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5 DECEMBER 2019

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Could Ferrari be the next move for Hamilton?

What more can Lewis Hamilton do to enhance his reputation in Formula 1? The obvious answer is by beating Michael Schumacher's titles and wins records. Both are well within range, but would taking yet more success with Mercedes add much to his status?

There's one thing that definitely would, and that's winning a title with Ferrari, which is why the rumours that gained momentum last weekend (see page 4) are so interesting. If Hamilton could succeed where Fernando Alonso and Sebastian Vettel have failed, there would be no doubt that he is the driver of his generation.

When assessing the greatest of all time, one of the factors that often comes up in the Autosport office is how many teams a driver was able to succeed with. A third team (after McLaren and Mercedes) for Hamilton — particularly one that has been so troubled in recent years — would make the case for Hamilton incredibly strong. But does it make sense for the man himself?

Hamilton is clearly happy at Mercedes, which has consistently provided him with competitive machinery. It also tends to look after its drivers following retirement — the relationship for Lewis could be for life. Throw in the sometimes tumultuous situation at Ferrari, where he would be alongside the up-and-coming Charles Leclerc rather than the already-beaten-him-three-times Valtteri Bottas, and the logical thing to do becomes clear.

Logic, of course, doesn't always rule, and Hamilton's hero Ayrton Senna famously thought he would end his career at Ferrari. There's a chance — a 25% chance according to Mercedes boss Toto Wolff — it could happen, but it's probably a move that is more appealing to motorsport fans than the driver who has to make the call.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Editor

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Our F1 season review
124-page bumper
special

Could Hamilton and Leclerc become Ferrari team-mates for the 2021 season?



HAMILTON '25% CHANCE' OF JOINING FERRARI

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton has been freshly linked to a possible Ferrari move, but Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff believes there is only a “25%” chance of that happening.

Hamilton is one of several topline drivers out of contract after next season. He and Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas both need new deals, as do existing Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel and Red Bull's Max Verstappen. The future of Charles Leclerc, Vettel's team-mate, may also need deciding — although he joined Ferrari on a multi-season arrangement this year, the explicit nature of his deal is unknown.

The Hamilton/Ferrari rumour originated in Italy, where *La Gazzetta dello Sport* reported that Hamilton had met twice this year with Ferrari president John Elkann. Then, when asked at last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix about Hamilton's impending availability and if Ferrari would be interested in signing him,

team principal Mattia Binotto called the six-time world champion an “outstanding” driver and “knowing that he's available in 2021 can make us only happy”. Wolff did little to dampen the flames. Asked how he'd feel about Hamilton meeting Ferrari, Wolff replied: “I'm totally OK with that.”

Hamilton appeared nonplussed by the story. “This is the first time I've heard of that,” he said on Saturday in Abu Dhabi. “I think that's the first compliment I've had from Ferrari in these 13 years! I honestly don't remember them ever mentioning me ever so thank you, I'll take it. It doesn't really mean anything — it's all talk. But it's nice. It's taken all these years for him [Binotto] to recognise me, maybe, but I'm grateful.”

The appeal of signing Hamilton from Mercedes is obvious for Ferrari. Vettel has been poor this season, by his own admission not driving as well as he should as a four-time world champion. Hamilton would represent an upgrade and hurt Ferrari's biggest rival at the same time by stripping Mercedes of its star driver.

But the appeal from Hamilton's side is restricted to the temptation of being the man to potentially end Ferrari's title drought, and the lure of Ferrari as a brand — which is significant, but ultimately of limited value — especially as he would need to walk away from Mercedes' domination of the V6 turbo-hybrid F1 era and his own role in that, winning five of the past six drivers' titles.

“I think for a driver the priority will always be to be in the quickest possible car and in a team where he can achieve his objectives,” said Wolff. “There will be components such as financial incentives that will play a role, and all that at the end becomes a total package that the driver will evaluate. I feel that if you look at it from a rational standpoint, everything speaks for the fact of us continuing the journey together. But then there might be



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other factors, a new challenge, an exciting deal, that you need to always factor in. I give this a 25% chance.”

Hamilton joined Mercedes in 2013, one year before F1's new engine formula was introduced, and the partnership has matched the Ferrari/Michael Schumacher tally of five drivers' titles, while Mercedes has broken Ferrari's record of five double championships by winning six drivers' and constructors' crowns on the spin. Schumacher won 72 races with Ferrari and scored 58 poles, while Hamilton has 63 wins and 62 poles with Mercedes.

Ferrari has not won a world championship since 2008, when it clinched constructors' honours, while Kimi Raikkonen was its last world champion in 2007. But it is arguably a much more competitive proposition than Mercedes was back in 2012, when Hamilton opted to leave long-time backer McLaren.

Wolff is wary of being stung by assuming keeping his driver is a done deal. “I still think a driver of that level will always know that he can make an impact in a team,” said Wolff. “What I'm considering is when he left McLaren for Mercedes [for the 2013 season], it was said that it wasn't the right move. And it proved to be right. I don't want to make the mistake of underestimating Ferrari's potential. I don't see a sense of entitlement for us to win the seventh or eighth title.”

Hamilton said in Abu Dhabi he was not thinking about his next move, because he owed it to Mercedes to give it his full focus and commitment. He went on to finish his title-winning season with a dominant victory from pole position. “I honestly don't know how the next phase is going to go, when it comes to a contract,” said Hamilton. “It's very odd that you have to do it almost a year before it ends, and it can't be done towards the end, but that's just the way it goes. We shall see.”

SCOTT MITCHELL

...as Prancing Horse places five juniors in F2

FORMULA 2

Ferrari is braced for an all-out internal junior war in 2020 after placing five of its juniors in the Formula 2 Championship, with most of them in potentially championship-winning seats.

FIA Formula 3 champion Robert Shwartzman will step up to join Mick Schumacher (below) at Prema Racing; Ferrari's highest-placed junior in F2 in 2019, Callum Iloft, joins teams' championship runner-up Virtuosi Racing; Marcus Armstrong takes a seat at ART Grand Prix, which has fielded the F2 title winner for the past two years; and Giuliano Alesi joins the fledgling HWA team.

The eyes are always on Schumacher, who was 12th in the standings this year, but he stopped short of predicting he'll fight for the title in his second season of F2 with Prema. “I don't want to say ‘fight for the championship,’” he said. “My mindset for next year is to fight for the top position and go all out.”

Iloft finished one spot above Schumacher in his F2 rookie season this year with the Sauber Junior Team. There's a lot to like about this switch for the Briton, whose Achilles' heel has been managing the tyres. Virtuosi is renowned for its ability to teach its drivers to do that.

“I think Virtuosi is one of the best all-round teams in terms of experience, pace and results so I'm looking forward to becoming part of that,” said Iloft. “I've only

been in F2 one year, but the learning curve is very steep and front-loaded, so what you learn in years one and two is much more than what you learn by years three or four in this category.”

The two new boys, Shwartzman and Armstrong, finished in that order in the FIA F3 Championship this year, Kiwi Armstrong's prodigious pace beaten by Russian Shwartzman's greater consistency.

While the new 18-inch wheels offer the chance to shake up the order next year, ART still has to be the favourite after taking George Russell and Nyck de Vries to the respective 2018 and 2019 drivers' titles. “My expectations are as high as ever,” said Armstrong. “I feel very happy to be in ART because they have huge experience with strong drivers, and I haven't been here for very long but I have the impression they really know how to teach the drivers the right thing.”

Alesi was with Trident for his rookie season, but joins German motorsport giant HWA, which has taken the team over from Arden, although it had engineers embedded in the squad this year. Those technical staffers helped revive Arden into a race-winning team with the late Anthoine Hubert, and the five years of GP2/F2 experience of team-mate Artem Markelov – back in the series after a season in Japan – should help Alesi make a step forward.

JACK BENYON

➔ P30 ABU DHABI F2



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Russell at Mercedes, Ocon at Renault for Abu Dhabi test

FORMULA 1

Williams's George Russell has been testing for Mercedes this week as part of three days of running he is due to complete for the team before the end of 2019.

Mercedes protege Russell started this week's post-season Abu Dhabi Formula 1 tyre test with Williams on Tuesday morning at the start of the two-day 2020 tyre test, but was due to hand the FW42 over to ex-F2 driver Roy Nissany for the afternoon. He was then set to drive the Mercedes W10 on Wednesday, after Valtteri Bottas had run it on Tuesday. World champion Lewis Hamilton is not available as he has team sponsor commitments.

Russell will return to Abu Dhabi next week for two further days of 2021 18-inch-tyre running in Mercedes' mule car. It will be Pirelli's final test of the season with the new-size tyres.

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff insisted that Russell (above), who did not feel well at the start of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix weekend, does not have to worry about impressing the works team amid talk about Lewis Hamilton's

long-term future (see page 4).

"I've said to George, who was not 100% these last days, this test is not benchmarking him," said Wolff, "because we are absolutely certain that he has the qualities of a potential future Mercedes driver. He has the raw speed, he has the talent, he has the intelligence. There is a reason why he's won GP3 and F2 as a rookie. That hasn't been done many times before. And he has a flawless record in F1. It's more about the experience. So there's nothing to prove during the during these upcoming tests.

"George is under contract with Williams and we will always honour all contracts because they have given him the chance to step into F1."

Esteban Ocon also began his work with his new team Renault at this week's Yas Marina test. Ocon (below), who has been on the sidelines this year as third driver at Mercedes, has been released early by the team, with which he retains a management relationship. His previous F1 run came with Mercedes at Paul Ricard in October during a Pirelli tyre test.

ADAM COOPER AND EDD STRAW

Honda stays in F1 for 2021

FORMULA 1

Honda has extended its deal with Red Bull by one year to commit to the 2021 Formula 1 season, with discussions under way to continue the partnership to at least the end of 2023.

The Japanese manufacturer has begun evaluating the cost of being part of the next rules cycle, preventing the company from making a significant long-term commitment to F1. But it has taken the first step towards doing that by confirming it will continue to partner Red Bull and the energy-drinks company's junior team Toro Rosso in 2021.

Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko has described it as "a great relief for us", while both parties have admitted that talks have started on extending the deal for the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Honda must cut its spending in order to secure the future of its F1 engine programme, which was revived for 2015, one year into F1's V6 turbo-hybrid era. It joined forces with Toro Rosso in 2018 after three poor seasons with McLaren that were plagued by poor performance and reliability, and rebuilt its reputation with Toro Rosso. In doing so, Honda convinced Red Bull to switch from Renault power for 2019, in what was initially a two-year deal.

Partnering Red Bull made Honda a race winner in F1 again when Max Verstappen ended a 13-year victory drought at the Austrian Grand Prix, and Verstappen has since scored two further victories. He also secured third place in the drivers' championship at last weekend's finale.

Honda has also celebrated two podium finishes with Toro Rosso this year, including Honda's first 1-2 in 28 years in the Brazilian Grand Prix, in which Verstappen won and Pierre Gasly finished a shock second for the Italian team.

SCOTT MITCHELL



Williams promotes F2 runner-up Latifi to race seat

FORMULA 1

Formula 2 runner-up Nicholas Latifi will replace Robert Kubica at Williams for 2020, taking the last slot on the Formula 1 grid.

Latifi, who has completed six FP1 sessions and three days of testing this year for the team, has long been favourite for the drive. He had to finish in the top five of this year's F2 championship in order to guarantee that he would earn enough superlicence points, and did easily enough at last weekend's Yas Marina finale.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the team this year," said the Canadian, "supporting them with the development of the car, and assisting wherever I can trackside and at the factory. I look forward to the journey ahead with the team."

Deputy team principal Claire Williams added: "All of us at Williams have been immensely impressed at what he has achieved this year in FIA Formula 2, along with his commitment to the team, and the work that he has put in behind the scenes."

"Nicholas has become an established and well-

respected member of Williams, and we look forward to him stepping up into this new role."

Kubica, meanwhile, said confirmation of his plans for 2020 will come "quite soon" as he looks to combine an F1 role with a DTM race seat. He looks most likely to join forces with Racing Point. "Definitely I'm looking for a big challenge, and DTM, which is the highest probability that I will be racing in, is probably the toughest championship apart from F1 in Europe," he said.

ADAM COOPER, VALENTIN KHOROUNZHIY, EDD STRAW



FAVOURITE 3

NON-VILLENEUVE CANADIANS...

...and we're leaving out Lance Stroll too. Apart from the current Racing Point man, and new Williams recruit Latifi, it's been a barren time for the Maple Leaf in F1



#1 ALLEN BERG

Marc Surer's serious injuries sustained in a rally crash in 1986 gave the 1984 British F3 runner-up his chance. Surer's drive at Arrows was taken by Christian Danner, and the lofty German's departure from Osella freed up a place at the Italian team for this diminutive British Columbian. Berg started nine GPs, but never got close to 110% from the pole time.



#2 BILL BRACK

This Toronto racer was a serious force in domestic competition. After his trio of GP starts, he was a three-time Canadian Formula Atlantic champion and won races against Gilles Villeneuve, Bobby Rahal and Keke Rosberg. Made three starts in his home GP, in 1968 with Lotus (pictured), and in 1969 and 1972 with BRM, but didn't finish any of them.



#3 GEORGE EATON

Early-1960s megatalent Pete Ryan should have become the first Canadian F1 regular, only to be fatally injured in an F2 crash. At the end of that decade, department-store scion Eaton rocked up at BRM and spent most of the 1970 season with the team. Started 11 GPs from 13 attempts, fourth among Canadians behind only the victorious Villeneuves and Lance Stroll.

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Lamborghini's GT great defects to join Audi

GT WORLD CHALLENGE

Lamborghini talisman Mirko Bortolotti's switch to Audi – confirmed earlier this week – marks the end of an era, as the last driver involved in the development of the Huracan GT3 to depart for pastures new.

The 29-year-old Italian has been the driving force behind most of Lamborghini's major successes since the Huracan debuted in 2015, notably the sweep of Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup and overall titles in

2017, and back-to-back GTD class wins at Daytona in 2018 – the car's first in a 24-hour race – and 2019. The 2018 Blancpain Sprint Cup was also within reach until co-driver Christian Engelhart attempted to hide evidence of driving with his FHR device over his belts by destroying the on-board camera's SD card, causing their exclusion from the final round at the Nurburgring.

Former Red Bull Junior Bortolotti was unable to continue on the single-seater ladder after dominating the 2011 MSV-run

Formula 2 championship. He won the final season of the Eurocup Megane Trophy in 2013 and moved into one-make Lambo racing the following year, winning the World Finals and earning a factory deal.

Bortolotti is joined in the works Audi roster by another newcomer: Patric Niederhauser. A race winner in GP3, the 28-year-old Swiss won this year's ADAC GT Masters title with new Audi colleague Kelvin van der Linde in an R8 LMS.

JAMES NEWBOLD

Chadwick to contest Asian F3 during off-season

ASIAN F3

W Series champion Jamie Chadwick is to compete in the Asian Formula 3 Championship during the European winter.

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award finalist Chadwick has joined Absolute Racing for the series, which runs over five race weekends beginning next week at Sepang. She

contested an Asian F3 one-off at the Malaysian venue back in April as she geared up for W Series, which uses the same Tatuus chassis and Alfa Romeo turbocharged engine.

"It's important for me to use this series as part of my testing and development programme to ensure that I'm race-fit for whatever 2020 throws at me," said Chadwick, who will bid for a second W Series title.

Absolute, run by ex-Formula Master racer Rodolfo Avila, has also snapped up FIA Formula 3 racer Devlin DeFrancesco for Asian F3, which runs until late February. Two more drivers confirmed by the team are Daniel Cao, who stays on after finishing third in the 2019 series, and Australian Tommy Smith.

MARCUS SIMMONS

➔ **P32 AMABA TESTS**





Breen may join Hyundai B team

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Hyundai Motorsport director Andrea Adamo wants to run a second team in next season's World Rally Championship.

The potential for manufacturer second teams in the WRC returned last week as Adamo looked to find a home for Craig Breen and Andreas Mikkelsen, and Jari-Matti Latvala aimed to keep himself in the fight for a full-time WRC return in 2021.

Second teams were a regular part of the WRC picture until the new generation of cars arrived in 2017. Now, Hyundai and Toyota have been linked to potential 'B' teams for next year.

Breen and Mikkelsen both will compete at this weekend's Monza Rally, and Adamo is determined the Italian event will not be their final outing with the manufacturer.

"We are working together with Craig and with Andreas," Adamo told Autosport. "As we know, we will have fewer World Rally Cars in the WRC next season [with Citroen pulling out] and all I can do is invent ways to make more. I don't know how or when this can happen, but the most important thing is to have the idea."

In addition to the potential for a second WRC squad, Hyundai is expected to reveal Nikolay Gryazin and Ole Christian Veiby

as its WRC 2 team this week.

Dropped from Toyota's first team last week, Latvala is determined not to give up on what has been a record-breaking career for number of WRC starts. The 34-year-old Finn will drive a factory-spec Yaris WRC in Sweden and Finland, and possibly Portugal, Sardinia and Wales next year.

"It's very important for me to keep driving next year," Latvala told Autosport. "This year has been a difficult one, it's been quite a stormy season for me in my private life too, but I see next year more like a pause than stopping. I still think I have another good couple of years in me."

Latvala said he could see the benefit of a second Toyota team and admitted he would be happy to join Takamoto Katsuta, who will drive all the European WRC rounds as well as Rally Japan in a Yaris WRC.

- April's Rally Chile has been cancelled following rioting and the declaration of a state of emergency in the country. WRC Promoter is considering a replacement. The Formula E round in Chilean capital Santiago is still good to happen in January as it is privately funded rather than relying on government support.

DAVID EVANS

IN THE HEADLINES

INTERLAGOS WEC CANNED

The Circuit of The Americas has replaced Interlagos on the 2019-20 World Endurance Championship schedule due to the financial difficulties of the Brazilian promoter. The Austin track will host its race on 23 February – two weeks later than the dropped Brazilian date – and gives the US a second round, with the Sebring 1000 Miles following in March.

FORMULA E'S WORLD STATUS

Formula E has gained official FIA world championship status, starting from the 2020-21 series. The governing body's World Motor Sport Council approved this in a recent vote, with FE founder and chairman Alejandro Agag and FIA president Jean Todt finalising the agreement last week.

MATSUSHITA BACK IN JAPAN

Formula 2 race winner Nobuharu Matsushita is taking part in this week's Super Formula test at Suzuka – dubbed 'rookie test' despite most of the participants having been around for donkey's years – as he looks increasingly likely to return to Japan again for 2020. The Honda protege will drive with Drago Corse, as the team returns to the category in conjunction with ThreeBond, which is moving up from Japanese F3. Red Bull Junior Juri Vips, who contested the final SF round of 2019 with Team Mugen, will stay with that team for the test.

DOMINGOS PIEDADE 1944-2019

An all-rounder best known for his influence on the AMG Mercedes team and his role in the management of Ayrton Senna's early career, Domingos Piedade, has died. He was 75. The Portuguese became Emerson Fittipaldi's manager in 1972, and later oversaw AMG's expansion from 46 employees to 1200. He played a key part in Joest Racing's Le Mans 24 Hours successes in 1984-85, and was involved in bringing the Portuguese Grand Prix to Estoril – he became president of the track in 2007.

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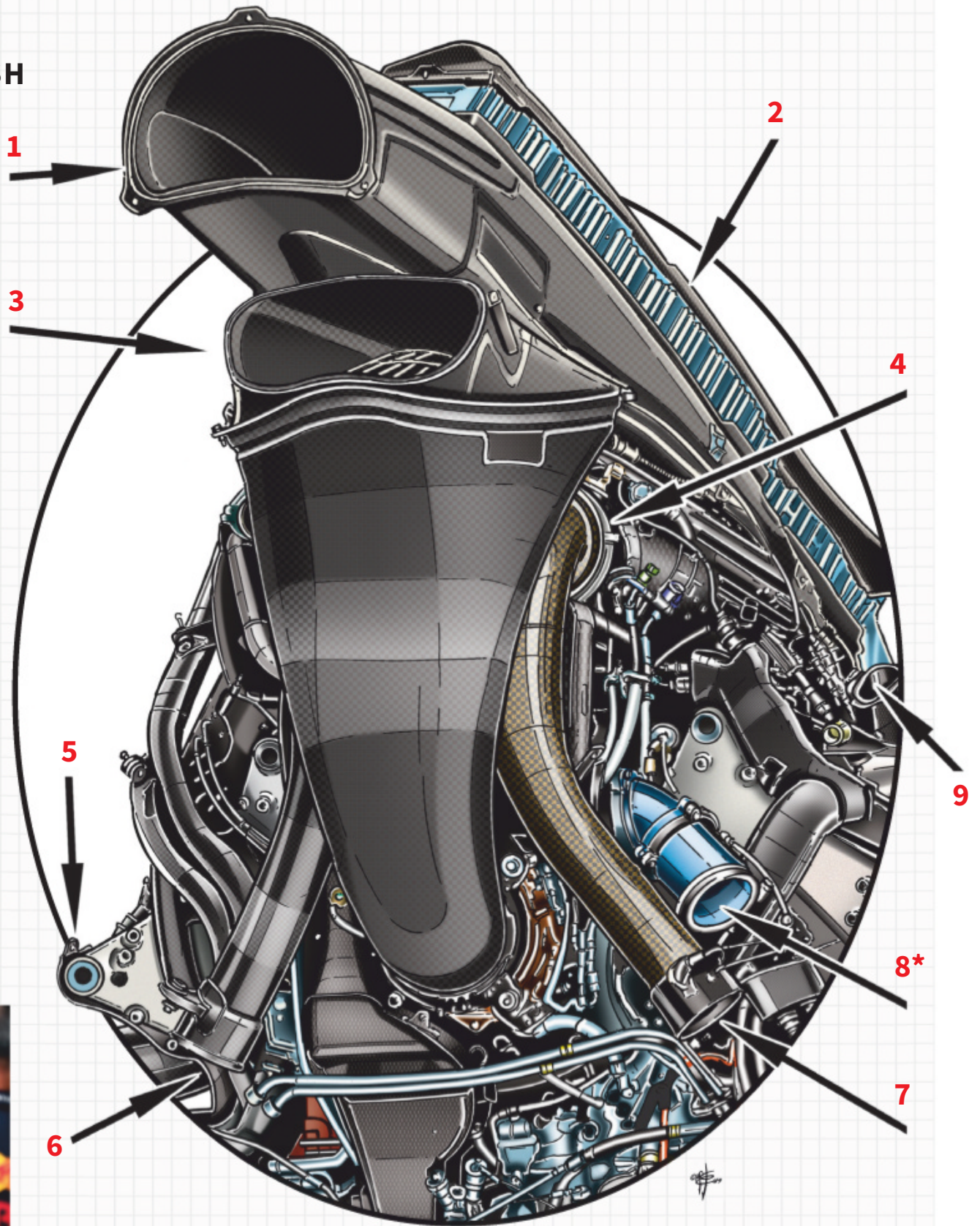
HONDA'S POWER UNIT PUSH

The development of the Honda Formula 1 power unit has been a key talking point of the 2019 season, as the marque has enjoyed a successful year with Red Bull. Having secured three victories this season – the Austrian Grand Prix win in June being the first since 2006 for the Japanese manufacturer – Honda has also pursued an aggressive upgrade strategy. Red Bull has also laid out the power unit inside its RB15 in an arrangement to improve the aerodynamics.

Throughout the years, the overhead air inlet has been used purely for the engine intake system, but Honda has allowed for the provision to also use that inlet (1) for radiator cooling. By nestling part of the radiator system (2) above the engine, the team can make the sidepods – where the radiators are usually housed – a lot smaller. But the inlet is still also used to bring air into the compressor (3), which is driven by the turbine, before it passes through the engine-intake system. Points (4), (6) and (7) denote further intakes.

At (8) and (9) there are cooling outlets, although Red Bull would not comment on the function of (8). As the internal-combustion engine is used as a stressed member of the chassis, it features highly robust mounting points, as denoted by (5).

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



EXHAUSTED FERRARI JOINS THE TREND

Ferrari trialled a split-wastegate design in free practice for the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, as it explored new powertrain developments. Having used a single wastegate pipe throughout 2019, Ferrari has fallen in line with the other engine suppliers on the grid by branching the wastegate out into two distinct exits.

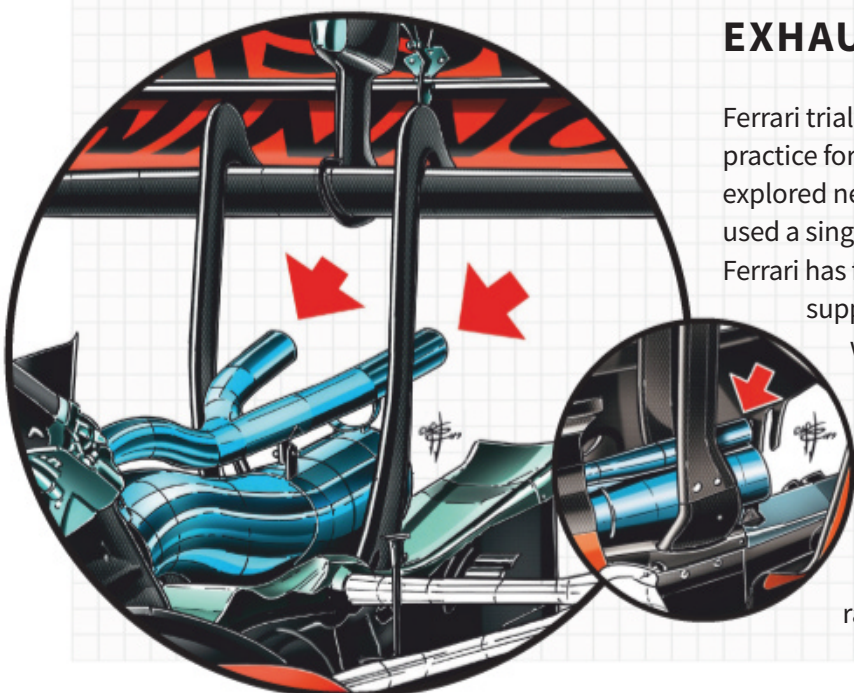
The team did so in 2018 in a shotgun style before opting for a larger-diameter single pipe this year.

A conventional wastegate in a turbocharged powertrain is used to keep the turbine within a certain range of operational speeds. The

MGU-H can also regulate the speed at which the turbo operates, but the wastegates are still required to take excess exhaust gases away from the turbocharger to relieve the overall pressure.

Part of the rationale behind breaking the wastegates into two is to rid the system of 'back pressure', which is classified as any resistance against allowing the exhaust gases to flow freely out of the tailpipe. The wastegates are also mounted some way above the main exhaust pipe, suggesting an attempt at firing the excess gases at the underside of the rear wing to increase performance.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE





IN MEMORIAM



KEN BRIGGS
(1941-2019)

Ken was with BBM for just shy of 2 decades, was universally loved and known in the paddocks for his kindness of spirit, generosity and willingness to go further than the extra mile for anyone.

A kind and gentle soul that was tragically taken in an accident on 29 November 2019, Ken was a guiding light to his loved ones and leaves behind a 2 generation motorsport legacy, with son Steve being a BBM director and grandson Alfie Briggs already a rising star in the Karting world.

His presence will be felt for years to come. Ken will be sorely missed by his family, friends and BBM family.



What next for Vettel?

Sebastian Vettel may have struggled at times in 2019, making silly errors and being overshadowed by his team-mate, but it's far too soon to write him off just yet

EDD STRAW

Sebastian Vettel neither sounds like a driver who is about to walk away from Formula 1 – after finishing fifth in last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, he mocked the suggestion that it had been his last race – nor looks like one. We can't be sure what is going on in his mind and he could yet surprise us but, while his 2019 campaign was disappointing, and at times blundersome, it wasn't that of a driver who had lost the determination and desire to be here.

The thinking is that a combination of team-mate Charles Leclerc's success and desire to have things all his own way within Ferrari, Vettel's own struggles, and the attraction of life away from the demands of F1 now that he's had his third child, mean Vettel will turn his attention to other things. But despite what has been a difficult 18 months of mishaps, misadventure and controversy, he's proved that, at 32, he's still got plenty of gas in the tank (although presumably no more than has been declared to the FIA).

This isn't because there is any great hidden story in his performances. There is no doubt who has been the stronger Ferrari driver this season. On average, adjusted to include only fair comparisons, Leclerc has been 0.129 seconds quicker than Vettel. He also outscored Vettel in the championship by 24 points, but Vettel was ahead of Leclerc at the finish of 10 of the 17 races they were both classified in. While Leclerc has made the mistakes you'd expect of a second-year driver, Vettel's regular, costly errors are

“This year has not been good enough and he has not been worth the expense or hassle”

unforgivable. He looks more like the unpolished sophomore.

During the third quarter of the season, it seemed Vettel really was a spent force. Leclerc was on a run of nine consecutive times when he outqualified Vettel – albeit with Hockenheim, where Vettel suffered a failure in Q1, included in that number. The nominally junior Ferrari driver was doing the winning, breaking through with back-to-back triumphs at Spa and Monza, and the dream of Vettel and Ferrari ever fulfilling what once seemed to be their destiny of winning the title together seemed dashed.

Since then, things have changed a little. While not enough to make a convincing case that Vettel can reassert himself over Leclerc and be the driver to end Ferrari's drought, Vettel has shown this year that he can still dig deep and bring out the best of himself. That was something that, just a few months ago, seemed uncertain.

Improvements to the Ferrari from September's Singapore GP, where Vettel took his one and only win of the season thanks to undercutting his way ahead of Leclerc by an accident of strategy, have helped him to fight back. A stronger front end has helped, although the rear end isn't always as stable and predictable as he would like – as exemplified by the car's performance in the twistier bits at Yas Marina.

But what matters is there have been brighter moments. Vettel's pace in the race at Sochi, which was strong despite the controversy over whether he should or should not have let Leclerc past as a result of the first-corner agreement, his storming Suzuka pole position lap, and his outpacing of Leclerc in three of the last five qualifying sessions show he has picked himself up. That answers one question – whether Vettel has it within him to go through the extraordinary physical and mental effort it requires to operate at this level. He wasn't so much on the back foot before as on the floor, but has recovered and got himself back in the game. It's extremely unlikely he could do that were he on the brink of walking away.

So what now? Vettel has one year left on his Ferrari contract, but he has got some work to do to convince the team he's worth persevering with. This year has not been good enough and he has not been worth the expense or the hassle, especially as he triggered the Interlagos collision with Leclerc. While publicly team principal Mattia Binotto apportioned no blame, there were some very frank discussions within the team that pointed more to the guilty party.

But for Vettel to deliver at the level required next year, and reassert himself over Leclerc, the conditions that created that situation need to be avoided. The problem is one of red mist. Vettel is an emotional character and it has been clear for some time that Ferrari has not worked out how to get this under control. This was something Red Bull mastered during Vettel's pomp.

If you can instil that calmness into Vettel then you will get the best out of him. And give him a car with the characteristics he wants and he is capable of being stunningly quick – especially when sprinting out front. But it's not just Ferrari that needs to get him under control, it's also down to Vettel to conquer his own weaknesses. He must look deeply into himself to understand how these mistakes happen, accept they have been too frequent to be down to bad luck, and conquer his demons.

