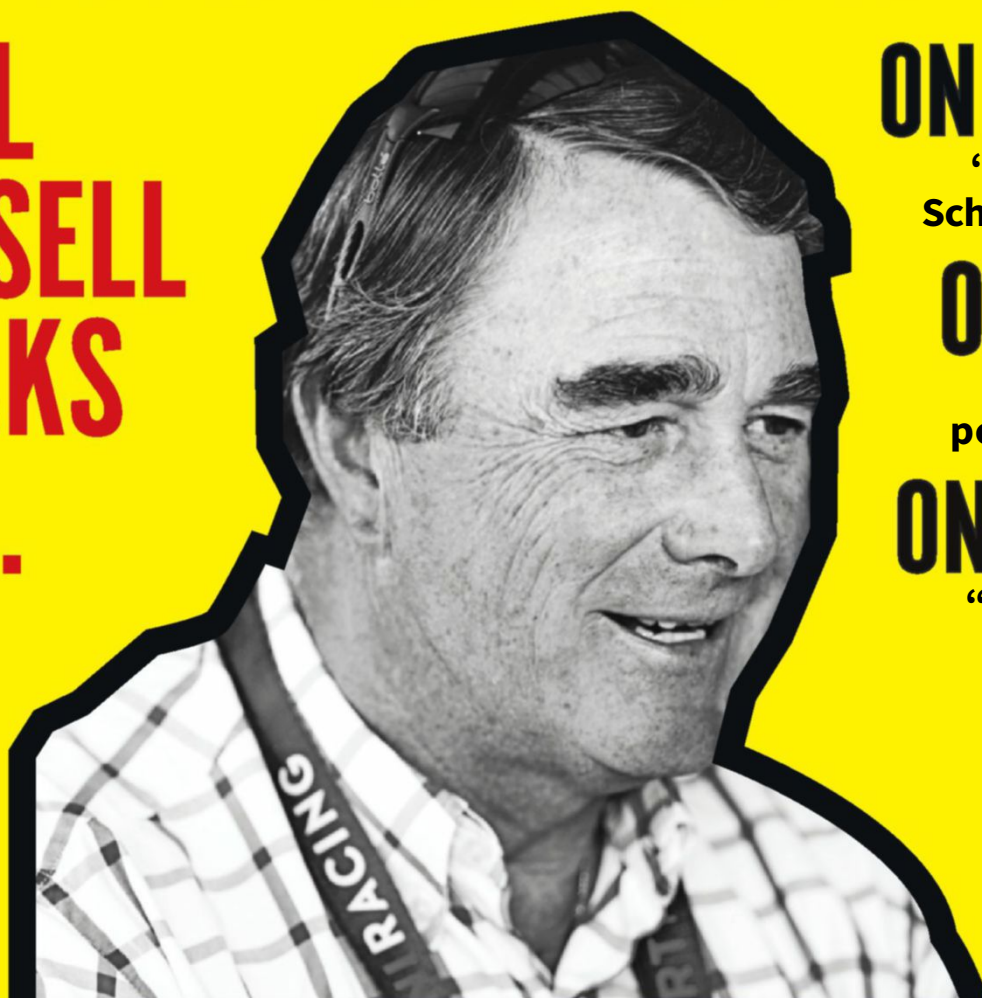


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MANSELL
SPEAKS
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Mansell: 'I hope Lewis embraces his chance'

NIGEL MANSELL WAS ONE OF FORMULA 1'S MOST exciting performers in the 1980s and early '90s. He was also an outspoken figure and still can be, even out of the limelight.

Mansell keeps an eye on developments today – not least through his role as a driver steward – and has some firm views on the current state of F1. Ahead of his appearance at the Autosport International show next week, Mansell opened up about Lewis Hamilton, Max Verstappen, Ferrari and some of things about the sport he doesn't like.

It's unlikely you'll agree with everything Mansell says (page 16), but it's clear that he still cares. And he also believes Hamilton could do what most people thought was impossible just a few seasons ago: surpass Michael Schumacher's record of 91 world championship race victories.

Away from F1, Gary Watkins looks back at the 2017 World Endurance Championship and picks out his star drivers in our season review (page 34). There may only have been two manufacturers battling it out at the front in LMP1, but the wins were shared and the close competition in LMP2 and GTE added to the spice.

Another winner of a hard-fought campaign last year was Josef Newgarden, who talks us through his tough fight to the top on page 46. Newgarden made a big impact when he came over to Britain to race in Formula Ford, but various setbacks mean it is only recently that he has been able to deliver on the potential that was obvious in 2009.



KEVIN TURNER EDITOR

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COVER IMAGE
S Bloxham/LAT

COVER STORY

16 Nigel Mansell speaks out on Formula 1

PIT+PADDOCK

- 4** Loeb back to the WRC for three rallies
- 6** Ahmed joins Euro F3; Lotterer quits Japan
- 8** 'Twenty drivers' could win World Tourers
- 10** Fifth Column: Nigel Roebuck
- 13** In the paddock: Scott Mitchell
- 15** Feedback: your letters

FEATURES

- 24** Autosport International: what to see
- 26** What it takes to win the World Rally title
- 30** The new age of LMP1 sports-racers
- 32** Formula Junior still strong at 60
- 34** World Endurance review: LMP1
- 40** World Endurance review: LMP2
- 42** World Endurance review: GTE
- 45** World Endurance review: top 10 drivers
- 46** The tough road for America's new star

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 61** Works Aston Martin drivers for British GT
- 62** New GT4 Mercedes heads to Britain
- 64** Mittell builds car to take on Radical
- 65** Race report: Mallory Park
- 66** The Alfa racer who rolled, then won
- 68** 2017 champions round-up








FINISHING STRAIGHT

- 70** What's on this week
- 72** From the archive: Reims-Gueux, 1948
- 74** Have-a-go hero: Alex Stone

AUTOSPORT SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

- 44** January savings offer

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WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Loeb returns with Citroen

SEBASTIEN LOEB IS TO RETURN TO THE World Rally Championship on a part-time basis with Citroen this season, but the nine-time champion's comeback will deprive the team's Craig Breen of what could have been two of his best opportunities for a maiden WRC victory.

Loeb will drive Citroen's second C3 WRC in Mexico, Corsica and Spain, and the two European rallies were target events for Breen in 2018. Kris Meeke, who leads the Versailles team in its second season with the C3, will start all 13 rounds of the series.

Loeb, who tested with Citroen twice last season, had been expected to start this month's season-opening Monte Carlo Rally before the logistical challenge of getting back from the Dakar Rally became clear. His first WRC return since leading on a one-off Monte entry three years ago comes on round three in Mexico, an event he won six times in succession.

While Loeb's return to the WRC was telegraphed following his enthusiasm for testing the C3 WRC, Citroen's decision to run only two factory cars – with Khalid Al Qassimi driving a third on a limited programme – was a surprise and a disappointment for Breen.

The Waterford driver refused to criticise the team, but admitted that Corsica and Spain had been rallies he would have targeted for the maiden victory team principal Yves Matton feels he's capable of in 2018.

Breen said: "I'm delighted to stay with

the team for another year. I'm going to do everything I can to get my first win at events like Rally Finland or Rally GB, where I have a bit of experience."

Meeke sympathised with his team-mate, telling Autosport: "I am really pleased Sebastien is coming back. There's no better exponent of our sport. He's a very, very high-calibre driver and it would have been fantastic to see him back full-time in the team."

"That said, one thing I don't think is correct is taking Craig out of the car for those three rallies. OK, this isn't my decision, but for me Craig has done enough last year and he absolutely deserves the second seat and a full-time drive this year. I've been there enough in the years gone by to know how much a driver benefits from being in the car for the complete season and, I think, that's what we should have done."

Loeb, who will continue in the World Rallycross Championship with Peugeot, said the focus was on fun for his three-rally return.

"I don't have any expectations," he said. "I just want to enjoy myself. I thought it made sense to take part in the French round, especially since I've always loved racing on Tarmac, although I'm not familiar with the current route of the Tour de Corse. Spain seemed like a good option too. I also wanted to contest a gravel rally. We opted for Mexico, since I have good memories of racing there and the route hasn't changed too much since I was last involved in the championship."

Meeke and Breen
tested for the
season-opening
Monte Carlo Rally
late last year

FORMULA1/DTM

Wehrlein: F1 reserve role or DTM

WHILE THE DESTINATION OF THE final Williams seat for this year's Formula 1 season remains a long, drawn-out process, one driver who has seemingly faded from the picture is Sauber refugee Pascal Wehrlein.

It now appears that Wehrlein (below) has to decide whether he wishes to remain in F1 in a third-driver role, or if he wishes to return to the DTM – a title he won in 2015 – with Mercedes for what will be the manufacturer's final season in the series.

The German marque's end-of-2018 pullout has already prompted Robert Wickens to jump ship a year early – the Canadian is switching to IndyCar with Schmidt Peterson Motorsports.

That leaves a vacancy that could be filled by Wehrlein. If he earns a role in F1, then the hot favourite for the final Mercedes DTM seat is Daniel Juncadella. The Spaniard raced in the series from 2013-16, before dropping into the Stuttgart make's GT ranks in '17.

There also remains the subject of the date clash between the DTM's Lausitzring event and the Formula E event in Berlin, with Mercedes tin-top racers Edoardo Mortara and Maro Engel doubling up in FE with Venturi. It is understood that a decision on where they will race will be based on their positions in the respective championships ahead of the clash.

That could mean a DTM debut for Mercedes protege Maximilian Gunther. Mercedes is said to be reluctant to add a rookie to its full-time line-up in 2018, meaning that the Bavarian Formula 3 star is likely to have to look elsewhere for his main programme this season.

Mercedes will continue with Paul di Resta – like Wehrlein the Scot has faded from contention for the Williams seat – along with Lucas Auer and Gary Paffett in its six-car line-up for the DTM. Audi looks set to run an unchanged squad, while BMW has already announced that Joel Eriksson and Philipp Eng will replace Aston Martin-bound Maxime Martin and FE new boy Tom Blomqvist.

JAMIE KLEIN AND JULIA SPACEK



HONE/LAT

– at Breen's expense

Moving the goalposts at Citroen

When Citroen returned to the WRC at the start of last season, the team's stated aim was to challenge for the manufacturers' championship in 2018. Team principal Matton says missing out on signing Sebastien Ogier for the second year in succession means the goalposts have moved.

"The aim will be to target podiums and secure some wins," said Matton. "We have seen good reliability from Craig last year, but now we want to see him challenging for the podium positions more often and then, in the second half of the year, on rallies where he is more experienced, maybe he could be fighting for the win."

"I'm also delighted to see that there will be another chapter in the great history between Sebastien Loeb and Citroen. He couldn't have returned to the WRC with anyone other than us! Seb confirmed he has lost none of his speed and skill during the test sessions completed, although he is bound to be short of knowledge of the stages and time in the car, compared with the increasingly tough competition."

Dakar looming for Loeb

Before Loeb makes his long-awaited return with Citroen, there's a final outing in the PSA Group's other rally car: Peugeot's 3008 DKR.

Along with team-mates Stephane Peterhansel, Carlos Sainz and Cyril Despres, Loeb will start the 5500-mile Dakar Rally from Lima, Peru on Saturday among the favourites to take Peugeot's third consecutive victory in South America.

"It's now or never for me to take victory in Dakar," said Loeb. "Last year we saw we had the speed to win, but everything has to work for us."

Loeb admits the route favours perennial Dakar competitors such as Peterhansel more than himself, with longer sections through the dunes rather than on Argentina's rally-type roads.

Much as Loeb will be pushing to take a first Dakar win, success for Sainz could be even more poignant, with the former winner and two-time world champion admitting this could be his final competitive outing.

Sainz said: "I'm 55 years old and I'm near to stop racing, but right now I'm thinking only about Dakar. I'm not going [to South America] thinking, 'That will be the last one'. I'm going thinking, 'I will win it'."

From its start in the Peruvian capital on January 6, the Dakar Rally runs down the Pacific coast to Bolivia for a January 12 rest day before heading back through the Andes and into Argentina to the Cordoba finish on January 20.

DAVID EVANS

**"Seb couldn't
return to WRC
with anyone
other than us!"**



FORMULA 1

F1 TIGHTENS UP FREE-PRACTICE LICENCES

THE FIA HAS CHANGED

Formula 1 superlicence rules for 2018 to make it tougher for drivers to participate in grand prix free-practice sessions.

Previously, drivers only had to complete 300km (186 miles) in a "representative Formula 1 car" over two days and answer questions on sporting regulations to qualify for a 'free-practice only' superlicence, so long as the FIA adjudged them sufficiently capable based on their prior single-seater experience.

From next season, drivers will also need to have completed six races in Formula 2, or accumulated 25 superlicence points in eligible championships during the previous three years.

Drivers subsequently reapplying need to have completed a full season in F2 or amassed 25 superlicence points over a three-year period.

Of the extra drivers who appeared in F1 practice sessions during 2017, only Force India reserve Alfonso Celis (above) would have been excluded had the new rules been in place.

Although Toro Rosso practice driver Sean Gelael did not have 25 superlicence points, his F2 experience was sufficient.

The FIA approved further changes to its superlicence qualification structure in September, awarding more points for F2 and IndyCar and downgrading the World Endurance Championship, Formula E and European Formula 3.

BEN ANDERSON

EUROPEAN FORMULA 3

Ahmed joins European F3 grid with Hitech call-up

BRDC BRITISH FORMULA 3 CHAMPION ENAAM Ahmed will step up to the F3 European Championship for the 2018 season with Hitech GP.

The 17-year-old took part in multiple tests with the team in Spain and Portugal during December, and his place aboard one of the Silverstone-based squad's Dallara-Mercedes cars was confirmed in the run-up to Christmas. Ahmed, a finalist in the 2017 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, therefore joins Motopark-bound Award winner Dan Ticktum on the Euro F3 grid for this year, meaning the series should continue its strong run of British leading contenders.

There could be another UK racer on the grid too. Ben Hingeley, a race winner in BRDC British F3 last season, has also been testing with Hitech and is very much in the frame for a seat. So too is Alex Palou, who scored victories in Japanese F3 with Drago Corse in 2017 and was the quickest rookie in the post-season Super Formula test at Suzuka. Spaniard Palou has also been a mainstay of Hitech's Iberian winter-test programme.

Ahmed wasn't the only driver to have been confirmed in the Euro F3 ranks in time for Christmas. New Ferrari protege Robert Shwartzman's anticipated move from the Formula Renault Eurocup to Prema Powerteam was finally announced. The Russian will also join Ferrari/Prema F3 stablemate Marcus Armstrong in the Toyota Racing Series in New Zealand in the coming weeks.

As expected, Force India youngster Jehan Daruvala is back for a second season with Carlin.

MARCUS SIMMONS



SUPERFORMULA

Lotterer quits Japanese racing

ANDRE LOTTERER IS CALLING time on his Super Formula career in Japan after 15 consecutive seasons.

The German has had to relinquish his drive with the TOM'S team courtesy of his programmes in Formula E and the World Endurance Championship with the Techeetah and Rebellion teams respectively. It brings to an end a career in a series formerly known as Formula Nippon that yielded the title in 2011, a further

nine top-three positions in the championship and 24 race victories.

"It will be sad to call time on something I've been doing since 2003," said Lotterer, who raced for TOM'S in 12 of his seasons in the Japanese single-seater series. "It wasn't something that I did for the money; I did it for fun. It was awesome racing and nothing came close for me to driving those cars through somewhere

like the esses at Suzuka."

It is unclear who will replace Lotterer alongside Kazuki Nakajima, but either one of Toyota proteges Nick Cassidy and Kenta Yamashita could make the step from Kondo Racing.

In the Honda ranks, Formula 2 race winner Nobuharu Matsushita looks likely to join Dandelion Racing after taking part in the post-season Suzuka test with the team.

GARY WATKINS





FORMULAE

Newbies plug in to Formula E

A MIX OF SINGLE-SEATER ACES AND DTM stars will be the main attention-grabbers in Formula E's first test for 'rookie' drivers after next week's Marrakech race. While the 2017-18 FE race drivers nurse an after-party hangover on Sunday January 14, many of the 20 testers will be getting behind the wheel of the electric single-seater for the first time.

Renault e.dams (Mitsunori Takaboshi/TBA) Nissan will take over its automotive partner Renault's factory entry in FE from 2018-19 and as part of its learning process Japanese Formula 3 champion Mitsunori Takaboshi will become the first driver from Nissan's current roster to sample an FE car. Renault is yet to confirm its test entry, although Formula 2 racer Alexander Albon has also been linked.

Audi Sport Abt (Nyck de Vries/Nico Muller) Audi became the first team to confirm its test line-up when it announced F2 race winner Nyck de Vries and Audi DTM driver Nico Muller. McLaren junior de Vries will race for Prema in F2 this season, but has been linked with Audi since taking part in the DTM young-driver test last season and was its reserve at the series' Moscow Raceway event in 2017.

Andretti (Bruno Spengler/Colton Herta) Muller's DTM adversary Spengler will drive for Andretti in the test, with the American squad taking advantage of its growing partnership with BMW to borrow the Canadian. Adding Spengler's experience to the mix is a valuable weapon, while at the other end of the 'things-they've-done-in-

their-careers' spectrum is Herta — the son of Bryan is known to Andretti as he races with the team in Indy Lights.

Techeetah (Frederic Makowiecki/James Rossiter) Makowiecki has experience of FE's current electric single-seater and the next-generation racer that is being developed for 2018-19 as series tyre supplier Michelin is using him as a development driver. With Porsche entering the FE fray properly in 2019-20, bleeding Makowiecki further is a logical step. Lexus Super GT frontrunner Rossiter is a known FE enthusiast after testing for the Venturi team.

Dragon Racing (Maximilian Gunther/Andrea Caldarelli) Formula 3 ace Gunther has links to Mercedes — he was reserve driver in the DTM and performed 'taxi' duties, then drove in the young-driver test at the Lausitzring. The 20-year-old is unlikely to graduate to the DTM full-time in 2018 and then Mercedes is out — for FE... He will be joined by Blancpain Endurance Series champ and Lexus Super GT frontrunner Caldarelli.

Who else?

Formula Renault Northern European Cup champion Michael Benyahia will drive for Venturi, while Mahindra will field simulator driver Sam Dejonghe and pre-season tester Dani Juncadella (above) again. Jaguar, NIO and DS Virgin Racing have dropped no hints over their test line-up, although Formula V8 3.5 champion Pietro Fittipaldi has been linked with a Jaguar drive. F2 racer Jordan King is also keen to gain FE experience.

SCOTT MITCHELL

IN THE HEADLINES

AUDI TAKES BIG GUNS TO BATHURST

Audi is to make a big attack on next month's Bathurst 12 Hour GT race with top team WRT. Reigning Blancpain Sprint champions Robin Frijns and Stuart Leonard share one of the R8 LMSs with Dries Vanthoor, who has been promoted to Audi's GT pool for 2018. The second car will be driven by Aston Martin's 2017 World Endurance GTE Am champions Pedro Lamy, Mathias Lauda and Paul Dalla Lana. Meanwhile, Shane van Gisbergen returns to the McLaren fold, with which he won the 2016 Blancpain Endurance title, for the race. The Kiwi will be joined in the factory-backed YNA Autosports team's 650S GT3 by Come Ledogar, with whom he won the Blancpain crown, and his Aussie Supercars team-mate Craig Lowndes.

MORE HARD TIMES FOR HILL

Up-and-coming British Touring Car Championship talent Jake Hill remains with Team Hard for a third successive season this year. The 23-year-old will once again drive one of the team's Volkswagen CCs, and is the third driver confirmed following Mike Bushell and Bobby Thompson. Further boosting Hard is the recruitment for this year of highly respected BTCC engineer Geoff Kingdon.

DUVAL RETURNS TO WEC WITH TDS

Former World Endurance champion Loic Duval makes a full-time return to the series this year with TDS Racing in the LMP2 class. Duval replaces Emmanuel Collard in the TDS ORECA alongside Matthieu Vaxiviere and Francois Perrodo. It comes after Duval contested the 2017 WEC finale in the TDS-run G-Drive car.

ASTON TEAM SMELLS LIKE THIIM SPIRIT

Aston Martin factory drivers Nicki Thiim and Maxime Martin will race for the R-Motorsport Blancpain GT Series squad jointly run by the British Arden and Jota teams in 2018. Thiim, World Endurance Championship GT title winner in 2016, and new Aston signing Martin join a line-up for the Endurance Cup rounds of the BGTS that already includes Jake Dennis and Alex Brundle. Two more drivers will be announced at a later date for the pair of Aston Martin V12 Vantages Swiss entrant R-Motorsport will field in the five-round Endurance Cup.

ROBORACE ON STAGE AT ASI

The driverless Roborace car will take pride of place on the Autosport Stage at next week's Autosport International, which takes place at the Birmingham NEC from January 11-14. Roborace CEO Lucas di Grassi said: "Autosport International gives us the opportunity to meet visitors and introduce them to the incredible possibilities of autonomous technology and the very real application it will have to their own road cars in the coming years."

MUNOZ LINES UP ANDRETTI 500 SEAT

IndyCar racer Carlos Munoz will return to Andretti Autosport for May's Indianapolis 500 aboard the squad's sixth car. The Colombian was edged out of the full-time field this year when Tony Kanaan took his seat at AJ Foyt Racing. Munoz was a race winner with Andretti in 2015.

BAMBER FOR BATHURST 1000 DEBUT

Reigning World Endurance champion Earl Bamber will make his Bathurst 1000 debut in October. The Kiwi joins compatriot Shane van Gisbergen aboard one of the Triple Eight-run Red Bull Holdens for the race, as well as the other enduros at Sandown and Surfers Paradise. Bamber is expected to switch to IMSA SportsCar action for his main-season programme with Porsche.

