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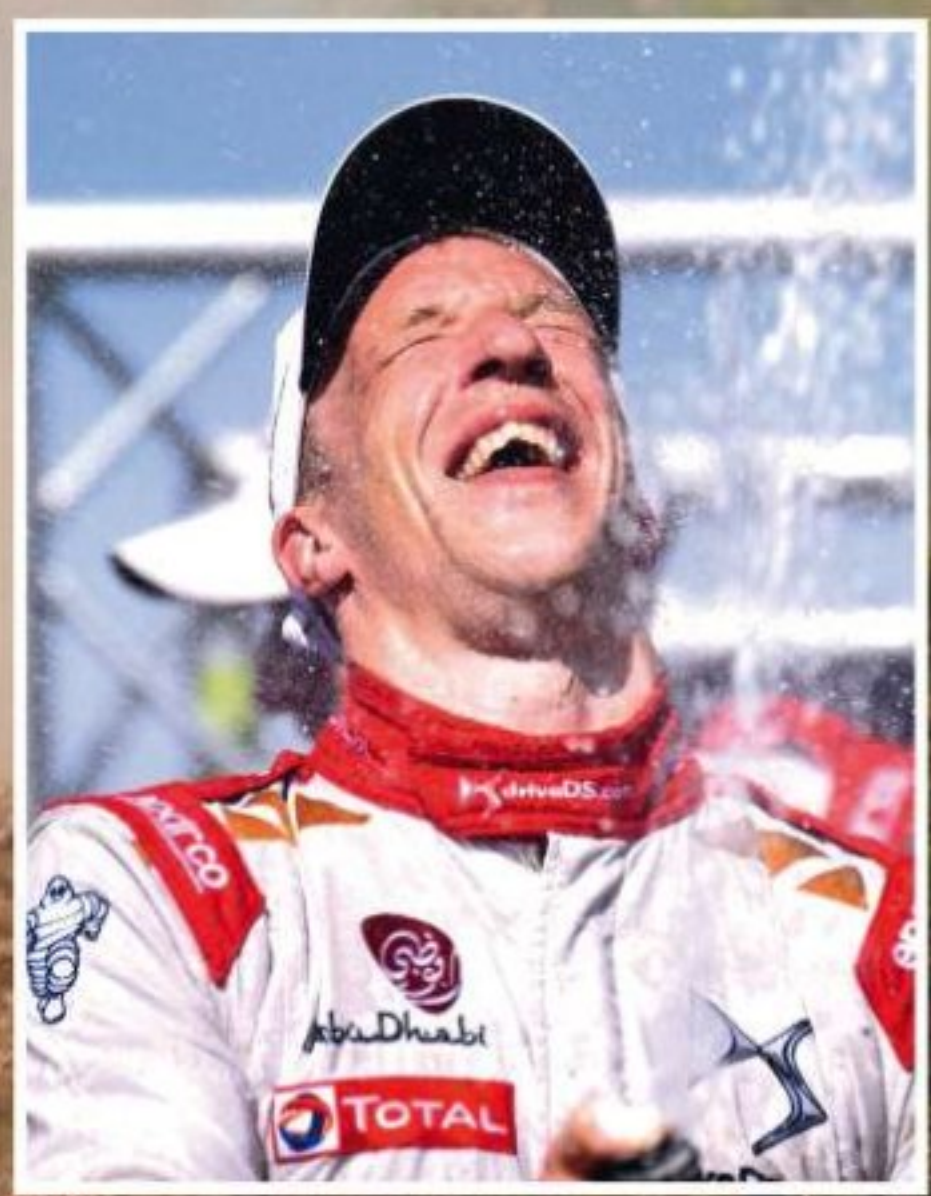
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RALLY ARGENTINA

MEEKE WINS FOR McRAE



“This one is for Colin”



PLUS

THE DEATH OF AN F1 TEAM

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POLE POSITION

A World Rally Car on our cover is a justified risk

WHEN AUTOSPORT PUTS ANYTHING OTHER THAN Formula 1 on the cover, sales suffer. For all the complaints from readers that AUTOSPORT focuses too much on F1 – something we refute because of the coverage given to other categories – the reality is that too many people don't respond to much else.

The plan for this cover was to focus on the death of the Caterham F1 team. Kris Meeke's maiden win relegated that to second billing... although commercially it would probably have been better to stick with the original plan. We didn't for two reasons:

First, the hope that AUTOSPORT's readership, which is, in my experience, the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic in all of motorsport, responds to it better than expected. Second, because it is, quite simply, the right thing to do.

It has been a very long time since a UK driver won a WRC round outright, so it's right and proper that this achievement is recognised with a green masthead, which is traditionally only used in cases of extraordinary achievement by a British driver.

So congratulations Kris. Your mentor, Colin McRae, would have been very proud to have seen you follow in his footsteps.



EDD STRAW EDITOR

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COVER STORY



McRae would have been proud of Meeke winning in the WRC

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This week in F1

Lotus runs 2015 car at Brands Hatch

A contemporary Formula 1 car tested at Brands Hatch on Monday for the first time in seven years, when Romain Grosjean drove his Lotus E23.

The team conducted one of its filming days at the Kent track, and opened the doors to the

public. Grosjean's team-mate Pastor Maldonado and reserve driver Jolyon Palmer also ran.

It was the first time a current F1 car had run at Brands since Lewis Hamilton drove his title-winning 2008 McLaren MP4-23 in a demonstration at that year's DTM event (right).



HONE/APB/LAT



DUNBAR/LAT

4

EQUIVALENCY FORMULA IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Formula 1 teams are evaluating a radical idea to allow customer squads the chance to run a different type of engine from 2017.

With F1 manufacturers adamant that grand prix racing should stick with the current turbo V6 power units, other options to help bring down costs for smaller teams are being looked into.

One idea being considered is for manufacturers to keep developing the current engines, with customer teams allowed to run cheaper V8s or a more-standard turbo as an alternative.

This would require equivalency rules to be introduced to ensure that all engines can compete.

Sauber team principal Monisha Kaltenborn told AUTOSPORT that costs should be the key factor when it comes to deciding on 2017 engine rules.

"As a customer team, for us the most important factor on engines is cost," she said. "The engines used to be such a big cost driver and we managed to move away from that for many years.

"But unfortunately now we are back to where we were, which is not a very sensible thing."

REMEMBER WHEN

2006



DUNBAR/LAT

The idea of old-spec engines being used by a smaller team is not unheard of. In 2006 Toro Rosso was allowed to run a rev-restricted Cosworth V10 when the other teams switched to V8 powerplants.

COATES/LAT

For all the breaking news, visit AUTOSPORT.COM



Williams posts dramatic losses

Williams has reported that its Formula 1 team lost £42.5 million last year, as its entire group lost £34.3 million.

Although the team enjoyed its best season for years, finishing third in the constructors' championship, increased costs in F1 and its poor results from 2013 meant its financial performance suffered.

With increased sponsorship on the back of a successful '14, plus more commercial-rights revenue due to be paid this year, the team remains upbeat about the future.

I think the car is capable of [fifth]. It's just the thing behind the car which is a bit of a nightmare



Max Verstappen makes it pretty clear that he's not happy with Renault's performance this year.

PIRELLI COMPOUNDS UNCHANGED

Pirelli will stick with the same tyre compound choices as last year for the next four Formula 1 grands prix.

For Spain, Pirelli will bring the hard and medium tyres, while the soft and super-soft will be used in Monaco, Canada and Austria.

The Monaco street race will again mark the first appearance of the season for the super-soft rubber.



Hamilton to meet winners

Lewis Hamilton is to meet the winners of the 2015 Motor Sports Association Film Competition road-safety initiative.

Entrants aged 16 to 24 have been asked to come up with a short film highlighting the FIA's Ten Golden Rules of Safer Motoring.

The two winning teams will travel to this year's Italian Grand Prix to meet Hamilton and watch the Monza race.

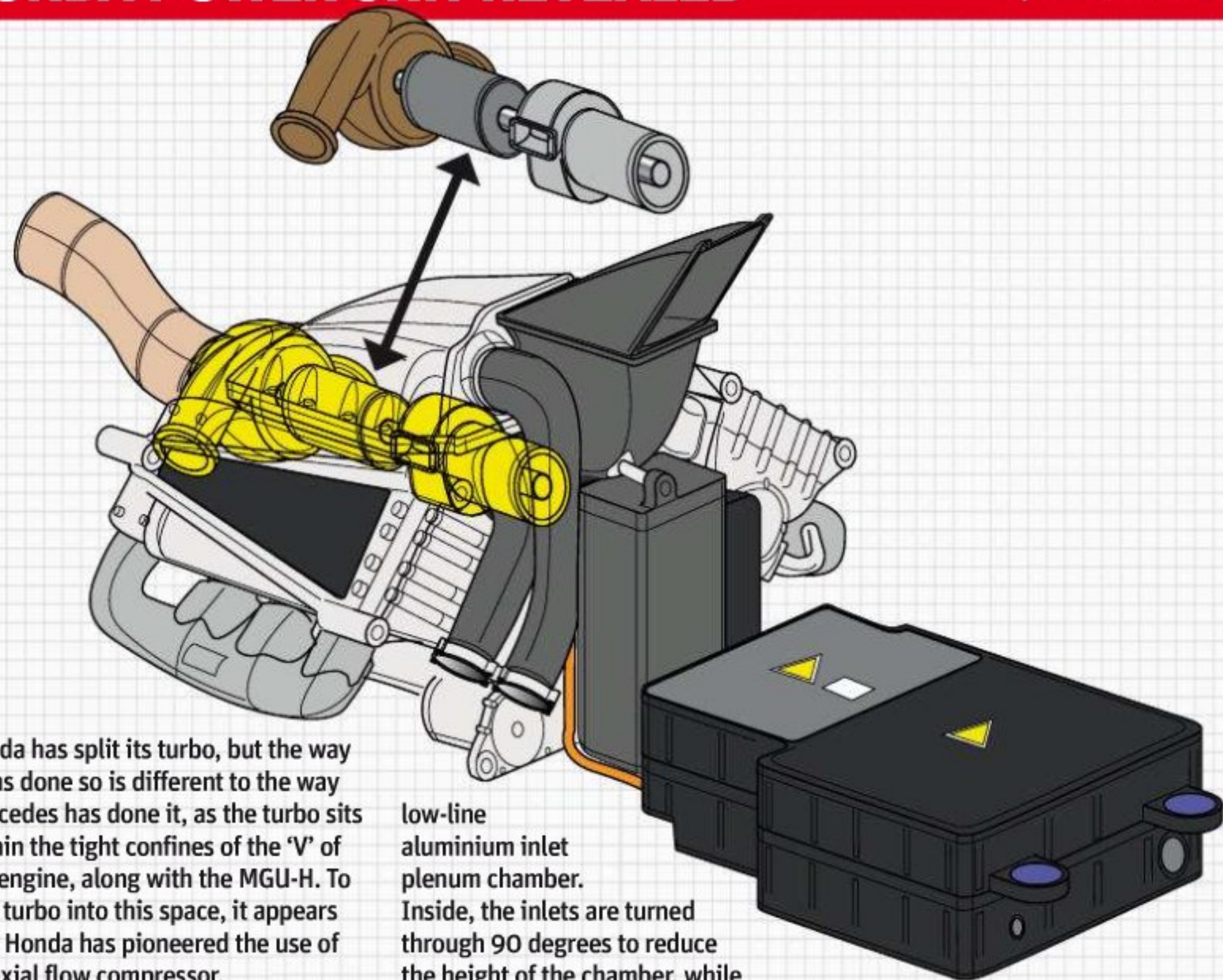
Speaking about the initiative, Hamilton said: "I think it's important that motorsport engages with the problem of safety on the roads."

Further details of the competition can be found at <https://www.msauk.org/>



HONDA POWER UNIT REVEALED

by Craig Scarborough



Honda has split its turbo, but the way it has done so is different to the way Mercedes has done it, as the turbo sits within the tight confines of the 'V' of the engine, along with the MGU-H. To fit a turbo into this space, it appears that Honda has pioneered the use of an axial flow compressor.

Rather than a large centrifugal fan, there is a smaller-diameter in-line fan on the shaft.

This design spins up quicker, although it may lack the maximum possible boost, which is not such an issue in this fuel-limited formula.

Aligned on the same shaft as the compressor are the MGU-H and the exhaust-driven turbine. The turbine appears to sit behind the engine and is of a more conventional design. Honda hopes to improve driveability and reduce the size of the total area of the engine with this layout.

Above the turbo is a compact,

low-line aluminium inlet plenum chamber. Inside, the inlets are turned through 90 degrees to reduce the height of the chamber, while still allowing for variable-length inlet trumpets.

More conventionally, the oil tank and MGU-K are located at the front of the engine and under the left-hand cylinder bank respectively.

Finally, and again unconventionally, the ERS module ahead of the motor combines the battery and both control electronic boxes (one each for ERS-K and ERS-H) into one unit.

This creates a lower and lighter unit that requires less space under the fuel-tank area, which again helps with aerodynamic packaging.

Of course, all this tight packaging

means that there's precious little space for external cooling.

All of the ERS elements will require water or oil cooling, which has led to reliability problems and Honda needing to cap power to keep temperatures under control, as well as prevent coolant leaks via the seals around the spinning shafts.

Although Honda continues to have reliability problems, the fundamental design of the power unit is valid and will eventually become both powerful and reliable. That will mean McLaren's aerodynamic packaging gains can be fully realised.

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“Help put young people with a learning disability
in the driving seat!”

Damon Hill OBE
Patron of The halow project

This weekend (1st-3rd May) Damon Hill OBE swaps four wheels for two to cycle 250 miles to raise funds for halow project, supporting young people with a learning disability.

The halow project (Registered charity no. 1116773) is dedicated to creating opportunities and supporting young people aged 16-35 with a learning disability so that they are able to live independent, meaningful, fulfilled lives and become more involved in their local community.

Damon's challenge - 250 miles - 48 hours - 2 countries
Share the adventure - @halowproject #halow250
Make a difference - #DamonSaysDonate

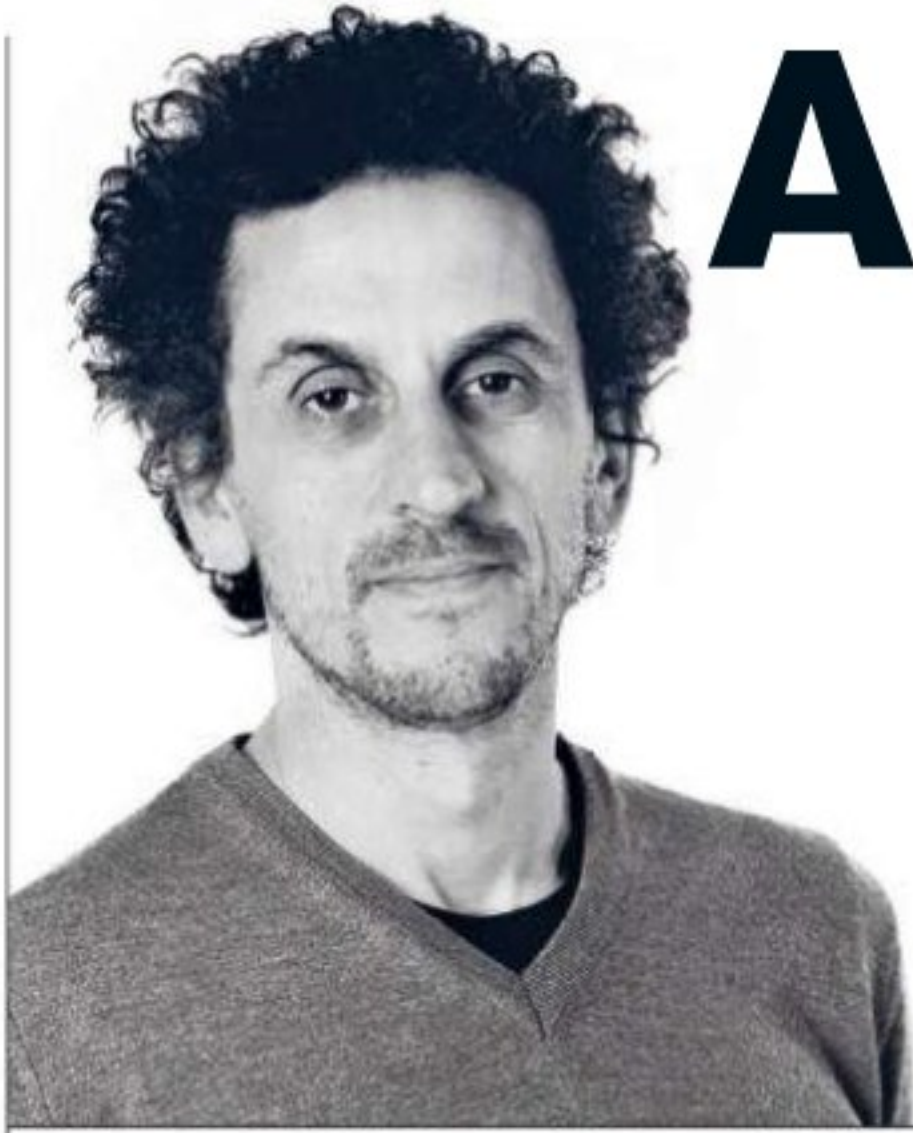
Please support Damon's challenge for halow project by making a donation today.

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To find out more www.halowproject.org.uk
and www.halow250.org.uk

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Anthony Rowlinson

From the paddock

Blaming Formula 1's new venues for pushing treasured ones off the calendar is easy, but it's too simplistic a view that ignores their contribution

Back in 2002 I was invited for *F1 Racing* magazine to attend the launch ceremony for the Bahrain GP. It wasn't a grand affair: fewer than 50 people were gathered on a scrub of desert at the bottom of the island, to watch then-FIA President Max Mosley pick up a shovel and push it gently into the perma-baked surface.

I remember thinking how shiny the surface of the shovel was as it glinted in unforgiving sunlight; how inappropriate Max's slacks-'n'-blazer attire seemed in temperatures of more than 40C; how surreal it was to be chatting with members of the Bahraini royal family about their new project which would, they assured me, place Bahrain on the global map as it never had been before.

Ground breaking done, we retired into an Arabian tent for shade, sweet black tea and further chat about the grand scale of the project and Bernie Ecclestone's enthusiasm for giving F1 a toe-hold in the Middle East.

Bernie had doubtless been encouraged by the prospect of hard cash already delivered up-front and the bold promise of 'desert racing' in a state-of-the-art facility that would surely provide unforgettable images for the sport's global TV audience. To this day, there remains a feeling around the Bahrain GP that whatever might be required to keep it secure on the calendar, a way will be found. What that means, in cruder terms, is that money has never been a problem. Build a circuit from scratch? No drama. Make it a night race, with all the multi-million-Dinar lighting investment that requires? Sure.

harmony of sunshine-seeking go-faster values both in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi – perhaps soon in Qatar, too.

The easy allure for a series promoter of a venue that will provide rock-solid and generous income, together with a sparkling facility and a burgeoning fan base, make it easy to understand why circuits such as Germany's Nürburgring struggle to meet race-hosting fees. The financial shortfall that resulted in the cancellation of this year's German GP was €10m, we gather, and despite the offer of a remedial bung of €5m from Mercedes, the gap remained too great for Mr E to countenance.

Its loss reminded me of something I'd written after that first Bahrain trip: "...poor old Spa and Silverstone, pillars of the F1 calendar, and, in Silverstone's case, the focal point for Britain's F1 community, struggle from year to year to retain their places on the fixture list. For both, and maybe also for the two German tracks, plus Austria and Imola there are sure to be sleepless nights in coming months."

Since then, Spa has been dropped twice, Austria has come back from the dead – only thanks to Red Bull – Imola is long gone, and Silverstone, though more secure than for many years, has routinely been kicked around.

Given all of this, it would be easy to demonise newcomer grand prix venues for 'ruining the sport'. Yet that's too simplistic a view.

Who, for example, might you imagine to have said the following in Bahrain: "I'm extremely disappointed that there will be no German Grand Prix this year. Germany is

"F1's 'paddock Cassandras' might do well to acknowledge the sport's newer partners"

So much, indeed, about the Bahrain GP continues to represent the 'modern' way of F1: government funding, a Tilke track and a 'can-do' conviction that whatever objections critics may raise about this new direction for the sport, the race would go ahead.

That hasn't always *quite* been true for Bahrain, of course. The much-documented troubles of 2011 forced the cancellation of that year's edition and many continue to protest over the state's human rights record. Every year, before the race, I receive a number of unsolicited emails all essentially saying Formula 1 and those who work around it should be ashamed to attend the event.

But F1 being F1, the mantra of 'sport and politics don't mix' is usually voiced and the show goes on – as it does in Russia, China, the USA or any other F1 territory where human rights records are less than squeaky-clean.

That being so, it's fair to assume that Bahrain's place on the F1 calendar is among the most secure. Formula 1 is comfortable, after all, in the Middle East, finding a happy

one of the biggest countries in Europe, one of the largest markets and I think we should have the German GP. It's a core part of Formula 1."

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff, perhaps? Seb Vettel?

No, none other than Mohammed bin Essa Al-Khalifa, a member of the Bahraini ruling family and one of the prime movers in bringing a grand prix to his country.

"Formula 1 is a global sport," he continued, "but we have to acknowledge Europe is the base and they say in politics 'don't forget your base'. F1 should take care of its base, but cater to its global audience. We have a saying in Arabic: 'if you don't know where you've come from, you won't know where you're going'. And it's the same thing with F1. Don't forget your heritage, your history, what you are about. And it will help you build a better future."

At a time when F1's 'paddock Cassandras' mutter louder than ever about the sport's health, they might do well to acknowledge the contribution of F1's newer partners, rather than bleating about the loss of the old. ❧

This week in motorsport

FORMULA E TO HELP NEW MAKES

Formula E chassis producer Spark Racing Technology will assign mechanics and engineers to work with each manufacturer in its second season as the series bids to keep competition close when its technical rules are opened up.

The electric series will begin to move away from its one-make concept in 2015-16, with elements of the powertrain opened up for manufacturer development ahead of new batteries in season three.

Spark president Frederic Vasseur said: "We're very mindful about equalising performance. We will help each constructor integrate their electric engine into the car, ensuring fairness across the field."

The French manufacturer also revealed that it will make improvements to the SRT_01E's suspension and brakes – two areas of the car that have come in for criticism from drivers – for next season. The suspension, which has suffered this year due to the cars being heavier than first expected, will be toughened up to reduce the number of failures caused by drivers hitting kerbs, and work has gone into making the carbon brakes reach their operating temperature more easily to give better feel.



8



Glock and Spengler join Zanardi

Alex Zanardi will be joined by BMW DTM racers Timo Glock and Bruno Spengler for the Spa 24 Hours in July. The trio will also contest the Paul Ricard 1000Km Blancpain race aboard their ROAL-run Z4 GT3.

BTCC GIVES UP ON MACAU

British Touring Car Championship machinery will not compete in the 2015 Macau Grand Prix's tin-top Guia support race because of logistical issues.

The proximity of the BTCC finale at Brands Hatch on October 11 to the November 19-22 event means it would

not be possible to sea-freight the cars to China, while transporting them by air would be too expensive.

Asian-based two-litre turbocharged cars, such as those that will race in the regional TCR series, will contest the Guia race – formerly a WTCC round – instead.

Varhaug tops final GP3 test

Category veteran Pal Varhaug set the fastest time in the final pre-season GP3 Series test at Barcelona last week.

Five years after he won the inaugural GP3 race at the venue, the Norwegian topped both sessions on the second – and faster – day of the test with Swiss team Jenzer Motorsport.

It was an all-Welsh benefit on day one, with Carlin's Jann Mardenborough setting the quickest time of the day in the

morning, and Status Grand Prix driver Seb Morris fastest in the afternoon.

The title-favourite ART Grand Prix pair of reigning Formula 3 European champion Esteban Ocon and Marvin Kirchhofer were both in the top eight in three of the four sessions.

Of the other British drivers, Matt Parry was third on the first afternoon with Koiranen GP, with Emil Bernstorff emulating that the day after with Arden.



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12 VIE FOR RX PRIZE

British Touring Car Championship race winner Tom Onslow-Cole, Carrera Cup GB star Dan Cammish and James Hunt's Clio Cup-racing son Freddie are among the 12 finalists vying for an RX Lites prize drive in the MSA-backed RX Talent Search.

They will be assessed at Lydden Hill next month, with the winner contesting the World Rallycross support at Istanbul Park in October.

THE 12 RX TALENT SEARCH FINALISTS

- Tom Onslow-Cole: BTCC race winner and 2014 British GT frontrunner
- Dan Cammish: Porsche Carrera Cup GB points leader and 2013 British Fford champion
- Jack Clarke: Formula 2 race winner and BTCC podium finisher
- Jason Pritchard: national rally winner
- Rupert Svendsen-Cook: British F3 race winner and 2013-14 MRF Challenge champion
- Sennan Fielding: BRDC F4 race winner and now MSA Formula contender
- Freddie Hunt: Renault Clio Cup UK racer; son of 1976 world champion James Hunt
- Euan Thorburn: reigning Scottish rally champion
- Chris Ingram: European Rally Championship competitor with Peugeot UK
- Dan Rooke: British Rallycross SuperNational class points leader
- Jake Taylor: Swift Sport Rallycross contender
- Ben Power: rallycross champion and now Legends circuit-race winner



In brief

DALY'S MONTH OF MAY

IndyCar irregular Conor Daly has secured a drive in next month's Indy 500 with his old Lights team Schmidt Peterson Motorsports. It will be the second run in the 500 for Daly, who turned out at Long Beach with Dale Coyne Racing.

PIZZONIA FOR AUTO GP

Maverick ex-Formula 1 racer Antonio Pizzonia and 2013 GP3 runner-up Facu Regalia were the leading names confirmed for this weekend's Auto GP opener at the Hungaroring as we went to press. Brazilian Pizzonia will race with Zele Racing, while Argentinian Regalia has taken a slot with FMS Racing.

BARKER LANDS LAND

British Porsche Supercup racer Ben Barker has switched to the German Carrera Cup as he plots a way back into the F1-support series. The 23-year-old will drive with Land Motorsport after impressing the squad in a recent test.

BORKOVIC QUILTS WTCC

Lofty Serb Dusan Borkovic has given up on trying to squeeze his six-foot-nine frame into Proteam Racing's Honda Civic for the World Touring Car Championship. Borkovic will instead return to the European Touring Car series, which kicks off this weekend at the Hungaroring, to drive a SEAT Leon Racer.

AUDI COY ON SPA

Audi will give the Le Mans-spec version of its R18 e-tron quattro a debut in this weekend's Spa World Endurance Championship round. It had not revealed how many of its three entries in Belgium would run in low-downforce configuration as AUTOSPORT closed for press.

Twilight for DTM sprints

The DTM is set to run four of its Saturday sprints as twilight races.

The 40-minute races will be held later in the day during the summer events, with 6pm among the mooted start times.

Lausitzring, Norisring, Zandvoort and Red Bull Ring are the candidates for twilight races, during the off-season for football's Bundesliga. The German league's top match each week is broadcast in the early Saturday evening timeslot.



NEW FACE

European F3 champion Esteban Ocon was expected to be announced as a Mercedes reserve driver in the DTM as AUTOSPORT went to press. The 18-year-old Frenchman is racing in the GP3 Series this season.



KOX ENDS LAMBO RUN

Sportscar stalwart Peter Kox has called time on a relationship with the Reiter Engineering Lamborghini organisation that stretches back 14 years.

The Dutchman said that "the time had come to move on" from Reiter without giving detailed reasons for the decision. He had no drive with Reiter lined up for 2015, although there had been a programme that had not come to fruition.

Kox first raced a Diablo GT1 contender built by Hans Reiter, his former race engineer at Schnitzer, in 2001 and went on to develop and race its Murcielago and Gallardo GT1 and GT3 machinery.



Performance gears up for Euro F3

Silverstone-based Formula 3 team Performance Racing will enter the European championship in 2016. The squad is running Malaysia's Akash Nandy in a test programme and lower-tier races in 2015.

BOURDAIS FOR BATHURST

IndyCar star and ex-Formula 1 racer Sebastien Bourdais is to make his Bathurst 1000 debut this year.

The Frenchman will contest Australia's 'Great Race' in October and the preceding Sandown 500 with Lee Holdsworth in a Walkinshaw Racing Holden Commodore.

Bourdais has previously won V8 Supercar races as a guesting 'international' at Surfers Paradise. "Thanks to Charlie Schwerkolt [licence owner] and Walkinshaw Racing, I will check off my 'bucket list' races I have been wanting to compete in for a while," he said.

One is not enough for new winner Meeke

Kris Meeke finally broke his World Rally Championship duck in Argentina. But, as **DAVID EVANS** explains, Citroen expects more



Meeke and Nagle have joined a special club

Citroen team principal Yves Matton says Kris Meeke's work for the team is a long way from being finished, following the Northern Irishman's maiden World Rally Championship win in Argentina last week.

Meeke dominated Rally Argentina, leading from the second stage until the finish to become the first Briton to win at rallying's highest level since Colin McRae's 2002 Safari Rally victory. Citroen's season was also boosted by its first one-two – courtesy of Mads Ostberg's second place – since the Argentina rally three years ago. Meeke's win was the first for a DS 3 WRC since Sebastien Loeb's success on the same event in 2013.

Citroen moves up to second in the standings, just 18 points adrift of Volkswagen, following a woeful event for the German squad – the champion team's worst-ever performance in the WRC.

After celebrating victory for Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle, Matton told AUTOSPORT he expected the pair to use this as a step to WRC greatness.

"I will not say the work is done," said Matton. "This is an important step, but we need to continue to work with him, our goal is not to give him only one victory. If he thinks that is payback, then he's wrong! He has more work to do."

"It's a great feeling for Kris. After what happened, it's not always been easy. But for a long time I believed in him and when you believe in something then sometimes you have to follow your own feeling and not listen to everybody. I'm also really happy for the team. It's quite difficult to keep the motivation when you are not winning for some time. I am really proud about the way the whole team has kept the commitment all of the time since the start of the year. Our new car was very well born and, for this, I am very happy."

THE MEEKE-McRAE ALLIANCE

Meeke dedicated his first WRC win to his mentor Colin McRae. Emotions ran high for Meeke as he

EVANS MAKES IT TWO ON THE PODIUM

The last time two British drivers finished on the podium in a World Rally Championship round was New Zealand in 2001, when Richard Burns led home Colin McRae. Elfyn Evans's third place in Argentina ended that drought.

"It's a really positive weekend for British rallying; it's great that I get my first podium and Kris gets his first win in the same weekend – it's great for the sport at home," said M-Sport driver Evans. "We can both be very happy with what we've done."



Evans took fine third in M-Sport's Fiesta



McRae and Burns were last two Brits on podium together

Evans' team principal Malcolm Wilson understood the significance of the result more than most – it was his car McRae was driving last time he won, in Kenya in 2002.

"It's just fantastic for British rallying," said Wilson. "It's a huge step to have taken. Kris has driven a great, great rally and congratulations to him for that and I am so

impressed with what Elfyn and Dan [Barritt, co-driver] have done. The maturity Elfyn has shown has been amazing.

"He's taken a step in pace and at the same time learned so much since he started in the WRC. He knows what it takes to drive the car to the finish and this podium is testament to that."

"I decided not to do any preparation. That was quite scary, but I told myself, 'Just go and do it'. And that's what we did" KRIS MEEKE

recalled what the Scot, who died in 2007, had done for him.

"This one has to be for Colin," said Meeke, whose victory moves him up to fifth in the drivers' championship and ends a miserable run of form. "Colin took me in and believed in me when other people didn't. He took a risk and backed me and it's sad he can't be here to share in this. It would have been impossible for me to make this step without Colin's help to take me firstly into the British Rally Championship and then on into the Junior WRC."

Meeke lived with the McRae family early in his career, training and working with the Scot, who won the world title with Subaru in 1995.

PRESSURE RELIEVED

Meeke admitted his career was on the line when he arrived in Argentina, having crashed in three from three rallies earlier in the season. In an effort to reverse his run of results, he took a dramatically different approach to the South American event.

"I tried so hard, put in so much effort," said Meeke, "I knew my second season was the time when this was supposed to come together and work. In those first three rallies, I was damned near choking myself. I was holding on too tight and I thought my chance had gone – not for the first time."

Something had to change and, following his latest disaster in Mexico, he made a decision on the way home.

He added: "After Mexico, I got off the plane at home and said, 'Fuck it. It's only a job. If it works, it works and if it doesn't, it doesn't.' I went home, spent time with my family.

Going home was a release. My daughter was about to start crawling and it was perfect to be home with my wife and the whole family.

"After that, I had to relax and take a different approach. I decided not to do any preparation. I'd been watching onboard all the time, working so hard to look at every single piece of information, but I came to Argentina with a blank pacenote book and no preparation. That was actually quite scary, but there was a freedom in it. I told myself, 'Just go and do it'. And that's what we did."

Meeke's result eclipses the third place he managed on Rally Argentina 12 months ago – one of four third-placed finishes he had in his first full season last year.

His team-mate Ostberg, who had been ill throughout the event, paid tribute to Meeke's efforts.

"He has driven so well," said the Norwegian, who has won once at WRC level. "I tried hard on Saturday and took some time out of him, but I felt like shit – in fact I felt dead all event – and if I couldn't win this rally, there was only man I wanted to. And he did."



Meeke led a Citroen one-two in Argentina

FULL RALLY ARGENTINA REPORT, PAGE 48

THE FUTURE OF LMP2

Major changes are planned for the secondary sports-racer class in 2017. **GARY WATKINS** explains what to expect

12



A category that is at once faster and cheaper. Those are the starting points of talks that will soon result in a new LMP2 rulebook to cover the World Endurance Championship and the Le Mans Series in Europe and Asia, as well as the United SportsCar Championship in North America, from 2017.

Faster is the easy bit. The plan is to up engine power by approximately 50bhp – with a target increase in straightline speed of 10km/h – over the current level in the WEC and the two LMS arenas, bringing it in line with the

higher horsepower numbers in the USC at the moment.

The aim of reducing costs in a category that has been ‘cost-capped’ since 2011 is the more difficult bit, and therefore more controversial.

The rulemakers have come up with the idea of making P2 – outside the USC – a one-make engine formula. At the same time, they want to limit the number of constructors licensed to build chassis to just four. And that is a major reduction given that there are presently seven constructors – and 10 different designs – that will have raced in the series in

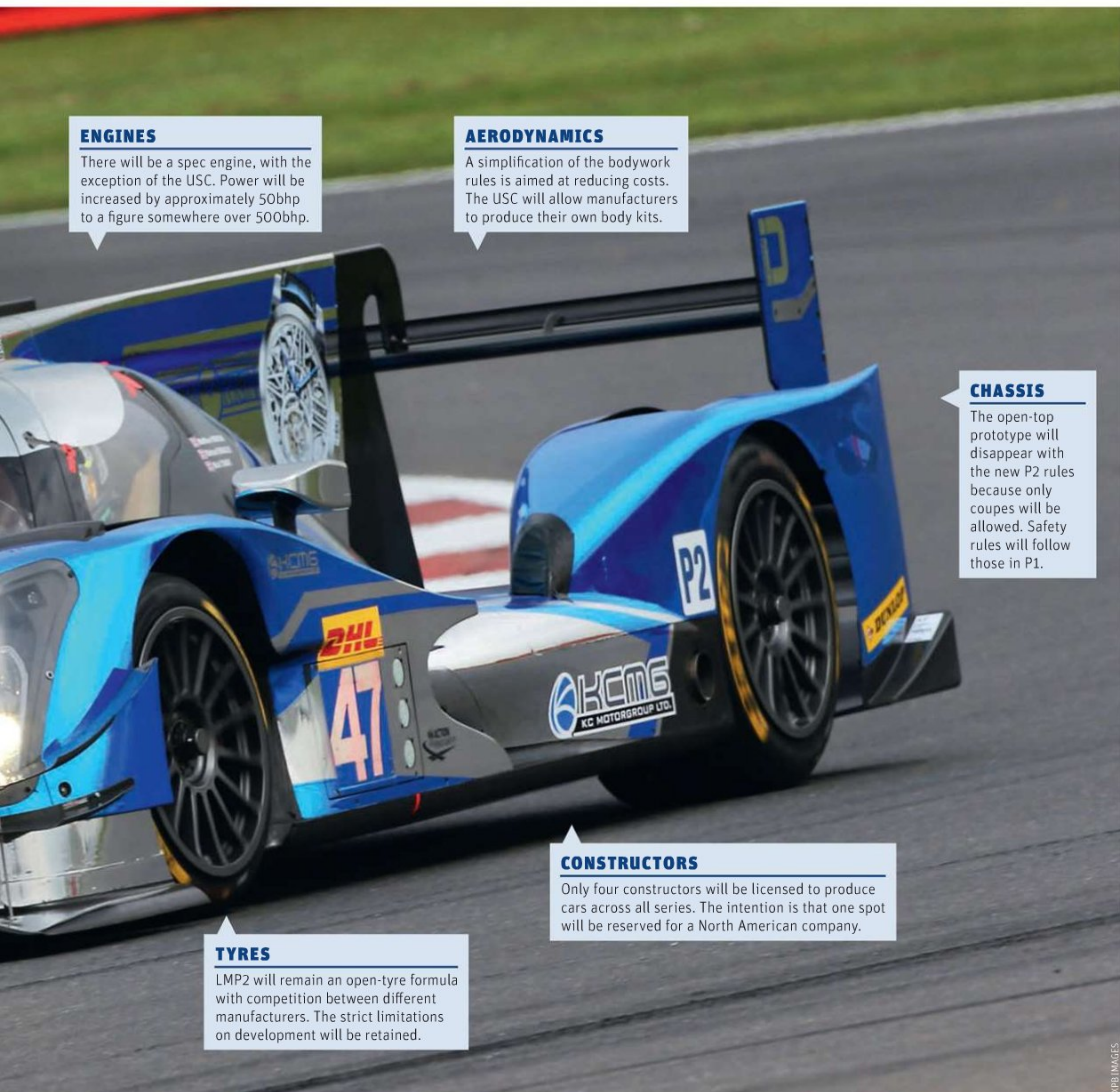


which P2 cars are eligible before the current season is out.

