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44-PAGE GUIDE

BTCC Turkington
takes third title
despite Brands clash

AUTOSPORT

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OCTOBER 4 2018

Hamilton's empty Russian victory

Lewis closes on fifth crown
but only after team orders

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WAS MERCEDES CORRECT TO SACRIFICE BOTTAS?

Any use of team orders in Formula 1 tends to incur the wrath of fans, and Mercedes' decision to get Valtteri Bottas to hand Russian Grand Prix victory to his title-contending team-mate Lewis Hamilton was no exception.

I have to admit to hoping that Lewis would make his own call to give the win back, but the truth is that maximising his points haul made sense. Although it now looks like Hamilton is destined to take his fifth world crown, it's not so long since Ferrari appeared to have the fastest car and that Mercedes was on the ropes. Things can change quickly in sport and, although Hamilton and Mercedes boss Toto Wolff both looked genuinely uncomfortable with the decision, sometimes the right thing does feel bad at the time. Losing the title by fewer than seven points would be really excruciating if you knew you'd had an easy opportunity to get them.

In fairness to Hamilton, his move on Sebastian Vettel – after being shown the wall by the Ferrari – to take back second was another fine example of his racecraft. It's that sort of driving that has put him in the position to fight for the title – and to get help from his cooperative fellow Silver Arrow.

Hopefully Bottas (who has been unfortunate not to win already this season, even if he hasn't been able to match Hamilton week in, week out) will get another chance to add to his current tally of three F1 victories. One thing he may like to remember is that, in 2015 and '17, Hamilton seemed to lose his edge once the title was sewn up. I'm sure Bottas would rather win fair and square than get a more obvious payback when it suits Mercedes and Hamilton.



Kevin Turner

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FREE INSIDE

RALLY GB PREVIEW



The fight for the 2018 WRC title has become a three-way battle. Here's our 44-page guide to the UK's round.



OGIER BACK AT CITROEN -

WRC

As Sebastien Ogier stood among the cattle sheds at the Royal Welsh Showground before dawn on the final day of the 2011 Rally GB, he was finished with Citroen. He wouldn't be back.

The French manufacturer had given him his start, his break in rallying, but now it had also made its choice. In Ogier's eyes, Versailles had selected the past and not the future. After a fractious, bad-tempered 2011, when Ogier made it clear he wouldn't toe the line and sit second behind Sebastien Loeb, Citroen and PSA Group management stepped in and gave its then-eight-time world champion its full backing.

Builth Wells was his final farewell, but seven years later he's back as a five-time World Rally champion.

In the time since Ogier joined Volkswagen, and then moved to M-Sport, things have changed at Citroen, for better and for worse. The management that forced Ogier out has gone, but so has an all-conquering red army that laid waste to its WRC competition on an annual basis.

A selective memory, allied to Ford's inability to step up to the plate in terms of commitment to M-Sport, has made it easy for the 34-year-old to go back.

"I kept only the good memories of that

time," he told *L'Equipe*. "It is useless to dwell on the rest, which somehow made me grow up. On the other hand, the problems I had at the time were with a general management that is no longer there today. With the technical team, it always went well.

"I felt at Citroen a new momentum at the management level. The contact quickly went very well with Pierre [Budar, team principal]. It was much easier to talk with him than with his predecessor [Yves Matton] and that's one of the things that convinced me to go in that direction."

Ogier, who confirmed a two-year deal with Citroen, tested the C3 WRC away from prying eyes – but in the knowledge of M-Sport – in the south of France recently. He was satisfied with what he found, but told Autosport he knew there would be work ahead. "There are attractive things on the side of Citroen," he said. "And I believe some potential to do good things. The chance to try to win the title

"WE'VE DONE PRETTY WELL, BUT FORD HAS NOT KEPT PACE WITH THE NEEDS"



Loeb took part in Rally GB test last week for Citroen on Hafren, but Ogier (inset) will lead the charge in 2019

- AND SLATES FORD

with a third manufacturer is an exciting challenge for me. Of course, I am aware it won't be easy and Citroen has been struggling in the past years and that means there is certainly some work to be done, but that's what motivates me. And being French, it's nice to go back to the team where I started my career. I believe we have the possibility to write a nice story... but we still have to write it.

"Seeing the car [C3 WRC] at the forefront had already given me a good idea of its potential," he added, "but it is sure that judging by myself is something that I wanted to do before committing myself. We did it, I was able to realise certain elements, and this contact reinforced me in my idea to want to try this adventure."

There remains, however, significant frustration at his departure from M-Sport. Ogier talks of a heartache at leaving team boss Malcolm Wilson, the team he has grown to appreciate fully and a family he has become part of. "It was not easy to leave them," he added. "I had two really good years with M-Sport and Ford and we achieved big things together. It's no secret I felt good in this team, and working with Malcolm and his guys was nice for me."

"It's never easy to take the big decision like this one. On the other hand without more support from Ford it became more

and more difficult to carry on, and at the end it was my decision, but it was a common decision with Malcolm and me that it was difficult to carry on.

"At the end of last year, Ford seemed motivated to help us further and allow us to raise our level this season, but unfortunately I was a little disappointed on that side. I gave Ford an ultimatum: either we had official support, or there was a good chance I would be interested to go somewhere else. When making my decision I had a heartache to leave Malcolm and his team because it was not their fault and they did everything to be one of the most efficient possible. We've done pretty well on that side, I think. But Ford has not kept pace with the needs."

By the end of this season, Ogier will be looking to end a glittering career where it began. But there are no guarantees of success in red. "It's all about words," he said, "and it takes a lot of confidence because I cannot guarantee that everything will be the way I want it to be, but Pierre managed to convince me and I feel that we are starting a great adventure."

DAVID EVANS

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY
JEROME BOURRET, L'EQUIPE

 RALLY GB SUPPLEMENT

Who's going to lead the M-Sport line?

WRC

Sebastien Ogier's departure from the M-Sport Ford World Rally Team has not only left a huge hole in the Cumbrian squad's 2019 title ambitions, but there's also the small matter of a Ford Fiesta WRC seat needing to be filled.

Of Ogier's current team-mates, only 24-year-old Finn Teemu Suninen has a deal for next season with Malcolm Wilson's squad. Last year's Rally GB winner Elfyn Evans is out of contract with M-Sport at the end of next month's Rally Australia, but the Welshman's chances of remaining in a Ford Fiesta WRC into next year are likely to have been strengthened by Ogier's decision to join Citroen.

With Toyota driver Esapekka Lappi widely tipped to join Ogier at Citroen, the French firm will need to ship one or both of its current drivers Craig Breen and Mads Ostberg out.

Both Breen (below) and Ostberg would be strong options for M-Sport. The Irishman won both of his world titles (WRC Academy and SWRC) in M-Sport cars and has a long-standing relationship with Wilson. Ostberg drove for Wilson's factory squad in 2013 and '16, and took his only WRC win (Portugal 2012) in a privately run Fiesta RS WRC.

Ahead of any talk of who's going to be driving the cars, Wilson admitted that the priority remained getting the Fiestas to the start of 2019.

"We've been in the world championship for a very long time and the plan is to try to stay there," he told Autosport. "There are various negotiations going on, but we'll see — we're not in a great hurry."

Asked directly about contracts for next season, he added: "We've got Teemu [Suninen]. That's all."

DAVID EVANS



MCKLEIN



Kvyat's Toro Rosso return as Haas keeps 2018 line-up

FORMULA 1

Daniil Kvyat's return for a surprise third stint at the Toro Rosso team has been confirmed, as three seats on the 2019 Formula 1 grid were nailed down during the Russian Grand Prix last weekend.

Kvyat's recall by Red Bull, which dropped him before the end of the 2017 season, was confirmed last Saturday at Sochi, one day after Haas announced that it will again field Kevin Magnussen and Romain Grosjean next season.

The reunion of Red Bull and Kvyat was unexpected, given the Russian had finally been dropped completely after last year's United States Grand Prix. Kvyat first drove for Toro Rosso in 2014 and replaced Sebastian Vettel at Red Bull a year later. But he was demoted to the junior team early in '16 to make room for Max Verstappen.

Red Bull admits that Kvyat never properly processed that rejection, and his second spell with Toro Rosso was underwhelming in terms of results, although not necessarily speed. He was named a Ferrari development driver for this season, and Red Bull believes this has helped him mature into a different driver.

It is not known who Red Bull will choose to be Kvyat's team-mate. Current driver Brendon Hartley claims to have

a long-term contract. Pascal Wehrlein, who will leave Mercedes' employment at the end of the year, is on a "long list" according to Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko, although team boss Christian Horner believes he will end up in Formula E, where he has been linked to the Mahindra team.

While Kvyat was a surprise addition to the F1 driver-market silly season, mainly thanks to Red Bull's lack of options among its own juniors to promote to replace Pierre Gasly, Haas's decision to retain Magnussen and Grosjean was expected.

Magnussen has been impressive in his second year with the American team, while Grosjean's upturn in form has earned him a contract extension that looked unlikely after high-profile mistakes in Azerbaijan and Spain. They will remain team-mates for at least one more season, though Magnussen has confirmed his is a two-year deal.

Five seats remain unconfirmed on the grid, although Sergio Perez and Lance Stroll are expected to drive for Racing Point Force India. Both Williams seats are still up for grabs, with Sergey Sirotkin and Artem Markelov in the mix and Esteban Ocon admitting the British squad is his only hope of remaining on the grid for 2019.

SCOTT MITCHELL

➔ P13 GROSJEAN'S REPRIEVE

Russians sue over Force India sale

FORMULA 1

A Russian company that failed in its bid to buy the Force India Formula 1 team is suing the administrators responsible for choosing Lawrence Stroll and his consortium as the British squad's saviour.

Uralkali, a global fertiliser power, is linked to Dmitry Mazepin, the father of GP3 race winner and current Force India junior Nikita (both pictured below). It joined the running to save the Force India team from administration but was unsuccessful.

When Stroll and his colleagues were announced as the new owners of the team, Uralkali threatened legal action after raising concerns about the way it was handled. Stroll's consortium ended up not taking control of the company as a going concern because of problems caused by a High Court freezing order issued in favour of 13 Indian banks, a legacy of previous Force India owner Vijay Mallya's troubles.

Instead, the Stroll group was able to buy the assets and agreed with the FIA to enter as a 'new' team, Racing Point Force India. Uralkali is unhappy about this too, as it believes it should have had the opportunity to engage in an asset sale.

It announced ahead of the Russian Grand Prix, of which it is a sponsor, that it had launched legal action in London's High Court following "inadequate responses" from the administrators, Geoff Rowley and Jason Baker of FRP Advisory LLP.

Uralkali claims it was told by the administrators that its bid – a cash consideration of between £101.5million and £122m – was the largest and therefore should have been successful. It states it would have satisfied creditors, including Mercedes, paid administrator costs and backed a five-year development programme, as well as leaving £40m spare to distribute to the old Force India's sole shareholder Orange India Holdings Sarl, held subject to the terms of the freezing order.

The administrators initially stated that they were not aware of such action, but later hit back claiming they acted appropriately and were confident that the legal claim would be rejected. They claimed Uralkali was only bidding to buy the assets and did not table a complete rescue proposal to keep Force India operating as a going concern.

SCOTT MITCHELL





Rosenqvist's Ganassi seat

INDYCAR SERIES

Finally, Chip Ganassi Racing has the man it has wanted since 2016 to partner five-time IndyCar Series title winner Scott Dixon.

When Ganassi refreshed itself for 2018 by cutting down from a four-car team to two – in part to get the best out of Dixon – Felix Rosenqvist was high on the shortlist for the second car. But Rosenqvist was busy in Formula E with Mahindra Racing, and fellow contender Brendon Hartley opted against the move in favour of a surprise Formula 1 chance with Toro Rosso.

Rosenqvist earned his chance with Ganassi off the back of a promising series of tests for the team in 2016 and '17, running in Dixon's car. He deeply impressed team director Mike Hull, plus Dixon and his race engineer Chris Simmons, in the first outing at Mid-Ohio (above) and earned a second chance at the same track in '17.

Ed Jones's inconsistency in the #10 car this year – which reportedly made data sharing tricky – meant team owner Chip Ganassi was cautiously avoiding confirming Jones for the 2019 season as he looked elsewhere.

Despite instant stories suggesting that Rosenqvist had signed for Ganassi, it was not a simple process. Sources close to the

deal repeatedly told Autosport the move was "complicated", and it was interesting to note that the release announcing his IndyCar move did not mention his future in either of his 2018 programmes: Formula E and Japan's Super GT series.

No wonder Ganassi welcomed the announcement with a mention that the timing was right to make the move happen. "Felix has become familiar with our team after coming over to test with us on a few occasions," said Ganassi. "Our management and engineering groups, along with the entire team, were impressed by his ability. The time was right to get him in the #10 car and I think I speak for a lot of people when I say that we are looking forward to seeing what he can do behind the wheel next season."

"To say I'm thrilled or excited to be making this step in my career would be an understatement," said Rosenqvist. "Coming to IndyCar and driving for Ganassi is a dream come true. I've followed the team for as long as I can remember, and it's the kind of environment any driver would want to be in. To get this chance alongside a proven, multiple championship winner such as Scott Dixon is just an incredible opportunity. To be on the grid in next year's Indy 500 is something that's still sinking in."

TOM ERRINGTON

ROSENQVIST HIGHLIGHTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 FORMULA RENAULT TITLES | 2ND IN SPA 24 HOURS |
| | PODIUMS IN SWEDISH LEGENDS CUP! |
| 1 TITLE AND 30 WINS IN EUROPEAN F3 | |
| 2 MACAU GRAND PRIX WINS | |
| 3 INDY LIGHTS WINS | 3 WINS IN FORMULA E |
| 2 MASTERS OF F3 WINS | 1 BLANCPAIN GT WIN |
| | TITLE CHALLENGE IN SUPER FORMULA |

IN THE HEADLINES

FILIPPI DROPPED BY NIO

Formula E team NIO has dropped Luca Filippi ahead of the forthcoming season. The GP2 veteran scored just one point in his 2017-18 campaign, and was stood down for the Paris round in favour of Ma Qing Hua. The team is yet to announce who will join Oliver Turvey in place of Filippi.

FULL SONOMA IN USE

NASCAR will use the full layout of the Sonoma road course for its June 23 Cup round next year, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the track originally known as Sears Point. The series last raced on the full 2.52-mile circuit in 1997, since when it has used 'The Chute' – a cut-through from Turn 4 to Turn 7, on a 1.99-mile layout.

NEW NASCAR SIGNINGS

Two rising stars of NASCAR have been chosen to replace old stagers for 2019. Xfinity Series playoff contender Daniel Hemric will fill the #31 Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet in place of Ryan Newman, while Xfinity race winner Ryan Preece steps into the JTG Daugherty Racing Chevy piloted this year by AJ Allmendinger.

MUNNICH WINS APPEAL

Munnich Motorsport has won its appeal against its exclusion from second qualifying of July's World Touring Car Cup round at the Slovakia Ring, although fellow Honda Civic team Boutsen Ginion Racing lost its verdict in the FIA's International Court of Appeal. The exclusions related to breaches of maximum boost levels. The cars competed under appeal in races two and three from their original grid positions. Munnich's Esteban Guerrieri therefore keeps his eighth place, while BGR's Benjamin Lessennes and Tom Coronel lose a fifth and an eighth respectively.

SRO'S NEW CHALLENGE

The Stephane Ratel Organisation has linked the Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup, Blancpain GT Series Asia and US-based Pirelli World Challenge into a Blancpain GT World Challenge for 2019. Manufacturers can nominate four-driver teams, comprising one each from the platinum, gold, silver and bronze categories, to score points in what is described by Ratel as a customer equivalent of the Intercontinental GT Challenge.

WRX IN ABU DHABI

The World Rallycross Championship will kick off at Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Formula 1 circuit next year on April 5-6. The venue has signed a long-term deal to become the first Middle East venue on the calendar. Belgian circuit Mettet was recently dropped from the 2019 schedule.

Tin-top champs sign up for electric Jag series



JAGUAR I-PACE ETROPHY

The first five confirmed drivers for the Jaguar I-PACE eTrophy sampled their cars during a dedicated 'acclimatisation test' at Silverstone last week.

The two-day session formed the series' first official test ahead of its introduction to the Formula E support bill at nine events over the 2018-19 championship.

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, which had already announced Katherine Legge (above) and Bryan Sellers, Jaguar Brazil Racing and the Asia Pacific eTrophy team were the squads taking part in the test.

JBR and AP also revealed their driver line-ups. The former will field five-time Brazilian Stock Car champion Caca Bueno and former GP2 and current sportscar racer Sergio Jimenez, with two-time New Zealand Touring Car champion Simon Evans – older brother of Jaguar FE driver Mitch Evans – competing for AP.

Only squads with confirmed driver line-ups took part in the test, but further multi-car teams from China, the Middle East and Europe are set to be confirmed in the coming weeks. Autosport has been informed that a team from Saudi Arabia with links to the organisers of the Ad

Diriyah E-Prix will field a two-car entry using drivers from that country.

"This is the first official launch running event, so the guys that have actually allocated their drivers have come out and seen their cars for the first time and driven them," said series manager Marion Barnaby.

"They got used to the car; we ended with a full race run – 25 minutes plus one lap. That was so the drivers can get into the mindset of a full race weekend, feeling what the car moves like, what the tyres are like – building them up to get used to driving electric vehicles."

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Saudi track features fast, flowing layout



FORMULA E

The track layout for the inaugural Ad Diriyah E-Prix in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh is to give Formula E drivers an "unusual" test thanks to its fast-and-flowing configuration.

The circuit, still subject to official FIA homologation, is 1.76 miles long and features 21 turns. It has a number of long, flowing corners, with relatively few 90-degree

corners of the type usually found on FE street courses.

"The layout looks really good with a lot of corners, which is quite unusual for FE tracks that are always only with 90-degree corners and squeezed in somehow," said Andre Lotterer.

"Here, it seems like a big track but all these flowing corners in the second sector and the other side of the [start/finish] straight looks really challenging. A quality

circuit in terms of layout."

Venturi's Felipe Massa explained that the "tricky and technical corners will be the main part for the lap time, especially if you make a little mistake – definitely you lose one or two tenths".

Autosport understands the high-speed section is likely to change ahead of the December 15 race to slow the cars down at certain points for safety reasons.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

F1 JAPANESE GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



UK START TIMES

FRIDAY	SUNDAY
FP1 0200 FP2 0600	RACE 0610
	LIVE ON SKY SPORTS F1
SATURDAY	& CHANNEL 4
FP3 0400 QUALIFYING 0700	BBC RADIO 5 LIVE 0600

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP AND CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP SO FAR

1	Hamilton	306	1	Mercedes	495
2	Vettel	256	2	Ferrari	442
3	Bottas	189	3	Red Bull	292
4	Raikkonen	186	4	Renault	91
5	Verstappen	158	5	Haas	80

TYRE ALLOCATION



TRACK STATS

LENGTH 3.608 miles

NUMBER OF LAPS 53

2017 POLE POSITION
Lewis Hamilton 1m27.319s

POLE LAP RECORD
Lewis Hamilton 1m27.319s (2017)

RACE LAP RECORD
Kimi Raikkonen 1m31.540s (2005)

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2017	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2016	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2011	Jenson Button	McLaren
2010	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2009	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2008	Fernando Alonso	Renault



THEMES TO WATCH

VETTEL'S LAST CHANCE

Sebastian Vettel is 50 points behind Lewis Hamilton and at best a rank outsider for the drivers' championship – but he is still in the hunt. He needs a win, but with Ferrari struggling for pace it's going to need a perfect weekend for driver and team.

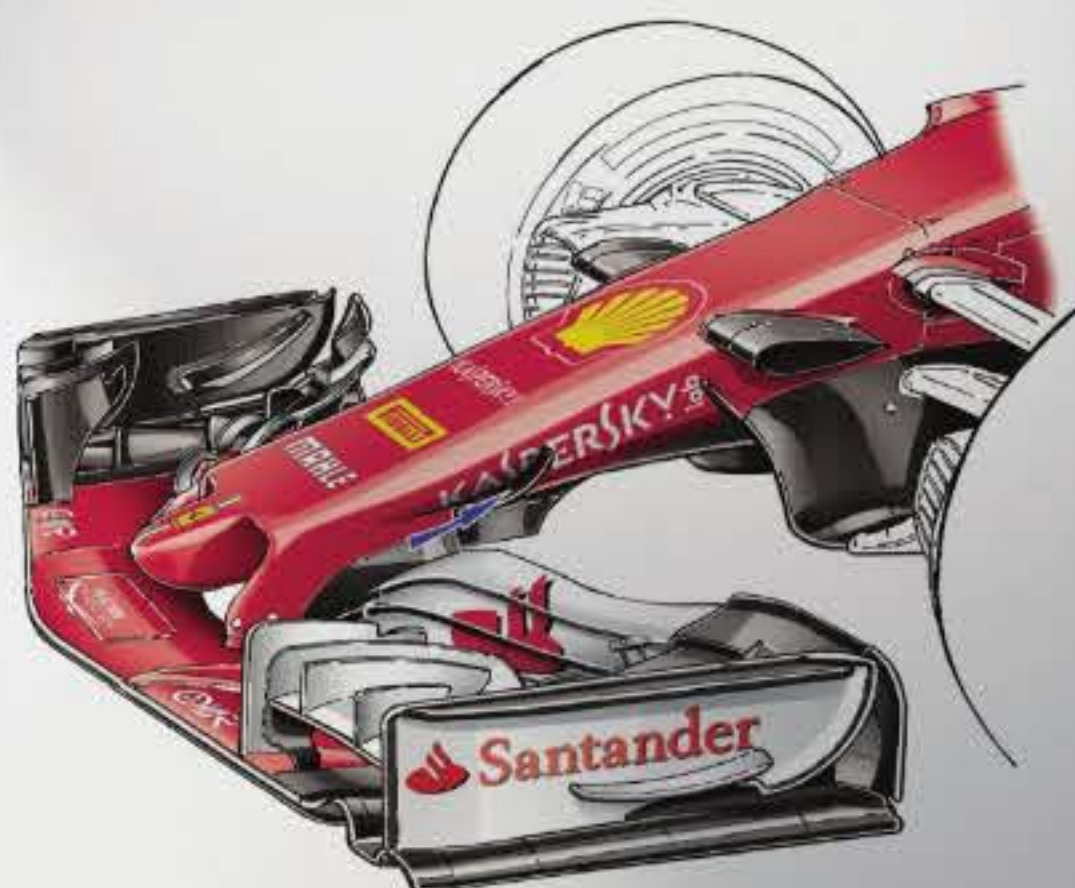
MORE TEAM ORDERS ON DISPLAY AT MERCEDES?

Given that Hamilton usually flies at Suzuka, it's unlikely that Valtteri Bottas will be ahead of him – but it's possible. If that happens, will Mercedes opt to use the Finn as Hamilton's wingman and try to close out the title victory as quickly as possible?

HONDA'S HOPES FOR GASLY AND HARTLEY

Honda's home grand prix – at a track it owns – is always a big deal, and in its finest traditions it has what you could call a 'Suzuka-special' engine. It was trialled encouragingly in free practice last weekend at Sochi, and both Toro Rosso drivers will benefit from an upgrade worth a few tenths that will boost their hopes of points.

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FERRARI FRONT WING

Ferrari introduced a new front-wing assembly at Sochi. As the leading edge of the car it makes first contact with the airflow, so it is critical to how the rest of the car performs.

1 The new endplate is similar to Red Bull's, with a vertical slot and the footplate higher at the front. Both of the modifications will reduce front-wing-endplate-to-ground sensitivity.

This part of the front wing section gets very close to the ground under braking and corner turn-in. The raised leading edge of the footplate means that the airflow will be more consistent when close to the ground and, when the endplate moves away from the ground, the inner surface will pull more airflow through the vertical slot.

2 There is a completely new multi-element turning vane under the chassis. This pulls more airflow under the raised section of the front of the chassis. Basically, the outwash front-wing endplates and this package of turning vanes work in parallel to pull the airflow around

the outside and inside of the tyre. The wheel and tyre can be a major aero blockage, so steering air away from them is beneficial.

3 As with the footplate modification, the outer end of the front-wing main plane has been raised – and for similar reasons. This area gets very

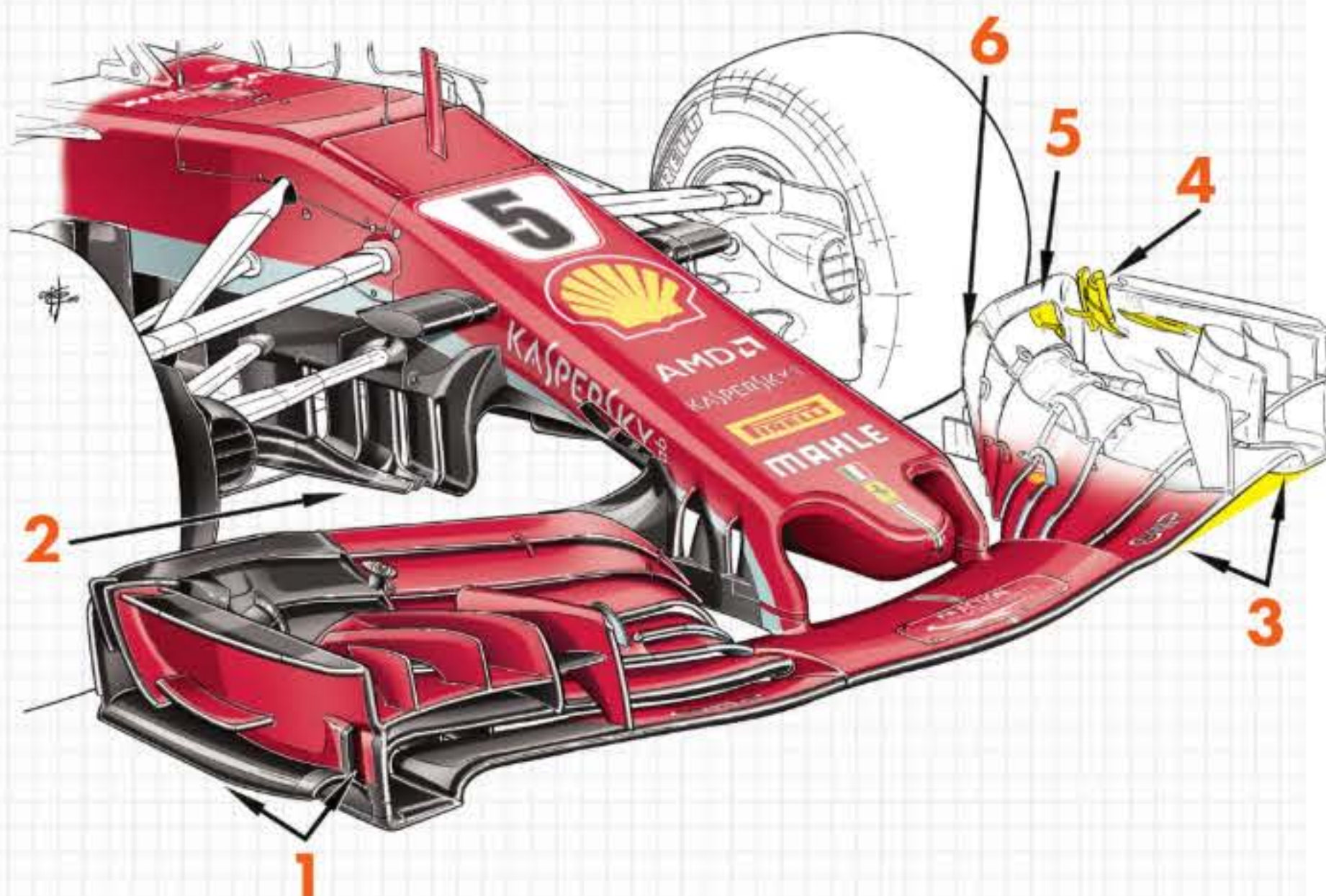
close to the ground on turn-in and mid-corner, making it very sensitive to aerodynamic stall. Having more of a gap to the ground makes it less prone to this behaviour.

4 Since these modifications to the outer end of the front wing and endplate create a slightly different

airflow structure, the turning vanes have also had to be optimised.

5 and 6 The trailing edge of the rear flap is trimmed differently, again because the airflow has altered slightly coming through to that section of the wing.

GARY ANDERSON



SAUBER DIFFUSER

Sauber introduced a new rear floor outer-rear-corner detail (red arrow, inset). It's not a big change but, because this area of the floor works in conjunction with the rear brake duct, turning vanes can function like a switch.

If you can get the low-pressure area behind the rear tyre to work hand in hand with the diffuser, it

can dramatically improve the performance of the underfloor. Since the diffuser is one of the most efficient areas for producing downforce with minimum drag, it receives a lot of focus.

Getting this all working together will also reduce diffuser sensitivity, so it's a win-win situation.

GARY ANDERSON

MERCEDES REAR-WING PILLARS

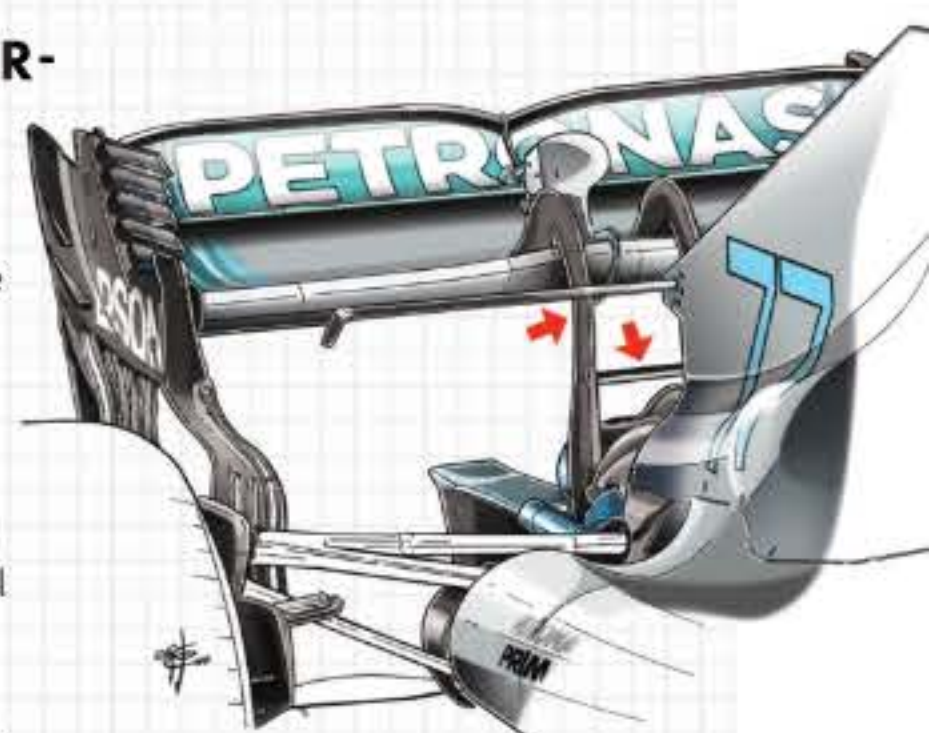
Mercedes' new rear-wing assembly, trialled in practice at Sochi, moved away from its single central mounting pillar to a twin-pillar set-up. Mercedes retains the 'hung' mounting-pillar design, and this means the wing's critical undersurface airflow is not negatively affected by the mounting-pillar intersection.

Mercedes has also added a small horizontal vane between the pillars just above the exhaust outlet. This will reduce the effects of the differing exhaust gas flow when the driver is on or off the throttle and when the MGU-H is in full recharge mode. Normally these changes to the airflow happen as the car is entering the braking zone, and that's just when

a driver wants maximum stability from the rear-wing downforce.

Twin pillars will give the wing more stability and allow the wing structure itself to be potentially lighter. Since it's located high up and a long way back, anything to reduce the weight of this component will be beneficial.

GARY ANDERSON





Kyle Reid wins the 2019 Sunoco 240 Challenge!

Massive congratulations to Kyle Reid who is the confirmed winner of the 2018 season Sunoco 240 Challenge. Kyle beat 118 racers in British GT, Radical, Mini Challenge, GT Cup, LMP3 Cup, F3 Cup and Britcar Endurance. Kyle will now race a GT4 race car in the BMW Endurance Challenge at Daytona in January 2019. Included in the prize are all flights, hotels, the Roar Before the Rolex 24 test and the 4-hour endurance race, the day before the Rolex 24 At Daytona on 25th January 2019.



Hall of fame – Sunoco 240 Challenge



2012 Aaron Steele	2013 Lawrence Davey	2014 Oskar Kruger	2015 Lewis Plato	2016 Paddy McClughan	2017 Max Bladon	2018 Rick Parfitt Jnr
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Participating championships

MINI
CHALLENGE



British GT
Championship



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HAAS'S CORRECT CALL

Romain Grosjean has refound his mojo and, crucially, confirmed to his employer that it was right to re-sign him for the 2019 season

EDD STRAW

Three months ago Romain Grosjean was in peril. After the British Grand Prix he had registered just a single points finish in 10 races – albeit for an outstanding drive to fourth place in Austria – and questions were being asked about his Formula 1 future following a series of costly mishaps. This could not go on.

It didn't. In the following six weekends, from the German Grand Prix that Grosjean himself cites as the turning point, he has performed strongly and earned himself a new Haas deal. And when Grosjean is at his best, he's fast. Seriously fast.

When Grosjean's deal was announced ahead of qualifying in Russia last weekend, some scoffed. But team owner Gene Haas was right to retain a driver capable of delivering outstanding results now that he has turned things around. Grosjean can be frustrating, but he's exactly the kind of driver Formula 1 needs to retain.

From Germany onwards, Grosjean has been among the best drivers on the grid. So what's changed? Inevitably, it's not only him. The car update introduced in Canada in June eliminated the understeer that Grosjean had complained about early on and his pace picked up. But still he needed to ensure he had his head together.

"It was more getting myself into form, in the zone and

"GROSJEAN IS AMONG THE MOST 'HUMAN' OF ALL THE DRIVERS ON THE GRID"

understanding why I was taking the wrong decisions," says Grosjean. "Sometimes it happens and maybe I left it a bit too long before realising what was going wrong. What were the issues? It could be personal, could be professional, and I knew when I got to Germany things were sorted and I was back to where I wanted to be."

To his credit, Grosjean has approached this process constructively. He's never been afraid to talk about the role his sports psychologist has played. While some may interpret that as a weakness, surely it's a show of strength to accept that there's a problem in yourself and address it. Had he not done so, his future could look very different.

