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AUTOSPORT

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4 FEBRUARY 2021

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CARLOS SAINZ JR

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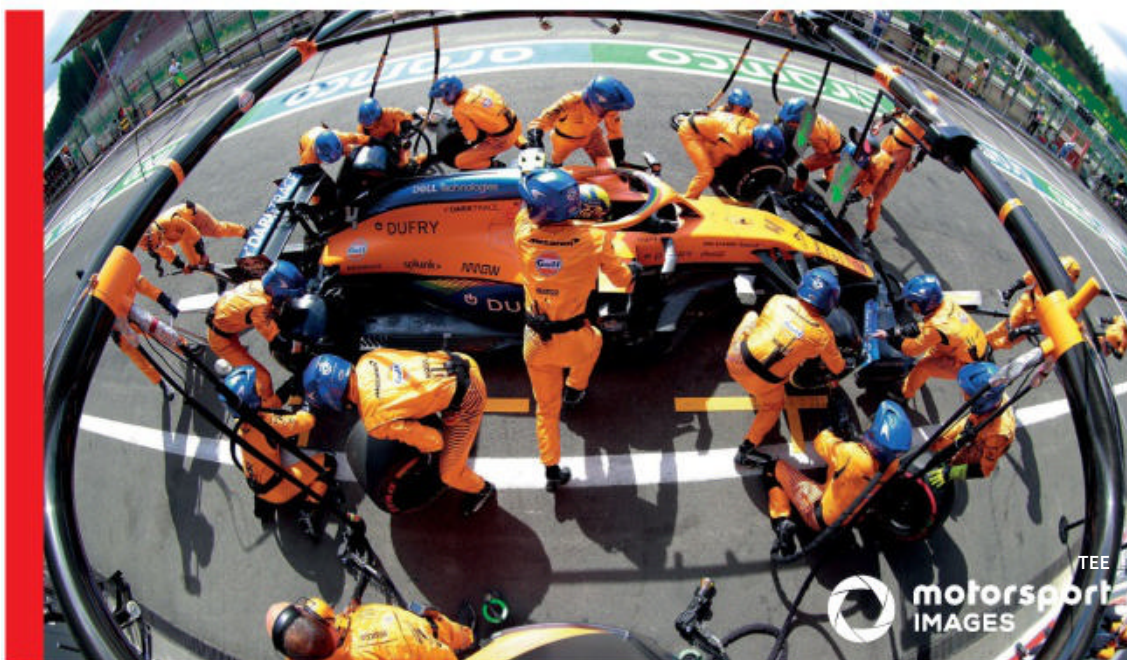
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Why the team in orange has stopped building lemons

Before he went off-line for a well-earned break this week, our Chief Editor Kevin Turner picked out the top five cars produced by McLaren over its 55-year history in Formula 1 (p29). Not a single one was from the 21st century. While that doesn't *quite* tell you all you need to know about the team's recent plight (the 2007-08 weaponry, for example, was pretty handy), it is eye-opening. The nadir, of course, came in the mid-to-late 2010s, but McLaren's subsequent change of management and drivers has put it firmly back on an upward trajectory. And now, with the overnight disappearance of financial worries, a new supply of the Mercedes engines it should never have got rid of, and Daniel Ricciardo on board to partner Lando Norris, things could get better still from 2021. Luke Smith delves into this on p16.

Continuing the McLaren theme, our IndyCar guru David Malsher-Lopez investigates the tie-up with the team formerly known as Schmidt Peterson (p32), while Formula E correspondent Matt Kew charges himself up to assess its potential move into the electric arena (p30).

That's not all. Exciting new AlphaTauri F1 prospect Yuki Tsunoda, and those who have worked with him, get interviewed by, erm, yours truly on p38. And the Daytona 24 Hours wouldn't be the Daytona 24 Hours without a Gary Watkins Autosport report. Turn to p46 for his account of a thriller.



MS

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NEXT WEEK
11 FEBRUARY

Three-pointed obstacles
How 2021's changes
could well trip up
Mercedes in F1



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Motorsport Images/Steven Tee

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F1'S POOR RECORD ON COVID-19 REACHES 30%

FORMULA 1

When Pierre Gasly last week became the sixth of the current Formula 1 drivers to test positive for COVID-19, it brought the figure up to 30% of the grid and raised the question: why are they so susceptible?

Sergio Perez, Lance Stroll and Lewis Hamilton all missed races in 2020 after contracting the disease. And Gasly's diagnosis means he becomes the third driver within three weeks – following Charles Leclerc and Lando Norris – to catch COVID-19 while in Dubai.

AlphaTauri driver Gasly has spent much of the winter at his apartment in Dubai while also completing an off-season training camp to prepare for the new campaign. The Italian Grand Prix winner confirmed via social media that he was “currently self-isolating and following the protocols set by the local health authorities. I'm feeling OK, and will continue to follow my training plan from home while I remain in isolation.”

The regular testing required for races is not in place during the off-season, giving the paddock some respite from uncomfortable nasal rummages. Tightening restrictions around the world have meant there is still a need to remain vigilant, particularly as new, more transmissible strains begin to emerge.

It's a risk the drivers were conscious of, but it has not stopped many of them travelling, raising questions about the necessity of their trips. Norris and Leclerc were both subjected to questions about their decisions to travel to Dubai. Norris's McLaren team said he was there for a training camp, but was having a short holiday beforehand.

Because Gasly has an apartment in Dubai, he is technically at home, but he has been photographed

interacting with people in recent weeks while not wearing a mask or socially distancing.

As countries began to instigate lockdowns again towards the end of last year, Dubai's low number of COVID-19 cases and lack of restrictions beyond wearing a face mask made it a popular and relatively easy location to travel to. Unsurprisingly, cases have now surged – a record daily high of 3657 was reported in the UAE on 30 January – prompting the UK government to place the country on the ‘red list’, banning travel.

This F1 off-season is perhaps the most needed in recent history. The run of 17 races in just over five months stretched the entire paddock, making it important for everyone to get some time off. The drivers had the freedoms they would normally enjoy, such as travelling and taking breaks during the season, snatched away because of the pandemic.

“You feel like you're a bit in a cage, where you don't have the freedom to really do and see the people you want,” Gasly told Autosport before the end of the season. “I'm clearly going to take the opportunity over the off-season to do it, because who knows what is going to happen next year?”

As important as that may have been to drivers, they may enter the new season with a compromised winter training programme as a result of their positive tests.

There is also the wider picture to consider. Newly appointed F1 CEO and president Stefano Domenicali recently spoke about the need for drivers to be ambassadors for the series off-track. In the current global climate, the raft of positive cases seems only to send out the wrong message from F1's most visible figures.

LUKE SMITH

Adrian Campos

1960-2021

OBITUARY

An enthusiastic FIA F2/F3 team owner and ex-Minardi Formula 1 driver, Adrian Campos died last week of “sudden coronary disease”. He was 60.

Born in Valencia in 1960, Campos competed with radio-controlled model cars before moving into racing proper in Spain, originally on motorcycles. After switching to cars he quickly graduated to Formula 3, competing in the European series in 1983, and scoring his first points the following year.

In 1985 he focused on German F3, in which he finished third behind Volker Weidler and Kris Nissen. The following year he made the full-time jump to F3000 with Peter Gethin Racing. In a packed field, he failed to qualify his March several times, and his best result was seventh in his home race at Jarama, after a late switch to Lola Motorsport.

Despite his low-key F3000 season, Campos found the backing to jump into F1 with Minardi in 1987 as team-mate to Alessandro Nannini. He had a difficult time with the unreliable Motor Moderni-powered car, and his only classified finish was 14th at Jerez.

He stayed with the team as it switched to Cosworth power for 1988, joined by compatriot Luis Perez Sala. He started the first two races but, after three non-qualifications in what was by then a packed entry list, he left the team and was replaced by Pierluigi Martini.

Later, Campos switched his focus to touring cars, winning the Spanish title in 1994 with an Alfa Romeo. In 1997 he raced a Ferrari 333SP and made his only Le Mans 24 Hours start, before retiring from active driving to form his own team.

Focusing initially on Spain's growing Euro Open by Nissan series, Campos



Campos celebrates his driver Leonardo Pulcini's GP3 win at Sochi in 2018

MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Motorsport won the title with Marc Gene in 1998, Fernando Alonso in 1999 and Antonio Garcia in 2000. In 2005 the team entered the new GP2 under the Campos Grand Prix name. After two difficult years, the squad made a big step in 2007, powering Giorgio Pantano to third in the series. The following year, Lucas di Grassi earned third and, with support from Vitaly Petrov, Campos won the teams' title.

Campos then took the bold decision to move into F1, and his GP2 team found new ownership under Alejandro Agag. Having gained an F1 entry as Campos Grand Prix, he began to prepare for the 2010 season, but financial problems led to a change of owner and the team morphed into HRT before its first race.

Campos Racing moved into Spanish-

based European F3 Open, but expanded into World Touring Cars in 2013, first with SEAT and then Chevrolet. The Campos name returned to GP2 in 2014, with Alexander Rossi among the drivers, before adding a GP3 squad in 2015.

Campos also became involved in Agag's new Formula E, partnering the NEXTEV TCR team and winning the first title in 2014-15 with Nelson Piquet Jr, before hooking up with Mahindra.

As the GP2 Series became F2 in 2017, Campos had a difficult time, when a revolving door of drivers led to it giving Lando Norris his first outing in the category in the Abu Dhabi finale. The new F2 car was introduced in 2018, before in 2019 the team scored three wins with Jack Aitken, who finished fifth in the championship.

Many former drivers and associates were quick to pay tribute. “One of the saddest days for the motorsport family,” said Alonso. “Thank you for dreaming about Formula 1. Thank you for believing in young people. Thank you and rest in peace.”

His team said: “Today is the saddest day in the history of Campos Racing. Our president and founder, Adrian Campos Suner, has left us. His heart stopped beating, but his memory will be the engine that will keep us all fighting to continue his legacy... Rest in peace.”

ADAM COOPER



At the wheel of the unreliable Minardi-Motori Moderni in 1987

MOTORSPORT IMAGES



ASTON MARTIN

At last: Westbrook gets Le Mans prototype break

WEC

Former Porsche, Chevrolet and Ford factory GT star Richard Westbrook will race the new Glickenhaus Le Mans Hypercar in this year's World Endurance Championship. The Briton was one of five names announced for the team's pair of Pipo-engined 007LMs last week, bringing its roster to seven drivers.

It will be the first time that Westbrook has raced a Le Mans-rules prototype. His previous experience in pure-bred sportscars came in the Daytona Prototype ranks in Grand-Am and then the unified IMSA series, which included a five-year stint as a factory Chevrolet driver in 2011-15.

"I loved racing the DPs and my background is single-seaters, so I've always wanted to have a go in the top class at the Le Mans 24 Hours," he said. "Whatever class you are in you want to win, but going for overall victory will give it a different dimension."

Westbrook revealed that he was in discussions with Glickenhaus about the LMH project when he was brought into its line-up for last September's Nurburgring 24 Hours. "I made contact a while ago and as a result of that I got the call for the 'Ring at the last moment after my original drive fell through," he explained. "Knowing what they did with a new car [the SCG004c] there, I'm optimistic about the LMH programme."

Westbrook is part of a line-up boasting extensive prototype experience. Romain Dumas, Pipo Derani, Olivier Pla and Franck Mailleux were named last week, while Ryan Briscoe and Gustavo Menezes were

confirmed on the publication of the WEC entry list the previous week. French racer Mailleux has been involved in the Glickenhaus marque's Nurburgring 24 Hours campaigns since 2017. He was formerly an LMP2 regular and raced P1 machinery for Signatech in the Le Mans Series in 2009-10.

Marque founder Jim Glickenhaus claimed that his driver line-up proved how serious his team is. "We punch well above our weight class," he said.

Luca Ciarretti, team manager of the Italian Podium Advanced Technologies organisation masterminding the Glickenhaus programme, added: "We wanted fast and experienced drivers and we chose them for the value they offer our programme."

Glickenhaus has yet to reveal the driver combinations for its two cars and if one of the seven will act as a reserve. A decision on the two crews is expected to follow initial testing, scheduled to begin this month.

The team has confirmed that it will be on the grid for the new opening race of the season at the Algarve Circuit on 4 April, which has replaced the Sebring round planned for 19 March. Glickenhaus had decided to skip the US race to focus on testing in Europe.

The Glickenhaus announcement means that the driver crews across the five cars in the Hypercar class are complete. The Signatech Alpine team had earlier named former Toyota driver Nicolas Lapierre and Matthieu Vaxiviere alongside Andre Negrao for its grandfathered ORECA-Gibson, which formerly raced as the Rebellion R-13. Lapierre raced for Signatech in LMP2 in 2016-19.

GARY WATKINS

Acura commits to LMDh future

IMSA SPORTSCAR

Acura has laid its cards on the table and committed to building an LMDh prototype for the 2023 season. The Honda sub-marque has joined Audi and Porsche in declaring its hand, a significant move because it has become the first of the manufacturers currently racing in the IMSA SportsCar Championship's top division to sign up.

The commitment from Acura, which joined the existing Daytona Prototype international ranks in 2018, came just days before Wayne Taylor Racing notched up a first IMSA enduro victory for the marque at Daytona last week. The announcement covers only the IMSA series, because Acura is not a global brand and is centred on North America, whereas Audi and Porsche have revealed their intention to race in the World Endurance Championship as well as IMSA.

A perfunctory statement said: "Acura Motorsports today confirmed it will continue to compete in the top category of the IMSA SportsCar Championship in 2023 under the new LMDh format."

It revealed no other details of its new programme, but all indications are that it will retain its relationship with French constructor ORECA. Acura's ARX-05 DPi car is based on the ORECA 07 LMP2, and it is expected that its LMDh hybrid will be developed out of the Paul Ricard-based organisation's next-generation P2 due to come on stream in 2023.

The car will be eligible for the Le Mans 24 Hours and the WEC, of course. That's the whole point of LMDh. Whether Acura would support teams wanting to take its machinery from North America to France is unclear at this stage. But WTR boss Wayne Taylor made his aspirations to go to Le Mans clear in Autosport last week.

GARY WATKINS



LEVITT/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Ticktum bags F2 Carlin seat

FORMULA 2

Two-time Macau Grand Prix victor and 2017 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Dan Ticktum has switched to Carlin for his second season in FIA Formula 2.

Ticktum will join Red Bull Junior Jehan Daruvala in the line-up, after testing with Carlin in December's post-season test in Bahrain. While he has never driven a full campaign with the Hampshire squad, they have a relationship dating back to his one-off Formula 3 European Championship debut with Carlin in the 2016 finale at Hockenheim, while he returned to the team for the 2019 Macau Grand Prix.

"We've known Dan for a long time — he's a friend of the team anyway," team boss Trevor Carlin told Autosport after the Bahrain test. "We know his ups and downs and we feel we can give him some stability and some trust, because we really believe in him."

"Dan is a very very good racer, and because of that this could be a good year for him, because effectively we've got two reversed-grid races each weekend. I'm fairly confident that with those two [Daruvala and Ticktum] we would have a very good line-up." Meanwhile, Ticktum's fellow Williams F1 protege Roy Nissany has secured the remaining seat at DAMS — the team



FORMULAMOTORSPORT LIMITED

Ticktum raced with in 2020 — alongside Ferrari junior Marcus Armstrong.

CORREA MAKES SHOCK RETURN IN F3

Juan Manuel Correa, who sustained serious injuries in the Spa 2019 Formula 2 accident in which Anthoine Hubert was killed, is to make a heroic return to the FIA Formula 3 Championship with ART Grand Prix.

Correa, who underwent multiple surgeries to prevent leg amputation, said: "F3 is a transition year, my dream is still to reach F1 and this is the first step. I won't put

pressure on myself, I will do my best, I will do what I love and that's already a victory."

With Correa lining up at ART alongside Frederik Vesti and Alexander Smolyar, that leaves unresolved the destinations of reigning Formula Renault Eurocup champion Victor Martins, who is managed by ART boss Sebastien Philippe, plus FRE runner-up and Renault F1 Junior Caio Collet, who each took part in post-season testing with the team. Autosport understands that both are in the frame for MP Motorsport.

MARCUS SIMMONS

JEP



Turkington set for 14th WSR season

BTCC

Four-time British Touring Car champion Colin Turkington will remain with the West Surrey Racing-run BMW squad in 2021.

Turkington, who starts his 14th season in the WSR fold, will spearhead a three-car line-up of BMW 330i M Sports. Tom Oliphant is tipped to stay on in the second car, while Stephen Jelley has been strongly linked with a return to WSR.

WSR retains its longstanding

tie-up with BMW UK, whose support enables it, among other things, to employ Turkington.

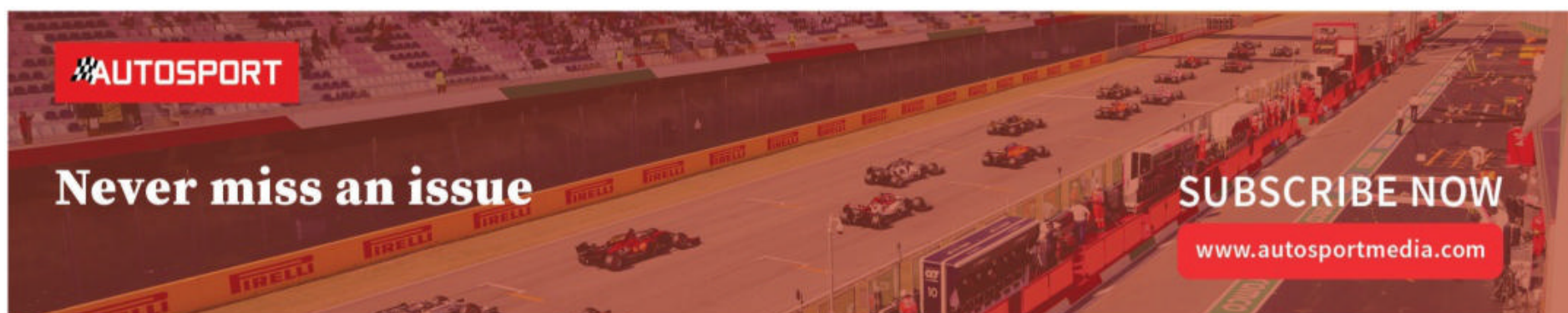
"What we achieved together last season was phenomenal," said Turkington, who lost the title battle to Ash Sutton in the final race. "It didn't have the fairytale ending we all wanted, but believe it or not, you can learn a great deal from defeat, so I'm convinced I will bring an even better package to the table."

The Motorbase Performance/AmD Ford Focus liaison has

also confirmed the trio who will join Jake Hill for 2021.

Two-time race winner Ollie Jackson and Andy Neate remain aboard the Fords, with Jackson shuffling across to AmD's MB Motorsport line-up. Sam Osborne, whose father Pete is the new joint owner of Motorbase along with AmD chief Shaun Hollamby, joins Neate in the Motorbase squad after racing an AmD Honda alongside Hill last season.

MARCUS SIMMONS



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P46 DAYTONA REPORT

Mercedes topped 19-strong
GTD class at last weekend's
Daytona 24 Hours



GALSTAD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

GTE could be doomed as IMSA drops class

IMSA SPORTSCAR

It could be the final nail in the coffin for the GTE class. IMSA has announced that for next season it will drop the GT Le Mans class based on the World Endurance Championship category in favour of a GT Daytona Pro division for GT3 machinery.

The move, which coincides with the introduction of new GT3 rules, follows a rapid decline in manufacturer participation and grid size in professional GTE racing on either side of the Atlantic since the WEC hit a five-marque high in 2018-19. Ford and BMW quit the series at the end of the so-called superseason and Aston Martin

withdrew after 2019-20. IMSA has lost Ford and Porsche, while BMW has slimmed its programme to the four long-distance races.

That has left Chevrolet with Corvette Racing and the works-assisted WeatherTech Porsche as the only full-season GTLM entries in North America. IMSA had little alternative but to look beyond GTE for the future of its premier GT division.

Where the decision leaves Chevrolet, which has raced at the Le Mans 24 Hours with its line of Corvette GT racers every year since 2000 bar last season, is unclear. Parent company General Motors has said that it is reviewing its programmes and evaluating both GT3 and LMDh.

The Automobile Club de l'Ouest, the WEC promoter and Le Mans organiser, has committed to GTE through to the end of 2022, though it may be forced to review that date following IMSA's announcement and Aston's withdrawal from the Pro ranks.

GTE Am remains in good health. The entry is up for the 2021 WEC and Porsche has sold 10 of its 911 RSRs for the new season. But there are two questions that the ACO has to answer. Does it need a professional GT division if manufacturers continue to sign up to race lookalikes via Le Mans Hypercar and LMDh? And does GTE Am have a future without a pro division?

GARY WATKINS

Autosport International set for 2022 return

ASI

Autosport International will burst back into life in 2022 after a one-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The traditional Birmingham NEC extravaganza will take place on 13-16 January 2022, with trade-only days on the first two days (Thursday and Friday) and public admission at the weekend. The popular

Autosport Stage and Live Action Arena will return.

