

CHAMPION!

LEWIS HAMILTON CELEBRATION

 **AUTOSPORT**

**WHY CLASH
COULDN'T
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F1
**23-PAGE
SPECIAL
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RALLY GB SENSATION

HOW ELFYN EVANS TOOK HOME WIN



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Just how many more can Hamilton win?

CONGRATULATIONS TO LEWIS HAMILTON ON HIS fourth Formula 1 world title. He might not have clinched the crown the way he wanted in Mexico last weekend, but there is no doubt he is a deserving champion. This was perhaps his best season.

So where does this leave him now in the pantheon of the greats and how much more can he go on to achieve? The first part of that question will be tackled by Autosport in more depth later in the year, but it is not unreasonable to compare him with the very best drivers the sport has seen – only Michael Schumacher and Juan Manuel Fangio won more championships, and Hamilton is second on the GP wins list.

As for the future, there is no reason to think Hamilton won't be in the mix again next season. The exciting thought is that Red Bull and Ferrari could maintain their current form and challenge Mercedes throughout 2018. Maybe McLaren and Renault will join in as well, although perhaps that is asking for too much!

For now, Hamilton should enjoy retaking the crown he lost to Nico Rosberg last year. Sebastian Vettel has been a worthy adversary this season (although the brief battle between Hamilton and Fernando Alonso reminded us of what we've been missing over the past four seasons), but – as the German said – Hamilton deserves his success.

There were three other top performers last weekend. That Max Verstappen is a future world champion is old news, as is the fact that newly crowned five-time champion Sebastien Ogier is the current king of rallying. But Elfyn Evans' dominant performance on Rally GB suggests there may be another star on the rise.



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Sam Bloxham/LAT

COVER STORY

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NIGEL ROEBUCK

Know your limits

Until the rules on track limits are enforced consistently, or flouting them puts a driver at a disadvantage, they'll continue to be disregarded

[@autosport](#)

IN AUSTIN MAX VERSTAPPEN, HAVING PASSED KIMI Raikkonen for third place on the last lap, looked suitably exhilarated as he awaited the podium ceremony with Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel, but his expression swiftly changed when Raikkonen entered the room, and someone advised Max that he should leave.

As we know, Verstappen had 'exceeded track limits' as he snicked past the Ferrari, and that being so, the stewards had no alternative but to penalise him. Their decision was not well received, for Max's move on Kimi had been beautifully executed, but inescapably all four of the Red Bull's wheels were 'off the track surface' at the time.

Christian Horner pointed out that this was the sort of racing fans were crying out for, and Niki Lauda described the

stewards' decision as the worst he could remember. On an emotional level, I entirely agreed with them, but rules are rules, and you can't ignore them as it suits you.

What you can complain about with this particular rule, though, is a lack of consistency in its application. For one thing, at some circuits it seems to be more fiercely in force than at others; for another, some incidents are punished, while others slip under the radar.

When you think about it, a rule like this might have been

conceived to cause controversy, and it exists, of course, as a consequence of the endless quest for greater safety. Back in the day I would stand for Monaco qualifying at the left-hander leading into the swimming pool complex, and marvel at the raw courage and commitment of Ayrton Senna as he hurtled into the turn. At that time a solid wall awaited if you got it wrong, so there was a powerful incentive to get it right. Now, though, the masonry is gone, replaced by white lines on the Tarmac, and the need for precision and bravery is inevitably reduced.

A couple of years ago, on the phone to Chris Amon, I brought up the contentious subject of track limits, and got a typically laconic response: "Well, in my day walls and trees

seemed to work pretty well..." Self-preservation is a powerful instinct, and assuredly such features around a track instilled discipline, but if 'something broke' the consequences were very different from skating into a huge runoff area bordered by tyre barriers.

We are now at the other extreme, and one which brings back to me *Support Your Local Sheriff*, a comedy western starring the lamented James Garner, in whose town a new jail had been built, but not completed.

“Magnussen, whose idol is Stirling Moss, thinks he was born too late”

COATES/LAT



Magnussen starred on way to eighth place in Mexico



Lacking bars for the cells, Garner chalked lines on the floor, advising inmates they should not cross them – and guess what, they took no notice.

No-one ever campaigned for safety more than Jackie Stewart, but even he thinks the situation, at modern circuits, has gone too far. “Everyone wants to see great racing, with more overtaking, although the fundamental problem is always ignored: the aerodynamics *have* to change.

“The way the cars are these days, overtaking – except in a straight line with DRS – is extremely difficult, so it’s not surprising to see the track limits, defined only by lines or small kerbs, being exceeded. As well as that, almost all the new circuits in the last 20-odd years have not been designed to encourage overtaking.

“For a long time there was no penalty for running wide – whether by accident or design – and using way more than the intended racing surface, and that had to change: making a mistake should not mean injury or death, but it should categorically mean you’re going to lose out.

“I don’t want to create accidents, God knows, but if proper rumble strips or whatever were put in the exit of a corner, drivers wouldn’t be able to make an error with impunity, and nor, with something similar at the apex, would they go off the racing surface to overtake. Risking a penalty is one thing: *knowing* that going beyond the track limits will cost you time is quite another.”

Illegal it may have been, but Verstappen’s pass of Raikkonen in Texas was like sleight of hand, and he was still seething about his penalty when he got to Mexico.

Add in that he was mortified to miss out on pole position, and that on the grid he was between Hamilton and Vettel, the last men standing in the championship, and it was no surprise that in the opening seconds he was utterly uncompromising. With nothing to lose, he sat it out with Vettel at the first right-left, and emerged with a lead he never lost: it was a glorious drive.

Finishing ninth, after the *contretemps* with Vettel on the first lap, was obviously not how Hamilton would have wished to clinch his fourth world championship, but, given the outcome of the day, he won’t dwell on a rare forgettable race.

Verstappen apart, I thought the outstanding drive in Mexico came from Magnussen, who finished eighth for Haas. In the team they think highly of Kev, not least because, unlike Romain Grosjean, he doesn’t moan all the time, and simply gets on with the job.

This is indeed an old-fashioned racer, not given to political correctness. “I’ve never,” he said to me, “been to an ‘old school’ track that I didn’t like. They’re more fun than modern circuits – and one thing that definitely makes them better is when there’s no runoff. Everyone has a brain, so you know if you go off it’s going to hurt – of course you don’t want to get hurt, but no matter how you look at it, it’s a choice: if we make it safer, we make it less exciting. It’s as clear as that.”

Magnussen, whose idol is Stirling Moss, thinks he was born too late, that he should have been a grand prix driver in the 1950s or ’60s. I’d say he was right. ✎



IMSA SPORTSCAR

Why Alonso is really doing

THERE WASN'T ANYTHING APPROACHING a masterplan when Fernando Alonso set out on his quest to win the unofficial triple crown of motorsport by adding wins in the Indianapolis 500 and Le Mans 24 Hours to his twin Monaco Grand Prix victories. An assault on the Daytona 24 Hours, the opening round of the IMSA SportsCar Championship, proves that a clear and coherent strategy is beginning to emerge as he turns his attention to Le Mans in his bid to emulate the so-far-unique feat of Graham Hill.

The idea of going for Indy glory started out as a bit of banter between Alonso and McLaren boss Zak Brown. No doubt the path to Alonso driving an LMP2 Ligier-Gibson JSP217 for his boss's United Autosports squad at Daytona alongside rising British star Lando Norris and Phil Hanson began in the same way. But the stateside outing really does make sense for a driver looking to go on to claim the biggest prize in sportscar racing.

We don't know how or when the double Formula 1 world champion will make a bid for victory at Le Mans, but he's not going to struggle with the machinery whatever form LMP1 takes in the future. He proved that when he jumped aboard an oval-spec IndyCar for the first time.

Nor will learning the track at Le Mans cause him many problems. The Circuit de la Sarthe is relatively easy to pick up.

But Alonso would be in for a culture shock if he pitched up at Le Mans for his first ever sportscar race. Just as he will be when he drives at Daytona for the first time.

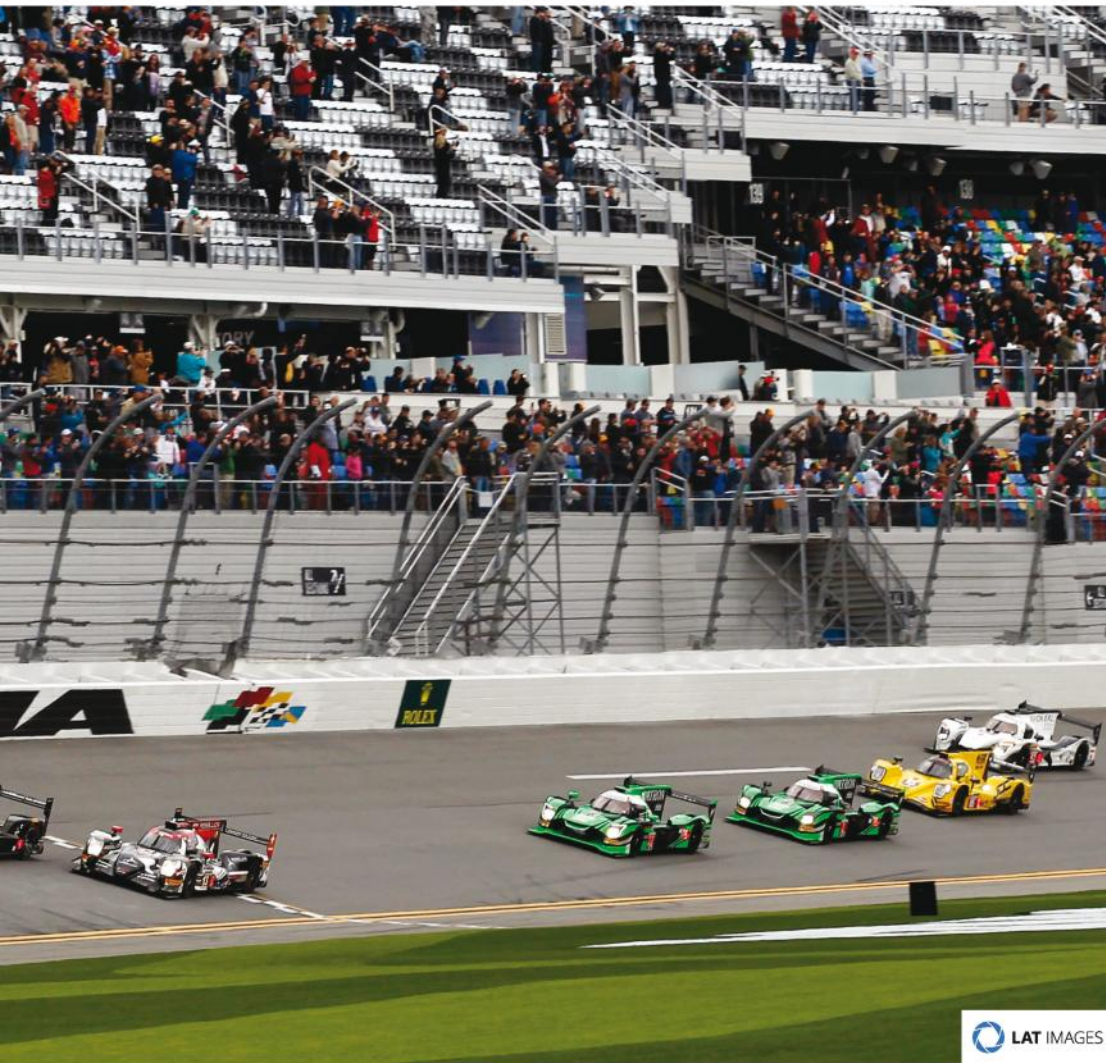
Sportscar racing is a multi-class discipline in which amateur racers are very much part of the scene. The speed differentials between the different categories of car are immense, and so are the disparities in the abilities of the drivers.

Being able to duck and dive through the traffic without losing time — or ending up with damaged machinery — is one of the core skills of a top sportscar driver. Learning where and when to pass with the least risk and time loss can only come with experience.

Doing a major sportscar race is the only way to understand how to read the 'body language' of that GT car ahead as you decide whether it's being driven by a professional who has seen you in their mirrors or an amateur who hasn't.

And there's probably no better place to begin that learning process than at the Daytona International Speedway on January 27–28 2018. A circuit measuring just three and a half miles will be packed full of 50-plus cars for the IMSA season opener.

Alonso talks about becoming a more "complete driver" with his Daytona participation, and there's no doubt it will make him a better sportscar driver for when



FORMULA 1

Kvyat joins contest for Williams slot

DROPPED TORO ROSSO DRIVER DANIIL Kvyat has joined the list of candidates for the 2018 Williams seat alongside Lance Stroll.

Kvyat, who started 15 grands prix for Toro Rosso this season, was told by Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko that he would not be returning to the team after the United States GP last month.

In recent weeks Williams' focus has been on Robert Kubica, Paul di Resta, Pascal Wehrlein and current incumbent Felipe Massa, but chief technical officer Paddy Lowe has maintained his team has to assess any qualified and available driver.

"We'll consider all drivers that are not contracted," Lowe said when asked about Kvyat by Autosport. "Kvyat is a very respectable driver, so he should be in the frame."

Williams does not have a deadline for a decision, and is resisting pressure from Massa to make a call before the Brazilian GP.

"We're talking all the time to Felipe, and we'll see where we get to with that," said Lowe. "There are all sorts of scenarios."

"Relationships between teams and drivers around renewals is always tense, unfortunately. In F1 it's a very public affair, and that does make it more awkward than we'd like. But Felipe's a great guy, and he's got a great relationship with Williams."

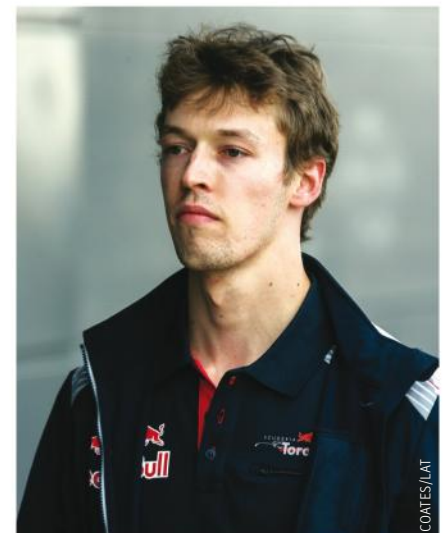
Toro Rosso team principal Franz Tost pointed to a loss of confidence in Kvyat and poor results as the reasons for the Russian being released by Red Bull.

Kvyat only scored points three times for Toro Rosso in 2017 and contributed just five to the team's current total of 53.

"The season from Daniil this year was very unfortunate," said Tost. "There were a lot of technical problems that were not in the hands of Daniil. But he also made some driver errors."

"Both parties lost confidence in each other."

ADAM COOPER AND LAWRENCE BARRETTO



the Daytona 24 Hours

he does make it onto the hallowed asphalt of the Circuit de la Sarthe.

That's not to say that Alonso couldn't win Le Mans without some prior sportscar experience. There have been some memorable rookie wins at the 24 Hours.

Most recently we had two first-timers in one car when Nico Hulkenberg and Earl Bamber claimed Porsche's first victory since 1998 together with Nick Tandy.

Hulkenberg was the least experienced of the three – he was going into only his second endurance event when he pitched up at Le Mans. It might be unfair to pick on one incident from the 2015 race, but he very nearly lost it for the winning crew in

the incident that sent Aston Martin amateur Roald Goethe into the barriers. However you want to apportion blame for that incident at the little kink that leads the cars out of the Porsche Curves sequence, the fact is that it could well have handed victory to the sister 919 Hybrid.

Some might point to another celebrated rookie victory by a driver who would go on to make quite a name for himself at Le Mans. Tom Kristensen starred on his debut in the 24 Hours with Joest Racing's Porsche WSC95, setting a

string of fastest laps one after another during the night on the way to victory with Michele Alboreto and Stefan Johansson in 1997.

Kristensen hadn't so much as driven the car before qualifying began, but what is often overlooked is that he had experience of multi-class racing from what was then known as the Japanese GT Championship, now the Super GT Series.

Andre Lotterer, Benoit Treluyer and Loic Duval – Le Mans winners all – will tell you that there is no better training ground for the aspiring LMP1 driver than competing in the GT500 class in Super GT. Dealing with slower GT300 cars is an essential part of the game.

Alonso surely understands that he has to learn about the nuances of sportscar racing. The idea of immersing himself in the discipline before he heads for Le Mans proves just how hungry he is in his quest to win the triple crown.

Not that we really need to question his drive and passion. Alonso has proved his motivation every time he has climbed aboard an uncompetitive McLaren-Honda over the past three seasons.

GARY WATKINS

“The idea proves just how hungry Alonso is”

FORMULA 1

MARCHIONNE: ENGINE HELP TALK JUST 'HOGWASH'

FERRARI PRESIDENT SERGIO Marchionne says Bernie Ecclestone's claims that Mercedes and the FIA helped his team are nothing but "unadulterated hogwash".

Ecclestone was quoted in an Italian newspaper claiming that Ferrari had been assisted with its engine this season by Mercedes, and that the FIA had "often helped" keep Ferrari competitive.

Marchionne (below) responded to Ecclestone's claims by saying the former F1 boss should be thankful to Ferrari for helping the series' profile during his era.

"I think it is what they call unadulterated hogwash," he said. "I think Bernie should be very thankful that Ferrari was at the table, and helped him turn the sport into as financially lucrative a position as it ultimately materialised for [his] personal use. God bless him. I like Bernie, a lot, but I think Ferrari has done as much [for F1]."

Ecclestone had claimed Mercedes had assisted Ferrari this season because it feared Red Bull would be a stronger rival and wanted the kudos of a title fight with Ferrari.

"With the friendly situation between the two teams, the best thing for Stuttgart in 2017 was to make sure that a) Red Bull did not have the most powerful engines, and b) Ferrari was competitive enough to be a credible rival to beat," said Ecclestone.

The allegation was dismissed by team bosses in the Mexican Grand Prix paddock last weekend.

TOM ERRINGTON



WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Honda loses China points for 'illegal' fuel injectors

THE HONDA WORLD TOURING CAR SQUAD HAS lost its results from the Chinese round of the series after its cars were disqualified on technical grounds.

An investigation by the championship's technical delegate ruled that the team's fuel injectors were not compliant with the technical regulations. Privateer team Zengo Motorsport was also excluded due to an identical homologation issue with its fuel injectors.

Only half points were awarded for the aborted wet second race at the Ningbo circuit and the decision, which was announced at last weekend's Motegi round, meant Honda lost all the points it had won in China.

The injectors of all the Honda Civic WTCCs were marked for further investigation during Friday's scrutineering session in China, with the results of the

races marked as provisional. Following a meeting in Geneva ahead of the racing getting underway in Japan, the FIA technical department ruled that the three cars of the factory Honda Racing Team JAS squad had not complied with the homologation procedure.

Honda accepted the decision, and put the transgression down to a difference in interpretation of the FIA homologation procedure. "While we accept this unfortunate decision of the race stewards, we wish to stress that we have acted in good faith at all times," said Ryuichi Furukawa of Honda's engine research and development team.

Honda was also excluded from the Marrakech round in 2016 when its car's floor was found to not be compliant.

NEIL HUDSON



INDYCAR

Deal for 2018 Mexico race 99% done

A DEAL FOR INDYCAR TO RACE at the Formula 1 Mexican Grand Prix venue in August 2018 is 99% complete, according to sources close to the race organisers.

Mexico City was listed as a provisional venue on the calendar as it had not been able to secure the date before the calendar was revealed due to September's earthquake and limited promotion time.

Autosport has learned that

IndyCar is now likely to visit the venue in the first week of August – the slot vacated by the World Endurance Championship's decision to create a 'superseason' and drop Mexico from its schedule.

Mark Miles, CEO of IndyCar's parent company Hulman & Co, confirmed to Autosport that "if the race happens, it's August 5, at least for 2018" and that an alternative date "is really not even in question".

It is understood that the reason the race has not yet been confirmed is because all parties did not want to detract attention from last weekend's Mexican Grand Prix.

A condition for IndyCar going to Mexico is that one Mexican driver must race. Former F1 driver Esteban Gutierrez is known to be working on a deal to race full-time in 2018.

LUIS RAMIREZ, JONATHAN NOBLE AND DAVID MALSHER



FORMULAE

Porsche not setting seat plan

PORSCHE'S LMP1 DRIVERS ARE NOT guaranteed seats when the German manufacturer enters Formula E as a full works entrant for season six in 2019/20, but they will be at the front of the queue.

Andreas Seidl, Porsche's LMP1 team principal, explained that the manufacturer's policy of recruiting from within its own ranks would be carried over from the LMP1 programme it runs in the World Endurance Championship, which finishes at the end of this season. All six P1 drivers will remain under contract heading into 2018 and will be offered race programmes for next season, Porsche has promised.

"The idea is that we will continue the history that we have built up with these guys in the next programme," explained Seidl. He stressed that it was "not a given" that two of the six will land the FE seats, but he said Porsche would "look in-house first like we did when we entered P1".

Seidl suggested that Andre Lotterer and Neel Jani, who have deals to race for Techeetah and Dragon Racing in FE season four in 2017/18 respectively, would not necessarily be able to jump ahead of the other LMP1 drivers in the queue for 2019/20 seats. He described their arrangements as "private deals" that were "good for Porsche".

Timo Bernhard, Romain Dumas and Marc

Lieb were already Porsche drivers when they joined the LMP1 squad on the marque's return to the top flight of sportscar racing in 2014. Nick Tandy and Earl Bamber then stepped up from Porsche's GT roster to drive the third 919 Hybrid at the 2015 Le Mans 24 Hours, before landing full-season WEC drives for '17. Brendon Hartley has contested the two most recent Formula 1 grands prix in the USA and Mexico for Toro Rosso, and the Italian team's boss Franz Tost said there was a "high possibility" he could race for the squad full-time in 2018.

Porsche had a presence at the official FE pre-season test at Valencia last month, embedding engineers with the Dragon team. Seidl would not be drawn on whether this arrangement would continue or whether it would seek a partnership with an existing team as it gears up for its FE entry.

"We had guys in that garage [Dragon's] and we were looking around other garages, too," he explained. "We used Valencia as an opportunity to have a first look and get an idea of what FE is, so that once this season is finished we can create a new structure."

On the subject of an alliance with one of the teams not affiliated to a major manufacturer, he said: "We could, but everything is open at the moment."

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

MOTO2 TEAM BOSS STEFAN KIEFER DIES

Kiefer Racing boss Stefan Kiefer died in Malaysia, on the eve of the Sepang MotoGP weekend. Autosport understands he died in his hotel room on Thursday 26 October, however details of his passing are limited. The news was confirmed by MotoGP on Twitter after first practice at Sepang last Friday. The Kiefer Racing squad subsequently opted to withdraw from the Sepang MotoGP event.

LEIMER WINS FERRARI CHALLENGE FINAL

The 2013 GP2 champion Fabio Leimer won the Ferrari Challenge's headlining Trofeo Pirelli World Final in a chaotic event at the Mugello circuit last weekend. Leimer built up a healthy lead following an early safety car as he made a superb restart and then pulled clear of the chasing pack. Behind the Swiss racer, Bjorn Grossman finished second and Sam Smeeth was third.

ROSBERG SET TO HELP KEKE'S GT TEAM

Formula 1 world champion Nico Rosberg will take a behind-the-scenes advisory role in the expansion of his father Keke's Team Rosberg outfit into GT racing next year. Team Rosberg won the DTM this season with series rookie Rene Rast and has purchased a pair of Lamborghini Huracan GT3s to enter in the German ADAC GT Masters championship. Rosberg will initially be responsible for finding drivers.

GANASSI SIGNS JONES FOR 2018 INDYCAR

Chip Ganassi Racing has signed IndyCar rookie of the year Ed Jones for the 2018 season. Jones made his IndyCar debut this year with Dale Coyne Racing, who had been keen to retain him for 2018. Jones has now made the surprise switch to join Ganassi, where he will partner Scott Dixon in a slimmed-down line-up.

TECHEETAH TAKING KNIFE TO GUN FIGHT

Jean-Eric Vergne is anticipating a "difficult" start to the 2017/18 Formula E season because his Techeetah team's pre-season testing restriction has left it "with knives when the others have rifles". Techeetah is a Renault customer, so the three-day official pre-season test at Valencia was therefore the team's first chance to run the new Renault Z.E.17 powertrain.

VIRTUAL BECOMES REALITY

Amalgam Collection has teamed up with McLaren to make the virtual a reality with the McLaren Ultimate Vision Gran Turismo. The collaboration has taken a virtual model – designed as a tie-in with the 15th anniversary celebration of PlayStation's Gran Turismo franchise – and made it into a 91-piece run model, each with a signed and uniquely numbered plaque.



AMALGAM COLLECTION



Drink to the future

Wales Rally GB delivered a home winner in Elfyn Evans and Sebastien Ogier's fifth championship title, but what do their futures hold?

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@daviddevansrally](#)

EMOTION. AND PETRUS. THOSE WERE THE TWO subjects Sebastien Ogier focused on in his post-event debrief with the media last Sunday night. The champ was tired, but on superb form. In truth, his mood after Wales Rally GB outshone his driving for at least two of the event's three days.

Try as he might, Ogier couldn't tune himself into typically tricky Welsh roads. He searched for rhythm and confidence as much as he sought grip from his Ford Fiesta WRC. Then he went off in Aberhirnant in the fog.

Remember when you were young and you were told to carry Granny's cup and saucer through to the kitchen? Whatever you do, don't drop them. The harder you focused, the more inevitable the crash of bone china meeting kitchen floor became. On Friday and Saturday, Ogier was carrying that cup and saucer. And on stage 15, they wobbled dangerously. But he caught them.

