

F1 Will Russell take Bottas's place at Mercedes?

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10 DECEMBER 2020

F1 SENSATION!

Russell stars in Sakhir GP
but Perez wins brilliantly
as Mercedes blunders

PLUS

Schumacher Jr secures
F2 title – and F1 drive

Ogier snatches WRC crown
as team-mate Evans crashes



‘His time will come’

TOTO WOLFF

‘I’m proud of the job we did,
but it wasn’t meant to be’

GEORGE RUSSELL



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REAL RACING, GREAT CARS, THE BEST LOCATIONS GEDLICH RACING'S GT WINTER SERIES

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE



Drivers and teams will be able to not only test but race over the coming months as the GT Winter Series returns for its second season.

Promoter Gedlich Racing will hold four meetings across the winter period for drivers at some of Europe's top circuits in both a track day and racing environment with up to 12 hours of activity, keeping them race sharp and ready for the beginning of the 2021 racing season.



"We want to offer the teams the possibility to run their motorsport not only in summer and in a concentrated time," said GT Winter Series project manager Robin Selbach.

"During the three winter months they can race on beautiful tracks in Spain and Portugal. In addition, the GT Winter Series is ideal for training for the summer season."

The first event will take place later this month on 19-20 December at the Algarve International Circuit in Portimao, before two further visits to the Portuguese circuit on 23-24 January and 16-17 February. The final visit of four will take place at Motorland Aragon in Spain on 3-4 March.

"We saw a great GT Winter Series event in Portimao last season, more than 20 cars were at the start," said Markus Gedlich, managing director of Gedlich Racing.

"That showed us how popular this location is in connection with the racing series. We will therefore drive there three times in the coming season."

One qualifying and two sprint races will be held per event, which can be scored individually or in total, with points awarded according to class and depending on the class strength ensuring those in slower cars have the opportunity for outright championship glory.

A Balance of Performance will also be in operation to ensure parity, although there will be individual classes for drivers in Porsche 911 GT4 or BMW M2 CS Racing machinery.

"It is important to us that the teams have an economically interesting field of activity and that the drivers find a high-quality sporting environment that offers them an extension of what they know from central Europe," adds Selbach.

"We also want to encourage them to rethink. Why does motorsport have to take place in summer and have a winter break? With us that does not have to be the case."

The GT Winter Series event will also lead into Gedlich Racing's "Endless Summer Ascari", which has been established for more than ten years and which will incorporate seven locations in total.

All the details, latest news and booking information for the series can be found at www.gt-winter-series.com.



19th / 20th December 2020
Autodromo Portimao
Pre-season test

23rd / 24th January 2021
Autodromo Portimao
GT Winter Series

16th / 17th February 2021
Autodromo Portimao
GT Winter Series

3rd / 4th March
Motorland Aragon
GT Winter Series



Autodromo Portimao
4.7 km, 16 curves
A modern race track with
a spectacular layout,
near Faro.



Motorland Aragon
5.3 km, 17 corners
The most expensive and
complex motorsport facility
in Europe.



Britain's next F1 star steps up as Perez finally gets what he deserves

It's been clear for some time that George Russell would thrive at the front of Formula 1, but for the Briton to outrace Valtteri Bottas on his Mercedes debut, with such little time to prepare, was remarkable.

Aside from his time in Formula Renault and Formula 3 (during which he still showed flashes of pace and scored race wins), Russell was a champion in every series he contested on his way up, from BRDC F4 to F2 via GP3. When he won the 2014 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award – against Alex Albon, among others – he showed remarkable maturity, as well as speed, for someone who was then only 16.

Last weekend he again demonstrated both a cool head and controlled aggression, while also finding time to thank both Mercedes and Williams for giving him the opportunity to drive the W11.

Russell was the moral victor of the Sakhir Grand Prix (see page 18), but it's great that Sergio Perez has become an F1 winner. Whereas it now seems almost certain that Russell will be a Mercedes driver at some point soon (how soon, Toto?!), Perez is still without a 2021 seat.

The Mexican has been one of the F1 midfield's best performers for several years now and, if the race in Bahrain really is his penultimate F1 start, nobody can take away the fact that he is the 110th driver to win a world championship event. A more sensible storyline, however, would surely be that Red Bull puts him alongside Max Verstappen...



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
17-24 DECEMBER**

Christmas double issue
The Abu Dhabi GP report,
our Top 50 drivers and
much, much more



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Russell showed Bottas the way for much of the race in Bahrain on his Mercedes debut



RUSSELL GIVES MERCEDES A HEADACHE FOR FUTURE

FORMULA 1

Mercedes has been left with a driver line-up headache after George Russell's Sakhir Grand Prix display last weekend led to fresh calls for him to partner seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton in the future.

Russell, who as a long-time Mercedes protege has spent the 2019 and 2020 seasons with Williams, only stepped into the Mercedes W11 for the first time for Friday's free practice sessions after Hamilton was forced to skip the race due to testing positive for COVID-19. But he managed to qualify second and was on course to win the race before Mercedes' pitstop blunder and a late puncture that dropped him to ninth.

Russell raced with boots one size too small just to squeeze into the shorter Hamilton's cockpit, and struggled all weekend with his seat and the clutch paddles that were designed to fit Hamilton.

Mercedes F1 boss Toto Wolff denied ahead of the race that the race was a shootout between Russell and Valtteri Bottas to partner Hamilton in 2022. But the fashion in which Russell was comprehensively beating Bottas, leading by around eight seconds at one stage, only added to the feeling that he could replace the Finn once his Williams contract is up at the end of next year.

"This has been a great weekend of validation, saying actually that we [I] probably have been doing a very good job in the Williams this year," said Russell. "From Toto's perspective, hopefully I have given him a headache — not just for 2022, maybe sooner."

Wolff was full of praise for Russell after the race. "His racing was unbelievable," he said. "He got off the startline with the best reaction time in a car that hasn't

been built for him, that is much too small, with pedals that didn't fit his hands, and he got into the lead and drove a brilliant race, and could have won twice.

"This is not a sad day. This is a day where we learn as a team, and we learned that George Russell is somebody to count on in the future. He has all the potential and all the ingredients that a future star needs. I'm sad for the result that he could have had in his first race for Mercedes, but on the other side I'm happy about his performance."

Asked what it meant for Russell's future, Wolff said: "To be honest, I haven't made up my mind what that means for us." But he later acknowledged that a potential Russell/Hamilton partnership at Mercedes could be "a bit of a wild ride for all of us", adding: "Maybe that will happen in the future."

The crestfallen Bottas insisted after the race that he could have caught Russell for a "good battle". He had cut the gap from eight seconds to five early in the second stint thanks to having tyres that were four laps fresher. "The race was not finished when we had the thing with the pitstops, which obviously changed everything," he said. "I managed to go a bit longer on the medium tyre, and that would have opened up opportunities for me on the hard."

But Bottas accepted that from the outside, being outpaced by Russell on his first weekend in the car was not a good look. "For sure, if you don't know things, then I'd have looked like a complete idiot and a fool," he said. "It was a pretty bad race for me from that side, and it will be very easy for people to say a new guy comes in and beats the guy who's been in the team for a few years. So it's not ideal."

LUKE SMITH



5 F1 SUPERSUBS

Formula 1 careers can be made – or rebuilt – on stand-in performances such as George Russell's in Sakhir. Here's a selection of our favourites, although some of us argued for Alberto Ascari (Italy 1954) and Takuma Sato (Japan 2003)...

JEAN-PIERRE JARIER

1978 United States GP Lotus

Drafted in to replace the late Ronnie Peterson, he rose to third following an early puncture before running out of fuel. Dominated the following Canadian GP before oil pressure failed, handing win to local hero Gilles Villeneuve.

MARIO ANDRETTI

1982 Italian GP Ferrari

With the loss of Villeneuve and Didier Pironi's terrible leg injuries, Ferrari brought in the American legend for Monza, and he sent the crowd into raptures by qualifying on pole. Finished third in race, behind team-mate Patrick Tambay.

ROBERTO MORENO

1990 Japanese GP Benetton

During the 1990s he was feted as an Indycar supersub, but the pattern was set at Suzuka. In the wake of Alessandro Nannini's helicopter crash, Moreno stepped in and followed Nelson Piquet home for a Benetton 1-2.

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER

1991 Belgian GP Jordan

When Bertrand Gachot got put behind bars for duffing up a taxi driver, Mercedes came along with a tempting offer for Eddie Jordan to put its young protege in his car at Spa. He qualified a stunning seventh and the rest was history.

MIKA SALO

1999 German GP Ferrari

Schumacher was bidding for his third F1 crown when he crashed in the British GP and broke his leg. Ferrari called up the Finn to aid Eddie Irvine's own title push, and second time out at Hockenheim he led before letting Irvine by to win.



F2 champ Schumacher joins all-rookie Haas line-up

FORMULA 1

Newly crowned FIA Formula 2 champion Mick Schumacher will step up to Formula 1 in 2021 with Haas, where he has secured a multi-year deal to partner F2 rival Nikita Mazepin.

The Ferrari protege, son of seven-time F1 title winner Michael Schumacher, was confirmed as a Haas driver in the build-up to last weekend's Sakhir Grand Prix in Bahrain, where he clinched the F2 title in the support series' final race of 2020.

"The prospect of being on the Formula 1 grid next year makes

me incredibly happy and I'm simply speechless," said Schumacher, who must therefore have been writing this down. "I will give it my all, as I always do, and I look forward to going on this journey together with Haas."

Schumacher will appear for Haas in FP1 this weekend in Abu Dhabi and also feature in the post-race test at Yas Marina.

Pietro Fittipaldi will continue to stand in for Romain Grosjean this weekend after the Frenchman decided against a comeback as he continues his recovery from his Bahrain Grand Prix injuries.

LUKE SMITH

Alonso leads 'dads-at-a-disco' test invasion

FORMULA 1

Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso will take part in next week's 'young-driver' Formula 1 test in Abu Dhabi after Renault gained permission from the FIA to run him.

The 39-year-old veteran of 311 grand prix starts will drive Renault's 2020 car in the one-day test at the Yas Marina circuit after the FIA opened up the test originally designed for young drivers to anyone who has not raced in F1 in 2020.

Red Bull is expected to field

Formula E star Sebastien Buemi, 32, in the test, while 36-year-old Robert Kubica is due to appear for Alfa Romeo.

The decision has drawn criticism from many of Renault's rivals, who felt that is goes against the intended spirit of the test to help give young drivers more seat time.

"It's a young driver test, and a two-time world champion almost in his forties isn't a young driver," said Racing Point team principal Otmar Szafnauer.

LUKE SMITH



Joachim Winkelhock won 1993
BTCC in Schnitzer-run BMW

JEP

Schnitzer ousted as BMW turns its back on history...

TOURING CARS/SPORTCARS

BMW has turned its back on more than 50 years of history with Schnitzer Motorsport. A team that won everything from the World Touring Car Championship to the Le Mans 24 Hours with the German manufacturer has been released from its factory roster for 2021.

The departure of Schnitzer from the BMW fold was announced last week along with that of RBM, the squad that took Andy Priaulx to a hat-trick of WTCC titles in 2005-07. The move follows the end of BMW's involvement in the DTM as the series moves from Class 1 touring cars to GT3 regulations for next season.

Schnitzer had been increasingly marginalised at BMW since it left the DTM when the marque slimmed down its assault on the championship from four to two teams for 2017. This year Schnitzer entered a solo M6 GT3 in the Nurburgring 24 Hours and was involved in the development of the replacement of that car, the M4 GT3.

That role has now passed to RMG, which has carried BMW's hopes in the DTM along with RBM since 2017. That left no programme for either Schnitzer or RBM.

"The necessary realignment of the works-based team structure means that the partnership with BMW Team Schnitzer will not be continued," read BMW's statement. "The collaboration with BMW Team RBM is ending, as there is no longer a classic works involvement in the new, customer racing-based DTM."

Herbert Schnitzer Jr, who took over as team boss from the late Charly Lamm at the end of 2018, explained

that the squad is "proud to be a part of motorsport history at BMW" and that "it is a pleasure to look back on all the big successes we have enjoyed together in such a wide range of categories".

The team, established by brothers Josef and Herbert Schnitzer Sr, started competing with BMWs in the mid-1960s and was at the vanguard of BMW's touring car campaigns from the early 1980s into the 1990s. It won major domestic titles in Germany, Britain and Italy – as well as the European Touring Car Championship and the WTCC – under Lamm, who died in early 2019 shortly after his retirement.

The team masterminded BMW's assault on the FIA GT Championship and the Le Mans 24 Hours with the longtail version of the McLaren F1 GTR in 1997, and then oversaw the German manufacturer's victory in the French enduro in 1999 with the BMW V12 LMR prototype developed by Williams.

The team moved back to touring cars in the Super 2000 era before switching to the DTM on BMW's return to the series in 2012, winning the series in the marque's first year back with Bruno Spengler.

RBM boss Bart Mampaey described his team's departure from BMW as a "a great shame". Mampaey's roots are in the BMW family. His father Julien ran the Juma team that won the Spa 24 Hours in 1977, 1982 and 1983 out of the family BMW dealership. Racing Bart Mampaey was established in the mid-1990s, won the Spa enduro with the marque in 1998, became part of its line-up in the European Touring Car Championship in 2002 and became a full factory team in 2006.

GARY WATKINS

...and pulls out of Formula E

FORMULA E

The number of German manufacturers committed to Formula E has halved. Hot on the heels of Audi announcing on 30 November that it would quit the championship at the end of the 2020-21 season, BMW revealed on 2 December that it will follow suit.

Whereas Audi sweetened the bitter pill by promising an LMDh programme in a bid to chase a 14th Le Mans 24 Hours victory, plus a 2022 Dakar Rally entry, the official BMW communication, which didn't feature a quote from a high-up, simply read: "When it comes to the development of e-drivetrains, BMW Group has essentially exhausted the opportunities for this form of technology transfer in the competitive environment of Formula E."

Autosport understands that the Andretti Autosport race team, which runs the BMW FE attack, wasn't aware of the announcement ahead of time, and only found out as personnel waited to check in for their flight at Valencia Airport following the pre-season test at the Circuit Ricardo Tormo.

The test was topped for the second year in a row by BMW Andretti driver Maximilian Guenther, the two-time E-Prix winner writing on social media: "The news about BMW's Formula E exit after the 2021 season comes as a surprise and is a pity."

Andretti FE team principal Roger Griffiths has told Autosport that the US concern will remain in the series and seek a tie-up with another manufacturer to retain factory status. He added: "[We're] obviously disappointed that they are leaving... but we also understand that they have other priorities beyond racing."

Audi has confirmed that it will continue to supply customer team Envision Virgin Racing with powertrains until the end of the 2021-22 season. A BMW spokesperson has told Autosport that the marque is "discussing options" to establish a similar deal with Andretti.

MATT KEW



GRIFFITHS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Bentley eyes WEC and FE

FORMULA E/WEC

Bentley is calling time on the Continental GT3 programme, but has vowed to be back in motorsport sooner rather than later, with a return to the Le Mans 24 Hours and a Formula E entry among the options.

The British manufacturer, part of the Volkswagen Group, put its factory assault on the Intercontinental GT Challenge with M-Sport on ice in the summer. It has now announced that there will be no return in 2021 for the organisation that developed both generations of the Continental for racing. Rather there will be a scaling back of the GT3 programme, which it said will come to a “natural end” at the end of next season.

Bentley motorsport boss Paul Williams explained that GT3 racing no longer fits with the company’s aspirations laid out last month in its Beyond 100 manifesto, a reference to its 100th anniversary last year. Under that plan, it aims to be manufacturing electric vehicles only by 2030. “We have a very clear strategy going forward as a brand with Beyond 100, going completely sustainable and focused on electrified mobility, and we felt it absolutely important we aligned our motorsport direction with that,” he said. “What we are saying is that we are changing direction and we are not going to invest any more in our GT3 programme but really look forward to the future.”



Williams revealed that Bentley’s options for the future are “very wide”. “The principle is that we want to do motorsport in the future,” he explained. “It has to be sustainable: we have to do something that ties into where the brand wants to go.”

Williams described FE as “obviously a consideration” and the forthcoming Extreme E off-road series for electric vehicles as a “fascinating format”. He also revealed that Bentley is investigating multiple routes back to Le Mans, at which

it took the last of its six victories with the Speed 8 LMGTP coupe in 2003. Those include the new category for hydrogen fuel-cell cars due in 2024, Le Mans Hypercar and LMDh. He listed them in that order in terms of their interest to Bentley.

Bentley has released its roster of six factory drivers for 2021. They will all contest this weekend’s IGTC finale at Kyalami, three with the K-PAX team and three in a privately entered M-Sport car.

GARY WATKINS

Radical change for F2/F3 format

FORMULA 2/3

Two thirds of next season’s races in the FIA Formula 2 and Formula 3 championships will be run from reversed grids.

The separation of the two series’ schedules, leading to a reduction in rounds for each, has freed up timetable space for three races on each weekend.

Feature races, with the grid formed by qualifying times, will

now be run on Sundays. Two sprint races will be run on Saturdays, the first from a reversal of qualifying times, and the second from a reversal of the finishing order from race one. This will be the top 10 in F2 and the top 12 in F3.

Ferrari protege Robert Shwartzman, who won more races than anyone else in his rookie F2 season, has been confirmed for a second season

in the series at Prema Racing, and fellow race winner Felipe Drugovich has been named at Virtuosi Racing – both hinted in Autosport last weekend. Ralph Boschung has joined Campos Racing for 2021, and made an early start with the Spanish team in last weekend’s 2020 finale in Bahrain, where he replaced Williams Formula 1 debutant Jack Aitken.

MARCUS SIMMONS



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Tandy leaves Porsche to join Corvette line-up

IMSA SPORTSCAR

One Brit will replace another in the Corvette Racing line-up in next year's IMSA SportsCar Championship. Le Mans 24 Hours winner Nick Tandy has left Porsche to fill the vacant seat at the factory Chevrolet squad left by Oliver Gavin.

Tandy will partner Tommy Milner at the wheel of one of the mid-engined GT Le Mans-class Chevrolet Corvette C8.Rs in the full IMSA series in 2021. They will be joined for the enduros at Daytona, Sebring and Road Atlanta by another British driver, Alexander Sims. The move follows Porsche's withdrawal from the IMSA ranks next season. Tandy had been part of its North American campaign for all but one season

of his eight at the German manufacturer.

Tandy described Corvette Racing, which won this year's GTLM crown with Antonio Garcia and Jordan Taylor, as "the team that everyone looks up to". "Many operations aspire to get to the level that Corvette Racing operates at," he said. "The fact that the opportunity arose where I could join the team and stay racing within IMSA is a dream opportunity."

Sims will dovetail the Corvette appearances with his Formula E campaign for Mahindra after his departure from BMW, with which he contested the full IMSA series in 2017-18. He stressed that his FE contract will take precedence should there end up being any clashes with IMSA.

The line-up in the other Chevrolet is

unchanged. Garcia and Taylor will be joined by Nicky Catsburg for the three big enduros. No mention was made of the Le Mans 24 Hours in the announcement of Tandy and Sims, but Corvette Racing is known to be working on a return to the French enduro after this year breaking a run of continuous participations stretching back to 2000.

● In the top IMSA class, Haas F1 refugee Kevin Magnussen's move to Chip Ganassi Racing, reported in Autosport last week, to drive a Cadillac DPi has been confirmed. Meanwhile, Juan Pablo Montoya has joined the line-up of the Meyer Shank Racing Acura for the enduros. He will partner Dane Cameron, Olivier Pla and AJ Allmendinger.

GARY WATKINS

Mini champion Harrison aims for Hyundai BTCC seat

BTCC

Mini Challenge champion Nathan Harrison has tested an Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N British Touring Car Championship racer as he bids to graduate to the series next season.

The 24-year-old Harrison finally landed the Mini title this year with Excelr8, after finishing as runner-up on three previous occasions. He sampled the Hyundai at

Snetterton last week – his first run in a BTCC car since a prize test in a Motorbase Ford Focus two years ago – and is now attempting to raise the budget to land a drive for 2021, when Excelr8 expands to four Hyundais.

"It all went really well – as soon as I jumped in, from lap three or four, I felt comfortable and at home," said Harrison, who endured mixed weather conditions during the test. "The balance

felt good and throughout the day we were making set-up changes so I could get a better understanding of what certain things do on those cars.

"The experience was mega and it was nice to already know some of the people from Excelr8. Now it's a case of trying to raise the budget for next year – with the current climate it's going to be hard."

STEPHEN LICKORISH





BTCC ups success ballast to 75kg

BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship has reverted to its 2015-18 levels of success ballast for 2021, with an increase from 60kg to 75kg for the championship-leading driver going into each weekend.

After Colin Turkington won the 2018 title with just one race victory in the swansong season for the West Surrey Racing BMW 125i M Sport, maximum success ballast was lowered from 75kg to 60kg for 2019. But in 2020, seven of the eight qualifying sessions in which cars carried success ballast were topped by machines on at least 30kg, indicating that teams have got their heads around keeping their cars competitive on heavier weight.

As a result, the pre-2019 sliding scale has returned, decreasing from 75kg to 39kg for fifth in increments of 9kg, then down to 9kg for 10th in increments of 6kg.

The decision was taken in the BTCC's traditional teams' meeting. "I actually suggested it," AmD/MB Motorsport boss Shaun Hollamby told Autosport. "I agreed when they reduced it [in 2019] because we would end up with guys fighting for the championship in 17th and 18th on the grid. We wanted an element of unpredictability,

but that didn't work commercially because sponsors wondered why their cars were suddenly uncompetitive.

"But things have moved on and now a good driver in a good car with success ballast is often first or second on the grid, when they should be eighth or 10th. An extra 15kg won't make as much difference as that, but it will help a bit. Maybe we'll be further up the grid or maybe it will be a downside for us – I did think of that!"

The option-tyre rule, abandoned for 2020 as teams were operating on reduced staffing levels as part of BTCC coronavirus protocols, has made a partial return for 2021. The Oulton Park, Croft and Snetterton rounds will feature the soft Goodyear tyre as the option, and it will be the medium at Knockhill. Every driver must use the option tyre in at least one race at each of those events. The medium tyre is mandated at Donington Park, Silverstone and the two Brands Hatch rounds, and the hard at the pair of Thruxton events.

The experimental top-10 shootout qualifying system, trialled successfully in October at Snetterton, will be used at three events next season – Snetterton, Donington and Silverstone.

MARCUS SIMMONS

IN THE HEADLINES

WEC DROPS AGGREGATE

Aggregate two-driver qualifying in the World Endurance Championship will be replaced to conventional one-driver sessions for next season. There will be two 10-minute qualifying periods, one for Le Mans Hypercar and LMP2 machinery, and one for the GTE Pro and Am classes. In GTE Am, the bronze-rated driver must set the time.

LE MANS TEST DAY MOVES

The Le Mans Test Day will return next season, but with a difference. The day-long test will take place one week ahead of the race on 6 June rather than the traditional two. Scrutineering for the race will take place on the Friday and Saturday before the test.

W SERIES CALENDAR

W Series has confirmed its eight-round Formula 1-supporting calendar for 2021. The all-female series kicks off at the French Grand Prix on 26 June, before appearing at the Austrian, British, Hungarian, Belgian, Dutch, US and Mexican GPs. All races take place on Saturdays.

VW STOPS MOTORSPORT

Volkswagen has announced an end to its motorsport activity, with the 169 employees of VW Motorsport redeployed within the company. Its main ongoing project was the ID.R electric prototype record car. Spare parts supply for the customer racing Golf TCR and Polo R5 rally car have been ensured in the long term.

ILOTT, TICKTUM CHANGES

FIA Formula 2 runner-up Callum Iloft was set to return to his 2019 team, Charouz Racing System, for the first day of this week's post-season test in Bahrain. Among a raft of driver-team changes for the test, Dan Ticktum switched to Carlin alongside Jehan Daruvala, while ex-F1 driver Roberto Merhi made yet another F2 return with HWA. Juri Vips and Liam Lawson – tipped for the two Hitech seats – are out with the team on all three days.

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F1 ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

LENGTH 3.451 miles NUMBER OF LAPS 55



2019 POLE POSITION
Lewis Hamilton 1m34.799s

POLE LAP RECORD
Lewis Hamilton 1m34.799s (2019)

RACE LAP RECORD
Lewis Hamilton 1m39.283s (2019)

UK START TIMES

Friday 11 December

FP1 0900

FP2 1300

Saturday 12 December

FP3 1000

QUALIFYING 1300

Sunday 13 December

RACE 1310

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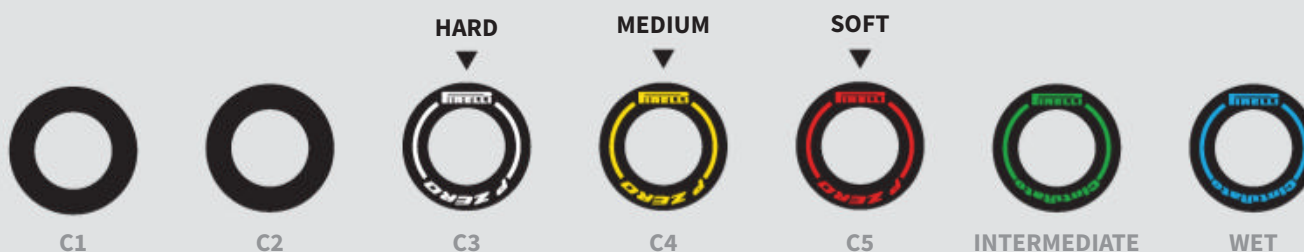
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TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

DRIVERS

1	Hamilton	332
2	Bottas	205
3	Verstappen	189
4	Perez	125
5	Ricciardo	112

CONSTRUCTORS

1	Mercedes	540
2	Red Bull	282
3	Racing Point	194
4	McLaren	184
5	Renault	172



RACE STATS

ABU DHABI GP WINNERS

2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Kimi Raikkonen	Lotus
2011	Lewis Hamilton	McLaren
2010	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull



YAS MARINA MASTERS

Top 10 points scorers for grands prix at Yas Marina. All races converted to current points system.	L Hamilton	188
	S Vettel	168
	N Rosberg	80
	J Button	67
	V Bottas	63
	K Raikkonen	61
	F Alonso	58
	M Verstappen	55
	M Webber	53
	F Massa	46

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Stewards on the side of sanity

The decision not to opt for disqualification after Mercedes' Sakhir tyre mix-up was the right one — George Russell fully deserved the points he managed to salvage

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

The Formula 1 stewards at the Sakhir Grand Prix had something new to consider: a driver running two of his team-mate's tyres. This is against Article 24.2a in F1's sporting rules, which is aimed at stopping abuse when it comes to tyre allocations.

"If a team runs out of tyres, hypothetically, they could be using a 14th/15th set of tyres [13 sets are set out in the rules], which obviously then gives them a resultant sporting advantage," explained F1 race director Michael Masi.

The penalty for this infraction is disqualification from the race in question (or grid penalty if committed beforehand), but the Sakhir stewards decided against this. They explained that there were "mitigating circumstances, additional to the radio issue", which was a George Russell message coming in on top of a call from Mercedes sporting director Ron Meadows, stopping Russell's crew from getting the communication that he'd be coming into the pits first.

The stewards noted that Mercedes had brought Russell back in the next lap — within the "three-lap tolerance" allowed in Article 24.4b, which covers drivers running tyres of mixed compounds. And this was the key to why Russell wasn't disqualified, although a penalty still had to be issued — a €20,000 fine.

Given that there was a real chance Russell would lose his first F1 points through no fault of his own, having already lost a likely first win to a later puncture, this was a very sensible outcome.

"Russell's performance reinforced his class as an F1 driver: fast, dedicated, fearless"

In essence, Russell and Mercedes had been punished enough, and the Briton at least came away with *something* to show for his debut Black Arrows appearance: ninth place and two world championship points, plus one for fastest lap. It's not hard, however, to imagine trouble stemming from this decision had Russell won the race in a last-lap move on eventual winner Sergio Perez, or if his replacement Jack Aitken had been running 11th at the flag. Racing Point and Williams surely would have been at least somewhat aggrieved to have been deprived of season-changing results. But then both do have key ties to Mercedes...

No matter, the decision has been made (and the stewards recommended the rules be tweaked to remove the exclusion threat if teams act as Mercedes immediately did), and Russell is no longer on the list of grand prix drivers to have racked up considerable

start totals without scoring points. At the start of the Sakhir race, which he aced, he'd been third on that chart — 22 behind leader Luca Badoer's 58.

Russell has shown his quality throughout his two years in F1 so far. He's only just lost that oft-referenced perfect qualifying record against F1 team-mates — and losing it in a pole battle with Valtteri Bottas that he came close to winning isn't exactly bad — and has consistently shown his pace.

There have been mistakes at key moments — including *that* crash behind the safety car at Imola and slipping off the road at the 2019 German Grand Prix, where he gave up the place that became 10th for team-mate Robert Kubica when the Alfa Romeos were penalised over their start procedures.

But thoughts of these have been banished by his performance as Lewis Hamilton's stand-in last weekend. Russell has shown that he can handle the pressure of leading for F1's top team, even if small doubts remain about how the second stint Mercedes expected to complete would have turned out without the pitstop shenanigans. Bottas was starting to close in, but he'd been kept at bay in the race's first three quarters.

Russell's overall performance across the second Bahrain event reinforced his class as an F1 driver. Fast, dedicated — he did "hundreds of practice starts in our little rig that we had set up in my room" — and fearless.

