

ROEBUCK WILL NEW RULES IMPROVE F1?

AUTOSPORT

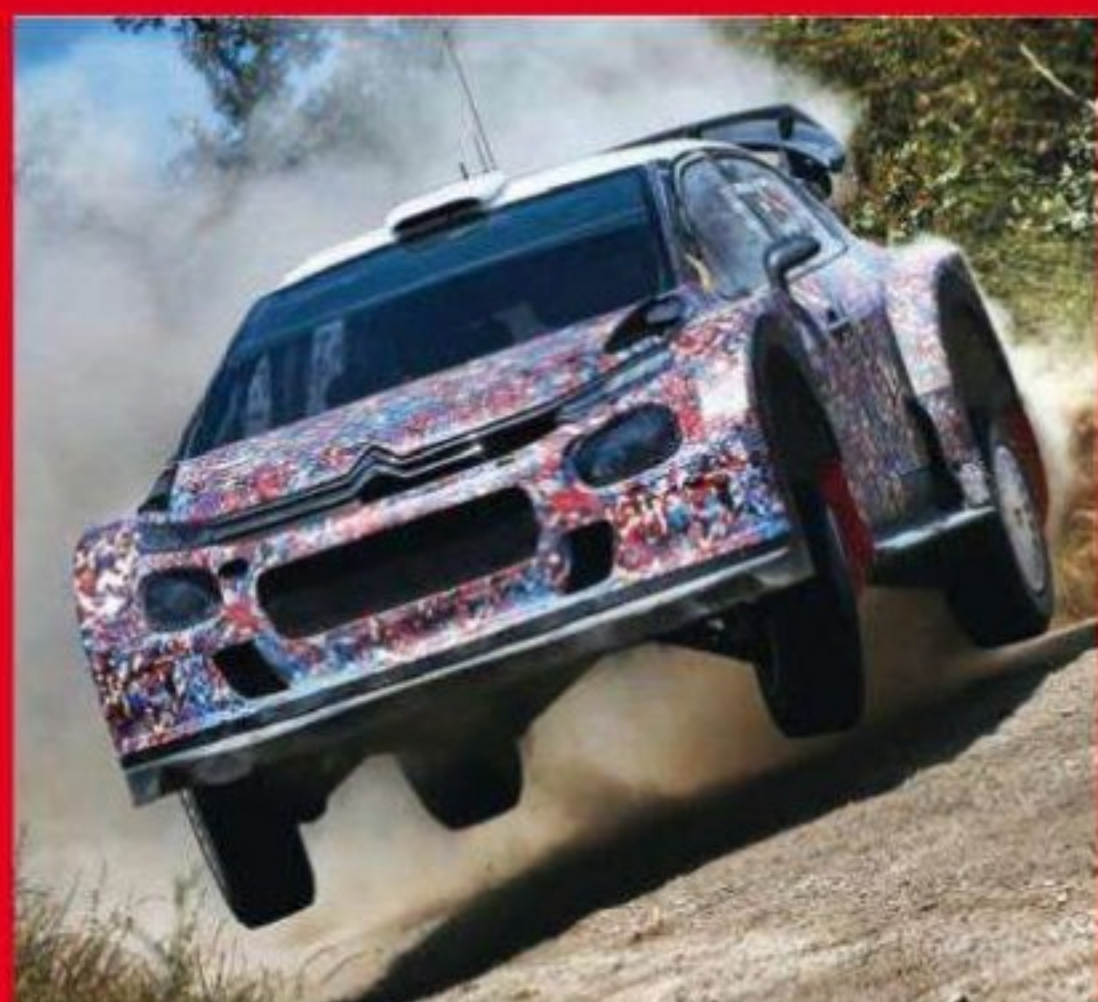
BOTTAS WILL SURPRISE HAMILTON

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ETHERINGTON/LAT

Big chance for Bottas at Mercedes in 2017

SOME PEOPLE SEEM RATHER UNDERWHELMED AT THE prospect of Valtteri Bottas taking on Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes. It's true that a Fernando Alonso-versus-Hamilton rematch would be the most tantalising prospect for Formula 1 fans, but Bottas will still give Hamilton some headaches.

Mercedes made it clear early on that it was not interested in big names contracted to main rivals – namely Alonso at McLaren and Sebastian Vettel at Ferrari. What we have instead is the potential for a new name to join the list of GP winners and title challengers.

With the possible exception of Nico Hulkenberg, Bottas is the midfield battler most deserving of a shot in a leading car. He now has four years of F1 experience and outperformed Felipe Massa over their three seasons together at Williams. The qualifying tally was 41-18 to Bottas, who also scored 407 points to Massa's 308.

Some in the F1 paddock think that Bottas has more potential than Nico Rosberg. Whether he has the same abilities as the outgoing champion to improve and repeatedly bounce back from defeat remains to be seen, but the signs are he will be no pushover.

If 2017 is Bottas's big chance, then it is also a crucial year for the World Rally Championship. Like F1, the WRC has new cars this season designed to be more spectacular. There's also been an interesting driver reshuffle, creating genuine unknowns as the crews start the Monte Carlo Rally this week. As our preview (from [page 22](#)) shows, all the right ingredients are there for a new golden era for one of the sport's underappreciated branches.



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Mercedes/LAT

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

Will F1 changes improve the show?

AT AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL LAST weekend I had many a conversation about the state of Formula 1, and the prospects for 2017, when we have what some are calling 'a whole new breed' of car. Are the changes necessary – or even desirable? Some said yeah, others nay.

In considering a personal future that could hardly be brighter, Max Verstappen recently said he had little interest in records, be they for poles, wins or championships. "To achieve things like that you have to have the best car for a very long time, like Michael Schumacher had at Ferrari, or Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes. Fernando Alonso should have had five or six world championships, but he's only had two – things happen. I'd be happy simply to have a successful career."

Given that Stirling Moss never won a world championship, nor Chris Amon a grand prix, I've never been terribly moved by raw statistics, and as time goes by 'all-time records' mean ever less, given that bulletproof reliability is a phenomenon only of recent times – and that there are at least twice as many point-scoring races as once there were. In his eight-year world championship career, Juan Manuel Fangio competed in 51 *Grandes Epreuves*, which these days is a matter of two and a half seasons.

In Formula 1 there have always been periods

when one team stole a march on the rest, but invariably, for one reason or another, these did not last too long. What has been different about the 21st century is that seasons of domination – from Ferrari, then Red Bull and latterly Mercedes – have gone on and on: no surprise that Schumacher, Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel occupy three of the top four places in the winners' list.

Four years ago Alonso had 32 victories, to Hamilton's 22, but since Fernando's last, at Barcelona in 2013, Lewis has won 31 times. Mercedes, as briefly in the 1950s, has been on another planet.

Having concluded in 2013 that 47 Monaco grands prix were probably enough, I began instead to spend that weekend in May at Indianapolis, watching Monaco on TV over breakfast at the Honda motorhome. It was there in 2014, as I reminded him at the NEC, that Dario Franchitti murmured to me: "Are you telling me they charge people money to watch this?"

Unarguably, it was pretty soporific, but then – in terms of *racing* – down the years that is how Monaco has invariably been. Rosberg beat Hamilton to pole, then beat him to Ste Devote, and an hour and 50 minutes later they took the flag. A few hours on, I watched Ryan Hunter-Reay do the same, followed – six hundredths of a second later – by Helio Castroneves,





whom he had passed on the last lap.

Very well, we're talking apples and pears here: a sinuous thread through the streets is not the same as a flat-out oval. And I appreciate, too, that in this sadly depleted era of IndyCar racing everyone — give or take a Chevy or Honda — has essentially the same equipment, but I also know that as they crossed the line I was on my feet, and that hasn't been so at a grand prix for a long time.

If Barcelona — where Raikkonen shadowed Verstappen in the late laps — provided a stimulating finish last year, it was only because Rosberg and Hamilton had obligingly taken each other out; had they not, Max and Kimi would have been scrapping over third.

For many, therefore, the vexed query in Birmingham last weekend was, 'Will it be better, with the new rules, in 2017?' To that one must add, 'For whom?' I don't doubt that, with 'aero' significantly freed up, and downforce greatly increased, the drivers will revel in grip levels not seen for years, but I remain to be convinced that, once they've grown accustomed to the sight of higher cornering speeds, the spectators will be quite so entranced. Unless I'm missing something — and I hope I am — a combination of 'dirtier air', lower top speeds and shorter braking

“When Pat Symonds speaks in terms of ‘some corners effectively becoming straights’, we have cause for worry”

distances sounds like anything but a recipe for better racing, even with the benighted DRS.

It is almost 50 years since 'the wing' made its first appearance in Formula 1, Amon's Ferrari and Jack's Brabham wearing it at Spa in 1968, where Chris took pole by nearly four seconds. "Practice was a bit inconclusive," Amon said. "The wing was primitive, of course, and whatever you gained in the corners you lost on the straights, because of the drag — I did similar times with and without it. [Jacky] Ickx decided not to use it in the race, but I went with it, mainly because it made the car more stable. At the time, though, I can remember thinking, 'Jesus, what can of worms are we opening here?'"

'A big one' was the answer to that, and we have been stuck with it ever since. The 'gurney flap' may have gone into the language of motor racing, but when I recently talked to Dan about the public's waning interest in the

sport, he was rueful: "Looking back, something that wasn't good — in the long run — was the advent of wings, and that would be the thing I would take off. What racing needs is more power, and less downforce, but it's gone completely the other way."

When a man like Pat Symonds, contemplating the 2017 cars, speaks in terms of 'some corners effectively becoming straights', I think we have cause for worry.

"If you take away Eau Rouge," Ayrton Senna once said, when the future of Spa's iconic switchback was under debate, "you take away the reason I do this..." Back then it was flat only for one or two — and then only in qualifying. Now long routinely flat for everyone, it remains spectacular, but means much less than it did. As Gurney put it: "Driving a race car should be more difficult, and it should look that way — I think that's what people really enjoy." ❧

PIT+PADOCK

NEWS • DEBATE • CONTROVERSY • OPINION • FEEDBACK



FORMULA 1

Gary Anderson's verdict

SINCE FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPION Nico Rosberg decided enough was enough and hung up his helmet just after the end of the 2016 season, everyone has waited to find out who would replace him at Mercedes.

It's easily the most coveted seat in F1, so there were plenty of drivers eyeing a career-making opportunity with the team that had not just won the drivers' and constructors' titles in each of the past three years, but had utterly dominated.

Once Rosberg made his announcement, I'm pretty sure every driver's manager would have made a courtesy call to the bosses at Mercedes just to remind them of the virtues of their driver(s) – even those who might not have been immediately available.

Quite how Toto Wolff, who is involved in Valtteri Bottas's management, made this phone call is not clear, but he certainly had no problem getting through, I'm sure.

Mercedes needed a driver who was available – or at least could be made available – and would not create too much friction within the team so it could focus on Red Bull and Ferrari. That's where the

main competition should come from.

While Bottas hasn't yet had the chance to win any grands prix, in my opinion there is no-one better to be lined up against Lewis Hamilton. He is Finnish, with the characteristic that nothing deters him. He just gets on with his job and won't allow Hamilton to overpower him.

If Rosberg had a fault, it was that he was too nice a guy. But Bottas won't suffer from that and will be hard but fair. Watch out Lewis, you have some real competition in that car in the other side of the garage.

Bottas has shown in his years in F1 that he has car control that is the envy of most, he doesn't make mistakes, and when he has the tools he can deliver the results consistently.

Since 2014 he has been in a team that has been sliding the wrong way down the performance slope, so we haven't seen his true potential; and as he has been getting better, the car has been getting worse.

He will gel with Mercedes very quickly. It's not just circuit miles that allow a driver to settle in, because there are tools such as driver-in-the-loop simulators that he can use to get up to speed and get familiar with the car very quickly.



Massa's back at Williams, Wehrlein's in at Sauber

on the driver-market resolution

He has driven a Mercedes-engined Williams for the past three years, so he will know that side immediately.

So this was a good choice by Mercedes in the circumstances. He will surprise a few people.

Massa to Williams

As far as Bottas's replacement Felipe Massa is concerned, I can only reiterate what I've said before: I don't like it when a driver retires and comes back. It suggests that they haven't thought things through well enough before making the decision to quit.

Williams let Massa go for good reasons and signed up Lance Stroll as his replacement, yet now it decides that it really needs his experience to help Stroll get his feet under the table.

It's a standard argument, but the one thing Max Verstappen has shown the blinkered world of F1 is that experience counts for little. The cars are set up, developed and engineered from the back of the garage, and as long as you can

drive fast, the rest will be done for you.

So Williams could have gone for another novice alongside Stroll – say, someone like Antonio Giovinazzi, who did such a good job in GP2 – and in reality be no worse off.

You know what you are going to get with Massa, and with 250 grand prix starts he has all the experience in the world, but I always liked to have young drivers with something to prove on the team rather than those who have been there and done that and are set in their ways.

“I don't like it when a driver retires and comes back”

Wehrlein to Sauber

It was clear early on that Mercedes simply did not have the balls to go for a

young-and-inexperienced driver. So with Esteban Ocon already having signed for Force India, and Manor potentially on the brink of extinction, it made sense that Mercedes would help Pascal Wehrlein into a seat at Sauber.

Wehrlein has a year's experience with Manor in 2016 and at times showed himself

to be very capable – most famously with that point for 10th place in the Austrian Grand Prix. So you would expect him to do well for Sauber, but the question is whether it's a good move for Wehrlein himself.

Yes, it keeps him in an F1 race seat, albeit with a team that should be doing better than it has lately. He needs to build on his experience, but for him and Mercedes it would surely have been better to get him in at Williams as part of the Bottas deal.

Admittedly, there are reasons why it might not have been possible, but it would have been far better for Wehrlein than heading into the unknown with Sauber and its 2016-specification Ferrari engine.

Mercedes obviously feels that Wehrlein needs more experience, but it remains confident in his ability. So this move to Sauber is with a view to monitoring his progress and understanding what level he is at, so he's ready just in case Hamilton wakes up one day and 'does a Rosberg'.

You never know – with Bottas as his team-mate, that could happen sooner rather than later.

GARY ANDERSON

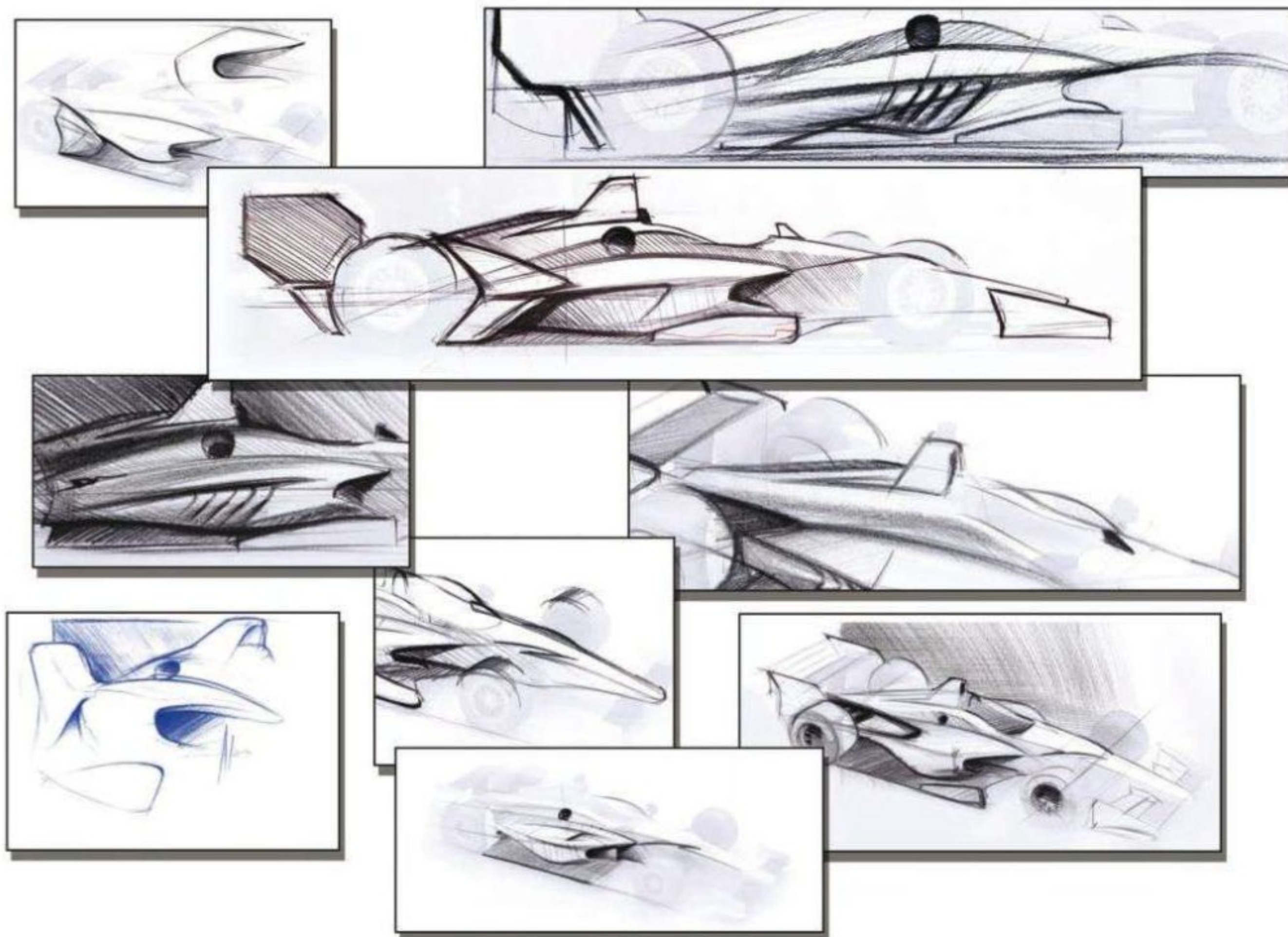
INDYCAR

A series of concept drawings have been revealed by IndyCar, outlining how the championship's new bodywork could look next year.

Dallara has extended its IndyCar chassis-supply deal, with the IR-12 introduced in 2012 to remain the backbone of the series through to '20. IndyCar will introduce a new standard aero kit in '18, replacing the packages developed by Chevrolet and Honda. Testing will begin in the summer.

The most striking aspect revealed in the drawings – besides the resemblance to a larger version of Dallara's IL15 Indy Lights car – is the removal of the air trumpet over the driver's head, which has allowed a low engine cover and sleeker rear bodywork.

Further updates will be shown at IndyCar's 2017 pre-season test at Phoenix next month.



Turkington has been linked to WSR return

BRITISH TOURING CARS

Turkington on the rebound after exit

COLIN TURKINGTON SAYS HE wants to secure his British Touring Car Championship future in "the next few weeks" following his exit from the Team BMR Subaru squad.

News of the two-time champion's split with the team after two seasons broke last Friday. Turkington finished fourth in the series last year in BMR's new-for-2016 Subaru Levorg.

He has been strongly linked with a return to the WSR BMW team, with which he won his 2009 and '14 titles, and acknowledged that the "rumour mill is obviously going".

WSR has already recruited Andrew Jordan to drive one of its 125i M Sports this year, with its 2016 series runner-up Sam Tordoff switching to British GT.

Turkington played down the prospect of spending 2017 on the sidelines, having been squeezed out of the BTCC for three seasons after winning his first title.

"My exit from BMR was only

yesterday, so I need some time to absorb the news, and work out the next path," he said. "Number one in any driver's mind is putting yourself in the most competitive car, the best team. You have to give yourself the best chance to win.

"That's my focus right now. I'll continue to work hard over the next few weeks to make something happen."

Renault Clio Cup UK champion Ant Whorton-Eales will step up to the BTCC for 2017 at the wheel of an AmD Tuning Audi S3. The 22-year-old, who took nine wins on his way to the Clio crown, will team up with Ollie Jackson at Shaun Hollamby's team.

Motorbase has completed its three-car line-up with Luke Davenport and Martin Depper. BTCC newcomer Davenport is a graduate of the Ginetta GT Supercup and GT racing, while Depper switches from the Eurotech Racing squad. The pair will join Mat Jackson at Motorbase, which won last year's Independent Teams' Trophy.



FORMULA 1

Manor's survival fight

THE FORMULA 1 TEAM CURRENTLY known as Manor has not had an easy ride. The company that operates it – Just Racing Services Ltd – went into administration earlier this month.

It's similar to the situation two years ago, when Marussia employees were laid off before energy-company founder Stephen Fitzpatrick saved the team and renamed it Manor.

Staff will be paid until the end of January, giving the squad a few more days to find a buyer. But time is running out.

Autosport has learned that an offer has been made to buy Just Racing Services Ltd, as well as Just Racing Ltd (the holding company of Manor) and Manor Grand Prix Racing Ltd (the F1 and FOM licence holder).

The bidder believes that to ensure the cars can be built and tested on time ahead of the start of the season, which starts in Australia on March 26, a decision on the offer is required by tomorrow (Friday).

If that deadline lapses without confirmation, the bidder could make a revised offer, but it is expected to be lower given the reduced time and increased costs required to get the team onto the grid.

Insolvency company FRP Advisory LLP declined to comment when approached by Autosport, and Fitzpatrick could not be reached. The 2017 car is ready to go into production, but parts cannot be produced as the administrators have put a block on spending to protect creditors.

Manor's future had looked bright when

Pascal Wehrlein scored a point in the Austrian Grand Prix last summer. Fitzpatrick said the terms of a sale to an Asian consortium were agreed, but time ran out to complete the deal. Entrepreneur Tavo Hellmund then emerged as the favourite to complete a takeover of Manor in December.

Losing 10th in the constructors' points to Sauber at the penultimate race of the season, which cost Manor around \$13.5 million in prize money, was a significant blow. Fitzpatrick said: "When I took over the team in 2015, the challenge was clear: it was imperative that the team finish in 10th place or better in '16."

"For much of the season we were on track. But the dramatic race in Brazil ended our hopes of this result and ultimately brought into doubt the team's ability to race in 2017."

It's a frustrating situation for Manor, which has made impressive progress since it was saved ahead of the 2015 season. That year the team's 'supertime' – the fastest lap from any weekend session converted to a percentage, with 100% representing the outright fastest – was 106.459%. That was 3.427% off the pace of the next slowest team, McLaren.

In 2016 Manor's 'supertime' was 103.779%, which is only 0.282% adrift of the next slowest team, Sauber, and a 2.68% gain compared to last season.

It's not over yet. Alongside the offer on the table, the administrators are talking to several interested parties and assessing the viability of their bids. But a deal needs to happen soon if the team is to survive.

LAWRENCE BARRETT

IN THE HEADLINES

EDWARDS'S SHOCK RETIREMENT

Two-time NASCAR runner-up Carl Edwards says his surprise decision to retire was largely a matter of realising he was satisfied with his career achievements. The 37-year-old announced last week that he would stop full-time racing after 13 seasons at Cup level.

NEW ERS FOR RENAULT POWER UNIT

Renault will introduce a second-generation energy-recovery system this year as part of a radical overhaul of its Formula 1 power unit. The French manufacturer has been working on a complete redesign for 2017.

MOSS 'STABLE' IN SINGAPORE HOSPITAL

Sir Stirling Moss is in a stable condition in hospital in Singapore, recovering from a serious chest infection. The 87-year-old was admitted to hospital on December 22.

NEW BENTLEY RACER FOR 2018

Bentley will continue its GT3 programme beyond the lifespan of the existing Continental with a race version of an all-new model set to hit the market in 2018.

PANOZ SET FOR RACING RETURN

US sportscar manufacturer Panoz will end a five-year absence from racing in 2017, fielding a pair of new Avezzanos in the GTS class of the Pirelli World Challenge. Its last involvement was the Abruzzi project of 2010-11.

MANOR WEC TEAM SIGNS UP FOR LMP1

The Manor World Endurance Championship squad is set to expand into LMP1 in partnership with Ginetta in 2018. Manor is the first team to announce its intention to run Ginetta's newly-announced LMP1 privateer contender.

ALONSO CRASH SIMULATED WITH HALO

The FIA has simulated Fernando Alonso's dramatic 2016 Australian Grand Prix crash with the halo fitted, as part of its analysis of the Formula 1 cockpit-protection device. "We feel in that case the halo actually creates breathing space for the driver," said FIA deputy race director and safety director Laurent Mekies.

FE FAVOURS DECEMBER SEASON OPENER

Formula E's 2017-18 season could start as late as December, with Hong Kong the series' favoured option for the opening round. Series CEO Alejandro Agag has also pledged "much more racing in January and February".

KUBICA WANTS MORE 24H RACES

Formula 1 race winner Robert Kubica wants to do more 24-hour racing after his debut in Dubai last weekend with Lukas Motorsport (below). "I may be doing some more races in the 24H Series with the team," he said. "For the rest of the season, I don't have any fixed programme yet."





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BTCC's prime mover

The announcement that Colin Turkington won't be driving a Team BMR Subaru this year has shaken up the British tin-top field

By Matt James, BTCC Correspondent

[@MattJMNews](#)

THE NEWS THAT TWO-TIME BRITISH TOURING CAR champion Colin Turkington had "parted ways" with the Team BMR squad, which carried him to fourth place in last season's contest, was not unexpected.