The front-left wheel was smashed and in need of urgent attention. The world title was wobbling. But, like world champion fighters the world over, Ogier relied on his instinct. It didn't let him down.

He got through the next stage, got to service, then delivered that fifth crown. The moment that elevated him above such greats as Juha Kankkunen and Tommi Makinen could also be the moment that keeps him in the sport.

"What is beautiful for me is my emotion," he said. "When I finished that last stage... I can't explain, but in this short period of time, I have the strongest emotion I ever had in rallying. I don't know why it was like this, why I felt like this. But I am happy I got this emotion, I'm happy this sport can still make me feel like this." Ogier moved a long way towards considering a second season with M-Sport on Sunday night.

And who could blame him? M-Sport is Malcolm Wilson's history-making band of privateers. At the start of the season, the Cumbrian talked of his desire to land his squad's first drivers' title in two decades at the sport's cutting edge.

Manufacturers' title, too? No. Not with Citroen's red army apparently marching back into battle, and Hyundai fielding a team of drivers all of whom had won a world rally. And then there was Toyota and an allegedly limitless budget to turn the Yaris WRC into a winner. No. MW talked mid-table, at best.

Ogier won the Monte and there's been a Fiesta WRC on the podium of every rally since. That sort of reliability and consistency wins championships. And M-Sport walked this one.

"We're not slowing down now," Wilson said quietly on Sunday night. "We've got more to come. We want more."

And nobody wants this to stop. The World Rally Championship has landed its very own David and Goliath(s) story. Forget David Sutton's 1981 win with Ari Vatanen (the RS1800 was already a well-proven winner). Forget Kronos Racing and Sebastien Loeb in 2006 (the cars were fettle between events in Citroen's Versailles factory). This is a genuine private win. This car was crafted in Cumbria and driven to the world's four corners, where it reigned supreme.

Don't get me wrong, without Ford, Wilson wouldn't have had a car in the first place. But here's hoping this staggering season of success for M-Sport will bring a fairer division of the financial burden to rallying's longest-standing alliance. Ford of Europe chief Gerard Quinn's presence in Deeside got people talking. Quinn himself remained tight-lipped on the future, but he's a man with rallying in his veins.

There was a similar reluctance to discuss the future of Wales' very own superhero, Elfyn Evans. Given that he was

five at the time, it was a fair assumption that Elfyn wouldn't have recalled Colin McRae talking about his intentions after his first home win on the 1994 RAC. I informed Evans what the then Subaru star had said at

Chester Racecourse 23 years ago. "I want to come back and fight for the championship next year," the Scot reckoned.

I told Elfyn now would be a good time for him to say the same. He told me to stop putting words in his mouth. But then he agreed, it would be a good thing to say. Almost. "Can we say that's what we've got to be aiming at?" he asked.

Works for me. Fact is, Evans in a Fiesta on Michelins will be a threat everywhere next year. His speed, consistency and self-belief will carry him to the top of the table in 2018.

Wilson agreed. Albeit slightly absentmindedly. Ogier, you see, had by this point on Sunday night reminded him of a topic discussed around the table between Mr and Mrs Wilson and their three drivers and co-drivers.

Wilson looked genuinely worried. Brow furrowed, he looked for a way out. "I didn't say that, did I?"

Ogier laughed. "Malcolm, you said Petrus. So now we get started on the Petrus!" For clarity, they were talking about the Bordeaux Merlot, not the Belgian beer of the same name.

Champions, championships and world domination, like Chateau Petrus, don't come cheap. #

"We're not slowing down now. We've got more to come. We want more"

FEEDBACK

Rally GB spectacle recalls glory days

Having just returned from Rally GB, I have to give a big thank you to the FIA for getting this formula right. The cars, both senior and junior R5, sound, look and go great. It's been years since I've been to a rally, but the sight of these projectiles in the way they handle and accelerate reminds me of the Group B days!

Congratulations to Mr Evans, Mr Ogier and M-Sport for a job well done.

Rob Foden
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Sticking up for the steward

I am probably the only person who is prepared to stick up for the much maligned "idiot steward" who decided to demote Max Verstappen from a podium position at the US Grand Prix.

On the irrefutable premise that one cannot be 'a little bit pregnant', Verstappen quite clearly transgressed the track-limit regulations and gained a significant advantage in doing so.

While the outcome of the decision is unfortunate, it is not fair to ignore the rules or manipulate the result simply for the sake of not spoiling the show.

Andy Davey
Peebles

One rule for all

On page 24 of last week's magazine, Article 27.3 of the Sporting Regulations is quoted and clearly sets out the rules

in respect of white lines/kerbs. While not agreeing with the decision to deny Max Verstappen a well deserved podium, I can understand the reasoning.

On page 58 we see Joey Foster pulling off a great bit of overtaking around the outside at Paddock to win the Formula Ford Festival, but with all four wheels over the white lines. Vastly different categories, of course, but surely they should be governed by the same rules?

Keith Quinnell
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire

Super idea to boost overtaking

What a telling comment in the first look at the 2019 Super Formula car (Pit+Paddock, October 26); 'the series suffers from a lack of overtaking but this is being addressed by relying more on underfloor aerodynamics than wings to generate downforce'.

Is it conceivable that other single-seat series will take note? In a word... no! It does go to show that some people are prepared to take measures to mitigate the effects of downforce on overtaking.

Neil Davey
Newport, South Wales

Remember Dijon '79...

It is just as well that there were no stewards at Dijon in 1979. Villeneuve and Arnoux would have got a lifetime ban!

John Simons
Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex



Sights and sounds of Rally GB 2017 have fired enthusiasm of reader Foden

New Daytona date for Alonso

Come on Fernando, never mind sportscars (Pit+Paddock, October 26), how about the Daytona 500 next year? I will be there and would be great to see you race the good ol' boys.

Paul Drinkwater
Byemail

Rosberg is sorely missed

As undoubtedly special as he is, Lewis Hamilton has been rather lucky this year without Nico Rosberg defending his title. Rosberg has been derided and disregarded. All world champions have said that they drove better, having got the monkey off their back, the following season and beyond.

Overall, Hamilton was ahead in their head-to-head, but not in the way that he is with Bottas, or Kovalainen at McLaren. There were many times when Rosberg was untouchable by Hamilton.

It is irrelevant whether Rosberg played mind games, top level sport is all about this. This season could have gone either way between the two had Rosberg stayed on to defend his title, and it's a real shame for the fans that he didn't.

Give Rosberg credit – a terrific driver and, for me, a racing fan more than a driver fan, he is sorely missed.

Pete Effamy
Hampshire

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Hamilton's fourth as Verstappen dominates

By Edd Straw [@eddstrawF1](#)







Verstappen forges into the lead as Hamilton starts his move on Vettel for second

MAX VERSTAPPEN COULD NOT HELP BUT BE FAST IN MEXICO. WITH THE RACE in the bag, and his Red Bull team monitoring the gap back to Valtteri Bottas, he could only say “I’m really sorry” when admonished for his lap times having stayed the same after agreeing to ease off.

At that point, early in the second stint of what was a one-stop race for the first and second place finishers, Bottas still had a vague hope of closing the gap after both had switched from ultra-softs to super-softs. That Verstappen could match or outpace Bottas seemingly without trying tells you everything that you need to know about his supremacy. It was a future champion’s drive on a day when Lewis Hamilton became the champion of the present.

Hamilton should have been part of that lead scrap, and momentarily was. After taking a scintillating pole position, Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel found himself under attack from Verstappen on the outside line into the Turn 1 right-hander. Vettel pushed Verstappen wide, but not too wide, with the pair making contact out of the ensuing left-hander. Hamilton didn’t need another invitation, going around the outside of both at the Turn 3 right-hander.

Sandwiched between Verstappen and Vettel as he exited the corner, and knowing that this was his best chance to gain a track position advantage, Hamilton wasn’t going to back down. But he had to check up thanks to Verstappen’s compromised exit. Vettel did not react quickly enough to avoid hitting the right-rear corner of Hamilton’s car. The result: Vettel hurried back to the pits for a new front wing, while Hamilton crawled back for a new set of boots as Verstappen charged into the distance ahead of Bottas.

The world championship battle, such as it was, given Hamilton

only needed to finish in the top five to clinch it regardless of what Vettel did, had effectively been decided by a collision. OK, in the circumstances, it wasn’t quite Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna at Suzuka 1989/1990, or Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve with Michael Schumacher in 1994 and ’97 respectively, but it was a moment that would have been far more controversial had there really been a championship at stake.

The stewards noted the event, but neither investigated nor took action on what was deemed to be a racing incident. Hamilton suggested it was deliberate over the radio, while Vettel, after the race, simply declared it to be “irrelevant”. He focused on Hamilton’s title, magnanimously congratulating him with a hug in the post-race TV interview pen.

“I knew that I couldn’t win the race, clearly, but I was [thinking], ‘You know what, I’m going to have the best race I can possibly have from wherever I am,’” said Hamilton. “I left a lot of room, so I wonder why the dude behind that I was fighting touched me. We’re great drivers, he’s a four-time world champion, it’s quite easy not to hit each other, but in the midst of things it can also be quite easy to touch. So I don’t really care and I don’t feel like analysing it.”

Even when forced to analyse it on Sky Sports F1’s post-race coverage, Hamilton held back when seemingly on the brink of emphatically blaming Vettel. In the end, given the clash didn’t



SUTTON



Hamilton briefly got ahead of his Ferrari rival...

COATES/LAT



... but picked up a puncture

ETHEM WIGTON/LAT

affect the outcome of the title, both could get away with glossing over it.

“I feel like I positioned my car perfectly through those two corners and it felt a bit odd to be hit by the guy I’m fighting the championship for,” was as far as Hamilton would go. It was clear both felt some grievance.

But the stewards were right. Hamilton had been bold and attacking but not to excess, and Vettel would certainly not have hit him intentionally given he also came off badly from the incident. It all stemmed from Verstappen’s slightly slow exit from Turn 3, itself a consequence of the battle through Turns 1 and 2. That’s racing.

Any realistic chance of Vettel, who needed to finish at least second to have any chance of staying mathematically in the hunt,

extending the fight for the championship was gone. But it did set up a fascinating ‘battle’ between the pair as they recovered from lowly positions.

Vettel pitted for a new front wing and rejoined 19th, courtesy of being able to make it to the pits more quickly than Hamilton, who was dead last and 23 seconds behind his rival. From here, it was a tale of two independent recoveries.

Vettel started quickly. Now on the soft Pirellis, he picked up places for free when Carlos Sainz Jr (after a spin) and Pascal Wehrlein stopped, before Daniel Ricciardo retired with an MGU-K problem.

On lap 12 of 71, he dispatched Felipe Massa into the Turn 4/5 chicane despite the Williams driver going mighty late on the brakes and forcing the Ferrari wide at the exit of the



LAT IMAGES



Verstappen was never challenged once in front

left-hander element, to run 15th. Pierre Gasly, on lap 16, Romain Grosjean, on lap 18, Brendon Hartley, on lap 21, and Stoffel Vandoorne, on lap 23, all followed in quick succession to put Vettel up to 11th. That became 10th when Nico Hulkenberg retired with an ERS problem on lap 25.

By now, Hamilton had climbed to... last. Frustrated behind the inconveniently quick Renault of Sainz and Wehrlein's Sauber, he asked whether there was damage to his floor. There was, and he didn't seem especially sharp at this stage of the race as he struggled on soft Pirellis when super-softs might have been the better choice. As Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff put it, "half of his right diffuser was ripped off" in the lap-one clash.

After 26 laps of running at the back, Hamilton finally made his way past Sainz on the main straight to run 17th (he had picked up two places from the demises of Ricciardo's Red Bull and Hulkenberg's Renault). But his gap to Vettel had only grown to just over 26s.

The deployment of the virtual safety car on lap 32 to clear up Hartley's smouldering Toro Rosso triggered a flurry of pitstops, including ones for Vettel and Hamilton. By then, Vettel had already passed Fernando Alonso into Turn 1 and picked up another place thanks to Marcus Ericsson's stop. That left Vettel eighth, with Hamilton down in 16th. This big difference in track position made all the difference when it came to the divergence of their races.

Hamilton picked off Grosjean, Wehrlein, Gasly and Ericsson in short order to run 12th by lap 50. During that time, Vettel had

passed only Kevin Magnussen into Turn 1 and was working his way onto the back of Sergio Perez's sixth-placed Force India. The gap between Vettel and Hamilton was now up to 41s thanks to a combination of Hamilton being in slower traffic and being lapped by the leading cars, and the fact Vettel was on ultra-softs and Hamilton super-softs.

The closing stages were all about Vettel working through the bottom half of the top six. None of Perez, Lance Stroll or Esteban Ocon put up much of a fight — although Vettel's surprise lunge on Perez into Turn 5 was a fantastic pass. It allowed him to finish fourth, 1m10s behind the leader.

Hamilton, meanwhile, worked his way through Vandoorne and Massa into Turn 1 to run 10th. The message from the pitwall was that eighth was possible, but there was one obstacle in the way: Fernando Alonso.

The McLaren driver was hassling Magnussen when Hamilton caught their battle with 13 laps to go. After a couple of looks, he launched an attack with just three laps remaining. Some said Hamilton's race, condemned to working his way through from the back with car damage, wasn't worthy of a champion. But this battle with another great champion was a thrilling one, coming to a head when Hamilton attempted to go around the outside into Turn 1.

Alonso got on the brakes late and hard, consolidating his position through the Turn 2/3 left-right. But this compromised his exit and allowed Hamilton a run towards Turn 4 on the outside line. The Mercedes was seemingly well ahead into the corner, but

“I left a lot of room, so I wonder why the dude behind touched me”



COMES/LAT



HONE/LAT

Alonso extracted every single iota of braking force to come back on the inside line, leaving Hamilton just enough room to complete the move into the Turn 5 right-hander. With a quick move to the right to cover Alonso into the Turn 6 double-apex hairpin, Hamilton had a hard-fought ninth position.

He hassled Magnussen to the flag, but the Dane stayed resolute and prevented the championship winner from grabbing what was at one stage the best possible result. No matter for Hamilton, who was crowned thanks to Vettel – who finished a minute ahead after their very different recoveries – only managing fourth.

In the final analysis, Vettel made 10 on-track passes on his way from 19th to fourth and Hamilton eight (two of them on Wehrlein) to go from 20th to ninth. But both enlivened the race and at least partly made up for their early exit from the lead battle. >>

Vettel fought back to fourth by making 10 passes in the race

QUALIFYING



TEEL/LAT

QUALIFYING WAS ALL ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT A RED BULL COULD beat Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes to pole position. But Sebastian Vettel wasn't interested in that script, delivering a virtuoso performance in Q3 to grab his 50th Formula 1 pole position.

Vettel's lap wasn't perfect, by his own admission – he shifted down to first in the Turn 6 double-apex hairpin, leading to the rear end being kicked out towards the exit. But the rest of the lap was outstanding, with Vettel controlling beautifully any misbehaviour from the car and provoking the rear to perfection on turn-in. That, combined with Max Verstappen failing to improve on his second run, was enough for pole position by 0.086 seconds. "It was quite a lap," was Vettel's verdict.

Red Bull's challenge had looked very strong, particularly for Verstappen. The Dutchman was on provisional pole position after the first runs on ultra-soft Pirellis in Q3, but lapped three-tenths slower on his second run. With Vettel making up the quarter-of-a-second deficit, that meant no first F1 pole for Verstappen.

"I couldn't switch the tyres on and couldn't go faster, go faster" he said. "This track is really slippery. The front tyres were not working, a bit of understeer – at this track you need to turn quickly in the low-speed corners."

Max Verstappen

"I couldn't switch the tyres on and couldn't go faster," he said. "This track is really slippery. The front tyres were not working, a bit of understeer – at this track you need to turn quickly in the low-speed corners."

Things were much worse for Friday practice pacesetter Daniel Ricciardo. He qualified only seventh, behind the Force India of Esteban Ocon, and was baffled. Again, getting the tyres working seemed to be a problem – with the variation in set-up between his car and that of Verstappen described as "peanuts".

"We tried doing two warm-up laps, one warm-up lap. But it seemed like whatever grip I had when I left the box, I had for the session," he said. "We played around a bit with front wing, but the car was numb to anything in qualifying. In the end we couldn't do anything, I was pretty helpless."

Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas were separated by just 0.024s in third and fourth. Hamilton failed to improve on his second run in Q3 and admitted his last run should have been a few tenths quicker but, given Verstappen was 0.360s up the road, the second row seemed about right for Mercedes.

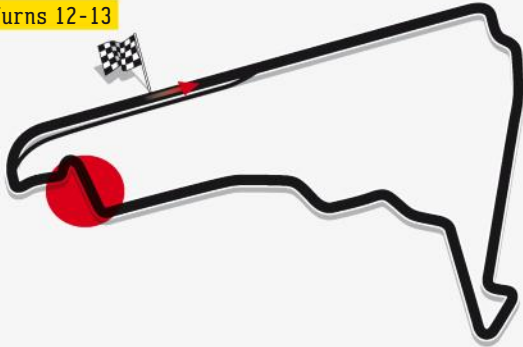
Bottas had to abort his first Q3 run after a big lock-up into the Turn 13 left-hander in the stadium after having to jink round Verstappen exiting Turn 12. The stewards concluded Verstappen might have affected Bottas, but it wasn't by enough to earn an impending penalty.

Only two of the drivers eliminated in Q2 set times – the two Williams drivers, with Lance Stroll just over a second behind Felipe Massa, thanks to a scruffy run through the stadium. Brendon Hartley lost power before he'd finished his first flier, but still ended up ahead of the penalty-laden McLarens of Fernando Alonso and Stoffel Vandoorne. Returnee Pierre Gasly did not run in qualifying, thanks to an engine problem in FP3.



“IT’S FASCINATING TO SEE HOW THE DRIVERS FEEL FOR AVAILABLE GRIP”

Turns 12-13



THROUGH THE THIRD-GEAR right-hander with a minimum speed of approximately 120km/h (75mph), pull the car across the track while accelerating to around 190km/h (118mph), then back on the brakes and down to second gear for the left-hander.

The first part of Mexico City’s stadium section seems simple enough, but, especially in the low-grip conditions of FP1, it’s fascinating to see how the drivers feel for the available grip.

One driver stands head and shoulders above the rest in the first 40 minutes of the session, prior to the

mandatory relinquishing of the first set of tyres. Sebastian Vettel hits the brakes and turns in. Like so many others, the rear steps out and he has to make a big correction. Usually, this means a wide ride through the tight left-hander. But not for Vettel, whose rapid and precise corrections keep the car beautifully under control. It’s no surprise to learn that he was fastest in that part of the session.

For others, it’s less straightforward. But you can see the adaptation. Valtteri Bottas struggles initially, but soon adapts to a technique



Vettel makes rapid, precise corrections

that requires a relatively late turn-in, with the fast application of the left lock. Lewis Hamilton, by comparison, starts loading up the car laterally earlier and more progressively. Very different styles, very similar results.

Carlos Sainz Jr seems to struggle, regularly running wide, but gradually refines

his approach. Most drivers make this progress, but Lance Stroll seems to struggle for confidence on the rear end, taking multiple bites of the steering wheel and then, when he finally winds on the lock properly, losing the rear. This happens a lot, and it’s no surprise that he loses a heap of time in the stadium on his qualifying lap the next day.

It’s a struggle for the Red Bull drivers early, too. Daniel Ricciardo is hesitant on turn-in and Max Verstappen regularly ends up with the rear stepping out after taking a more positive and later approach. As is often the case for these two, they gradually converge on a happy medium by the second half of the session.

EDD STRAW



Vettel warmly congratulates rival Hamilton

HONE/LAT



SUTTON

In between the top two and Vettel was Kimi Raikkonen, who spent the early stages of the race stuck behind Perez before capitalising on running longer on the ultra-softs and, more importantly, the timing of the virtual safety car, to take third. Vettel had been 26.895s behind Raikkonen after his early stop, and eventually crossed the line 16.071s behind – an average gain of 0.155s per lap to a driver who spent the last 50 laps in clear air (save for the odd bit of lapping). Even with the caveat that Raikkonen had less of an imperative to push than Vettel, that shows how good Vettel's recovery was.

Up front, Verstappen's run to victory was very straightforward. He led all 71 laps and was only denied fastest lap by Vettel's charge. With Red Bull and Renault's form already on an upward curve, the high altitude of the track reduced air density by approximately 23% and forced teams to run maximum downforce. This was very good news for Red Bull, and its cars were even faster in the speed trap than usual.

At the end of the first lap, Verstappen was 1.737s clear of Bottas. By the time they both pitted at the end of lap 32 under the virtual safety car to change from ultra-softs to softs, Verstappen's advantage had grown to just over eight seconds. Over the 30 racing laps in between, Verstappen had inched away at 0.236s per lap. All Mercedes could do was keep Bottas out there and hope for the Red Bull to use up its tyres quickly.

Bottas was 7.6s behind when the VSC ended on lap 33 and, with the Mercedes pitwall closely watching the gap, Verstappen started

to edge away again. It quickly became clear to both that there was going to be no battle for victory and both were able to take it easy during the second half of the race, leading to Verstappen's apologetic struggle to do so. By the finish, Bottas was 19.678s behind. The only real drama for Verstappen was the start.

"With the pre-start limiter, I was a bit too high and I almost touched the limit so my start was not great, but actually because of that I was in a good position because I had a good slipstream from Sebastian. I went on the outside and I was like, 'I'm going to try around the outside and see what happens'. I just saw we had a little bit of a touch [with Vettel] into Turn 2 but luckily nothing happened there.

"From there onwards, I could do my own race, I was pulling away every single lap. I knew the car was good, but I didn't know that it was going to be this good in the race."

As for Bottas, he didn't have the pace to challenge. Given Hamilton didn't rate his own chances of going for victory that highly, it's fair to say this was as good as it was going to get for the Finn on a circuit where he was closer to Hamilton than at any other point in the second half of the season. But it's hard to escape the conclusion that Hamilton would have made a better fist of it.

After all, this has been Hamilton's season – arguably his greatest season. He can do things the merely very good can't hope to achieve, and the details of a difficult day at Mexico City are already fading into the footnotes of history as Hamilton's status as a four-time world champion is etched into grand prix legend. ✨

“I knew the car was good but not that it would be this good in the race”



ALONSO WINS POINT AFTER FIGHT WITH HAMILTON

FERNANDO ALONSO CLAIMED HIS third points finish of 2017 in 10th place, after his dramatic battle for ninth with Lewis Hamilton enlivened the closing stages of the Mexican Grand Prix.

Alonso started 18th, thanks to power unit element change penalties, but quickly climbed to 12th with other drivers hitting trouble and early pitstops. He passed Romain Grosjean for 11th and held ninth following a stop under the virtual safety car, after jumping Marcus Ericsson and gaining a place from the retirement of Nico Hulkenberg.

Alonso then harried Kevin Magnussen for eighth, but was caught by the recovering Hamilton. With three laps left, Hamilton attacked to the outside at Turn 1, completing the move at Turn 5.

Alonso, who set the fifth fastest time in Q1, claimed the McLaren was the best car in Mexico – once you factored out the limitations of the Honda engine.

“As of today, or at least today, we have the best car,” said Alonso. “The car was handling incredibly. In the corners, it has very good grip and it allows you to drive instinctively and easily.

“It’s been a while since we set a pink sector. It’s probably the best weekend of the whole season.”



Hamilton hailed after fourth title

LEADING FORMULA 1 FIGURES hailed Lewis Hamilton as a great of Formula 1 after he secured his fourth world championship.

While Hamilton’s qualifying pace has always been celebrated, Williams chief technical officer Paddy Lowe, who worked with Hamilton at McLaren, suggests Hamilton’s racecraft now stands out among the sport’s great champions.

“The style with which he qualifies and races, it is always very exciting,” said Lowe. “His racecraft is probably unparalleled. It would have been great to see him race against the likes of [Ayrton] Senna. Michael [Schumacher] achieved fantastic records but his racecraft was not one of his greatest strengths, for example. Why people love Lewis is they love the way he races.”

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff suggested this was the hardest of Hamilton’s title wins for Mercedes from a team perspective. “It was certainly the hardest for the team because we had quite some ups and downs – new car, new tyres, and to

accept that this is the reality now, and to progress, was difficult for the team, and took the maximum out of us,” said Wolff.

“I think for Lewis maybe fighting with his team-mate [in previous seasons] was also hard in a different way. Having the enemy in the same team is a different struggle or fight than fighting against Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari.”

Former team-mate Fernando Alonso suggested Hamilton has had it too easy this year with the strength of the Mercedes package.

“It was very easy this year, no opponents,” Alonso said. “Last year, he had Nico until the last race, fighting every single race.

“This year was too easy. Mercedes four races to the end constructors’ champion, Hamilton three races before the end drivers’ champion.”

Hamilton is now the first British driver to win four world championships, and is behind only Michael Schumacher (seven) and Juan Manuel Fangio (five) in terms of the number of titles won.



Magnussen’s eighth place ‘like a victory’

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN DESCRIBED his eighth place as “like a victory” at a circuit that Haas team principal Gunther Steiner said was one of the squad’s worst scenarios.

Magnussen and team-mate Romain Grosjean were the slowest drivers in qualifying, with Magnussen starting 14th, thanks to five drivers being given grid penalties. He ran 12th at the end of the first lap after passing Pascal Wehrlein and Lewis Hamilton, then moved to ninth with Sebastian Vettel’s early stop, Carlos Sainz Jr’s spin and Felipe Massa’s puncture.

He gained a further two positions as a result of the retirements of Nico Hulkenberg and Daniel Ricciardo, with the recovering Vettel passing him at half-distance.

He had Fernando Alonso chasing him for much of the rest of the race, then held off Hamilton on the final lap to secure his fifth points position of the season.