What's unquestionable is that things were going wrong. Those misjudgements were costing significant points. Grosjean crashed under the safety car while running sixth in Azerbaijan, he spun on the first lap of the Spanish Grand Prix and wiped out Pierre Gasly and Nico Hulkenberg, he crashed on his first Q3 run in France

before clashing with Esteban Ocon at the start. At Silverstone he hit team-mate Kevin Magnussen on the first lap.

Even though other weekends – Australia, Bahrain, China, Monaco, Canada – got away from Grosjean for reasons outside of his control, at this point many teams would have looked elsewhere. But not Haas. Team principal Gunther Steiner says that the priority was always to get Grosjean back on form rather than sign someone else.

But Grosjean still had to prove he was the driver of old and not trapped in a downward spiral, or the team would have had no choice but to go elsewhere. And that would probably have been the end for him in F1.

Which brings us back to Grosjean himself. Specifically, what exactly has he done to deliver this outcome?

"It's not a reset," he says. "I don't want to go too much into details but it can be from the birth of your third child to the feeling in the car to bad luck in Bahrain [where he would have finished eighth but for his car shedding aero parts], to a lot of small things together."

"If you accumulate them and don't understand them, don't let them go, then you always try to do things that don't work. Like Q3 in France where I was safely seventh on the grid and on the first run [on used rubber] I wanted to say, 'Let's have an amazing lap' when there was no need. Why did I decide that lap? I spun and crashed – it was rubbish."

"There are a lot of things you can look at, explain and try to understand. When I did realise what was going on, I was back on it."

Central to Grosjean's improved form is being able to judge what's possible with the machinery and to set the bar accordingly, rather than letting his ambition dare him to attempt to bend the unyielding laws of physics.

"That's not easy, is it?" says Grosjean. "The challenge is not to lose the fact that you want to be world champion, but on the other hand know where you are. Some years, my problem has been I wanted too much. I wanted more than what we were doing last year, for example, because I haven't lost that wish to be world champion one day."

Grosjean is a likeable character, among the most 'human' of all the drivers on the grid. He's an emotional person who many want to see doing well. Perhaps that emotional approach is a double-edged sword that can cause downward spirals, but is also responsible for his often-searing speed.

He's an enigma, both in terms of performance and his curious combination of mental fragility and robustness. Put him in one of the top three teams and he would be mixing it with Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel. The key is that he needs to, and has, embraced what constitutes a 'victory' in the midfield.

That's why Haas had to re-sign him. ✎



IT'S GIOVINAZZI'S TIME

In the wake of Charles Leclerc's Ferrari promotion, the F1 giant continues its show of faith in youth as Antonio Giovinazzi gets his big break at Sauber

ADAM COOPER

Italy has not had a full-time grand prix driver since Jarno Trulli and Tonio Liuzzi were last on the entry list back in 2011. That changes next season as Antonio Giovinazzi joins Kimi Raikkonen at Sauber in what could develop into a fascinating contest between the ambitious Ferrari protege and the veteran former world champion.

Giovinazzi has been placed at Sauber by Ferrari in another impressive show of faith in young talent by the Maranello team. It scored a hit with Charles Leclerc, now propelled into a works seat after a single year of apprenticeship, and Giovinazzi is the next man in line — although perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he's catching up with the Monegasque driver, having been leapfrogged in Ferrari's affections last year.

Maurizio Arrivabene and his colleagues have followed through on a bold strategy, and it's interesting to make a comparison with Mercedes and Toto Wolff's struggles to place his proteges.

It was in September 2016 that Giovinazzi first hooked up with Ferrari. Starring in GP2 with Prema Racing, he had a run in the Ferrari simulator and did well enough to land a reserve role with the team and some winter testing with Sauber.

"THIS IS F1 — ONE WEEK YOU ARE A HERO, ONE WEEK YOU ARE NOT REALLY GOOD"

When Pascal Wehrlein declared himself unfit after the first day of running in Australia last year, Giovinazzi was drafted in on Saturday morning and acquitted himself well in difficult circumstances.

Retained for the next race in China, he had a heavy accident coming onto the pit straight in qualifying and then a second one — in the same place — during the race.

Teams expect rookies to make mistakes, but the double whammy in Shanghai generated an unfair impression around the paddock that Giovinazzi was a crasher, and another off in FP1 for Haas in Hungary later in the year didn't help.

Meanwhile, Leclerc gained momentum with his superb F2 performances, and the push to land him an F1 seat in 2018 proved irresistible. Thus, when the time came for Maranello to nominate a Sauber driver — a contractual legacy of the new engine supply deal and Alfa Romeo sponsorship — Leclerc got the nod. Giovinazzi had to be content with a third-driver role at Ferrari, and the

promise of some FP1s with Sauber.

It wasn't easy for Giovinazzi to be overtaken by a younger guy who had come through the ranks just behind him. The upside was that he knew that Ferrari owned the right to nominate a Sauber driver. So the better Leclerc performed in 2018, the more likely it was that he would be promoted to the works team, thus leaving a space for Giovinazzi to slot into.

To his credit, Giovinazzi got on with the job and impressed the team with his simulator running, while gaining some useful experience with an outing at Le Mans for AF Corse. In the background his canny manager Enrico Zanarini — well connected with Ferrari — continued to hustle on his behalf. All they could really do was wait and see if Leclerc did well enough to guarantee a graduation to the works team for 2019.

Fairly early on in the year, that already seemed a certainty, not least because Sergio Marchionne was clearly pushing for it. But after the Ferrari boss's sudden death, the picture was less clear for a while — perhaps Raikkonen would stay on after all...

When Leclerc was finally confirmed, the issue was clouded by Raikkonen's immediate move to Sauber. Was Kimi taking the Ferrari slot originally earmarked for Giovinazzi, or was he potentially stealing the other seat from Marcus Ericsson? It turned out to be the latter.

"Kimi was not the Ferrari driver," says Sauber team boss Fred Vasseur. "Kimi was informed by Ferrari that they stopped the project together and he was on the market."

Ferrari faced a tricky decision. The team appreciated having Giovinazzi on board as its simulator driver and, with Daniil Kvyat already destined for Toro Rosso, it was wary of losing another valuable asset.

The catch-22 was that if Ferrari didn't place Giovinazzi at Sauber in order to keep him on sim duty, he would have walked away rather than spend another year on the sidelines.

So Ferrari went for it, and nominated him for its Sauber seat. After some soul-searching by Sauber owner Hans Rausing, Ericsson's long-time patron, it was eventually confirmed that Giovinazzi did indeed have the race drive.

Giovinazzi turns 25 in December, and thus he goes into 2019 with more experience than the typical modern-day rookie. And he's a more complete driver than when he had those first Sauber outings. It's now in his hands to show what he can do — and put that Shanghai nightmare behind him.

"After Melbourne everyone was really happy and my name was on the top," he says. "And then after Shanghai my name was really down! This is F1 — one week you are a hero, one week you are not really good. This was my problem — to finish my experience in F1 with this race weekend in Shanghai was not the best." ❧

YOUR SAY

With the highly talented Esteban Ocon and George Russell unlikely to be on the F1 grid next year, this should ring the alarm bells loud and clear to Liberty Media and the FIA

MICHAEL SKEET

Mercedes was out of order

What an appalling use of team orders by Toto Wolff in the Russian Grand Prix. It demonstrated once again that the Formula 1 teams don't give a damn about the fans. Mercedes should refund the admission fees to everyone who attended the Sochi Autodrom and were robbed of a proper motor race.

Douglas Thomson
By email

Three-car F1 teams: a vote for...

I agree with the idea of top teams running three-car line-ups (Pit+Paddock, September 27). However, I'd go further still and also reintroduce privateer 'customer' teams (indeed, one could say that with Haas using myriad Ferrari technology this arrangement is arguably already in place in all but name!).

Imagine the excitement of a modern-day Rob Walker running a customer car from one of the 'works' teams and beating them at their own game, like Stirling Moss and his famous 'giant-killing' exploits at Monaco in 1961.

I'd far rather see a driver in, say, a third Mercedes – be it a customer car or a third factory entry – and hence in with the chance of a decent finish, as opposed to their having little realistic prospect in normal circumstances. Time for a radical rethink, Ross Brawn and co!

James Rollin
Belper, Derbyshire

...and a vote against

Three-car Formula 1 teams is not the right way to get more cars on the grid long-term. With the highly talented pair of Esteban Ocon and George Russell both unlikely to be on the F1 grid next year, this should finally ring the alarm bells loud and clear to Liberty Media and the FIA to cut the costs of competing in F1 substantially so we can get more teams onto the grid and take the count up to 26 cars.

I'm sure most fans would love to see this happen as well. This number of cars would allow the most talented drivers



the greatest opportunity of staying in F1, or for the champion of F2 being able to progress into an F1 drive immediately and not end up as a reserve driver, or even worse out on their ear.

Come on F1, be bold, be brave, and most of all see the greater good that this would bring to the sport, both for drivers' careers and the fans, who pay a great deal of money to attend races to see the best in action. It can be done.

Michael Skeet
Lordswood, Kent

Amazing effort made for new hillclimb

In response to Tony Adams' piece on the inaugural Watgate Bay Hillclimb (Club Autosport, September 20), I spectated at the inaugural event and was amazed at the amount of planning and forethought that had gone into it.

Yes, there were areas where vision was not good but it was as good, if not better, than some full-time hillclimb venues. I had no difficulty finding places to take pictures (such as the one above) and the commentary was fine. Access to the paddock was fine and the crossing point was well controlled.

Mike Furse
By email

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HOW MERCEDES MADE A WIN FEEL LIKE A DEFEAT

Team orders may often be necessary in racing, but for the public — and even some of the protagonists — they are never anything but ugly

EDD STRAW

WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IT? THIS WAS THE QUESTION MERCEDES MOTORSPORT CHIEF TOTO Wolff asked his many interrogators after his decision to impose team orders handed Lewis Hamilton Russian Grand Prix victory over rightful winner Valtteri Bottas.

This is the key question – the only question that matters in understanding what happened in Sochi last weekend, and one that has a different answer depending on whether you approach it in a cool, calculating, rational manner or an emotional one. Wolff's two explicit decisions – firstly for Bottas to be ordered to let Hamilton into the de facto race lead, secondly not to reverse their positions in the closing laps once the threat to the Mercedes' supremacy had been defused – were exactly what you'd expect from a ruthless, world championship-winning machine.

Wolff's decision to "be the baddie", as he put it, was the result of the uneasy balancing act between individual and collective success in grand prix racing that has always existed. Nobody, including Wolff and Hamilton, attempted to argue this wasn't Bottas's race, but everyone involved – even Bottas – understood why this was more inconvenient necessity than destructive act of anti-sportsmanship.

The original swap was driven by the necessity of the race situation, but some would argue that the sporting thing to do would have been to swap them back, particularly once Sebastian Vettel had lost a little time lapping Romain Grosjean's Haas and Bottas had some breathing space.

But unlike the 2017 Hungarian Grand Prix, where Hamilton waved Bottas by late on for third having earlier been ordered ahead, Wolff decided to bank the extra points for Hamilton.

"I thought about it the whole hour, in the same way I thought about it in Budapest," said Wolff of how seriously he considered switching them back. "In Budapest, we said if he can't make it past [Kimi] Raikkonen then we're going to swap back. But that was mid-season, here we are in Sochi at the end of the season.

"You need to consider the championship. If at the end five points or three points are missing, then you're the biggest idiot on the planet for having prioritised Valtteri's single race result over the championship."



You may not like it, and the man himself was clearly uncomfortable with what he'd had to do, but it's hard to argue with Wolff's logic. Sometimes the rational decision goes against the heart.

Hamilton's championship lead is now up to 50 points, rather than the 43 it would have been without the order. Since Mercedes has made big performance strides since struggling in the Belgian GP three races earlier, and improved dramatically in terms of corner-exit traction from slower turns thanks to a confluence of mechanical tweaks, Hamilton now holds all the aces.

And when it came to the Russian GP it was logical, if genuinely painful, for Mercedes to sacrifice Bottas even if it didn't go into the race intending to do so. You can argue that the only mistake was not to make the decision that Hamilton would win before the race and make it clear to Bottas, rather than deciding on the hoof after being backed into a corner by the circumstances of the race. That this became a grand prix of team-orders controversy was the consequence of three inter-related factors.

Early on, the race panned out as planned. Bottas held on to his pole position with a good launch, while Hamilton came under attack from Vettel. The team had discussed a strategy to neutralise the advantage conferred by a tow to a car behind and it worked beautifully, and Bottas stayed to the right of the track where Hamilton was, with

his team-mate in the tow. Vettel, his Ferrari facing a wall of air, had no chance and had to settle into third place as the two Mercedes drivers fanned out on the approach to the corner.

"I had the best start out of those three, but couldn't go anywhere without a tow," said Vettel.

With Bottas leading from Hamilton and Vettel, the three remained locked together in the early stages. Hamilton's deficit fluctuated between 1.2 and 1.7 seconds, while Vettel was on average around two seconds behind. It was all a question of who would blink first and stop.

So far, so straightforward. But the first complicating factor emerged early in the race – Max Verstappen. He started 19th, one place behind team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, owing to Red Bull's decision to introduce another pair of the B-spec Renault engines for use in Mexico and Brazil since the newer C-spec could be problematic at altitude.

The frontrunners knew the Red Bulls could become a nuisance, but it would depend on them scything through the field in the early stages. That's exactly what Verstappen did, signalling his intent by catapulting past both Ricciardo and Toro Rosso driver Pierre Gasly within moments of the race starting thanks to a great getaway. He carried that momentum to 14th place out of Turn 2 by charging up the outside in the braking zone, then picked off Lance Stroll on the back straight to run 13th. >>



Bottas and Hamilton kept both Ferraris at bay at the start

QUALIFYING



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/ETHERINGTON/LAT

THE KEY TO VALTTERI BOTTAS'S RUSSIAN GRAND PRIX POLE position, his first since topping qualifying for the Austrian Grand Prix three months earlier, was the middle sector.

On the first runs in the Q3 top-10 shootout, Bottas was 0.225 seconds quicker than team-mate Lewis Hamilton through this section, enough to offset Hamilton's advantage over the rest of the lap by just 0.004s. And when it came to the crunch on the final Q3 runs, Hamilton had to correct a rear-end snap out of the Turn 7 right-hander after picking up some dirt on his tyres with an earlier wide moment and was spat off the track onto the runoff. He aborted the lap, while Bottas improved to take pole by 0.145s.

Throughout the weekend, that sector was where Hamilton was struggling the most, and although there were times when he was faster through there than Bottas (Q1 and on the hypersoft runs in Q2, for example), other times – FP3 and on ultrasofts in Q2 – he was behind. Had Hamilton put together his three best sectors, he'd have beaten Bottas.

"The first [run] in Q3, I was down in the middle sector but quickest in the first and last," said Hamilton. "I knew I had to push quite a lot because I knew he would gain time. So it was half a second I needed to improve, and so I just over-egged it a bit."

Ferrari needed to pull something out of the bag in qualifying, but the pace simply wasn't there. Third-placed Sebastian Vettel made an error in the Turn 15 left-hander that cost him a quarter of a second, and lost another tenth in the final two corners. But the deficit to pole was 0.556s, so even that lost time wasn't enough. Kimi Raikkonen was fourth, complaining about tyre feel during Q3.

The rest of qualifying was overshadowed by a farcical situation in Q2 with only 10 cars running. Because they had 'back-of-the-grid' engine penalties, Max Verstappen, Daniel Ricciardo and Pierre Gasly did not run.

Renault pairing Carlos Sainz Jr and Nico Hulkenberg also didn't, a sensible move knowing that they would move up to 11th and 12th once penalties were applied and have a free choice of starting tyre – not to mention the fact that they probably weren't quick enough to break the top 10 anyway. Renault's six midfield rivals, headed by fifth-placed Kevin Magnussen's Haas, were all locked in to starting on hypersofts having used that tyre in Q2.

EDD STRAW

**"I KNEW I
HAD TO PUSH
A LOT. I JUST
OVER-EGGED
IT A BIT"**
HAMILTON



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

A lap later, Verstappen passed the Renaults of Nico Hulkenberg and Carlos Sainz Jr to climb to 11th, before passing Marcus Ericsson on lap three into the Turn 4 right-hander to crack the top 10. Romain Grosjean followed later that lap on the back straight, and Verstappen then dismissed Sergio Perez, Esteban Ocon and Kevin Magnussen on the three following laps.

It took him two laps, until the main straight on lap eight, for him to blast past 'Class B' leader Charles Leclerc's Sauber for fifth. At that point he was 20s behind leader Bottas, meaning that the top four were all in the window where they would fall behind Verstappen, running long on softs while the top four had started on ultrasofts, when they pitted.

Bottas tried to extend the gap, but Verstappen was comfortably able to maintain it and even shaved off a few tenths. Fortunately there was only one Red Bull to contend with since Ricciardo was more than 14s back, having taken longer to come through the field after picking up



From 19th on the grid,
Verstappen made it to
fifth by lap eight

MOTORSPORT IMAGES



light front-wing damage on the opening lap that cost him downforce and left him fighting understeer.

Mercedes realised there was no chance of building up enough of a lead over Verstappen and, when Bottas dived into the pits at the end of lap 12 to switch to soft Pirellis while 1.3s clear of Hamilton, he rejoined fifth and just over five seconds behind the Red Bull. This is the moment of the race that supports the claim Mercedes did not preordain the result, because it would have been so easy to give Hamilton the undercut on Bottas and claim it had to because of the threat of Vettel.

Ferrari responded by telling Vettel, who was 1.8s behind Hamilton, to do the opposite to Hamilton in terms of pitting. Hamilton, surprisingly, stayed out while Vettel dived into the pits to take on softs. This Mercedes mistake was the second complicating factor.

Wolff took the blame for this since he was part of the chatter on the strategy radio channel about whether Hamilton should pit or try to eke out another lap – chatter that coincided with the championship leader's rears giving up the ghost in the final sector while he was on a quick lap. With the extra lap to complete, and struggling for grip, Hamilton was then very vulnerable to being undercut by Vettel, leading to Bottas being told "we'd like to reduce lap times and back Vettel up".

Bottas wasn't expecting team orders of this nature, so realised something was up. It was a tough break for him, but the instruction was issued out of necessity given Hamilton was now in trouble.

Hamilton did come in a lap later, but despite a rapid pitstop he emerged side by side with Vettel. The Ferrari had the momentum, and Hamilton wasn't in a position to contest the corner at Turn 2. "How did that happen?" asked Hamilton over the radio. A good question.

"We did the right thing by calling Valtteri in first – it protected his position," said Wolff. "But we were one lap too late with Lewis. I'll take it on me, because I was engaging James [Vowles, chief strategist] in a conversation when he should have made the call. This is why he came in a lap too late and lost position."

Wolff admitted that this was a clear mistake, and it was a strange one, but the disadvantage was quickly eliminated by Hamilton's virtuosity.

"WOLFF TOOK THE BLAME SINCE HE WAS PART OF THE CHATTER ON THE STRATEGY RADIO CHANNEL"

He stayed with Vettel in the hope of repassing him, and had a run on him on the main straight on the next lap.

With Hamilton closing rapidly, Vettel moved right on the approach to Turn 2 and forced the Mercedes to back out of it before taking the corner. Hamilton wasn't happy and the stewards looked at the incident, ruling it legitimate despite the two moves. It was understandable that Hamilton was unhappy, but it was deemed to be on the line rather than over it.

"Sebastian moved and then moved again," said Hamilton. "If I didn't brake, I would have been in the wall and we would have crashed. It felt that it was a double move, which we often talk about that we shouldn't do. Luckily, I got away with it and I was quite forceful in the next corner."

Vettel saw things differently: "I saw him coming very late. Obviously, it's difficult to see in the mirrors and I tried to move to make clear that I'm going to the inside. If you want to go somewhere, go the other side. He had quite a bit more speed at that time, maybe he was surprised, but there was no intention to irritate him."

Hamilton got a good exit from Turn 2 and closed on Vettel through the fast left-hander at Turn 3 before diving to the right as they emerged from it to take the place up the inside into the following right-hander.

"I had a compromised run out of the second corner," said Vettel. "Then it was very difficult to see where he was. I couldn't see him for a very long time, then just saw his tyres and knew he was somewhere there. I didn't want to be a complete arse by pushing him into the dirt and potentially into the wall, and at some point I had to give in." >>



TRACKSIDE VIEW

SOCHI DOESN'T HAVE A GREAT reputation as a track, the legacy of the largely straightforward grands prix at the circuit since it joined the calendar in 2014. But what it lacks in iconic corners, it makes up for in driver challenge. It's a lesson in why you should never assume a superficially straightforward track is 'easy'.

It's a circuit where the grip levels evolve dramatically as the cars – including the Formula 2 and GP3 racers – pile on the laps.

Watching at Turn 2, the first 'proper' corner after the kink on the main straight, at the start of FP1, initially it's a struggle for drivers to get the front end in for the tight right-hander. Probably the strongest early on are the Ferraris, which seem able to get to the apex without having to be too conservative at turn-in. But the evolution kicks in quickly, and by the second runs the telltale signs of both drivers struggling a little with grip from the rear-left in the turn-in phase start to show.

There's another reason why Sochi is tricky, which is related to the track evolution but tangential.

"It's one of those circuits where you feel like you can push more and more but you actually go slower," says Kimi Raikkonen. "It's a nice



circuit but it's not very easy to make the best lap times because it's easy to push too much and go slower."

Turn 2 is a good example of this, critical for lap time because it leads into the never-ending, flat left-hander of Turn 3, at 680 metres the longest turn on the calendar. Margins are fine at the exit. Most of the runoff area is lined by a sausage kerb set back from the edge of the track, but at the point the cars run to the outside of the circuit there's

a short section that is right on the edge to stop drivers taking liberties. Hit this, as Max Verstappen does, and the car is unsettled and the traction compromised.

Watching a day later at the exit of Turn 15, which immediately leads into the tight right-hander at Turn 16, is also illuminating. The natural line is to hold the car tight through the final part of Turn 15 to minimise the distance travelled, which is what the front-runners do

with their extra grip. Some of those in lesser cars, Toro Rosso's Pierre Gasly, for example, take that line too even though it puts cars with less downforce on a knife-edge.

Others let the car run wider for stability reasons. This includes Fernando Alonso, who experiments with varying approach trajectories in a futile attempt to get more pace out of the McLaren.

So not so simple, after all.

EDD STRAW

Ferraris were able to attack Sochi until track evolution kicked in





**"THIS KIND OF RUTHLESS
DECISION-MAKING IS, LIKE IT OR
NOT, THE STUFF OF CHAMPIONS"**



Bottas checks Hamilton's
tyres for evidence of the blister
that prompted the team call

It was a crucial pass, but one that had consequences in the form of a left-rear blister that Hamilton picked up thanks to going too hard, too soon on fresh rubber that is susceptible to such problems when carrying maximum tread. This was the third complicating factor.

Bottas, meanwhile, was closing on Verstappen and was told that passing him was "for the win". This was a clear sign that team orders were being considered, because Verstappen was not a contender to beat him. The implication was: get ahead, or you will be cast behind.

Sure enough, after spending five laps stuck behind Verstappen, with Hamilton right behind and still under pressure from Vettel, Bottas was told to let Hamilton by at Turn 13. He wasn't happy, but dutifully did so. Even Hamilton was uncomfortable, telling the team to get Bottas to speed up to allow them to edge away from Vettel, something that wasn't possible because of the Red Bull ahead.

Had Verstappen not been there, had Mercedes not left Hamilton out for a lap too long and had he then not been forced to risk blistering by

attacking Vettel, the team orders might never have happened. But Wolff felt with a drivers' championship at stake, there was no other choice.

"We had Valtteri in front managing the tyres, Lewis behind with a blistered rear and Sebastian all over Lewis," said Wolff. "At that stage, there were two possible outcomes. The best case would have been it stays like it is and we finished second with Lewis and win with Valtteri. The worst case was the blister wouldn't last until the end and Lewis would have been overtaken by Sebastian. That is why Valtteri in between was the call we made. Realistically, it was the right call to do, but our sporting heart says no."

This is the kind of ruthless decision-making that is, like it or not, the stuff of champions. Once Hamilton was in the lead after Verstappen had stopped and rejoined well behind fourth-placed Raikkonen, it made sense to leave him there to bank the extra points despite Bottas understandably asking if order would be restored late on. And Mercedes deserves credit for being frank, with clear instructions to Bottas during the race and clear explanations afterwards.

Team orders are a fact of life. As enthusiasts we may not like them, but the fact is that neither do the teams. This was a one-two finish for Mercedes, but the celebrations were subdued because of the way things had panned out.

Was it sporting? By one definition, of course it wasn't. But the objective of professional sport is to win and the unworkable ban on team orders was lifted eight years ago, so by another measure it was the only sporting decision that could be taken.

In parc ferme, an uncomfortable and unhappy Bottas had a look at the rear tyres of Hamilton to confirm the blistering was real. Who can blame him? After all, he'd been robbed of a race win and, having been told he could race for victory pre-GP, he clearly wondered if it was a put-up job. But in the cold light of day, even he will grudgingly understand why it happened.

Whatever happens in this title race, Hamilton certainly owes his wingman one after this. ❧



Mercedes opted
against swapping back
in the later stages



Red Bull sacrifices Sochi for altitude races

Red Bull sacrificed its chances of challenging Mercedes and Ferrari in the Russian Grand Prix in order to boost its prospects at Formula 1's upcoming high-altitude races in Mexico and Brazil.

The team used Renault's upgraded 'Spec C' engine in Italy and Singapore but switched to a fresh 'Spec B' in Russia, which Max Verstappen claimed was because the 'Spec C' would not be able to complete the races at altitude.

That meant both drivers dropped to 18th and 19th on the grid at Sochi, where Verstappen charged through to fifth in just eight laps. He then led more laps than any other driver as

he extended a long first stint and eventually finished fifth, while Daniel Ricciardo made slower progress to sixth after picking up bodywork damage early on.

"To win the race would have been very tough today," said Red Bull team boss Christian Horner. "We could have challenged Ferrari harder. We might have been able to have a go at them in qualifying and I think we'd have been putting a lot more pressure on them."

Red Bull will now alternate between its 'Spec C' and 'Spec B' engines.

Air density decreases as altitude increases, which stresses the turbocharger and MGU-H

as they compensate for the impact of thinner air on power output from the combustion engine. Verstappen claimed that the C's turbocharger would not last in Mexico (around 2250m above sea level) and Brazil (850m), which triggered a war of words between the Dutchman and Renault boss Cyril Abiteboul.

Horner said: "Max has made his feelings clear. As we all know, Cyril tends to get a little bit emotional, so we're very much focused on finishing the relationship on a positive note."

"I was just surprised he [Verstappen] didn't mention anything when he came up to lap [Renault driver Nico] Hulkenberg."



Renault ploy doesn't pay off

Renault pairing Nico Hulkenberg and Carlos Sainz Jr came away from the Russian Grand Prix empty-handed despite not running in Q2 in an attempt to gain a tyre advantage.

Since the two Red Bulls and Pierre Gasly's Toro Rosso were carrying back-of-the-grid engine-change penalties, Renault did not send out either of its drivers in the second segment of qualifying. This allowed them to start 11th and 12th, with Sainz ahead thanks to his Q1 advantage.

Sainz's race was immediately ruined by damage sustained at Turn 2 in a clash with Sergey Sirotkin. Although Sainz blamed Sirotkin, the Williams driver had Marcus Ericsson's Sauber on his inside when the Renault turned in from the outside line, and there was not enough space for all three. Sainz finished a hobbled 17th after the team attempted to use him to hold up some of Hulkenberg's rivals.

Hulkenberg slipped to 12th, which was broadly representative of Renault's pace. He came close to building enough of an advantage to threaten the minor points runners, but ultimately wasn't fast enough.



Leclerc takes first 'Class B' victory

Sauber driver Charles Leclerc took his first 'Class B' victory of 2018 by finishing at the front of the midfield pack at Sochi.

Leclerc qualified behind the Haas of Kevin Magnussen and Esteban Ocon's Force India, but passed Ocon on the run to the first corner. Leclerc then executed a great move on Magnussen around the outside of the long Turn 3/4 left-hander on the second lap to take sixth. Although he subsequently fell behind the two Red Bulls and finished seventh, it was a strong performance from the driver who will move to Ferrari next year.

"It was a great race with a strong strategy and a car that felt very good to drive," said Leclerc. "The overtakes at the beginning of the race were on the limit but they helped us to finish the race in P7. To score such a result for the first time this season feels amazing."

Leclerc's mention of 'the first time' is a clear reference to the unofficial 'Class B'. He was potentially set to undercut his way past Nico Hulkenberg's Renault for a similar result in the British Grand Prix in July, only to retire while attempting to do so.

It takes his points tally to 21 for the season, and puts Sauber within three points of Toro Rosso in the battle for eighth in the constructors' championship.



Force India place swap fails

Racing Point Force India duo Esteban Ocon and Sergio Perez finished ninth and 10th after both failed to pass the Haas of Kevin Magnussen.

The duo started sixth and eighth respectively, although Ocon lost out to Charles Leclerc's Sauber at the start. They fell behind the charging Red Bulls of Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo and ended up behind Magnussen, who pulled off an aggressive chop to keep Ocon behind him just before the pitstops.

After the stops, Perez complained of being held up by Ocon, who was stuck behind Magnussen, and the

team eventually ordered them to swap places so Perez could attack. They later swapped back.

"We tried to swap to see if someone could get the car in front, but we probably have to review this [decision] because I don't think it worked that time," explained Ocon.

Team principal Otmar Szafnauer refuted the suggestion that there was any need for review.

"It didn't work but you don't know until you try," he said. "You have to try because had it worked we would have been better off. You should do it if you are no worse off."

Q&A VALTTERI BOTTAS Mercedes driver

Valtteri Bottas remains winless in 2018 after missing out on a second consecutive Sochi victory, but it was the way his sacrifice was managed – not the order itself – that upset him.



most frustrated by the way it was handled?

It was slightly confusing. It was not something we had planned. Normally we go through everything before the race – all the scenarios and how we

planning to overtake him two laps later; I was getting closer and closer. Suddenly I got a call to move over for Lewis. That was confusing.

You got fastest lap. Was that important?

I was still on engine-save mode. It felt like I was cruising in the end so there was a lot more pace available throughout the whole stint behind Lewis. There are no points for fastest lap. The main thing is that I know I could have won on equal terms.

Has Toto promised to make it up to you?

I don't expect anything back from the team. When, if, I win I want to win like I've earned it in pure racing. As a person, as an athlete, it's not ideal. Today was really me taking one for the team.

Was it not clear before the start that you would be asked to move aside?

It was surprising. The team was worried with the blister Lewis had that he would lose second place to Sebastian and that wouldn't be ideal for both championships. I'm sure if you put yourself in the shoes of Toto [Wolff] or any team leader it's not easy to decide those things.

Since you understand the need for the order, are you

would react to those things. What happened today, we could never expect that to happen and I got the call very suddenly. I definitely didn't expect it – that's why it was a little bit confusing.

So why wasn't it planned?

It's impossible to go through all of them [the scenarios]. What was confusing is the lack of communication before it happened. I was told to try to get through Verstappen. I was



FIVE 2018 TITLES

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British GT4 Champion

MICHAEL CREES

Ginetta GT4 SuperCup Am Class Champion

JAMES KELLETT

GT5 Challenge Champion

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GINETTA

Brake problems eliminate Toro Rossos early

Toro Rosso drivers Pierre Gasly and Brendon Hartley both retired from the Russian Grand Prix with front-brake problems that led to both suffering high-speed spins early in the race.

Team principal Franz Tost said the incidents were related to a piston as the brakes reached hot temperatures.

"It was a frustrating Sunday for Toro

Rosso as both cars had to retire," said Tost. "For whatever reason we ended up with very hot front brakes and one piston in the calipers got stuck. This caused overheating of the brake fluid and a long pedal so we called the drivers to come to the garage. Obviously, being in parc-ferme conditions, we didn't change anything from yesterday, so we need to investigate further what the reason is."

Gasly took to Twitter after the race to reveal that his spin through the sweeping Turn 4 occurred at 174mph.

"I had a really strange feeling with the brake pedal, it went pretty long and got worse very quickly," he said. "Then, on the third lap at Turn 4, I braked and the pedal went completely flat, so we lost the front brakes and had to retire the car."

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/ANDRE/SUTTON

Gasly hit in visor by debris

Pierre Gasly says a piece of debris got past the halo and hit his visor on the opening lap of the Russian Grand Prix.

Debris from Daniel Ricciardo's Red Bull was flicked up in front of him at the start, hitting his helmet and landing in the cockpit of his car.

"I think Daniel lost a piece of carbon, which went straight into my visor, so this was really, really scary," said Gasly. "I thought it was going through and straight into my eye, and finally it touched the visor and

then came into the cockpit.

"In Turn 4 I had to take the carbon piece and throw it from the cockpit. At the time I had like five tenths of a second to see it flying and just hitting the visor – maybe a winglet that came from somewhere, I think contact with Daniel. But it came my way, pointing towards me and straight at my right eye. When I first saw it coming I was like, 'It's going through the visor.' The visor is really strong, it hit it and fell into the cockpit."



MOTORSPORT IMAGES/GORIA/SUTTON

Alonso: McLaren lacked ambition for fastest lap

That Fernando Alonso suggested McLaren "lacked ambition" because it did not allow him to challenge for fastest lap with a fresh set of tyres late in the race says everything you need to know about the team's difficult weekend.

Alonso was running 14th in the closing stages, keeping Lance Stroll's Williams at bay, when he requested a shot at fastest lap. The team declined.

"I think when you are P14, P15 at least I think it's good for the team, good for the guys who are working flat-out every day, good for the sponsors, good for the partners, but we were lacking ambition I think today," said Alonso.

The main achievement of the weekend was starting one place higher (16th) than he qualified despite a back-of-the-grid penalty. This was thanks to McLaren getting Lando Norris, who drove Alonso's car in FP1, to the front of the pitlane queue in FP1 to get on track first.



