHI	1m46.677s	-	-
20	STEVENS	-	-	-

Weather: 25C, stormy

QUALIFYING STATISTICS

HEAD TO HEAD		
ROSBERG	0	2 HAMILTON
RICCIARDO	2	0 KVYAT
MASSA	2	0 BOTTAS
VETTEL	2	0 RAIKKONEN
ALONSO/MAGNUSSEN	0	2 BUTTON
PEREZ	0	2 HULKENBERG
SAINZ	1	1 VERSTAPPEN
GROSJEAN	2	0 MALDONADO
ERICSSON	1	1 NASR
STEVENS	N/A	N/A MERHI



POLE POSITION TROPHY

HAMILTON	AUS	WAL	2
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RACE: 56 LAPS - 192.879 MILES

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	LAPS	TOTAL TIME	FASTEST LAP	PITSTOPS	TIME IN PITS	GRID
1	SEBASTIAN VETTEL	FERRARI	56	1h41m05.793s	1m43.648s	2	49.088s	2
2	LEWIS HAMILTON	MERCEDES	56	+8.569s	1m43.125s	3	1m14.868s	1
3	NICO ROSBERG	MERCEDES	56	+12.310s	1m42.062s	3	1m22.599s	3
4	KIMI RAIKKONEN	FERRARI	56	+53.822s	1m44.124s	3	1m16.682s	11
5	VALTTERI BOTTAS	WILLIAMS-MERCEDES	56	+1m10.409s	1m44.088s	3	1m19.588s	8
6	FELIPE MASSA	WILLIAMS-MERCEDES	56	+1m13.586s	1m43.990s	3	1m17.590s	7
7	MAX VERSTAPPEN	TORO ROSSO-RENAULT	56	+1m37.762s	1m44.579s	3	1m19.939s	6
8	CARLOS SAINZ	TORO ROSSO-RENAULT	55	-1 lap	1m45.507s	2	50.291s	15
9	DANIIL KVYAT	RED BULL-RENAULT	55	-1 lap	1m44.514s	3	1m21.393s	5
10	DANIEL RICCIARDO	RED BULL-RENAULT	55	-1 lap	1m45.312s	3	1m17.711s	4
11	ROMAIN GROSJEAN	LOTUS-MERCEDES	55	-1 lap	1m44.812s	3	1m15.012s	10
12	FELIPE NASR	SAUBER-FERRARI	55	-1 lap	1m43.902s	4	1m50.194s	16
13	SERGIO PEREZ	FORCE INDIA-MERCEDES	55	-1 lap	1m45.345s	2	1m01.044s	14
14	NICO HULKENBERG	FORCE INDIA-MERCEDES	55	-1 lap	1m44.822s	3	1m26.224s	13
15	ROBERTO MERHI	MARUSSIA-FERRARI	53	-3 laps	1m49.040s	3	1m23.746s	19
R	PASTOR MALDONADO	LOTUS-MERCEDES	47	brakes	1m45.070s	3	1m38.959s	12
R	JENSON BUTTON	McLAREN-HONDA	41	engine	1m46.056s	3	1m24.454s	17
R	FERNANDO ALONSO	McLAREN-HONDA	21	engine	1m48.460s	1	25.222s	18
R	MARCUS ERICSSON	SAUBER-FERRARI	3	spun off	1m48.760s	-	-	9
W	WILL STEVENS	MARUSSIA-FERRARI	0	-	-	-	-	0

Weather: 33C, sunny. Winner's average speed: 114.471mph. Fastest lap: Rosberg 1m42.062s (121.488mph) on lap 43. Lap leader: 1-3 Hamilton, 4-17 Vettel, 18-23 Hamilton, 24-37 Vettel, 38 Hamilton, 39-56 Vettel.

TYRE CHOICE

STINT 1	STINT 2	STINT 3	STINT 4	Stint 5
Medium U	Medium N	Hard N		
Medium U	Hard N	Medium N	Hard N	
Medium U	Hard N	Hard N	Medium N	
Medium N	Medium N	Medium N	Hard N	
Medium U	Medium N	Medium N	Hard N	
Medium U	Hard N	Hard N	Medium N	
Medium N	Hard N	Hard N		
Medium U	Medium N	Hard N	Hard N	
Medium U	Medium N	Hard N	Hard N	
Medium U	Medium N	Medium U	Hard N	
Medium N	Hard N	Hard N	Hard N	Medium N
Medium N	Hard N	Medium N		
Medium N	Medium N	Hard N	Hard N	
Medium U	Hard N	Medium N	Medium U	
Medium N	Medium N	Medium U	Hard N	
Hard N	Medium N	Medium N	Medium U	
Hard N	Medium N			
Medium U				

N - new; U - used

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	PTS	AUS	MAL	CHN	BRN	E	MC	CDN	A	GB	H	B	I	SGP	J	RUS	USA	MEX	BR	UAE	
1	HAMILTON	43	1st	2nd	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	VETTEL	40	3rd	1st	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	ROSBERG	33	2nd	3rd	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	MASSA	20	4th	6th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	RAIKKONEN	12	ret	4th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	NASR	10	5th	12th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	BOTTAS	10	DNS	5th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	RICCIARDO	9	6th	10th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	HULKENBERG	6	7th	14th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	VERSTAPPEN	6	ret	7th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	SAINZ	6	9th	8th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	ERICSSON	4	8th	ret	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	KVYAT	2	DNS	9th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	PEREZ	1	10th	13th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	GROSJEAN	0	ret	11th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	BUTTON	0	11th	ret	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	MERHI	0	DNS	15th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	STEVENS	0	DNS	DNS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	MAGNUSSEN	0	DNS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	ALONSO	0	-	ret	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	MALDONADO	0	ret	ret	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



...while Ferrari fans got what they wanted

COATES/LAT



Early incidents led to cut tyres

COATES/LAT



STALEY/LAT



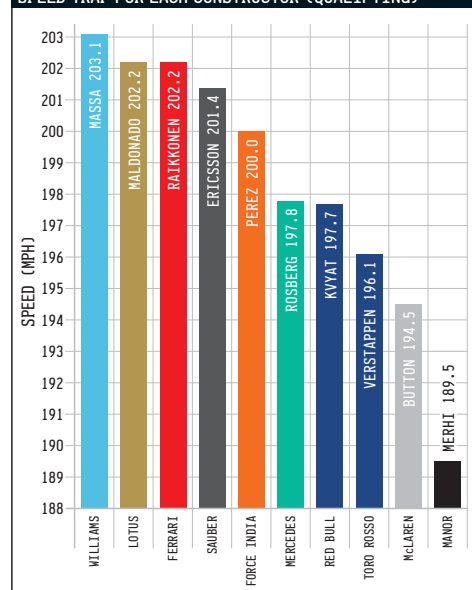
McHonda fan went home unhappy...

STALEY/LAT

CONSTRUCTORS' STANDINGS

POS	CONSTRUCTOR	PTS	AUS	MAL	CHN	BRN	E	MC	CDN	A	GB	H	B	I	SGP	J	RUS	USA	MEX	BR	UAE	
1	MERCEDES	76	43	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	FERRARI	52	15	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	WILLIAMS	30	12	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	SAUBER	14	14	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	TORO ROSSO	12	2	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	RED BULL	11	8	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	FORCE INDIA	7	7	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	LOTUS	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	McLAREN	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	MARUSSIA	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

SPEED TRAP FOR EACH CONSTRUCTOR (QUALIFYING)



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Vettel and his new team celebrate Malaysian win



28

How Ferrari got back to th

Last year, Ferrari had its worst season in over two decades. **LAWRENCE BARRETTO** explains how

When team boss Maurizio Arrivabene set Ferrari a target of two victories for 2015, it seemed optimistic considering the Scuderia ended last season with a paltry two podiums – neither of which was a win. But Sebastian Vettel's shock win in Sunday's Malaysian Grand Prix after beating Mercedes "fair and square", as the German put it, means that goal looks achievable, beatable even.

So how has Ferrari gone from being the fourth-best team of 2014 to the main challenger to Mercedes this year?

Last season was a miserable one for Ferrari, which exists to win, so to fail is unthinkable. Unsurprisingly, that led to a clearout.

Long-time president Luca di Montezemolo left after 23 years, with Sergio Marchionne stepping in. Marco Mattiacci, having spent just seven months in the job as successor to Stefano Domenicali as team principal, was given his marching orders, with Arrivabene taking the reins.

Engineering director Pat Fry and chief designer Nicolas Tombazis also departed. And Fernando Alonso left after five years with the team, with Vettel coming in alongside Kimi Raikkonen.

Ferrari had created a new-look team – and one that meant business. Arrivabene wasted no time in getting down to work. High among his priorities was to instill confidence into an outfit that had been long-starved of success. Key to this was to enforce a mentality

of teamwork and a way of working whereby staff are not afraid to take risks for fear of failure, which had hung heavy on those who have worked in Maranello for many years. Arrivabene demanded his team become aggressive to make big

gains. The only real failure would be not being aggressive enough.

This is something Fry tried to introduce when he joined from McLaren in 2010. The Englishman made some progress but he met with resistance from the old regime.



"I don't trust a one-man show, it doesn't exist. It's the overall team" MAURIZIO ARRIVABENE



AGGRESSIVE UPGRADE PROGRAMME PLANNED

Beating the pacesetter Mercedes once is one thing, doing it again is quite another. But Ferrari has no intention of taking its foot off the gas, with tech boss James Allison saying that the team will not be “conservative” in the coming races.

“We will be shovelling performance onto the car as quick as we can find it and make it,” he adds. “There’s a bagload in the pipeline in the factory at the moment

and that will find its way onto the car as soon as we can, and there will be more coming after that. The aero programme is performing strongly and these are still quite young aero rules so I think we can expect more.”

With regards to the engine, Ferrari is in a strong position as it has 10 tokens, three more than rival Mercedes, to use up over the course of the season. “The whole situation with the tokens means it’s a very

different year compared with last year, adds Allison. “Notwithstanding the gains we’ve made to date, we think we can bring a lot more during the year.

“Three [more than Mercedes] is an important number even though it doesn’t sound a lot. Three buys you a combustion upgrade. A combustion upgrade is quite significant.” Ferrari’s performance in Malaysia, then, may not be a one-off.

e front

it turned things around

That is no longer the case under Arrivabene and the positive atmosphere in the team is already clear. Raikkonen, for example, appears to be happier, with Arrivabene joking that he thought the Finn was ‘sick’ because he has been smiling so much.

“The biggest challenge is to make sure that everybody is going in the same direction with a straightforward commitment and that they are honest, brave and transparent and understand the value of working together,” says Arrivabene. “I really don’t trust a one-man show, it doesn’t exist. It’s the overall team. And this is the most important thing.”

Technical director James Allison should be given credit too. He joined Ferrari from Lotus in September 2013. It was too late to

have a major impact on the ‘14 car but it enabled him to start thinking about ‘15 much earlier.

Under his leadership, the team’s aero programme began in January 2014, with the real momentum behind the engine programme starting in late May. And he has changed the team’s approach to development too. Rather than rushing through as many parts as possible, Allison says he pinpointed specific areas that “are worth putting lots of effort into” and, to improve quality, has done away with unreasonable deadlines.

“The pressure has been taken off people to deliver things for next week and they can instead work with a slightly longer timescale in mind, which frees up your hand to do a good job,” says Allison. “It’s hard to do anything in a two- to

three-month timescale. You need to build a programme over months and years rather than weeks.”

Another chink in Ferrari’s armour has been its windtunnel, with a track-correlation problem causing issues that the team felt across a number of seasons. The Scuderia started using Toyota’s windtunnel in Cologne, Germany, while upgrading its own facility. And it’s now starting to reap the benefits after a period of pain.

And, of course, there is the engine, which was poor last year but is a significant step forward in 2015. In fact, it’s now the second-best power unit on the grid, behind Mercedes. Part of that is down to the new aggressive mentality.

“We have got good performance on the engine and the team have had to do that by showing a lot of

engineering skill, but also a huge amount of courage because engine stuff requires an extremely long lead time and if you make a mistake you pay for it forever,” says Allison. “Compared to chassis people they have to be more conservative but they were extremely courageous and now we are benefiting from their skill and their courage.”

It’s that long-term approach that arguably started more than five years ago, albeit slowly, that is starting to pay dividends now. Allison says Ferrari has its “work cut out in China to do anything like as impressive a job” as the team managed in Malaysia. That may well be the case. But if the team maintains its aggressive tactics and teamwork ethic, it may well not be the last time we see a driver in red climb the top step this season. ❧



Porsche downplays WEC testing pace

The new Porsche 919 dominated the timesheets in testing at Paul Ricard.

GARY WATKINS explains why the German marque is still being cautious



Porsche is warning that the one-lap pace it showed at last week's official World Endurance Championship test at Paul Ricard will mean little when the season kicks off at Silverstone on April 12.

The all-new, 2015-specification Porsche 919 Hybrid topped each of the five sessions at the 'Prologue' test on Friday and Saturday. Its ultimate pace put it the best part of two seconds ahead of closest rival Audi. But the two cars' quickest times came during qualifying simulations, which neither Audi nor Toyota undertook over the

course of the two days.

"We showed a bit of strength, but qualifying strength is not race strength – we don't seem that much better in long runs than the others," said Neel Jani, who ended up with the fastest time of the test with a 1m37.220s set when it was still light in the Friday-evening session. "Audi was very strong on its long runs and, for sure, Toyota didn't show everything here."

Jani and his team-mates in the #18 Porsche all set times in the 1m37s bracket when they were each allowed a quality sim in the evening. Marc Lieb got within two tenths of

his Swiss co-driver's time, while Romain Dumas was six tenths slower during his run in the dark.

The #17 919 Hybrid, which like the sister car was running in the high-downforce aero configuration with which Porsche will start the season, was second fastest with another qualifying run from Mark Webber right at the end of Friday's afternoon session. Neither he nor his team-mates, Timo Bernhard and Brendon Hartley, managed clear laps when they were given their low-fuel, fresh-tyre runs.

Audi and Toyota seemed relatively unconcerned by the one-lap pace of Porsche, which had already proved the benefits of its hybrid concept with four pole positions with the original 919 last year. The advantages of that system in a qualifying situation have only been increased with Porsche's step up to the eight megajoule hybrid sub-class for this season.

"If they go for a qualifying run with a fully-loaded 8MJ system, I don't think we should take too much time to care about qualify," said Audi Sport Team Joest boss

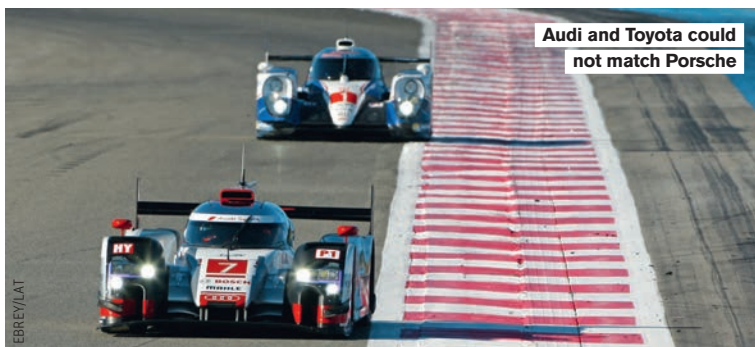
Ralf Juttner. "There will be tracks where it won't make sense for us to make even the smallest effort to try to beat them to pole."

Audi was happy with the long-runs that it undertook at Ricard with its two upgraded 4MJ-class R18 e-tron quattros, according to Juttner.

"We had some points on our list to improve over the winter and one of those was hopefully to have our tyre management working better," he explained. "Here it did work, and I hope it is true for other tracks."

Audi ended up third and fourth in the times with Benoit Treluyer and Loic Duval on a 1m39.058s and 1m39.354s respectively. It kept mileage down on its two R18s, as it did at the Ricard test last year, because the two brand-new cars had already been built up ahead of the series opener at Silverstone.

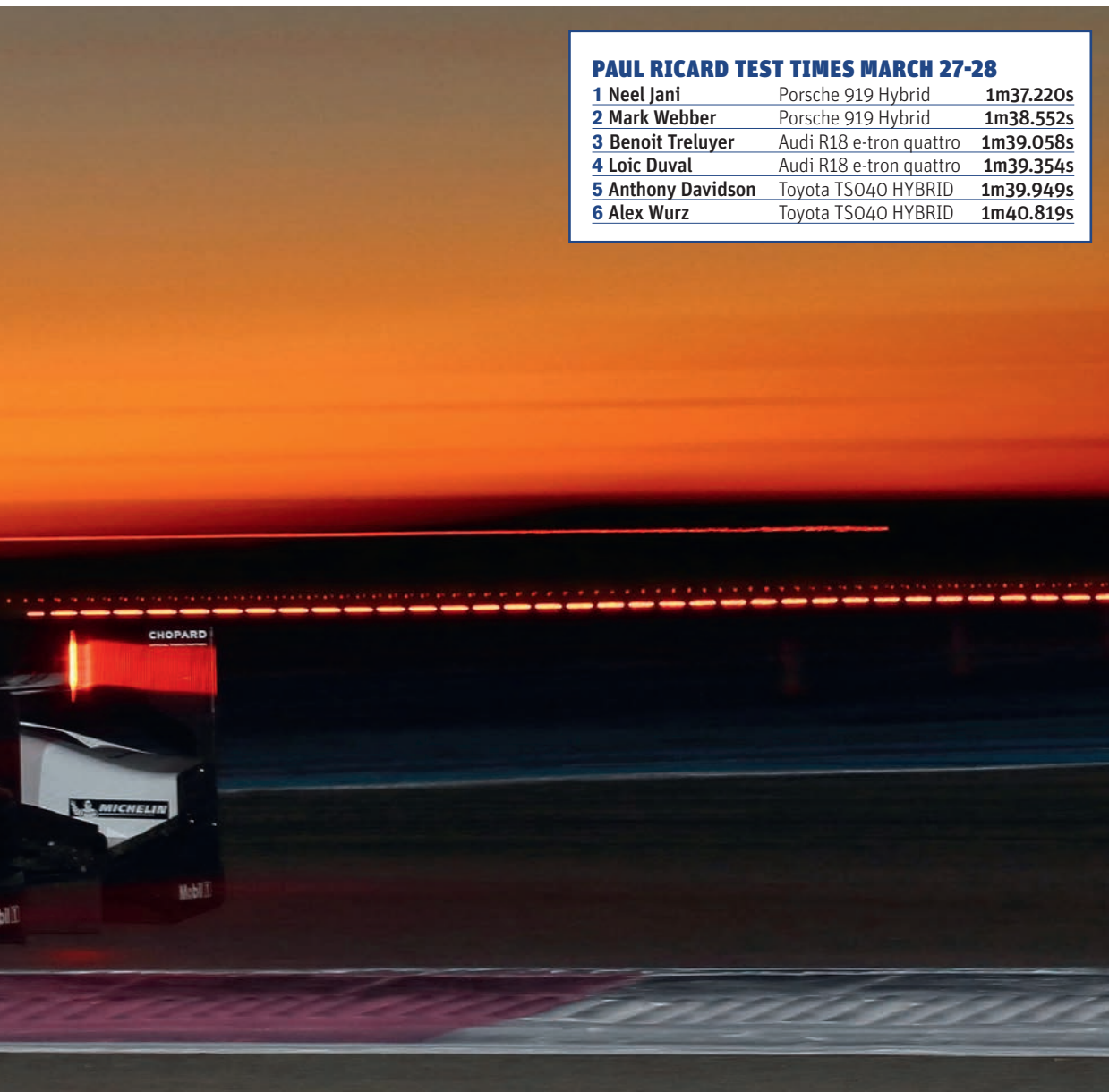
Reigning world champion Toyota appeared not to show its hand at Ricard. Its two revised TS040 HYBRIDS, which like last year will run in the 4MJ class, ended up fifth and sixth on the timesheets. It ran both high-downforce and Le Mans



Audi and Toyota could not match Porsche

PAUL RICARD TEST TIMES MARCH 27-28

1 Neel Jani	Porsche 919 Hybrid	1m37.220s
2 Mark Webber	Porsche 919 Hybrid	1m38.552s
3 Benoit Treluyer	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	1m39.058s
4 Loic Duval	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	1m39.354s
5 Anthony Davidson	Toyota TSO40 HYBRID	1m39.949s
6 Alex Wurz	Toyota TSO40 HYBRID	1m40.819s



“We’d like to have been faster but laptime was not part of our programme”

TOYOTA'S PASCAL VASSELON

aero configurations, each crew starting in one car and swapping to the other for the second day. Both Anthony Davidson and Alex Wurz recorded their best times in the high-downforce version, ending up on a 1m39.949s and 1m40.819s set respectively on Friday and Saturday.

“We had a programme to go through and don’t know what the others were doing,” said Toyota Motorsport technical director Pascal Vasselon, who pointed out



Toyota denied speed was part of test plan

that one of the priorities for the test at Ricard was aero-mapping its new Le Mans bodykit.

“We would like to have been three seconds faster, but going for laptime was not part of the programme that we had.”

Vasselon did admit that the new Toyota suffered worse tyre degradation – undeniably the strong suit of the original TSO40 last season – than expected.

World champion Anthony

Davidson admitted that there was “a bit of head scratching going on” and reckoned Toyota “couldn’t get close” to Audi’s long-run pace.

The results of the Paul Ricard test were largely inconclusive, partly because each of the three manufacturers was doing its own thing over the two days. The only firm conclusion that could be drawn from the Prologue was that Porsche is probably going to be nigh-on unbeatable in qualifying. ❧

In brief



CLM MAKES TEST BOW

The heavily-revised CLM-AER P1/O1 fielded by the ByKolles team turned its first laps on Friday in the hands of Pierre Kaffer. The 2015-spec privateer LMP1, which has new suspension, aero and an Xtrac rather than Hewland gearbox, ran a total of 181 laps, with Tonio Liuzzi setting a best lap of 1m46.983s.

TANDY'S LMP2 MARKER

Nick Tandy led the way in LMP2 in the KCMG ORECA-Nissan O5 coupe he will race in six WEC rounds this year. The Porsche driver set a best time of 1m47.456s on his second run during Friday’s evening session, which put him 0.3s up on Julien Canal’s G-Drive Ligier-Nissan JSP2s and a further 0.2s up on Nelson Panciatici in the Signatech team’s Alpine-badged ORECA-Nissan O3R.

EXTREME DOUBLES UP

The open-top HPD-Honda ARX-03bs that Extreme Speed Motorsports will race at Silverstone arrived at Ricard straight from the Sebring 12 Hours. They each completed just over 50 laps – the minimum stipulated under engine-useage rules – in the hands of Scott Sharp and Ed Brown. They also tried the #36 G-Drive Ligier in advance of the team’s switch to the JSP2 for round two of the WEC at Spa in May.

ASTON ON TOP IN GTE

Aston Martin Racing topped the times in both GTE classes, Stuart Hall in the only Am-class Vantage present going slightly faster than Fernando Rees in the #95 Pro entry. Their respective 1m57.116s and 1m57.331s times were set using a 2014 air-restrictor rather than the smaller-diameter unit they will have to race at the start of the season.

DOME'S HIGH MILES

The as-yet-unraced Strakka Dome S103 (below) completed 1000km over the course of the test in the hands of Danny Watts, Jonny Kane and Nick Leventis. Watts was fifth fastest aboard the Nissan-powered car, 0.7s off Tandy’s best.



THE BTCC'S B

New cars, new teams and new rules mean new challenges for last year's leading British Touring



The 2014 champion returns, but in a new car run by a three-year-old team

Colin Turkington



Record race winner finds himself in an unproven team for the first time

Jason Plato



A title challenger, but Honda's new Civic Type-R is very late to the party

Gordon Shedden



Motorbase's budget woes mean he's on the sidelines for the first half of the year

Mat Jackson

BIG SHAKE-UP

Car Championship drivers. **SCOTT MITCHELL** tries to work out who is a potential favourite



Away from his family team and tasked with succeeding where Plato failed

Andrew Jordan



WSR's BMW is arguably the best car, but Tordoff is an unproven title contender

Sam Tordoff



A race winner, but team-mates Tordoff and Priaulx are likely to shade him

Rob Collard



Endured his worst season since 1998 last year and has a new (but late) car in 2015

Matt Neal

Trying to predict a winner at Brands Hatch, let alone a champion, is not normally this difficult before a British Touring Car Championship season. There's usually a clutch of three or four drivers you would expect to be leading the way when it all kicks off after the usual winter of mystery. But there's something very different about this year.

