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dramatic race in Chile

Daytona Can anyone stop
Cadillac in the 24 Hours?

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New storylines in Formula 1, the WRC and at Daytona

The big Formula 1 regulation change may not be coming until 2021, but there are still plenty of elements to keep things fresh this year.

As well as the ongoing efforts of Ferrari and Red Bull to topple Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes, there will be new circuits, the return of Esteban Ocon and a changed line-up at Williams. We are your guide through all of those and more on page 16, while our technical experts Giorgio Piola and Jake Boxall-Legge talk through the likely areas of development we'll see after the cars break cover next month.

By then, the World Rally Championship will have kicked off with this week's Monte Carlo Rally. As our preview (p24) shows, the big questions will be how reigning world champion and Hyundai signing Ott Tanak stacks up against new team-mate Thierry Neuville, and just how strongly Sebastien Ogier will bounce back from losing his crown now that he has moved into Tanak's vacated Toyota seat.

Given his remarkable record (seven wins and counting) on the Monte, Ogier must start round one as favourite, but that should just be the opening shot in a dramatic WRC battle over the course of the year.

It's also Daytona time, so we take a look at the chances of Cadillac's run at the front of the 24 Hours being ended by Acura or Mazda (p38), and at the first mid-engined factory Corvette racer in GTLM (p40).

• Next week's issue will include the first of our free monthly National supplements. We've always covered national and club motorsport, but have often been asked to do more, and this is our first step as we head towards our 70th birthday. Expect more of what you're used to – track tests, interviews and opinions – and a few other things too.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
30 JANUARY**

Has Red Bull-Honda finally got all it needs to end the Mercedes domination of F1?



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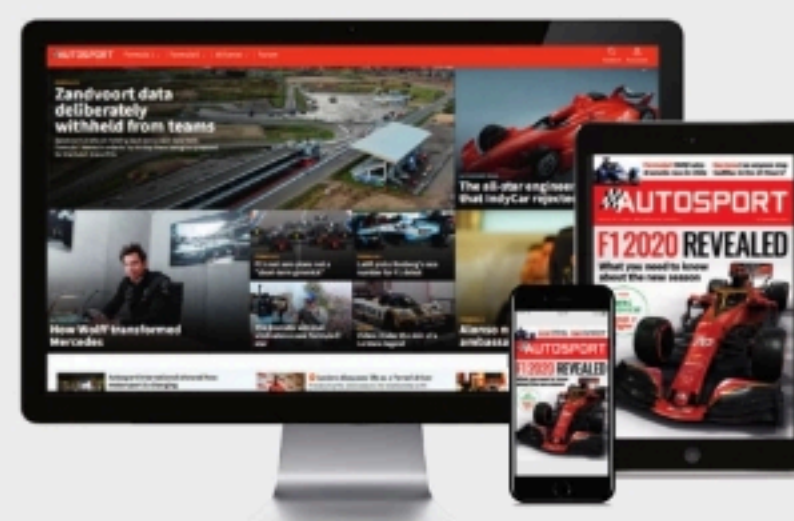
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NEW SAUDI TRACK EYES FORMULA 1 DATE

FORMULA 1

A new race track in Qiddiya will be ready to host a Saudi Arabian Grand Prix Formula 1 race from 2023, according to the circuit's bosses at an event last Friday.

The development is situated around 30 miles from capital city Riyadh, which hosts a Formula E round, and is part of a major new entertainment and commercial complex that is being built against the backdrop of a mountain range. The layout has been designed by former F1 driver Alex Wurz to the FIA Grade 1 standards required for F1.

Mike Reininger, CEO of the Qiddiya Investment Company that is behind the project, told Autosport that the aim is to attract all top-tier motorsport categories. "We're building so that we're able to host MotoGP events, WEC, regional and national championship events, and all the way up through F1," he said. "We're building the facilities so that we can ultimately host the biggest and the best motorsports events. And Grade 1 is synonymous with F1, so we're hopeful that that comes to pass for us."

Asked what timeframe would be possible for it to host its first F1 race, Reininger said: "Our project in Qiddiya is on pace for a very large first-phase offering, and that'll be ready at the beginning of 2023."

It is understood that F1 CEO Chase Carey and

outgoing commercial chief Sean Bratches visited Saudi Arabia last year for talks with the royal family over hosting an F1 race there in the near future.

Reininger said: "It has the backdrop of this 200-metre sheer cliff on one side, and then the circuit really has two zones. One zone is inside a stadium, where you'll be able to see as much as six kilometres of the race as a spectator in the stadium. And then it has another portion of the circuit, which is what we call the city portion. The circuit will leave the stadium and become integrated with the rest of this entertainment capital that we're building. So it will buzz by hotels and shops and restaurants, and there will be rollercoasters and rides that weave their way around the circuit."

"It will be the best of a stadium course and the best of the city course all looped into one."

Track designer Wurz was joined on Friday at an event in Qiddiya – which simultaneously was hosting the finish of the 2020 Dakar Rally – by a host of F1 stars, with Damon Hill, David Coulthard, Nico Hulkenberg and Romain Grosjean all getting a chance to try his layout for the first time.

Wurz said: "The design is made to challenge drivers and engineers alike, and from our simulation runs I can assure you it is absolutely thrilling as an on and off-track experience."

JONATHAN NOBLE

SAUDI ARABIA'S MOTORSPORT EXPANSION

While some of the news around the desert kingdom has not exactly been palatable in recent years, its march to prominence in motorsport cannot be ignored.



REDBULL

DAKAR RALLY

The first Dakar Rally of a five-year deal finished last week, resulting in victory for Spanish superstar Carlos Sainz on a route that ran from Jeddah to Qiddiya – the same city that will house the new circuit.



FORMULA E

The electric single-seater series first visited Diriyah, on the outskirts of capital city Riyadh, in December 2018, with a win for the BMW of Antonio Felix da Costa. Formula E was back there last November.



RACE OF CHAMPIONS

The multi-discipline motorsport event continued its nomadic existence with a visit to Riyadh's King Fahd International Stadium in February 2018. David Coulthard was the winner.



PORSCHE

REEM INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT

Believe it or not, Saudi Arabia already has a permanent circuit. Reem, the brainchild of amateur international GT racer Abdulaziz Al Faisal, has hosted rounds of the Middle East Carrera Cup.



WILLIAMS F1 TEAM

Frank Williams pulled a coup in the late 1970s when he attracted Saudi sponsorship – and Alan Jones and Clay Regazzoni passed up champagne on the podium for non-alcoholic tipples in deference to their backers.



Bottas rolls, then makes top 10 on snow rally

ARCTIC RALLY

Mercedes Formula 1 star Valtteri Bottas learned plenty about driving in the Arctic last week – not least that a top-10 result is still possible even if you roll on the opening day.

The Finn returned to the Arctic Lapland Rally for a second year in succession, this time driving a PH Sport-run Citroen DS3 WRC. The event started well with a second fastest time early on Friday. Unfortunately his progress was halted when he crashed on the final stage of the first leg.

The car was repaired overnight, allowing Bottas to move back up the leaderboard from 22nd to a final position of ninth.

"I learned lots driving in tricky conditions with loose snow and poor visibility," said Bottas. "And I had a lot of fun, which is the main thing."

The event was dominated by Toyota Gazoo Racing new boy Kalle Rovanpera (above), who won all but one stage, when his Yaris WRC overheated, on his way to a three-and-a-half minute win at the finish in Rovaniemi.

DAVID EVANS

Women's series gets US and Mexican GP dates

W SERIES

The all-female W Series will race on the Formula 1 support package at the United States and Mexican Grands Prix in 2020, expanding its second-season calendar to eight rounds.

Following its successful inaugural season in 2019, which comprised six rounds at DTM events, W Series had been in discussion with F1 for some months about the possibility of joining the support bill at several races.

The back-to-back US and

Mexico races represent what W Series described as "an exciting double-header championship decider" in October.

F1 sporting boss Ross Brawn said: "In just one year, W Series has contributed significantly to increasing interest in the topic of diversity and inclusion in motorsport."

The 'double-header' will take place seven weeks after the final round of W Series' European schedule, which again supports the DTM, at Assen on 5 September.

ADAM COOPER



Pitstop rule changes to open up strategy variations

GT WORLD CHALLENGE

More strategy, better racing and greater onus on teamwork. That's the promise of GT boss Stephane Ratel for this year's GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup after a swathe of revisions to the pitstop rules.

The most significant of the changes for what was formerly known as the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup is the removal of the minimum time, measured from pit-in to pit-out, for a complete stop. Now only the refuelling time will be controlled by electronic means to equalise the different makes of car.

Coupled with another rule change that dictates that tyres can only be changed once fuel has gone in, this means that there will be time to gain in the pits. More importantly, it opens up strategic options for the teams, particularly at the Spa 24 Hours blue-riband round of the GTWCE. Double-stinting the tyres had all but disappeared from the Belgian endurance classic, but should make a return in 2020.

Ratel insisted that the old rules, introduced in 2016, were a necessary evil to stop the manufacturers and teams developing systems that would allow them to refuel ever-faster.

"I always said I didn't like them, but we introduced them to stop the arms race in the pits when there was no other appropriate system available for a price that we felt we could impose on the teams," he said. "Progress with the technology means that we can measure and control the refuelling time electronically."

Another part of the package of changes will remove what Ratel called a "lottery effect" at Spa. From 2017, a car could not enter the pits to take its mandatory so-called technical pitstop – which allows for a change of brakes – when a safety car or full-course-yellow virtual safety car was in progress. But crucially, if a car was already in the pits when the yellows were called, it could begin its technical stop. This played a role in the GPX Porsche team's victory in last year's edition of the 24 Hours.

Vincent Vosse, boss of the WRT Audi squad, welcomed the changes. "I'm sure I am not the only person who has been pushing for this," he said. "It is important to me that the pitstop can be used for strategy."

Jerome Policand, who runs the Auto Sport Promotion Mercedes team, added: "It's good for strategy because it means at Spa that there sometimes might be an advantage in not changing tyres."

But Black Falcon Mercedes team manager Sean Paul Breslin warned that while the new rules would result in "more of a strategic element", the freeing up of the tyre changes will have a cost implication.

"The best-trained teams will be quickest in the pits, and training costs money," he explained. "Our pit crew is largely made up of mechanics who are with us only at the weekend, so the rule is going to favour teams with full-timers."

The technical pitstop is also being reduced in length from five to four minutes.

GARY WATKINS

Piquet in bid for Rio race

FORMULA E

Formula E's calendar is already set to look different in 2020-21 after news emerged last weekend that Santiago's place on the schedule is in serious doubt.

The Chilean capital, which is bearing the scars of the major social unrest of recent months, hosted its third FE race last weekend – the second at Parque O'Higgins. But Autosport understands that the 2020 event will be the final race FE will hold as part of its current deal with the city. Santiago will hold elections in the summer and, even if FE can agree a fresh deal with the next administration, it will come too late to secure a place on next season's calendar.

But FE is keen to have two races in Latin America, with a South American round partnered with the ongoing event in Mexico City. Autosport understands that a Brazilian race is in contention to replace Santiago, and Rio is the most likely city to host a 2021 event. A consortium headed by inaugural FE champion Nelson Piquet Jr is aiming to hold a Rio event at a revived Jacarepagua track, which was demolished in 2012 to create space for facilities used at the 2016 Olympic Games.

"The manufacturers are putting a lot of pressure [for a Brazilian race]," said Piquet, who split with the Jaguar squad midway through last season. "But FE never had someone competent to put the series in Brazil. They even announced a race [Rio in 2014-15 and Sao Paulo in 2017-18], but that's not how it works. The first time the job is being done right is now. A group of businessmen came to me wanting to do it and I said, 'OK, but let's do it right'."

The project is understood to have the support of senior government figures in Brazil. But, as Piquet alluded, securing a place on the FE calendar and actually holding a race are two different things.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Hitech makes step up to F2

FORMULA 2

Leading FIA Formula 3 squad Hitech Grand Prix is joining the Formula 2 grid as an 11th team this season.

Rumours had emerged in the paddock at the Abu Dhabi season finale last year that Hitech could join the grid, as the squad spoke to prospective personnel about staffing a possible entry.

"With the new 18-inch rims and some car updates coming to F2 in 2020, it made entering now much more necessary than the end of 2020, when we would be a year behind the learning process," explained Hitech boss Ollie Oakes.

"We are under no illusions that it will be a big ask to compete against some very established teams in F2, but I believe in our group and I'm really excited for the first event in March at Bahrain."

Hitech is yet to announce its drivers, although ex-ART Grand Prix driver Nikita Mazepin is set to join the team. McLaren test and development driver Sergio Sette Camara had been favourite towards the end of 2019 for the second seat, but ex-Virtuosi Racing ace Luca Ghiotto has emerged as an option, according to Autosport sources. Ghiotto left F2 at the end of last year to join the R-Motorsport Aston Martin team's GT set-up, but he has now been linked to an F2 return.

JACK BENYON

FOUR NEW TEAMS THAT MADE A SPLASH IN F2/GP2

Hitech and fellow newcomer HWA have hard acts to follow from the series' influx of the past decade



PREMA

Italian team dominated its debut season in 2016 with Pierre Gasly (above) and Antonio Giovinazzi, then followed that with the 2017 crown for Charles Leclerc. No surprises there.



CARLIN

Made a quiet entry in 2011, but then hit form with Jolyon Palmer and Felipe Nasr. After a year out, returned in style in 2018, with Lando Norris (above) leading Carlin to a teams' title.



VIRTUOSI

Norfolk-based squad took over Russian Time effort for 2014 (above) after single successful season in 2013 with Motopark. RT exit meant Virtuosi could stop running incognito in 2019.



RAPAX

Effectively this was a rebrand for 2010 of the old Piquet-named squad – and instantly won a title with Pastor Maldonado (above). Hugely underrated, it fell out of F2 at the end of 2017.



Neal fitness fight after tree accident

BTCC

Top British Touring Car Championship squad Team Dynamics is confident that three-time champion Matt Neal will be able to return to the cockpit for pre-season testing, despite suffering multiple injuries in a cycling accident.

Neal collided with a tree while mountain-bike riding with his

friends last weekend. He sustained a broken clavicle, multiple fractures to a shoulder, a broken rib and a punctured lung, which then collapsed.

Neal said on Twitter: "Slight shunt today. Matt Neal o – Tree 1...", alongside a photograph of him resting on the tree with blood on his face.

The 53-year-old, who last week was confirmed on the

driving strength of the Honda Civic Type R squad for his 30th season in the BTCC, was being treated in hospital in Worcester.

Dynamics team manager James Rodgers said that he had been in touch with Neal and was optimistic that he would be fit in time for the beginning of the campaign, at Donington Park on 28-29 March.

MATT JAMES

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McLaughlin with Roger Penske
at 2019 Bathurst 1000 enduro



Touring car star McLaughlin could race Penske IndyCar

INDYCAR SERIES

Team Penske president Tim Cindric has confirmed that Australian Supercars champion Scott McLaughlin's test last week at Sebring was more than just a one-off and that the team is investigating the possibilities of the 26-year-old New Zealander making his IndyCar race debut.

McLaughlin, who has won the past two Supercars titles for DJR Team Penske and clinched victory in last season's Bathurst 1000, tested one of Penske's Dallara-Chevrolet IndyCars on Sebring's 1.7-mile

short course. He finished the day with a best lap time just one second slower than Indy Lights runner-up Rinus van Kalmthout (Ed Carpenter Racing), and 0.5s adrift of Lights champ Oliver Askew (Arrow McLaren SP).

Cindric confirmed to Autosport that Penske is hoping to add McLaughlin to its roster for Spring Training at Austin's Circuit of The Americas next month, with a view to putting him in a fourth race entry alongside Josef Newgarden, Will Power and Simon Pagenaud at some race this season.

"We haven't finalised whether we're going to be able to run Scott at COTA or

not; we're still working on that," admitted Cindric. "IndyCar won't let just anyone show up to an open test without a commitment to running somewhere else. So that depends on if we can put something together in time for that test or whether there'll be another opportunity... We still need to figure out that part of it."

Indianapolis Motor Speedway's road-course race on 8-9 May, a free weekend for Supercars and IMSA (Penske's IMSA crew would run the extra IndyCar), is "one of the possibilities," according to Cindric.

DAVID MALSHER

McLaren 720S steps into GT World Challenge

GT WORLD CHALLENGE

The McLaren 720S GT3 will make a belated debut in the renamed GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup this year. The first car developed in-house at McLaren Automotive will contest the five-round series with Optimum Motorsport and a line-up of three factory drivers.

It will be the first time that a McLaren has raced

in the championship previously called the Blancpain GT Series since 2018, when the Garage 59 squad run by CRS GT fielded a pair of 650S GT3s. Part of the organisation that developed the 650S for racing, it had won the BGTS Endurance Cup title in 2016.

Optimum, which claimed the British GT Championship in 2018 with Aston Martin, will field a solo car in the pro class

driven by full-factory contractees Rob Bell and Joe Osborne. They will share with Ollie Wilkinson, who is designated a 'young professional' by McLaren.

McLaren Automotive director of motorsport Ian Morgan said: "The decision to enter the Endurance Cup is a big step, and it is the ultimate challenge in GT3 racing for the drivers, the team and the car."

GARY WATKINS



720S already handy weapon
in International GT Open

FOTOSPEEDY

IN THE HEADLINES

MERC'S SILVERSTONE DEBUT

Mercedes' new Formula 1 car will make its track debut at Silverstone on 14 February, taking advantage of the 'filming-day' rule, which allows up to 100km of running on two occasions during the year. This comes three days after Ferrari kicks off the F1 launch season on 11 February.

LECLERC JR JOINS FERRARI

Arthur Leclerc, the younger brother of Ferrari F1 star Charles, has joined the bulging ranks of the team's Ferrari Driver Academy. Leclerc Jr, a race winner in French and German Formula 4, will race in the Formula Regional European Championship with Prema Powerteam alongside fellow Ferrari junior Gianluca Petecof. Swedish karter Dino Beganovic is another addition to FDA, and will race with Prema in the Italian F4 series plus selected German F4 rounds.

BRATCHES LEAVES F1 POST

Spectacularly eyebrowed F1 commercial boss Sean Bratches is leaving his full-time role at the end of this month to spend more time with his family. Bratches, who has four grown-up sons, will continue to work in an advisory role for F1 from his home in Connecticut, USA.

NISSANY IN FP1 FOR WILLIAMS

Ex-Formula 2 driver Roy Nissany will take part in three FP1 sessions for the Williams F1 team this season in a new role of official test driver. The Israeli, who took part in the post-season F1 test in Abu Dhabi with Williams, is planning a return to the grid in F2 this year. He competed in 2018 but was sidelined by a wrist injury in 2019.

NO WRC CHILE REPLACEMENT

Rally Chile will not be replaced on the World Rally Championship schedule following its cancellation due to the unrest in the country. Rally Argentina has shifted forward one week, and now starts on 23 April. Rally GB takes Chile's slot in the Junior WRC calendar.



New job doesn't worry Evans

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

As he prepares for his seventh Monte Carlo Rally start, Toyota newcomer Elfyn Evans says he is ready for anything – rain, hail, snow, ice and sunshine. And he's completely ready for *that* question.

It's the one about this being the biggest season of his career. The provenance of that line is understandable. The Welshman has moved from the privately funded M-Sport Ford World Rally Team to the service park's best-budgeted squad and, on the basis of what Ott Tanak achieved last year in winning the title, the fastest car.

But he's not buying the line. After seven years with M-Sport, there's not a hope of him chucking Malcolm Wilson's team under the bus. Evans scored his first – and so far only – WRC win on the 2017 Rally GB in a Fiesta WRC, the same season M-Sport swept the board in taking the manufacturers' title and the drivers' crown with Sebastien Ogier.

"Let's not make excuses here," he told Autosport. "I've had really good cars from M-Sport before and I, for one reason or another, haven't been able to turn that potential into the right results. But now

I'm completely focused on the future and on the opportunity that lies ahead.

"We know how strong this car [the Yaris WRC] is and I feel I'm still on an upward trend with my driving. I want to continue on that upward trend, keep getting faster and make the most out of the next two years with Toyota. There can be no excuses now, we know the position we're in and I just want to get out there and see where we are compared to the competition. For me, the feeling is good in the car and with the team."

Evans's final preparations for this week's season opener may not have been ideal ("It was dry, then it was raining, then it was pissing down, then there was a river running down the road, then it snowed..."), but he's fully focused on today's (Thursday) start and the first two stages.