ASI operations director Mandy Cox said: "For over 30 years, January has been the time when over 90,000 fans and trade professionals descend on Autosport International. Clearly, 2021 is a very different situation with lockdown three, but we are focused on making the 2022 event a fantastic bounceback celebration of

everything that is great about our international industry and the sport we love."

Meanwhile, trade registration is now open for the 2021 Autosport International Connect, a digital networking event for motorsport industry professionals, which takes place on 10-11 March.

Tickets for ASI will go on sale later this year.





Vallelunga to trump Valencia?

FORMULA E

Formula E will race on a bona fide permanent circuit for the first time in 2021, although it's a battle between Vallelunga and Valencia to see which venue gets to host a little bit of history.

The electric championship has announced the next batch of six races that, subject to FIA approval, will bolster its heavily disrupted calendar for the forthcoming season. Monaco, Marrakech and a double-header event in Santiago all return to the fold as expected, meaning it's the April dates that pique interest.

Following the already confirmed two Saudi Arabia night races, Rome is set for a comeback on 10 April, when the DS Techeetah, Nissan e.dams and Dragon Penske Autosport teams will introduce their new powertrains. But Vallelunga has been placed on standby should a city-centre race prove unviable – although with the locations separated by only 20 miles, any changes to the current situation could force FE to lose both in one fell swoop.

It's therefore likely that Valencia's Circuit Ricardo Tormo, site of FE pre-season testing for the past four years, will host FE's first race on a permanent track, since

Marrakech only counts as a temporary course and the Mexico City layout is heavily altered from the grand prix configuration.

Confirmation of a final batch of races is expected in the spring. It is understood that FE is in talks to restore Sanya, New York and Berlin to the line-up, while the London ExCeL Centre and Seoul could finally make their debuts. The Paris E-Prix, meanwhile, is benched until next season.

FE co-founder Alberto Longo told Autosport that he is targeting a record-breaking 15 races for 2021, surpassing the 13-race 2018-19 campaign, and that some events will be open to the fans. "We have a very aggressive, optimistic target to do 15 races during this season," he said. "This is the season when we will be delivering more races in our history."

"The races that are on the calendar are because we are confident on having the public [on site]. This is a key factor and key decision element for us. Obviously, we don't have the confirmation of hosting the public in any of these events until it gets very close to the date. But in principle, they have all agreed that with all the COVID measures we will put in place, they will love us to have the public."

MATT KEW AND SVEN HAIDINGER

IN THE HEADLINES

ALESI IS OFF TO JAPAN

Giuliano Alesi is to step down to F3 level this season with a switch to Japan's Super Formula Lights, and has left the Ferrari Driver Academy. Alesi, who is half-Japanese, will drive for top team TOM'S, with Toyota proteges Kazuto Kotaka (staying on for another year in SFL) and Hibiki Taira (the reigning F4 champion) expected to join him. Alesi will also drive in Super GT's GT300 class with Toyota Team Thailand alongside Sean Walkinshaw.

JONES BACK IN INDYCAR

Anglo-Emirati Ed Jones will return to IndyCar this season after a one-year break, replacing the NASCAR-bound Santino Ferrucci at Dale Coyne Racing. Another to make a full-time return to the series is James Hinchcliffe. The six-time race winner takes the Andretti Autosport seat formerly occupied by Zach Veach.

LMP3 JOINS THE GAMES

The LMP3 class will join the Olympic-style Motorsport Games set for Paul Ricard in October. The Automobile Club de l'Ouest's entry-level prototype category is one of three new disciplines added to the Games on 22-24 October, bringing the tally to 18. The ACO will help put together the grid for the two-hour, two-driver race.

ALBON FERRARI CONFIRMED

Red Bull Formula 1 reserve Alex Albon's DTM programme will be in an AF Corse Ferrari, as predicted by Autosport. Super Formula king and Formula E newcomer Nick Cassidy will fill in where Albon's F1 commitments take precedence, while Liam Lawson dovetails a full season of DTM in the sister car with his Formula 2 activities.



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Peak practice

Last-lap lead changes are rare in Formula 1, but recalling such moments of peak drama in motorsport is just what we need in a time of crisis

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

People love motorsport for plenty of reasons. For many, its ability to deliver the unexpected is what keeps them coming back. It's the cliché of all sport: unscripted drama.

The end of the 2021 Daytona 24 Hours had this on full display, with Renger van der Zande closely pursuing Filipe Albuquerque as the endurance event entered its final minutes. A puncture brought van der Zande's chase to a devastating close, preventing a very late attack or even a final-lap pass.

That last scenario is a rare thing in Formula 1. Of the 1035 races held so far in the world championship, only 26 times has a lead change occurred on the final tour, bringing a race to the ultimate last-gasp conclusion (although two of these include red-flagged races — the chaotic 2003 Brazilian Grand Prix and the tragic 1975 Spanish GP). That works out as just 2.51% of all world championship F1 races since Silverstone 1950 having such an ending — and these are detailed superbly in Roger Smith's (see p13) reference book *Formula 1 All the Races: The First 1000*, which gives a rating to every F1 race up to the 2019 Chinese GP.

For this writer, witnessing the end of the 2019 Mexico City E-Prix stands as the most memorable example of this occurrence. There, Audi driver Lucas di Grassi triumphed after seizing the lead metres from the finish line as Pascal Wehrlein's Mahindra-run car hit 0% usable energy and suddenly slowed.

“The late tyre blowouts suddenly enlivened an otherwise turgid event”

It harked back to some of F1's final-lap thrilling climaxes, such as the 1959 US GP. This was the second F1 example of a last-lap lead twist (the first was the 1954 French GP). At Sebring, Bruce McLaren claimed a sensational victory after Cooper team-mate Jack Brabham ran out of fuel, that season's newly crowned champion eventually pushing his car over the finish line in fourth. To add to the drama, McLaren's margin of victory was just 0.6 seconds over the Rob Walker Cooper of a charging Maurice Trintignant.

The 1968 Belgian, 1970 British, 1977 French and 1978 South African GPs are further F1 examples of drivers losing the lead at the death with no fuel. Five more races ended in a late switch due to reliability intervention, but such events are altogether less prevalent in modern F1. Five others got a late winner through a staged finish, including Juan Manuel Fangio's formation triumph with Mercedes

team-mate Karl Kling at Reims in 1954. But a 'genuine' pass for the lead creates a different kind of climaxing drama.

The first of eight cases in F1's history, which can also be split into five examples of a battling overtake, and three of the leader at the start of the final lap losing first place through a particular error (although the 2005 European GP was rather more than a driving slip), was the 1961 French GP. The 1982 San Marino GP will be forever remembered thanks to the rancour that followed Didier Pironi ignoring Ferrari orders and overtaking Gilles Villeneuve, who then died in a shocking accident at the next GP at Zolder and is therefore categorised differently by Smith under 'duplicity'.

But, although the four most recent examples of the last-lap-overtake phenomenon had 'genuine' battle passes or a leader succumbing to pressure (think Sebastian Vettel at the 2011 Canadian GP), they have become even rarer. Up to the 1971 Italian GP, which served as the most recent example until the 2005 Nurburgring race (we appreciate it's a stretch to call this instance a pass/mistake given Kimi Raikkonen's dramatic retirement), the percentage of finishes featuring a last-lap overtake was 1.94%. But between then and the 2020 finale it is 0.48%.

The most recent F1 race with a 'genuine' pass for the lead on the closing lap was the 2016 Austrian GP, where Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton collided, and Hamilton scooped the win. Since then, the closest F1 has come to a repeat was the 2017 race at the Red Bull Ring, where Max Verstappen battled past Charles Leclerc three laps from home (and the post-race-penalty shenanigans at Montreal 2018 doesn't count).

The season just gone featured nothing so thrilling in terms of late drama. Only twice — at the Austrian (where Hamilton had a five-second penalty still to be factored in) and Italian GPs — was there a gap under a second between the leaders. But the British GP was certainly memorable, even without a last-lap lead change.

The late tyre blowouts suddenly enlivened an otherwise turgid event, and the drama of that final lap at Silverstone was palpable. That feeling, which the unexpected releases so wonderfully, demonstrates what sport can do to those who love it. And right now, with the global situation so bleak, that is something worth recalling and holding on to — escapism at its finest.

The last-lap lead change, not created artificially, plays into the 'peak-end theory', where an experience is judged mainly on the sensation of its peak. The 2020 British GP 'peaked' on that final lap. It was an awful race overall, but the last lap, and Hamilton's remarkable win, will be what is ultimately remembered.

The peak-end sensation of a last-lap lead change of course doesn't mean a race has automatically been a classic. But remembering just how incredible motorsport circumstances can be might be really helpful right now. 🍀



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A new proposal for spicing up F1

Is it possible to make a grand prix weekend more exciting without compromising the essential DNA of Formula 1? The 'split-grid' qualifying model aims to do just that

ROGER SMITH

Although the 2020 Formula 1 season had its moments, it was a one-sided affair. Bearing in mind the outstanding effort by F1 to get the show on the road, and the relief and delight that any racing was at all possible, it would seem churlish to criticise the season. Yet it is likely we are in for another dose of the same this year, over (perhaps) 23 races rather than 17.

Last September, in the wake of Pierre Gasly's Monza miracle, Ross Brawn resurrected the old chestnut of reversed grids, proposed within the context of some experimentation with different formats in the closing races of the season once the championship chase was over. Toto Wolff, likening the idea to WWE or reality shows, killed the debate in its tracks. And many of the drivers voiced opposition too.

It's easy to have sympathy with both sides. Reversed grids, with Saturday qualifying for pole ditched and replaced with a sprint race to decide the Sunday starting grid, flies in the face of F1's DNA. But Brawn is right to push for an openness to experimentation that could prove helpful in the longer-term evolution of the spectacle that is F1, not just on Saturday and race day, but in raising the razzmatazz and commercial value of Friday too.

As implied by the call for reversed grids, the elephant in the paddock is the traditional F1 grid, or rather its formation. Placing the fastest car/driver at the front, slowest at the rear, obviously influences the race's outcome. Over seven decades the stats have hardly budged: the chance of victory from pole position is 40%, from the front row 65%.

But that's OK, after all qualifying is an intrinsic F1 preliminary in finding the winner over the GP weekend. It's akin to reaching the Wimbledon semis. Now you know that one of just four players will win the tournament, but it takes nothing away from the anticipation, enjoyment and excitement of 'The Wimbledon Final' itself, and the acclamation of a worthy winner.

Although F1 should not be bound by the 'straitjacket of history', the battle for pole is a time-honoured and frequently intoxicating competition at each grand prix that showcases key facets of the F1 driver. F1's battle for pole should be sacrosanct and not sacrificed in the name of the show. Happily, that won't be necessary as there is another way to utilise the existing successful qualifying format, and the beauty of it is that it would increase unpredictability and introduce an exciting new competitive dimension.

Welcome to the 'split-grid' qualifying model:

SHOOTOUT FRIDAY

After normal Q1, Q2, Q3, the faster driver in each two-car team would be allocated the top five rows, first to 10th; the slower drivers 11th to 20th. This format not only mixes up the grid, but it ramps up the tension and excitement

for one of F1's most bankable assets: intra-team rivalry. Essentially quali becomes a *mano a mano* shootout right the way through the field. 'Shootout Friday' would take place in the afternoon after morning FP1 and make simply unmissable TV, as big-name 'team leaders' are occasionally usurped in qualifying with all the repercussions for their championship aspirations.

QUALIFYING SATURDAY

But those who lapse have a chance to redeem themselves on Saturday afternoon in a 45-minute sprint race. Final grid order for Sunday's GP will be determined by the sprint race finishing order. Filled with action and excitement, the sprint race allows drivers from the second half of the split grid to stake their claim for an improved Sunday starting position. And in order to maximise constructor points for their car towards the back of the split grid, teams will need to develop versatile machines designed to overtake in dirty air.

RACE DAY SUNDAY

The two-day build-up for Sunday's race will generate diverse grid patterns and put paid to the tedious front-row lockout and Noah's Ark grid line-ups. Rogue 'outsider' results will occur in the race far more frequently than from present-day grids, especially in changeable conditions or with safety-car interventions, and tyre strategy will become more potent. And finally, even with these added dimensions of unpredictability, the best driver-and-car combination will likely continue to be rewarded such that a worthy champion will be crowned.

Yet even for this F1 utopia there must surely be downsides... Will teams search for the unfair advantage? Of course, especially when the championship situation favours one of their drivers. But any suggestion of lifting, sandbagging or other suspicious behaviour on Shootout Friday would be penalised with loss of points. And with the cost cap now in place, teams needn't be discouraged from producing 'clean air' and 'dirty air' aero packages for either car, but will be stuck with their choice throughout the GP weekend.

Will it alter championship outcomes? Not really, although it might prolong title battles. It just might change things in the case of a team with a dominant car and a closely matched driver pairing.

Anything more will come to light when the split-grid model is tested in a live setting. It offers a nicely sequenced three-day build-up of competitive action and, as an alternative to the unpalatable prospect of 'WWE' reversed grids, deserves its place for inclusion in future trials of F1 race formats. 🏁

Roger Smith's limited edition book, *Formula 1 All The Races: The First 1000*, is widely available, with exclusive numbered copies also accessible at: f1-1000.veloce.co.uk

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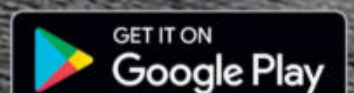
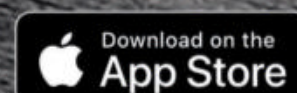
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YOUR SAY

Pat Patrick was a mighty tough, very shrewd and fair negotiator. He was also personally an extremely generous man and was very kind and hospitable

MIKE BLANCHET

Memories of Pat Patrick

I was saddened to learn of the passing of legendary IndyCar team owner Pat Patrick (Obituary, 14 January). Pat was a mighty tough, very shrewd and fair negotiator, as I experienced frequently in selling him Indycars and obtaining the Indy Lights car supply contracts back in the late 1980s and 1990s.

He was also personally an extremely generous man and was very kind and hospitable to me, and also to my wife when she accompanied me to some CART races and to his home.

Despite his self-made wealth he was modest, but very determined and loved his racing (and the deal-making!). With loyal and long-serving support from stalwarts like Jim McGee and Roger Bailey, along with a number of

others, Patrick Racing formed a formidable team. Their outstanding successes over many years proved this.

Such a great character – I am privileged to have known him.

Mike Blanchet

Former Joint Managing Director, Lola Cars Ltd 1989-1996

Lundqvist deserves more attention

Why is Linus Lundqvist not on Formula 1's radar?

Having enjoyed watching some excellent performances from him as he won British F3 in 2018, I note he has had a reasonably successful 2020 season in American Formula Regional, scraping 15 wins from 17 races.

Graeme Innes-Johnstone

Elland, West Yorks

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Carlos Sainz Jr in action in a 2018 car at Ferrari's five-day, seven-driver test at Fiorano last week.

Watch the video at [autosport.com](https://www.autosport.com)



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WHY *THE FORCE* IS NOW WITH McLAREN

*History's second most successful Formula 1 team
fell far, and fell hard. But finally a revitalised
empire is preparing to strike back*

LUKE SMITH

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“I’M REALLY HAPPY TO SEE McLAREN SO CLOSE. IT’S GREAT TO SEE THEY ARE ENDING THE YEAR WITH A GOOD CAR, SO THEY CAN PERHAPS BE IN THE FIGHT WITH US NEXT YEAR. IF THAT MAKES IT A THREE-WAY TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP, I THINK THAT WOULD BE AMAZING.”

As frustrated as he was with his own third-place finish, Lewis Hamilton spoke with real heart and pride about the performance of his former team, McLaren, in qualifying for the 2020 Formula 1 season finale in Abu Dhabi.

Lando Norris had qualified fourth at Yas Marina. On face value, it was a decent but hardly extraordinary result, and not even the team’s best Saturday of the season. But the gap of 0.251 seconds to pole was minimal by any metric and, while skewed a bit by the fresh power unit in Norris’s car, it was proof of how far McLaren has come.

The regular gulf to Mercedes and Red Bull returned in the race, yet Norris and team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr were able to cross the line fifth and sixth respectively, clinching McLaren third place in the constructors’ championship. It represented McLaren’s best season since 2012, and a continuation of its rise out of the doldrums in which it floundered just a few years ago.

While Hamilton’s optimism of a McLaren title fight this year is perhaps too wishful a thought, the fact that it is even a consideration acts as proof of the team’s transformation. This year may be too soon but, given its trajectory and the foundations that are being put in place, McLaren is once again beginning to get a taste for success.

McLaren’s rise has taken place largely under the stewardship of Zak Brown, who joined in November 2016, initially as executive director

before becoming McLaren Racing CEO. Upon arrival at Woking, the American found a team in desperate need of change.

“What I walked into was a team very much on the decline in almost every aspect,” says Brown. “The sponsorship from Vodafone, Johnnie Walker, GSK and ExxonMobil had gone, down to almost a blank car. In terms of results, the facts are the facts: we were ninth in the championship [in 2015]. That manifested itself into a very unhappy workforce. When you walked around the shop, heads were down.”

It forced change. Ron Dennis had departed at the end of 2016 amid a tussle for control of McLaren, ending his long tenure at the team. Jost Capito left after just four months as CEO. A miserable 2017 prompted a split with Honda, ending McLaren’s de facto works status. Although McLaren rose to sixth in the table after the switch to Renault, the car was still far from competitive and Honda’s loss left a considerable financial gap for Brown to make up. He was wearing many caps while he



SUTTON

pieced his management team together.

“I don’t think it’s any one individual person’s fault, there’s not a blame game here,” says Brown, reflecting on McLaren’s decline. “But you had a revolving door of leadership, starting at the top. You had a well-documented and publicised shareholder battle. You had an automotive company that was getting started and built, so I think you didn’t have as much focus and leadership and vision on the Formula 1 car.

“You had Ron out, Martin [Whitmarsh] in, Martin out, Ron in, Eric

[Boullier] in, Jost in, Jost out – I think any racing team or business, if you have effectively five leaders in the span of five years, that’s not a recipe for success and leadership of a racing team. That just manifested itself into a very unhealthy environment.”

McLaren had also lost a certain amount of warmth. As successful as Dennis had been in building the McLaren empire, his obsessive tendencies had arguably sapped some of the team’s personality, particularly when the going got tough. >>



Brown makes his admiration for Dennis clear, before taking the conversation to a galaxy far, far away. “I’ve always felt like McLaren is *Star Wars*, but we became a bit Darth Vader, and we needed to be a bit more Luke Skywalker,” Brown says. “It was about trying to turn the attention of the team and the brand into, ‘What do people want out of McLaren?’, whether it’s changing the car to papaya because that’s what the fans want, or something else.

“By getting the right people in the right place, focusing the organisation, and bringing some energy and change, we’re now starting to see that all working.”

The force grew stronger for McLaren as the pieces fell into place. Former Porsche LMP1 chief Andreas Seidl joined as team principal in 2019, while James Key took up the role of technical director. The car continued to fill up with sponsors. The warmth McLaren had been chasing returned in droves, partly thanks to the all-new line-up of Norris and Sainz for 2019 that brought a youthful, fun image to the squad.

And the on-track results improved thick and fast. McLaren rose to fourth in the constructors’ championship in 2019, trailing only the ‘big three’ of Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull. Sainz picked up its first podium in over five years at the Brazilian Grand Prix after Hamilton was hit with a post-race penalty, sparking wild celebrations that saw as many McLaren personnel as possible get onto the Interlagos podium hours after the race finished. The move was mocked unfairly by some of the bigger teams, but

“WHILE WE’VE HAD A LOT MORE GOOD DAYS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, IT’S ONLY GOING TO GET TOUGHER AS YOU GET NEARER THE FRONT”

it proved how much the result meant to the whole operation.

It would not be a one-off, either. McLaren started the 2020 season strongly as Norris snared his first F1 podium in Austria (again thanks to a Hamilton penalty, this time applied in time for the team to take part in the actual ceremony), before Sainz came within a couple of laps of victory at Monza, where he finished second behind Pierre Gasly. Although the MCL35 lacked the outright pace of immediate rivals Racing Point and Renault for much of the year, McLaren was able to beat both to third place in the standings, rising a place thanks to Ferrari’s fall.

Brown isn’t one to get high on his own supply, though. Even off the back of two impressive seasons, he warns that McLaren “still has a long way to go”. “While we’ve had a lot more good days in the past two years, it’s only going to get tougher,” he accepts. “We need to keep our feet on

the ground in this journey of being ninth, sixth, fourth, third in the championship. I don’t think that means second and first in the next two years. As you get nearer the front, it gets tougher.”

It is for that reason that McLaren knows it cannot afford to stand still. The team signed a deal to switch to Mercedes engines for 2021 back in 2019, and has stuck to the plan despite the car freeze for this year in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the shift has forced McLaren to spend its two permitted development tokens on the rear of its car to fit the new power unit, Norris is confident it will offer a step forward.

“All round, it’s a better package,” he says. “It’s more power. Touch wood, it offers more reliability and those kind of things. It’s a slightly better-fitting package, so as just a whole, there’s a lot of positives about it. I’m sure there’s going to be some things which are a bit trickier, but as a





Brown brought in
Andreas Seidl (right)
as team principal

package it should be much better, and that gives us good confidence it will take us that little bit further towards the top.”