With the NGTC regulations throwing up another packed grid – 32 cars have entered the 2015 season, although three (the two Motorbase Fords and Nicolas Hamilton's Audi) will miss the early races – the championship is enjoying a strong period of technical stability. Most cars are entering their fourth season, some their fifth. It's still not a universally loved formula, but in quantity alone the results speak for themselves.

And yet the biggest driver shake-up in recent times is promising a season of unparalleled unpredictability. The status quo has been ripped apart, and it's all change at the top. Jason Plato's MG contract expired and Team BMR was the

only place with the coffers and ambition to match his pedigree. Colin Turkington lost his seat with WSR when eBay pulled its title sponsorship (echoing the scenes of 2009), but BMR offered a reprieve.

MG's replacement for Plato is 2013 champion Andrew Jordan, who has taken something of a gamble in leaving the security of his family-run team and its proven Honda Civic to try to succeed where Plato failed (in title terms). In fact, it's all change at MG, with Sam Tordoff following Plato out of the exit

door and Jack Goff stepping into his vacant MG6. Tordoff heads over to WSR, where he will join triple world champion Andy Priaulx and the veteran Rob Collard.

Throw in a new car for Honda, along with Motorbase's shock withdrawal, which leaves Mat Jackson (fourth in 2014) and James Cole on the sidelines for now since the team has not been able to replace the funding provided by departed sponsor Airwaves, and each of the top eight from last year has something new to deal with, something that stops them being a "favourite". You can legitimately throw Collard into that mix, not just because he is targeting podiums rather than a title attack, but because WSR is not convinced it will hit the ground running after regulation tweaks to peg back the performance of rear-wheel-drive cars. But more on that later.

A high-stakes game of musical chairs was always going to result in big-name casualties; Fabrizio Giovanardi and Alain Menu were the two left standing when the music stopped. While losing those two deprives the series of its "seven champions" USP from 2014, it doesn't detract from what's happening at the front. Somehow,

having said goodbye to a pair of double champions, it's become even tougher to work out who will be at the front.

"I'm not that brave," laughs Turkington when asked if he has any insight into the pecking order. "Normally it's the same old faces but I think this year is going to be more open than ever."

He's right. The start of the 2015 season will be more open than it has probably ever been. It's certainly rare in a period of technical stability, and the result is a campaign that should throw up a series of twists and turns.

The list of potential race winners is well into double figures, though we know Eurotech, which ran Jordan to the 2013 crown, is probably not on it (with no disrespect to the returning Jeff Smith or Martin Depper). But it may well be part of a much longer list of potential podium finishers, especially with the increased ballast amounts for this season and the doubling of the number of drivers who have to carry it. Suddenly, race two is not as predictable as it was in previous seasons. Reversed-grid races should be even more of a lottery than before too.

Graciously, the winter has at least provided a few clues. The only official pre-season test at Donington Park confirmed what trackside

viewers had suggested from early tests of the new Team BMR superteam era – that Colin Turkington and Jason Plato look quick. That's not surprising in itself, but if the double champions – the top two in last year's championship – can fight for pole and victory at Brands Hatch then it's an ominous marker for the remainder of the season. Especially since Plato, who topped the Donington test by just six thousandths of a second ahead of Turkington, says there's "loads left in the car".

"It's not a surprise they've got on top of them because they are top-class drivers," points out 1992 BTCC champion Tim Harvey, who pays close attention to what's happening on and off the track in his long-running role as one of ITV's commentators. "They've had eight days' testing already – that's more than anyone else. The others have had a few but nobody's done as much as they have."

That work is standing BMR in good stead. Plato was targeting wins as soon as the announcement was made in early February, but Turkington was more pragmatic – it would, he said, take time to adjust to the front-wheel drive Volkswagen CC after becoming a rear-wheel-drive "specialist". That sounds like nonsense. Turkington's a top driver – "world class", says Plato – and that's been evident. He has looked very comfortable in the VW and it should translate into a frontrunning performance at Brands, even though Plato has bagged early bragging rights with his 0.006s advantage.

Testing, though, can be as red a herring in touring cars as it is in any discipline. So while it's safe to believe the BMR machines have moved forward significantly this season, ▶

"THE START OF THE SEASON WILL BE MORE OPEN THAN THE BTCC HAS PROBABLY EVER BEEN"

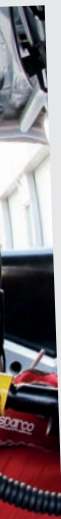


Neal's Honda team is behind schedule, but if the three-time champion's usual consistency returns he'll be a contender

There should be new teams, cars and drivers fighting for the 2015 title



35



Return to a hatchback
Civic has been less than ideal for Honda

TOP MARQUES IN PRE-SEASON TEST



1st	Volkswagen	Plato
3rd	Mercedes	Moffat
5th	MG	Goff
7th	Audi	Abbott
9th	Honda	Depper
10th	BMW	Tordoff
11th	Chevrolet	Newsham
17th	Ford	Bushell
20th	Toyota	Belcher
23rd	Proton	Wilmot
Did not run	Infiniti	NA

MG is gunning for the drivers' title with a new pairing in 2015



WILL PRIAULX'S GLORY DAYS RETURN?

Last year two returning BTCC behemoths found their series sequel was more of a horror story than a fairytale. The underachievements of Fabrizio Giovanardi, blown away by Motorbase team-mate Mat Jackson, just shaded those of Team BMR's Alain Menu.

The answer to their struggles lies in the

peculiar nature of the championship's Next Generation Touring Car, which consensus indicates does not drive like a regular racing car. Giovanardi simply found it difficult to adapt. As much of a master of S2000 machinery the Italian had been in previous years, the NGTC was just not something that he connected with – and he

didn't have the excuse of it being a poor car, since Jackson won twice in the Ford Focus in the second half of the year. Menu, by comparison, had a car that was not completely sorted, and he often showed well in the races, although it was still young team-mate Aron Smith who delivered the team's two victories.

What's the point here? That Andy Priaulx's challenge is not insignificant. Years spent driving GTE and DTM machinery mean the three-time WTCC champion has a lot of experience driving purebred racing cars, which the NGTC is something of a departure from.

The good news for the Guernseyman is that the WSR BMW 125i M Sport is as natural a racer as an NGTC is likely to be. It's a very well-sorted bit of kit and last year Dick

Getting mileage in WSR's BMW will be key for Priaulx





Jordan's title defence did not go to plan in 2014, but a change of scenery and new motivation should bring out the best in him



► are the Ciceley Racing Mercedes A-Classes really going to be the nearest challengers? The likely answer is no. Aiden Moffat's a promising young driver, but expecting him to be best of the rest – as he was on the media-day test – is premature and unfair. Adam Morgan won a race last year, and was a frontrunner on merit. Regular podium challenges should be the target, but it would be a surprise to see the Mercs suddenly launch into regular race-winning contention.

Assessing the usual suspect, it is crucial that Honda hits the ground running with its new Civic Type-R. Niggling small reliability issues hurt its media-day running, on top of an already delayed testing programme. This year it will be harder than ever to make up ground – that's why Honda crowbarred in a day at Brands Hatch last week. Track time has never been so crucial.

The top 10 is packed with drivers who could make legitimate arguments for being contenders for victory at the first race. But, just for the record, take a look at the information from the media day. Is that really how the first race is going to pan out? While the Hondas' and WSR BMWs' positions are unrepresentative, they're not a million miles away. The expectation is for the Mercedes to be very credible contenders. Rob Austin's Audi A4 should be in the mix too.

It would be rose-tinted to say the BTCC is perfect. There are arguments bubbling away all the time, unhappiness with some NGTC parts, and always a financial row or two in the background. But there is every reason to believe that on-track, this season will be a step up – and arguably the most competitive in recent times.

This season has the potential to play into the hands of an experienced driver such as Matt Neal,

because the nature of more drivers carrying success ballast (and more of it) means that races one, two and three should be very different stories. "It might be hard to understand from home," reckons Harvey, because drivers could suffer greatly contrasting fortunes across a race day. The out-and-out fastest should, in theory, be hurt the most: prime territory for a driver to win big through consistency.

Backed into a corner you could put money on Andrew Jordan to take pole and win the opening race at Brands Hatch, with one of the BMR Volkswagens scoring in race two and, with less

weight and a favourable grid position, a WSR BMW (probably Tordoff's) to win race three. Looking further ahead, you could place factory Honda men Neal and Gordon Shedden in the running for the title.

Honda has watched a customer team win the title in 2013 and a rival manufacturer do so in '14 – with an aggressive new car, it's clear where its intentions lie. If Shedden or Neal can avoid losing too much ground early on, then

expect a second-half flourish from the Team Dynamics-run cars that will ramp up the pressure on the BMR boys and, you would expect, Jordan.

A topsy-turvy season lies in wait and keeping on top of it all will be tough enough – pre-empting it all is a near-impossibility.

"It's such a shuffled pack," Turkington points out. "I think it's going to be the same contenders as ever but everybody has the potential to win now; you can't afford to write anybody off. That's the beauty of it: it's going to be harder than ever to win." ❧

“THE TOP 10 IS PACKED WITH DRIVERS WHO COULD CONTEND FOR VICTORY AT THE FIRST RACE”



Bennetts's team had it on song with Colin Turkington.

Priault missed the media day, which crucially meant an afternoon's extra running lost, but he was back in the car at Brands Hatch last week and by all

accounts is slotting into a decent groove early on.

Wins may be out of his reach in the first couple of rounds, but the early signs at least suggest his return to the BTCC could be closer to the intended script than his predecessors.



Plato topped official pre-season test for new team BMR

OFFICIAL PRE-SEASON TEST TOP 10

1	Jason Plato	BMR VW	1m10.249s	
2	Colin Turkington	BMR VW	1m10.255s	+0.006s
3	Aiden Moffat	Moffat Mercedes	1m10.300s	+0.051s
4	Adam Morgan	Ciceley Mercedes	1m10.304s	+0.055s
5	Jack Goff	MG	1m10.380s	+0.131s
6	Andrew Jordan	MG	1m10.625s	+0.376s
7	Hunter Abbott	RAR Audi	1m10.794s	+0.545s
8	Warren Scott	BMR VW	1m10.829s	+0.580s
9	Martin Depper	Eurotech Honda	1m10.928s	+0.679s
10	Sam Tordoff	WSR BMW	1m10.985s	+0.736s

HARVEY

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR THIS SEASON

Champion-turned-pundit Tim Harvey tells **SCOTT MITCHELL** his predictions for 2015

From winning the British Touring Car Championship in 1992 to becoming a core part of ITV's live television coverage of the series, with a stint as Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion in between, Tim Harvey has been a household name in British motorsport for over two decades.

Never one to mince his words, his current role in the BTCC as an analyst and commentator means he pays close

attention to what happens on and off track.

So, while the red herring of pre-season testing may cause some people to sway one way or the other on the eve of arguably the most unpredictable BTCC season of recent times, Harvey is well placed to make observations with a more refined judgement.

AUTOSPORT decided to pick his brains on how he thinks the season will develop – even though he wasn't quite confident enough to nail down a champion...

MOST IMPROVED...

TEAM

BMR did win races last year, but I suppose in terms of overall competitiveness they are going to be the ones that are the most improved, without a doubt. The team bears little resemblance to last year, they've got different-class drivers and the engineering team has been considerably enhanced.



DRIVER

Aiden Moffat had a very good showing, but you have to be careful how much you draw from the pre-season test. It was good to see both the Mercedes up there and Aiden's certainly marked himself out as one to watch, but it's too early to say he'll be up there regularly. Jack Goff, now with MG, could be, and Tom Ingram [above] could do well. Warren Scott surprised me – he could benefit from three fast team-mates – and Mike Bushell could surprise a few people.



THE BIGGEST...



Domination repeat unlikely

CHANGE

I'd put a bet on nobody qualifying on pole and winning the first two races. It's going to be pretty impossible with 75kg of ballast. I think the situation will change massively in terms of people having ups and downs. Nobody is going to dominate this year.





Q&A

ALAN GOW
BTCC SERIES
DIRECTOR



Is this a difficult season to predict?

Because of all the different driver movements and team changes, you'd be a brave man to actually work out who is going to win at this stage of the game. Normally you can go into a season and say it's going to be out of three or four, probably. This year, no, which is fantastic. Delving into the great unknown is terrific.

And are you expecting even more people fighting for wins?

Last year we had 11 winner. There's no reason we won't have that again, if not more. It's a fascinating season; it's probably the most wide-open season you can think of.

Is there anything specific you'll be looking out for this year?

There are a lot of dynamics you've got to watch. Colin Turkington and Jason Plato is one of them. There's not one in particular that stands out to me – there's just a lot of different dynamics, and it will be fascinating to watch it evolve over the course of the season, how people get on with different cars and team-mates. It's going to be good.

Who could emerge from the chasing pack and challenge the usual suspects?

The Volkswagens should be strong – where they lost out last year was consistency. They won a couple of races, quick at one circuit, not quick at others. I think that with Colin and Jason both in there, they should be consistent frontrunners. I think those two Mercedes are good, strong cars. Aiden Moffat is a quick little driver and he's now got a year's experience behind him. Dave Newsham's Chevrolet is an interesting one. There's no reason that car shouldn't be quick. It's a good chassis, good engine, Dave knows how to drive. I think that could be a regular frontrunner. There are quite a few like that. As I said before, who knows? I've no idea who is going to be there until we get out at Brands Hatch.



RIVALRY

There will be team rivalry perhaps more than the driver rivalry between Jason Plato and Colin Turkington, but that's a battle I'll watch very closely. The interaction is fine and lovely at the moment but every driver wants to be quickest. There'll be huge pecking-order bragging rights.



DISAPPOINTMENT

The potential is there for Andy Priaux to fail like Alain Menu and Fabrizio Giovanardi did. But I don't think it will happen. The BMW is a more natural car to drive than any front-wheel-drive NGTC and, from what we saw at Thruxton, he looked on top of it straight away. Who else might be disappointing? MG perhaps. Last year it was the fastest front-wheel-drive car but I'm not convinced they will have developed it for this year. They've lost Jason Plato and [engineer] Carl Faux. Will they have moved forward? Potentially there are other cars who could be the best of the FWDs.

OFF-TRACK STORY

I think the return of Motorbase and performance of Infiniti will be the two political stories. Infiniti [left] has certainly put a lot into the team and should be expecting a return on its investment, which is substantial. They may be taking a long-term view but if the team doesn't perform that will be an interesting story. And the BTCC can't afford to lose a team like Motorbase. We're high on numbers but you don't want numbers instead of quality.

HARVEY'S...



PICK FOR THE TITLE

It's the most unpredictable, but the cream rises to the top and it will be the same familiar faces... [silence]... Plato, Turkington and Shedden. You could pick any one of those.

RUNNERS AND RI

The BTCC has attracted a 32-car entry for 2015. **SCOTT MITCHELL** walks you through the grid on the eve of

HONDA/TEAM DYNAMICS

The late start to testing means this car isn't as refined as it should be at the start of a crucial year for Honda. A title challenge is the minimum after two years playing second fiddle.



Honda Civic Type-R



52 GORDON SHEDDEN

Age 36
Starts 255
Wins 37
Best season 1st (2012)

The 2012 champion has a habit of always being in the title hunt. He won three races in the Tourer and the new Civic looks the part. Cannot afford to lose ground early on if the car, which has about two and a half days of running altogether, suffers any niggling issues early on.

25 MATT NEAL

Age 48
Starts 545
Wins 53
Best season 1st ('05, '06, '11)

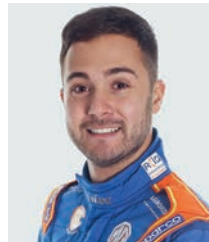
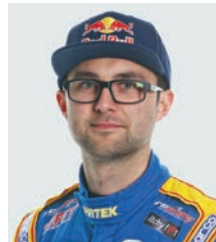
After describing his 2014 as "difficult", Neal is somewhat determined to remind people why he has three titles to his name. The new rules, with more ballast for the frontrunners, are likely to reward consistency over raw pace, and this could play perfectly into his hands.

MG/TRIPLE EIGHT

After three years of race wins, but no drivers' title, the championship is a must for Triple Eight. The MG team returns with an upgraded version of the MG6 and two new drivers.



MG6 GT



77 ANDREW JORDAN

Age 25
Starts 208
Wins 14
Best season 1st (2013)

The 2013 champion's title defence had a few holes in it last year, and that was before Jordan ended up in the Snetterton barriers in qualifying. Stepping away from his family Eurotech operation presents a big challenge, but there's no doubting his ability. An early favourite.

31 JACK GOFF

Age 24
Starts 57
Best finish 2nd
Best season 15th (2014)

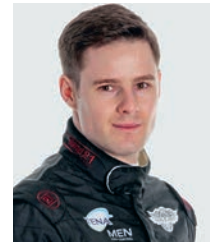
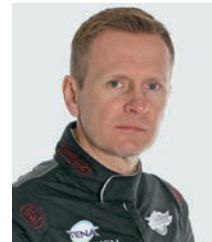
It's thought that Triple Eight has taken a bit of a punt on Goff. The 2012 Renault UK Clio Cup champion is clearly a talented driver, and MG will be hoping his touring car performance didn't peak with a second-place finish in the 2013 season finale. This is his big chance.

INFINITI

The car's not tested, the team's unproven and the drivers are inexperienced. It's a works entry, and investment has not been frugal, but points need to be the target, at least early on.



Infiniti Q50



84 RICHARD HAWKEN

Age 42
Starts 0
Wins n/a
Best season n/a

Hawken is an accomplished driver in Super Touring circles – but that's the revived series for older cars rather than a nod to any achievements in the era itself! Has tested a Toyota Avensis before but inexperience and new-car gremlins could stymie his rookie campaign initially.

22 DEREK PALMER JR

Age 27
Starts 0
Wins n/a
Best season n/a

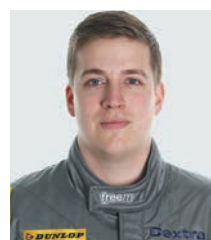
Derek Palmer Sr is not short of confidence in Infiniti's second driver, although that it's his son may have something to do with it. Dutch touring car experience on his CV, but the BTCC will prove a far sterner test. If the car's up to the task, he will be interesting to watch.

TEAM PARKER RACING

Team Parker Racing is a very capable team and the car will be good enough to fight for podiums.



Ford Focus



14 ALEX MARTIN

Age 27
Starts 0
Wins n/a
Best season n/a

What may keep the Focus off the rostrum is

the driver, in the least disrespectful way possible. Martin's a BTCC rookie and it took someone of Jack Clarke's pedigree a full season to clinch a (reversed-grid) podium in a similar package.

DRIVERS

the Brands Hatch opening round

SPEEDWORKS (HANDY)

Speedworks has overhauled Ingram's Toyota Avensis, which is now 40kg lighter. Belcher's talked of off-season upgrades to his Avensis, but most of the time will be in the driver.



80 TOM INGRAM
Age 21
Starts 30
Best finish 5th
Best season 14th (2014)

What will hold Ingram back at the start of the season is a lack of track time, having jokingly described his minimal mileage at the pre-season test as "the three most crucial laps of my career". This is a package that, once it gets going, could and should challenge the podium.



11 SIMON BELCHER
Age 41
Starts 30
Best finish 18th
Best season 30th (2014)

It's easy to criticise Belcher, but you can't really knock his attitude or approach. He's keeping his ambitions small and focusing on improving as a driver – work to the Avensis over the winter and a step forward from the man himself could put him on the precipice of the points.

ROB AUSTIN RACING

The Audi A4 has won a race in each of the past two seasons now. Will a hat-trick of Rockingham victories be out of reach this time? Revisions to the car and financial stability suggest more podiums are achievable.



101 ROB AUSTIN
Age 34
Starts 106
Wins 2
Best season 11th (2013)

You know what you're getting with Austin: a driver of race-winning calibre. If the upgrades do the job, consistency will be his target.

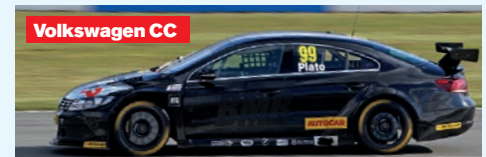


54 HUNTER ABBOTT
Age 34
Starts 29
Best finish 10th
Best season 20th (2014)

The results weren't truly reflective of how Abbott grew into the series last season. A return gives him a shot at replicating Austin's peaks.

TEAM BMR

Plato and Turkington will be hoping to challenge for the title, but regular race-winning pace should be a more achievable aim. Whether that leads to a championship challenge remains to be seen.



99 JASON PLATO
Age 47
Starts 434
Wins 88
Best season 1st ('01, '10)

We know exactly what Plato is capable of and he insists the fire in his belly remains. Beating Turkington by 0.006s in the pre-season test gives him early bragging rights and he'll be desperate to claim that elusive third title – and a first crown for VW in the BTCC. Pace in testing suggests it's a possibility.



1 COLIN TURKINGTON
Age 33
Starts 275
Wins 32
Best season 1st ('09, '14)

For someone who claimed switching back to front-wheel drive would take time, he's looked at ease in the VW CC so far. Team BMR's comprehensive test programme has no doubt helped, and Turkington is a genuine title contender. Just in case anyone ever thought otherwise...



40 ARON SMITH
Age 25
Starts 93
Wins 3
Best season 8th (2012)

The Irishman could be the season's dark horse. Clearly the VW is a step forward from last year and Smith knows how to win races. He outshone Alain Menu in 2014 and, if Plato and Turkington get preoccupied fighting with each other, Smith will need no second invitation. He has nothing to lose and it all to gain.

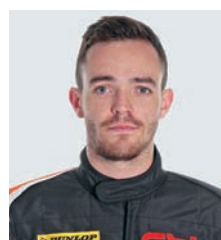


39 WARREN SCOTT
Age 43
Starts 50
Best finish 9th
Best season 21st (2014)

Scott has no illusions over where he stands in the BMR driving pecking order, but the man who has been instrumental in putting together something of a BTCC superteam is not bad on track either. Impressed in the media-day test and could be an occasional podium threat if he keeps out of trouble.

TEAM HARD

Tony Gilham's team returns but it could be tough. The Avensis appears to be a tricky car to get working and points will probably be the limit of potential.



23 KIERAN GALLAGHER
Age 25
Starts 3
Best finish 13th
Best season 28th (2013)

Gallagher was due to race in the Renault UK Clio

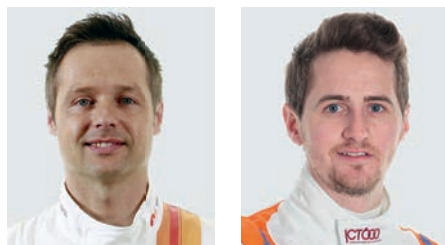
Cup this season, but now has a bigger FWD mount to master. Has raced before with Team Hard, and did well, but the Avensis is a difficult car to get sorted and he may find his first full season challenging.

WSR

This car was the class of the field in 2014, so the championship has to be the target. Especially if the series' new rules don't peg back the rear-wheel-drive cars too much.



BMW 125i M Sport



111 ANDY PRIAULX

Age 40
Starts 22
Wins 1
Best season **5th (2002)**

Two things will hurt Priaulx's bid to add the BTCC to his list of touring car titles: adapting to NGTC after an age in racing thoroughbreds; and skipping the Rockingham round. Early signs are he's slipped into a nice groove, though.

7 SAM TORDOFF

Age 25
Starts 63
Wins 2
Best season **6th (2013)**

Is this Tordoff's year? Two wins might not seem a lot in two years at MG, especially as Plato twice fought for the title. But it could have been more, had circumstances not gone against him. The BMW should be quick again and he's a proven race winner.

