

F1 How the French GP came back

LE MANS SPECIAL
New rules to attract hypercars and more star names

FE Why Porsche is joining fierce electric battle

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

JUNE 21 2018

Alonso conquers Le Mans

Nakajima & Buemi help Toyota end its curse

'As a rookie he was exceptional'

TOYOTA

PLUS

- Vergne loses LMP2 victory
- Di Resta's massive crash
- 'Pink Pig' tops GT fight





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TOYOTA CRACKS IT AS ALONSO MAKES MORE HISTORY

When Kamui Kobayashi slowed to a crawl in the penultimate hour, Toyota's 'easy' run to its first Le Mans victory suddenly looked under threat. Could its curse really strike *again*?

Fortunately, the problem turned out to be nothing more than Kobayashi forgetting to stop, and the Japanese manufacturer duly completed its one-two, finally ending three decades of heartache.

Despite what a few naysayers may think, Fernando Alonso's appearance at Le Mans was a huge positive for the race. And so was his victory. Yes, he stole most of the headlines, but there were *more* of those headlines, and more people reading them, because the double Formula 1 world champion was in the classic French enduro.

There were also those in the immediate aftermath of the race who felt the need to suggest that Alonso's achievement wasn't worthy of Graham Hill's Le Mans victory in 1972. That success completed Hill's triple crown so – given Alonso's stated aim of winning the Monaco GP, Le Mans and the Indianapolis 500 – comparison was inevitable.

Quite apart from the fact that *any* win in the Le Mans 24 Hours is worthy of respect, Hill was also part of a dominant team. Matra had no real opposition – Hill's success was undoubtedly well-deserved, but the 1972 Le Mans hasn't gone down as a classic in the event's history. This year's race probably won't either, but that has nothing to do with Alonso's performance.

So, fans should rejoice in Alonso's success, particularly as it means he is even more likely to do the Indy 500 again now. Perhaps a World Endurance title and full IndyCar season beckon...

● As the early section of the magazine, which includes our LMP2 report, went to press the news broke of G-Drive's exclusion. It was too late to change our report (page 28), but please turn to p10 for details on what went on and how Signatech inherited victory.



Kevin Turner

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Sam Bloxham/LAT Images

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LE MANS REVEALS ITS 20

WEC

Strict limits on aerodynamic performance lie at the heart of the new regulations announced for the top class of the World Endurance Championship in 2020-21. They will allow for a range of lookalikes based on the styling of manufacturers' super-sportscars or hypercars to compete against each other, at the same time as capping costs.

Maximum-downforce and minimum-drag figures will be laid down in the LMP1-replacement formula, which was announced in outline form last week ahead of the Le Mans 24 Hours. This will allow for the lookalike styling over pure-bred racing chassis that the rulemakers – the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA – believe is necessary to attract manufacturers to the highest level of endurance racing. It will also draw a line through the expensive windtunnel and computational fluid dynamics (CFD) development that has traditionally defined the shape of P1 machinery.

"The idea is that if you define the values then there is no reason to spend money on windtunnel development because you will get no reward," said ACO sporting director Vincent Beaumesnil. "This will be a new process in which we will measure the cars in the windtunnel and make full body

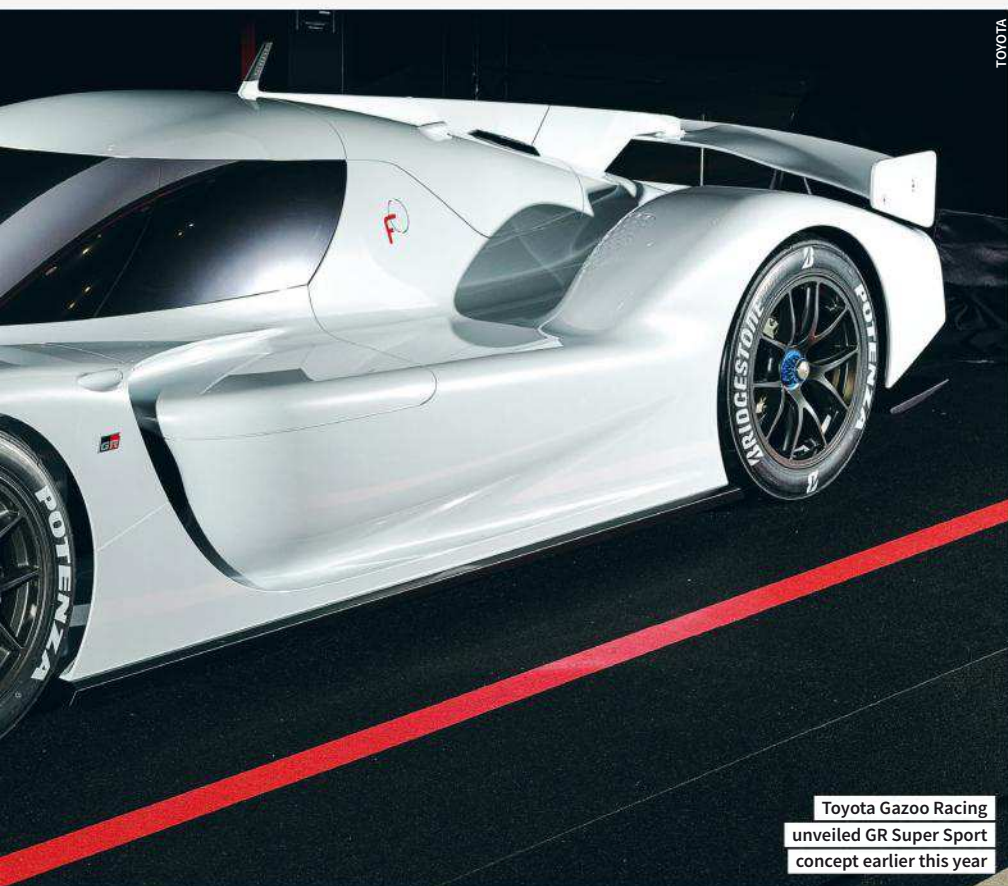
scans of them. This way we can make sure that the cars can go up to the point we lay down, but not go over it."

Toyota Motorsport GmbH technical director Pascal Vasselon described the principles behind the aero rules as an "interesting innovation".

"Instead of micro-managing the regulations by banning this winglet or that one, where the regulatory body is always behind the engineers, here the actual aerodynamic performance is set," he explained. "The target is to set the aero efficiency at an achievable level, not at a level that requires 30 people over three years. It should be achievable by a team with a few good CFD engineers."

Active aerodynamics will be permitted in a class that is aimed at both manufacturers and constructors – there are no plans for a separate privateer subclass. This is also a cost-saving measure that will do away with the need to develop separate low and high-downforce configurations for the Le Mans 24 Hours and the six-hour

**"IT STILL REPRESENTS
A BIG INCREASE IN
COST FROM WHERE
WE ARE WITH DPi"**



Toyota Gazoo Racing
unveiled GR Super Sport
concept earlier this year

New Le Mans eSports for race gamers

LE MANS ESPORTS

The Automobile Club de l'Ouest will launch a Le Mans eSports series at Silverstone in August, using the Forza Motorsport game series as its platform.

The series will be run in partnership with the Motorsport Network, as well as Microsoft through the Forza video game, while Paris-based eSports company Glory4Gamers will manage the format and the events.

Elite eSports gamers and amateurs can compete in a series of offline qualifying events at WEC's Fuji round on October 13-14, the 2019 Autosport International Show and the Sebring round on March 15, with each of those events acting as a regional qualifier for a grand finale. The "unique" final will take place at the 2019 Le Mans 24 Hours next June, with the fastest qualifiers to meet and compete against leading real-life drivers.

Further details regarding the competition's format will be announced at the WEC Silverstone round on August 18-19, but it will have "many innovations and authentic details" and will have prizes.

"We are delighted to be able to launch this new eSports series at our British round in August", said WEC CEO Gerard Neveu. "We know from the worldwide fan survey we carried out last year that we have a growing number of younger fans following us on social media. This allows us to speak to them via a medium they love – and one they are very good at."

Neveu added that FA Racing – Fernando Alonso's gaming team – would be part of the series.

"This exciting partnership with the world's greatest motor race underlines Motorsport Network's convening power. It is a clear statement of our intent to bring motorsport to a new audience and offer our many millions of fans and customers around the world a new way to be passionate about the sport," said Motorsport Network EMEA president James Allen.

"As the world's largest motorsport media platform, we see eSports as central to our growth strategy and we are therefore the natural partner for this epic race. The 24 Hours of Le Mans is close to my heart for many reasons, not least because my father was a class winner in 1961."

To register your interest in competing, visit lemanseports.com.

20 VISION FOR THE WEC

WEC races held on Formula 1 circuits.

FIA technical director Gilles Simon explained that this would allow for "greater efficiency at lower cost" and made sense at a time when active aero was increasingly becoming part of road-car design.

The new breed of WEC prototypes will be hybrids like their predecessors, but the level of energy-retrieval will be downscaled in the name of cost-reduction. Just one system, a front-axle KERS, will be permitted rather than the current two, and the maximum power output of this has been reduced from 400bhp to 270bhp.

Any manufacturer developing its own system – both the battery and the motor-generator unit – will have to make it available to other entrants at a price yet to be laid down.

The rulemakers believe that the cost-saving measures will mean that budgets can be reduced to just 25% of current levels. A figure of €25-30million has been suggested for a two-car team competing in the WEC.

This does not appear to be enough of a reduction to make the new formula attractive to the IMSA SportsCar Championship, which the ACO has been lobbying to adopt the 2020 rules.

"Even with the significant reductions announced it still represents a big increase from where we are with the DPi [Daytona

Prototype international] and LMP2 formula that is working well," said IMSA series boss Scott Atherton. "We have spoken to several manufacturers who share our opinion that, even with what has been achieved in terms of cost reduction, it is not yet to a level that would enable them to participate."

Atherton said that IMSA would be working with the ACO and the FIA to try to further reduce costs prior to the publication of the full rulebook before the end of this year. The first Technical Working Group meeting that will start drafting the rules meets in early July.

The larger cockpit dimensions of cars that will be true two-seaters will allow the introduction of the safety upgrade that was first planned for 2018. There will be greater space around the driver's head, and the seating position will be more upright.

The new cars will be slightly slower than the twin-hybrid LMP1s that have raced in the WEC since 2014. The target is for the new cars to be able to achieve a qualifying lap time of 3m20s around the 8.47-mile Le Mans circuit. That's only 5s slower than pole position for last weekend's race. The new cars will be heavier – 980kg rather than 870kg – and have less downforce, but the rulemakers believe that an additional 200bhp from the cars' internal-combustion engines make that a realistic target.

GARY WATKINS



Red Bull ditches Renault for Honda

FORMULA 1

Red Bull will switch to Honda engines in Formula 1 from next season after ending its long-running partnership with Renault.

The termination of the 12-year relationship between Red Bull and Renault, which has yielded 57 grand prix wins so far and four world championship doubles from 2010-13, was announced on Tuesday ahead of Renault's home grand prix.

It came after months of behind-the-scenes analysis from Red Bull, aided by its junior team Toro Rosso switching to Honda engines for this year, of whether the Japanese manufacturer was a credible alternative.

Team principal Christian Horner said: "We have always taken decisions such as this dispassionately and with only one criteria [sic] in mind: do we believe the outcome will allow us to compete at a higher level? After careful consideration and evaluation we are certain this partnership with Honda is the right direction for the team."

"We have been impressed by Honda's commitment to F1, by the rapid steps they have made in recent times with our sister team Scuderia Toro Rosso, and by the scope of their ambition, which matches our own."

Honda has identified its initial target of 2019 as ensuring Red Bull does not drop "below its current level". Though Red Bull

and Renault have not replicated their championship-winning success since F1's V6-turbo-hybrid era began in 2014, they have still won 10 races in that time.

Seven of those wins have come since Honda rejoined the grand prix grid at the start of 2015, which compares to a best result of fourth for Honda, earned with Toro Rosso in Bahrain earlier this year. Daniel Ricciardo has won two of this season's seven races for Red Bull, with Max Verstappen adding a brace of podiums.

Honda motorsport boss Masashi Yamamoto said: "[Red Bull] is one of the top teams. It has won several championships and this year too it has already won some races. It is also obvious that they have a very good chassis and this means we'll have better chances of winning races."

"This gives further motivation to all the members of Honda, but at the same time it is a huge pressure and responsibility for us."

"However, it is Honda's nature to always aspire to a very high target, and I think that's what makes Honda, Honda. As a starting point we do not want to see Red Bull Racing's performance drop below its current level. But our target is to go further and do better than they are doing at the moment."

Honda says it will not identify Red Bull as its works F1 team in 2019 because it "doesn't make sense" to assign labels to either of its customers as it prepares to

supply a second squad in F1 for the first time since '08, when its works team was supported by Super Aguri. Yamamoto said this was an acknowledgement of the regulations stating that engine manufacturers must supply the same specification to all teams, and therefore it does not want to present an image of inequality.

Honda will have more time to prepare for its Red Bull union than it did with its junior team Toro Rosso, having only completed that deal for 2018 as part of a complicated merry-go-round in September '17.

"Though we have more time compared to last year's Toro Rosso situation, it is still a relatively shorter timeframe than everyone else," said Yamamoto. "So, we have to make sure we have good communication in order to have smooth development together."

Relations between Red Bull and Renault had grown increasingly fractious in the years following their last title together, as Renault proved unable to match Mercedes and Ferrari in F1's hybrid era.

Horner thanked Renault for "some incredible moments" over the past 12 years, while Renault reacted with a statement that acknowledged the decision and called it "a natural evolution for both Renault and Red Bull in view of their respective aspirations".

SCOTT MITCHELL

Rockingham binned from BTCC schedule

BTCC

The loss of Rockingham from the 2019 British Touring Car Championship calendar will give series boss Alan Gow the chance to rotate the spare date around the country.

Gow said that the possible sale of Rockingham (right, top) in the future meant that it was impossible to set a date. The 2019 calendar includes two trips to Thruxton (right, below) – in May and August – but this may not necessarily be the case in subsequent seasons.

“It’s a shame to lose Rockingham from the calendar, but we simply couldn’t come to an arrangement,” said Gow. “We will double up at Thruxton and see how that goes – although that ‘spare’ date that we now have isn’t set in stone. We will try Thruxton this year, but equally we could double up at other venues in years to come. We’ve had two rounds at places like Oulton Park before, and that has worked well. We will look at it on a year-by-year basis.”

Gow has always traditionally preferred shorter circuits as it gives trackside fans more chance to see the cars, and he also

believes that it keeps the pack more tightly bunched. But tracks with two differing layouts could be an option in the future.

He added that it is impossible to add different tracks to the schedule, and the current crop would always form the backbone of the schedule.

“Given the infrastructure of the BTCC and the demands it places on a circuit, the ones on the schedule presently are the only ones that can properly accommodate the championship,” he added. “We are not ignoring the other tracks around the UK – we simply wouldn’t be able to fit into them. We will stick with the circuits we have.”

The 2019 BTCC will kick off at Brands Hatch on the Indy layout (April 7) before going to Donington (April 28), Thruxton (May 19), Croft (June 16) and Oulton Park (June 30) before the traditional five-week mid-season break. Snetterton starts the second part on August 4. The championship run-in will take place at Thruxton (August 18), Knockhill (September 15), Silverstone (September 29) and conclude on Brands Hatch’s GP circuit on October 13.

MATT JAMES



SUPER FORMULA This little beauty is the Dallara SF19, which will form the basis of Japan’s Super Formula series next year, replacing the existing SF14. Tomoki Nojiri gave the car its first track test at Varano in Italy last week, completing 71 laps. Aesthetic purists will be pleased not to see a halo, although it has been designed with the potential for one. A two-day shakedown will take place at Fuji on July 4-5 before a demo at the same track’s SF round on July 8.



Unhurried Ogier holds key to rally driver market

WRC

For the third year in succession Sebastien Ogier will weigh another season in a Ford Fiesta WRC against retirement from the World Rally Championship.

By his own admission, jumping ship to another manufacturer would be a big move ahead of his 11th season at the sport's highest level. But it's not inconceivable, with a seat obviously available following Kris Meeke's departure from Citroen.

As well as a potential return to the French firm with whom his world championship

adventure started with the 2008 JWRC title, there will be openings at both Hyundai and Toyota. Only Ott Tanak (Toyota) and Andreas Mikkelsen (Hyundai) are locked down for 2019.

"I'm happy with where I am at, I always said that," Ogier told Autosport. "Everything is going in the direction I want it to at M-Sport. We are progressing and when it's like this you could say there is no reason to change. Let's say this: I would really need a very convincing offer to move." Then he paused before the annual and inevitable: "Who knows if I am here next year? That's

another question; I said sometimes already that this [retirement] is an option."

Should Thierry Neuville secure his first world title this year, he is all but certain to stay with Hyundai. Citroen is ready and willing to table negotiations with Ogier, and Toyota would have the wherewithal to attract him. Once Ogier has made his move, the rest of the market will fall into place – which means there will be more pressure than normal for the reigning champion to make an early decision, something he hasn't managed for the past two years.

DAVID EVANS

Ostberg gets the nod to replace Meeke



WRC

Kris Meeke's Citroen seat has been taken by the team's former employee Mads Ostberg, with the Norwegian driving the factory C3 WRC until the end of this season.

Ostberg drove for Citroen in 2014-15 and returned on a limited programme this season to finish sixth in Sweden and Portugal, before a seat-securing fifth in

Sardinia last time out (left).

Meeke was dropped after crashing heavily in Portugal.

The only one of the final six rounds of the season not confirmed for Ostberg is Spain. Sebastien Loeb will return to the team for his third and final WRC outing of the season at the Salou-based October event.

Ostberg is, however, working to get the WRC's only mixed-surface round added to his roster.

Ostberg told Autosport: "I'm so happy to have the rest of the season sorted. We all know about the situation, but no matter what the circumstances I'm just glad that I got the seat. I think I delivered on the rallies that I have already done and now I'm looking forward to getting more used to the car in the next events."

Craig Breen is confirmed for every remaining event.

DAVID EVANS

A race at last in rallying

WRC

Should they be a creature of habit, the FIA's engraver may slip up in November. For the first time in 15 years, they may not be writing 'Sebastien' on the World Rally Championship trophy. Imagine that. A non-Frenchman winning the WRC...

A generation of rally fans have grown up thinking *La Marseillaise* is the World Rally Championship's theme tune; the red, white and blue Tricolore its home colours and a given name of Sebastien a prerequisite for any would-be title winner. Not since a Subaru-driving Norwegian known as 'Hollywood' carved the words 'Petter Solberg' into the 2003 title has world motorsport's most Seb-centred series been won anybody other than a Loeb or an Ogier.

Until now — perhaps.

Obviously, we're still six rounds from home, but you would have to say this year's drivers' title is Thierry Neuville's to lose. The Belgian (above) is 27 points clear of five-time title winner Ogier and it's hard to think of a driver who has come close to bridging a divide so wide to claim the end-of-season crown.

Were roles reversed, you could crack the champagne right now; Ogier would not drop a 27-point lead across six rallies. Will Neuville? We'll see. It's impossible to say definitively; he's never been here before — but he singularly failed to make the most of an advantage this time last year. When Ogier slapped his Ford Fiesta WRC against a Jukojarvi tree 11 months ago, Neuville

was 19s off the lead in ninth place, but the event was only half a morning old. The bespectacled one had flown a Fiesta to second place just four years earlier, his speed through the Finnish forests beyond question. The talk over lunch that Friday was all about watching Neuville rise; he would win and walk away from Jyväskylä with a 19-point lead over Ogier.

He finished sixth, headed to Saarbrücken level on points, shot himself in the foot in Germany and ended the year with a silver. A year on, there are still those questioning Neuville's ability to finish the job.

If he can maintain the consistency he's shown through the first half of the year and play to his and the Hyundai's strengths, he can do it. He's ahead; it's the hunter who has the work to do. He can't finish second to Ogier everywhere, but he can certainly take a more measured approach.

Ogier's season has turned on two rallies: Sweden, where conditions worked 100% against him, turning his Fiesta into a glorified snowplough after winter arrived; and Portugal, where he turned in fractionally early, damaged the steering and went off the road. Five bonus points were rescued in Torsby, but everything — and possibly the title — was lost in Porto.

Ogier is rattled and on the ropes. Starting with Finland next month, we'll see if Neuville possesses the power to finish the job, or if Ogier can stage a fightback befitting a five-time champion. Either way, we're in for one heck of a ride through to New South Wales in November.

DAVID EVANS



IN THE HEADLINES

BELGIAN GP SECURED

The future of the Belgian Grand Prix has been secured by the local government, which has signed a new three-year extension with Formula 1 owner Liberty Media. Belgian media reported that the deal was signed last week, between Spa's local Wallonian government and Liberty, extending the current deal that runs out after the 2018 event. The race's annual operating losses are paid for by the local government, and offset by the economic benefits to the region.

COLLINS RE-DEDICATION

A re-dedication of the gravestone of 1950s grand prix star Peter Collins will be carried out at 11am on August 5 at St Mary the Virgin Church, Stone, Kidderminster — two days after the 60th anniversary of his death, when he crashed his Ferrari in the 1958 German GP. Rectification work, organised by a number of Collins's friends, has been carried out on the gravestone.

BUTTON IN BGP 'RACE'

Jenson Button will take part in a staged 'race' against motorcycle racer-turned-TV presenter Guy Martin at Silverstone on the Friday of the British Grand Prix weekend, for a Channel 4 programme. Button will drive the unraced Williams FW08B six-wheeler, with Martin aboard an FW08C.

PEUGEOT'S NEW 208

Peugeot plans to introduce a new 208 Supercar model for Sebastien Loeb and Timmy Hansen to race in the World Rallycross Championship from next week's round at Holjes in Sweden. The machines will feature a revised chassis and new engine. Loeb sits second in the points behind runaway leader Johan Kristoffersson. Third driver Kevin Hansen is to upgrade to one of the 208s used so far by Loeb or his older brother.

AUDI STARS IN SPA 24

Reigning DTM champion Rene Rast is to contest the Spa 24 Hours in an Audi R8 LMS alongside Nico Muller and Robin Frijns, who also compete in the German tin-top series for the manufacturer. The trio will line up for WRT alongside the Belgian squad's current Blancpain GT Endurance points leaders Dries Vanthoor, Christopher Mies and Alex Riberas.

FITTIPALDI MOVES AHEAD

A triple victory at Misano last weekend has carried Enzo Fittipaldi into a narrow lead in the Italian Formula 4 rankings. The grandson of two-time world champion Emerson, run by Prema Powerteam, is now one point ahead of Leonardo Lorandi, who scored a second place. Czech F4 rookie Petr Ptacek was second in the other two races.

LMP2 winner excluded for refuelling modification



LE MANS 24 HOURS

The G-Drive Racing team has lost its LMP2 class victory in last weekend's Le Mans 24 Hours for a technical infringement.

The Russian entrant's ORECA-Gibson 07 – run in conjunction with TDS Racing – and the French team's own car were found in post-race scrutineering on Monday to have modifications to their refuelling systems designed to gain time in the pits.

This allowed the G-Drive car shared by Jean-Eric Vergne, Roman Rusinov and Andrea Pizzitola and the fourth-placed TDS ORECA of Loic Duval, Matthieu Vaxiviere

and Francois Perrodo to refuel “significantly faster” than their class rivals, according to World Endurance Championship technical delegates in a stewards' report.

The technical delegates identified an additional part in the two cars' refuelling systems extending from the ‘dead-man’ cut-off valve into the restrictor, which limits the rate at which the fuel goes into the car.

G-Drive and TDS argued that their refuelling restrictors were fully compliant and that the rules do not prohibit additional parts. But the technical delegates successfully argued in a stewards' hearing that the modification was designed “to

defeat, in part, the flow restrictor”. An LMP2 rule states that “What is not expressly permitted by the present regulations is prohibited”.

The decisions, which G-Drive and TDS can appeal, means that the Signatech Alpine ORECA shared by Nicolas Lapierre, Andre Negrao and Pierre Thiriet has been provisionally awarded the P2 class victory. The United Autosports Ligier JSP217 that finished fifth in class in the hands of Juan Pablo Montoya, Hugo de Sadeleer and Will Owen moves up to the final podium behind the Graff-SO24 team's ORECA.

GARY WATKINS

New Tatuus F3 car could race in Europe

FORMULA 3

The FIA's Regional Formula 3 concept hasn't exactly spawned a host of new series in its early days, but it could be about to gain traction in Europe.

Asian F3 gives the fledgling category its first race at Sepang next month, using the Tatuus T-318, and the Italian company's product may form the foundations for action

closer to home in 2019.

Tatuus chief Gianfranco De Bellis told Autosport: “At the moment we have decided to start with the Asian championship, but maybe there will be one or two championships in Europe. We are in discussions with the Italian and German federations, because they have the same F4 Tatuus product – they are interested maybe to organise a championship.”

Both Italy and Germany currently run the Tatuus Formula 4 chassis in the entry-level category, powered by Abarth engines tuned by Autotecnica – the same company that has produced the turbocharged 1750cc Alfa Romeo motor used for Asian F3.

Tatuus also supplies the heavily modified F4 car used as the basis for BRDC British F3.

MARCUS SIMMONS



F1 FRENCH GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



UK START TIMES

FRIDAY

FP1 1100 FP2 1500

SATURDAY

FP3 1200 QUALIFYING 1500

SUNDAY

RACE 1510

LIVE ON SKY SPORTS F1

HIGHLIGHTS ON CHANNEL 4 2215

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP AND CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP SO FAR

1	Sebastian Vettel	121
2	Lewis Hamilton	120
3	Valtteri Bottas	86
4	Daniel Ricciardo	84
5	Kimi Raikkonen	68

1	Mercedes	206
2	Ferrari	189
3	Red Bull	134
4	Renault	56
5	McLaren	40

TYRE ALLOCATION



TRACK STATS

LENGTH 3.630 miles

NUMBER OF LAPS 53

2017 POLE POSITION
n/aPOLE LAP RECORD (old layout)
Keke Rosberg 1m32.462s (1985)RACE LAP RECORD (old layout)
Keke Rosberg 1m39.914s (1985)

PREVIOUS WINNERS (at Magny-Cours)

2008	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2007	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari
2006	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari
2005	Fernando Alonso	Renault
2004	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari
2003	Ralf Schumacher	Williams
2002	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari
2001	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari
2000	David Coulthard	McLaren
1999	Heinz-Harald Frentzen	Jordan



Remember 1973 at Paul Ricard? Ronnie Peterson opposite-locked his way to his first grand prix victory in the gorgeous Lotus 72

THEMES TO WATCH

FRANCE'S HOME HEROES

Three-and-a-half local drivers will take part in the first French GP for 10 years this weekend. France's Esteban Ocon, Romain Grosjean and Pierre Gasly all contest their home race for the first time, while Monagasque Charles Leclerc is actually the most 'local' driver to the Ricard circuit.