“You can hope all you want but nobody would expect that,” said Magnussen. “We didn’t have the pace and we qualified last. I had a decent

start, then good pace compared to qualifying. I knew one Ferrari and one Mercedes were behind me and they were going to get back, but only the Ferrari came through.”

Grosjean had a more difficult race, finishing 15th and last. He sustained bodywork damage in a clash with

Fernando Alonso at Turn 1, claiming to have lost “half the floor”. Stewards took no action over the incident.

He was also hit with a five-second penalty for gaining an unfair advantage by leaving the track at the Turn 13 hairpin in the stadium and rejoining after Turn 14.

Magnussen had lined up 14th on the grid





Hamilton celebrates fourth title



Stroll's sixth helps Williams in teams' battle

Stroll's sixth his best finish since Azerbaijan GP

LANCE STROLL CLAIMED HIS best finish since finishing third in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix in June with sixth place.

The Williams driver started in 11th after setting the 12th fastest time in qualifying. While he was just over a second slower than team-mate Felipe Massa, this was down to taking a maximum-attack approach to his second Q2 run, given only 12 cars were going to set a time in that session.

He climbed to ninth on the first lap, moving up to eighth thanks to Carlos Sainz Jr's spin.

The retirements of Daniel

Ricciardo and Nico Hulkenberg handed him two more positions, with the timing of the virtual safety car allowing him to jump ahead of Sergio Perez's Force India to run fifth. He was passed by Sebastian Vettel into Turn 1 in the closing stages, but was never under threat for his sixth place. With Massa finishing 11th, Stroll has moved ahead of him into 10th in the drivers' championship.

Stroll's points mean Williams takes a step closer to securing fifth in the constructors' championship after both Renaults retired and neither Toro Rosso scored points.

Ericsson denied end to points drought

MARCUS ERICSSON WAS DENIED A SHOT AT HIS first points finish in 46 starts by a combination of the timing of the virtual safety car and what the team described as "a technical issue around the rear suspension" that forced him to retire.

Ericsson started 12th, soon establishing himself in ninth place but making his pitstop shortly before the virtual safety car was deployed. This dropped him to 12th, behind Fernando Alonso, Stoffel Vandoorne and Felipe Massa – a position he retired from after completing 55 laps.

Q&A

MARCUS ERICSSON SAUBER DRIVER



Were points on the table today?

The start of the race was really good, I kept the pace quite well. The main thing was that I kept the McLarens behind, they couldn't get close enough to pass. To run inside the top 10 for the first 30 laps was really good. We timed the pitstop really well. I think we could have been able to keep position. Then the virtual safety car came at the worst possible moment for us and ruined our race. We lost out to both McLarens and Massa.

How frustrating is it to come away with nothing?

It's frustrating because I'm still zero on points. I've had a few places like Barcelona, when [team-mate] Pascal [Wehrlein] scored, I also had a strong race but I was unlucky with different things. Then in Baku, I was running in the points the whole race and then having to let Pascal by in the end.

Why has Sauber come on so strongly?

The last two weekends, we have worked the tyres a bit differently, a bit different temperature windows and that seems to be helping us quite a lot. From my side, we've got 7kg out of the car since Malaysia. That's quite a lot of lap time every lap for me, two or three tenths depending on the track. Also on the engine side, the Ferrari guys have managed to get a bit more out of it.



SUTTON



Daytona-bound Middleton makes history!

Stuart Middleton wins the 2018 Sunoco Whelen Challenge

Congratulations to 17-year-old Stuart Middleton who has won the 2018 Sunoco Whelen Challenge. The competition's youngest-ever winner and 2017 British GT4 champion is the ninth driver to claim arguably Europe's biggest motorsport prize – a fully-funded race seat aboard the Whelen-sponsored #31 Cadillac DPi V.R in January's Rolex 24 At Daytona.

Stuart joins 2016 IMSA champion Eric Curran, ex-F1 racer Felipe Nasr, and Toyota LMP1 factory driver Mike Conway in the Action Express Racing sports-prototype – quite a line-up! The prize - worth an estimated \$250,000 - includes all flights, accommodation, pre-race testing and of course the chance to win one of the world's most prestigious motorsport events – the Rolex 24 At Daytona!



Hall of fame – Sunoco Challenge



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Renault engines suffer altitude sickness

RENAULT ADMITTED ITS PREPARATIONS for the altitude of the Mexican Grand Prix were not adequate after suffering a litany of failures – despite Max Verstappen’s victory.

Toro Rosso’s Pierre Gasly suffered a turbo problem on Friday, then an engine failure on Saturday that kept him out of qualifying, with team-mate Brendon Hartley stopping in the race with an engine issue. Renault pairing Nico Hulkenberg and Carlos Sainz Jr both retired from the race with power unit

problems, while Daniel Ricciardo stopped with a turbo failure.

The air density in Mexico City is approximately 23% lower than at sea level, putting extra demands both on the engine and the turbocharger, and reducing cooling potential.

“We’ve made an error of judgement in our preparation in the way we have been trying to balance performance versus reliability,” said Renault’s Cyril Abiteboul.

“It’s clear when you look at the pace of the car around the weekend, lots of teams have come here taking the right approach when it comes to dealing with engine parameters and chassis parameters.

“We’re extremely competitive. The flipside is that we weren’t capable of being at the right level of reliability for that level of performance.

“At the same time, it’s a judgement that has allowed a car powered by Renault to be on the top step of the podium.”



Gasly dogged by problems all weekend

Force India seals fourth place

FORCE INDIA SECURED fourth place in the constructors’ championship thanks to Esteban Ocon and Sergio Perez finishing fifth and seventh respectively.

Ocon qualified sixth, running third in the early stages after capitalising on

the Sebastian Vettel/Lewis Hamilton clash and jumping Kimi Raikkonen at the start. But a combination of him responding to the pitstops made by Nico Hulkenberg and Perez, who ran behind him, and stopping on lap 20 when the ultra-soft Pirellis

still had good pace in them, and the virtual safety car, meant he dropped behind Raikkonen. He was then passed for fourth by Vettel into Turn 1 on lap 57.

Perez was always set to drop behind Raikkonen even without the VSC, which also allowed Lance Stroll to jump him – losses halved thanks to Hulkenberg’s retirement. Vettel passed him for sixth on lap 50.

“Raikkonen was coming up behind us,” said team CEO Otmar Szafnauer. “His team came out of the pitlane with tyres ready to undercut us and I think his instruction was to do the opposite of Ocon. And had we not done it Raikkonen would have pitted, come out in free air and then we pit one lap later because he’s close enough to us and he gets us.”

The result puts Force India 99 points clear of Williams with only 86 available.



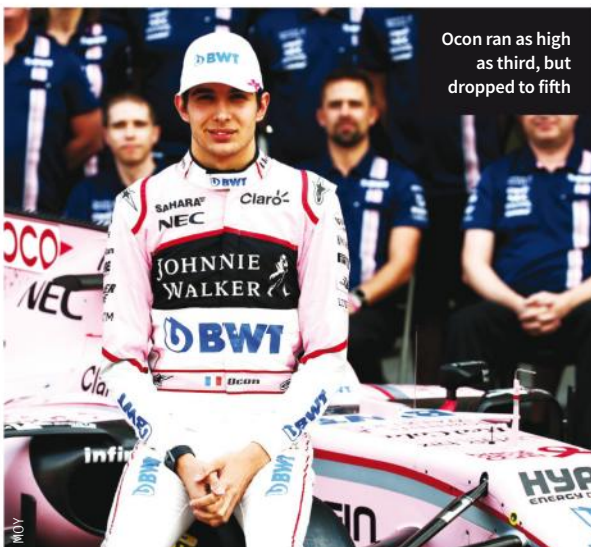
Gasly unlucky 13th on troubled return

PIERRE GASLY FINISHED 13TH ON HIS RETURN TO Formula 1 after missing the United States Grand Prix, replacing Daniil Kvyat in the Toro Rosso team’s line-up.

The 21-year-old had a disastrous run in practice, managing just 12 laps thanks to sitting out the first sessions for Sean Gelael, then Renault power unit problems in the next two. Similar issues also prevented him from driving in qualifying.

He was running 9.485 seconds and two places behind team-mate Brendon Hartley when the New Zealander retired on lap 31. While his race pace was a little slower, considering his lack of practice and track experience, it was a respectable performance.

“You mustn’t forget Pierre couldn’t do many laps because of reliability problems,” said Red Bull’s Helmut Marko. “He did a really good job.”



Ocon ran as high as third, but dropped to fifth



GIORGIO
PIOLA 



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PERFORMANCE

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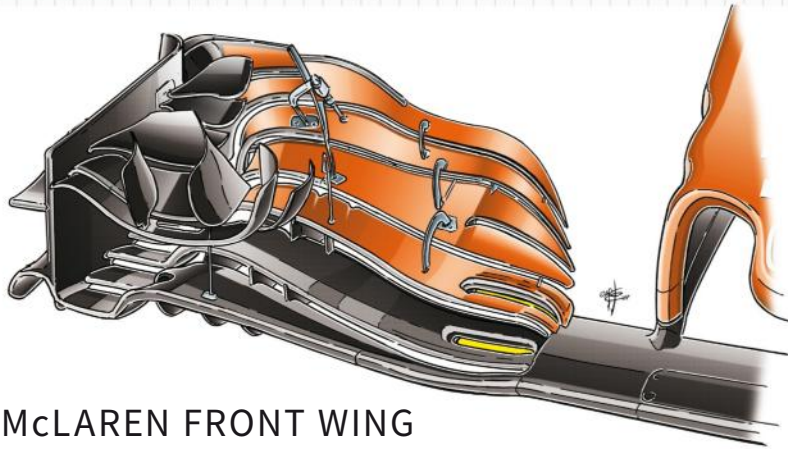
- Swiss Movement
- Titanium caseback
- Titanium case
- Black rubber strap
- Sapphire glass
- Titanium buckle

GIORGIOPIOLA.COM



DRAWING BOARD

BY GIORGIO PIOLA



MCLAREN FRONT WING

McLaren's older version of the front wing had a seven-element inboard section. As of Austin, it has added another two short slot gaps (yellow), making the inboard section into a nine-element inboard version.

The inboard section, and how aggressive it is,

determines the airflow through to the bargeboards and the leading edge of the underfloor. It is the area that is sometimes called the 'Y250 vortex'.

When you have an area so vitally important to the aerodynamic function of so many parts, airflow consistency is the name

of the game. You might have to give up a little front-wing downforce to achieve this, but you will have more overall downforce and a more consistent aerodynamic platform. This, in turn, will give the driver more confidence.

GARY ANDERSON

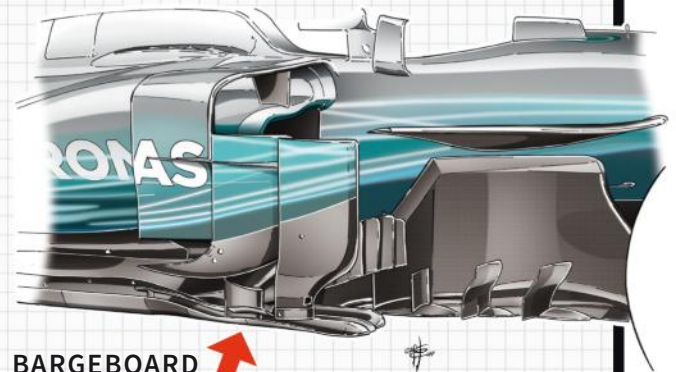
MERCEDES BARGEBOARD'S SURPRISINGLY SMALL WINGLET

You would not be blamed for asking if aerodynamic developments as small as this one justify the time and money spent on them. But the answer is yes.

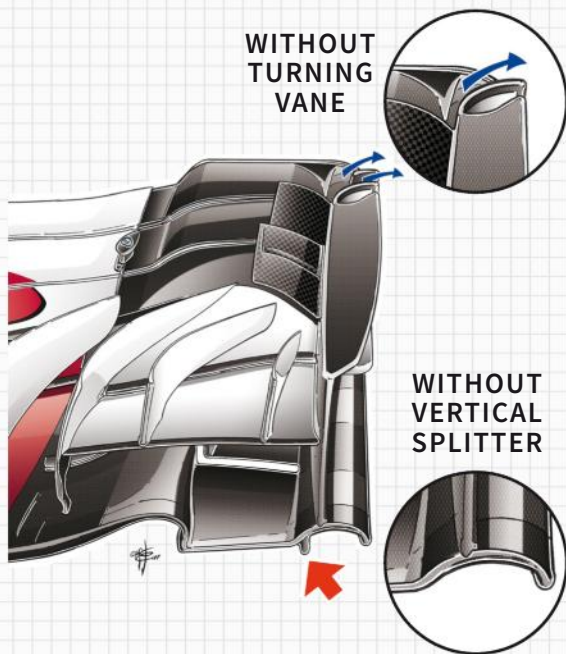
Small details like this help the consistency of the airflow

and probably reduce the risk of airflow separation in this area. The cars are so complicated that, to produce the downforce levels they do, all the components have to work as one.

GARY ANDERSON



BARGEBOARD WINGLET



WITHOUT TURNING VANE

WITHOUT VERTICAL SPLITTER

FERRARI TURNING VANE

Ferrari introduced a new front-wing endplate for the United States GP with a bigger gap between the trailing edge of the endplate and the trailing edge 'Gurney flap' on the rearmost flap.

On the rearmost flap, Ferrari has now fitted a small turning vane (blue arrows) in this area

to help turn more airflow around the outside of the front tyre. It has also fitted a small vertical splitter (red arrow) in the outer endplate, which again will help reduce the amount of airflow the wing section will be pulling in under the endplate foot.

GARY ANDERSON

FORCE INDIA'S MULTI-VANED BARGEBOARD

Force India introduced a multi-vaned bargeboard in Mexico to pull more airflow from underneath the front section of the chassis and improve the performance of the front wing.

Making it all work harder means there is more risk of airflow separation and the multi-slot gap arrangement will be to improve its consistency. But, with this number of slot gaps and the vortices that could be set up with the open upper ends,

it might take a little time to get the most out of it.

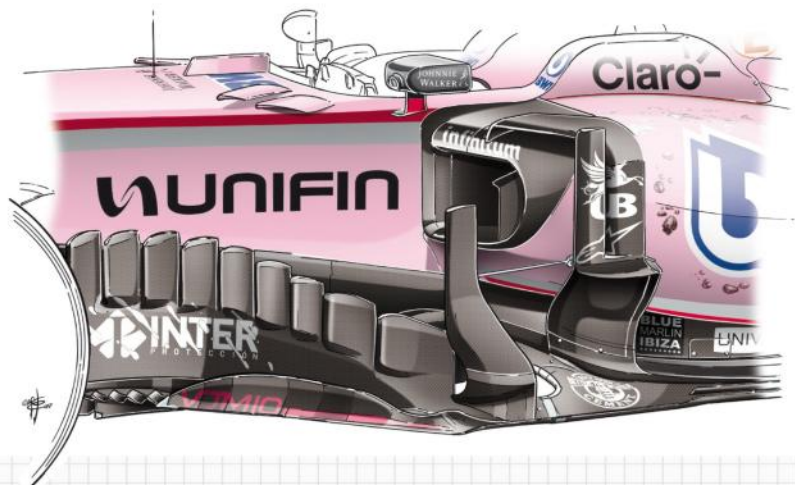
Force India also fitted three small splitters to the leading edge of the underfloor (inset), but only on Sergio Perez's car in practice. These have curved lower foot sections to help induce horizontal vortices from the

lower edges, which travel under the flat floor section to increase the speed of the airflow here. This

improves the aerodynamic performance of the underfloor.

This detail was used with great success in the late 1990s and early 2000s on Champ Car underfloor leading edges.

GARY ANDERSON



F1/MEXICAN GRAND PRIX RESULTS

STARTING GRID



Race results / 71 laps - 189.747 miles

Fastest laps

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	TIME IN PITS	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Max Verstappen (NL)	Red Bull-Renault	1h36m26.552s	71	○●	22.570s	1	Vettel	1m18.785s	-	68
2	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+19.678s		○●	21.758s	2	Verstappen	1m18.892s	+0.107s	65
3	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Ferrari	+54.007s		○●	22.540s	3	Bottas	1m19.374s	+0.589s	70
4	Sebastian Vettel (D)	Ferrari	+1m10.078s		○●●	54.416s	4	Perez	1m19.929s	+1.144s	54
5	Esteban Ocon (F)	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●	22.665s	5	Hamilton	1m19.945s	+1.160s	69
6	Lance Stroll (CDN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●	21.825s	6	Raikkonen	1m20.054s	+1.269s	59
7	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		○●○	45.431s	7	Grosjean	1m20.345s	+1.560s	64
8	Kevin Magnussen (DK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		●●	22.507s	8	Gasly	1m20.859s	+2.074s	70
9	Lewis Hamilton (GB)	Mercedes	-1 lap		○●●	52.598s	9	Ocon	1m20.946s	+2.161s	67
10	Fernando Alonso (E)	McLaren-Honda	-1 lap		●●	22.655s	10	Vandoorne	1m20.972s	+2.187s	66
11	Felipe Massa (BR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		●●	22.055s	11	Alonso	1m21.014s	+2.229s	50
12	Stoffel Vandoorne (B)	McLaren-Honda	-1 lap		●●	28.044s	12	Stroll	1m21.062s	+2.277s	53
13	Pierre Gasly (F)	Toro Rosso-Renault	-1 lap		●●	22.709s	13	Massa	1m21.136s	+2.351s	55
14	Pascal Wehrlein (D)	Sauber-Ferrari	-2 laps		●●	23.358s	14	Magnussen	1m21.214s	+2.429s	68
15	Romain Grosjean (F)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps		●●●	51.796s	15	Sainz	1m21.360s	+2.575s	34
R	Carlos Sainz (E)	Renault	59 laps-power unit		○●○	45.887s	16	Wehrlein	1m21.638s	+2.853s	56
R	Marcus Ericsson (S)	Sauber-Ferrari	55 laps-suspension		●●	22.736s	17	Ericsson	1m21.686s	+2.901s	54
R	Brendon Hartley (NZ)	Toro Rosso-Renault	30 laps-power unit		●	-	18	Hulkenberg	1m21.691s	+2.906s	18
R	Nico Hulkenberg (D)	Renault	24 laps-power unit		○●	22.587s	19	Hartley	1m22.572s	+3.787s	28
R	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	Red Bull-Renault	5 laps-turbo		○	-	20	Ricciardo	1m22.789s	+4.004s	4

WEATHER Sunny, 22C WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 118.042mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 122.203mph

● New ○ Used ● Ultra-soft ● Super-soft ● Soft ● Medium ● Hard ● Wet ● Intermediate

3

All three of Verstappen's F1 wins have come in a race before which Daniil Kvyat was dropped by a team

4

Hamilton is the fourth driver to clinch the title in Mexico after John Surtees (1964), Denny Hulme ('67) and Graham Hill ('68)

18

Hamilton's record, taken from Jackie Stewart in Austin, for consecutive races led has finished on 18

50

Vettel's pole position was his 50th in F1, making him the fourth driver to hit that number

80

Verstappen is the leading points scorer over the past four races with 80 points

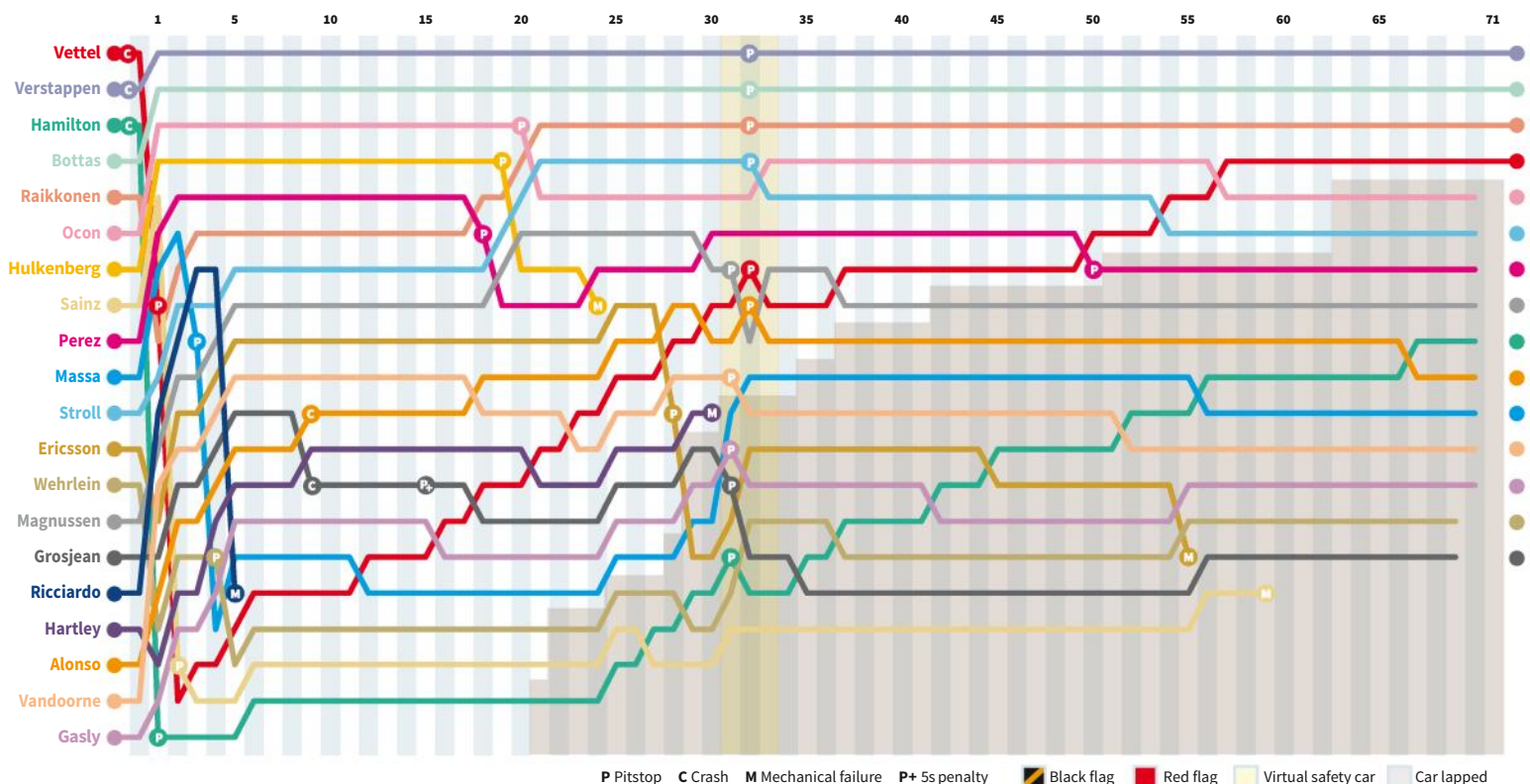
90

Raikkonen took his 90th podium finish in F1, the sixth driver to hit that mark

206

This was Hamilton's 206th grand prix start, drawing him level with old rival Nico Rosberg

Lap chart / What happened, when



12 Ericsson #9
1m19.176s



14 Magnussen #20
1m19.443s



16 Ricciardo #3
1m17.447s



18 Alonso #14
no time



20 Gasly #10
no time



13 Wehrlein #94
1m19.333s



15 Grosjean #8
1m19.473s



17 Hartley #28
no time



19 Vandoorne #2
no time



Qualifying 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m17.518s
2	Bottas	1m17.578s
3	Verstappen	1m17.630s
4	Vettel	1m17.665s
5	Alonso	1m17.710s
6	Perez	1m18.020s
7	Raikkonen	1m18.148s
8	Ricciardo	1m18.208s
9	Hulkenberg	1m18.322s
10	Ocon	1m18.336s
11	Sainz	1m18.405s
12	Massa	1m18.570s
13	Vandoorne	1m18.578s
14	Hartley	1m18.683s
15	Stroll	1m18.902s
16	Ericsson	1m19.176s
17	Wehrlein	1m19.333s
18	Magnussen	1m19.443s
19	Grosjean	1m19.473s
20	Gasly	no time

Qualifying 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m16.524s
2	Vettel	1m16.870s
3	Hamilton	1m17.035s
4	Bottas	1m17.161s
5	Raikkonen	1m17.534s
6	Ricciardo	1m17.631s
7	Sainz	1m17.753s
8	Hulkenberg	1m17.792s
9	Ocon	1m17.827s
10	Perez	1m17.868s
11	Massa	1m18.099s
12	Stroll	1m19.159s
-	Hartley	no time
-	Alonso	no time
-	Vandoorne	no time

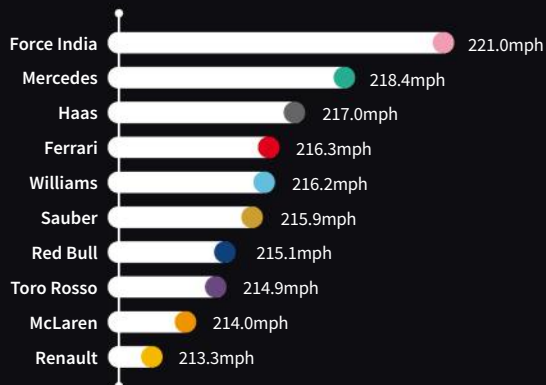
Qualifying 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m16.488s
2	Verstappen	1m16.574s
3	Hamilton	1m16.934s
4	Bottas	1m16.958s
5	Raikkonen	1m17.238s
6	Ocon	1m17.437s
7	Ricciardo	1m17.447s
8	Hulkenberg	1m17.466s
9	Sainz	1m17.794s
10	Perez	1m17.807s