6 ROB COLLARD

Age 46
Starts 323
Wins 8
Best season **5th (2012)**

There are times when Collard can match or beat his team-mates, but he was bested by Turkington last year and it's unlikely he'll have the upper hand on



Priaulx or Tordoff. Podiums are his personal target, and that's very achievable.



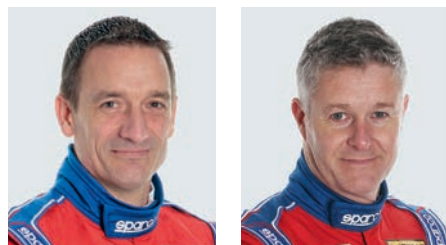
BMW 125i M Sport

EUROTECH

From challenging for titles to challenging for points, this will be a transitional year for Eurotech, which replaces Mike Jordan with a very good team manager in Marvin Humphries.



Honda Civic



55 JEFF SMITH

Age 48
Starts 84
Best finish **2nd**
Best season **12th (2012)**

By the end of his previous stint in the series Smith was a regular top-10 qualifier and solid points scorer. There's no reason why that can't be the aim again this time around. It may take him a bit of time to reacquaint himself but 'Super Jeff' should be solid.

30 MARTIN DEPPER

Age 46
Starts 88
Best finish **12th**
Best season **23rd (2014)**

Given how difficult last year was, his times at the media day were very encouraging. Hopefully that's an indicator that the ex-VW Cup ace's second year with Eurotech will be much better than his first, in which he struggled to even net points.

CICELEY RACING

Regular podiums are a must for a team that earned a penultimate-race victory last year. Ciceley's built a very smart car and will benefit from having two to glean data from in 2015.



Mercedes A-Class



33 ADAM MORGAN

Age 26
Starts 88
Wins 1
Best season **7th (2013)**

Victory last year should have been earned on merit, but it took a penalty for Plato for it to materialise. The bottom line is Morgan showed just how good he is. The car looks quick, if not a title contender, and this is a package that should be capable of fighting for victories.

16 AIDEN MOFFAT

Age 18
Starts 36
Best finish **12th**
Best season **25th (2014)**

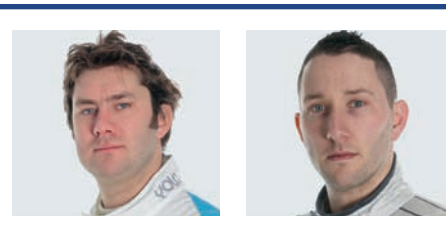
Is this the driver who will make the biggest vault up the order? After a difficult year with his Cruze, Moffat has turned to a Ciceley-built A-Class. The impact should be immediate. Third in testing could be misleading but Moffat is set to enjoy a breakout season.

WELCH MOTORSPORT

Surely this year has to be better than last, when the engine was a disaster and the cars failed to score a point. Self-built engines remain, which is a risk, but the car itself isn't hopeless by any means.



Proton Persona



13 DAN WELCH

Age 32
Starts 92
Best finish **14th**
Best season **15th (2012)**

A better driver than 2014 made him out to be, Welch was a near-podium finisher at the Proton's peak performance of 2013. That's unlikely to be achievable now, but points are.

12 ANDY WILMOT

Age 34
Starts 3
Best finish **18th**
Best season **38th (2013)**

The Welch house is back in order, but is Wilmot the man to move it back forward? He has one weekend's experience to his credit and this season should be about building up his experience.



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The battle commence



The new season of Avon Tyres British GT Championship is just around the corner and Anglo American Oil Company are delighted to return as the official fuel and lubricants partner for the 2015 season. As well as powering the entire British GT grid, the partnership will see Sunoco branding appear on all cars, driver overalls and trackside signage.

British GT drivers are also eligible to sign up for the Sunoco Whelen Challenge (GT3) and Sunoco 200 Challenge (GT4) points that count towards prize drives during the Rolex 24 At Daytona race weekend in January 2016.

The 2016 Sunoco Challenges kicked off last weekend with some of the eligible opening rounds – but who will take the prize drives at the end of the season?

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Radical European Masters 10-12th April
Radical Enduro 26th April

British GT race dates

Oulton Park 4-6th April

Rockingham 2-3rd May

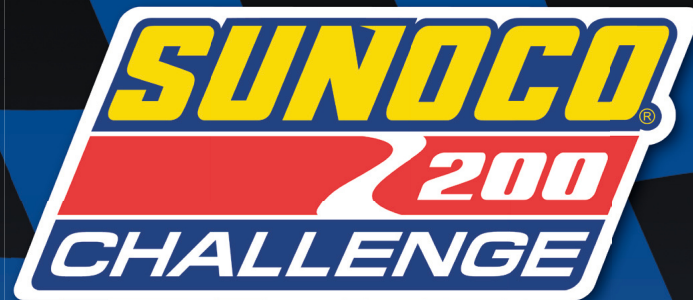
Silverstone 30-31st May

Spa Francorchamps 10-11th July

Brands Hatch 1-2nd August

Snetterton 22-23rd August

Donington Park 12-13th September



Sunoco 200 Challenge eligible series



Coming up: British GT4 4-6th April
F3 Cup 6th April
Atom Cup 18th April



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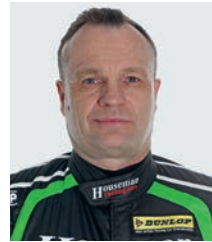
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HOUSEMAN RACING

A late deal and a car that struggled last year mean another season of fighting to get into points.



Toyota Avensis



95 STEWART LINES

Age 50
Starts 0
Wins n/a
Best season n/a

One of the Volkswagen Racing Cup's regular

frontrunners, Lines has good pedigree in one-make series. Whether he can make a successful transition to touring cars will depend on how well Houseman gets on with the Avensis.

AMD TUNING

Last year the team bagged its first outright podium and that will probably be the peak of its ambitions this time. Shaun Hollamby's squad finally expands to run a second car too.



Ford Focus



21 MIKE BUSHELL

Age 25
Starts 3
Best finish 17th
Best season 36th (2013)

The fairest way to describe Bushell from the end of the 2013 Clio Cup season to the start of the 2015 BTCC campaign 18 months later is 'transformed'. A deserving champion last year who, having impressed in a Cruze in '13, should adapt well to full-time BTCC.

28 NICOLAS HAMILTON

Age 22
Starts 0
Wins n/a
Best season n/a

Coming in at Croft will be a tough ask, but Hamilton at least doesn't seem to be underestimating the challenge. Says it would be nice not to be stone last in the north-east and test days before will be crucial to getting up to speed.



Audi S3

POWER MAXED RACING

BTC Racing achieved very little in the series last year but an overhaul of ownership, two cars (both saloon Cruzes) and two capable drivers mean this team should score points.



Chevrolet Cruze



66 JOSH COOK

Age 22
Starts 0
Wins n/a
Best season n/a

One of the TOCA package's leading lights last year with an entertaining series of displays in the Clio Cup. Missing out on the title was the result of a wild final few rounds but he knows how to win and, if the Cruze is up to the task, could very well wind up top rookie.

17 DAVE NEWSHAM

Age 47
Starts 116
Wins 2
Best season 9th (2012)

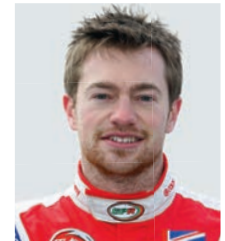
Alan Gow thinks Newsham might be one to watch this season. It looks like PMR has overhauled the team entirely from last year and, having won in an S2000 Vectra in 2012, Newsham has been itching for an opportunity to get back towards the front since.

MOTORBASE

Nothing until Snetterton, when hopefully Mat Jackson and James Cole will appear. The team is confident it has a race-winning package and that should be the aim: if it returns.



Ford Focus



4 MAT JACKSON

Age 33
Starts 259
Wins 21
Best season 2nd (2008)

Will he even race in the BTCC this season? If not, Jackson would be a big loss to the championship. A British GT drive has been agreed for the series' Oulton Park opener. If he comes back to the BTCC he can win races, having rediscovered his form last year.

44 JAMES COLE

Age 26
Starts 44
Best finish 13th
Best season 21st (2013)

United Autosports' difficult (and only) season in the BTCC means the ex-British Formula Ford champion hasn't had a real crack at the series still. Outperformed by Glynn Geddie last season but would be expected to do better if the Fords appear. Potential not yet proven in tin-tops.

2015 CALENDAR

Brands Hatch (Indy)	April 5
Donington Park (National)	April 19
Thruxton	May 10
Oulton Park (Island)	June 7
Croft	June 28
Snetterton	August 9
Knockhill	August 23
Rockingham	September 6
Silverstone (National)	September 21
Brands Hatch (GP)	October 11



THE SUPPORTING ACTS

BTCC events are about much more than the headline tin-tops. **STEPHEN LICKORISH** guides you through the support series from Porsche, Renault, Ford and Ginetta that kick off at Brands

RENAULT CLIO CUP UK

WHO ARE THE FAVOURITES? With last year's champion Mike Bushell and runner-up Josh Cook both progressing to the British Touring Car Championship, Jordan Stilp and Ant Whorton-Eales are among this year's favourites. They finished third and fourth in 2014's standings and are continuing with the same teams, 20Ten and SV Racing respectively. Ash Hand is also a contender after replacing Bushell at Team Pyro, while three-time champion Paul Rivett can never be ruled out.

HOW STRONG IS THE ENTRY? The series is still struggling after the introduction of the new Clio model last year. But the entry is better this time around and the fact that Ginetta Junior champion Jack Mitchell has chosen to join is a good sign.

WILL THE RACING BE GOOD? The Clios often provide some of the best action on the BTCC support bill, with single-make tin-top series regularly producing entertaining racing. A BTCC test for the champion is again an added incentive to do well.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO WATCH OUT FOR? Ashley Sutton. The Formula Ford ace and Team BMR protege has made the switch to Clios and will be interesting to watch. He has racked up a lot of testing mileage and should do well.



Renault Clio Cup UK

EBREY



Porsche Carrera Cup GB

GRIFFITHS

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

WHO ARE THE FAVOURITES? Reigning champion Josh Webster and double title winner Michael Meadows are again among the leading contenders, but the pair are no longer team-mates as Webster has left Redline Racing to join Team Parker. They are likely to face stern opposition in the form of ex-Formula Ford champion Dan Cammish. He won impressively on his debut at the tail end of last year and will be in the hunt for the crown, lining up alongside Meadows at Redline.

HOW STRONG IS THE ENTRY? For the past couple of years the Carrera Cup has been in the doldrums with an entry barely mustering double figures. That has changed for this year, with over 20 drivers registered. It's an impressive cast list too, with single-seater stars Dino Zamparelli and Nicholas Latifi joining TOCA support regulars Stephen Jelley, Josh Files and Tom Sharp.

WILL THE RACING BE GOOD? A much larger grid is sure to make a difference from some of the poor action of 2014.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO WATCH OUT FOR? Pro-Am 1 and 2 class battles. It's not just at the front of the grid that the entry has grown; all three of the series' classes have swelled significantly.



MSA FORMULA

WHO ARE THE FAVOURITES? There is no shortage of contenders to claim the inaugural MSA Formula championship. Sennan Fielding, Colton Herta and karting stars Lando Norris and Enaam Ahmed could all feature. But it has been Ricky Collard and Dan Ticktum who have topped the testing timesheets. Collard has an advantage over his rivals having experienced this engine in Formula Ford last year, and the son of BTCC race winner Rob definitely starts as one of the favourites.

HOW STRONG IS THE ENTRY? There is an entry of at least 20 for the series' first season, with several international youngsters choosing it as the next step in their careers. Renowned single-seater teams Arden, Carlin, Fortec and Double R being among the competitors definitely helps.

WHAT WILL THE RACING BE LIKE? With a new car, what the racing will be like is an unknown quantity. The old FFord series was dire at times over the past few seasons but it has been reinvigorated by its new identity for this year and should be much closer.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO WATCH OUT FOR? BRDC F4. MSA Formula is in direct competition with Jonathan Palmer's British GT-support series. The TOCA category has a younger minimum age limit over its rival, but its budget is apparently much higher. It will be intriguing to see which emerges as the better option for new talent.



MSA Formula



Ginetta GT4 Supercup

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

WHO ARE THE FAVOURITES? The 2015 Supercup championship is set to feature a battle of the 'veterans'. Carl Breeze has finished in the top three of the series in each of the past six years and will be a contender once again. One of his main rivals is likely to be former British GT champion Michael Caine, who moves to the series after a change to the GT rules meant he could no longer partner Ahmad Al Harthy. Former karting star and Formula Renault driver Mitchell Hale could also be in the mix on his return to racing.

HOW STRONG IS THE ENTRY? The addition of drivers of the calibre of Caine, ex-BTCC racer Jack Clarke and Bradley Smith helps, so it should avoid being the weakest for numbers too.

WHAT WILL THE RACING BE LIKE? It's a cliché, but only two cars are needed for a good race. Even so, the small entry will limit excitement.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO WATCH OUT FOR? Bradley Smith. The Radical ace has won three championships on the bounce and will be looking to add to that in '15 with his family team Mectech.

GINETTA JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

WHO ARE THE FAVOURITES? Jamie Caroline and Dan Zelos were both race winners last year and now have the experience to really launch a title bid. Caroline comes into the season on the back of winning the Winter Series, so is likely to be the benchmark. Senna Proctor is another returning podium finisher and was runner-up to Caroline in the Winter Series, so should also be a challenger.

HOW STRONG IS THE ENTRY? There's a decent line-up for this year's championship, with several European karters attracted to the series. A number of drivers made sporadic appearances last year so that will stand them in good stead for a full campaign in 2015.

WHAT WILL THE RACING BE LIKE? With all the drivers aged between 14 and 17, the races are usually action-packed. You can expect plenty more bumper-banging and mirror-bashing racing – and furious parents! – this year.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO WATCH OUT FOR? Career progression. With the lack of standout rookies, it's even more likely there will be a sophomore champion this year. That means there could be a cluster of drivers ready to move up from the series to the GT4 Supercup in 2016.



Ginetta Junior Championship



Montoya shows there's more than one power at Penske

After a frustrating comeback year, Juan Pablo Montoya is back in the groove – leading a dominant weekend for Roger Penske's expanded team. By **MARK GLENDENNING**



JUAN PABLO MONTOYA HAS BEEN CALLED MANY things during his career, but the description afforded to him by Roger Penske last Friday had to be a first. “Last year,” Penske said, “he was a frustrated duck.”

Put aside the visual for a moment – hard though that may be – and focus on the meaning. The Montoya who spearheaded Team Penske's domination of last weekend's IndyCar curtain-raiser is a completely different proposition to the one that walked into the paddock 12 months ago to prepare for his first open-wheel race in almost a decade.

Back then, he had no idea how to work with the soft-compound red tyres, and he had yet to reconnect his raw instincts with an intuitive touch for what the car needed in order to be fast.

“I see what the other two [Penske drivers] are doing, and I see that I need to be more aggressive,

that I need to brake later,” he told AUTOSPORT early last year. “I also know that if I brake later, I'm not going to make the corner.”

That version of Montoya could not have run amongst the top five all through last weekend. He could not have kept Will Power at bay for an entire stint while using a set of the harder black tyres while his team-mate was on the reds. The 2014 version of Montoya would not have won Sunday's race. The 2015 version did.

“I'll tell you a big difference between myself last year and this year,” he said. “Last year, going to the restarts, I was thinking, ‘don't hit anything.’ In these restarts, I knew how far I could go and make the corner. Everything just clicked. I was looking for the hole, always looking for the hole. I think that was a big plus.”

Roger Penske is not the type to make grand proclamations unless they have a very solid

foundation in fact, so it's worth paying attention to what he said immediately after he compared his driver to an aquatic fowl: “This will be a breakout season for him.”

When Montoya first decided to return to IndyCar, there were no guarantees that he'd ever recapture the form that made him one of the most exciting drivers on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1990s and early-mid 2000s. And while Chip Ganassi, who made the Colombian a free agent when he decided not to renew his NASCAR deal after 2013, is too savvy to admit to any regret he may now harbour about having inadvertently equipped Penske with another weapon, the reality is that no team other than Penske could have teased this level of performance out of the 39-year-old.

It was a process: both team and driver admitted that he struggled during his initial tests when he first arrived, and even as his comfort curve flattened out over the course of last season, he still freely admitted that street courses were a thorn in his side. On that basis, the fact that he opened 2015 with a street-course victory is immensely significant.

And it was an excellent win. Power had dominated the early stages of the race, but Montoya was always in the hunt and had moved up to second as the pair prepared to make their final stops. Montoya veered into the pits a lap before Power, and the Australian was momentarily delayed by a jack problem during his own stop. He duly rejoined the track having ceded the lead to Montoya, who made his



Power led during the early running



Montoya had moved up to second before final pitstops



to opportunism instead. He did try one lunge from a long way back, but Montoya saw it coming and shut the door, brushing his team-mate's nose and knocking off a winglet in the process. Power had no complaints, and later admitted that he'd been trying to create something out of nothing.

A swifter trip through some late lapped traffic sealed the deal, and as if to reinforce the message that the Montoya of today is not the Montoya of years gone by, he ran across from Victory Lane to celebrate with some fans.

"Seeing Juan celebrating with the fans the way he did today... I can assure you that wouldn't have happened 15 years ago," said Tony Kanaan. "But that was Juan back then. I still see the old Juan sometimes, and it's great to see. But when he came back [to IndyCar], I think he was a different person."

Taken in isolation, it's impossible for any racing fan not to be excited by the prospect of a Montoya who keeps getting faster. But the other message from the weekend was that at St Petersburg, he was the tip of a very dangerous spear. The race was Penske's first as a four-car team following the off-season arrival of Simon Pagenaud, and any doubts about whether the team could run all four of its entries competitively were allayed right from the first practice session.

Ganassi himself played down the threat that the Power/Montoya/Castroneves/Pagenaud combination poses to his team, arguing that the four drivers will take points from each other.

"I like the fact he has four good guys, because they can all pick up a lot of points and I can just have Kanaan and [Scott] Dixon," he said. "It's much easier for one guy to beat four guys than four guys to beat four guys. So we'll see how that works out later in the year for him."

His own drivers were more wary. Kanaan spoke of his own experience with a dominant team, and tellingly, he wasn't referring to his current one, but to his years with Andretti Green:

"They [Penske] have a very good team," he said. "I know how it feels. I've been on a team like that many years ago. For us, it was great. We made everybody else mad."

Whether that dominance can hold for the duration of a full season remains to be seen. In having four such demanding drivers the team has a delicate internal dynamic to maintain, and it's possible that last weekend's result was a reward for Penske taking less time to work out the new manufacturer aero kits. If that's the case, then other strong teams such as Ganassi should close the gap relatively quickly.

But in the meantime, neither Penske himself nor Montoya could have wished for a better start to the season. And seeing Montoya find this sort of form, at this point in his career, makes it impossible not to wonder just what Formula 1 lost when he decided to turn his attention to the US all those years ago. ❧

INDYCAR

St Petersburg (USA)

March 29

Round 1/15



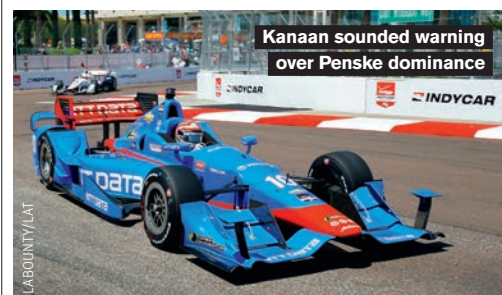
RESULTS

110 laps, 198 miles

1	JUAN PABLO MONTOYA (CO) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet (Q4)	2h16m58.1079s
2	WILL POWER (AUS) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet (Q1)	+0.9930s
3	TONY KANAAN (BR) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q7)	+11.1685s
4	HELIO CASTRONEVES (BR) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet (Q3)	+11.4376s
5	SIMON PAGENAUD (F) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet (Q2)	+12.3909s
6	SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS (F) KVSH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q6)	+16.4923s
7	RYAN HUNTER-REAY (USA) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda (Q8)	+27.7102s
8	JACK HAWKSWORTH (GB) AJ Foyt Enterprises Dallara-Honda (Q21)	+34.9206s
9	LUCA FILIPPI (I) CFH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q19)	+38.1564s
10	MARCO ANDRETTI (USA) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda (Q12)	+38.6910s
11	GRAHAM RAHAL (USA) Rahal Letterman Lanigan Dallara-Honda (Q15)	+40.3895s
12	JOSEF NEWGARDEN (USA) CFH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q10)	+51.7710s
13	TAKUMA SATO (J) AJ Foyt Enterprises Dallara-Honda (Q5)	+52.2688s
14	CARLOS MUNOZ (CO) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda (Q14)	+56.7210s
15	SCOTT DIXON (NZ) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q9)	+59.6613s
16	JAMES HINCHCLIFFE (CDN) Schmidt Peterson Dallara-Honda (Q16)	+1m02.4581s
17	GABBY CHAVES (CO) Bryan Herta Autosport Dallara-Honda (Q22)	+1m03.0667s
18	SIMONA DE SILVESTRO (CH) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda (Q11)	+1m03.1422s
19	SAGE KARAM (USA) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q18)	-1 lap
20	STEFANO COLETTI (MC) KV Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q17)	-1 lap
21	CHARLIE KIMBALL (USA) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet (Q13)	-1 lap
22	JAMES JAKES (GB) Schmidt Peterson Dallara-Honda (Q20)	-8 laps
23	FRANCESCO DRACONE (I) Dale Coyne Racing Dallara-Honda (Q23)	70 laps-engine
24	CARLOS HUERTAS (CO) Dale Coyne Racing Dallara-Honda (Q24)	19 laps-steering

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	MONTOYA	51	4	CASTRONEVES	33
2	POWER	44	5	PAGENAUD	31
3	KANAAN	35	6	BOURDAIS	28



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This year, I knew how far I could go and make the corner. Everything just clicked

JUAN PABLO MONTOYA

intentions clear by putting down the hammer and opening up a 4.0s lead in just a few laps.

That burst prompted a flurry of messages from his pitwall beseeching him not to kill his tyres or burn too much fuel, so he lifted off and allowed Power to close back within range. Ironically, it was the phase of the race where Power was clamped to Montoya's rear wing that decided the race: whatever pace Power was able to summon from the softer tyres, Montoya could match on the harder, more durable ones. He had the reigning champion covered.

"I was amazed how quick we were today, especially on the black tyres," he said. "I had as good pace as the reds, but more consistent. That was pretty exciting."

It also meant that Power was not going to have the benefit of a grip or handling advantage to help him regain the lead, so he'd have to resort



Comini (blue SEAT) goes wheel to wheel with Gleason

TCR INTERNATIONAL SEPANG (MAL), MARCH 28-29 RD 1/11

Comini and Gene take first blood

IF THE AMBITIONS OF MARCELLO Lotti – previously the man behind the revival of the World Touring Car Championship – are fulfilled, the inaugural TCR International race supporting the Malaysian Grand Prix could be the start of something big for tin-tops. There's a long way to go for the cost-controlled, universal touring car concept, but it was a promising start.

Seventeen cars and five marques appeared, but unsurprisingly it was a SEAT Leon Racer, effectively the manufacturer's one-make machine, that dominated even though the JAS-

developed Honda Civic of American Kevin Gleason bagged pole.

With performance balancing a key component of the series, and very little time to get the ballast levels perfect heading into the weekend, the Hondas gained 30kg pre-race.

Gleason's lead lasted to the end of lap one, when former Megane Trophy champion Stefano Comini passed him at the last corner. The Target Competition driver pulled away, with Pepe Oriola and Sergey Afanasiev completing a podium lockout for SEAT, the Russian after a battle with Gleason, who faded to

sixth amid tyre troubles.