THE RATIONALE

The moves can be interpreted as a reaction to two things: the paucity

of entries in the secondary prototype class of the WEC last year, which prompted a wide-ranging investigation into the category by series promoter and P2 originator the Automobile Club



ENGINES

There will be a spec engine, with the exception of the USC. Power will be increased by approximately 50bhp to a figure somewhere over 500bhp.

AERODYNAMICS

A simplification of the bodywork rules is aimed at reducing costs. The USC will allow manufacturers to produce their own body kits.

CHASSIS

The open-top prototype will disappear with the new P2 rules because only coupes will be allowed. Safety rules will follow those in P1.

CONSTRUCTORS

Only four constructors will be licensed to produce cars across all series. The intention is that one spot will be reserved for a North American company.

TYRES

LMP2 will remain an open-tyre formula with competition between different manufacturers. The strict limitations on development will be retained.

de l'Ouest at Le Mans; and the announcement of new projects, most pertinently that undertaken by SMP Racing/BR Engineering, which it believed could destabilise the category.

It should be remembered that the introduction of cost caps in P2 was, itself, a reaction to Porsche building the RS Spyder for a class that was conceived back in 2004 as a home for privateers.

"Porsche's LMP2 at that time was in accordance with the rules but not clearly in accordance with the spirit of what we wanted," says ACO sporting manager Vincent

Beaumesnil. "We wanted constructors who are involved to build cars and sell them – and not to build an expensive car that stops other people from winning races."

The ACO and the FIA, with which it jointly writes the prototype rulebook, haven't gone on the record to single out the new BR01 (scheduled to make its race debut in round two of the ELMS at Imola next month), but the rhetoric from the Franco-Russian operation confirms that the governing bodies have made their opinions clear in private.

"They say that we are spending more money than the others, but

that is not true," says Benjamin Durand, boss of both SMP and BRE. "We want to sell cars and we will not lose money on them if we do."

The ACO isn't looking to reduce the cost of chassis when the new rules come into force, but it says it wants to limit the number of constructors in order to create a sustainable business model for those organisations. This, it believes, will ensure that customers "will receive a better quality product with lower associated maintenance and operational costs" from the constructors. The idea is that a constructor making more ▶

"We wanted constructors who are involved to build cars and sell them"
ACO'S VINCENT BEAUMESNIL



The SMP/BRE project has caused controversy

► cars can be forced to offer spares at lower prices.

“With the number of different chassis currently available to customer teams – some manufacturers supplying just one or two cars – the cost per car is far higher than for, say, a manufacturer supplying 10 cars to several teams,” read a statement when the ACO finally confirmed its plans over the Silverstone WEC weekend earlier this month. “By limiting the number of manufacturers, the business case is far more sustainable for the supply of cars.”

CONTROVERSY

The proposals, which call for one of the constructor spots to be reserved for a North American-based manufacturer, have sparked controversy. Many believe that they run counter to the diversity that has always been at the heart of sportscar racing in general and the Le Mans 24 Hours in particular.

“We shouldn’t lose the patchwork quilt that makes up the rich tapestry of sportscar racing,” says Strakka Racing team principal Dan Walmsley, whose squad gave its Strakka Dome S103 a belated debut in the opening WEC event at Silverstone. “The backbone of sportscar racing is small privateer teams, some of whom choose to build their own cars.”

Walmsley ascribes to the ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ philosophy, pointing out that the 19 cars on the entry list for Le Mans this year make LMP2 the biggest single class. Bill Gibson, whose Gibson Technology company (formerly Zytek) supplies both chassis and Nissan engines, is of a similar viewpoint: “P2 is flying right now, so why change it?”

“The backbone of sportscars is privateers, some of whom choose to build cars”

STRAKKA BOSS DAN WALMSLEY

CHASSIS

The new P2 formula will be for coupes only. The chassis rules will come into line with those introduced for LMP1 at the start of 2014. That means a raft of new mandatory safety measures, including zylon side anti-intrusion panels that are already a feature of some of the latest generation of coupes.

The likelihood is that P2 will also follow the downsizing of the cars to a 1900mm maximum width already introduced in the higher prototype category. It is also proposed that the minimum weight of the cars will be increased from the current 900kg to 940kg in the interest of cost.

The cost of the cars will not decrease. It is envisaged that the cost cap will be approaching €500,000 for a rolling chassis with gearbox, an increase from the €450,000 maximum for a coupe under the current regulations.

The commercial demands of the USC across the Atlantic mean that manufacturers will be able to introduce their own bodykits.

Existing P2 chassis will be



Will Ligier, ORECA, HPD and Dome all still be allowed in '17?

grandfathered to compete alongside the new machinery for the first season of the new formula, which will be in place for four seasons up to the end of 2020. (Daytona Prototype machinery will also be allowed to race on for a year in the USC.) No chassis upgrades will be allowed in that time with the exception of one ‘joker’ if it is felt that a marque – or marques – needs help to remain competitive.

ENGINES

The move to a single-spec engine for the WEC and the Le Mans Series in Europe and Asia is the

cornerstone of the attempt to reduce running budgets. The idea is that a manufacturer or engine specialist supplying the whole grid would be able to offer both a lower purchase price and cheaper rebuilds.

It makes sense given that engine costs are a substantial part of any team’s budget. Even someone who stands to lose by the arrangement admits that.

“If I was looking at it from the outside, I’d probably think it was a good idea,” says Gibson. “It is the obvious way to reduce budgets.”

Gibson admits that the move away from production-based engines, one of the key tenets of the cost-capped P2 formula introduced for 2011, also makes sense. “Doing something on a road-car base rarely saves money,” he says.

The ACO, the architect of the existing P2 rulebook, has come to the same realisation.

“At the time, we felt that it did make it cheaper, but we do not feel that is the case now,” says Beaumesnil. “We know today that you don’t particularly save money

Open-top P2s, as used in the ELMS, will be outlawed





ACO boss Fillon will be open to allcomers

J BLOXHAM/LAT

TYRES

The idea of LMP2 becoming a one-tyre category in both the WEC and the ELMS was firmly on the agenda when the rulemakers met with interested parties straight after the Daytona 24 Hours at the end of January, although the ACO won't admit it. That's because it was effectively vetoed by Michelin and Dunlop, two important players – from both a commercial and sporting perspective – at Le Mans and in the WEC.

Michelin and Dunlop also won't admit that they brought pressure to bear on the ACO, but they make no secret of their preference for the existing status quo.

"The present situation with a tight framework set by the ACO is ideal for a tyre manufacturer," says Dunlop Motorsport marketing director James Bailey. "The limits on development and the way they are policed mean there can be no arms race, while free competition allows us to prove our products."

Bailey also points out maintaining the P2 open-tyre formula is of significant importance when it comes to P1. "If you didn't allow competition and development in P2," he says, "there would be no chance of the ACO finding another manufacturer to join LMP1 [in which Michelin currently has a monopoly]." The reason: it would have nowhere to develop its tyres.

ACO president Pierre Fillon is adamant that P2 would be open to allcomers, but it is known that one proposal calls for suppliers to be limited to three. That coincides with interest from South Korean manufacturer Hankook, which is known to be about to embark on a test-and-development programme with an existing European P2 team.

TIMELINE

The final rules should be confirmed in the week of the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. The tender process will then begin ahead of the selection of chassis constructors and engine suppliers by September.

Then it will become clear which of the existing marques – or new ones, such as Dallara, a participant in the rules meetings – will carry on. And which names will disappear from the grid. ❧



Michelin does not want one-tyre series

EBREY/LAT

EBREY/LAT

starting from a production engine to make a race engine."

The 2017 plan calls for pure-bred race powerplants based on the Global Race Engine concept. The rule makers have proposed a normally aspirated V8 that would have the same architecture in terms of the cylinder head and block as the two-litre GRE-based engines that have been racing in Formula 3 in Europe since last year.

Gibson feels that direct injection is unnecessary. "It would be a huge added expense with no benefit," he argues. "DI is about emissions and fuel consumption in road cars, so if you have a one-make engine formula it doesn't matter."

Multiple engines will still be allowed in the USC, for obvious reasons. The Prototype class in North America is a separate case because it is the top division of the series. That means there is major representation from manufacturers such as Chevrolet, Ford and Honda, who are commercial partners of the series as well as competitors.

Engines used in the USC would have to have similar architecture and dimensions (they would have to fit within the same notional box) to the spec powerplant so that revisions to the chassis and bodywork are not required. Only the shape of the internal – and not external – cooling ducts would be allowed to change. That would mean each chassis constructor would not have the expense of producing multiple engine installations.

The plan is to also mandate common electronics across all P2 engines and bring the fuel used in North America in line with that supplied to the other series.

Engines built for North America would then be subject to a Balance of Performance process should the manufacturers or teams running their engines choose to race in the Le Mans 24 Hours. US-spec cars would not be able to take part in other rounds of the WEC.

Volkswagen has been a participant in the rule-making process, which has prompted speculation that it is contemplating

making a bid to become the sole engine supplier. Wolfgang Ullrich, motorsport boss at VW brand Audi, insists that its involvement is more about its desire to return to what he calls a "high-level motorsport" in the US since its withdrawal from the American Le Mans Series at the end of 2008. It is worth pointing out that Ullrich left the door open to an Audi involvement in the Grand-Am Daytona Prototype class in early 2013.

The ACO is believed to favour a specialist engine builder rather than a car maker becoming the supplier. This would then allow the motor to be badged by different manufacturers in each of the different championships.

Will the general election affect motorsport?

Politics and motorsport are not strange bedfellows. SCOTT MITCHELL explains why the UK government means more to the sport than people might think

Government investment in motorsport is a contentious subject. It's seen by some as a silver bullet capable of solving the struggles of traditional Formula 1 venues as they fight against the rise of oligarch-backed foreign events. Others see it as an excuse used when circuits start to hit trouble.

It is not realistic to expect any particular party to include in its election manifesto a promise to secure the British Grand Prix as F1's traditional races fall by the wayside (or stand on the brink). Prioritising the wish of a few hundred thousand when a 60-million strong electorate is outraged by NHS funding and police cutbacks would be career suicide for any politician.

That's why the UK general election next month will not have particular significance to British motorsport. But before we get onto the ways in which government can, and has, helped UK racing, it's worth explaining why state support is not an option.

SUPPORTING F1 'NAIVE'

Former UKIP defence spokesman and ex-F1 team boss Lord Hesketh says it is unrealistic to expect the government to commit funding to motorsport or the British GP.

The collapse of the German GP last month raised concerns over the future of the British race, although it is understood that the privately-financed Silverstone round is secure for now.

Hesketh told AUTOSPORT that it was "pretty naive" to expect government investment when stretched resources are already a key political issue.

"To even talk of Silverstone's problems by using the German Grand Prix as an example, it's too late when you say what happened there could happen here," said Hesketh, whose eponymous team won the 1975 Dutch Grand Prix with James Hunt.

"You can make a case to the enthusiasts [for government support] but they represent a tiny, tiny minority of the electorate



Formula E has promoted itself in Westminster

compared to the demands of defence, education and the NHS.

"It might be a rough view to take [but] it's an excuse for doing nothing in my opinion."

A UKIP spokesperson did not rule out entirely the prospect of the party evaluating whether there could be some kind of support, financial or otherwise, for the much-fancied but issue-ravaged London Grand Prix.

"The costs for running such a thing are immense, just to make the roads safe enough," the spokesperson said. "It's the London elections next year. Let's see if we get UKIP voted onto the Greater London Authority (I do believe we will) and then take a closer look at this from the inside."

MOTORSPORT INDUSTRY THE MAIN BENEFICIARY

Labour shadow sports minister Clive Efford talked positively about the country's engineering industry.

Referencing a Motorsport Industry Association figure of 40,000 jobs sustained in the UK by the sport – "which includes 80 per

cent of the world's high-performance engineers" – Efford said the fact it "attracts many visitors who come to Britain to take part in or watch the many races and rallies" made "a vital contribution to local tourism economies".

"Britain is a leading nation in developing the technology for Formula 1 and many of the teams are based here in the UK," he continued. "The motorsport industry creates vital job opportunities in engineering, manufacturing, design and service sectors."

While not addressing what role a Labour government can play in preserving the impressive automotive legacy Britain has earned, Efford waxed lyrical about the state of motorsport in the country, claiming "it is clear that the sport has a long and positive future in all its forms".

But crucial to that future will be stability. What had previously existed as the Government Motorsport Unit, established under Labour, had been labelled unsuccessful by a report by the



Hamilton and Button examine a London GP circuit proposal in 2012



This is an area in which competition has directly been influenced by political movement.

“Their bloody-mindedness has pushed it through,” says the MSA’s Ben Taylor of Conservative MPs Ben Wallace and Ken Clarke.

“Closed-road motorsport is not a formality but the legislation is in place. We now have to get the Department of Transport to define exactly how it’s going to be done.

“It’s pretty much unprecedented, certainly in my experience.”

Taylor also pointed to the influence the Welsh government has in helping fund the British round of the World Rally Championship, Wales Rally GB, and the review undertaken by the Scottish government into rallying following last year’s Jim Clark Rally tragedy.

“The work in Scotland on the safety review has been instrumental in the past 12 months,” Taylor adds. “It gave positive recommendations to apply across the sport.”

The bottom line is the impact

“This government recognises the genuine value of the business” CHRIS AYLETT



Business Innovation and Skills Committee in April 2010.

Since then, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition’s business department, led by Vince Cable, has introduced credits that allow small- and medium-sized enterprises to claim back the expense of research and development against their tax. According to Motorsport Industry Association chief executive Chris Aylett, this has been crucial to the industry.

“This government has been immeasurably beneficial to the

business of motorsport compared with the previous government,” he argues. “They recognise the genuine value of the business we’re creating. The industry has had a very good five-year run.”

The MIA acts as the middle man between the motorsport industry and British government, and has played a key role in establishing and developing that relationship.

There are other areas in which government support has allowed the motorsport industry to thrive – export allowances mean UK businesses are suppliers to

championships such as Super GT in Japan, Argentinian touring cars and Australian V8 Supercars. In addition, offering a 60:40 funding split for resource grants (with the government providing the bigger portion) has allowed the likes of Delta Motorsport, Williams Advanced Engineering and Cosworth to perform R&D in areas relevant to motorsport that have wider gains elsewhere. This is painting with broad brushstrokes but Williams’s aerodynamic technology from Formula 1 is being used to make supermarket fridges more efficient...

CLOSED-ROAD PLAN THANKS TO GOVERNMENT

Not all state support needs to be financial, though. The MSA received significant support in its bid to change the Road Traffic Act and make it easier for closed-road motorsport events to take place.

government can have on motorsport runs deeper than is suggested on face value. That’s why fostering a positive relationship is crucial, and why the cliché ‘friends in high places’ is no less true for being often repeated.

“Can we have stability?” asks Aylett. “This current government has established a reputation where Britain is a country you want to deal with, to an unexpectedly good level.

“Continuing with that is the preferred option of business. We hope whoever gets in [in next week’s general election], it can be positive. A new government that doesn’t commit to that could completely change the face of the industry.”

AUTOSPORT contacted the five major nationwide parties – Labour, Liberal Democrats, Conservatives, UKIP and the Green Party – for this article, but only received responses from Labour and UKIP.

F1 PERFORMANCE

With four flyaway grands prix of the 2015 season completed, AUTOSPORT technical expert **GARY ANDERSON** gives his verdict on which teams are making headlines – and for what reason

The early races of a Formula 1 season always set the tone for what is to follow. We've had four races on four very different tracks, enough to give us a clear idea of where the teams stand. As usual, to analyse the pace I have taken the fastest individual lap by each team set over the weekend

and converted it into a percentage of the quickest overall. By doing this, it ensures that all four events are equally weighted. It shows that, while Ferrari's progress has made the headlines so far this season, it hasn't made as dramatic a step relative to Mercedes as you might think...



MERCEDES 1ST



Mercedes has had the quickest car on all four weekends so far, showing that it has developed well from last year. How much has been on the car side and how much on the engine is difficult to say. But when you are already on the top rung of the ladder and are closer to the limit, it's harder

to make gains so the team deserves all the credit it gets. The only thing that looks like it can deny Mercedes the constructors' title, and Lewis Hamilton a third drivers' title, is unreliability if it has to be too aggressive in its attempt to make improvements to the W06.



FERRARI 2ND

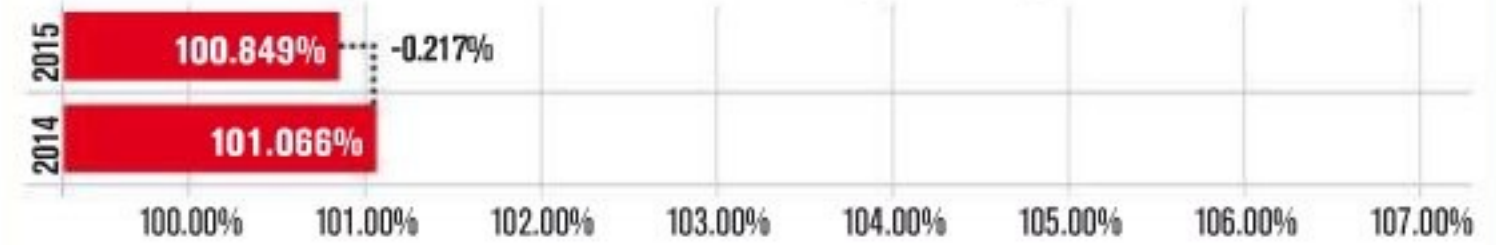


Ferrari has been the big success story of the season, but a look at the numbers shows that it still has some way to go on pace. Good tyre management relative to Mercedes is Ferrari's big strength, but in terms of pace it is still 0.849 per cent off.

but the engine deficit has reduced dramatically. Given Ferrari has three more engine-upgrade tokens to spend, it clearly has greater potential to improve than Mercedes.

The laptime gain relative to Mercedes has only been modest,

I don't believe that management changes have transformed the team just like that, but it's clear the change has given everyone a real shake-up.



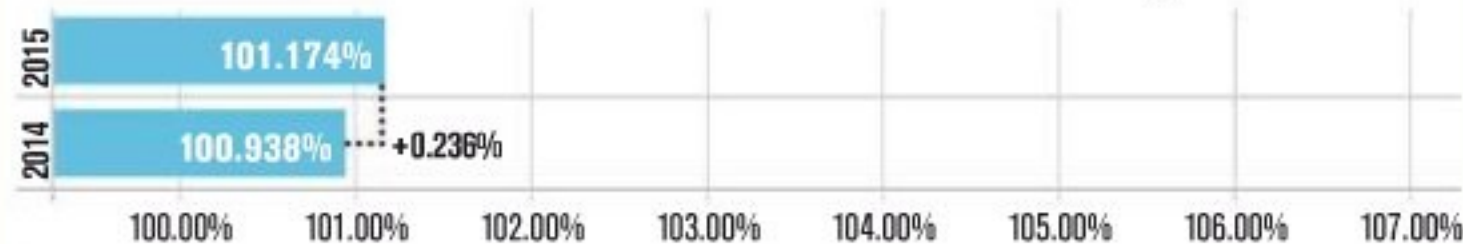
WILLIAMS 3RD



Williams has more or less stood still, and if anything gone backwards relative to Mercedes. There was a lot of excitement pre-season, but I never saw in the car anything like the step forward needed to fight right at the front. There have also been some errors made by the team, showing that there is still room for improvement.



and continue to be the third strongest team represents a good performance because it's very easy to go backwards. But equally, it's hard to see Williams moving forward.



RED BULL 4TH



Red Bull has been disappointing this year and, while Renault hasn't done the greatest job in the world with an engine that isn't that good and is unreliable, it does seem that the

minute anything goes wrong the daggers come out. That applies not just to Red Bull criticising Renault, but even cases such as Daniel Ricciardo's poor start in China, which was instantly put down to driver error.




The most damning statistic is that Red Bull, which has the same Renault engine as its junior team, Toro Rosso, but far greater resources, is only a third of a per cent faster. That's not good enough.




NCE ANALYSIS

LOTUS 5TH



Last year was a disaster for Lotus, and to its credit it has regrouped. The Mercedes engine has certainly helped, but the aim for the team has to be to take on Williams, which has the same engine.


The Lotus still doesn't look perfect on track, even though it's far better than last year's unpredictable car. And that's a reminder that Renault wasn't the sole cause of Lotus's struggles last year.



Lotus has had to go through a bit of pain over the past year or so and is rebuilding, but it now needs to close the gap to Williams over the rest of the season.


2015	101.881%	-0.947%
2014	102.828%	

TORO ROSSO 6TH




With young, inexperienced drivers, the Renault engine and a modest budget, there was every reason to expect Toro Rosso not to go so well. But the team has got its head down, made the most of what it's got and done a good job.

The team has set its sights on fifth place and while it's not quite there, the basis is there. Technical director James Key runs a good ship, although reliability is a real concern. I'm not sure exactly what the problem is but it's been a weakness on and off for some time and needs to be improved. To get results, you have to finish.




2015	101.960%	+0.138%
2014	101.822%	

SAUBER 7TH




Sauber has done a great job this year. Yes, it benefits from the Ferrari engine package, and that has helped it, but last year's car was also poor aerodynamically, so there's an improvement on the team side as well.

Sauber's young drivers are doing a decent job, particularly Felipe Nasr, but there's a question mark over budget. Does it have the resources to match the development rate of those it will be battling with as the season progresses?




2015	102.168%	-0.576
2014	102.744%	

FORCE INDIA 8TH




It's difficult to know what to say about Force India, which has dropped off dramatically. The car is not a step forward and the key now is development. There's a lot of talk about the big b-spec car that will be introduced for the Austrian GP, but that's not until late June.

The key is the windtunnel. Force India has moved into the Toyota windtunnel and it could be getting different results to its own. If its own windtunnel was being misleading, then there could be a big step in performance from this new direction. But if that isn't the case, it's going to be a long season for my old team.




2015	102.549%	+0.628%
2014	101.921%	

McLAREN 9TH




In calculating McLaren's performance figure for this year, I have disregarded the first race of the season in Australia because the car was so far off there that it wasn't representative. But I'm yet to see the signs of rapid improvement the team is claiming.

Everyone keeps talking about how good the car is, but we haven't seen a single quick lap from it yet. If McLaren can climb to fifth behind Red Bull from here, that will be good progress.




2015	102.899%	+1.495%
2014	101.404%	

MANOR 10TH



The fact that its 2014 car has slipped back so much shows the rate of development. Also, Will Stevens seems to be doing a very decent job and has kept his head down well in a tough situation.



2015	106.582%	+2.318%
2014	104.264%	

THE GREEN HELL

20

It started full of hope as Lotus Racing in 2010, but a series of blows meant it finally fell apart as Caterham at the end of last year.

JONATHAN NOBLE tells a sad story

After setting an unwanted record of 94 Formula 1 races with no points, Lotus Racing/Caterham ended its journey with an ongoing auction of its remaining assets. It was the final curtain for a team that had faced unpredictable challenges right from the beginning, including an amusing incident that came close to putting a roadblock on it even getting off the ground.

Back in the summer of 2009, a dream by Litespeed Formula 3 boss Nino Judge to enter F1 in 2010, pushed forward on the technical front by Mike Gascoyne, rested on getting funding from Air Asia head Tony Fernandes. The Malaysian entrepreneur was at the time a sponsor of Williams and in talks to buy the Brawn team. But there was an alternative plan on the table to help fund a new team, from scratch, under the Lotus banner.

Gascoyne was tasked with making a deal to procure Fernandes's support, and a crunch meeting was set up with FIA president Max Mosley and advisor Tony Purnell (who was overseeing the new-team entries for 2010) at the British Grand Prix. Gascoyne had arranged to meet Fernandes at the main roundabout outside Silverstone at 4pm on the Saturday.

Gascoyne takes up the story: "I walk out to the entry of Silverstone waiting for him to arrive and notice the traffic is one way – exit only! So I think, 'What do I do now?' ►





Caterham finally
went up in smoke
at the end of 2014



Gascoyne (l), with Fernandes, was start-up tech chief

GIBSON/LAT

“IT WAS A MAGICAL TIME, REALLY PURE. NO POLITICS. NO BULLSHIT”

MIKE GASCOYNE

► “I spoke to the head of traffic and told him, ‘I’ve got a very big problem. I’m meant to meet a sponsor, we’re going to set up an F1 team, and I can’t get him in because it’s one way. What am I going to do?’

“He replied, ‘Leave it with me.’”

The traffic chief commandeered a jeep and took Gascoyne out across the fields to Brackley – through normally-shut gates – to retrieve Fernandes from a petrol station. He then drove the pair right back to the paddock.

The battle to get Fernandes in to Silverstone was typical of the hurdles of those early days as the new team’s plans progressed. Just days after the British GP, the budget-cap plans that spawned the F1-team idea in the first place were abandoned following manufacturer breakaway threats.

Then Lotus missed out on the original list of teams to get an entry in July, but was told to keep preparing as Mosley got ready for F1 life after Toyota and BMW. In September, Lotus finally got the green light and the work really ramped up.

“The Monday after that announcement, four of us went to our Hingham factory,” recalls Gascoyne. “That was me, Silvi Schaumloeffel (Gascoyne’s partner), Paul Craig and Keith Saunt. We had an F1 team to organise and an empty factory. Silvi went to the desk to answer the phone and the boys looked at me and said, ‘What are we going to do?’

“I said to them, ‘Don’t worry. I’ve got a plan. I’m going to design it, Keith you’re going to make it, and Craig you do everything else. For the moment that’s it.’”

The ball was rolling and the drive to expand staff was helped by weekend trips Gascoyne would take



John Iley brought know-how from big boys McLaren

COATES/LAT

to Cologne to sign up out-of-work Toyota staff. “It was a magical time, really pure,” says Gascoyne. “No politics. No bullshit.”

While car progress to make the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix of 2010 was good, other things did not go the team’s way. Hopes of securing support from Malaysia (where Fernandes planned to move the team within a few years) were hit when a hoped-for sponsorship deal from Petronas went to Mercedes instead.

For Fernandes, now with no budget cap and no Petronas backing, F1 was suddenly going to be a lot more expensive.

Lotus’s 2010 car was everything that was expected considering the ludicrously short lead time. It qualified and it raced near the back of the field, but usually ahead of the other new teams, to secure the crucial 10th place in the constructors’ title race and carry momentum into ’11.

There were distractions over naming rights, which fuelled the Caterham name change for 2012. But a steady £55 million budget and a deal for Renault engines and Red Bull gearboxes that began in ’11 was the bedrock of a push to become a points-scoring team.

Caterham was never stronger than in the early races of 2012. Comfortably in front of Marussia – even lapping it on occasion – the midfield was within a whisker.

But close was not good enough for Fernandes, who was impatient to take some midfield scalps. That desire to find the silver bullet coincided with a perfect storm of events that would mark the beginning of the end.

By this stage, Gascoyne was gone. He had been involved in drawn-out court proceedings with Force India, relating



Petrov leads Mark Webber's Red Bull in 2012 – but only before being lapped



XPB IMAGES



XPB IMAGES





COATES/LAT

to IP over windtunnel models used by Aerolab in the creation of the original Lotus car. Although Gascoyne was cleared of any wrong-doing, the fact that the matter had gone to court was used by some as an excuse to change perceptions of him, especially those who were not endeared to his strong character, media popularity and love of the good times. Perhaps there were feelings from some within the team that getting rid of Gascoyne would help their own cause, especially since his power base was weaker after key ally Dieter Gass had departed in the winter of 2011.

In February 2012, Gascoyne was duly moved aside, with a new role as head of the Caterham Technical Group presented as a promotion. Gascoyne's effective removal from the team meant that technical chief Mark Smith was in charge, with new recruit John Iley, previously at McLaren, having been personally brought in by Fernandes.

Smith and Iley did not agree, however, on a key development path that was needed for 2012. Iley, convinced of the potential for huge gains, wanted the team to go down an expensive blown-floor route that Red Bull and McLaren had put to such good use. Smith, concerned that Caterham did not have the resources needed to make the blown-floor concept work properly, wanted to stick to the more-conventional aerodynamics that appeared to be paying off early that year.

Iley's signing meant a direct line of communication to Fernandes in the wake of Gascoyne's departure and got him the backing and resources he wanted. Caterham's blown-floor car duly appeared at the British GP. A ▶

**BIG
NUMBER**

5th

The highest position the team ran in during an F1 race – for a grand total of two laps.



FERRARO/LAT

Hingham base at least housed some good Lotuses



Facilities were sound but cashflow stymied growth



FERRARO/LAT

► wet weekend hampered the team's understanding of the updates, but the warning signs were there that the time and resources going into it did not justify the gains – plus it cost vital engine power.

Having shown significant pace improvement throughout the early campaign with a standard aero package – impressively halving the gap to the Q1 pacesetters at Valencia compared with 2011 – Caterham was further adrift at Silverstone. Smith pushed for the blown-floor concept to be dropped.

“I was totally convinced that abandoning it and adopting a conventional aero development route would be better for the team,” he says. “We couldn't model it, our windtunnel model didn't have the capability and the windtunnel didn't have the capability. We just didn't have a good handle on it.”

Iley stuck to his guns and Fernandes, desperate to believe there was a miracle step forward, never questioned the lack of gains. He stumped up ever more money in the hope of finding the breakthrough that never came. Insiders suggest that the team's annual budget jumped from £55 million to as much as £90 million.

Spending (boosted by the team earning proper constructors' championship income for the first time) and wages (needing to compete with what bigger teams could offer) had started to get out of control, as ambitions to progress meant the frugality of the early days evaporated. It was unsustainable without dramatic progress on track.

Having been lucky to scrape 10th place in the constructors' championship in the 2012 season finale in Brazil, new team principal Cyril Abiteboul was tasked with sorting things out. A merger with Marussia was briefly considered but then rejected by management. One version of events is that factory staff were not happy with the idea, especially after some found out they would be made redundant if it happened...

To boost its coffers, the team opted for pay drivers Giedo van der Garde (from GP2) and Charles Pic (jumping over from the Marussia line-up).


Hopes were that Abiteboul's links with Renault, allied to a road-car tie-up with Alpine, would secure free engines. Plus, Pic's presence offered the chance of big backing from oil company Total. Neither came off.

On the track, a focus on making the most of the opportunities offered by the 2014 switch to turbo engines, plus the fact that so much resource had been pumped into trying to get the 2012 blown-floor car to work, meant the '13 contender was nothing more than a carryover. It was hoped, however, that it would still be enough to scrape the 10th place needed to keep Caterham's commercial revenue.

When Marussia ended up half a second quicker in Australia, panic measures were taken. Resources originally devoted to 2014 were brought forward but, with van der Garde and Pic struggling, it was ultimately a lost cause. Money was getting tighter and there was the first evidence of bills not getting paid. This is why one-off funded tests such as Will Stevens's run at Silverstone were essential for the team to keep its head above water.

Adding to the trouble were the political turf wars that had hitherto rumbled beneath the surface becoming more obvious. Abiteboul and long-time Fernandes ally Riad Asmat did not see eye-to-eye. Plus the Iley/Smith/Jody Egginton axis that should have worked as one technical unit became fragmented as communication lines were changed under new team management.

The guiding light of Fernandes was fading too as he lost interest in bankrolling the operation. He had got involved with football team Queen's Park Rangers and it was dominating both his attention and his chequebook. Caterham suddenly found itself trapped in the scenario of needing more money to progress, but there being less cash available because it had overspent. ►



“I WAS TOTALLY CONVINCED THAT A CONVENTIONAL AERO ROUTE WAS THE BEST THING”

MARK SMITH

By Valencia in 2012, the Caterham team was in the mix for Q2

CATERHAM/LOTUS IN F1 2010-2014

94
STARTS

11TH BEST FINISH

0 POINTS

10TH BEST
CHAMPIONSHIP

9182
RACED LAPS





Fernandes promised a future to Kovalainen

COATES/LAT

“THE TEAM WAS STARTING TO GROW, BUT THE FUNDING WAS BEING REDUCED”

HEIKKI KOVALAINEN



Crucially, Caterham lost its fight for 10th with Marussia in 2013

26

► As original driver Heikki Kovalainen, who returned for some practice outings in 2013, reflects: “They realised they were spending a bit too much. And by the time the team was starting to grow and needed to make another couple of steps, so required a bit of extra funding, actually the funding was being reduced.

“It was just going the wrong way for the development of the team. Everything slowed down. The development of the car slowed down and the progress stopped.”

It wasn't just money though, for Caterham's management made some wrong decisions of their own too. It has been suggested by several good sources that a Mercedes customer engine deal had been offered for 2014. While Williams saw the performance and cost benefits (as much as 50 per cent cheaper), Abiteboul's loyalty to Renault, allied to ambitious road-car plans, kept him aligned to the French car manufacturer.

Another blow came at the end of 2013 when Caterham failed to overhaul Marussia for 10th in the constructors' battle. While the immediate loss of around £10 million in prize money would not be fatal, it meant that the pressure was really on for 2014: if Caterham failed to finish in the top 10 for the second consecutive season then it would lose valuable Column 1 money, worth around £25 million. That would be the death knell for the team.

A more competitive 2014 was essential, but all that was coming was bad news. Ahead of the new turbo-engine era, the indications coming out of Renault's Viry-Chatillon test beds were not encouraging. Its teams were being told to brace for the worst.



Cyril Abiteboul's links with Renault weren't the lifeline the team wanted

COATES/LAT

On January 21, Caterham held a media event at its Leaffield factory to announce that it had signed Marcus Ericsson and Kamui Kobayashi. Fernandes was there that day and originally had not been due to talk. But, being the media-savvy man he is, he couldn't help himself in joining the press conferences. It was there that his frustrations of the rising financial burden were unleashed.

“If we're at the back I don't think I'm going to carry on,” he told the media. “Nothing is set in stone, but after five years with no points there is a limit to one's patience, money, motivation, etc.”

Fernandes's comments sent shockwaves through the factory and, although it was probably not his intention, it seemed to act as confirmation that he was pulling the plug and the team was going to be sold.

Matters were not helped when the team's 2014 challenger fell far short. Beyond being the ugliest of the new generation of cars, it was far from the best that had been produced either. Senior technical figures started distancing themselves from what had gone wrong. A difficult start to the season, which included Kobayashi's spectacular Turn 1 exit in Melbourne, pointed to the end.

In Malaysia for race two, Fernandes deliberately stayed away from the track. But a 13th- and 14th-placed finish in the race prompted him to hold a party for the team in downtown Kuala Lumpur on the Sunday night.

Those present talked of Fernandes seeming to be in a 'low mood' about F1. Their fears were borne out, with the flow of funding stopping and behind-the-scenes moves being made to sell the team.



COATES/LAT



FERRARU/LAT



ETHERINGTON/LAT

Things got even worse though. In Monaco, when Jules Bianchi finished ninth for Marussia, Caterham's fate was sealed as suddenly the nightmare of losing that £25 million prize money became real. Without a buyer the team was dead, and just days after the Austrian GP, when Caterham's dire situation became evident as senior staff were told for the first time that their wages were going to be paid late because there was no money, new owners were parachuted in (see panel, right).

Despite their best endeavours, and Colin Kolles's ruthless survival abilities, Caterham could not be saved. Without the FOM prize money, and with large debt, there was ultimately nothing for its administrator to sell.

The Caterham dream died in the messiest of ways with mud-slinging, a lot of bitterness and regret.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and perhaps it can be argued that, with the direction F1 had been heading in, the Lotus/Caterham dream was doomed before a wheel had been turned.

