

BTCC showdown Five contenders on their title chances

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

12 NOVEMBER 2020

Button: life after F1

Why the 2009 world champion can't quit racing

On his new team

**'There's no point having
your name on something
unless it's great'**

On racing in Japan

**'People go there thinking
they're going to kick ass
and get destroyed'**

On his big goals

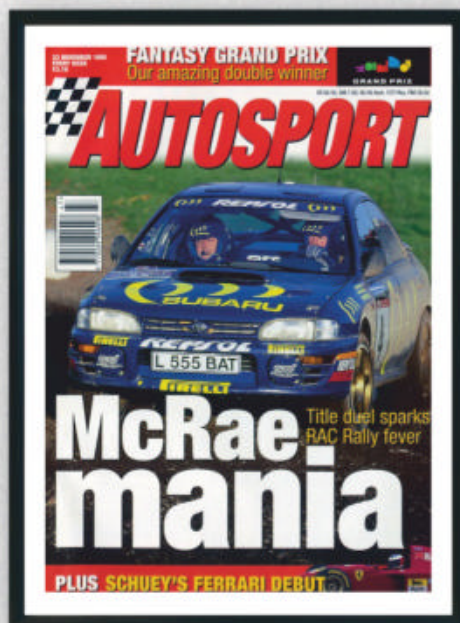
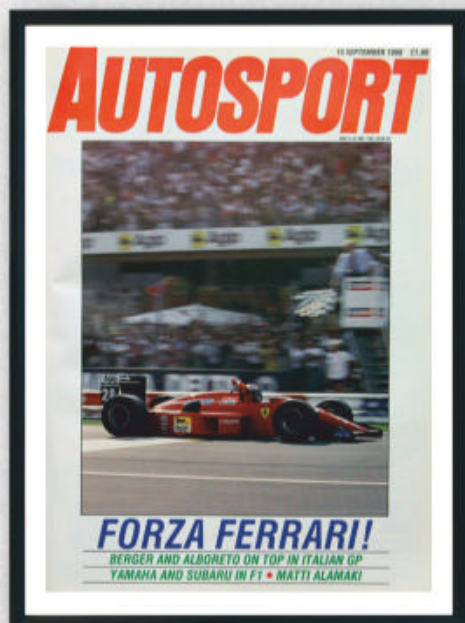
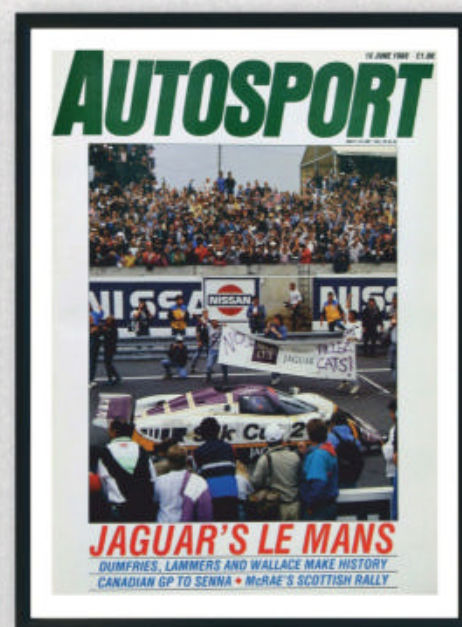
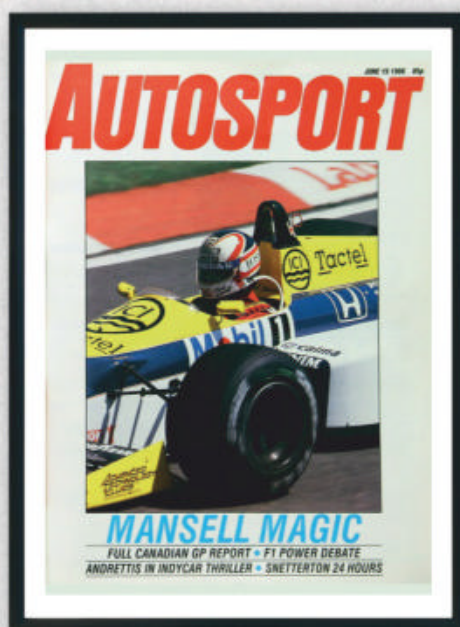
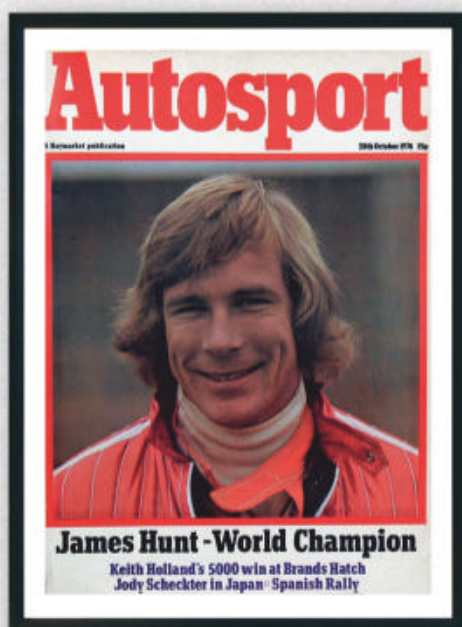
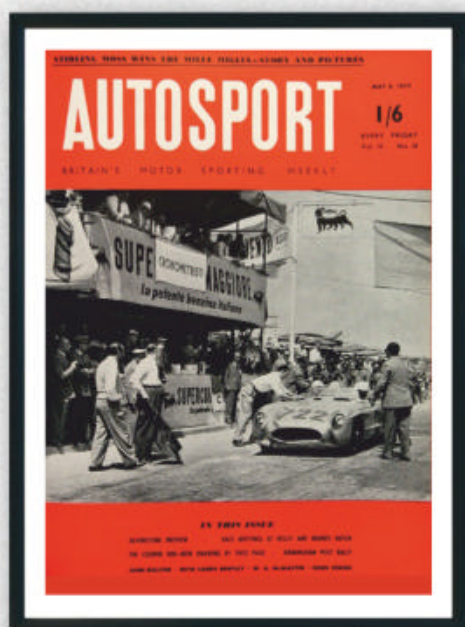
**'The idea is still to race
at Le Mans and go for
the outright win'**



Autosport 70

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Why Jenson Button is still not finished with motorsport

Thanks to the troubles of the McLaren-Honda partnership, Jenson Button's Formula 1 career did not finish as well as it should have, although he did perform well alongside Fernando Alonso. Fortunately, Button's enthusiasm for motorsport has not dimmed and he has taken on a number of new challenges since 2017.

As he tells James Newbold in our exclusive interview on page 18, Button still wants to push himself and learn. That helps to explain why, as a driver, he has taken on events as diverse as the Le Mans 24 Hours and Baja rally, and has moved into GT team management. He even combined the two at Silverstone's British GT finale last weekend.

Button has never been afraid to put himself in a position where he could fail. Few expected him to be so strong alongside Lewis Hamilton at McLaren, and he took his one and only world title chance in 2009.

Our 1998 young driver Award winner probably won't ever get the credit he deserves, but it's great that he is still out there competing.

• Our 70th birthday special, a separate publication from the normal magazine, will be out next week. All current print subscribers will receive a copy of the 196-page Autosport anniversary edition for free. If you're not a subscriber or would like to pre-order an extra copy (!), please go to: [autosport.com/autosport70th](https://www.autosport.com/autosport70th)



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

kevin.turner@autosport.com

**NEXT WEEK
19 NOVEMBER**

Reports special
Featuring the Turkish GP,
BTCC and WEC finales,
and Sebring 12H



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TW9 1AG

@
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Pictured:
50% of the grid for
the final LMP1 contest,
this weekend
in Bahrain

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GOLDEN ERA OF SPORTSCARS BO

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

It's a sad way to finish. The LMP1 era will go out with a whimper at this weekend's Bahrain round of the World Endurance Championship: just the two Toyotas on the grid, and little or no chance of any kind of battle to rekindle memories of the glory days of the category.

While the pair of TSO50 HYBRIDs – the drivers of one with an arm tied behind their backs – play out the charade that Saturday's Bahrain 8 Hours will surely be, it will be difficult to stop harking back to better times. And there really were some amazing moments over the quarter of a century of LMP1.

LMP1 began in embryonic form in 1994, the year this writer started working for Autosport, so there may be some bias here. It was slow away from the blocks at a time when manufacturers were more interested in producing allegedly road-based GT1 machinery, got into its stride as the last century was coming to a conclusion, and then entered its pomp at the end of the 2000s.

LMP1 gave us two of the greatest ever Le Mans 24 Hours: Audi's triumphs in 2008 and 2011. They were mesmerising for different reasons: the first, an against-the-odds victory for the underdog; and the second, a 24-hour slugfest between two heavyweights at the top of their game. Peugeot was the loser both times, which should in no way detract from its contribution to one of the greatest eras in sportscar racing history.

A halcyon period began when Peugeot joined Audi in the turbodiesel ranks at Le Mans and beyond in 2007. It was the start of what can be simplistically called the high-tech era that segued into a time when there were three manufacturers – Toyota, Audi and Porsche –

battling it out with hybrid machinery after the rebirth of world championship long-distance racing in 2012.

The 10 years between Peugeot becoming a fully fledged contender in season two of the 908 HDi programme and Porsche's final campaign with the 919 Hybrid in 2017 were among the greatest in the history of sportscar racing. They stand comparison with any eras.

The fortunes of LMP1 went into a downward spiral when Audi pulled the plug on its long-running programme at the end of 2016. Once Porsche announced that it was following suit less than a year later, P1 was dead in the water. Part of the reason for that was the disappearance of the bedrock of privateers.

“IT WOULD BE CHURLISH TO LAMBAST REBELLION FOR DUCKING OUT OF BAHRAIN”

It's irrefutable that the technology drove them away.

The rulemakers – the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA – did attempt to address this dependency on the factories. They practically rolled out the red carpet for the privateers, though arguably too late. First, they promised one-lap parity in the 2018-19 WEC superseason and then, with Toyota's agreement and assistance, came up with the system of success handicaps in force for the current campaign.

It would be churlish to lambast Rebellion Racing for ducking out of Bahrain in the current global situation after announcing that this season would be its last as an entrant. Doubly so because it has been the most ardent

NIGHT RACE FOR JEDDAH AS VIETNAM IS AXED

FORMULA 1

The inaugural Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on the streets of Jeddah will be a night race, while the Vietnamese GP has been dropped in a provisional 23-round calendar announced this week.

The street race in Jeddah will take place on 28 November as the penultimate round of the 2021 season, starting a 10-year deal between F1 and Saudi Arabia. The event will become the second full night race on the F1 calendar after Singapore.

The announcement was followed by confirmation of the provisional 2021 calendar that features 22 races, as speculated last week in Autosport, with one TBC slot following the late dropping of Vietnam.

Autosport understands that F1 officials decided to scrap the race due to ongoing political issues in Vietnam. The former mayor of Hanoi, Nguyen Duc Chung, was arrested in August over corruption charges, and had been one of the major supporters of the race. It casts serious doubt on whether the race will ever happen.

The absence of Vietnam leaves a one-month gap in the calendar between events in China and Spain, but F1 is understood to be confident of filling that with a new event after enjoying a surge in demand to host grands prix through 2020.

Interlagos (below) has also been handed a reprieve to continue hosting the Brazilian Grand Prix as promoters for the planned event in Rio still wait on government approvals, meaning the switch will not take place until 2022 at the earliest.

LUKE SMITH



MAUGER

Buemi, Nakajima and Hartley lead points, but rules make win and title a tall order

DWS OUT WITH WHIMPER

independent supporter of the LMP1 division.

The lack of entries in P1 this weekend wouldn't be so bad if the Toyotas could actually race each other. That's a forlorn hope given the #8 TSO50 driven by Sebastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and Brendon Hartley will be half a second slower by regulation.

Success handicaps have robbed this year's WEC of one of the highlights of 2018-19. The one-off superseason won't go down in history as a classic, but there was some phenomenal racing between the two TSO50s over its course. There was a case for scrapping the success handicaps in Bahrain given the absence of any opposition to Toyota. They were devised to give the privateers a chance in the WEC's hour of need. So no privateers, no need for the penalties.

That argument tugs at the heart strings, but reasoned thought should result in the conclusion that it would have been wrong to ditch the handicaps. The #7 TSO50 of Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez has been more heavily penalised than the sister car in three events. The roles were reversed in only one.

The system has been tweaked in the name of common sense for Bahrain. The calculation of the penalties was based on the points differential between each entry and the worst-placed car in the championship, up to a maximum of 40. For this weekend, only the points gap between the two Toyotas was used to arrive at the handicaps. That means #8 will run a 0.54s penalty and #7 zero, rather than 2.70s and 2.16s respectively.

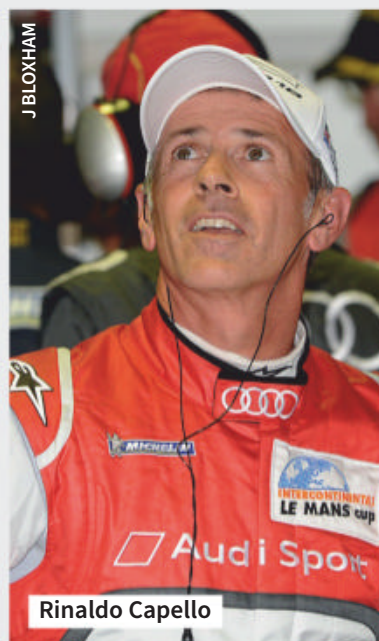
But that doesn't get away from the fact that we are unlikely to have a real motor race for what will be, by Autosport's calculations, the 290th international event open to P1 machinery. And that is an undoubted shame.

GARY WATKINS

TOP 10 LMP1 WINNERS

Most overall or class wins in LMP1 international races from 1994-2020

Rinaldo Capello	41
Allan McNish	37
Marco Werner	29
Tom Kristensen	27
Lucas Luhr	26
Frank Biela	26
Emanuele Pirro	25
JJ Lehto	21
Klaus Graf	20
Sebastien Buemi	17



Rinaldo Capello



Iannone ban extended to four years after appeal loss

MOTOGP

The career of MotoGP star Andrea Iannone has been dealt a massive blow after his appeal to have an anti-doping ban overturned was rejected and increased to four years.

Aprilia rider Iannone was banned by governing body the FIM at the end of last year when he was found to have tested positive for a banned steroid at the Malaysian Grand Prix. The Italian had this 18-month ban upheld after an FIM hearing in March, but was deemed to have ingested the substance accidentally through contaminated food.

Aprilia and Iannone appealed this ruling to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), believing the acquittal of other athletes over similar offences provided a precedent. But CAS rejected this appeal following a review of the evidence and has upheld the World Anti-Doping Agency's bid to have the ban increased to the maximum four years, starting from his initial ban on 17 December 2019.

CAS also confirmed that Iannone's MotoGP race results from 1 November 2019 through to his initial suspension are official disqualifications.

The CAS panel found Iannone hadn't submitted the necessary evidence to back up the contaminated meat claim, having failed to establish the exact type of meat he ate. Furthermore, Iannone and his experts couldn't present substantial evidence to suggest there was an issue of meat contamination in Malaysia with Drostanolone, the substance he tested positive for.

Aprilia has publicly stuck by Iannone and repeatedly expressed

a desire to retain him for 2021 if it could, assuming it could overturn his ban. But the team now needs to find a replacement rider to join Aleix Espargaro for 2021. It is understood that Cal Crutchlow has a pre-agreement in place, while test rider Bradley Smith is also an option.

Yamaha given penalty

In further controversy, Yamaha was given points penalties in the teams' and constructors' championships for engine valve illegalities at the season-opening Spanish GP (see p15).

While Yamaha welcomed the decision not to punish its riders, this came in for criticism throughout the paddock. Ducati felt a "dangerous" precedent had been set by the ruling, while Suzuki boss Davide Brivio feels a Yamaha title win (something unlikely now) would cast a "shadow" over the season owing to the engine debacle.

Honda's Alex Marquez was blunt in his assessment, claiming Yamaha "cheated" and the riders knew exactly what was going on: "You know everything, you are up to date, as a rider you are always watching when they install an engine or store it."

All Yamaha riders denied any knowledge of Yamaha's error with the valves, although they were critical of the implications it had on their 2020 seasons. Vinales admitted Yamaha was "throwing away" title chances every year through mistakes.

Suzuki's points leader Joan Mir said: "I don't want to win this championship with all these things [hanging over it], so I prefer this."

LEWIS DUNCAN



Dovizioso set for sabbatical

MOTOGP

Outgoing Ducati rider Andrea Dovizioso is set to take a MotoGP sabbatical in 2021 and will not take on a test role at Yamaha.

The 15-times MotoGP race winner made the bombshell announcement during the Austrian Grand Prix weekend in August that he would not be renewing his contract with Ducati beyond 2020, and admitted at the time that he had no Plan B.

Autosport understands that Dovizioso held discussions with Honda, KTM and Yamaha to become its test rider in 2021, with the Yamaha option emerging as the most likely. But he has since changed his mind and will now leave the MotoGP paddock completely. The Italian will focus on his passion for motocross racing while keeping fully fit with a view to making a return to the MotoGP grid in 2022.

As we went to press, Dovizioso (below) was yet to publicly announce this.

In other Ducati-related news, the Italian marque confirmed last weekend that it has signed Valentino Rossi's half-brother Luca Marini and his Moto2 title rival Enea Bastianini to join the Avintia MotoGP squad.

Intriguingly, Marini is set to take some of his VR46 team with him to MotoGP and will run the squad's colours at Avintia, with VR46 team boss Pablo Nieto set to take on a senior role within Avintia alongside current boss Ruben Xaus. It is thought that VR46 will take over Avintia's grid slots in 2022.

Rossi himself returned to MotoGP action last weekend at Valencia following a COVID-19-enforced layoff from the Motorland Aragon double-header. He was replaced by American World Superbike rider Garrett Gerloff, who impressed on his maiden MotoGP outing, on Friday. Rossi was cleared to return from Saturday.

LEWIS DUNCAN





DTM ELECTRIC The DTM’s vision for an electric support series hit the track at last weekend’s Hockenheim season finale, in the hands of ex-champions Hans Stuck and Timo Scheider, Formula E refugee Daniel Abt and Formula 3 racer Sophia Florsch. The DTM Electric has been developed by long-time Audi partner Schaeffler, and pushes out over 1000bhp thanks to battery-electric power. It includes Schaeffler’s Space Drive steer-by-wire technology (electronic steering operating without conventional mechanical steering). Apparently, rather than a typical race car layout, the car features ‘a puristic design’ (answers on a postcard please). DTM Electric is set for introduction in 2023 to a package that will include the headlining series (which is switching from Class 1 machinery to GT3 for 2021), the GT4-based DTM Trophy, historic exotica in DTM Classic, and DTM ESports. **Photograph by DTM**

Later start for full 2021 MotoGP schedule

MOTOGP

MotoGP has unveiled a provisional 20-race 2021 calendar. While it largely follows the original 2020 schedule before it was decimated by COVID-19, it starts later than normal with the traditional opening trio of the Qatar (right, top), Argentinian and US Grands Prix before heading to Europe.

The first half of the season is due to end on 11 July with the delayed return of the Finnish GP, pending homologation of the KymiRing. The resumption date is unclear, with the slot for the Czech GP left without a date or venue. Brno (right, below) needs to make track works to secure a date, and there has been no indication that this will happen.

Three venues – the Algarve Circuit, Igora Drive in Russia and the yet-to-be homologated Mandalika Street Circuit in Indonesia – are reserves should Brno not appear, or if COVID-19 forces cancellations.

The British GP at Silverstone is due for the weekend of 29 August.

The traditional Pacific triple-header has been scrapped, with two double-headers now lined up, one in Japan and Thailand, and the other in Australia and Malaysia.

Two three-day pre-season tests at Sepang and Losail are scheduled.

LEWIS DUNCAN

MOTOGP CALENDAR 2021		
ROUND	VENUE	DATE
1	Losail (QAT)	28 March
2	Rio Hondo (ARG)	11 April
3	Austin (USA)	18 April
4	Jerez (ESP)	2 May
5	Le Mans (FRA)	16 May
6	Mugello (ITA)	30 May
7	Barcelona (ESP)	6 June
8	Sachsenring (DEU)	20 June
9	Assen (NLD)	27 June
10	KymiRing (FIN)	11 July
11	TBA	
12	Red Bull Ring (AUT)	15 August
13	Silverstone (GBR)	29 August
14	Motorland Aragon (ESP)	12 September
15	Misano (ITA)	19 September
16	Motegi (JPN)	3 October
17	Buriram (THA)	10 October
18	Phillip Island (AUS)	24 October
19	Sepang (MYS)	31 October
20	Valencia (ESP)	14 November





Eleven-way title decider for World Touring Cars

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP

Tin-top fans have got it made this weekend. If you thought the British Touring Car Championship's five-way title showdown at Brands Hatch was something to get excited about, then consider the 11-driver shootout for World Touring Car Cup honours that will simultaneously take place at Motorland Aragon...

Yann Ehrlicher, nephew and team-mate of four-time World Touring Car champion Yvan Muller, leads the way in his Cyan Racing Lynk & Co with a 26-point

advantage over Munnich Motorsport Honda Civic Type R driver Esteban Guerrieri. Third is Muller, one point ahead of Jean-Karl Vernay in his Team Mulsanne Alfa Romeo Giulietta. Other contenders are Gilles Magnus, Nathanael Berthon and veteran Tom Coronel (Comtoyou Audis), Mikel Azcona (Zengo Motorsport Cupra), Lynk & Co pair Santiago Urrutia and Thed Bjork, and Nestor Girolami (Munnich Honda).

Guerrieri, runner-up last year, will benefit from a 30kg weight break for the Honda ahead of the weekend. He struggled to a best of ninth in the penultimate round, which was

also at Motorland, while Vernay and 2017 champion Bjork won the non-reversed-grid races. Bjork, however, will join Muller and Urrutia in supporting Ehrlicher's bid.

"They will help me like they do from the middle of the season, when they started to work for me and the Cyan team let's say," said Ehrlicher. "They are important and I'm really thankful to these three guys – they are top-rated guys and they help me a lot. Of course, they are definitely part of the fact I am leading the standings."