He added: "It's a new car, in the dark, nobody knows if it's wet, dry, freezing, how much ice there is. Everything's new. Those are probably the two stages in the most difficult circumstances of the whole season. It's quite intense when you make your tyre choice, but then you've got to chill and just get on with it."

DAVID EVANS

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Who's hot and who's not in FE

At nearly one quarter of the way through the season, it's time to assess the performances and title chances of Formula E's runners and riders

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

The 2019-20 Formula E season may have only visited two cities so far, but it's one-quarter mark is not far off. After two races in Diriyah and one in Santiago, BMW Andretti sits at the top of the teams' championship — thanks to its two wins from Alexander Sims and Maximilian Guenther.

BMW got off to a winning start in 2018-19, but — in spite of Antonio Felix da Costa and Sims showing rapid form at times — a combination of bad luck, the championship-order qualifying groups and *that* crash in Marrakech cost the team momentum.

This time, though, it has carried its sparkling speed from testing to two victories in the first two race weekends. While Sims's Riyadh race-two drive was all about managing a constantly interrupted race — albeit something he did very impressively — Guenther's come-from-behind triumph last weekend in Santiago really showed BMW has produced a strong package. It's certainly too early to say if it is the class of the field, but there's no doubt that it can get the job done, judging by Guenther prevailing in the scorching temperatures in the Chilean capital while others wilted.

Another squad that can be feeling pleased with its results so far is one that isn't exactly familiar with underperforming. Mercedes may still be yet to secure a first FE win, but it sits just four points behind BMW in the teams' championship, and Stoffel Vandoorne leads the drivers' equivalent by three over Sims.

“Mercedes has moved up the order in every race – its first FE powertrain clearly works”

Although its highlights so far are *only* a pair of podiums from the Saudi Arabian opener, at least one Mercedes has moved up the order in every race so far. And had it not been for his battery coolant being cooled just a little bit too much, Nyck de Vries would have kept Mercedes' podium streak alive in Santiago. Mercedes' first stab at an FE powertrain clearly works.

Behind the two German giants comes Envision Virgin Racing, which, despite a scrappy weekend in Santiago, remains well in the hunt. Sam Bird had to recover from an early spin and further clashes in the pack, but felt his pace was seriously strong. This slickly operated team always does well when the temperatures rise — a true test of FE machinery, which must also encourage this privateer team's powertrain supplier Audi.

The Audi works squad, 2017-18 teams' champion, may not have

so far hit the heights to which it has become accustomed, but the package — which the team feels is one of the most efficient on the grid — is clearly strong. Lucas di Grassi has provided silverware already with runner-up in the second Riyadh race, and his rise from 22nd to seventh last time out — aided by a fairly high attrition rate, it must be said — was impressive nevertheless.

Jaguar can be very encouraged by Mitch Evans's pole in Santiago and, while it will be disappointed to have lost out on the win after leading most of the first half of the race, there are reasons for encouragement. Had Evans not overconsumed when faced with no energy readings on his dash in the early laps, he *might* have been able to resist his challengers.

Remarkably, given it has been the class of the past two seasons, we only now arrive at DS Techeetah, which is sixth in the teams' standings. But watching Jean-Eric Vergne and da Costa surge up the order in the second half of the Santiago race showed the team's strength has not disappeared. If it hopes to win a third consecutive drivers' championship — and retain its teams' prize — DS Techeetah must find a way to escape the chaos of the pack. Vergne staged a strong comeback last season, but two retirements allied to one eighth place so far mean it's already starting to look as if the tale of his season will be one of a struggle to hold back the winds of change.

Harder to read are the strengths of Porsche, Mahindra Racing and Venturi Racing. While Andre Lotterer gave Porsche a dream debut podium, it hasn't scored a point since. Still, he made solid progress in the second Riyadh race, so there is clearly something in the technology Weissach has produced. Both Mahindra and Venturi have shown promise, but they've not followed through with the results just yet.

Dragon Racing and NIO 333 once again bring up the rear of the field — no surprises there — but there's one team that is really yet to show what it can do...

Nissan e.dams produced something of a miracle to switch from its controversial twin-motor powertrain, but it is yet to sparkle in the manner befitting a four-title team. Oliver Rowland's persistence to grab good points in Riyadh offers encouragement, and Sebastien Buemi has had reliability issues and a crash. But Buemi's lack of progress from a decent starting spot in Santiago was alarming.

But here's the thing. Buemi's second-place finish in the 2018-19 championship demonstrated that no one is ever really out of contention in FE's Gen2 era — he was only 11th in the standings after three races last season. It's a point emphasised again by Sims's Santiago dramas not dropping him out of the top spots in the championship. Which, despite the quirks of the qualifying system, is where you want to be heading to each race. *W*

P42 FORMULA E REPORT

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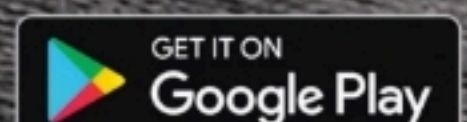
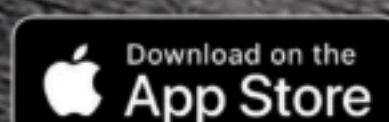
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Rallying's reasons to be cheerful

The World Rally Championship has had a tough time of late, but things are looking up ahead of Monte Carlo this weekend

DAVID EVANS

Citroen who? Remember all that negativity from the back end of last year? Forget it.

The World Rally Championship has turned the page and started a new chapter. And who's writing the opener at the top of the decade?

Sebastien Ogier. Who else?

It's not often that the six-time world champion gets overlooked, but it definitely feels as though he's coming into 2020 in Ott Tanak's shadow. That's understandable given the Estonian's maiden world title last season, but it's about the narrative too. The story of the closed season has been Tanak's first steps with his new Hyundai and his new life alongside Thierry Neuville.

Hyundai Motorsport's charismatic director Andrea Adamo is never far from the centre of any story, and he's been busy orchestrating some of the best pre-season videos in the history of the championship. Hyundai has kept us entertained in the past week and Adamo hasn't shied away from sharing what he knows and what we all knew anyway: Tanak and Neuville will cause him some bother this year.

Shunning the showbiz approach, Ogier's slid into the season nice and quietly. He's been on holiday, had a good Christmas with the family and made some new friends in Tokyo as he prepares to replace Tanak at Toyota. Ogier and co-driver Julien Ingrassia went down an absolute storm at Toyota's season launch at Auto Salon

“Neuville and Tanak looks like an absolute belter – neither's known for giving an inch”

in Tokyo. And, as footage from their final day of running ahead of this week's Monte Carlo Rally continues to rack up hits, that relationship will be cemented.

Ogier's faith in the car and rubber beneath him was on another level. Talk about a statement of intent. Granted, he was running in consistent, dry conditions, but still. Slashing through sixth-gear corner after corner within sight of the limiter, he didn't even lift when a cut inside a right-hander unsettled the car. The Yaris WRC fidgeted for a nanosecond, but the man in charge didn't flinch.

And, from a British angle, it's hugely positive for Elfyn Evans at Toyota. Talking to the Welshman on the eve of his first WRC round in something without a Blue Oval on the grille is enormously encouraging. Elfyn's not really one to get overly excited about things – he's a man who takes everything in his

stride. And that's where he's at this week.

Autosport tried to wind him up, tried to get him to talk about the biggest chance, biggest week, biggest rally of his life. But he swatted such attempts aside with aplomb. This will be his seventh Monte. He's seen it all before. And he's not about to get caught up in the hype. Or a headline. “Let's see what happens,” he smiles.

And then there's the third Toyota. And, for another reason to be cheerful, let's go back to YouTube and watch an onboard – Kalle Rovanpera's sensational speed through the Arctic Rally shakedown. Once again, he's enjoying the perfect conditions to shop-window his talent and the car's grip, but still... he's 19!

Both Toyota and M-Sport Ford put forward compelling cases this year. The factory Fiestas will be driven by a pair of rising Finnish stars in Esapekka Lappi and Teemu Suninen. Both are well capable of springing a surprise – as is Brit Gus Greensmith, who will drive the third car on nine events.

But all roads lead back to Hyundai, don't they? A title fight is fascinating, but an intra-team scrap really gets the juices flowing. And it's been too long since the WRC's last one. We could talk Ogier versus Loeb at Citroen but, in all honesty, Ogier was still too green to take on his Alsatian namesake. The previous best would be Colin McRae and Carlos Sainz – take your pick from Subaru or Ford ding-dong when it came to that pair.

But Neuville and Tanak has the look of an absolute belter. Neither's known for giving an inch and both will see this season as their own. In all honesty, Thierry's got to make 2020 stick. If he lets the new boy get a foot in the door early, Tanak will dominate.

And any misbehaviour will result in the increasingly famous – potentially infamous – Adamo hard stare.

And the good stuff doesn't stop there. The WRC's going back to those crazy camber-surfing stages in New Zealand. The North Island is a personal favourite of mine. Auckland's one of the finest cities in the world and the roads are genuinely some of the best on planet Earth.

Talking of iconic, what better backdrop is there than an elephant? Or a giraffe? For too long, WRC galleries have been missing those sensational big African skies, with a World Rally Car dusting things up beneath. The wait is over. We're back to Africa. It's 18 years overdue, but who cares now? Kenya's calling.

The final piece of the jigsaw? Japan. It's all too easy to forget the passion of those people and their undiluted and absolute love of all things rallying. We'd better be ready to see plenty of fans wearing Toyotas on their heads come November.

See? It's all good again in the world of the World Rally Championship. Have a great season.

P24 WRC PREVIEW



THE RACER

Pit talk from the HRDC



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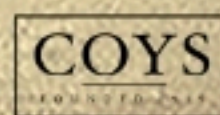
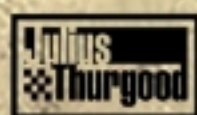
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16th March	GOODWOOD	HRDC 105 dbi TRACK DAY	ALL HRDC
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6th - 7th June	THRUXTON	THRUXTON HISTORIC	COYS 100 TROPHY / DUNLOP ALLSTARS / CLASSIC ALFA CHALLENGE
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YOUR SAY

Lewis Hamilton has restored the sportsmanship. He has won by working on himself, and developing this ability to win fair and square against all comers

JOHNNIE CREAN

Hamilton v Schumacher

I want to commend Mr Turner and Autosport for their insightful and righteous comparison of these two drivers (Autosport, January 16).

Lewis Hamilton has done something remarkable in Formula 1. He has restored the sportsmanship that must be one of the legs of any sport! Michael Schumacher followed Ayrton Senna in making winning at any cost and by any means the norm in F1, taking the nobility of the competition away.

Hamilton has won by working on himself, and developing his ability to win fair and square against all comers by being faster on Sunday. He does believe how he wins is important.

We F1 fans deserve that our all-time champion be an individual of character, and we are looking forward

to Lewis achieving that position. Good luck in 2020, Lewis!

Johnnie Crean

Kamuela, Hawaii, USA

Don't give the Lotus 49 all the credit

Last week was another super issue (Autosport, 16 January), but I can't understand what got into my friend Giorgio Piola. He said that the Lotus 49 "was the first car with the engine fixed as a stressed member".

Here he was unfair to his countrymen, for the first F1 Ferrari with the engine used as the rear of the chassis practised at Monza in 1963 and raced in 1964. The H16 BRM Type 75 also had this feature in 1966. Shared with Lotus as the engine was, this certainly inspired the design of the Lotus 49.

Karl Ludvigsen

Via email

PICTURES OF THE WEEK

Fernando Alonso and Marc Coma (left) took 13th on the Dakar Rally, while the Toyota Racing Series Tatuus FT-60 made its debut in New Zealand (inset)



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F1
2020

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2020?

*Formula 1 launches and testing kicks off next month,
so here's what you need to know about the coming season*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**





Will settled rules
bring a closer field,
or will someone find
the edge?

FRESH CIRCUITS

While the battleground that played host to arguably Formula 1's most thrilling race in 2019 – Hockenheim – drops off the calendar, there's still going to be a record 22 grands prix this year. To sate the legions of Max Verstappen fans, who have been clamouring to bedeck a home race in retina-scorching orange tones, the Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort makes a return to the calendar after a 35-year hiatus, while Vietnam also makes its maiden bow on the schedule.

In those intervening 35 years, the Zandvoort circuit has undergone significant change and, while the opening six corners are heavily rooted in those seen when F1 last visited the seaside circuit, the remainder of the layout received a complete overhaul back in 1999.

There have been a number of concerns raised about the circuit's ability to not only provide great racing, but also offer the facilities required to cope with the size of the fanbase expected to make the pilgrimage to Zandvoort. The tight, twisty and technical nature of the circuit means that overtaking should come at a premium, and thus the final corner, the Arie Luyendykbocht, is currently being augmented with an 18-degree banking. That's twice the incline seen at Indianapolis, and Pirelli is expected to raise its tyre pressures in order to cope with the forces banked corners provide.

There will also be banking added to the Hugenholtzbocht,



while the pit complex is being extended to accommodate the full F1 circus. Originally, there had been fears that Zandvoort's building works would be mothballed thanks to environmental protests about the disruption to wildlife on the local dunes. Some of those fears have been allayed after the local sand lizards were relocated, and construction permits were granted after nitrogen emissions were also proven to be sufficiently low.

If Zandvoort covers the role of returning venue, Vietnam represents an entirely new adventure for F1. At the start of April, Hanoi will host the country's first grand prix. While the circuit features similarities to the Suzuka and Nurburgring tracks, it's characterised by a lengthy back 'straight' that should afford plenty of overtaking opportunities as the cars brake heavily for the tight hairpin that follows.

A slight tweak has been made to the final two corners, tightening up the penultimate turn ahead of a 90-degree right-hander. According to Le Ngoc Chi, the CEO of promoter Vietnam Grand Prix Corporation, the FIA and F1 had requested the change "to make sure that everything we do ensures perfect safety", and the circuit now stands at 3.484 miles in length. Although significant portions of the circuit – particularly the straights – are made up of pre-existing public roads, the pit complex and final sector have all been newly constructed next to Hanoi's My Dinh stadium. >>

OCON RETURNS

For any driver, making it to the Formula 1 grid is almost an impossibility. Returning to the grid after losing a drive is even more of a rarity, but Esteban Ocon has managed to make his way from the sidelines, replacing Nico Hulkenberg at Renault for 2020 with a two-year deal in hand.

It's not the first time that Renault has attempted to sign Ocon, having originally planned to partner Hulkenberg with him last season, but the French manufacturer instead managed to lure Daniel Ricciardo from Red Bull to Enstone with a very hefty suitcase of cash. Ocon's signing, then, seems a year overdue and it may take a couple of races for the ex-Force India/Racing Point driver to shake off the last vestiges of race rustiness.

That said, Ocon has been kept well-incubated as Mercedes' designated reserve driver, and has carried out factory simulator duties to keep his hand in. It's no substitute for the cut-and-thrust of an actual grand prix weekend, but it beats twiddling thumbs on a Brackley sofa. Although Ocon still remains tethered to Mercedes, his contract with Renault dictates that the Silver Arrows cannot provide any further interference until the end of his tenure at the team, eliminating the risk of any cross-pollination.

Clearly, Ocon is highly rated enough by Renault's management to chisel Hulkenberg out of what seemed to be a secure seat. The German was, by the end of the 2019 season, well beaten by Ricciardo but not by a significant margin. Therefore, Renault's valuation of Ocon seems to be enough to upset the recently settled appletart, along with the marketing boost his nationality provides.

"He will push us in a different way," says Renault team principal Cyril Abiteboul, "a new energy, a new aggressivity – in my opinion a fully positive one – coming also with a different set of experiences, having worked with Mercedes."

"He's still in the construction phase. First, he's coming back to racing, which is good news. Hopefully he will have a better car than the one he had last time he drove, so it's a positive dynamic for us."



Ocon returns from a year on the sidelines

2020 will be the final year of the current tech rules



RAIKKONEN'S FINAL YEAR?

Kimi Raikkonen, embarking upon his 18th season in F1, turns 41 in October. In sporting terms, the age of 40 is usually the watermark at which most athletes retire. The Finn, however, is not 'most athletes'.

Arguably, the longevity of Raikkonen's career has been surprising; his departure from F1 at the end of 2009 was nullified by a surprise return in 2012, and his rolling one-year deals at Ferrari seemed to surprise and bewilder a number of paddock figures. But as long as the motivation remains and the fire still burns, then Raikkonen can still deliver for a midfield team such as Alfa Romeo.

Raikkonen's return to Hinwil (where he started his F1 career) last season was generally successful and, while the on-track performance of the Alfa Romeo C38 was variable, the 2007 world champion seemed to give the team renewed focus and vigour. Based in Switzerland, Raikkonen's commute to the Sauber Motorsport facility is surely nowhere near as draining as the presumably frequent flights to Italy were, giving him more time to spend with his family. It's a far more agreeable work-life balance, and Raikkonen has enjoyed a career Indian summer as a result.

This year is the final campaign of Raikkonen's contract, and he may wish to stay for one more season if the curiosity of 2021's much-hyped formula intrigues him. But his performances against Antonio Giovinazzi – who began to outqualify his senior team-mate on a more regular basis as 2019 developed – must pick up, as Alfa Romeo also has a number of options available. Nico Hulkenberg is a free agent with star quality, while Ferrari will have five junior drivers all battling for supremacy in Formula 2: Callum Ilott, Mick Schumacher, Giuliano Alesi, 2019 F3 champion Robert Shwartzman and runner-up Marcus Armstrong.



motorsport
STUDIO



Is the sun about to set
on Raikkonen's career?



Few drivers have contracts
in place for 2021

AN EARLY SILLY SEASON FOR 2021

Although Max Verstappen's recent contract extension has cooled some of the hype around the next silly-season cycle, there are still numerous high-profile stars who do not have a contract beyond 2020. Charles Leclerc is the other top driver locked in beyond 2020 (with a Ferrari contract that will take him to the end of 2024), but Lewis Hamilton, Sebastian Vettel and Daniel Ricciardo will be free to assess options for when the new rules arrive.

Hamilton has been linked with a switch to Ferrari, and a partnership with Leclerc would be an incredibly tantalising prospect. But Mercedes has both seats open and will want to keep Hamilton, who would be taking a risk by moving to Ferrari, while Bottas begins 2020 aiming to make further contract extensions with the Brackley-based team a "no-brainer".

Should one of the Mercedes drivers end up elsewhere, George Russell is a ready-made option for the team, while Ricciardo will surely start tapping up any of the top teams if Renault fails to begin 2020 in resurgent form. If McLaren's duo of Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz Jr continue to impress, the two could also present wildcard options for the Big Three.

Further berths on the grid could also be open to change. AlphaTauri, formerly Toro Rosso, could have Juri Vips knocking on the door should the Estonian manage to crack Super Formula, while the current pairing of Pierre Gasly and Daniil Kvyat will fight to earn a reprieve to the lead Red Bull team depending on how Alexander Albon gets on this year. Haas surprised a few by retaining Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen, perhaps through their collective identification of the recalcitrant VF-19's shortcomings rather than through on-track performance. Racing Point seems to be the only settled team. Sergio Perez is on a long-term deal and Lance Stroll presumably has a seat for as long as he wants it, given his father's involvement with the team. Williams will surely scoop up whoever is left on the market.

From F2, Guanyu Zhou – pending a successful sophomore year – will have plenty of supporters aiming to help him become China's first F1 driver, while the storied surnames of (Mick) Schumacher, (Louis) Deletraz, (Pedro) Piquet and (Giuliano) Alesi are all on the periphery. And recently signed Williams junior driver Dan Ticktum's rocky road in racing has brought him to F2 teams' title holder DAMS for 2020.

In short, once the music stops, there could be very few drivers who have stayed put for 2021. >>

F1
2020

motorsport
STUDIO



2020 TECH FOCUS

Our technical editor takes a look at the key battleground areas

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

Formula 1's technical ruleset is somewhat stagnant for 2020. There are a few detail changes, but, as F1 waits for 2021's complete overhaul of the formula, 2020 prioritises evolution over revolution.

What we saw over last season's final set of rounds was a concerted effort to steal a march for 2020. Most trialled a Ferrari-style inboard-loaded front wing, while the Scuderia itself is believed to have queried the legality of Mercedes' rear-suspension duct as it intends to integrate its own design into the upright.

And while design convergence is often admonished by F1 purists, it does have the happy side-effect of bringing teams closer together. If Renault can get its act together, it could soon join the current triumvirate of top teams in battle. McLaren, too, will be aiming to build on its 2019 rebirth – and claiming a 'proper' podium early doors would be a rather large signal of intent. With a relatively static ruleset, it should be hard for a single team to steal a march on the rest of the field.