MERCEDES' TYRE 'ADVANTAGE'

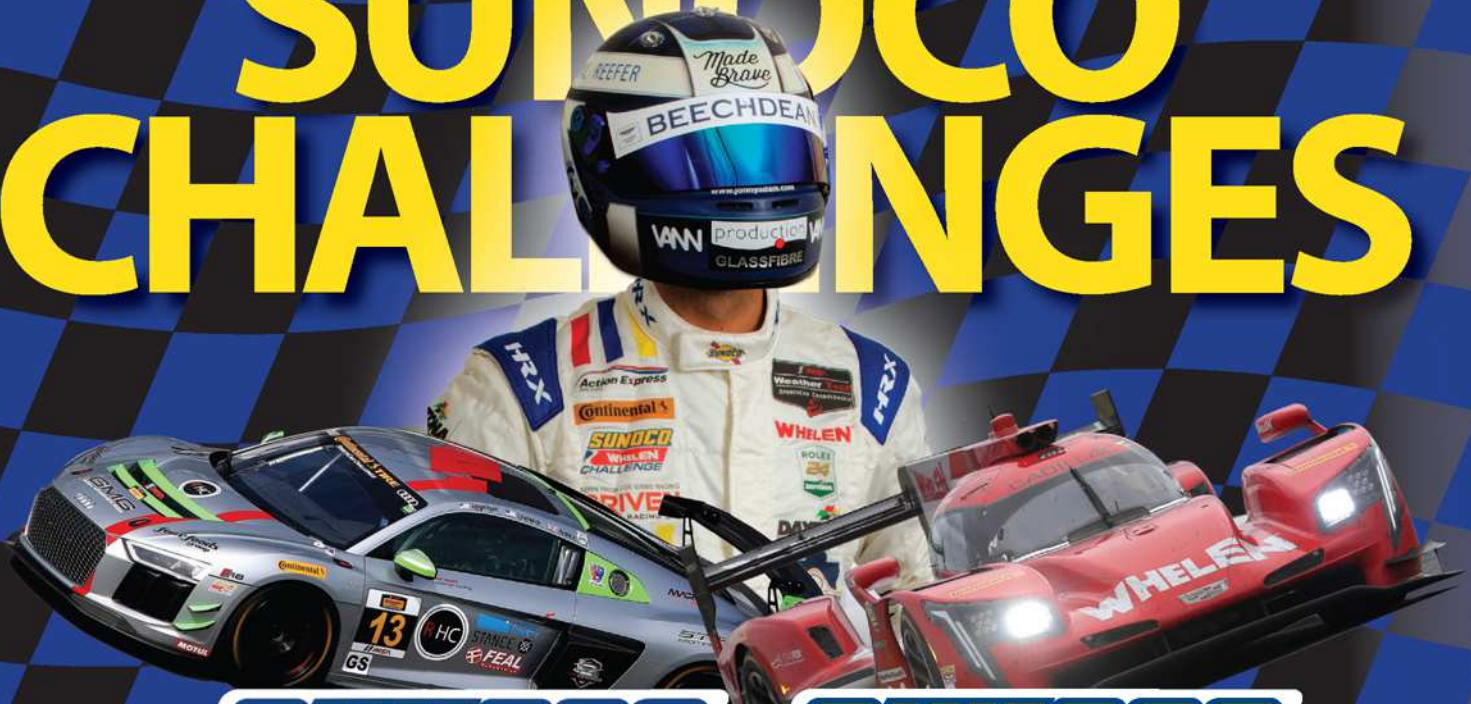
Mercedes has cleared back-to-back races with hypersoft tyres and may have another ace up its sleeve. Paul Ricard offers the same combination as the Spanish GP: special Pirellis (produced for certain circuits to avoid blistering) and a high-speed track that suits its car perfectly.

ALONSO'S RETURN TO MIDFIELD REALITY

Fernando Alonso heads to France in fine fettle after helping end Toyota's Le Mans curse. Such a high must be put behind him as he rejoins McLaren's struggling midfield fight. Red Bull is not alone in having a choice to make for 2019...

10th Anniversary 2018 Special

SUNOCO CHALLENGES



Never Say Never Again!

For this year only – past winners can also compete for the prize*

WHELEN



MINI
CHALLENGE

F3 CUP

GT CUP
CHAMPIONSHIP



* Previous winners are eligible to enter only if in a Challenge approved championship

Anglo American Oil Company Ltd



www.sunocochallenge.com

Sunoco Challenge update – June 2018

The race to compete in 2019's Rolex 24 At Daytona ratchets up a notch in the coming weeks when this season's Sunoco Whelen and 240 Challenges enter the crucial second half of the year.

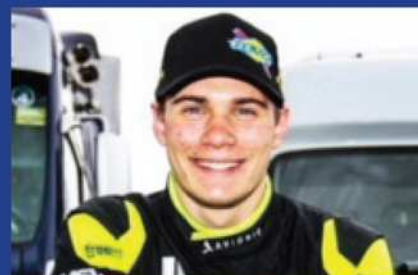
The competition's unique scoring system ensures both categories remain finely poised despite the deceptively large difference between their respective front-runners and pursuers.

Take BRDC British F3 Championship leader Linus Lundqvist who currently tops the Whelen table by 9.92 points. His 102.5 season average was built on an incredibly consistent start to the campaign, while nearest rival Phil Keen (British GT3 Pro) has already experienced the sort of below-par results that could yet hinder Lundqvist's chances of racing at Daytona.

Stuart Moseley is best placed of the Radical Masters contingent in third, one place ahead of Lundqvist's chief F3 rival Nicolai Kjaergaard who continues to recover from the non-scores that blighted an otherwise strong start. It's a similar story for fellow Dane Nicki Thiim who's vaulted back into contention following a recent run of British GT3 wins and podiums.

Meanwhile, the Sunoco 240 Challenge – which offers its winner a fully-paid for entry in Daytona's support race – looks to be a one-horse contest thanks to Kyle Reid's storming start to the Mini Challenge Cooper season. However, his incredible 124-point average remains susceptible to a sudden drop should he fail to maintain the current string of wins, fastest laps and pole positions.

Just ask nearest rival Steve Burgess, who now finds himself 21.78 points behind Reid following a troubled Radical UK Challenge round at Spa. Championship rival Dominic Jackson is just 3.33 points adrift thanks to a stellar outing at the same circuit, while Kelvin Fletcher's increasingly impressive British GT4 Am performances have helped him also move into contention. F3 Cup driver Stuart Wiltshire completes the top-five.



1	L Lundqvist	British F3	102.50
2	P Keen	British GT3	92.58
3	S Moseley	Radical Masters SR8	85.08
4	N Kjaergaard	British F3	78.13
5	N Thiim	British GT3	76.08



www.sunocochallenge.com



1	K Reid	Mini Cooper Pro	124.00
2	S Burgess	Radical Challenge	102.22
3	D Jackson	Radical Challenge	98.89
4	K Fletcher	British GT4 AM	87.08
5	S Wiltshire	F3 Cup	84.00

Points correct as of 10.06.18



Latest updates online, www.sunocochallenge.com



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FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Conservatism is forcing the Formula 1 driver market towards status quo again. Is there any way to induce change – and new stories – without burning bridges?

EDD STRAW

Daniel Ricciardo is going to Mercedes, Kimi Raikkonen is out of Ferrari, Max Verstappen is leaving Red Bull for Sauber, Formula 2 leader Lando Norris is headed to Toro Rosso, rising star Charles Leclerc is moving to Renault and Artem Markelov is joining Force India.

Something akin to this would be happening were the Formula 1 driver market as exciting as what's going on in MotoGP for 2019. Well, it is if you allow a few broad-brushstroke correlations to be drawn between certain drivers/riders and teams.

Four of the six drivers in F1's big three teams are out of contract at the end of this year, yet right now the smart money is on all of them being in the same place in 2019. The big three's line-ups will probably be the same for a third consecutive season. There's a word for that: stagnation.

Why? There are multiple reasons, some of which lie in the cautious mentality of the teams, some of which are down to the nature of the current generation of F1 cars, and because of the strong divide between the haves and the have-nots in contemporary grand prix racing.

Firstly, teams tend to be conservative on driver choices.

"NOW, MORE THAN EVER, SPORTS STAND OR FALL ON THE STORIES THEY GENERATE"

It's a case of 'better the devil you know' being more appealing than risking a 'grass is always greener' appointment. For every inspired piece of recruitment, there are cases of drivers who underachieved when given a big chance.

It's also a more comfortable existence to have a clear hierarchy in your team, which is effectively what Mercedes and Ferrari currently have. But this is the easy option. While there are some infamous cases of two big-name drivers causing problems in teams – Williams in 1986–87 with Nelson Piquet and Nigel Mansell being the obvious example – there are also times when it has succeeded. Crucially, it needs strong and bold management.

The second factor is that current grand prix cars are hugely complicated, with a vast array of unseen set-up options within them. For drivers to master the intricacies to the maximum requires a season of experience. In simpler times, adaptation was less complicated.

This is particularly relevant when it comes to drivers moving from the midfield to large teams. As Valtteri Bottas explained in a recent interview with Autosport, "Changing teams was a bit bigger than I expected." He cited the range of set-up changes, ones that can be made multiple times during a lap to optimise the car, as a big part of that.

There's also the question of the sheer lack of options in F1. This will be the fourth time in six seasons that Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull lock out the top three in the constructors' championship.

To come back to the MotoGP comparison, there are myriad destinations that give you a realistic shot at good results. Even if you can't land a manufacturer ride, there are satellite teams that will allow riders to piece together good campaigns – and more than the promise of a stack of finishes in the bottom half of the top 10.

Outside of F1's elite, Renault is the only other squad a superstar driver could consider throwing their lot in with right now.

There's a final, hidden, factor. The unseen hand of the proverbial 'men in smoke-filled rooms' manipulating driver moves in the background was once a powerful force in grand prix racing, but there's been no sign of Liberty Media having an appetite for pulling strings to facilitate such transfers.

Bernie Ecclestone was never afraid to play his part in moving some of the chess pieces to keep the F1 grid fresh. The classic example was in 1994, when following the tragic loss of Ayrton Senna he moved mountains to bring back the one established 'big box office' driver still racing – Mansell.

Stories about the driver market remain among the most engaging in F1, but there are not enough such stories to go around – even among the smaller teams.

The last time there were so many drivers staying in the same car was from 1989 into '90 – but with 20 teams on the grid in the second of those years, that's a much smaller proportion.

Not every year can be a 2010, or a 1996 – when six of the seats in the top four teams from the previous campaign changed hands – but F1 needs more driver movement to keep itself fresh.

For that to happen, F1 needs to tackle its problems of the inequality of funding and the unprecedented chasm between the elite few teams and the rest. Now, more than ever, sports stand or fall on the stories they generate, and driver moves in F1 are a huge part of generating such interest.

Even this season, when we've had three different teams win races and Red Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes are often covered by a few tenths, has been criticised for supposedly being boring.

That criticism perhaps says less about what we're actually seeing, and more about the feeling that fans are seeing variations of the 'same old' every weekend. That's what makes what could be termed 'freedom of movement' so important. 🏁

YOUR SAY

OPINION PIT + PADDOCK

Having followed F1 on TV since the 1970s, when the coverage was mostly highlights, fans of the sport have long wished for the depth of media interest we enjoy today

KEVIN SKOYLES

Lay off Sky – or just switch to Channel 4

I am sick and tired of people complaining about Sky Sports F1's coverage of grands prix. If you do not like the coverage, do not subscribe and make do with Channel 4 instead.

In response to Daniel Heathcote's email (June 14), I think that Martin Brundle lapping the track in an Aston Martin is a great way for the viewer to see how the track looks, with expert analysis to go alongside. And as for Ted Kravitz 'bench pressing' Nico Rosberg, that was to demonstrate the sheer force that a driver has to go through in order to apply the brakes in an F1 car.

Finally, in response to Andy Bradshaw (June 14), all Formula 1 world feed coverage is produced by Formula One Management, so no fault of Sky there. In fact, you would've got the same on Channel 4. And you have to feel sorry for Crofty and Brundle – how are they supposed to know who all the celebrities are? They're F1 commentators! I still don't know who Gayle King is, and why FOM decided we should know about her...

Joshua Kerr

Kidderminster, Worcestershire

F1 coverage on TV – definitely not better back then...

I wish to reply to Daniel Heathcote's remarks in last week's letters section, regarding the length and content of the Sky F1 coverage. Having followed F1 on television since the 1970s, when the coverage was mostly highlights, fans of the sport have long wished for the depth of media interest we enjoy today.

For those who do not wish to view the entire programming, there is provided on their television set a button labelled on/off.

Kevin Skoyles

By email

Memories of an impromptu flying lap

Re Marcus Pye's great article on Tony Hazlewood's DAF V8 (June 7, page 55). In the early 1970s I was at Silverstone testing my ex-Alan Mann Ford Escort XOO 349F when it broke down at Becketts. Tony stopped and said: "Jump in, I'll take you



back to the pits." Hanging onto the rollcage, crouched in the back, we approached Woodcote at amazing speed. I was just thinking, 'He'll never get in the pitlane...' when with a big grin and a "Hang on!" he proceeded to give me a flying lap.

Later that day he removed the rev limiter and gave the DAF the first unofficial sub-one-minute lap of the old Club circuit. What a great man and racing car. Thank you for the memory, Tony, from a now 74-year-old.

Geoff Robinson

Frome, Somerset

Formula 1 has become its own worst enemy

Pitstops bungled by algorithms, drivers penalised for failed power-unit elements and cars so 'efficient' that overtaking is well nigh impossible. I can't be alone in thinking F1 is turning into a load of bollocks. Surely people like Adrian Newey must realise their prowess is killing the sport, albeit they're operating within the rules. It used to be different with flat-bottomed cars, single-plane wings and, best of all, steel brakes.

Alan Gent

Cheadle, Cheshire

HAVE YOUR SAY, GET IN TOUCH

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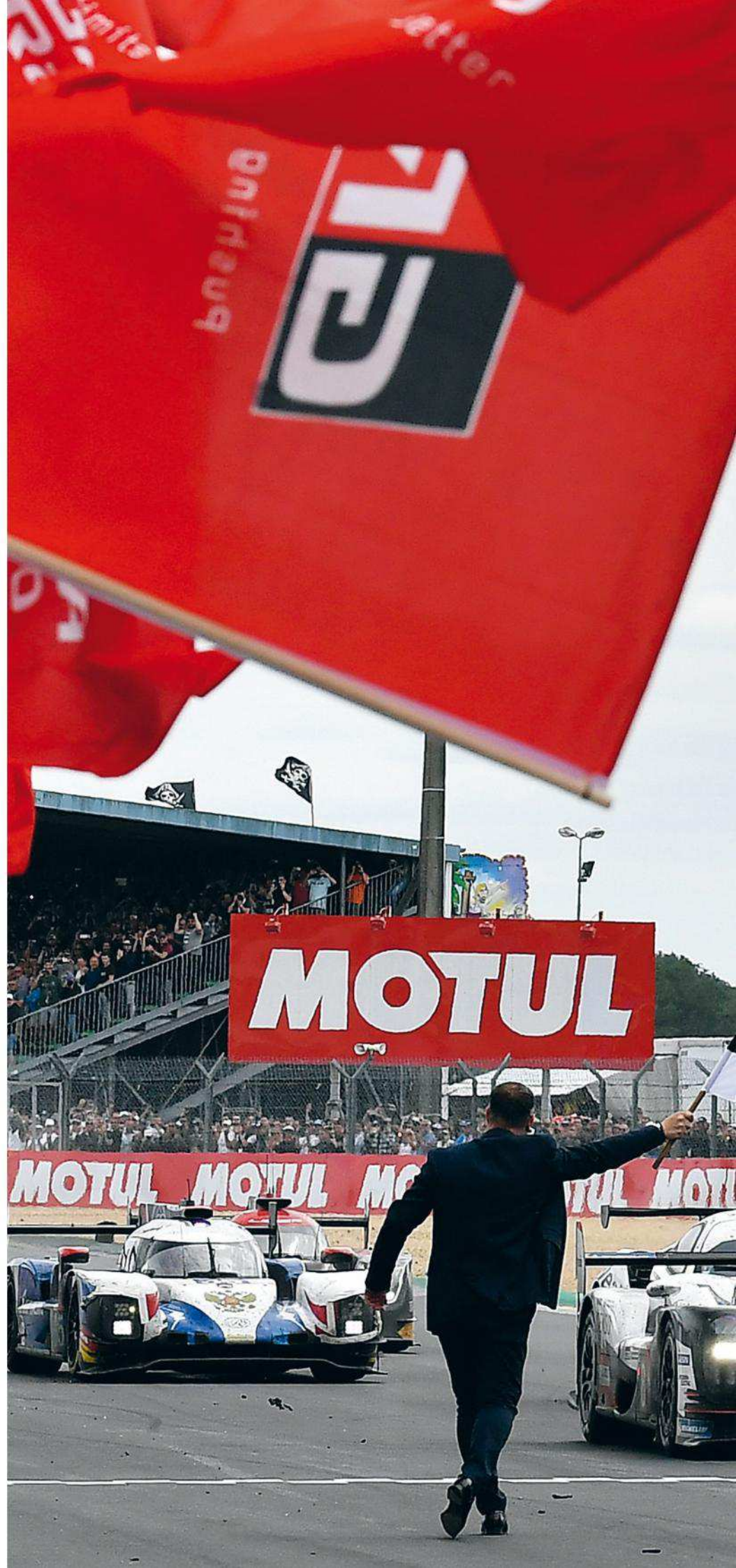

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LMP1

LMP2

GTE PRO

GTE AM

TOYOTA FINALLY BEATS LE MANS – AND NOT ITSELF

There was no factory opposition, but Toyota's TSO50 HYBRIDs set a blistering pace as Fernando Alonso, Kazuki Nakajima and Sebastien Buemi ended one of racing's most famous jinxes

GARY WATKINS

Toyota finally buried its Le Mans 24 Hours jinx and did so in style on a day when it allowed its two TSO50 HYBRIDs to race – and race hard. The Japanese manufacturer's cars put on a show last weekend as they ran without fault through the contest, and the easy conclusion to reach was that Fernando Alonso stole that show on the way to victory together with Sebastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima.

The two-time Formula 1 world champion hauled back the better part of a two-minute deficit to the leading Toyota during a stirring quadruple stint in the small hours of Sunday morning,

putting it on a footing to move into the lead later. Yet it would be too simplistic to conclude that the Le Mans rookie was the difference between the two crews in the second round of the 2018-19 World Endurance Championship superseason.

Alonso climbed aboard the #8 Toyota for the second time in the race shortly before 1.30am on Sunday. Team-mate Mike Conway was more than two minutes up the road in the #7 Toyota, and Alonso quickly started to make up some of the lost ground. But by the time he climbed out after four stints, he was a shade under 40 seconds behind Jose Maria Lopez. ►



Alonso's stint of a few minutes more than two and a half hours in the small hours was a decisive period of the race, but it wasn't only the result of his phenomenal talents and a no-stone-unturned approach to his preparations for the French enduro and the unique challenge of the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe.

The balance between the two Toyota TSO50 HYBRIDS changed over the course of the race, and in the cool of the night Alonso's mount had a clear advantage over the #7 car in which Kamui Kobayashi joined Conway and Lopez. Alonso talked about how he "found a good rhythm" during his quadruple stint during the night, a stint he wanted to extend — he asked over the radio if he could stay in the car to turn it into a quintuple.

The reality was that Alonso now had a car in which it was easier to get to the maximum performance than the sister Toyota in those cooler conditions. "When the temperatures dropped at night, we kind of lacked a lot of front end with the car," explained Conway. "All through the night we dropped pace compared with the other car. That was the kind of turning point, even though the hotter conditions when the sun came up brought us back into the window."

Conway, Kobayashi and Lopez had struggled with set-up through race week and eventually decided to go down the same path as their opposite numbers in #8. Lopez reckoned that their team-mates still had the "better base" come race day.

Nakajima and then Buemi also got more out of #8 than the drivers in #7 when they cycled through the car after Alonso. The Japanese driver continued to make inroads into the diminishing advantage held by Lopez, and was within sight when he stopped for the first time in his own night-time quadruple.

Kobayashi, now with the benefit of a fresh set of Michelins, was briefly able to stabilise the position of the #7 car at the head of the field after taking over from Lopez. Midway through hour 16, however, Nakajima eased past at Mulsanne Corner as his fellow countryman gave him plenty of room.

Buemi continued to build the lead early in his stint with some stunning laps — as well as a bit of luck with a slow zone — before the gap started to stabilise again as the temperatures rose.

The two Toyotas had been evenly matched for the opening hour and swapped positions multiple times in the ebb and flow of the race, until the #7 got its break at the end of the eighth hour and early in the ninth. A slender advantage became a 40s lead when Buemi lost time through the vagaries of the slow-zone system. It turned out to be a double whammy for the Swiss driver, who was penalised with a one-minute stop-go for exceeding the 80km/h speed limit in the controlled area.

The deficit eventually ran to two minutes, but the #8 Toyota had the pace during those epic nocturnal stints to claw it back, and then #7 didn't really have anything for the leaders as the race drew to a close. The race appeared to be over, even before Lopez lost time with a quick spin in the 21st hour.

Kobayashi revealed after the race that he and his team-mates had given up the fight in the closing hours and were concentrating on bringing their car home in second position. This explained, he said, a bizarre mistake with 90 or so minutes to go when he failed to come into the pits for a scheduled stop and had to complete ▶

There was relief as Toyota finally did it



HOURLY BY TOM ERRINGTON

Hour 1 1500-1600

The polesitting #8 Toyota of Sebastien Buemi held the lead against the sister #7 car driven by Mike Conway after a chaotic start for the other LMP1 runners as Andre Lotterer's Rebellion R-13 lost its nosecone.

Hour 2 1600-1700

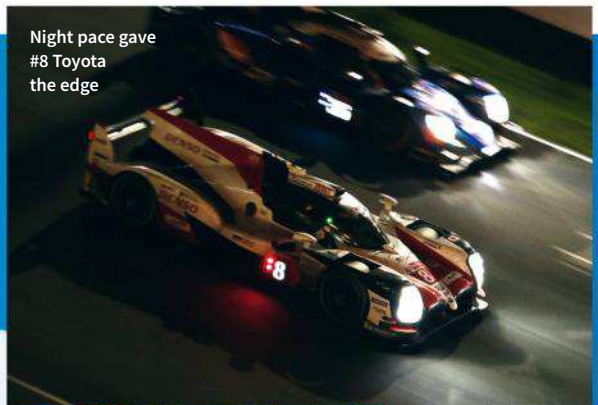
Buemi lost his lead after Conway benefited from a slow zone caused by the GTE Am Porsche driven by Michael Wainwright and emerged with a 1.5-second lead. Rebellion's Thomas Laurent wrestled third back from SMP's Stephane Sarrazin.

Hour 3 1700-1800

Fernando Alonso climbed into the #8 Toyota and set about reducing the lead of Conway's replacement Jose Maria Lopez, notably lapping three seconds faster late in the hour. The #26 G-Drive Racing ORECA began to pull away in LMP2.

Hour 4 1800-1900

Alonso led the majority of the hour with a big advantage before a pitstop promoted Lopez back to the lead. The #7 Toyota and the #38 Jackie Chan DC Racing ORECA punctured. SMP's Egor Orudzhev moved to third, ahead of Rebellion's Mathias Beche.



Night pace gave
#8 Toyota
the edge



Rebellion
finished third
and fourth



Solo ByKolles
entry didn't
see the finish



Ginetta team
struggled, but
got a car home

Hour 5 1900-2000

Negotiating heavy traffic, Alonso picked off Lopez on a safety car restart that followed a huge crash for the ByKolles at the Porsche Curves. The G-Drive machine continued to lead LMP2, while the #92 Porsche edged the #81 BMW in GTE Pro.

Hour 6 2000-2100

Alonso handed the #8 over to Kazuki Nakajima as their car ended up 10s clear. The DragonSpeed BR1 driven by Renger van der Zande skated across the Dunlop Chicane and Jenson Button racked up laps in the troubled second SMP Racing car.

Hour 7 2100-2200

Nakajima traded fastest laps with Kamui Kobayashi before a slow zone caused by Juan Pablo Montoya going off brought the Toyotas together. The #26 G-Drive ORECA led LMP2 and the two retro-liveried Porsches dominated the GT tier.

Hour 8 2200-2300

Kobayashi brought an end to the Toyotas close racing, putting the #7 seven seconds clear. Best of the privateers was an intriguing battle until SMP's Matevos Isaakyan crashed, freeing Thomas Laurent's Rebellion into third.

much of the next lap using electrical power from the car's hybrid system. "We should have stopped after 11 laps, but I didn't box – I just forgot, that's it," he explained. "For us the race was gone, so we decided not to take risks, not to be aggressive. I slowed down and that is why I lost concentration."

The #7 Toyota received two penalties, each a 10s stop-go, for the additional lap. One was for exceeding the maximum stint length under green-flag conditions of 11 laps, and the other for using more than the maximum amount of fuel over a stint.

That meant the gap between the two Toyotas went out to more than a lap for the first time of the race. The #7 TSO50 ended up classified two laps down on the winning car because Kobayashi had to line up behind Nakajima for a formation finish ahead of the chequered flag.

There was, predictably, no race with the privateers at Le Mans, just as there hadn't been at the 2018-19 WEC opener at Spa in May. The closest that one of the non-hybrids came to the Toyotas was into the Dunlop Chicane on the opening lap, when the nosecone of Andre Lotterer's Rebellion touched the rear end of the #8 car, though only because it was in the process of parting company with the rest of the car at the time.

A lap into the 24 Hours, the leading Toyota was nearly three seconds up on the best of the Rebellion-Gibson R-13s. And by the first round of pitstops, that margin was nigh on 20s. The TSO50s held a one-lap advantage over the chasing pack as early as the third hour.

However quick the best of the independents were over one clear racing lap – Neel Jani was less than two and a half seconds slower than Buemi's fastest lap of the race – they couldn't lap as consistently quickly as the TSO50s. The benefits of having a 400bhp kick on tap from their twin-hybrid systems resulted in a massive advantage for the Toyotas in traffic.

"We're not too bad over one lap, but on a spread of times we are nowhere near the Toyotas," said Jani, who lined up in the #1 Rebellion with Lotterer and Bruno Senna. "We can lose 10s or 12s a lap if we are unlucky with traffic."

The quickest of the privateers, the Rebellions and SMP Racing's BR Engineering BR1s powered by the AER V6 turbo engine, were never going to be in a position to benefit from any Toyota hiccups even if they had run reliably. And they didn't.

The Rebellions ran through to the finish to third and fourth positions, but they were a long way back after 24 hours of racing. The third-placed R-13, shared by Thomas Laurent, Gustavo Menezes and Mathias Beche, was 12 laps down at the chequered flag, the car Lotterer shared with Jani and Senna 13.

Along the way, the R-13 designed and built by ORECA suffered a series of niggles that you may expect of a car that didn't run for the first time until the start of April. There were issues underneath both cars – a loose floor on #1 and loose plank on #3 – in addition to clutch issues, while the Lotterer/Jani/Senna Rebellion had a problem with one of its doors at the finish to go with the loose nose that it had at the start.

It was this problem that decided the internecine battle between the Swiss entrant's two cars in favour of Laurent, Menezes and Beche in #3. That explained why the team opted to leave Jani

Errant Rebellion
nose caused
early drama



*"Over a spread of times we're
nowhere near the Toyotas"*

REBELLION'S NEEL JANI

HOURLY BY HOURLY

Hour 9 2300-2400

The #7 Toyota's lead ballooned after the sister car shipped a significant amount of time under the slow zone. There were farcical scenes as the damaged Isaakyan SMP BR1 made a failed attempt to rejoin, eventually catching fire.

Hour 10 2400-0100

Buemi not only lost time under the slow zone in the #8 but was hit with a penalty for speeding. Conway's lead grew to over two minutes when Buemi served his stop/go penalty. The two Rebellions settled into third and fourth, clear of LMP1 attrition.

Hour 11 0100-0200

Alonso began the night's starring role that turned out to be pivotal in the #8's success, almost immediately outpacing Conway. Oliver Rowland stopped in one of the Manor Ginettas, allowing Petrov's SMP Dallara to begin overhauling them.

Hour 12 0200-0300

The #7 Toyota continued to haemorrhage time to Alonso, who took to night racing with ease and took over a minute out of the leader Lopez. Rebellion Racing was third and fourth in the hands of Mathias Beche and Bruno Senna.

QUALIFYING

JAPANESE DUEL
DECIDES POLE

Toyota was always going to get pole position. And always going to monopolise the front row of the grid with its pair of TS050 HYBRIDs. But it still put some effort into qualifying.

Kazuki Nakajima's time on the way to setting another Le Mans pole to go with the one he claimed back in 2014 proved that Toyota was trying. He got down to a 3m15.377s, which wasn't so far off Kamui Kobayashi's record-breaking 3m14.791s from 2017.

It was a good effort, because Kobayashi's lap, remember, was set in freakishly perfect conditions. There was a tail wind on the Mulsanne Straight, a headwind in the Porsche Curves and a track surface nicely rubbered in by the Michelins on the cars competing in the Porsche Carrera Cup support race. Nakajima had none of those advantages.

Both Toyota's Japanese drivers were given a qualifying shot at the start of the opening session on Wednesday, which followed four hours of free practice, courtesy of the threat of rain on Thursday. Nakajima posted a 3m17.270s, while Kobayashi was just a tenth behind on 3m17.377s.

They went again in third qualifying on Thursday in the knowledge that the conditions were significantly better. It was cooler and there was now more rubber laid down on the asphalt. Nakajima found almost two seconds, but Kobayashi went two tenths slower than before despite setting a fastest middle sector.

"It was more or less at the maximum with no traffic, so I can't complain," said Nakajima. "The track conditions were much better than yesterday and the lap was more or less as we expected. I was pushing hard to try to beat Kamui's record, so maybe I could have done better in places."