➔ P26 BTCC SHOOTOUT

Castroneves gets Meyer Shank IndyCar seat

INDYCAR SERIES

Three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Helio Castroneves will join Meyer Shank Racing for a part-time 2021 IndyCar Series campaign.

Castroneves's deal with MSR is understood to be for six races – Long Beach, Barber Motorsports Park, the Indy 500, the new-for-2021 second race on the Indy road course in August, Portland and Laguna Seca.

The 45-year-old has not competed full-time in the series since 2017, and has only raced at Indy since then, alongside his IMSA commitments with Penske.

MSR, which in the last off-season switched its technical alliance from what was previously known as Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports to Andretti Autosport, became a full-time IndyCar team for the first time this

year, running one car driven by Jack Harvey, who stays on for 2021.

Castroneves has become available for 2021 because this weekend's Sebring 12 Hours, in which he and co-driver Ricky Taylor could clinch the IMSA SportsCar title, will be the Brazilian's final race for Team Penske after 21 years at the team.

He could also race in IMSA in MSR's Acura.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ



LEPAGE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

IN THE HEADLINES

TSUNODA COMPLETES F1 TEST

Honda and Red Bull-backed Formula 2 star Yuki Tsunoda completed his first Formula 1 test at Imola last week with AlphaTauri. The Japanese, who is increasingly tipped to replace Daniil Kvyat at the team for next season, clocked up the minimum 300km required to qualify for a superlicence.

CICELEY DITCHES MERCEDES

British Touring Car Championship team Ciceley Motorsport will switch to a new car for next season. The squad has taken eight wins with its Mercedes A-Class in the hands of Adam Morgan since its debut in 2014. Ciceley has yet to confirm the identity of its new car, and has put its Mercedes machinery up for sale.

NON-WINNER TAKES TITLE

Former World Touring Car Championship race winner Mehdi Bennani clinched the TCR Europe title at Jarama last weekend, despite not winning any races this season and only scoring three podium finishes. The Moroccan moved into the series lead with fourth place in the opening race in his Comtoyou Racing Audi, as pre-weekend leader Mike Halder crashed his Honda and Mikel Azcona won in his Cupra. Halder shunted again the reversed-grid sequel, while Bennani came through to second behind the Hyundai of John Filippi, who ended as series runner-up.

MARTINS CLOSE TO CROWN

Victor Martins has one hand on the Formula Renault Eurocup crown, despite not winning at last weekend's Hockenheim penultimate round. The ART Grand Prix driver trailed R-ace GP-run title rival Caio Collet in the opening race, with Alex Quinn third for Arden International. Lorenzo Colombo took his first win of 2020 in the second race with his Bhaitech-run car, with Martins second and Franco Colapinto holding off Quinn for third. Collet retired from fourth place with mechanical problems.



Brit Edgar storms to F4 crown

FORMULA 4

British Red Bull Junior Jonny Edgar snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in winning the German Formula 4 title at Oschersleben last weekend with a drive that team boss Frits van Amersfoort said “showed the world he’s a fantastic racer”.

Edgar, 16, went into the weekend with a 23-point advantage over fellow Red Bull protege and Van Amersfoort Racing team-mate Jak Crawford. Edgar was leading the opening race when he misjudged a defensive move on the 15-year-old American. They made contact, sending Edgar to the pits with a puncture, while Crawford went on to win despite a broken front wing.

That gave Crawford a two-point lead, and he extended that to nine by soaking up massive pressure from Edgar to take another victory in the second race.

This result put the duo together on the fourth row for the reversed-grid finale. A storming drive from Edgar gave him second place behind Tim Tramnitz, while Crawford could only manage sixth, giving Edgar the title by two points.

This is the second year in F4 for Edgar, who focused on the Italian championship last season with Jenzer Motorsport.

“It reminded me of the fantastic race Max [Verstappen] did at Imola in 2014 [when he raced in European F3 with VAR], when he came from 11th on the grid to second,” van Amersfoort told Autosport.

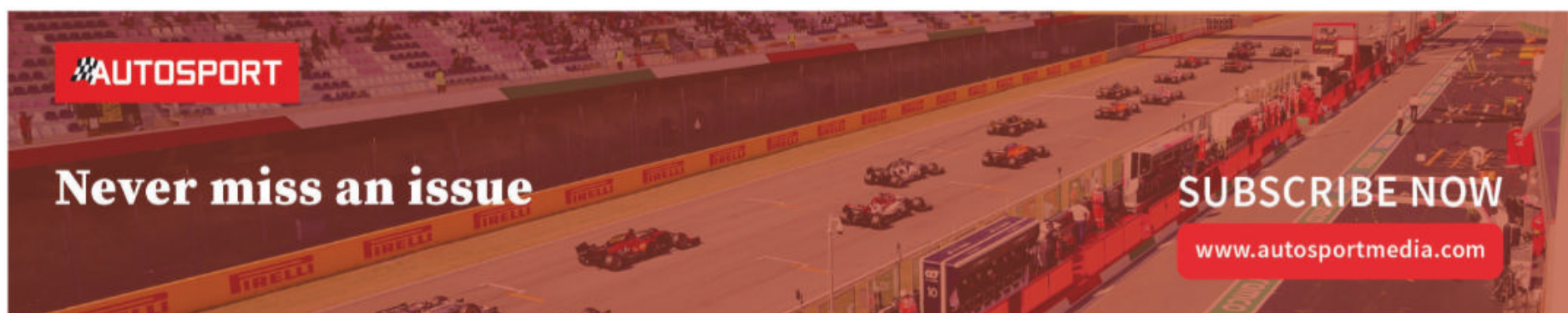
“Both of them [Edgar and Crawford] I think have a bright future. Jonny was in his second year of car racing but he sure showed he’s a good racer and also fast, and Jak showed he’s an upcoming talent.”

Crawford’s title shot was enabled by the coronavirus-enforced delay to the season. Although he won races in the Mexican-based NACAM F4 series in 2018-19 as a 13-year-old, he would have been forced to miss the initially scheduled opening German round because he was not yet 15.

“Jak came to Holland in January, and when coronavirus came he was more or less imprisoned in Holland!” said van Amersfoort. “That shows also his character.”

Both drivers have taken part in FIA Formula 3 testing, but van Amersfoort is cautious about their prospects, bearing in mind the form this season of his 2019 Italian F4 champion Dennis Hauger: “We were 100% convinced of Dennis, but it’s complicated [in FIA F3] and Theo Pourchaire told the world he was better.”

MARCUS SIMMONS



IN THE HEADLINES

BIG CHANGES FOR F2 AND F3

The FIA Formula 2 and Formula 3 championships have confirmed that they will go their separate ways for next season, with shorter calendars but three races per weekend instead of two – as predicted by Autosport. F2 will support the grands prix in Bahrain, Monaco, Azerbaijan, Britain, Italy, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. F3 will be on the bill in Spain, France, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United States.

SERRA IN FOR PIER GUIDI

Daniel Serra will partner James Calado in the #51 AF Corse-run Ferrari 488 GTE Evo at the Bahrain World Endurance Championship finale this weekend. The Brazilian takes the place of Alessandro Pier Guidi, who will be bidding for the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup title at Paul Ricard. The Italian will be joined in the six-hour race by Sam Bird and Come Ledogar in place of Calado and Nicklas Nielsen.

SUPER FORMULA SWITCHES

Formula Renault Eurocup race winner Charles Milesi will make his Super Formula debut at Autopolis this weekend. The redheaded Frenchman, who raced in Japanese F3 in 2019, had signed up for a full season with B-Max with Motopark, but coronavirus quarantine measures have hitherto scuppered him. Meanwhile, Tatiana Calderon returns to the Three Bond with Drago Corse team, and Super Formula Lights leader Ritomo Miyata stands in again at TOM'S for Kazuki Nakajima, who has a date clash with the WEC finale.

BRITS AT R-MOTORSPORT

Ex-DTM team R-Motorsport will make its debut in the GT4 European Series at this weekend's Paul Ricard finale, after pausing its activities this season during the pandemic. Britons George Gamble and Seb Perez will drive one of the two Aston Martin Vantage GT4s being fielded by the Swiss squad.



Huff quarantines for Macau bid

MACAU GRAND PRIX

TCR Scandinavia champion Rob Huff is the only non-local driver entered for next week's Macau Grand Prix event, which has been heavily shaped by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Huff, who clinched the 2012 World Touring Car crown on the famous street circuit, has a record nine wins at the track, and will bid for honours in the Macau Guia classic – which doubles up as the TCR China finale – in an MG 6 (above).

"The MG 6 has been really strong in its first full season in the TCR China championship," said Huff, who is serving a 14-day isolation period in a Macanese hotel room. "I think we've got a very good chance, although it's not going to be easy. This is a new car for me – I've never driven it before, although that was the plan originally this year, so the first time I'll have ever driven it will be around the streets of Macau in the first practice session, which will be an exciting way to be introduced. I have been involved in the development of the car and know it's got great potential."

Leading the way in the TCR China standings is ex-HRT and Caterham Formula 1 FP1 participant and Citroen

World Touring Car racer Ma Qing Hua, at the wheel of a Teamwork Motorsport Lynk & Co 03, while Huff is joined in the MG XPower team by ex-British F3 racer Rodolfo Avila. A very strong 35-car field has been attracted for the event.

The Macau GP itself will be fought out by 17 cars from the Chinese Formula 4 Championship. Among the drivers are Charles Leong and Andy Chang, who have both contested Macau F3 GPs, with Chang taking a creditable 12th place in his third and most recent appearance. Leong and Chang both warmed up with Chinese F4 outings in last month's round at Zhuhai, winning three and one of the four races respectively. They will therefore start favourites, although He Zi Jian is in the box seat to concurrently wrap up the F4 title.

A field of 25 will start the GT Cup race for GT3 and GT4 cars, with long-time international racer Darryl O'Young driving a Craft-Bamboo Mercedes-AMG GT3 and looking good for honours. Ye Hong Li, who has raced in Japanese F3 and the Macau GP, will be at the wheel of a Toro Racing Mercedes. And Steven Bei, a race winner in Chinese F4 this year, eschews the GP to race a GRID Motorsport Lamborghini.

MARCUS SIMMONS

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F1 TURKISH GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

LENGTH 3.317 miles NUMBER OF LAPS 58



Turkish Grand Prix
Intercity Istanbul Park
15th November 2020



MOST RECENT POLE POSITION
Sebastian Vettel 1m25.049s (2011)

POLE LAP RECORD
Sebastian Vettel 1m25.049s (2011)

RACE LAP RECORD
Juan Pablo Montoya 1m24.770s (2005)

UK START TIMES

Friday 13 November

FP1 0800

FP2 1200

Saturday 14 November

FP3 0900

QUALIFYING 1200

Sunday 15 November

RACE 1010

CATCH THE RACE LIVE

SKY SPORTS F1

BBC RADIO 5 LIVE

HIGHLIGHTS

CHANNEL 4 1600

TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP

DRIVERS

1	Hamilton	282
2	Bottas	197
3	Verstappen	162
4	Ricciardo	95
5	Leclerc	85

CONSTRUCTORS

1	Mercedes	479
2	Red Bull	226
3	Renault	135
4	McLaren	134
5	Racing Point	134



RACE STATS

TURKISH GP WINNERS

2011	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2010	Lewis Hamilton	McLaren
2009	Jenson Button	Brawn
2008	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2007	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2006	Felipe Massa	Ferrari
2005	Kimi Raikkonen	McLaren



ISTANBUL PARK MASTERS

Top 10 points scorers for	F Massa	89
grands prix at	F Alonso	79
Istanbul Park. All	J Button	74
races converted	L Hamilton	65
to current	K Raikkonen	62
points system.	M Webber	59
	S Vettel	40
	N Rosberg	40
	R Kubica	30
	M Schumacher	28

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Another slippery challenge?

Istanbul's Turn 8 earned a reputation that belied its pedestrian moniker. Predicted low temperatures and a green track surface this weekend could ensure it still inspires awe

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

There are many corners that have gone down in Formula 1's folklore with significant adjectives attached: 'famous', 'fabulous', 'fearsome'. For Eau Rouge, Peraltada or Parabolica you can add 'evocative' to the descriptive cliché list. But that's only because they have proper names, something seemingly eschewed in current track construction.

Now, though, F1 is heading to another distantly familiar venue, which has a corner that has gained all the right adjectives despite its utterly uninspiring name. During Istanbul Park's initial seven-year stint on the F1 schedule, its 'Turn 8' complex understandably grabbed attention. This bumpy, four-apex, 'sweeping' section severely tests the drivers. As Istanbul Park is an anti-clockwise layout, it placed tremendous stress on their necks throughout this high-speed, left-hand 'blast'.

This weekend's Turkish Grand Prix will be F1's first since 2011, after the track dropped off the calendar as the organisers baulked at the escalating race-hosting fees. The layout is identical, save for a new surface, which was only completed in the past three weeks.

In the nine years that have passed since Sebastian Vettel won the most recent Turkish GP for Red Bull, a handful of categories have passed through. European Truck Racing made a sole visit in 2012, World Superbikes came a year later, then World Rallycross for its first two seasons. Largely, Istanbul Park has been used for trackdays.

"Formula 1's intra-team dynamics deserve particular attention this weekend"

Now, though, the faster, bigger, 'monstrous' F1 machines are in town, ready to test Turn 8 with all their packed-on downforce. This is likely to have a big impact on the 'challenge' of the sequence, even if they are expected to be flat-out from the off.

In 2011, the pole position time was a 1m25.049s, while the race lap record stands at 1m24.770s, from Juan Pablo Montoya at the inaugural 2005 event. That is very much under threat in 2020, but there are a few factors to consider when it comes to predicting how things will play out. For a start, the last race essentially came at the start of the Pirelli era, and the high-degradation proceedings that were desired for 2011. But that Turkish GP came in for a barrage of criticism. It was a four-stop affair, with 79 overtaking moves — up from 27 in 2010. The 'fragile' tyres were combined with the new-for-that-year DRS, which led to what Autosport called "a race

that lacked clear narrative". Now, Pirelli's rubber is generally more durable, even if it still needs significant tyre management. So, don't expect four stops, and in any case the tyre manufacturer has brought its hardest three compounds to use this weekend.

Two races ago, F1 rocked up in Portugal and found a 'fearsome' track featuring 'fabulous' evaluation changes. But it had also been recently resurfaced, which, allied to low temperatures all weekend, caused considerable consternation for the pack.

Pirelli motorsport boss Mario Isola says the brand-new asphalt at Istanbul is "less severe than we were expecting", so perhaps not as coarse. But it was the slippery surface oils that wreaked such havoc at the Algarve Circuit, where the drivers locked up and slid their way through practice and qualifying, with the race then featuring those dramatic early laps in the spitting rain. This weekend, temperatures are set to be even lower and there are no support categories to lay down additional rubber and clean up the racing line. F1 could therefore experience something similar this weekend, which may yet preserve Turn 8's mystique.

But Istanbul Park also has another reputation to uphold — its team-mate wars. This season is the 10th anniversary of Vettel's and Mark Webber's 'infamous' clash in the 2010 race, which also featured a superb battle between Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton, who went on to win. A year later, the then-McLaren team-mates were at it again, hindering their chances as they abused their tyres out of reasonable shape early on in Vettel's race of atonement. That event also featured Renault drivers Nick Heidfeld and Vitaly Petrov coming to blows in the final corners, which this weekend should also feature overtaking at the end of track's main straight.

F1's intra-team dynamics deserve particular attention this weekend. At Williams, George Russell needs to bounce back from his embarrassing safety car crash at Imola, where team-mate Nicholas Latifi impressed. The Haas drivers are out for themselves given they will soon be out of the squad, while Alfa Romeo's Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi will have to make the best of their inevitably split strategies to reach the points again.

AlphaTauri has a pair of drivers shining in 2020, but only one with a confirmed contract for 2021. The Renault team-mates are unbalanced in terms of points and podiums, while there's not a lot to split Carlos Sainz Jr and Lando Norris at McLaren. Racing Point really needs Lance Stroll to get back on terms with Sergio Perez's consistent points-scoring, while Ferrari must hope Vettel can do likewise with Charles Leclerc. At the head of the field, Alex Albon's fortunes will, as ever, be contrasted with Max Verstappen at Red Bull, with decision time on Albon's future now firmly in sight. And finally, at the new constructors' champion squad, a seven-time world champion can be crowned, unless Valtteri Bottas can deny Hamilton and Istanbul Park a 'history-making' moment. 🏆

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Why Yamaha's woes run deep

An awful European Grand Prix weekend, topped off by the docking of championship points, is symptomatic of the state it's got itself in

LEWIS DUNCAN

While Suzuki last weekend delighted in its first MotoGP 1-2 since 1982, and Joan Mir's maiden victory put him within touching distance of the title thanks to a 37-point lead after the European Grand Prix, Yamaha wallowed in despair after a miserable Valencia weekend.

Yamaha was forced to exceed Maverick Vinales's season engine allocation, meaning he was hit with a pitlane start. After recovering to 13th, his title hopes are basically over. This came after five members of the team were forced into COVID-19 isolation, with Vinales missing crew for the weekend. Fabio Quartararo struggled in all conditions and crashed on lap one, rejoining to finish 14th. His title hopes are all but gone now. And, for the first time since Valencia 2007, not one Yamaha rider finished in the top 10.

It was a humbling round just two weeks after Franco Morbidelli romped to Teruel victory. But Yamaha was mired in controversy before a wheel had been turned at Valencia, when an investigation by the FIM, motorcycle racing's governing body, found it had used illegal engines in the Spanish GP for all four of its riders. Yamaha's eight Spanish GP engines were found to have been fitted with valves not homologated with the sample engine pre-season. Yamaha claims this was a result of its current valve supplier discontinuing production of that part and the need to seek a new supplier.

Yamaha claims it fell into a grey area of the regulations, as it

“Yamaha has missed the widest open goal it will ever have. And Suzuki has left it far behind”

believed it could within the rules use valves of an identical spec from a secondary supplier. Reliability issues with its Spanish GP engines led to it making a request to the manufacturers' association to unseal its frozen motors to swap to the valves it had homologated, which is when questions started to be asked by its rivals.

Yamaha insists its mistake was an “internal oversight” and stresses that the valves in no way offered a performance advantage. But it was deemed by the FIM to have made a change to its engine without unanimous Motorcycle Sport Manufacturers Association approval and was docked 50 constructors' championship points, as well as 20 from the teams' standings, with Petronas SRT losing 37.

While the riders escaped punishment, Yamaha's mistake dealt a major blow. It had to withdraw the offending engines from the riders' allocation of five, leaving them with just three for the season from

the Andalusian round at the end of July (round two of 14), and with Vinales on only two having lost one to a failure in the Spanish GP.

Vinales's pitlane start for unwrapping a sixth engine last weekend is a direct result of Yamaha's error. Illegal valves, however, wasn't Yamaha's main issue. The engine in general is just weak, with Yamaha regularly the slowest manufacturer through speed traps on race weekends. And it's fragile, with the marque forced to reduce around 500rpm from all four riders' engines.

“For me the engine department is our first problem, because the performance is not fantastic and also the reliability is critical,” said Valentino Rossi.

Brute power isn't an inline four-cylinder engine's strength. But Suzuki uses the same concept as Yamaha, and it now leads all three championships after managing double podiums for Mir and Alex Rins in four of the past five rounds, and winning twice. Yamaha has more wins, with six between Quartararo (three), Morbidelli (two) and Vinales, but just four other top-three results.

The GSX-RR has had more power squeezed out of it in 2020, and it accelerates well. But the engine is just one factor. The Suzuki's engine complements its improved handling, and the bike seemingly has a very strong base set-up. The Yamaha can carry good corner speed when it's out on its own, but it doesn't accelerate well from the corners, it doesn't have the speed on the straights, and it is now lagging behind the Suzuki in terms of handling.

“My first laps with the 2020 bike in really dry conditions – the 2020 bike changed a lot from last year – and I didn't really feel like the bike was mine,” said former title favourite Quartararo. “When the bike is good from FP1, we make small changes and everything is perfect. But when you start and it's difficult, you are lost.”

Rossi added: “We expected a lot from the 2020 M1, but in reality we didn't make a big step.” Vinales was even more downcast, accusing Yamaha of “throwing away” title chances due to errors.

It seems, then, that for all the predictions pre-season pointing towards Quartararo being the one to really take the fight to Marc Marquez in 2020, he was always doomed to fail. Given Marquez's injury-enforced absence, Yamaha has missed the widest open goal it will ever have. And more troublingly, a much stronger, more efficient and better-working Suzuki force has left it far behind.

Yamaha's European GP weekend wasn't all bad, though. World Superbike rider Garrett Gerloff impressed on a Friday outing in place of Rossi as the Italian awaited a negative COVID test. He was 1.6 seconds off the pace on a bike he'd never ridden before, at a track he'd never seen and in iffy conditions, and has many pinning him for a MotoGP future. Perhaps fresh perspective from Gerloff could be key to Yamaha fixing its troubled bike... ❧

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YOUR SAY

Ickx was significantly faster than other competitors with much more experience of Bathurst. He also made it look easy

STUART FORBES

Another of Jacky Ickx's great drives

I've just read the article on Jacky Ickx's top 10 by Gary Watkins (Autosport Plus) and ask that you could pass on my appreciation for that and the top 10 LMP1 races.

Among his top 10 drives could have been added his win in 1977 at Bathurst. Ickx was co-driver to Allan Moffat in a Group C Ford Falcon XC Coupe, a massive lump of metal that despite being the best-prepared XC Coupe on the track would have been an evil thing to drive at the speeds that were achieved.

The XC had a 500bhp V8, with a four-speed gearbox. The brakes and tyres were barely up to the task and the car was derived from a road car with homologation requiring the sale of 500 cars to the public. The rules allowed very limited changes, and if I remember correctly none to the suspension.

Ickx got only a few hours' practice and yet when he got into the car on race day he was close to Moffat's own times and

significantly faster than other XC Coupe competitors with much more experience of both the track and car.