From the moment F1's 2010 budget cap died, and Petronas aligned itself with Mercedes, the game changed. One source said: "Tony totally believed that it would all be backed by Malaysian companies. What shocked him was when Brawn sold to Mercedes. But what screwed him was when they announced Petronas.

"He should have walked away at that point – or at worst sold it after the first year. He shouldn't have believed he could compete as a privateer. Perhaps Fernandes lacked such ruthlessness, which is said to be a vital ingredient to succeed in F1. There are plenty of stories suggesting ►

DID YOU KNOW?

Ten different drivers raced for the team in F1

Driver	Starts
1 Heikki Kovalainen	59
2 Jarno Trulli	36
3 Vitaly Petrov	19
= Charles Pic	19
= Giedo van der Garde	19
6 Marcus Ericsson	16
7 Kamui Kobayashi	15
8 Karun Chandhok	1
= Will Stevens	1
= Andre Lotterer	1



COATES/LAT

THE TAKEOVER THAT WASN'T



Kolles (l) and Albers failed to rescue the team

Just days before last year's British Grand Prix, the money had run out for Caterham.

Tony Fernandes's disenchantment with Formula 1 and decision to offload the team meant funding had dried up in the week after the preceding Austrian GP. Without fresh investment, the team was dead in the water.

Following the intervention of Bernie Ecclestone, rescue came in the form of Swiss investment consortium Engavest backed by Middle Eastern money, which agreed a deal to buy Caterham from Fernandes and the other shareholders on June 29.

The interests of Engavest were represented by Colin Kolles, who appointed former F1 driver Christijan Albers as team principal, and Manfredi Ravetto as his deputy and general manager.

Their mission was simple: reduce the huge overheads and throw as much as they could at trying to recover 10th place in the constructors' championship. Around £25 million of prize money – the difference between surviving and not – rested on it.

Kolles's brazen attitude inevitably caused initial unease: but a push to invest in updates for the Belgian GP and decision to hand Andre Lotterer a race debut suggested that this was not just a simple money-grabbing operation. But the dark cloud of previous debt, and spending cuts, put it on a collision course with staff and bailiffs. The laying off of 40 staff in July prompted legal threats, and visits from the bailiffs to the Leaffield, Oxfordshire factory became more frequent. In October a number of items were seized.

By this stage Albers (who at one stage was checking at the front gate what time people arrived for work) was gone, with Ravetto made team principal.

The new owners were fighting wars on many fronts, amid confusion over shareholding as well as the ownership and responsibility of various Caterham-related companies. That prompted big questions about which assets had and had not been transferred to whom.

When the administrators were called in, the juggling act of Kolles and Ravetto to keep things going came to a swift end. They had no other option but to walk away.

There was a brief return in Abu Dhabi last year, with administrator Finbarr O'Connell acting as team boss following a crowd-fund appeal. But that was to be the final hurrah.

Efforts to find a new buyer were nigh on impossible with no commercial prize money on offer. Time was called early this year to bring the Caterham dream to an end, with all that's left now a few memorabilia items on offer in auction.



COATES/LAT

GIBSON/GETTY



COATES/LAT

HEIKKI KOVALAINEN ON CATERHAM

How would you judge the progress Caterham made during its time in F1?

I saw a massive improvement from the structural point of view. Even from the beginning, under Mike Gascoyne's command, we had the fundamental parts in place that you need in F1, and they were growing all the time that we were there. What was probably evident and what was probably slightly disappointing was that progress was slow.

Did Tony Fernandes have the right personality to run an F1 team?

Tony was very excited about the project in the beginning and perhaps thought it would be easier to make progress and to be able to run an F1 team with a limited budget. Perhaps that was a bit of a naive thought, thinking he could achieve results with a limited budget like he had done with his airline.

How do you rate the job Mike Gascoyne did?

Mike did a good job actually. I think he got more out of the team and the people than the management did after they shuffled it.

Do you regret your time there?

Now, looking back, I think I stayed loyal to the team for too long. At the end of 2011, after my two years there, I felt that I had restored a little bit of the potential I had. I had some offers from bigger teams, but I was promised by Tony and Caterham that the team was going forward and it had what it needed to make the next steps. So I decided to stay loyal.

Looking back now, I think that was the wrong choice. It's all done and dusted now, but one disappointing thing that bothers me a little bit is that I never got a thank you from anyone in the team publicly. I got a text message from the management [after 2012] saying that they were going to replace me with a pay driver and that was it. So I was quite disappointed about that. It left a bit of a bitter taste perhaps.



“THE GREAT THING IS WE CAN DREAM AND SAY, ‘MAYBE WE HAVE A CHANCE’”

TONY FERNANDES IN 2009

► that, when he was left alone to sort negotiations – either with drivers or other team partners – he came back having come off second best in the process.

Perhaps the inability to be a tough negotiator came from a personality that quickly falls in love with people and wants to believe everything positive he is told. Those who are willing to buddy up with him found that by doing so they could increase their influence.



STALEY/LAT



DUNBAR/LAT

GILHAM/GETTY



THE FATE OF THE 'NEW' TEAMS



Had Caterham been unique in failing to survive in Formula 1 after the collapse of the budget cap, then the blame could have been laid squarely on its management.

But the fact that none of the new teams who were handed entries for 2010 were on the grid in Australia this year says much about how tough things have been for all of them.

The first to collapse was USF1, which didn't even get as far as the first race when financial shortcomings and a lack of progress in developing its car meant it had to abort its F1 plans before they even began.

Campos did manage to race, but without its founder Adrian Campos. He moved aside under new owner Jose Ramon Carabante before the campaign began. Colin Kolles was made team principal of the renamed HRT and moved heaven and earth to ensure the team not only began racing but stayed alive in the early years.

Kolles was gone by the end of 2011, and replaced by Luiz Perez Sala as the team set about a move to Spain under new owners Thesan Capital.

As costs started to bite, Thesan looked for a way out, but new buyers could not be found. The team died at the end of 2012 when it was left off the '13 entry list.

The only other team to make it to the grid was Virgin, which after transforming to Marussia has now returned as Manor in a bid to stay in F1. It failed to compete in the final three races of last year because of lack of funds.

Ultimately, all the failures can be put down to lack of money, which is why the budget cap would have helped their cause.

But the collapse of cost control was not the only reason for struggles. Rising costs, allied to F1's revenue-distribution system that heavily penalises any team not finishing in the top 10, perhaps ultimately meant, at best, that only one of the 2010 contenders would ever have a long-term future. And even that's not guaranteed.

Surrounded by people telling him how great he was, Fernandes never knew when things had started to drift.

Ultimately Caterham lived and died through Fernandes. His image was tarnished amid the turmoil of the ending, but equally he deserves credit for building up a team that in early 2012 appeared to be on the cusp of something big.

Smith, who left the team in May 2014, reckoned that midfield respectability was well within reach if the team had abandoned the blown floor in '12.

"We could have been in the midfield in the latter half of 2012," he said. "The group of people and the resources we had available at Caterham were no different to Force India. We were at least the equal of Force India.

"It was compounded in 2014, which was the final death knell, when the Renault power unit was not up to the job. "But if we hadn't lost ground with the aero development in 2012, and had had a Mercedes engine, then I think we would not have been competing any differently to how Force India were last year. So that's really where the team should have and could have been."

Fernandes could not be tracked down for his views on the saga, but it's interesting to reflect now on his optimism when he first went public with his F1 plans back in 2009.

There was confidence about the solid foundations that his backing, allied to falling costs in F1, would give the then Lotus Racing team. "The great thing about it is that we can dream in the morning and say, 'Maybe we have a chance'," he said.

He's right, it did have a chance – right up until the middle of 2012. But in F1, not all dreams come true. ❧

BIG NUMBER

29,272

Number of miles the team racked up in races without scoring a single point.





CAN MERCEDES ESCAPE THE DTM WILDERNESS?

The DTM's most successful manufacturer hasn't won a title since 2010.

MITCHELL ADAM asks whether the Three-Pointed Star can recover

Mercedes won more Formula 1 races in 2014 than it has in its domestic motorsport bread and butter, the DTM, since Paul di Resta secured its last championship in 2010. Admittedly, the dominant F1 programme would skew just about any figure you care to find. But for a manufacturer with such a proud history of success, four seasons without a title and 11 race wins from 40 starts

represents more than a lean spell. Especially when you take into account that Mercedes claimed six drivers' and nine manufacturers' championships between 2000 and '10.

Since then, it has watched Audi take two of each and, perhaps more tellingly, BMW re-enter the series after 20 years away and do the same.

BMW's first titles came in its comeback season, when Bruno Spengler beat Gary Paffett in the final race to win the 2012 championship by just four points. Paffett actually led by 11 with two races remaining, but – in what has become a theme since – Mercedes struggled in the penultimate round at Valencia. Since then, Mercedes has been a distant third in the three-horse race, finishing more than 100 points behind manufacturers' champion BMW in 2013 and nearly 200 off Audi last year.

"Gary came close in 2012 with a completely new car. He was able to fight until the very last race," says Ulrich Fritz, the new CEO of HWA, which is



Fritz must turn around HWA's DTM fortunes

responsible for engineering Mercedes' DTM cars. "But if you look back to that, I think we have been struggling for performance from that day onwards."

Mercedes' top driver in the 2013 and '14 standings has been Christian Vietoris, in fourth, as the marque won five of a possible 20 races. Vietoris's 2014 victory came in the wet at Oschersleben and featured a strategic gamble after starting 16th, while fellow Merc men Robert Wickens and Pascal Wehrlein also won in the wet, albeit from pole. In the dry races, no Mercedes driver finished on the podium.

"We struggled most in high-speed corners, I would say," Vietoris reflects. "Mercedes had two ▶



BMW ruled the roost in '14, with five wins

► really difficult years. We won all of the difficult races last year, the wet and mixed-up races, but we couldn't score enough points in the easy races."

A lot has happened in recent months to try to rectify that, the catalyst being leaving Hockenheim's 2014 season opener without a single driver finishing inside the top 10. HWA technical director and CEO Gerhard Ungar was relieved of his post and replaced by Fritz. Having only joined HWA's board as a director six months earlier, from Mercedes' Customer Sports arm and AMG Driving Academy, reporting to motorsport chief Toto Wolff and rebuilding the DTM programme became Fritz's new mission.

"It's difficult to really judge because I haven't been part of the team during all those years," he says of the lean run. "However, of course we have taken a lot of effort to analyse the situation and also find the root cause for us, as to why we didn't perform last year especially."

Work has centred around two primary opportunities – a new generation C-Coupe and personnel. Feedback on the new car has been positive since it debuted late last year, and Fritz has overseen a major restructure of Mercedes' DTM programme, to the point that during a 15-minute conversation he uses the term "new team" several times, almost subconsciously.

"We had the possibility to rehomologate the car until the [September 2014] race at Zandvoort, and aero has been one of the key areas. Now it is on us to really understand the new car, to really figure out the working window," he notes.

"Also the focus was to put together a modern motorsport team, which is a combination of the guys who have been a long time on board who



"WE MUST NOT EXPECT A WONDER CAR"

HWA BOSS ULRICH FRITZ

have a lot of knowledge with the company and have gained a lot of success with the company, but also matching that up with external expertise of guys coming in from other teams."

Fritz estimates five to seven new faces have joined HWA, and says he "more or less" has everything in place. The group includes new head of race operations Michael Wilson, recruited last summer from the High Performance Powertrains arm behind Mercedes' dominant F1 power units,

indicative of a focus on learning from new insights and perspectives.

"The goal was definitely to bring in a lot of people who first of all understand their job, understand how the structure in a modern racing team would look like, and how we could approach different issues," Fritz says.

"To also bring in a new perspective, driving a change in process – this was really important. Michael is one guy who knows the brand, knows the company.

"Others got new positions and we thought we needed to focus more on engineering, and understanding and designing the car. I'm confident that through the last weeks and months we have done quite a reasonable job there and have got our structures together.

"Now the challenge, as always if you form a new team, is that they get used to each other, that they are accustomed to each other and have the family approach, which is important to get high performance out of the team."

As you would expect, Vietoris speaks positively

NEW RACE FORMATS

It's out with the old and in with the older in 2015. For the first time since 2002, each DTM weekend will feature two races with the reintroduction of a Saturday sprint, a number of which will be run as twilight races over the summer.

Pitstops will be optional in the 40-minutes-plus-one-lap affair. But with organisers ditching option tyres and with the durability of the standard-compound Hankook, it's unlikely that drivers will pit. Sunday's race will be 20 minutes longer and involve a mandatory tyre change.

Both races will be worth equal points, with grids set by stand-alone qualifying sessions.

DRS usage has also been revamped in a bid to improve the quality of the on-track product. In 2014, drivers could activate the system once when they started a lap within two seconds of the car ahead.



They'll need to be closer this year – within one second – but they'll get three cracks a lap, and the angle of reduction is also more generous, now set at 18 degrees rather than 16.

"You will need to be very close to catch the

one-second window. But if you are close enough you will manage to pass with three shots per lap," Audi's Mattias Ekstrom predicts. "In the past the single shot was no guarantee."



Vietoris won at a wet Oschersleben last year



Di Resta was Merc's last champ – in 2010



ART has won in F3 and GP2 (below)

GRIFITHS/LAT

ART'S ARRIVAL

Few teams boast a record in their chosen domain like ART Grand Prix in single-seaters, and in 2015 it enters the DTM with Mercedes.

ART's links with the manufacturer date back to its Formula 3 days, during which time boss Frederic Vasseur admits it almost entered the DTM. "We won something like 100 races together and in 2008 we were quite close to making the step. But, to be honest, I was not very confident about the structure of the team," he says.

He's more confident seven years later about what is still "a big step", and feels the structure of the DTM, with HWA overseeing all four Mercedes squads, will help the learning process.

"We are working together, the Mercedes teams, and that approach is a little bit different compared to GP2, where you are working alone in your garage," Vasseur surmises.

"We are a team of eight cars, and the first target is to put Mercedes on top. The approach is a little bit different for us, but it's very helpful to be in this situation."

While Vasseur says none of the ART crew has DTM experience – most worked on its McLaren GT programme – and Lucas Auer is a rookie, the other driver, 2005 champion Gary Paffett, is a major asset.

"I have known Gary for 15 years perhaps, from F3, and it was very important to have this kind of driver with huge experience and able to be the leader of the team," he says.

"Not just in terms of pace in the car; I need someone in the team to push on the mechanics, or the engineers or me, at some point, because he has been involved more than anybody else in the project.

"It goes perfectly that he can be open in the discussions with me, to push on the team to move forward."



Vasseur (l) is ready for DTM move now

STALEY/LAT

of his employer's changes, and conveys an added emphasis on detail in the squad's procedures. "It's a big difference to what we had last year and a few years ago," he says. "I'm not saying it was bad; it's a different atmosphere in the team and it feels like a small Formula 1 team.

"We've got a lot of meetings, a lot more people are involved and it's down to detail. If it takes a few minutes longer than in past years, so all of the drivers and engineers can explain themselves in detail, that's good. You get a different approach, which is the biggest difference overall."

While the DTM without Mercedes would be unrecognisable, the upswing of its F1 team has coincided with its DTM downturn. Now, even though Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg won't race on German soil this year, it has a world championship-winning F1 squad to splash across showrooms and marketing collateral.

Questions were asked when Mercedes dropped to entering six cars in 2012, which was upped to seven in '14 and eventually – having raised the ire of Audi and BMW by suggesting as recently as September that it might not – the expected eight again this season. A new team has also joined the fold – single-seater giant ART Grand Prix – and, while the extra entry and team indicates Mercedes is putting more resources into the DTM in '15, Fritz stresses the focus has been on people power rather than euros.

"Bringing eight cars to the grid is not cheaper than having seven cars on the grid, especially if you have one team more," he says.

"But I would say that most of the changes we have made are not down to investing a lot of money, it's also getting the right people and the right processes in place, and also having the high-performance culture. This does not really cost money but it will put you on another performance level."

The performance level Mercedes reaches will ultimately be determined by how competitive its 2015 challenger is. Vietoris was trusted with the new-specification car at Zandvoort, before his team-mates got their hands on it for Hockenheim's season finale. That didn't result in a Mercedes romp, with di Resta the best finisher in fourth, but the feedback was positive.

A winter of fine-tuning in pre-season testing has followed, but how much of a step

Mercedes has taken in relation to BMW and Audi is the great unknown.

"It feels strong. I feel like we've taken a step forward," Vietoris surmises. "The car is reacting to the changes we can do, which wasn't always the case last year. If we do some changes on the car it actually goes faster, so that's positive."

While some of those changes are still being explored, one thing that may play into Mercedes' hands is the DTM doing away with the option tyre for 2015, a compound its drivers generally struggled to make last.

"The car is a little bit out of balance, I would say," Vietoris offers. "It's not totally driveable, so we still can make some steps forward. Testing is very limited and I think there is still something in the back [end], which we need to find.

"We found it very challenging to keep the option tyres up over whole stint. Now we'll be doing 40 minutes on one set of [the primary] tyres, so it's still a challenge, but the harder compound was strong last year already for us."

Motorsport is a results business and Fritz was given the scope to overhaul Mercedes' DTM programme to end its barren run. This weekend's opener at Hockenheim essentially marks the end of his first 12 months in charge, and will provide the first real sign as to whether Mercedes can get back to its winning ways, or whether it will face another stint in the wilderness. Given the limited room to move, Fritz is understandably realistic.

"Ultimately, where we started last season, we were one second off the pace," he says. "The DTM is incredibly tight and competitive – one second isn't much, but it's a world.

"I think we have to take into consideration how far we were off and I hope the homologation process helped us to reduce this gap, but I think again we only had a few months to really make this change happen.

"We must not expect, especially with the tight regulations of the DTM, that you can build a wonder car there in this time – this is definitely not possible. I think we have made a step, but it's not like other guys need to be afraid that this will outperform everything that's on the track from their side."

Wonder car or not, Mercedes can ill afford another season of struggle. ❧

RUNNERS AND

BMW

BMW TEAM RMG

1 MARCO WITTMANN (D)

Wittmann started his second DTM season with a win and ended it as champion. His campaign was built on victories, four of them in fact, and off-season stability means he begins 2015 as the hunted.



BMW TEAM RMG

36 MAXIME MARTIN (B)

The Belgian exceeded expectations when he finished seventh as a rookie, including a dominant victory in Moscow. Year two in the DTM is about spending more time at the front and less in the midfield.



BMW TEAM MTEK

7 BRUNO SPENGLER (CDN)

Between 2006 and '13, and including the '12 title, Spengler finished in the top five, so 11th last year was a significant downturn. After a lacklustre and troubled end to '14, he'll be keen to bounce back.



BMW TEAM MTEK

16 TIMO GLOCK (D)

The ex-F1 man ended his first DTM season with a win at Hockenheim, so expectations were high this time last year. What followed was 16th, sixth of the eight BMWs. Looking for more in year three.



MERCEDES

ART GRAND PRIX

2 GARY PAFFETT (GB)

There's no way to sugar-coat Paffett's worst-ever year in the DTM. The former champ only scored points twice, but the new Merc and a switch to series newcomer ART should provide a new lease of life.



ART GRAND PRIX

22 LUCAS AUER (A)

Another single-seater hotshot joining the DTM, Auer has the added challenge of racing with its newest team. But with Paffett alongside, he could hardly have a better team-mate from which to learn.



HWA AG

3 PAUL DI RESTA (GB)

After leaving the DTM for F1 as champion in 2010, di Resta endured a frustrating comeback season. But he turned in some fine drives when the troubled Merc allowed, providing a decent platform for 2015.



HWA AG

6 ROBERT WICKENS (CDN)

Belying his eventual 12th in the standings, Wickens dragged the Mercedes to places it didn't deserve on occasion last year, including a win, a pair of poles and second to Wittmann in laps led for the year.



AUDI

AUDI SPORT TEAM ABT SPORTSLINE

5 MATTIAS EKSTROM (S)

Double champion Ekstrom was ultimately Wittmann's closest challenger after winning 2014's last two races. Given his strategy skills, he'll miss the added option-tyre variable but is well-placed to lead Audi's charge.



AUDI SPORT TEAM ABT SPORTSLINE

17 MIGUEL MOLINA (E)

Molina was one of the DTM's best qualifiers in 2014 but, other than a podium finish in Hungary and a pair of fastest laps, he didn't end the year with much to show for it, down in 17th place.



AUDI SPORT TEAM ABT SPORTSLINE

27 ADRIEN TAMBAY (F)

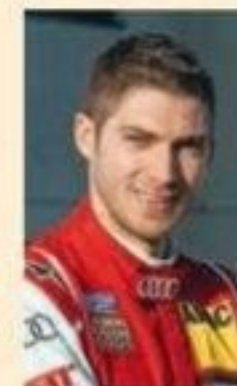
Started 2014 well, with pole and third at Hockenheim, and was fifth in the points before copping a hit from Rockenfeller in Moscow. Results dried up in the year's second half, but the potential is there.



AUDI SPORT TEAM ABT SPORTSLINE

48 EDOARDO MORTARA (I)

Without a win since 2012, Mortara managed fifth in the points last year despite never really challenging for a win. He turned some bad grid positions into good races and vice versa, but has the pace to do more.



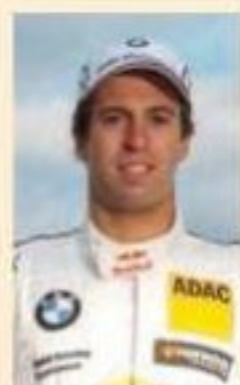
RIDERS

THE DTM ROSTER IS PACKED WITH TALENT, ARGUABLY MORE SO THAN ANY SERIES IN THE WORLD. MITCHELL ADAM GUIDES YOU THROUGH THE TEAMS AND DRIVERS

BMW TEAM SCHNITZER

13 ANTONIO FELIX DA COSTA (P)

The ex-single-seater man's first DTM campaign was better than 21st in the points suggests. Got up to speed quickly and qualified in the top five at the first three rounds, but couldn't maintain that in the races.



BMW TEAM SCHNITZER

77 MARTIN TOMCZYK (D)

The former champion bounced back from his worst DTM campaign in 2013 to finish sixth last year, but is still yet to win a race for BMW. Raced better than he qualified, so fixing his one-lap form is the key.



BMW TEAM RBM

18 AUGUSTO FARFUS (BR)

Farfus fell from winning three races and being a title contender in 2013 to spending more time in the midfield in '14. Needs to get his mojo back to avoid dropping further down the pecking order.



BMW TEAM RBM

31 TOM BLOMQUIST (GB)

Split Esteban Ocon and Max Verstappen in F3 in 2014, but he changes direction this year. Has settled in well, topping a day of the final pre-season test at Oschersleben. Chance for a win during his rookie year?



HWA AG

8 CHRISTIAN VIETORIS (D)

The most-consistent Mercedes driver in 2014, as in '13, Vietoris also joined the winners at Oschersleben. Improving his qualifying efforts after averaging 15.70 last year represents the next big step.



HWA AG

94 PASCAL WEHRLEIN (D)

Following an anonymous rookie season, Wehrlein made major inroads during his second year in the DTM and took a maiden win at Lausitzring. His 2015 progress will come down to Merc's off-track efforts.



MUCKE MOTORSPORT

12 DANIEL JUNGCADELLA (E)

Entered the DTM at the same time as Wehrlein after beating him to the European F3 crown, but is yet to fire a shot in the series. With five points finishes in two years, he's out for a much bigger 2015.



MUCKE MOTORSPORT

84 MAXIMILIAN GOTZ (D)

Wedge between Nico Rosberg and Sebastian Vettel on a list of German Formula BMW champs, Gotz has starred recently in GTs, taking the 2014 Blancpain Sprint Series crown. Now he gets a shot at the DTM.



AUDI SPORT TEAM PHOENIX

10 TIMO SCHEIDER (D)

The two-time champion has drifted in recent years and, while ninth with a single podium makes 2014 look like a quiet year, three DNFs did the damage. Less of those and a first win since '10 will be his target.



AUDI SPORT TEAM PHOENIX

99 MIKE ROCKENFELLER (D)

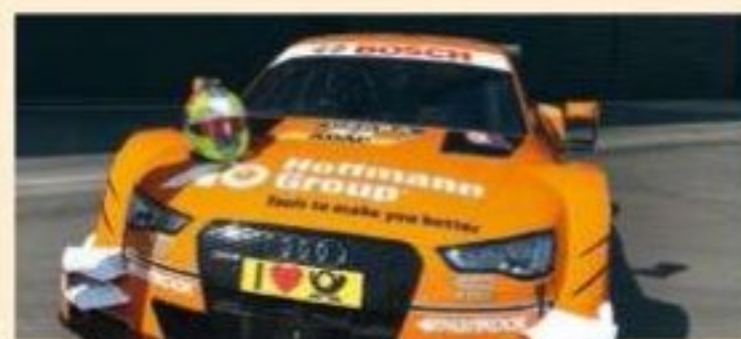
Failed to win a race last year as reigning champion – safety cars worked against him at Moscow (before punting Tambay) and Zandvoort – but still took third overall. Will be there or thereabouts again.



AUDI SPORT TEAM ROSBERG

44 JAMIE GREEN (GB)

Averaged P5 in the points across eight seasons with Mercedes, so 11th in 2013 and 10th in '14 means Green's switch to Audi hasn't met expectations. Pace not a problem, just needs better luck and fewer errors.



AUDI SPORT TEAM ROSBERG

51 NICO MULLER (CH)

The GP3 and FR3.5 race winner only scored points once in his rookie campaign, which he ended as the lowest Audi driver. He did show flashes of speed, and topped 2015's first official test at Estoril.



Domenicali presents Charles Leclerc with his trophy at the Silverstone FIA F3 opener



DOMENICALI

THE GARNISH ON BERGER

Ex-Ferrari team boss Stefano Domenicali has replaced Gerhard Berger as head of the FIA Single Seater Commission. He outlines his plans to **MARCUS SIMMONS**

Stefano Domenicali is on a roll. In fact, he seems to be permanently on a roll, a lightning-fast waterfall of words gushing from the mouth of the former Ferrari team principal – now Gerhard Berger’s replacement as the president of the FIA Single Seater Commission – as if he’s commentating on a thrilling climax to the 4.25 at Kempton Park. “We have to be very careful,” he says at 10 times the speed the average Englishman would deliver

such a portentous phrase. “We must not underestimate the automotive approach of the young generation. It’s very easy for them to see cars as a commodity or just as part of a need to move. Here, we have to make sure that motorsport is something coming from a passion, because if you lose that, that would be a problem.”

“That’s also a challenge for the manufacturers for the future, and that time is coming very quickly. We have a duty in the federation to make sure that the passion is applied in the right way – not just using simulators [games], but on track, performing, giving them the chance to race, using new media as a contact because it’s part of the new story, but on the other hand making sure that the traditional media have the chance to develop stories, to explain the situation. That’s why I believe that the role of all of us [in the sport], with different positions, is crucial.”

Domenicali has arrived in his new role, dovetailing it with his latest day job looking after

‘new business’ at Audi, with a clear mandate to continue the work Berger put in place. The Austrian only intended to take the helm of the Commission for a year as a favour to his old Ferrari team boss, FIA president Jean Todt, but ended up with a three-year tenure, saying he wanted to step down but needed to find the right person to succeed him. Domenicali, whose time at Maranello dated back to when Berger was racing for the Scuderia, and who served under Todt at the squad, is that man.

His appointment has been almost universally welcomed, and AUTOSPORT gets two bites at the Domenicali cherry during the opening round of the FIA’s Formula 3 European Championship, supporting the Silverstone 6 Hours. First there’s a general media gathering, then he makes himself available to us for an exclusive.

“Gerhard called me – we have known each other for many years,” he explains. “I worked for Mr Todt for more than 15 years, and because of my passion for motorsport, and because I think we can do something really important, I said, ‘Thank you very much, I will do it’, and do the work Gerhard started, and try to move forward.”

Contrary to what you might have thought, Domenicali didn’t live in an F1 ivory tower, oblivious to any other form of motorsport (see, erm, most other F1 team principals): “We created the Ferrari Driver Academy and that was for two reasons. One, from the Ferrari perspective, to have young, talented drivers to become one day Ferrari drivers. Secondly, I was working closely with the Italian federation to promote the sport,



“YOU CANNOT CONCENTRATE ONLY ON THE TOP. THE BASIS OF IT HAS TO BE SOLID”

STEFANO DOMENICALI

because it was important with the role of Ferrari to make something happen.

“That was also the reason why last year the Italian federation was the first to launch F4. When you are a fan of motorsport you know that you cannot only concentrate on the top. The basis has to be solid.”

That basis, in FIA-world, is already looking pretty solid. The governing body is happy with the work Berger put in on what is now a super-strong European F3 series, as well as the framework for Formula 4, which is streamlining the complex and confusing network of junior single-seater categories.

Domenicali’s biggest job at the moment is to create the concept for the new FIA Formula 2 Championship, something he hopes will be clear within the next few weeks. ▶



NATIONAL F3: A WAY BACK?

Formula 3's current regulations are locked in until the end of 2017, with a new generation of cars scheduled to appear in '18. What will happen to all the current equipment? Stefano Domenicali is eyeing a home for the cars in a revival of national F3, which pretty much died out for '15 with the end of the road for the British and German series.

"To have the possibility of what I would call F3 Classic, in certain markets where the will and the need is there, why not?" he says. "In my view that would have to be national, not international, otherwise it will get mixed up in the path of what we're doing. Before the change in regulations I would not see that as a possibility. After? Yes."

But, asks AUTOSPORT, wouldn't the name 'F3 Classic' be a bit of a turn-off, sounding like something you'd trailer up your old Argo JM6 for? "Oh... I said 'Classic'. You know why? Because it has to be clear that the F3 European Championship is the main one. As a federation we don't want to stop people who want to drive, but that word is just to make sure you understand that there is a clear path."

Hmm, presses AUTOSPORT, what about calling it 'F3 Lights'? "Yeah we'll discuss it," Domenicali concedes. "We'll call you and then we'll discuss it!"

► He is open-minded about how that may evolve, but personally favours smaller, turbocharged engines. He is also keen to involve as many of the sport's traditional manufacturers as possible. In other words, the two-litre, four-cylinder turbocharged powerplants to be introduced to the DTM in 2017, and already used in Japan's Super Formula (with Toyota and Honda) and Super GT (Toyota, Honda and Nissan) look just the job...

Think about that: add Audi, BMW and Mercedes to those three Japanese manufacturers; consider that each of those six giants has a strong track record in supporting young drivers, many with official junior teams. We could be onto something mighty here. AUTOSPORT is liking this (albeit by putting two plus two plus two together and coming up with single-seater nirvana). But... what about controlling the costs?

"We know motorsport is not a cheap business – it's not like athletics where you just put your running shoes on and go out," says Domenicali. "You need the technical structure under you, and part of that cost has to be controlled and be sensible. I think that what has been done so far on F4 and F3 is sensible and correct."

So, at the moment, we're looking at budgets of around €200,000 in F4, approximately €5-600,000 in F3. So maybe a round million for F2?

"Yes, correct," he smiles. "That's the kind of feeling. Of course we need to wait and see but that for sure is the target we're working on."

The concept is, of course, potentially bad news for GP2 and Formula Renault 3.5. What does Domenicali think of the incumbent second-tier series? He doesn't really answer that, but does declare that the last thing he wants is to wipe them into oblivion (and, who knows, either or both could actually form the basis of F2 anyway).

"For me, without going into too many details, because as you can imagine we're in a phase of



LAT



The first FIA F4 event:
Italian series at Adria in 2014

getting ready to launch the intention of interest of everyone... I believe that as a federation we need to make sure that the path is clear [very much echoing Berger here]. We don't want to kill anyone, but on our side we need a clear structure, a clear line of championships, where everyone knows where we are going. And then if this is clear and there are other series, then they are very welcome. I would be very pleased – not only me but all the Commission members – if the major manufacturers involved in motorsport tender to this bid of interest [in F2]. It's a very important project because we feel that there is this gap to fill, and it has to be done as quickly as possible because the foundations we are launching this year are very good."

Here Domenicali moves onto a topic whereby he wants to limit the time drivers spend on each step of the ladder, possibly with a maximum age too. No more Felix Rosenqvist-type six-season F3 careers then. But, with GP2 outside the FIA's remit, it would have no effect on that cluster of drivers who seem to have been racing since Stirling Moss was an up-and-coming talent and who keep on going in GP2.

"You shouldn't have, in F3 or F4, drivers who are 25 years old," he declares. "That means something's wrong. Otherwise they stay there for many years, and we don't want that in the intermediate championships – F3, F4 and in the future F2 – because that means something is not right. That's not the aim of the championship, which is to give people the possibility to grow. We are thinking of a way of [restricting] how



**F2 with manufacturer competition again?
This is 1976, with BMW-powered Ribeiro
leading Renault men Tambay/Arnoux at Rouen**

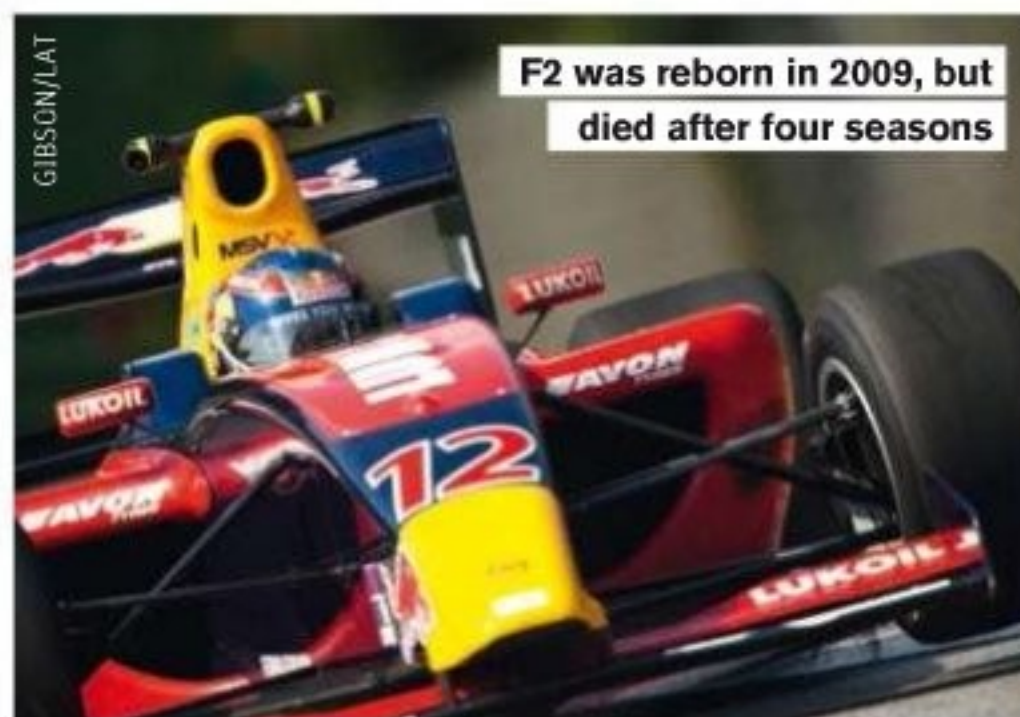
many years of a championship you can do, and the age, because we need to make sure there's a clear path ahead."

Moving onto F3, all looks rosy, yet there are some fears that the championship is in a post-Max Verstappen bubble. Even with 36 entries, some of the smaller teams are struggling to attract any customers with budgets, and the fear is that they could disappear when or if the grid drops. At the same time, three of the teams are operating with at least five cars. It's a concern precisely because F3 has been in this exact place before: huge interest, followed by a massive drop in numbers, with the lion's share of the grid formed by multi-car super teams.

"Yes of course, but it's always difficult to find the right balance," says Domenicali. "If there are new, young, motivated teams with a wish to be very stable in the championship, that is always welcome. But we have examples of teams coming, leaving, disappearing, and this is not good. We are monitoring it, because it depends how things move next year. If we're going to have 50 drivers – it's a chance! – then of course we will put some rules to make sure this is controlled."

So, potentially a maximum number of cars for each team? "Yes, it's possible. It's in the list of points we need to check, depending on how the situation develops."

On the F4 side, Domenicali is confident that this year's roster of seven series will grow to "hopefully a double-digit number" for 2016, and that progress is even being made in the US, a market Berger shied away from due to its



**F2 was reborn in 2009, but
died after four seasons**

**"WE NEED TO
FIND A SOLUTION
ON F4. WE ARE
DISCUSSING
WITH JONATHAN
PALMER"**

STEFANO DOMENICALI

complexity. Germany has just had its first F4 event with 38 cars, Japan started earlier this month with 28, Italy looks set to have around 24 for its second year (similar to last season). Meanwhile, in the UK we've just gained MSA Formula, with 20 cars turning up for the opening round, while the rival BRDC Formula 4 kicked off its third season with 19 on the grid.

