

**DRIVERS BLAST HOW
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**TOYOTA REVEALS
2016 LMP1 CAR**

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BID KICKS OFF**

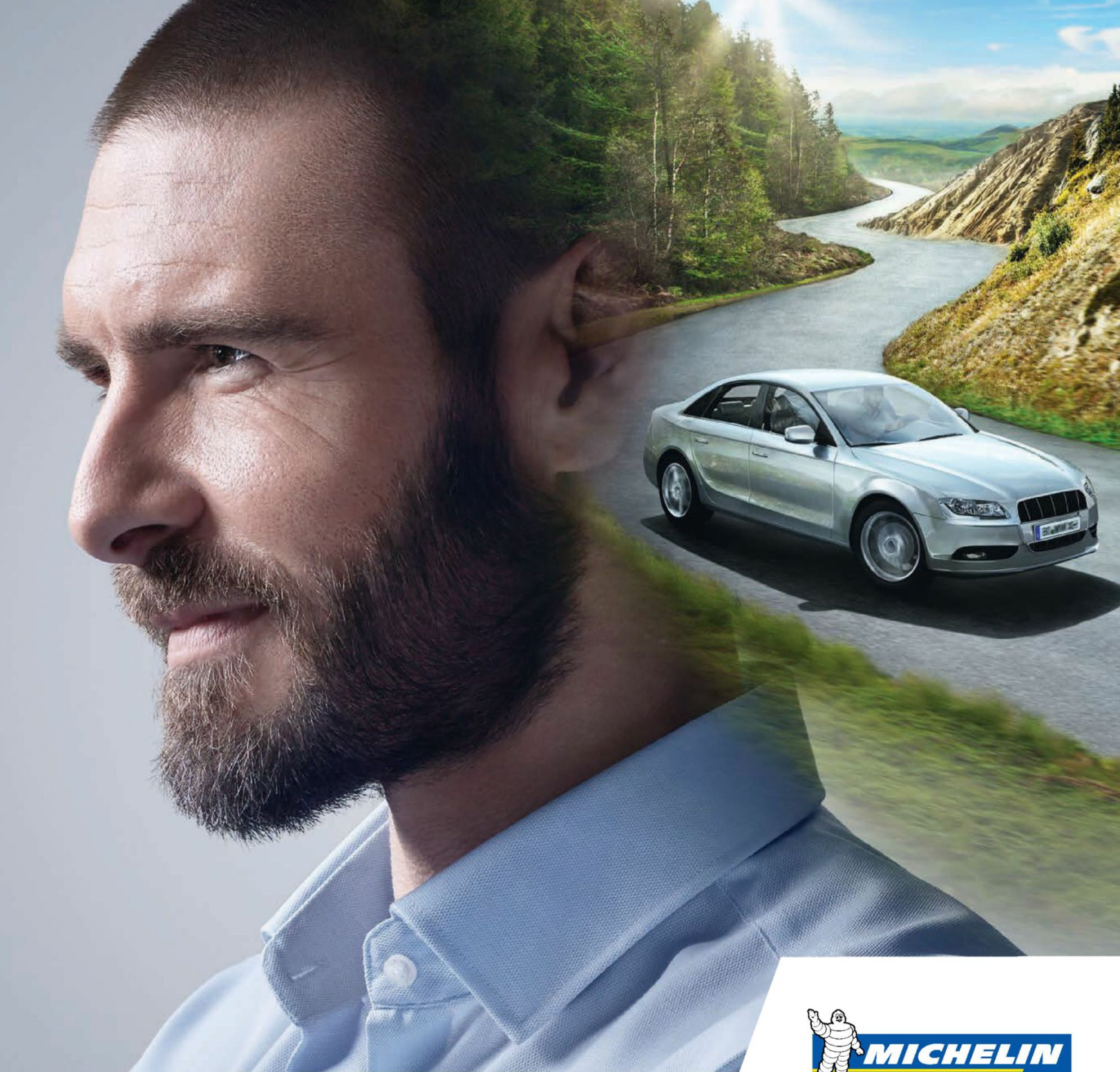
AUTOSPORT

The team that could beat Merc in 2017?

RED BULL RISING

**Why its
Aston Martin
deal is about
more than just
road cars**





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Formula 1 needs a strong Red Bull team

WHEN RED BULL WAS KNOCKED OFF ITS PERCH BY Mercedes in 2014, it's fair to say that a lot of those who had long since tired of its four years of dominance revelled in *schadenfreude*. Doubly so when it could not so much as win a grand prix last year. But now, F1 needs Red Bull back up there.

With Ferrari inching its way towards Mercedes to potentially make it a two-horse race up front, it would be even better if Red Bull could make it three. It certainly has the resources and the expertise to be up there, and the possibility of three genuinely great teams (for make no mistake, much as you might not like the way Red Bull does things or its *arriviste* status, its success earns it that title) duking it out at the top is one few could resist.

For all the moaning about the regulations, what defines a great period of grand prix racing is the close competition at the front. No matter what the rules are, if you are watching the cars on the formation lap with genuine uncertainty about which of five or six cars is going to win, then it is going to be well worth watching.

As politics continue to hog centre stage, with the GPDA announcing its determination to become a genuine player on that score, it's essential F1 does not lose sight of this. The key is what happens on track and that is how it must stay.

Red Bull has started quietly but solidly this year. But if it plays its cards right, it could have an important role in making F1 unquestionably worth watching even for the most casual fan.



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Charniaux /
XPB Images

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WHAT COULD THE ASTON MARTIN TIE-UP MEAN FOR RED BULL'S FORMULA 1 REVIVAL?

At first, it's just about a high-end road car. But there is potential for this alliance to grow into something far more significant

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

 [@BenAndersonAuto](https://twitter.com/BenAndersonAuto)

Aston Martin's history in Formula 1 is neither long nor illustrious. It's been more than half a century since Roy Salvadori and Maurice Trintignant brought the curtain down on its five-race foray into the world championship as a constructor, Trintignant finishing 11th in the 1960 British Grand Prix at Silverstone, five laps down to winner Jack Brabham's Cooper-Climax. The stylish British manufacturer is barely a footnote in the vast annals of F1 lore.

Aston Martin finished second and set fastest lap on its F1 debut in the '59 International Trophy race at Silverstone, but was — is — a sportscar manufacturer at heart. That's where its real racing pedigree lies, enshrined by its victory in that year's edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

There was brief rumour of an F1 return in 2009, when Max Mosley went on his crusade to entice new entrants into a budget-capped championship, and former Benetton and BAR team boss David Richards was at the helm of Prodrive-run Aston Martin Racing, but that came to naught.

Now the iconic builder of James Bond's favourite car is back in F1. Not as a manufacturer of engines or constructor of chassis, but as a sponsor of Red Bull.

F1 teams (well, most of them at least) announce new sponsorship deals often. That's par for the course in a global mega-bucks category such as this. So what's so special about this one? Well, that's the intriguing part.

Sponsorship has changed. It's no longer simply about stickers on cars. It's about partnerships and collaborations that stretch beyond on-track exposure. Take McLaren and GlaxoSmithKline for example. GSK branding does not adorn swathes of the MP4-31's bodywork, but the British pharmaceutical giant is one

"HORNER DESCRIBES ASTON MARTIN AS AN 'INNOVATION PARTNER' FOR HIS TEAM"

of McLaren's biggest financial and technical supporters, and has a human performance laboratory housed within McLaren headquarters in Woking.

Red Bull boss Christian Horner describes Aston Martin as an "innovation partner" for his team. Broadly this refers to the 'hypercar' road-car project, codenamed Project AM-RB 001, which Red Bull technical genius Adrian Newey has helped design. That suggests this is already a collaboration that goes beyond a marketing exercise.

"This is more of a first step under the umbrella of an innovation partner," Horner tells *Autosport*. "The first real project we are working on together is the road car, which will be taking F1 methodology, know-how and performance — with Adrian at the helm — and applying it to a road car."

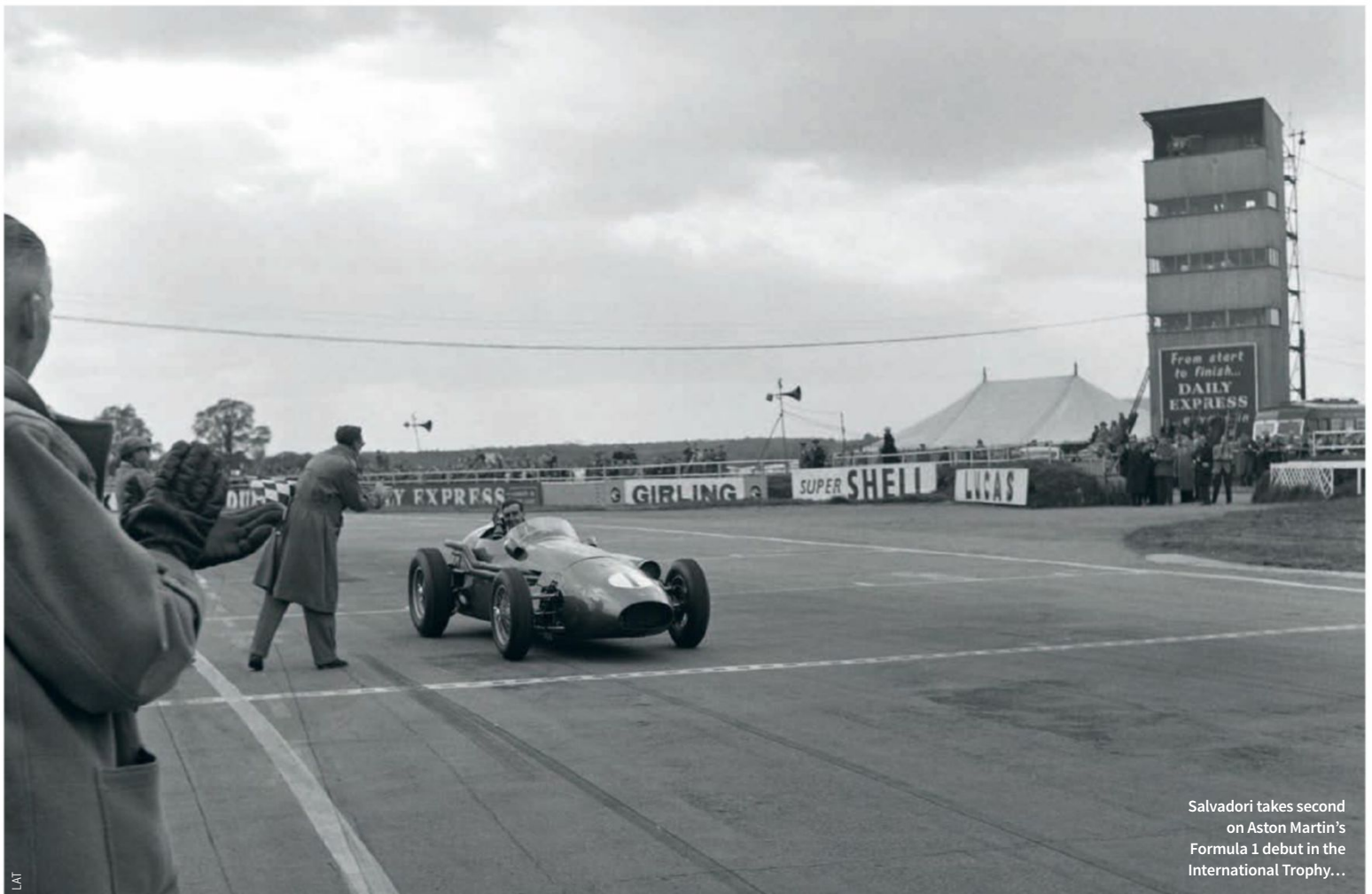
"We are bringing two huge brands together in Red Bull and Aston Martin, with the most successful designer ever in F1, to produce what will be, I have absolutely no doubt, an iconic car with F1-type performance unbounded by regulations. It is the first of a relationship that hopefully will grow and flourish."

Newey began working with Aston Martin in early 2015. Red Bull has pre-existing ties to Aston CEO Andy Palmer, and its marketing and communications director Simon Sproule, through the tie-up it enjoyed with Infiniti until the end of last »

DUNBAR/LAT

Ricciardo finished fourth in Australia despite Renault's engine disadvantage





How Autosport imagined the mooted Prodrive/Aston Martin F1 project might have looked back in 2009



year. Horner says a supercar project didn't fit with Infiniti, but discussions resumed with Palmer and Sproule when they left Nissan for Aston Martin in late-2014.

"Since the summer we have been working on this project, but obviously to get the funding has taken a little while, especially on Aston's side," explains Horner. "They have got some great backers involved now. It's an exciting project. A showcase for Red Bull outside of an F1 environment to demonstrate its skill and know-how.

"Adrian will be splitting his time between advanced technology projects and Formula 1, as he has done for the last 18 months. He is 50/50 split with his time, which is working well and keeps him engaged in Formula 1."

Keeping Newey engaged in F1 is vital for Red Bull. Building the best F1 chassis on the grid is what it does, and is really all it has to shout about right now. Since V6 hybrid turbo engines arrived in F1 in 2014, Red Bull has struggled.

From 2009-13 it won 50 per cent of the races it started, qualified on pole for 61 per cent, and won four consecutive drivers' and constructors' world championships. Since then it has won just eight per cent of the races it's started, never started on pole position, and last year finished fourth in the championship – the team's worst result since 2008.

Red Bull has laid the blame for this stark reversal of fortune squarely at the door of engine supplier Renault, becoming increasingly frustrated at the fact that engines play a much bigger part in the performance equation now, and at Renault's weakness within that dynamic.

When it became clear that Renault had lost ground relative to rivals Mercedes and Ferrari at the beginning of last season, moves were made to extricate Red Bull from its customer deal with the French manufacturer and attempt to secure a supply of customer Mercedes power units for 2016. Part of the early discussions over that deal, which was ultimately nixed at boardroom level by Mercedes, was to badge those engines Aston Martin, which is five per cent owned by Mercedes parent company Daimler.

Fraught politics surrounds engines in Formula 1 right now. The current sporting regulations forbid manufacturers to supply more than three customer teams at any one time, without express consent of the FIA. But they also do not mandate manufacturers supply that maximum number of teams either. Hence Ferrari was also able to reject Red Bull's overtures when the Mercedes deal fell through.

On top of this there are regular rows over costs, the power the manufacturers wield over the technical regulations, threats of introducing an independently manufactured power unit (built to a different but equalised specification), and a suggestion the rules could be rewritten for 2017 to force existing manufacturers to open up supply to more teams.

That, potentially, could open things back up for Red Bull and its latest 'technical innovation' partner. Red Bull currently uses

newly acquired timepiece sponsor TAG Heuer to badge its Renault customer engines, and one suspects there is a desire to see the Aston name involved in a similar capacity.

Of the potential for Aston to open the door to a Mercedes deal, Horner is naturally coy. "It was something that was discussed [in 2015]," he says. "It wasn't and isn't an option at this point in time, but of course there are natural synergies."

The suggestion seems to be one of 'who knows

where things could lead?' It's worth remembering that Red Bull began its Formula 1 involvement with stickers on cars. Now it outright owns two teams...

The man with control over those two teams, Dietrich Mateschitz, continues to talk about the essential need for Red Bull to obtain a competitive engine. The Austrian repeatedly threatened to pull the plug last year, despite Red Bull's current commercial arrangement with Bernie Ecclestone running until the end of 2020, and spoke unfavourably ahead of this season about the imbalance of power wielded by Mercedes and Ferrari in F1 at the moment.

Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko says the team briefly explored the possibility of building its own engine, back when it became clear Renault was struggling badly at the beginning of 2014, but Horner has consistently ruled this out on the basis that it would cost hundreds of millions of pounds to invest in the correct infrastructure.

So an Aston-badged Mercedes engine theoretically still

represents the ideal solution to all that ails Mateschitz. But so many stars would need to align at the right time to make that scenario a reality, and none of that is likely in the short term. For now, Red Bull is stuck with the initial source of Mateschitz's frustration: Renault.

The public breakdown of that relationship was

remarkable, and had its roots in the fact that Mercedes caught everyone out with the sheer depth of its own preparation for the current V6 hybrid era.

Renault admits it underestimated the challenge of the combustion element within the complex hybrid loop that defines these power units, preferring to focus on the energy recover systems. To its credit, it did a good job with those, but to the detriment of pure horsepower. And it has been fighting to play catch-up ever since.

When it became clear Red Bull would not be able to source an alternative engine supplier, it struck a new one-year deal to remain with Renault, but without any associated branding or sponsorship – hence the TAG badging on its engines this season, and the lack of any Renault or Infiniti logos.

Horner has spoken previously about Red Bull being in a "better position" regarding engines for 2017, and the current one-year Renault deal does look like the work of a team that is hedging its bets.

"Not really, we are limited in our choice of supply, that is obvious and clear," Horner counters. "Of course the other thing mooted by the promoter is that if the engines don't converge on performance, to within two per cent by the first race of 2017, then there will either be a rule change or intervention. »

"ASTON-BADGED MERC ENGINES THEORETICALLY REPRESENT A CURE FOR ALL MATESCHITZ'S ILLS"

Q&A

ADRIAN NEWEY
CO-DESIGNER ON
PROJECT AM-RB 001



Does this project give you the freedom you lack in F1?

It's much, much more open. There is more room for creativity. The rulebook now almost designs the car for you in Formula 1. That is clear in the way the cars have converged in terms of looks. With road cars, there is far more freedom with trying to do something, which will be a bit different to anything else that's out there.

What is it current cars miss that you'd like to see?

We're just trying to keep it pure and simple, compact, light. It's trying to adhere to the old values. So many cars now have become big, heavy and very compacted. This has reversed that trend.

Do you believe F1 should have the ultimate cars?

It's that old thing. First of all, you have to satisfy safety requirements, but in truth those cars would be too fast to be safe and pretty uncomfortable to drive at those sorts of *g*-levels. There has to be some sort of reining-in of performance. Current F1 cars are slower than cars of 10 years ago. It's a bit like losing Concorde...

What materials will you use?

There is nothing particularly revolutionary. It's mainly carbonfibre with bits of aluminium and other materials. With the motor-racing industry, we are users of technology developed elsewhere; we're not big enough as an industry to do our own fundamental research into materials. What we do is take what has been developed and use that harder and develop it more quickly than other industries might do, and I think that's why so many aerospace industries are interested in motor racing. We can really push the technology, be it materials or CFD or computer simulation techniques. We're a very good development industry.

Is there a crossover for the technology?

On the road car there will be a very good flow. There are clearly areas of road cars we know nothing about. In terms of the race car I think we can certainly hope to bring things to Aston, in terms of the way we do things, technology, how fast we can work. Equally, in terms of production techniques, trying to bring costs down, then I believe Aston can bring things to us.

Will this mean you move away from Red Bull?

No, it will be a split role. I think we're in a position now where we have a really good depth of engineering inside the team and that means that I can step back a bit and they know exactly what they are doing. We have some really strong heads of department and we can give them a bit more freedom.

Does this project give you more enthusiasm for your job?

It's a fresh stimulation and I think that then springs back into Formula 1. It [F1] becomes a mindset of feeling slightly flat and it's difficult to feel stimulated.



Horner and Aston Martin CEO Andy Palmer announce their new alliance





Newey has been working with Aston Martin since early 2015

“With that timescale it’s quite a long shot, but how they deal with that is for the promoter to sort out, along with the governing body. It comes at a cost, because the expense of the current power-unit regulations – particularly with open development for the manufacturers – is incredibly expensive.

“The independent engine still lurks in the background if a solution cannot be found. It would have to be a different specification, but the problem with that is you then get into equivalence. I think the ideal scenario is that we find a solution among what’s already there, rather than getting into equivalence, because that is fraught with difficulties. If it cannot be achieved then there’s no other option.

“That’s the sword of Damocles hanging over the manufacturers if they don’t converge and get their act together, and of course if they do converge supply becomes much less of an issue.”

In which case the necessity of sourcing a supply of Mercedes engines in order to win races again would greatly reduce. But even a scenario that involves engine-equivalency tinkering behind the scenes – much more difficult to do with the current evolving technology than was the case in the V8 era – still relies on Renault being able to sort out many of its present problems.

The V8 convergence worked because all the manufacturers had a broadly similar understanding of how to produce competitive engines. What is abundantly clear in the V6 hybrid turbo world is that two manufacturers – Renault and Honda – are some considerable distance away from the point at which a bit of minor outside help would make them competitive.

Such moves would also undo significant efficiency gains made by Mercedes and Ferrari with their respective fuel partners, Petronas and Shell, which are not the inexpensive work of a moment.

But in stark contrast to the negativity emanating from Red Bull last year, there is certainly a feeling within the

“THERE IS A CLEAR STRATEGY AT RENAULT. THERE’S LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL”

team that Renault may finally be on the right track again.

“I think we will be making decisions on engines a lot earlier this year,” says Horner. “And depending on progress then the likelihood is to extend the partnership we have in its current guise.

“A lot will depend on the progress made during the first part of the year. We are expecting significant progress, and you can see with the frugal token usage [Renault spent a significantly smaller number of development tokens than its rivals over the winter], with the restructuring they have had, that there is a positive direction there for the first time in quite a few years.

“This year there is a clear strategy within Renault. Their commitment to Formula 1 is clear now. They have restructured their technical team, they have brought in good personnel, and there is a clear direction. They have been working with good external consultants, like Mario Illien, and we can now see light at the end of the tunnel.”

Renault’s recommitment to F1 as a works entrant has helped diffuse the doubt Red Bull had in its engine supplier. Renault has continued to invest in a dual development plan with Ilmor founder Illien, and has also recruited staff from Mercedes and leading World Endurance Championship manufacturer Porsche.

“To a certain degree we were a bit in limbo because we were not sure where to go, so we hadn’t really invested in people and infrastructure,” Renault F1 managing director Cyril Abiteboul says. “Now that we have a clear plan ahead we know where we are and we know what we are doing. Our own project is »

more stable, there is a greater degree – to a certain extent – of motivation, so we've got something a bit more robust to build for the future.

"Red Bull has not changed. They are extreme competitors. It looks like things are improving on the engine side; the relationship is improving also. But I have no doubt if we suddenly have some repeated issues it will become slightly different and the relationship may change again. It will very much depend on what we do in terms of performance."

There was talk in the Melbourne paddock of a new, top-secret facility within the grounds of Red Bull's Milton Keynes HQ, which led to speculation that it has begun its own engine development programme. Some suggested that's where Illien is beavering away on developments for the Renault power unit.


When quizzed about this building during our chat, Horner takes out his smartphone. "I'll show you," he says. Eventually he finds an image and presents it to *Autosport*. "It's being used as a storage facility," says Horner. All we see staring back at us is a line of Red Bull engine covers. There's not even an engine sitting somewhere in the background, let alone a full dyno...

While perhaps no longer invested in the Renault engine project to quite the degree some people suspect, it is clear the result is a different atmosphere to the toxic antipathy from both sides that spewed forth when we discussed the fall of the Red Bull-Renault empire 12 months ago.

"IF RENAULT'S BIG UPGRADE FAILS TO DELIVER, THE KNIVES COULD BE OUT AGAIN"

Red Bull seems quietly confident this time around. Renault made modest gains over the winter, which it estimated to be worth half-a-second in laptime, to try to avoid losing further ground to Mercedes and Ferrari. The new Red Bull RB12 showed encouraging speed in the first grand prix of the season in Australia, particularly in the race, where Daniel Ricciardo ran as high as second before finishing a solid fourth.

But more engine performance is clearly needed; even just to return Red Bull to its 2014 status of occasional race winner and second-best team on the grid, let alone the leading role it feels it warrants. Red Bull is expecting a big development step from Renault around the time of June's Canadian Grand Prix. Only then we will begin to discover whether all this positive talk is cheap or not.

All is fine for now, but we've been here before. If Renault's big upgrade fails to deliver, the knives could come out once again. If that happens then perhaps that Aston Martin badge on the side of the car could become much more significant. 



Red Bull/Renault relationship rides on success of June engine upgrade

"TALENT BELOW THE PRESSURE ON TALENT"

FOR ALL ITS CONCERNS about the performance of its engine, one area Red Bull never lacks confidence in is its drivers. Sebastian Vettel won Red Bull those four consecutive drivers' titles from 2010-13, and Daniel Ricciardo's 2014 emergence ensured the team had a capable replacement leader when Vettel left for Ferrari.

But 2017 could create a driver-market

headache for Red Bull. Ricciardo is hot property – probably the most complete driver outside of the established world champions – and it also has to contend with the ambition of Max Verstappen, whom it worked so hard to sign.

Verstappen is understood to have a three-year agreement with Red Bull, and is keen to earn promotion to the A-team for next season. Given Toro

Rosso team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr is also doing an excellent job, and Daniil Kvyat has turned things around after a tricky start to 2015, Red Bull possesses an embarrassment of driving riches.

But Horner is not concerned about the need to move certain drivers on, or cull members of the programme.

"Drivers is not our biggest issue," he says.

Red Bull's Helmut Marko with his four active F1 drivers, pictured at the end of last season



NDS TO PUT NT ABOVE”

“Sainz is doing a great job, Verstappen is an exciting talent, Kvyat is developing well and Ricciardo is an established star now. Obviously we have others coming through too, like Pierre Gasly in GP2 or Sergio Sette Camara in Formula 3.