Expect further developments to the bargeboard area, as this has become a particularly popular area for teams to pour their resources into. The same can be said for the edges of the floor as teams continue their attempts to channel airflow outwards. Doing that limits the amount of turbulence produced by the wheel wake, a key proponent of drag.

Under the skin, the largest change is to the driver-operated clutch system, where the mapping will be more stringently regulated to limit any software advantages. Furthermore, the clutches must only be a pull-type paddle system, which must move in a linear way with the clutch to put the race starts literally back into the drivers' hands. Mirrors will also be more strictly regulated, having become complex over recent seasons.



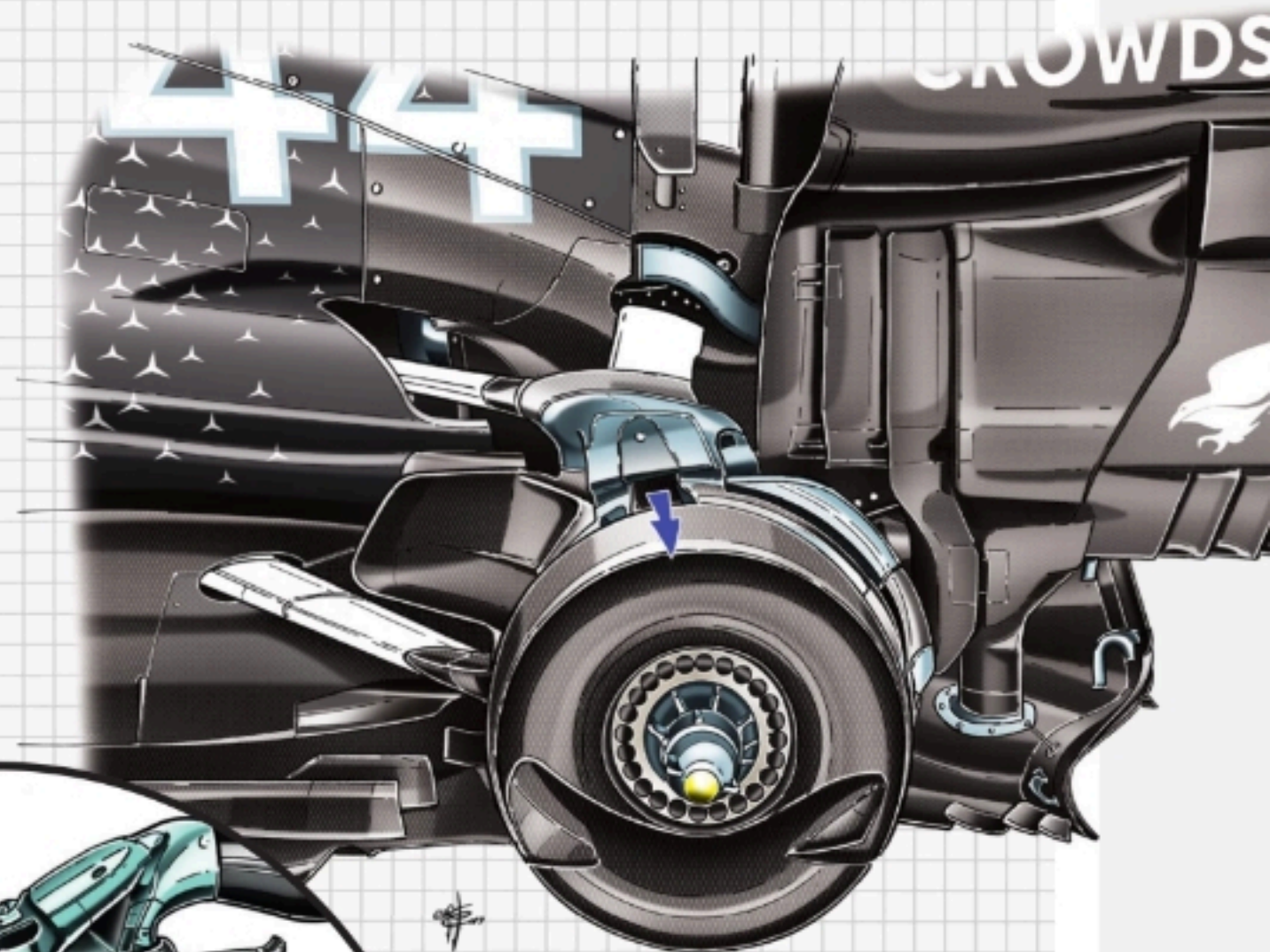
Autosport's technical consultant on F1's current position

GIORGIO PIOLA

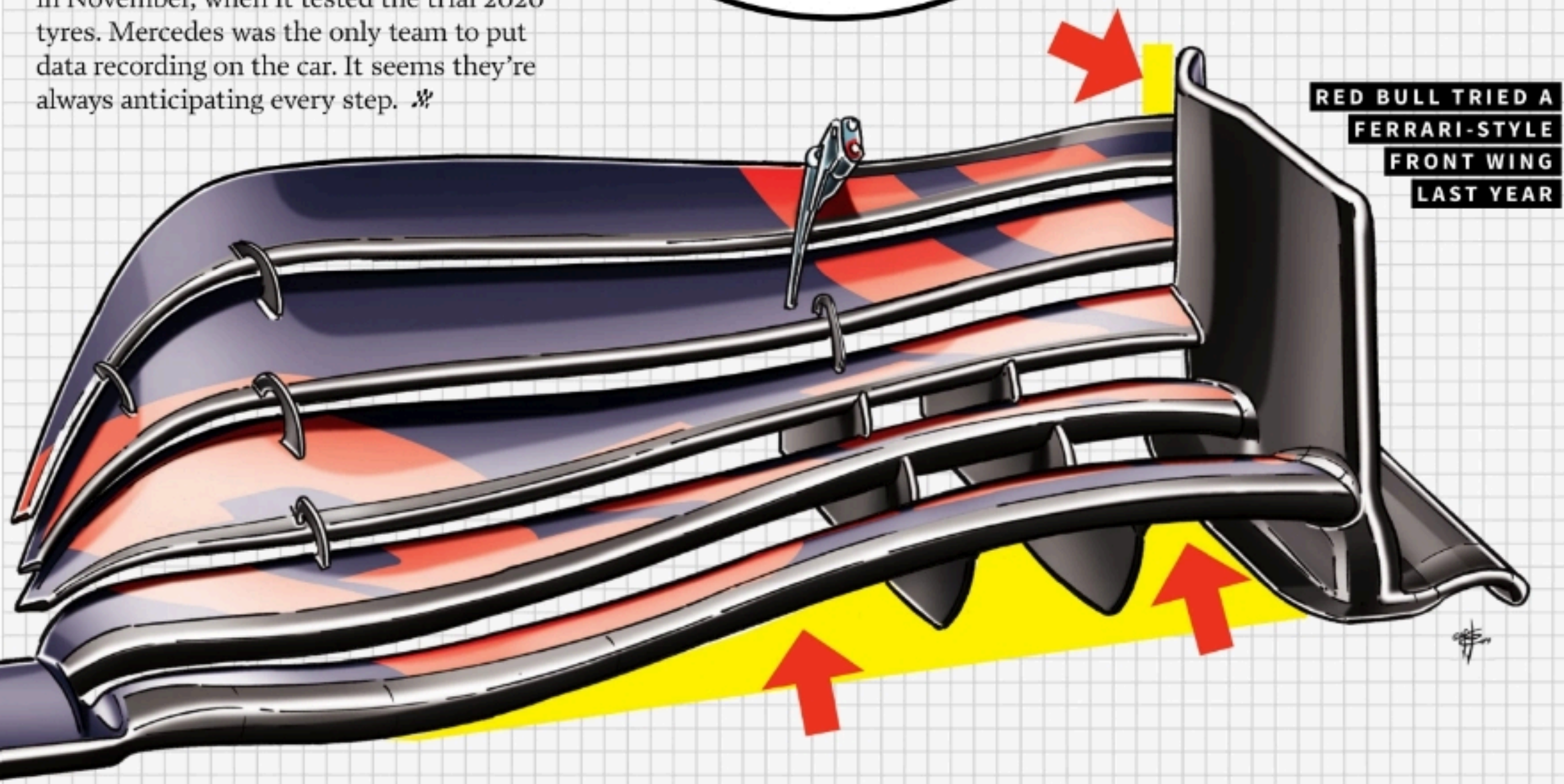
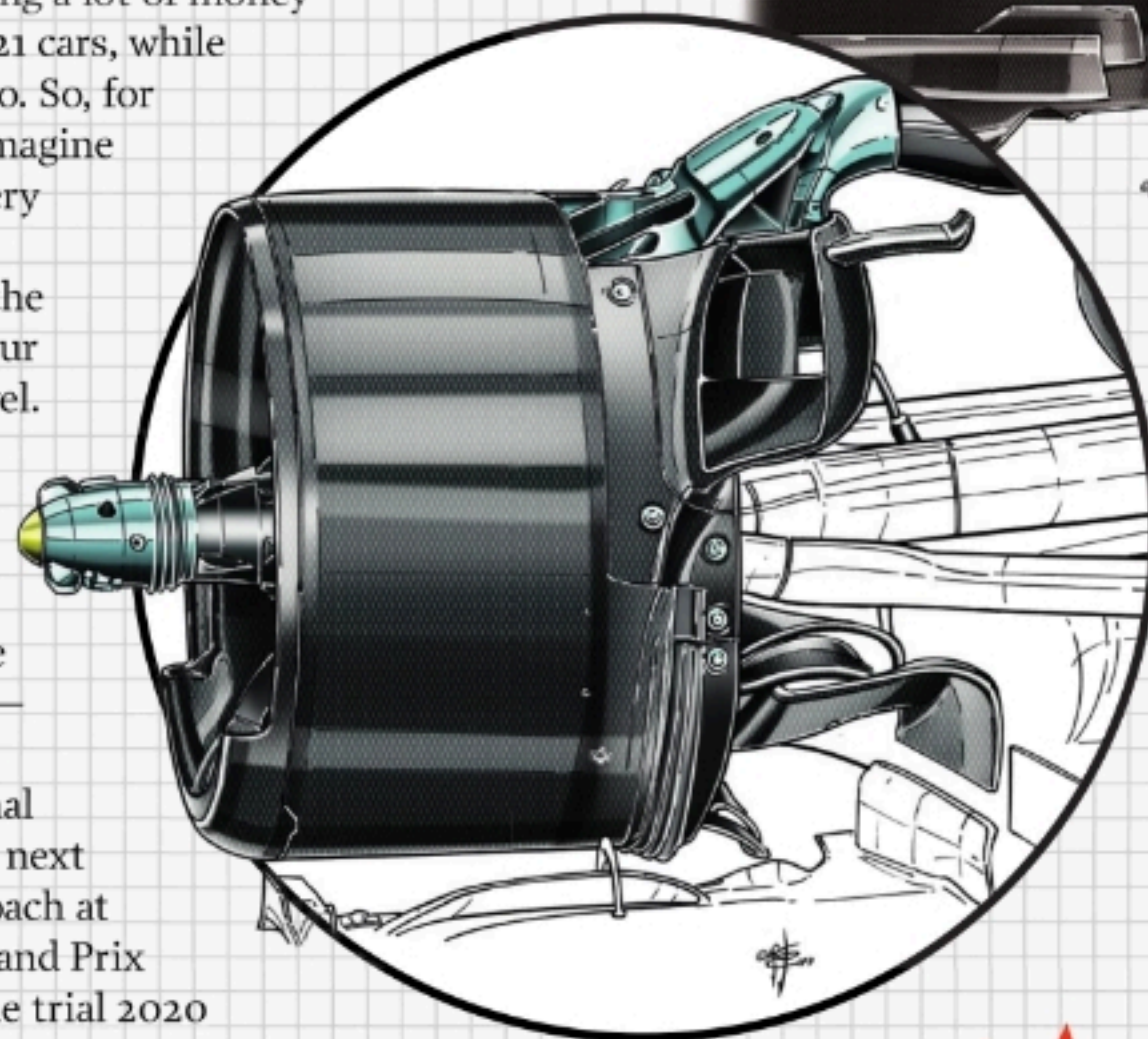
There will be a refinement of all the cars. Ferrari seems to be doing the cape, like Mercedes, and it sounds as though it will be an evolution, with some Mercedes solutions. The Mercedes may adopt sidepods a little bit similar to Ferrari's due to the position of the deformable structure. I expect a very strong Red Bull, if the team is able to make the engine more reliable. With the aerodynamics of Adrian Newey, I hope it will have more chances to fight with Mercedes. I believe it will be the most interesting season as I hope McLaren, AlphaTauri and Racing Point will be able to catch up.

I'm not terribly happy about the new rules of 2021. I'm afraid that we come back again immediately, especially for the first year, to have an even bigger gap to the three top teams. They are already spending a lot of money on facilities, in research for 2021 cars, while everyone else will not be able to. So, for at least one or two seasons, I imagine it'll be a terribly big gap. I'm very confident in the 2020 season both from the driver skill and the teams, hopefully, so we have four or five teams at a very good level.

I imagine teams will move towards the Ferrari-style front wing. We saw Red Bull try it in Brazil and the team tested it just for this. When we talk about facilities, Mercedes – as it did two years ago – ran in the last races with the additional telemetry to start work for the next season. We also saw that approach at Austin at the United States Grand Prix in November, when it tested the trial 2020 tyres. Mercedes was the only team to put data recording on the car. It seems they're always anticipating every step. *W*



**MERCEDES
REAR SUSPENSION
MAY BE WIDELY COPIED**



**RED BULL TRIED A
FERRARI-STYLE
FRONT WING
LAST YEAR**

F1
2020



LATIFI

Better than you think

Yes, he's brought a budget. Yes, he's been around a while. But Nicholas Latifi also has driving talent and a motivation that can help Williams – and could spring a surprise

JACK BENYON

PHOTOGRAPHY



motorsport
IMAGES

Latifi racked up six
FP1 outings for
Williams in 2019



M

any Formula 1 fans are desperate to see Williams rebound in 2020, and the announcement of Nicholas Latifi – without a major pole or title under his belt from junior single-seaters at the age of 24 – may well leave those fans underwhelmed.

For that reason, Williams can't afford for Latifi to be the wrong choice, as it will be vilified for passing on the likes of Nico Hulkenberg – if he ever was an option – in favour of going with an F1 rookie and a sophomore driver in the form of George Russell in 2020. You'd think a struggling, once-great team would go for experience to provide a shining light on the path to illumination, but that comes with positives and negatives. Opting for an older driver can present the risk of a lack of motivation or an unwillingness to try a different approach or method in response to certain situations. How you tackle problems and the attitude with which you do it is even more important when you're constantly faced with issues, after all.

It was clear that Robert Kubica faced an unhealthy amount of adversity last year. Shaking off the tag of 'should have been a world champion' before a rally crash in 2011 seriously damaged his arm, it was always going to be a struggle to return to F1 and deliver on expectations. But it was also clear that he and Williams weren't well-suited, and the atmosphere turned tense not too long into the season. Kubica half-accused Williams of not giving him the same equipment as Russell, and it became fractious before his exit from the team.

There was none of that with Latifi, who drove in six FP1s for the team last year as the squad's junior driver. "I think he's got an extremely good understanding of the car and what we need to get out of it," says senior race engineer Dave Robson. "And he's brought with him an extremely positive attitude. I think he brightens up that side of the garage whenever he's in the car."

It's no surprise that those at Williams have played up Latifi's attitude and approach – they're fantastic and always have been. He showed his ability to dig deep in Formula 2 in 2018, after a pre-season hospitalisation had robbed him of testing time, and then on his return he'd taken the wrong path with the car's set-up, leading to poor results. Admitting he was at fault and changing his driving style worked dividends, and he was a constant threat in 2019, taking second in the championship.

Latifi did start motorsport late, and his CV is poor compared to fellow F2 graduates such as Lando Norris, Russell and his 2018 F2 team-mate Alex Albon. But he has an explanation for it and believes the extra years were needed to make certain he was ready for F1. More proof of his pragmatism.

"Lando and Alex didn't win the championship last year [2018] and they are still doing extremely well," says Latifi. "I've lost out on the championship unfortunately, but that doesn't mean I won't be capable of doing the job or have the performance [in F1] this year. If I'd have gone into Formula 1 two or three years ago I wouldn't have felt as ready and as prepared as I do now. I only started racing karts at 13 years old, compared to guys like – in the extreme cases – [Max] Verstappen and Esteban [Ocon], I think they were both in a kart at four years old. When you take into consideration from when I started and when I'm in F1 it's about 12 years. It's the same for someone like Max, 17 years old, 13 years from when he started driving. It's about right, let's say [how long it's taken Latifi to reach F1]."

"Compared to the more recent rookies I'm definitely on the older side. In terms of my experience level of motorsport I think it's right for me. I feel the most prepared, ready I've ever been and ready to make the step up."

One benefit Latifi does have is that he has way more F1 miles under his belt before entering the championship, racking up almost 5000km in testing so far. That should help him get up to speed quickly, and he'll need that in the race against a hungry and motivated Russell.

People will point to the fact that Latifi brings budget and that his CV isn't as good as Russell's. But there's every chance that he can become a strong F1 driver based on his ability to learn and the attitude with which he approaches his racing. He knows he has an uphill struggle in 2020, facing the prodigiously talented Russell, who has one eye on a Mercedes seat in 2021. But give Latifi the benefit of the doubt – he could well surprise many this year. ✎



"I'M ON THE OLDER SIDE, BUT IN TERMS OF MY EXPERIENCE LEVEL I THINK IT'S RIGHT FOR ME"



CV

Age 24

Nationality Canadian

2019

2nd in Formula 2 with DAMS
4 wins

Williams F1 reserve

6 FP1 sessions, 4 days of testing

2018

9th in Formula 2 with DAMS
1 win

Force India F1 reserve

5 FP1 outings, 3 days of testing

2017

5th in Formula 2 with DAMS
1 win

Renault F1 reserve

1 day of testing

2016

16th in GP2 with DAMS

2015

11th in Formula Renault 3.5
with Arden Motorsport

Some races in GP2 and
Carrera Cup GB

2014

10th in European Formula 3
with Prema Powerteam

Some races in GP2, Formula
Renault 3.5 and Carrera Cup GB

2013

5th in British Formula 3 and
15th in European Formula 3
with Carlin

9th in Toyota Racing Series
with Giles Motorsport

2012

7th in Italian Formula 3 with
JD Motorsport and BVM Racing,
1 win

WRC
SEASON
PREVIEW



BACK IN BLACK

Reigning World Rally champion Ott Tanak's switch from Toyota to South Korean manufacturer Hyundai was the talk of the off season. But all that matters to him is getting back behind the wheel

DAVID EVANS

PHOTOGRAPHY DIRT FISH/GRAILLON

It's shortly after six in the morning when the receptionist at the Ibis hotel in Sisteron asks the Hyundai team if they can shut down their i20 Coupe WRC, on a guest-waking urgent idle in the car park. For only the second time since signing for the team, reigning World Rally champion Ott Tanak is about to clamber into the seat, to make his way up an icy D53 to the hamlet of Valbelle as he begins preparation for the Monte Carlo Rally.

The Estonian appears in reception, ready to go, sporting black test overalls and silver Alpinestars boots. Shouldn't they be gold? "They're Thierry's," says Tanak, perfectly innocently. His reply is greeted with a degree of amusement. After all, his new partnership with Neuville has already been billed as one of rallying's great intra-team rivalries. "They were the only boots in my size," he clarifies.

Tanak spent a day in the Hyundai last month, but the mountains were in benign mood then; it was damp, maybe a little frosty at times, but mainly dry. Today's higher, colder, significantly more Monte-like. The road is deep frozen and, three miles north of here, there's snow.

Progress through the first couple of hours of the test is slow. Because the stage is longer than the average test road, there's no need for double-running. Tanak makes one pass in each direction before the car is back into the silver-grey tent for more fettling. Changing the transmission and the suspension takes time. And so do the tyre options. Admittedly, there's nothing like the myriad of compounds and constructions on offer there once was, but still a driver has to get the feel for a crossed mix of slicks and winters; winters with studs and wets; slicks, wets with a winter in the boot.

"This is Monte," says Tanak with a wry smile. "There's a lot to get through. When I tested in December, it was mainly dry. Today it's tricky. I've tried everything. I'm discovering a lot and there is a lot that's new for me. I need to understand what this change does to the car and what happens if we do that when this is happening. And then we have all the tyre combinations and lots of other settings, and it's tough when the conditions are changing. And this is the test. Today I know where is the ice."