As usual the British situation is complicated... "I don't want to say that!" he laughs. "But we are discussing with [BRDC F4 promoter] Jonathan Palmer, because we need to find a solution for that. There is a will to solve this issue." Domenicali smiles, then says enigmatically: "I'm sure that from here to the end of the season that something will happen. Let's wait and see..."

Berger's relationship with Palmer was famously edgy, but Domenicali says things are going well. "I have a lot of respect for him, because he's a businessman and knows his business very well," he states. "But as president of this Commission I have the mandate to try to make sure that what is the FIA championship is very clear, and I will work very hard to make this happen. And this... will happen."

Domenicali's passion for the sport is clear, and his early days in the job have met with approval from most of the paddock. Berger was successful in clearing the single-seater clutter; now his successor, as well as launching F2, is keen to draw more people in, and widen the Commission's responsibility to bring on talent, whether in the cockpit or on the engineering laptop.

He's on a roll, and the signs are encouraging. ❧

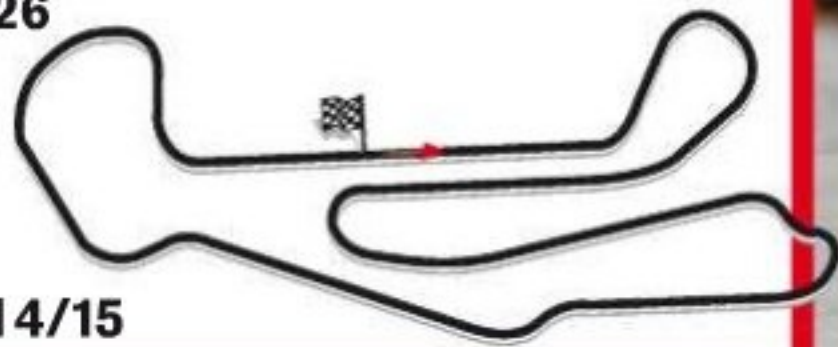
Newgarden gives IndyCar green shoots of recovery

In a race where different strategies converged as it reached its climax, Josef Newgarden proved himself a very popular winner. By **MARK GLENDENNING**

INDYCAR

Barber (USA)

April 26



Round 4/15

IT'S A STRETCH TO SAY THAT INDYCAR NEEDED a race like the one that played out at Barber Motorsports Park last weekend. But the high quality of racing in the series over the past few years has set the bar high – perhaps unreasonably so – and by those lofty standards, it had been a scrappy start to the 2015 season.

At St Petersburg, the never-ending showers of debris from the new manufacturer aero kits delivered a race plagued with cautions. The much-anticipated inaugural NOLA event was ruined by bad weather and a complete lottery of a race. Long Beach wasn't bad, but Scott Dixon had everyone so thoroughly beaten that it was left to the drivers behind him to deliver the late-race entertainment.

But Barber was an absolute keeper. It had everything: great passing at a track not normally known as an overtaking hot spot, dueling strategies, a manufacturer battle that actually showed both sides in a favourable light, and

an immensely popular – and long-overdue – first-time winner. Purists might argue that the race could have been improved had Francesco Dracone not been floating around getting in people's way, but even he offered entertainment of sorts. (Not least when he issued a post-race quote lamenting the fact that, but for assorted misfortunes, he might have finished 21st).

But Sunday was not about Francesco Dracone. It was about Josef Newgarden and Graham Rahal: the first, the poster boy for IndyCar's new generation and archetypal young charger with a small team; the second, a sometimes divisive driver occasionally charged with possessing an unfortunate combination of good genes and poor application.

Newgarden won the race, and it was a hugely popular result. Everyone likes an underdog, and you can scarcely imagine a more sleeves-rolled-up IndyCar team than one jointly run by Sarah Fisher and Ed Carpenter. Plus, the American has

been within reach of his breakthrough win on more than one occasion, only to be denied by forces beyond his control, the most noteworthy being when he was punted out of last year's Long Beach race by Ryan Hunter-Reay.

He achieved this win the old-fashioned way. Newgarden started fifth, gained two places at the first corner, was on the optimal strategy, and ultimately did a better job than those who had the same race plan. Had the race been just one lap longer though, it might have been a very different result.

This was a day of many strategies – indeed, Hunter-Reay, who had qualified near the back of the grid, had declared before the race that his plan was essentially to do the exact opposite of what the leaders did and see where it got him. Rahal's approach wasn't quite so dramatic. The RLL team has shown a distinct step up in pace over the first few races after a couple of disappointing years, and Rahal was only a handful of places behind Newgarden and the rest of the leaders during the first stint.

They maintained their presence towards the front after the first round of stops, with Newgarden now leading after capitalising on Helio Castroneves being delayed in the pits by an errant wheelnut to leapfrog the Brazilian. It was when the second and final caution (caused by Stefano Coletti bombing into James Jakes, earning the Monagasque a drive-through penalty) came nine laps after the restart that their paths diverged: Newgarden and most of the other lead group took advantage of the yellow to make their second stop; a small group of rebels, including Rahal and James Hinchcliffe, decided to stay out for an extra few laps.

Rahal (15) and Hinchcliffe stayed out when the rest pitted on final caution



Newgarden took first
win for CFH Racing



Stealthy Hunter-Reay took fifth



FUEL DISCIPLINE PAYS OFF

Ryan Hunter-Reay made an excellent recovery at Barber, climbing to fifth after starting near the back. "We worked really hard on saving fuel," he said. "We had to have a lot of discipline to pull that off."

BRAKES BREAK HINCHCLIFFE

NOLA winner James Hinchcliffe spent the early phase of the race battling Graham Rahal, but the Canadian faded from contention as he struggled to match his rivals on the brakes: "We just didn't quite have it on the brakes today, unfortunately. That allowed Graham [Rahal] to stay in front of us while he was on blacks, which left us stuck behind those Coyne cars way too long."

WORRY OVER GUYS AT BACK

Some of the series veterans were disappointed by what they considered to be youthful overexuberance by some of their younger rivals. Ryan Hunter-Reay was driven off the track while battling Sage Karam, and Juan Pablo Montoya had his front wing broken twice through contact. "It's hard to race with some of the guys in the back of the pack," Montoya said. "They are young and sometimes make moves like you aren't even there when you're right beside them."

MUNOZ PASSES FUEL DEGREE

Carlos Munoz said that his sixth-place finish with Andretti Autosport was as good as a win after he started the race from 22nd on the grid. "The team did a great job in pitstops and strategy," he said. "I think I did a great job in saving fuel. I'm more or less a rookie at saving fuel, but now I think I have my 'saving fuel degree' from university."

GONZALEZ 20TH ON DEBUT

GP2 veteran Rodolfo Gonzalez made his IndyCar debut at Barber in one of the Dale Coyne Racing entries. The Venezuelan managed to climb into the lower mid-pack during the race but was classified 20th after needing to make a late additional stop to take on more fuel.



Lapping 2.0s quicker than both of them, he quickly closed down the 4.9s gap to Dixon, and after a two-lap battle he put his former team-mate behind him and set his sights on Newgarden. Making up 4.0s in two laps was always going to be a tough ask for Rahal, but Newgarden's final winning margin of 2.2s showed just how close he came.

"I'm so relieved that's over with," Newgarden admitted. "I really wanted that race to end! Normally I'm pretty cool, but it was very stressful to run those laps, trying to control that. We've been there before, things have gone wrong. Today nothing went wrong."

Rahal declared himself reasonably pleased with how his strategy had played out. "It was my choice to stay out [during the second caution]," he said. "I didn't think they would be able to make it on fuel so I kind of just said, 'Now let's take our chance.' I want to be able to drive hard, push hard the entire race, versus saving fuel. I think it worked to a certain extent."

He was partially right about the frontrunners being marginal on fuel. Dixon insisted that it was never a problem for him ("We were able to get fuel mileage with the Chevy, which is not normally our strong suit"), but it was a different story over at Penske. There, Castroneves was on his way to a fourth place that would have moved him ahead of team-mate Juan Pablo Montoya in the championship when his car ran out of fuel on the second-to-last lap.

"There was just a bit of miscommunication on our fuel number that, unfortunately, caused us to have to pit with one lap left," he said. "You never want to see the white flag on pit road."

Indeed, it was a strange race all round for Penske, which, through Castroneves, had started from pole for the seventh IndyCar race in a row. Power was in the frame early on before he crashed into Takuma Sato while exiting the pits, bringing out the first caution and earning himself a drive-through. Somehow, he managed to recover back to fourth. Simon Pagenaud was running strong with Sebastien Bourdais early on and felt he had the speed to win had he not been caught out by a yellow that left both drivers mired in the midfield for the rest of the race. And Montoya qualified badly, suffered two broken front wings, and still left Alabama with his points lead intact thanks to Castroneves's late problem.

But this was a contest that was very much about the new guard rather than the traditional powerhouses. Newgarden didn't win because the big teams tripped up, he won because he and CFH Racing went out and beat them.

"You've really got to be on your game to beat Helio Castroneves and Scott Dixon," he said. "They're phenomenal racers with incredible skill. I tried to be really aggressive and make it happen." And it was brilliant. 🏆

You've really got to be on your game to beat Castroneves and Dixon. They have incredible skill

JOSEF NEWGARDEN

That decision proved to be the spark that lit up the latter part of the race. Newgarden, Scott Dixon and Castroneves all made their final stops within a two-lap window that fell just about as early as it could while still offering a reasonable chance of having both the fuel and tyres to get to the end of the race.

But Rahal, still off-sequence, could afford to pit half a dozen laps later. He rejoined sixth, almost 20s behind Newgarden, but fuelled to the gills and with fresher tyres. What followed over the next dozen or so laps will prove to be one of the highlights of the season, and was the first real glimpse of Honda having some sort of answer to what has been a dominant start to the season by Chevrolet. Everyone was struggling a little with tyre wear, but the Chevy runners seemed to be struggling a little more, especially on the softer compound.

Rahal had no such problems. In the space of six laps he'd picked off Will Power, Hunter-Reay and Castroneves, and what had been a huge deficit to Newgarden and Dixon had been cut in half.



Pigot (12) goes level with Harvey

INDY LIGHTS BARBER MOTORSPORTS PARK (USA), APRIL 25-26 RD 3/10

Pigot saddles up for a double win

SPENCER PIGOT CONTINUED HIS steady progression toward his goal of a future in the IndyCar Series by scoring a copybook victory for Juncos Racing in Saturday's Indy Lights race. He then repeated the feat on Sunday to take over the points lead from Ed Jones as the series heads to a busy month of May, comprising two road-course events at the Indianapolis Grand Prix circuit, followed by the blue-riband Freedom 100 on the hallowed 2.5-mile oval.

Pigot smashed the old Lights track record and was never seriously

threatened in either race. In the 40-minute 'sprint' on Saturday, he completed the first lap a full 1.1 seconds clear of Jack Harvey and never looked back.

Pigot has become a poster boy for the Road to Indy development ladder after twice finishing a close second in the USF2000 series and then winning last year's Pro Mazda title, along with a \$585,000 Mazdaspeed scholarship to graduate into Indy Lights.

Englishman Harvey, driving with a fractured thumb following an incident at Long Beach, claimed two

seconds for Schmidt Peterson Motorsports. He ran a lonely race on Saturday, well clear of team-mate RC Enerson, who just managed to keep erstwhile series leader Jones (Carlin) behind him. On Sunday Harvey came under intense pressure from Jones's team-mate, Max Chilton, who was delighted with his first podium finish since his GP2 days.

Jones finished a distant 11th in race two after sustaining a puncture during an incident on the first lap with Pigot's team-mate, Kyle Kaiser. Weiron Tan (Andretti Autosport)

and Neil Alberico (Cape Motorsports) shared the Pro Mazda spoils, while Cape stablemates Aaron Telitz and Nico Jamin each won a USF2000 encounter.

● Jeremy Shaw

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Spencer Pigot, 30 laps in 37m29.0146s; 2 Jack Harvey, +6.7109s; 3 RC Enerson; 4 Ed Jones; 5 Max Chilton; 6 Felix Serralles. **Race 2** 1 Pigot, 35 laps in 44m12.9340s; 2 Harvey, +5.9781s; 3 Chilton; 4 Serralles; 5 Scott Anderson; 6 Sean Rayhall. **Points** 1 Pigot, 132; 2 Jones, 125; 3 Harvey, 112; 4 Chilton, 84; 5 Serralles, 78; 6 Enerson, 75.

EURO NASCAR VALENCIA (E), APRIL 25-26 RD 1/6

Cheever scores in first race

EDDIE CHEEVER STARTED THE season in style with a win in the opening race at Valencia.

Nicolo Rocca was on pole position and took the early lead, but an early safety car gave Cheever the opportunity to jump ahead at the restart. First the Italian son of the former Indy 500 winner fended off Rocca, then Ander Vilarino moved into second place to have a go at Cheever.

Borja Garcia came home fourth from reigning champion Anthony Kumpen, who fell to 18th at the start but fought back to fifth ahead of Domenico Schiattarella.

Basque racer Vilarino led the second race, which again featured



an early safety car, from start to finish. This time Kumpen engaged in battle for second with Frederic Gabillon, but was unable to find a way past before the finish.

Romain Iannetta sat in fourth before he was jumped by Cheever at the last corner on the final lap.

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Eddie Cheever (Chevrolet SS), 16 laps in 31m04.090s; 2 Ander Vilarino (SS), +0.748s; 3 Nicolo Rocca (SS); 4 Borja Garcia (Ford Mustang); 5 Anthony Kumpen (SS); 6 Domenico Schiattarella (Chevy Camaro).

Race 2 1 Vilarino, 16 laps in 31m25.434s; 2 Frederic Gabillon (SS), +3.659s; 3 Kumpen; 4 Cheever; 5 Romain Iannetta (SS); 6 Wilfried Boucenna (Ford).

WORLD CHALLENGE BARBER (USA), APRIL 25-26 RD 1/6

Nissan's 'pointless' success

DRAMA AND CONTROVERSY

continued to dog the Pirelli World Challenge in Alabama, but there was plenty of tight competition.

James Davison (AIM Autosport Nissan) sped to a narrow victory in race one over Nicky Catsburg's Reiter Engineering Lamborghini, only to learn that he would earn neither points nor prize money due to a technical infraction regarding turbo boost pressure. His team has appealed.

The two K-PAX McLarens of Kevin Estre and Robert Thorne had their problems on Saturday but none on Sunday as they raced away to a

convincing one-two finish, chased by the super-consistent Ryan Dalziel (Effort Racing Porsche).

The race was marred, though, by a frightening incident involving Johnny O'Connell's Cadillac ATS-VR, which suddenly burst into flames while running sixth. The three-time champion fortunately emerged unscathed, but the same could not be said for his car.

● Jeremy Shaw

RESULTS

Race 1 1 James Davison (Nissan GT-R GT3), 29 laps in 52m09.241s; 2 Nicky Catsburg (Lamborghini Gallardo FLII), +0.928s; 3 Mike Sken (Audi R8 LMS ultra); 4 Johnny O'Connell (Cadillac ATS-VR GT3); 5 Ryan Dalziel (Porsche 911 GT3-R); 6 Chris Dyson (Bentley Continental GT3). **Race 2** 1 Kevin Estre (McLaren 650S GT3), 29 laps in 50m46.654s; 2 Robert Thorne (McLaren), +4.271s; 3 Dalziel; 4 Olivier Beretta (Ferrari 458 Italia GT3); 5 Sken; 6 Michael Lewis (Porsche). **Points** 1 Beretta, 679; 2 Dalziel, 669; 3 Estre, 543; 4 Ryan Eversley, 488; 5 O'Connell & Catsburg, 433.

Davison leads Catsburg Lambo



Entries Now Open for the Fourth Henry Surtees Foundation Brooklands Team Karting Challenge



John Surtees cordially invites you to enter the fourth annual Henry Surtees Foundation Brooklands Team Karting Challenge taking place on Tuesday 30 June 2015. The event organised by John Surtees OBE, will be staged once again at the iconic Mercedes-Benz World, Surrey. Racing starts with practice and qualifying. Teams will then compete in a challenging 2 hour endurance race, where they battle it out in Daytona High-Performance two-stroke DMAX Birel Karts in the hope of securing the coveted 'H' trophy.

John Surtees OBE said "Each year the HSF Team Karting Challenge receives tremendous support from a host of star names from the world of motorsport, business and the entertainment industry and 2015 will be no exception. Why not put a team of four together and come and join us at the original home of motorsport at Brooklands where you will be

able to enjoy the superb facilities of Mercedes-Benz World in the company of the Henry Surtees Foundation and star guests".

The interval features a spectacular display of Surtees built Formula cars and Brooklands Museum exhibits plus 'special' vehicle demonstrations.

The day culminates in a prize giving Champagne reception courtesy of G H Mumm in the impressive state-of-the-art Mercedes-Benz World venue where the prestigious 'H' trophy is awarded to the 2015 karting champion. The Champagne and canapé reception will be hosted by Steve Rider and feature interviews with racers and celebrity guest participants, plus an incredible fundraising auction hosted by Malcolm Barber of Bonhams featuring exclusive artwork, memorabilia and experiences.



Team entry for the Brooklands Team Karting Challenge £1200 per team of 4 competitors and includes 4 x tickets to the champagne and canapé reception

Champagne & Canapé Reception

The reception is open to all HSF supporters to attend at the cost of £65 per person, per ticket

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For further event details, to enter a team or book tickets to the reception, please contact:
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2. #12 Team LNT (LMP3) - Ginetta LMP3
3. #8 Peter Cook (GT3) - Audi R8

Class 2

1. #91 Marc Cars Australia (GTE) - MARC Focus V8
2. #17 Topcats Racing (GTC) - Marcos Mantis
3. #15 Topcats Racing

Class 3

1. #35 Beechdean AMR (GT4) - Aston Martin Vantage
2. #37 Cor Euser Racing (GT4) - Lotus Evora
3. #41 Speedworks Motorsport (GT4) - Aston Martin Vantage

Class 4

1. #50 St Bas Koeten Racing (24HRS) - Seat Leon Cup Racer
2. #33 Nick Barrow (GT4) - BMW 135 GTR
3. #58 WEC Motorsport 1 (24HRS) - BMW M3

Class 5

1. #62 Red Camel - Jordans.nl - Seat
2. #65 Paul Mensley - Ford Fiesta
3. #66 WEC Motorsport 2 - Seat Supercopa



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Class 5 winner (8th overall)



Class 2 winner (9th overall)

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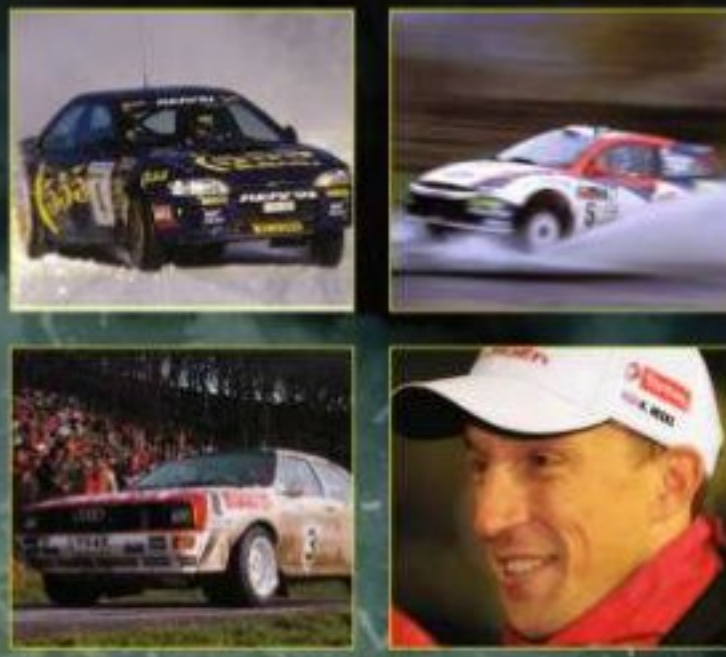
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NASCAR SPRINT CUP RICHMOND (USA), APRIL 26 RD 9/36

Busch plants himself in the Chase with win

IN THE SIX WEEKS SINCE HIS suspension relating to an off-track legal case ended, Kurt Busch has been a Sprint Cup form driver.

Wins, though, hadn't been forthcoming, to the point that the 2004 champ headed to Richmond as the driver who'd led the most laps this season without a victory.

Busch changed that in emphatic fashion in a race postponed from Saturday night to Sunday afternoon due to rain storms, leading 291 of 400 laps in his Stewart Haas Chevrolet. After starting third, he claimed the lead on lap 95 and looked set to fight Jamie McMurray over the final third, but crucially unspun himself from an out-of-

sequence Brad Keselowski between pitting and a caution.

That gave Busch track position he didn't waste, and his win – secured by 0.755s over team-mate Kevin Harvick – books him into the Chase.

Jimmie Johnson finished third after starting 36th, while McMurray also had to work for his fourth-place finish after loose wheelnuts necessitated an unscheduled pitstop and dropped him to 30th. Kasey Kahne followed Johnson through the pack, moving from 40th to sixth.

Polesitter Joey Logano led the opening 94 laps and eventually took fifth, while fellow front-row starter Denny Hamlin went backwards, ending the afternoon in 22nd place.

Keselowski ran in the lead pack before dropping a cylinder and falling to 17th.

RESULTS

1 Kurt Busch (Chevrolet SS), 400 laps in 3h05m16s; 2 Kevin Harvick (Chevy), +0.754s; 3 Jimmie Johnson (Chevy); 4 Jamie McMurray (Chevy); 5 Joey Logano (Ford Fusion); 6 Kasey Kahne (Chevy); 7 Matt Kenseth (Toyota Camry); 8 Jeff Gordon (Chevy); 9 Clint Bowyer (Toyota); 10 Martin Truex Jr (Chevy). **Chase grid 1 Harvick, 2 wins/357 points**; 2 Johnson, 2/299; 3 Logano, 1/324; 4 Brad Keselowski, 1/283; 5 Kenseth, 1/273; 6 Denny Hamlin, 1/245; 7 Busch, 1/222; 8 Truex, 0/315; 9 Kahne, 0/275; 10 Dale Earnhardt Jr, 0/271; 11 McMurray, 0/264; 12 Gordon, 0/263; 13 Aric Almirola, 0/250; 14 Paul Menard, 0/239; 15 Bowyer, 0/235; 16 Ryan Newman, 0/234.

**ADAC GT MASTERS
OSCHERSLEBEN (D),
APRIL 25/26 RD 1/8**

Door opens for Schutz

SCHUTZ MOTORSPORT PORSCHE DUO

Christian Engelhart and Klaus Bachler are leading the drivers' standings after a win and a second at the Oschersleben season opener.

Starting from second on the grid behind polesitter Luca Stolz, who shone in qualifying on the HTP Bentley's series debut, Engelhart took the lead at the start, built up an advantage of 2.2 seconds until the pitstop and left it to team-mate Bachler to bring it home.

Bachler extended the lead to 8.8s in the final part of the race, but a rain shower with 10 minutes remaining made life difficult for many drivers. Clemens Schmid crashed the second HTP Bentley heavily into the wall and caused a safety car until the end of the race, leaving Bachler to lead home the Zakspeed Mercedes of Sebastian Asch and Luca Ludwig and another SLS, driven by Harald Proczyk and



Andreas Simonsen and run by Proczyk's new HP Racing Team.

Stolz's co-driver Jeroen Bleekemolen started from pole in race two, but tangled with Ludwig on the way to the first corner. That allowed Callaway Corvette driver Daniel Keilwitz to take the lead.

After the pitstops, Keilwitz's co-driver Wirth defended the lead and looked set for victory until a driveshaft broke with less than four minutes to go. That handed the lead to Stolz, the 19-year old taking the win with the same Mercedes crews as on Saturday completing the podium. Engelhart and Bachler charged from 10th on the grid to finish fourth in their Porsche.

The Reiter Camaro of Tomas Enge and Oliver Gavin was 10th in the

first race, but retired from race two following a collision.

● Rene de Boer

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Christian Engelhart/Klaus Bachler (Porsche 911 GT3-R), 38 laps in 1h01m40.805s; 2 Luca Ludwig/Sebastian Asch (Mercedes SLS AMG GT3), +0.683s; 3 Hari Proczyk/Andreas Simonsen (Mercedes); 4 Andreas Wirth/Daniel Keilwitz (Chevrolet Corvette C6.R); 5 Jens Klingmann/Dominik Baumann (BMW Z4 GT3); 6 Claudia Hürtgen/Jesse Krohn (BMW). **Race 2 1 Luca Stolz/Jeroen Bleekemolen (Bentley Continental GT3)**, 39 laps in 1h00m56.025s; 2 Ludwig/Asch, +5.707s; 3 Proczyk/Simonsen; 4 Engelhart/Bachler; 5 Hürtgen/Krohn; 6 Stefan Wackerbauer/Kelvin van der Linde (Audi R8 LMS ultra). **Points 1 Engelhart/Bachler, 37**; 2 Ludwig/Asch, 36; 3 Simonsen/Proczyk, 30; 4 Bleekemolen/Stolz, 25; 5 Krohn/Hürtgen, 18; 6 Baumann/Klingmann, 16.



VLN

DTM driver Nico Muller had never raced on the Nurburgring Nordschleife, but that didn't stop him and Christopher Mies giving the new-spec Audi R8 LMS ultra (above) a maiden win. The sister WRT-run car of Pierre Kaffer and Laurens Vanthoor shrugged off a puncture to finish second. Third was the Rowe Mercedes of Klaus Graf, Christian Hohenadel, Thomas Jäger and Nico Bastian. Pole went to Bentley's Lance David Arnold, and he claimed fourth with Guy Smith and Christian Menzel.

EUROFORMULA OPEN

Brazilian Vitor Baptista (RP Motorsport) and Russian Konstantin Tereschenko (Campos Racing) took a win apiece from two entertaining races at Paul Ricard. Alessio Rovera was the other standout driver, with the trio filling out the podium in both races.

GERMAN FORMULA 4

After two wins and a sixth place at Oschersleben, HTP Junior driver Marvin Dienst is the first points leader in the new ADAC-run Formula 4 series. Much publicised in the German media, victory in the reversed-grid race went to Van Amersfoort Racing's Mick Schumacher. Harrison Newey took a best of seventh.

BRAZILIAN FORMULA 3

Rookie Rodrigo Baptista benefited from a blown engine in the car of polesitter Pedro Piquet to win the first race at Velopark. With a new engine, Piquet took 20 laps to climb from 14th to win race two. Matheus Iorio was second in both races.

BRASILEIRO DE MARCAS

Teenager Gabriel Casagrande gave Renault its maiden win in Brazil's category for smaller tin-tops at Velopark. His Fluence led home Luiz Razia, who took his Toyota from sixth to second. Nono Figueiredo won the second race in his Chevrolet Cruze from the Toyota of Thiago Marques.

SUPER TC2000

Reigning champion Nestor Girolami led all the way at Rosario in his Peugeot, with the Fiat of Facundo Ardusso giving him little respite, especially after two safety-car periods. About five seconds behind, Girolami's team-mate Agustin Canapino just managed to stave off Esteban Guerrieri's Toyota for third, Canapino rising to the top of the points standings.

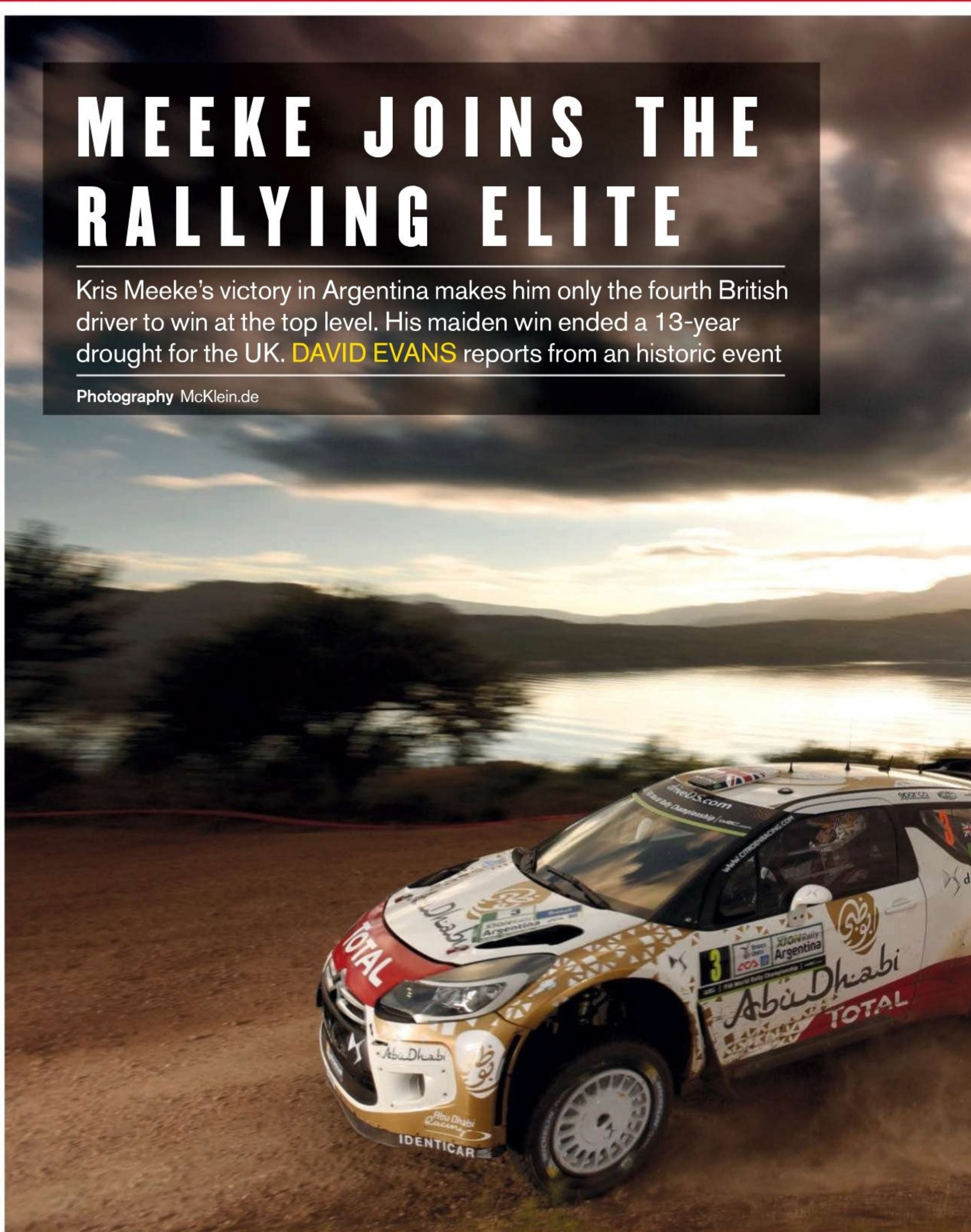
FMASTERS CHINA

Estonian ex-Formula Renault racer Martin Rump won race one at Sepang, before Australian Jake Parsons scooped the other two. Brit Dan Wells romped home to win both Asian Formula Renault races.

MEEKE JOINS THE RALLYING ELITE

Kris Meeke's victory in Argentina makes him only the fourth British driver to win at the top level. His maiden win ended a 13-year drought for the UK. **DAVID EVANS** reports from an historic event

Photography McKlein.de





Rally Argentina

World Rally Championship
Villa Carlos Paz (RA),
April 23-26
Round 4/13



HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE. WHICH MEANS 'UNTIL victory, forever'.

Last week's Rally Argentina didn't bear too much comparison to South American revolution, but given that Kris Meeke pretty much passed Che Guevara's front door, the words stand up.

Goodness knows, Meeke has fought for this maiden victory.

The alternative intro for this story offered a more comedic edge to what was a pretty tense three days aboard DS 3 WRC number three. Given the Irish – northern and southern – element in the car, it was tempting to turn to Ted and ask the question: is there anything to be said for saying another mass?

Paul Nagle would have been all for it. Family and friends, reckoned Meeke's co-driver, had done their bit last Sunday morning.

Rally Argentina's a technical event at the best of times – a real challenge blending the super-fast with the tortuously twisty. And the sandy stages always ready with a surprise or two just beneath the surface. Except this time, the sand had long since gone.

A storm of biblical proportions had washed people from their homes and roads from the map a couple of months ahead of the start. The organisers re-routed, patched and plotted a new rally in next to no time. Day two's longest stage had 14 miles chopped off the start of it, a necessity when mud-plugging tractors were stopped in their tracks a week out.

Mercifully, the rain ran dry on the recce and the sun arrived in time for the start.

Meeke flew into town very much off the radar. A shocking start to the season had left him interested in nothing but the finish. Attention centred on another driver fighting for survival in the season: Jari-Matti Latvala. Oh, and his Volkswagen team-mate, the record-chasing Sebastien Ogier, who arrived on the crest of the winning wave he'd been riding since last October.

Volkswagen, the formbook confidently predicted, was unbeatable. Good job the rest didn't follow much of the service park advice and go home.

Every now and then one stage truly turns a rally on its head and the 33-mile dash between the one-street towns of Agua de Oro and Ascochinga was about to do just that.



Once a year, front rooms are turfed out and turned into makeshift coffee shops; lawns barely recovered from the scorching parrillas of last year are loaded with logs, fired up and covered with as much meat as possible.

The dogs are let out, strays coming from miles around, following the crowd marching towards the same roads they bump across day-in-out in worn out, too-old Ford Falcons.

And the Condors circle and soar high above, white heads visible against the bright blue sky. The time has come. Local radio reporters vie

with each other, turning the volume up when the time comes to mention Dani o – a Spanish-speaking favourite in these parts.

Dani can wait. Ogier's off the line and in. And in trouble. Scanner's pick up camera operators reporting the Polo sounding like a tractor. He's out. Pulled over, switched off. The big wave rider's run out of surf.

Team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen's next, puncture. Same for Thierry Neuville's Hyundai. But these are no ordinary deflations. Mikkelsen's elected not to stop and smoke pours from the Polo's front-right rim filed smooth against rock-solid South America.

Neuville did stop and change, but the flailing Michelin had already punctured the side of the i20 WRC. Dust pervaded everywhere, including the Belgian's mouth. Opening the door to reveal all about the past 30 mental minutes of his life, he spat mud out. Words really weren't required.

It didn't stop there. Neuville's Hyundai team-mate Sordo followed. Something was amiss. The car was banged down the gears with no mercy, an audible protest at something. A quarter-mile straight after the flying finish gave plenty of time to prepare questions, but as Sordo punched the steering wheel, even the more hardened hacks rethought their opener.

Powersteering. And a question of his own. "Why," he pleaded, "why is it always a problem?"



Last-stage trouble robbed Latvala of third place



Hyundai had a shocker, the #7 i20 of Thierry Neuville crashing out

Uninterested in an answer, he put his head in his hands.

At least his Hyundai only had one problem. Hayden Paddon's sister car arrived with a hole in the turbo, a broken driveshaft and other stuff that he didn't have time to mention.

"It's just a joke," said the Kiwi, "we didn't even get three kilometres..."

And the Citroens? Mads Ostberg fared the worst. Taking a deep breath, he glared straight ahead. "I will try to speak calmly," he said. "We have an engine problem. The car cut out and we had to reset everything. We lost 45 seconds. Four rallies, four problems."

This was getting ridiculous. What about the boys most in need of a result?

Latvala came in wearing a proper race face. No problems, just a big focus. Middle of the road, no risk, but little reward either.

Two stages in – Thursday night included a short spectator-pleaser down south in San Luis – and Meeke was leading.

That wasn't in the script. A handbrake problem aboard the DS 3 WRC certainly wasn't.

"I've had to learn to drive like a Finn," he said. "The only way to get through the hairpins was to give it the big Scandinavian flick."

What about the plan? What about fifth or sixth? "Honestly, I'm not doing anything silly."

Latvala lurked dangerously, looking like one of the strays eyeing a slither of beef that had toppled from the grill.

But the Finn's charge and challenge never came. He simply never engaged in the fight and a big moment first time out on Saturday morning convinced him of the merits of a points-paying podium. Astonishingly, from mid-morning Saturday, Rally Argentina was all about Citroen.

Two years since the French firm's last victory in the world championship, another one was being lined up. And few could have more significance as the team still struggled to impose itself in this post-Loeb era.

Three years ago, Loeb and Mikko Hirvonen raced to the halfway point neck and neck. Only to be told the time had come to be sensible. Yes, a Finn might be nice, but Loeb would conquer all again.

But what now? Neither Meeke nor Ostberg could lay claim to a title tilt of any significance, but both had driven a first half in Argentina worthy of the ultimate success at full-time. What did Citroen boss Yves Matton think?

What did Matton say? Nothing. Except that he wanted the cars to finish one-two. The order wasn't important to him.