At that time we'd seen Derek Bell do magnificent things with Alfa GTVs at Bathurst, but seeing such a masterful drive of an 'open' class car was awe-inspiring. Ickx was critical to the win and he also made it look easy.

Stuart Forbes

By email

Taking your mind off lockdown

If looking for entertainment while in *Lockdown: The Sequel*, the FIA OK-Junior World Championship final in Portugal, on YouTube, is hugely entertaining. And one might even be, unknowingly, watching a future Formula 1 champion or two...

Graeme Innes-Johnstone

Elland, West Yorks

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

The eyes have it: Jenson Button's steely gaze back at Silverstone – albeit as a one-off. The 2009 F1 champion tells us about his passion to keep racing on **page 18**




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INSIGHT

WHY JENSON BUTTON STILL LOVES TO RACE • BTCC TITLE SHOWDOWN • DRIVING EXTREME E'S ELECTRIC OFF-ROAD MONSTER

WHY BUTTON'S MOTORSPORT JOURNEY IS FAR FROM OVER

*The 2009 world champion is now a team co-owner,
but his passion for driving is undiminished*

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP AND



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Four years have passed since the 2016 Brazilian Grand Prix, a race that is widely remembered for Max Verstappen's charge to the podium in horrendous conditions and Felipe Nasr battling into the points to save his Sauber team, while effectively sinking the Manor squad.

Jenson Button's drive to finish 16th and last at the track where he had clinched the 2009 world championship, as McLaren team-mate Fernando Alonso salvaged a point for 10th, barely registered as a footnote. But the penultimate race of his swansong F1 season (he would return for a final time at Monaco in 2017, subbing for Alonso when the Spaniard was given permission to skip F1's grandee race for the Indianapolis 500) served as proof to Button that he'd made the right decision in stepping away after 17 years.

In his book, *How to be an F1 driver*, Button revealed that he experienced the fear factor in Brazil for the first time in his career. Would it have been any different if he had been planning to stay on for 2017?

"It would have been completely different, definitely," he tells Autosport. "My head wasn't in it, and the stupid thing was, those were my conditions. Those were where I was at my best and I couldn't show that because I was too scared. That proved that it was the right time. I look at F1 now and think, 'I wish I'd done a couple more years,' but it's easy looking back and saying that because you forget that I was really tired at the end of it and mentally, just drained. I needed to get out.

"Should I have gone back and done a year or two? Maybe, but I've had so much fun racing in Japan — it was a lot more relaxed and more fun."

Fun has certainly been on the agenda ever since, as Button has taken on multiple pursuits crossing the full breadth of motorsport. Now based on the United States' west coast, he's remained in touch with current events in F1 through his work as a pundit for Sky, and expanded his horizons by spending two years racing Super GT for Honda in Japan — he won the 2018 title — as well as making his debut at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2018, and contesting the Baja 1000 off-road race last year. He's also embraced team co-ownership with the Jenson Team Rocket RJN squad and become a father for the first time. Now aged 40, his passion for motorsport burns as brightly as it ever did.

"I feel like I'm 20 years old still," he says. "The reactions are still there. There's just a few more wrinkles but that doesn't matter when you're driving a racing car."

It's precisely this passion that meant he was out racing one of his own team's McLaren 720S GT3s in the British GT Championship's final round at Silverstone last weekend. In a year dominated by the pandemic, Button's racing activities had largely been restricted to the virtual world

BUTTON'S F1 STATS

STARTS 306

WINS 15

POLES 8

FASTEST LAPS 8





until he teamed up with life-long friend and team co-owner Chris Buncombe “to blow the cobwebs out”. The pair finished 14th in a challenging outing hampered by a lack of pre-event testing.

Autosport meets with Button at a chilly Silverstone a day prior to his first test in the McLaren, not long before the UK’s second national lockdown is announced. He’s also brought along one of his title-winning Brawn chassis, decked out in its Abu Dhabi GP livery — so chosen because he raced it as a world champion, having wrapped up the title in the previous race at Interlagos — for a photoshoot with the McLaren GT3. It serves as a fitting illustration of then and now.

Button says team ownership and helping young talent progress is something he and Buncombe have “talked about for years”. Button’s father John was a regular on the British rallycross scene in the 1970s, >>



Lifelong friend Chris Buncombe is helping to steer Button in GT venture

finishing runner-up in the 1976 British championship, and Button Jr looked into the possibility of forming a rallycross team “out of passion really” after testing an Olsbergs MSE Honda Civic GRC at Sebring in January 2017. He even approached Alain Prost to see whether the four-time world champion would hypothetically be interested.

“They’re just amazing bits of kit,” says Button with a glint in his eye. “The aim was to have a team, but looking at the financials, the people that were involved at the time were manufacturers – Peugeot, VW – and they were putting in €10million-plus per year. You just can’t compete against that much money, so it wasn’t worth even putting our foot in the door.”

Conversation then turned to setting down roots in endurance racing. Buncombe’s long connection with RJN boss Bob Neville, whose team won the 2015 Blancpain Endurance Series title with Buncombe’s younger brother Alex as part of the driver line-up, was a logical port of call and a favourable alternative to starting from scratch. The renamed team campaigned a Honda NSX in the Silver Cup class of the GT World Challenge Europe last year before switching to McLaren this year, taking a late decision to focus attentions on British GT when the pandemic hit.

“Chris and I sat down with Bob and we thought this was a great partnership for the future, a fantastic base,” says Button. “These guys have won multiple championships in GT racing, they’ve experienced off-road racing, and that experience is so important in adapting to the new car, but also because of the people they know within the paddock and knowing the people running the series. It’s exciting because we have some good ideas that can help this team succeed.”

The team’s name is also significant, heralding a return of the Rocket name used by his father’s kart engine business, which won 11 British championships and supplied top names including a young Lewis Hamilton. After Button Sr died in 2014, Button

“I TESTED FOR DAYS WITH THE SUPER GT CAR AND I COULDN’T GET NEAR MY TEAM-MATE FOR A LONG TIME”

decided “it was a great way to keep the name going”.

“As soon as we announced the team, so many drivers mentioned on social media, ‘It’s great to see the Rocket name back, I remember racing with one of John’s engines’ or ‘I remember one of John’s engines beating me,’” says Button, who admits to still finding it “weird” that Jenson is in the name, having been overruled on its inclusion by Buncombe. “For me, the name of the team should be Rocket RJN to be fair, but it’s great to have it back. The idea is to go on to win other championships, British championships, European championships and world championships with that name.”

Rookie line-up James Baldwin and Michael O’Brien won on their GT3 debuts at Oulton Park and remained in mathematical title contention until last weekend’s finale, ultimately finishing fourth in a successful first year for the team with the 720S. While the day-to-day running is still headed up by Neville – Button jokes: “I definitely don’t sit down and discuss financials” – the world champion’s input is considerable when it really counts, on race weekends. Button attends every team debrief over Zoom “to hear what they’ve got to say when it’s fresh and discuss what could be better in terms of the car, the team but also where the drivers feel they can be better in themselves, because that’s where my strength is”.

“I mean, we do talk about [financials], quite a bit actually,” he clarifies. “We talk regularly about moving forward with whether and where we’re



Celebrating first F1 win with dad John; right: victory in China, 2010



BUTTON ON MODERN F1

When Autosport sat down with Jenson Button, it came one day after Lewis Hamilton broke Michael Schumacher's all-time Formula 1 wins record at the Portuguese Grand Prix. His crushing defeat of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas, by 26 seconds, was his 92st F1 victory and further strengthened his case to be considered as one of motorsport's greatest drivers. Button acknowledges that his McLaren team-mate between 2010 and 2012 is currently "the best driver in the world", but says the greatest-of-all-time debate is "a pointless conversation".

"How can you compare [Juan Manuel] Fangio who drove a car that had a stick-shift and no seatbelts to a guy that's racing a car that does 230mph and can go through Copse flat-out, so they don't even have to think?" says Button. "In Formula 1 you can't compare and there's really no point."

"All you can say is [Hamilton] has done the best job he can and the team has done a fantastic job. They've not been beaten in the hybrid era and Lewis has won all but one championship with them in the hybrid era. I don't see that changing either."

Button believes Mercedes' advantage beyond the next major rules change set to be introduced in 2022 will remain intact, despite the impending cost cap and potential for major shake-ups in the order such as the one Brawn used to deliver Button the 2009 world title. With his former team boss now in charge of F1, Button has confidence that the new regulations can create the desired improvement in the on-track spectacle, and says he's not concerned by the prospect of 2022 cars being much slower.

"No one cares, a few months in no one is going to notice," he says. "People notice the sound more than the speed. The important thing is that we can have proper racing, so we need less downforce. I think Ross Brawn is doing a great job of understanding what we need from the sport."



going to be racing or with what cars, in what category. I would say I'm probably more involved than people think. There's no point having your name on something unless it's great, and I want this team to be successful. It already has been for years, but now we've got us two a bit more involved, we hope to help this team succeed even more."

In the short term, Button is eyeing a return to European competition in the GT World Challenge, but his long-term ambition is to partner with a manufacturer and race at the Le Mans 24 Hours, which he labels "the biggest motor race in the world". While conceding that currently "the World Endurance Championship isn't as competitive as you'd like it to be" — a season-low grid of 24 cars, including just two LMP1s, is expected for the Bahrain finale this weekend — brighter times are expected for sportscar racing in the future. The latterly moribund LMP1 era will be replaced by Le Mans Hypercar next year, with Peugeot set to join Toyota from 2022. There is also hope that lower costs involved in the LMDh ruleset, which will allow the same LMP2-based cars to compete in both the WEC and IMSA SportsCar Championship from 2023, will entice manufacturers to challenge for an outright Le Mans victory.

"That has to be the aim for the future — if you're in endurance racing, you want to go to Le Mans," Button says. "The dream obviously would be for this team to race at Le Mans and for me to be in the car when that happens. I might be too old by then, I'll have to wait and see."

Button's remark shows he is aware that he has a shelf-life as a driver, but he is determined to make full use of the years ahead to continue his personal mission, outlined in his aforementioned book, to become the "complete driver".

His experiences outside the F1 bubble have reinforced the point that "there's always good drivers wherever you go", and that the skillset required to be quick in F1 — which is "very different to anything else" — has relatively little in common with other disciplines.

"When you watch an F1 car and you compare it to anything else, it's another level," he says. "It would embarrass any GT car on the circuit, especially now. A lot of the corners here [at Silverstone] are tough corners in a GT car, but you don't even lift in F1. Copse, it's easy flat, you don't even think about lifting — that's just madness. So, you learn certain things but weight transfer is not one of them, and understanding suspension travel isn't one of them either."

All of which meant Super GT took some getting used to at first, not helped by having to wait until team-mate Naoki Yamamoto had finished debriefing with the engineers in Japanese first. "I'd be sat there like a lemon a bit, the number two driver!" he jokes.

"Most of the time, people go there thinking they're going to kick ass, and they get destroyed by someone they've never heard of before," Button continues. "I tested for days with the Super GT car and I couldn't get near my team-mate for a long time, just because of the weight transfer and >>>



THE 'WINGMAN' GUIDING BUTTON'S GT JOURNEY

It's perhaps fitting that, while RJN founder Bob Neville and Jenson Button are immediately identifiable partners in Jenson Team Rocket RJN, you have to look more closely to view Chris Buncombe's involvement behind the scenes.

A core part of 'Team Button' during his Formula 1 career, Buncombe (left) has been friends with the 2009 world champion "since we were 10 years old" in karts – although always competing in different age brackets – before Button's rapid ascent of the single-seater ladder led him to F1 in 2000.

"It's an incredible personal relationship alongside somebody that I've known as a kid, both Somerset boys, to then live the motorsport dream and travel the world," Buncombe says. "We've spent such incredible times together through early years of him getting into F1 and then living through those 17 years when I had a business as well, and that naturally evolved through being a bit of a wingman at races."

In many respects, it's a role he continues to hold now since he accompanied and guided Button on the start of his foray into endurance racing.

Buncombe's own racing career has been spent in

sportscars, including spells in the Maserati MC12 and Lola Aston Martin LMP1. His CV counts an LMP2 class win at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2007 but is, by Buncombe's own admission, "very bitty". After 2011, he had a seven-year spell concentrating on his events and sponsorship activation business, during which he only raced once. That changed when, at Neville's suggestion, Buncombe applied for a double driver-grading downgrade from Gold to Bronze for 2018, which created a sudden demand for his services from GT World Challenge teams.

Still, his experience means Buncombe has been well-placed to steer Button through the pitfalls of the endurance racing word, and has given him a strong idea of how a well-run team should look.

"There are not many people that know how to go about GT racing better than Bob," Buncombe says, "so we're not changing the way it operates at all. What Jenson and I have brought to the organisation is more about wanting to take the team to its next chapter, and hopefully we can bring something to that."

the feel of it. We didn't have tyre warmers either, which didn't help.

"But then I'd jump in the LMP1 car and I was on the pace on the first day. I'm used to the high downforce, carrying lots of speed, good change of direction. I can really find the limit with that, but when the car is heavier it's a lot more difficult. That's why it's exciting, it's more of a challenge."

Although his preliminary foray at Le Mans with SMP Racing's catchily titled BR Engineering BR1-AER was a disappointment – the car he shared with Vitaly Petrov and Mikhail Aleshin was delayed for the best part of three hours by an engine sensor issue before the end of the first hour, leading to a hard night of slog for the prospect of little reward before, cruelly, the engine failed in the final hour – it was not an entirely wasted experience. Knowing that his victory prospects against the Toyota juggernaut were slim, Button used the event as an opportunity to soak up everything that makes it unique and prepare for a return "with a proper team to fight for glory in the future". When that return will be, he doesn't know.

"I want to be racing in something next year and the idea is still to race at Le Mans in a competitive car and go for the outright win," he says. "I obviously raced there in 2018 and the whole idea was to get the experience to race in the future with manufacturers when they came back into the sport. COVID hasn't helped that, but I think we'll see over the next couple of years a lot of good manufacturers that are interested."

Compared to the relative order of F1, where all 20 drivers are known to each other, Le Mans is an altogether different challenge.

"There's 55-odd cars and each one has three drivers in it, so it's crazy when you go to the drivers' briefing and you only know 20% of the drivers or less!" he says. "That was an unusual experience for me getting in there as an F1 world champion, racing against guys that I'd never heard of before, and amateurs, but the whole week was awesome, I loved it."

"It was such a special experience working with the drivers and developing a car and wanting them to be as quick as you if not quicker. You're going through the heat of the day to the cold of the night, sunset, sunrise, and the car changing from hour one to hour 23 because everything is getting a bit tired. Going there, I have that experience already, but I would still like to have more

JEP



experience. If I could race there next year, and if it was the right situation, I would – if we could find that situation.”

Racing in IMSA might appear an obvious avenue to do so, “but finding the right situation is tricky” due to a limited number of manufacturers also competing at Le Mans. Current Daytona Prototype international cars are not eligible for the French classic, although the next-generation machines from 2023 will be.

“We don’t know who’s going to be involved,” Button says. “I hope there are six or seven manufacturers racing around the world in that category, and if that’s the case then I’ll jump at the chance to get in something. I’m always keeping my eyes open for opportunities in endurance racing.”

In the meantime, Button is planning a return to off-road racing – “The only time I’ve ever paid for racing”, he laughs – in March in the Mint 400 in the Nevada desert. Learning how to traverse the big bumps at speed is a world away from negotiating Copse, Maggotts and Becketts, but is all part of his quest to have fun and learn at the same time.

“You go slower and you hit them harder, so it’s just another world,” he says. “It’s like when you get in a downforce car for the first time and you think, ‘I can’t go through the corner that quick.’ But the quicker you go, the more downforce you get and the easier it is.”

Button’s smile widens as he recalls racing in the desert on the Baja, where some fans will “direct you knowing that they’ve made a trap, they’ve made a massive jump that you hit and go 20 feet in the air, and you might not land it either. It’s a lawless race,” he grins.

So how close is he to achieving his stated aim?

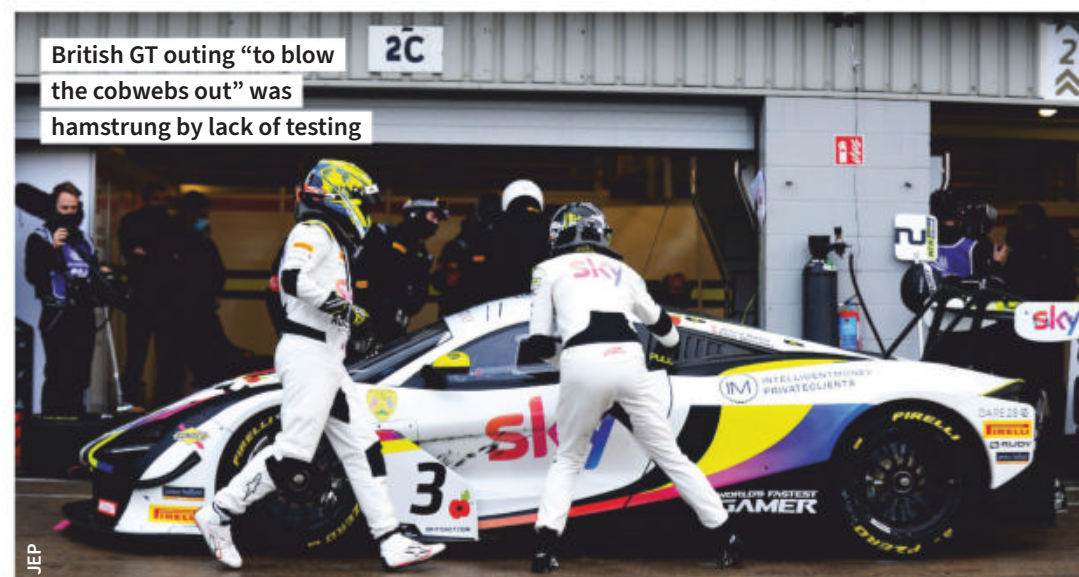
“I’M ALWAYS GOING TO KEEP LEARNING. THERE’S SO MUCH I WANT TO DO THAT I’LL RUN OUT OF YEARS”

“There’s so much to learn still,” he says. “I think when I run out of things to learn, I’ll stop racing, but there are so many different categories that have different skillsets that you need to succeed. It’s all driving a car, but you still have to learn other things to find that extra few tenths in a different series.

“That’s why racing in Baja was so fun because it’s completely different. I’m still shit at driving a Baja truck, but I’m getting better. Compared to the best in the world, I’m miles off the pace, but it’s learning what suspension can do and weight transfer, it’s definitely unlocking something which is giving me more experience when I race in something else.

“I’m still not at my maximum and I never will be. I’m always going to keep learning and that’s why it’s so exciting. There’s so much I want to do that I will run out of years, that’s the biggest issue. The great thing about the off-roading is you can do it until you’re 70 and still be competitive, it’s whether you just switch your brain off when you go over the big bumps...”

Somehow, it seems Jenson Button isn’t going to be sliding quietly off into the California sunset. 🌅



THE SHOWDOWN EVERYONE WANTED

This hasn't been the easiest of years for anyone, but one thing has remained the same: a gripping BTCC title fight. This is what the five contenders are saying about it

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP





Back row: Tom Ingram, Rory Butcher;
front row: Dan Cammish, Ash
Sutton, Colin Turkington



Well, we made it. During the painful year of 2020, the coronavirus pandemic saw to it that the British Touring Car Championship season couldn't kick off until August, and at no point have crowds been admitted to circuits due to the series' status as Elite Sport. But, with eight rounds down, that status has saved the day regarding the season finale. Elite Sport events are exempt under the November lockdown, and that means five drivers can fight it out this weekend on the Brands Hatch Indy Circuit.

Four-time champion Colin Turkington leads the way in his West Surrey Racing-run BMW 330i M Sport, but Ash Sutton is just nine points adrift in this, his first campaign with the Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50, run by his old pals at the BMR Engineering concern. This rear-wheel-drive pair are challenged by front-wheel-drive opposition in the forms of Dan Cammish (Team Dynamics-run Honda Civic Type R), Tom Ingram (Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla) and Rory Butcher (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus). Cammish is 25 points behind Turkington, Ingram is 34 off the summit, and Butcher only has the slenderest of mathematical chances – he's 63 off the top with 67 available.

Don't forget, Turkington goes into the weekend with the maximum 60kg of success ballast aboard his BMW, with Sutton on 54kg, Cammish on 48kg, Ingram on 42kg and Butcher on 36kg. This will be changed for race two depending on the result of the opener, and again for the reversed-grid race three based on the result of the second counter. So if, say, Sutton is 15 points (with 20 for a win) behind Turkington going into the final race, but is starting up at the front with a relatively unballasted Infiniti, and Turkington is carrying weight from the wrong end of the top 10, then there's still everything to play for.

It's not to be missed on ITV4. But first, what do the five men in the hunt have to say about it?

How do you rate your chances of the championship?

COLIN TURKINGTON My chances are, I would say, as good as anybody's. I don't believe the odds are stacked in anyone's favour. I go in with a slender advantage, but I hope my chances are strong because I feel massively motivated to try and win again, and just as hungry as ever before. Whether that's enough to clinch the crown I don't know, but I go with good confidence.

ASH SUTTON Obviously I rate them quite highly. I'm the closest one to taking it off Colin out of all of us. We've seen over the past few meetings how quickly it can change and you never know what's round the corner in British Touring Cars. But I'm in a very good position. I'm in my comfortable position where we're always hunting rather than being the prey, shall we say. So yeah, I think we've got a very good chance.

DAN CAMMISH Good question. To be honest I feel like I'm in the hands of others. I think we've got a sensible chance, but I need a bit of luck. I really need Colin and Ash to have a non-score in at least one race. A non-score from those two in one race, and I've got a good chance. Without it, I think we're just a little bit too far away.

TOM INGRAM Outsider, I think is the easiest way to say it. But with being an outsider, it actually puts a lot less pressure on us for the weekend, because we need everyone else to mess up. We just have to focus on doing the best job we can, and if it's to be it's to be, and if it's not it's not. We can only control our own destiny. We'll just focus on that.