GARY WATKINS

**Hour 13 0300-0400**

Lopez was helped as a disrupted hour ended with a slow zone, just after Alonso had taken five seconds out of his lead. It grew back to around two minutes, with Alonso on a quadruple stint and radioing the team to ask about a fifth.

Hour 14 0400-0500

Nakajima carried on where Alonso left off and brought the lead gap to around 10s. Rebellion Racing swapped positions when a technical problem forced Neel Jani into the pits for almost 10 minutes and allowed Gustavo Menezes to go third.

Hour 15 0500-0600

Kobayashi ended the #8 Toyota's run of gaining on the leader as he stabilised the lead to around 10 seconds. LMP2 continued to be controlled by G-Drive, which held a one-lap advantage. The #92 Porsche's GT lead grew ever bigger.

Hour 16 0600-0700

As light returned, it was the #8 Toyota that was finally back in front after a clean move on the Mulsanne executed by Nakajima on Kobayashi. Buemi took over #8 and built a gap of over 30s in the pits during a slow zone.



Button's debut did not go as well as Alonso's



DragonSpeed crashed out



Toyota's crew had time to rest in the pits



SMP Racing showed pace but neither car made the end

RACE PACE

If you take the average of the 10 fastest race laps of each Toyota driver, Alonso is third quickest, behind Sebastien Buemi and Mike Conway:

Average of top 10 fastest laps

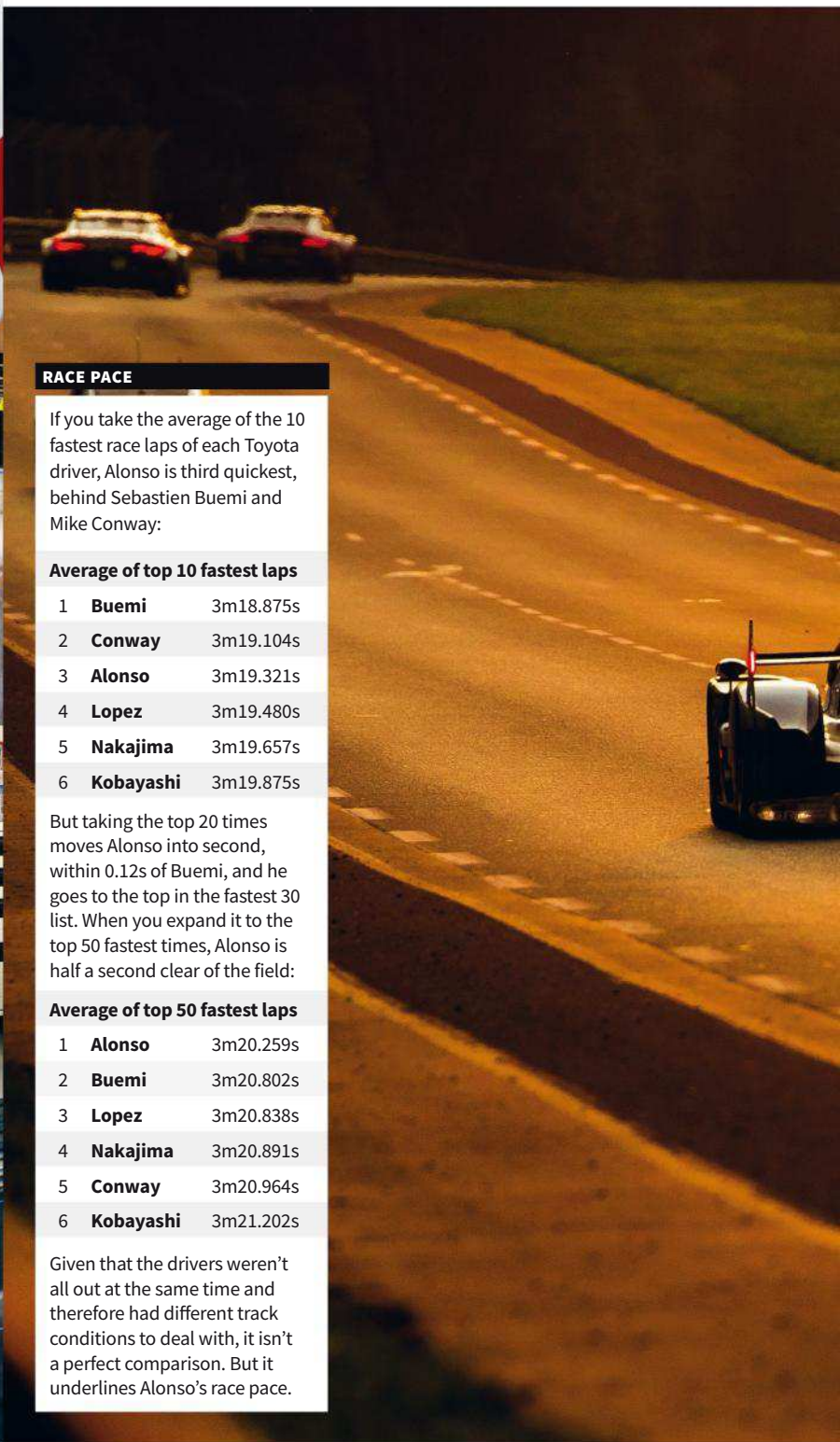
1	Buemi	3m18.875s
2	Conway	3m19.104s
3	Alonso	3m19.321s
4	Lopez	3m19.480s
5	Nakajima	3m19.657s
6	Kobayashi	3m19.875s

But taking the top 20 times moves Alonso into second, within 0.12s of Buemi, and he goes to the top in the fastest 60 list. When you expand it to the top 50 fastest times, Alonso is half a second clear of the field:

Average of top 50 fastest laps

1	Alonso	3m20.259s
2	Buemi	3m20.802s
3	Lopez	3m20.838s
4	Nakajima	3m20.891s
5	Conway	3m20.964s
6	Kobayashi	3m21.202s

Given that the drivers weren't all out at the same time and therefore had different track conditions to deal with, it isn't a perfect comparison. But it underlines Alonso's race pace.



HOURLY

Hour 17 0700-0800

Buemi's advantage shrank but the #8 Toyota continued to lead the way. Once again he was the victim of a slow zone, taking 12s out of his time as Conway returned to the #7's wheel. Ben Hanley crashed the DragonSpeed BR1.

Hour 18 0800-0900

While attrition continued to claim the privateer LMP1s, Buemi set about rebuilding his gap over Conway. He made up 10s to be three-quarters of a minute clear. Problems behind the Rebellions included the last Manor Ginetta having gearbox issues.

Hour 19 0900-1000

Alonso once again led when he beat Conway off a restart after being held at pit exit due to a safety car called for repairs at Tertre Rouge. The #3 Rebellion briefly dropped out of third place for the first time in 11 hours when it stopped under the safety car.

Hour 20 1000-1100

The Alonso versus Lopez battle continued to be won by Alonso, who held almost a 1m20s advantage over the sister car. Beche's Rebellion was reported for having its door open, while the Manor Ginetta was back on track in this hour.



“When the temperature dropped at night, we lacked a lot of front end”

TOYOTA'S MIKE CONWAY

in the car for the final three hours. It didn't want to have to open the offending door again in case it couldn't be closed.

A distant third still represented the best Le Mans result that Rebellion has been able to keep (it lost a podium last year with its LMP2 ORECA for a homologation infraction). “It feels good to have finally got on the podium,” said team principal Bart Hayden. “When you consider how long we've had this car up and running we should be quite happy, even though we weren't in the same race as the Toyotas.”

Both BR1s run for SMP by the ART Grand Prix squad showed form. Stephane Sarrazin battled with Laurent in the opening stages, and the car he shared with Matevos Isaakyan and Egor Orudzhev continued to fight it out with the #3 Rebellion for more than seven hours. The car's race came to an end when Isaakyan spun in the second part of the double-left in the Porsche Curves, hit the barrier and was unable to get his damaged car going again. Or rather he did get going after considerable effort, which included removing the rear bodywork, only for the car to catch fire after limping along for a handful of metres.

The sister car, in which Jenson Button made his Le Mans debut alongside Vitaly Petrov and Mikhail Aleshin, stopped at the pits just before the end of the opening hour with an engine-sensor issue and stayed there — apart from one slow lap — for three hours while the problem was located and resolved.

The second of the Dallara-developed cars was as quick, if not quicker, than the Rebellions when it finally got back on track, but also didn't see the finish. An engine failure put the car out of the race early in the final hour.

It may not have made the finish, but there was satisfaction at SMP that it had been able to battle with the Rebellions. “We really felt we could challenge Rebellion,” said Gaetan Jago, technical director of the ART sportscar squad. “We were happy with our pace and felt we were in the fight.”

DragonSpeed's Gibson-engined BR1, which Ben Hanley put an impressive sixth on the grid with his first flying lap in qualifying, didn't see the finish. Renger van der Zande damaged the floor with an early off through the Dunlop curve/chicane, which precipitated a long stop. The team opted not to attempt further repairs after Hanley crashed heavily in the 17th hour.

The ByKolles team's Nissan-engined ENSO CLM P1/01 didn't make it back to the pits after Dominik Kraihamer clipped a GTE Am car and hit the wall in the Porsche Curves.

The Manor squad had a troubled week, but managed to keep its Ginetta-Mecachrome G60-LT-P1s running relatively smoothly for the first six or so hours. The #5 Ginetta was afflicted by a multitude of mechanical problems, including steering and clutch issues, but came through to the finish in the hands of Charlie Robertson, Mike Simpson and Leo Roussel, despite spending nearly a quarter of the race in the pits. The sister car suffered a series of electronic glitches and stopped for good out on the circuit in Oliver Rowland's hands in the 10th hour.

So it was the privateers who hit problems, not Toyota, despite its unenviable record of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Its meticulous preparation paid off and it did what it had failed to do so many times in the past: it managed to beat Le Mans. 🇯🇵

Hour 21 1100-1200

Lopez's spin at the Dunlop Chicane in the #7 further extended the #8 car's lead in the final hours. The multiple World Touring Car champion had previously touched the grass on the exit of the Esses as Alonso ran untroubled to a 40s lead.

Hour 22 1200-1300

Nakajima climbed aboard the #8 in the final driver change of the race. The battle for best privateer took another twist when Jani was forced to abandon a stint early after his door flew open, which allowed the sister car of Menezes to pass for third.

Hour 23 1300-1400

Fears that the Toyota curse had struck again were raised when Kobayashi slowed; he had missed his pitstop and was forced to run at 80km/h to save fuel. That allowed the #8 Toyota to lap the #7 and make a big step towards victory.

Hour 24 1400-1500

Kobayashi served two separate 10-second stop/go penalties after his pitstop miss. Nakajima took the flag to win for Toyota, with the lapped sister car slowing to join for a photo-finish. Rebellion was third and fourth.

LMP1

LMP2

GTE PRO

GTE AM

ALONSO'S REMARKABLE ROOKIE RUN

The Spanish ace played a key role as he took a step towards the triple crown

ANTHONY PEACOCK

There's an old joke about two explorer friends trekking through the Serengeti, when suddenly, in the distance, they spot a hungry lion about to set upon them. The first one gets ready to run, but the other starts to calmly remove his desert boots and put on some trainers. "What are you doing?" cries out his mate. "Even with those on, you're never going to outrun a lion!"

"I don't need to outrun the lion," points out the first explorer. "I just need to outrun you..."

Fernando Alonso spent a lot of time wearing those trainers at the Le Mans 24 Hours. The Spaniard came to it knowing that he essentially only had to beat his team's other car, and he made that his mission during the night-time hours in particular, when he was outstandingly ruthless.

The other two stints he did were instead about consolidating a position: holding station against the #7 car as the lead oscillated between them on Saturday evening, then protecting a considerable advantage on Sunday morning, before handing over to poleman Kazuki Nakajima to seal the victory.

So, two boxes now ticked on the 'triple crown' list, with only the Indianapolis 500 yet to fall to him. But this one felt special because, leaving last month's Spa 6 Hours warm-up event aside, this was the first race of massive international stature that he had won since the 2013 Spanish Grand Prix. It's a mountain climbed; redemption after being cruelly denied a shot at the Indy 500 win last year.

"Right now, it's difficult to express the emotions: firstly because you are tired and then because you are so focused and concentrated that it's difficult to really realise what you have achieved," Alonso said after the podium celebration. "I am very, very proud of my team-mates and I am very proud of Toyota. The winning feeling

is amazing and the adrenalin you have now, the experience and emotions, are much bigger than any feelings of tiredness."

Alonso was relishing the satisfaction of knowing that his own pace had triumphed over experience. The rabbit had been pulled out of the hat, after it so nearly was at Indianapolis just over a year ago. In his own words: "To beat the specialists in oval racing or here in endurance racing – against the guys who know every trick – is great."

Because even for a man used to multi-tasking, merely adapting to the Toyota TS050 HYBRID was no easy job, let alone discovering how to get the very best out of it, faced with drivers who have been doing it for years (Nakajima and Buemi first contested Le Mans with Toyota in 2012).

"Before the race, the biggest challenge was simply getting used to the car: the systems, the technology, the way you drive going into the corners," says Alonso. "For example, you brake from longer distances but with light braking for better harvesting and more efficient driving. It's definitely a completely different driving style to Formula 1, but also quite complex in the way it works."

This year Alonso is contesting 27 races between his Formula 1 and sportscar programmes, which also included the Daytona 24 Hours at the start of the year and now Fuji after the event was shifted to accommodate him. Right now, he's in the middle of doing five big races on consecutive weekends: the Canadian GP, Le Mans 24 Hours, French GP, Austrian GP and British GP.

Ask about his commitment to this sort of programme, which feels more like it should belong to the 1950s rather than the present day, and the response is instant: "One hundred per cent. If it wasn't that, I wouldn't do it."

Except in the 1950s, cars were a lot more similar – whether ►





they were for F1, Le Mans or the road (in the latter case, they were essentially the same thing).

"[It's] not easy," Alonso confirms. "There was a lot of training, a lot of effort, a lot of studying. Because this is endurance racing, it's all about making the car survive every lap, or survive any unexpected problems. We had to practise for a lot of problems that may happen in the race, so it was quite complex preparation."

In the end, perhaps thanks to that comprehensive programme (which included running on three wheels to simulate returning to the pits with damage), the issues were astonishingly few and far between for both TS050s – and any minor setbacks were entirely of the Toyota crews' own making. Alonso himself kept his nose spotlessly clean throughout the whole 24 hours – "a perfect debut", according to Toyota Gazoo Racing boss Shigeki Tomoyama.

The #8 car picked up just two minute-long stop-and-go penalties during the course of the race, on both occasions when Buemi was driving. Mechanically, it exhibited the sort of reliability over 24 hours that must have left Alonso wondering why the same is never guaranteed in just two hours of F1, with just 47 minutes lost during 35 stops (penalties aside).

Much was made of the fact that Toyota was the only manufacturer LMP1 entry this year but, looking at those numbers, it could probably have won anyway.

The race started, of course, under more worrying circumstances, with the entire rear deck of the #8 Toyota needing a precautionary change after being hit – shortly before Buemi set the fastest lap of the race. Alonso himself explained what happened: "We were concerned by the incident at the start, so we took it off, but we saw nothing wrong. In fact, the original one is going back on."

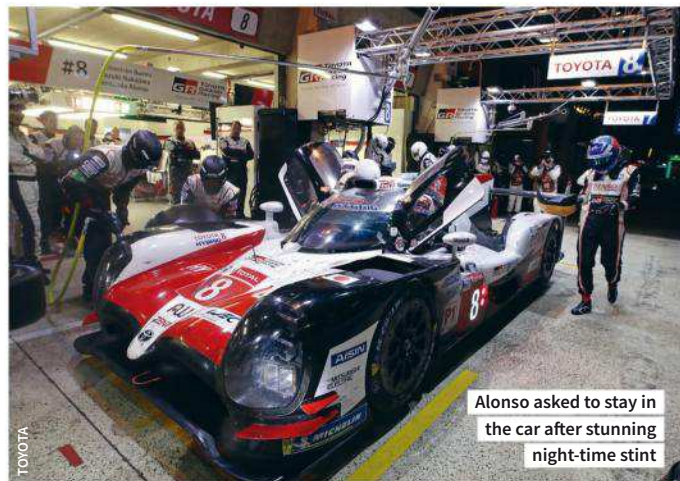
Throughout Alonso's first stint, which followed on from starter Buemi's, he was running close to the leading #7 car driven by Jose Maria Lopez, which had got the better of the slow zones and safety cars at the beginning of the race.

Then there was yet another safety car. With Le Mans fielding three safety cars at different points around the circuit, one of those quirks of fate led to Alonso and Lopez being caught in the middle of the same safety car train, within a gaggle of slower traffic (a description that could actually apply to the entire rest of the field).

Finally, it was back to green-flag racing and, when the hammer dropped, Alonso had no hesitation in bundling his team-mate out of the way. Some people felt it was too aggressive, but Alonso was sending out a very clear message about his intentions.

"We lost a bit of time with the puncture and the safety car and I think it will be a bit like that for the whole race; we were very close," he reported after getting out of the car. "From my point of view it was great; I really enjoyed my first stint. I think it was under control – we were taking care of every detail, and extra care in the pitlane. Both cars are pulling away from the others, so that's the most important thing."

As expected, the Toyotas were racing themselves, which led team adviser Alex Wurz to describe the race afterwards



Alonso asked to stay in the car after stunning night-time stint



as "one of the most intense battles within a team that I have ever seen in the whole of motorsport, even if maybe we didn't show it so much from the outside".

That intensity was well and truly revealed during Alonso's second stint – the night shift he had been looking forward to most. Rested after more than five hours off, Alonso climbed back into the #8 Toyota when it was around three minutes behind its sister car, largely the consequence of losing out in a slow zone, followed by a penalty for not slowing down enough during it.

Before long, Alonso was reeling in his rival (Mike Conway initially, then Lopez) at the rate of three seconds or more per lap. As another safety car period came and went, Alonso kept pushing – these were the laps that helped win the race.

By the time he reached the end of his quadruple stint he had just about halved the deficit and was reluctant to get out. "I can do one more," he said on the radio. "I have the rhythm of the night."

The decision was taken to pit him anyway. A plan had been put in place and, with drivers only allowed to drive for four hours out of every six, keeping Alonso in the car limited the potential options. When he emerged after three hours and six minutes behind the wheel he was visibly buzzing.

"Yes, I asked to stay in the car," he confirmed, hardly able to keep still as he was talking. "I felt strong, I felt in the zone. It went well. When you get lucky, it feels like you just get more and more lucky. It's the opposite of when you get unlucky, as then it feels like you get sucked into a loop. Now half the job is done, and we just have to continue like this."

"When you get lucky, it feels like you just get more and more lucky"

FERNANDO ALONSO



Nakajima, who Alonso handed over to in the early hours of the morning, did exactly that, relentlessly harrying the sister car – and it was on his watch that the #8 finally got through at Mulsanne Corner to claim a lead it would never lose, while Buemi then went on to extend the advantage.

But it was Alonso who pulled back the biggest gap during that crucial night stint to put them within touching distance. By the time he completed his final stint on Sunday morning, the hardest part was done. Or maybe not, as he then had to watch from the garage...

As Buemi pointed out, the picture was looking very different when they were three minutes behind just before half-distance and the spectre of team orders was floating in the background of the feast. It was absolutely crucial to close that gap before anybody in management started getting any ideas.

That was what made Alonso's arrival a triumph. "I think the cold conditions seemed to suit my style a little bit better and I took the maximum from the car," he said. "Together with Seb and Kazuki, we just tried to stay calm and be in the race until the last couple of hours."

Job done. There's obviously going to be a lot of speculation now about what Alonso will do next. But another Le Mans is pretty sure to be close to the top of the list. "I've loved every minute of it," he says. "It's actually a shame that Le Mans is only every year – it should be every two or three weeks!"

Alonso fever or not, not quite everybody shared his enthusiasm for the event... 🇫🇷



Alonso and Buemi celebrate their moment of triumph

HARTWELL
LAT IMAGES

STOP PRESS

As Autosport's early section went to press, it was revealed that both the victorious and fourth-place ORECA's had been disqualified for a machined part in the refuelling system that was thought to enable faster refuelling. See Pit and Paddock for more details.



LMP1

LMP2

GTE PRO

GTE AM

NO STOPPING VERGNE AND G-DRIVE IN LMP2

Jean-Eric Vergne, Andrea Pizzitola and Roman Rusinov were the favourites, and after a cautious start they took the lead and held it to the end

JAMES NEWBOLD

Pressure on the shoulders of pre-event favourites was a familiar theme at Le Mans, and it wasn't just Toyota that felt the weight of expectation on race day.

Jean-Eric Vergne, Andrea Pizzitola and Roman Rusinov were hotly tipped for LMP2 glory in the #26 G-Drive Racing ORECA after following up their domination of the World Endurance Championship opener at Spa with another comfortable victory in the European Le Mans Series at Monza, but translating latent speed into a result at Le Mans is never straightforward, as Rusinov well knows.

Although the Toyota comparison doesn't quite bear scrutiny, the Russian has been close a few times before, finishing third in 2015 with OAK Racing and going one better

in '16 after switching allegiance to Jota Sport. Last year was meant to be his crowning glory as part of the TDS Racing stable, but it didn't happen – and his race ended in the Porsche Curves barriers, with a three-minute penalty carried over to the next WEC round adding insult to injury.

Rusinov offered cautionary platitudes about the #26 crew's status as favourite before practice got under way: "I love and I hate this race at the same time because it takes you so long to prepare it and it can all go wrong." But such was his car's dominance come the race that his caution proved unfounded.

Although Vergne slipped back from third to seventh at the start, as Nathanael Berthon's DragonSpeed ORECA took the lead from pole position man Paul-Loup

Chatin's IDEC Sport ORECA, his pace around the first pitstops cycled the #26 car into a lead it would not lose for the rest of the race – all 360 laps of it.

With no on-track incidents or unscheduled pitstops required to solve mechanical problems, the #26 car made it look "a bit too easy" for Pizzitola's liking. But as the hours ticked by and the car continued to run like clockwork, two laps clear of the field, no bad luck was forthcoming and the team was left to ponder one of the most comprehensive victories you're likely to see at Le Mans.

"I was really surprised about the reliability of the car," admitted TDS team boss Xavier Combet. "It was amazing; you cannot imagine that it's so easy in the end.

"We never had pressure because we all



HARTWELL
LAT IMAGES



SBLOXHAM
LAT IMAGES

prepare really well and we try to imagine all these situations [where something could go wrong] and in the end it did not happen.

"This time it's the perfect race. We've never been in this situation. I am like somebody who is in a cloud. It's just a dream I would say."

With such a huge margin over the chasing Signatech-Alpine car of two-time class winner Nicolas Lapierre, Andre Negrao and Pierre Thiriet, Vergne spent much of his

race in conservation mode, a task he said was not as easy as it looked from outside, as he attempted to balance looking after the car with keeping his concentration.

"Having such a big lead, there is no point to push, but as a racing driver you want to make the fastest times, you want to have the fastest average," he said. "In the traffic I was taking absolutely zero risk — you need to drive like your grandmother sometimes just to bring the car back home!"

Despite this, Thiriet felt that G-Drive was out of reach. Aside from a hapless spin exiting a slow zone at Arnage towards the end of the sixth hour, Signatech also had a trouble-free run, but simply didn't have the pace to stay with the leaders when Lapierre wasn't in the car and had fallen off the lead lap by the 11th hour.

"They were faster in the box, faster on the track and faster everywhere, it was difficult," said Thiriet. "Against us was ▶

LMP2 IN BRIEF

NO FAIRYTALE RETURN FOR JOTA SPORT

After finishing second outright and taking a class one-two in 2017, Jota Sport had a difficult return with its Jackie Chan DC Racing-branded ORECA. A disconnected water pipe on the all-Malaysian #37 car as early as lap two left it playing catch-up, before two punctures for the sister #38 – including a major blowout for Gabriel Aubry on the Mulsanne – hampered its challenge. Thanks to attrition, they finished in sixth and eighth, scoring points for third and fifth of the World Endurance-entered runners.

CETILAR VILLORBA'S ALTERNATIVE VICTORY

Giorgio Sernagiotto's aerial accident in the second part of qualifying left the Cetilar Villorba Corse team facing a race against time to make the 24 Hours. After missing Q3, the mechanics worked until 3am on Friday and received a special bodywork shipment from Dallara before returning to the track for the warm-up. Their efforts were rewarded with 13th in class, after an incident-filled race. Team manager Raimondo Amadio described it as "one of the most complicated and difficult races of my life" but was happy just to have finished. "For us, finishing the race was more or less like a win," he said.

LAMMERS ENJOYS LE MANS SWANSONG

Thirty years on from his famous victory with Jaguar, Jan Lammers signed off at Le Mans with his 24th and final appearance, driving the Racing Team Nederland Dallara. Formula 2 racer Nyck de Vries – nearly 40 years his junior – will take over the cockpit alongside Giedo van der Garde and Frits van Eerd for the remaining rounds of the WEC. Lammers had run as high as sixth early on, before exhaust issues in the night dropped him several laps down in ninth, but the veteran still enjoyed his experience.

"I was glad with my fitness and in the end the speed was coming, so I felt really good about it," said Lammers. "It hasn't really quite sunk in yet, but I just enjoyed the driving, it was really an enormous privilege to be able to do this at my age."



a very strong team. G-Drive did an amazing job."

The IDEC ORECA, a transformed prospect this year with former Peugeot ace Nicolas Minassian installed as sporting director, was among the few cars able to match G-Drive on pace, particularly in the hands of 2014 ELMS champion Chatin, but a fuel-pick-up problem from the start of the race meant it was limited to nine-lap stints, one fewer than the rest, and would therefore require an extra stop once in every 10.

Even so, Signatech-Alpine's second place was still not completely out of reach until the IDEC car's gearbox temperature rocketed and further inspection revealed that the casing had cracked. Game over.

IDEC's departure followed an attritional 20th hour in which Ligier's hopes

collapsed. Its cars had taken a major step forward courtesy of an ACO 'joker' intended to improve the relative performance of its Le Mans aero kit, which proved such a disaster that it was abandoned by most teams last year. Will Stevens qualified the #23 Panis-Barthez Competition entry just shy of last year's pole time.

Stevens briefly led the race during the first pitstop sequence and consolidated second position after moving ahead of Negrao in the early hours of the morning before clutch problems cost him, Julien Canal and Timothe Buret over an hour in the pits and relegated them to an unrepresentative 11th at the finish.

"Basically the clutch engaged, so I lost drive and then the clutch went super-stiff and I couldn't manage to get it back,"





which had bronze-rated Francois Perrodo on its driver roster and had lost time when Matthieu Vaxiviere got stuck in the gravel in hour 17.

Having recovered from a one-minute stop/go penalty for speeding in a slow zone in the 14th hour, Gommendy, Jonathan Hirschi and Vincent Capillaire had a 25s buffer after Duval's final pitstop with a little under half an hour to go, but anyone who thought the matter settled had reckoned without Duval's determination.

The 2013 winner – who set the fastest time in qualifying before it was deleted for missing the scrutineering light – got his head down and charged, finishing just 2.5s in arrears.

"It would have been great to bring Matthieu and Francois on the podium, I feel that we really represent what LMP2 is today," said Duval, prior to being docked a lap for Perrodo exceeding the maximum of four hours' driving time in any six-hour period by four minutes. "We have a real amateur and it would have been great with him to be up there, but a thousand times we will find the 2.5s we missed at the end of the race. For sure we didn't do everything perfect but that's the way it is.

"In the end I have to say I'm really proud of the guys, my team-mates and proud of myself. After the crash in 2014 [which forced him to miss the race], the '15 and '16 car was not the quickest, Formula E was not going well and then the first year in DTM. It's great to be back and it shows that when everything goes right I can still drive!" 🇫🇷

Stevens explained. "I'm obviously extremely disappointed, there's nothing we could have done as a team to prevent it happening."

Panis-Barthez's heartbreak followed an enormous accident for Paul di Resta in the best of the #22 United Autosports Ligiers at the Porsche Curves, which ended his day on the spot.

Battling back after losing seven minutes in the second hour to fix the FIA-mandated GPS tracker, di Resta had passed Chatin for fourth – which would have become third after the delays for Panis-Barthez – following a restart for track repairs. But he crashed out three laps later.