Q&A

TOM CHILTON NEW MOTORBASE DRIVER



Tom Chilton has switched to Motorbase Performance to race a Ford Focus in British Touring Cars this season.

So, you're heading to Motorbase for 2018...

It's one of the teams I haven't been with, funnily enough.

I've been with pretty much everyone up and down the paddock apart from Motorbase and WSR. When I was at Arena Motorsport we used to build the Fords and then sell them to Motorbase [in 2010 and '11] so I was kind of the development driver, so it's quite nice to go to them now and see what I can do. I've worked with a lot of the guys before, so I feel like I know the main people in the team already and I've not even driven their car yet."

There was some talk about Carlin [Chilton's father Grahame is CEO of the team] getting involved in the BTCC. How far did that get?

There were a couple of talks and I did try very hard to get it to work, but sadly Alfa Romeo's budget had gone by that point. It wasn't going to happen, which is a real shame because I think we could have done a fantastic job. For the future there's always that option – and when I say the future I'm talking about when the rules change again, we'll be thinking.

What can you achieve in 2018?

2017 was very much dipping my toes back into the water, because I had a five-year break [from the BTCC] and the car's completely transformed – not only the chassis, but the tyre has massively changed. I was just getting a feel for it, learning how everybody drives because there are a lot of new drivers on the grid. My goal [this year] is to be British champion, 100%, and if not champion I'd like to be Independent champion again like I was in 2010 and see where that puts me.

JACK COZENS

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP

'Twenty drivers' can win each race

EUROSPORT EVENTS CHIEF

Francois Ribeiro says as many as 20 drivers will be in contention to win each race in the new World Touring Car Cup.

The World Touring Car Championship will cease as an FIA world championship from 2018 and become 'WTCR' as part of a two-year deal to allow it to adopt TCR rules.

A 26-car limit has been imposed on full-season entries, with priority for those places given to teams from the WTCC and the TCR International Series, which was canned as part of the WTCR deal. Balance of Performance will be determined by the FIA alongside TCR technical officials, and Ribeiro said getting that right would allow the majority of the grid to be in contention for race wins.

"There won't be any proper factory teams on the grid, but you will see many teams directly or at a very good level supported by manufacturers," Ribeiro told Autosport. "I think you will see all WTCC drivers and all TCR International drivers on the grid next year, and that will deliver something that I'm sure fans will like. If the BoP is properly managed, that will be maybe 20 drivers able to win every race."

Ten drivers won races in the WTCC last season, while 12 were victorious in the TCR International Series – including Gabriele Tarquini in a temporarily homologated Hyundai i30 N TCR.

Ribeiro said combining the two sets of drivers would create an "awesome" spectacle. "I always said last winter that I was expecting it [2017] to be one of the best of the WTCC era," he added. "OK, we had only 16 cars but we had eight [drivers] potentially able to go for the

world championship and both WTCC titles went to the wire in Qatar.

"This year will be even better; more fights, more winners, more uncertainty, more overtaking, more extreme manoeuvres, more risks, more variety of cars, more drama, more everything. It's just going to be awesome."

Ribeiro's comments came as the series unveiled a very strong 10-round calendar for the 2018 season. It includes seven of the venues from last year's WTCC, including the 'glamour' rounds supporting the Nurburgring 24 Hours (below) and Macau Grand Prix, and the Vila Real street circuit in Portugal. The Japanese event moves to Suzuka, where it will run on the same bill as the final round of the country's ultra-competitive Super Formula series. Zandvoort hosts a round on a Bank Holiday Monday, alongside rounds of the European and Benelux TCR series. One more event has yet to be assigned a venue.

JACK COZENS

WTCR CALENDAR 2018

DATE	CIRCUIT
April 8	Marrakech (MA)
April 29	Hungaroring (H)
May 12	Nurburgring Nordschleife (D)
May 21	Zandvoort (NL)
June 24	Vila Real (P)
July 22	TBA
August 5	Rio Hondo (RA)
September 30	Ningbo (PRC)
October 28	Suzuka (J)
November 18	Macau (PRC)



GOODEN/DPPI



FORMULA 2 Series newcomer Charouz Racing System has recruited Antonio Fuoco and Louis Deletraz as its drivers for 2018. Both will carry the logo of the Ferrari Driver Academy on their new machines with the Czech team, which won the final Formula V8 3.5 drivers' and teams' titles as Lotus. Fuoco finished eighth in the 2017 F2 standings as team-mate to Charles Leclerc at Prema Racing, while Deletraz ended the year in 17th after switching from Racing Engineering to Rapax. "I'm thrilled to welcome Louis and Antonio into our team and keen to work with the Ferrari Driver Academy," said team principal Antonin Charouz.

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Da Costa joins big names as Daytona shapes up

FORMULA E RACE WINNER ANTONIO FELIX DA COSTA and Macau Grand Prix have-a-go hero Ferdinand Habsburg are the latest recruits to the Jota Sport-run Jackie Chan DC Racing all-star line-up for this month's Daytona 24 Hours.

Both Portuguese da Costa and Austrian Habsburg will be making their sports-prototype debuts in one of the team's ORECA-Gibsons, where they will join team regulars Alex Brundle and Ho-Pin Tung. They line up alongside the sister car in which Formula 1 racer Lance Stroll will partner Felix Rosenqvist, Daniel Juncadella and Robin Frijns.

"It's very exciting to be going to Daytona for the first time with two such strong car crews," said Jota Sport's Sam Hignett. "It's been a few years since we last raced in America outside of the FIA WEC but, having had cars on the overall podium at Petit Le Mans, we aim to be doing even better in Daytona."

The lead-up to Christmas was characterised by excitement that Kevin Magnussen would become the third current F1 driver in the Daytona field, along with Stroll and Fernando Alonso. Magnussen subsequently confirmed to Danish media that there had been talks with a team — believed to be the Action Express Racing Cadillac squad — but they had not come to fruition.

Meanwhile, the Spirit of Daytona Racing team has returned to the General Motors fold. The squad, which ran a Coyote Corvette from 2012-16, raced LMP2 Riley and Ligier (right) machinery last year, but now joins Action Express and Wayne Taylor Racing in the Cadillac ranks for the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

A new driver line-up has been taken on by Spirit of Daytona to replace Marc Goossens and Renger van der Zande. IndyCar and GT racer Tristan Vautier will be joined by European Le Mans Series graduate Matt McMurry. Daytona testing kicks off tomorrow (Friday) and runs through to Sunday.

VALENTIN KHOROUNZHIY AND SCOTT MITCHELL



NIGEL ROEBUCK

Brawn should call Ferrari's bluff

Sergio Marchionne claims that Ferrari will quit Formula 1 if Ross Brawn's plans for cheaper, simpler engines aren't to his liking

[@autosport](#)

IT IS ALWAYS DURING THE ENDLESS YULETIDE

season that Formula 1 is at its quietest, but if things have been pretty still these two weeks past, there have yet been talking points, the loudest of which came from Sergio Marchionne's pre-Christmas address to the world.

Little within it came as a surprise. The Ferrari president declared, for example, that Kimi Raikkonen was on his last warning, that if he didn't raise his game in 2018, Sebastian Vettel would have a new team-mate the following year.

This had the feel of old news. Short of Michael Schumacher, Raikkonen is the longest-serving Ferrari driver, about to begin his eighth season in the red overalls. If he narrowly won the world championship in 2007, his first year in the team, more often than not he was shaded by Felipe Massa, and by '09 Luca di Montezemolo opted to pay him off, so as to hasten Fernando Alonso's arrival.

Raikkonen then disappeared from F1 for a couple of years, rallying with Citroen, even flirting with NASCAR. There was some surprise when he returned in 2012, with Lotus, and even more when he won a couple of races with the underfunded team. For all that, though, many were amazed when Ferrari asked him back for '14.

“As Marchionne put Raikkonen on notice, he did the same to F1”

There remain legions of Raikkonen fans, forever bewitched by his 'don't give a toss' persona, but not even his most fervent supporter could claim that his second spell with Ferrari has been a success. In the past three seasons he may not have been blown aside by Vettel as he was by Alonso in 2014, but invariably Sebastian has had the upper hand, and there have been constant murmurings that Kimi is on borrowed time.

It is lack of consistency, always a Raikkonen trademark, that most irks Marchionne, as it did di Montezemolo. At Monaco last May he took pole position – his first for nine years – and led Vettel until the stops, when their positions changed. Had he been allowed to win, it might have significantly

affected the rest of his season, but he was not, and not even that poker face could hide his displeasure.

When it comes to continued employment by Ferrari, a high card in Raikkonen's hand is his relationship with Vettel. The two have always got along, and of course Seb, perhaps not unmindful of his Red Bull season with Daniel Ricciardo, likes it that the man in the other car is not as quick as he. Maranello insiders tell me he was instrumental in Kimi's one-year contract being renewed yet again.



Marchionne has not been holding his opinions back

HONE/LAT



1982 Belgian GP started with no Ferrari on grid

SUTTON



Raikkonen hasn't found
Monaco form elsewhere



There have been times when sentiment has unexpectedly had the better of logic in Ferrari decisions. Why else, for example, would longtime wealthy test driver Luca Badoer have had a couple of stand-in drives after Massa was injured at the Hungaroring in 2009?

Come to that, why did the team so long keep faith with Felipe? Yes, he was loyal, and would have been a deserving world champion for Ferrari in 2008, but the fact is that in four later seasons as Alonso's team-mate he was outqualified 60-13, and scored 496 points to Fernando's 1029.

These things happened, though, on di Montezemolo's watch. Perhaps, if someone cares to blast for it, there is a touch of sentimentality in Marchionne, but thus far none has been apparent.

"My opinion is that, if we find the right key, Raikkonen drives like a god – but he needs more consistency, and it's important to find the right key to make him drive like in Monaco also on other circuits. Probably this is the last season to find it."

As Marchionne put Raikkonen on notice, so also he did the same to Formula 1, saying people are 'playing with fire' if they believe he is bluffing – as Enzo himself was often given to in *temps perdu* – about taking Ferrari out of the game.

"The situation has changed since 2015," he said, referring to when he fired di Montezemolo, and took the reins himself. "Starting from that moment, everyone knows that if we threaten to do something, we do it. The previous Concorde Agreement made it impossible for the team to evaluate an alternative outside the circus, but now there is the possibility to create an alternative

championship from 2020/2021.

"I would like to continue with Formula 1, but we have to find compromises that don't leave Ferrari without the possibility of showing its DNA in every race. If we can't find that, then Ferrari has to go away. The main thing that bothers me is that inside Liberty Media there is a person with great experience in Formula 1, Ross Brawn, who is trying to give a direction that is not in the DNA of the sport."

Two thoughts: first, some might say that hybrid 'fuel saving' engines are themselves 'not in the DNA' of Formula 1, and second, while Marchionne uses the word 'compromises', clearly that is not something he thinks applicable to Ferrari. What Brawn proposes is not doing away with the hybrids for 2021 (however much fans would like to see it), but simplifying them, and making them significantly cheaper to ease the plight of smaller teams obliged to buy engines.

Inescapably, far too much power in F1 now resides with Ferrari and Mercedes, who, unlike Renault, take great care not to sell engines to any team that might threaten them. Such as Marchionne might wish to continue with 'no holds barred' hybrids, but after four largely dreary seasons few would suggest they have done other than conspicuously damage Formula 1.

Like any enthusiast, I would hate to see Ferrari disappear, but the DNA of F1 – as well as technological sophistication – is sound and fury and *racing*, all of which are in perilously short supply in this era. If Brawn's utterly reasonable plan is not acceptable to Marchionne – indeed apparently not even a basis for discussion – I say his bluff should be called, and if it proves to be more than that, so be it. ❧

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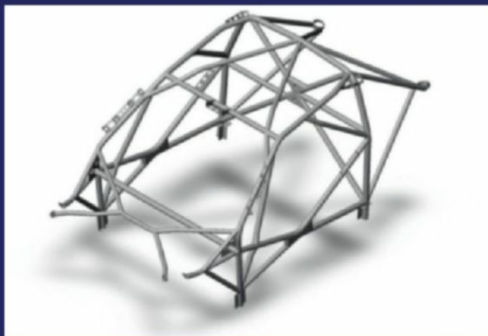
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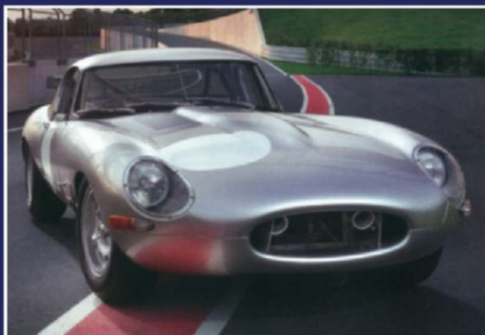
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Silence of the damned

Lewis Hamilton felt the full sting of the internet over Christmas. He was a fool, but he shouldn't become an e-recluse

By Scott Mitchell, Autosport Plus Editor

[@ScottAutosport](#)

IF YOU POLLED EVERY RACING FAN UNDER THE SUN, the perfect driver would be all manner of things. They would be brave, aggressive, super-fast on track, and not content with a dull corporate image off it. They would be outspoken and honest, born from a rags-to-riches, underdog, did-it-their-way back story, while maintaining a humble grounding that shows they never forget where they have come from.

The current crop of Formula 1 drivers display many excellent qualities, but none are 'perfect'. Closest is Lewis Hamilton. He's a super-fast, super-successful racing driver despite being a black man who didn't grow up in privilege. You only need to look at the general motorsport demographic to know that either one of those is enough to make a racing career unlikely, let alone the chance to be one of the greatest F1 drivers of all time. He's also plagued with an air of arrogance. It's part of what fuels his brilliance in a racing car of course, but it's also why he'll never qualify as humble.

Now is not the time to dive into why we should enjoy witnessing racing royalty perform in front of our eyes. It is the time to discuss his openness, how he connects with fans and how he shares parts of his life in a way most F1 drivers simply do not.

Or should that be 'how he connected'? You're unlikely to have missed the outcry when Hamilton published a video over the holidays of himself with his nephew, who was proudly wearing a Christmas-gifted princess dress. The four-time world champion said he is "so sad" and criticised his nephew because "boys don't wear princess dresses". The public scorned him and Hamilton subsequently apologised profusely. This week, whether by consequence or independent inspiration, he carried out a total wipe of his social-media channels. His feeds are empty. We're all in the dark.

His openness has always been good for F1 fans, whether it's another manifestation of his arrogance or an insistence he should not have to hide just because the spotlight shines harder on him than most. Hamilton has no obligation to be that way. He could just leave it to sponsored/promoted tweets and the like, or ignore it altogether. Others do.

Hamilton, and his social-media activity, is scrutinised intensely by members of the public and the media inside the F1 bubble and out of it. The video with his nephew is evidence he is capable of extreme foolishness, but maybe the backlash was the last straw. Or maybe he's just preparing for a fresh start on

his channels. If so, it's a curious strategy. He hasn't deleted the account, although that could just be an insurance policy: if he stops for a bit and returns, building a readership of more than five million followers is not the work of a moment.

I hope this isn't the end of Hamilton on social media because he has always felt the most real of the F1 drivers. Flaunting his lifestyle has never bothered me because we all do it to differing degrees. We know more about his life than any other driver.

The more important reason for wanting it to be a temporary hiatus is that Hamilton will return with a greater awareness of how powerful the microscope is when five million people follow you and you slip up. He needs to be more careful about what he writes and shares because, like it or not, he is a person with extreme social responsibility.

The idea that we should be self-censored, particularly in the context of praising Hamilton's openness, will probably annoy many. Every case is different, though. If Hamilton speaks out about US president Donald Trump stoking division over racial issues, that is going to piss off Trump supporters but it's

part of a wider push for equality. If Hamilton tells a child to conform to gender stereotypes and broadcasts that message to millions who view him as a role model, it's a completely different type of negative consequence.

Many people struggle with the issue of identification, and similar social pressures or expectations, and it's a very conflicting message for someone who usually says 'be yourself' to inadvertently add the caveat 'if you're normal'.

It is hypocritical to publically contradict a personal belief but it is not hypocritical to stop and think, 'What am I actually saying?' – that's why Hamilton apologised so swiftly. He recognised it was a real balls-up with much bigger consequences than he had ever imagined.

Trial by social media is a chastening experience, as Hamilton knows all too well. Rightly or wrongly, clearing his feeds has led many to infer that this is linked to what happened over the holidays. It has also consigned his admission, his apology and his request for forgiveness to the memory hole.

Hamilton got so much stick because of the reach his social-media status has, but he should not hide. He should use his platform to be a loud, public, responsible voice for the positivity and equality he claims he wants to see in the world. The best way to get the pardon he desires is to earn it – actions speak louder than (deleted) words. 🌟

"Trial by social media is a chastening experience, as Hamilton knows well"

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FEEDBACK

McLaren first to achieve title feat



Autosport, and others, keep referring to Mercedes' Formula 1 double titles in 2017 as the first time a team has defended its double championships across a major change to the regulations.

This is patently untrue. From 1988 to '89 the regulations changed hugely, going from a 1.5-litre turbocharged to a 3.5-litre normally aspirated engine formula, and of course chassis regulations changed hugely as a result.

Yet McLaren-Honda successfully defended its double championships across this huge change from 1988 to '89. So it is simply not true that Mercedes is the first team to do this. McLaren-Honda did it in the past, and spectacularly so.

Peter Dick
By email

Absolutely, although it is probably fair to say that Mercedes is the first to do so across a major aero rule change — ed

A worthy near-winner

While I cannot argue with any of the choices for top Formula 1 cars never to win in your Christmas double issue, I do feel that the McLaren MP4-21 of 2006 should have been included on the list. While it may not have been on the level of the Renault and Ferrari of that season, Kimi Raikkonen did take it to three pole positions, and would've won in Hungary were it not for a collision with a lapped car.

Joe Padgett
By email

All the tension Wolff can handle

My wife and I attended the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix for the second year running and we agree it was really boring at the front.

However, if Toto Wolff had crowd satisfaction as a feature of his strategy software it could have been very exciting.

He would have called Lewis

Defending champion squad McLaren won both titles in 1989. This is Alain Prost en route to victory at Silverstone

Hamilton into the pits with 16 laps to go for fresh tyres. When he came out he would have been two seconds behind Sebastian Vettel and 22 seconds behind Valtteri Bottas. Just imagine the excitement for the next 30 minutes or so. And the worst outcome would have been Lewis finishing second!

I imagine your race report would have been very different and Toto would have had all the tension he could handle.

Dennis Clark
Thornham, Norfolk

Does Mercedes need stress test?

Was interested to read Nigel Roebuck's take on Toto Wolff's remarks that he doesn't think he needs to avoid "a stressful situation" within the Mercedes F1 team (December 14-21).

Is "stress, tension, disruption" really such a good combination? Wolff is undoubtedly a savvy operator, but he seems to have blocked out the memory of Spain 2016, for starters.

Frances Stewart
London SE12

Hoping for more substance

New leadership, new offices, new marketing initiatives and a new logo. For the sake of the future of F1, I hope Liberty Media can provide more than just 'style over substance'.

Andrew Andersz
By email

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NIGEL MANSSELL ON FORMULA 1

In a wide-ranging interview, the 1992 world champion shares his views on how Lewis Hamilton could be the greatest F1 driver of all time, the pressure of driving for Ferrari and the rise of Max Verstappen

By James Roberts, *F1 Racing* Associate Editor

[@JRobertsF1](#)

The phone rings. Nigel Mansell has something to add. Five minutes after we've ended our conversation, the 1992 world champion is back on the line with another thought about Lewis Hamilton. It's a bold prophecy: "I predict Lewis will challenge Michael Schumacher's records in both wins and championships," says Mansell. "I won my world championship at 39 and he's only 32. Lewis is on 62 wins, while Michael has 91. With a hit rate of eight or nine wins a season, he only needs four more successful years to break all the records."

Last year, Hamilton eclipsed both Ayrton Senna and Schumacher to top the all-time pole position list, and has only Juan Manuel Fangio (five) and Schumacher (seven) ahead of him on world titles. Mansell's right; it's not insurmountable for Hamilton to become, statistically, the greatest F1 driver of all time.

"He has the most incredible opportunity and I hope he embraces it," adds Mansell. "Lewis had the most outstanding season in 2017, running with the finest team and the finest car of the past few years. I think he got better last year and can get even better in '18. Nothing beats winning and having support behind you. I hope he keeps his focus, as he has so much more to offer."

There was a time when the man breaking all the records was

Mansell. In 1992, he became the first driver to win nine grands prix in a single season. And when he dominated the British Grand Prix that year, he scored his 28th GP victory, breaking the 19-year record that Jackie Stewart held as the most successful British driver in terms of wins.

A quarter of a century has passed since Mansell was tearing up race tracks in his Williams FW14B, but after he finally quit F1 he stayed close to the sport. Following his single-seater comeback in the short-lived Grand Prix Masters series, he guided his sons Leo and Greg through British F3 and into sportscars, ultimately joining them in an ill-fated Le Mans appearance.

Mansell returned to F1 in 2010 when the FIA added a former driver to its roster of stewards at races, and he's deliberated over many on-track indiscretions over the past few seasons.

He has also dovetailed his motor racing interests with charitable work for UK Youth, and today, while starring in the occasional magic show, resides close to his Mitsubishi dealership (and museum) on the Bailiwick of Jersey.

Mansell is set to kickstart a new year of racing when he appears at Autosport International next week (see p22), but ahead of the event we spoke to the 64-year-old about a wide range of subjects. With his typically forthright views, Mansell gives his opinion on Max Verstappen and track limits, Fernando Alonso's racing ambitions outside of F1, his time at Ferrari and how Sebastian Vettel can return even stronger in 2018. »

MANSELL ON

VETTEL'S TITLE CAMPAIGN

Ferrari's fight for last year's world title came to a spectacular halt in the first few hundred metres of the Singapore Grand Prix and was

compounded by unreliability for Sebastian Vettel, both in qualifying in Malaysia and the race in Japan.