WEATHER Sunny, 22C

SPEED TRAP

Fastest for each constructor in qualifying



Race briefing

FRIDAY PRACTICE

ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI replaced Grosjean at Haas

CHARLES LECLEERC replaced Ericsson at Sauber

SEAN GELAEI replaced Gasly at Toro Rosso

ALFONSO CELIS replaced Ocon at Force India

GRID PENALTIES

ALONSO 20-place penalty for additional power unit elements used

VANDOORNE 35-place penalty for additional power unit elements used

GASLY 20-place penalty for additional power unit elements used

RICCIARDO 20-place penalty for additional power unit elements used

HARTLEY 20-place penalty for additional power unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES

GROSJEAN Five-second penalty for leaving the track and gaining an unfair advantage

Free practice 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m17.824s
2	Hamilton	1m18.290s
3	Verstappen	1m18.395s
4	Ricciardo	1m18.421s
5	Vettel	1m18.586s
6	Raikkonen	1m19.008s
7	Perez	1m19.240s
8	Alonso	1m19.346s
9	Massa	1m19.443s
10	Hulkenberg	1m19.552s
11	Sainz	1m19.554s
12	Stroll	1m19.772s
13	Magnussen	1m20.644s
14	Wehrlein	1m20.971s
15	Giovinazzi	1m21.269s
16	Leclerc	1m21.446s
17	Gelael	1m21.639s
18	Hartley	1m21.747s
19	Celis	1m22.342s
20	Vandoorne	no time

Free practice 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Ricciardo	1m17.801s
2	Hamilton	1m17.932s
3	Verstappen	1m17.964s
4	Vettel	1m18.051s
5	Raikkonen	1m18.142s
6	Bottas	1m18.299s
7	Alonso	1m18.508s
8	Perez	1m18.728s
9	Hulkenberg	1m18.775s
10	Ocon	1m18.822s
11	Sainz	1m19.060s
12	Massa	1m19.206s
13	Hartley	1m19.423s
14	Stroll	1m19.524s
15	Vandoorne	1m19.844s
16	Wehrlein	1m20.306s
17	Magnussen	1m20.318s
18	Ericsson	1m20.362s
19	Gasly	1m21.745s
20	Grosjean	1m25.526s

Free practice 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m17.113s
2	Hamilton	1m17.188s
3	Vettel	1m17.230s
4	Bottas	1m17.283s
5	Ricciardo	1m17.361s
6	Raikkonen	1m17.517s
7	Perez	1m18.040s
8	Ocon	1m18.165s
9	Sainz	1m18.208s
10	Hulkenberg	1m18.380s
11	Hartley	1m18.602s
12	Massa	1m18.690s
13	Stroll	1m19.066s
14	Magnussen	1m19.205s
15	Ericsson	1m19.331s
16	Alonso	1m19.565s
17	Grosjean	1m19.586s
18	Wehrlein	1m19.826s
19	Vandoorne	1m20.030s
20	Gasly	no time

WEATHER Overcast, 21C

WEATHER Sunny, 28C

WEATHER Sunny, 20C

SEASON STATS

Drivers' championship

1	Hamilton	333
2	Vettel	277
3	Bottas	262
4	Ricciardo	192
5	Raikkonen	178
6	Verstappen	148
7	Perez	92
8	Ocon	83
9	Sainz	54
10	Stroll	40
11	Massa	36
12	Hulkenberg	34
13	Grosjean	28
14	Magnussen	19
15	Vandoorne	13
16	Alonso	11
17	Palmer	8
18	Wehrlein	5
19	Kvyat	5

Constructors' championship

1	Mercedes	595
2	Ferrari	455
3	Red Bull	340
4	Force India	175
5	Williams	76
6	Toro Rosso	53
7	Renault	48
8	Haas	47
9	McLaren	24
10	Sauber	5

Wins

Hamilton	9
Vettel	4
Bottas	2
Verstappen	2
Ricciardo	1

Fastest laps

Hamilton	7
Vettel	5
Raikkonen	2
Alonso	1
Bottas	1
Perez	1
Ricciardo	1

Pole positions

Hamilton	11
Vettel	4
Bottas	2
Raikkonen	1

Qualifying battle

HAM	13	5	BOT
RIC	6	12	VER
VET	13	5	RAI
PER	11	7	OCO
STR	2	15	MAS
STR	1	0	DIR
VAN	3	14	ALO
VAN	0	1	BUT
GAS	0	1	HAR
KVY	1	0	HAR
GAS	0	2	SAI
KVY	6	8	SAI
GRO	11	7	MAG
HUL	1	1	SAI
HUL	16	0	PAL
ERI	7	9	WEH
ERI	2	0	GIO

Dane brings home the bacon

Kevin Magnussen is the only driver to rate full marks in Mexico City

By Edd Straw

[@eddstrawF1](#)

MERCEDES



8 LEWIS HAMILTON
Hamilton should have improved on his second Q3 run, and while his Turn 3 move was bold, he didn't deserve to get a puncture. His recovery started a little slowly on softs, but even with damage to the diffuser he salvaged two points with ninth. One of his lesser performances of an otherwise spectacular season.



8 VALTTERI BOTTAS
Bottas was bang on Hamilton's pace in qualifying, and could do nothing about Verstappen in the race. It's difficult to compare his pace to his team-mate's on Sunday, given their different race situations and strategies, but Bottas seemed to run decently enough on his way to a solid second place. A handy weekend's work.

RED BULL



6 DANIEL RICCIARDO
Quick on Friday, but struggled to switch on the tyres in qualifying and ended up a lacklustre seventh fastest. After taking a strategic power-unit-component penalty, climbed back to seventh. That should have laid the foundation for a podium challenge but for the turbo letting him down. Good, but not as strong as his team-mate.



9 MAX VERSTAPPEN
The only negative about his weekend was the failure to improve on his second Q3 run and losing pole position. Other than that, he was quick, controlled the race well, toughed it out with Vettel on the first lap and never looked like losing victory. The missed pole slot costs him a mark, as the driver plays a key role in switching on the tyres.

FERRARI



8 SEBASTIAN VETTEL
Vettel's pole lap was superb, although seemingly inadvertently knocking it into first at Turn 6 did cost him a little. He might just have avoided the clash with Hamilton, but once in 19th did a very good job to charge through the field. A great performance slightly undermined by a couple of messy moments.



6 KIMI RAIKKONEN
Qualifying was mediocre, and while the race result was solid it was helped by the premature stops of the Force Indias and Hulkenberg, and the VSC's timing. Vettel gained 10s on Raikkonen from lap two to the end despite having to charge from 19th - while Kimi had less imperative to push, that still says a lot.

FORCE INDIA



7 SERGIO PEREZ
Banked a decent result after a slightly underwhelming Q3, and while he was the second-best Force India driver on the weekend, the gap to Ocon wasn't too big. Stopping early cost him places to Raikkonen and Stroll, but had he been able to match Ocon's form he might have been able to finish ahead of both.



9 ESTEBAN OCON
Qualified and raced exceptionally well, running third early on and only losing positions to the faster Ferraris of Raikkonen and Vettel. Thereafter, dealt with the threat from Stroll with ease. This was an excellent performance from the Frenchman, who gets better and better with every weekend.

WILLIAMS



7 LANCE STROLL
Opted to throw caution to the wind on his qualifying lap knowing he could do no worse than 12th and might sneak into Q3, which backfired when he lost a heap of time in the stadium section. But as is often the case, once he had track position he raced well, using the right strategy, to bag his best finish since Baku.



7 FELIPE MASSA
Had the edge on Stroll in qualifying, although the gap of over a second was largely down to Stroll going too aggressive in the stadium section. A slow puncture picked up at the first corner forced an early stop, then drove well in a marathon stint, fighting his corner when he needed to, but could not quite deliver any points.

McLAREN



6 STOFFEL VANDORNE
A solid weekend, but he couldn't quite match the pace of Alonso in either qualifying or the race. He did play the team game by letting Alonso past, which proved to be a good decision, but wasn't able to haul his McLaren from the back to a points finish. This left him on the periphery of the top 10 throughout the race.



9 FERNANDO ALONSO
Drove with his typical determination and verve during qualifying (fifth fastest in Q1) and the race, which included giving Hamilton a hard time as he tried to hang on to ninth. Hard to say if he could have done a lot better, but it wouldn't have taken much to finish eighth. Tricky with a Honda engine though.



Tenth-place man Alonso was usual combative self

TORO ROSSO



7 PIERRE GASLY
After sitting out the US GP, and with no experience of the Mexico City circuit, Gasly really needed more than a grand total of 12 practice laps thanks to a combination of engine problems and Sean Gelaef using his car in FP1. So to be in the same ballpark as Hartley, albeit not showing quite the same pace, was a decent performance.

8 BRENDON HARTLEY
There's no question that Hartley took everything he learned at Austin and applied it to a far more rounded performance in Mexico. Was doing well in qualifying before engine problems struck, and he showed decent pace in the race, albeit in a car that didn't look to be a points threat, before retiring.

HAAS



5 ROMAIN GROSJEAN
During qualifying he extracted much the same performance out of a not-especially-quick car as Magnussen, but didn't get the same out of it in the race. Grosjean made his life harder by clashing with Alonso and pitting for a new nose, picking up a penalty for exceeding track limits, and two-stopping. Messy.

10 KEVIN MAGNUSSEN
Described his race as a victory, and he's right because he comfortably won his 'class' despite being in a car lacking in pace and not easy to drive. It wouldn't have taken much to slip out of the points, but after shading Grosjean in qualifying he was more impressive at making the best of a tough race.

RENAULT



8 NICO HULKENBERG
Performed strongly throughout the weekend and managed to pull a three-tenths gap on Sainz in Q3. Carried his form into the race, running fourth in the first stint before pitting in response to Perez's stop. This would have cost him, but an ERS problem forced him out after 24 laps anyway. A typically formidable performance.

6 CARLOS SAINZ JR
Looked to be struggling on Friday but recovered well and pushed Hulkenberg until the final stages of qualifying, when he slotted in three tenths behind. A high-speed spin on the second lap forced an early stop and effectively ruined his race. Underlying pace seemed fine, but couldn't escape traffic before retiring.

SAUBER



9 MARCUS ERICSSON
Had a very strong weekend in Mexico, recovering from sitting out FP1 to lead the way for Sauber. Grid penalties for others meant he started artificially high, but put it to brilliant use and was strong enough on the main straight to keep cars behind. VSC timing had cost him a points shot even before the engine let him down.

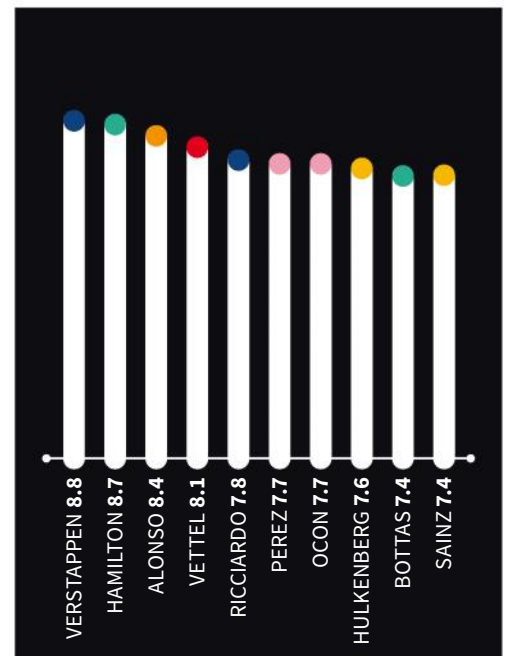
6 PASCAL WEHRLIN
Was giving away a little pace to Ericsson in qualifying, and that proved very costly in the race as he ended up on the more unusual strategy thanks to weaker track position. Finishing 20 seconds behind Gasly wasn't ideal, although part of that was down to his marathon stint on softs. The second Sauber driver this weekend.



Magnussen reckons eighth-place finish was like a win

COATES/LAT


TOP 10 AVERAGE RATING



How Hamilton made it four

The 2017 world title might have been wrapped up two races early, but it was no easy ride for Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes

By Ben Anderson, Grand Prix Editor

 @BenAndersonAuto

Lewis Hamilton clinched the Formula 1 world championship with two races to spare last Sunday in Mexico City, by scraping home ninth after a bruising encounter with title rival Sebastian Vettel.

Mercedes ultimately topped both points tables for the fourth straight season, but the way this campaign played out was nothing like the previous three years in the V6 hybrid turbo era.

Vettel and a rejuvenated Ferrari properly carried the fight to Hamilton and Mercedes, taking full advantage of the 2017 rulebook's extra aerodynamic freedom to

close the yawning chasm between the Silver Arrows team and its nearest rivals.

Vettel led the way early on, but was ultimately undone by a few crucial mistakes and some late-season Ferrari unreliability.

Mercedes produced the out-and-out fastest car on the grid again, but it hasn't proved easy to drive or set-up, and has required Hamilton to be at his very best to consistently extract its potential.

Vettel has driven brilliantly, too, at times, but ultimately come up short. As he licks his wounds while Hamilton basks in the glory of reclaiming the title he lost to Nico Rosberg in 2016, we identify the key moments that led to Hamilton's fourth F1 championship. »»



Vettel takes charge as Mercedes wobbles

Hamilton qualified on pole for the first two races. Had he not pressed his DRS activation button prematurely in Q3 in Bahrain, he would perhaps have scored a hat-trick.

But Hamilton came out of those first three races trailing Vettel in the championship, thanks to unexpected defeats in Australia and Bahrain, either side of a comfortable win in China.

What team boss Toto Wolff described as a “perfect storm” of mistakes and problems undid Mercedes in Bahrain, but the Wo8 also looked tricky and inconsistent. That impression was rammed home in Russia, where Mercedes struggled to get Pirelli’s ultra-soft tyre working properly on the billiard-smooth Sochi track surface.

Hamilton’s team-mate Valtteri Bottas narrowly won that race, thanks to a fast start, but Ferrari was faster overall and Hamilton finished a distant fourth as Vettel finished right on Bottas’s tail.

Having won or finished second in each of the first four races, it was Vettel, not Hamilton, who took charge of this title race early on.

“I just don’t think about it right now – it’s not important,” said Hamilton. “We need to understand where the speed was this weekend and what went wrong with the set-up, and come back fighting for the next race. There’s still a long way to go, still second in the championship. It’s not the end of the world.”

STANDINGS AFTER FOUR RACES

- 1 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 86
- 2 LEWIS HAMILTON 73
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 63

Hamilton’s deficit grows

Hamilton hit back by taking victory in Spain, utilising an offset tyre strategy and some help from hampered team-mate Bottas to re-pass Vettel after a slow start from pole.

But Vettel kept the points board ticking over with another second place finish, before scoring his third victory of the season next time out in Monaco, to extend his advantage to a season-high 25 points over Hamilton.

Kimi Raikkonen claimed his first F1 pole position since 2008 for that race, but lost out to team-mate Vettel in the pits and had to settle for second.

Mercedes again struggled to make the ultra-soft tyre work and Hamilton was unexpectedly eliminated from qualifying in Q2, thanks to the timing of Stoffel Vandoorne’s crash at the Swimming Pool. Hamilton recovered to sixth in the race, while team-mate Bottas – who heroically qualified within half a tenth of pole – was beaten to the podium by Daniel Ricciardo’s Red Bull.

There were strong suggestions afterwards that Ferrari had deliberately sacrificed Raikkonen’s race to bolster Vettel’s title ambitions, not least from Hamilton. “It’s clear to me Ferrari have chosen their number one driver,” he said. “So they’re going to be pushing everything to make sure Sebastian will get the maximum on all of his weekends.

“It’s very hard for the leading car to get jumped by the second car [in Monaco] unless the team decide to favour the other car, so that’s very clear.”

STANDINGS AFTER SIX RACES

- 1 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 129
- 2 LEWIS HAMILTON 104
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 75

Vettel’s moment of madness

Hamilton near-enough halved his championship deficit to Vettel by taking victory in Canada, while Vettel was forced into a recovery drive after getting tagged by Max Verstappen at Turn 1, breaking the Ferrari driver’s front wing.



Vettel won in Melbourne (above), Bahrain and again in Monaco (below) to lead by 25 points



Vettel lost his head, and a probable win in Baku, (below) when he drove into Hamilton

That left the title battle delicately poised heading to the streets of Azerbaijan, where Ferrari screwed up its tyre preparation in qualifying and poleman Hamilton was more than 1.2 seconds faster than Vettel.

Nevertheless, the way things played out, Vettel still could, and should, have won this race. But a moment of madness behind the safety car, where Vettel deliberately drove into the side of Hamilton's car shortly after rear-ending it, feeling (wrongly, as it turned out) that Hamilton had brake-tested him, cost the Ferrari man dearly.

Hamilton's own victory chances were undone by a loose headrest, incorrectly reattached during a mid-race red flag stoppage. Vettel finished one place ahead in fourth, so extended his championship lead by two points, but without the 10-second penalty he incurred for dangerous driving, he would have won easily.

Vettel later apologised for overreacting and creating a "dangerous situation", but, notwithstanding the post-race backlash he suffered, it was an unnecessary points loss.

STANDINGS AFTER EIGHT RACES

- 1 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 153
- 2 LEWIS HAMILTON 139
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 111

Hamilton gets back in the game

July's British Grand Prix was a real turning point in the title race. Not only did Hamilton all but wipe out Vettel's points advantage with a record-equalling fifth British GP victory, but Mercedes utterly crushed Ferrari in the process.

Hamilton was on pole by more than half a second, and had such superior pace in the race that he could afford to back off to "half/60% throttle everywhere" in the closing stages to protect his tyres, as both Ferraris suffered sudden front-left tyre failures from pushing too hard trying to keep up.

Austrian GP winner Bottas recovered from a grid penalty to complete an emphatic Mercedes one-two finish at the front, as Vettel limped home seventh and saw his championship lead slashed to a single point.

"This weekend we've been able to exploit the full performance of our car, more so than any other race we've done so far this year," said Hamilton.

"It gives us a strong platform to start from for the second half of the year."

STANDINGS AFTER 10 RACES

- 1 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 177
- 2 LEWIS HAMILTON 176
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 154

Humdrum Hungary pivotal for Hamilton

On the face of it, the Hungarian Grand Prix was a disappointing one for Hamilton. He qualified and finished fourth, as Vettel led a Ferrari one-two.

Hamilton also gave up three potentially crucial points by allowing Bottas back past on the final lap, after his teammate had moved aside earlier in the race to give Hamilton a chance to attack the Ferraris.

"The heart tells me the right thing to do was to let him by," said Hamilton. "I want to win the championship the right way. I don't know whether that will come back to bite me in the backside or not..."

Ultimately it wouldn't, but perhaps more significant than Hamilton's sporting gesture was the way he transformed his form through the course of the race weekend. He struggled in qualifying again on a high-downforce, low-speed circuit, but got himself right on the pace in the second part of the race, while Bottas struggled.

"It's strange," Hamilton explained during the next race at >>

Mercedes dominated the British Grand Prix, finishing one-two and leaving Ferrari trailing



MAUGER/LAT



Hamilton's fifth British GP victory would prove to be a turning point in the title battle

DUNBAR/LAT



Hamilton finished in fourth place at the Hungaroring behind a Ferrari one-two

Spa. "Because of the way our car is, you apply a driving style, and it just doesn't like it. It's like trying loads of different techniques, and eventually figuring out that one works, then you can really grab on to it.

"It didn't feel great initially [in Hungary]. I've got to change a bunch of settings, and change my lines, and then eventually the car likes this spot, and you can really start to lean on it. That's where you can really stretch the wings of the car. I loved that discovery."

And it proved to be a crucial one for Hamilton heading into the last part of the season.

STANDINGS AFTER 11 RACES

- 1 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 202
- 2 LEWIS HAMILTON 188
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 169

Hamilton's winning run begins

Hamilton returned from August's summer break with fresh vigour and determination, operating at the "top end" of his personal energy levels after spending three weeks "recharging the batteries".

Wolff described Hamilton as coming back from this break "with a great spirit", and the results reflected that, with Hamilton winning the next two races in Belgium and Italy to claim the outright lead of the championship for the first time.

"It's an empowering feeling for sure," said Hamilton.

"Because it's been a real constant search and battle for perfection, which is what's been needed to overhaul the Ferraris, because they've been exceptional all year long.

"To come through these last races, they've been real solid races. I've felt more heart and passion within myself. Silverstone was a real empowering weekend, and from then it's sparked a forest fire within me."

STANDINGS AFTER 13 RACES

- 1 LEWIS HAMILTON 238
- 2 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 235
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 197

Vettel self-destructs

Vettel should have won in Singapore, as he did in Monaco and Hungary. Such a high-downforce, slow-speed, street-style circuit is Ferrari territory at the moment.

As expected, Mercedes struggled, with Hamilton qualifying fifth, six tenths off pole, behind the improved Red Bulls as well as the Ferraris.

Vettel had everything in his hands starting from pole position, but he threw away a potential 25 points by starting this wet race in second gear, then veering aggressively across the track to block second-placed Verstappen. This triggered a three-way collision with the fast-starting Raikkonen, which ultimately took the entire trio out of the race.

Hamilton sailed serenely around the mayhem on the outside line, inherited the lead, and drove on to a comfortable victory, extending his points lead on a weekend when he really should have lost it.

STANDINGS AFTER 14 RACES

- 1 LEWIS HAMILTON 263
- 2 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 235
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 212

Ferrari self-destructs

Unexpectedly, the Malaysian Grand Prix proved to be a real struggle for Mercedes, as its updated high-downforce package proved troublesome, leading Hamilton to revert to an older specification for qualifying.

Red Bull was quick enough again to take points away from

Hamilton learned a lot in Hungary (below) about setting up his car to get the best out of it



Hamilton returned from his summer break refreshed, winning at Spa and Monza (below)



Vettel made a bad start in Singapore (below), tried to block Verstappen and crashed into team-mate

the leading cars, as evidenced by Verstappen's victory in the race, but Ferrari had the outright fastest car at Sepang and should have come away with a one-two result.

Instead, Vettel's engine failed at the start of Q1, relegating him to the back of the grid, while pole contender Raikkonen failed to start the race after his broke on the way to the grid.

Vettel salvaged fourth in the race, but knew a quality control problem with the Ferrari engine's turbo/compressor intake manifold – “technical nonsense” according to president Sergio Marchionne – had thrown yet more “presents” in Hamilton's direction.

A subsequent spark plug failure on the way to the grid in Japan cost Vettel another potential victory shot there, as Hamilton claimed his fourth win in five races to take decisive control of the title battle.

STANDINGS AFTER 16 RACES

- 1 LEWIS HAMILTON 306
- 2 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 247
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 234

Hamilton delivers a killer blow

Ferrari brought substantial updates to the SF70H for the US Grand Prix, including a revised front wing and a new floor, in a last-ditch bid to rescue Vettel's title bid.

Hamilton blitzed the field again in qualifying, but lost out to Vettel at the start, as the Ferrari made a blistering getaway from second on the grid to lead into Turn 1.

But Ferrari simply couldn't match Mercedes for pace in this race. Hamilton breezed back past Vettel on the back straight a few laps later, and drove on to his ninth win of the season – his fifth in six races – while Vettel was forced into a second pitstop after chewing through tyres trying to keep up.

Vettel looked thoroughly dejected afterwards, perhaps as much at the emphatic manner of this latest defeat, as knowing it left Hamilton needing just 10 more points to clinch the championship.

STANDINGS AFTER 17 RACES

- 1 LEWIS HAMILTON 331
- 2 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 265
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 244

Hamilton seals the deal

Hamilton only needed a fifth-place finish from the Mexican Grand Prix to clinch the championship, so things were looking good when he qualified third, behind Vettel and Verstappen.

But Hamilton's coronation turned into a real slog thanks to a clash with Vettel at Turn 3 after the start. Hamilton picked up a puncture, and damage to his Mercedes' diffuser, and spent much of the race mired in the lower order, even getting lapped by race winner Verstappen.

Vettel had to pit at the end of the first lap, too, to replace his damaged front wing. He recovered to fourth, but needed to finish at least second to have any hope of taking the title fight to the next race in Brazil.

So, Vettel's title hopes were finally extinguished as Hamilton survived a fraught late battle with Fernando Alonso's McLaren-Honda to cross the line in ninth place and claim the championship.

Hamilton described this race as a “horrible way” to win it, but that matters not. As Vettel put it: “It's irrelevant what happened today. Overall, he was the better man and did the better job, simple as that.”

STANDINGS AFTER 18 RACES

- 1 LEWIS HAMILTON 333
- 2 SEBASTIAN VETTEL 277
- 3 VALTTERI BOTTAS 262



A spark plug failure on the way to the grid in Japan (below) cost Vettel more points



Vettel got ahead at the start in Austin before Hamilton retook the lead and went on to win



Hamilton battled back in Mexico (below) after first-lap clash with Vettel, to take title-winning points



Evans delivers for the home hordes

The fans flocked to Wales and local hero Elfyn Evans dominated, while Sebastien Ogier secured his fifth World Rally crown

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

[@daviddevansrally](#)





FYNSCORNER



MCKLEIN

Not since Sunday September 16, 2012 had a driver other than Sebastien Ogier led Wales Rally GB. Not since Friday November 22, 2001 had a British driver led their home round of the World Rally Championship.

Myherin, mid-morning last Friday and Elfyn Evans changed those records. But what about the big one? What about the fact that a local hadn't sprayed the Sunday afternoon champagne on this

rally since Richard Burns did 17 years ago? Evans was more than equal to correcting that wrong, too.

M-Sport enjoyed its own golden hour last Sunday. When Ott Tanak crossed the finish line on SS21 at 1250 in his Ford Fiesta, the Cumbrians ruled the world for the first time in 10 years. Thirteen minutes later, team-mate Ogier followed him and became only the second man in history to lift five world titles.

Ten minutes after that, Evans rounded off the most incredible Sunday lunchtime by becoming the fourth Briton to win his home round of the World Rally Championship.