At the time of writing, it's still unknown if Hamilton will return a negative COVID-19 result in time to race in this weekend's Abu Dhabi season finale. But even if he does, the strict protocols being enacted in the city mean he may not be granted entry without special arrangement. So the chances of Russell getting a second chance to show he deserves to join Mercedes full-time for 2022 seem reasonable.

The question is, can he do as good a job again? The Yas Marina track is an altogether different beast to the short Bahrain outer loop, which makes a second Russell-versus-Bottas bout all the more interesting. Whether the Sakhir GP track made Russell look closer to Bottas, or the reverse, should theoretically be exposed this weekend. But that's an imprecise science, which explains why both drivers and Mercedes insisted that even a one-off weekend shouldn't be seen as a shootout for a future drive.

But it did allow Mercedes to see what Russell could do, with his expected rival for the 2022 seat alongside and without the pressure of the team needing points for championships that are already won. At the very least, his performance has shown that Mercedes' long-term F1 future is in good hands. It just needs to provide a steering wheel built to fit them. 🏁

➔ P18 SAKHIR GP REPORT



Mir's rise and his next challenge

The 2020 MotoGP champion's rapid ascent is proof of his class, which will be tested to the full next year when he defends that crown against one of the all-time greats

LEWIS DUNCAN

It was obvious from the first time he raced in the motorcycle grand prix world championship that Joan Mir was a special talent. He made his grand prix debut in the Moto3 class in 2015 at the Australian Grand Prix as replacement for the injured Hiroki Ono. He'd never seen Phillip Island before, but Mir ran inside the top six in his first race before crashing.

A year later, halfway through his first full Moto3 campaign with Leopard Racing, Mir claimed his maiden victory in Austria. And in 2017 he dominated the season with 10 victories to win the lightweight-class title comfortably.

He served just one year in Moto2 with Marc VDS in 2018, during which time he scored four podiums, before Mir was on the MotoGP grid in 2019 with Suzuki.

And in 2020, at the end of MotoGP's wildest season, Mir emerged as champion having displayed consistency on his Suzuki that the rest of the grid could not match, with a tally of seven podiums, including a race win. His rise to MotoGP stardom was rapid, coming five years into his grand prix career – one fewer than Marc Marquez's ascent to the top of the world.

Suzuki's philosophy since it returned to MotoGP in 2015 has always been geared towards youth. It picked Maverick Vinales out of Moto2 after a year, then replaced him with Alex Rins two seasons later before pairing the latter with Mir, a line-up

“I can't wait to start to have battles with Marc. But to beat Marc we need the fastest bike”

that will remain in place until at least the end of 2022.

Mir was sought after for 2019, with Honda also wanting him in its ranks – albeit at its satellite team LCR. Mir wanted a factory seat, despite HRC willing to place him on the world championship-winning bike. That led Mir into Suzuki's arms, the Japanese marque only too happy to meet his demands. And there was something else in the back of Mir's mind that swayed his decision to throw his lot in with Suzuki.

Speaking to Autosport on its Tank Slappers podcast following his title win at the Valencia GP, Mir said: “When I won the title in Moto3, I said, ‘I have to celebrate in a good way because maybe it will be the last one.’ And now to have the second one, it's unbelievable and also with Suzuki because when I signed the contract with them, this was the first thing

that happened in my mind that I remember.

“I said, ‘OK, maybe with the other manufacturers I get the title, but I will be one more who gets the title.’ It would be super-nice, but with Suzuki you are a boss, you become a legend if you get the title. Two years later... in my mind [I thought], I go to Suzuki and maybe the first years will not be easy. But then at the end we can have the chance to fight for the victory one day for sure.”

Mir's title charge got off to a tricky start. He registered two retirements from the first three rounds while early points leader Fabio Quartararo won twice and was seventh in the Czech Republic. Mir got his first podium at round four, the Austrian GP in August, which began a run of seven rostrums from the final 11 rounds, during which time he transformed a 48-point deficit to a 37-point lead and wrapped up the title with a round to spare.

“In Austria I started to get good results, podiums, and race by race I was recovering distance to Fabio, who was the first one, and race by race I was stronger,” he added. “It was not in one point that I realised I would be world champion, it was more in that process of recovering points.”

The completion of that process ended in history being made. Mir ended a 20-year wait for Suzuki to win the MotoGP title again; he became just the sixth Suzuki rider to achieve the feat and only the fourth Spaniard. And showing his class on Sundays, he is the first rider since American legend Wayne Rainey in 1992 to win the championship without a pole position.

The unpredictability caused by Michelin's new rear-tyre construction and the COVID-condensed calendar created MotoGP's wildest season. Marquez's season-ending arm injury certainly contributed, but claims that it devalues Mir's title are nonsense. He crashed and hurt himself fighting for the title – the omnipresent threat to a motorcycle racer.

While Mir came of age in 2020 on a Suzuki package easily the class of the field, the 23-year-old is all too aware that another step needs to be made in 2021 to take the fight to Marquez when he hopefully returns.

But it's a challenge he isn't shying away from: “I can't wait to start to have battles with Marc. The truth is we need to improve the speed with our Suzuki because we have a bike really balanced, but it's not the fastest and to beat Marc we need the fastest bike. This is really important. We won the title because I'm clever, but not because I was the fastest with this package.

“So, this means that if I was able to manage the pressure with this package, which is actually not the best one on the grid, if we get the speed and we start to fight a bit for the pole positions, victories in every GP, then I think we can fight with Marc for sure.” ❧

P44 MOTOGP REVIEW

YOUR SAY

The fuel tank burst, and I was soaked in fuel, on fire from head to foot. I held my breath, closed my eyes and hit the belt release, stood up in the seat and jumped

BRIAN REDMAN

Memories of a fiery crash half a century ago

I was very interested to hear Romain Grosjean describe his accident. Almost unbelievable that he was able to survive with relatively minor injuries. I found it somewhat surprising that he was able to describe his feelings – not wanting to die, thinking of his children, Niki Lauda, and thinking “I’ll wait until they come” – “I cannot die today. For my kids I cannot die today.”

Well, 49 years ago when I crashed on the Targa Florio it was not like that! The fuel tank burst, and I was soaked in fuel, on fire from head to foot. I held my breath, closed my eyes and hit the belt release (Jo Siffert and I had practiced 12 driver changes the previous day), stood up in the seat and jumped. In the distance, as in a dream, I heard an unearthly screaming (must have been me!). I had absolutely no thoughts at all, then while rolling trying to put out the flames, heard the sound of voices – spectators – who came to help. When the fire died down they took my overalls off and fanned me with magazines (open helmet so my face was damaged and I was blind).

Forty-five minutes later, the helicopter arrived. I was taken back to the pits and then transported to an unnamed hospital. There (I now know it was in Termini Imerese) I was bandaged from head to foot. Around two hours later in came Alain de Cadenet. His Lola 210 had lost a wheel at top speed on the main straight, it caught fire and Alain’s life was saved when he was dragged out of the burning wreckage by a local carabinieri. He wasn’t too badly injured, though complained that he couldn’t see out of one eye! Unfortunately, as my hands were heavily bandaged, I had to ask his assistance in passing water!

At this point, no one knew where I was but at around 10pm, in came the search party, Pedro Rodriguez and Richard Attwood. They took me back to the hotel where a German doctor who had come with the Porsche team administered pain-killing injections. The next day Porsche and Gulf rented a jet which flew me to the UK, and I went to a private wing of Christie’s Cancer Hospital in Manchester. When the jet landed I was told a friend, Howard Lowcock, had brought my wife Marion to meet us. As I appeared at the door, looking like The Invisible Man, I heard a thud; was it Marion fainting? No! Howard!

Seven weeks after the accident I raced again, finishing third at Mallory Park in Sid Taylor’s McLaren M18 F5000. Unfortunately, the helmet was catching on some of the damaged areas and I was told to go away for eight weeks.

Brian Redman
Vero Beach, Florida

Sakhir’s outstanding performances

Congratulations to George Russell on a faultless drive all weekend in Bahrain. He made his vastly more experienced team-mate look pretty ordinary at times, and has given himself a great chance of a full-time promotion in 2022.

Also, I would like to say how great it was to see Sergio Perez finally getting a much deserved first GP victory. Surely it is now time for Red Bull to make the only sensible decision, which is to sign him for next year!

Tim Parrett
By email

Russell was extra-special

I know this is a bit *Spinal Tap*, but any chance of ramping your driver score to 11 for George Russell this week?

Simon Yates
By email




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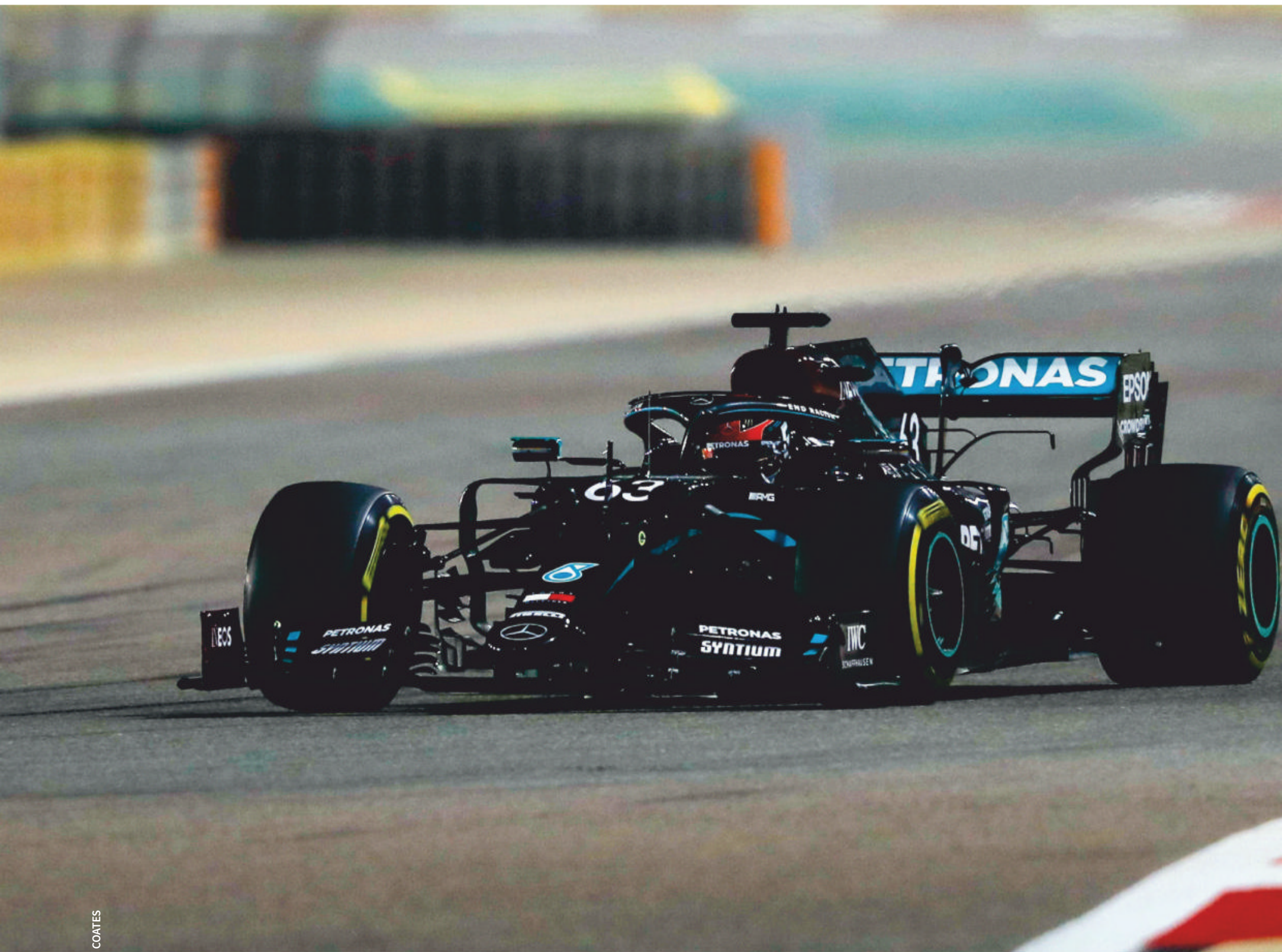
PEREZ WINS AS HAMILTON REPLACEMENT RUSSELL STARS

There was no stinting on the drama as Mercedes' young supersub missed out on a maiden F1 win. Instead that prize went to Racing Point's veteran

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

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COATES

At the inaugural Sakhir Grand Prix, Formula 1 got a glimpse of what things could look like without Lewis Hamilton. The world champion had been forced out of the race by a positive COVID-19 test and, while that misfortune ended his streak of 265 consecutive grand prix races, it gave the rest of the field a golden chance to shine. And they took it. The weekend had been set up as a duel between the new Mercedes line-up, with George Russell going up against Valtteri Bottas. But the pulsating battle between the duo didn't end with one picking up critical momentum for Mercedes' 2022 driver-line-up decision. Instead, Sergio Perez and Racing Point came away with victory in what will surely go down as a famous grand prix thriller, which was defined by two starring drives and one calamitous pitstop.

THE MERCEDES DUEL

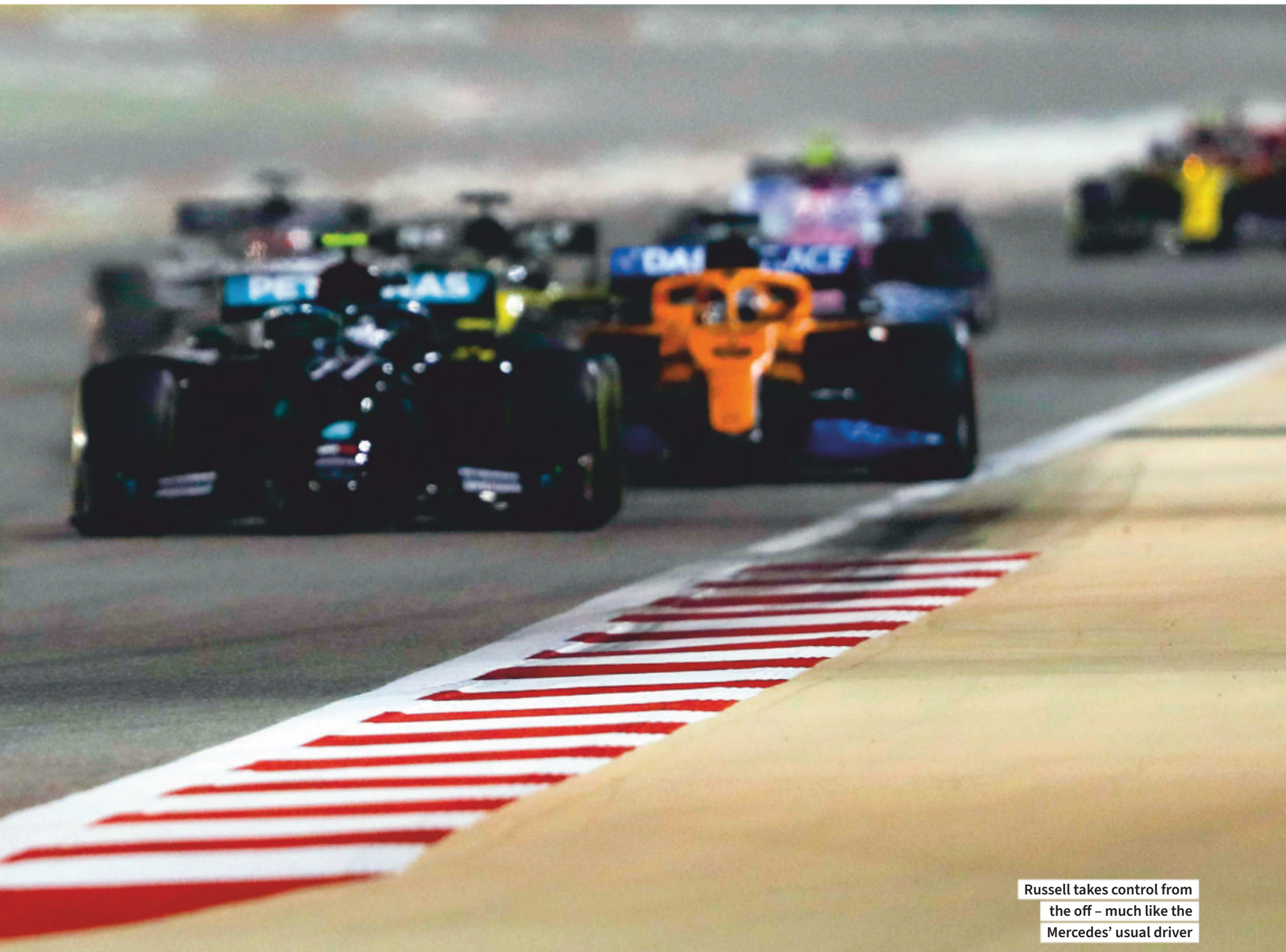
Russell couldn't quite beat Bottas in qualifying, but still lined up alongside him on the front row, and there was intense focus on the start. It was loaded with uncertainty given that Bottas has had a season littered with poor getaways, including one seven days earlier, and Russell has a similar record for Williams. Plus, an afternoon sandstorm near the venue had created a blustery, dusty atmosphere as night rolled in, with the field making extra practice starts on the laps to the grid.

Russell's start "was the phase of the race that I was most nervous about all weekend" as he had to contend with his fingers being too big for clutch paddles that were moulded to Hamilton's hands, but he aced it. Bottas also launched well, but "suddenly had a spike on wheelspin" as he shifted into second gear and he lost impetus. This meant the Mercedes pair went side by side towards Turn 1, pinching together and warding off Max Verstappen.

Russell sealed the lead on the inside at the right-hander and scampered clear, while Bottas "had a bit of a snap being in the dirty air [behind Russell] and with the tailwind" in Turn 2. This cost the Finn momentum and meant the following drivers – including Perez, who had shot off from fifth on the grid and was nearly into third on the outside at Turn 1, plus Verstappen and Charles Leclerc – were quickly on top of him.

Russell was gone, but in his wake at the Turn 4 right-hander it all got messy. Verstappen braked early as the pack swamped Bottas, who locked up, while Perez went around the Red Bull and swung in to the apex as the Mercedes went deep. But Leclerc was also locked up on the inside and he clattered into Perez, spinning him into the runoff, but crucially not into the gravel. Leclerc's Ferrari was out on the spot with a broken left-front, while Verstappen, who had been forced off too but not been hit, was also out of the race after carrying too much speed into the gravel, where he could not avoid a slide into the wall.

The safety car appeared as Perez dropped to the back of the pack in 18th, stopping to switch his soft tyres for mediums. The race was



Russell takes control from the off – much like the Mercedes' usual driver

neutralised for the next six laps of 87, after which Russell nailed the restart and set about building a gap over Bottas, who ran second after briefly being passed by McLaren's Carlos Sainz Jr at Turn 1, with the Spaniard then slipping off the road at the Turn 3 kink and falling behind.

This aberration put Russell well out of DRS range, 1.6 seconds to the good at the end of lap eight, and he continued to pull away as the two Mercedes drivers lapped in the low 58s or high 57s, with the rest at least half a second further back each time. This quickly pulled them clear of Sainz, and the race became about the Black Arrows trading times for the rest of the long first stint. Bottas was able to close on occasion, but never looked like he had enough pace to simply surge back up to Russell.

"The first stint was quite understeery for me," explained Bottas. "I'd decided to go with less front flap for the first stint, but I think it was not ideal. It seemed to be a difficult track to follow once you were within three seconds, you were always drifting in the corners."

And so, the first stint for the Mercedes cars became one of ebb and flow between the pair as they pulled clear of the pack (Sainz was

14.4s behind before he stopped on lap 28), and the team was happy to run longer thanks to the cool conditions (around five degrees lower than in the Bahrain GP) reducing tyre degradation. The early safety car also helped the tyres as the drivers were not pushing while full of fuel, which would have worked the rubber harder.

Russell came in to take hard Pirellis, with Mercedes set for a one-stopper, on lap 45. Bottas was left out for a further four laps, during which Russell reported possible power problems while setting rapid lap times, such was the advantage of fresh rubber.

"From the power perspective, it was just sort of coming in and out," he explained. "Nothing too concerning from the data, but just from within it didn't feel quite right, so we just had to change a few settings and then everything was fine."

By the time Bottas rejoined, Russell's lead was up to 8.5s, but that quickly came down during a period when Mercedes warned its drivers to be careful with their left-fronts at the bumpy outer-loop chicane. Bottas gained three seconds as the leaders got back up to speed at the end of a brief virtual safety car called for Nicholas Latifi retiring on the inside of Turn 8 on lap 54, and generally looked to be catching Russell further when the race was completely turned on its head.

On the leader's 61st lap, Russell's replacement at Williams, Jack Aitken, "took a little bit of a chance by keeping my foot in on the dust and it bit me pretty hard" as he spun on the exit of the final corner and wiped his front wing off. The FIA initially looked to cover the debris recovery with another VSC, which was soon upgraded to a >>

"I TOOK A LITTLE BIT OF A CHANCE BY KEEPING MY FOOT IN ON THE DUST AND IT BIT ME PRETTY HARD"



Verstappen's anger was obvious after first-lap biff of the barrier

full safety car. Mercedes had a 37.5s gap behind Bottas on the lap Aitken crashed, and so opted to bring its cars in for a double-stack stop that will go down in F1 history for its shambolic results.

THE MERCEDES PITSTOP CATASTROPHE

Russell stopped to take what should have been a free pitstop for Mercedes and go back to the mediums. The problem was that he exited with Bottas's designated mediums fitted. Another stop had to follow immediately, after Bottas had been sent back into the train still on the hards he had taken back on lap 49.

"The pitstop issues were linked to the way our radio system handles the priorities of messages, which caught us out in a big way," explained Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin. "As the safety car came out, we were calling for the crew to be ready, and for the tyres for each car to come into the pitlane.

"At the time that message was going out, another radio message for a very brief period prevented one of the key messages getting through to one set of tyre collectors [Russell's]. It's something that's been lurking in there and could have caught us out at any time over the past few seasons."

As a result of the disaster, Mercedes' comfortable 1-2 had turned into fourth and fifth by the time the race restarted on lap 69. The leader, sensationally, was Perez.

THE PEREZ RECOVERY

"I thought the race was over," Perez would later say of his lap-one spin following the Leclerc contact, for which the Ferrari driver was handed a three-place grid penalty for this weekend's Abu Dhabi GP following a post-race investigation.

The Mexican was right at the rear of the field under the first safety car, but had at least been able to switch to the mediums — which would prove very handy in his resulting strategy. But this was nearly ruined by an unseen, and seemingly innocuous, slip as he toured around to catch Kimi Raikkonen at the back of the safety-car snake.

At the start of the third lap after his initial stop, Perez snatched his front-left brake as he exited the Turn 3 kink and flat-spotted the tyre. He quickly called for Racing Point to assess the vibrations he was immediately feeling. The team asked him to shoot back to the highest speed he could under the safety car, which briefly took him past Raikkonen, after which they decided the vibrations were acceptable. A further round of deliberations over coming in again under the safety car and taking the hards was made, but the imminent race restart essentially took this option away.

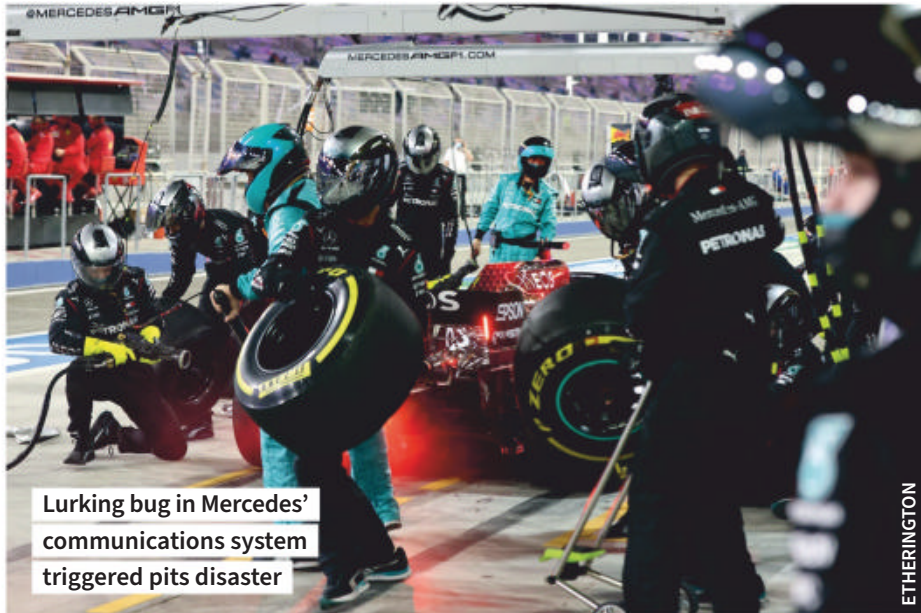
Perez was ruthless at the restart. He immediately dispatched Raikkonen on the run into Turn 1 with a late dive to mug F1's most experienced driver (who to be fair had no need to fight a much quicker car) and breezed past Pietro Fittipaldi's Haas into the final corner, still

"THE WAY OUR RADIO SYSTEM HANDLES THE PRIORITIES OF MESSAGES CAUGHT US OUT IN A BIG WAY"

on the first lap back at racing speed. Aitken was easily overcome on the pit straight that followed, before he repeated the simple final-corner move on Antonio Giovinazzi, and then dispatched Latifi and Kevin Magnussen with ease on the following two tours.

This put Perez in 12th on lap 10, now chasing Alex Albon, who was also on a one-stopper (which became two when Red Bull gambled on a switch to softs at the Aitken-triggered safety car). Perez gained another spot when Sebastian Vettel made an error, but followed Albon for 11 laps, before hanging on to get ahead around the outside of Turn 4 on lap 21. That came after he had followed Albon past Lando Norris when the McLaren driver was slow through Turn 5 as a result of having just been passed by the Red Bull.

Racing Point had warned Perez while he was chasing Albon that



his race would be “all about managing the left-front” and its vibrations, which Perez said had got so severe that “it was hard to keep the steering wheel tight [in my hands]. There were times when I told the team that we should box because I was losing lap time – but still the pace was strong.”

Pitting for a second time at this stage could have been disastrous for Perez’s recovery, and changing to a conventional ‘two-stopper’ (in his case a third stop overall) would have certainly prevented the outcome the Sakhir GP eventually got. He did come in again on lap 47 to finally take hards, six and five laps respectively after Esteban Ocon and Lance Stroll, the duo he had been chasing after passing Albon. Perez later felt what “really made our race was to be able to go a bit longer than these two guys and build up a bit of a tyre delta”.

After asking to be let past Stroll for the sake of Racing Point’s ongoing, intense battle for third in the constructors’ championship, he got ahead with a different kind of assistance on lap 56 when the Canadian outbraked himself into Turn 4 and slid deep, with Perez nipping past and heading after Ocon. He caught and passed the Renault, which had earlier run strongly behind Stroll and got ahead thanks to the undercut effect putting Ocon within DRS striking distance of the Racing Point when it rejoined from its only stop of the race (Stroll had put in a brilliant 42-lap first stint on the softs as he rose from 10th on the grid).

Perez’s pass on Ocon was for sixth, but this became the net lead thanks to the Mercedes pitstop calamity, which followed Daniil Kvyat pitting his AlphaTauri in an attempt to attack Sainz and Renault’s Daniel Ricciardo just before the first VSC. Sainz and Ricciardo then came in a fraction after that neutralisation was ended, which cost them critical track position to the one-stoppers, even if the timing made sense given their two-stop strategy.

And so Perez suddenly had the lead, with Racing Point committed to leaving him out during the second safety car (as it did not do at Imola, to its cost) because it was satisfied with not only the degradation on the hards, but that tyre warm-up at the restart would not be an issue. But things weren’t over for Mercedes just yet. >>

QUALIFYING



The qualifying battle between the Mercedes drivers has been one of the best aspects of the 2020 Formula 1 season, but it took on a whole new dimension at the Sakhir Grand Prix.

The question was, could George Russell, who had topped the first two practice sessions after stepping into Lewis Hamilton’s W11, beat Valtteri Bottas to pole? The Finn had pushed Hamilton, statistically F1’s best-ever qualifier, so close in 2020 – the average gap between them in dry sessions just 0.133 seconds in Hamilton’s favour. But Russell is ‘Mr Saturday’... The answer was no – Bottas claimed his fifth pole of the season, but only just.

The two Mercedes drivers had been the only ones to get through Q2 on the medium tyres, and they were given an unusual three runs in the top-10 shootout. The first had them languishing in third and fifth, but only because they had completed their initial laps back on the soft rubber on used tyres. Armed with fresh Pirellis, they enjoyed a near-empty track for their second attempt. Bottas blitzed to a 53.377s, which would be his fastest time, with Russell 0.142s adrift.

On the last run in the final minute, Bottas rued running without a tow as he couldn’t improve (an increased headwind down the main straight in the dying minutes also not helping). But Russell *was* able to do better, cutting the gap to 0.026s, which left the Briton “gutted” to miss out on pole.

Russell put the gap down to his struggle to keep speed high on the Turn 1 exit – something he’d aced for Williams over the first Bahrain weekend, but could not replicate.

“I was just struggling with a lot of understeer at the apex, which meant when I picked up the power I was just getting a snap of oversteer,” he explained. “The Mercedes just has so much more grip and so much more front end on the entry phase that could allow me to carry a bit more speed, but it was difficult.”