“It’s all down to performance. It is designed that we have a pool of drivers we can draw on as they develop and improve themselves,

“Next year could create a driver-market headache for Red Bull”

but obviously there is no timescale on that.

“Obviously after Sebastian became world champion the terms of his contract

varied somewhat from a junior graduate. Daniel Ricciardo’s contract doesn’t have the same mechanisms that Sebastian’s had. Daniel is an asset of the team, Red Bull has invested in Daniel, and his status is fixed and very clear. He is under contract certainly for next year.

“Talent below tends to put pressure on talent above. It depends how those drivers evolve. There are no set criteria.”



THE RISE AND FALL OF RED BULL



THE EARLY DAYS, 2005-08

After taking over the Jaguar squad, Red Bull spends its first four seasons building the team up and finishing from fifth to seventh in the constructors’ championship.



THE FIRST WIN, 2009

Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber post a one-two finish in the Chinese Grand Prix. It’s the first of six wins that season as it emerges as a title-contending force.



THE FIRST TITLE, 2010

Lost victories in the first two races for Vettel show Red Bull is still finding its feet at the front in F1. But both drivers’ and constructors’ titles are won for the first time.



THE GLORY YEARS, 2011-13

Vettel takes his tally of drivers’ titles to four as he leads the team to a further three constructors’ championships. Red Bull wins 32 races in just three seasons.



THE BAD TIMES, 2014...

Daniel Ricciardo’s three wins in 2014 seem a comedown, but it’s in the following season, when Red Bull claims just three podium finishes, the troubles become clear.



FORMULA1

F1 governance attack

IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARGUE WITH THE points made by the Grand Prix Drivers' Association in its statement last week demanding reform in Formula 1 (see opposite page). F1's governance is flawed, and will remain so until the covenants between commercial rights holder Formula One Management, the teams and the FIA expire in 2020.

That the drivers are entitled to express their opinions is a given. However, it is interesting to examine the GPDA's motives for doing so.

Only since the body has had a non-active F1 driver in Alex Wurz – appointed in October 2014 – at the helm has it become active in non-driving issues, such as calling for fan initiatives in order to improve 'the show'.

Wurz, who has close links to the FIA Institute and acts as advisor to the Williams board, in addition to other interests such as an advanced driving centre and a circuit-design company, recently emerged as one of the primary forces behind the nascent World Rally Championship Drivers' Association. Does the highly intelligent Wurz hold political ambitions, and see F1 (and soon rally) driver bodies as a springboard?

The irony is that the trio of drivers to put their names to the GPDA letter, namely Wurz, Sebastian Vettel and Jenson Button (Fernando Alonso and Lewis Hamilton, too, can be included after both recently voiced similarly critical

comments) are contracted to teams that benefit most from F1's processes: Wurz via Williams, Vettel with Ferrari, Button and Alonso through McLaren, and Hamilton for Mercedes.

So if the GPDA really is sufficiently concerned, in the first instance the signatories should take issue with their various team bosses, who are in at the ground floor by being members of F1's Strategy Group, rather than addressing the matter via an open letter copied to the media – which, intriguingly, the drivers did not even mention in their list of F1 players.

The Strategy Group consists of representatives from five permanent teams, plus one from the highest-placed team outside the top four (currently Force India), each with one vote. The FIA and FOM have six votes apiece and decisions are based on a majority vote.

If the teams cannot agree a unified position, the drivers should take that up with their team bosses. Equally, at F1 Commission level the teams hold by far the largest single block – 11 votes – versus another 15 split singly among FOM, the FIA, sponsors, technical partners, engine suppliers and race promoters.

Given various commercial and technical alliances, the teams potentially control 16 of 26 votes, close to the 66 per cent required to pass a motion for the following season. Only immediate issues require unanimity.

The GPDA represents driver interests, although not all drivers are members



d by drivers

Conspicuously absent from the GPDA letter are proposals to improve the situation. This could be because the drivers realise that only by scrapping (legally binding) bilateral agreements between FOM and the five enfranchised teams – the other being Red Bull Racing – can the flawed structures, including the much-contested revenue-distribution system (which lies at the core of the matter by militating against open competition), be overhauled.

The net effect would, though, be reduced FOM revenues for the five beneficiaries, in turn impacting on driver retainers and car performance among the signatories' teams. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas...

It will be fascinating to question all members of the GPDA as to their opinions during open media sessions in Bahrain.

Should they stick to the stock phrase of "we don't discuss GPDA matters externally", then clearly they do not share the courage of the GPDA's stated convictions – in turn suggesting that the letter was little more than a publicity stunt, possibly with political overtones. Until then the jury remains out.

Bernie Ecclestone has already responded with a letter of his own, agreeing that a restructure is required and challenging the GPDA to come up with proposals on how to improve the situation.

DIETER RENCKEN

THE GPDA LETTER IN FULL

Dear Formula 1 stakeholders, followers and fans,

The grand prix drivers would like to state our following position:

We drivers love our sport! Since childhood, we dreamed of racing the fastest race cars from the top teams on the coolest tracks against the best drivers in the world. We seek competition and love F1 almost unconditionally, which makes us most probably the people with the purest interest for Formula 1, beside our fans.

Formula 1 is currently challenged by a difficult global economic environment, a swift change in fan and consumer behaviour, and a decisive shift in the TV and media landscape. This makes it fundamental that the sport's leaders make smart and well-considered adjustments.

We feel that some recent rule changes – on both the sporting and technical side, and including some business decisions – are disruptive, do not address the bigger issues our sport is facing and in some cases could jeopardise its future success. We know that among the leaders of the sport – be it the owners, their representatives, the governing body, the teams or other stakeholders – every individual acts with the very best intentions.

Therefore, the drivers have come to the conclusion that the decision-making process in the sport is obsolete and ill-structured and prevents progress being made. Indeed, it can sometimes lead to just the opposite, a gridlock. This reflects negatively on our sport, prevents it being fit for the next generation of fans and compromises future global growth.

We would like to request and urge the owners and all stakeholders of Formula 1 to consider restructuring its own governance. The future directions and decisions of F1, be they short or long term, sporting, technical or business-orientated, should be based on a clear masterplan. Such a plan should reflect the principles and core values of Formula 1.

We need to ensure that F1 remains a sport, a closely fought competition between the best drivers in extraordinary machines on the coolest race tracks. F1 should be home only to the best teams, drivers and circuits, with partners and suppliers fit for such an elite championship.

Formula 1 has undoubtedly established itself as the pinnacle of motorsport and as such one of the most viewed and popular sports around the world. We drivers stand united, offer our help and support for F1 to keep it as such, and further to make it fit and exciting for many years and generations to come.

It is important to state that this open letter is intended in the best interests of all and should not be seen as a blind and disrespectful attack. Thank you for your attention and granting us the liberty to put our thoughts into words.

Best regards,
Jenson Button, Sebastian Vettel, Alex Wurz
on behalf of the grand prix drivers



NEXT-GENERATION WRC CARS TO START TESTING

THE NEXT GENERATION of World Rally Cars – the fastest in rallying history – will begin testing from next week.

Next year's regulations mean more powerful, more technical (with the return of a centre differential) and much more striking cars will be competing in rallying's top flight.

The five marques are at different stages of development, with only Citroen, Toyota and Volkswagen ready to be running with 2017-specification cars through April.

The 1.6-litre turbocharged engines remain, but the restrictor size governing how much air flows into the turbo is increased from 33mm to 36mm. This will take power outputs north of 400bhp for the first time since the end of Group B.

There will also be extra aero freedom.

Volkswagen has been testing a mule (pictured) since August last year, but the 2017 Polo R WRC will be in action for the first time next month.

Citroen's C3 WRC will be shaken down at the team's Satory test track before moving into its first phase of gravel testing by the middle of April.

Toyota Gazoo Racing had hoped to be running in mid-March, but a delay in delivery

of parts postponed the car's test debut.

Team principal Tommi Makinen confirmed to *Autosport* that the Yaris WRC will run in April – quite possibly driven initially by the four-time world champion.

Volkswagen's Jari-Matti Latvala expects to get his first taste of the 2017-spec Polo soon after next month's Rally Argentina. Marcus Gronholm has completed much of the car's early development running.

Latvala said: "It's very exciting to get the chance to see and drive what is the next chapter for Volkswagen. I'm sure Marcus has done a good job. I spoke with him a little bit and I'm very confident the car will be ready."

Kris Meeke is Citroen's development driver. Team principal Yves Matton said: "Kris has a lot of experience for this type of job. We have one test car ready; the second will be an evolution and closer to homologation spec."

Hyundai and M-Sport's cars won't run until June, with both drawing heavily on this season's i20 WRC and Fiesta RS WRC respectively.

Hyundai's Michel Nandan explained: "This year we have a completely new car and we will carry some of this over to the ['17] car."

DAVID EVANS

F1 loses free live TV in 2019

Sky Sports' exclusive deal to show live Formula 1 reduces UK free-to-air coverage to highlights only

W

HEN SKY SPORTS LANDED THE BRITISH TV RIGHTS for Formula 1 ahead of the 2012 season in a deal that gave it live coverage of all races and the BBC the right to show half of them, it was only a matter of time before it became an exclusive contract. And with the BBC pulling out and passing the remaining three years of its deal to Channel 4 for 2016-18, and a new contract up for grabs in 2019, Sky's financial might meant it was able to make an offer that Formula One Management could not refuse.

The deal runs from 2019-24, and the only race that will be shown live on free-to-air television in the UK will be the British Grand Prix. It remains to be seen via which channel, but it will most likely go to either the BBC, ITV or Channel 4, or be shown via Sky's own free platforms, such as Pick. This is despite the British GP, contrary to

some claims, not being on the government's list of sporting events that must be shown live on free-to-air.

A same-day highlights package will be available for a terrestrial broadcaster. When contacted by *Autosport* in the aftermath of the announcement, Channel 4's head of F1 Stephen Lyle did not rule out the possibility of it continuing to cover grand prix racing.

"It's a bit early for that because we've only just picked up the news," he said of the possibility of broadcasting on a highlights-only basis. "It doesn't affect the contract we have at the moment, so nothing has really changed on that score in terms of how we are approaching it. We'll obviously look at it and then look at what to do from 2019 onwards."

The impact on viewing figures in the UK will be predictable. Sky's business model is based on subscriptions rather than the peak viewing figures a terrestrial broadcaster seeks. In broadcasting, live sports coverage is something that commands a high premium, so it's reasonable to assume that Sky will gain some new subscribers keen to follow F1, but that will only be a fraction of a per cent of those who currently watch the live races available on terrestrial television. So viewing figures will be lower.

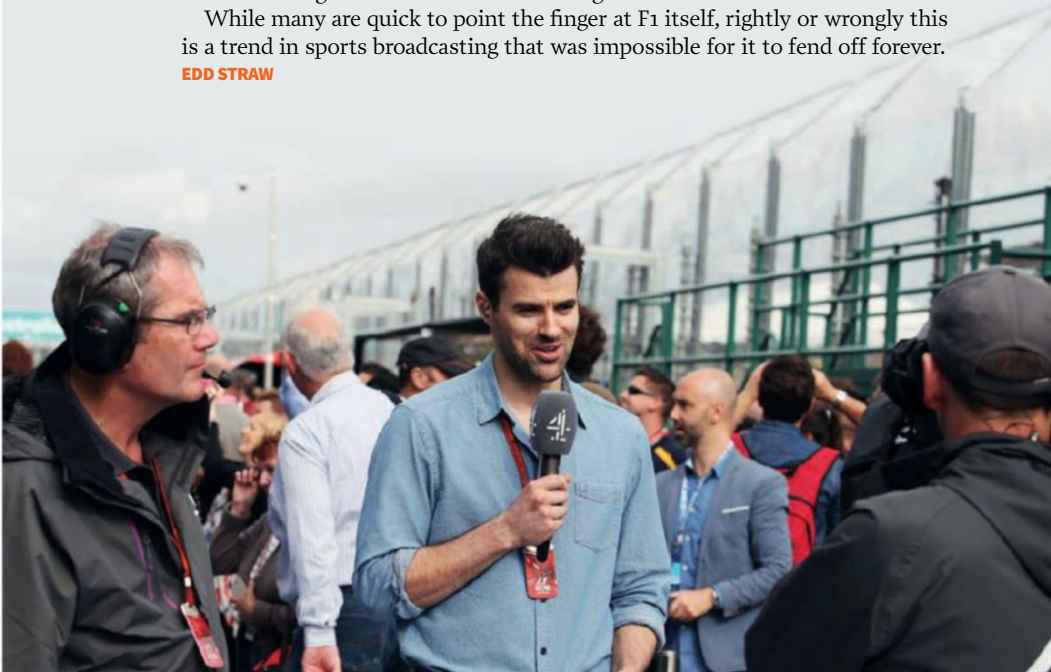
The preservation of free-to-air highlights, however, will ensure that F1 is watchable to those without Sky. While this is bad for the viewer in terms of the spending required to watch races live, it's a surprise that F1 has held out for so long in the UK with free coverage.

While many are quick to point the finger at F1 itself, rightly or wrongly this is a trend in sports broadcasting that was impossible for it to fend off forever.

EDD STRAW



PLANETEMARCUS.COM/BILLIOT



IN THE HEADLINES



FUOCO FASTEST IN ESTORIL GP3 TEST

Trident driver Antonio Fuoco topped last week's three-day GP3 test at Estoril. The Italian set a fastest lap of 1m27.293s on the final morning, putting him 0.482s ahead of Arden International driver Jake Dennis. Alexander Albon (ART Grand Prix), Sandy Stuvik (Trident), Jack Aitken (Arden) and Nyck de Vries (ART) rounded out the top six.

HILDEBRAND LANDS INDY 500 SEAT

JR Hildebrand will race a third Ed Carpenter Racing entry in May's Indianapolis 500. The 28-year-old, who famously lost victory in the 2011 Indy 500 when he crashed at the final corner before finishing second, joins regular drivers Josef Newgarden and Ed Carpenter.

PADDON LAUNCHES NEW ZEALAND TEAM

Hyundai World Rally Championship star Hayden Paddon has launched a new rally car and team in an effort to boost the sport's popularity in his native New Zealand. He will drive the Hyundai New Zealand Rally Team's i20 AP4 on the Rally of Otago and the International Rally of Whangarei.

HOMEBUSH SET FOR V8 SWANSONG

This year's V8 Supercars season finale will be the last event run on the streets of Homebush. A new street race in Gosford, one hour north of Sydney, could replace it.

FREDDY ROUSSELLE 1927-2016

Freddy Rousselle, who has died at the age of 88, enjoyed a short but successful sportscar career that came close to rewarding him with a Le Mans 24 Hours podium. Sharing a works-prepared Equipe Nationale Belge Jaguar D-type with Paul Frere, he was heading for second place in the 1957 race when ignition problems temporarily stranded the car out on the circuit. The former motorcycle racer and rally driver started Le Mans three times.

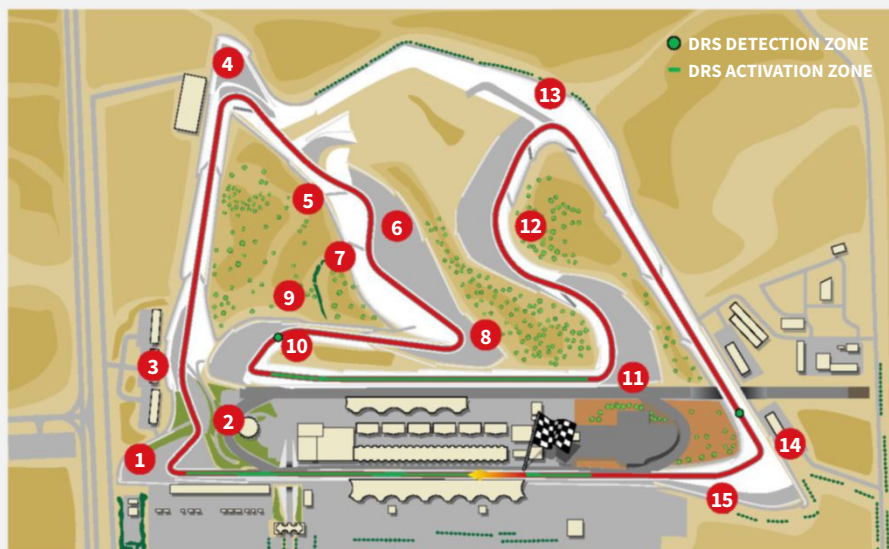
ACURA NSX GT3 RACER REVEALED

A GT3 version of the forthcoming Acura NSX supercar has been unveiled ahead of a full factory programme in North America next year. The Acura NSX GT3 is powered by a 3.5-litre twin-turbo V6.



F1 PREVIEW

Bahrain Grand Prix April 1-3



BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT

LENGTH 3.362 miles **NUMBER OF LAPS** 57

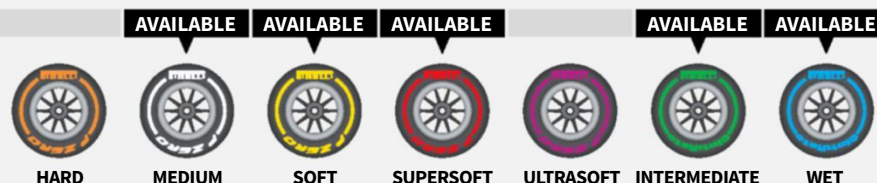
2015 POLE POSITION Lewis Hamilton 1m32.571s

QUALIFYING LAP RECORD Michael Schumacher 1m30.139s (2004)

RACE LAP RECORD Schumacher 1m30.252s (2004)



Tyre allocation



UK start times

LIVE ON CHANNEL 4 & SKY SPORTS F1

FRIDAY

FP1 1200 **FP2** 1600

SATURDAY

FP3 1300 **QUALIFYING** 1600

SUNDAY

RACE 1600

RADIO COVERAGE

5 LIVE SPORTS EXTRA
BBC SPORT WEBSITE

Previous winners

2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2010	Fernando Alonso	Ferrari
2009	Jenson Button	Brawn
2008	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2007	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2006	Fernando Alonso	Renault
2005	Fernando Alonso	Renault

Themes to watch

ROSBERG'S RUN

Nico Rosberg has now won four consecutive races and leads the title chase. Another win here would lay down the championship gauntlet.

FERRARI'S FORM

Ferrari threw away a shot at victory in Australia, and while it was some way off in qualifying, the race-pace gap has closed. Bahrain will offer a better read.

BATTLE FOR THIRD

Red Bull was best of the rest in Australia, although Williams also scored well, with Toro Rosso quick enough to be a threat. It will be very tight in Bahrain.

ALL PICS: EBREVILAT



WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Porsche sets the pace in WEC test

WHAT DID THE WORLD LEARN FROM LAST WEEK'S OFFICIAL World Endurance Championship test at Paul Ricard? Not a lot more than we already suspected and certainly no definitive answers.

Porsche was strong with the revised version of last year's championship-winning 919 Hybrid, but then we expected that. Toyota closed the gap with its turbocharged TS050 HYBRID, which it was surely going to do after its torrid 2015. And Audi was behind the game – but probably catching up – after a difficult winter test programme with its all-new R18 e-tron quattro, again something we suspected.

The heavily uprated 919 Hybrid headed each of the five sessions over the two days of the so-called prologue. Brendon Hartley ended up with the fastest time, a 1m37.445s set on Saturday afternoon that narrowly eclipsed Neel Jani's 1m37.487s from Friday's night session.

That left Porsche ahead of its rivals by eight tenths of a second, Stephane Sarrazin setting the third-best time of 1m38.273s in the high-downforce version of the new Toyota on Saturday morning. The latest Audi was a further half-second back with a 1m38.827s from Benoit Treluyer.

Porsche is undoubtedly best prepared at this stage of the game. It was running an updated car, of which many of the elements have been in place since before Christmas, and arrived at the prologue on the back of a 30-hour simulation at Ricard the previous week, admittedly with the low-downforce version of the 919 for the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Toyota had only tested its TS050 with last year's rear-end, normally aspirated V8 included, at Ricard, while Audi was effectively running its new LMP1 hybrid at the French track for the first time. The new R18 was, said Audi Sport Team Joest boss Ralf Juttner, "a very different car" when it undertook its first shakedown at Ricard back in November.

Porsche only ran its cars – which tested for one day each – in high-downforce configuration, while Toyota converted its solo car from low to high aero ahead of the third session. Audi, meanwhile, encountered problems with the R18 it was due to run on both days and had to switch to a second chassis for day two.

Porsche's speed was significant, however. Its best times around the

3.60-mile Circuit Paul Ricard were only two tenths from Jani's fastest lap of last year's prologue. That came in the face of new rules for 2016 that have robbed the cars of approximately 7.5 per cent of their per-lap fuel allocation. Porsche's developments have clearly clawed back some of that loss, but exactly how much is difficult to judge.

That's because it was running in high-downforce trim based on the spec that it used to win the final five races of last year's WEC. Twelve months ago, it turned up with an interim configuration that wasn't optimised for Ricard.

"Our times show that we did some good work over the winter improving the car," said Jani. "It's not a true comparison, but it is an indication of where we are."

Toyota was happy with its performance after gaining 1.7s in comparison with last year, but "not jumping up and down", according to technical director Pascal Vasselon.

Juttner admitted that Audi had "not had the best of winters in terms of quality running", but stressed that progress was being made. He also pointed out that Ricard was also the first time that Joest, as opposed to Audi's test team, was running the latest R18.

"The Porsches are still quick, but we don't know what kind of programme they have been running," he said. "We only know what we have been doing, and we are where we expected to be."

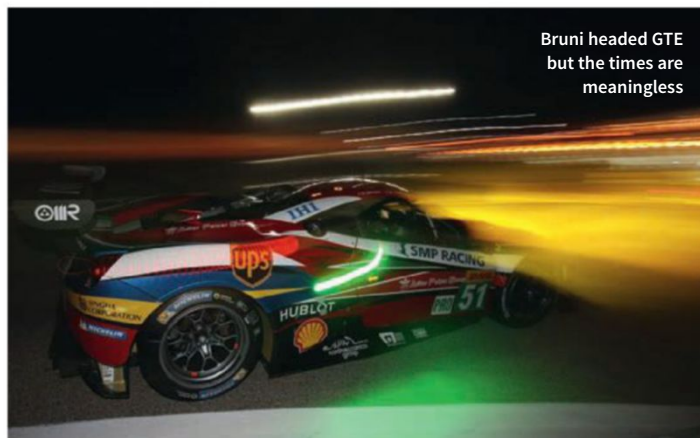
GARY WATKINS

RESULTS PAUL RICARD WEC TEST – LMP1 TOP SIX

POS	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Brendon Hartley	Porsche 919 Hybrid	1m37.445s
2	Neel Jani	Porsche 919 Hybrid	1m37.487s
3	Stephane Sarrazin	Toyota TS050 HYBRID	1m38.273s
4	Benoit Treluyer	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	1m38.827s
5	Alexandre Imperatori	Rebellion-AERR-One	1m41.773s
6	Nicolas Prost	Rebellion-AERR-One	1m42.147s



The #1 Porsche set fastest time in the hands of Brendon Hartley



AF Corse Ferraris top GTE running

FERRARI AND THE FACTORY AF CORSE team led the way in GTE Pro with the new twin-turbo 488. Gianmaria Bruni's eventual margin of two tenths over team-mate Sam Bird and seven tenths over Olivier Pla in the best of the Ganassi Ford GTs are meaningless, however.

The Ferraris were slower than last year's 458 Italias at the prologue, just as the solo Aston Martin Vantage GTE was. Yet new rules have given the GTE Pro cars more power and aerodynamic freedoms designed to make them faster.

Bruni's test best of 1m57.808s compared with his 1m57.440s at the prologue last year and the 1m57.116s set by a GTE Am class Aston in 2015. The best Aston time this year was a 2m00.298s set by Marco Sorensen in the team's solo Pro car.

It was clear that no one wanted to show their hand at the start of a new era for the class. One senior figure in the GTE paddock summed it up when he said: "Isn't it funny

how all these teams are so bad at testing, but so good at racing?"

Ford's British-based 'Ganassi' team racked up the miles with its pair of GTs on only its second test together. There was, however, concern in the camp about the BoP it has been given and is likely to have to race at Silverstone next month. The Ford was 10kg heavier than at the Sebring 12 Hours earlier this month and has a less favourable torque curve.

ORECA led the way in LMP2 with the Signatech Alpine team. Nicolas Lapierre set a best lap of 1m46.974s in its lead Nissan-engined 05 coupe, which was just two thousandths of a second quicker than Jonny Kane in Strakka's Gibson-Nissan 015S.

The best time from a Ligier JSP2 was a tenth further back courtesy of a 1m47.024s from Nathanael Berthon in the Jota-run G-Drive car.

In GTE Am, Paolo Ruberti set the pace in the Larbre Chevrolet.