Jordi Gene, who finished behind Gleason in seventh, started race two from reversed-grid pole thanks to qualifying 10th. He led from start to finish, but his Craft Bamboo SEAT was under near-constant pressure, alleviated only when the multi-car fight behind temporarily gave him breathing space.

Initially, Ferenc Ficza was his main challenger, before he faded back. Oriola battled up to second, but couldn't find a way past Gene. Honda driver Gianni Morbidelli lost third to Andrea Belicchi on the last

lap, but reclaimed it in a final-corner dust-up during which Comini also jumped the sister Target SEAT.

● Edd Straw

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Stefano Comini (SEAT Leon Racer), 9 laps in 21m26.159s; 2 Pepe Oriola (SEAT), +3.381s; 3 Sergei Afanasiev (SEAT); 4 Gianni Morbidelli (Honda Civic TCR); 5 Andrea Belicchi (SEAT); 6 Kevin Gleason (Honda).

Race 2 1 Jordi Gene (SEAT), 10 laps in 23m53.256s; 2 Oriola, +0.752s; 3 Morbidelli; 4 Comini; 5 Belicchi; 6 Rene Munnich (Honda).

Points 1 Comini, 40; 2 Oriola, 36; 3 Gene, 31; 4 Morbidelli, 27; 5 Belicchi, 24; 6 Gleason, 19.

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NASCAR SPRINT CUP
MARTINSVILLE (USA),
MARCH 29 RD 6/36

Hamlin holds them at bay

NOT EVEN THE THREAT OF RUNNING out of fresh sets of tyres, or them going astray in pit road, could prevent the Denny Hamlin freight train from steaming into victory lane in Sunday's NASCAR Sprint Cup race. The Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota star took his 25th career win and fifth at the half-mile track.

Hamlin was among the leaders early in the race, but at one-third distance he was sent to the back of the field for an uncontrolled tyre in his pitbox. It took until the halfway stage for him to find his way back into the top 10.

Brad Keselowski followed Hamlin past Matt Kenseth with just over 20 laps remaining, which set the stage for an epic showdown. Keselowski could have easily punted Hamlin off on the final lap, but fought clean and fair to the chequered flag.



Hamlin leads Keselowski

Keselowski's Penske team-mate Joey Logano came third after taking pole. Series leader Kevin Harvick topped 154 laps but faded to eighth.

RESULTS

1 Denny Hamlin (Toyota Camry), 500 laps in 3h49m13s; 2 Brad Keselowski (Ford Fusion), +0.186s; 3 Joey Logano (Ford); 4 Matt Kenseth (Toyota); 5 David Ragan (Toyota); 6 Martin Truex Jr (Chevrolet SS); 7 Danica Patrick (Chevy); 8 Kevin Harvick (Chevy); 9 Jeff Gordon (Chevy); 10 Jamie McMurray (Chevy). **Chase grid 1 Harvick, 2 wins/263 points**; 2 Logano, 1/239; 3 Keselowski, 1/206; 4 Hamlin, 1/172; 5 Jimmie Johnson, 1/168; 6 Truex, 0/231; 7 Kasey Kahne, 0/193; 8 Ryan Newman, 0/180; 9 Paul Menard, 0/173; 10 Dale Earnhardt Jr, 0/172; 11 Aric Almirola, 0/170; 12 Kenseth, 0/168; 13 Ragan, 0/163; 14 Casey Mears, 0/161; 15 McMurray, 0/154; 16 Patrick, 0/148.

SUPER TC2000 JUNIN (RA), MARCH 29 RD 1/12

Fineschi finesse for win

DAMIAN FINESCHI AND THE FE Peugeot Junior Equipe scored their first Super TC2000 win in the 2015 season opener.

Fineschi outdragged the Renault of front-row neighbour Emiliano Spataro into the first right-hander and led to the finish. Spataro kept Fineschi under pressure until one of his tyres called it a day just after half-distance.

This promoted a battle between

the Chevrolet of Matias Munoz Marchesi and Peugeot driver Agustin Canapino, who went at it before second place was decided in Munoz Marchesi's favour.

It was a bad start to the season for reigning champion Nestor Girolami, who was 16th on the grid but clambered through the field before a deflated tyre put paid to his hopes. Ditto fellow frontrunner Leonel Pernia, who had to pit when his Renault's bonnet came loose shortly after the start.

● Tony Watson

RESULTS

1 Damian Fineschi (Peugeot 408), 24 laps in 36m55.391s; 2 Matias Munoz Marchesi (Chevrolet Cruze), +1.536s; 3 Agustin Canapino (Peugeot); 4 Lucas Colombo Russell (Chevy); 5 Facundo Chapur (Fiat Linea); 6 Esteban Guerrieri (Toyota Corolla).

Points 1 Fineschi, 31; 2 Munoz Marchesi, 25; 3 Canapino, 21; 4 Colombo Russell, 20; 5 Chapur, 16; 6 Guerrieri, 12.



Fineschi fends off Colombo Russell

INDY LIGHTS ST PETERSBURG (USA), MARCH 28-29 RD 1/10

Light brigade can't keep up with Jones

A BRAND-NEW ERA OF INDY LIGHTS began with a rookie driver – Dubai's Ed Jones – and a team making its North American debut – Carlin – dominating proceedings on the streets of St Petersburg.

Trevor Carlin's two drivers, Jones and F1 refugee Max Chilton, had shown well in recent testing with the attractive new Mazda turbo-powered Dallara IL-15s, and duly qualified on the front row for the season-opening race of the top step on the Mazda Road to Indy. Jones, the 2013 European F3 Open champion, never looked back, winning Saturday's sprint race comfortably and repeating the feat on Sunday during the lead-up to the IndyCar season opener.

Chilton didn't fare quite so well after failing to come to grips with the rolling starts. He was involved



Jones and Trevor Carlin's team have made a splash in US

in an incident with ex-Euro F3 racer Felix Serralles in race one, but bounced back from another poor getaway on Sunday to take fourth.

Fellow Briton Jack Harvey, who only lost out on last year's title to Gabby Chaves on a tie-breaker, was the bridesmaid again. Harvey finished a lonely second on both days for the seven-time champion Schmidt Peterson team, while 2014 Pro Mazda champion Spencer Pigot secured a pair of podiums for Juncos Racing. Excellent starts helped Pigot's cause, and on Sunday he had to work extremely hard to keep

Chilton behind him. Chilton did manage to nose ahead briefly in Turn 1 with four laps remaining, but Pigot was able to redress the balance immediately and hold the position.

● Jeremy Shaw

RESULTS

Race 1 Ed Jones, 30 laps in 37m44.4021s; 2 Jack Harvey, +3.7085s; 3 Spencer Pigot; 4 Scott Hargrove; 5 Kyle Kaiser; 6 Juan Piedrahita. **Race 2** 1 Jones, 45 laps in 51m20.2851s; 2 Harvey, +9.0708s; 3 Pigot; 4 Max Chilton; 5 Kaiser; 6 Hargrove. **Points** 1 Jones, 64; 2 Harvey, 50; 3 Pigot, 44; 4 Hargrove, 34; 5 Kaiser, 34; 6 Chilton, 28.

V8 SUPERCARS SYMMONS PLAINS (AUS), MARCH 28-29 RD 2/14

Double puts Lowndes one short of century

TRIPLE EIGHT HOLDENS DOMINATED all three V8 Supercar races in Tasmania, but not in the way many might have predicted.

Craig Lowndes won both Saturday races from pole position and looked likely to take Sunday's 200km race when he qualified fastest. But in the first corner he punted David Reynolds off the track and was dealt a drive-through penalty. From the rear of the field Lowndes quickly gained ground to finish sixth, but the chance for a sweep – and a 100th career win – went begging.

Into the breach, inevitably, stepped Jamie Whincup, who took the series lead with a classy win.

One of the talking points over the weekend was a battle on the track – and a war of words off it – between James Courtney and Will Davison, who showed considerable speed in the Erebus Motorsport Mercedes-Benz. The two clashed in the first race, the Merc losing any chance of converting qualifying fourth into a race result. After no action was taken by the stewards Davison called Courtney (who

replaced him at the Holden Racing Team) "arrogant".

Scott McLaughlin struggled for reliability, again, in his Volvo, but his fellow Kiwi Andre Heimgartner was the revelation of the weekend. The 19-year-old rookie showed dazzling speed in his Ford, particularly in qualifying, and a best result of eighth is little indication of how competitive he looked.

● Phil Branagan

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Craig Lowndes (Holden Commodore), 25 laps in 22m01.3121s; 2 Mark Winterbottom (Ford Falcon), +2.2765s; 3 James Courtney (Holden); 4 Shane van Gisbergen (Holden); 5 Chaz Mostert (Ford); 6 David Reynolds (Ford). **Race 2** 1 Lowndes, 25 laps in 24m24.0674s; 2 Jamie Whincup (Holden), +1.6507s; 3 Courtney; 4 Reynolds; 5 Garth Tander (Holden); 6 Winterbottom. **Race 3** 1 Whincup, 84 laps in 1h15m21.0174s; 2 Mostert, +3.4950s; 3 van Gisbergen; 4 Tander; 5 Winterbottom; 6 Lowndes. **Points** 1 Whincup, 483; 2 Courtney, 464; 3 Lowndes, 460; 4 Tander, 457; 5 van Gisbergen, 456; 6 Winterbottom, 433.



Lowndes leads; Davison points the wrong way



NASCAR TRUCKS

Sprint Cup star Joey Logano (above) took his maiden Truck win at Martinsville with his Brad Keselowski Racing Ford in a dramatic green-white-checker finish. Logano muscled his way from third to first at the final restart to deny reigning champion Matt Crafton and Erik Jones. That last yellow was caused by a retaliating Crafton bumping Cole Custer into the wall, shortly after Custer had aggressively moved into the lead. Crafton's second place moved him into the points lead from Tyler Reddick, who took fifth.

WORLD CHALLENGE GT

Crashes marred both races on the streets of St Petersburg, but Ryan Eversley took advantage of wet conditions in qualifying to take pole for race one in his four-wheel-drive Acura TLX and held on to score an accomplished victory on Saturday from Ryan Dalziel's Porsche and the Audi of Mike Skeen. Olivier Beretta (Ferrari) won race two from Nicky Catsburg's Lamborghini, with McLaren works driver Kevin Estre taking third.

PRO MAZDA

Californian Neil Alberico only concluded his deal to rejoin Cape Motorsports a couple of weeks before the season but lost no time in making his presence felt in the team's home-town races, winning comfortably on both days in St Petersburg. Uruguayan ex-GP3 racer Santiago Urrutia and Mexican Jose Gutierrez shared the runner-up spoils. Briton Raoul Owens took a best finish of sixth, with compatriot Alessandro Latif claiming a ninth.

USF2000

Jake Eidson, who finished third in the 2014 championship, swept the season openers for the first step of the Mazda Road to Indy on the streets of St Petersburg for Pabst Racing. Fellow ex-Team USA Scholarship winner Aaron Telitz and French team-mate Nico Jamin filled the podium on both days for Cape Motorsports.

AUSSIE FORMULA FORD

Some thrilling races at Sandown ended with a win apiece for Hamish Hardeman, Christian Morina and Cameron Hill. Hardeman won the first, with Morina passing Jake Spencer on the last lap for second. Morina won a four-abreast fight in race two from Spencer and Hardeman, while Hill came through to defeat Spencer and Mitch Martin in the finale, with Hardeman going off. All three race winners drove Mygales, as did Spencer, who takes the points lead.

BRDC F4'S FIGHT TO STAY ON TOP

BRDC Formula 4 starts its 2015 season at Oulton Park this weekend. Can it stave off a new rival? By **ALEX KALINAUCKAS**

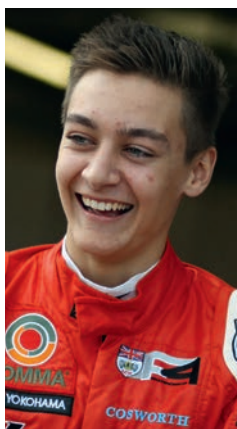
Since its launch in 2013, BRDC Formula 4 has established itself as the number-one single-seater category for up-and-coming British drivers. Close racing and lower budgets have played a key role in it attaining that status. But following the official launch last September of MSA Formula, Britain's version of FIA F4, speculation has been mounting about the potential consequences of the two series competing against each other this season, and whether MSA Formula can topple BRDC F4 from its current perch.

A new car – the same as is used in German and Italian F4 – comes in time for the Winter Series later this year. BRDC F4 founder and promoter Jonathan Palmer is confident his series can maintain its current popularity even with the existing RFR-built spaceframe car that will be used in the main series for a third year, starting this weekend at Oulton Park with one race on Saturday and two on Monday.

“The calibre of competition adds to the success of winning the championship,” he says. “We believe it’s the most competitive junior single-seater championship and that BRDC F4 will continue to be the most competitive, and that the sheer affordability will continue to keep the grid big.”

“We know we have MSA Formula but BRDC F4 is proving to be very strong indeed. They have 16 [drivers confirmed], and six of those





Russell (left) did a lot of F4 overtaking in '14



are aged 15. We have a great new composite Tatuus chassis coming, and we've already sold all 26 cars. Things have changed in a big way for single-seater racing in the UK."

George Russell, the 2014 BRDC F4 champion and McLaren AUTOSPORT BRDC Award winner, reckons that he'd have chosen the same series had he been starting out in cars this year, despite the points it offers towards a Formula 1 superlicence.

"I'm sure a lot of drivers coming through the ranks are going to be taking the superlicence rule as a factor," says Russell. "But at the end of the day if they are one of those drivers who's going to [make it to] Formula 1, when you look back, those extra 10 points aren't going to make a blind bit of difference as you'd have probably gained that from the other championships you do [after F4]. I think I would have definitely stuck with BRDC F4."

MSA Formula will support the BTCC this season, and as such will enjoy a higher public profile than BRDC F4, which will run on the same bill as British GT. But Russell believes this won't hamper Palmer's series; from his perspective, the fact that the championship has been running for two years will lead to fewer teething problems for teams and drivers over the course of the season.

"I still think BRDC F4 is the best value for money," says Russell. "Obviously it's not running with the TOCA package, but I think as BRDC

Formula 4 has two years of experience there won't be any of the issues you get with a new car. They know how the format runs and it's a successful one too. To be honest [MSA Formula's arrival] shouldn't damage the championship too much."

One of BRDC F4's strengths is that the cars can closely follow each other in combat. Russell feels this improved his racecraft, and that this experience will give him an edge in future. It's another unknown for MSA Formula that only the Brands Hatch opener this weekend will shed light upon.

"I did Formula Renault races last year and I think throughout the whole season, just due to the car and the aerodynamics, I did about five overtakes all year," said Russell. "In BRDC F4 I did that per weekend, minimum. That helped my racecraft and it's definitely something that will give me the upper hand this year in Formula 3 against drivers who haven't had the chance to be in situations like that."

Possibly as a result of the competition between the two series, they both still have spaces on their grids to fill with the new season looming. It remains to be seen which will emerge on top, but MSA Formula has a lot of ground to make up if it wants to become Britain's pre-eminent junior championship. ☒

"BRDC F4 helped my racecraft and I still think it's the best value for money. I would've stuck with it" **George Russell**

TOP 5... Drivers to watch

HARRISON NEWEY

The spotlight will be fixed on Newey thanks to his illustrious father, F1 engineer Adrian. But the BRDC F4 experience he gained with solid performances in the championship's Winter Series and testing last season will stand him in good stead, as will completing six ADAC F4 rounds alongside Mick Schumacher.



JACK BARTHOLOMEW

16-year-old Jack Bartholomew will be looking to follow in the footsteps of Jake Hughes and George Russell and win the title in his car-racing debut season and has joined the Lanan squad that propelled both previous champions to the title. This adds pressure but the team is confident in his potential.



WILL PALMER

Palmer will be expecting to claim the title this season after finishing sixth in the standings and collecting two wins last year. Winning the championship's Winter Series also bodes well for the 18-year-old and he has raced for HHC since 2012, in Ginetta Juniors, so he therefore knows the squad well.



CIARAN HAGGERTY

Haggerty won the Scottish Formula Ford 1600 Championship in imperious style last season, taking 11 consecutive wins at the end of the year. He also enjoys the backing of Dario Franchitti and the Ecurie Ecosse Young Driver Initiative, which will be useful if BRDC F4 delivers a third close championship battle.



RODRIGO FONSECA

In his second year in BRDC F4, Fonseca has joined the Lanan squad alongside Bartholomew. Despite good results, including two wins, in the BRDC Winter Series, the pressure is on Fonseca to improve on last year's 13th place. But Lanan boss Graham Johnson reckons the team can help him progress.



WILL BRITISH GT'S RISE CONTINUE?

Another packed grid and a near-even split of GT3 and GT4 cars suggests Britain's top GT series is set for another exciting season. **SCOTT MITCHELL** is your guide



Has British GT peaked? That's not a loaded question. Certainly the past three years have featured improvement, after improvement, after improvement. Somehow the championship has a way of creating spectacular title fights. Last year topped the lot, and it's some ask to maintain that progress.

The indications are that the series is still very strong this season, and in many ways has built on 2014 – which, while certainly the best season yet, was still not perfect. Series

boss Benjamin Franassovici and his team have identified several areas for improvement, and targeted addressing them over the winter – with promotion and television coverage top of the list.

We will address the positives shortly, because there are plenty. But first, some context: no championship is a utopia and while British GT is a long, long way from previous fallow periods, it would be wrong to ignore an area in which the series has regressed ahead of the 2015 season.

Variety is down, of that there is no question. The grid has lost Nissan, Bentley, Audi and Porsche GT3 entries from its ranks, and whichever way that's dressed up it is a loss

“VARIETY IS DOWN BUT THE GRID IS PACKED, ENTRIES ARE UP AND MOST RACES WILL BE ON LIVE TV”



— especially as the German marque's departure is largely due to the long-serving, multiple championship-winning Trackspeed team all but shutting its doors.

The United Autosports Audi R8 LMS ultra almost won the 2013 title in the hands of Matt Bell and Mark Paterson, and was a regular frontrunner. The GT-R NISMO GT3 was a threat to the podium on tracks that suited its Godzilla-like stature (among the more conventional, sleek opposition anyway), and while the M-Sport Bentley Continental was never likely to stay for more than a year, its departure and the customer Generation team's withdrawal

before the end of last season is a notable loss.

Another significant departure is the AF Corse Ferrari squad. While this was not the out-and-out factory Ferrari team, it was still a big name to have in the championship, bringing with it drivers like Richard Lyons (Super Formula and Super GT champion), Matt Griffin (Ferrari ace) and Toni Vilander (GT world champion and Le Mans 24 Hours winner) at various stages. Youngster Pasin Lathouras also took seventh in the points in 2014, so you couldn't say it didn't trouble the scorers.

The schedule's not ideal, with its Easter-weekend start at Oulton Park clashing with the British Touring Car Championship opener at ▶

THE CARS



BMW Z4

TEAMS Barwell; Triple Eight

PEDIGREE Drivers' title in 2014 (Marco Attard)

BEST CHANCE Marco Attard/Alexander Sims (Ecurie Ecosse/Barwell)

There is no reason why the championship-winning operation from last year should do worse in 2015. Attard improved hugely in 2014 and was a deserving champion, while the excellent Alexander Sims returns with a real chance to right a terrible wrong — that he's never won a championship. The sister car of Phil Keen and Jon Minshaw should also challenge.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR The slimmed-down Triple Eight entry getting it right and Joe Osborne and Lee Mowle winning a race. It's not been a perfect transition to GTs for the crack touring car team, but the progress has not stopped and the fiendishly quick Osborne is arguably the most underrated driver on the grid.



ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE V12

TEAMS Beechdean; Motorbase; TF Sport; 22GT Racing

PEDIGREE Teams' title in 2014 (Motorbase);

Drivers' title in 2013 (Beechdean/Andrew Howard)

BEST CHANCE Jonny Adam/Andrew Howard (Beechdean)

The Vantage is the prevalent GT3 car, and Beechdean's duo know how to wield it best. Howard has improved greatly since winning the title in 2013 and only a disastrous final three rounds last year dropped him and factory Aston driver Adam out of contention. A title challenge is a must.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR Motorbase's trio of Vantages has two young chargers in Rory Butcher and Dan Lloyd, and a British Touring Car Championship ace in Mat Jackson. The drivers' title credentials are not concrete, but David Bartrum's squad is a proven challenger.



MORE GT CHALLENGERS

Sims is back
for a title tilt



“SIMS AND CARROLL HEAD AN IMPRESSIVE DRIVER ROSTER”

► Brands Hatch, the Rockingham round taking place on the same weekend as the World Endurance Championship meeting at Spa-Francorchamps and then the August Snetterton event again clashing with the BTCC (Knockhill this time).

That's the negatives out of the way. The grid is packed, GT4 entries have increased and most of the races will be broadcast live. And that last point is a big deal for a championship that has grown exponentially in stature and quality in recent seasons but not had a proper platform on which to shout about it.

Perhaps more importantly, though, is the quality on the grid. The stars of the show are Alexander Sims, former single-seater-ace-turned-BMW factory driver, and Adam Carroll, of multiple single-seater race- and title-winning fame. Beyond those two, though, it's still an impressive roster.

There's British Touring Car Championship title challenger Mat Jackson, Jonny Adam, Joe Osborne, Phil Keen, Matt Bell, Euan Hankey and Mike Simpson to name a few. Rising stars include Jody Fannin, McLaren juniors Ross Wylie (also the 2014 GT4 co-champion) and Andrew Watson, and Dan Lloyd. World Endurance Championship LMP2 title winner Martin Plowman will even race in GT4 at Oulton. While the GT3 numbers are down, the quality remains.

The reason GT3's shortfall has not impacted on the overall grid total is the continued rise of GT4, which should feature 17 cars at varying points this year. Quite the turnaround from the Ginetta G50-dominated small grids from a few short years back, and all credit to the series officials for their perseverance.

Arguing the merits of a split GT3 and GT4 grid can wait for another day. Focus on those that are present, not absent, and this has the making of another British GT season to savour. ☘

THE CARS



McLAREN 650S

TEAM VonRyan Racing

PEDIGREE British GT podium finisher

BEST CHANCE Andrew Watson/Ross Wylie

The biggest test of the Silver Cup. While it might irk some to consistently point this out, Watson and Wylie should win this championship given their abilities, the car they are driving and the team running them. Balancing an all-Silver pairing will be crucial, but the title should be the aim for the McLaren junior drivers.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR Euan Hankey and his rapidly rising rookie team-mate Salih Yoluc. It wasn't long ago that Hankey, a very good driver, was targeting GT4 with Yoluc, but such has been his co-driver's improvement (and ambition) that it's straight into GT3 as they enter British GT for the first time.

FERRARI 458 ITALIA

TEAMS FF Corse; Rosso Verde

PEDIGREE British GT race winner

BEST CHANCE Adam Carroll/Gary Eastwood (FF Corse)

One of two world champions who will line up on the grid at Oulton Park (but the only one in GT3), Adam Carroll will be key to a Ferrari title tilt this season. The loss of AF Corse is significant in name, but FF Corse was always the strongest outfit – and Eastwood is one of the best Am drivers as well.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR The popular Rosso Verde team returning yet again with Benny Simonsen partnering team owner Hector Lester. Losing Allan Simonsen was a huge blow to all who knew him, not least Eastwood, who has rekindled the union with Allan's young brother.



GINETTA G55

TEAM Team LNT

PEDIGREE VdeV Endurance Series race winner

BEST CHANCE Mike Simpson/Steve Tandy
A Ginetta has never won a British GT race in GT3 trim, though the G55 has shown good pace on occasion. The combination of Simpson and Tandy is stronger than Tom Oliphant and Rick Parfitt Jr but victories will likely be beyond the orange team.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR Consternation with championship officials. The Ginetta GT3 entries have never been far from the firing line in terms of arguments with the series, whether it's balance of performance or driver gradings.