“I STRUGGLED AT THE APEX. WHEN I PICKED UP THE POWER I WAS GETTING A SNAP OF OVERSTEER”

Max Verstappen finished third in his Red Bull, only 0.056s from pole, while Charles Leclerc stunned with fourth for Ferrari, getting out of his car after just one Q3 run as he only had a single set of new tyres available.

F1’s newest drivers – Jack Aitken and Pietro Fittipaldi – sandwiched the championship’s most-experienced racer, Kimi Raikkonen, in 18th and 20th. Aitken had done well against new team-mate Nicholas Latifi, only being surpassed on the final Q1 runs. Haas had tasked Fittipaldi with giving Kevin Magnussen a tow – he would start last regardless after his car needed a new energy store and control electronics.

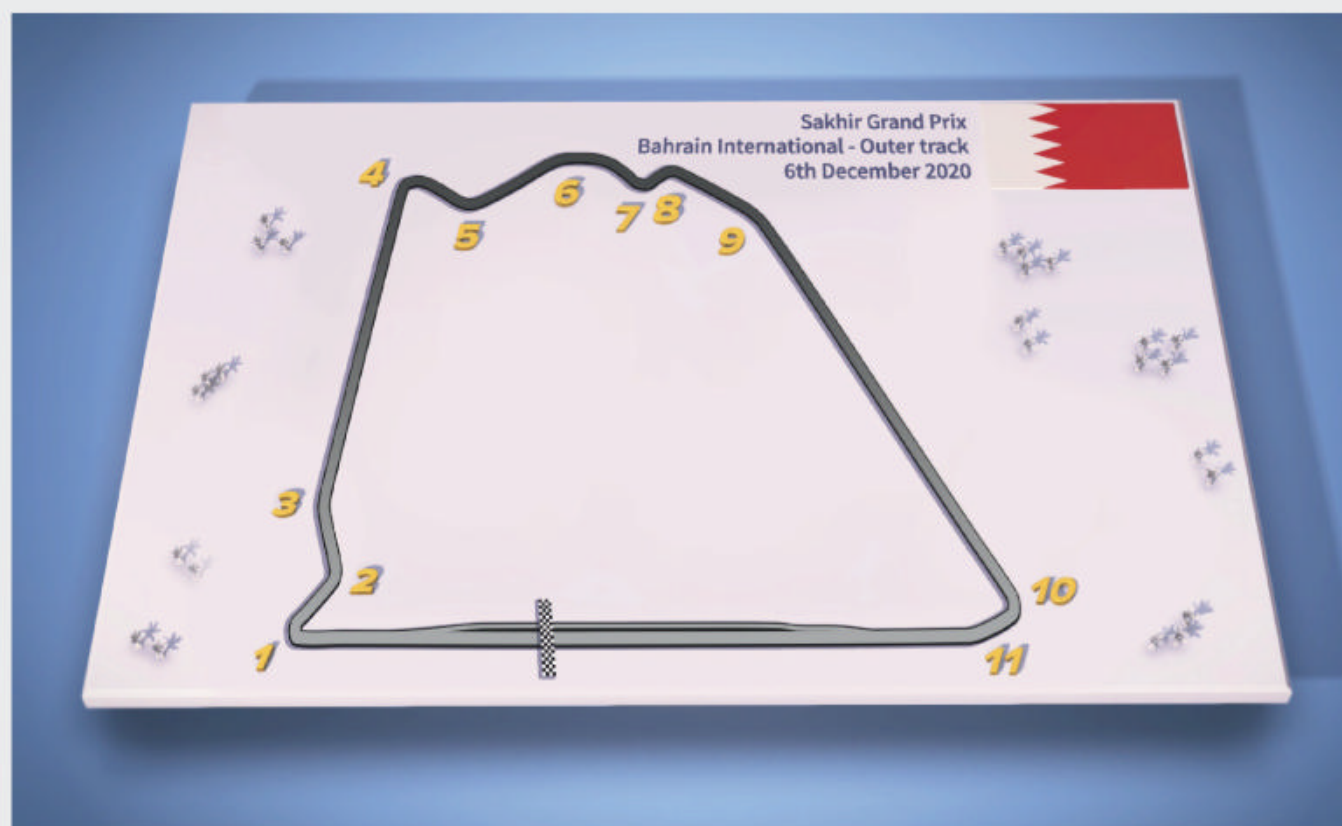


TRACKSIDE VIEW

In the days that have followed George Russell being announced as Lewis Hamilton's temporary replacement at Mercedes, Autosport has been pondering starts – specifically the ultra-pressure grand prix getaways.

In the previous week's Bahrain race, both Russell and new team-mate Valtteri Bottas had tough times at the initial start. The pair are now together in the W11s, but this hasn't been the easiest car to get off the line in 2020. Although Bottas has had the majority of the shockers, Hamilton has not been immune from the odd slow start. So when FP1 gets under way for the Sakhir GP, Autosport heads down to the pit exit to see if Mercedes is paying any extra attention to its launch procedures.

Almost immediately, Bottas is there, his W11 glittering under the spotlights as he pulls up to Autosport's left after a quick install lap that features a steering wheel 'hot-swap' when he returns to the pits. Practice start, lap, repeat (with another steering wheel change). Replays later tell us that Bottas suddenly lowering the revs during his second practice start is a reaction to a marshal jumping into the pitlane to remove some debris, which is covered by a virtual safety car. Mercedes later tells us that this practice is not in response to Bottas's poor start in the Bahrain GP, which it has put down to unexpectedly



low grid-spot grip giving him wheelspin.

Russell is given extra practice starts as part of his programme of getting settled with Hamilton's car, although he doesn't leave the pits until more than 15 minutes of FP1

“RUSSELL GETS EXTRA PRACTICE STARTS AS PART OF GETTING SETTLED WITH HAMILTON'S CAR”

have passed. He takes longer to sort the bite-point-finding part of the process, although is later told his clutch position is fine, and is soon heading out for his first lap with the Black Arrows. The largely red helmet livery has serious Michael Schumacher vibes.

After breathing in a healthy amount of burned rubber (having done a whole GP weekend already, the ground by the pitlane exit is covered in rubber – the 'We Race as One' logos now far from pristine), we walk down to the approach to Turn 1 for the rest of the session.

As in FP1 for the Bahrain GP,

there's little action to speak of – the bumps that could unsettle a car directly opposite Autosport's vantage point (where the pit exit flag marshals wave in recognition at the lone observer) are far from the braking zone. But we enjoy the Red Bulls showering sparks far more than most, although only on their push laps when the aero loads are highest, before Bottas and Sebastian Vettel have a spate of lock-ups in the closing stages, the former battling with floor damage on what is a pretty punishing circuit.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Bottas has not been so hot off the line, so practice starts are in order



Russell took immediate advantage of Bottas's slip to muscle past

THE RACE TO THE FINISH

Russell was on used mediums, but crucially his own, following his third trip to the pits, but Mercedes insisted he'd have the advantage with that rubber versus Bottas and his twice-fitted hards, and the one-stoppers occupying the podium places.

While Perez scampered clear out front when the race restarted for the final time, his pace over the final 18 laps good enough to take him 10.518s clear of Ocon, Russell harried his team-mate. Bottas made a critical slip deep at Turn 4 the lap after the restart and Russell didn't think twice, diving to the inside of the first part of the Turns 7/8 chicane and forcefully stealing fourth. He then overcame Stroll and Ocon in successive laps, which set the race up for a grandstand finish of which it was ultimately robbed.

At the end of lap 73, Perez's lead was 3.4s, which Russell eroded over the following four laps before disaster struck again. Mercedes had detected a slow left-rear puncture and

"I'VE HAD RACES IN MY PAST WHERE THEY'VE BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM ME – BUT TWICE?"



Racing Point crew celebrate win Perez has dreamed of for a decade

had to bring Russell in for a fourth time. Although he was able to tear back from 14th to finish ninth – just behind Bottas, who was defenceless in the pack with his fading hards – and take his first F1 points, that was not the prize he'd desired.

"I've had races in my past where they've been taken away from me – but twice?" said an initially shocked Russell, who could have been disqualified for the lap he did on Bottas's mediums, had the stewards not opted instead to impose a €20,000 fine on Mercedes due to the mitigating circumstances around the pitstop disaster. "I just couldn't believe my luck."

There will forever remain two unanswered questions hanging over the Sakhir GP. Could Bottas have battled back against Russell if Mercedes' second stint had run to the end as expected? He felt he could, saying: "I was catching him at a pretty decent rate, so I knew everything was going to be open and most likely we'd have a good battle."

Could Perez have held on without Russell's puncture? He felt he could too. One insistence, at least, came with the certainty of victory.

"It was going to be close but I think I was going to be able to hold him back, because we had good pace," said Perez. "Given the age of my tyres, given the pace I had towards the end, the pace I had in hand, I was going to be able to hold him back to the end."

Ocon was a fine second, with Stroll third, completing a tumultuous seven days for Racing Point, which had come away from the first Bahrain race with no points after Perez's fiery retirement while running third, and Stroll's flip following the red flag.

F1's first Sakhir GP was a thriller, but as so often in sport it will be the emotions that stay in the memory. Hamilton's absence, Russell's heartbreak (twice), Bottas's defiance and Perez's joy.

"I'm a bit speechless," the winner said after climbing from his RP20. "I hope I'm not dreaming, because I've dreamed for so many years of being in this moment. Ten years it took me. Incredible..." ❄

NEXT F1 REPORT

ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX 17-24 DECEMBER ISSUE

What chance another first-time grand prix winner as the season comes to a close in the United Arab Emirates?

VSC pit call costs Sainz and Ricciardo

Carlos Sainz Jr and Daniel Ricciardo paid the price for pitting under a brief virtual safety car as their midfield rivals filled out the podium.

Sainz's McLaren and Ricciardo's Renault ran third and fourth after the first-lap collision, and were joined in the fight to complete the podium by the AlphaTauri of Daniil Kvyat, who was able to undercut Ricciardo at the first round of pitstops.

But a decision to pit on lap 55 under a brief VSC called to clear Nicholas Latifi's Williams dropped Sainz and Ricciardo behind Sergio Perez, Esteban Ocon and Lance Stroll, who would go on to finish as the top three.

"I've done everything I could today, I've not left anything out there," Sainz said after finishing fourth. "Other cars have been luckier today with the timing of the stops and the VSC."

"Other cars were much faster than us, such as Checo and company, who fell to last place and ended 10 seconds ahead of us, despite the fact that we were driving on a newer tyre."

"I'm fifth, and usually that is a good result," said Ricciardo. "But if you see our rivals first and third, and I heard that Perez was in the pits on lap one – when a car pits on lap one, you can't let him win the race. I felt like we all missed out today."

Racing Point is now 10 points ahead of McLaren in the race for third in the constructors' championship, with Renault another 12 further back in fifth.



Leclerc is handed grid penalty for 'reckless' clash

Charles Leclerc will drop three places on the grid for the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix after stewards sanctioned a "reckless" move on the opening lap at Sakir.

Ferrari driver Leclerc locked up and made contact with eventual race winner Sergio Perez at Turn 4, spinning the Racing Point driver. Leclerc's car was left with damage, while Red Bull's Max Verstappen ran through the gravel trying to avoid the two spinning cars, crashing into the wall.

The stewards confirmed soon after the incident that they would be investigating the clash following the race, and ultimately handed Leclerc a three-place grid penalty for the collision. Their report stated Leclerc "braked too late into Turn 4, locking the front right wheel and colliding with [Perez], which was taking the normal racing line into the corner".

Leclerc was also handed two penalty points on his FIA superlicence, taking him up to three points for the 12-month period.

"I was side by side, a bit behind Max

I think, and tried to overtake him into Turn 4," said Leclerc. "I had seen Checo, but I expected him to go around the outside of Valtteri [Bottas] and stay there, but I think he decided after to come back on the inside, and I was there."

"I don't think it's a mistake from Checo. If there's anybody to blame today, it's me, but I would say it's more unfortunate than blame."

Perez feared "the race was over" after being hit by Leclerc, while Verstappen was more punchy in his criticism of the Ferrari driver.

"It was all about surviving in between the cars," Verstappen said. "I don't know why they were being so aggressive and so reckless. We are all up in the front, and at the end of the day now, three cars basically were the victim of that, two cars heavily."

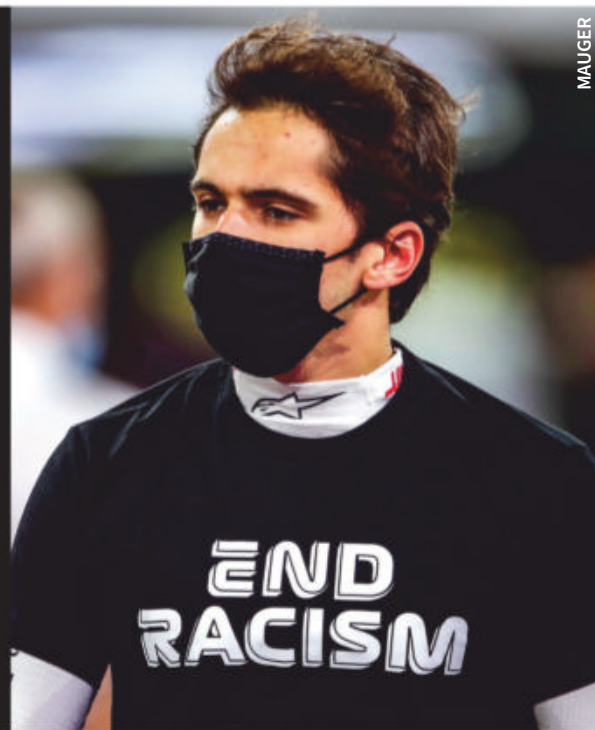
"I don't really know why Charles dived up the inside like that, especially to brake that late as well. What do you expect?"

When told that Leclerc had taken the blame, Verstappen replied: "As he should."



"PIETRO DID THE WHOLE RACE AND DIDN'T PUT A FOOT WRONG. KEVIN [MAGNUSSEN] IS NOT IN THE TOP 10 ANYWAY, SO IF YOU COMPARE IT WITH KEVIN, IT IS RESPECTABLE"

Haas boss Gunther Steiner on Pietro Fittipaldi's Formula 1 race debut



Albon manages to salvage points after missing Q3

Alex Albon was on the back foot for the Sakhir Grand Prix when he failed to make it out of Q2. The Red Bull driver pinned his inability to make it through to the top-10 shootout on a lack of time spent on the soft tyres in practice, and toiled somewhat in the race, complaining of a lack of straightline speed.

Albon made early progress on the medium tyre to pass Sebastian Vettel and Lando Norris, dispatching the McLaren around the

outside of Turn 6, but was unable to keep the rapidly recovering Sergio Perez behind him.

Albon took his tyres up to the end of lap 47, switched to a two-stopper under the safety car, and took on a set of fresh soft Pirellis for the last 25 laps.

He quickly cleared the two AlphaTauris when green-flag running resumed, and cycled up to sixth after George Russell dropped down the order.



AlphaTauri's impressive run fizzles out

Daniil Kvyat's stellar run to sixth in qualifying underlined the pace that AlphaTauri had on Bahrain's outer loop circuit, while Pierre Gasly cited floor damage as the reason behind his ninth-place starting slot.

While Kvyat lost places to the fast-starting Carlos Sainz Jr and Daniel Ricciardo at the start, the Russian kept the Renault driver within DRS range for a good portion of the opening stint of the race, bringing Lance Stroll and Gasly in tow. AlphaTauri then brought Kvyat in on lap 27 for a set of scrubbed medium tyres, and he immediately set the fastest lap to date to undercut Ricciardo two laps later.

The Australian kept himself in DRS range until Kvyat stopped a second time for the hard tyre on lap 53. Gasly had stopped two laps prior and cycled out just behind his team-mate, and the two remained together on the road during the safety car.

But they struggled to get the hards to fire up once again, Gasly suffering worse and eventually haemorrhaging enough positions to drop out of the points. Kvyat, meanwhile, managed to keep Valtteri Bottas at bay to hang on to seventh place. In a normal GP, staying on the hard tyres could have paid off, but the late-race safety car gave AlphaTauri's late-stopping rivals a grip advantage.

Q & A

JACK AITKEN WILLIAMS F1 DEBUTANT

How was the race from your perspective?

The first few laps here were more a case of getting used to the pack. We've done a little bit of driving in traffic during practice, but just settling in was tricky with how chaotic it was. I fought a bit with Kimi Raikkonen, eventually got past him and pulled away, which is nice. I was looking pretty good on pace, we were matching the guys ahead of us and just slowly creeping up to them. I felt like there was an opportunity, particularly with some of the retirements in the



first couple of laps. And then I just pushed it too hard, took a little bit of a chance by keeping my foot in on the dust, and it bit me

pretty hard. I'm really sorry to the whole team for that. It's a real shame. And should I have to step in again next weekend, I'm more motivated than ever to do an even better job and bring more to the table. So we'll see what happens with that.

Are you happy to tick the box and finish your first race despite breaking your front wing?

Yeah, absolutely. I was a very lucky boy, I think it's fair to say. And the guys did a really good

job to turn me around and get me out, nearly got onto to the back of the pack even during that safety car period. So I was able to go racing and didn't finish last. There are some silver linings to take, for sure.

What are your thoughts on the Russell incident?

I am gutted for George as a colleague and friend. Obviously, it was a huge opportunity for him, and that's very unfortunate. I don't feel responsible in any way for it [Aitken's incident brought out the safety car]; this is racing, it's what happens. It's a chain reaction. Mercedes made a bit of an error, and that's very unfortunate for him.



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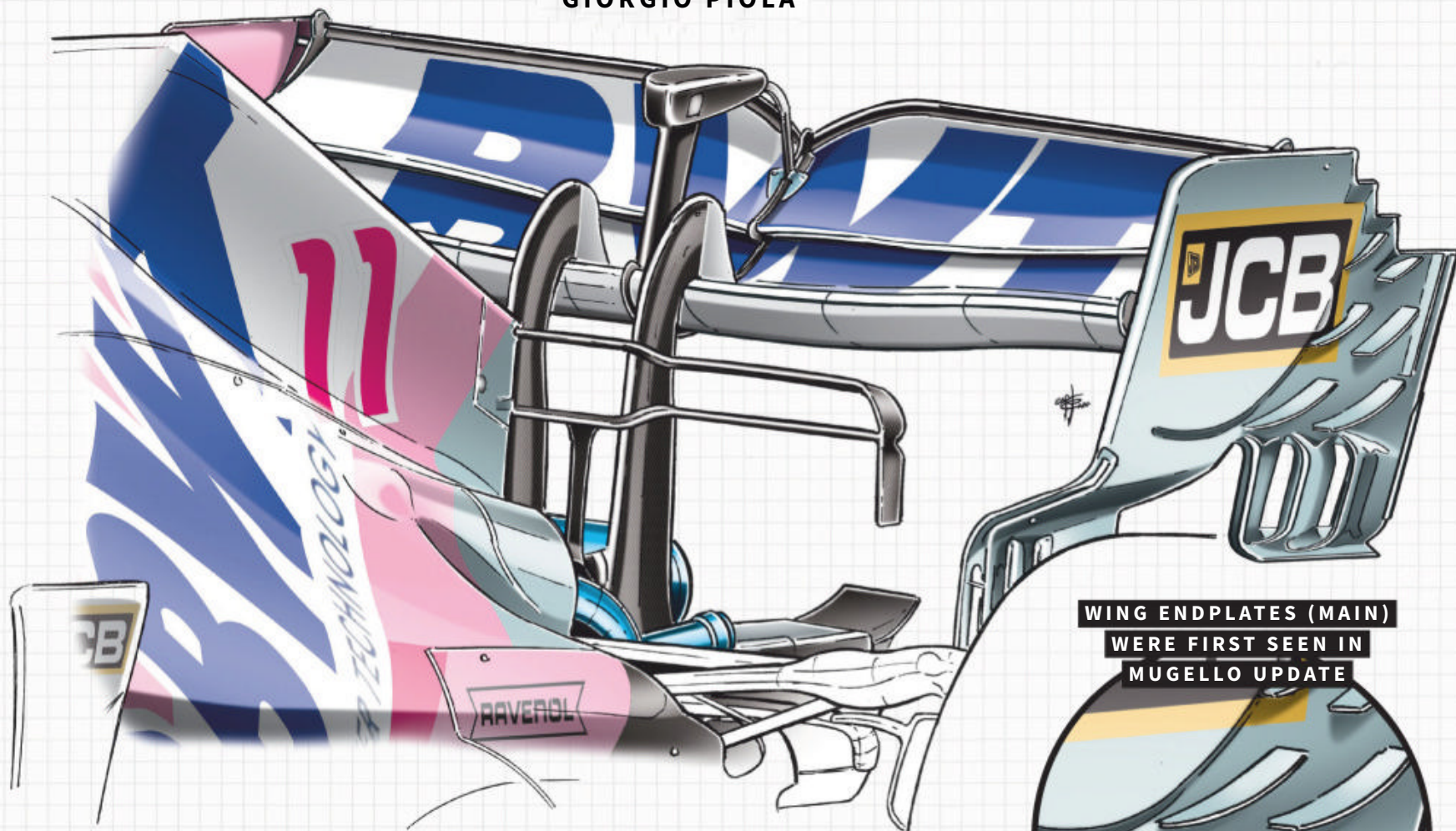


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DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA



WING ENDPLATES (MAIN)
WERE FIRST SEEN IN
MUGELLO UPDATE

RACING POINT'S LOW-DRAG TWEAK

As Formula 1 approaches the conclusion of the season, the development paths of the 2020 cars have now come to an end – sure, they'll be carried over into next season, but the effort from within the teams is firmly on limiting the damage that comes with the aero changes to the floor next year.

But the Sakhir outer-loop circuit threw up a few challenges for the

aerodynamicists. Without the more technical inner section, the teams could trim off a little bit more downforce, albeit not too much as it was needed in the bumpy upper section of the circuit.

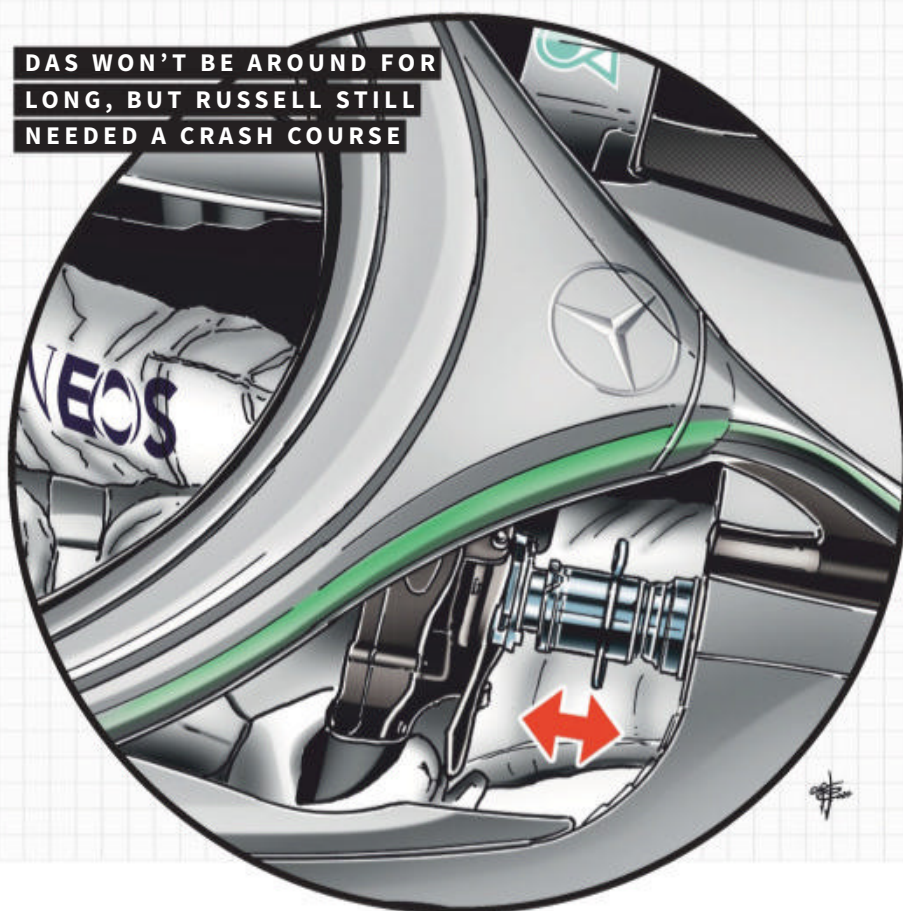
Racing Point elected to opt for a spoon-shaped rear wing, featuring the endplates introduced in the large mid-season update package taken to Mugello in September. By

decreasing the amount of wing used in the outer portion, the downforce can be dialled back a little and can help relieve the car of some of its drag. It certainly helped Sergio Perez find a good turn of pace in qualifying, as he clocked in at 342km/h (212.5mph) in the speed trap en route to fifth on the grid. Even so, you could hardly predict the turn of events that

granted him his first F1 victory, going to show that even the most brainiest of aerodynamicists cannot factor circumstance into their equations...

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

DAS WON'T BE AROUND FOR LONG, BUT RUSSELL STILL NEEDED A CRASH COURSE



MERC SPLITS ITS STRATEGY ON DAS

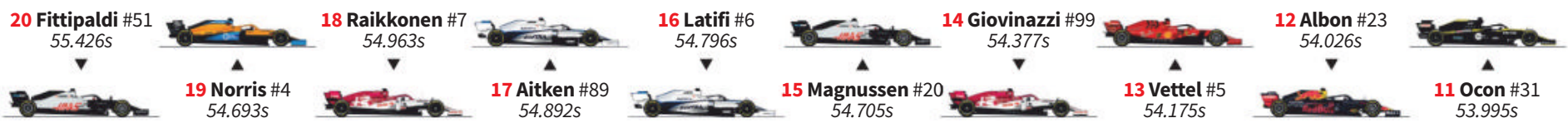
Mercedes' dual-axis steering system has one more race left before it joins the double-diffuser, the mass damper and the Brabham BT46B in the room of F1's no-longer-welcome designs. The push-pull toe-change system has been a valuable tool to Mercedes as it seeks to boost the warm-up of its front tyres by moving the carcass around more to generate heat, but the team has prepared for life after DAS.

Valtteri Bottas ran in Friday practice without the system, as Mercedes seeks to understand how the car operates without it and how the team can make up for its absence. But Merc also had

to get George Russell up to speed with DAS, and so it was left on board the #63 car as Lewis Hamilton's race engineer Pete Bonnington coached Russell through the particulars of the system during practice. He also had to get accustomed to a new steering wheel, and Russell admitted that having done the Bahrain GP for Williams gave him the wrong reference points in practice while driving the Mercedes W11, in addition to learning the new cockpit layout.