That left the #32 United Autosports car of Juan Pablo Montoya, Will Owen and Hugo de Sadeleer to uphold Ligier honour, after Montoya had lost a lap with a mistake at Indianapolis in hour six.

"It was weird, I just understeered off to be honest," he explained. "It wasn't like I went too deep or anything, I was trying to make a bigger arc and got on the dirt a little bit."

The car was running fourth in the penultimate hour when a left-rear puncture for de Sadeleer dropped him to fifth, leaving Onroak Automotive's Philippe Dumas unsure whether to smile or cry.

"It's a mix between because the level we showed this week is something special after all the trouble last year," he said. "G-Drive was unbeatable this weekend, but with our car we clearly had the pace to finish on the podium and to fight against the Alpine and the others. It's promising, but frustrating".

The battle for third eventually went down to the wire between the unheralded #39 Graff-SO24 ORECA of Tristan Gommendy and Loic Duval's #28 TDS Racing ORECA,

THE TYRE WAR IS ON

BEHIND THE ORECA VERSUS Ligier versus Dallara battle, the tyre war between Dunlop and Michelin is often considered little more than a footnote. Dunlop's podium sweep suggests it was on relatively comfortable ground, but dig a little deeper and Michelin can take away plenty of encouragement.

It locked out the front row with Paul-Loup Chatin (IDEC Sport ORECA) and Nathanael Berthon (DragonSpeed ORECA). And while their challenges petered out – DragonSpeed's in abrupt fashion when Berthon lost a wheel at Arnage in the second hour – there could be no disputing that Michelin's new range was much closer to Dunlop than has been the case in recent years.

"We did already a strong design last year where the step was really strong, we had a good consistency but we still needed to have more performance, especially one-lap performance in qualifying," said Michelin endurance programme manager Jerome Mondain. "So the aim this year was to get the qualifying much

stronger, but without any drawback with consistency."

That they succeeded is supported by Berthon claiming fastest lap with a 3m27.2s shortly before 7am. The Michelin-shod Panis-Barthez Ligier that ran second before it was delayed by clutch problems also dipped under 3m28s with Will Stevens on board.

"We had no issues on tyres at all," said Stevens. "I did all quad stints, my first stint was on all the same tyres and then after that we pretty much did two new on the left most times after two stints."

For its part, Dunlop was pleased with its new specifications, and welcomed the increased challenge posed by Michelin.

"It's what we expected," said Dunlop motorsport communications director James Bailey. "We have a strong competitor, they push us, and that's the reason why every tyre that we've brought this year is brand new.

"Despite the fact that we won every WEC race last year on the Dunlop, every one of those tyres has been replaced, which shows how seriously we take the tyre war."

With tyre specifications frozen for the superseason and the 2019 European Le Mans Series, the lessons learned at Le Mans won't be applied until the 2019-20 superseason, but LMP2's other manufacturer battle will continue to be an intriguing subplot.



LMP1

LMP2

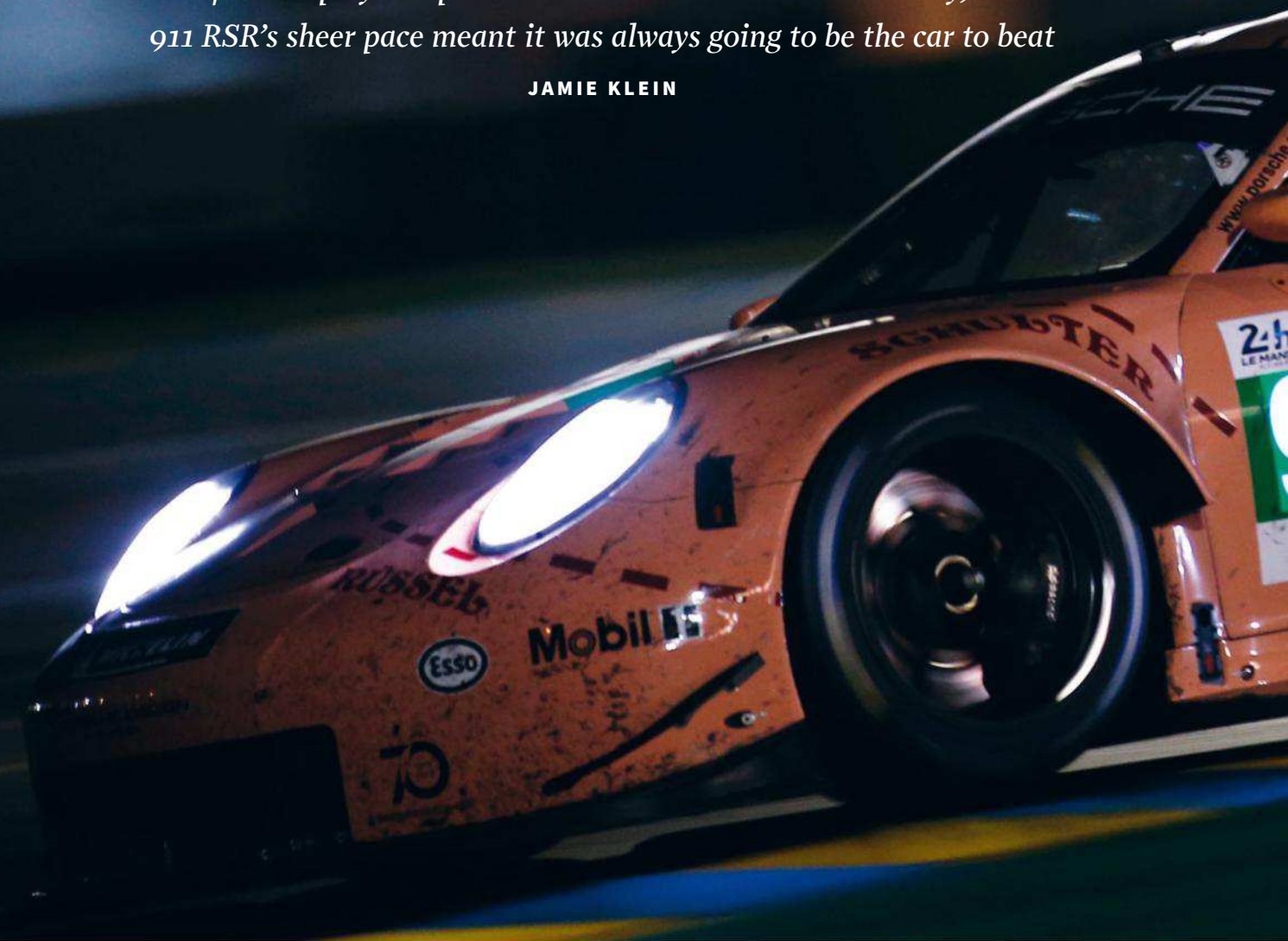
GTE PRO

GTE AM

PORSCHE'S PINK PIG FLIES TO GT SUCCESS

Good fortune played a part in the retro-liveried racer's victory, but the 911 RSR's sheer pace meant it was always going to be the car to beat

JAMIE KLEIN



In the absence of factory competition in the LMP1 ranks, many hopes were pinned on a 17-strong GTE Pro field to provide a welcome antidote to the expected tedium of Toyota domination in the fight for overall honours.

It didn't play out that way. In the event, Porsche took a relatively straightforward one-two with its pair of retro-themed Manthey-run 911 RSRs, with the winning #92 trio – Kevin Estre, Michael Christensen and Laurens Vanthoor – ending up completing one more lap than Gianmaria Bruni, Richard Lietz and Frederic Makowiecki in the #91 car.

Two main factors contributed to this

dominance: an early safety car that effectively gifted the #92 Porsche, sporting a livery based on the famous 'Pink Pig' Porsche 917 of 1971, a two-minute lead, plus the sheer pace of a car that entered the race as the clear favourite after qualifying.

Porsche made a statement of intent in first qualifying when Bruni, back racing at Le Mans after a year in exile following his Ferrari split, posted an incredible 3m47.5s lap to go a second and a half clear of the competition. Such a quick time was only possible because of a tow from an LMP2 car, but it only added to the sense that Porsche – winless here in the GT ranks since 2013 – was perhaps due a victory

on the marque's 70th anniversary.

A pre-race Balance of Performance adjustment handed the Porsche an extra 10kg of weight, but this made precious little difference in the race, with the Manthey cars plus the leading Ganassi-run Ford – the #68 shared by Sebastien Bourdais, Joey Hand and Dirk Muller – quickly pulling clear of the rest in the early stages.

At the end of the opening stint, the #92 Porsche (along with a few other cars further down the field) went into the pits a lap earlier than the new-for-2018 mandated 11-lap opening-stint rule dictated. That decision proved to be the foundation for the 'Pink Pig' crew's victory.



"I think you can say we deserved a bit of luck. It paid us back with Le Mans"

LAURENS VANTHOOR

The three lead cars continued to be locked in battle until the fourth hour, when the safety car was deployed for the debris sprayed on the track by the #38 ORECA's puncture. Vanthoor had just pitted to hand over to Estre before the incident, while Makowiecki, Bourdais and others were yet to pit – and were held at the end of the pitlane to wait for the next safety car train. This gave the #92 squad a lead that it practically couldn't lose, given the car's speed and reliability, and splitting up what had been until then an entertaining scrap.

"For sure it helped us, but it was something we were trying to achieve from the beginning," said Vanthoor of

the safety car phase. "It was part of our strategy, but you need luck for that and somehow it worked out. I think we can say the three of us deserved a bit of a luck. We've done some big races together lately and been in a position to win, but it didn't work out. Luck paid us back with Le Mans."

The safety car shook up the order behind, temporarily promoting the best of the new BMW M8 GTEs to second (see page 34). But over the course of the night the natural hierarchy reasserted itself, with the #91 Porsche and #68 Ford proving the protagonists in what turned into a fraught and controversial battle for second place.

A loose drain cover at Tertre Rouge in

the 19th hour caused a lengthy safety car intervention that wiped out what had been a 30s advantage for the Rothmans-themed Porsche over the lead Ford, while also bringing the second best of the Fords, the #67 of Harry Tincknell, Andy Priaulx and Tony Kanaan, into play.

Priaulx was vaulted from fourth to second with an excellent double move but, because the #67 was on a different pit schedule, that meant he didn't play any part in the almighty scrap that developed between Bourdais and Makowiecki in the 21st hour.

Bourdais had the pace to get by the #91 Porsche for second, but Makowiecki resorted to some questionable blocking ►



BMW PROMISE, ASTON MARTIN DISASTER

There were contrasting fortunes for the two cars racing for the first time at Le Mans in the GTE Pro division: the BMW M8 GTE and the Aston Martin Vantage GTE. One looked like a genuine threat at times; the other was, to put it mildly, pitifully off the pace.

Qualifying was nothing to write home about for BMW, whose MTEK-run cars rolled off from 12th and 13th in class. But with the help of a 10kg weight drop post-qualifying and a bit of luck with safety cars, the Bavarian marque was up there in the mix for a podium by the time darkness fell.

Nicky Catsburg, Martin Tomczyk and Philipp Eng were holding their own in battle against the #91 and #93 Porsches until their M8 (above) needed a damper change, and a 20-minute spell in the garage to replace a radiator after it was damaged by debris in the morning dropped the lead trio all the way down to 11th at the finish.

The sister #82 car was eliminated when Alexander Sims shunted at the Porsche Curves.

Aston Martin at least had the satisfaction of getting both of its cars to the finish, albeit not without dramas. But the Vantages were sorely lacking in straightline speed, and a last-minute power boost and weight break in the post-qualifying BoP didn't change much.

The two cars qualified last and second-last, quickly losing touch with the group ahead in the early exchanges of the race, but a solid run for the #95 car (below) shared by Marco Sorensen, Nicki Thiim and Darren Turner allowed it to climb to eighth by the finish, five laps down.



Muller/Hand/Bourdais
Ford finished third
after controversial spat

tactics to keep his fellow Frenchman at bay.

That didn't prevent the IndyCar star from pulling off the move of the race as he went around the outside of his rival at Indianapolis, but on the run from Arnage to the Porsche Curves Makowiecki had the better straightline speed and squeezed Bourdais right onto the margins of the track and got back ahead.

The stewards investigated Makowiecki's driving, but no further action was taken, much to Bourdais's disgust. In an epic tirade, he said: "[It's unacceptable] these kinds of manoeuvres are allowed and race control doesn't do anything. When do we say 'stop'? When a car ends up in the trees?"

"I hope Fred [Makowiecki] is not very

proud of himself because it was some very poor standards for a professional driver."

That was about as close as the #68 Ford got to second place. Once Hand took over from Bourdais, Makowiecki pulled away over his next stint, and by the chequered flag the margin between the two cars had grown to 26 seconds.

The #67 Ford crew's luck turned when the car was only given half a tank of fuel during one of its pitstops, which put it off strategy. The next safety car period dropped it a minute off the sister car in fourth, which is where it stayed at the flag. But post-race it turned out that Kanaan had failed to complete his minimum drive time, falling short of the mandatory six



Manthey-run 911
RSR duo set the
pace from the off

AND PORSCHE WINS IN GTE AM

Porsche was able to make it a double GTE victory thanks to a dominant display by the #77 Dempsey-Proton machine (pictured) driven by Julien Andlauer, Matt Campbell and Christian Ried, who never looked back after grabbing the lead in the third hour.

The sheer speed of 18-year-old Le Mans debutant Andlauer and Aussie Porsche 'young professional' Campbell allowed the #77 trio to build up a considerable lead into the night, while the super-experienced Ried never put a foot wrong in his stints.

Ried took the car to the chequered flag, having had an advantage of more than three minutes cut down to 1m39s in the closing

stages by a charging Giancarlo Fisichella in the #54 Spirit of Race Ferrari.

"We were able to get the lead around 5.30 [on Saturday evening] and hold it all the way through to the end of the race," said Campbell post-race. "Absolutely crazy to hold

a lead like that all race; to hold onto it is something I'll never forget."

Fisichella and teammates Thomas Flohr and Francesco Castellacci were able to take advantage of drama for another Ferrari, the #85 Keating/Risi car, to ultimately come out

on top in the fight for second in class.

Jeroen Bleekemolen described his third-place finish as "bitter" after Ben Keating got stuck in the gravel at Mulsanne in the late stages, costing the pair, plus young gun Luca Stolz, the chance to take the fight

to the winning Dempsey-Proton Porsche.

Another Ferrari that had been in contention for a spot on the podium was the #84 JMW Motorsport car, which ultimately had to settle for fifth after Jeff Segal got the car beached in the gravel in the morning hours.

Two of the fancied class runners failed to finish. The #88 Dempsey-Proton Porsche, which had qualified on pole in Matteo Cairoli's hands, was on course for a podium when the Italian hit the tyre barriers at the Ford chicane with an apparent suspension issue, while Paul Dalla Lana crashed the #98 Aston Martin at the Porsche Curves.



hours by 44 minutes. That was converted into an 11-lap penalty that dropped the luckless #67 crew, whose WEC class title hopes were already dealt a blow by Tincknell's megashunt at Spa, to 12th.

The penalty promoted the best of the Corvette C7.Rs, the #63 car of Antonio Garcia, Jan Magnussen and Mike Rockenfeller, into fourth place – a result earned on consistency and staying out of trouble rather than outright pace.

Ferrari's top finisher was the third-string #52 488 GTE 'evo' piloted by Pipo Derani, Toni Vilander and Antonio Giovinazzi, which likewise ran reliably throughout but lost ground with a pair of penalties for speeding in slow zones.

The other two AF Corse-run Pro cars, the WEC-entered #51 and #71 488s, both had races to forget. James Calado, Alessandro Pier Guidi and Daniel Serra were ruled out of contention early on by a puncture, with an admirable recovery drive into the top five being derailed by a trip to the pits to replace a broken damper. That meant dropping back to an eventual seventh, behind the #66 Ford shared by Olivier Pla, Stefan Mücke and Billy Johnson that lost two laps when Johnson suffered suspension damage due to contact with a prototype in hour four.

As for the Ferrari of Sam Bird, Miguel Molina and Davide Rigon, a three-minute stop-and-go penalty for not respecting the red light in the pitlane was followed by a

long trip to the garage to repair a front splitter. The trio finished ninth.

While Ferrari backed up its WEC cars with one extra 488, Porsche entered no fewer than four of its mid-engined 911 RSRs, supplementing its Manthey cars with the pair of CORE Autosport-run IMSA SportsCar championship entries.

Of those, the quicker was the #93 entry of Nick Tandy, Earl Bamber and Patrick Pilet, which was battling with the #91 car before hopes of an all-Porsche podium were thwarted by an alternator problem just shy of midnight.

A philosophical Tandy reflected: "There's a reason we put so many cars into the race, to maximise our chances, and they were all good cars. There was no surprise there were three running at the front. The cars were quick; I think we deserved the result in the end."

On the safety car that set up the #92 Porsche for the win, he added: "That's pure luck. That could have been a Ford, it could have been a Corvette. It could have been us, but then we'd have been bloody annoyed to have lost a two-minute lead..."

Could have, would have, should have. Good fortune undoubtedly played a role in determining the exact victors, but a Porsche win seemed near-certain from the moment Bruni banged in that 3m47s. It's just a shame it wasn't a better fight. 🇫🇷



QUALIFYING

POS	NO	DRIVER	CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	8	Kazuki Nakajima	Toyota TS050 HYBRID	LMP1	3m15.377s
2	7	Kamui Kobayashi	Toyota TS050 HYBRID	LMP1	3m17.377s
3	1	Bruno Senna	Rebellion-Gibson R-13	LMP1	3m19.449s
4	17	Stephane Sarrazin	BRE-AER BR1	LMP1	3m19.483s
5	3	Gustavo Menezes	Rebellion-Gibson R-13	LMP1	3m19.945s
6	10	Ben Hanley	BRE-Gibson BR1	LMP1	3m21.110s
7	11	Mikhail Aleshin	BRE-AER BR1	LMP1	3m21.408s
8	4	Tom Dillmann	ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01	LMP1	3m22.505s
9	6	Oliver Rowland	Ginetta-Mecachrome G60-LT-P1	LMP1	3m23.757s
10	48	Paul-Loup Chatin	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m24.842s
11	31	Nathanael Berthon	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m24.883s
12	26	Jean-Eric Vergne	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m25.160s
13	28	Loic Duval	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m25.240s
14	5	Mike Simpson	Ginetta-Mecachrome G60-LT-P1	LMP1	3m25.268s
15	23	Will Stevens	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m25.376s
16	36	Nicolas Lapierre	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m26.681s
17	39	Tristan Gommendy	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m26.701s
18	22	Filipe Albuquerque	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m26.772s
19	38	Ho-Pin Tung	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m27.120s
20	37	Jazeman Jaafar	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m27.226s
21	40	Enzo Guibbert	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	3m27.280s
22	47	Felipe Nasr	Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	3m27.993s
23	29	Giedo van der Garde	Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	3m28.111s
24	32	Hugo de Sadeleer	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m28.159s
25	35	Norman Nato	Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	3m28.629s
26	34	Ricky Taylor	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m29.474s
27	44	Andrea Bertolini	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m33.585s
28	33	David Cheng	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m35.237s
29	50	Romano Ricci	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m38.206s
30	25	Mark Patterson	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	3m39.518s
31	91	Gianmaria Bruni	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	3m47.504s
32	92	Michael Christensen	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	3m49.097s
33	66	Olivier Pla	Ford GT	GTE Pro	3m49.181s
34	51	Alessandro Pier Guidi	Ferrari 488 GTE 'evo'	GTE Pro	3m49.494s
35	68	Dirk Muller	Ford GT	GTE Pro	3m49.582s
36	93	Patrick Pilet	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	3m49.589s
37	69	Richard Westbrook	Ford GT	GTE Pro	3m49.761s
38	94	Sven Muller	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	3m50.089s
39	63	Antonio Garcia	Chevrolet Corvette C7.R	GTE Pro	3m50.242s
40	71	Sam Bird	Ferrari 488 GTE 'evo'	GTE Pro	3m50.246s
41	67	Andy Priaulx	Ford GT	GTE Pro	3m50.429s
42	82	Antonio Felix da Costa	BMW M8 GTE	GTE Pro	3m50.579s
43	81	Nicky Catsburg	BMW M8 GTE	GTE Pro	3m50.596s
44	88	Matteo Cairoli	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	3m50.728s
45	64	Tommy Milner	Chevrolet Corvette C7.R	GTE Pro	3m50.952s
46	52	Pipo Derani	Ferrari 488 GTE 'evo'	GTE Pro	3m50.957s
47	86	Ben Barker	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	3m51.391s
48	77	Matt Campbell	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	3m51.930s
49	54	Giancarlo Fisichella	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	3m51.956s
50	97	Alex Lynn	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Pro	3m52.486s
51	56	Jorg Bergmeister	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	3m52.985s
52	90	Euan Hankey	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	3m53.070s
53	80	Fabio Babini	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	3m53.402s
54	61	Matt Griffin	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	3m53.409s
55	84	Jeff Segal	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	3m53.439s
56	95	Nicki Thiim	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Pro	3m53.523s
57	98	Pedro Lamy	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	3m53.817s
58	85	Jeroen Bleekemolen	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	3m54.000s
59	99	Patrick Long	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	3m54.720s
60	70	Olivier Beretta	Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	3m54.951s

LAPS LED Overall



SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

LMP		
1	Buemi/Alonso/Nakajima	65
2	Lopez/Conway/Kobayashi	45
3	Laurent/Beche/Menezes	38
4	Negrao/Thiriet/Lapierre	21
5	Lotterer/Jani/Senna	18
6	Duval/Perrodo/Vaxiviere	14

LMP2		
1	Negrao/Lapierre/Thiriet	57
2	Aubry/Tung/Richelmi	40
3	Perrodo/Duval/Vaxiviere	39
4	Jaafar/Jeffri/Tan	38

GTE		
1	Estre/Christensen	56
2	Johnson/Pla/Mucke	48
3	Bruni/Lietz	40
4	Vanthoor	38
5	Makowiecki	28
6	Rigon/Bird	27

GTE AM		
1	Ried/Andlauer/Campbell	51
2	Sawa/M Griffin/Mok	33
3	Castellacci/Fisichella/Flohr	31
4	Lauda/Dalla Lana/Lamy	25

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

LMP1		
1	Toyota Gazoo Racing	65
2	Rebellion Racing	38
3	ByKolles Racing Team	12
4	SMP Racing	10
5	CEFC TRSM Racing	1
6	DragonSpeed	0

GTE		
1	Porsche	96
2	Ford	50
3	Ferrari	45.5
4	Aston Martin	30
5	BMW	17



REMAINING SUPERSEASON RACES

August 19	Silverstone
October 14	Fuji
November 18	Shanghai
March 16 2019	Sebring
May 4 2019	Spa
June 15-16 2019	Le Mans

RACE RESULTS WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 2/8, LE MANS (F), JUNE 16-17, 388 LAPS – 3285.120 MILES

POS	NO	DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	8	Sebastien Buemi (CH) Kazuki Nakajima (J) Fernando Alonso (E)	Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota TS050 HYBRID	LMP1	24h00m52.247s
2	7	Mike Conway (GB) Kamui Kobayashi (J) Jose Maria Lopez (RA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota TS050 HYBRID	LMP1	-2 laps
3	3	Thomas Laurent (F) Mathias Beche (CH) Gustavo Menezes (USA)	Rebellion Racing / Rebellion-Gibson R-13	LMP1	-12 laps
4	1	Andre Lotterer (D) Neel Jani (CH) Bruno Senna (BR)	Rebellion Racing / Rebellion-Gibson R-13	LMP1	-13 laps
5	26	Jean-Eric Vergne (F) Roman Rusinov (RUS) Andrea Pizzitola (F)	G-Drive Racing (TDS) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-19 laps
6	36	Nicolas Lapierre (F) Andre Negrao (BR) Pierre Thiriet (F)	Signatech Alpine Matmut / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-21 laps
7	39	Tristan Gommendy (F) Vincent Capillaire (F) Jonathan Hirschi (CH)	Graff-SO24 / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-22 laps
8	28	Loic Duval (F) Francois Perrodo (F) Matthieu Vaxiviere (F)	TDS Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-23 laps
9	32	Hugo de Sadeleer (CH) Will Owen (USA) Juan Pablo Montoya (CO)	United Autosports / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	-23 laps
10	37	Jazeman Jaafar (MAL) Nabil Jeffri (MAL) Weiron Tan (MAL)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-27 laps
11	31	Nathanael Berthon (F) Roberto Gonzalez (MEX) Pastor Maldonado (VY)	DragonSpeed / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-28 laps
12	38	Ho-Pin Tung (NL) Stephane Richelmi (MC) Gabriel Aubry (F)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (Jota) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-32 laps
13	29	Giedo van der Garde (NL) Frits van Eerd (NL) Jan Lammers (NL)	Racing Team Nederland / Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	-32 laps
14	33	Nick Boule (USA) David Cheng (USA) Pierre Nicolet (F)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (OAK) / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	-33 laps
15	23	Will Stevens (GB) Timothe Buret (F) Julien Canal (F)	Panis Barthez Competition / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	-36 laps
16	35	Victor Shaytar (RUS) Harrison Newey (GB) Norman Nato (F)	SMP Racing / Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	-43 laps
17	92	Kevin Estre (F) Michael Christensen (DK) Laurens Vanthoor (B)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey) / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-44 laps
18	91	Gianmaria Bruni (I) Richard Lietz (A) Frederic Makowiecki (F)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey) / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-45 laps
19	68	Dirk Muller (D) Joey Hand (USA) Sebastien Bourdais (F)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team USA / Ford GT	GTE Pro	-45 laps
20	63	Antonio Garcia (E) Jan Magnussen (DK) Mike Rockenfeller (D)	Corvette Racing-GM (Pratt & Miller) / Chevrolet Corvette C7.R	GTE Pro	-46 laps
21	47	Giorgio Sernagiotto (I) Roberto Lacorte (I) Felipe Nasr (BR)	Cetilar Villorba Corse / Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	-46 laps
22	52	Toni Vilander (FIN) Antonio Giovinazzi (I) Pipo Derani (BR)	AF Corse / Ferrari 488 GTE 'evo'	GTE Pro	-47 laps
23	66	Stefan Mucke (D) Olivier Pla (F) Billy Johnson (USA)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK / Ford GT	GTE Pro	-48 laps
24	51	James Calado (GB) Alessandro Pier Guidi (I) Daniel Serra (BR)	AF Corse / Ferrari 488 GTE 'evo'	GTE Pro	-49 laps
25	95	Nicki Thiim (DK) Marco Sorensen (DK) Darren Turner (GB)	Aston Martin Racing (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Pro	-49 laps
26	71	Sam Bird (GB) Davide Rigon (I) Miguel Molina (E)	AF Corse / Ferrari 488 GTE 'evo'	GTE Pro	-50 laps
27	77	Matt Campbell (AUS) Christian Ried (D) Julien Andlauer (F)	Dempsey-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-53 laps
28	54	Giancarlo Fisichella (I) Thomas Flohr (CH) Francesco Castellacci (I)	Spirit of Race (AF) / Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	-53 laps
29	93	Patrick Pilet (F) Nick Tandy (GB) Earl Bamber (NZ)	Porsche GT Team (CORE) / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-54 laps
30	85	Jeroen Bleekemolen (NL) Ben Keating (USA) Luca Stolz (D)	Keating Motorsports (Risi) / Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	-54 laps
31	99	Patrick Long (USA) Tim Pappas (USA) Spencer Pumpelly (USA)	Proton Competition / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-54 laps
32	84	Jeff Segal (USA) Liam Griffin (GB) Cooper MacNeil (USA)	JMW Motorsport / Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	-56 laps
33	80	Christina Nielsen (DK) Fabio Babini (I) Erik Maris (F)	Ebimotors / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-56 laps
34	50	Romano Ricci (F) Erwin Creed (F) Thomas Dagoneau (F)	Larbre Competition / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	-56 laps
35	81	Martin Tomczyk (D) Nicky Catsburg (NL) Philipp Eng (A)	BMW Team MTEK / BMW M8 GTE	GTE Pro	-56 laps
36	56	Egidio Perfetti (N) Jorg Bergmeister (D) Patrick Lindsey (USA)	Team Project 1 / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-56 laps
37	61	Matt Griffin (IRL) Mok Weng Sun (MAL) Keita Sawa (J)	Clearwater Racing / Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	-56 laps
38	67	Andy Priaulx (GB) Harry Tincknell (GB) Tony Kanaan (BR)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK / Ford GT	GTE Pro	-56 laps
39	97	Jonny Adam (GB) Alex Lynn (GB) Maxime Martin (B)	Aston Martin Racing (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Pro	-61 laps
40	70	Olivier Beretta (MC) Motoaki Ishikawa (J) Eddie Cheever (I)	MRRacing (AF) / Ferrari 488 GTE	GTE Am	-64 laps
41	69	Ryan Briscoe (AUS) Richard Westbrook (GB) Scott Dixon (NZ)	Ford Chip Ganassi Team USA / Ford GT	GTE Pro	-79 laps
42	86	Ben Barker (GB) Mike Wainwright (GB) Alex Davison (AUS)	Gulf Racing UK / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-105 laps
43	5	Mike Simpson (GB) Charlie Robertson (GB) Leo Roussel (F)	CEFC TRSM Racing (Manor) / Ginetta-Mecachrome G60-LT-P1	LMP1	-105 laps
NC	44	Tracy Krohn (USA) Andrea Bertolini (I) Nic Jonsson (S)	Eurasia Motorsport / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	334 laps
R	11	Vitaly Petrov (RUS) Mikhail Aleshin (RUS) Jenson Button (GB)	SMP Racing (ART) / BRE-AER BR1	LMP1	315 laps-engine
R	48	Paul-Loup Chatin (F) Paul Lafargue (F) Memo Rojas (MEX)	IDEC Sport Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	312 laps-g'box casing
R	90	Euan Hankey (GB) Salih Yoluc (TR) Charlie Eastwood (GB)	TF Sport / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	304 laps-driveshaft
R	22	Filipe Albuquerque (P) Phil Hanson (GB) Paul di Resta (GB)	United Autosports / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	288 laps-accident
R	64	Oliver Gavin (GB) Tommy Milner (USA) Marcel Fassler (CH)	Corvette Racing-GM (Manor) / Chevrolet Corvette C7.R	GTE Pro	259 laps-engine
R	10	Ben Hanley (GB) Henrik Hedman (S) Renger van der Zande (NL)	DragonSpeed / BRE-Gibson BR1	LMP1	244 laps-acc damage
R	25	Mark Patterson (USA) Ate de Jong (NL) Tacksung Kim (ROK)	Algarve Pro Racing / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	237 laps-gearbox
R	88	Matteo Cairoli (I) Khaled Al Qubaisi (UAE) Giorgio Roda (I)	Dempsey-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	225 laps-accident
R	82	Augusto Farfus (BR) Antonio Felix da Costa (P) Alexander Sims (GB)	BMW Team MTEK / BMW M8 GTE	GTE Pro	223 laps-acc damage
R	40	Jose Gutierrez (MEX) James Allen (AUS) Enzo Guibbert (F)	G-Drive Racing (Graff) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	197 laps-accident
R	34	Ricky Taylor (USA) Come Ledogar (F) David Heinemeier Hansson (DK)	Jackie Chan DC Racing (OAK) / Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	195 laps-engine
R	6	Alex Brundle (GB) Oliver Rowland (GB) Oliver Turvey (GB)	CEFC TRSM Racing (Manor) / Ginetta-Mecachrome G60-LT-P1	LMP1	137 laps-electrical
R	17	Stephane Sarrazin (F) Egor Orudzhov (RUS) Matevos Isaakyan (RUS)	SMP Racing (ART) / BRE-AER BR1	LMP1	123 laps-accident
R	94	Romain Dumas (F) Timo Bernhard (D) Sven Muller (D)	Porsche GT Team (CORE) / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	92 laps-suspension
R	98	Pedro Lamy (P) Paul Dalla Lana (CDN) Mathias Lauda (A)	Aston Martin Racing (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	92 laps-accident
R	4	Tom Dillmann (F) Oliver Webb (GB) Dominik Kraihamer (A)	ByKolles Racing Team / ENSO CLM-Nissan P1/01	LMP1	65 laps-accident

WINNERS' AVERAGE SPEED 136.797mph **FASTEST LAP** Buemi 3m17.658s, 154.208mph. **LMP2** Berthon 3m27.200s, 147.106mph. **GTE PRO** Magnussen 3m49.448s, 132.842mph. **GTE AM** Barker 3m52.600s, 131.042mph.