When Tanak sets off into the Alps this week, sure, he'll have some guidance from his ice-note crew passing through the stage a couple of hours before him, but it's still an almighty big step into the unknown. You can test as much as you like for round one, but the mountains can and usually do throw the odd meteorological curveball. Tanak knows, at some point or another in the next few days, that his tyre choice is going to be catastrophic. Granted, winter hasn't landed with quite the force it's been known to muster in previous years, but the potential for ice is ever-present. "When



"WHEN YOU COME TO THE ICE WITH SLICKS, ALL YOU CAN DO IS AIM TO GET THROUGH AND HAVE TRUST"

you come to the ice place with the slicks, all you can do is aim to get through and trust in the information you have," says Tanak. "You have to be patient, you have to take your time and know that everybody else will be going slowly as well."

Unless they've gone with a studded tyre. If that's the case, the ice is nice. And that's where the time's there to be taken.

On the snow at the top of the road, Tanak's pace drops off significantly. Everything is more progressive, more measured, more careful, apart from where an opening right-hander leads onto a longish straight. There the i20 is given the beans, with Tanak's outrageous and world-beating talent all that keeps the left-rear from tumbling over the edge and into the trees. And taking the rest of the Hyundai with it. If you ever wanted to know what rallying on a knife-edge is all about, this is it.

Further down the stage, a shorter, quicker corner is bookended >>

by dry Tarmac, and Tanak blows apart your perceptions of what the Hyundai should be doing. He slashes through the bend at barely diminished speed. Yes, there's some slip, but sheer momentum carries the car through the section of compromised grip. That's mightily impressive, except to the man himself. "I don't know," he says patiently. "I'd like to do some rallies and find out where we are. What I do know is that we have a big team behind us and they will make it as easy as possible for us."

Toyota, with which he won the 2019 title, is a big team too, so how does his new mount compare to the Yaris WRC that made him world champion last October? "I don't know," he says, marginally less patiently. "When I drove the Toyota in 2018, the car was still quite young and there was still some development coming. Now the cars are all more developed and all of the teams are at quite a good level."

Roughly translated, that means a Hyundai with two years' development is better than a Toyota. Tanak has tucked a message

between the lines too: "There's no comparison to be had. Move on."

Let's move on to the team-mates. Hyundai can boast 10 drivers' titles among its line-up this year (Tanak's 2019 crown plus the nine of Sebastien Loeb), and that makes the Alzenau squad the most decorated in terms of the men behind the wheel. "Andrea [Adamo, team boss] has put together a strong team," says Tanak. "That's one of the reasons I wanted to join."

The bond between the world champion and his new mentor is already strong. Tanak has responded well to Adamo's trademark big hugs. The respect is obvious. And while he's not willing to take the bait and deliver a line about the best team ever constructed in world rallying, Adamo knows what he's got.

"With Ott, I think we have the cherry on the cake," says the Italian. "We are very happy to have him and Martin [Jarveoja, co-driver] with us. I think it's good for everyone. We have a world champion and that's great, but as well as that we have a guy with



Estonian didn't want to be drawn on how the i20 stacks up to the Yaris...



...but he's been made to feel comfortable in and out of the car

a good technical mind and approach. With him, everything is well, I think we clicked quite good.”

Suggest that he’s looking to make Tanak feel at home and Adamo agrees. Stops. Then disagrees. “Home is different,” he says. “We have family, friends at home. I want to make Ott in a comfortable position as soon as possible. This means to welcome him, to listen and share all the information and make sure the people react to his input – this is how the driver feels comfortable. It’s not about having a drink together; we’re here to work. The comfort comes if you are in a place you can stay and you’re not stretched or squeezed.”

Adamo’s presence on the Monte test is the first since the equivalent running in 2019. “There are two reasons why I didn’t come to so many tests,” he says. “I was so busy for one, and I trust my people to do their job. My people don’t need me pushing from behind. They are even better if I am not there. I know me; I try to stay [at the test] and look around and try to understand where I have to help them to improve. But I also know that, sometimes, if I stay at home it’s better for everyone. I know I am quite... in Italy we would say I am... very present!”

Present, usually correct, entirely forthright and exactly the right person to ask how he intends to manage one of the WRC’s most exciting and enticing driver line-ups in years. The Tanak-versus-



Neuville storyline will run and run this year.

Adamo smiles thinly. “I know this story is getting big,” he says. “It’s the question that’s coming all of the time, but when I go home at Christmas and my mother is saying to me, ‘Andrea, how are you going to manage Ott and Thierry?’ I mean... bloody hell! When >>

“WHEN MY MOTHER IS SAYING, ‘HOW ARE YOU GOING TO MANAGE OTT AND THIERRY?’ I MEAN... BLOODY HELL!”



you are lucky enough to work with the very clever guy, it's always easy. And then you add into the mix another clever guy who knows very well what is needed when you work with a manufacturer. They know what we want, everybody has a clear vision.

"I try to make this an open team. There is only one number one: Hyundai. We are paid by Hyundai to win, and if Hyundai wins then everybody is pulling in the same direction and sharing the information. Once we get to the stage, then everybody has their own set-up and can do their own thing."

Adamo's explanation is as clear and concise as it is tried and tested. There's no room for misunderstanding, interpretation or confusion. "I don't give to them any bullshit," he says. "When you are clear and straight, when you give no grey area, things will work. When you have top drivers, it can make it a bit more difficult, but I can name loads of teams with top drivers who manage to dominate in the championship. For sure, for somebody in my position it will be a bit more busy. I like to be busy."

It'll be fascinating to see how Tanak engages with a team that operates with Adamo's arms wrapped firmly around it. "Sometimes, I will send the WhatsApp to my drivers, just to say, 'Are you alive. Is all OK?'" continues Adamo. "The communication is continuous. What I'm really pleased to see is how quickly everybody is sharing the information. I see emails and phonecalls [to and from Tanak]

"THE CAR IS GOOD. IT WON'T BE EASY TO DEFEND THE TITLE, BUT I KNOW I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE"

from the engineers and between the drivers. This is so important."

Anybody who knows Tanak realises he's not a driver interested in engaging in any kind of psychology. He'll just pull his race face and crack on – usually fastest. "I didn't talk to them [Neuville or Loeb] much yet," he says. "I've seen their feedback from the test and I talk with the team. It's no problem."

Tanak's quick to move the conversation along. Not because he's got anything to hide, but simply because he feels there are more important things to talk about. And he's got to be back in the car soon. "The car's good," he says of the i20. "Remember, we saw this last year, they were closing in... I know it's not going to be an easy job to defend the title, but I know that I'm in the right place for the fight."



With Hyundai's line-up also including last year's Rally Italy winner Dani Sordo, there are suggestions that the South Korean manufacturer could win all 13 rounds this season. But now Adamo steps in. He wants a word. "You know me," he says. "I am from the mountains, so for this reason my foot is always on the ground. And for this, you are dreaming. I would hope to have some 1988 Lancia-style dominance and I would like to make this season boring for you."

Tanak's not so sure. "There will be some fights, that's for sure," he says. "We can say this: this year will not be boring. But we can see that the car is ready and now we have to be sure that we are ready."

From the sight and sound of one overcast, frozen day in Valbelle, Tanak and the i20 look more than ready. ✎





OGIER NO WORRIES FITTING IN AT TOYOTA

It's a question you can't help asking Sebastien Ogier about his move to Toyota: after the stories we heard of disharmony within the team last season, how does he think he will survive there?

Ogier smiles and gives a half-laugh, knowing where we're trying to lead him. "Survive..." he says. "I'm not sure I would use this word. I don't see it like this."

The Toyota-Ogier alliance is actually one that fits the two parties perfectly. His decision to walk away from Citroen is evidence that he simply didn't believe the French firm was capable of delivering him a seventh title, a feat he *can* see happening at Toyota.

When Ott Tanak departed Toyota, Tommi Makinen's team was left vulnerable in the extreme. The Yaris needed a world champion, and the six-time world champion needed a Yaris.

On the evidence of the past three years, you'd have to say that Ogier's a shoo-in for 2020. On hearing the confirmation of the



line-ups for the coming season, one paddock cynic offered: "So, Tanak has worked all last year to take the title off Ogier. Only to give it back to him this year..."

Combine the Toyota's devastating pace with Ogier's natural talent, nous and speed, and the wins are sure to follow. What's going to be fascinating is how Toyota's management works with him. So far Makinen has been the go-to guy in terms of what it takes to stand on top of the world not once, but four times. Now he's working with a guy who's bested that record and comes with 10 more world

championship starts and 23 more wins than the superstar Finn.

Ogier's second stint at Citroen demonstrated that he's not interested in playing politics. If he thinks the management's at fault, he's going to say so. His only interest is winning.

Offer him some of the titbits of gossip about the Toyota team in recent years, and he's not playing.

"You have to make your own experience," he says. "I'll do that. I'm looking forward to this year and when it comes to this time, like always, I'm looking forward to the Monte. It's no secret, and you know this: if I could sign to

win only one race, then it would be this one. The excitement is coming when you go to the mountains to test. I love to be close to my home and in these roads."

Ogier's chasing a seventh straight Monte win and an eighth in total, and that would take him past Sebastien Loeb's record. That would be especially gratifying if this is going to be his last season. "The plan [to retire at the end of the season] hasn't changed," says the 36-year-old. "But I'm not going to put extra pressure to myself. It's the same when I start any season – I think only about winning. It's the same with the chance to win the world championship with a third different manufacturer [following his wins with Volkswagen and M-Sport Ford], but this is not really something I am thinking about right now."

Right now, presumably, he's sending up a silent prayer of thanks to Tanak for making his move and opening the door for what could be a record-breaking single season with Toyota.

WRC
SEASON
PREVIEW

THE TEAMS

OK, so what are the prospects for the WRC heavy hitters this season?

DAVID EVANS

HYUNDAI
MOTORSPORT

Car Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC
Based Alzenau, Germany
Team principal Andrea Adamo



CAN TANAK
REMAIN AS
NUMBER ONE
AS #8?

**OTT
TANAK**

#8
Age 32
Starts 105
Wins 12
Titles 1
Co-driver
 Martin Jarveoja

Massive gamble or masterstroke? Departed the Toyota he used to demolish allcomers last season for Hyundai and life alongside Neuville, one of his biggest rivals. Tanak's pace was on another level last year and the South Korean car was closing on its Japanese rival. Rarely has a new combo been so keenly anticipated.

**THIERRY
NEUVILLE**

#11
Age 31
Starts 110
Wins 12
Titles 0
Co-driver
 Nicolas Gilsoul

It's now or never. He's had the Hyundai team to himself for the past six years, but now it's all change: the world champ's landed in the Frankfurt suburbs and the chirpy Belgian's cage will have been well and truly rattled. Neuville's adamant that Tanak's arrival will drive the team forward. Let's see which i20's driven forward fastest.

**SEBASTIEN
LOEB**

#19
Age 45
Starts 178
Wins 79
Titles 9
Co-driver
 Daniel Elena

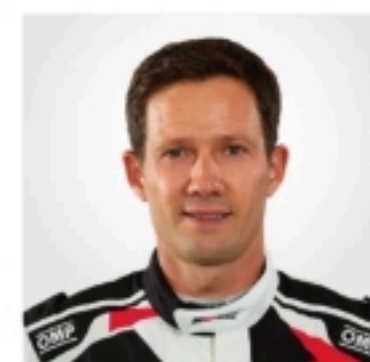
Back in town for another limited programme, and it's always a pleasure to have Loeb with us. He remains a barometer for brilliance, even if the super-sharp edge has dulled slightly. Enjoy this week's final Seb v Seb, all-French fight through the Alps. His nous, knowledge and seven Monte wins mean he can't be discounted.

**DANI
SORDO**

#6
Age 36
Starts 167
Wins 2
Titles 0
Co-driver
 Carlos del Barrio

Being moved to a part-time gig last season reignited his fire. His win in Sardinia came courtesy of trademark consistency, but his speed was on show in plenty of places – a Portugal win could so easily have come his way too. Expect more of the same this season as he shares an i20 with his old mucker Loeb.

Car Toyota Yaris WRC
Based Puuppola, Finland
Team principal
 Tommi Makinen

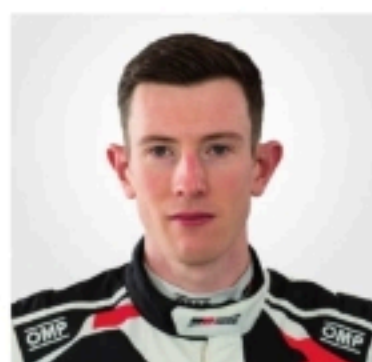
**SEBASTIEN
OGIER**

#17
Age 36
Starts 149
Wins 47
Titles 6
Co-driver
 Julien Ingrassia

One last time for Ogier, whose plan to depart the WRC at the end of the season remains. If so, he has a huge opportunity to go out on the highest of highs. He's shooting for a seventh title in eight years and the chance to capture the crown with a third different manufacturer. Odds-on favourite? He's looking very much like it.



TOYOTA GAZOO RACING



ELFYN EVANS

#33
Age 31
Starts 86
Wins 1
Titles 0
Co-driver
Scott Martin

For a man who has never lived the WRC life outside of the M-Sport family, this season's going to be a huge change. It's unfair on the Cumbrian gang to bang on about this being his biggest chance yet, but it's hard not to see it that way. Evans developed massively last year and that will stand him in good stead this time.



KALLE ROVANPERÄ

#69
Age: 19
Starts 20
Wins 0
Titles 0
Co-driver
Jonne Halttunen

The youngest World Rally champion (WRC 2 Pro) ever becomes the youngest-ever full factory WRC driver this season. What can we expect? A Verstappen-style attack on year one's not sensible when experience of the roads is so important. But somewhere like New Zealand, from a good place on the road? Watch him go.



TAKAMOTO KATSUTA

#18
Age 26
Starts 23
Wins 0
Titles 0
Co-driver
Dan Barritt

The friendly Japanese will tackle eight rounds of this year's WRC, including the season closer in his homeland. While he's impressed on the handful of Yaris WRC outings he's managed so far, 2020 is all about experience. It's vital he brings the car to the finish on every occasion. Co-driver Barritt will help in that direction.

M-SPORT FORD WORLD RALLY TEAM



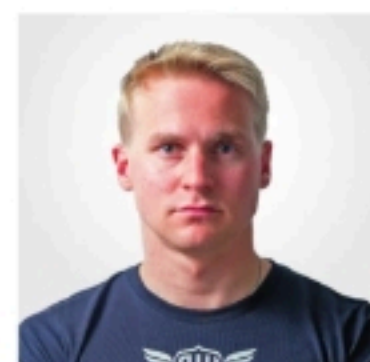
Car Ford Fiesta WRC
Based Cockermouth, UK
Team principal
Rich Millener



TEEMU SUNINEN

#3
Age 25
Starts 53
Wins 0
Titles 0
Co-driver
Jarmo Lehtinen

The arrival of another hard-charging young Finn alongside him will definitely serve to spur Suninen on this season. He showed exceptional speed at times in 2019, and if he can rid his campaign of the odd frustrating mistake then he's got the potential to put together a fine 2020. Can he win a rally? Definitely.



ESAPEKKA LAPPI

#4
Age 29
Starts 55
Wins 1
Titles 0
Co-driver
Janne Ferm

A dark horse. The second half of a troubled Citroen campaign showed that Lappi's lost none of the speed that carried him to a 2017 Rally Finland victory. He's the sort of character who will blossom with the Brits, and early indications are that the easy-going nature of the Fiesta WRC's very much to his liking too.



GUS GREENSMITH

#44
Age 23
Starts 40
Wins 0
Titles 0
Co-driver
Elliott Edmondson

A huge year. Yes, he's contributed to the running costs of his Ford Fiesta WRC but, make no mistake, the Manchester lad has the potential to go a very long way in the WRC. He's brave, committed, quick and getting quicker. To succeed, he needs to listen to Malcolm Wilson, and bring a straight motor home every Sunday.

RUTH'S BABE

The World Rally Championship's All Live service is about to begin its third season. But its debut still makes the series' TV boss Florian Ruth shudder

DAVID EVANS

PHOTOGRAPHY WRC PROMOTER

Sisteron. That 23-mile run up the D3 from Thoard, over the legendary hairpins near Authon and down into the town, is legendary for striking fear into the hearts of rally folk. And now darkness has fallen – in every sense. In just a couple of hours, the World Rally Championship is expected to step out of the darkness and into the light, courtesy of its ground-breaking All Live service.

But now, with the start of the 2018 Monte Carlo Rally looming large, the world's gone a bit mad. It looks like fate may have its finger poised over the pause button.

Florian Ruth, the WRC's head of television, is one of the most positive people you can ever hope to meet. But talk to him about that Thursday night in Gap two years ago and the smile slips. Those hours still haunt him. "They were some of the hardest days we had in the championship," he says. "That Thursday night we were in the middle of the mountains, with two huge mountains between the cars and our base. We also had low temperatures, but the logistics and geography were the biggest challenges."

"We had done a couple of rallies before we started All Live; we tested as much as possible. We knew what our technology was capable of, but to do this, in reality, there was no test possible. We cannot ask the manufacturers to run their cars away from a rally for us to check the signals. We tested lots of elements, but the whole system really only ran when Monte started."

For a year, WRC Promoter had been talking about this moment. Everything through 2017 was geared towards offering rally fans around the world all the WRC stages, all live. From the device of your choice, you could sign up and watch the WRC like never before. And lots had signed up, and were ready and waiting.

"That moment on Thursday night was actually quite emotional," says Ruth, "because it looked like we would be failing. For this difficult operation, we had just chosen the absolute hardest day of the whole season with two stages in the middle of the night, in the middle of the mountains with snowfall and minus temperatures. It was so stressful."



Providing TV coverage in remote locations and varying weather conditions presents challenges

"In the end, we had a start and end-of-stage camera via the satellite and a few parts of the action. There was just about enough to tell the story, but this was not how All Live looked in our vision or how we wanted to showcase it to the world. It didn't go black, but this wasn't what we'd been thinking of when

we were talking about showcasing this beautiful product."

Friday was a new day. And everything was well in the world of All Live. "The sun came out," says Ruth. "We knew the [camera] positions and we got some of the absolute best brains in the business and they just did an awesome job and did it together. On Friday we could start to show what the vision looked like, and by Sunday night we'd proved we could make 30 hours of rally coverage per weekend and make it interesting."

And that's what Ruth and his team have been doing ever since. "This is rallying," he continues. "In Formula 1, they have pre-fibre-cabled camera positions where they plug in the camera and start producing. We have nothing. We don't know if it's sunny, rainy, are there mountains? In Argentina we had some remote-feed drop-outs because of some military ops that blocked our signals. These are massive challenges that we can't legislate against."

But it's that challenge that keeps Ruth interested, occupied and very much in the game, and All Live is his game. Having worked on



“WE HAD SOME REMOTE-FEED DROP-OUTS BECAUSE OF MILITARY OPS THAT BLOCKED OUR SIGNALS. THESE ARE MASSIVE CHALLENGES”

Red Bull's Air Race project for a while, he took a trip to Rally Poland in 2015 and was surprised at how poorly fans were served. “After that rally I wrote a concept,” says Ruth. “In this concept, already I was struggling with logistics of the rally. OK, something happened out on the stages. At this point, somebody filmed it, then the helicopter came and picked up the card to bring it back to base where it was ingested, edited and uploaded. This took hours. I’m a big fan of real-time communication. I don’t want to learn what happened yesterday, I want to know now. The fans film what happens on the stages and put it on YouTube 10 minutes later. We cannot be hours behind.

“I thought of a way to connect everything we have at the rally and have it all live. There’s nothing new with the All Live idea. The previous promoter had a similar idea, to be faster on social and digital media. In combination with new technology on the market, All Live was possible.”

Ruth’s right. During his tenure in the promoter’s seat two >>

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Being inside one of the production pods during a live broadcast is an intense experience. Director Stefan Koch sits front and centre of 16 different screen options. It’s up to him to decide what you and I will be watching at any one time.

Before any action shots of a crew are shown, Koch primes pictures of driver and co-driver for the screen. “We want to make this more personal for the viewers,” he says, “so we show the guys without their crash helmets and with some stats to introduce them. We want to lead the viewers through All Live; we don’t want them to have to use any energy figuring out who they’re watching. We just want them to sit back and enjoy.”