HONE/LAT
motorsport
IMAGES

20 Hartley #28 1m35.037s	18 Ricciardo #3 no time	16 Alonso #14 1m35.504s	14 Stroll #18 1m36.437s	12 Hulkenberg #27 no time
19 Verstappen #33 no time	17 Gasly #10 no time	15 Vandoorne #2 1m35.977s	13 Sirotkin #35 1m35.612s	11 Sainz #55 no time

FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Vettel	1m34.488s
2	Verstappen	1m34.538s
3	Hamilton	1m34.818s
4	Bottas	1m34.999s
5	Ricciardo	1m35.524s
6	Ocon	1m35.663s
7	Raikkonen	1m35.696s
8	Magnussen	1m36.196s
9	Hulkenberg	1m36.274s
10	Giovinazzi	1m36.712s
11	Grosjean	1m36.816s
12	Gasly	1m36.944s
13	Norris	1m37.022s
14	Leclerc	1m37.054s
15	Markelov	1m37.183s
16	Vandoorne	1m37.187s
17	Latifi	1m37.206s
18	Sirotkin	1m37.225s
19	Hartley	1m37.944s
20	Stroll	1m39.137s

WEATHER 22C, sunny

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m33.385s
2	Bottas	1m33.584s
3	Verstappen	1m33.827s
4	Ricciardo	1m33.844s
5	Vettel	1m33.928s
6	Raikkonen	1m34.388s
7	Perez	1m35.122s
8	Gasly	1m35.137s
9	Ocon	1m35.147s
10	Ericsson	1m35.295s
11	Magnussen	1m35.331s
12	Sainz	1m35.341s
13	Leclerc	1m35.432s
14	Hulkenberg	1m35.568s
15	Grosjean	1m35.911s
16	Hartley	1m36.024s
17	Alonso	1m36.074s
18	Vandoorne	1m36.617s
19	Sirotkin	1m36.861s
20	Stroll	1m37.001s

WEATHER 21C, sunny

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m33.067s
2	Bottas	1m33.321s
3	Vettel	1m33.667s
4	Raikkonen	1m33.688s
5	Verstappen	1m33.937s
6	Ricciardo	1m34.394s
7	Leclerc	1m34.628s
8	Ocon	1m34.809s
9	Magnussen	1m34.820s
10	Perez	1m34.916s
11	Sainz	1m34.988s
12	Gasly	1m35.125s
13	Grosjean	1m35.185s
14	Hulkenberg	1m35.213s
15	Ericsson	1m35.370s
16	Hartley	1m36.033s
17	Sirotkin	1m36.071s
18	Stroll	1m36.274s
19	Vandoorne	1m36.597s
20	Alonso	1m36.992s

WEATHER 22C, sunny

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Hamilton	306
2	Vettel	256
3	Bottas	189
4	Raikkonen	186
5	Verstappen	158
6	Ricciardo	134
7	Magnussen	53
8	Hulkenberg	53
9	Alonso	50
10	Perez	47
11	Ocon	47
12	Sainz	38
13	Gasly	28
14	Grosjean	27
15	Leclerc	21
16	Vandoorne	8
17	Stroll	6
18	Ericsson	6
19	Hartley	2
20	Sirotkin	1

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	495
2	Ferrari	442
3	Red Bull	292
4	Renault	91
5	Haas	80
6	McLaren	58
7	Racing Point Force India	35*
8	Toro Rosso	30
9	Sauber	27
10	Williams	7

* Team lost its 59 points scored in rounds 1-12 as Force India due to its name change.

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	10	6	Bottas
Vettel	13	3	Raikkonen
Ricciardo	2	13	Verstappen
Perez	4	12	Ocon
Stroll	6	10	Sirotkin
Hulkenberg	9	7	Sainz
Gasly	11	3	Hartley
Grosjean	6	9	Magnussen
Vandoorne	0	16	Alonso
Ericsson	3	13	Leclerc

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying, as happened with Hartley in Spain and GB, Verstappen in Monaco, and Grosjean in Canada.

WINS

Hamilton	8
Vettel	5
Ricciardo	2
Verstappen	1
Bottas	2
Raikkonen	1
Ricciardo	1

FASTEST LAPS

Bottas	5
Ricciardo	4
Hamilton	2
Verstappen	2
Magnussen	1
Raikkonen	1
Vettel	1

SPEED TRAP



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m32.410s
2	Bottas	1m32.964s
3	Verstappen	1m33.048s
4	Ricciardo	1m33.247s
5	Raikkonen	1m33.341s
6	Vettel	1m33.476s
7	Leclerc	1m33.924s
8	Grosjean	1m34.022s
9	Magnussen	1m34.078s
10	Perez	1m34.084s
11	Ericsson	1m34.170s
12	Ocon	1m34.290s
13	Gasly	1m34.383s
14	Sainz	1m34.626s
15	Hulkenberg	1m34.655s
16	Hartley	1m35.037s
17	Alonso	1m35.504s
18	Sirotkin	1m35.612s
19	Vandoorne	1m35.977s
20	Stroll	1m36.437s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m32.595s
2	Bottas	1m32.744s
3	Vettel	1m33.045s
4	Raikkonen	1m33.065s
5	Leclerc	1m33.488s
6	Grosjean	1m33.517s
7	Ocon	1m33.596s
8	Magnussen	1m33.747s
9	Perez	1m33.923s
10	Ericsson	1m33.995s
11	Verstappen	no time
12	Ricciardo	no time
13	Gasly	no time
14	Sainz	no time
15	Hulkenberg	no time

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m31.387s
2	Hamilton	1m31.532s
3	Vettel	1m31.943s
4	Raikkonen	1m32.237s
5	Magnussen	1m33.181s
6	Ocon	1m33.413s
7	Leclerc	1m33.419s
8	Perez	1m33.563s
9	Grosjean	1m33.704s
10	Ericsson	1m35.196s

WEATHER 23C, sunny

STARTING GRID

10 Ericsson #9 1m35.196s	8 Perez #11 1m33.563s	6 Ocon #31 1m33.413s	4 Raikkonen #7 1m32.237s	2 Hamilton #44 1m31.532s
9 Grosjean #8 1m33.704s	7 Leclerc #16 1m33.419s	5 Magnussen #20 1m33.181s	3 Vettel #5 1m31.943s	1 Bottas #77 1m31.387s

RACE RESULTS ROUND 16/21, 53 LAPS - 192.48 MILES

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GB)	Mercedes	1h27m25.181s	14	USu, Sn
2	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+2.545s	11	USu, Sn
3	Sebastian Vettel (D)	Ferrari	+7.487s		USu, Sn
4	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Ferrari	+16.543s	4	USu, Sn
5	Max Verstappen (NL)	Red Bull-Renault	+31.016s	24	Sn, USn
6	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	Red Bull-Renault	+1m20.451s		Sn, USn
7	Charles Leclerc (MC)	Sauber-Ferrari	+1m38.390s		HSu, Sn
8	Kevin Magnussen (DK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		HSu, Sn
9	Esteban Ocon (F)	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		HSu, Sn
10	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Force India-Mercedes	-1 lap		HSu, Sn
11	Romain Grosjean (F)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		HSu, Sn
12	Nico Hulkenberg (D)	Renault	-1 lap		Sn, USn
13	Marcus Ericsson (S)	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap		HSu, Sn, USn
14	Fernando Alonso (E)	McLaren-Renault	-1 lap		USn, Sn
15	Lance Stroll (CDN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		USn, Sn
16	Stoffel Vandoorne (B)	McLaren-Renault	-2 laps		USn, Sn
17	Carlos Sainz (E)	Renault	-2 laps		Sn, USn
18	Sergey Sirotkin (RUS)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps		USn, Sn
R	Pierre Gasly (F)	Toro Rosso-Honda	4 laps-brakes		Sn
R	Brendon Hartley (NZ)	Toro Rosso-Honda	4 laps-brakes		HSn, Sn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Bottas	1m35.861s	-	50
2	Hamilton	1m35.916s	+0.055s	50
3	Vettel	1m35.990s	+0.129s	50
4	Verstappen	1m36.283s	+0.422s	45
5	Ricciardo	1m36.345s	+0.484s	41
6	Raikkonen	1m36.611s	+0.750s	47
7	Ericsson	1m37.931s	+2.070s	39
8	Magnussen	1m38.015s	+2.154s	52
9	Leclerc	1m38.107s	+2.246s	52
10	Grosjean	1m38.244s	+2.383s	46
11	Perez	1m38.300s	+2.439s	47
12	Ocon	1m38.366s	+2.505s	52
13	Hulkenberg	1m39.108s	+3.247s	52
14	Stroll	1m39.435s	+3.574s	44
15	Alonso	1m39.590s	+3.729s	44
16	Sainz	1m39.731s	+3.870s	35
17	Sirotkin	1m39.838s	+3.977s	43
18	Vandoorne	1m39.922s	+4.061s	41
19	Gasly	1m44.071s	+8.210s	3
20	Hartley	1m45.852s	+9.991s	2

WEATHER 25C, sunny

TYRES n - New set u - Used set Available | SH - Superhard H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft SS - Supersoft US - Ultrasoft HS - Hypersoft I - Intermediate W - Wet

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 132.10mph. FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 136.47mph.

RACE BRIEFING

FP1
ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI replaced Ericsson at Sauber
LANDO NORRIS replaced Alonso at McLaren
ARTEM MARKELOV

replaced Sainz at Renault
NICHOLAS LATIFI replaced Perez at Force India

GRID PENALTIES
ALONSO, RICCIARDO, VERSTAPPEN, GASLY and

HARTLEY required to start from the back of the grid - additional power unit elements used
VERSTAPPEN, RICCIARDO and **VANDOORNE** Five-place grid penalties

for replacement gearboxes
VERSTAPPEN Three-place penalty for failing to slow for a waved yellow flag
HARTLEY 10-place penalty for additional power unit elements used

STAT

6

Bottas now has six F1 poles, the same as world champions Phil Hill, Emerson Fittipaldi and Alan Jones

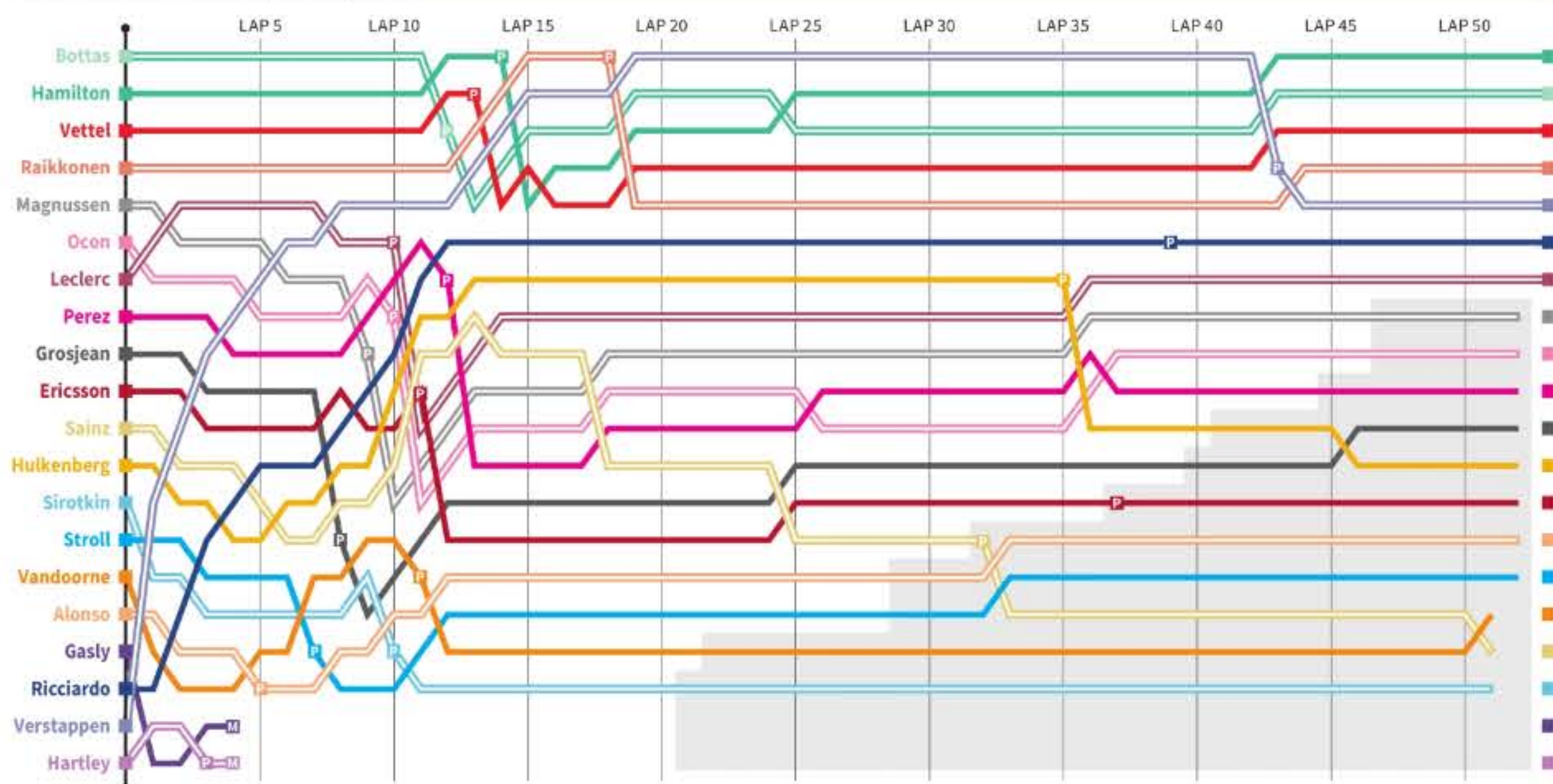
NEXT RACE

OCTOBER 7
JAPANESE GP

Suzuka



LAP CHART What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin + Penalty Car lapped Safety car

FULL MARKS FOR SECOND-FIDDLE BOTTAS

The Mercedes driver easily had the measure of his multiple world champion team-mate and was Sochi's winner in spirit, if not at the flag

EDD STRAW

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

9 Was outpaced by his team-mate in qualifying and had to rely on team orders for the win, so by definition this wasn't a perfect weekend. But his superb pass on Vettel was crucial, and overall this was a good performance. By his own admission, the victory wasn't really his.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

10 While the team orders that cost him victory were understandable, it's impossible not to feel sorry for Bottas losing out on a thoroughly deserved first victory of 2018. He had the air of a man who knew he could pull pace out of the bag in the crucial second sector to outpace Hamilton.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

8 Seemed pretty happy with life after the race, which suggests that he felt he did all he could and perhaps he's accepted the championship has slipped away. Scrappy last sector exaggerated the gap to Mercedes in qualifying, and could he have fought harder to keep Hamilton behind in the race?



KIMI RAIKKONEN

7 Nothing particularly wrong with his performance, but he never really lifted himself beyond solid. Three tenths slower than Vettel in qualifying translated into him losing touch with his team-mate in the race. Didn't have much to do other than ensure the Red Bulls didn't bother him.

RED BULL



DANIEL RICCIARDO

8 The usual qualifying gap to Verstappen was there, with Ricciardo two tenths down in an admittedly irrelevant Q1. In the race, he also couldn't match the verve of his team-mate's charge, but in mitigation he did have some front-wing damage from the opening lap.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

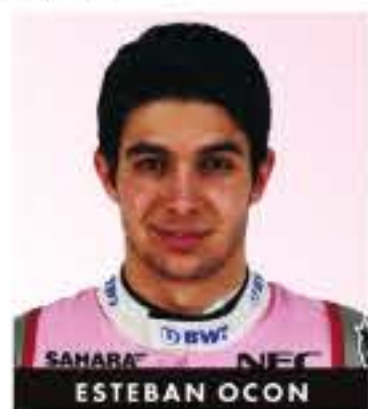
9 We've seen plenty of drivers in the leading teams charging from the back into the top six this year, but Verstappen achieved this with minimal time loss to the front – 20s to be precise. Shame he didn't have a go at a late-race charge on fresh tyres, as it meant his race petered out into a cruise to fifth.

FORCE INDIA



SERGIO PEREZ

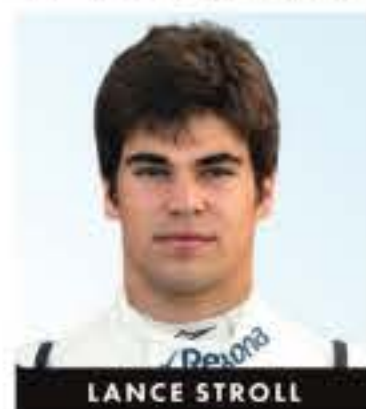
7 Sochi is a track he generally goes well at, but he admitted his Q3 was not good after his tyres overheated in the second half of the lap. His race was fairly straightforward, running behind Ocon and, like his team-mate, unable to attack Magnussen for eighth after being waved past to have a go.



ESTEBAN OCON

8 Was the leading Force India in both qualifying and the race, although there was a suspicion that had Q3 gone slightly better he could have pipped Magnussen and therefore had track-position advantage and finished higher in the race. Third in 'Class B' was a decent enough result.

WILLIAMS



LANCE STROLL

6 A mistake on his first run meant he was outqualified by Sirotkin, but things might have been different had Ricciardo not backed off so much in the yellow-flag zone triggered by Sirotkin on the second Q1 runs and cost Stroll too much time. At least he gave Alonso something to think about in the race.



SERGEY SIROTKIN

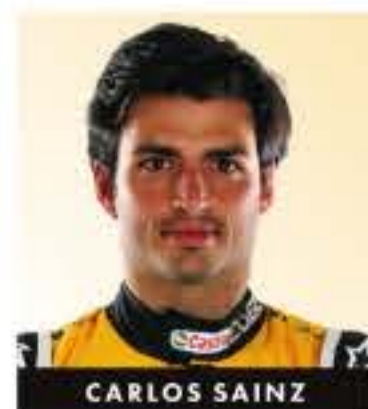
6 Laid it on the line on his second Q1 run and spun. His own words best sum it all up: "The most painful race of the year. Every single bit went wrong for us. We've always been in the worst possible position on the track with the worst possible traffic situation." He was last, but had the pace to do better.

RENAULT



NICO HULKENBERG

8 After being shaded by Sainz in qualifying, wasn't able to convert 12th on the grid into points. That might seem disappointing, but the Renault wasn't really a top-10 car at Sochi, even on an alternate strategy. Given the car's pace, this was a better performance than it looked.



CARLOS SAINZ

6 Pipped his team-mate in Q1, which equated to 11th after both Renaults sat out Q2. Was unhappy with damage sustained in Turn 2 when Sirotkin hit him. But as Sainz was on the outside and cut towards the apex, where Ericsson and the Williams were side by side, he had a hand in that clash.



TORO ROSSO



PIERRE GASLY

7 Displayed his usual verve throughout the weekend in a Toro Rosso that didn't look the easiest to drive, extracting a decent lap time in Q1. Unfortunately, his engine-change grid penalties and early retirement with a brake problem meant that was as far as his participation went.



BRENDON HARTLEY

5 Sirotkin's spin contributed to Hartley being eliminated in Q1, but he was still firmly the second-fastest Toro Rosso driver. Had no chance to do anything in the race given the brake problems that forced both cars out. Can only really be judged on practice and qualifying, and he was outclassed by Gasly.

HAAS



ROMAIN GROSJEAN

7 Didn't quite have the pace in qualifying, and thanks to tyre temperatures being compromised by out-lap traffic the gap to Magnussen was stretched. That track-position disadvantage made life difficult in the race, but he drove decently enough to pass both Sainz and Hulkenberg.



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

8 Did a very good job in qualifying to head the midfield in fifth place. This gave him track position in the race, but he did lose out on 'Class B' victory when Leclerc pulled off a great move in Turn 4. He did a good job to keep the Force Indias at bay, even if his defence did risk being a little too robust.

McLAREN



STOFFEL VANDOORNE

5 Is trying to use his final races in F1 to show what he can do, but wasn't able to make much of an impact. It's hard to evaluate his performance beyond knowing he's in a poor car and for some reason unable to demonstrate the ability that everyone knows is there in abundance.



FERNANDO ALONSO

7 Grid penalties meant he didn't have a full crack at qualifying. Made no serious progress in the race, and probably had no business doing so in a McLaren. The fact that he had to work to keep Stroll behind says a lot, but despite the car being uncompetitive there was little sign of his usual verve.

SAUBER



MARCUS ERICSSON

5 Lack of opposition meant his first Q3 appearance since the 2015 Italian GP was less impressive than it seemed, especially given the closest he got to Leclerc in qualifying was 0.246s in Q1 before fading. Ended up stuck in traffic in the race and fell away from points contention.

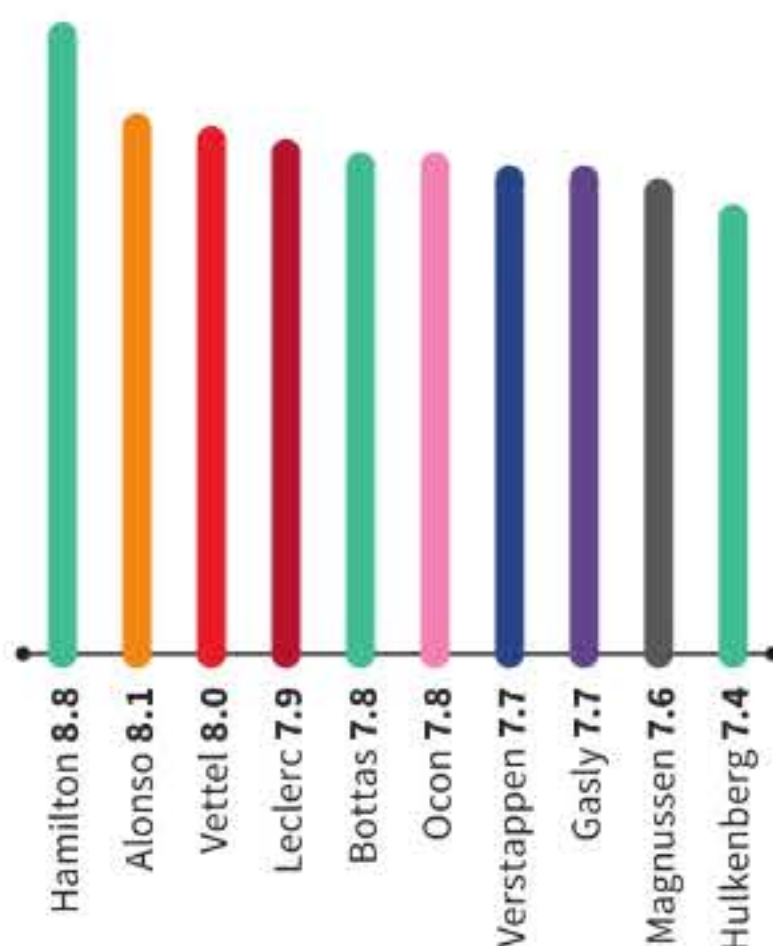


CHARLES LECLERC

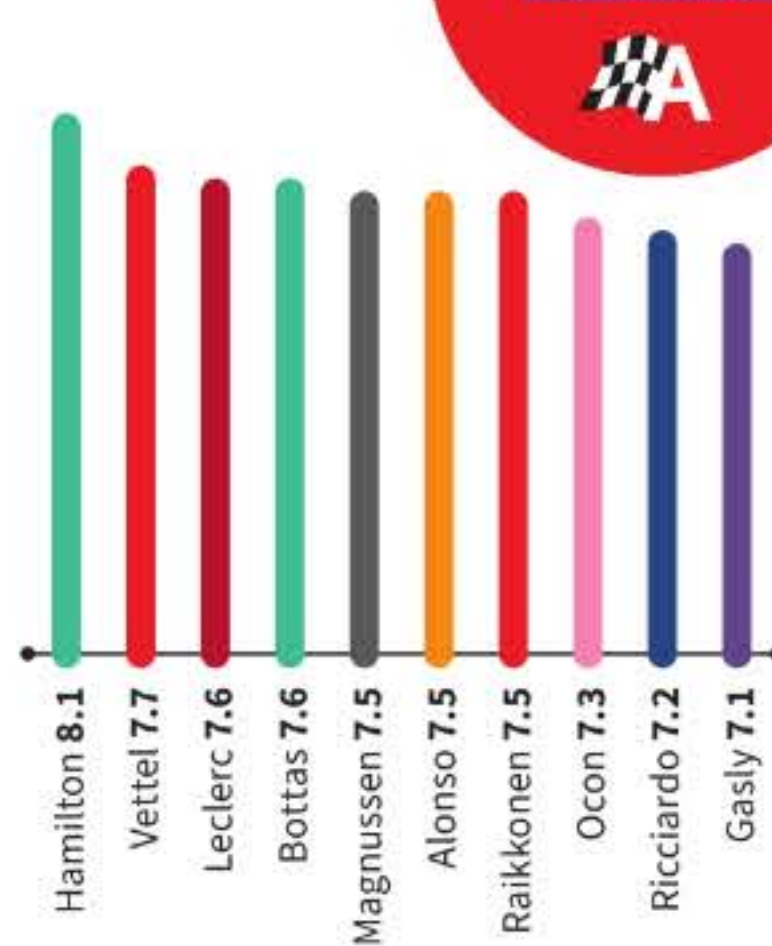
9 This was his first 'Class B' victory, very well earned through a good qualifying and an outstanding race performance, save for a brief excursion on lap one. Stellar pace in a car that started the weekend tricky to drive put his team-mate in the shade, and a superb early pass on Magnussen was key.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS

AUTOSPORT'S RATING
AFTER ROUND 16



READERS' RATING
AFTER ROUND 16



GIVE
YOUR DRIVER
RATINGS

VISIT
AUTOSPORT.COM



1958
BTCC
2018
60
YEARS



Turkington holds on as Honda dominates

The Team Dynamics Civics showed pace and poise around Brands Hatch, but the championship was decided at the tail end...

MATT JAMES

Never has a 22nd-place finish caused so much emotion. But, after the finish of the second race at Brands Hatch last weekend, it was a snapshot of the rollercoaster ride Colin Turkington has endured on his way to sealing a third British Touring Car Championship crown.

The WSR BMW 125i M Sport driver had come to Kent with it all to lose. He had a 34-point buffer, which he extended to 36 before race two after claiming 12th spot in the opener with a full complement of 75kg of success ballast. That came as a bonus in that Turkington finished ahead of his main title rival, Tom Ingram, who had also struggled with the 66kg of extra lead installed within the passenger footwell of his Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Avensis.

Race two was the crunch point, and Turkington was doing enough to seal the title. He was 11th in the pack, but was beginning to feel the heat because those around him were scrambling to make their way into the top 10.

It came to a head at the top of Paddock Hill Bend on lap 13 when Turkington went for the inside of Dan Lloyd's BTC Norlin Honda Civic Type R and the two collided. Turkington skittered into the gravel, but had enough momentum to crawl his way out of the other side. He returned to action dead last, and that is where he finished.

"At that point I was making a plan, trying to work out what I had to do in race three – I knew it would be tough from there," said Turkington. "I was in shock when my engineer Kevin Berry came on the radio to tell me that I had done enough [to win the title]. I couldn't believe it."

It was enough because Ingram came up just slightly short of keeping himself in the hunt going into the last race of the weekend.

Ingram started off promisingly, blasting up the order from 14th in a car shorn of its success ballast. It took him nine laps to slice into fourth place, and he was right on the bootlid of third-placed Andrew Jordan's »



ALL PICS: JEP/LAT
motorsport
 IMAGES



WSR BMW. But he needed more. Finishing fourth would mean being 23 points behind Turkington – and that would leave Ingram, a three-time race winner in 2018, out of the hunt even though the points leader wasn't likely to score.

Try as Ingram might, he could not unpick Jordan's determined grasp on third place. Turkington got the radio message to confirm his third crown on the slowing-down lap – but Ingram had received his own message a few moments earlier.

"Spencer [Aldridge] came on the radio and told me that Colin was out of the points and we needed to be looking at second or third to keep the title alive," said Ingram.

"For me, that was where I was aiming to get to anyway. We were hopeful that we could have got a little bit higher, and we were maximum attack.

"With five laps to go, I had no brakes, no tyres, everything was gone. It was hard because at that point I needed something to attack with and I had nothing. I could have gone for something desperate and fired Jordan off or spun him around, but I would have taken absolutely zero gratification in doing that because we would have done it by cheating.

"When I went across the line, I asked, 'Is it over, is that it, is it gone?' And Spencer said yes. My world sunk at that point.

I went and had a little cry in the truck and had five minutes to myself. It's hard to take, but we can't look back at anything and think we should have done it differently."

Turkington was drained of all emotion after the second event and limped to 23rd in race three, an event in which he didn't really want to take part. Ingram had to regroup and battle to fifth place in the finale to help Speedworks to the Independent Teams Championship, having already taken the Independent Drivers silverware.

Those were the championship players in a weekend where the BTCC once again delivered some excellent racing, and there were plenty of other subplots that kept the crowd entertained throughout.

The biggest winner was Dan Cammish in the Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R. The rookie, who stepped into Gordon Shedden's shoes at the beginning of 2018, has been promising a breakthrough all season but had been forced to wait.

Qualifying on the front row with no success ballast was the launchpad for his weekend, and then he overcame pole winner Brett Smith after one lap. He dominated the race and wasn't headed again until the third encounter of the weekend.

He secured his back-to-back wins – the second with 75kg of ballast – in front of team-mate Matt Neal, and showed the prowess of the Civic chassis on the fast sweepers around the back of the circuit.





"It's a mark of the progress we have made over the course of the year," said Cammish. "The work that the team has put in is incredible, and this is still a new car for us. This is a huge motivation for me going into the off-season."

His smile after race two took a while to manifest itself. Officials had deemed that his start was slightly out of position and initially penalised the Yorkshireman 30 seconds. Cammish was summoned to explain himself to the stewards, wherein he successfully argued his case. For a man who has had many kicks in the teeth this season, it was a refreshing change.

Neal had come into the meeting in the top 10 of the championship and therefore had 15kg of ballast, and there was no way he was going to try anything risky to usurp Cammish once the sister car was in front. But this was the strongest weekend yet for the new FK8 Civic and bodes well should either of them be in the championship showdown next season...

It was fitting that the third race of the day at Brands Hatch allowed outgoing champion Ash Sutton to show that he is still among the best drivers on the entry list.

It had already been a dramatic weekend for the Team BMR Subaru man. He had been on the pace since the beginning of practice, but had a huge scare in the second session with a heavy crash at Paddock Hill Bend with only a couple of moments left. >>



SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

IT WAS HARD FOR NEW CHAMPION COLIN Turkington to hold back his emotions as he gradually realised that he had landed his third BTCC crown.

There have been a lot of things going on in the background for the 36-year-old during 2018: the fights on the Tarmac have not been his biggest battle.

The Northern Irishman lost his mother Mavis in June and it had a profound effect, and even he admitted that he had found some relief in his on-track activities, saying that it gave him even more motivation to land the biggest prize.



"I TRIED TO BE CLEVER. IT WAS A GOOD WAY TO GO ABOUT WINNING"
COLIN TURKINGTON

"It has been tough this year on track and off track," says Turkington, who also lifted the title in 2009 and '14. "The biggest challenge has been off track. That is one of the reasons this championship has been so good for our family this year. It has given us something to focus on and smile about. Those things have been hard to come by in the last few months."

Victories have also been hard to come by. There were 17 different winners over the course of the 30 races, and that means consistency has been the golden ticket: and if there is one driver on the grid who knows how to keep the tally ticking over, it's Turkington. But that also means that the pressure was even greater.

"It was certainly intense," says Turkington. "By a long way this has been

the most intense championship I've been involved with. And as I've said many times, there is no magic.

"You've just got to keep working hard and fighting back. I've won one race and had 10 podiums but at no stage have I felt like I've had the fastest car. This team hasn't had a pole since 2015. I've tried to be clever. It was a good way to try and go about winning it."

Now that the silverware is locked away, thoughts can turn to the future, but the new champion wants to wallow in his achievement for a while yet before turning his attentions to 2019.

"It's so special to be there among the big names who have won three titles, but I know how much harder it's going to be to win the next one," adds Turkington. "It could be even tougher, and I need to stop and have a think about it and think about how you go about winning it again because it's harder and harder. First of all, though, I need a long break."

MATT JAMES

STAT

1

Number of wins taken by Turkington in his title-winning campaign





Sutton had been asked to change the map on the engine as he crossed the line to begin another lap. When he got to the top of Paddock, the throttle stuck open and the Subaru took a one-way trip to the barriers.

The car was repaired just in time for him to qualify 10th, and Sutton took 39kg and soft tyres in race one, where he was tipped off the track before he began his charge. He was eighth in race two and was then drawn on row two for the finale, which was the only incentive he needed.

Despite bogging down away from the start, he climbed up to second place by lap seven of the reversed-grid encounter. There was only one car to peg back: the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra of his former team-mate and very good friend Josh Cook.

The two began what quickly developed into a BTCC epic, as time and again Sutton pulled alongside, only to be rebuffed. Cook was stern in his defence and looked like he had done enough in a truly absorbing battle. But there was a sting in the tail.

"We know each other's style very well," said Sutton. "Every time I played a card to

try and get ahead of him, he played a better one and stayed in front. I was laughing and smiling in the car.

"On the final lap, Josh did exactly what you would expect him to do: he slowed the car right down on the apex at Clearways and I had no choice but to look to the outside. You do get a bit of side-draft in the cars like you see in NASCAR, and I was using that to give me extra push towards the line."

It worked, by just 0.032s, even though Sutton wasn't aware until it was confirmed to him on the radio on the slowing-down lap. Cook, for his part, was pragmatic about the defeat, preferring to dwell on what had been a spellbinding race.

"I have never pushed the throttle pedal as hard as I did on the run to the line – at one point, I think I had both feet on it!" he joked. "My car was a little tail-happy and I was struggling. There was a bit of contact, but Ash was just letting me know he was still there. There was nothing nasty in it."

Rob Austin's HMS Alfa Romeo Giulietta had held the lead at the start of the reversed-grid race in what was a solid

weekend for the Italian hatchback. Austin had lined up in 14th and driven to 15th in race one, but the favourable softer rubber helped him to ninth in race two, and a front-row start for the finale.

He headed Cook initially before understeer left him unable to hang on to his advantage, although he did bring the Alfa home in third.

Smith's Eurotech Honda had taken a rostrum finish in the opening race with a mature performance that showed how much he has developed over the season, and he did not overreact when the flying Team Dynamics duo battled ahead of him. That result was achieved on the preferable softer tyres and with no weight. When the other handicaps were applied, he was 11th and 16th, but he had made a good impression.

The final podium finisher was Jordan, who had come into the weekend with high hopes of landing a top-three position in the championship. He had arrived at Brands with weight, lined up 12th for race one and finished eighth – one of the few to make progress with the extra lead in the car and with the normal tyres.

Once the softs were bolted on, Jordan flew in race two and rocketed from row four to fourth at the start. He then climbed further when the engine went on second-placed Jack Goff's Eurotech Honda. Jordan was ninth in the finale, and was left ruing what might have been from 2019 – although he had already done the perfect job for his team by resisting everything that Ingram had thrown at him in race two to assist Turkington's path to title glory.