The flurry of press releases that were issued last Friday at Autosport International were full of the usual platitudes, with each party wishing the other the best for the future, much as you would expect.

But what has really gone on at Team BMR, and what now for Turkington? The second of those questions seems easier to answer than the first.

For now, the only top-line drive left open to the Northern Irishman outside the Subaru set-up is a return to a WSR-run BMW 125i M Sport. It's the car that gave Turkington his second title in 2014, and one that he raced for two seasons and took to 13 race wins.

WSR remained tight-lipped on the prospect last week, but it's certain that all parties would be willing to rekindle this relationship.

Turkington himself said last weekend that if the WSR seat were an option, he would be a fool not to explore it. That's just the driver spinning a non-controversial line in front of the public – don't doubt that these two parties have been talking to each other for a while now.

Turkington has spent all but three of his 12 seasons in the BTCC under the wing of Dick Bennetts's team, and there is a huge affinity between the pair. Both have similar work ethics and are able to get the most from each other. If Turkington does manage to tie up a deal to become part of the team, he would be joining 2013 title winner Andrew Jordan in a mouthwatering line-up, regardless of who occupies the squad's third machine.

The spin-off from this is what happens at Team BMR Subaru? Why did Turkington leave the team after being its most successful driver in 2016?

The answer will remain within the locked debrief rooms at Team BMR and be kept between team principal Warren Scott, Jason Plato and Turkington himself.

Sources suggest that the relationship was becoming tricky towards the end of last season and that Turkington knew the writing was on the wall. Plato, the prime mover behind the effort to persuade Subaru onto the BTCC grid for the first time as a manufacturer,

has a long-term contract with BMR. He won one race in 2016 in his first top-flight season in a rear-wheel-drive BTCC car and is confident of a step forward in '17. Scott is the man who, as well as driving one of the cars last season, has put up the money to get the programme off the ground.

Turkington was not part of the inner nucleus that got the project together and that ultimately appears to be a big part of the reason for the split. It was always going to be tricky with two professional drivers – Turkington and Plato – and two tightly knit engineering groups around them. Some operational procedures had to be put in place mid-season to clarify how the team worked together across all of the cars but, it appears, there were still some grey areas between them.

So with Turkington's departure, a gap is left at Subaru, and that will be a prime seat in 2017. Yes, there are rules to even out its centre-of-gravity advantage with the engine that it enjoyed unhindered in '16, but the development


work done on the car has been rapid and effective.

Plato is in, and the squad is also likely to retain James Cole for a second season. Scott is debating whether or not to return to the driving seat himself,

so there could be two plum seats up for grabs.

And that leads to another interesting train of thought. Ash Sutton was, without doubt, the standout rookie of 2016, and he is a product of the Team BMR scholarship. Scott has been his fairy godfather for the past two seasons in the Renault UK Clio Cup and the BTCC. Given the chance to promote Sutton to the top table, surely that would make sense. And that still leaves another seat in the team...

So if Sutton does climb into a Subaru – which would seem to be the natural fit – then what happens to the MG team, which made a strong impact last season? It will have an updated car in 2017 with new RML kit, and it was potent in the hands of Sutton and Josh Cook last season. It should be another sought-after seat on the grid.

Of course, it all depends on budget. Drivers still need to bring funding, and that will make the money men the arbiters of the final line-up. But the latest developments have thrown a whole new complexion on what was, until last week, a fairly settled landscape in terms of the 2017 BTCC field. 

“Turkington and Andrew Jordan at WSR would be a mouthwatering line-up”



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FEEDBACK

F1's 'deaf ears' must learn to listen

I hope Liberty Media's and Sky Sports' bosses read the letters page of Autosport, where their independently minded customers have a chance to air their views, because unless we have a British Grand Prix at Silverstone for me to visit and experience that year-long sustaining thrill, I will not need Sky TV anymore, nor entertain the possibility of visiting other GPs. Either cut the fee, or Sky become a sponsor in some way.

In anticipation of deaf ears from those who need a dose of realism about the impact this possible loss will have on the wider British motor racing public, BTCC dates have now been added to my diary, and tickets for the Brands Hatch and Thruxton events ordered, instead of buying my 2017 BGP tickets as planned.

Stewart Thomson
Fairford, Gloucs

It's all about the money

Why taxpayers' money (Pit+Paddock, January 12)? To make Bernie Ecclestone



ETHERINGTON/LAT

and the F1 gravy train even richer? No thanks. The traditional 'real' circuits should refuse to pay the exorbitant demands of the F1 supremos. This only emphasises once again what's wrong with the way F1 is run – sport? What sport? Money, money, money.

SalvadorValiente
Rutland

Roebuck's welcome return

A big welcome back to Nigel Roebuck. Always authoritative and entertaining, with a wonderful insight into Formula 1.

In his previous job, I always enjoyed reading his words. But now I'm able to enjoy them four times a month instead of just the once. How pleased am I?

Gordon Wallace
Royston, Herts

Welcome home, Nigel Roebuck. Please don't leave us again.

Mark Farrell
By email

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CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Congratulations to Craig Steele of Glasgow, who is our winner of the 2016 Autosport Christmas Quiz. However hard we try, we can't seem to stop our readers from getting incredible scores, and it was tight at the top this time – as ever. Craig wins a BTCC VIP experience trip for two and, hailing as he does from Scotland, it doesn't take a genius to work out which event he's going to! Thanks to all those who entered – we're going to have to make it tougher in 2017...

HERE ARE THE ANSWERS:

A 1 Paul di Resta, Robert Wickens. 2 Jack Goff. 3 Tom Chilton. 4 Jean-Karl Vernay, Dusan Borkovic. 5 15 or 16; Rob Collard, Adam Morgan, Jack Goff. 6 Michael Caruso. 7 Wilson Alfa Romeo, Zonta Mercedes. 8 Aku Pellinen. 9 10th. 10 2 – 12 Hour and 1000.

B 1 3. 2 Carel Godin de Beaufort. 3 Austrian, USA. 4 Jenson Button, Tomoki Nojiri. 5 Felipe Nasr. 6 Jake Dennis. 7 Lance Stroll, Maximilian Gunther, Ben Barnicoat, Callum Iltott, George Russell, Ralf Aron, Alessio Lorandi, Anthoine Hubert, Nick Cassidy, Joel Eriksson, Niko Kari. 8 Raffaele Marciello. 9 Charlie Kimball. 10 Lando Norris.

C 1 Wellington. 2 Baltimore. 3 Livorno/Leghorn. 4 Trois-Rivieres. 5 Santa Fe. 6 Birmingham. 7 Bordeaux. 8 Detroit. 9 Ain-Diab. 10 Durban.

D 1 35th. 2 Iannone. 3 35. 4 Andrea Dovizioso, Andrea Iannone, Cal Crutchlow, Jorge Lorenzo, Marc Marquez, Jack Miller, Dani Pedrosa, Valentino Rossi, Maverick Vinales. 5 2. 6 Moteji. 7 Chris Vermeulen. 8 4. 9 Jorge Lorenzo. 10 Mika Kallio; Bradley Smith and Pol Espargaro.

E 1 17. 2 2. 3 Lance Stroll. 4 Scott Dixon. 5 Lime Rock. 6 1992. 7 David Ashburn and Glynn Geddie. 8 Allan Simonsen and Jonny Cocker, Donington. 9 30th. 10 Steve Soper 1987; Andy Priaulx 2005.

F 1 Gilles Villeneuve, Wolf-Dallara-Chevrolet WD1, Can-Am, Watkins Glen, July 10 1977. 2 Stirling Moss, Audi 80 GLE, BTCC, Brands Hatch, July 13 1980. 3 Dave Charlton, Lotus-Ford 72D, Formula 1, Nurburgring, July 30 1972. 4 Dani Clos, HRT-Cosworth F112, Formula 1, Barcelona, May 11 2012. 5 Graham Hill/Jackie Stewart, Ford GT40, International Championship of Makes, Sebring 12 Hours, March 26 1966. 6 Franco Forini, Osella-Alfa Romeo FA11, Formula 1, Jerez, September 26 1987. 7 Robert Wickens, Virgin-Cosworth MVR-02, Formula 1, Yas Marina, November 17 2011. 8 Niki Lauda, BMW CSL, World Championship of Makes, Spa, May 6 1973. 9 Tom Walkinshaw, Modus-Ford M5, Formula 5000, Oulton Park, March 28 1975. 10 Tony Kanaan, Opel Lotus, Opel Lotus Euroseries, Estoril, September 26 1993.

G 1 2002. 2 Zero. 3 1. 4 Thierry Neuville. 5 Kevin Abbring, Eric Camilli. 6 1. 7 1. 8 Rob Duggan. 9 Olympus Rally. 10 Osian Pryce.

H 1 Roberto Colciago. 2 Sven Muller. 3 Dominik Baumann. 4 Matheus Leist. 5 Yuji Kunimoto. 6 Agustin Canapino. 7 Pieter Schothorst. 8 Dane Cameron. 9 Leonardo Pulcini. 10 Stephane Richelmi.

Bottas gets the car he deserves

After four years at Williams, Valtteri Bottas has proved he's ready to win races and, at Mercedes, he surely will. What's more, he could give team-mate Lewis Hamilton something to think about

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

 @BenAndersonAuto

When Valtteri Bottas pulled into the pits to retire his Williams at the end of the sixth lap of last year's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, he couldn't have dreamt that the next time he drove a Formula 1 car in anger would be for the best team

on the grid, one that has dominated F1 for the past three seasons.

But as Bottas climbed from his broken car and headed home for the winter, Nico Rosberg was busy navigating the most difficult race of his life, knowing that if he succeeded he would likely retire from F1 as its new world champion.

And that's exactly what he did. A few days later, at the FIA's prizegiving ceremony in Vienna, Rosberg announced to a stunned audience that he would not defend his maiden world title in 2017, bringing an abrupt end to his F1 career, and setting off a chain of events that would eventually lead Bottas to leave his Williams "family" to take up the hottest seat in F1's house.

And they surely don't come any hotter than in the reigning world champion's car, belonging to the reigning world champion constructor, as team-mate to Lewis Hamilton – one of the greatest drivers F1 has ever seen...

Bottas would have expected to spend a fifth season racing for Williams in 2017, helping the team that has nurtured his entire F1 career to date traverse the minefield of sweeping regulation changes. But that's the thing about F1 – you just never know what might be around the next corner.

What else could Mercedes do?

Rosberg's sudden retirement shocked everyone, including his employers, who were banking on him seeing out the new contract he had signed ahead of last July's Hungarian Grand Prix, which was meant to keep him at Mercedes until the end of the 2018 campaign.

The timing also left Mercedes with little room for manoeuvre in finding a capable replacement. Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said that every driver on the 2016 grid bar two – Kimi Raikkonen and Daniil Kvyat – phoned him in the aftermath of Rosberg's bombshell. He reckoned the only reason it wasn't a full set was because neither Raikkonen nor Kvyat possessed his phone number! But nearly all of them already held contracts with rival teams.

Of the like-for-like world champions, Sebastian Vettel and Raikkonen both have a year to go on their respective deals with Ferrari; ditto McLaren-Honda's Fernando Alonso, while Alonso's now semi-retired team-mate Jenson Button is tied down to an ambassadorial and reserve-driver role for 2017, with an option on the team's side to return him to race action the following year.

Max Verstappen tweeted a screen shot of an incoming call from Wolff on a smartphone, asking his followers whether he should answer. Verstappen would arguably be Wolff's preferred choice, given Mercedes engaged in a tug of war for his services in 2014. But Red Bull won that war, and has both Verstappen and team-mate Daniel Ricciardo – F1's outstanding driver in '16 – under lock and key until at least the end of '18.

F1 fans would probably most want to see Hamilton paired >>



COVER STORY/BOTTAS AT MERCEDES



alongside Vettel, or renewing his 2007 rivalry with Alonso, but Wolff made it clear pretty quickly that Mercedes wasn't interested in 'disturbing' its main rivals (likely code for 'we know the buyout price will be way too high'), while Alonso told McLaren's staff he wasn't interested in abandoning the Honda project after two seasons of toil.

Even F1's top midfield drivers (including Bottas) were all tied down. The only clean option for Mercedes was to promote junior driver Pascal Wehrlein, who enjoyed a fine rookie campaign at customer squad Manor in 2016, but got overlooked by Force India when it came to replacing Renault-bound Nico Hulkenberg.

Hulkenberg would arguably have been the perfect fit for Mercedes in these circumstances – an experienced driver, German, and considered among the best on the grid yet to earn a shot with a top team. Had Hulkenberg decided to reject Renault and see out the final year of his Force India contract, a move to Mercedes would have been relatively straightforward, given Force India always said it would not stand in his way should a top team come calling.

Mercedes clearly felt its junior drivers were too raw to

thrust into the pressure-cooker of a world championship title defence. Top teams are naturally risk-averse, so perhaps it's no surprise that Wehrlein and Force India-contracted Esteban Ocon have been overlooked in favour of more experienced hands.

Bottas, now 27, is part of that group of drivers – including Hulkenberg, Force India's Sergio Perez, and Haas's Romain Grosjean – who exist outside of F1's top bracket but have the

requisite experience and track record to move on up if required. Toro Rosso's Carlos Sainz Jr (following an outstanding 2016 season) and his team-mate Kvyat (demoted, some feel harshly, by Red Bull last year) could also fit the

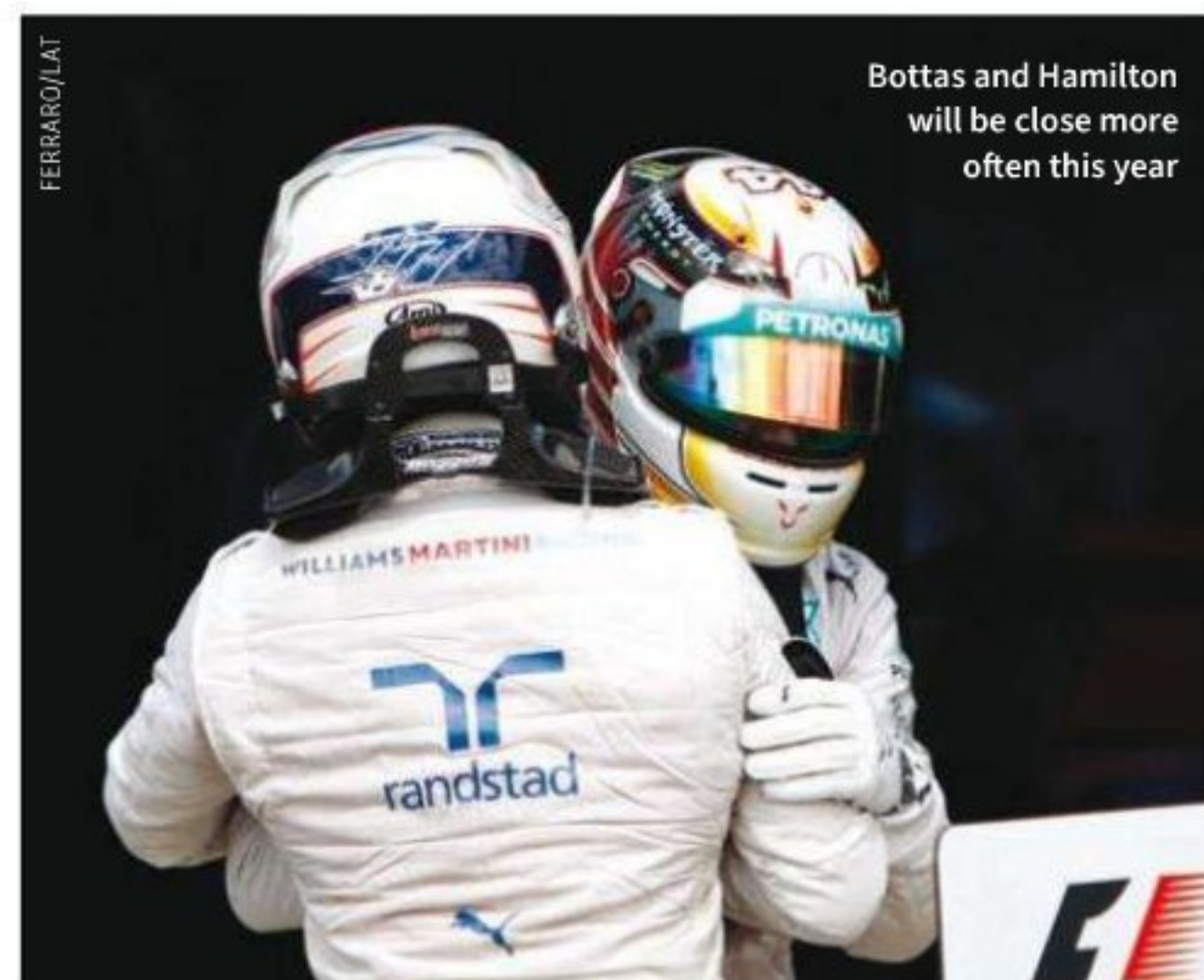
bill, but not without a tricky process of contract renegotiation.

Looking outside of F1 was obviously out of the question and, the more you narrow down the realistic options for Mercedes, the more Bottas looks the best fit given the circumstances. He is already part of the Mercedes family, through its customer-engine deal with Williams, as well as being managed in part by Wolff. He also has experience and is still hungry for success. All this must have played a part in Mercedes' thinking.

“The more you narrow Merc's options, the more Bottas looks the best fit”



Wolff and Bottas finally sorted the deal this week



Bottas and Hamilton will be close more often this year

More than just a safe pair of hands

The Finn looks a safe pair of hands – someone to slot in at short notice who will do a good job without rocking Hamilton's boat, trying too hard to make an impression, or occasionally going missing through inexperience.

He is also possessed of an even temperament, which should help Mercedes avoid the sort of internal conflicts that became a regular feature of the recent Hamilton/Rosberg rivalry.

But Bottas is much, much more than just a safe option. Over the past four seasons he quietly became Williams's best driver, the reference point around which it focused its competitive effort, a driver its ex-technical chief Pat Symonds reckoned was "crucial" to the team's hopes of future success, and someone his Williams race engineer Jonathan Eddolls describes to Autosport as "bulletproof", and reckons is a better driver than Rosberg.

"I worked with Rosberg. I've worked with them [both] in different eras. Definitely I think he [Bottas] is better," says Eddolls, who has worked with Bottas since he first drove in free practice sessions for Williams in F1, in 2012.

"Even back in '12 we could tell that he had a natural talent. And what was good was after every Friday we'd go through all the data, tyre temperatures, what he was doing, the slip [of the tyres], how he was driving, the pros and cons of what he was doing, and he'd understand.

"He's clever, which helps! Then the next week he'd come

Bottas mixed it with the Mercs when the Williams allowed

back and have another go. Over those Fridays you could really see the improvement from one Friday to the next.

"I think it's continued and continued. To be honest I think that's one of his big strengths over most – he's probably one of the best drivers at looking after tyres.

"One thing he's excellent at giving is feedback during the race – how many laps are left for the tyre. We've got the data and can monitor it and predict ourselves, but there's nothing like the driver saying that there are five or eight laps left, which gives you confidence in your numbers. He's never very far out – a lap or two, which is pretty exceptional. I don't know how he does it, but he's got a hell of a feel for the tyres."

This sort of remarkable intuitive feel is a hallmark of all potentially great drivers. It's something engineers revere in Bottas's compatriot Raikkonen; it's something that is clear to see in the outstanding performances of triple champion Hamilton, the stunning qualifying laps of Ricciardo, and the mesmerising races of rising superstar Verstappen.

Bottas's efforts are often less heralded, because of where Williams has been in the competitive pecking order recently, but he has a knack for getting up to speed very quickly on grand prix weekends. His qualifying record against Massa last season was also better than any other driver on the grid versus a full-time team-mate.

Bottas is able to marry his speed and feel with a furious work ethic – another trait of the best drivers in the modern age. »

COVER STORY/BOTTAS AT MERCEDES



First-lap error in Bahrain, where he hit Hamilton's Mercedes, was a rare mistake from Bottas

Bottas will be looking to add to his nine F1 podiums so far and is still chasing a first win

"In qualifying, as long as you get him a good track position, you can sit back, watch him start and you're confident he'll always find the limit of the car," Eddolls adds.

"He's very honest, and doesn't ever try to hide anything. He's not somebody who will blame the team. He'll look inwards and blame himself. And he'll learn from that — try to make sure those little things don't happen again. He's very self-critical.

"If he does say anything about the car then you know there is something wrong — he'll never go out and make something up. If he's slow he'll come back and say, 'To be honest the car feels all right to me, that wasn't a great lap', so you won't have to spend three hours hunting for something that isn't there. It makes working with him much easier. You trust each other.

"He very, very rarely makes mistakes. He [nearly] always gets

to the end of the race and brings it home. He's rarely involved in accidents. It will be interesting to see him in a Mercedes, just to see how quick he really is. On his day he's awesome, he really is."

Bottas himself knows the scale of the challenge, and is quick to highlight the need to take his maiden victory in what should be his first experience of a car able to win.

"It will be my biggest season in F1," says Bottas. "I got nine podiums with Williams, but I am still missing my first win, so that is the first mission. Then we go from there.

"With Lewis, we will be a strong pair. I really respect him as a driver and a person. He is so quick, so he is a great reference for me. I am sure we will be close and we will both be pushing each other but I am sure we can work together as a team. We will both go flat out and let's see."



TEE/LAT

“If he’s slow, he’ll say it wasn’t a great lap, and that makes working with him much easier”

Some room for improvement

Bottas is by no means the finished article yet, and there is no doubt that he will need to raise his game to cope with the added pressure of racing for F1’s current top team, and taking on a driver of Hamilton’s legendary ability in identical equipment.

So far Bottas has shown himself to be a very well-rounded driver – he is fast, consistent, has excellent feel, and is intelligent, self-critical and mentally resilient. But there is one area of his game that perhaps needs some refinement. Williams has often highlighted the way Bottas can get outmuscled at the start of races.

Excluding the three that began in wet conditions behind a safety car in 2016 (Monaco, Silverstone and Interlagos) and May’s Spanish GP (where the two Mercedes drivers took each other out on lap one), Bottas gained places on the first lap of only six of the remaining 17 races last season – his most impressive start coming in Bahrain, where he was lucky to escape a collision at Turn 1 with Hamilton.

He doesn’t seem to be naturally aggressive in battle, an impression his predecessor Rosberg had to work hard to overcome after being seen as a ‘soft touch’ by rivals during the early part of his career.

“In terms of the start and that procedure he’s very good,” argues Eddolls. “It’s difficult to say if he’s conservative in the first corner. Maybe you could say he’s not as aggressive as >>

How Massa came back to Formula 1

FELIPE MASSA HAD bid a tearful farewell to Formula 1. After 14 seasons racing for Sauber, Ferrari and Williams, narrowly missing out on the world championship in 2008, the Brazilian was readying himself for a new racing

few available, to replace him.

Massa initially wanted to stay in F1, but knew he was going to lose his seat at Williams and that there were no other competitive seats available. So he made the first move

Though an agreement was reached quickly, an announcement was delayed as Bottas’s move to Mercedes took more time to be finalised.

It is a remarriage of convenience, a repeat of when the pair first formed a partnership in 2014, with Massa in need of a new team after a challenging time at Ferrari and Williams requiring an experienced driver as it looked to return to the front. Williams believes the unretired Massa will be fired up. Only time will tell.

LAWRENCE BARRETTO

“Williams believes the unretired Massa will be fired up. Time will tell”

challenge. The F1 chapter in his life was supposed to be over.

But then the phone rang. It was deputy team principal Claire Williams. She wanted to know if he would consider a U-turn to help the team out.

Mercedes wanted Valtteri Bottas to replace Nico Rosberg, who’d caught the team out with a shock retirement five days after winning the title. Bottas wanted to take the opportunity but Williams needed an experienced driver, of which there were

and told the team he was calling it quits.

Williams wasn’t sure if Massa would want to come back, but she invited him to discuss the opportunity and, very quickly, a deal was agreed. Massa wanted to help Williams, a team he has a huge affection for, and it was a chance to lead the squad and use his experience to make the most of the new regulations.

It’s a one-year deal, with an option on the team side, giving flexibility for both.



DUNBAR/LAT

COVER STORY/BOTTAS AT MERCEDES



some of the others, but rarely do we look at video and say, 'Shit, we lost a place because of that'.

"Maybe sometimes you think we could've gained a position if we were a little bit more aggressive, but it's bringing the thing home and consistently scoring the points [that counts for more].

"I'm not saying he's weak, but if I had to improve one thing it would be that relative to some of his other areas."

Bottas himself agrees this is something he needs to work on. "It's definitely one of the things I can still improve," he says. "But I think I've got a lot better. I think sometimes I've taken too little risks. It's always about balancing the risk and how many points you think you can gain with that."

"I can't really point and say there's one big weakness, but there are things you can always improve. I just know that, by doing the style I do, by learning from mistakes and analysing every situation, like if I've lost a position or something in the race, try and learn from it and do better next time, that'll help me improve. I feel like I'm better for it."