After failing to capture the championship last year, the Ferrari man needs to be even better in 2018, in a similar style to how Mansell came back stronger after losing out to Ayrton Senna in 1991. He believes that Vettel will be able to lift himself from the depths of defeat.

"You need to turn the negativity of losing into positivity," he says. "You say to yourself, 'Next year's my year.' Seb should bounce back strongly and he should understand it was 50/50 between him losing the championship and the team letting him down with unreliability and making bad calls. If you consider where Ferrari was in 2016, it did a fantastic job last year to be able to challenge for the championship."

"Having driven for Ferrari I know that momentum builds at the team. They made a fantastic start to the year and it all seemed to be under control. Then the most significant thing that happened is that some mind games started to play out. Baku [where Vettel bashed wheels with Lewis Hamilton] was a very unfortunate situation because without Seb getting a stop-go penalty, he would have won that grand prix."

"Then the race that made me jump out of my chair was Singapore. That was the defining moment of last year. Mercedes weren't favourites to win that GP and it was handed to Lewis on a plate."

"What Ferrari has done to challenge the might of Mercedes in a short period of time was awesome to watch and it was disappointing to see some of the things develop that hurt them throughout the year. They will come back stronger this season."

Right: start of the Singapore GP is the defining moment of the 2017 season, reckons Mansell



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MANSELL ON NUMBER-ONE DRIVERS

Left: Mansell made sure he outranked Riccardo Patrese in the Williams team's pecking order in '92

Right: Prost (here ahead of Mansell, Spain '90) was seen as Ferrari team leader, putting the Brit on the back foot

was further troubled when Alain Prost was drafted in alongside him as the de facto team leader at Ferrari, and the Brit was determined to be guaranteed senior status when he returned to Williams. He believes that Vettel will benefit if there is a clear structure at Ferrari today.

"When you're the outright number one of any team and you have total support, then you can compete at the highest level," says Mansell. "It's very different when you don't get the support of the team."

"There were a number of challenges I had. One of them was that I kept coming back to compete, but I was the number-two driver. In my day, the thing that was so critical was the reliability of the cars and the number one always had the best components and so better reliability."

In 1986, the bitter intra-team duel between Mansell and Piquet ultimately cost Williams the drivers' championship, because in the aftermath of Mansell's famous tyre blow-out in Adelaide, Prost sneaked through to take the crown for McLaren.

When Mansell was pitched against Nelson Piquet at Williams, the question over who was the number-one driver became an issue, as both believed they had priority status in the team. Mansell



Mansell says it's vital that teams don't repeat that mistake.

"If you have one driver who defers to the other, it's important to have that understanding in the team, otherwise you can lose a championship through infighting," says Mansell. "But in reality, I'd love to see two number ones in all the teams because there are so few cars on the grid. I'd like to see more cars and drivers competing and greater competition throughout the whole field." >>

MANSELL ON

THE PRESSURE OF DRIVING FOR FERRARI

With the exception of the dominant Michael Schumacher years, winning world championships with Ferrari does not tend to look like an easy task, as Fernando Alonso — and now Sebastian Vettel

— will testify. When Mansell drove for the Italian marque (1989-90) his team-mate Alain Prost came close to conquering the might of Ayrton Senna and McLaren, until he was memorably thwarted by the Brazilian's ruthlessness at Suzuka's Turn 1.

The following year, Prost was unceremoniously dumped by Ferrari when he dared to criticise the ill-handling 643. With so much pressure on the Scuderia from the passionate Italian fans, the team will often find a scapegoat in the aftermath of failure.

“There aren't many teams where the Pope has visited the factory”

“Ferrari is not just a race team, it's an institution,” says Mansell, who was Enzo Ferrari's last signing before his death. “If you are an Italian and you are two years old or 92 years old, you know who the Ferrari drivers are. You don't get the church bells ringing in Brackley when Lewis Hamilton wins a race for Mercedes, but the church bells chime all around Maranello when Ferrari wins.

“I was part of that for a couple of years and it's one big family. Ferrari is different, whether that's because they have this Latin feel, I don't know, but put it this way: there aren't many teams in the world where the Pope has visited the factory.

“The power of Ferrari is something very special and I cherished the time I had with them. In some ways it was too short and, yes, it is very political. They demand success and if you don't deliver the goods, then, sadly, they look for a fall guy to take the blame.”

Right: Vettel has been embraced by the Ferrari family, but will it turn on him if things go belly-up?

Below: Mansell had a two-year stint at Maranello (this is '89). It's not like any other team, he reckons



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MANSELL ON

THE RISE OF MAX VERSTAPPEN

Above: Mansell sees something of himself in Verstappen's speed and bravery, although his mistakes aren't punished as harshly

It was at the 1980 Austrian Grand Prix when 'Our Nige' made his debut in grand prix racing at the age of 27. He ran a third Lotus and completed only 40 laps until his engine failed, but more seriously he suffered burns from leaking fuel that soaked through his overalls.

His early career was characterised by wild flashes of speed, combined with his trademark bravery – there were shunts too – and Mansell was regularly checking himself into hospital.

He sees the same flashes of speed, bravery and brilliance in Red Bull's Max Verstappen, but believes that modern Formula 1's safety standards allow drivers such as the 20-year-old to take more risks.

"With the way Formula 1 has gone with safety, you can make some bad mistakes and not be seriously hurt," says Mansell. "The perfect example is what Verstappen did in attempting to overtake Romain Grosjean and crashing head-on at Monaco a couple of years ago.

"In my day if you were lucky you'd just have a broken leg, but you'd still need a long recovery period. It just goes to show you where the sport is with its technology and safety standards. In days gone by, Max would have learned the hard way."

Mansell believes that the Milton Keynes team will be able to mount a challenge for the championship this year, giving fans a three-way fight for victory. It's perhaps apt that Mansell's one and only championship was also in a Renault-powered, Adrian Newey-designed machine.

"I think the resurgence of Red Bull will continue as Adrian Newey's cars are always fantastic, combined with the support of Renault. Both Dan [Ricciardo] and Max had bad luck last year – in fact it was crazy – but thank goodness it came together for Max at the end. They are huge talents – both of them – and Max is going to be at Red Bull for a considerable time. I hope the team can be more reliable and closer [to the front] so they can challenge for the championship in 2018." »

MANSELL ON

THE ISSUE OF TRACK LIMITS

Right: as an FIA driver steward, Mansell wants justice to be seen to be done over track limits

One of the more controversial moments of last season was Max Verstappen's last-lap pass on the inside of Kimi Raikkonen at the United States GP at Austin, which, with his FIA stewarding hat on, Mansell was concerned about.

In the battle for the final podium position, Verstappen cut the inside of Turn 17 and overtook the Ferrari for third. It was an ambitious move and he was deemed to have 'gained a lasting advantage', and the Red Bull driver was demoted from the podium when the stewards awarded him a five-second penalty. The problems in this case were twofold: the amount of runoff on newly built F1 tracks, and the perceived inconsistency of the stewarding.

Mansell: "The safety standards in F1 now are fantastic, but a track limit is exactly that – the limit of the edge of the race

track. The paradox for drivers now is that the racing is almost too safe, so the challenge for the organisers is to ratify what track limits are. It looks like some people get away with things, while other get penalised – and that is wrong."

Mansell has been a driver steward at numerous circuits – including Silverstone, Spa and Austin – since the FIA introduced the role in 2010, and he's also a member of the FIA's Drivers' Commission. He believes the best way to penalise racers who regularly defy track limits is to instigate a 'three-strikes-and-you're-out' policy.

"If you go over the limit then I suggest you get three 'bys', so the stewards don't have to act unless a driver does it a fourth time," says Mansell. "I think it's grossly unfair at the moment because I think the fans can't understand some of the decisions. We should give drivers three byes and after that a five-second time penalty. Then it's straightforward for everybody and the stewards don't need to have this terrible agony of penalising one driver while another gets away with it."



MANSELL ON

THE HALO

Above: Mansell's not a fan of the halo, as it takes away some of the sport's essence

The single biggest visual change to Formula 1 is coming for 2018 when every car adopts the controversial halo cockpit-protection device. The intention is to reduce the chances of a driver being struck on the head

by debris or errant wheels, but the unwieldy nature of the structure has led to criticism over its aesthetics.

Despite the evidence pointing to its worth, many, including Mansell, are not in favour. "Personally, I'm not a fan," he says. "There has to be an element of racing a car and taking some risks, and the drivers are going to be hidden away even more."

"In my career I raced with barriers on the edge of the circuit with 200mph corners and big kerbs on the outside of them. Then, if you got it wrong you were launched over the barriers, but I survived, despite a few significant injuries."

"But my career pales into insignificance when you think of the era in which Fangio or Stirling Moss raced – they didn't even have safety belts. We need to be careful. I hope the halo won't be a hindrance if a driver is trapped upside down, or whether it might cause problems because of blind spots."

"We'll have to see what the cars look like, but my fear is that it might turn a lot of people off."



COME AND SEE NIGEL MANSELL AT AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL

Mansell will headline Autosport International at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham on January 13-14. Fans attending the annual event will be able to meet the 1992 F1 world champion at autograph sessions and see him being interviewed on the Autosport main stage.

"Autosport International is a great chance for the industry to come together at the beginning of the year and for the fans to see the new cars get unveiled," says Mansell.

"The NEC is a fantastic venue and to have something in our own country, which is the home of Formula 1 and motorsport, is just tremendous, and for the fans to be able to come along and have the opportunity to meet drivers and see the teams and cars."

One of the centrepieces this year is a special collaboration with Ferrari that will showcase famous Maranello-built cars from F1 to sportscars. The FIA World Rally Championship will also officially launch its new season at the show, and there will be the usual host of big-name drivers and stars in attendance.

"For motorsport enthusiasts there is something for everybody," says Mansell. "It's very special and there are so many opportunities to see spectacular things – you can't miss it."

Autosport International runs from January 11-14, with the first two days for trade and the public days at the weekend. For ticketing information please visit autosportinternational.com

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MANSELL ON

ALONSO'S INDY AND LE MANS AMBITIONS

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Mansell's victorious Indycar season, as he became the first driver to win back-to-back F1 and Indycar titles. Twice he attempted to match the feats of Jim Clark and Graham Hill by tackling the prestigious Indianapolis 500. He led the 1993 edition until he dropped to third on a late-race restart, and crashed out on his second attempt the following year.

Sixteen years later, at the age of 56, Mansell took on motorsport's endurance classic as he contested the Le Mans 24 Hours in an LMP1 Ginetta-Zytek shared with his two sons. Sadly a puncture pitched the car into the barriers in the opening laps, putting paid to his bid.

Last year Alonso took his first step in following Mansell's path by taking on racing's unofficial 'triple crown'. He skipped the Monaco Grand Prix to compete at Indianapolis, a race he could have won before he was let down by engine failure. And this year Alonso will contest the Daytona 24 Hours as a precursor to a future Le Mans bid.

Mansell is a fan: "Fernando is a huge talent, a great world champion and most of all a *racer*. It's a shame that he has been stymied throughout his career through no fault of his own. But how on earth have the might of Honda and McLaren suffered in the doldrums like they have for the past three or four years? Can it be that difficult?

"I drove for Honda and they were — and are — a fantastic company, but they are missing something from somewhere and poor old Fernando's got caught up in it.

"I believe he can win several more championships, he's an unbelievable racer and I really hope McLaren can give him the goods this year so that he can compete at the top level again." ■



Last year's Indy bid is testament to Alonso's pukka-racer credentials. And later this month he'll be at Daytona!

SUTTON

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KICKING OFF 2018 IN STYLE

Autosport International heralds the start of a new season. Here are some of the highlights

By Alex Kalinauckas, Assistant Editor

[@Nauckas](#)

The 2018 motorsport season will get under way in Birmingham with the annual extravaganza that is the Autosport International Show, which will take place at the NEC.

On January 11-14 a host of the sport's personalities will arrive for Europe's largest indoor pre-season motorsport show, which will be packed full of on-stage interviews, displays and live driving demonstrations.

As usual, the first two days of the event are dedicated to the motorsport industry itself, as companies and personnel present their latest offerings. Then, on Saturday and Sunday, the doors of the NEC are opened to the public.

Here's a short selection from the feast that you can expect to see.

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▼ THE SHOWSTOPPERS

The centrepiece for Autosport International in 2018 is a feature created in conjunction with Ferrari. It will showcase the lineage of the legendary Italian marque from its sportscar programmes through to Formula 1, and comes courtesy of Ferrari's exclusive client racing programme, Corse Clienti. The initiative can take a Ferrari owner via its Corsa Pilota programme from a 488 GTB through the Ferrari Challenge Series, FXX cars, to Le Mans and even to owning and driving a Ferrari F1 car.

Two of Ferrari's famous sportscar challenges

are among those scheduled to appear on the feature stand at the show: the Ferrari 488 Challenge and the Ferrari FXX-K Evo. The latter will be appearing for the first time at an event outside of Italy, ahead of its on-track debut.

Ferrari's racing heritage will also be showcased via two of its successful thoroughbreds. An F2004 – which Michael Schumacher and team-mate Rubens Barrichello took to 15 wins in 2004, on the way to Michael's seventh world title – will be on display, as will the Ferrari 488 GTE that James Calado and Alessandro Pier Guidi drove to World Endurance Championship glory in 2017.



Spanish Grand Prix was Schumacher's fifth consecutive win in 2004

LAT IMAGES



▲ LIVE ACTION

The Live Action Arena is one of the highlights of Autosport International each year, and this edition aims to continue that tradition. Sky Sports F1 commentator David Croft returns to host the action-packed shows (which include stuntman Terry Grant teaming up with Billy Monger) in the NEC's 5000-seat arena.

Each performance is an hour long and encompasses racing categories from all over the world. BriSCA F1 Stock Car Racing machines will make an appearance, as will NASCAR driver Bobby Labonte.

There will also be Rallycross and Ginetta Racing Drivers' Club demonstration events, and a virtual segment created by the Project Cars team that will present e-racing and real racing in a special combination.

WRC 2018 SEASON LAUNCH ►

For the first time in Autosport International's 27-year history, a top-tier FIA world championship will launch its upcoming season at the show.

The manufacturers from the 2018 World Rally Championship will parade their latest rally cars on the main stage across the Thursday of Autosport International, and many of the leading drivers, co-drivers and team principals will be there too.

All of the 2018 WRC machines will remain on display at the show throughout the weekend.

"I'm looking forward to it," said 2017 Rally GB winner Elfyn Evans.

"It'll be good to do something a bit different, and it's a great chance for the fans to come over and have a look – it's good for Britain to have a second major event in the WRC season."

Visitors will be able to get up close to the cars and to the drivers and team personnel in attendance. Over the course of the show they'll take turns on stage to be grilled by regular host Henry Hope-Frost about the season past – and the one to come.

There will also be a dedicated WRC stand at the show, building the excitement for the new season, which gets under way in Monte Carlo a little under two weeks after the 2018 edition of Autosport International concludes.



Last year's WRC season got under way in Monte Carlo

McKLEIN

HOW TO WIN THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP AS A PRIVATEER

Fresh from taking the 2017 drivers' and teams' World Rally titles, M-Sport deputy team principal Rich Millener explains what it takes to reach the top

When Sebastien Ogier signed for us at the end of 2016, everything changed. Overnight, we once more became a real force in the World Rally Championship.

Through the testing we'd done with our 2017 Ford Fiesta WRC, we really felt we had a good car. It was impossible to predict what was coming, but certainly we weren't afraid of anything that anybody else had done. And when Seb and Julien Ingrassia tested the car and said yes, they wanted to join us, that was a real shot in the arm.

The Ogier effect

Ultimately, the biggest 'Ogier effect' came in points and prizes, but it went way deeper than just scoring those goals.

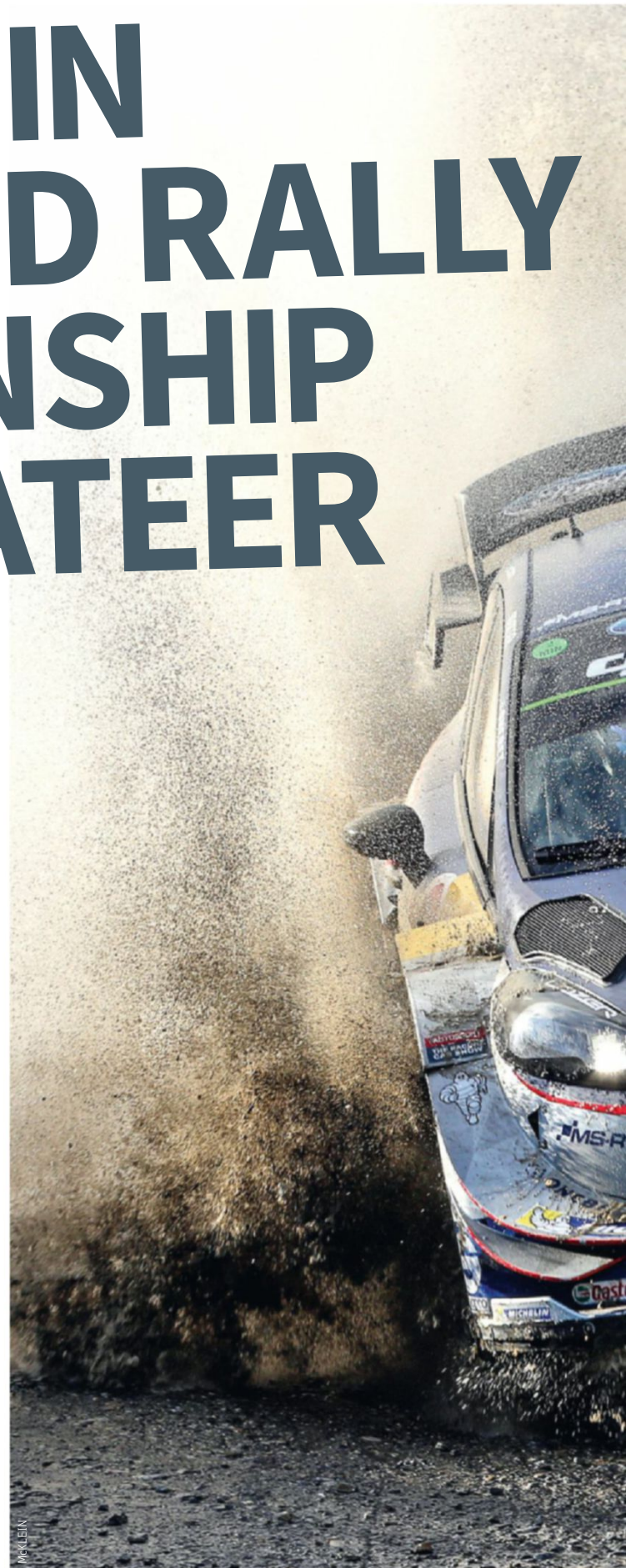
I've worked at this team for 10 years and, with the greatest of respect to the other drivers we've had, none have had the same impact that Seb and Julien did. Drivers such as Colin McRae and Carlos Sainz were before my time at M-Sport, but I heard the stories about when they walked in and everything went quiet. It was similar this time. The respect was huge, but at the same time we took real confidence that Seb had come to us and believed in us.

One of the first things he and Julien did when they walked into our M-Sport

HQ at Dovenby Hall for the first time was go around and shake hands with absolutely everybody who works here – that's more than 200 people. It sounds simple, but it really set the tone well.

I'm not saying he didn't have reservations, it would be completely natural that he did. He was coming from the best-funded team in the service park to a private team. I'd say it took a couple of rallies before he was convinced we had what it took and, after that, he stopped worrying about us and the car, and allowed himself to focus on the most important thing: winning rallies and challenging for the championship.

The Ogier effect was big in the team, but where it was felt the most was with our other drivers. Ott Tanak and Elfyn Evans learned more in one season than at any other point in their careers. They both grew tremendously as competitors and people; quite literally they became rally winners. We saw this from the start in Monte Carlo, a notoriously tricky event for tyres. Without Seb, Elfyn and Ott would have been worrying about what to go on in a compromised situation. Having somebody with so much experience to call on and follow inspired confidence. Towards the middle and end of the year, that had become a two-way thing, with Seb often



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Ingrassia and Ogier helped lift M-Sport

absolutely agreeing with points the other two made. In the debrief room, you could see the effect on their self-belief.

Change, but not for change's sake

Our team was quite considerably smaller than Volkswagen, and Seb and Julien were keen to try to replicate as much of what they'd had in the previous five years as possible. We took a lot of that on board, swallowed the cost and appreciated the benefits. It wasn't always a massive financial thing, though, it could be just coming at something from a different angle. For example, Julien asked us early on why we didn't give the weather crews a coolbox for their food; these guys are out in the field all day, every day, and a coolbox kept their food in better condition. We did that immediately – it was a simple thing, but it was appreciated across the board.

The number of weather crews was an area Seb wanted to look at early on. Obviously, the more eyes you've got on a stage, the more information you can feed back to the crew before they start each one – we're no longer allowed to convey information to the car in the middle of stages. We met somewhere in the middle on how many we had versus how many he wanted. We then really focused on working the crews we had. We brought Stuart Loudon, a very experienced co-driver, in to coordinate the crews and Stu built up a great trusting relationship with Julien and Seb.

But, on the other side, we were keen to get them to look at what we'd got before making some changes. For example, we have our own crew manager in Mick Maunder. Seb and Julien asked about having people they already knew for that job. We asked them to give Mick a chance; they did and they stuck with him and, again, built a really good relationship.