MERCEDES AMG SLS

TEAM Ram Racing

PEDIGREE 24 Hour Series frontrunner

EXPECTATION Lewis Plato is a promising driver but has only competed in Radicals until now. A good testing programme, combined with Ram being a European Le Mans Series-winning team, means his debut should not overwhelm him. Podiums should be the target.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR Not just look, but listen. The Mercedes is an excellent returnee to the grid thanks to its sharp looks and excellent noise – and there are two this year as the Jones twins switch back from their McLaren MP4-12C.



AmD is running
series' only 911



GT4 FROM THE SHADOWS TO THE SPOTLIGHT

Last season's title-winning Beechdean pair, Ross Wylie and Jake Giddings, won the strongest GT4 class since its inception. And the rise has continued in 2015.

This is now a central part of the British GT family, not just a distant relative – there will be 17 cars on the grid, quite a turnaround. It is dominated by Ginetta G55s and Aston Martin Vantages (the V8 version), but there are others. AmD will fly the sole Porsche flag with its

ex-Team Parker Racing 911, three Lotus Evoras will be present and GPRM's Toyota GT86 will also return. The BMW M3, though, has been lost.

Giddings returns in an Aston, but with series newcomer JWB Motorsport and Kieran Griffin. That pairing, the Oz Yusuf/Gavan Kershaw Lotus Evora and the G55s of Aleksander Schjerpen/James Birch and Bradley Ellis/Ade Barwick, should all win races.

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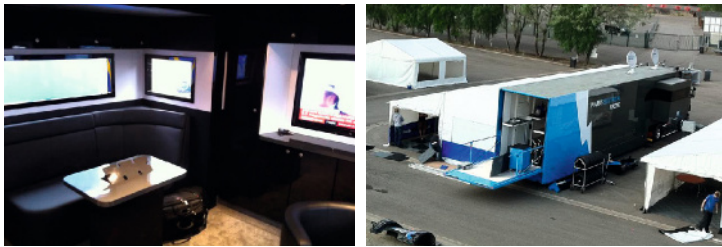
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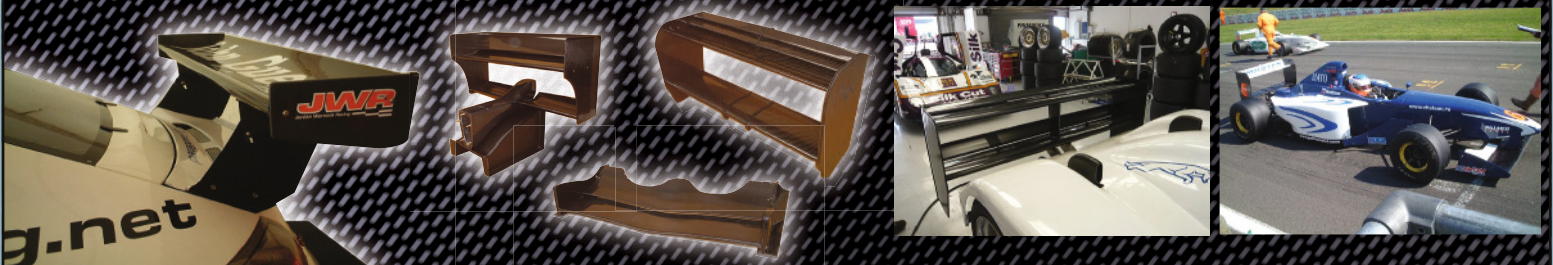
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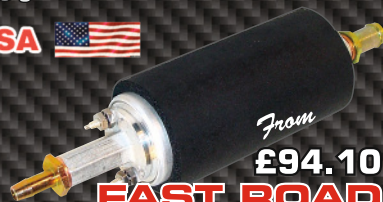
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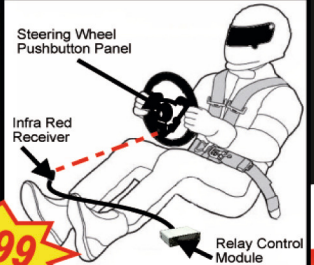
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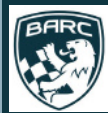
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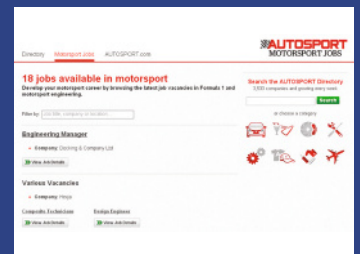
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One of many big incidents at Silverstone



READ

Drivers hospitalised by crashes

Silverstone shunts leave three in hospital as incidents mar opener

LAST WEEKEND'S NATIONAL race meeting at Silverstone was marred by a number of serious incidents that led to several drivers being taken to hospital.

Changeable conditions, including heavy rain and high winds, caused several crashes over the course of the weekend and meant racing was significantly disrupted.

The first serious accident involved Pre-2003 Touring Car

Championship driver Matt Edwards, when his Ford Escort hit a Volkswagen Golf during qualifying. Edwards was transferred by air ambulance with suspected rib damage. In Britcar Trophy qualifying, Roger Whiteside crashed his Morgan Aero and had to be taken to hospital with a suspected back injury after being cut from his car.

It was a similar story in the Mazda MX5 Championship when

William Bowles spun at the flag and made heavy contact with the barrier, resulting in a hospital visit with a possible pelvic injury.

The conditions led to further incidents at Silverstone but did not lead to serious injuries, although the roof of the Wing was damaged by the wind.

There were also accidents at two other events. In the Citroen 2CV race at Oulton Park on Saturday, Sammie Fritchley was airlifted to hospital after a crash involving Nick Roads and Glen Oswin at Old Hall on lap one of the first race. It is understood she suffered bruising.

At Mallory Park, MG Cup racer David Strike was taken to hospital after a crash at the Esses, but the MGB driver's injuries were not thought serious.

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IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE

a driver, team member, journalist, fan or have no real connection to motorsport, fatalities make you sit up and take notice. And we've had comprehensive reminders in the past couple of years of the risks that come with racing.

My third event working trackside for AUTOSPORT, the 2013 Le Mans 24 Hours, was marred by the death of Allan Simonsen. I'll try and make this make sense: I don't think I've ever not known how to react quite like that. There is every chance the feeling in the press room when the news came will remain the worst I'll encounter in my working life.

Bringing it up to date, without listing every serious accident that has occurred since the summer of 2013, what happened on the Nurburgring Nordschleife last weekend was horrific. As many have noted, it is awful that a fan of the sport went trackside to follow something they loved – and lost their life.

My greatest sympathies to Jann Mardenborough, too, because that's a terrible scenario for a driver to be a part of, and I hope he receives the appropriate support.

As morbid a column as this is, there's a point. I mean no disrespect to those who lost a family member or friend at the Nurburgring on Saturday, but the news from the weekend could have been even worse.

As our lead story here shows, the consequences of motorsport's inherent danger can be felt much closer to home. Fortunately at Silverstone, Oulton Park and Mallory Park, they were not more severe.



Whiteside Morgan took a big hit

READ

Hollywood in Aston debut at Silverstone

BAKER PAUL HOLLYWOOD, BEST known for being a judge on the Great British Bake Off, made his racing debut last weekend alongside former British GT champion Andrew Howard.

Hollywood, who has been mentored by factory Aston Martin drivers Darren Turner and Jonny Adam, drove a Beechdean Vantage in the

Britcar Trophy at Silverstone.

He passed his ARDS test earlier this year and has ambitions of driving in the Britcar-organised 24-hour race at Silverstone, although he stressed that his plans were still developing.

"I loved the racing," he said. "The conditions weren't ideal, it's greasy out there and the racing line is hard to judge.

"It's a dream to race an Aston, I was a big fan as a kid and my first Corgi car model was the DB5 from *Goldfinger*. I've always had that passion for Aston Martin."

"My calendar will be sporadic this year, dipping in and out of championships. It's all about getting experience as well as getting the signatures to race. Nothing is concrete just yet."



Paul Hollywood is an Aston fan

READ



Kruger won FFord title last season

Carrera Cup

FFord champ Kruger joins Carrera Cup

REIGNING BRITISH FORMULA

Ford champion Jayde Kruger has signed a late deal to drive in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this year, bringing the number of drivers signed up to the series to 30.

The South African will race for Brookspeed International Motorsport, which will also be making its debut in the category. The 27-year-old has had

only limited testing ahead of the first round at Brands Hatch this weekend.

Kruger had been targeting a Carrera Cup move since last year but only shook down the car at Silverstone last week and admitted he is on the back foot.

"I would rather it was late than never," Kruger added. "It's either going to go very good or very bad. Hopefully it will be good. I need to get my head round

the car quite quickly."

Kruger is the latest addition to a bumper grid of Porsches as the series has recovered from a poor entry in the past few years, when it struggled with races consisting of less than 10 cars.

"Finding a clear lap with 30 cars at Brands will be difficult," said Kruger, who is targeting the title. "I am not there to come second. With so many quick

drivers it's not going to be one driver running away with it."

Kruger's predecessor as Formula Ford champion, 2013 title winner Dan Cammish, made a one-off winning appearance in the series last year and is returning this season.

Kruger added: "If I did repeat [winning on debut] that would be great – that's the goal."

MSA Formula

Barlow to make MBM return in MSA Formula

FORMER BRDC F4 RACER JACK

Barlow will race in this year's MSA Formula Championship with the MBM Motorsport squad.

The 19-year-old finished sixth in BRDC F4 in 2013 with the Sean Walkinshaw Racing outfit, scoring two wins. He moved to British Formula Ford last season with MBM before a testing accident curtailed his season.

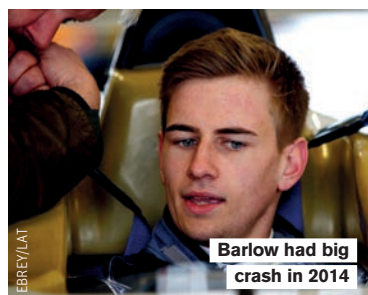
Barlow has only driven the new MSA Formula car twice at the final two championship test days ahead of this weekend's season opener at Brands Hatch.

"The car didn't feel too different to the BRDC F4 machine, but it does move around a bit more," Barlow added.

"My expectations aren't too high, I'm

confident in my ability but both me and the team are behind in getting to grips with the car. So top-five finishes in the first few races is the target."

Barlow's entry made it 20 cars lined up for the inaugural MSA Formula race at Brands as AUTOSPORT went to print.



Barlow had big crash in 2014

BRDC F4

Ford convert O'Brien to run with MGR in BRDC F4

HISTORIC FORMULA FORD

race winner and sometime British Formula Ford driver Michael O'Brien will contest the BRDC Formula 4 Championship this season.

O'Brien contested four of the last five rounds of the Ford series in 2014, earning a best finish of fourth with the Jamun/MBM Motorsport team.

His family Speedsport operation will prepare the Ralph Firman-built F4 car, but he will run with Mark Godwin Racing at events.



O'Brien joins BRDC F4 grid

"The overall aim is to win the championship," he said. "That's the only reason why we're doing it."

"Doing the few Ford races last year was such a valuable experience and it went as well as it could have done."

"I think BRDC F4 is the right step. It's the right championship to do and the right direction to go in."

O'Brien completes a 20-car BRDC F4 entry. Karting graduate James Reveler has been confirmed at the new 23 Racing squad.

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GT4 SuperCup

Ex-BTCC man Clarke moves to Ginetta GT4 SuperCup

FORMER BRITISH TOURING CAR Championship driver Jack Clarke will switch to the Ginetta GT4 SuperCup with SV Racing.

Clarke drove a Ford Focus for Motorbase under the Crabbie's Racing moniker last season and joins frontrunners SV, who guided David Pittard to second in the 2014 standings. The Formula Two race winner

attempted to sign a deal to remain in the BTCC but decided a move to the SuperCup was his best option.

"I'm really excited to be working with SV Racing this year in the GT4 SuperCup," said Clarke ahead of his debut this weekend.

"Racing in the BTCC last year was obviously a big learning curve. We had discussions with a number of teams about returning to the series, but the right package wasn't quite there.

"I want to be clear that even though I'm stepping away from the championship for a year, my BTCC dream is certainly not over."

SV team principal Danny Buxton added: "Getting Jack on-board is a major coup for us – a real headline-grabbing signing in view of what he brings to the team."



Clarke will race for SV in Ginetta

Mazda MX-5

Global plan for new MX-5

MAZDA HAS UNVEILED A new one-make racer based on the fourth-generation MX-5 that it hopes will be adopted around the world.

The Global MX-5 Cup racer has been developed by Mazdaspeed in the US in conjunction with Long Road Racing in North Carolina and will supersede the existing Mk3 version in the US one-make series next year.

Mazda North America motorsport boss John Doonan, the architect of the

programme, said there was real interest from other markets around the world, including the UK.

A spokesman for Mazda in the UK said that it was "watching with interest, but keeping its options open".

Doonan's goal is for the car to race in multiple series, which would then come together for a world finals at Laguna Seca at the end of the season. He believes that the 155bhp car could sell for £30,000 in the UK.



UK could host new MX5

GT

Aston reveals GT academy

ASTON MARTIN HAS REVEALED the 10 drivers who will form its 2015 Evolution Academy.

The up-and-coming racers will be given support to help develop their careers, with simulator runs, fitness, media training all part of the programme.

The majority of the drivers will race in British GT and all members will be driving Vantages this year. Those from the main GT3 division are ex-Carrera Cup GB racer Dan Lloyd, Matt Bell and Jody Fannin. GT4 class competitors are Dennis Strandberg, Jade Edwards, Jamie Chadwick, Ross Gunn and reigning champion Jake Giddings.

Completing the 10 are Blancpain driver Devon Modell and GT Asia racer Jon Venter. The driver who performs best will be handed a works Aston Martin drive for 2016.



Factory chance for Aston drivers

HUMBLE PYE

The voice of club racing

Pye is a fan of the Civic Cup



JONES

“RASP OF 32 CIVICS TOGETHER WAS A SPECIAL MOMENT”

Honda's powerful high-revving VTEC engines have been winners since the brilliant variable-valve-timing and electronic cam-lift concept redefined the Japanese marque's hottest cars 25 years ago. The rasp of 32 of them pulling together in the opening round of the Civic Cup at Donington on Sunday was thus a special moment for both the initiative and the 750 Motor Club, which took it on to widespread acclaim last season.

The series gathered momentum throughout 2014, but the granting of championship status by the MSA for '15 boosted competitor interest and has taken it to a new plane. Since then, workshops up and down the country have been working flat out to fulfil customer demand for race-prepped EP3 and FN2 models.

Competitors from other long-established series are certainly taking notice. The arrival of 2011 Mini Miglia champion Endaf Owens, with an immaculate trio of cars built at his renowned fabrication shop near Pembrey in South Wales among others, demonstrates the initiative's massive appeal.

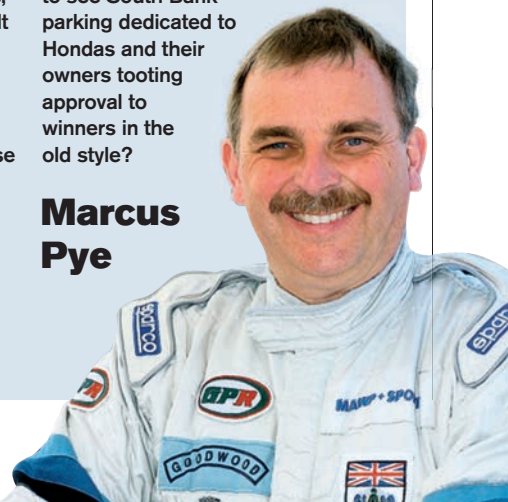
The success of UK-based Maltese racer Bernard Galea – who won in the category last term – in an older car has prompted not only a car upgrade but also his countryman Rodren Vella to join in the fun. Father and son Martyn and Sam Hathaway are among the newcomers, as is Adam Shepherd

who has made the switch from karts over the winter.

Essex lad Shepherd, 22, carries familiar colours on his pristine white car, for the purple and mauve longitudinal stripes graced his father Craig's 750MC championship winning Stock Hatch (2004) and Hot Hatch (2006) machines, and his grandfather's Mini before that. Adam drove superbly in tricky conditions at Donington and was blown away with two podiums with the car fresh 'out of the box'.

Versatile former TVR and Caterham racer Danny Winstanley won both races at the weekend, when evidence of a new order emerged, although I have a sneaking suspicion that the likes of Rob Baker and his Area Motorsport equipe will bounce back at Brands Hatch's Indy circuit where the Civic Cup reconvenes at the end of this month. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see South Bank parking dedicated to Hondas and their owners tooting approval to winners in the old style?

Marcus Pye



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In brief

Hulford returns

Former British GT racer Miles Hulford will return from a three-year sabbatical to drive in the BRSCC's Open Sports Car Championship. The youngest ever British GT participant will compete in a Wolf GB08 CN Prototype under the GCH Motorsport banner. Hulford will also take part in selected endurance races in Britcar and VdeV with his father Gerry.

Harding's scholarship

Former karter Jack Harding has secured a drive in the Mazda MX-5 Supercup this year after winning the Blendini Motorsport Scholarship contest. The 21-year-old beat four other finalists to claim the fully funded drive with former champion Tom Roche's team. He will make his debut at Silverstone this weekend.

RfH to Clio Series

Ben Davis will return to the club Clio Cup Race Series this year for Finesse Motorsport, after receiving backing from the RacingforHeroes charity. The former karter made his debut in the series last year and aims to graduate to the TOCA-supporting Renault UK Clio Cup in 2016.

Ingram's RX debut

British Touring Car Championship driver Tom Ingram will make his rallycross debut in the British Rallycross Championship this weekend at Lydden Hill. Ingram will race in the RX150 category on Easter Monday, the day after his first BTCC race of 2015. He has been watching videos to prepare and will be joined by David Coulthard's nephew Murray at the Kent track.

New Eagle soars

Former rally driver Andrew Twort made his racing debut in the 750 Formula at Donington on Saturday, at the wheel of his self-built Blue Tailed Eagle (pictured). The combo set fastest lap in Class B in Sunday's leg of the double-header.



Group C

Toyota to make historic debut

A TOYOTA THAT FINISHED IN THE top six at the Le Mans 24 Hours will become the first of the Japanese manufacturer's cars to compete in the Group C/GTP Racing series.

The Toyota 92C-V, entered at Le Mans in 1992-'94 by the Trust team, will race in five of the six 2015 Group C/GTP races with new owner Alan Dike. The South African will join the grid for round two at Spa at the end of May.

The car will be run by the British

Chamberlain-Synergy squad, which has undertaken a sympathetic restoration of a car that has not raced since period. The car has been returned to the specification in which it made its Le Mans debut in '92.

Group C/GTP co-ordinator Zoe Copas said: "This only adds to the diversity of our grid; it is great that new and interesting cars are coming out of the woodwork."

The Toyota 92C-V, powered by a 3.6-litre V8 twin-turbo engine, was an updated version of the Japanese

manufacturer's factory Group C challengers of the 1989-'90 seasons.

Chassis 92C-V #001 was purchased by Trust and made its debut at Le Mans in 1992 with Stefan Johansson, George Fouche and Steven Andskar, the trio finishing fifth behind four 3.5-litre Group C entries from Peugeot, Toyota and Mazda. It finished sixth in 1993 and scored its best Le Mans result in 1994 when Bob Wollek partnered Andskar and Fouche to fourth.

Hillclimbs could be held on closed UK roads



UK racing

Closed roads near reality

THE POSSIBILITY OF HILLCLIMB, national rallying and sprinting events taking place on closed public roads in England, Wales and Scotland was boosted last week by new legislation approved by the British government.

On Thursday March 26 the Deregulation Bill, in which the framework for running closed-road motorsport features, achieved the Royal Assent. This marked the

approval of primary legislation that will enable the Road Traffic Act to be suspended or amended without an Act of Parliament.

It is a huge step forward in the Motor Sports Association's bid to increase the number of events that take place on public roads in Britain – although the secondary legislation required is expected to have to wait until after the General Election in May.

Historics

Brits on top in French historics

BRITONS TIM SUMMERS AND Nigel Greensall claimed a superb victory over the Franco-Swiss partnership of Yan Mahe/Dominique Guenat as Shelby Cobras filled the top five places in the two-hour Sixties' Endurance race at Peter Auto's inaugural Vallengunga Classic near Rome last weekend. Soloist Andrew Beverley finished third.

Martin O'Connell and Andrew Kirkaldy hurtled Sandy Watson's Chevron-FVC B19 to CER1 honours, chased by the Lola T212 of Serge Krikhoff.

Russell Busst (Chevron-BDG B31) and Tony Sinclair (Lola-BDG T292) placed fourth and seventh respectively in CER2, won by Guenat in his Lola-DFV T286 from Frenchman Patrice Lafargue's two-litre Lola-BMW T298 and Philippe Scemama (Lola-DFV T290).

Marcus Pye



R.S.01 is new sportscar

Renault UK Clio Cup

Renault R.S.01 test for Clio Cup champion

THE WINNER OF THE RENAULT UK Clio Cup will test Renaultsport's 500bhp R.S.01 silhouette sports racing car.

The R.S.01 will form the base for a single-model championship in Europe this year, which features a round at Silverstone in September.

It will be run in addition to the British Touring Car test with leading team Motorbase already confirmed for this year's champion.

Renault UK Clio Cup Championship Manager Will Fewkes said: "R.S.01 is one of the most talked about silhouette

sports racing cars in 2015 and a test in one for our eventual champion really is something special.

"Tests in R.S.01 and also with Motorbase brings even more kudos to being crowned 2015 Renault UK Clio Cup champion."



750MC DONINGTON PARK, MARCH 28-29

Gearing makes last-corner move for poignant Darvi win

DARVI MARQUE FOUNDER DICK

Harvey, who died nine days earlier, must have been Robin Gearing's guardian angel as the F1 technician's "all-or-nothing" move at the final turn robbed David Bartholomew (PRS) of the season's first **750 Formula** win on Saturday, presaging a poignant Donington double.

"We 750 racers owe Dick an enormous debt of gratitude," said an emotional Gearing, having fired his Darvi P88 into the chicane and carried the speed to beat Bartholomew as they shot either side of debutant Andrew Twort's Blue Tailed Eagle in the dash to the chequer.

Bill Cowley secured pole in the wet, but last season's runner-up's eponymous steed faded to third in the dry. Cowley led Sunday's stanza before pitting, whereupon Bartholomew and Gearing took up the cudgels anew.

Bartholomew spun at Coppice, promoting Gearing and Mick Harris, but vacated the gravel to split the Darvis at the finish. "I didn't know Bill had gone, but pushed harder

when I saw Dave reappear in my mirrors," smiled Gearing.

An inadvertent tap from fast starter Chris Gough on a soggy track sent Mark Glover's Falcon rotating between the CGR2 Evo (with battered nose) and Harris at the chicane, but ex-Locost man Glover reclaimed fourth, ahead of Dave Robson (SDAR) and Gough.

Eighteen litres of throbbing muscle in Cheng Lim's RAM Cobra, John Plant's outrageous Allard J2 clone and Tim Davis's TVR Tuscan scrapping out front characterised the debut of the **SRGT & Bernie's V8s**. Plant led briefly before a mechanical failure sidelined him, benefiting the Essex-domiciled Singaporean. Davis outran Lim with some stunning lappery in race two.

The splendid **BMW Compact Cup** warranted three races, each competitor running twice. Past master Steve Roberts – the 2013 champion in Farard Darver's Army Motorsport car – prevailed in both wet and dry, staving off Mike Tovey and former British GT champion James Gornall respectively.

The second race, in trickier intermediate conditions, was won brilliantly by 2012 Saxmax champion Owen Hunter. He outfoxed David Drinkwater to lead two laps from home, then kept his cool to keep Drinkwater and Alex Dew behind. "I'm speechless," said Owen, shaking. "The best thing ever," added proud dad Dave, whose racing involvement started 50 years

ago. Confidence buoyed, Hunter finished third in the finale.