DMACK rubber was key to Evans' domination, but he made the most of it on home ground

The fairytale was complete. The dream delivered. The delight etched into Evans' face was hard to reconcile with the fella who was watching on the sidelines on this rally just 12 months ago.

A year ago, Elfyn didn't know if he had a job. There was the chance of something. Or nothing. Now? Rally GB hero. Let's have a look at the four days that changed everything for Evans and Dan Barritt.

Wales was full last weekend. There was no room at the inns and even less in the stages. Car parks? Forget it. Only the hardcore, the car sleepers, were guaranteed a place. The verges lining the road sections were the only option. But they were fraught with risk – the risk, that is, of losing your car for the rest of the day.

Alun Davies didn't care. His mother's SEAT Ibiza would be sacrificed if necessary. This hardest of hardcore rally fans from Newcastle Emlyn in southwest Wales was following the event four-up, complete with sleeping bags, a camping stove and a boot-load of Tesco value sausages.

His dedication was matched only by his determination not to be denied his chance to see one man. "Elfyn," he said. "That's why I'm here. He's the boy, isn't he?"

His voice trailed away, almost daring me to contradict him. Daring me to point to the fight for this year's World Rally Championship or the most spectacular >>>



Former Rally GB winner Latvala only narrowly missed the podium

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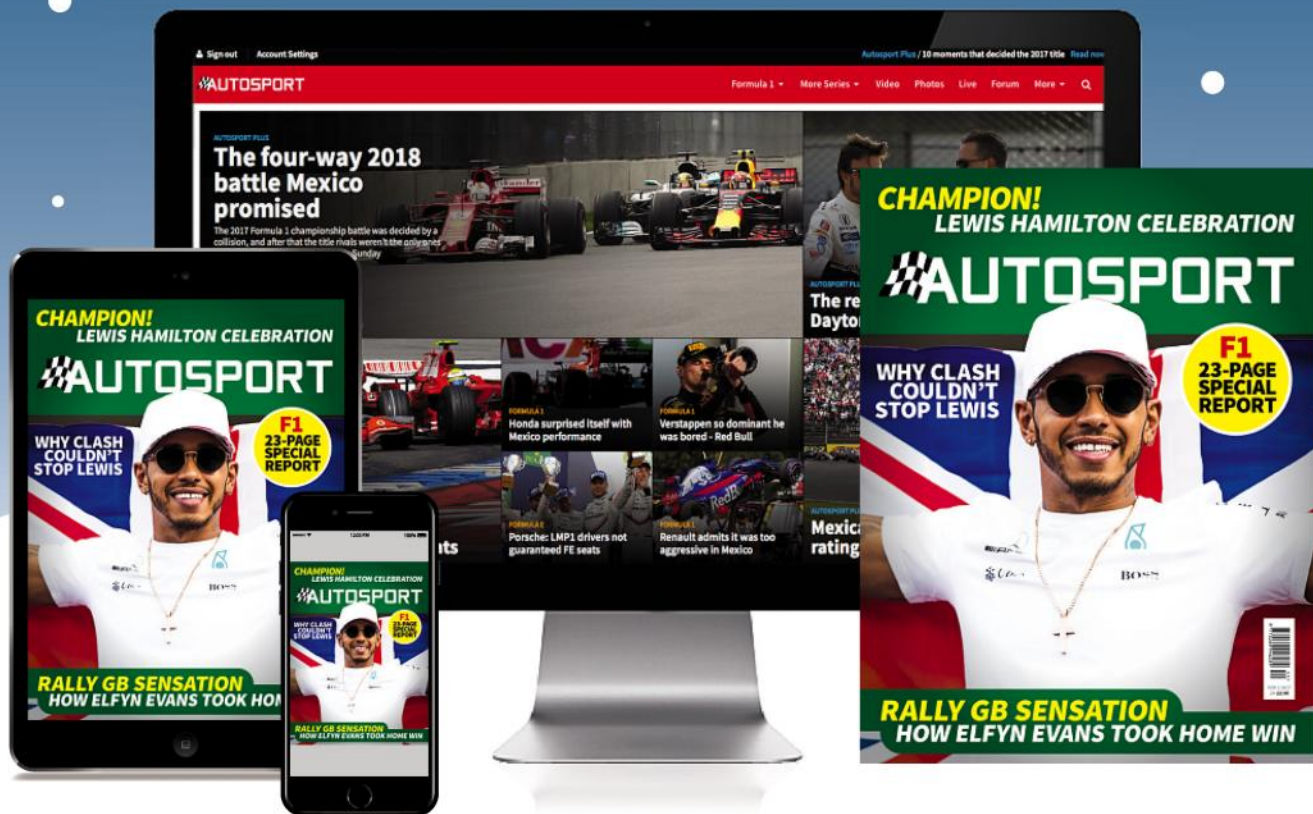
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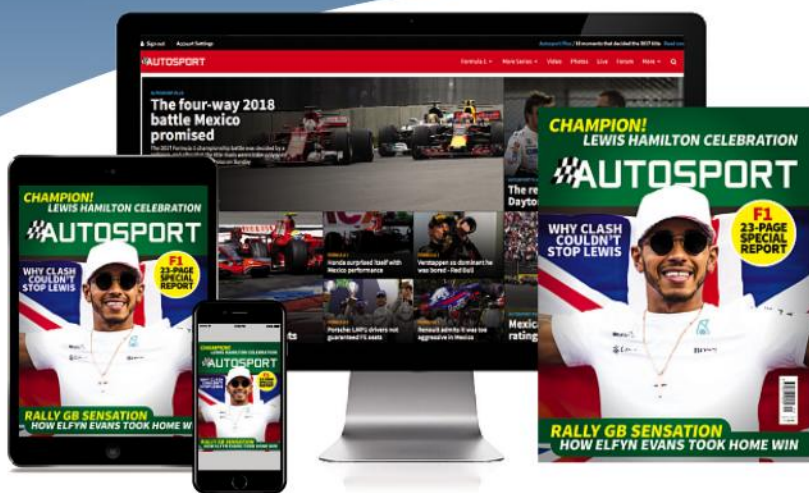
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“Bloody hell! I’ve never had support like this and never seen so many people on the stages”

Elfyn Evans

and fastest rally cars in the sport’s history. I didn’t dare.

“Actually, I came last year as well,” he added, referencing the fact that he doesn’t just come to follow Evans. “I’ve not missed one of these for years. I’m from down south [Wales], so don’t be telling everybody this, but this rally’s much better up here in the north.”

He wasn’t keen to be deterred, partly because he didn’t want to miss Elfyn and partly because he didn’t want to be around if the police arrived.

“They can have the car,” he said, pointing at the muddied, tired-looking SEAT parked neatly between one sign declaring the car parks full and another outlining this as a ‘Tow-away zone’.

“I’m off. I’m not going to miss this. I’ll deal with my ma and tell her what’s happened to her car later.”

M-Sport cap pulled low, he was away, across the A470 and running towards the village of Aberangell. Heading for the hills,

up through the woods and, miles later, a super-quick entry followed by a big drift through the following downhill right-hander that was junction three of Dyfi.

Not long after he’d gone, the police did arrive. What, I asked, would they do about the cars? “Not much we can do, is there?” said the policeman with a smile. “There aren’t enough tow trucks in Wales to deal with this!”

Davies’ story was typical of thousands last week. Tens of thousands. Whether it was the cars, the championship or the boy from just up the road in Dinas Mawddwy, they came back in their droves.

And Evans delivered for them. His wasn’t always the most spectacular World Rally Car out there, but it was the fastest. And the one accompanied by the loudest cheers.

Elfyn’s Corner on that first stage in Myherin was a case in point. The corner itself was just an average second-gear right-hander. Nothing special. The >>

HOW THE TITLE WAS WON (AND LOST)

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A PART OF THIERRY Neuville that was wondering why he was bothering. He gave it a go anyway, but 10 seconds before he started the final stage, the Belgian was informed that his chance of this year’s World Rally Championship title had gone.

Ahead of the powerstage, Neuville needed Ogier to set sixth-fastest time, with him bagging the full-fat five bonus points. When the #1 Autosport-liveried Ford Fiesta WRC crossed the line a tenth of a second quicker than Andreas Mikkelsen, the deal was done.

“Literally, I was just about to start the stage,” said Neuville (below), “but I gave it everything anyway. And we won the bonus points.”

But this championship was lost long ago. It was lost with mistakes while leading in Monte Carlo and Sweden, or by the astonishing inability to capitalise on Ogier’s crash in Finland. It wasn’t lost on a run around Brenig lake on Sunday.

What was especially nice to see was Ott Tanak throttling back in SS21. Like Neuville, he had an outside – like very, very outside – chance of winning the championship, but the Estonian took it upon himself to slow down as the finish line approached.

“Seb deserves this title,” said Tanak at the end. “It was the right thing to do.”

As for Hyundai’s title aspirations, they’d already been blown away by M-Sport’s devastating record of placing a Fiesta on every podium this year.

Citroen is also well worthy of a mention here, with Kris Meeke and Craig Breen both showing pace at times. Given the changeable grip on this event, this was a genuine test of the Ohlins suspension and the confidence it would feed back into the drivers. There were no complaints. Yes, there’s work to do, but the C3 WRC is night and day better than it was at the start of the year.

Breen was unlucky, dropping into a ditch in Hafren, but Meeke drove superbly with his head. He could – and probably would in days gone by – have tried to force this one.

But it wasn’t his weekend, and he recognised that on his way to seventh.





EBREY

WRC SUPPORTS

THE WRC2 SUPPORT CATEGORY FEATURED a stellar entry for R5 cars, but the result was similar to the main event. A runaway winner and an epic battle for second. But the pre-event hype was all around Kalle Rovanpera.

The Finn, fresh off passing his driving test at 17-years-old, was making his WRC debut and the pressure was on. On stage five, he slipped off the road and his day was over. There was a little more to it than that, though. The car wasn't suiting his style.

"We are learning all the time," said the young prodigy. "We had understeer a lot because my driving style [isn't working] with this car. My style is really clean. With this car it's different, you have to throw it around."

He returned on Sunday but still struggled to crack the top five on each stage. Far too much was expected of this youngster and although he didn't set Wales Rally GB alight, it doesn't mean he won't be successful in the future. Next stop Australia, for the WRC's final round of the year.

Pontus Tidemand, the 2017 WRC2 champion before the event started, was untouchable out front. "It shows we are the strongest in WRC2," he said of his win, and he's right. The only drivers even close to his pace were his team-mate OC Veiby, who suffered a puncture on Friday, and Teemu Suninen, who had no power-steering through Saturday. That scuppered any chance of a battle for Tidemand, who was quicker than both of those drivers for the majority anyway.

Second went to Eric Camilli, who was

pretty much beaten by home favourite Tom Cave, before Cave spun on Sunday morning. It handed Camilli second on the event and second in the WRC2 championship for the year. When asked if he had his seat in next year's WRC confirmed, he flashed a rueful smile and said: "We will see."

Chris Ingram destroyed the RC4 class competition for R2 cars, finishing over 12 minutes ahead of his nearest rival, Raphael Astier. The latter won WRC3 for the event.

Dan Moss was the highest finisher in a non-homologated car. Those cars have previously had to enter the National Rally but an FIA rule change allowed them in this year.

In the National Rally, Lancashireman Tom Preston (above) scored his first ever rally win with a dominant performance, while the event featured its best entry yet.

Last year's winner Bruce McCombie lamented the change of format for this year, which switched from three days to two. Without Friday's longer stages, which suit his Mitsubishi Lancer E9, he was unable to match the Skoda R5 of Preston on the more intricate Saturday and Sunday stages.

Roger Duckworth pleased the fans with the same-shape two-door Subaru Impreza used by Colin McRae to win the 1997 event outright. Diff trouble tied a hand behind his back, but he still scored a podium ahead of Dylan Davies, who picked up his new Subaru Impreza R4 a week before the rally and adapted well.

JACK BENYON

Tidemand dominated WRC2



MCKLEIN

approach out of the windfarm half a mile back up the road was a gazillion times more spectacular (Kris Meeke and Esapekka Lappi on the lock stops and the limiter in fifth is a sight that will remain with me for a very long time), but this one wasn't all about the spectacle. It was about the sight and the sound.

And when their boy came into view, it was like Welsh rugby star Shane Williams picking the ball up in his own 22, dropping the shoulder and dancing his way down the wing to another score. Who would have thought that roof-closed Millennium Stadium roar could be recreated on the side of a sunny Welsh hillside, well north of Cardiff?

"What was it like?" Elfyn asked later that day. I explained. He grinned. Had he seen anything? Like the 30-foot banner revealing that this particular corner of Myherin would be forever Elfyn?

"No," he said. "I said I didn't know where it was before the stage, but I did really. It's so quick coming down into there, you're so focused on what you're doing, getting the car slowed into that section... there's not a second to think about anything else."

But, clearly, Evans had put a huge amount of thought into this rally.

"I knew we had an advantage with the tyre, but at the same time I knew I had to be careful how I drove," he said. "Two years ago, I came here, went like hell and it just didn't work."

"This time I knew I had to do something different. I knew I had to drive neater, keep the car straighter, cleaner and not push. The minute you start to bounce the thing off the banks then you're losing time. You just can't over-drive this rally."

Evans' co-driver Dan Barritt remembers two years ago as well. "We would be coming to the end of stages and we'd pushed like hell," he said, "and then we saw the times and it just wasn't happening. You have to be patient with this event and he's got that."

And to go with that patience, Elfyn needed DMACK's specially cooked DMG+22 tyres. The Cumbrian firm played its joker to bring a new, softer, more open-treaded tyre for the last three rounds of the championship.

When it melted in Spain earlier in October, there were sniggers from some of those less well informed in the service park. But those in the know knew full well what a potent force Elfyn's new boots would be on a wet Welsh stage.

And so it transpired. The softer rubber offered more compound grip, while the blocks – the ones that had wobbled and wilted on Terra Alta – shifted the mud and clawed at forest beneath.

By the end of the Myherin, the first stage proper, Evans was in charge and in control. And only once through the three days did that waiver.

At the end of Myherin second time through, he'd done the radio and the TV, talked the positive talk, but a

“Elfyn is driving without putting a foot out of place. To do that in the fog was simply incredible”

Sebastien Ogier



MCKLEIN



MCKLEIN

flicker of doubt came across his face.

“It’s drying like hell...” he said.

Hafren was Friday’s sole remaining big test for his DMACKs. And, fortunately, Friday’s longest road remained largely hidden beneath the trees, shaded from the sun, shielded from the wind. It was still damp enough.

Just before six on Saturday morning

Ogier (top) did enough to secure world title number five, while Mikkelsen (above) starred on his way to fourth for Hyundai

and legendary tyre engineer Fiorenzo Brivio was deep in conversation with Evans. Brivio masterminded countless wins and titles for Pirelli before switching to DMACK two years ago. This moment, that morning was right up there with the best of them.

Could his covers cope with almost 70 miles of flat-out motoring? That was the question. There was cloud cover and talk of drizzle. But the temperatures were a little higher than expected and... 70 miles.

Which do you choose? A hard or soft option? The conservative choice would be to mix them up, stick two hards at the front or even cross them diagonally. But that would immediately compromise feel for the car.

Prior to the start of this rally, one man had won Britain’s round of the world championship more than any other, Petter Solberg. Autosport asked the five-time winner what he needed most from the car in Wales.

“Confidence,” was the answer. “Yes, you need speed and the dampers working well; you need the chassis soft for the traction, but still firm enough to give you the turn-in at high speed; you need all of that. But what you need most from the car is confidence. If you don’t trust your car in Wales, you are nowhere. When I won, I put everything into that car. I knew, when I wanted it to turn at 160km/h in the mud, it would turn.”

Different grip levels from different corners of the car would undermine that immediately. Evans had complete confidence in the car and complete confidence in Brivio. They went soft. It worked a treat.

“It was a brave choice,” said the likeable Italian. “It was courageous because there was more temperature. When I came through these stages on Monday they were like a race track, but then the rain came on Tuesday. That made us happy.”

Keith Phillips was pretty chuffed, >>

too. Howard Davies is always a welcome sight; Gwyndaf Evans' former co-driver is now a presenter of Welsh television's Ralio show. And he remains as entertaining as ever.

Deep in the depths of Dyfi, big Howie was entertaining Mr Phillips. "You should meet this man," Howard tells me. So I do.

Phillips was Elfyn's tutor at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor. He set about telling some stories of a 16-year-old Evans.

"He arrived with a string of A grades at GCSE," he said. "He was clearly a very bright young man and came to study advanced engineering. I remember some of his design and technology work was very, very good. He was a clever student..." Phillips' voice quietened as he looked back towards the stage behind him. "...but his motivation was elsewhere."

What was doubly refreshing last weekend was the reverence for Evans' efforts. Yes, the DMACKs were mentioned, but Ogier challenged anybody to question the commitment his team-mate was putting in.

"He is still driving the car," said the Frenchman, "and he is driving it without putting a foot out of place. And this is Wales, and to do that in the fog last night was simply incredible. It was horrible in there."

And Ogier would know. He'd gone off the road in a pea-souper of a run through Aberhirnant on Saturday night, clattering the left-front of his Fiesta and causing a flurry of excitement at M-Sport. Coming out of the stage high above Bala lake,



Meeke was never in the hunt, but kept it on the island

there's zero phone coverage at the best of times, but with the fog down in the pitch black, there was real panic back at base.

Ogier got out his torch, got on his hands and knees in the rain and mud, stripped the brake disc off that corner, bled the brakes, got back in the car and set a time just 3.3s down on Evans through Dyfnant two. With only three functioning anchors on his Red Bull-liveried motor.

Those two Saturday night stages were another fascinating facet of this year's route. The fog shook up the leaderboard, costing Tanak and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville most dearly. Neuville talked with some confidence about him and Ott obviously having the worst of the conditions... But there were some who gambled and gained. Haydon Paddon, for example, had an event to forget, but a run through the murk to remember as he swallowed a brave pill and tuned in to co-driver Seb Marshall like never before.

After the event, Ogier's co-driver Julien Ingrassia talked about the feeling inside the car in the dark and the fog. "When you have a stage like this," he said, "you realise that you live something unique."

The view from outside the car was almost as special: tracing the lights as they arced through the night sky, hearing the anti-lag bouncing off the trees as you waited, watched, senses heightened. Saturday night was alright for rally fans.

And Sunday morning was easy for Elfyn. "I wasn't sure what was going on with myself during the day," he said. "I'd talked myself into believing this was just another rally, that I was actually believing it and I wasn't actually that bothered! But the feeling definitely changed once we crossed that line."

Out of the car, there was the obligatory step onto the roof of the car, before a classic interview with a proud-as-punch father Gwyndaf alongside.

RICHARDS BEGINS HIS RETURN

IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE DAVID Richards has had any business on the stages of the World Rally Championship.

Last weekend, he was back. Inbound as Motor Sports Association chairman from January 1, Richards fired up the chopper and pointed it in the direction of Corris for a Saturday morning mooch around a world he has ruled from both sides.

The effect he had was quite remarkable. His car's arrival in the middle of the regroup area caused a significant hue and cry among the marshals, but as soon as the door opened and DR flashed his 'see, you do know who I am' smile, everything was well with the world.

It's impossible not to be impressed with Richards in this kind of situation. He had a moment for everybody and was predictably well versed in every aspect of the event, Elfyn's lead and the championship connotations. We

chatted about the event's success and the need to further the reach of the sport to the masses and then he was gone.

Back in the helicopter, he was bound for the woods he would once have called his backyard. As well as his trademark Penhaligon's scent, DR left behind a genuine sense of anticipation and excitement about what was about to come next year.

"You can't fail but to be impressed," said Howard Davies as the pair of us stood in the downdraft. "He knows just what's needed and just how to do it."

It's true. Such is Richards' ability across all aspects of the commercial and sporting side of our sport, it's impossible not to look to the future of British rallying, without a significant degree of confidence.

And, if all else fails, at least we'll have a chairman with Ari Vatanen and Colin McRae stories on tap.



Fans surrounded Evans wherever his Fiesta went

“Bloody hell,” said Elfyn. “There were a lot of people around there. I don’t think Brenig’s ever seen so many folk! And I’ve got to say, what a lift they’ve given Dan and me this week. I’ve never had support like this and I’ve really never seen as many people on the stages. It’s been unreal, but it’s really helped.”

But the loudest cheer was the one that boomed out of M-Sport’s corner of the service park when Britain’s 17-year wait for another win was done.

With so much focus on M-Sport’s success, it was easy to forget Neuville’s pacy, if turbulent, run to second or Andreas Mikkelsen’s impressive fourth on his first time out on a full gravel rally in the Hyundai i20.

Such was the ferocity of the battle, fifth-placed Jari-Matti Latvala was only five seconds off a podium spot in his Toyota. But had he switched places with the man who stood on the bottom step, the story wouldn’t have been the same. Ogier was a thoroughly deserving and unusually emotional world champion by the close of play.

But this week’s story was two steps up.

With the dust settling, Autosport looked to move the story on, thinking next year, championship? What next, Elf?

“Home,” he said quietly. “Bit of a celebration tonight, but then back down those roads to Dolgellau tomorrow. There won’t be quite so many folk waving this time, though...”

Understated, always. Underrated? Not any more. 🍀



RESULTS ROUND 12/13, RALLY GB, OCTOBER 26-29

POS	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Elfyn Evans (GB)	Daniel Barritt (GB)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	2h57m00.6s
2	Thierry Neuville (B)	Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+37.3s
3	Sebastien Ogier (F)	Julien Ingrassia (F)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+45.2s
4	Andreas Mikkelsen (N)	Anders Jager (N)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+49.8s
5	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+50.3s
6	Ott Tanak (EST)	Martin Jarveoja (EST)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+1m02.3s
7	Kris Meeke (GB)	Paul Nagle (IRL)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+1m20.5s
8	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	Sebastian Marshall (GB)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+2m16.3s
9	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	Janne Ferm (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	+2m46.5s
10	Dani Sordo (E)	Marc Marti (E)	Hyundai Motorsport · Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+3m50.5s

OTHERS

15	Craig Breen (IRL)	Scott Martin (GB)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+12m58.7s
22	Khalid Al-Qassimi (UAE)	Chris Patterson (GB)	Citroen Total · Citroen C3 WRC	+18m08.2s
32	Charles Payne (GB)	Carl Williamson (GB)	Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+30m19.3s
38	Mads Ostberg (N)	Emil Axelsson (S)	M-Sport WRT · Ford Fiesta WRC	+37m51.9s
42	Jourdan Serderidis (GR)	Frederic Miclotte (B)	J-Motorsport · Citroen DS 3 WRC	+44m43.9s
R	Juho Hanninen (FIN)	Kaj Lindstrom (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC · Toyota Yaris WRC	SS14-crash
R	Yazeed Al-Rajhi (SA)	Michael Orr (GB)	Yazeed Racing · Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS6-crash

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier 215; 2 Neuville 183; 3 Tanak 169; 4 Latvala 136; 5 Evans 118; 6 Sordo 95; 7 Hanninen 71; 8 Meeke 70; 9 Breen 64; 10 Paddon 59.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 M-Sport WRT 398; 2 Hyundai Motorsport 305; 3 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC 241; 4 Citroen Total 210.

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Visit Conwy Tir Prince 0.93 miles	Ogier 1m09.7s	Ogier	Latvala +0.4s
SS2 Myherin1 12.60 miles	Evans 11m01.6s	Evans	Ogier +3.1s
SS3 Sweet Lamb1 2.63 miles	Tanak 2m44.4s	Evans	Ogier +2.2s
SS4 Hafren1 21.83 miles	Evans 20m25.3s	Evans	Tanak +6.7s
SS5 Myherin2 12.60 miles	Evans 10m52.3s	Evans	Tanak +15.1s
SS6 Sweet Lamb2 2.63 miles	Ogier 2m41.6s	Evans	Tanak +16.1s
SS7 Hafren2 21.83 miles	Neuville 20m22.3s	Evans	Tanak +24.6s
SS8 Aberhiant1 8.64 miles	Evans 7m30.2s	Evans	Tanak +30.0s
SS9 Dyfnant1 11.13 miles	Evans 10m15.5s	Evans	Tanak +36.1s
SS10 Gartheiniog1 7.84 miles	Evans 7m30.5s	Evans	Tanak +39.8s
SS11 Dyfi1 16.07 miles	Evans 15m02.6s	Evans	Tanak +50.5s
SS12 Gartheiniog2 7.84 miles	Evans 7m35.1s	Evans	Neuville +54.3s
SS13 Dyfi2 16.07 miles	Neuville 15m21.2s	Evans	Neuville +51.6s
SS14 Cholmondeley Castle 1.12 miles	Neuville 1m07.5s	Evans	Neuville +50.0s
SS15 Aberhiant2 8.64 miles	Latvala 7m58.0s	Evans	Ogier +49.8s
SS16 Dyfnant2 11.13 miles	Evans 10m26.1s	Evans	Ogier +53.1s
SS17 Alwen1 0.88 miles	Tanak 5m32.2s	Evans	Neuville +52.4s
SS18 Brenig1 4.00 miles	Mikkelsen 4m04.0s	Evans	Neuville +46.3s
SS19 Gwydir 4.65 miles	Neuville 4m51.1s	Evans	Neuville +43.4s
SS20 Alwen2 6.47 miles	Mikkelsen 5m34.5s	Evans	Neuville +43.1s
SS21 Brenig2 (powerstage) 4.00 miles	Neuville 4m01.2s	Evans	Neuville +37.3s





Dovizioso left title rival Marquez behind early on

Dovizioso's wet win keeps

MOTOGP
SEPANG (MAL)
OCTOBER 29
ROUND 17/18

JUST WHEN IT SEEMED MARC MARQUEZ was on the brink of securing MotoGP title number four, Andrea Dovizioso scored a sixth race win of the season to ensure that this most unpredictable of championship campaigns goes down to the last race.