Starting Saturday with more than a minute in hand, Ostberg slashed into Meeke's lead. The San Marcos-Characato test was one that Meeke feared



the most this time. Narrow, boulder-strewn, twisty, and full of short corners ready to catch out the unwary, Meeke took his time, a gear down in some places. An overshoot in the dust on the first stage had reminded him just how much was at stake.

Survival. Instinct. No heroics.

The day's fourth stage was halted after Paddon's car landed awkwardly and speared off the road and into the crowd. Six fans were hospitalised from their chosen vantage point in a prohibited area. The stage was cancelled and Ostberg's main sail slackened. The gathering wind had gone.

"It's not possible to catch him now," said ▶

Meeke and Evans: first British duo on a WRC podium since 2001



► Ostberg. "If that stage had run and we could have had some more time, maybe. Now? No."

Meeke denied the cancelled stage played into his hands. Yes, a 32.6s gap was easier to defend across less mileage, but he'd wanted to spike the Norwegian gun himself.

He did it on the next stage instead, lifting the lead north by a further six seconds. It would have been more, but for a heart-stopper.

"The thing stopped," grinned Meeke, with the face of a man who'd just got away with murder. "I was coming down to a river crossing not far from the end of the stage and it cut out. Died. Nothing. I didn't have time to think, I just went straight for the starter. But I had to reset everything. Basically, I turned it off, then turned it back on again and she went. I thought that was it..."

And relax. And relax into El Condor.

There's no place on earth like this place. Stand with your back to the road and look out towards the horizon and you could quite honestly convince yourself you were on the Moon. Or Mars.

The first corners are carved from the insane geology associated with the high Sierras, but the rope bridges holding the wooden slats that keep cars and crews from tumbling into crevasses are pure spaghetti western.

The number of corners and complexity of Condor is born out by the fact that it takes 13 minutes to cover the stage which measures just shy of 10 miles. This one's always about patience. Push it or try to take liberties and the place bites. First time Meeke came here last year to do this one as a Powerstage, Ogier took a minute out of him. That was in the fog. The sun was shining this time.

The first run was no problem. Or was it? When he came to the finish, the door stayed shut. No



Welshman Evans took surprise maiden podium



Sordo tried hard and salvaged fifth place

words spoken. Was this focus? Was there an issue? Turns out there was a minor issue, something Meeke couldn't put his finger on or his ear to; the kind of noise one hears when one's on the verge of becoming only the fourth British driver to win a round of the World Rally Championship.

Thirteen minutes more and the job was done. Meeke, the world rally winner stepped from his car and thanked Colin McRae. Meeke's mentor had been here before, 14 years earlier – but Coco had ended his only Argentina win with a flourish and a fastest time over Condor. Equally, McRae's 2001 win wasn't quite the career-shaper this one turned out to be for Meeke.

Trying to put into words what it meant, Meeke got caught in the emotion of the moment and turned his back on the massed ranks of media. This was his time. And the same for Paul Nagle. Nagle's lived and loved this sport all his life and his first world championship win will put an extra spring in his step when he gets home in time for the Rally of the Lakes in his home town of Killarney this week; it'll be some session in the Teddy O'Connors as County Kerry comes out to greet its world-beater.

Ostberg was magnanimous in defeat, admitting Meeke had been the better man across the three days. The Norwegian turned out to be the meat in a British podium sandwich as a late problem ruled Latvala out and elevated Elfyn Evans to third place. In their own way Welshman and Dan Barritt deserved as much credit as Meeke and Nagle in their achievement, a maiden podium on an event as difficult as last week's was exceptional.

All-in-all, providing you weren't in a Polo, last week was a bit of a belter. Particularly for the Brits. Slainte, boys. 🍷

FOR FULL RESULTS, PAGE 57

IN THE SERVICE PARK

DAVID EVANS
RALLIES EDITOR
@daviddevansrally



CLEARLY, NOBODY COULD SLEEP. SUNDAY morning, hours before the sun's even considering showing its face, and Citroen team personnel filled the hotel reception.

Handshakes were delivered beneath faces deep-set with anxiety. Could today end a two-year drought for the Parisians. Two years? Try 13... That's a wait. Kris Meeke emerged, straight out of the door, head down, bound for the team bus. And destiny.

Weather's holding. Much planned for the rest of the week? How's the family?

Anything, anything, but the day ahead. Mercifully, Meeke's nine-month old daughter has started crawling – video footage providing the perfect release.

"We'll be alright once we're on the road," he smiled, thinly. Leaving service, he stalled. Silence. Sign? Forget it. Don't believe in signs. Not today.

And so continued the British rally fan's longest day. It was, in all honesty, agony. Watch the splits? Yes. No. Can't do it. Radio? Same. Scanner? On, then off. The prospect of hearing Kris or co-driver Paul Nagle reporting anything other than a stage time was too much to bear. Then seeing Andreas Mikkelsen and Thierry Neuville crash in the same Condor corner sent me into a flat spin. Surely Meeke wasn't going to fall at the last.

No. He wasn't.

Those same subdued souls who'd had nothing to say seven hours earlier found their voices and went bananas. Kris and Paul had done it. Seriously.

The dude from Dungannon and Killarney's finest were the best in the world in Argentina last week. And Britain (and the Republic of Ireland – for the first time since Ronan McNamee co-drove Pentti Airikkala to his 1989 RAC win) were back in business.

Beautiful.



Nagle and Meeke: a world-beating combo

My family and friends are all going to mass...



Paul Nagle looks to the big JC (Jesus Christ, not Jost Capito) for the right result



Ogier's Polo let him down in Argentina

Ogier: VW will be back on form for the next rally

WORLD RALLY CHAMPION Sebastien Ogier is confident his Volkswagen team will bounce back from its worst-ever performance in Argentina last week.

Prior to the South American event, a Polo R WRC had never finished outside the top 10 since the car's debut in the world championship at the start of 2013. Ogier was VW's only finisher last week, the Frenchman ending the rally in 17th position.

The two 2015-specification Polos of Ogier and team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala were silenced by fuel-injector problems,

while Andreas Mikkelsen's year-old car suffered powersteering woes, which was likely linked to driving the car on a front puncture in the second stage. Ogier also suffered powersteering failure on Saturday.

"It seems we have two problems with the powersteering this weekend and that's not normal," Ogier said. "It looks like we have something to improve on that, but I'm sure they will find a solution."

"It's never easy to win, it's never time to relax. I repeat that all of the time. The team has a bit of work to solve the problem, but I

really trust them to do it. Now we look forward to Portugal and a better weekend."

Team principal Jost Capito said the team would learn from its tough weekend.

"We had some tough rallies in early 2013," said Capito, "but we didn't see two cars retire in one day like here. I am not concerned at all. But we will go home and we will learn from this. It's not like we will go home and say: 'That was just bad luck...' It's not bad luck at all. We are disappointed, but this is not a disaster, we are prepared for this."



FANS HURT IN CRASH

Six spectators were hospitalised after being hit by Hayden Paddon's Hyundai i20 WRC on the penultimate Saturday stage in Argentina. One of the fans, a 54-year-old man, remains stable in intensive care – although his thoracic injury is not thought to be life-threatening. Rally officials admitted the fans were standing in a prohibited area.

HORROR FOR HYUNDAI

Hyundai endured an event to forget in Argentina. Beyond Paddon's accident on Saturday, Thierry Neuville crashed out on the final day, having already spoiled his event by smacking a rock in SS2. Dani Sordo overcame powersteering and fuel-sensor problems to finish fifth.

EVANS' DOUBLE JOY

Podium finisher Elfyn Evans also won the inaugural wheel-change challenge on the eve of Rally Argentina. He and co-driver Dan Barritt changed the left-rear wheel on their Ford Fiesta RS WRC in 46s – a second quicker than Sebastien Ogier.

AL-KUWARI'S WRC2

Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari scored his second Rally Argentina WRC2 win in three years last weekend. The Qatar driver led the class for much of the event after fellow Ford Fiesta RRC driver Yuri Protasov suffered day-one suspension problems.

HUNT'S SHUNT...

Britain's Harry Hunt crashed out of last week's Sealink Cross-Country Rally in Qatar. The Londoner, who took a sensational podium on his debut in a Mini ALL4 Racing on the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge earlier in the month, was caught out by a drop and retired on the spot. The event was won by Hunt's Mini team-mate Nasser Al-Attiyah.

...ON TRAGIC SEALINK

The Sealink event was marred by the death of co-driver Jurgen Damen, who died from neck injuries sustained when Rene Kuipers rolled their Ford HRX.

ITALY'S LONGEST DAY

Organisers of June's Rally of Italy are planning the longest day of the season. The Sardinian Saturday will last 14 hours, with 10 stages and 126 competitive miles. The Cagliari superspecial remains a feature, but the cars will remain in the capital overnight on Thursday.



Kubica fights for new car

ROBERT KUBICA'S CHANCES

of running an all-new Ford Fiesta RS WRC on next month's Rally of Portugal hang in the balance, according to well-placed sources.

The Pole skipped last week's Rally Argentina and is now said to be working on his own team after the alliance with A-Style broke down. M-Sport has agreed to supply the Italian team with a new car and won't be able to build Kubica a separate 2015 Fiesta in time for the next round of the series.

Members of Kubica's RK World Rally Team were present in Argentina last week, brokering agreements to keep the star's season on track.

High praise for Argentina team

THE ORGANISERS OF LAST WEEK'S Rally Argentina were praised for their efforts in keeping the event on track despite some of the worst storms in living memory.

Six months' worth of rain fell in and around Cordoba in just a week in February, washing away many roads and leaving the stages rougher than ever. Despite the conditions, rally winner Kris Meeke praised their efforts.

"We need a mix of events," he said,

"and this one was as rough as the Safari at times. But the organisers did a great job when you think about the impact those storms must have had."

Two stages had to be shortened on the itinerary last week – but there could be a bigger change ahead next season. Following the success of the Thursday night superspecial in Merlo there's a strong chance the event will spend a day in the San Luis province 150 miles south of Carlos Paz.

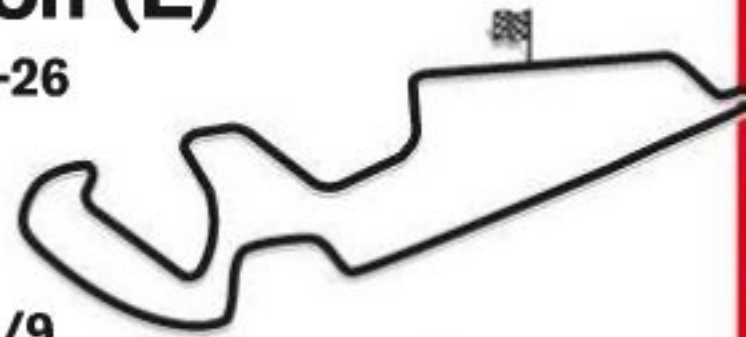
Big floods threatened the rally last week



FR3.5 Aragon (E)

April 25-26

Round 1/9



A blatant jump start from van Buuren (10) led to a race-one penalty



Rain delays, but races amaze

54

THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN 50,000 SPECTATORS IN attendance at Motorland Aragon over the course of last weekend, but in driving rain and wind at 2pm on Sunday afternoon the numbers of umbrellas and waterproof-clad bodies in the exposed pit-straight grandstand appeared to thin out distinctly.

Where was the action? Not on track, as 2015's bright young things waited for the storm to pass while bottled up in the pitlane, their monocoques filling up like bathtubs.

Ah, but good things come to those who wait. Those onlookers who braved the worst of the conditions were treated to a sensational performance in the closing laps of the restarted second FR3.5 race.

The quickest man in the build-up to the season-opener was determined not to go home having under-delivered. After taking pole for race one, Lotus F1 Junior Matthieu Vaxiviere had come off worse from a three-car-wide battle into Turn 1, which had severely compromised his race.

Now, after a year in the category, his maiden win was tantalisingly close. Vaxiviere was edging closer to race leader Nyck de Vries, an adversary keen to demonstrate just why he is on McLaren's books.



Extreme conditions delayed the start

On the penultimate lap, de Vries had covered the inside line into Aragon's optimum passing place, the Turn 16 hairpin. Next time around, Vaxiviere darted over to the outside at the end of the back straight, aiming for a treacherous-looking piece of damp track. Wet tyres gripped, and Vaxiviere hung on around the outside of the 180-degree hairpin to edge past the Dutchman.

A slightly wild swerve across the road into the Charouz-run car's sidepod failed to salvage the position for de Vries, who had driven flawlessly until that moment but was forced to concede victory. Both men downplayed the shoulder-charge after the race.

Behind the lead scrap Oliver Rowland produced a clean run to third. The Briton was under no obligation to take risks. Having already triumphed in race one, another sizeable points haul was the order for the day. That Rowland heads to Monaco with the points lead is no less than he deserves (see column).

Like Vaxiviere, Fortec racer Rowland was also in the heart of some fraught Turn 1 action in the opening race. Promoted to the front row after Gustav Malja received a penalty (see right) Rowland found himself heading three abreast with the Lotus duo into the 90-degree left-hander.

One of them shouldn't really have been there. Likeable Dutchman Meindert van Buuren had crept forward before the lights. Faced with an inevitable jump-start penalty, van Buuren had no option other to go for it. Attack!

A watching Allan McNish in the media centre commented that, once the offence was committed, van Buuren did the right thing. He had to be out front and build an advantage.

Seeing van Buuren arrive on the scene in determined mood, Rowland admitted to dropping to first gear on the apex to ensure



Vaxiviere's amazing move round the outside of de Vries

avoiding contact, while Vaxiviere lost ground squeezed out wide.

Credit to van Buuren, who subsequently kept his head to take the chequered flag first and salvage an adjusted fifth place. Informed of the 20s penalty, Rowland did an equally good job to lead home Jazeman Jaafar in a Fortec one-two.

Dean Stoneman's 2015 preparations had been disrupted by a mammoth test shunt at Jerez. But the Red Bull-backed GP3 runner-up demonstrated clear progress in a fine run to third ahead of Vaxiviere.

Of the other pre-season hot tips, Tom Dillmann bogged down at the start and then clipped the rear of Tio Ellinas exiting Turn 5 on the opening lap. Ellinas was sent into the gravel after picking up an instant puncture, while Dillmann struggled home with a loose front wing robbing him of downforce.

Race two started under a safety car after heavy rain caused chaos in the preceding FR2.0 race. Strakka Racing's Ellinas bounced back from his earlier first-lap retirement to pick up fourth ahead of his old sparring partner, GP2 refugee Dillmann.

FOR FULL RESULTS, PAGE 57

IN THE PADDOCK

PETER MILLS
FR3.5 SERIES
CORRESPONDENT

@peter_autosport



OLIVER ROWLAND SCORED A 'HEIST' of silverware and the coveted FR3.5 points lead at Aragon last weekend. The raid was less smash-and-grab, more Rififi or Hatton Gardens, given the attention to detail that went into its preparation.

Of many crucial ingredients, the continued support of the Racing Steps Foundation has long played a central role in the Sheffield racer's undertaking to achieve championship glory. The RSF has in turn facilitated focused training in Lanzarote during the close season, under the supervision of Porsche performance guru Eliot Challifour, and a continued berth at polished title-winning team Fortec.

But after overcoming apathy to the low-downforce set-up introduced for this season's Saturday races to win the season opener, Rowland and Racing Steps' co-ordinator Derek Walters singled out the importance of one man: Derek Warwick.

"In the last two or three years, Derek has been very involved in mentoring Oliver," explained Walters of the role played by the all-round friend to motor-racing and Britain's one-time great F1 hope. "He has been hounding him every day to get him fit and taking him cross-country skiing. Derek has really made sure Ollie understands what being a professional driver is all about, and he has been an absolute brick."

Rowland, beaming after his win, fully echoed the sentiment. Canny racecraft demonstrated alongside his trademark speed in race one bodes well for Rowland's 2015 title prospects.

But other threats lurk beyond the dazzling Vaxiviere/Lotus combination.



L-r: Jaafar, Rowland, Stoneman on podium

The visibility went from seeing everything, to seeing nothing in two corners



Rowland on conditions before race two red flag

FORMULA RENAULT EURO CUP RD1/7

Deletraz claims two victories in triple-header

IN A BREAK FROM TRADITION, THE opening round of the Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup featured an extra race. BMW Junior driver Louis Deletraz kicked off his 2015 account with a dominant pair of victories in Saturday's dry races. Running in Sunday's wet final race was restricted owing to appalling weather and accidents.

Deletraz commanded race one from pole. The battle for the remaining podium positions provided fleeting Michelin-to-Michelin action. Exiting the hairpin on lap one, Norwegian Dennis Olsen was squeezed out onto the kerbs after an unsuccessful attempt to wrest second from Ben Barnicoat. Suffering a loss of momentum, Olsen dropped to sixth. Kevin Jorg was promoted to third, but a sideways moment cost him places to Anthoine Hubert and Matevos Isaakyan.

In a processional second race, Deletraz and Jorg completed a Josef Kaufmann Racing one-two.



Deletraz: a strong performance out front

Jack Aitken was unfortunate to miss out on a podium in Sunday's final race. The Koiranen driver was left nursing an injured hand from an assault when running second under the safety car.

Fifth-placed Martin Kodric was caught out by poor visibility, and ploughed into both Aitken and third-placed Ignazio D'Agosto. The resulting clean up meant the race concluded under the safety car, with polesitter Olsen winning.

RESULTS Race 1 1 Louis Deletraz, 14 laps in 27m20.972s; 2 Ben Barnicoat, +2.342s; 3 Anthoine Hubert; 4 Matevos Isaakyan; 5 Kevin Jorg; 6 Dennis Olsen. **Race 2** 1 Deletraz, 13 laps in 27m35.424s; 2 Jorg, +1.042s; 3 Olsen; 4 Isaakyan; 5 Barnicoat; 6 Hubert. **Race 2** 1 Olsen, 10 laps in 29m37.049s; 2 Hubert, +1.320s; 3 Darius Oskoui; 4 Callan O'Keeffe; 5 James Allen; 6 Deletraz. **Points** 1 Deletraz, 58; 2 Olsen, 48; 3 Hubert, 41; 4 Jorg, 34; 5 Barnicoat, 28; 6 Isaakyan, 26.

Stoneman (2) has F1 aspirations in FR3.5



Sainz backs F1 licence change

REIGNING FR3.5 CHAMPION Carlos Sainz Jr believes the series should be valued more highly by the FIA's proposed Formula 1 superlicence points system.

Future FR3.5 series champions stand to earn 10 points less towards their superlicence than an FIA European F3 champion. They will also

receive 20 less than the GP2 winner.

"For me, FR3.5 should have big prominence," said Sainz, currently racing for Toro Rosso in F1. "How much I cannot judge because I am not getting into politics, but it should be a big thing. If I won FR3.5 and I'm doing a good job in the first four grands prix, it means FR3.5 is the right way to go."

NO HOME JOY FOR MERHI

ROBERTO MERHI HAD A TROUBLED maiden outing for Pons Racing.

The Manor Formula 1 driver struggled with set-up all weekend, and was caught up in a first-corner incident in race one.

"I was right behind Mehri, [Roy] Nissany locked-up and hit me, so I bounced into Merhi," said Carlin FR3.5 debutant Sean Gelael, who retired in the melee.

After running eighth in the early laps, the Spaniard parked late in the race.

"The suspension was bent, that's why I was so slow," said Merhi.



Merhi's smile didn't last long

COMTEC, WASTED TRIP

Norfolk team Comtec's transporter travelled to Spain with rebuilt cars in a late bid to run former GP3 runner-up Facu Regalia. The deal could not be concluded and both Comtec and 2014 race winner Zeta Corse missed the Aragon opener, leaving 20 entries.

TWO DNFS FOR AVF

Neither AVF entry finished race one. Beitske Visser suffered a gearbox-problem on the formation lap, while Mexican rookie Alfonso Celis Jr stopped on lap 15 with accident damage.

SPEEDING STONEMAN

Red Bull Junior driver Dean Stoneman lost seventh place in race two after incurring a 25-second penalty for speeding in the pitlane. The Briton was happy with his race one podium, though: "I was on the back foot after missing some testing," said Stoneman, "but it's enjoyable when you can see yourself catching someone. I had to pace myself after passing Vaxiviere though, as I didn't know what the tyres were going to do."

MALJA'S EXCLUSION

Swedish rookie Gustav Malja was stripped of a front-row qualifying position for race one after his Strakka car's carbon floor failed a ride-height test. Malja started race one from the back and recovered to finish 10th.



AUTOSPORT COMPETITION

WIN

A PASSENGER RIDE IN A COLIN McRAE SUBARU

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of Colin McRae winning the WRC title, we have a rare opportunity for one reader to win a passenger ride in one of the Scot's cars at the McRae Rally Challenge at Knockhill, as well as a pair of tickets to enjoy the special event marking this anniversary.

FIRST PRIZE

- PASSENGER RIDE IN A COLIN McRAE SUBARU
- FAMILY WEEKEND-ENTRY TICKETS TO THE McRAE RALLY CHALLENGE AT KNOCKHILL, MAY 16-17

For more information on the event or tickets visit www.knockhill.com



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TO ENTER ANSWER THIS QUESTION

Who was the last driver to win a World Rally Championship round in a Subaru?

- A) Colin McRae
- B) Petter Solberg
- C) Richard Burns

Email your answer to autosport.competitions@haymarket.com, with McRae in the subject line.

Entries close at 11.59pm May 5, 2015.

Terms and conditions: To enter: email autosport.competitions@haymarket.com. Entries close: 11.59pm May 5, 2015. Prize(s) are as stated in the competition. It does not include any travel/subsistence or additional expenses that you may incur. Open to: UK residents aged 18 or over. No cash alternative. Prizes are non-transferable. Only one entry per person. For full terms and conditions see autosport.com
The Promoter: Haymarket Media Group, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 9BE



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RESULTS ROUND-UP

INDYCAR SERIES

ROUND 4/15 BARBER MOTORSPORTS PARK, APRIL 26
90 LAPS – 207.00 MILES

- 1 **Josef Newgarden (USA)** CFH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet **1h55m53.0630s**
- 2 Graham Rahal (USA) Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Dallara-Honda +2.2061s
- 3 Scott Dixon (NZ) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +4.8371s
- 4 Will Power (AUS) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet +19.4903s
- 5 Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda +22.0663s
- 6 Carlos Munoz (CO) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda +24.0595s
- 7 James Hinchcliffe (CDN) Schmidt Peterson M-sports Dallara-Honda +24.6529s
- 8 Sebastien Bourdais (F) KVSH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +25.4534s
- 9 Simon Pagenaud (F) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet +30.6139s
- 10 Marco Andretti (USA) Andretti Autosport Dallara-Honda +33.4777s
- 11 Luca Filippi (I) CFH Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +34.1607s
- 12 Charlie Kimball (USA) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +34.6792s
- 13 Tony Kanaan (BR) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +35.3334s
- 14 Juan Pablo Montoya (CO) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet +36.6361s
- 15 Hello Castroneves (BR) Team Penske Dallara-Chevrolet +39.4194s
- 16 Gabby Chaves (CO) Bryan Herta Autosport Dallara-Honda +45.8965s
- 17 Takuma Sato (J) AJ Foyt Enterprises Dallara-Honda +50.8442s
- 18 Sage Karam (USA) Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +55.1372s
- 19 Stefano Coletti (MC) KV Racing Dallara-Chevrolet +55.4160s
- 20 Rodolfo Gonzalez (YV) Dale Coyne Racing Dallara-Honda +1m07.9855s
- 21 Jack Hawksworth (GB) AJ Foyt Enterprises Dallara-Honda +1m13.1828s
- 22 James Jakes (GB) Schmidt Peterson Motorsports Dallara-Honda -1 lap
- 23 Francesco Dracone (I) Dale Coyne Racing Dallara-Honda -1 lap

Winner's average speed 107.175mph.
Fastest lap Hunter-Reay, 1m09.7188s, 118.763mph.

Q3 1 Castroneves, 1m07.1925s; 2 Power, 1m07.3833s; 3 Pagenaud, 1m07.6383s; 4 Dixon, 1m07.6938s; 5 Newgarden, 1m07.8922s; 6 Kanaan, 1m07.9426s.

Q2 Power, 1m06.8050s; Castroneves, 1m06.8790s; Pagenaud, 1m07.0586s; Dixon, 1m07.0940s; Kanaan, 1m07.2059s; Newgarden, 1m07.2251s; 7 Bourdais, 1m07.2462s; 8 Rahal, 1m07.3903s; 9 Filippi, 1m07.6302s; 10 Hinchcliffe, 1m07.6626s; 11 Kimball, 1m07.8405s; 12 Karam, 1m07.8930s.



Newgarden (third in line) bagged his first victory



Vaxiviere claimed victory in race two

Q1 – GROUP 1 Dixon, 1m06.9406s; Power, 1m06.9973s; Bourdais, 1m07.3141s; Kimball, 1m07.3842s; Hinchcliffe, 1m07.4708s; Kanaan, 1m07.6242s; 14 Jakes, 1m07.9671s; 16 Coletti, 1m07.9947s; 18 Hunter-Reay, 1m07.9984s; 20 Sato, 1m08.2541s; 22 Munoz, 1m08.3533s; 23 Dracone, 1m10.1133s.

Q1 – GROUP 2 Pagenaud, 1m07.1072s; Castroneves, 1m07.2631s; Newgarden, 1m07.2853s; Filippi, 1m07.5023s; Rahal, 1m07.5198s; Karam, 1m07.5355s; 13 Andretti, 1m07.6295s; 15 Montoya, 1m07.7235s; 17 Chaves, 1m07.8191s; 19 Hawksworth, 1m08.0082s; 21 Gonzalez, 1m08.5259s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Montoya, 136; 2 Castroneves, 133; 3 Dixon, 123; 4 Newgarden, 119; 5 Power, 112; 6 Hinchcliffe, 110; 7 Kanaan, 110; 8 Rahal, 103; 9 Pagenaud, 96; 10 Bourdais, 91.

RESULTS BY FORIX

FORMULA RENAULT 3.5 SERIES

ROUND 1/9 MOTORLAND ARAGON (E), APRIL 25-26
RACE 1 (24 LAPS – 79.695 MILES)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1 Oliver Rowland (GB) Fortec Motorsports | 42m06.315s |
| 2 Jazeman Jaafar (MAL) Fortec Motorsports | +2.117s |
| 3 Dean Stoneman (GB) DAMS | +4.755s |
| 4 Matthieu Vaxiviere (F) Lotus (Charouz) | +7.081s |
| 5 Meindert van Buuren (NL) Lotus (Charouz) | +16.394s |
| 6 Pietro Fantin (BR) International Draco Racing | +20.368s |
| 7 Nyck de Vries (NL) DAMS | +27.330s |
| 8 Nicholas Latif (CDN) Arden Motorsport | +32.844s |
| 9 Tom Dillmann (F) Carlin | +35.757s |
| 10 Gustav Malja (S) Strakka Racing | +35.891s |
| 11 Bruno Bonifacio (BR) International Draco Racing | +54.408s |
| 12 Aurelien Panis (F) Tech 1 Racing | +1m11.935s |
| 13 Philo Paz Armand (RI) Pons Racing | -1 lap |
| 14 Roy Nissany (IL) Tech 1 Racing | -1 lap |
| R Roberto Merhi (E) Pons Racing | 20 laps-damage/handling |
| R Alfonso Celis Jr (MEX) AVF | 15 laps-accident damage |
| R Egor Orudzhev (RUS) Arden Motorsport | 2 laps-accident |
| R Tio Ellinas (CY) Strakka Racing | 0 laps-puncture/collision |
| R Beitske Visser (NL) AVF | 0 laps-gearbox |
| R Sean Gelael (RI) Carlin | 0 laps-collision |

Winner's average speed 113.564mph.
Fastest lap van Buuren, 1m44.201s, 114.722mph.

QUALIFYING 1 Vaxiviere, 1m41.446s; 2 Rowland, 1m41.628s; 3 van Buuren, 1m41.674s; 4 Jaafar, 1m41.692s; 5 Dillmann, 1m41.709s; 6 Stoneman, 1m41.757s; 7 Ellinas, 1m41.844s; 8 Latif, 1m41.921s; 9 de Vries, 1m42.041s; 10 Fantin, 1m42.149s; 11 Visser, 1m42.270s; 12 Merhi, 1m42.471s; 13 Orudzhev, 1m42.529s; 14 Gelael, 1m42.624s; 15 Celis, 1m42.678s; 16 Nissany, 1m42.678s; 17 Bonifacio, 1m42.895s; 18 Armand, 1m42.965s; 19 Panis, 1m43.090s; 20 Malja, 1m41.471s*. * = excluded from qualifying.

RACE 2 (19 LAPS – 63.092 MILES)

- 1 Vaxiviere, 1h06m48.647s; 2 de Vries, +3.459s; 3 Rowland, +9.926s; 4 Ellinas, +20.518s; 5 Dillmann, +26.285s; 6 van Buuren, +29.111s; 7 Jaafar, +32.629s; 8 Celis, +34.717s; 9 Merhi, +48.122s; 10 Bonifacio, +48.303s; 11 Fantin, +49.043s; 12 Stoneman, +54.607s; 13 Panis, +1m00.323s; 14 Latif, +1m10.161s; 15 Gelael, +1m11.014s; 16 Nissany, +1m11.100s; 17 Armand, +1m11.787s; 18 Orudzhev, +1m13.842s; 19 Visser, +1m14.210s; 20 Malja, -1 lap.
Winner's average speed 56.660mph.
Fastest lap Celis, 1m58.333s, 101.021mph.

QUALIFYING 2 de Vries, 1m41.609s; 2 Vaxiviere, 1m41.633s; 3 Rowland, 1m41.689s; 4 Jaafar, 1m41.690s; 5 Fantin, 1m41.847s; 6 Dillmann, 1m41.868s; 7 Stoneman, 1m41.882s; 8 Latif, 1m41.898s; 9 Ellinas, 1m41.937s; 10 Celis, 1m41.963s; 11 Visser, 1m42.085s; 12 Malja, 1m42.313s; 13 van Buuren, 1m42.337s; 14 Gelael, 1m42.360s; 15 Bonifacio, 1m42.414s; 16 Orudzhev, 1m42.515s; 17 Nissany, 1m42.675s; 18 Merhi, 1m42.857s; 19 Panis, 1m43.027s; 20 Armand, 1m43.125s.

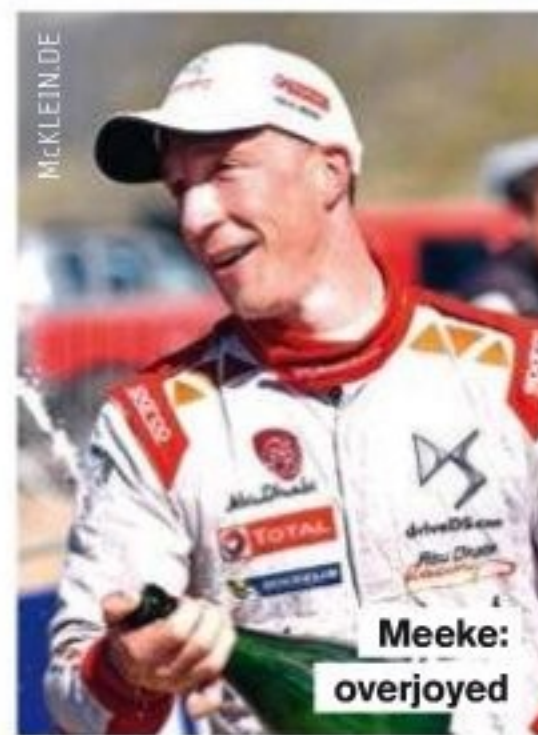
CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Rowland, 40; 2 Vaxiviere, 37; 3= de Vries & Jaafar, 24; 5 van Buuren, 18; 6 Stoneman, 15; 7 Ellinas, 12; 8 Dillmann, 12; 9 Fantin, 8; 10 Latif, 4.

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

ROUND 4/13 RALLY ARGENTINA, APRIL 23-26

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1 Kris Meeke (GB)/Paul Nagle (IRL) Citroen Total Citroen DS3 WRC | 3h41m44.9s |
| 2 Mads Ostberg (N)/Jonas Andersson (S) Citroen Total Citroen DS3 WRC | +18.1s |
| 3 Elfyn Evans (GB)/Daniel Barritt (GB) M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC | +3m27.4s |
| 4 Martin Prokop (CZ)/Jan Tomanek (CZ) Jipocar Czech National Team Ford Fiesta RS WRC | +6m26.1s |
| 5 Daniel Sordo (E)/Marc Marti (E) Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC | +10m46.7s |
| 6 Khalid Al-Qassimi (UAE)/Chris Patterson (GB) Citroen Total Citroen DS3 WRC | +11m19.9s |
| 7 Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari (Q)/Marshall Clarke (GB) Youth & Sports Qatar Rally Team Ford Fiesta RRC | +16m02.6s |
| 8 Diego Dominguez (PY)/Edgardo Galindo (RA) Ford Fiesta R5 | +18m48.2s |
| 9 Gustavo Saba (PY)/Diego Cagnotti (RA) Saba Competicion Skoda Fabia S2000 | +21m20.6s |
| 10 Federico Villagra (RA)/Diego Culetto (RA) Ford Fiesta MR | +25m19.6s |
| 11 Ott Tanak (EST)/Raigo Molder (EST) M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC | +25m52.3s |
| 16 Hayden Paddon (NZ)/John Kennard (NZ) Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC | +36m15.3s |
| 17 Sebastien Ogier (F)/Julien Ingrassia (F) Volkswagen Motorsport Volkswagen Polo R WRC | +37m11.5s |
| 19 Lorenzo Bertelli (I)/Giovanni Bernacchini (I) FWRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC | +39m17.0s |
| R Thierry Neuville (B)/Nicolas Gilsoul (B) Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC | SS12-accident |
| R Andreas Mikkelsen (N)/Ola Floene (N) Volkswagen Motorsport II Volkswagen Polo R WRC | SS12-accident |
| R Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)/Miikka Anttila (FIN) Volkswagen Motorsport Volkswagen Polo R WRC | SS11-fuel injector |



Meeke: overjoyed

Meeke, first Brit to win in WRC for 13 years



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier, 84; 2 Ostberg, 51; 3 Mikkelsen, 47; 4 Evans, 41; 5 Meeke, 35; 6 Neuville, 35; 7 Sordo, 30; 8 Prokop, 26; 9 Latvala, 19; 10 Tanak, 12.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 VW, 103; 2= Citroen & Hyundai, 85; 4 M-Sport, 73; 5 Jipocar, 32; 6 VW II, 15.

STAGE TIMES

SS1 SSS Merlo-San Luis (1.86 miles)
F:Ogier 2m32.0s L: Ogier S: Meeke +0.2s
SS2 Agua de Oro-Ascocchinga 1 (32.31 miles)
F:Meeke 38m26.2s L: Meeke S: Sordo +32.7s
SS3 Villa Bustos-Tanti 1 (12.17 miles)
F:Latvala 10m10.0s L: Meeke S: Latvala +15.3s
SS4 Agua de Oro-Ascocchinga 2 (32.31 miles)
F:Meeke 38m12.5s L: Meeke S: Latvala +28.7s
SS5 Villa Bustos-Tanti 2 (12.17 miles)
F:Meeke 10m03.9s L: Meeke S: Latvala +53.1s

SS6 SSS Parque Tematico (3.75 miles)
F:Sordo 5m01.0s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +1m08.4s
SS7 Capilla del Monte-San Marcos 1 (14.42 miles)
F:Ogier 17m31.1s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +53.5s
SS8 San Marcos-Characato 1 (35.11 miles)
F:Mikkelsen 27m17.4s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +32.6s
SS9 Capilla del Monte-San Marcos 2 (14.42 miles)

F:Mikkelsen 17m13.5s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +32.6s
SS10 San Marcos-Characato 2 (35.11 miles)
F:Mikkelsen 27m00.3s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +38.6s
SS11 El Condor-Copina (10.14 miles)
F:Mikkelsen 13m09.8s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +27.0s
SS12 El Condor (Power Stage) (9.12 miles)
F:Ogier 12m59.6s L: Meeke S: Ostberg +18.1s

WORLD RALLYCROSS
MONTALEGRE (P),
APRIL 25-26 RD 1/13

Swede gets the verdict from Solberg

JOHAN KRISTOFFERSSON GOT THE Volkswagen Team Sweden squad's World Rallycross title bid off to a brilliant start by taking victory in the opening round in Portugal.

The team, run by successful former driver Tommy Kristoffersson (father of Johan), has a three-year objective to win the championship, and is undertaking its first full-time WRX campaign this year after a part-season in 2014.

Reigning champion Petter Solberg had pole for the final in his Citroen DS3, but Kristoffersson's Polo got the best start. The Swede immediately took his joker lap and, in clear air, put his head down while 2003 World Rally champion Solberg soaked up the pressure from the Peugeot of Timmy Hansen.