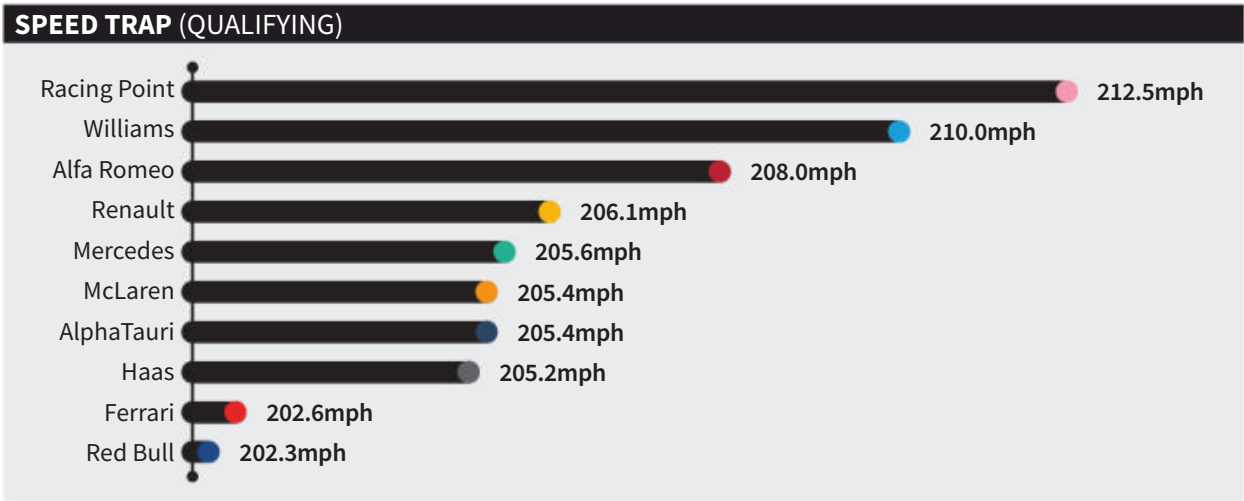
"FP1 was a mess," he said. "[I was] pressing the wrong buttons here and there; even in qualifying."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2			FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Russell	54.546s	1	Russell	54.713s	1	Verstappen	54.064s
2	Verstappen	54.722s	2	Verstappen	54.841s	2	Bottas	54.270s
3	Albon	54.811s	3	Perez	54.866s	3	Gasly	54.427s
4	Bottas	54.868s	4	Ocon	54.940s	4	Ocon	54.453s
5	Kvyat	55.011s	5	Albon	55.036s	5	Norris	54.606s
6	Gasly	55.166s	6	Kvyat	55.068s	6	Albon	54.629s
7	Ocon	55.273s	7	Stroll	55.104s	7	Russell	54.664s
8	Vettel	55.281s	8	Ricciardo	55.124s	8	Perez	54.678s
9	Ricciardo	55.379s	9	Gasly	55.133s	9	Stroll	54.693s
10	Leclerc	55.449s	10	Sainz	55.258s	10	Sainz	54.720s
11	Stroll	55.558s	11	Bottas	55.321s	11	Giovinazzi	54.845s
12	Perez	55.716s	12	Raikkonen	55.484s	12	Kvyat	54.850s
13	Sainz	55.757s	13	Giovinazzi	55.533s	13	Leclerc	54.854s
14	Raikkonen	55.783s	14	Magnussen	55.738s	14	Ricciardo	54.857s
15	Giovinazzi	55.858s	15	Latifi	55.784s	15	Vettel	54.858s
16	Norris	56.078s	16	Vettel	55.830s	16	Raikkonen	55.171s
17	Magnussen	56.130s	17	Norris	56.031s	17	Magnussen	55.347s
18	Latifi	56.764s	18	Fittipaldi	56.110s	18	Latifi	55.493s
19	Fittipaldi	57.077s	19	Aitken	56.260s	19	Fittipaldi	55.666s
20	Aitken	57.187s	20	Leclerc	no time	20	Aitken	55.670s

WEATHER Twilight, air 22-26C track 25-30C WEATHER Night, air 24-25C track 26-27C WEATHER Twilight, air 25C track 29.9C



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	53.904s	1	Verstappen	53.647s	1	Bottas	53.377s
2	Verstappen	54.037s	2	Perez	53.787s	2	Russell	53.403s
3	Russell	54.160s	3	Bottas	53.803s	3	Verstappen	53.433s
4	Norris	54.194s	4	Sainz	53.818s	4	Leclerc	53.613s
5	Gasly	54.207s	5	Russell	53.819s	5	Perez	53.790s
6	Perez	54.236s	6	Leclerc	53.825s	6	Kvyat	53.906s
7	Leclerc	54.249s	7	Stroll	53.840s	7	Ricciardo	53.957s
8	Vettel	54.301s	8	Kvyat	53.856s	8	Sainz	54.010s
9	Ocon	54.309s	9	Ricciardo	53.871s	9	Gasly	54.154s
10	Kvyat	54.346s	10	Gasly	53.941s	10	Stroll	54.200s
11	Ricciardo	54.388s	11	Ocon	53.995s			
12	Sainz	54.450s	12	Albon	54.026s			
13	Giovinazzi	54.523s	13	Vettel	54.175s			
14	Stroll	54.595s	14	Giovinazzi	54.377s			
15	Albon	54.620s	15	Norris	54.693s			
16	Magnussen	54.705s						
17	Latifi	54.796s						
18	Aitken	54.892s						
19	Raikkonen	54.963s						
20	Fittipaldi	55.426s						

WEATHER Night, air 24C track 27C



SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP		PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Hamilton	332	1	1
2	Bottas	205	1	1
3	Verstappen	189	1	2
4	Perez	125	1	3
5	Ricciardo	112	3	4
6	Leclerc	98	2	4
7	Sainz	97	2	3
8	Albon	93	3	4
9	Norris	87	3	4
10	Stroll	74	3	1
11	Gasly	71	1	4
12	Ocon	60	2	5
13	Vettel	33	3	5
14	Kvyat	32	4	6
15	Hulkenberg	10	7	3
16	Raikkonen	4	9	8
17	Giovinazzi	4	9	10
18	Russell	3	9	2
19	Grosjean	2	9	14
20	Magnussen	1	10	15
21	Latifi	0	11	15
22	Aitken	0	16	18
23	Fittipaldi	0	17	20

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Mercedes	540
2	Red Bull	282
3	Racing Point	194
4	McLaren	184
5	Renault	172
6	Ferrari	131
7	AlphaTauri	103
8	Alfa Romeo	8
9	Haas	3
10	Williams	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Russell	0	1	Bottas
Hamilton	11	4	Bottas
Vettel	4	12	Leclerc
Albon	0	16	Verstappen
Norris	7	8	Sainz
Ricciardo	15	1	Ocon
Gasly	13	3	Kvyat
Perez	10	3	Stroll
Perez	1	0	Hulkenberg
Stroll	1	1	Hulkenberg
Raikkonen	8	8	Giovinazzi
Magnussen	1	0	Fittipaldi
Grosjean	7	8	Magnussen
Latifi	1	0	Aitken
Latifi	0	15	Russell

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

POLE POSITIONS

Hamilton	10
Bottas	5
Stroll	1

WINS

Hamilton	11
Bottas	2
Gasly	1
Perez	1
Verstappen	1

STARTING GRID

10 Stroll #18 54.200s		8 Sainz #55 54.010s		6 Kvyat #26 53.906s		4 Leclerc #16 53.613s		2 Russell #63 53.403s	
	9 Gasly #10 54.154s		7 Ricciardo #3 53.957s		5 Perez #11 53.790s		3 Verstappen #33 53.433s		1 Bottas #77 53.377s

RACE RESULTS ROUND 16 (87 LAPS – 191.39 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Racing Point-Mercedes	1h31m15.114s	24	Su, Mn, Hn
2	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Renault	+10.518s		Mn, Hn
3	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Racing Point-Mercedes	+11.869s		Su, Mn
4	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	McLaren-Renault	+12.580s		Su, Mn, Mn
5	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	Renault	+13.330s		Su, Mn, Hn
6	Alexander Albon (THA)	Red Bull-Honda	+13.842s		Mn, Hn, Sn
7	Daniil Kvyat (RUS)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+14.534s		Su, Mu, Hn
8	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+15.389s	4	Mu, Hn, Hu
9	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+18.556s	59	Mu, Hn, Mu, Mu, Su
10	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Renault	+19.541s		Sn, Mn, Mn
11	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+20.527s		Su, Mu, Hn
12	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Ferrari	+22.611s		Mu, Hn, Sn, Su
13	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+24.111s		Mn, Hn, Mn
14	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+26.153s		Mn, Hn, Mn, Sn
15	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	+32.370s		Sn, Mn, Su
16	Jack Aitken (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	+33.674s		Mn, Hn, Mn, Sn
17	Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA)	Haas-Ferrari	+36.858s		Sn, Mn, Su, Su
R	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	52 laps-oil leak		Sn, Mn
R	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	0 laps-accident		Su
R	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	0 laps-accident		Su

FASTEST LAPS

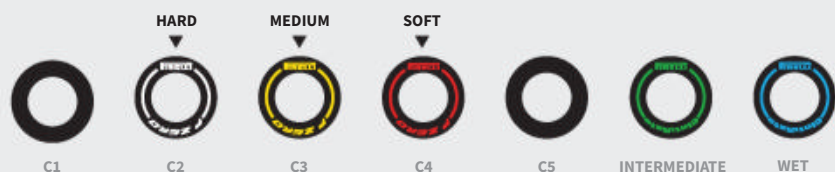
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Russell	55.404s	-	80
2	Bottas	56.563s	+1.159s	60
3	Perez	56.789s	+1.385s	69
4	Giovinazzi	56.887s	+1.483s	56
5	Vettel	56.905s	+1.501s	56
6	Ricciardo	56.979s	+1.575s	57
7	Kvyat	57.001s	+1.597s	80
8	Albon	57.056s	+1.652s	52
9	Sainz	57.165s	+1.761s	80
10	Gasly	57.220s	+1.816s	53
11	Norris	57.270s	+1.866s	85
12	Ocon	57.350s	+1.946s	75
13	Raikkonen	57.375s	+1.971s	56
14	Stroll	57.388s	+1.984s	85
15	Aitken	57.392s	+1.988s	56
16	Magnussen	57.516s	+2.112s	57
17	Fittipaldi	57.742s	+2.338s	56
18	Latifi	58.206s	+2.802s	29
19	Verstappen	no time	-	-
20	Leclerc	no time	-	-

WEATHER Night, overcast, windy, air 20-23C track 23-26C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 125.84mph **FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED** 143.05mph

TYRES

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



RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

NORRIS and **FITTIPALDI** required to start from the back of the grid for additional power unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES

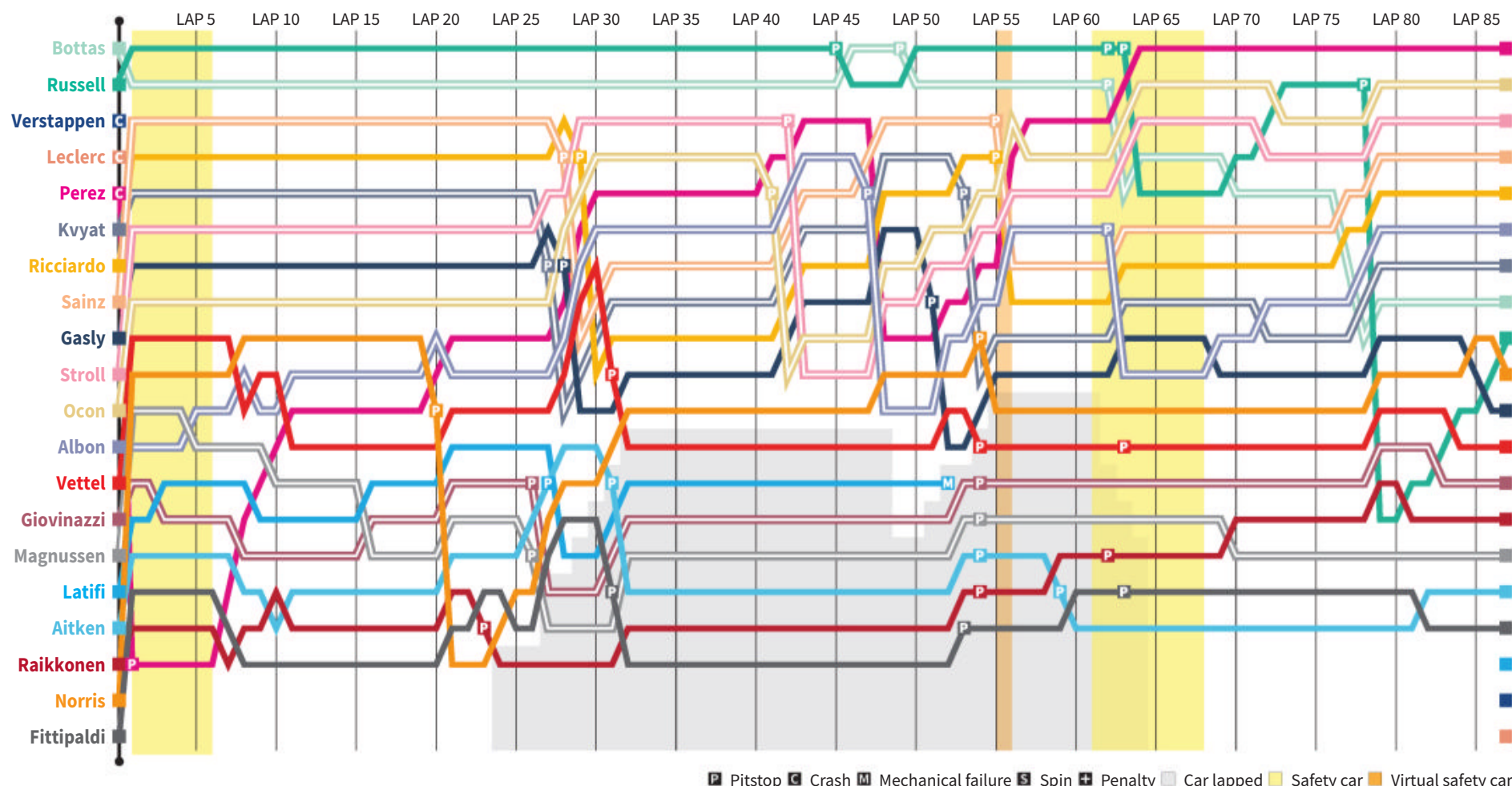
LECLERC Three-place grid penalty for next race and two licence points for causing a collision with Perez

STAT

2

Perez is the second Mexican to win a world championship F1 race, after two-time victor Pedro Rodriguez

LAP CHART What happened, when



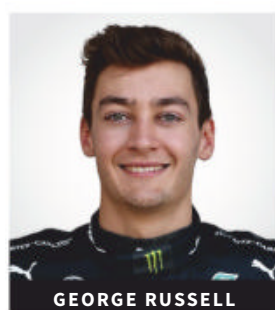
P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin + Penalty Car lapped Safety car Virtual safety car

FULL POINTS FOR THE WINNER AND THE ONE WHO CAME SO CLOSE

Sergio Perez earns top marks for a superb fightback to take maximum advantage of Mercedes' agony, while it's a case of what could have been for a brilliant George Russell

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

MERCEDES



GEORGE RUSSELL

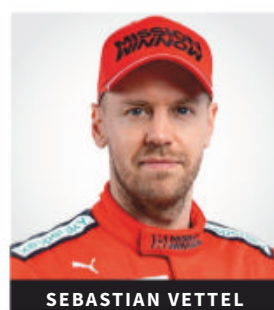
10 Given the pressure he was under in a car that did not even fit him, this was sensational. On the pace from the off, he came oh so close to a maiden pole. Aced the start and nailed the first stint. Was losing time to Bottas before pitstop fiasco, but made up for it with pre-puncture charge.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

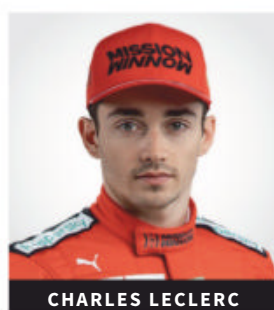
7 Earns a reprieve for taking pole, otherwise would have scored lower given how close Russell was. Another slow start, and didn't seem to have an answer to Russell in first stint. Reckoned he'd have closed in during the second stint on the hards, but never got the chance to fully prove it.

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

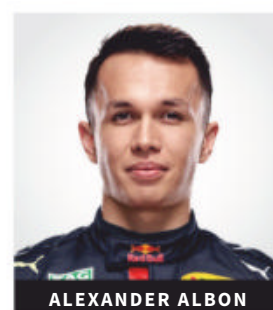
5 Was always going to be a hard race for Ferrari given its car struggles in 2020, and that's why we're not scoring Vettel lower on what was an anonymous weekend overall. Eliminated in Q2, then had a long and unexciting race that featured a slow left-front change at his second stop of three.



CHARLES LECLERC

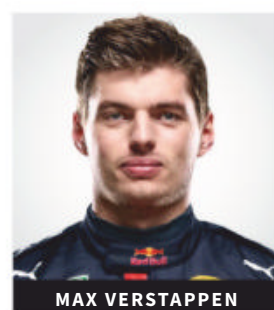
7 Put in an excellent qualifying performance to take fourth with one of the laps of the season so far, on his sole Q3 run. But his race was over after four corners as he locked up and tagged Perez, breaking his Ferrari's left-front and earning him a penalty for the next race.

RED BULL



ALEXANDER ALBON

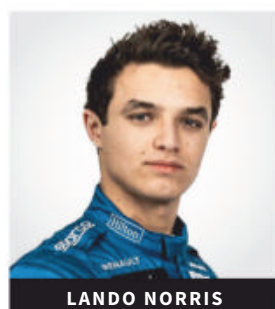
6 A middling score because 12th in qualifying and sixth in the race isn't close to what the Red Bull looked to be capable of. He did show well in battle in the race and went forwards, but this was another tough weekend when Perez, his rival for the 2021 Red Bull seat, won the race.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

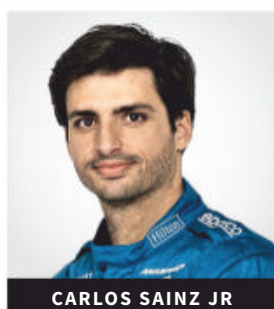
7 Very tough to score. Superb in qualifying to be just 0.03s from splitting the Mercedes. Made a good start and was unlucky to be forced wide by the Leclerc/Perez clash, but it's hard to understand why he didn't slow more before hitting the gravel, which meant he slid into the wall.

MCLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

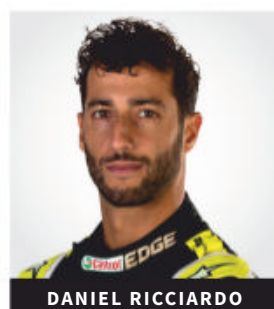
6 Made a great start, gaining nine places on the first lap after being put back on the grid for taking a fresh engine and turbo. But he'd been eliminated in Q2, which he put down to needing to go slowly on his final outlap. Struggled for pace after his great start and couldn't make progress.



CARLOS SAINZ JR

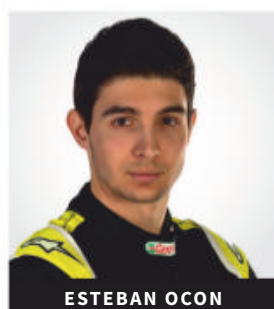
8 Another fine weekend, although doing a fraction better in the ultra-tight qualifying would have meant not starting behind an AlphaTauri and two of McLaren's constructors' rivals. Made a brilliant start and was the top two-stopper home, nearly catching Stroll for third in the final laps.

RENAULT



DANIEL RICCIARDO

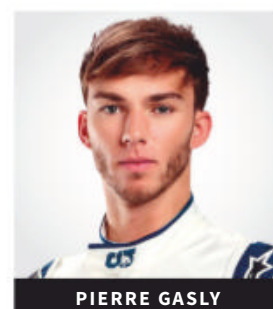
8 Beaten by Kvyat in qualifying and chased Sainz hard in the early stages after they'd passed the AlphaTauri at the start. Fell back behind Kvyat when the call to pit on the same lap as Sainz came too late. Got back past his old team-mate exiting his second stop, and was trapped in the DRS train at the end.



ESTEBAN OCON

9 We're being generous because Ocon's race was so strong, but his qualifying was a disappointment in 11th. This at least allowed a medium-shod start, which was the key to his race. Drove well to make the one-stopper work and claim his maiden F1 podium.

ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY

6 A tough weekend that had started strongly in practice. Was left to rue getting floor damage in Q1, which he felt explained the gap to his team-mate in qualifying. Was in the DRS chain at the end of the points for a long time as he struggled for pace. Felt he was unlucky with the first VSC timing.

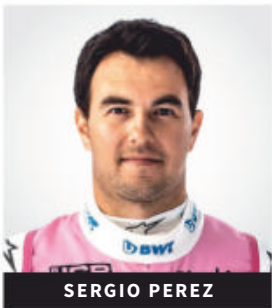


DANIIL KVYAT

9 We're scoring him highly for the strength of his qualifying, ahead of Ricciardo and Sainz in their arguably faster cars. Was slow away, so needed the undercut to get back past the Renault, which reversed the positions at the second stops. A fine weekend overall despite slipping back from his grid spot.



RACING POINT



SERGIO PEREZ

10 There's a case for losing the maximum given he was outqualified by Leclerc's slower Ferrari, but this is overcome by his superb race recovery to take a shock win. Soldiered on with his badly vibrating left front and was generally brilliant as the race came to him.



LANCE STROLL

8 Could be considered harsh given he went from 10th to third. But he was beaten by his team-mate who ran last at the end of lap one, and Stroll made key mistakes in battle, including a slip after pitting when Ocon was bearing down and then outbraking himself in front of Perez.

ALFA ROMEO



KIMI RAIKKONEN

5 Earns a point back for beating Magnussen home, but this was a tough weekend for Raikkonen. He was sandwiched between the two drivers making their F1 debuts in qualifying when his team-mate made it out of Q1, then spun after running over the Turn 3 inside kerb on lap one.



ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

8 Earns this score for escaping Q1 and then qualifying ahead of the hobbled Norris to boot. Is also rewarded for being the top 'Class C' runner home and being not far off Vettel at the flag, although he had been behind Latifi before the Williams's retirement.

HAAS



PIETRO FITTIPALDI

7 A decent debut considering the circumstances in which he was called up to race a totally unfamiliar car. Pre-race engine penalties meant Haas sacrificed his last two Q1 runs to give Magnussen a tow, and he qualified last in any case. Was pleased to finish the race, his goal.



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

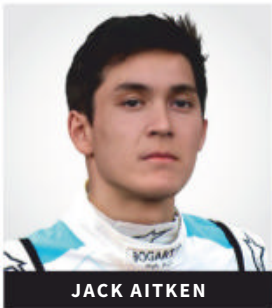
6 Earns this score purely because his weekend was pretty ordinary. Only missed escaping Q1 by less than a tenth, then felt he had no race pace. Was given a curious tyre strategy of starting on the softs, then taking them again under the second VSC when he had new hards and mediums left.

WILLIAMS



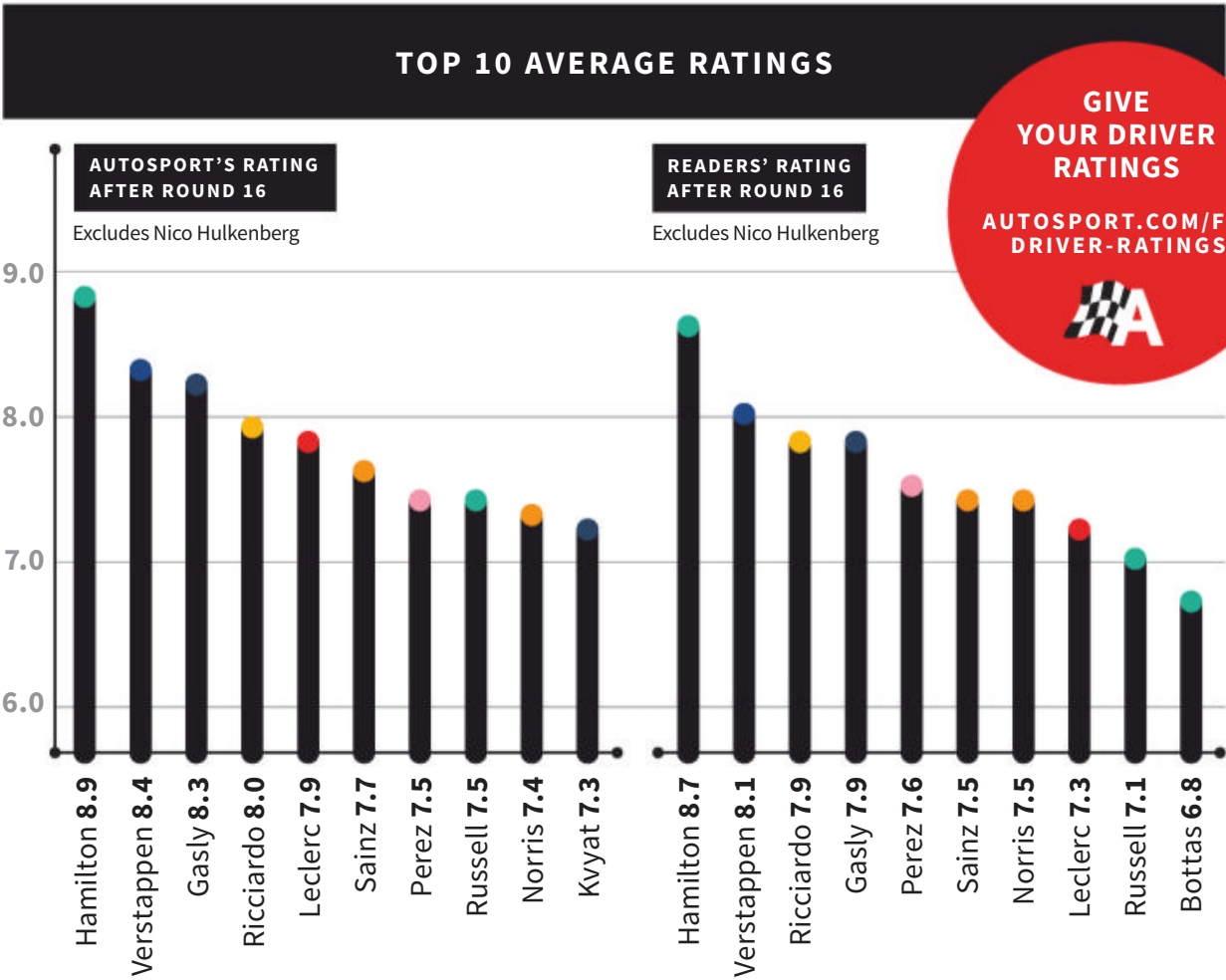
NICHOLAS LATIFI

7 A strong weekend overall. Was very close to escaping Q1, if only he hadn't made a mistake at the final corner, and so qualified 17th, but ahead of his new team-mate. Drove well in the first half of the race and was running solidly behind Vettel when he retired with a suspected oil leak.



JACK AITKEN

7 A good debut overall. We'd like to be generous, but his spin into the wall was a major error and blotted what had been a very good copybook as he ran 15th ahead of Raikkonen. Qualifying was the highlight given he was ahead of Latifi for so long in Q1, but rued a mistake on his last lap.





Ogier snatches title from honourable Evans

When a patch of snow put paid to the Welshman's championship hopes, he helped ensure his team-mate stayed on the road to secure a seventh crown

NICK GARTON

PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN

The 2020 World Rally Championship ended in heartbreak for Britain's Elfyn Evans as his 14-point advantage in the drivers' title race was whisked out from beneath him by a patch of Italian snow. Thus Sebastien Ogier claimed his seventh WRC title as Rally Monza joined the calendar for the first time.

Tensions were high when the trucks unloaded in the historic royal park and there were suggestions that some teams were rather less willing to be there than others. Event organisers had insisted that the itinerary would be fully compliant with the COVID legislation in place at the time, but it was sobering to know that Italy had suffered its most grievous toll of the pandemic so far on the opening day of the rally, with 993 lives lost.

Eight long weeks had passed since the previous round in Sardinia, throughout which time the expectations of British rally fans had hung over Evans like the Sword of Damocles. The nation had meanwhile saluted the 25th anniversary of Colin McRae's euphoric WRC title and paid fulsome tribute to Richard Burns 15 years after his tragic loss to cancer, which would have served only to remind Evans of exactly whose boots he was expected to fill.

Sure enough, he managed to uncharacteristically reverse his Toyota Yaris into the barriers during shakedown.

Thursday's opening stage was dominated by the two fastest drivers of the season: Toyota man Ogier and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville, both of whom had to throw caution to the wind for any chance of beating Evans to the drivers' title. Come Friday morning, however, and it was Rally Monza expert Dani Sordo who put his experience of the layout to best use, taking the overall lead as he aimed to carry Hyundai to the manufacturers' crown.

By now a mix of incessant rain and constant rally traffic had reduced Monza's historic circuit to 50% bog and 50% skating rink. Therefore M-Sport's Esapekka Lappi rolled the dice and fitted four of his eight allocated snow tyres to his Ford Fiesta in a bid to find some extra grip. Grip was indeed found, with Lappi taking the overall lead from Sordo, while the sister M-Sport Fords of Teemu Suninen and Gus Greensmith both went out, the Finn with terminal engine issues and the Briton crashing into a gate.

No second invitation was needed for the rest of the field to bolt on their own snow tyres, and, over the remaining three stages of the day, Sordo carved away at Lappi's advantage to sit atop the leaderboard once again.

Sordo's pace was exactly what Hyundai needed to see because by this time Neuville was also out. The mercurial Belgian had started the day by dropping 20 seconds after sliding into a wire fence, but this indiscretion soon paled when he clipped one of the concrete >>



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blocks laid out on the historic Monza banking. Adding insult to injury, he then drowned his i20's engine in a watersplash.

Ogier had also courted disaster, first spinning into a hay bale and then completing several corners with an impenetrable mist having descended upon his windscreen. None of this drama delayed him unduly. The maestro still ended the day five seconds in front of team-mate Evans as the Welshman settled in for a long haul, knowing that fourth place would still guarantee him the title no matter what else happened around him.

On Saturday, the action finally departed the confines of the Monza encampment and headed up into the Bergamasque Alps for two loops of three closed road stages, which had been dubbed 'Monza Carlo' following the recce.

Heavy snow had fallen throughout the week, but a combination of torrential rain and the snowploughs sent in by the rally organisers had cleared a path in readiness for some full-blooded asphalt action. Even so, further assistance was given by the FIA when it granted an extra pair of snow tyres to be allocated to each car in order to ensure that all possible contingencies were covered.

Ogier immediately swept through the first 25km stage of Selvino to reclaim the overall lead for Toyota from Sordo, with Lappi hanging on grimly to third, while Evans put a little breathing space between himself and fifth-placed Ott Tanak's Hyundai.

As the morning wore on, the crews were all happy to run on wet-weather tyres. Sordo reclaimed his lead on the next stage, Gerosa, when Ogier went into tyre-management mode, and Lappi was swallowed up by Evans and then Tanak.

Having restored his rubber, Ogier then won the final stage in the





Sordo had advantage of event experience, although perhaps not Monza's mud bath

loop, Costa Val Imagna, and the field returned to the service park. While they were safely tucked away in the lowlands, however, heavy snow began to fall in the mountains and chaos was about to unfold.

On the second run through Selvino, Greensmith's restarted rally came to a spectacular end when he hit a patch of snow and was fired off into the guardrail. This sent his Fiesta back across the road into a rock face, whereupon it rolled and traversed the road again, clearing the guardrail and dropping into the trees below.

Takamoto Katsuta's Yaris, another restarting entry after he had struck a wall on Thursday's opening stage, made it through cleanly. But then Ole Christian Veiby, in Hyundai's fourth entry, came to grief on the same corner as Greensmith. Unlike the Englishman, Veiby did not exit stage left. Instead the Norwegian's i20 scattered large parts of its front end across the road and came to rest broadside, forcing the stage to be abandoned.