There’s not much chance of Koch sitting back and relaxing. He is, quite literally, on the edge of his seat. His eyes are everywhere as graphics are prepared for the next crew, split times are beamed in and stage-end crews primed via the remote feed. “There are a lot of layers,” he says. “There’s a lot of talking going on at once.”

And the problem is there’s no such thing as white noise. It’s all relevant. But when it comes to direct

communication, that only comes from Koch.

“Everybody listens to him,” says head of TV Florian Ruth. “Only somebody very important speaks to Stefan during the stage.”

As we sit with Koch, the action is focused on the rally leader. But the bottom right screen flashes in a picture of Jari-Matti Latvala on his side. Koch doesn’t cut to it. We’re wondering if he’s seen it. Is it worth giving him a nudge? Eventually, we cut to J-ML.

“I don’t like to cut what the viewer is watching,” he says. “We don’t like to break the story. We have done this a few times and then analysed it and it’s the wrong decision to immediately respond when something happens. We get our rally leader to the end of the stage, then cut back to Latvala. For me it’s like an onion: the coverage is in layers with the championship story in the middle, then the rally leader, then the guy with the problem.”

For 10 hours a day, Koch only moves from the pod for the call of nature or to grab something to eat. “When it’s really crazy, you don’t eat,” he says. “But it’s incredible, to produce 30 hours of live TV in a weekend is a real rush.”





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decades ago, David Richards was banging the drum about digital live coverage. Richards' frustration about the WRC not being available on mobile telephones in the early noughties was huge. But the cost to change it was simply too high.

Codecs has fixed that. It's now cheaper and more straightforward than ever to pack pictures into a transmittable format. "The cost is important, but the main thing is that this is now a reliable and stable system," says Ruth. "Before these improvements in codecs we would have been using radio frequencies which would have had too many break-ups."

As well as covering the start and finish of every stage, All Live runs some cameras in the stage, as well as onboards and a heli-cam. At any one time, there can be as many as 80 camera feeds coming into the All Live base in the service park. Coming via satellite, they're usually with WRC TV between 1.3-1.6 seconds later.

Those pictures were all fed into the back of an outside broadcast truck. On some events, that was the promoter's own truck, but on events such as Argentina the facility was hired locally. Because of that, there was no continuity of quality. To combat that, Ruth commissioned the build of studio production pods. "We have ripped apart an OB van and built it into four pods," says Ruth. "The technology is all the same in the pods [as in the OB van]."

The difference here is that these four pods are taken to every round. Regardless of which end of the world All Live director Stefan Koch calls the shots from, he's sitting in the same seat looking at the same screens and pushing the same buttons.

Over the past two years, making 30 hours of television from Thursday afternoon until Sunday lunchtime has become the norm. Fans have come to expect it. But Ruth himself is still learning. "I have been in this sport for three years now," he says, "and still on every rally I learn something new. This is why we have experts like





“WE HAD SOME TELL US THEY LOST THEIR JOBS BECAUSE THEY WERE WATCHING ALL LIVE ALL THE TIME – IT COST ONE GUY HIS MARRIAGE!”

[former co-driver] Steve Turvey, and this is why we work with the best people and best reporters like Colin [Clark]. He knows rallying and he's a character and an entertainer; once you've met Colin on TV, you won't forget him.”

Still, however, there's the odd niggle. Britain's own WRC counter in Wales, for example, can provide a real headache. “The remote-feed signals are very sensitive,” he says. “When it's wet, the signals do get blocked by the water, so when we have forests with leaves we can have break-ups in the transmissions of onboards. The signals don't go through water.”

At the moment, stopping the rain remains beyond even Ruth's control. Instead, he'll chase a fix from the tech side. The delays are, of course, necessary on some occasions. If there's a particularly nasty accident, everything can go on hold.

“We actually have two delays from our side,” says Ruth. “There's a safety delay of 10 seconds, just in case. We love the sport and we don't want anything to happen; we want control. But in addition to that we want the buffering time, so wherever you watch you should have a continuous and fluent stream of pictures.”

And those pictures are available on your iPhone or tablet in Tesco's. But if you're watching in the office, just be careful. “We had some people telling us they lost their jobs because they were watching All Live all the time,” says Ruth. “We even had some guy telling us it cost him his marriage!”

In addition to producing constant live pictures for WRC.com, Ruth oversees the creation of the promoter's television package. That process underwent significant change last year, with TV production moving to Stockley Park, near Heathrow. “Moving to London means we can take 20 people less to each round,” says Ruth. Such cost savings – with the potential for more folk to follow – along with a rapidly growing subscription base are helping to sustain All Live. “The post-production base in London is possible because of our technical partner Tata,” he adds. “Tata provides a fibre connection all around the world and, once we plug into this connection from our rally base, we send the pictures down the fibre to Stockley Park and they go from the service park to there in around 300 milliseconds.”

So, when you fire up the phone for Thursday night's season opener in the Alps, you'll do so safe in the knowledge that, actually, Ott Tanak's not the fastest thing in the service park. *W*

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CALENDAR

Where it's all happening – and when

DAVID EVANS

1 MONTE CARLO RALLY

Date 23-26 January

Based Gap/Monaco

Surface asphalt/snow/ice

2019 winners Sebastien Ogier/
Julien Ingrassia (Citroen C3 WRC)

The biggest, the oldest and the most complicated, throwing the crews in at the deep end of the new season. The Monte can be a monster when it comes to changeable conditions.

2 RALLY SWEDEN

Date 13-16 February

Based Torsby

Surface snow

2019 winners Ott Tanak/Martin
Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

If winter does its thing and delivers a deep freeze, solid ice and big snow, it's hard to think of a finer spectacle. The ability to save your studs and tyres as rain turns slush to mush is crucial.

3 RALLY MEXICO

Date 12-15 March

Based Leon

Surface gravel

2019 winners Sebastien Ogier/
Julien Ingrassia (Citroen C3 WRC)

This is the first time we see the cars in gravel specification. But Mexico is fairly specific, given its rough-and-rocky stages running at a restrictor-starving altitude of around 12,000 feet.

4 RALLY ARGENTINA

Date 23-26 April

Based Villa Carlos Paz

Surface gravel

2019 winners Thierry Neuville/
Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC)

One of the classics. The roads are fast – very fast in places – but also technical, sandy and rocky. The South American vistas and passionate fans help make this one of the most memorable rallies.

5 RALLY PORTUGAL

Date 21-24 May

Based Matosinhos

Surface gravel

2019 winners Ott Tanak/Martin
Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

Running at the end of spring, temperatures can soar. This one's not really known as a car-breaker, but it is one of the harder rallies to learn, with plenty of corners over crests to catch out the unwary.

6 RALLY ITALY SARDINIA

Date 4-7 June

Based Alghero

Surface gravel

2019 winners Dani Sordo/Carlos
del Barrio (Hyundai i20 WRC)

The sun-baked Italian island provides a stern challenge for cars and crews, with a win bringing the added advantage of a traditional leap into the harbour to celebrate.

7 SAFARI RALLY KENYA

Date 16-19 July

Based Nairobi

Surface gravel

2019 winners N/A

Kenya makes a welcome return to the WRC for the first time in 18 years. There's been talk about this being a watered-down shadow of its former Safari self. It's not. It's not the open-road epic it was, but it's going to be a real toughie.

8 RALLY FINLAND

Date 6-9 August

Based Jyväskylä

Surface gravel

2019 winners Ott Tanak/Martin
Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

One for the brave. You've got to be committed to win any WRC round, but it's only here that time after time the driver will approach a blind brow with their right foot nailed in top gear. It's special.

9 RALLY NEW ZEALAND

Date 3-6 September

Based Auckland

Surface gravel

2019 winners N/A

Rally New Zealand's return to the WRC means the return of some of the best roads on the planet. What makes them that good? The two 'c's: corners and cambers. Nowhere makes cambers like the North Island.

10 RALLY OF TURKEY

Date 24-27 September

Based Marmaris

Surface gravel

2019 winners Sebastien Ogier/
Julien Ingrassia (Citroen C3 WRC)

Anybody who feels the WRC is missing the Acropolis Rally is quite right. Turkey's not Greece, but it is all-Acropolis in its rough, rocky nature. This is a rally to be driven with the head as much as the heart.

11 RALLY GERMANY

Date 15-18 October

Based Bostalsee

Surface asphalt

2019 winners Ott Tanak/Martin
Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

The Panzerplatte stage is one of the season's highlights – it's a proper test of focus, speed and durability. And that's when the sun is shining. If it's raining it's going to be even more complicated.

12 RALLY GB

Date 29 Oct-1 November

Based Llandudno

Surface gravel

2019 winners Ott Tanak/Martin
Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)

The route will be a tried-and-tested mix of fabulous forest roads in Wales. Moving from the front to the back of October could give it a wetter feeling, but this wouldn't be Rally GB without mud-coated cars.

13 RALLY JAPAN

Date 19-22 November

Based Nagoya

Surface asphalt

2019 winners N/A

And relax, Japan. The WRC's back – finally, after a decade. The return brings a significantly different event to the Hokkaido woods of old, with this year's finale based in Nagakute, just east of Nagoya, for an all-asphalt route.



DAYTONA
PREVIEW

CAN ANYONE STOP CADILLAC'S DAYTONA RUN?

They haven't been beaten in the 24 Hours since the new IMSA era began, but the Cadillac teams could have their work cut out this weekend

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**



GALSTAD

Cadillac has notched up a run of three consecutive victories at the Daytona 24 Hours. That adds up to a 100% record in the era of the Daytona Prototype international regulations, but the smart money is on that run coming to an end when the new IMSA SportsCar Championship season kicks off at the self-styled World Center of Racing this weekend.

Wayne Taylor, whose eponymous team has claimed two of three victories for the Cadillac DPi-V.R since 2017, reckons the tide is going to turn in favour of either Acura or Mazda. The boss of Wayne Taylor Racing is known for his pessimism, but he concedes that the team's rivals at the front of the IMSA grid finally look ready to win the Rolex-sponsored US enduro.

That's something that wasn't the case in past years. Cadillac was the best prepared of the DPi manufacturers when the new era kicked off three years ago and, as far as 24-hour racing went, retained that advantage through into last year's running of the enduro.

Mazda, Acura and, originally, Nissan have showed speed, but not always consistently so. They have also lacked the reliability of the Dallara-based Caddys.

Acura was on the pace the moment it arrived in the DPi ranks with its ORECA-based ARX-05 and the Penske Racing team. It

was quick on its debut at Daytona in 2018, but not reliable. Last year, it just wasn't quick enough at the right time.

Taylor is making Acura, last season's IMSA title winner with Juan Pablo Montoya and Dane Cameron, the pre-race favourite. "If I were a betting man, I'd put my money on Acura," he says. "That's based on what they did last year at Daytona, what they did over the rest of the season and what they did at the Roar [the pre-event test earlier this month]."

Acura appeared to be establishing a grip on last year's event late on Saturday night and early Sunday morning. But the ARX-05s couldn't match the winning WTR Caddy driven by Fernando Alonso, Jordan Taylor, Renger van der Zande and Kamui Kobayashi, nor that of the second-place Action Express Racing Caddy, in the heaviest of the rain that ultimately brought about an early end to the race.

Ricky Taylor, who finished third with Helio Castroneves and Alexander Rossi, describes Daytona 2019 as an "eye opener" for the team. That's because it was stepping into the unknown with a car that it had barely run in the wet beforehand. It never encountered rain during testing and there was a wet track for just one session of free practice over the course of the 2018 IMSA trail, and that was before the IMSA prototypes classes



Wayne Taylor believes the rival Acuras start as favourites

GALSTAD

DOLE



The Mazdas were quick in testing, but will they finally be reliable?

GALSTAD



Penske could be in a strong place to add to its 1969 win with Lola

DOLE

had switched from Continental to Michelin tyres.

“Last year’s race was a wake-up call,” says Taylor, who was part of the winning line-up in his father’s WTR entry at Daytona in 2017. “We never had a proper opportunity to test the car in the wet, so we were learning as we went along. We were struggling to get energy into the tyres by just playing around with the pressures, so we added some more downforce – and ended up going slower!”

Those problems in the race at Daytona last year explain why the two Penske Acuras were out on track whenever there was a wet or damp track during their successful 2019 IMSA campaign. “When there normally wouldn’t be anything to gain by running in the wet, we were out there,” explains Taylor. “We were trying to gain as much experience as we could.”

Taylor Jr reckons 2020 could be Acura’s year as Penske bids to repeat its 1969 Daytona success: “We’ve got all the niggles out of the car and opened up the window of adjustability now that we’ve got a couple of seasons under our belt. We know we’ve got the pace, so why not?”

Acura topped only one of the seven practice sessions at the Roar. Quickest in four of them, as well as the ‘qualifying’ session that determines the allocation of pitboxes, was Mazda.

The big underachiever of the DPi era finally got a monkey off its back by winning an IMSA race at Watkins Glen last June, and followed it up at Mosport and Road America. But what it hasn’t done is get one of its AER-engined RT24-Ps to the end of the race at Daytona over the past three years.

Harry Tincknell backs away from predicting that the Mazda team, in which Joest Racing’s involvement alongside Multimatic is expected to come to an end after the Sebring 12 Hours in March, will win. “We’ve done two Sebrings without problems, but Daytona demands the maximum amount from the engine,” says the Briton. “We’ve been working hard in the off-season: all the problems we’ve encountered have been rectified and we’ve spent five or six days at Daytona pushing hard.

“We are not taking anything for granted, but we know that if we are there on the lead lap in the last couple of laps, then we have the pace to win it.”

Mazda is heading into the IMSA opener with a Balance of Performance largely unchanged from Daytona last year. It ran at the Roar 5kg heavier than in the 2019 race, whereas the Cadillacs have been given an extra 20kg, though they did get an increase in the diameter of the engine air-restrictor.

Wayne Taylor isn’t sure what impact these changes, which may or may not have been tweaked by the time the race finally begins, will have on Cadillac. “All I know is that we would be in better shape if we hadn’t got the 20kg, though it appears the weight and the restrictor have cancelled each other out,” he says. “It’s going to be tough for us but, as I keep telling my guys, it’s a long race with a lot of strategy involved.”

DAYTONA DPi ENTRY

NO	TEAM (CAR)	DRIVERS
5	JDC-Miller Motorsports (Cadillac DPi-V.R)	Joao Barbosa/Sebastien Bourdais/ Loic Duval
6	Acura Team Penske (Acura ARX-05)	Juan Pablo Montoya/Dane Cameron/ Simon Pagenaud
7	Acura Team Penske (Acura ARX-05)	Ricky Taylor/Helio Castroneves/ Alexander Rossi
10	Wayne Taylor Racing (Cadillac DPi-V.R)	Ryan Briscoe/Renger van der Zande/ Kamui Kobayashi/Scott Dixon
31	Action Express Racing (Cadillac DPi-V.R)	Felipe Nasr/Pipo Derani/ Mike Conway/Filipe Albuquerque
55	Mazda Team Joest (Mazda RT24-P)	Harry Tincknell/Jonathan Bomarito/ Ryan Hunter-Reay
77	Mazda Team Joest (Mazda RT24-P)	Oliver Jarvis/Tristan Nunez/ Olivier Pla
85	JDC-Miller Motorsports (Cadillac DPi-V.R)	Tristan Vautier/Matheus Leist/ Chris Miller/Juan Piedrahita



DAYTONA
PREVIEW

THE REFORMATION OF CORVETTE

Sacrilegious? Maybe. But the Corvette factory team is excited that at long last an American icon has gone mid-engined with the new C8.R

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

The eternal all-American sportscar has been given much more than a facelift. A car that has had its engine mounted up front ahead of the driver through seven generations dating back to 1953 is now mid-engined. Purists may object, but there have been no complaints from the team tasked with turning Chevrolet's new C8 Corvette into a racing car.

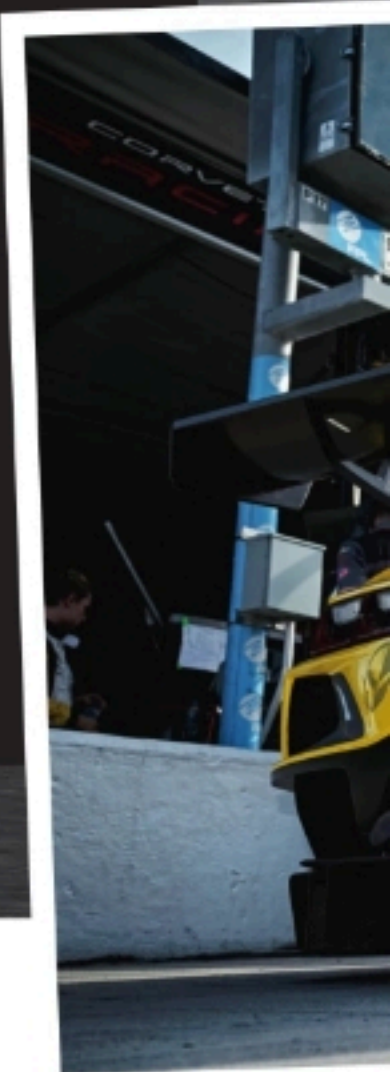
In fact, they were jumping for joy at Corvette Racing, the Pratt & Miller-run operation in Detroit that has been responsible for the Chevys that have competed in North American sportscar racing since 1999 and at the Le Mans 24 Hours since 2000. That was six years ago, and the fruits of an unusually long gestation period will be on show as the new C8.R GT Le Mans class contender makes its debut in the Daytona 24 Hours IMSA SportsCar Championship opener this weekend.

"As rumours of the consideration of a mid-engine car were floating around, the race guys kept asking if it was true," recalls Ed Piatek, Corvette chief engineer. "They were certainly encouraging us to make this decision."

The race team may not have driven the configuration change, but the logic behind it holds true across both road and race car. Chevrolet had reached the limit of performance with the C7, just as Pratt & Miller knew that the C7.R racer built to the GTE regulations had its deficiencies. "We had gotten to the point where we were adding more power but we weren't adding more performance, so we decided this was the right time to create an all-new, revolutionary Corvette that was mid-engined," continues Piatek. "Of course, all the physics that work for the street car make the race car better."

Corvette Racing team manager Ben Johnson recalls "a sense of excitement" at Pratt & Miller when it was confirmed to them that the eighth-generation 'Vette would be mid-engined. They knew it was going to be a "big advantage in terms of the weight distribution and aerodynamic packing".

It's not that Pratt & Miller believed that the front-engined concept had had its day. Johnson points out that the C7.R dates back to 2014, but just as significant is the fact that the car only underwent an update rather than redesign when new rules were





introduced across the GTE Pro class in the World Endurance Championship and GTLM in IMSA two years later. “Had we started from scratch with the front-engined architecture, I’m sure we would have had the ability to further optimise to the new regulation set,” he explains. “However, having the engine in the middle allows us to push the envelope.”

Corvette Racing stalwart Oliver Gavin reveals that the C7.R was short of front downforce in comparison to its rivals from Porsche, BMW, Ferrari, for instance. And that meant, he says, “we could rarely run maximum rear downforce” as the team sought to balance the car. “Everything is limited with the engine cradle in a front-engined car, so you are always battling the packaging constraints versus what the aero team would like to do,” says Johnson. “You come to the best compromise, but you realise you’ve left something on the table.”

There will also be benefits in wet conditions courtesy of the rearward shift in the weight distribution. That’s an important factor according to Johnson: “When we saw there was rain coming we

always knew we would be in for some damage-limitation in terms of track position. We haven’t run with the opposition in the wet yet, but we are confident that the C8.R will be a better car in those conditions.”

The long gestation for the C8.R reflects the involvement of Pratt & Miller from the very beginning of the design phase of the road car at Chevrolet. Information flowed both ways during an unprecedented collaborative process between the Chevy design and race teams. “I can tell you that I first sat in a meeting with Corvette Racing about this architecture six years ago and there have been meetings multiple days every week since,” reveals Piatek. “The race car guys were really keen on making it understood where they had freedom and where they had to follow the production car closely. We did make many decisions on the street car that helped enable a better race car right from the outset.”

The programme got up to a full head of steam at Pratt & Miller over the winter of 2016-17. The first race car, like its predecessor powered by a 5.5-litre normally aspirated V8, hit the track at Road America in August 2018. Between that test and the first for the pair

“THERE WILL BE DISAPPOINTMENT IF WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE WINNING RACES THIS SEASON”

of C8.Rs that will race this weekend last November, the development vehicle completed more than 4000 miles. The two race cars have already completed a similar mileage between them since.