Jordan was – along with Rob and Ricky Collard – part of the crew that helped BMW to the manufacturers' title and WSR to the teams' championship. After a contest that had been as competitive as any in recent years, that is to their huge credit. ✎



RESULTS ROUND 10/10, BRANDS HATCH (GB), SEPTEMBER 30 RACE 1 (15 LAPS – 36.498 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Dan Cammish (GB)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R	23m10.679s
2	Matt Neal (GB)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R (15kg)	+0.368s
3	Brett Smith (GB)	Eurotech Racing / Honda Civic Type R	+2.753s
4	Jack Goff (GB)	Eurotech Racing / Honda Civic Type R (21kg)	+3.362s
5	Senna Proctor (GB)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+3.922s
6	Daniel Lloyd (GB)	BTC Norlin Racing / Honda Civic Type R	+8.102s
7	Aiden Moffat (GB)	Laser Tools Racing / Mercedes A-Class	+9.218s
8	Andrew Jordan (GB)	WSR / BMW 125i M Sport (27kg)	+9.428s
9	Tom Chilton (GB)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus RS (57kg)	+12.421s
10	James Cole (GB)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus RS	+12.632s
11	Sam Tordoff (GB)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus RS (9kg)	+13.237s
12	Colin Turkington (GB)	WSR / BMW 125i M Sport (75kg)	+13.460s
13	Tom Oliphant (GB)	Ciceley Motorsport / Mercedes A-Class	+13.612s
14	Tom Ingram (GB)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Avensis (66kg)	+13.794s
15	Rob Austin (GB)	HMS Racing / Alfa Romeo Giulietta	+14.059s
16	Ricky Collard (GB)	WSR / BMW 125i M Sport	+18.686s
17	Ollie Jackson (GB)	AmD Tuning / Audi S3 Saloon	+19.840s
18	Jason Plato (GB)	Team BMR / Subaru Levorg	+20.268s
19	Adam Morgan (GB)	Ciceley Motorsport / Mercedes A-Class (39kg)	+20.846s
20	Matt Simpson (GB)	Simpson Racing / Honda Civic Type R	+21.468s
21	Stephen Jelley (GB)	Team Parker Racing / BMW 125i M Sport	+22.454s
22	Josh Cook (GB)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (33kg)	+22.483s
23	Rory Butcher (GB)	AmD Tuning / MG6	+22.861s
24	Mike Bushell (GB)	Team Hard / Volkswagen CC	+30.865s
25	Sam Smelt (GB)	AmD Tuning / Audi S3 Saloon	+34.370s
26	Josh Caygill (GB)	AmD Tuning / MG6	+35.070s
27	Ollie Pidgley (GB)	Team Hard / Volkswagen CC	+35.608s
28	Chris Smiley (GB)	BTC Norlin Racing / Honda Civic Type R	-2 laps
R	Ethan Hammerton (GB)	Team Hard / Volkswagen CC	14 laps-puncture/gravel
R	Ash Sutton (GB)	Team BMR / Subaru Levorg (39kg)	0 laps-accident damage
R	Bobby Thompson (GB)	Team Hard / Volkswagen CC	0 laps-accident damage

Winner's average speed 94.48mph. **Fastest lap** Neal 1m31.356s, 95.88mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Smith 1m30.537s; **2 Cammish** 1m30.580s; **3 Neal** 1m30.725s; **4 Goff** 1m30.773s; **5 Lloyd** 1m30.775s; **6 Proctor** 1m30.847s; **7 Tordoff** 1m30.886s; **8 Smiley** 1m30.895s; **9 Moffat** 1m30.915s; **10 Sutton** 1m30.919s; **11 Collard** 1m30.978s; **12 Jordan** 1m30.999s; **13 Plato** 1m31.111s; **14 Austin** 1m31.123s; **15 Chilton** 1m31.125s; **16 Cole** 1m31.140s; **17 Turkington** 1m31.164s; **18 Jackson** 1m31.169s; **19 Ingram** 1m31.224s; **20 Oliphant** 1m31.302s; **21 Bushell** 1m31.308s; **22 Morgan** 1m31.349s; **23 Cook** 1m31.393s; **24 Simpson** 1m31.464s; **25 Butcher** 1m31.702s; **26 Jelley** 1m31.755s; **27 Thompson** 1m31.807s; **28 Smelt** 1m32.060s; **29 Hammerton** 1m32.255s; **30 Pidgley** 1m32.531s; **31 Caygill** 1m33.294s.



GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1.

RACE 2 (17 LAPS – 41.365 MILES)

1 Cammish (75kg) **27m52.493s**; **2 Neal** (66kg) +0.595s; **3 Jordan** (21kg) +0.781s; **4 Ingram** +1.323s; **5 Moffat** (27kg) +2.984s; **6 Chilton** (15kg) +3.166s; **7 Proctor** (39kg) +3.425s; **8 Sutton** +5.938s; **9 Austin** +7.091s; **10 Cook** +13.356s; **11 Smith** (57kg) +16.918s; **12 Smiley** +17.049s; **13 Lloyd** (33kg) +17.509s; **14 Tordoff** +18.553s; **15 Jackson** +18.765s; **16 Cole** (9kg) +19.443s; **17 Plato** +20.434s; **18 Collard** +20.845s; **19 Smelt** +20.957s; **20 Bushell** +23.381s; **21 Caygill** +29.817s; **22 Turkington** +37.033s; **R Morgan** 14 laps-puncture; **R Oliphant** 13 laps-puncture/spin; **R Pidgley** 9 laps-power-steering; **R Goff** (48kg) 5 laps-holed radiator/engine; **R Jelley** 4 laps-accident damage; **R Simpson** 2 laps-accident damage; **R Butcher** 2 laps-accident damage; **R Hammerton** 2 laps-accident damage; **R Thompson** 0 laps-driveshaft.

Winner's average speed 89.03mph.

Fastest lap Oliphant 1m31.219s, 96.03mph.

GRID RACE 3 Decided by result of Race 2, with top 10 reversed.

RACE 3 (15 LAPS – 36.498 MILES)

1 Sutton (21kg) **23m18.405s**; **2 Cook** (9kg) +0.032s; **3 Austin** (15kg) +0.738s; **4 Chilton** (33kg) +1.100s; **5 Ingram** (48kg) +1.662s; **6 Tordoff** +1.839s; **7 Proctor** (27kg) +2.286s; **8 Smiley** +2.550s; **9 Jordan** (57kg) +3.065s; **10 Lloyd** +3.689s; **11 Morgan** +8.300s; **12 Jackson** +11.912s; **13 Collard** +12.054s; **14 Cole** +12.484s; **15 Bushell** +15.255s; **16 Smith** +15.720s; **17 Cammish** (75kg) +16.877s; **18 Goff** +17.208s; **19 Thompson** +17.509s; **20 Oliphant** +18.112s; **21 Neal** (66kg) +18.457s; **22 Simpson** +19.210s; **23 Turkington** +19.417s; **24 Butcher** +19.616s; **25 Plato** +19.845s; **26 Smelt** +20.112s; **27 Moffat** (39kg) +1m22.927s; **R Hammerton** 4 laps-loss of drive; **R Jelley** 3 laps-throttle; **R Caygill** 3 laps-power-steering; **NS Pidgley**.

Winner's average speed 93.96mph.

Fastest lap Tordoff 1m31.319s, 95.92mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Turkington 304; **2 Ingram** 292; **3 Chilton** 266; **4 Sutton** 256; **5 Jordan** 247; **6 Cook** 246; **7 Morgan** 232; **8 Goff** 228; **9 Neal** 223; **10 Cammish** 218.

WORLD OF SPORT

Black Falcon trio are the gaffers – or are they?

**BLANCPAIN GT ENDURANCE
BARCELONA (E)
SEPTEMBER 30
ROUND 5/5**

The battle for the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup turned into a straight fight between the Black Falcon Mercedes trio of Maro Engel, Luca Stolz and Yelmer Buurman and Auto Sport Promotion Mercedes star Raffaele Marciello at Barcelona last Sunday. In more ways than one.

First off, Engel, Stolz and Buurman pulled level in the championship with Marciello after claiming the point for pole position. And then in the final hour a quickfire series of safety cars turned the event into a Merc-versus-Merc sprint to the flag with race victory and title honours at stake.

Buurman proved more than equal to the challenge of Tristan Vautier, who lined up with Marciello and Daniel Juncadella at ASP, through three restarts in the last hour. The last came with just five and a half minutes left on the clock, but Buurman got his head down and pulled out a lead of just under two seconds.

It couldn't have been much closer, and the intrigue only continued after the race. The Black Falcon Merc was excluded from the results for a technical infringement in another case of gaffer tape being used to seal part of the induction system. The team appealed, so the original results remain

provisional. Marciello, for the moment at least, has the Endurance Cup title in his possession along with the overall BGTS crown he sealed on Sunday and the Sprint Cup he wrapped up earlier in September.

The race didn't look as though it was going to be close early on. Pole ended up giving Engel a huge advantage after Nicki Thiim jumped to second at the start in his R-Motorsport Aston Martin V12 Vantage. The Aston was fast over one lap last weekend, but the nature of the Circuit de Catalunya took its toll on its brakes and tyres, making it a less convincing proposition over a stint. But its straightline speed also made it difficult to pass.

That explained why Engel had a lead of 20 seconds when the first round of pitstops began as Thiim backed up the rest of the field. Marciello had moved up from sixth on the grid to third behind the Aston, but what happened next proved decisive in the outcome of events in Catalonia.

Juncadella just failed to get out of the pits in front of the Aston now driven by Jake

Dennis. The DTM driver had a fresh set of Pirelli tyres but, tucked up behind the R-Motorsport car, he couldn't exploit the advantage they offered. Of course, he wasn't going to chase down the still-growing deficit to the Black Falcon car now driven by Stolz, but that was artificially closed just after halfway with the first safety car of the race. The second, just after the ASP Merc had got ahead of the Aston in the final stops, eradicated it entirely.

The problem for ASP was that its rival now had the advantage of new tyres. Buurman certainly had the edge at each of the restarts, though Vautier reckoned that wasn't all. "They appeared to have a more aggressive set-up that gave them an advantage for those first few laps after the green," explained the Frenchman. "But it was probably more equal after that, so I don't think that final safety car actually helped us."

The Aston, which Matthieu Vaxiviere took over for the final stint, was running fourth when a heavy contact with Dries Vanthoor's WRT Audi R8 LMS resulted in front-suspension damage for the British car and a drivethrough for the German one.

The incident promoted the SMP Racing Ferrari 488 GT3 shared by Davide Rigon, Mikhail Aleshin and Miguel Molina to fourth. That became third – and then second after scrutineering – when it got past the Emil Frey Racing Jaguar of Adrian Zaugg, Alex Fontana and Mikael Grenier.

The XK-based Jag ended up a provisional third and the Silver Cup victor on the day and in the championship. It came from nowhere to score its best ever BGTS result in what was its final race courtesy of a late final pitstop that coincided with a yellow-flag period.

GARY WATKINS



Engel leads from Thiim, and Black Falcon Merc took the flag first...

SRO/BOGAERTS

WEEKEND WINNERS

**BLANCPAIN
ENDURANCE
BARCELONA**
Raffaele Marciello,
Daniel Juncadella,
Tristan Vautier
Auto Sport Promotion
Mercedes-AMG GT3

For full results visit:
motorsportstats.com



SRO/BOGAERTS

WEEKEND WINNERS

WTCR NINGBO

Race 1 Thed Bjork
YMR Hyundai
i30 N TCR

Race 2 Yvan Muller
YMR Hyundai
i30 N TCR

Race 3 Thed Bjork
YMR Hyundai
i30 N TCR

For full results visit:
motorsportstats.com

WTCR WORLD OF SPORT

Bjork leads as they
race past the rolling
Zhejiang scenery



DE MATTIA/DPPI

Bjork in command at Ningbo

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP NINGBO (PRC) SEPTEMBER 29-30 ROUND 7/10

As open and competitive as the World Touring Car Cup season has been – just nine points separate the top three drivers after seven of the 10 rounds – a theme at the majority of this year's rounds has been that of one-driver domination.

That didn't change during the first of two back-to-back weekends in China. In fact, Thed Bjork's command of proceedings at Ningbo was undoubtedly the most impressive of all so far.

An advantage of close to a second in first practice was an ominous start and, while that gap fell in FP2 and qualifying, Bjork and his YMR Hyundai faced no competition in Saturday's first race: a clean getaway allowed him to streak clear of the Munnich Motorsport Honda Civic of Esteban Guerrieri and Frederic Vervisch (Comtoyou Audi RS3 LMS), and he won by more than four seconds.

The 2017 World Touring Car champion claimed after race one he would need "to do something clever or they will beat me tomorrow", but in reality the chasing pack had little hope of catching him on Sunday either. After another qualifying pole and a calculated drive to seventh in the reversed-grid race, Bjork again controlled the early stages of the finale. The race was subsequently halted to allow repairs to be made to kerbs at the Turns 15/16 left-right,

but Bjork made no mistakes the other side of the stoppage and eased clear of Gabriele Tarquini's BRC Hyundai to claim a second win of the weekend and fourth of 2018.

That took his weekend haul to 68 points and hoisted Bjork up to second in the standings behind Tarquini. The Italian had forfeited that lead to Bjork team-mate/boss Yvan Muller after race two – Muller won while Tarquini stopped – but returned to the top of the pile by finishing best of the rest behind Bjork in the finale, while this time it was Muller who retired.

Eight points is Tarquini's advantage over Bjork with nine races remaining, while Muller – who slipped out of the top two overall for the first time in 15 races – is one point further back.

While the Ningbo weekend thrust Bjork back into title contention, it most likely signalled the end of some other challenges.

Norbert Michelisz – the fourth Hyundai driver – could have expected to have ended the weekend in a similar position to Bjork, having twice qualified in the top three, but is now a distant fourth in what increasingly looks like a private Hyundai battle for the drivers' (and teams') championships. A power-steering failure hampered his cause in race one, while he lacked the pace to challenge in either of Sunday's affairs.

Guerrieri added another podium in race two, and his weekend was such that he looked like overhauling team-mate Yann Ehrlacher – who was by far the most impressive Honda performer across the European leg of the season – in the points



Old master Muller
is still a winner

before a race-three retirement. While passing Michelisz for second at the Turn 11 hairpin, Guerrieri and the Hungarian collided, breaking the front-right suspension on the Civic immediately.

Ehrlacher should have had a nailed-on podium in the reversed-grid race, but a reported anti-roll bar breakage allowed Vervisch to close up. Things went awry when Vervisch attempted a penultimate-lap pass, which resulted in the pair making contact and dropped Ehrlacher to 10th. His fall was compounded by a hit from WTCR debutant Ma Qing Hua, which put him out of the race and forced a pitlane start in the finale.

And while the Comtoyou Audis were hooked up at Ningbo, things could scarcely have gone worse for the WRT squad of RS3s. Jean-Karl Vernay started the weekend fifth overall – ahead of Bjork by a point – but failed to score all weekend and is now 75 adrift of Tarquini.

JACK COZENS



FORMULA 2
SOCHI (RUS)
SEPTEMBER 29-30
ROUND 11/12

George Russell has one hand firmly on the Formula 2 title after another great weekend at Sochi. Now his only challenger is Alexander Albon, who took victory in Saturday's feature race as Lando Norris dropped out of title contention.

If anything can characterise Russell's season, it's consistency and his ability to improve his ART Grand Prix car through a weekend. In the feature race he lacked the edge of DAMS pairing Albon and Nicholas Latifi, who he said had "the strongest pace of any driver and any team all season". But after staying late on Saturday with the team to investigate, Russell was rocket-like in the sprint race, and he managed a number of tricky scenarios including mid-race rain to dominate proceedings.

Although he has already been confirmed in a McLaren seat in Formula 1 next year, Carlin driver Norris maintained that winning the F2 title is important to him. But it all went wrong during the feature race when he was released from his pit box before his front-right wheel was attached, putting him out of the race. That placed him at the back for the sprint race, where only fastest lap would have kept him in with a chance – but Russell grabbed those bonus points before the rain came. Norris also earned himself a stop-go penalty in the sprint race for an infringement on the formation lap, and was pushing hard when

he was tagged into retirement by Arjun Maini. Little wonder Norris described the weekend as "horrendous".

While Norris's title bid was unstitching in the feature race, Albon – third in the standings arriving in Russia – was ready to pounce. Since tyre degradation was high at Sochi, it looked as though those starting on the soft prime rubber – as opposed to the supersoft option – would have an advantage. Indeed, Artem Markelov led most of the race having started in 19th, but the prime runners couldn't maintain pace towards the end of the stint. Markelov might still have had a chance, but his radio failed and he took his Russian Time team by surprise when he pitted for his supersofts.

The key move came in the pitstops for Albon, who jumped polesitter Nyck de Vries. But on both stints Albon and team-mate Latifi were rapid. After locking up with three laps to go, de Vries flat-spotted and Latifi was able to move through for a brilliant one-two for DAMS, a team in fine form. Latifi has been rejuvenated in the past three rounds, having struggled before that.

Markelov fell back to 11th, vitally important in his battle for fourth in the points with Prema Racing man de Vries.

While Russell won on Sunday, Latifi believed this was "his race to win" until an "idiot move" from Alessio Lorandi wiped him out at Turn 5. Lorandi had already gone straight on at Turn 2 – along with a





host of other drivers, including Russell – before he locked up for T5 and crashed into the back of Latifi's car.

Russell made haste after the resultant safety car had come in, dispatching Arden's Nirei Fukuzumi for the lead. Fukuzumi's car was so tail-happy that you could be forgiven for thinking he was driving in a different formula as Russell reeled him in.

There have been many occasions when adversity has hit Russell while leading a race, almost as if some higher power had taken against him. And it remains a cruel injustice that, while Norris and Albon (who goes to Formula E) thoroughly deserve their seats for next season, Russell's future remains uncertain.

The adversity on this occasion was rain. It looked as if it might be possible to remain on slick tyres, but Russell took the difficult decision to pit for wet-weather rubber on lap 13. His rivals followed.

Russell was peerless in the wet to win by 7.4 seconds over Sergio Sette Camara and Albon. De Vries ended a race-long battle with Markelov by taking fourth from him on the penultimate lap.

Albon now trails Russell by 37 points, with 48 on offer from the Abu Dhabi finale. That's a struggle as vertiginous as they come, especially since Albon's score of 35 at Sochi is his best weekend harvest to date this season. "Mathematically, there's a possibility for Alex to take the championship," admitted Russell. "He had a great weekend here. I feel we're in a good position but anything can happen."

JACK BENYON

RESULTS SOCHI (RUS), SEPTEMBER 29-30, RACE 1 (28 LAPS – 101.622 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Alexander Albon (T)	DAMS	54m12.383s
2	Nicholas Latifi (CDN)	DAMS	+11.307s
3	Nyck de Vries (NL)	Prema Racing	+14.259s
4	George Russell (GB)	ART Grand Prix	+17.468s
5	Sergio Sette Camara (BR)	Carlin	+22.953s
6	Antonio Fuoco (I)	Charouz Racing System	+34.899s
7	Alessio Lorandi (I)	Trident	+39.133s
8	Nirei Fukuzumi (J)	Arden International	+43.463s
9	Roberto Merhi (E)	Campos Racing	+46.334s
10	Tadasuke Makino (J)	Russian Time	+46.461s
11	Artem Markelov (RUS)	Russian Time	+53.455s
12	Louis Deletraz (CH)	Charouz Racing System	+56.606s
13	Dorian Boccia (F)	MP Motorsport	+1m00.950s
14	Jack Aitken (GB)	ART Grand Prix	+1m06.522s
15	Arjun Maini (IND)	Trident	-1 lap
16	Maximilian Gunther (D)	Arden International	26 laps
R	Niko Kari (FIN)	MP Motorsport	23 laps-mechanical
R	Lando Norris (GB)	Carlin	6 laps-lost wheel/damage
R	Luca Ghiotto (I)	Campos Racing	1 lap-accident damage
NS	Sean Gelael (RI)	Prema Racing	clutch

Winner's average speed 112.483mph. **Fastest lap** de Vries 1m51.929s, 116.874mph.

QUALIFYING 1 de Vries 1m46.476s; 2 Norris 1m46.696s; 3 Russell 1m46.839s; 4 Latifi 1m46.890s; 5 Albon 1m47.039s; 6 Ghiotto 1m47.151s; 7 Makino 1m47.372s; 8 Sette Camara 1m47.384s; 9 Aitken 1m47.634s; 10 Gunther 1m47.743s; 11 Fuoco 1m47.774s; 12 Merhi 1m47.854s; 13 Lorandi 1m48.006s; 14 Deletraz 1m48.105s; 15 Gelael 1m48.154s; 16 Kari 1m48.206s; 17 Fukuzumi 1m48.327s; 18 Boccia 1m48.491s; 19 Markelov 1m48.568s; 20 Maini 2m14.971s.

RACE 2 (21 LAPS – 76.186 MILES)

GRID FOR RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1, with top eight finishers reversed.

1 Russell 44m46.259s; 2 Sette Camara +7.438s; 3 Albon +8.216s; 4 de Vries +19.132s; 5 Markelov +22.258s; 6 Merhi +27.778s; 7 Fukuzumi +30.852s; 8 Boccia +35.190s; 9 Fuoco +39.981s; 10 Gunther +47.076s; 11 Makino +50.708s; 12 Gelael +53.110s; 13 Deletraz +53.404s; 14 Ghiotto +53.553s; 15 Maini +1m52.002s; R Norris 16 laps-puncture; R Aitken 11 laps-spun/stalled; R Kari 10 laps-accident; R Lorandi 0 laps-accident; R Latifi 0 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 102.100mph. **Fastest lap** Russell 1m50.501s, 118.384mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Russell 248; 2 Albon 211; 3 Norris 197; 4 de Vries 184; 5 Markelov 166; 6 Sette Camara 164; 7 Fuoco 120; 8 Ghiotto 94; 9 Latifi 91; 10 Aitken 62.





Mazepin's mistake benefits Hubert

GP3 SERIES
SOCHI (RUS)
SEPTEMBER 29-30
ROUND 8/9

If the GP3 Series was decided on number of wins, the outcome of this year's title would probably be very different. But Anthoine Hubert's balance of speed and consistency is paying dividends as he extended his points lead despite failing to win for a fourth round in a row.

If victories were the decider, Nikita Mazepin and David Beckmann are tied on three and top of the charts. But a costly mistake in race two left Mazepin falling further behind ART Grand Prix team-mate Hubert in the points, while Beckmann will be wondering what could have been, having completed a third round in a row with a victory in his fourth weekend with Trident after a mid-season switch from Jenzer.

Someone finally notching a mark on the

win table was Leonardo Pulcini. He has been incredibly impressive this year, light years ahead of his Campos Racing team-mates. After a 15th and a 14th in the past two feature races, an upturn in form and luck was needed.

Mazepin was the initial polesitter but his lap was disallowed after the session, relegating him to eighth on the grid and robbing him of the four points for pole that had edged him ahead of team-mate Callum Ilott. Mazepin swiftly made light work of the disadvantage, scything through to fight Ilott and Giuliano Alesi for third in race one as Hubert established himself behind Pulcini.

At quarter-distance Mazepin seized his opportunity at Turn 2, taking to the inside of the track in a move on Alesi and Ilott that was investigated by the stewards. Ilott ran wide on the outside, as Mazepin got ahead and began hunting down Hubert. Ilott and Alesi then dropped like bricks

as the race progressed.

Mazepin took advantage of the home crowd cheering him on and, with a DRS-assist, made it by Hubert on the last lap to cut his team-mate's lead to 24 points, the Frenchman lamenting working his Pirellis too hard in pursuit of Pulcini. With Ilott, Jake Hughes, Hubert and Mazepin, ART Grand Prix sealed a seventh teams' title in eight seasons in another dominant year.

Richard Verschoor continued his searing pace in just his third event with fourth, ahead of Beckmann, while Joey Mawson earned the reversed-grid pole in eighth.

Ilott meanwhile struggled with his tyres from much earlier on, and fell all the way to 13th. A retirement in the second race means he is now out of contention for the title.

It's fair to say that Mawson has outperformed his troublesome Arden-run car in GP3 on many occasions this year, and he would need another of those performances to convert the sprint race. But more bad luck struck, as Mazepin played a huge part in the race-two outcome.

He jumped team-mate Hubert early on and looked like he would cut the points deficit again, but with three laps to go Hubert turned up the wick and closed on his stablemate for fourth.

But he didn't need to make a move, as Mazepin first ran wide at Turn 13 and then couldn't keep his car out of the wall at the exit, smashing into retirement. It means Hubert's points gap is now 32, with 48 available at the last round in Abu Dhabi.

The resultant safety car was the bringer of bad luck for Mawson. Having been harried by Beckmann for the majority of the race, he managed to escape, only for the field to be bunched up again. On the last lap Beckmann dived inside at Turn 13 for his third win of 2018. Mawson had to settle for second, ahead of Verschoor and Hubert.

JACK BENYON



GP3 SERIES
SOCHI

Race 1 Leonardo Pulcini

Campos Racing

Race 2 David Beckmann

Trident

NASCAR CUP
CHARLOTTE

Ryan Blaney (below)

Team Penske Ford Fusion

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For full results visit:
motorsportstats.comCharlotte drama plays
out well for lucky BlaneyNASCAR CUP
CHARLOTTE (USA)
SEPTEMBER 30
ROUND 29/36

Ryan Blaney was fortunate to collect his first NASCAR Cup victory of the season after a multi-car pile-up and last-lap spin took out the leaders in the 'Roval' 400.

Blaney's Penske Ford team-mate Brad Keselowski was ahead when a caution period was thrown in the closing stages of the race. He then locked up at the first corner of the restart, running straight into the wall. Other drivers, including points leader Kyle Busch, followed him into the wall and the red flag was brought out.

Martin Truex Jr avoided the drama to inherit the race lead ahead of Jimmie Johnson, who needed a strong result to secure his place in the top 12 of the playoffs.

When the race restarted with three

Johnson (48) spun and
hit leader Truex

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/INKP/LAT

laps remaining, Johnson pushed to take the victory. But he spun at the final corner of the last lap, clipping the back of Truex's car and sending the race leader into a spin.

Blaney slipped past to win, ahead of Jamie McMurray and Clint Bowyer. Johnson recovered for eighth, but it wasn't enough to secure his playoff place.

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Kristoffersson crowned as Solberg shines

WORLD RALLYCROSS
AUSTIN (USA)
SEPTEMBER 30
ROUND 10/12

A PSRX Volkswagen Polo dominated the opening day of World Rallycross's first visit to Austin. But for once this season it wasn't the car of Johan Kristoffersson that set the initial pace.

Little over a year after Petter Solberg had been diagnosed with lung disease, the Norwegian was seemingly back to his enduring best.

In Q1 Kristoffersson found himself stuck in traffic and so slumped to 13th as Solberg dominated. He not

only secured top spot in the Intermediate Classification, but won the first semi-final ahead of Kristoffersson, meaning he would line up on pole for the final.

Although Kristoffersson had failed to seal his consecutive World RX crown in qualifying, his wait was barely delayed. By finishing second to Solberg in the semi, he wrapped up his championship defence and started on row two for the final.

Solberg took the lead at Turn 1 as Kristoffersson forced his way inside front-row starter Mattias Ekstrom into the joker lap. Solberg took his joker on lap two to cover off his team-mate and remained in front before both VWs moved forward when Andreas Bakkerud

took his joker on the fourth tour.

Bakkerud exited the joker alongside Audi team-mate Ekstrom, who ran wide at the next corner as Bakkerud climbed a position. A lap later race leader Solberg locked his Polo's brakes at Turn 3 and ran wide on the exit.

The mistake gifted Kristoffersson the lead and his ninth win of the season. Solberg and Bakkerud finished on the podium, and Sebastien Loeb inherited fourth when Peugeot team-mate Timmy Hansen and Ekstrom came together late on, fifth position being swapped post-race after Hansen received a five-second penalty.

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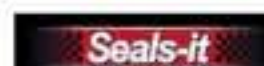
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McLAREN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD 2018 FINALISTS REVEALED

AWARD FINALISTS

The four finalists who will contest the 2018 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award have been selected.

BRDC Formula 3 race winners Jamie Caroline and Tom Gamble, Formula Renault Eurocup points leader Max Fewtrell, and British Formula 4 champion Kiern Jewiss are finalists. Only Fewtrell, 19, has been a finalist before.

There will be fitness and simulator elements before a two-day test at Silverstone in MotorSport Vision Formula 2, McLaren GT3 and Ligier LMP3 machinery (see story, right).

Prizes for the winner, who will be announced at the Autosport Awards on December 2, include a McLaren F1 test and full membership of the British Racing Drivers' Club.

Ex-Formula 1 driver and former BRDC president Derek Warwick chairs the judging panel, which also comprises two-time



British Touring Car champion Jason Plato, former McLaren and Lola designer Mark Williams, GT team boss and 1997 Award winner Andrew Kirkaldy, experienced commentator Ian Titchmarsh, McLaren's Amelia Lewis, and Autosport's Kevin Turner and Scott Mitchell. Last year's guest judge and recently announced BMW Formula E driver Alexander Sims has also joined the panel full-time.

Former Award winners include 2009 F1 world champion Jenson Button, new McLaren F1 driver Lando Norris, 13-time grand prix winner David Coulthard, triple Indianapolis 500 victor Dario Franchitti, and 2014 World Endurance champion Anthony Davidson.

KEVIN TURNER



Winner will test an F1 car, as Lando Norris did in 2017

MAUGER/LAT
motorsport
IMAGES



L-r: Caroline, Fewtrell,
Gamble and Jewiss



JAMIE CAROLINE

Age 19

2018 Race winner in BRDC F3
with Carlin (2 wins)

He says "It wasn't on my radar – I'm more surprised getting in this year than I would have been last year [when he was British F4 champion] because I've had such little seat time. It's been my hardest season in motorsport. I can't thank the BRDC enough for the support it's given me this year and this is another lifeline. I'm looking forward to the F2 car, but the prototype will be cool too and the GT3 should be fun."



MAX FEWTRELL

Age 19

2018 Leading Formula Renault Eurocup
with R-ace GP (6 wins)

He says "Last year in the Award tests I don't think I did my best, so I hoped I would get another chance. We started this year strongly, then we were unlucky at Monza and got punted off, but we've clawed back to the front so it's been a good season and I thought I might get another chance in the Award. This year I need to prepare a bit better – I took the Award for granted last time."



TOM GAMBLE

Age 16

2018 Fifth in BRDC F3
with Fortec Motorsport (2 wins)

He says "The Award was definitely in my mind. It's fantastic to be part of – some of the people that have won it have gone on to achieve a lot in motorsport. It's been an up-and-down season, but we've shown speed. I'm looking forward to the F2 car's downforce. Going from the Ginetta Junior to BRDC F3 was massive so I can't imagine what the F2 will be like. I'll have to do some neck training!"



KIERN JEWISS

Age 16

2018 British F4 champion
with Double R Racing (6 wins)

He says "It's all a bit of a shock. When the nominations came out and my name was on there it gave me a good feeling. Before that it was just a dream. I've been to the Autosport Awards and this is the one that stood out. I want to be the one up there at the end of the night. It's crazy to be selected and the whole thing is special. Now that I'm a finalist I'm going to do my homework."



Ligier LMP3 now part
of test line-up

LIGIER JOINS AWARD AS MERCEDES BOWS OUT

A Ligier JSP3 will replace the Mercedes DTM car in this year's McLaren Autosport BRDC Award tests.

Mercedes has regularly supplied one of its DTM machines and has been part of the Award every year since 2010. But with the German manufacturer withdrawing from the DTM in 2019, it is not able to provide a car for the Silverstone running in October.

Instead, Onroak will provide a Ligier LMP3 racer, which has dominated the category. The JSP3 has a normally aspirated 420bhp Nissan V8 engine and will join the MotorSport Vision-run Williams JPH1B Formula 2 and McLaren 650S GT3 machines, both of which are turbocharged.

Ex-Formula 1 driver and Award chairman Derek Warwick said: "Mercedes has been a loyal and strong partner. Working during the night and changing the engine last year showed their commitment.

"The DTM Mercedes has been one of the highlights of the Award for the drivers. When they saw and got into it, you could see their eyes light up.

**"THE DTM
MERCEDES
HAS BEEN
AN AWARD
HIGHLIGHT"**

"I'd also like to think Mercedes has benefited because they've found drivers to join the DTM team, such as former Award winners Gary Paffett, Jamie Green and Paul di Resta."

Warwick believes that the inclusion of the Ligier also reflects the current motorsport scene. "We've moved into a different world," he added. "It is getting more difficult to make it into F1. Sportscars will be the route for many drivers so it's another great discipline to put the finalists through.

"Ligier have been fantastic – they understand what we're trying to do."

KEVIN TURNER



Mercedes bows out

Dorlin: I've done all I can

CLIO CUP

Provisional Renault UK Clio Cup champion James Dorlin says he isn't thinking about the National Court hearing that could lead to Paul Rivett taking the crown instead.

Rivett was excluded from third place in the second race at Silverstone last month after contact with title rival Max Coates, a decision Rivett and his WDE Motorsport team have appealed to the National Court. No date has been set for the case.

Dorlin won the title in dramatic style last weekend at Brands Hatch after taking an impressive win in the finale to beat Coates by five points, with Rivett a further two back.

"It's out of my control," said Dorlin. "Today we've won and I'm celebrating – I've done everything I can."

Rivett, however, is confident of getting the decision overturned. "Provisionally I finished third but I'm certain we are



Dorlin won the title at Brands on the track, but could lose it in the courts

going to win it in court," he said. "It's a shame it has to finish this way."

Coates had led the standings for much of the season but was gracious in defeat. "I think that's Clio Cup racing at its best," he said of the finale. "I can't have any regrets and I tried my best."

Dorlin is yet to decide where he'll race in 2019, considering both touring cars and a move into GT racing, but Coates is clear. "I want to go and race in touring cars and I would love to be back with Ciceley, where I began my Clio career," he said.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Reeve plans racing return after smash

CLIO CUP

Renault UK Clio Cup racer Nick Reeve plans a quick return to action after being airlifted to hospital following a high-speed crash at Brands Hatch last Saturday.

Reeve's car was sent into the barriers at Dingle Dell after Brett Lidsey ran wide and then came back across the track. He clipped Reeve's car, which was launched up and into a roll before landing on its wheels. Reeve was able to walk away but was airlifted to King's College Hospital in London for precautionary CT scans. He was discharged and returned

to Brands later that day.

"The luckiest thing is the fact that I didn't go over [the barriers]," said Reeve. "I'd done my belts up so tight before the start of the race, which I'm quite thankful for."