Meanwhile, the snow still fell but, without much guidance available and without experiencing Selvino at full tilt, most of the crews elected to stay on rain tyres. A marshal plaintively held up a note at the startline warning of possible snow, but by then it was too late to do much but trust to luck.

Evans's luck ran out soon afterwards. "Obviously, starting the stage, a lot of standing water but I felt like we were having a good, clean, tidy run," he said. "Then the snow got a little bit worse but still the grip was surprising that we had for the most part, not really sliding at all, and then I basically came round a flat-right corner with a short braking and the surface of the Tarmac had just changed."

The Yaris wobbled and Evans, by now a passenger, shouted "Ahhh, you bastard!" as it changed ends on him and dropped gently off the road. It was bitter, galling luck, but the WRC now gained another shining example of what sort of a competitor Evans is.

Rather than throwing a tantrum or letting Ogier take his own chances on the roulette wheel, he and co-driver Scott Martin donned their jackets and jogged back up the stage to warn oncoming traffic to proceed with caution. Ogier only just made it through the fateful bend even with the furious gesticulations of his stranded team-mate. Yet thanks to Evans, the Frenchman made it through and extended his lead over Sordo by a further 16s.

The rally then descended into farce as the crews arrived at the start of their second run through Costa Valle Imagna only to find a complete whiteout. They sat around for a while until the organisers finally called a halt and brought them back for their scheduled run around the Monza mud bath before their final overnight halt.

Sunday dawned with just three more timed runs through the royal park separating Ogier from a seventh world title >>



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Yes, the stages were slippery and tricky and had already taken their toll upon the less experienced and more desperate crews, but by now any spark had gone out of proceedings.

Ogier and team-mate Kalle Rovanpera in the only other unblemished Yaris swept to a 1-2 on their first run. Rovanpera had been subdued all weekend, letting Ogier and Evans have their battle and ending up too far behind the Hyundais of Tanak and Sordo to have any influence on the manufacturers' points.

Sordo and Tanak finished 1-2 for Hyundai on the next stage, which was enough to virtually guarantee them the manufacturers' trophy. All that remained was the powerstage and one last blast around the Autodromo. Evans had restarted and gave his all to try to wrest the five bonus points available for winning the powerstage, but overcooked it twice on his way round, which handed Katsuta the honours.

Ogier, Tanak and Sordo had no interest in going for glory – they simply wanted to claim their respective titles and leave 2020 behind them. In the end, not even losing his windscreen wipers for an awkward moment could derail Ogier's progress towards the inevitable. "It's been a difficult weekend and this last stage was definitely not the most enjoyable, but the team have made such a great effort," said the champion.

"Of course we feel for Elfyn also today. He has made a very strong season, very consistent, and we had really good fun to fight each other. I'm sure next year is going to be about the

same so I'm really looking forward to it as I decided to go for one more year. But today, yeah, I'm very happy. Not jumping in the air maybe like crazy because right now we are living in a time that, you know, a lot of people are suffering all over the world and, I mean, you have to be decent."

Ogier's sentiments were echoed by Hyundai's victorious team principal Andrea Adamo, for whom the manufacturers' championship is his first priority. "It's complicated – so many images are passing by now," he said. "It's been an amazing year, it's been a tricky year, everyone has fought a lot. I know how much we have fought, how much pressure we had, what I had to do to try to protect everyone.

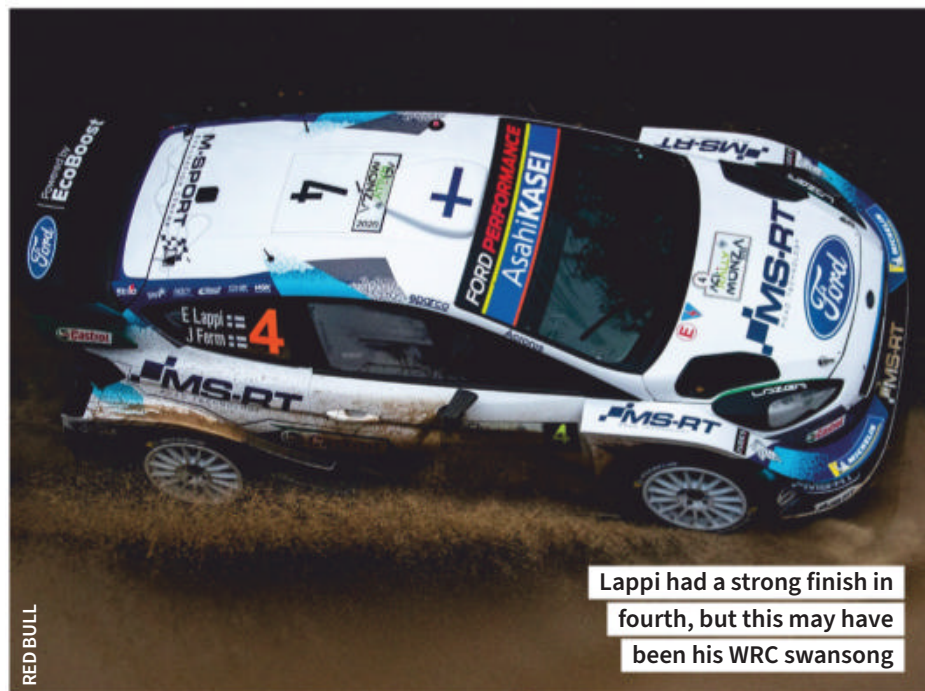
"Everyone has been somehow personally touched [by COVID-19] and this year everyone lost someone maybe... I also have some friends that are no more with me due to this."

Adamo's tearful outpouring was arguably the most admirable sentiment expressed in a rally that confounded logic for much of the time. The runner-up in Monza, outgoing drivers' champion Tanak, had played his part for the team but was left rather nonplussed at the end of it all. "It's been a very strange season," he opined. "I didn't see the team too much, just a couple of events, hopefully next year we see each other a lot more and come back to normal. So, that's how it is."

In any normal season, of the sort we took for granted before COVID-19 reared its ugly head, we would have had a dozen rallies, seen some breathtaking battles and rounded it all off with the closure that comes from crowning the champions. We should of course be thankful that WRC Promoter, the FIA and the organising clubs collectively moved heaven and earth to bring us four additional rallies. Moreover, that those rallies have passed off safely and that the WRC community will be home for Christmas.

But the closure is lacking. Some people believe that closure is a bad thing, that it panders to our baser instincts and belittles the drama that has taken place if it's all neatly wrapped up at the end. That was the rationale that created the TV series *Twin Peaks*. Its creators never intended us to discover who had killed Laura Palmer, the central mystery, but rather to use the show to make us think more about our place in the world. Oddly enough, the police station that featured in the show is now home to a rally school and a hyperactive blog about the sport. It oddly seems fitting.

Maybe in 25 years there will be a *Twin Peaks*-esque dream sequence in which the missing rallies from 2020 are played out. Probably the result would still be the same, but it would be reassuring to see nonetheless. Meanwhile, in just over a month's time, we'll be back in Monte Carlo... ❄️



REDBULL

CLASS ACTS LEFT OUT IN THE COLD



“It’s a world championship and we’ve just won it!” So said WRC refugee Mads Ostberg as his factory-backed Citroen (above) crossed the line at Monza as the supporting class titles were decided.

“It’s been a crazy year. I mean we are winning the championship as the underdog, the other teams have done more rallies than us, we have the fewest rallies and we have developed the car through the year,” he said, after fending off Pontus Tidemand’s Skoda for the crown. “It’s for sure something special to be world champion, even though it’s WRC2.”

In WRC3, the star men of the weekend were another WRC veteran, Andreas Mikkelsen, and his Skoda team-mate Oliver Solberg, who not only dominated their class, but also finished in sixth and seventh places overall. Mikkelsen even managed to set the fourth fastest time overall on stage three, but it was taciturn Finn Jari Huttunen who claimed the WRC3 championship.

Swedish youngster Tom Kristensson drove an immaculate rally to claim the Junior WRC crown, and with it a fully funded WRC3 entry for 2021. From then on, though, it seems he will almost inevitably join the glut of talent that currently sits just outside the top class.

The celebrations of these champions were in sharp relief to the anguish in Esapekka Lappi’s voice when he declared that he is stepping out of the WRC, maybe for good. With only two teams offering the chance to compete for the title, and with drivers of such calibre as Sebastien Ogier, Thierry Neuville, Ott Tanak, Kalle Rovanpera, Elfyn Evans, Dani Sordo and Craig Breen in situ, where will the young up-and-comers find their big opportunity?

Mikkelsen, Ostberg, Tidemand, Solberg, Lappi and others have all shown that they have what it takes to get the job done. But for them, unless M-Sport can convince Ford to invest, or another manufacturer steps in, ‘only WRC2’ is the highest branch on the tree. Lappi is choosing to call it quits. Let’s hope that no more talent like his becomes lost to the WRC.

RESULTS ROUND 7/7, RALLY MONZA (ITA), 3-6 DECEMBER

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)/ Julien Ingrassia (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	2h15m51.0s
2	Ott Tanak (EST)/ Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+13.9s
3	Dani Sordo (ESP)/ Carlos del Barrio (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+15.3s
4	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)/ Janne Ferm (FIN)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	+45.7s
5	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)/ Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+1m11.1s
6	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR)/ Anders Jager (NOR)	Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo	+3m56.2s
7	Oliver Solberg (SWE)/ Aaron Johnston (GBR)	Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo	+4m12.1s
8	Jari Huttunen (FIN)/ Mikko Lukka (FIN)	Hyundai i20 R5	+5m15.4s
9	Mads Ostberg (NOR)/ Torstein Eriksen (NOR)	PH Sport / Citroen C3 R5	+5m27.4s
10	Pontus Tidemand (SWE)/ Patrik Barth (SWE)	Toksport WRT / Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo	+5m53.0s
18	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)/ Daniel Barritt (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+11m50.3s
25	Elfyn Evans (GBR)/ Scott Martin (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota Yaris WRC	+20m12.6s
R	Gus Greensmith (GBR)/ Elliott Edmondson (GBR)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	SS10-accident
R	Ole-Christian Veiby (NOR)/ Jonas Andersson (SWE)	Hyundai 2C Competition / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	SS10-accident
R	Teemu Suninen (FIN)/ Jarmo Lehtinen (FIN)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta WRC	SS5-engine
R	Thierry Neuville (BEL)/ Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	SS4-acc damage

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Sottozero The Monza Legacy (2.69 miles)	Ogier 3m31.5s	Ogier	Neuville +0.5s
SS2 Scorpion 1 (8.35 miles)	Sordo 9m54.5s	Sordo	Lappi +4.6s
SS3 Scorpion 2 (8.35 miles)	Lappi 9m56.8s	Lappi	Sordo +3.3s
SS4 Cinturato 1 (10.08 miles)	Evans 11m56.5s	Lappi	Sordo +3.3s
SS5 Cinturato 2 (10.08 miles)	Ogier 11m53.5s	Lappi	Sordo +2.8s
SS6 PZero Grand Prix 1 (6.41 miles)	Sordo 5m52.5s	Sordo	Lappi +1.0s
SS7 Selvino 1 (15.57 miles)	Ogier 18m03.1s	Ogier	Sordo +1.3s
SS8 Gerosa 1 (6.89 miles)	Sordo 7m05.0s	Sordo	Ogier +4.5s
SS9 Costa Valle Imagna 1 (13.78 miles)	Evans 14m35.5s	Ogier	Sordo +4.4s
SS10 Selvino 2 (15.57 miles)	Stage cancelled		
SS11 Gerosa 2 (6.89 miles)	Umberto Scandola 8m13.4s	Ogier	Sordo +20.4s
SS12 Costa Valle Imagna 2 (13.78 miles)	Stage cancelled		
SS13 PZero Grand Prix 2 (6.41 miles)	Sordo 5m47.8s	Ogier	Sordo +17.8s
SS14 PZero Grand Prix 3 (6.41 miles)	Ogier 5m32.2s	Ogier	Tanak +25.5s
SS15 Serraglio 1 (9.30 miles)	Sordo 11m10.2s	Ogier	Sordo +20.8s
SS16 Serraglio 2 (powerstage) (9.30 miles)	Katsuta 11m05.5s	Ogier	Tanak +13.9s

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Ogier** 122; 2 **Evans** 114; 3 **Tanak** 105; 4 **Neuville** 87; 5 **Rovanpera** 80; 6 **Lappi** 52; 7 **Suninen** 44; 8 **Sordo** 42; 9 **Breen** 25; 10 **Loeb** 24.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 **Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT** 241; 2 **Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT** 236; 3 **M-Sport Ford WRT** 129; 4 **Hyundai 2C Competition** 8.



DON'T MISS...

31 DECEMBER ISSUE

The final magazine of 2020 features our WRC season review, including our top 10 drivers. Also look out for our bumper Christmas double issue next week.



United he stands: van Uiter has cemented his reputation this season



MAIN PIC: MARIN/DPPI

GETTING THE **JOB** DONE AT LE MANS

He doesn't have the profile — yet — of many of the WEC superstars, but this young Dutchman was the class act in LMP2 at this year's 24 Hours

NELSON VALKENBURG

Becoming a Formula 1 great and having your name mentioned in a sentence alongside those of Lewis Hamilton, Michael Schumacher and Ayrton Senna. It's the typical motorsport dream that motivates hundreds of young, talented racers as they populate the junior ranks, desperate for success. And when, for most, this does not materialise, only then does endurance racing become a viable career path, a Plan B.

Not so for Job van Uiter. The 22-year-old Dutchman made the switch to sportscars early and has become one of the standout performers in endurance racing as he chases his particular dreams: "What I want to achieve is to build a sportscar career and success in the biggest endurance events in the world."

In little over three years, van Uiter has won the European Le Mans Series LMP3 title in 2018, finished as LMP2 runner-up in the two subsequent seasons, guest-starred twice for Racing Team Nederland in the FIA World Endurance Championship, and recently won LMP2 at Petit Le Mans on his IMSA SportsCar championship debut. But it's his performances in the Le Mans 24 Hours, most notably this year, that have marked him out as one of the most exciting young sportscar drivers. It's safe to say that making clear and early career choices has worked to his advantage. "No one could've expected the three years that have followed my switch to endurance racing, but it's clear that it was the right move," he says.

Despite growing up in a motorsport environment (his father Arthur competed, and Arthur's cousin Gerald raced in British FF2000), van Uiter's first steps onto the racing ladder came rather late: "I never really spent much time driving karts in my youth, in fact my first kart race was just a few years ago following my first season in sportscars. My father raced Formula Fords in the Netherlands and I grew up in racing paddocks. But the desire to compete came much later." Van Uiter's first competitive outing came in a Dutch Mazda MX-5 championship race and did not go exactly to plan: "I was barely 15 and qualified well, but my race

ended after two corners and with the car nearly upside down!" He would quickly rebound however, finishing third in the championship and ready to start racing internationally.

Even as van Uiter progressed from the Mazda MX-5 into single-seaters, a move that culminated in finishing runner-up to Ferrari junior Marcus Armstrong in the 2017 Italian Formula 4 Championship, endurance racing beckoned: "I grew up watching the 24 Hours of Le Mans on television as a little kid, seeing Audi and Peugeot push each other to the limit and going as fast if not faster during the night than during the day. Whatever happened they never considered giving up. I always knew that was the race I wanted to win most." But the dream of competing at Le Mans was reinforced by a healthy dose of self-awareness. "My race pace and ability to

"I QUALIFIED WELL, BUT MY RACE ENDED AFTER TWO CORNERS WITH THE CAR NEARLY UPSIDE DOWN!"

extend the life of my tyres had been my strong suits in F4, but on outright qualifying pace I had still had work to do," he admits. "Spending two seasons in GP3 doing that while not getting closer to my ultimate racing goal just didn't seem like the way to go."

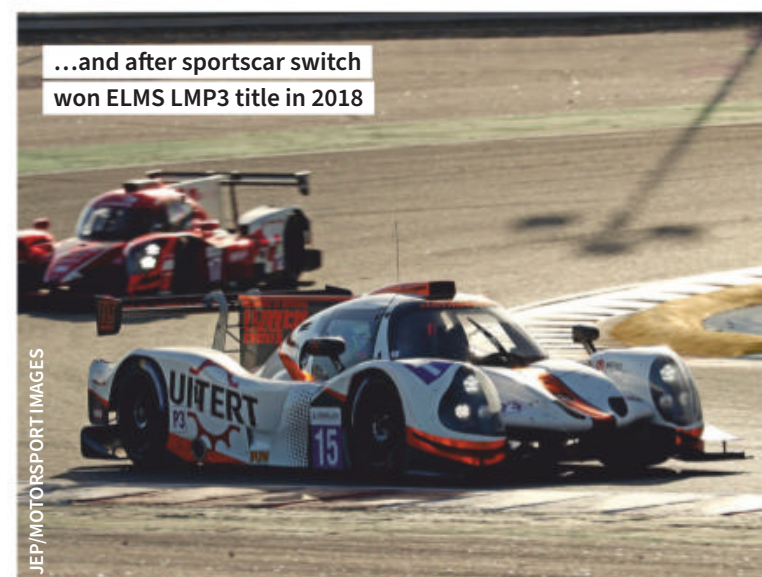
After testing with several teams, van Uiter signed with RLR MSport, joining Canadian John Farano and the experienced Rob Garofall for the 2018 European Le Mans Series. Throughout the season, van Uiter's race pace was among the strongest in the field as the team twice won the LMP3 class and went into the final event leading the championship. It meant his name was being mentioned more and more in the paddock and, as RLR MSport took the title, »



Van Uiter raced in Italian F4 in 2017...



...finishing runner-up to Marcus Armstrong...



...and after sportscar switch won ELMS LMP3 title in 2018



Van Uiter a standout new talent in endurance racing

“I FEEL LIKE LE MANS ITSELF BEAT US TWICE NOW. BUT WHILE IT STILL HURTS, I KNOW MY TIME WILL COME”

van Uiter felt sure he had made the right career choice: “Winning my first championship title at Portimao was incredible. It was much more than we could have hoped for in my first season in sportscars.”

But the newly crowned champion had little time to celebrate or reflect on what he had just achieved, as a huge opportunity came knocking on the door: “G-Drive Racing was looking for a silver driver to race alongside Jean-Eric Vergne and Roman Rusinov, so a day after sealing the title I found myself back at the track and in another championship-winning car.”

With about 30 laps to show what he could do in an LMP2 prototype, the pressure was on: “It felt like this was my big chance to break through and I had to make the most of it.”

He duly delivered, turning heads straight out of the box. “Job was immediately on the pace on used tyres and, given it was his first experience in an LMP2 car, this was impressive,” recalls G-Drive technical director David Leach. “It was already a very convincing debut but, when we gave him a set of new boots, he went quicker than anyone had in the #26 car all week long!” Unsurprisingly, it landed him one of the top drives in endurance racing.

Van Uiter immediately seemed at ease racing in LMP2. He started the ELMS season strongly at Paul Ricard, before putting a big exclamation mark behind his name at the second race of the season at Monza, where the team not only won the race but enjoyed one of van Uiter’s now trademark stunts that even earned him the lap record. It was the perfect preparation for Le Mans.

And it was his debut performance at the world’s biggest



endurance event that was perhaps his official breakthrough. He announced himself early on in the race by duelling for the lead, seemingly undaunted by the immensity of the occasion, with Nicolas Lapierre. As the race settled down, the G-Drive team asserted itself at the front of the LMP2 field. It left the rookie pinching himself. “It was surreal,” he smiles wryly. “Here I was racing at Le Mans, going out in the dark for the first time and seeing our lead increase from stint to stint until we nearly had a lap in hand. I could feel the belief growing. And then it went wrong...”

An electrical issue saw any chance of a debut victory evaporate and replaced by utter disappointment: “It felt as if the floor dropped



Frontrunning pace at Le Mans in 2019 stymied by electrical fault



WEC guest star (r) for Racing Team Nederland at Silverstone last year



Runner-up for United Autosports in 2020 ELMS



Heartbreak at Le Mans part two: searing speed in 2020 rudely interrupted by split oil line

away from underneath me and the disappointment hit me hard.” It was perhaps the biggest and cruelest lesson he needed to learn, that endurance racing can be incredibly frustrating and rewarding in equal measure: “You have to take it on the chin and never give up.”

It was a lesson van Uiterit was forced to learn again this season. Following his upgrade to gold status and a subsequent move to United Autosports, he arrived at Le Mans with a win in the ELMS season opener in the bag. “Even though COVID-19 delayed the season and in many ways turned Le Mans into a weird event, I felt confident we could do the job,” he says. His confidence was not misplaced as United Autosports’ two ORECAs dominated the LMP2 class from the off. While fighting the sister car, van Uiterit and his team-mates Alex Brundle and Will Owen bided their time early on, only upping the ante as dusk fell.

With his race pace on full display, van Uiterit and his co-drivers started pulling out a lead, stretching it to the point that they had almost a stop in hand, before disaster again hit. A split oil line forced the car into the garage for almost 40 minutes and out of contention, while the sister machine went on to win the race.

“I was gutted for the guys as they had not put a foot wrong,” recalls team owner Richard Dean, who was equally proud to see his young driver’s response as he climbed back into the car, way down the order but with a point to prove. “He just got on with his job and showed what that car could have achieved. He was constantly at a very high level, and he certainly drew cheers in the garage. He repaid the guys for their hard work

and took away a bit of their heartache as well.”

The stats reflect how much of an impact van Uiterit made. He not only set the fastest lap in class, but also led the way on best 30, 50 and 70-lap averages against a field full of former F1 drivers and Le Mans winners. It left him proud but not satisfied: “I feel like Le Mans itself beat us twice now, and you never know how many chances you will have to fight for victory in this race. But while it still hurts, I know my time will come if I keep working hard enough.”

Van Uiterit put his Le Mans disappointment behind him to finish his third sportscar season on a high by winning the LMP2 class at Petit Le Mans on his IMSA debut, reuniting with former team-mate Farano and with engineer Leach in a Starworks ORECA. “It was incredible to be able to take that win, especially as I got the call-up only a few days before the event and I had never been to Road Atlanta,” he says. But perhaps the biggest personal achievement was his qualifying lap at the ELMS season finale, where he qualified over 0.4 seconds clear of the rest of the field. “I worked hard over the past few seasons to improve my single-lap pace, and when I got the opportunity to qualify at Portimao I really wanted to show I’m growing and improving,” he continues. “It definitely gave me great satisfaction and further momentum heading into 2021.”

So 2020 ends with van Uiterit’s reputation as one of the big talents in endurance racing further cemented, and as a driver who should be on the radar with factory teams, both in WEC and in IMSA. “It just goes to show that if you want to give yourself the chance to achieve your dreams, you have to follow the path that is right for you – it’s the only way,” he concludes. And in Job van Uiterit’s case, that is indeed the road less travelled. 🏆

SEASON
REVIEW

MOTOGP GETS A NEW CHAMPION IN ITS MOST UNPREDICTABLE YEAR

Joan Mir took a surprise title as drama hit at the start of the season and never left

LEWIS DUNCAN

PHOTOGRAPHY GOLD AND GOOSE

motorsport
IMAGES

One way to describe MotoGP in 2020 would be to compare it to a Rammstein concert. It was full of fireworks, shocks and ridiculous action, and left you in a constant state of bewilderment in its breathless 14-round run from 19 July at Jerez to 22 November at the Algarve Circuit. That it happened at all is testament to the dedication Dorna Sports' CEO Carmelo Ezpeleta has to his series.

Just a week before the originally scheduled opener in Qatar, the season was put on hold as the horror of the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world. A schedule centred on Europe was eventually finalised, and numerous cost measures for 2020 and 2021 were put in place to ensure the series' survival. MotoGP's independent teams, as well as all squads in Moto2 and Moto3, received financial support from the championship during lockdown.

When MotoGP came out of the frying pan and into the fire at Jerez, it was business as usual. Honda had endured a tumultuous winter with its 2020 RC213V, as the new-for-this-season Michelin rear tyre construction threw it – and more notably Ducati – a real curveball. Honda also had problems with its new aero package in testing, and had only discovered this on the final day of the Qatar test.

Honda basically came into 2020 with a bike not that far removed from its previous year's challenger, a machine that LCR's Takaaki Nakagami would ride. But reigning champion Marc Marquez was in fine fettle, fully recovered from an off-season shoulder operation that would have left him only 70% fit for the planned Qatar opener.

Though denied pole by the rapid-when-there's-grip Yamahas of Fabio Quartararo and Maverick Vinales, Marquez was set for total domination of the Spanish GP before he lost the front of his Honda at the Turn 4 left-hander and slid into the gravel in the early stages. He stayed mounted and rejoined 16th, going on to stage what very nearly was one of the greatest comebacks of all time.

Then he crashed at Turn 3 on lap 22. It was a moment that blew the championship wide open and would ultimately spell the end of Marquez's season. He had surgery on a broken right humerus, with a view to coming back for round three at Brno. Back-to-back non-scores would have made his hopes of MotoGP title number seven hard, but not impossible. But Marquez is a relentless force and, having felt up to it following surgery and given the go-ahead from doctors, he tried to come back just a few days later at the Andalusian GP, the second Jerez event.

He would abort it after qualifying, his arm in a bad way. The



effort exerted to get to that point was valiant, but foolish. He'd damaged the plate inserted in his arm during the operation and would need a second operation ahead of Brno. Honda held out hope of a return at some point, but recovery was slower than anticipated and he wouldn't be seen on track again in 2020.

Quartararo on the Petronas SRT M1 won the opening two rounds at Jerez, doing what he'd promised in his debut season and stepping up to the plate in Marquez's absence. But all wasn't well within the Yamaha camp. During the season opener, Valentino Rossi and Vinales lost engines from their allocation of five due to mechanical issues. Franco Morbidelli on the sister SRT M1 was denied a maiden podium when his engine cried enough late in the Andalusian GP.

From that point, Yamaha reduced revs in its engines to preserve mileage. But that wasn't the end of the story. The problems from the first Jerez weekend were traced to a fault in the valves. It transpired ahead of the European GP in November that Yamaha had used non-homologated valves in its batch of eight engines for the first round, which made them illegal, forcing it to withdraw two engines from each rider's allocation. Yamaha was also docked constructor and team points for what it insists was "an internal oversight" and a misinterpretation of the regulations.

Not only were Yamaha's engines unreliable, but they were slow too, with M1 riders regularly at the bottom of the speed-trap figures. On top of that, the 2020 Yamaha proved incredibly inconsistent, the traditional M1 problem in the Michelin era of a lack of rear grip rearing its head again. Yamaha won more races (seven) than any other manufacturer, but came up short in the championship. And it seemed Quartararo's hopes of title glory were doomed from the start.

"Actually, [from] my first laps with the 2020 bike in really dry conditions — the 2020 bike changed a lot from last year — I didn't really feel like the bike was mine," Quartararo said at Valencia in November as his championship challenge crumbled with crashes in both outings at the Ricardo Tormo circuit. "When the bike is directly good from FP1, we make small changes and everything is perfect. But when you start and it's difficult, you are lost."

At Brno for round three, the Yamaha's inconsistency was apparent for the first time, with Quartararo down in seventh and Vinales 14th. Morbidelli, on the 'A-spec' bike — essentially last year's model — was second, and this would become a common theme as the season wore on.

But, for that afternoon at Brno, nobody was a match for KTM and Brad Binder. The rookie stormed to a famous first win for »

himself and the team by 5.3 seconds, fulfilling KTM's claims that it would win inside its first five years in the premier class. As it turned out, 2020 would be a banner year for the Austrian marque, with Pol Espargaro registering five podiums across the campaign and Tech3's Miguel Oliveira claiming two wins, pipping Espargaro and the Pramac Ducati of Jack Miller at the last corner of a thrilling Styrian GP, and dominating on home soil in the Portuguese finale.

Binder and Oliveira added their names to the list of nine winners across the campaign alongside Quartararo, Vinales, Morbidelli, Andrea Dovizioso, Danilo Petrucci, Alex Rins and Joan Mir. The last time so many riders won in a single season was 2016, when MotoGP's radical rule introduction and Michelin's tyres shook up the order.

Despite his Brno woes, Quartararo held on to the championship lead. But his results only rebounded in rounds seven and eight at the Emilia Romagna and Catalan GPs. He was fourth at Misano (having been demoted from third for a track-limits violation on the last lap) and clung on to his third win of the season at Barcelona.

Consistency eluded most title challengers. Dovizioso, the man who'd offered Marquez his stiffest championship opposition in recent years, was one of the riders – along with team-mate Petrucci – hit hardest by the change of construction in the rear tyre. The added grip from the rubber stopped Dovizioso from adopting his normal riding style on the Ducati. He took third at the Spanish GP opener and won the fourth round, the Austrian GP, but never finished on the podium again. Team-mate Petrucci took victory in the wet race at Le Mans, but it was Pramac's Miller who was the most consistently competitive Ducati runner in 2020, with four podiums – and likely a few more, had he not been hit with some rotten luck.

After the Brno race, Suzuki's pre-season hopes of a title challenge appeared battered. Mir had registered two retirements from the first three rounds, while Rins was suffering the after-effects of a broken and dislocated shoulder from the Spanish GP.

Much was made all year about the legitimacy of a championship won without Marquez. As grand prix legend Wayne Rainey told Autosport in July: "The only way you can be champion is [by being] the guy with the most points at the end of the championship.