The other boost for McLaren comes on the driver front. After Sainz’s star displays through 2019 prompted Ferrari to snap him up to replace four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel, McLaren wasted little time in pursuing Daniel Ricciardo as a replacement. Ricciardo reciprocated its eagerness, walking away from the works Renault team he so famously left Red Bull for less than two years earlier in order to sign for McLaren. It was a huge show of confidence in the project being pieced together at Woking. And the Australian is a proven F1 race winner.

But 2020 was not all good news for McLaren. The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed its “fragile” business model, to quote executive chairman Paul Walsh, and forced it into action. A £150m loan



was taken out with the National Bank of Bahrain to ease short-term cashflow problems, while the McLaren Group announced plans for 1200 redundancies, around 70 of which came from the F1 operation. It also took steps towards selling the McLaren Technology Centre in Woking to then be leased back to release some cash tied up in real estate. Many of the projects, such as the construction of a new windtunnel, also became subject to delays due to the pandemic.

Amid the worldwide economic concerns through 2020, McLaren was nevertheless able to get a fresh investment deal across the line. Announced just hours before the season finale in Abu Dhabi, McLaren Racing welcomed new minority shareholder MSP Sports Capital, an American consortium, which took an initial 15% stake in the company for £185m. It was a move that not only brought knowhow from the worlds of baseball, basketball and sports broadcasting to McLaren, but also alleviated the financial concerns that had been bubbling away.

“All the financial issues that we had are now behind us,” Brown says. “We’ve been working on it for quite some time. As you can imagine, bringing in that level of investment while you’re living with COVID is not easy, and I think that speaks to the confidence MSP has in McLaren, Formula 1, and our long-term plan.

“But that has now just overnight made all of the financial challenges we had go away. Saying that, they’re very smart, shrewd investors, so I need to spend their money wisely, and provide them a return on their investment. But the bank account is there to support the business plan that I and my leadership team have put together to get this journey back to competing for the world championship, and adding to the motorsport portfolio when and if it makes sense.” >>



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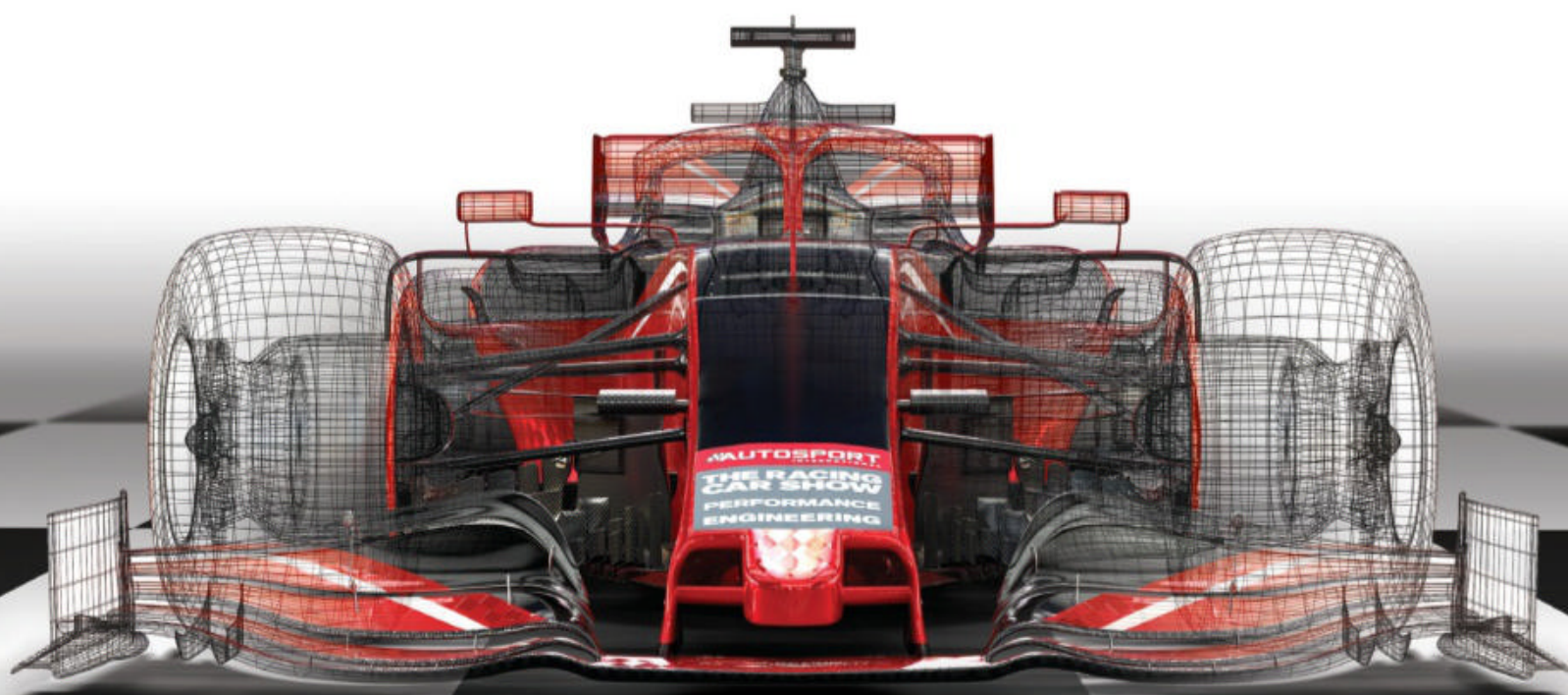
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The investment ensures all of the projects McLaren is working on can go ahead as planned, with Brown saying it offers “the resources we need to compete at the highest level”. Although he admitted it would take “a couple of years” to catch up on its capital expenditure plans, the building blocks to become an F1 frontrunner again are being put in place.

McLaren has not actively fought for a world championship since 2012, when Hamilton and Jenson Button drove for the team. The loss of Mercedes works backing and major title sponsorship funds led to a futile struggle to keep up with the wild spending of F1’s current frontrunners, and the changing landscape meant it was never realistic for McLaren to keep its seat at the top table in F1. No matter how well it performed or made use of its resources, it simply wasn’t going to be enough.

But things are changing. The arrival of a \$145million cost cap in 2021 means the start of a new era for F1, putting an end to the free spending that has led to the great imbalance on the current grid. There are also significant changes to the governance of the series under the new Concorde Agreement, as well as a redistribution of prize money that will also help close the gap between the haves and have-nots.

“We now have the ability to be a big team, because we’re running at the budget cap,” says Brown. “It’s also brought more competition from behind, which I think at the end of the day is what’s good for the sport. I think we now have a better shot to catch the guys in front of us, but we need to pay attention, because I’d also say the ones that are trying to catch them too, that field is now deepened.”

“You’ve got six or seven teams that are all going to run at the budget cap. I think AlphaTauri is very well funded. Clearly Lawrence Stroll is investing a lot of money in his [Aston Martin] team. You then have Renault [Alpine], which I think is at our level. You’ve got seven teams that I think are all playing with the same size bat, if you like, and I think that’s great.”

It should make for a much more competitive field and, while it will take a few years for the bigger teams to come back down to earth and truly feel the impact of a leaner wallet, F1 should get to a point where it’s not about what you spend, but how you spend it.

McLaren will also recover a degree of political power, something



“THANKS TO THE NEW BUDGET CAP YOU’VE GOT SEVEN TEAMS THAT ARE ALL PLAYING WITH THE SAME SIZE BAT, AND I THINK THAT’S GREAT”

Brown felt had been lost with the manufacturer ‘blocs’ who “sometimes abused” their influence over customers under the old Concorde Agreement.

“It gives more power to Formula 1 and the FIA as opposed to the teams, because the teams with all the political power, with the previous governance, were able to better keep things shaped around their agenda,” he explains. “I think that gets neutralised. That’s good, because we didn’t have the political power of some of the others who are engine manufacturers.”

Overhauling Mercedes, Red Bull and Ferrari (which will hope its 2020 blip was nothing more than that) is no easy feat, even with the rules >>

WHY McLAREN WANTS SUCCESS IN MORE THAN JUST F1

One of the first major moves of Zak Brown’s premiership at McLaren was its return to the Indianapolis 500 in 2017 with Fernando Alonso.

It set the tone for a maintained interest in racing ventures beyond F1 for McLaren. After an unsuccessful second attempt at entering the Indy 500 in 2019, McLaren linked up with Schmidt Peterson Motorsports to form Arrow McLaren SP, entering two cars for the full 2020 season (see page 32).

McLaren announced last month that it had

signed an option to enter a team into Formula E from 2022 (p30), subject to further evaluation of the project, and has always been at the table through discussions of the World Endurance Championship’s Hypercar plans.

Brown refers to McLaren’s wider motorsport interests as being part of a “solar system”.

“We have a long history of competing in other forms of motorsports, in addition to Formula 1,” he says. “Formula 1 will always be our biggest planet and our biggest priority.”

“When we look at the other forms of racing, the criteria is: they all need to be commercially viable; we need to feel it fits our brand; and they need to directly or indirectly support our Formula 1 efforts and offer a larger variety of opportunity for our commercial partners.”

IndyCar has offered a boost to McLaren’s North American interests, while Formula E would help tick a big sustainability box. A possible LMDh programme that would see expansion into WEC (and potentially IMSA) would be conducted in closer collaboration with McLaren Automotive, helping showcase its road-car prowess in endurance racing.

These activities also tap into McLaren’s rich racing history that reaches far beyond F1. It won the Indy 500 three times in the 1970s, and took victory at Le Mans in 1995. But as it operates in a COVID-impacted world, and with its F1 interests still the priority, Brown is refusing to rush into any decisions about entering new championships. “Those are all the planets that are rotating in our solar system, and I’d love to be in all of them,” he says. “But it has to be complementary to Formula 1, and it has to be financially sustainable.”



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Norris is relishing the chance to go up against race winner Ricciardo



McLAREN IN THE TURBO-HYBRID ERA

YEAR	CONSTRUCTORS' POS	POINTS
2014	5th	181
2015	9th	27
2016	6th	76
2017	9th	30
2018	6th	62
2019	4th	145
2020	3rd	202

changing. But McLaren has the benefit of only needing to make some small changes to come down to the budget-cap level, unlike its better-funded rivals. McLaren is already operating in the right kind of ballpark, meaning it will face less of an adjustment period.

Even the outgoing Sainz sees the momentum that McLaren has built, much of it coming in his two-year stint. “The team has come forward a long, long, long way since that test in Abu Dhabi at the end of 2018,” says Sainz. “The group of people is as strong as it can get, and the team is forming really nicely into 2022, which is the big regulation change, when I think the team is going to be ready to hit the ground running. Having a much more specific and established structure, the people there I think are going to be a lot more established. It’s going to be a force to be reckoned with in the future, I think.”

As impressive as Sainz was, he lacks something that Ricciardo will bring: race-winning experience with a top team. “With Daniel, working with Red Bull a bit more and knowing how to win races and how a team wins races and the car he needs, that’s something Carlos doesn’t have,” says Norris. “That’ll be very good for when Daniel comes in, giving those fresh ideas and helping the team move forward. It’s nice for me to work with someone different and learn from things, but also go up against a driver who has won races and people say is one of the best on the grid. It’s a good chance for me to compare myself against him, and work with a race winner.”

The puzzle pieces are falling into place for McLaren. Its great disadvantages of the past seven or eight years — namely its lack of works status and lack of financial might — won’t be as decisive to succeeding in F1 in a few years’ time. No longer will it be taking a knife to a gun fight.

Brown agrees that the new era of F1 is going to “play right into our sweet spot”, but is quick to serve a reminder that, much like the recovery process, the road to success takes time.


“I like where we’re going, and we’ve got to keep our head down,” he says. “I think we have everything we need now, whether that’s drivers, team principal, technical director, power unit, sponsor partners, investors, the resources, the CapEx. But it’s going to take more time to gel.”

“If you look at the two more recent dominations: Mercedes, it took them a little bit of time to build that momentum to get there, then once you get there, they’re hard to knock off the top of the mountain. And before that, it was Red Bull. It took them a little bit of time to get there. This

is a momentum business. I think we have good momentum. But we still have a long way to go.”

Brown draws an interesting comparison with the dynasties built by Red Bull (2010-13) and Mercedes (2014-present). Both projects had some tricky formative years where they went through various drivers, approaches, and, in Mercedes’ case, leaders. But the momentum that built set them up to peak just at the right time, capitalising on the changes F1 faced with the new rulesets.

The feeling is similar for McLaren, even if it’s coming from a vastly different position than its free-spending predecessors. The competitive landscape in F1 looks poised to change more rapidly than at any other point in the series’ history, making it possible for the team to dream of winning again. “My first dream job would have been standing on the podium in Formula 1 in a McLaren driver’s suit but, because they no longer make them my size, if I can stand up there in team uniform, that’s the next best thing,” jokes Brown.

It has the right engine. It has the right drivers. It has the right amount of money. And soon, it will no longer face the competitive disadvantages it once did. It all bodes well for an incredibly bright future for McLaren. 

 P26 McLAREN’S F1 PERFORMANCE HISTORY

CHARTING McLAREN'S F1 PERFORMANCE HISTORY

From humble beginnings it grew into grand prix racing's second most successful team. The glory days seem distant, but things are looking up

KEVIN TURNER

McLaren's last Formula 1 title was Lewis Hamilton's 2008 drivers' crown, but it remains the second most successful team, with 182 wins to Ferrari's 238. Assuming the 2021 calendar gets close to its planned schedule, McLaren will start its 900th world championship race this year, so it's time to take a look at the team's time at the pinnacle of motorsport.

We've used supertimes, based on the fastest single lap by each car at each race weekend, expressed as a percentage of the fastest lap overall (100.000%) and averaged over each season. We have calculated how far behind the fastest team McLaren has been each season, or how far ahead.

Bruce McLaren's first F1 effort as a constructor was low-key. He started only four championship races in the 1966 M2B, while designer Robin Herd's M4B and M5A didn't contest the full season in 1967. So arguably the first 'proper' effort came in 1968 with the M7A. McLaren was 1.525% from pacesetter Ferrari – that's similar to the gap between Mercedes and Renault in 2020. It was only fifth fastest, but such was the inconsistency elsewhere that McLaren finished second in the constructors' table and won three grands prix. In just three seasons it had become a strong unit.

McLaren remained a points contender after Bruce's death in 1970, but couldn't become a pacesetter. The breakthrough came with the Gordon Coppuck-designed M23, incorporating lessons learned from the Lotus 72. The 1973 supertimes place McLaren third, 0.7% behind, but this hides the truth. If only the races in which the M23 appeared are counted, McLaren moves into second, ahead of Tyrrell, 0.602% behind Lotus.

The M23 was second quickest in 1974, but became the first McLaren to win an F1 title. And it won both, new recruit Emerson Fittipaldi beating Ferrari's Clay Regazzoni to take his second crown.

Ferrari and Niki Lauda set the pace and had reliability in 1975. McLaren was the same distance away – 0.717% to 0.716% in 1974 – but fell from second to fourth fastest. McLaren closed the gap to 0.114% in 1976 as James Hunt famously took the drivers' crown.

The M26 replaced the M23 during 1977. McLaren was only 0.206% behind Lotus, which suffered with its development Cosworth DFV engines. McLaren could have capitalised, but problems allowed reliable

Ferrari-Lauda to take both titles despite being only fourth fastest.

McLaren now started a slide. The M26 fell to fourth, 1.376% off as Lotus perfected ground-effects, in 1978, and the following year McLaren fell off the cliff. The M28 was replaced by the M29 during the season. It was not enough: McLaren was 2.035% off the pace across 1979 and 1.9% behind in 1980, putting it ninth in the constructors' table. That paved the way for a merger with the Project 4 Formula 2 team, designer John Barnard replacing Coppuck as part of the shake-up. Barnard's MP4/1, which brought the carbonfibre monocoque to F1, helped McLaren to sixth quickest across 1981, 1.393% away.

On the face of it, things went downhill over the next two seasons. McLaren was fifth and ninth, 2.167% and 3.559% behind, in 1982 and 1983 respectively. But this was when the turbocharged teams created artificially big gaps with high boost in qualifying. Watson finished just five points shy of champion Keke Rosberg in 1982, while DFV-powered McLaren scored five wins in that two-year period.

Team boss Ron Dennis had secured TAG-badged turbocharged engines from Porsche and, when Alain Prost arrived alongside Lauda, Dennis had a superteam, equipped with Barnard's MP4/2, for 1984. Thanks to Brabham's qualifying pace, McLaren's advantage was only 0.072%, but it had a more reliable racing machine. Lauda beat Prost by half a point, while McLaren waltzed to the constructors' crown with 12 wins from 16 races.

The team fell to third quickest in 1985, but Prost and the MP4/2B were often the best package on Sundays. The Frenchman took his first world title, while Lauda did enough to help McLaren top the constructors' table.

The pace gap remained in 1986, and Williams-Honda had the best mix of speed and efficiency. Williams cruised to the constructors' title, though McLaren won the drivers' championship after a brilliant campaign from Prost. The gap was simply too great in 1987, and Williams took both titles. McLaren slipped to fourth, 1.466% behind.

The response was dramatic, aided by weaknesses from its rivals. For the final year of the first turbo era, McLaren/Prost joined forces with Honda/Ayrton Senna. The MP4/4's supertimes advantage of 1.511% – the fifth largest in history – resulted in 15 wins from 16 races.

The gap was almost as wide in 1989, and would have resulted in more than 10 wins but for bad luck and unreliability. More damaging was Prost's and Senna's toxic relationship. Prost left to lead Ferrari, which closed to 0.654% off McLaren in 1990. The battle was close, but McLaren kept its titles, Honda power and better reliability getting it over the line.

Ferrari fell away in 1991 but Williams stepped up. The FW14 was only 0.27% away from the MP4/6 and that flatters McLaren – the Williams was arguably quicker in 10 of the 16 races. Williams unreliability and blunders helped McLaren extend its streak to four title doubles. But, with the reliable FW14B, Williams and Nigel Mansell crushed all in 1992. In three years McLaren's 1.445% advantage had turned into a 1.492% deficit.

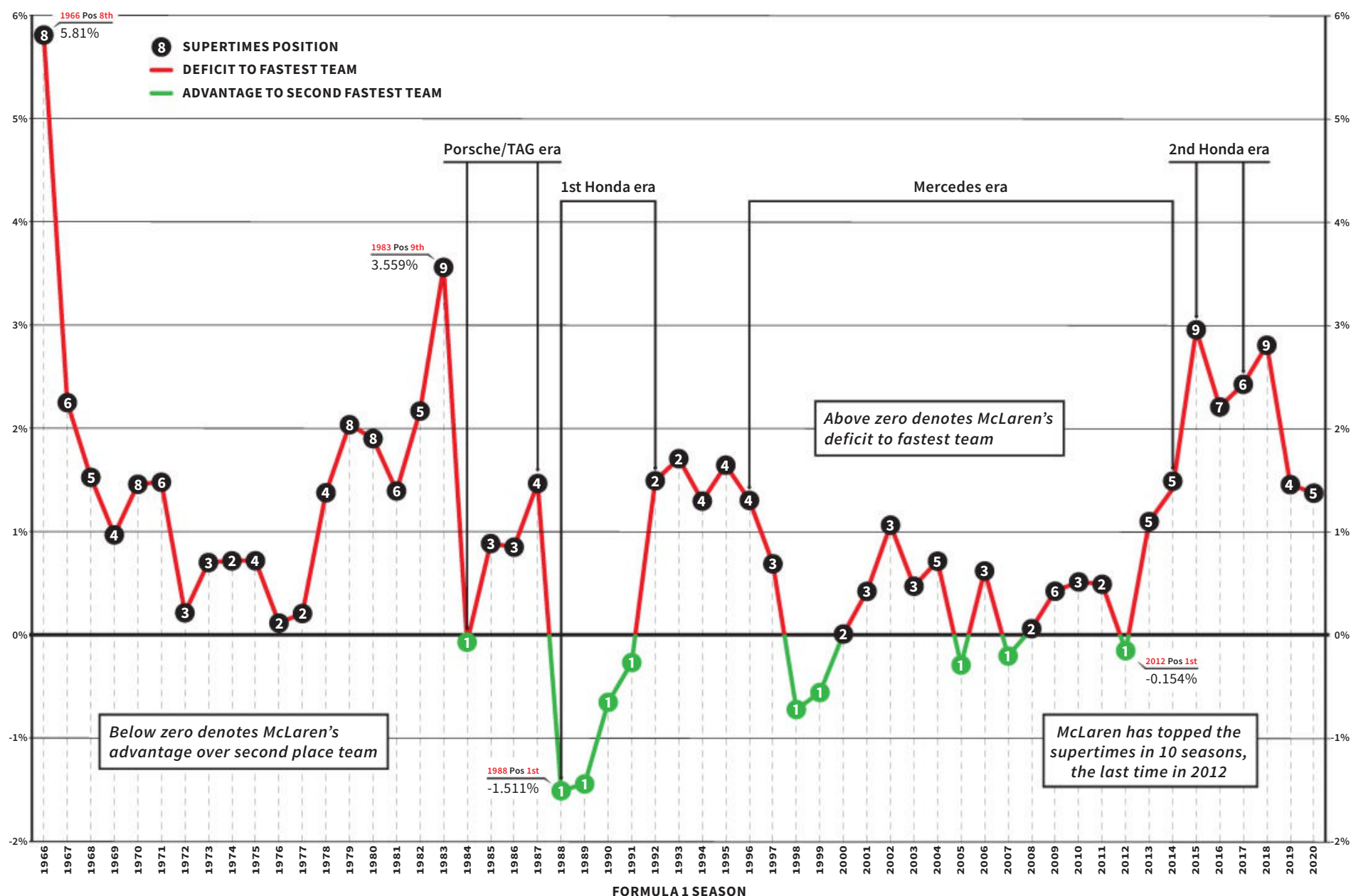
Honda pulled out of F1 at the end of 1992. The 1993 Ford-engined MP4/8 was not terrible and improved towards the season's end, but it was no match for the FW15C: McLaren was 1.706% slower on average.