GARY WATKINS



RESULTS PAUL RICARD WEC TEST – GTE TOP SIX

POS	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Gianmaria Bruni	Ferrari 488	1m57.808s
2	Sam Bird	Ferrari 488	1m58.083s
3	Paolo Ruberti (Am)	Chevrolet Corevttte C7.R	1m58.268s
4	Olivier Pla	Ford GT	1m58.525s
5	Andy Priaulx	Ford GT	1m58.697s
6	Mike Wainwright (Am)	Porsche 911 RSR	1m58.818s

IN THE HEADLINES



MANOR MAKES LMP2 TESTING DEBUT

Manor Motorsport completed a successful maiden sportscar test with the first of its ORECA-Nissan 05s at Ricard. Will Stevens, James Jakes, Tor Graves and Matt Rao completed a total of 242 laps over the two days.

WURZ TAKES TOYOTA RESERVE ROLE

Two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Alex Wurz will be Toyota's reserve driver for this year's edition of the race despite his retirement from racing. Wurz, who took part in January's Daytona 24 Hours after the announcement that he was moving into an advisory role with Toyota, stressed that he had no further plans to race.

REBELLION OPTS FOR OLDER ENGINE

The Rebellion Racing privateer LMP1 squad has switched to an older-spec AER twin-turbo V6 for reliability reasons after running an evolution of the engine first raced by the ByKolles team in 2014. The Anglo-Swiss squad, now running on Dunlop tyres, was happy with the progress it made at the prologue and, according to team boss Bart Hayden, "was closer to the factories than expected".

REVISIONS TO BYKOLLES CLM

The ByKolles team was running minor revisions to the front-end aerodynamics of its AER-engined CLM P1/01 ahead of a major update scheduled to arrive in time for next month's Silverstone WEC opener. Only new signing Oliver Webb drove the car at Ricard.

DEMPSEY-PROTON PORSCHE RUNS

The Dempsey-Proton team gave its 2016-spec GTE Pro-class Porsche 911 RSR a shakedown at the prologue. Team boss Christian Ried complete seven laps on Saturday afternoon after its build was completed during the test.

CAMATHIAS LANDS PORSCHE SEAT

Sportscar regular Joel Camathias has joined the Proton-run KCMG GTE Am Porsche line-up for the eight WEC races excluding Le Mans. The sometime CART driver will share the 911 RSR with factory driver Wolf Henzler and Proton boss Ried.

LARBRE TO RUN CHEVY YOUNGSTERS

Larbre Competition is expecting to run what team boss Jack Leconte described as "young Chevrolet factory drivers" – and likely to include Ricky Taylor – in its Corvette C7.R later in the season. Paolo Ruberti is confirmed alongside full-season drivers Pierre Ragues and Yutaka Yamagashi for the first two races.

PLA TOPS ELMS TESTING AT RICARD

Olivier Pla topped the times in the official two-day European Le Mans Series test at Ricard on Tuesday and Wednesday with the Krohn Racing squad. His best time of 1m48.100s aboard the Krohn Ligier-Nissan JSP2 was just under two tenths quicker than second-placed Pierre Thiriet aboard the TDS Racing ORECA-Nissan 05.

FEEDBACK

How will Sky deal attract new fans?



After hearing that Formula 1 will only be shown on Sky from 2019, I'm sure there will be many, including myself, who are disappointed that our beloved sport is going behind a 'paywall'. Was it not one of Mr E's priorities to keep F1 on free-to-air channels such as C4?

What sort of audience is Mr E and the commercial bosses trying to reach out to? The casual viewer? Not with this move for 2019! The viewer who doesn't have Sky Sports? How on earth are they meant to draw in new fans if they have to pay for the privilege of watching F1?

Thank goodness for ITV4 and their coverage of the BTCC and Formula E! Both are excellent series, and shown on free-to-air telly.

S Yates
By email

Gregor Grant, bike enthusiast

Your reader, Barry Hunter (March 24) in complaining about the inclusion of motorcycle racing in *Autosport*, is clearly unaware that its founder, Gregor Grant,

was one of the founders of the old Glasgow Motor Cycle Club – later Lanarkshire MCC.

He was also the author of the book *AJS, The History of A Great Motorcycle* and rode in many motorcycle scrambles, sand races and grass-track events. I think he is more likely to be turning in his grave at Mr Hunter's narrow views!

Richard Layton
Clacton, Essex

Stop putting F1 down

Imagine an exciting new TV programme which has been hyped up and promises state-of-the art coverage like never before. The chosen sport: 10-pin bowling.

Imagine that within the first half-hour the presenters and commentators have berated the participants for not being big enough characters, complained about the lanes being too slippery, the balls for being too big and too round, the pins for being the wrong colour and for making the wrong sound when they fall down. Even the bowlers' shoes are not the

Sky will have a monopoly for live F1 broadcasts from 2019; is this really the way to nurture and grow the sport's fanbase?

correct colour. Would you watch this programme again? I'm guessing not.

Does this remind anyone of a certain other sport whose presenters, commentators and even promoters seem to want to deride it at every opportunity? Come on F1 (and Sky Sports in particular), you can and should be doing better. The show is good, so start telling us it is.

Gary Jones
Matlock, Derbyshire

Get the basics right

Tempting though it may be, ridiculing those responsible for the F1 qualifying debacle would be superfluous.

I suggest we focus on the wider issue instead: why does a group of intelligent, highly capable people keep making poor decisions? The aim of the new qualifying structure was to improve the racing, something it was never likely to do.

A shift in thinking is crucial, because the same people are responsible for finalising the 2017 technical regulations. The 'dirty air' issue looked worse than ever in Melbourne; even radical proposals like reversed grids won't deliver a good race when fast cars can't pass slow ones.

Sometimes failure teaches you more than success. The lesson here is that baffling tweaks won't work. Be brave and slash aerodynamic grip. If there was ever a moment to get the basics right, surely this is it?

Daniel Durrant
Cromer, Norfolk

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That shrinking feeling

Pay TV is now F1's broadcasting model, but chasing revenue is only going to further reduce an already dwindling audience

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

[@BenAndersonAuto](#)

FORMULA 1 HAS NOT ENJOYED THE EASIEST START

to 2016. Every new season offers fresh hope, but the cars had barely begun to turn wheels in pre-season testing before the knives were out again, Bernie Ecclestone telling the press that the current state of F1 was "the worst he'd ever known" and that he wouldn't pay to take his family to watch a race.

Not even a grand prix on the board and already F1's audience appeal was under fire. 'F1 is not worth watching,' says the man whose job it is to sell it to TV companies and their viewers, as he did last week by inking a new five-year deal with Sky Sports.

Come mid-morning of the first day of testing at Barcelona, the press gathered for a briefing with McLaren racing director Eric Boullier, keen to know his thoughts on Ecclestone's words.

"I understand his frustration, but we have to live with what we have," Boullier said. "He is the sport's commercial leader, so if you see your TV figures going down that is concerning. In my opinion it is because we go, for obvious reasons, to some pay TV. Obviously pay TV has a reduced number of viewers compared with free-to-air."

Boullier was not trying to be controversial. He was stating the obvious. Pay TV deals, such as the one Ecclestone confirmed with Sky last week, are shrinking F1's audience.

Hours before Sky Sports announced its new deal to make the UK's TV coverage of F1 exclusively 'pay-per-view' from 2019 until 2024, the Grand Prix Drivers' Association published an open letter calling for reform to F1's "obsolete" governance structure.

That letter warned of the "difficult global economic environment, swift change in fan and consumer behaviour, and decisive shift in the TV and media landscape" that F1 faces right now, also suggesting certain regulatory and business decisions "could jeopardise its future success".

One really does wonder if Ecclestone's right hand knows what his left is doing sometimes...

As the GPDA points out, we are living through a seismic shift in the media landscape. The spread of high-speed internet and mobile technology has transformed the way people consume media. No longer must they simply be satisfied with whatever powerful proprietors and executives wish to spoon-feed them. The internet means democracy of information, it means choice, it means diversification, it means power to the people.

The floodgates have opened, creating a twofold tension in the media. On the one hand many people now expect to receive a certain amount of content for free, which makes production of

profitable and sustainable media products extraordinarily difficult. On the other, organisations trying to give the people what they want to an acceptably high standard are struggling to afford to do so without introducing subscriptions and paywalls.

The internet gives consumers so much power over what media they use and when they use it (something F1 is slow to realise), but it also gives advertisers greater knowledge of the reach of products and thus a better idea of the value of their spending. The internet means data, which means value can be measured quantitatively. The result is a drop in ad revenue.

So the focus has to be on quality and those smaller audiences Boullier mentions, the hardcore of fans prepared to pay a premium for a quality product. That's F1's TV model. It's what Sky's all about. And to be fair, those who consume Sky's F1 coverage are impressed with its efforts to justify the cost.

But the inevitable consequence of backing this horse will be a further drop in F1's overall audience. Casual viewers won't fork out high monthly subscription fees so will do something else with their time and money. Some will simply

be priced out of watching the sport they love.

The saving grace is that Sky Sports has pledged to offer the British Grand Prix for broadcast free of charge. Any arrangement with a free-to-air provider would also include showing

highlights of every race and qualifying session.

This is vitally important for F1's future. Sky has owned the TV rights to English football's Premier League since the inaugural season in 1992, but the beautiful game's popularity in this country remains underpinned by the BBC's long-running and much-loved *Match of the Day* highlights show, which is free-to-air — licence fee notwithstanding.

MotoGP is broadcast live via subscription by BT Sport, but highlights of every race on ITV4 ensure the majority of UK viewers can still follow the pinnacle of motorcycle racing unencumbered by extra financial commitment.

Cuts to public spending in the UK mean the BBC and its F1 coverage have paid the price. Channel 4 has thankfully ensured that the impact is not immediate.

Fans will have this new Sky deal to thank for a public service element of F1 broadcasting remaining in future. And F1 will also have this to thank if a short-term financial arrangement for the commercial rights holder does not ultimately kill off yet more of the dwindling audience that so concerns Bernie Ecclestone in the first place. 🏁

"The focus has to be on the hardcore prepared to pay a premium"

Toyota's fight to get back in front

After winning the championship in 2014, Toyota wasn't in the same league as Porsche or Audi last year. The all-new TSo50 HYBRID is designed to change that

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazza_sportscars](#)

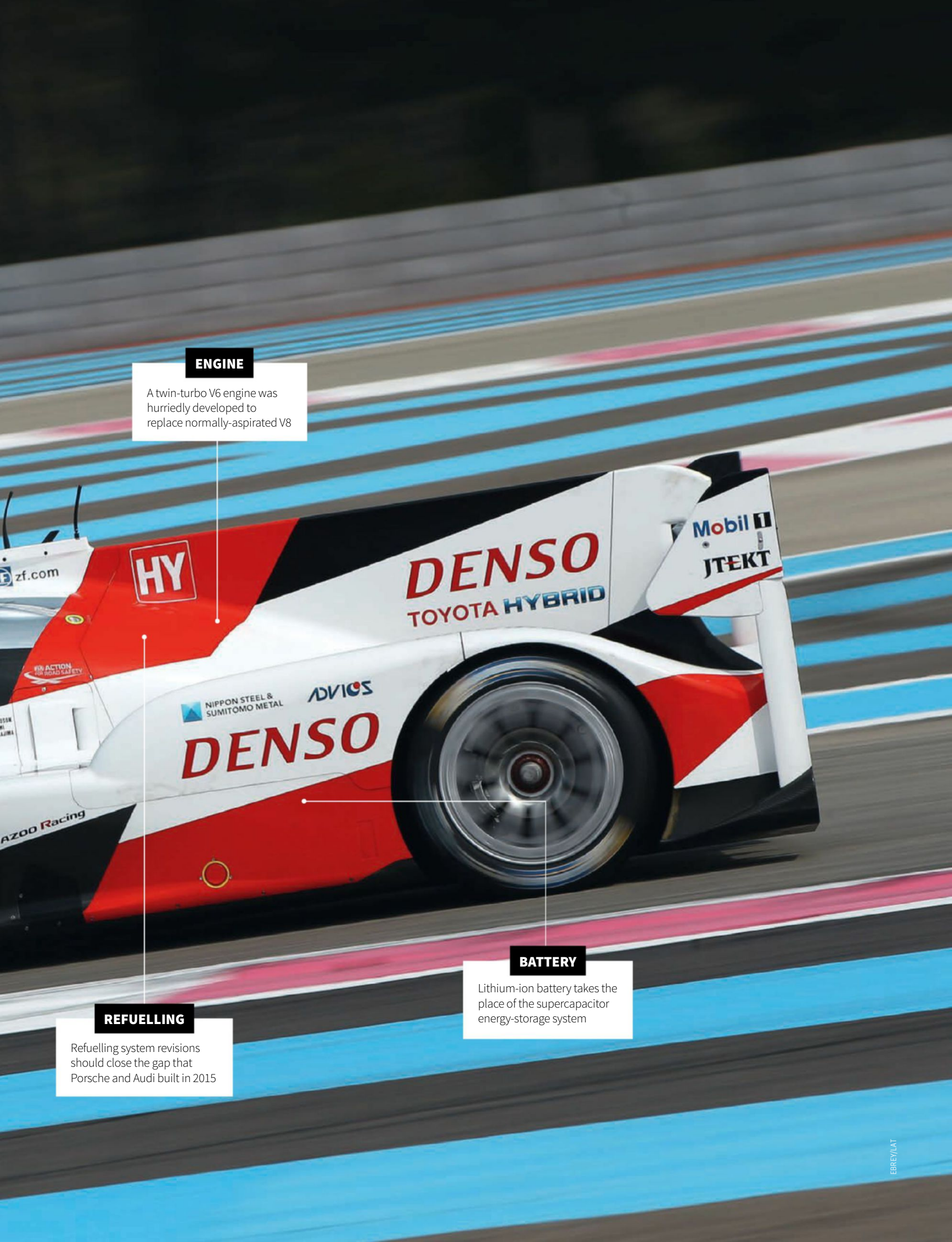
AERO

New raised-nose aero is the most efficient route to the downforce targets set

HYBRID CLASS

Toyota is now on a par with Porsche after moving into the 8MJ hybrid sub-class





ENGINE

A twin-turbo V6 engine was hurriedly developed to replace normally-aspirated V8

REFUELLING

Refuelling system revisions should close the gap that Porsche and Audi built in 2015

BATTERY

Lithium-ion battery takes the place of the supercapacitor energy-storage system



Toyota made a big decision at the beginning of last summer. But then it reckoned it didn't have a choice. Trowned by its rivals in the Spa World Endurance Championship round in May, it set in motion a wide-ranging review – and the result was unveiled last week in the shape of the all-new TS050 HYBRID, powered by a clean-sheet-of-paper turbocharged V6.

Big changes were already planned for 2016. A swap from the supercapacitor energy-storage system to the same lithium-ion battery technology with which Porsche won last year's WEC, combined with a move up in hybrid class from six to eight megajoules, was already in the works, but a new turbo engine to replace its 3.7-litre normally aspirated V8 was a further year down the line in the development road map. The events of Spa forced Toyota to bring forward the plan to introduce a turbocharged engine.

The lack of competitiveness of last year's uprated version of the 2014 championship-winning TS040 in Belgium prompted what Toyota Motorsport GmbH technical director Pascal Vasselon describes as a "global feasibility study to see how far we could go". The result was a decision in June to go down the turbocharging route.

"We have understood after Spa that we should have changed engine concepts for '15, because the development rate and the development potential of a turbo is a bit higher," explains Vasselon. "A turbo gives you peak efficiency in a much wider rpm range, in a much wider atmospheric pressure range and a much wider temperature range. Overall you operate at a higher average fuel efficiency over the course of a season."

Another factor was the reduction in fuel available to the factory LMP1 field for the coming season. The actual figure

(a 10MJ reduction, or approximately 7.5 percent), didn't arrive until after Toyota made its decision, which is why Vasselon describes it as a "consideration" but not "the driving factor".

He does concede, however, that "when you are targeting lean running and extremely good fuel efficiency, direct injection is a must". Toyota's new turbo does have direct injection, whereas its predecessor did not. Not that Toyota believes that it made the wrong choice for 2014, and not just because the old engine claimed both drivers' and manufacturers' titles.

"We were able to bring our V8 to a good efficiency level quicker than we would have a new engine," says Vasselon. "That was the big merit of our V8 at the time. We know that in 2014 we had the best efficiency. And the V8 had the beauty of being cheap and available."

Toyota – like its rivals – believes it has clawed back some of the engine performance that will be lost to the reduced fuel allocation for 2016. Vasselon won't put a figure on it, but says "we have recovered a significant percentage".

Toyota made its final decision to advance its plans for a new engine just after the Le Mans 24 Hours in June, according to Vasselon. He says that an announcement that it was already set on this route on the Friday before the 24 Hours was actually premature. "The real decision was right after Le Mans," he says.

Hisatake Murata, general manager of Toyota's motorsport development unit, argues that a V6 "achieves the best balance of power and efficiency" with the latest regulations. The 2.4-litre engine is of twin-turbo configuration, a least for the moment, for reasons concerning throttle response, centre of gravity and exhaust back pressure. The 90-degree vee angle was driven by the need to use the engine as a stressed member in the name of weight saving.

Vasselon also points out that it was a natural step for a manufacturer running a V8 to move to a V6 "in terms of the structural and packaging considerations".



The Toyota ran in high-downforce trim on the second day of testing

“I could feel what Porsche had last year”

ANTHONY DAVIDSON'S enthusiasm for the new Toyota TS050 HYBRID stretched to laughing in the car as he started his first flying lap in the machine at Paul Ricard early this year. He didn't yet have the new V6 twin-turbo behind him, but he was stunned by the the kick from the overhauled hybrid system.

“I could feel what Porsche had last year straight away,” says the 2014 WEC champion, who again shares his Toyota with Sebastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima this year. “I couldn't believe how much power there was. The difference really was laughable. It made

me fully understand the challenge we faced in 2015.

“Our comments as drivers to the engineers were that the competition could boost longer and stronger. Now that's exactly what we can do.

“It made me realise the sizeable challenge we all had in the car last year. We all made mistakes, and no wonder because we were trying to drive out of our skins to be anywhere near that kind of performance.”

Davidson reveals that he can feel an improvement in performance from both the move to the 8MJ class and the switch to

battery storage rather than a supercapacitor.

“I am convinced if we were running at 6MJ with the latest lithium-ion battery technology we would still gain a sizeable chunk,” he explains. “It is a more versatile system: it allows you to charge in a different way, store the energy in a different way and transport the energy in a different way.

“With the supercapacitor, we could get the energy in and out very quick, but we had a tiny storage size. Now we are filling this empty void of battery cells and we can then use that energy at will.”

“It was a natural step for a manufacturer running a V8 to move to a V6”

No engine existed at Toyota's Higashi-Fuji technical centre in Japan at the time of the decision. Yet Toyota had its first V6 twin-turbo up and running on the dyno by mid-September, according to Murata. “We've been very busy,” he says in a clear piece of understatement.

The new TS050 tested for the first time in early January, but not with the V6. The first two tests of the car, at Motorland in Spain and then Paul Ricard, were undertaken with the rear end of the TS040, engine and all, grafted onto the back of the new Toyota challenger. That was because the new Xtrac gearbox, a long-lead-time component required by the different torque characteristics and mounting points, was not ready.

“We still ran the old rear end in the first tests we did with the new car, because the new gearbox was not available,” explains TMG project leader John Litjens. “It was quite a compromise, but in the end it was important to get on track and testing the new hybrid parts.”

The switch to a turbo in June forced Litjens and his team back to the windtunnel courtesy of the different cooling requirements of turbocharging.

“We started in March and April with the first tests of the new car – in the windtunnel – but the real steps normally »



come in July and August. It didn't affect the base changes that we were looking for, which were triggered by getting the hybrid installation higher in the car."

The TSO50 has a higher nose than its predecessor, though nowhere near as extreme as the 2016 Audi R18 e-tron quattro. Toyota is further exploiting the flow of air through the car, as well as the front flap or winglet under the nose, in the name of efficiency with both its high and low-downforce configurations.

"In the beginning of the programme we looked at a traditional Le Mans-type splitter and an F1-style front, and it looked like for very low-downforce circuits that the former had an advantage," explains Litjens. "But over the years, and with the regulation changes that allow for the front flap, we have come to an open concept that works well for the low-downforce circuits as well."

He adds that it is "the more efficient route to a low-downforce target". And in 2016, the reduction of the available fuel has inevitably resulted in aero targets being revised downwards. A solution as extreme as Audi's, argues Litjens, "doesn't bring that much extra".

Toyota has three aero configurations – the maximum now allowed by the regulations – planned for 2016. It tested its Le Mans-spec bodywork for the first day of last week's official pre-season WEC test at Ricard, before the car was converted to the specification in which it will race in the series opener at Silverstone on April 17. A third spec will then come on stream for the resumption of the WEC post-Le Mans at the Nurburgring at the end of July.

The biggest challenges, says Litjens, were packaging a more powerful and there larger hybrid system and meeting the weight targets: "You have to find new ways of saving weight; it was certainly a challenge to hit 875kg [the new minimum that incorporates the weight of the onboard camera] with the time that we had."

An eventual switch from the supercapacitor energy storage system to a high-voltage lithium-ion battery developed in-house at Toyota was always on the cards for this season. It seriously evaluated making the move for '14, having monitored the technology since the start of its WEC programme in 2012.

"We have seen the development curve of batteries, which gave the indication that it would very quickly cross that of the supercapacitor," explains Vasselon. "We always knew that we would have to handle the switch at some point."

The battery has the advantage that it is more flexible in how it can store and deliver energy.

"You can store energy and deliver it whenever you want: you can give a couple of big boosts if you need, whereas with the supercapacitor we were forced to give several small boosts,"

Toyota has a new livery, as well as a new car for 2016



EBREVILAT





EBREY/LAT



Last year's Toyota was off the pace of Porsche and Audi

“Toyota has retained the twin-axle energy recovery system, or KERS, of the TS040”

explains Vasselon, who points out that the advantage of the move to a battery will be at its least significant at Le Mans, where seven mini-boosts are required. Toyota has retained the twin-axle energy recovery system or KERS of the TS040. Murata points out that recovering kinetic energy “is for free”, but using exhaust gases to drive a turbine comes with a penalty on engine performance in terms of increased back-pressure.

Vasselon says that Toyota’s simulations conclude that a traditional KERS has a higher energy density – the energy on offer for a given weight – than an exhaust turbine. “Heavier but you get more performance out of it,” is how he puts it.

Porsche made significant play of the greater flexibility of its hybrid system compared with those of its rivals last season. That flexibility came from both battery storage and having two systems that can retrieve in different ways and at different times. Vasselon doesn’t foresee a downside here for Toyota. “I will not go into detail,” he says, “but we can make it flexible.”

Another development for 2016 is revised refuelling, a reaction to the new systems Porsche and then Audi brought on stream at Le Mans and Fuji last year. Vasselon won’t say what Toyota has done – just as its rivals haven’t – but he believes that the trick that they found has been identified.

Toyota revealed that it had completed more than 22,000km ahead of the official WEC test at Paul Ricard last week, though the first two of its four tests were completed with the old engine and rear end. And that distance has been covered without major problems.

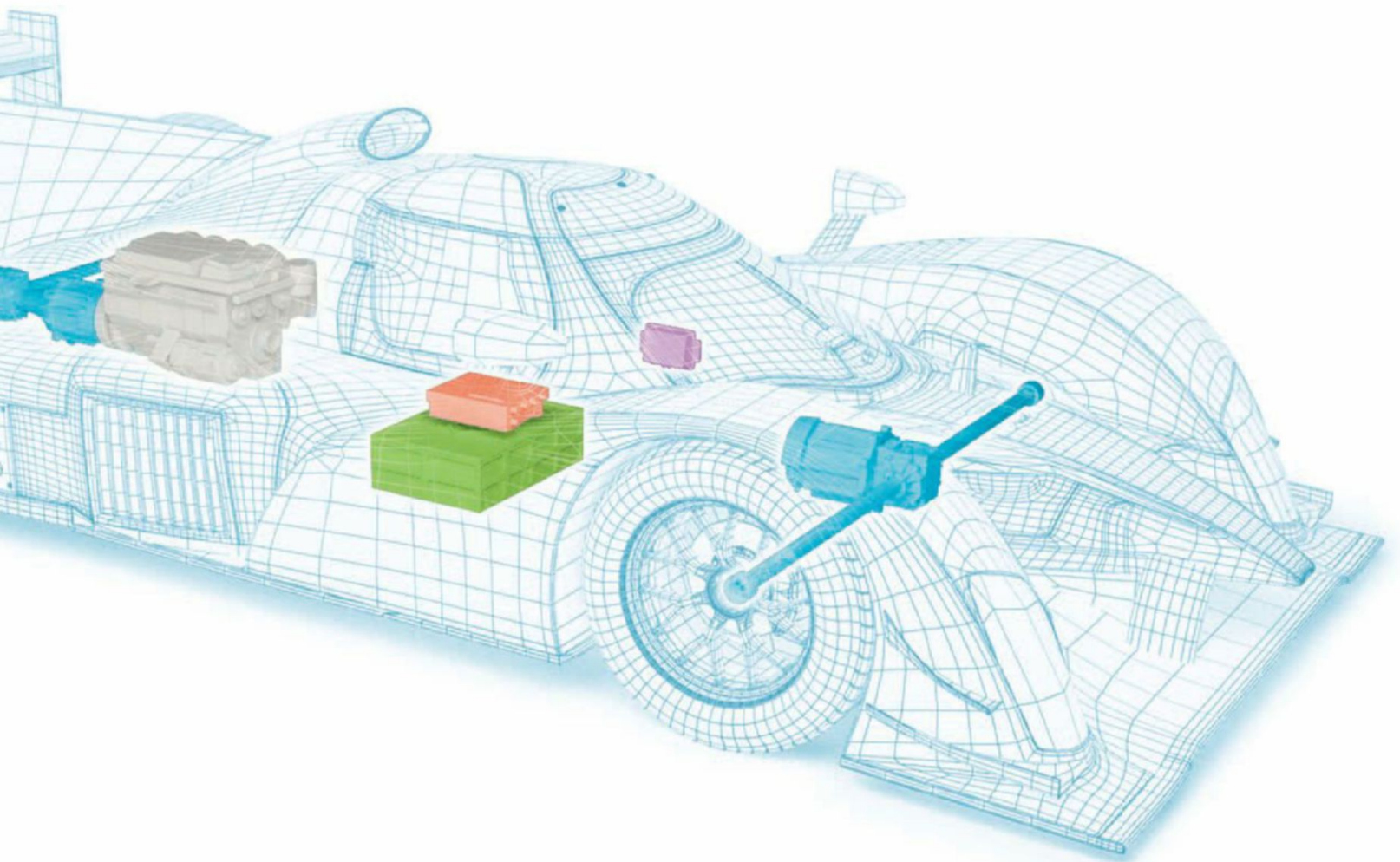
“We have had small issues that could be fixed from one session to another, but nothing fundamental,” he says. “We have not had issues affecting long-lead parts, so no gearbox or engine issues, things we would struggle to fix before Le Mans. It has been tight but we are coming back to a normal schedule.