Quartararo leads at start of Andalusian GP



Morbidelli's bike flies in Austrian GP crash

Each and every race counts, and especially in a sporting season like this odd one, you have to be there every single race." And Marquez himself brushed away any suggestions that his absence would devalue the championship.

It's not unreasonable to suggest that Marquez, even with a few races off, would have thrived in 2020. His domination of the 2019 campaign came about through devastating consistency, with the Honda rider finishing all but one race inside the top two. So, if consistency is a Marquez strength needed to win a championship, you can easily argue that Mir 'did a Marquez'.

The Suzuki rider climbed onto the MotoGP podium for the first time at August's Austrian GP in second place. Denied victory in the second Red Bull Ring race when a red flag caused by Vinales's brake-failure-induced crash left him fourth at the restart, Mir rallied and stood on the podium at the following three rounds. By the end of September he'd come from rank title outsider to a firm favourite.

His first wet race at Le Mans halted his rostrum run – Mir was unable to fend off Quartararo and Vinales on the last lap and ended up 11th. But with the Yamaha pair directly ahead and Dovizioso not capitalising in fourth, while Rins and Morbidelli both crashed out, the championship points spread remained paper-thin.

Quartararo lost the lead in the standings briefly after crashing out of the San Marino race at Misano, Dovizioso edging ahead. But the Frenchman was back in control after the Barcelona encounter. When Quartararo finished a career-worst 18th at the Aragon GP due to a front-tyre-pressure issue, Mir moved six points ahead of him thanks to finishing third in a race won by team-mate Rins.

Another third at the Teruel round extended that advantage to 14. The final blow came at the European GP. Amid a terrible weekend for Yamaha, with its Jerez engine transgression coming to light, members of the team forced into isolation due to COVID-19, Vinales having to start from the pitlane due to exceeding his

ROUND BY ROUND

Spanish GP

1 Fabio Quartararo

2 Maverick Vinales

3 Andrea Dovizioso

Quartararo becomes first French MotoGP winner since 1999, leading home factory Yamaha counterpart Vinales. Spectacular save early on forces Marc Marquez into a recovery ride before he crashes, ending his season. Dovizioso completes the podium.

Andalusian GP

1 Fabio Quartararo

2 Maverick Vinales

3 Valentino Rossi

Marquez's aborted comeback is juxtaposed with a dominant win for Quartararo, who leads home a Yamaha 1-2-3 from Vinales and Rossi in what will prove to be a false dawn. Mechanical woes for Morbidelli and Bagnaia deny them maiden podiums.



Czech Republic GP

1 Brad Binder (left)

2 Franco Morbidelli

3 Johann Zarco

Binder delivers first shock result of 2020, scoring KTM's maiden win from Morbidelli, while Zarco comes from pole to third despite a long-lap penalty for a collision with Pol Espargaro. Factory Yamahas and Ducatis struggle, while Mir registers second DNF.

Austrian GP

1 Andrea Dovizioso

2 Joan Mir

3 Jack Miller

Dovizioso wins a day after quitting Ducati, aided by a crash for Rins. Mir takes maiden podium as Quartararo struggles with brake problems in eighth. Morbidelli, Zarco walk away from horror collision, with Rossi and Vinales lucky to avoid flying motorcycles.



“MARQUEZ BRUSHED AWAY ANY SUGGESTIONS THAT HIS ABSENCE DEVALUED THE CHAMPIONSHIP”

engine allocation and a lap-one crash for Quartararo, Mir finally broke through to score his first MotoGP victory.

Now 37 points clear in the championship, ahead of Rins and Quartararo, Mir sealed the title at the second Valencia race – which he called a “nightmare” – with a safe seventh following another crash for Quartararo and a fourth-place finish for Rins. At the scene six years earlier where Suzuki made a troubled return to MotoGP as a wildcard, the small-but-incredibly-well-run operation had a world champion again for the first time since 2000.

And it was brought to Suzuki by a rider it signed straight out of Moto2 for 2019, Mir just the sixth Suzuki rider in history to win the premier class title and only the fourth Spaniard. That his season ended in the Portugal finale with an early retirement owing to a technical issue just a week after his championship heroics just about summed up 2020.

Suzuki couldn't quite take a clean sweep of titles. With Rins struggling in the final round to 15th, Pramac's Miller took second – trailing home hero Oliveira on the Tech3 KTM – to seal the constructors' title for Ducati. It was a fitting prologue to Ducati's new future, with Miller and Francesco Bagnaia stepping up to replace Dovizioso and Petrucci at the factory squad in 2021.

Dovizioso's souring relationship with Ducati forced him to quit the team without a back-up plan. Bereft of options beyond keeping the door open for a 2022 return, Dovizioso will take a sabbatical. But scoring just two podiums all year and not being the one to win the world championship in Marquez's absence, having been his nearest rival for the past three years, has seriously damaged his stock. That he kept in the title hunt for as long as he did >>

APRILIA STRUGGLES TO GET IN ON THE FIGHT



Aprilia made the biggest stride in 2020 with its challenger. But the promise shown in pre-season testing with its RS-GP ultimately didn't translate into the consistent top-eight finishes and occasional podium charges it had hoped for.

Alex Espargaro valiantly fought through mechanical issues and with a bike still lacking relative to its competitors to finish up 17th in the standings, managing a best of eighth in the final round in Portugal, where he felt he could have made a bid for the podium had he qualified better.

Aprilia's year wasn't helped by the need to place its main test rider Bradley Smith on the bike to race due to Andrea Iannone's 18-month doping ban. Smith was solid if unspectacular. That Aprilia placed MotoGP rookie Lorenzo Savadori on the bike for the final three rounds also made little sense to most.

With Iannone's ban extended to four years in October, Aprilia's valiant-but-foolish decision to stick by the Italian meant it lost Cal Crutchlow to a Yamaha test role, while it couldn't court Andrea Dovizioso. Several Moto2 talents were offered deals, including VR46's Marco Bezzecchi and American podium finisher Joe Roberts. But these moves came to nothing.

Now Aprilia will let Smith and Savadori duke it out across testing to win the race seat alongside Espargaro. Another bizarre decision, given that Aprilia needs a test rider fully focused on just that, not least with the marque being the only one on the grid able to develop its engines in 2021.

Styrian GP

1 Miguel Oliveira

2 Jack Miller

3 Pol Espargaro

Oliveira steals maiden win for himself and Tech3 with last-corner pass on Miller and Espargaro. Brake failure for Vinales causes red flag, which robs Mir of surefire win. Yamaha's struggles at Red Bull Ring continue, but Quartararo holds championship lead.

San Marino GP

1 Franco Morbidelli

2 Francesco Bagnaia

3 Joan Mir

Morbidelli absorbs early pressure from Rossi to take maiden win on 'lesser' Yamaha machinery. Bagnaia scores maiden rostrum ahead of Mir, as Quartararo crash hands seventh-placed Dovizioso the championship lead. Vinales fades from pole to sixth in race.

Emilia Romagna GP

1 Maverick Vinales

2 Joan Mir

3 Pol Espargaro

Late crash for long-time leader Bagnaia hands Vinales first win of 2020. Mir charges through to second ahead of Quartararo, who is demoted behind KTM's Espargaro to fourth for a last-lap track-limits violation, but reduces gap to Dovizioso to one point.

Catalan GP

1 Fabio Quartararo

2 Joan Mir

3 Alex Rins

Quartararo holds on to third win of 2020 despite fading tyres to retake points lead. Mir and Rins charge through the pack to complete the top three. Mistake denies Morbidelli podium as 200th rostrum slips from Rossi after crash from second. Dovizioso wiped out at start.

French GP

1 Danilo Petrucci

2 Alex Marquez

3 Pol Espargaro

Rain moments before start turns race on its head, Petrucci sailing to second career win ahead of rookie Alex Marquez and KTM's Espargaro. Quartararo pips Mir on last lap to take ninth, with Vinales splitting the pair. Quartararo holds points lead.

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despite his woes with the 2020 Michelin tyre was admirable. But with the new generation fighting for the championship and winning the lion's share of races in 2020, it's hard to see how a 34-year-old Dovizioso fits into any manufacturer's future equations.

Yamaha has some serious soul-searching to do over the winter. Morbidelli's form on the older bike was very nearly enough to win him the championship. Three times a winner in 2020, he ended the year just 13 points behind Mir. That's the amount of points scored for a fourth-place finish in MotoGP, which was the position he was running in at the Andalusian race when his engine broke late on.

Quartararo's decline continued after he lost the points lead to Mir, the SRT rider never reaching the top six again in the final six rounds and ending up eighth in the points. Vinales fared little better, taking sixth in the standings at the end of what he branded the "worst" season of his career. Rossi's final year as a factory Yamaha team rider was similarly difficult, a two-race layoff after catching COVID-19 coming between a run of four DNFs in the second half of the season.

All three 2020 M1 riders cut critical figures at the end of the year, highlighting what needs to be done to the bike over the winter. As well as looking at his bike for ideas, the trio may need

"HONDA FAILED TO WIN FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE IT RETURNED TO MOTOGP FULL-TIME BACK IN 1982"

to learn a thing or two from a much-improved Morbidelli.

Honda capped off 2020 without a win for the first time since it returned to MotoGP full time back in 1982. The absence of Marquez forced HRC into throwing more at the RC213V, with a mid-season upturn in form following a handful of updates, and a general better understanding of how to ride it allowed rookie Alex Marquez to claim back-to-back podiums at Le Mans and Motorland Aragon.

It wasn't enough to secure him rookie of the year honours, with KTM rider Binder taking that title. But any suggestions that Marquez would be left to reside in his elder brother's shadow were firmly swept aside as the 2019 Moto2 champion demonstrated the world class quality that had earned him his MotoGP promotion.

MotoGP bid farewell to Cal Crutchlow as a full-time racer at the end of an injury-hit campaign. On his return to Yamaha next year to be its test rider, perhaps he holds the key to transforming its fortunes. Meanwhile, incoming Honda man Pol Espargaro ended his KTM tenure with fifth in the standings as he gets set for the biggest challenge of his MotoGP career in 2021.

In the end, 15 different riders took to the podium steps in 2020 on a mix of factory-spec and year-old machinery, with five new race winners being crowned. But none of this was a direct result of COVID or an absent Marquez. This season proved that MotoGP's radical regulation shake-up in 2016 designed to make the grid ultra-competitive has worked. Without it, Suzuki likely wouldn't have come back to MotoGP, and one of grand prix racing's most exciting talents may never have been given the golden opportunity to fulfil a lifelong dream just two years into his MotoGP career... 🏁



Yamaha's Rossi and Vinales had seasons to forget

[➔ P51 TOP 10 RIDERS AND RESULTS ROUND-UP](#)

ROUND BY ROUND

Aragon GP

- 1 Alex Rins
- 2 Alex Marquez
- 3 Joan Mir

Rins comes from 10th to win, fending off Marquez as Mir takes third. Front-tyre-pressure issue drops Quartararo to career-worst 18th, with cold conditions hindering Ducati. Mir's podium gives him six-point lead in the championship. Rossi out with COVID-19.

Teruel GP

- 1 Franco Morbidelli
- 2 Alex Rins
- 3 Joan Mir

Morbidelli stage-manages second Aragon race from the front ahead of Rins, as more Quartararo struggles and third for Mir extends the points gap to 14. Ducati continues to struggle, but Dovizioso remains in championship hunt heading to Valencia.

European GP

- 1 Joan Mir
- 2 Alex Rins
- 3 Pol Espargaro

Mir takes maiden MotoGP win at crucial juncture, as lap-one crash and lowly 14th for Quartararo gives Mir a 37-point lead in the championship. Rins keeps hopes alive in second, while Espargaro registers fourth podium. Vinales 13th after pitlane start.

Valencia GP

- 1 Franco Morbidelli
- 2 Jack Miller
- 3 Pol Espargaro

Morbidelli fends off Miller in last-lap thriller to score third win, as safe seventh for Mir gives him the title. Quartararo crashes again, meekly surrendering his charge. Suzuki also wraps up the teams' championship after Rins finishes fourth.

Portuguese GP

- 1 Miguel Oliveira
- 2 Jack Miller
- 3 Franco Morbidelli

Oliveira dominates as Morbidelli secures runner-up spot in the championship with third. Quartararo slips to eighth in standings with 14th-place finish as Mir retires. Ducati wins constructors' championship courtesy of Miller's second.

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AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 RIDERS



JOAN MIR

1 In a season of inconsistency, Mir's considered approach to racing ensured his Suzuki made it to the podium more times than anyone across the campaign to secure him a maiden MotoGP title just five years into his world championship career.



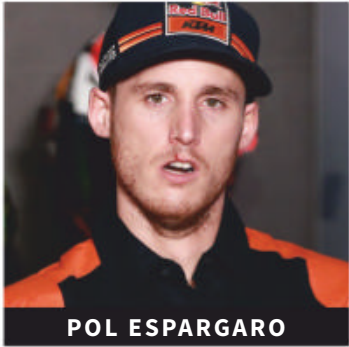
FRANCO MORBIDELLI

2 Had his fragile Yamaha engine survived the Andalusian GP, Morbidelli could well have been champion. But he shone as the marque's leading light, and that was after the 2020 bike he was meant to ride was taken away from him pre-season.



ALEX RINS

3 By bouncing back from a shoulder injury at round one, Rins's ultimately futile title charge continued to prove his credentials as one of the grid's best. With a bit more luck and better qualifying performances, 2021 could be a big year.



POL ESPARGARO

4 Though he ended his KTM tenure winless, five podiums and general consistency vaulted him to fifth in the standings and equal on points with Dovizioso. Instrumental in KTM's development, he's laid the foundations for a strong Honda debut in 2021.



FABIO QUARTARARO

5 The season went horribly awry for the rider who should have been king, but Quartararo's three victories at least proved his 2019 breakout was no fluke. Capable of bouncing back from low points, he needs a more consistent package from Yamaha.



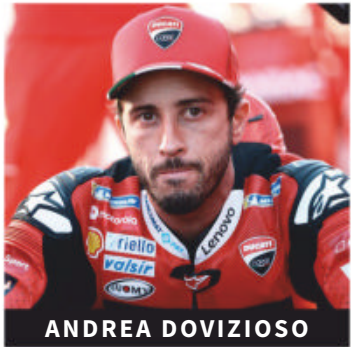
MIGUEL OLIVEIRA

6 Though his Styria win may have been fortunate, his Portuguese triumph was total vindication of KTM's decision to have him lead its factory squad in 2021. A spot more luck may have offered him more podiums.



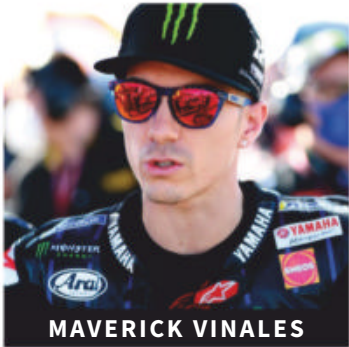
JACK MILLER

7 One short of his 2019 five-podium haul, Miller consistently got the best out of the tyre-hampered GP20 to secure Ducati the constructors' championship. Not bad for a rider it was willing to cut at one point for Jorge Lorenzo for 2020.



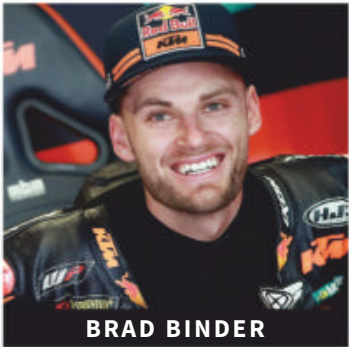
ANDREA DOVIZIOSO

8 Dovizioso's guile ensured he still won a race and stayed in the title fight through consistent points finishes despite never adapting to the 2020 Michelin rear tyre. A disappointing end to his Ducati, and possibly his MotoGP, career.



MAVERICK VINALES

9 When the 2020 Yamaha worked, Vinales showed his class with his Misano win and double Jerez podiums. But he seemed more lost than the rest on the M1, leading to what he branded the worst season of his career.



BRAD BINDER

10 The late replacement for Zarco for 2020, Binder showed why KTM had banked on him for its future with stunning early-season form and Brno victory. Despite four DNFs and no other podiums, he ended 2020 as the top rookie.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	RIDER	TEAM/BIKE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	PTS
1	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	R	5	R	2	4	3	2	2	11	3	3	1	7	R	171
2	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	5	R	2	R	15	1	9	4	R	6	1	11	1	3	158
3	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	NS	10	4	R	6	5	12	3	R	1	2	2	4	15	139
4	Andrea Dovizioso (ITA)	Ducati	3	6	11	1	5	7	8	R	4	7	13	8	8	6	135
5	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	KTM	6	7	R	R	3	10	3	R	3	12	4	3	3	4	135
6	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	2	2	14	10	R	6	1	9	10	4	7	13	10	11	132
7	Jack Miller (AUS)	Pramac Ducati	4	R	9	3	2	8	R	5	R	9	R	6	2	2	132
8	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Petronas Yamaha	1	1	7	8	13	R	4	1	9	18	8	14	R	14	127
9	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	Tech3 KTM	8	R	6	R	1	11	5	R	6	16	6	5	6	1	125
10	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	10	4	8	6	7	9	6	7	7	5	R	4	R	5	116



Was 2020 a last hurrah for Dovizioso?

11 Brad Binder (KTM) 87; 12 Danilo Petrucci (Ducati) 78; 13 Johann Zarco (Avintia Ducati) 77; 14 Alex Marquez (Honda) 74; 15 Valentino Rossi (Yamaha) 66; 16 Francesco Bagnaia (Pramac Ducati) 47; 17 Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia) 42; 18 Cal Crutchlow (LCR Honda) 32; 19 Stefan Bradl (Honda) 27; 20 Iker Lecuona (Tech3 KTM) 27; 21 Bradley Smith (Aprilia) 12; 22 Tito Rabat (Avintia Ducati) 10; 23 Michele Pirro (Pramac Ducati) 4; 24 Mika Kallio (Tech3 KTM) 0; 25 Lorenzo Savadori (Aprilia) 0.

MANUFACTURERS 1 Ducati 221; 2 Yamaha 204; 3 Suzuki 202; 4 KTM 200; 5 Honda 144; 6 Aprilia 51.

Schumacher is champion as Tsunoda stars with win

FORMULA 2
SAKHIR (BHR)
5-6 DECEMBER
ROUND 12/12

Mick Schumacher may have wrapped up the FIA Formula 2 Championship last weekend on the quirky outer loop of the Bahrain International Circuit, but it was Yuki Tsunoda who starred.

Indeed, looking at the respective performances over the finale, it became apparent that the Haas F1 team could have a lot of work to do with its 2021 signings Schumacher and Nikita Mazepin, yet AlphaTauri has a solid-gold little starlet in the form of Tsunoda. Schumacher appeared to utterly lose the plot in Friday qualifying, but went some way towards redeeming himself in Saturday's feature race, in which the rapid Mazepin drove dubiously and with an apparent lack of respect for his rivals. And Tsunoda,

who faced a million-to-one title shot, put on a brilliant display to finish just 15 points behind Schumacher and a mere one adrift of disappointed title runner-up Callum Ilott.

Tsunoda first kept himself just about in play for the crown by earning the four points for pole in his Carlin car, edging out Hitech Grand Prix man Mazepin. Prema Racing star Schumacher found himself down in 18th — he had one hot lap late in the session ruined by traffic, but bizarrely pushed on for a second successive flier, despite all those around him on the track having a cooldown before going for their final efforts. He had already compromised himself on two occasions by going off line to dive past Marino Sato and Marcus Armstrong when he moved over at the final corner to collide with Roy Nissany, causing a needless shunt that sent the Israeli flying over his rear wing and a session-terminating red flag.

One area where Tsunoda did let himself down was his starts, and this meant he raced

for much of the opening stint behind leader Mazepin and the Prema car of second-placed Robert Shwartzman. Tsunoda finally got ahead of Shwartzman just before they pitted successively to get rid of their soft option tyres and onto the hard primes. The last of this trio to stop was Tsunoda, and he emerged in front, but Mazepin and Shwartzman got back ahead as the Japanese worked up to speed on his new rubber.

With 12 laps remaining Tsunoda moved back ahead of Shwartzman, and with five to go he bravely dived inside Mazepin into Turn 1 to lead, despite the Hitech driver forcing him off track — cue a five-second penalty for Mazepin.

While Ilott, from ninth on the grid, couldn't do any better than sixth place at the flag in his Virtuosi Racing car, his team-mate Guanyu Zhou went for the alternative strategy of starting on the hards and, on softer rubber, he raced through to second, just 0.6 seconds adrift of Tsunoda.



Schumacher battles
it out with title rival
Ilott during sprint race

SUTTON



Daruvala beat
Tsunoda on Sunday
for a Carlin 1-2

COATES



TEE

A 5s penalty for speeding in the pits didn't affect Zhou's result, thanks to Mazepin's ruthless defence of third place from Felipe Drugovich costing them time on the final lap. That meant another 5s penalty for Mazepin, relegating him to ninth and promoting MP Motorsport pilot Drugovich to third and Schwartzman to fourth.

Schumacher was also on the alternative strategy, and he put in a superb drive, which featured the prototype for George Russell's spectacular Turn 6 Sakhir GP move as he passed Dan Ticktum. He finished seventh, one place behind Ilott, with both promoted one position by Mazepin's penalty.

Ilott had to win Sunday's sprint race, with Schumacher outside the points, to claim the title. At one point this did look possible, because Schumacher had flat-spotted his tyres with a massive lock-up on lap one and, after Ilott finally chiselled a way past for third position, he dived for the pits and a set of soft Pirellis. Ilott trimmed the gap slightly to the leading duo of reversed-grid polesitter Ticktum and Jehan Daruvala, but then really began to suffer with his tyres and slid ever further backwards to finish 10th.

Daruvala got in front of Ticktum with nine laps remaining, and then the British DAMS driver had a frenetic final scrap with Tsunoda, who'd stormed through after dropping to 12th on the first lap. Ticktum, struggling hugely on his spent rubber, slid wide at the final corner, and Tsunoda pipped him to second on the line to complete a Carlin 1-2 and head off into a potentially fascinating F1 rookie season.

RESULTS ROUND 12/12, SAKHIR (BHR), 5-6 DECEMBER RACE 1 (48 LAPS – 105.696 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	Carlin	52m59.396s
2	Guanyu Zhou (CHN)	Virtuosi Racing	+5.613s
3	Felipe Drugovich (BRA)	MP Motorsport	+6.655s
4	Robert Schwartzman (RUS)	Prema Racing	+7.438s
5	Callum Ilott (GBR)	Virtuosi Racing	+8.143s
6	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Prema Racing	+10.339s
7	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	Carlin	+11.818s
8	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	DAMS	+14.640s
9	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Hitech Grand Prix	+16.280s
10	Pedro Piquet (BRA)	Charouz Racing System	+17.511s
11	Marcus Armstrong (NZL)	ART Grand Prix	+17.789s
12	Louis Deletraz (CHE)	Charouz Racing System	+19.374s
13	Artem Markelov (RUS)	HWA Racelab	+31.999s
14	Ralph Boschung (CHE)	Campos Racing	+34.388s
15	Giuliano Alesi (FRA)	MP Motorsport	+35.082s
16	Luca Ghiotto (ITA)	Hitech Grand Prix	+38.113s
17	Marino Sato (JPN)	Trident	+39.059s
18	Theo Pourchaire (FRA)	HWA Racelab	+41.719s
19	Sean Gelael (IDN)	DAMS	+45.847s
20	Roy Nissany (ISR)	Trident	+50.305s
21	Christian Lundgaard (DNK)	ART Grand Prix	+59.292s
22	Guilherme Samaia (BRA)	Campos Racing	-1 lap



QUALIFYING

1 Tsunoda 1m02.676s;
2 Mazepin 1m02.798s;
3 Daruvala 1m02.807s;
4 Schwartzman 1m02.822s;
5 Drugovich 1m02.841s;
6 Lundgaard 1m02.849s;
7 Markelov 1m02.947s;
8 Ticktum 1m02.954s;
9 Ilott 1m03.014s;
10 Deletraz 1m03.062s;
11 Zhou 1m03.075s (above);
12 Sato 1m03.116s;
13 Piquet 1m03.147s;
14 Ghiotto 1m03.166s;
15 Armstrong 1m03.169s;
16 Alesi 1m03.194s;
17 Pourchaire 1m03.228s;
18 Schumacher 1m03.270s;
19 Nissany 1m03.317s;
20 Boschung 1m03.403s;
21 Samaia 1m03.552s;
22 Gelael 1m03.738s.

Winner's average speed 119.479mph. **Fastest lap** Schumacher 1m04.087s, 123.667mph.

RACE 2 (34 LAPS – 74.699 MILES)

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

1 Daruvala 37m26.570s; **2 Tsunoda +3.561s;** **3 Ticktum +3.902s;** **4 Zhou +5.615s;** **5 Schwartzman +7.585s;**
6 Alesi +9.040s; **7 Ghiotto +11.093s;** **8 Drugovich +13.878s;** **9 Mazepin +14.536s;** **10 Ilott +16.023s;** **11 Piquet +16.157s;**
12 Lundgaard +17.051s; **13 Deletraz +20.176s;** **14 Armstrong +21.844s;** **15 Nissany +23.639s;** **16 Sato +26.089s;**
17 Gelael +26.759s; **18 Schumacher +28.529s;** **19 Samaia +35.936s;** **20 Markelov +59.769s;** **21 Pourchaire -1 lap;**
R Boschung 9 laps-suspension.

Winner's average speed 119.700mph. **Fastest lap** Schumacher 1m04.383s, 123.098mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Schumacher 215; **2 Ilott 201;** **3 Tsunoda 200;** **4 Schwartzman 177;** **5 Mazepin 164;** **6 Zhou 151.5;**
7 Lundgaard 149; **8 Deletraz 134;** **9 Drugovich 121;** **10 Ghiotto 106.**



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Wins for Honda tighten title fight to a tie

SUPER FORMULA
SUZUKA (JPN)
5-6 DECEMBER
ROUND 5/6

A pair of dramatic races at Suzuka changed the complexion of the Super Formula title race, as Honda drivers Naoki Yamamoto and Toshiki Oyu shared the victories.

Ryo Hirakawa arrived at Suzuka with an 11-point championship lead over Nick Cassidy, but a troubled weekend that involved a huge Turn 1 crash in the first race means Hirakawa heads to the Fuji season finale level on points with Yamamoto.

By contrast, Dandelion Racing star Yamamoto scored a dominant victory from pole in the opener and would have likely finished on the podium in the second race but for a suspected gearbox problem.

Hirakawa's troubles began when a failed "¥200 [£1.45] part" in the gearbox actuator forced him to miss qualifying and start the first race from last, but he had recovered to seventh before attempting an audacious triple move on Ukyo Sasahara,



YOSHIMI

Dandelion driver
Yamamoto won
Suzuka opener

Sho Tsuboi and Kamui Kobayashi.

He looked to have successfully cleared all three of his rivals until Sasahara made contact with Tsuboi and lost control of his Team Mugen car, which then careened into the barriers at speed and ended up on its side, but not before tagging the rear of Hirakawa's Impul machine.

After a lengthy rebuild, Hirakawa salvaged seventh in race two, which should have been won by reigning champion Cassidy but ultimately went the way of rookie Oyu.

Fifth in race one, Cassidy took a commanding pole in race two, and the TOM'S racer looked on course for his second win of the season before his

Toyota engine blew on lap nine of 30.

That promoted Nakajima Racing talent Oyu to a lead he wouldn't lose, as the youngster kept Yamamoto's Dandelion team-mate Nirei Fukuzumi at bay to become the sixth different winner this season in as many races.

Taking dropped scores into account, Cassidy has fallen to fourth in the standings behind Mugen's Autopolis winner Tomoki Nojiri, who was fifth in both of the Suzuka races.

JAMIE KLEIN

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Leclerc slip helps crown Petecof

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN
VALLELUNGA (ITA)
5-6 DECEMBER
ROUND 8/8

Just two points split table-topper Gianluca Petecof and nearest rival Arthur Leclerc as the Formula Regional European field paid a visit to Vallelunga for the final round of the season. Although it was all but a dead cert that Prema Powerteam would guide another of its hotshots to junior single-seater success, this was a title battle that might have gone down to the wire on any other weekend.

A sodden circuit north of Rome played into the hands of race-one front-row

starter Dennis Hauger, as the Van Amersfoort Racing pilot swiftly deposed polesitter Oliver Rasmussen – another Prema young gun – to score his maiden victory at Formula 3 level.

As Petecof rose a place to fourth, Leclerc needed to recover from last place on the compact grid. A drive-belt failure that led to an engine fire in qualifying meant he lined up 11th. In his efforts to finish a strong fifth at the flag, a tag with Jamie Chadwick returned a five-second penalty that demoted him a position.

That should have left two races in which to overturn the now six-point deficit to Petecof but, when the second bout was rained off, Leclerc's task became that much harder.

When Leclerc dipped his wheels off track and spun into the gravel and retired in the finale, fifth place was sufficient for Petecof to win the title and Ferrari junior bragging rights. Race-three victory for Rasmussen meant he tied on points with fellow six-time race winner Leclerc.