Not many people in M-Sport knew Seb particularly well before this year >>



M-Sport raised its game to help Ogier to world title

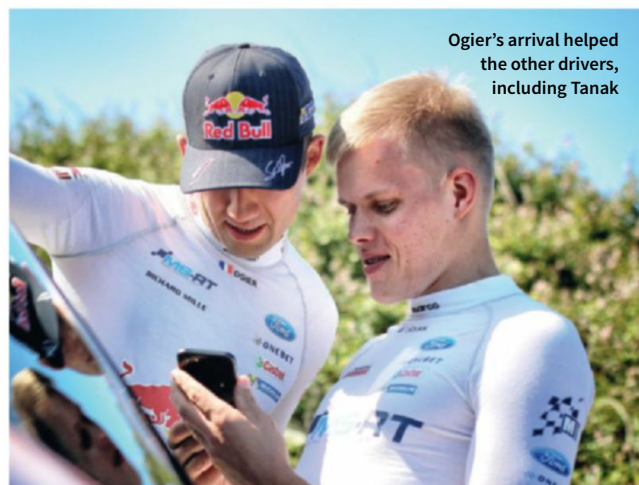
and I think there were a few who feared he might come in as a bit of a diva. That wasn't the case at all. At Volkswagen, he was pretty well looked after in terms of having his own space when he needed it. Things are a bit different here. We don't have the money to buy a new truck to give drivers quiet time, but we'll do what we can when it's really needed. They appreciated that.

There's no doubt when they sat down to eat at the first round in Monte Carlo and found themselves at the table next to M-Sport's customers, they were a bit taken aback, but that's the way we work – we are a commercially driven, not factory-supported, team and we need private drivers to keep our operation afloat. Again, they learned that and ultimately I think they appreciated the diversity of drivers and co-drivers.

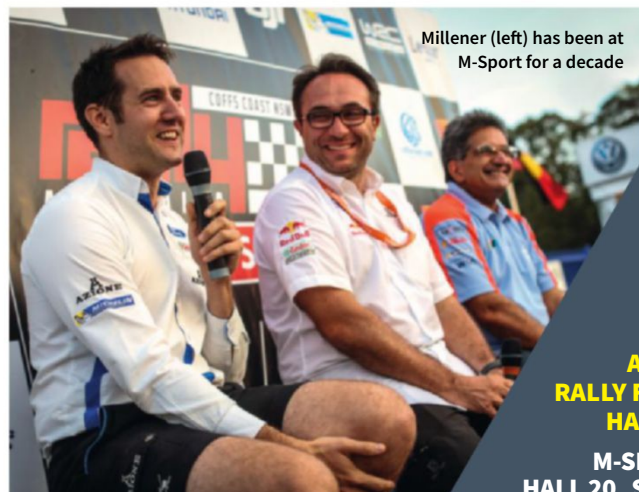
Test and recce

In recent seasons, our test team had been made up of the same technicians that came to competitions. This year we established a dedicated test team. We knew there would be a cost involved with this, but we only planned to run one test car through the season and there would be a significant amount of work involved in stripping and rebuilding it after every test. We were fortunate that, apart from the one crash in Finland, we didn't have any major accidents.

The majority of the test team never came to a rally, which lessened the



Ogier's arrival helped the other drivers, including Tanak



Millener (left) has been at M-Sport for a decade

pressure on the event team. This year we had to stay sharp and motivated and, while plenty of the guys are really keen to do everything, it's easy to burn out when you're on event and testing.

When running as many as 10 cars on some events, the pre-event recce can get really logistically complicated. It can be pandemonium and that's not what we want when we're running at the highest possible level with Seb. I committed to going to every recce, as an extra pair of hands and to oversee things.

One of the other changes to our recce was the inclusion of the Ford Focus RS. Seb made it quite clear he didn't want to use the Volvos that M-Sport traditionally used for the recce runs. There's nothing wrong with our S80s – they're a bit long in the tooth, but perfectly functional. But Seb wanted a Focus, which meant we had to prepare a couple of those very quickly: one for Monte and Sweden, and one to go immediately to Mexico for the first long-haul rally.

We did what we could with seats, tripmeters, a rollcage, guards and some dampers, but these were standard cars and, inevitably, there were some teething troubles. After a particularly testing day in Mexico, I remember Seb lobbing the keys to his recce car reasonably hard down the hotel corridor before saying something uncharitable about the

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Finally getting wet in Sardinia was a big moment

“I don’t think anybody outside the team has any clue what Malcolm Wilson risked to bring Sebastien Ogier to M-Sport”

motor. We worked through those issues and now the Focus RS is as brilliant on a recce as it is on the road.

Marginal gains

A lot of what we’ve done this year has been in the margins. Seb coming made us rethink so much of what we do and question whether there was a better solution. It’s that old Clive Woodward thing about making the England rugby team change their shirts at half-time; it didn’t make them play any better or less tired, but it put them in a stronger and more positive mindset for the second half. That’s what we were looking for this year.

Somebody asked Elfyn what the most positive thing about Seb coming had been. He replied: “The hotels have got a lot better!” It’s true. We did spend more on the hotels last year and I’m sure we felt the benefit; if the crew had a bad recce or a problem at shakedown and they went back to a hotel room with a cold shower or no

desk, neither of these things would be the end of the world, but the knock-on effect would put them on the back foot going into the rally. That’s not what we wanted.

I don’t think anybody outside the team has any clue what Malcolm Wilson risked to bring Seb and Julien here, and he deserves so much respect for that. That admiration was already there from Seb beforehand, but I’m sure it’s there in spades now.

Me? I’m just pleased that we’ve unlocked the potential of this amazing team of people. It’s sometimes the silly things that really matter. There’s a strange tradition that when you win the rally in Sardinia, the team jumps – or gets pushed – into the harbour. Year after year we’d stood on the sidelines and watched the other teams jumping in. But this time, after Ott won, it was our turn. You can’t underestimate how much those things mean.

As a team, we’re on top of the world. And that’s where we start this year. ■

LOOKING TO 2018

This year is definitely going to be a bit trickier; for us it’s that difficult second album, isn’t it? The first one went better than we could ever have dreamed and now we’ve got to follow it up.

We start the season with real expectations. Not since the start of 2007, as the factory Ford team, has M-Sport defended the world championship, but that year went well and we won back-to-back titles; but this time we’re defending both the manufacturers’ and drivers’. It’s going to be tough, but we learned so much through the first season with Sebastien Ogier; we’re in very good shape.

One thing there’s zero chance of is complacency. The last round of 2017 was just about our worst event of the year. So much went wrong in Australia – we had some reliability issues and other problems. Now, nobody took their eye off the ball in Coffs Harbour, nobody

necessarily did anything different, but it was a real wake-up call that we need to be absolutely perfect every single time and in everything we do. Naturally, we’ve debriefed and learned from Australia and we’ll implement those lessons this year.

I’m really excited about watching Elfyn Evans step up to that second seat alongside Seb. Elfyn’s already learned plenty from sharing the team with him, but now he’s going to be in the position that Ott Tanak was in last year: same tyres, same everything. We saw how both Elfyn and Ott progressed through 2017, and I think if Ott had stayed we could, for example, have had a situation like Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg at Mercedes in 2016. But this year I think we’ll be a bit more Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas.

We made history, winning the titles as privateers, but that’s all it is. Doing the job again is the only focus now.



CAN THE 'INDIES' SAVE LMP1?



After the shock withdrawal of Audi and Porsche from LMP1 in the past two years, the top level of the WEC will be bolstered by new privateer entries for the 2018-19 superseason

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)

The privateer is back. Back as an important component of the premier LMP1 class at the Le Mans 24 Hours and in the World Endurance Championship. And, quite possibly, back in the hunt for outright victories against factory opposition.

This had been the avowed intent of the rulemakers, most pertinently the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, organiser of Le Mans and promoter of the WEC, as it strived to resurrect LMP1 privateer participation that slumped to a one-car low at the 24 Hours last year.

The efforts to revive interest among independents have proved successful. Rules the ACO has put in place together with the FIA are attracting a growing band of privateers ready to step up to the plate to take on Toyota at the front of the WEC field. There should be a minimum of seven non-hybrid P1 contenders run by independents on the grid when the 2018-19 superseason kicks

off at Spa in May, and there's a chance that total could nudge into double figures. Those cars will be split between four different makes and as many as six teams, and have four different engines.

Thanks to privateers, Le Mans has made it through the troughs in manufacturer participation that have followed the peaks, so the ACO knows better than most organising bodies about the vagaries of factory involvement. That explains a series of measures put in place over the past 18 months to encourage the independents.

"We know our history very well and that the privateers are very important to Le Mans and the world championship," says ACO sporting director Vincent Beaumesnil. "We've been working on this for a long time. It's not something new."

The seeds of the revival were sown long before the ACO and the FIA made the promise of lap-time

Rebellion and Manor will be among a minimum of seven independent P1 contenders on the grid at Spa in May

parity between non-hybrid independent machinery and the high-tech factory cars in September. At the same time the privateer sub-class was removed because the intent now is that all LMP1 machinery will race together. That commitment was made as part of a radical overhaul of the WEC after Porsche's announcement that it was leaving LMP1, but green shoots of recovery were already beginning to appear.

At Le Mans in 2016, the ACO took the wraps off a raft of measures to increase the competitiveness of privateer cars, at the same time offering a three-year period of rule stability. These had a direct influence on Ginetta – which is unveiling its Mecachrome-powered LMP1 at Autosport International at the NEC in Birmingham next week – and SMP Racing and its BR Engineering offshoot deciding to build new LMP1 contenders.

These two constructors will supply the bulk of the privateer P1 grid this year. SMP will field a pair of BRE BR1s with AER turbo power to be run by ART Grand

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LAT IMAGES

SMP's pair of
BRE BR1s will
be run by ART

Prix, which is no stranger to sportscar success despite its huge reputation in the single-seater ranks. It was a race winner and series frontrunner with McLaren in what was then known as the Blancpain Endurance Series in 2014. The US DragonSpeed team – the European Le Mans Series champion in '17 under the G-Drive Racing banner – will field a solo car with a normally aspirated Gibson V8.

Ginetta is set to be represented by two teams, with Manor expanding from the LMP2 ranks to run one or possibly two machines. Another entrant has ordered a trio of the British cars with the Mecachrome engine around which it was designed and intends to enter two cars. It has, however, yet to stick its head above the parapet and declare its identity.

The big news in the run-up to Christmas was that Rebellion Racing, the most successful LMP1 privateer in the history of the reborn WEC, had pushed go on its plans to return to the top rank of the series after a single, successful season in LMP2. The return of the Swiss entrant, whose cars are run out of the UK, can be directly linked to the privateer revival.

Rebellion called time on its LMP1 participation, latterly with its eponymous R-One chassis, at a time when it was slipping further behind the factories yet had no real opposition in the privateer division. Now there is competition and the chance to challenge a factory effort. That explains why it's decided to end

NEC is venue
for unveiling of
Ginetta LMP1......at least one
of which will be
run by Manor

what had been a two-year commitment to LMP2 and return to its former stomping ground. As some kind of declaration of intent, it has signed Le Mans 24 Hours winners Andre Lotterer and Neel Jani (still contracted to Porsche) to its driver roster.

Rebellion hasn't announced any details of which chassis it will run. But it can be taken as read that the car it plans to unveil at the Geneva motor show in March will be built by ORECA. Expect it to be called the Rebellion R-Two and powered by the same 4.5-litre Gibson powerplant that DragonSpeed has chosen.

ByKolles, the only independent LMP1 WEC entry last season, plans to be back after calling time on its 2017 entry after the Nurburgring round in July. It wanted to focus on testing and development with its ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01 ahead of the arrival of more independents this year.

The question now is whether 'indies' can compete with Toyota in 2018-19. Manor sporting director Graeme Lowdon thinks so. "We are not underestimating the challenge the privateers face, because we all have to get a car from the drawing board to the toughest race in the world at Le Mans and get it to finish, and then finish competitively," he says.

"But the way I look at it, there were five heavily funded factory entries at the 24 Hours this year, but an LMP2 car came close to winning it. So is it possible for a privateer LMP1 car to win Le Mans this year? Yes it is. ■

FORMULA JUNIOR STRONGER THAN EVER AT 60



The historic-racing category is in fine fettle as it celebrates its diamond anniversary

By Paul Lawrence, Special Correspondent

[@autosport](#)

Formula Junior is the most prolific historic racing category in terms of competitor support, active cars and global reach.

At Autosport International, a feature display of six cars will kick off the category's 60th-anniversary season.

In 1958, Italian Count Johnny Lurani conceived an affordable and accessible category at a time when 500cc F3 was fading and there was little else below grand prix racing in single-seater terms.

It was an instant hit and was quickly

adopted in many other countries. Early designs were front-engined but, just as Formula 1 engines moved back, Cooper and Lotus soon led the switch to rear-engined Juniors.

The category helped to launch the careers of many stars, including Jim Clark and John Surtees, but by 1963 costs had risen and taken Formula Junior away from its founding principles as Lotus and Brabham fielded works cars based on contemporary F1 designs. It was replaced in '64 by both F2 and F3.

Over the last quarter-century, the category has continued to grow as a historic racing class, largely due to the passion and commitment of Duncan Rabagliati of the Formula Junior Historic Racing Association. More than 1000 cars survive and over 300 are currently active across five continents.

To celebrate 60 years, an ambitious three-year Diamond Jubilee World Tour has been running since early 2016 and will conclude with more than 100 cars racing at the Silverstone Classic in July.

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▲ 1958 STANGUELLINI

The earliest car on display will be the Stanguellini of Tom de Gres, representing the marque that won the first Formula Junior race at Monza in April 1958.

This is a classic front-engined car from Modena in Italy, styled in homage to the Maserati 250F and built by Vittorio Stanguellini, a contemporary of Enzo Ferrari.

Powered by 1100cc Fiat engines, the ladder-chassis Stanguellini was a success, with more than 100 built through to 1960. But when Cooper and Lotus arrived with rear-engined designs, Stanguellini was left behind.

On show will be chassis 178, which was sold to the US when new but soon ended up in Mexico. De Gres acquired the restored car in 2013.

▼ 1959 LOLA Mk2

On the back of its success with the Mk1 sports-racing car, Eric Broadley's fledgling Lola company unveiled its first single-seater design for the second season of Formula Junior.

The car featured a fairly complex tubular chassis, with the front-mounted engine sat to the right of the centre line and the driver on the left. Ford 105E power and a four-speed BMC gearbox completed the strong and competitive package. Close to 30 cars are thought to have been built.

The Lola on show has a good history, having been raced by the Fitzwilliam Racing Team in 1960 in European events as part of a three-car squad for drivers including John Love, John Whitmore and Tony Maggs. It is now owned by Simon Hewes.



▲ 1960 LOTUS 18

Colin Chapman was one of the first race-car constructors to present a rear-engined Formula Junior as the category headed into the 1960 season. The Lotus 18 was Chapman's first rear-engined Lotus design and was conceived as a car for F1, F2 and FJ. The Junior version was constructed with smaller-gauge chassis tubes, used the Renault four-speed gearbox and ran with drum brakes all round.

The Lotus 18 on display at the NEC is from the stable of Classic Team Lotus, the operation headed by Chapman's son Clive. More than 100 18s were built to Formula Junior specification, and Jim Clark was among the future stars to race one on his way to the British title in 1960.

◀ 1961 COOPER T56

At a time when Cooper was revolutionising Formula 1, the T56 was its second FJunior offering and was one of the first low-line designs to appear in the category. Ken Tyrrell's team ran a pair of works-blessed cars on behalf of Cooper, with Tony Maggs claiming the European title.

The T56 on show was first campaigned in the 1961 season. Chassis 21 has a continuous history, starting with Robert Bouharde in France when new. Subsequent owners include hillclimbers Tico Martini and Roy Lane, before Mike Harrison had it restored by Peter Denty in the late '70s. It was later raced by Peter Jackson and is now owned and raced by Jeremy Deeley, and runs the period-correct BMC engine and Citroen/ERSA gearbox.



▲ 1962 GEMINI Mk4

The origins of the Gemini marque were in the Moorland design from 1959, which was then acquired by Graham Warner of Chequered Flag car sales and renamed Gemini.

After building the Mk3 and Mk3A in 1960 and '61, Warner really pushed the boundaries with the Mk4 of '62. The advanced design featured inboard suspension, inboard disc brakes and a pair of small radiators, one on each side of the car.

The Mk4 mated a Cosworth engine to a Renault gearbox and was the model that pushed future F1 racer, and Formula Junior Diamond Jubilee patron, Howden Ganley into the spotlight. On show will be Jan Goeckmann's car, one of only six built.

▼ 1963 BRABHAM BT6

Representing the category's final season is the ex-Denny Hulme Brabham BT6 now owned and raced by Mark Shaw. The BT6 was effectively a scaled-down grand prix car and went head-to-head with the monocoque-construction Lotus 27.

The BT6 was developed from the previous season's BT2 design and was among the first relatively high-volume cars from Jack Brabham's team. Around 20 examples of the spaceframe BT6 were built.

Other drivers who raced BT6s include Mike Hailwood, Frank Gardner and Paul Hawkins. Hulme's car, chassis 9, was shipped to Australia at the end of 1963 and stayed there and in New Zealand until being brought back to the UK a year ago.



ALL PICS: LAWRENCE



PORSCHE



Porsche's games pay off

Two manufacturers were left to fight it out after Audi's withdrawal from the WEC. Toyota topped more phases of the year than Porsche, but the German marque took all the glory

By Gary Watkins, Special Contributor

[@gazzasportscars](#)

There were four distinct phases to the 2017 World Endurance Championship, and Toyota had the advantage in three of them. Yet it was

Porsche that collected all the big prizes on offer. It claimed the drivers' title with Brendon Hartley, Timo Bernhard and Earl Bamber, and the manufacturers' crown, as well as Le Mans 24 Hours glory with the same trio. And it was that win in France that provided the foundation to its successful pursuit of the end-of-season silverware.

Porsche won a topsy-turvy Le Mans in which all five of the factory LMP1 prototypes hit problems. It then followed up on its 19th victory in the 24 Hours with a short burst of dominance (phase three) after the arrival of the high-downforce version of the 919 Hybrid. Only for the three races after Le Mans was Porsche in the ascendant, but its

Sebastien Buemi, Anthony Davidson and Kazuki Nakajima, and completed an end-of-season hat-trick at Fuji, Shanghai and Bahrain (phase four) with the same trio to outscore Porsche five-four in race victories over the course of the season. But it wasn't enough to prevent Porsche taking a clean sweep of the all-important trophies.

Toyota was comprehensively outscored by Porsche at Le Mans, the one-race (but incredibly important, given the double points on offer) second phase of the championship. Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima took 16 points as the sixth-placed WEC-registered car, and Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Stéphane Sarrazin in the other TS050 claimed a single point courtesy of the Japanese driver's scintillating pole lap. Porsche racked up 50 points for the win.

Once it became obvious that the high-downforce 919 Hybrid had an edge, Toyota's chances of taking either championship rapidly faded.

“Le Mans was the foundation of Porsche's successful pursuit of end-of-season silverware”

dominance at the Nurburgring, Mexico City and Austin was enough to put the titles all but out of reach for Toyota, now its only rival in the wake of Audi's withdrawal from LMP1 at the end of 2016.

For the rest of the year, Le Mans included, the latest version of Toyota's TS050 HYBRID had the edge. The Japanese manufacturer started the season with back-to-back victories at Silverstone and Spa (phase one) for

Porsche extended its advantage during its post-Le Mans purple patch to such an extent that it was able to seal both titles at Shanghai with a race to go, even though Toyota started winning again.

These distinct phases were a result of the way the two manufacturers went about developing their cars under new regulations that limited the factory LMP1 teams to just two aerodynamic configurations. That really meant one spec of bodywork for Le Mans and >>

one for the rest of the season. Only Porsche chose not to bring out what might be termed its 'sprint car' until after Le Mans, preferring to leave its design in the windtunnel.

It started the season with one hand effectively tied behind its back, particularly around Silverstone's ultra-fast corners. But Porsche's hierarchy reckoned it was a sacrifice worth making, arguing that it would compromise one or other of its designs if it undertook development in parallel. This was a strategy that had served it well in the past, although the two-specs rule, which came into force at the same time as new aero regulations designed to halt the pace of development, meant Porsche couldn't

rely on its bodykit from the end of the previous season in the opening races. But it was clearly a risk worth taking in a year of only two manufacturers in LMP1. The worst its cars were going to finish, given reliable runs, was third and fourth.

Porsche almost pulled off an upset at Silverstone in a race interrupted by rain and safety cars. It wasn't so close to victory three weeks later in round two at Spa on a track where a low-downforce-configuration car should have been more competitive, though it did take pole in the hands of Neel Jani and Andre Lotterer in the car they shared with Nick Tandy.

Toyota carried its advantage into Le Mans when it raced the TS050 in low-downforce configuration for the

only time. Once again it had the fastest car around the Circuit de la Sarthe in both qualifying – witness Kobayashi's record-breaking pole lap – and the race. What it didn't have, as in previous years, was the luck to finally record a first victory in the 24 Hours, even with an expanded three-car effort for the first time since its return to the prototype ranks on the rebirth of the WEC in 2012.

It had lost victory in 2016 in dramatic fashion with six minutes of the race to go. The manner of its failure to win this time was no less heartrending, even though the melodrama reached an almost farcical high 14 or so hours earlier.

Kobayashi, Conway and Sarrazin, who replaced Jose Maria Lopez in a reshuffle

Porsche's dominance in Mexico part of key post-Le Mans sequence of wins

“Porsche started the season with one hand effectively tied behind its back”



ROUND BY ROUND

SILVERSTONE

LMP1 Buemi/Davidson/
Nakajima

LMP2 Tung/Laurent/Jarvis
GTE Priaulx/Tincknell/
Derani

Toyota wins by a scant six seconds after dominating for much of the race. Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima use a clear performance advantage to build up a lead of 40s, but it is negated by a series of safety cars. The Hartley/Bernhard/Bamber Porsche is at its most competitive in the closing stages, and pushes the winning TS050 to the finish. Lopez crashes heavily on his fourth racing lap in the WEC.