RORY BUTCHER I'm not out there to win this championship – the gap in points has become too big after a tough Croft and Silverstone. It's a fight that's most likely going to come down to Ash Sutton and Colin Turkington. My goal is to finish the season on a high and bag some good results for the team to go into the winter. With a good weekend I can definitely challenge for fourth or even third overall.

Which weekend has been most important to boosting you into a good championship position?

CT That's an easy one – definitely Snetterton [pole, two wins and a third]. That was critical for me a) to make sure I went into the Brands Hatch final still in with a good shout, and b) just rebounding after a tough weekend at Croft. It's not easy lifting yourself again, and with any sport confidence plays a big part. It was massively >>

important. To come back in such style with a 60-point weekend was a nice signal of intent that I haven't gone away, and that I'm back and we're hungry to win.

AS Knockhill was a solid weekend in terms of race one and two – we came away with perfect points from those. But I think ultimately the most important one was probably Silverstone, where we had to have that comeback in race three. After the puncture in race two, to come back in race three was the make-or-break to staying in the hunt to some extent. I did a fair amount of overtaking in that one, that's for sure!

DC I think Silverstone [a win, a second and a fourth] probably. The last two years I've been to Silverstone and to be honest I've struggled a little bit. I've just never felt it's been my best track, even comparative to Matt [Neal, team-mate]. Matt's usually quicker than me there. This year I went there determined to learn and do the best job I could. I really didn't expect to put it on pole and have such a strong weekend, with I think my highest ever points tally.

TI Ooh that's a difficult one. It was probably Silverstone that had the opportunity to be, but being realistic it was Thruxton, with some mega results. That was particularly good, with two wins. That was when we felt the momentum really started.

RB Hard to say. Potentially it might have been some of the weekends in the middle of the year. We've got a new car in the Ford Focus ST which really hit the ground running, but we hadn't been to every single circuit yet, and there were three or four circuits in a row where we arrived and we weren't quite in the window in FP1. As a team we just worked our way through and were competitive at the end, allowing me to score big points. At the same time you've got to look at the weekends where I bagged multiple podiums, like Oulton Park and Donington at the start of the year. Those definitely gave me a foundation of points.

And which weekend do you look at as 'the one that got away'?

CT Again easy – Croft. I do believe some things happen for a reason, and I left Croft disappointed that I hadn't got more out of the weekend, but sometimes you have to learn a lesson. It's never nice going through that experience, but I think that the mistake I made at the beginning of race two is hopefully something I won't repeat for a while. It's better that something happens like that three weekends from the end and not on the final race weekend.

AS Croft. Yeah, Croft... An error from myself in race two [when a collision with Jake Hill caused a puncture]. Colin was out of the race, and we could be chatting about a very different picture right now if I'd maybe managed the situation slightly better. So yeah, I've lived and learned from that one.

DC No doubt Brands GP. I was on for a podium in race two when the power-steering fuse came out, and then in race three the engine expired when I probably would have wound up sixth or seventh at worst. For me that was a real missed opportunity, because we were very quick and we really could have done without that.

TI Silverstone. Unfortunately motorsport can be such a cruel mistress at times – it gives with one hand, and it snatches away with the other.

RB There's a couple of weekends. At Brands Hatch, I had two punctures – I was leading one race and in the other I was in third. So that definitely dented my season. And you then look at Silverstone, getting turned around on lap one of race two, and then obviously having the spectacular shunt in race three, and at Croft again getting turned around in race two. And I need to acknowledge and learn from the mistakes I've made which have hurt my chances.

What's your approach to the final weekend of the season?

CT These are things I consider a lot – what's the best way to approach it? And in the end I always remember when I was team-mates with Anthony Reid back in the MG days, and he said "attack is the best form of defence". So I think you have to have that mentality of going forward, no matter where you are. I'm leading the points but it's not a buffer I can rely on. It's not possible just to drive round and consolidate and score points; »



“WHEN I WAS TEAM-MATES WITH ANTHONY REID, HE SAID ‘ATTACK IS THE BEST FORM OF DEFENCE’”



Turkington was a
double winner
at Snetterton...



Crucial podium
for Sutton came
at Silverstone...



**“WE COULD BE CHATTING ABOUT
A VERY DIFFERENT PICTURE IF
I’D MANAGED CROFT BETTER”**

THE OTHER CHAMPIONSHIPS



THERE ARE FOUR MORE TITLES UP FOR GRABS AT BRANDS

Even if Colin Turkington doesn't win the British Touring Car Championship title, there should be some celebrations at Brands Hatch this weekend within the pit garage of BMW squad West Surrey Racing, which is in the box seat to win the manufacturers' and teams' crowns.

There have been only three manufacturer BTCC teams in 2020, and one of those – Toyota – is represented by just a single car, so kudos to Tom Ingram for Toyota's points score, which is just a smidgen under half of BMW's total. As it is, Turkington and Tom Oliphant have racked up a 48-point advantage going into Brands over Honda duo Dan Cammish and Matt Neal. There are 111 points on the table here – 37 in each race – so it could all be over in Munich's favour by the end of race two.

Similarly, WSR, operating as Team BMW, is in front in the teams' championship courtesy of Turkington and Oliphant. Honda squad Team Dynamics, under the name of Halfords Yuasa Racing, is 67 points adrift in this contest due to the efforts of Cammish and Neal. No one else is in the picture, and this one could be settled in Sunday's opener.

Ash Sutton has already clinched the independent drivers' championship, and it's his Infiniti-equipped Laser Tools Racing squad that is in front in the independent teams' standings, with Sutton and Aiden Moffat bringing home the points. But Motorbase Performance, thanks mainly to the efforts of Rory Butcher and Ollie Jackson, is just 24 points behind, so the Ford team could take it right down to the final race. Only 60 points – 20 per race – are on the table in this competition, as it's only each team's best finisher that scores.

Finally, there's been heartbreak in the Jack Sears Trophy, for drivers who had never scored an overall BTCC podium before the 2020 season. Bobby Thompson's massive shunt – and resulting concussion – in the Trade Price Cars Audi at Croft has not only ruled him out of Snetterton, where he lost the series lead, but also Brands. It's therefore a four-way fight, with BTC Racing Honda driver Michael Cress (above) leading Carl Boardley (Team Hard BMW) by 11 points, improving BTCC sophomore Sam Osborne (MB Motorsport Honda) by 25, and last-minute series rookie Jack Butel (Ciceley Motorsport Mercedes) by 39, with 60 available.

**“KUDOS TO INGRAM
FOR TOYOTA’S
SCORE, WHICH IS
JUST A SMIDGEN
UNDER HALF BMW’S”**

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**NO ADS.
JUST MORE
PERFORMANCE**



“I SHOULD HAVE HAD A POLE POSITION THERE ON MY DEBUT, BUT MISSED THE BLOODY RED LIGHT”

you have to be going forwards otherwise you're going backwards.

AS Full attack, if I'm honest. Obviously I'm gunning for my second title, and I've got some great competition. It's not going to be easy, that's for sure. But I'm full guns blazing, we've got nothing to lose, and there's only one winner at the end of the day.

DC I can't really change my approach. Really I've got nothing to lose now. There's no prizes for second place. Of course I'd like to be on the [championship] podium at the end of the year, but even then is there a podium as such? People only remember the winner! It's a matter of I'll give my absolute best. All I can do is qualify well and then race my heart out from there.

TI No different to any other weekend to be honest. We're in the passenger seat with it really. I'll just do my normal race weekend, which is go and attack and give it our all. It's not like I can think about being conservative, or thinking if there's a third I'll bank a third. Given the points scenario, I have to be thinking of first, not third, which at this stage of the year you don't really want to be doing of course.

RB We've done a lot of testing around that track. I love the circuit and so do Motorbase. Realistically I can still fight for third or fourth, but I'm just approaching it as I usually do, trying to maximise and attack every session.

Who or what are you most worried about?

CT Probably the weather, purely because it can have such a big influence on the outcome. I would prefer stable conditions, whether that be wet or dry, and not somewhere in the middle. And maybe Dick Bennetts [WSR boss] if I don't win! *[Not Matt Neal?]* He does tend to be a factor in any of the season finals with me! Who knows?

AS Qualifying has always been our trickiest point. We can never match the pace of, shall we say, the manufacturers. We're always there or thereabouts, but it's just that's going to be the most important part of the whole weekend in my opinion. Free practice is an hour long, so you're not losing out too much on time, you just don't get as much time to potentially make a big set-up change. All of that plays a big part into having a good qualifying – and that's going to be the key.

DC My biggest worry is that we're genuinely not quick enough. I'm not worried about other drivers or anything like that. My worry is that we just won't have the out and out performance that we need. A bit like Snetterton, where we were just a distant fifth or sixth on the day.

TI Weather conditions I think. Given we're going to Brands Hatch Indy, which is not renowned as a high-grip surface, when it's going to be minus 20 with thick snow on the ground, I think it's going to be quite a weekend!

RB Probably the bloody weather! Mid-November at Brands Hatch, you just don't know what the hell's going to happen.



How does Brands Hatch Indy Circuit suit you and your car?

CT It's always been a good circuit for West Surrey, for the BMWs. But the BTCC final is a completely separate event from any other race. It almost doesn't matter which track we're on because the event is a law unto itself. It's such a strange and difficult day on so many levels. It just happens to be the bit of Tarmac where the season final will be played out. I'm not sure whether it even favours front-wheel drive or rear-wheel drive. I'm looking forward to it because the target you set yourself at the beginning of the season is to get to the final with a chance, and it's just a privilege to be involved. In normal years when you have 40,000 people there it's just such a magical day, and you feel that the eyes of the world are on you and the championship, and that could well be the case this weekend, because the country is in lockdown and a lot of people will be interested to see what happens. It's great that we've been able to continue on and complete the season and give the fans a showdown. I think everybody wants to see it. So just try and enjoy the occasion, that's important for me as well, because you don't always get these opportunities. It's important to try and remember to smile and enjoy it for what it is.

AS All we can really do is look at sector one from the Brands GP circuit. We were fairly strong in that sector, so we've only got to hook up the other half of the track and we should hopefully be there or thereabouts. But we've never taken the car around there, it's the smallest circuit on the calendar, it's tight and twisty. Some say Knockhill is very similar, but Knockhill has got a lot of undulation changes, so the car set-up is very different [soft, which suits the Infiniti]. So it's an unknown quantity for us.

DC In two years at Brands Indy we've basically had very average days, usually dictated by the weather and just getting the wrong side of it, wrong decisions. Having said that, I should have had a pole position there on my debut, but I missed the bloody red light [for the weighbridge]. The car can work well, I can get it round. It's a matter of doing the best job we can with the weight.

TI Historically it's been a good circuit for is. It's the circuit I got my first pole and my first win at, so it holds quite good memories for us. Last year we weren't particularly strong but we were at the start of the new car so it was hard to tell. Also, when we go to Brands Indy we usually have no weight, and for the first time I can remember we're all going to be having qualifying there with weight on, and seeing who's going to be where. I enjoy the circuit. I like the challenge of the shorter circuits because you've got to get everything absolutely right.

RB I think it's going to be good to the car. We've done quite a chunk of testing there, our base set-up has all come from Brands Hatch. I think we'll be in a good position, and with only one FP session it's important that we do arrive there with a car that hits the ground running. >>



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Thruxton success
catapulted Ingram
into contention



“WE’RE A LITTLE BIT LIGHTER, SO
WE’RE IN THE BEST PLACE FROM A
PERFORMANCE POINT OF VIEW”

How will wet or cold weather affect your chances?

CT You know, when you reflect back to Snetterton, I think front and rear-wheel drive, we all found it difficult to get tyre temperatures. I think all cars are in the same boat on that one. We’re trying to get heat in the fronts, and front-wheel drive are trying to get it in the rears. We both have our challenges.

AS If it’s wet we seem to thrive, if it’s damp and we’re on slicks it’s not an ideal situation for any rear-wheel-drive car, and then in the dry I think it’s going to favour a front-wheel-drive car full stop. But I think we should be in the mix – it’s just having the ballast that we’ve got on board [that will have a bigger effect].

DC In the full wet I don’t think there’s much in the front and rear-wheel-drive battle, but in the greasy conditions it’s really advantage front-wheel drive. The cold temperatures, certainly the front-wheel drive might have an advantage because we can bring the tyres up to temperature a bit quicker. It’s going to be nip and tuck, isn’t it?

TI It shouldn’t be as much of a surprise to us as it was at Snetterton.



“ASH WILL BE STRONG ON RACE DAY,
SO IT WILL COME DOWN TO THE
WIRE. I CAN’T PUT MONEY ON IT”

However, when we go to Brands I think we’ll all be a little bit more dialled in to the colder conditions, and come wet or dry I think we’ve got a very strong car. We’re also a little bit lighter [less ballast] than those around us in the championship hunt, so it feels like we’re in the best place from a performance point of view.

RB I’m not too concerned either way. I think the car will be good in the dry, and in the wet it’s good around there. With the weather, the worst part is really the decision-making if it’s changeable, when it’s that toss-up – nobody likes that.

Who do you think will win the championship?

CT I think the only way I can answer is that I expect the champion to be one of the five contenders! I can’t be arrogant and say I expect myself to win; I’m going to Brands believing that I *can* win. I think that for me is an important step: to believe that you can do it, otherwise the job will be even harder.

AS I’d like to say myself! I’m not going to be choosing anyone else – I don’t want anyone else to win it! Expectations are just something we can’t really rely on in this championship in my opinion.

DC Er, that’s a tough one. I think it’ll either be by Ash or myself! Looking at Colin’s past history, he tends to have quite a tough last day, but usually he’s got a buffer that he’s far enough in front that even if he has a bit of an off day he still wins. This year he doesn’t have much of a buffer at all, at least to Ash, and Ash’ll come out swinging. He’s going to be absolutely so fired up for it, and we haven’t really seen those two race each other properly this year. I think we might be about to though, and that might just play into my hands.

TI Ooh, I wouldn’t put it past Colin to be honest – he’s been there 19 times already! He knows the script, he knows the score. I wouldn’t put it past Ash to try his absolute utmost of course, but will Colin drop the ball? Er, he has done a couple of times over the past couple of years, but I don’t think he’ll do it this year.

RB It could go so many different ways. The way I see it is Ash is going to be very much on the attack. Potentially Turkington and the BMW have a slightly better performance in qualifying, and will give themselves a good chance, but Ash will be strong come race day, so it will come down to the wire. I honestly can’t put my money on it. 🍀

NEXT WEEK

BTCC REPORT 19 NOVEMBER ISSUE

Don’t miss our full report on the British Touring Car season finale at Brands Hatch. This issue will also include WEC coverage, plus the Sebring 12 Hours.

A VOYAGE INTO ELECTRICAL WIZARDRY

Autosport headed to the South of France to sample the ODYSSEY 21 – the titanic 550bhp machine underpinning Alejandro Agag’s latest electric venture

HAL RIDGE

PHOTOGRAPHY CHARLY LOPEZ AND TIERNAY OLIVER

For decades, World Rally Championship and Dakar Rally teams have used the easily accessible Chateau de Lastours facility in the South of France as the roughest of proving grounds to put fledgling competition creations through their paces. Think Ford Focus WRC, Hyundai i20 WRC and Peugeot 2008 DKR to name but a few. Those machines have gone on to succeed in some of the harshest terrains on the planet, after first going through this very development school.

It’s therefore fitting that the major initial running of the new ODYSSEY 21 E-SUV – the spec car that will be campaigned in the nascent all-electric Extreme E off-road racing championship – has been undertaken on those same gravel roads.

The inaugural 2021 XE calendar will visit five locations:

Saudi Arabia (Desert X-Prix), Senegal (Ocean X-Prix), Greenland (Arctic X-Prix), Brazil (Amazon X-Prix) and Argentina (Glacier X-Prix). Each type of terrain will pose challenges that cannot be exactly mirrored, and each round will mark some of the most remote top-flight races ever held. It’s all part of XE’s bid to highlight areas that have been hit hardest by the climate crisis. So, the chateau’s roads have been put to use to plan for as many eventualities as possible.

Feeding the development of the ODYSSEY 21 – conceived by Spark Racing Technology, maker of the spec Formula E chassis – there’s been input from a raft of drivers. World Rally, World Rallycross and FE champions plus Formula 1 race winners have all had their turns behind the wheel. Last month, just days after Mercedes grand prix racer Valtteri Bottas and WRC legend Sebastien Loeb had occupied the same seat, Autosport had the chance to sample this new racer.

The test took place on a loose-surface track in the foothills of the Chateau de Lastours site. Of the many top-class drivers that ran during the official test week, only a select few actually took to the rough rally raid-style stages.

On arrival at the venue in the dark, there’s chance for a quick



recce of the circuit. On the way down the access track, it’s time to slow to a crawl in Europcar’s cheapest rental hatchback to negotiate three huge bulges in the road, which cover drainage pipes under the surface.

The sun rises, we’re aboard the ODYSSEY 21 just an hour later, and the 2.3-metres-wide car rides over

the trio of mounds in the manner that a Range Rover would disregard urban speed bumps. It gives a small glimpse into the XE machine’s all-terrain capabilities.

With an identical 250kW motor front and rear, and a Williams Advanced Engineering-developed 800v Lithium-ion battery pack sitting behind the driver’s compartment, the ODYSSEY 21 delivers 400kW (536bhp), can reach 60mph in less than



4.5 seconds, and climb gradients of up to 130%.

Each round of the maiden campaign will feature different surfaces, from loose sand to boulders and everything in between. SRT had a clean sheet of paper to design the ODYSSEY 21, albeit steered somewhat by XE and FE co-founder Alejandro Agag and his team's vision.

Without rules to follow, and led by engineer Theo Gouzin, SRT evaluated a Safari Rally-style car concept. But as plans for the series' nature matured, the French firm went for a cross-country/Dakar/rally raid-type platform instead. And while Dakar rules seek parity between two and four-wheel-drive machines by giving technical benefits such as increased suspension travel and tyre size to the two-wheel-drive cars, SRT cherry-picked the best from a range of rulesets to create the ultimate electric off-road racer.

With one pedestrian rental-car lap of experience under

“THE JAW-DROPPING TORQUE DELIVERY OF EV POWERTRAINS NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE”

the belt, and having glanced briefly at an onboard with reigning World RX champion Timmy Hansen at the wheel from a few days earlier, Autosport heads out on track.

The jaw-dropping torque delivery of EV powertrains never ceases to amaze, although it's comparable to the electric rallycross car Autosport has been lucky enough to sample before. Coupled with the ODYSSEY 21's sophisticated torque distribution system >>

working underneath, even a ginger application of the right pedal results in the car hurtling through the first right-left kink on the circuit. The rear immediately steps out as the purpose-made Continental tyres scabble for traction.

The course is scattered with a range of surfaces, from clean lines thanks to a week's worth of running, to rougher gravel then slimy mud. The area has been drenched by heavy overnight rain.

Driving down from the workshop area to the track, there is

“IT’S POSSIBLE TO HOLD A LONG DRIFT AROUND THE TRACK’S MOST OPEN OF HAIRPINS ONE-HANDED”

a chance to get a slight feel of the rock-solid, non-servo-assisted brake pedal. But now pressing on, both the stopping performance from the six-pot anchors and the feedback through the pedal – slowing from higher speed for the first time into a left-hand hairpin – is seriously impressive.

With the dust of a few days earlier a distant memory, this corner is now home to a substantial puddle right on turn-in. Contact with the water pushes a bow wave over the front of the car, despite its height off the ground, and over the windscreen. Although the splashy moment is indicative of the kind of visibility that can be expected on events next year, what’s less realistic is the need to slow to a crawl to fumble for the wiper button on the dash. It’s a safe bet the proper XE drivers won’t have such problems.

Vision restored, it’s back under way. The first lap is just about finding our feet, the noise from the direct-drive



powertrain, single-speed transmission and tyres on the road making the interior anything but silent, despite the perception of electric motorsport machinery.

The ride is smooth, thanks to the 350mm of soft suspension travel and huge sidewalls of the tyres, but the chassis feels taut too, despite the centre of gravity being far higher than anything Autosport has driven before.

The traction provided by the 37-inch rubber is very impressive and the tyres give a satisfying judder as they search for grip on the firmer sections of track. They also allow the car to slide sideways nicely on the exit of the medium-speed corners. With its single-speed drivetrain, the ODYSSEY 21 serenely glides its way down the straights, progressively pushing the driver back into the seat, without the jolt of gearchanges.

In the very tight low-speed corners during the opening laps,

WHY F1 CHAMPIONS HAVE ENTERED XE



That Extreme E has committed to addressing the climate crisis as an intrinsic part of its concept is what’s responsible for attracting Formula 1 world champions Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg into the fold as team owners with X44 and Rosberg Xtreme Racing.

Hamilton’s efforts in highlighting diversification in the sport have made the headlines this year while, since his shock departure from F1 after his title-winning campaign in 2016, Rosberg has become an environmental entrepreneur.

They’re not the only big names. Volkswagen Group member Cupra becomes the first manufacturer directly involved by giving technical support to the Abt concern. Zak Brown and Michael Andretti are in partnership at Andretti United, while Chip

Ganassi and Jean-Eric Vergne are also heading up XE squads.

In addition, the XE paddock will be transported around the world on the freshly revamped St Helena cargo ship, while minimal personnel will be on site at the closed-door events to keep travel as low as possible in the series’ bid to be carbon positive.

Electricity for the race cars will be generated on site by hydrogen fuel cells developed in the UK. Possibly the most critical, XE will work to support local communities in environmental, social and conservation projects.

“One of the things that really attracted me to this opportunity [to start an XE team] was that we all need to take responsibility for the planet,” Hamilton said during the championship’s global virtual launch.



Rosberg Xtreme
Racing machine

ROSBERGXTREME RACING

“We’ve all got to do something, but each of us can have a positive impact by implementing small changes. That’s why Extreme E is so important, because it’s going to keep people talking about the climate issue and inspire us to take action. It gives an opportunity for me to be able to merge my love of motor racing

with my love for the planet. By bringing those two together, we can have a positive impact.

“I’ve always wanted my own team – I just never knew when it would be. When I heard about Extreme E I jumped right at it because of what the series means, what the series is going to do. It’s going to be quite powerful.”