Brazilian Petecof
celebrates title spoils

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WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER FORMULA
SUZUKA (JPN)
Race 1 Naoki Yamamoto
Dandelion Racing (Dallara-Honda)
Race 2 Toshiki Oyu
Nakajima Racing (Dallara-Honda)

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN
VALLELUNGA (ITA)
Race 1 Dennis Hauger
Van Amersfoort Racing
Race 2 Oliver Rasmussen
Prema Powerteam

SUPER TC2000
BUENOS AIRES (ARG)
Julian Santero (below)
Toyota Gazoo Racing (Toyota Corolla)



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Croft operator the BARC believes it's positive that motorsport is on government's radar



CIRCUIT OPERATORS AWAIT GOVERNMENT LOAN DETAILS

CORONAVIRUS

Leading circuit operators say they are still waiting for more details about the government loans that are available to them as part of a sport funding package before deciding whether or not to take advantage of the support.

The UK government announced last month that it would be making £300million of loan funding available to sports affected by the absence of spectators during 2020. Motorsport is one of the sports that is set to benefit – while others, such as cricket and elite football, missed out. A total of £6m of loans is due to be on offer to circuit owners and operators.

But it's not yet clear what terms will be attached to the loans or how much each of MotorSport Vision, the British Automobile Racing Club, Silverstone and Goodwood would receive. Despite this, both the BARC and MSV say it's better that motorsport has been included in the scheme than to be left out.

"We still don't know what any of the details are," said Ben Taylor, group chief executive of the BARC, which operates the Thruxton, Croft and Pembrey circuits. "We will look at any kind of support that's

available and assess it and, as soon as the details come through, we will make a decision.

"Credit where it's due, Motorsport UK have got motorsport onto that list of 11 sports. It's much better to be in that position where you don't know what it means than whingeing we weren't on the list.

"It's been a terrible year for everybody and everybody has lost a lot of money, but when you think about what it could've been – we did get a season in."

Jonathan Palmer, chief executive of MSV, which operates the Brands Hatch, Donington Park, Snetterton, Oulton Park and Cadwell Park venues, added: "The COVID pandemic has been very costly for us as circuits. Our turnover has reduced from about £60m to £30m overnight and that's a hard thing for a business to cope with.

"We don't know yet what the terms of the loan are, we don't know what the interest rate would be, what the term of the loan would be or indeed what criteria would have to be satisfied to even get that loan. So, the idea that we've got a bit of a cash handout is far from the truth. It may be the loan's not worth having – hopefully it will be."

STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY

F4 race winners sample British F3 machinery

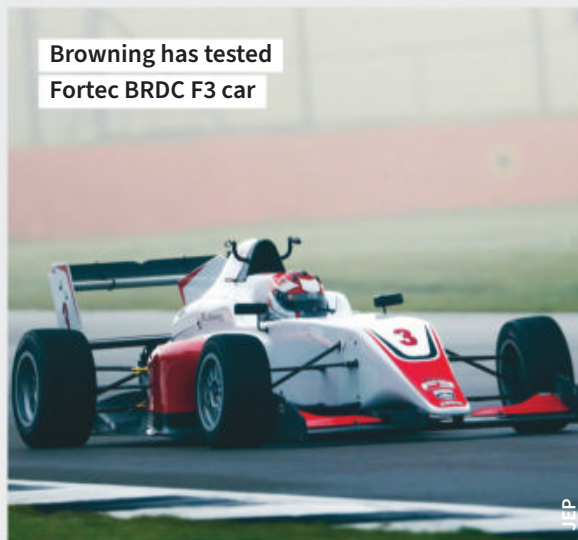
BRDC BRITISH F3

A number of British Formula 4 race winners, including 2020 title protagonists Luke Browning and Zak O'Sullivan, have tested BRDC British Formula 3 machinery in recent weeks as they evaluate their options for next season.

Champion Browning has tested with the Fortec Motorsport squad that powered him to the F4 crown and says he was amazed by the number of offers he has received since taking the title.

"There's been a lot of opportunities since winning the championship; I've never experienced that before," said Browning. "At the moment, with the budget we've got and the opportunities available, British F3 seems the right progression. I know Fortec have got a phenomenal car in that – look at [Johnathan] Hoggard's year [when he finished runner-up with Fortec in 2019]."

F4 runner-up O'Sullivan has been out



testing Carlin's British F3 machinery as he weighs up which F3 category to move into. "There's so many different series – it's a hard decision as there's so many different cars and manufacturers," he said.

Fellow Carlin F4 race winner Christian Mansell has joined O'Sullivan in testing one of the squad's British F3 cars, while Casper Stevenson – third in the F4 points – is another to have been testing.

James Hedley, who took a hat-trick of F4 wins at Thruxton, has also been sampling British F3 cars. He has run with Fortec, having already tested with new F3 squad Elite Motorsport.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

COOK IMPRESSED BY NEW Mk7 FIESTA ST TURBO

FORD FIESTAS

British Touring Car race winner Josh Cook believes the Mk7 Ford Fiesta ST Turbo is a good stepping stone for drivers aspiring to climb the tin-top ladder, after sampling the car for the first time at Croft earlier this year.

Cook was racing in the Invitational class of the Fiesta Championship and took three on-the-road wins, which did not count towards the official results. He was full of praise for the car, which is set to be formally introduced next year.

The car (below) features a 1.6-litre EcoBoost engine, which produces over 100bhp more than the current Zetec S Mk7 used in the championship.

"The suspension is good, so it handles really well," said Cook. "It's got a good power-to-weight ratio and the tyres are great too – it's a good package all-round. It'll be a great stepping stone into the formulas above for drivers looking to make progress."

Fellow BTCC racer Jade Edwards, who shared the car with Cook in a rain-soaked Clubsport Trophy encounter in North Yorkshire, agreed.

"It's a car where you have to keep your wits about you, but it's good fun and it's a lot faster than other cars [in the Clubsport Trophy]," she said.

"There are similarities to the Mini Challenge and Clio Cup cars. It has a similar feel to drive, but the main difference is the Fiesta has an H-Pattern gearbox rather than a sequential.

"I think if you can't make it onto the TOCA package, this is a great alternative."

JOE HUDSON



FIESTA ZETECs

Former British Touring Car champion Andrew Jordan will contest the six-hour Fiesta Endurance race at Mondello Park next month.

The 2013 BTCC champion is set to compete in the event on 24 January, after being persuaded to do so by fellow historic racer Michael Cullen. He will be joined by Cullen and Dave Maguire driving for Murray Motorsport, and follows in the footsteps of fellow BTCC champion Colin Turkington, who has also competed in the endurance event.

"Working with Michael [Cullen] over

the past year, he's been telling me about how fierce the competition is in the Fiesta races at Mondello," said Jordan. "I last raced there in rallycross in 2007 and loved the atmosphere, so I'm very excited to come and take part in the six-hour race, have some great fun and try to get a good result."

First held in 2014, the race is for 1.25-litre Ford Fiesta Zetec cars from the Mondello-based championship. It is traditionally held in November, but governing body Motorsport Ireland suspended event permits in the middle of October amid escalating coronavirus cases.



EQUIPE CLASSIC RACING

Equipe Classic Racing has revealed its provisional 2021 calendar, which features a rare visit to Castle Combe along with events at Estoril and Jerez at the end of the year.

The organisation, which runs the popular Equipe GTS series as well as grids for Pre-'63 and '50s machines, is due to

appear at all six of the MG Car Club's events next season, as well as being the headline act at a new two-day meeting at Combe in early July.

Following a third visit to Silverstone, the 10-weekend season will conclude with European trips to Estoril – as part of a Peter Auto event on 10 October – and Jerez on 23-24 October.

"We haven't been to Castle Combe for about 10 years," said Equipe partner John Pearson. "They've built this meeting around us. It should be really nice – everyone seems to like Castle Combe!"

"The two races abroad at the end of the year are very different – we've done Zandvoort and Spa and thought we would do something different. I think people will be really keen to go abroad and do some racing at the end of the year."

Pearson added that there has already been a lot of interest in these events, and that the club has deliberately planned them at the end of the year in a bid to avoid lingering travel restrictions that are likely to be in place at the start of 2021.

The club has also confirmed that its Equipe Libre series, which is open to any pre-'66 car built to FIA Appendix K rules, will be back next year after successful initial events in 2020.

"We've had a great reaction to that – we piloted it this year and people really liked it," said Pearson. "It also gives our existing grids a second race. A lot of people don't like to go away for a long trip and do just one race."

The first races this year attracted a variety of different cars, including Jaguar E-types, Lotus Elans, Austin-Healeys and a Ford GT40.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Mallory's annual Plum Pudding event cancelled

PLUM PUDDING

The traditional Plum Pudding meeting held at Mallory Park on Boxing Day has been cancelled this year due to coronavirus restrictions.

The event has been administered by the British Racing & Sports Car Club since 2016 and usually features two grids – one for saloons and one for sportscars – with each having two races, along with bike contests.

But circuit bosses have decided not to run the

meeting this year after the track was placed in a tier-three area due to COVID-19.

BRSCC chairman Peter Daly discussed plans for the event with Mallory's management, but they concluded the event could not go ahead without

any spectators.

"Mallory Park, fortunately, is in the area with the lowest cases in Leicestershire but, unfortunately, the government guidelines put us into the Leicester category, which is quite a high area,"

explained Daly. "With it being a tier-three category, at the moment Mallory Park has no option because of people travelling from outside of the area to go there. That event was very reliant on spectators, and without spectators the event wouldn't be feasible."

"There was no shortage of competitors who wanted to take part – that wasn't an issue. With Mallory Park being in a tier-three area, it was disappointing that we couldn't go ahead."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



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IN THE HEADLINES

ROOKIES JOIN GT ACADEMY

The first batch of rookies to sign up to race in Ginetta's new entry-level GT Academy series have been announced. Five drivers with no previous racing experience have joined. Two, Darren Leung and Edward Acres, have previously taken part in trackdays, while Jack Harwood worked alongside GT4 Supercup race winner Jamie Falvey this season. Completing the quintet are Ravi Ramyeed and Danny Dwyer.

AWARDS FOR HSCC MEMBERS

The Historic Sports Car Club has announced its award winners from 2020, including those honoured for off-track work. The late Paul Simms – father of HSCC regular Benn – was remembered with the Terence Smith Quiet Achiever award for the help he gave rival competitors, while the Lola Trophy for Clubman of the Year went to Daniel Clayfield for his work behind the scenes with Historic F2.

CSCC 2021 CALENDAR

The Classic Sports Car Club has revealed more details about its 2021 calendar. The Tin Tops series will have its postponed event on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix Circuit as part of the British GT meeting in May. The Special Saloons and Modsports series will have its first 40-minute pitstop race at Silverstone in October alongside another CSCC category. The Open Series will also feature a variety of race lengths next year – as well as the traditional 40-minute contests, there will be 20 and 30-minute distances.

NEW NAME FOR FUN CUP

The Fun Cup will have a slightly tweaked name for next season and will also introduce a masters class for older drivers. The category will now be known as the Fun Cup Endurance Championship to better reflect the longer race distances in the series. The new sub-class will be for teams that include a driver aged over 55 – and the more over-55s in the team, the more points they will score.



STYLES



Doran doubles up on BRX return as title goes down to the wire

BRITISH RALLYCROSS

Following a torrid season for Liam Doran in the World Rallycross Championship, the Briton returned to British Rallycross to compete in the final event of 2020 and walked away with a brace of victories from the double-header at Lydden Hill last weekend.

Doran was reunited with an EKS-built Audi S1 for the weekend, run by World RX teams' champion JC Raceteknik, alongside stablemate Enzo Ide. Despite the rallycross experience disparity between the pair, and Doran's local knowledge of his home circuit, Ide challenged Doran all weekend.

But Doran's consistency proved decisive as Ide finished second in both rounds, including in the floodlit final on Saturday evening.

Another World RX regular, Oliver Bennett, led the final in round two in his BMW Mini until he dropped down

the order with technical issues, as points leader Mark Donnelly completed the podium with his Citroen DS3.

Bennett then finished third in round three as 2007 British champion Ollie O'Donovan scored a pair of fourth-place finishes, despite missing Q3 in round three while accident damage sustained to his Ford Fiesta was repaired.

With Donnelly retiring from the round three final, Team RX Racing's O'Donovan closed the gap in the standings to just two points with a round remaining next year.

Isle of Man TT racer John McGuinness and Autosport's Hal Ridge shared O'Donovan's team's Ford Focus for the two rounds to make their respective Supercar debuts. McGuinness rolled in Q1 on Saturday, but the car was repaired for the bike ace to finish in the semi-finals.

Ridge beat Steve Hill in the round three semis to make the final, where he finished fifth, ahead of multiple champion Julian Godfrey.

Final meeting draws in the entries

750MC

The 750 Motor Club is expecting a bumper entry for the majority of its series this weekend, for what will be the final circuit racing event of 2020 in the UK.

The Donington Park meeting was scheduled only weeks ago after the 750MC's original two November fixtures were cancelled due to the second national lockdown.

Nine series will compete this weekend, with entries for Roadsports at over 40, while Club Enduro, MR2s and MX-5s are into the thirties.

"It's pretty healthy by anyone's standards –

fingers crossed the weather will hold and we don't get any of this snow we saw last week," said 750MC competitions manager Giles Groombridge.

"It's certainly pleasing that it's still being well supported and people are keen to end the season on a high, but a December meeting is not something that we should be putting on on a regular basis.

"It's an exceptional circumstance in an exceptional year because we only started racing in July, and most people have only had two or three fixes of motorsport."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Bird glides to win MN Circuit Rally opener at Donington

RALLYING

The fastest time on all six stages netted Frank Bird and Jack Morton's Ford Focus WRC a 35-second victory on the delayed opening round of the *Motorsport News* Circuit Rally Championship at Donington Park last weekend.

Mark Kelly and Neil Colman's Ford Fiesta R5 matched Bentley Motorsport Academy driver Bird's time on the opening run and was only a second slower on SS2. But, on the third stage, they were delayed after Richard Wells/Calvin Houldsworth's Fiesta R5 went off at the Old Hairpin and rejoined directly in front of them.

Kelly still retained a clear second over Ollie Mellors/Max Freeman's Proton Iriz, which was third throughout – despite clattering a tyre wall at the Old Hairpin on the opening stage and skirting the gravel at the Esses on stage four.



Wells had been fourth best on the opener, after surviving a big drift at the Old Hairpin. But a slide into the tyres on the next run, and the stage-three off, dropped him behind Paul Smith/Ellie Williams's Fiesta R5 and John Griffiths/Nigel Wetton's Peugeot 208, leaving Wells in a battle for sixth with Kevin Procter/Patrick Walsh's Fiesta S2000. Although Procter had a stage-four spin at Melbourne Hairpin, he retained sixth.

Christopher and Anthony Newton's Vauxhall Nova comfortably led Class 1 from

Mark and Matt Blackmore's Vauxhall Corsa, taking victory by over two minutes. Despite having trouble starting their Corsa, Chris Ruck/Steve Harris led Class 2 throughout.

Elliot Payne/Cameron Fair's Fiesta R2 set the initial pace in Class 3, but lost out to Josh Payton/Jamie Vaughan's Ford Escort Mk2 from stage four. Martin Hodgson/Tony Jones's Escort led Class 4 until it spun, dropping them behind fellow Escort crew Dane Walker/Dave Boyes.

PETER SCHERER

Organisers relieved as circuit rallying gives hope

RALLYING

Organisers are relieved that the 2020-21 *Motorsport News* Circuit Rally Championship has successfully started after the discipline was hard hit by coronavirus.

The nomadic nature of stage rallying has left events unable to run since the original lockdown in March

and only a tiny number of single-venue rallies have subsequently taken place.

The Circuit Rally series attracted a capacity 100-car entry for the Donington Park opener last weekend. The season was due to begin last month, prior to the second English lockdown preventing non-elite sport from running.

"The fact it went so well

was a big weight off my shoulders and we did feel that everyone was watching," said championship coordinator Darren Spann.

Former BTRDA Gold Star rally champion Charlie Payne is more used to forest rallying, but was among those at Donington – taking seventh – with son Elliot also competing. "When I saw

this rally was on, I entered straight away – it's our only way of rallying for the foreseeable future, as I can't see us back in the forests for a long while," Payne Sr said.

The next round is due to take place at Brands Hatch on 16 January, ahead of a planned further six events, and is already oversubscribed.

PETER SCHERER

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Quietly confident for 2021

As clubs continue revealing draft calendars, the familiar problem of juggling clashing events has returned. But early signs suggest there's plenty to look forward to next year

MARCUS PYE

No VC (Victory over COVID-19) Day has been announced yet, but scientists around the world have developed and tested vaccines against coronavirus at racing speed. Thus, in its own microcosm, the motorsport fraternity is quietly confident about 2021, indeed planning for it with cautious optimism. Maybe salient lessons were learned earlier this year when Motorsport UK cancelled all events from late March to the end of June, leaving organising clubs to battle for survival with aid from government furlough schemes.

The bigger players appear to have weathered the pandemic through prudent management. They are eager to get back to normal – whatever that may now be. I have seen provisional calendars for the Historic Sports Car Club, Classic Sports Car Club, 750 Motor Club and fast-rising Equipe Classic Racing over the past couple of weeks, and they look promising. The first two have inscribed visits to Mallory Park and Knockhill respectively on their domestic programmes, while ECR is excited about its new Castle Combe Summer Classic fixture on 3-4 July.

As ever, the tile puzzle of fitting everything into a finite number of practicable weekends is riddled with conundrums, trying to avoid clashes with big 'international' events, some postponed from this summer. Historic racers now know, for instance, that the ACM's keynote Monaco Grand Prix Historique

“Given a fair wind, I'd move heaven and earth to get over to NZ for the Taupo Historic GP”

is set for 23-25 April, four weeks before the Principality's F1 showpiece, Goose's Silverstone Classic is from 31 July-2 August, and the Spa Six Hours is on 1-3 October. But Zandvoort's Historic GP is set to run on 16-18 July, several weeks earlier than its usual September date.

Having seen its 2020 season decimated, and devised the stopgap SpeedWeek to keep partners engaged, Goodwood has also laid its cards on the table. With the Formula 1 World Championship season expanding to 23 weekends, it's as well the Duke of Richmond and Gordon's cohorts have long ceased worrying about the availability of current GP drivers but instead have looked increasingly to approachable Le Mans winners and British Touring Car racers to underpin its triumvirate of staples.

By moving the Members' Meeting from its previous March/April

position to 15-16 May (where Monaco would have been in 'even' years), the chances of snow are slim. The MM should be stronger for it, and Goodwood Road Racing Club subscribers and their guests considerably warmer if the vagaries of the British climate don't follow it. The Festival of Speed (8-11 July) is again up against the HSCC's big Legends of Brands Hatch Super Prix gig, but the Revival keeps its optimum 17-19 September slot, spanning both the anniversary of the circuit's inaugural meeting in 1948 (Saturday) and the birthday of its top gun, the late Sir Stirling Moss (Friday).

With international travel not yet back on the radar for most, I'm sad that South Africa's Passion for Speed Historic events, traditionally run at Zwartkops (Pretoria) and Killarney on successive weekends, will not be back in February. The vast and diverse country has been ravaged by COVID-19 this year, and although some modern meetings recently returned (albeit behind closed doors), the logistics of shipping visiting cars from the UK and getting drivers and preparation teams there remain too much of an unknown for vital commitment on both sides. I loved the tour this spring, thus long to make the pilgrimage again in 2022.

One place out of the woods pandemic-wise – fingers tightly crossed – is my beloved New Zealand, a wonderful country I first visited in 1990 and which left such an impression that I've returned several times. Its Formula 5000 Tasman Cup Revival series started last month at Manfeild's Chris Amon Circuit and, while it has of necessity become a national contest for the time being, the mighty cars are still a draw for enthusiasts. New drivers are joining the fun, too. Reigning champion Michael Collins (ex-Graham McRae Leda GM1) was unbeatable last month, but older sister and team-mate Anna impressed hugely on her graduation to the Hey stable's later McRae GM1, netting two third places.

Given a fair wind, I'd move heaven and earth to get over for the Taupo Historic GP on 23-24 January. Not only because the Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park – a 10-minute drive into the hills above the delightful lakeside resort town, situated in the centre of the North Island's heartland – hosts the F5000 brigade again, but also a special feature celebrating 50 years of Formula Ford in NZ amid a major Blue Oval showcase. Formula Junior, always strong in the theatre of motorised warfare, is another attraction.

Australia has had it really rough over the past few months, with strict lockdowns across its most populous areas and international travel still difficult. Although Phillip Island's huge January motorcycle event has been postponed (hopefully to later in the year), the Victorian Historic Racing Register is forging ahead with its Car Classic Festival of Motorsport, scheduled for 5-7 March. As things stand, alas, the rendezvous for around 500 entries is currently not open to spectators. Here's hoping that, when racing kicks off in the UK later in March, enthusiasts will be able to attend. 🏁



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Third in the final race was enough for Austin to claim the crown



Mini Challenge Cooper S title finally goes Austin's way

DONINGTON PARK
MSVR
5 DECEMBER

After finishing runner-up three years in a row, long-time Mini racer Rob Austin finally savoured that winning feeling by clinching a maiden title in the Mini Challenge Trophy at Donington Park.

Austin arrived at the final round with a narrow six-point advantage in the Cooper S Class over defending champion Daniel Butcher-Lord. Having missed out on pole for the first time this season to his title rival, Austin made amends in race one, passing Keir McConomy and Butcher-Lord by the end of the opening lap.

He was then able to build a commanding lead while the battle raged behind. A safety car period eradicated Austin's advantage, but he held on to take a crucial victory ahead of Butcher-Lord.

Austin opted for a conservative drive to third place in the second and deciding race, while Sami Bowler led the way. But Bowler was denied her first win of the season by Butcher-Lord, who just missed out on the crown despite taking victory.

"I've had over 56 podiums in the Minis since 2004, so it was a very long time coming," said a relieved Austin. "But, after four second places, I'm really pleased to get it this time. I was determined to win [the first race]. The second one I had to finish

and I actually found it much harder driving slower to save the car. To finish in third, which is my worst result of the year, was the most stressful race I've had this year.

"Daniel and I have just had the closest fights all the way through without any contact so credit to him as well because he's been brilliant to race."

The title battle in the Cooper Class was an even closer affair. Harry Nunn took second in the first encounter behind James Hillery to head former championship leader Dominic Wheatley by two points. Seven cars fought it out for victory in the deciding race, with Hillery again coming out on top. Nunn and Wheatley were in the thick of that battle, the pair swapping places several times, but the former took third place, enough for him to steal the crown.

Last month's Walter Hayes Trophy winner Ollie White made his first appearance in Heritage Formula Ford since his 2019 title-winning season. At the wheel of a Souley Motorsport-run Van Diemen RF90, White led the first race until a late safety car period. A mistake at the restart dropped him to third, and his hopes of fighting back were ended by a late red flag.

Former British Formula 4 driver Alex Walker (RF00) took his first single-seater victory ahead of Tom Brown (RF91), who was crowned champion with a race to spare. White made amends in race two with a lights-to-flag win.

WEEKEND WINNERS

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Race 1 Rob Austin

Race 2 Daniel Butcher-Lord

HERITAGE FORMULA FORD

Race 1 Alex Walker (Van Diemen RF00, below)

Race 2 Oliver White (Van Diemen RF90)

FORD FOCUS CUP

Race 1 David Rowe

Race 2 Scott Parkin

LOTUS ELISE TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Danny Winstanley (Elise S1)

RACING SALOONS/PRODUCTION BMW

Cliff Pellin (Ford Fiesta ST180)



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Andrew Godfrey won the Focus Cup Championship despite being involved in a four-car collision during the first race, which ended his running for the day. The race was won by David Rowe, who passed polesitter Paul Donkin on the outside at Redgate on the second lap and then held him off by 0.2 seconds at the flag.

Despite leading for most of race two, Donkin again missed out on victory by a tiny margin, Scott Parkin passing him in the final two laps to take the spoils.

STEVE WHITFIELD



#78 Mitchell/Collard
Lambo triumphed from
a COVID-depleted grid

SEASON
REVIEW

COLLARD AND MITCHELL TOP A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CONTEST

The quality of competition in British GT defied the season's difficult circumstances

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



motorsport
IMAGES

It's been an unusual year for British GT. Action was delayed until August by the pandemic, and the grid had dropped from 35 paid-up entries to 21 when it got under way. As series promoter Stephane Ratel put it, "when you lose 40% of your grid, you can't call it a success". But, as Ratel rightly added, "it's been a sporting success".

There were seven different winners from four manufacturers over the nine races, and four crews remained in title contention until the Silverstone finale, which drew an encouraging 37-car field. There, the Barwell-versus-RAM fight was decided in favour of Sandy

Mitchell and British Touring Car Championship convert Rob Collard, becoming the first and, likely, last Silver Cup duo to make the grade before such pairings are outlawed next year.

British GT has traditionally been an arena favouring Pro-Am crews, but the spate of pre-season withdrawals largely came from that pool. At the same time, several entries abandoned planned European programmes to bolster the Silver class, which from two full-season entries in 2019 suddenly had over half the GT3 field, rendering Pro-Am effectively a sub-category due to their inevitably inferior qualifying aggregates.

GT3 TOP 6

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	PTS
1	Sandy Mitchell/Rob Collard	Barwell Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	168
2	Patrick Kujala/Sam De Haan	RAM Racing	Mercedes-AMG (right)	148.5
3	Phil Keen/Adam Balon	Barwell Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	134
4	Michael O'Brien/James Baldwin	Jenson Team Rocket RJN	McLaren 720S	125
5	Yelmer Buurman/Ian Loggie	RAM Racing	Mercedes-AMG	111
6	Michael Igoe	WPI Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	103





“SEVEN DIFFERENT WINNERS FROM FOUR MANUFACTURERS OVER THE NINE RACES”

Making matters more confusing, some Silver crews carried more weight than others, creating a form of ‘Driver BoP’ that hit the posse of Silver McLarens (which locked out the top four spots on the grid for the Oulton Park season opener) the hardest. Still, it didn’t please anybody – in that regard, 2021 *should* be rather simpler...

Mitchell, 20, returned to British GT with Barwell Motorsport as a polished version of the braces-wearing teen who had won GT4 races in a McLaren in 2017. Capable of pushing experienced team leader Phil Keen in qualifying despite running 30kg heavier – his stunning pole in the wet at Snetterton a case in point – a bright future surely beckons for the Scot, whose driving style complemented Collard’s.

Collard admitted that “it’s taken me a little bit longer than I would have liked” to master the high-aero Lamborghini Huracan after two decades in tin-tops and, as Barwell boss Mark Lemmer repeatedly pointed out, the 52-year-old is an FIA-graded Bronze running as a derogated Silver due to his experience compared to typical ‘am’ racers. He made this count in races but, as in touring cars, qualifying tended to be his downfall. That is until he produced a fine pole at Silverstone, laying the foundation for a dominant victory.

“Barwell is like another West Surrey [where he scored success in the BTCC],” said Collard, who accelerated his learning curve in a parallel GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup campaign with Mitchell. “The drivers aren’t allowed to leave until the team boss is completely happy!”

Collard felt “a bit gutted” at the Oulton Park opener as a multi-car clash just after the pitstops meant the remainder of race two was neutralised behind the safety car. He felt a maiden win was there for the taking with only Adam Balon, freshly relayed by Keen, ahead.

The Donington double-header next time out was another disappointment, Collard wresting the lead from Michael O’Brien (Jenson Team Rocket RJN McLaren) in the two-hour opener, only for incorrect tyre pressures to cause Mitchell to slip back as Andrea Caldarelli charged to a maiden win in Michael Igoe’s WPI Lambo. All three Huracans struggled with tyre warm-up in race two, where Scott Malvern and Nick Jones (Team Parker Racing Bentley) scored a surprise win.

But the safety car came just at the right time at Brands Hatch to neutralise a massive lead built up by impressive Esports convert James Baldwin just before the pitstops, where a speedy >>

AUTOSPORT’S TOP 5 GT3 DRIVERS



PHIL KEEN

1 The British GT title continues to elude Keen, but by every metric he was the year’s benchmark GT3 driver, taking seven fastest laps from nine races. Several stirring drives captured the imagination, chief among them streaking off into the distance after passing Mitchell around the outside of Riches at Snetterton.



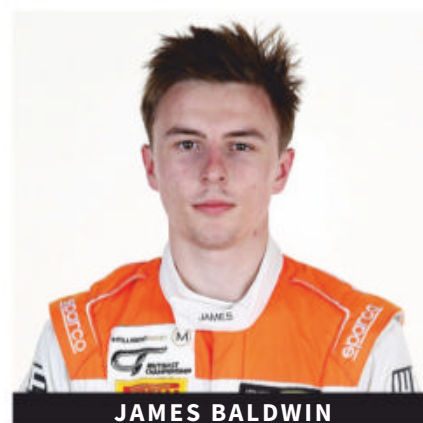
SANDY MITCHELL

2 Highly rated by Barwell from his time in Europe, Mitchell was 2020’s breakout star. Just 0.066s off Keen in qualifying at Oulton Park, he beat him at Donington 1 and Snetterton. Error-free, got the best from Collard and looked every bit equal to the factory pros. Likely will be one next year.



ROB COLLARD

3 Had a big job on his hands unlearning the skills needed for tin-top racing, but improved to deliver Lamborghini’s first series title. Superb in battle as ever, as witnessed by stalking of Loggie at Silverstone. Brilliant extended stint in the wet at Donington went unrewarded.



JAMES BALDWIN

4 Instantly surpassed expectations with victory on his series debut, although it owed much to others’ mistakes. Quicker than O’Brien at Donington 1, where he was fastest by half a second in his session, and led serenely in opening stints at Brands and Donington’s third race. Thrust in at the deep end, he delivered.