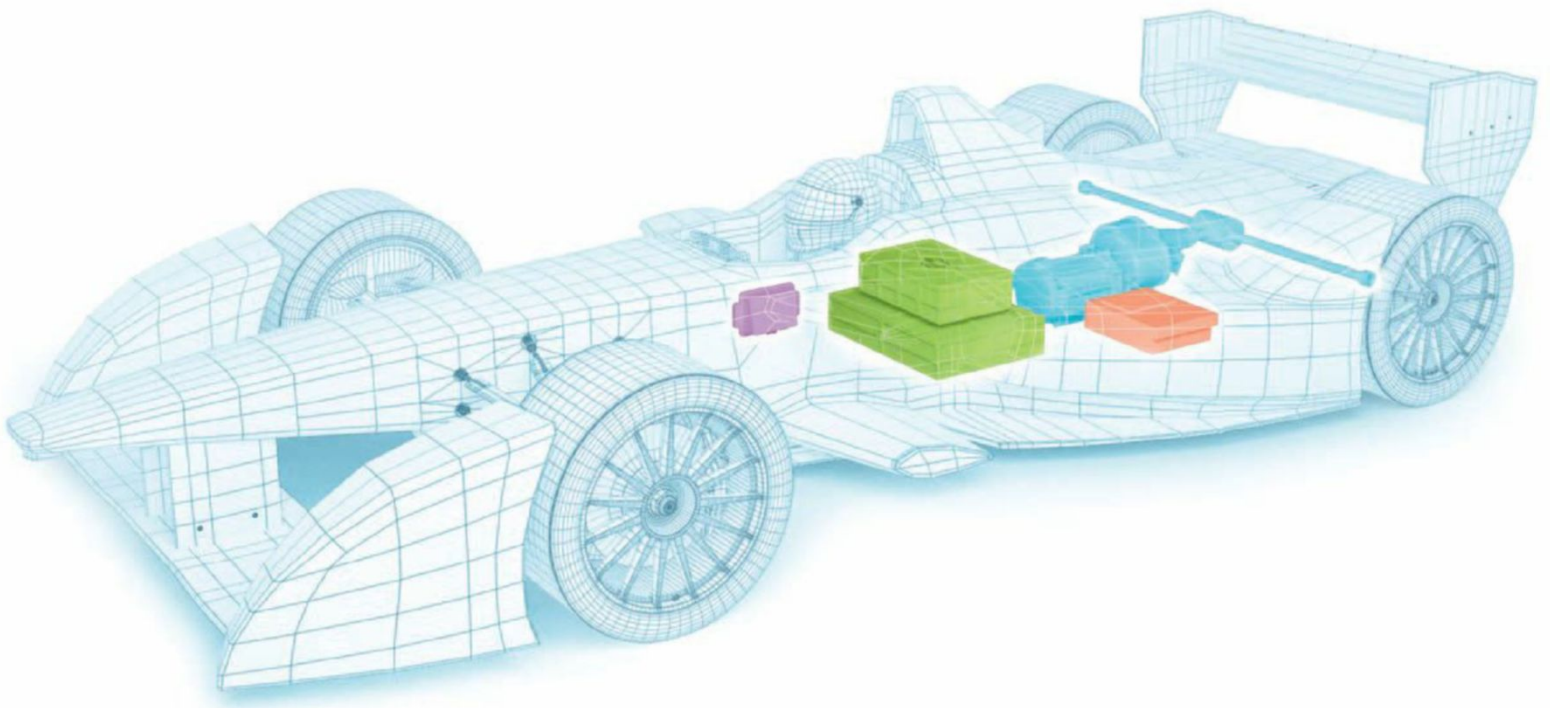
The results of last week’s Ricard test, the so-called WEC ‘prologue’, were inconclusive, just as they have been in the past. The characteristics of the Silverstone circuit layout mean next month’s opening WEC round might not offer the pointers for which the watching world is looking as the championship heads for Le Mans.

It will be round two at Spa, the race at which Toyota’s annus horribilis really began in 2015, when a true picture of this year’s WEC will begin to emerge. Only then will it become clear whether Toyota’s root-and-branch overhaul will be enough. ✱

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Subaru's bid to conquer the BTCC

After coming so close to winning last year's championship, Team BMR is back with a headline-grabbing new car

By Matt James, BTCC Correspondent

 @autosport



The British Touring Car Championship Honda was right at the top of its game last season, as was Gordon Shedden. Four race victories formed the foundations of a title-winning campaign, despite an extremely rushed build-up to its season with the late-on-parade Civic Type-R.

This year the new works-backed Subaru Levorg, which will be run by Team BMR, has pushed the boundaries even further.

The first of its four cars didn't even run during the championship's official pre-season test session at Donington Park last week. So drivers Jason Plato, Colin Turkington, James Cole and Warren Scott will be taking a huge leap into the unknown when the field rolls on to the Brands Hatch Indy circuit on Saturday morning for the opening free-practice session of the season.

Teething worries aside, Subaru has definitely caused a stir by deciding to join the UK's tin-top entry list, with most of the focus on the build-up to the championship centred on the new machine. BMR had the budget to go racing this season, but wanted the input from a leading brand, and that's how the link-up with Subaru came about.

Both BMR chief designer Carl Faux and Plato, who had worked together previously at Triple Eight, had seen the potential in the Subaru range's layout and were itching to get going with a project. Indeed, Plato says that all the while he was tied in to his factory deal with MG, he had his fingers crossed that no other operation would spot the manufacturer's potential.

Subaru managing director Paul Tunnickcliffe, a club racer himself, explains his reasons for the manufacturer's decision to commit to the programme for three years.

He says: "In the past I've been approached by privateer motorsport teams looking for us to get involved, but the answer has inevitably been no.

"Over the latter part of the season I was contacted by Jason and my initial reaction was 'thanks but no thanks' because I do a bit of motorsport myself and so I'm aware of what kind of budget is involved in touring cars.

"But when the team said it had its budget in place and just needed some support with cars, it began to make a lot of sense."

Tunnickcliffe says that BMR's original plan was to base the campaign around the WRX model, but he wanted a slightly different approach.

"It would have been easy for Subaru to follow the lead of Ford and Honda and enter with its performance model, but that's not really what we're about," he says.

"SUVs and estates dominate our sales these days, and that's what we need to publicise. We suggested the Levorg instead. They took a road car away, drove it, analysed it and came back to us to say they believed it would work well.

"Being involved with the BTCC is a terrifically low-cost way to get the kind of television exposure that would normally cost us much, much more. I've been delighted with the reaction since we announced the deal and everyone seems very excited about having the Levorg in the championship."

Plato, who was the prime mover behind the relationship, is enthusiastic about Subaru's commitment to the project and thinks it could create a whole new group of trackside fans.

"We are in a lovely situation because I have been a fan of Subaru since the early days," he says. "I was really good friends with [former Subaru World Rally Championship driver] Richard Burns — we were virtually next-door neighbours in Oxford — and through him I got to know Colin McRae.

"I understand probably more than most what the heritage of Subaru is and the power of the brand, and for us to be entrusted with their future — the new Levorg race car project — and take it forward is special. We have something very precious in our hands and we have to protect it.

"We all know how many fans that brand has got and they're motorsport fans. Rallying is motorsport, and so is the BTCC, so they can potentially be our fans too and that's an exciting thing. This is going to be an amazing journey."

The car was tested in private at the Millbrook Proving Ground in the latter part of last week, but the preparations for the opening meeting have been seriously stunted. This is only one of a number of hurdles that the Team BMR crew had to overcome to get the ball rolling on the project.

Four-wheel-drive cars are outlawed under the current BTCC regulations, so a special amendment was needed. This was agreed by all the teams towards the end of last season and allows BMR to run the car in two-wheel-drive configuration. The rule tweak dictates that if the original positioning of the powerplant in the road model is transverse, then the car must have two driven wheels at the front. If it's longitudinal, then the car must have rear-wheel drive.

It is, but Plato knows there is still work to be done: "There are some fundamental things about this new car which will be a challenge. While Carl, the team and I understand touring cars, how the cars work and how the suspension works, the Levorg is going to be a very different beast than anything we've had before."

The key reason the rear-wheel-drive machine is going to be such a challenge, and a long way from the experience that the brains trust within the team has built up over decades,

is the configuration of the engine.

It's a flat-four, which is something that hasn't been used before in the modern BTCC. While the centre-line of the crank is in a mandated place, the rest of the metalwork for the block is on a horizontal plane.

That means there's no high-up weight, unlike

the other cars running an in-line four-cylinder engine. That should give the Subaru a centre-of-gravity advantage.

But with that comes problems — especially as the team has yet to properly run the car.

Faux says: "The engines have all been run on the dyno, but none of the drivers has felt how that power delivery comes in. Also, on the dyno, we can't put any lateral forces on it so we haven't had the oil moving around in the sump. We need to make sure we have a good handle on oil control, and the heat generation under the bonnet is going to be quite big."

The two-litre turbocharged engine, which will be tuned by Mountune, is also going to present another challenge. It's had to be imported from Japan as the specific unit used within the BTCC car is not available on the UK range.

"The engine has never been developed into a race unit before, so we are breaking new ground," adds Faux. "The whole packaging around it is really tight. Also, the power isn't quite where we want it to be at the moment in terms of output. It's not class-leading yet, but it will get there."

Faux says that when the original plan to run the WRX model was put on the backburner in favour of the Levorg, he had to readjust his thinking: "We had done all our research around the WRX and didn't think about the Levorg. I hadn't even looked at the numbers, but when Subaru suggested it, it was clear it was going to be an amazing racing car.

"It simply had to be rear-wheel drive. Look at the difficulties Honda had perfecting the Civic Tourer it ran in 2014. It is a hard thing to get right and the dynamics of the car would have made it extremely tough for us to have made it work. »

"Plato had kept his fingers crossed that no one else would spot the Subaru's potential"





TEAM BMR
SUBARU LEVORG GT

WARREN SCOTT

AGE	44
RACES	74
POINTS	43
DEBUT	2013

COLIN TURKINGTON

AGE	34
RACES	305
POINTS	2474
DEBUT	2002

JAMES COLE

AGE	27
RACES	60
POINTS	48
DEBUT	2013



JASON PLATO
AGE 48
RACES 484
POINTS 4411
DEBUT 1997



“Once we realised we could run this as rear-wheel drive, it was all-systems go.”

Despite the issues, there’s genuine excitement surrounding the Subaru project. The raft of mandated parts in the championship – including subframes, suspension and steering – means that the underpinnings of the car will be similar to the rest of the pack.

However, the supplier for those parts this year has changed from GPRM to RML, which means there are a number of teams up and down the pitlane scratching their heads as they try to extract the most from the reworked set-ups. That’s a problem that won’t affect BMR so substantially because it’s starting with a blank sheet of paper. It’s a small positive.

Allied to that, BMR has already got on top of the handling of the Subaru in ways that don’t involve track running.

“We’ve got fairly good simulation tools and we hope we’ll be somewhere in the ballpark with the set-up we already have on the car,” says Faux. “We have a complete mathematical model of the car and we can run it round circuits.

“It has a virtual driver, with the benefit that he doesn’t make mistakes and is always consistent. That means we should be in a good place from the get-go.”

So while the team is confident of the set-up being strong and the engine providing a key advantage, the vital thing for the engineers to get right is reliability. Although there are 30 rounds of the BTCC, a driver has to bank a solid amount of points at each one otherwise they’ll be out of the title hunt.

This is where Faux and Plato differ. The former treads the typically pessimistic path of an engineer and designer.

“We need to be on the top step of the podium fairly consistently in the second half of the year,” says Faux. “Having Jason and Colin on the driving strength will help. They will get everything they can from the car – they are the best on the grid.

“There are only a couple of people that can get anywhere near them, and they consistently prove that. Jason has gone in to the last round of the championship in with a shout of the crown for the last 10 years. He’s good. We need to put the package together to win the championships.”

While Faux is vague, Plato is raring to get going and has a strong message for his rivals.

“I will put my neck on the line and say we will be winning races before halfway though the season. If I don’t win the championship, I will be pissed off. The title is in the crosshairs. We might fall short, but we are going for it.”

Plato was pipped to last year’s championship. He’s aiming to go one better in 2016

MOTORBASE PERFORMANCE
 FORD FOCUS


ANDREW JORDAN
 AGE 26
 RACES 238
 POINTS 1740
 DEBUT 2008



MAT JACKSON
 AGE 34
 RACES 274
 POINTS 1910
 DEBUT 2007



MICHAEL EPPS
 AGE 24
 RACES 0
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT N/A



CHRIS SMILEY
 AGE 23
 RACES 0
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT N/A



JAKE HILL
 AGE 22
 RACES 9
 POINTS 8
 DEBUT 2013



ALEX MARTIN
 AGE 28
 RACES 24
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT 2015

HONDA (TEAM DYNAMICS)
 HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R


MATT NEAL
 AGE 49
 RACES 575
 POINTS 3688
 DEBUT 1991



GORDON SHEDDEN
 AGE 37
 RACES 287
 POINTS 2544
 DEBUT 2006



ANDY NEATE
 AGE 41
 RACES 99
 POINTS 101
 BEST FINISH 6TH



MARTIN DEPPER
 AGE 47
 RACES 77
 POINTS 67
 DEBUT 2010



JEFF SMITH
 AGE 50
 RACES 113
 POINTS 339
 DEBUT 2010



JACK GOFF
 AGE 25
 RACES 86
 POINTS 427
 DEBUT 2013

WELCH
 MOTORSPORT
 PROTON PERSONA


DAN WELCH
 AGE 33
 RACES 111
 POINTS 110
 DEBUT 2011



MARK HOWARD
 AGE 51
 RACES 0
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT N/A



ARON SMITH
 AGE 26
 RACES 121
 POINTS 816
 DEBUT 2011



OLLIE JACKSON
 AGE 31
 RACES 86
 POINTS 93
 DEBUT 2011



HUNTER ABBOTT
 AGE 35
 RACES 56
 POINTS 43
 DEBUT 2014



KELVIN FLETCHER
 AGE 32
 RACES 0
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT N/A

SPEEDWORKS MOTORSPORT
 TOYOTA AVENSIS + HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R


TOM INGRAM
 AGE 22
 RACES 60
 POINTS 294
 DEBUT 2014



MATT SIMPSON
 AGE 34
 RACES 0
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT N/A



ROB AUSTIN
 AGE 35
 RACES 136
 POINTS 569
 DEBUT 2011



STEWART LINES
 AGE 52
 RACES 30
 POINTS 0
 DEBUT 2015

HANDY
 MOTORSPORT
 TOYOTA AVENSIS

MAXIMUM
 MOTORSPORT
 FORD FOCUS

BTCC 2016 kicks off
 at Brands Hatch
 this weekend



**CICELEY
RACING**
MERCEDES A-CLASS



ADAM MORGAN
AGE 27
RACES 118
POINTS 733
DEBUT 2012

**LASER TOOLS
RACING**
MERCEDES A-CLASS



AIDEN MOFFAT
AGE 19
RACES 63
POINTS 86
DEBUT 2013

WSR
BMW 125i M SPORT



ROB COLLARD
AGE 47
RACES 385
POINTS 1782
DEBUT 2000



SAM TORDOFF
AGE 26
RACES 93
POINTS 812
DEBUT 2010

MG (TRIPLE EIGHT)
MG6 GT



JOSH COOK
AGE 24
RACES 30
POINTS 97
DEBUT 2015

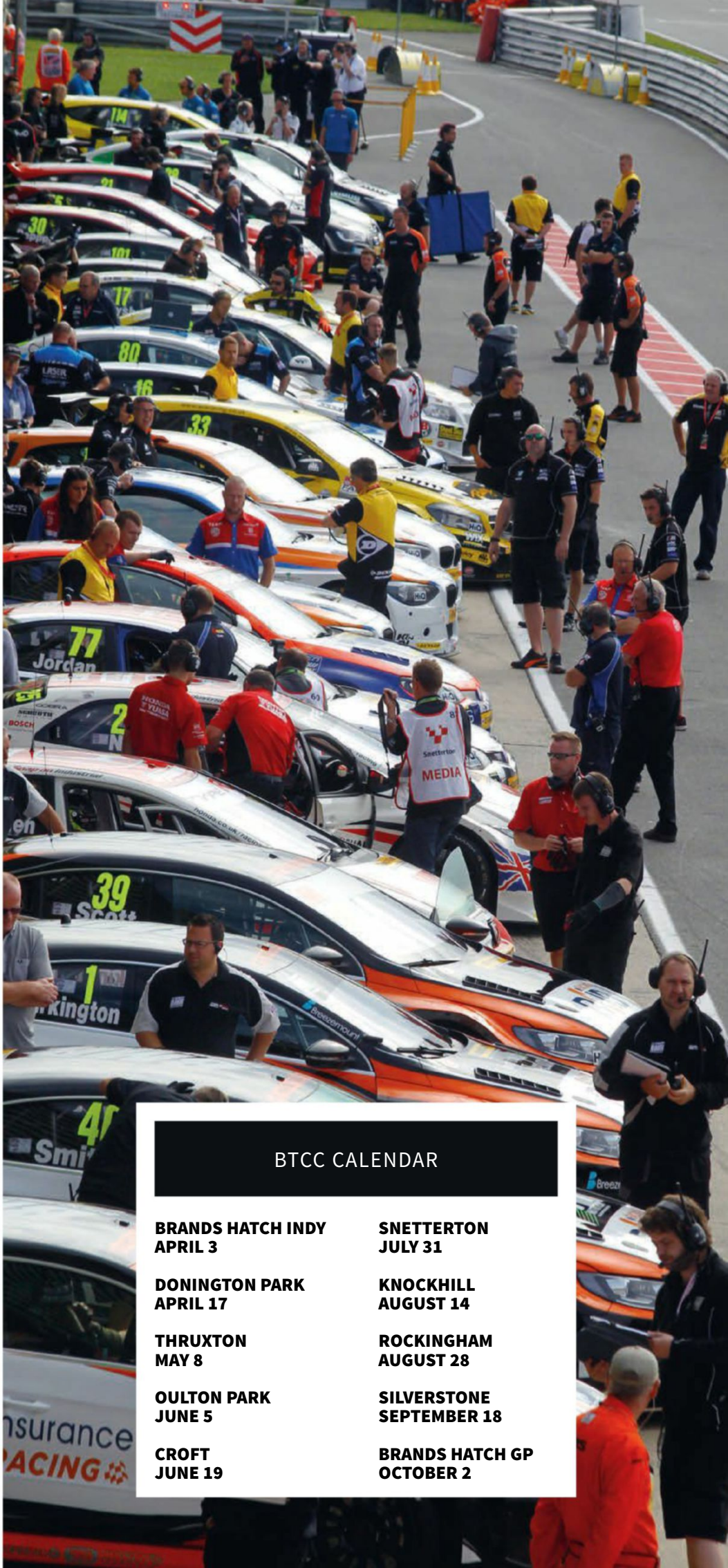


ASHLEY SUTTON
AGE 22
RACES 0
POINTS 0
DEBUT N/A



EBREY

EBREY/LAT



BTCC CALENDAR

BRANDS HATCH INDY
APRIL 3

DONINGTON PARK
APRIL 17

THRUXTON
MAY 8

OULTON PARK
JUNE 5

CROFT
JUNE 19

SNETTERTON
JULY 31

KNOCKHILL
AUGUST 14

ROCKINGHAM
AUGUST 28

SILVERSTONE
SEPTEMBER 18

BRANDS HATCH GP
OCTOBER 2

Can George slay the F3 dragon?

The new Hitech Grand Prix squad is going all-out to defeat dominant Prema Powerteam in European F3, starting this weekend at Paul Ricard. Leading the charge is George Russell, and he believes he can do it

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

🐦 @MarcusSimmons54



George Russell is adamant. “I’m 100 per cent sure I wouldn’t be doing Formula 3 if Hitech wasn’t here,” he proclaims. And so, for the sake of the F3 European Championship, it’s crucial that Russell’s new team, Hitech Grand Prix, has burst in with grand plans to upset the domination of Prema Powerteam, the Italian organisation that has run the past five champions at this level.

That’s because, amid plummeting grids, F3 has haemorrhaged much of its brightest talent from 2015 to GP3. Partially that’s because many drivers and their fathers and managers believe it’s pointless to try to compete against the omnipotence of Prema. Whether you agree with that viewpoint or not it makes 2016 F3’s rebuilding season, one during which it is vital that there is a challenge to Prema.

Barring a surprise performance from any of the other contenders, most pundits reckon this year’s championship – which kicks off at Paul Ricard this weekend – will boil down to a battle between Russell and the Prema juggernaut of Lance Stroll, Nick Cassidy, Maxi Gunther and Ralf Aron.

So what is it about the Silverstone-based Hitech, formed only a year ago and still with only two race weekends under its belt, that has prompted 18-year-old Russell to throw in his lot here, rather than remain at his old team Carlin or switch to, say, Van Amersfoort Racing?

Put simply, it’s a wannabe Prema Mk2. With the all-star engineering cast it’s assembled, you have to say that, if Hitech GP was a band, it would be a ’70s prog-rock supergroup and

“It’s Hitech’s first season but it’s up to the standard of any single-seater team I know”

its debut full season would be released in a gatefold sleeve. Sizeable investment from fertiliser magnate and Russian political player Dmitry Mazepin, father of racer Nikita, has enabled Hitech director Oliver Oakes and day-to-day team boss David Hayle (founder of the old, but entirely separate, Hitech Racing team) almost free rein.

As a statement of intent, Hitech recruited former Prema tech director John McGill, and at the same time formed an engineering partnership with AOTech, the company part-founded by Frederic Vasseur and umbilically linked to Vasseur’s ART Grand Prix – which dominated F3 before Prema did. The well-respected Paul Woodhams, formerly of Fortec’s Formula Renault 2.0 squad and Status Grand Prix’s GP3 team, is on Russell’s car.

“It’s Hitech’s first season, but everything so far is definitely up to the standard of any single-seater team I know – I don’t think I’ve seen any better,” says Russell. “Prema have been going for years and years, so they’ve got that advantage, but Hitech have a very, very good starting package.

“It’s great having AOTech on board. One of their people is engineering Ben [Barnicoat, who graduates from FR2.0 and joins Russell and Mazepin in the Hitech line-up], and I think we’ll be spending a bit of time over in Paris preparing before each race weekend with them. Their collaboration with ART has obviously been successful and what they do is a great – it’s a massive benefit, especially for a new team.”

But why not do the ‘easy’ thing and plug in as a Prema driver for 2016?

“I think that would have been a bit of a foolish move,” says Russell, “because if you’ve got the team owner’s son competing in the championship [Stroll’s father Lawrence is a big investor] »

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Russell spent his rookie F3 season with Carlin (right)...

...and now hooks up with Barnicoat and team boss David Hayle at Hitech (far right)



in Prema], and competing to win – and I’m obviously competing to win as well – then no matter what, even if he was driving faster, generally you’d always have doubts in the back of your mind. That’s just how it is. So I don’t think I would ever have considered Prema – not for this season anyway.”

The implication here is that Russell believes Prema’s hired guns Cassidy and, to a lesser extent, Gunther will be playing back-up to Stroll. Meanwhile, he has no such fears at Hitech about Mazepin, who as a rookie in 2016 will be aiming to learn – and benefit from Russell’s experience.