Realistically, it's difficult to see Vettel putting Leclerc back in a box and making Ferrari 'his' team again, and he may well not live up to the Italian team's needs next year – in which case he won't get a new deal. But no matter what doubts you have about him as a driver, don't make the mistake of thinking he's given up.

He might not be able to do it. But he wants it. ❧

➔ **P16 ABU DHABI GP REPORT**



Beating the fear of failure

Lando Norris admits that he came into F1 wondering if he was going to be good enough, but his strong performance this year has surely given his confidence a boost

ADAM COOPER

Who will win the Rookie of the Year at the Autosport Awards on Sunday? As always, there are contenders from outside Formula 1, but logic suggests that it will be a contest between Alexander Albon, George Russell and Lando Norris.

All three have done sensational jobs in 2019 on their graduation from Formula 2, and each has further enhanced his reputation and proved to be a worthy choice for their respective teams.

But arguably it was Norris who made the biggest strides over the course of the season, and ended it with the greater momentum. In Abu Dhabi last weekend he not only led the midfield grid-position battle with seventh place, but he also won the season qualifying fight with McLaren team-mate Carlos Sainz by 11-10.

To be fair, on occasion the Spaniard was handicapped by issues outside his control, so perhaps the more interesting statistic is that in a comparison of their best qualifying times over the year (where possible) they were all but equally matched.

Not a bad effort by Norris given his lack of experience, and the fact that many of the tracks were new to him. And yet at the start of 2019 the man himself was not convinced that he was up to the task. "Coming into the season I wasn't very confident with how I was going to do," he says. "So I'm happy I kind of proved myself wrong and have done a good job, and been able to give myself more confidence,

"Among the F1 rookies, it was arguably Norris who made the biggest strides over the season"

and improved as a driver. So I'm very happy about that. And I got some good results. But still a lot of things I need to improve on."

Upwardly mobile racing drivers, especially those who have fast-tracked their way to the top on the back of stellar CVs, are usually brimming with self-belief. So what kind of doubts did he harbour?

"If I was going to be good enough," he admits. "Simple as that. I didn't know if I was going to be quick enough, going up against a driver who's done four years in F1, and against so many good drivers. It was simply just not knowing if I was going to be able to keep up. But I gained a lot of confidence from Australia and Bahrain [the races in Melbourne and at Sakhir were the first two rounds of the season]."

A fear of failure is a candid admission for any racing

driver to make in public, even after the fact. "I think if I was still suffering with the same things, then I probably wouldn't have said it," he admits. "But I'm more confident, and see more confidence in me."

"I'm glad he didn't tell us that!" jokes McLaren boss Zak Brown — who first took an interest in the career of Norris in late 2016 — when told of his driver's doubts. "I think as a 19-year-old rookie, coming into F1 with McLaren — we kind of take for granted that these drivers come and settle in, but the amount of pressure that's on them... He's a breath of fresh air in that he's really honest with himself. I actually think at times he's more critical about a session or a lap than we are, and to me that means he's constantly wanting to improve and analysing what he's doing, and how he can improve."

That quest for perfection is a Norris trademark, and McLaren has been mightily impressed by the way he has approached the year. "You can see on Fridays how much Lando learns from Carlos — he's a sponge in that sense," says Brown. "I think that's where his maturity has come through. He's recognised that some of these tracks are new to him, and he's not in a rush on Friday to put Carlos's time down. But come qualifying they are matched, so he has a real mature approach to the race weekend."

"He took his time also in order to build up experience and then go more and more aggressive into the races," says team principal Andreas Seidl. "Especially the race starts, where he took it more conservative at the beginning of the season because it was important he finished the races, just to build up experience. Second half of the season he got more and more aggressive for the race starts as well. So I would say it was a sensational rookie season."

Another positive is the way Sainz and Norris have bonded as genuine pals, socialising away from the track and sharing an upbeat approach that has provided a boost for a team that had been through the mill over recent seasons.

"I think when you bring in two new drivers it does bring a freshness to the garage and the ability to press the reset button," says Brown. "I don't think it was necessarily needed, but I do think we benefited from having two new drivers and a lot of change in the garage that has actually come together pretty quickly in terms of working together as a cohesive team."

It's remarkable to think that, fresh from Formula Renault, Norris won the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award just three years ago. What better inspiration for the candidates who will be on stage in London on Sunday evening? 🏆

➔ **P32 THE 2019 AWARD CONTEST**

YOUR SAY

Drivers, entrants, marshals and even spectators need to make it known to the higher authorities of motor racing that the current situation will not be able to continue

J-P HUSBAND

Shocked at the cost of going racing

I write further to Mr Birley's excellent letter published last week. Having recently retired, I now have the time to look at doing some motor racing in 2020. I have been looking at a number of championships to enter.

I have to say however that when I consider the initial costs, entry and licence fees, my enthusiasm has been seriously dampened. Even before you have got on the grid, the ARDS test is not cheap and requires quite an up-front investment in equipment terms, certainly far higher than in some other sports. The blase answer 'this is motor racing and it costs a lot' is not good enough, when competition from other leisure pursuits is so strong.

Even in comparatively low-cost series such as the Citroen C1 series, competitors have said to me that these costs are much higher than they anticipated, particularly in terms of the administrative fees involved. This included discussions with drivers who run their own businesses and know about budgeting expenses.

At a time when club grids are at best only just being maintained, drivers, entrants, marshals and even spectators need to make it known to the higher authorities of motor racing that the current situation will not be able to continue.

There should be a serious review of both the ARDS system, licence and entry fees by an independent party. This could be backed by your magazine, which should welcome the opportunity to be a campaigning voice in the UK motorsport community.

J-P Husband

By email

Hollywood glosses over British connection

Having just seen *Le Mans '66*, I can agree with much of what Matt Kew writes in his review (14 November).

One major oversight, I have to say, is that apart from one passing mention of the first GT40 coming from England, absolutely no credit whatsoever is given in the film to the pivotal role played by Eric Broadley



(pictured above at Indianapolis in 1966) and Lola Cars in the concept and creation of this outstanding car.

Perhaps it's too much to expect Hollywood to demonstrate anything other than – Ken Miles excepted – an all-American success story. However, being a 20-year-long former employee and joint managing director of Lola Cars, I feel obliged to pull Autosport up rather on not including this criticism in your piece, at least.

Perhaps you can redress this in some way, at least for the ex-Lola people of that period, who are doubtless spitting blood like me?

Mike Blanchet


By email

We hope this, at least in part, helps set the record straight – ed


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HAMILTON RUBS SALT IN THE WOUNDS

Lewis Hamilton dominated the weekend with pole and a commanding 84th win, but the race provided plenty of interest further down the order

EDD STRAW

PHOTOGRAPHY



**motorsport
IMAGES**

Hamilton now has six grand slams (pole, win, every lap led and fastest lap), second only to Jim Clark's eight



After a second half of the season full of twists and turns to the plot, it was appropriate that Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes rounded out the 2019 Formula 1 campaign by returning to dominant form in the Abu Dhabi finale. To underline his advantage, Hamilton nailed fastest lap with two laps remaining on well-worn hard Pirellis. This was a crushing, emphatic full stop to a season in which driver and team again demonstrated their supremacy, even when others were capable of going quicker.

That Ferrari's fuel use was catapulted back to front and centre by the pre-race bombshell that F1 technical delegate Jo Bauer had referred it to the stewards was also appropriate in a season blighted by suspicions over its engine advantage. This was because the FIA had discovered a "significant difference" between Ferrari's declaration of how much fuel there was in the car – a lengthy technical directive issued in February required teams to state this and the means by which it would be measured – and the real amount in Charles Leclerc's Ferrari. The team was later fined €50,000 for under-declaring the fuel mass by 4.88kg – potentially 4.4% more energy on board relative to the 110kg in-race fuel limit.

While Hamilton assured the team over the radio after the chequered flag that he genuinely had broken a sweat, it was more Sunday drive than pitched battle. A good start ensured the lead was banked in the early seconds of the race and he finished the first lap 1.7s clear of Leclerc. The Ferrari driver, who started third behind Max Verstappen, used superior traction off the Turn 7 hairpin leading onto the first back straight and was clear of the Red Bull by the time they got to Turn 8. Verstappen then came under pressure from the other Ferrari of Sebastian Vettel, holding him off into Turn 11 to keep third place.

Hamilton pulled away at almost half a second per lap to be just under six seconds clear after 10 laps. It was already clear there was no stopping the lead Mercedes and the chasing Ferrari was more interested in trying to hold on to a second place that could give Leclerc third in the drivers' championship. Fearing an undercut

attack from Verstappen, Ferrari called Leclerc in after just 12 laps, despite him starting the race on medium tyres.

By the time he peeled into the pitlane, Leclerc was less than two seconds clear of Verstappen. Red Bull, wisely, decided to leave Verstappen out to gain a tyre-life offset given he had no chance of jumping Leclerc. But, to complicate matters, Ferrari decided to double-stack its drivers, with Vettel coming in to switch from soft tyres to hards at the same time.

Vettel was a good seven and a half seconds behind, so there was plenty of time for this manoeuvre. But both the front and rear changes on the left side were problematic and Vettel was parked for almost seven seconds, the left-rear proving to be the bigger delay. Fortunately, he'd built an advantage of just under five seconds over fifth-placed Alex Albon, so when the Red Bull driver responded and pitted a lap later after a rapid in-lap, also taking hards, Vettel was still ahead – just.

This left Hamilton leading from Verstappen, with the Red Bull driver going to lap 25 before stopping to take hards. A lap later, Hamilton had his hards bolted on for the run to the finish and never lost the lead. This ensured he was on for a rare 'grand slam' of pole position, fastest lap and all laps led – the sixth of his career.

Despite Leclerc's lengthy undercut, Hamilton emerged with an advantage of 6.3s, which he extended to 13s by the end of lap 31. By this time, Leclerc was hanging onto second by the skin of his teeth from Verstappen, who was using his 13-lap tyre advantage to good effect. Five seconds behind Leclerc after his stop, he quickly reeled the Ferrari in, despite complaining over the radio about the 'handbrake effect' caused by power-delivery problems that showed early in the race but became a bigger problem after the pitstop. It meant the car wasn't behaving how he wanted it to and this was put down to a system problem on the Honda side.

"Torque holes and throttle," said Verstappen when asked to explain his problem. "There were some delays so it was not great, and we couldn't fix it so we drove around the problem. When I go on the throttle, it was not doing what I want. It did cost me lap time, but it



Hamilton pulled away
at the start to build a
lead of 6s after 10 laps

ETHERINGTON



Vettel finally overtook
Albon on lap 53 of 55
to take fifth place

“WHILE HAMILTON ASSURED THE TEAM OVER THE RADIO AFTER THE CHEQUERED FLAG THAT HE GENUINELY HAD BROKEN A SWEAT, IT WAS MORE SUNDAY DRIVE THAN PITCHED BATTLE”

wouldn't have given me the win today.”

Second place was a different matter. As Leclerc and Verstappen closed on the lapped Williams of George Russell on the first back straight on lap 32, the Red Bull driver made his move and dived up the inside on the brakes into Turn 8. Leclerc emerged from the left/right well behind, but a combination of the DRS and the Ferrari unleashing its full power allowed him to close on Verstappen and attack to the outside of Turn 11. Verstappen held him off through the corner, then took off with second place in his pocket.

Behind, there was an intriguing battle for fourth place. Vettel held a three-second advantage over Albon. But the second Mercedes of Valtteri Bottas was looking ever-more threatening having started from the back of the grid.

The Finn went into the weekend knowing he would start at the back thanks to the failure that had put him out of the Brazilian Grand Prix, although he attacked qualifying normally and was second fastest. With a fresh engine, the second after suffering a pneumatic leak during FP2, he had licence to go on the attack.

He jumped the two Williams drivers by the first corner, then initially passed Romain Grosjean's Haas for 17th into the Turns 5/6 chicane. Boxed in by Pierre Gasly's Toro Rosso at the Turn 7 hairpin, Bottas was repassed around the outside before dispatching them both on the run into Turn 8. That added up to 15th by the end of the first lap.

He then picked off Kimi Raikkonen, Lance Stroll, Antonio »

QUALIFYING

Qualifying hasn't been a happy hunting ground for Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes during 2019 (*well, it's all relative! – ed*), so to sign off with a fifth pole position – and first since July's German Grand Prix – was very obviously a source of tremendous satisfaction to him. Doubly so considering he struggled during Friday practice and had to “recompose” himself overnight before bagging his 88th F1 pole.

His task was simplified by two factors. First, that the Mercedes was the class of the field in Abu Dhabi thanks to its prodigious pace in the slower corners that proliferate over the second half of the lap. The second was that his main rival, team-mate Valtteri Bottas, had a back-of-the-grid penalty thanks to taking a complete new Mercedes power unit following his Interlagos failure – and he took another fresh one for good measure after a hydraulic leak struck on Friday.

“MERCEDES WAS THE CLASS OF THE FIELD THANKS TO ITS PRODIGIOUS PACE IN SLOWER CORNERS”

Unexpectedly, Bottas defied tradition by running qualifying conventionally. But despite shaving just over two tenths off his first-run time in Q3 at the second attempt, Bottas fell short of outpacing his team-mate. This meant Max Verstappen, 0.360s off the pace, secured a front-row spot for Red Bull by setting the third-fastest time.

Ferrari always struggles in Abu Dhabi and its difficulties were compounded by Charles Leclerc not being able to start his final lap. He complained of being backed up by team-mate Sebastian Vettel, but the lead Ferrari was himself being held up so it was a classic case of a Q3 concertina. Even so, his first run was good enough to secure the fourth-fastest time given Vettel failed to improve on his second run.

With Red Bull's Alex Albon in no man's land in sixth place, the battle for best of the rest was tighter than ever. Lando Norris prevailed to set the seventh-fastest lap but by the narrowest of margins, lapping just two hundredths quicker than the Renault of Daniel Ricciardo, with McLaren team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr a further 0.003s back. Sainz looked a shoo-in to lead the midfield, but his out-lap traffic badly compromised his preparation and led to undercooked front tyres.

Racing Point's Sergio Perez claimed the prime position of being able to start with free tyre choice in 11th, moving up one position thanks to Bottas's penalty. Down at the back of the field, Williams's George Russell completed his unique feat of outqualifying his team-mate – Robert Kubica – 21 times out of 21 over the season.



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Verstappen won out in
the battle for second
place with Leclerc

Giovinazzi, Kevin Magnussen and, on lap 12, Sergio Perez. His task was made more difficult by the fact that the DRS was unavailable until lap 18 as a result of a server problem. By that time, thanks to others stopping, Bottas had climbed to fifth, immediately using the DRS to pass soft-shod Nico Hulkenberg, who ran an extended first stint ahead of an ill-starred switch to mediums for the run to the finish.

By the time he'd passed Hulkenberg, midway round lap 18, Bottas was 49s off the lead but within 20s of Leclerc. Vettel and Albon were running together two seconds behind the Mercedes. But Bottas's pace over the next 10 laps was formidable and he was able to chip away at Leclerc by almost two tenths per lap and drop Vettel by the same margin. This raised hopes for a possible run at the podium.

He eventually stopped to take hard tyres at the end of lap 29, emerging in sixth place. Vettel, in fourth, was 16.5s up the road, with Albon 3.4s behind the Ferrari. The chase was on and by lap 38 Bottas was all over Albon for fourth place. At which point the race took a surprising turn.

That Leclerc pitted at the end of lap 38 while running a lonely third was no surprise. He had a fresh set of softs and the space to stop without losing position for a tilt at the fastest lap point – and although giving away time, this strategy would maximise his chances of retaining third from Bottas. But Ferrari again pitted Vettel on the same lap, successfully this time, to take fresh mediums. In doing so he relinquished places to Bottas and Albon, who swapped positions on lap 39, the Mercedes driver making an easy move into Turn 8.

Vettel never had a hope of holding off Bottas or catching him, so the key was to close the 21s gap to Albon in the remaining 17 laps. He cut it fine and it wasn't until lap 53 of 55 that he made his move, pulling past Albon on the run to Turn 8. But Albon wasn't about to give up and dived back up the inside. Vettel checked up and let him go, but made the pass again on the following straight. Over the radio, he complained Albon's



Bottas fought hard
through the field from
the back to finish fourth

ETHERINGTON



PORTLOCK

“HAD THE BATTLE IN THE MIDFIELD BEEN THE ONE FOR OVERALL VICTORY, THIS WOULD HAVE GONE DOWN AS AN ALL-TIME CLASSIC AS IT BUILT TO A THRILLING LAST-LAP DENOUEMENT”

late move was “borderline”, but the Red Bull driver gave that short shrift when it was put to him after the race — “it’s racing,” was his verdict.

Bottas still hoped for a podium finish, but fell just a second short despite pressuring Leclerc at the end. Perhaps he had good reason to rue taking a little longer to clear traffic than he would have done thanks to the early lack of the DRS, which potentially cost him as much as six seconds. But this was still a decent performance to end a strong season. He might also have had the consolation of a bonus point for fastest lap, but for Hamilton pulling the final rabbit of the season from the hat.

Hamilton was happy with the way the hard Pirellis were standing up, particularly as he could take a cautious approach during the second stint given the gap to Verstappen. So, with three laps remaining, he had a go and banged in a 1m39.283s — 0.432s quicker than Bottas had managed 22 laps earlier on the second lap of a hard stint. Hamilton had the advantage of significantly less fuel, but also tyres that already had 26 laps on the clock when he went for it.

“The hard tyre is quite resilient, it goes a long, long way,” said Hamilton. “Towards the end of the race I was like, ‘I’ve got to push and see if I can extract any more performance from the car.’ I do wish that we had some battles, I saw on TV you guys [Leclerc and Verstappen] battling.”

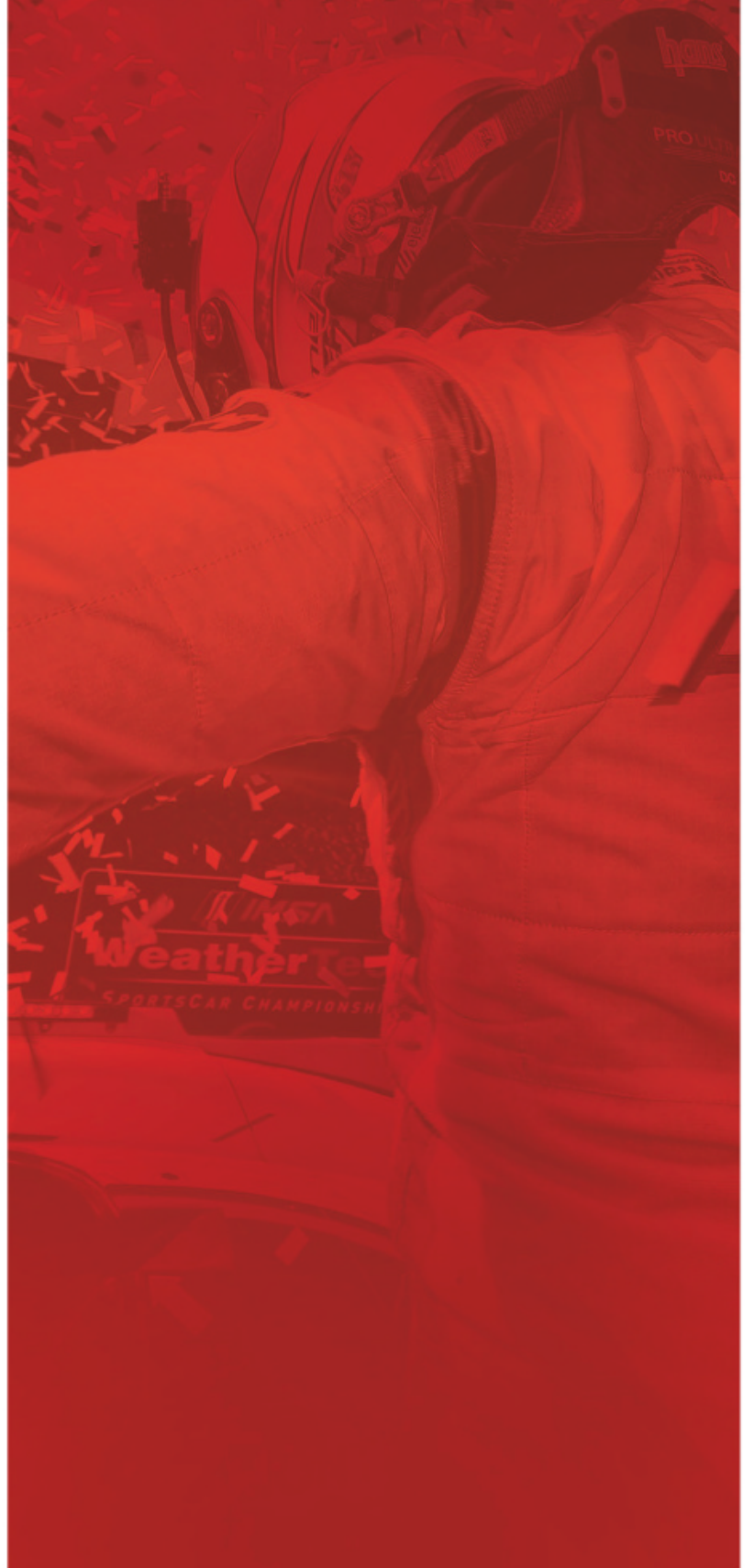
Had the battle in the midfield been the one for overall victory, this would have gone down as an all-time classic as it built to a thrilling last-lap denouement. McLaren started the race ahead, with the Renaults close behind and Lando Norris, who started at the head of the group in sixth, had control for almost the entire race.

Initially, he headed Carlos Sainz, with Daniel Ricciardo and Hulkenberg chasing. But a huge right-front lock-up into the Turn 17 right-hander forced Norris to pit immediately, and too early, at the end of lap eight. That dropped him firmly into traffic and, while he battled his way through (sans DRS), Sainz took up leadership of the group.

Ricciardo was the next to stop, attempting to undercut his way past Sainz by pitting on lap 11. Sainz, inevitably, responded a lap later but couldn’t cover the move and dropped behind Ricciardo. After initially passing Ricciardo into Turn 5, but running across the chicane and having to give the position back, he reclaimed the place for good two laps later with a brilliant late dive up the inside of the Renault into Turn 8, coming from a long way back. It was a move worthy of Ricciardo himself. >>

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TRACKSIDE VIEW

Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina circuit is a spacious place with plenty of forgiving runoff, but it's not without its perils. The Turn 19 left-hander under the Viceroy Hotel reminded everyone on Friday that it is capable of biting with both Ferrari drivers hitting the wall, Antonio Giovinazzi spinning and everybody else having moments where the rear end misbehaved as the power was fed in. This made it the obvious destination for Saturday's one-hour practice session, enlivened by the proximity to the marina and the yacht bedecked with Danish flags that provided a thumping beat through the session.

Turn 19 can't be viewed in isolation. It effectively forms the second part of a double-left with the preceding Turn 18 as the two flow into each other. What's more, the Turn 17 right-hander before that effectively makes it a three-part combination as it's easy to overdo it there and compromise your approach to Turn 18.

Turn 19 itself starts conventionally enough, but rather than being another 90-degree turn it opens out and allows drivers to carry more speed through it after entering in third gear. There are two interconnected challenges. The first is ensuring that you don't take too much inside kerb, which various drivers do fall into the trap of during

the session. This unsettles the car and can increase the chances of the second challenge, that of managing the tyre slip at the exit. At the end of a quick lap, with the rears being worked hard through the twisty part of the lap, overheating is common and compounds the challenge, meaning drivers are never completely sure how much grip there is.

There are some wild moments, particularly early in the afternoon session, when drivers are

readjusting to the grip levels in the sun, having last taken to the track under lights the night before. That's not helped by the fact that two thirds of the corner is in shade while the final part is in direct sunlight.

Both Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz have to make sizeable corrections early on, while Lance Stroll is caught out by walloping the inside kerb and has a wild ride through the turn. Later, on the qualifying simulation runs, Charles Leclerc – who is always aggressive

on the throttle in qualifying and not afraid of having to react to the rear misbehaving – hangs the back end out. Alex Albon, another driver not uncomfortable with a car moving around, is spat out wide earlier than anticipated and that compromises getting on the throttle.

It's a reminder that these cars take serious driving, with valuable hundredths won or lost through the ability to manage rear tyre slip and judge the grip.

EDD STRAW



The challenging Turns 17-18-19 complex by the Viceroy Hotel



“MUCH AS HAMILTON MIGHT HAVE DESIRED A MORE EXCITING PATH TO OUTRIGHT VICTORY, THE REALITY WAS HE HAD EVERYTHING UTTERLY UNDER CONTROL”

All three had lost more than they would have done thanks to the lack of DRS, with Norris leading the trio bottled up behind Romain Grosjean, bringing others into play. Hulkenberg stopped for mediums at the end of lap 18 after starting on softs and emerged between Sainz and Ricciardo.

Perez, meanwhile, revelled in his marathon stint on mediums on a track where his mastery of mitigating tyre slip was a huge boost. He didn't stop his Racing Point until lap 37, which allowed him to switch to hards with a mighty offset over those ahead. Daniil Kvyat, who had started on hards, took his Toro Rosso even further – lap 40 – to switch to mediums, although time lost behind Raikkonen early in the race when the DRS was not available meant he had more work to do than he might have had.

Perez rejoined 12th, 3.5s behind Ricciardo, but the group of McLarens and Renaults were all within 8.5s. He used his 26-lap tyre advantage to take 11th from Ricciardo, who then dived into the pits to take on softs, while Sainz then aborted his planned one-stopper to take mediums. With Kvyat having pitted from seventh place and rejoined at the back of the group, this put Perez ninth.

Perez then overtook Hulkenberg, who was by now struggling on well-used mediums, and set about Norris. Norris's early stop meant he was on hards with over 40 laps on the clock and was given the instruction that he had nothing to lose and to go for it. He set some impressive lap times given the grip, which meant Perez had to work for it. It seemed Norris had done just enough to make sure of midfield 'victory', only for Perez to come from a long way back on the outside on the approach to

Turn 11 on the final lap – the last realistic passing opportunity.

Perez went around the outside to bag a brilliant seventh, leaving Norris dejected. While Perez praised Norris for how fair he had been, the McLaren driver publicly flogged himself after the race for not being more aggressive and denounced himself as “too polite”.

Behind, Kvyat climbed to ninth in those frantic final laps, compromised by some minor front-wing damage that he appeared to suffer without contact after pulling out of Ricciardo's slipstream. Sainz, meanwhile, also left it late before pulling off a brilliant late swoop to the inside at Turn 11 to pass Hulkenberg – who subsequently fell behind Ricciardo – for 10th place. This was a crucial move as it handed the delighted Sainz sixth in the drivers' championship.

Much as Hamilton might have desired a similar path to outright victory, the reality was he had everything utterly under control for his 84th win. With Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto admitting after the race that Ferrari has much to do, and Red Bull looking back on yet another season of sniping for victories here and there, it's a reminder of what makes this team and driver combination so special – and what it will take to topple them. 🏆

NEXT F1 REPORT

F1 SEASON REVIEW 12 DECEMBER ISSUE

Our bumper issue on the 2019 F1 season

Gasly loses sixth in table after shunt

The race at the Yas Marina Circuit was relatively incident-free, save for a first-lap skirmish between Lance Stroll, Pierre Gasly and Sergio Perez, which left Gasly missing a front wing after the opening corner.

Stroll encountered a bit of understeer at Turn 1 and tapped Gasly's rear wheel, which pitched the Toro Rosso driver into the rear of Perez. That removed the Toro Rosso's front wing (below).

Perez continued unhindered en route to an impressive seventh place in his Racing Point, but Gasly had to trundle around a whole lap before the damage could be repaired, by which time his race had completely unravelled. Stroll retired his Racing Point at the end of lap 45 with damage.

Gasly said he needed to review the incident, but said "from what I could see so far, Lance just ruined everything".

"Last race of the season, just to ruin your race with the first-corner incident, it's clearly annoying," he added. "It put us one lap down from the first lap, and [I spent] the whole race basically praying for a safety car."

With Carlos Sainz Jr finishing 10th, Gasly's non-score meant the McLaren driver beat him to sixth in the drivers' championship.

"Looking at the standings, not being able to take the fight to Carlos and looking at what Daniil did, I think we clearly had the pace to be right there and hold on to that sixth place," added Gasly. It's really frustrating."



ANDRE



Ferrari fined €50,000 for Leclerc fuel irregularity

Ferrari escaped with a €50,000 fine for having "significant difference" between the fuel load declared by the team in Charles Leclerc's car and that measured by the FIA.

After measuring the amount of fuel, FIA technical delegate Jo Bauer referred the discrepancy between the two measurements to the stewards for further investigation.

Although the breach was reported prior to the race, the FIA decided to defer any decisions until afterwards, as the check had been completed approximately five minutes before the pitlane was declared open. FIA race director Michael Masi explained that the team would be afforded a chance to present its argument, given that there wasn't enough time to do so before the race began.

After their investigation, the Abu Dhabi stewards acknowledged that Bauer's report showed that Leclerc's car had 4.88kg more fuel on board than the amount registered by Ferrari. This was considered a breach of the technical directive TD 014-19, which states that a team must correctly "declare the amount of fuel that they intended to put in the car for the laps to the grid, the formation lap, the race, the in-lap and any fire-ups that would be needed".

Despite Ferrari's protestations, the difference between measurements was considered a breach of the FIA's International Sporting Code. Ferrari was handed a fine, but there will be no further penalty, and Leclerc's third-place finish behind Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen remains intact.

Before the race, Red Bull team principal Christian Horner suggested on Sky F1 that "if you look at the technical reg, theoretically, I can't see how [Leclerc] won't be [disqualified]".

Ahead of the FIA's decision, Ferrari boss Mattia Binotto said: "I don't think there's much to explain — there has been a discrepancy between measurements. We believe that our measurements are correct. I think there is one measure which is not, but it's in their hands. We're happy on our side to understand and happy to go in detail, but it's not part of our discussion, our decision."

Rumours continue to spiral over the way Ferrari uses fuel-burning in its power unit and, although a number of technical directives seem to have restricted the team's options in that area, the Abu Dhabi technical report will surely have added fuel to the fire.



Why there was no DRS early in the GP

The Drag Reduction System was conspicuous by its absence during the early stages of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

DRS wasn't activated until the 18th lap of the race due to a reported server issue. This meant that the drivers had to overtake in the 'old-fashioned' way without any assistance down the straights.

"Simple part is a data server crashed," explained FIA race director Michael Masi. "Immediately, we disabled it until we were 100% confident that it was back up and running with the correct data available – that was when we re-enabled it. So we ran various checks to make sure that everything was working hunky-dory. Until that point we were not going to take a chance until we were confident. For the DRS signals going to the cars, there wasn't a confident feed that we could rely upon."

Masi also suggested that, had DRS not been deactivated until the system was fully operational, the opening stages would have been a "free-for-all", and that it was easier to shut it down rather than risk any further problems caused by the system failure.

Without the straightline speed advantage the drivers generally struggled, most notably when Valtteri Bottas's charge through the pack was put briefly on ice when he was unable to clear Nico Hulkenberg. Once the DRS was re-enabled, Bottas was the first driver to benefit, and was able to cruise by and continue his charge to fourth place.