SPA

LMP1 Buemi/Davidson/
Nakajima

LMP2 Rusinov/Thiriet/Lynn
GTE Bird/Rigon

Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima win again, but it's the sister car that has the edge in Belgium. Kobayashi and Conway, driving as a duo after Lopez is ruled out of the race courtesy of his Silverstone injuries, lose the win after twice being undone by the virtual safety car. They drop somewhere over a minute, but finish only a couple of seconds behind the sister car on a day that Porsche barely challenges.

LE MANS

LMP1 Bernhard/Hartley/
Bamber

LMP2 Tung/Laurent/Jarvis
GTE Turner/Adam/Serra

Every LMP1 car on the grid hits problems, but a superb comeback by Porsche drivers Hartley, Bernhard and Bamber gives their employer a 19th outright Le Mans victory after the sister car retires in hour 21. Toyota's Le Mans hoodoo continues: a rogue 'marshal' and clutch failure, a hit up the rear from an LMP2 car, and problems with a hybrid system scupper its chances when it again has the fastest car.

NURBURGRING

LMP1 Bernhard/Hartley/
Bamber

LMP2 Tung/Laurent/Jarvis
GTE Calado/Pier Guidi

Porsche bloods the high-downforce version of its 2017 LMP1 contender and dominates against Toyota. Its two cars are evenly matched, swapping positions through the race, but it is the Lotterer/Jani/Tandy car that is out in front as the end of the race approaches. Lotterer is given an extra-long dump of fuel at the final splash-and-dash pitstop, which allows Bernhard to take the win in the championship-leading car.

of its expanded line-up for Le Mans, were sitting pretty at the front of the field in the 10th hour when a sequence of events that barely seems believable struck Toyota's best shot for the win. They had a clear lead of around about a minute – and the pace to maintain it – when Kobayashi encountered a red light at the end of the pitlane during a safety car. An orange-clad figure, who the Japanese driver presumed to be a marshal, appeared to wave him through the signal.

He instinctively followed the instruction, before the team told him to stop immediately. When Kobayashi did try to get going to join the track proper, he did so using the conventional internal-combustion engine rather than

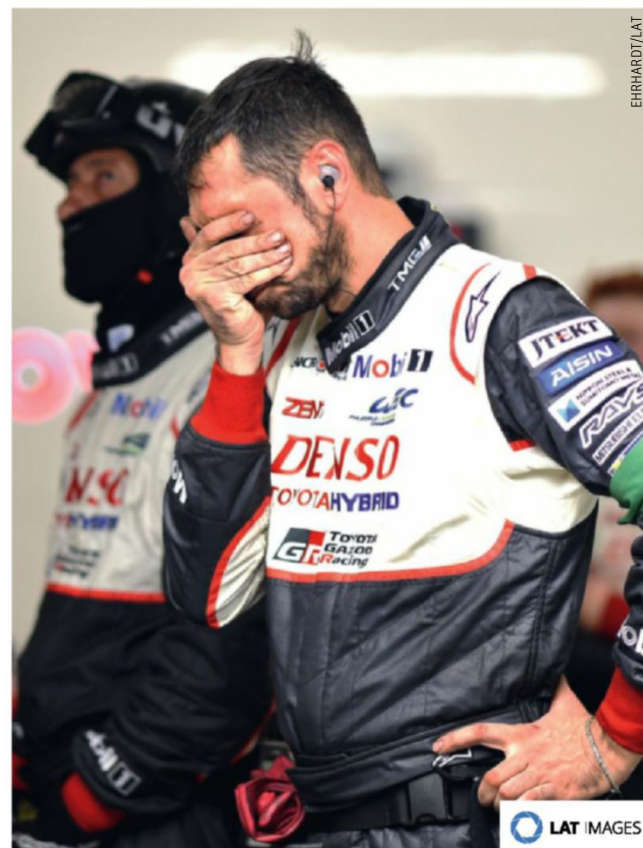
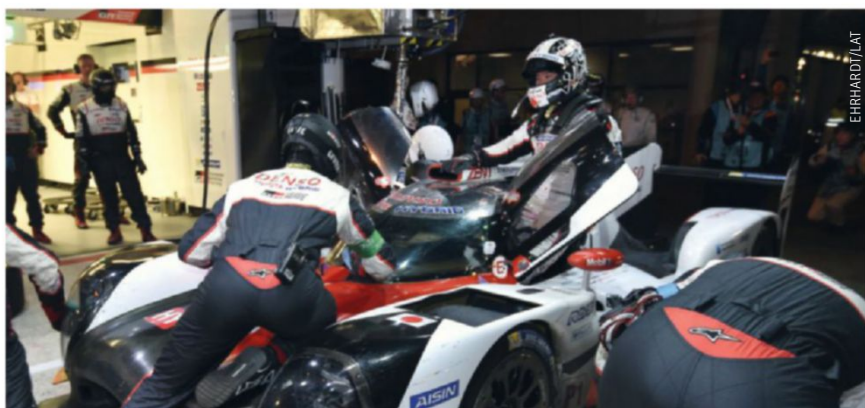
the TS050's twin electric motors, the normal procedure by which the car would leave the pits. The car's transmission was not designed to support such getaways and, in his attempts to get moving, Kobayashi irrevocably damaged the clutch. After one lap behind the safety car, it gave up the ghost and, after a valiant attempt to get the car around the long Le Mans lap on hybrid power, he was forced to park up within sight of the pitlane entry, the battery finally depleted.

The 'marshal' turned out to be another driver, whose car was stationed at pit-out, expressing encouragement to the race leader. It was a highly confusing situation for Kobayashi, who received no blame from the team.

The third car, in which Lopez had joined marque returnee Nicolas Lapierre and Yuji Kunimoto, might have been Toyota's saviour. It had lost time early on with a malfunctioning light panel and was running second, a lap down on the Lotterer/Jani/Tandy Porsche, when Lapierre was hit up the rear as he received an unexpected fuel cut at the end of the start-finish straight. The incident happened less than half an hour after Kobayashi's retirement.

Rubber flailed from a disintegrating tyre as Lapierre drove back to the pits, which took out the gearbox hydraulics, forcing the Frenchman into all-electric mode just like Kobayashi. He, too, failed to make it back to the pits. >>

Clockwise from below left: Buemi/Nakajima/Davidson led home Toyota one-two at Fuji; shock over #7 Toyota's retirement from the 24 Hours; Toyota was fastest car at Le Mans, then fate intervened...



MEXICO CITY

LMP1 Bernhard/Hartley/Bamber

LMP2 Canal/Prost/Senna

GTE Sorensen/Thiim

Porsche is on top again in the thin air of Mexico City and its cars are still evenly matched. The Hartley/Bernhard/Bamber 919 is ahead when the sister car is penalised for pitlane speeding after Tandy has problems pre-setting the limiter. The Toyota struggles in the altitude and never gets its tyres working. Kobayashi, Conway and Lopez are on course for third, before Toyota reverses the positions of its two cars in the pits.

AUSTIN

LMP1 Bernhard/Hartley/Bamber

LMP2 Lapierre/Menezes/Negrao

GTE Calado/Pier Guidi

Toyota is back in the hunt despite a disappointing qualifying performance, but Porsche has just enough in hand to be able to play out team orders once again – Tandy has to move over twice for Bamber in the closing stages. Nakajima is only 10s behind going into the final stops, but the need for more fuel drops the TS050 out of striking range on the run to the chequered flag.

FUJI

LMP1 Buemi/Davidson/Nakajima

LMP2 Canal/Prost/Senna

GTE Calado/Pier Guidi

Toyota scores only its second one-two in a stop-start affair that is red-flagged twice and interrupted by no fewer than eight safety cars. The Japanese manufacturer is running the first fruits of its late-season development programme on home ground, but it's tyre choice that makes the difference in the inclement conditions. It opts for a different specification of wet-weather Michelin to Porsche that comes up to temperature more quickly.

SHANGHAI

LMP1 Buemi/Davidson/Nakajima

LMP2 Canal/Prost/Senna

GTE Priaux/Tincknell

It's a dominant display from Toyota as Porsche goes about the business of wrapping up both championships – and the two 919s are a lap down after four hours. The Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez car has the pace to win, but two incidents with the Argentinian driver at the wheel leave it an unrepresentative fourth at the finish. Another one-two for Toyota would have kept the battle for the manufacturers' title alive going into the finale.

BAHRAIN

LMP1 Buemi/Davidson/Nakajima

LMP2 Canal/Prost/Senna

GTE Bird/Rigon

Toyota makes it five-four in race victories with another comfortable win, even if the TS050 isn't quite so dominant as at Shanghai. Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima take the victory on a day that the three other LMP1s are delayed to varying degrees. Tandy is still in the hunt when he tangles with a GTE Am Porsche, while Kobayashi does likewise with one of the factory 911s to leave the second Toyota winless in 2017.



RUBBER RULES REDUCE RACING

A REDUCTION IN THE TYRE ALLOCATION IN LMP1 – as well as GTE Pro – may have been good for the environmental credentials of the World Endurance Championship, but it certainly did nothing for the racing. Nor the coffers of the teams – the cost-saving was so negligible as to be irrelevant.

A limit of four and a half sets for qualifying and the race at the six-hour events – down from six and a half for the majority of races and eight and a half at the high-grip Shanghai and Bahrain circuits – wasn't popular with the drivers. It also undoubtedly diminished the spectacle, though it might have been more apparent had the two LMP1 manufacturers been more evenly matched at the individual races in 2017.

This tyre rule will have a significant knock-on into the 2018-19 WEC superseason. The pitstop regulations introduced in '09 that allow just two mechanics to cross into the pitlane to perform the wheel changes was put in place to reward double-stinting and more. That's no longer necessary, so tyres will be allowed to be changed while the fuel is going in for the first time in Le Mans-sanctioned sportscar racing since 1993.

The rule may increase the spectacle in the pitlane, for all that it's worth. But the real problem lies out on the race track. The four-and-a-half-sets rule does nothing for a form of racing that is increasingly at odds with the instant-gratification demanded by the modern world.

The great battles in the short history of the reborn WEC have been fought out by drivers pushing to the maximum over the course of a full stint. The question that must be asked is whether they would have been quite so enthralling had the drivers been nursing their tyres.

GARY WATKINS

EBREY/LAT

“Toyota suggested Porsche had not so much won the titles as had them presented on a plate”

That left only one Toyota running, the Buemi/Davidson/Nakajima car, though it was already well and truly out of the running. The front motor-generator unit had needed changing late in the eighth hour, and the battery too, which turned out to be the difference between it and the Porsche that went on to win the race; the 919 had stopped even earlier, halfway through the fourth hour, with a similar problem, but it didn't need a new battery. That explained why the Toyota spent a shade under two hours in the pits and the Porsche just over one.

The Porsche, which dropped as low as 55th on the leaderboard, was able to come back through the field to claim victory, overhauling the leading LMP2 car to prevent a shock result with just over an hour left. The Toyota recovered only to eighth, which gave it sixth-place points.

Toyota suggested after the season was complete that Porsche hadn't so much won the titles, as had them gift-wrapped and presented on a plate. The team's failure to get a big score on the board at Le Mans did play a role, though had Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima recovered to second behind Hartley and co, Toyota still wouldn't have won the drivers' title. Davidson missed Austin later in the year for what were described as personal reasons, putting him out of championship reckoning, but, that said, a victory for either of the other two Toyotas at the 24 Hours would have changed the picture in the manufacturers' championship.

One thing is for certain, however — the

destination of the drivers' title hinged on the Le Mans result and, in particular, the retirement of the Lotterer/Tandy/Jani Porsche from the lead with engine failure in the 21st hour. The full weight of the Porsche LMP Team, to give the operation its official name, swung behind Hartley, Bernhard and Bamber. Their team-mates had to give up the victory in two of the next three races, as Porsche invoked team orders to maximise its chances in the drivers' championship.

Had Lotterer, Tandy and Jani gone on to win at Le Mans, they would have left France with the points lead, though an admittedly narrow one, over their team-mates. Whether Porsche would have played the team-orders game in their favour or let its two crews race can never be known, but either way the drivers of the #1 car would have almost certainly come out on top in the championship battle. As it was, Lotterer and his crew-mates ended the season winless. That was poor reward for a trio that generally had the edge over the drivers of the sister car after Le Mans.

Porsche came in for a lot of flak for using team orders at the 'Ring and then at Austin, even, it is said, from within the company. It's easy to forget, however, that Audi did the same at an identical stage of the season in 2016 and Toyota played the game in '17 too. And from an even earlier stage of the season: Kobayashi was told to hold station behind Buemi in the closing stages at Spa.

With its championship chances as good as gone, Toyota revised its targets late in the summer. It restarted



Low-downforce
Toyota appeared
only at Le Mans



development of the TS050, diverting the resources that were no longer required for a 2018 upgrade in the wake of Porsche's announcement at the end of July that it would be calling time on its LMP1 programme. The goal for Toyota now was to try to score more race victories than Porsche.

The first fruits of an aerodynamic and weight-loss programme, which had to take place within the confines of the homologation of its high-downforce bodykit, arrived on home ground at Fuji. Toyota won in a rain and fog-affected race. More bits came on stream over the remainder of a season that climaxed with Toyota in a dominant position.

That Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima did all the winning for Toyota reflects on the bad luck for the drivers of the sister car. Le Mans aside, they were dominant at Spa and had the pace to win at Shanghai too.

Porsche and Toyota were the only full-season participants in the top class of the WEC in 2017. The ByKolles team opted to focus on testing and development, as was always planned, after its home race in Germany. Its long-serving LMP1 machine underwent a change of name, becoming the ENSO CLM P1/01, and was re-engined with Nissan's twin-turbo V8. There's not much else to say about the team,

Hartley, Bernhard and Bamber celebrate wrapping up drivers' and teams' titles a round early in China

except that its chances of exploiting the misfortune of the factories at Le Mans disappeared with an early puncture. That damaged the nose, which in turn affected the cooling and rooted the engine.

Porsche's twin strategies of leaving its high-downforce car on the drawing board and unashamedly using team orders ultimately paid dividends. They did, however, take the edge off the racing in the early rounds and the shine off its victories in the middle of the season. But the team ultimately delivered what Porsche wanted – a hat-trick of hat-tricks as it leaves the top flight of sportscar racing once again. 🏆

LMP WORLD ENDURANCE DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	PTS
1	Timo Bernhard (D) Earl Bamber (NZ) Brendon Hartley (NZ)	Porsche LMP Team Porsche 919 Hybrid	2	3	1	1	1*	1	4*	2	2	208
2	Kazuki Nakajima (J) Sebastien Buemi (CH)	Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID	1	1	8	4	3	3	1	1	1	183
3	Anthony Davidson (GB)	Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID	1	1	8	4	3	-	1	1	1	168
4	Nick Tandy (GB) Andre Lotterer (D) Neel Jani (CH)	Porsche LMP Team Porsche 919 Hybrid	3	4*	R	2	2	2*	3	3	3*	129
5	Kamui Kobayashi (J) Mike Conway (GB)	Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID	23*	2	R*	3*	4	4	2	4*	4	103.5

6 Jose Maria Lopez (Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID) 84.5; 7 Oliver Jarvis/Thomas Laurent/Ho-Pin Tung (Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA07) 82.5; 8 Julien Canal/Bruno Senna (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 76; 9 Nicolas Prost (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 68; 10 Andre Negrao (Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07) 62.5; 11 Gustavo Menezes (Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07) 62.5; 12 Nicolas Lapierre (Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID/Signatech Alpine ORECA07) 60; 13 Tristan Gommendy/Alex Brundle/David Cheng (Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA07) 37; 14 Matt Rao (Signatech Alpine/Manor ORECA07) 35; 15 Jean-Eric Vergne (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) 33; 16 Mathias Beche/David Heinemeier Hansson (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 27.5; 17 Stephane Sarrazin (Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID) 26; 18 Pierre Ragues/Nelson Panciatici (Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07) 24.5; 19 Nelson Piquet Jr (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 23.5; 20 Jonathan Hirschi/Tor Graves (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) 23; 21 Roman Rusinov (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 17.5; 22 Pierre Thiriet (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 16.5; 23 Emmanuel Collard/Francois Perrodo (TDS Racing ORECA07) 15.5; 24 Matthieu Vaxiviere (TDS Racing ORECA07) 15; 25 Alex Lynn (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 14.5; 26 Romain Dumas (Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07) 12.5; 27 Ben Hanley (TDS/G-Drive/Manor ORECA07) 12; 28 Yuji Kunimoto (Toyota Gazoo Racing Toyota TS050 HYBRID) 10; 29 James Rossiter (ByKolles ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01/G-Drive ORECA07) 9; 30 Dominik Kraihamer/Oliver Webb (ByKolles Racing Team ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01) 8.5; 31 Filipe Albuquerque (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 8; 32 Vitaly Petrov/Simon Trummer/Roberto Gonzalez (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) 7; 33 Pipo Derani (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 4; 34 Memo Rojas/Ryo Hirakawa/Jose Gutierrez (G-Drive Racing (DragonSpeed) ORECA07) 4; 35 Leo Roussel (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 1; 36 Roberto Merhi (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) and Marco Bonanomi (ByKolles Racing Team ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01) 0.5; 38 Nico Muller (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 0.5; 39 Loic Duval (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 0.5. **Manufacturers** 1 Porsche 337; 2 Toyota 286.5. * denotes pole position, for which a point is awarded. All LMP2 cars powered by Gibson engine.



Battle between
#31 Rebellion and
#38 Jackie Chan DC
went to the wire

LMP2

Rebellion knocks out Jackie Chan

By Gary Watkins

TWO TEAMS STOOD HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE THE REST in the battle for the championship in the new era of more powerful and faster LMP2 machinery. Rebellion and the Jackie Chan DC Racing squad run by Jota shared out the victories in seven of the nine races over a closely fought title battle that was still raging deep into the Bahrain finale.

Rebellion, which like Chan DC and all the other P2 WEC entrants ran the ORECA 07 chassis with the spec Gibson V8, had the momentum over the second half of the season, the best of its two cars — shared by Bruno Senna, Julien Canal and Nicolas Prost — winning three times in the four races leading up to Bahrain. That allowed them to overhaul the points lead that the Chan DC trio of Oliver Jarvis, Ho-Pin Tung and Thomas Laurent had held since making a flying start with victory at the Silverstone opener in April.

But it looked like the pendulum was going to swing back the other way at the day-night series curtain closer. Jarvis



and his team-mates had the speed to take a fourth victory of the season, only for a fuel-pick-up problem to intervene, forcing them to make an extra pitstop and hand both the race win and the class title to Rebellion. Senna and Canal were crowned champions, though without Prost, who had missed the Nurburgring race courtesy of the clashing Formula E

Prost (left) joins Canal (middle) and Senna in their title celebrations

fixture in New York.

Rebellion became ever stronger as the year progressed. The team that had enjoyed so much success in the privateer LMP1 ranks before what has turned out to be a one-year switch to P2 gradually got to grips with both the class and its ORECA chassis. It reckoned that its participation in the early-season IMSA SportsCar Championship enduros at Daytona and Sebring — on spec Continental tyres rather than the Dunlops it ran in the WEC — detracted from its preparations for the new challenge rather than aiding them. A big shunt in pre-season testing didn't help either.

Its late-season run allowed it to overhaul a 46-point deficit after the lead Chan DC crew followed up on their big score with that remarkable second overall at Le Mans and another class victory at the 'Ring. Rebellion was helped along the way by a disastrous weekend for Jarvis, Tung and Laurent in Mexico City. They picked up just a couple of points for a distant ninth



ENDURANCE TROPHY FOR LMP2 DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	PTS
1	Julien Canal (F) Bruno Senna (BR)	Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07	2	2	14	2	1	3	1	1*	1	186
2	Ho-Pin Tung (NL) Oliver Jarvis (GB) Thomas Laurent (F)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA07	1	3	1	1*	9	4	3	4	2	175
3	Nicolas Prost (F)	Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07	2	2	14	-	1	3	1	1	1	168
4	Gustavo Menezes (USA)	Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07	4	5	8	3	2*	1*	2	2	4*	151
5	Andre Negrao (BR)	Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07	-	6	3	R	2*	1*	2	2	4*	132
6	Nicolas Lapierre (F)	Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07	4	-	-	3	2*	1*	2	2	4*	121
7	Matt Rao (GB)	Signatech Alpine/Manor TRS Racing ORECA07	4	5	8	3	3	6	5	9	6	100
8	David Heinemeier Hansson (DK) Mathias Beche (CH)	Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07	9	4	DSQ	4	5	2	DSQ*	3	3	85
9	Roman Rusinov (RUS)	G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07	5*	1*	R*	6	4	8	6	7	7	82
10	Jean-Eric Vergne (F)	CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07	6	7	6	-	3	6	5	9	6	81

11 David Cheng/Tristan Gommendy/Alex Brundle (Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) ORECA07) 77; **12** Nelson Piquet Jr (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 73; **13** Pierre Thiriet (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 70; **14** Emmanuel Collard/Francois Perrodo (TDS Racing ORECA07) 55; **15** Alex Lynn (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 54; **16** Matthieu Vaxiviere (TDS Racing ORECA07) 53; **17** Ben Hanley (TDS/G-Drive (TDS)/Manor ORECA07) 53; **18** Vitaly Petrov/Roberto Gonzalez/Simon Trummer (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) 46; **19** Tor Graves/Jonathan Hirschi (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) 40; **20** Pierre Ragues/Nelson Panciatici (Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07) 38; **21** Romain Dumas (Signatech Alpine Matmut ORECA07) 30; **22** Filipe Albuquerque (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 18; **23** Pipo Derani (Vaillante Rebellion ORECA07) 12; **24** Leo Roussel (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 12; **25** Memo Rojas/Ryo Hirakawa/Jose Gutierrez (G-Drive Racing (DragonSpeed) ORECA07) 12; **26** James Rossiter (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 8; **27** Nico Muller (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 6; **28** Loic Duval (G-Drive Racing (TDS) ORECA07) 6; **29** Roberto Merhi (CEFC Manor TRS Racing ORECA07) 2.