Danny Winstanley twice bested a capacity field of snarling Honda VTECs – the top 10 reversed for race two – as Shaun Woods' Tegiwa Imports-backed **Civic Cup** initiative celebrated championship status. Impressive car debutant Adam Shepherd finished a superb second in the opener, ahead of Stock Hatch graduate Carl Swift. They finished the opposite way round later as newcomers ruled the roost. Malta's Bernard Galea was top returnee with a fourth, after leading, while multiple 2014 winner Rob Baker scraped home sixth.

Now with engine reliability and a more refined Spire chassis, Tim Gray was uncatchable in **Bikesports** in wet or dry conditions on Sunday. The reversed-grid race brought the weekend's only red flag, when poor Oliver Cox's Radical SR4 broke a CV joint at the start and was rammed into Scott Mittell's passing RGB car by the unsighted John Prickett's PR6. All three drivers walked away.

Despite a misfire, Lee McNamara repassed Ian Allee for his maiden **Locost** points race win on Saturday. Martin Wellard jostled from ninth to third with carburation problems blunting his 1300cc Ford engine's edge, but newcomer Lee Emm's car wound up inverted at the chicane.

Sideline by a broken throttle cable at Saturday's start, second qualifier Stuart Sellars was barely headed in Sunday's race in which



JONES

poleman Danny Andrew "got greedy" and skated off in the damp entering the Old Hairpin. Fired up, Andrew shot back to wrest second from McNamara and Ian Allee.

Anglo-Irishman Shaun Traynor, fifth in last year's **Toyota MR2** standings, bagged his first victory, then doubled-up on father Timmy's birthday. Stuart Nicholls harassed him throughout, but went over the grass after a brush in the sequel before recovering to fourth. Made up with third in race one, Miles Hodgson was overjoyed with second in the replay.

Ben Short and team-mate Will Blackwell-Chambers nailed a brace of one-tuos in the Mazda **MX5 Cup** races. Behind them the action was frenetic; Sam Gendy and Jason Greatrex completed the podiums.

Martin James took the chequer in Saturday's **Sports Specials** round, but like fellow Ariel Atom pilot Nick Whitehead (who spun out at the Old Hairpin) was excluded for yellow flag infringements. Stephen Lansley



JONES



JONES



First-corner pile-up wrought chaos in Roadsports enduro

RESULTS

750 FORMULA (11 LAPS) 1 Robin Gearing (Darvi P88) 14m54.09s (86.37mph); 2 David Bartholomew (PRS 1b) +0.33s; 3 Bill Cowley (Cowley MKIV); 4 Mark Glover (Racekits Falcon); 5 Chris Gough (CGR2 Evo); 6 Dave Robson (SDAR 83). **CW** Dick Hartle (Tristesse Mk7) FL Gearing 1m18.92s (88.95mph). **RACE 2 (10 LAPS)** 1 Gearing 15m53.99s (73.59mph); 2 Bartholomew +5.08s; 3 Mick Harris (Darvi 877); 4 Glover; 5 Robson; 6 Gough. **CW** Hartle. FL Gearing 1m31.22s (76.96mph). **SRGT & BERNIE'S V8S (15 LAPS)** 1 Cheng Lim (RAM SC) 20m26.46s (85.86mph); 2 Tim Davis (TVR Tuscan) +6.40s; 3 Julian Bailey-Watts (Ford Falcon EL); 4 Eike Wellhausen (Lister-Jaguar); 5 William Toye (Triumph TR8); 6 Mark Bowd (Ford GT40). FL John Plant (Allard J2) and Davis 1m19.61s (88.18mph). **RACE 2 (15 LAPS)** 1 Davis 19m58.24s (87.88mph); 2 Lim +12.95s; 3 Toye; 4 Phil James (MGB V8); 5 Dave Stewart (TVR Griffith); 6 Bailey-Watts. FL Davis 1m16.50s (91.76mph).

(75.70mph); 2 Danny Andrew +2.57s; 3 McNamara; 4 Allee; 5 Wellard; 6 Jones. FL Andrew 1m29.92s (78.07mph). **TOYOTA MR2 (9 LAPS)** 1 Shaun Traynor 14m58.74s (70.30mph); 2 Stuart Nicholls +0.38s; 3 Miles Hodgson; 4 Mark Barber; 5 William Powell; 6 Tim Heron. **CW** Nicholls; Dave Hemingway. FL Nicholls 1m37.40s (72.07mph). **RACE 2 (10 LAPS)** 1 Traynor 14m36.95s (80.05mph); 2 Hodgson +1.72s; 3 Kristian White; 4 Stuart Nicholls; 5 Mick Nicholls; 6 Alex Knight. FL Hodgson 1m25.63s (81.98mph). **MXS CUP (10 LAPS)** 1 Ben Short 15m18.22s (68.81mph); 2 Will Blackwell-Chambers +3.17s; 3 Sam Gendy; 4 James Harris; 5 Jason Greatrex; 6 Kris Greatrex. FL Short 1m40.00s (70.20mph). **RACE 2 (10 LAPS)** 1 Short 14m50.71s (78.81mph); 2 Blackwell-Chambers +0.75s; 3 Jason Greatrex; 4 James Rogers; 5 Daniel Stewart; 6 Kris Greatrex. FL Blackwell-Chambers 1m27.79s (79.96mph).

BMW COMPACT CUP, GROUPS B&C (9 LAPS) 1 Steve Roberts 15m38.68s (67.31mph); 2 Mike Tovey +1.00s; 3 Josh Harvey; 4 Mikey Gray; 5 Richard Miles; 5 Ian Jones. FL Harvey 1m42.56s (68.45mph). **GROUPS C&A (10 LAPS)** 1 Owen Hunter 15m57.32s (73.33mph); 2 David Drinkwater +0.41s; 3 Alex Dew; 4 Paul Hinson; 5 Simon Roche; 6 Gray. FL James Gornall 1m32.40s (75.97mph). **GROUPS A&B (10 LAPS)** 1 Roberts 14m38.54s (79.91mph); 2 Gornall +0.44s; 3 Hunter; 4 Drinkwater; 5 Tovey; 6 Harvey. FL Jonathan Davis 1m26.72s (80.95mph). **CIVIC CUP (9 LAPS)** 1 Danny Winstanley 14m44.52s (71.43mph); 2 Adam Shepherd +0.48s; 3 Carl Swift; 4 Endaf Owens; 5 Sam Hathaway; 6 Mark Higginson. **CW** Mark Anderson. FL Shepherd 1m35.94s (73.17mph) Establishes Record. **RACE 2 (11 LAPS)** 1 Winstanley 15m36.04s (82.50mph); 2 Swift +5.25s; 3 Shepherd; 4 Bernard Galea; 5 Owens; 6 Rob Baker. **CW** Anderson. FL Swift 1m23.04s (84.54mph) Record.

SPORTS SPECIALS (11 LAPS) 1 Stephen Ward (Westfield Aerorace) 14m40.78s (87.67mph); 2 Stephen Lansley (Procomp LA Gold) +0.89s; 3 Anton Landon (Cyana Duratec); 4 Adrian Cooper (Procomp LA Gold); 5 Nigel Brown (Sylva Phaser); 6 John Moore (Arrow 2). **CW** Landon; Cooper. FL Lansley 1m18.16s (89.82mph) Record. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS)** 1 Landon 15m24.55s (68.34mph); 2 Ward +1.49s; 3 Lansley; 4 Moore; 5 Patrick Mortell (Rogue Xenon); 6 Martin Buckland (RAW Striker). **CW** Ward; Richard Benham (STM Phoenix). FL Landon 1m39.10s (70.84mph). **750 TROPHY (9 LAPS)** 1 Christian Pedersen (Austin 7 Monoposto) 14m48.46s (71.11mph); 2 Martin Kemp (Racekits Merlin) +18.06s; 3 Mike Harvey (JB Special); 4 Lyndon Thruston (DNC Trophy); 5 Trefor Slatter (Centaur Mk16); 6 Gregan Thruston (Austin 7). FL Petersen 1m35.79s (73.29mph).

MGCC B/C/V8 CHALLENGE (13 LAPS) 1 Simon Cripps 20m52.87s (72.84mph); 2 Russell McCarthy +7.97s; 3 Ian Prior; 4 James Wheeler; 5 Mark Scott; 6 Johnnie Wheeler. **CW** Scott; Johnnie Wheeler; Simon Tinkler. FL McCarthy 1m32.85s (75.61mph). **THOROUGHbred SPORTS (15 LAPS)** 1 Russell McCarthy (MGB GTV8) 20m17.26s (86.51mph); 2 Ken Deamer (MGB GTV8) +1 lap; 3 Mark Scott (MGB Roadster); 4 Peter Dubsky (Jaguar RAM D-type); 5 Martin Barrow (Jaguar E-type); 6 Rob Roodhouse (Triumph TR6). **CW** Deamer; Philip Lambe (Triumph TR6). FL McCarthy 1m18.51s (89.42mph). **ROADSPORTS (25 LAPS)** 1 Alan Gibson (Lotus Exige) 46m11.12s (63.33mph); 2 Anthony & Jason Jones (Toyota MR2) +9.76s; 3 David Slater/Aaron Harding (Renault Clio 172); 4 David Gardner/Christopher Wills (Porsche Boxster); 5 Rob Horsfield (Toyota MR2 Speedster); 6 JM Littman (Porsche Boxster). FL Horsfield 1m21.24s (86.41mph).



Gray's Spire leads the Bikesports field

JONES



Roberts took wins in Compact Cup

JONES

thus kicked himself for letting Stephen Ward past with a lap to go into what became first. James and Whitehead stormed clear in Sunday's wet race, increasing their advantage by 12-13 seconds per lap on tyres subsequently found to contravene the regulations. Cyana driver Anton Landon was thus accorded victory, having pounced when Ward got sideways on their penultimate lap. Lansley was on Ward's tail at the finish, with John Moore fourth in his Arrow. Christian Pedersen's pretty Austin 7 single-seater 'Miss Green' behaved herself en route to **750 Trophy** victory. Behind the Wolverhampton-based Dane, Martin Kent (Racekits Merlin) used his guile to pip Mike Harvey (JB), while Lyndon Thruston (DNC) ascended from the back to fourth, resisted only by father Gregan. Wheelspin at the start of the damp **MGCC/C/V8 Challenge** opener dropped poleman Simon

Cripps to third, but he growled back to win, ending two years of engine misery. "Looks like I fixed it too well," smiled runner-up Russ McCarthy, who fought off Ian Prior, James Wheeler and Neil Fowler – later excluded for lack of transponder signal. Cripps' car broke as the **Thoroughbred Sports** race started, thus McCarthy blitzed it by a lap from champion Ken Deamer, although the 'invisible' Fowler split them throughout. Following a multi-car first corner pile-up, the safety car appeared thrice in the **Roadsports** enduro, won by Lotus Exige soloist Alan Gibson. "I had no idea where I was," he said. His closest rivals – after Dan Wylie/Owen Fitzgerald (BMW M3) were excluded for overtaking under yellows – were the Jones brothers, Anthony and Jason, surprised that their new Toyota MR2 Roadster lasted 45 minutes after issues in testing. ● Marcus Pye



SILVERSTONE, MARCH 28-29 BARC

Ferraris denied Britcar clean sweep

CHAMPIONS CALUM LOCKIE AND David Mason made the perfect start to the new Britcar season with pole and a brace of victories in their Ferrari 458 Challenge.

While the FF Corse car had two untroubled races, its main rival, the ex-British GT Preci-Spark McLaren MP4-12C of Paul and Daniel Gibson, struggled and was forced to visit the pits frequently. Their issues meant the newly supercharged Ariel Atom of Nick Holden took second ahead of the BMW M3 of Richard Neary and Martin Short.

In the second race the McLaren improved to third, but the Wolf

CN2000 of Ollie Chadwick and Pete Storey took second after they repaired pre-event testing damage.

Ferrari dominance continued in the **Britcar Trophy** when John Seale won the first race in his Ferrari 458 Challenge before the Gibson McLaren broke their run of bad luck. The two cars pitted at the same moment, but the McLaren avoided the Ferrari's unsafe release to move ahead and cruise to victory.

Chadwick watched on as sister Jamie built towards her British GT season with a **Max5 Racing** debut, as well as running a Peugeot 206 in the **Classic Saloon and Historic Touring Car Championship** and



the **Pre-2005 Championship**.

Chadwick gained experience but Jonathon Halliwell and Paul Roddison in the Mazdas took the

wins, while victory went to Philip Jose in both touring car races.

The **Pre '83 and Pre '93 Touring Car Championship** was dominated

Dickens victorious as Gibson falls on hard times

Steve Dickens grabbed both **Clubmans Championship** wins at Silverstone, comfortably defeating polesitter Paul Gibson each time.

Despite the grid advantage, Gibson's Nemesis suffered setbacks in both races. In the first, consistent rain and wind convinced him to switch to wets



on the opening lap. This decision appeared to be vindicated swiftly as out on track Martin Goddard hit Winston Graham's sliding Mallock Mk27. Moving across Copse, Goddard's Mallock was unable to avoid the collision.

The accident, and the worsening rain and wind, led to a red flag that soon made way for a five-minute restart. Dickens was at the front of the reformed grid and made a strong getaway to move clear of the chasing pack.

Starting from the back, Gibson reaped the rewards of his tyre choice as he set a series of fast laps to force his way into the top three, dispatching Robert Manson for second place before the flag. But he could not retake the lead.

There was a case of déjà vu in the second race as Dickens once again benefited from Gibson losing time.

Gibson's race started with a spin at Becketts, an area of the track that suffered particularly badly in the conditions. That forced him to repeat his charge from the back and he again proved able to string fast laps together before returning to second ahead of Mason. But, as in the first race, he couldn't overhaul Dickens.

"Paul was absolutely flying behind me this weekend but he couldn't quite make up the time," said Dickens. "I think he was the best driver out there and I'm surprised he didn't catch me."

"It's been a challenge on track this weekend, it's not actually as

wet as you would expect, but it's very greasy even though there's little standing water."

The two races provided good racing but the 50th anniversary season-opener was plagued by the effects of bad weather.

The first race was hit by the aforementioned five minute restart, but a serious crash during the Britcar Trophy's Sunday morning qualifying meant the Clubmans' sister session was cancelled.

"It's been a disrupted weekend," added Dickens. "The stoppages have been for serious crashes and people have been hurt. They have to be the priority, not us."

● Tom Errington



Gibson (right) won final Britcar Trophy race



Byne (76) and McMullan clash decided race two

DEMPSTER



Garden topped Classic FF1600

READ

KIRKISTOWN, MARCH 29 MRCI

Ford fights thrill before fracas fouls frontrunners

AFTER A LONG WINTER WAIT THE Northern Irish racing season got underway at Kirkistown with a 10-race programme that kept a small crowd enthralled in blustery conditions.

As ever, **Formula Ford 1600** provided some of the best entertainment. Jonathan McMullan, in the Motorsport Ireland-backed Van Diemen, won the first race comfortably from Adrian Pollock, Jake Byrne and Alan Davidson, but the second race was a superbly tight affair, featuring a four-car fight for most of the distance.

Initially it was McMullan who started well from the front row, followed – very closely – by Byrne’s Ray, Pollock’s Van Diemen and the ageing but effective Mondiale of Davidson.

Over the next 10 laps the

quartet traded places, sometimes crossing the line three abreast. A couple of laps from home, Davidson dropped back with an unhelpful gearbox, but the battle raged on until the Hairpin on the final lap when Byrne and McMullan tangled, handing a grateful Pollock victory.

Davidson was second with Ginetta Junior graduate Wilson Thompson claiming the final podium position. Behind the leaders an equally enthralling four-car battle for sixth eventually went to Reynard pilot Ryan Campbell.

Gavin Buckley came out on top of a slipstreaming battle with Des Foley to win the opening **Formula Vee** race for the B and C-class cars.

The A-class race was an equally fraught affair which featured Kevin Grogan’s Leystone beating the Sheane of Adam Macauley to the flag by 0.073s with Davids

Kelly and O’Brien following in close attendance.

Among the **Saloons**, a close fight between Stephen Traub’s Integra and the SEAT Supercopa of James Turkington went to Traub by 0.4s with Hugh McEvoy’s Lotus Elise also close by. The trio repeated the performance in race two.

There was a little more unpredictability in the two **Fiesta** races. Poleman Jonny Forsythe was turfed into the weeds at the first corner in race one, leaving Andrew Blair in command from newcomer Adrian Finnegan, who had started from the back row.

Forsythe kept out of trouble in the second race to claim his first victory from Blair and Magill, but the issue remained in doubt until the final couple of feet.

Jim Larham’s Radical soaked up pressure in both **Roadsports** outings. Larham fended off the Crossles of Paul Conn and John Benson, who finished in reverse order in their second race. The real battles, though, were among the one-litre ‘Sevens’, which provided Mark Francis (GMS) and Iain Leinster (Westfield) with a win apiece.

● Richard Young

by BMWs all weekend. Ray West and Roger Stanford finished first and second in both races with an M3 and E30 M3 respectively.

The **Blue Oval Saloon Championship** joined a bumper field of the **Pre ’03 Touring Car Championship** and the **Classic VW Challenge**. Steven Wood’s Volkswagen Golf cruised to victory in the opening race, before Olly Allen responded to the challenge with a fantastic getaway at the start that sealed race-two glory.

The touring cars were occasionally caught out by the weather but that was nothing on the **Classic Formula Ford 1600** races. After Copse became the scene of several spins in the Classic Formula Ford opener a safety car was required. Mike Gardner then made his championship experience count with two decisive victories.

The **Racing Thunder Championship** races were won by Andy Robinson (Ford Falcon) and Vaughan Fletcher (Subaru Impreza) after two hotly contested battles.

● Tom Errington



Traub prevailed in Saloons encounter

DEMPSTER



TRACKDAY TROPHY SNETTERTON, MARCH 28 MSVR

Clio soloist's rivals wave the White flag

BRUCE WHITE LED FOR THE majority of the 45-minute Trackday Trophy enduro in his Renault Clio, consolidating his advantage over the Peugeot 306 Rallye of brothers Dan and Ben Abbitt during the closing laps to win by 23 seconds.

White trailed Simon Clark's Mini Cooper S Challenge initially before

taking charge on lap two as they eased clear of a four-car battle for third. Dan Abbitt led the chasing quartet but it took a while for him to get clear of his rivals since John Langridge's Ford Fiesta proved a stubborn challenger.

The Clios of David Hitchin and Russell Danzey continued to duel

for fifth, which allowed Gary Burstow's BMW 328i not only to challenge, but to demote them both on the fifth lap.

Abbitt had started to escape from Langridge in third, but his respite was brief and by lap seven they were nose-to-tail again. Abbitt was the first to make the stop, handing over to brother Ben. A couple of laps later Langridge found himself in second when White pitted, before making his own stop. Clark was the new leader with Hitchin a distant second, but even after his stop White was still in third.

There were 16 minutes left when Clark finally stopped but Hitchin stayed out for another lap, which handed White a huge 23-second lead over Clark and Abbitt. As it began to look settled Clark spun. "I



Winner White started 10th

was coming out of Agostini, it was so slippery I just lost it," he said.

Abbitt was into second and was matching White's pace on the drying track. But he made little impression over the final laps and White held on to his 23-second cushion. "It was a nice controlled drive for me," said the victor.

Clark retained third from Burstow's Class B-winning BMW, while Neal Clarke and Gary



Abbitt and Clark led off the grid

Hat-trick for McClughan as Malvern is thwarted

Teenager Paddy McClughan dominated the opening **Radical Sprint** races, with a hat-trick of victories in his SR3.

He led race one from Montreal Hairpin on the second lap while Ben Dimmack snatched second from Marcelo Marateotto on the final tour.

Brian Caudwell's stern defence gave him the early lead in race two but, after a poor start, McClughan still had the lead by Bentley Straight on lap three. Dimmack grabbed another second late on with a move at Coram after numerous attempts.

Not even a reverse grid could stop McClughan's run as he led into Montreal on lap three of the final race. He won by over 30 seconds, aided by second and third-placed Dimmack and John Macleod colliding at Brundle but still retaining their places.

Aaron Mason was a double **VAG Trophy** winner in his Scirocco, but didn't have it easy at the start of either race. He led race one but lost out to Paul Taylor's Seat at Agostini on the opening lap, then dominated after regaining his advantage at Montreal a lap later. Paul Ivens' Scirocco was third after

a massive scrap with Jason Tingle and Richard Morgan's Golfs, which continued into race two. Tingle led from the start and retained third behind Mason and Taylor. He lost out to Ivens briefly but contact at Agostini settled it, while Ivens and Morgan remained in the mix right to the flag as they battled inches apart throughout.

Scott Malvern managed to build huge leads in both **Radical Enduros**, but it was not quite enough of an advantage to hand to Nick Jones to ensure victories. Jones held on until the 12th lap in a wet race one, but Steve Burgess was

then in control, having recovered from an early spin. Jones looked secure in second but was caught on the last lap by Ed Cockill and pipped in the drag to the flag.

It was dry for the second race and Burgess led up to Montreal but then spun under pressure from James Abbott. Malvern's first half push almost gave Jones his win but a stunning last three laps from Ed Cockill gave him and brother Harry a dream debut victory. Ozzy Yusuf and Gavan Kershaw completed the podium.

Darren Goes converted pole into a lights-to-flag win in the **Team**



White's Clio won by more than 20 seconds

Papworth's Mini moved up to fifth when Chris Hughes spun the Ford Puma he shared with Ryan Gibbs.

"There was oil at Coram and it started to slide and I just couldn't hold it," said Hughes.

Although Hitchin dominated Class B qualifying he had to settle for third in class behind Burstow and the Steve Kelly/Olly Owen Clio. Steve Dolman's Mazda MX-5 was unopposed in Class D, while Ben Cook and David Jackson's Fiesta managed to clinch Class E by 0.239s from the Chris Middleton/Andrew Tsang Mini Cooper.

Down in 17th place and stuck in gear was double British Rally champion Jonny Milner who had an outing in Jack Wright's Porsche 944.

● Peter Scherer



McClughan was a treble victor

Trackday Trophy. His Seat Leon Supercopa was chased throughout by Andrew Ball/Stephen Hughes' Porsche 968, with Bruce White's Clio almost a lap down in third.

● Peter Scherer

OULTON PARK, MARCH 28 BARC

Mighty Mickel an Oulton Legend after trio of wins

THE LAST TIME THE LEGEND CARS Championship visited Oulton Park, in March 2013, John Mickel barrel-rolled into the barriers at Old Hall in what can only be described as a terrifying crash.

Fast forward to 2015, and the Horsham driver took a brilliant trifecta of wins in difficult conditions.

The first race on a wet but drying track left the drivers with a tyre dilemma, and there was no shortage of incidents thereafter. Henry King and Matthew Pape led on the final lap of the race, but both fell off at different places on the track. Mickel capitalised from sixth on the grid, to head Steve Whitelegg and John Patterson.

Whitelegg drove superbly all day, securing another runner-up spot in the second race, which Mickel came through from 15th to win. Paul O'Brien remained in the top three for the entirety and rounded out the podium spots.

Mickel started 19th for the last encounter, as per Legends rules, where the best finishers from the first two races start at the back for the final.

He was into the top 10 after two laps and showed his class by fighting through Patterson and Whitelegg to force himself into contention. He stole the lead on the last lap thanks to some help from his team-mate King.

The local **Sports/Saloon Championship** showed a touching dedication to former competitor Cam Forbes, who passed away in January this year, by displaying Wile E Coyote



Mickel leads the chasing pack

BOURNE

stickers on all cars in a race won by the Saker of Paul Rose.

Rose had an off on oil in a wet qualifying session, but recovered to win the race ahead of the fast-starting Joe Spencer.

The **Citroen 2CV** championship races were overshadowed by a huge crash in the opening race involving three cars. Sammie Fritchley was airlifted to hospital. Kris Tovey won the delayed restart.

Pete Sparrow won the second instalment by an amazing 8.519s in a six-lap race.

The **Caterham Graduates** field

was split into three races, with Mega & Super, Classic & Sigma and Sigmax making up the categories for each one. Neil Shinner scored a narrow Sigmax victory, while Oliver Gibson and Toby Briant stole Mega and Super category honours, respectively.