Solberg was the last to take his joker, rejoining the circuit in second place and unable to prevent



Kristoffersson leads in the muddy going

Kristoffersson stretching his lead to the finish. "I almost stalled the car at the start, but kicked the clutch and made a good launch," said the winner. "The whole track was unbelievably slippery – you just had to be so careful. I'm so happy for the whole team, who have worked very hard this winter."

After taking his joker, Hansen came under attack from the VW of PG Andersson, but contact between the pair damaged a rear wheel on

Andersson's car and put him out. Hansen and team-mate Davy Jeanney ran nose to tail thereafter to finish third and fourth.

Andreas Bakkerud emerged from an early battle with Andersson to take fifth place in his Ford Fiesta.

Double DTM champion Mattias Ekstrom missed out on a place in the final by one place after finishing fourth in his semi, while ex-Formula Renault 3.5 title winner Alx Danielsson was plagued by gremlins

on his Munnich Motorsport Audi S3 throughout the weekend.

● Hal Ridge

RESULTS

1 Johan Kristoffersson (Volkswagen Polo), 6 laps in 4m34.242s; 2 Petter Solberg (Citroen DS3), +3.790s; 3 Timmy Hansen (Peugeot 208); 4 Davy Jeanney (Peugeot); 5 Andreas Bakkerud (Ford Fiesta); 6 PG Andersson (VW). **Points**
1 Kristoffersson, 27; 2 Solberg, 27; 3 Hansen, 24; 4 Bakkerud, 21; 5 Jeanney, 16; 6 Mattias Ekstrom, 15.

58



Wilson scored in race two

V8 STOCK CARS VELOPARK (BR), APRIL 26 RD 3/12

Serra and Wilson on top

WHILE DANIEL SERRA AND MAX Wilson claimed their first wins of the year, it was Julio Campos who took home the most points from the short and wide Velopark.

Polesitter Marcos Gomes battled it out with Serra and Campos in the first race, but Campos's Prati-Donaduzzi Peugeot lost a little bit of time in the pitstops. He therefore settled for third, with Serra, in a Mattheis/Red Bull Chevy "as close to perfection as I dare to dream of", crossing the line just ahead of Gomes.

Wilson was fastest in the opening free practice session but loss of fuel pressure restricted him to 24th on the grid. He raced through to 10th in the opening race, giving him pole for the reversed-grid counter.

By now Wilson had just six power boosts left, compared to the

12 of front-row partner Sergio Jimenez and sixth-starter Caca Bueno. But a clean and fast first lap for Wilson gave him a gap, with Jimenez losing ground in a collision with Ricardo Mauricio.

Mauricio put Wilson under pressure until a puncture sent him to the pits, allowing the understeering Bueno into second place ahead of Campos.

● Lito Cavalcanti

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Daniel Serra (Chevrolet Sonic), 47 laps in 47m08.923s; 2 Marcos Gomes (Peugeot 408), +0.691s; 3 Julio Campos (Peugeot); 4 Rubens Barrichello (Chevy); 5 Caca Bueno (Chevy); 6 Ricardo Mauricio (Chevy). **Race 2 1 Max Wilson (Chevy)**, 26 laps in 28m06.567s; 2 C Bueno, +1.343s; 3 Campos; 4 Serra; 5 Barrichello; 6 Felipe Lapenna (Peugeot). **Points**
1 C Bueno, 62; 2 Campos, 59; 3 Gomes, 51; 4 Barrichello, 49; 5 Wilson, 48; 6 Mauricio, 44.

INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN PAUL RICARD (F), APRIL 25-26 RD 1/7

Ferraris rule the GT roost

THE FERRARIS OF VILLORBA CORSE and AF Corse split the wins following a brace of lively races to open the season in Paul Ricard.

A stunning opening stint from Alessandro Balzan in the Villorba car built a sizeable buffer over the field on Saturday, although Balzan was aided by a spin from Miguel Ramos in the Teo Martin Motorsport McLaren. Upon taking over from Ramos, Alvaro Parente charged, closing to within two seconds of Nicola Benucci – now in the Villorba 458 – at the flag. Pasin Lathouras and Michele Rugolo took third in their AF Ferrari.

Early pacesetter from Parente, Rugolo and Irishman Matt Griffin split the field in race two. Once the pitstop sequence had cycled through, Lathouras had a sufficiently comfortable advantage to not be seriously challenged. Ramos once

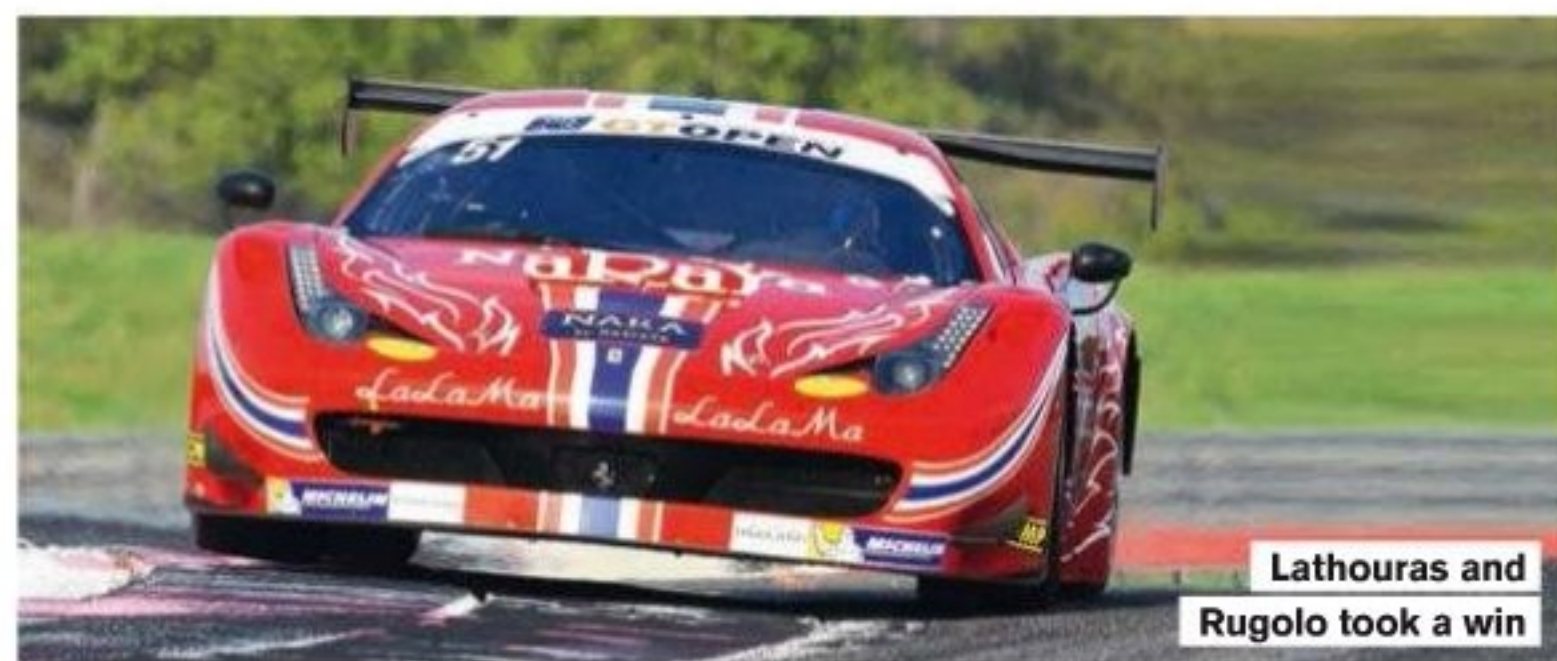
more took second, with the rostrum completed by Raffaele Giammaria and Ezequiel Perez Companc.

Griffin and Duncan Cameron took fifth in both races in their Ferrari.

● Ben Evans

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Alessandro Balzan/Nicola Benucci (Ferrari 458 Italia GT3), 33 laps in 1h11m28.015s; 2 Miguel Ramos/Alvaro Parente (McLaren 650S GT3), +2.045s; 3 Pasin Lathouras/Michele Rugolo (Ferrari); 4 Michal Broniszewski/Giacomo Piccini (Ferrari); 5 Duncan Cameron/Matt Griffin (Ferrari); 6 Ezequiel Perez Companc/Raffaele Giammaria (Ferrari). **Race 2 1 Lathouras/Rugolo**, 28 laps in 1h01m17.589s; 2 Ramos/Parente, +3.595s; 3 Perez Companc/Giammaria; 4 Emiliano Lopez/Jose Perez Aicart (Ferrari); 5 Cameron/Griffin; 6 Balzan/Benucci. **Points**
1 Lathouras/Rugolo, 36; 2 Ramos/Parente, 36; 3 Balzan/Benucci, 26; 4 Perez Companc/Giammaria, 18; 5 Cameron/Griffin, 16; 6 Broniszewski/Piccini, 11.



Lathouras and Rugolo took a win

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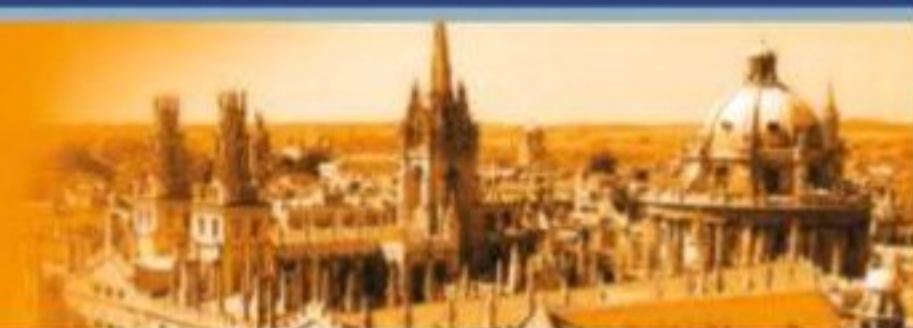
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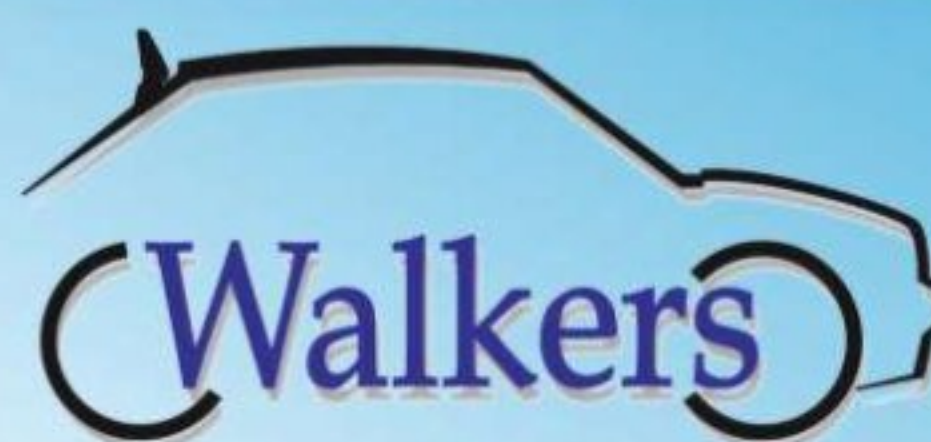
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Clockwise from T-L:
British; NEZ; Italian
and German F4 series



**MARCUS
SIMMONS**
DEPUTY
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I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FAN OF the FIA's Formula 4 concept – anything to alleviate the global clutter of junior categories has to be a positive thing in my book, although I'm sure I'm not alone in my wistful old-school hankering for competition between chassis constructors within the same series.

So my interest was piqued when word reached my ear that the FIA Single Seater Commission had last Summer discussed the idea of a World Final, especially with memories still strong of those classic Formula Ford Festivals (surely the spiritual forebear of such an event) fought out at Brands Hatch in the category's 1980s heyday.

It's only an idea at the moment, but one that Commission president Stefano Domenicali believes is worth pursuing. He knows as well as anyone that equalising the concepts of chassis, engine and tyres would be extremely tricky.

It's not as simple as asking a balance-of-performance test pilot to get a read on things over a single day of driving. What about how the tyres evolve over a race distance in differing conditions? And how could you accurately simulate Macau for such an exercise, if it transpired that the event was held there?

When I first heard talk of the F4 World Final discussion, it had been tantalisingly accompanied by mention of the classic Chinese street circuit.

"Macau would be a good place for it..." I suggested to Domenicali with a grin. "Maybe..." he laughed in enigmatic response. "Maybe you're right!"

Wherever it is, it would be a great event, and the ultimate prize for any driver on the ladder's bottom rung.



Can F4 emulate
the FFord Festival?

World Cup plan possible for F4

Leading British teams keen on showpiece event for fledgling FIA series

THE FIA IS PLANNING A FUTURE World Cup contest for its new Formula 4 concept, and has hinted that it is eyeing a Macau Grand Prix support for the event.

The plan was originally discussed last year by the FIA Single Seater Commission during Gerhard Berger's presidency, and his replacement, ex-Ferrari Formula 1 team boss Stefano Domenicali, is willing to press ahead with the initiative.

Seven F4 championships are being held in 2015, with Britain (via MSA Formula), Germany, Japan, China, Australia and the Northern European Zone joining Italy, which was alone in holding a series in '14. The World Cup would be contested between selected drivers from the FIA F4-homologated series.

The biggest obstacle is that varying chassis constructors, engine suppliers and tyres are used around the globe.

"Yes, we are discussing it," Domenicali said. "We have one

issue – if we had in all the different championships the same engine, the same chassis, the same tyres, that would be an easy choice. [If] we do the final; we could have a lot of offers for that.

"So now we need to think how we can balance the performance between the cars, because we know that tyres, engines and chassis are different. So we have this in mind and we are thinking how to stabilise the system and make sure in the future this will be an opportunity.

"That is something that has to be studied carefully, because otherwise you will see different cars behaving in a different way, so we have a disparity and you go there with a balance of performance that will be seen as fake, so we need to be careful."

Fortec Motorsports boss Richard Dutton, whose team runs cars in MSA Formula, welcomed the move.

"It would be great to do, but it will be difficult to get around the differences in chassis and

powertrain between the cars in national championships," he said. "When Gerhard Berger was Single Seater Commission president he didn't want this sort of concept to happen, which is why he was happy to allow countries to have different chassis. That's not the biggest problem because the chassis are the same weight, but it's the engines and tyres which are the issue. I would certainly look at it if Stefano was able to make it possible."

Double R Racing boss Anthony Hieatt added: "It'll be a difficult task for Stefano, but I'd like to see a world final contest like in the old Formula BMW, which was good.

"Ideally, we would have the Tatuus car and Abarth engine which is used in the Italian and German F4 championships. All you'd have to do is change the tyres.

"So we're a little pigeon-holed in the UK, but Mygale and Tatuus have done a great job to produce an F4 chassis for its €33,000 [£23,530] pricetag."

Abt Audi to UK series

This ex-Christian Abt Audi A4, driven by Paul Smith, will be part of a 27-car field at the Super Touring opener at Donington Park's Historic Festival this weekend. Reigning champion James Dodd and former British Touring Car racers John Cleland and Patrick Watts are also entered.



STILL

70

Mini Challenge

Neal Jr suffers high-speed roll on Mini Challenge debut

HENRY NEAL ESCAPED INJURY

after a high-speed roll during his Mini Challenge debut at Donington Park last weekend.

Neal, the teenaged son of triple British Touring Car Champion Matt, was fighting for fifth place during the second Cooper race when a clash with Martin Poole entering the Old Hairpin sent Neal's Team Dynamics-run car into the gravel, precipitating a series of rolls.

Neal was unharmed but unable to take part in the final race of the weekend.

"I was ahead into the corner and then got a tap on my right-rear which sent me straight off and into the gravel sideways," he said. "The car then dug in and over I went. It wasn't a nice experience."

Neal said that the team would assess

the damage to the car back at base.

Poole added: "Henry and I were together down the Craner Curves and then he cut in front of me into the braking zone to take the line, but braked earlier than I was expecting and I had nowhere to go. It was a total accident."



Neal's car post-shunt

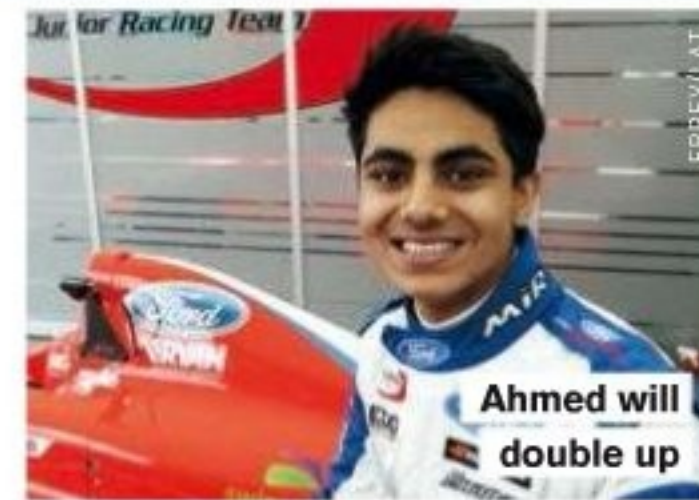
Formula 4

Ahmed adds NEZ FIA F4 programme to MSA Formula

ENAAM AHMED WILL DOVETAIL his domestic racing commitments in this year's MSA Formula with a campaign in SMP Formula 4.

Ahmed first tested the car earlier this year and has now confirmed that he will take part in selected rounds of the new Northern European Zone series.

The 15-year-old reigning world junior karting champion, who graduated to single-seater racing this season, is the 13th racer to sign up to the championship, which offers the



Ahmed will double up

winner €350,000 to move to the Formula 3 European Championship.

"I'm over the moon to be competing in the SMP Championship this season," Ahmed said. "We tested the car back in January and I really enjoyed it. We were given the opportunity to race this season and we couldn't turn the offer down."

The series is being run by Finnish-owned single-seater squad Koiranen GP, best known for its exploits in Formula Renault and GP3.

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British GT

Hill to British GT in Porsche

JAKE HILL WILL MAKE HIS BRITISH GT debut at Rockingham this weekend after joining AmD Tuning to race its GT4-class Porsche.

Hill competed in two rounds of the British Touring Car Championship in 2013 and last year claimed two podium finishes from four starts in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB.

British Touring Car/GT team boss Shaun Hollamby drove the AmD Porsche at the opening round of the season at Oulton Park alongside Graham Coomes,

finishing fourth in class in the first race, but has now opted to step back from driving duties.

"Shaun and the guys at AmD have been so supportive of me right back to 2011 when I had a run in their VW Golf BTCC car, so I am really, really pleased to be racing with them," said Hill, 21.

Hollamby added: "I really enjoyed Oulton, but think the combination of Graham's experience and pace and the raw speed that I know Jake has will enable us to fight for wins."



Hill replaces Hollamby

EBREV/LAT



Schumacher Jr bags first car win

Mick Schumacher won on his debut weekend in single-seater racing in the German Formula 4 Championship at Oschersleben. The 16-year-old son of seven-time F1 world champion Michael won the reversed-grid finale after finishing ninth and 12th in the first two races

GT Cup

Harvey back in Porsche

BRITISH TOURING CAR

Championship commentator Tim Harvey got back behind the wheel of a Porsche GT machine at Donington Park last weekend after accepting an invitation from the In2Racing team.

Harvey, a former BTCC and Porsche Carrera Cup champion, joined regular racer Nick Staveley to share his Type 991 Porsche GT3 Cup machine for the GT Cup opener. The pair qualified 20th and failed to finish after an early clash on lap five.

"It's not been the ideal weekend but it was fun to get back out anyway," said Harvey. "This was a one-off because

I've known Nick for many years and he offered me this chance, and I like any opportunity to get back behind the wheel. I could be back later in the year, but I don't know yet."

Staveley handled the car solo on Sunday and took a best finish of 10th.



WALKER

BTCC champ drove 911

HUMBLE PYE

The voice of club racing



Pye likes the look of the Clio series

HAWKINS

"FOR VALUE RACING LOOK DOWN THE 750MC'S CLIO LANE"

Pioneered by 750 Motor Club competitions boss Giles Groombridge as a bolt-on to thinning Stock Hatch fields in 2013, following the channelling of pre-1992 cars into a separate 'bargain-basement' Classic Stock Hatch competition, the rise of the Renault Clio 182 class into a fully-fledged racing championship this season has captured the imagination of competitors.

Fields ranged from nine to 22 last season, when the French machines were seeded out from the nursery into a stand-alone series of 12 races with the enthusiastic backing of Dorset-based Renault tuning specialist K-Tec Racing. Many aspirants who watched the fledgling class's development last year have leapt off the fence (or over it) and joined the fun. At Brands Hatch last weekend 33 cars – one fewer than the Indy circuit's MSA licence allows – made a superb spectacle.

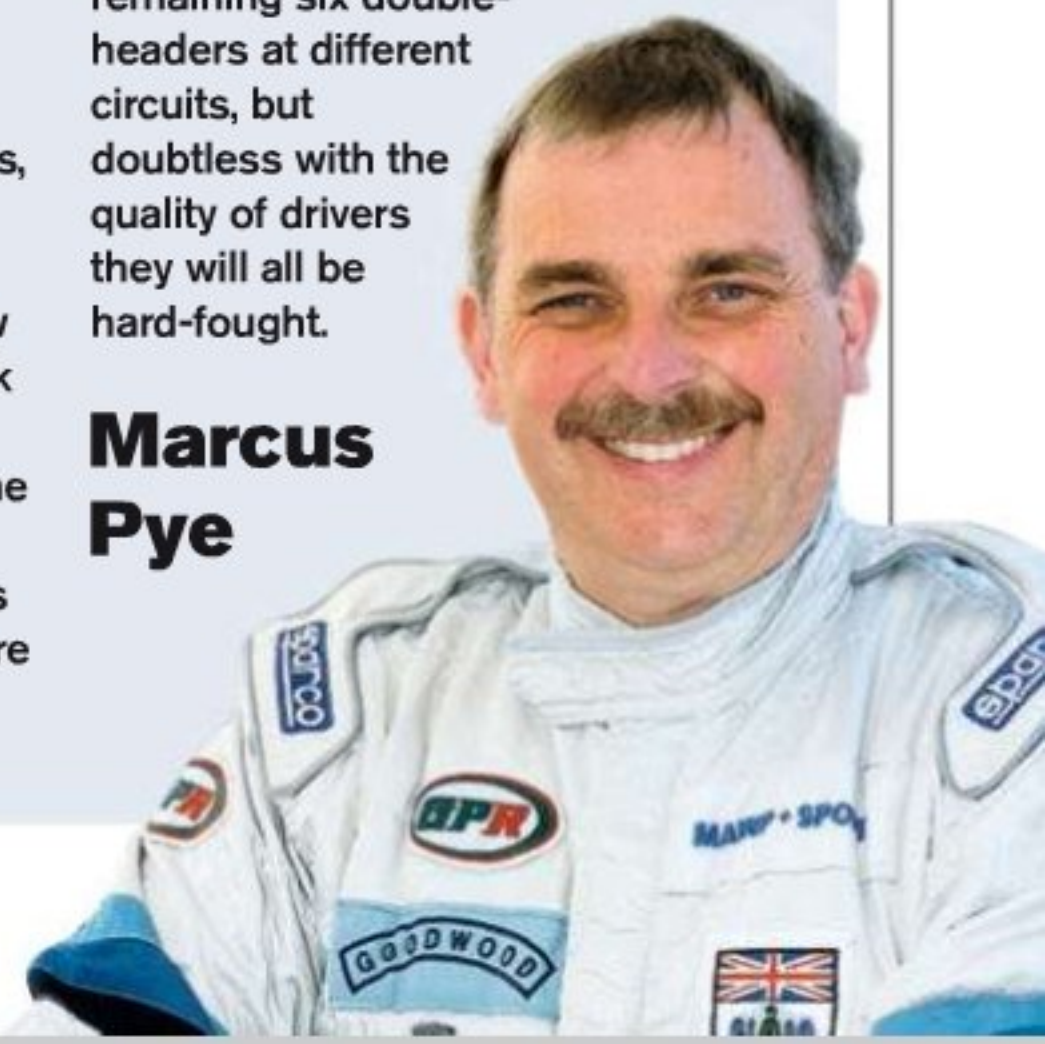
Among the competitors were former Stock Hatch champions Patrick Fletcher and Jeff Humphries, plus numerous other graduates including Pete Morgan and Matt Digby and racing returnees Andrew Tibbs, rapid VW 'Golfer' James Bark and renowned Renault preparer Mark Fish. More will be ready for the next event at Croft on May 23-24.

One key reason for the growth is the availability of the potent two-litre Clio II (CB22) models at sensible money. The facelifted Cup cars of

2004-05 are the best-looking of the Regie's genre and, despite being 10 years old, still look fresh. Carefully written regulations minimise expenditure beyond the fitment of six-point rollcages, MSA-prescribed safety equipment and 15-inch Rimstock wheels to take Dunlop 195/50 tyres, while the Mecachrome-developed engines use a control-mapped ECU supplied by K-Tec Racing.

That the recipe is working was evidenced by Saturday's qualifying session. The quickest four (Digby, Fletcher, Tibbs and Bark) were covered by 0.07s, the first six rows by 0.98s and the top 20 by 1.75s. To keep things as equal as possible, the first four finishers in each race must carry 'success' ballast of 30kg, 20kg, 10kg and 5kg respectively (cumulatively for three results). The weekend's closest finish of 0.01s may not be repeated over the remaining six double-headers at different circuits, but doubtless with the quality of drivers they will all be hard-fought.

Marcus Pye



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Butler-Henderson was a winner



In brief

Powell's GT aim

Alice Powell plans to make a switch into sportscar or touring car competition after making her endurance racing debut at last weekend's Britcar 24 Hours. The 22-year-old ex-Formula Renault and GP3 competitor raced with the works Aston Martin Lagonda squad (above), finishing fifth overall.

Sieljes returns

Paul Sieljes will return to BRDC Formula 4 at Rockingham this weekend with Chris Dittmann Racing. The 21-year-old competed with the squad in the final round of last year's F4 Winter Series at Brands Hatch and will take time out from racing in the Dutch Supercar Challenge to make the one-off appearance alongside Tom Jackson.

Record Tin Tops haul

The Cannons Tin Tops Championship will begin its season at Brands Hatch this weekend with its biggest grid in three years after 27 drivers signed up. The series ran as a separate class on the same grid as the *Motorsport News* Saloon Championship last season.

NASCAR debutant

Renault UK Clio Cup and Formula Renault BARC race winner Luke Wright competed in the opening round of the NASCAR Euro Series at Valencia last weekend. The 22-year-old has previously tested NASCAR machines in the States and earned a best finish of eighth in Spain.

Harrison to Minis

Former British karting champion Nathan Harrison is contesting the Mini Challenge this year and won on his debut in the Cooper Class at Donington Park last weekend. Harrison lifted the Super One Rotax MiniMax title in 2009 and last raced in Ginetta Juniors, contesting six races in '12.

Mini Challenge

New Mini smashes lap record

THE NEW MINI CHALLENGE CAR smashed the lap record at Donington Park on its first race outing last weekend, despite a power restriction.

Sixteen of the new Generation 3 F56 cars lined up for the first races at the track. Thirteen of them lapped well under the class record in qualifying, with Rob Smith's pole position time being over 2.6s faster than the benchmark for the old R56 JCW car.

While the BMW engine is capable of pushing out up to 280bhp, series organiser Total Track has limited that to 255bhp and also worked to limit torque.

Gearbox issues also affected some of the cars on their maiden weekend.

Championship promoter Anthony Williams said: "We have had a few teething issues with the gearboxes, but we're working with [supplier] Quaife to iron those out as soon as possible.

"We're happy with the performance where it is because we've had to work very hard to find the right level of driveability for the new cars.

"We've reduced the torque by 30 per cent to make sure the car doesn't overwork tyres and so far we've had very positive feedback."

Smith won the first and third races at Donington, with Charlie Butler-Henderson triumphing in the other.

Vernon dominated on Formula 3 debut



F3 Cup

Vernon wants more F3

EX-CARRERA CUP, FORMULA

Palmer Audi and Formula Renault racer Kieran Vernon may race on in the F3 Cup after winning all three races on his debut at Donington Park last weekend.

The 25-year-old was a late entry for Donington, driving a Chris Dittmann Racing Dallara-Mercedes.

"It's been a stunning weekend, and

better than I ever expected," said Vernon. "I work with the team's BRDC F4 arm and Chris offered me the car this weekend because it was free.

"I had one run in the car beforehand and it takes some getting used to. I didn't expect to win, but now I think there will probably be a conversation about maybe doing some more this year."

VdeV

Prototype move for Porsche ace

FORMER PORSCHE RACING ACE

Tom Bradshaw will return to the European VdeV sportscar championship later this season with the Gibson team.

Ex-Carrera Cup and Porsche Club challenger Bradshaw will handle the developmental Gibson GM19 sports-prototype alongside Daniel Gibson.

The pair was due to run for the full season, but delays in the homologation of the car mean the team is pushing to return to the grid in time for the next races at Motorland Aragon in Spain at the end of next month.

"The Gibson car is a fantastic piece of kit but it looks like it'll be another development year," said Bradshaw. "They've had to make some changes to the tub, such as changing the carbon-crash structure for a steel one, and also remodelled the front suspension."

Nissan shootout returns



Nissan GT Academy

Latest Nissan gaming talent search starts

THE QUALIFYING PHASE FOR THIS year's Nissan Playstation GT Academy talent search is now live and will run until June 16.

The global talent search, now in its seventh year, rewards its winner with a full factory race programme. The scheme has

so far produced a string of sportscar stars, including Jann Mardenborough and Lucas Ordóñez, who will both form part of Nissan NISMO's LMP1 programme at the Le Mans 24 Hours this year.

To qualify, players have to set a laptime in the seasonal event game mode of Gran

Turismo 6 on the Playstation 3, with the fastest then going through to a live knockout event.

The final race-camp shoot-out will be held at Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi this year, instead of its traditional home at Silverstone.

Cutmore chases
Boulton at Brands



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BRANDS HATCH, APRIL 25-26 750MC

Inspired Cutmore's double tops

WITH AN UNPAINTED NOSECONE the only evidence of a massive Wednesday testing shunt that had extensively damaged his reconfigured Spire-Suzuki GT3S, John Cutmore's double victory in the 750 Motor Club's RGB championship openers rewarded a stunning team effort. "I thought it was over, but Tim Gray and three other guys turned it round in 23 hours at Spire's base. They did an incredible job," said Cutmore.

Cutmore grabbed pole, but Al Boulton (Spire GT3) led Saturday's race until his gear linkage broke. Scott Mittell (MC-52B) was hobbled by an electrical glitch, and Cutmore

led by half-distance. Duncan Horlor (GT3) bagged second after the engine in Paul Rogers's Contour blew, while Oliver Hewitt (GT3) deserved third after another rebuild.

Yokohama tyre choice (new for 2015) decided Sunday's damp race. Mittell scarpers on his treaded option, but Cutmore's lone decision to run 'drys' with wet suspension settings won the day. Mittell hung on for second ahead of Horlor. David Watson (in a new MNR GM2) and James Walker (TGM Phoenix) shared front-engined honours, the latter repelling Colin Spicer (Wildmoor) by 0.3s.

Twenty-nine screaming Hondas

set off on Sunday's damp track, underlining the Tegiwa Civic Cup's growth, but Mark Anderson's rocket-like start from 12th to fourth by Paddock presaged a spin and chaos. A pinball shunt sidelined six cars before Druids, including points leader Danny Winstanley's.

Adam Shepherd restarted superbly, staving off Endaf Owens for his first car victory. Mark Higginson's third marked the FN model's maiden podium. Stock Hatch graduate Carl Swift led Sunday's race throughout as Malta's Bernard Galea and Shepherd disputed silver. Poor Winstanley was a first-lap casualty again.

Debutant Matt Digby led both Clio 182 races but won neither. Demoted in traffic by polesitter 'Patch' Fletcher and Andrew Tibbs on Saturday, Digby was denied on the line by VW Golf GTi convert James Bark second time out.

Twice Ian Jordan was leading Saturday's Formula Vee opener when it was red-flagged, but having again done the hard work he saw Ian Buxton (GAC) snatch victory in the UK's first Hoosier-tyred race, concluded in a shortened finale. Buxton started 12th and ambushed Paul Smith, yet to attune his AHS



to the American rubber, drawing Jordan past with him.

James Harridge was Sunday's star. The youngster harassed Smith all the way in almost dry conditions, poking his self-built Maverick's proboscis into gaps as they lapped traffic. Smith, pleased that "major changes" to his car's set-up worked, needed his straight-line edge to counter Harridge's cornering speed.

"Absolutely ecstatic" with second, Harridge's efforts also netted fastest lap. Some aero help with the intriguing car and a little more grunt might just make the package a winner. A moment at Druids for early leader Jordan dropped him to sixth behind GAC trio Craig Pollard, Paul Hughes and Dan Pitchford.

Bill Cowley and his venerable



ALL PICS: GARY HAWKINS



Three of the best as Locost record tumbles

As they did at Donington's Demon Tweaks/Yokohama championship opener in March, Lee McNamara and Stuart Sellars each won a Locost counter, but 41 entries merited a trifecta of races on the Indy circuit and Danny Andrew nailed the third.

All were thrillers – wonderfully clean slipstreaming contests in which each competitor appeared twice and margins of victory totalled 0.71s – simultaneously reminding category fanatics of its greatest days and dulling memories of last season's carnage.

Points leader McNamara qualified quickest as Sellars was excavated from the gravel at Paddock Hill Bend. In action first, however, Sellars beat Andrew home by a few lengths as Ian Allee continued his Donington form and Michael Roots emerged as a contender, erasing Andrew's 58.24s lap record.

Jack Coveney pushed the class standard into the 57s as he rose brilliantly from sixth on the opening lap of the second

stanza to wipe out a three-second deficit to McNamara, whose tyres had overheated, then pass him audaciously on the penultimate lap.

A tiny error at Graham Hill Bend last time around torpedoed Coveney's dream, however, leaving him powerless to resist McNamara who drafted past in the last 30 metres to win by 0.02s. James Millman praised his grandad's car preparation as the catalyst of a career-best third.

Andrew took the last race by a whisker from Sellars, after several mid-race exchanges. "The race pace was unbelievable," said the victor, who had deposed Allee on lap two, then homed in on Sellars's gold car.

Roots – "I was a bit of a wimp in qualifying" – joined them on the podium after Tim Neat traversed the gravel at Paddock and McNamara shot into the shingle and gyrated on the rise to Druids. Neat recovered to sixth, eclipsing Coveney's further-improved record on the last lap.

Roll on Croft next month!

RESULTS

RGB (17 LAPS) 1 John Cutmore (Spire GT3S) 14m25.20s (85.45mph); 2 Duncan Horlor (Spire GT3) +5.67s; 3 Oliver Hewitt (Spire GT3); 4 Tony Gaunt (Wolfe TGO3); 5 Adrian Moore (AB Sabre G1); 6 Mark Betts (Spire GT3). **Class winner** David Watson (MNR GM2). **Fastest lap** Scott Mittell (Mittell MC-52B) 49.49s (87.87mph). **Pole** Cutmore. **Starters** 33. **RACE 2 (16 LAPS) 1 Cutmore 14m10.47s (81.81mph);** 2 Mittell +4.39s; 3 Horlor; 4 Alastair Boulton (Spire GT3); 5 Gaunt; 6 David Wale (Spire GT3). **CW** James Walker (TGM Phoenix). **FL** Cutmore 51.12s (85.07mph). **P** Cutmore. **S** 30.

HONDA CIVIC CUP (12 LAPS) 1 Adam Shepherd 13m10.50s (66.02mph); 2 Endaf Owens +0.91s; 3 Mark Higginson; 4 Rodren Vella; 5 Carl Swift; 6 Tim Evans. **CW** Evans. **FL** Owens 1m04.26s (67.68mph). **P** Shepherd. **S** 29. **RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Swift 14m18.80s (75.96mph);** 2 Bernard Galea +0.83s; 3 Shepherd; 4 Higginson; 5 Andrew Hough; 6 Stu Neale. **CW** Hough. **FL** Shepherd 55.66s (78.13mph). **RECORD.** **P** Hough. **S** 24.

CLIO 182 (15 LAPS) 1 Patrick Fletcher 14m29.66s (75.01mph); 2 Andrew Tibbs +1.86s; 3 Matt Digby; 4 James Bark; 5 Jeff Humphries; 6 Philip Wright. **FL** Tibbs 56.86s (76.48mph). **P** Digby. **S** 33. **RACE 2 (13 LAPS) 1 Bark 14m04.54s (66.94mph);** 2 Digby +0.01s; 3 Tibbs; 4 Humphries; 5 Fletcher; 6 Pete Morgan. **FL** Bark 1m01.64s (70.55mph). **P** Fletcher. **S** 32.