TOP 4 HOUR BY HOUR CHART What happened, when

GRID	HR1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
8	8	7	7	7	8	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
7	7	8	8	8	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
1	17	3	3	17	17	17	17	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3
17	3	17	17	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1

WORLD OF SPORT

Latest developments
have enabled Lorenzo
to unleash Ducati's pace



GOLD AND GOOSE
LAT IMAGES

Lorenzo domination highlights Ducati's

MOTOGP
BARCELONA (E)
JUNE 17
ROUND 7/19

Back-to-back victories at Mugello and Barcelona following a spell of relative underachievement last year put Andrea Dovizioso firmly into 2017 title contention, while team-mate Jorge Lorenzo continued to look for the form that had deserted him since his switch to Ducati.

Last weekend Lorenzo completed his own Italian GP/Catalan GP double. It's not quite put Lorenzo back in the hunt – though he admits it is no longer “impossible” – but it's come at an unfortunate moment for Ducati, which recently decided it didn't want his services in 2019. At the same time, the form

Dovizioso displayed in the opening rounds has vanished, as a third crash in four races leaves the Italian level on 66 points with Lorenzo, eighth in the standings, 49 down on leader Marc Marquez.

Dovizioso's Mugello/Barcelona double last year seemingly vindicated Ducati's decision to retain him and kick Andrea Iannone to the kerb, even if those successes were more the result of tactical use of circumstances rather than all-out speed.

Lorenzo's double Ducati success is different. He blitzed the field in Italy as the ‘final-step’ modifications to the GP18s fuel tank allowed him to maintain his searing early pace for a full race distance.

At Barcelona, he did so again. Marquez was 4.5 seconds back at the flag in second place. After Lorenzo hit the front at the

start of lap two, he asked questions Marquez simply could not answer.

Lorenzo effortlessly lapped in the low-mid 1m40s bracket for 22 of the 24 laps. Marquez, by contrast, was working overtime to try to run at that pace. Lorenzo kept his soft tyres in sublime condition, nullifying any late-race advantage Marquez hoped to have on his harder rubber.

With its future line-up split by 0.066s in qualifying and finishing one-two in the race, Honda management must have been delighted by its decision to recruit Lorenzo. Ducati put a brave face on, but it now must face up to the awkward reality; had it waited one more weekend, Lorenzo would likely still be a Ducati rider in 2019. Danilo Petrucci, who will fill Lorenzo's shoes next year, picked a terrible weekend to finish a lowly eighth on his Pramac-run factory GP18.

Crash aside, Dovizioso once again looked resigned to being Lorenzo's bridesmaid, his pace two to three tenths short of what his team-mate was hammering out in the early stages. His Turn 5 tumble on lap nine came as the result of “arriving five, six kilometres [per hour]” faster into the corner, and he brushed off claims that Lorenzo's resurgence forced him to go over the limit.

Valentino Rossi remains Marquez's nearest title rival, 27 points adrift despite riding a Yamaha with a “maximum” potential of third – at least, in his hands. Team-mate Maverick Vinales once again showed promise in practice and in qualifying, but



Lorenzo and Marquez
romped away
from the start

GOLD AND GOOSE
LAT IMAGES



lack of vision

plummeted from fourth to 10th on lap one and spent most of the first 10 tours looking for pace. Sixth, besting Yamaha stablemate Johann Zarco on the Tech3 M1 in the latter stages, was all Vinales could conjure.

As fifth-placed Dani Pedrosa (Honda) looks odds-on to join a Petronas-backed Yamaha team next year, the Japanese marque must also be facing the awkward reality that it perhaps jumped the gun in signing Vinales for two more years back in January.

Cal Crutchlow passed Pedrosa late on at Turn 4 for fourth, though the factory Honda man had made his satellite LCR counterpart fight hard for it. As 13 of the 26-strong field all fell out of contention on the day with many crashes, ninth-placed Alvaro Bautista (Aspar Ducati) was able to add a third top-10 finish to his 2018 scorecard as he seeks to save his career in MotoGP, while early podium challenger Iannone sunk to 10th after making several errors on his factory Suzuki.

Lorenzo now has "the most complete Ducati ever" at his disposal, and his form on it has so far been unstoppable. Marquez's grip on the championship is still tight, but he now has the only rider who has beaten him to a MotoGP title back at the front. Lorenzo could well go on to deliver the championship his arrival at Bologna was supposed to produce. And Ducati will have to come to terms with the fact that its impatience has potentially denied it more title glory.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 7/19, BARCELONA (E), JUNE 17 (24 LAPS – 69.002 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Jorge Lorenzo (E)	Ducati	40m13.566s
2	Marc Marquez (E)	Honda	+4.479s
3	Valentino Rossi (I)	Yamaha	+6.098s
4	Cal Crutchlow (GB)	LCR Honda	+9.805s
5	Dani Pedrosa (E)	Honda	+10.640s
6	Maverick Vinales (E)	Yamaha	+10.798s
7	Johann Zarco (F)	Tech3 Yamaha	+13.432s
8	Danilo Petrucci (I)	Pramac Ducati	+15.055s
9	Alvaro Bautista (E)	Aspar Ducati	+22.057s
10	Andrea Iannone (I)	Suzuki	+24.141s
11	Pol Espargaro (E)	KTM	+36.560s
12	Scott Redding (GB)	Aprilia	+38.229s
13	Karel Abraham (CZ)	Aspar Ducati	+1m21.526s
14	Franco Morbidelli (I)	Marc VDS Honda	-3 laps
R	Hafizh Syahrin (MAL)	Tech3 Yamaha	20 laps-accident
R	Tito Rabat (E)	Avintia Ducati	18 laps-engine
R	Jack Miller (AUS)	Pramac Ducati	17 laps-technical
R	Bradley Smith (GB)	KTM	13 laps-accident
R	Takaaki Nakagami (J)	LCR Honda	13 laps-accident
R	Alex Rins (E)	Suzuki	11 laps-electronics
R	Andrea Dovizioso (I)	Ducati	8 laps-accident
R	Xavier Simeon (B)	Avintia Ducati	7 laps-accident
R	Aleix Espargaro (E)	Aprilia	4 laps-accident
R	Thomas Luthi (CH)	Marc VDS Honda	3 laps-accident
R	Sylvain Guintoli (F)	Suzuki	2 laps-accident
R	Mika Kallio (FIN)	KTM	0 laps-accident

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 102.921mph. **FASTEST LAP** Lorenzo 1m40.021s, 103.481mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Lorenzo 1m38.680s; 2 Marquez 1m38.746s; 3 Dovizioso 1m38.923s; 4 Vinales 1m39.145s; 5 Iannone 1m39.148s; 6 Petrucci 1m39.178s; 7 Rossi 1m39.266s; 8 Zarco 1m39.331s; 9 Rabat 1m39.504s; 10 Crutchlow 1m39.556s; 11 Pedrosa 1m39.695s; 12 Nakagami 1m39.888s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Marquez 1m39.217s; 2 Nakagami 1m39.663s; 3 Miller 1m39.732s; 4 Syahrin 1m39.879s; 5 Rins 1m39.918s; 6 A Espargaro 1m40.010s; 7 Smith 1m40.019s; 8 Morbidelli 1m40.058s; 9 P Espargaro 1m40.178s; 10 Redding 1m40.300s; 11 Abraham 1m40.449s; 12 Bautista 1m40.524s; 13 Kallio 1m40.572s; 14 Luthi 1m40.590s; 15 Guintoli 1m40.834s; 16 Simeon 1m41.369s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Marquez 115; 2 Rossi 88; 3 Vinales 77; 4 Zarco 73; 5 Petrucci 71; 6 Crutchlow 69; 7 Lorenzo 66; 8 Dovizioso 66; 9 Iannone 66; 10 Miller 49; 11 Pedrosa 40; 12 Rins 33; 13 P Espargaro 28; 14 Rabat 27; 15 Bautista 26; 16 Morbidelli 19; 17 Syahrin 17; 18 A Espargaro 13; 19 Nakagami 10; 20 Redding 9; 21 Smith 7; 22 Kallio 6; 23 Abraham 4; 24 Luthi 0; 25 Simeon 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Honda 150; 2 Ducati 132; 3 Yamaha 124; 4 Suzuki 80; 5 KTM 29; 6 Aprilia 22.



WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

BARCELONA

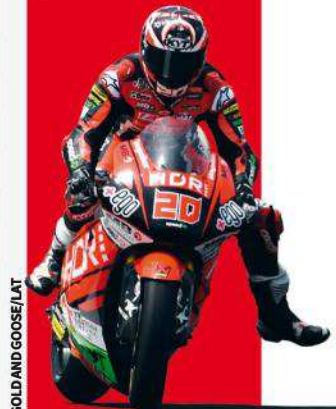
- 1 Fabio Quartararo Speed Up
- 2 Miguel Oliveira KTM
- 3 Alex Marquez Kalex

MOTO3

BARCELONA

- 1 Enea Bastianini Honda
- 2 Marco Bezzecchi KTM
- 3 Gabriel Rodrigo KTM

Quartararo took his first win



GOLD AND GOOSE
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Reynolds (right) and McLaughlin (17) shared the victories in Darwin

McLaughlin keeps the pressure up

KLYNSMITH
LAT IMAGES

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS HIDDEN VALLEY (AUS) JUNE 16-17 ROUND 7/16

Scott McLaughlin extended his Supercars points lead in Darwin last weekend with a win and a second place from the two races.

The DJR Penske Ford driver had to play a defensive role to win Saturday's race, having gone for an early stop to undercut polesitter and first-stint leader David Reynolds. That left him vulnerable to Shane van Gisbergen and Reynolds in the second stint, the Holden drivers having better rubber for the run home thanks to later stops. But McLaughlin held on for his sixth victory of the season.

Erebus man Reynolds was the runaway winner on Sunday, sweeping into the lead at Turn 1 from row two and dominating.

McLaughlin came home second, but it wasn't easy. First, he was forced to deal with a dislodged helmet-fan hose for much of the gruelling 200-kilometre race, while an oil-surge issue meant his Ford spent the last two stints blowing blue smoke and missing crucial horsepower.

Luckily for McLaughlin both he and the car made it to the finish, holding off Jamie Whincup by 0.6 seconds.

Van Gisbergen finished fourth, which meant losing more ground to championship leader McLaughlin. The gap between the Kiwis is now 161 points, while Reynolds's fine weekend moves him back to third in the standings, ahead of Craig Lowndes.

Having finished eighth on Saturday before his third on Sunday, reigning champion Whincup is now 433 points behind.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

WEEKEND WINNERS

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS HIDDEN VALLEY

Race 1 Scott McLaughlin

DJ Team Penske
Ford Falcon FG X

Race 2 David Reynolds

Erebus Motorsport
Holden Commodore ZB

MICHELIN LE MANS CUP LE MANS

Race 1 Mikkel Jensen/Kay van Berlo

EuroInternational Ligier JSP3

Race 2 Duncan Tappy/Michael Benham

Lanan Racing Norma M30

Tappy's Road to Le Mans

MICHELIN LE MANS CUP LE MANS (F) JUNE 14 & 16 ROUND 3/6

Briton Duncan Tappy took the Lanan Racing Norma M30 to victory in the Road to Le Mans finale after a late slipstreaming move around the long-time race-leading United Autosports Ligier.

Tappy took over from Michael Benham in the second half of the race after Benham had managed to keep out of

the trouble that hit the leading contenders, such as the polesitting Graff Norma of Eric Trouillet. Other victims of the attrition-filled contest included race-one winners Mikkel Jensen and Kay van Berlo.

Those incidents meant John Falb's solid stint allowed Sean Rayhall to quickly pick off the leading CD Sport Norma M30 after engine issues in the pits stunted its progress. But Rayhall's advantage was quickly eroded and Tappy grabbed the lead on the Mulsanne for victory.

TOM ERRINGTON

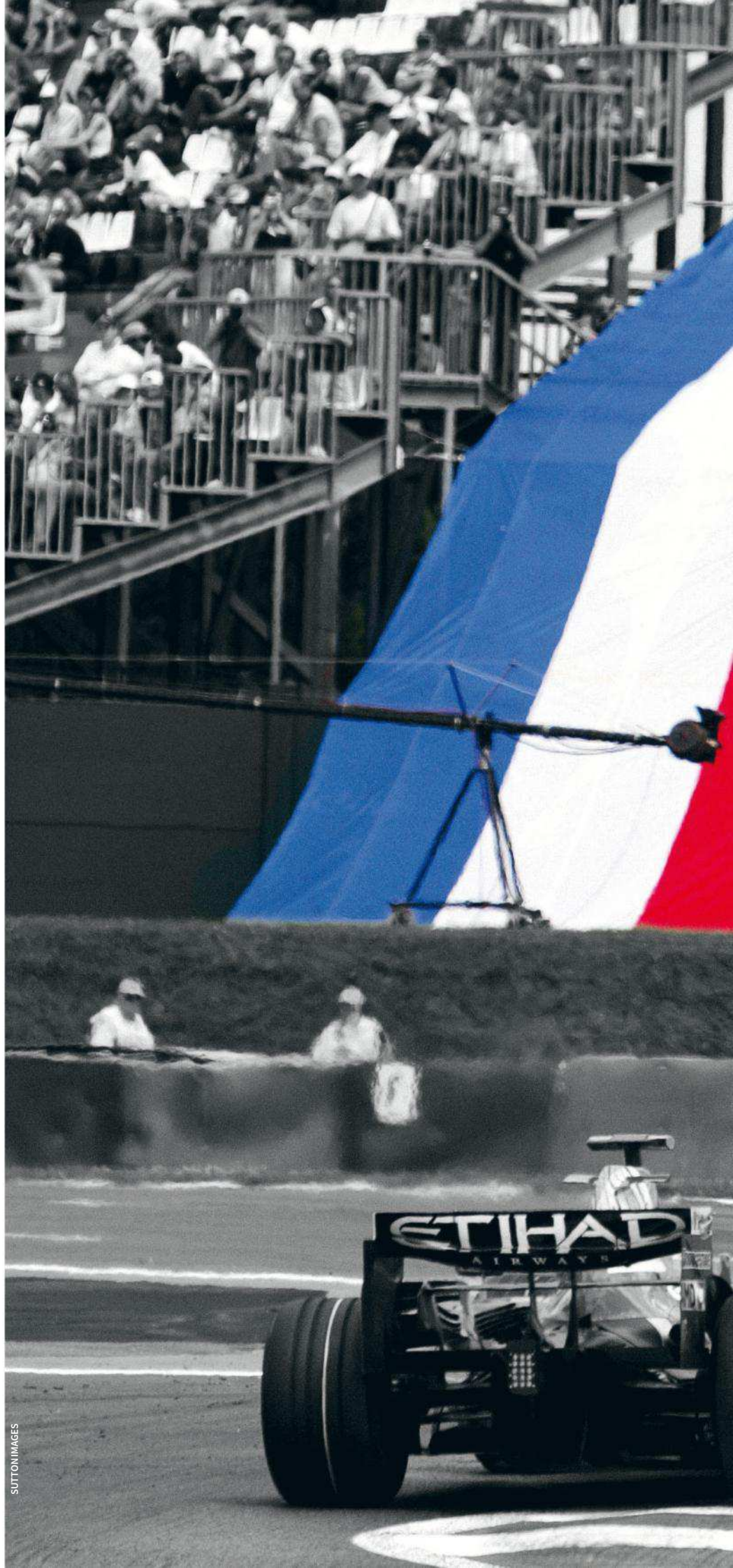


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INSIGHT

RETURN OF THE FRENCH GP • FORMULA E'S GERMAN GIANTS

SUTTON IMAGES





How the French GP was revived

After a decade away, one of the most historic motorsport events is back on the Formula 1 calendar. Autosport explains how ahead of this weekend's race

EDD STRAW

When the Formula 1 paddock was packed up after the 2008 French Grand Prix at Magny-Cours, uncertainty surrounded the future of the race. But the event was on the following year's draft calendar, and few then seriously believed that 10 years would pass before there was another French GP.

Motorsport was born in France, and it thrived there during its infancy. Irrespective of which competing definition of the first real motor race you favour, it was held in France. The first race to carry the title 'Grand Prix' was staged in the south-western town of Pau in 1901, and five years later Ferenc Szisz won the French Grand Prix at Le Mans, recognised as the first true grand prix, driving a Michelin-shod Renault. Since then France has produced some of motor racing's greatest champions and most famous marques, and is home of governing body the FIA. So how can it have taken so long for a national GP to return?

The race always had something of a peripatetic existence. Seven different circuits – Reims, Rouen, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Mans (Bugatti circuit), Dijon, Paul Ricard and Magny-Cours – have staged the race in the world championship era. And in the pre-war years, it moved on close to an annual basis, with the Montlhéry track just outside Paris the closest thing to a consistent home.

The move from Paul Ricard to Magny-Cours in the Nevers region was controversial. The French government invested heavily – to the tune of around FF250million – to transform Magny-Cours into what then passed for a leading grand prix facility ahead of it taking over the race in 1991. This wasn't popular, particularly with Maurice Arreckx, president of the Var department in which Paul Ricard sits. He described it at the time as "a scandal".

But come 2008 the landscape was very different. In '03 the Federation Francaise du Sport Automobile (FFSA) had to take over the promotion of the race to ensure it continued. In '07 and '08 the grand prix lost around €2m – on top of which it needed to find the €40m investment to fund the so-called 'Magny-Cours 2' redevelopment project. The seven-figure losses were not sustainable.

A multitude of other contenders arose, and six venues, Magny-Cours included, were interested in bringing the race back in 2010. The other five required new circuits, the most credible of which was Disneyland Paris Val d'Europe, but none of these came off.

Attempts to bring back the French GP continued over the years. Paul Ricard, which was bought by Bernie Ecclestone's Excelsis company in 1999, had been reborn as a testing facility and >>



"WE'VE GOT THREE FRENCH DRIVERS IN F1. THREE AND A HALF, IF YOU COUNT CHARLES LECLERC"

gradually racing returned. In December 2016 it was confirmed that the circuit would host the revived French GP in '18, this time with investment from regional government. Ex-Formula 3 racer Christian Estrosi has been a key player in his role as president of the Alps and Cote d'Azur province; his role has been crucial in corralling local and regional authorities to stump up the cash needed to ensure that the race could take place.

The result is a five-year deal for the French GP, with a crowd of more than 60,000 expected for this weekend, as event managing director Gilles Dufaigneux explains. "For the first edition, we hope we will welcome around 65,000 people," he says. "The circuit is able to welcome 100,000, but for the first edition we want to do it nice and controlled. We have to learn again."

The cautious approach is sensible. Paul Ricard is infamously difficult to access, so plunging straight in with a bigger event would have been a mistake. When Magny-Cours hosted its first grand prix, 100,000 turned up and there were massive traffic jams. The event never really recovered and had a reputation as an unpopular venue that it never shifted, despite a challenging track configuration that had a great overtaking opportunity at the Adelaide Hairpin.

The hope is that the return of the race to Paul Ricard will be a success and momentum will build as a result. The timing is certainly good. France's interest in F1 is on the rise again, with Esteban Ocon, Pierre Gasly and Romain Grosjean all on the grid, plus the recent return of the Renault works team. This has played a part in organisers being able to raise the investment to get the race up and running at the track – which, it should be noted, is supplied by Ecclestone's company on a commercial basis.

"We've got three drivers, which is incredible if you take into account the past 20 years," says Dufaigneux. "Three and a half, if you count [Monegasque] Charles Leclerc. And we have Renault as a team, not only an engine provider. So there's strong interest in the competition coming back. There's a new focus of the French public on this grand prix. It's a major element, the attractiveness of F1. To have drivers, a team and a grand prix is very important. Renault improving a lot as a team is important because it's part of the story."

France is certainly engaging, and this is good news for the whole industry. Mercedes-contracted Ocon grew up in racing while the French GP was off the calendar, and was only 11 when Magny-Cours held its last grand prix. So it's a big deal for him.

"It's a dream come true to be racing at home," he says. "I've been waiting for it since I was a kid – I didn't understand

PAUL RICARD'S NEW LOOK

THE 3.6-MILE VERSION OF the Paul Ricard circuit that will be used for the revived French Grand Prix will be largely familiar to those who remember the truncated configuration used from 1986-90. The most obvious change is the addition of a chicane on the iconic Mistral Straight.

Even with the straight cut in half, the cars are expected to exceed 210mph on the approach both to the chicane and the famous Signes right-hander that follows. It's hoped that it will be possible to overtake into the chicane and even on the run into Signes.

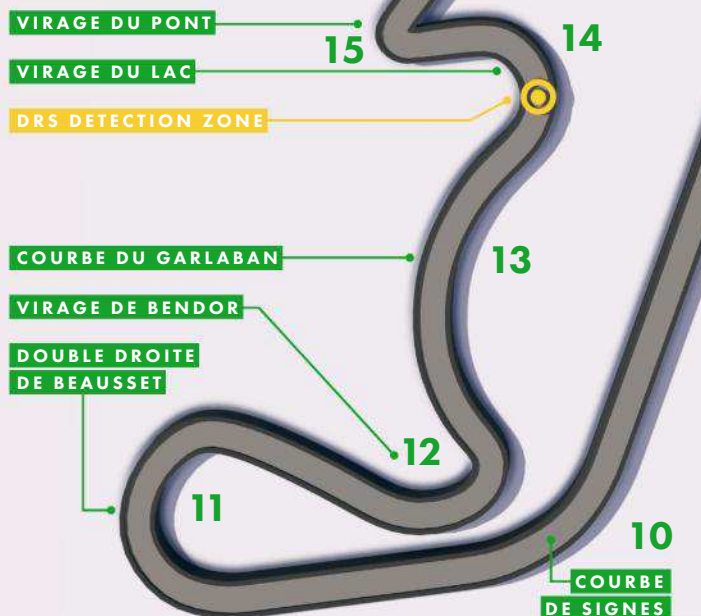
This exact configuration has not been used by F1 cars in dry conditions, although Pirelli has tested there in wet conditions in the past.

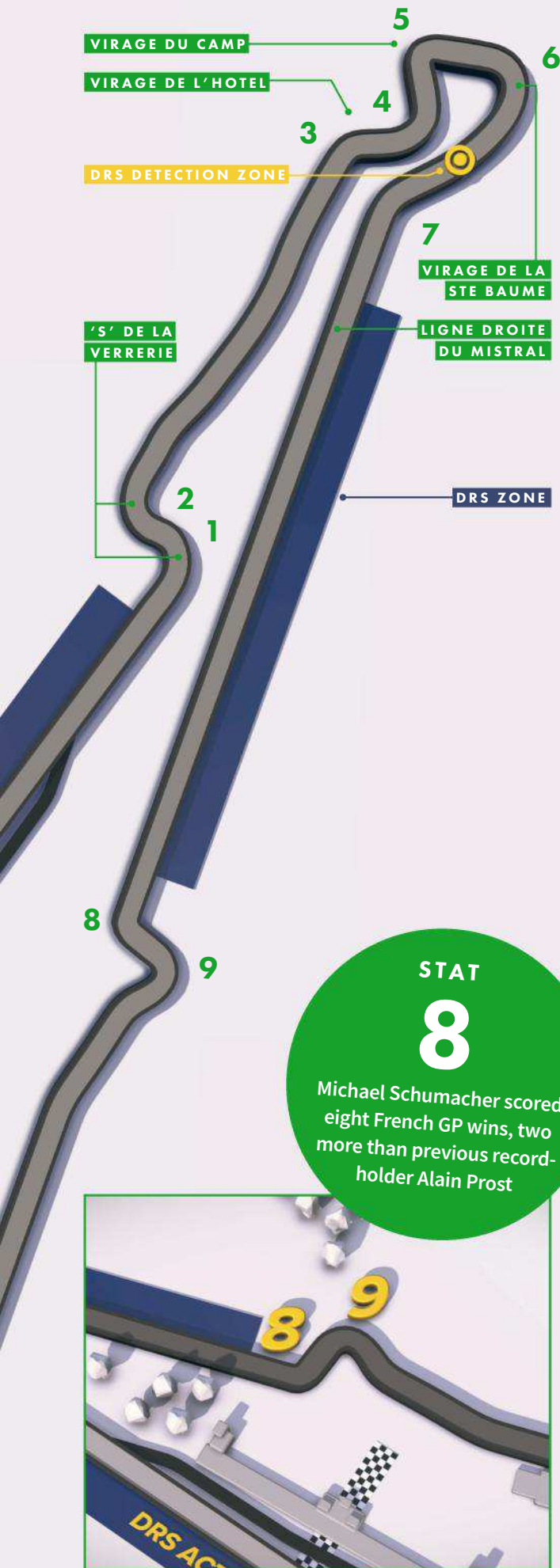
The track uses the same ultra-smooth surface material as has been laid at Barcelona and Silverstone, meaning Pirelli will use its reduced-thickness-tread tyres for the second time this season. These were first used for the Spanish Grand Prix and are 0.4mm thinner than the normal specification to protect against blistering. Although Ferrari's drivers criticised

the change in Spain, after trying the standard tyres in the post-race test Sebastian Vettel said he believed Pirelli had done the right thing by changing the rubber.