The best of the C8.Rs ended up with the third fastest ‘qualifying’ time in the pre-season Roar test in early January in the hands of Gavin’s team-mate Tommy Milner. The car, in which Marcel Fassler joins the line-up for the enduros including Le Mans, was just over a tenth down on James Calado in the pacesetting Risi Competizione Ferrari. The second ‘Vette of full-season drivers Antonio Garcia and Jordan Taylor and enduro man Nicky Catsburg was a further half-second back.

Gavin isn’t sure where Chevrolet will be in the pecking order as it goes up against reigning champion Porsche, BMW and Ferrari this weekend. “We know where we are, but we don’t know how much the game has moved on,” he says. “We’re going in with our eyes wide open in the expectation that something we haven’t covered off in testing jumps out at us. We’re not making bold predictions ahead of Daytona, but there will be disappointment if we are not going to be winning races this season.”

DAYTONA GT LE MANS ENTRY

NO	TEAM (CAR)	DRIVERS
3	Corvette Racing (Chevrolet Corvette C8.R)	Antonio Garcia/Jordan Taylor/ Nicky Catsburg
4	Corvette Racing (Chevrolet Corvette C8.R)	Oliver Gavin/Tommy Milner/ Marcel Fassler
24	BMW Team RLL (BMW M8 GTE)	John Edwards/Jesse Krohn/ Augusto Farfus/Chaz Mostert
25	BMW Team RLL (BMW M8 GTE)	Bruno Spengler/Connor De Phillippi/ Philipp Eng/Colton Herta
62	Risi Competizione (Ferrari 488 GTE)	James Calado/Alessandro Pier Guidi/Davide Rigon/Daniel Serra
911	Porsche GT Team (Porsche 911 RSR)	Nick Tandy/Frederic Makowiecki/ Matt Campbell
912	Porsche GT Team (Porsche 911 RSR)	Earl Bamber/Laurens Vanthoor/ Mathieu Jaminet

Guenther completes his Formula E redemption

He was benched last season to allow an ex-F1 racer to hardly the set world alight at Dragon. But all came good for BMW's new Bavarian in Chile

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY





Guenther took his first FE win in only his second outing for BMW Andretti



This time last year in the hot Chilean sun, Maximilian Guenther lost a promising Formula E result when a powertrain problem struck his Dragon Racing car. Twelve months on, he's a race winner in the electric championship after triumphing in sweltering Santiago last weekend for his new squad BMW Andretti.

For a significant portion of the year just past, Guenther has had to endure struggles not of his own making. Soon after the 2019 Santiago E-Prix, he found himself dropped by Dragon, with ex-Formula 1 driver Felipe Nasr taking his seat from the next round in Mexico City. While there is nothing to suggest there was anything untoward about that development, the team's explanation that Guenther had completed a "three-race programme" was odd, and in conversations with the young German driver – who remained utterly professional throughout the saga – there was a sense that all was not well behind the scenes.

Dragon brought Guenther back for the Rome round in April, which Nasr was always set to miss due to a clashing IMSA SportsCar commitment, and it was Guenther who stayed in the car for the rest of the season. He always dealt with questions about his FE future in a calm and respectful manner, and his intention to forge a professional path in the championship was clear. That level-headed and humble approach – allied to the searing speed he showed in qualifying in Rome, and the brilliant pair of fifth places he claimed in the tricky races in Paris and Bern that followed – paid off. In September, after conducting private test running for the team, he was announced as a BMW driver.

Pre-season testing went as well as it could – Guenther topped the times.

Although he had a low-key race in the first leg of the Riyadh season opener, he showed great pace and defensive skill during his on-the-road run to second in the sequel, although his position was artificially boosted by his misreading of the safety-car-restart procedure and, after the stewards got involved, he was eventually classified 11th.

The 22-year-old therefore arrived back in Santiago in much the same situation as when he visited the city as a Dragon driver – pointless. But things are different now.

For the second year in a row, the heat and track surface played major roles in the outcome of last Saturday's results. Although the Parque O'Higgins track did not suffer 37.9-degree conditions as in 2019 – this time it was a mere 34.1 degrees – the largely relaid asphalt/concrete surface meant the championship-order qualifying groups mixed up the grid nicely.

Guenther's BMW team-mate Alexander Sims, the championship leader heading to Santiago after his victory last time out in Riyadh, qualified 15th, with his fellow Saudi Arabia race winner Sam Bird 16th. Of the

group one runners, none made it through to superpole, thanks to the severe track evolution factor at the 1.42-mile circuit, where dust and park detritus again left the early-running drivers as effective road sweepers. A superb lap from Stoffel Vandoorne put him ninth on the grid, the highest spot of the top six in the points.

Mitch Evans kick-started his 2019-20 campaign by taking pole for Jaguar from group three, with Guenther joining him on the front row to claim his best FE grid spot. But things did not get off to the smoothest of starts for the eventual race winner.

Off the line, Evans maintained the lead, but Mahindra Racing's Pascal Wehrlein – from third – muscled past Guenther as they ran side by side through the new left-hand first corner, sealing the position as both cut the runoff to go tight to the inside wall for the right-hand Turn 2.

From there, Guenther tracked the leaders through the early stages, with Evans appearing to marshal his advantage up front, while much of the race's chaos happened at the rear of the tightly





congested pack. After briefly falling behind Edoardo Mortara to take his first attack-mode activation, Guenther passed Wehrlein on lap 17 of what would become a 40-lap event. He quickly homed in on Evans, and on lap 18 the battle for the lead began.

Evans had deployed an aggressive attack-mode strategy, taking his activations on laps eight and 13. This was a pre-meditated bid to use the higher power mode while his battery temperature was comparatively low, and well away from the critical 72.6-degree mark that all the drivers feared reaching at the end of the race given the conditions and the demands they were making of their machinery whenever they used regen or did not hit their lift-and-coast targets. But this approach left the Jaguar driver vulnerable to attack, and Guenther took full advantage.

After a bold move around the outside at Turns 1-2 was rebuffed, Guenther used the dying seconds of his final attack-mode activation to blast around the outside of Evans on the rapid run to the blind left of Turn 9 – the corner that takes the track back from the perimeter roads surrounding Santiago's Movistar arena to the concrete apron in the centre of the park.

It was a scintillating move, and one that demonstrated the benefit of raising the attack mode's potency by 10kW to 235 for 2019-20. It gave Guenther the chance to get alongside and ahead, but still relied on him having to make it stick on the brakes.

For the next 16 laps, Guenther's lead looked secure. Then, very suddenly, it didn't. The results of the past two seasons have demonstrated the strength of the DS Techeetah package – particularly when it comes to energy efficiency. The way in which Jean-Eric Vergne and Antonio Felix da Costa made their way up the field from 11th and 10th on the grid respectively therefore had a very familiar feel – once they had >>

MERCEDES AND PORSCHE FORTUNES

While BMW Andretti was again the star of the Formula E show, series newcomers Mercedes and Porsche nevertheless made waves in Santiago.

At Mercedes, Nyck de Vries lost a maiden FE podium to circumstances outside his control. The 2019 Formula 2 champion had started eighth but dropped to 11th early on as he was "struggling a little bit in terms of pace and positioning". But he surged up the order in the latter stages of the race and crossed the line in third, ahead of Mitch Evans.

But de Vries's joy was short-lived. Earlier in the race, he had been handed a five-second race-time addition for an unspecified technical infringement. This was later revealed to be a breach of Article 27.9 of FE's sporting rules, which relates to the instructions given by FIA battery supplier McLaren Applied Technologies regarding, among other things, minimum battery coolant temperatures. In short, the coolant applied to de Vries's battery was too cold.

"We had a battery infringement ahead of the race," said de Vries. "Everyone is trying to cool down the battery as much as possible before the race starts and unfortunately we just went below the threshold. It's a big shame – it should have been a first podium on track but it happens, everyone makes mistakes, I make mistakes, so it's part of the job. I'm satisfied with our race."

Team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne converted his best-of-group-one grid spot into a sixth-place finish that meant he left Santiago with the championship

lead – three points ahead of Alexander Sims. Vandoorne didn't have the late-race pace of de Vries – the ex-Formula 1 driver said getting "touched a couple of times" meant "my car was not 100% in good shape anymore".

Things did not go so well in Santiago for Porsche. After taking an unexpected, but not undeserved, podium on its debut in Riyadh, the motorsport giant was rather roughed up in the season's third race.

Both Neel Jani and Andre Lotterer were involved in clashes with Sims, with Jani retiring with broken suspension after being pushed into Jean-Eric Vergne at the Turn 10 hairpin by the BMW driver on the opening lap, and then being clouted by Brendon Hartley on the corner's exit.

Lotterer survived his early exchange with Sims at Turn 2, but a further clash with Dragon Racing's Nico Muller "spun me around and in the process it broke my suspension". He recovered to the pits for repairs and got going again – 12 laps down – because "track time is valuable" to the new squad. To compound Lotterer's woes, he was later disqualified from the results – even though he was not classified in them – for going over the maximum 200kW power level when not in attack mode.

But for Jani, who was some way off Lotterer's level in the Saudi Arabian aces, there was reason to be optimistic. "Qualifying was a big improvement," he said. "We had a little issue also in quali, which tells me I have a lot more potential. I'm still happy in one way because I would say I've made that step [to Lotterer]."



Mercedes' Nyck de Vries finished third but fell to fifth after penalty

IN THE HEADLINES

VERGNE IN THE WARS

Jean-Eric Vergne was frustrated to be told to pit for repairs following his smoky wheel issues late in the race as “sometimes drivers are banging the wall to try and remove the front wing [pieces] – they come off and then they can continue,” he explained. The DS Techeetah driver parked his car when he arrived at his garage and retired for the second time in three races this season.

NO POINTS FOR SIMS

Alexander Sims could not back up his Riyadh victory in Santiago. After his clashes with the Porsche drivers (see page 45), he clipped a wall with his right-rear wheel and was forced to retire with a damaged driveshaft. He nevertheless holds second place in the drivers’ standings heading to the next race in Mexico City.

TURVEY’S STAR TURN

NIO 333 driver Oliver Turvey was an unlikely star of qualifying. Despite having to run in what is a clearly limited package, Turvey made it through to superpole from group four and qualified fifth. He held station in the race early on, but was eventually shuffled back to 11th.

DRAGON BLOWS

Dragon Racing was hit with a €5000 fine after a comical – but serious – incident in FP2. Brendon Hartley was sent out of the pits with a large brake blower still fixed to the front of his car, which slid off at the pitlane exit. The session was red flagged so the device could be retrieved.

OLIVER WOE-LAND

Oliver Rowland (below) had another bruising day in Santiago. After crashing out in 2019, the Nissan e.dams driver – who set the fastest time in a disrupted second practice session – was again in the wars. He hit Daniel Abt in the race, triggering Sam Bird’s spin, and was given a drivethrough penalty after his front wing blew off on the pit straight. He was classified 17th and last, four laps down.



PORTLOCK



negotiated the early shenanigans in the pack, which left Vergne with damage that would come back to bite him.

The reigning champion was running third on lap 26, and seemingly well placed to strike at Evans and Guenther, when suddenly the broken left-front-wheel cover cried enough and began rubbing ferociously against the tyre it housed. This slowed Vergne, who impeded the following da Costa badly in his efforts to shake and whack the fairing away, and he eventually fell to fifth before being told to pit for repairs by the FIA.

That left da Costa as the 2018-19 constructors’ champion squad’s only hope, but he duly found his way to the front, and set about taking on the driver occupying his old BMW ride. On lap 35, da Costa erased the 2.1-second advantage Guenther had built to virtually nothing, taking back 1.3s in a single tour. Guenther’s radio messages became that much more clipped, the pressure mounting.

On lap 36 da Costa made his move. The former Red Bull junior dived down the inside of the Turn 10 right-hand hairpin, and, without ever being properly alongside, barged his rival wide to take the lead.

But the ramifications of that incident will never be known as Guenther secured his own justice. As da Costa suddenly found himself battling late-race battery temperature issues, Guenther went back on the offensive. Although a locked-up attempt at Turn 1 on the final tour failed, he repeated his heroics on the outside at Turn 9 at the death to seal the win – his first in FE and first since the 2018 Formula 2 sprint race at Silverstone.

“It feels amazing,” he said. “It’s really a



Da Costa and the DS Techeetah squad had to settle for second place

dream coming true for me, to win my first ever Formula E race with BMW on my second weekend with them. Already in the last few weeks I really felt very familiar and confident inside the team. The transition from my old team to the new one was quite quick.”

How Dragon – which failed to score with Nico Muller and Brendon Hartley on another poor weekend for the squad, also receiving a penalty for causing one of the more amusing practice red flags in FE history (see panel, left) – must envy Guenther’s success.

Da Costa held on to finish second, but was left ruing what he considered to be poor communication from his team. “I think I was being fed either not the complete or slightly wrong information because I was being told I was good on temperatures, even



though I was saying, 'I don't think I am,'" he explained. "And yet, the moment I got the lead, they tell me, 'OK, you have to slow down.' It all came down to the last lap, but [BMW] just managed it better."

DS Techeetah team boss Mark Preston sensibly explained the squad was "still discussing what the actual chain of events were" when it came to da Costa's initial feelings. It may not have been a victory, but second finally provided a major points haul for the team – although on 25, it is 22 behind its total at this stage last season after another Vergne retirement (see panel).

Evans came home third, but only as a result of Mercedes' Nyck de Vries copping a penalty for a battery infringement (see p45) and immediately being demoted to fifth, behind Wehrlein. Like da Costa, Evans was visibly frustrated at losing a race he could have won, but, when he explained the circumstances behind his fade after looking in control early on, it was understandable.

"I was getting no guidance from the energy software [on the dash]," said Evans. "So I was going blind for the first few laps. I was trying to do my best, but that made me overconsume." And there was therefore nothing he could do to arrest his slide down the order in the race's second half.

While da Costa and Evans may have been sad to lose out on the day, it was practically impossible not to be pleased for Guenther. After celebrating with his team, father and fans in the paddock, he could reflect on a job well done. Watching such a likeable and professional young driver prove his worth a year on from his disappointing demotion felt immensely satisfying. *W*

RESULTS ROUND 2/12, PARQUE O'HIGGINS (CHL), 18 JANUARY (40 LAPS – 56.843 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Max Guenther (DEU)	BMW/BMW iFE.20	46m11.511s
2	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	DS Techeetah / DS E-Tense FE20	+2.067s
3	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar / Jaguar I-TYPE 4	+5.119s
4	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M6Electro	+7.050s
5	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	Mercedes / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 01	+9.883s
6	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	Mercedes / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 01	+11.237s
7	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Audi Sport Abt / Audi e-tron FE06	+14.437s
8	James Calado (GBR)	Jaguar / Jaguar I-TYPE 4	+18.255s
9	Felipe Massa (BRA)	Venturi / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 01	+20.430s
10	Sam Bird (GBR)	Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE06	+21.780s
11	Oliver Turvey (GBR)	NIO / NIO FE-005	+27.778s
12	Nico Muller (CHE)	Dragon Racing / Penske EV-4	+33.786s
13	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Nissan e.Dams / Nissan IM02	+43.257s
14	Daniel Abt (DEU)	Audi Sport Abt / Audi e-tron FE06	+47.198s
15	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE06	-1 lap
16	Ma Qing Hua (CHN)	NIO / NIO FE-005	-1 lap
17	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan e.Dams / Nissan IM02	-4 laps
NC	Jerome d'Ambrosio (BEL)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M6Electro	+1m57.624s-gearbox
R	Brendon Hartley (NZL)	Dragon Racing / Penske EV-4	35 laps-accident damage
R	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Techeetah / DS E-Tense FE20	32 laps-accident damage
R	Edoardo Mortara (ITA)	Venturi / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 01	29 laps-accident damage
EX	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric	28 laps-over max power
R	Alexander Sims (GBR)	BMW / BMW iFE.20	4 laps-accident
R	Neel Jani (CHE)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric	2 laps-accident damage

Winner's average speed 73.835mph. **Fastest lap** Rowland 1m06.405s, 77.040mph.

SUPERPOLE 1 Evans 1m04.827s; 2 Guenther 1m05.102s; 3 Wehrlein 1m05.645s; 4 Massa 1m05.645s; 5 Turvey 1m05.788s; 6 Buemi 1m05.809s.

QUALIFYING Evans 1m04.941s; Guenther 1m05.169s; Buemi 1m05.390s; Massa 1m05.463s; Turvey 1m05.510s; Wehrlein 1m05.525s; 7 Mortara 1m05.547s; 8 de Vries 1m05.560s; 9 Vandoorne 1m05.566s; 10 da Costa 1m05.574s; 11 Vergne 1m05.625s; 12 Jani 1m05.696s; 13 Abt 1m05.745s; 14 Lotterer 1m05.801s; 15 Sims 1m05.848s; 16 Bird 1m05.886s; 17 Hartley 1m06.126s; 18 Calado 1m06.305s; 19 Muller 1m06.367s; 20 d'Ambrosio 1m07.692s; 21 Frijns 1m09.089s; 22 di Grassi 1m26.526s; 23 Rowland 1m18.239s*; 24 Ma no time. * = grid penalty.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Vandoorne 38; 2 Sims 35; 3 Bird 28; 4 Guenther 25; 5 di Grassi 24; 6 Rowland 22; 7 da Costa 21; 8 Evans 21; 9 Lotterer 18; 10 Mortara 18.

NEXT RACE

MEXICO CITY
20 FEBRUARY
ISSUE

Can BMW continue its winning run?

He's 57, and his son is an F1 star, but Sainz Sr is officially Spain's coolest man for now



King Carlos reigns in Saudi Arabia

DAKAR RALLY
JEDDAH-QIDDIYA (SAU)
5-17 JANUARY

In the lead-up to the Dakar Rally, Toyota could have been forgiven for thinking it had one hand already on a second successive win in the prestigious marathon. Its Hilux had scored a comfortable maiden triumph in 2019 with Nasser Al-Attiyah and looked no less competitive in Dakar rehearsal events later that year, beating the X-raid Mini crews in Rally Morocco and a pair of Saudi Arabia-based contests.

In Al-Attiyah, Toyota has the benchmark rally-raid driver, and someone who relished the chance to tackle the Middle-Eastern dunes with which, in theory, he was so much more familiar than his main rivals at Mini, Carlos Sainz and Stéphane Peterhansel. Al-Attiyah thus openly referred to himself as the favourite, and it looked like

he would simply need a Dakar run devoid of major dramas to prevail again.

By the end of the first week of competition, however, it was abundantly clear that it would not be so easy. "It's been a big fight," Toyota Gazoo team boss Glyn Hall would later admit. "Much bigger than I thought it was going to be, and him [Al-Attiyah]. We thought we had something in hand, but we certainly don't. Not on this race. Something's changed since Morocco."

The Sainz/Al-Attiyah/Peterhansel trio that would monopolise the battle for victory once again took a few days to be established, as the X-raid Mini crews suffered some early navigational setbacks while Al-Attiyah was hampered by repeat punctures.

Once they did break away from the pack, it appeared that the Mini buggies, rather than Al-Attiyah, had something extra. Sainz and Peterhansel would rack up four stage wins apiece, whereas Al-Attiyah's first of the

marathon would come in the very final stage.

By then it was too late. Two problem-filled stages for Sainz had eradicated what was once a 10-minute lead, leaving Al-Attiyah just 24 seconds adrift with three days remaining. But on the very next stage, Al-Attiyah and Peterhansel got badly lost while opening the road. This handed Sainz a match point, and Al-Attiyah was powerless to stop the two-time World Rally champion from converting it, although he did see off Peterhansel to deny X-raid a 1-2.

Still, it was the German team's first Dakar victory since it won with Al-Attiyah in 2015, and Sainz's third with a third different marque, having previously triumphed with Volkswagen and Peugeot.

Outside the battle for victory, two-time Formula 1 champion Fernando Alonso was the main attraction, and his Dakar debut proved eventful. Lengthy damage repairs on the second day meant it took him until stage nine to break into the top 10, and on the very next day he seemed overexuberant in tackling a dune a mile in and rolled his Toyota. This necessitated another stop for repairs, and consigned him to 13th. It was no major heartbreak for Alonso, who said: "I don't mind if I'm sixth or 13th either way."

Alonso was more interested in chasing a maiden stage win but, while the rally did produce two shock first-time stage winners in Vaidotas Zala and Mathieu Serradori, Alonso ultimately came up just short.

Despite this, he clearly proved he was able to go toe to toe with rally-raid regulars, and his debut was lauded as "impressive to say the least" by team boss Hall and "fantastic" by team-mate Al-Attiyah.