ODYSSEY 21 SPECIFICATION

CHASSIS Niobium-reinforced steel alloy tubular frame

BODY Composite

MOTORS 2 x 275kW

BATTERY 400kW, 800v Lithium-ion

SUSPENSION Double-wishbone

BRAKES Six -piston calipers

POWER 400kW (536bhp)

TORQUE 920Nm

TRANSMISSION Single-speed, direct drive

WEIGHT 1750kg

ACCELERATION 0-62mph in 4.5s

TOP SPEED 124mph

there's a battle with understeer. But it's quickly learned that this isn't an inherent issue with the equipment, just ineptitude of the operator.

Our previous experience of four-wheel drive comes from rallycross machinery, which is soft in comparison to circuit racers but low-slung and stiff when pitched against this beast. There, understeer can be cured by either a tug of the handbrake or a good dose of throttle to rotate the rear. The ODYSSEY 21 doesn't have a handbrake. The SRT engineers toyed with the idea of using a regenerative braking system to lock the rear axle but, following a number of driveshaft breakages in testing with such rapid torque shift, the plan was canned.

Also, with so much suspension travel, when you get hard onto the throttle at low speed the chassis starts to pick up the nose, rather than immediately rotating the rear.

To combat this, a Scandinavian-flick approach is required for the tight turns. While we'll never claim to be proficient in such an art, by the end of the all-too-short run, Autosport is getting to grips. Brake hard with the left foot and turn away from the desired corner on entry, then throw the tubular spaceframe, composite panel-clad machine towards the apex. Allow the weight to transfer to the outside of the car, the rear breaking traction and rotating nicely.

Once the rear is sliding, the 1750kg machine (with 45:55 weight distribution) is beautifully balanced and, by massaging the throttle, it's possible to hold a long drift around the track's most open of hairpins one-handed.

That is in no small part due to the ODYSSEY 21's sophisticated torque distribution system, which for Autosport's time at the wheel is running in one of its most 'active' modes. As with almost every four-wheel-drive electric competition car, there's no mechanical connection between the front and rear axles, but you wouldn't know that at the wheel.

While the driver is able to adjust torque bias and steering sensitivity in the cockpit, the various maps within the car's vehicle control unit can account for much more. Motor speed, steering angle, g-force and suspension attitude sensors constantly evaluate which axle needs the most or least torque in any given situation, and how quickly it needs to be delivered, for both performance and reliability.

For example, torque output is decreased while the wheels are in the air over a jump to protect the drivetrain on landing. And, when the system detects understeer, it can deliver a greater percentage of torque to the rear axle to aid with rotation. That's before it knows what to do when each wheel is in a hole or deep sand. Clever stuff!

For such a large car, the ODYSSEY 21 feels nimble, even on this circuit, which isn't really representative of what it will encounter in competition.

Out in the field next year, drivers will race four at a time through a live-broadcast qualifying, semi-final and final format. Each race will comprise two laps, up to 10 miles in length. With the courses laid out by the XE team ahead of events, and with no traditional circuit or stage lengths to adhere to, the course distances can be tailored to the time they will take to complete to suit the broadcast schedule of around 15 minutes per race.

Each car will have two drivers, a male and female, who need to complete

a lap each per race. While Autosport doesn't find sliding into the driver's seat the easiest operation under the gull-wing doors, the professionals already signed up – such as Hansen, double DTM champion Mattias Ekstrom and Junior WRC driver Catie Munnings – are far sligher, and for them it will be far less of an issue, even in haste.

Each course will include different route options and the car has been built to cope with the rough and the smooth. But it will be up to teams and drivers, after only a short recce on foot the day before competition starts, to decide if they want to go over the rougher and slower but shorter sections, or the smoother but longer routes.

Regardless, drivers will need to pass through virtual waypoints en route and, just like in FE, there will be various ways for fans to get involved. A GridPlay system means public votes will determine grid positions. Or to gain speed boosts, the team that flies the longest from each track's first jump will receive the 'hyperdrive' speed benefit.

After the run at the wheel is complete, Autosport vacates the seat and the cockpit is sanitised – such are the times we are currently in – for the following driver to get their first experience of the new car. Next up is none other than double FE champion Jean-Eric Vergne, who we're quietly pleased to learn finds his first-ever run on a loose surface a challenge.

Even with its electronic wizardry at play, the ODYSSEY 21 needs to be tamed. There aren't going to be huge amounts of testing opportunity for teams before the inaugural season starts, which should make the racing all the more unpredictable. Agag's vision is for XE to be a carbon-positive series, while highlighting the effects of climate change in some of the world's hardest hit areas. If that can be achieved while racing these exceptional machines, it will be both an impressive feat and spectacle to boot. 🏆



Seven wins this season took Rast to the final DTM title of the Class 1 era

Rast beats Muller to final Class 1 crown

DTM
HOCKENHEIM (DEU)
7-8 NOVEMBER
ROUND 9/9

Rene Rast cemented his position as Audi's most successful DTM driver in history by clinching his third title in four years with a convincing display at Hockenheim.

After winning four races on the trot over the previous two rounds at Zolder, Rast headed into the decider 19 points clear of chief title rival Nico Muller, with Robin Frijns 41 behind in third as a rank outsider.

Rast and Audi stablemate Muller qualified on the front row of the grid for last weekend's opening race, setting the stage for a nailbiting battle. Muller got the jump on polesitter Rast at the start as the two title contenders banged wheels, but Team

Rosberg driver Rast reclaimed the lead with an easy pass on lap nine.

The advantage shifted back to Muller when he made an early dive into the pits eight laps later. Rast made a tardy stop on the following lap and also slipped behind Frijns and Jamie Green, but was again able to find his way to the front.

The deciding moment turned out to be a late safety car, triggered by an incident for Timo Glock, which bunched up the field and brought Muller back into contention. Armed with DRS and push-to-pass, Muller swept around the outside of Rast into the hairpin to take the lead. The Abt Sportsline ace then fended off the pressure in the closing laps to hold onto victory by 0.6 seconds.

The win brought the gap down to just 13 points, but it grew to 16 when Rast

scored pole for Sunday's race and Muller qualified down in fourth.

Muller cleared Green at the start and then made quick work of Mike Rockenfeller on lap three, putting himself right behind Rast. But Rast was again the quicker of the Audi RS5 racers, and Muller had to resort to an undercut for the second time to leapfrog his rival. The pitstop strategy did what was required for Muller, but Rast was able to come through and spoil his party again, overtaking the Swiss with relative ease before the hairpin.

With Muller's pace fading due to excessive tyre graining, Rast got a clear run and celebrated his seventh victory of the season by 0.4s. With it, he clinched the drivers' title. The result firmly positioned Rast, 34, as one of the greatest drivers to ever grace the DTM and even led to suggestions that he should be labelled a 'legend'.

Rast's team-mate Green finished third in both races, a return to the podium for the DTM stalwart for the first time since the season opener at Spa in August. Audi's factory quartet locked out the top six spots in race two as the DTM's Class 1 era came to a close — a fitting end to the Ingolstadt manufacturer's potent tenure in the category.

Jonathan Aberdein finished as the top BMW driver in both races as he continued to impress in his second season in the category, but the tag of BMW's highest-scoring driver went to Glock, ending the season fifth in the drivers' standings.

RACHIT THUKRAL



Title rivals Muller and Rast bang wheels in race-one melee

Elliott trumps rivals to repeat NASCAR history

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
8 NOVEMBER
ROUND 36/36

Perhaps Chase Elliott was destined to win the NASCAR Cup title in dominant style at Phoenix last Sunday, for there was a pleasing symmetry to when his father Bill lifted the crown in 1988. They both did so at the wheel of the #9 car, at a time when the NBA title was claimed by the LA Lakers, the LA Dodgers won baseball's World Series, and an American vice-president was elected to the Oval Office.

But to get to a position where Elliott could ensure history did repeat itself, his Hendrick Motorsports crew needed a big dollop of luck. Earlier this month at Martinsville, in a must-win eliminator for the Georgia native, Elliott had a penalty rescinded after his jackman had jumped the wall too soon, but 'reset' himself by touching the pitwall. Avoiding the wrath of the stewards set Elliott up to fight Brad Keselowski, Joey Logano and Denny Hamlin for the title.



Elliott started at the rear for twice failing the pre-race technical inspection, but he rose to the top five by lap 42 of 312, latching onto his three rivals. Logano undercut Elliott for the net lead by pitting a lap earlier, but Elliott's Chevrolet fought back through traffic to take the lead on lap 270. And with his outstanding pace, that was that.

Elliott won by 2.74 seconds from Keselowski to become Hendrick's first champion since Jimmie Johnson in 2013, and ensure the Elliotts join the Pettys and Jarretts as father-and-son title winners.

JAKE NICHOL

WEEKEND WINNERS

- DTM**
HOCKENHEIM (DEU)
Race 1 Nico Muller
Team Abt (Audi RS5 DTM)
Race 2 Rene Rast
Team Rosberg (Audi RS5 DTM)

- NASCAR CUP**
PHOENIX (USA)
Chase Elliott
Hendrick Motorsports
(Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 1LE)

- NASCAR XFINITY SERIES**
PHOENIX (USA)
Austin Cindric
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

- NASCAR TRUCK SERIES**
PHOENIX (USA)
Sheldon Creed
GMS Racing (Chevrolet Silverado)

- SUPER GT**
MOTEGI (JPN)
Tomoki Nojiri/Nirei Fukuzumi
Team Aguri (Honda NSX-GT)

- FORMULA RENAULT EURO CUP**
HOCKENHEIM (DEU)
Race 1 Caio Collet
R-ace GP
Race 2 Lorenzo Colombo
Bhaitech

- BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS**
CURITIBA (BRA)
Races 1 & 2 Thiago Camilo
Ipiranga Racing
(Toyota Corolla)
Race 3 Gabriel Casagrande
R Mattheis Motorsport
(Chevrolet Cruze)

- EUROPEAN RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP**
RALLY HUNGARY (HUN)
Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Floene
Topp-Cars (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo)

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Honda bags top-five lockout

SUPER GT
MOTEGI (JPN)
8 NOVEMBER
ROUND 7/8

Honda dominated the penultimate round of the Super GT season at Motegi, as Team Aguri pairing Tomoki Nojiri and Nirei Fukuzumi scored their first win of the year.

For the second race in a row, the safety car played a large role in determining the outcome, as a caution was called on lap 24 of 63 – after only two GT500 cars,



the Aguri Honda NSX-GT and the similar polesitting Nakajima machine of Takuya Izawa and Hiroki Otsu, had pitted. They were effectively given a minute's advantage by the time the others stopped, and duly came home 1-2.

Best of the rest was the Kunimitsu Honda of Naoki Yamamoto and Tadasuke Makino, while the cars of the Mugen and Real Racing squads completed a top-five lockout for the manufacturer.

What was already a finely poised title battle remains on a knife-edge heading into the final round at Fuji later this month. Fifth at Motegi puts Real Racing pair Bertrand Baguette and Koudai Tsukakoshi on 51 points, the same amount as TOM'S racer Ryo Hirakawa, who finished sixth in his Toyota alongside Nick Cassidy's replacement for the last two races, Kenta Yamashita.

Seventh for Nissan pair Tsugio Matsuda and Ronnie Quintarelli leaves them two points back, level with Yamamoto and Makino, while Nojiri and Fukuzumi are just three off the lead.

JAMIE KLEIN

Mir finally chalks up a win as he takes another stride towards the title

MOTOGP
VALENCIA (ESP)
8 NOVEMBER
ROUND 12/14

As the drama of the MotoGP season has unfolded, it looked almost a dead cert that the championship would go down to the wire in Portugal at the end of November. A general lack of consistency throughout the field – in large part down to the 2020 Michelin tyres and the condensed schedule – left the door wide open for anyone to come through and take the crown.

Except, while he was yet to win, from August onwards the most consistent force has been Joan Mir and Suzuki. And after he finally broke that duck last weekend in the first European Grand Prix since 1995,

the title race looks all but a mere formality now with two rounds left to run.

The first of two Valencia races was a lottery. Wet weather early in the weekend meant the only full dry running the field was afforded was the 20-minute warm-up session, run on a Circuit Ricardo Tormo that was 11C colder than it would be for the race. Mir topping the 20-minute session ultimately foreshadowed the race.

With so little set-up time available ahead of the 27-lap round, a bike with a strong base was always going to win the day. It just so happens the Suzuki GSX-RR is, more often than not, a plug-in-and-play weapon.

Polesitter Pol Espargaro tried to enact his plan of 'all or nothing' in his quest for a maiden win on the KTM and led for the first lap. But Alex Rins on his Suzuki

scythed past at the Turn 11 right-hander on lap two and began a 15-tour stint at the head of the pack. Mir repeated the move on Espargaro on the fourth lap.

By then, Mir's championship position looked even more concrete. Nearest title rival Fabio Quartararo predicted he would need to take risks after qualifying a lowly 11th on a Petronas SRT Yamaha he couldn't get to work well in any conditions. Up to ninth after the first few corners, the French rider slid out at Turn 8 as he grabbed a little more brake in reaction to Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro crashing out in front of him.

The fact that Mir could have become the first ever MotoGP champion without having won a race had hung over him for some time. He kept his eyes on the main prize but admitted getting that elusive first victory was something he had wanted to clear from his mind.

Mir matched and bettered team-mate Rins' pace all the way to lap 17, when a mistake changing gears for Rins put him out slightly wide for Turn 11 and welcomed Mir into the lead. Mir then duly dipped into the 1m31s for the first time with a string of 1m31.9s and grew his gap to over 1.4s by the penultimate lap.

Mir had a sure-fire victory snatched from him by a red flag in the Styrian GP in August. But nothing could stop his onslaught last Sunday and he led home Suzuki's first 1-2 since 1982 to open up a 37-point lead over Quartararo and Rins with two rounds to go.





Quartararo limps home to 14th after opening-lap fall



Morbidelli (21) fronted a lacklustre Yamaha attack down in 11th

Pol Espargaro completed the podium ahead of LCR's Takaaki Nakagami, Tech3's Miguel Oliveira, Jack Miller's Pramac Ducati, the KTM of Brad Binder and the Ducati trio of Andrea Dovizioso, Johann Zarco and Danilo Petrucci.

The top Yamaha runner was Franco Morbidelli on the sister SRT only in 11th, owing to a front tyre pressure issue. With no M1 bike inside the top 10 for the first time since Valencia 2007, it capped off a truly miserable weekend for the Japanese marque during which its championship hopes crumbled.

After his crash, Quartararo recovered to 14th behind Maverick Vinales – who had to start from the pitlane due to exceeding his engine allocation for the year. Valentino Rossi's COVID comeback lasted four laps before he bowed out with a technical issue.

Quartararo says the inconsistencies of his year – which have resulted in his fading title hopes – “hurt a lot”, while Vinales felt the poor performance of his bike was more of a problem than his battered championship chances. With Quartararo 37 points adrift, Vinales 41 and Morbidelli 45 off Mir, they all need a disaster to befall the Suzuki rider.

Quartararo says both Suzuki riders look “unbeatable” now. Rins' identical deficit to Mir means he also needs the 23-year-old to hit trouble. But the European GP was a showcase of the performances Mir has provided all season to put him in prime position to lift the 2020 crown.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 12/14, VALENCIA (ESP), 8 NOVEMBER (27 LAPS – 67.192 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	41m37.297s
2	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	+0.651s
3	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	KTM	+1.203s
4	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+2.194s
5	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	Tech3 KTM	+8.046s
6	Jack Miller (AUS)	Pramac Ducati	+8.755s
7	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+10.137s
8	Andrea Dovizioso (ITA)	Ducati	+10.801s
9	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Avintia Ducati	+11.550s
10	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Ducati	+16.803s
11	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+17.617s
12	Stefan Bradl (DEU)	Honda	+24.350s
13	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	+25.403s
14	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Petronas Yamaha	+39.639s
R	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	25 laps-accident
R	Alex Marquez (ESP)	Honda	23 laps-accident
R	Tito Rabat (ESP)	Avintia Ducati	13 laps-brakes
R	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Pramac Ducati	5 laps-accident
R	Cal Crutchlow (GBR)	LCR Honda	5 laps-accident
R	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Yamaha	4 laps-mechanical
R	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	0 laps-accident
W	Garrett Gerloff (USA)	Yamaha	

Winner's average speed 96.861mph. **Fastest lap** Binder 1m31.884s, 97.502mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 **P Espargaro** 1m40.434s; 2 **Rins** 1m40.475s; 3 **Nakagami** 1m40.530s; 4 **Zarco** 1m40.577s; 5 **Mir** 1m40.704s; 6 **A Espargaro** 1m40.893s; 7 **Miller** 1m40.893s; 8 **Oliveira** 1m41.328s; 9 **Morbidelli** 1m41.557s; 10 **Binder** 1m41.781s; 11 **Quartararo** 1m41.943s; 12 **Dovizioso** 1m42.249s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 **Oliveira** 1m40.771s; 2 **Zarco** 1m40.821s; 3 **Bradl** 1m41.010s; 4 **Marquez** 1m41.276s; 5 **Vinales** 1m41.310s; 6 **Crutchlow** 1m41.311s; 7 **Bagnaia** 1m41.395s; 8 **Rossi** 1m42.039s; 9 **Petrucci** 1m42.244s; 10 **Savadori** 1m42.532s; 11 **Rabat** 1m43.030s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Mir** 162; 2 **Quartararo** 125; 3 **Rins** 125; 4 **Vinales** 121; 5 **Morbidelli** 117; 6 **Dovizioso** 117; 7 **P Espargaro** 106; 8 **Nakagami** 105; 9 **Miller** 92; 10 **Oliveira** 90; 11 **Petrucci** 77; 12 **Binder** 76; 13 **Zarco** 71; 14 **Marquez** 67; 15 **Rossi** 58; 16 **Bagnaia** 42; 17 **Iker Lecuona** 27; 18 **A Espargaro** 27; 19 **Crutchlow** 26; 20 **Bradl** 16; 21 **Bradley Smith** 12; 22 **Rabat** 10; 23 **Michele Pirro** 4.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Yamaha** 213; 2 **Suzuki** 188; 3 **Ducati** 181; 4 **KTM** 159; 5 **Honda** 130; 6 **Aprilia** 36.



L-r: Rins, Mir and Espargaro toast their podium success

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

VALENCIA (ESP)

Marco Bezzecchi (below)
Team VR46 (Kalex)

MOTO 3

VALENCIA (ESP)

Raul Fernandez
Ajo Motorsport (KTM)



NEXT REPORT

VALENCIAN GRAND PRIX 19 NOVEMBER ISSUE

Now that Mir has broken his duck, will another win follow as MotoGP returns to Valencia for the penultimate round of the year?

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Lanan pair
Bart Horsten and
Piers Prior at Silverstone
last weekend in team's
British F3 swansong

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP
motorsport
IMAGES

LANAN LEAVES BRITISH F3, ELITE TAKES SPOT FOR 2021

BRDC BRITISH F3

Leading Ginetta team Elite Motorsport will enter the BRDC British Formula 3 Championship next season with cars acquired from Lanan Racing, which could potentially be ending its involvement in motorsport.

Two Tatuus-Mountune machines have been bought by Eddie Ives's Elite operation, with the possibility of a third car being added ahead of its maiden campaign in single-seaters next year.

Elite has been successful in a number of Ginetta championships since it moved into Ginetta Junior in 2015. Last year it carried James Hedley and Harry King to the Junior and GT4 Supercup crowns respectively.

The squad expanded into the Mini Challenge for the first time this year, with the series' addition to the TOCA support package, and Ives admits a move into a single-category has been on his radar for several years since he evaluated joining British F4 for 2015.

"We never took the jump and then this time I wasn't going to miss the opportunity," said Ives. "We built up some really good relationships with drivers in all the Ginetta championships and those very successful and talented kids that do want to go into single-seaters, over the past few years we've had to say goodbye to multiple very good families because we haven't had a single-seater championship on offer.

"We're going into it for the long term, this is not for just one or two years. It's going to be really tough, the level of the teams is exceptionally high. We're not going into a championship with a bunch of amateur teams but at the same time we want to push ourselves."

Lanan Racing team principal Graham Johnson confirmed that, as well as withdrawing from British F3, the team may cease to continue in motorsport altogether next year.

Lanan has been a fixture of British F3, including its former guise of BRDC F4, since the category was first created in 2013. The team took FIA F3 race winner Jake Hughes and Williams F1 racer George Russell to the titles in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

"After 27 years, to be honest I've had enough of going into winter chasing drivers – I'm just tired of it," said Johnson, who will initially offer some technical support and guidance to Elite.

"I still enjoy being at the track and everything else – it's just the driver chasing. We did Le Mans Cup and we were going to do the ELMS in an LMP3, but we're waiting for a driver to confirm or decline, and if he declines we'll pull the doors down.

"What I didn't want to do is some people hang on too long and wait for the situation to be made for them. I like to be in control."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Collard left 're-energised' by GT switch

BRITISH GT

Newly crowned British GT champion Rob Collard said he was "re-energised" by switching codes after two decades in the British Touring Car Championship.

The 52-year-old claimed the GT3 crown alongside Barwell Motorsport team-mate Sandy Mitchell by winning at Silverstone last weekend in his maiden GT season.

Collard became disillusioned with tin-tops at the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall team last year, his first winless campaign since 2013, and considered hanging up his helmet before making the successful switch to GT3.

"Touring cars got a bit too monotonous and I think I probably got a bit lazy in my approach to it because it just felt flat, whereas here I've had to come in and really focus myself to get on the pace," he said. "I still feel I need to refine my technique a little bit more – driving these cars with



British GT3 title came in maiden season

aero is a completely new experience.

"I so nearly retired in 2018 and 2019 again. In 2019, every time I turned up at a track I didn't have my heart in it, it just didn't feel right. Now it's re-energised me a little bit."

Collard said that qualifying on pole at Silverstone had been a "monkey off my back" after heavy accidents at the circuit in 2014 and 2017, the latter forcing him to sit out the remainder of a year in which he had been in title contention.

"I was a bit worried it could all fall apart after all the bad luck I've had here, so I'm relieved I've been able to deliver," he said.