"Turn 1 is a bit tighter and they have opened the entry of a couple of hairpins, so it might change a little bit," says Toro Rosso driver Pierre Gasly, who raced at Paul Ricard in Formula Renault 3.5, Formula Renault 2.0 and French F4. "I heard the Tarmac is faster now, so I expect it to be pretty quick, especially with these new cars."

It's anticipated that there will be DRS zones on the start/finish straight and on the Mistral, with the braking zone into the chicane the most likely overtaking spot. It's not clear which of the leading cars the track should favour, although the straights mean it will likely either be Mercedes or Ferrari that has the edge.





then why there was no French Grand Prix. The first grand prix I saw was Magny-Cours in 2006 and now I have the privilege to race in front of my home crowd.

"It's very important. During that period France lost a bit of interest. We still have the hardcore fans, but we need to reach more people. To be French with so little coverage [climbing the ladder] was very hard; hopefully that's going to change."

Amid all the optimism surrounding the event, the race is also in an interesting position in an evolving grand prix landscape. It's the first 'new' race to be staged in the era of Liberty Media ownership and, while there's a desire for the event to continue beyond 2022 at the end of its contract, already there's talk of a need for a different financial model.

The French GP promoters are understood to have paid more than \$20m up front this year simply to run the event. With Liberty opening a can of worms through its willingness to have a Miami race on the calendar that doesn't require such an up-front payment, already there are mutterings about the need for a profit-share model, in which Liberty doesn't get paid ahead of the event and F1 effectively has a stake in the success of the race. This is a model that Paul Ricard is very keen on, along with many members of the Formula One Promoters' Association.

"We have to make the model change or be a bit more realistic, especially in Europe as we have the same type of constraints and the same type of grands prix," says Dufeigneux. "Monaco is different, but the others share a lot of qualities. From the talks we have with promoters renegotiating their contracts with Liberty, there is a need to change the model a bit."

"First of all, we have to make the product grow, and to grow is to invest. We're not able to invest in marketing and new products if we've got a strong financial constraint with the fees. We need smaller fees and we need to share the product, maybe to co-invest with Liberty. We're ready to invest, but we want our part of the revenues. The level of fees is a very big issue because the fees are around two thirds of the budget, and after paying the fees you don't have a lot of money left to invest in the new products."

This brings us back to the very reason the French GP failed in the first place – the sheer cost of holding an F1 race. With the British GP at Silverstone activating the break clause in its contract last year (meaning its last race is scheduled for 2019) and being among those seeking a more workable deal, these are interesting times for race promoters. And with the teams concerned about the threat to a model that guarantees part of their income (the two primary streams of revenue for F1 are race-promoter fees and broadcast rights), Liberty faces a delicate balancing act.

And connected to that is the future of a race that's back where it belongs on the calendar, but already faces an uncertain future. France, like Britain, needs to be part of F1 given the depth of its motorsport history. Collectively, they will play a big part in dictating whether or not races can be run on a more sustainable financial model in the long term. ✎

WHY THE GERMANS ARE FLOCKING TO FORMULA E

Porsche is set to join Audi and BMW, with Mercedes not far behind. The result could be an epic battle

ANTHONY ROWLINSON



“When have we seen, in the history of racing, Mercedes against Audi against BMW against Porsche? I don’t know if we ever have, but that sounds pretty damn exciting. That’s going to get massively good to watch.”

This is Nico Rosberg getting ever-so-slightly excited at the prospect of the four titans of German automotive manufacture going head to head (to head to head) in Formula E within the next 18 months. As well he might, for in an improbably short space of time, the all-electric race series has gone from being an intriguing technical curio to a racing and tech-innovation showcase that car makers simply can’t ignore.

Manufacturer interest in the series was apparent from the beginning, as Renault emerged comfortable season-one champion, but even the most optimistic daydreams of CEO Alejandro Agag would surely never have forecast ranks of blue-chip brands queueing up to join.

Audi, of course, with Abt, is a works entry already and is probably the outright quickest team in this season’s championship. And BMW has supported FE from the outset with its i8 and i3 models as safety and medical cars; it enters full-time for season five, which starts this December in Riyadh.

But it’s the involvement of Porsche and Mercedes for season six that has really turned heads, while also giving rise to concerns



SBLOXHAM
LAT IMAGES

that a strictly cost and tech-controlled championship could soon be facing its own arms race. For while the 'Gen2' car that will be used for season five onwards retains many 'spec' components, such as the chassis, battery, aero, tyres, brakes and front suspension, it's in the area of powertrain R&D – those components including the motor, inverter and gearbox that are not technically locked down – that costs could escalate.

As Andreas Seidl, Porsche's former World Endurance Championship team principal who now leads its Formula E effort, confirms: "The decision has been made that we will approach Formula E in a similar way to how we did it in LMP1 – which means that both the development but also the entire

race operation will be a full works programme. For us it was never an option to run a Formula E season with a car that doesn't have any single Porsche component."

Seidl draws a distinction with the Mercedes approach, which is based on a toe-in-the-water season-five entry in partnership with Venturi and HWA – Mercedes' long-time DTM ally.

Porsche, by contrast, will enter season six 'cold': "For us it was clear that we would only start doing Formula E once we had our own powertrain in place," adds Seidl, "so it wasn't possible to do something similar to Mercedes for season five in terms of timing. So season six will be our rookie year and we will have to learn quite quickly – but again I think we have >>

a good foundation and hopefully we'll be in the window of being competitive as soon as possible."

Porsche's impeccable sportscar heritage and the battle-hardened Weissach race operation that will take on the Formula E challenge mean this could never be considered a 'rookie' entry in any conventional sense. Yet despite this pedigree and Porsche's extensive experience with the 919 Hybrid LMP1 car, Seidl is cautious of the particular challenges of Formula E. It's a race series unlike any other, where efficiency of power usage is of paramount importance and the skills of team and driver in being able to manage a vehicle, rather than simply make it go as fast as possible, are paramount.

"We are very aware of how tough the competition will be," he says, "especially considering going into competition against manufacturers that have already been in for five years when we enter. So, this is why we approach this challenge quite humbly and with a lot of respect. For sure we have to learn, especially in our first year. It's part of the learning process to have issues there and learn from them."

Audi's early-season reliability troubles were clear evidence that Formula E is a more subtle technical challenge than many outsiders acknowledge, and one that is taking engineers into realms of experimental powertrain development, as-yet untried in the wider motoring and motorsport arenas.

This quest to improve cutting-edge electric-vehicle technology is what underpins the surge in manufacturer interest, for should Formula E competition prove a catalyst for a breakthrough in battery capacity, or fast charging, the prizes on offer for any car maker that steals a march on its rivals are potentially huge.

Porsche's Formula E programme is closely aligned with its 'Mission E' project: the company's first all-electric road-going sportscar due for release in 2019. As elsewhere in the motor industry, Porsche's direction of travel is towards electrification

and hybridisation, as emissions legislation becomes tougher and diesel fuel becomes ever-more stigmatised.

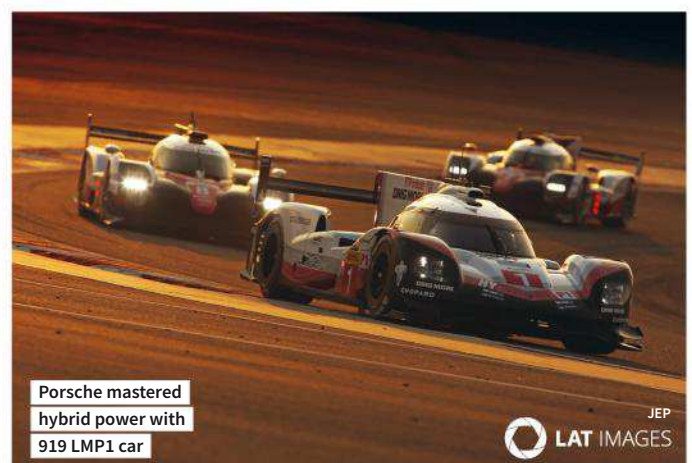
"The possibilities and the performance of electric cars have been a central topic at Porsche for quite a while," Seidl explains, "and in Formula E, the competition is about achieving differences in efficiency through details."

Drivetrain development is already under way in the same high-voltage laboratory that was used for the 919 Hybrid, and some new components are being used on both racing and road-car prototypes. "Motorsport and road-car engineers are working closely together," Seidl explains. "We share a common interest in aspects of efficiency and in making an electric powertrain as light as possible."

They'll be facing some serious competition come December 2019, however, not least from Mercedes, which, if persistent rumours are to be believed, may yet focus its main motorsport efforts towards Formula E and away from Formula 1 sooner rather than later. In the

"IT GOES BACK TO 'WIN ON SUNDAY, SELL ON MONDAY'. SO WE'LL ALL BE UNDER PRESSURE"

latest issue of Autosport's sister title, *F1 Racing*, Merc team boss Toto Wolff admitted: "If you don't consider all options, you're not doing your job properly... At the moment, Formula 1 works well for us, but equally, all options are open for us after 2020. We are contractually bound [to F1] until 2020, but it could be that we would have had 10 great years, it could be that we go



on forever, it could be that we do something else with the structure. And these are things that I'm considering."

Like Porsche, Mercedes views Formula E as an immensely valuable proving ground for electric-vehicle technology and, given the era-defining excellence of its hybrid-V6-turbo engines in F1 since 2014, it seems unlikely Merc will be laggards when the first silver-painted FE cars whirr near-silently onto the grid next year.

Mercedes describes its High Performance Powertrains site at Brixworth as a "world-class centre of expertise", and it's here that FE powertrain R&D is already taking place. "Formula E is a unique series with some very specific challenges for its teams," says Wolff. "We know the level of competition is extremely high and we will approach the challenge with energy and humility. There can be no other approach when we are up against 10 competitive manufacturers, many of whom have years of experience in the series."

Make no mistake though, Mercedes, like Porsche, like Audi, like BMW and every other manufacturer entrant, is only in it to win. Brand lustre can be lost as easily as it is gained in the heat of battle and inevitably some will lose. And right there, reckons Audi team boss Allan McNish, is a risk of future peril for the still-evolving championship. "Nobody likes losing but not everyone can win," he says. "The competition between sales divisions is going to be just as intense as it is between teams. It's already looking pretty busy for season five and in season six there will be a lot of head-to-head fights. It goes back to 'win on Sunday, sell on Monday' – so we'll all be under that pressure."

There will be a particular frisson between Porsche and Audi, too, as both are part of the Volkswagen group and both will have to prove the merits of their entries to respective corporate drones. "It's certainly a focal point," says McNish, "and I'm sure it will be very much a focal point on Monday mornings when board directors are calling around saying, 'Congratulations on your fine second place' when they've won. But that aside, the competition brings



Wolff: all options open regarding Mercedes' motorsport future

ETHERINGTON
LAT IMAGES

a lot of positives even as it brings a lot of internal pressures. You're competing against your next-door neighbours – and in the case of Porsche you're kind of competing against your brother."

Formula E's baked-in technical restrictions should prevent healthy rivalry from escalating into the 'total war' currently being played out in F1, where annual budgets are measured in hundreds of millions of dollars and allegations of rule-skirting skullduggery are the fortnightly norm.

Yet those deep-pocketed car-industry leviathans are going to want to spend their cash *somewhere*, so it's unlikely to be long before big-name drivers get the scent of cash and the odd hospitality unit or three become part of FE's travelling circus.

As McNish notes: "I'm sure Alejandro is delighted every time he signs an individual deal with one of these prestige manufacturers. But I'm sure there are going to be times in the future when he's tearing his hair out." ❄



THE JAPANESE CHALLENGE

WHILE THE GERMAN ARMADA heading towards Formula E is getting a lot of attention, the might of corporate Japan will also soon be ensuring that Asia is pitching squarely into the manufacturer battle.

Nissan will become the first Japanese entrant into FE, as it takes over the entry of sister brand Renault for season five, bringing, in the words of series CEO Alejandro Agag, "a huge

element to the championship – a huge plus. We are really happy that they are coming in."

As with all its manufacturer peers, Nissan has been drawn to Formula E by the potential for showcasing its EV technology in a racing environment. Its Nissan Leaf model is the world's biggest-selling electric car, with more than 300,000 sold so far, and the introduction for season five of a battery that will last a full race distance has removed

any corporate concerns over EV 'range anxiety' engendered by the spectacle of mid-race car swaps.

Nissan global motorsports director Michael Carcamo says: "For us Formula E is about innovation – we don't race just to race. We race because racing is exciting and innovative. You put those together with the 'Generation Two' Formula E car for season five and it really starts to hit all the right marks for us.

"Now is the right time. We have

increased battery time with the Gen2 car, more power, and that's all in one with road-car technology. So Formula E is a great showcase for us to talk about what we actually do – and have been doing – on the road and bringing it to the streets.

"The racing is where people can see the emotional part about EVs. I think that's something that we still need to do a lot of work on to convince people that EVs are a great alternative."

AWNINGS



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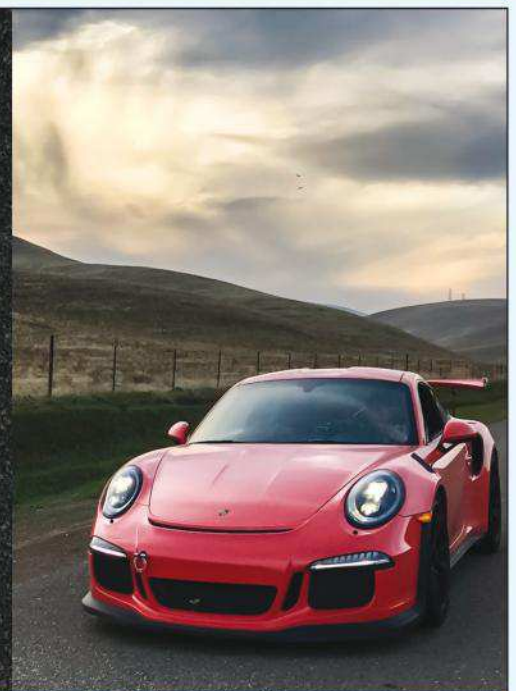
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CLIO JUNIOR ON THE BRINK AS DRIVERS JOIN GINETTA

RENAULT CLIO JUNIOR

It's not even two years since the Renault UK Clio Cup Junior concept was first launched. But after suffering a number of setbacks in that time, it seems that the series is now on the brink of cancellation since two of its remaining three drivers have switched to Ginetta Junior.

The series endured a troubled genesis. Originally due to begin in June last year, the inaugural season was postponed until September and managed to attract a peak of nine cars – a far cry from the 27 who took part in a sampler day in 2016.

But it got far worse this year. The five-car grid at the Silverstone opener has gradually reduced rather than increased.

And now the final nail in the coffin appears to be the decision of Team Pyro drivers Gus Burton and Lorcan Hanafin to switch to Ginetta Junior with the returning Douglas Motorsport squad, making their debuts at Croft this weekend.

Burton's father, Mike, explained: "The two lads were both in Clio Junior but unfortunately the grid is so depressingly small they are lacking competition and not getting the racecraft that the lads want and need, so that's why they've switched.

"It's a great shame – we chose it for a good reason and it's a bloody good car. The plan was to cut their teeth in the juniors and use the same car in the senior Clios.

"Ginetta Junior is a bit of a challenge for them and they're doing a couple of tests to

Sowery heads to the States

PRO MAZDA

Former BRDC British F3 frontrunner Toby Sowery will make his Pro Mazda debut at Road America this weekend, having signed a one-event deal with the BN Racing squad.

Sowery has been racing in International GT Open in a Lamborghini with Giuseppe Cipriani this year, and has competed in two triple-header rounds of the Italian Formula 4 Championship – with a best result of two thirds – for the KDC Racing team of Monisha Kaltenborn and Emily di Comberti.

Sowery is no stranger to the Road to Indy ladder after racing in USF2000, one rung below Pro Mazda, last year in the Barber Motorsports Park round.

"Returning to competition in North America is something that I have been working towards for quite some time,"

Sowery told Autosport. "I can't thank BN Racing enough for the opportunity and look to make them proud at Road America."

BN Racing team manager Bryn Nuttall added: "I am really excited to have Toby join our programme. He is a talented driver and an obvious threat for race wins and podium results in whichever series he enters. I think with two test days this week, he will be right on pace to challenge at the front of the field in our next event."

Nuttall was speaking before the test at Road America last weekend, where Sowery managed to go 10th quickest.

Sowery, who was twice a McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist in 2015 and '16, will join fellow Brit Harrison Scott – who is fourth in the championship with RP Motorsport – on the Pro Mazda grid.

JACK BENYON



get up to speed as they're switching from front-wheel drive to rear-wheel drive."

Their departures leave just Nick Reeve in the series. Specialized Motorsport team boss Simon Horrobin said that while Reeve is currently entered for the next round at Donington Park next month, he will review that after this news.

Previously championship manager Will Fewkes has blamed the Motor Sports Association for the series' struggles, citing "numerous changes to junior formula requirements at short notice". Other junior series have reported similar struggles but have more than one entry.

Fewkes was unavailable for comment this week following the funeral of his father, former Clio Cup technical

commissioner Roy Fewkes, while the British Automobile Racing Club said it will consider the series' future closer to the Donington event.

Burton's and Hanafin's moves to Douglas mean the team will compete in Ginetta Junior for the first time this season. It has retained much of its kit from last year, and one of the drivers will be using the car that Dan Harper drove to third in the standings in 2017.

Team boss Wayne Douglas said: "It's a bit of a cultural shock to them going from front to rear-wheel drive and they've only had two tests in the car. They seemed to go well and we'll do more testing."

One former Clio Junior driver will graduate to the senior Clio series for the

second half of this year. Jack Young, who claimed the title last year, will join the MRM team for the Snetterton round having studied for exams until now.

"It'll be a bit of an eye-opener jumping up to the Clio Cup – we're on a massive stage alongside the British Touring Car Championship," said Young. "But MRM has been delivering some strong results with Jade [Edwards] and Brett [Lidsey], plus Colin Turkington who currently leads the BTCC is a good pal, so I'm sure I'll feel at home pretty quickly in the paddock."

Ben Colburn, younger brother of Clio regular James, will also join the series later in this year, competing in the final three rounds with Westbourne Motorsport.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Driver suffers serious injuries

FF1600

Northern Formula Ford 1600 Pre-'90 competitor Andrew Kluge was airlifted to hospital after suffering serious injuries in an incident in the first of two races at Oulton Park last Saturday.

The Manchester driver's Van Diemen RF89 tangled with the Swift of Seamus Wild at Deer Leap, resulting in him spinning off the circuit and into Andrew Thomas's abandoned Mygale, which remained trackside following an earlier incident. Kluge's car collided with the gearbox of the stationary machine side-on. The impact punctured the Van Diemen's fuel tank and bent the seat.

Wild was subsequently disqualified

for his part in the accident.

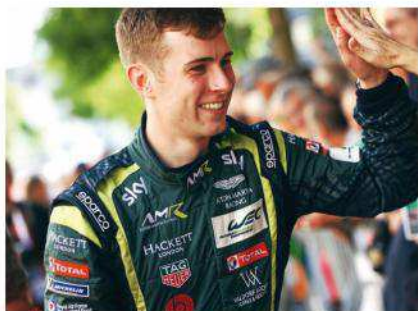
Rapid response was provided by marshals, before Kluge was treated at the circuit medical centre and then taken by the North West Air Ambulance to Royal Stoke University Hospital.

An MRI scan revealed a torn aorta that required emergency surgery, along with injuries to other organs and a broken hip.

Kluge, who is expected to remain in hospital for at least a week, was said to be in "great spirits" when visited by former FF1600 frontrunner Chris Hodgen, a close friend of Kluge who helps to run his car.

"I thought the medics [at Oulton] were fantastic, and at Stoke they potentially saved a life," said Hodgen.

ELLIOT WOOD



Gunn took victory on the road in new Aston



New Vantage GT3 gets off to perfect start

ASTON MARTIN FESTIVAL

Ross Gunn gave Aston Martin's 2019 Vantage GT3 challenger a perfect start with an on-the-road 'victory' in the Aston Martin Le Mans Festival.

Gunn, driving the unrestricted and yet-to-be-homologated car, was forced to start at the rear of the field, having failed to qualify after he burned out the clutch while making his way through traffic on the way to the circuit.

That meant Aston's Vulcan hypercar starred at first in the hands of Peter Dumbreck and then *Top Gear* host Chris

Harris before Gunn's early progress – making up over 30 places in the opening laps – made a dent in the Vulcan's lead. Gunn moved ahead after four tours.

The 2014 British GT4 champion continued to extend his lead over the Vulcan to claim a commanding on-track win, but he was not classified as the winner since it was considered a "demonstration run", meaning the Vulcan of Dumbreck and Harris claimed the 'real' victory.

That was not considered to be a disappointment, since the purpose of running the new Vantage was to demonstrate its performance.

"We've already seen a high level of interest from potential customers and we only expect that to grow as the car evolves closer to its homologation date [in seven months]," said AMR president David King when the Vantage's debut was announced.

The new GT4-spec Vantage also made its public debut at Le Mans, sitting on display in the AMR Festival paddock.

The Festival grid also featured Aston Martin CEO Andy Palmer, British cycling legend Sir Chris Hoy and his racing team-mate, Formula 1 commentator Martin Brundle.

TOM ERRINGTON

Strong car-racing debut for karter Ward

JSCC

Karter Thomas Ward made his car-racing debut at Rockingham last weekend, qualifying on pole for his maiden race in the Junior Saloon Car Championship.

Ward had tested his Citroen Saxo twice at Blyton Park and once at Brands Hatch ahead of the weekend. After making poor starts in both races,

he finished third in the first encounter and then claimed second in race two.

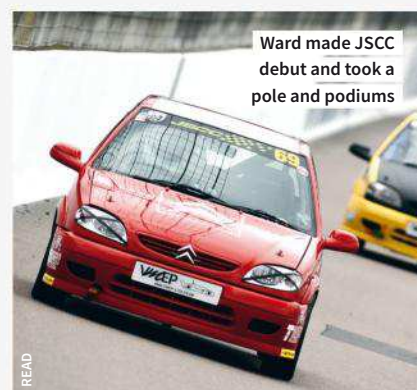
"There were a few scary moments and I was particularly nervous in the first race," he said. "But I must learn how to do a standing start.

"My plan is to learn the circuits this season, go for the championship next year, and then move into Formula Ford 1600."

Ward is backed by 2013 Formula Renault BARC champion Chris Middlehurst and his father, historic racer Andy.

• Pre-weekend JSCC championship leader Frankie Taylor was a reluctant spectator at Rockingham after breaking his wrist. He is expecting to return at the next round.

PETER SCHERER



Ward made JSCC debut and took a pole and podiums

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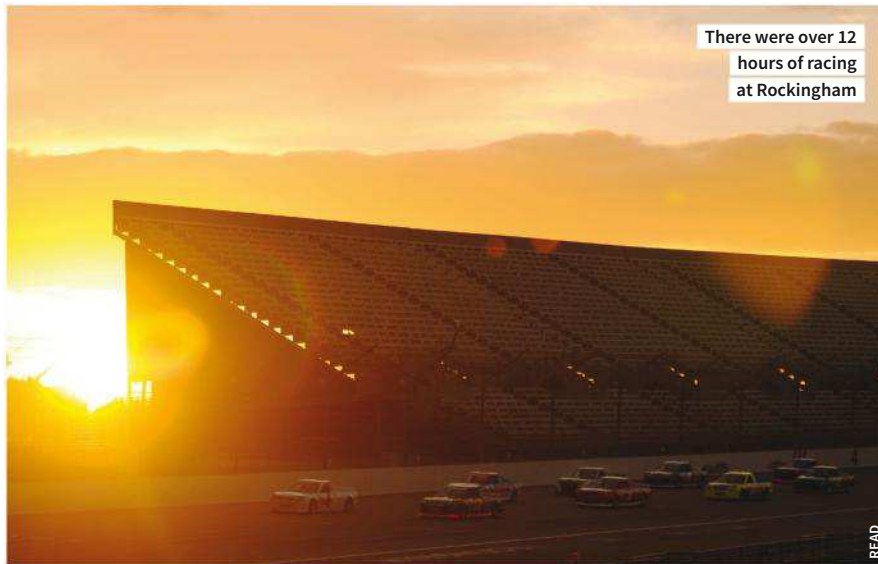
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Praise for evening racing

PICKUPS

Rockingham's evening Pickup Truck races last weekend were hailed a success by drivers and officials, and organisers may arrange other similar events.

The 20-minute Pickups contest was the finale of a one-day British Automobile Racing Club meeting at Rockingham that featured over 12 hours of track action.

The meeting paused for a tea break at 5.30pm, and after that the Junior Saloon Car Championship, Classic Touring Car Racing Club and Pickups all had evening races. The meeting concluded at 9.30pm. Another BARC event featuring Pickups on August 4 will also include evening races, and if that is also successful then the club will consider further similar events.

While the format was well-received, there was disappointment over the low crowd numbers.

"It was great but I can't understand why

people don't come," said veteran Pickup racer and former Thundersaloons champion Pete Stevens. "We get a crowd at Buxton for short ovals in December, and here we have all the facilities and good racing too – but hardly anybody here."

Long-time Pickup racer Mark Willis added: "It was a brilliant night, getting back to the good old days. A great atmosphere and this evening format really works. If people can just support us, the whole Pickup thing could be great again."

It was the first time the Pickups had run on the Rockingham oval this year, and Pickup supremo Sonny Howard already has plans for the future.

"We are having a standalone Oval Championship again with five races helping to form the grid for the Grand Final on September 23," he said. "We would like to run races at night with the whole track floodlit to create a real atmosphere."

PETER SCHERER

Oval Pickup first-timers

PICKUPS

Four drivers made their oval Pickup Truck racing debuts at Rockingham last Saturday, with one of them winning.

After 15 years of short-oval racing, George Turiccki was surprised to win his debut oval race, and he followed that up by getting as high as second place in race two before overheating tyres dropped him to fifth.

"I had been doing F2 on the short ovals but that's going nowhere now, so I decided to try Pickups," he said.

Dale Atkins, who had 34 years of racing experience before moving to Pickups, was eighth in race one and retired from the second after contesting the road race at Croft as his debut.

Having seen Scott Bourne's truck at Autosport International, Dan Petters decided to move from Saloon Stock Cars on the ovals, taking two seventh places at Rockingham. Dale Gent, who has been racing a Subaru Impreza since 2010 mainly in Classic Thunder, retired from both Pickup races.

PETER SCHERER

IN THE HEADLINES

MILES AWARD CONTINUES

The 750 Motor Club plans to continue awarding the John Miles Young Driver accolade following the former Lotus Formula 1 racer's death earlier this year. Miles's family, together with the club, have asked that memorial donations go to help support the award. The award's winner in 2017 was MX-5 Cup racer Ali Bray.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

The 500 Owners Association is planning the return of some familiar faces past and present for its November AGM to mark the club's 50th anniversary. It was formed in the 1960s when Formula Junior – which "put the [500] cars out of favour" – began, leaving plenty of the old motorbike-engined F3 cars in existence but with nowhere to race.

ROE WINS SELECTION

James Roe Jr has been selected as the Irish Young Racing Driver of the Month for April. The 19-year-old took two top-six finishes on his maiden weekend in the American F2000 series during the month and has since gone on to claim his first win. He has also made an appearance in the USF2000 series that is part of the Mazda Road to Indy ladder.

PBMW CHARITY DRIVE

Production BMW drivers taking part in the Brands Hatch Deutsche Fest raced to help raise public awareness of the Walking with Giants Foundation, a charity that supports the families of those affected by life-limiting and very rare genetic conditions. David Brise, nephew of the late Formula 1 driver Tony and chief instructor at Goodwood, represented them in the E30 cabriolet guest car and took a best result of 13th.