The banning of driver aids for 1994 hindered Williams, but the Peugeot



Bruce McLaren scored his team's first world championship race win in the 1968 Belgian GP

SCHLEGELMILCH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



V10 in the MP4/9 was neither powerful nor reliable and McLaren didn't win a race. The gap increased to 1.643% in 1995, but the season marked the start of its relationship with Mercedes. David Coulthard joined Mika Hakkinen for 1996, McLaren edged to 1.302% from the front, and aero genius Adrian Newey arrived from Williams.

The MP4-13 was head and shoulders above the rest in 1998. McLaren ended the season with both titles and an average advantage of 0.724%, while the 1999 MP4-14 was 0.559% ahead. Given Michael Schumacher's leg-breaking crash, that should have been enough for McLaren and Hakkinen to comfortably retain their titles. But unreliability, bad luck and errors let Ferrari snatch the constructors' laurels.

In terms of the supertimes gap between the top two, the 2000 season



“RON DENNIS SECURED TAG-BADGED ENGINES FROM PORSCHE. WHEN ALAIN PROST ARRIVED ALONGSIDE LAUDA, DENNIS HAD A SUPERTeam”

was the closest ever. Ferrari's F1-2000 was 0.008% quicker than the MP4-15 as Schumacher and Hakkinen fought an epic contest, which McLaren lost. Ferrari's rise continued in 2001, with McLaren falling behind Williams on raw speed. The British teams vied for best-of-the-rest status for the next few years as Ferrari largely dominated.

Ferrari and Bridgestone were caught out by the 2005 rule changes, the MP4-20 being the season's fastest car. And yet McLaren didn't win either title, Fernando Alonso's brilliance and McLaren unreliability allowing Renault to scoop both championships.

The MP4-21 fell to third, 0.618% off Ferrari, and failed to win a race in 2006, but that was just a blip. The 2007 MP4-22 had a 0.205% advantage and *did* score more points than any other, but exclusion following the spy scandal cost McLaren the constructors' title.

In 2008 McLaren was 0.059% behind Ferrari, close enough for Lewis Hamilton to take the drivers' accolade. McLaren missed the

double-diffuser trick of 2009 and started poorly. But it recovered well and, although the MP4-24 was only sixth fastest, McLaren took third.

For the next three seasons McLaren was a consistent frontrunner, and its last big opportunity came in 2012. The MP4-27 topped the supertimes by 0.154% but suffered too many problems. McLaren went radical for 2013, but the MP4-28 was a miss, 1.097% off in fifth. The MP4-29 benefited from having the Mercedes engine in the new turbo-hybrid era but was still only fifth quickest in 2014, 1.413% behind.

Dennis recreated the McLaren-Honda partnership for 2015 but the project was an infamous failure. The gap to the front soared and McLaren never got within 2% in the three-year spell with Honda.

When the Renault-powered MCL33 was even further away in 2018 there were sweeping changes. The gap to Mercedes halved to 1.454% in 2019 and McLaren was fourth fastest, while the deficit was 1.372% last year. That put McLaren only fifth, but the savvy race operation and strong driver line-up helped it to third in the constructors' championship.

With Mercedes power, investment in facilities and the new rules of 2022 hopefully offering a more level playing field, McLaren now looks in better shape than it has for almost a decade. 🍀

➔ **P29 TOP 5 McLAREN F1 CARS**

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STATS
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Poles: 157

FORMULA 1 McLARENS

McLaren has produced many great F1 cars over its half-century in the championship. Here's our pick of the best machines, based on success, how important they were, and their 'X factor'

KEVIN TURNER

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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5 MP4/5 (1989-90)

McLaren maintained its pre-eminent position as F1 switched from turbos to 3.5-litre naturally aspirated power in 1989. The Honda V10-engined MP4/5 was almost as dominant as the MP4/4 in terms of raw pace, though races were lost due to unreliability. The revised MP4/5B held off the Ferrari challenge in 1990, so the model managed two title doubles and 16 grand prix victories from 32 races.



4 MP4-13 (1998)

Adrian Newey left Williams to join McLaren, and the 1998 MP4-13 was his first design for the team, produced for the new narrow, grooved-tyre regulations. Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard lapped the field at the season opener in Melbourne and, despite the banning of its innovative braking system and a charge from Ferrari, McLaren-Mercedes took 12 poles and nine wins on its way to both titles.



3 MP4/4 (1988)

A fan favourite and possibly the most famous of all McLarens, the MP4/4 won 15 from 16 races in 1988, with Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost fighting an epic battle well clear of the rest. The Honda-powered car's raw pace advantage was greater than any other McLaren in world championship history. The only reasons it isn't higher on this list are that the opposition was weak and it wasn't particularly innovative.



2 M23 (1973-77)

The first McLaren to win an F1 crown, the M23 took 16 victories and three championships in its long career. Designer Gordon Coppuck applied some of Colin Chapman's Lotus 72 thinking – wedge shape and side radiators – and perhaps it should have won more races in its first season in 1973. The arrival of Emerson Fittipaldi (below) in 1974 raised the team's game, while James Hunt took a dramatic crown in 1976.



1 MP4/2 (1984-86)

The MP4/2 combined the game-changing carbonfibre monocoque of John Barnard's MP4/1 with a brilliant mix of power and efficiency from Porsche's TAG-badged turbo engine. The package, developed over a three-year period, dominated F1 in 1984, took both titles in 1985, and was good enough for Prost to score a superb second drivers' crown against Williams in 1986. Its final tally was 22 grand prix victories.



WHY McLAREN IS INTERESTED IN FORMULA E

*Now in better financial health, McLaren is sounding out an FE entry.
But first the electric series must sort out its own monetary issues*

MATT KEW



Mclaren was pushed through the financial wringer in 2020. It withdrew a £150million loan from the National Bank of Bahrain, sought fast-tracked legal action from UK courts, offered its Technology Centre for sale, and made 1200 positions redundant. Against that backdrop, showing interest in a new racing programme would appear insensitive and optimistic.

But thanks to the loan and a £185m cash injection coming from an American consortium buying an initial 15% stake in its Formula 1 team, the balance sheets are looking healthier.

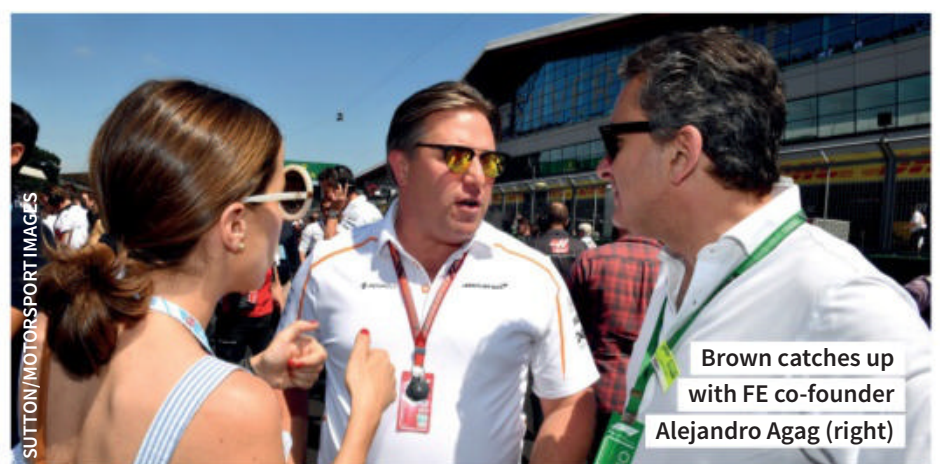
That's why the McLaren Racing arm has signed an agreement with Formula E that gives it the option to join the electric grid for the arrival of the Gen3 rules in 2022. By then, the cars will have gone on a 120kg crash diet, while power will be boosted to 470bhp. The key word for now is 'option', as first must come an evaluation of what an FE entry can offer.

News of McLaren sniffing around the championship has, in turn, already offered something to FE. A punishing winter was headlined by Audi and BMW both announcing they would quit the series at the end of the inbound season. Further bitter pills were administered when four races were postponed due to the pandemic. It's little surprise, then, to learn it was the series that pushed for the team to go public with its interest, in the quest for some positive news to kick off the new year.

But what does come as a small shock is that Audi and BMW voting with their feet, and all the uncertainty this has created, has made FE

more appealing to McLaren, with Alpine and Lotus also investigating a possible entry. With two vacancies, there's now a better chance of being competitive and having a louder voice.

A move to FE also fits in with the wider McLaren Group, as its Automotive division will adopt hybrid powertrains in all of its new road cars from 2021. Even if FE suffers for a lack of media exposure, another firm complaint among teams, an entry does tie in nicely with that direction. It offers McLaren much more coverage than continuing in its current role as the unsung sole battery supplier, with Williams Advanced Engineering taking on the contract for Gen3.



Brown catches up
with FE co-founder
Alejandro Agag (right)



BMW and Audi decisions to quit FE have, perversely, made series more appealing



The Andretti United partnership in XE could bear fruit in sister series FE

“THE COST CAP IS MANDATORY FOR US. WE NEED TO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT WE CAN AFFORD TO RACE, AND THAT THE GOALPOSTS WON’T MOVE”

“To be able to strengthen our sustainability credentials is what has us interested in Formula E,” says McLaren chief executive officer Zak Brown.

What BMW’s exit also creates is a chance for Brown to consolidate a pre-existing electric alliance. In the closely linked Extreme E, his United Autosports team has partnered with Andretti Autosport. With Andretti running the BMW race team, and its boss Roger Griffiths emphatic about the squad’s desire to remain in FE after the Bavarians wave farewell, Brown could very well forge a similar technical tie-up. This would be reflective of McLaren’s IndyCar project with Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsports (see page 32). It’s a commercial relationship first and foremost.

Such a set-up would go further to reducing the strain on the coffers. As Brown accepts: “[Before Audi and BMW’s decision] the only way to enter would have been to acquire an existing team, and they’re trading for not an insignificant amount of money. This would probably be a barrier to entry for us. When the opportunity presented itself to acquire an option, that’s why we moved... We’re leading with the commercial review.”

With only months to go until manufacturers must commit to the new

Gen3 regulations, it appears very unlikely for McLaren to go it alone.

There is still one barrier that looms large over the entirety of FE, let alone a McLaren entry. Budgets in FE have quadrupled and, while plans are afoot to introduce a cost cap, implementing it fairly and strictly remains a huge challenge as some teams are well on the way to developing their car for the next rules package. That spending can’t be undone.

But a financial leash must soon come if FE wants to welcome a brace of papaya cars to the grid. “The cost cap is mandatory for us,” says Brown. “We don’t have the depth of resources of a BMW or a Mercedes or a Porsche. I don’t have the ability to just go back and say, ‘Ah, I need another £15 million.’ We need to have total confidence that we can afford to race for the championship, and that those goalposts aren’t going to move on us.”

FE needs to work hard to lock down what is, currently, a moving financial target. Championship boss Jamie Reigle reckons a cost cap is one of his top two priorities, having commenced talks with teams last April. But his optimism belies the logistics behind actually enshrining it in law.

That concern will be a priority for McLaren, as it is for every FE team. But with a clutch of present manufacturers all issuing public statements confirming their commitment to FE, to offset the unease created by Audi’s and BMW’s exits, McLaren’s initial interest alone is something to be welcomed, even if there are hurdles yet to be jumped. ❧

P32 McLaren in IndyCar



CAN ARROW McLAREN SP GET THEM IN A QUIVER?

The second year of McLaren's full-time IndyCar return is looming. With a strong staff and driver line-up, it could join the established elite

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY



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Once we got used to seeing the large two-storey Arrow hospitality unit regularly appearing at IndyCar races, before the pandemic made such luxuries superfluous in 2020, it was easy to forget the humble beginnings from which the squad now known as Arrow McLaren SP had grown over the previous two decades.

The rise was not meteoric: there were definite flat spots, usually as a result of partnerships that had their roots in expedience rather than expectation of excellence. Counterbalancing that trait along the way, team founder Sam Schmidt, whose underlying ambition and business smarts could rarely be questioned, doesn't tend to shy away from making difficult decisions. Consequently, the team's form never dipped for longer than a season, and the general trend was always upward.

Now, little more than a year after Arrow Schmidt Peterson Motorsport formed a partnership with McLaren, the team truly does appear to have entered a new era. In fact, the biggest question now is whether Arrow McLaren SP is going to turn IndyCar's Big Three — Team Penske, Chip Ganassi Racing and Andretti Autosport — into a Big Four, or if it will replace Michael Andretti's team in that top trio. In 2020, it came very close to achieving the latter. Either way, the team appears ready for success, thereby returning the McLaren name to US single-seater racing's Victory Circle more than 40 years after its last win.

Schmidt, a winning driver in Indy Racing League who was rendered quadriplegic after an accident in testing in January 2000, has the mindset of a champion and the soul of a true motorsport addict, inspired by the example of the similarly injured Sir Frank Williams. Throughout 2000, he spent the year assembling a team, and thus was born Sam Schmidt Motorsports. After only a couple of full IndyCar seasons, he turned most of his attention to Indy Lights and, over the course of a dozen years, his was the team to beat in the junior series, producing seven champions between 2004 and 2013.

But it was in 2010 that Schmidt noticed a new way back into the top rung. The FAZZT race team had been a hastily formed house of cards, and after just one season it was collapsing, so Schmidt bought the assets, Alex Tagliani included, and his team, run by former Walker Racing team manager Rob Edwards, regularly impressed in 2011. 'Tag' took a couple of poles, became a regular participant in the Firestone Fast Six, and it was only for personal reasons that team and driver split at season's end.

With the arrival of the Dallara DW12 for 2012, the IndyCar Series got the make-over it needed, the restrictions on the spec car became more

stringent, and Schmidt hired the fast, methodical and composed Simon Pagenaud. Over the next three years, during which former Atlantic team owner Ric Peterson became Schmidt's business partner, Pagenaud and race engineer Ben Bretzman delivered four wins and in 2013 took third in the championship, before both were scooped up by Penske for 2015.

James Hinchcliffe — not as quick as Pagenaud but arguably a more instinctive fighter — became lead driver in the team, and the likeable Canadian scored a couple of wins over the next two seasons, despite a crash during 2015 Indy 500 practice that almost killed him and put him out for the rest of that season. But both he and the team were hard to gauge. Was their inconsistency in 2016 and 2017 down to Hinchcliffe and team-mate Mikhail Aleshin requiring very different handling cars? Was the team unable to give either of them the cars they needed?

The picture became clearer with the arrival of IndyCar rookie — but vastly experienced — Robert Wickens in 2018. He was very fast, demanding of his engineers and always pushing for excellence, and it's beyond cruel that his flurry of podiums and top-five finishes were brought to a shattering halt with his injuries suffered at Pocono. In 2019, his absence from the team as a driver meant SPM trod water rather than fight with the series' established elite, and that made all involved restless. Arrow Electronics had gone from traditional primary sponsor of Hinch's car to full-blown team partner, and the company's directors had got involved not just to be part of the scene but instead be seen — at the front. Major change was needed.

In April of that year, McLaren CEO Zak Brown said that it was a case of 'when' rather than 'if' McLaren returned full-time to IndyCar racing, and Arrow SPM's partnership with the famous marque was announced in early August 2019. In between times, however, McLaren had failed to qualify Fernando Alonso for the Indy 500. How was the Woking company's input going to help an under-performing IndyCar team?

But Brown, like Schmidt, doesn't tend to make the same mistakes twice, and over the next few months it became clear that this was not going to be a branding exercise in the manner of the one-race-only deal

“INDYCAR GIVES US THAT PLATFORM TO SAY ‘AH, NORTH AMERICA’S REALLY IMPORTANT FOR YOU? WE HAVE A SOLUTION THERE...’”



Inspirational Sam
Schmidt built up team
after IndyCar accident

DOLE

when Alonso drove a McLaren-backed Andretti Autosport car at Indy in 2017. This partnership would herald an unambiguous return to the series in which McLaren scored 28 wins (including three Indy 500s) and two championships back in the 1970s.

“If I look at why we did IndyCar, aside from the obvious history that we have there, Formula 1 doesn't yet move the needle in North America as much as we hope it will, and think it will in time,” explains Brown. “If we look at the majority of sponsor partners, one of the yearly questions is that [F1] is not big enough in North America for us. So IndyCar gives us that platform to say, ‘Ah, North America's really important for you? We have a solution there...’”

“IndyCar is about the North American marketplace for us and our partners. BAT is a big sponsor of ours in F1. They are now in IndyCar. Arrow Electronics, our title sponsor in IndyCar, is now a significant partner of ours in F1. We're getting a cross-pollination of partners.”

Arrow McLaren SP's switch to Chevrolet engines for 2020 was inevitable, for McLaren and Honda had long since fallen out over Alonso's and the team's criticisms of the marque's F1 power units. But there were more changes afoot in that summer of 2019. Inevitably in a spec racing formula, there is much emphasis on driving talent, and neither Hinchcliffe nor ex-F1 driver Marcus Ericsson were cutting it, so they were cut loose. In Ericsson's case, he was informed before season's end that his services would not be required for 2020, whereas the axe fell on Hinchcliffe after the 2019 finale.

In came Patricio O'Ward, 2018 Indy Lights champion, who had looked startlingly rapid in Carlin's IndyCar during a part-time campaign, and 2019 Lights champ Oliver Askew. Many had sympathy for the likeable Hinchcliffe: he had another year on his contract, so his sudden >>



O'Ward is regarded as one of the bright young IndyCar talents...

ABBOTT



...and so is Rosenqvist, who joins the team after two years at Ganassi



Brown believes that F1 and Indy teams are complementary

Wickens brought team to the front in 2018 before terrible crash



LePAGE





McLaren was a force as an Indycar constructor, its last wins coming in 1979 with Johnny Rutherford and M24B

unemployment was a shock. But a rival team owner viewed it unsympathetically. “Sam’s very tough and he understands racing,” he said. “We all know there’s only four or five drivers in IndyCar who can win you races you aren’t supposed to win by being superfast and aggressive – and then the weekends where you give them a great car, they’re gone. That’s Power, Dixon, Newgarden, maybe Rossi, maybe Bourdais on his best days.

“Wickens was going to be in that group, and now Pato and Colton [Herta] will probably be in there – and could have another 20 years left! Colton’s tied up with Andretti, but that leaves Pato. You’ve got to grab a guy like that while you can. Hinchcliffe peaked years ago, and Ericsson is decent but nothing special. Sam did the right thing.”

O’Ward and Askew were race-engineered by incumbents Will Anderson and Blair Perschbacher respectively, while highly regarded former Newman Haas kingmaker Craig Hampson joined the team as R&D and race engineer of the extra Indy 500 car for Alonso. As it transpired, once Alonso shunted his primary car in practice and was left with less perfectly optimised bodywork, he became anonymous. But in most other regards 2020 has to be seen as a success for Arrow McLaren SP.

O’Ward delivered a pole position, four podiums and fourth in the championship, showing not only great pace but also astounding maturity and self-restraint for a driver in his first complete IndyCar season. Askew doesn’t have the bullish self-confidence of O’Ward but he was also unluckier. After he too landed a podium, a heavy crash on the Indy road course led to an undiagnosed concussion that put him out of action for two races, and then he was told he was being released at season’s end. Given that this news emerged before the youngster’s comeback in the season finale, team management again presented IndyCar fans with rods with which to beat it.

But again, you could hardly argue with the team’s choice of replacement for Askew. The 2019 IndyCar Rookie of the Year, Felix Rosenqvist, scored his first IndyCar win in 2020 by passing O’Ward two laps from home at Road America. When his relationship with Ganassi ran its course, AMSP was delighted to grab him. Six weeks later, the team revealed it had signed two-time Indy 500 winner and former McLaren F1 driver Juan Pablo Montoya to race its third car at the Speedway.

Brown sounds convinced that returning full-time to IndyCar after 40 years is already paying off for the company, and that the investment will be rewarded with success – sooner rather than later. “We have an IndyCar team that sits inside McLaren in Woking that is exclusively dedicated to IndyCar, where we bring F1 and motor racing knowhow and technologies,” he says. “I think Taylor Kiel, who is the president of the team [Gil de Ferran has now left the programme], has done an outstanding job. He’s young, energetic, very smart and highly motivated.