"It was a whole different race without the DRS," said Hulkenberg. "I was thinking, 'Why can't he get me?' He was stuck on the straight, and that's what was so strange! Then suddenly it started working when I really didn't need it to..."

Q & A

CARLOS SAINZ JR McLAREN F1 DRIVER

Carlos Sainz Jr snatched 10th place on the final lap from Nico Hulkenberg to take sixth place in the championship, having been tied on points with Pierre Gasly before the last race of the season.

Unable to pass Hulkenberg after the first DRS zone, Sainz's final chance came after the second zone. After being on the right, Sainz switched to the left to dive down the inside.

Talk us through that overtake...

It was the most exciting final lap I think I've had – it was like for a world championship for me! I just got close enough to Nico in order to throw a move into Turn 9, I decided to back out of it and try in Turn 11 but I



didn't get the run out of Turn 10 that I wanted. So it meant I arrived at 11 a bit far behind. I saw a gap in the inside but it was really small, a bit like with [Sergio] Perez, and I said, 'OK, if it worked with Perez I need to try to make it work with Nico' – and I threw the move and made it stick.

Did you know that you were fighting for sixth?

Yes, I was aware of it. I knew Gasly was out of it [contention]. I knew – when I was behind Nico in this first or second stint – that Perez and [Daniil] Kvyat had the fastest strategy. We had to start

the race on the medium, so they got a massive advantage on the strategy. There was no DRS at the beginning, so we couldn't go through traffic, it just compromised our whole race. [Sitting through] the whole race behind Lando [Norris] and behind Renaults with the dirty air, it was very difficult to manage the tyres. At the end I was going to get passed by Kvyat and Perez and said, 'Our only chance is getting by Nico at the end pitting for a medium.' We did it – I think I did one of the fastest laps as soon as I did it so I could show my pace in clean air finally. Yeah, caught him in the last lap and made it stick.

What does sixth place mean to you?

I think in modern Formula 1 to beat two guys that were in a much faster car for 10 races and still manage to get nearly 100 points and P6 in the championship is something that before the year I couldn't even think about. Coming to this weekend, I knew it was going to be tough. But I had a small chance and we made it stick when it counted, so I'm happy about that.




Kubica enjoys Giovinazzi tangle

Although the first-lap scuffle was the only real incident of note, Antonio Giovinazzi and Robert Kubica did their best to grab TV time by clashing at the end of the second DRS zone into Turn 11.

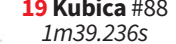
Kubica lost ground in the battle, escaping to the pits having been cleared by the Alfa Romeo driver, but

enjoyed the cut-and-thrust of wheel-to-wheel racing in his final grand prix appearance for Williams.


"That's racing," Kubica said. "We did have a bit of fun, when you're racing far behind, at least. I knew he was there but I thought he would back off. I tried to go around the corner but it was so tight there and we touched."




20 Bottas #77
1m34.973s




19 Kubica #88
1m39.236s




18 Russell #63
1m38.717s



17 Raikkonen #7
1m38.383s




16 Giovinazzi #99
1m38.114s




15 Grosjean #8
1m38.051s




14 Magnussen #20
1m37.254s



13 Kvyat #26
1m37.141s



12 Stroll #18
1m37.103s



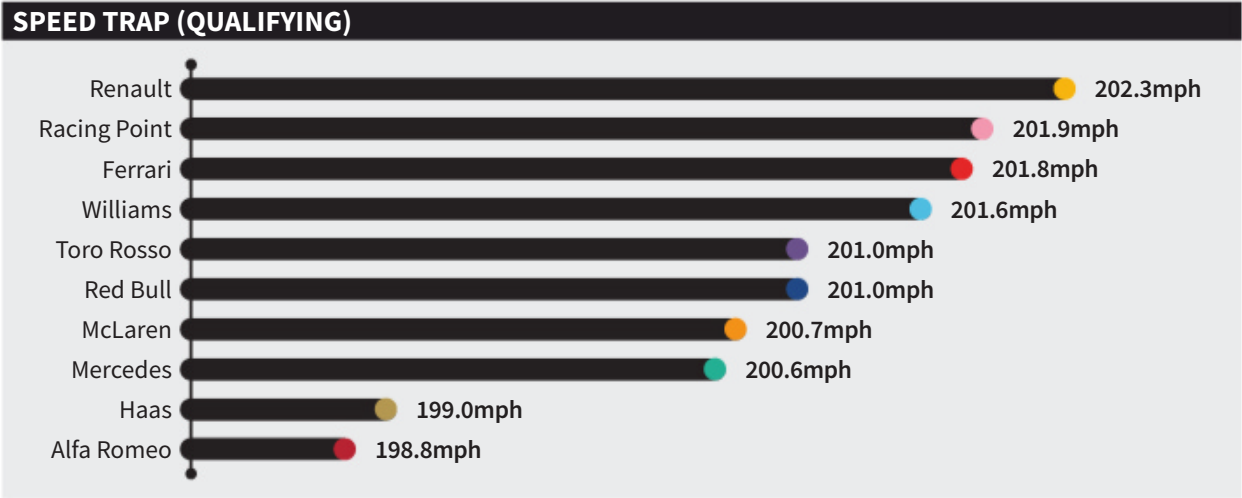
11 Gasly #10
1m37.089s

FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2			FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m36.957s	1	Bottas	1m36.256s	1	Verstappen	1m36.566s
2	Verstappen	1m37.492s	2	Hamilton	1m36.566s	2	Hamilton	1m36.640s
3	Hamilton	1m37.591s	3	Leclerc	1m36.642s	3	Bottas	1m36.655s
4	Albon	1m38.084s	4	Vettel	1m36.691s	4	Albon	1m36.927s
5	Vettel	1m38.906s	5	Verstappen	1m36.807s	5	Vettel	1m36.975s
6	Grosjean	1m39.146s	6	Albon	1m37.288s	6	Leclerc	1m37.010s
7	Leclerc	1m39.249s	7	Grosjean	1m37.601s	7	Perez	1m37.516s
8	Magnussen	1m39.350s	8	Perez	1m37.637s	8	Ricciardo	1m37.615s
9	Giovinazzi	1m39.423s	9	Kvyat	1m37.651s	9	Sainz	1m37.691s
10	Hulkenberg	1m39.505s	10	Gasly	1m37.770s	10	Gasly	1m37.736s
11	Norris	1m39.628s	11	Sainz	1m37.834s	11	Grosjean	1m37.768s
12	Stroll	1m39.864s	12	Norris	1m37.918s	12	Kvyat	1m37.963s
13	Raikkonen	1m39.888s	13	Stroll	1m37.985s	13	Norris	1m38.100s
14	Perez	1m39.901s	14	Magnussen	1m38.080s	14	Magnussen	1m38.198s
15	Kvyat	1m39.969s	15	Hulkenberg	1m38.122s	15	Stroll	1m38.462s
16	Gasly	1m40.401s	16	Ricciardo	1m38.400s	16	Raikkonen	1m38.514s
17	Sainz	1m40.687s	17	Raikkonen	1m38.415s	17	Hulkenberg	1m38.580s
18	Kubica	1m40.792s	18	Giovinazzi	1m38.464s	18	Giovinazzi	1m38.782s
19	Ricciardo	1m40.850s	19	Russell	1m39.512s	19	Russell	1m39.206s
20	Russell	1m41.362s	20	Kubica	1m40.455s	20	Kubica	1m39.859s

WEATHER 27C, sunny

WEATHER 26C, dark

WEATHER 27C, sunny



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m35.851s	1	Leclerc	1m35.543s	1	Hamilton	1m34.779s
2	Albon	1m36.102s	2	Hamilton	1m35.634s	2	Bottas	1m34.973s
3	Bottas	1m36.200s	3	Bottas	1m35.674s	3	Verstappen	1m35.139s
4	Verstappen	1m36.390s	4	Vettel	1m35.786s	4	Leclerc	1m35.219s
5	Leclerc	1m36.478s	5	Verstappen	1m36.275s	5	Vettel	1m35.339s
6	Perez	1m36.961s	6	Sainz	1m36.308s	6	Albon	1m35.682s
7	Vettel	1m36.963s	7	Albon	1m36.718s	7	Norris	1m36.436s
8	Ricciardo	1m37.106s	8	Norris	1m36.764s	8	Ricciardo	1m36.456s
9	Gasly	1m37.198s	9	Ricciardo	1m36.785s	9	Sainz	1m36.459s
10	Sainz	1m37.358s	10	Hulkenberg	1m36.859s	10	Hulkenberg	1m36.710s
11	Hulkenberg	1m37.506s	11	Perez	1m37.055s			
12	Stroll	1m37.528s	12	Gasly	1m37.089s			
13	Norris	1m37.545s	13	Stroll	1m37.103s			
14	Kvyat	1m37.683s	14	Kvyat	1m37.141s			
15	Magnussen	1m37.710s	15	Magnussen	1m37.254s			
16	Grosjean	1m38.051s						
17	Giovinazzi	1m38.114s						
18	Raikkonen	1m38.383s						
19	Russell	1m38.717s						
20	Kubica	1m39.236s						

WEATHER 25C, dark

NEXT RACE
15 MARCH
AUSTRALIAN GP
Melbourne



SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Hamilton	413	1	1
2 Bottas	326	1	1
3 Verstappen	278	1	1
4 Leclerc	264	1	1
5 Vettel	240	1	1
6 Sainz	96	3	6
7 Gasly	95	2	4
8 Albon	92	4	5
9 Ricciardo	54	4	4
10 Perez	52	6	5
11 Norris	49	6	5
12 Raikkonen	43	4	5
13 Kvyat	37	3	6
14 Hulkenberg	37	5	6
15 Stroll	21	4	9
16 Magnussen	20	6	5
17 Giovinazzi	14	5	8
18 Grosjean	8	7	6
19 Kubica	1	10	18
20 Russell	0	11	16

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Mercedes	739
2 Ferrari	504
3 Red Bull	417
4 McLaren	145
5 Renault	91
6 Toro Rosso	85
7 Racing Point	73
8 Alfa Romeo	57
9 Haas	28
10 Williams	1

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	14	7	Bottas
Vettel	9	11	Leclerc
Albon	0	7	Verstappen
Gasly	1	10	Verstappen
Ricciardo	12	8	Hulkenberg
Grosjean	7	12	Magnussen
Norris	10	9	Sainz
Perez	18	3	Stroll
Raikkonen	11	9	Giovinazzi
Gasly	5	1	Kvyat
Albon	5	5	Kvyat
Russell	21	0	Kubica

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS		FASTEST LAPS	
Hamilton	11	Hamilton	6
Bottas	4	Leclerc	4
Verstappen	3	Bottas	3
Leclerc	2	Verstappen	3
Vettel	1	Gasly	2
		Vettel	2
		Magnussen	1
POLE POSITIONS			
Leclerc	7		
Bottas	5		
Hamilton	5		
Verstappen	2		
Vettel	2		

STARTING GRID

 10 Perez #11 1m37.055s	 9 Hulkenberg #27 1m36.710s	 8 Sainz #55 1m36.459s	 7 Ricciardo #3 1m36.456s	 6 Norris #4 1m36.436s	 5 Albon #23 1m35.682s	4 Vettel #5 1m35.339s	3 Leclerc #16 1m35.219s	2 Verstappen #33 1m35.139s	1 Hamilton #44 1m34.779s
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RACE RESULTS ROUND 21/21 55 LAPS – 189.75 MILES

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h34m05.715s	55	Mu, Hn
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+16.772s		Mu, Hn
3	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+43.435s		Mu, Hn, Sn
4	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+44.379s		Mu, Hn
5	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Ferrari	+1m04.357s		Su, Hn, Mn
6	Alexander Albon (THA)	Red Bull-Honda	+1m09.205s		Mu, Hn
7	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Racing Point-Mercedes	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
8	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Renault	-1 lap		Su, Hn
9	Daniil Kvyat (RUS)	Toro Rosso-Honda	-1 lap		Hn, Mn
10	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	McLaren-Renault	-1 lap		Su, Hn, Mn
11	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	Renault	-1 lap		Su, Hn, Su
12	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Renault	-1 lap		Su, Mn
13	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Hn
14	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Hu
15	Romain Grosjean (FRA)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap		Mn, Hu
16	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap		Sn, Hn, Mn
17	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap		Hn, Mn
18	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Toro Rosso-Honda	-2 laps		Mn, Hn
19	Robert Kubica (POL)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps		Hn, Mn
R	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Racing Point-Mercedes	45 laps-brakes		Mn, Hn, Sn

FASTEST LAPS

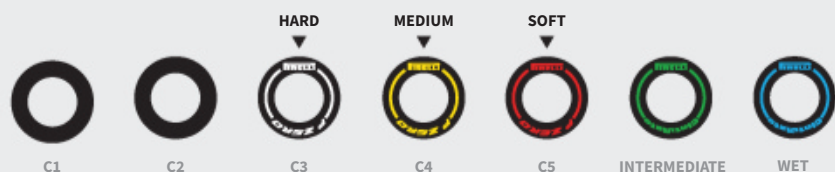
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Hamilton	1m39.283s	-	53
2	Bottas	1m39.715s	+0.432s	31
3	Vettel	1m40.128s	+0.845s	55
4	Leclerc	1m40.442s	+1.159s	44
5	Verstappen	1m41.119s	+1.836s	55
6	Ricciardo	1m41.190s	+1.907s	51
7	Sainz	1m41.294s	+2.011s	43
8	Albon	1m42.219s	+2.936s	49
9	Kvyat	1m42.222s	+2.939s	42
10	Gasly	1m42.414s	+3.131s	53
11	Perez	1m42.639s	+3.356s	39
12	Norris	1m43.026s	+3.743s	50
13	Russell	1m43.074s	+3.791s	50
14	Raikkonen	1m43.142s	+3.859s	25
15	Giovinazzi	1m43.256s	+3.973s	28
16	Hulkenberg	1m43.274s	+3.991s	52
17	Stroll	1m43.326s	+4.043s	25
18	Grosjean	1m43.666s	+4.383s	33
19	Magnussen	1m43.790s	+4.507s	22
20	Kubica	1m44.500s	+5.217s	51

WEATHER 24C, dark

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 121.00mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 125.14mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



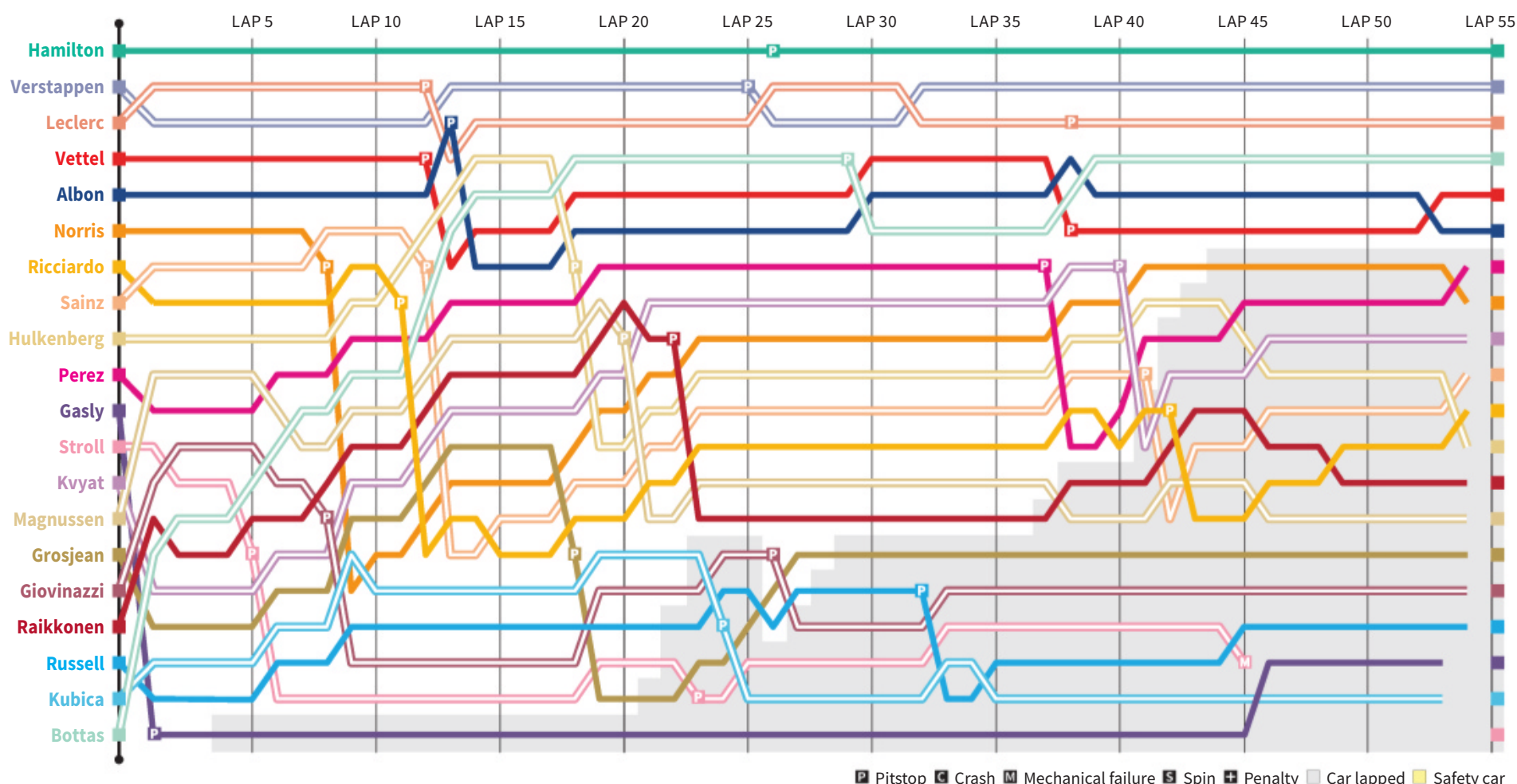
RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES
BOTTAS required to start from the back of the grid for additional power unit elements used

STAT
250
Hamilton has now started 250 F1 races, scoring a 33.6% win rate

STAT
177
Number of F1 starts without a podium for Nico Hulkenberg, a record

LAP CHART What happened, when



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

NINE'S THE HIGH-WATER MARK AT YAS MARINA

No one deserves full marks for their performance at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, although Hamilton, Verstappen and Perez come close

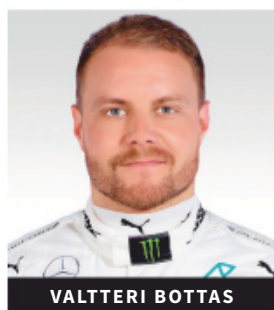
EDD STRAW

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

9 Struggled to get into a rhythm on Friday, but after an overnight reset bagged his fifth pole position of the season. Dominated the race, adding fastest lap on 26-lap-old hard tyres for good measure as he took a comfortable victory in which his advantage was far bigger than the final gap suggested.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

8 Knew he had to start from the back because of an engine change, but gave it a go in qualifying to set the second fastest time. Lost as much as six seconds in the first 18 laps because of the DRS not being available, but drove well to deliver fourth – and menace Leclerc for third.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

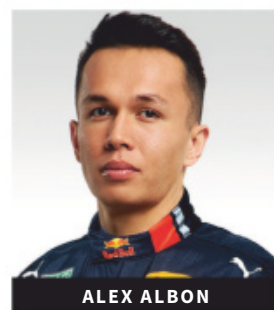
7 Lapped 0.120s off Leclerc in qualifying and always looked marginally the slower Ferrari driver. After having a dig at Verstappen on the first lap, settled into a battle with Albon that was ultimately resolved in his favour after making a second stop. Fifth was about his level in the race.



CHARLES LECLERC

8 Started third after qualifying fourth and used a good exit from Turn 5 to pass Verstappen on the first lap. But with Ferrari spending much of the race in fuel-save mode, he wasn't able to resist Verstappen coming back at him. Subsequently stopped again to try for fastest lap and cover Bottas.

RED BULL



ALEX ALBON

7 Over half a second slower than Verstappen in qualifying, Albon struggled to get the best out of the car in the slower corners. But in the race he gave his best in his battle for what was ultimately fifth with Vettel, briefly resisting the Ferrari, which had a tyre advantage, late on.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

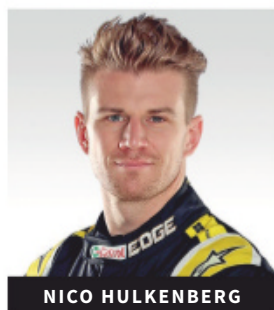
9 Was realistically only ever fighting his team-mate and the Ferraris despite his FP3 pace giving hope he could challenge for pole. Lost second to Leclerc on the opening lap and was almost passed by Vettel, but did well with the onset of power-delivery problems to retake second.

RENAULT



DANIEL RICCIARDO

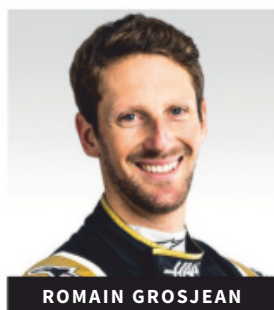
8 Outpaced Hulkenberg in qualifying, but didn't quite have the pace to beat Norris even though 'Class B' pole might have been possible. Was passed by Sainz on the first lap, then again in the second stint, before abandoning his two-stopper a little too late to come back through to salvage points.



NICO HULKENBERG

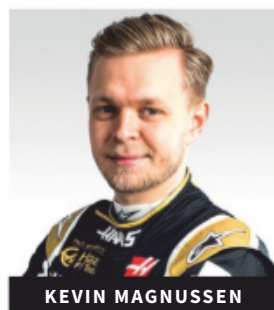
7 Qualified behind Ricciardo, but got ahead of him after running a longer first stint on softs. Unfortunately, it was too early to switch to mediums rather than hards and he plummeted out of the points on the last lap, falling victim to Sainz's incisive pass and then also losing a place to Ricciardo.

HAAS



ROMAIN GROSJEAN

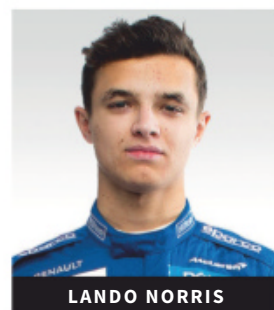
6 Was rapid on Friday, but the one version of the floor available (dating from the start of the year and featuring diffuser tweaks) was smashed up by Bottas's rash FP1 move. Underachieved in qualifying then slipped to 17th at the start, setting the tone for a quiet day in a car without much pace.



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

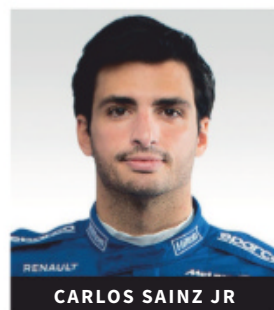
7 Qualified well compared to Grosjean and held 10th place early on before slipping behind Perez and Bottas. Hung on gamely, but the Haas was not quick enough and vulnerable on the straights, which added up to a 14th-place finish, having been passed by Raikkonen in the second stint.

MCLAREN



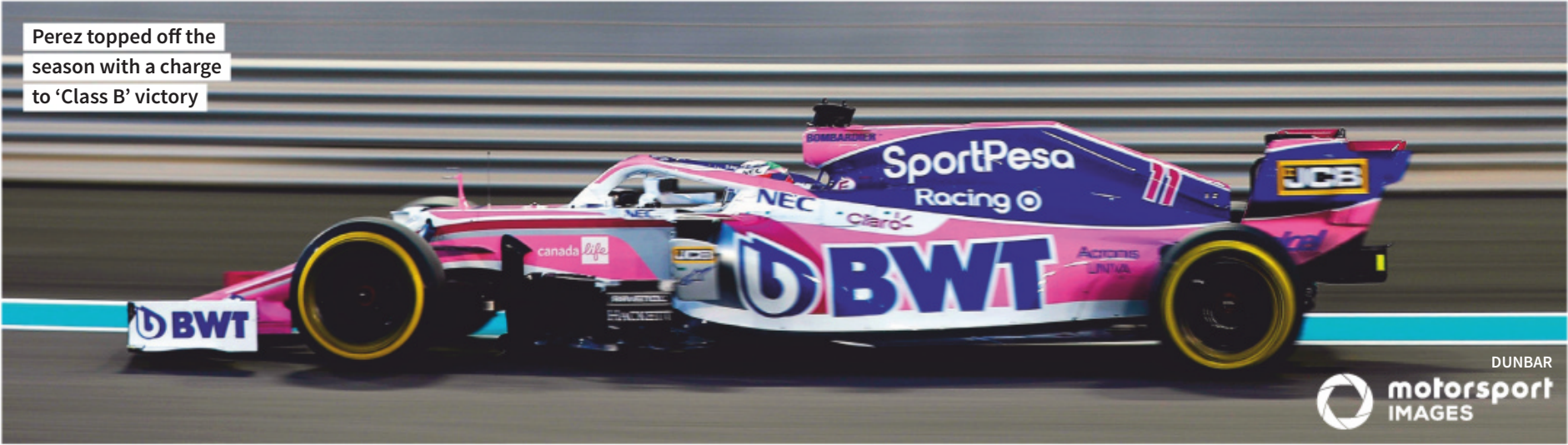
LANDO NORRIS

7 Qualified as the leading midfielder despite looking to have a slight pace deficit to Sainz. Held position at the start, although a big lock-up forced him to the pits early. He mitigated the losses in traffic without DRS, although was annoyed to lose out to Perez on the final lap.



CARLOS SAINZ JR

8 Was the fastest midfielder in qualifying, but traffic on his out-lap in Q3 meant the front tyres weren't up to temperature and he ended up ninth. Battled hard in the midfield before a second stop and a superb late dive to nick 10th from Hulkenberg on the last lap.



RACING POINT



9 Qualified exactly where he needed to, giving him free tyre choice and 10th thanks to Bottas being dropped to the back. Extended his medium stint to 37 laps, which allowed him to charge from 12th to seventh in the closing stages on hards, capped by mugging Norris with an unexpected lunge.



5 Was within half a tenth of Perez in qualifying, but was a little too ambitious in the first corner, understeering into Gasly. Finished the first lap 12th, but the damage meant he was destined for an early stop that condemned him to irrelevance before eventually giving up while running 17th.

ALFA ROMEO

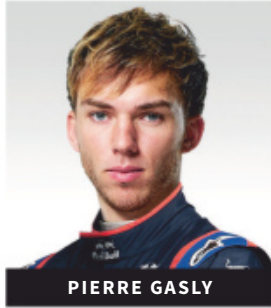


7 Climbed to 14th on the opening lap after starting 17th having been beaten by Giovinazzi in qualifying. Held off Kvyat in the first stint and kept himself on the periphery of the top 10 battle – passing Magnussen on the way – lest any crumbs fall off the table. The Alfa wasn't capable of much more than that.



7 Outpaced Raikkonen by a quarter of a second in qualifying and ran 12th in the early stages. But the gamble of choosing to start on softs forced a stop on lap eight and meant he had to clear traffic, resulting in a collision with Kubica that gave him significant aero damage.

TORO ROSSO

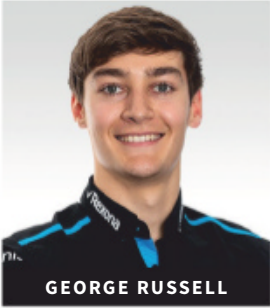


7 Disappointed to miss out on Q3, but was still in a good position to have a decent race after starting on mediums. Was hit by Stroll at the first corner, which turned his car in a way that meant he damaged his front wing on Perez. Long pitstop condemned him to a lonely afternoon.



8 Qualified half a tenth behind Gasly and seemed a little less comfortable with the car, although the underlying pace was decent. Started on hards and ran to lap 40, crucially losing time behind Raikkonen early on. Charged on mediums late on to climb from 12th to ninth.

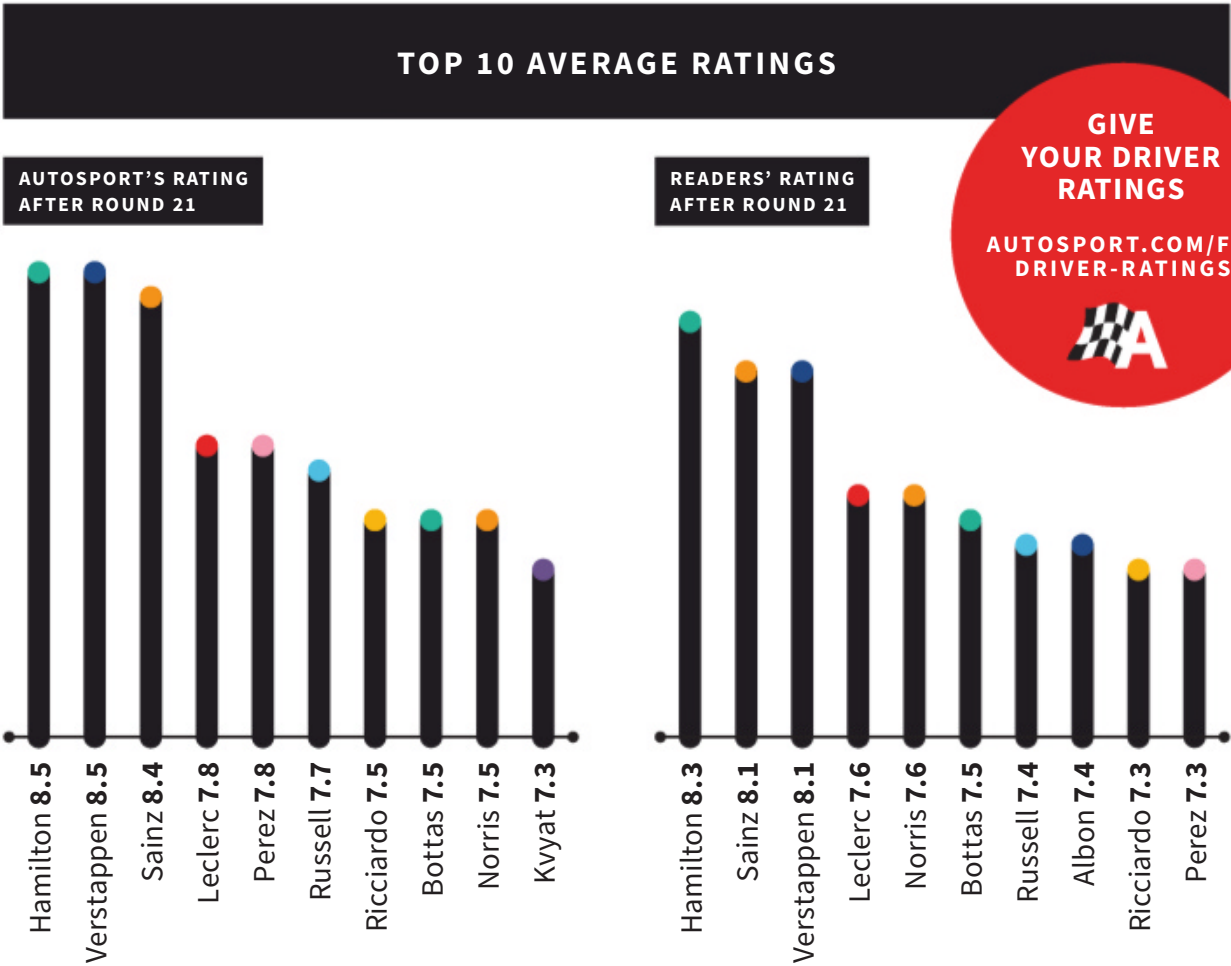
WILLIAMS



6 There were question marks over whether he could drive on Friday owing to illness, but he was certainly back on form come qualifying. Dropped to the back at the start, then went off at Turn 5 while trying to pass Kubica. Ran long in the first stint and dispatched his teammate after stopping.