JAMES NEWBOLD



Porsche suffered rear suspension failure

Full-time return Bridgman's goal

BRITISH GT

Tim Bridgman, the 2009 Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion, is eyeing a full-time racing comeback next season after making his first race appearance in three years in the British GT finale at Silverstone last weekend.

The 35-year-old, whose last race outing came in a HubAuto Racing GT3 Porsche in Blancpain Asia in 2017, joined Carrera Cup Pro-Am class regular Karl Leonard in a Team Parker Racing Porsche Carrera Cup car in the GTC class.

His first British GT outing since 2011 ended in disappointment following contact on the

opening lap with Mike Brown's Ultimate Speed Aston Martin Vantage, before Leonard also collided with Lucky Khara's Ferrari 488 Challenge. Suspension failure when Bridgman was at the wheel ended their day after 33 laps.

Bridgman, who won his Carrera Cup title with Team Parker and has been a regular coach for Leonard, said it was a "natural progression" for the Irishman to move into endurance racing.

Speaking ahead of the race, Bridgman said: "I am focused on coming back full-time next year, so fingers crossed I can have a good weekend and get something sorted over the winter."

JAMES NEWBOLD

BUTTON: MORE TESTING NEEDED IF I MAKE GT RETURN

BRITISH GT

Jenson Button has said he would do more testing if he were to return to GT3 racing in the future after finishing 14th in his British GT cameo at Silverstone last weekend.

Both GT3 debutant Button and Jenson Team Rocket RJN team-mate Chris Buncombe were left mystified on Saturday by problems generating tyre temperature on their McLaren 720S. This left them only 18th fastest on combined times, with Button reporting there was "something fundamentally wrong" with the car.

Although he felt it was more stable in high-speed corners on race day, after the dampers were changed overnight, there was still room for improvement.

"I still think there's something not quite right with the car that we need to find," said the 2009 world champion. "As the fuel came out, it got a little bit better, but I think there was more just in us as drivers getting used to the car through a stint."

Button and Buncombe had only managed one day of testing in the wet beforehand, and Button said the experience had underlined how much more preparation would be needed if he were to return.

"Definitely if I was going to drive one again, I would do a lot of testing to get everything right," he said.

"I feel that I'm up to speed in terms of what I can do with the car and confidence with ABS, but the way that it feels isn't really to my liking. We would need to do a lot more work in finding a direction."

JAMES NEWBOLD





Support for Turner as his legs are amputated after WHT crash

WALTER HAYES TROPHY

A fundraising page set up to help Colin Turner's recovery, after both of his legs were amputated following a crash in the Walter Hayes Trophy earlier this month, has attracted a wealth of support.

Scottish Formula Ford driver Turner suffered serious injuries in the incident during the Last Chance race of the

Silverstone event, which was triggered when Dean Forward spun out of Woodcote in tricky, wet conditions and hit the pitwall. His stricken Vector was then collected by Ken Finneran and Turner.

While Finneran and Forward were soon released from hospital, Turner's injuries were far more severe. Surgeons at University Hospital Coventry battled to save his legs, but both had to be amputated below the

knee. He has also suffered broken vertebrae in his lower back, a broken sternum and injuries to his ribs and fingers.

Turner's fellow Scottish racer Neil Broome started the JustGiving page to help with Turner's rehabilitation last week, and it had raised more than £36,000 when Autosport closed for press – British Touring Car figures Jason Plato and Paul O'Neill are among those to have donated.

Broome has described Turner as a "lovely guy", who is "so humble", and says he is doing well.

"He's one of the true independents out there – he runs his own car and he even does his own seatbelts," said Broome. "Given what he did for a career, a pilot in the RAF during the Falklands War and then a commercial airline pilot, you would never know that about him because he is just a quiet, unassuming person.

"His big goal after he retired was to do the Walter Hayes: buy a new car, get some practice in and do the Walter Hayes. So, it's particularly sad he's had this accident at that race.

"But he's been in good spirits and is slowly getting there. We're all under no illusions that this [recovery from injury] will be a marathon and not a sprint for Colin, and the whole of the motorsport community is rallying around him."

**STEPHEN BRUNSDON
& STEPHEN LICKORISH**

Irish karting champion set to join 2021 F1000 grid

F1000

Irish karter Kayls Cole is set to make her car racing debut next season in F1000.

The 17-year-old, who has won two Irish Senior Rotax karting titles, has received coaching from W Series racer Sarah Moore and first tested the F1000 category's Jedi car last year.

"After testing the F1000 single-seater, we were really interested to take part in 2020 but, unfortunately, COVID restricted our

plans, so watching from the sideline has been tough," said Cole. "Now I am fully focused on the 2021 championship."

Meanwhile, series organisers have decided not to rearrange the category's 2020 finale for a December date after the planned Silverstone meeting was called off due to the second English lockdown. This means regular frontrunner Dan Clowes has been crowned champion for the first time.

"Having raced in F1000 for 11 years, the championship was always the aim and, over the last few years with JFK Racing running the car for me, the dream got closer and closer," said Clowes.

"To win an F1000 race is an amazing feeling, mainly because it's such a difficult thing to do. The championship is fiercely competitive, with some very talented and some experienced drivers in very well-prepared cars."



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Brands Hatch Truck meeting cancelled at the last minute

BARC

The planned British Truck Racing Championship finale at Brands Hatch last weekend was cancelled on the eve of the event, despite it being granted 'elite' status.

The British Automobile Racing Club meeting was recognised by both the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and governing body Motorsport UK as 'elite', but it was cancelled last Thursday after discussions with the local council over additional preparations needed in the wake of the second national lockdown in England. The decision does not affect this weekend's British Touring Car finale at the circuit.

As well as the Trucks, last weekend's meeting was due to feature the last action

of the Legends and Junior Saloons seasons, along with the only Pickup Truck races in 2020 and a grid for the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club.

Its cancellation means Ryan Smith has won a fifth Truck title, former Superkart racer Daniel Clark has sealed the Legends crown, and Lewis Saunders has taken a second Junior Saloons championship win.

Junior Saloons coordinator Dave Beecroft said: "We were halfway down the M6 when we got a phone call to say it was cancelled. There's nothing you can do about it. It's no fault of BARC's, it's just disappointing.

"We planned for nine events and got seven – compared to other people, we've done very well."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

New December 750MC meeting

750 MOTOR CLUB

The 750 Motor Club has announced a new race meeting at Donington Park in December to accommodate some of the championships that lost events this month due to England's national lockdown.

A one-day meeting at Silverstone and two-day event at Donington were scheduled for November, but had to be cancelled last week as non-elite motorsport was suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The club has now announced a new meeting will be held at Donington on 12-13 December, after the lockdown is scheduled to be lifted. This is due to feature sprint races for Clio 182s, BMW Car Club, Locosts, 5Club MX-5s, Hot Hatches, Type R Trophy and MR2s, as well as longer contests for Roadsports and Club Enduro.

Classic Stock Hatch, Alfa Romeos, F1000, Formula Vee and Ma7das were all due to end their seasons in November but won't be at the new meeting.

750MC competitions manager Giles Groombridge said: "We spoke to MSV and, in an ideal world, we would have had the weekend after lockdown but there is a stage rally, so rather than see if that could be moved we thought we would go for the weekend after so people can plan accordingly.

"I'm confident the grids will be credible, but there's a strong likelihood they won't be as strong as what we were seeing for the November dates."

STEFAN MACKLEY

IN THE HEADLINES

WILKINSON'S F3 DEBUT

Ginetta GT5 Challenge racer Jonny Wilkinson made his BRDC British F3 debut in the finale at Silverstone last weekend with Fortec Motorsport. The one-time F4 USA driver took a best result of ninth. Also in action was Ayrton Simmons, returning for the second time in 2020 after two wins at Brands Hatch with Chris Dittmann Racing, who took two podiums for JHR Developments. Wilkinson's Fortec team-mate Roberto Faria will return to British F4 to contest the final round of the season this weekend at Brands.

GRIMES'S TRIBUTE TO KIRK

Ford Fiesta and Fun Cup racer Chris Grimes has paid tribute to former CNC Heads Sports and Saloons stalwart Les Kirk, who recently died of cancer. Grimes brought Kirk's Fisher Fury out for the final rounds of the season at Oulton Park at the end of last month, finishing ninth overall and first in class in the final race.

HSCC REVEALS 2021 DATES

The Historic Sports Car Club has unveiled its provisional calendar for the 2021 season. The club plans to run nine race meetings next year, including a three-day Brands Hatch event, the first day of which will be on the Indy layout, while the Saturday and Sunday will be on the Grand Prix Circuit. The club is also set to host its first full event at Mallory Park since 2010. The season is due to begin at Snetterton on 17-18 April.

BARC'S WATSON TO RETIRE

British Automobile Racing Club general manager Ian Watson will retire from the role at the end of this year, after 20 years with the club. Watson (below) will continue as a consultant to the BARC and will also remain as the senior clerk of the course for the British Touring Car Championship. "Over the past two decades I have been privileged to work alongside some great people and they have all made my time at the club unforgettable," he said.



Berkeley back with new car from plant-based chassis

BERKELEY CARS

British sportscar brand Berkeley is to return with a new version of its Bandit model.

The small constructor produced a limited number of cars in the second half of the 1950s, some of which competed. Stirling Moss drove one at Goodwood in 1956, four years before the firm was forced to close the doors to its Bedfordshire premises.

Aviation and automotive industrial designer Martin Rees and former RML and Lotus engineer Simon Scleater have now joined forces to bring Berkeley back.

In the 1950s, Berkeley pioneered the use of fibreglass bodies with recycled aircraft components, and the new composite chassis will use plant-based materials: flax replaces carbonfibre, while resins from trees take the place of glue-like chemicals.

A range of powertrain options will be available, from conventional V6 or V8



internal combustion engines, through hydrogen to full electric. A motorsport return is also being considered.

“Restoring the Berkeley brand with fresh products, drawing from a heritage of groundbreaking innovation, celebrates the spirit of the brand, but takes some serious steps to break the mould of traditional car manufacturing towards a green, high-performance future,” said Rees.

“Berkeley had an eye for competition 60 years ago. And that’s something we’re certainly going to be looking to revive in the near future as well. Berkeley had a steady

stream of race car variants in its line-up, which is something I am keen to follow.

“At this time, when norms are challenged by both pandemic and climate change, we need to create vehicle solutions that are in tune with the concerns of the public and address these with quality design.

“I believe that forging links between aviation and automotive thinking will bring new solutions beyond the current mainstream. The next challenge for us will be to carry those very same solutions into the world of motorsport.”

KEVIN TURNER

MX-5 ace Allwood makes GT5 Challenge debut

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Newly crowned Mazda MX-5 champion Oliver Allwood made his Ginetta GT5 Challenge debut at Silverstone last weekend.

Allwood secured his maiden Mazda crown last month at Brands Hatch by beating Mike Comber to the Mk1 title by just two points, and remained with AB Motorsport for the step up.

Allwood finished 11th in the first race around the Grand Prix Circuit and improved to eighth in race two, in which he finished



just 0.2 seconds behind Dan Budd, a result he said he would have been “really happy with” prior

to the race.

“ABM have got the car and I had the opportunity to do this round,” said Allwood,

who first raced Mazdas in 2013 and has since competed in five full seasons. “They are planning to rent the car out to other drivers so I probably won’t be racing in this next year – I’ll probably be defending my Mazda title.

“The difference here is the operating window is quite narrow – in Mazdas, you have a lot more free rein to operate the car in the middle of the corner. Here you’re on the edge; if you’re not on the edge you’re not fast enough and if you’re over the edge you’re off.”

STEFAN MACKLEY

ANGELO R. DRIVE



Title perspectives

While this weekend is set to feature some enthralling championship battles among the British Touring Car supports, recent events on and off the track show what really matters

STEPHEN LICKORISH

It could not be any closer. Unlike the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, where Harry King has already sealed the title with an event to spare, the two main British Formula 4 protagonists head to the Brands Hatch finale level on points. You can always guarantee there will be plenty of excitement in the British Touring Car Championship showdown in Kent, but there should be some intriguing title battles in the support series, too.

Given how close it is, the F4 tussle is likely to be one of the highlights. Predicting a winner is not easy, although it is Carlin's Zak O'Sullivan who heads into the weekend with the momentum. Fortec driver Luke Browning had built a strong 57-point lead mid-season, helped by his hat-trick of victories at Oulton Park, but he has struggled to replicate that kind of form in recent events, while O'Sullivan has won four of the past seven races. Casper Stevenson's consistency over the course of the season means the Argenti Motorsport driver retains an outside chance of taking the crown but, at 48 points behind, he needs O'Sullivan and Browning to have a nightmare in order to triumph.

If this scenario sounds very familiar, that's because it is. It was exactly the same in F4 last year. Zane Maloney and Sebastian Alvarez entered Brands tied on points, while Louis Foster had a slim chance still, 30 points back. On that occasion, there was extra spice to the fight as Maloney and Alvarez had taken each other out at the previous round at Silverstone when battling for second. However, the final race proved to be a disappointment as Foster was already out of the picture, while Maloney streaked to a win and mechanical woes for Alvarez ended his bid. Expect it to be a closer conclusion this time around.

But it's not just in F4 where an exciting finale is in prospect, it's also pretty close in Ginetta Junior. Bailey Voisin and rookie class champion Tom Lebbon have been the two drivers to beat for much of the season, but both had a tricky event in the second half of the season. Elite Motorsport driver Lebbon was stripped of a Silverstone win for contact, before rolling out of the second race, while R Racing's Voisin was demoted to the back of the grid after Croft qualifying due to an engine infringement. All of that means they head to Kent separated by just three points, in Voisin's favour, before dropped scores apply. Elite Racing's Josh Rattican is firmly in the mix too, as he profited from the leading contenders'

woes, sitting just 15 points back from Voisin.

Over in the Mini Challenge, it's also interestingly poised as the category's first season on the TOCA support bill draws to an end. However, with the series visiting just half of the BTCC events held so far – due to coronavirus-related cost-saving measures – a title narrative has not really built over those four weekends. Nonetheless, it's three regular Mini frontrunners who lead the way. Three-time runner-up Nathan Harrison has a 14-point lead over Excelr8 team-mate Dan Zelos, while the 2018 champion, Jamsport driver Ant Whorton-Eales, is 13 points further back. But, with 118 points available, predicting a champion is virtually impossible. Drivers all the way down to eighth-placed Lewis Brown are still in with

a mathematical chance – a group that includes regular Renault UK Clio Cup title contender Max Coates. Add in the category's dropped-score rule and the calculators will be out on Sunday.

One title fight where complex calculations are unlikely to be needed is in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup. Rob Boston Racing driver Will Burns came unbelievably close to sealing the crown last time out at Snetterton, so he essentially just needs to finish the opening Brands contest to secure the title. Having twice narrowly lost out in dramatic finales before, his seemingly straightforward path to the championship win will no doubt be a relief to Burns. That he's in such a strong position is quite remarkable, considering how evenly matched the leading trio in the series were over the opening chunk of the campaign.

Little separated Burns from Gus Burton and Tom Hibbert and it looked like the battle would rage throughout the year, like the close F4 fight. But opening-lap dramas for Burton at Thruxton and Snetterton and a very strong Croft for Burns have put him on the front foot. And there are no such concerns at all for King in the Carrera Cup, instead he can focus on finishing the season with a flourish.

While for those involved the title fights seem incredibly important, in reality they matter little. Colin Turner's horrific crash at Silverstone in the Walter Hayes Trophy earlier this month (see p54) – after which the outpouring of support has been

fantastic to see – offers some perspective. As do the thousands of deaths from the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. While we should enjoy what could be the final hurrah of the UK motorsport season this weekend, let us also remember winning or losing is relatively trivial compared to some of the issues we face. 🍷

BRITISH FORMULA 4

POS	DRIVER	PTS
1	Zak O'Sullivan	369
2	Luke Browning	369
3	Casper Stevenson	321

GINETTA JUNIOR

1	Bailey Voisin	479
2	Tom Lebbon	476
3	Josh Rattican	464

MINI CHALLENGE

1	Nathan Harrison	387
2	Dan Zelos	373
3	Ant Whorton-Eales	360

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

1	Will Burns	496
2	Tom Hibbert	440
3	Gus Burton	435



Unstoppable Mitchell and Collard grab GT3 title

SILVERSTONE
BRITISH GT
7-8 NOVEMBER

Time and again, Barwell Motorsport has seen its superb starts to British GT campaigns unravel when it really counts. But, at the Silverstone finale, Rob Collard and Sandy Mitchell drew a line in the sand and the Lamborghini Huracan pair overturned their deficit to Sam De Haan and Patrick Kujala to wrap up the title in fine style with pole and victory.

The memory of the seatbelt blunder that cost them a potential win at Snetterton was firmly cast aside as Collard put together a confidence-boosting pole lap at a track where he has twice suffered heavy accidents

in recent years, then assertively passed Ian Loggie's RAM Mercedes in a move that set the crew up for their second win of the year. Unlike Brands Hatch, which was decided by a mid-race safety car, this was won on pace.

"It's our best performance of the season as a whole in terms of the team and Rob and me, and everything was on the line this weekend," said Mitchell. "Rob delivered his best qualifying all year and really put us in the best position possible, and we managed to deliver on that today. We've peaked at the right time and I think it proves that we definitely deserved this."

At the start, Collard led away from a fast-starting James Baldwin and Loggie, who admitted he was "gutted" when the safety car was required to recover the

wreckage of Nick Jones's GT4 Mercedes, which had spun and got by Mia Flewitt's McLaren at Chapel. Barwell reacted quickly by pitting Collard and Adam Balon at the end of lap two, but fuel consumption worries meant RAM had to wait an extra lap before calling in Loggie and De Haan, meaning Yelmer Buurman (in for Loggie) and Kujala were stuck behind Tom Canning's early-stopping TF Sport Aston Martin when the race restarted on lap eight.

Kujala also lost a place to Ollie Millroy's Optimum McLaren before Canning had to serve a drivethrough penalty for a start infringement. By contrast, Mitchell and Phil Keen in the sister Barwell Lambo had clear air and, after Keen moved ahead on lap 10, he pulled out a six-second lead before

CENTURY ENDS SEASON ON A HIGH AS CAROLINE AND VAUGHAN TAKE GT4 TOP SPOT

Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke and series debutant Rob Wheldon took advantage of a strategy blinder to end a tough season for Century Motorsport on a high, as a tense battle for the GT4 title was decided in favour of TF Sport's Jamie Caroline and Dan Vaughan.

Wheldon started down in ninth, but his BMW M4 was kept out during the early safety car period until lap five, when he followed leader Jordan Collard's HHC McLaren in.

Crucially, while the Pro-Am BMW had a 14-second shorter pitstop and didn't lose a lap to the safety car, HHC's longer stop meant Patrik Matthiesen arrived at the pit

exit when the light was red and had to wait another 23s, dropping him to last.

"We were patient when the safety car came out," explained Century boss Nathan Freke. "We timed it right and we were the only team to get in and out before the safety car came back round. It made a massive difference and gave us half a lap straight away."

It didn't yield the lead immediately, though, as the Newbridge Motorsport team elected to keep James Dorlin out. He and Alex Toth-Jones kept their one-lap lead until the final hour, the need to make all three mandatory driver changes under green demoting the Aston Martin to sixth.

As Gordon-Colebrooke continued in a net lead, Caroline and TF Aston stablemate Patrick Kibble, who had both pitted on lap two, were handed 10s stop/go penalties for passing a red light at the pit exit, and dropped behind Matthiesen.

Caroline muscled back ahead at Brooklands but, when he handed back to Vaughan on lap 29, the #97 Aston rejoined behind Collard (in on lap 34) and the #95 Aston Kibble relayed to Connor O'Brien two laps later. On lap 51, Vaughan took advantage of O'Brien's poor exit from Club to take third at Abbey, but Collard remained out of reach until his 5s-longer pitstop success penalty closed the gaps after the final stops.



pitting on lap 30. Co-driver Balon's pace relative to the long-running Mitchell, Buurman and Millroy dropped him to fourth after the stops had shaken out and, after losing another place to Lewis Proctor's McLaren, his slim title hopes were dashed when he was rear-ended by De Haan at Stowe, spinning the Lambo at a cost of 40s. De Haan apologised later, and got a 10s stop/go for his trouble. "It didn't make much difference," said a gracious Balon. "We needed a massive break of luck because of the 20s [success penalty]."

With a 10s success penalty still to come at De Haan/Kujala's final stop, and none for Collard/Mitchell, Barwell's grip on the title became tighter still when Collard, who had been jumped in the pits by Loggie, found a way through at the Loop. Loggie, struggling with pickup on his tyres, had no answer. "I could see three or four laps before he was thinking about it," he said. "Then I just made a tiny mistake and he was there."

Collard made haste as Loggie was passed by Proctor and came under pressure from Brendan Iribe (in for Millroy) before the American had a huge moment at Farm. Proctor managed to get to within 2s of the leader before handing back to Ollie Wilkinson, but their victory hopes disappeared when Wilkinson's attempt to unlap himself from a yet-to-pit Loggie resulted in a spin at Aintree and a 10s penalty for good measure.



Mitchell had a brief fright as the McLaren of Michael O'Brien (in for Baldwin, who had moved back into contention after dropping out of the top 10 during the safety car shake-up) loomed large in his mirrors, but O'Brien never got close enough to mount a challenge. After Millroy clobbered a kerb and had to perform a system reset, dropping him to seventh, Buurman was freed to chase O'Brien and made it stick around the outside at Stowe with a lap to go. But there just weren't enough laps to pursue Mitchell.

"It's a big race to win, it's not just the championship," said Barwell boss Mark Lemmer. "It was a fairytale really. Set-up was right, pitstops immaculate as ever, strategy was right and the drivers did a brilliant job. Rob drove his socks off and Sandy was mega."

Trouble-free drives helped 2Seas Motorsport McLarens claim fourth and fifth places, although the outcome could have easily been different without the 15s success penalty for the WPI Lamborghini of Michael Igoe and Andrea Caldarelli, which was 13s behind fourth-placed Martin Kodric in sixth.

If Millroy was disappointed at losing a podium, it paled in comparison with eighth-placed De Haan and Kujala's reversal in fortunes, the Finn just 5s ahead of the recovering Keen. Further back, Jenson Button's British GT debut alongside Chris Buncombe ended with 14th place in their McLaren, the final GT3 car on the lead lap.