Hopefully everyone will fight it out freely, and if that’s the case then the battle between Russell and Stroll should be a close one – as it was when they were F3 rookies in 2015, when Russell initially had the upper hand. Off the back of claiming the BRDC Formula 4 title, the East Anglian had become the youngest-ever winner of the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award (he got his prize Formula 1 test with McLaren four months ago), forcing him to readjust his horizons and join Carlin. “F3 wasn’t really the idea for 2015 – it was a last-minute thing after such a successful end to the season,” he says.

Despite damaging the tub in a pre-season test crash at Pembrey, he bounced back and took a superb win in the Carlin spare on his debut F3 race weekend at Silverstone.

“I don’t know whether you can say it was a surprise or not, but it was incredible really,” recalls Russell. “The speed had been great and we thought the season was going to be a good one. Obviously Silverstone is one of my home tracks, so I think that favoured us, and on paper it’s one of Carlin’s strongest tracks, so I think all of that came into the equation.”

But Russell never repeated that win, and was only really in the frame twice more: at the Norisring, where he lost out in a manic scrap with Charles Leclerc and Alexander Albon, and at the Nurburgring, where 10-place grid penalties for an engine change ruined his weekend. Apart from those events, qualifying was a tad disappointing, and Russell lost out to Stroll in the fight for fifth in the points.

Carlin cars are mega in the cold at Silverstone, but the team has admitted it would like to carry out more testing with higher track temperatures to improve in the warmth. Put that to Russell, and he reckons the reasons for his qualifying ups-and-downs are more complex. “At the circuits where it was hotter we definitely did struggle,” he says, “but I think there were other reasons for that. I’d put that possibly down a bit more to coincidence.”

Ask Russell’s driver coach Robbie Kerr about the qualifying travails, and the 2002 British F3 champion isn’t giving much »

Rating the Formula 3 contenders

PREMA POWERTEAM

Lance Stroll (pictured) should lead the team’s attack. Not only is he quick, but the Williams F1 protege has the advantage of actually contesting all the races, something that team-mate Nick Cassidy won’t be doing because there is one date clash with his Super GT programme in Japan.

Maximilian Gunther should prove as rapid, while Italian Formula 4 champion Ralf Aron has tested impressively.

CARLIN

No obvious title contenders, and you’d probably look to Alessio Lorandi – a bit of a rough diamond in 2015 – as the likeliest to bag a win. Ryan Tveter and Raoul

Hyman need to switch their speed on consistently, while Peter Li will be happy to get in the points.

VAN AMERSFOORT

Similar story to Carlin. Callum Irott is brimming with talent and car-control, and with some polish could become a contender. Pedro Piquet will find Europe a big step from

Brazilian F3, and FRenault 2.0 ace Anthoine Hubert has limited mileage. Harrison Newey has the steepest learning curve of this quartet.

MUCKE MOTORSPORT

Mikkel Jensen was on Van Amersfoort’s shopping list before he ended up back at Mucke, where 2015 form suggests he could be snapping at the heels of the title chargers. The youthful David Beckmann has to wait until May, at Pau, for his debut, as he isn’t quite 16 years old yet.

MOTOPARK

Two Red Bull juniors and one from Ferrari! In the blue corner are Sergio Sette Camara and Niko Kari; the Brazilian looked very good last year, while Kari is the

reigning SMP F4 champion. In the red corner is the Italian F4 runner-up, China’s Guan Yu Zhou. Add in German F4 runner-up Joel Eriksson and Motopark could rack up podiums.

HITECH GRAND PRIX

Apart from Russell, the team should also show well with Ben Barnicoat as he steps up from FRenault 2.0, while Force India-affiliated Nikita Mazepin will strive to learn in 2016.

T-SPORT

The team from Brackley goes into 2016 with spirits high, as the very capable Arjun Maini – a protege of Karun Chandhok – drives the solo entry. The Tomei-built ThreeBond engine may well catch the opposition on the hop.



“Prema took charge and it was frustrating. The whole reason I’ve come to Hitech is to go and win the championship”



Russell has been impressed by the new Hitech operation

away. “You’ve got to have a look at the reasons behind what’s gone on in each qualifying session,” says Kerr. “It’s a case of working on all the areas to move things forward – going to each circuit, seeing how he’s tested, previous experience, and improving things.”

What was clear last year was Russell’s racecraft. On this score, he is arguably the closest to Max Verstappen of the current generation. Find Spa race three from last year on YouTube. Russell rises from 21st on the grid (unlucky when the red flag truncated the session on a drying track) to 11th by the exit of La Source. He then drops to 13th because two drivers running wet-weather tyres on a damp track come through, before a canny drive to third as the circuit dries out.

Kerr, who got to know Russell as the BRDC F4 driving-standards officer, points out: “It’s that natural feel of what’s going on, what’s underneath you and how the track is. He’s got that knowledge of what’s around him and makes the most of

the opportunities. Even if something silly happens behind, if someone makes a lunge, he’s already out of the way and trying to get the cutback – he’s thinking about the longer-term race. He knows where he was strong and weak last year and it’s a case of refining it. His strong points have been made stronger and his weak points have been worked on.”

One big help in this was Carlin’s 2015 lead driver Antonio Giovinazzi, nearly always up there even if his team-mates were struggling. “All year he drove absolutely excellent,” acknowledges Russell. “He was on it from day one and he was the benchmark for us in Carlin. Having him there did help me, just knowing that it can be done. It improved me as a driver.”

By the end of the season, Russell’s management was already in talks with Hitech, and straight after the finale at Hockenheim he was having a seat-fitting before a series of test sessions. Although Russell says the deal still wasn’t done with Hitech, Carlin pulled him from its Macau Grand Prix line-up. Gutted



at the time, Russell is more philosophical now: “Everything happens for a reason I think, and that was a good reason.”

Could that ‘good reason’ be the 2016 European title? It’ll be difficult.

“At the end of last season Prema took charge and it was a bit frustrating for everyone,” says Russell. “No one could really fight and it was tough. But the whole reason I’ve come to Hitech is to go and win the championship. On paper you’d say Stroll is the favourite — he finished highest up last year of the people who are doing the championship this year. Also you’ve got Gunther — he was strong at races last year with Mucke and when he went to Prema [for the finale] he was competitive, but I’m not sure how the roles will play out there; that was my doubt about Prema. Van Amersfoort have big backing too, and Callum [Ilott] was fast towards the end of last season — I’m sure he’ll be competitive.

“The grid is a lot less in number, but the quality is still there and it’s going to be as tough a season as it was last year.”

EURO F3 ENTRY LIST

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR
Lance Stroll (CDN)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
Nick Cassidy (NZ)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
Ralf Aron (EST)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
Maximilian Gunther (D)	Prema Powerteam	Dallara-Mercedes
Ryan Tveter (USA)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
Alessio Lorandi (I)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
Li Zhi Cong (PRC)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
Raoul Hyman (ZA)	Carlin	Dallara-Volkswagen
Pedro Piquet (BR)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
Callum Ilott (GB)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
Harrison Newey (GB)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
Anthoine Hubert (F)	Van Amersfoort Racing	Dallara-Mercedes
Mikkel Jensen (DK)	Mucke Motorsport	Dallara-Mercedes
David Beckmann (D)*	Mucke Motorsport	Dallara-Mercedes
Sergio Sette Camara (BR)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
Niko Kari (FIN)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
Joel Eriksson (S)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
Guan Yu Zhou (PRC)	Motopark	Dallara-Volkswagen
Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Hitech Grand Prix	Dallara-Mercedes
George Russell (GB)	Hitech Grand Prix	Dallara-Mercedes
Ben Barnicoat (GB)	Hitech Grand Prix	Dallara-Mercedes
Arjun Maini (IND)	T-Sport	Dallara-ThreeBond

*cannot contest first two rounds as too young

EURO F3 CALENDAR

PAUL RICARD (F)
APRIL 2-3

ZANDVOORT (NL)
JULY 16-17

HUNGARORING (H)
APRIL 23-24

SPA (B)
JULY 29-30

PAU (F)
MAY 14-15

NURBURGRING (D)
SEPTEMBER 10-11

RED BULL RING (A)
MAY 21-22

IMOLA (I)
OCTOBER 1-2

NORISRING (D)
JUNE 25-26

HOCKENHEIM (D)
OCTOBER 15-16

XPB IMAGES



Can Huff and Honda topple Citroen?

Rob Huff knows he has his best chance yet to win a second WTCC title as the 2016 series kicks off at Paul Ricard this weekend

By Jack Cozens, WTCC Correspondent

🐦 @JHCozens



Rob Huff's path from World Touring Car Championship winner with Chevrolet in 2012 to Honda works driver in 2016 has not been a straightforward one. Title success four years ago marked the end of Chevrolet's works programme, which left Huff without a drive for 2013. In stepped privateer Munnich Motorsport, leaving Huff to bide his time racing a SEAT Leon. He took two wins along the way, then moved to Lada for a couple of frustrating seasons of unfulfilled promise culminating in last year's winless campaign. But now comes the switch to Honda and the realistic chance of re-emerging as a title threat.

After Gabriele Tarquini was jettisoned by the Japanese manufacturer at the end of 2015, Huff was the obvious replacement, joining Tiago Monteiro and Norbert Michelisz in the expanded JAS Motorsport-run squad. He's considered a move to the team before, and raced a JAS-built Honda for West Coast Racing at Macau in the TCR International Series last year. No prizes for guessing what happened there, as he notched up an eighth victory at Macau. So it's no surprise

that Huff acclimatised quickly.

"I feel like I've fitted in really quite well," he says, as Michelisz motors past during testing at Vallelunga. "I've had to do the simple things like learning everyone's name, but it's hard work because there's 30 to 40 people. It's been really nice. I've been welcomed with open arms."

Honda's driver line-up might steal the headlines heading into this weekend's first round at Paul Ricard in the South of France, but the changes at JAS extend beyond that. Behind the scenes, team principal Alessandro Mariani has overseen an engineering revolution, with Duncan Laycock – Huff's former long-term race engineer at the RML-run works Chevrolet team – joining as technical director.

"Duncan and I have worked together for years," says Huff. "He was my data engineer at SEAT [during Huff's 2004 British Touring Car Championship season] and actually race-engineered me for two race weekends in the BTCC. Then we did eight years at Chevrolet together. I know him very well and it's great to have him here. It's a nice way to start a new adventure together."

The new recruits bring something fresh to JAS, but the challenge they face is to turn the Civic into a car that can



“The six-week break will give us a chance to bring new things to develop the car”

fight for the title. Citroen has steamrolled the competition since its arrival in 2014. Champion Jose Maria Lopez scored more than 100 points more than Monteiro and Tarquini managed between them last year, while Michelisz – then in a Zengo Motorsport Civic – secured the only non-Citroen ‘main-race’ pole position of the season at Motegi. Tom Chilton, now racing a Citroen for Sebastien Loeb Racing, is the only driver to have beaten all of the French manufacturer’s cars to the flag in a non-reversed-grid race, at Beijing’s Goldenport circuit in 2014, when he was driving a ROAL Chevrolet.

Despite its impending exit as a works squad at the end of the season, Citroen will remain the team to beat this year. Given the scale of the task, Huff accepts it will take time to close the gap.

“That’s where the fresh ideas from the engineering department will come in, certainly towards the second half of the year,” he says of the race to catch Citroen. “We believe we have found something over the winter that will improve the pace of the car – not only in qualifying but the race as well.

“Duncan is familiar with the Chevrolet, I’m familiar with the Lada and JAS are familiar with the Honda, and it’s been a case of taking the strong bits of what we know from each car and trying to combine them. We develop the whole time and are continually testing new parts, but from when the championship starts until the summer break there isn’t really much time anywhere to give us a lot of scope to work on any specific thing.

“It’s only when we have a six-week gap in the middle of the season where we will have a chance to bring new things to the car, and obviously that’s an opportunity for us again to close the gap.”

Huff is quick to point to 2017 as the time to mount a title bid thanks to Citroen’s absence. But the improvements »

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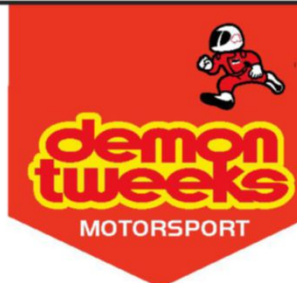
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Citroen quitting, but not giving up

SO FAR AHEAD OF THE game is Citroen in the World Touring Car Championship that it was able to announce its exit a year before its departure at the end of this season.

This year, its works entry is cut from four cars to two (resulting in the axeing of nine-time world rally champion Sebastien Loeb) and there are question marks over whether it can dominate again.

To call Loeb's exit acrimonious might be overstating things, but there was a certain hysteria surrounding the team's business at the 2015 finale in Qatar. And yet it seems to have had no negative effect on the team; it has simply gone about its business as usual.

There's no reason, then, to expect Citroen to be caught napping this season. The marque won 21 of 24 races last year and has

introduced a new aero package that it will continue to develop throughout the season – after all, its C-Elysees will stay on the grid as privateer entries next year. There has also been a focus on improving the stability of the car.

But, recognising the progress that

“We’ve raised the level of the series and everyone is pushing”

Citroen's rivals have made, champion Jose Maria Lopez expects a much closer fight among manufacturers this year.

“I think yes [it will be more challenging],” he says. “Especially as the competition has been growing since we started. We’ve raised the level of the series

and everyone has been pushing to catch up. Honda has made progress on the car and put Rob Huff and Michelisz in. With Volvo, we don't really know the level, but they've been developing for a while so I think it's going to be a good car.

“Lada will be strong as well; they have Valente, Tarquini and Catsburg, who is a great driver as well. This year is going to be really tough.”

For team principal Yves Matton, Honda's advances mark it out as his team's nearest rival.

“Honda made major changes during the winter to technical aspects and its driver line-up,” he says.

“I think they will be the number one to fight with us.

“It will be a really open championship, much more so than what we have had in the past.”



Huff (left) and Michelisz (centre) are both Honda works-team newcomers



Huff spent last year struggling in the Lada Vesta

XPB IMAGES

“I wouldn't be here if I didn't think I had a chance to win a world championship”

Honda has made, combined with the fact that the Citroen effort drops to two cars for Lopez and Yvan Muller, means a challenge is possible this year.

And while Citroen's interest in development may dwindle, there is no sign of that yet (see right). So Huff is not entertaining thoughts of a title tilt before the season starts, given the ease of Citroen's strolls to victory in 2014 and '15.

“It's so difficult to tell until we've done that first race weekend,” says Huff. “But I wouldn't be sitting here if I didn't think I had a chance of winning a world championship. I get out of bed in the morning because I want to win races and I want to win championships. We know the Citroen is very strong, and we know that with our fresh approach it's going to take a few races for everything to settle down.

“I think race wins are definitely on the cards. The main target as always will be to qualify genuinely on pole position and win that main race.”

Huff highlighting qualifying shows a particular understanding of where the car needs to improve. A Honda only made the final shootout stage of qualifying on four occasions last year, while Huff managed that feat just twice in his Lada Vesta.

“It's going to be difficult,” he continues. “But we're closing the gap all the time, we're working very hard – I hope they're not working too hard on improving their car, but obviously they are going to want to win three years in a row.”

Huff may well need to apply some pressure this year, >>

FLAMAND/DPPI





Newcomer Volvo
could spring a
surprise in 2016

“We’ve not really seen Lopez crack. Let’s put some pressure on him”

because it’s not just Honda that Citroen is having to look over its shoulder for. The pitwalls at Vallelunga are, like all others, brick thick, and the venue’s amphitheatric qualities mean that any chitter-chatter is quickly drowned out by the whirl of another car looping the final hairpin before flying along the pit straight. And yet above the engines, above the pitlane tinkering, a whisper can be heard more audibly than anything else. The word is that new entrant Volvo’s offering is reliable, and it has the speed to match.

Polestar will operate Volvo’s programme in the WTCC, and head of motorsport Alexander Murdzevski Schedvin has been keen to play down expectations since the project’s launch in October. But at dinner at Vallelunga a far more bullish Murdzevski Schedvin emerges, and it’s clear that he and Polestar are hungry for success.

“Obviously we didn’t do this just to be having coffee with this gentleman over there,” he says, pointing in the direction of Yves Matton, Citroen’s team principal. “We’re here to give everyone a headache and we are here to win the championship and bring it back to Sweden – otherwise we wouldn’t even bother doing it.”

There will also be competition for Huff from within the Honda stable. Monteiro knows his way around the car well and, while Michalisz doesn’t have the same international reputation as his two team-mates, he has a massive following in his native Hungary and four race wins to his name. So he has just as big a chance as Huff to shine on his move to the works team.

Factor in Lada, which has signed Tarquini and rapid Frenchman Hugo Valente to partner Nicky Catsburg in its three-car attack, as well as Chilton’s move to the Citroen satellite squad – a move the Briton hopes will yield his best placing in the WTCC – and there’s a real prospect for a competitive fight for honours. There’s plenty of reason not just to hope, but to expect a better show in 2016.

Huff is aware of the pressure on his shoulders to play his part in the narrative. Finally, he gives way. “I’d love nothing more than to believe that our car is going to be strong enough to win races and potentially win the championship,” he says. “I think if the three of us [Huff, Michalisz and Monteiro] work well together then there is an opportunity for that to happen.

“At the end of the day, I don’t think we’ve really seen Lopez crack at any point. Let’s see if we can put some pressure on him this year and make it happen.”

WTCC ENTRY LIST

DRIVER	TEAM	CAR
Jose Maria Lopez (RA)	Citroen Total	Citroen C-Elysee WTCC
Yvan Muller (F)	Citroen Total	Citroen C-Elysee WTCC
Tiago Monteiro (P)	Honda Racing Team	JAS Honda Civic WTCC
Norbert Michalisz (H)	Honda Racing Team	JAS Honda Civic WTCC
Rob Huff (GB)	Honda Racing Team	JAS Honda Civic WTCC
Gabriele Tarquini (I)	Lada Sport	Lada Vesta WTCC
Hugo Valente (F)	Lada Sport	Lada Vesta WTCC
Nicky Catsburg (NL)	Lada Sport	Lada Vesta WTCC
Fredrik Eklund (S)	Polestar Cyan Racing	Volvo S60 Polestar TC1
Thed Bjork (S)	Polestar Cyan Racing	Volvo S60 Polestar TC1
Tom Chilton (GB)	Sebastien Loeb Racing	Citroen C-Elysee WTCC
Gregoire Demoustier (F)	Sebastien Loeb Racing	Citroen C-Elysee WTCC
Mehdi Bennani (MA)	Sebastien Loeb Racing	Citroen C-Elysee WTCC
Tom Coronel (NL)	ROAL Motorsport	Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1
John Filippi (F)	Campos Racing	Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1
TBA	Campos Racing	Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1
Rene Munnich (D)	Munnich Motorsport	Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1
Ferenc Ficz (H)	Zengo Motorsport	Honda Civic WTCC
Daniel Nagy (H)	Zengo Motorsport	Honda Civic WTCC
John Bryant-Meisner (S)	Nika Racing	Chevrolet RML Cruze TC1

WTCC CALENDAR

PAUL RICARD (F)
APRIL 3

SLOVAKIA RING (SK)
APRIL 17

HUNGARORING (H)
APRIL 24

MARRAKESH (MA)
MAY 8

NURBURGRING (D)
MAY 28

MOSCOW RACEWAY (RUS)
JUNE 12

VILA REAL (P)
JUNE 26

RIO HONDO (RA)
AUGUST 7

MOTEGI (J)
SEPTEMBER 4

SHANGHAI (PRC)
SEPTEMBER 25

BURIRAM (T)
NOVEMBER 6

LOSAIL (Q)
NOVEMBER 25



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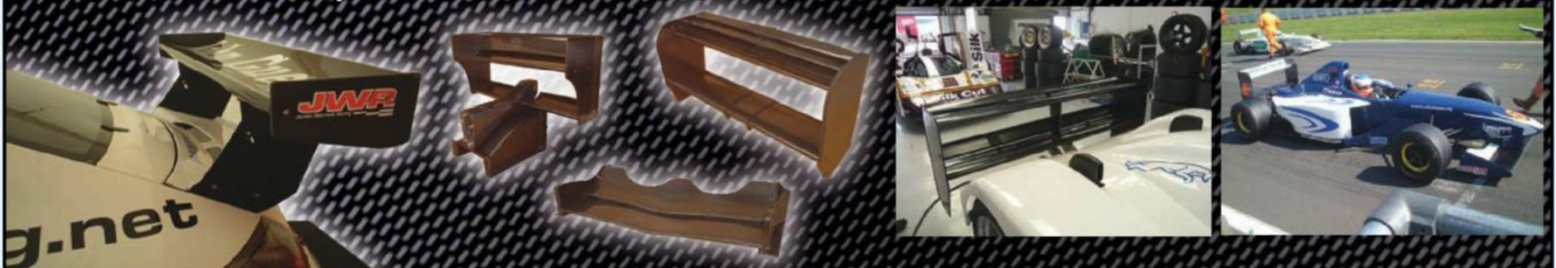
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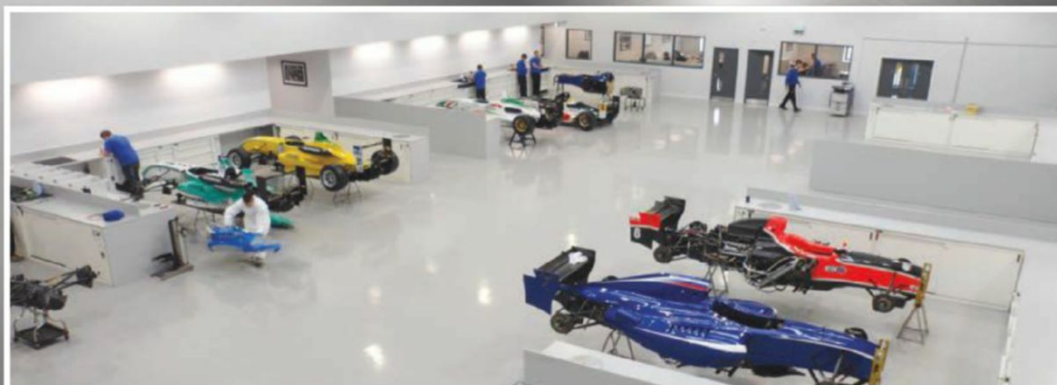
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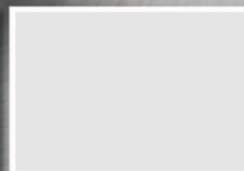
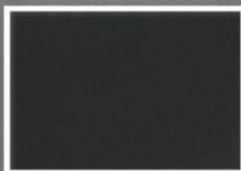


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F3 rebrand streamlines national ladder

THE FIRST ROUND OF BRITISH Formula 3 for 18 months took place at Snetterton last weekend after a late agreement that is set to align national formula championships in the UK.

Autosport previously reported (March 10) that such a move was likely after a recent meeting of the World Motor Sport Council paved the way for regional F3 championships to return.

A deal was struck between the FIA, MSA and MSV chief executive Jonathan Palmer to rebrand BRDC F4 in time for the series' curtain-raiser, with the category called BRDC British Formula 3.

The introduction of a new 230bhp Tatuus-Cosworth car puts the series close to existing F3 regulations and significantly faster than FIA F4 series.

"It's great for the championship – it's the right title for the performance of the car and for the competitiveness of the series," said Palmer. "Everybody involved in British motorsport knows how important British F3 has been and we are delighted to get it back."

Former F3 frontrunners Carlin, Fortec Motorsports and Double R all committed to the series after details of the new car were announced.

Palmer said that it would be important to learn lessons from the demise of the original British F3 series. Spiralling budgets put off drivers, with as few as five cars taking part in its 2014 swansong.

"We must make sure that the BRDC British F3 Championship keeps a very affordable budget and one that gives at least 20 cars on the grid," he said.

Charlie Kemp, team principal at HHC Motorsport – which took Will Palmer to the BRDC F4 title last year – believes the changes will allow for a more fluid national racing system.

"I think it's the right thing to do," he said of the decision to give the series F3 status. "It sets a clear ladder in the UK and, to some extent, in Europe. The more competitive a championship gets it's possible budgets might go up, but I don't think it will be a problem. The heritage British F3 has gives it a global draw."

Seven drivers have made the jump to BRDC F3 from MSA Formula this season, including Carlin's Lando Norris and Ricky Collard, who finished first and second respectively in MSA Formula last season, and Matheus Leist and Enaam Ahmed, who both scored victories in the TOCA support championship. Three of those four won at Snetterton last weekend.

The change in status also paves the way for MSA Formula to take up the F4 naming rights in the UK for this season, which would complete the streamlining of an often saturated junior single-seater ladder in the UK.

As Palmer had exclusive use of the F4 name with his BRDC-backed series, the British variant of FIA F4 ran under the name MSA Formula Certified by FIA, Powered by Ford EcoBoost in 2015.

This was officially rebranded in recent weeks to Ford MSA Formula, but *Autosport* understands that a change to hand MSA Formula the Formula 4 trademark in Britain is imminent.

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MSA

UK concussion rules set out

COMPETITORS IN BRITAIN WILL TEMPORARILY LOSE their race licence if diagnosed with concussion, as part of new safety framework devised by the MSA.

Autosport revealed last year that the MSA was evaluating a concussion directive, with the Motor Sports Council, Safety Advisory Panel and Medical Advisory Panel working with specialists from the Rugby Football Union to assess the need for new rules governing treatment of the injury.