It seems only fitting that such a battle between two very different but equally worthy potential champions should be resolved at the Valencia finale, even if the odds remain overwhelmingly stacked in favour of Marquez.

Then again, 11 years ago, the late Nicky Hayden arrived at Valencia facing a seemingly insurmountable deficit to the man widely considered the best rider in the field. But Valentino Rossi succumbed to the pressure and crashed, and the crown was Hayden's. The biggest difference between those two races is that, even if Marquez fails to score, Dovizioso has to win at Valencia, as he lags 21 points behind the Honda rider, and that is not guaranteed, given Ducati last won there in 2008.

After the disaster of Phillip Island, Dovizioso was expected to make up some ground on Marquez at Sepang. He did win in Malaysia in 2016, while Marquez has never felt fully at ease around the Hermann Tilke-designed circuit. Although Dovizioso was pipped to pole position by Dani Pedrosa and Johann Zarco, he had the clear measure of his opposition in another rain-soaked race.

Not for the first time this year, Tech3's Zarco – now the official rookie of the year of 2017 –

was the early leader, thanks in no small part to being the only rider in the top 10 besides polesitter Pedrosa to opt for the soft compound wet rear tyre. At one stage, the Frenchman – still chasing that first MotoGP win – held an advantage of nearly two seconds over the works Ducatis of Jorge Lorenzo and Dovizioso. But it wasn't long before they began to close in, and on lap nine of 20 both Lorenzo and Dovizioso picked Zarco off and began to edge away.

With a Ducati win looking likely, it was inevitable that team orders would come into play. After several more laps of circulating out front, Lorenzo duly received a coded instruction on his dashboard ('Suggested Mapping 8') to let Dovizioso go by. This went unheeded at first, and, when Dovizioso finally got passed Lorenzo at the final hairpin on lap 16, it looked anything but orchestrated, as Lorenzo suffered a major front-end scare and nearly crashed.

Once in front, Dovizioso opened a small gap to Lorenzo, and took the chequered flag for the sixth time this season without coming under any further threat from his team-mate, who could still take solace in having scored his best result for Ducati.

Afterwards, Lorenzo claimed he hadn't seen the dashboard message, but also said he was aware of the points situation, implying he would have done the honourable thing and given up the win to Dovizioso even if he hadn't made the error that allowed the Italian past. How Dovizioso must wish that Danilo Petrucci had been gallant in Misano, where the Pramac Ducati rider chose not to allow his more senior stable-mate through for second...

Completing the first podium in a decade to not feature any works Honda or Yamaha riders was



LAT IMAGES

thrilling title race alive

Zarco, who wound up the best part of 10s down on Dovizioso at the finish, but never came under threat from fourth-placed Marquez.

All things considered, fourth wasn't a bad return for Marquez, who had crashed on his way to his worst grid slot of the season (seventh) in qualifying. An aggressive opening lap from the Spaniard allowed him to reach third behind Zarco and Lorenzo, but after settling into fifth place he was able to escape his pursuers and bank his best finish of a flyaway swing to forget.

As at Misano and Motegi, the works Yamahas again failed to make an impact in the wet, as Valentino Rossi and Maverick Vinales struggled to seventh and ninth respectively. Rossi suffered the indignity of being passed by Petrucci for sixth, despite the fact the latter was forced to start from last when his bike ground to a halt on the warm-up lap, while Vinales slumped as low as 13th before finally clawing his way back inside the top 10.

When asked if Yamaha should consider putting Zarco on a current-spec machine to boost development, Rossi joked that the rookie probably wouldn't be happy about such a 'promotion', a remark that neatly sums up the sorry situation Yamaha finds itself in.

At least the manufacturer could take some solace in another strong showing for satellite rider Zarco, as well as a solid debut for World Superbike regular Michael van der Mark – the

third different rider to stand in for the unwell Jonas Folger at Tech3 in as many races. The Dutchman was finally given his chance on a MotoGP bike after being named as Rossi's replacement for Aragon, only for the seven-time premier class champion to be declared fit to race with a broken leg.

Qualifying didn't go according to plan for van der Mark, as he crashed in Q1 and condemned himself to last on the grid. But his race pace was more impressive, and he only just missed out on scoring what would have been a very well-deserved point on his debut. With Folger unlikely to be back in time for Valencia, the chances of van der Mark getting a second crack of the whip on the M1, after he completes his World Superbike campaign in Qatar this weekend, are high.

But all eyes in Spain will be on Marquez, as he seeks to join Geoff Duke, John Surtees, Mike Hailwood and Eddie Lawson in the exclusive club of four-time 500cc/MotoGP champions. The pressure will be on, as it was for Rossi in 2006, while Dovizioso assumes the plucky underdog role that Hayden played 11 years ago. You wouldn't be placing any money on the latter, but at the same time you can't help but admire the fact he's even made it this far.

JAMIE KLEIN

RESULTS

1 Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati) 20 laps in 44m51.497s;
 2 Jorge Lorenzo (Ducati) +0.743s; 3 Johann Zarco (Tech3 Yamaha);
 4 Marc Marquez (Honda); 5 Dani Pedrosa (Honda); 6 Danilo Petrucci (Pramac Ducati); 7 Valentino Rossi (Yamaha); 8 Jack Miller (Marc VDS Honda); 9 Maverick Vinales (Yamaha); 10 Pol Espargaro (KTM).
Points 1 Marquez 282; 2 Dovizioso 261; 3 Vinales 226; 4 Rossi 197; 5 Pedrosa 185; 6 Zarco 154.

Busch bags top-four playoff spot

NASCAR CUP
MARTINSVILLE (USA)
OCTOBER 29
ROUND 33/36

IT WAS A CHAOTIC END TO THE first NASCAR race to finish under lights at Martinsville, where Kyle Busch emerged the winner and became the first driver to seal one of four spots in the 2017 playoff season finale.

Busch's win came in overtime after Chase Elliott – the driver to beat in the closing stages – was eliminated in a clash with Denny Hamlin at Turn 4 with just three laps to go. As the field entered the corner, Hamlin made contact with Elliott, spinning the Hendrick driver and forcing the race into extra time.

In the ensuing added laps, Joe Gibbs Racing team-mates Hamlin and Busch made contact several times. But while Busch held on for the win, Hamlin spun and started a chain reaction pileup as the field crossed the line at the chequered flag.

Martin Truex Jr squeezed through to take second, with Clint Bowyer in third. Brad Keselowski, who had battled Elliott for the lead earlier in the final period, finished fourth, one spot ahead of fellow playoff contender Kevin Harvick. Reigning champion Jimmie Johnson finished in 12th place after a late gamble to pit while the rest of the pack stayed out did not pay off.

After his collision with Hamlin, Elliott was marked down in 27th place. The pair clashed on-track again following the finish, and then had a heated exchange once they climbed out.

RESULTS

1 Kyle Busch (Toyota Camry) 505 laps in 3h32m47s;
 2 Martin Truex Jr (Toyota) +0.141s; 3 Clint Bowyer (Ford Fusion); 4 Brad Keselowski (Ford); 5 Kevin Harvick (Ford); 6 Trevor Bayne (Ford); 7 Denny Hamlin (Toyota); 8 Ryan Blaney (Ford); 9 Matt Kenseth (Toyota); 10 Ricky Stenhouse Jr (Ford).

Points 1 Martin Truex Jr 4117; 2 Kyle Busch 4100;
 3 Keselowski 4079; 4 Harvick 4053; 5 Jimmie Johnson 4050; 6 Blaney 4047; 7 Hamlin 4045;
 8 Chase Elliott 4027.





Michelisz makes up for Honda woes

WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
MOTEGI (J)
OCTOBER 29
ROUND 8/10

AT TIMES IN THE WORLD TOURING Car Championship this season, it seems as though fate is conspiring against Honda's title bid.

Tiago Monteiro's testing crash at Barcelona and its consequences were far beyond Honda's control, but the blame for its latest setback lay firmly at its own door. A new fuel injector was flagged up by officials in China and, just as had been the case with the ruling over its modified flat floor last season, the part was found to contravene the series' homologation procedure – costing the team (and independent Zengo Motorsport) all its points from the previous round.

It was another case of interpretation of the law with the same outcome, and left Honda facing another uphill battle. If Norbert Michelisz – who now appears to be the Japanese marque's best bet for the title – is to overturn Thed Bjork's lead, he'll need more days

like a flawless Sunday at Motegi.

A compact Sunday schedule – relating to typhoons between Shanghai, from where the cars were being shipped, to destination port Tokyo caused delays – rendered the weekend effectively a one-day event, but Michelisz did everything he needed to do in the circumstances. Second fastest times in the first and second segments of qualifying did not reflect the Hungarian's pace, having done the minimum required to progress to the next stage, but Michelisz saved it up for one monster Q3 shootout run to grab pole by 0.370 seconds in his Civic.

Increasingly heavy rain – a factor for a second race weekend in a row – meant much of the main race was neutralised, but Michelisz had done the hard work already. In the four laps of green running that were managed after a safety car start, he built a small lead over Nicky Catsburg, before the safety car returned on lap seven. That was it and, while win number eight of his career was hardly the most acclaimed, Michelisz won't have minded too much. The cars circulated

until the mandatory 75% distance for full points to be awarded had been completed before the race was called.

Michelisz's seventh in the opening race was little reward for a fighting display, but it could have been far worse after a punt from Nestor Girolami at the final complex put him on the edge of the gravel trap.

A recovery drive from there, allied to drivethrough penalties for Girolami and Catsburg (both for clashes with Hondas), limited the points lost to fourth-place finisher Bjork.

The Swede had been part of a three-way squabble for second – some way back from race winner Tom Chilton, who romped to a second win of 2017 – but after briefly claiming the spot from Yann Ehrlacher, Bjork became embroiled in a tussle with Esteban Guerrieri and ultimately slipped behind the pair.

Had Honda kept its China points, Michelisz would currently enjoy a 14.5-point lead. As it is, he's 16.5 down on Bjork – but that is half of what it was before the event, and is a gap that's not insurmountable with four races left. And Catsburg is still close too.

Chilton is up to fifth in the 2017 standings

JACK COZENS

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Tom Chilton (Citroen C-Elysee) 11 laps in 23m53.262s; 2 Yann Ehrlacher (Lada Vesta) +13.158s; 3 Esteban Guerrieri (Honda Civic); 4 Thed Bjork (Volvo S60); 5 Mehdi Bennani (Citroen); 6 Kevin Gleason (Lada).

Race 2 1 Norbert Michelisz (Honda) 9 laps in 22m17.924s; 2 Nicky Catsburg (Volvo) +0.392s; 3 Nestor Girolami (Volvo); 4 Guerrieri; 5 Bjork; 6 Bennani.

Points 1 Bjork 228.5; 2 Michelisz 212; 3 Catsburg 209.5; 4 Tiago Monteiro 200; 5 Chilton 184.5; 6 Bennani 184.





Ammermuller ambles to first title

PORSCHE SUPERCUP
MEXICO CITY (MEX)
OCTOBER 28-29
ROUND 8/8

FORMER RED BULL JUNIOR Michael Ammermuller was happy to watch Matt Campbell claim a double victory in Mexico City, as a brace of second places earned him his first Supercup title at the sixth attempt.

Australian Porsche junior Campbell took the race one lead from Ammermuller's title rival, Denis Olsen, on the run to Turn 1. Thereafter, he was never threatened, with Ammermuller

passing Olsen into Turn 1 and then spending the rest of the race keeping his rival behind to extend his lead to five points.

While Campbell led the second race from start to finish from pole, Ammermuller held second off the line from Olsen. Any chance of a battle between the title contenders evaporated on lap three, when Olsen lost touch with Ammermuller and settled into third. Ammermuller had the pace to beat Campbell and had a few looks, but wasn't willing to jeopardise his title with a rash attack late-on.

Dan Cammish was fourth in

race one, but retired from the second with damage sustained after clipping the Turn 3 barrier in attempting to complete a pass on Olsen for third.

EDD STRAW

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Matt Campbell 16 laps in 30m11.627s; 2 Michael Ammermuller +1.868s; 3 Dennis Olsen; 4 Dan Cammish; 5 Julien Andlauer; 6 Thomas Preining.

Race 2 1 Campbell 16 laps in 28m00.377s; 2 Ammermuller +1.017s; 3 Olsen; 4 Josh Webster; 5 Preining; 6 Zaid Ashkanani.

Points 1 Ammermuller 193; 2 Olsen 186; 3 Campbell 151; 4 Cammish 122; 5 Robert Lukas 103; 6 Mattia Drudi 91.

Fenestraz caps crown with last win

FORMULA RENAULT EURO CUP
BARCELONA (E)
OCTOBER 28-29
ROUND 10/10

SACHA FENESTRAZ SEALED the 2017 Formula Renault Eurocup title with a race to spare as he took second place in the second race of the weekend, comfortably clear of his closest rival, Will Palmer.

Fenestraz, a championship outsider for much of the season, had to wait for race two to be resumed after an enormous Turn 2 crash eliminated 13 cars on the first lap and the event was red flagged.

The crash was a knock-on effect of Max Defourny and Gabriel Aubry clashing as they ran through the left-hander, which spun the former to a halt. He was collected by the second half of the field.

After a 20-minute suspension, Fenestraz attacked polesitter Robert Schwartzman on the run to Turn 1 but could not find a way by. But with Palmer, who was second in the opening encounter, finishing down the order – the 2015 BRDC Formula 4 champion had needed to win with Fenestraz finishing ninth or lower to prolong the title fight – the crown went to the

Josef Kaufmann Racing driver.

"It just feels amazing," said Fenestraz after the conclusion of race two. "I think we deserved this championship, so I can't ask for more than that. I'm over the moon."

Red Bull junior Richard Verschoor completed the race two podium ahead of Max Fewtrell, Jarno Opmeer and Palmer.

In the final race, Fenestraz reversed the race two result by beating recently announced Ferrari Academy member Schwartzman, who also won race one. Defourny finished third.

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Robert Schwartzman 16 laps in 27m51.529s; 2 Will Palmer +3.273s; 3 Gabriel Aubry; 4 Sacha Fenestraz; 5 Richard Verschoor; 6 Max Defourny. **Race 2 1 Schwartzman**

14 laps in 50m31.068s; 2 Fenestraz +5.343s; 3 Verschoor; 4 Max Fewtrell; 5 Jarno Opmeer; 6 Palmer. **Race 3 1 Fenestraz** 15 laps in 27m30.197s; 2 Schwartzman +0.400s;

3 Defourny; 4 Palmer; 5 Verschoor; 6 Aubry. **Points 1 Fenestraz 367.5**; 2 Palmer 298;

3 Schwartzman 285; 4 Defourny 255; 5 Aubry 232; 6 Fewtrell 164.



IN BRIEF

MOTO2

Franco Morbidelli was declared Moto2 champion ahead of the penultimate round of the season at Sepang, as title rival Thomas Luthi failed to start due to injury. Luthi, who was 29 points behind Morbidelli heading to Malaysia, was ruled out when he fractured his ankle in a qualifying crash. For the second time in a row, Miguel Oliveira led home a KTM 1-2 ahead of Brad Binder, while Morbidelli finished third, nearly seven seconds back.

MOTO3

At Sepang, Moto3 champion Joan Mir took a 10th victory of the year. The Leopard Racing Honda rider came out on top in an entertaining three-way battle against Jorge Martin and Enea Bastianini, the trio split by just eight tenths at the finish. British rider John McPhee finished fifth, while Mir's nearest championship challenger Romano Fenati was seventh.

EUROFORMULA OPEN

With Harrison Scott absent from the Barcelona finale, his replacement, Felipe Drugovich, took charge. Drugovich, third in the 2017 ADAC Formula 4 championship, claimed race one pole and led the early stages of race one. But an off-track moment meant he finished sixth, with Devlin DeFrancesco beating Ameya Vaidyanathan. But Drugovich made amends in race two, resisting Nikita Troitskiy for first.

INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN

Giovanni Venturini secured the 2017 title at Barcelona. Venturini, along with Marco Mapelli, dominated race one, and needed to finish race two – won by Albert Costa and Philipp Frommenwiler – seventh. That would give Venturini the crown regardless of progress made by Fran Rueda and Victor Bouveng. They succeeded, which meant Bouveng's late-race clash with Christian Engelhart did not have standings consequences.

NASCAR TRUCKS

Noah Gragson went around double champion Matt Crafton at a late restart and held on to win at Martinsville and take his first career victory. Crafton beat Johnny Sauter to second, while their fellow playoffs contenders Christopher Bell, Ben Rhodes and Austin Cindric were eighth, ninth and 10th respectively.

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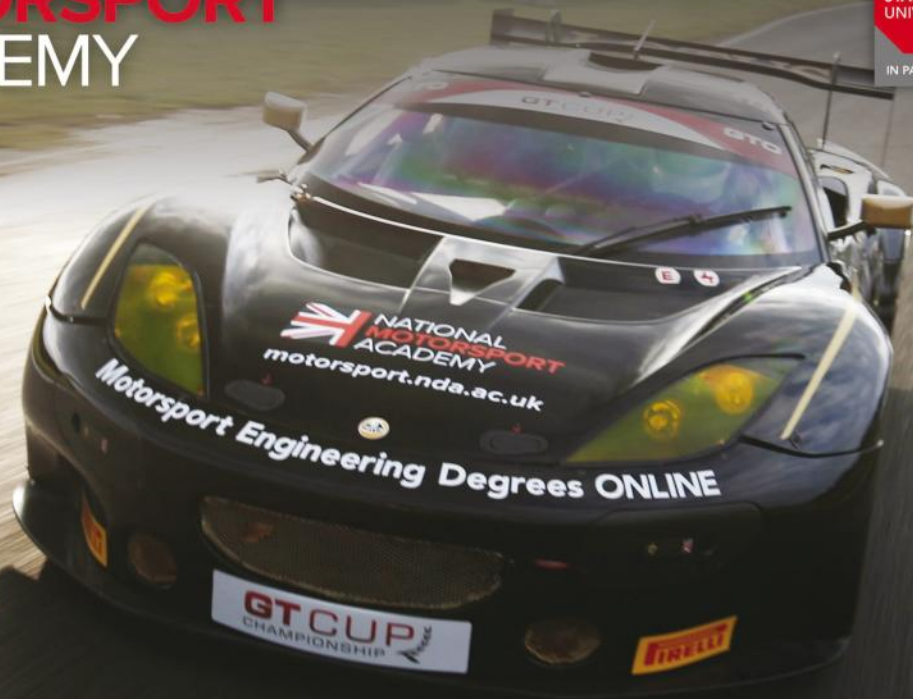
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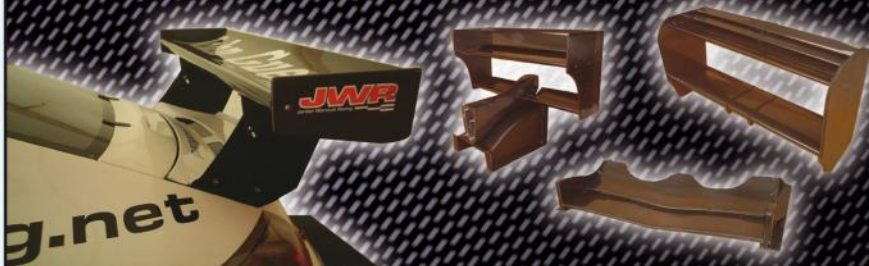
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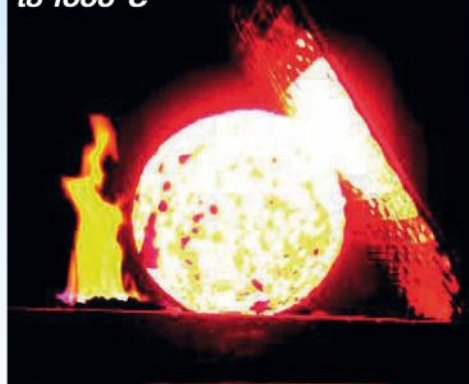
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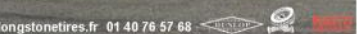
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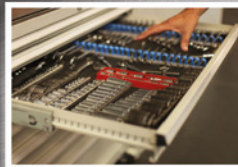


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Profile:

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PROFILE

AGE 13

FROM Brackley

RESULTS

2017 5th in Super One Junior X30

2016 3rd in Super One British IAME Cadet

4th in LGM National Cadet

1st in Welsh IAME Cadet

2015 1st in Welsh IAME Cadet

2014 4th in Welsh IAME Cadet



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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Jonny Wilkinson

HE MAY SHARE A NAME WITH A RUGBY LEGEND but it is in the world of motorsport that Jonny Wilkinson wants to succeed.

The 13-year-old has had an impressive career in karting and is now preparing to make the switch to cars. But it was a birthday party several years ago that started his motorsport journey.

“For my ninth birthday I went to Formula Fast, which was my local indoor karting track, and I really loved it,” recalls Wilkinson. “After a few goes, I went to do a club championship and won it and it built up from there.”

His success in club karting paved the way to a switch to the main Super One series and he finished third in IAME Cadet in 2016 with KMS, the small team he had started out with. Then this year he achieved fifth in Junior X30 – one of the most competitive karting series there is – becoming one of only five drivers to win a Super One final this year.

After enjoying that success, Wilkinson is now eager to make the transition to cars. He was one of the finalists for the Ginetta Junior scholarship last month and, although he ultimately missed out on the prize, he gained a lot from the experience, describing it as a “good learning curve”.

That learning curve will now only get steeper as he will compete in the championship in 2018 with Elite Motorsport – the team that helped to power Tom Gamble to this year’s title – and

is busy testing ahead of the season.

“I’ve got to make the most of it and test at as many different tracks as I can as I’m too young to do the Winter Series,” says Wilkinson. “I think the rookie championship is the main goal for next year but any overall wins and podiums would be amazing.”

Elite team boss Eddie Ives adds: “Although Jonny will be the youngest member of our squad next year, with a serious test programme planned we are confident his talent will shine through.”

Longer-term, Wilkinson is aiming to make a name for himself at the top levels of motorsport, but not necessarily in Formula 1. “In F1 there are only 20 drivers but there are a lot more options in touring cars or GT racing,” he says.

With that kind of mature attitude, Wilkinson is well-placed to enjoy more success, both next year and further into the future. He is now looking for new sponsors to help him deliver on that potential.



CONTACT DETAILS

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Murray in return to defend Walter Hayes Trophy triumph

NIALL MURRAY WILL RETURN TO FORMULA Ford action this weekend to defend his Walter Hayes Trophy success from 12 months ago.

The 22-year-old will contest the annual Silverstone event aboard a Van Diemen LA10 that he has already used to take the Northern Ireland Formula Ford championship this season.

“As the reigning winner of course you want to go on and defend the crown,” said Murray, who dominated last year’s event in torrential rain.

“If I win it this year, I would probably try and do it next year for the hat-trick.

“Of course, you need a lot of luck. With the amount of entries there’s a big chance of something going wrong. If it goes wrong in the heats, you’ve more or less got very little chance [of winning].

“Just with the nature of Silverstone there’s a big

chance of drivers 0.5 seconds off the pace being up there and causing an accident, which has happened to me before and is frustrating.”

Murray will headline a bumper entry of more than 100 cars, including 2014 Formula Ford Festival winner James Raven, who will drive the Ray GR09 used by Neil MacLennan this season.

“It’s definitely unfinished business,” said Raven. “Last year I got taken out in the heat, and the year before we were at the front but we were taken out in the final. Luck has always evaded me there. We’ve always been in the top three or top five at least, in terms of times. You need luck at the big events.”

Other leading Formula Ford drivers taking part include 2014 National FF1600 champion Stuart Gough – who will race a Kevin Mills Spectrum – and 2017 Brands Hatch Festival winner Joey Foster.

Top contenders

Heat 1

Matt Cowley	Van Diemen JL13
James Raven	Ray GR09
Rob Hall	Van Diemen JL12
James Roe	Van Diemen RF99
Matt Round-Garrido	Medina Sport JL17

Heat 2

Luke Cooper	Swift SC16
Felix Fisher	Van Diemen RF02
Ross Martin	Ray GR17
Sebastian Melrose	Ray GR14
Callum Grant	Merlyn Mk20a

Heat 3

Joey Foster	Ray GR08
Jordan Dempsey	Spectrum 011
Richard Tarling	Jamun T2
Josh Barnett	Reynard RF89
Jamie Chadwick	Ray GR14

Heat 4

Ed Moore	Van Diemen JL13
Jonathan Kotyk	Ray GR11
Niall Murray	Van Diemen LA10
Josh Smith	Van Diemen JL16
Keith Donegan	Van Diemen JL13

Heat 5

Luke Williams	Firman RFR16
Michael Moyers	Spectrum 011
Roger Orgee	Ray GR17
Aaron Jeansonne	Ray GR15
Ben Mitchell	Merlyn Mk11a

Heat 6

Oliver White	Van Diemen JL17
Stuart Gough	Spectrum 011
Robert Barrable	Van Diemen RF02
Josh Fisher	Van Diemen JL14
Jamie Thorburn	Ray GR15

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Cane is targeting Eurocup for 2018

EBREY/LAT

LAT IMAGES

FORMULARENAULT EURO CUP

Cane, Caroline in Eurocup test outing

BRDC BRITISH F3 FRONTRUNNER JORDAN Cane and British F4 champion Jamie Caroline were scheduled to test Formula Renault Eurocup machinery at Barcelona this week as Autosport closed for press.

Cane has targeted a season in the category next year, and will run with two teams in upcoming tests before confirming his campaign.