Teams' champion #31 Vaillante Rebellion. *denotes pole position, for which a point is awarded. All cars powered by Gibson engine.

place after an errant washer jammed the clutch pedal, a problem that took the team some time to locate.

At Le Mans, the lead Rebellion car had its one significant problem of a season in which it finished on the class podium eight times. A gearbox issue late in the 18th hour when it was running third in class and fourth overall lost it a significant points haul and, as it turned out, a place on the podium proper. The sister car driven by Nelson Piquet Jr, Mathias Beche and David Heinemeier Hansson did make it onto the final step, only to be excluded after the race for a Heath Robinson modification (designed to overcome a starter-motor issue) that contravened the ORECA's homologation.

Reigning P2 champion team Signatech Alpine was one of the other two LMP2 class winners during 2017, but the French team never really looked likely to mount a successful defence of its crown. It started off with a solo car before expanding to two Alpine-badged ORECA 07s for Spa. It then slimmed backed down to one after the Nurburgring,

transferring Andre Negrao from its second car to join up with 2016 title winners Nicolas Lapierre and Gustavo Menezes in the lead entry in place of Matt Rao.

That transformed the fortunes of Signatech, which belatedly got into its stride and notched up a run of podiums that included a class victory at Austin. The team qualified on pole on three occasions, but lacked the consistency of the championship frontrunners, both over the season and a race distance.

Russian entrant G-Drive Racing swapped its allegiance from Jota to the French TDS Racing squad, which provided the infrastructure needed to run its solo ORECA, and looked like it was going to contend for the title. The team made a strong start to its campaign with Alex Lynn, Roman Rusinov and Pierre Thiriet.

They arguably would have won at Silverstone but for a loose door and did win at Spa. Lynn then completed a hat-trick of poles for the team at Le Mans (the first two

claimed together with Thiriet), but its bid for class honours in the 24 Hours and its season as a whole went off the rails during a mad 90 minutes at the beginning of the French enduro.

Rusinov, who had already been penalised for an illegal pit entry, made a rash attempt to pass one of the GTE Am-class Proton Porsches, ending the race for both cars there and then in the Porsche Curves. The misdemeanour came with a three-minute stop-go penalty for the following race.

Rusinov and Thiriet, who were joined by Ben Hanley in place of Lynn, not surprisingly didn't make the class podium at the Nurburgring, and then the G-Drive car couldn't finish any better than fourth over the remainder of the season. Lynn, who'd missed the 'Ring to make his Formula E debut in New York, dropped out of the line-up after Austin to concentrate on his duties with DS Virgin Racing and his 2018 WEC employer, Aston Martin Racing. Thiriet subsequently walked away with two rounds left. ❄

GTE

Ferrari duo finds form after Le Mans

By Gary Watkins

AMAZING CONSISTENCY ALLOWED Ferrari to come back from a disappointing – disastrous, even – Le Mans 24 Hours to take the GT drivers' and manufacturers' crowns newly afforded with full world championship status in 2017. Title winners James Calado and Alessandro Pier Guidi only notched up a single point in the French enduro, but three victories and a further four podiums allowed them to secure the title at the end of a closely fought GTE Pro campaign.

The factory AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTEs were competitive everywhere in the new era of the automatic Balance of Performance, a system based on pure maths and designed to remove the politicking and bickering that blighted the old procedure. That consistency set the Italian cars apart from their rivals in a season that yielded five wins for AF. Sam Bird and Davide Rigon chipped in with a couple of victories, the second in Bahrain handed to them by their team-mates.

Ford duo Harry Tincknell and Andy Priaulx led the points for much of the season after winning the Silverstone opener in their Ganassi-run GT and following it up with second at Le Mans. The Brits, who had been joined by Pipo Derani for the first three races, were still ahead after a disastrous weekend at

Austin when the carbon-chassis Ford was inexplicably off the pace. But things went from bad to worse at Fuji.

Priaulx failed to spot a red light at the end of the pitlane in the mayhem of a race blighted by fog, rain and the safety car. A one-minute stop-go followed, before Priaulx tangled with Kevin Estre's factory Porsche. A rear tyre damaged in the clash subsequently let go at Turn 1, and the Ford drivers left Japan with only half a point more than when they'd arrived.

The damage had been done to their championship challenge. A win at Shanghai and third in Bahrain didn't even get them back to second in the points.

Porsche drivers Frederic Makowiecki and Richard Lietz took that position without winning a race in the new mid-engined 911 RSR, or ever really looking like winning one. Team-mates Kevin Estre and Michael Christensen did look capable of a win, but bad luck prevented them from doing so and left them an unrepresentative 11th in the points.

Aston Martin Racing failed to put together a coherent defence of the drivers' title it won in 2016 with Nicki Thiim and Marco Sorensen. The Danish pair won in Mexico City, which turned out to be their only podium of the season.

AMR, now fully backed by Aston



Calado and Pier Guidi made seven podium visits on their way to the crown for Ferrari

Martin, did win the most important race of the season at Le Mans with the venerable Vantage GTE, a machine that will be replaced by an all-new car of the same name for the coming season. Aston stalwart Darren Turner, Jonny Adam and Daniel Serra came out on top in a thrilling battle with the Chevrolet Corvette C7.R shared by Jordan Taylor, Jan Magnussen and Antonio Garcia to give AMR a GTE Pro class victory at Le Mans to go with its back-to-back GT1 wins in 2007-08.

The Aston had been able to draft past the Chevy on the Mulsanne Straight earlier during the race, but the American car found some extra straightline speed in the closing stages. AMR's solution was to get Adam to turn off the air-conditioning for the last couple of laps, knowing that it wouldn't matter if the cockpit temperature limit was exceeded.

Whether that would have been enough had Taylor not locked up and skated across the gravel at the second Mulsanne chicane on the penultimate lap will never be known. The Corvette picked up a puncture, Adam sneaking past out of the Ford Chicane as the cars started the final lap. When the tyre delaminated, the Corvette Racing entry dropped to third behind the Tincknell/Priaulx/Derani Ford.

Aston Martin drivers Pedro Lamy and Paul Dalla Lana finally took the GTE Am title in their fourth season of trying, and their third with Mathias Lauda. They won four of the races, not to mention scoring seven pole-position bonus points (one behind a non-registered car), to put previous heartbreaks behind them. 🌟

Ford and Aston had their moments, but both missed out in the final reckoning





WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP FOR GTE DRIVERS

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	PTS
1	Alessandro Pier Guidi (I) James Calado (GB)	AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE	2	2	25	1	6	1	1	3	2	153
2	Frederic Makowiecki (F) Richard Lietz (A)	Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR	3	5	4	2	3	6	2*	2	4	145
3	Andy Priaulx (GB) Harry Tincknell (GB)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK Ford GT	1*	4	2	5	4	7	13	1	3	142.5
4	Davide Rigon (I)	AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE	5	1*	5	11	2*	3*	5	6	1*	139.5
5	Sam Bird (GB)	AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE	5	1*	5	-	2*	3*	5	6	1*	139
6	Marco Sorensen (DK) Nicki Thiim (DK)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	6	8	9	4	1	4	7	5*	7	104
7	Darren Turner (GB) Jonny Adam (GB)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	7	7	1*	7	NC	5	6	7	6	101
8	Olivier Pla (F) Stefan Mucke (D)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK Ford GT	4	3	11	6	7	8	4	4	5	95
9	Daniel Serra (BR)	Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE	7	7	1*	7	NC	5	-	-	-	79
10	Pipo Derani (BR)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK Ford GT	1*	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	74

11 Kevin Estre/Michael Christensen (Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR) 67; 12 Billy Johnson (Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK Ford GT) 43; 13 Miguel Molina (AF Corse/Spirit of Race Ferrari 488 GTE) 32.5; 14 Richie Stanaway (Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage V8) 32; 15 Patrick Pilet (Porsche GT Team Porsche 911 RSR) 30; 16 Mathias Lauda/Paul Dalla Lana/Pedro Lamy (Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE) 19.5; 17 Keita Sawa/Matt Griffin/Mok Weng Sun (Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE) 19; 18 Christian Ried/Marvin Dienst/Matteo Cairoli (Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 17; 19 Aaron Scott/Duncan Cameron/Marco Cioci (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 12; 20 Francesco Castellacci/Thomas Flohr (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 9.5; 21 Ben Barker/Nick Foster (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 6; 22 Mike Wainwright (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 3.5; 23 Khaled Al Qubaisi (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 2; 24 Alvaro Parente/Hiroki Katoh (Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE) 1; 24 Michele Rugolo (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE) 1; 24 Olivier Beretta (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 1; 24 Richard Wee (Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE) 1; 28 Toni Vilander (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE) 0.5; 29 Mike Hedlund (Gulf Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 0.5. **Manufacturers** 1 Ferrari 305; 2 Ford 237.5; 3 Porsche 223.5; 4 Aston Martin 207. **Teams' champion** #51 AF Corse. * denotes point for pole.



Aston crew finally took well-deserved GTE Am title

GTEAM 1 Mathias Lauda/Paul Dalla Lana/Pedro Lamy (Aston Martin Racing Aston Martin Vantage GTE) 192; 2 Christian Ried/Marvin Dienst/Matteo Cairoli (Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 168; 3 Mok Weng Sun/Keita Sawa/Matt Griffin (Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE) 165; 4 Francesco Castellacci/Thomas Flohr (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 109; 5 Miguel Molina (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 97; 6 Ben Barker/Nick Foster (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 97; 7 Mike Wainwright (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 67; 8 Aaron Scott/Duncan Cameron/Marco Cioci (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 50; 9 Khaled Al Qubaisi (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 18; 10 Alvaro Parente/Hiroki Katoh/Richard Wee (Clearwater Racing Ferrari 488 GTE) 16; 11 Mike Hedlund (Gulf Racing UK Porsche 911 RSR) 12; 12 Olivier Beretta (Spirit of Race (AF Corse) Ferrari 488 GTE) 12. **Teams' champion** #98 Aston Martin Racing.

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AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 LMP1 DRIVERS

**1 SEBASTIEN BUEMI**

The Swiss was the top performer at Toyota again this year, and by some margin. That's why he gets the number-one spot – he stood out above his team-mates in a way that no-one did at Porsche; its drivers were just so evenly matched. Buemi had the kind of season we have come to expect from him as he has grown into one of the best sportscar drivers of his generation. It's difficult to pick a high point, because there weren't any lows, except perhaps for Spa where he and his co-drivers were unable to match their team-mates for pace.

**2 MIKE CONWAY**

The Briton had an exceptional 2016, but an even better '17. Conway took a step forward as a sportscar driver last year, his third full WEC campaign in LMP1. He was more often than not a match for Kobayashi in the races, if not qualifying, and didn't make any of the mistakes of his team-mate. Lap time averages in the WEC are now difficult to read thanks to the new-for-'17 limitation on tyres for the six-hour events, but Conway always looked good in the stats. Le Mans, perhaps, offers a more representative picture, and there he was on top.

**3 KAMUI KOBAYASHI**

That qualifying lap at Le Mans must give Kobayashi extra brownie points. No-one could believe his 3m14.791s pole, not even the man in the cockpit. There were special circumstances that made it possible: a tailwind down the Mulsanne and a headwind into the Porsche Curves; and a nice layer of Michelin rubber from the Porsche Carrera Cup cars. But he still had to make the most of all that, even though it was his first flying lap in the car that day. What he achieved was phenomenal and rightly propels him up this list.

**4 TIMO BERNHARD**

Bernhard cemented a place in sportscar history in 2017, and not just because he notched up a second Le Mans victory and a second world title. His role in the incredible successes of the 919 Hybrid should never be overlooked. The first driver to test the car, he played a key role in both the development of the LMP1 hybrid and Brendon Hartley and Mark Webber as drivers in the early years. He was one of the foundation stones on which the programme was built, and he's a rock in terms of consistency. He doesn't have off days.

**5 NEEL JANI**

Picking another Porsche team member for the Top 5 – a Top 10 in LMP1 would not be right given the paucity of entries – isn't easy because there really wasn't much between all six of them, at least once newcomer Andre Lotterer got to grips with the 919 from the Nurburgring on. Jani gets the nod courtesy of his one-lap speed in qualifying. It can be no coincidence that when the #1 Porsche was on pole, the Swiss driver was in the car and set the fastest time. And when the other Porsche took the top spot, he didn't play a part in qualifying.

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 GTE DRIVERS

**1 JAMES CALADO**

It would be wrong to say that Calado slipped into the big shoes of erstwhile Ferrari team leader Gianmaria Bruni after he upped sticks and departed for Porsche. But the Briton did everything expected of him in the lead AF Corse Ferrari alongside Alessandro Pier Guidi. Calado exploited the most consistent car in GTE Pro to its utmost – he was fast and ultra-consistent. He was a deserving champion who will surely go on to reach greater things. Maybe he'll be talked about in the same breath as Bruni in years to come.

**2 NICKI THIIM**

There were days in 2017, just as before, when Thiim could do things in the best of the Astons that appeared to suspend reality – and were definitely out of the reach of his team-mates. The Dane flattered the ageing Vantage GTE, which wasn't the most competitive package last season. It was a disappointing year for Thiim and his '16 co-champion Marco Sorensen, but there were some incredible performances. His comeback drive at Le Mans after Richie Stanaway's mistake, a race won by the sister car, was special.

**3= ANDY PRIAULX/
HARRY TINCKNELL**

Two British drivers at very different stages of their careers impressed for Ford over the course of a season in which they were evenly matched. Tincknell, 26, came of age as a GT driver in his second season with Ford and was more often than not at or near the top of the lap time averages. Fortysomething Priaulx, meanwhile, rekindled the kind of form that made him a champion three times over in the World Touring Car Championship in the 2000s. More than that, however, they



worked well as a unit, something that gave them the edge over their team-mates, Olivier Pla and Stefan Mucke. They made the most of a car that wasn't necessarily the most 'raceable' in GTE Pro – the Ford's lack of straightline speed definitely hurt. Tincknell was particularly impressive in the foul conditions of Fuji, a race that ultimately turned into a disaster thanks to Priaulx's misdemeanours. Running a red light at the end of the pits probably wasn't excusable even with the confusion of a stop-start race, but the incident with the Porsche was a strange one in which it was hard to apportion blame.

**5 KEVIN ESTRE**

The Frenchman was the stand-out at Porsche's GT squad, even though he and team-mate Michael Christensen failed to make an impact on the championship in the new 911 RSR. The mid-engined car didn't score a class win in the WEC to go with its solo IMSA success, but there were a couple of clear shots at victory that were ripped away from Estre and his team-mate. Estre was mighty in the difficult Fuji conditions before the bizarre Priaulx incident. Engine issues robbed them of an even better chance at Shanghai.



Often down but never out

IndyCar champion Josef Newgarden's career almost ended several times before his Penske deal, but the struggles have made him a better driver

By Tom Errington, Special Contributor

[@tomgerrington](#)

Josef Newgarden's first IndyCar title was built on the foundation of his season's low point: the Month of May. Having lost a podium due to an electrical glitch at the road course, he was never in contention in the 500, and finished 19th.

At that point he was eighth in the standings, trailing table-topping Penske team-mate Helio Castroneves by 59 points. After replacing Juan Pablo Montoya at the end of 2016, Newgarden was the lowest-placed Penske driver too.

But rather than crumble, Newgarden learned to adapt to the Penske Dallara-Chevrolet, having previously been unable to extract the maximum from the car, and began a run of seven podiums in 11 races. Even a self-inflicted pit-exit crash in the penultimate race at Watkins Glen couldn't stop his title charge.

With three points between him and veteran IndyCar star Scott Dixon going into the Sonoma finale, Newgarden took pole and raced to second to secure the crown. He was "steaming" not to have won the race too.

The rate of Newgarden's development — he's still only 27 and the youngest Penske driver — caused him to be linked to Formula 1 when Toro Rosso began its driver merry-go-round, although Newgarden says he was never contacted.

That link is fitting in two ways: Newgarden began his career in England on the conventional F1 path; and it was textbook to his career. From the lowest low, the American always, somehow, comes out on top.

After starring in Skip Barber races, Tennessee native Newgarden won a place in 2008 as a Team USA scholar on an English mini-tour to participate in the end-of-season Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy. And he caught the eye with a Kent-class win in the Festival.

His 2009 season could be considered a breakout year. Having joined Joe Tandy's JTR team (see p49), he took

part in a close title battle that he eventually lost. He did enough to make British Formula 3 a viable, and logical, next step, but that's when his career came under threat for the first time.

"I didn't have the money or the funding," recalls Newgarden. "I thought we had found an investor that wanted to do the best for my career and was pumped for an F3 season. I went as far as getting into a race team and working the deal, getting a seat built, and being ready for pre-season testing for F3. Then it fell through; it ended up being a flake that was going to invest. It was really late in the off-season and I didn't have a ride."

The saving grace was 2010's new GP3 Series, which mandated that teams had to run three cars. That opened the door for Carlin to offer Newgarden a seat alongside Dean Smith and Lucas Foresti. While it meant that Newgarden's career could continue, he was stepping up to the international stage having

never raced a single-seater in Europe with aero.

Pre-season testing started well at Paul Ricard, where he was the fastest Carlin driver, but the fact that this would be one of Newgarden's season

highlights tells its own story. His other peaks included a pole position at Hockenheim and a fifth place at Monza in a run of three points finishes in the last six races, but it was hardly enough to help him secure a second season. At that stage of his career, the then-19-year old was hamstrung by GP3's lack of testing and the teething issues of a new series, with disparate engine performances regularly catching out Carlin.

The money had also dried up and he was forced to move home to the US. "I actually thought my racing career was over at that point, to be honest with you," admits Newgarden. "It was such a difficult year and all the money that we had left was spent on that season in 2010; it was kind of our last shot at racing. There wasn't any money left to do any racing, let alone live in another country." »

"There wasn't any money left for racing, let alone live in another country"



GP3 was difficult:
here Newgarden
retires at Spa

Newgarden's second salvation came thanks to Sam Schmidt and his Indy Lights team paying for him to be on the grid in 2011. "I couldn't afford crash damage and we didn't pay crash damage for the entire year," says Newgarden. "As for insurance, we didn't insure the cars. Sam footed the bill for the most part, and that gave me the opportunity to run Indy Lights." He seized it with both hands, beating team-mate Conor Daly by the narrowest of margins in St Petersburg at the beginning of a season in which he won five races and took the crown by 94 points.

Formula Renault 3.5 race winner Esteban Guerrieri was his nearest challenger, but when Newgarden lapped the field at New Hampshire while Guerrieri fell out of contention, it was clear where the title was going. With the pressure on, Newgarden delivered a title that ensured he would be on the IndyCar grid just over a year after he looked down and out.

He signed to Sarah Fisher's IndyCar squad just months

"I couldn't really use my right hand at Iowa. It was a tough day"

later, but then what looked like a revitalised career hit the rails – again. This time, his new team could not secure an engine deal, meaning he was stuck on the sidelines while pre-season testing took its course. The reprieve came when Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing's second car fell through, and it helped the Fisher team to ensure its one car would have an engine.

Newgarden was now on the grid, but missing a month of testing in his rookie year, with a new car in the form of the Dallara DW12, meant he was already up against it.

He took his chance once again, incredibly finishing 11th on his series debut in St Petersburg. It would be the only high of a difficult first season, but at least his future was secured.

Success, though, took time. There were two podiums in the



Growing confidence:
Newgarden tries to
muscle past Will Power
at Detroit in 2016

next two years, with Baltimore in 2013 proving agonisingly close to a first win until brake problems ended his pursuit of Simon Pagenaud: "We were actually ready to win a race. I don't think from a team standpoint we were ready, but I felt ready for sure."

The chance to get into race-winning machinery came in a breakout year in 2015, when Fisher's team merged with Ed Carpenter Racing. Newgarden was unsure initially and looked at other offers, but finally committed to a one-year deal with the renamed CFH Racing.

It was the right call and in the first year of the merger he started to build his reputation as the best driver outside of Penske. There was a win at Barber Motorsports Park, where Newgarden held off Scott Dixon and the superior strategy of Graham Rahal to finally take his first IndyCar victory.

There was also an impressive one-two on the streets of Toronto, with team-mate Luca Filippi following him across the line. Three years earlier, it had been Filippi's failed RLL deal that got Newgarden on the grid in the first place. Now the future Penske driver was established after helping to build the team from its troubled roots.

"I remember telling my dad that there aren't many people who've won an IndyCar race, so that was amazing," he says. "When you win the second one you go, 'Well, how many people have won two IndyCar races?' I remember that feeling of it being huge."

There was another big call to make at the end of that year, with rumours that both Chip Ganassi Racing and Team Penske



Edmonton Indy
Lights, 2011 –
Newgarden leads



NICK TANDY ON...

Josef Newgarden's European adventure

JOSEF NEWGARDEN'S MOVE TO England was crucial, and his success with JTR in British Formula Ford in 2009 caught people's attention.

"At the time my brother Joe was in charge and we always worked together and kept an eye on who runs in the cars," says Nick Tandy. "Josef came over in 2008 and won the Kent class [at the Festival] and as soon as he did that, it made us think he had potential."

Newgarden then competed in the 2009 British Formula Ford Championship. After an accident in the first race at Oulton Park, he took a podium in the second and finished the opening weekend with a win.

JTR was rocked by the death of its leader Joe Tandy in a road accident in May, with Newgarden taking an emotional victory next time out at Rockingham. He continued to impress, but eventually lost the title to Jamun driver James Cole, despite taking nine wins to Cole's seven. Newgarden nevertheless topped Autosport's FFord driver ratings at the end of the year.