SAM DE HAAN

5 Runner-up for a second year, but a fitter, more rounded driver than in 2019 who adapted quickly to the Merc. Took a maiden pole in the rain at Snetterton and largely raced well, twice passing O’Brien in slippery conditions at Donington. Blotted copybook with Balon contact at Silverstone, which he owned.

turnaround by Barwell – despite Mitchell almost stalling on exit – helped get him out ahead of O’Brien.

The Barwell pair proved they wouldn’t be going away by finishing just 24s off victory, in sixth place, in the three-hour Donington contest in September, despite a 20s success pitstop penalty and a slow puncture 20 minutes into Mitchell’s stint. But after pipping Ollie Wilkinson (Optimum McLaren) for second at the line in the first Snetterton race, their title hopes took a dent when a bungled driver change in race two meant Collard emerged fifth, instead of challenging Balon for victory, and lost the points lead as a result.

Fears that this could prove costly when the title decider was put under threat by the second lockdown were dispelled, and Mitchell and Collard produced their most convincing display of the season. Main rivals Sam De Haan and Patrick Kujala had an off-day in their RAM Mercedes, capped by De Haan being penalised for spinning Balon, and Collard and Mitchell took their second win of the year.

The RAM pair put up a strong fight, their high point coming with a charging victory in the longer Donington enduro after De Haan was turned around at the first corner. The ex-Barwell man thrived in the Mercedes and took an excellent pole in the wet at Snetterton, where tyre-pressure woes limited them to a disappointed fifth in race one. Barwell’s race-two pitstop woe paradoxically disadvantaged RAM at Silverstone, a 10s success penalty adding to their disappointing afternoon.

Of the remaining Silver crews, Baldwin was a revelation and took three poles with GT4 graduate O’Brien, although the Jenson Team Rocket McLaren pair’s only win came in the Oulton curtain raiser, when a pitstop infringement took Jordan Witt/Jack Mitchell (2 Seas McLaren) out of the running and Wilkinson’s unforced error allowed O’Brien through. “I didn’t feel like it was real,” recalls Baldwin. “It was such a surreal feeling which led to me not eating or drinking before race two!” Both drivers’ inexperience with the 720S in the wet at Donington and Snetterton cost them ground in the title fight, but neither put a scratch on the car all year.

That meant the final title contenders at Silverstone were the other Barwell Lambo duo, Keen and Balon, but their hopes had already taken a beating due to hidden damage to the diff carried over from Balon’s practice shunt at Oulton, which made the Huracan tricky to drive and was only discovered three races later.

Keen was again the quickest man all year, but a non-score at Brands, where Balon finished the race a lap down, meant they were fighting an uphill battle. Victory at Snetterton restored hope, but the 20s pitstop penalty carried to the Silverstone finale meant the title was a long shot even before Balon was rear-ended by De Haan. That incident did prove costly in the Pro-Am rankings, however, because it allowed the other RAM Mercedes crew of Ian Loggie and Yelmer Buurman to scoop the prize.

“WITH A REDUCED CAR COUNT THE DESTINY OF THE TITLE WAS LIKELY TO COME DOWN TO THE SMALL THINGS”




TF ASTON BATTLE DELIVERS THE CROWN

Success was also shared around in GT4 as seven different winners claimed the spoils, but, unlike in GT3, the battle went right down to the final minutes at Silverstone. Rookies Jamie Caroline and Dan Vaughan (TF Sport Aston Martin) finished every race and claimed the spoils from Patrik Matthiesen and Jordan Collard (HHC Motorsport McLaren) and their second-year team-mates Patrick Kibble and Connor O’Brien in a year of fine margins.

Ex-Porsche Carrera Cup racer Vaughan took longer than 2017 British F4 champion Caroline to get to grips with the Vantage, a car that requires a very particular style to extract peak lap time, but the title-winning pair was the stronger Aston on pace by season’s end. This was evidenced in their drive for the title at Silverstone, where key passes on O’Brien (by Vaughan) and Matthiesen (Caroline) swung the balance in their favour.

With the reduced car-count – just eight full-season entries – allowing crews to still score heavily on a bad day, the destiny of the title was always likely to come down to the small things. A puncture on the Brands GP loop meant Collard couldn’t make it back to the pits and proved costly

GT4 TOP 6

A photograph of a yellow Aston Martin Vantage GT4 race car, number 95, with 'Holmes' branding. Two drivers, Jamie Caroline and Dan Vaughan, are standing next to the car, wearing green floral leis. A sign on the car reads 'GT4 TEAMS' CHAMPIONS'.

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	PTS
1	Jamie Caroline/Dan Vaughan	TF Sport	Aston Martin Vantage (left)	170
2	Jordan Collard Patrik Matthiesen	HHC Motorsport	McLaren 570S	158.5
3	Patrick Kibble/Connor O'Brien	TF Sport	Aston Martin Vantage	152.5
4	Gus Bowers/Chris Wesemael	HHC Motorsport	McLaren 570S	120.5
5	Matt Cowley	Academy Motorsport	Ford Mustang	118.5
6	Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke	Century Motorsport	BMW M4	108.5

Advantage O'Brien and Kibble (#95) on the grid at Brands Hatch



Collard/Matthiesen McLaren versus Moore/Cowley Mustang

on a day when Caroline turfed Kibble into the Paddock Hill Bend gravel and copped a 40s penalty (although they were still classified sixth and seventh respectively). A lowly fourth would have given HHC the points needed for the title, yet still avoid a success pitstop penalty for the next round at Donington, which they won.

Likewise, Kibble and O'Brien could point to the second race at Oulton Park, where O'Brien was ambushed by Nick Jones's GT3 Bentley, as a costly moment. Had the race run green to the end, TF boss Tom Ferrier believes a 1-2 headed by Vaughan was a distinct possibility. But it would likely have meant a reversal in the order at the two-hour Donington race (where more points were on offer), dominated early on by Caroline while Kibble made heavy weather of clearing traffic, before a 15s success penalty dropped Vaughan behind O'Brien.

Without their Oulton and Brands misfortunes, Kibble and O'Brien would certainly have been closer than 13 points behind prior to Silverstone, where both cars were delayed by a 10s stop/go for crossing the pitlane red light – although Kibble hadn't actually committed the misdemeanour... A likely second instead turned into third; a 4.5-point swing that wouldn't have been enough for the title on its own, but another avoidable loss outside their control all the same. "Between those two cars, either one of them could have won the championship," says Ferrier. "They were both good enough to win it."

Of the rest, Euan Hankey and Mia Flewitt (Balfe McLaren) ran unopposed to the Pro-Am title and took a fortuitous win at Oulton, Academy's Mustang showed flashes but its title hopes petered away with Jordan Albert's sponsor woes, and the Speedworks Toyota was a magnet for trouble that hampered its obvious pace. ❧

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 GT4 DRIVERS



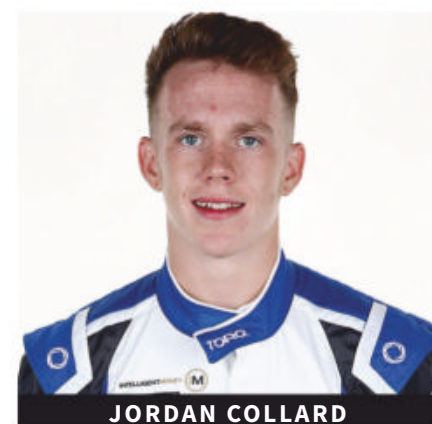
PATRICK KIBBLE

1 Not perfect – see Donington 2hr – but narrowly edges his team-mate given that he outqualified Caroline 3-2 in their sessions together, and lost the title through an accumulation of unfortunate issues not of his making. Unfairly penalised for a red-light violation at Silverstone, adding to woes of Oulton and Brands. Has just turned 18.



JAMIE CAROLINE

2 Major faux pas in taking off Kibble at Brands, but showed flair whenever conditions were poor – he gapped everyone in the Donington 2hr – and superb at starts, charging from fifth to first at Snetterton on lap one. Showed at Oulton he had sussed GT racing by leading pro driver Hankey.



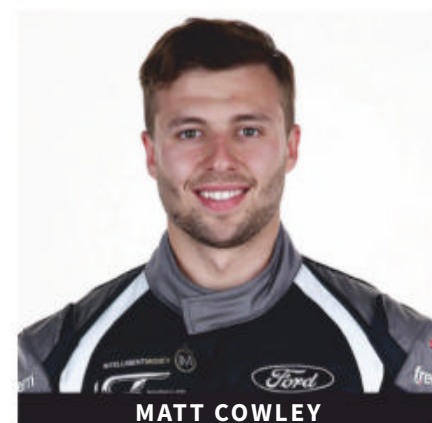
JORDAN COLLARD

3 Performance at Snetterton as convincing as anybody all season. Pole by over a second for race one, led the entirety of his stint, and charged from fourth to win race two. Equally impressive was soaking up pressure from Jordan Albert's much quicker Academy Mustang at Donington.



SAM SMELT

4 After anonymous 2019, quick out of the blocks at Oulton despite rideheight changes making the Supra feel more like a bus. Unlucky to only have one podium to show for a year where he was best of the wet-shod cars at Donington 1hr, led at Brands and topped the regular runners in qualifying at Silverstone.



MATT COWLEY

5 Just 1.5 points off the summit following Brands win, secured with bold move on Caroline at Hawthorn, and close second, despite 20s penalty, at Donington 3hr. But title chase collapsed in final two rounds without co-driver Albert. Spun out at Oulton and twice caught out in the wet at Snetterton.



FREDERICK SHOWS HIS CLASS

After a disastrous Brands Hatch weekend that firmly put him on the back foot, Kaylen Frederick bounced back to win the BRDC British F3 title with a masterclass

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  motorsport
IMAGES

The record books will show that Kaylen Frederick was the star of the season on his way to victory in the 2020 BRDC British Formula 3 Championship. The American, returning with Carlin for his sophomore season in the category, claimed more wins (nine), poles (eight) and fastest laps (12) than any other driver. Perhaps the most startling statistic of all is that he led 120 laps, while the next best was his main title rival Kush Maini, with just 36.

Yet as Frederick lined up on pole for the 24th and final race of the season at Silverstone, he still needed to finish the race to be sure of the title. He duly did that with an emphatic drive and victory, but the fact that the title went down to the dying moments of the campaign, despite his seeming dominance, belied the ups and downs of a turbulent 2020.

"I knew we were quick; it was the rest of the stuff we needed to get right," admits Frederick. "I haven't had this much up-front running in quite a long time. It's a different mentality going into a race starting from pole versus the middle of the field. Trying to adopt that mindset was the trickiest part."

While Frederick did win two races in 2019, his speed and performances were inconsistent, meaning he finished ninth in the standings while team-mate Clement Novalak won the title. Greater preparation and commitment in 2020, including the decision to live in the UK rather than commute to each race from the States, taken even before the coronavirus pandemic escalated, meant he started the season with a double victory at Oulton Park. He'd actually taken a hat-trick of wins on the

road, but his opening-race success was voided after a false start.

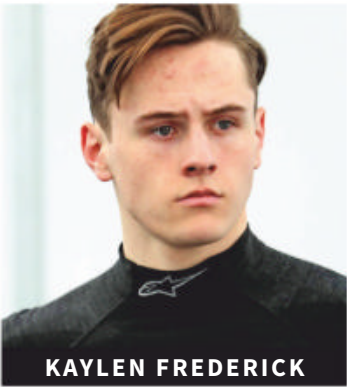
Even a mechanical problem at Donington Park, which cost him the chance of grabbing a brace of wins, failed to stop him increasing his points advantage over the weekend, and he headed into the third round of the season at Brands Hatch with a 29-point lead in the standings. But an innocuous error in qualifying, when he slid off the circuit at Druids on a damp track, would have far-reaching consequences.

As conditions improved throughout the session, Frederick found himself starting at the back of the grid for races one and three. Contact with Piers Prior in both those races (for which the pair were disqualified in the latter) and a best result of 11th all weekend meant his healthy lead in the standings had turned into a hefty deficit of 49 points.

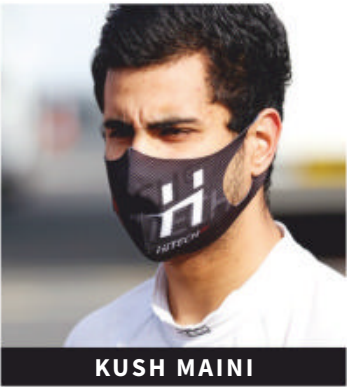
The man to benefit from Frederick's downturn was Maini, the Indian returning to British F3 after taking third in the standings in 2018 before moving on to the Formula Renault Eurocup last year. He joined Hitech GP for its maiden season in the category, with Maini only getting the call to compete in the opening round days before. With no firm commitment that he would see out the season, four podiums from the opening seven races was a steady if unspectacular start, and by the time of Maini's first win, in the third round at Brands, he had already launched himself to the top of the standings.

On the series' second of three visits to Donington, Maini set down a marker in the final race of the weekend by lunging up the inside of Frederick at the Old Hairpin on the opening lap before going on to take his second win of the season. With three events

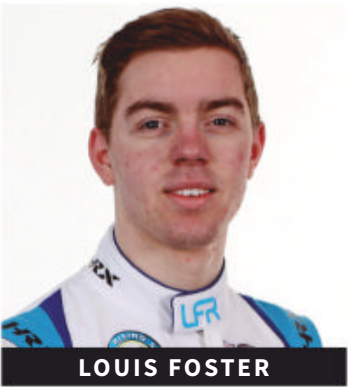
AUTOSPORT'S TOP 5 DRIVERS



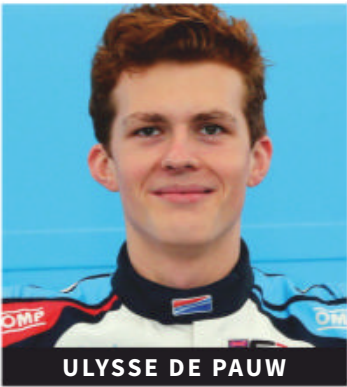
KAYLEN FREDERICK



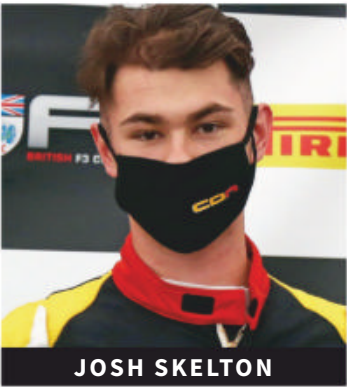
KUSH MAINI



LOUIS FOSTER



ULYSSE DE PAUW



JOSH SKELTON

1 On paper the class of the field, and but for his Brands Hatch nightmare would have secured the title much sooner. His double success at Silverstone with the title on the line and going wheel-to-wheel with Maini was Frederick at his best.

2 Was left rueing the UK's infamous autumn weather as he watched a 54-point lead slip away. Used his experience and knowledge to put himself in contention in the first place, but lacked that extra tenth of a second compared to his title rival when it mattered.

3 Didn't lack speed, bagging five poles across the season – second only to Frederick (eight). Was in his element in the wet and arguably should have scored a hat-trick of wins at Snetterton, but a poor start and unforced error in races one and four proved costly.

4 Made good on promise from last season and secured his first British F3 wins – a reversed-grid race at Donington and another at Snetterton. Small mistakes that had big consequences – such as being disqualified from going fractionally too fast past a yellow – cost him.

5 Just edges Oliver Clarke to the final top-five spot. A steady maiden season, with standout performances including a final-corner overtake on Maini for second at Donington, before following home CDR team-mate Ayrton Simmons for another second at Brands.



a sublime success in the wet at Snetterton left him just 21 points off the top spot. But a nightmare final two weekends put paid to any title hopes, and cost him third overall in the standings to Douglas Motorsport's Ulysse De Pauw. The Belgian recorded two wins as well as a further eight podiums and was left to lead the charge for Douglas after team-mate Kiern Jewiss withdrew mid-season. Jewiss, the 2018 British F4 champion and a McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist that year, finished fourth in the British F3

“A LACK OF WET RUNNING PRE-SEASON WOULD PROVE MAINI’S UNDOING ”

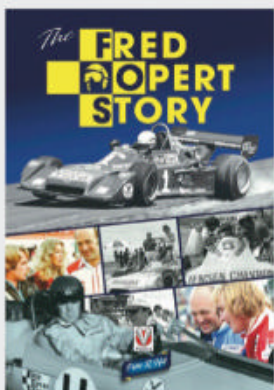
left and a 54-point lead in the standings, Maini was in the driving seat, but a lack of wet running pre-season would prove his and the team's undoing. “Hitech is one of the best teams I’ve worked with, but any team in the world if you don’t let them test in the wet in a new championship, the first time you’re driving in the wet in a race [you will struggle],” he says. At the Snetterton quadruple header, held mostly in atrocious conditions, Maini languished outside the top 10 nearly all weekend, and a win in the drying reversed-grid race was his and Hitech's last victory of the season. With Frederick scoring a win and two further podiums at Snetterton, the gap between the two title protagonists was reduced to just nine points. Frederick went on to score a brace of wins on the final visit to Donington, as a tyre gamble failed to pay off for Maini, meaning the championship lead swung back in the Floridian's favour with three races remaining. Frederick was in a class of his own on the Silverstone Grand Prix layout, lapping as much as one second quicker than his nearest challenger after firmly shutting the door on Maini at the start of the first race. And while the pair made contact several times in the second race, their wet-weather tyres quickly losing grip on a dry surface, Frederick made sure of the title in the final encounter. Heading into that final round, Louis Foster was still in contention. The British F4 graduate had made an immediate impact with Double R Racing by taking a double pole at the opening round at Oulton. A maiden British F3 victory followed next time out at Donington, before a reversed-grid win (again at Donington) and

standings in 2019, so hopes were high. He won the opening race of the season at Oulton Park – albeit only after Frederick was penalised for a jumped start post-race – but after four events he was sixth in the standings, and he parted ways with Douglas. Another alumnus from last season to return was Ayrton Simmons, who competed in one round apiece with Chris Dittmann Racing (with which he took two victories) and JHR Developments after starting the season in Euroformula Open. There were also reversed-grid race winners in the forms of Piers Prior (Lanan Racing), Nazim Azman (Carlin) and Benjamin Pederson (Double R). But the season belonged to Frederick, even if “I just made it a bit harder for ourselves” with his Brands faux pas. 🍷

BRDC BRITISH F3 TOP 6				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	WINS	PTS
1	Kaylen Frederick	Carlin	9	499
2	Kush Maini	Hitech GP	3	448
3	Ulysse De Pauw	Douglas Motorsport	2	392
4	Louis Foster	Double R Racing	3	388
5	Nazim Azman	Carlin	2	370
6	Josh Skelton	Chris Dittmann Racing	0	320



THE TALENT WHO NURTURED FUTURE CHAMPIONS



BOOK REVIEW
THE FRED OPERT STORY
 RRP £16.99

2016 was a pretty grizzly year for high-profile deaths. In the entertainment industry, cancer claimed the lives of Alan Rickman and David Bowie in January; the calendar ended with Carrie Fisher, her mother Debbie

Reynolds, and George Michael all departing too.

Motorsport sadly wasn't spared the casualties either, with the first 10 days of August marking a particular low. On 3 August, 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours victor and all-round ace Chris Amon died. Four days later, inaugural British Saloon Car champion Jack Sears passed away. Two days after that, Fred Opert was gone.

Famed American race team owner Opert had been in poor health – a combination of kidney problems, diabetes and having had open-heart surgery six years earlier. As Peter Hill writes in his latest book *The Fred Opert Story*, he had also “seriously damaged his feet while walking barefoot on hot asphalt in Florida; they had never healed”.

Despite his reduced mobility, Opert – who shared a Chevron-BMW GT (B4) with Peter Gethin and Roy Pike in the 1967 Daytona 24 Hours – had undergone rehabilitation and made plans to attend the Hungarian, German, United States, Mexican and Brazilian Grands Prix in 2016. His motivation was to see Nico Rosberg be crowned the Formula 1 World Champion. Alas, it was a feat he would never witness.

As the presence of forewords from Rosberg and his 1982 F1 title-winning father Keke in Hill's book attest, Opert had a major influence on their careers.

His friendship with Rosberg Sr is the one that stands out, stretching beyond the conventional driver-and-team-owner relationship. So much so, he was willing to ‘break his golden rule’ and spend his own money in an effort to nurture the talent of the young Finn.

The former motor trader guided Rosberg's success at Formula 2 level and in Formula Atlantic in North America. As Marcus Pye wrote in the Autosport obituary of Opert, he was “arguably the catalyst of Keke Rosberg's rise to become Formula 1 World Champion”.

Hill's prose throughout the relatively few 150 pages is straightforward and easy to read; there's little in the way of embellishment. But extensive research is evident – he includes adverts first printed in *New York Magazine* and *Popular Mechanics* that sell the idea of enlisting in the Fred Opert Motor Racing School.

But the brevity of the book does have its obvious downsides. There are little more than two pages dedicated to Opert's albeit short stint as team manager for the ATS F1 team in 1979.

Rosberg, splitting his time between Walter Wolf Racing in F1 and Paul Newman and Bill Freeman's Can-Am squad, recommended Opert as a solution for ATS, which at the time was a “f**ked up team and everything's going bad”, according to Opert. But the poor relationship with team founder Gunter Schmid put paid to reviving its fortunes.

When Schmid withdrew racer Hans-Joachim Stuck's Cosworth DFV-powered D2 – which borrowed parts for its ground-effect skirts from Canadian snowmobile



Opert briefly took charge of
ATS team in 1979, thanks to
Rosberg's recommendation



Opert shared Elva Courier
Mk4 with William McKemie
in 1966 Sebring 12 Hours

runners – from that year's French GP, Opert resigned. A fascinating chapter in Opert's life, but one that's covered in only a few hundred words.

Autosport is content to call this a one-off rather than a recurring theme throughout the title, but it does mean that reading will be broken up by internet searches in a bid to garner more information – although that is a hard task as there's not an abundance of Opert material online... Perhaps that's why it's such a concise chapter.

Let's put it down to Opert's career being so expansive that some elements have had to make way for there to be more detail on others.

That aside, there are few who won't learn a great deal from *The Fred Opert Story*, and how a speeding ticket issued in 1963 paved the way for a race team that would run the likes of Alan Jones, Alain Prost, Bobby Rahal, Brian Redman and many more besides.

Peppered throughout with some excellent archive imagery – Autosport only counts one snap where Opert isn't smiling, he's instead grimacing over an ATS – this is a very worthy release on a figure that many who enjoyed motorsport in the 1970s will have heard of, but perhaps won't have known all that much about.

Hill has successfully changed that, no mean feat in so few pages, and for that *The Fred Opert Story* is well worth adding to the bookshelf.

MATT KEW

FINISHING STRAIGHT



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



Fernando Alonso has ramped up preparations ahead of his Formula 1 return with Renault by testing the team's 2018 challenger. But for a two-time champion, is he really going to get something out of these recent runs, or is he just wasting his time? **Go to bit.ly/AlonsoTest**

autosport.com/podcast



Two lost opportunities for George Russell led to Sergio Perez taking to the top step of the Formula 1 podium for the first time, which in turn followed costly crashes for Charles Leclerc and Max Verstappen... The Autosport team reviews one of the best races of the year.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

**Formula 1 World Championship
Round 17/17**

Yas Marina, United Arab Emirates

13 December

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1305

TV Highlights Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1700, Channel 4, Sun 1730

Brazilian Stock Cars

Round 8/8

Interlagos, Brazil

13 December

Intercontinental GT Challenge

Round 4/4

Kyalami, South Africa

12 December

Livestream on Motorsport.tv,
Thurs 1530, Fri 0850, 1245, 1425,
Sat 0945

UK MOTORSPORT

Donington Park 750MC*

12-13 December

5Club Mazdas, BMW Car Club, Clio
182s, Club Enduro, Hot Hatch, Locost,
MR2s, Roadsports, Type-R Trophy

***Behind closed doors**





FINISHING STRAIGHT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Jim Clark (Lotus-Climax 33) is in the eye of a snapper storm awaiting the start of the 1965 Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort. Clark had qualified in second place, lining up on the front row alongside polesitter Graham Hill (BRM P261) and the Honda RA272 of Richie Ginther. All three drivers had a crack at leading the race, although the balance was somewhat skewed in Clark's favour. Ginther erupted off the line to head the field for the first couple of laps before Hill took over for the next three, then Clark established control until the finish on lap 80. Jackie Stewart (BRM P261) was second and Dan Gurney (Brabham-Climax BT11) third, while Hill and Ginther crossed the line fourth and sixth respectively.



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Villeneuve gets the support of Autosport readers

11 December 1997

Autosport readers voted Jacques Villeneuve the International Racing Driver of the Year this week in 1997. The Williams ace had become world champion at the end of October, but some mediocre performances by the Canadian and star drives from Ferrari's Michael Schumacher created a title showdown at the Jerez finale. There, Schumacher had turned in on Villeneuve but, interestingly, Autosport said that the voting had been close even before that.

"It may surprise some that readers should vote Villeneuve as the International Racing Driver of the Year, given some of the performances that Schumacher produced in the Ferrari F310B," we wrote. "But the voting told a very interesting story. Even before the European Grand Prix, the two were neck and neck. That move by Schumacher seemed to so offend you that Villeneuve moved ahead in the voting by around three to one."

Murray Walker was on hand to present Villeneuve with his trophy

at the Grosvenor House Hotel. Other winners included Villeneuve's Williams FW19, the Subaru Impreza 555 WRC 97, Mark Blundell and Alain Menu, while Colin McRae and Tommi Makinen shared the International Rally Driver Award – the first dead-heat in the history of the event. Future GT team boss Andrew Kirkaldy won the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award, beating Matt Davies, Marc Hynes, Leighton Walker, Dan Wheldon and Adam Wilcox.

The 11 December issue also featured interviews with Land Speed Record holder Andy Green and F1's newest race winner Mika Hakkinen, an assessment of the increasing speeds of CART Indycars on superspeedways, and a look at the state of GT racing following the influx of factory efforts in the 1997 FIA GT Championship.

The winners of the **2020 Autosport Awards** will be announced soon. Keep your eye on [autosport.com](https://www.autosport.com) and read the 31 December issue of the magazine.



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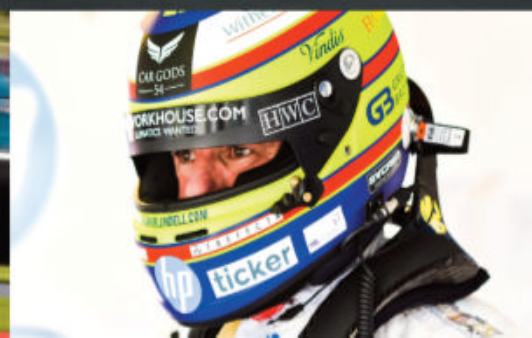
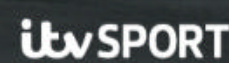


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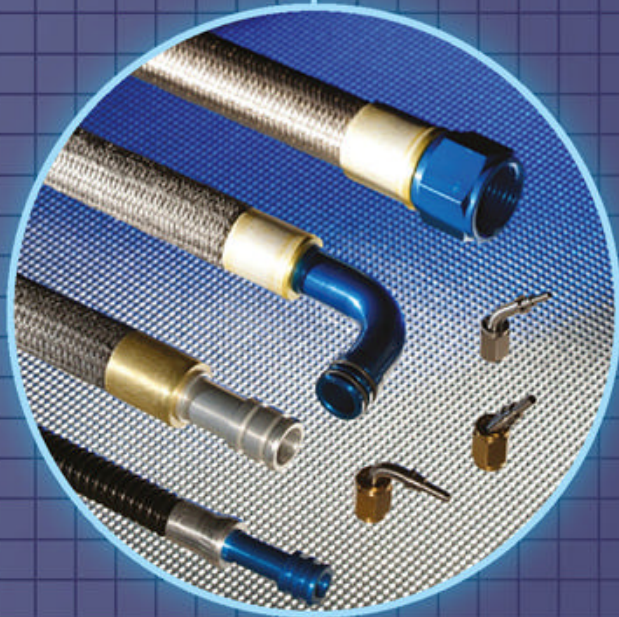


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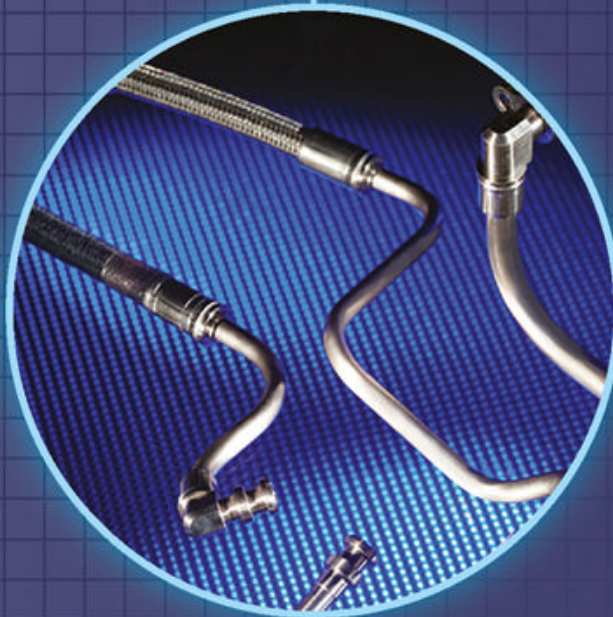
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