“So it’s a young IndyCar team, which is what I kind of feel we have in F1, even though we’ve been around a long time. It’s a very youthful-in-spirit racing team. I think we’ve got a great driver line-up in Pato and Felix Rosenqvist... as strong a line-up as any IndyCar team out there. Juan Pablo coming back to do Indy will be a lot of fun, and I expect him to be very competitive. We brought on Craig Hampson, who is recognised as one of the best engineers in IndyCar racing. I think we’ve collaboratively built a really strong IndyCar team. It’s a very strong championship and I don’t think you could have a better custodian for a racing series than Roger Penske. I think IndyCar as a series is on the up.”

To appreciate how highly this team has come to be regarded in the last year, though, it’s Chevrolet’s IndyCar programme manager Rob Buckner whose words carry the most weight. Before 2020, there was a yawning gap in Chevy’s line-up of teams – Penske and then the rest, except on ovals where Ed Carpenter Racing would often shine – which made it difficult for the Bowtie to win the manufacturers’ championship. Arrow McLaren SP’s switch from Honda has made a big difference, says Buckner.

“From our first conversations with Zak, Taylor Kiel and Sam, we

“WE’VE GOT AS STRONG A DRIVER LINE-UP AS ANY INDYCAR TEAM OUT THERE, AND MONTOYA COMING BACK TO DO INDY WILL BE A LOT OF FUN”

realised it was going to be a very competitive team,” he recalls. “Seeing what they had done with Robert Wickens in 2018, we knew they had the performance. The team was already on the rise, so it was a question of, ‘How do we put a deal together?’

“And the team did a really nice job of executing last year. I think we were all a bit frustrated we haven’t gotten a race win together yet. But it was a really tough year to be a rookie with zero testing going on, so those two inexperienced drivers did well, and I also think Arrow McLaren SP builds great cars. They’ve been a great group for us to work with, and they helped us address that lack of depth by being competitive week in, week out. We got great feedback from the drivers and engineers, and we think that is going to continue with Pato and Felix in 2021. I mean, just from the talent point of view, those two are going to push each other really hard, which benefits each other, and the team and us too. Having those two guys as team-mates in as strong a team as Arrow McLaren SP already is, and how strong we think they’re going to become, that really is a big boost for us. We’re very happy about it.”



21ST CENTURY BOY

New AlphaTauri F1 recruit Yuki Tsunoda has had a sensational rise during his F2 rookie season. What makes him so special?

We ask those he's worked with, and the man himself

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY



M eet the man who, in a couple of months' time (we hope...), will become the first driver born in the 21st century to race in Formula 1. He's extremely fast, he has excellent racecraft, he's had a meteoric Formula 2 career under the patronage of Red Bull and Honda, and he has great intelligence that has impressed everyone he's worked with.

And Yuki Tsunoda is also an absolutely terrific lad. In these strange times, Autosport's chance to interview him comes via the courtesy of his new F1 team AlphaTauri's Zoom link, beamed from a truck at Yas Marina straight into a Middlesex living room. As Tsunoda approaches the screen, he bows politely, exchanges pleasantries, and gets reminded by AlphaTauri's media lady that he's OK to take off his face mask – the risk of infection over computers separated by 3500 miles is, after all, on the slim side.

At the time of the interview, Tsunoda is about to embark upon the post-season Abu Dhabi test in preparation for his maiden F1 season, yet only a couple of weeks earlier there had been a big question mark over whether he could even secure the top five Formula 2 championship position he would require to gain the necessary superlicence following an explosive rookie campaign with the Carlin team. A spin in qualifying for the penultimate round in Bahrain, which consigned him to the back of the grid, had preceded a recovery drive to sixth in the feature race, but potential points had gone begging in the sprint race thanks to a first-lap puncture.

That led to a nervous few days before the finale, again in Bahrain but this time on the outer-loop circuit. "To be honest, I was really nervous between the first round of Bahrain and the second," he reflects. "I got a little bit of pressure of course, but I had still pretty good confidence, because in the feature race the pace was already

there – and also qualifying, I did a mistake, spun and engine stopped, but until then there was potential to be easy top three. I talked a lot with Matt [Ogle, his Carlin engineer], how I could improve that situation, and also with my psychologist to help more with mentality to prepare for second Bahrain, and it was OK. Not too bad."

Acquiring the superlicence was the number-one mission set by Red Bull Junior programme taskmaster Helmut Marko before the F2 season had begun. For a driver being promoted after just a single season in FIA Formula 3, with a solitary (reversed-grid) win under his belt, that was a tough task. "I got told from Helmut that I need to be on top form in the season to get superlicence points," he reveals. "That was the main target for me. But I didn't expect it was going to be an easy season, because rookie season, new 18-inch wheels... so I expected it was going to be a really tough season. But I finished in the almost perfect way, so I think I definitely improved."

He most certainly did. Tsunoda's performance over the Bahrain finale was the single most impressive weekend display by anyone in F2

over the 2020 season. To recap, he entered the event 48 points adrift of eventual champion Mick Schumacher, with 48 on offer. It was the skinniest of mathematical chances of winning the crown, yet he scored 43, was pipped to the title runner-up accolade by Callum Ilott by just one point – and, of course, made sure of the minimum championship position required for his superlicence with an in-turns cerebral and attacking performance in winning the feature race.

But let's backtrack. The AlphaTauri drive comes just two years since Tsunoda left Japan as the country's 2018 Formula 4 champion, following two seasons there in the Honda junior line-up. Before he'd even clinched that title, he'd made his first >>

**"HIS GREAT INTELLIGENCE
HAS IMPRESSED EVERYONE
HE'S WORKED WITH"**



trip to Europe to test for F3 European Championship team Motopark, whose Red Bull Junior Dan Ticktum was in the midst of a title fight with Schumacher. “We had two days at the Hungaroring, which is probably one of the more difficult circuits,” recalls Motopark supremo Timo Rumpfkeil. “He was testing alongside Dan, and it was really quite an eye-opener, because he’d never been on the Hankook tyres.

“At that time it was already decided that Red Bull and Honda wanted to promote the next Japanese talent together, and Yuki showed he had all the right package. It was clear he would be the right driver to choose. He’d done a few days in an F3 car in Japan to prepare for the test, but knowing the level in Japan, even if he’d done 20 days it was still a stunning test, because there was less than a tenth to Dan by the first lunchtime, on an equal fuel load.”

At this point, the FIA was selecting teams for its new-for-2019 F1-supporting F3 championship. “The initial plan was that he would do FIA F3 with us,” continues Rumpfkeil, “but then someone at the FIA decided that Motopark was not a good enough team to join F3...”

Tsunoda was therefore diverted to Jenzer Motorsport for FIA F3 and, like fellow Red Bull Junior Liam Lawson, was given a secondary programme in the old-school F3 machines of Euroformula Open with Motopark. Bearing in mind his reputation now, it’s a surprise that he scored no more than a single win in each (at Monza in FIA F3; at Hockenheim in EFO). “In the beginning it was a little bit of a downside to be swapping cars,” explains Rumpfkeil, “but in the end, overall, it made him a stronger driver. A quality driver can adapt to different cars and drive them quickly.”

There was also a battle with Lawson to emerge as the strongest



Red Bull Junior, and this blew up at Spa, where the duo collided while battling for the lead in EFO. “Yuki had the right to be where he was [on track],” says Rumpfkeil, “but the logic was that if he had left half a metre more space he would have had him, and he would have won the race. It’s also a good quality when you can back off to secure a result or a championship. We brought him to a level where he was able to perform more consistently. We saw exceptional racecraft from him.” (This was illustrated in the EFO finale at Monza by his rise to third from 16th, after getting delayed on the opening lap.)

Rather than staying for another year at the third tier, Tsunoda was hoiked up to F2 with Carlin alongside fellow Red Bull Junior Jehan Daruvala. But before then, he contested the Toyota Racing Series in New Zealand. Again, he scored just one (reversed-grid) win, and was outshone by his team-mates at M2 Competition,





Lawson (again) and Igor Fraga. “He struggled with the fact that the car was so different to the F3,” says M2 chief Jonathan ‘Flex’ Moury. “It took him a little while to get on top of it, especially in qualifying. But he was one of the best racers I’ve ever seen: banzai, but under control, never stupid.”

“What he produced in F2, considering his experience, was incredible. He’s also very down-to-earth. I like the kid – he’s a nice guy, very driven, very clever – and if he’s in the right environment in F1 he’ll thrive.”

“He’s done very little mileage compared to most drivers,” points out Tsunoda’s F2 team boss Trevor Carlin. “So if you’d asked me a year ago I’d have said he probably needs a couple of years of F2. But as the year went on the speed was very apparent. Free practice and qualifying, Yuki was pretty much at the front most sessions. But of course his starts weren’t brilliant, and we had a little bit of excitement at Turn 3 at the Red Bull Ring [where the season kicked off with the opening two rounds], and a lock-up from Yuki takes Jehan out.”

“So I think, ‘Oh blimey, we’ve got a fast Japanese driver, which of course we love, but unfortunately we’ve got a bit of a crashy Japanese driver, which we don’t love quite so much’. It was almost as if he didn’t quite know the length of the car, so he’s just clipping front wings on the back of people for the first three rounds. And then once he got the size of the car sorted out, we didn’t have any issues whatsoever. The speed was there, the racecraft was there, it just got better and better.”

Tsunoda gelled extremely well with race engineer Ogle, himself new to F2 after running talents such as Lando Norris and Antonio Giovinazzi in Euro F3, plus chief engineer Stefan de Groot. “As time moved on, Stefan said, ‘The kid’s just got it,’” enthuses Carlin. “You explain to him what to do, and because the Pirelli’s a very fickle tyre, we’d explain to him how to drive it in the races and he understood it very quickly, and he just got better and better. And after that he pretty much managed the races by himself, and as you saw his racecraft and tyre saving... he was fast and tyre saving... It was incredible.”

One example was the final Bahrain feature race, where Tsunoda lost his pole advantage when he got passed in the early stages by Robert Shwartzman and Nikita Mazepin, but suckered them into taking too much out of their tyres, and consequently had more life left on his second set after pitting later. The passes he made on both Russians were easy, despite Mazepin forcing him off the track. “We could have gone even longer on the first stint,” says Carlin. “We just had to cover them unfortunately. We had loads of rubber left. He could have just kept going, but you can’t take the risk because if there’s a safety car you’re screwed.”

Tsunoda himself says the COVID-compacted calendar helped

him as a rookie: “For me it was good to be honest. We start from July and we did 12 rounds and almost every weekend is a race, so for me I can stay really sharp. Also, before the racing I had a couple of tests with Carlin – there was Carlos [Sainz Jr] and Lando there too, and we all did three days’ testing at Silverstone with the [old-spec] Formula 3. That was a really good experience and that made me step forward for preparing for Formula 2.”

“I had a really good relationship with Matt from the first round. It was not easy for us, but there were also experienced engineers alongside of us. There was Jehan’s engineer Stu [Stuart King], and also Stefan was really good. So we were quite spot-on. When we made the plan of the race strategy, Matt was not an experienced engineer so we had to a little bit ask Stu. But end of the season we worked really good, and especially the Bahrain strategies we made very well. Out of the race track, we [Tsunoda and Ogle] were just doing some iRacing together, and doing some battling!”

In a funny way, those Bahrain strategies were made more feasible by his maiden F1 test in the AlphaTauri at Imola. It gives some idea of Tsunoda’s personality that, when asked about the experience

of his first shot in the F1 machine, instead of bubbling about the power, the brakes etc, he zeroes in on a benefit it gave him for the concluding F2 round. “What I experienced from the Imola test in Formula 1 was usable for qualifying for the second round of Bahrain,” he explains. “We had the soft tyre [mandated], and also it was night time, it was really difficult to warm up the front tyres – I think everybody struggled to warm up the fronts. In

Imola it was difficult to warm up the front tyres, and I got taught by AlphaTauri how to do that better, and that experience I used for the Formula 2 qualifying. And yeah, it worked really good in qualifying and that helped me to be P1. So it was not just a Formula 1 test, it also helped me to improve for the future, and that was a really good test for me.”

“He’s just a pleasure to be with,” concludes Carlin. “He arrives on time, he says hello to the whole team, fist-bumps them every morning, gets stuck in at his computer with the engineers, goes through stuff, does his little warm-up exercises. He’d come out in the evening with us, and just be part of the team, which helps him with his language and understanding of the European culture.”

Now Tsunoda needs to get to grips with the F1 culture. His interview with Autosport takes place a few days before his AlphaTauri drive is confirmed publicly, and he smiles that “I’m really looking forward to driving Suzuka in front of the Japanese fans”. Then a look of concern crosses his face as the team’s media lady reminds him that he’s jumping the gun. It’s a comedy moment, but it doesn’t matter: the Suzuka fans will, in turn, love seeing this proper little racer in action. And so will the rest of the world. 🍷

**“HE ARRIVES ON TIME,
FIST-BUMPS THE WHOLE
TEAM, GETS STUCK IN”**

TAKING PORSCHE BACK TO THE DAKAR – AS ROOKIES

Amy Lerner and Sara Bossaert wanted to have a go at the Dakar Classic. So why not do it in some style and use a Rothmans Porsche 911?

MARIA GUIDOTTI

“**W**hat the hell am I doing here?” Stuck twice in the desert – its deep, fine and soft sand like talcum powder – Amy Lerner was questioning exactly why she was in Saudi Arabia. That day on stage seven, Ha'il-Sakaka, as the Dakar Classic was exploring the northern border of the country, the American entrepreneur was wondering if it had been such a clever idea to bring an “old lady” like the revered Porsche 911 to once again tackle the extreme and hostile conditions of the open desert: “Everybody was stuck, even the 4x4 and organisation cars!”

An experienced off-road racer with several rallies under her belt (from the Gazelle Rally in Morocco to the Australasian Safari that she won in her category in 2013), Lerner called on all her experience and skills to dig out of the sand and finish the stage.

“These cars require a different driving technique on the sand,” she says. “The Porsche has a lot of power and great tyres, but the moment you get started, you must not stop. The momentum will keep you going. The moment you hesitate, you get stuck. This is what happened to us.”

Except for that difficult moment, Lerner and her navigator Sara Bossaert enjoyed every single moment of the rally. “I come from New York and I have a busy life with two kids and a job in real estate and investing in the stock market,” explains Lerner. “I have been racing for 12 years, mainly with a Jeep Wrangler, and there is no off-road close to where I live, so when I plan something, I plan something big, like Dakar Rally.”

Lerner inherited her passion for cars from her father, who was an antique car collector. This is how she fell in love with vintage vehicles from the beginning of the last century. But motorsport has become a part of her life only recently.



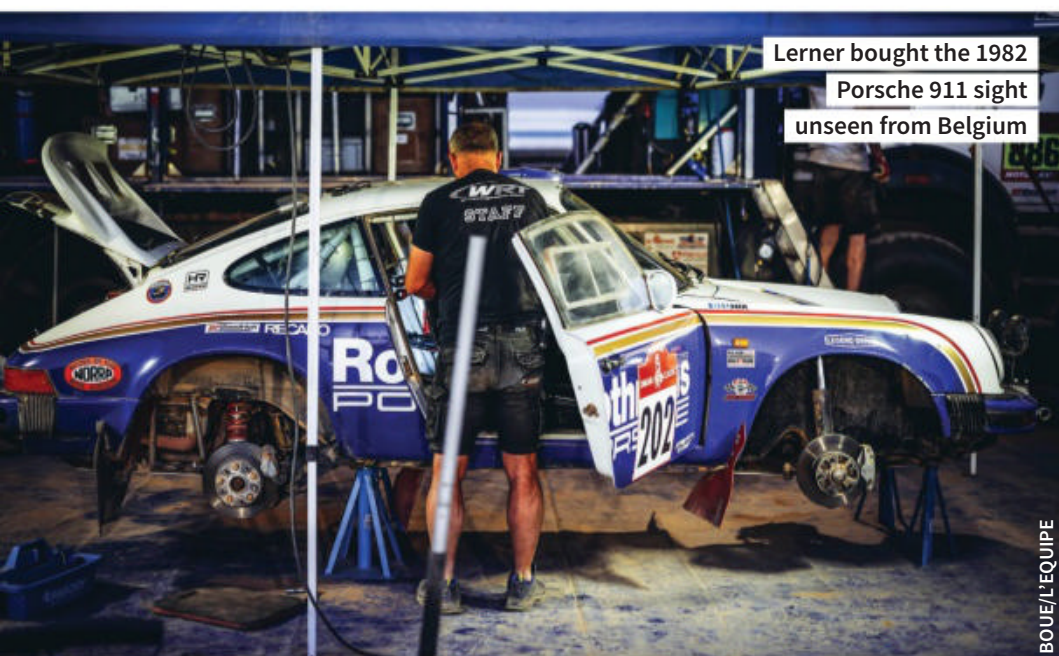
EPIFANIO/A.S.O.

After reading about the Rallye des Gazelles, she registered and competed in the Moroccan race for female crews, firstly in 2011 and for a total of four times. That eventually led to the Australasian Safari Rally, in which she drove a Jeep. She won the Dakar Challenge class, giving her an opportunity to register for the Dakar.

A lack of time and a busy life made it impossible to go. But it was only a question of time. This 55-year-old businesswoman has worked in many different domains, from Wall Street where she started to real estate, and more recently in film making and production. In 2019, she produced a documentary on Baja legend Rod Hall, called *One More Win*, combining work with her passion for off-road racing. The idea of doing the Dakar came only a few months ago when she heard about the new Dakar Classic regularity rally for cars built before 2000.

“I was sitting at home, locked down in New York during the pandemic, and heard about the Dakar Classic format and found it fascinating,” she says. “I said to myself, ‘Why not now?’ I made a few calls and got all the pieces together and off we went. I signed in for the event just two weeks before the end of registration. I bought a 1982 Porsche 911 3.0L SC from Stephane Henrard in Belgium. It’s not the actual car Rene Metge won the 1984 Dakar with, but a tribute to it and to Jacky Ickx.”

Lerner bought the Porsche 911 with the Rothmans colours without even seeing it in person. Thanks to the precious help of >>



Lerner bought the 1982 Porsche 911 sight unseen from Belgium

BOUE/L'EQUIPE



BRINGING A TASTE OF AFRICA TO SAUDI ARABIA

Do you remember the Porsche 911 SC 3.0 with the Rothmans colours, the legendary two-wheel-drive Sunhill buggies, the muscular Range Rover V8s, the Mitsubishi Pajero V6 or the Nissan Patrol, one of the favourite cars for privateers who dared to challenge the Tenere when the Paris-Dakar was still raced in Africa?

Welcome to the Dakar Classic. This regularity rally, for past rally-raid vehicles built before 2000 and run in parallel to the Dakar Rally route, was a homage to the pioneers of off-road sport.

To design the route and manage this animated caravan with vintage colours, rally director David Castera relied on the experience of historic vehicle specialist Yves Loubet and 1980s racer Alain Lopes. “I went to browse the archives and leafed through the pages of the history of Jean-Claude Bertrand, the father of the rally raids like the Bandama Rally and the famous Abidjan-Nice, who inspired [Dakar founder] Thierry Sabine,” says Loubet.

Talking with Loubet at the Riyadh bivouac is



Marc Douton's Sunhill buggy took the win

like free-falling without a parachute into the folds of the myth of the Paris-Dakar, when the route was designed with geographical maps and compass. “At that time, the dunes always surrounded us, because the vehicles were mainly small cars and two-wheel drive, with not enough

power to surf the dunes,” he says. “The navigation was simple; one point to another.”

The Dakar Classic route was designed with this philosophy, with each of the individual stage lengths from 200 to 300km (120-190 miles) on varied terrain featuring sand, rocks and fast paths. A total of 26 classic cars competed in the inaugural edition of the Dakar Classic in 2021, with the 1979 Sunhill buggy driven by Marc Douton winning the regularity race.

For all the competitors it was a jump into the past. On his first attempts at the start of the 1980s, Yves Sunhill did not manage to drive the buggies he created to Lake Retba, the pink lake. Forty years later, Frenchman Douton and his navigator Emilien Etienne reached the shores of the Red Sea in Jeddah among the applause and the joy of the whole Dakar caravan.

“It was a fantastic experience and we are so happy because we finished it,” says Douton. “The most difficult parts were the rocks, because of the suspension, but all in all we love it.”



the experienced Judith Tomaselli as team manager, the whole expedition was in place. Only the co-driver was missing. “At the end of October, two days before the closing of the entries, I called my friend and business partner Sara in Barcelona,” explains Lerner. “It took her exactly two seconds to accept my crazy idea.”

For the Belgian architect it was the first automotive race of any kind. “I never sat in a car like this and had no idea of what a roadbook was,” admits Bossaert. “I have no experience in cars but I do in sailing, and I love adventure.”

As a competitive sailor, Bossaert used her bravery and her offshore navigation experience to be very competitive in the Dakar Classic. Despite having no experience with the mechanics of a car, nor with the navigation, she put her head down and learned pretty quickly, becoming a valuable navigator for Lerner in a month.