"He was great for us," says Tandy. "He was battling for the

top spot and winning lots of races. He proved himself at a high national level."

Newgarden points to the failed British F3 switch that forced him into GP3 too early as being costly, forcing him to move back to the US at the end of the 2010 season, though Tandy believes it was the right experience for him.

"GP3 didn't do any harm. It's good to push yourself"

"I think GP3 didn't do any harm; it's good to push yourself," adds the factory Porsche driver. "The experience comes from the good and the bad. He was not as successful as he would have wanted, but by joining IndyCar and winning it later on, it all shows the determined person he is."

Tandy remains good friends with Newgarden and sent him a congratulatory text when he won the IndyCar title: "I like to think that JTR played some role in his success and it was great to watch him at Sonoma."

Rockingham '09
FFord win was
emotional

were interested in him. For his part, Newgarden believes that neither party felt he was ready for the top step yet.

It could have been a moment he'd live to regret when he signed another one-year deal with Ed Carpenter Racing, but Newgarden excelled. He finished fourth in the series in 2016 as the highest non-Penske runner. Now he really had momentum.

While there was only one win in 2016, it was by far the most impressive campaign of Newgarden's career to that point. Having been involved in a huge crash at Texas Motor Speedway that broke his right shoulder and hand, he returned at the physically demanding, high-banked short oval of Iowa Speedway a month later and broke a series record in his dominance — he led 282 laps of the 300.

"I couldn't really use my right hand, so I was just pulling with my left, and around a track like Iowa that is just a worst-case scenario, not to have your two hands to use," says Newgarden. "I remember that being a tough day."

It was one of his last tough days. Penske again took notice, and Newgarden joined the legendary American team at the end of the year to begin his title-winning push.

Newgarden makes a point of doubting whether he would have been so successful in his first year at Penske without his tough racing background: "If I was just going to walk into a Penske car in my very first season, I don't know if I would have developed the skills that I have now."

Having been so close to having no career at all, Newgarden now has the chance to become one of Penske's IndyCar legends. 🏆



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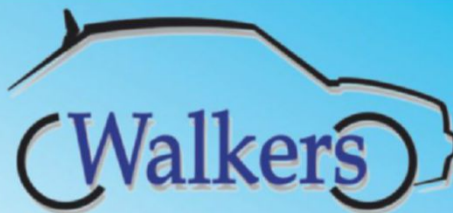
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- A natural ability to find solutions when faced with difficult problems

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TF Sport Astons will be driven by WEC Danes

BRITISHGT

Aston WEC duo to race in British GT

ASTON MARTIN RACING WORLD Endurance Championship duo Nicki Thiim and Marco Sorensen will join TF Sport's attack on this year's British GT Championship.

The Danish drivers will share a pair of Aston Martin Vantage GT3s with returning amateur racers Derek Johnston and Mark Farmer.

Sorensen, 27, will share with Johnston in the 2016 championship-winning car, replacing the Optimum Motorsport-bound Jonny Adam, while Thiim, 28, will partner Farmer in the sister chassis. Jon Barnes, who also raced with the team last year, is in search of a new drive.

The deal means that both Thiim and Sorensen will return to UK racing for the first time since their respective Formula Ford programmes a decade ago.

Thiim raced at the Formula Ford Festival in 2006 in a factory Ray, while Sorensen competed in the '08 British championship with a Fluid Van Diemen.



Both drivers shared AMR's #95 Vantage GTE Pro entry in the WEC last year, winning in Mexico and finishing sixth in the GTE Pro standings.

With the WEC now spread over a 13-month superseason, AMR's factory drivers have a greater availability for customer teams in national series.

"To have two of Aston's real rising stars join us for British GT is absolutely

Thiim (l) and Sorensen (r) will partner Farmer and Johnston respectively at TF

fantastic, and they'll help take us to the next level," said TF Sport team boss Tom Ferrier.

"Last year was a difficult season in many respects for us, so we felt it was time for a shuffle to refresh things and this will definitely mix it up a bit.

"We worked with Nicki last year in our European Le Mans Series programme and he's absolutely rapid. He's a bit crazy, but he's a truly superb racer. Marco knows the British tracks from his time in Formula Ford, so the pair will work together and spur each other on.

"Both Nicki and Marco are consummate professionals, so I know they'll work well with Derek and Mark. The team dynamic will shift because we've got two new driver pairings – there will be less 'hand-holding' for the Am drivers, but both Derek and Mark have more than enough experience now. I think we'll have two cars going for the title."

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DONINGTON PARK Leicestershire venue Donington Park will undergo a multi-million-pound transformation ahead of the 2018 season. The takeover of the track was completed by MotorSport Vision in August last year and several major improvements will now be made to the circuit's facilities. This includes a new grandstand on the outside of Hollywood corner, a new restaurant, bar and cafe, and the existing paddock entrance will become the circuit's main entrance. The toilet blocks in spectator areas will be demolished and replaced with bigger and more modern facilities and a new circuit office will be added, as well as internal roads being improved for easier access. The changes are due to be completed by March.

BRITISH GT

Fox enters new Merc in British GT

FOX MOTORSPORT HAS BECOME THE first team to enter a new Mercedes AMG GT4 in the British GT Championship this season.

The squad has secured an entry for the all-new machine, which will be driven by GT Cup graduates Michael Broadhurst and Mark Murfitt.

Fox, which is run by racer Paul McNeilly, last competed in British GT running a Ginetta G55 GT4 for sporadic outings in 2016. The team has also run a Ferrari 488 GT3 in recent years.

Murfitt entered GT racing as an amateur last year and competed in both GT Cup and Britcar in a G55 alongside Broadhurst.

Broadhurst has a long history with British GT, having won the first-ever GT4 race at Oulton Park in 2008 alongside Joe Osborne.

The team is scheduled to take delivery of the new AMG in early March, just a few weeks before the start of the 2018 campaign.

Broadhurst said: "I've been buzzing ever since I was told about the plans to return to British GT. If the performance of the Mercedes GT3 cars at the moment is anything to go by, the GT4 is going to be an awesome piece of kit."

Murfitt added: "I couldn't be in a better environment. Michael's been a superb teacher so far."



EUROFORMULAOPEN

F4 champ targets Euro step-up

BRITISH FORMULA 4 CHAMPION JAMIE Caroline is working on a move up to Euroformula Open for this year.

The 18-year-old had his first taste of Formula 3 power at the end of 2017 when he tested with the Euroformula arm of Carlin – the squad with which he claimed the British F4 crown – at Albacete in Spain.

Team boss Trevor Carlin views Euroformula, which uses the current F3 Dallara chassis with a spec-Toyota engine, as the ideal step for Caroline.

"He went well and did a good job – everything you'd expect of him," said Carlin. "I think he'd do a fantastic job in Euroformula Open."

Carlin joined Euroformula Open in 2016, running Colton Herta to third position in the standings, and repeated that feat last year with Devlin DeFrancesco. Brit Harrison Scott won the 2017 title.

● Sometime British F4 driver Yves Baltas will race in Euroformula Open this year. The American, who took a best finish of sixth from the opening two F4 rounds last year, will drive for Fortec Motorsport.

New BMW series to run with 750MC

THE BMW CAR CLUB GB WILL LAUNCH a racing series in 2018 for a wide range of the German marque's cars.

The BMW Car Club Racing Series has revealed a 14-race provisional calendar, shared with the 750 Motor Club, Aston Martin Owners' Club and Castle Combe Racing Club. The organisers have deferred championship status until 2019.

The new series will share four events – Silverstone, Croft, Donington Park

and Snetterton – with the 750MC and hopes to attract entrants from the existing M3 Cup and 330 Challenge. These drivers will be offered a discount on the entry fee as an incentive to compete.

The classes, aimed at production-spec vehicles, will use a power-to-weight-ratio system to even up the competition. Tyres are open but must be treaded, with the intention of allowing cars from different championships to gain more track time.



GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Fender joins Century for Supercup

ANGUS FENDER IS SET TO become the youngest driver in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup in 2018 after entering the championship for G55s.

Fender, 17, is set to begin testing with Century Motorsport and will work as a mechanic at the team for British GT rounds.

"It's a really exciting challenge," said Fender. "I'll be going in with only one year of car experience at 17. But I'm looking forward to getting out and competing against some really top-flight racers."

Fender finished outside of the top 10 in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge last year,

but improved his results considerably in the second half of the season.

● Former Xentek Motorsport co-owner Nicholas Hart has split from the team and has started his own squad, Hart GT. He plans to run three cars in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup this season.



GINETTA JUNIOR

Sugden backs RCE Junior return

RICHARDSON CHASSIS ENGINEERING will return to Ginetta Junior this season, with support from GT racer Tim Sugden.

The squad last competed in the series in 2015 with Will Tregurtha, who was racing in his maiden Ginetta season, but is now planning a two-car comeback. Tregurtha, who went on to win the

championship in 2016, will be a driver coach for RCE.

Team boss Dave Richardson said: "Tim's knowledge and contacts in the BTCC paddock together with our expertise developing and competing in spaceframe race cars provides junior drivers with the experience, equipment and environment to start racing."

IN BRIEF



THRUXTON TO HOST HISTORIC SERIES

Three major historic race series from the Motor Racing Legends organisation will be central to the Thruxton 50th Anniversary Celebration meeting on June 2-3. The Royal Automobile Club Woodcote Trophy, the Stirling Moss Trophy and the Historic Touring Car Challenge will take many cars and drivers to the Hampshire track for the first time. Grids of pre-1956 sports cars, pre-'61 sports-racers (above) and pre-'91 touring cars will be major attractions.

NEW, IMPROVED TYRES FOR CLIO CUP

The Renault UK Clio Cup will introduce a new Michelin tyre for this season. Michelin returned to being the series' tyre supplier last season following several years of using Dunlops, and the new tyre is expected to lead to even faster lap times in 2018 after a number of lap records were already broken last term.

JOHNNY BLADES: 1939-2017

Fifth-generation bespoke tailor Johnny Blades, who died of cancer on December 14, was a very competent club racer whose hobby took him abroad and to F2 in 1970. With omnipresent tape-measure inside his immaculate jacket, ever-smiling Blades was a popular visitor to Croft Nostalgia Festivals and Goodwood in recent years.

EUROTECH TO STAY IN MINI CHALLENGE

British Touring Car squad Eurotech Racing will continue to run cars in the Mini Challenge JCW Championship this season, despite new champion Brett Smith moving on. Smith – the son of team head and BTCC regular Jeff Smith – won the JCW title in his second season of the category last year, taking six race wins.

NORMA TO MAKE SECOND UK APPEARANCE

The Norma M30 (below) will make only its second appearance on British soil when it headlines the Bute Motorsport stand at Autosport International next week. Bute is the organiser of the British-based LMP3 Cup Championship; a Norma did not appear in the series last year, but Lanar Racing has been testing the car in France. Also on the stand will be the title-winning Ligier JSP3 of Alasdair McCaig and Colin Noble.



Mittell's new car will be a development of the MC-53 he raced in RGB



HAMPTON DOWNS

REYNARD RECOVERS UNIQUE FF1600

FORTY FOUR YEARS AFTER he last raced the first of his eponymous designs, Adrian Reynard will be back at the wheel of the unique Reynard 73FF Formula Ford at Hampton Downs in New Zealand later this month.

Reynard won his first race (a non-championship event at Silverstone in September 1973) in the car, but sold it to future associate Jeremy Rossiter when he ran out of funds the following year.

"In those days I was little interested [in my old cars] as I just wanted to make more!" said Reynard. "I recovered it [73FF] about a year ago, then got enthused about racing it again."

The 73FF, which Reynard built while serving an apprenticeship at British Leyland, has been rebuilt for him by professional engineer Martin Lucas in NZ. Kent tuner Graeme Cook has built the engine.

Reynard has a long affinity with New Zealanders, having founded the Sabre Automotive fabrication business in Bicester with Bill Stone.

Last year Adrian returned to both FF1600, winning in Auckland John Pickford's Reynard 84FF at Hampton Downs, and Historic FF2000. In the latter he drove James Lovett's 78SF, a car he had raced before winning the FF2000 title in 1979.

OSS

Mittell expands beyond RGB

RGB SPORTS 1000 FRONTRUNNER SCOTT MITTELL will not compete in the championship this year, since his eponymous team has built a new car aimed at the Bikesports and OSS championships.

Mittell, who finished second in the RGB standings last season in a Mittell MC-53, won't commit to a single championship in 2018, but will instead dovetail the development of the new car, the MC-41, between Bikesports and OSS.

"It's all designed and the chassis are made, we're just having the fuel tanks made at the moment," said Mittell of the new design. "It will be similar to the RGB car, just with a few differences."

The MC-41 will feature more pronounced aerodynamic devices and a central driving position,

which isn't allowed in RGB. It will keep the 1000cc engine used in RGB with the aim of keeping costs down and establishing the MC-41 as a rival to the Radical PR6.

"The plan is to go and try and beat some of the Radicals with Hayabusas [engines]," he added. "The PR6 is a proper car for Bikesports and OSS but you can't buy new ones and the Hayabusas are expensive, at least £10,000 a pop. We think we can at least get close to them if not beat them with a 1000cc, which is £2000."

Although Scott will be absent from RGB, Mittell Cars will field more entries than ever before in the category. Six Mittells are expected to run. Danny Andrew (sixth in 2017) and Paul Smith (ninth) both drove Mittells for the first time last year and are understood to be among the marque's representatives in RGB this season.

PETERAUTO

New series for historic Porsche 911s

A RACE SERIES SOLELY FOR pre-1966 Porsche 911s has been launched by French historic race promoter Peter Auto, and there are already plans to expand the three-race series in 2019 by adding a race in England.

To be called the 2.0L Cup, the inaugural season will take in races at Peter Auto events at Spa, Dijon and Paul Ricard.

UK-based Porsche specialist Lee Maxted-Page is behind the project and he believes there is sufficient demand to support standalone races.

Despite spiralling values for the two-litre short-chassis 911s dating from before 1966, the target is to have 40 cars per race, and that some notable former Porsche

racers will share cars in the 90-minute enduros.

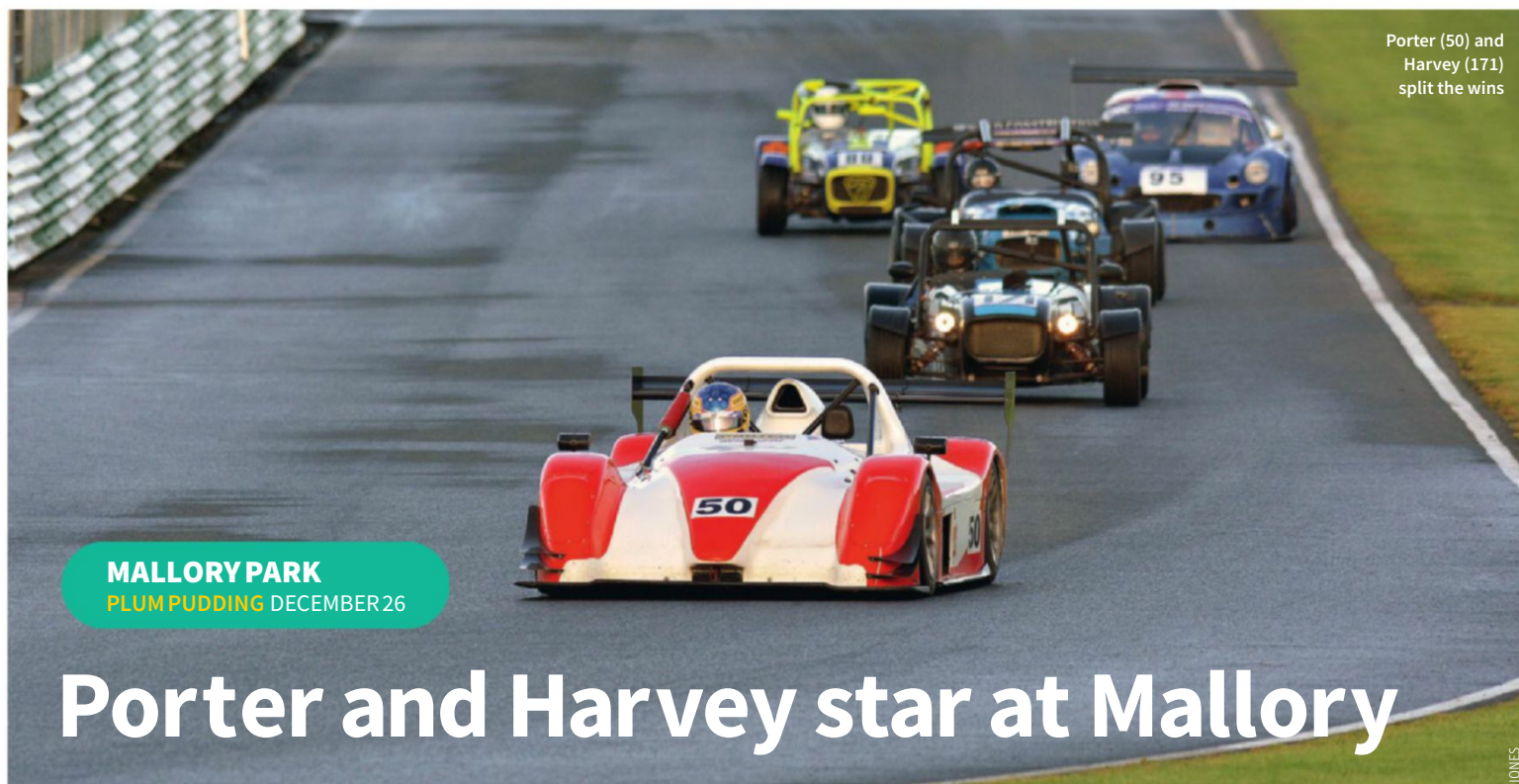
To date, the only previous race exclusively for early 911s was the John Aldington Trophy race at the 2015 Goodwood Members' Meeting, won by Andrew Jordan.

Patrick Peter, founder of Peter Auto said: "Ultimately, our aim is to organise a round in England eventually."



Early 911s got their own race at Goodwood in 2015

LAWRENCE



Porter (50) and Harvey (171) split the wins

MALLORY PARK
PLUM PUDDING DECEMBER 26

Porter and Harvey star at Mallory

DAVID PORTER AND DAVID HARVEY shared Plum Pudding Sports Car victories in front of a large crowd at Mallory Park.

Porter's Radical SR3 has in the past been sluggish off the line, but in the first race he converted his front-row start into the lead at Gerard's Bend. His most likely rivals started at the back of the field – by virtue of having placed late entries, as the grid for race one is decided in order of receipt – but brothers Paul and Jon Woolfitt, as well as Harvey, charged from the back in various motorcycle-engined machines.

Paul Woolfitt's pace was most impressive – his fastest lap was quicker than Porter's – and he took second from Jon Curry's Caterham 310R at the exit of Gerard's on lap three. He closed the gap to Porter – who had a grassy moment negotiating traffic towards the end – and with another couple of laps might well have sealed victory. As it was, only those two finished on the lead lap, with Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki) coming out on top in an epic scrap with Jon Woolfitt's MK Indy for third.

Philip Hart looked set to be the first car-engined contender home in his Mallock Mk16, but offs at the Esses and Gerard's on successive laps put paid to that, handing the honour to Caterham specialist Andy McMillan in his 420R, ahead of Bill Lancashire's TVR Tuscan.

From a partially reversed grid for race two, McMillan had an impressive advantage at the end of the first lap, but Harvey reeled him in and dived ahead at the Esses on lap four. McMillan made a number of attempts to reassert his authority but, with their cars strong at different parts of the circuit, McMillan

was unable to breach the defence of Harvey, who took his second career win. Having to deal with drier conditions than in the opener, Paul Woolfitt and Porter were both some way back.

Peter Felix's victory in the opening Saloon Car encounter was his first since Croft in 2013. The ex-Star of Mallory competitor declared his 20-Ten-prepared Renault Clio "magic in these conditions" after a dominant performance in the damp. "I went with wet tyres and thought that would be the advantage," he said after charging through from row nine.

Steve Barnard made the early running in his spaceframe Audi TT, but he was the only driver who had opted for slicks and Felix drove around the outside of him at Gerard's on the fourth lap to take an unassailable lead. Wayne Ward also charged up the order, spectacularly going around the outside of Barnard at Devil's Elbow on the 11th lap to claim second in his Subaru Impreza. Fellow eighth-row starter Simon Ward hauled his Vauxhall Astra GTE onto the podium, ousting Barnard at the hairpin with just over a lap to go. After an off on lap five, Richard Thurbin's Lancia Delta fought off Brian Sale's Rover Vitesse for fifth position.

"My hillclimb and sprint experience stood me in good stead at the start," reckoned Barnard, after blasting into an early lead in the second race. The conditions had come back to his tyres and he ran out a comfortable winner.

Second was disputed by Thurbin and Ward in the early stages, but Thurbin dropped back after "overdriving it again" and Ward was eliminated by a transmission failure, promoting Felix to second place.

IAN SOWMAN



Barnard (at the front) and Felix (back) were Saloon Car victors

RESULTS

SPORTS CARS (BOTH 17 LAPS) 1 Dave Porter

(Radical SR3); 2 Paul Woolfitt (Lotus Exige); 3 David Harvey (Stuart Taylor Locosaki); 4 Jon Woolfitt (MK Indy); 5 Andrew McMillan (Caterham 420R); 6 Bill Lancashire (TVR Tuscan).

Fastest lap P Woolfitt 52.523s (92.53mph).

Pole Chris Aubrey (Caterham 270R). **Starters** 18.

RACE TWO 1 Harvey; 2 McMillan +0.319s;

3 P Woolfitt; 4 Porter; 5 J Woolfitt;

6 Lancashire. **FL** Porter 49.579s (98.03mph).

P Brian Dean (Westfield SE). **S** 18.