While Reeve's car was written off, he was offered a spare for Sunday's race but was not passed fit to compete. He is instead targeting a comeback with his regular team Specialized Motorsport in the British Racing and Sports Car Club's Fiesta Championship at Brands Hatch later this month before a return to the Clio Cup next year.

MARK PAULSON



Brands crash left Reeve's car with heavy damage

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Ginetta series will race at Rockingham farewell meeting

Rockingham swansong

GINETTA GT5/G40

Ginetta plans to run winter races for its Ginetta GT5 Challenge and G40 Cup series at the Rockingham 'send-off' meeting next month.

After it was announced that motorsport activity at the Northamptonshire venue would cease at the end of the year, plans were soon made for a farewell event.

Ginetta is one of the manufacturers to get involved in the November 24-25 meeting and has decided to put on extra races for its GT5 and G40 Cup categories.

"I had a few people ask if we were going to do a winter series," explained Ginetta motorsport manager Ash Gallagher.

"People will be keen to do the last race at Rockingham and we plan to run combined races for the GT5 Challenge

and G40 Cup. I've already got 20 people who have said they want to do it, despite it being at the end of November.

"Ginetta has done lots of racing at Rockingham over the years, and it's a nice thing for us to do. It's a shame [Rockingham closing] – we always had a friendly welcome from the staff there."

A number of allcomers races will form part of the meeting, with separate contests for saloons/hatchbacks, GTs and single-seaters. Caterhams are also set to race.

• The Ginetta Junior Winter Series will take place the weekend before the Rockingham send-off meeting. The contest will form part of the final racing event of the year at Brands Hatch on November 18-19.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Crees targets promotion

GINETTA GT4

Ginetta GT4 Supercup racer Michael Crees has tests lined up in Porsche Carrera Cup GB and GT4 machinery as he evaluates plans for next year after clinching the Supercup Am class title at Brands Hatch last weekend.

The 35-year-old, who won the GRDC+ title last year and beat Ben Barnicoat and Jake Dennis in the 2016 Henry Surtees Challenge karting event, bested Colin White by 73 points with 11 Amateur wins.

Now he is considering either a return to the Supercup as a Pro driver, or a move into the Carrera Cup. A BMW M4 GT4 test is set to happen this week, before two outings in a Porsche.

"It's amazing being here, never having been in a racing car or a trackday two years ago," he said. "I came and won last year [in GRDC+] and have won again this year. I came to Brands last year paying to watch touring cars and now I'm standing on the podium – it's so surreal."

JASON NOBLE

IN THE HEADLINES

MORE CMMC MEETINGS

The new Classic and Modern Motorsport Club intends to double its number of official meetings in 2019 and learn lessons from poor grid numbers at Snetterton last month. This was the second meeting the club has held in its inaugural season, after its Mallory Park date in June. Plans are in place to hold at least four events next year, with visits to Cadwell Park and Lydden Hill planned.

ROSS BUILDS NEW CAR

Graham Ross clinched the MG Trophy championship at Snetterton in a new car, having built it over the past three weeks. He bought a new bodyshell from friend and fellow competitor Colin Robertson following a crash at the previous round at Oulton Park.

DAYTONA FOR MINI CHAMP

Mini Challenge Cooper Pro class champion Kyle Reid will compete in the Daytona 24 Hours support race courtesy of his title victory this season. Reid clinched the Mini crown at the final round at Rockingham last weekend and in the process won the Sunoco 240 Challenge. He will contest the Michelin Pilot Challenge four-hour endurance race in a GT4-spec car on January 25.

WATKINS GLOVE MISHAP

Stephen Watkins was unable to convert his dominant MG Midget and Sprite qualifying pace at Snetterton into strong race results last weekend after misplacing his gloves meant he had to start the opening race from the pitlane. He recovered to fourth, despite a misfire, but then retired in the second race as the problem reappeared.

CHADWICK'S RACE RETURN

Former Ginetta GT5 Challenge champion Ollie Chadwick made a return to the GT4 Supercup at Brands Hatch last weekend – two years on from his one-off weekend in the series at Silverstone. He took eighth and ninth before he blotted his copybook when he was disqualified in the final race for ignoring a black/orange flag for bonnet damage.

TRIBUTES FOR DOOLEY

Officials and competitors at the British Racing and Sports Car Club Oulton Park meeting came together last weekend to pay tribute to Tom Dooley. The former BRSCC North Western Centre chairman and coordinator of the Northern segment of the Formula Ford 1600 series died last year, and his ashes were spread along the start-finish line at the Cheshire circuit.

Porsche 917K visits Combe

COMBE AUTUMN CLASSIC

The Porsche 917K that won both the 1971 Daytona 24 Hours and Monza 1000Km will be on display at this weekend's Castle Combe Autumn Classic.

It is thought to be the first time that a 917K has ever been to the circuit.

Insured for £20million, chassis #013/034 has made regular appearances at the Goodwood Festival of Speed with owner Mark Finburgh.

He bought the car from the Porsche factory in 1973, having found it covered in a layer of snow. Its dual chassis number

denotes a '71 rebuild following a crash during filming for the Steve McQueen movie *Le Mans*. It was this incident which caused driver David Piper to lose part of his leg owing to complications from surgery.

"You've got to play with these cars otherwise there's no point," Finburgh said.

"If I'd only bought it three years ago then I'd think three times about taking it anywhere, but they work and you've got to run the bloody things, haven't you?"

The ex-John Wyer car will not run on circuit owing to noise restrictions and will instead complete engine start-ups.

MATT KEW



PORSCHE LAUNCHES 935-STYLED GT CAR Porsche has revived the type number and styling of its 935 silhouette racer of the 1970s with a new 911 GT2 RS-based car aimed at club racing and trackdays. The born-again 935 mimics the look of the final factory iteration of the Group 5 car – the 1978 version dubbed 'Moby Dick' on its roll-out because of its whale-like tail – and was publicly unveiled at the Rennsport Reunion Porsche festival at Laguna Seca last week. **Photo by Porsche**

Luti a class above in MG ZR 190

MG TROPHY

Paul Luti made a surprise jump from his own car into "nemesis" and three-time champion Chris Bray's machine for the MG Trophy season finale at Snetterton.

Frustrated with persistent brake problems in his ZR 170 this season and believing his championship chances to be remote, Luti decided to move from Class B to A and into a ZR 190.

"I've had such a disastrous year in the 170s," Luti said.

"It started off brilliantly but I had two problems with the brakes that travelled from Silverstone to Donington Park and to Oulton.

"It caused three DNFs then two bad scores because it was happening during the race, so I thought, 'Why not come out in this [190] for a bit of a laugh?'

"I used to race a 190. In fact the car I'm racing currently, my 170, was originally my 190 – I just sold the bits that made it a 190. It's nice to be back in the 190, they're nicer to drive."

The change in car allowed Luti to take a second and a victory.

GRAHAM KEILLOH

South and '78 March come together again

HISTORIC

Stephen South, one of Britain's top single-seater racers of the 1970s, was reunited with his March 782 Formula 2 car at Donington Park last week.

The 1978 March has just finished a total restoration by Matthew Watts at Retro Track and Air, and Watts invited South to Donington to see the car run for the first time in more than 30 years.

The car is believed to have last been used for hillclimbing in the early to mid-1980s by Roy Lane, before Watts – an established Historic F2 frontrunner with his ex-Norman Dickson March 772P chassis – bought it eight years ago.

South, now 66, has largely kept away from motor racing since the Can-Am accident in 1980 that left him with serious leg injuries just as a Formula 1 career was becoming a real possibility. But he has fond memories of the March 782 and '78 season.

"I struggled to get enough money to do anything in 1978 but we did a few F2 races," he said.

"F2 was what I wanted to do and I got some help from Robin Herd at March. We had a second-hand Hart engine that Robin found under a bench.

"We just put the car on the track and away we went with a very small team. I prepared the car most of the time.

"It is fantastic to see the car back up and



running again: it looks wonderful and it's good to see it back. But I didn't realise they were so small!"

PAUL LAWRENCE



DECISION TIME WAS UP, BUT ALL ARE LEFT SMILING

MSV has finalised the 2019 plans for British F3, ensuring it maintains the right ingredients for another sizzling season

STEFAN MACKLEY

After waiting months for a decision, BRDC British Formula 3 teams and drivers finally have an answer on which car will be used in 2019. It will be a relief to all of them that the current Tatuus-Cosworth will be kept because, although we're only at the start of October, plans for winter testing should already be well under way and budgets put in place.

As a racing car it ticks all the boxes: it's good-looking, reliable, sounds great and the drivers enjoy it, so it would have been a shame to see the back of it after only three seasons. But why has it taken until now for a decision to be made on whether to keep it?

MotorSport Vision, which operates the championship, expressed an interest in becoming one of the FIA's new Regional F3 series, and discussions have been ongoing for more than two years. It would have meant changing to a halo-fitted car for 2019, and with it a potential increase to double the current circa £200,000 budget. But with no decision from the FIA – which is understood to be considering two bids for Europe's Regional F3 series between

"IT'S MORE OF AN ATTRACTIVE OPTION BETWEEN THIS AND EUROPEAN F3 FOR F4 DRIVERS"

the organisers of Italian F4 and Renault Sport – MSV took matters into its own hands.

There was only so long teams and drivers could wait, and MSV should be commended for making a decision in the interest of its series before it was too late. Any further delay and numbers could have suffered for next season, especially if a change of car was required with such little time remaining.

It's a decision backed by the teams and drivers themselves. "It's good for the championship – it's a strong field and there's not a lot that's broke so we don't really need to fix it," says Lanar Racing team principal Graham Johnson. "I would imagine it [the British F3 budget] will be half of what Regional F3 will be for a car that might be a little slower."

"This is a really good value-for-money championship – anything beyond this is three times the amount and it shows how well run it is," adds British F3 driver Jamie Chadwick. "I think it will

be good for it to stay as it is – it's more of an option for Formula 4 drivers between this and European F3."

But there is a downside to not becoming a Regional F3 series, because the championship could lose the right to use the Formula 3 name next season. But even if that were to happen, there's no reason to suggest it would suffer. "It's a good thing having the name, but I don't think it will be the be-all and end-all as long as it stays competitive," says team chief Chris Dittmann.

And competitive the series has proved to be. Take qualifying at Spa as an example. Around a 4.3-mile circuit with a lap time of more than 2m18s, the top three cars were covered by less than a tenth of a second and the top 15 by less than nine tenths. At the latest round at Donington Park a season-high 20 cars were entered. Not only is this the highest number since the series' launch year in 2016, but it was also at the penultimate round of the season – a time when numbers would usually drop. Compare that with the British Formula 4 Championship, on the British Touring Car Championship bill, in which numbers dropped as low as 12 cars for its Knockhill round in August.

This shows how popular and affordable British F3 is now, which is not lost on MSV. Group operations and engineering manager Giles Butterfield says: "The single-seater market is still fairly tough so it's pleasing to hear drivers [like Chadwick] make such comments. I think the championship stands on its own credentials – people are coming here because it's good value for money, the car is great and performance equality is excellent."

And what a championship battle it has turned into this season. Double R Racing's Linus Lundqvist was on the cusp of claiming the title at Donington but endured a disastrous weekend, meaning Carlin's Nicolai Kjaergaard could still snatch it in the final round at Silverstone. But the greatest moment from Donington was Billy Monger's return to the circuit where his life-changing injuries occurred just 17 months ago. The Carlin driver was the fastest man across the weekend, securing two pole positions, and took a third place in the final race. It's a sign of how the teenager isn't just there to make up the numbers, given he rued two mistakes that cost him a potential brace of victories. Now that the championship's plans are in place for 2019 – with a calendar due to be announced soon – there's every chance that Monger could return and mount a serious bid for the title.

Looking further ahead, don't rule out the MSV series becoming Regional F3 in the future. But for now the right decision has been made: to keep a car and format that is proving popular, affordable and competitive. ✎

TOCA SUPPORTS BRANDS HATCH SEPTEMBER 29-30

Zamparelli was once again left disappointed



Ellinas title means more Zamparelli heartbreak

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

To lose a title fight on countback by taking one win fewer is cruel. To then miss out on the crown the following year by just two points is heartbreaking. And Dino Zamparelli was left heartbroken at Brands Hatch last Sunday.

The Redline Racing driver was defeated again in Kent to become Porsche Carrera Cup GB runner-up for the third year in a row as Tio Ellinas took the spoils.

It had all been going so well for Zamparelli. He jumped polesitter Dan Harper at the start of race one to take the

lead – if the race had finished at that point he would have been crowned champion. But it wasn't to be. Dan Vaughan's Porsche was damaged after contact and was leaking fluid over the track. Zamparelli was first to hit the slippery surface at Hawthorn and spun.

Then he couldn't get going. The steering wheel was slammed in frustration; after what must have felt like an eternity, finally the Porsche crept back into life, but he had slipped to the back of the field.

"There was some oil or coolant on the track and I was the first one to hit it," said an utterly despondent Zamparelli. "Once you've gone backwards in one

of these things, that's it."

Lewis Plato inherited the lead but was under intense pressure from Harper, who then spun at Surtees while trying to grab the place. That left Ellinas second and the scores were level.

"It was a really good start – I went from P6 to P4," said Ellinas. "I saw the oil flag out and it was really unfortunate – the next thing I saw was Dino spinning. I feel sorry for Dino, but it's one of those things."

For race two, Zamparelli was starting down in 13th as a legacy of the spin, while Ellinas was fifth. Zamparelli simply had to beat Ellinas to secure the title, and it started off well – he had surged to seventh on the opening lap, aided by polesitter Michael Caine spinning at Paddock Hill Bend in front of the pack.

But his efforts were then frustrated by a safety-car period, coincidentally caused by Zamparelli sending Seb Perez into the barriers out of Druids.

On the restart Ellinas fell to fourth while Zamparelli passed Rory Collingbourne, meaning that only Harper split the pair. But Zamparelli never really got close enough to mount a challenge and third place for Ellinas (well behind comfortable winner Tom Wrigley) secured him the crown by two points.

"To win with a little team like Slidesports is incredible," enthused Cypriot Ellinas. "It was a crazy race, I was really worried because [Caine's car] was spinning and spinning in front of me. I just wanted to finish third, stay there and be consistent."

Consistent he certainly was – he never finished below fifth this year – while there was a different sort of consistency for Zamparelli: continual near-misses.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Ellinas (left) edged out Zamparelli for the title

Dorlin claims Clio crown

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

There wasn't much Clio Cup racing at Brands Hatch, but what did take place was enthralling as James Dorlin stole the title from Max Coates's and Paul Rivett's grasp.

A safety-car period and red flag after a scary, barrier-destroying shunt for Nick Reeve limited the first contest to just three racing laps. Dan Rowbottom won, while Dorlin was third, ahead of Rivett and Coates.

It all came down to the finale, and Dorlin got a brilliant start from second to launch into the lead, before pulling away from the squabbling pack. But his three-second advantage was wiped out by a safety car

after Nic Hamilton crashed.

On the restart a failed pass from Coates on Mike Epps for second let Rivett through. Coates then hit Rivett at Graham Hill Bend, which resulted in him getting a penalty that promoted Rivett to third in the final result.

That didn't matter to Dorlin, who sealed the title (pending a National Court hearing) with a brilliant win. "I pulled out a gap," he said, "but I was thinking, 'A safety car would ruin this.' [When that happened] you've got to keep your head and stay focused."

"The recognition from winning Clios is huge – it's the most prestigious title I've won in my career so far."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Dorlin beat Coates and Rivett to title

JEP/LAT
motorsport
IMAGES

Redemption for Jewiss

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Ten months ago Kiern Jewiss was in a reflective mood in the Brands Hatch paddock. He'd just lost out on clinching the Ginetta Junior Winter Series because of one small spin on oil at Surtees bend.

Fast forward to September 2018 and the only thing he was in danger of slipping on was the champagne flowing from a British Formula 4 Championship victory and a record 18 podiums.

His race-two win at Brands Hatch was a fine way to celebrate the occasion, particularly given that he wasn't on the podium to celebrate the championship win in race one, his sixth-place finish being enough to bag the prize.

"It means the world to be champion," said the delighted 16-year old. "Lando Norris has won the championship [in 2015] and now he'll be driving for McLaren in F1. It would be great to follow in his footsteps. I don't think it will sink in until later once everything has calmed down and we can enjoy the moment."

The weekend's big winner was Johnathan Hoggard, who scored three podiums, including a lights-to-flag race-three win to take his eighth of the year and the most of anyone.

Seb Priaulx enjoyed an untroubled race-one victory, following it up with third in race three for at least some redemption from a tricky year.

JASON NOBLE



Jewiss wrapped up the title early

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WEEKEND RESULTS

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

Race 1 (7 laps) 1 Daniel Rowbottom; 2 Bradley Burns +0.619s; 3 James Dorlin; 4 Paul Rivett; 5 Max Coates; 6 Dan Zelos. **Fastest lap** Jack Young 1m39.405s (88.12mph). **Pole** Rowbottom. **Starters 21. Race 2 (15 laps) 1 Dorlin;** 2 Rowbottom +4.061s; 3 Rivett; 4 Coates; 5 Sam Osborne; 6 James Colburn. **FL** Rowbottom 1m39.260s (88.25mph). **P** Young. **S 20. Points 1 Dorlin 316;** 2 Coates 311; 3 Rivett 309; 4 Rowbottom 278; 5 Burns 238; 6 Epps 210.

GINETTA JUNIOR

Race 1 (8 laps) 1 Luke Browning; 2 Adam Smalley +0.117s; 3 Patrick Kibble; 4 Louis Foster; 5 James Hedley; 6 Gustav Burton. **FL** Smalley 1m49.025s (80.34mph). **P** Hedley. **S 22. Race 2 (10 laps) 1 Smalley;** 2 Foster +0.471s; 3 Kibble; 4 Browning; 5 James Taylor; 6 Ruben del Sarte. **FL** Browning 1m48.794s (80.51mph). **P** Smalley. **S 21. Race 3 (10 laps) 1 Foster;** 2 Browning +0.722s; 3 Kibble; 4 Taylor; 5 Smalley; 6 del Sarte. **FL** Ethan Hawkey 1m48.920s (80.42mph). **P** Smalley. **S 21. Points 1 Smalley 679;** 2 Foster 671; 3 Browning 654; 4 Kibble 496; 5 del Sarte 425; 6 Taylor 414.

BRITISH F4

Race 1 (14 laps) 1 Seb Priaulx; 2 Johnathan Hoggard +2.050s; 3 Paavo Tonteri; 4 Patrik Pasma; 5 Ayrton Simmons; 6 Kiern Jewiss. **FL** Priaulx 1m26.501s (101.26mph). **P** Priaulx. **S 13. Race 2 (14 laps) 1 Jewiss;** 2 Pasma +1.993s; 3 Hoggard; 4 Tonteri; 5 Simmons; 6 Priaulx. **FL** Jack Doohan 1m27.482s (100.13mph). **P** Jewiss. **S 13. Race 3 (12 laps) 1 Hoggard;** 2 Priaulx +0.448s; 3 Tonteri; 4 Simmons; 5 Pasma; 6 Jewiss. **FL** Priaulx 1m27.113s (100.55mph). **P** Hoggard. **S 13. Points 1 Jewiss 445;** 2 Simmons 374; 3 Hoggard 339; 4 Dennis Hauger 329; 5 Doohan 328; 6 Pasma 315.

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Race 1 (10 laps) 1 Charles Ladell; 2 Angus Fender +1.018s; 3 Harry King; 4 Carl Boardley; 5 Jac Constable; 6 Adam Shepherd. **FL** Boardley 1m30.144s (97.17mph). **P** Ladell. **S 18. Race 2 (13 laps) 1 Ladell;** 2 King +0.763s; 3 Fender; 4 Tom Roche; 5 Carl Shield; 6 Shepherd. **FL** Fender 1m30.489s (96.80mph). **P** Ladell. **S 18. Race 3 (17 laps) 1 Roche;** 2 Boardley +0.497s; 3 Shepherd; 4 Shield; 5 King; 6 Colin White. **FL** Roche 1m30.631s (96.65mph). **P** Shepherd. **S 17. Points 1 Ladell 680;** 2 Boardley 620; 3 King 518; 4 Roche 424; 5 Fender 402; 6 Constable 378.

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Race 1 (17 laps) 1 Lewis Plato; 2 Tio Ellinas +0.406s; 3 Tom Wrigley; 4 George Gamble; 5 Tom Jackson; 6 Michael Caine. **FL** Daniel Harper 1m27.814s (99.75mph). **P** Harper. **S 20. Race 2 (17 laps) 1 Wrigley;** 2 Plato +4.436s; 3 Ellinas; 4 Harper; 5 Dino Zamparelli; 6 Jackson. **FL** Harper 1m28.349s (99.15mph). **P** Caine. **S 20. Points 1 Ellinas 117;** 2 Zamparelli 115; 3 Wrigley 108; 4 Plato 95; 5 Harper 84; 6 Gamble 75.



Dorlin clinched the Clio title

TOCA SUPPORTS BRANDS HATCH SEPTEMBER 29-30



Charlie Ladell and team celebrate their Ginetta GT4 Supercup crown

Ladell picks up GT4 title in style with double win

ALL PICS: JEP/LAT

motorsport
IMAGES

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Charlie Ladell didn't need two more wins to wrap up the Ginetta GT4 Supercup title at Brands Hatch, but that didn't stop him rounding out the year in fine style.

Pole position got the ultra-consistent 22-year old on the right track, and for both the Saturday encounters he led unchallenged from the front.

Ladell only needed fifth in race two to secure the championship but, while Harry King put in a spirited display to challenge for the lead, he couldn't get closer than 0.5 seconds shy of Ladell. Nearest title rival Carl Boardley made a lunge around the outside of Graham Hill Bend on third-placed Angus Fender, but contact caused a puncture and put him out of both the podium and title contention.

"It's just an amazing feeling," said a wide-eyed Ladell after the second race. "We

worked so hard all year – when it comes good it's really good. The [Rob Boston Racing] boys have done a great job all year."

Ladell, who had only finished off the podium twice ahead of the Brands round, opted not to run in the final race to make sure no penalties could compromise his title. His consistency, alongside the 10 wins racked up over the course of the campaign, has proved to be the crucial difference compared with his previous effort.

"I think a second year in the car and the team, it all clicks," he said. "I have clicked with the car and the tracks and it's a completely different feeling without changing too much. It's all come together."

Ladell may not have changed too much, but Boardley adapted his own mindset to help keep Ladell honest, and bounce back from what was a disappointing 2017.

"I didn't like last season – last year was

a year to forget," Boardley admitted. "Every time there was an incident I seemed to be the next one on the scene or in the middle of it. This year has been a completely different approach, trying to get through every single meeting and be a podium threat – I've enjoyed it a lot."

"We have 13 podiums and six wins. In any normal year that would have put us in a position to wrap the job up, but the wins have been shared between four of us and there weren't enough others getting in the mix taking points off people."

Ladell may have been a spectator for the final race, but fortunately for him what he missed was a scrappy affair punctuated by two safety cars.

The first was as a result of a heavy shunt for Jac Constable into the Hawthorns barriers, before a second safety car for Jack Minshaw's car, which was beached in the gravel at Paddock Hill Bend.

The interruptions made it tricky for any of the remaining runners to settle into a rhythm, but Tom Roche held off Boardley to secure the final win. The front two stormed away, building a 6s gap to third-placed Adam Shepherd.

"I did at one point think I could win," said Boardley. "Tom just had the legs on me going into the GP loop. All in all, second [in the championship] is good. Obviously we would have loved to have gone one step further but there are 12 other drivers aiming to do the same."

JASON NOBLE



Carl Boardley fell out of contention



Smalley takes the honours after three-way title fight

GINETTA JUNIOR

In true Ginetta Junior championship fashion, the title fight between Adam Smalley, Louis Foster and Luke Browning all came down to the final weekend of the season. Smalley ultimately took the crown in Sunday's final race.

James Hedley set a blistering lap in

qualifying to take pole for the first race, but too much wheelspin off the line at the start allowed Smalley to snatch the lead with Browning close behind.

Proceedings were interrupted by a safety car for an incident between Will Martin and Theo Edgerton at Graham Hill Bend, which neutralised the race until there were just three minutes left on the clock.

Smalley initially held on to the lead again at the restart until Browning made a decisive move at Surtees to secure the win and keep him firmly in contention for the championship fight. Patrick Kibble completed the podium, while Foster came home in fourth, lamenting the end of his impressive run of consecutive podium finishes.

The second race of the weekend was a muted affair at the front, as Smalley went on to take a comfortable win – but battles further down the field meant that the race ended behind the safety car. The biggest incident was a spin for Hedley, demoting him to 10th. Browning suffered collateral damage in the incident and his eventual fourth place finish all but spelled the end for his championship hopes. Foster, meanwhile, managed to avoid trouble to take second and Kibble was third again.

Smalley was on pole for the deciding race but lost the lead to Browning, who charged from fourth, while Foster snatched second place. Smalley slipped down the order to finish fifth, but anything within the top eight was enough for him to win the title.

Browning and Foster continually disputed the lead throughout and battled for consolation in the form of the race win. It was Foster who triumphed over Browning, as Kibble held on to third place once again.

LUCY MORSON

CHANGING OF THE GINETTA GUARD

The suspension of JHR Developments in 2017 and HHC Motorsport's withdrawal from the series meant that the Ginetta Junior championship headed into '18 without two major players.

But the mantle left behind has been picked up by Elite Motorsport, which has enjoyed its most successful season to date.

Having entered the championship in 2014 with Geri Nicosia as a single-car entry, the team now has the biggest presence in the paddock. At Brands last weekend it fielded six drivers: Greg Johnson, Louis Foster, Adam Smalley, Tom Emson, Fin Green and James Hedley.

"We worked really hard and grew things gradually," explained team boss Eddie Ives. "With what went on last year we ended up growing probably a bit quicker than we wanted to and it wasn't really planned, but it's how it happened."

According to 1986 and '87 British Touring Car champion Chris Hodgetts, who is on hand as a driver-development coach and all-round team personality, the secret to Elite's success is entirely down to its emphasis on family values.

"I'm a parent myself and I have that duty of care for the kids, but I think we're respected in the paddock because we want to win in a fair manner – honourable in victory and gracious in defeat," said Hodgetts.

"The staff that we have at the team are taught by us and our methods and the way that we do things, so it all works. We're all a family, we all support each other as much as we can through whatever we do."

It's a sentiment echoed by Hodgetts's driver-coaching son Stefan, who notes that Elite provides the place for young drivers to hone their racecraft but also to have fun before heading up the career ladder.

And it's an approach that works. Tom Gamble sealed the title with Elite last term, after moving from JHR, while Smalley and Foster finished first and second in this year's contest.

"It hasn't really sunk in yet to be honest," said Ives of Elite's stellar season, which has established his squad as the frontrunner. "To win the overall championship, rookie championship and the



teams championship, it's something very special."

But this is just the beginning for the team. After enjoying success with Junior graduate Harry King, who took four wins and third place in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup this year, Ives is already looking at expanding to a full squad there too. "I think we will be running more next year," he said. "We hope to take at least one of our Juniors there next year so we'll have the same [number of] Juniors, six or seven, and probably three or four GT4s."

LUCY MORSON

Round-Garrido leads
David McCullough and
race-two winner Davidson



Round-Garrido takes NI FF1600 crown

KIRKISTOWN
500MRCI
SEPTEMBER 29

All but one of the local championships were undecided ahead of Kirkistown's traditional Martin Donnelly Trophy season closer. Adding to the excitement, Formula Ford 1600 and Formula Vee always excel at the circuit, and both lived up to their reputation with all races won by paper-thin margins.

The FF1600 final rounds were run ahead of the Martin Donnelly Trophy itself, and the first was won by season-long leader Matt Round-Garrido in his Team Dolan-run Medina Sport JL17, who crossed the line just ahead of David and Ivor McCullough to clinch the title and secure the Mazda Road to Indy Shootout ticket. Will Herron was fourth, while Alan Davidson should have been in the mix

but for a spin at Colonial that dropped him to 18th, although he did have the consolation of setting fastest lap.

Perhaps spurred on by this, Davidson was in superb form for the second 'local' race. A contender at the start, he found himself spending several high-intensity seconds regaining the track after his Mondiale M89S was shuffled onto the grass at the ultra-fast Debtors Dip left-hander to fall to eighth, but his comeback drive was strong and he set another fastest lap en route to the win.

There was no such luck for new champion Round-Garrido, though. A mighty whack from the pursuing David McCullough meant his car was left stranded with only one driveshaft in place. While McCullough recovered to eventually place fourth behind Davidson, Ivor McCullough and an on-form Herron, Round-Garrido was left to console

himself with the knowledge that his title was secure and he would be starting from pole in the 'Donnelly'. Except he didn't. The business of rebuilding the Medina's rear end took longer than expected, meaning Round-Garrido found himself in the unfamiliar role of spectator.

With Round-Garrido absent from the pole slot, Noel Robinson found himself all on his own on the front row. But the McCullough brothers were very keen to keep him company, creating a three-way battle that lasted all the way to the finish, with Robinson the meat in a McCullough sandwich, the much improved David McCullough taking the honours in his Van Diemen RF01. For the full 21 minutes the trio stayed very close together, eventually passing the flag just 0.5 seconds apart. Davidson might have been involved at the end but for a mechanical problem that meant he was stuck in third gear for the last few laps.

Defending MDT champion Kevin O'Hara, who had earlier decided to miss both of the Northern Irish FF1600 races – in spite of qualifying on pole – in order to concentrate on the main race, found himself relegated to the back of the pack after a first-lap misadventure dropped him down and eventually led to retirement.

Once again the Vees put on a great show, the first race developing into a four-car dogfight that lasted throughout the 12 laps. By the end it was Anthony Cross by 0.1s in front of Lee Newsome, Dan Polley and Gavin Buckley in very close attendance, as just 0.5s covered all four.



Armstrong's BMW
took both Saloon wins

KIRKISTOWN WEEKEND WINNERS

NORTHERN IRELAND FF1600

Race 1 Matt Round-Garrido (Medina Sport JL17)

Race 2 Alan Davidson (Mondiale M89S)

MARTIN DONNELLY TROPHY

David McCullough (Van Diemen RF01)

IRISH FORMULA VEE

Race 1 Anthony Cross (Sheane FV94)

Race 2 Dan Polley (LOH Sheane)

NORTHERN IRELAND SALOONS

Race 1 & 2 Andrew Armstrong (BMW M3)

NORTHERN IRELAND FIESTA ZETEC

Race 1 Paul Stewart

Race 2 Brendan Fitzgerald

Race 3 Mark Stewart

NORTHERN IRELAND ROADSPORTS

Race 1 Jim Larkham (Radical PR06)

Race 2 Mike Johnston (Opel Tigra)



Johnston was finally
able to defeat Larkham

For full results visit:
[speedhive.mylaps.com/
Events/1599376](http://speedhive.mylaps.com/Events/1599376)

The second encounter, with the Emerson Fittipaldi Trophy up for grabs, was a similarly intense encounter won by Polley by only 0.1s from Jimmy Furlong and Cross after 15 laps.

Not to be outdone, Andrew Armstrong and James Turkington put on an equally intense display of tin-top racing, with Armstrong's BMW M3 just ahead of Turkington's SEAT Leon at the finish of the first Saloons race. But Turkington, who had clinched the title back in July, was absent from the second saloon race, heading instead for Brands Hatch to watch big brother Colin in BTCC action. This left Armstrong in sole command.

Among the feisty Fiestas, Paul Stewart was a man on the move, taking the first of three races – the one held over from August – ahead of Ricky Hull and Eorann O'Neill.

In the second, with a much larger entry, Brendan Fitzgerald took the top spot ahead of Malcolm McKeown and Paul Stewart. Mark Stewart won the third race ahead of Conor Mulholland as Ricky Hull was demoted to third, having been penalised 1s for missing out the chicane in yet another race where the top four was covered by less than a second.

RICHARD YOUNG

NATIONAL REPORTS CLUB AUTOSPORT



CLOSE COMPETITION Mike Johnston in his Opel Tigra and long-term champion Jim Larkham had a pair of nailbiting Roadsports battles. Radical man Larkham (above) took the first encounter by just 0.65 seconds, then Johnston found a way past in race two. Johnston can now turn his attention to fixing the Southcott family MG Midgets in preparation for next season.



HOUSE OF STEWART The first of three Fiesta races was one postponed due to time constraints a month earlier and was open only to those who had qualified then. Paul Stewart (locking up in the pic) took the spoils. The second and third encounters had much larger fields; Stewart scored in both and therefore just pipped brother Mark and early leader Eorann O'Neill to the title.



SING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING Dan Polley is no stranger to the Kirkistown podium, yet the Emerson Fittipaldi Trophy race winner has an unlikely 'day job' working for ethereal Irish hit machine Enya. Her tranquil tones are a far cry from the hurly-burly of Formula Vee dicing, but Polley is equally at home in both roles and had his Luke O'Hara Sheane in front when it counted.

De Sadeleer doubles up as title rivals stumble



De Sadeleer's two race wins boost his title chances but Jackson also won

ROCKINGHAM
MSVR
SEPTEMBER 29-30

Jerome de Sadeleer took advantage of dramas and success penalties for title contenders Steve Burgess and Dominik Jackson to win the opening two races of the Radical Challenge Championship triple-header at Rockingham's final MSVR-supported meeting.

Burgess and Jackson set the pace before

the mandatory pitstops in race one, and their enforced handicaps enabled reigning SR1 Cup champion de Sadeleer to grab a lead he would never lose. Burgess salvaged third behind Brian Caudwell despite struggling with "a lack of pace". A five-second penalty for exceeding track limits left Jackson fifth.

De Sadeleer's win in race two came after an incident-strewn contest. Two safety-car periods had already disrupted the early part of the race before leader Burgess was spun into retirement by Jackson on the 10th lap.

Jackson would later be penalised for his part in the collision in an event that would be brought to a premature end by a four-car shunt along Steel Straight.

Burgess was out of luck again in race three when differential problems forced him to retire while lying fourth. Jackson made amends for his earlier frustrations by taking victory ahead of Mark Richards and de Sadeleer, setting up an intriguing title decider at Silverstone next week.

The three F3 Cup races had only eight

Ross claims MG Trophy crown in MGCC finale

SNETTERTON
MGCC
SEPTEMBER 29

Graham Ross secured the MG Trophy championship during the MG Car Club's Snetterton season closer at which several title battles went down to the wire.