COLLEGE'S HSCC CAR

A group of engineering students are helping to run a car in the Historic Sports Car Club's 70s Road Sports Championship this year. The students, from the Huntingdon campus of Cambridge Regional College, are assisting in running a Lotus Europa in the series for Howard Payne, who sits third in Class C.

LONDON TO SYDNEY

The MGB register of the MG Car Club is one of a number of clubs helping to support a special event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the London to Sydney Marathon. A collection of Marathon and World Cup cars will gather at the British Motor Museum in Gaydon on July 29 to mark the occasion. A number of cars that competed in that 10,000-mile event will take part in a parade with other period cars.



Abuse sparks exclusion

PRODUCTION BMW

Production BMW frontrunner William Davison has suffered a blow to his championship challenge following disqualification from the Brands Hatch event last weekend after one of his party was involved in a paddock altercation.

Davison and former champion Matt Swaffer, who was making a one-off appearance, collided with each other while battling for the lead at Clearways on the last lap in race one.

Swaffer crossed the line first but was later disqualified for "driving in a manner incompatible with general safety". He claimed that a member of Davison's party had behaved in an abusive manner towards him after the race. Davison would go on to win the second race of the weekend, before being disqualified

from the entire meeting.

John Willcocks, who coordinates the championship for the Project 8 Racing Club, said: "The abuse complaint was investigated by the clerk and stewards, with the use of onboard cameras carried by every car, which confirmed one of Davison's party was deemed to have contravened MSA regulation C.1.1.9 [abusive language or behaviour, physical assault or threats of physical assault within the area under control of the organising club]. This resulted in the driver's disqualification from the meeting.

"Project 8 Racing Club prides itself in maintaining close, competitive, clean racing and a friendly paddock atmosphere and will continue to investigate and report all avoidable contact or unwarranted behaviour to the nominated officials."

STEFAN MACKLEY

IN THE HEADLINES

GT40 GOES TO AUCTION

The Holman-Moody Ford GT40 MkII that American duo Ronnie Bucknum and Dick Hutcherson drove to third at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1966 is to be auctioned by RM Sotheby's in August. Part of Ford's first win and 1-2-3, it is estimated to sell for up to \$12million. Earlier this year the book *Ford GT40 MkII – the remarkable history of 1016* was published, focusing on the chassis's race history and restoration.

DAVID DUDLEY

David Dudley, who died this month aged 73, was a stalwart of Monoposto Formula racing, although the title eluded him. The Tewkesbury butcher debuted in 1973, driving a Formula Junior Emeryson (FJ-4), bought as a rolling chassis for £250. He competed for the next 35 seasons in Brabham BT15, a modified March 708 – in which he scored the first of more than 30 wins at Castle Combe in 1977 – GRD 374, Reynard SF77 and the ex-F3 Anson SA4.

BRASHAW'S GLORY

Jamie Brashaw only took his F2 Chevron B27 to Silverstone for a shakedown test last Friday, but it went so well that he placed a late entry for the Historic Formula 2 races and took two podiums. He also used it to finish fourth in the opening Derek Bell Trophy race after his Formula 5000 March 73A was sidelined by engine failure in qualifying.

HUFF AT THE CLASSIC

Rob Huff will add a Lotus Cortina to his tally of historic race cars when he shares the car of Andy Wolfe in the 50-minute U2TC race at the Silverstone Classic. Wolfe and Huff will be one of the strongest driver pairings in the race, which is part of the event's Tin Top Sunday on July 22.

Chevron 'race of a lifetime'

GUARDS TROPHY

Former MG Metro Cup champion Ben Rushworth made his Guards Trophy debut at Silverstone last weekend, sharing a Chevron B8 with the car's owner Paul Ugo in the Historic Sports Car Club series.

Rushworth, currently third in Class A of the 750 Motor Club's Hot Hatch Championship, said: "I did a test and it's a very special car –

it's completely different."

Having qualified fifth, the pair were fourth on the road but were promoted to second after two cars ahead were handed 30-second penalties for missing the pit window.

"I've just had the race of my life," added Rushworth, who usually competes in a Honda Integra. "It's such a privilege to drive the Chevron."

PAUL LAWRENCE





MAGICAL MEMORIES

As Thruxton celebrates 50 years and achieving a prestigious second BTCC visit next season, here's a very personal take on the circuit's history

MARCUS PYE

The privilege and pleasure of reporting and commentating at Thruxton's 50th Anniversary Celebration earlier this month brought the British Automobile Racing Club home circuit's heritage and extensive contribution to my career into focus, and made the last day of my sixth decade unexpectedly special.

Although we lived in Hampshire, I missed the first five seasons alas. My intro came through racing rookie neighbours, on October 28 1973, BARC Championship Finals day. Apart from Tony Hazlewood's 100mph saloon lap record in the DAF V8, other memories thankfully remain vivid. Local ace Ian Taylor, already Forward Trust F3 champion, finished third in the Baty March 733. Another car I loved was Tony Birchenough's Dorset Racing Lola T290 HU22, driven in the Motoring News/Castrol GT race by 'Lee Kaye', who I discovered years later was Leopold Kasproicz. On a very sad note, Cheshire veteran Brian Hough lost his life in the Modsports race when he crashed his TVR Tuscan at Kimpton Bend (now Noble).

Now open to the possibilities, I went a few times in 1974 with my dad, including to the May F5000 race won by Ian Ashley (Lola T330) and in which young Rene Arnoux drove Tony Kitchiner's

"DOING THE PA FROM EITHER THE AIRFIELD CONTROL TOWER OR AT THE COMPLEX IS A JOY"

McLaren M19A. Excitingly, I first saw John Turner's spectacular F5000 Leda-based Skoda-Chevrolet Super Saloon here.

Becoming a BARC junior race assistant/paddock runner brought me closer. Decades before transponders arrived, Mike Eyre's team timed several drivers each, to a tenth, using banks of manual stopwatches. Wendy Dodimead, Sue Duddridge and the late Del Ali typed their results after each session, printing sheets on a hand-turned Banda spirit duplicator. Having ascertained that I could lap chart, Wendy sent me to assist the commentator, Autosport's Simon Taylor, in a wooden shed wobbling on scaffolding stilts at the chicane. A portentous occasion.

Through chief startline marshal Bob Lentell I switched to grid and pitlane duties during 1975-76. Bob lived near me and marshalled most weekends, thus I gratefully accepted lifts from Basingstoke to Brands Hatch, Silverstone, Mallory Park and Snetterton. I met countless racers along the way, from the club

racing classes I adored to frontline internationals including Thruxton's Easter Monday F2 bonanzas.

Having knowledge gleaned from voracious reading of the weeklies (often to the detriment of school lessons) bolstered by experience at meetings, I was ready for work. When, after a year on a fringe car magazine, a post came up on Autosport, I applied immediately. Editor Quentin Spurring was reassured by Simon Taylor, and happily the job was mine. Starting directly from the British GP at Silverstone in July 1977, I remained on the full-time staff for 20 years and 1000 issues.

Although restricted to 12 event days per year, Thruxton will always be special for me as the catalyst for more than four decades of work. I enjoyed my first race there in 1981, driving Clive Wood's Pine City Racing FF1600 Van Diemen RF79, and competed subsequently in a Royale RP26, a Renault 5 GT Turbo, an ex-Tim Brise GRD 372, a Ginetta G20, a ToJ SS02, a Chevron B26, an FRenault Swift and a BOSS Formula Lola-DFZ T90/50.

I've instructed there on countless occasions, initially on BMW days with dear Ian Taylor and his eponymous resident racing drivers' school. Subsequently I enjoyed the camaraderie of ex-F1 racers Mike Wilds and Tiff Needell and characters like Ian Flux and Scott Stringfellow over thousands of laps on Mercedes-Benz tours masterminded by ex-F3 racer Gray Hedley, whose son James, 14, is excelling in the Ginetta Junior championship.

On a glorious day, however, doing the PA from either box, in the airfield control tower at the chicane or at the complex, binoculars in hand, is a joy. Particularly when the racing is as good as it was at the Golden Jubilee beano. With a magnificent view around most of the hallowed 2.356 miles, epic FF1600 and Mini slipstreamers, and great catchweight contests such as the RAC Woodcote/Stirling Moss Trophy '50s sportscars entertaining appreciative spectators, it's as good as it gets.

My old pals Bill Coombs – to whom I lent my ex-Thierry Tassin Argo JM6 for an early Classic F3 race at Mallory Park in 1986, and later became champion in the ex-David Sears sister car I'd fielded in '87 – and Pat Blakeney put their heart and soul into making the event happen, with the small Thruxton team. I'm thrilled that its success has sown the seeds of future summer celebrations.

Having taken the racing school over when mentor Ian Taylor died at Spa in 1991, and developed every aspect of the venue's offering and become Group MD, Bill fittingly demonstrated Ian's F3 March 733 (now owned by Andy Langridge) at the anniversary meeting. When I arrived at Thruxton, aged 15, I'd never have dreamed that 45 years on I'd see it on track again. Or own a beautiful Mervyn Mk20, sharing the elation of Ben Mitchell repeating first owner Rob Cooper's July '72 double there. Especially from the best seat in the house. Fantastic! 🏁



Historic Formula 2 stars at Silverstone

SILVERSTONE
HSCC
JUNE 16-17

Inaugurated in 1949, the *Daily Express* International Trophy non-championship Formula 1 race was a staple of Silverstone's calendar until '78. The HSCC's homage has long showcased the event's classes, but 2018's brought stunning F1, F2, F5000, F3 and Formula Ford action, plus stirring Sports Racing and GT enduros.

F2, last run as a stand-alone race here as the '84 International Trophy – when Mike Thackwell (Ralt-Honda) won in the European championship's final season before F3000 arrived – took centre stage with a magnificent 28-strong entry spanning 1967-78.

Mark Dwyer and Richard Evans set Saturday's pace in March-BDG 742s,

before Dean Forward hustled his Hart 420R-powered 782 ahead. Alas, Forward buckled a front wheel when he tangled with Luciano Arnold's Brabham BT36 – which led quintuple champion Robert Simac (March 712) in the Jochen Rindt Trophy 1600cc division – and half-spun at Village. Evans darted past to win as he recovered quickly. Jamie Brashaw (Chevron B25/27) wrested third from Dwyer. Behind the same trio on Sunday came James Murray (Chevron B25) as Simac beat Arnold by 1.252 seconds, his fifth class victory from six starts.

Recalling the wonderful 1000cc 'screamer' years of 1964-70, in which Jackie Stewart, Piers Courage, Peter Westbury, Roy Pike, John Miles and Dave Walker won International Trophy supports, Historic F3 demonstrated the slipstreaming art and pack hunting anew as Brabham aces Jon Milicevic (ex-Mike

Keens BT21B) and Andrew Hibberd (ex-Chris Irwin BT18) scrapped it out. Defending champion Milicevic extended his unbeaten streak to six races this term. "I'm 50, so what I lack in stamina I have to make up for with technique," he grinned.

They traded the lead constantly on Sunday, when Milicevic had to dig deeper still. "Once I arrived at Brooklands with every wheel locked and no grip. I just threw it in, but Andrew is a brilliant driver, one of the few you can race that closely with," he said. Hinwil hunter Christoph Widmer (ex-Wal Donnelly BT18) started feistily, but lost bronzes to Steve Smith (Jolly Club Chevron B15) and Mike Scott (ex-Erkki Salminen BT28).

Following Saturday's atypically quiet Historic FF round, in which Cameron Jackson (Lola T200) scarpered from the rolling start as poleman Ben Mitchell (Merlyn Mk20) wriggled back past double champion Callum Grant – sidelined when a water pipe burst – for second, Sunday's sequel featured an epic fight between the table-toppers. "The lead yo-yoed, but our strengths were different," said Jackson, having lost out by 0.228s. "It was counter-intuitive, the short-wheelbase Lola quicker in the fast stuff – Becketts, Club and Abbey – whereas the Merlyn had better traction in the slower corners," added Mitchell.

Mitchell's fourth win from eight maintained the status quo, thus 12 points still split them going to Brands Hatch's Grand Prix Circuit, but breaking 2013



Hibberd (25) made
 Milicevic (1) work
 for double win



Evans (yellow car) prevailed in F2 opener after scrap with Dwyer (22) and Forward (13)

champion brother Sam's lap record and emulating Rob Cooper's and Chris Woodcock's Silverstone wins in the car from 1971-73 were feathers in his cap.

Max Bartell was with them until he "missed a couple of gears", but a second third place, ahead of a squabble that embroiled the next eight, was another good result. As at Thruxton, Grant shot from the back to sixth, while Jackson's Neil Fowler Motorsport team-mate Brian Morris claimed 'Over Fifties' honours, won by Switzerland's Ghislain Genecand (Crossle 16F) on Saturday.

David Shaw (ex-Nelson Piquet Ralt RT1) pipped Richard Trott (Chevron B43) for Classic F3 pole by 0.001s, but Anthony Hancock was on sizzling form. From fifth, the gastropub guru bolted his ex-Arie Luyendyk Sr/Mike Blanchet works development Lola T670, in familiar SDC colours, to win the opener from Shaw and Andy Smith (March 783). Hancock withstood immense pressure from Shaw in the finale until he "chose the wrong side" as they caught two slow FF2000s at Village and Shaw gleefully dived past to win. Ian Pearson (Royale RP30) dominated the URS FF2000 section, twice beating promising debutant Ben Stiles (Van Diemen RF82).

Michael Lyons's Derek Bell Trophy victories in the ex-Al Unser Lola T400 reminded onlookers of F5000 savagery. Even he was shocked when James Hadfield – saddling the Hexagon Trojan T101 on an impressive class debut – "almost had me >>>



AUSTRALIAN SPORTS RACER One of four Elfin 300s built by Garrie Cooper in Adelaide, this 1967 chassis was uniquely fitted with an ex-Team Lotus 1500cc Coventry-Climax PPF Formula 1 engine stretched to two litres and mated to a Hewland FT200 gearbox by Garth McGillewie in South Africa. Owned by Briton Will Walker, it was shared by Bentley 3/4½ veteran Randal Stewart.



MURRAY'S MINT CHEVRON James Murray debuted his ex-Peter Gethin 1973 Chevron B25 in the Historic Formula 2 feature races, finishing fourth from the back of the grid on Sunday, after a ride-height issue. Back in its works livery, the B25's appearance delighted HSCC director Grahame White, who left his long-term BARC race-management role to become Chevron's sales manager at the time.



ANTIPODEAN STAR Two second places on his UK racing debut in Classic FF2000 with the ex-Paul Burt Van Diemen RF82 – acquired from Ken Thorogood of series sponsor Universal Racing Services – were superb results for Ben Stiles, who now aims to close the gap to past master Ian Pearson. New Zealand-based Stiles is son of long-time Brands Hatch FF1600 favourite farmer Trevor.



Hancock (32) and Shaw (3) duelled in Classic F3

SILVERSTONE WEEKEND WINNERS

CLASSIC F3/URS FF2000

Race 1 Anthony Hancock (Lola-Toyota T670)

Race 2 David Shaw (Ralt-Toyota RT1)

DEREK BELL TROPHY

Race 1 Michael Lyons (Lola-Chevrolet T400)

Race 2 Michael Lyons (Lola-Chevrolet T400)

GT & SPORTSCAR CUP

Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield (AC Cobra 289)

GUARDS TROPHY

Martin O'Connell (Chevron-FVA B8)

HISTORIC FORMULA 2

Race 1 Richard Evans (March-BDG 742)

Race 2 Richard Evans (March-BDG 742)

HISTORIC FORMULA 3

Race 1 Jon Milicevic (Brabham BT21B)

Race 2 Jon Milicevic (Brabham BT21B)

HISTORIC FORMULA FORD

Race 1 Cameron Jackson (Lola T200)

Race 2 Ben Mitchell (Merlyn Mk20)

JAGUAR CLASSIC CHALLENGE

James Dodd (E-type)

PRE-'80 ENDURANCE

Race 1 Leo Voyazides (Lola-DFV T282)

Race 2 Leo Voyazides (Lola-DFV T282)

For full results visit: mstworld.com/results

at the start" on Saturday. Third qualifier Hadfield was out when his front-left tyre deflated through Woodcote on lap three, but he blasted from the back to a fine second on Sunday, lapping within 1.7s of Lyons's best while staving off David Shaw's ex-Rolf Stommelen Eifelend March 721.

Leo Voyazides won both Pre-'80 Endurance races at a canter in his DFV-powered Lola T282, having shaken off the Lola T290s of Mark Richardson and Robert Oldershaw, then on Sunday 1989 Group C2 world champion Nick Adams, sampling Richard Dodkins's throbbing March-Chevrolet 717 InterSerie monster. Voyazides's fifth Silverstone GT & Sportscar Cup win (a fourth in his black AC Cobra, and with Simon Hadfield) was tougher, achieved when they outran Gary and John Pearson in the latter's Jaguar E-type by 35s. Philip Walker/Miles Griffiths were third in the former's startling orange Lotus 15, clear of Martin Hunt's E-type – in which son Theo, 20, set its best lap on his first shot in it – and the Chiles family's Cobra, shared with Simon Garrad.

Jeremy Welch anchored Martyn Corfeld's Austin-Healey 3000 to GT3 honours as the class hare, the Chris Milner/Nigel Greensall

E-type, broke. Tim Jacobsen was within metres of Malcolm Paul's GT2-leading TVR Grantura, gaining fast when his MGB "lost drive" on the Hangar Straight three laps from the chequer.

Soloist Martin O'Connell blitzed the HSCC Guards Trophy round in Sandy Watson's 1600cc Chevron-FVA B8, with Paul Ugo and the race's star Ben Rushworth gobsmacked to be second when Simon Hadfield/Michael Schryver (B6) and Julian Thomas/Calum Lockie (B8) were penalised 30s for stopping outside the pit window. Outqualified in tricky damp conditions by Singapore commuter Oliver Ford, debuting his 26R-spec Lotus Elan, points leader John Davison reversed the order in the dry race, scooping class gold in his Elan as he chased GT winner John Spiers's TVR Griffith.

With father Graeme unwell, James Dodd raced their E-type to Jaguar Classic Challenge victory over the Pearson brothers and Ben Short/Nick Riley, the latter overjoyed with his first podium. Milner/Greensall took advantage of conflicting pit-window regulations to land Class D from Martin Melling and a disgruntled Jason Minshaw.

MARCUS PYE



Voyazides's Lola (1) was class of Pre-'80 Endurance field



Lyons took Lola to Derek Bell Trophy success

BRANDS HATCH WEEKEND WINNERS

BMW M3 CUP/330 CHALLENGE

Race 1 Paul Cook (E46 M3)

Race 2 Paul Cook (E46 M3)

PRODUCTION BMW CHAMPIONSHIP

Race 1 David Graves (320i)

Race 2 David Graves (320i)

RACING SALOONS

Race 1 Nigel Innes (BMW E36 M3)

Race 2 Nigel Innes (BMW E36 M3)

VOLKSWAGEN RACING CUP

Race 1 Chris Panayiotou (Scirocco)

Race 2 Dennis Strandberg (Golf)

For full results visit:

www.tsl-timing.com



Panayiotou in series lead at Deutsche Fest

BRANDS HATCH

MSVR

JUNE 16-17

Volkswagen Racing Cup points leader Chris Panayiotou and Swedish driver Dennis Strandberg each tasted the victory champagne after an eventful pair of races, which headed the programme at the second Brands Hatch Deutsche Fest.

Success in race one was Scirocco driver Panayiotou's first win of the year, consistent finishing placing him top of the table at the championship's halfway stage. And it was a hard-won result, Panayiotou first having to overcome the quick-starting Scirocco of Ruairidh Clark, who stayed on his rival's tail to the flag. Third was taken by Simon Walton's Audi TT after a late skirmish at Paddock with Jamie Bond's Golf, which resulted in Bond being penalised back to fourth for his part in the incident. Golf drivers Toby Davis and Strandberg were fifth and sixth, and this half-dozen would be reversed on the race-two grid.

High expectations were dashed and the second race spoiled by two lengthy safety-car interventions to move cars stranded at Paddock. Strandberg had already been given breathing space by those behind making an ill-advised attempt to take Druids and Graham Hill three abreast on lap one. The caution periods then

left the Swede to stay in control for a single-lap dash to the finish, something he successfully achieved in an unballasted car against a bunch of rivals carrying varying levels of success weight. The win was Strandberg's third of the year, and he was followed home by Bond, Davis, Clark and Panayiotou.

Paul Cook's unmissable black-and-yellow E46 won both BMW M3 Cup races, beating David Whitmore in each outing. In race two, a seemingly comfortable lead evaporated when Cook briefly struggled to find a gear, but he soon regained control. Nick Williamson was third in the first race, but had to follow Graham Crowhurst home in race two after reaching the front of the quartet contesting fourth.

The 330 Challenge provided much closer competition for victory, Matt Maxted taking

the wins after chasing Darren Ball for most of the race distance in both encounters.

Success in the Toyo Racing Saloons fell all too easily to the Nigel Innes BMW E36. He finished just over 22 seconds clear each time, with Roger Kneebone's E36 and the Toyota Starlet of Barnaby Davies taking the runner-up spots respectively. Davies and his brother Oliver in another Starlet made a nuisance of themselves amid the BMW domination, but Barnaby's poor start in race two meant he only moved up to second on the penultimate lap. Production BMW champion Matt Swaffer took a class win and a second place in a diesel 120.

Swaffer isn't registered for the 2018 Production championship and ran as a guest entry at Brands, determined to avenge his defeat by William Davison in last year's fixture. His E30 320i was indeed first across the line in race one after a tense duel, but contact on the final corner knocked Davison (E30) back to sixth and earned Swaffer disqualification for his strong-arm tactics.

Davison duly won race two on the road, while Swaffer reached 11th from the back of the grid, but Davison was then excluded from the meeting after a paddock altercation (see page 64). He had been battling with David Graves (320i), who thus inherited a double win after taking the flag as close runner-up in each race.

BRIAN PHILLIPS





Willis leads, but lost out to Turiccki (inset right) in early-evening race

Twilight racing brings debut win for Turiccki

ROCKINGHAM
BARC
JUNE 16

George Turiccki fought off a last-lap challenge from Mark Willis and Scott Bourne to take victory in the first of the evening's Pickup races on his debut at the Rockingham oval.

Willis and Bourne had controlled things from the front until Turiccki split them with nine of the 30 laps remaining. A

safety-car intervention left Turiccki under threat from Bourne at the green flag with three laps to go. He not only held his place, but he also dived past Willis on the inside at Turn 2 in a decisive move to win. Willis and Bourne completed the podium from a distant Paul Tompkins.

After a closer initial fight, race two developed into a Bourne-and-Willis duel again. Bourne set the pace for most of the race, and Turiccki managed to slip into second again for a while, but when his front

tyres began overheating he lost out to both Willis and Mel Collins at the exit of Turn 4 with three laps remaining. Bourne stayed clear to take the win from Willis and Collins, and Pete Stevens went ahead of Turiccki for fourth on the last lap.

Joel Wren and Lewis Saunders shared the Junior Saloons victory spoils. Saunders led in the first race until Wren shot by into Deene hairpin on the third lap. Series debutant Thomas Ward ousted Steven Chandler for third, before both overtook

Grice and Sharp extend lengthy Civic winners list

OULTON PARK
BRSCC
JUNE 16

The Civic Cup underlined its credentials as one of the country's most competitive championships as it produced its fifth and sixth winners from the first half-dozen races. Mark Grice, the 2017 runner-up, triumphed in the first race at Oulton before Arron Sharp took his first car racing victory – at his home circuit – in the second.

Grice, who was third in the standings before the weekend, had a coming-together with Silverstone victor Dan Reason at Shell on the opening lap, allowing Paul Bancroft to lead for a time. Grice lost just one position and was able to close the gap to Bancroft by lap five

out of eight, before challenging him on the sixth lap at Hislops and completing the move at Druids. Championship leader Rob Baker and Reason followed him through over the following sequence of corners and eventually completed the podium, and then David Buky relegated Bancroft to fifth on the drag to the line.

"Two or three laps from the end something came loose and I kept going wide," admitted Grice after surviving final-lap offs at Cascades and Lodge.

From the front row of the reversed-grid second race, Sharp was able to assume a comfortable margin from the outset, establishing a five-second gap at the end of lap six that enabled him to cling on despite a mistake in the closing stages. "The car was mint, but we're still learning – this is only our third meeting with it," he said.



Jason Ballantyne made a strong start from row three and grabbed second place from Lewis Rose down the Avenue on lap three, but a truculent gearchange at the end of the penultimate lap allowed Reason through to second. Having dropped to 15th on the opening lap, Baker climbed back to eighth to maintain his 12-point lead over Ballantyne, while Grice – who finished race two in 10th – was leapfrogged in the points by Reason.

Mike Comber Racing drivers completed a clean sweep of the MX-5 Championship wins, a great birthday present for the team proprietor – even if he did play third fiddle on track to Will Blackwell-Chambers and Sam Smith, who split the three wins.

Saunders. As Ward consolidated second, Chandler ran wide at Deene, handing third back to Saunders. Jemma Moore and Scott McIntyre latched on to Chandler's tail, and both got by into the Brook esses on the last lap. McIntyre won the dash to the line to take fourth, from Moore and Chandler.

At the start of the second race Saunders chased Ben Kasperczak and Wren through Turn 1, but passed both with a brave move around the outside at Gracelands. Wren then hit Kasperczak at Tarzan and put them both out, while Ward moved into second despite having to take evasive action as the accident unfolded ahead of him.

Saunders got no opportunity to extend his lead over Ward because the safety car had to be deployed, and when the race was green-flagged again with two laps remaining he had to stay on the defensive. He just held on for his maiden victory, and Moore secured third place behind Ward after McIntyre's engine went into limp mode.

It wasn't the best of starts for Stephen Primett's Ford Escort in either of the Group 1, Classic & Historic Touring Car races, but that didn't stop Primett taking a brace of wins. He took the lead in race one on lap two, overtaking the Triumph Dolomite of early leader Mark Osborne, who then had a great duel with Stephen Cripps's Escort. Osborne held on, while Cripps had to fend off Mark Cholerton's Escort too.

Osborne got the best start again in race two, but had to surrender the lead when Primett went around the outside at Deene on lap two. Osborne and Cripps continued their duel from earlier, but were split



by Cholerton when Cripps overshot at Deene. Osborne held on to second again, while Cripps went back up to third at the Brook esses a lap from home.

Ian Bower's BMW M3 was a lights-to-flag winner in the first multi-class Classic Touring Car Racing Club race, but a track-limits penalty dropped him to second behind the Honda Civic Type R of Steve Barden. Barden went on to secure a double after passing Bower into Tarzan in race two.

PETER SCHERER



Blackwell-Chambers, championship leader by six points over Oliver Allwood, passed Smith for the lead at Dentons on lap seven of race one. The pair went on to finish well clear of Comber, who clinched third in a tight finish with Allwood and Brian Trott despite a differential-bearing issue.

Smith was untroubled in the second race, aided when Blackwell-Chambers got a bad exit from Cascades and was outpowered by Trott and Allwood along Lakeside. He got the places back, but lost second again to Trott at Cascades on the final lap.

Smith's victory in the final race came by just 0.044s over Blackwell-Chambers. Trott lost third to Cadwell victor John Langridge



at Old Hall on the final lap, while Allwood finished 17th after bouncing off the Old Hall barriers.

Rory Smith moved to the top of the Northern FF1600 standings with a win and a second place in his Medina. In the opener, David McArthur drove around the outside of Smith to take the lead at Old Hall before a red flag wound the result back a lap. After another poor start – caused by a clutch issue on his Van Diemen – McArthur repeated the move in the second race, this time claiming the win. Jack Wolfenden twice took his Reynard to Pre-'90 spoils.