SALOON CARS (16 LAPS) 1 Peter Felix

(Renault Clio); 2 Wayne Ward (Subaru Impreza); 3 Simon Ward (Vauxhall Astra GTE); 4 Steve Barnard (Audi TT); 5 Richard Thurbin (Lancia Delta Integrale); 6 Brian Sale (Rover Vitesse). **FL** unavailable. **P** Geoff Connor (Renault Clio). **S** 18.

RACE TWO (17 LAPS) 1 Barnard; 2 Felix +28.773s; 3 Thurbin; 4 Rich Hockley (Honda Civic); 5 Ward; 6 Sale. **FL** Barnard 51.257s (94.82mph). **P** Sale. **S** 19.



Barrel roll to honour roll

In 2016, Andrew Bourke escaped a huge crash at Brands Hatch without serious injury. Little did he know it would lead to a championship...

By Jack Benyon, Group National Editor

[@jackbenyon](#)

WHEN YOU'RE BARREL-ROLLING into a gravel trap at upwards of 100mph, and your head pops out of the window, it doesn't normally lead to good things. Andrew Bourke was incredibly lucky: in the short-term it gave him just bruises, and in the long-term it helped deliver a championship title.

The weekend before the huge crash at Brands Hatch's Paddock Hill Bend in 2016, Bourke had just taken his best finish of third in his class in the British Racing and Sports Car Club's Alfa Romeo Championship. Then

the crash changed everything.

"I had no brakes," explains Bourke. "As I went to turn in there was a car there; I clipped the car and that sent me into a roll. It was about 120mph and a violent roll. I was shaken and had a couple of bruises, but that was about it."

Explaining why his head went through the window, he adds: "Usually you have a seat mount that's drilled straight through the floor. My car had a spacer on the right-hand side. That gave way, so there was space between the seat and the floor. It caved in during the

Above: a brake issue triggered Bourke's season-ending crash at Brands Hatch in 2016

crash and pushed me [to the] right, and my head [went] out of the window."

The car was destroyed, fit only for scrap, and after a check-up at the infield care centre Bourke was released and eager to race again. He considered hiring a car, but with only a few races left in the season he elected to defer.

That didn't stop him making some bold claims in jest with his fellow racers. Living close to Corby, Bourke visited the championship's Rockingham round following his crash, and afterwards the beer was flowing.

**TABLE OF CLASS RESULTS
SINCE BRANDS HATCH CRASH**

CIRCUIT	RACE 1	RACE 2
Oulton Park	2	1
Silverstone	5	6
Cadwell Park	1	1
Rockingham	2	1
Snetterton	2	1
Brands Hatch	3	2
Mallory Park	R	NS
Donington Park	5	3



"I said to them, 'Next year I'm going to win the championship, I'm going to smash every lap record,'" says Bourke, amused by the irony of the seemingly hollow threat. "I got one lap record at Cadwell Park, but I took the championship and that was the main thing."

It was an impressive feat in only his fourth year of racing. The 31-year-old runs a printing business, but across his four years of competition he has increased his participation each season. For 2017, the big change was a new car,

a 156 JTD in the Twin Spark class replacing the GTV, and a new team in Scuderia Bianco.

He finished outside the top six only once, with a retirement and a non-start on his record after he was clipped into the barriers while fighting for the lead in race one at Mallory Park – the car wasn't in any fit state to start race two.

Asked about how it felt getting back into a competition car after rolling at 100mph-plus, Bourke says: "It was tough. Coming into the first race weekend at Oulton Park it was nerve-wracking."

But the perfect tonic for a driver after a big crash is a strong result: "That first race back was really good, we finished second in the first race and then we got our first [class] win after that, so it was good to see we were still progressing."

The return to Brands Hatch came six events into an eight-round calendar. The previous five meetings went some way to helping with the nerves, but nothing can quite prepare a driver for returning to *that* corner.

"There was always nerves there," says Bourke. "I had done a test beforehand.

Above: a win and a second place at Rockingham helped title charge

Left: Bourke has a seat-fitting in new Alfa before 2017 season

I was braking far too early in the test! Slowly the confidence came back. I think for everyone it's a tricky corner. It's still fun though."

Lifting the spectre hovering over you after a crash like that is always difficult, but a third and a second in class helped. Winning the championship at the end of the year of course did the rest.

Sadly, Bourke isn't set to race this year without a major sponsor to help him out. So, if anyone fancies getting behind one of the comeback stories of 2017, they should give him a call! 📞



New car, a 156, carried Bourke to his first victories in his fourth year of racing

CLUB AUTOSPORT

2017 championship round-up

Compiled by Jack Benyon, Stephen Lickorish and Stefan Mackley

[@AS_National](#)

500MRCI

NORTHERN IRELAND FORD FIESTA ZETEC

Jonny Forsythe

NORTHERN IRELAND FORMULA FORD 1600

Niall Murray (Van Diemen LA10)

750 MOTOR CLUB

750 FORMULA

Bill Cowley (Cowley MkIV)

ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE

Paul Waterhouse (Peugeot 306)

BIKESPORTS

Stefano Leaney (Radical PR6)

CIVIC CUP

Lee Deegan

CLASSIC STOCK HATCH

Lee Scott

CLIO 182

Patrick Fletcher

FORMULA VEE

Ben Miloudi (Storm GKBM 2015)

HOT HATCH

Paul Jarvis (Citroen Saxo VTR)

LOCOST

Ian Allee

M3 CUP

Adam Shepherd

MX-5 CUP

Ben Short

RGB

Billy Albone (Spire GT3)

SPORT SPECIALS

Paul Boyd (Eclipse SM1)

TOYOTA MR2

Shaun Traynor

BRITISH AUTOMOBILE RACING CLUB

2CV

Lien Davies

BRITCAR ENDURANCE

Witt Gamski/Ross Wylie/Joe Macari (Ferrari 458 GTE)

BRITCAR SPRINT

Rick Nevinson/Brad Nevinson/Sean Cooper/Matt Cherrington

(Porsche Cayman GT4)

BRITISH TRUCK RACING DIVISION 1

Ryan Smith (MAN TGA)

BRITISH TRUCK RACING DIVISION 2

Mika Makinen (Sisu SL250)

CANNONS TIN TOPS

Daniel Fisher (Honda Civic Type R)

CATERHAM GRADUATES CLASSIC

Graeme Smith

CATERHAM GRADUATES MEGA

Declan Dolan

CATERHAM GRADUATES SIGMA

Jonathan Harmer

CATERHAM GRADUATES SIGMAX

Oliver Gibson

CATERHAM GRADUATES SUPER

Toby Briant

CLASSIC FORMULA FORD 1600

Adriano Medeiros (Van Diemen RF80)

CLUBMANS

Mike Evans (Mallock Mk27)

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOONS

Joe Spencer (Stuart Taylor Locosaki)

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Callum Pointon

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Lewis Brown

GINETTA JUNIOR

Tom Gamble

GINETTA RACING DRIVERS' CLUB+

Michael Crees

GINETTA RACING DRIVERS' CLUB

Tom Golding

HONDA VTEC CHALLENGE

Peter Dunmore (Civic Type R)

INTERMARQUE

Malcolm Blackman

(Vauxhall Tigra)

JUNIOR SALOONS

Will Dyrda

KUMHO BMWs

Kevin Denwood (E46 Compact)

LEGENDS CARS UK

John Mickel

MAX5

Matthew Tidmarsh

MGOC

Simon Kendrick (MGF VVC)

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Alice Hughes

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(Ford Escort WRC)

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RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Mike Bushell

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP JUNIOR

Jack Young

SMART CARS 4TWO CUP

Alan Palmer

SUPER MIGHTY MINIS

Scott Kendall

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ALFA ROMEOS

Andrew Bourke (156)

BMW COMPACT CUP

James Gornall

BRITISH F4

Jamie Caroline

BRITISH GT3

Rick Parfitt/Seb Morris

(Bentley Continental GT3)

BRITISH GT4

Will Tregurtha/Stuart Middleton

(Ginetta G55 GT4)

CATERHAM ACADEMY GREEN

Daniel French

CATERHAM ACADEMY WHITE

Andy Morgan

CATERHAM ROADSPORT

Pete Walters

CATERHAM SEVEN 270R

Russ Olivant

CATERHAM SEVEN 310R

Lee Bristow

CATERHAM SEVEN 420R

Danny Winstanley

CATERHAM SUPERSPORT

Mike Evans

F1000

Michael Watton (Jedi Mk6)

FORD FIESTA

Jamie White

FORD FIESTA JUNIOR

Jack Davidson

FORMULA FORD 1600 TOURIST TROPHY

Neil MacLennan (Ray GR09)

FORMULA FORD 1600 TRIPLE CROWN

Luke Williams (Firman RFR16)

FUN CUP UK

JPR Uvio

(Scott Fitzgerald/Graham Roberts)

MAZDA MX-5

Will Blackwell-Chambers

MAZDA MX-5 SUPERCUP

Luke Herbert

NATIONAL FORMULA FORD 1600

Luke Williams (Firman RFR16)

NORTHERN FORMULA FORD 1600

Josh Smith (Firman RFR16/Van Diemen JL13)

OSS

Mike Jenvey (Gunn TS6)

PORSCHEs

Ed Hayes (Porsche Boxster)

PRODUCTION GTIs

Chris Webb

TVRs

Mike Luck (Chimaera RV8)

XR CHALLENGE

Mark Robinson (Ford Fiesta XR2)

CASTLE COMBE RACING CLUB

FORMULA FORD 1600

Josh Fisher

(Van Diemen JL14)

GT

Ilsa Cox (SEAT Leon Cupra)

SALOON CARS

Simon Thornton-Norris

(Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart)

CLASSIC TOURING CAR RACING CLUB

BLUE OVAL SALOONS

Chris Brown

(Ford Fiesta XR2)

GROUP 1 TOURING CARS

Stephen Primett

(Ford Escort Mk1)

PRE-1993 TOURING CARS

Simon Ward

(Vauxhall Astra GTE)

PRE-2003 CLASSIC VWs

Steven Rowland

(Volkswagen Beetle)

PRE-2003 TOURING CARS

Luke Allen

(Honda Civic Type R)

PRE-2005 PRODUCTION TOURING CARS

Mario Neophytou (Peugeot 106 GTI)

PRE-1966 TOURING CARS

Tony Preston

(Morris Minor)

THUNDER SALOONS

Richard Askham

(Jaguar XJR)

HISTORIC SPORTS CAR CLUB

70s ROAD SPORTS

Charles Barter

(Datsun 240Z)

CLASSIC CLUBMANS

Mark Charteris

(Mallock Mk20/21)

CLASSIC FORMULA 3

Gaius Ghinn

(Ralt RT3)

FORMULA JUNIOR

Peter de la Roche

(BMC Mk2/Lola Mk3)

FRONT-ENGINE FORMULA JUNIOR

Nick Taylor (Elva 100)



Alan Auerbach was super in a Stryker



Simon Thornton-Norris and his unusual Colt



Jamie Caroline was dominant in British F4



Billy Albane waves the flag for RGB

JONES

GUARDS TROPHY John Davison (Lotus Elan 26R)

HISTORIC FORMULA 2 Robert Simac (March 712)

HISTORIC FORMULA 3 Jon Milicevic (Brabham BT21B)

HISTORIC FORMULA FORD 1600 Richard Tarling (Jamun T2/Macon MR)

HISTORIC FORMULA FORD 2000 Andrew Park (Reynard SF79)

HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS William Plant (Morgan +8) and Dick Coffey (Turner Mk1)

HISTORIC TOURING CARS Steve Platts (Singer Chamois)

SUPER TOURING James Dodd (Honda Accord)

IRELAND

ASK SUPERCARS Peter Barrable

BOSS FORMULA LIBRE IRELAND Peter Dwyer (Lola T95/50 F3000)

FORD FIESTA ZETEC Phillip Lawless

IRISH GLOBAL LIGHTS Peter Drennan

IRISH FORMULA SHEANE Dave Parks

IRISH FORMULA VEE Conor Molloy (Leastone)

IRISH FUTURE CLASSICS

Aidan Byrne (Toyota Celica)

IRISH GINETTA JUNIORS Patrick Dempsey

IRISH LEGENDS CARS Paul O'Brien

IRISH SEATS Rod McGovern

IRISH STRYKER SPORTSCARS Alan Auerbach

MG CAR CLUB

BCV8 Russell McCarthy

COCKSHOOT CUP Brian Butler (MGF VVC)

MG CUP Alan Brooke (Rover Metro GTi)

MG METRO CUP Mike Williams

MG TROPHY Matt Turnbull

MINI 7 RACING CLUB

MINI MIGLIA Rupert Deeth

MINI SE7EN Charlie Budd

MONOPOSTO RACING CLUB

MONOPOSTO Chris Hodgen (Dallara F304)

MONOPOSTO TIEDEMAN TROPHY Neil Harrison (Dallara F302)

MOTORSPORT VISION RACING

BRDC BRITISH FORMULA 3

Enaam Ahmed

F3 CUP Jacopo Sebastiani (Dallara F311)

GT CUP Graham Davidson (McLaren MP4-12C GT3)

LMP3 CUP Colin Noble/Alasdair McCaig (Ligier JSP3)

LOTUS CUP Simon Atkinson (Exige V6)

LOTUS ELISE TROPHY William Stacey (Elise S2)

MSVT TRACKDAY Callum McDougal/Ben Simonds (Caterham 1400 Supersport)



William Plant: Historic Road Sports

WALKER

MINI CHALLENGE JCW Brett Smith

MINI CHALLENGE OPEN Ben Dimmack

MINI CHALLENGE COOPER AM Stuart McLaren

MINI CHALLENGE COOPER PRO

Matt Hammond

PRODUCTION BMWs Matt Swaffer

RADICAL CHALLENGE Oliver Barker (SR3)

RADICAL SR1 CUP Jerome de Sadeleer

VAG TROPHY Paul Taylor (Volkswagen Golf)

VOLKSWAGEN RACING CUP Bobby Thompson (Golf)

SCOTTISH MOTOR RACING CLUB

SCOTTISH BMW COMPACTS Lee Elrick

SCOTTISH CLASSIC SPORTS AND SALOONS Alastair Baptie (Fiat X1/9)

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SCOTTISH FORMULA FORD 1600

Ross Martin (Ray GR17)

SCOTTISH LEGENDS CARS John Paterson

SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP Mark Geraghty

SCOTTISH SALOONS AND SPORTSCARS

William Robson (Ford Focus RS)

SPORTS RACING CAR CLUB

SPORTS 2000 DURATEC Tom Stoten (Gunn TS11)

SPORTS 2000 HISTORIC Colin Feyerabend (Lola T492)

SPORTS 2000 PINTO Mike Fry (Lola T86/90)

OTHERS

AMOC INTERMARQUE Bob Searles (Porsche 944 Turbo)

JAGUAR SALOONS AND GT Rodney Frost

MORGAN CHALLENGE Elliot Paterson

NORTHERN SALOONS & SPORTSCARS

Mark Leybourne (Westfield)

PORSCHE CLUB Mark McAleer (Porsche 996 C2)

WELSH SPORTS AND SALOON CARS Tyrone Luffarelli (Peugeot 106)



GT Cup was won by Graham Davidson

READ



Jon Milicevic: Historic F3 champion

WALKER



John Paterson is Scottish Legend at Knockhill

MOIR

WHAT'S ON

Mario Andretti's career in pictures

It's not often a book titled *A Life in Pictures* sets out to capture your attention with an opening chapter entitled 'Once upon a time in Montona'.

That line sounds as if it could have been lifted from a fairytale or a children's book, but Mario Donnini's tome on Mario Andretti is far from either. The dual-language book – Italian and English – covers Andretti's racing career and provides an insight into his life both on and off the track.

The book was released ahead of the 40th anniversary of Andretti winning the Formula 1 drivers' title in the seminal Lotus 79 in 1978. And it runs through his career, covering it all: grand prix racing, the Daytona 500, Le Mans, success with Ferrari – and even his missed F1 debut in 1968. The chronological order makes it an easy-to-follow read, and the prologue, written by Donnini, gives it context.

Donnini describes Andretti as a "champion of the American dream". Given the far-from-gilded upbringing Andretti had in Montona, this comment echoes throughout *A Life in Pictures* as it takes its journey through Andretti's extraordinarily successful life.

During his career, Andretti scored victories in endurance racing, F1, NASCAR and Indycar, as well as a handful of wins in dirt-track racing that cemented his reputation as an all-rounder. Each chapter therefore represents a significant moment in Andretti's tale. There is a similar format throughout each one – background information sets the story for the

reader before quotes from Donnini's interview with Andretti add context to each moment. Although brief, the chapters provide enough detail to understand what happened at each stage and why, and Andretti's words and Donnini's explanations are enough for the reader to fully picture these significant moments.

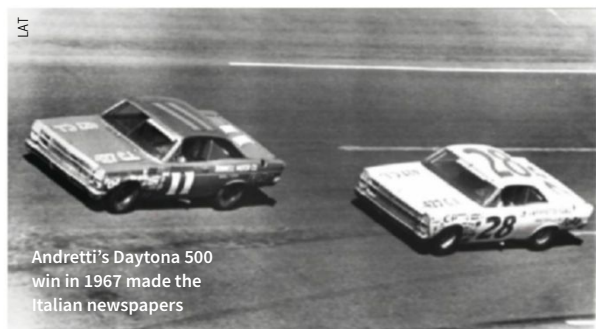
A Life in Pictures ends with a brief overview of Andretti's career results, giving his number of wins in each category and information on where and when he won in F1, endurance racing and Indycar.

A chapter is normally a page or two in each language followed by a couple of pages of images as a maximum and that's partially down to the size of the book. It's big and wide, which makes it difficult to read on the go – this is a book to enjoy at home rather than while commuting. Images aren't individually captioned but there is a paragraph on each photo-based page to explain the context of the images.

One shot in particular stands out: a newspaper cutting from Italy after Andretti's 1967 Daytona 500 NASCAR win. It helps emphasise the resonance and impact of Andretti's achievements in his country of birth as well as the US.

The opening chapter of *A Life in Pictures* may have a fable-esque title, but the story of Andretti's labours to become one of the biggest names in American (and international) motorsport mean it is ultimately fitting.

JACK AMEY



Andretti's Daytona 500 win in 1967 made the Italian newspapers



1978 Dutch GP was Andretti's final F1 win

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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

F1'S BEST DING-DONGS OF THE YEAR

Search for F1: Top ten dramatic moments of 2017

Relive some of the most exciting and controversial moments of the F1 year just gone in this video. Sebastian Vettel's antics in Baku, Max Verstappen losing his podium for a track-limits violation at Austin, and a rogue Sepang drain cover causing much damage to Romain Grosjean's Haas – it's all here.



 LAT IMAGES

NEXT WEEK



FERRARI F2004

The story behind one of the Scuderia's best F1 cars

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DAKAR RALLY

MARAGNI/REDBULL CONTENT POOL





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ferdinando Righetti (Ferrari 166SC) gets very sideways on his way to second place in the 1948 Coupe de Petites Cylindrees at Reims-Gueux in north-east France. Getting an eyeful of Righetti's moment is Jose Scaron (Simca Gordini 11), who finished fourth.

HAVE-A-GO HERO



ALEX STONE

FATHER/SON DUO HELP TO SPREAD DOWN'S SYNDROME AWARENESS

ALL PICS: SMJ PHOTOGRAPHY

Admittedly this isn't a typical Have-a-go hero entry, but an exception has to be made for Alex Stone and his titanic efforts in rallying last year.

Stone, 19, competes with his father John and won his first championship in 2017, the three-round Three Sisters Challenge at the Wigan-based circuit.

The hero element of this is that Alex has Down's Syndrome, and isn't able to communicate verbally.

Down's Syndrome is a genetic condition that typically causes some level of learning disability – different for each person – and certain physical characteristics. People with Down's Syndrome also have different personalities and abilities.

"Lots of people with Down's Syndrome are, unfortunately, stuck in a corner in front of the TV," says Ford Fiesta S2500 driver John. "Alex's speech is incredibly poor. But he has a marvellous sense of humour and he enjoys being around cars and blokes fixing them. I just want him to enjoy life."

If you get the chance, watching an onboard (John has a YouTube channel) will show you just how much fun Alex has – showtunes and chart hits are sung before and after the stages. Whoops and cheers accompany the use of the handbrake, as well as victories on events (the duo won all three rounds of the Challenge).

Throughout his competing with Alex, John has been part of the Rallying for Down's Syndrome Awareness campaign, which has led to over 5000 stickers being printed and used on rallies as far afield as Kenya and Canada. A Facebook group also exists to inform parents and to support them if they have children with the condition. Recent East African Safari Rally winner Ryan Champion and his wife Jemma – a competitor in her own right – plus Donegal Rally fan Danny McMenamin started the group and have brought hope, knowledge and awareness to many families. McMenamin's four-year-old Sean has Down's Syndrome, as does the Champions' son, three-year-old Finley.

There's no doubt Alex is a star. He proves that people with Down's Syndrome can have just as much fun in grassroots motorsport as any. He's only human, after all. 🏆

JACK BENYON



19-year-old
Alex Stone
has proved
that those
with Down's
Syndrome
can compete

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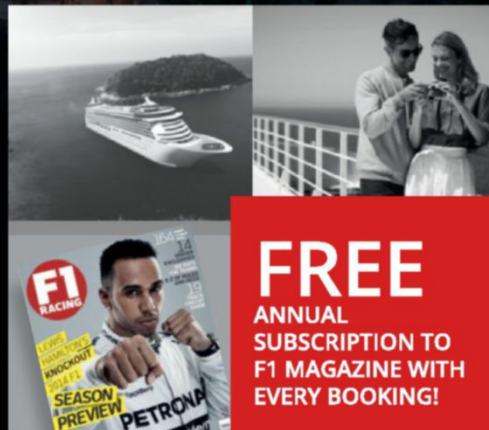
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