It has now issued a new set of guidelines that restrict competition and activity for any drivers showing symptoms of concussion, including confusion, amnesia, headache and dizziness, after an accident.

The new rules state that any competitor diagnosed with concussion must not compete further in the meeting/event and that his/her licence be suspended and retained by the Clerk of the Course before being returned to the MSA's Medical Department.

Competitors will have to obtain formal medical clearance from their GP before their licence will be returned and

they can compete again.

The typical period of recovery is stated as between two to three weeks. If a driver suffers a repeat concussion within three months, they will need specialist referral to regain their licence.

BTCC driver Andrew Jordan suffered a concussion during qualifying for Snetterton in 2014. He raced on Sunday, but withdrew after the second encounter.

"As a driver you don't want to give up and that is what it would have felt like if I hadn't raced on the Sunday after my crash," he said. "But it was clear that something wasn't right and I had pushed too far."

"The competitive instinct is always there and you want to get behind the wheel no matter what, but you have to take into account the safety of others on the track. If you were to cause an accident in that situation and if affected another driver, it would be awful."

"On balance, I think it is good that they will introduce these checks – but I am sure drivers will complain!"

PCCGB

PORSCHE TITLE THE AIM FOR ZAMPARELLI

DINO ZAMPARELLI WILL again race in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this year with GT Marques.

The 23-year-old had a difficult rookie season in 2015 and struggled in the first half of the year with Parr Motorsport.

But a switch to GT Marques for the final four races proved successful when he took two wins at Silverstone.

"We ended last year on a high and that was what I wanted," said Zamparelli. "This year is really about continuing the job and proving that we can fight in the top three every race, not just those two races."

"[Having switched teams] we were up there fighting and that was key to me returning this year. I'm now excited to get going and am really looking forward to it."

Zamparelli ended up sixth in the standings in 2015, and was the only driver other than champion Dan Cammish to win more than once.

FORMULA 3

Leading BRDC British F3 teams eye expansion

THE THREE BRDC BRITISH Formula 3 teams that fielded two cars in the season opener at Snetterton last weekend are all considering running a third driver in future rounds.

Fortec Motorsports and

Lanan Racing both have a third car available, while Douglas Motorsport, which leads the drivers' standings with Enaam Ahmed, could buy an additional machine.

Fortec boss Richard Dutton said: "Hopefully we

will have three cars for the next round. We are talking to two or three drivers."

Lanan team principal Graham Johnson added: "We are looking for someone. We've won the title twice and Toby [Sowery]

running at the front showed what we can do."

Meanwhile, 19-year-old Sowery aims to contest the remainder of the BRDC British F3 season after bagging two podiums, if he can secure the budget.





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RGB

Mittell returns with new machine

REIGNING RGB CHAMPION SCOTT Mittell will attempt to defend his title in a new car designed by his family company.

The MC53 is the third car that Mittell Cars has produced and two will race in the 750 Motor Club category this year. Oliver Hewitt will drive the other for VR Motorsports.

There is a third one in build and the company aims to offer kit car packages for the MC53 in the future. Testing of the new car is now under way ahead of the first round of the series at Oulton Park on April 2.

“At the end of last year we won the championship but we had already started designing a new car,” said Mittell. “We’ve been working on it for 18 months. We’ve concentrated on the bodywork and were trying to improve the aerodynamics and downforce with less drag.

“We’ve completed a couple of tests and it seems to be doing everything we expect it to and it’s looking promising. We had a few small issues – we had a fuel pump problem – but you expect that with a new car.”

IN BRIEF



GT CHAMPION WILCOX SIGNS UP FOR CUP

Former British GT champion Adam Wilcox will compete in the GT Cup this year, sharing an Audi R8 LMS Ultra with Nigel Hudson. The pair made sporadic outings last season, and scored a podium at Oulton Park.

BRANDON GETS HARD VW CUP DRIVE

Multiple Mini Challenge race-winner Hamish Brandon will graduate to the Volkswagen Racing Cup this year with Team Hard. The Hawick-based Scotsman will handle a new-build Mk6 Golf GTi, having sold his R56 JCW Mini after three years in the Challenge.

RADICAL ACES TO RACE LIGIER P3 IN ELMS

Reigning Radical European Masters champions Terrence Woodward and Ross Kaiser will team up with James Swift for a campaign in the European Le Mans Series. The trio will race a Ligier JS P3 in the LMP3 class for the 360 Racing team.

BRITCAR CANCELS PRODUCTION RACE

The first round of the Britcar Production Championship last weekend was cancelled owing to its proximity to this weekend’s Creventic 24 Hours of Silverstone. This weekend’s Creventic race is open to touring cars and production saloons only, meaning entries were slow since teams opted to save their cars for the longer race.

TCR PICKS GRADUATE FOR CHALLENGE

Total Control Racing has added Dan Collinson to its Ginetta GT5 Challenge squad for this season. Collinson made his racing debut in last year’s Ginetta Racing Drivers’ Club series. Collinson joins Matt Chapman and Ian Robinson at the team.

SCORPIO TO SKIP OPENING ROUNDS

Scorpio Motorsport will not take part in the opening rounds of the Ford MSA Formula season but plans a two-car entry later in the year. The team has two drivers lined up for this season, but a combination of budget concerns and school commitments mean it is unable to start the year.



TRUCK RACING

Truck demo added to Motofest bill

THIS YEAR’S COVENTRY Motofest event will expand to feature a British Truck Racing display.

The event takes place on Jun 4-5 and runs high-speed demonstrations around the Coventry Ring Road, featuring a variety of national motorsport series, including

cars from the BTCC, Legends, Pickup Truck and drifting.

This year British Truck Racing Championship aces Stuart Oliver, Steve Thomas and Steve Powell will all run.

Oliver said: “We are looking forward to bringing along a selection of 1100bhp race truck to entertain,

demonstrate and display the high level of skill and professionalism involved in British Truck Racing.”

Motofest race director Darren Langeveld added: “Racing trucks are a spectacular sight in British motorsport. We believe they’ll be a real crowd pleaser.”

MG TROPHY

Returning Bray targets MG title



MULTIPLE MG TROPHY CHAMPION Chris Bray will return to the series this year after a one-year sabbatical.

Bray spent 2015 operating his Finishline UK team, but will return this year aiming for his fourth overall title, following on from his

successes in 2009, 2012 and ’14. He will race in the top ZR190 class.

Bray is hopeful that he will be able to fight for the championship and has targeted the second meeting of the year at Brands Hatch as the place he can begin his charge.



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Waterlogging off track ultimately prevented racing

SILVERSTONE 24 HOURS

BARWELL GT RACERS JOIN 24H M235i CUP

FOUR DRIVERS FROM British GT squad Barwell Motorsport will share a BMW M235i in the Silverstone 24 Hours.

Barwell team boss Mark Lemmer, Mark Poole, Richard Abra and Timur Sardarov will race one of the three-litre coupes for the Belgian JJ Motorsport team in this weekend's race. The car will run in the M235i Cup Class.

Lemmer won the saloon class of the race in 2005 in a Honda Accord, while Poole and Abra won the event outright in 2012 and 2013 in a BMW M3 GT and Aston Martin Vantage GT3 respectively.

The JJ team has a successful history with the M235i. Last year the outfit won the single-make Belgian M235i Racing Cup, and it also has a class win in the Zolder 24 Hours.

● The Silverstone 24 Hours has attracted the largest grid for almost a decade, with 45 crews signed up so far. The entry is the largest since the 2008 Britcar 24 Hours, which had a record 51-car field. The race will be run by Creventic for the first time.

CCRC

Combe meeting rained off

CASTLE COMBE'S TRADITIONAL EASTER MONDAY season-opening race meeting was abandoned without any on-track action taking place.

Storm Katie, which dominated the bank holiday weather nationwide, had inflicted the worst of its wrath overnight, leaving major flooding between Quarry and Old Paddock corners. More seriously, the track margins at the eastern end of the became waterlogged.

This marks the first time in the circuit's history – dating back more than six decades to 1950 – that a meeting has been called off owing to rain.

Mini Seven championship competitors, who were due to be on track first for qualifying at 0830, remained in the assembly area for three hours while marshals and the circuit crew endeavoured to make the circuit 'raceable' using a pump.

A statement from organiser Castle Combe Racing Club read: "It is with sincere regret that we have abandoned today's race meeting on safety grounds due to flood water on the track. Meeting abandoned at 1130 after valiant

efforts by circuit staff and marshals."

CCRC chairman Ken Davies added: "Ironically, the circuit was bone dry by 1145, but had a car gone off sideways or even straight on into the waterlogged grass we could not have guaranteed the safety of its driver or marshals. We had no option but to take the decision."

Former competitor Davies confirmed that while there was no leeway within Castle Combe's 11-day calendar to reschedule the event – set to celebrate the CCRC's 10th anniversary – an alternative date for the Mini Seven and Mini Miglia rounds has been tentatively agreed.

The lost races for the resident Formula Ford 1600, Saloon and GT championships will be made up with double-headers later in the season.

Spectators who had bought tickets in advance or on the gate have been offered full refunds.

While many Combe competitors are based within striking distance of the venue, Caterham Supersport racer Finlay Hutchison had travelled from Dundee in Scotland to take part in the event.

RADICAL CHALLENGE

Former World Superbike champion Guintoli makes racing debut

SYLVAIN GUINTOLI, THE 2014 World Superbike champion, took a podium finish on his car racing debut at Snetterton last weekend.

Guintoli, who also rode for Yamaha and Ducati in MotoGP in 2007-08, was seventh in Sunday's opening Radical Challenge race before retiring from the second. But the Frenchman and Radical test driver James Abbott saved their best until last, finishing second in the third race.

"I really enjoyed it, a totally new experience for me," said Guintoli, who is currently fifth in WSB. "I had done some track days in a Radical SR3, so it was logical that I should race one."

"I have to learn because I made a good start [and went from] 14th to sixth, but with the cold tyres I crashed on the first lap [of race two]."

Abbott started the SR3 in the longer final race, and handed over to Guintoli in second place, which Guintoli

successfully defended under enormous pressure and retained throughout the second half.

"James set it up for me and I was careful but didn't want to make a mistake. We had the pace and I just kept going and it worked for us to keep second," said Guintoli.

Although Guintoli's Superbike commitments restrict his availability, he hasn't ruled out further Radical outings this year.



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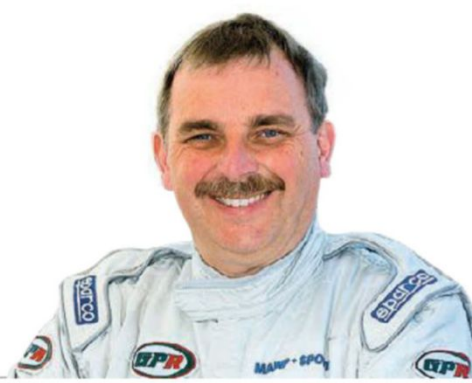


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What a difference a week makes

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@Autosport](#)

FIVE DAYS AFTER THE HUBBUB OF GOODWOOD'S exciting but bitterly cold 74th Members' Meeting had died down, tranquillity had descended when I returned, *en famille*, to show a Taiwanese house guest Chichester's 'Cathedral of Speed'. The paddock stalls were eerily empty, contractors were dismantling marquees and the Great Hall was anonymous again, ready to become 'Earls Court' for September's Revival. Oh, did I forget to mention that the day was sunny from dawn to dusk and 14C, shirtsleeves weather? Not even Goodwood can have it always!

Before then, Lord March's estate's motorsport focus will switch to the House and its Festival of Speed – the 24th annual edition – in June. Staged on a sinuous garden driveway, the grand hillclimb-based showcase has a very different feel to the race meetings. Presaged by the Moving Motor Show (which does what London's now flattened Earls Court did for the industry, albeit with high-octane action replacing epauletted commissionaires) FoS attracts an enormous audience with stars on parade – and accessible with patience.

'Full Throttle – The Endless Pursuit of Power' is this year's theme. Giving selectors almost limitless scope for entertainment, I can't wait to see how it intertwines with BMW's centenary in the hope that we will witness 1500bhp Brabham-BMW F1 turbocars, sensationally striped Junior Team Group 5 320is from 1977, F2 Marches, howling 450bhp M1 Procars and V12LMs.

For me the grassroots racing season I adore will have to wait for 750MC Oulton Park on Saturday, for Castle Combe's Easter Monday opener was flooded off when the drainage was overwhelmed. This didn't happen before the construction of the solar farm which dominates the centre of the circuit,

thus I fear it's no coincidence. Ten years ago the Castle Combe Racing Club took over the resident championships from BRSCC South West. All three race winners from March 25, 2006 – Pat Blakeney (FF1600), Louis Davidson (Special GTs) and Gary Prebble (Saloons) – are still active.

Talking of old-stagers, the past week was tinged with sadness, with the deaths of popular racer Roger Ealand and hillclimber John Forsyth, both of whom I was privileged to know well. Then, over the weekend, contact with Pete 'Rhubarb' Smith – who shared a Chevron B23 with my old Super Saloon Skoda and Formula 5000 pal John Turner – informed me of the sudden passing of Lotus Elan, Ginetta, Piper and Chevron racer Peter Creasey. All were in their early seventies.

Roger Ealand – on whose debonair appearance Peter Perfect in the *Wacky Races* cartoon series could have been modelled – and his Marcos-Volvo 1800GT were nigh-on invincible in the HSCC's Classic Sports Car championship, winning the title in 1981 and '84. In later years, having braved an F5000 McLaren M18, he returned to Australia, promoting the Speed of Tweed event and enjoying his Historic Formula Junior cars.

John Forsyth also split his time between competing and organising. A prime mover in Gurston Down and Wiscombe Park hillclimbs, with the BARC SW and Woolbridge MC respectively, John was a quiet achiever with a ready smile, gentle demeanour and wicked sense of humour. He generously shared his Chevron B47 and Mallock Mk24 with me in the Channel Islands' RAC British Hillclimb rounds before graduating to a Pilbeam-DFR MP58.

My thoughts are with both families and that of Creasey, whom I recall as a capable pilot of Chevrons run by the enthusiastic Worcestershire Racing Association. 🍷



NO ANNIVERSARY WALTZ FOR PREBBS

Ten years after he won Castle Combe Racing Club's first saloon car championship race, Gary Prebble's efforts to match his feat were thwarted on Monday when the meeting was cancelled because of flooding. He was among the favourites but 'Prebbs' will have to wait until April 16-17 to kick his programme off.



MALLOCK RETURNS TO MONACO

Ray Mallock will become the first family member to race at Monaco in 52 years when he contests the Formula Junior event in May's Grand Prix Historique in his early U2. Father Arthur raced in the first F3 GP there in 1964. "I will try not to emulate his feat of spinning up the steps of the Hotel de Paris," said Ray.



OULTON PARK KICK-OFF FOR RGB

A 34-strong entry for Saturday's opener at Oulton Park has underlined the status and value-for-money of the 750 Motor Club's Road Going Bike-engined [RGB] competition. Defending champion Scott Mittell and Oliver Hewitt in new Mittell MC53s will take on Jon Cutmore and Billy Albane in the latest Spires.


SNETTERTON

MSVR MARCH 27-28

British F3's return whips up a storm

AS STORM KATIE BATTERED THE UK, very different forces hit Snetterton. Three BRDC British Formula 3 drivers put in riproaring performances to devastate the opposition.

First, and most ferocious, was Storm Lando. To begin, Norris grabbed pole. Then he dealt the field a massive blow by ending the first lap of the race with a four-second lead. Next lap it was 7s. By the end, on a tricky wet track, the gap to Aleksanteri Huovinen was almost 20s, with Enaam Ahmed 28s back in third.

"The conditions were really tricky, there was a bit of oil down so it was very slippery," said Carlin driver Norris. "It was hard to push but I built a base and controlled the race. I couldn't have started in a better way."

However, like Katie, Storm Lando soon fizzled out. He got caught up in the fighting in the reversed-grid second

race and had to settle for sixth.

Instead it was Storm Matheus that was next to strike. Leist, driving for Double R, started race two from 10th. But he didn't stay there long.

By the end of the first lap he was fourth and as Enzo Bortoleto, Jan Jonck and Ahmed battled with each other he was able to pounce to take an unassailable lead on lap two.

"I don't know what happened [on the first lap] but this motivated me to go on and try to win," said Leist. Behind, Ahmed and Toby Sowery took advantage of new rubber to complete the podium.

Storm Matheus quickly lost momentum and was replaced by Storm Enaam — which had been brewing all weekend. The Douglas Motorsport driver made steady progress in each session, culminating in a brilliant race-three win.

He made an electrifying start from the

A fast start and a bold move at Riches launched Ahmed to race-three victory and an early points lead

front row to pass Lanan's poleman Sowery on the outside of Riches. From there he kept the chasing pack at bay. Sowery, Norris, Leist, Thomas Randle (Douglas) and Huovinen were all within three seconds of him at the finish.

"I made the same move on Enzo in the second race but it was a bit easier this time as I got a better start," beamed Ahmed. "I'm delighted to take my first win and now I've got to maintain that and try to take as many as I can."

His consistency paid dividends as three visits to the rostrum resulted in him leading the championship after the first round, seven clear of Norris.

Another driver expected to shine in the series, Ricky Collard, instead left under a dark cloud. Things started well for the Carlin driver as he was a close second to Norris in qualifying, but that proved to be the high point.

He made a poor start to the opener and ended up fourth. That soon became fifth after he was given a 3s penalty for nudging Sowery out of the way in his efforts to reclaim lost ground.

Then the heavens opened on him in race two as he was punted off by HHC driver Ben Hingeley, who was an impressive sixth in the opener from 14th. Hingeley was handed a 10-place penalty for the finale, in which Collard made some progress from the back.

As for the real winner, that was arguably Jonathan Palmer. He had three enthralling races to kick off his era with the F3 name he desired.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Norris blasts into an unassailable lead in the F3 opener, but his weekend peaked there





RESULTS

BRDC BRITISH FORMULA 3 (12 LAPS) 1 Lando

Norris (Carlin) 25m04.753s (85.23mph); 2 Aleksanteri Huovinen (Double R) +19.095s; 3 Enaam Ahmed (Douglas); 4 Toby Sowery (Lanan); 5 Ricky Collard (Carlin); 6 Ben Hingeley (HHC). **Fastest lap** Norris 2m01.988s (87.61mph). **Pole** Norris. **Starters** 21.

RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Matheus Leist (Double R)

20m01.628s (80.05mph); 2 Ahmed +1.421s; 3 Sowery; 4 Huovinen; 5 Sisa Ngebulana (HHC); 6 Norris.

FL Sowery 1m46.934s (88.26mph). **P** Enzo Bortoletto (Double R). **S** 21.

RACE 3 (10 LAPS) 1 Ahmed

17m53.859s (99.52mph); 2 Sowery +0.480s; 3 Norris; 4 Leist; 5 Thomas Randle (Douglas); 6 Huovinen.

FL Norris 1m45.768s (101.05mph). **P** Sowery. **S** 21.

RADICAL CHALLENGE (11 LAPS) 1 Steve Burgess

(SR3 RSX) 21m008.163s (92.70mph); 2 Tony Wells (SR3 RSX) +12.044s; 3 Brian Caudwell (SR3 RSX); 4 Mark Richards (SR3 RSX); 5 Jack Lang (SR3 RSX); 6 Martin Verity (SR3 RSX). **CW** Sylvain Guintoli (SR3 RSX); Andy Chittenden (SR1). **FL** Burgess 1m51.684s (95.69mph). **P** Bradley Smith (SR3 RSX) 1m57.252s (91.15mph). **S** 28.

RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Burgess 21m15.761s

(83.77mph); 2 Smith +0.076s; 3 Lang; 4 Brian Harvey (SR3 RS); 5 Wells; 6 Jason Rishover (SR3 RSX).

CW Smith; Matthew George (SR1). **FL** Burgess 2m02.972s (86.91mph). **P** Smith. **S** 26.

RACE 3 (21 LAPS) 1 Burgess 41m52.687s (89.32mph)

; 2 Abbott/Sylvain Guintoli +21.612s; 3 Richards; 4 Caudwell; 5 Lang; 6 Evgeny Klyucharerev/Smith. **CW** Abbott/Guintoli; George. **FL** Smith 1m53.097s (94.50mph). **P** Burgess. **S** 26.

RACING SALOONS (6 LAPS) 1 Stuart Waite (BMW

M3) 13m20.274s (80.13mph); 2 Karl Cattliff (BMW E36 M3) +1.801s; 3 Nigel Innes (BMW E36 M3); 4 Andy Baylie (VW Golf GTI); 5 Rodney Frost (Jaguar XJS); 6 Colin Philpott (Jaguar XJS). **CW** Frost; Stuart Wright (BMW E30 325); David Graves (BMW 320i). **FL** Waite 2m10.066s (82.17mph). **P** Waite 2m12.278s (80.80mph). **S** 29.

RACE 2 (7 LAPS) 1 Waite

17m05.092s (72.98mph); 2 Cattliff +6.499s; 3 Innes; 4 Baylie; 5 Stephen Pearson (BMW E36 M3); 6 Darren Stamp (BMW E36 M3). **CW** Philpott; Pete Cross (VW Corrado); Matthew Wileman (BMW 320).

FL Innes 2m18.390s (77.23mph). **P** Waite. **S** 30.

NIPPON CHALLENGE/DEUTSCHE MARQUE/

TRICOLORE (5 LAPS) 1 Richard Hockley (Honda

Civic) 14m37.877s (60.87mph); 2 Michael Hamlett (Honda Civic Type R) +9.857s; 3 Steve Cassar (Honda Integra); 4 David Payling (Honda Civic); 5 Don Hughes (Peugeot 306 S16); 6 Carl Chambers (Peugeot 306 Rallye). **CW** Hamlett; Cassar; Payling; Hughes; Peter Highton (Toyota MR2 Mk3); Roger Pullan (Audi A3); Paul Clothier (Renault Clio); Gerard Merriman (Citroen Saxo); Ashley Bruneau (Renault Clio). **FL** Hockley

2m39.012s (67.21mph). **P** Hockley. **S** 32.

RACE 2 (7 LAPS) 1 Hockley 16m35.587s (75.14mph)

; 2 Hughes +2.986s; 3 Chambers; 4 Cassar; 5 Payling; 6 Nick Gwinnett (Renault Clio 172). **CW** Hughes; Cassar; Payling; Robert Buckland (Renault Clio); Highton; Ryan Mone (Porsche 944); Bruneau. **FL** Hughes 2m16.496s (78.30mph). **P** Hockley. **S** 30.

MSVT TRACKDAY (14 LAPS) 1 Kester Cook

(Ford Fiesta) 43m29.893s (57.33mph); 2 Ryan Steel

(Citroen Saxo) +2.070s; 3 Darren Goes (SEAT Cup); 4 Jamie McHugh (Porsche 944 Turbo); 5 James Britton

(BMW M3); 6 Mark Penny (Vauxhall VX220). **CW** Steel; Penny; Tony Hobson/Tommy Sharp (Renault Clio);

Oliver O'Neill (Ford Fiesta). **FL** Steel 2m40.072s

(66.77mph). **P** Mark Flowe (BMW E46 M3) 2m12.895s

(80.42mph). **S** 39.

MR2 RACING SERIES (5 LAPS) 1 Adam Lockwood

14m17.827s (62.29mph); 2 Arron Pullan +0.486s;

3 David Hemingway; 4 Nathan Harrison; 5 Neale

Hurren; 6 Daniel Bryant. **FL** Pullan 2m47.400s

(63.85mph). **P** Lockwood 2m51.226s (62.42mph). **S** 22.

RACE 2 (7 LAPS) 1 Pullan 17m11.148s (72.55mph)

; 2 Hemingway +3.157s; 3 Lockwood; 4 Harrison;

5 Hurren; 6 Bryant. **FL** Pullan 2m25.212s (73.60mph).

P Lockwood. **S** 22.

PRODUCTION BMW (7 LAPS) 1 Matthew Swaffer

(320) 20m25.874s (61.03mph); 2 Harry Goodman

(320i) +5.267s; 3 David Graves (320i); 4 Gianluca

Maretto (320i); 5 Edd Giddings (320); 6 Ross Stoner

(320i). **FL** Giddings 2m48.105s (63.57mph). **P** Goodman

3m02.859s (58.44mph). **S** 28.

RACE 2 (7 LAPS) 1 Goodman 17m05.164s (72.98mph)

; 2 Swaffer +1.210s; 3 Graves; 4 Andy Strong (320i); 5 Giddings;

6 Cooper. **FL** Goodman 2m23.980s (74.23mph).

P Swaffer. **S** 26.

MOUNTNEY SUPERSERIES (8 LAPS) 1 James Raven

(Ray GR) 16m46.482s (84.95mph); 2 Jamie Thorburn

(Ray GR) +8.992s; 3 Chase Owen (Ray GR); 4 Henry

Chart (Van Diemen RF022); 5 Sebastian Melrose

(Ray GR14); 6 Simon Hadfield (Van Diemen FRF85).

FL Raven 2m03.973s (86.21mph). **P** Owen 2m10.847s

(81.68mph). **S** 12.