JAMES NEWBOLD

WEEKEND WINNERS

GT3

(85 laps) **1 Rob Collard/Sandy Mitchell (Lamborghini Huracan EVO)**; 2 Ian Loggie/Yelmer Buurman (Mercedes-AMG) +7.669s; 3 James Baldwin/Michael O'Brien (McLaren 720S); 4 Al Faisal Al Zubair/Martin Kodric (McLaren); 5 Angus Fender/Dean Macdonald (McLaren); 6 Michael Igoe/Andrea Caldarelli (Lamborghini). **Fastest lap** Phil Keen (Lamborghini) 1m58.782s (110.94mph). **Pole** Collard/Mitchell. **Starters** 20.

Points **1 Mitchell/Collard 168**; 2 Sam De Haan/Patrick Kujala 148.5; 3 Keen/Adam Balon 134; 4 Baldwin/O'Brien 125; 5 Buurman/Loggie 111; 6 Igoe 103.

GT4

(77 laps) **1 Rob Wheldon/Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke (BMW M4)**; 2 Dan Vaughan/Jamie Caroline (Aston Martin Vantage) -1 lap; 3 Connor O'Brien/Patrick Kibble (Aston Martin); 4 Jordan Collard/Patrik Matthiesen (McLaren 570S); 5 Gus Bowers/Chris Wesemael (McLaren); 6 James Dorlin/Alex Toth-Jones (Aston Martin).

FL Sam Smelt (Toyota GR Supra) 2m10.997s (100.59mph). **P** Smelt/James Kell. **S** 12.

Points **1 Caroline/Vaughan 170**; 2 Collard/Matthiesen 158.5; 3 Kibble/O'Brien 152.5; 4 Bowers/Wesemael 120.5; 5 Matt Cowley 118.5; 6 Gordon-Colebrooke 108.5.



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

As Century eased to victory, Caroline got reacquainted with Matthiesen and pressured him for several laps before catching the Dane off guard at Becketts. Kibble also pounced to see off any hope of a McLaren comeback.

A race that promised much for the Speedworks Toyota, after its maiden class pole, yielded only disappointment. Damage to the door sustained early on when James Kell was hit by Will Moore's Ford Mustang meant the team was penalised for refuelling with it still open, before a strategy miscue meant it needed an extra stop to avoid overrunning Sam Smelt's drive time.

JAMES NEWBOLD



The American (inset) was in a class of his own in races one and three, taking comfortable victories



Frederick trumps British F3 rivals to take crown

SILVERSTONE
BRSCC
7-8 NOVEMBER

Kaylen Frederick made certain on the destination of the BRDC British F3 Championship title, as an imperious display at Silverstone, which included two wins, secured the American the coveted crown.

The Carlin driver entered the final round of the season with a 13-point lead over main rival Kush Maini, with both title protagonists qualifying on the front row for races one and three on the Grand Prix layout – Frederick fractionally quicker than Maini both times.

As Maini tried to pull alongside on the run to Copse in the opening race, Frederick swept across the bow of the Hitech GP machine and the resulting loss of momentum dropped Maini behind Ayrton Simmons, who was returning to the series

for a second 2020 outing, this time with JHR Developments, the squad with which he finished runner-up in British F4.

Out front, Frederick was in a class of his own, extending his lead by a second each lap, and even a late safety car to retrieve Ulysse de Pauw's stricken Douglas Motorsport machine after contact with Reece Ushijima – for which Ushijima was disqualified – couldn't halt him. Simmons and Maini completed the podium, while Frederick was given a post-race verbal warning for his chop at the start.

There was a split throughout the field for Sunday's damp reversed-grid race between slicks and wet-weather tyres. While Frederick covered off Maini by going for wets, it was the slick-shod runners who soon came to the fore on a drying track. Double R Racing's Benjamin Pedersen just held on to win as Bart Horsten snatched

second on the last lap for Lanan Racing (the team participating in its final British F3 meeting) by diving up the inside of Carlin racer Nazim Azman into Brooklands.

Frederick could only salvage 12th, more than a minute and a half in arrears of Pedersen, as his wets lost all grip. But he still finished in front of Maini, who took 17th after damaging the steering alignment of his car early on when he and Frederick made minor contact several times.

Frederick only needed to finish the final race to secure the title, with Maini needing to win to claim the honours, but he took the crown in emphatic fashion with a lights-to-flag display and his ninth win of the season. "It's definitely a massive relief," said Frederick. "We've been working really hard to make up some ground that we lost at Brands Hatch, and then we pulled ahead by a solid margin this weekend. We knew we had the pace the entire year, but just eliminating those small mistakes is what we had to do. We showed our potential and the amount of work that we've all put in to get ourselves here."

After ending the opening lap in fourth, Maini slipped to sixth by the flag, with Roberto Faria (Fortec Motorsport) and Simmons completing the podium.

Louis Foster entered the weekend still in championship contention along with de Pauw and Azman, but all three dropped out of the running after Frederick's win in the opener. Things got worse for Foster in race two, when he was handed a one-minute penalty and three points on his licence for contact with Piers Prior exiting Luffield, dropping him from sixth to ninth in the



SILVERSTONE WEEKEND WINNERS

BRDC BRITISH F3

Race 1 (10 laps) 1 Kaylen Frederick;

2 Ayrton Simmons +2.608s; 3 Kush Maini;
4 Roberto Faria; 5 Louis Foster; 6 Oliver Clarke.

Fastest lap Frederick 1m54.406s (115.18mph).

Pole Frederick. **Starters** 19.

Race 2 (10 laps) 1 Benjamin Pedersen; 2 Bart

Horsten +0.737s; 3 Nazim Azman; 4 Clarke;
5 Carter Williams; 6 Sasakorn Chaimongkol.

FL Chaimongkol 1m56.877s (112.74mph).

P Max Marzorati. **S** 19.

Race 3 (10 laps) 1 Frederick; 2 Faria +4.121s;

3 Simmons; 4 Clarke; 5 Chaimongkol; 6 Maini.

FL Frederick 1m54.564s (115.02mph).

P Frederick. **S** 19.

Points 1 Frederick 499; 2 Maini 448; 3 de Pauw
392; 4 Foster 388; 5 Azman 370; 6 Skelton 320.

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Race 1 Theo Edgerton

Race 2 James Dorlin

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Race 1 James Taylor

Race 2 Gordie Mutch (below)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

results. Contact with de Pauw at Village in the final race was rewarded with another one-minute penalty, and Foster therefore lost out on third place in the final standings to de Pauw by four points.

James Dorlin may have returned to British GT action at Silverstone, but he also found time to secure the maiden Porsche Sprint Challenge GB title. Dorlin's main rival Tom Jackson was missing from both races, his chassis still not repaired following his heavy crash at Croft in the previous round, meaning Dorlin was assured of the title before the opening race.

In damp conditions, youngster Theo Edgerton took his maiden win in the series in race one, having disposed of Dorlin and poleman Dino Zamparelli by the time they reached Maggotts on the opening lap. Zamparelli, on worn wet tyres, soon fell behind fellow series debutant Charlie Ladell and Dorlin to finish fourth.

Dorlin secured victory in race two, after race-long pressure from Zamparelli, while Edgerton finished a distant third. This was enough to tie with Jackson for second in the points, but Edgerton lost out on countback.

STEFAN MACKLEY

GT5 TITLE GOES DOWN TO THE WIRE IN THRILLER



Both Malin (90) and Taylor led for a spell in dramatic final race

Amid all the uncertainties that 2020 has produced, some normality returned in the form of a Ginetta title being decided on the last lap of the final race of the season after a thrilling on-track battle.

Ginetta GT5 Challenge title rivals Josh Malin and James Taylor came into the last two races of the season separated by just seven points, which was extended to eight when Malin grabbed pole for both races.

But any thoughts that Malin would have everything his own way were immediately dispelled at the start of race one when Taylor muscled his way ahead on the opening lap into Maggotts as Malin ran wide and then had a huge moment exiting Chapel. The car was on the verge of spearing off left and then right before Malin regained control along the Hangar Straight down in ninth.

Malin made short work of regaining his lost ground, moving into fifth by the end of the second lap, fourth by lap three and third, which is where he finished, a lap later. Behind him, Magnus Kriklywi just held off recently crowned second-time Ginetta G40 Cup champion Tom Golding and Gordie Mutch, who had still been mathematically in title contention ahead of the penultimate race.

At the front, Taylor kept John Bennett behind, taking the win and a crucial

one-point lead into the final race of the season, essentially meaning that whoever finished ahead out of Taylor and Malin would be crowned champion.

What ensued was a thrilling spectacle as the lead changed hands almost every lap, with sweeping moves around the outside being performed at Stowe and through Club on a regular basis. Mutch showed his true pace and dived with the two title protagonists, acting as a buffer between the pair on several occasions as the trio circulated as one.

Mutch made the decisive move on the penultimate lap by getting up the inside of Malin at Club, before pulling clear of the squabbling duo to take victory.

Taylor had one final effort to get ahead of Malin on the last tour, but his attempt at going the long way around Stowe was rebuffed by the Richardson Racing driver, who held on to take the title by just four points. "That was the most stressful race that I have been in, honestly," said Malin, who was also a race winner in the GT5 Challenge last season. "I'm genuinely lost for words. I don't have the vocabulary to convey how I feel, that race was so intense. I got a decent start, better than in the first race, and Gordie bumped me down to Maggotts, which got me ahead. It was changing and changing, and credit to James and Gordie, it was probably the best race I have been involved in."

Taylor, who was in his maiden GT5 Challenge campaign with Elite Motorsport, added: "I would have liked to have won the title but those two have driven well. It's been hard but fair, we've raced fair all through the year and Josh is a good driver. It was always going to be close in a one-make series."

STEFAN MACKLEY



Champion: Malin took the title by four points



THE SALOONS THAT THUNDERED TO SHORT-LIVED SUCCESS

It's 35 years since the Thundersaloons category was born — a series that featured some of the most powerful tin-tops to ever race on these shores — although its popularity waned when pitched against the British Touring Car juggernaut

MARK PAULSON

British club racing lost one of its stalwarts when Pete Stevens died earlier this year. He was best known for his years in Thundersaloons, winning four titles, and in particular for the mighty Chevrolet-powered Vauxhall Carlton in which he claimed his last two crowns.

It's 35 years since the birth of the series, which featured some of the most powerful saloon cars ever to race in this country. Like so many successful categories of the era, it was dreamed up by Brands Hatch supremo John Webb and, as the moniker suggests, drew inspiration from the Thundersports series that had been running since 1983.

While Special Saloons, and the Super Saloons offshoot, had captured the imaginations of racers and fans alike in the 1970s,

grid sizes were waning in the 1980s.

"It was all becoming very much spaceframes with a plastic body," remembers Tony Davies, polesitter for the first Thundersaloon race in his Blydenstein-tuned twin cam Vauxhall Firenza. "With a steel-bodied saloon car, you just didn't stand a chance. So when I saw the regulations come out for Thundersaloons, I thought, 'Well, this is just perfect for the Firenza'. It had to be a production steel-bodied shell and the engine had to be in its manufacturer's position. I thought, 'This is proper saloon car racing — this isn't dressed-up single-seaters'."

Two-driver races, run to a mini-enduro format, are commonplace now but were unusual in those days and served as another selling point to spectators and competitors. "I could share the driving with one of >>

ICONIC THUNDERSALOONS FORD SIERRA PORSCHE

While American V8s or turbocharged Cosworth YB fours became the engines of choice for those aiming at overall honours, the Gartrac-developed Ford Sierra of 1989 followed a very different route. Squeezed into its engine bay was a 3.2-litre twin-turbo Porsche flat-six more commonly found in the German marque's Group C 956s and 962s.

Designed for a rear-engined car, the motor was rotated 180 degrees and mated to an Xtrac gearbox, powering the wheels through a modified Jaguar differential. It delivered up to around 750bhp, although was reckoned to be capable of 1000bhp with maximum boost.

The rear end incorporated suspension and brakes from the MG Metro 6R4 Group B rally car but the machine did not look as lairy as some. To keep the car as streamlined as possible, its wide wheels were largely accommodated inboard rather than via extended wheel arches.

First mooted towards the end of 1986, it was over two years before the car made its debut in the opening round of 1989 at Brands Hatch. Podiums there and at Oulton Park appeared promising,



Sierra featured engine used
in Porsche 956s and 962s

but the results masked a major flaw.

"The car kept going light," recalls Rod Birley, who shared the driving with Terry Nicholls. "I remember one day at Oulton Park in qualifying, coming up over Clay Hill and the car took off. How I never had the biggest accident ever, I don't know. I somehow managed to gather it together.

"Porsche had developed their very effective under-floor venturi system. The engine was air-cooled so it blew the air down and out through the back of the car, which increased the suction to the ground. We didn't realise that – we were almost driving on a cushion of air."

There was no hiding from the issue, but

a workaround was developed, and Birley remembers the car was much better next time out at Zandvoort. Its sheer grunt ate up the long straight but put too much strain on the clutch. By then, Nicholls had had enough. He reckons he'd sunk more than £35,000 into the scheme – and that was just on the rolling chassis, as Birley sourced the engine.

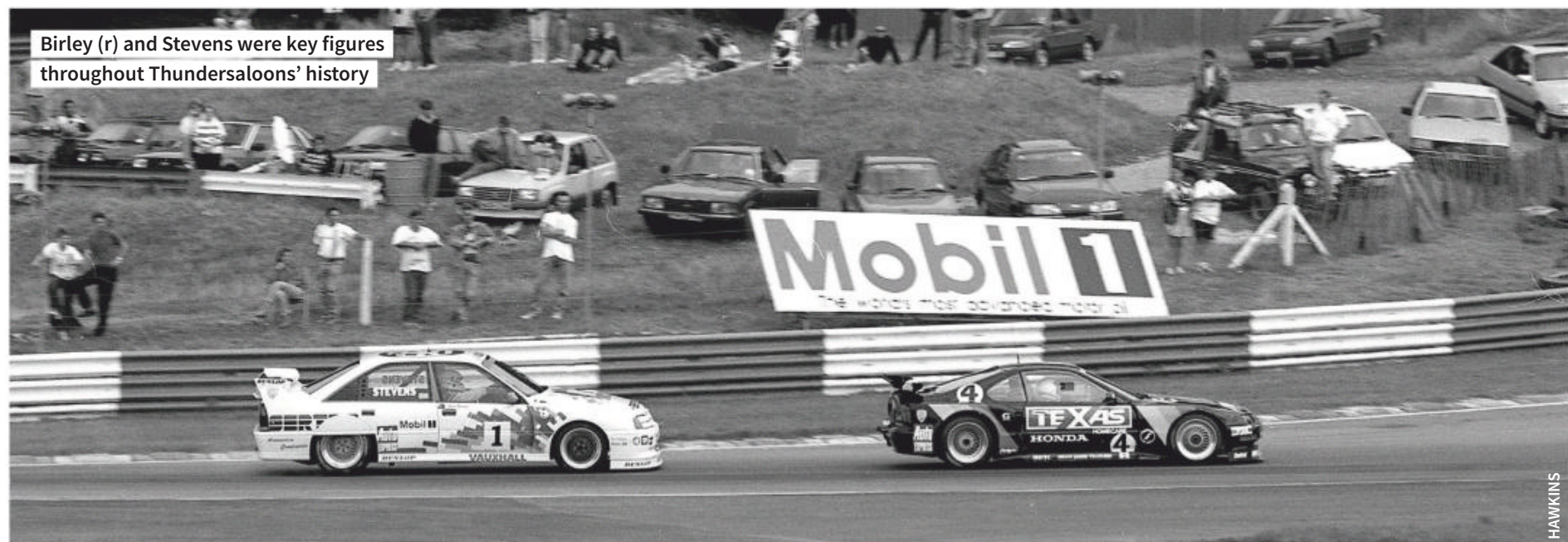
Birley brought in Barrie 'Whizzo' Williams the following week at Snetterton and the pair challenged for victory until the Jaguar axle broke. The ambitious project had reached the end of the road.

"That [result] would have been a turning point," rues Birley. "But, by now, everyone was getting a bit despondent because it cost a lot of money and we'd not really understood what the problem was with putting the engine in the front."

Heavily reworked and powered by a Pontiac V8, the car reappeared as 'Black Thunder' in Rob Cox's hands, proving quick but unreliable. It passed to Steve Wallace and then, post-Thundersaloons and now Chevrolet-powered, suffered a heavy crash at Oulton with Michael Blomfield at the wheel.



Sierra had a major flaw with Porsche engine: air was sucked underneath, cue scary offs



my brothers and share the cost,” says Davies. Races of 50–75 miles also meant that reliability could be an issue for such highly developed cars, throwing in another variable.

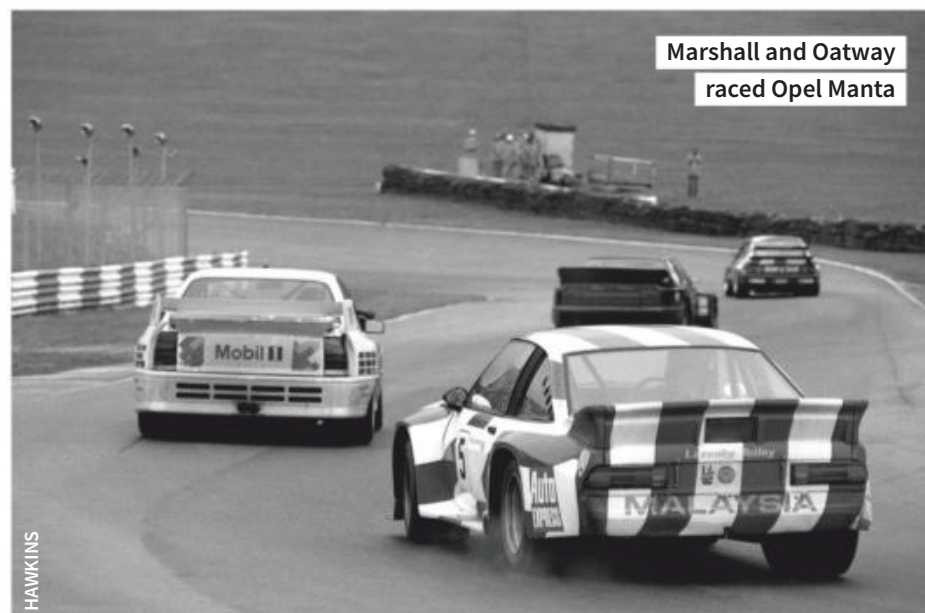
Officially a series rather than a fully blown championship for the first two years, there was no doubt who the top dogs were in the inaugural season. That pole position aside, Davies’ Firenza, which he shared with brother John in the secondary class for cars of up to 2.5 litres, was unable to live with the pace of Vince Woodman and Jonathan Buncombe’s Broadspeed-built Ford ‘Cologne’ Capri. The Shell-backed Capri took the honours at the freezing Brands Hatch opener, establishing a theme that would continue as it won all eight races in 1985.

The following year, Woodman was joined by rising star John Cleland in a works-backed Vauxhall. Badged as a Senator, it was in fact an ex-Peter Brock Holden Commodore. The big V8 won eight of the 10 races in 1986, but was beaten first-time out at Snetterton by Rod Birley’s Ford Sierra XR4, powered by a 3.4-litre Ford GAA V6 engine and shared by British Touring Car star Andy Rouse.

Still racing today, Birley was a Thundersaloon mainstay, a frontrunner in the series from its inception, although it would take until 1993 for him to lift the title (see p66). His XR4, built by Tony and Kevin Wood at Milton Motors in Maidstone, wasn’t quite ready for the start of 1985 and thereby narrowly lost its off-track contest with Rouse’s BTCC version to be the first racing Sierra. Shared with John Brindley, four podiums followed before Rouse brought his engineering expertise – and driving talent – in 1986.

“He’s a very good engineer,” says Birley. “It was just little things he’d noticed when he’d driven the car. He said, ‘You could spend a fortune on this and you’d probably find a second and a half or you could spend a little bit of money and you’d probably find half to three-quarters of a second.’”

Having the BTCC’s most successful driver on board, when his other commitments allowed, was an endorsement of the series’ status. There were other big names involved too: club racing legend Gerry Marshall co-drove the Davies Firenza and a handful of other cars on occasion



“IT WAS REALLY STARTING TO BE QUITE SERIOUS WITH THE VAUXHALL ENTOURAGE THAT BECAME INVOLVED”

before what looked set to be a title challenge in 1989. But the promising campaign alongside Nick Oatway in a Pontiac V8-engined Opel Manta adorned in a striking ‘Stars ‘n’ Stripes’ livery was derailed by reliability issues and an accident at Zandvoort.

Marshall’s great friend and adversary Tony Lanfranchi was a winner on three occasions that year when he substituted for Cleland, who was on BTCC title-winning duty, and helped Woodman to a fourth title in five years. Dave Brodie, Jerry Mahony, Laurence Bristow and Sean Walker were other BTCC frontrunners who were attracted to sample the brutish power of Thundersaloons, while David Leslie won a Class B title alongside Hugh Chalmers in the Ecurie Ecosse Opel Manta. The BTCC’s switch to a single-class, two-litre formula in 1991 led to an influx of Sierra RS500s, which could be made to go even quicker in the alternative category. Mahony’s machine – co-driven variously by its owner Bristow, Walker and ex-Formula 1 driver Slim Borgudd – edged Carlton-mounted Stevens and Chris Millard to the Thundersaloon title that year.

The category’s profile had been further raised by manufacturer involvement, led by Vauxhall. After a year with the Senator, Dave Cook’s GM Dealersport-backed squad introduced the Carlton in 1987. It would become arguably the series’ most iconic machine, taking two titles with works backing and a further two with Stevens as a privateer (see right).

“Dave brought a new level of professionalism to the series, which really meant that everybody had to up their game,” recalls Birley. “It was really now starting to be quite serious with the sort of Vauxhall entourage that became involved.”