VALENTIN KHOROUNZHIY

Al-Attiyah was on tail of Sainz but then got a bit lost



Lawson does a Highlands fling

TOYOTA RACING SERIES

HIGHLANDS MOTORSPORT PARK (NZL)

18-19 JANUARY

ROUND 1/5

Two wins set Red Bull Junior Liam Lawson off to a flying start in his bid to win his second successive TRS title, but the first came only after a penalty for on-the-road winner Caio Collet, whose weekend rapidly unravelled even further.

Collet led the opener all the way from pole in his MTEC Motorsport car, run in collaboration with crack Formula Renault Eurocup squad R-ace GP. But the M2 Competition squad of Kiwi Lawson thought it had spotted the Brazilian making an illegal practice start on the warm-up lap. Sure enough, the stewards agreed and slapped Collet with a five-second penalty. Because a late safety car had left only a one-lap dash

to the flag, Collet was relegated to seventh.

Igor Fraga (M2) and Lirim Zendeli (Giles Motorsport) moved up to second and third.

With the top six reversed on the grid for race two, Collet just missed out on a top starting slot and then shunted on the second lap, as Lawson took fifth. M2's Yuki Tsunoda led all the way from polesitter Oliver Rasmussen and Zendeli.

Collet qualified alongside poleman Lawson for the finale, but pulled into the pits after the warm-up lap due to previously undetected suspension damage from his earlier crash. Lawson took advantage to lead all the way for his first on-the-road win.

Argentinian Fernando Alonso protege Franco Colapinto, the reigning Spanish Formula 4 champion, took a fine second with Kiwi Motorsport, while Fraga took his second podium of the weekend from Red Bull and Honda junior Tsunoda.



BRUCE JENKINS

WEEKEND WINNERS

DAKAR RALLY

1 Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz (Mini JCW Buggy) 42h59m17s; 2 Nasser Al-Attiyah/Matthieu Baumel (Toyota Hilux) +6m21s; 3 Stephane Peterhansel/Paulo Fiuza (Mini JCW Buggy); 4 Yazeed Al-Rajhi/Konstantin Zhiltsov (Toyota Hilux); 5 Giniel de Villiers/Alex Haro (Toyota Hilux); 6 Orlando Terranova/Ronnie Graue (Mini JCW Rally); 7 Bernhard ten Brinke/Tom Colsoul (Toyota Hilux); 8 Mathieu Serradori/Fabian Lurquin (Century Buggy); 9 Yasir Saeidan/Alexey Kuzmich (Mini JCW); 10 Wei Han/Min Liao (Hanwei 2WD).

TOYOTA RACING SERIES

HIGHLANDS MOTORSPORT PARK (NZL)

Race 1 Liam Lawson
M2 Competition

Race 2 Yuki Tsunoda
M2 Competition

Race 3 Liam Lawson
M2 Competition

ASIAN FORMULA 3

YAS MARINA (ARE)

Race 1 Ukyo Sasahara
Hitech GP

Race 2 Joey Alders
BlackArts Racing

Race 3 Sebastian Fernandez
Pinnacle Motorsport



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Penalty hits Chadwick after on-road win

ASIAN FORMULA 3

YAS MARINA (ARE)

17-18 JANUARY

ROUND 3/5

A 20-second post-race penalty for a false start denied W Series champion Jamie Chadwick a maiden win in mixed-gender racing for Regional Formula 3 machinery, after she'd crossed the line 4.4 seconds ahead of series leader Joey Alders.

Chadwick earned pole for the second race of the triple-header, for which grid positions were decided by fastest laps in the opening race. The Absolute Racing driver led most of the way, while BlackArts Racing-run Dutchman Alders worked his way up from fourth. First Alders passed Ukyo Sasahara, then Jack Doohan – who suffered clutch problems for much of the weekend – retired from



second place. Chadwick's penalty, which dropped her to eighth, moved Sasahara up to second and Devlin DeFrancesco to third.

Hitech GP driver Sasahara had won the opener from team-mate Nikita Mazepin, with Pinnacle Motorsport man Doohan third. Doohan had to recover from fifth. He'd illegally passed Alders for second, and as he gave the position back he also

lost out to Mazepin and Pietro Fittipaldi. Mazepin took second from Alders, who ran wide and dropped back to an eventual fifth. Doohan then passed Fittipaldi for third.

Sebastian Fernandez (Pinnacle) finally made a good start from pole to control the last race. Doohan was second from Mazepin, but sixth place for Alders means he retains a 48-point lead over Doohan.

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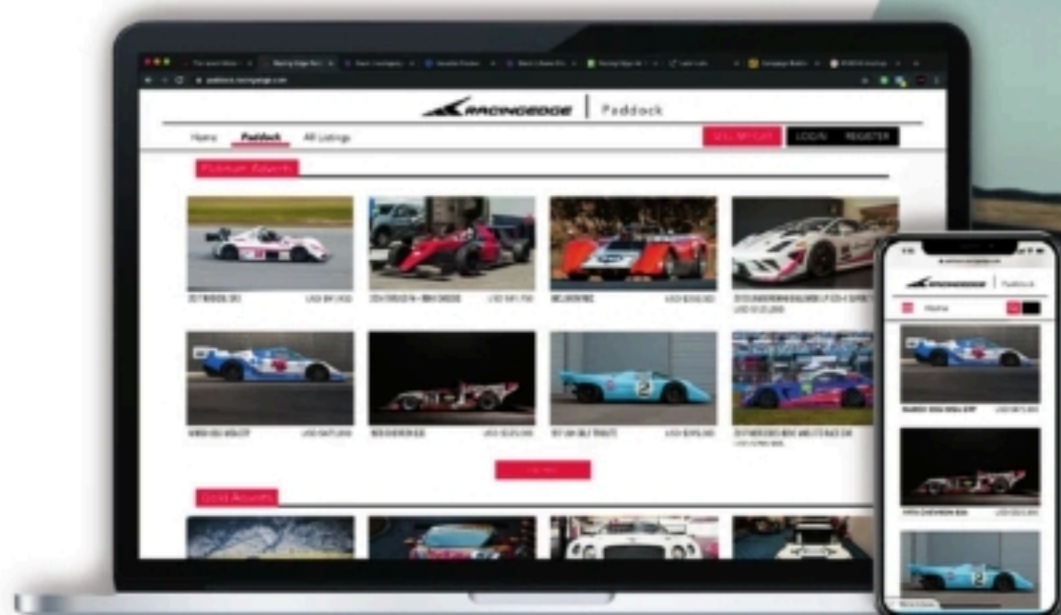
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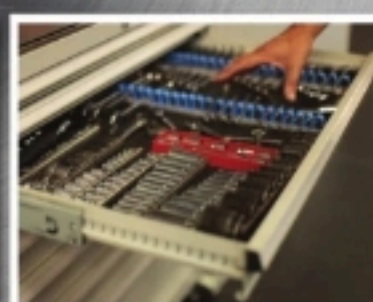


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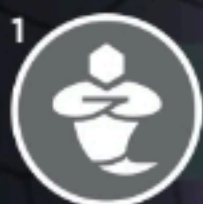
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SPECIAL SALOONS

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Wilson is so enamoured by the car – which Mike Wilds drove in the club’s demo race in 2011 – that he has acquired a standard 55 Marathon Coupe too.

Debuted in 1972 by originator Tony Hazlewood, who set the first 100mph tin-top lap of Thruxton in October 1973, the DAF was subsequently owned by Colin Folwell and Alan Minshaw and raced with V8 Rover/Oldsmobile engines of up to five litres capacity until 1976. Tony Sugden raced it (sometimes as a Volvo) with a two-litre Ford BDX to 1978.

Wilson says he loved the car from the moment he saw it. “Special saloons have been in my blood since my dad [Tony] raced,” said Wilson, who spectated at Rufforth, Croft and Cadwell as a child. “I’ve had loads, but never dreamed of owning the DAF, which Tony Hazlewood rescued and rebuilt.

“I grew up on the smell of Castrol R and the roar of open exhausts, so for me this opportunity was unmissable. Cadwell has always been my favourite circuit, so I’ll debut it there. After my ’64 Ford Falcon and modern Holden Monaro I won’t be scared to race it hard.

“I’ll do most CSCC events – maybe not Thruxton – but need to make the roll cage comply with current [Motorsport UK] regulations first. We’ll also look at reinstating the front spoiler. The DAF may not be competitive with younger cars but that’s not the point. I’m going to have a lot of fun putting an icon back on track.”

• Another car set to return to action this year is a 1996 Team Opel Belgium Opel Vectra Super Touring machine. German racer Steffan Irmeler has added the car to his stable and plans to race it in the Dunlop Saloon Car Cup at Knockhill and Oulton Park this summer. The car was new for the 1996 Spa 24 Hours when raced by Eric van de Poele, Alain Cudini and Pierre-Alain Thibaut. It qualified third but retired from the race and was then used in the French Supertourisme series.

MARCUS PYE AND PAUL LAWRENCE

Factory Lambo driver Perera to race for WPI

BRITISH GT

Factory Lamborghini driver Franck Perera will contest five of the seven British GT rounds this year alongside Michael Igoe at WPI Motorsport, which will become an official Lamborghini-supported team.

Igoe will again team up with Dennis Lind at Snetterton and Silverstone when Perera is on ADAC GT Masters duty.

Perera, 35, was part of the Toyota junior scheme and tested for its Formula 1 team, before an aborted IndyCar spell in 2008 led him down the GT path. He won the European Le Mans Series GTC title in 2015 and took the Daytona 24 Hours GTD class win in 2018.

The Frenchman made his first outing alongside Igoe in the GT Cup finale last year, as WPI swept all three races, and told Autosport he thought Igoe could be an outside bet for the title.



“That’s the reason I’m invested into the project with Michael – him and the team have a big potential and, for sure, we can do big things this year,” he said.

Perera has never regularly raced in a UK-based series but, having taken poles at Silverstone (2014) and Brands Hatch (2016), he added he was looking forward to racing at other UK venues.

“I love the British tracks,” he said.

“Silverstone was an amazing pole for me at the beginning of my second career in GT, and I could do it again at Brands Hatch – every year I’m in the top three or top four in that track.”

“That’s why I think the relationship was immediately good with Michael and the team – they know my speed but also they know my experience.”

JAMES NEWBOLD

Optimum swaps Aston for McLaren

BRITISH GT

Optimum Motorsport has switched allegiances from Aston Martin to McLaren and will run a 720S GT3 in the British GT Championship this year for Australian pair Nick Foster and Martin Berry.

The 2018 GT3 champion team has run Aston machinery for the past two seasons and last year returned to GT4 with two new Vantages. But team boss Shaun Goff said Optimum’s switch to run McLarens in GT3 would not affect its commitment to enter two GT4 Astons this year.

It comes after Optimum announced that it would run a 720S for 2019 British GT Silver Cup champion Ollie Wilkinson alongside McLaren factory drivers Rob Bell and Joe Osborne in the renamed GT World Challenge Europe (nee Blancpain) Endurance Cup (see page 8).

Goff says the speed the programme came together “took us by surprise”. “Last year was the first year where McLaren Automotive were supplying cars to customer teams and it looked to be going really well, so our discussions with them soon materialised into

serious conversations,” he said. “McLaren have a great product in the 720, and as a package it’s certainly capable of winning championships.”

Foster, 27, is best known for his exploits in Porsche racing, having won his native Carrera Cup series in 2015, but has since become a prolific sportscar racer and won the Laguna Seca 8 Hours Intercontinental GT Challenge round last year. His co-driver, 42-year-old Berry, won the 2017 Ferrari Challenge Asia Pacific title and last year contested the Blancpain Endurance Cup.

JAMES NEWBOLD





All of the company's other venues have also undergone improvement works during recent months.

At Cadwell Park, a large area has been covered in Tarmac to effectively double the size of the paddock. There has also been some resurfacing of the Lincolnshire track itself, along with the Hall Bends Armco barriers being reprofiled.

Over at Snetterton, the barriers along the Bentley Straight have been replaced (above), and new fire and recovery trucks have been added to the circuit's fleet.

Meanwhile, at Donington Park, several new tyre barriers have been installed and drainage improved at the Craner Curves and Old Hairpin. LED safety lights have also been added at various points of the circuit.

Finally, at Oulton Park, new concrete run-off areas have been added at Old Hall and Lodge, along with other barrier replacement works taking place.

All of these construction projects are due to be completed before the racing season begins.

Circuit improvement works at all of MSV's venues for 2020

MOTORSPORT VISION

MotorSport Vision has undertaken a raft of circuit improvement works at its venues during the winter months.

One of the largest changes comes at Brands Hatch, where the barriers at Clearways have been moved back and the gravel trap extended in order to make the corner safer for car and motorcycle racers. A new raised

viewing area is being created so spectators can still see the final section of the lap.

Brands Hatch circuit manager Mike Groves said: "This major on-track project is a hugely positive move which massively promotes the safety of competitors, both in car and motorcycle racing. This development significantly increases the size of our gravel trap run-off at Clearways and Clark Curve but will continue to allow spectators to view from that area of the venue if they so wish."

Zelos targets title in second Mini Challenge season

MINI CHALLENGE

Mini Challenge frontrunner Dan Zelos will remain with the Excelr8 Motorsport team in the category this year as he targets the title.

Zelos finished third in the standings in his first full season in the championship last year, taking two wins and seven other podiums.

The 21-year-old was previously a regular in the Renault UK Clio Cup and will now return to racing at British Touring Car Championship meetings as the Mini Challenge JCW class joins the TOCA package for this season.

"My aim for 2020 is very clear – to win the Mini Challenge title, and in so doing prove to all the BTCC team managers that I'm ready to take the next step," said Zelos. "It's good to be returning to the TOCA paddock after a year away – there's no question that it's the biggest shop window around."

"Last season, I felt like I improved every time I got into the car, and over the second half we were consistently pushing for the top step of the podium. The goal going into the new campaign has to be to keep the ball rolling and really start off on the front foot."



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IN THE HEADLINES

JORDANIAN TO BRITISH F3

Manaf Hijawi will this season become the first Jordanian driver to compete in the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship after joining Douglas Motorsport. The 18-year-old, who has tasted action this winter in the MRF Challenge and UAE Formula 4, will join 2018 British F4 champion Kiern Jewiss at Douglas.

MARSHALL BACK RACING GT5

Ashley Marshall will return to action in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge this year after missing the majority of last season. He will drive for the Fox Motorsport squad. "I'm thrilled to get back onto the grid for a full season in what I think is probably the most competitive and action-packed one-make race series in the UK," he said.

HAWKEY CHANGES TEAM

Porsche Carrera Cup GB racer Esmee Hawkey has switched to the Team Parker Racing squad for her third season in the category. The Pro-Am racer – who was one of the finalists for the Junior shootout in 2017 – has spent her first two years racing with GT Marques, the squad with which she drove in the GT Cup. Her move to category stalwart Parker means she will benefit from running alongside Pro driver team-mates for the first time.

WILLIS DEBUTS F5000 LOLA

Brett Willis debuted a Formula 5000 Lola T332 (below) unseen for more than 40 years at Taupo last weekend. The former Tasman Revival Series champion finished fourth in heat one before gear selection problems struck. Supplied to UK-based Australian Brian McGuire in 1974, HU40 was wrecked by Gordon Spice at Mallory Park in 1975. Rebuilt, it was the basis of actor Paul Newman's Can-Am Spyder NF11 crashed by Keke Rosberg at Mosport Park in 1979.



FAST COMPANY/MAI



New Equipe 50s series unveiled by popular historics organiser

HISTORICS

Popular historic racing organiser Equipe Classic Racing will run a third series this season dedicated to 1950s machines.

As well as the Equipe GTS and Equipe Pre-'63 categories, the new Equipe 50s series will be open to earlier cars. Production sportscars with up to 3.6-litre engines and sports-racers with up to two-litre motors will be eligible.

A six-event calendar has been revealed for this season, which predominantly features races at MG Car Club meetings. It means Equipe will be running four grids at some events as the popular GTS

division is sometimes split in two.

"We've had a great response from people," said Equipe partner John Pearson. "This morning I confirmed a Cooper Bristol that Mike Hawthorn drove is going to come and race with us – we're looking forward to seeing that on the grid. We started thinking about this last summer and it's the next brand extension of what we do."

• This news came too late for us to include Equipe 50s in our feature looking at new series for 2020. Turn to page 69 to look at the others.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

JOY RAINEY 1942-2020

OBITUARY

The hillclimb fraternity is immensely saddened to learn of Joy Rainey's passing last week, in an apartment overlooking the water at Geelong in Australia, her birthplace and home of the Speed Trials.

Rainey spent her adult life in Britain where her fiercely competitive nature overcame all challenges. Restricted stature, a condition passed down from her triple national Formula 3 champion father Murray, never deterred either

from driving an Alfa Romeo 6C or Jaguar E-type hard. A brilliant engineer, Murray devised ingenious ways to enable Joy to eke maximum performance from her cars.

His compressed air clutch actuator, fired from the gear lever by a soda syphon bulb, and "afterburner" to keep the turbo spinning on the Dastle-based Murrain-FVC sportscar, were jaw-dropping. Once into a Pilbeam-Hart single-seater Joy smashed women's records on the major hills – Shelsley Walsh's stood for 22 years.

MARCUS PYE



Between four and six drivers
raced in the series last year

Fiesta Junior boosted by strong number of early registrations

FIESTA JUNIOR

The Fiesta Junior Championship is set to have a grid in double figures this season after struggling to attract entries in 2019.

The British Racing and Sports Car Club-run category featured just four to six drivers last season. But a programme of investment by the club appears to have turned the category's fortunes around.

Two taster days were held last season and attended by a total of 22 drivers. This has transferred into registrations for 2020. By the time of this month's Autosport International show, 15 drivers

had already signed up for this year.

"We set out last year to invest a lot in encouraging people to have a go [in the category]," explained BRSCC chairman Peter Daly. "The success of those taster days means we have 15 championship registrations and more interested. We're delighted by that and it shows the investment and hard work by our team at the BRSCC has paid off."

Among those to have signed up are Joseph Loake and Alfie Glenie, who finished second and third respectively in last year's standings.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

NEW MX-5 Mk4 SERIES A MAJOR STEP FORWARD

MX-5 Mk4 TROPHY

The British Racing and Sports Car Club's new Mazda MX-5 Mk4 Trophy is set to provide a significant performance step from the club's MX-5 Supercup for Mk3 models.

The new Mk4, which has been developed by marque specialist Paul Sheard Autosport, features uprated suspension, brakes and engine components as well as a six-speed sequential gearbox.

"It has more power, it's lighter, it's got better mechanicals and more torque so it should be quite a bit quicker," said Sheard, who added that using readily available parts will ensure the car remains "economical to run".

"The ratios are absolutely ultimate for racing, which is not what you would normally get with any one-make stuff," he said. "It's flat-shift on the way up and auto-blip on the way down. It's got a reasonably long first gear and it will top out at about 125mph, which will be perfect for all UK circuits."

A five-round calendar has been announced for the inaugural season. It will initially share a grid with the Clubsport Trophy mini-enduro series before holding standalone races as it develops.

MARK PAULSON

Lyons takes New Zealand F5000 hat-trick

HISTORICS

Anglo-Irishman Michael Lyons's three-event New Zealand F5000 Tasman Cup Revival Series 'drop in' got off to a perfect start with a hat-trick of wins at Taupo's Bruce McLaren Motor Sport Park last weekend.

On pole by 1.7 seconds — in the absence of Kenny Smith, who has sold his Lola T332 — the T400 driver also shattered Smith's lap record.

Michael Collins — who

dominated the opening round of the 2019-20 contest at Manfeild in November — led the chase each time in Alistair Hey's Leda LT27-based McRae GM1. Collins briefly led Sunday's heat before being overpowered by the visitor.

Third place was less clear-cut in the 17-car field, with a different driver joining the young guns on the podium each time. Series sponsor David Banks and veteran Grant Martin bagged bronze in the first and



Lyons leads the F5000
field away at Taupo

last races, driving their Talons. Kevin Ingram, who piloted his own Keram car to the national FF1600 title in 1973, grabbed P3 in Sunday's heat, his best outing since returning to the sport

with a T332 after a long lay-off.

Pre-'72 class stalwart Tony Roberts was top gun in the early class with his high-winged McLaren M10A.

MARCUS PYE



Out of date, out of touch?