5 Was half a second off Russell in qualifying but passed him into the first corner. Complained of damage after a wheel-to-wheel slap from Russell at Turn 5. Held Russell off for the first stint, but was passed in the second after stopping eight laps earlier.





Sette Camara win sets up Driot tribute

FIA FORMULA 2
ABU DHABI (ARE)
30 NOVEMBER-1 DECEMBER
ROUND 12/12

For Sergio Sette Camara, his Formula 2 feature-race win signified everything the young McLaren test and development driver's season should have been. For DAMS, it meant the most emotional of triumphs as the Brazilian's victory sealed the teams' title months on from the death of the squad's founder Jean-Paul Driot.

The DAMS drivers – 2020 Williams Formula 1 signing Nicholas Latifi in the other car – have carried stickers commemorating Driot ever since, and the squad could easily have suffered a slump in form or even capitulated. But the strong final quarter of the year proved everything Driot stood for: put good people in the right places and the results will come.

One of those people, DAMS team boss

Francois Sicard, said: “He was such a competitor. The only way to honour Jean-Paul was to carry on with the momentum, carry on winning and clinching the title. He has done so much for the team.”

You could be forgiven for switching off from a pole winner taking the victory, but the race was about as exciting as possible given the circumstances.

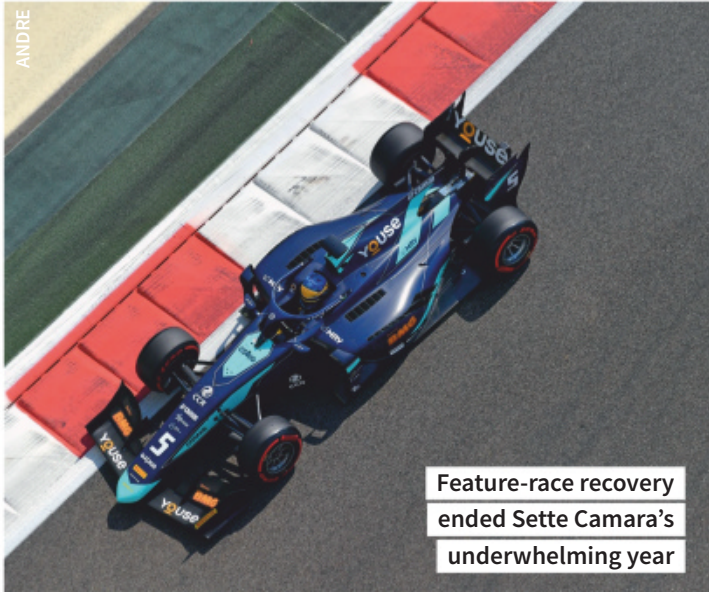
The tyres – supersofts and softs – degrade so quickly in Abu Dhabi that it becomes a case of survival of those on the best strategy. Sette Camara failed on that front at the start as Louis Deletraz and Callum Ilott – on the same strategy – breezed past as he burned up his rear tyres. It's something that has plagued his season. But the sometimes hot-headed 21-year-old never lost his cool in the heat, measuring a second stint where – after leaping past Ilott in the pitstops – he watched Carlin ace Deletraz drive into the distance.

Out front, Nobuharu Matsushita and

Guanyu Zhou were in a class of their own, the Carlin and Virtuosi Racing men running the soft tyres from the start on the alternate strategy. Zhou had been as much as seven seconds behind, but whittled that down to nothing on lap 27 of 31. It was Matsushita who pitted first and received the undercut. Zhou stayed out one lap longer with his pace advantage, but it wasn't enough.

Meanwhile, Sette Camara emerged in the picture behind Deletraz and he was closing. The net leader for effectively 80% of the race (knowing Matsushita and Zhou would have to pit), Deletraz lost out as Sette Camara timed his late surge perfectly and stormed past on lap 28. The only question in the closing phase was whether Matsushita and Zhou – now lapping upwards of six seconds quicker than their rivals on new boots – had enough tyre life and time left to bring the gap down. Both passed Deletraz, but Matsushita lost too much time doing so, allowing Sette Camara to scarper up the road.





Feature-race recovery ended Sette Camara's underwhelming year



Ghiotto rounded out lengthy F2 spell with the sprint-race spoils

RESULTS ROUND 12/12, YAS MARINA (ARE), 30 NOV-1 DEC RACE 1 (31 LAPS - 106.913 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	DAMS	1h02m17.011s
2	Nobuharu Matsushita (JPN)	Carlin	+5.149s
3	Guanyu Zhou (CHN)	Virtuosi Racing	+7.765s
4	Louis Deletraz (CHE)	Carlin	+10.919s
5	Callum Ilott (GBR)	Sauber Junior Team by Charouz	+15.981s
6	Luca Ghiotto (ITA)	Virtuosi Racing	+20.385s
7	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	DAMS	+25.785s
8	Giuliano Alesi (FRA)	Trident	+32.249s
9	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Prema Racing	+41.902s
10	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	ART Grand Prix	+48.680s
11	Jack Aitken (GBR)	Campos Racing	+49.560s
12	Jordan King (GBR)	MP Motorsport	+50.479s
13	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	ART Grand Prix	+53.455s
14	Christian Lundgaard (DNK)	Trident	+53.963s
15	Matevos Isaakyan (RUS)	Sauber Junior Team by Charouz	+56.593s
16	Tatiana Calderon (COL)	Arden	+58.602s
17	Sean Gelael (IDN)	Prema Racing	+1m02.900s
18	Marino Sato (JPN)	Campos Racing	+1m37.470s
R	Artem Markelov (RUS)	Arden	9 laps-engine
R	Mahaveer Raghunathan (IND)	MP Motorsport	7 laps-technical

Winner's average speed 102.992mph. Fastest lap Zhou 1m54.077s, 108.908mph.

QUALIFYING 1 Sette Camara 1m49.751s; 2 Ilott 1m49.840s; 3 Deletraz 1m49.931s; 4 Matsushita 1m50.157s; 5 Zhou 1m50.190s; 6 de Vries 1m50.288s; 7 Latifi 1m50.303s; 8 Aitken 1m50.520s; 9 Schumacher 1m50.652s; 10 Ghiotto 1m50.858s; 11 Alesi 1m50.920s; 12 King 1m51.174s; 13 Markelov 1m51.412s; 14 Isaakyan 1m51.522s; 15 Sato 1m51.829s; 16 Gelael 1m51.884s; 17 Lundgaard 1m52.140s; 18 Calderon 1m52.412s; 19 Mazepin 1m50.618s*; 20 Raghunathan 1m53.363s*. *grid penalty.

RACE 2 (22 LAPS - 75.853 MILES)

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

1 Ghiotto 44m22.552s; 2 Latifi +7.274s; 3 Sette Camara +10.235s; 4 Ilott +16.106s; 5 Alesi +17.273s; 6 Deletraz +19.451s; 7 Matsushita +28.230s; 8 Zhou +29.112s; 9 King +31.532s; 10 Aitken +32.075s; 11 Schumacher +33.578s; 12 Lundgaard +37.018s; 13 de Vries +40.436s; 14 Calderon +43.149s; 15 Raghunathan +52.593s; 16 Sato +59.719s; 17 Mazepin 19 laps-DNF; R Isaakyan 18 laps-stalled; R Gelael 16 laps-driveshaft; R Markelov 10 laps-gearbox.

Winner's average speed 102.559mph. Fastest lap Latifi 1m55.526s, 107.542mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 de Vries 266; 2 Latifi 214; 3 Ghiotto 207; 4 Sette Camara 204; 5 Aitken 159; 6 Matsushita 144; 7 Zhou 140; 8 Deletraz 92; 9 King 79; 10 Anthoine Hubert 77.



Tyre and set-up woes meant de Vries clocked out with two 13th places

With an IndyCar slot and an F2 return rumoured in the paddock, despite a nightmare season, Sette Camara sealed fourth in the standings and secured an F1 superlicence, making him a potentially attractive proposition in the future.

Matsushita and Zhou rounded out the podium, but Deletraz would get his revenge in the second race when he mugged team-mate Matsushita on the last lap for fifth.

Giuliano Alesi took eighth in the feature and the reversed-grid race pole, which he managed well to take a whopping 1.7s lead at the end of the first lap. But he was never expected to stay there and on lap eight Luca Ghiotto stormed past. The Italian, in his last race after four years in the F1 support series, should have been fighting for the title with Virtuosi this year but some mistakes and niggly issues cost him. At least breezing into the distance in the sprint race took back third in the championship. In doing so he deposed Sette Camara, who stormed through the pack after falling to ninth at the start, taking third on the penultimate lap from Ilott.

Second belonged to Latifi. After four years with DAMS, the teary-eyed Canadian thanked the team for all it had done for him. It was a fitting and emotional tribute.

But what about the F2 champion? A nightmare weekend for Nyck de Vries yielded a pair of 13th places after set-up and tyre issues. What could have been, had the title race stayed alive until the last round?

JACK BENYON



HOW THE 2019 AWARD WINNER WAS CHOSEN

*This Sunday the winner of our young driver award will be announced.
Here's how the team of judges assessed the British hopefuls*

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**



Autosport's search for the best young British driving talent has been pretty successful over the past 30 years. David Coulthard became the inaugural winner in 1989, with an on-track shootout between a selected group of finalists arriving the following year. Since then, Award winners have included 2009 Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button, three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Dario Franchitti, 2014 World Endurance champion Anthony Davidson, and current F1 stars George Russell and Lando Norris.

The process to select the winner has also developed a great deal, and the 2019 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award finalists were tested across a wide range of disciplines, so how did the judging panel (see page 35) assess them?

The process began by selecting the four finalists, based on their performances during the season. There is often strong debate, but the panel was unanimous in choosing Enaam Ahmed, Jamie Chadwick, Johnathan Hoggard and Ayrton Simmons for 2019. Once selected, the slate is wiped clean and the finalists start on a level playing field – only their level of experience is taken into account.

After the announcement, the Award truly began for the finalists with the fitness and simulator tests at Red Bull Racing. Extensive reports were made, which gave the judges hints at possible strengths and weaknesses of the finalists and what they are like to work with. Although the Award has yet to be decided on these elements, they are important aspects to modern motorsport and are useful in the feedback sessions the judges provide to all finalists in January.

Then it was off to the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit for the on-track part of the assessment. After seat fittings and briefings, the judges and finalists went to the nearby Plum Park Hotel for an informal dinner. This – and the formal dinner the following night – is not part of the test, but helps everyone get to know each other.

An early-morning briefing the next day was swiftly followed by sighting laps in the Silverstone Driving Experience's Aston Martin Vantages. Then it was on to the MotorSport Vision F2 cars. Each finalist gets their own F2 machine, engineer and mechanics – selected at random – for the two days.

This year, with the circuit slightly damp, the judges decided to send the four cars out on wet-weather tyres. These were quickly chewed up and the finalists were soon put on to slicks for two



Fitness tests also helped provide post-award feedback for the drivers

'familiarisation' runs. Then there were two new-tyre runs, which are essentially qualifying-style sessions. No sessions are any more significant than the others – all count and the progress of each finalist is key, as is the consistency of their performance.

Throughout the running, the judges are positioned around the circuit, in the pits and in the judges' HQ, where live timing data is received thanks to TSL.

With on-track running limited in many categories, the need to figure out a car quickly and get on the pace is increasingly important. That's also true in the Award, although it won't trump the overall speed shown during the tests.

With the F2 runs and debriefs completed, attention turned to the Aston Martin Vantage GT3 and Ligier LMP3 machines. There was one of each and the drivers had to take it in turns, so direct comparison was harder than with the F2s, in which the drivers are all on track at the same time. But the benchmark drivers – in this case, judges Darren Turner in the Aston and Alexander Sims in the Ligier – provided useful comparisons and could check track evolution, as well as helping the finalists adapt to the cars.

Being benchmark drivers also gave them extra insight when it came to the judging process. "The most impressive thing was that they came over from the F2 and switched completely into GT3 mode to try and extract the most performance," says Turner. "All of them did an exceptional job in the GT3 car – lap time performance was very good and there were no mistakes.

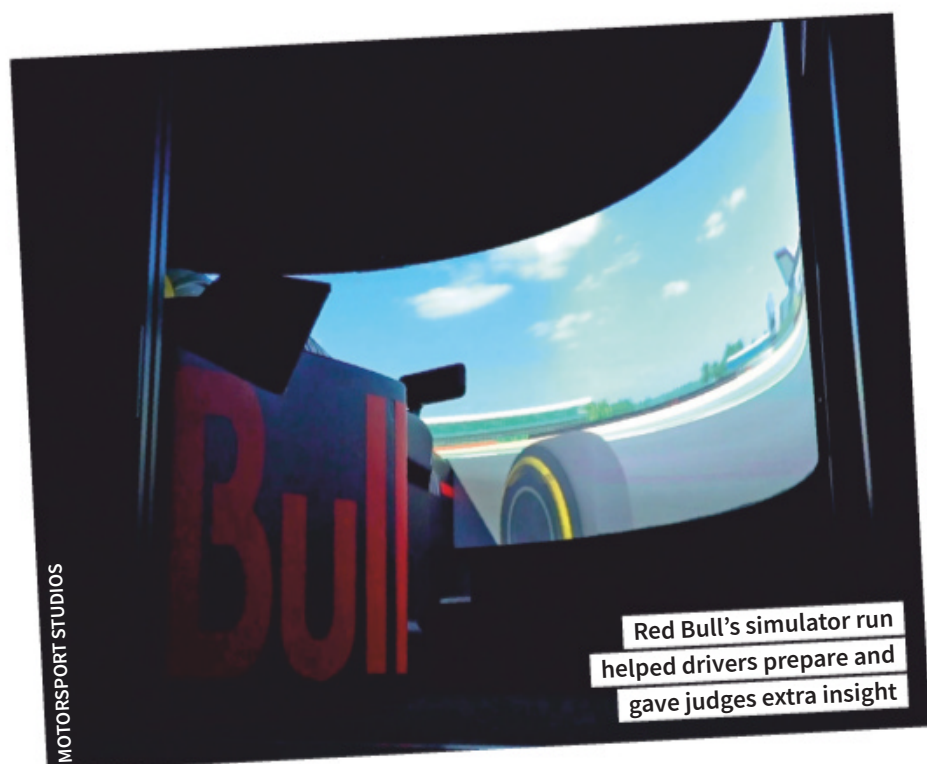
"It was interesting that the person who did the best was the

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO SEE THEM IN NEW ENVIRONMENTS TO ASSESS HOW THEY PUSH NEW-FOUND LIMITS"

person who asked the most questions beforehand. The ambient temperature was quite cold. The tyres came out of the oven and then dropped away and then plateaued, so the best lap was generally at the beginning of the run. One driver really understood that."

Given that finalists are chosen from the single-seater ladder, the GT and sportscar are important in taking the drivers out of their comfort zones. Seeing who adapts best gives a good indication into how well the drivers will perform as they progress in their careers.

"It's important to see them in challenging new environments to assess how they adapt their driving and push the new-found limits," confirms Sims. "Often, the drivers have only done a couple of years in single-seaters, so the range of machinery is important." >>



Red Bull's simulator run helped drivers prepare and gave judges extra insight

WHAT THE 2019 FINALISTS THOUGHT



ENAAM AHMED

AGE 19

JAPANESE F3 RACE WINNER (AND 2017 AWARD FINALIST)

"I didn't drive the LMP3 car in 2017 and that was my favourite this time around. The steering was super-sharp and you have to get your head around that because the car is very neutral. The GT3 car is very different to what I normally drive, but since then I went and qualified a Vantage third [in his session] for the Kyalami 9 Hours so it was still a really useful experience. It was great that we got to do the last day in the wet. I think that was one of my best sessions. The wait is hard, though. At the Awards the winner is revealed right at the end so you just get more nervous!"



JAMIE CHADWICK

AGE 21

MRF CHALLENGE AND W SERIES CHAMPION

"It's such a cool process and you have the full Grand Prix circuit all to yourself. After watching Tom Gamble have his F1 test, that is enough of an incentive. I wasn't expecting to get as much driving as we had – five new tyre runs in the F2 car. I think that's not really like anything any of us had driven for a while and I absolutely loved it. With the power and the boost button, it's a very rewarding car. Rain on the second day did make it a bit of a handful, though, as it's such a heavy car. It was also amazing to jump back into a GT car, but the Ligier LMP3 was my favourite."



JOHNATHAN HOGGARD

AGE 19

BRDC BRITISH F3 RUNNER-UP

"Coming in I was quite nervous. You have two days to show everything you've got but I think it went quite well. It's hard not knowing how well you've done as there's no data so it's like having one of your senses taken off you. Since the shootout I've had to keep myself busy and not worry, but I really enjoyed all three cars and it's a great experience to jump out of one and into something different. I've never driven anything with a roof before, so that was my first taste of a GT car or a prototype. Because of that, I really tried to use the reference drivers."



AYRTON SIMMONS

AGE 18

BRDC BRITISH F3 RACE WINNER

"I think it went very well, much smoother than I expected for what is an intense two days. Especially in the F2 car, I didn't feel out of place. I've never driven a GT3 car before and considering that I think it went well, but I did struggle in the higher-speed corners with a lack of downforce. I was actually looking forward to driving in the wet to spice things up – managing that in a car with double the power to what I'm used to and some turbo lag thrown in there as well. It's been an intense wait and as you get closer to finding out you just want to know more and more."



Day one ran so smoothly that, with rain threatening for day two, there was time for the drivers to jump back into the F2 cars again and have a go with the ‘push-to-pass’ overboost, providing an extra 50bhp, taking it to nearly 500bhp. This throws an extra variable at the finalists and puts the pressure on in terms of avoiding errors.

At the end of the day, the judges received feedback on each of the drivers from the Garage 59 team running the Aston Martin and the Ligier squad. The drivers are ranked in terms of their performance and how they interacted with the team members.

Prior to day two’s running, the judges interviewed the finalists to see how things were going and what their plans were. The judges are there to assist as much as possible. The idea is to help each finalist perform to the best of their ability, not trip them up – ‘be friends, not policemen’ – so asking questions is encouraged.

The second day started dry, so there were two more F2 runs with slicks. The final test was a pursuit in which the aim was to cover 10 flying laps in the lowest time. It rained heavily before the session, so the judges got to see the finalists perform in the wet. Sadly, the conditions worsened so the session was red-flagged after just seven laps, but that was enough to establish a firm order. The engineers then gave their feedback before leaving the judges to deliberate.

Although the Award is judged across the entire process, there have been some standout moments over the years. Button was sensational in the Super Touring Nissan Primera in 1998, Sims outpaced the DTM benchmark driver in 2008, and Dan Ticktum showed star quality on slick tyres on a drying track in 2017.

Chairman of the judges, ex-F1 driver and British Racing Drivers’ Club vice-president Derek Warwick, believes the average level of the finalists has improved over the years, with all the extra data across three cars sometimes required to really separate the drivers: “Every year I’m stunned by the organisation, motivation and fitness of the finalists, and how prepared they are. This year was no different.



MSV F2 runs provided the meat of the Silverstone test

STALEY

“THEY PROVED THEY ARE WORTHY FINALISTS AND ONE IN PARTICULAR REALLY SURPRISED ME”

“I’m amazed how they can cope so well, going from low-power, low-downforce to beasts of cars. When you come off the back of great winners such as Oliver Rowland, Jake Dennis, George Russell, Lando Norris and Dan Ticktum you wonder how you can reproduce it, but we had four great drivers. They proved they were worthy finalists and one in particular really surprised me.”

The four finalists – and the motorsport world – will find out who that person is on Sunday when the 31st winner is announced at the Autosport Awards. 🏆



GT3 Aston Martin was the new addition to the 2019 line-up

STALEY



Ligier took the finalists out of their comfort zones

STALEY

ALEXANDER SIMS: A DRIVING JUDGE’S VIEW

I was hugely thankful for the Award opportunity when I was 20 years old and, having seen it from the other side, I have even more appreciation for it. The Award relies on the goodwill of many different organisations that pool

their efforts and resources to make it happen. All the partners are there giving their time and expertise to help young drivers and it really makes the atmosphere special. No one is there to make money. Everyone wants to make it

the best it can possibly be. What I now appreciate the most is that it’s an open and honest process: the best and fastest driver wins. A lot of politics can come into play in motorsport, but one of the best things about AMABA is how pure

the judging process is. It’s never a case of considering who deserves it most, or whether they had a ‘difficult season’, it’s purely who is quickest during the driving assessment. I set the benchmark lap for the LMP3 car, and I find

that almost more nerve-wracking than when I was a finalist myself! If it’s a close call then we might look at other aspects, such as the simulator or fitness tests, but ultimately it’s about ability behind the wheel on the day.

2019 JUDGES

Derek Warwick (chairman), Leena Gade, Andrew Kirkaldy, Jason Plato, Alexander Sims, Ian Titchmarsh, Darren Turner, Kevin Turner, Mark Williams



INSIGHT

THE BTCC'S GREATEST DRIVER • WRC SEASON REVIEW • JACK BRABHAM'S 10 GREATEST DRIVES

ROUSE

TITLES 4
(1975, 1983,
1984, 1985)

WINS 60



TURKINGTON

TITLES 4
(2009, 2014, 2018, 2019)

WINS 51





THE DEBATE

WHO IS THE BTCC'S GREATEST?

A recent Autosport podcast tackled the big question raised after Colin Turkington secured his fourth British Touring Car crown. Here's how the debate between three series correspondents went down

MATT KEW, EDD STRAW AND KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

PLATO

TITLES 2
(2001, 2010)
WINS 97



MATT KEW



EDD STRAW



KEVIN TURNER

EDD STRAW Apart from Colin Turkington, Andy Rouse is the other driver with four titles so it's a good opportunity to discuss who is the greatest BTCC driver, and it's not just between those two. In the title decider Colin knew he was up against it, but he still got in the car, drove a good race, kept it clean. There was a point where he was behind Dan Cammish for a handful of laps – he could have tapped him off, but he kept his cool, he worked his way past. There's a lot to be said for a driver who can do that. I think that shows a good amount of class to do that, particularly in a sprint race.

MATT KEW Last year he won the title but with only one race win, so you know he did the business by consistently scoring solid points, whereas this year he sort of showed he can do everything, even with maximum success ballast. He scored a brilliant pole at Oulton Park – I know some people will say BMW is quickest, but touring cars has measures to bring about performance parity so you know up to a point it takes that away. Turkington can devour the pack if he needs to, he can put the car exactly where it needs to be and pull off these brilliant overtakes in a sizeable car, so yeah he's got the pace and he's got the brains as well, so it's quite a potent combination.

KEVIN TURNER He's long since been underrated in the way that he can overtake cars. The 2014 Knockhill drive – through the pack from the back to fourth with not a scratch on the car, nobody was fired off. He very rarely gets himself into trouble but he does overtake people, he's just very good at picking his moment. He's one of the cleanest racers on the grid. >>

ES I almost feel that up to the point when he joined WSR the second time in 2006 he was kind of on the up. It was the difficult experience at Triple Eight and then moving to WSR that allowed him to really start to come of age as a driver.

KT You see that in the modern age of touring cars quite a lot, in that the quick guys are quick from the moment they arrive, but it takes a long time to work out how to put a championship challenge together. Colin's really worked it out to the point where he could win the championship last year, in 2018, when there were half a dozen cars that could have potentially won that championship.

MK Yep he had one win, Sutton had six, and he still converted it.

ES It's phenomenally difficult to win that championship because of the three-race format, the success ballast – it's not a championship you can go out and dominate in the conventional sense. In the Super Touring era you could go out and win nine races in a season potentially – it was competitive but it was possible to do that. But if you're the best car and driver package in BTCC now you are probably going to come out of the season at best with half a dozen wins. And it's being able to bank fourths and fifths here and there that's really the bedrock of your campaigns.

KT And to back up your point about 2005-06 being the watershed moment, Colin lost to his team-mates in the first four seasons – Gareth Howell in 2002, not by much it has to be said, and then the following year with MG, Anthony Reid and Warren Hughes finished ahead of him in the championship. Reidy beat him in 2004, and then in 2005 Yvan Muller, who many regard as one of the best touring car drivers in recent years, beat him in a difficult car. Since then, since he joined WSR again with the MG ZS in 2006, he's beaten his team-mates every single season with one exception, which was in 2015 in the BMR VW against Jason Plato. And he has never been beaten in the BTCC by a team-mate in a rear-wheel-drive car, and that includes having Jason the following year when they switched to Subaru – he turned the tables. As a front-wheel-drive racer he was one of the best, but I think he's *the* rear-wheel-drive racer of the NGTC era.

ES What makes it very difficult to evaluate these drivers is that, on the one hand there are loads more races than there used to be, so this is why people run up quite big victory tallies. But at the same time it's now much harder to win them. Let's start bringing in some of the other drivers and talk a bit about Jason Plato. Everybody knows how good Plato has been in the BTCC – 97 wins, which is absolutely sensational. Just the two titles, a hell of a lot of near-misses, but he has to be in this conversation.

KT If you did the championship on who's won the most races in a season – which is more problematic with touring cars than with anything else because of the success ballast and all the rest of it – but if you did give it to the driver with the most wins then Jason would be a seven-time champion, with two others that would have to be decided on countback.

ES Of course he won in the Super Touring era – he came in in 1997 with Renault-Williams and got a couple of wins in his first year.

KT And the only drivers who have beaten him in the same team: Alain Menu in his first two years in the championship; Yvan Muller in 2000, and obviously he did beat him the following year; Colin himself in the Subaru and then Ash Sutton, who is another champion. That's an awful lot of team-mates that he's beaten.

MK In terms of legacies and impact Plato is a household name. Look at the blue-chip names he's brought in. He's brought in manufacturers all by himself, so his contribution to the championship has been massive.

ES If you're putting him up against Turkington in this debate, he's got a star quality that's well beyond what Turkington has. Colin is a class act in the car, he's a great driver, you know he's a nice guy out of the car, but he ultimately is not memorable in that same way, whereas Plato's got this huge character and plays up to things.

KT It depends what the conversation is. If you're talking about the greatest British Touring Car figures, or most important people in the history of it, then Jason is absolutely right up there and well ahead of Colin. But I think if you're talking about just the greatest driver, then I think it's much closer because Colin has converted more of his chances.

ES With Plato there were too many times – I know this from when I was covering it – when he had scrapes that he didn't need to have.

KT But then he has also been unlucky. It's a bit like the Fernando Alonso situation – a handful of points here or there and you'd be looking at five championships instead of two. But I'm quite a purist when it comes to the racing. Rubbing is racing, but firing someone straight off the road is not, even in touring cars. And I think the difference between Colin and Jason is that Colin can get the moves done without overstepping the mark, whereas Jason has done on many occasions.

MK Yeah, there were a couple of times this year when you get the impression the mentality was, 'You're not coming by because I'm just better than you.' The fight is still there and you've got to hand it to the guy, he's still fast.

ES His longevity is remarkable.

KT It is, but I think when we're comparing these two we're not really comparing like for like, because Jason has lost a bit of an edge – there have been a few times this year when I thought Jason from maybe five years ago, maybe 10 years ago, would have nailed a win and he just didn't get it done. But to be fair he's had the peak of his career and he's nearer the end than the beginning. Colin probably isn't there yet. But we don't know how Turkington will finish. Will he do a sort of Jackie Stewart/Nico Rosberg-style thing and quit when he's still at the top, or will we see a gradual decline? It's a little bit tricky to compare before Colin's story is entirely finished.

ES Bringing in Andy Rouse, he has comfortably the strongest wins/starts strike rate of these three big drivers. Four titles, five more class titles, 60 wins in total – he has to be in this debate, doesn't he? A very different driver and I guess another set of criteria he kind of brings.

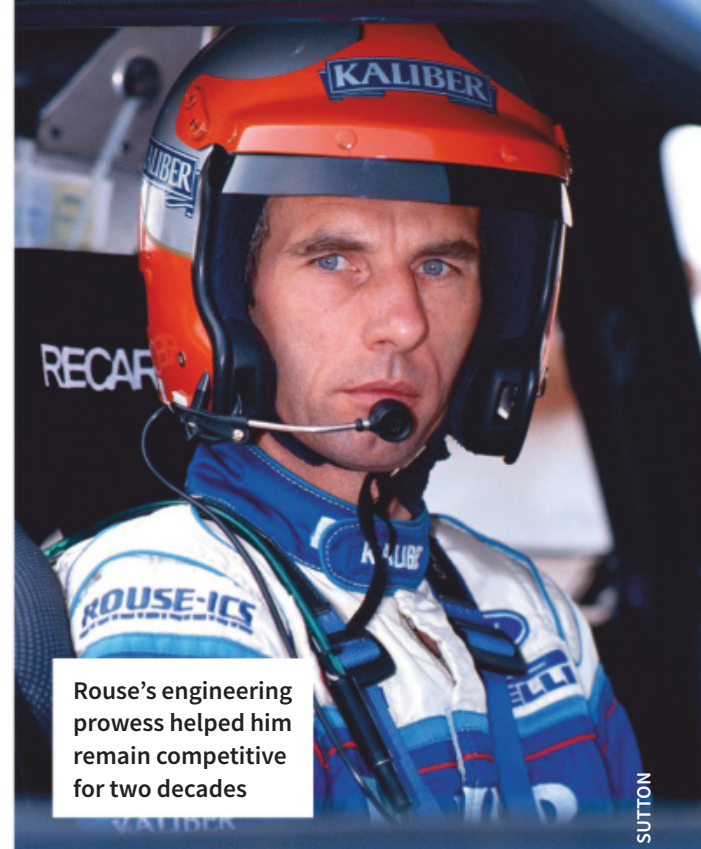
KT If you're looking at the impact on the championship, then Rouse is perhaps even more important than Jason. He was there through a period when the BTCC was growing, led the way with the Ford RS500s – which everyone still talks about – and was involved in the formation of the Super Touring rules. And when you think he was in touring cars and winning in the mid-1970s and still able to hold his own in the early days of the two-litre Super Touring era, that's longevity as well, isn't it? I guess his biggest trump card over the others is his engineering. He was always able to give himself a technical advantage through some of this period and that's impossible now because of the NGTC regulations.