Ross's closest challenger Jason Burgess won the opening race while Ross finished third after a spin. Ross therefore needed second place in race two for the title. Burgess once again led, but suffered an early spin at Hamilton and finished fourth. This let Ross, whose car wasn't handling well, cruise home second behind Paul Luti for his first MG Trophy championship. Luti was making a one-off Class A appearance, having competed in Class B so far this year (see News).

While Ross has competed in the series since 2008, this was his first full season as well as being the first in which he has not been able to share the logistics of commuting from Crieff in Scotland with fellow competitor Colin Robertson.

"I was going to say this was 11 years in the making; this is my first full assault at it and I can't ask for a better result," said Ross. "It [chasing a championship] is something completely new to me.

"I had to stand own my two feet. Once you make that decision, you think, 'Let's start off and see how things go.' Then when you start doing well and winning it kinds of sucks you in.

"In reality if I'd had some really bad rounds halfway through I probably wouldn't have done the whole season. We probably do travel 4500 to 5000 miles to come



and do 500 miles of track time."

John Booth clinched the Class C title from Tylor Ballard and David Heasman.

Matthew Simpson's double MG Cup win in his Rover 220 Tomcat Turbo wasn't enough to deny Peter Burchill the championship in his Class C ZS 180. In a dramatic two-race finale, Burchill finished second and third to pip Simpson to the title. Burchill lifted the crown in spite of not having won a race this season.

Alan Brooke's and Mike Williams's Metros had set the Snetterton MG Cup pace but both hit technical problems in the races. Brooke fell behind Simpson in race two's run to the line when he lost drive.

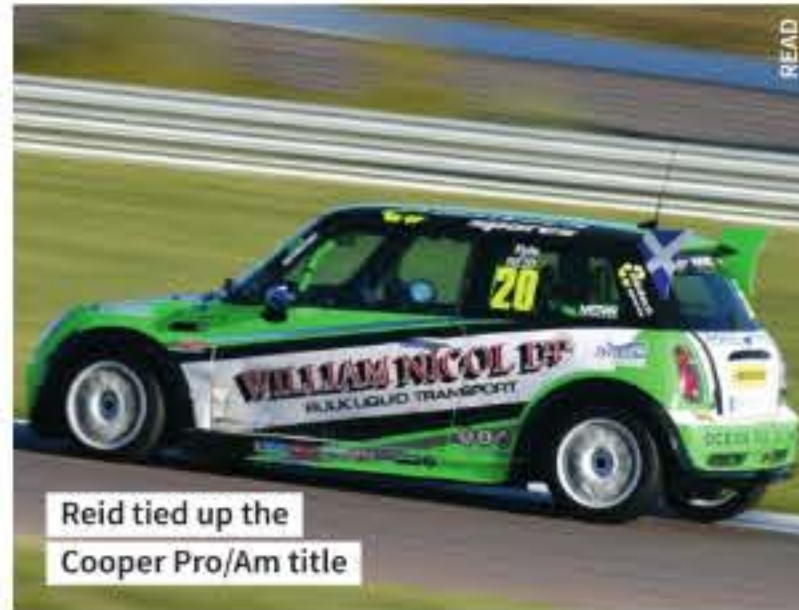
starters but there was no shortage of drama. Championship leader Cian Carey was spun on lap one of the opener and his recovery drive ended when an ambitious lunge on Shane Kelly at Deene resulted in contact, forcing both drivers into retirement. Chris Dittmann, deputising for Phillip Jeans, scored a dominant win from pole.

Hywel Lloyd bounced back from an off during race one to take second behind Dittmann in the next contest. He went one better with a lights-to-flag win in the finale ahead of Carey, after Dittmann had slid wide at Deene on the opening lap.

Kyle Reid said he was "overwhelmed" after a win and a second place in the opening pair of Mini Cooper Challenge Pro/Am contests secured him the title. Reid took second in race one behind first-time winner Toby Goodman before inheriting the victory next time around when Goodman was handed a 10s penalty for a jumped start. Simon Walton was another driver to score his maiden triumph in the series after claiming race-three honours, while Goodman and Reid battled their way to second and third respectively. Two wins secured the Am class crown for Alex Nevill.

In the Cooper S ranks, Jono Davis bagged a hat-trick to ensure he ended the year with six straight wins. Daniel Butcher Lord impressed with a brace of seconds, while Will Fairclough banked the finishes he needed to guarantee the championship.

Recently crowned Lotus Cup UK & Elise Trophy champion Craig Denman powered to victory in the first race as poleman Joe Taylor tumbled down the order after an off



Reid tied up the Cooper Pro/Am title



Deputising Dittmann claimed two F3 Cup victories

at Yentwood. Taylor fought back to second, then made no mistake in race two, storming to the front on lap one from ninth on the grid, then taking victory ahead of Denman and Mackenzie Walker.

A faultless opening-race performance was enough to guarantee David Graves the Production BMW Championship title. Will Davison finished second in race one, then recorded an untroubled success in race two ahead of Nigel Innes.

MARK LIBBETER



Simpson (16) took the wins; Burchill (13) the crown



Collier claimed the Midget/ Sprite championship

The overall Class A and Class B titles had been decided in advance of the meeting – the first for Darren Harris and the latter for Nick Arden.

Stephen Collier claimed the MG Midget and Sprite Challenge title with two overall Snetterton race wins in his Midget. Class D's Edward Easton entered the final round with a clear points advantage and indeed took class victory in race one, but he had to sit out race two having damaging his Austin-Healey Sprite's suspension on a kerb on his way to the earlier win. This opened the door for Collier to take the championship with a strong result.

Jack Ashton secured the MG Metro Cup

championship. He won the opening race by holding off a strong challenge from his brother and title rival Andrew, who claimed race two honours while Jack cruised home conservatively to finish fifth and ensure his crown.

Philip Goddard, driving a +8, won the Morgan Challenge race after long-time leader Keith Ahlers's similar car had a major oil spillage at Coram. The oil slick caused an early chequered flag.

Andrew Thompson in an ARV6 won the special handicap Morgan pitstop race. He was first both on the road and after post-race handicapping was applied.

GRAHAM KEILLOH

WEEKEND WINNERS

ROCKINGHAM

RADICAL CHALLENGE

Race 1 & 2 Jerome de Sadeleer (SR3 RSX)

Race 3 Dominik Jackson (SR3 RSX)

F3 CUP

Race 1 & 2 Chris Dittmann (Dallara F312 Mercedes)

Race 3 Hywel Lloyd (Dallara Mercedes)

MINI CHALLENGE COOPER PRO/AM

Race 1 Toby Goodman

Race 2 Kyle Reid

Race 3 Simon Walton

MINI CHALLENGE COOPER S

Race 1, 2 & 3 Jono Davis

LOTUS CUP UK & ELISE TROPHY

Race 1 Craig Denman (Elise S Cup R)

Race 2 Joe Taylor (Elise 3 Cup R)

PRODUCTION BMWs

Race 1 David Graves (320i)

Race 2 Will Davison (E30 320i)

RACING SALOONS

Race 1 Nigel Innes (BMW E36 M3)

Race 2 Roger Kneebone (BMW E36 M3)

ALL-COMERS

Race 1 & 2 Martin Smith (Audi R8 LMS)

TRACKDAY TROPHY

Matt Shawyer/David Traviss (Toyota Celica)

SNETTERTON

MG TROPHY

Race 1 Jason Burgess (ZR 190)

Race 2 Paul Luti (ZR 190)

MGCC MG CUP

Race 1 & 2 Matthew Simpson (Rover 220 Tomcat Turbo)

MGCC MG MIDGET/SPRITE CHALLENGE

Race 1 & 2 Stephen Collier (Midget)

MG METRO CUP

Race 1 Jack Ashton (Rover Metro GTi)

Race 2 Andrew Ashton (Rover Metro GTi)

MSCC MORGAN CHALLENGE

Philip Goddard (+8)

MORGAN PITSTOP RACE

Andrew Thompson (ARV6)

For full results visit:

tsl-timing.com



Jack Ashton confirmed the Metro crown

FINISHING STRAIGHT

IN THE MEDIA • INTRODUCING • ARCHIVE • QUIZ

ANATOMY OF AN F1 DRIVER'S REINVENTION

WHEN JOLYON PALMER lost his Renault drive after the 2017 Japanese Grand Prix and was replaced by Carlos Sainz Jr, he kept a deliberately low profile.

"It was not a pleasant place to be for me and I didn't have any intention of going back," he says. "When I got home I quietly accepted what happened.

"I wasn't fussed about watching the races, and for somebody who has grown up watching every Formula 1 race since I was a kid, it was a little strange to have it a little soured."

One year later from that low point, Palmer is an F1 2018 hit. But in a very different way.

SCOTT MITCHELL



THE UNPLANNED MOVE

Palmer planted the seeds of an alternative career in 2015. When he was "doing GP2 commentary, I would get called up to do some F1 practices on Sky or a little bit of 5 Live". He was expecting to spend '18 away from racing altogether, but doors opened.

"I wasn't seeking it out," he says. "I got a call from the BBC over the winter to come and do it. It stacked up with what I wanted to do, so I thought, 'Why not?'"

THE INSTANT HIT

Palmer has nailed the discipline. His style oozes confidence because he's opinionated and extremely knowledgeable, but he's worked out where to draw the line. It makes for a classy broadcast.

"We're generally broader with explaining things, rather than the nitty-gritty," he notes. "There are times when you can, it's just feeling the session and what's going on in terms of the depth of information.

"Before the season the BBC explained how they wanted it to work. I could go into more detail but it's not great for the listener."



THE SHARP-SHOOTING

"I just call things as I see it," says Palmer. "I've always been quite opinionated. That came back to bite me in the arse with some juicy headlines sometimes while driving."

"Coming back, you can see how much the drivers have to rein stuff in with interviews. It can stifle personalities. You have to be very careful with what you say – there's a corporate line and it's difficult to be outspoken."

"I enjoy saying what I think. My role with the BBC is a nice way to do that."

THE PRAISE

If you've listened to 5 Live, via radio or the F1 App, you'll know why Palmer has been so widely praised in his new role. But, quite pleasantly, he lacks an ego, so plays down the suggestion that he is one of the off-track stars of 2018.

"I think it's gone well but mainly because the team I'm working with has been great," he says. "I feel like I can just be quite natural when I talk."

"I'm just doing it in the moment and having fun with what I'm doing, hopefully helping the audience to understand more what's going on in a reasonably exciting way."

THE CLOSURE

It is never pleasant to see how F1 can chew a driver up and spit them out. So it is both important and something to be cheered that Palmer has found a way to be happy once again in the same paddock that put the weight of the world on his shoulders a year ago.

"I've got this role, I'm enjoying what I'm doing and I'm back in the paddock from a different perspective. I can see it from the outside and it's a much nicer place to be."

"I'm really not fussed about coming back [to racing]. You never know, if there's a great offer to come back and do something then I would never say never. But right now, as I sit here, it's not at all on my mind to come back."

MOTORSPORT IMAGES/NAUGER/LAT



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



GETTING TO GRIPS WITH AN AUSSIE SUPERCAR



Autosport Drives: Aussie Supercars

Australian Supercars' crown jewel, the Bathurst 1000, takes place this weekend. In anticipation, Autosport wanted an insight into what it's like to helm one of these beasts. So we've got behind the wheel of a Ford Falcon around the glorious Phillip Island circuit to find out what 640bhp is like when braking performance and mechanical grip is at a premium. Go to <https://bit.ly/2RdiFZ7>

THIS WEEKEND'S EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Japanese GP

Formula 1 World Championship
Rd 17/21

Suzuka, Japan

October 7

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sunday 0430 (repeat 1105). Channel 4, Sunday 0500 (repeat 1230)

TV Highlights

Sky Sports F1, Sunday 1700

Rally GB

World Rally Championship
Rd 11/13

Deeside

October 4-7

TV Live BT Sport 2, Saturday 1200, Sunday 1200. BT Sport 3, Sun 0800.

Red Bull TV, Sat 1145

Live coverage on wrcc.com. **All live** service via WRC+.

TV Highlights BT Sport 2, Friday 2330.

BT Sport 1, Saturday 2245, Sunday 1130.

Red Bull TV, Friday 2200, Saturday 2200, Sunday 2200

World Touring Car Cup

Rd 8/10

Wuhan, China

October 6-7

TV Live Eurosport, Sunday 0830, 0945

Bathurst 1000

Australian Supercars
Rd 13/16

Bathurst 1000
Mount Panorama, Australia

October 7

MotoGP

Rd 15/19

Buriram, Thailand

October 7

TV Live BT Sport 2, Sunday 0730

NASCAR Cup

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VSCC October 6

Jaguars, Pre-'66

Touring Cars, Austin

Healeys, Formula

Junior, GT and Sports

Car Cup, FISCAR

Silverstone MSVR

October 6

Equipe Pre-'63,

GT Challenge, '50s

Sports, Pre-War

Sports/Aston

Martins, Equipe GTS,

Intermarque

Lydden LHMSC

October 6

Ford Saloons,

Intermarque, Sports/

Saloons, Tin Tops

Silverstone BARC

October 6-7

Britcar, Junior Saloons,

Clubmans, Mini Se7en,

Mini Miglia, Kumho

BMW's, MGOC

Mallory Park CSCC

October 6-7

Jaguar Saloons/GTs,

Tin Tops, Swinging

Sixties, Future

Classics, Magnificent

7s, Modern Classics,

Special Saloons and

Modsports, New

Millennium, Open,

Turbo Tin Tops

Snetterton 750MC

October 6-7

Bernie's V8s, Club

Enduro, BMW 330s,

BMW Car Club, Toyota

MR2s, Roadsports,

Bike Sports, Sports

Specials, Classic Stock

Hatch, Hot Hatch, MX-5

Cup, M3 Cup, BCV8s

Knockhill SMRC

October 7

Mini Coopers, Fiestas

and Hot Hatch,

FF1600, Classic

Sports and Saloons,

Legends, Sports and

Saloons, BMWs



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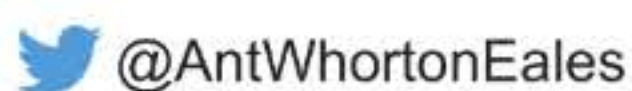


Photo by Mark Campbell

to Ant Whorton-Eales on winning the 2018 Mini Challenge JCW series at Donington Park last month.

Ant won ten races this year with JamSport Racing during his maiden season in the JCW class, taking an additional three podiums on his way to the title.

He would like to thank JamSport Racing, sponsor Donkin Group and suppliers Dunlop and Sunoco for the support this season, as well as Mini Challenge for creating a competitive series.



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STAT

13

The number of podiums
Hubert has scored
so far in GP3

INTRODUCING



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ANTHOINE HUBERT

Renault link-up has helped tap a rich vein of form in his second season of GP3

JACK BENYON

Anthoine Hubert has gone from racing a go-kart in a car park to becoming a French driver affiliated to a French manufacturer, and is now sparkling in GP3 Series this year.

A late deal with Renault signed at the first round of the season at Barcelona – a proud moment for the patriotic driver – allied to a return to GP3's most successful team, ART, has allowed the 21-year-old to kick up a gear in 2018.

Only five times has he finished off the podium, all of them allied to mechanical or on-track issues, and the momentum is gathering as the season reaches its climax. He now lies 32 points ahead at the top of the standings in a field that has pedigree up front.

The target before the start of the year was wins and poles, as neither of those was achieved last year, but something has clicked in 2018 and the Lyon-born driver is flying. "Last year I was not where I wanted to be,"

he says, "but it wasn't like I was three seconds a lap slower. You improve small areas to get better to improve two or three tenths and that's what makes the difference."

Working with Renault has certainly boosted those areas: "I think it's helping. It has many good aspects – it's helping me to improve myself. I work with them for physical training. I'm branded as a Renault driver and it helps people to look at me potentially for the future. I think it's not doing everything, but it helps. I get advice, support."

There's no shortage of motivation in Hubert's camp – he is incapable of giving an interview without uttering the phrase "we need to keep our heads down". Rather than PR mumbo-jumbo, it's a call to action. A constant self-motivating mantra to not let his work ethic slip, inherent in all successful drivers without big-money backing.

A lot of that comes from his former rally-driving father, Francois, says Hubert: "My dad was doing rallying as an amateur, some French Championship rounds, and when I was three Santa Claus brought me a go-kart. I started on the supermarket car park on Sundays. Since I was three, I knew I wanted to be a driver."

Mission accomplished. A driver who some of the Formula 1 hopefuls are looking at with no answer to the question: how to beat Anthoine Hubert. ✎



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CV

- Age** 22
- 2018** Leading GP3 Series standings with ART Grand Prix
- 2017** 4th in GP3 Series with ART Grand Prix
- 2016** 8th in European Formula 3 with Van Amersfoort Racing
- 2015** 5th in Formula Renault Eurocup with Tech 1 Racing
- 2014** 15th in Formula Renault Eurocup with Tech 1 Racing
- 2013** French Formula 4 champion
- 2012** Karting, CIK FIA World KF1

"SINCE I WAS THREE YEARS OLD I KNEW I WANTED TO BE A RACING DRIVER"

FINISHING STRAIGHT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Tony Brooks (Vanwall VW5) leads Maurice Trintignant (Cooper-Climax T45) as they accelerate past the onlookers gathered inside and on the roof of Porto's landmark Bela Cruz restaurant during the 1958 Portuguese Grand Prix. Brooks, who had qualified fifth, failed to finish after he spun off on lap 37 of the 50-lap race. Trintignant improved on his ninth-placed qualifying slot by one position, two laps behind the victorious Vanwall VW10 of Stirling Moss.



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1 Which Swede finished on the podium on his grand prix debut on this day in 1970?

2 Denny Hulme died on this day in 1992. How many grand prix wins did he score?

3 Eitel Cantoni, who was born on this day in 1906, is one of one three Uruguayans to start a world championship grand prix. Who are the other two?

4 It's Sarah Fisher's birthday. Where did she score her only Indycar pole?

5 At which circuit did Andy Rouse score his 60th and final BTCC win on this day in 1992.

NAME THE HELMET



LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

Who, what, where, when Jacques Villeneuve Sr, Arrows-Ford A3, Caesars Palace, October 16 1981.

Who is this? Frank Sytner. **On this day** 1) 6. 2) Luxembourg. 3) 1962 Dutch GP. 4) Japan 1995. 5) Nurburgring.

Name the helmet Sam Hornish.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE



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 **AUTOSPORT**

RALLY GB PREVIEW

**WILL OGIER
BOUNCE BACK?**

**44-PAGE
GUIDE**



**OGIER v
NEUVILLE
v TANAK**

**GRIST'S
FIRST GB
VICTORY**

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COVER IMAGE: MCKLEIN



Evans pulled off
a fairytale win
last year

IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE TO DISCOVER THAT I ABSOLUTELY LOVE THIS TIME OF YEAR.

I love wearing jumpers. I love the first frost of the season and the autumn colours. Most of all, I love traffic on the A470 just south of Mallwyd, and the smell of mud being cooked on hot exhausts next door in Dyfi.

I love Rally GB, and this year I love it just that little bit more because we have absolutely no idea who's going to win. Can Ott Tanak continue his exceptional run of form? He thinks so. And he tells us so in our exclusive interview – alongside his fellow championship challengers Thierry Neuville and Sebastien Ogier on page 6.

What about last year's local hero, Elfyn Evans? He's definitely in there with more than a fighting chance. Or previous winner Jari-Matti Latvala? You can never discount a Finn, particularly not one who lists Myherin as one of his favourite stages in the world.

Let's hope Craig Breen can break his Friday curse and give the superb Irish support plenty to cheer about. Every one of the four factory teams has at least one driver capable of topping the podium in Llandudno on Sunday.

And then there's the subplot of the direction of the drivers' and manufacturers' titles, and even a British Rally Championship crown to be awarded. It's all happening on Deeside this week.

Have a fantastic rally and, wherever you go, enjoy the action, listen to the marshals and stay safe. See you on the stages.



DAVID EVANS
Rallyes Editor



Neuville heads the
points ahead of Rally GB

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The full rundown of who will be competing on the stages

SUB-EDITORS Peter Hodges, Marcus Simmons, Carrie Stammers · CONTRIBUTOR Jack Benyon · ART EDITOR Lynsey Elliott · SENIOR DESIGNER Michael Cavalli
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Testing for Rally GB has already begun – only 11 months and 10 days since the World Rally Championship departed these woods. There couldn't be a better time for the WRC to arrive in Britain, what with a three-way championship fight reaching fever pitch: Thierry Neuville, Ott Tänak and Sebastien Ogier will go head to head down some of the world's best rally roads this week.

By Sunday afternoon's trip to Llandudno promenade, another chapter in this thriller of a season will have been written.

But what's coming? And who can make the most of it?

In an attempt to answer those questions, we took a drive with the person who knows more about these roads than anybody: route coordinator Andrew Kellitt. What we found last week were probably some of the most diverse conditions seen on Rally GB in years. Nothing's changed in mid-Wales, the roads are still super-smooth and beautifully profiled. There's been the odd bit of harvesting here and there, with rocks of varying sizes laid to soak up the muddy puddles caused by logging trucks. Otherwise, the stages are mint.

Further north, there are plenty of changes to the route – all of

them detailed in our stage-by-stage guide on page 24. One thing is quite clear: for Friday and Sunday it's going to be the driver who can adapt and accept a change of tempo and rhythm who's going to make the best out of Clocaenog and co.

There are super-narrow sections, some serious downhills and lovely lanes for the cars to cane. And, of course, there's history to be made. Brenig's the place where world championship action will come to British closed roads for the first time ever. A couple of days later and more history will come our way in Llandudno, when the WRC makes its debut on the streets of a British town.

The organisers really must be applauded for the efforts made in Llandudno this year. One criticism of Rally GB has been the lack



The Welsh climate never puts off the hardcore rally fans

MCKLEIN

of atmosphere at the Deeside service park. That's a touch harsh – Deeside's had its moments, but the location of the place means it's never going to buzz in the way downtown Jyväskylä does when Rally Finland rolls into the city each summer. But Llandudno will.

All weekend, Britain's biggest rallying event will rule the north-Welsh town. And on Sunday, when that first car rockets off the Great Orme's Marine Drive and down to a roundabout in the centre of Llandudno, the spectacle will be simply sensational.

The only thing that could spoil it is the weather. If it's lashing it down, the seafront does have a tendency to become more sea than front. Beyond Sunday afternoon, the climate will play a vital role in the direction of the biggest bottle of champagne in Wales.

At the previous WRC round in Turkey, standing in the service park just outside Marmaris, melting in the mid-thirties temperatures, it was impossible to think about the need for a bobble hat and an umbrella. You might notice that our exclusive interview with Neuville, Tanak and Ogier seems a little obsessed with the sun shining in Wales and the possible effect such a meteorology would have on the Welsh stages.

It's probably fair to say we're not going to see mid-20s and wall-to-wall blue skies but, if it does stay dry enough to generate some dust, then first-on-the-road Neuville will struggle a little bit on Friday.

The perfect storm for the Belgian is actually one that's already passed through the Welsh stages and left the ground sodden. In that case, he'll get the very best of a crust that sits on top of the road and, while his Michelin-shod Hyundai is slashing and cutting its way through Brenig, snatching at every stone and helping itself to the most traction available, he'll be stirring up what lies beneath. The surface becomes muddier and muddier and more and more slippery.

If that's what comes on Friday, then the chances of home hero Elfyn Evans repeating his victory from last season will pretty much go out of the window. So, let's hope summer can muster one last stand before Wales gives itself over to autumn.

Either way, enjoy this week. The stages are set and the championship's primed to deliver an extraordinary event.

DAVID EVANS

THE BIG THREE

THIS SEASON'S WRC CROWN BELONGS TO ONE OF THREE STARS. AUTOSPORT GATHERED THEM TOGETHER TO TACKLE THE KEY QUESTIONS

BY **DAVID EVANS**
PHOTOGRAPHY **McKLEIN**

Neuville (left) leads points ahead of Tanak (right) and reigning champ Ogier



A

fter 14 years of Sebastien – Loeb and Ogier – domination of the World Rally Championship, there's every chance there'll be a different name on this year's silverware. Twenty-three points separate Thierry Neuville, Ott Tanak and, of course, defending champ Ogier ahead of this week's Rally GB.

We rounded up the three of them to talk about the week ahead, the year to date, and what's coming at the season's end.

DAVID EVANS What's Rally GB going to be like in early October rather than it's more-usual November date? Will it be sunny, or could we see rain, mud, snow, fog?

SEBASTIEN OGIER From what you mention, the only thing I think we won't get is snow. The rest – the fog, the rain and the mud – it can all be there. We'll have to see. Maybe we'll have a higher temperature, which should help the tyres to work, even if this year we should all have better tyres for the conditions as Michelin brings a softer tyre. But, to be honest, I still expect a muddy Rally GB. If it's not, it would be a surprise. I have never done GB in the dry, or maybe one time...

THIERRY NEUVILLE We always have a little bit of sunshine in the previous years as well, but mainly the conditions were still muddy, with a lot of rain before. Last year I remember a hell of a stage in the dark with the fog. Probably this year we'll see similar conditions.

DE Is the mud and rain a part of Rally GB, Ott? Do we need that?

OTT TANAK It's nice to have it wet and muddy, then the conditions are a bit more similar for everybody and that's a part of the GB

rally. I guess to have it the way it's been, the way it's been in every year, yes we definitely need that. But I guess there is no need to say that because the rain will be coming anyway. OK, we just mentioned we had 2012 that was a dry event, but even then I guess some time it was wet for some days. To have a week with no rain? I guess that would be some kind of miracle.

DE Is Rally GB one of the classics? We talk about the history of rallying with events like Monte Carlo, 1000 Lakes and the RAC Rally – is it still up there?

TN I think it's getting more and more the rally I know from when I was watching television in the past. I remember last year we woke up very early, we finished very late and I think this year's edition should be similar. This makes it a bit different from the others, and Rally GB without rain would be like Sweden without snow or Turkey without big stones – it has to be part of the rally.

DE Sebastien, you're not really one for history, but do you know much about the old RAC Rally? Would you, for example, know about Kielder forest?

SO Honestly, I don't know much about names, maybe a couple of them in Monte Carlo because it's close to where I come from, but honestly I never remember. You mention the older rallies, but nowadays most of them are concentrated in one area and that's the case for GB. Everything evolves in life and the rallies like they were 30 years ago, they could not exist anymore. They were probably beautiful, but today it's in a different way exciting and I think there's still some way to go to make it even better to fit our society and even more concentrated, in my point of view. I believe the characteristic of the rally is still there, the spirit of the rally is still there, and it's still one of the main events of the season.

“RALLY GB IS AN EVENT THAT I'VE LEARNED TO ENJOY AFTER I STARTED MY WORLD RALLY CAR CAREER HERE IN 2008”

OGIER

RALLY GB RECORD

Starts 10
Finishes 8
Wins 4
Podiums 5

Ogier is ready to bounce back after Evans interrupted his run of GB victories last year





DE Ott, what is the character of Rally GB? Is it a fast one, a technical one?

OT It's a fast event. That's actually what happens in Wales: it gets muddy and very polished and then we have no grip and that makes it a bit more challenging to set the car in the high-speed places. But, at the same time, it's still a technical rally to drive in places. I would imagine if it's full dry then it would be as fast as Finland because there's going to be a lot of grip and the forest roads are very quick. They are nice stages, but so far it's just been about the conditions that are actually slowing them down a bit. But they are enjoyable roads.

DE If it's dry, would Michelin's new soft tyre be too soft?

SO If it's full dry, I believe yes, most probably it would. But we would have the option to go to the medium tyre, which would work. What we have today is a good package to fit every condition. [Bringing this new soft tyre] is a good move from the FIA.

DE Sebastien, you've won this event four times. Without giving away too many of your secrets, what's the key to winning Rally GB?

SO Mastering those conditions we talked about is never easy. We've mentioned what we can have there, the fog and the poor visibility – this is what makes the event special and this is the thing that can make the biggest differences. And, obviously, I have been suffering very often starting first on the road in my career [on dry gravel rallies where the road gets faster with more grip with every passing car], but often I am coming in GB and on that event, most of the time, it's more of an advantage to start first, so I also used that advantage a couple of times. Rally GB is an event I learned to enjoy. I have a special memory with this one – I started my World Rally Car career there with the best time [on the opening stage in Sweet Lamb, 2008]. I couldn't believe it at the time and then I struggled a bit more. But, after some years, I managed to feel better there and a great series of leading the rally for four years and

the victories that were very enjoyable for me. Even last year we had an important event when we secured the title again – so I think we can say that I like very much the Rally GB.

DE Was it a tough rally to learn for you, Thierry? Why haven't you won it?

TN I don't know why I haven't won it yet. I have always been very competitive – I've been on the podium a couple of times, close to the victory, but never won yet. I'm looking forward to it; we have many more chances to try to be on the first step of the podium there. But the main goal and the main thing for me is to enjoy the event. Because of the conditions and the timing is different [with early starts and late finishes], it makes it challenging for us.

DE How important is a win in GB for the championship – is it somewhere you can take a tactical approach?

TN Every event is difficult and important, and if you can fight for victory you definitely need to go for that. If not then you have to secure the best points that you can.

DE Talking of championships, what's been the high point of your seasons so far?

OT The first high point was definitely Argentina. We managed to seal our first victory for the team there and this was very important. But after this, we had, let's say, some really low points as we retired from two events. But the next events we managed to win. It's kind of up and down, but we've been improving and developing quite a lot. I think we've been getting more consistent. The last events have been our high point and, really, I would like to carry that on.

SO I hope the best is still to come this season. Obviously we had a very strong start, which sometimes brings us into the low-point situation as well – like Sweden [where Ogier was hampered by running first on the road and couldn't run higher than ninth and eventually finished 10th], where it was almost impossible to ►



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DAYTONA >>





“WALES IS THE ONE EVENT THAT EVERYONE WANTS TO WIN. IT’S DEFINITELY THE TROPHY TO TAKE HOME”

TANAK

RALLY GB RECORD

Starts	7
Finishes	6
Wins	0
Podiums	1

Tanak is gunning for the rally win in his hunt to overhaul both Ogier and Neuville for the WRC crown

score any points on this event. Recently the performances have been a little bit up and down: Finland was not very great for me, but Germany I was satisfied with the speed we had; we had a great fight with Ott. In motorsport, unfortunately, sometimes you still need the luck with us. So far we haven't had much, but still there are some events to go and everything is still possible.

TN I enjoyed the start of the season as well. I was trying to find the right way between the consistency and pushing when it was needed and when it was possible as well. And, yeah, it's always nice to win Sweden because not so many have won Sweden; we did a good job over there. Then we had some great fights with Ott and Sebastien as well and I've been enjoying that. There have been many highs, but there were some difficult times as well, but we managed them and got a couple of podiums. Now we're looking forward to the upcoming events. It's going to be really hard, but it can be enjoyable for us if we make a nice fight.

DE It's been a while since we've had a really close championship fight. Is this building into one of the great years?

TN For the sport, I think it's the best we can get. I think rallying is a great sport. Maybe it's not as popular as it should be, but definitely it's growing and, with the support of the promoter and the fights we have with the new generation of cars that are much more equal, it makes it really, really interesting. And it's not just interesting for us three, but for all of the other drivers who have the opportunity to get podiums and victories as well.

DE Sebastien, these boys are chasing your crown. How do you rate their chances of taking it this year?

SO You never come into the fight for the championship by chance, so you have to rate them. Of course, they are great drivers. Like Thierry said, it's very nice for the sport to see these kind of fights. Last year was already very intense and this year again it looks like

we'll carry on this fight longer into the season and that's good for everyone. It's not often in motorsport you see four teams pretty close to each other. I would offer the chance to win to almost every driver in this championship and that makes for great fights, and everybody is winning in this situation.

DE Last question, two-parter: who's going to win in Wales and the championship. Ott?

OT Definitely Wales is one event everybody wants to win, it's unique...

SO Is there any event you don't want to win?

OT Maybe let's say some events, I don't care so much, but the championship I care about... so definitely. OK, in the end, to win Wales this year is not so important as to win the championship, but Wales is as unique as Monte Carlo or Finland. It's definitely the trophy you need to take back home.

DE But give us a name, who's going to win?

OT I'm going to win.

DE Both?

OT I go for both.

SO What else can you answer than that?

DE You think Ott's going to win as well?

SO Ott has been very impressive with the speed this year. If I have to speak about my contenders now then Ott is definitely the more dangerous in terms of speed. But, you know, the championship is not only about the speed so we will see what happens at the end of the year.

TN I think similar. We try to win Wales and, more important than that, we're going to win the championship. So put us down for both. ■

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Ogier stunned
on his World Rally
Car debut back
in 2008



FASTEST OUT OF THE BLOCKS

Sébastien Ogier's record on Rally GB is far superior to those of his championship rivals: four wins plays a no-score draw for both Thierry Neuville and Ott Tänak.

But despite the success, it's his debut on Britain's round of the World Rally Championship that stands proud.

When Ogier arrived in Wales in 2008, he arrived as a Junior World Rally champion. He may have been top of the stack in a Citroën C2, but he'd never driven a World Rally Car before and nobody had ever seen him in Wales.

But still, on the opening stage of the event – and in the worst snow and ice in recent memory – Ogier went

fastest. He held the lead, ahead of his fellow Citroën C4 WRC driver Sébastien Loeb, for Friday morning's mid-Wales loop. He was unbelievably good out of the box.

He crashed heavily the next morning, but notice had been served in a similar fashion to when

Carlos Sainz had gone one better and won the first stage he'd ever driven in the WRC.

The following years baffled Ogier. He couldn't fathom the event at all. The ever-changing level of grip, the use of ditches, the long, tightening corners. He took his time

and, by 2013, he was on top of it, his wins duly coming in the subsequent four years.

Thierry Neuville has always shown good pace in the UK, and he didn't seem to struggle to find his feet in the way Ogier did. On just his second start, he was third in a

Ford Fiesta RS WRC. One sizeable shunt in Dyfnant aside, Neuville's always been at the races, and third in 2016 followed by the runner-up spot last season could be indicative of a driver building towards a win.

Tänak too has come as close as possible to winning without actually winning in Wales – he was second in a DMACK Fiesta RS WRC in 2016. The winner of the past three WRC rounds has the raw speed and ultimate bravery to get the best out of the Welsh stages, but a lukewarm performance for M-Sport last year demonstrated that he's still learning the unique challenge that the forests present.