“What did I learn from the first stages? That I love this race,” says Bossaert. “It is a unique, life-changing experience. When you sign up for the Dakar Rally, you take yourself out of your comfort zone to experience life and have an amazing human adventure.”



Lerner (left) and Bossaert made it back to Jeddah

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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Rocky terrain and sand
dunes of Saudi Arabia
tested the classic 911

**“IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES, THE
ROAR AND SMELL OF OIL AND FUEL
BRING YOU BACK TO THE 1980s”**

The atmosphere of the bivouac with tents, the generators, the privateers and the professional drivers such as soon-to-be 14-time Dakar Rally winner Stephane Peterhansel living shoulder to shoulder, adds that extra fascination in addition to the vintage flavour.

“If you close your eyes, the roar and the smell of oil and fuel from these vintage cars bring you back to the 1980s when the rally was still in Africa, and we were young,” reckons Lerner. “The engine is loud, but you get used to it. It’s a beautiful song and I want to record it. I’m sure I’m gonna miss it once I’m back in New York.”

Of all the vehicles registered in the Dakar Classic, the 911 grabs the most attention. It’s indeed a tribute to that magnificent vehicle that conquered the Dakar back in 1984: “I would have never imagined the joy coming from driving this iconic car. It represents an era in history with Jacky Ickx and Rene Metge.”

A great toy with a lot of power, ‘Bey-Bey’, as Lerner named the Porsche, was the great attraction of the 2021 Dakar Classic. “Like Beyonce, the Porsche is beautiful outside and fierce inside,” says Bossaert. “Everyone wanted to have a photo with it. The line of car is stylish and unique, like a wave. It’s still beautiful 40 years later, like a piece of [architect] Mies van der Rohe. It will never age.”

Fifteenth overall after 12 stages, the duo had to deal with the demanding Saudi terrains such as the sand dunes and the sharp rocks, and the regularity aspect of the navigation that was quite new to Lerner, who was more used to fully competitive rally raids. The entrants on the Dakar Classic had to respect an average speed throughout the stage, with the imposed time changing according to the type of path and terrain.

“You have to stay steady and that was one of the biggest challenges,” explains Lerner. “You have to respect a specific speed or you can get a penalty. It’s different from normal racing.”

“All in all, we had a good race,” adds Bossaert. “We didn’t suffer major technical issues. One day we lost the exhaust on a rock, but the assistance truck found it. We had a problem with the shocks in the sharp rocky sections, we lost the bumper and the lights.”

This was Lerner’s first Dakar Classic but, now that she’s bought the car, she has a good excuse to return next year: “I’m a competitor, absolutely. The goal is the podium.” ❧



RACE CENTRE

DAYTONA 24 HOURS • WORLD OF SPORT



Meet the new boss, same as the old boss

A third-straight win — despite switching to Acura machinery for 2021 — proved that Daytona is Wayne Taylor Racing's happy hunting ground, not Cadillac's

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**



The Cadillac stranglehold on the Daytona 24 Hours has been broken. And it took the team that had been at the vanguard of the marque's domination from the start of the Daytona Prototype international era in 2017 to do it. Wayne Taylor Racing did what Penske was unable to achieve in three years with Acura by giving it a maiden victory in one of the big North American enduros, and at the first time of asking with its new partner.

WTR claimed a third Daytona victory in a row, and sixth for team boss Wayne Taylor either as a driver or team owner, at the end of a thrilling race in which all but two of the seven DPis finished on the lead lap. Three of those five cars led after the final safety-car period with just over two hours to go, and the two that didn't finished on the podium.

The 59th edition of this fixture, and the 54th run to a 24-hour format, was a frenetic and flat-out affair in which Filipe Albuquerque, Ricky Taylor, Helio Castroneves and Alexander Rossi ultimately prevailed by a scant 4.7 seconds aboard the WTR Acura ARX-05. The top five completed 807 laps, only 26 down on last year's record 833, despite double the number of safety cars this time around.

The race, as per normal at Daytona, boiled down to a sprint to the line once the green flags flew for the final time with just under two hours left on the clock. The WTR Acura with Taylor at the wheel led from Oliver Jarvis in the Multimatic-run Mazda RT24-P at this stage, but there were more twists and turns to follow during a race in which there were no fewer than 72 changes for the lead.

Daytona 2021 developed into a three-way scrap over the final stages, the winning WTR machine squabbling with two cars that had looked out of it at different stages of the race. The Mazda, which Jarvis shared with Harry Tincknell and Jonathan Bomarito, vaulted to second with the first-named at the wheel during the 11th of the 12 safety-car interludes, despite falling three laps behind shortly before the halfway mark. And the Chip Ganassi Racing Cadillac DPi-V.R, WTR's replacement in the



marque's roster, was still in the hunt in spite of a monster right-rear blow-out that brought Scott Dixon into the pits with just under two and a half hours to go.

The Ganassi Caddy with Renger van der Zande in the hot seat led into the final round of pitstops with 33 minutes remaining. The Dutch racer, who has switched from WTR for this season to drive alongside Kevin Magnussen in the full IMSA SportsCar campaign, had got into the lead courtesy of some quick laps after making an early penultimate stop. But the six tours he'd done before the WTR Acura stopped would prove decisive.

Van der Zande led by a couple of seconds from Kamui Kobayashi in the second of the

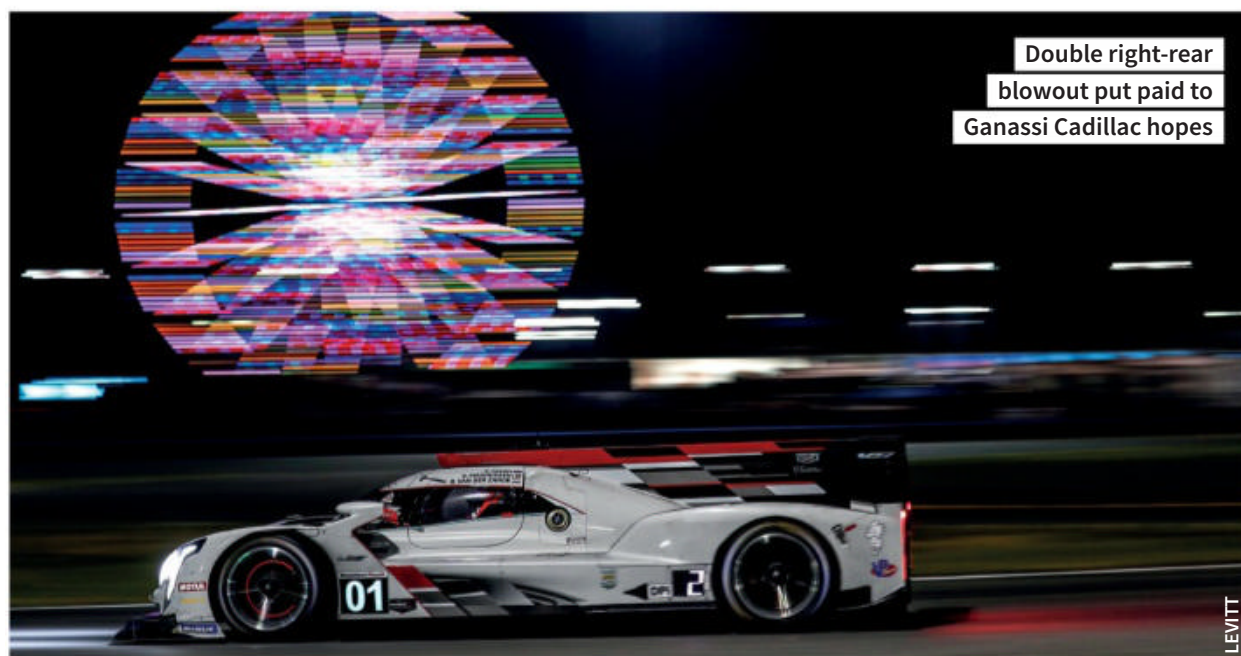
Action Express Racing Caddys, an extra entry for Daytona, when he stopped for the last time. Albuquerque was a further six seconds down in third ahead of Tincknell in the Mazda.

The Portuguese needed less fuel than the cars around him, which put him back to the top of the leaderboard by just under three seconds from van der Zande. So little, in fact, that the team could change only two tyres in the time it took to refuel.

Van der Zande, with four new Michelins underneath him, came back at the race leader from three or so seconds down, and had a go at getting past the Acura nine laps after the stops. He failed to pull it off but was still within a second when a repeat right-rear tyre failure sent the car into the pits with seven minutes and down to fifth in the final order.

The way was clear for WTR to notch up yet another Daytona victory. The Mazda was now no longer the car that Tincknell had taken past van der Zande late in the penultimate hour after a rear support strut broke on the rear wing. So much so that Kobayashi in the Action Express car shared with Jimmie Johnson, Mike Rockenfeller and Simon Pagenaud was able to nip past into second with four minutes to go.

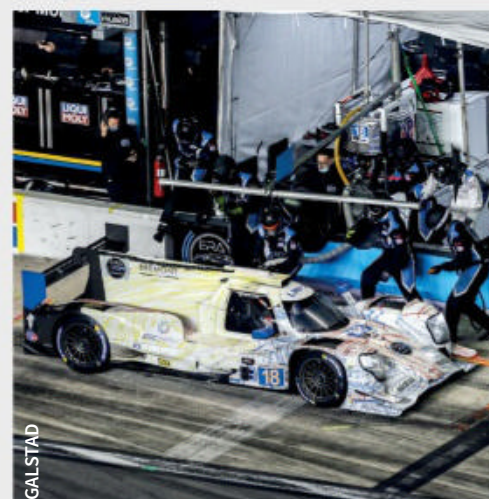
Albuquerque described this year's Daytona, the 30th to be sponsored by Rolex, as "the hardest race of my life". "Renger was faster, definitely, but it's one thing to catch and another to pass," he said. "He was pushing hard; I was





Caped crusaders:
Taylor, Albuquerque,
Rossi and Castroneves

ERA CLUTCHES LMP2 WIN



The Era Motorsport squad claimed a last-gasp victory in the LMP2 ranks. The Era ORECA-Gibson 07 shared by Ryan Dalziel, Paul-Loup Chatin, Kyle Tilley and Dwight Merriman moved into the lead with just eight minutes to go.

The class winner had dropped as much as four laps off the front, yet Chatin came through to take the flag 19.5 seconds up on the Starworks-run Tower Motorsport ORECA. Gabriel Aubry, Matthieu Vaxiviere, Timothe Buret and John Farano lost the advantage they had held for much of the second half of the race when the first-named needed a late splash of fuel.

The Era entry lost time during the night with an electronic glitch that sent it into limp mode every time it left the pits. Its drivers then had to get out of their box without the use of the clutch for the final 12 hours.

Tower's chances of cementing the victory diminished as the race went green after the final safety car. Era made an acute strategy call in bringing Dalziel into the pits for service, while Vaxiviere was penalised for a jumped start.

DragonSpeed was in the hunt for a hat-trick of Daytona P2 victories with the ORECA shared by Christopher Mies, Devlin DeFrancesco, Fabian Schiller and Eric Lux until the 21st hour when it ran into cooling issues.

The LMP3 class may have been new to the main WeatherTech-sponsored IMSA series, but a stalwart of its ranks triumphed: the Riley Motorsports squad. The best of its Ligier-Nissan JSP320s was victorious with Oliver Askew, Spencer Pigot, Scott Andrews and Gar Robinson after the kind of trouble-free run that none of its competitors in class could manage. Its three-lap margin over the second-placed Sean Creech Motorsport entry would have been bigger had not the team erred on the side of safety and undertaken a second change of brakes late on.

lucky he had the puncture.”

The WTR drivers reckoned they didn't have the fastest car around the 3.56-mile Daytona International Speedway 'roval' last weekend. "All race we felt we had a bit of a pace disadvantage, to the #01 [Ganassi] car specifically," said Rossi. "We knew how important track position was to what we were trying to accomplish."

What they did have, however, was a near-perfect race. That belied WTR's lack of time with the ORECA-based Acura. It opted to forego testing in favour of prep time, though that was cut into when it was decided that the team should get two new ARX-05s rather than head into the year with ex-Penske machinery. Its Daytona race car wouldn't run for the first time until a test at Sebring less than two weeks ahead of the race.

The solo Mazda only looked like a potential winner in the closing stages. The RT24-P, which scored its first win in one of the IMSA enduros at the Sebring 12 Hours last November, started dead last, lost a lap early on, got it back, lost it again and two more besides, and then clawed its way back to the front, only for the late-race aero issue. No wonder Tincknell described last weekend's events as a "rollercoaster race" for the Multimatic squad.

Jarvis had to start from the back after the transmission went into standby mode as he attempted to start the formation laps, and the Mazda went a lap down by hour five. "We were just really slow in the first part of

"All race we had a pace disadvantage. We knew how important track position was"

the race," said Tincknell. The car got back on the same lap as the leaders in hour 12, shortly before losing three laps in the pits.

Multimatic was already thinking about changing the rear body section as a result of aero degradation when a rear-light failure forced its hand. As the team went to work, a problem with the mounting pins resulted in an excruciating delay. "In my mind I had to show some good pace to keep everyone's head up," said Tincknell of his efforts after rejoining. "Deep down, though, I wasn't very hopeful."

It took until hour 19 for the Mazda to make it back onto the same lap as the leaders. Tincknell had just unlapped himself from race leader Rossi when the yellows flew. He got the wave-by during the caution, which meant he regained two laps in double-quick time. It would, however, take until the penultimate yellow for the Mazda to get in among the leaders.

Tincknell made it clear afterwards that he had the pace to win. As the end of the 23rd hour approached, he was able to move >>

past van der Zande in the Ganassi car. “When I passed Renger, I thought, ‘Right, let’s go on and win this thing,’” said the Brit. “I’d passed Rossi in the car that ended up winning as we got back on the lead lap, so I thought we had a good shot at it. Renger was able to really have a go at Filipe before the puncture and I’d passed him, so this really feels like one that got away.”

“The car went from being a rocketship to something that wasn’t in a short space of time. Something broke on the rear wing; we think it was a strut that changed the wing’s angle of attack – suddenly the car got very loose.”

Fourth place was taken by the second Acura, the Meyer Shank Racing car driven by Dane Cameron, Olivier Pla, Juan Pablo Montoya and AJ Allmendinger. They were never quite a match for the WTR entry, especially when push came to shove in the closing stages. The drivers reported their ARX-05 was very unstable as the temperatures rose and the wind increased.

The second Action Express Cadillac may have taken second place, but it never looked like one of the favourites as the race unfolded. It didn’t have the pace and was missing some straightline speed in the closing stages, and repeatedly lost time while refuelling.

The other two Cadillacs, based on the Dallara LMP2 chassis, were genuine



contenders, however. The full-season Action Express car in which Felipe Nasr and Pipo Derani were joined by Mike Conway and reigning NASCAR Cup champion Chase Elliott, and the JDC-Miller MotorSports car driven by Loic Duval, Tristan Vautier and Sebastien Bourdais, might have won but for myriad problems.

The Action Express Caddy in which Nasr and Derani had won the qualifying race that set the grid began to lose pace in the night as the result of a broken exhaust manifold. The car was still hanging in there when it became stuck in gear in hour 19. The 40 minutes lost to a gearbox change and

replacing the header left the car behind two LMP2s in eighth overall at the finish.

The JDC-Miller car led after six hours, the cut-off for the first tranche of Endurance Cup points, but the car had to go back to its garage for lengthy repairs after Vautier came together with Jan Heylen in the Wright Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3-R in the 10th hour. After that it was just about collecting points for a car that was ultimately classified down in 34th position.

Maybe we were wrong to talk about Cadillac domination at Daytona under the current rules. Perhaps it was the Wayne Taylor Racing hegemony. 🚩

‘SLOWER’ CORVETTE COMES ALIVE AS HEAT TURNS RACE YELLOW

The vital statistics of the GT Le Mans battle at Daytona didn’t lie. The two Chevrolet Corvette C8.Rs led 715 of the 770 laps completed in class on the way to a 1-2. The only quirk for the mid-engined machine that made its debut 12 months ago was that the winning ‘Vette shared by Jordan Taylor, Antonio Garcia and Nicky Catsburg was out front for only 238 tours.

It was pretty close between the class winner and the sister Chevy driven by Nick Tandy, Tommy Milner and Alexander Sims. The Corvettes were more often than not just a handful of seconds apart. But, as is so often the case at Daytona, victory went to the car that had the pace as the race approached its conclusion.

The #3 Corvette edged into a dominant position as the temperatures rose. Tandy, Milner and Sims had the advantage on the soft Michelin tyre but, when it was time to switch to the medium on Sunday morning, the balance

swung to the other car.

Catsburg explained: “Our car really came alive on the medium tyre in the warmer conditions. That was when it needed to be done, so I guess we got lucky there.”

But there was a double twist at the end. Long-standing Chevrolet driver Garcia had to stand down when the COVID test he took in readiness for his return to Europe yielded a positive result. Although he was asymptomatic, he wasn’t allowed to drive again from early

into the 18th hour.

Catsburg also had problems getting enough revs to leave his pitstall during the penultimate safety-car period and then was pinged for pitlane speeding. He dropped to fourth but was only a few seconds off the lead when he handed over to Taylor, who quickly got the car back to the lead.

The internecine Chevrolet scrap might have worked out differently but for a gearbox glitch on the second-placed car. Its drivers had

to manage an issue that caused problems on the upshift to second for the whole race.

The best of the Rahal BMW M8 GTEs managed to lead the race in the closing stages in the hands of Augusto Farfus. But in truth the car he shared with Jesse Krohn, Marco Wittmann and John Edwards wasn’t in the same class as the Chevys.

Mercedes notched up a first win in this race in the GT Daytona class with HTP Winward Motorsport. Maro Engel came out on top in a late-race battle with fellow factory driver Raffaele Marciello driving the Gradient Racing-run SunEnergy1 Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Engel stretched his tank of fuel to 72 minutes in the car he shared with Indy Dontje, Philip Ellis and Russell Ward on his third stint from home. That broke the back of the challenge from Marciello, who co-drove with Luca Stolz, Mikael Grenier and Kenny Habul, on a day when Engel reckoned Winward executed the perfect race.