MK There's that 1988 race at Brands Hatch too, between Rouse and Steve Soper; it's amazing. Rouse had greater turbo boost and was almost laughably faster in a straight line – these two RS500s, supposedly the same car. Soper was so sideways because he knew that to catch up with Rouse he had to just pin open the throttle as early as he could. But yeah, Rouse put him in that position by having a huge technical advantage, and at a young age he was put pretty much in charge of the Broadspeed operation. >>



Rouse starred in Dolomite in 1970s

McKLEIN

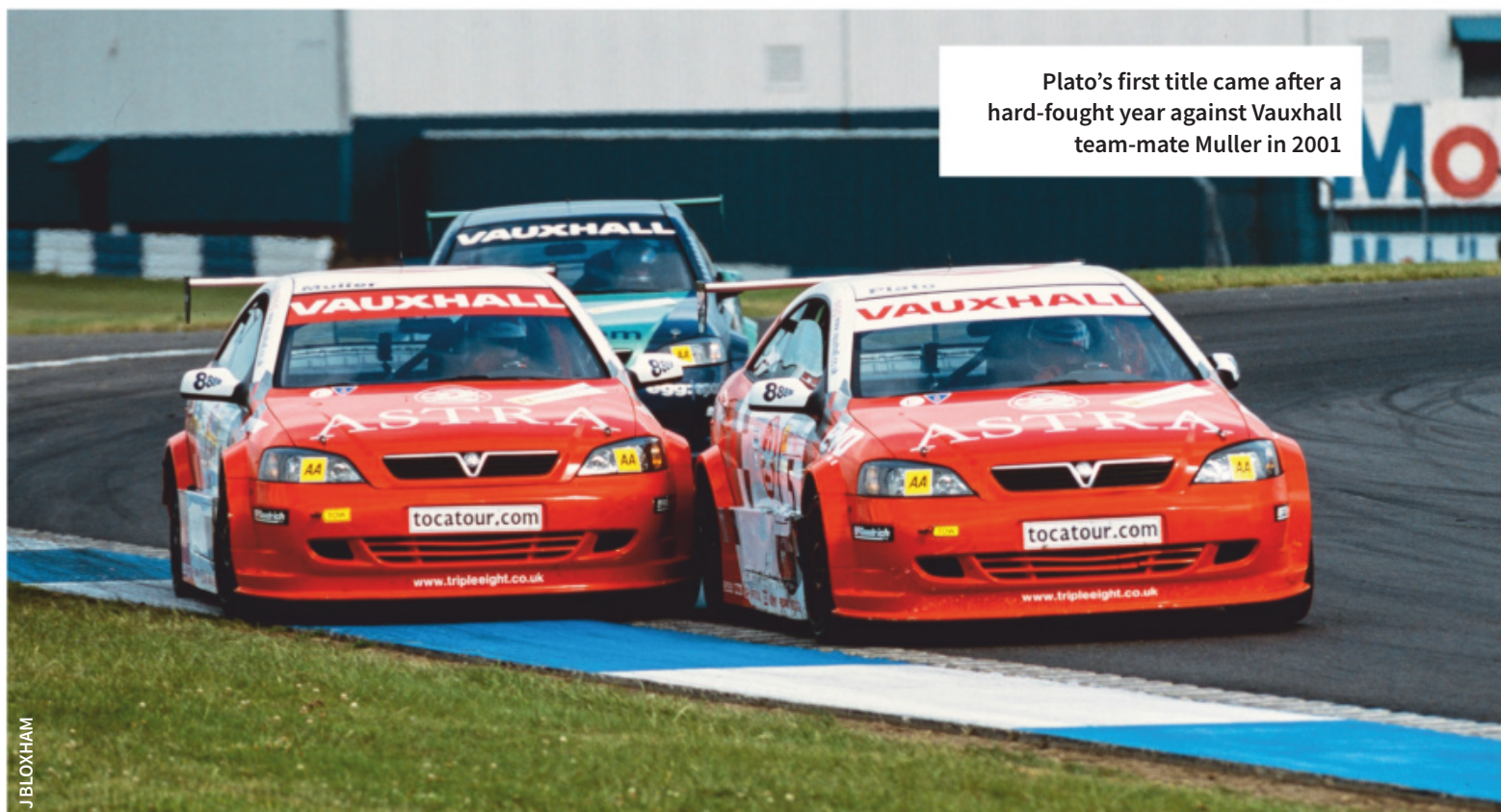


Rouse's engineering prowess helped him remain competitive for two decades

SUTTON



Plato is still going strong at the age of 52



Plato's first title came after a hard-fought year against Vauxhall team-mate Muller in 2001

J BLOXHAM



Plato beat Turkington in FWD VWs in 2015 (left), but the tables turned in RWD Subarus in 2016

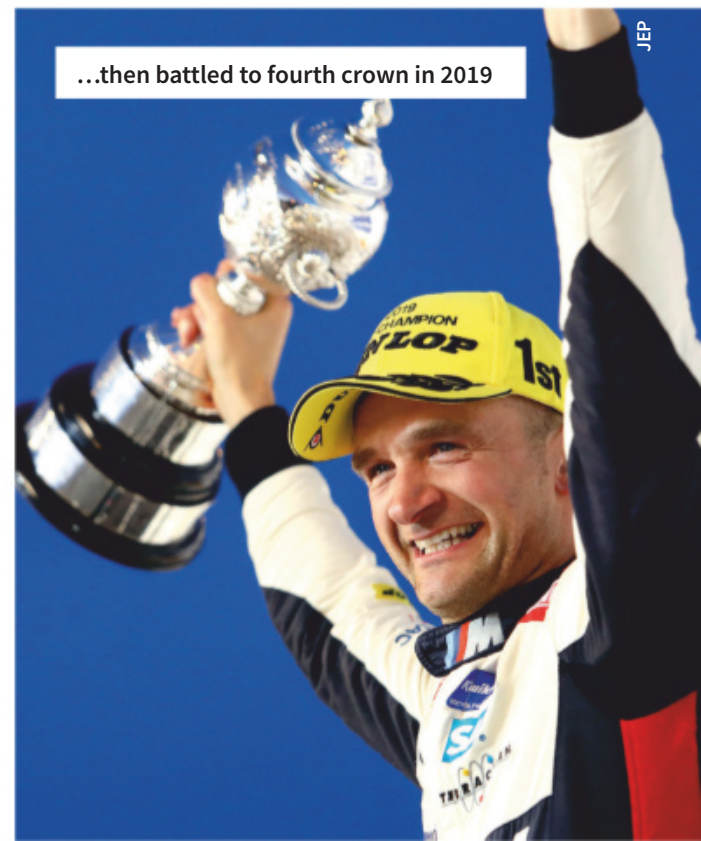


JEP



Turkington scored stealth title in 2018...

JEP



...then battled to fourth crown in 2019

JEP



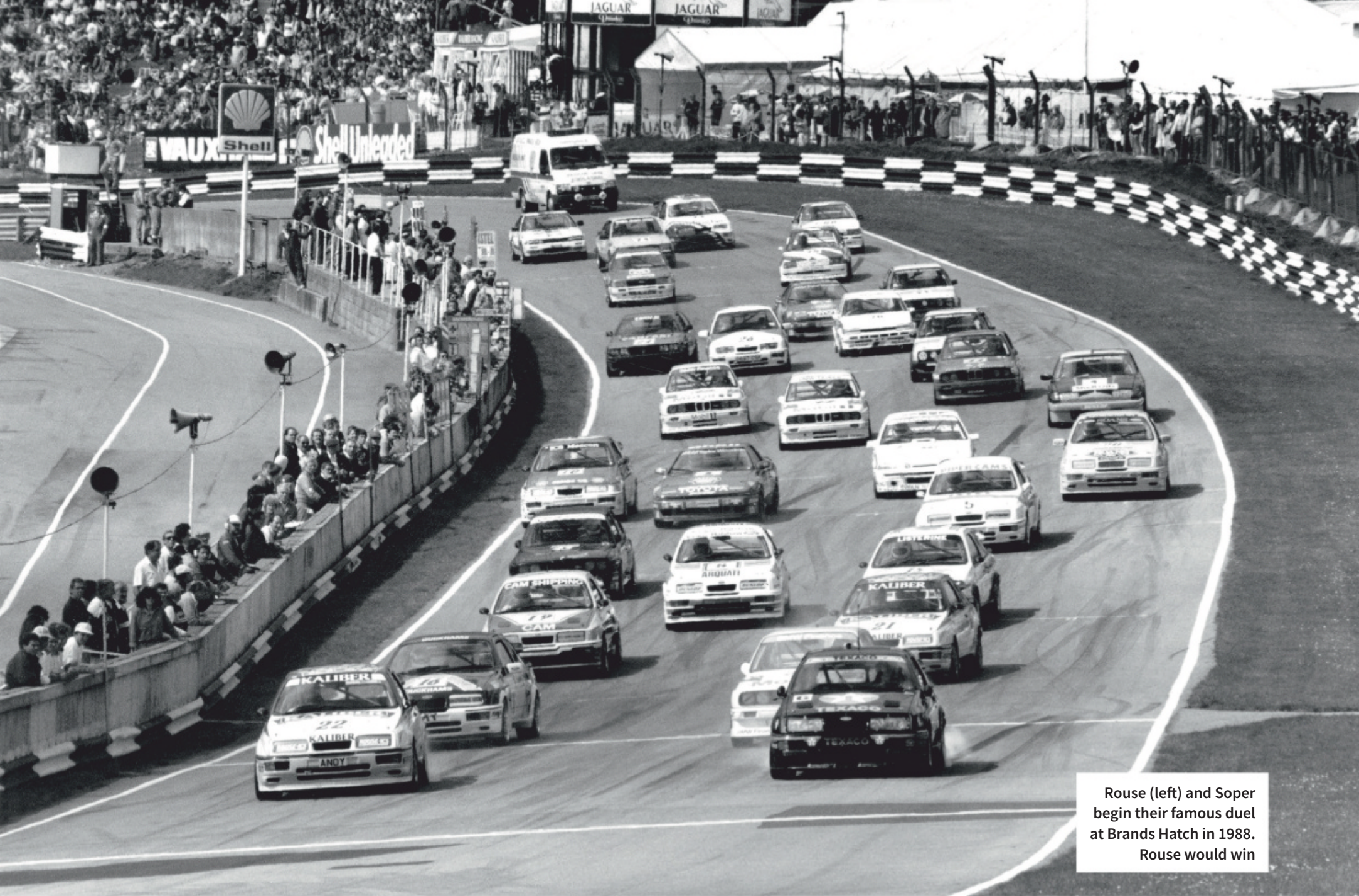
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ES Turkington talks about the importance of WSR; in Rouse you've basically got someone who's Colin Turkington and [WSR boss] Dick Bennetts rolled into one. And in fact, in that period of Broadspeed and the Triumph Dolomite Sprint he was developing the car and running it and doing his day job. Kind of the last thing on the list was getting in the thing and racing it, which is a very different world to what Turkington's doing. Again, it's just someone bringing so much more to the table. But I think if you were to find a way to create a race where all things are equalised and you take each of those drivers at their peak and put them in, Rouse is not going to be the quickest of them.

KT But one point Soper did make about Andy was that when Rouse made a move and came down the inside, you knew the move was done. There was no point blocking because he'd pick his moment and that to me is more of the Turkington-type thing, of 'he's waited for his moment and he's gone'. There's none of this kind of nudging and edging off. Now, OK you might say touring car racing wasn't as close, especially if you could just turn the boost up and blow by; the pressure is different.

ES Rouse had to deal with a much wider range of machinery in terms of his winning in Ford Capris, in Dolomite Sprints, Alfa Romeos, and was still winning in the Super Touring era for Toyota. So in terms of just the broadness of what he was doing, that's just a phenomenal range. And if you watch footage from the 1970s when he started out, the way you have to drive those cars, the nature of the tyres etc, is so different and the fact that he was still able to be competitive enough in the early days and was a title contender right at the start of Super Touring speaks well of him, doesn't it?

KT Yeah, absolutely, and going to the team-mate thing – a little more awkward in the Rouse situation because quite often he was the only guy in his team or he had team-mates come in and out – but there were three drivers that beat him as team-mates. One was Gordon Spice, who was *the* guy in Capris and Rouse was the up-and-coming guy, although already a champion by then. Andy lost to him in 1980 and beat him in 1982. Will Hoy, 1992 in the

Toyota, and then Paul Radisich both years with the Ford Mondeo. So if you think that's a span of basically 20 years, to have only been beaten by three drivers, one of them who was a champion and one of them who should have been, that's not too shoddy either.

ES Absolutely and it's also that thing of different times – the nature of the racing was very different, with no performance balancing. The way you had to go and race and win in the 1970s was different – it was more amateur, but Rouse also did bring some professionalism to it. He was one of those guys who had a kind of 360-degree view of race driving and engineering. To use a Formula 1 comparison, you're kind of comparing a Jack Brabham-type figure to perhaps a driver you might think was quicker.

KT Yeah, I think that's fair, and actually if you look at most wins in a season he'd have actually got another championship. And he was robbed of several titles because of what I regard as a ridiculous, idiosyncratic class system. He obviously gained a couple of times early on in his career with that, but then lost it towards the end with the RS500. Until Robb Gravett came along with the Yokohama tyres, Rouse was the RS500 guy, but he didn't win the championship because he kept losing to people in the lower classes. So four championships actually is an injustice to Rouse; two is an injustice to Jason. Perhaps you'd say at this point Colin's done well – his strike rate is very good.

ES Of course, Rouse was the only one of our three to have raced 500bhp touring cars as well.

KT It's fair to say that a 500bhp RS500 is very different to a Triumph Dolomite Sprint, but on the other hand the only thing Turkington needs to do now to enhance his reputation is to win this championship in a front-wheel-drive car. And he has won races in front-wheel-drive machinery. He is more convincing as a front-wheel-drive driver than Jason has been in a rear-wheel-drive car. And Rouse was in an era where most of the cars, unless you were in a Mini, were rear-wheel drive, so Colin scores quite well there I think in the modern context. >>



JEP

MK One thing that helps Rouse is he won through different sets of regulations. But the thing that helps Turkington is, if you look at the field now – Rouse and Soper were 30-odd seconds ahead of Karl Jones in that Brands race – 25 cars qualify within a second. To extract that pace, especially when he's got the full payload of success ballast, to find that, not even a tenth, that hundredth of a second, over a two-mile lap, that's extraordinary. Without taking us down a rabbit hole, what do we think of the people they were beating at the time, so the depth of the quality? How does a Dan Cammish and Andrew Jordan as your main title protagonists compare to people Plato's beaten, the people Rouse has beaten?

KT Rouse comes out of that worst, because I think the quality of the touring car field falls away, when you look at any entry list from the 1980s. At one stage the championship almost died. The grids were really small before they sorted it out and got BBC *Grandstand* and Murray Walker and it all took off again. You remember the times that Eggenberger turned up with its car with Gianfranco Brancatelli or Soper because somebody was there to race Rouse, whereas I think both Plato and Turkington have had lots of people to deal with. Jason was competitive in that Super Touring era,

which has to be the peak of British Touring Cars, in terms of professionalism of the teams and the quality of the drivers. But I don't know whether the modern era actually scores any worse on that, because fundamentally if you could get into the best car, you didn't have to worry about how good the other drivers were in Super Touring, whereas now that just doesn't really happen. The thing that puts Turkington above his peers is that whatever the situation, whether it's wet, dry, ballast, no ballast, coming through the field, leading from the front, he's got it all covered. He doesn't really have an obvious weakness. Andrew Jordan you would say is one of the quickest guys, who went toe to toe with Gordon Shedden when they were in Hondas, and in three years as team-mates he's failed to beat Turkington.

ES The way you probably look at it is it's easier to be a BTCC race winner today than it was at the peak of Super Touring, but it's every bit as hard to win a title, perhaps harder.

KT If you look at the four championships that Colin has won, in 2009 it was a proper three-way fight between lead drivers in different teams; in 2014 he had a car advantage and he absolutely nailed it and won eight races; in 2018 he won in a car that I think was no better than three or four of the other cars; and then this year he did have the best car but he also had one of the best drivers as a team-mate. Other than win the championship in a front-wheel-drive car, I can't think of what else he could do.

ES Before we try to come up with a conclusion, shall we throw in some honourable mentions? Matt Neal has been a great servant to the BTCC, a cult figure, and scored that famous independent win at Donington Park in the Nissan. He's a three-time champion so a great competitor.

KT Yeah, he's an important part of the story and he's got a very similar sort of career in that respect to Jason, but for me is just not quite as good, not quite as big a figure for the championship, not quite as good a driver, even though he's got more titles. Jason has got 97 wins from fewer races. It's a much better strike rate than Matt's, and Colin's on a better strike rate as well. He's not quite up there in this debate, but he's worthy



JEP

of a mention because of the Plato-Neal rivalry that helped the championship through some difficult times.

MK This season he has been trounced by his team-mate Cammish. I think the development of the new Honda has suffered without Gordon Shedden, who I'm going to throw into the ring as one of the greats. But then again Matt Neal is still cutting it and every time he looks down and out he can bang in a really good result.

ES He's got incredible longevity. He's 52, so it's remarkable what he's been able to do. It was a great moment when he won his first title in the Dynamics Integra; that was really popular because it was the underdog getting the title. There are a lot of guys who've won a few titles, aren't there? Fabrizio Giovanardi won back-to-back, Chris Hodgetts in the Toyota, Win Percy was a very quick driver and seems to be overlooked quite often. Richard Longman in the Mini; Bill McGovern, famous for the Sunbeam Imp...

KT And Frank Gardner would have to be in there. I'm sure there are some people shouting 'Jim Clark' as well, but that's a slightly different debate. He was one of the greatest drivers of all time who did the series. He's not a British Touring Car driver, if that makes sense. That might sound like a tenuous decision, but for me it's quite clear – he's a double F1 champion and Indy 500 winner who had fun very effectively in touring cars. It's not quite the same.

MK He's not got the titles, but I can't not worship the ground Steve Soper walks on. He was fantastic. He had lots of success overseas, but was a class act in the British championship as well.

KT Absolutely. There are three drivers who never won the championship who are kind of the Stirling Moss of touring cars. Soper is probably number one, Gordon Spice is another, and Anthony Reid. He was probably the best driver of the Super Touring era that didn't get a title. We should mention some of the top Super Touring guys!

ES Laurent Aiello is probably the one who stands out with his stunning 1999 performances in the Nissan.

KT But if you were talking about great *British Touring Car* drivers, it's one season so he fails on longevity. You would probably have to talk about Alain Menu. For me he falls down because I don't think he was particularly brilliant in wheel-to-wheel combat, but he was a very fast driver.

ES That's probably fair. We should also mention John Cleland, who had a couple of titles.

KT To raise his game – he'd come through club racing – and be able to take on and beat people that almost got to F1, at the height of the works Super Touring era in 1995, was phenomenal.

ES So let's try to get some conclusions. We're sticking to a final selection of Turkington v Plato v Rouse. Shall we play the elimination game and knock out one of the three?

KT I'll eliminate Jason on two counts. One is that he's got into too many scrapes and lost himself championship fights, and the other that I just think he's overstepped the mark too often during his career in terms of wheel-to-wheel stuff. That is a criterion for me, so I can now hand over the more difficult question of Rouse v Turkington...

MK I would say Turkington is the greatest. I've had the privilege of covering this year and I think he's a class act. He took his 50th BTCC win this year, so we did a piece about all the cars he's won in, and when he got to the Vauxhall Astra Sport Hatch he said, 'Yeah, I didn't care for that one', but he could still drag it to

results. Turkington has had to drive what's in front of him, and he's still dragged results out of bad cars.

KT I wasn't sure when I walked in who I was going to go for, but I'm thinking about Edd's argument concerning the impact on the championship and what they're like as a figure within that. If we're including that in this debate, then it has to be Rouse – he's still Mr British Touring Car Championship. But the caveat is let's see what the rest of Turkington's career is like. If he can consistently keep knocking out titles and race wins in such a competitive era, then the longevity argument begins to push it towards him. You can make a case for any one of these three and right now I'm leaning towards Rouse for his overall impact on the championship. So, Edd, are you going to go for Jason so we've got a split panel?!

ES It becomes really difficult because you're starting to judge different qualities. If you were to pick a driver who at their peak was going to race for your life, perhaps Turkington's the one you'd choose in terms of just executing that race – you know he's going to get the most out of the machinery. But then if you start bringing in other factors about prepping machinery or about sponsorship, the answer could be different. I still just lean a bit towards Rouse, just for that all-round impact, and I always like drivers who have that full gamut of things – doing his day job, running the cars, prepping them, developing them and jumping in them and winning. But I wouldn't for one moment argue that if you were talking about who's the greater driver fundamentally, that he's the third of this group.

KT I think that's fair. Does that mean he gets to keep his trophy that we gave him at the start of the year for the greatest British Touring Car driver?!

ES Well, I think for now, but let's give Turkington more time. Each of these three are probably drivers of their time.

KT I know that, whenever we do one of these greatest debates, there are some naysayers that say, 'Well you just can't decide, there's no definitive answer' and of course they're right, but that's not very much fun, is it?

ES The fun is the journey. And understanding what makes them work, what makes them so strong and effective.

KT And quite often by doing this you highlight the differences of the eras and you get them into context as well, which I think is important.

ES Well, it's 2-1 in favour of Rouse then, so we have to say Andy Rouse is still ahead, but it's tight, isn't it?! 🏁



For more on the BTCC driver debate go to [autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)

SEASON
REVIEW

IT AIN'T HALF OTT MUM

Ott Tanak was on blistering form all season with Toyota to wrest the World Rally Championship away from France for the first time since 2003

DAVID EVANS

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN



The FIA's engraver had better be ready for this. After starting his World Rally Championship work with 'Sebastien' for the past 15 years, finally he gets to do his work with his eyes open. Instead of Loeb or Ogier, Ott Tanak is the new hero, the new ruler of rallying.

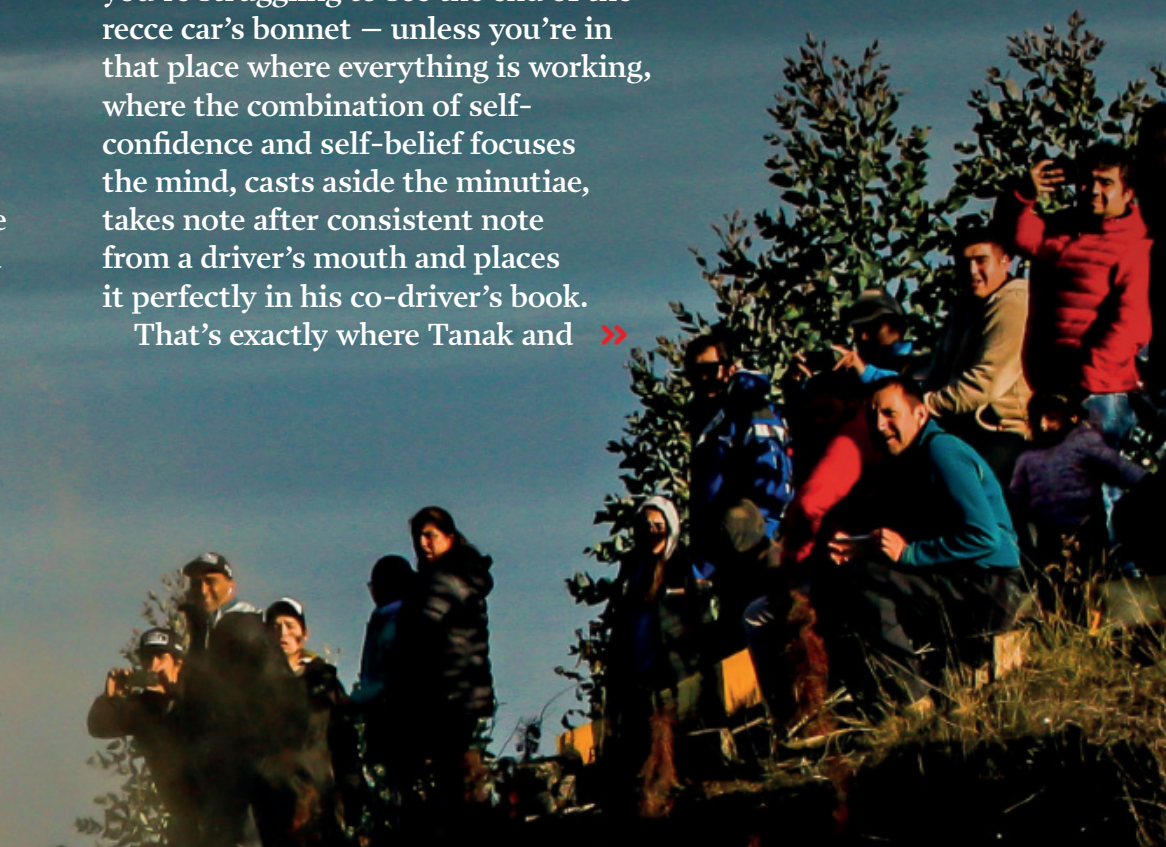
Rarely has a driver been so deserving of a title. And in all honesty, it probably should have come last year. From late April's Rally Argentina onwards, Tanak found a groove with his Toyota in 2018, and he has been in it ever since. The speed he showed in South America last year was a step on from what others were achieving with this generation of very fast rally cars. He hasn't been able to maintain that shocking pace universally, but when he's really needed it, and when he's reached for it, he's found it again.

Back to South America in 2019, and across to the Andes' Pacific side, and it was there for all to see in Chile. The Concepcion-based event was one of Tanak's most impressive rallies ever. Not only did he show that speed, but he matched it with commitment, common sense and sheer bravery. Those three days of sport through the Chilean woods

showed precisely why Tanak's time had come.

New rallies level the playing field every time, but Chile was more level than ever. On any new event, the most important aspect of rally week is the recce. Get the notes right early on and you take confidence. From confidence comes commitment, and from commitment comes speed. That's unless it's foggy, when anything can happen. When the mist comes down, it's so easy to get disorientated and misjudge things. A 100-metre straight can be 100 metres before one corner, then 80 or 120 the next time. A big-speed six-right this time could be a five or five minus when you're struggling to see the end of the recce car's bonnet – unless you're in that place where everything is working, where the combination of self-confidence and self-belief focuses the mind, casts aside the minutiae, takes note after consistent note from a driver's mouth and places it perfectly in his co-driver's book.

That's exactly where Tanak and »



co-driver Martin Jarveoja were in Chile. The road surface, grip levels, weather, tyre choices, suspension and transmission settings... nothing was simple about the WRC's first visit to this beautiful country, but Tanak made it look like he'd been born, brought up and taught to drive on the roads that flashed up and down the valleys above the Biobio river.

Whatever was thrown in his path, he dealt with it, and when he crossed the finish line of the powerstage – fastest, naturally – he permitted himself a small fist-pump. Ordinarily, he doesn't go in for that sort of thing. Before the stage starts he'll wiggle his wrists around, but thumping himself on the legs or slapping his chest to get the blood up? Nah, that's not really him. He just brakes a bit later than everybody else.

Not only did that event highlight how complete Tanak is

“HE PERMITTED HIMSELF A SMALL FIST-PUMP. HE DOESN'T USUALLY GO IN FOR THAT SORT OF THING”

as a driver, but it also played him very much back into the championship fight. An electrical issue on the other side of the mountains 10 days earlier in Argentina had left him 28 points behind championship leader Thierry Neuville. His perfect 30 in Chile (allied to an unfortunate and enormous, rally-ending shunt for Neuville's Hyundai) meant Tanak flew back to Europe just 10 off new leader Sebastien Ogier.

Victory in Portugal three weeks on meant he narrowed the gap to two points off Ogier, and a less-disastrous weekend than his rivals meant he moved into the lead on a particularly baking week on the Italian island of Sardinia. First into the powerstage, Tanak would be fifth when he came out. Power-steering problems almost sent him off the road and nearly derailed his title tilt once more. Those issues weren't the only ones he suffered through the season. The Toyota was also hit by electrical gremlins with the ECU and the alternator, and then there was the batch of weak wheelrims that arguably cost him a puncture in Monte Carlo and Corsica – he was leading both before stopping to change a wheel.

Adding up, in conservative fashion, what might have been if he'd enjoyed a trouble-free season is a startling task. Giving him second place instead of third on the Monte, second rather than



sixth in Corsica, wins in Argentina and Sardinia, and eight more points in Turkey is not unreasonable. Totting those up gives him an extra 62 points and would have put him out of sight well before the finish line of Rally Spain at the end of October.

With that in mind, it becomes a little easier to understand why he parted ways with Toyota at the end of the season. Few who saw the thunderous look across Tanak's face as he came into the service park in Sardinia would question the strength of feeling about the 20 points he'd dropped an hour earlier on the road to the sea. Worse still, that was the precursor to the WRC's summer break. From the middle of June until early August's Rally Finland, Tanak would be stewing on squandered opportunity.

It was in the radio silence that followed that Andrea Adamo spotted a window of opportunity. The Hyundai Motorsport director got in there and orchestrated the greatest heist since Charlie Croker left Turin with a Mini-load of gold. But regardless of what's coming in 2020, this year Tanak was the worthiest of champions, something the outgoing champ was quick to recognise.

Ogier and Tanak are good buddies and, sore as the Frenchman was at missing out on going seven up, if he had to defer to anybody, he'd rather it was somebody as deserving as his former team-mate. >>

Monte Carlo Rally

- 1 Ogier/Ingrassia
- 2 Neuville/Gilsoul
- 3 Tanak/Jarveoja

Ogier makes the perfect return to Citroen with a debut win aboard the C3 WRC. That's six straight wins on the rally that means most to the reigning champion – and with three different manufacturers. Neuville is a very close second, rueing a Friday overshoot that costs him 15 seconds. Tanak leads early on but loses time with a puncture and finishes third, one place ahead of former Monte Carlo master Loeb, who hits the ground running with fourth on his Hyundai debut.

Rally Sweden

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja
- 2 Lappi/Ferm
- 3 Neuville/Gilsoul

Suninen leads a World Rally Championship round overnight for the first time in his career, but Tanak's Toyota is only two seconds behind M-Sport's Finn heading into Saturday. The pressure gets to Suninen and he falls victim to a Hagfors snowbank, leaving Tanak to manage a gap at the front of the field. There's a huge battle for the podium places, with Mikkelsen running second before he fades to fourth. Mikkelsen's Hyundai team-mate Neuville hassles Lappi for the runner-up spot, but loses out to the Finn on the final stage.

Rally Mexico

- 1 Ogier/Ingrassia
- 2 Tanak/Jarveoja
- 3 Evans/Martin

Ogier makes it two out of three for 2019 and five Mexico wins in seven years (again in three different cars). The Citroen driver enjoys a clean run on the first hot event of the season. Evans returns to the scene of his big shunt 12 months ago and is immediately on the pace for M-Sport – he runs second for much of the event before losing that place to Tanak (who recovers from sweeping the gravel clear on Friday) on the final day. Neuville can find no confidence in the i20 but makes fourth, while Benito Guerra is given a hero's welcome at home, finishing sixth and top R5 in his Skoda.

Tour of Corsica

- 1 Neuville/Gilsoul
- 2 Ogier/Ingrassia
- 3 Evans/Martin

After the pain of losing second place on the previous round, Evans feels real agony as he loses a win on the French island. The Fiesta WRC driver is 11s up on Neuville going into the final stage, but drops to third with a powerstage puncture. Neuville's first victory of the season moves him to the top of the points table, with Ogier's second place keeping him close behind. That second comes despite frustration for the Frenchman, who feels the C3 WRC is lacking asphalt pace. That's nothing compared with Tanak's frustration – he leads early on but slips to sixth with a puncture.