After an early period of struggles, Ogier began a dominant Welsh streak

TEAM BY TEAM

BY DAVID EVANS PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN



CITROËN

TEAM PRINCIPAL PIERRE BUDAR
CAR CITROËN C3 WRC



#10 MADS OSTBERG

Nationality Norwegian
Age 30
Co-driver Torstein Eriksen (N)
WRC rounds 117
WRC wins 1
GB starts 12
GB best result 2nd (2011)

There was the odd raised eyebrow when Ostberg was given the keys to a C3 WRC for the rest of the season following Kris Meeke's departure from the team in May. However, the Norwegian's searing pace to secure second in Finland silenced the critics in the summer. Ostberg has the speed and the car beneath him to repeat that result, providing he can settle in and score some solid times during the rally's early stages.



#11 CRAIG BREEN

Nationality Irish
Age 28
Co-driver Scott Martin (GB)
WRC rounds 56
WRC wins 0
GB starts 7
GB best result 12th (2010)

Breen competed in Britain regularly early in his career, so has a good idea of what's coming his way this week. He will be glad to see the back of Hafren this time around – a puncture spoiled his first run in 2017, and sliding off the road ended his second. If drier conditions prevail on Friday and he can get into a good place on the road at the weekend, then this could be a good week to remove a monkey from his back – or break a duck.

HYUNDAI

TEAM PRINCIPAL MICHEL NANDAN
CAR HYUNDAI i20 COUPE WRC



#4 ANDREAS MIKKELSEN

Nationality
Norwegian
Age 29
Co-driver
Anders Jaeger (N)
WRC rounds 97
WRC wins 3
GB starts 8
GB best result
3rd (2015)

Behind Elfyn Evans, Mikkelsen is the driver who knows this place the best. That may sound odd for a 29-year-old born in Oslo, but 12 years ago he was all about Ruthin. He lived in the town on the fringes of Clocaenog forest and spent much of his latter teenage years testing and competing around these woods in a Ford Focus RS WRC. He won't remember the specifics, but he'll understand the lie of the land and how conditions can change.



#5 THIERRY NEUVILLE

Nationality
Belgian
Age 30
Co-driver
Nicolas Gilsoul (B)
WRC rounds 94
WRC wins 9
GB starts 6
GB best result
2nd (2017)

He has the speed to win this rally, but does he yet have the craft? We've seen him on the podium a couple of times, but he's never really managed to tailor the i20 to the constant grip changes on offer in Wales. If it rains, this week will be by far the best chance he's had of winning, but he has to balance that risk with the potential bigger-picture reward of a championship. What he doesn't need is a repeat of Turkey...



#6 HAYDEN PADDON

Nationality
New Zealander
Age 31
Co-driver
Seb Marshall (GB)
WRC rounds 77
WRC wins 1
GB starts 8
GB best result
4th (2016)

Parts of the route aren't a million miles away from what he knows 12,000 miles away at home. Curiously though, Paddon's never gone tremendously well in Wales. He comes with good experience of the rally and needs to find a balance within the car as quickly as possible on Friday. If he does that and the weather's with him (ie it's sunny, not rainy), then anything is possible for this likeable and ultimately pacey Kiwi.



M-SPORT

TEAM PRINCIPAL MALCOLM WILSON
CAR FORD FIESTA WRC



#1 SEBASTIEN OGIER

Nationality
French
Age 34
Co-driver
Julien Ingrassia (F)
WRC rounds 133
WRC wins 43
GB starts 10
GB best result
1st (2013/14/15/16)

Ogier is chasing the record-breaking fifth win that eluded him last year in Wales (sealing a fifth title in Llandudno went some way towards making up for that disappointment). It took him a while to come to terms with what's needed to make the best out of these stages, but he has absolutely found the answer now. Ogier starts as favourite, especially if the rain comes and the advantage lies with those at the front of the field.



#2 ELFYN EVANS

Nationality
British
Age 29
Co-driver
Dan Barritt (GB)
WRC rounds 73
WRC wins 1
GB starts 6
GB best result
1st (2017)

Evans doesn't have any more experience of his local roads than his main rivals, but last year's magical Welsh win demonstrated what competing at home can do: Evans was filled with confidence on this event last time out and had an answer to every question he was asked. He can trade on that again this week, but also starts safe in the knowledge that he has the speed, the car and the team to take back-to-back wins in his backyard.



#3 TEEMU SUNINEN

Nationality
Finnish
Age 24
Co-driver
Mikko Markkula (FIN)
WRC rounds 37
WRC wins 0
GB starts 3
GB best result
11th (2015)

Short on sharp-end experience of this rally, M-Sport's young Finn should consider a podium a solid result in Wales. That said, we've seen enough of Suninen to know that when he gets the car hooked up, the notes are working and he feels comfortable on the road, he's well capable of some sensational times. Born and bred in Finland, he'll undoubtedly be happier when the Fiesta's singing in the top half of the rev range.



TOYOTA

TEAM PRINCIPAL TOMMI MAKINEN
CAR TOYOTA YARIS WRC



#7 JARI-MATTI LATVALA

Nationality
Finnish
Age 33
Co-driver
Miikka Anttila (FIN)
WRC rounds 192
WRC wins 17
GB starts 16
GB best result
1st (2011/2012)

If Evans doesn't win, most would like to see Latvala on the top step of the podium on Sunday afternoon. He likes Wales, loves this event and simply adores Myherin. His wins came when the event was based more down-country, but he knows what's needed to make the most out of the north; don't forget he's been around for a while now... He drove Penmachno when he finished second on the the Cambrian Rally 16 years ago.



#8 OTT TANAK

Nationality
Estonian
Age 30
Co-driver
Martin Jarveoja (EST)
WRC rounds 89
WRC wins 6
GB starts 7
GB best result
2nd (2016)

A driver right at the very top of his game, Tanak comes to Deeside on the back of three consecutive wins in Finland, Germany and Turkey, and a similar result would reel points leader Neuville in even closer. Can he do it? Absolutely. The Yaris WRC has struggled for grip in changeable conditions recently, but the team is confident it is on top of those issues. If it is, a fourth straight win for the Estonian could well be on the cards.



#9 ESAPEKKA LAPPI

Nationality
Finnish
Age 27
Co-driver
Janne Ferm (FIN)
WRC rounds 39
WRC wins 1
GB starts 2
GB best result
9th (2017)

It's probably best not to expect too much from last year's Rally Finland winner. Just when he thought he'd started to understand this event in 2017, he found another series of inconsistent conditions and unfathomable corners. This will be another learning year but, when he's comfortable and confident on the faster stages in mid-Wales, it's quite possible we could see some rapid progression leading to some fastest times on the second runs.

HOME HERO

AFTER DOMINATING RALLY GB LAST YEAR, ELFYN EVANS HAS DROPPED THE MONKEY FROM HIS BACK. BUT CAN HE REPEAT THAT MOMENTOUS VICTORY IN HIS OWN BACKYARD?

BY **DAVID EVANS** PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**



F

orty-nine weeks ago, Elfyn Evans landed the big one in Llandudno. He won Rally GB and, in doing so, he vaulted himself right into world rallying's pages of history. For the first time in 17 years, the backyard was British again.

Evans lives, works and trains not far from the route

for Britain's biggest rallying event, so Rally GB is never too far from his daily grind. But this is a special time of the year. The leaves have started to turn, there's a chill in the air, the nights are lengthening. It signals that the point around which his year turns is fast approaching.

"It was always the same," Evans says. "Going out to spectate and getting excited about watching my dad [Gywndaf] or Colin McRae. It was always a special buzz. It's the same now. The same, but different."

"Coming into this event as a competitor, I feel just that bit more relaxed. I feel more comfortable, like I know how to drive and I know what's coming. It's also easier because there are no planes, no airports, no travel or hassle. I'm just getting in the car and driving. I won't be this year because of the way the recce is working out, but in the past I've stayed at my old man's house on the recce. If we're starting the recce early in the morning and we're straight into Dyfi or even Hafren, it's more comfortable, familiar."

"It's definitely easier coming back after the win," he continues. "You know you can win, pure and simple."

But Evans didn't just win last year, he dominated. And part of that domination came from DMACK's soft-

compound tyre – a cover designed specifically with Rally GB's chilly ambient and muddy surface in mind. Undoubtedly, those boots got the event off to a strong start, but things were starting to unravel by the time the rally got to the end of Myherin on Saturday afternoon.

The rain had stopped, the temperature was rising and the DMACKs were starting to wobble. The question was, would Evans follow?

Not a chance. He managed that situation, eked every ounce out of the tyres and took slicks back to service.

"Obviously," he says, "I had a tyre which worked well last year, but you still have to drive a good rally if you want to win at this level. Ultimately, it wasn't straightforward – we had to manage the tyres and we did that."

This year's going to be a little bit more complex. Evans will start eighth on the road, and everybody's got the same tyre after Michelin cooked the same compound.

"So much of your result can depend on the conditions," he says. "If it gets wet then it's going to be tricky to do much from eighth on the road on the opening day. The cars ahead will bring the mud to the surface on the road and it gets quite tricky – the road definitely gets slower the more cars that pass if it's wet."

And if it's dry?

"Then that could be interesting. We've had a dry and hot summer and the road would definitely clean quite well if it stayed like that into the rally. Then we could have an advantage. We'll have to wait and see."

Be under no illusion, Evans wants and needs victory in Wales just as much as he did in 2017. He's had a difficult year, and back-to-back lots of Rally GB spoils would set him up for a strong run-in to the end of the season through Spain and Australia.

"It's been a tough year so far," he says. He ponders that and comes back: "It's been a pretty shitty year, actually, so far. It's been so frustrating to know that we've got the pace, but then there were punctures and little things like that. I've made some mistakes and now we're here."

As he enters the final stages of preparation, it's time to bin that baggage and get on with the week ahead.

"I like this rally," says Evans, "I like the roads and I've grown up around here so it's special. But, at the same time, I wouldn't say I know the event any better than the others – Jari-Matti Latvala has been here for a lot of years and knows some of these stages as well as anybody, especially somewhere like Myherin."

Agreed, but the Finn doesn't have his own corner in Myherin. Elfyn does. After thundering down through the windfarm, it's a couple of lefts, then a square right with a bank full of fans. Evans fans on Evans' corner.

Typically, he played the whole thing down last year. He was grateful, but embarrassed. He's not the sort who goes in search of the limelight. Ahead of last year's rally, he was busy telling the world he wasn't really sure where the corner was and he'd be focused on the whole stage, but he was grateful to the people for the effort they'd gone too.

There's a slightly bashful smile when he's reminded about that. "Yeah, I did know where it was," he says. "But coming out of the quick bit and getting through the corner, there wasn't really much of a chance to have a look."

"Were there many there?" There were, and the atmosphere was fantastic. As it will be when the rally runs through the same corner on Saturday.

Evans isn't about to shout about his huge fanbase in Britain, but that's not to say he's not grateful.

"There's a buzz about the place," he says. "Sometimes you wonder if you're imagining it, but it's definitely ►"





For 2018, Evans and co-driver Barritt lose the advantage of DMACKs

there with all the people. It's fantastic to see those people at the side of the road. And it definitely helps."

And that extends beyond just the driver. It also helps the one sitting next to him, barking directions. "I don't mind being a Welshman for the weekend," smiles Englishman Daniel Barritt. "It's going to be mega. I think there'll be a lot more people who will come and jump on board after last year and I love that. It's fantastic to see all of those people out there, honestly, it's a real buzz. And to know that those fans out there at Rally GB are waiting for us – they want a British crew to be doing well – that really lifts you."

After spending much of the year by Evans' side, Barritt is well placed to talk about how much last year's home win

helped. "The monkey's gone, hasn't it?" he says. "It's off our back now. Last year was such a big learning curve to take that win at home. We were learning all the time what it was like to be in that position, to be closing on the win and things like that. It would have been less pressure if we'd taken the win in Argentina."

"Everybody wanted us to do it so badly last year, but we did it and now Elfyn comes back to the event so much more relaxed. I know there had been hard times – I'd seen it, been there. It was like in 2015 when we came to GB and Elfyn was thinking, 'I've got this opportunity, a real opportunity. I've got to make it happen.'"

"We knew all those people were watching and waiting. And the full package wasn't right. I'm not talking about the car or anything like that – I'm talking about the approach, everything. Last year the package was right and I know it's right this year."

"Last year took so much weight off his shoulders, you could see that. And this year we're going to see the benefit of that. We don't drive to the start knowing everybody's wondering if we can do it. We know we can do it – we did it last year and we can do it again. We know things haven't gone to plan this season and that makes us even more determined in the last three rallies [of the year]. Elfyn's got the speed."

Evans started last year with a corner named after him and ended up putting his name to the rally. What price for back-to-back British success this time around? Such a result couldn't come at a better time for Evans. Or the growing band of fans ready to make their voices heard in the valleys this week. ■

**"WINNING LAST YEAR
TOOK SO MUCH WEIGHT
OFF ELFYN'S SHOULDERS.
THIS YEAR WE'LL SEE
THE BENEFIT OF THAT"**

DANIEL BARRITT



Starting eighth on the road leaves them vulnerable to a wet and broken surface

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ON TAKING DOUBLE TITLE GLORY IN THE PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Seb was crowned Pro-Am champion at Brands Hatch on his birthday after a strong maiden year in the series. He was only off the Pro-Am podium four times this season and was able to fight with the Pro drivers on occasions.



George claimed the Rookie title after an impressive first season in the Carrera Cup. He claimed three wins during the year and finished sixth in the overall standings.



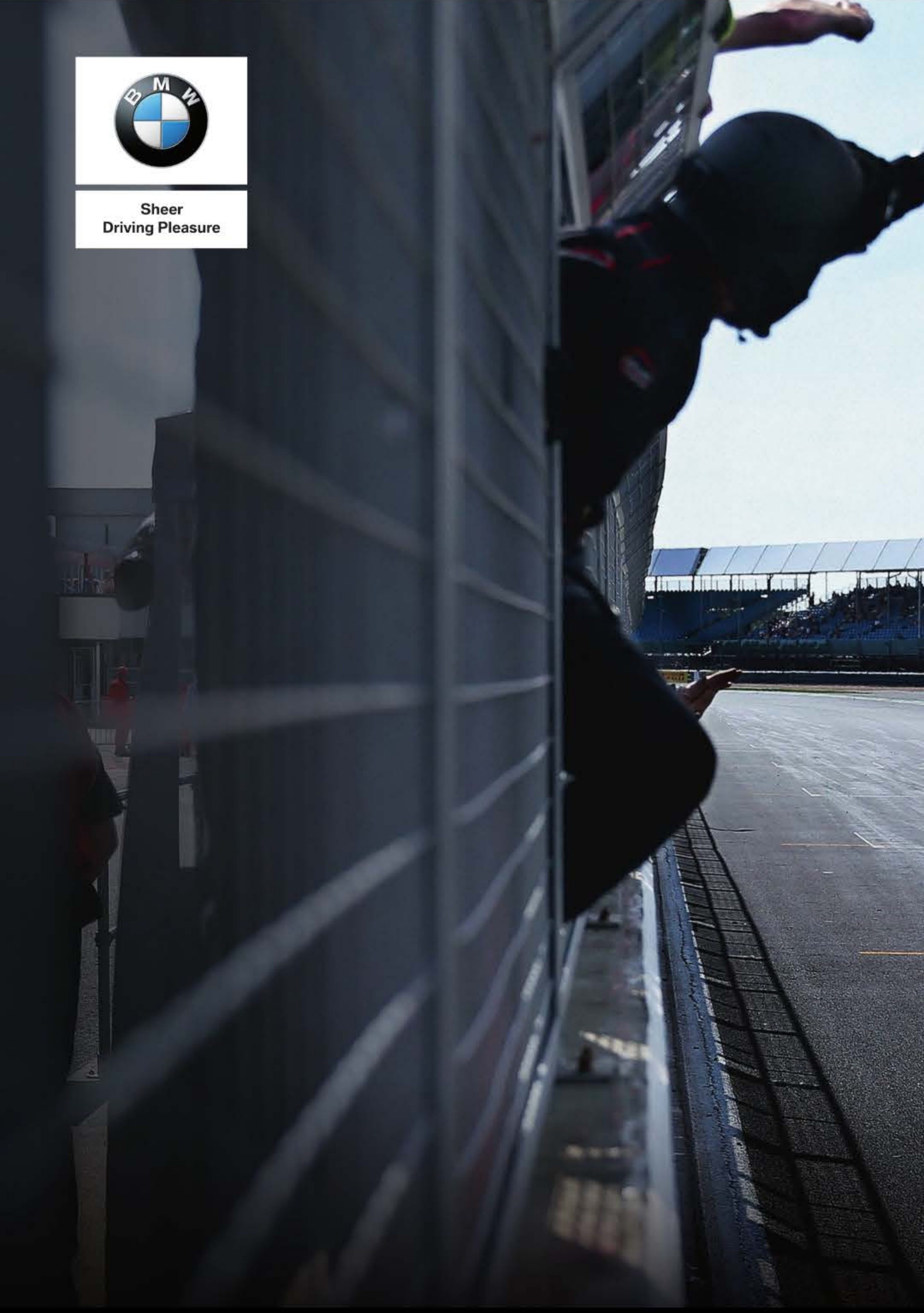
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Flick becomes the first female driver to win an overall championship in GT3 and Jonny takes his third series title, taking 3 pole positions and 2 wins



CHASING SHADOWS

THE ONES TO WATCH IN THE RACE FOR WRC2 BRAGGING RIGHTS AS THE UNBEATEN KOPECKY MISSES RALLY GB

BY JACK BENYON PHOTOGRAPHY RED BULL

WRC2 is usually the hotbed of young talent, of which rally fans can draw great excitement for the future. In recent years, Esapekka Lappi is the crowning achievement of the series, the works Skoda driver stepping up to a rightful home in the World Rally Championship proper with Toyota. It wasn't long before he took his first win, at home in Finland in 2017.

But this year's series has been dominated by 36-year-old Jan Kopecky, who is unbeaten in 2018. It's put him on the precipice of a first WRC2 title and the question of what to do next. But that topic is for another time.

Kopecky is absent from Rally GB, so the band of cohorts will be simply chasing the Czech driver's shadow.

One driver likely to star in WRC2 – which features the same 1600cc engines used by the WRC cars but strangled by a larger restrictor, plus spec-parts and fewer aero devices to keep the costs down – is reigning champion Pontus Tidemand, who hasn't been as competitive as he was last term. Part of that may be down to the Swede's testing of the new Volkswagen Polo R5, but a little bit of bad luck has also come into play during his Skoda exploits.

He was a cut above on Rally GB last year in the same class, and will need that again to keep any title hopes alive. Another 13 cars – down from 22 last year – stand in his way, and picking a likely challenger is tough.

Britain has a trio of hopefuls to back, each with a real claim to the North Wales forest spoils.

Under 27 European Rally champion Chris Ingram made a stunning WRC2 debut on Rally Turkey earlier this month with a podium, and looked at home fighting the works Skodas in his privateer Fabia. He also has plenty of experience on this event, albeit in front-wheel-drive machinery. After missing the first

half of the season through illness, his recent form has been impressive.

"It's a dream come true to be doing this event in a proper car," says Ingram. "I never thought I'd get here, there have been so many times I've ran out of budget. We're here for the bigger picture and this is one of the strongest fields of the year. We'll do our best."

Tom Cave will drive a Hyundai i20 R5 on this event for the first time, although he knows the car and the stages separately very well. A podium last year, in third behind Eric Camilli, means he's a threat, but a year out of R5 battle won't do him good against match-ready competition.

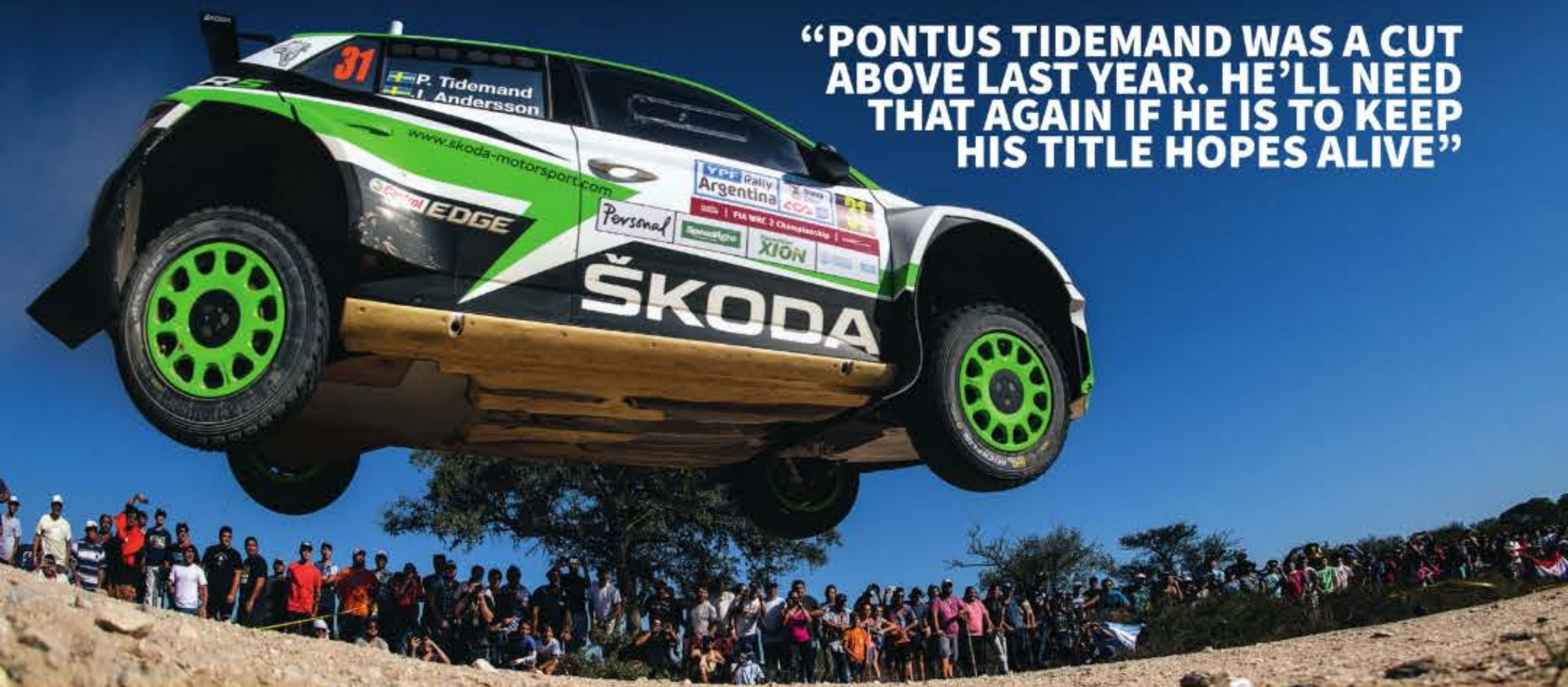
Gus Greensmith had a strong start to the season and is the only Brit to have actively chased the WRC2 title this year, although a barren run for the M-Sport Ford driver means third is likely as high as he'll go in the standings. But a third year on this event in the same car should at least encourage some confidence.

Camilli was a radiator glitch away from winning the class in 2015 and took second last year; testing VW's new Polo has kept him sharp and he is worth watching in his Fiesta.

Then, of course, there's boy wonder Kalle Rovanpera. This will be the first WRC2 event he starts for a second time, having made his category debut in Wales last year. He will be 18 when the event starts and, incredibly, is already into his third season in an R5 car. A second on Germany's asphalt last time out is far-from-perfect preparation, but there's been a strong turn of form in recent rallies. Plus, with a works Skoda, you're always in the mix.

WRC3, for front-wheel-drive cars, has a four-car entry and is often poorly supported. Finn Taisto Lario is the highest placed in the standings of those competing – fourth in his Peugeot 208 R2. ■

"PONTUS TIDEMAND WAS A CUT ABOVE LAST YEAR. HE'LL NEED THAT AGAIN IF HE IS TO KEEP HIS TITLE HOPES ALIVE"



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

OUR GUIDE TO THE STAGES THIS WEEKEND

BY DAVID EVANS

THURSDAY OCTOBER 4 SHAKEDOWN

Britain's round of the World Rally Championship starts right here. These two miles represent the last chance for the teams to iron out any final niggles with the car or work more on the set-up for the competition ahead. As it has in recent years, shakedown for Rally GB runs through Clocaenog, with the last right-hander and the run to the finish identical to the first stage proper on Friday morning. A shakedown doesn't get much more representative than that. Like last year, the cars will be returning to the service park in Deeside rather than to Ruthin for the remote service.

SS1 TIR PRINCE

Absolutely not representative of the three days to come, this superspecial is nevertheless a fantastic opportunity for easy access to the cars and the stars. The stage itself is a short affair, but you'll see a modern-day World Rally Car in all its fury tearing through a slalom section and around a 'Dayinsure Donut'. Probably not one for the purist, but many fans won't be put off – how often do you get the chance to see Sebastien Ogier doing his thing in his Ford Fiesta WRC on a Thursday evening? Of all the stages, this is definitely the easiest to get in and out of, based not far off the A55 dual-carriageway from north-west England into north Wales.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 5 SS2/7 CLOCAENOG

If it's wet, this will be a really tricky start to the morning and afternoon loops on Friday. The surface is generally softer and muddier than you'll find elsewhere on the route and much of it is under the trees – so even if the sun is shining it can take a little longer to dry out. The big difference here, however, is the number of junctions. Clocaenog doesn't flow in the way many of the other stages do, but that doesn't mean the speeds aren't as high – between those junctions the road is generally straight and quick.

SS3/8 BRENIG

History will be made in this stage. After running alongside Llyn Brenig, the cars come up a slight incline and turn square left. Technically, it's known as junction six on the stage – but it's also the location for the first time an FIA-sanctioned world championship event will run on closed public roads in Britain. Granted, we're not talking the A5 here, but it's still a public road and the WRC will be on it. A short uphill section leads the cars back into the woods. They're back on asphalt twice later in the stage – including the section that was used at the end of the powerstage last year – with almost two of the stage's 18 miles run on asphalt.

Not long after that, it's history time again as they nip over the B4501 (first time a world

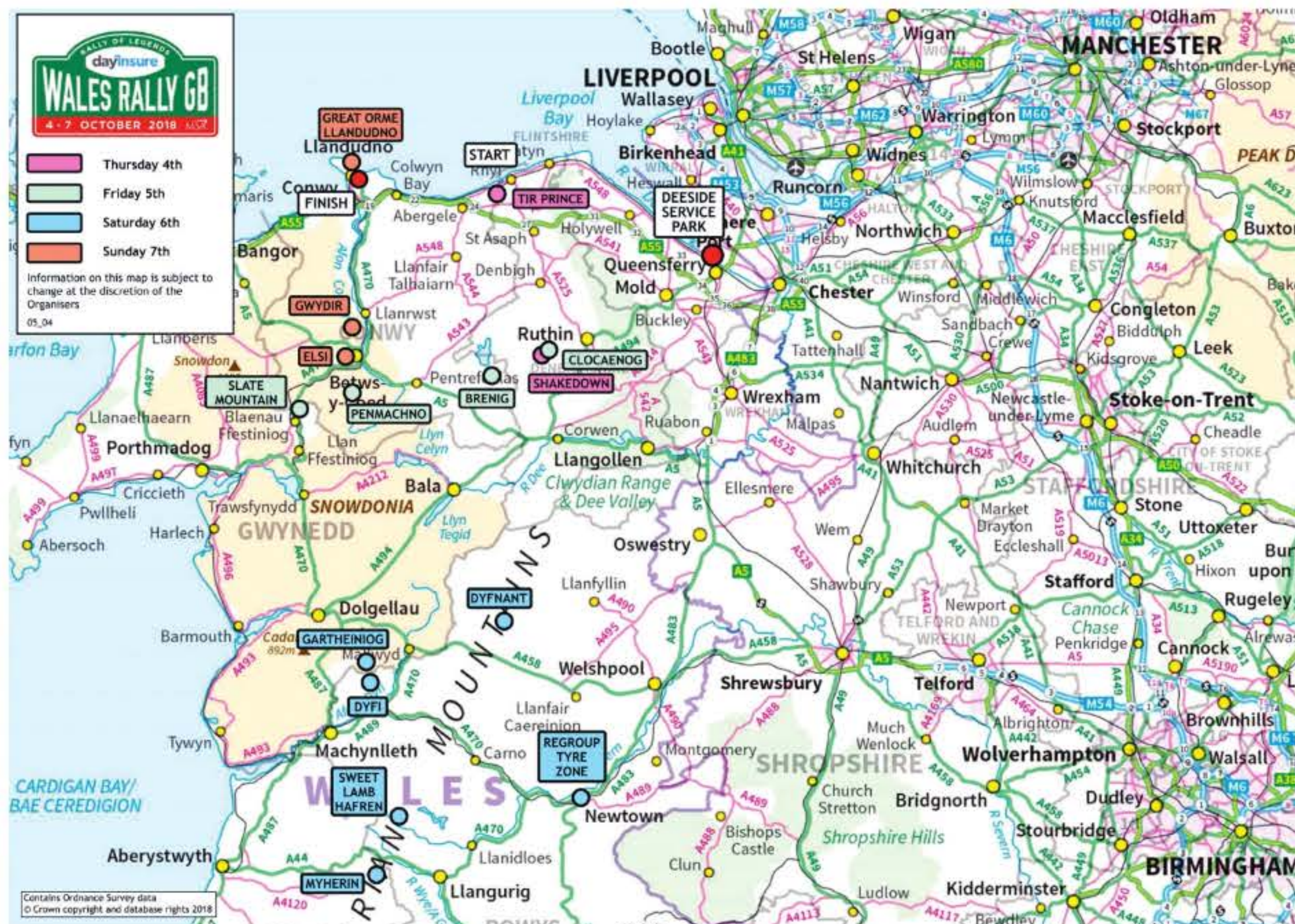
championship has run on a classified British public road) and into the Alwen stage. The second half of this Brenig-Alwen combo is the same as last year.

The major changes to this one come in Brenig, with a mile and a bit of overgrown, narrow road returning to Britain's WRC round for the first time since the 1990s. "This is a solid piece of road," says route coordinator Andrew Kellitt. "It's quite narrow, but by the end of the first run the drivers will have redefined the road slightly, making use of the ditches – they have a habit of doing that. It's interesting; it breaks up the rhythm, which I quite like."

Another feature of this one is regular surface and grip changes. Moments after leaving the undulating, grass-up-the-middle stretch, the cars are onto an almost Kielder-esque stretch, with the road built up above the ditches.

SS4/9 PENMACHNO

Back on the Rally GB route for the first time since 2013, and back for the first time in the daylight since 1995. Even more important than both of those is the decision to run north and south stages linked together for the first time – another reason to be grateful to the Welsh government for devolving the power to suspend the Road Traffic Act. Starting just above the Woollen Mill hairpin, this stage climbs up to a quarry, with the chance for some superb spectating. After that comes Kellitt's



conundrum. "There's a narrow and quite steep downhill section which runs for half a mile or so," he says. "It's in there because it helps us link a couple of spectator areas from one car park. Again, it'll break the rhythm and add to the challenge."

Not long after there's a superb section of asphalt – a really quick, narrow lane that will totally focus the crews, especially on knobbies, with the cars sitting high up on gravel-specification suspension. That's pretty much the north done. Penmachno South is the section that was last used in 2013, so bits of it may be more familiar to some of the crews.

Kellitt continues: "There's been a lot of talk about the use of closed roads to link stages and this is one of the obvious ones. It's great to have the chance to combine this into one great test."

SS5/6 SLATE MOUNTAIN

With two runs at a mile-long stage cut into an old slate quarry, this place has genuine potential for spectators on Friday. The viewing will be excellent, it's easy to get to (follow the signs to Zip World in Blaenau Ffestiniog), and there's loads of epic cake on offer in the lovely Slate Caverns restaurant.

RALLY VILLAGE DEESIDE

On Thursday night, Friday lunchtime and evening, and Saturday evening, head along to Rally Village (the service park in old money and

service area in even older money). This is where you'll see vital repair work being done to keep the cars on the road, and it's also where you'll find lots of family entertainment. Here's a tip: if you want the best view of the year, get yourself out of bed and get to Deeside for the first service of the day. Yes, it's *really* early (Friday 0645, Saturday 0530 and Sunday 0525), but this red-eye opportunity is gilt-edged and you'll see more of the crews than ever.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 6 SS10/15 MYHERIN

A genuine case of something not being broken and not being fixed, Myherin is the only stage that remains entirely untouched from last year. Elfyn's Corner is an interesting square-ish right-hander, but a slightly longer yomp leads you to some of the most awe-inspiring action on the whole route as the cars tear down the hill through the windfarm, bouncing off the rev limiter. Classic.

Well known as Jari-Matti Latvala's favourite of the event, this one offers some of the widest roads on the whole route. A real challenge; a real driver's stage.

SS11/16 SWEET LAMB HAFREN

Joined together for the first time in four years, here the cars will start in what's arguably one of this rally's most recognisable locations: the Sweet Lamb bowl. After playing to the crowd,

flying over jumps and diving through watersplashes, they head up past the mines and into Hafren at the top of the hill.

There are a few more junctions in Hafren than the nearby Myherin stage, so the speed's generally not quite as quick. Hafren will, however, keep the crews guessing when it comes to grip. Unless it's bone dry (increasingly less likely), the drivers will be on their toes from corner to corner as they feel for more or less traction, eyeing every change of colour on the road surface as an indication as to what could happen when they turn in.

SS12/17 DYFI

Back to the same configuration as two years ago, except with a slightly different start. The surface for this stage has evolved through the year, but it's primed and ready for this weekend. "It's easy to forget," says Kellitt, "that we come ▶



Is there a better place in the world to watch a rally than Dyfi?

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here with our sport, but for the remainder of the year this place is, essentially, a timber factory. There's been a fair bit of harvesting going on and when I came through here for the first time in March the road wasn't perfect, but it is now.

"It's been repaired and it's settled very nicely. OK, where the new stone has gone down the edges of the road might get chewed up a little bit and there's the chance there could be the odd bigger rock pulled out."

But for the most part, it's that fabulous mid-Wales-motorway stuff that we know and love. There will be some standing water here and there if September's end hasn't been completely dry, but that just serves to make great pictures. It's fast, flowing and fabulous.

SS13/18 GARTHEINIOG

Elfn Evans's favourite stage. Why this one and not Dyfi, which is a stone's throw up the road? He doesn't know. This one just works for him. The start is back at the right-left junction, where it was a couple of years ago. The first downhill hairpin right is really tricky, completely overgrown and more deceptive than ever.

"This stage just encourages you to go harder and harder all the time," says Evans. "I love the long corners that you can really attack. It's just a great place."

Gartheiniog, like Dyfi, has run in slightly longer form in recent seasons, but Kellitt admits he was faced with the nicest of problems for the event's second day.

"Having all the mid-Wales mileage on one day, we simply didn't need it all," he says, "so we had to cut some of it to keep it under the regulated 80 kilometres per loop."