In the final race of the day, Andrew Outterside held a winning margin of just 0.019s in the Sigmas, and Graham Smith had only a slightly bigger lead in the Classic ranks.

● Jack Benyon



Sparrow took lead at the start of race two

BOURNE

Title duo resumes its 2014 rivalry

FORMER CHAMPIONSHIP RIVALS Mike Williams and Tom Sanderson began another Metro Cup season with a tremendous on-track battle, but it was Williams who prevailed.

The duo was part of a five-car lead train in the early stages of a tightly contested race that featured tussles throughout the field of ageing Metros.

Ben Rushworth, starting his second year in the series, led away from pole but fellow front-row starter Oliver Hood didn't get such a good getaway. By the Esses he had lost places to both Sanderson and Williams.

The race-defining moment came on lap five when Sanderson attempted a pass on Rushworth for the lead at Gerard's, but the 2014 runner-up only succeeded in hitting the back of Rushworth and ran wide, allowing Williams to squeeze through to seize second.

A couple of laps later Williams made the move for the lead at the Esses and Sanderson followed him through. For the remainder, Sanderson was glued to Williams'



Williams kept his rival at bay

bumper and tried desperately to grab the lead. But Williams had everything under control and used all of his experience in the series to keep his challenger behind and claim the year's opening win. Sanderson had to settle for second, finishing just seven tenths of a second behind his rival.

Hood came on stronger later in the race and recovered to take third, despite dropping down to fifth at one point, while Rushworth

plummeted in the final laps as he started to struggle. In the end he crossed the line sixth. Dick Trevett, the 2005 champion, was also part of the lead train for the first half of the race, but pulled off after eight laps with a problem.

Richard Garrard claimed fourth while a storming drive from Jack Ashton resulted in fifth.

Ashton started a lowly 19th after failing to master the wet qualifying conditions, but a dry track for the

race meant a change of fortunes and he steadily rose up the order.

Philip Gough was the Class B winner after claiming seventh overall. He topped the division for slightly less powerful Metros by five seconds from Tony Connell.

Justin Marsden took third in class, ahead of poleman Mark Eales, with Andrew Jolly less than a second further back after some more close racing.

● Stephen Lickorish

Swashbuckling Smith laps entire Equipe field

Tom Smith was the star of the **Equipe GTS** mini-enduro after lapping the entire field.

The MGB man qualified on pole and never looked back in a dominant display as he wrested the most from a car on the ragged edge. In his wake David Beresford, Pete Foster, Brian Arculus, Jonathan Ostle and Rod Begbie spent the entire encounter swapping places, with Beresford and Ostle eventually completing the podium.

Paul Sibley made a massive gamble ahead of the **Midget/Sprite Challenge**. With the cars facing a lengthy delay as barriers were repaired, he decided to fit slicks to his Midget, despite the track still appearing wet.

It proved to be an inspired decision because he claimed a lights-to-flag victory, although

a few brief rain showers threatened to scupper his plan.

James Dunkley finished some 30 seconds behind Sibley in his Midget to take runner-up spot, while the podium was rounded out by Edward Reeves, who had also opted for dry-weather rubber.

Simon Cripps dominated the opening **MG Cup** race while behind him Thomas Halliwell and Tom Diment had a great battle for second, after Johnnie Wheeler's smoking MGB halted. Halliwell thought he had clinched the place with a late move on Diment's similar ZR, but a red-flag countback meant second went to Diment.

Halliwell won race two, profiting from the retirement of Cripps' MGB as soon as the lights went out. This time it was Ed Davies' ZR that claimed second.

It was a straightforward win for



Clackett eased clear of Cockshoot rivals

Paul Clackett in the **Cockshoot Cup**. The ZS driver led the entire race from pole and was aided by second-place starter Ashley Woodward spinning at Gerard's on the opening tour. Peter Burchill took second, 30 seconds further back, after passing Philip Standish in the closing stages. It was still a good result for Standish, who had qualified down in 10th.

Mark Ellis was another comfortable victor in the **Iconic 50s** thrash – the MG A driver leading every lap. Peter Edney made a good getaway in his MG T to take second from a row-two grid slot and stayed

there throughout.

Two non-championship **MG Trophy** races only attracted a small entry. Australian newbie Cody Hill lost some ground from pole in race one, but regained second place around the outside of Gerard's before passing Fraser-Burns into the Esses to take an unassailable lead.

For race two the Trophy cars tagged on to the back of the MG Cup grid because of time pressures. Hill and Fraser-Burns soon rose to the front with Hill eventually making it a double win. ● Stephen Lickorish

RESULTS ROUND-UP

SNETTERTON MARCH 28, MSVR



TRACKDAY TROPHY (19 LAPS) 1 Bruce White (Renault Clio Cup) 46m36.380s (72.62mph); 2 Ben Abbott/Dan Abbott (Peugeot 306 Rallye) +23.242s; 3 Simon Clark (Mini Cooper S Challenge); 4 Gary Burstow (BMW 328i); 5 Neal Clarke/Gary Papworth (Mini JCW); 6 Simon Gerrard/Giles Lock (VW Golf Mk3 VR6).

Class winners Abbott/Abbott; Burstow; Ben Cook/David Jackson (Ford Fiesta); Steve Dolman (Mazda MX5 Mk3).

Fastest lap B Abbott 2m18.404s (77.22mph).

RADICAL SPRINT (10 LAPS) 1 Paddy McCullughan (SR3) 20m27.856s (87.04mph); 2 Ben Dimmack (SR3) +0.997s; 3 Marcello Marateotto (SR3 RSX); 4 Brian Caudwell (SR3 RSX); 5 Richard Stables (PR6); 6 David Jacobs (SR3 RSX).

CW Stables; Barry Liversidge (SR1). FL Dimmack 1m59.418s (89.50mph). RACE 2 (11 LAPS) 1 McCullughan 21m22.255s (91.68mph); 2 Dimmack +11.023s; 3 B Caudwell; 4 John Macleod (SR3 RSX); 5 Martin Verity (SR3 RSX); 6 John Caudwell (SR3 RSX). **CW** Liversidge; Joe Stables (PR6). **FL** McCullughan 1m52.781s (94.76mph). **RACE 3 (8 LAPS)**

1 McCullughan 15m47.048s (90.28mph); 2 Dimmack +31.018s; 3 Macleod; 4 Verity; 5 Jason Rishover (SR3 RSX); 6 J Caudwell. **CW** Stables; Liversidge. **FL** McCullughan 1m54.772s (93.12mph).

VAG TROPHY (BOTH 7 LAPS) 1 Aaron Mason (Scirocco) 15m21.539s (81.18mph); 2 Paul Taylor (Seat Leon Cupra R Mk1) +19.480s; 3 Paul Ivens (Scirocco R); 4 Jason Tingle (Golf); 5 Richard Morgan (Golf); 6 Lee Christopher (Scirocco R). **CW** Tingle. **FL** Mason 2m09.640s (83.29mph).

RACE 2 1 Mason 15m20.692s (81.26mph); 2 Taylor +22.342s; 3 Tingle; 4 Ivens; 5 Morgan; 6 Christopher. **CW** Tingle. **FL** Mason 2m09.640s (83.29mph).

RADICAL ENDURO (16 LAPS) 1 Steve Burgess (SR3) 41m12.426s (69.16mph); 2 Harry Cockill/Ed Cockill (SR3 RSX) +11.889s; 3 Scott Malvern/Nick Jones (SR3 RSX); 4 Hui Sun/Kit Stuart Moseley (SR3 RSX); 5 Ozzy Yusuf/Gavan Kershaw (SR3); 6 Marc Crader/James Abbott (SR3 RSX). **FL** Tom Harvey (SR3 RSX) 1m58.816s (89.95mph).

RACE 2 (19 LAPS) 1 Cockill/Cockill 40m41.237s (83.18mph); 2 Malvern/Jones +2.643s; 3 Yusuf/Kershaw; 4 Harvey/Brian Harvey; 5 James Abbott/Marc Crader (SR3 RSX); 6 Scott Mansell/David Lidbetter (SR3 RSX). **FL** Burgess 1m51.177s (96.13mph).

TRACKDAY TEAM TROPHY (26 LAPS) 1 Darren Goes (Seat Supercopa) 1h02m17.724s (74.34mph); 2 Andrew Ball/Richard Hughes (Porsche 968) +1.219s; 3 Bruce White (Renault Clio Cup); 4 Paul Hatton (Ford Focus); 5 Gary Boon/Martyn Dolan (Caterham Academy); 6 Adam McKeever/Matthew Weymouth (BMW 328i Coupe). **CW** Ball/Hughes; White; Hatton; Nik Barton/Bob Hosier (Seat Leon). **FL** Goes 2m14.605s (79.40mph).

OULTON PARK MARCH 28, BARC



LEGEND CARS CHAMPIONSHIP (6 LAPS) 1 John Mickel (Legend Coupe) 13m05.779s (73.99mph); 2 Steve Whitelegg (Legend Coupe) +0.222s; 3 John Paterson (Legend Coupe); 4 James Holman (Legend Ford Coupe); 5 Guy Fastres (Legend Chevy); 6 Henry King (Legend 34 Coupe). **FL** Whitelegg 2m06.062s (76.87mph). **RACE 2 (6 LAPS)** 1 Mickel 12m14.385s (79.17mph); 2 Whitelegg +0.119s; 3 Paul O'Brien (Legend Coupe); 4 Paterson; 5 Ben Power (Legend Ford Coupe); 6 Robert King (Legend Ford). **FL** Mickel 1m59.994s (80.75mph). **RACE 3 (8 LAPS)**

1 Mickel 16m16.286s (79.40mph); 2 H King +0.166s; 3 Matthew Pape (Legend Ford Coupe); 4 Whitelegg; 5 Paterson; 6 Holman. **FL** Mickel 1m59.860s (80.84mph). **2CVPARTS.COM CHAMPIONSHIP (4 LAPS)** 1 Kris Tovey 10m30.588s (61.46mph); 2 Jon Davis +0.567s; 3 Richard Lambert; 4 Louis Tyson; 5 Steve Walford; 6 Nick Crispin. **FL** Tyson 2m32.789s (63.42mph). **RACE 2 (6 LAPS)**

1 Pete Sparrow 15m29.652s (62.54mph); 2 Tovey +8.519s; 3 Matt Lambert; 4 Mick Storey; 5 Matthew Hollis; 6 Paul Taylor. **FL** Sparrow 2m31.760s (63.85mph). **CATERHAM GRADUATES CHAMPIONSHIP - SIGMAX (9 LAPS)** 1 Neil Shinner 17m40.627s (82.22mph); 2 Jeremy Webb +0.104s; 3 Dylan Stanley; 4 Mick Whitehead; 5 Zoltan Csabai; 6 Ray Gilliland. **FL** Webb 1m55.936s (83.58mph).

CATERHAM GRADUATES CHAMPIONSHIP - MEGA & SUPER (9 LAPS) 1 Oliver Gibson 17m49.775s (81.52mph); 2 John Ogilvie +12.175s; 3 Glenn Burtenshaw; 4 Christopher Benfield; 5 Ian Noble; 6 Declan Dolan. **CW** Toby Briant. **FL** Gibson 1m57.405s (82.53mph). **SPORTS/SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP (10 LAPS)** 1 Paul Rose (Saker Rapx) 17m34.623s (91.88mph); 2 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaj) +10.723s; 3 Steve Harrier (Saker Rapx GT); 4 Nick Cresswell (Caterham 7 R400); 5 Mark Burton (Saker Rapx S1); 6 Luke Armiger (Vauxhall Tigra).

FL Rose 1m43.776 (93.37mph). **CATERHAM GRADUATES CHAMPIONSHIP - CLASSIC & SIGMA (9 LAPS)** 1 Andrew Outterside 18m37.057s (78.07mph); 2 Jason Gale +0.019s; 3 Andrew Connolly; 4 Nigel Board; 5 Bill Scott; 6 Pete Yates. **CW** Graham Smith. **FL** Board 2m01.044s (80.05mph).

MALLORY PARK MARCH 29, MGCC



MG METRO CUP (22 LAPS) 1 Mike Williams (Rover Metro) 20m 50.348s (85.51mph); 2 Tom Sanderson (Rover Metro GTi) +0.772s; 3 Oliver Hood (Rover 100); 4 Richard Garrard (MG Metro Turbo); 5 Jack Ashton (Rover Metro GTi); 6 Ben Rushworth (Rover 100). **CW** Philip Gough (Rover 114 GTi). **FL** Dick Trevett (MG Metro Turbo) 55.607s (87.39mph).

EQUIPE GTS CHALLENGE (34 LAPS) 1 Tom Smith (MGB Roadster) 37m 49.937s (72.79mph); 2 David Beresford (MGB FIA Roadster) +1 lap; 3 Jonathan Ostle (MGB FIA Roadster); 4 Pete Foster (Triumph TR4); 5 Brian Arculus (Lotus Elite); 6 Rod Begbie (TVR Grantura Mk III). **CW** Foster; Arculus; Paul Eales (MGB Roadster); Ian Hulett (WSM Sprite Sprint). **FL** Smith 1m 04.639s (75.18mph).

MIDGET/SPRITE CHALLENGE (15 LAPS) 1 Paul Sibley (MG Midget) 14m 03.859s (86.38mph); 2 James Dunkley (MG Midget) +32.972s; 3 Edward Reeve (MG Midget); 4 Paul Campfield (Austin Healey Frogeye Sprite); 5 Andy Southcott (MG Midget); 6 Stephen Pegram (MG Midget). **CW** Campfield; Southcott; Carl Chadwick (MG Midget); John Bridge (Austin Healey Sprite). **FL** Sibley 53.929s (90.11mph).

MG CUP (14 LAPS) 1 Simon Cripps (MGB Roadster) 15m19.753s (73.97mph); 2 Tom Diment (MG ZR 170) +42.124s; 3 Thomas Halliwell (MG ZR); 4 Ed Davies (MG ZR); 5 Nick Arden (MG Maestro EFI); 6 Clive Jones (MGB Roadster). **CW** Halliwell; Arden. **FL** Cripps 1m 04.125s (75.78mph). **RACE 2 (19 LAPS)** 1 Halliwell 19m 26.706s (79.14mph); 2 Davies +3.730s; 3 James Darby (MGB GT); 4 Ashley Cross (MG ZS 180); 5 Jones; 6 Arden. **CW** Davies; Jones. **FL** Halliwell 56.226s (86.43mph).

COCKSHOOT CUP (19 LAPS) 1 Paul Clackett (MG ZS) 20m 10.812s (76.26mph); 2 Peter Burchill (MG ZS) +30.427s; 3 Philip Standish (MG TF LE 500); 4 Peter Bramble (MGB Roadster); 5 Nick Ashman (MG ZR); 6 David Coulthard (MG F Cup). **CW** Ashman; Adam Key (MG F VVC); Jeremy Toes (MG Midget). **FL** Clackett 1m 01.238s (79.36mph).

ICONIC 50s (19 LAPS) 1 Mark Ellis (MG A Twin Cam) 20m 55.108s (73.57mph); 2 Peter Edney (MG TC) +6.953s; 3 Jeff Marsden (MG TC); 4 George Edney (MG TB); 5 Graham Coles (MG A Coupe); 6 Rod Begbie (Elva-Climax Mk 4). **CW** P Edney; Begbie; Jonathan Smare (Lotus Elite); Shaun Bromley (MG A). **FL** Ellis 1m 02.669s (77.55mph).

MG TROPHY (21 LAPS) 1 Cody Hill (MG ZR 190) 20m 43.079s (82.10mph); 2 Jake Fraser-Burns (MG ZR 190) +6.471s; 3 Christopher Oulton (MG ZR 170); 4 Andrew Fraser-Burns (MG ZR 170); 5 Jim Kennon (MG ZR 170); no other finishers. **CW** Boulton. **FL** Hill 57.501s (84.52mph).

RACE 2 (19 LAPS) 1 Hill 18m 45.557s (82.03mph); 2 J Fraser-Burns +4.207s; 3 A Fraser-Burns; 4 Boulton; no other starters. **CW** A Fraser-Burns. **FL** Hill 53.386s (91.03mph).

SILVERSTONE MARCH 28-29, BARC



CLUBMANS CHAMPIONSHIP (6 LAPS) 1 Steve Dickens (Mallock Mk29) 6m59.742s (84.41mph); 2 Paul Gibson (Nemesis K11 Proto) +9.200s; 3 Robert Manson (Mallock Mk21); 4 Michelle Hayward (Mallock Mk27); 5 Chris Pickering (Mallock Mk27 EBX); 6 Alex Champkin (Vision V84). **CW** Manson; Hayward; Barry Webb (Mallock Mk16 BW). **FL** Gibson 1m05.640s (89.97mph). **RACE 2 (13 LAPS)**

1 Dickens 15m17.289s (83.69mph); 2 Gibson +2.319s; 3 Manson; 4 Pickering; 5 Hayward; 6 Steve Everson (Mallock Mk28). **CW** Manson; Pickering; Alan Cook (Mallock Mk20b/21); Webb. **FL** Gibson (Nemesis) 1m06.717s (88.51mph).

BRITISH ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP (80 LAPS) 1 David Mason/Calum Lockie (Ferrari 458) 1h30m56.047s (86.59mph); 2 Nick Holden (Ariel Atom) +1 lap; 3 Richard Neary/Martin Short (BMW M3); 4 Alistair Barclay/Charlie Hollings (Ginetta G55); 5 Neil Primrose/Nick Barrow (BMW 150); 6 Mike Moss/Kevin Clarke (BMW E46). **CW** Holden; Moss/Clarke; Daniel Gibson/Paul Gibson (McLaren MP4 12C). **FL** Mason/Lockie 1m02.186s (94.96mph). **RACE 2 (65 LAPS)** 1 Mason/Lockie 1h05m28.582s (97.71mph); 2 Pete Storey/Oli Chadwick (WOLF CN2000); 3 Peter Cook/Frank Pelle (Audi R8 LMS); 4 Barclay/Hollings; 5 Primrose/Barrow; 6 Holden. **CW** Holden; Moss/Clarke; Gibson/Gibson. **FL** Storey/Chadwick 54.75s (108.21mph).

CLASSIC SALOON AND HISTORIC TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP & PRE 2005 CHAMPIONSHIP (12 LAPS) 1 Philip Jose (Renault Clio sport) 15m29.931s



MGs kicked off Mallory's season

(76.20mph); 2 Gary Parkes (Peugeot 206 GTi 180) +4.328s; 3 Philip Burden (Peugeot 206 GTi); 4 Paul Waterhouse (Peugeot 306 GTi 6); 5 Jason Brooks (Austin Mini Cooper S); 6 David Hall (Ford Cortina). **CW** Brooks; Hall; Kenneth Adlard (Alfa Romeo 145); Jeffrey Windsor (Ford Puma); Tony Preston (Morris Minor); Gary Fletcher (Hillman Imp); Robert Strutt (66A). **FL** Parkes 1m12.122s (81.88mph). **RACE 2 (11 LAPS)** 1 Jose 15m11.994s (71.23mph); 2 Parkes +1.157s; 3 Burden; 4 Waterhouse; 5 Jeffrey Windsor (Ford Puma); 6 Adlard. **CW** Windsor; Adlard; Brooks; Hall; Luc Wilson (Austin A40); Fletcher. **FL** Parkes 1m21.588s (72.38mph).

HAMMERTITE RACING THUNDER CHAMPIONSHIP (14 LAPS) 1 Andy Robinson (Ford Falcon V8 Supercar) 15m06.294s (91.22mph); 2 Kevin Wendt (BMW M3 E46) +0.996s; 3 Vaughan Fletcher (Subaru Impreza); 4 Darren Bly (Nissan Skyline); 5 Ian Froggatt (Subaru Impreza); 6 Ilsa Cox (Seat Leon Cupra). **CW** Fletcher; Cox. **FL** Wendt 1m02.842s (93.97mph). **RACE 2 (13 LAPS)** 1 Fletcher 15m58.717s (80.07mph); 2 Bly +15.426s; 3 Cox; 4 Gavin Thomson (Peugeot 205); 5 Bradley Gelman (Ford Sierra Cosworth); 6 Alex Sidwell (Holden VZ Commodore). **CW** Bly; Cox; Thomson. **FL** Robinson 1m08.501s (86.21mph).

PRE-'83 TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP & PRE-'93 TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP (14 LAPS) 1 Ray West (BMW M3) 15m50.105s (87.02mph); 2 Roger Stanford (BMW E30 M3) +0.482s; 3 Malcolm Wise (Ford Sapphire Cosworth); 4 Stephen Primett (Ford Escort); 5 Peter Winstone (Ford Escort); 6 Nic Strong (Ford Capri). **CW** Stanford; Wise; Primett; Winstone; Strong; Michael Sheraton (BMW E30); Philip Comer (Jaguar XJS); Andrew Anderson Smith (Honda CRX). **FL** Stanford 1m06.145s (89.28mph). **RACE 2 (12 LAPS)** 1 West 15m54.785s (74.22mph); 2 Stanford +2.298s; 3 Sheraton; 4 Andrew Harrison (Jaguar XJS); 5 Strong; 6 Winstone. **CW** Stanford; Sheraton; Harrison; Winstone; Primett; Comer; Wise; Smith. **FL** West 1m17.721s (75.98mph).

BLUE OVAL SALOON CHAMPIONSHIP, VTEC DIRECT PRE-2003 CHAMPIONSHIP & VW CHALLENGE (11 LAPS) 1 Steven Wood (Volkswagen Golf Mk4) 12m21.925s (87.55mph); 2 Olly Allen (Ford Fiesta) +5.524s; 3 Jim McLoughlin (Honda Integra); 4 Paul Nevill (Ford Escort RS2000); 5 Ken Lark (Volkswagen Corrado V26); 6 Nick Sanderson (Seat Leon). **CW** Allen; McLoughlin; Christian Adams (Volkswagen Golf VR6); John Edwards-Parton (Ford Fiesta); Steve Rowles (Honda Integra Type R); Gary Johnson (Seat Ibiza R); Brian Long (Ford Fiesta). **FL** Wood 1m05.747s (89.82mph). **RACE 2 (13 LAPS)** 1 Allen 15m25.923s (82.91mph); 2 Lark +10.375s; 3 Wood; 4 Rob Allum (Volkswagen Golf GTi); 5 Alexander Owen (Honda Civic Type R); 6 Nevill. **CW** Lark; Wood; Allum; Owen; Nevill; Pantelis Christoforou (Ford Escort); Demetris Neophytou (Ford Fiesta Mk1); Scott Parkes (Ford Fiesta XR2). **FL** Allen 1m09.891s (84.49mph).

MAXS RACING CHAMPIONSHIP (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Paul Roddison (Mazda MX5 Mk3) 21m06.189s (69.96mph); 2 Jonathan Halliwell (Mazda MX5) +3.311s; 3 Simon Fleet (Mazda MX5 Mk3); 4 Andy Baylie (Mazda MX5 Mk3); 5 Ged Kelly (Mazda MX5); 6 Jeremy Shipley (Mazda MX5). **CW** Chris Webster (Mazda MX5 Mk1). **FL** Baylie 1m22.409s (71.66mph). **RACE 2 1** Halliwell 21m12.963s (69.58mph); 2 Kelly; 3 Fleet; 4 Jeremy Shipley (Mazda MX5); 5 George Grant (Mazda Mk3); 6 Roddison. **CW** Webster. **FL** Shipley 1m22.800s (71.32mph).

BRITCAR TROPHY CHAMPIONSHIP (39 LAPS) 1 John Seale (Ferrari 458 Challenge) 45m07.348s (85.07mph); 2 Daniel Gibson/Paul Gibson (McLaren MP4-C GT3) +1 lap; 3 Gary Furst (Mitsubishi Evo 9); 4 Lee Allen (Seat Leon); 5 Peter Challis (Porsche 997); 6 Kevin Riley/Gareth

Downing (Lotus Evora). **CW** Gibson/Gibson; Furst; Allen. **FL** Seale 1m04.837s (91.08mph). **RACE 2 (41 LAPS)** 1 D Gibson 45m28.721s (56.967mph); 2 Seale +5.871s; 3 Furst; 4 Andrew Howard/Paul Hollywood (Aston Martin GT4); 5 Challis; 6 Rob Hedley (Chevrolet CR8). **CW** Howard/Hollywood; Hedley. **FL** Gibson 56.967s (103.66mph).