“The plan for us at the minute is to do Renault next year,” said Cane. “We’re testing with Fortec in Barcelona and then with Tech 1 Racing at the Nurburgring. We’re not sure yet who we’ll test

with at Spa, we’ll see how we gel with which team.

“There will be 36 drivers at this test, a lot of second-year drivers, so it should be good. It’s scrutineered so no-one is playing games.

“Fortec in previous years have been pretty mega and Tech 1 have been the big dogs in the series recently.”

Caroline was invited by the series to test with the frontrunning Tech 1 Racing squad.

“I’m looking forward to comparing with all the others at the test,” added Caroline. “I know I probably won’t be quickest but I will try my

hardest. It’s a new team, new car, new track, so a total refresh. It’s something that I would be interested in doing [next year], with the Renault Academy making them one of the only [F1] teams that helps drivers through the ranks.

“It’s a shame because I have to leave halfway through the day to go to the Porsche Junior assessment, so I will look at the progress I make.”

One of Caroline’s British F4 rivals, Oscar Piastrri, has also been invited to the test. He drove with Arden in the UK and will stick with the same squad for his Eurocup bow.



EBREY/LAT

BRITISH FORMULA 4

New engine support for F4 teams in 2018

BRITISH FORMULA 4 TEAMS HAVE welcomed the decision for Neil Brown Engineering to become the category’s engine-support provider from next season.

The renowned company will be responsible for balancing the F4 Ford EcoBoost engines as well as providing trackside support.

Double R team boss Anthony Hieatt has been heavily critical of the engine support provided by Sodemo and the equality of the

motors in the past – describing it as the “worst thing about the championship” – but he says the addition of Neil Brown Engineering is very positive.

“It’s a fantastic step in the right direction – it can only be a good thing,” said Hieatt. “It was a crazy decision in the first place for an MSA championship to go with a foreign engine tuner when we’ve got so many good ones in the UK. The championship will

just become stronger now as people will have confidence in the engines.”

Hieatt added that, as a French-based company, Sodemo didn’t have an easy task providing full support to the British series. Sodemo will remain as homologation partner.

Neil Brown has a long history of working with Ford and currently builds engines for a number of British Touring Car teams.



BRITISH GT

GT4 champ Middleton Daytona-bound

BRITISH GT4 CHAMPION STUART Middleton will race in January's Daytona 24 Hours after winning a fully funded seat in a Cadillac Daytona Prototype courtesy of Sunoco.

Middleton was crowned the winner of this year's Sunoco Whelen Challenge contest last weekend, and will now get to race an Action Express Racing Cadillac DPi-V.R for the IMSA SportsCar Championship opener. The prize is worth an estimated £190,000.

Middleton will share the car with former

Formula 1 racer Felipe Nasr, World Endurance Championship regular Mike Conway and 2016 IMSA champion Eric Curran.

Middleton, 18, won this year's prize after standout performances alongside Will Tregurtha in the HHC-run Ginetta G55 GT4 as the pair took the British title. Middleton was put clear in the Sunoco points when Radical European Masters racer Stuart Moseley was unable to score enough points at Barcelona last weekend.

IN BRIEF



THURSTON TO MAKE WALTER HAYES BOW

Historic Formula Ford frontrunner Ed Thurston (above) will make his debut at the Walter Hayes Trophy this weekend, aboard a rare Jamun M89. Thurston, 18, campaigns an Elden Mk8 in the HSCC-organised Formula Ford championship, and, through a tie-up with friend Nigel Tye, will race at one of the formula's showpiece events as it reaches 50 years of age.

F4 ACE VAN UITERT TESTS LIGIER LMP3

Dutch teenager Job van Uitert tested the RLR Motorsport Ligier JSP3 at Donington Park last week, with regular team driver Alex Kapadia on tutoring duties. Van Uitert finished second in this year's Italian F4 Championship with four wins.

COTTRELL STEPS DOWN FROM BRSCC

British Racing and Sports Car Club chairman Bernard Cottrell has stepped down from his role after 13 years following ongoing health issues. He will be replaced by vice-chairman Peter Daly.

AHLERS AND BELLINGER SEAL TITLE

Keith Ahlers and Billy Bellinger have retained their overall title in the FIA Masters Historic Sports Car Championship. Ahlers' Cooper Monaco King Cobra sealed the crown in the final race of the season at Estoril in Portugal after winning the pre-1966 'Denny Hulme' class once more.

LEMMER JUNIOR MAKES RACE DEBUT

The son of British GT team boss Mark Lemmer made his car racing debut at Brands Hatch last weekend. Jack Lemmer, 16, contested the Allcomers races in a Peugeot 106 Rallye. He was 14th and the last runner in the opening race and was unclassified in race two.

TAYLOR WINS A YEAR IN GINETTA JUNIOR

Karter James Taylor (below) has won the Ginetta Junior scholarship for 2018 after beating 64 other drivers during assessments at Blyton Park last week. The 15-year-old has been karting for seven years and will graduate after securing a fully funded prize drive in Ginetta Junior, having impressed in driving, media and fitness tests.



BRITISH FORMULA 3

Lanan F3 deal on the cards for Maini

LANAN RACING HAS TESTED two drivers it intends to run next year in the BRDC British Formula 3 championship.

Kush Maini – an Italian Formula 4 driver whose brother, Arjun, finished second in the 2014 British F4 championship with Lanan – and karter Joshua Mason have both been running at Donington Park, Oulton

Park and Snetterton in the last few weeks.

Mason has already signed a two-year deal with the team and Maini is also expected to be confirmed sometime in the next few weeks.

Lanan Racing team principal Graham Johnson said: "Josh has been testing the old Formula 4 car, and next year he'll go into

the F3 car, but he'll miss the first race as he's not 16-years-old in time.

"Kush just loves it so much we're doing another two days of testing at Snetterton this week.

"His father called me and said we want to have a look at British F3 and we're the only team that they would consider running with."



TCR UK

Swift to conduct TCR winter tests

FORMER CIVIC CUP CHAMPION CARL Swift has bought a SEAT Leon TCR car ahead of his planned move into TCR UK next season.

Swift, who won the 750 Motor Club's Civic Cup title in 2016, has bought the second-hand car to allow him to conduct a test programme over the winter in preparation for the season.

He plans to begin testing in mid-November and has decided to opt for the Leon because it is more affordable.

"They've been around for longer so the resale

prices are lower with them," explained Swift. "I'm planning a couple of weeks familiarising myself with it, and get out on a couple of trackdays and then get in some test runs.

"It should be interesting. The only data we have really got is the Silverstone GP circuit from Creventic [there was a TCR class that raced as part of the Silverstone 24 Hours earlier this year] so that's all everyone knows. I will probably get on the GP circuit so I can compare against those cars."



BIRKETT RELAY A team from the BBC's *Top Gear* television programme took part in the 750 Motor Club's Birkett Relay at Silverstone last weekend. The BBC team consisted of presenters Rory Reid in a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow (picture 1), Matt Le Blanc in a Bentley Turbo R (2) and Chris Harris in a Mercedes 600 SEL (3), but they also took to the track in a Dacia Sandero. The team finished 69th out of 70 in both the handicap and scratch results. Race report on page p68. **Photographs by Steve Jones**

FIESTA SIX HOURS

DEVANEY STARS IN MONDELLO FIESTAS

Michael Devaney may have banged wheels with Nico Rosberg in German Formula 3 in the past but these days he just races once a year – in the Mondello Park Fiesta Six Hour race.

He showed no signs of rustiness, though, grabbing pole in the Murray Motorsport machine and he gradually eased clear of the pack before an errant team-mate turned in on him while being lapped, putting them both off.

Liam Denning assumed the lead and, despite not having raced recently, held off the chasing pack with apparent ease for the opening stint.

Kevin O'Hara, having started on the front row, dropped back to the fringes of the top 10 in the early damp conditions but began to slice his way back towards the front. O'Hara's pace was matched by team-mates Dan Polley and Ronan McHale and, once they assumed the lead, their pace was relentless until the flag.

Blackchurch Motors, winners in 2016, climbed to second through strategy more than the pace of drivers Kevin Doran, Shane McFadden and Sean Lillis.

A strong recovery drive brought Devaney's team – which also included John Denning, Michael Cullen and Dave Maguire – to third.

HISTORIC FF2000

Grant plots FF2000 comeback

TWO-TIME HISTORIC FORMULA FORD 1600 champion Callum Grant will return to Historic Formula Ford 2000 next season for a serious crack at the title in what he says could be his last full season of racing for now.

Grant, 22, was HFF champion in 2012 and '16 and narrowly missed out this year. Now he is planning a full season next year in his father Nigel's Delta T78 in the two-litre series.

"It's the same car as 2015 when I last raced it," said Grant. "I did three-quarters of the season in it but we couldn't get the car handling as we wanted. We did a bit of work and tested it last year and it seemed better.

"I think 2018 will be my last full year. We'll keep the

cars but just do two or three meetings a year."

Nigel has owned the Delta for more than a decade but they have struggled with tyre costs when racing it. Now, tyre changes have reduced the cost and the Grants are planning a full campaign next season.

"It's always been fast, we've just not had the reliability," explained Callum. "Now we've rebuilt it and gone through everything."

His run in the Delta at the recent Silverstone meeting netted a podium finish, but Grant knows that he will face fierce opposition from drivers such as reigning champion Andrew Park and Ian Pearson.

HISTORICS

Jordan to build TVR Griffith for 2018

FORMER BRITISH TOURING Car champion Andrew Jordan is building a TVR Griffith to contest selected historic events next season.

The Jordan Racing Team, which entered the historic arena in 2015, has built a number of historic touring cars, including the Jordan family's successful Austin A40.

Now Jordan plans to build

a 'wide-body' V8-engined TVR, with Nigel Reuben Racing, to share with his father and fellow BTCC race winner, Mike, in high-profile historic meetings for pre-1966 GT cars.

"We've got so many car builds on at the moment, but this is for me and dad to do some racing in," said the 28-year-old, who confirmed JRT is also expanding its

workshop. "We'd like to do the Oulton Park Gold Cup, Classic Daytona and, depending on dates, the Silverstone Classic or Donington Park. We want to cherry-pick some nice races."

Mike Whitaker, who shares cars with Jordan Sr, has scored many successes in his similar Griffith, as well as the 'narrow-body' version that won at the Goodwood Members' Meeting.





Walter Hayes Trophy pays homage to FF1600

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@autosport](#)

WALTER HAYES, THE JOURNALIST-TURNED-PR CHIEF-turned-motor industry guru, immortalised in motorsport for enthusing The Blue Oval to put its financial heft behind Formula Ford and badge Cosworth's all-conquering DFV F1 engine, was doubtless quietly proud of the fruits of their success. Both entered the public eye in 1967, as a pivotal year for the sport, and neither has done the Ford Motor Company's sporting heritage any harm over 50 years. Indeed both gifts keep on giving.

Only last weekend the shrill V8 power unit that triumphed in 155 World Championship grands prix was performing before today's F1 circus – at its second successive venue, for the cars were trucked from the Circuit of the Americas at Austin – as the lifeblood of popular Mexican GP supporting races. A new short-stroke DFV may cost £100k with taxes, the same numbers as Ford's original (pre-inflation) investment, but the genius of Keith Duckworth's design is still evident half a century on. That Japan's Katsu Kubota won both races in Lotus 78/4 has personal significance, for my first experience of driving an F1 car was in sister chassis 78/1 at Donington Park in 1980. Coincidentally, owner Colin Bennett had prepared a Lotus 51 for the inaugural Formula Ford race at Brands Hatch in July '67.

FF1600, as it became universally known when its two-litre cousin arrived with slicks and wings in '75, was still growing – and on every aspiring pro driver's bucket list through the '80s, long after the DFVs had fallen silent in contemporary F1, outgunned by sizzling 1500cc turbos. While ringmaster Bernie Ecclestone had liquidated his DFV stockpile, creating F3000 to supplant two-litre F2, enlarged 3.3 and 3.9-litre DFL derivatives

were long active in sports-prototype racing on the global stage, and in hillclimbs. Ask Andy Priaulx.

This year's Formula Ford golden jubilee celebrations have been magnificent, fuelling unprecedented competitor demand for the Historic Sports Car Club's Historic championship (for cars built and raced before 1972). Consistently drawing some of the largest fields in Britain and embroiling a wider range of chassis marques than before (22), the racing has been awesome too, with five different winners, eight points splitting the top three at season's end and several races decided by a hair's breadth. Just as it always was.

The British Racing and Sports Car Club's annual FF Festival, originated at Snetterton in 1972 but run at Brands Hatch since '76, may not be the event it was before the class abandoned the venerable 'Kent' engine after Jan Magnussen's '92 victory, but it returned to its roots in 2013. The old favourite, key to the class's longevity and accessibility, rules the roost again, as past master and current champion Joey Foster, who has won thrice – driving Van Diemen, Reynard and Ray chassis – will attest.

But it is the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone – instigated in his memory by fellow visionary (and dyed-in-the-woolly hat FF1600 nut) James Beckett – that has taken over the mantle as the end-of-season showdown they all want to win. This year's 17th edition brings together the biggest entry of a very special year, around 100 competitors from around the world, to pay homage to the man who recognised the value of John Webb, Brands Hatch boss, and its resident racing school owner Geoff Clarke's call for an inexpensive single-seater racing class. Little did they expect to change the course of history. 🏆



PORTUGUESE RULE AT ALGARVE CLASSIC

Portuguese father-and-son Rui and Pedro Macedo Silva, sharing their AC Cobra (left) with Joaquim Jorge, became the fourth victors in as many races in last Sunday's two-hour GT & Sports Car Cup seasonal finale, a highlight of the annual Algarve Classic Festival at Portimao.

Andrew Haddon/David Pittard (Cobra) were second as Keith Ahlers/Billy Bellinger (Morgan +4 SLR) and Rick Bourne/Wil Arif (TVR Grantura) claimed GT3 and GT2 honours, the latter duo pipping Joe Ward/Hugh Colman's sister car by 2.5 seconds.

Steve Soper (Lotus Cortina) beat U2TC first heat winners Andrew and Max Banks in their Alfa Romeo GTA on aggregate. Chris Ward/John Young's Lister-Jaguar topped MRL's '50s Sportscar enduro, but Belgium's Eric Mestdagh (BMW CSL) aced the Historic Touring Car Challenge.

Catalan Joaquin Folch (Lotus 16) and Rod Jolley (Cooper T45/51) won HGPCA's Pre-'66 events, each chased by Dutchman Eddy Perk in a Heron-Alfa. Swiss Stefan Rey (Lola Mk5) was unbeatable in Formula Junior, while Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield in their Lola T282 took sportscar gold.

RAFMSA team took third win in a decade



SILVERSTONE
750MC OCTOBER 28

RAF flies high again in Birkett Relay

FOR THE THIRD TIME IN 10 YEARS, a team from the RAF Motorsports Association won the Birkett Six Hour Relay race at Silverstone as Armed Forces Race Challenge organiser Chris Slator led his squad to handicap honours.

While none of the five drivers that combined to claim the prize for RAFMSA this season was involved in 2008, Slator and Darren Howe were part of the 2011 winning team, with their Peugeot and Volkswagen Golf this year joined by Dan Smith's Ford Fiesta and BMWs for Scott Lawson and Ed McKean, who saw them home. McKean picked up the baton in a strong position, with the team leading from two-thirds distance, although they had languished in 27th after two hours.

A squad of Mk5 Golfs – the Production GTI Gentlemen being Luke Schlewitz, Andy Baylie, Rob Sadler, James Howlison and Peter Cross – finished within a minute of RAFMSA, the gap between the leading duo barely changing in the final hour. Locost squad Team Sellars Racing had been well placed going into the final phase, but slipped from third to eighth. Earlier, team boss Stuart Sellars enjoyed a memorable battle with the Mercedes 600 SEL of Chris Harris, part of a *Top Gear* team that also included Matt LeBlanc in a Bentley Continental and Rory Reid in a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow, as well as the inevitable Dacia Sandero. They finished



second from bottom in both scratch and handicap standings.

With the fall of TSR, BMW squad Team Osman – family members Yusuf, Senna and Cemal, and Jody Halse – completed the podium. Rogue's Troopers salvaged fourth in spite of two cars blowing up in qualifying. Stuart Nicholls hopped from his Toyota MR2 into one of two GT86s, alongside Giles Groombridge, Martin Farrelly and Cam Walton, who was driving with a strapped-up wrist that he injured in a shunt at Thruxton in August.

Caterham outfits Six Sevens and Gradsports completed the top six, although the former fielded only four drivers.

The Scratch race was disputed by three Radical squads. Last year's winners

Scratch race was hotly contested between three teams – all driving Radicals

had rebadged themselves as Breakell's Nightmare in response to team organiser James Breakell selecting an eponymous Racing Heroes squad. Both were beaten, however, by SR3 RSX triumvirate John Macleod and Brian and Tom Harvey, collectively known as Dobbers. "I was a bit nervous but I kept it on the circuit," said Tom after completing the final stint. "We had two laps in hand so I didn't want to do anything silly."

It was an almost perfectly executed plan, whereas their rivals both had problems. Racing Hero Joe Stables popped a diff on his PR6 after just a couple of laps of his stint, four hours in, dropping them out of contention. The team had led by a lap at the two-hour mark, thanks to the efforts of Bikesports champion Stefano Leaney, but Julian Caldwell's car broke down at Woodcote and had to be pushed back to the pits in the third hour, losing the team the lead. Joe's father Richard and Charles Graham completed that team, which finished second.

Among the difficulties for the third-placed Nightmare squad was confusion over a stop-go penalty, which caused Aaron Bailey to make multiple pit visits before it was eventually served by Simon Garmiston. Saker squad JPR Motorsport was a distant fourth, hampered by a fuel pressure issue on Paul Rose's car.

IAN SOWMAN

RESULTS

67TH BIRKETT SIX HOUR RELAY – HANDICAP (155

LAPS) 1 RAFMSA – Chris Slator

(Peugeot 306), Darren Howe (VW Golf), Scott Lawson (BMW Compact), Ed McKean (BMW 325i), Dan Smith (Ford Fiesta);

2 Production GTI Gentlemen – Luke Schlewitz, Andy Baylie, Rob Sadler, James Howlison, Peter Cross (VW Golf Mk5s)

+57.61s; 3 Team Osman – Yusuf Osman, Senna Osman (BMW 320is), Jody Halse, Cemal

Osman (BMW M3s); 4 Rogue's Troopers – Martin Farrelly, Cam

Walton, Stuart Nicholls, Giles Groombridge (Toyota GT86s);

5 Six Sevens – Michael Downing, Chris Buckley, Barry

White (Caterham Supersports), Peter Marsh (Caterham

Sigma); 6 Gradsports – Alex Gurr, Tristan Judge, Zoltan

Csabai, Jason Gale, Scott Lawrence (Caterham

Graduates). **Class winners** Rogue's Troopers; Civic Cup

– Ben Sharpe, David Vincent, James Griffith, Paul Bancroft

(Honda Civic Type Rs); Brackley Motor Workers – James

Gunn-Carter, David Mennie (BMW Compacts), Robin Ward

(Ford Falcon), Ashley Bird, Ed Platt (BMW M3s).

SCRATCH (149 LAPS) 1 Dobbers – Brian Harvey,

John Macleod, Thomas Harvey (Radical SR3 RSXs);

2 Breakell Racing Heroes – Richard Stables, Stefano

Leaney, Joe Stables (Radical PR6), Charles Graham (Radical

SR3 RS), Julian Caldwell (Radical SR3 RSX); 3 Breakell's

Nightmare – Aaron Bailey, Lee Bailey (Radical SR3 RSX), Doug

Carter (Radical PR6), Simon Garmiston, Brian Murphy

(Radical SR3); 4 JPR Motorsport – Paul Rose, Steve Harris,

Graham Roberts (Saker RapX S1s); 5 M3 Amigos – Piers Reid,

Rory Hinde, Matthew Evens, Owen Fitzgerald (BMW M3s);

6 Hart Attacks – Barry Webb (Mallock Mk16BW), Peter

Richings (Mallock Mk30PR), Howard Payne, Clive Wood

(Mallock Mk20Bs), Michelle Hayward (Mallock Mk27).

CW M3 Amigos; Hart Attacks; Three Hares and a Tortoise

– Mike Evans, Rob Watts, Paul Thacker (Caterham

420Rs), Gavin Crawford (Caterham Supersport). **Fastest lap** Leaney

2m04.15s (105.54mph). **Pole** Dobbers. **Starters** 70.



Sebastiani claims F3 Cup championship

JACOPO SEBASTIANI SEALED THE F3 CUP championship at Oulton Park with yet another convincing display, a second place and victory in the season finale confirming him as champion, 34 points ahead of runner-up Shane Kelly.

A strong weekend at Brands Hatch last time out meant the Italian's intention to not play the numbers game was evident from the start as he took pole position for race one. But it was the impressive Cian Carey who won the opening race to secure his first victory of the season, storming into second at Old Hall Corner. He inherited the lead at the end of the opening lap after Wade Eastwood pulled into the pits with an engine issue. Sebastiani had made an uncharacteristically poor getaway and slipped back to third, which then became second after Eastwood's retirement.

With drizzle falling and the pack electing to stay on slicks save for two runners, conditions were treacherous and the title was wrapped up midway through when Shane Kelly could not avoid Robbie Watts' sideways moment at Cascades and spun out. The order up front remained unchanged, with Sebastiani finishing behind Carey in second, safe in the knowledge that the position would be enough to give him the title.

Consistent all season and only finishing off the podium four times in 17 races, the F3 Cup champion was determined to finish on a high in race two – he pulled clear from pole to secure a lights-to-flag victory, with Carey and Kelly completing the podium.

Both VAG Trophy outings were interrupted, with Simon Walton taking the honours in race one. Starting from pole, the Audi driver pushed

the fast-starting Paul Taylor wide at the first corner and controlled the pace superbly to win despite the emergence of the safety car midway through, courtesy of Callum Jenkins crashing around the back of the circuit while battling with Matthew Wilson and Kenan Dole for third.

A red flag in race two could not stop Brayden Fletcher winning from pole. Richard Morgan got sideways at Old Hall Corner, collecting Matthew Evans, and the chaos descended into Cascades with Jenkins and Peter Davies also unable to avoid the melee. Fletcher nailed the restart and was untouchable until the end. Owen Walton and Wilson completed the podium after a race-long battle with Dole, Ben Wallace, Kyle Owen-Bradshaw and Simon Walton. Second to sixth was covered by two seconds before Dole failed post-race scrutineering.

Callum McDoughall and Ben Simonds (Caterham Supersport) won the MSVT Trackday Championship with a fourth-place finish and a retirement for Class S champion Darren Goes. Eventual winners David Gardner and Chris Mills surrendered the lead in their BMW M3 to Goes in the early stages, but the result for McDoughall and Simonds was confirmed when SEAT Leon driver Goes suffered a delaminated tyre and crashed at Cascades midway through.

John Lyne inherited the MSVT Trackday Trophy win after Dean Hyde went off at Cascades late on while leading, causing a red-flag stoppage. Lawrence Davey and Toby Hotston had started from pole, but surrendered the lead to Hyde after the stops, the latter pulling clear until the error that gifted the win to Lyne in his Volkswagen Golf.

JAKE JONES

RESULTS

F3 CUP (12 LAPS) 1 Cian Carey (Dallara

F311); 2 Jacopo Sebastiani (F311) +2.595s; 3 Stuart Wiltshire (Dallara F308); 4 Robbie Watts (F308); 5 Tony Bishop (Dallara F312); 6 George Line (F308). **Fastest lap** Watts 1m32.548s (104.71mph). **Pole** Sebastiani. **Starters** 10.

RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Sebastiani;

2 Carey +10.180s; 3 Shane Kelly (F308); 4 Wade Eastwood (F311); 5 Wiltshire; 6 Line. **FL** Sebastiani 1m29.433s (108.36mph).

P Sebastiani. **S** 8.

VAG TROPHY (8 LAPS) 1 Simon Walton (Audi

TT); 2 Paul Taylor (VW Golf) +0.505s; 3 Matthew

Wilson (VW Golf); 4 Owen Walton (Audi TT); 5 Ben Wallace (VW Golf); 6 Alex Dziurzynski (VW Scirocco). **Class winner** Martyn Culley (SEAT Leon). **FL** Taylor 1m53.056s (85.72mph).

P S Walton. **S** 21. **RACE 2 (11 LAPS) 1 Brayden Fletcher (VW Golf);** 2 O Walton +8.689s; 3 Wilson; 4 Wallace; 5 Kyle Owen-Bradshaw (VW Golf); 6 S Walton. **CW** Culley. **FL** Dole 1m53.295s (85.54mph). **P** Fletcher. **S** 14.

MSVT TRACKDAY CHAMPIONSHIP (22 LAPS)

1 David Gardner/Chris Mills (BMW M3); 2 Mark Flower (BMW M3) +9.955s; 3 Steve Gales (BMW 235i); 4 Callum McDoughall/Ben Simonds (Caterham Supersport); 5 Gary Burstow (BMW 328i); 6 Warren Allen (Ginetta G27R).

CW McDoughall/Simonds; Burstow; John Lyne (VW Golf); Russell Danzey/Jack Wood (Renault Clio). **FL** Darren Goes (SEAT Leon) 1m55.932s (83.59mph). **P** Gardner/Mills. **S** 21.