Some club championships could do more to improve communications with competitors, spectators and other stakeholders – starting with their websites and social media

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Before Christmas, Autosport put together its list of club racing champions from the 2019 season. Now, this is never an easy task – but it does provide a very useful record of the year just gone. It is always tricky to make sure the round-up is entirely comprehensive and to ensure there are no series, rather than championships, that have accidentally been excluded.

But what is already a job that requires multiple checking and double-checking of various different sources was made noticeably more difficult by the websites of some organising clubs or the individual championships not being kept up to date with the latest information.

Autosport does not wish to name and shame any of the offenders, but it was surprising how many sites did not contain the final championships standings. And we were searching for these in early to mid-December – at least a month (sometimes significantly more) after the weekend in which the final rounds took place.

It was not just the websites either. The social-media accounts were no more enlightening. In a more extreme example, the most recent points table on one championship's site dated back to 2015 and its Facebook page was not much better, containing just five posts since the start of 2019.

While this was just a minor issue for a journalist attempting to

“If a championship’s website is missing a complete points table, what else is out of date?”

have a quick glance at the standings to check who the champion was, the problem goes much deeper. If the points table is missing or incomplete, what other information is missing or out of date?

Another key area is contact details. There have been several times when Autosport has attempted to use the stated phone number or email address, only for this to be hopelessly inaccurate. Again, it is an extreme case, but on one occasion the number given on a category's website was actually a business number for a company the coordinator had previously worked for – but, apparently, with whom they'd had no involvement for months.

All of this paints a picture of there being a problem with the promotion of club racing categories. It is important to point out that some clubs and series do a fantastic job and provide a wealth of current information and updates across their various online

platforms, but, in these uncertain economic times, getting as many entries as possible on the grid is more important than ever. New drivers are not going to just appear from thin air and if they come across a hideously out-of-date website, a Facebook page that has not been updated for months or a Twitter account with very few updates, alarm bells are going to be ringing. It is certainly not going to encourage them to sign up for a specific championship. In this age, with social media becoming ever more important, it simply is not enough for coordinators to sit on their hands any more and expect drivers to come to them.

Motorsport UK is aware of this potential problem and is investigating how and whether it can help out with promotion. When the governing body unveiled its new strategy at the end of last year, better promotion of motorsport in this country was one of the key messages. But individual categories have got to take action themselves too.

One example of what can be done with a bit of investment and promotion is the Fiesta Junior Championship (see opposite). This is a category that was seemingly on its knees last year and, in Autosport's feature looking at entry levels across the club racing world, it had the lowest average entry of them all with just five cars across its 2019 events. And that was not with wildly contrasting fortunes round by round: numbers ranged between four and six cars throughout the season.

Autosport has consistently stated clubs should be more ruthless and just axe struggling categories. And Fiesta Junior would surely have been at the very top of that list. But Peter Daly, chairman of the organising British Racing and Sports Car Club, felt otherwise. He believed that there was still more the club could do to try to turn the category around and did not want to pull the plug with some stones still to be turned.

A programme of investment in Fiesta Junior was put in place during last season, and this included two taster days to give prospective drivers an idea of what competing in the championship is all about. These proved a success at gathering interest, and all the efforts have seemingly been rewarded as the category has already received 15 registrations two months before the new season begins. Registrations do not directly transfer into entries, but the signs are still very good that its average numbers can double or triple for 2020.

What this does is provide a bit of a blueprint to other clubs for what can be done when you give a struggling class a bit of support. Far from sitting on its hands and waiting for Fiesta Junior drivers to come forward, the BRSCC instead actively went out looking for them. Small measures can make a significant difference to a series' fortunes, and having up-to-date websites and social-media accounts is a good place to start. ❧

2019

THE NEW CATEGORIES RATED...

There was no shortage of series launched last season in the UK. Some were enormous successes, while others were disappointing flops

STEPHEN BRUNSDON, MATT KEW, STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY



NEW 750 MOTOR CLUB SERIES

116 TROPHY

★★★★☆

MA7DA

★★★★☆

TYPE R TROPHY

★★★★☆

Introducing three new series at the same time is never easy, especially in the current climate in which club motorsport finds itself, with a plethora of categories on offer for drivers and teams.

But, arguably, if any club could make it work it was going to be the 750 Motor Club, which has a proven track record of launching low-cost classes, and the 116 Trophy for early BMW 1 Series models certainly established itself throughout 2019. For the first two rounds it was part of the Roadsports grid, but by its third meeting at Snetterton it had established its own standalone races and attracted between 12 and 14 entries over the remaining rounds, as well as increasing its race distances from 45 to 90 minutes.

Sprint races are planned for 2020 – as well as five mini-endurance events – and with 12 roll cages already on order for new customers the series could continue to grow.

The Ma7da series – using a Locost car but with a significantly more powerful 1.8-litre Mazda engine – was an offshoot of the popular Locost Championship. The series never held standalone races and instead joined the Sports Specials Championship. Despite attracting eight entries for the opening races at Brands Hatch, this number had dropped to just three by the final round six months later, having never reached double figures.

It was the same story for the Type R Trophy. After holding its own standalone races, the Honda Civic-based category often struggled to reach double figures across its five events.



ENDUROKA

★★★★☆

Following on from the incredible success of the Citroen C1 Challenge in 2018, MotorSport Vision Trackdays created its own version of a cheap, affordable endurance category: EnduroKa. Using Ford's Ka with a few minor modifications to get them into race trim, the series proved there was still a gap in the market.

Six events took place during the season, ranging from a 12-hour race at Snetterton to four 15-minute sprint races at Brands Hatch. Grids were above 20 at all of the rounds, with the final race of the season attracting 35 cars – its largest entry of the year.

Such was the popularity and appeal of the series that Le Mans 24 Hours race winner Nick Tandy, no less, entered with his own car and won at Brands. Former McLaren team boss Eric Boullier also made his racing debut in the category.



HAWKINS

TOURING CAR TROPHY

★★★★☆

Before the Touring Car Trophy season even started there was a major tweak to the series as it merged with the ailing TCR UK category.

But even that struggled to make a difference to grid numbers as just seven cars raced at the opening weekend at Oulton Park. That's how it stayed for the majority of the tin-top category's season until the Donington Park finale, when a number of British Touring Car Championship teams entered their machinery after the BTCC season had finished.

Organisers are now seeking to build on that momentum into 2020.



HAWKINS

FERRARI CHALLENGE UK

★★★★☆

Out of the two new-for-2019 categories aimed at the gentleman racer, there is no disputing which one emerged on top. While Series Elite floundered (see below), Ferrari Challenge UK had an impressive first season.

Despite featuring just four events, the British Racing and Sports Car Club-administered series attracted good grids.

Twenty Ferrari 488s lining up for the Brands Hatch season opener was a very encouraging start and put other categories with far less expensive machinery to shame. And that grid featured a mix of rookies and experienced racers, like Lotus Cup regular Jason Baker.

Numbers had dropped slightly to 18 by the finale but it was still an impressive platform for the series to build upon this year, when it again features a four-weekend schedule.



ROBERTS

CLUBSPORT TROPHY

★★★★☆

If you wanted to see an eclectic mix of machinery all on the same circuit at the same time, then you didn't need to look further than the Clubsport Trophy.

Introduced by the British Racing and Sports Car Club midway through 2019, only two races were held at Brands Hatch and Donington Park. But, with grids of 34 and 41

cars respectively, it became evident that the series was a hit with drivers.

Consisting of a 45-minute mini-endurance race with drivers able to compete on their own or with another person, its multi-class format catered for a variety of vehicles. From Honda Civics to Mazda MX-5s and from Porsche 911s to Citroen Saxos, the strength in depth was there and it's no surprise that the series will expand to five meetings in 2020.



WALKER

SERIES ELITE

★★★★☆

The brainchild of Graeme Glew, Series Elite was a new one-make series aimed at gentleman drivers aged over 40.

Launched at the Autosport show, this was as good as it got for the British Automobile Racing Club-run series as supply chain issues with its Jaguar XE SV Project 8 cars meant the first scheduled round at Brands Hatch became a demo.

One round did eventually take place in June, but only attracted four entries. A further two outings were scrapped due to mechanical woes, and this season it will be incorporated into the GT Cup.



SCOTTISH C1 CUP

★★★★☆

The 2019 season was largely dominated by talk of new championships, but the newest addition to the Scottish Motor Racing Club bill was an undoubted success.

The C1 Cup was introduced as a cost-effective entry-level category with exciting door-to-door racing. That's exactly what happened. Eleven cars entered the first meeting, with the grid increasing to 16 by mid-season. The mix of budding professionals and older amateur drivers made for close action throughout, proving that, despite their lack of noise and power, the C1s are fan favourites already.



SPORTS PROTOTYPE CUP

★★★★☆

Expectations were not high for the inaugural Sports Prototype Cup season as it was designed to be very much a trial year ahead of a proper campaign in 2020.

That soft-launch approach was a sensible one as the series, which features the Revolution Trophy for the new prototype from ex-Radical boss Phil Abbott as well as a class for Radical SR3s, averaged eight cars across its UK events.

But it is looking much more positive for 2020 as more Revolutions and the addition of an Open class for old OSS competitors are set to boost numbers significantly.



Z CARS

★★★★☆

FOCUS CUP

★★★★☆

This is not the first time the Z Cars name has appeared as part of this feature. It was due to launch in 2017 but only mustered a couple of cars as part of Allcomers races.

It was back with a new organiser for 2019 and was more successful. Although, in a congested market for BMW-based categories, it only averaged 11 cars.

That is similar to another new MotorSport Vision Racing series, the Focus Cup. This centrally run contest features turbodiesel versions of the Ford machines and had a solid, if unspectacular, first season.



RX-8 TROPHY

★★★★☆

The 2020 season should be a better litmus test for the Classic Sports Car Club's RX-8 Trophy class. The road-legal rotary Mazdas will move from the oversubscribed New Millennium grid to bolster the Turbo Tin Tops field. With more spaces available, we'll get a clearer indicator of competitor interest, which surpassed targets with a peak of 11 entries at Silverstone but averaged around six cars in 2019.

Tight regulations and low costs make it an ideal entry point into club motorsport, and the 40-minute pitstop race format and strict driving standards remain selling points for the CSCC.



MSV SUPERCUP

★★★★☆

MotorSport Vision's Trackday Trophy and Trackday Championship are among the most popular series in all of club racing. It therefore seemed sensible for these to be expanded into a third series, dedicated to more powerful machinery.

The MSV SuperCup is made up of what were the top three power-to-weight ratio classes from the Trackday Championship and provides the next step up for drivers. Entry numbers were decent in its first year and a diverse range of cars joined.

2020

There may not be the quantity of last year, but there are encouraging signs for the latest crop of new categories on the British motorsport landscape

MATT KEW, PAUL LAWRENCE, STEPHEN LICKORISH, STEFAN MACKLEY AND MARK PAULSON



PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

There are always new series being launched and 2019 was a particularly bumper year for clubs trying different formulas. But it's not every year that a full manufacturer-backed championship is among the new classes. The Porsche Sprint Challenge GB is an exception.

It is aiming to jump on the success of the GT4 division around the world and offers a one-make series for the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport, aimed at a wide range of drivers – including gentleman racers and also up-and-coming youngsters.

A lot of thought has been put into how this fits alongside the well established Carrera Cup GB. The Sprint Challenge features a calendar that includes two rounds alongside the British

Touring Car Championship (like Carrera Cup), three as part of the British GT package and one alongside the Porsche Club GB categories, thereby ensuring it is in all the right places not only for drivers looking to graduate from it, but also showcasing itself to potential racers.

The schedule has been carefully put together to ensure there are no clashes with the Carrera Cup, and therefore plenty of teams are expected to compete in both championships. A number of drivers have signed up already and there has been interest from double Carrera Cup and 1992 British Touring Car champion Tim Harvey.

It is an encouraging start for a championship in a crowded marketplace, but the signs are good for the latest part of Porsche's motorsport pyramid.



NEW HSCC SERIES

No race promoter can afford to stand still, and that's part of the reasoning behind the Historic Sports Car Club launching two new race series for 2020, both focusing on cars from the 1980s. These series are the Geoff Lees Trophy and the 1980s Production Car Challenge.

The Geoff Lees series will be home to up to two-litre slicks-and-wings single-seaters, taking in the later ground-effect F2 cars, F3, Formula Atlantic, Formula Vauxhall and even early Formula Renault cars.

The PCC is all about close-to-standard sports and saloon cars running on treaded tyres with only limited modifications.

The response to the Geoff Lees Trophy has been particularly strong, with a range of cars in ready-to-go condition. Each series has a modest programme of pilot races for 2020.



BRITCAR TROPHY

A new championship aimed at production cars, the Britcar Trophy is open to machinery from classes 5-7 based on the Britcar Endurance Performance Indicator (BEPI).

Two 50-minute races will take place on Sundays at the majority of meetings this year and venues include Donington Park, Silverstone (on the Grand Prix layout), Snetterton, Brands Hatch and Oulton Park.

The new series will also contest the two non-championship races at Spa-Francorchamps in support of the World Endurance Championship on 23-25 April with Britcar Endurance.



SLICKS SERIES

When the Slicks Series gets under way at Oulton Park in May, it will mark the 11th new formula that the Classic Sports Car Club has introduced. But unlike its Swinging Sixties or Tin Tops predecessors, this will be a catch-all contest.

It's open to saloon, hatchback, sports and GT cars with doors – excluding Radical-like sportscars and Seven designs – equipped with racing slick or wet tyres. That wide catchment means the likes of Porsche Cup cars, BMW M3s and other CSCC regulars will gain a second home.



MAZDA MX-5 Mk4 TROPHY

Joining the British Racing and Sports Car Club's roster of Mazda MX-5 categories is the Mk4 Trophy for the ND1 model built between 2015 and 2018. It's not just a newer base car than the flagship MX-5 Supercup's Mk3, there is a step up in performance too.

A sequential gearbox and various other mechanical tweaks (see page 64) aim to pitch the series at a Ginetta GT5 Challenge performance level but for a lower budget. That could help the Mk4 Trophy – which will initially run as a class within the Clubsport Trophy – establish a footing in a crowded marketplace.



Lauda in 'Black Widow' Opel at Tulln-Langenlebarn, before engine failure put him out

CELEBRATING LAUDA'S F1 GLORY – AND OBSCURITIES



BOOK NIKI LAUDA, HIS COMPETITION HISTORY

Books about the late Niki Lauda are nothing new, and even without them his story has been well (or badly) documented on countless occasions – including on the silver screen. He paid

his way into Formula 1 without much success in the lower ranks, blah blah. He survived horrific burns at the Nurburgring in 1976, drone drone. He walked away from racing, set up an airline, then returned to Formula 1 to win a third title, zzz zzz. Yes, we've heard it all before.

So a book entitled *Niki Lauda, his competition history* written by an unknown author in Jon Saltinstall doesn't fill you with enthusiasm. Until you open it. Actually, the trick is to open it from the front, because it's here that you'll find the random, arcane and obscure events and machinery that were part and parcel of life for any aspiring professional driver during Lauda's early career in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Saltinstall has done an incredible job of documenting what we have to accept is every event in which Lauda competed in a car – all 316 of them. And yes, we've gone through the book trying to catch him out ("Hmm, bet he's left out that Interserie race at Thruxton. No, he hasn't!"). We grudgingly – because we like to be clever – have to accept that Saltinstall has covered everything and that he could have added the word 'definitive' to 'his competition history' on the cover.

You're probably beginning to think that this is a work best described as 'scholarly', and that it most definitely is. Saltinstall acknowledges in his introduction that in preparing this book he's pored over every European motorsport magazine and newspaper, plus official entry and results lists, of the time. So if you think this is an attempt to cash in on Lauda's passing in 2019, you can shut up right now – it's a labour of love that must have taken over Saltinstall's life.

To be honest, for this reviewer who was a Lauda fan as a kid, it's not the years of success in F1 that are the appeal here. His stints at Ferrari, Brabham and McLaren are already burned in the memory, although that's not to say that younger connoisseurs won't find the short reports of each race of interest. No, it's more the tales that went around his initial days in the sport hillclimbing a Mini and a Porsche, or traipsing around Europe with Formula Vee and then Formula 3 machinery. In the Vee ranks, for example, he had a ferocious battle for victory with Helmut Marko in the 1969 German Grand Prix support race at the





Nurburgring that ended with Marko putting Lauda's works Kaimann off on the last lap. Lauda was furious, but the two soon made up.

Photos illustrate almost every race, and we were particularly taken by the Kaimann team's lairy Opel Rekord, which Lauda was unfortunate enough to race. After his final outing in it at Neubiberg (another treasure trove of this book is the long-forgotten, mainly airfield-based circuits of Central Europe), it got stolen but no one could be bothered to try to find it. The dashes from venue to venue are a further eye-opener. It's pretty well known that Lauda supplemented his BRM F1 programme of 1973 with a nice little earner for the BMW touring car effort, but who remembers that, after starring in the early stages of that year's British Grand Prix at Silverstone on a Saturday, he flew in to Diepholz on the Sunday morning to battle in a round of the German DRM series in his Alpina-run 3.0 CSL?

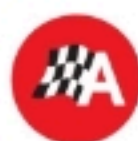
And his last single-seater race that wasn't in an F1 car? It was the Australian Grand Prix at Calder Park in 1984, just after Lauda's third crowning as world champion, in a Formula Pacific (that's Formula Atlantic to those of us in the northern hemisphere) Ralt RT4.

At £60, this hardback is not cheap, but its detours down all the 'country roads' of Lauda's career and superb illustrations make it a worthy addition to the often-told story of his life.

MARCUS SIMMONS



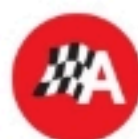
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Motorsport UK chairman David Richards joins the Rt Honourable Lord Hain at the Motorsport Leaders Business Forum to discuss whether governments should care about motorsport, and how it can ensure its continued relevance in a changing landscape of mobility. Some of the views may be controversial, but it's a crucial debate about the future of motorsport.



[youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom](https://www.youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom)



The Jaguar XJR-9 was one of the iconic sportscars of its generation, and an example was on show at Autosport International 2020 in celebration of our 70th anniversary. Jake Boxall-Legge is joined by the car's designer Tony Southgate, who tells the XJR-9's story.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Monte Carlo Rally
World Rally
Championship
Round 1/14

Monaco/Gap, France

23-26 January

All Live service via WRC+

Daytona 24 Hours
IMSA SportsCar
Round 1/12

Daytona, Florida,

USA

25-26 January

Livestream [imsa.com](https://www.imsa.com)

Toyota Racing Series
Round 2/5

Teretonga,
New Zealand

25-26 January

Motorsport.tv

FINISHING STRAIGHT



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Nelson Piquet (Williams-Honda FW11B) and Gerhard Berger (Ferrari F1-87) run together during the 1987 Austrian Grand Prix weekend at the Österreichring. They

had mixed fortunes in the race, which had to be started three times thanks to shunts. Piquet finally finished second – to team-mate Nigel Mansell, who averaged over 146mph on his way

to victory – while Berger qualified third but only completed five laps before turbo failure struck. Teo Fabi's Benetton-Ford B187 completed the podium, albeit a lap behind the dominant Williams rivals.



For classic 1980s Formula 1 DVDs head to dukevideo.com/F1





Preparing for that final Formula 1 breakthrough

26 January 2006

Honda's and Jenson Button's Formula 1 assault made our cover on 26 January 2006. The team stated that wins were the aim for the new season, which included a rules switch from three-litre V10 engines to 2.4-litre V8s.

Button, already a veteran of 100 F1 starts, had yet to take a victory and it had become something of a monkey on his back. "Could this finally be the year Jenson makes the breakthrough?" asked Autosport.

While Honda did not achieve its goal of being "in a position to win at every race", the RA106 did become a consistent points scorer. And in August, in a dramatic Hungarian Grand Prix, Button would come through from row seven in mixed conditions to finally take that first win. He would rack up 14 more before retiring from F1 in 2017.

Elsewhere in F1, we reported that Spa was on the verge of losing its GP "because of a financial spat between event organisers and F1 chief Bernie Ecclestone". Ecclestone was also demanding upgrades to the Belgian GP venue. The matter was not resolved in time to save the race – for the second time in four years the classic track fell off the F1 calendar – but the Belgian GP did return in 2007.

Taking a first victory in that final week of January in 2006 was the Ford Focus RS WRC 06. Marcus Gronholm beat Citroen rival Sebastien Loeb, who made an error, on the Monte Carlo Rally by just over a minute. The M-Sport Ford operation would go on to win the manufacturers' title, but it was Loeb who would once again triumph in the drivers' contest.



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