Realisation of a dream

By the end of the summer of 2015 it looked as though Bottas had missed his big F1 break. Ferrari wanted him to replace the underperforming Raikkonen as Vettel's team-mate, but refused to match Williams's valuation to buy Bottas out of his contract, so he stayed put.

Bottas could so easily have let his head drop in the aftermath of this outcome, and might have experienced a dip in form concurrent with Williams's competitive reversal of 2016, which culminated in defeat to Force India in a tight battle for fourth place in the constructors' championship.

Some paddock insiders feel the reasons Hulkenberg didn't always reach the heady heights of his 2013 season with Sauber during his recent Force India stint lay somewhere in the disappointment of missing out on a Ferrari seat when the team paired Raikkonen with Alonso in 2014.

Williams was impressed with the way Bottas kept his chin up, refusing to let any personal dissatisfaction with the way the 2016

Why Mercedes still believes in Wehrlein



MERCEDES' REJECTION OF Pascal Wehrlein as a replacement for Nico Rosberg was not a snub. It was a pragmatic move. It required an experienced driver capable of scoring big points consistently for the constructors' table.

Though Wehrlein impressed in his rookie season, scoring Manor's only point and reaching Q2 four times in the final nine races in an unfancied car, he has only one year's racing experience in F1. You can't take a short cut to make up the deficit. The opportunity came too soon.

Force India would have been a good option for Wehrlein, but the squad picked Esteban Ocon over the German because it rated Ocon higher and felt he

was a better fit for the team. Williams, like Mercedes, needed experience and felt Felipe Massa was the better solution.

That left Sauber and Manor, the latter of which was considered too much of a risk given the uncertainty over its future. So Mercedes boss Toto Wolff called Monisha Kaltenborn and thrashed out a deal.

It makes sense for both Mercedes and Wehrlein. For the former, its junior driver, which it rates highly as he has delivered in every category he has competed in, is placed in a team that has form developing young drivers, such as Kimi Raikkonen and Felipe Massa.

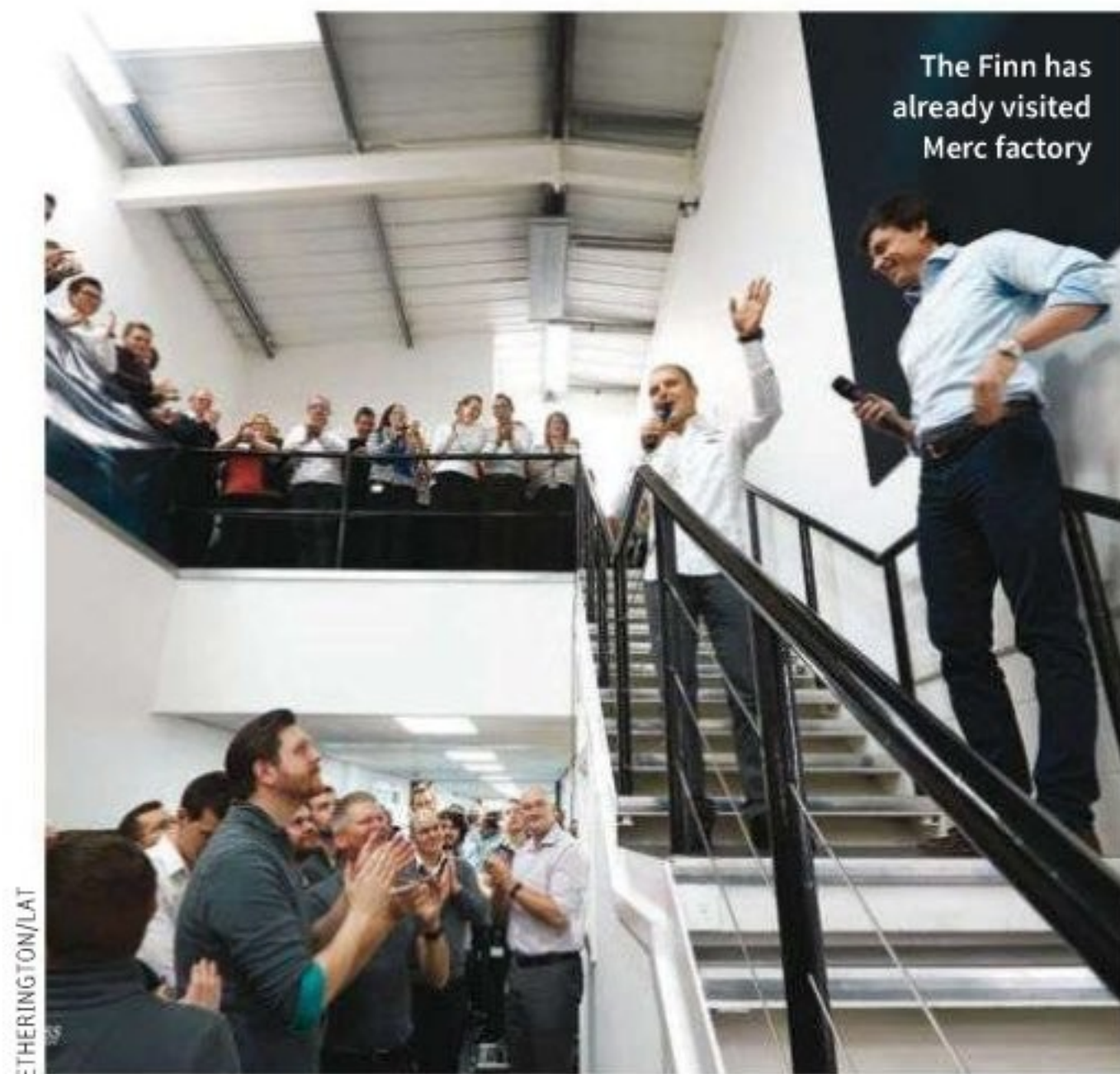
Wehrlein has the opportunity to smooth the rough edges.

There is a perception in the paddock that he is arrogant and difficult to work with. His former racing director Dave Ryan rubbished those claims but Wehrlein knows he has to work on that area, having admitted he underestimated the off-track challenge.

A change of scene is just what he needs. Mercedes worked hard to keep him on the grid and retains belief that he has the potential to progress to the works team in the future.

His challenge now is to sharpen up on his off-track approach, comfortably beat new team-mate Marcus Ericsson and get good feedback from his engineers. Then Mercedes' belief will be rewarded.

LAWRENCE BARRETTO



“I have no doubts in myself. I know I’m capable of winning races. I’m ready for a winning team”

What can Mercedes expect?

Mercedes should bank on Bottas being much more than a reliable number two to Hamilton. OK, he has yet to win a race in 77 starts in F1, but that’s not through any fault of his. The Williams cars he’s driven for each of those starts have not been good enough for that in reality, yet he’s still returned nine podium finishes with them.

His peak performances in 2013, such as qualifying third in Canada, show he’s capable of overachieving in poor machinery – a sure sign of a potentially elite driver. He is ambitious, possessing the single-minded ruthlessness familiar to all drivers who feel they have the ability to succeed at the very top of single-seater racing, but he is also capable of seeing the bigger picture of team sport.

Bottas isn’t controversial, doesn’t make a lot of noise, doesn’t spend much time talking himself up on TV and in the press. But he looks eminently capable of at least winning races in the right machinery, which is the least Mercedes will expect of him.

“Personally all I can do is keep doing what I’m doing, trying to get better and better, and I know if there’s a car that is close to being the best car, or top three, I can definitely do it,” Bottas reckons.

“I have no doubts in myself. I know I’m capable of winning races. It feels like I need the correct machine for that. I have my goals and I know I still have many years to come, and still feel like I haven’t yet achieved my peak of performance.

“I’m ready to wait for the right opportunities for me to fulfill my dreams. I think I’m definitely ready for a winning team.”

For Bottas, that wait is finally over. ✽

driver market had played out, or Williams’s own disappointing development of the FW38, negatively affect his driving.

Last season was the most difficult of the past three for Williams in terms of achieving big results, but Bottas stuck resolutely to his task. He is not one for dwelling on opportunities missed. This sort of mental strength should serve him well.

“I don’t think about it because it doesn’t help,” he told Autosport at the end of last season, when asked whether he held any regrets over missing the boat at Ferrari. “I focus on the current situation, and I know I’ve got plenty of time left.

“I feel I’m getting better so I’m approaching it knowing there’s more ahead, and to be honest I’m just always looking forward and waiting for the opportunities that will come.

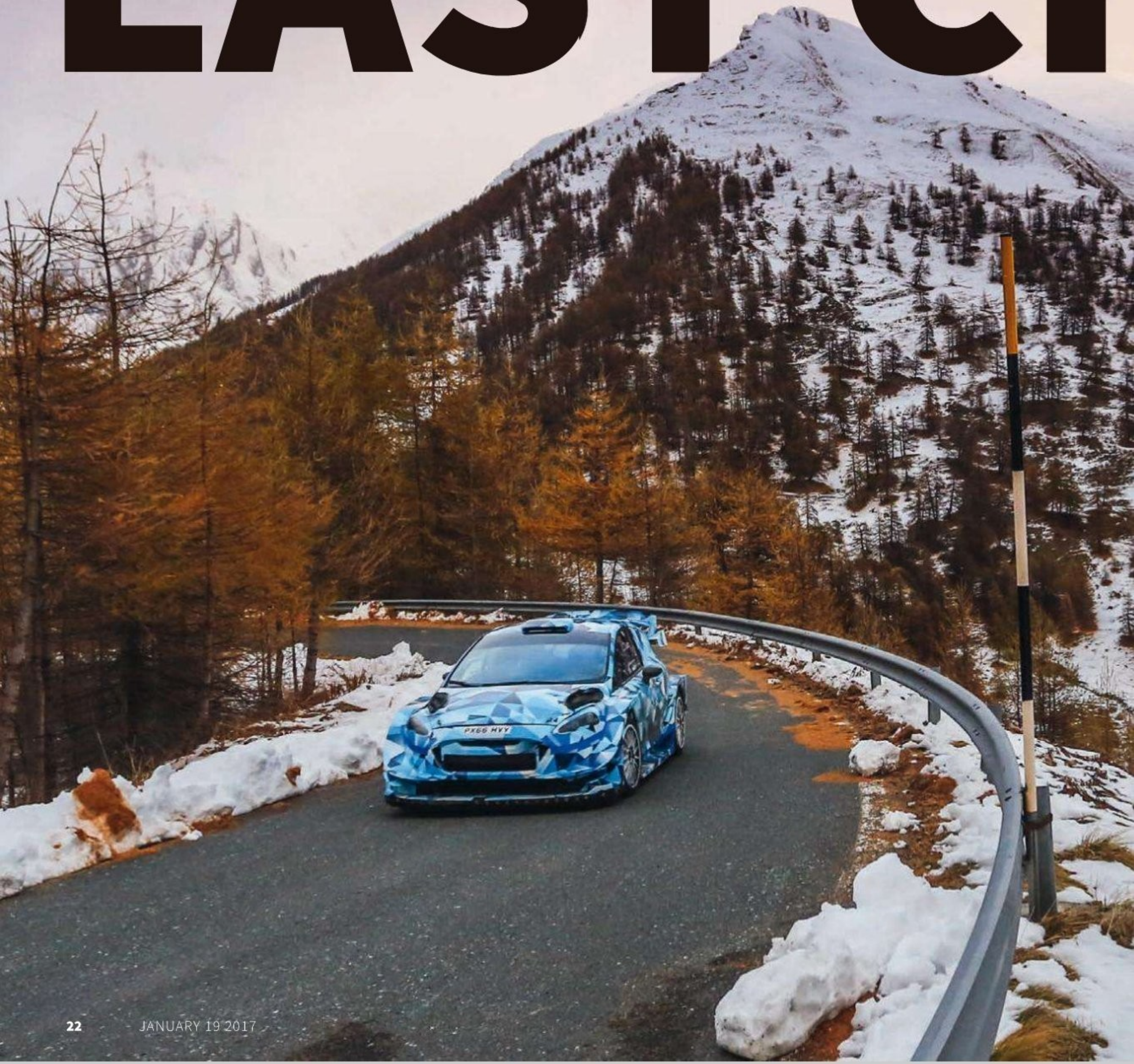
“I’ve much bigger plans than this in Formula 1. I feel comfortable in Formula 1, and it’s for other people to see me as their driver. I know it’s possible. I’m just chasing my dream.”

Joining Mercedes will be a major step towards realising that dream, of one day becoming Formula 1 world champion.



WRC/PREVIEW

Is this the WRC's LAST CH



CHANCE?





Group B is seen as a high-water mark for rallying, which has suffered a difficult time in recent years. But the new rules for 2017 mean spectacular cars will once again impress on the world stage

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

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

Group B is back. But it's back with a hint of health and safety. As well as being the fastest rally weapons ever, the 2017 World Rally Cars will, the FIA is confident, also be the safest. New technical regulations have focused on a major hike in power, but at the same time there has been significant work on improving the lot of the crew should things go pearshaped.

On the road, the 2017 World Rally Car is a sight to behold. If it stays dry in Monte Carlo this week, these things will redefine what a car can do on a public road. In the higher-speed stages, there's an expectation that they will be a second per kilometre quicker than last year. Fast-forward further into the season and the fastest-of-the-fast stages, and that would mean lifting 30 seconds out of the record for Ouninpohja on Rally Finland.

If your brain's not fried now, it will be when we get there.

The level of downforce being produced from the Group B-style splitters and wings is more than ever before. In the mid-'80s, science wasn't what it is today and dining-room tables were effectively chopped down and bolted onto the rear of the cars.

Take a closer look at a 2017 machines and you'll see a vast surface area for the aero loading, but at the same time you'll witness Formula 1 levels of detail on the endplates and in the diffusers.

What we have here is a true evolution of Group B. With that evolution has come the finesse that computational fluid dynamics affords, and transmission control in the form of an active centre differential. Add into that equation the sort of genius suspension that is light years ahead of the then cutting-edge twin-damper set-up at each corner of Ford's RS200 and you have some idea of how far these cars have come.

Fear not, though – they are still brutal. Admittedly, there's

more to getting one off the line than building the boost and side-stepping the clutch, but watch Sebastien Ogier's Ford Fiesta WRC or Kris Meeke's Citroen C3 WRC at the start and see the way the thing shakes as a gear is pulled and the launch deployed. It's devoid of the drama of spinning wheels and smoking boots – such wastefulness might have been all the rage in the '80s, but today it's all about efficiency. And propulsion.

The brutality of almost 600 horses ensured a Group B car was horizon-bound in mind-bending speed; two-thirds of the power, but a world of technology, will get today's cars there even quicker.

And grunt is all the Group B cars have on today's machinery. Slowing for a corner? A 2017 contender will massacre its predecessor on braking distance. Corner speed? You'd not even get close in a Group B car.

But don't take my word for it. Listen to a man who did it. Listen to Markku Alen.

"Down the straights, hey, the Lancia Delta S4 was incredible," he says. "Out of the corner, there was a big noise from the supercharger then 'boom!', the turbo was spinning and you were on a space rocket going to the moon. Incredible. But come to a corner..."

"We had to work the car, get it turned in on the power and keep the power up to make sure we had enough at the exit.

But the suspension, you know, this is biggest step forward [for 2017]. The suspension now is incredible. The speed of jumps in Finland now compared to Group B is a different world.

If we'd taken off at that speed, we were going straight into the trees. Forget turning or landing – straight into the trees."

Does that make Meeke more of a hero than Markku?

Not a bit of it, according to Meeke.

"Drivers are the same in whatever era," says the Northern Irishman, "and it's not really fair to compare them. Markku

"The speed of jumps now compared to Group B is a different world"



Lancia Delta S4 and Peugeot 205 (top left) were stars of Group B, but Alen (top right) believes new cars like the Citroen C3 (above) are also impressive

and the boys were pushing those cars as hard as they dared and you have to take your hats off to them for what they did. Those cars were incredible, so much power. It took a special kind of driver to take them through the woods in the dead of night.”

But down the same stretch of road 30 years on, Meeke’s motor would be five seconds faster across every 1000 metres. That’s progress.

As the Group B era neared its end, the drivers began to speak out. Some were concerned about the cars, but most were concerned about the cars *and* the rallies. They were being asked to drive for hours on end with nothing but Pro Plus and full-strength Marlboros to keep their eyes open and their mind on the job.

That’s where the world’s changed. As well as generating the safest possible place of work for the drivers, the FIA is working harder than ever with rally organisers to ensure spectator and crew safety, while retaining as much flavour and character in the sport as possible.

Privately, the 2017 increase in speed is still a concern. None of the leading drivers has been willing to criticise the performance hike, but almost to a man they have stepped out of the car and talked off the record about their concerns at trying to keep up with what’s happening in front of them.

In the quickest sections, co-drivers are struggling to get their notes out fast enough, while the bloke next to them dares not even blink.

That’s why a lot of breath will be held as this season unfolds. These cars are shockingly fast and ruthlessly effective, providing everything is working as it should.

There’s an edginess about the World Rally Championship this week – there’s a genuine feeling of stepping into the unknown. And that level of unpredictability is brilliant for the fans.

Beyond the new cars, it’s the new driver line-ups and returning giants in the shape of Toyota and Citroen that have added further spice to the season ahead.

Once the crying about Volkswagen’s departure had stopped, there was a lightbulb moment in rallying when it became »



clear that this added another angle. A Polo won't be winning at every turn and, quite possibly, neither will Ogier.

On a personal level, VW's departure is still shocking and sad – not least for Andreas Mikkelsen – but it's provided a real opportunity for the World Rally Championship.

Nobody knows who's going to be champion this year. Ogier has dropped into the largely unknown world of a private team, forced to forget the thousands of miles of testing he's done aboard a 2017-spec Polo and refocus on the Ford Fiesta WRC he takes over the ramp in Casino Square tonight (Thursday).

Nobody (apart from Ogier) can say if the Fiesta or the Polo is better, but what we do know is that the four-time world champion's only had four days to get used to the Cumbrian car.

So if it's not Ogier, who's going to be champion? According to the bookies, the joint favourite is a Brit: Meeke. Sixteen years after Britain's last World Rally champion, we're in with a real shout of landing another.

And Meeke's well up for it. He and Citroen have worked at a furious pace on the development of the C3 WRC, and nobody on the Monte entry list knows their car better. What's more, he's a different driver, a more mature driver – and a driver

who has already won in Finland.

Meeke really could be the man this season.

Or could it be a Belgian, or a Kiwi, taking the drivers' title for the first time? There's a quiet confidence about Hyundai, Thierry Neuville and Hayden Paddon. It's perfectly possible, with the testing pace the i20 Coupe WRC has shown – and the Korean manufacturer's ability to carry over parts from an enormously competent 2016 car.

And then there's Toyota. This is not a team to be confused with Ove Andersson's Cologne-based red army, the one that steamrollered everything in its path, out of Africa and across the world. No. This is Tommi Makinen's taskforce from Puuppola in central Finland.

What can we expect from Jari-Matti Latvala and Juho Hanninen? Nobody really knows. The car has looked... challenging in certain conditions, but the drivers are insistent that there's a good base there, and on gravel in particular there's decent potential.

One thing is sure: this will be a learning year for the Finns – unless they've been sandbagging in the extreme.

Either way, having a Japanese manufacturer – indeed, a world-leading car-maker – back in the WRC is another mighty shot in the arm for the series this season.

And, as we outline on the page opposite, it's never going to be easier to keep up with what's going on in the World Rally Championship this season. Red Bull TV looks set to revolutionise consumption of rallying on telly – and not a moment too soon.

FIA president Jean Todt must take his fair share of credit for the technical revolution that's taken place. When he took over at the motorsport governing body in 2009, as well as asking when his sport had gone all 'daytime-sensible', he must have wondered what had happened to the cars. When he left Peugeot more than two decades ago, his car was a championship-winner displayed on bedroom walls the world over. When he returned, he found a Ford Focus and Citroen C4.

In his mind, something had to change. Seven years on and we're here. Here with undoubtedly the most exciting-looking rally cars since the end of 1986. Here at the return of Group B. And quite possibly the rebirth of rallying. ❄

Ogier will drive new Fiesta (above), while Toyota (below) adds extra intrigue for 2017



Innovation is required to bring rallying to new fans

FORMULA 1 PERSONNEL OFTEN view rallying with a mixture of incredulity and bewilderment. How does it work? Where did all that mud come from?

More recently, there's been a much more pertinent question from colleagues on the cleaner side of the track.

Where has rallying gone?

Formula 1's most ardent rally fan is a man who grew up in the west country, threw a sleeping bag and a few cans of cider in the back of a Ford Transit and went off to chase the RAC Rally with some mates.

The sight and sound of a Lancia Stratos (below) hooked Pirelli's motorsport director, Paul Hembery. He's never forgotten the emotion and sense of occasion that went

with the sport in those days.

"Rallying," says Hembery, "got in people's way back then. The route for the rally went right through the centre of towns and stopped the traffic. There were queues for miles to get around the stages and one thing is for sure: love it or loathe it, you couldn't get away from it – the whole world knew the RAC Rally was happening.

"Now? OK, I hear it's improved in the last few years, but there's still a tendency to hide ourselves away. Rallying needs to make a nuisance of itself again, it needs to be noticed. And don't get me started on the television."

Let's get him started on the television.

"Where is it? Where has

rallying gone?" he says. "I've got just about every channel under the sun on my television at home, but I've got absolutely no idea where to find the WRC. I watched some rallying last year, but it was the British Rally Championship, not the WRC. I couldn't find it."

Trouble is, particularly in Britain, the sport has found itself in the centre of the perfect storm for the past 15 years.

Rewind to the height of Colin McRae and Richard Burns's fame, the days when the Brits were leading lights in the sport, and television coverage was worth fighting for. And paying for. Channel 4 paid millions and made great telly out of covering the sporting soap opera that



Hembery believes rallying deserves better TV coverage

was the quarreling Brits.

Without those characters, there was no story in the mainstream British media. Daily newspapers have long since forgotten what rallying is and Channel 5's cut-and-shut coverage is fine for the enthusiast, but it's never going to reveal rallying's true glories to those on the periphery.

Then the manufacturers walked away and the WRC went from eight or nine makes fighting at the front to, er, two. Thankfully – mercifully –

Citroen and Ford remained and kept the WRC flag flying. Through that most troubled of eras, one man stood head and shoulders above the rest. But, great as Sebastien Loeb was, and is, winning nine straight titles did nothing for the sport's popularity.

Now, though, times are changing. There's innovation and an inclination to take this sport back to where it once was. Hembery should dust off that rally jacket and give it another go. Rallying's back.



Under the skin of 'THE NEW

After close to 4000 miles of testing, M-Sport's muscular new Ford Fiesta WRC is ready to take to the stage. The British team's head of rally engineering **CHRIS WILLIAMS** talks us through the first all-new World Rally Car to come out of Cumbria in six years



GROUP B'



TECH SPEC

FORD FIESTA WRC

Engine	EcoBoost 1600cc
Turbo	Garrett, 36mm inlet restrictor
Bore/stroke	83.0x73.9mm
Power	380bhp
Torque	330lb ft
Gearbox	M-Sport/ Ricardo 6-speed sequential hydraulic shift
Differentials	active centre, mechanical front and rear
Clutch	M-Sport/ AP Racing multi-disc
Suspension	MacPherson struts, Reiger dampers
Brakes	300mm/ 370mm discs, four-piston calipers (gravel/ asphalt)
Steering	power- assisted 12:1-ratio rack and pinion
Wheels	7x15in/8x18in (gravel/ asphalt)
Length	4130mm
Width	1875mm
Wheelbase	2493mm
Weight	1190kg



“The fastest way will be the most precise way, keeping the car on the road at all times”

It's hard to put a precise time and date on when we started working on the 2017 car. We launched an upgrade to the Fiesta RS WRC in Portugal in May '15, and started to migrate people across from that to the new Fiesta in June and July of that year.

The first job with any new car is to read the regulations and look at ways to make a difference, but at this time the rules were very fluid and still being clarified. It was clear, however, that the new technical regulations for 2017 would offer scope to make that difference. From the outside, the biggest noticeable difference is with the aerodynamics, so let's start there.

AERODYNAMICS

We use CFD (computational fluid dynamics) when we're working on new aerodynamics on the cars. We haven't been in a windtunnel, but none of the recent cars from M-Sport have. We took the view that we were getting some great results from CFD, it's served us well in the past and we're really fine-tuning the process and achieving better and better data.

One of the issues we had with the aero was that the regulations were quite late in being defined. There was a lot of discussion between the manufacturers and the FIA regarding the interpretation of the rules. For example, the rear wing was still being discussed in October. OK, it was only the gurney flap on the rear wing, but there were some real discussions going on about what constituted the gurney and how it interfaced with the main wing profile.

This meant there was a lot of evolution of the aerodynamics

throughout the development process last year. But we're really happy with what we've got.

We had an aero-balance target to meet for the car and we're there. The front bumper/splitter arrangement balances what we get from the enlarged spoiler at the rear. But all of the time you have to balance the equation of drag, downforce durability and robustness. The durability comes in two parts: if the front aero is too fragile and you knock parts off, you're going to have a real imbalance in the car *and* you have to be aware that the car will move around. It also needs to be robust so it's not sensitive to pitch and yaw changes. For example, when we are running the car in gravel specification, the car tends to be quite soft and there will be more pitch.