Ogier had fairytale Citroen
return on Monte, but by Germany
(left) things weren't so good



Neuville won in Corsica,
while new Hyundai boss
Adamo (left) divided opinion

Rally Argentina

1 Neuville/Gilsoul

2 Mikkelsen/Jaeger

3 Ogier/Ingrassia

Neuville extends his championship lead with back-to-back wins. He's quick to praise the Hyundai team after much-needed speed and stability is found from the car. He's also aware that he might have dodged a couple of Tanak-shaped bullets after the Toyota man stops with an electrical problem on the second day. Mikkelsen happily grabs second place – just what he needed after being benched for the previous round. Ogier steals third spot from Meeke on the powerstage after the Northern Irishman suffers a puncture four miles from the end.

Rally Chile

1 Tanak/Jarveoja

2 Ogier/Ingrassia

3 Loeb/Elena

An opening-stage stall aside, this is pretty much the perfect way for Tanak to play himself back into the title fight – he leads from SS2 until the finish. Championship leader Neuville slips to third after a shocking crash on Saturday's second test. The battle for second is an all-French affair between Ogier and Loeb. The reigning champion holds his former team-mate off and moves back to the top of the table courtesy of the runner-up spot. Loeb is satisfied with his first podium for his new employer. M-Sport's Evans and Suninen round out the top five.

Rally of Portugal

1 Tanak/Jarveoja

2 Neuville/Gilsoul

3 Ogier/Ingrassia

One of the toughest events of the season as temperatures rocket, but Tanak and the Toyota are, once again, able to control proceedings. A broken damper on the second Amarante test is a small concern, but such is Tanak's confidence that he takes a tactical decision to slow just before the end of the powerstage to ensure Ogier remains at the top of the table and opens the road in Sardinia. Meeke loses second to Neuville with a spin in the penultimate test and then retires when he hits a rock, elevating Ogier to third on the final stage.

Rally of Italy

1 Sordo/del Barrio

2 Suninen/Lehtinen

3 Mikkelsen/Jaeger

Tanak is robbed of a third win on the bounce after his Yaris suffers final-stage power-steering failure. He finishes a furious fifth. The upside to that dramatic news is Sordo's elevation to P1. The Spaniard scores a hugely popular second career win – his first on gravel – on the Italian island. Suninen's second is equally as well received, especially by new co-driver Jarmo Lehtinen. Mikkelsen makes it an unlikely double podium for Hyundai – lead driver Neuville finishes sixth after a pacenote 'misunderstanding' costs him time on Friday. Seven points now covers the top three.



Sordo touches down.
He was a big asset to
Hyundai in 2019...



...but Meeke, here
taking off, struggled
to do that at Toyota



Evans was on form
on return from injury
for M-Sport on Rally GB

ROUND BY ROUND

Rally Finland

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja
- 2 Lappi/Ferm
- 3 Latvala/Anttila

A Toyota podium lock-out is on the cards for much of the event, but ultimately the team from up the road in Puuppola misses out. Meeke crashes twice and Latvala is pipped to second by 7.6s, losing the spot to countryman Lappi. Out front, Tanak is again peerless. This is a typically close Rally Finland, with Tanak running fourth at the end of Friday, 2.6s off the lead, but by Sunday he's back in front. Mikkelsen holds off an ill Ogier to take fourth place by 2.7s. Kalle Rovanpera moves a step closer to the WRC 2 Pro title with a fourth successive class win.

Rally Germany

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja
- 2 Meeke/Marshall
- 3 Latvala/Anttila

The result Toyota threatened in Finland is duly delivered on the season's final all-asphalt rally. Neuville keeps Tanak honest and has high hopes of spoiling the Yaris-based party until he punctures in Panzerplatte. Second and 5.6s off the lead becomes seventh and miles away. Meeke secures his first podium of the season with second place. Latvala follows him home with third. A Hyundai reshuffle after the final stage eases Neuville's pain and moves him up to fourth, but Ogier's malady is worse – he's a distant seventh in an 'undriveable' C3.

Rally of Turkey

- 1 Ogier/Ingrassia
- 2 Lappi/Ferm
- 3 Mikkelsen/Jaeger

Three weeks after Citroen's low point of the season comes a 1-2 on the roughest and toughest round of the season. Lappi leads through the opening day, but has no answer to Ogier's supreme pace and ability in finding the right tyres for the conditions. The Frenchman's title hopes are given a significant boost with problems for Neuville, who slips off the road and ends the event eighth. Championship leader Tanak retires on Saturday morning with an ECU problem. He comes back to win the powerstage, but talk of taking the title next time out in Wales is forgotten.

Rally GB

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja
- 2 Neuville/Gilsoul
- 3 Ogier/Ingrassia

Tanak takes a Welsh classic from Neuville. The gap between the pair is rarely more than a second or two, but the Toyota driver finishes the job he started on Rally GB 12 months ago. Ogier is third, but can see his title chances slipping away as Tanak leaves Llandudno 28 points ahead. Meeke is fourth, but Evans is the real home hero, returning to the series after a back injury ruled him out for the previous three rounds to take fifth – suspension damage in Penmachno costs him a possible podium. Rovanpera seals the WRC 2 Pro title with another win.

Not only did he lose to Tanak, but Ogier could only take his Citroen to third in the final standings behind Neuville.

Up the road out of Hafren on the Saturday afternoon of October's Rally GB, Ogier pulled over to work on tyre pressures and to fiddle with the C3's suspension ahead of a second dash through Dyfi. Neuville had just elbowed his way past into second place, and Ogier seemed in a resigned mood. "I can't do more," he offered, looking up from working on the car's left-rear. "Really, I am on the limit."

Right then came the realisation that this thing was really over. French rule was finished, and Ogier really wasn't going to win the championship. A year earlier, Wales had been the place where he'd turned everything around again with another flash of his otherworldly talent. But this time he wound everything up, took a shot and found there was nothing left to give. A month later, he was

"OGIER WOUND EVERYTHING UP, TOOK A SHOT AND FOUND THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE"

giving Autosport the exclusive on why he'd walked out of Citroen.

Ogier defied significant odds to win three times this season and dug deep to display the sort of fighting spirit the world's finest sportsmen command to keep himself in a game he knew was slipping away. But with Toyota he'll be back, recharged and ready for one more season and one more title next year.

Citroen, on the other hand, won't be. Despite readying a racier-looking C3 for 2020, the Parisians felt they were lost without their team leader and threw in the towel. In doing so, they lessened the WRC manufacturer count by a quarter and slapped Ogier's team-mate Esapekka Lappi firmly in the face. The Finn, like the Versailles workforce, deserved far more.

It's probably a little harsh to prioritise Ogier above Neuville when the 120 driver finished ahead in the final standings, but the title has, for the past five years, been Ogier's to lose and how that happened was a significant part of the story. How close was Neuville to winning? Being brutal, not particularly. There's no denying that Hyundai was a much more potent force under the eye of Adamo, but the Belgian's undoing was threefold: a dramatic, panel-bending no-score in Chile when he was building momentum and chasing a hat-trick of wins was followed by a miserable pair of



outings in Finland and Germany. The news from Jyväskylä and Bostalsee was pretty standard fare for Neuville. He lacked confidence and pace on the former, and fell foul of Panzerplatte on the latter. Toppling off a wall in Turkey just about finished the job and seriously tested Adamo's patience.

For the past three years, Neuville has been the very epicentre of this team and he's failed to deliver gold. He affected change in the team ahead of this season – Adamo in for Michel Nandan – and benefited from the associated improvements, but still finished second. Next year he'll have a world champion alongside him morning, noon and night. Failure to establish some sort of authority over Tanak from the off could be the bespectacled one's undoing.

Following the loss of Rally Australia to rampaging bushfires, Neuville takes some bragging rights as he heads into the winter as winner of the last round of the 2019 series in Spain. And Hyundai certainly has plenty to brag about. The Frankfurt-based team appeared to relish its part as the service park's pantomime villain, with Adamo dropping Andreas Mikkelsen three times, rotating drivers to manipulate the running-order regulations, and working a Sunday classification to its own end when and where it fancied.

Adamo's response was simple – and defiant. Break any rules? ➤

Rally Spain

1 Neuville/Gilsoul

2 Tanak/Jarveoja

3 Sordo/del Barrio

Emotional scenes greet Tanak at the end of the final stage as second place and a towering powerstage victory are enough for him to seal his maiden world title. All Neuville can do to keep his dwindling hopes alive is win, and the Hyundai driver duly delivers a pretty perfect result from that perspective. Ogier's season is shot when he suffers power-steering problems while leading on Friday morning. Sordo boosts Hyundai's manufacturer title hopes with third on his home round. Hyundai's success is confirmed when Rally Australia is cancelled.



Lappi lost out when Citroen left, and deserves more



ROVANPERA GETS IT SORTED

This year was going to be a walk in the park for Kalle Rovanpera. Yes, he was only 18 at the start of the year, and yes, there was a bit of pressure, but he had a factory Skoda and, well... he's Kalle Rovanpera – the WRC's wunderkind to end all wunderkinds.

He would, the storyline went, have the all-new WRC 2 Pro title all sorted by the end of the Finnish summer. Some even went so far as to suggest that he could be swapping a Fabia R5 for a Toyota Yaris WRC before the end of the year. Then he crashed on the Monte. And in Sweden. And in Corsica. Oh...

That pressure got real in Chile, his fourth start of the season. We were about to find out what 2001 Swedish Rally winner Harri's boy had really learned since he started tearing up frozen lakes a decade ago. What happened? He won four on the bounce and rocketed himself back into contention. A couple more rallies on, and a world title was delivered for the only-just-19-year-old on Rally GB. Rovanpera made mistakes this year, but he's the real deal and he's ready for the step up to the big time that awaits him in 2020.

What of the rest of the WRC 2 Pro field? M-Sport's Gus Greensmith scored a superb seventh overall to start his season in sensational fashion on the Monte. The rest of the year didn't quite live up to that billing, save for an incredible Rally Turkey victory – the first WRC success for the Fiesta R5 MkII, which came despite rolling after the penultimate stage.

Greensmith narrowly missed out on second place in WRC 2 Pro, which was taken by Citroen driver Mads Ostberg. But, quite frankly, who was winning that class was pretty much anybody's guess for much of the year. All too often the supposedly amateur end of the R5 offering – WRC 2 – was besting WRC 2 Pro in the overall classification, leaving onlookers bemused at best and thoroughly confused at worst. Fortunately, the FIA is working to deliver a marginally more elegant solution for 2020.

Back-to-back wins in Portugal and Sardinia laid the foundations for Pierre-Louis Loubet to lift the WRC 2 title in his Skoda.

The Solans household celebrated a second JWRC title (the class is a one-make series for Ford Fiesta R2s) in three years, as Jan followed in the footsteps of older brother Nil to drive away the prize – a brand-new Fiesta R5 – at the end of the season. Spanish star Solans Jr and Swede Tom Kristensson were the class of the field and shared two wins apiece in the five-round series. A double-points finale meant practically everybody stood a mathematical chance of clinching the Junior title in Wales, but ultimately it was Solans who delivered the precision and pace required.

He didn't even bend them; he *played* them. Adamo masterminded this year's manufacturers' title beautifully. He didn't have the fastest car, but he focused on the man-management of Neuville, Mikkelsen, Dani Sordo and Sebastien Loeb to deliver the South Korean manufacturer's first WRC title.

Hyundai's chief title rival Toyota simply didn't have the consistency to challenge. Too often the Yaris drivers appeared to

“ADAMO'S RESPONSE WAS SIMPLE. BREAK ANY RULES? HE DIDN'T EVEN BEND THEM; HE *PLAYED* THEM”

focus on their own ends instead of tuning into team boss Tommi Makinen's bigger picture. Kris Meeke and Jari-Matti Latvala both have a devastating turn of speed, but this year was about bringing the car home sixth or higher time after time. Makinen wanted them to become his equivalent of Sordo. That they failed in that resulted in a very different looking Toyota team for next season.

The whole service park will be looking very different next season following Citroen's departure. The WRC's response will be fascinating. The cost of these cars prohibits the sort of privateer response we've seen in the past; there will be no army of M-Sport Fords packing out the space formerly run by the reds.

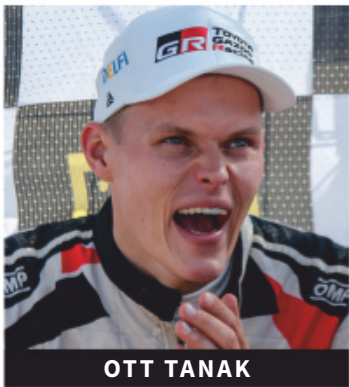
Talking of the Cumbrian-based team, Ogier's absence from M-Sport was painfully felt. That said, Elfyn Evans stepped up and led the team superbly. He deserved a Corsican win and returned from a back injury for a strong showing at home in Wales. But M-Sport Ford didn't start every round knowing it was chasing victory. There's a psychological side to that and, while team principal Richard Millener and Malcolm Wilson did all they could to offset it, the edge and application of a six-time champion was missing.

The door to Dovenby Hall is currently being knocked down by a long line of star drivers looking for a ride alongside Teemu Suninen next season. There's title-tilting potential in that queue, so if Wilson can work his magic with the numbers through 2020, M-Sport could top a podium or two sometime soon.

OK, there's nothing to suggest that there will be any interlopers among the big three – Tanak, Neuville and Ogier – for the title, but the potential subplot of civil wars around the service park can only serve to spice up the current WRC cars' penultimate season. 🏆

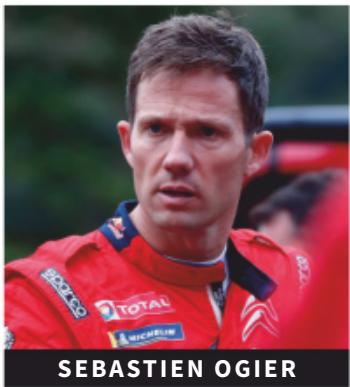


AUTOSPORT’S TOP 10 DRIVERS



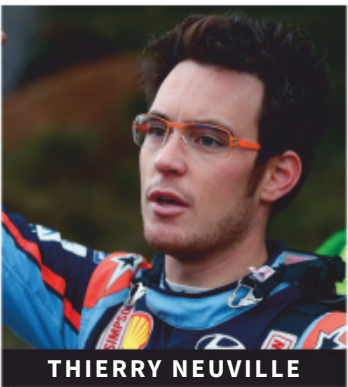
OTT TANAK

1 Six wins, monstered the stage-time chart and led for way, way longer than anybody else. Should have had this one in the bag before the final action in Spain. Probably should have had it in the bag last year... A totally deserving champion.



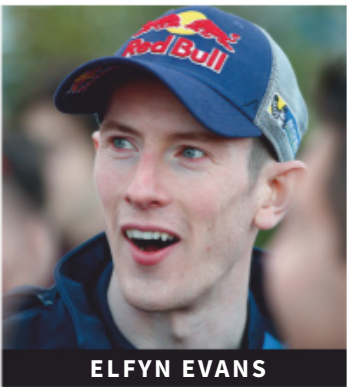
SEBASTIEN OGIER

2 Back to Citroen after seven years and six titles, but there was no dream return. The Frenchman won three times through dogged determination, but ultimately the package wasn't up to the job and he walked out of Versailles for the second time.



THIERRY NEUVILLE

3 Was this the Belgian's best chance yet? Probably not – he had a better opportunity to become champion in 2017. Again, he was right at the sharp end of the title fight, but missed out when it mattered most. Tough mid-season cost him dearly.



ELFYN EVANS

4 Stepped up and led M-Sport superbly after Ogier's exit. Should have won Corsica (and would have done if he'd avoided a pothole). Hurting his back benched him for three rallies, but he showed strength and speed on his Welsh return.



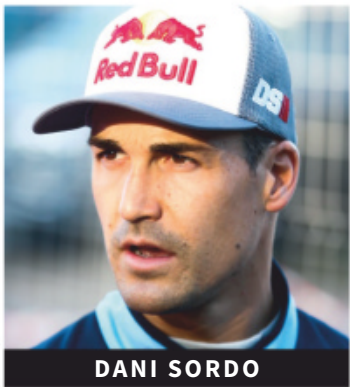
TEEMU SUNINEN

5 Shocking start to the year, ditching his Fiesta on stage one of round one, but he bounced back to bely a lack of experience (this was his first full season in a factory car) and showed great speed to lead rallies. Second in Sardinia was a highlight.



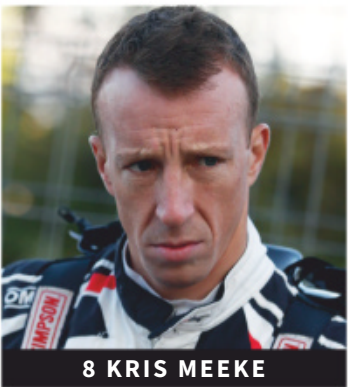
ESAPEKKA LAPPI

6 Spent much of the season in Ogier's shadow and/or looking like a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders. But once Citroen sorted the diffs out, he showed excellent speed and potential. Worthy of a 2020 seat.



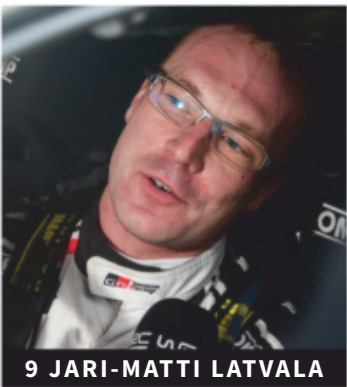
DANI SORDO

7 Could have won Portugal and did win in Sardinia. Sordo's part-season didn't deliver quite as many podiums as he might have liked, but the Spaniard was always there, the complete team player helping Hyundai to its maiden title.



8 KRIS MEEKE

8 Huge frustration for the Northern Irishman, who played himself into a new team with brilliant consistency, then seemed to lose the plot in the middle of the year before returning with more speed towards the end of the season.



9 JARI-MATTI LATVALA

9 Had to deal with some fairly significant personal issues through this season and was simply too inconsistent on the stages. Rolling out of the lead in Sardinia was the absolute low point of the season. Can't say he hasn't had his chance.



10 ANDREAS MIKKELSEN

10 Can't ignore a driver who scores three podiums from 10 starts, regardless of how those results arrived. Nothing seemed to work for him this time, though. Looked ill at ease in the i20 and rarely had an answer to Neuville's speed.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	PTS
1	Ott Tanak (EST)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	3	1	2	6	8	1	1	5	1	1	16	1	2	263
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	2	3	4	1	1	R	2	6	6	4	8	2	1	227
3	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Citroen Total WRT	Citroen C3 WRC	1	29	1	2	3	2	3	42	5	7	1	3	8	217
4	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	R	4	11	-	2	7	-	3	4	6	3	6	-	102
5	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Fiesta WRC	R	5	3	3	R	4	5	4	-	-	-	5	6	102
6	Kris Meeke (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	6	6	5	9	4	10	R	8	R	2	7	4	29	98
7	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	5	21	8	10	5	11	7	19	3	3	6	R	5	94
8	Dani Sordo (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	-	-	9	4	6	-	23	1	-	5	5	-	3	89
9	Teemu Suninen (FIN)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Fiesta WRC	11	23	R	5	7	5	4	2	8	29	4	R	7	89
10	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	Citroen Total WRT	Citroen C3 WRC	R	2	14	7	R	6	R	7	2	8	2	27	43	83

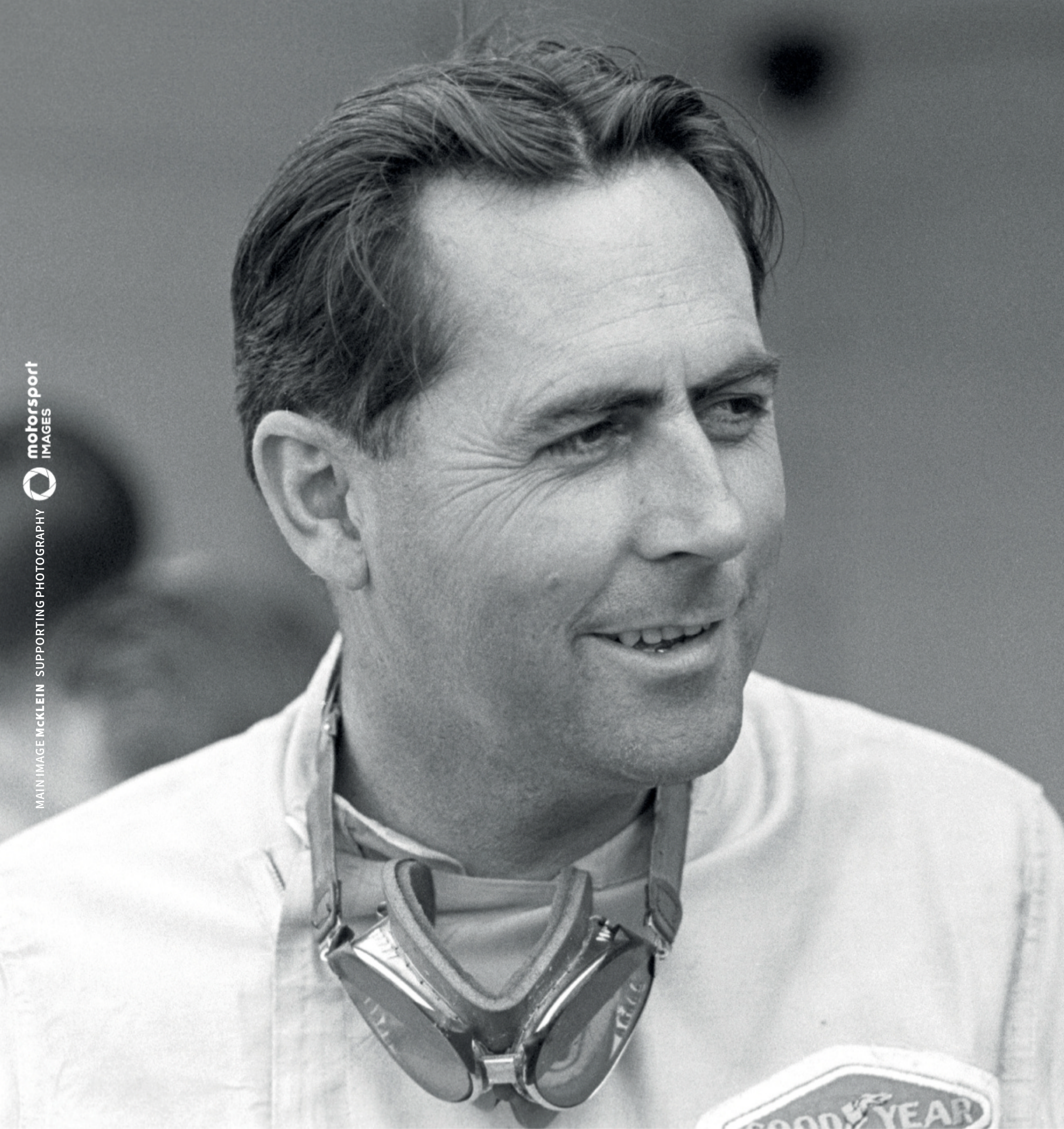
11 **Sebastien Loeb** (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 51; 12 **Kalle Rovanpera** (Skoda Fabia R5/R5 Evo) 18; 13 **Pontus Tidemand** (Ford Fiesta WRC) 12; 14 **Craig Breen** (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 10; 15 **Gus Greensmith** (Ford Fiesta R5/Ford Fiesta WRC/Ford Fiesta R5 Mk2) 9; 16 **Benito Guerra** (Skoda Fabia R5) 8; 17 **Marco Bulacia Wilkinson** (Skoda Fabia R5) 6; 18 **Mads Ostberg** (Citroen C3 R5) 6; 19 **Jan Kopecky** (Skoda Fabia R5 Evo) 5; 20 **Yoann Bonato** (Citroen C3 R5) 4; 21 **Stephane Sarrazin** (Hyundai i20 R5) 2; 22 **Ole-Christien Veiby** (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 2; 23 **Pierre-Louis Loubet** (Skoda Fabia R5) 2; 24 **Adrien Fourmaux** (Ford Fiesta R5) 1; 25 **Janne Tuohino** (Ford Fiesta WRC) 1; 26 **Ricardo Trivino** (Skoda Fabia R5) 1; 27 **Pedro Heller** (Ford Fiesta R5) 1; 28 **Emil Bergkvist** (Ford Fiesta R5) 1; 29 **Nikolay Gryazin** (Skoda Fabia R5) 1; 30 **Takamoto Katsuta** (Toyota Yaris WRC) 1; 31 **Petter Solberg** (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 1; 32 **Eric Camilli** (Citroen C3 R5) 1.

JACK BRABHAM'S 10 GREATEST DRIVES

It's 60 years since the Australian scored his first Formula 1 world title.

Time to pick out his best performances

KEVIN TURNER



10**1961****INDY 500****INDIANAPOLIS****COOPER T54 (9TH)**

Jim Clark, Colin Chapman and Lotus changed Indianapolis and American single-seater racing by winning the 500 with a rear-engined car in 1965, but Brabham and Cooper had got the ball rolling four years earlier.

The 1961 Formula 1 season was not going well for Cooper, so Brabham was happy to try a new challenge. "The car we built was only slightly different from our F1 car," explained Brabham in his autobiography *When the Flag Drops*. "The frame and the suspension were stiffened, Coventry Climax built a special version of their FPF engine with a capacity of 2750cc, a rollover bar had to be fitted, and I had to wear a safety harness for the first time since the midget days."

The T54 was also converted to run on methanol fuel, while Dunlop developed a special tyre, though wear was an issue against the rest of the Firestone-shod field during the race.

Brabham started in the middle of the pack, which proved something of an eye-opener: "It was a bit overpowering having all those front-engined monsters surrounding me on all sides, and I felt very boxed in for a time.

"We were miles slower than the other cars on the straight, but our cornering speed was by far the quickest. But in the

race this didn't seem to have much advantage at first, because it isn't only difficult to pass in the corners at Indy when everyone is looking for the lowest part of the banked turns, but a lot of other cars were lapping at the same speed as myself."

He nevertheless adapted during the race and made progress, despite wheelnut issues slowing Cooper's stops and having to avoid a multi-car incident.

"As the race went on I began to get the hang of the whole thing," recalled Brabham. "I was able to overtake just after the apex, because the Cooper did not have to use the line used by all the big, front-engined cars."

Brabham looked set to be in the hunt for an impressive top-six finish when he was forced to make a third stop for tyres. The change was slow, but the Cooper still finished ninth and the team was "delighted to be up that far".

Interestingly, Brabham didn't believe that a rear-engined car provided any real advantage at Indy because he felt they wouldn't take the big engines required, nor did he think a successful combined F1-Indy 500 programme could be achieved. That would be left to Clark and Lotus, but Brabham had proved capable of rising to the Indy challenge.



"WE WERE MILES SLOWER THAN THE OTHER CARS ON THE STRAIGHTS, BUT OUR CORNERING SPEED WAS BY FAR THE QUICKEST"

**9****1959****MONACO GP****MONTE CARLO****COOPER T51 (1ST)**

How to rate Brabham's first world championship grand prix victory? Even the man himself apparently felt conflicted.

In his 1960 publication *Jack Brabham's Motor Racing Book*, Brabham criticised his own approach to the race, yet in the 1974 book *My Greatest Race*, edited by Adrian Ball, Brabham picked it out for more positive reasons and the significance of the win in his career.

Following problems at Silverstone the week before and in Monaco practice, Brabham was concerned about water and engine temperatures. That did not stop him from chasing Jean Behra's Ferrari and the similar (Rob Walker-run) Cooper of Stirling Moss in the early stages.

Moss grabbed the lead on lap 22 of 100 and Brabham overtook the Ferrari on the following tour. But Brabham did not hang on to Moss, who looked unassailable with a lead of around a minute.

With less than a quarter of the race to run, however, Moss's transmission failed and Brabham moved into the lead. But the race was not yet won as Tony Brooks, charging despite being sick in the cockpit, closed in.

Brabham responded and broke the lap record on lap 83, going 1.9 seconds faster than anyone else had managed, to beat the Ferrari ace by 20.4s. "With oil on the circuit this was a tremendous effort," reckoned Gregor Grant in Autosport's report. "Brabham flew round the circuit, never putting a wheel wrong."

Brabham felt his concerns had allowed Moss to get too far away and that he should have pressed on, but he also had to put up with the radiator making the pedals very hot during a gruelling race that lasted nearly three hours. That makes it worthy enough to make our list.

8

1960

NEW ZEALAND GP

ARDMORE

COOPER T51 (1ST)

Stirling Moss and Brabham had several battles for New Zealand GP honours, each winning three times, and 1960 was perhaps Brabham's best.

Brabham set the pace in practice, while Moss had to wait for an engine for his Yeoman Credit Cooper T51. There were two 30-mile qualifying heats before the GP. Moss won heat one and Brabham was leading his heat when the fuel pump failed and his Cooper caught fire! Brabham thus started the 75-lap New Zealand GP on the final row of the 24-car field.

"Brabham took advantage of the space left vacant by the absence of Denny Hulme to place his Cooper diagonally on the grid, the idea being to swoop round the outside of those in front rather than attempt to go through," wrote Peter Greenslade in Autosport. "This was unorthodox but, as subsequent events showed, most effective."

That could perhaps be classed as an understatement, given that Brabham completed the first lap in third, behind team-mate Bruce McLaren and slow-starting poleman Moss. Remarkably, he then overtook Moss and McLaren on lap two, with Moss following him through to set up a duel for the lead.

"Brabham and Moss fought a close battle in which Brabham held the slightest of advantages most of the time," reported Autosport. "This was wheel-to-wheel stuff, with Moss slipstreaming Brabham and getting the worst of it with grit flying in his face in places where the surface had started to cut up. Now and again Moss would get up alongside but he could never quite make it."

Moss did in fact briefly grab the lead, only for

**"THE MOST BRILLIANT
DEMONSTRATION
OF WHEEL-TO-WHEEL
RACING EVER SEEN
IN THIS COUNTRY"**

Brabham to snatch it back again. At one-third distance only two others were still on the lead lap.

Moss scraped ahead again, but almost immediately his transmission failed. "One could almost hear the groan of disappointment above the roar of the engines as the most brilliant demonstration of wheel-to-wheel racing ever seen in this country came to an end," wrote Greenslade.

Brabham inherited a comfortable lead but then McLaren started closing in. "Just before the start Brabham had found that one of the cylinder head studs was loose," reported Autosport. "It was too late to do anything about it. During the race he lost most of his water and finished with an engine almost white hot. The applause was deafening."

Brabham held on to win by 0.6s.



7

1969

BRDC INTERNATIONAL TROPHY

SILVERSTONE

BRABHAM BT26A (1ST)

Brabham had a woeful 1968 season, only scoring two points in F1 as the Brabham-Repco combination ran out of steam – and reliability. A switch to Cosworth DFV power in 1969 boosted the team's fortunes and, in March, Jack scored his first F1 win since September 1967.

Although a non-championship event, the Silverstone International Trophy attracted 14 cars, including two Ferraris and the Lotus 49s of reigning world champion Graham Hill and Jochen Rindt. The Brabhams, driven by Jack himself and Jacky Ickx, had revised front suspension.