RESULTS DAYTONA 24 HOURS, IMSA SPORTSCAR ROUND 1/13, DAYTONA (USA), 30-31 JANUARY, 807 LAPS – 2872.92 MILES

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME	GRID
1	Filipe Albuquerque /Ricky Taylor /Alexander Rossi /Helio Castroneves	Wayne Taylor Racing	Acura ARX-05	DPi	24h00m14.673s	5
2	Jimmie Johnson /Kamui Kobayashi /Simon Pagnaud /Mike Rockenfeller	Action Express Racing	Cadillac DPi-V.R	DPi	+4.704s	6
3	Oliver Jarvis /Harry Tincknell /Jonathan Bomarito	Mazda Motorsports (Multimatic)	Mazda RT24-P	DPi	+6.562s	2
4	Dane Cameron /Olivier Pla /Juan Pablo Montoya /AJ Allmendinger	Meyer Shank Racing	Acura ARX-05	DPi	+54.418s	4
5	Renger van der Zande /Kevin Magnussen /Scott Dixon	Chip Ganassi Racing	Cadillac DPi-V.R	DPi	+1m07.744s	7
6	Dwight Merriman /Kyle Tilley /Ryan Dalziel /Paul-Loup Chatin	Era Motorsport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-20 laps	14
7	John Farano /Gabriel Aubry /Timothe Buret /Matthieu Vaxiviere	Tower Motorsport (Starworks)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-20 laps	10
8	Felipe Nasr /Mike Conway /Pipo Derani /Chase Elliott	Action Express Racing	Cadillac DPi-V.R	DPi	-24 laps	1
9	Eric Lux /Devlin DeFrancesco /Fabian Schiller /Christopher Mies	DragonSpeed USA	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24 laps	16
10	Salih Yoluc /Cody Ware /Austin Dillon /Sven Muller	RWR Eurasia	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	-29 laps	15
11	Antonio Garcia /Jordan Taylor /Nicky Catsburg	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller)	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	GTLM	-37 laps	26
12	Tommy Milner /Nick Tandy /Alexander Sims	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller)	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	GTLM	-37 laps	25
13	John Edwards /Jesse Krohn /Augusto Farfus /Marco Wittmann	BMW Team RLL	BMW M8 GTE	GTLM	-38 laps	30
14	Alessandro Pier Guidi /James Calado /Jules Gounon /Davide Rigon	Risi Competizione	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTLM	-38 laps	28
15	Bruno Spengler /Connor De Phillippi /Philipp Eng /Timo Glock	BMW Team RLL	BMW M8 GTE	GTLM	-39 laps	29
16	Steven Thomas /Tristan Nunez /Thomas Merrill /Matthew Bell	WIN Autosport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-43 laps	17
17	Kevin Estre /Cooper MacNeil /Richard Lietz /Gianmaria Bruni	WeatherTech Racing (Proton)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTLM	-47 laps	27
18	Gar Robinson /Spencer Pigot /Scott Andrews /Oliver Askew	Riley Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-50 laps	24
19	Lance Willsey /Joao Barbosa /Wayne Boyd /Yann Clairay	Sean Creech Motorsport	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-53 laps	21
20	Moritz Kranz /Laurents Hoerr /Kenton Koch /Stevan McAleer	Muehlnher Motorsports	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	LMP3	-57 laps	18
21	Jim Cox /Dylan Murry /Austin McCusker /Jeroen Bleekemolen	Riley Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-61 laps	23
22	Russell Ward /Philip Ellis /Indy Dontje /Maro Engel	Winward Racing	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	GTD	-62 laps	35
23	Kenny Habul /Raffaele Marciello /Mikael Grenier /Luca Stolz	Sun Energy 1 (Gradient)	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	GTD	-62 laps	40
24	Madison Snow /Bryan Sellers /Corey Lewis /Andrea Caldarelli	Paul Miller Racing	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo	GTD	-62 laps	46
25	Jan Heylen /Trent Hindman /Patrick Long /Klaus Bachler	Wright Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-62 laps	38
26	Ian James /Roman De Angelis /Darren Turner /Ross Gunn	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	GTD	-62 laps	36
27	Robby Foley /Bill Auberlen /Aidan Read /Colton Herta	Turner Motorsport	BMW M6 GT3	GTD	-63 laps	31
28	Maxwell Root /Charlie Eastwood /Ben Keating /Richard Westbrook	TF Sport	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	GTD	-63 laps	42
29	Matteo Cressoni /Simon Mann /Nicklas Nielsen /Daniel Serra	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GT3	GTD	-64 laps	45
30	Daniel Morad /Mike Skeen /Billy Johnson /Maximilian Buhk	Alegra Motorsports	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	GTD	-66 laps	44
31	Jon Bennett /George Kurtz /Colin Braun /Matt McMurry	CORE Autosport	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-70 laps	20
32	Rob Ferriol /Earl Bamber /Katherine Legge /Christina Nielsen	Team Hardpoint EBM	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-70 laps	43
33	John Potter /Andy Lally /Spencer Pumpelly /Mario Farnbacher	Magnus with Archangel	Acura NSX GT3 Evo	GTD	-71 laps	41
34	Loic Duval /Tristan Vautier /Sebastien Bourdais	JDC-Miller Motorsports	Cadillac DPi-V.R	DPi	723 laps-retired	3
35	Roberto Lacorte /Antonio Fuoco /Andrea Belicchi /Giorgio Sernagiotto	Cetilar Racing (AF Corse)	Dallara-Gibson P217	LMP2	-97 laps	13
36	Zacharie Robichon /Laurens Vanthoor /Lars Kern /Matt Campbell	Pfaff Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-105 laps	32
37	Rasmus Lindh /Cameron Cassels /Mateo Llarena /Ayrton Ori	Performance Tech Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-120 laps	22
38	Frankie Montecalvo /Robert Megennis /Zach Veatch /Townsend Bell	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	GTD	-126 laps	39
39	Bret Curtis /Ed Jones /Ryan Briscoe /Marcos Gomes	Scuderia Corsa	Ferrari 488 GT3	GTD	676 laps-o'heating	37
40	Don Yount /Alan Metni /Andrew Davis /JR Hildebrand	NTE Sport	Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo	GTD	665 laps-gearbox	49
41	Ben Keating /Mikkel Jensen /Scott Huffaker /Nicolas Lapierre	PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	664 laps-retired	8
42	Aaron Telitz /Oliver Gavin /Kyle Kirkwood /Jack Hawksworth	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	GTD	641 laps-cooling	34
43	Ted Giovanis /Owen Trinkler /Hugh Plumb /Matt Plumb	Team TGM	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	515 laps-drivetrain	48
44	Ryan Norman /Mark Kvamme /Gabby Chaves /Trenton Estep	Forty7 Motorsports	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	LMP3	413 laps-oil pump	19
45	Rolf Ineichen /Mirko Bortolotti /Steijn Schothorst /Marco Mapelli	GRT Grasser Racing Team	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo	GTD	347 laps-electrics	33
46	Misha Goikhberg /Franck Perera /Albert Costa /Tim Zimmermann	GRT Grasser Racing Team	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo	GTD	195 laps-engine	47
47	Frits van Eerd /Giedo van der Garde /Job van Uitert /Charles Milesi	Racing Team Nederland (TDS)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	64 laps-gearbox	11
48	Dennis Andersen /Ferdinand Habsburg /Anders Fjordbach /Robert Kubica	High Class Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	56 laps-gearbox	9
49	Rob Hodes /Garett Grist /Rinus van Kalmthout /Ben Hanley	DragonSpeed USA	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	53 laps-acc damage	12

In each car, first-named driver started the race. **Winners' average speed** 119.685mph. **Fastest lap** van der Zande 1m34.657s (135.394mph)
LMP2 Lapierre 1m36.910s (132.246mph); **GTLM** Pier Guidi 1m42.411s (125.143mph); **LMP3** Hoerr 1m43.389s (123.959mph); **GTD** Gomes 1m45.724s (121.221mph).

POINTS DPi 1 Rossi/Albuquerque/Castroneves/R Taylor 376; 2 Johnson/Kobayashi/Rockenfeller/Pagnaud 345; 3 Tincknell/Bomarito/Jarvis 332; 4 Allmendinger/Cameron/Montoya/Pla 308; 5 Elliott/Nasr/Conway/Derani 285; 6 Magnussen/van der Zande/Dixon 284.

GTLM 1 Garcia/J Taylor/Catsburg 382; 2 Sims/Tandy/Milner 355; 3 Farfus/Krohn/Edwards/Wittmann 325.

GTD 1 Dontje/Engel/Ellis/Ward 376; 2 Habul/Stolz/Grenier/Marciello 341; 3 Caldarelli/Sellers/Lewis/Snow 314.

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Alpine F1 protege
Zhou was on form
in Dubai



Zhou kicks off in style with double success from pole

**ASIAN FORMULA 3
DUBAI (ARE)
29-30 JANUARY
ROUND 1/5**

FIA Formula 2 race winner Guanyu Zhou’s winter quest for a pocketful of F1 superlicence points began in style with a dominant double win in the opening round of the Formula 3 Asian Championship in Dubai. But Zhou and his fellow stepping-down-the-ladder F2 cohorts were outshone in a gripping final race won by FIA F3 newcomer Pierre-Louis Chovet.

The victory of Chovet, a leading light in last year’s Formula Regional European Championship, more than made up for the opening pair of astonishingly sterile races. The Regional F3 Tatuus chassis used in the series has not been renowned for being a very raceable machine in its first two seasons of use in Asian F3, FRegional and FRenault, and the wide-open expanses of the Dubai Autodrome exacerbated the processional nature of the action.

Chovet had qualified on the front row for the opener alongside polesitter Zhou, but a poor start dropped him to fourth, and that’s

where he stayed. Fastest laps from this race decided the grid for the sequel, Chovet got another less-than-perfect start, and finished fourth again. The French racer then topped the second qualifying session in his Pinnacle Motorsport car to line up on pole for race three, but once again lost out in the opening-lap jousting.

Williams F1 test driver Roy Nissany, looking for his first race win since defeating Pietro Fittipaldi to Formula V8 3.5 honours at Jerez in 2017, took advantage to grab the lead in his Hitech GP machine. Nissany had already taken a distant second to Zhou in the opener, by placing his car in all the right places to fend off fellow F2 racer Jehan Daruvala’s Mumbai Falcons weapon. By the time Chovet had squeezed his way past star turn Dino Beganovic – the Swedish Ferrari junior made a superb debut at this level after graduating from Italian F4 – for second place, Nissany was three seconds up the road.

Undeterred, Chovet sliced away at the gap. He was clearly quicker than Nissany, and the duo spent a lap side by side at almost every corner before Chovet got past. That frantic battle also brought Beganovic, Isack Hadjar, Roman Stanek and Ayumu



Chovet won
final thriller

ALL PICS: F3 ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP


WEEKEND WINNERS

**ASIAN FORMULA 3
DUBAI (ARE)**
Race 1 Guanyu Zhou
Abu Dhabi Racing by Prema
Race 2 Guanyu Zhou
Abu Dhabi Racing by Prema
Race 3 Pierre-Louis Chovet
Pinnacle Motorsport

**TOYOTA RACING SERIES
HAMPTON DOWNS (NZL)**
Races 1 & 2 Matthew Payne
M2 Competition

**MICHELIN PILOT CHALLENGE
DAYTONA (USA)**
Kuno Wittmer/Orey Fidani
AWA (McLaren 570S GT4)

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Iwasa into the fight, and Beganovic crowned a superb weekend by also passing the Israeli for second. That repeated his result from race two, in which he followed Abu Dhabi Racing by Prema team-mate Zhou home. Hadjar was also impressive, the French F4 graduate finishing fourth behind Nissany, after taking third in race two.

Daruvala had a miserable time following his opening-race podium. In the finale he was involved in an opening-lap clash that eliminated team-mate Kush Maini from contention and ended Zhou’s race, but stormed back from 19th to seventh.

Zhou’s exit from that one means he holds a slender one-point lead on Chovet, and four on Beganovic, going into this weekend’s sextuple-header at Yas Marina.

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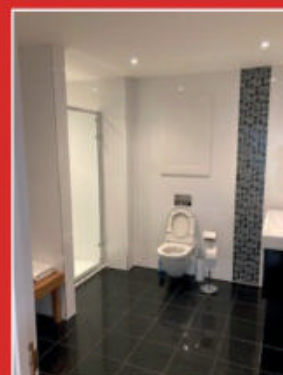
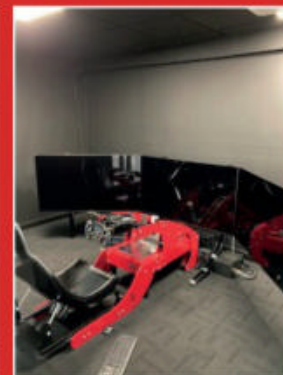
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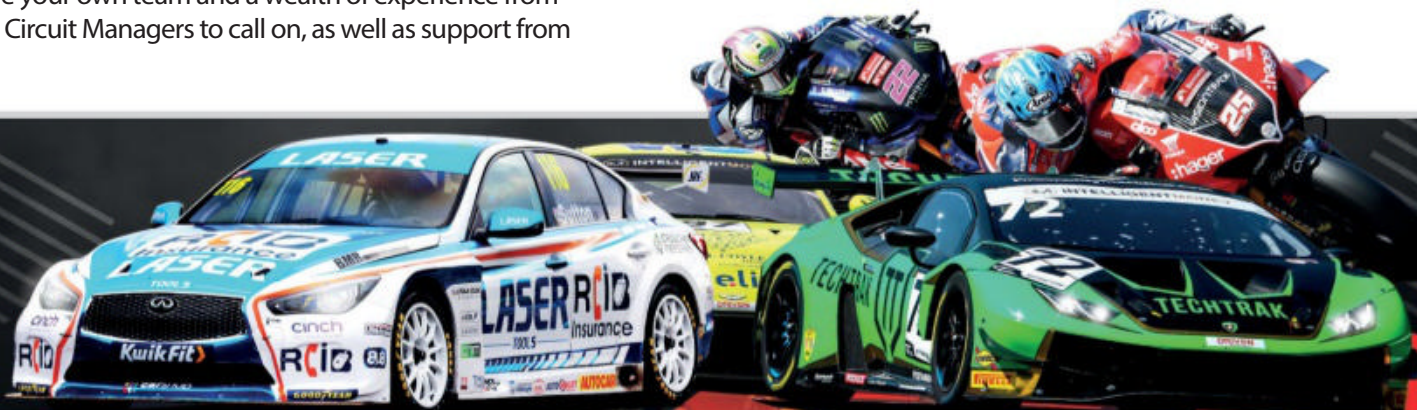
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New series will feature a car similar to this Alfa 158-styled racer, but with added rollbar

SERIES PLANNED FOR ALFA ROMEO 158-INSPIRED CAR

TIPO184

A new series for machines inspired by the successful Alfa Romeo 158 grand prix racer will be operated by the British Racing & Sports Car Club in 2022.

The Tipo184 concept was created by Dowsett Cars, a company founded by television car-builder/designer Ant Anstead, and the series will feature drivers buying kits to convert a regular Mk2 Mazda MX-5 into a machine that resembles the 1950s Formula 1 car. An example, which does not feature a roll bar, has already been built.

The Alfa 158 dominated the inaugural F1 world championship season in 1950. It powered Giuseppe Farina to the drivers' crown, despite having first been built in 1938, and achieved success not only before the Second World War but immediately after it.

A pilot race for the machines is planned at Cadwell Park in August ahead of a full series in 2022.

"It's something we were approached with by Ant Anstead and his team of people at Dowsett Cars," said BRSCC head of formulae development Greg Graham. "We get approached by numerous projects, as do all clubs, every year and this struck me as a little bit

different. They've spent a couple of years coming up with the idea and building the first car, and the lads involved in it are really well connected. They convinced us they've got a lot of interest in the road-spec cars and race-spec cars globally, so we thought let's give them a bit of support to develop a race series."

Graham believes that the MX-5 – a car the BRSCC has strong links with through its Mk1 and Mk3 championships – is one of the key selling points of the idea. "You don't need to go out and spend a lot of money on specialist parts," he said. "The MX-5 is a cracking donor car and you do get a lot of kit cars that use their underpinnings, so it makes complete sense.

"It's not a historic racer and it's not a modern car – it's not one or the other – and people are intrigued by it. It's got a lot of plus points and it's completely different to anything else."

Anstead added: "I was so inspired by the Alfa 158 that I made my own version of it from scratch. It was such a great experience building and driving it that I wanted to give other enthusiasts the opportunity to build their own."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Elite reveals its Junior racers as new team joins

GINETTA JUNIOR

Leading Ginetta Junior squad Elite Motorsport has revealed a mixed line-up of podium finishers and rookies for the 2021 season, as the number of entries in the series has already surpassed 20.

Elite has been the team to beat in the category in recent seasons, and has powered Adam Smalley, James Hedley and Tom Lebbon to the past three titles.

Tommy Pintos and Seb Hopkins, both of whom took a podium with the squad in their rookie campaigns last year, will lead Elite's 2021 roster. Will Jenkins will also remain with the team, after joining for the final three rounds of 2020.

Joe Warhurst, who made his debut at the penultimate event last season, will also race for Elite, and will be joined by karting graduates Max Hall and Josh Rowledge.

Meanwhile, a new team will enter Ginetta Junior this year. Breakell



Hopkins finished fifth in 2020 standings with Elite

Racing, which is more used to running prototype machinery, will run Ginetta scholarship finalists Aqil Alibhai and Fergus Chalmers.

"The transition for our team into the Ginetta paddock from our roots in sports-prototype racing has been a couple of years in the making," said team manager James Breakell. "Our strategy is to give talented young drivers a route into prototype racing."

The winning scholarship drivers have also announced which teams they will be competing for this season. Maurice Henry will drive for the Fox Motorsport squad, while Robert de Haan becomes Richardson Racing's first confirmed driver.

STRONG INTEREST IN NEW GINETTA GT ACADEMY

GINETTA GT ACADEMY

An impressive 20 cars are expected on the grid for the inaugural round of Ginetta's GT Academy series this year.

The category replaces the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club as the manufacturer's entry-level division and features the new GTA-spec G55 (below), which will run on road tyres. The series will feature predominantly on the support bill of British GT but is also due to appear at the Silverstone British Touring Car Championship event.

Ginetta motorsport manager Ash Gallagher says 22 cars are currently in build, with one destined to race with the 750 Motor Club and another for a driver planning a testing programme this year.

"If you had said six months ago we're looking to have 20 cars at round one, I would've been made up," he said. "It's testament to how good the car is, and that makes it much easier to sell if everyone loves driving the G55. We've had hundreds of people drive the car from our pool of drivers and they've all liked it."

G40 Cup graduate Roy Alderslade and former GT4 Supercup competitor Lee Goldsmith are the latest drivers to reveal that they will be competing in the GT Academy this year, driving for the Assetto Motorsport squad.

Gallagher added that nearly all 40 places on the combined GT5 Challenge and G40 Cup grid are taken for 2021, while Ginetta Junior interest is also strong (see above left).

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Karting graduate Bolger will join Bilinski at Carlin

KOKORO MEDIA

Bilinski moves to Carlin for F4 bid

BRITISH FORMULA 4

British Formula 4 podium finisher Roman Bilinski has switched to Carlin for his second season in the category this year, where he will be joined by promising karter Dougie Bolger.

Bilinski finished eighth in the standings last year in his first season in single-seaters with Arden, but has now moved to the squad that has powered the champion in four of the six years to date of British F4.

Bilinski is only the second driver with previous F4 experience to be announced as racing in the series for 2021, and is set to be the highest-placed driver to continue.

"Last season gave me a lot of really valuable experience, and I'm looking forward to putting that together with the team to really unlock my potential," said Bilinski. "I know first-hand how competitive the championship can be, so I've got a busy winter now to keep testing, keep learning and make sure we arrive at Thruxton [for the first round] in the best position possible."

Japanese racer Bolger, meanwhile, has become Carlin's third driver announced for 2021, alongside fellow karting graduate Kai Askey. Bolger, who is half-British and has been part of McLaren's DNA Programme that has supported karters, has already completed numerous tests with the Carlin squad.



HAWKINS

Festival winner Smith to branch into historics by racing Ralt RT4

GEOFF LEES TROPHY

Formula Ford Festival winner Rory Smith will add a 1980s Formula Atlantic car to his 2021 programme in a bid to broaden his racing experience.

Smith, 21, will race a two-litre single-seater Ralt RT4 (right) in the new Geoff Lees Trophy series of races alongside an ongoing programme of modern Formula Ford racing. The car has been sourced from New Zealand and is due to arrive in the UK in March ahead of the opening races at Silverstone in late May.

“It’s a step up to slicks-and-wings and a lot more power,” said Smith’s father Ray. “This seems a more cost-effective option in a powerful car to gain experience and build

his reputation. It has 220bhp and weighs 470kg, so it’s very similar to more modern cars. We’re certainly not shutting the door on modern racing: this is to complement it.”

Smith’s RT4 was originally raced in the US in 1985 by Charlie Batka and was campaigned by the late Jeff Krosnoff in 1987. It was then sold to Australia and New Zealand and was latterly raced by Tony Quinn. More than 100 RT4s were built by Ron Tauranac’s Ralt company through the early 1980s, primarily for Formula Atlantic, and there has been no obvious place to race them in the UK until now.

The Historic Sports Car Club’s Geoff Lees Trophy is open to all up to two-litre 1980s single-seaters. It is one of two new categories from the club, alongside the



Production Car Challenge, that were tentatively launched last year and feature more modern machinery. Both are set to have expanded calendars in 2021.

“Geoff Lees Trophy is bringing in different and later single-seaters – we will pool those with the Aurora category,” explained HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. “We’ve also got three events for the 80s Production Car Challenge and we’re extremely pleased about that. We’ve got some Porsche owners interested and we’re really excited.”

PAUL LAWRENCE & STEPHEN LICKORISH

Thundersports opens to Trans-Am and IMSA GTs

THUNDERSPORTS

Trans-Am and IMSA GT cars from the 1970s are being invited to join the grid for the Historic Sports Car Club’s

Thundersports series in 2021.

The series, which recreates the ethos of the original Thundersports races of the 1980s, has predominantly run over the past two seasons for

a field of pre-1981 sports-prototypes, but the promoters are now keen to build a GT element to the grid and are seeking to encourage period GT cars, including those from the US-based Trans-Am and IMSA GT classes.

The five-event series is open to a range of cars, notably those of the type used in the World Championship, FIA GT Championship and FIA 2 Litre Sports Car Championship up to 1981, along with Can-Am sports-racing cars from the 1970s and Ford Pinto-powered Sports 2000s from up to 1990.

“We feel that’s a natural [progression] and, from the showing we had at the Silverstone Classic in 2019 and our series since then, I think we will see some superb racing with a real variety of cars now, which will be spectacular,” said HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne.

In addition, Dee-Crowne has extended an invitation to drivers and teams who normally race this type of car in Europe to contest some events in the UK, at least in the first half of the season.

**PAUL LAWRENCE
& STEPHEN LICKORISH**

IMSA GTO cars from '70s are encouraged to join



MOTORSPORT IMAGES



HSCC's Brands Hatch Super Prix event scoops RAC Historic Award

HISTORICS

The Historic Sports Car Club's Brands Hatch Super Prix event has been awarded the Royal Automobile Club's Historic competitive event of the year for 2020.

The Super Prix was one of the first historic race meetings to run in the UK last season after Motorsport UK's suspension of event permits was lifted in July. After uncertainty surrounding whether or not the meeting would be able to go ahead, organisers were praised for the quality of the event that took place.

"Against the odds, we managed to put on an event that was open to the public, and this is down to the cooperation between Jonathan Palmer, MotorSport Vision and our team," said HSCC CEO Andy Dee-

Crowne. "We're delighted this was recognised by our peers in the industry.

"We didn't know it was going to go ahead seven days before the meeting. We had to take a huge leap of faith but, with support from MSV, who also took a huge leap of faith, it worked."

The Formula Junior, 70s and Historic Road Sports, Historic Formula Ford 2000 and Historic Touring Car grids all attracted entries in the 30s. The Historic Endurance Rallying Organisation's Novice Trial and Thruxton Historic were other nominees.