FORMULA VEE (10 LAPS) 1 Ian Buxton (GAC Daghorn) 9m11.54s (78.85mph); 2 Ian Jordan (Sheane Jordan) +0.27s; 3 Paul Smith (AHS Dominator); 4 James Harridge (Maverick); 5 Matthew Perks (GAC); 6 Daniel Pitchford (GAC). **CW** Harridge. **FL** Tim Probert (Storm) 53.74s (80.92mph). **P** Jordan. **S** 24. **RACE 2 (13 LAPS) 1 Smith 12m20.70s (76.33mph);** 2 Harridge +0.83s; 3 Craig Pollard (GAC); 4 David Hughes (GAC); 5 Pitchford; 6 Jordan. **CW** Harridge. **FL** Harridge 54.12s (80.35mph). **P** Jordan. **S** 25.

750 FORMULA (16 LAPS) 1 Robin Gearing (Darvi P88) 14m23.15s (80.61mph); 2 David Bartholomew (PRS 1B) +3.84s; 3 Bill Cowley (Cowley MkIV); 4 Dave Robson (SDAR 83); 5 Mark Glover (Racekits Falcon); 6 Bob Simpson (SS/F). **CW** Dick Hartle (Tristesse Mk7). **FL** Gearing 52.72s (82.49mph). **P** Cowley. **S** 19. **RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Cowley 8m54.24s (73.26mph);** 2 Gearing +7.22s; 3 Bartholomew; 4 Mick Harris (Darvi 877); 5 Chris Gough (CGR2 Evo); 6 Simpson. **FL** Gearing 57.41s (75.75mph). **P** Cowley. **S** 18.

BMW COMPACT CUP GROUPS B&C (9 LAPS) 1 Steve Roberts 9m31.93s (68.43mph); 2 Owen Hunter +0.98s; 3 Ian Jones; 4 Richard Miles; 5 Josh Harvey; 6 James Gornall. **FL** Hunter 1m00.53s (71.85mph). **P** Roberts. **S** 29. **GROUPS C&A (14 LAPS) 1 Mike Tovey 14m52.86s (68.19mph);** 2 Gornall +0.07s; 3 David Drinkwater; 4 Miles; 5 Simon Wood; 6 Alex Dew.

TOYOTA MR2 GROUPS B&C (13 LAPS) 1 Alex Knight 14m38.54s (64.35mph); 2 Kristian White +1.44s; 3 Mark Barber; 4 Dave Hemingway; 5 Cam Walton; 6 David Asbury. **CW** Hemingway; Jonathan Grimes. **FL** Knight 1m06.16s (65.73mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS C&A (14 LAPS) 1 Stuart Nicholls 14m51.54s (68.28mph);** 2 Shaun Traynor +0.50s; 3 Tim Heron; 4 Robert Wells; 5 Knight; 6 Barber. **CW** Traynor; Merrill Readett. **FL** Traynor 59.75s (72.78mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS A&B (14 LAPS) 1 Traynor 13m45.15s (73.78mph);** 2 Stuart Nicholls +0.69s; 3 Heron; 4 Mick Nicholls; 5 Jim Davies; 6 Walton. **CW** Hemingway; Nicholls. **FL** Traynor 57.20s (76.03mph). **RECORD.** **P** Wells. **S** 25.

MX5 CUP (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Ben Short 14m44.40s (73.76mph); 2 James Rogers +4.39s; 3 Jack Sycamore; 4 Daniel Stewart; 5 Jason Greatrex; 6 Kris Greatrex. **FL** Will Blackwell-Chambers 57.84s (75.19mph). **RECORD.** **P** Short. **S** 31. **RACE 2 1 Short 14m39.72s (74.15mph);** 2 Blackwell-Chambers +2.30s; 3 Sycamore; 4 J Greatrex; 5 Rogers; 6 K Greatrex. **FL** Blackwell-Chambers 57.89s (75.12mph). **P** Short. **S** 31.

LOCOST GROUPS B&C (14 LAPS) 1 Stuart Sellars 13m53.76s (73.02mph); 2 Danny Andrew +0.61s; 3 Ian Allee; 4 Michael Roots; 5 Richard Bradley; 6 James McAllister. **FL** Roots 58.03s (74.94mph). **P** Sellars. **S** 26. **GROUPS C&A (15 LAPS) 1 Lee McNamara 14m50.95s (73.22mph);** 2 Jack Coveney +0.02s; 3 James Millman; 4 Tim Neat; 5 McAllister; 6 Bradley. **FL** Coveney 57.77s (75.28mph). **P** Bradley. **S** 27. **GROUPS A&B (15 LAPS) 1 Andrew 14m47.96s (73.46mph);** 2 Sellars +0.08s; 3 Roots; 4 Coveney; 5 Allee; 6 Neat. **FL** Neat 57.47s (75.67mph). **RECORD.** **P** McNamara. **S** 28.

TOYOTA MR2 GROUPS B&C (13 LAPS) 1 Alex Knight 14m38.54s (64.35mph); 2 Kristian White +1.44s; 3 Mark Barber; 4 Dave Hemingway; 5 Cam Walton; 6 David Asbury. **CW** Hemingway; Jonathan Grimes. **FL** Knight 1m06.16s (65.73mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS C&A (14 LAPS) 1 Stuart Nicholls 14m51.54s (68.28mph);** 2 Shaun Traynor +0.50s; 3 Tim Heron; 4 Robert Wells; 5 Knight; 6 Barber. **CW** Traynor; Merrill Readett. **FL** Traynor 59.75s (72.78mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS A&B (14 LAPS) 1 Traynor 13m45.15s (73.78mph);** 2 Stuart Nicholls +0.69s; 3 Heron; 4 Mick Nicholls; 5 Jim Davies; 6 Walton. **CW** Hemingway; Nicholls. **FL** Traynor 57.20s (76.03mph). **RECORD.** **P** Wells. **S** 25.

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MX5 CUP (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Ben Short 14m44.40s (73.76mph); 2 James Rogers +4.39s; 3 Jack Sycamore; 4 Daniel Stewart; 5 Jason Greatrex; 6 Kris Greatrex. **FL** Will Blackwell-Chambers 57.84s (75.19mph). **RECORD.** **P** Short. **S** 31. **RACE 2 1 Short 14m39.72s (74.15mph);** 2 Blackwell-Chambers +2.30s; 3 Sycamore; 4 J Greatrex; 5 Rogers; 6 K Greatrex. **FL** Blackwell-Chambers 57.89s (75.12mph). **P** Short. **S** 31.

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FL Gornall 1m01.54s (70.67mph). **P** Jones. **S** 29. **GROUPS A&B (15 LAPS) 1 Roberts 14m43.99s (73.79mph);** 2 Tovey +2.47s; 3 Paul Hinson; 4 Hunter; 5 Ben Pearson; 6 Jonathan Davis. **FL** Roberts & Tovey 57.97s (75.12mph). **RECORD.** **P** Tovey. **S** 30.

STOCK HATCH (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Lee Deegan (Citroen Saxo VTR) 14m38.71s (74.24mph); 2 Shayne Deegan (Saxo VTR) +1.27s; 3 Scott Sharp (Saxo VTR); 4 Paul Jarvis (Saxo VTR); 5 Nick Thornton-Jones (Saxo VTR); 6 Craig Robertson (Saxo VTR). **FL** S Deegan 57.72s (75.34mph). **P** L Deegan. **S** 17. **Hot Hatch Tom Bell (Ford Fiesta ST). S 2. RACE 2 1 S Deegan 14m43.34s (73.85mph);** 2 L Deegan +0.44s; 3 Sharp; 4 Thornton-Jones; 5 Jarvis; 6 Steve Powlesland (Saxo VTR). **FL** Sharp 57.94s (75.06mph). **P** L Deegan. **S** 15. **HH Bell. S 2.**

CLASSIC STOCK HATCH (14 LAPS) 1 Lee Scott (Ford Fiesta XR2i) 13m55.46s (72.87mph); 2 Matt Stubington (Peugeot 205GTI) +13.11s; 3 Andrew Thorpe (Citroen AX GTi); 4 Stewart Place (205GTI); 5 Derek Rozier (XR2i); 6 Edward Cooper (Vauxhall Nova GS). **FL** Scott 58.66s (74.14mph). **P** Scott. **S** 23. **RACE 2 (6 LAPS) 1 Scott 6m27.33s (67.37mph);** 2 Thorpe +1.03s; 3 Matt Rozier (205GTI); 4 D Rozier; 5 Mervyn Beckett (Nova GS); 6 Gordon MacMillan (205GTI). **FL** Place 1m01.76s (70.41mph). **P** Scott. **S** 24.

TOYOTA MR2 GROUPS B&C (13 LAPS) 1 Alex Knight 14m38.54s (64.35mph); 2 Kristian White +1.44s; 3 Mark Barber; 4 Dave Hemingway; 5 Cam Walton; 6 David Asbury. **CW** Hemingway; Jonathan Grimes. **FL** Knight 1m06.16s (65.73mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS C&A (14 LAPS) 1 Stuart Nicholls 14m51.54s (68.28mph);** 2 Shaun Traynor +0.50s; 3 Tim Heron; 4 Robert Wells; 5 Knight; 6 Barber. **CW** Traynor; Merrill Readett. **FL** Traynor 59.75s (72.78mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS A&B (14 LAPS) 1 Traynor 13m45.15s (73.78mph);** 2 Stuart Nicholls +0.69s; 3 Heron; 4 Mick Nicholls; 5 Jim Davies; 6 Walton. **CW** Hemingway; Nicholls. **FL** Traynor 57.20s (76.03mph). **RECORD.** **P** Wells. **S** 25.

MX5 CUP (BOTH 15 LAPS) 1 Ben Short 14m44.40s (73.76mph); 2 James Rogers +4.39s; 3 Jack Sycamore; 4 Daniel Stewart; 5 Jason Greatrex; 6 Kris Greatrex. **FL** Will Blackwell-Chambers 57.84s (75.19mph). **RECORD.** **P** Short. **S** 31. **RACE 2 1 Short 14m39.72s (74.15mph);** 2 Blackwell-Chambers +2.30s; 3 Sycamore; 4 J Greatrex; 5 Rogers; 6 K Greatrex. **FL** Blackwell-Chambers 57.89s (75.12mph). **P** Short. **S** 31.

LOCOST GROUPS B&C (14 LAPS) 1 Stuart Sellars 13m53.76s (73.02mph); 2 Danny Andrew +0.61s; 3 Ian Allee; 4 Michael Roots; 5 Richard Bradley; 6 James McAllister. **FL** Roots 58.03s (74.94mph). **P** Sellars. **S** 26. **GROUPS C&A (15 LAPS) 1 Lee McNamara 14m50.95s (73.22mph);** 2 Jack Coveney +0.02s; 3 James Millman; 4 Tim Neat; 5 McAllister; 6 Bradley. **FL** Coveney 57.77s (75.28mph). **P** Bradley. **S** 27. **GROUPS A&B (15 LAPS) 1 Andrew 14m47.96s (73.46mph);** 2 Sellars +0.08s; 3 Roots; 4 Coveney; 5 Allee; 6 Neat. **FL** Neat 57.47s (75.67mph). **RECORD.** **P** McNamara. **S** 28.

TOYOTA MR2 GROUPS B&C (13 LAPS) 1 Alex Knight 14m38.54s (64.35mph); 2 Kristian White +1.44s; 3 Mark Barber; 4 Dave Hemingway; 5 Cam Walton; 6 David Asbury. **CW** Hemingway; Jonathan Grimes. **FL** Knight 1m06.16s (65.73mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS C&A (14 LAPS) 1 Stuart Nicholls 14m51.54s (68.28mph);** 2 Shaun Traynor +0.50s; 3 Tim Heron; 4 Robert Wells; 5 Knight; 6 Barber. **CW** Traynor; Merrill Readett. **FL** Traynor 59.75s (72.78mph). **P** Knight. **S** 22. **GROUPS A&B (14 LAPS) 1 Traynor 13m45.15s (73.78mph);** 2 Stuart Nicholls +0.69s; 3 Heron; 4 Mick Nicholls; 5 Jim Davies; 6 Walton. **CW** Hemingway; Nicholls. **FL** Traynor 57.20s (76.03mph). **RECORD.** **P** Wells. **S** 25.

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BRITCAR 24 HOURS SILVERSTONE, APRIL 24-26 BRSCC

Beechdean Aston survives the night

THE BEECHDEAN ASTON MARTIN Vantage GT4 of Andrew Howard, Jonny Adam, Harry Whale, Ross Gunn and Jamie Chadwick took a surprising victory, over five laps ahead of its nearest rival, in the first Britcar 24 Hours event since 2012.

With the British GT Vantage GT4 running in the Class 3 category, the Aston overcame its power deficit to beat the superior two classes for LMP-style prototypes and GT machinery to victory by taking advantage of the bad weather conditions that many struggled in.

The calm and measured finish by the Aston Martin belied the drama of the night racing that was interrupted by torrential rain and over 10 safety-car periods.

But the setbacks didn't faze the experienced Aston line-up of Howard and Adam, driving with GT4



The Gamski Ferrari had gearbox trouble

youngsters Gunn and Chadwick.

The Beechdean car started in 10th in the hands of Whale, while all eyes were on the new Ginetta-Nissan LMP3, which was continuing where it left off in the European Le Mans Series round by leading.

Mike Simpson, sharing the LMP3 with Chris Hoy, Gaetan Paletau, Lawrence Tomlinson and Charlie Robertson, claimed pole by a margin of three seconds ahead of the 2010 race-winning Witt Gamski Ferrari.

A measured drive helped the Beechdean car climb the timesheets as others battled the conditions and, with the constant stream of safety car periods, it was in those moments that Beechdean played its strategy perfectly, taking advantage of Britcar's refuelling rules.

"The many safety cars actually worked to our advantage," said Howard. "You can pit and put in 25 litres of fuel, which meant we could run further and go out to refuel again under the longer safety cars. It was clear we could run for longer than the other cars."

It meant the Aston hauled itself into the sparring class 1 trio of the #14 Porsche, the #4 Ferrari and the #8 Peter Cook Audi R8 at the front, where the Aston held its own.

Gearbox issues began to plague



The Radical RXC V8 triumphed in Class 1

the #14 Marco Schelp Porsche and inconsistent lap times meant it was the first of several Class 1 retirements. The Ferrari followed its lead late in the night with a similar issue, before the Audi retired late on.

Their struggles opened the door to the Class 4 #50 St Bas Koeten Racing SEAT Leon Cupra as it moved from 10th up into podium contention during the night before a trouble-free end to the race helped it to seal second.

Third overall was the Class 3 #37 Cor Euser Racing Lotus Evora, which moved up the field in the morning to ensure a podium place.

The Evora wasn't the only car to prefer the sunny running as the Team LNT Ginetta LMP3 struggled

in the night conditions.

Nightfall greeted them with a tumble down the order after the windscreen of the Ginetta repeatedly steamed up and, in addition, headlight glare led to Simpson regularly pitting, unable to drive safely and quickly.

The four drivers improved in the LNT car as the light returned, but Simpson's contact with the #41 Speedworks Aston in the night soon proved to be the turning point.

The incident led to a wishbone replacement but LNT's fortunes soon took a turn for the worse as a gearbox oil line severed and caused a fire that jammed the throttle, forcing Robertson to pull off at Vale.

After lengthy repairs, Team LNT



The Ginetta LMP3 led the way from pole



Beechdean Aston had a clean run



Trouble in the night undid the Ginetta



After a gruelling race: the spoils

was able to return to the track 100 laps down on Beechdean after leading during much of the early hours. There was a late scare as the Ginetta returned to the pits but, with less than a minute remaining, it returned to the track. It was classified 13th and second in class.

Ahead of the Team LNT in Class 1 was the #10 Radical after overcoming a penchant for drive-through penalties to hold onto its class win as LNT stuttered. The Speedworks Aston took third.

In Class 5, the #52 Red Camel-Jordans SEAT showed superior fuel economy to run much further than its rivals, finishing 97 laps ahead of the #65 Paul Mensley's Ford Fiesta.

The 'History of the BTCC' provided the perfect warm-up race, with Mike Gardiner taking advantage of Michael Whitaker's late error to win. Whitaker had done the early work, avoiding stalled cars at the start before climbing up the order to lead before the safety car.

A frantic restart put him under pressure from Gardiner and it proved too much, running wide at Brooklands and losing the lead.

The Britcar Trophy races had familiar winners in the first race as Callum Lockie and David Mason combined to win the opener, while

the Riley of Nigel Mustil and Craig Dolby bounced back from a race-one setback to win the second.

The Production BMW & Toyo Tires Racing Saloons featured wins for two veterans as Karl Catliff grabbed the first race win before Stephen Pearson moved from runner-up to victor in the second.

Michael Gibbins won the solo Sports 2000 Championship race, narrowly holding off the fellow MCR of Paul Martin.

● Tom Errington

RESULTS

BRITCAR 24 HOURS (529 LAPS) 1 Andrew Howard/Jonny Adam/Harry Whale/Jamie Chadwick/Ross Gunn (Aston Martin Vantage), 24h01m21.245s (80.60mph); 2 Karel Gijs Bessem/Harry Hilders/Roger Grouwels (SEAT Leon Cup Racer) -5 laps; 3 Hal Prewitt/Jim Brody/Alistair Mackinnon/Dirk Schulz/Sam Allpass (Lotus Evora); 4 Tony Hughes/Ollie Hancock/Devon Modell (Vantage); 5 Andrew Palmer/Marek Reichman/Alice Powell/Andrew Frankel (Vantage); 6 Nick Barrow/Tom Barrow/Clint Bardwell/Richard Corbett (BMW 135 GTR); 7 Laurence Wiltshire/Chahin Nouri/Martyn Smith/Richard Roberts (Radical RXC V8); 8 Ivo Breukers/Rik Breukers/Sjaco Griffioen (SEAT Leon); 9 Tom Onslow-Cole/Paul White/Ben Gerszkowski/Gary Jacobson (MARC Focus V8); 10 Dave Cox/Jason Cox/Michael Cox/George Haynes (BMW M3) **Class winners** Bessem/Hilders/Grouwels; Wiltshire/Nouri/Smith/Roberts; Palmer/Reichman/Powell/Frankell; Breukers/Breukers/Griffioen. **Fastest Lap** Charlie Robertson (Ginetta LMP3), 2m02.922s (107.20mph). **Pole** Michael Simpson (Ginetta). **Starters** 29.

HRDC HISTORY OF THE BTCC 1958-1966 (12 LAPS) 1 Mike Gardiner (Ford Falcon) 36m17.115s (72.63mph); 2 Michael Whitaker (Ford Mustang) +1.053s; 3 Peter Hallford (Mustang); 4 Nick Whale (Studebaker Lark Daytona); 5 Chris Clarkson (Falcon); 6 Michael McInerney (Lotus Cortina). **CW** McInerney; Mike Jordan (Austin A40); Mark Thomas (Ford Anglia); Ding Boston (OUMF Riley); David Lillywhite (Austin A35). **FL** Whitaker 2m35.069s (84.98mph). **P** Gardiner. **S** 32. **BRITCAR TROPHY (20 LAPS)** 1 David Mason/Calum Lockie (Ferrari 458 Challenge) 46m21.105s (94.76mph); 2 Neil Huggins (Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4) +1m09.918s; 3 Peter Fairburn/Paul McLean (Ferrari 430); 4 Steve Glynn (TVR Sagaris V8); 5 Michael Smith (SEAT Leon Supercopa); 6 Paul Ugo (Ferrari 360 Challenge). **CW** Fairburn/McLean; Ugo; Peter Challis (Porsche 997). **FL** Mason/Lockie 2m07.447s (103.39mph). **P** Nigel Mustil (Riley). **S** 12. **RACE TWO (21 LAPS)** 1 Mustil/Craig Dolby (Riley) 46m43.309s (98.71mph); 2 Mason/Lockie +1m43.309s; 3 Huggins; 4 Fairburn/McLean; 5 Challis; 6 Darren Dowling/Fred Tonge (TVR Sagaris) **CW** Mason/Lockie; Challis; Dowling/Cook; Glynn. **FL** Mustil/Dolby 2m00.689s (109.18mph). **P** Mason/Lockie. **S** 12.

PRODUCTION BMW & TOYO TIRES RACING SALOONS (12 LAPS) 1 Karl Catliff (BMW E36 M3) 30m 09.531s (87.38mph); 2 Stephen Pearson (M3) +0.777s; 3 Darren Stamp (M3); 4 Nigel Innes (M3); 5 Dave Griffin (M3); 6 Mike Dugdale (M3) **CW** Sam Clarke (Jaguar XJS); John Willcocks (BMW E30 M3); Adrian Kneebone (BMW E30 325i); Gary Feakins (BMW 320i). **FL** Pearson 2m28.964s (88.46mph). **P** Catliff. **S** 50. **RACE TWO (12 LAPS)** 1 Pearson 31m42.209s (83.13mph); 2 Innes +0.429s; 3 Catliff; 4 Stamp; 5 Matt Smith (E36 M3); 6 Clarke. **CW** Clarke; Liam Crilly (Mazda RX-8); Matthew Swaffer (BMW M20). **FL** Innes 2m30.405s (87.61mph). **P** Catliff. **S** 50. **SPORTS 2000 CHAMPIONSHIP (14 laps)** 1 Michael Gibbins (MCR) 31m30.829s (97.57mph); 2 Paul Martin (MCR) +0.882; 3 David Houghton (Van Diemen); 4 Cameron Davies (MCR); 5 Mike Turner (MCR); 6 Colin Peach (Van Diemen RFS02) **CW** Martin; Peach; Phillip Ledger (Crossle 95); Clive Steeper (Tiga SC80); Damien Griffin (Lola T598); Scott Guthrie (Carbir); Agi Eugenio (Royale RP37); Mark Marsh (Tiga SC82b). **FL** Gibbins 2m11.378s (100.30mph). **P** Patrick Sherrington (MCR). **S** 34.

Ferraris made the early running



GT CUP DONINGTON PARK, APRIL 25-26 MSVR

Caution pays off for Aston Martin pair

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PAUL BAILEY AND ANDY SCHULZ'S potent Aston Martin V12 was a comfortable winner in the GT Cup Enduro after a cautious start. Bailey was eighth on the opening lap as Richard Chamberlain's Porsche 935 set the pace, from Phil Burgan's Audi R8 LMS.

On lap four Bailey ousted Arwyn Williams's Ferrari for third, and six laps later he was second into Redgate after Burgan lost ground thanks to a spin. Most of the competitors took their pitstops during a safety-car intervention, and once Schulz took over from Bailey he emerged in a lead which he gradually increased.

Nigel Greensall moved into second in Darren Nelson's Ferrari after Aaron Scott had spun Williams's Ferrari on fluid at McLeans. Chamberlain's retirement enabled Wayne Marris and Charlie Hollings' Ferrari to complete the

podium, a lap up on John Seale/Jamie Stanley's similar car. The Ferraris of Andrew Houghton/Phil Glew and Marcus Hoggarth/Tom Ingram completed the top six.

Bailey initially lost out to Nelson at the start of the second race, but was ahead and in the clear after a couple of laps. Burgan took second at the chicane on lap three, with Seale briefly poised to follow.

But Nelson came back strongly to stake his claim for second, until contact at Coppice put Burgan out and sent Nelson to the pits to retire. Bailey was left to take his second win, with Seale second and Hoggarth's Ferrari holding off Marris' similar car for third, followed by the Porsche's of Ross McEwan and Jarrod Potter.

Bailey's hopes of a hat trick came to nought, when his pursuit of Nelson for the lead of race three was interrupted by Scott's Ferrari



Aston made up ground after cautious start

into Redgate on lap three. Scott pulled off an identical move a lap later to build a decisive lead.

Bailey was a solitary second after the duel for third between the Ferraris of Nelson and Seale intensified. Nelson lost out after a spin at the Old Hairpin, but he clawed his way back to reclaim the place five laps later. Seale was fourth and Hoggarth came out on top of a race-long duel with Marris for sixth.

Seale also won the GTC class in both sprint races, after Marris/Hollings triumphed in the Enduro.

SUPPORT RACES

There were three different winners in the rain-affected **Radical Sprint**. Brian Caudwell mastered the conditions in race one, leading from the opening lap. Paddy McClughan grabbed a late second from Martin Verity, having started from the pitlane.

Caudwell led again in a wetter race two, but as Ben Dimmack took

a run up the inside at the chicane only three laps from home, they made contact and Caudwell spun, handing Dimmack his maiden victory. Marcello Marateotto completed the podium after McClughan had come from another pitlane start, only to have his car cut out having climbed to third.

But in the dry race three McClughan claimed his fourth win of the year after Marateotto had a driveshaft break exiting the chicane on the final lap, dropping him to sixth behind Dimmack, Caudwell, Richard Stables and John Macleod.

Kieran Vernon took a hat trick of wins in the poorly supported **F3 Cup**, over Aaron Steele and Stuart Wiltshire, despite being left at the start in the first.

A slipping clutch robbed Rob Smith of a triple win in the **Mini Challenge JCW/F56s**. He led the first from lights to flag but had David Grady on his tail at the end, while Charlie Butler-Henderson recovered third from Ryan Rhode.



Ryan Savage won second Elise race



Clutch woe hindered frontrunner Smith



Malvern/Jones set pole in Radical Enduro



F3 Cup had a sparse entry



Paterson triumphed in epic second final

STEPHEN TAIT

LEGENDS CROFT, APRIL 25-26 BARC

King and Paterson battle to Legends victories

HENRY KING AND JOHN PATERSON each claimed a victory in the brace of Legends finals following two pairs of heats.

The first attempt to run the opening final had to be red-flagged after multiple offs at Clervaux on lap one.

Following the restart, King swept into an immediate lead and romped to a clear cut victory, leaving second-placed James Holman to hold off points leader John Mickel.

The frenetic first heat, interrupted by the safety car, had boiled down to Ben Power fending off Mickel for the spoils and Paterson resisting intense pressure from Daniel McKay for the final podium position. After a further safety car period in the second heat, Holman claimed his first victory of the season, closely followed by Paterson, McKay and Matthew Pape.

The second final was simply a brilliant display of Legends racing at its very best, with the result unclear until the final corner of the last lap. Paterson clinched it after hitting the front on the penultimate tour, leading

McKay and Holman to the chequered flag.

The preceding opening heat had provided tremendous action as Mickel notched up another career victory. Former Metro racer Thomas Grainger showed impressive pace and only lost second place to McKay at the complex on the last lap but one. The safety car again made an appearance early in the second heat after offs at Clervaux. Paterson then ran out front throughout for his first win of the year, just clear of Mickel and Holman.

Only four cars lined up on the grid for both **Kumho BMW** (Class A) encounters and in wet conditions for the opening race Colin Wells added to his two wins at Rockingham a fortnight earlier, comfortably clear of second-placed James MacIntyre-Ure. Later Wells was again in control as runner-up MacIntyre-Ure was kept honest by James Card.

The first contest for Classes B,C & D featured a highly entertaining battle for the lead between Kirk Armitage (M3) and Alan Thompson (328i) before the former asserted his authority. To their rear, Ian

Crisp very much made third place his own. The following day Richard Marsh (M3) much preferred the dry conditions and moved up from seventh on the grid to second by lap three. However, the Shrewsbury-based driver could do nothing about clear winner Armitage.

There may only have been four starters and just three finishers for the initial **URS Formula Ford 2000** event, but Chris Lord and Clive Wood battled hard for the victory honours in their Van Diemen RF82s. Wood emerged on top after edging ahead at the hairpin on the penultimate lap. Subsequently the tables were turned as Wood harried the leading Lord throughout, but was unable to find a way past.

Daniel Gibson dominated the opening **Clubmans Cup** race ahead of father Paul in their immaculate Nemesis K11 Protos, reflecting their qualifying superiority. This left Chris Pickering to follow them home as the best of the rest. In the second encounter Paul Gibson got his own back on Dan after sweeping ahead at Clervaux on the eighth tour. The pair ultimately finished over half a minute ahead of third-placed Alex Champkin.

Poleman Jonathan Halliwell took both sets of **MaX5** spoils after leading fellow Mk3 racer Paul Roddison throughout each contest. The second event was closer, with Roddison reducing the double victor's winning margin from eight seconds to four.

● Graham Read



Armitage was a clear winner in both races

STEPHEN TAIT

Despite his clutch problems Smith led race two for 11 laps. Butler-Henderson and Grady got by at Coppice and left him to hold off Harry Valkhard for third. But Smith then took the race three spoils from Butler-Henderson and early leader Rhode.

Alex Reed's Exige easily won the **Lotus Cup UK**, having led from lap 13 of the hour long race. He had 37 seconds in hand over Adam Gore's Exige at the flag.

Having lost his comfortable lead in the first **Mini Challenge Cooper** race when his brakes failed at Redgate on the last lap, Ricky Page was rewarded with victories in races two and three. Nathan Harrison inherited victory in race one and followed Page home in race two. Simon Walton had been second first time out and held off Harrison for a repeat in the third.

Luigi Mazza just held off a determined Daniel Rowbottom in the first **Lotus Elise Trophy** race, but in the second Ryan Savage led from lap three, heading Craig Denman and Mazza.

Jon White/James Abbot won the first **Radical Enduro** from Stuart Moseley/Hui Sun Kim, after the race finished behind the safety car. Steve Burgess comfortably won the second, well clear of Jamie Spence and Grahame Tilley.

● Peter Scherer

ALL PICS: WALKER

No stopping Jake
Byrne in FF1600



KIRKISTOWN, APRIL 25 500MRCI

Byrne scorches to dominant double

THE DAMP CONDITIONS OF qualifying gave way to biting wind, which dried the track for the first **Formula Ford 1600** encounter.

A smaller entry than normal lined up for the latest two rounds in the Northern Ireland FF1600 Championship, with a number of drivers absent, including Jonny McMullan, who has his focus on the All-Ireland Championship and National Championship events.

However, that shouldn't detract from the performance of Jake Byrne, who was the convincing winner of both races.

Byrne powered his way to victory in race one with Alan Davidson in his Mondiale and series leader Adrian Pollock in his Van Diemen in hot pursuit, but the Tyrone driver was out at Colonial

and further drama followed when series newcomer Wilson Thompson's Van Diemen left the track and scaled the grass banking at Fisherman's. Thompson was transferred to a local hospital as a precautionary measure. The race was red-flagged. Pollock's misfortune promoted Tom O'Connor to third.

Byrne had Davidson alongside for race two and Pollock lurking on row two in his repaired car. Pollock got away well and mounted a challenge to early leader Byrne, but Byrne soon broke clear as the battle for second raged with the verdict going to Pollock from Davidson.

No surprise in **Roadsports** that Jim Larkham took pole for both races with his Radical, but it was Paul Conn's Crossle that led for

most of the opening lap. That was until Larkham picked his spot and simply cruised away from the pack.

Eamon Matheson Jr, driving his father's MM2, put in an impressive drive to take second ahead of Conn.

Larkham didn't fare so well in race two, falling behind Matheson Sr who had not qualified and started from the back of the grid. Regardless, Matheson flew up the order to snatch victory from Larkham. Graham Moore and Ian Leinster were the class winners in the hotly contested **NI Sevens**.

Richard Livingston dominated the **Ford Fiesta Zetec** races, twice breaking away from the pack. Adrian Finnegan claimed runner-up spot from Jonny Forsythe. Ian McCallister was best of the rest in race two ahead of Shane Roe

James Turkington, younger brother of BTCC champion Colin, put his SEAT Cupra on pole for the Saloon/GTs, but it was Stephen Traub who shot to the front and was never to be headed as he took his third win of the year.

Traub hit transmission problems in race two, leaving Turkington to fend off Sean Doyle for the win.

James Roe made a great start from pole in the first **Ginetta Juniors** race but William Herron eventually found a way past to win, setting a new class lap record.

Herron was again on pole for race two, but Jordan Dempsey got a demon start to break clear, chased by Heron and Roe. Herron and Dempsey then collided at Colonial, leaving Roe to take an easy win.

● Ian Lynas

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BRITISH HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIP PRESCOTT, APRIL 26-27

Noise limit casts damper as Moran rules the roost

CONTROVERSY REIGNED AT THE first round of the new season as a new 106Db drive-by noise limit was enforced at Prescott. This resulted in disallowed times from qualifying runs and the exclusion of two competitors from the final run-off.

None of this impeded five-time champion Scott Moran who swept to a pair of imperious wins followed home each time by impressive new co-driver Alex Summers in a clean sweep for the mighty Gould GR61X.

Drivers excluded from qualifying in round one included five-time Midland Champion Rob Stevens, Prescott hill record holder Jos Goodyear and Trevor Willis. Goodyear was excluded from the meeting for failing twice and two competitors were thrown out after taking their run-offs later.

Moran commented: "I couldn't let Alex have it easy, he will have plenty of chances later and in the years to come."

This cast a pall over a meeting already reeling from a dreadful crash and serious injury to local competitor Steve Hemingway. The Gotherington man crashed his historic Pilbeam into a timekeeping display tower and was airlifted to Southmead Hospital in Bristol where he underwent an operation on Sunday evening.

Willis bounced back after missing round one to finish third behind the Gould duo. Multiple title-winning car constructor Sean Gould returned to hillclimbing after many years building chassis, reaching his first run-offs for 25 years and scoring points.

Tom New is now sharing the ex-Martin Groves Gould GR55 that won four titles and over 100



Scott Moran was a class apart at Prescott

rounds. He christened it with third and fourth but co-driver Wallace Menzie – in his first event in a Gould – binned the car at Ettore's kitty in the first qualifying session but gained sixth-equal later on.

Gurston Down and Wiscombe specialist Ed Hollier ventured north to score well in his nearly-new Empire Evo. Local lady Tina Hawkes and Cornishman Terry Graves got into the run-offs for the first time and scored points too. John Bradburn took fourth in round one but was left fuming after round two, posting a time that would have

given him another fourth had he not failed the noise test.

The other run-off exclusion was former Leaders Champion Simon Fido. He was left frustrated by circumstances where his tiny 1000cc car can fall foul of a system that leaves a competitor one transient peak of a backfire away from exclusion.

And all this in an area that reverberates to clay target and pheasant shooting all winter and the noise of an adjacent steam railway all summer.