RACE 2 (8 LAPS) 1 Raven

16m42.591s (85.28mph); 2 Owen +0.070s; 3 Thorburn;

4 Charsley; 5 Liam Sullivan (Ray); 6 Hadfield. **FL** Owen

2m03.113s (86.81mph). **P** Raven. **S** 12.

MSVT TRACKDAY TROPHY (18 LAPS) 1 Dean Hyde

(BMW E30) 45m39.377s (70.22mph); 2 Ray Honeybone

(Ford Fiesta) +15.285s; 3 Neal Clarke/Gary Papworth

(Mini JCW); 4 David Hitchin (Renault Clio); 5 Alf Hyde

(Ford Fiesta ST); 6 Jamie Going/Mark Godfrey (Ford

Fiesta). **CW** Honeybone; Hitchin; Going/Godfrey; Teddy

Clark (Ford Puma); Paul Hatfield/Tristan Potkins (Ford

Puma). **FL** Papworth 2m20.165s (76.25mph). **P** Going/

Godfrey 2m42.651s (65.71mph). **S** 19.

F3 SUPPORTS ROUND-UP

STEVE BURGESS STOLE THE SHOW IN THE REVAMPED Radical Challenge Championship, claiming a clean sweep of wins in Saturday's trio of races. He teed off with a convincing drive in the opening race, overhauling fast-starting Brian Caudwell and gradually pulling away. Further back, Tony Wells advanced from his third-row start, picking off Brian Murphy and Caudwell in the closing laps to finish second.

Despite leading most of race two, Burgess's winning run looked to have ended when his race-long lead battle with Bradley Smith culminated in a dramatic last-corner collision. Smith had dived up the inside into Murrys, with the resulting contact leaving Burgess in a spin that consequently gave Smith the win. But a post-race time penalty dropped a contrite Smith back to second, handing Burgess top spot.

Burgess completed his hat-trick in the pitstop finale, well ahead of World Superbike ace Sylvain Guintoli, who took over from team-mate James Abbott to edge out Mark Richards and Caudwell for second.

The M3s of Stuart Waite, Karl Cattliff and Nigel Innes locked out the podium places in that order in both of the well-supported Racing Saloons bouts, while further back Rodney Frost and Colin Philpott took a win apiece in the well-fought Jaguar-class contests.

Once Sunday's midday downpours were over, the combined Nippon Challenge, Deutsche Marque and Tricolore field took to a sodden track for their opening race. After a brief safety car period thanks to a collision at Palmer, Richard Hockley's Civic pulled clear of Michael Hamlett's similar car to win. He made it a double in race two, while Hamlett's early exit allowed Don Hughes' 305 to take runner-up spot.

The Fiesta of Kester Cook clinched top spot in the first of two well-supported races for the MSVT Trackday Championship. Although James Britton (M3) sprinted from the second row to snatch the early initiative, his subsequent tumble down the order allowed Cook though to win, albeit narrowly just withstanding a late charge from Ryan Steel.

Having overtaken pole-sitter Adam Lockwood at the start of the opening MR2 race, Aaron Pullan looked in control. But he hit oil and slid off on the final lap, allowing Lockwood to steal victory.

Pullan bounced back in race two, overtaking Lockwood into the infield at the start before pulling steadily away for a convincing win. Meanwhile, Lockwood was chased by a determined David Hemingway, who slipped past on lap four and had just enough to stay ahead.

Matthew Swaffer surged into the lead in the opening moments of the Production BMW opener, pulling clear of pole-man Harry Goodman and David Graves. Behind them, a great drive from the back by Gianluca Maretto was rewarded with fourth. Title hopeful Matthew Wileman had a torrid time, finishing sixth from the back of the field despite spinning, only to be excluded.

Despite again building an early lead in race two, this time Swaffer was reeled in and passed by a determined Goodman, who claimed a well-deserved win.

After a terrible start James Raven quickly recovered to pass pole-sitter Chase Owen and win the first Formula Ford Super Series race. Raven was on pole for race two and held off late pressure from Owen to win again.

Dean Hyde put in a great performance to steer his rapid BMW E30 to victory in the Trackday Trophy enduro. Ray Honeybone's Clio just held off Steve Papworth's feisty Mini to claim second.

OLIVER TIMSON



Mills and Mickel steam Legends rivals

AFTER SIX HOTLY-CONTESTED races in the National Legends Cars Championship, Connor Mills and John Mickel emerged as the standout drivers.

Mills dominated on Sunday, claiming a hat-trick of wins to take maximum points from the first three rounds of the season. But Mickel hit back in Sunday's first two races with a brace of victories, the second after Mills hit a mechanical problem. Mills then bounced back with a dominant win in the final race.

Mills, last season's rookie champion, initially fought with Will Gibson at the front, before a mistake by Gibson left him trawling through the gravel trap at Paddock Hill. This handed the lead to Mills, who cruised to an imperious victory by a five-second margin despite a late safety car.

Chris Whiteman and Rod Birley shared the honours in the Quaife/Cannons Tin Top Championship in two hard-fought races. Arguably the star of the first race was Chris Bassett, who recovered from a first lap spin into McLaren to claim third, just two tenths of a second behind Birley. Whiteman, who took the lead heading into Clearways at the end of the second lap, held on to win the opening round.

After taking the lead on the outside line into Paddock during the second race, Whiteman spun his Civic heading through the left-hander at Surtees and could only recover to third. Birley eventually won after defending from Bassett in the latter stages of the race, having built an advantage following a safety car restart.

Birley won the first race of the weekend in the *Motorsport News* Saloon Car Championship. The Ford Escort WRC driver edged out Malcolm Wise. Dale

Gent sliced through the majority of the field in the second contest and posed the only serious threat of the weekend to Birley, but the two made contact heading into Paddock Hill Bend. Gent took a trip through the gravel, while Birley survived to make the perfect start to his title defence with victory.

Chris Brockhurst was declared the winner of the second Intermarque Championship race following a red flag as a result of cars off at Clearways and worsening conditions.

Malcolm Blackman won a thrilling earlier race. Lewis Smith took the lead on the opening lap but Blackman kept close and the pair established a three-second margin ahead of the rest of the field. Following a safety car restart due to incidents for Michael Thurley and Paul Adams, Smith closed to within three tenths of Blackman but was unable to make a move for the lead. Keith White managed to defend from Brockhurst to win the battle for third.

Ex-Ginetta racer Carl Boardley kicked off his campaign in the Pickup Truck Racing Championship with a faultless double victory. Freddie Lee was second in both contests. After Boardley claimed

Mills' (82) scrap with Gibson was one of Saturday's highlights

the first race of the day with a margin of over four seconds, the final race of the weekend proved a much more difficult challenge. The lead changed hands several times, but a move by Boardley at Druids ensured he won. Former British Touring Car Championship driver Lea Wood endured a mixed start to his first full campaign the series, retiring from the first race before recovering to take a strong fifth place.

The theme of double winners continued in the BARC Mini Trophy, with Paul Inch winning twice in Class A and Jamie White doing the same in Class B. A late mistake by Greg Jenkins allowed Inch through to claim the first contest, before a thrilling conclusion to the second and final race of the weekend.

Jamie Young made a mistake at Paddock Hill Bend and collected Stuart Coombs, whose Mini ended up on its side in the gravel trap. Inch escaped the incident unscathed and was declared the winner after the resulting red flag.

A move at half-distance during the first B-class event allowed White to defeat Scott Kendall. He beat Neven Kirkpatrick to win race two.

DAMIAN MEADEN

Blackman resisted Smith to clinch Intermarque R1 win



ALL PICS: HAWKINS

Usual suspects share spoils in soggy Truck encounters

ON A WEEKEND WHEN ADVERSE AND CHANGEABLE weather conditions led to disruption across Britain, the British Truck Racing Championship stormed into Brands Hatch to contest its opening meeting of the season in its brand new, 10-race format.

The new organiser of the series, Truck Sport UK, has divided the two classes into separate contests and any concerns that the revised race format would lead to a reduction in the quality of the racing were quickly allayed.

The five Class A races featured four different winners. After Mat Summerfield won the opener, which was red-flagged twice before a racing lap could be completed, Ryan Smith and David Jenkins joined him in taking to the top step of the podium. Stuart Oliver claimed two race wins and a further podium to cap a strong start to the championship.

Class B was dominated by the Smit family, with brothers Rody and Frans shared four of the five wins. Rody won the first two races and was promoted to victory in the third after Simon Cole was excluded for overspeeding.

Frans Smit then won the fourth contest before the two brothers clashed whilst fighting for victory in the final race, allowing Cole to come through.



RESULTS

LEGENDS CARS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP (10 LAPS)

1 Connor Mills 11m34.659s (62.60mph); 2 Jack Parker +3.026s; 3 Will Gibson; 4 John Mickel; 5 Guy Fastres; 6 Jean Michel Poncelet. **Fastest lap** Gibson 1m07.609s (64.31mph).

Pole Parker. Starters 22. RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Mills 11m26.515s (63.34mph); 2 Gibson +3.118s; 3 Mickel; 4 Jerome Farinaux; 5 Fastres; 6 Poncelet. **FL** Mills 1m07.336s (64.58mph). **P** Gibson. **S 22. RACE 3 (12 LAPS) 1 Mills 11m26.951s (75.96mph);** 2 Mickel +0.237s; 3 Stephen Whitelegg; 4 Rickie Leggatt; 5 Gibson; 6 Poncelet. **FL** Mickel 55.336s (78.58mph). **P** Whitelegg. **S 22. RACE 4 (8 LAPS) 1 Mickel 8m48.046s (65.88mph);** 2 Mills +0.413s; 3 Whitelegg; 4 Paul Simmons; 5 David Ward; 6 Poncelet. **FL** Mills 55.706s (78.06mph). **P** Mike Bourner. **S 21.**

RACE 5 (12 LAPS) 1 Mickel 12m55.533s (67.28mph); 2 Simmons +0.171s; 3 Leggatt; 4 Whitelegg; 5 Parker; 6 Poncelet. **FL** Mills 56.000s (77.65mph). **P** Gibson. **S 20.**

RACE 6 (14 LAPS) 1 Mills 20m47.431s (48.80mph); 2 Gibson +5.636s; 3 Mickel; 4 Whitelegg; 5 Poncelet; 6 Farinaux. **FL** Mills 1m04.038s (67.90mph). **P** Gibson. **S 20.**

QUAIFE/CANNONS TIN TOP CHAMPIONSHIP (16 LAPS) 1 Chris Whiteman (Honda Civic) 15m09.348s (76.51mph); 2 Rod Birley (Honda Integra) +13.041s; 3 Chris Bassett (Peugeot 205 Gti); 4 Peter Osbourne (Vauxhall Astra); 5 Graham Richardson (Honda Civic Type R); 6 Mikey Day (Citroen Saxo). **Class winners** Osbourne, Day, Clifford Pellin (Ford ST150). **FL** Whiteman 55.607s (78.20mph). **P** Birley (Honda Integra). **S 27. RACE 2 (12 LAPS) 1 Birley 15m37.299s (55.67mph);** 2 Bassett +0.577s; 3 Whiteman; 4 Osbourne; 5 Terence Searles (MG ZR160 1798); 6 Richardson. **CW** Osbourne, Day, Pellin. **FL** Whiteman 54.599s (79.70mph). **P** Whiteman. **S 27.**

MOTORSPORT NEWS SALOON CAR CHAMPIONSHIP (12 LAPS) 1 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC) 10m50.272s (80.24mph); 2 Malcolm Wise (Ford Escort Cosworth) +11.451s; 3 Stephen Dann (VW Golf); 4 Laurie Grant (BMW E36 M3); 5 Mark Cripps (E36 M3); 6 Graham Crowhurst (BMW E46 M3). **CW** Crowhurst, Grant, Andy Woods-Dean (Honda

Civic), Andy Pipe (Ford Escort Mk1). **FL** Birley 51.709s (84.09mph). **P** Dave Gent (Subaru Impreza). **S 22. RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Birley 15m52.103s (68.51mph);** 2 Danny Cowan (Ford RS500) +19.123s; 3 Wise; 4 Luke Reade (Mini Cooper S); 5 Grant; 6 Cripps. **CW** Tony Skelton (Renault Clio), Grant, Woods-Dean, Pipe. **FL** Dave Gent (Subaru Impreza) 49.461s (87.91mph). **P** Birley. **S 19.**

INTERMARQUE CHAMPIONSHIP (14 LAPS) 1 Malcolm Blackman (Vauxhall Tigra) 15m32.943s (65.25mph); 2 Lewis Smith (Tigra) +1.421s; 3 Keith White (BMW Z4); 4 Chris Brockhurst (Tigra); 5 Malcolm Harding (Tigra); 6 Richard Smith (Mercedes SLK). **FL** Blackman 49.539s (87.78mph). **P** Blackman. **S 20. RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Brockhurst 12m03.886s (59.26mph);** 2 L Smith +1.709s; 3 Blackman; 4 Harding; 5 R Smith (Mercedes SLK); 6 Daniel Smith (VW Corrado). **FL** Brockhurst 1m03.351s (68.64mph). **P** D Smith. **S 17.**

PICKUP TRUCK RACING CHAMPIONSHIP (20 LAPS) 1 Carl Boardley 18m12.897s (79.57mph); 2 Freddie Lee +4.217s; 3 Michael Smith; 4 David O'Regan; 5 Gavin Murray; 6 Mark Willis. **FL** Boardley 53.026s (82.00mph). **P** Paul Poulter. **S 17. RACE 2 (22 LAPS) 1 Boardley 21m52.189s (72.90mph);** 2 Lee +0.293s; 3 Paul Tompkins; 4 Mel Collins; 5 Lea Wood; 6 O'Regan. **FL** Boardley 52.251s (83.22mph). **P** Collins. **S 18.**

BARC MINI TROPHY GROUP A (19 LAPS) 1 Paul Inch 20m50.889s (66.05mph); 2 Stuart Coombs +0.283s; 3 Greg Jenkins; 4 Sam Tomlinson; 5 Morgan Harris; 6 Joshua Young. **FL** Coombs 1m04.613s (67.30mph). **P** Coombs. **S 13. RACE 2 (13 LAPS) 1 Inch 16m22.074s (57.56mph);** 2 Jenkins +8.281s; 3 Craig Pendlebury; 4 Penelope Jones; 5 Harris; 6 Ben Butler. **FL** Inch 1m13.599s (59.08mph). **P** P'bury. **S 13. GROUP B (20 LAPS) 1 Jamie White 20m14.846s (71.59mph);** 2 Scott Kendall +4.219s; 3 Neven Kirkpatrick; 4 Adrian Tuckley; 5 Ian Slark; 6 Mark Burnett. **FL** Kendall 59.825s (72.68mph). **P** Adrian Tuckley. **S 10. RACE 2 (17 LAPS) 1 White 20m54.601s (58.92mph);** 2 Kirkpatrick +4.202s; 3 Tuckley; 4 Burnett; 5 Steve Maxted; 6 Slark. **FL** White 1m07.987s (63.96mph). **P** Burnett. **S 10.**

BRITISH TRUCK RACING CHAMPIONSHIP CLASS A

(10 LAPS) 1 Mat Summerfield (MAN TGX) 12m00.647s (60.34mph); 2 Stuart Oliver (Volvo RH13) +0.693s; 3 Ryan Smith (MAN TGA); 4 David Jenkins (MAN TGX); 5 Luke Taylor (Renault Premium MKR); 6 Steven Thomas (MAN TGX). **FL** Summerfield 1m10.131s (62.00mph). **P** S Oliver. **S 13. RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 S Oliver 09m22.892s (69.52mph);** 2 Thomas +3.183s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Summerfield; 5 Smith; 6 Richard Collett (ERF ECX). **FL** S Oliver 1m01.106s (71.16mph). **P** Michael Oliver (Scania 12000). **S 13. RACE 3 (16 LAPS) 1 Smith 16m30.923s (70.21mph);** 2 Taylor +3.526s; 3 Summerfield; 4 S Oliver; 5 Jenkins; 6 Thomas. **FL** Shane Brereton (MAN TGA Euro 6) 1m00.360s (72.04mph). **P** M Oliver. **S 13. RACE 4 (16 LAPS) 1 Jenkins 16m11.821s (71.59mph);** 2 Brereton +1.936s; 3 Summerfield; 4 Thomas; 5 S Oliver; 6 Smith. **FL** Jenkins 59.748s (59.75mph). **P** Luke Garrett (Renault T Range). **S 13. RACE 5 (14 LAPS) 1 S Oliver 16m16.430s (62.35mph);** 2 Jenkins +4.588s; 3 Thomas; 4 Summerfield; 5 Cees Zandbergen (Scania T124); 6 Smith. **FL** Smith 1m07.661s (64.27mph). **P** David Smith (Sisu SL250). **S 13.**

BRITISH TRUCK RACING CHAMPIONSHIP - CLASS B (14 LAPS)

1 Rody Smit (Volvo F12) 17m21.630s (58.44mph); 2 Adam Bint (Volvo Aerodyne) +0.132s; 3 Frans Smit (Scania T112); 4 Simon Cole (Mercedes); 5 Brian Burt (Volvo White); 6 John Powell (Ford Cargo). **FL** Bint 1m12.747s (59.77mph). **P** F Smit (Scania T112). **S 9. RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 R Smit 16m46.875s (64.78mph);** 2 Cole +18.217s; 3 Bint; 4 John Bowler; 5 Powell; 6 Burt. **FL** R Smit, 1m05.371s (66.52mph). **P** Bowler. **S 7. RACE 3 (15 LAPS) 1 R Smit 16m15.644s (66.85mph);** 2 Powell +11.855s; 3 F Smit; 4 Bint; 5 Burt; 6 Trevor Martin (Scania). **FL** R Smit, 1m03.634s (68.33mph). **P** Burt. **S 8. RACE 4 (15 LAPS) 1 F Smit 16m05.286s (67.57mph);** 2 R.Smit +6.820s; 3 Cole; 4 Ryan Colson (Foden Alpha); 5 Martin; 6 Bint. **FL** Cole 1m03.269s (68.73mph). **P** Martin. **S 9. RACE 5 (14 LAPS) 1 Cole 16m39.011s (60.94mph);** 2 Burt +2.759s; 3 F Smit; 4 R Smit; 5 Bint; 6 Bowler. **FL** F Smit 1m08.210s (63.75mph). **P** Martin. **S 8.**



SILVERSTONE
BARC MARCH 26-27

Hanson and Moore win sodden Silverstone Britcar opener

TORRENTIAL RAIN CURTAILED THE season-opening Britcar Endurance race, handing Phil Hanson and Nigel Moore victory in an unpredictable event. The duo started 11th in their Audi R8, and were aided by a series of early incidents that eliminated the favourites.

Reigning champions Calum Lockie and David Mason took pole, but their Ferrari 458 GT3 was out on the first lap when Lockie crashed at Copse. This gave the lead to Adam Wilcox's Audi R8.

Glynn Geddie quickly moved ahead in his McLaren MP4-12C GT3, but the car, shared with father Jim, soon retired, consigned to the pits by electrical gremlins. Holding an early lead appeared to be a poisoned chalice, even when Javier Morcillo took over in the unfancied Mosler MT900.

Morcillo's lead looked comfortable, but threats loomed behind. Darren

Hanson/Moore
Audi R8 won rain-shortened opener

Nelson and Nigel Greensall's Lamborghini Huracan hurtled through the field after starting at the back of the grid to avoid collisions and shake the new car down. A sensible approach paid dividends as Nelson moved into podium contention before handing over to Greensall.

Ahead, the Mosler team, having avoided a penalty for Morcillo exceeding the 72-minute driving time limit, had a slow stop when handing over to Manuel Cintrano. This relegated the Mosler to third and handed the lead to Moore's Audi and second to the Lamborghini duo.

The race was brought to an end by a red flag with 30 minutes to go because of worsening weather conditions.

Kumho BMW Championship driver Michael Cutt revelled in the rain after his wet-tyre gamble rewarded him with the top step of the podium.

He built a strong lead after a great launch moved him from fourth to first, but the need to cool his tyres allowed James MacIntyre-Ure to close in.

The two were again rivals, along with Michael Vitulli, in the second race. The trio's battle was short-lived, though, as Tom Hibbert powered through to take victory ahead of Daniel Wylie. Hibbert then replicated this in the non-championship finale.

Both Caterham Graduates grids provided plenty of action, with the huge entry list split between the Mega, Super and Classic classes, and Sigmax and Sigmaz.

Glenn Burtenshaw took a simple

victory in the Sigmax and Sigma opener, while Scott Lawrence came out on top battling with Lee Bristow for the lead in Sigma and Sigmaz.

Bristow and Lawrence again battled on the sunnier Sunday, this time joined by Cedric Bloch and Dylan Stanley as part of a seven-car lead battle, before Bristow pulled away to win the finale.

The Mega, Classic and Super classes also proved lively. Four Sevens battled across the grand prix circuit before Luke Cooper darted past Oliver Gibson in the final laps for the honours.

In the Classic Formula Ford race Stuart Kestenbaum rolled his Crossle 16F after Adriano Medeiros and Mike Gardner tangled and caught him by surprise. Medeiros won, before the finale had the Brazilian battling with Gardner again.

This time they were joined by Daniel Eagling and the trio ran three-wide at Brooklands before Gardner edged ahead at the end.

The Clubmans didn't have the same wealth of contenders, but the rivalry of reigning champion Jamie Champkin and Philip Weaver stole the show.

Weaver took a routine win in the opening race, but Champkin hit back in the second. He was aided by Weaver's spin through Abbey, which forced the rest of the grid to hastily avoid a collision.

It was then a reverse of fortunes in the finale, with Champkin pulling off at Aintree with a mechanical issue to allow Weaver to storm to victory.

TOM ERRINGTON



RESULTS

BRITCAR (32 LAPS) 1 Phil Hanson/Nigel Moore (Audi R8 LMS) 1h27m04.425s (80.71mph); 2 Darren Nelson/Nigel Greensall (Lamborghini Huracan) +2m10.623s; 3 Manuel Cintrano/Javier Morcillo (Mosler MT900); 4 Nigel Hudson/Adam Wilcox (Audi R8 LMS); 5 Ian Lawson/Kevin Clarke (BMW Z4 GT3); 6 Jacob Mathiassen/Steve Fresle (Ginetta G55 GT3). **Class winners** Mathiassen/Fresle; Sam Allpass/Lee Atkins (BMW E46 GTR); Alyn James (Honda Civic Type R); Ian Heward/Michael Millard (Porsche 911 RSR).

Fastest lap Hanson/Moore 2m24.833s (90.98mph).

BMW CHAMPIONSHIP (ALL 8 LAPS) 1 Michael Cutt (M3 E36) 21m26.506s (81.94mph); 2 James MacIntyre-Ure (M3 E46) +0.549s; 3 Jason West (M3); 4 James Card (M3 E46). **CW** MacIntyre-Ure; Michael Vitulli (M3 CSL); Oliver Taylor (M3 E36); Paul Travers (328i); Colin Whitmore (M3 E36); James Ford (318i).

FL Card 2m29.765s (87.98mph). **RACE 2 1 Hibbert 22m10.303s (79.24mph);** 2 Daniel Wylie (M3 E46) +28.900s; 3 Kal Ezzat (M3); 4 Card. **CW** Wylie; Ezzat; Taylor; Whitmore; Travers; Ford. **FL** MacIntyre-Ure 2m40.937s (81.88mph). **RACE 3 1 Hibbert (M3 E36) 20m16.390s (86.66mph);** 2 Domenic Surdi (M3 E36) +16.915s; 3 Lucky Khera (M3 E49); 4 Lee Frost (M3). **CW** Surdi; Khera; Dack; Max Walton (318i). **FL** Hibbert 2m29.920s (87.89mph).

CATERHAM GRADUATES – SIGMA & SIGMAX (7 LAPS) 1 Scott Lawrence (Sigmax) 20m22.988s (75.42mph); 2 Lee Bristow (Sigmax) +0.616s; 3 Dylan Stanley (Sigmax); 4 Rowan Williams (Sigmax). **CW** David Webber (Sigma). **FL** Lawrence 2m53.174s (76.09mph). **RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Bristow 25m10.118s (87.26mph);** 2 Cedric Bloch (Sigmax) +0.184s; 3 Stanley; 4 Tristan Judge (Sigmax). **CW** Webber. **FL** Bloch 3m05.796s (70.92mph).

CATERHAM GRADUATES – MEGA, SUPER & CLASSIC (7 LAPS) 1 Glenn Burtenshaw (Mega) 21m17.405s (72.21mph); 2 Oliver Gibson (Mega) +4.667s; 3 Tom Hayman-Joyce (Super); 4 Andrew Molsom (Super); 5 Tom Overton (Mega); 6 Luke Cooper (Mega). **CW** Hayman-Joyce; Matthew Willoughby (Classic). **FL** Burtenshaw 3m00.111s (73.16mph). **RACE 2 (10 LAPS) 1 Cooper 25m45.898s (85.24mph);** 2 Gibson +0.327s; 3 Burtenshaw; 4 Ian Noble (Mega); 5 Roger Ford (Mega); 6 Declan Dolan (Mega). **CW** Molsom; Steven McMaster (Classic). **FL** Burtenshaw 2m32.397s (86.47mph).