The rear wing and diffuser are vital parts of the aero package, but again you have to reach that aero target in terms of balance, efficiency and avoiding drag. We want downforce, but we don't want the car to be slowed down in a straight line. We're looking for efficiency all round with the aero.

Obviously, the splitters and wings will increase the corner speed, there's no doubt about that. The increase in width of the car by 55mm will also raise the corner speed and the levels of stability in the corners.

ENGINE

Everybody's talking about the bigger restrictor and bigger turbo that has been fitted to this year's Fiesta, but there's more to the engine work than that. We have evolved pretty much every part of the engine for 2017. It hasn't been a radical rethink, more an optimisation of everything we have. We've done a lot of

Aero is key to the 2017-spec car's speed, so drivers need to avoid knocking off bits of bodywork



ALL PICS: GARY JONES

packaging work in the engine, looking at it as part of the whole car in a way of optimisation and integration. What we've focused on here is a better whole-car concept.

One of the key areas of our association with Ford is the use of the climatic tunnel at Dunton. Loosely speaking, that allows us to dial in the conditions we want to tune the engine to, including temperature and altitude. Obviously, it's quite difficult to find a high-altitude and high-temperature road all-year round – that's where Dunton comes in.

The upshot of the engine work is more power (380bhp, up from 300) and a bit more torque (around 330lb ft now). Because we've got more power, you'll notice a different engine note to before – the cars are going to be revving higher with the optimum power further up the rev range.

TRANSMISSION

We've changed supplier for this season – we're working with Ricardo – but the big regulation change is the return of the active centre differential. Here at M-Sport, we have a lot of experience of working with active transmission: we used it in our cars from 1999-2010. That knowledge has given us a lot of base-strategy data to go back through while working on this car.

We're using a different kind of valve in the centre diff this time around – not the expensive servo-type we used previously – and learning how to control that valve has probably been the biggest hurdle for us. It took a while, but we've got the accuracy and speed we wanted. As well as helping to make the car easier to drive, the centre differential will potentially help with shock loading and bring more durability in the transmission.



Ogier has more power to play with



On-the-fly diff changes will boost driver confidence

The previous transmission was designed for the Fiesta S2000 and then evolved for the World Rally Car. The transmission for the 2017 car is designed and optimised as a WRC product throughout. For example, the assisted gearshift and control valve are integrated direct into the gearbox casing.

BRAKES

The maximum brake-disc size has increased from 355mm to 370mm on asphalt. It stays the same at 300mm on gravel. The innovation in this area for us comes from Brembo, our brake-component supplier. Brembo has designed specific calipers for this car, working hard on the distribution of mass inside the caliper and stiffness.

Braking efficiency has improved, but it wouldn't really be noticeable to the naked eye. It's sure that the cars can brake later this year, but that's not just coming from the brakes – the aerodynamics and downforce help with that and the cars are 10 kilos lighter.

SUSPENSION

The regulations have allowed more freedom all round in the suspension, and we've worked very hard on a different philosophy from the last couple of years. Again, this isn't really something you would notice from the outside and it's not something that changes the car radically on gravel or asphalt. The biggest change comes for us in the rear suspension – but we haven't reinvented the wheel.

DRIVEABILITY

These new cars are going to suit a smoother, neater driving style than before. The increased aero and the centre differential will mean the cars will be straighter, with less drama. Obviously the downforce will stop the cars from sliding as much, but the change in the transmission will make them easier and less edgy on the road. The fastest way will be the most precise way, keeping the car on the road at all times.

The ability to make changes to the centre diff – even in the middle of the stage – will give the drivers confidence and, fundamentally, it will make it a bit easier to turn in to the corners. Without the centre diff, you tended to get a bit more fight from the car.

Staying on the road will be a big key to success this season. Going off and knocking bits of aero off will really hurt a driver and their stage time. 🏆



Meeke's BEST CHANCE

It's been a long time coming, but Kris Meeke is now in a position to fight for the WRC title with Citroen. Some even say he's favourite...

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@daviddevansrally](#)

Kris Meeke is happy to talk. More than happy. Talking means sitting in the car and not standing outside, where temperatures are knocking on the door of -40C. Jabbing at the buttons on the road-going C3's heater a couple of times, just to be sure the blower's giving all it's got, Meeke shivers briefly and zips his bright-red, duvet-thick Citroen Racing jacket up as far as it will go. A white woolly hat is produced from his pocket and pulled in the opposite direction, leaving just the Northern Irishman's eyes peering out into Sweden's arctic gloom.

But the eyes are smiling.

"I love it," he says, "I just love it. This is my job."

The last sentence is delivered in almost a questioning tone – like he can scarcely believe his luck.

Except it's not luck. Meeke's arrived at this point of his career via some of the lowest lows and toughest times. But those days are behind him now. Any lingering self-doubt has long since been cleared away; Meeke's focus is now on his first serious tilt at the World Rally Championship title.

Fourteen years ago next week, Meeke started his first foreign round of the WRC. While he delivered an Opel Corsa to the finish of the Monte Carlo Rally 12th in class, fellow Brits Colin McRae and Richard Burns fared a little better. The Scot was second, the Englishman fifth.

That event would be the last time a UK driver started

a full world championship programme with a shot at the title. Until now.

"I feel ready for this," says Meeke. "We've put so much work into the last season, the development of the car and everything, I don't think I could be in a better position. Do I dare think about the title? Why not? What happened with Volkswagen's departure has blown this whole thing wide open.

"Don't get me wrong, I would have loved to have had a crack at [Sebastien] Ogier in a Volkswagen, but things have changed a fair bit now. Now Seb's in a new car, he's in a Ford and he's in there with very little mileage under his belt. But he's still Sebastien Ogier. And then there's Hyundai, they're looking good and Toyota's coming back and nobody really knows how they're going to run. There are so many unknowns about this season – it's a big step into the dark for us all."

The one thing Meeke's not in the dark about any more is his future with Citroen. Just over 12 months ago, he inked a deal that will keep him at the French firm until the end of next year.

That three-year contract has had a crucial effect. "I said all along that when I got a long-term contract, it would make a difference and it has," says Meeke. "It's really hard to drive when you know what's riding on each result and you know you could be out before the end of the season. But the stability has taken away any doubt in the mind."

Meeke doesn't strike you as the kind of man who has any time for self-doubt.

"I don't really," he says, "but when you're working under those kind of conditions, there's always something in your >>

Meeke was peerless on the final morning in Corsica last year



MCKLEIN/DE



Meeke was the first UK driver to conquer Rally Finland

mind. That's gone now. I know what I can do and I know what this team can do."

Meeke's stock is high right now. His wins in Portugal and Finland last year were a clear indication of how he's evolved into a quick and consistent driver. Such has been his progression that some of the world's media are actually pushing the line that he starts the season as favourite – ahead of Ogier. Predictably, Meeke's having none of that. But it's a fair reflection on just how much perceptions have changed.

Citroën certainly sees the value in its new team leader. The squad backs Meeke with the kind of admiration and dedication not seen since the days of Sebastien Loeb. And the feeling's mutual.

"Look at this team," says Meeke. "There's so much experience about the place. This [the C3 WRC] has been done by the same guy who worked on the Xsara, Alexis Avril. Alexis was Carlos Sainz's engineer – that's the kind of experience I'm talking about. It's huge.

"The C3 WRC is the fourth generation of World Rally Car

"I'm not the kind of driver who makes big plans. It's event by event for me"

Citroën has built and, let's face it, the last three haven't been half bad, have they? But as it stands right now, I've won nothing in terms of a championship and I haven't even come close to winning. What Sebastien Loeb did with this team was special and it'll never be repeated – certainly I'll not be winning nine titles. But let's see if we can get one..."

Loeb's certainly been impressed with what Meeke's achieved.

"Kris did some good rallies last year," Loeb says, "and he's improved more for staying on the road! He's shown that he's very fast and now he's finding ways to keep the consistency as well."

In the past, Meeke has been guilty of snatching

at opportunities. When he led a rally, it was concern rather than confidence that was writ large across the faces of those at Citroën HQ. Not anymore.

When Meeke moved to the front in Portugal and Finland, there was no hiding behind hands. You sensed that he was driving within himself and the times were coming naturally. He had relaxed.

Meeke's history-making Finland win – the first for a UK driver – was lauded as one of the finest achievements of his career. And the first run through Ouninpohja – when he took 13 seconds out of everybody in arguably the season's most famous 20 miles – was singled out as the moment of the season.

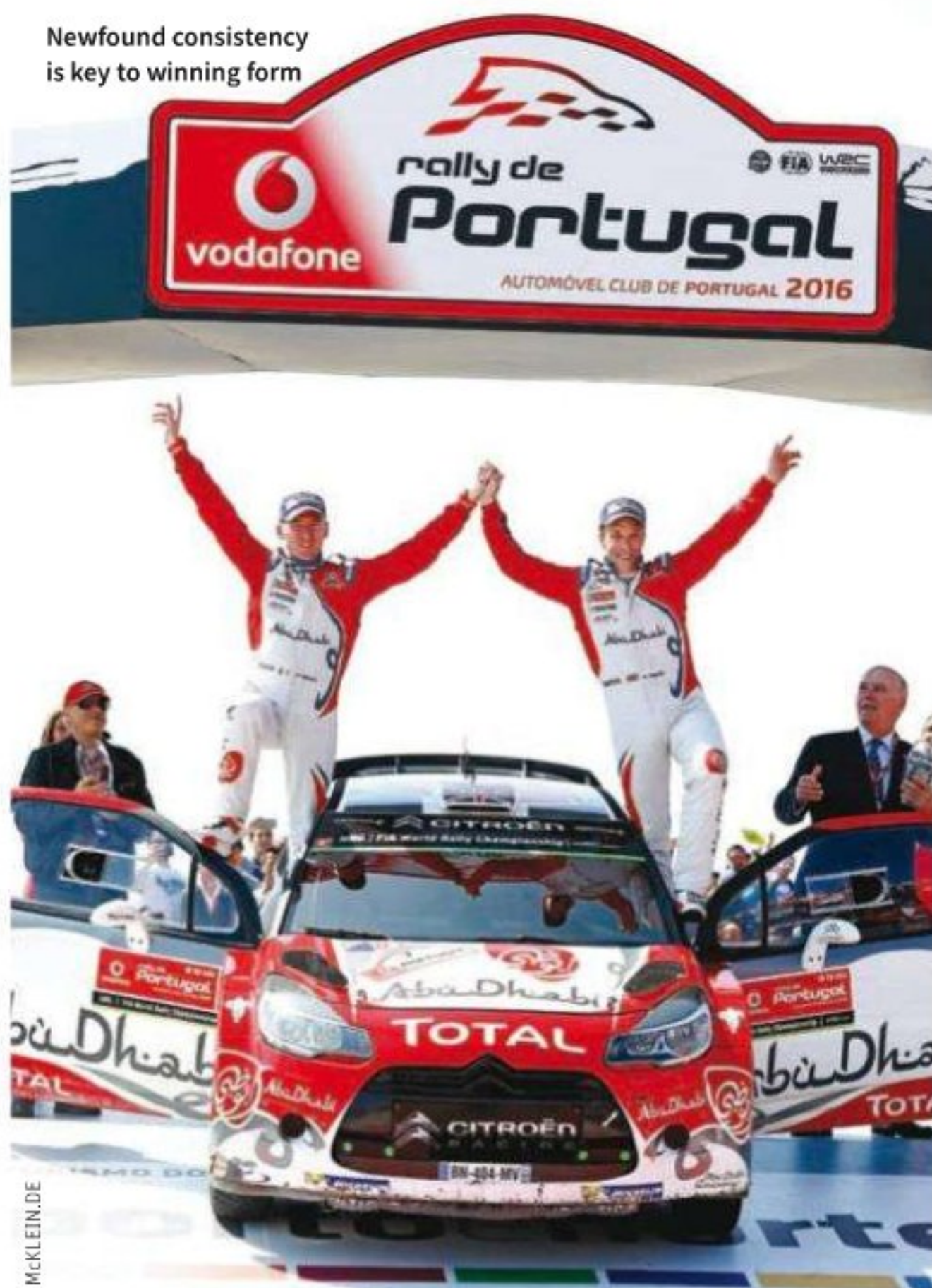
Meeke disagrees. There's no doubt that he loved his rip across rallying's most famous rollercoaster, but he took more personal satisfaction from the final morning in Corsica. The road from Antisanti to Poggio di Nazza is 33 miles long; Meeke took a shade over a second out of everybody in every single one of those miles.

"There were events – or parts of events – last year," says Meeke, "where I knew I had struggled in the past. Corsica was one of them. I'd done Corsica a couple of times 10 or so years ago, but the 2015 event was my first time in a World Rally Car



New C3 WRC has been built by a team with exceptional pedigree

Newfound consistency
is key to winning form



THE 'OTHER' IRISHMAN AT CITROEN

RARELY HAS THAT analogy about the regularity of buses been so applicable as it is with the Citroen Total Abu Dhabi World Rally Team this season.

Thousands of rally fans across the Emerald Isle have waited patiently for one of their own to land a seat in a factory World Rally Championship team. And now two of them have, with Craig Breen joining Kris Meeke to offer a real Irish flavour to the French squad.

And that Northern and Irish Republic connection doesn't end there: team co-drivers Paul Nagle and Chris Patterson mean four of the eight competitors in the team are from west of the Irish Sea.

"There's never been anything like this before at home," says Meeke. "We had

Billy Coleman doing some rallies in a works car, but not two drivers with factory programmes. It's great for the sport at home and people are really getting behind us and supporting it. It's great to see."

Breen remains on cloud nine, his place of residence since landing the biggest

world to talk to and to work with."

While Meeke is shaping up for a potential title bid, Breen's got his own ideas about success in the coming season.

"My aim was to be on the podium," he says, "but I managed that already [in Finland last year], so I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself. That

"My aim was a podium. But I've done that. So now I'm chasing a win"

deal of his life in October last year.

"It's still an absolute dream," says the former WRC Academy and Super 2000 World Rally Championship winner. "To be driving alongside Kris is fantastic; it really helps to have somebody from the same part of the

means the next step has to be chasing wins – I want to be in a position to be doing that this year."

Breen starts Monte Carlo in a 2016 DS 3 WRC. For the first few rallies he will share a third C3 WRC with Frenchman Stephane Lefebvre, before they get a C3 each from Corsica onwards.

and it was horrible. I was nowhere. The conditions were shocking, I was driving for my career, Thierry [Neuville] had gone off, which meant there was pressure on for the manufacturers' championship – I hated it. We were fourth, but the times were not good.

"Last year, we had a puncture on the first day and a broken wheel on the second, but on the third I really wanted to come out and give it a go. I wanted to leave the island on a high, on a positive note. That first stage on Sunday morning did that. For me, that was a better performance than Ouninpohja."

And it was the same story in Spain.

"I'd never been able to get on with the gravel stages there," he admits. "I don't know why, but it had never worked. In Terra Alta, I'd never been within 25 seconds of the fastest time and last year I was quickest on the second run there. I'm happy now. I know that sequence of stages is in my head and I have no issues. For me, the box was ticked in Corsica and Spain in the same way the box was ticked for winning in Portugal and Finland."

Meeke's under no illusions – he's certainly not eyeing every event as a potential 25-pointer.

"Monte and Sweden are events I like," he says, "but the early part of the season's about laying the foundations for the year ahead. It's about putting some points down and making a good start to the championship. I'm not the kind of driver who makes big plans about how to tackle the year ahead; it'll be event by event for me, building momentum."

At 37, time's not on Meeke's side in the way it is for a twentysomething driver coming to the boil in the WRC. But it's easy to forget how much success in world rallying relies on the experience and maturity of drivers; it's those facets that allowed some of the greats to compete well into their forties.

But beyond those very necessary attributes is speed. And nobody could deny that Meeke has that in spades.

Fourteen years after his mentor McRae started the Monte chasing a win, it's Meeke's name on the side of the Citroen this time. And there's never been a stronger case for a British winner with the French connection. ❧

Breen benefits
from working
alongside Meeke



WRC/PREVIEW

Ogier, M-Sport and the ENTENTE CORDIALE

It's been a hasty marriage between the multiple champion and his new British team, but Sebastien Ogier is settling in perfectly at M-Sport. So much so that the French superstar even likes the Cumbrian cuisine

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

🐦 @daviddevansrally



Going into the penultimate round of last year's World Rally Championship, Sebastien Ogier was a shoo-in for this week's Monte Carlo Rally. Had to be; he'd be starting another season with a team he'd already won four titles with. And he'd be in a car benefiting from 18 months of development.

There's no such thing as a dead cert in the French Alps, but the Gap-born superstar was as close as you're ever going to get.

And now? Two and a bit months on from Rally GB, he's driving for a team that hasn't won for four years, and he's in a car he's tested for four days.

Still worth a punt? Definitely.

More than anybody else in the championship, Ogier knows where his new Ford stands. He's the only man in the world who can compare it with the Polo R WRC and Toyota's Yaris WRC. To varying degrees, he's tested all three. What does he think?

He thinks he's an M-Sport driver now and that's what he wants to talk about. The future; the Fiesta.

This week, the all-conquering Frenchman has the chance to join Tommi Makinen and Sebastien Loeb and become the third driver to win the WRC-counting Monte Carlo Rally four times in succession. And that's his aim.

"I am always the same," he says. "My philosophy when I start something is to win; I only want to win. It's true, this is the smallest amount of preparation I have ever done before the start of a new season. I've been in the car for two days in Sweden last month and two days in France last week and done maybe 400 kilometres in each test. I'm not going to think much about that. It is how it is."

"I am realistic about the preparation, but at the moment there is nothing that tells me I cannot win in Monte Carlo. I am thinking about the positives."

And anybody who's seen M-Sport's stunning Ford Fiesta WRC in testing will tell you there are plenty of positives. Ogier arrived at the team too late for any input into the development of the car but, a couple of damper tweaks aside, he's happy with what he's found.

"With the homologation done, there's no chance for me to change anything," he says. "It's about me getting comfortable with the set-up and then seeing how the car reacts to any changes we make."

"There are some points I would like to improve, but I have to say the car is not bad. The thing is, as we all know, the Monte is a very specific event. To do well in this rally, you need a good set-up from the car, you need the confidence from the car and you need to make the tyre choice well. If you do all of that, then you are looking in a good way for some success."

Those roads and that climate come as second nature to Ogier. He grew up there and that could be enough to give him the edge. "I do have good experience of this rally," he agrees, "and you are right, that's really important on this event. And I have some hopes that I can use this knowledge this week, but at the same time we have to remember, the Monte can be... I won't say the word 'lottery', but you know what I mean — you need some luck with the conditions."

"I will be first on the road and if there is snow then it will be a disadvantage, but if it's clean then maybe I can have the advantage. Let's see."

In the previous five years with Volkswagen, Ogier and co-driver Julien Ingrassia wanted for pretty much nothing. But the switch from the biggest-budgeted manufacturer squad to Malcolm Wilson's privateer M-Sport operation doesn't faze him in the slightest.

"It's the car," he says, quietly, but emphatically. "That's



the most important thing. That's the only thing. This is the reason I took this deal. At Volkswagen we had some comfort and plenty of facilities to make our lives really good. It's early to say how it will work at M-Sport, but really I'm not worried about that. It's clear we are here with a team with less budget, but all I want to know is that the car is fast and reliable."

Having watched the new car throughout its development process, Wilson is predictably full of reassurance on that front. "I've got every confidence in the car," he says. "There's so much experience and knowledge in this team; I'm sure we've done a good job. When it came to talking to Sebastien about him coming to drive for us, the priority for me was to get him in the car. I wanted to see what he thought. To be honest, I didn't want him here if he couldn't see the potential. Thankfully for us, he could."

Wilson's no stranger to big deals — the several millions he paid Colin McRae to lure the Scot from Subaru set a new benchmark in 1999. And Marcus Gronholm didn't come cheap seven years down the line.

But this is the most important one for Wilson — and M-Sport.

"I must admit, the timing for all of this deal to happen was... should we say, less than perfect," Wilson smiles thinly.

"What with the investment we've got going on here at Dovenby and the investment in the new facility in Poland, it's fair to say the negotiations with Sebastien did leave me with a few sleepless nights. My priority has always been and will always be to the 200 people who work here at M-Sport and I've explained that to Sebastien; they have to come first. But at the same time, I'm passionate about this sport and, for me, there will never be another opportunity like this one."

There are 200 people standing behind Wilson at M-Sport who couldn't agree more.

And every one of them met Ogier when he arrived at the Dovenby HQ earlier this month.

"He went and shook hands with every single member of staff," says Wilson. "That meant a huge amount to the people here — you should have seen the look on their faces. We haven't won a rally for, what? Four years. And that hurts, it really does. But now, I tell you, morale here couldn't be higher."

It wasn't lost on Ogier either. "The enthusiasm was incredible," he says. "It definitely feels like a good place to »

be. Some of the team came into the factory during the Christmas holiday when it was closed to make some more time and some extra work on the car — that's incredible. It's nice to feel part of this, but now I have to deliver on my side as well."

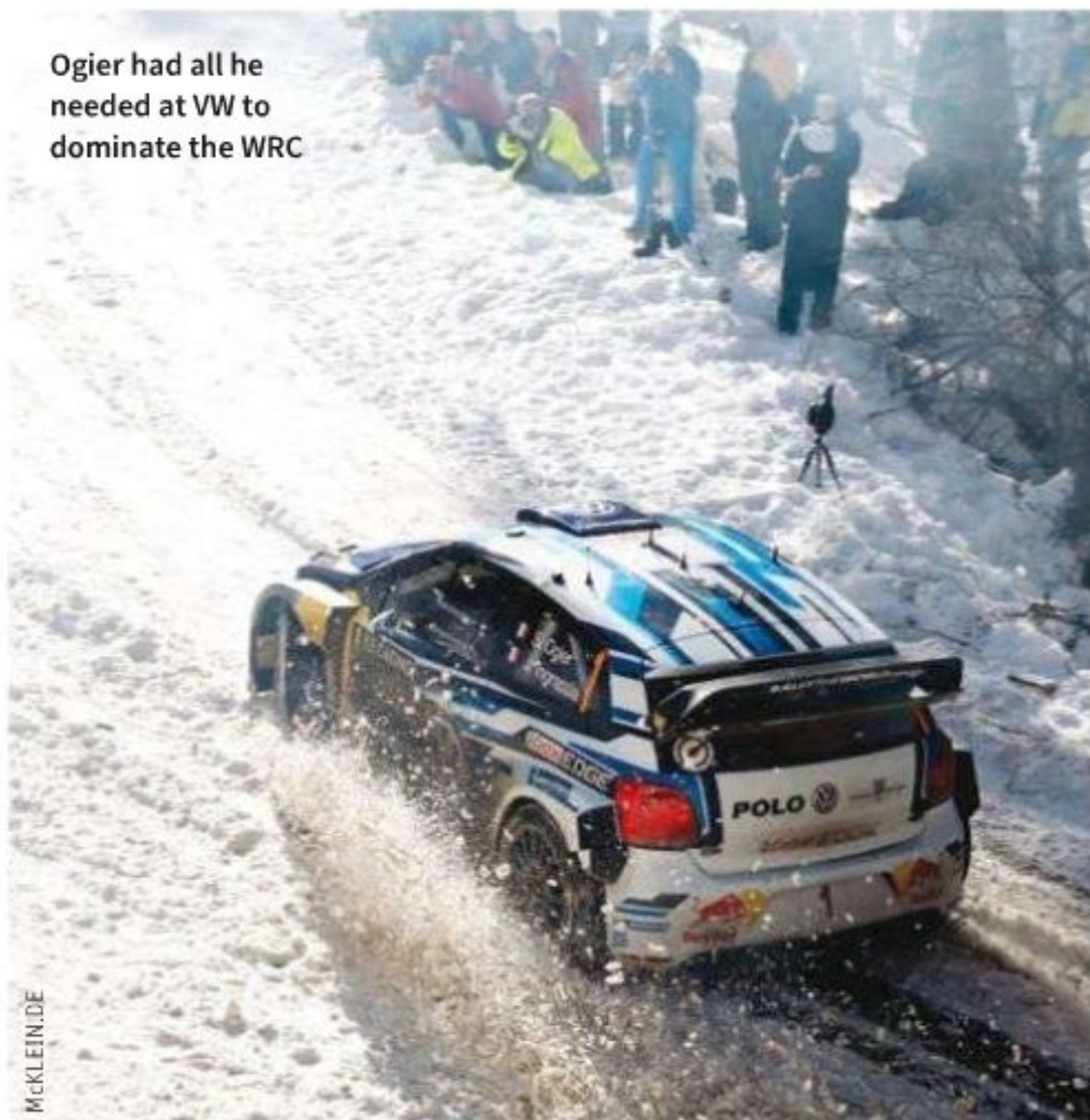
Wilson famously engenders a family atmosphere at M-Sport and regularly takes his crews back to his house to sample his wife Elaine's cooking at the end of the day.

For Seb, there was more good news at *maison* Wilson.

Ogier laughs: "There was this reputation that the food in England is not always the best. I can tell you, this is the complete opposite for Mrs Wilson — she is a fantastic cook!"