Saturday morning's loop is 730 metres short of 80km.

SS14 DYFNANT

Replaces Gartheiniog as Saturday's Red Bull live telly stage for this year. And, because of that, it needed to be trimmed to fit. But no need to worry: Kellitt's kept the best bits. Irish Corner's in there as a fast left – the opposite way to last year – leading the cars into the hairpin left at what would have been one of the busiest spectating venues.

"When a stage is only run once, for obvious reasons you tend to get fewer spectators in there," says Kellitt. "Dyfnant is, however, one of the classics. The grip level varies quite a lot if it's been wet/dry on the run up to the rally, but a few years ago we had enough rain to wash the top layer of mud away, exposing a hard base with curiously good traction."

SUNDAY OCTOBER 7 SS19 ELSI

While this is a completely new stage to the World Rally Championship, Kellitt points out that it doesn't differ radically from Friday's Penmachno challenge. "Look at it on a map," he says. "You can see that Penmachno, Elsi and Gwydir are all part of the same forest, so the geography isn't hugely different from one to the other."



"It's obvious we're in Snowdonia here – this is obviously a mountain stage and quite different to the flatter stuff in Clocaenog or Brenig. It's also quite technical with a few crests, and corners over crests; it's quite deceptive and generally a bit slower than some of the other stages."

The woodland we're in here is also different to mid-Wales. This isn't really a commercially driven forest producing timber on a massive scale; it has a much more parkland-type feel to it – certainly near the start. But once you climb and get into the middle, there are some superb views.

SS20/22 GWYDIR

The first three miles or so of this stage were used last year, but after that it's all new – including an interesting half-mile of asphalt in the middle of the stage. While the Cambrian Rally has used parts of Gwydir and Elsi, it's more than likely that Britain's biggest motorsport event hasn't been on these roads since it was called the RAC in the 1960s.

"It's hard to know which roads were used back then," says Kellitt. "The route records we have aren't very specific, but what we do know is that some of these roads are very, very old in here and were probably laid originally to allow the timber to be extracted by men and tractors, not the modern harvesting machines. The network of roads in here is quite intense and that's given us some good choice."

Once the stage is up and running, it opens up into a nice quick stretch. The asphalt will

demand a real focus as it narrows down to take the crews between dry stone walls and hedges.

The first run of this stage on Sunday is the powerstage, with five bonus points on offer for the fastest time.

SS21/23 GREAT ORME LLANDUDNO

The first mile of this stage is new, leading the crews onto the Great Orme, but once they're on the toll road it's the same as they drove in 2013. But instead of coming across the flying finish near the archway at the town end of Marine Drive, they'll crack on through and into the town itself. They go up and down Gloddaeth Street (rounding the Dayinsure Donut) and onto the seafront for a jump and flying finish.

"We're really bringing the rally to the people in Llandudno," says Kellitt. "What we've done is take a fairly straightforward route as a toe in the water, if you like. Obviously, there's plenty of potential for a stage through the town, but we have to be completely mindful of local businesses and the local population."

FINISH LLANDUDNO

This bit isn't just about the finish – it's about Llandudno and a weekend of thrills. From Saturday morning, Rally GB will be in town, but overnight into Sunday the area around Gloddaeth Street and down the seafront will be transformed into stages 21 and 23 of the 11th round of the FIA World Rally Championship. While that's going on, Red Bull trial-biker Kenny Belaey will be mostly in the air above you and Paul Swift will be using just two of the four wheels on his car in front of you. Take a seat in the grandstand for £25 on the day if you fancy the best views, or just pick up a sarnie at M&S and make your way to the Orme end of town, where you can stand and watch the world's best for free.

Once SS23 is done, the podium celebrations will take place on the seafront. Llandudno will never have looked so cool on an October Sunday. ■



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WHAT'S ON WHEN

ITINERARY

STAGES	TIME
THURSDAY OCTOBER 4	
SS1 Tir Prince (0.92 miles)	1900
Parc ferme Deeside	2006
FRIDAY OCTOBER 5	
SS2 Clocaenog 1 (4.76 miles)	0757
SS3 Brenig 1 (18.10 miles)	0833
SS4 Penmachno 1 (10.53 miles)	0949
SS5 Slate Mountain 1 (1.05 miles)	1043
SS6 Slate Mountain 2 (1.05 miles)	1050
Service Deeside	1259
SS7 Clocaenog 2 (4.76 miles)	1441
SS8 Brenig 2 (18.10 miles)	1517
SS9 Penmachno 2 (10.53 miles)	1633
Service Deeside	1854
SATURDAY OCTOBER 6	
SS10 Myherin 1 (12.60 miles)	0835
SS11 Sweet Lamb Hafren 1 (12.39 miles)	0915
SS12 Dyfi 1 (12.10 miles)	1028
SS13 Gartheiniog 1 (6.99 miles)	1102
SS14 Dyfnant (5.15 miles)	1208
Remote tyre zone Newtown	1317
SS15 Myherin 2 (12.60 miles)	1450
SS16 Sweet Lamb Hafren 2 (12.39 miles)	1530
SS17 Dyfi 2 (12.10 miles)	1643
SS18 Gartheiniog 2 (6.99 miles)	1718
Service Deeside	1944
SUNDAY OCTOBER 7	
SS19 Elsi (6.25 miles)	0722
SS20 Gwydir 1 (9.13 miles)	0808
SS21 Great Orme Llandudno 1 (4.98 miles)	0916
SS22 Gwydir 2 (9.13 miles)	1035
SS23 Great Orme Llandudno 2 (4.98 miles)	1218
Finish Llandudno	1230



TV

BT SPORT

Friday October 7
2330 End of day one review,
BT Sport 2

Saturday October 8
1200 SS14 live, BT Sport 2

Saturday October 8
2245 End of day two review,
BT Sport 1

Sunday October 9
0800 SS20 live, BT Sport 3
1200 SS23 live, BT Sport 2

Sunday October 9
1100 End of day three review,
BT Sport 1

RED BULL TV

Friday October 7
2200 End of day one review

Saturday October 8
1145 SS14 live
2200 End of day two review

Sunday October 9
2200 End of day three review



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TOP 10 RUNNING ORDER

#	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
5	Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC
8	Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja	Toyota Yaris WRC
1	Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia	Ford Fiesta WRC
9	Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm	Toyota Yaris WRC
7	Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila	Toyota Yaris WRC
4	Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC
3	Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula	Ford Fiesta WRC
2	Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt	Ford Fiesta WRC
6	Hayden Paddon/Sebastian Marshall	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC
10	Mads Ostberg/Torstein Eriksen	Citroen C3 WRC

STICKING POINT

MICHELIN HAS BEEN HARD AT WORK IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS TO ENSURE THAT HISTORY DOESN'T REPEAT ITSELF

BY DAVID EVANS

T

he unexpected result of last year's Rally GB forced Michelin's hand. A car shod with rival, softer DMACK tyres had finished at the top of the pile. Michelin had to respond, and it did just that by constructing an all-new tyre to avoid any form of Elfyn Evans-style triumph from being repeated. After all, his win 12 months ago ended Michelin's perfect

World Rally Championship victory streak, which had started with Mikko Hirvonen's victory on the Monte Carlo rally in 2010.

Transmitting 380bhp through all four wheels to take a World Rally Car to 60mph from rest – no matter how unruly the surface may be – in less than four seconds is all part of the brief for

building the WRC tyre. So too is supporting the 1400kg weight as it bounces down the pitted gravel roads that make up Rally Cyprus. And, when it comes round to Sweden, each car requires 1536 20mm tungsten and steel studs to claw into the ice and snow to find traction. Yet it was the Welsh forests that managed to twist the plot.

So specific are the conditions of the Rally GB roads that Michelin has now tailored its approach especially for the likes of Dyfi and Dyfnant. Current tyre regulations stipulate one tread pattern for gravel and, before the summer, that tyre came in just two compounds: hard and soft. Now it has a third as the firm tries to ward off another potential upset.

Michelin's WRC manager Arnaud Remy says: "Rally GB is so different from the others; when it's wet it can be really wet and very muddy and this is one of the reasons that we decided to design and build this new compound of tyre."



Michelin heads into Rally GB far better prepared for the Welsh roads

McKLEIN



“WHEN WE DESIGNED OUR NEW TYRE COMPOUND, WE HAD WALES IN MIND”

MICHELIN WRC MANAGER ARNAUD REMY



When we designed it we had Wales in mind.”

The new tyre, codenamed LTX Force S6, actually made its debut in Finland – not that you’d have noticed because nobody used it. Although they were intended to fit the rally’s looser surfaces, the higher temperatures ruled out that strategy.

As the rally’s winner Ott Tanak explains: “It was too hot in Finland for this tyre. We tested it a little bit, but it’s hard to see how good it was in those conditions.”

The softer boot was never going to see the light of day on a sweltering and rock-hard Rally Turkey last time out, but Tanak drove the new compound in meaningful conditions last week.

“I had two days’ testing in Wales,” he says. “The first day was not so wet, but the second day was wet and muddy and the soft tyre worked well. It’s definitely a good option tyre, but we’ll have to see if it’s wet and muddy enough for a complete loop to use it.”

Michelin’s prime tyre for this week will be the medium M6; loosely speaking it’s the old soft tyre with a bit of a tweak. Each crew has an allocation of 28 M6s and 16 S6s – a maximum of 28 tyres can be used during the event.

“When it’s hot in Wales we have seen that it can be very abrasive for the tyre,” Remy continues. “If it’s warm and dry it could be quite complicated – but we don’t think that we

would need the hard [compound].”

After a dip in the weather, last week’s welcome return of low-20s temperatures and lots of sunshine would have meant plenty of medium action. But Remy’s not going to be lulled into a false sense of security. He’s seen Wales in all weathers.

“For us, this rally is so important,” he says. “It’s like Monte Carlo or Finland. It’s a unique challenge with the weather, the conditions and the gravel – a real challenge for the tyre. But it’s always a joke that when we go to this rally, nobody forgets to take the big boots and the umbrella.”

Monte Carlo is frequently thought of as the trickiest event from a tyre management perspective. But this week could be just as complicated in Wales. If the sun stays, that will rule out use of the soft tyre. But, just as you know that ice will surely feature during round one of the season, it’s almost as surefire that we’ll see some precipitation on round 11 this week. When the time comes, picking the soft compound at the key moment could pay off handsomely – providing you can get it through the loop (the longest of which is Saturday morning at 49 miles).

After all of Michelin’s effort in the intervening year, its new soft tyre has opened up a window of opportunity on Rally GB. It’s now left to the crews to decide whether it’ll be worth the gamble. ■

'BOYO, WE'RE GOING TO WIN THIS ONE FOR YOU'

ALREADY CONFIRMED AS 1993 CHAMPION, JUHA KANKKUNEN HAD NO NEED TO ENTER THE RAC RALLY. THAT DIDN'T STOP HIM FROM BRINGING IT HOME FOR HIS NEW CO-DRIVER

BY **NICKY GRIST** PHOTOGRAPHY **MCKLEIN**



T

he 1993 RAC Rally was my first ever World Rally Championship win at home. It's an event I'll never forget and a result I'll cherish forever.

I was, of course, competing with Juha Kankkunen at Toyota. I'd started to work with him in the middle of the season, drafted in after his regular co-driver, Juha Piironen, suffered a brain

haemorrhage in Argentina. After a brief recce we headed north to Tucuman for the start and first stage, which, remarkably, we were fastest on. Here I was leading a WRC event for the first time. From that point on we never lost the lead and won that first event together, and then won again in Australia some weeks later.

On the rally before the RAC, Juha had sewn up his fourth world title when we finished third in Spain. In all honesty, we didn't even have to come to the RAC, but Juha told me: "Boyo, we're going and we're going to win this one for you."

Before the 1993 event, my best RAC finish was 25th overall and second in A5 while sharing Harry Hockly's Vauxhall Nova five years earlier. And now here I was arriving at the start with a four-time world champion, running first on the road with number

1 on my door as part of the factory Toyota team. I do remember thinking: "Bloody hell..." but when I look back now, I took it all in my stride, even though it really was a dream come true.

We'd had a couple of weeks between Spain and the RAC. In that time we'd done our pre-event test and, of course, the recce. During the test, the big focus was on tyres. There was a plethora of options – so many compounds, patterns, sizes, and then all of those could be cut into something new. It was incredible as we could choose the optimum tyre for each stage. Nowadays, the WRC drivers have to mix and match a very limited choice that cannot be cut in order to get the best compromise for a large group of stages! How things have changed.

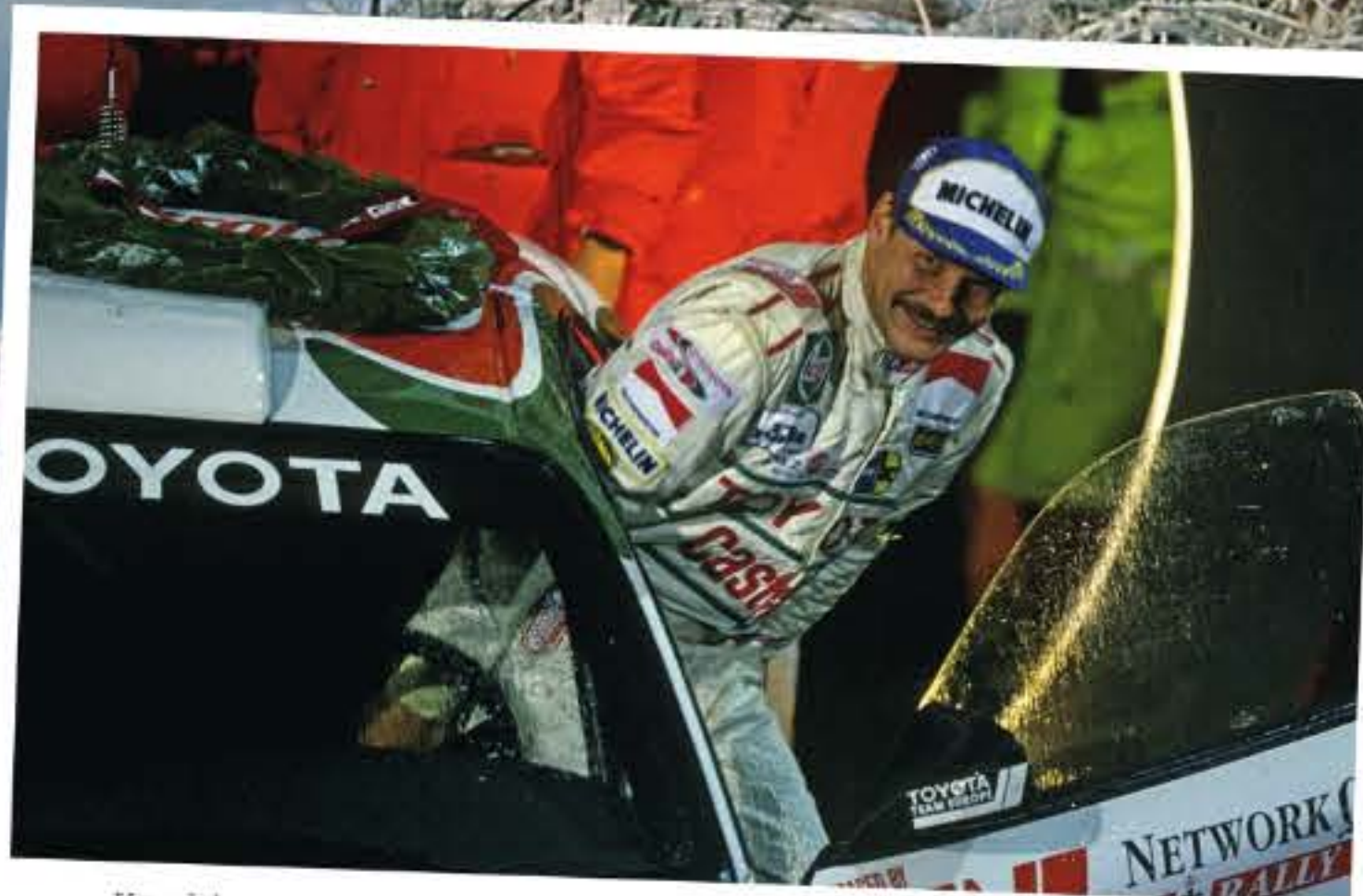
The action started earlier than expected on the recce, when the bad weather arrived. Like today on this rally, we only had two passes through each stage. But the difference was we had 33 stages to recce. Only Donington was repeated (run three times in total), so the recce took a huge amount of planning.

We got to the Dyfnant stage in Wales and the organisers were all at the start – none of them could get through as the snow was so bad. I told them not to worry, as Juha said we'd go in and open the road up a bit for everyone in our four-wheel-drive Celica recce car – that's how bad it was in places.

It was really cold on Sunday morning for the start out of Birmingham, but there wasn't any snow as the Midlands was



Kankkunen was sensational in treacherous conditions, but so calm in the cockpit



Kankkunen was beaten by Grist to the champagne, but partied much harder afterwards

fairly clear. Sutton Park, the first stage, was in good shape and we were quickest. Juha was always good on the Sunday spectator stages.

Down the M54 to Weston Park and that was OK as well. On the remainder of the Sunday loop we went through Oulton Park, Tatton Park and Chatsworth, which had some snow on the high ground, and into Clumber. We started to get more and more snow at the side of the road as we went further north.

The final stage of the day was at MIRA in Warwickshire, after which we were back to Birmingham with a slender 14-second lead. But we were all ready for an attack on Monday morning in Wales. That was where the rally would start in earnest.

Juha's brother Timo was doing our gravel notes, so he'd been through the first stage in Dyfnant earlier and reported a lot of ice. Basically, it was all ice with a fair bit of snow in places.

Juha attacked in an attempt to catch everyone asleep. He was so, so impressive. The car control was exceptional. We started that stage at half-six in the morning in the pitch black and he was on it from the word go. We took 13s out of everybody and a whopping 47s out of Colin McRae.

This was during the time when all of Britain was rooting for Colin and his co-driver Derek Ringer to win. They'd led the event for the previous two years, but fallen foul of Grizedale

both times. A day on from Dyfnant and we'd be back into the Lakes — and Juha and I were as interested as anybody to see how our Scottish Subaru rivals would fare.

Monday was a difficult day in Wales. There wasn't so much snow, but the ice was everywhere and when daylight came it made it even more treacherous. In the trees, it was like an ice rink, but where the sun was — and it was a lovely sunny day — the grip wasn't so bad. People talked of fearing a corner waiting for them in those conditions. I can honestly say I didn't feel that with Juha. He was completely composed in the car. We clattered some logs in Dyfnant, but it was no bother.

By the end of day two, and after a series of really quick times, Colin was leading us by 21s as we left Wales and headed north on the M6 to the overnight halt in Lancaster. I knew this was going to be a real ding-dong battle.

Now for Grizedale... and Colin came through unscathed, still ►

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Grist swiftly settled into life alongside ace Finn



The Kankkunen/Grist partnership lasted until the Welsh co-driver moved to join Colin McRae in 1997

in the lead. The reward for that was to head further north and into Kielder. Juha always called it 'Killer Kielder', but he did like the place and was not fazed by its reputation. This was where it got interesting. The ice was there, but now it was covered with fresh snow. And some more stages in the dark.

Unfortunately for Colin and Derek, however, their challenge ended in Kershope – the first Kielder stage – when a damaged radiator cooked the engine on their Impreza. Once again their rally was curtailed early on.

We'd been going at it pretty hard in a battle with the Scots and suddenly Juha and I were two and a half minutes ahead of everybody else. Did I dare think about taking my first-ever RAC win? Not a chance. There was so much of Kielder still to come, and the night stages. And now there was the constant balance of what to do with tyres.

The studded bicycle-type narrow tyre we use in Sweden would have been the ideal choice, but we weren't allowed those. We could take the narrow tyre with no spikes, but it didn't have Michelin's ATS mousse-insert system, which made the tyre pretty much puncture-proof. If you wanted the best grip, that was the tyre to cut through the snow. If you wanted to avoid punctures, you needed the wider gravel tyre, which had ATS.

We went with the narrow tyre and, once again, Juha was superb. It was something natural for the Scandinavians to drive the car in these conditions. A friend of mine was spectating at one stage and he told me after the event that they couldn't even stand up on the road because it was so icy. When the course cars came through, they were so, so slow and just trying to stay on the road. Then they heard the whistles from the marshals and this Celica rocketed into view. He said it was unbelievable.

Juha used all of the road, regularly putting the car into a ditch to slow us down or finding traction out of corners on the frozen stones at the side. It was sensational from the

outside, but so calm on the inside.

Unfortunately, we did fall foul of Kielder and a couple of punctures cost us two minutes. Suddenly Kenneth [Eriksson, Mitsubishi] was just 30s behind. Pundershaw was the last stage of day three, starting just before seven in the evening. Juha got the hammer down in there and we took another big chunk out of everybody, but more importantly 49 seconds out of Eriksson, which gave us a reasonable buffer again. With one day to go, things were looking good.

Hamsterley, first thing Wednesday, was full snow and halved in distance because of the conditions. We were quickest again, but Cropton, next up, showed we really weren't out of the woods yet. We slid wide and clattered a gatepost or something on my side. The rear wing was well modified and it was actually quite a big impact. But the car was straight and, just to prove it, we went fastest in the next one, SS31, Gale Rigg, Langdale and Dalby followed, and Juha just kept reeling the fastest times off.

The run back south to the finish was punctuated by a couple of spectator stages at Scunthorpe and one last run around Donington, where Juha drove sensibly to conserve the result. After that we were on the road to Birmingham for the finish around eight in the evening. Coming into Centenary Square was the most surreal feeling. There were these ceremonial trumpeters playing as we went over the ramp, and such a big cheer from the crowd. It was amazing, such a fantastic feeling.

It was still absolutely freezing when Juha and I got out of the car and stood on the bonnet. I'd popped the cork out of my champagne, sprayed it and enjoyed my first sip before he even got the top off his bottle! But that was pretty much all the celebrating for me. Juha had been competing at this level a long time and he went out to enjoy the moment with a big party. I wasn't so interested in that; I was starting out and was just happy to have a couple of beers.

If there was one disappointment, it was the trophy. Those years earlier, finishing on the podium in A5 with Harry we'd got a lovely piece of Wedgewood. I was expecting something special for taking my first world championship win at home. Instead I got this thing with a wooden base, a gold Network Q logo and a small sliver of silver that read 'Winner: Juha Kankkunen/Nicky Grist'. In fairness, when Colin and I won it four years later the trophy was much better.

And that was that. Birmingham might not have been one of the classic RAC venues like Chester or Harrogate, but it did mean I was only an hour and a quarter from home. Thursday morning, I was in the front door and back to normal life. In fact, I was probably on the golf course by mid-morning.

What a difference a day makes. ■



Grist took his first WRC win on his maiden outing with Kankkunen in Argentina, 1993

Edwards has been a shining light in BRC, driving his M-Sport run Ford Fiesta R5



THE BRITS ARE BACK

AFTER A DECADE AWAY, BRITAIN'S PREMIER RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP RETURNS TO RALLY GB FOR A TITLE FINALE

BY JACK BENYON PHOTOGRAPHY JEP

A

ri Vatanen, Stig Blomqvist, Hannu Mikkola... and, more recently, Elfyn Evans. Those are all drivers who have a debt of gratitude to what is generally accepted as one of the most storied and strongest domestic rally series: the British Rally Championship.

For the first time since 2008, when Guy Wilks steered his Mitsubishi to title glory, Britain's

round of the World Rally Championship is the BRC title decider once more. Running as part of the international event, the series is led by the same spec of R5 cars that will fight for WRC2 honours.

Since returning in 2016 after a one-year hiatus, the BRC has had mixed fortunes. While it offers arguably the toughest test of ability of any national rally series, costs to run an R5 car top £300,000 and entries have steadily declined over recent years.

It has not been helped by incidents out of its control this year. The opening round, the Border Counties Rally, was cancelled due to poor weather and the Rally Isle of Man due to issues obtaining closed-road permits, with the event and government blaming each other in what can only be described as a shambles. A revamped calendar, with more events shared with the R5-based Irish Tarmac Championship, could be just the rejuvenation it needs.

There has been a shining light in a season of adversity, and that's Matt Edwards. Saddling a Ford Fiesta R5 run by M-Sport, the Conway driver has won every rally this year – that's some feat, regardless of how highly you rank the competition. Edwards has always struggled for budget, but his hard work is met by Peter Smith – father of Bentley Le Mans winner Guy – who has helped Edwards throughout his career and has paid for cars to help the Welshman. It's a proper fairytale story in a sport that offers little help for the talented and low-funded.

LEADING BRC ENTRIES

#	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	BRC CLASS
81	Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod	Ford Fiesta R5	BRC 1
82	David Bogie/John Rowan	Skoda Fabia R5	BRC 1
83	Rhys Yates/Elliott Edmondson	Skoda Fabia R5	BBC 1
86	Alex Laffey/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta R5	BRC 1
88	Sacha Kakad/James Aldridge	Ford Fiesta R5	BRC 1
90	Lawrence Whyte/Paul Beaton	Ford Fiesta R5	BRC 1
92	Steve Rokland/Dai Roberts	Peugeot 208 R2	JBRC
93	James Williams/Tom Woodburn	Vauxhall Adam R2	JBRC
94	William Creighton/Liam Regan	Peugeot 208 R2	JBRC
96	Kevin Horgan/Liam Fouhy	Skoda Fabia R2	JBRC

With this a double-points round of the BRC split into two, all Edwards needs to seal the title is a fourth place on Friday, and the 34-year-old could wrap it up on a stage within a 30-minute drive of his house. His dad Alyn helps to organise the event too.

"Alwen and Penmachno are both equal distance from my house and it's not far," says Edwards. "Penmachno is my favourite local stage, so it would be nice to be sat there as British champion on Friday afternoon. I'd be lying if I said I hadn't thought about it. But there's a lot of work to do before that happens."

Unfortunately, Edwards and the only person who can likely stop him – Skoda Fabia R5 driver and 2011 BRC champion David Bogie – won't be able to register for WRC2 as the series use different and conflicting regulations on items such as fuel. But while the BRC drivers will start further back in the running order on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, they should be much closer

BEAUTIFUL MACHINERY AND A NOD TO RALLY GB'S PAST

There's no doubt that the top-line WRC cars provide adequate entertainment – the current machinery is arguably as spectacular as any in the sport's history.

But aside from the bewinged top-spec cars of the likes of Sebastien Ogier and Thierry Neuville, the rest of the cars are a bit, well, samey. They're all based on hatchbacks and

“THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF VARIETY, AS PRETTY MUCH ANY RALLY CAR CAN ENTER – FROM AN EX-WRC FORD FOCUS TO A VOLVO AMAZON”

variation is minuscule. But don't worry – rectifying this is what the National rally is for.

Running 80 miles of stages, usually just doing one run through each test, it attracts UK clubmen from all over the country to share the same stages as the superstars.

And there's no shortage of variety, as pretty much any rally car can enter. This year there's anything from a 2001 Ford Focus WRC to a Volvo Amazon, Volkswagen Beetle, Land Rover Freelander and back through to a current R5 Skoda Fabia. Watching them will require committing to staying longer in the forests, but it's only once a year and there's no doubt about the entertainment produced



by the eclectic mix.

The only major change to the National event for 2018 is that it takes in the stages on Friday and Saturday, as opposed to last year when it was Saturday and Sunday. This has been done to increase mileage and to give competitors the Sunday off to allow them time to return to work on Monday.

Favourite this year is Tom Preston, 2017's

winner driving a Skoda Fabia R5. But, after a lengthy period on the sidelines, he'll be challenged hard. Andrew Gallacher was recently crowned Scottish champion, and he'll be hoping that experience will counteract the age of his 2001 Focus (above), once driven here by British champion Mark Higgins. Fellow SRC driver John Wink will be in the mix with his Hyundai R5,

and Roger Duckworth returns to an event he first tackled in 1996.

Of the historic entries, Steve Ward's Ford Escort will be tough to beat, while in terms of spectacle it will be difficult to better John Saunders's MG Metro 6R4. Bob Bean's Ford Lotus Cortina, Glenn Janssens's Porsche 911 and Ken Davies's Volvo Amazon (below, left) will be among the weird, wonderful and beautiful.



NATIONAL RALLY CARS TO WATCH

#	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
201	Tom Preston/Carl Williamson	Skoda Fabia R5
202	Andrew Gallacher/Jane Nicol	Ford Focus WRC05
203	John Wink/John Forrest	Hyundai i20 R5
204	Roger Duckworth/Mark Broomfield	Subaru Impreza S6 WRC
220	John Saunders/Tony Hart	MG Metro 6R4
225	Steve Ward/Michael Crawford	Ford Escort Mk2
231	Bob Bean/Malcolm Smithson	Ford Lotus Cortina
232	Tommi Meadows/Emma Morrison	Ford Fiesta R2
235	Bob Beales/Mike Leflay	Volkswagen Beetle
236	Glenn Janssens/TBC	Porsche 911

together on times and a comparison should be possible.

The Junior British Rally Championship will also be decided, with Norwegian Steve Rokland (Peugeot 208 R2), Welshman James Williams (Vauxhall Adam R2) and Northern Irishman William Creighton (208 R2) up for honours. This R2 class for front-wheel-drive purpose-built rally cars has flourished in the BRC with 18 points scorers this year, and is one of few categories with consistent entries, along with the R5 and Cadet divisions. The Cadet class for the older Ford Fiesta R2 and Cup-class cars – lower-powered versions of the R2 – will also be decided between the Fiestas of Jordan Reynolds, Johnnie Mulholland and Bart Lang.

It's likely that this will be the last time the BRC is part of Rally GB for some time as it has not been included in next year's calendar, although it is listed as a back-up event should any of the others be lost. That's another reason why this shouldn't be missed. ■





MCKLEIN/REINHARD KLEIN/COLIN McMASTER/LAT

There was nothing unusual about Formula 1 drivers tackling the RAC Rally in the 1960s. Graham Hill and Jim Clark both started the '66 event; Hill retired a

Mini Cooper S in Grizedale early on, but two-time world champion Clark starred. Running as high as sixth overall in a Lotus Cortina, he

was quickest on three stages before rolling out of the rally on its 45th stage, Glengap. "I tripped over the Border..." smiled the Duns farmer.



THE RUNNERS AND RIDERS



#	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR		
1	Sebastien Ogier (F) Julien Ingrassia (F)	Ford Fiesta WRC	62	Enrico Brazzoli (I) Luca Beltrame (I)
2	Elfyn Evans (GB) Daniel Barritt (GB)	Ford Fiesta WRC	63	Louise Cook (GB) Stefan Davis (GB)
3	Teemu Suninen (FIN) Mikko Markkula (FIN)	Ford Fiesta WRC	64	Tom Williams (GB) Phil Hall (GB)
4	Andreas Mikkelsen (N) Anders Jaeger (N)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	81	Matt Edwards (GB) Darren Garrod (GB)
5	Thierry Neuville (B) Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	82	David Bogie (GB) John Rowan (IRL)
6	Hayden Paddon (NZ) Sebastian Marshall (GB)	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	83	Rhys Yates (GB) Elliott Edmondson (GB)
7	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN) Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	84	Tom Cave (GB) James Morgan (GB)
8	Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Toyota Yaris WRC	85	Gaurav Gill (IND) Glenn Macneall (AUS)
9	Esapekka Lappi (FIN) Janne Ferm (FIN)	Toyota Yaris WRC	86	Alex Laffey (GB) Patrick Walsh (GB)
10	Mads Ostberg (N) Torstein Eriksen (N)	Citroen C3 WRC	87	Eamonn Boland (IRL) MJ Morrissey (IRL)
11	Craig Breen (IRL) Scott Martin (GB)	Citroen C3 WRC	88	Sacha Kakad (GB) James Aldridge (GB)
31	Pontus Tidemand (S) Jonas Andersson (S)	Skoda Fabia R5	89	Paulo Nobre (BR) Gabriel Morales (BR)
32	Gus Greensmith (GB) Alex Gelsomino (USA)	Ford Fiesta R5	90	Lawrence Whyte (GB) Paul Beaton (GB)
33	Lukasz Pieniazek (PL) Przemyslaw Mazur (PL)	Skoda Fabia R5	91	Jean-Baptiste Franceschi (F) Romain Courbon (F)
34	Fabio Andolfi (I) Simone Scattolin (I)	Skoda Fabia R5	92	Steve Rokland (N) Dai Roberts (GB)
35	Ole Christian Veiby (N) Stig Rune Skjaermoen (N)	Citroen C3 R5	93	James Williams (GB) Tom Woodburn (GB)
36	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN) Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Skoda Fabia R5	94	William Creighton (GB) Liam Regan (GB)
37	Jari Huttunen (FIN) Antti Linnaketo (FIN)	Hyundai i20 R5	95	Tony Jardine (GB) Tom Cary (GB)
38	Pierre-Louis Loubet (F) Vincent Landais (F)	Hyundai i20 R5	96	Kevin Horgan (IRL) Liam Fouhy (IRL)
39	Nil Solans (E) Marc Marti (E)	Ford Fiesta R5	97	John Morrison (GB) Peter Carstairs (GB)
40	Stephane Lefebvre (F) Gabin Moreau (F)	Citroen C3 R5	98	Paul Walker (GB) Geraint Thomas (GB)
41	Marco Bulacia Wilkinson (BO) Fabian Cretu (RA)	Skoda Fabia R5	99	Scott Partridge (GB) Fiona Scarret (GB)
42	Simone Tempestini (RO) Itu Sergiu (RO)	Citroen C3 R5	100	Jordan Reynolds (GB) Peredur Wyn Davies (GB)
43	Eric Camilli (F) Benjamin Veillas (F)	Ford Fiesta R5	101	Finlay Retson (GB) Tom Hynd (GB)
44	Chris Ingram (GB) Ross Whittock (GB)	Skoda Fabia R5	102	Spencer Wilkinson (GB) Glyn Thomas (GB)
61	Taiko Lario (FIN) Tatu Hamalainen (FIN)	Peugeot 208 R2	103	James McDiarmid (GB) Gareth Clarke (GB)
			104	Alex Waterman (GB) Harry Thomas (GB)
			105	Bart Lang (GB) Sinclair Young (GB)
			106	Saleh Hijazi (GB) Stephen Landen (GB)
			107	Nabila Tejpar (GB) Richard Bliss (GB)
			108	Jonathan Mulholland (GB) Jeff Case (IRL)
			109	Stephen Southall (GB) Richard Bestwick (GB)
			110	Iwan Evans (GB) Sion Williams (GB)
			111	Neil Andrew (GB) Dominic Adams (GB)





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