● Eddie Walder

RESULTS ROUND-UP

DONINGTON PARK APRIL 25-26, MSVR



GT CUP (40 LAPS) 1 Paul Bailey/Andy Schulz (Aston Martin V12 GT3) 50m19.770s (94.32mph); 2 Darren Nelson/Nigel Greensall (Ferrari 458 GT3) +27.232s; 3 Wayne Marrs/Charles Hollings (458 GT3); 4 John Seale/Jamie Stanley (458 GT3); 5 Andy Houghton/Phil Glew (458 GT3); 6 Marcus Hoggarth/Tom Ingram (458 GT3). **CW** Marrs/Hollings; Tom Webb (MW M3 E46 GTR); Flick Haigh (Ginetta G55). **FL** Schulz 1m05.682s (108.47mph). **P** Arwyn Williams/Aaron Scott (Ferrari 458 GT3). **S 30. RACE 2 (20 LAPS) 1 Bailey 25m59.457s (91.28mph);** 2 Seale +3.135s; 3 Hoggarth; 4 Marrs; 5 Ross McEwan (Porsche 997 GT3); 6 Jarrod Potter (Porsche 911 Cup). **CW** Seale; McEwan; Mick Mercer (BMW M3 E6 GTR). **FL** Nelson 1m06.979s (106.37mph). **P** Nelson. **S 27. RACE 3 (21 LAPS) 1 Aaron Scott (458 GT3) 25m54.814s (96.14mph);** 2 Bailey +27.620s; 3 Nelson; 4 Seale; 5 Hoggarth; 6 Marrs. **CW** Seale; James Greenway (997 GT3); Gary Smith (M3 E46 GTR). **FL** Scott 1m05.659s (108.50mph). **P** Nelson. **S 26. RADICAL SPRINT (17 LAPS) 1 Brian Caudwell (SR3 RSX) 20m03.396s (100.53mph);** 2 Paddy McClughan (SR3 RS) +10.414s; 3 Martin Verity (SR3 RSX); 4 Richard Stables (PR6); 5 Nick Jones (SR3 RSX); 6 John Macleod (SR3 RSX). **CW** Stables; Peter Tyler (SR1). **FL** McClughan 1m07.658s (105.30mph). **P** Marcello Marateotto (SR3 RSX). **S 24. RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Ben Dimmack (SR3) 20m46.568s (79.90mph);** 2 Nick Jones (SR3 RSX) +2.970s; 3 Matt Brookes (SR3 RSX); 4 Marateotto; 5 Jason Rishover (SR3 RSX); 6 Verity. **CW** Stables; Tyler. **FL** Marateotto 1m15.320s (94.59mph). **P** B.Caudwell. **S 25. RACE 3 (13 LAPS) 1 McClughan 15m15.533s (101.01mph);** 2 Dimmack +1.865s; 3 B.Caudwell; 4 Stables; 5 Macleod; 6 Marateotto. **CW** Stables; Barry Liversidge (SR1). **FL** McClughan 1m07.442s (105.64mph). **P** David Lidbetter (SR3 RSX). **S 22. F3 CUP (14 LAPS) 1 Kieran Vernon (Dallara F307) 15m07.414s (109.77mph);** 2 Aaron Steele (F307) +12.630s; 3 Stuart Wiltshire (Dallara F308); 4 Jacopo Sebastiani (Dallara F311); 5 Adrian Holey (Dallara F300); 6 Daniel Tapinos (F311). **CW** Holey. **FL** Vernon 1m03.087s (112.93mph). **P** Vernon. **S 7. RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Vernon 15m58.999s (111.29mph);** 2 Steel +4.684s; 3 Wiltshire; 4 Tapinos; 5 Sebastiani; no other finishers. **FL** Vernon 1m02.619s. **P** Vernon. **S 7. RACE 3 (19 LAPS) 1 Vernon 20m16.729s (111.14mph);** 2 Steele +18.097s; 3 Wiltshire; 4 Sebastiani; 5 Tapinos; 6 Matthew Payne (F307). **FL** Vernon 1m02.337s (114.29mph). **P** Vernon. **S 6. MINI CHALLENGE (16 LAPS) 1 Rob Smith 21m01.840s (90.23mph);** 2 David Grady +0.728s; 3 Charlie Butler-Henderson; 4 Ryan Rhode; 5 Lawrence Davey; 6 Lee Pattison. **CW** Neil Newstead (JCW) **FL** Smith 1m16.472s (93.16mph). **P** Smith. **S 24. RACE 2 (16 LAPS) 1 Butler-Henderson 20m40.740s (91.76mph);** 2 Grady +1.091s; 3 Smith; 4 Harry Vaulkhard; 5 Jono Brown; 6 Rhode. **CW** Newstead. **FL** Grady 1m15.901s (93.86mph). **P** Smith. **S 23. RACE 3 (16 LAPS) 1 Smith 20m36.095s (92.11mph);** 2 Butler-Henderson +6.065s; 3 Rhode; 4 Grady; 5 Sam Osborne; 6 Chris Boon. **CW** Hamish Brandon. **FL** Smith 1m16.128s (93.58mph). **P** Rhode. **S 23. LOTUS ELISE TROPHY (40 LAPS) 1 Alex Reed (Exige Cup R) 1h01m15.137s (77.50mph);** 2 Adam Gore (Exige V6) +37.140s; 3 Adrian Hall (Exige S1); 4 Adam Knight (Exige V6 Cup R); 5 Ken Savage (2 Eleven); 6 Adam Balon (Exige V6 Cup R). **CW** Hall; Savage; James Little/Andrew Bentley (Elise Cup R). **FL** Gore 1m15.051s (94.93mph). **P** Hall. **S 23. MINI CHALLENGE (COOPER) (14 LAPS) 1 Nathan Harrison 20m20.737s (81.59mph);** 2 Simon Walton +2.445s; 3 Martin Poole; 4 Ricky Page; 5 Darren Chat; 6 Adrian Norman. **FL** Harrison 1m25.485s (83.34mph).

P Walton. **S 16. RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Page 13m00.048s (82.02mph);** 2 Harrison +2.534s; 3 Walton; 4 Mark Wakefield; 5 Chat; 6 Matt Hammond. **FL** Page 1m25.426s (83.40mph). **P** Harrison. **S 15. RACE 3 (12 LAPS) 1 Page 21m06.232s (67.41mph);** 2 Walton +2.087s; 3 Harrison; 4 Wakefield; 5 Max Bladon; 6 Hammond. **FL** Harrison 1m25.337s (83.48mph). **P** Wakefield. **S 14. LOTUS ELISE TROPHY (15 LAPS) 1 Luigi Mazza 19m59.233s (89.00mph);** 2 Daniel Rowbottom +0.016s; 3 Craig Denman; 4 Freddie Hetherington; 5 David Stead; 6 Ryan Savage. **FL** Mazza 1m19.047s (90.13mph). **P** Mazza. **S 26. RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Savage 20m05.397s (88.54mph);** 2 Denman +6.713s; 3 Mazza; 4 Hetherington; 5 James Little; 6 David Ellesley. **FL** Savage 1m19.415s (89.71mph). **P** Neil Stothert. **S 24. RADICAL ENDURO (32 LAPS) 1 James Abbott/Jon White 40m10.683s (94.51mph);** 2 Stuart Moseley/Hui-Sun Kim +1.718s; 3 Scott Mansell/David Lidbetter; 4 Scott Malvern/Nick Jones; 5 Marcello Marateotto; 6 Grahame Tilley. **FL** Malvern 1m06.623s (106.93mph). **P** Malvern/Jones. **S 15. RACE 2 (35 LAPS) 1 Steve Burgess 40m56.564s (101.45mph);** 2 Jamie Spence +20.679s; 3 Tilley; 4 Harry Cockill/Ed Cockill; 5 Jones/Malvern; 6 Kim/Moseley. **FL** Moseley 1m06.521s (107.10mph). **P** Spence. **S 14.**

CROFT APRIL 25-26, BARC



LEGENDS (10 LAPS) 1 Ben Power 19m 07.445s (66.67mph); 2 John Mickel +0.538s; 3 John Paterson; 4 Daniel McKay; 5 Connor Mills; 6 Henry King. **FL** Mickel 1m 38.217s (77.88mph). **P** Paul McKay. **S 20. HEAT 2 (10 LAPS) 1 James Holman 21m 41.204s (58.79mph);** 2 Paterson +0.507s; 3 McKay; 4 Matthew Pape; 5 Paul O'Brien; 6 Power. **FL** O'Brien 1m 55.056s (66.49mph). **P** Paterson. **S 20. FINAL (10 LAPS) 1 King 19m 15.860s (66.18mph);** 2 Holman +3.776s; 3 Mickel; 4 McKay; 5 Derek Pierce; 6 Pape. **FL** Mickel 1m 52.775s (67.83mph). **P** Mike Bourner. **S 19. HEAT 3 (8 LAPS) 1 Mickel 13m 12.473s (77.22mph);** 2 McKay +0.250s; 3 Thomas Grainger; 4 Holman; 5 O'Brien; 6 Paterson. **FL** Power 1m 37.168s (78.73mph). **P** Pape. **S 20. HEAT 4 (10 LAPS) 1 Paterson 18m41.81s (68.19mph);** 2 Mickel +0.255s; 3 Holman; 4 O'Brien; 5 McKay; 6 Pape. **FL** Mickel 1m 37.456s (78.49mph). **P** Pierce. **S 18. FINAL (10 LAPS) 1 Paterson 16m 33.688s (76.98mph);** 2 McKay +0.135s; 3 Holman; 4 King; 5 O'Brien; 6 Power. **FL** Holman 1m 37.295s (78.62mph). **P** Euan McKay. **S 19. KUMHO BMW CLASS A (13 LAPS) 1 Colin Wells (M3 CSL) 21m 11.787s (78.19mph);** 2 James MacIntyre-Ure (E46 M3) +3.591s; 3 James Card (E46 M3); 4 Colin Whitmore (E36 M3); no other starters. **FL** Wells 1m 36.106s (79.60mph). **P** Wells. **S 4. RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Wells 21m 23.570s (83.44mph);** 2 MacIntyre-Ure +8.635s; 3 Card; no other finishers. **FL** Wells 1m 29.781s (85.20mph). **P** Wells. **S 4. KUMHO BMW CLASSES B,C&D (11 LAPS) 1 Kirk Armitage (M3) 21m 55.550s (63.96mph);** 2 Alan Thompson (E36 328i) +6.161s; 3 Ian Crisp (E36 M3); 4 Domenic Surdi (M3); 5 Greg Marking (318is); 6 James Ford (318is). **CW** Thompson; Crisp; Marking. **FL** Armitage 1m 54.661s (66.71mph). **P** Richard Marsh (E36 M3). **S 11. RACE 2 (13 LAPS) 1 Armitage 20m 43.749s (79.96mph);** 2 Marsh +26.749s; 3 Surdi; 4 Thompson; 5 Adrian Gilbert (M3 E36); 6 Crisp. **CW** Marsh; Thompson; Ford. **FL** Armitage 1m 34.037s (61.35mph). **P** Armitage. **S 11. FORMULA FORD 2000 (12 LAPS) 1 Clive Wood (Van Diemen RF82) 21m 09.295s (72.3mph);** 2 Chris Lord (Van Diemen RF82) +0.991s; 3 Peter Chippindale (Van Diemen RF82); no other finishers. **FL** Lord 1m 42.374ms (74.72mph). **P** Wood. **S 4. RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Lord 21m 02.745s (84.81mph);** 2 Wood +0.362s; 3 Chippindale; 4 Glyn Davies (Van Diemen RF82); no other starters. **FL** Wood 1m 29.342s (85.62mph). **P** Lord. **S 4. CLUBMANS CUP (10 LAPS) 1 Daniel Gibson (Nemesis K11 Proto) 17m 52.146s (71.35mph);** 2 Paul Gibson (Nemesis K11 Proto) +9.204s; 3 Chris Pickering (Mallock Mk27 EBX); 4 Alex Champkin (Vision V84); 5 Adrian Langridge (Mallock Mk27); 6 Clive Wood (Mallock Mk20). **CW** Pickering; Wood; Alan Cook (Mallock Mk20b/21). **FL** D Gibson 1m 32.735s (82.49mph). **P** D Gibson. **S 23. RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 P Gibson 17m 01.641s (89.85mph);** 2 D Gibson +4.539s; 3 Champkin; 4 Cook; 5 Peter Richings (Mallock Mk30PR); 6 Langridge. **CW** Champkin; Cook; Barry Webb (Mallock Mk 16 BW). **FL** P Gibson 1m 22.197s (93.07mph). **P** D Gibson. **S 21. MAXS (12 LAPS) 1 Jonathan Halliwell (Mk3) 20m 31.758s (74.52mph);** 2 Paul Roddison (Mk3) +7.971s; 3 Ian Loversidge (Mk3); 4 Simon Fleet (Mk3); 5 Nick Dunn (Mk3); 6 Andy Baylie (Mk3). **CW** Richard Smith (Mk1). **FL** Fleet 1m 41.289s (75.52mph). **P** Halliwell. **S 17. RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 Halliwell 20m 23.971s (75.00mph);** 2 Roddison +3.986s; 3 Fleet; 4 Dunn; 5 Loversidge; 6 Baylie. **CW** Nicholas Bailey (Mk1). **FL** Halliwell 1m 40.895s (75.82mph). **P** Halliwell. **S 17.**



Champion Moran won at Prescott

ROUND 1 1 Scott Moran (3.5 Gould-NME GR61X) 36.75s; 2 Alex Summers (3.5 Gould-NME GR61X) 37.11s; 3 Tom New (3.5 Gould-NME GR55) 38.63s; 4 John Bradburn (3.5 Gould-Cosworth GR55) 38.72s; 5 Alastair Crawford (2.8 Gould-NME GR55) 38.92s; 6 Oli Tomlin (4.0 Pilbeam-Judd MP97) 39.13s; 7 Ed Hollier (1.6 Empire-Suzuki OO Evo) 39.16s; 8 Tina Hawkes (1.6 Force-Suzuki PC) 40.79s; 9 Sean Gould (1.6 Gould-Suzuki GR59) 41.44s; 10 Terry Graves (3.5 Gould-Cosworth GR37) 41.78s; 11 Lee Griffiths (1.3s OMS-Suzuki 25) 41.81s. **Excluded (noise)** Paul Haines (1.3t Gould-Suzuki GR59). **ROUND 2 1 Moran 36.50s (BTD);** 2 Summers 36.70s; 3 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS-RPE 28) 36.94s; 4 New 38.56s; 5 Haines 38.97s; 6 Crawford & Wallace Menzies (3.5 Gould-NME GR55) 39.01s; 8 Hollier 39.18s; 9 Tomlin 38.83s; 10 Graham Wynn (1.3t Force-Suzuki PC) 40.75s; **Ex** Bradburn & Simon Fidoe (1.0 Empire-Suzuki Wraith). **CW** Fred Currell (2.0 VW Golf GTI) 50.64s; Roy Standley (2.0t Mitsubishi Evo 5) 47.24s; Roger Moran (2.0 Caterham-Suzuki) 45.43s; Carl Jones (1.3 Austin Mini) 49.00s; Colin Satchell (2.0 Peugeot 205 GTi) 45.15s **class record**; Mike Turpin (2.2s Vauxhall VX220) 46.10s; Martin Watts (1.0 Sylva Riot) 47.67s; Allan McDonald (2.4t 2-Cars Morris Mini/Mitsubishi Evo) 44.22s; Gary Hill (1.0 OMS-BMW Homet) 44.51s; Chris Aspinall (1.0 Empire-Suzuki Wraith) 40.76s; Martin Jones (1.6 Jamun Formula Ford M90) 48.35s; Hollier 39.46s; Howard Savage-Jones (2.0 Lola-TKD Colgan B5) 41.93s; Haines 39.95s; Summers 37.00s. **POINTS 1 Moran 20;** 2 Summers 18; 3 New 15; 4 Crawford 11; 5 Willis 8; 6 Hollier/Bradburn/Tomlin 7; 8 Haines 6; 9 Tina Hawkes 3; 10 Gould 2.

**PRESCOTT
APRIL 26-27, BRITISH HILLCLIMB**



ROUND 1 1 Scott Moran (3.5 Gould-NME GR61X) 36.75s; 2 Alex Summers (3.5 Gould-NME GR61X) 37.11s; 3 Tom New (3.5 Gould-NME GR55) 38.63s; 4 John Bradburn (3.5 Gould-Cosworth GR55) 38.72s; 5 Alastair Crawford (2.8 Gould-NME GR55) 38.92s; 6 Oli Tomlin (4.0 Pilbeam-Judd MP97) 39.13s; 7 Ed Hollier (1.6 Empire-Suzuki OO Evo) 39.16s; 8 Tina Hawkes (1.6 Force-Suzuki PC) 40.79s; 9 Sean Gould (1.6 Gould-Suzuki GR59) 41.44s; 10 Terry Graves (3.5 Gould-Cosworth GR37) 41.78s; 11 Lee Griffiths (1.3s OMS-Suzuki 25) 41.81s. **Excluded (noise)** Paul Haines (1.3t Gould-Suzuki GR59). **ROUND 2 1 Moran 36.50s (BTD);** 2 Summers 36.70s; 3 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS-RPE 28) 36.94s; 4 New 38.56s; 5 Haines 38.97s; 6 Crawford & Wallace Menzies (3.5 Gould-NME GR55) 39.01s; 8 Hollier 39.18s; 9 Tomlin 38.83s; 10 Graham Wynn (1.3t Force-Suzuki PC) 40.75s; **Ex** Bradburn & Simon Fidoe (1.0 Empire-Suzuki Wraith). **CW** Fred Currell (2.0 VW Golf GTI) 50.64s; Roy Standley (2.0t Mitsubishi Evo 5) 47.24s; Roger Moran (2.0 Caterham-Suzuki) 45.43s; Carl Jones (1.3 Austin Mini) 49.00s; Colin Satchell (2.0 Peugeot 205 GTi) 45.15s **class record**; Mike Turpin (2.2s Vauxhall VX220) 46.10s; Martin Watts (1.0 Sylva Riot) 47.67s; Allan McDonald (2.4t 2-Cars Morris Mini/Mitsubishi Evo) 44.22s; Gary Hill (1.0 OMS-BMW Homet) 44.51s; Chris Aspinall (1.0 Empire-Suzuki Wraith) 40.76s; Martin Jones (1.6 Jamun Formula Ford M90) 48.35s; Hollier 39.46s; Howard Savage-Jones (2.0 Lola-TKD Colgan B5) 41.93s; Haines 39.95s; Summers 37.00s. **POINTS 1 Moran 20;** 2 Summers 18; 3 New 15; 4 Crawford 11; 5 Willis 8; 6 Hollier/Bradburn/Tomlin 7; 8 Haines 6; 9 Tina Hawkes 3; 10 Gould 2.



Mazza triumphed in Elise opener

WALDER



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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



Meeke's win gives rally fans a good reason to celebrate

Meeke revives rally glory days

I know one swallow doesn't make a summer, but last weekend has left this British rally fan with a particularly dramatic spring in their step.

Kris Meeke (and Elfyn Evans!) deserve the highest praise for keeping it on the road in Argentina.

It's been a long time since we had a good-news story in world rallying, and

Meeke's breakthrough victory is about as good as it gets. The poignancy of his tribute to his mentor, Colin McRae, gave the win an additional emotional resonance.

It would perhaps be churlish to say, 'What took you so long, Kris?', but I won't hesitate to declare, 'Hurry up with the next one!'

Frances Stewart, London SE13

I totally agree about the greed of those involved in F1, who seem hell-bent on shooting themselves in the foot (*The future of F1*, April 9). The only thing that I will ever give Bernie credit for is giving Gordon Murray a free hand in designing what for me are some of the most beautiful F1 cars that graced the track (BT45 and BT52).

Obviously beauty is in the eye of the beholder, which brings me to the next point. The reason that I avidly watch the World Endurance Championship is that the cars, especially in the GT category, have different shapes!

And in LMP1 you have, as you know, different engine variations that make it interesting.

These days I watch bike racing. Yes, the machinery looks similar make-to-make, but the outcome is less predictable. I've not been to a grand prix since 1989, mainly because it is too expensive and you can't see the track

for hospitality tents full of people who aren't interested in F1.

Finally, let's have a mix of V12s, V10s and V8s in the same race.

Franc Wells
By email

It was interesting to read what you propose as a way of changing F1 (April 9), though your 'solutions' gave me mixed feelings. I find the proposals related to tyres and altering race format a bit far-fetched, even to the point of being artificial.

Revenue redistribution and consolidation of teams finance-wise should be the principal issues of F1 – all the others can wait.

Brigitta Gyimesi
By email

Many references were made to what the fans want, but do we seriously think our views are considered? Our

sport, like many, is about money, and the people at the top look after their own interests.

F1 racing cannot be made exciting, we have had dominating teams for years – think Red Bull, Ferrari, McLaren and Williams – so Mercedes domination is nothing new.

Maybe the audiences are changing, particularly at the (increasing) flyaway tracks, with a different type of F1 fan; the powers that be should take note, 2020 is too long to wait.

Graeme Lovell
Warwick

This is a genuine question: why, in IndyCar, when a yellow flag incident has been cleared, do they run under yellows for half the race before it goes green again? Would anyone from IndyCar care to answer this for me?

David Herron
Washington, Tyne and Wear

BIG NUMBER

2 Number of sportscar races Nico Hulkenberg, who will race for Porsche in the Spa 6 Hours, has started. He raced in VdeV in 2006, winning once.

MILESTONE

1935 The first Donington Grand Prix is celebrated at this weekend's Historic Festival. Richard Shuttleworth won the inaugural race in an Alfa.



WHAT'S ON TRACK IN THE UK

EVENT OF THE WEEK



Historic tin-tops will star at DHF

WALKER

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL

May 2-4

This year's Donington Park Historic Festival celebrates the 80th anniversary of the first grand prix around the Leicestershire venue.

The packed three-day programme covers eras from the 1930s to the 1990s, with Formula 1, Super Touring, World Sportscars, Group B rallying and even historic karting all represented in the competitive action.

SILVERSTONE 750MC

May 2

A primarily sportscar-based bill for the 750 Motor Club's one-day event at Silverstone.

CRAIGANTLET UAC

May 2

The British Hillclimb Championship heads to Northern Ireland for its second round.

ROCKINGHAM BRITISH GT

May 2-3

British GT resumes at Rockingham after its bruising Oulton opener, with BRDC F4 heading the supports.

BRANDS HATCH MGCC

May 2-3

The MGCC's usual vast array of MG machinery is joined by Morgan and Porsche races.

KNOCKHILL SMRC

May 3

A jam-packed day in Fife with 18 races from Scotland's leading domestic championships.

CASTLE COMBE CCRC

May 4

Classic FF1600 and Touring Cars join the local series for Combe's Motors TV live day.



SMRC

EBREY/LAT



BRITISH GT

British GT moves from Oulton to Rockingham

EBREY/LAT

EBREY/LAT

WHAT'S ON TRACK AROUND THE WORLD

WORLD ENDURANCE

Rd 2/8
Spa, Belgium
May 2
fiawec.com



WEC

EBREY/LAT

DTM

Rd 1/9
Hockenheim, Germany
May 2-3
dtm.com

WORLD RALLYCROSS

Rd 2/13
Hockenheim, Germany
May 2-3
rallycrossrx.com

EUROPEAN FORMULA 3

Rd 2/11
Hockenheim, Germany
May 1-3
fiaf3europe.com

WORLD TOURING CARS

Rd 3/12
Hungaroring, Hungary
May 3
fiawtcc.com



EUROPEAN F3

XPB IMAGES

EUROPEAN TOURING CARS

Rd 1/6
Hungaroring, Hungary
May 3
fiaetcc.com

V8 SUPERCARS



V8 Supercars head west to Barbagallo

CIANFLONE/GETTY

AUTO GP

Rd 1/6
Hungaroring, Hungary
May 2-3
autogp.net

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

Rd 10/36
Talladega, Alabama, USA
May 3
nascar.com

V8 SUPERCARS

Rd 4/14
Barbagallo, Western Australia
May 2-3
v8supercar.com.au

UNITED SPORTSCAR

Rd 4/10
Laguna Seca, California, USA
May 3
imsa.com

TCR INTERNATIONAL

Rd 3/11
Valencia, Spain
May 2-3
tcr-series.com

SUPER GT

Rd 2/8
Fuji, Japan
May 3
supergt.net

FROM THE SOFA

WHAT'S ON TELEVISION



British GT has had to settle for highlights

EBREY/LAT

TV pick of

Edited by Charlie Bennett



HOCKENHEIM DTM - LIVE ESPN

Saturday 1315-1500

The struggle to watch the DTM live was a sore point for British fans in 2014, but race one of the series' new double-header format is live from Hockenheim on ESPN on Saturday afternoon.

The BT Sport /ESPN alliance is giving its coverage of the ultra-high-quality tin-top championship a push, with every round of the 2014 season being re-run this week and a preview show on Friday, but Hockenheim race two only gets late-night highlights on Sunday as football, MotoGP and tennis take precedence.



BRITISH GT - LIVE Motors TV

Sunday 1300-1535

British GT's big live television adventure begins at Northamptonshire's second favourite racetrack.

If Rockingham's two-hour race has a fraction of the incidents of Oulton Park's chaotic Easter double-header, the Motors TV audience will have plenty to enjoy. Motorbase duo Rory Butcher and Liam Griffin lead the championship after winning race one in their Aston Martin following a penalty for Adam Carroll and the FF Ferrari, with Beechdean's Jonny Adam and Andrew Howard also Aston-mounted winners at Oulton.

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Live TV: British GT's silver bullet?

HOW IMPORTANT TO MOTOR racing is live television coverage? In some cases, like Formula 1, it is vital. In others, like junior single-seater formulas, it matters very little. For British GT, securing a deal with Motors TV to have five of its seven rounds broadcast live in 2015 is a watershed moment.

Since it joined the GT3 revolution in 2007 (as the main class, anyway) the series has grown exponentially in stature – quality teams have joined with high-profile drivers and gentleman competitors spending a significant amount of money. And yet, despite that, it regressed last year in terms of media exposure. The 2013 three-hour Silverstone showpiece was British GT's first live offering. Its spectacular finale that season was also broadcast live. In 2014? No live offerings, just a delayed 'as live' programme for Silverstone.

This was not good enough. "Everyone knows about touring cars because it's on TV," pointed out Triple Eight boss Ian Harrison last year. And he's right – the British Touring Car Championship's free-to-air coverage was crucial to keeping fan interest alive even when the series wasn't exactly at its strongest.

British GT series boss Benjamin Franassovici has made no secret of his desire to get a proper TV deal together, calling it "top of his Christmas list" to SRO chief Stephane Ratel. He's got his wish.

This weekend's two-hour contest at Rockingham marks the first of the five races to get the Motors TV live treatment. The season opener at Oulton Park missed out, although being on a Bank Holiday Monday it probably wasn't essential for it to be shown live – and it was compensated by a very impressive highlights package (albeit one I witnessed very early on a Sunday morning). Beyond Rockingham the Silverstone, Snetterton, Brands Hatch and Donington encounters will all be live, but the overseas trip to Spa-Francorchamps will be restricted to highlights.

"The final piece in the jigsaw was to add regular live TV coverage," said Franassovici when the deal was announced in February. "It is a huge investment to make, but the live

"The 2015 TV deal is a watershed moment"

A relatively big British GT crowd



EBREY/LAT

television element undoubtedly adds greater commercial value."

Not least because Motors is available on Freeview now, so the niche channel is all the more accessible to fans on the sofa. British GT needed to access that audience, because for all its growth in recent seasons – and let's make it very clear, it's turned into a superb domestic championship – it's had no way of conveying that progress to potential fans. Getting punters through the gate of an endurance event is no easy task – five-figure audiences have been a luxury.

What hasn't helped is a poor highlights package in recent years, based around Channel 4, Motors and BT Sport, and lacking in quality and often poorly timed. Teams have been calling for proper live coverage for a while and while it won't be the silver bullet that makes British GT become a household-name championship, the series finally has the platform to shout about its success. Endurance racing's struggle to appeal to the masses means it's all the more important that live television coverage will put the championship into something of a primetime slot for potential fans. You're always more likely to engage with punters if they can watch races at their convenience – not having to set an early Sunday morning alarm clock to grab highlights on Channel 4. *Scott Mitchell*

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ONLINE

the week



SPA WEC - LIVE
 Motors TV
 Saturday 1300-2000

Porsche and Toyota will aim to hit back this weekend, as the World Endurance Championship moves to Spa for the second race of the season following Audi's Silverstone victory.

The Belgian round is a crucial preparation race for next month's Le Mans 24 Hours, which means a mix of car specs and a bigger entry – including Nico Hulkenberg's WEC debut with Porsche. It's live throughout on Motors TV, or you can dip in for the finish with Eurosport when the snooker's finished.



HUNGARORING WTCC - LIVE
 Eurosport
 Sunday 1215-1415

Yvan Muller comes into round three of the 2015 World Touring Car Championship on the back foot to a runaway Jose Maria Lopez again, but the four-time champion has won at least one race at the Hungaroring every year since the series made its Budapest debut in 2011.

The centre of attention will be Norbert Michelisz, who draws vast crowds to his home event. Eurosport is showing qualifying live at 1330 on Saturday as well as Sunday's two back-to-back races.



TALLADEGA NASCAR - LIVE
 Premier Sports
 Sunday 1730-2200

From the short tracks of Bristol and Richmond, NASCAR moves on to the mammoth 2.66-mile Talladega Superspeedway for its second restrictor-plate race of the season. It's either an ultra-close, wildly-unpredictable thriller, or a destructive lottery that asks nothing of driver talent – depending on your view of NASCAR's superspeedway style.

The US presenters certainly take an enthusiastic interest in the (almost) inevitable 'big one' mega-shunt. Keep an eye on Jeff Gordon – a six-time Talladega victor yet to win in his farewell season.



SPANISH GP 1996
 Sky Sports F1
 Saturday 1800-1845

There hasn't been a wet Spanish Grand Prix since the 1996 classic, which Sky serves up highlights from among its retro selection ahead of this year's race.

The Catalunya track is usually basking in sunshine when Formula 1 rolls into town, but 19 years ago torrential rain caused 10 drivers to spin out or crash.

Schumacher not only stayed on track but made his rivals look amateur, as he stormed away – in the least competitively-designed car Ferrari ever gave him – to win by a 45-second margin that could've been whatever he pleased.

Top stories on AUTOSPORT.com in the last week

McLAREN STARTING TO UNDERSTAND HONDA

McLaren racing director Eric Boullier explained to AUTOSPORT how the team's relationship with Honda off-track has progressed so far this year

MERCEDES WON'T RUSH ENGINE UPGRADES

Niki Lauda urged caution following Ferrari's resurgent start to 2015, saying that Mercedes must not make changes "on a whim" to fight back

VERSTAPPEN: RENAULT "A NIGHTMARE"

The pressure on Renault's F1 programme has continued, with Toro Rosso's Max Verstappen declaring that the engine is holding back the fifth-fastest car

THREE-WEEK GAP 'CRITICAL' FOR RENAULT

Red Bull joined sister team Toro Rosso in getting on Renault's case again, with team boss Christian Horner hinting at developments for the Spanish GP

LOTUS TO RUN 2015 F1 CAR AT BRANDS HATCH

News that Lotus would offer fans a rare chance to see contemporary F1 machinery at Brands Hatch with a filming day this week grabbed a lot of attention



THE POPULARITY OF THE UNDERDOG

Our Secret Mechanic calls on his own experiences to say how it must feel to be at Ferrari right now as fortunes change

HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube SCHUMACHER JR CLAIMS MAIDEN FORMULA 4 VICTORY



SEARCH FOR: Hier rast Schumacher zu seinem ersten Sieg
 Sixteen-year-old Mick Schumacher proved that the apple didn't fall far from the tree when the son of seven-time F1 world champion Michael Schumacher took his first car-racing win in the opening round of the ADAC F4 championship at Oschersleben.

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TOP TEN

British WRC drivers

Which home-grown WRC heroes stirred fans' souls? **HENRY HOPE-FROST** picks his favourites

Since the world rally championship began in 1973 – albeit without a drivers' title in its first six seasons – just four British drivers have stood on the

top step of the podium of a WRC-qualifying event: Roger Clark once in 1976; Colin McRae 25 times between 1993–2002; Richard Burns 10 times in the period 1998–2001 and Kris

Meeke thanks to his breakthrough win in Argentina last weekend. These four would surely feature in any rally fan's top-10 Brits in WRC history, but which other home-grown talents

brought out the anorak and bobblehat brigade in force – particularly during RAC Rally time in November? Some are obvious, others probably less so...



ALL PICS: MCKLEIN



1 Colin McRae
The first Brit to win the world title, McRae became a household name thanks to daredevil antics in blue-and-yellow Subarus and his popular computer-game tie-ups. Never one to hold back, behind the wheel or into a microphone, he garnered huge support – which lives on after his death, in 2007.

2 Richard Burns
The lanky redhead from Reading plied his trade in one-make series, and soon made the most of a mid-90s apprenticeship alongside McRae. Went off to Mitsubishi, learnt how to win, rejoined Subaru and won the title in 2001 – the only Englishman to do so. Beaten by cancer, aged just 34, in 2005.

3 Tony Pond
The moustachioed bloke-next-door of rallying in the late-'70s and most of the '80s, Pond was loyal to British marques Triumph, Talbot and MG, taking many popular wins on the national rally scene in TR7 V8s and Metro 6R4s. His finest hour: that third on the '85 RAC on the WRC debut of the wacky 6R4.

4 Roger Clark
The blonde-haired, blue-eyed boy of 1970s rallying, Clark won the RAC Rally in '72, before it was a WRC round. He became our first winner when he won it again, in the Cossack Hairspray-liveried Ford Escort RS1800 in '76. He remained our only winner for 17 years, until McRae came along.

5 Malcolm Wilson
Watching Wilson win in the British championship in an Audi Quattro while I was still mid-teens meant I'd be a lifelong fan. The Cumbrian took a late British title after his WRC career had fizzled out, then sought glory as a team owner, which he did with Ford. Still at the top of his management game.

6 Jimmy McRae
The unflustered Scot was the king of British rallying in the 80s, taking five titles in Opel and Ford machinery. Took two podiums in his home WRC event – the RAC – before focusing on bringing son Colin up to speed. Now in his 70s, he still competes in historic rallying with all the gusto you'd expect.

7 Russell Brookes
What was it about Russell Brookes in an Andrews Heat for Hire Vauxhall Chevette or Opel Manta 400? Great nemesis of Jimmy McRae, Brookes was another 1980s ace on the British scene who never quite managed a WRC win but who influenced many a British rally enthusiast.

8 Kris Meeke
There's every chance the Northern Irishman will get much higher up this list now that the monkey's off his back and he's joined the elite club of British WRC winners. With grit and determination in spades, Meeke has laughed in the face of adversity to get where he's got. Hopefully there's more to come.

9 Terry Kaby
This plucky privateer grew up on a diet of Triumph TR7s and Vauxhall Chevettes, but landed a big break with a factory Nissan 240RS – in European and WRC events in the mid-'80s. Fans fondly recall his scrap with McRae and Brookes on the '85 RAC for best two-wheel-drive-powered British runner.

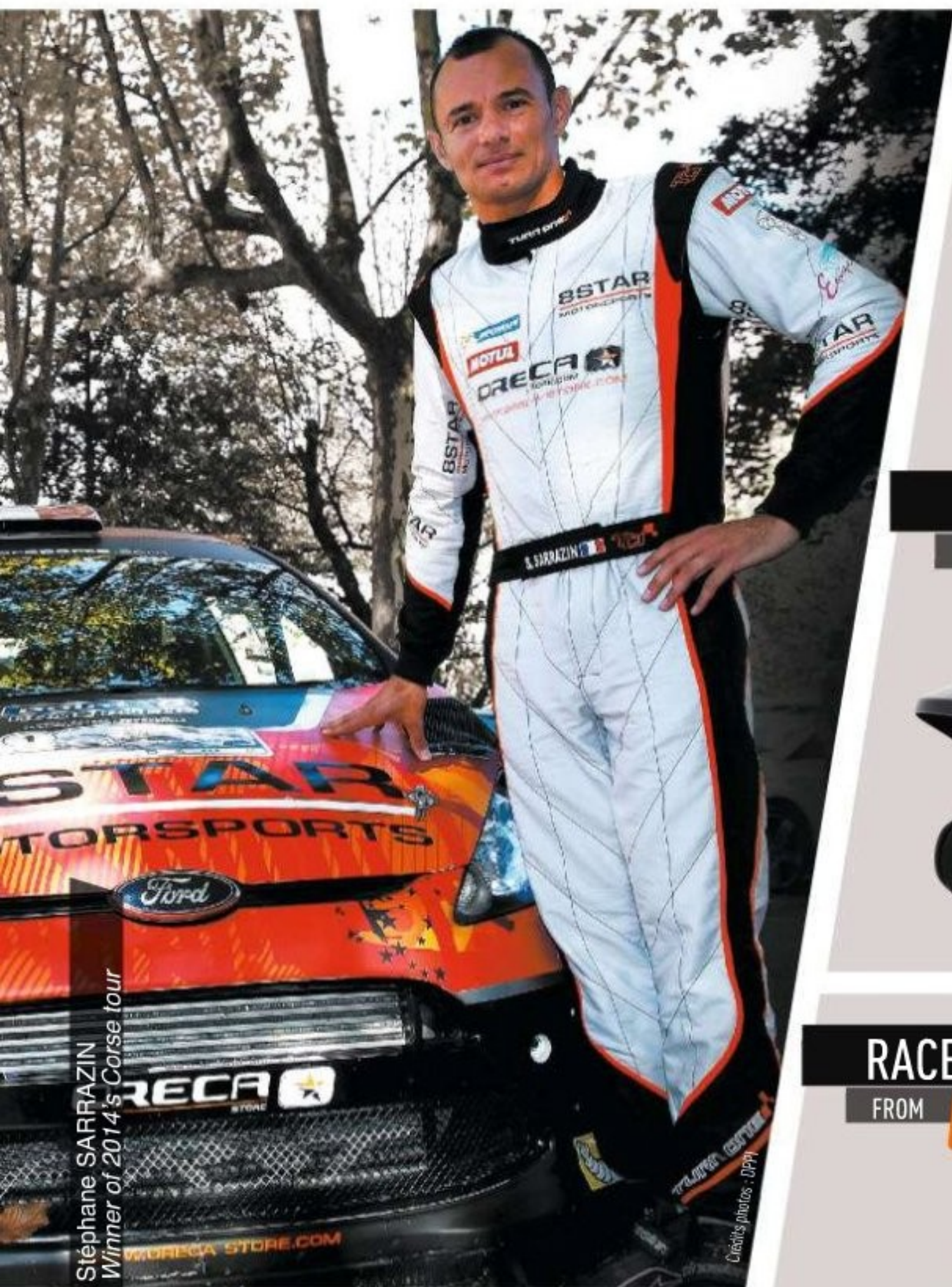
10 Andy Dawson
After finishing fifth in the 1977 RAC in a Ford Escort, Dawson pledged allegiance to the Datsun marque on the world stage, twice coming close to a podium finish in the trusty 160J – in Canada and Portugal in '79. Now 68, he's involved with Italian brand Abarth and its motorsporting activities.

NEXT WEEK

Ferrari's new dream team
Plus: Why it's GP3 for Verstappen's conqueror

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