Jackie Stewart started at the back in his Matra MS10 as the MS80, which he had qualified on pole, was poor in the wet and the track was very wet for the race.

That meant Brabham started at the front and duly led team-mate Ickx, then built a lead of around half a minute while Ickx battled the Frank Williams-run

Brabham of Piers Courage.

On lap 17 of 52, Brabham lapped the struggling Hill, but the other Lotus was more of a threat. Rindt had put on an impressive charge after an early misfire had cleared and, just before half-distance, dispatched the battling Ickx and Courage to take second. He looked capable of closing, but Brabham responded.

"A pit signal went out to Brabham, and wily Jack pulled out a little more speed, driving superbly," reported Autosport's Simon Taylor. "At lap 29 the gap was 27s."

Rindt kept charging on, but Brabham still held a 9.8s advantage going on to the final lap. Then the BT26A started running out of fuel. Brabham slowed dramatically and coasted across the line with a dead engine – 2.2s before Rindt arrived.

"Thanks to Jack and Jochen, it had been a first-class race," concluded Autosport. "Jack's back."





6

1964

AINTREE 200

AINTREE

BRABHAM BT7 (1ST)

The 1964 BT7 was the first Brabham capable of fighting for the F1 world championship. Dan Gurney tended to lead the line, only bad luck keeping him out of the title fight, but Jack starred in two early-season, non-championship events.

The first was the Aintree 200, which combined Formula 1 and F2 machinery. With Gurney absent, Brabham qualified a close second and slotted in behind polesitter Graham Hill's BRM at the start. Brabham soon took the lead, while reigning world champion Jim Clark made up for a poor getaway from fourth in his Lotus.

Clark charged through to second and pressured Brabham, finally finding a way by on lap 25 of 67. But Brabham tenaciously held on to the Lotus. "Clark was determined to try to increase his lead but could only pull out a 25-yard advantage over Brabham," reported Autosport's Patrick McNally. "The pace was really hot and Hill was 38.5s in arrears."

Having got alongside Clark a couple of laps earlier, Brabham snatched the lead back at two-thirds distance. That proved vital when the duo came upon traffic on lap 47.

"As Clark, hard after Brabham, attempted to pass two slower cars at Melling, there was a bit of a mix-up and Clark found himself with no road," reported McNally. The Lotus was wrecked in the ensuing crash – which prompted Autosport to suggest a 10% qualifying margin to eliminate the very slowest cars from starting – and Brabham was left on his own. He cruised home to beat Hill by 34s.

Just two weeks later Brabham scored a sensational victory in the BRDC International Trophy at Silverstone, passing Hill's BRM at Woodcote on a dramatic final lap. That performance narrowly fails to make this list because Clark's Lotus and the rapid Gurney both retired while running ahead of Hill and Brabham.



5

1970

SOUTH AFRICAN GP

KYALAMI

BRABHAM BT33 (1ST)

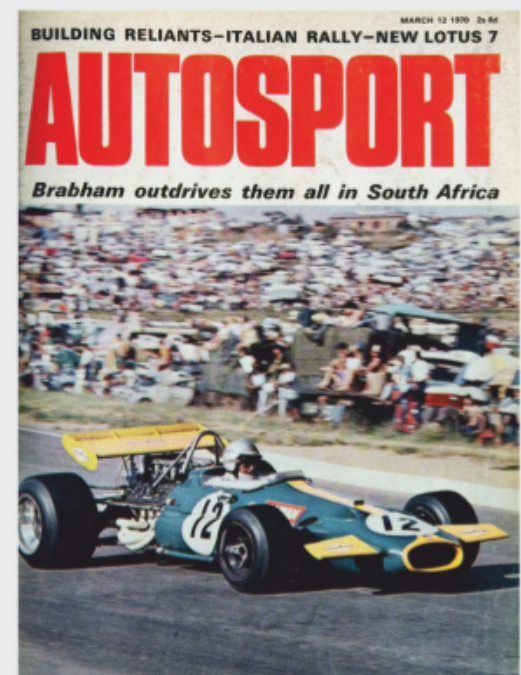
Amid rumours of his retirement, Brabham had a good feeling about the BT33, the team's first monocoque F1 contender. And he underlined the point with a crushing display at the 1970 season opener.

After practice, late on Friday evening, the team found that the timing had slipped and had to change the Cosworth engine prior to the Saturday race.

Brabham got away well, but seemed to struggle to change gear and was overtaken by polesitter Jackie Stewart's March and then suffered contact with Jochen Rindt's Lotus. He thus completed the first lap in sixth and spent a few laps ensuring nothing was amiss, while Stewart opened up a lead. Then Brabham started his recovery.

On lap four he passed Bruce McLaren (McLaren) and the BRM of Jackie Oliver. On the next tour he overtook Jean-Pierre Beltoise (Matra) and on lap six he swept past Jacky Ickx's Ferrari to take second. The lead to Stewart was 6.1s and initially it didn't change very much, although Ickx did fall away from the Brabham.

Gradually Brabham chipped away at the gap and he got to within a second of the leading March for the first time on lap 18 of 80 (above). Despite being hit



by a stone thrown up by Stewart, Brabham picked off the reigning world champion on lap 20 and immediately started pulling away. That was the last anyone saw of Brabham for the rest of the race.

Having built a lead of 13.5s he backed off in the closing stages to win by 8.1s and take an early lead in the world championship. Autosport's cover was apt: "Brabham outdrives them all in South Africa." Not bad for a driver one month away from his 44th birthday.



4

1964

OULTON PARK GOLD CUP

OULTON PARK

BRABHAM BT10 (1ST)

Almost as soon as it came into existence, Brabham's team produced competitive single-seaters and Formula 2 was a happy hunting ground.

The Gold Cup was switched from F1 to F2 for 1964 and provided a sensational battle between the Brabhams of Graham Hill, Denny Hulme and Jack, and the Lotus of Jim Clark. Just 0.6s covered the four cars in practice, at the front of a field that also included up-and-comers Jochen Rindt and Jackie Stewart, and that competitiveness continued in the 40-lap race.

Clark grabbed the lead at the start and the front quartet – in the order Clark, Hulme, Hill and Brabham – edged away from the rest. Brabham soon moved ahead of Hill, who then pitted with half-shaft problems.

On lap nine Hulme took the lead, while Brabham overtook Clark, but was repassed almost immediately. Clark moved to the front and broke the lap record, but could not shake off the Brabhams. Jack passed Hulme and took

his turn to lead at half-distance, before Hulme retired when a rose joint broke.

“For lap after lap an enthralled crowd saw a titanic duel between Brabham and Clark,” reported Autosport's Gregor Grant. “The Australian was driving with all his old fire and dash.”

Having narrowly failed to usurp Brabham at Lodge on lap 34, Clark made it stick the next time round, but Brabham immediately retaliated. “The final five laps saw Brabham drive with tremendous verve, and Clark's great skill was of no avail,” added Grant. Brabham pipped the Lotus ace to the line by just 0.2s.

“Brabham drove a wonderfully calculated race, countering Clark's every manoeuvre, and using the slightly superior pace of his own product to the best advantage,” summarised Grant. “It was small wonder that the pair had a tremendous ovation from the excited crowd.”

THE SEASON THAT COULD HAVE DELIVERED TITLE NUMBER FOUR

“One of my reasons for wanting to go on for another year was that we had the new monocoque car and I was pretty confident it would be good,” wrote Jack Brabham about the 1970 BT33 in his autobiography *When the Flag Drops*. “I started the year with more confidence than I'd had since 1966.” He wasn't wrong – his final season, which ended when he was 44, could have resulted in a remarkable fourth title.

Testing went well and Brabham won the season-opening South African Grand Prix, probably helped by Goodyear's advantage over Firestone at the start of the year.

Brabham took pole in Spain, but made a poor start. That meant he was behind Denny Hulme when the McLaren driver had a slide, where Jacky Ickx and Jackie Oliver had suffered a fiery shunt on the first lap. Brabham reacted and

spun, then spun again shortly afterwards trying to make up ground. After being stuck behind Jean-Pierre Beltoise's Matra, Brabham put on a charge that took him to the back of leader Jackie Stewart. Brabham was plotting his attack when the engine failed.

The Monaco GP became infamous. Once Stewart's March had retired, Brabham led until the final corner, when he slid

off into the straw bales lapping Piers Courage. A charging Jochen Rindt shot by to win, with Brabham recovering to second.

He now led the points table, but a lack of straightline speed was a hindrance at Spa. Brabham still rose as high as third before the clutch fell apart.

The BT33 wasn't competitive in the Dutch GP and Brabham was classified last, four laps behind the dominant Lotus 72 of



3**1970**

BRITISH GP BRANDS HATCH BRABHAM BT33 (2ND)

This is an infamous race he lost twice. Brabham had set the pace at the Race of Champions four months earlier, only being denied by an ignition problem in the last three laps. He carried that form into the GP, matching Jochen Rindt's pole time for a place on the front row.

Although Brabham led initially, it was Jacky Ickx's Ferrari that jumped into the lead at Druids (right). Ickx pulled away while Brabham and Rindt battled, but a key moment came at the start of lap seven.

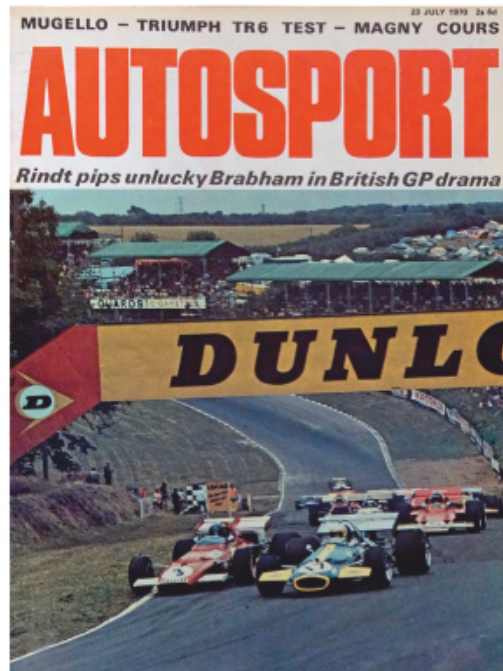
The Ferrari's differential failed as Ickx entered Paddock Hill Bend and, at the same time, Rindt dived up the inside of Brabham. They were wheel to wheel as they caught the ailing Ickx and the Lotus made it past, jumping to first.

As the Ferrari retired, Rindt and Brabham started a duel for the lead that would last for much of the 80-lap event. For the next 60 laps the gap between them would not grow more than 1.5s and was usually less than 1s, the Lotus 72 perhaps a little faster in a straight line.

Finally, on lap 69 Brabham took his chance. "Eventually he missed a gear coming out of Bottom Bend and I was able to get close enough to do a little bit of slipstreaming, and I outbraked him at the bottom of the straight," recounted Brabham in *When the Flag Drops*.

The BT33 quickly pulled away and, going onto the final tour, Brabham was 13.3s ahead of Rindt.

"It was a bit shattering when I came to Stirling's Bend and the engine died," recalled Brabham, who later suggested



that the cause was a mechanic leaving the mixture setting too rich. "There was nothing at all to worry about – except that there was no petrol left."

Rindt drove past to win. Although Brabham still finished second, it was a bitter blow: "Of all the disappointments in my racing career, maybe that one hurt more than most."

But there was still time for more drama. Rindt's Lotus was initially thrown out because the rear wing was deemed too high. He was reinstated hours later and Brabham, who had never believed the disqualification would stand, lost the race a second time: "While [Lotus boss] Colin Chapman was in there fighting I just resigned myself to the fact that nobody else stood a chance!"

Rindt. Both Rindt and Stewart were now ahead in the table.

Another sluggish getaway in the French GP restricted Brabham to third as Rindt won again, but Brabham was in fighting mood in the British GP and would have won had he not run out of fuel. He left Kent second, 11 points behind Rindt.

Somehow, things then went more wrong. Many problems in Germany culminated in a retirement with an oil leak and in Austria a stone punctured his radiator, while

overheating and then a crash on oil ended a promising Italian GP. After championship leader Rindt's death at Monza, Brabham was tied for second in the points, but there were no points in Canada or the United States GP.

"We decided it was time to find out exactly why our car was so slow," explained Brabham. "Eventually we found that after Brands Hatch, an oil line had been changed from the breathing system of the engine to the oil tank. This had created tremendous

back pressure in the engine and it had been getting too much oil in the sump, and wasn't scavenging properly."

Problem fixed, Brabham went to Mexico for his final GP. He qualified fourth and was running third when his engine failed with just 13 laps to go.

Had it not been for the mishaps, it is possible that Brabham would have scored enough points to overhaul the posthumously crowned Rindt's tally of 45. Instead, he had to share fifth with Stewart on 25.

2**1960**

FRENCH GP REIMS COOPER T53 (1ST)

Brabham played a key role in Cooper's rear-engined revolution, which was already well under way by Reims. But many still felt the more-powerful front-engined Ferraris would be too fast at the high-speed circuit.

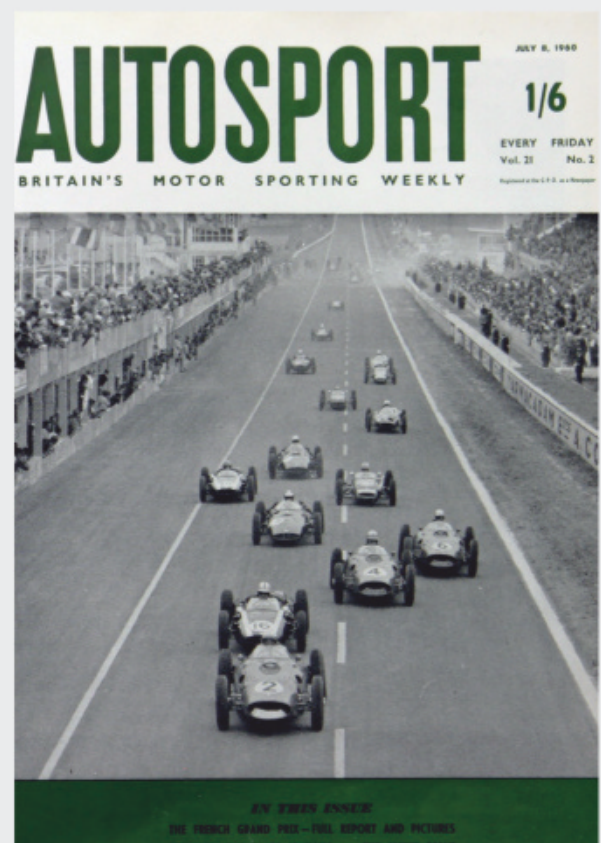
"People said that there was no way we could beat the Ferrari V6s because it's a very fast circuit," explained Brabham when he chose the GP as his Autosport Race of My Life in 2009. "I had other ideas."

Phil Hill's Ferrari hit the front at the start, but the two continually swapped places and even made contact at one point, the wheel-to-wheel fight also including Wolfgang von Trips's Ferrari.

"The Ferraris had top speed in their favour, but Reims was a slipstreaming circuit and it was all a matter of tactics to get yourself into the right place," added Brabham. "With one of those Ferraris to slipstream I could pass it before getting to the braking area at the end of the straights."

In *When the Flag Drops*, Brabham also recalled a near-miss: "I had passed Phil on the straight and was on the left-hand side of the circuit in the braking area and, just before turning right across the track to take the right-hander, I fortunately looked in my rear-view mirror. There was the Ferrari coming down the inside with all four wheels locked and not a hope of stopping. If I hadn't seen him I am sure he would have run straight over the top of me. I managed to keep the car straight before turning, and Phil went past me. I guarantee he was going 50-60mph faster than I was."

As Hill disappeared up the escape road, Brabham retook the lead. Just after half-distance the transmissions on the Ferraris failed, leaving Brabham to head a Cooper 1-2-3-4. The age of the front-engined GP car was over.



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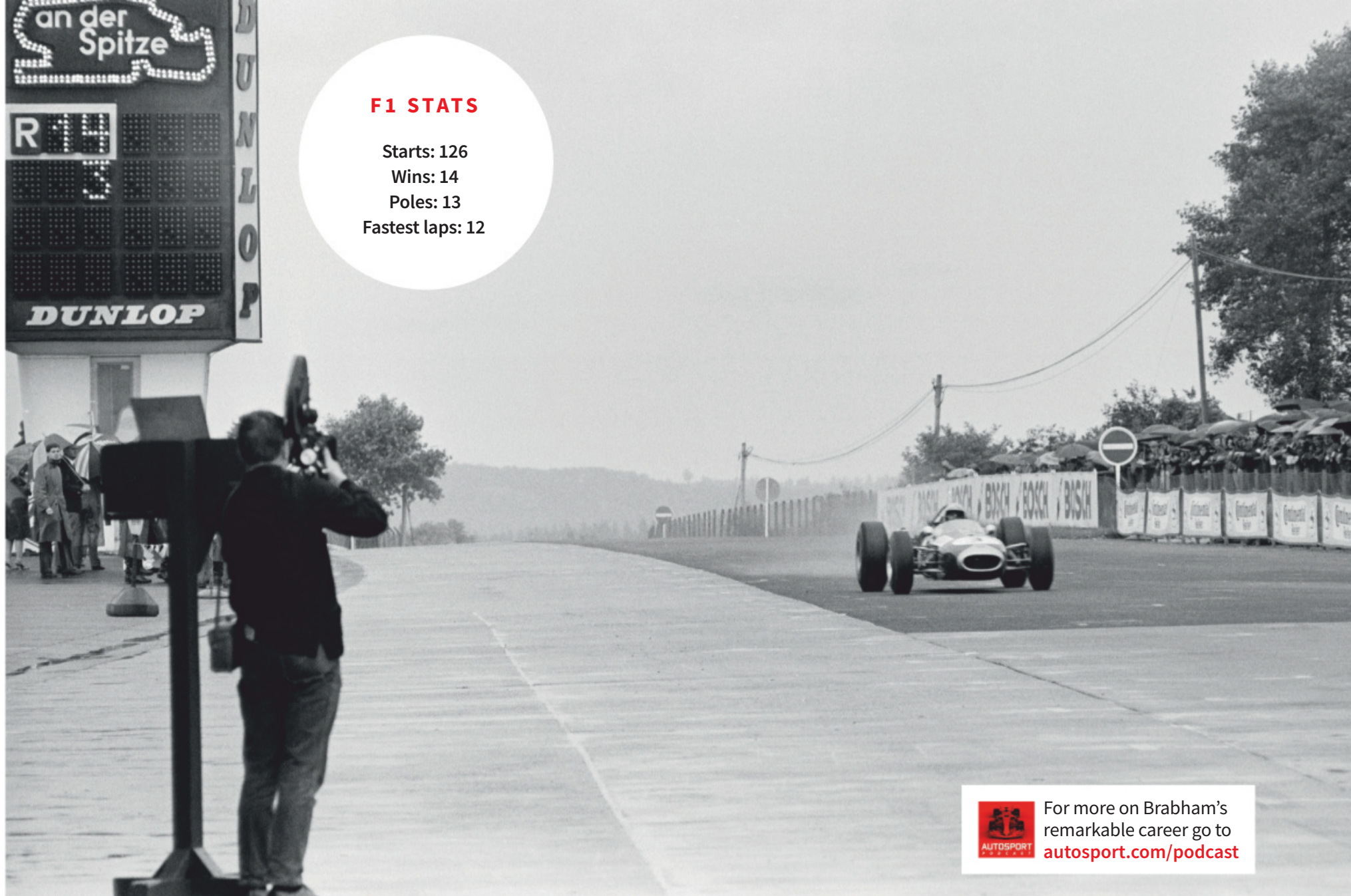
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F1 STATS

Starts: 126
Wins: 14
Poles: 13
Fastest laps: 12



For more on Brabham's remarkable career go to [autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)

1

1966

GERMAN GP NURBURGRING BRABHAM BT19 (1ST)

Brabham won the German GP once and it was one of the few races he picked out. That's perhaps unsurprising given it came in difficult conditions at the fearsome 14.2-mile Nurburgring.

Brabham suffered gearbox issues in practice and qualified only fifth, 4.3s behind the Lotus of poleman Jim Clark. It rained before the start and Nurburgring ace John Surtees (Cooper-Maserati) led Lorenzo Bandini's Ferrari from the off, with Brabham slotting into third. Brabham had requested extra treads cut into his Goodyears and he quickly passed Bandini before slipstreaming into the lead just before the end of the first lap.

The leading duo pulled clear of the field, with Surtees tracking Brabham all the way. After 12 of the 15 laps, the gap was still only 1.5s.

"Surtees was putting on the pressure with a vengeance, but it was no easy task to overtake the wily Brabham," reported Gregor Grant in Autosport's report. "On and on went the flying Australian, never putting a wheel wrong."

With less than three laps to go, Brabham finally got some breathing space as Surtees started suffering clutch problems that eventually left him stuck in fourth gear. That meant Brabham's winning margin ballooned to 44.4s, but perhaps more telling was the gap to third-placed Jochen Rindt: 2m32.6s. It was Brabham's fourth win in a row.

"Both drivers did a superb job in heavy rain and on a slippery circuit," wrote Grant. "Only a near-miracle can prevent Brabham from winning the championship."

"It was a shocking race and a very dangerous one," recalled Brabham in *When the Flag Drops*. "I guarantee we drove every lap under a different set of circumstances, because of rain showers on different parts of the circuit. And then you would come across rivers running across the road."

"I got a lot of satisfaction out of winning that race, because it was the first GP I won at the 'Ring. I look back on that as more satisfying than perhaps any other race."

"IT WAS A SHOCKING RACE AND A VERY DANGEROUS ONE. I GOT A LOT OF SATISFACTION OUT OF WINNING AT THE 'RING"



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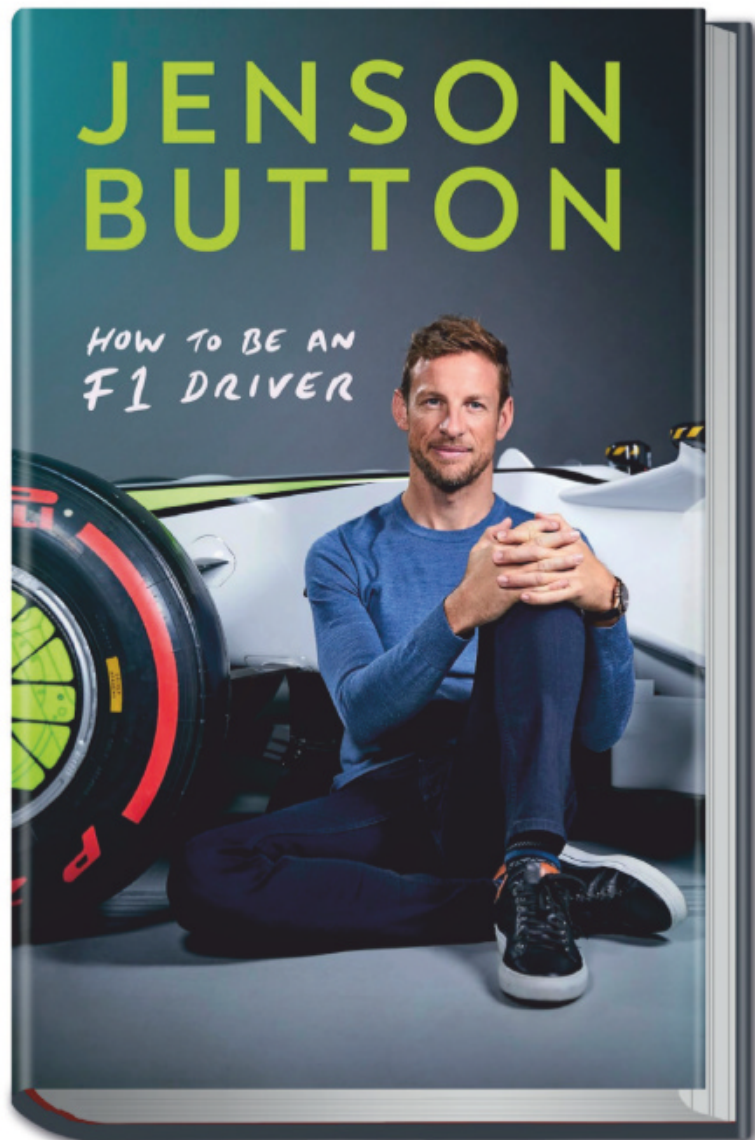
Race event tickets from £12

Meanwhile race tickets are available for major events throughout 2020, including the Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship. These can be posted in time for Christmas and come with a presentation gift wallet.

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Gift Guide

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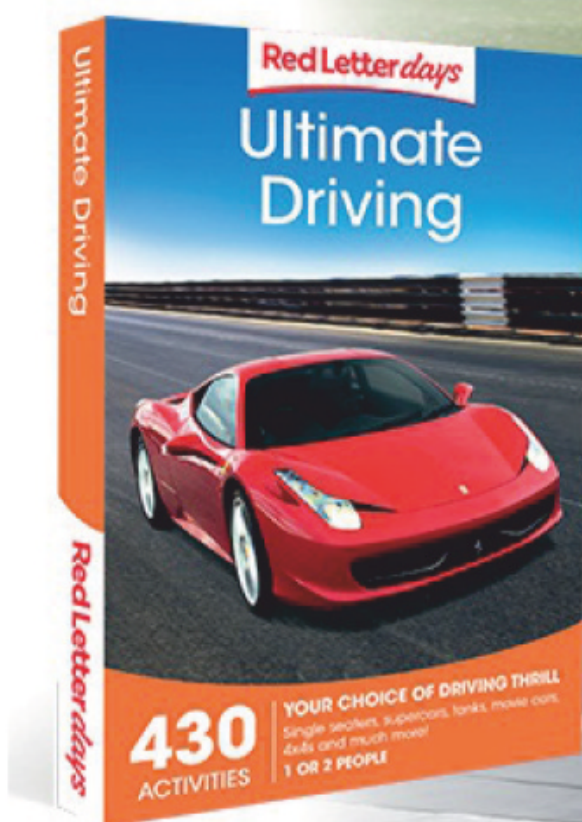
Like, how to tell a multiple F1 champion they need to check their blind-spot. How to practise your champagne spray ahead of the big day. Why it is never, ever, under any circumstances a good idea to buy a yacht. And how to face down your team when you've just stacked their multi-million-pound car into a wall during practice.

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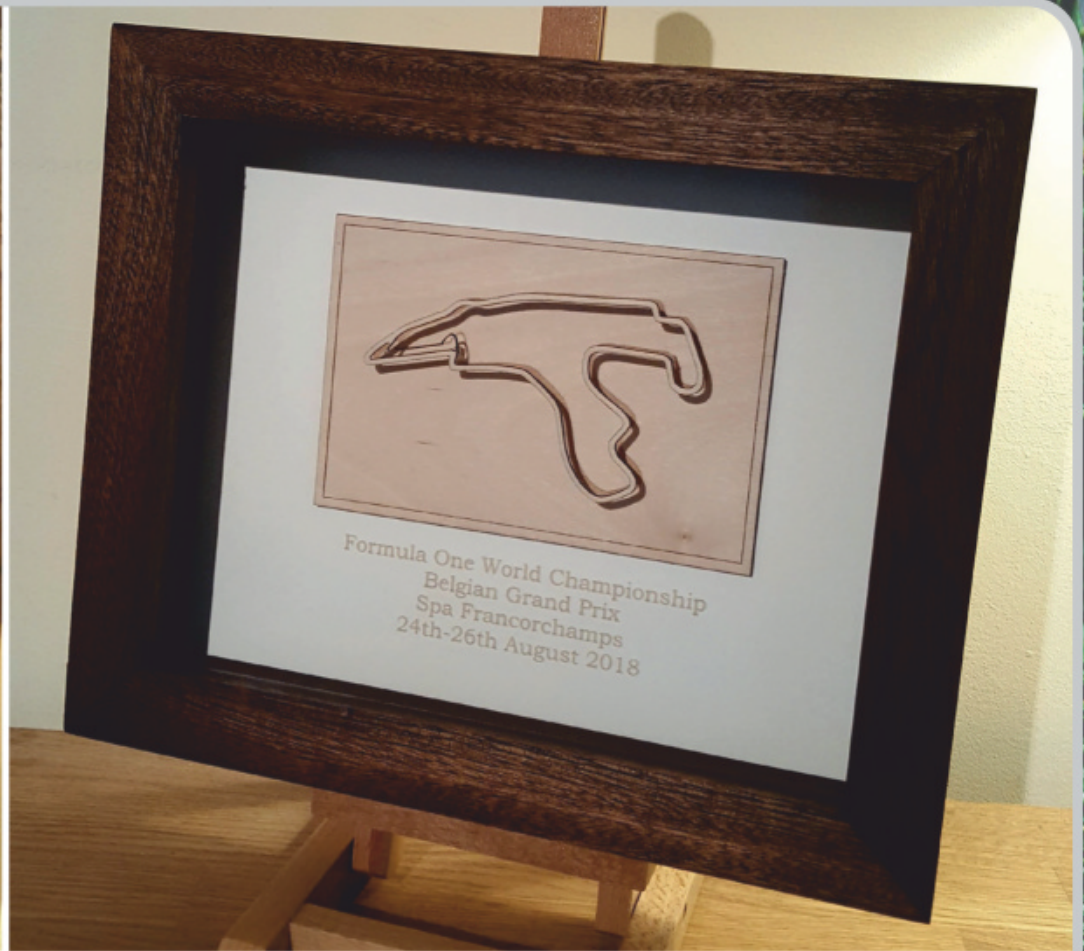
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Wesemael will swap RGB Mittell (inset) for a GT4 McLaren in British GT next year



RGB CHAMPION WESEMAEL TO STEP UP TO BRITISH GT

BRITISH GT

RGB Sports 1000 champion Chris ‘Chippy’ Wesemael will make the move into the British GT Championship next season with HHC Motorsport at the wheel of a McLaren 570S GT4.

Wesemael has spent the past two years driving a Mittell MC-53 in the 750 Motor Club’s RGB series, finishing runner-up in 2018 before dominating this season with 11 wins from 14 races. He tested the 570S GT4 at Snetterton across two days last month.

“The car was awesome – credit to the team and McLaren, it’s very good,” said Wesemael after his first test in GT machinery. “Coming from RGB they are very lightweight and, not running a slick tyre, you’re forced to work the car yourself, which I think helps moving to something like this which has a much bigger engine, traction control, ABS. I think it’s just a case of getting used to moving the weight around. I was very

comfortable with my two days and I think the team were impressed that I adapted quickly.”

HHC spent its first season with the 570S in 2019, taking a win at the opening round of the season at Oulton Park with Dean Macdonald and Callum Pointon. In 2017, its first year in British GT, it ran a Ginetta to the GT4 drivers’ and teams’ titles with Stuart Middleton and William Tregurtha. HHC has yet to assign a co-driver to Wesemael for next season.

Despite leaving the RGB series, Wesemael is keen to continue working alongside Mittell in the future.

“I wanted to move away from RGB mainly because there’s more exposure in the British GT Championship – it’s a massive series that’s much more nationally recognised,” he added. “Don’t get me wrong, the cars in RGB are incredible and I will carry on working with Scott and Ian [Mittell] potentially doing some driver work. I think it’s just a step forward and a new challenge.”