From the start, Stevens had been a standout performer in his BDG-engined Ford Escort Mk2 – the Class B machine even taking an outright win at Castle Combe – and established himself as a regular frontrunner in 1987 when he acquired the title-winning Senator. He and co-driver Neil Facey took the crown that year, despite not winning a race, as the mighty Carlton suffered some reliability gremlins. The pair had, like Birley, graduated from short oval racing, blazing a trail that many others would follow. Overall race winner Stuart Jackson and successful Class B racers John Edwards/Trevor Shaw, Paul Sherlock/Robert Bridger and the Morris brothers, Ricky and Danny, were among those to step up from Hot Rods, while Brian Powles used his knowledge of Chevrolet V8s from BriSCA Formula 1 stock cars to make the switch to circuits.

“A lot of guys were stepping up to the formula from either oval racing or modified saloons and it was quite a big jump actually because these were serious bits of kits with a lot of power,” says Birley. “[The racing] was quite dramatic. [Competitors] were working normal jobs during the >>>

ICONIC THUNDERSALOONS VAUXHALL CARLTON CHEVROLET

Commissioned by GM Dealersport and built by Dave Cook, who ran the works team, the Chevrolet V8-engined Carlton TS6000 won its first three races in 1987 and would become the most successful Thundersaloon of them all, taking four titles between 1988 and 1995.

Pete Stevens, synonymous with the machine in later years, admitted it was built with no expense spared – contemporary reports suggesting a £150,000 investment from Vauxhall.

“I think it was possibly one of the most expensive steel-bodied racing cars around,” said Stevens, before his death earlier this year. “All the panels were Kevlar with carbonfibre strands. Although it was a big car, I think it weighed about 1100kg, which is quite light.”

Following the early season hat-trick for Vince Woodman and John Cleland, reliability woes allowed Stevens and Neil Facey to usurp them – ironically, at the wheel of the Vauxhall-badged Holden Commodore the Carlton replaced.

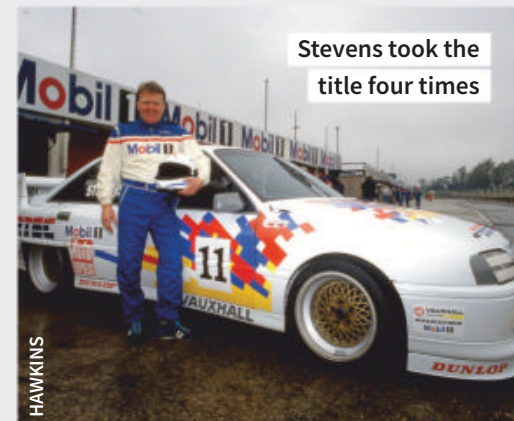
But the Carlton pair dominated in 1988, taking seven wins from 10 starts (and disqualified from first on the road in two more), and Woodman added another title

in 1989, joined by Cleland when his British Touring Car Championship commitments allowed. Then in Stevens’ hands, the car claimed further crowns in 1992 and 1995.

Other than masses of torque and power – Stevens reckoned the small-block Chevy was good for 570bhp when bored out to six litres from the original 5.7 – the Carlton’s success was not based on magic bullets. Its relatively simple technology was just extremely well sorted, with MacPherson struts on the front and a rear set-up that combined a Watt’s linkage to prevent longitudinal travel with a Panhard rod for lateral control. “Typical to how a rally Escort Mk2 would be in its day,” said Stevens.

“I don’t know whether a lot of people knew this, but it had a Ford nine-inch back axle in it, which they called a nine-inch Detroit locker diff,” he added. “So it didn’t actually have a limited-slip diff. And, the thing is, when you drove it though fast corners it didn’t push the car on – you’d swear blind it was a normal limited-slip diff. It worked really well.”

That’s not to say it couldn’t be a brute to drive. At the end of 1989, Vauxhall sold the car to Joe Ward, who had just been



Stevens took the title four times

pipped to the Class B title sharing an Opel Manta 400 with Tony Dickinson. But it would only make one appearance in 1990 – a successful return for Cleland alongside Special Saloon ace Dickinson at Silverstone – before Stevens snapped it up for 1991.

“I remember taking it to Donington Park to drive it once, and it frightened me so much my lap times were slower than in the Manta!” laughs Ward. “I thought: ‘What on earth am I doing with this?’”

More recently, Stevens raced the car in Special Saloons and Modsports and took it to the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

“The Carlton still is a crowd-puller,” he said. “If you can get invited to Goodwood, you know you’ve got there.”

Vauxhall Carlton was the most successful car and still drew crowds decades later





ICONIC THUNDERSALOONS HONDA PRELUDE COSWORTH

The Honda Prelude might not have been an obvious candidate to be a track icon, but it became the ultimate Thundersaloon, winning back-to-back titles in 1993 and 1994.

Its builder, Jim Morgan, was involved in a number of Thundersaloons over the years, including the multiple race-winning Mazda RX-7 Cosworth, which was twice runner-up in the championship. The second time was in 1992 when Mike Wilson was joined by Rod Birley who realised that, having been uprated to the YB RS500 engine, the car was being held back by its older-spec Hewland transmission.

In response, Morgan mooted his idea of the Prelude to Birley, who had connections at Honda through club-racing contacts. "They were keen to get involved in the championship because

Honda was on quite a big product push into the UK," recalls Birley. "They'd got the Swindon factory and wanted to make inroads into getting away from the rather staid image that Hondas had."

The project quickly became a reality and featured suspension from a Spice Group C2 sportscar and a Hewland transaxle of similar provenance. But there was one issue: sourcing a suitable engine. Original plans to run the 500 bhp-plus Acura NSX engine used in IMSA fell through when, with time running out before the start of the 1993 season, it transpired that it wasn't all it seemed.

"They'd had special blocks made and everything," says Birley. "They didn't want it to go abroad because the wrong people might have seen it! So I went back to Honda and said, 'Look, what are we

going to do?' We had sponsors on board, some big companies coming along. 'All I've got left is my RS YB engine'.

"We shoehorned that in and it was quite funny because Honda kept saying, 'We'll get something sorted'. They never did, which was a bit sad, but in a way it was probably a blessing in disguise."

In Birley and Richard Piper's hands, the car romped to eight wins in 10 races mid-season then cruised to the title, dethroning the Vauxhall Carlton and ending Birley's long wait for success.

"The handling was just phenomenal," says Birley. "Because we had the gearbox as part of the transaxle at the back, the weight distribution was perfect. We had the engine set back as far as we could up to the bulkhead."

"Everything on it was bulletproof – Jim spent a lot of time looking at it. We had a proper full-sized rear wing. We looked at what the Carlton had and we woke up to the fact that we needed to get the aerodynamics right, we needed to get the handling right – it's the whole package. In previous years we were getting it two-thirds right and not the last bit. This time, because we started with a clean sheet of paper, and we had some decent money and a good bit of engineering skill, it really cracked the nut. It took a long time!"



Prelude powered Birley to two Thundersaloons crowns

week then come the weekend you put your overalls on and you felt like you were in a big arena and playing with the big boys.

“Quite a few drivers jumped over to the Thundersaloons because there was good prize money, which clearly whetted their appetites. They could, with not a lot of work, use the cars which they’d used on the ovals.” It was no coincidence that the Mk2 Escorts and Toyota Starlets, which were the backbone of the lower-powered ‘entry-level’ Class B, were also the cars to have in National Hot Rods.

Very healthy prize money of £2500 per round came thanks to backing from Shell Oils, Norcros, and *Fast Car* and *Auto Express* magazines, and was significantly boosted by a promotional push in later years. Allied to innovative television coverage on satellite channel Screensport, it made for an attractive prospect. The spectacular cars drew large crowds to circuits and – strange as it may seem in the current racing landscape – some considered Thundersaloons a genuine rival to the BTCC. As that was transitioning to the Super Touring era, with grids increasingly filled by front-wheel-drive cars, the Thundersaloon promoters sensed an opportunity to provide a more exuberant alternative.

Make-or-break rule changes followed but, sadly, they didn’t have the desired effect. Gone were the mid-race driver changes, replaced by a pair of back-to-back races with the option of one driver contesting both. Then Class B was scrapped and, perhaps most controversially, cars for which the base model had been out of production for more than three years were banned.

“I could see what they were trying to do,” says Birley. “They wanted the big bangers, they wanted to promote it as the fastest saloon car series, and go down that route. But the trouble was, guys who’d supported the series for a few years suddenly didn’t have a market to sell their cars and didn’t have the money to build a new car. It was done too quickly. If it had been phased over a year or two, it would have given guys the opportunity.

“It left a bad taste because there was a lot of expensive machinery that suddenly became redundant,” he concludes.

At a stroke, half the field was rendered ineligible. New cars were built but not enough to prevent grid sizes plummeting and, as the downward spiral began, prize money was slashed, further reducing numbers. The nadir came with just six cars contesting the 1994 opener at Brands. The drivers united and formed an association in an attempt to save the series, with a secondary class reintroduced, but the damage had been done.

“I needed the prize money to put back into the car, to keep it competitive,” said Stevens, who took the title in its final year. “The prize money went out of the series and it wasn’t viable to race that sort of car.”

Class B stalwart Ricky Parker-Morris, a prime mover in modern-day CSCC Special Saloons and Modsports – where he still campaigns his Cosworth turbo-powered Peugeot 309 – believes the economic recession of the early 1990s played its part, too.

“The world has never returned to what it was before 1993,” he says.



‘Vauxhall Senator’ won title on three occasions

CHAMPIONS OVERALL/CLASS A CHAMPIONS

YEAR	CHAMPION DRIVERS	CAR
1985	Vince Woodman/Jonathan Buncombe	Ford Capri GAA V6
1986	Vince Woodman/John Cleland	Vauxhall Senator V8
1987	Pete Stevens/Neil Facey	Vauxhall Senator V8
1988	Vince Woodman/John Cleland	Vauxhall Carlton V8
1989	Vince Woodman/John Cleland*	Vauxhall Carlton V8
1990	Pete Stevens/Chris Millard*	Vauxhall Senator V8
1991	Jerry Mahoney/Laurence Bristow*	Ford Sierra RS500
1992	Pete Stevens	Vauxhall Carlton V8
1993	Rod Birley/Richard Piper	Honda Prelude Cosworth
1994	Rod Birley/Ian Cantwell*	Honda Prelude Cosworth
1995	Pete Stevens	Vauxhall Carlton V8

*Missed races

“That’s when it all died, just after the recession.”

Not only were competitors having to tighten their belts, but the circuits were developing new business models. With the rise of the BTCC and its TOCA support package there was little room for the promotion of any other national-level championships.

“It was sad really, because we suddenly realised that we’d been used as a bit of a pawn in a bigger game,” Birley concedes.

The once-great category limped on into 1995, running alongside Modified Saloons, but no further. Some of the cars found a home in Formula Saloons and, more recently, the Special Saloons and Modsports series. But the days of a Jaguar XJ220 engine under the bonnet of a Ford Escort (as developed by Derek Tyndall in 1993) or a Chevrolet-engined Honda Legend (1990 runner-up in the hands of Tony Wolfe and Terry Nicholls) competing against Pontiac-powered Vauxhall Calibras and Toyota Supras, and many more exotic creations, were no more. ❧



Decision to only allow newer models contributed to the category’s decline



David Brabham/Darren Turner/
Rickard Rydell won GT1 class at
Le Mans aboard the DBR9 in 2007

HIS WORD IS HIS BOND IN TALE OF



BOOK REVIEW
ASTON MARTIN:
MADE IN BRITAIN
RRP £20

By the normal standards of the reviews that grace these pages, this one's a touch personal.

This James Bond-loving Autosport writer spent the early part of the first national lockdown distracted by the build of a gadget-laden LEGO Aston Martin DB5, complete with ejector seat and wing-mounted machine guns. A beer-inspired late-night eBay purchase then meant disassembling many of the 1295 bricks to retrofit an aftermarket light kit.

Winding on a couple of months, this writer paid a visit to their childhood home in Lincolnshire to see their parents on the eve of Boris Johnson belatedly announcing the second lockdown. A day later, news came that Sean Connery had died aged 90.

On the return car journey, the title songs of the 25 official Bond films — there's little time for *Never Say Never Again* — were blaring in honour. Arriving back at Autosport's current residence, a review copy of *Aston Martin: Made in Britain* was waiting on the doormat.

As the cover illustration of a DB5 snaking through an Alpine pass suggests, this isn't a dedicated motorsport title. It's a more holistic take on the car company founded by Lionel Martin and Robert Bamford that's peppered with racing anecdotes. But given the timely arrival and that its author is current Bond stunt driver Ben Collins — who this writer watched regularly win for RML to be crowned the 2003 ASCAR champion at Rockingham, just a stone's throw from said childhood

home — we reckoned it was apt for a review.

For those who didn't possess a disposition for watching a pickup truck tow a jet engine in an effort to dry the Corby oval — drizzly weather would occasionally give way to stock car racing — Collins is of course best-known around the world for his former role as The Stig on *Top Gear*. Although silent for many series, his car control remains revered. So, throughout this near-300-page book, Collins flashes between the Aston narrative and relating it to his personal experience of racing, including tackling the Le Mans 24 Hours. In a marketplace awash with various 'definitive', 'model by model' and 'complete history' releases on Aston Martin, Collins's own voice helps set this title apart.

Amid a crashing stock market share price, Aston Martin has — literally — cashed in on its association with the Bond franchise via a host of special edition models. Collins charts how the connection to Ian Fleming, author of those 14 original spy novels, stretches well beyond 'BMT 216A'. A 12-year-old Fleming attended Brooklands and witnessed the cars go briefly airborne as they hit the undulating concrete. Once such driver who caught the eye was Louis Zborowski, at the wheel of his various 'Chitty Bang Bang' creations — which would inspire the novel Fleming wrote for his son four decades later.

Aside from the patchy economics (Aston has gone bust seven times) and various owners, there is still a wealth of motorsport coverage.

From Short Handicap-race success at Brooklands in the early 1920s, *Aston Martin: Made in Britain* tracks through the stunted Formula 1 efforts of the DBR4 and Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby's triumph in the 1959 edition of Le Mans. It also spans the successive French enduro GT1 class wins of the DBR9 in 2007 and 2008



HALL
motorsport
IMAGES

ASTON MARTIN



Zborowski pilots his
Aston Martin at Shelsley
Walsh in 1922

MOTORSPORTIMAGES

as well the nascent Valkyrie hypercar, designed in conjunction with Red Bull F1 chief technical officer Adrian Newey.

Collins is open about his affection for Aston Martin, and not just because he's been tasked with driving DBS and DB10 machines while masquerading as Daniel Craig. The book's prologue is centred on a trip with his dad to buy some new socks, which ended up in the purchase of a 5.3-litre Vantage – albeit *sans* Q Branch skis. This personal connection, delivered via Collins's own insight and light-hearted tone, helps *Aston Martin: Made in Britain* in its mission to stand apart from its competitors, even if it's not perhaps the final word in detail and archive imagery.

With *No Time to Die* delayed yet again, for fans of Bond, Aston Martin and motorsport, this book will help pass the time before taking its place alongside the LEGO on the living room shelf.

MATT KEW

FINISHING STRAIGHT



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



The revolving door that seemingly operates around the occupant of the second seat at the Red Bull Formula 1 team is again in motion. After Alexander Albon turned in another underwhelming performance in the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola, the Autosport team discusses his prospects of remaining alongside team-mate Max Verstappen in 2021. **Go to bit.ly/AlbonFate**

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Turkish Grand Prix

Formula 1 World Championship
Round 14/17

Istanbul, Turkey

15 November

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1005

TV Highlights Sky Sports F1, Sun 1500, Channel 4, Sun 1600

World Endurance Championship

Round 8/8

Sakhir, Bahrain

14 November

TV Live on Motorsport.tv, Fri 1500, Sat 1100

TV Live Eurosport 2, Sat 1045, 1730

TV Highlights Eurosport 1, Sun 1305

World Touring Car Cup

Round 6/6

Motorland Aragon, Spain

15 November

TV Live Eurosport 1, Sun 0800, 1200, 1400

Super Formula

Round 4/7

Autopolis, Japan

15 November

TV Live on Motorsport.tv, Sun 0500

GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup

Round 4/4

Paul Ricard, France

15 November

TV Live on Motorsport.tv, Sat 1030, 1620

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1830

Formula Renault Eurocup

Round 10/10

Paul Ricard, France

14-15 November

12 Hours of Sebring

IMSA SportsCar

Round 11/11

Sebring, USA

14 November

MotoGP

Round 13/14

Valencia, Spain

15 November

TV Live BT Sport 2, Sun 1230

UK MOTORSPORT

Brands Hatch BARC*

14-15 November

BTCC, Ginetta GT4 Supercup,

Mini Challenge, Ginetta Junior,

British F4, Porsche Carrera Cup GB

TV Live ITV4, Sun 0920

***Behind closed doors**



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WHEN DRIVERS CROP UP IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

ADAM CARROLL

When a World Cup winner's IndyCar dream went awry

JAMES NEWBOLD

ABBOTT
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IMAGES

Everything was going right for Adam Carroll in June 2009. The Northern Irishman had wrapped up the A1GP 'World Cup of Motorsport' title for Team Ireland, was being linked with one of the mooted new Formula 1 teams for 2010 and even got to appear on a chat show with Henry Winkler, aka The Fonz.

That his Lola F1 shot didn't materialise mattered little though, because he had attracted the attention of A1 Team USA seat-holder Michael Andretti, and an IndyCar debut in 2010 was a real possibility.

It was a long time in the making for a driver who had always raced "on a Formula Renault budget". In 2005, he had been the reserve driver for Champ Car outfit RuSPORT at Mexico City, when Justin Wilson was nursing a broken scaphoid, and later tested for the team, but didn't race.

"Some of the smaller IndyCar teams would have taken you straight away but they were asking for \$1.5million," says Carroll. "It was an achievement in itself that I had offers that others wouldn't have got, but I couldn't make it happen."

However, a second chance came after his triumph in A1GP's 2008-09 'Powered by Ferrari' season, sufficiently impressing Andretti to be entered in a fifth car for the 2010 Watkins Glen and Mid-Ohio IndyCar races with the intention of a full 2011 season.

After only one test day, qualifying 10th ahead of team-mates Tony Kanaan, Ryan Hunter-Reay and Danica Patrick was no mean feat. But Carroll wasn't happy with the car's relentless understeer and his mix-and-match crew couldn't dial it out for race day, where he fell to 16th.

Likewise, Mid-Ohio was "a real disaster from the start" as he qualified 17th and finished two places lower. He later found "rideheight, damper settings, wing settings, tyre pressures [were] all different" to his team-mates, but it was too late.

"You need the car to have a crack over the whole championship to show what you can do," he says. "One-offs are really, really difficult. You can never perform at 100%."

The hoped-for 2011 seat was scuppered by a U-turn from logistics company DHL, as only half of the promised sponsorship was approved, leaving a \$1.5m shortfall that Carroll had no hope of making up.

A decade on, with experience of Formula E, the Le Mans 24 Hours and a Ferrari World Finals win under his belt, Carroll still has a tinge of regret that he wasn't able to show what he could do.

"If you have two chances in any race series, you've got a good chance that one of them isn't going to be great," he says. "But I've been a paid professional driver since 2007, which isn't easy to do. The reality is you've made it if you're paid as a driver." ❧



FEISTMAN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

**"YOU NEED TO HAVE
A CRACK OVER THE
WHOLE SEASON TO SHOW
WHAT YOU CAN DO"**



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Francois Cevert's Tyrrell-Ford 006 fills the frame in dramatic close-up during the 1973 Monaco Grand Prix. The Frenchman rocketed into the lead from his fourth-

place grid slot, but his moment in the sun was short-lived as a front-right puncture caused by hitting a kerb on lap two forced him to pit. He fought back to finish fourth, his progress aided by spending a chunk of

the race running behind, but a lap adrift, of team-mate and eventual winner Jackie Stewart, so when cars moved over to be lapped by the Scot, Cevert was able to nip through and take another place.



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Big successes for Volvo and Ferrari

13 November 1964

A hard-fought RAC Rally and a celebration of recently crowned F1 world champion John Surtees were the main features of Autosport this week in 1964.

Our interim RAC report stated that 158 competitors had taken the start, but that many had hit trouble in the early stages. As the magazine closed for press it was the Mini Cooper S of Rauno Aaltonen/Tony Ambrose that led, from the Volvo PV544 of Tom Trana/Gunnar Thermanius. In third sat the Mini of Harry Kallstrom and Ragnar Hakansson that made our cover.

The Mini challenge would not last. Kallstrom and Aaltonen both suffered transmission failures, while Paddy Hopkirk crashed his Cooper. Trana came through to win the gruelling event “with a performance of sheer brilliance”, according to the following week’s Autosport. Timo Makinen’s Austin-Healey 3000 was second and won the Autosport Trophy for best

GT car, while Vic Elford completed the top three in a Ford Cortina.

Following the dramatic 1964 F1 finale in Mexico, Autosport looked at Surtees’s career since his switch from bike racing, and the Ferrari 158 that helped him to the crown. “Maybe John had a bit of luck in Mexico with Graham Hill involved in an accident with [Ferrari’s] Lorenzo Bandini, and with Jim Clark’s engine packing up,” wrote founding editor Gregor Grant. “Nevertheless, his title was thoroughly deserved: his superb drives at the Nurburgring and Monza were highlights.”

The technical appraisal of the V8 158 was less enthusiastic: “It was estimated that the power output would be 220bhp, but it is doubtful whether the unit produced more than 195bhp.” It also suggested the chassis was on the heavy side, but did concede that “it soon became very competitive” after some testing miles with Surtees.



Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG
Tel +44 (0) 20 3405 8100 **Email** autosport@autosport.com
Individual email firstname.surname@motorsport.com
Website www.autosport.com **Twitter** @autosport

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK +44 (0) 344 848 8817 **Overseas** +44 (0) 1604 251451
Email help@asm.secureorder.co.uk **Back issues** 0344 8488817

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Tel +44 (0) 20 3405 8106
Email autosport.ads@motorsport.com
 Sales Director **James Robinson**
 Creative Solutions **Don Rupal**
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ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Production Controller **Ben Webster**

Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.
 Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary Road, Willenhall, Wolverhampton WV13 3XT.
 ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG.

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