CLASSIC FFORD (7 LAPS) 1 Adriano Medeiros (Van Diemen RF80) 17m04.772s (90.01mph); 2 Dan Eagling (VD RF77) +2.899s; 3 Benn Tilley (Merlyn Mk20); 4 John Village (Crosle 25F). **CW** Tilley. **FL** Medeiros 2m24.351s (91.28mph). **RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Gardner 22m06.773s (89.38mph);** 2 Eagling +0.380s; 3 Medeiros; 4 Village. **CW** Chris Stuart (Crosle 16F). **FL** Medeiros 2m25.329s.

CLUBMANS CHAMPIONSHIP (7 LAPS) 1 Philip Weaver (Nemesis) 22m50.3116s (67.31mph); 2 Alex Champkin (Vision V84) +0.727s; 3 Steve Everson (Mallock Mk27); 4 Steven Dickens (Mallock Mk29). **CW** Clive Wood (Mallock Mk23); Barry Webb (Delapena Mallock Mk16); Alan Cook (Mk16). **FL** Weaver 2m27.976s (89.05mph). **RACE 2 (9 LAPS) 1 Champkin 20m29.309s (96.47mph);** 2 Weaver +16.996s; 3 Dickens; 4 Wood. **CW** Wood; Webb; John Drinkwater (Messer Mk18). **FL** Ian Crombie (Mallock Mk28b) 2m12.928s (99.13mph). **RACE 3 (9 LAPS) 1 Weaver 20m02.289s (98.64mph);** 2 Ian Crombie (Mallock Mk28b) +43.522s; 3 Dickens; 4 Cook. **CW** Cook; Webb. **FL** Weaver 2m11.803s (99.96mph).



Heath starts defence with double

HAVING WON THE XR CHALLENGE FOR THE LAST two years, Michael Heath's XR2 continued to dominate with another double victory.

Steve Poole just had the edge into Old Hall from the start but, having ousted Heath from second on lap two, Ralph Fernihough had the lead two laps later. His advantage was shortlived as he spun off at Cascades on lap five. Poole was back in front but under tremendous pressure from Heath again, before they swapped once more into Old Hall.

With a lap to go, Poole had to pit with a broken throttle cable, leaving Heath well clear of Mark Buxton.

Heath also led from the start of race two, but Buxton charged ahead as they crested Deer Leap for the first time. They were side-by-side down the Avenue two laps later before Heath went back ahead into Cascades to secure his second win of the day.

Poole charged from the back of the grid and was third into Old Hall on lap four before successfully reeling in Buxton to take second as they completed the 10th lap. Roberts and Fernihough were next to challenge Buxton, settling in third and fourth from lap eight, while Buxton finally reclaimed fifth from Peter Lancaster on the last lap.

Ben Cater's Dallara led the first Monoposto race as far as Fosters on the eighth lap, when pressure from Tony Bishop finally told. David Gillett also demoted Cater, but a penalty for starting out of position dropped him back to third.

It was another Cater and Bishop duel in race two, with Bishop losing his early lead with a touch of the grass at Knickerbrook. Bishop's pursuit still threatened Cater until the chaser spun at Old Hall. Chris Davison surged through to take victory, with Peter Venn second and Cater just holding off Chris Hodgen for third.

Paul Taylor's Golf dominated the first VAG Trophy race, with Jason Tingle and Tommy Knight in second and third throughout. In the closer race two there was a four-car lead train by lap five, as Rob Allum, Darron Lewis and Alex Dziurzynski chased Toby Bearne's Golf hard.

Bearne ran wide over the kerbs at Fosters and that gave Allum the lead, but both Lewis and the recovering Bearne got by on the last lap.

Both Northern Saloons & Sports races were dominated by Joe Spencer's Locosaki.

With race one cancelled after two red flags in the Monoposto 1800, 1600 & Moto and race two starting with a third, the restart went to Jeremy Timms' Dallara after an early scrap with Richard Gittings.

PETER SCHERER

XR CHALLENGE (BOTH 11 LAPS) 1 Michael Heath (XR2) 15m21.025s (71.11mph); 2 Mark Buxton (XR2) +29.182s; 3 Justin Roberts (XR2); 4 Ben Atkinson (XR2); 5 Peter Lancaster (XR2); 6 Alistair May (XR2). **Class winner** Ron Loffstadt (XR3i). **Fastest lap** Heath 1m21.840s (72.75mph). **Pole** Steve Poole (XR2). **Starters 20. RACE 2 1 Heath 15m17.584s (71.38mph);** 2 Poole +5.042s; 3 Roberts; 4 Ralph Fernihough (XR2); 5 Buxton; 6 Lancaster. **CW** Lee Bowron (XR3i). **FL** Poole 1m21.390s (73.16mph). **P** Heath. **MONOPOSTO, F3, 2000 & 2000 CLASSIC (BOTH 14 LAPS) 1 Tony Bishop (Dallara F302/4) 15m44.020s (88.30mph);** 2 Ben Cater (Dallara F301) +9.764s; 3 David Gillett (Dallara F302/4); 4 Peter Venn (Dallara F301); 5 James Harris (Tatuus Formula Renault); 6 Chris Davison (Dallara F301). **CW** Robin Dawe (Vauxhall Lotus); Kevin Otway (Van Diemen F4). **FL** Bishop 1m04.024s (93.00mph). **P** Bishop. **S 23. RACE 2 1 Davison 15m00.954s (92.52mph);** 2 Venn +12.775s; 3 Cater; 4 Chris Hodgen (Dallara F304); 5 Bishop; 6 Neil Harrison (Dallara F302). **CW** Duncan Horlor (Van Diemen Comtec 04); Dawe. **FL** Davison 1m01.037s (97.55mph). **P** Cater. **S 22.**

VAG TROPHY (BOTH 13 LAPS) 1 Paul Taylor (Golf GTI) 15m44.169s (81.98mph); 2 Jason Tingle (Golf GTI) +12.030s; 3 Tommy Knight (Golf GTI); 4 Darron Lewis (Golf GTI); 5 Toby Bearne (Golf GTI); 6 Didge Dziurzynski (Scirocco). **CW** Simon Tomlinson (Golf Mk4). **FL** Darelle Wilson (Scirocco) 1m09.519s (85.65mph). **P** Taylor. **S 24. RACE 2 1 Lewis 15m02.951s (85.72mph);** 2 Bearne +0.134s; 3 Rob Allum (Golf GTI); 4 Tom Walker (Golf TFSI); 5 Dziurzynski; 6 Paul Ivens (Scirocco). **CW** Barrie Culley (Vento VR6). **FL** Ivens 1m07.149s (88.67mph). **P** Dziurzynski. **S 24.**

NORTHERN SALOONS & SPORTS (7 LAPS) 1 Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki) 8m14.843s (84.23mph); 2 Paul Brydon (BMW M3) +2.512s; 3 Bill Addison (Caterham Superlight R400); 4 Andrew Morrison (SEAT Leon Eurocup). **CW** Brydon; Andrew Kell (Ford Sierra XR4x4); Matthew Kirby (Caterham C400); Simon Sheridan (Renault Clio); Martin Whitehouse (BMW 328i); Derek Linley (Locost). **FL** Spencer 1m08.627s (86.76mph). **P** Brydon. **S 24. RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Spencer 16m15.460s (91.56mph);** 2 Brydon +32.657s; 3 Morrison; 4 Kirby. **CW** Brydon; Kirby; Kell; Whitehouse; Steve Kirton (Vauxhall Corsa); Simon Mayne (Arion 52). **FL** Spencer 1m02.755s (94.88mph). **P** Brydon. **S 25.**

JMT MONOPOSTO 1800, 1600 & MOTO (10 LAPS)

1 Jeremy Timms (Dallara F399) 9m55.212s (100.03mph); 2 Richard Gittings (Jedi Mk6) +3.718s; 3 Jason Timms (Dallara Dallara F311); 4 Jonathan Reed (Jedi); 5 Craig Hurren (Jedi Mk6); 6 Richard Moorcroft (Jedi Mk6). **CW** Gittings; Richard Fores (Van Diemen RF97); Geoff Fern (Van Diemen). **FL** Jason Timms 56.861s (104.72mph). **P** Jason Timms (Dallara F311). **S 18.**

WHAT'S ON

Tear gas and tyre smoke

IN A TIME WHEN SUSIE WOLFF'S Dare to be Different campaign is making headlines, the world of motorsport is talking about the challenges women face breaking into a 'men's sport'; with Wolff's own experience of getting to the cusp of F1 often cited.

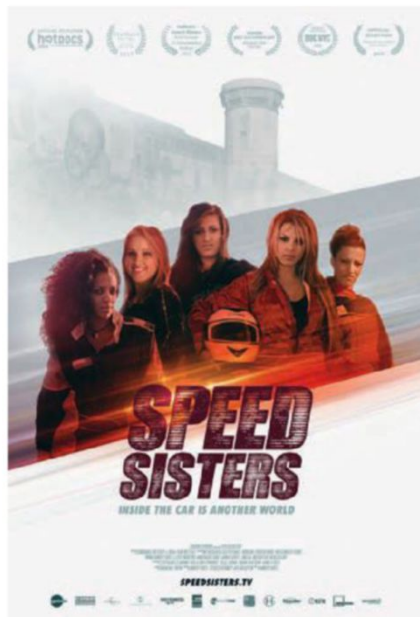
Cut to the West Bank and the lives of five women who form the first all-female street-racing team in the Middle East and are the focus of Amber Fares' new documentary *Speed Sisters*. Living under Israeli occupation, their world is one where they can't go to the beach without a permit, where schools shut down without warning and where getting from A to B can take between five minutes and five hours.

For them, being a woman in a man's world is the least of their worries when it comes to racing their modified Volkswagen Golfs and SEAT Cupras in speed tests; it's more fundamental issues like finding a place to practice in a territory where their freedom is constantly curtailed that proves a bigger challenge.

"There's no way to predict what will happen when you're on the road," director Fares tells *Autosport*. "It could be checkpoints — they can be manned, sometimes not. It's in planning your life when you live in Palestine because you don't know where it's going to rear up — you just don't know what you're going to encounter."

In one scene team captain Maysoon Jayyusi is stopped at the Qalandia military checkpoint where "kids are throwing stones and soldiers are throwing bullets". Before long, gunshots are heard, tear gas is released and burning tyres are rolling down the road. The experience reminds Maysoon of her childhood, when "she used to breathe [tear gas] on [her] way to and from school".

Another instance sees her with team-mates Betty Saadeh and Noor



Above: documentary director Amber Fares

Left: film tells story of all-female racing team

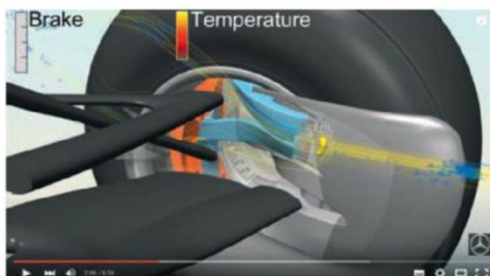
Daoud as they stop their car after spotting soldiers en route to a regular training ground. As they check a tyre, one of the soldiers shoots Betty in the back with a rubber bullet, causing the team to rush to hospital. It's a frightening moment that leads to an argument about whether or not they should continue to train in an area that's becoming so dangerous. Noor doesn't want to submit to the authorities, but Maysoon thinks the risk isn't worth it.

This kind of incident is a regular occurrence for all the Speed Sisters, not just when they're en route to a practice session or race, but when they go anywhere in Palestine. By comparison, the safety risks of getting in a car and racing seem rather trivial.

On top of these challenges, the women still have the same pressures as young drivers here. They need

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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

You Tube MERCEDES' POST-OZ UPDATE

Search for: The Stories You Missed From Melbourne

This seven-minute round-up of post-Australian GP news explains how Nico Rosberg nearly lost the win (overheating brakes were to blame) and reveals how his team approached the new radio restrictions. Got to be said that Mercedes takes some beating in terms of Formula 1 teams' YouTube output.



INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX

Formula 1

Rd 2/21
Bahrain International
Circuit

April 3
WATCH ON TV
Live: Channel 4, Sunday
1500. Sky Sports F1,
Sunday 1530

FORMULA E

Rd 6/10
Long Beach, California, USA
April 2

WATCH ON TV
Live: ITV4, Saturday 2300

INDYCAR

Rd 2/15
Phoenix, Arizona, USA

April 2
WATCH ON TV

Live: BT Sport 2,
Sunday 0200

EURO FORMULA 3

Rd 1/10
Paul Ricard, France
April 2-3

WATCH ON TV
Live: MotorsTV,
Saturday 0935; Sunday
0840; Sunday 0925.
BT Sport Europe,
Saturday 0930; Saturday
1530; Sunday 0915

WORLD TOURING CARS

Rd 1/12
Paul Ricard, France

April 3
WATCH ON TV
Live: Eurosport 1, Sunday
1100; Sunday 1600

MOTOGP

Rd 2/18
Rio Hondo, Argentina

April 3
WATCH ON TV
Live: BT Sport 2,
Sunday 1945

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

Rd 6/36
Martinsville, Virginia, USA

April 3
WATCH ON TV
Live: Premier Sports,
Sunday 1930

V8 SUPERCARS

Rd 2/15
Symmons Plains,
Tasmania, Australia
April 2-3
WATCH ON TV
Live: BT Sport 1, Saturday
0615; Sunday 0430

sponsorship (which Betty works hard to source from the Minister of Transportation), talent (they have in abundance, regularly beating their male competitors in the speed tests) and the support of their families (Marah Zahalka races with the encouragement of her father in the face of grandparents who want her to 'be respected' and do 'something valuable').

If they're lucky, young drivers in the UK might get the chance to race at Brands Hatch or Donington Park. If the Speed Sisters are lucky, they're racing in vegetable markets and practising beneath the watchtower of a detention centre.

Wolff says Formula 1 is a "tough environment" to work in and few would disagree, but one look at the Speed Sisters and the definition of tough seems like it needs re-evaluating.

ALLY WYBREW

UK MOTORSPORT

SILVERSTONE 24HR

April 1-3
Britcar Prototypes,
Caterhams, Touring Greats

OULTON PARK 750MC

April 2
RGB, Roadsports,
Bike Sports, Civic Cup,
Sports Specials, MX-5s

KIRKISTOWN 500MRCI

April 2
Historic FF2000,
FF1600, Saloon and GT,

Road Sports, Ford Fiestas,
Formula Vee

BRANDS HATCH BTCC

April 2-3
BTCC, MSA Formula,
Porsche Carrera Cup,
Renault Clios, Ginetta
GT4, Ginetta Junior

SNETTERTON BRSCC

April 2-3
Alfa Romeos, Fiesta Junior,
Formula Jedi, MX-5s,
Porsches, Ford Fiestas

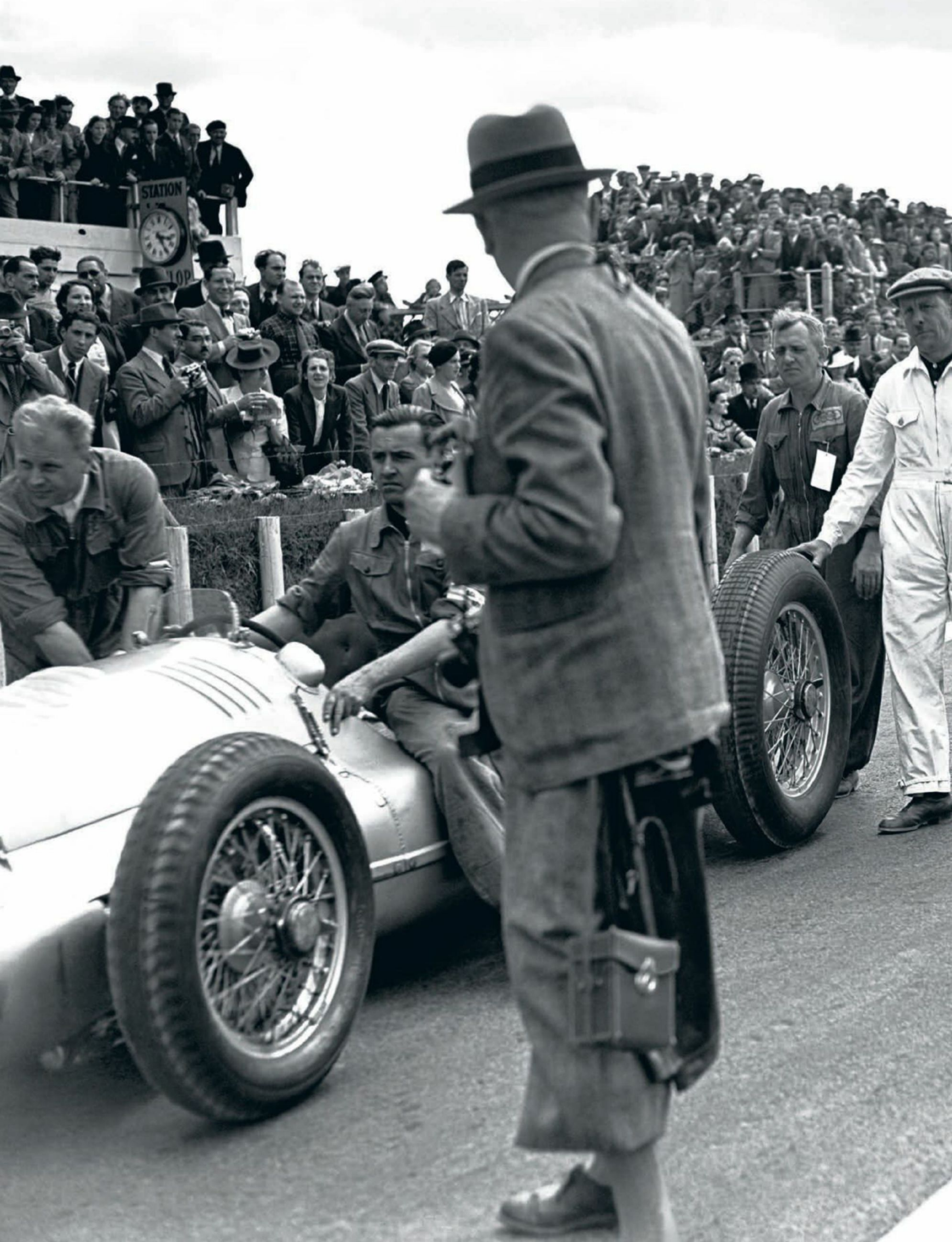


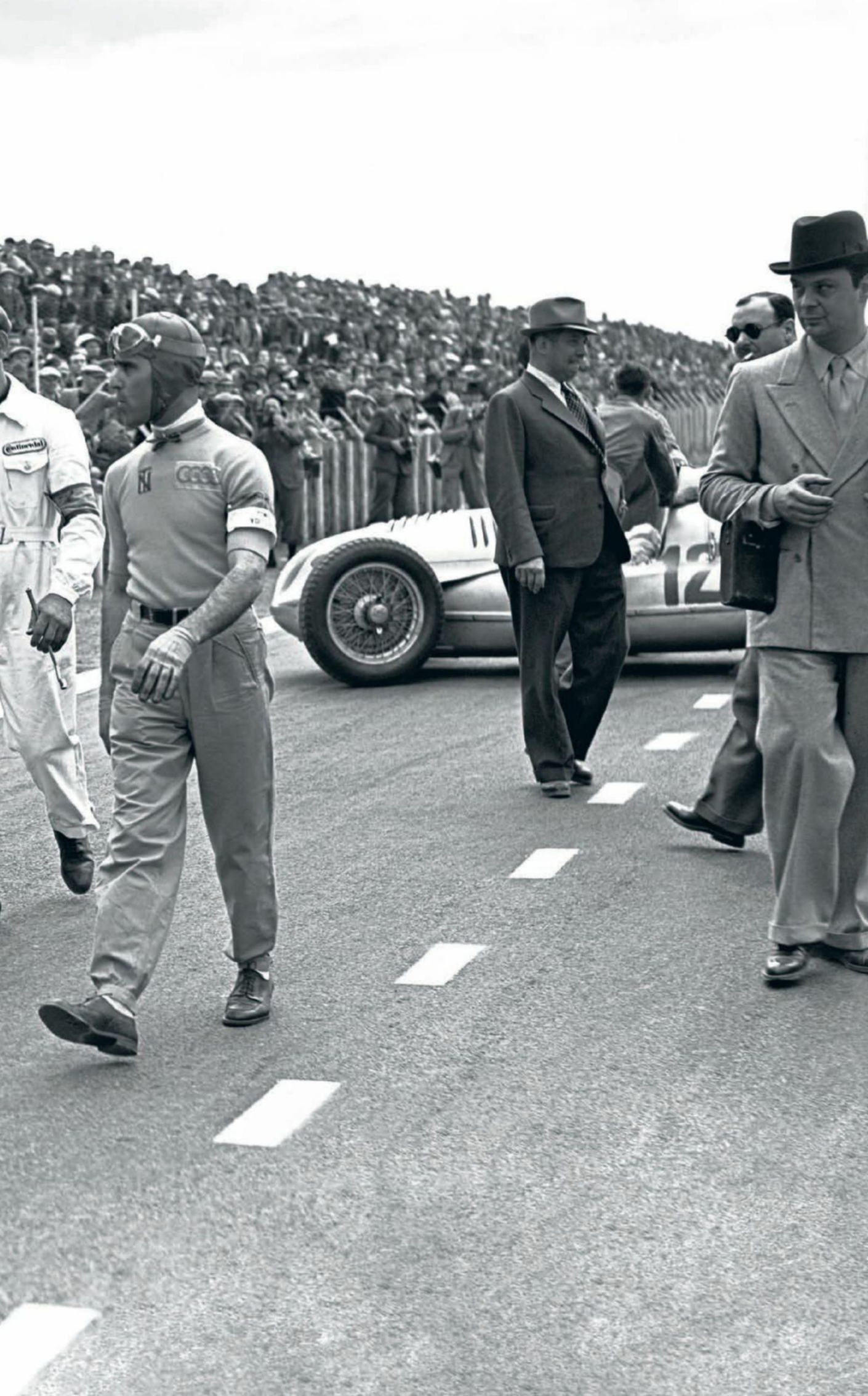
DONINGTON PARK MGCC

April 3
MG Trophy, Peter Best MG,
MG Metros, Midgets and
Sprites, Iconic '50s Sports,
Cockshoot Cup, Equipe GTS

KNOCKHILL SMRC

April 3
Mini Coopers, Ford
Fiestas, FF1600, Classic
Sports and Saloons,
Legends, Sports and
Saloons, BMW Compact





THE ARCHIVE

Auto Union driver Tazio Nuvolari strides purposefully ahead of the 1939 French Grand Prix at Reims. A gearbox failure cut short his race. The winning sister car of Hermann Muller is in the background.

LAT Photographic

TOP FIVE

CAR DEBUTS IN THE BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

The big news for the 2016 BTCC opener at Brands Hatch this weekend is the new factory-blessed Subaru squad, spearheaded by Jason Plato and Colin Turkington.

Team BMR has been burning the midnight oil readying the rear-wheel-drive Levorg, but it will have had hardly any track time. It will have to go some to make as much of an impact as some of the UK tin-top scene's most successful new cars.



1 1988 FORD SIERRA RS500

People knew the Ford Sierra RS500 was coming – the RS Cosworth had appeared in 1987 as a staging post while teams waited for the new rocketship. And when it arrived, the RS500 took the British Touring Car Championship to a new level. It pushed out 550bhp, had better suspension, bigger spoilers and a bigger rear wing. And there were loads of them on the grid too. It was the essential end-of-the-'80s BTCC weapon, so much so that from its first full season in 1988 it remained unbeaten until it was effectively outlawed at the end of the 1990 campaign.



2 1963 FORD GALAXIE

The seven-litre V8-powered Galaxie ended Jaguar's reign as the car to beat in the BTCC and started an American invasion that lasted for more than a decade. Jack Sears won first time out with the giant Ford at Silverstone in 1963 and went on to secure his second drivers' title. The V8 floodgates had opened and weren't slammed shut by the rulemakers until the end of 1975.

3 1994 ALFA ROMEO 155 SILVERSTONE

Alfa Romeo had exploited a loophole in the aero rules and bolted on proper front and rear spoilers, which it said were standard on the 155 Silverstone road model. It was homologated the day before the first round at Thruxton, prompting rivals to accuse the Italians of "taking the piss". Gabriele Tarquini won the first five races and, even when the aero was reined in, he won three more times and claimed the title at a canter.



4 2001 VAUXHALL ASTRA COUPE

The BTCC went through a revolution as the Super Touring era fell over at the end of 2000. BTC-spec cars brought costs down but failed to spark a rush from car makers – only Vauxhall and Peugeot did the entire campaign. But Vauxhall's commitment was full-on, with the Astra Coupe taking the title for four seasons in a row. It was so dominant that drivers were asked not to use full throttle for fear of making the races dull.



5 2012 HONDA CIVIC

Team Dynamics has a habit of making new cars win. It did it with the Honda Integra in 2005, and again with its new NGTC-spec Civic in '12. This was the first full NGTC car that Team Dynamics had built as a factory-supported team and it was late on parade. Despite limited testing it was very quick, Matt Neal proving that with victory in the opening race. The car won 13 times, taking Gordon Shedden to the title ahead of Neal.



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