CLASSIC FORMULA FORD 1600 CHAMPIONSHIP (9 LAPS) 1 Mike Gardner (Crossie 30F) 13m53.955s (63.73mph); 2 Simon Jackson (Javelin JL5) +0.951s; 3 Stuart Kestenbaum (Van Diemen RF79); 4 Trevor Stiles (Van Diemen RF80); 5 Matthew Dunne (Crossie 35F); 6 Mike Wrigley (Merlyn MK20a). **CW** Wrigley; Mark Turner (Jamun T12B). **FL** Jackson 1m17.254s (76.44mph). **RACE 2 (14 LAPS)**

1 Gardner 15m33.947s (88.52mph); 2 Adriano Medeiros (Van Diemen RF79) +21.856s; 3 Jackson; 4 Kestenbaum; 5 Stiles; 6 Wrigley. **CW** Wrigley; Turner. **FL** Gardner 1m05.411s (90.28mph).

KIRKISTOWN MARCH 29, 500MRGI



FIESTA ZETEC (10 LAPS) 1 Andrew Blair 13m21.949s (67.87mph); 2 Adrian Finnegan +2.859s; 3 Paul Magill; 4 Ian McCallister; 5 Lewis Dunlop; 6 Jonny Forsythe. **FL** Blair 1m18.225s (69.58mph). **RACE 2 (11 LAPS)** 1 Forsythe 14m31.434s (68.80mph); 2 Blair +0.312s; 3 Magill; 4 Ben McCully; 5 McCallister; 6 Dunlop. **FL** Blair 1m17.857s (69.91mph).

FORMULA VEE 'N' (15 LAPS) 1 Kevin Gordon (Leastone JH002) 16m56.799s (80.30mph); 2 Adrian Macauley (Sheane FV09) +0.073s; 3 David Kelly (Sheane FV02); 4 David O'Brien (Sheane FV98); 5 Dabn Pollock (LOH Sheane); 6 Jimmy Furlong (Sheane FV94). **FL** Macauley 1m06.167s (82.26mph). **B & C (10 LAPS)**

1 Gavin Buckley (Sheane FV99) 11m37.177s (78.07mph); 2 Des Foley (Leastone JH004) +0.711s; 3 Justin Costello (Leastone JH002); 4 Anthony Cross (Sheane FV10); 5 Brendan O'Brien (Leastone JH004); 6 Ger Byrne (Sheane FV95). **FL** Buckley 1m08.023s (80.02mph). **ROADSPORTS (BOTH 13 LAPS)** 1 Jim Larkham (Radical PR06) 13m51.620s (85.09mph); 2 Paul Conn (Crossie 47S) +1.191s; 3 John Benson (Crossie 37S); 4 Mark Francis (GMS Honda); 5 Iain Leinster (Westfield Honda); 6 Graham Moore (GMS Honda). **CW** Larkham; Francis. **FL** Larkham 1m01.865s (87.98mph). **RACE 2 1** Larkham 13m50.597s (85.19mph); 2 Benson +2.818s; 3 Conn; 4 Leinster; 5 Francis; 6 Moore. **CW** Larkham; Leinster. **FL** Larkham 1m01.860s (87.99mph).

SALOONS (BOTH 13 LAPS) 1 Stephen Traub (Honda Integra) 13m50.555s (85.20mph); 2 James Turkington (SEAT Supercopa) +0.399s; 3 Hugh McEvoy (Lotus Elise); 4 Donal O'Neill (SEAT Cupra); 5 Eddie Kinirons (BMW M3); 6 Aiden Vance (Honda Civic). **FL** Turkington 1m01.854s (88.00mph). **RACE 2 1** Traub 13m51.512s (85.10mph); 2 Turkington +0.261s; 3 McEvoy; 4 Vance; 5 Andrew Armstrong (BMW M3); 6 O'Neill. **FL** Turkington 1m02.801s (86.67mph).

FORMULA FORD 1600 (BOTH 16 LAPS) 1 Jonathan McCullinan (Van Diemen DP09) 16m41.406s (86.97mph); 2 Adrian Pollock (Van Diemen DP08) +5.685s; 3 Jake Byrne (Ray GR13); 4 Alan Davidson (Mondiale M89S); 5 Wilson Thompson (Van Diemen RFOO); 6 Sean Lillis (Ray GR05). **CW** Johnnie Mulholland (Van Diemen RF91); Davidson; Ryan Campbell (Reynard FF84); Arnie Black (Crossie 32F). **FL** Davidson 1m01.771s (88.12mph). **RACE 2 1** Pollock 16m49.636s (86.26mph); 2 Davidson +2.355s; 3 Thompson; 4 Lillis; 5 Campbell; 6 Black. **CW** Mulholland; Davidson; Campbell; Black. **FL** Davidson 1m02.060s (87.71mph).



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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



Rosberg's body language spoke volumes in Malaysia

Rosberg must rise to challenge

So after the Australian Grand Prix we had Red Bull calling for an equalisation mechanism to rein Mercedes in; now after the result in Malaysia – and yes, congratulations to Ferrari and Sebastian Vettel for a job well done – we have the end of the Mercedes domination and Vettel to win the title.

I look forward to Lewis and Vettel battling it out this season, but what should be a

concern for Mercedes is Rosberg. His body language, for me, is that of a broken man. He now has the air of someone who realises his chance may have gone already, because now he has a prancing horse to contend with as well as his team-mate.

Mercedes needs him to step up, or the domination that everybody was worried about will evaporate.

Kevin Friday, by email

Brilliant – what a difference 14 days make. Battles up and down the grid in Sepang, with overtaking galore, but I can't help but feel that Mercedes special itself in the foot, regardless of Seb's brilliant win. Will have killed all talk of 'equalisation' instantly, though. Which is another very good thing.

Even some 'green shoots' for the Ronster and Honda. And Lewis a class act again after the race. *Fantastisch!*
Brian McCausland
Portishead, Somerset

Watching the second-best race on Sunday (after the Malaysian GP) on ESPN, I was thoroughly enjoying it when I went to make a cup of tea with about 30 laps to go at around 1030.

I returned to find the IndyCar race had disappeared to be replaced by basketball, without any explanation. If BT/ESPN want to build a loyal

audience, they need to do better.

During the race it became apparent that no-one in IndyCar has watched F1 recently, as they all seemed surprised that the new front wings were being regularly damaged. The wings might be aero efficient, but they are very fragile. Lessons to be learned before the next race.

Bruce Chisholm
By email

Regarding the expense-of-windtunnels-in-F1 debate, how about limiting their use to an agreed period each year and teams having to submit their aero packages for homologation at the start of the season?

I would also like to see less prescriptive rules regarding aerodynamics, and instead have a stipulation that cars cannot have anything that is or appears to be an 'add-on' aerodynamic part (not

including mirrors). This would get rid of bargeboards and all the flicks and winglets that are such an eyesore.

If front and rear wings are also restricted, designers will have to find ways to recoup their downforce losses through the shape of the car itself.

As someone who was brought up on six-wheel Tyrrells, Brabham fancars and twin-chassis Lotuses, it's hard to get excited about a different shape of bargeboard.

Steve Burden
Cumbria

Well, it shouldn't be long before we see Max Verstappen on the podium sipping champagne. Oh, no he can't – he's not old enough, of course. Better get some sparkling alcohol-free grape juice on ice, just in case.
Paul Caldwell
Widnes, Cheshire

BIG NUMBER

140 The Circuit of Ireland has registered a capacity entry, including 53 international crews and 87 national competitors

MILESTONE

Intrigue in Blancpain at Nogaro: Robin Frijns' first race in an Audi; Maxi Buhk's first in a Bentley; and Bernd Schneider's roughly 260th in a Mercedes!



WHAT'S ON TRACK IN THE UK

EVENT OF THE WEEK



Craig Breen heads a bumper entry

CIRCUIT OF IRELAND

April 2-4

The UK's round of the European Rally Championship begins with the qualifying stage on Thursday afternoon and the ceremonial start in Belfast in the evening, before the crews head out for two days of competitive action

on Friday and Saturday.

Ireland's Craig Breen starts at number 1 in his Peugeot 208 T16, and enters the event trailing championship leader Kajetan Kajetanowicz by five points. The Pole himself is next on the list with his Ford Fiesta, with fellow ERC contenders Robert

Consani and Alexey Lukanyuk also in the fray in Citroen DS3 and Fiesta respectively.

There are plenty more Fiestas for the partisan crowd to cheer, with Northern Ireland's Alastair Fisher and the Republic's Robert Barrable vying to snatch some of the local limelight.

BRANDS HATCH BTCC

April 4-5

The traditional Brands Hatch curtain-raiser for the BTCC (and supports) is set to open a blockbuster of a season.



BTCC

OULTON PARK BRITISH GT

April 4-6

British GT's new alliance with BRDC Formula 4 kicks off at Oulton Park on the Bank Holiday weekend.

SILVERSTONE BRSCC

April 4-5

A double-header at Silverstone, taking in the national and international layouts.

SNETTERTON MSVR

April 4

Snetterton is one of the busiest circuits in the country and for a second consecutive week welcomes a plethora of MSVR categories, headlined by the Lotus Cup.

THRUXTON HSCC

April 4-5

The Historic Sports Car Club makes its first appearance of 2014 with its now customary Easter Revival at Thruxton.

British GT



CASTLE COMBE CCRC

April 6

The first Monday meeting of the year at Castle Combe.

WHAT'S ON TRACK AROUND THE WORLD

FORMULA E

Rd 6/10

Long Beach, California, USA

April 4

fiaformulae.com

BLANCPAIN SPRINT SERIES

Rd 1/7

Nogaro, France

April 5-6

blancpain-gt-series.com

Senna will drive a McLaren GT3



GIBSON/LAT

SUPER GT

Rd 1/8

Okayama, Japan

April 5

supergt.net

V8 STOCK CARS

Rd 2/12

Ribeirao Preto, Brazil

April 5

stockcar.com.br



Super GT

ISHIHARA/LAT

Formula E visits the iconic Long Beach track



FROM THE SOFA

WHAT'S ON TELEVISION

Q&A

DAVID ADDISON ITV BTCC COMMENTATOR

@addison1972

AUTOSPORT: The British Touring Car Championship resumes on Sunday, and now ITV's coverage is up to eight hours. That's a lot...

David Addison: What ITV has done is revolutionise the way national coverage is done. I used to get very excited for 20 minutes of *Grandstand*, but now there is eight hours of live coverage. I think people have come to expect that. It's almost not special now! It's a Herculean task for the ITV people, and there are some very very good people that put it together. TOCA has created a category where the racing is always very good and ITV's coverage goes hand in hand with that.

AS: Your schedule is a bit more than the BTCC though, isn't it?

DA: I try to do as much as I can because one day people will stop asking! I do BTCC, Porsche Carrera Cup, Blancpain, F3 and when I have time, some Motors TV Live Racedays. I think people do perhaps get a bit pigeonholed, but really that is down to the audience – if you're a BTCC fan you wouldn't necessarily know my voice is on other things.

AS: How did it start out for you?

DA: Circuit commentary. It's a very different way of doing it. It's a bit more like radio commentary; you're talking to people who can't see it whereas on television you've got the same pictures. It teaches you to look for battles, and it gives you a bit more freedom; you're



not restricted to the pictures on screen. You have to think on your feet and cover everything.

"I think there's a belief that if it's not TV, it's inferior"

AS: Is it something more aspiring commentators should target?

DA: I think there's a belief that if it's not TV, it's inferior. But many of the people who do circuit commentary are very good. It's a good grounding; you're more use if you're someone who has huge enthusiasm and

knowledge for club racing in general. You've got to start somewhere and if you're not interested and don't know much about it, then you're not going to be asked back very often.

AS: And how would someone get started like that?

DA: It's a good question these days. More and more people want to do it and there are fewer opportunities. The venues and clubs would rather pay for one person, not two. I started off doing lap charts and got asked to have a go. I guess I was in the right place at the right time, and a few people have been good and kind along the way.

AS: Is there anything stand stands out from that time?

DA: Two things. The very first day of doing the BTCC, because it was quite a big day, a big responsibility. And the first year I did the circuit commentary at Bathurst. To be at such a hallowed circuit and be part of that tribal atmosphere... that was quite something. *David Addison was talking to Scott Mitchell*



Addison covers BTCC with Tim Harvey

TV pick of

Edited by Stephen Lickorish



BTCC BRANDS HATCH - LIVE ITV4

Sunday 1030-1800

The British Touring Car Championship is back. All the bumper-bashing action returns this weekend with Britain's premier national series' traditional Brands Hatch curtain-raiser. There are some significant driver changes for 2015, since champions Colin Turkington, Jason Plato and Andrew Jordan have all switched teams. With plenty of newcomers debuting on Sunday as well it's sure to be an interesting day. ITV4's coverage also includes all the support race action, including MSA Formula.



BELGIAN GRAND PRIX 1998

Sky Sports F1

Monday 1500-1715

The pick of Sky's selection of classic Formula 1 races this week is undoubtedly the 1998 Spa thriller. It was the scene of one of the sport's biggest-ever first-corner crashes, that infamous bust-up between Michael Schumacher and David Coulthard, and a very surprising collection of drivers on the podium (including Damon Hill for his final GP victory). Many wet races are exciting but this one reached another level. Other memorable wet races on air over the next seven days include Australia 2010 and Brazil 2003.

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ONLINE



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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A fortnight makes. The Malaysian Grand Prix erased a lot of the (on-track) damage that Formula 1 appeared to be suffering after the somewhat uneventful season-opener in Australia, and that in turn has cooled the negative off-track talk of teams folding or pulling out of the sport that came in the wake of that event.

AUTOSPORT took some heat for reporting these negative themes after Australia – particularly on our website – with some assuming that there was some sort of deliberate attempt on our

part to be down on F1. Our take on it is that we're there to report on what's going on in the sport, so while Australia wasn't a great weekend, the excitement we had in Malaysia (and Ferrari emerging as a credible threat to Mercedes) should be celebrated.

Ferrari returning to form is a feel-good story for F1, and we'd all rather have more of those. Of course, some of the other off-track problems are still in the background and must not be ignored, but it makes a nice change for something else to be dominating the news agenda.

the week



FORMULA E LONG BEACH - LIVE
ITV4

Saturday 2330-Sunday 0130

The second half of the first Formula E season begins on Saturday night with the electric cars racing around the streets of classic IndyCar venue Long Beach. The championship race is still wide open with Nicolas Prost leading the way – and since five different drivers have won the opening five races anything could happen. Last time out in Miami the ePrix came alive in the closing stages as Scott Speed came close to claiming victory on his debut, and he stays on with Andreotti for his second home round.



ERC CIRCUIT OF IRELAND
Eurosport

Friday 2200-2230,
Saturday 2215-2245

More British Isles-based Easter weekend motorsport action comes in the form of the third round of the European Rally Championship. The Circuit of Ireland rally is one of the world's oldest, and is the season's first purely asphalt event. A record number of entries are set to start but, sadly, this round isn't being given the live treatment. Eurosport's camerawork is sure to still make the two highlights programmes worth a watch.



GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
ITV4

Thursday 2100-2200

If you missed Motors TV and AUTOSPORT.com's live coverage of this historic thrash, then ITV4 has produced a highlights programme containing some of the best action. The Members' Meeting returned to the motorsport calendar in 2014 after a 48-year hiatus and this time an even more eclectic array of cars took to the track. Some of the closest battling came in the Gerry Marshall Trophy race, with Nick Swift's little Mini and David Clark's somewhat larger Chevrolet Camaro fighting hard.



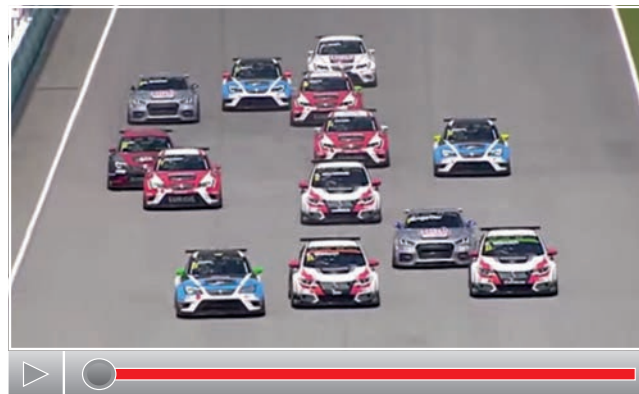
MALAYSIAN GP REPEAT
Sky Sports F1

Thursday 2300-Friday 0130

There are plenty of chances to catch up with all the excitement from last weekend's Malaysian Grand Prix on Sky Sports F1 this week. The race itself is repeated in full, along with highlights and 'best bits' programmes. The notoriously tempestuous Kuala Lumpur weather has played its part in many races in the country and this re-run will provide a way to analyse all the events (rain-interrupted qualifying and incredibly hot race) in detail. Sky's F1 Midweek Report follows with more discussion.

HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube NEW TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES MAKES ITS BOW



SEARCH FOR: 2015 Sepang TCR Race 1 highlights
 The new TCR International Series staged its inaugural race on the Saturday of the Malaysian Grand Prix weekend. While unvoiced, this brief highlights package gives you a taste of the kind of action the new category produces.

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Robb Gravett

■ BTCC ■ Silverstone ■ October 7 1990 ■ Ford Sierra RS500 ■ Fightback after 'camera glitch'



Gravett overcame a mystery electronic issue to take his final BTCC win

86

Well, I had some great races in my career, but I've tried to come up with a cool one to talk about – something a bit out of the ordinary.

The race I've chosen was the final round of my British Touring Car Championship-winning season in 1990. It was on the Silverstone National circuit and although I'd won the title at Thruxton the previous race, I wanted to go out in style as it was the last race for the RS500 – and of course for the historic, multi-class BTCC.

I qualified third, behind Tim Harvey in the Labatt's Sierra and Andy Rouse in his ICS car. Andy and I battled hard all year – we'd won all 12 races between us up to this point, with me 8-4 ahead – so it was set to be another close one on a circuit with a 70-second laptime.

If you'd been watching the races on TV that year you'd know how good the onboard cameras had become. It was all clever stuff, pioneered in Australia with the

Bathurst 1000 race. For this BTCC finale, the BHP [Barrie Hinchliffe Productions, who made the programmes] guys were using a helicopter to operate my onboard camera remotely. All pretty cool stuff, but it almost spoiled my day!

I got a great start and took the lead, which was half the work done.

As soon as the helicopter moved my camera, about half way round

the first lap, it played havoc with the electronics in my Mountune engine, actually causing it to cut out.

It was all supposition about what was causing it at the time, of course, but I was ranting and raving on the radio after Tim and Andy had got back past me. I went from hero to zero pretty quickly because, as long as the interference problem went away, I had it all to do again.

I loosened my belts to try to reach the aerial to rip it out. Something worked because the car then started to behave itself and I went on a bit of a mission.

Andy had built up a bit of a lead – about four seconds or so – while all this had gone on, but his Pirelli tyres were starting to go off so I was catching him. My Yokohamas were still good and it was going to be a fight to the flag.

I caught him with four laps or so to go and I tried a couple of times to get past, before succeeding with a couple of laps remaining.

It was very satisfying to get my ninth win of the year – and what would prove to be my last in the BTCC of course. I loved those RS500s, they had so much power!

We still don't know exactly what the electronic problem was – it had never happened before and never happened again, but at least it gave me some work to do. ❧

Robb Gravett was talking to Henry Hope-Frost

PROFILE

Londoner Robb Gravett graduated to the BTCC on the back of Monroe and Uniroyal Production Saloon class titles in 1987, as well as victory in the Willhire 24 Hours. He won races in 1989 and took the last big-class BTCC crown in 1990. He stayed in the series until '98, taking the Independents' title in '97 in a Honda Accord. Now 58, he runs a high-performance driving school and can be seen racing in historic touring cars at events such as the Goodwood Revival and Donington Historic Festival.



STALEY/LAT

NEXT WEEK How to make F1 better
Plus: All the action from Brands Hatch BTCC

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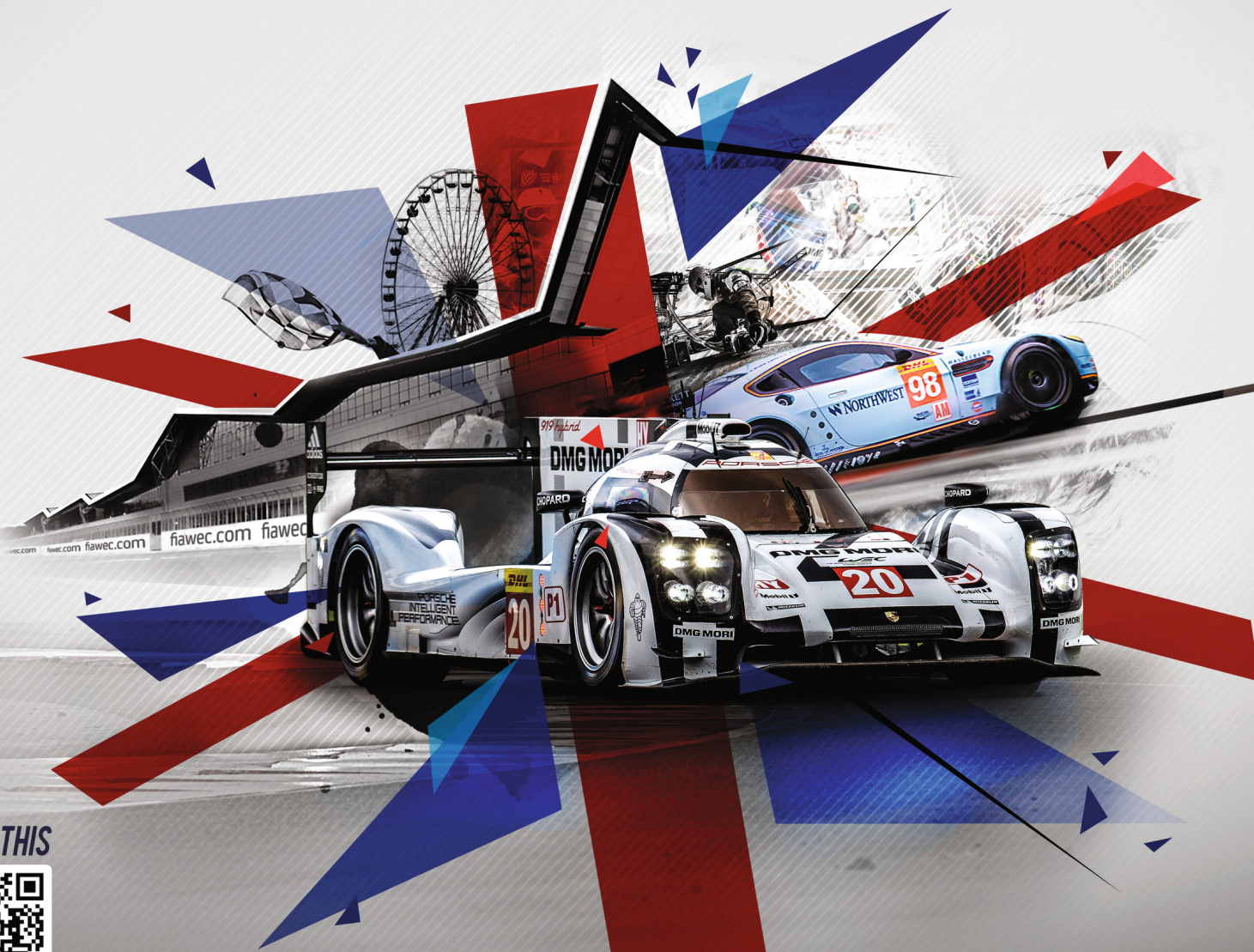
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