STEFAN MACKLEY

BTCC SQUAD POWER MAXED LOOKS AT CLIOS



CLIO CUP UK

The Power Maxed Racing British Touring Car Championship team is looking to expand into the Clio Cup UK next year.

The squad fields the two factory-supported Vauxhall Astras in the BTCC and won the final race of the season in 2019 with Jason Plato at the controls.

A step into the Clio competition is a new foray for the PMR team, which also operates cars in the VW Racing Cup. It will align the Renault campaign with the BTCC programme and will offer driver training as well as the possibility of testing the Astra at the end of the season.

Team principal Martin Broadhurst said that the team could field a brace of the French hatchbacks in 2020.

“We’ve seen the car and what the championship offers in terms of value for money and driver progression – it’s cost-effective and ticks all the right boxes,” said Broadhurst. “It would be an expansion for PMR and it is a great stepping stone to be involved with.”

The refreshed Clio Cup UK will run over seven events in 2020 and will support British GT at five of these. There are also two overseas rounds at Magny-Cours in France and Barcelona in Spain.

Another team interested in joining the Clio Cup is Assetto Motorsport. The team is run by 2000 Clio Cup champion Jim Edwards Jr and his son-in-law Simon Traves, and powered Chris Salkeld to the Ginetta G40 Cup crown this year.

MATT JAMES

Team has strong track record in junior series



Westbourne eyes JSCC return

WESTBOURNE MOTORSPORT

JUNIOR SALOON CARS

Successful Junior Saloon Car Championship squad Westbourne Motorsport plans to return to the series next season after not fielding cars in the category for the past two years.

The squad has won titles in both the series’ current JSCC guise and in its previous Saxmax form. Westbourne’s main campaigns in recent years have been in the Renault UK Clio Cup, Michelin Clio Series and in historic racing.

Team boss Richard Colburn says that

developing the careers of young drivers is a key part of the team and he wanted to return to a junior category to assist with this.

“It’s been a very good championship for us in the past with wins,” he said. “We’re already talking to a couple of people who ran in it this year but we’re looking for at least two new drivers too. We’ve got two new cars in build fresh to the championship.

“What we find important is it’s not too expensive – it’s very affordable.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH

REFRESHED 2020 TOURING CAR TROPHY SCHEDULE

TCT/TCR UK

Bosses of the Touring Car Trophy have announced a seven-date calendar for the 2020 season, which kicks off at Silverstone on 18-19 April.

The series was launched in 2019 with an 11-race programme and it included an overseas trip to Spa. The TCT will remain solely in the UK in 2020.

The category allows British Touring Car Championship cars to take part, although only those with the older-spec GPRM parts can tackle the series during the course of the year as the BTCC does not allow in-season testing.

The TCT also admits cars from the TCR UK series, S2000-spec tin-tops as well as SEAT Leon Supercopa cars. The dates have been designed to not clash with the 2020 BTCC schedule and series boss Stewart Lines hopes that current BTCC teams would look to enter eligible cars into the category.

“Our team at Maximum Motorsport have worked hard to get to this stage and we aim to provide a fantastic and affordable platform to race touring cars in 2020,” said Lines.

Maximum’s other series, the Volkswagen Racing Cup, will join TCT at all of these events, and the organising British Racing & Sports Car Club wants to build race meetings around the two categories.

MATT JAMES

2020 TCT CALENDAR

DATE	VENUE
18-19 April	Silverstone (Int)
6-7 June	Croft
21 June	Brands Hatch (Indy)
18 July	Oulton Park
8-9 August	Snetterton (300)
22-23 August	Thruxton
17-18 October	Donington Park (Nat)



JONES



CLASSIC SPORTS CAR CLUB

The Classic Sports Car Club will expand its Open Series grid to include the Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club Saloon and GT Championship for the 2020 season.

Since its first meeting in 2003, the CSCC line-up has continually been supported by the Jaguar series and now organises the races on the JEC's behalf.

The Open Series, which caters for cars that are ineligible for other CSCC

competitions, has averaged a strong 32-car grid in 2019. It is hoped that the addition of the Jaguar XJSs and XJs will not only boost numbers but also reduce the cost for competitors.

The format for the Open Series will change as a result, with the usual 30-minute race format being replaced by two 20-minute bouts to allow for a two-driver or two-car team.

The Open Series and Jaguar competitors will start separately via a timed interval.

A statement from the CSCC read: "By combining both groups it will encourage strong grid numbers, making financial sense and giving more rounds than we have ever been able to do in the past. All CSCC drivers competing in the Open Series as a second race will receive a £100 discount on their race entry."

The change means Seven-type cars will no longer be able to compete in the Open Series, but instead Magnificent Sevens competitors will be offered a second race at all 2020 rounds.

A two-race format has been trialled before and proved popular with entrants. The second race will be optional and discounted, ranging from 15 minutes through to 40 minutes depending on popularity and timetable constraints.

MATT KEW

➔ P75 OPINION

Middlehurst set for National FF1600 campaign

FORMULA FORD 1600

Historic Mini racer Chris Middlehurst is eyeing a National Formula Ford 1600 campaign next year.

The 2013 Formula Renault BARC champion last regularly contested the National series in 2016, but has continued to take part in the end-of-season FF1600 events, finishing seventh in this year's Walter Hayes Trophy final.

Now Middlehurst plans a training regime over the

winter before wheeling his Van Diemen LA10 out more regularly next season.

"I don't know about the full lot, but we'll see what the budget is like," he said. "I'd like to, of course, and I'll attack the Formula Ford Festival and the Hayes again. I say that every year, but I think I was fifth for like six years in a row, and now I'm seventh."

"I can probably lose 10 kilos over the winter. If I do that and we work on the car, we should be quick."

Middlehurst believes FF1600 represents better value for money than the historic racing he's been doing in recent seasons.

"The Mini is really good fun but it's very expensive," he said. "Formula Ford, for the money, you get a lot more track time. It's much more competitive and equal, because the Mini is up against Mustangs and Cortinas, so unless it's raining you can't really win."

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Up to 60 cars can now enter
the Gerry Marshall Trophy

J BLOXHAM
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IMAGES



Entry increased for Gerry Marshall Trophy Goodwood race

HISTORICS

A record field of Group 1 Touring Cars of the 1970s and early '80s is expected at the Goodwood Members' Meeting on 28-29 March next year.

A new format for the Gerry Marshall Trophy race will increase the entry to 60 cars. The first 15 finishers from each of the two heats will go into the final.

This will mark the biggest entry of these cars since they raced in period and will allow entries from cars that have not previously been accepted into the event.

The two-driver-format race will move to the Pierpoint Cup for pre-'66 V8 touring cars, which will be the last race on Saturday, running for 45 minutes into

the dusk. The driver line-up will include former Formula 1 racers and sportscar stars sharing Ford Falcons, Mustangs and Galaxies with the owners.

The event will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Lotus 72, which made its grand prix debut in Spain in April 1970. Just nine chassis were built and seven are believed to have survived. Through the support of Classic Team Lotus, Goodwood intends to have as many of those seven cars as possible running in demonstration sessions at the Members' Meeting.

The fastest rear-engined disc-braked Formula Juniors will also make their Members' Meeting debut to compete for the Arundell Cup.

PAUL LAWRENCE

750MC Honda grids set to double

TYPE R TROPHY

The 750 Motor Club is expecting grid sizes for its Type R Trophy series to double for next season as the category will feature more standalone rounds.

The series is for the EP3 version of the Honda Civic Type R and was new for this year but struggled for entries. It averaged eight cars this

season, but had fewer cars than that at three events.

The club is confident that entries will be much higher for the six-round 2020 season, with more cars in build and a number of Renault Clio 182 competitors opting to move across.

"With the Type R Trophy we started the year with 10 cars on the grid and had a few drivers start building cars but never

actually got the cars finished," said 750MC competitions manager Giles Groombridge. "We only had about a 10-car pool but we are now looking at 20-plus cars in build or built."

"Area Motorsport have come on board and are building a couple of cars so I'm cautiously optimistic we will start the year with 16 drivers on the grid."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

IN THE HEADLINES

CONNOR TAKES MAIDEN WIN

British Formula 4 driver Alex Connor claimed his maiden car racing victory in one of two non-championship UAE F4 contests that supported last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Connor, who took ninth in the F4 standings this season after being too young to contest the Brands Hatch opener, won the second race at Yas Marina with Xcel Motorsport, having finished third in the opener. Amna Al Qubaisi – daughter of ex-WEC racer Khaled – won the first race but crashed out of the second.

SKELTON'S PORSCHE BID

British Formula 4 race winner Josh Skelton is evaluating a move into the Porsche Carrera Cup GB next season. Skelton finished fourth in this year's F4 standings in his second season in the championship. He has tested In2 Racing's Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport – the team will also expand into the new Porsche Sprint Challenge next year.

MONOPOSTO STARS TO F1000

Two former Monoposto champions are among a number of drivers to sign up to race in F1000 next year. The 2006 and 2009 1400 class champion Chris Woodhouse – who has more recently competed in rallies, including Rally GB National – has signed up along with 2018 Moto 1000 winner Dean Warren. Also joining the 750 Motor Club series' grid in 2020 will be 16-year-old European karting graduate Jack Tomalin.

PRODRIVE LEGENDS BACK

Prodrive has launched a new Legends division to concentrate on the restoration and support of its historic race and rally cars. Since its formation in 1984, Prodrive has built more than 1100 race and rally cars, including 700 Subarus. In the 1980s it built nearly 40 BMW E30 M3s and, more recently, nearly 50 Aston Martin GT cars based on the DB9 and a further 180 of the previous-generation Vantage.



IN THE HEADLINES

ANDREW HANNAH 1953-2019

We regret to record the death, last week, of Yorkshire GT stalwart Andrew Hannah, following a 14-year battle with cancer. Hannah started racing in the early 1980s in a Jaguar Mk2 and progressed via a Lister to a McLaren M1C replica. He also built a RAM SC Cobra for Adrian Cocking. Hannah loved big American V8s and was in the final stages of completing a Chevrolet-powered Ultima, a project he had started building with his engineer pal John Leek, who died in 2016.

MAY DATE FOR PALACE SPRINT

The Crystal Palace Sprint will again take place in 2020 in its traditional late-May Bank Holiday slot, on 24-25 May. The Sevenoaks and District Motor Club-run event, using a course including part of the historic Crystal Palace Park circuit, returned this year in its May date and attracted 192 car entries. The 2018 event was cancelled while the 2017 sprint was moved to August. "Although it was a success this year, we know we can make this event even bigger and better in 2020," said event coordinator Karen Webber.

COBRA TO RACE RETRO

The championship-winning AC Cobra of Kevin Kivlochan will greet visitors to Race Retro next February by taking pride of place in the main entrance. The car was brought to the UK and prepared for racing by RW Racing Services. Kivlochan duly dominated this year's Historic Road Sports Championship in the 1965 car.

HRDC CALENDAR UNVEILED

The Historic Racing Drivers' Club calendar for 2020 features five key dates, starting with the Vintage Sports-Car Club's Silverstone meeting on 19 April. The Donington Historic Festival on 1-3 May, Thruxton (6-7 June, below) and Castle Combe (3-4 October) also feature, along with a return to Lydden Hill on 4 July.



Mini 7 Club to support DTM again and race at Combe Classic

MINI MIGLIAS AND SE7ENS

The Mini 7 Racing Club has again been offered a space on the DTM support bill when the German series visits Brands Hatch in 2020, following a successful first appearance this year.

The club's Mini Miglia and Se7en categories had two races in Kent alongside the DTM in August as a replacement for their original MG Live date, after that event was cancelled due to Silverstone's resurfacing work. Now the Minis have been invited back to Brands again on 22-23 August next year.

Achim Kostron, managing director of DTM organiser ITR, said: "For 2019, it was fantastic to welcome the Mini 7

Racing Club onto the support package – and their huge fields and close, frantic racing definitely entertained the crowds. It's fantastic to welcome them back again for 2020, and we look forward to putting on another spectacular weekend at Brands."

Mini 7 Racing Club commercial manager Colin Peacock added: "It's a real pat on the back to have the likes of ITR/DTM saying such nice things about us. The membership seems really happy to be invited back and delighted to be part of it."

As well as the Brands DTM date, the club's 2020 calendar also features its traditional visit to Zandvoort, MG Live and an appearance at Castle Combe's popular Autumn Classic event.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Langridges switch to Historic FF2000

HISTORICS

Classic Formula 3 champion Adrian Langridge and his father Andy will switch to Historic Formula Ford 2000 next season with a Crossle 41F and a Class B Tiga SF78.

The Crossle, previously raced by former Formula Vee champion Jez Clark, and Tiga are being prepared by Dan and Glenn Eagling at Lifetime

Racing. Dan was under the Snetterton lap record first time out in the 41F, but the Tiga's engine needs a rebuild.

"Adrian wanted more single-seater track time somewhere cheaper, but in which we could both enjoy ourselves," said Langridge Sr. "The March 803 we've raced this year is the pinnacle of what we've done, but it's [relatively] expensive to run.

"He feels he needs to learn more about car control and racecraft, thus sought more miles with hard racing from lights to flag. FF2000 is a second a lap slower than CF3 at some circuits, and the engines should go on forever. We also want to help our daughter Ali get more enjoyment from our FF1600 Lotus 61."

MARCUS PYE



Does club racing have a future?

The sport has changed radically over 40 years, not least the balance of power among organising clubs, but is racing in terminal decline?

MARCUS PYE

As the 2020 national racing calendar takes shape, event organisers are staking their claim to dates to satisfy members' wishes in a fickle marketplace – one in which it has become increasingly difficult to cover costs. It is interesting to reflect, therefore, on a seismic shift in club racing's logistics over the 42 years I have been covering the genre for Autosport.

Over the winter of 1978–79, after my first full season in the title's office, 243 days of racing were posted on the national calendar for the season ahead. Numerically, these were dominated by the British Racing & Sports Car Club and British Automobile Racing Club with 49 and 48 days respectively, shared with centres nationally. The Silverstone-based British Racing Drivers' Club was third on 14, followed by 750 Motor Club, under the late David Bradley, on nine.

The Donington Racing Club, Scottish Motor Racing Club (Ingliston), peripatetic Nottingham Sports Car Club and 500 Motor Racing Club of Ireland (Kirkistown) had six days apiece, and the Royal Automobile Club – three for the British Grand Prix alone – Astra MC (Lydden Hill) and Vintage Sports-Car Club five.

Thirty-seven clubs were inscribed on the calendar, many from the thriving marque and regional motoring scenes. Most have now faded or disappeared as the widespread use of tuned road cars for everything (sprints, hillclimbs, autocross and races) is long gone.

Now missing from the 1979 roster of venues are Aintree,

“Of the 37 clubs inscribed on the 1979 calendar, most have now faded or disappeared”

Ingliston and Longridge tracks, replaced by Anglesey, Knockhill and Pembrey. Mallory Park's availability has diminished and, of course, Rockingham has come and gone, leaving 16 mainstream circuits in the UK and Ireland.

The ultra-professional British Touring Car-supporting TOCA series' debut in 1993 brought wholesale change to national racing. Ford, Renault and Vauxhall's participation triggered the rise of one-make single-seater, saloon and sportscar formulas. At that point the number of multi-day meetings also multiplied. In 1979 there were only 28 'weekenders'. Now it's become the norm, with 20-plus races per event (some double or triple-headers) in place of the six to eight in a typical single day of yore.

Rooted in Brooklands, discontinued after 1939, Thruxton-based BARC, which pinned its flag to the BTCC mast from the start, now

organises little else – with the exception of 'new heyday' Goodwood events, reflecting history, and the British Hillclimb Championship. The BRSCC's footprint has reduced too, with the Castle Combe Racing Club succeeding its SW centre and the influence of Jonathan Palmer's (Brands Hatch, Cadwell Park, Donington Park, Oulton Park and Snetterton) circuit group MotorSport Vision's racing arm. The BRDC has not run events for many years, to the regret of many stalwart members.

What is evident is the rise of the 750MC and Historic Sports Car Club as key players in the circuit-hire market. The former, with Giles Groombridge leading the busy Donington-based competition office, has 27 days booked (10 two-day events) for 2020 to cope with an increasing portfolio of championships and series 70 years after Charles Bulmer won its first 750 Formula crown.

The HSCC, founded in 1966, has 18 days (nine doubles) on its card – as opposed to two, one co-promoted with BARC, in 1979 – on top of organising the circuit element of Goose Live Events' 30th Anniversary Silverstone Classic, and the RAC Historic Award-winning Historic F2 series, a high-flyer at home and across continental Europe. The Classic Sports Car Club (inaugurated in 2001, and a series promoter since 2004) satisfies demand from racers of cars from the 1950s to date. It has a 15-day domestic season planned for 2020, plus a European sojourn.

Ambitious programmes, booked at the end of the previous year based on what competitors say they want, need to be met with entries to balance the books. Unless aspirations are met with reality, it's no guarantee. The demise of the many popular clubbies of the 'golden era' – put on by the likes of the 8 Clubs, Jaguar Drivers' Club, Midland Automobile Club, Peterborough MC and SUNBAC (Sutton Coldfield and North Birmingham AC) at Silverstone alone – still brings tinges of sadness. The same can be said for clubs that focused on annual events at venues nationally.

It's evolution, of course. Ageing competitor demographics have hit all, not least the Bentley Drivers' Club, which still fights for its traditional Silverstone fixture, and the Aston Martin Owners' Club, which at its height badged the spectacular Martini International Trophy sportscar staple there, yet now struggles to engage its own marque racers as car values soar. So what does the future hold for club racing?

I don't want to be the prophet of doom but, speaking to a fellow lifelong fanatic last week, this very topic came up. If circuit hire costs – ultimately passed on to competitors through entry fees – continue to rise and licence holder numbers continue to fall, the consensus was that traditional club racing as we know it may have 15 to 20 years left. That's before external factors, environmental issues and the switch to electric vehicles among them, bite. Clearly, we need to treasure and make the most of it while we can. 🏁



FATHER-AND-SON BONDING

TV SHOW

THE BRUNDLES RACE THE NORDSCHLEIFE

Ahead of qualifying for last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Sky Sports F1 aired Martin Brundle's 60th birthday present to himself. Not content with a cake, gardening gloves or an Autoglym set, Brundle decided to make his race debut at the Nurburgring Nordschleife.

Alongside his son, European Le Mans Series driver Alex, Brundle entered round seven of the 2019 VLN season for a four-hour enduro. It's not the first time the father-and-son duo have shared a car — Brundle Sr, the 1990 Le Mans 24 Hours victor, returned to that race in 2012 to partner Alex in a Zytek LMP2 car.

The 30-minute broadcast, unambiguously named *The Brundles race the Nordschleife*, is now available for those of us who don't pay-to-view via the Sky Sports F1 website and its YouTube channel.

Brundle Sr may have 158 grand prix starts to his name and, through his TV work, have driven 54 Formula 1 cars, but he still had to prepare for the infamous 16-mile German track (Nordschleife and Grand Prix circuit combined). That preparation comes courtesy of a specific race licence, which involves a track walk and two sessions with circuit instructor Thomas Koll — one without circuit traffic and one with — in a previous-generation Aston Martin Vantage. Then it's eight laps solo and two preliminary races to total 18 racing laps.

Licence secured, he and Alex are then entered into the 150-car four-hour race, featuring Walkenhorst BMW M6 and Falken Porsche 911 GT3-R machinery, no less. But Aston brand ambassador Martin climbs up the

foodchain too, with the new 400bhp Vantage GT4.

Brundle Sr is arguably the finest sports star-turned-pundit in the business at the moment — *Monday Night Football* included. That shows as he live-commentates one of his laps, although a slow and stubborn BMW 2 Series that insists on blocking the racing line does prove irksome — “What the f*ck are you doing, man?” is the reaction from the driver's seat of the Aston.

After Alex's run in qualifying, the pair line up second in class for the race with the yellow Mercedes-AMG GT4 of 'Ring specialist Yannick Mettler ahead.

Alex, who won the GT4 class in the Vantage at the 2019 Nurburgring 24 Hours, takes the start in greasy conditions before we cut to the UK race commentary feed as he climbs a place to lead his group. A stop for intermediate tyres precedes more rain and the car begins to struggle. Then Alex faces a front-left puncture early on the lap at the Flugplatz and has to crawl the car back to the pits without collecting any more damage.

There's a quick exchange at the next stop as Alex says, “That's one of the hardest things I've done in a racing car,” before passing over to Martin. “Let's see what dad can do. He's an ex-F1 driver so he'll be leading in a few laps, as we all know,” Alex quips.

Here's the thing, however. This is a programme about Martin's first competitive event on the Nordschleife. It's interesting to see him go through the steps to attain the appropriate licence, familiarise himself with the controls of the Vantage — its impressive radar system — and watch Alex at work in the opening stint. But the crux of the show is Martin's experience, and there's just two minutes of him in the car before the chequered flag. That feels like the wrong balance.

Despite the puncture, the pair snare second in class. Without the tyre woes, a win looked a formality and Martin has lost none of his competitive edge — he's seriously downcast about the turn of events.

Some might, and indeed do, argue that Brundle is one of the best drivers never to win an F1 race. Given that and the fearsome nature of the Nordschleife, his turn at the wheel is over all too quickly.

That said, it's still worth a tip of the hat to whoever pressed the button on the project. The Brundles are class in front of camera and the Nordschleife will never not be cool. That makes this release a welcome change of pace and scenery for Sky Sports F1.

MATT KEW



Alex won GT4 class in the N24 earlier this year



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



As Ayrton Senna considered a future away from McLaren in 1993, Mika Hakkinen came in for the final three races of the year and promptly outqualified his illustrious team-mate first time out. But what started out as a chance to poke fun at the three-time world champion quickly turned into an opportunity to learn some serious lessons. **Go to bit.ly/HakkinenVSenna**



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Four-time – and reigning – European top fuel champion Anita Makela is our guest on the podcast as we delve into the world of drag racing. Santa Pod dragstrip guru Robin Jackson and Autosport magazine editor Kevin Turner also join Edd Straw in a bid to educate our host about an unfamiliar, but fascinating, form of 10,000bhp and 300mph motorsport.



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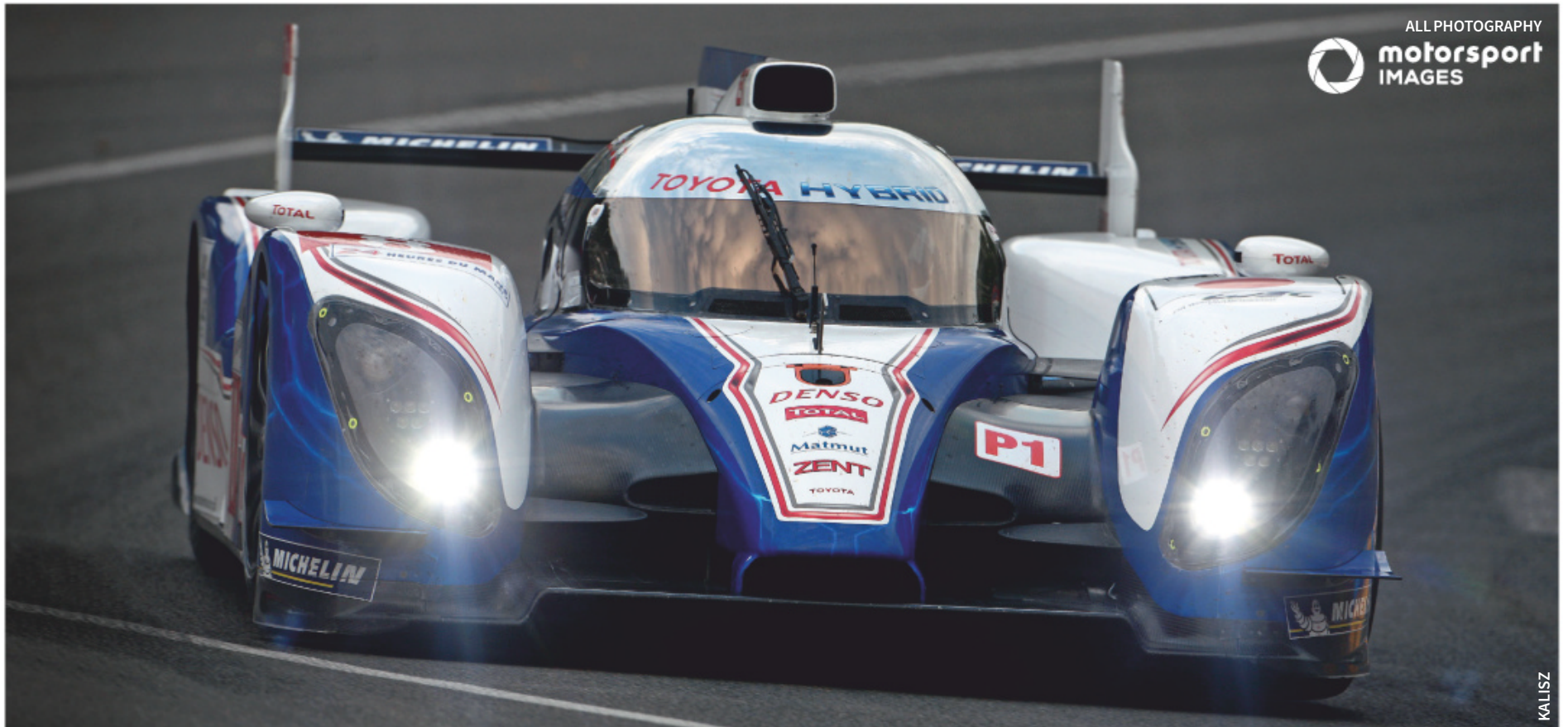
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WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN



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KALISZ

DARREN TURNER

Two shots at an LMP1 drive at Le Mans

KEVIN TURNER

Darren Turner has had an incredibly successful GT career and been a lynchpin of the Prodrive-run Aston Martin success since 2005. That includes three class wins at Le Mans, but he could have had at least two cracks at winning the 24 Hours outright had things fallen slightly differently.

The first opportunity came in 2004 in one of the Veloqx Audis contesting the Le Mans Endurance Series.

"Veloqx introduced me to Prodrive and we went to the Sebring 12 Hours and Le Mans in 2003 with a Veloqx Prodrive Ferrari 550," recalls the 45-year-old. "That got me in front of [Prodrive team principal] George Howard-Chappell, and that year Jan Magnussen couldn't do the Miami American Le Mans Series round. Because of my performances earlier in the year, I ended up doing that race with David Brabham and we won the GTS class [in

a 550]. That's what got me in at Prodrive.

"Then there was the Veloqx Audi programme and I was down to drive one of the cars, but something happened at Audi and Allan McNish was moved into that position. I was reserve driver, but free to go and do whatever else I wanted to do.

"It would have been for the season and you don't know what could have happened. At the time I was really pissed off – it was an LMP1 opportunity with Audi – but then it meant I built my relationship with Prodrive, which ended by being with Aston Martin Racing. One door shuts and another one opens; you've just got to go and find it."

Perhaps even more tantalising was an opportunity to be part of Toyota's LMP1 campaign in 2012 (above).

"I was involved with Toyota's Formula 1 simulator programme towards the end of 2009 and when they came back to prototypes there was a seat available," explains Turner. "But I was in the middle

"I JUST COULDN'T FIND A SOLUTION. I HAD TO RING PASCAL AND TELL HIM I COULDN'T DO IT"

of a contract with Aston Martin Racing.

"I tried to arrange it so I could do all the Aston stuff and do Le Mans with Toyota. It went back and forth for a long time, [Toyota team boss] Pascal Vasselon gave me a deadline and said he had another driver lined up. I just couldn't find a solution. I had to ring Pascal and tell him I couldn't do it.

"That would have been a great opportunity, but as a contracted driver you're happy when you sign a contract.

"That evening me and my wife were supposed to be having dinner with Anthony Davidson and his wife. I knew he was the other driver and that, as soon as I'd made my call, he'd have got the call getting the seat. So I rang him and said, 'Let's can the dinner because you're on a high, I'm on a low, it's going to be awkward!'

"That drive didn't happen, but other things happen. This journey with Aston has been an incredible 15 years. I don't really look back, I only want to look at what the next positives will be." ❦



JBLOXHAM



JBLOXHAM

FINISHING STRAIGHT



FROM THE ARCHIVE

The artistry of photographic legend Rainer Schlegelmilch makes Johnny Herbert at the wheel of his Lotus-Ford 107B seem a vision of man and machine in perfect

harmony. The truth was rather different, the Briton struggling with a handling imbalance throughout the weekend of the 1993 Portuguese Grand Prix. Having qualified 14th, Herbert was circulating in

ninth place when he spun into retirement on lap 61 of 71. Rookie team-mate Pedro Lamy, who'd been running nine seconds behind Herbert in only his second grand prix, befell a similar fate next time around.



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QUIZ



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Having decided not to milk it, he was a national champion on bikes before making the switch to cars via the conventional route at the time.

With patriotic backing he tried the step up, and even went it alone to make his point. This attracted the attention of a seasoned racer, with whom he would get the chance to show his potential, besting a legendary ace and becoming the last of his kind at the top level. As his reputation grew so did his opportunities, and big race wins followed as he helped to develop a racing car for the ages.

After a quick-step failure he joined a rejuvenated great and was back to winning ways when mechanical failure and a lack of preparation conspired to cut him down in his prime.

3) On this day...

A Peter Gethin died on this day in 2011. He won the 1971 Italian GP, but what was his next best F1 World Championship finish?

B What car was Roger Clark driving when he won the RAC Rally on this day in 1972?

C It was an all-Japanese front row for the GP2 Asia race that took place in Dubai on this day in 2008. Who were the two drivers?

D Which veteran V8 Supercar racer claimed his 82nd and final podium on this day at Homebush in 2015?

E Which Brit joined Anthony Davidson in the BAR testing line-up on this day in 2002 at Barcelona?

4) Name the helmet



LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS **Who, what, where, when?** Aaron Lim, Lola-Zytek B05/52, Brands Hatch, May 2008. **Who is this?** Nicolas Lapierre. **On this day** A) Maserati 250F. B) Lancia Delta Integrale S4. C) Louise Aitken-Walker. D) 1951. E) Colin Bond. **Name the helmet** Alex Yoong.



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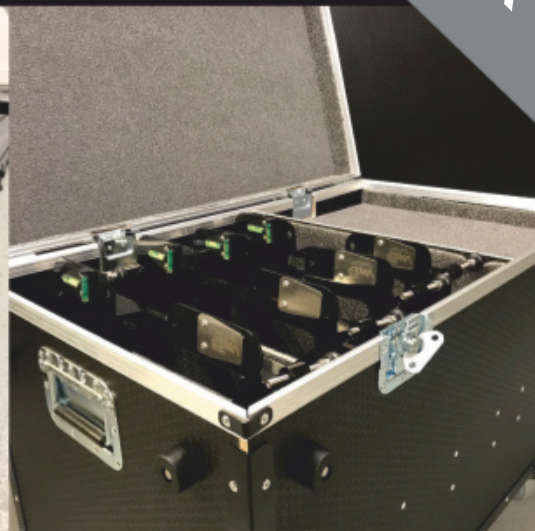
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