The perfect Cumbrian fare was a great end to the team's annual strategy meeting day, a rendezvous that kicks the season off for the 2006/2007 world champion team. "This is something we do early every January and always have," says

Ogier had all he needed at VW to dominate the WRC



Wilson. "We get all the crews up here, go into the boardroom and spend the day talking everything through from the Monte right through the strategy for the year. I can't tell you the difference in the atmosphere at that meeting from the same one 12 months earlier. It was incredible. The positivity and enthusiasm in the room was fantastic."

While Ogier's professional pre-season preparations may not have been perfect, he still managed a couple of weeks' family time over Christmas. "That time to disconnect is really important for me," he says, "and this year was really nice. Maybe the rest wasn't quite as complete as normal and maybe I didn't get quite so much sleep as normal, but this was nothing to do with work... his name is Tim [Ogier's baby son]! It was really great to spend my first Christmas with my son and with my wife."

But now the time has come to get back to work. And the first week hasn't been without incident, after Ogier slid off the road during the second day of his test on the Col de Perty, just north of Sisteron.

"During the lunch break in the test," he says, "the conditions had changed. There was a little snow and there was some frost on the road. The car slid into the ditch and took the wheel out. It wasn't too bad, not too much damage and, of course, it's better that this happens in the test!"

After dry conditions on the opening day of his test, Ogier was glad of the chance to soften the Fiesta and run it in changeable, snowy weather. "Nobody knows what will come in Monte," he says, "this is what makes it a challenge."

Ogier is absolutely right. Nobody knows what will come in Monte. And we're not just talking about the weather. But if the all-new Gap-Cumbrian alliance works the way they want it to, four years of hurt could be coming to an end. ❧



How much of a threat will the new Toyota be?

Believe the hype – it's all to play for

IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER a time when there was so much hype ahead of the start of a new World Rally Championship season. And it's even harder to remember a time when that hype was so entirely justified.

The main question is obviously centred on the Sebastien Ogier/M-Sport partnership, but beyond that there's the return of Citroen. Talk to the champ about his main title rival and Kris Meeke's is the first name past the Frenchman's lips. Ogier knows all about the reserves of expertise and depth of knowledge on tap at his former employer in Versailles. He knows the

C3 WRC will be a good car. And we all know what Meeke's capable of. And we got a solid insight into Craig Breen's potential too last season. How cool would it be to see Citroen's Irishman topping the podium this year? That's what he's aiming for.

But what about Hyundai? The new i30 Coupe WRC lifts the best bits out of last year's car – those best bits that carried the car to two victories – and adds them to some even better bits for 2017.

Certainly, it's hard to look past the trio of Hayden Paddon, Thierry Neuville and

Dani Sordo for a more consistent points-scoring machine. Hyundai for its first world title this season? Looks a pretty safe bet. But within the squad, who will win out in the power struggle to be the number one between Neuville and Paddon?

And then there's Toyota. The Japanese sleeping giant, which once ruled the World Rally Championship, has been woken. Looks like it may take a while to shake off some early-season sleepiness but, once that Yaris WRC has a few more miles under its wheels, anything could happen.



WRC/PREVIEW

TEAM BY TEAM

New cars, a new manufacturer, and a new home for the world champion. **DAVID EVANS** delivers the lowdown on the 2017 WRC season's line-up

M-Sport World Rally Team



Malcolm Wilson and his Cumbrian-based M-Sport team have known some big seasons with major Martini and Ford backing for stars such as Colin McRae, Carlos Sainz and Petter Solberg. It's landed two world titles with the 2006 and '07 manufacturers' trophies and come close to crowning a driver or two at the same time.

But nothing quite comes close to the opportunity that sits before the good folk of Dovenby Hall this season. In Sebastien Ogier, M-Sport has the finest driver of a generation and, on paper, its Ford Fiesta WRC is not far behind in terms of hardware.



SEBASTIEN OGIER (F)
Age 33
Car number 1
Starts 110
Wins 38
Podiums 56
Titles 4

Co-driver Julien Ingrassia (F)

A fourth consecutive title defence could be the biggest challenge of Ogier's career to date. The Frenchman starts round one with severely limited knowledge of what his Ford Fiesta WRC and his new team are capable of. Fortunately for him he's Sebastien Ogier, so he's likely to come out smelling of roses. And champagne.



OTT TANAK (EST)
Age 29
Car number 2
Starts 66
Wins 0
Podiums 4
Titles 0

Co-driver Martin Jarveoja (EST)

His yo-yo career in and out of the M-Sport World Rally Team continues. But this time Tanak comes back a faster and far more mature driver than before. He could and should win rallies this time around. More importantly, where he can't win, he needs to bank big points.



ELFYN EVANS (GB)
Age 28
Car number 3
Starts 50
Wins 0
Podiums 2
Titles 0

Co-driver Dan Barritt (GB)

Entered by M-Sport, although this will be a DMACK World Rally Team-branded car and effort. Evans knows the Cumbrian tyres better than anybody, having won last year's British Rally Championship on them, and he comes back to a factory Fiesta WRC more determined than ever to stay put.

Hyundai Motorsport



In the absence of Volkswagen, the spotlight falls on the 2016 runner-up to provide a manufacturers' benchmark. And the South Korean firm is definitely up for the task, especially with such a capable driver line-up.

Michel Nandan's team has evolved brilliantly since it arrived in the championship three years ago, and building three new World Rally Cars (not to mention an R5 machine) in as many years hasn't fazed the fledgling squad in the slightest. Hyundai's new car comes with the most carryover of all the 2017 machinery – and, with the pace of last year's car, that may be no bad thing.



THIERRY NEUVILLE (B)
Age 28
Car number 5
Starts 71
Wins 2
Podiums 19
Titles 0

Co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul (B)

A year ago, Neuville was on the verge of being labelled a spent force. Not any more. Refreshed and revitalised after a much more sensible approach last season, the Belgian is a real force going into this season, particularly if he can continue the sort of form he showed in the second half of 2016.



HAYDEN PADDON (NZ)
Age 29
Car number 4
Starts 60
Wins 1
Podiums 4
Titles 0

Co-driver John Kennard (NZ)

Paddon's methodical approach bore fruit last season, but now it's about more wins and a possible title threat from the hard-working and likeable Kiwi. Needs to take a step on asphalt – he knows that and, predictably, he's on it.



DANI SORDO (E)
Age 33
Car number 6
Starts 140
Wins 1
Podiums 40
Titles 0

Co-driver Marc Marti (E)

Hugely experienced and one of the quickest drivers ever on asphalt. Can he be world champion? He says not, but what he can do is bag big points for Hyundai and help his team-mates achieve their goals. Brilliant team player.

Citroen World Rally Team

The sabbatical's done, a season of development is through – it's time to see what the C3 WRC is capable of. This week marks Citroen's proper, full-time return to the WRC after what's been any number of half-baked seasons with zero development and not a lot more budget.

The whole touring car thing has come and gone and now Versailles is ready to get back to rallying. Eight titles in 10 years doesn't come without amassing huge levels of knowhow and experience, and all of that will be deployed this year.



*Car 12, DS 3 WRC in Monte Carlo



KRIS MEEKE (GB)
Age 37
Car number 7
Starts 73
Wins 3
Podiums 9
Titles 0

Co-driver Paul Nagle (IRL)

The moment he's waited for: for the first time in his career, Meeke's in the right place at the right time. He's spent the past year developing the C3 WRC and building both the car and the team around himself. He has the nous, the speed and the wherewithal to take the title.



CRAIG BREEN (IRL)
Age 26
Car number 8/9*
Starts 37
Wins 0
Podiums 1
Titles 0

Co-driver Scott Martin (GB)

Will share the second C3 early in the season before getting a full programme in the 2017 car from Corsica onwards. Breen's development was one of the stories of last year, and his podium in Finland was a spectacular headline that launched his successful bid for a ride this season.



STEPHANE LEFEBVRE (F)
Age 24
Car number 8/9
Starts 26
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Titles 0

Co-driver Gabin Moreau (F)

Starts the year sharing a car with Breen, but Lefebvre is a driver with some pressure on his shoulders. Citroen's remarkable ability to bring talented young Frenchmen through the ranks has stalled recently – could Lefebvre be the man it's been waiting for?



Toyota

Toyota has a rich and rewarding history in the WRC, but what came out of Cologne under the guidance of Ove Andersson more than 17 years ago has little bearing on the Yaris WRC that returns the world's biggest carmaker to the forefront of the sport. This Toyota is a Finnish affair, admittedly with an engine tuned in Germany. Team principal Tommi Makinen has been running around like a mad thing for the past year, but still, this is going to be a very, very tough season for a team running a car that only turned a wheel for the first time in April last year.



JARI-MATTI LATVALA (FIN)
Age 31
Car number 10
Starts 169
Wins 16
Podiums 57
Titles 0

Co-driver Miikka Anttila (FIN)

Edged Andreas Mikkelsen for the final remaining seat when the music heralding VW's departure ended last month. Now has to step up and show he's worth it. Needs to put a disastrous 2016 behind him, shed the number-two tag and lead a team without crashing or cracking.



JUHO HANNINEN (FIN)
Age 35
Car number 11
Starts 43
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Titles 0

Co-driver Kaj Lindstrom (FIN)

Keeping the man who has put thousands of testing miles on a Yaris WRC in the seat for this season makes sense from a development perspective, but Hanninen's going to have to turn on some pace to stay there in an increasingly overcrowded driver market.



ESAPEKKA LAPPI (FIN)
Age 26
Car number 12
Starts 21
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Titles 0

Co-driver Janne Ferm (FIN)

Has been the next big thing to come out of Finland for a while now. But with the likes of Teemu Suninen waiting in the wings, he's not going to have long to show he's been worth the wait. Lacks World Rally Car experience, but has the right kind of attitude – *sisu* aplenty.

PICK OF THE REST

ANDREAS MIKKELSEN (N)

Age 27 Starts 78 Wins 3

Podiums 20 Titles 0

Co-driver Anders Jaeger (N)

Starts in a Skoda Fabia R5 this week, but if there's any justice he will find his way into a 2017 car sooner rather than later. Australia win at the end of last year showed what Mikkelsen is truly capable of.

MADS OSTBERG (N)

Age 29 Starts 103 Wins 1

Podiums 16 Titles 0

Co-driver Ola Floene (N)

Has a real chance to make a big impression when he launches his 2017 season in Sweden, driving an independent M-Sport Fiesta WRC. When all's working right, still has the potential to win.

CALENDAR

MONTE CARLO RALLY

JANUARY 19-22

RALLY SWEDEN

FEBRUARY 9-12

RALLY MEXICO

MARCH 9-12

TOUR OF CORSICA

APRIL 6-9

RALLY ARGENTINA

APRIL 27-30

RALLY PORTUGAL

MAY 18-21

RALLY ITALY SARDINIA

JUNE 8-11

RALLY POLAND

JUNE 29-JULY 2

RALLY FINLAND

JULY 27-30

RALLY GERMANY

AUGUST 17-20

RALLY SPAIN

OCTOBER 5-8

RALLY GB

OCTOBER 26-29

RALLY AUSTRALIA

NOVEMBER 16-19

THE RACING CAR SHOW

2017 IS GO

MOTORSPORT LEADING LIGHTS INCLUDING JACQUES Villeneuve, Dario Franchitti, Lance Stroll, Claire Williams, Adrian Newey and Rob Smedley helped launch the new season at Autosport International 2017 last weekend.

Fans and members of the industry flocked to Birmingham's NEC, in which a display celebrating the Williams Formula 1 team's 40th anniversary was among the many highlights.

Jacques Villeneuve spoke his mind



SBLOXHAM/LAT

AUTOSPORT STAGE GUESTS

Cyril Abiteboul, Ewan Baldry, James Barclay, Ella Barrington, Dan Barritt, Rob Bell, Wayne Boyd, Zak Brown, Martin Brundle, Dick Cormack, Maria Costello, Richard Dean, Christian England, Elfyn Evans, Will Fewkes, Sennan Fielding, John Fitzpatrick, Dario Franchitti, Mark Gemmell, James Good, Alan Gow, Paul Hembery, Johnny Herbert, Jake Hill, Callum Ilott, Andrew Jordan, Jack Layton, Olivier Lombard, David Lowe, James MacNaughton, Arun Mammen, John McGuinness, Allan McNish, Laurent Mekies, Sandy Mitchell, Adam Morgan, Johnny Mowlem, James Nash, Matt Neal, Adrian Newey, Harrison Newey, Lando Norris, Sam O'Neill, Glenn Patterson, Martin Plowman, Nigel Roebuck, Tom Sharp, Gordon Shedden, Rob Smedley, Toby Sowery, Paul Streather, Lance Stroll, Nick Tandy, Christopher Tate, Ben Taylor, Elizabeth Thompson, Lawrence Tomlinson, Colin Turkington, Darren Turner, Oliver Turvey, Jacques Villeneuve, Tommaso Volpe, Derek Warwick, Ant Whorton-Eales, Claire Williams, Malcolm Wilson and Dino Zamparelli.

SBLOXHAM/LAT





WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Franchitti Porsche link

DARIO FRANCHITTI SAYS HE had an LMP1 Le Mans 24 Hours drive with Porsche lined up for 2015, before his career-ending IndyCar accident.

The four-time IndyCar champion was forced to retire on medical grounds aged 40 in late 2013, following a crash in that year's Houston race.

Franchitti was a semi-regular in sportscar races such as the Daytona 24 Hours, and planned to be part of Porsche's LMP1 programme in 2015, the year after

it returned to the World Endurance Championship.

"I'd have liked to have done Le Mans, that was the big dream," the three-time Indy 500 winner said on the Autosport Stage on Saturday.

"I had a great drive lined up for 2015 there, actually in LMP1. I'm a big Porsche fan – literally my phone is full of pictures of Porsches and my garage has a couple too, and I love the brand.

"I became friends with Wolfgang Hatz who is the head

of R&D there, and I talked to him a bit about it and he said to come along. So I went to [Porsche's base in] Weissach and had a big top-secret meeting with [LMP1 team principal] Andreas Seidl and the guys there.

"I said I wanted one more chance at Indy. I wanted to do 2013 and '14, and then I said I'd be done with IndyCar and then I wanted to come – and he said that was fine, and it fitted in with their plan.

"It just didn't happen."



AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL TRADE AWARDS

BEST OVERALL STAND

Toyo Tires

BEST NATIONAL MOTORSPORT STAND

Race Revival Shop

BEST PERFORMANCE CAR SHOW STAND

The Performance
Company

BEST HISTORIC MOTORSPORT STAND

Dunne Motorsport

BEST TRADE & TECHNICAL STAND

Dymag

BEST AUTOSPORT ENGINEERING STAND

FI.TIM

TECHNICAL INNOVATION AWARD – AUTOSPORT ENGINEERING

MoTec

CREATIVE STAND DESIGN AWARD

Juno Racing Cars

BEST SMALL STAND

Harper Adams
University

FORMULA 1

Villeneuve: modern F1 lacks respect

MODERN FORMULA 1 DRIVERS LACK respect for their rivals, 1997 world champion Jacques Villeneuve believes.

Speaking at Autosport International, he likened F1 racing to a video game and said that improved safety had negatively impacted the way drivers race each other.

Comparing current F1 with the era in which his father Gilles raced, Villeneuve said: "Because the cars were dangerous and it was difficult to overtake, there was a lot more respect between drivers.

"You never saw drivers weave down a straight line. You never saw a driver brake on the inside of the track; he would keep the line, brake on the outside and try and brake later. It was clean and respectful. They banged into each other but they were mistakes.

"Now, you see a video game, where drivers think they are inside a video game. There is no respect. What is respect? It's not even in their dictionary. Everything is fine – you can't get hurt."





Silverstone wants to keep MotoGP round

MOTOGP

Silverstone thinks bike

BRITISH RACING DRIVERS' CLUB PRESIDENT Derek Warwick hopes the Circuit of Wales project "doesn't happen" and that Silverstone can continue to host MotoGP's British Grand Prix.

Silverstone took over the race from Donington Park in 2010, but the yet-to-be-built Welsh venue signed a five-year deal to host MotoGP from 2015. Since the Circuit of Wales has hit funding hurdles, Silverstone has remained on the calendar in an arrangement that will continue this year and potentially next. Warwick wants to keep MotoGP beyond the interim hosting deal.

"MotoGP is very important for Silverstone," he said. "We think we have got it for the next two years, which is really good."

"I'll talk very quickly about a certain Welsh circuit, the Circuit of Wales – I hope it doesn't happen, I don't think it will happen so I'm looking forward to MotoGP in the future."

"We have a very good crowd base at Silverstone for motorbike racing followers. We're not just a four-wheel circuit anymore; we're

also a two-wheel circuit, and we get a good following for that as well."

On the circuit's Formula 1 future, Warwick says that Silverstone is in talks with the government about securing funding. The BRDC sent a letter to its members before Christmas suggesting that it was considering activating its break clause after the 2019 race.

But Warwick moved to calm fears that Silverstone could lose the race, saying that talks with the government, as well as F1's incoming owner Liberty Media and F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone, give him hope.

"We have had meetings with Liberty and [F1 chairman] Chase Carey – he understands our dilemma. We understand he still has to make money because that's what these guys are doing."

"There is light at the end of the tunnel. We will have grands prix past 2019. We're talking to government to see if there is any help there. Even Bernie [Ecclestone] is calling us and saying, 'Let's set up a meeting and we'll talk about it.'"

BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Honda bets on black



THE TEAM DYNAMICS HONDA BRITISH Touring Car Championship team has revealed a new colour scheme for the 2017 season.

The squad, which has won back-to-back drivers' titles with Gordon Shedden in the past two years, will continue to run him and fellow series champion Matt Neal in its Civic Type Rs.

Also at Autosport International, Motorbase welcomed Luke Davenport and Martin Depper to its Ford line-up and Ant Whorton-Eales secured his move up to the BTCC in an AmD Tuning Audi S3. Rob Austin (Handy Motorsport), Tom Ingram (Speedworks Motorsport) and Jeff Smith (Eurotech) confirmed their places on the grid.

FORMULA 1

BRUNDLE REVEALS HEART SCARE

FORMULA 1 COMMENTATOR Martin Brundle has revealed that he suffered a minor heart attack during Sky's broadcast of the 2016 Monaco Grand Prix.

The Sky Sports F1 expert had just finished his duties for his channel's main live race feed in Monte Carlo. It was while running from the commentary booth that Brundle suffered the attack, and only found out afterwards how serious it was.

"I had a small heart attack running to do the podium in Monaco," Brundle said on stage on Thursday. "I ended up with a 23mm stent in my left anterior descending artery."

Brundle underwent a heart operation soon after the Monaco race and missed the following grand prix in Canada so he could recover.

He thought the injury would force him out of a drive he had secured in the Road to Le Mans LMP3 support race at the 24 Hours, but was given the all clear by medical staff.

"I didn't think I could do the race," Brundle said.

"And the cardio guy said to me, 'Yeah, you can do the race. Just don't forget your blood thinners.'"

Brundle qualified on pole in the race and finished second with Christian England.

"I sat in the press conference and there was a 17-year-old and a 19-year-old sitting there alongside me, and I thought, 'That's not bad for an old geezer of 57,'" he said.

"We finished second in the race, which was unfortunate, but to drive a prototype car out of the pitlane at Le Mans is extraordinary – you get a bit sweaty, get a bit scared."



Heart attack couldn't hold Brundle back

VILLENEUVE: 20 YEARS ON FROM HIS TITLE

Jacques Villeneuve looks back on a dramatic 1997 championship that went right down to the wire before he triumphed with Williams

By Lawrence Barretto

[@lawrobarretto](#)

The 1997 Formula 1 World Championship should have been straightforward for Williams and Jacques Villeneuve.

Immediately after winning the Indycar title in 1995, he had come close to winning the F1 crown in his debut season. For '97 he had the best car on the grid: the Renault-engined FW19. And reigning champion Damon Hill had moved to Arrows. No wonder Villeneuve oozed confidence.

The championship was expected. But it didn't work out like that. Though Villeneuve won seven races, he retired five times and was disqualified from the penultimate race,

the Japanese Grand Prix. This, combined with an impressive campaign from Ferrari's Michael Schumacher, who capitalised on a series of mistakes by Williams, meant Villeneuve had a battle on his hands.

But he was up for the fight, as he demonstrated when he won in Argentina in April, backing up his Brazilian GP win in round two. "That was a really tough weekend," says Villeneuve. "After Brazil, Mika Salo and I headed to the beach in the north for a holiday. When I got to Argentina I didn't feel right. It was a stomach bug. I didn't eat until Sunday. I was up all night and up all day.

"Once you have your belts on, you're sitting in the car, all the pains and aches go away. Your body shuts everything up. Once the race got going and I was out in front, I just paced myself because physically I couldn't push. I was so run down.

"I shouldn't have been racing but when you have a championship at hand, you just go for it. It made that win a little bit special. Somehow the race fixed me, it killed the bug. It just emptied everything."

Heinz-Harald Frentzen had been drafted in by Williams to replace Hill. While Villeneuve admits he did feel threatened by Frentzen, that was "only before the season started".

He adds: "When Williams signed him, they announced that he was their champion. That didn't go down well with me. So my first goal was to destroy Frentzen. That's what I had to do and that's what I did all winter. I would wait until the last five minutes of testing to do a quick lap and finish one tenth ahead. All day he thinks he's quick but goes to bed feeling down.

"Had Williams not acted that way when



Third place in the season-closing European Grand Prix was enough to secure the drivers' title

they signed him, I probably would have been nicer with him and then I might not have seen it coming, so it's a good thing they did that."

Frentzen's high point in 1997 was winning in San Marino before taking pole in Monaco at the next race. But from there, Villeneuve gradually broke him and Frentzen ultimately managed just over half his team-mate's points.

A combination of complacency and mistakes from Williams enabled Ferrari to catch up, and Schumacher led the championship for much of the season. "That's always the danger when you start super-strong – you relax and you lose your way," says Villeneuve. "You have to react and the team did, which was amazing."

Villeneuve trailed Schumacher by a point with three races to go. He capitalised on the German's first-corner accident at the Nurburging to take what would be his 11th and last grand prix win to move nine points clear with only 20 left on offer. But having



S. BLOXHAM/LAT



“It was a tremendous race in the last event, instead of winning it easily in Japan”

arrived in Japan with a suspended one-race ban for ignoring yellow flags, Villeneuve was caught out again in Saturday practice. That led to an exclusion from the event.

“It was extremely harsh, especially when it was six of us who didn’t slow down in a straight line,” he says. “To us, it sounded like they were trying to give the championship to Ferrari. But it made winning the championship even more exciting. It was a tremendous race in the last event, instead of winning it easily in Japan. We had to come from behind.”

Schumacher led by one point heading into the Jerez finale, and made the early running. But Villeneuve hunted him down in

a battle for the lead and attacked into the Dry Sack corner. Schumacher, caught by surprise, turned in on the Williams. He retired, but Villeneuve was able to continue.

“My first thought was he did it badly,” says Villeneuve. “I knew it was coming. We had spent a month talking with the media about Michael’s past behaviour, just to put pressure on that and encourage him not to do it. When I overtook him, his first reaction was to turn away, then his second reaction was, ‘Oh no, I have to take him out’.

“We collided, which broke the battery holder. When that happened, I mellowed my driving to the point that I didn’t see the McLarens coming back.”



Argentina victory came in spite of a brutal stomach bug

Villeneuve let the McLarens past and limped home third, but it was enough to win the title. “It was my ultimate goal,” he says. “That’s why I was racing, to reach that point. Somehow I knew it was mine.

“It’s crazy that it happened nearly 20 years ago because it doesn’t feel that long. It feels like it was only last week.”

LANCE STROLL SPEAKS UP

The Williams rookie got his first taste of how much attention he'll be getting now that he's made the step up to Formula 1

By Edd Straw

[@eddstrawf1](#)

Is this your first time at the Autosport International show?

Yeah, it's the first time. I'm sharing my love for motorsport! It's great to be here and I'm curious to see the different kinds of cars, so I'm very happy to be here.

You're now half way through the off-season in preparation for your rookie season in F1 – how is progress?

Is it only half way through? No more? There are up-and-down moments, there are always times when stuff pops up that you didn't expect, but I'm just taking it as it comes. I've been preparing every day as much as I can for the first race, and I'm just really excited to get back in the car and get back driving.

Do you feel comfortable in an F1 car now that you've had plenty of mileage in a 2014 Williams?

The more seat time the better, so every time I get in the car I'm learning more. You can never really have enough practice, but I'm learning all the procedures, the complicated switches and just driving the car. It's a new car with more power and more aero and in 2017 it's going to be

completely new again. But it's better to make the step from driving a 2014 car to a 2017 car, rather than going right from Formula 3 to a 2017 F1 car.

Aside from the driving, the big challenge is building a rapport with the whole team. Has the work you've done with Williams over the past year meant you are settled in?

I've been working with them for a year. Even during my year in F3, I spent a lot of time at the factory picking up on little things, so I'm super-comfortable in the team. They are very welcoming; everyone that works in Williams is just really hard-working and it's a real racing team.

In terms of understanding the 2017 cars, you've done simulator work so presumably it's not going to be completely alien...