IAN SOWMAN

WEEKEND WINNERS

ROCKINGHAM

CLASSIC & HISTORIC THUNDER/BLUE OVAL SALOONS

Race 1 Dale Gent (Subaru Impreza)

Race 2 Dave Cockell (Ford Escort)

GROUP 1, CLASSIC & HISTORIC TOURING CARS

Race 1 Stephen Primett (Ford Escort Mk1)

Race 2 Stephen Primett (Ford Escort Mk1)

INTERMARQUE

Race 1 Lewis Smith (Vauxhall Tigra)

Race 2 Lewis Smith (Vauxhall Tigra)

JUNIOR SALOONS

Race 1 Joel Wren

Race 2 Lewis Saunders

PICKUPS

Race 1 George Turiccki

Race 2 Scott Bourne

PRE '93 TOURING CARS/PRE '03 TOURING CARS/PRE '05 PRODUCTION CARS

Race 1 Steve Barden (Honda Civic Type R)

Race 2 Steve Barden (Honda Civic Type R)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



OULTON PARK

CIVIC CUP

Race 1 Mark Grice (EP3)

Race 2 Arron Sharp (EP3)

FF1600 NORTHERN CHAMPIONSHIP

Race 1 Rory Smith (Medina JL18)

Race 2 David McArthur (Van Diemen LA10)

MX-5 CHAMPIONSHIP

Race 1A Will Blackwell-Chambers

Race 2A Sam Smith

Race 3A Sam Smith

Race 1B Simon Orange

Race 2B Callum Greatrex

Race 3B Marcus Bailey

MX-5 SUPER SERIES

Race 1 Joshua Jackson

Race 2 Joshua Jackson

Race 3 Joshua Jackson

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com





FROM CAR CONTROL TO HAND CONTROLS

Adapting to a new style of driving is a big challenge. Just ask Damon Hill, who sampled the Aston Martin of the injured servicemen at Team BRIT

JACK BENYON

The story starts back in February in the Clark Curve gravel trap with a Formula 1 world champion. He's just found out how difficult it is to have everything you've ever known challenged, and how tough it is to relearn how to do things as basic as driving.

The driver in question is Damon Hill, and it's not the first time he's stepped into some of the most advanced machinery in its field. But unlike his title-winning Williams FW18, this is a GT car – an Aston Martin GT4. It looks like a normal GT4, so why on earth, under Hill's spell, has it careered into the gravel trap?

The first theory posed is, 'Is it because Adrian Chiles is in the passenger seat? I'd throw him off into the gravel if I was driving too.' Ever the pro, there's no sign of a smirk from Hill, having given Chiles the ride of his life while doing some TV recording.

The real reason is this Aston is controlled totally from the steering wheel, and it's caught Hill out.

Designed for the injured servicemen of the Team BRIT squad, which is hoping to reach the Le Mans 24 Hours by 2020, the car has throttle, clutch and gearchange paddles that allow amputees and drivers with leg injuries the chance to compete on an even

playing field. That is, when they've retaught themselves how to drive. And Hill proves it isn't easy.

"When you're racing, things in the car become automatic," says Hill. "It's amazing that you find yourself doing other stuff in the process of driving, which is not possible unless you've made the driving side of things completely automatic. You're not conscious of doing things like changing down and braking."

"The problem with that is it becomes hardwired and it's hard to go back and change it. It's a good analogy – if you suddenly had an injury, losing fingers and legs and things like that, everything is new again and the Team BRIT drivers have to relearn what they're doing."

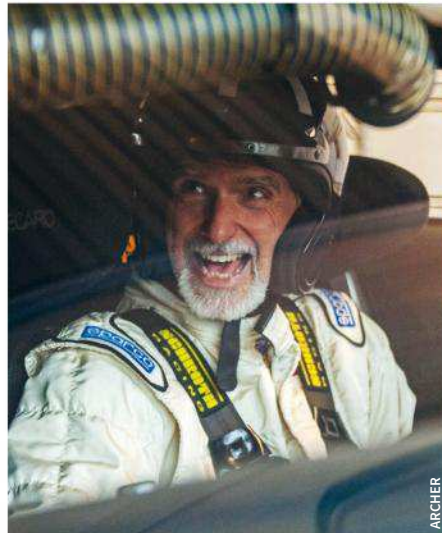
Of course, it doesn't take Hill long to turn things around. His trip to the gravel is very early in his experience with the car, but by the time he's giving further passenger rides he's got the thing purring.

The steering wheel itself is a revelation. It's been designed to combat the problem that GT races are multi-driver – when you have people with different disabilities jumping in the car, a standard steering wheel doesn't work.

"We're an endurance race team, so each driver will have his or



ARCHER



ARCHER



Learning to use hand controls is a challenge even for a world champion

HAWKINS



ARCHER



Hill poses with Team BRIT's line-up of ex-service personnel

ARCHER

her wheel," says Team BRIT race manager Graham Horgan. "Plug it in and your settings are there and away you go. We thought we'd try to use some technology to allow drivers using hand controls to be equalised and take part on a level playing field. There aren't many sports that do that; most disabled sports are unique to disabled people."

The different paddles are the reason for Hill's off. "Because I'm used to paddleshifts, where the right hand is an upshift and the left hand is a downshift, when I was coming out of Clearways on my first lap I went for a downshift as I was in too high a gear and I pulled the brake on and chucked it in the gravel," he says. "I couldn't work out what had happened. It was a completely automatic reaction. But it was the wrong one!"

It may sound relatively straightforward to convert a car to hand controls, but to make everything work reliably and quickly in an endurance environment is far from simple. Just the seven ECUs needed to control the braking system tell you all you need to know about the complexity.

But that job's for Team BRIT's masterful engineers. The end result is, via such complicated engineering, to make it simple enough that any of the Team BRIT drivers can jump in and get straight on the pace.

Unlike Hill, the Team BRIT drivers have had previous experience, usually in karting, where Team BRIT started out. Founder Dave Player brought hand controls to karts in a bid to help injured servicemen experience that adrenaline rush of being on the frontline, in a bid to rejuvenate them.

That grew into a Fun Cup entry for 2017, which has expanded to two cars this year, and now the GT4 is out competing, making

"I WENT FOR A DOWNSHIFT AND PULLED THE BRAKE ON AND CHUCKED IT IN THE GRAVEL"

its debut at Oulton Park last month. "Oulton was fantastic," says Jimmy Hill, who steered the car to fourth and a class win in the Aston Martin Owners Club GT Challenge race at the Cheshire venue. "It was nerve-wracking being the first time in the GT competitively. But we were disappointed to see the race end."

The car also appeared in the Aston Martin Festival in the Le Mans support race last weekend, but the big prize is a full-on Le Mans 24 Hours attempt, and there's the hope of developing a similar GT3 variant of its Vantage for 2019.

Hill's famous namesake Damon says there's no chance he'll be persuaded back into racing for the fear of upsetting his wife, but his support for Team BRIT is testament to his personality. "The mind is a wonderful thing, how it adapts to new challenges," he enthuses. "Even though I've raced a lot and for a long time, you're always trying to learn more when you're driving."

Hill definitely learned a lesson, that starting from scratch isn't easy. What the Team BRIT servicemen have to go through is heart-wrenching, but motorsport can be something that pulls them through mentally. For that, the team and especially its engineers should be proud. ❦

TURNING 24 SECONDS INTO 24 HOURS

After swapping hillclimbs for the mammoth task of reaching Le Mans, Charlie Martin has decided to challenge gender equality along the way

JACK BENYON

Charlie Martin has spent her life climbing mountains. The last couple of years have provided the biggest challenges yet, as a path to Le Mans is being paved by the 36-year-old from Leicestershire.

Ironically, the challenge involves moving away from climbing hills, in order to scale greater heights. Martin has impressed in hillclimbs in the UK and Europe for a number of years, but a life-long dream to compete at Le Mans has kick-started a switch to circuit racing and the Ginetta GT5 Challenge.

"I went to Le Mans in the early 2000s and ever since it's been my dream race to do," says Martin. "Endurance racing is something that has always fascinated me.

"You couldn't get two more different ends of the spectrum in switching from hillclimbing to circuit racing, but I think I've got good grounding. In hillclimbing you're doing what is effectively

a qualifying run with very little margin for error. You have to be very accurate and precise because you don't have any runoff, and that applies to racing as well. The racecraft and moving in traffic is something I'll hopefully pick up as my career progresses."

Martin has always bitten off more than the average person could chew and challenged herself more than most, starting with her motorsport career. "I bought my first race car after university, a Peugeot 205, with the objective of going hillclimbing," she adds.

"I did four years with that car and then changed to a Westfield. My dream in hillclimbing had always been to race in Europe. I'd seen a lot of the videos with the longer hills. In 2014 I took the Westfield to do a round of the French national championship."

With just a trailer in tow, it's fair to say Martin was one of the poorer-funded drivers climbing the hills of Europe. But it didn't show in the results, and in 2015 and '16 a step up to a Norma prototype delivered podiums in the European and French championships.

But then the racing had to take a back seat, as Martin completed her transition from male to female. It was a turbulent period, during which she worried about her motorsport future. Would she still be accepted, especially by a sport dominated by middle-aged and older men?

"When I transitioned in England, I took a year out of racing and it was a difficult time for me," Martin explains. "I really was unsure as to whether I would continue racing. With the racing I did in France, I had a lot of friends on Facebook and friends from the trans community, so I was in this situation where I'd rather just tell people [to avoid confusion]."

A decision like Martin's is never easy. But the nature of motorsport and the race against the stopwatch has had advantages. Once the helmet is on, everyone is treated



**"FIRST AND FOREMOST I WANT
TO BE SEEN AS A RACING DRIVER.
I'M OUT THERE TO TRY TO WIN"**

the same. It's a mixed-gender sport, one that accommodates those from all walks of life. Whether its transgender people, amputees, people with mental illness or with physical injuries — none of these things can be seen when a car is attacking an apex.

"First and foremost, I just want to be seen as a driver," declares Martin. "I'm out there to go fast and to try to win. I don't like to jump up and down and shout about it. Hey, I'm trans, but I'm a racing driver. I'm here to get in the car and go fast."

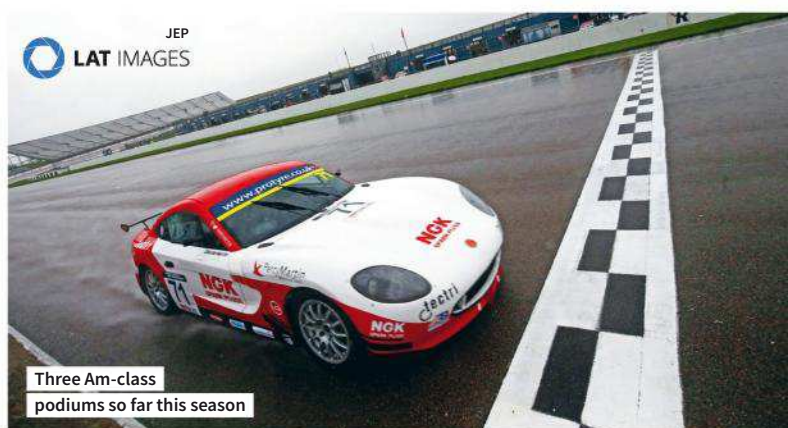
The added benefit of Martin's anticipated path is that she gets to raise awareness of an issue that isn't exactly a common topic in the world of motorsport, one a stereotypical racing



Strong GT5 grid ups the challenge of switch to racing



Martin campaigned a Norma prototype on European hills



Three Am-class podiums so far this season

crowd probably doesn't know much about.

While Martin admits that she doesn't define herself as an activist, she realises the opportunity to help similar people is there. "I think by being visible as a trans woman, the fact I have a public profile, there's a lot of positivity that can come from that," she adds. "I would never say I'm an activist, but the trans community suffers a lot of discrimination and there's a lot of progress that needs to happen both in the UK and globally.

"I think anything that can change the public's perception in a positive way, and can change attitudes in society towards the trans community in a positive way, it's something that people should try to do. And if you have the opportunity to do that through racing, then that's something I would like to do."

Thankfully, Martin has been well received in the sometime TOCA-undercard, the GT5 Challenge. British Touring Cars brings a lot of spectators and people working for teams in the paddock. So far, the reaction has been positive.

"Apart from the odd stupid comment on Twitter, there was no real negativity at all, just people who were very supportive

and that is very encouraging," says Martin, who worked hard to publicise the cause in the recent Trans Day of Visibility in March. "I've not experienced anything to the contrary. I guess the more you get to know people in the paddock, the more you become known. It's a bit of a work in progress."

A work in progress, much like the switch to Ginettas. The GT5 series itself has been boosted by a number of high-profile drivers deciding against another year in junior racing to step up and compete, forming one of the strongest grids the category has ever had, making Martin's leap a big one.

"My goal is to try to finish in the top 10 this year and to get on the podium," adds Martin. "As many podiums as I can manage. A top 10 result would be great."

With her team Richardson Racing, Martin has taken three Am-class podiums in the first four rounds. While there's plenty of pace needed to forge a graduation to British GT next year, if Martin attacks that challenge like she has the transition from hillclimbing to circuit racing, and transgender rights, then don't bet against her making it to the world's greatest sportscar enduro. 🏆

GAMERS GET TO JOIN IN FE ACTION

NINETEEN DRIVERS HAD THE CHANCE to stop Lucas di Grassi from winning the most recent Formula E race in Zurich – but the Audi ace, and the rest of his rivals in the electric championship, could soon have thousands more competitors.

The street tracks aren't about to be jammed for real, because this opposition will be ghosts. FE has announced that it's releasing a 'ghost-racing' video game that will allow fans to compete against the series' drivers in real time during ePrix events, as well as explore each track on their own.

Using telemetry from the real cars, the live racing is recreated by Virtually Live, an entertainment company that specialises in creating CGI experiences by rendering live physical action in a virtual environment. The player controls a car that 'ghosts' alongside the recreated real-life action.

"The ethos behind the company and our patent is around recreating live events using data in tandem with social media," says Oliver Weingarten, director of content development. "Accordingly, CGI is the best way for us to recreate live sports events to provide fans with the most robust and realistic gaming experience.

"Many series are facing dwindling TV viewership and ageing audiences, entertainment consumption patterns are changing and it's becoming all about engagement, sharing and ultimately participation.

"Gaming is a great way to engage younger audiences and CGI gives users the freedom to view from almost any perspective, thus increasing the value of the experience and participation across all types of viewers."

The game, which will first be available for smartphone and PC gamers – with consoles and virtual reality set-ups scheduled for a future release – has been a long-held target for FE and its



CEO and founder Alejandro Agag as a way to reach new fans. "I remember before we launched the first season of Formula E, we said that fans no longer just want to watch or follow a sport – they want to participate in it too," says Agag.

As well as racing alongside live FE events, gamers will be able to record their exploits and share them on social media, and replicate real-life scenarios at a later stage.

"We have integrated ourselves into FE's data pipeline and ingest the various data streams in real time," explains Weingarten. "We have a partnership with Magneti Marelli to provide higher accuracy in positioning data direct from the cars. There is no delay. In fact, we are quicker than the TV broadcast... that therefore allows us time to sync up with commentary from the world feed."

Autosport sampled an early tablet version of the game at the Zurich race earlier this month. The controls were deliberately simplified – automated acceleration with only braking (thumb or finger pressed onto the screen) and turning (physically tilting the tablet) necessary to navigate the Zurich street





"FANS NO LONGER JUST WANT TO WATCH A SPORT, THEY WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN IT"

circuit. The graphics were slightly on the simplistic side, but considering the tablet format they impressed overall, especially as the many trackside buildings and city furniture were accurately recreated.

"The game is being tailored for casual gamers to sim racers, with various levels of settings, and we expect all motorsport fans and gamers alike to participate," adds Weingarten. "This is a unique opportunity to take on the real drivers during a live race, and share your curated experience on social media. The offering will be attractive to users, and we will release more info on format, different challenge modes etc in due course."

Questions linger over how the game will indeed attract new fans – will FE fans notice it and decide to play, or will gamers subsequently watch more of the real racing after playing the game? A chicken-and-egg analogy arises but, when compared with traditional ways of getting people engaged with a motorsport series, then perhaps ghost-gaming makes sense as a novel new approach.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

To register your interest and be among the first to play the game visit www.FIAFormulaE.com/GhostRacing

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

The Road to Le Mans

presented by auto classics

THE ROAD TO LE MANS

The tagline for this 25-minute programme, which follows the build-up to the 86th running of the Le Mans 24 Hours, is 'The greatest race in the world has the hardest path to victory'. Toyota, finally a winner in last weekend's round-the-clock marathon, is unlikely to disagree with that statement. Go to <http://bit.ly/roadtolemons>

THIS WEEKEND'S EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

French Grand Prix

Formula 1 World Championship

Rd 8/21

Paul Ricard, France

June 24

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sunday 1330.

TV Highlights

Channel 4, Sunday 2215

DON'T MISS

Formula 2

Rd 5/12

Paul Ricard, France

June 23-24

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Saturday 1645, Sunday 1055

GP3 Series

Rd 2/9

Paul Ricard, France

June 23-24

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Saturday 1025, Sunday 0945

IndyCar Series

Rd 9/16

Road America, Wisconsin, USA

June 24

TV Live BT Sport ESPN, Sunday 1730

Indy Lights

Rd 5/10

Road America, Wisconsin, USA

June 23-24

DTM

Rd 4/10

Norising, Germany

June 23-24

European Formula 3

Rd 3/10

Norising, Germany

June 23-24

TV Live BT Sport 1, Saturday 1000. BT Sport 2, Sunday 1000, 1600

World Touring Car Cup

Rd 5/10

Vila Real, Portugal

June 23-24

TV Live Eurosport 2, Sunday 1500

Blancpain GT Sprint Cup

Rd 3/5

Misano, Italy

June 23-24

TV Live BT Sport 2, Saturday 1845, Sunday 1215

NASCAR Cup

Rd 16/36

Sonoma, California, USA

June 24

TV Live Premier Sports, Sunday 1930

UK MOTORSPORT

Donington Park Ferrari Club Live

June 23

Ferrari Classic, Ferrari Club

Oulton Park BARC

June 23

Britcar, 2CVs, Sports/Saloons, Kumho BMWs

Brands Hatch MSVR

June 23

BMW Car Club, Equipe GTS, GT Challenge, Equipe Pre '63, Intermarque, Jaguar XKs

Kirkistown 500MRCI

June 23

Historic FF2000, FF1600, Ford Fiesta Zetecs, Saloons/GTs, SEATs, Historic Racing Cars, Future Classics

Croft BARC

June 23-24

BTCC, F4, Clio Cup, Ginetta GT4,

Ginetta Junior

TV Live ITV4,

Sunday 1115

Rockingham BRSCC

June 23-24

Fiesta Juniors, Track Attack, Mazda MX-5s,

Porsches, Ford

Fiestas, Open

Sports, MG Metro

Cup, Formula 1000,

Production GTis

Silverstone MSVR

June 23-24

Radical SR1s,

Heritage FF1600,

F3 Cup, Trackday

Trophy, Trackday

Championship,

Mini Challenge,

Allcomers

Donington Park VSCC

June 24

Vintage and

Pre-War races,

FISCAR

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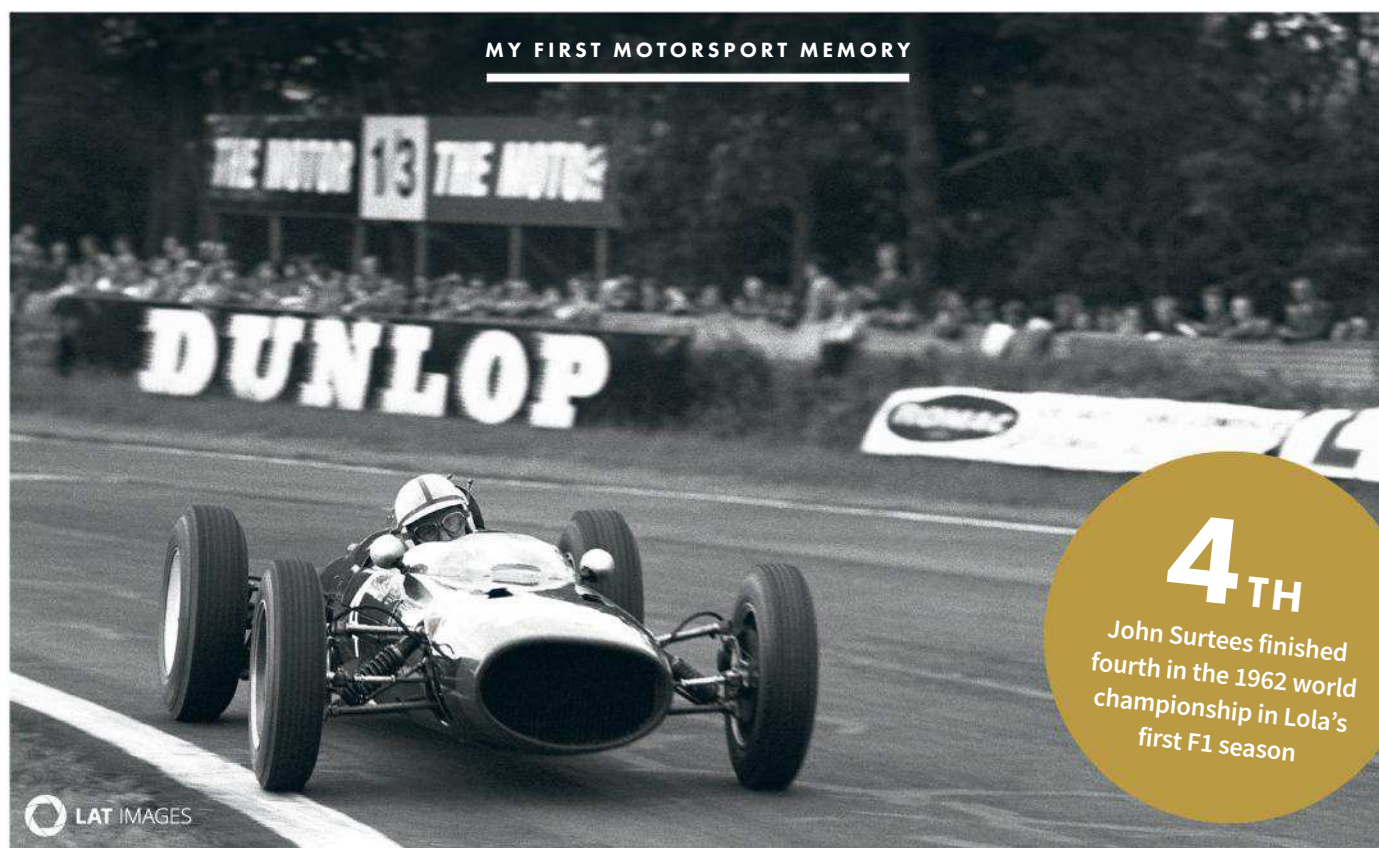
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1962 MALLORY PARK 2000 GUINEAS

A seven-year-old sees Surtees outshine Clark, Hill and Brabham

PETER SCHERER

Current grand prix cars racing at Mallory Park? Impossible. Well, it was true and I was there for the June 1962 2000 Guineas race, even though the occasion meant more to me in later years than it did as a seven-year-old.

My father and brother had been regular spectators at car and motorcycle meetings for a number of years, but it was a first for me.

The star names were Jim Clark, Graham Hill and Jack Brabham, but it was John Surtees who stole the show, winning the race in his Bowmaker Lola. As we stood and watched in an old grandstand on the inside of the Esses, my brother timed Surtees doing 55-second laps. An onlooker said that was impossible. Surtees's fastest lap was a 50.8s. Now, F3 Dallaras can lap in 44s.

There were only 13 starters, but the noise of Coventry Climax engines and the Porsches of Jo Bonnier and Carel Godin de Beaufort was awesome.

Although Hill went on to win the

world championship that year in a BRM, for this race he was driving a Rob Walker-entered Lotus. He was third behind Surtees and Brabham, who was in his own Lotus.

Mike Parkes also made his Formula 1 debut in the race, driving a Cooper, before taking a win in the Equipe Endeavour Ferrari GTO in the supporting GT race. When Parkes's GT car arrived in a plain black van with Ferrari badges, word went around that it was an F1 Ferrari. Reigning world champion Phil Hill was entered, but unfortunately failed to show.

Mini ace John Rhodes raced in the saloons, and the F1 race with a Bob Gerard-entered Cooper, but it was the larger-than-life Dutch Count de Beaufort who gave everyone a laugh, trying to go out for qualifying in his Porsche wearing a Tyrolean hat instead of his helmet.

As we left the circuit we spotted Surtees leaving in his Jaguar E-type, heading for Bowmaker team boss Reg Parnell's farm near Derby. My father took up pursuit in our Austin A35 van, but we were forced



"WE SPOTTED SURTEES LEAVING IN HIS JAGUAR E-TYPE, SO WE TOOK UP PURSUIT IN OUR AUSTIN A35 VAN"

to abandon the chase when I became travel sick after falling off my seat, a Davenports beer crate. I had to abandon my job of leaning out of the window to push the trafficators in too. But the seeds were sown, even though my next F1 race wasn't for five more years, seeing Jim Clark win his last British Grand Prix. ❧





FROM THE ARCHIVE

"The car upside down is a Toyota!" One of legendary commentator Murray Walker's greatest moments came in the British Touring Car round supporting the 1993 British Grand Prix at Silverstone. Julian Bailey had just taken second place when he attacked team-mate and leader Will Hoy at Priory, putting the Carina on its roof and triggering Murray's quip. Both Toyotas were out, leaving the Japanese firm's arch-rival Nissan to score a one-two, courtesy of Kieth O'dor and Win Percy.

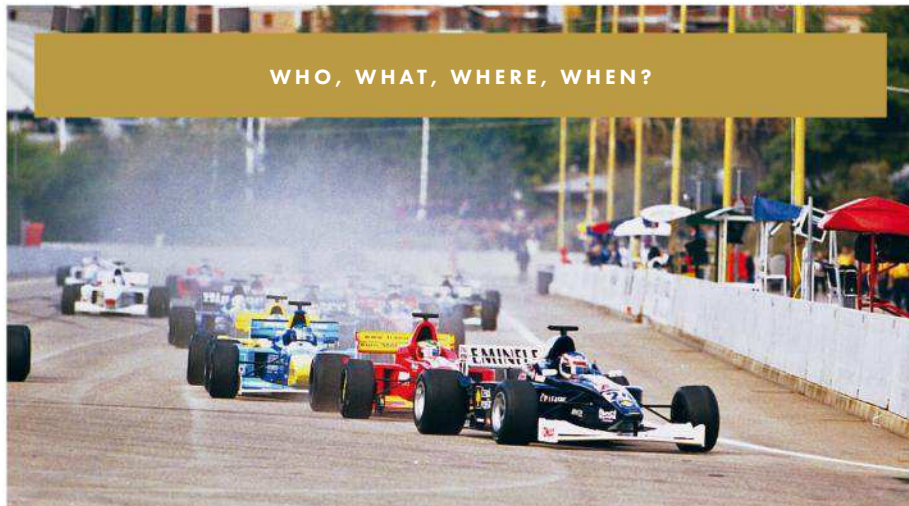


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WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN?



WHO IS THIS?

This record-breaking long beard was the star of one world before slotting into a domestic pinnacle in another.

He started out sprinting up the mountains, but his true calling initially came from a local aristocrat. But it was a more famous nobleman who provided the equipment that delivered unrivalled success across the classes and in the most fearsome event of all. When tragedy called close to home he made a stand and refused to tame the mountain again.

He caused a shock when he left the Count for the land of the rising sun, but was validated by more titles. But with time taking its toll, he doubled up from two to four. With his own team he collected silverware, but with nothing like the frequency of his past.

When he returned to familiar territory he proved to be almost as successful from the pitwall as he was in the saddle.

ON THIS DAY

- 1 Who was the first driver to start a Maserati from a world championship pole position, on this day in 1953?
- 2 Clay Regazzoni made his F1 debut on this day in 1970. How many GPs did he win?
- 3 Who started from his career-best F1 grid spot on this day in the 2015 Austrian GP?
- 4 Today is V8 Supercar legend Craig Lowndes's birthday; where did he score his only F3000 points?
- 5 Which three drivers handed Peugeot its first Le Mans 24 Hours win on this day in 1992?

NAME THE HELMET



LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

Who, what, where, when Brian Henton, Boro-Ford 001, Monza, September 10 1977. **Who is this?** Bernd Schneider. **On this day** 1) 30. 2) Karl Wendlinger. 3) 1970 South African GP. 4) Hans Herrmann/Richard Attwood. 5) 1993. **Name the helmet** Ralf Schumacher.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE



BACK TO RICARD: THE FRENCH GP REBORN



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Email help@asm.secureorder.co.uk Back issues 0344 8488817
Laura Paterson +44 (0) 20 3405 8129

Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. Subscription records are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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Printed by William Gibbons
& Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary
Road, Willenhall,
Wolverhampton WV13 3KT.
ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport
is published weekly by
Autosport Media UK Ltd,
1 Eton Street, Richmond,
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