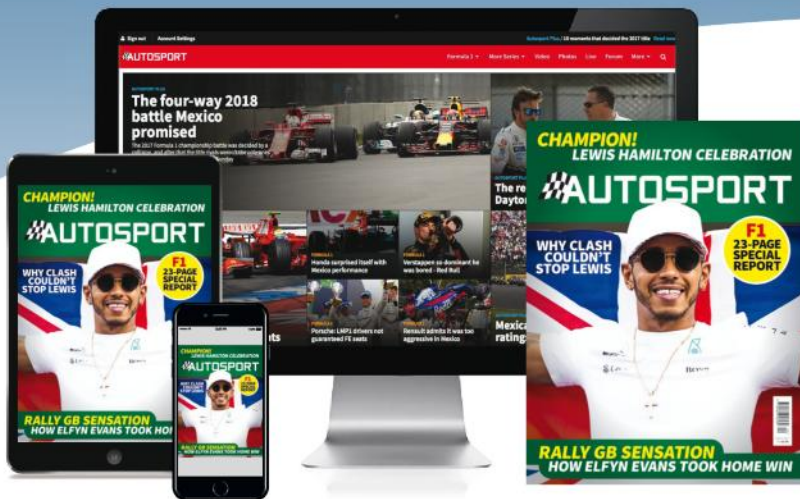
MSVT TRACKDAY TROPHY (18 LAPS)

1 John Lyne (VW Golf); 2 Alex Tait/Jay Finlay (Renault Clio) +15.453s; 3 Jonathan Evans/Darren Meadows (Honda Civic); 4 Cameron McLean (Renault Clio); 5 Ray Worley (Mazda MX-5); 6 Guy Colclough/Tony Jones (SEAT Leon). **CW** McLean; Ronan Quinn (Ford Fiesta ST); Tom Murphy (Ford Puma); Martin Davies/Steve Sleath (Peugeot 205 GTI). **FL** Lyne 2m00.272s (80.57mph). **P** Lawrence Davey/Toby Hotston (Mini JCW). **S** 36.

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Rivett makes it double joy with victory at Brands

MATT RIVETT BECAME THE ONLY driver in 2017 with two Champion of Brands Formula Ford 1600 wins when he triumphed in the season's final round.

Last Saturday's races produced tussles between Rivett and Sebastian Melrose, who dominated a seven-car entry.

Melrose's trip from Scotland was rewarded in race one, despite wheelspin at the start, when a lunge at Clearways just ahead of yellow flags took him to the front. In race two, it was Rivett's turn to chase before taking the lead. Melrose spun his Ray GR14 after contact between them at Druids, which left him third behind Keith Wood.

Formula Vee champion Ben Miloudi

added the 10th Vee Festival to his winning record despite retiring before the first corner in race one with fuel feed problems in his Storm GKBM.

John Hughes strayed through the Clark Curve gravel while leading race two, but a superb effort at Paddock Hill lifted him from third back to first in a single move. Miloudi grabbed third behind Ian Jordan, as the top four, completed by Peter Belsey, finished together.

The decider ended in anti-climax when Hughes was called into the pits after a place-swapping duel with Miloudi. Jordan couldn't stay with the duo, but finished second, with spinner

Rivett won final race of the season after battling with Melrose

Belsey third. Hughes snatched fifth on the final lap after a brief stop for his Scarab – ultimately, there was disappointment for him after being brought in for allegedly spraying fuel.

Dale Gent scored two race wins and a second place in a quartet of Allcomers' outings. Success came the hard way on Saturday after duelling with Colin Watson's Caterham. A passing bid at Druids near the end of race two went wrong when Gent didn't spot the Caterham, although Watson still finished second despite the near miss.

Gent met his match on Sunday in the form of Graham Hill's Radical PR6, but overcame Simon Smith's Caterham for second. The Subaru was a no-show for the final race, allowing Hill the win.

The opening Single Seater Allcomers' race lost Noel Roddy at the first corner. Kevan McLurg retired after leading, and Mike Hatton survived a touch with Dave Wheel to win from Chris Kite. A dreadful race two start left Kite well down the order, but he overhauled Roddy and Hatton for victory.

Three Ssangyong Challenge races were dominated by Michael O'Brien and James Gornall. Contact at Paddock Hill left O'Brien with a flapping door but didn't stop him winning race one. Gornall fended off O'Brien throughout race two and Lewis Grant stayed with them to complete the podium. The race three grid put Gornall on row two, helping O'Brien to build a lead he held to the end.

The Victor Meldrew Trophy also celebrated its 10th anniversary. A bumper entry contested two handicap races, won by Robert Taylor and Kieron Lehane. Nobody was more surprised than Jody Halse (BMW M3), eighth and seventh, when he was declared the recipient of the coveted trophy for the third time.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

RESULTS

CHAMPION OF BRANDS (18 LAPS)

1 Sebastian Melrose (Ray GR14); 2 Matt Rivett (Ray GR10) +0.165s; 3 Keith Wood (Swift SC93); 4 Ben Tinkler (Reynard 89FF); 5 Adam Fathers (Ray); 6 Michelangelo Amendola (Mygale).

Fastest lap Melrose 50.976s (85.30mph).

Pole Melrose. **Starters** 7.

RACE 2 (18 LAPS) 1 Rivett; 2 Wood +9.726s;

3 Melrose; 4 Tinkler; 5 Fathers; 6 Amendola.

FL Melrose 51.257s (84.83mph). **P** Melrose. **S** 6.

FORMULA VEE FESTIVAL (17 LAPS) 1 John

Hughes (Scarab); 2 Ian Jordan (Sheane) +7.963s;

3 Peter Belsey (Spyder Mk2); 4 Christian Goller (AHS Challenger); 5 John Stapleton (Hawke FV);

6 Mark Lawton (Scarab Mk2). **FL** Hughes 53.310s

(81.57mph). **P** Ben Miloudi (Storm GKBM). **S** 15.

RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Hughes; 2 Jordan +0.558s;

3 Miloudi; 4 Belsey; 5 Paul Taylor (GAC); 6 Goller.

FL Hughes 52.875s (82.24mph). **P** Jason Chatten

(GAC). **S** 15. **FINAL (17 LAPS) 1 Miloudi;**

2 Jordan +5.216s; 3 Belsey; 4 Taylor; 5 Hughes;

6 Goller. **FL** Hughes 53.050s (81.97mph).

P Hughes. **S** 12.

ALLCOMERS (21 LAPS) 1 Dale Gent (Subaru

Impreza); 2 Colin Watson (Caterham C400)

+2.307s; 3 Samuel de Haan (Audi RS3 TCR);

4 Mark Rusted (TVR Cerbera); 5 Tim Davis (C400);

6 Colin Whitmore (BMW M3). **FL** Gent 48.813s

(89.08mph). **P** Watson. **S** 17. **RACE 2 (24 LAPS)**

1 Gent; 2 Watson +3.195s; 3 Davis; 4 Richard

Green (C400); 5 de Haan; 6 Andrew Wilson

(Holden Monaro). **FL** Gent 49.322s (88.16mph).

P Gent. **S** 15. **RACE 3 (25 LAPS) 1 Graham Hill**

(Radical PR6); 2 Gent +28.493s; 3 Simon Smith

(Caterham CSR); 4 Ian McDonald (Radical SR1);

5 Green; 6 Nicholas Wall (Renault Clio).

FL Hill 47.494s (91.56mph). **P** Hill. **S** 15.

RACE 4 (25 LAPS) 1 Hill; 2 Green -1 lap; 3 Smith;

4 Wall; 5 David Cowan (BMW E46 M3); 6 Rusted.

FL Hill 48.063s (90.47mph). **P** Hill. **S** 13.

SINGLE SEATER ALLCOMERS (17 LAPS)

1 Mike Hatton (Dallara); 2 Chris Kite (Dallara

F393) +0.689s; 3 Julian Hoskins (Vector TF93Z);

4 George Fowler (Reynard SF84); 5 Alan Gape

(Royale RP27); 6 Phil Slate (Reynard F3). **FL** Kite

48.467s (89.72mph). **P** Kevan McLurg (Dallara

F397). **S** 10. **RACE 2 (18 LAPS) 1 Kite;** 2 Hatton

+6.438s; 3 Noel Roddy (Dallara F3); 4 Hoskins;



Raymond Donner gets sideways in his Ford Capri in Victor Meldrew Trophy

5 Fowler; 6 Gape. **FL** Kite 48.332s (89.97mph).

P Hatton. **S** 8.

SSANGYONG CHALLENGE (15 LAPS) 1 Michael

O'Brien; 2 James Gornall +0.261s; 3 Nik Johnson;

4 John Hindhaugh; 5 Matt Smith; 6 Gavin Pell.

FL Gornall 59.953s (72.53mph). **P** O'Brien. **S** 11.

RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Gornall; 2 O'Brien +0.158s;

3 Lewis Grant; 4 Johnson; 5 Smith; 6 Pell.

FL O'Brien 1m00.206s (72.22mph). **P** Gornall.

S 11. **RACE 3 (15 LAPS) 1 O'Brien;** 2 Gornall

+3.873s; 3 Grant; 4 Luke Warr; 5 Smith; 6 Pell.

FL O'Brien 59.914s (72.58mph). **P** O'Brien. **S** 11.

VICTOR MELDREW TROPHY (15 LAPS)

1 Robert Taylor (Citroen Saxo); 2 James

Hebditch (Austin-Healey Sprite) +0.657s; 3 Julian

Newman (Lexus); 4 John Willcocks (BMW E30);

5 Martin Gadd (Honda Civic); 6 Glen Rossiter

(BMW Mini). **FL** Jody Halse (BMW M3) 54.769s

(79.39mph). **P** Michael Kirk (Mazda MX-5). **S** 26.

RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Kieron Lehane (Ford Fiesta

ST150); 2 Oliver Davies (Toyota Starlet Turbo)

+5.462s; 3 Eliot Dunmore (BMW Mini); 4 Cem

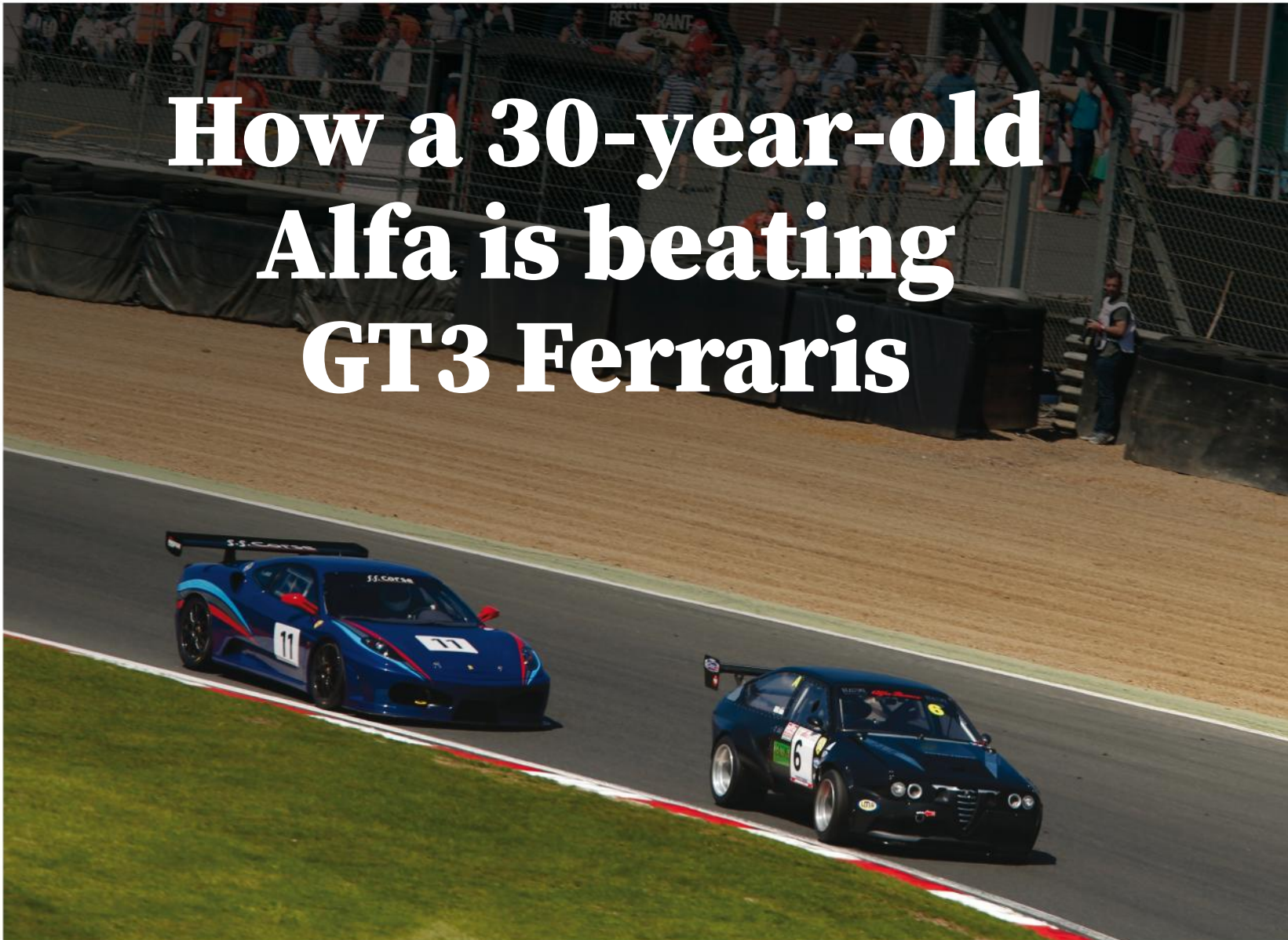
Osman (BMW M3); 5 Pete Osborne (Vauxhall

Astra VXR); 6 Karl Graves (BMW 120d). **FL** Craig

Jamieson (Ford Sierra Cosworth) 53.336s

(81.53mph). **P** Martin Gadd (Honda Civic). **S** 26.

How a 30-year-old Alfa is beating GT3 Ferraris



Ian Stapleton has a collection of eight Alfa Romeo GTVs and has achieved giant-killing results in an Alfetta GTV6 this year

By Matt Kew

[@matt_kew](#)

It takes a brave person to chop the bodywork, change the engine and modify all four corners of a Terry Drury-built Group A British Touring Car. To many it would be sacrilegious to alter a part of racing history, a car that would be welcomed into the Historic Sports Car Club's Super Touring Trophy. But to Ian Stapleton, that car is his Ferrari F430 GT3-beating Alfa Romeo Alfetta GTV6.

In the back of a 2002 Alfa Romeo Owners' Club magazine was an advert for a GTV complete with "many racing goodies". What it didn't say was that the car's new owner would be buying into the Italian marque's rich motorsport history.

"A friend of mine had an Alfasud and I just thought it was the most amazing thing," Stapleton says of his first step to currently owning eight GTVs. "I quite liked the Sprints but I then saw a GTV6 in a car park and I just loved it."

A reply to that advert resulted in Stapleton purchasing an Alfa Romeo once factory-funded to compete in the BTCC. Its racing department, Autodelta SpA, had supplied the parts and Paul Smith took on driving duties, with the car also making European Touring Car and Tourist Trophy appearances through the 1980s.

After its Group A exploits, Drury ran the car in the Thunder Saloons Championship later in the decade. To be competitive, two turbos were mated to the V6 engine. Putting that power 'on the road' required large tyres, and the bodywork was modified to house them. Fitting the old Alfa stereotype, however, the new forced-induction configuration meant the car was unreliable.

The programme failed and the money dried up, leaving the GTV6 in storage after 1987. But before it got to Stapleton, the bonnet and bumper of an Alfa Romeo 147 hatchback had been grafted on and the roof removed. That contributed to the three years it took from money changing hands in 2002 to it going



racing again. After a further 12 years the result is a matte-black monster that wouldn't look out of place on the set of a *Mad Max* film. It's a car that now regularly features in the Classic Sports Car Club's Modsports and Special Saloons series, one that can lap Mallory Park faster than a John Cleland-driven, factory-supported six-litre V8 Vauxhall Carlton ever did.

But Stapleton says the GTV6 was always a dynamic driver. "It's classic Alfa to throw everything back to keep the handling as good as possible – gearbox in the back, in-board disc brakes, even a magnesium sump and wheels," he says.

What wasn't 'classic Alfa' was waiting in the boot. "When I picked this up, the fuel tank had a nitrous oxide bottle in the back, so there must have been a lot going on back then," recalls Stapleton.

With a cycle of continual development, in its current guise the car runs a reliable 350bhp and weighs in at just under 1000kg. But to Stapleton, the car will never be finished. "You'll always be doing something," he says. "It's pretty good as it is, but I always like to fiddle about with it. I want more power."

The target is 500bhp and supercharging the current bored and stroked three-litre engine, taken from an Alfa 164, is the next step. "You can always keep on going, it's just a question of money," Stapleton explains. "I've always tried to keep the expense realistic. I look at things very practically and I'm aware that once you start increasing power you can have failures elsewhere. I've bought injectors capable of handling 600 horsepower so I know I won't have to change them.

"You can have that opportunity to innovate, and if you can innovate then you can beat people with larger budgets because they'll spend a fortune on the wrong stuff. If you're not doing the engineering yourself then you're not getting the feedback.

One of the most important things is to understand what the car is doing beneath you. If I'm going into a corner and it's washing out at the front, I know what needs to be done."

Being led out onto the grid at Brands Hatch by a Lamborghini Aventador safety car and flanked by a brace of Ferrari F430 GT3s in an all-comers race earlier this year preceded what Stapleton recalls as one of his finest drives.

"A lot of people think it has a lot more power than it does," he says. "Those Ferraris were 580bhp, so people assume I have that too. In many cases I'm carrying an extra 100kg and less horsepower, but the difference is they're trying to put the power down. I'm flat everywhere using all I've got."

Stapleton was jumped by one of the F430s off the line but was always challenging: "I was taking stock all the time. I certainly didn't race as close to it as normal because I didn't want to be in a situation where I'd run into the back of a Ferrari – not that I ever want that situation anyway."

He got ahead, and was now the benchmark. The F430 upped its lap times to match and was never out of touch. But Stapleton held on for victory – a popular result with the crowd.

"I was waiting to leave the car park and an Alfa enthusiast came running over, shook my hand and said, 'Ah, you beat the Ferraris!' It was such a small thing but it makes it worthwhile."

Success and reliability have come by manufacturing custom parts to improve on the original design. From that Stapleton is hoping to turn his passion into a full-time business with Real Time Performance, helping others indulge in what he loves most.

"Driving on the roads has changed so much that I don't bother with a sports car," he says. "All my enjoyment comes through building and racing cars." ❦



Extraordinary looks backed up by pace



Factory-backed Group A Alfa raced in the BTCC

Stapleton's Alfa shows a Ferrari F430 the way home at Brands Hatch



Monster GTV is constantly being fettled

WHAT'S ON

LAT IMAGES



Ferrari: Race to Immortality

TWO OF THEM WOULD LIKELY have flown Spitfires had they reached adulthood 10 years earlier. Their wide, open smiles and swept, blond hair contrasted starkly with the brooding charisma of the other three – the pair of dashing Italians and the Spanish aristocrat. Five swashbuckling racing drivers, all dangling from the strings of one enigmatic and utterly ruthless puppet-master – and all dead within two devastatingly tragic years that have echoed through the ages: it's the stuff of movie scripts.

And the word is it still could be, on the back of this stunning documentary. *Ferrari: Race to Immortality* is the story of a quintet of racing warriors, all of whom found themselves pitched into Enzo Ferrari's famous Scuderia at the same tumultuous time during the second half of the 1950s. The focus falls most directly on *Mon Ami Mates* Mike Hawthorn and Peter Collins (above right), and is inspired by the celebrated book of the same name by the late Chris Nixon. Hawthorn would, in 1958, become enshrined in history as Britain's first Formula 1 world champion, but only after his great friend gallantly

gave up his chance of the honour two years earlier in deference to team leader Juan Manuel Fangio – the maestro who refused to dance to Ferrari's Machiavellian manipulations.

Eugenio Castellotti and Luigi Musso upheld Latin honour at Ferrari thereafter and were set against the Englishmen, only to perish as they strived for glory – the former in a pointless Modena testing crash, the latter while chasing Hawthorn at the French GP of '58. The Marquis, Alfonso de Portago, died along with his co-driver and nine spectators (including

Collins, Fangio and Hawthorn at the 1957 German Grand Prix, where the maestro defeated the Ferraris

The Scuderia's charges line up at the 1957 French Grand Prix



five children) on the '57 Mille Miglia.

Collins, recently married to his beautiful American sweetheart, would win with style at Silverstone in '58, only to lose his life the next time out at the Nurburgring. His devastated friend resolved to quit the sport, but not before winning the title in Collins' honour, in the heat of Casablanca.

The coda of Hawthorn's own demise, on an unremarkable stretch of Surrey road in January 1959, ensures a dark conclusion. As the film documents, it's likely the accident only preceded a more drawn out and painful death from the kidney complaint Hawthorn spent his racing career striving to cover up.

In all, this is heavy material. But the wonderful, rare and largely colour footage, dug out by our own archive 'magician' Richard Wiseman, regularly lifts the gloom. Clips from Casablanca, Reims, Silverstone and many more left us open-mouthed.

The dead bodies of spectators killed in the 1955 Le Mans disaster, which Hawthorn inadvertently triggered, are upsetting and the footage steps beyond the boundaries of taste. Perhaps the scale and violence of that tragedy offers

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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

 FROM ONE CHAMPION TO ANOTHER...

Search for CONGRATULATIONS LEWIS - DESERVING CHAMPION | NICO ROSBERG

Nico Rosberg takes time out from changing nappies (daughter number two arrived a couple of months ago – see separate video) to offer congratulations to his successor and former team-mate Lewis Hamilton.



BERNARD CAHIER/THE CAHIER ARCHIVE

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vindication for their inclusion. But among the horror, the filmmakers also remember to remind us why these men raced at all: motor racing in the 1950s was exhilarating and fun. Lifestyle montages of Collins and Hawthorn, set to a soundtrack of Peggy Lee and Etta James, capture the best aspects of a spectacular era.

Narration comes from expert voices, among them Nigel Roebuck. Others include Tony Brooks – a Ferrari legend himself, of course – and also wives and girlfriends: Louise King recalls her tragically short marriage to Collins with deep fondness, and Jean Ireland, Hawthorn's fiancée, and later wife to Innes, adds further authority.

A film about Ferrari in the 1950s that doesn't mention Alberto Ascari cannot be described as flawless. But of the growing number of racing documentaries to have broken cover in recent years, this is among the finest.

DAMIEN SMITH

Ferrari: Race to Immortality is released in cinemas on November 3, and on DVD, Blu Ray and digital platforms from November 6.

NEXT WEEK

ON SALE THURSDAY

➔ SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Where it all went wrong for Hamilton's vanquished foe



MAUGER/LAT



KONI

4

Britax

GP LOCKHEED

FERODO

EMANUEL

NO 36

MAGNETI MARELLI

JACKY



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Jacky Ickx strikes a pose with his Ferrari 312B2 at the 1971 French Grand Prix at Paul Ricard. The Belgian had dominated the previous round at Zandvoort, taking pole position, fastest lap and victory, but his luck didn't hold out in France: starting from third on the grid, Ickx was out on lap five with a blown engine.

MY FIRST MOTORSPORT MEMORY



ET HERINGTON/LAT

LAT IMAGES



FATEMA CHOWDHURY

[@FChowdhury95](#)

IN THE THICK OF MONZA'S FORMULA 1 FRENZY

Looking around at the wealth of talent, experience and knowledge in the Autosport office, it's instantly obvious I'm a mere rookie, an imposter if you will! I didn't stumble across motorsport until the age of 15, on a damp Sunday in late August. I was in a sullen spirit after receiving what a stereotypical Asian student would consider mediocre GCSE results.

So turning on the TV to find nothing else on to distract me from my academic 'woes' but the Belgian Grand Prix proved to be the first step in leading me astray from a more conventional career path my parents would have approved of.

I was taken aback by Lewis Hamilton's composure in an action-packed race. Forty-four laps later, it was all over – and before I knew it, the epic 2010 season was coming to its exciting conclusion in Abu Dhabi.

Four years later and with significantly more cash courtesy of Student Finance, I decided to take my first pilgrimage to a race and chose the homeland of the tifosi. The beautiful Monza Park and the historic track that it encircled was every bit a testament to the legacy it had spun over the past 92 years.

I'd been mute in the engine-noise debate that had rattled on throughout that season because I'd never experienced the sound of an F1 engine beyond the telebox. The V8 was raucous, but I was more than content with my ears splitting to the sound of V6s. By the time the F1 cars hit the track, the grandstands were packed with fanatical fans. Now this was what I'd been waiting for.

The defining moment of the weekend was on Sunday morning. I turned up to the track early, not for any other reason than wanting to explore without succumbing to the heat of the rising sun. I watched fans gather around an enclosure to get autographs, so I attempted to join in. Now to paint this horrific yet amusing picture: I'm just shy of five foot, standing in a mosh pit of screaming, perspiring and significantly taller tifosi.

As soon as Hamilton came out, I was in the eye of the sweaty storm. Such was the force of the swell, the plastic carrier bag containing my bottle of water was ripped from my hands, leaving nothing but the severed handles gripped in my fists.

I was quickly rescued by the eagle-eyed security guards and propped in front of the barriers separating the fans and soon-to-be double world champion. One signature later, I didn't care about my near-death experience. ✨

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Email help@asm.secureorder.co.uk Back issues 0344 8488817

Laura Paterson +44 (0) 20 3405 8129

Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. Subscription records are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.



CIRCULATION TRADE ENQUIRIES

Seymour Distribution Ltd,

2 East Poultry Avenue,

London, EC1A 9PT.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.

Printed by William Gibbons

& Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary

Road, Willenhall,

Wolverhampton WV13 3XT.

ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport

is published weekly by

Autosport Media UK Ltd,

1 Eton Street, Richmond,

TW9 1AG.

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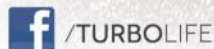
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	856804-5002S	846098-5001S	740902-0066	1.01	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
	856804-5003S	846098-5001S	740902-0052	1.21	V-Band	V-Band	N	N
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