Yeah, but it's going to be different because simulators can't completely simulate reality – but really it's another racing car. Whatever you jump into, you've got to drive it. It's a new machine, but at the end of the day I've been driving different kinds of cars or karts my whole life.



Stroll enjoyed meeting new fans at the Autosport show. He also enjoyed winning 14 European F3 races in 2016 (below)

There has been a lot of talk about your family background rather than what you've done in winning Italian F4 and then European F3. Is it frustrating that people overlook your ability as a driver?

The FIA introduced the superlicence points for that exact reason. I've won the championships I needed to win to get to Formula 1, and if it was all about a question of money, many people could be here. But money doesn't win races, and you need to win races to be in F1 today. I'm not focused on all that stuff; I don't waste my time reading it and thinking about what people think of me. I'm just here to have fun and race as hard as I can because that's what I love to do.

It's one of those things – people always complain about drivers not getting opportunities, but when someone does have them and makes the most of them, they also complain...

It's human nature. It's nothing I didn't expect – so, whatever, it's behind me now and there are going to be hard moments,





PORTLOCK/LAT

“You’ve got to embrace the journey, love what you do and enjoy every moment”

people are going to say stuff, and there are going to be good moments. I’m focused.

How would you characterise your targets and goals for 2017?

I just want to do a solid job for the team. There will be bumps in the road because it’s my first season; there will be things to learn but I’m just going to take it race by race, lap by lap, and that’s it. There’s no false expectations in my mind. I’m just going to do the best possible job I can.

Is there going to be time to enjoy the feeling of being a grand prix driver, of being on the grid with Fernando Alonso, Lewis Hamilton and everyone after working towards it for so long?

You need to embrace the journey. Of course you need to work as hard as you can, and you can’t just sit back and relax and take it all in, but you’ve got to embrace the journey – you have got to love what you do and you’ve got to enjoy every moment.

The moments of glory go by so quickly, and that’s actually something I learned in F3. It’s a dream come true for me; I’ve been watching F1 my whole life. Since I was a little kid it’s always been my dream to be in it one day, and finally now I’m going to have a go and feel what it’s actually like to be on the grid. It’s going to be really amazing.

I’m working hard, harder than ever, but also just really enjoying the whole thing, because you need to enjoy it otherwise there’s no point to be there. 🍀

THE WILLIAMS EXPERIENCE

THE WILLIAMS EXPERIENCE WAS A HUGE success at Autosport International, providing an imaginative means of getting the audience just that little bit closer to the workings of a racing team than they do by gazing at a car sitting behind a rope.

It began with the tour-goers standing next to the ‘new’ FW06 in a mock-up old-school workshop bay, while mechanic actors explained – in archetypal ’70s-mechanic mockney tones – their hopes for the ’78 season and pointed out the nearby naked tub of the under-development FW07.

After a warning that ‘Patrick Head’ was about to make a surprise visit, visitors were rushed off the scene and into a room to don Williams jackets or overalls plus a headset, over which illustrious voices from past and present illuminated the history of the team. Particularly amusing was the tale of the advent of CAD technology in the ’80s – a freebie in return for a couple of stickers on the car.

The tour culminated with an emergence into the dazzling white light of a modern-day Formula 1 pit garage, as the mechanics put on a choreographed display while tending the ‘new FW40’. It could have been a routine straight out of a Kraftwerk video.

As a showpiece the whole Experience was beautifully done, and it will hopefully provide an inspirational template for engaging fan interaction in the future.

MARCUS SIMMONS



Immersive exhibit told the Williams story

EBREV/LAT

INDOOR FIREWORKS ENTERTAIN

The Live Action Arena was at its most spectacular in 2017 – here are a few of Autosport's highlights...

By Scott Mitchell

[@ScottMitchell89](#)

The Live Action Arena is not so much the heart of Autosport International as the adrenalin that courses through its veins.

From demonstrations of supercars, old cars, new cars (and more) to short-oval races, the Live Action Arena has always offered a raw source of excitement that's set apart from the (mostly) static displays of ASI.

Rallycross cars have featured more and more at ASI in recent years, and an incredible line-up of the best machines of past and present to celebrate the category's 50th anniversary was a particular treat for anyone who likes their sport sideways and muddy. Flame-spitting RS200s and Silkolene-liveried Metro 6R4s are always a welcome sight, as was the Porsche 911 that won the inaugural rallycross in the hands of Vic Elford. The turbo bangs from Pat Doran's RS200 provided an aural

shock to viewers, while son Liam's donutting antics in the World Rallycross Citroen DS 3 were a hoot.

The usual suspects were back in the form of ground-shaking BriSCA F1s and ever-cool autograss machines (right) going wheel-to-wheel, and complemented by an additional competitive element this year: a battle between some of the best BTCC drivers.

Gordon Shedden, Andrew Jordan and Rob Austin (who set the fastest time of the event) were among those who duked it out in time-trial format in a Ginetta G55, each completing two timed laps of a figure-of-8. Shedden's lighting up of the rear tyres and filling the arena with smoke proved that sometimes even the best do get it wrong...

One man who rarely does, though, is stuntman Terry Grant. He made his customary appearance too, but excelled himself this time with loop-the-loop magic passengered by biker Lee Bowers.





S. BLOXHAM/LAT



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1 STUNTS TO IMPRESS

TVR-mounted Terry Grant does donuts as biker Lee Bowers puts his foot down – literally.

2 SHOWSTOPPER

The daring duo also completed a UK first when they looped the loop in the Live Action Arena.

3 CROSS AT 50

A colourful array of old and new rallycross machinery celebrated its 50th anniversary.

4 SUPER MODEL

Electric GT's new Tesla Model S, seen for the first time, in the hands of Lombard, Paya and Teixeira.

BEST IN SHOW

There was plenty to see and a host of great guests to listen to across the four days of Autosport International. Here are some of LAT's best pictures

By Mitchell Adam, International Editor

[@DrMitchellAdam](#)

1 GREAT MEMORIES

Indy500 and IndyCar legend-turned-Formula E commentator Dario Franchitti entertained the crowd on Saturday

2 SLICE OF HISTORY

Fans check out James Hunt's first grand prix winner, the Hesketh 308B, which he drove to victory in the 1975 Dutch GP at Zandvoort.

3 OLD MATES

Classic Team Lotus reunited former team members from the late 1960s and the remaining Lotus 49s



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S BLOXHAM/LAT



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HAWKINS



EBREY/LAT



PORTLOCK/LAT

4 SIERRATANGO

It's 30 years since the RS500 burst onto the touring car scene, and the Performance Car Show's special display turned the spotlight on this iconic tin-top.

5 SCHUEY'S VAN DIEMEN

Ex-Michael Schumacher FFord was among the Historic Sports Car Club's line-up to mark the 50th birthday of this evergreen single-seater category.

6 GRAND PRIX GRID

Monaco, Melbourne, Montreal... Birmingham. Our sister magazine *F1 Racing* brought modern grand prix machinery to the NEC.

LATEST SAFETY NEWS

How new technology
enables the FIA to
analyse accidents

By Edd Straw,
Editor in Chief

[@eddstrawF1](#)

"t's pretty much impossible to start talking about safety and safety research today without mentioning the legacy of Sid Watkins," said Laurent Mekies early in the Motorsport Safety Fund's annual lecture in honour of the legendary F1 safety and medical delegate. And he's right. It would be an understatement to describe the difference in F1 safety between Watkins's first involvement (when he attended the 1978 Swedish GP at the invitation of Bernie Ecclestone) and its present state as 'night and day'.

To illustrate the point, former Scuderia Toro Rosso head of performance Mekies, who has taken the role of deputy F1 race director from the retired Herbie Blash having been FIA safety director since October 2014, revealed the depth of accident analysis in F1 today.

The most obvious case study was Fernando Alonso's shunt at last year's Australian Grand Prix. Two relatively new data-gathering tools, on top of the longstanding accident data recorder

(better known as the 'black box') produce a vast amount of information.

First is the in-ear accelerometer, which all drivers use. As Mekies points out, since safety changes have reduced leg and neck-related injuries, brain traumas are now the biggest concern – as the Jules Bianchi tragedy reminded us. The second is the high-speed camera facing the driver in the cockpit, which records at 400 frames per second and allows every movement of the head to be documented.

While the start of the Alonso accident – when he ran into the back of Esteban Gutierrez – was minor, he then suffered several significant impacts.

"The first serious bit happens when Fernando hits the wall on the left-hand

Autosport's Stuart
Codling grills Mekies
on the main stage
at the Autosport
International Show

side," explained Mekies, using the video as an illustration. "That was a 45g hit, but the car barely slowed down, it was only hitting the wall laterally. You can see the reaction in the in-ear accelerometers. You see two peaks, because he hit with the front-left then the rear-left.

"Then the car slid onto the grass. Then you see another massive peak, which is when the car hits the gravel trap. It was at such high speed that it generated the same 45g impact, a second after the first one. His head pretty much saw the same deceleration as well.

"Then the car was flying and there was a heavy landing on the rear crash structure. It's less peaky because the crash structure is designed to absorb it, which is why you get a nice shape [on the graph showing the force] as opposed to a peak, which could have hurt him."

This is just the beginning in terms of understanding the accident, which, along with research work not based on accidents that have happened, is key to the evolution of safety equipment used both inside and outside the car.

It's testament to the power of the appliance of science in what was once a best-guess safety world. While often derided by fans, this work is essential and should be celebrated more often.



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S. BLOXHAM/LAT



THANK YOU

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE drivers, team bosses, designers and industry specialists who generously gave us their time, as well as all of the behind-the-scenes staff who made the 2017 Autosport main stage a great success.

We would like to give special thanks to Williams Martini Racing for creating the extraordinary and memorable Williams Experience. Thanks too to Image Innovation and The Department for its

production. We were also delighted to work with Powered By Humans for the first time on this year's thrilling Live Action Arena.

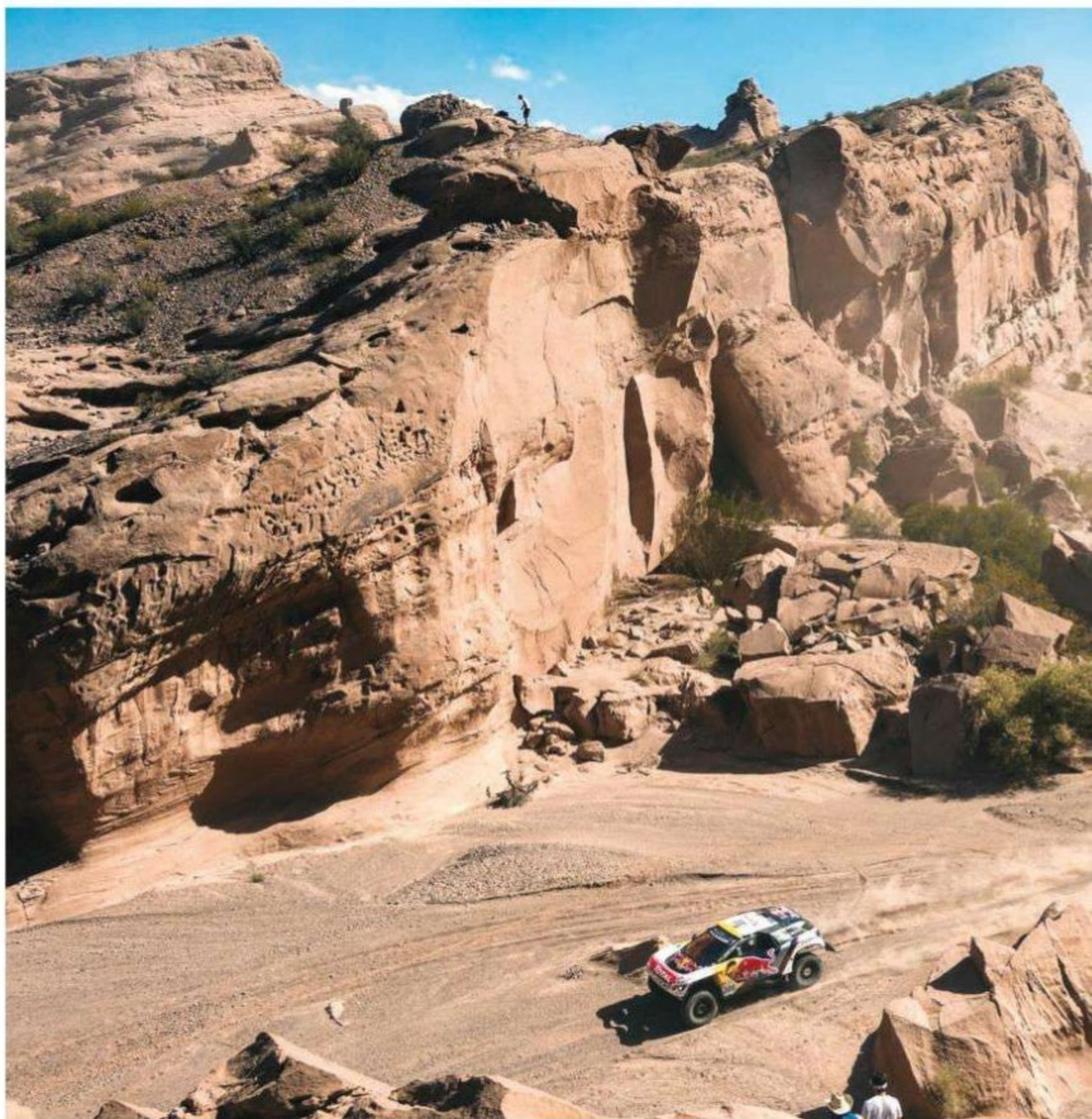
We wish to thank all the Formula 1 teams, Jaguar Formula E, Team Hard BTCC, Tim Lamont and Paul Sleeman for supplying their cars for the spectacular grid, which drew huge crowds across the four-day event.

Finally, don't forget to watch the show highlights on autosport.com. See you in 2018.



RACE CENTRE

DAKAR RALLY • TOYOTA RACING SERIES • DUBAI 24 HOURS



Loeb can't hold back the

DAKAR RALLY
ASUNCION (PY) TO BUENOSAIRES (RA)
JANUARY 2-14

AFTER ITS FIRST FEW STAGES PRODUCED entertainment and drama in abundance, the 2017 Dakar Rally was riding high. The increase in difficulty, after previous editions had been criticised as too easy, was on display – and the navigational challenge, while somewhat controversial, was working as intended and shaking up the order.

The rally had lost two major contenders in Nasser Al-Attiyah and Carlos Sainz early on, the Spaniard exiting in a truly frightening crash. The pair's retirements were a blow but not inconsistent with the atmosphere that Dakar 2017 would've been going for – a super-tough, extremely unpredictable, treacherous marathon.

Unfortunately, the talk of the town soon enough shifted from competition and onto weather. As the rally arrived in Bolivia, highly anticipated stages were being cut left and right, torrential rainfall wrecking the planned schedule.

Week one saw the cancellation of Oruro-La Paz, the only stage of the rally that was to feature more than 500km timed. The no-assistance marathon from La Paz to Salta via Uyuni was then significantly altered, while a rockslide on

the road section approaching Salta subsequently caused the exciting 'Super Belen' to be canned.

As the rally dealt with organisational nightmares, Stephane Peterhansel and Sebastien Loeb emerged as the two main contenders of the headlining car class, and the Peugeot pair would eventually produce a thrilling showdown for the up-and-down event.

Ahead of the rest day, Loeb and Peterhansel had been engaged in a close fight for the lead with Peugeot team-mate Cyril Despres and Toyota's Nani Roma, but neither could keep in touch with the nine-time WRC champion and the reigning Dakar winner for much longer.

In the first stage of week two, Loeb arrived within two minutes of Peterhansel, completing his recovery from the engine issue that had earlier cost him more than 20 minutes.

The next stage was won by Loeb too, and now he was leading. On his Dakar debut in 2016, the Frenchman had mostly excelled on so-called 'WRC-style stages'. The Bolivian leg was way different from that template, offering navigation and terrain challenges, and yet Loeb and co-driver Daniel Elena were lighting up the timing screens.

Still, Peterhansel was undeterred by Loeb's comeback. The Chilecito-San Juan stage, which came after the much-feared-but-cancelled Super Belen, had its own twists in store.



Peterhansel proved the maestro in South America once again

flying Peterhansel

For Peterhansel the stage was punctuated by a collision with biker Simon Marcic. Peterhansel, visibly shaken by the incident, said Marcic arrived unsighted from the opposite direction as both had been looking for a waypoint, the Slovenian rider braking hard to avoid a collision and falling under the Peugeot as a result.

Marcic escaped with a broken leg, Peterhansel remaining with him until the medical team arrived. The time he gave up while waiting with Marcic was returned later, and the result was a six-minute lead over Loeb, who had endured some navigation troubles in the stage.

At that point, Loeb suggested that the gap was too big to make up, but the latter-day rallycross ace certainly gave it a fair go. In the penultimate stage, his last real chance to cut into the deficit ahead of the straightforward 64km decider, Loeb made up three minutes. But a puncture followed for Loeb, all but guaranteeing a 13th Dakar triumph for Peterhansel.

"At the beginning of the race I was not sure about this victory. It was a big fight with six or seven drivers, after it was only four – and in the last week it was just the two," Peterhansel said after seeing out the rally.

"Seb and I, we fought really strong... Probably this is the victory of experience."

The two protagonists were joined on the

podium by Despres, the five-time Dakar bike champion completing a Peugeot 1-2-3.

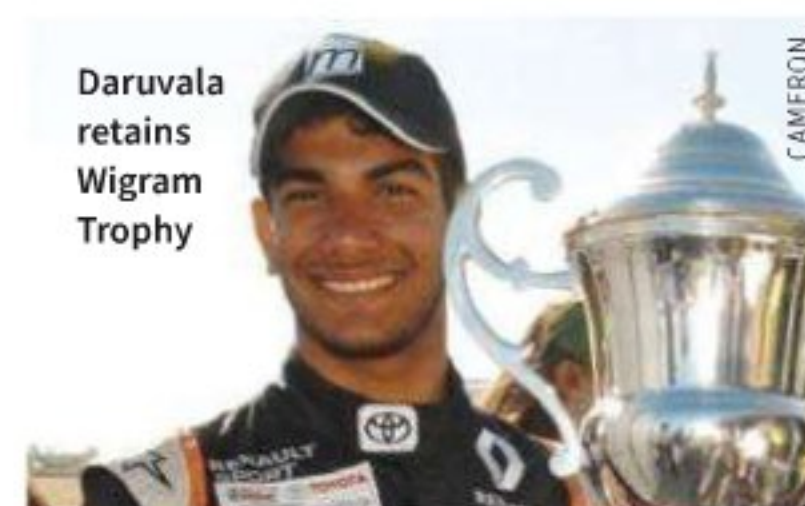
He capped off what was ultimately a crushing performance by the French manufacturer, fully reflected in the timing sheets by the gaps to its rivals. Roma, who earlier stood as the last real threat to Peugeot, had to do with coasting to fourth, while fellow leading Toyota man Giniel de Villiers could never recover the time he had lost in week one and finished a distant fifth.

For X-Raid Mini, the flag was flown by Orlando Terranova in sixth. The team would've hoped for a better result courtesy of its benchmark driver Mikko Hirvonen, but the ex-World Rally star had his bid for a good result undone by a horrific day that featured two punctures, a gearbox failure and a run-in with a truck.

VALENTIN KHOROUNZHIY

RESULTS

1 **Stephane Peterhansel/Jean-Paul Cottret (Peugeot 3008 DKR)** 28h49m30s; **2** Sebastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Peugeot) +5m13s; **3** Cyril Despres/David Castera (Peugeot); **4** Nani Roma/Alex Haro (Toyota Hilux); **5** Giniel de Villiers/Dirk von Zitzewitz (Toyota); **6** Orlando Terranova/Andreas Schulz (Mini John Cooper Works Rally); **7** Jakub Przygonski/Tom Colsole (Mini All4 Racing); **8** Romain Dumas/Alain Guehennec (Peugeot 2008 DKR); **9** Conrad Rautenbach/Robert Howie (Toyota); **10** Mohammed Abu-Issa/Xavier Panseri (Mini All4 Racing).



Honours even in New Zealand

TOYOTA RACING SERIES
RUAPUNA PARK (NZ)
JANUARY 14-15
ROUND 1/5

FERRARI PROTEGE MARCUS Armstrong took the first win, Force India starlet Jahan Daruvala won the prestigious Lady Wigram Trophy finale, but it's Red Bull junior Richard Verschoor who leads the points.

On his home ground on the South Island, Armstrong took the lead with an audacious passing manoeuvre around the outside of poleman Daruvala. While the Indian stayed with Armstrong, he could not make any impression.

Pedro Piquet started from pole in the reversed-grid race, but wheelspin slowed him and Taylor Cockerton swept into the lead and quickly pulled away, while Piquet had to defend from Australian Thomas Randle. Race officials then ruled that Cockerton had moved out of his grid box before the start and the Pukekohe driver was penalised 10 seconds, while Piquet was docked 30s for a double move while defending his position. This gave the win to Randle from Verschoor, with Armstrong fighting from sixth to third.

Once more on the front row for the 20-lap Lady Wigram Trophy, Armstrong and Daruvala went side by side into the first turn, with Verschoor also in the mix. Lining up Daruvala for a pass approaching the short back straight, Armstrong strayed wide and slid onto the grass, rejoining in ninth place with a damaged front wing. He then charged back through the field but tangled with Australian Harry Hayek and crashed out of the race.

Daruvala, meanwhile, had stretched out a lead of almost 10s and won the Wigram trophy for the second year running, while fourth for Verschoor – behind Piquet – gave him the series lead.

MARK BAKER

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Marcus Armstrong 15 laps in 22m12.255s; **2** Jahan Daruvala +0.851s; **3** Richard Verschoor; **4** Tom Randle; **5** Taylor Cockerton; **6** Pedro Piquet.

Race 2 1 Randle 15 laps in 19m54.946s; **2** Verschoor +4.054s; **3** Armstrong; **4** Cockerton; **5** Ferdinand Habsburg; **6** Brendon Leitch. **Race 3 1 Daruvala** 20 laps in 37m01.402s; **2** Enaam Ahmed +0.915s; **3** Piquet; **4** Verschoor; **5** Randle; **6** Habsburg.

Points 1 Verschoor 181; 2 Randle 178; 3 Daruvala 142; 4 Habsburg 136; 5 Armstrong 135; 6 Ahmed 134.

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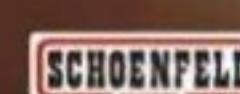
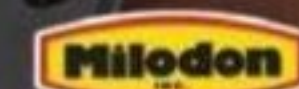
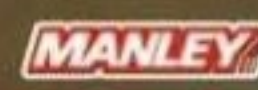
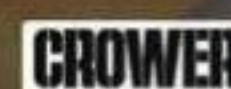
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Herberth Porsche
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reliable – as usual



Hartley's first 24-hour win

DUBAI 24 HOURS
DUBAI (UAE)
JANUARY 13-14

HERBERTH MOTORSPORT KEPT cool in the desert heat to dominate an intriguing Dubai 24 Hours, as Porsche factory LMP1 driver Brendon Hartley took his maiden twice-round-the-clock race win on his first appearance in a 911 GT3-R.

Brothers Robert and Alfred Renauer, along with Ralf Bohn, Daniel Allemann and Hartley, led for 380 of the 578 laps to secure the team's fourth win from their past five 24H Series outings, following the 2016 Zandvoort 12H, Paul Ricard 24H and Barcelona 24H.

Hartley was frustrated by one of 22 Code 60 periods that ate into his first stint in hour four, but once let loose was soon in the thick of the battle with the Manthey Porsche and polesitting #2 Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT3, playing catch-up after Jeroen Bleekemolen had been among the few to stay out under the first Code 60.

Having exchanged the lead with Manthey for much of the night, Herberth seized the upper hand in the 16th hour when Otto Klohs pitted with damage and lost two laps while repairs were carried out.

This left the #2 Mercedes as Herberth's only remaining challenger, but the Black Falcon machine's race was ended abruptly when Khaled Al-Qubaisi, only

introduced to the race in hour 17, lost control and hit Mirko Bortolotti's recovering Grasser Racing Lamborghini. The Italian had enjoyed a cat-and-mouse scrap with Bleekemolen in the first hour before team-mate Rolf Ineichen's tangle with Ruben Maes's semi-works WRT Audi R8 LMS dropped them to the lower end of the top 10.

Propelled by Porsche Supercup champion Sven Muller and former sparring partner Matteo Cairoli, Manthey fought back and retook second from the other Black Falcon Mercedes of Maro Engel, Yelmer Buurman, Hubert Haupt, Abdulaziz Al Faisal and Michal Broniszewski, but the Herberth Porsche was already way out of reach.

Following WRT's disaster, the Audi baton was passed to Optimum Motorsport. Christopher Haase, Joe Osborne, Ryan Ratcliffe and Flick Haigh lost power-steering with five hours to go, but still took fourth, with two laps in hand over the Imsa Performance Porsche and the Saudi Arrows Audi.

Originally slated to compete in the A6-Am class, the Saudis were elevated to A6-Pro at the 11th hour when 1990 Formula Ford champion Michael Vergers lapped too quickly in qualifying. Hofer Racing took full advantage to secure the Am class victory in seventh overall.

Optimum's Ginetta G55, driven by Stewart Linn, Ade Barwick, Dan O'Brien and William Moore, won

a well-contested SP3-GT4 class after the leading RJN Nissan 370Z – led by Jann Mardenborough – suffered a damper failure. Century Motorsport's Ginetta (Nathan Freke, Aiden Moffat, Jack Mitchell and Ben Green) was second following a suspected brake failure for the ProSPORT Porsche Cayman with 15 minutes to go.

Ex-F1 stars Robert Kubica (Forch Racing Porsche) and Jean-Eric Vergne (GP Extreme Renault RS01) won't have overly fond memories of their 24-hour debuts after both were blighted by mechanical troubles, but unlike poor Sam Tordoff they at least got to drive.

The BTCC convert planned to use Dubai as an extended test session ahead of his switch to British GT, but packed up when a puncture ruptured an oil line and his HB Racing Lamborghini went up in flames in the second hour.

RESULTS

1 Brendon Hartley/Robert Renauer/Alfred Renauer/Daniel Allemann/Ralf Bohn (Porsche 911 GT3-R) 578 laps in 24h02m01.224s; 2 Sven Muller/Matteo Cairoli/Jochen Krumbach/Otto Klohs (Porsche) -2 laps; 3 Yelmer Buurman/Maro Engel/Hubert Haupt/Abdulaziz Al Faisal/Michal Broniszewski (Mercedes-AMG GT3); 4 Christopher Haase/Joe Osborne/Ryan Ratcliffe/Flick Haigh (Audi R8 LMS); 5 Mathieu Jaminet/Maxime Jousse/Raymond Narac/Thierry Cornac (Porsche); 6 Marcel Fassler/Michael Vergers/Mohammed Bin Faisal Al Saud/Mohammed Bin Saud Al Saud (Audi).

IN BRIEF

24 HOUR PROTOTYPE

Seventeen cars tackled the inaugural 24H Proto Series 3x3 in Dubai. ELMS regular Graff Racing took first blood with its LMP3 Ligier after problems for the fast-but-fragile Optimum Motorsport Ginetta G57, before the Bradley Ellis, James French and Kyle Masson-driven machine hit back to win race two. But Graff would have the last laugh under the lights in the finale as Eric Trouillet, Franck Matelli and Edward Lewis Brauner recorded their second victory, ahead of the identical Kox Racing Ligier of Peter Kox and Nico Pronk.

TCR MIDDLE EAST

BTCC veteran James Kaye came close to victory in the series' inaugural event in Dubai on the debut of the Audi RS3 LMS. But he slowed when informed of a time penalty for contact while taking the lead from Filip Sladecka. The wins were shared by the Team Engstler Volkswagen Golfs of Luca Engstler (the son of team boss Franz on his tin-top debut) and Brandon Gdovic. The CadSpeed Audi did go on to take TCR-class honours in the 24 Hours, Kaye sharing with Erik Holstein, Julian Griffin and Finlay Hutchison.

ANDROS TROPHY

Olivier Panis led Benoit Treluyer in a WRT Audi one-two last Sunday at Serre Chevalier, after Renault Clio driver Jean-Baptiste Dubourg had won on Saturday. Dubourg topped qualifying and super pole on day one, then won the final from the starring Didier Thorat, the Mazda driver on his debut in the Elite Pro class. Panis (below) cleaned up on Sunday, while Treluyer lost second place halfway through the final to Franck Lagorce's Mazda, although his qualifying-points advantage still gave him runner-up on the day. BMW man Jean-Philippe Dayraut still leads the points, just two ahead of Dubourg.



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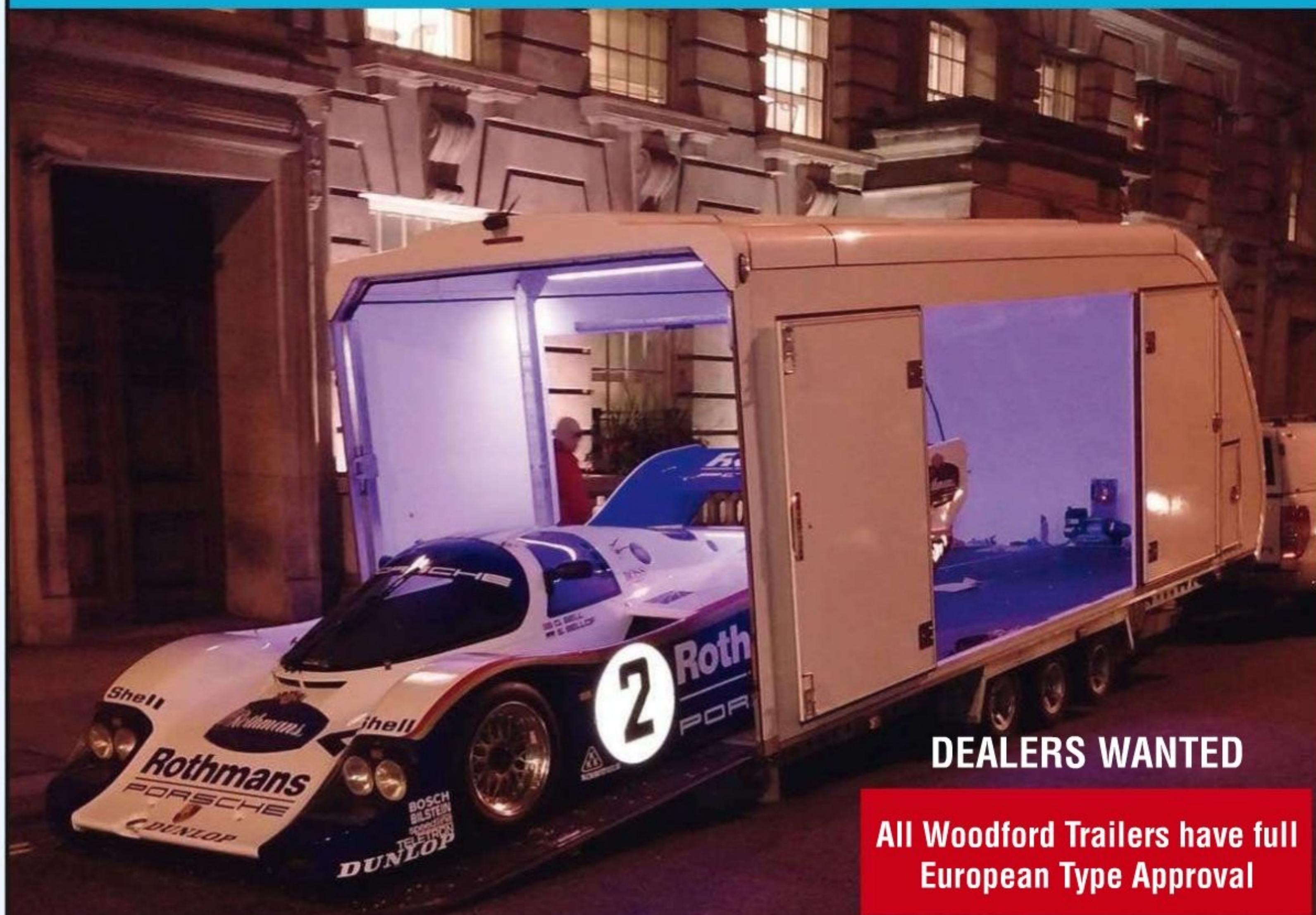
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HRDC 2017 RACE CALENDAR



2017	Count	Venue / Event	Track Capacity	Content	Content	Format	ACD	ALL	ASC	TG/TC63	JAG	COYS Pre-'66
11-Feb		Eastbourne	180	Dinner/Dance	ALL HRDC	Evening	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
06-Mar	✓	Goodwood	35	Track Day	ACD	Full Day	✓					
30-Mar	✓	Goodwood	35	Track Day	TG	Full Day				✓		
09-Apr	✓	Brands Hatch BRSCC	Indy 34	Race	ACD / ASC	30/15	✓		✓			
09-Apr		Brands Hatch BRSCC	Indy 34	Race	TG/TC63	45/25	✓			✓		
* 23-Apr	✓	Silverstone VSCC	Nat 40	Race	JAG	30/15					✓	
Apr 28-30	✓	Donington Festival	Nat 40	Race	TG/TC63	45/25	✓			✓		
Apr 28-30		Donington Festival	Nat 40	Race	COYS	45/25	✓			✓	✓	✓
28-May	✓	Silverstone BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
28-May		Silverstone BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	TG/TC63	45/15	✓			✓		
11-Jun	✓	Snetterton BRSCC	(300) 45	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
11-Jun		Snetterton BRSCC	(300) 45	Race	TG/TC63	45/15	✓			✓		
16-Jul	✓	Castle Combe BRSCC	42	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
16-Jul		Castle Combe BRSCC	42	Race	COYS	45/25	✓			✓	✓	✓
16-Jul		Castle Combe BRSCC	42	Race	JAG	30/15					✓	
* July 28-30	✓	Silverstone Classic	Hist GP 58	Race	ACD	2-part	✓					
24-Sep	✓	Mallory Park BRSCC	30	Race	ACD / ASC	30 /15	✓		✓			
24-Sep		Mallory Park BRSCC	30	Race	COYS	45/25	✓			✓	✓	✓
15-Oct	✓	Donington BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	ALL/ ACD / ASC	30/15	✓	✓	✓			
15-Oct		Donington BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	TG/TC63	45/25	✓			✓		
15-Oct		Donington BRSCC	Nat 40	Race	JAG	30/15					✓	

* Please note these date changes!

KEY:

ACD:	ALL:	ASC:	COYS:	TG:	JAG:	TC63:
ACADEMY	ALLSTARS	A-SERIES CHALLENGE	COYS TROPHY	TOURING GREATS	COOMBS	TC63

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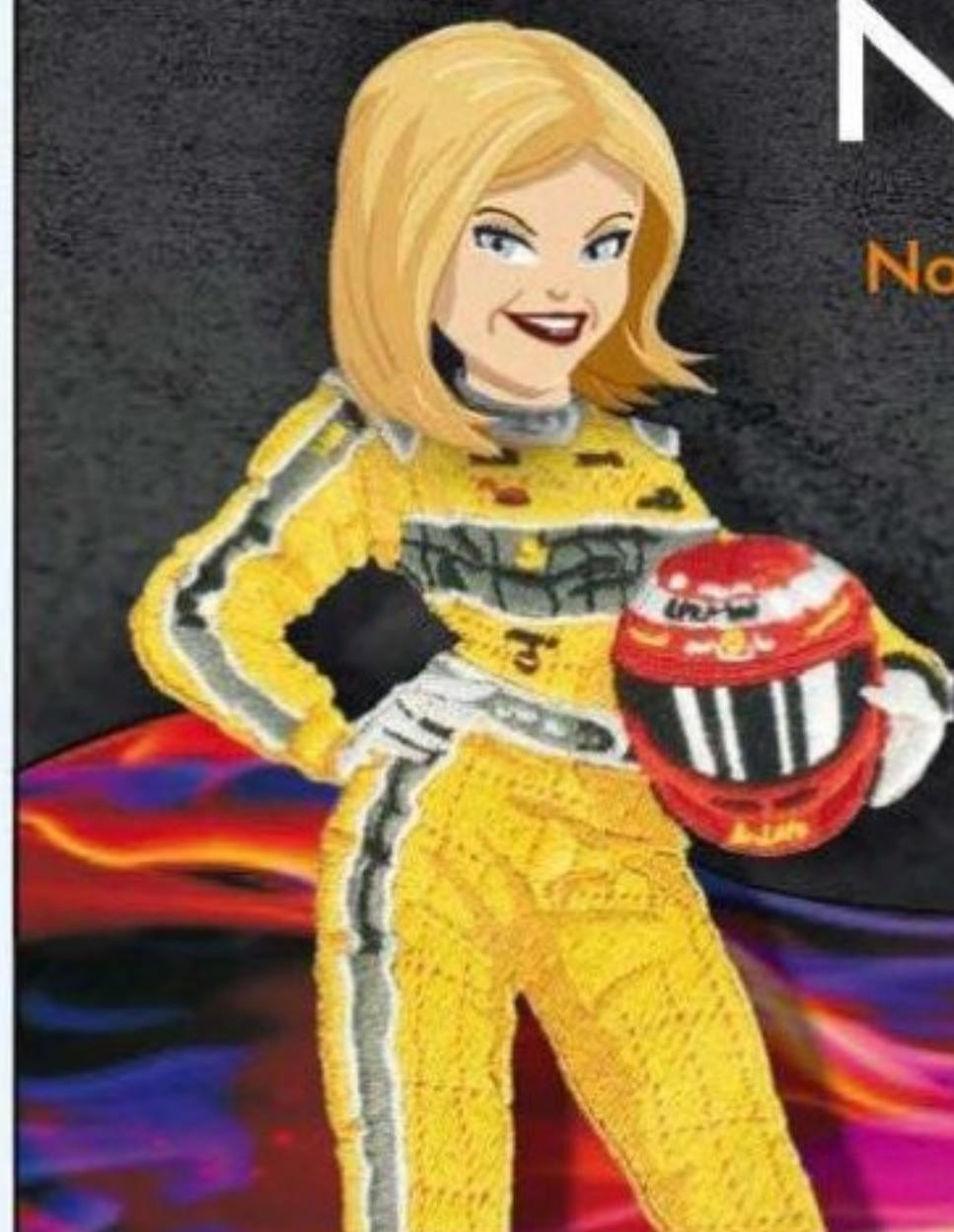
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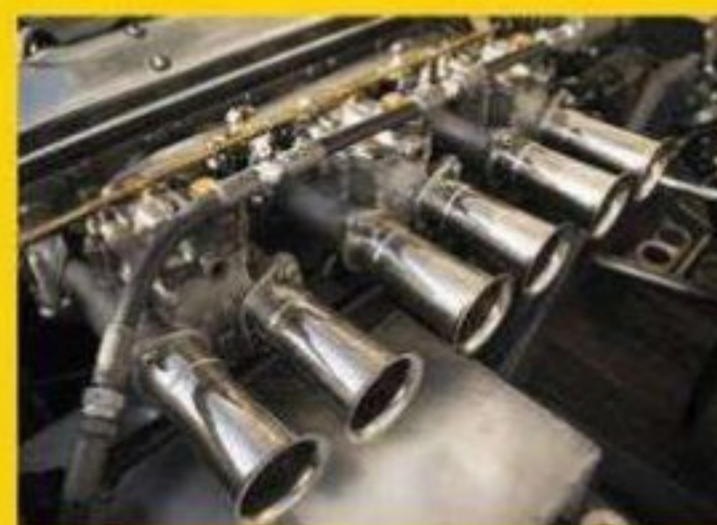
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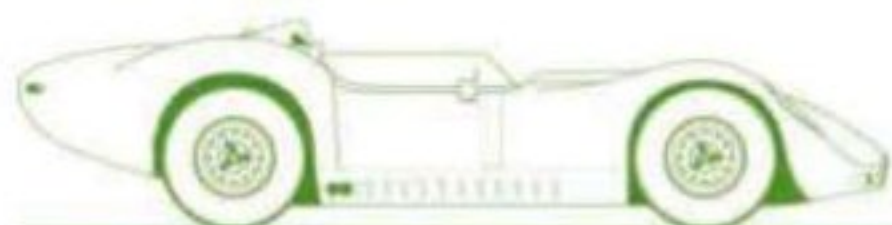
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CLUB AUTOSPORT

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GROUP
NATIONAL EDITOR

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DONINGTON. IT HASN'T HALF had a hard time, hasn't it? It boasts the highs of one of the best laps in Formula 1 history from arguably its best driver in Ayrton Senna – yes, that race in 1993 – to the lows of the failed F1 bid by Donington Ventures Leisure Limited in the late 2000s.

Since that dark period for the track, the circuit has been in a constant fight to recover and to return to its past glory.

Now the juggernaut that is MSV is in town and taking over proceedings. Only this time, Donington fans, there's no need to panic about impending doom for the Leicestershire venue.

Because MSV is exactly what the circuit needs to carry on the good work laid out by Kevin Wheatcroft, managing director Christopher Tate and his team in recent years.

While an attempt to wrest the British Grand Prix from Silverstone is unlikely, it's hardly fair to measure the significance of a circuit based on whether or not it has F1. MSV will bring a lick of paint here, a touch of investment there – an element of proper professionalism. The future of Donington is in safe hands. Attracting a major international series is first up on the to-do list.

MSV and Palmer secure deal for Donington Park takeover

JONATHAN PALMER'S MOTORSPORT VISION group has added Donington Park to its stable of circuits after acquiring the business operations of the Leicestershire circuit.

A deal between the two parties, negotiated by Donington leaseholder and chairman Kevin Wheatcroft, was announced last Thursday, with MSV taking up an initial 21-year lease of the circuit estate and its operations.

The Formula E Championship facility is included in that list of assets, although the motorsport and military museums at the circuit will remain under the Wheatcroft family's control.

Donington joins Brands Hatch, Oulton Park, Snetterton and Cadwell Park in MSV's portfolio of circuits, while the company also manages the BRDC British Formula 3 and British Superbike championships, as well as a number of club series in the UK through its MSVR arm.

"Donington has incredible history, being the first permanent road circuit in the country and the only circuit upon which the mighty pre-war Auto Unions and Mercedes grand prix cars raced in the 1930s," said

Palmer, chief executive and co-founder of MSV. "Its modern-day existence is purely down to the vision and energy of Tom Wheatcroft, whom I admired enormously.

"Like many circuits in the UK, Donington has had a turbulent time over the last 10 years, though thankfully Kevin Wheatcroft and his team have now recovered the damage done by the previous owner of the business.

"Donington is a good British circuit that deserves further investment, energy and expertise in order to make it truly outstanding, and MSV will provide this."

Donington Park managing director Christopher Tate added: "He [Palmer] will be investing, pressing ahead with a number of internal projects and improvements that have long been wished for.

"Being part of the group is bound to be useful in things like marketing and hospitality because MSV does that well.

"Many people in motorsport admire the attention to detail at MSV circuits. Jonathan and his team have done a fantastic job. We've tried to emulate that style but with the limitations of being an independent circuit. MSV has accumulated expertise that can only be a benefit."

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CARRERA CUP GB

Zamparelli joins JTR in Carrera Cup

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB RACE WINNER Dino Zamparelli hopes that joining Nick Tandy's JTR team can give him the edge needed to beat series dominator Dan Cammish this year.

Bristol-based Zamparelli became the second driver to join JTR's new Carrera Cup attack last week. The 24-year-old ex-single-seater ace will partner Lewis Plato at the team.

Zamparelli was double champion Cammish's biggest rival last season, taking three race wins and finishing second in the points with GT Marques. He joined the Carrera Cup in 2015 after title successes in Ginetta Junior and Formula Renault BARC, as well as a campaign in GP3.

"This year is a big one for me as I have to go and take the fight to Dan, and with JTR and Nick [Tandy] behind me I truly believe we can win it this year," said Zamparelli.

"Last year I started the season well but we had an undiagnosed issue with the car that meant the second half of the season just sort of fell apart, and that cost me badly.

"I've worked with Nick before. He gave me some tips in 2015 just before I joined the GT Marques team and I went on to take my first win. Nick knows these cars so well, and he's a Le Mans winner, so his experience will be invaluable for my third year in Porsches."

Tandy added: "With Dino on board for this year I know I have two drivers who are capable of fighting for the title with JTR. Lewis has been hugely impressive in testing with us, and if he can bring that speed and consistency then he'll be right at the front.

"Dino has more experience in the championship, and he needs a big year. He's a top talent and I'll work with both drivers to help them get the best out of the cars.

"As JTR, we're not starting this year from scratch. I've worked for years with the Porsche factory to develop these cars. We want to fight for the championship."

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Streather switches to WDE for second campaign in Clio Cup

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP RACE WINNER Paul Streather will switch to the WDE Motorsport squad for his second full season in the series.

The 27-year-old raced for Finesse Motorsport last year, finishing seventh in the standings, and has tested for WDE – which has run multiple champion Paul Rivett in recent seasons – over the winter (Autosport, November 24) ahead of the move.

"I've tested with WDE and, with them, I'll have full-time team-mates to compare data with, which is bound to bring me on more as a driver," said Streather. "They also have vast experience of running the Clio Cup car.

"I really want to thank Finesse though for the effort they put into me in 2016. They are a fantastic bunch of people and I'll always remain friends with them."



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EBREY/LAT

MAZDA MX-5s

Ingram on the MX-5 Supercup bill

BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP race winner Tom Ingram will make guest appearances in the BRSCC Mazda MX-5 Supercup this season.

Ingram, who finished 10th overall in the BTCC last year, will be a guest driver for Paul Sheard Racing alongside his tin-top commitments with Speedworks Motorsport, although he is yet to announce which rounds of the series he will contest.

"We had a night out with Paul and I said, 'Yes, I'll do it'; I think I'll do Snetterton," said Ingram. "It's something with not a lot of pressure as well. We're just able to enjoy it and have a play with something different."

Paul O'Neill will also make another cameo in the series, while Dan Welch is expected to appear in the BARC-run Max5 Racing Championship this year after his family-run team's decision to take a BTCC sabbatical.

IN BRIEF



NEW C1 SERIES TO INCLUDE UK RACES

A new pan-European endurance series featuring the Citroën C1 will take place this year. The new C1 Challenge uses one-litre, 67bhp cars with few permitted modifications. It will tag on to a series of French 2CV race events, and will also be permitted by the British Automobile Racing Club for events at Pembrey and Cadwell Park. Race durations will vary from four to six hours, while a 24-hour race at Spa is scheduled for October.

VALOUR TEAM TO RACE IN RADICALS

A new team will join Radical grids in Europe and the UK this year. Valour Racing has been established by Ben Lane, and will enter a Spyder for American Jim Booth in the European Masters. It also hopes to field three SR3s in the UK-based Radical Challenge.

PINDER SWAPS CLIO FOR GINETTA

Michelin Clio Series frontrunner Luke Pinder will switch to the Ginetta GT5 Challenge for this season with the Jade Developments team. Pinder had initially looked at emulating title rival James Dorlin's ambitions of moving into the Renault UK Clio Cup, but has settled for a slot in the British GT support series.

20TEN SON TO MAKE DEBUT IN FIESTAS

Ollie Hunt, son of 20Ten Racing team manager Simon, is due to make his circuit-racing debut in Class C of the Fiesta Championship. He will join Josh Watkins, who returns for a second season. The other car has yet to be decided between Watkins's brother Sam, who has raced in the Clio Cup, and father Steve.

RADICALS TO MOROCCO WITH WTCC

Radicals will compete in North Africa for the first time this year after it was announced that its Masters Euroseries will support the World Touring Car Championship opener on the Moulay El Hassan street circuit in Marrakech, Morocco (below) on April 7-9. The rest of the calendar comprises events at the Algarve International Circuit, Spa (with the Radical Challenge), Hungaroring, Silverstone, Magny-Cours and Barcelona.



Le MEUR/DPPI

FIESTAS/CLIOS

Prize outings for Fiesta and Clio drivers

TOP DRIVERS FROM THE BRSCC Fiesta Championship and the BARC Michelin Clio Series' Road and Race categories will receive prize drives this season.

A test in one of Motorbase Performance's British Touring Car Championship Ford Focus STs is on offer to the overall Fiesta champion, after a tie-up with BTCC tyre supplier Dunlop.

"The Fiesta Championship

produced some great grids and competitive racing last season so we wanted to put something back into the championship for 2017," said Dunlop Motorsport's Mickey Butler. "Motorbase Performance is the ideal team to do the test with and the champion will benefit greatly from the experience."

Meanwhile, the leaders of

both Clio classes with a round to spare will be offered a race in the final round of the main Clio Cup UK series or a Gen-3 Clio test day.

Westbourne Motorsport will enter a car for the leader of the 'Race' class for the final round at Brands Hatch, while the 'Road' leader will receive a fully funded test day in a Clio 200 race car.



BOURNE

750MC

New organisers for 330 Challenge

THE BMW 330 CHALLENGE WILL BE RUN by the 750 Motor Club this season after previous organiser BMW Race Days' exit.

The one-make series was due to run with the BRSCC last year. But concerns over a lack of completed cars and additional development work meant no races took place.

Now BMW Race Days, which also runs the popular Compact Cup with the BRSCC, has decided that it is not financially viable for it to pay for additional track time with the club when a small entry is still expected for 2017. The series will now share a grid with the Super Cooper Cup on 750MC bills.



LMP3 CUP

BTCC team Speedworks joins LMP3

BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP team Speedworks Motorsport is among three new squads to have officially committed to the LMP3 Cup Championship in the past week.

Speedworks has taken delivery of its first Ligier JSP3 chassis and last week revealed the machine at the Autosport International show.

The team plans to field the car in the UK-based LMP3 Cup class and continental European classes, such as the new Creventic-run Proto Cup and VdeV, and is now searching for drivers for the 2017 season.

Speedworks boss Christian Dick said: "This is an exciting new adventure with the LMP3 Cup's launch and all of the possibilities

having an LMP3 car brings.

"With LMP3 homologation frozen for three years, it guarantees a level playing field."

ABG Motorsport will also join the LMP3 Cup, running former British GT champions Glynn and Jim Geddie in a Ligier.

Geddie Jr, who won the 2011 GT title in a Ferrari alongside father Jim, said: "We tested the car at Snetterton and loved it. The British LMP3 series will be a great first step on the journey to the European Le Mans Series and hopefully the Le Mans 24 Hours one day."

Horsepower Racing, another ex-British GT team, will also compete in the LMP3 Cup, fielding Paul Bailey and Andy Schulz in a JSP3.

Bailey and Schulz have raced together not only in British GT, but also took a class championship title in the GT Cup last year in an Aston Martin Vantage GT3.

● BRDC British Formula 3 Championship race winner Thomas Randle has announced that he will compete in this year's LMP3 Cup with the Douglas Motorsport team.

The Australian, who took a race win in last weekend's opening round of the Toyota Racing Series in New Zealand, also took part in last year's LMP3 preview race at Snetterton. He has agreed a deal to share a Ligier JSP3 with Mike Newbould in the full championship.

GOODWOOD MM

Twilight slot for Marshall Goodwood race



THE GERRY MARSHALL Trophy race at the Goodwood Members' Meeting in March will run into dusk on the Saturday evening for the first time.

The race for Group 1 Touring Cars of the '70s and early '80s is one of the highlights of the Members' Meeting and will take the prestigious Saturday early-evening slot for an hour-long, two-driver race.

Famous racers traditionally share the

cars with their owners. BTCC luminaries Andrew Jordan, Tim Harvey and Stuart Graham are among the pro drivers who are expected to contest the March 18-19 event this year.

The owners will also then be able to race in the Gerry Marshall Sprint race on the Sunday, a shorter event featuring a reversed grid based on the finishing order from the previous evening's race.

LIGIER

Ligier plans for launch at Le Mans

LIGIER EXPECTS TO BEGIN TESTING OF ITS new club-racing-car range in April and plans to coincide the launch of its new models with the Le Mans 24 Hours in June.

The famed French constructor recently acquired the services of Radical Cars co-founder Phil Abbott to lead the design of a range of new entry-level track cars.

Two fresh designs have been mooted, which are due to feature carbonfibre chassis and power outputs of around 200 and 400bhp respectively.

"We're basing designs on the chassis of our current CN car [JS53 EVO] and an LMP3 variant [the JSP3], so the new cars are based on proven foundations," said sales and marketing manager Christophe Profit. "We want to start testing in April and the natural place to launch them is at Le Mans, where sportscar interest is at its highest."



750MC

750MC to celebrate Vee anniversary

THE 750 MOTOR CLUB PLANS TO celebrate the 50th anniversary of Formula Vee with a celebration event at Cadwell Park in July.

The July 29-30 meeting will feature Formula Vee races open to cars from across the category's history.

"We will be doing a non-championship event at Cadwell Park and are hoping to get some Irish, European and historic cars," said 750MC competitions secretary Giles

Groombridge. "There will be some drivers from the past too.

"There will be various other celebrations throughout the year and we have put together a calendar for Formula Vee including the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit, which is a rare occasion."

The series will race at the Kent track on Bank Holiday Monday May 1 as a guest event at an MSVR meeting.

CLASSIC FORMULA FORD

Morris to race restored Royale in FFord

FORMULA FORD VETERAN RICK Morris will race a Royale RP26 this season in the Classic Formula Ford Championship.

To celebrate the category's 50th anniversary, long-time Royale marque boss Alan Cornock has restored an RP26 from 1980 for Morris, who drove for the constructor's works team in 1981.

"I bought two cars that had been hillclimbing," said Cornock. "I wanted the one we'll race to look good and so we finished it in the Crompton Lighting colours of Jim Walsh."

Morris, who will reach his



70th birthday before the season starts, last raced a Royale in 1994 when he

finished fourth in the Kent-engined element of the Formula Ford Festival.

RGB

Vee champion Smith to race in RGB

FOUR-TIME 750 MOTOR CLUB FORMULA Vee champion Paul Smith will switch to the club's RGB Championship this season driving a Mittell MC-53.

Smith, who won 13 of 14 Vee rounds last year in his trusty AHS Dominator, started looking for a new challenge last summer. He has taken over the works car that 2015 RGB champion Scott Mittell raced last season.

Mittell, meanwhile, will compete in a new chassis, which should be ready to test at the end of February. Former RGB champion Tim Pell is also building a Mittell, which he acquired in kit form.

"We'll have four MC-53s on the grid this season, with Paul's, [2015 Locost champion] Danny Andrew's and mine running from our awning," said Mittell.

IN BRIEF



FIRST CLIO JUNIOR DRIVER REVEALED

Max Marzorati has been announced as the first driver to commit to the new Renault UK Clio Cup Junior series this year. The 16-year-old (above), whose father used to race in Formula Ford, will compete for the 20Ten Racing with Pyro partnership. "I've sampled the UK Clio Cup Junior car a couple of times now and it's just phenomenal," he said. "I love driving it for its performance but also for what it's teaching me in terms of front-wheel-drive skills for the future."

GINETTA'S YOUNG-DRIVER PROGRAMME

Ginetta has launched a new development scheme for young drivers and has signed four racers for 2017. Briton Jordan Sanders, Frenchman Remy Deguffroy and Americans Parker Chase and Harry Gottsacker are the first to join the programme. The scheme will allow the four to be placed with Ginetta customer teams around the world, while also working closely with LMP3 factory drivers Mike Simpson and Charlie Robertson on test and development days and conducting simulator work.

MANSELL UP FOR THE FUN CUP

Former EuroBOSS dominator Scott Mansell, who earned a place in the 2004 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award shootout for his outright-lap-record-slaying performances, is to contest the Fun Cup this year in a new team with his business partner Richard Baxter, having made periodic appearances in the past with Global Racing. British GT racer Peter Belshaw also plans a full season in the series alongside Marcus Clutton, having scored two wins last year.

SMITH GAINS FIRMAN FACTORY DEAL

Former Racing Steps Foundation protege Josh Smith will become a Ralph Firman factory-supported driver in 2017 in the BRSCC Formula Ford 1600 National Championship. Smith competed in a handful of FF1600 events in 2016 (below), and will drive the Firman RF16 vacated by Graham Carroll. "I've got a lot of confidence in Ralph," said Smith. "We've got a fairly intensive testing programme coming up."



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Autosport show: the year of the prototype?

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@Autosport](#)

I ONLY MADE IT TO AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL for one day this year, and Friday was not nearly enough to take in everything I wanted to see.

As ever, the breadth of motorsport disciplines on show at Birmingham's NEC was mindboggling for the legions of hardened enthusiasts, let alone the merely curious. The effort that exhibitors had expended in preparing their stands was impressive, and easier on the eye thanks to grey rather than red walkways this time round.

My absolute highlight was Classic Team Lotus's line-up of all seven surviving Type 49s, resplendent in green and yellow, Rob Walker Racing midnight blue and Gold Leaf liveries. In numerical order, with two life-sized 'cut-outs' representing their lost sisters (some folk eagerly reclined behind these for photos as if aboard, according to CTL's Steve Allen), the pioneering Cosworth DFV-powered beauties wowed onlookers. Memories of Jim Clark winning the Dutch Grand Prix first time out (in R2, later renumbered R11 for American VW dealer Pete Lovely, whose wife was named Nevele – read it backwards!) on my ninth birthday, and watching the double world champion win the British GP at Silverstone in the same car on July 15 1967 flooded back.

French privateer Guy Ligier was the final finisher that Saturday afternoon, 10th and four laps down in his year-old Brabham-Repco BT20 – the chassis in which New Zealander Denny Hulme had won the Monaco GP a couple of months previously. While eponymous cars built by Ligier's own equipe would win eight grands prix between 1977 and '81 (five of them with DFV engines) and added a surprise ninth, 15 years later, through Olivier Panis at Monaco in '96, the marque is better known today for its spectacular sports-prototypes.

Three of these stunners – covering the JSP2 and LMP3 designs – were at ASI, Ligier now thriving as a brand of Jacques Nicolet's Onroak Automotive group. The conglomerate embraces Martini, whose sole Formula 1 design, the ill-funded MK21, launched European F2 champion Rene Arnoux's top-line career in 1978.

A stepping stone to the P3 is in the pipeline, so who better to head up Onroak's Club Cars division than Radical Sportscars co-founder Phil Abbott?

Twenty years after it entered the marketplace – with the 1100cc Kawasaki-engined Clubsport developed within the 750 Motor Club – the Radical phenomenon is in new ownership. Given that the company has sold well over 2000 cars in two decades, the majority of them SR3 derivatives, I was staggered to notice that it has been rebranded. The iconic stylised R, which coloured Radical's identity from day one, is no more – gone in favour of a logo that reminds me of the fabulous Road America circuit's at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin.

Not far from the Radical and Onroak ranges, Ginetta proudly showed its latest prototype. The marque has been through metamorphoses since the four Walklett brothers originated it in the 1950s, but the orange G flag has never flown higher than it does today.

In Lawrence Tomlinson's ownership it finally has funding to match the ambition and passion that were always there. As I stood beside the G57-P2 and thought of the Lotus-eating G4s I saw race in the 1960s and '70s, and the LMP1 under development, it struck me that the name has probably come further than any other in motorsport, having initially badged agricultural buildings in Suffolk. 🏁



REYNARD WINS AT HAMPTON DOWNS

Adrian Reynard won last Sunday's Formula Ford finale at Hampton Downs in New Zealand, driving John Pickford's Epic Cars Reynard 84FF. In an FF1600 for only the third time since 1974, the British marque founder became more competitive with each outing. He described the experience as "very enjoyable".



KING KENNY HEADS NZ FESTIVAL

Following Australia's rounds at Barbagallo and Sandown Park, the Formula 5000 Tasman Cup Revival Series moves to Hampton Downs in New Zealand this weekend. Ken Smith (Lola T332, above) joins the fray at the eighth NZ Festival, facing Barbagallo winners Bryan Sala (Matich A50) and Grant Martin (Talon MR1A).



CANTILLON STEPS UP TO FW07C

Mike Cantillon is pinning his aspirations to become a Masters Historic Formula 1 frontrunner on the last Williams FW07C. The FW05 and Tyrrell 010 graduate has acquired FW07C-17, in which Carlos Reutemann finished third in the 1981 Italian GP, from the factory. CGA Race Engineering will continue to prepare his cars.

FINISHING STRAIGHT/WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

WHAT'S ON



Right at the heart of the action with

FOUR YEARS AFTER RED BULL arrived in the World Rally Championship, Red Bull has *finally* arrived in the World Rally Championship.

You know all that cool grooviness we were expecting from the masters of the extreme? Well, let's be honest, it didn't really happen, did it? Until now.

Got a phone, telly or tablet? Then get the Red Bull TV app and prepare yourself for the onset of more World Rally Championship action than you can shake a stick at.

Red Bull TV is offering previously unrivalled coverage of the championship, with half-hour highlights shows on Friday (the first is at 2100 tomorrow) and Saturday nights, with an extended wrap-up programme on Sunday evening.

That's all excellent news – especially combined with an extended powerstage show (now 90 minutes, up from 60), available on BT Sport – but the real bonus is on Saturday lunchtimes.

Forget *Football Focus*, the middle of Saturday now belongs to Mike Chen, Mark Webber and Matthew Wilson. As well as anchoring all of Red Bull TV's WRC coverage, Chen will deliver a Saturday stage live from every event, with Webber and Wilson offering expert analysis and insight – at least from round one this week.

Such is the potential of the new

Monte will be the litmus test, with a live Saturday slot and dedicated presenters

coverage, one WRC old boy has been tempted back to have a look.

"I'm really excited the WRC will be broadcast on Red Bull TV. Fans will now have the chance to see the very best coverage of some of the world's best motorsport for free and at a time that suits them."

So says Sebastien Loeb, a man who knows a thing or two (or nine) about the World Rally Championship.

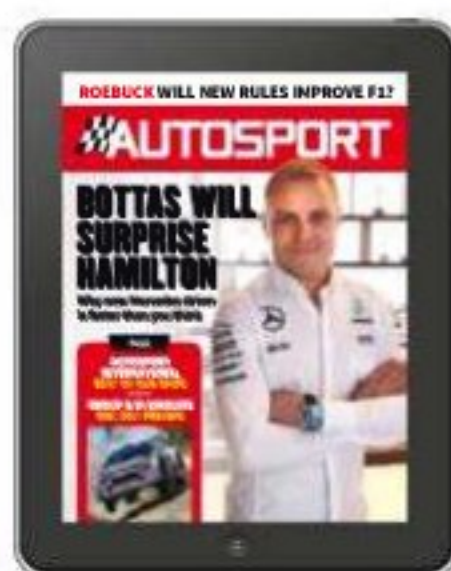
And he's right about the time thing as well. As with any of the Red Bull TV coverage, if you miss it, just flick through the library and it's there at your fingertips.

Wilson and Webber are great additions for Monte. Wilson brings with him a myriad of sweaty-palmed stories about dancing across icy cols, with nothing but four chilly slicks to keep him on the side of the mountain. And Webber's got that motorsport-royalty cachet, having won in Formula 1 and



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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube DUST-UP IN THE DUST

Search for: Best Of Car - Dakar 2017

Enjoy highlights from the four-wheeled competition in this year's South American off-road epic. The event ended in a Peugeot clean sweep (Stephane Peterhansel, Sebastien Loeb and Cyril Despres were 1-2-3), but the Minis and Toyotas certainly aren't ignored in this round-up.



Red Bull TV's WRC coverage kicks off in Monte Carlo

RED BULL

Red Bull

the World Endurance Championship.

And, unlike most of his racing pals, he has some solid experience of rolling cars, which definitely qualifies him for a rally show.

But Chen's the man behind the mic and in front of the camera. And he comes with a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm. Beyond that, he's got a rare ability to tease stories from drivers and co-drivers when they're live on air.

What's more, he's a former competitor. Somewhere in the service park there's a book open on how long it'll take him to mention his outing on last year's national element of Wales Rally GB.

Wilson's ready for those stories. "I've already heard most of them," he says. "But I'm sure Chenny will have a few more to come. Seriously though, I'm really looking forward to it. Mike's perfect for this job and I'm sure that's going to come across in the programmes."

DAVID EVANS

TV PICK OF THE WEEK

LIVE RACE OF CHAMPIONS: MIAMI

SKY SPORTS F1
Saturday 2000, Sunday 1700

It might have been a slightly longer wait than usual (the last event was in December 2015), but the Race of Champions is back this weekend. Defending champion Sebastian Vettel returns to face a line-up including Juan Pablo Montoya, Petter Solberg, Kurt and Kyle Busch, Jenson Button, Tony Kanaan and Tom Kristensen.

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Rd 4/4

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January 22

TOYOTA RACING SERIES

Rd 2/5

Teretonga, New Zealand

January 21-22

ANDROS TROPHY

Rd 6/7

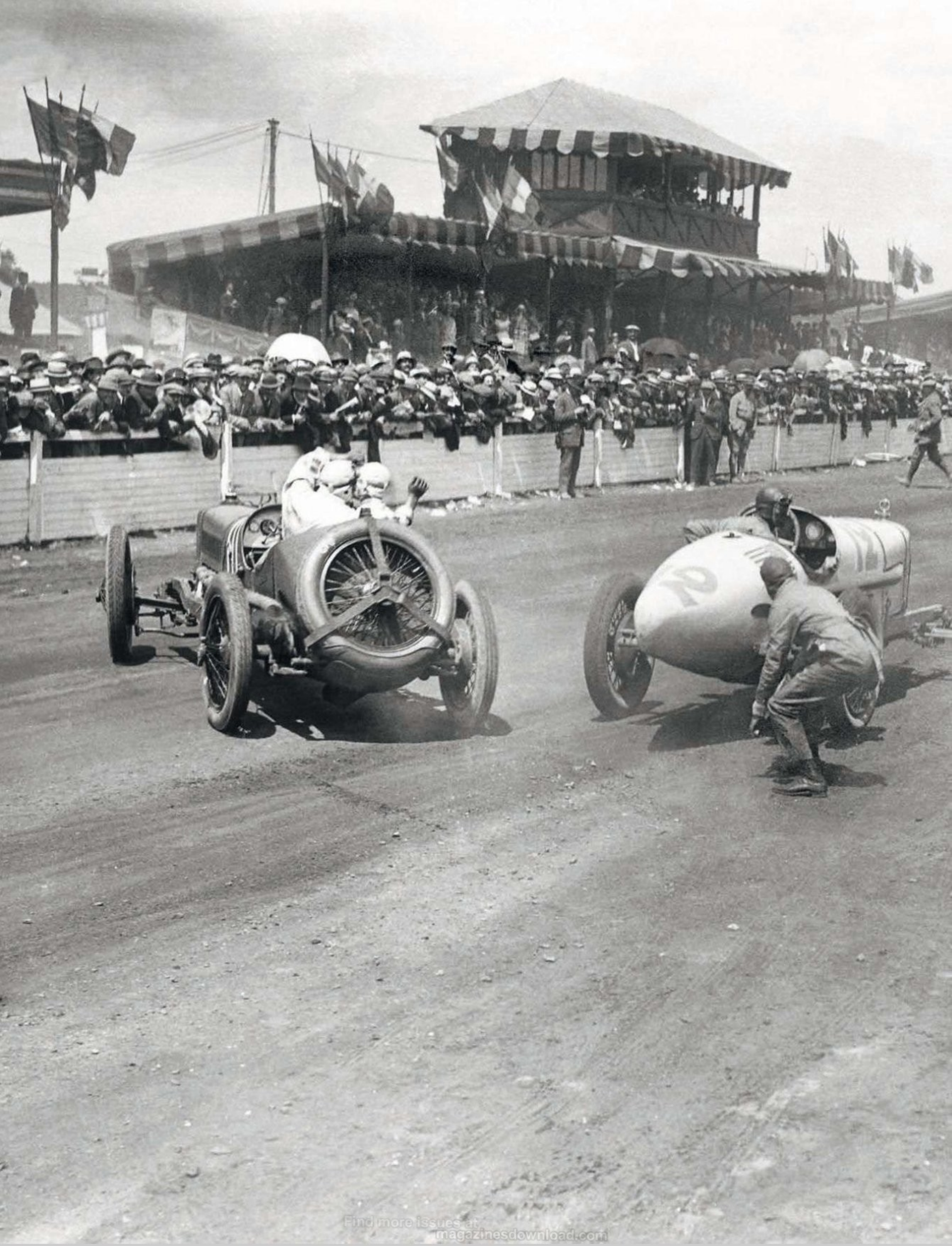
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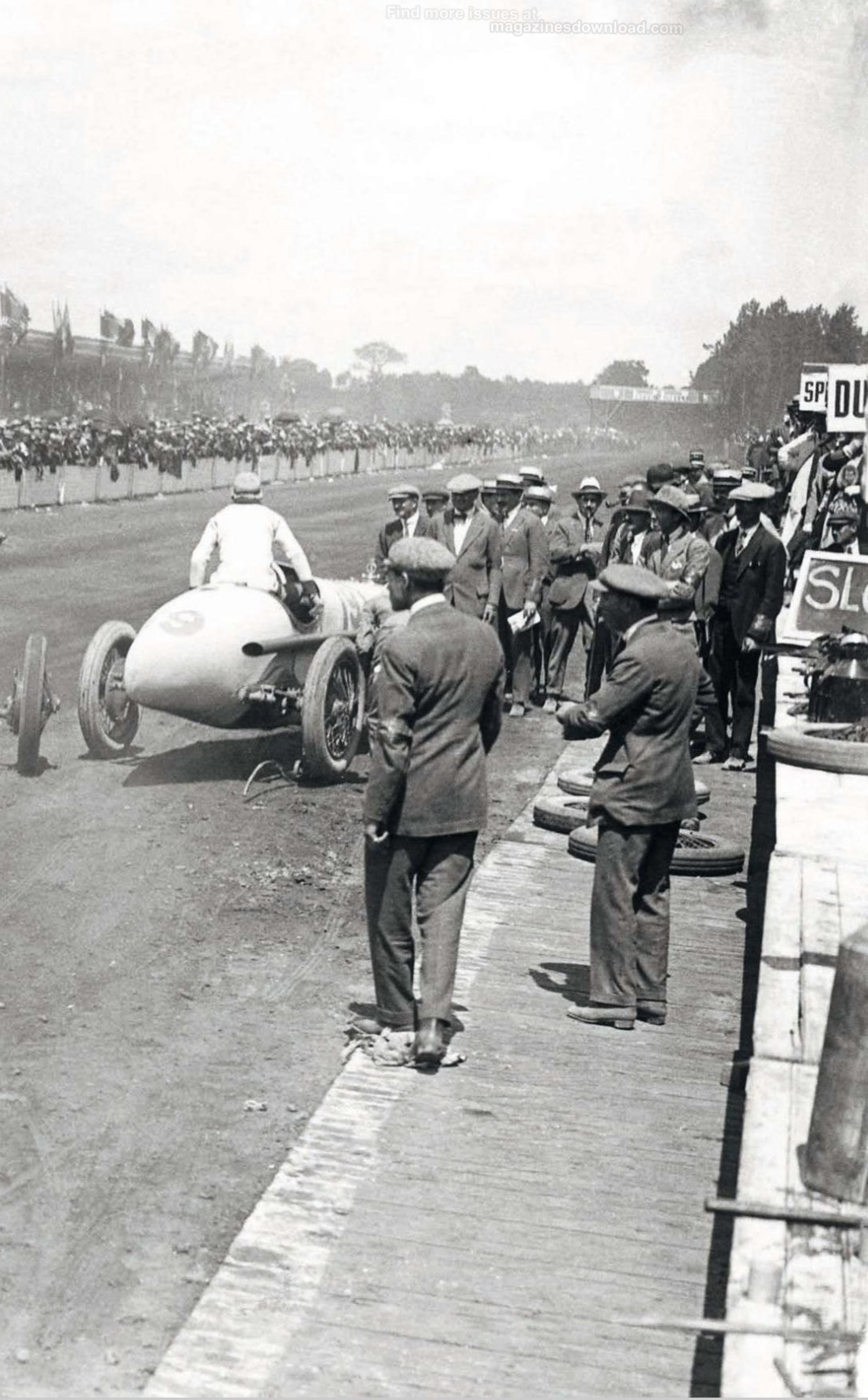
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B BADE

ANDROS TROPHY





THE ARCHIVE

Henry Segrave (Sunbeam) has to take a wide berth around the Duesenbergs of Jimmy Murphy (#12) and Andre Dubonnet (#19) in the pits during the 1921 French Grand Prix at Le Mans. The race was won by San Francisco-born Murphy – reportedly much to the chagrin of the local organisers – in what was the first all-American grand prix victory.

INTRODUCING



JOEL ERIKSSON

DON'T BE FOOLED INTO THINKING THAT this year's Formula 3 European Championship is going to be all about Brits Callum Iloft, Lando Norris and Jake Hughes against German Maxi Gunther. One man they will all have a wary eye upon is Joel Eriksson, from Tomelilla in the far south of Sweden and the star F3 rookie of 2016.

If the surname is familiar, that's because older brother Jimmy has been a mainstay of the single-seater ranks for eight years. But it was actually dad Arne who first got the racing bug. "Everything started with him," says Joel. "In his workplace he and his friends were starting to play around with some go-karts, and then when I was seven years old I got my own go-kart. And then we start to race and everyone was saying, 'Oh he's a real talent and blah blah blah'."

With karting titles in Sweden under his belt, Eriksson joined Motopark in 2015 and was the team's top driver in ADAC Formel Masters in Germany. The following season FMasters was replaced by Formula 4. "I was leading the championship at halfway but then the stewards were not really on my side," he reflects of a campaign he finished as runner-up.

Eriksson remained with Motopark for F3, a team his brother drove with for four seasons. "I started to run around here as a kid in 2009," he smiles. "The team is more like a family to me. Everyone here in the team is really good. It's perfect." A likely maiden win at Norisring evaporated when he was inadvertently torpedoed by a sheepish Callum Iloft, but the victory finally came at Spa on his way to the rookie title, and he also triumphed in August's Masters of F3 at Zandvoort.

He was also recruited to the BMW Junior Team in 2016, doing 'taxi' rides at four DTM events and getting a pukka test in the M4 racer at Jerez in December. Eriksson looked in the frame for a DTM seat in '17, until the manufacturers reduced from eight-car teams to six. "For me it's been really fun," he says. "I'm really happy about that opportunity. It's a great car to drive – it's quite similar to the F3, and it's a little bit extra driving on the track when you're racing. But I always kept in my head that my plan [for '17] is Formula 3 [he will stay with Motopark] to not be disappointed. There is still a lot to learn. Staying one more year in F3 can only be good for my career." ❄

MARCUS SIMMONS



CV

Age	18
2016	5th in F3 European Championship (rookie champion) with Motopark 1 wins, 10 podiums, 1 pole 1st in Masters of F3 Joined BMW Junior Team
2015	2nd in German F4 with Motopark 7 wins
2014	5th in ADAC Formel Masters with Motopark 1 win
2007-13	Karting

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