The GT & Sports Car Cup was also recognised in the RAC's Historic Awards, securing the race series title. Formula Junior and the Historic Racing Drivers Club Jack Sears Trophy were finalists.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Micro car class for CMMC Tin Tops

TIN TOPS

The Tin Tops series run by the Southern branch of the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club is introducing a 'micro car' class this season in an attempt to boost numbers so it can run as a standalone grid.

Rather than taking competitors away from popular series such as the C1 Challenge and EnduroKa, organisers intend for the new T4 class to present an opportunity for those drivers to take part in additional sprint races, particularly those based in the

south-east, and who are reluctant to travel too far.

"We want to get Tin Tops to have their own autonomous grid again," explained CMMC Southern's Rod Birley. "We've lumped them in with Super Saloons on a number of occasions, and drivers of the lower-powered cars weren't quite so happy about doing that for understandable reasons. We said to the guys to come up with some ideas to improve grid numbers."

This led to the suggestion of a class for cars such as the Citroen C1, Ford Ka and Peugeot

107. Talks were then held with other clubs running series dedicated to these machines.

"These clubs are oversubscribed in some cases," continued Birley. "We've had some interest in the Lydden round because none of the other clubs go there and it could be a hoot. If you can't get a full team together and you're not able to go to Anglesey and Croft, but can do an event at Lydden, it gives you that opportunity. We're putting these races on for a bit of fun and enjoyment and you can dip in and out."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

IN THE HEADLINES

ELITE'S FIRST F3 DRIVER

Elite Motorsport has unveiled Spanish Formula 4 graduate Javier Sagra Pont as its first driver in BRDC British F3 for 2021, when it will make its debut in single-seaters. Australian Bart Horsten has also revealed he will contest a second season of British F3, with Hitech GP. The 18-year-old competed with Lanar Racing last season and secured a best finish of second at the Silverstone finale.

STANLEY TO CARRERA CUP

Former British GT racer Micah Stanley has become the first driver officially confirmed for the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this year. Stanley drove for the Academy Motorsport Aston Martin GT4 squad in 2019, having previously raced in the European GT4 Series. He makes the switch to Porsches with leading Carrera Cup squad Redline Racing.

ANOTHER MN RALLY DELAY

The Snetterton Rally, due to have been the next round in the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship later this month, has become the latest event to be postponed. Organisers are still hopeful that the Lee Holland Stages at Anglesey will go ahead on 7 March, followed by an event at Donington Park on 21 March. A reserve date of 24 April has been announced for the Anglesey event, in case that one is postponed too.

FARRELLY TO RACE MA7DA

Former Sport Specials class champion Martin Farrelly is set to make a return to racing this season in the Ma7da category. Farrelly, who won Class B of Sport Specials in 2017, has also previously raced in the MR2 championship. His Ma7da (below) will be run by TMC Race Engineering. "The Ma7da championship provides a fun and challenging race series with the cars being rear-wheel drive, lightweight and powerful enough to provide a good adrenaline rush," said Farrelly.



MSV appeals for return of stolen course cars

CADWELL PARK

Leading UK circuit operator MotorSport Vision has continued to appeal for help because a safety car and medical vehicle remain missing after being stolen from Cadwell Park last week.

Lincolnshire Police are investigating after the BMW M240i safety car and BMW X5 medical car, with a combined value believed to be more than £100,000, were stolen from the circuit at approximately 0015 on Tuesday 26 January. Maintenance equipment was also taken during the incident, while the circuit office IT and security systems were damaged.

“It’s a tricky time for us anyway – we simply can’t operate at the moment [due to COVID-19] so it’s unhelpful to say the least,” said MSV operations manager Giles Butterfield. “The police have been very good, very cooperative. Their response



has been excellent and we’re very much hoping that with their help we might be able to recover the vehicles.

“Even though they were stolen at that time of night it seems incredible that someone won’t have seen them being driven, and they’re reasonably easy to spot. They’re not just anonymous vehicles – signwritten on the side, lights on the roof. Hopefully either technology or people’s power of observation will help us.

“The office has been ransacked, a lot of the IT kit has been destroyed in an effort to disable alarms and CCTV, so we’ve got a bit of clearing up to do and a bit of damage to repair as well. Some other maintenance equipment has been stolen, too. It leaves a pretty bad taste to be honest.”

Anyone with information regarding the stolen vehicles should contact the police by calling 101.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Scottish Legends makes switch to run with KMSC

KMSC

The Scottish Legends championship has switched from the Scottish Motor Racing Club to run at Knockhill Motor Sports Club events in 2021.

The series suffered small grids during the shortened 2020 campaign, only attracting five cars for some

rounds, although it was back in double figures for a KMSC-organised event in October, when a number of guest drivers took part. It is hoped that the new arrangement will allow for increased entries again in the future.

“After reaching an agreement with the Scottish Motor Racing Club, the

Legends championship will now run at the KMSC events in 2021 with the first round timed for 16 May,” read a KMSC statement. “Add in the visit of the National and Irish championships at the May British Automobile Racing Club meeting, it is hoped that interest and numbers will grow during ’21 to get back to the glory

days of large grids with hard-fought bumper-to-bumper racing.

“This change leaves an opening for some new content within SMRC race meetings and we are pleased to be working with the club on some exciting new plans to help grow and benefit the whole Scottish motor racing community further.”

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Planning for the future

Despite COVID-19, many race organisers are continuing to evolve and are still coming up with new concepts or ideas to boost existing series – and that’s reassuring to see

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Looking to the future can be difficult when the present is proving such a challenge. Dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and all the uncertainty it brings means organisers are coming up with plans, modifying those, producing more contingency plans, and adapting those amid changing dates for the high-profile events. Therefore, investing in new ideas and improving existing categories for the future could be overlooked.

But this issue of Autosport, along with other news stories from over the past few weeks, proves that’s not necessarily the case in UK club racing. Despite the impact of COVID-19, six new series were still able to launch successfully in 2020, and another seven are already in the pipeline for the year ahead. Other organisers are modifying rules, tweaking eligibility criteria or merging grids with an eye to boosting their fortunes for the future.

Not every club feels the middle of a global pandemic is the right time to be trialling new ideas amid an uncertain economic backdrop. And that’s perfectly understandable. Take the MG Car Club, for example – it has opted to delay making any major changes to its regular schedule for now. “We’re looking to do some things differently in the future, but this year was not the year to try and do something different,” says MG Car Club competitions secretary Mark Baulch. “We’ve gone for a traditional calendar with circuits we know people enjoy.”

“Six new series were still able to launch in 2020 and another seven are in the pipeline”

Others believe that now is the correct moment to be pushing on with plans to add to their portfolio. One such organiser is the Historic Sports Car Club. It had planned to cautiously introduce new series catering for 1980s single-seaters and tin-tops last year, but this became more tentative amid the pandemic. Now, plans are in place for more Geoff Lees Trophy and Production Car Challenge contests this year, and club CEO Andy Dee-Crowne says it’s important that these more modern series are introduced to the HSCC’s programme.

He notes how many people have a close affinity to the cars that were around when they were growing up, and therefore feels it’s necessary to provide somewhere for the next generation of historic enthusiasts to race. “A lot of people say, ‘I wish I had a Golf GTI, I never had one in the day and now I’ve got disposable income to race

one,’” says Dee-Crowne. “That means a lot to that individual. They might not be able to afford to race a historic motor vehicle and their view of a historic motor vehicle will be completely different. In 1966, when the club had its first race, the car that won was 10 years old, a D-type Jag. As we progress through time, we should incorporate and increase the timeline. We’ve got ’60s and ’70s and now we’re going to have ’80s.”

The HSCC is far from alone in this view of needing to continually evolve its portfolio. The British Racing & Sports Car Club has placed a renewed focus on offering what its competitors want, and the approach of the new management has allowed it to attract a variety of existing series under its wing – from Aston Martin Owners Club racing, to Modified Fords, to the Track Attack Race Club. Interest is booming in its new CityCar Cup, while the BRSCC has also been looking to the future – as well as its new MX-5 Clubman and Zeo Proto categories, in this week’s issue are details of the Tipo184 series it is due to operate from 2022. This Alfa 158-inspired, Mazda MX-5-based modern/historic racer is something very different to enter the market. It’s far too early to say how much of a hit it will prove to be, but it’s becoming increasingly rare to see such a completely unique idea reach fruition, and that kind of out-of-the-box thinking from concept creator Dowsett Cars has to be applauded.

As already alluded to, there have also been encouraging developments from a number of series seeking to boost their entry numbers. Two cases of this are the opening up of Castle Combe Saloons to cars built before 2000, while the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club Southern’s Tin Tops series has created a new class for micro cars to capture the interest in racing Citroen C1s and Ford Kas and give drivers the opportunity to contest some additional sprint races. Other categories have entered into new collaborations that could bring multiple benefits for the future, such as Production BMW and Production GTI organisers, and a new tie-up between Equipe 50s and Fifties Sports Car Racing. Add in manufacturer involvement via the new Praga class within the Britcar Endurance Championship and the encouraging interest in Ginetta’s inaugural GT Academy season, and it shows there have been some more positive stories amid the recent doom and gloom.

Multiple lockdowns have given organisers the chance to take stock and look at what they would like to do differently, whether that’s for the coming 2021 season or further down the line. Despite all the challenges the world faces, let alone the club racing community, the continued desire to look to the future and develop new ideas has to be encouraging to see. 🏁



2020

THE NEW CATEGORIES RATED

To the credit of organisers, some new UK series were still able to successfully launch last year, even with the world in the grip of a pandemic

STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

★★★★★

With official backing from the German manufacturer, the new-for-2020 Porsche Sprint Challenge GB was seen by many competitors to be the perfect step below the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, and was aimed at up-and-coming young drivers as well as gentleman racers.

A total of 12 races were held across the condensed six-round season – the same number as was planned pre-COVID – and it featured on the support bill of a number of high-profile events, including TOCA and British GT.

Grids, which consisted of a Pro and an Am element, averaged 14 cars across the year, with a season-high of 17 at the final meeting of the campaign at Silverstone. Well-known Porsche squads such as Redline Racing, In2 Racing and Valluga Racing were represented on the grid, while established drivers including British GT4 racer James Dorlin, who won the inaugural Sprint Challenge title, three-time Carrera Cup GB runner-up Dino Zamparelli and W Series driver Sarah Moore all appeared during the year.

All in all, with a reliable car in the form of the 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport, it was a successful maiden season for Porsche's newest championship despite the adversity of the pandemic.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



STYLES

EQUIPE LIBRE

★★★★★

Equipe Classic Racing has a history of organising popular series, and added more new categories to its portfolio during 2020.

The first was Equipe Libre, which, as the name suggests, caters for a wide range of pre-1966 Appendix K cars. It spawned from Equipe's 3-Hour Relay, which is also open to larger-engined cars than the GTS division. As well as allowing a different group of machines to race, it enables other drivers to have a

second race over an Equipe weekend. Two rounds took place in 2020 and it proved a hit, attracting more than 25 entries and a diverse range of cars, from an MGA to a Ford GT40.

The other new series was Equipe 50s and this had a more modest start. It was paired with the existing Pre-'63 class for two events and featured up to a dozen cars. A potential tie-up with the Fifties Sports Car Racing series could be the perfect route to larger grids in the future.

CITYCAR CUP

★★★★☆

Launching a completely new category during the middle of a pandemic is not the easiest of tasks, but the British Racing & Sports Car Club seems to have struck gold with the CityCar Cup.

It may feature the same base car as the C1 Challenge, but the CityCar Cup machines are very different beasts. The Citroen C1s, Peugeot 107s and Toyota Aygos are significantly modified for the track, including a remapped ECU and adjustable suspension. Donor cars can be converted by individuals or machines can be bought ready to race.

It got off to a sensibly modest start, beginning as a class within the Clubsport Trophy, before 15 cars took part in a standalone race at Croft. The series is set to boom this year, with an estimated 50 cars either already built or in construction.



WILLMORE



HAWKINS

BRITCAR TROPHY

★★★★☆

Created to cater for production cars and offer them a spot in the limelight away from the faster GT machinery, the Britcar Trophy was open to cars from classes 5-7 based on the Britcar Endurance Performance Indicator (BEPI).

Five rounds took place in 2020, which generally consisted of two 50-minute races on the same weekends as the main Endurance Championship. While the opening round at Croft attracted only 11 Trophy entries, which were merged with the Endurance races, the remaining rounds of the campaign

were all standalone events.

Grid numbers steadily improved, with a season-high of 32 cars for the penultimate round on the Silverstone Grand Prix layout, as a plethora of machines and competitors were attracted to the successful fledgling championship.

OTHER (VERY) SOFT LAUNCHES

A number of other categories were set to feature soft launches in 2020 ahead of possible full campaigns this year but, understandably, plans for these new series became more tentative as the pandemic worsened.

The Historic Sports Car Club sought to add some newer cars to its racing programme with the Geoff Lees Trophy catering for a variety of up to two-litre single-seater machines constructed in the late 1970s and 1980s, along with the Production Car Challenge for 1980s tin-tops. But, in the end, just a handful of cars turned up for shared races in 2020 on the Classic Formula 3 and Historic Touring Car grids respectively. Plans are afoot for more action from these series this year. The Geoff Lees Trophy will form part of the Aurora Trophy grid, while interest is encouraging in three standalone Production Car Challenge (below) events.

It's a similar story with the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Mazda MX-5 Mk4 Trophy, where just a couple of the machines ended up running within the Clubsport Trophy last year.

SLICKS SERIES

★★★★☆

It wasn't just the COVID-19 pandemic that the Slicks Series had to contend with in 2020, but also the British weather. The Classic Sports Car Club's newest series was open to saloon, hatchback, sports and GT cars with doors – excluding Radical-like sportscars and Seven designs – and equipped with racing slick or wet tyres.

In a rescheduled calendar, just three meetings were planned, but a healthy grid of 15 cars took part in the first event at Thruxton once UK motorsport resumed in July. That number had dropped to single figures for the following round at Snetterton just a month later, though the race was called off due to a



JONES

deluge at the Norfolk circuit.

The season ended on a more promising note, with 21 cars entered for the final round at Donington Park in September, and currently five events are scheduled for the 2021 season, including a trip to Spa in June.



WALKER

2021

AND A PREVIEW OF WHAT'S TO COME

Understandably, there may not be as many new categories in the pipeline for 2021, but there is still a range of new offerings from clubs

STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY

MAZDA MX-5 CLUBMAN

The British Racing & Sports Car Club's Mazda MX-5 Championship for Mk1 models of the sportscar is one of the best-supported categories in the UK, and for 2021 the club has decided to mix things up a little and split it into two separate championships.

The existing series will continue in its traditional two-day format and will cater for the top MX-5 racers, while a new Clubman championship has been

created that's a little less intense. This is designed for racers on a tighter budget, with the calendar made up of single-day events to reduce costs, and is the perfect stepping stone for new drivers to MX-5s, who would perhaps be wary of entering such a competitive category.

The cars may now be over 30 years old, but they continue to be as popular as ever, so expect this latest addition to the range of UK MX-5 series to be another hit.



GINETTA GT ACADEMY

It's been a while since Ginetta has introduced a new car designed for the UK national racing marketplace. OK, the GTA machine is not completely new, as it's a fresh version of the existing G55, but it's good to see the manufacturer continuing to invest in motorsport in this country.

The car forms the basis of the GT Academy series, the new entry point to Ginetta's motorsport

ladder, and replaces the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club series. On the surface, it may seem a significant jump from the G40 used in the GRDC contest, but it runs on road tyres, has a much less powerful engine than the GT4-spec G55, and has won over many of the drivers to have sampled it so far.

Like the GRDC, it will feature on the British GT support bill, but also gets a one-off appearance at a British Touring Car event with a visit to Silverstone.

And it's set to get off to a very encouraging start, with 20 cars expected to be on the grid this year.

The new GTA will also be appearing in the GT4 Supercup. A more powerful version, but still a step down from the G55s in the rest of the series, will form a new subclass specially designed for those aged 16 to 21 and making the step up from the G40s of Ginetta Junior or the combined GT5 Challenge/G40 Cup grid.



ECURIE CLASSIC RACING

Created by a former competitor, Ecurie Classic Racing is a very similar series to the incredibly well-subscribed Equipe GTS category. Breakaways rarely work out well, but the immense number of pre-1966 small-engined Appendix K machines out there means it's undoubtedly a popular branch of the sport.

Races will last 40 minutes, and a six-round provisional calendar has been assembled under the wing of the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club. It includes two trips to Silverstone, alongside events at Snetterton, Castle Combe, Oulton Park and Donington Park.



WALKER



HAWKINS

PORSCHE CLUB 911 CHALLENGE

After unofficial practice sessions at the Brands Hatch Porsche Festival last year, the Porsche Club 911 Challenge is due to hold its first races this term.

Something of a trip back in time to the 1980s and the Pirelli Porsche Classic series, the new-for-2021 category will be open to all 911s up to and including the 964 type, with the grid broken into three classes: 964s, no slicks and existing race cars permitted; new builds from 1978-89 (G-body

cars only); and air-cooled machines from 1965-77. Intended to run alongside the Porsche Club Championship, the 911 Challenge is scheduled to have six rounds in 2021, featuring visits to Donington Park, Snetterton (twice), Oulton Park, Silverstone – on the Grand Prix layout, with two 25-minute races and shared grids with the Porsche Club Championship and Porsche Classic Boxster Cup – and Brands Hatch for the Festival of Porsche. The majority of races will be one-hour long with drivers able to share cars.



ROBERTS

ZEO PROTO SERIES

There will be a new home for open and closed prototypes and sports-racers in 2021 with the Zeo Proto Series. A collaboration between the British Racing & Sports Car Club and Excool (driver Duncan Williams's company, which manufactures advanced data centre cooling equipment), the new series will feature six classes, ranging from sports protos over 2001cc down to CN-spec and LMP3 cars, plus an invitational division.

Four meetings are currently scheduled for the year, with trips to Snetterton, Silverstone, Brands Hatch and Donington Park. Each round will consist of a 20-minute qualifying session and two 20-minute races, and the series is due to begin on 11 April.

AMON CUP/ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB PALL MALL CUP

Motor Racing Legends will launch two new series of races in 2021. The Amon Cup, solely for Ford GT40s, is named in honour of Chris Amon for his GT40-mounted 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours success. Two 80-minute races will be held, at the Donington Park Historic Festival (1-2 May) and on the Silverstone Grand Prix layout (30-31 October), for pre-1966 examples.

The Royal Automobile Club Pall Mall Cup is a continuation of the successful Pre-'66

Three-Hour race that was held at Silverstone in October last year. The two three-hour races (again at Donington and Silverstone) will feature three classes for Pre-'66 GTs and touring cars, Pre-'63 GTs, and Pre-'61 sports-racing cars. This means a plethora of machines will be able to enter, including AC Cobras, Jaguar E-types, Ford Mustangs, Austin-Healeys and Lotus 15s.

Entrants will be encouraged to form teams of three cars – one from each class – and the overall spoils will be awarded to the winning team.

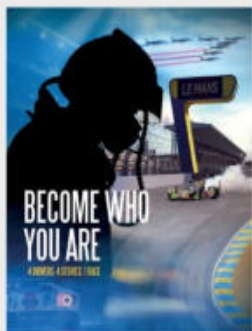


MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Fluorescent Rebellion livery is one of very few highlights

TIRED LOOK AT LE MANS PROVES



DOCUMENTARY REVIEW BECOME WHO YOU ARE: 4 DRIVERS, 4 STORIES, 1 RACE

The Daily Mail once published a review of a television series wonderfully executed by film critic Mark Kermode that read: “Mark’s problem is that he’s watched far

too many movies”. *There’s a non sequitur.*

That failed attempt to deride a movie reviewer for doing their job (and Kermode does his brilliantly) will always inspire a wry smile. But perhaps for the first time Autosport can sympathise with those words. Perhaps this writer has watched too many motorsport films. Or, maybe, yet another sleep-deprived night courtesy of selfish neighbours has taken its toll on the mood, because this review of *Become Who You Are: 4 Drivers, 4 Stories, 1 Race* isn’t favourable.

Available to watch on Amazon Prime, this near-90-minute documentary from 2020 bills itself as enabling the viewer to “discover what it takes to race and compete at the world-famous 24 Hours of Le Mans”. It tries to do so by very loosely tracking the events of the 2019 edition of the French enduro, with Bruno Senna (fourth overall for LMP1 team Rebellion Racing), Memo Rojas (fifth in LMP2 for IDEC Sport), Scott Dixon (fifth in GTE Pro for Ford Chip Ganassi Team USA), and Jules Gounon (11th in GTE Pro for Risi Competizione) the main persons of interest.

But, to put it bluntly, if you’ve seen any of *Endurance* from Porsche, *Truth in 24* or *Journey to Le Mans*, you can afford to give this one a miss. It doesn’t thrill, ‘take you closer to the action’, or get you invested

in any of the lead protagonists anything like as well as the others. And by repeating similar themes, only less successfully, the format feels tired.

The main points are the dangers of motorsport, the financial troubles of working your way up the junior ladder, and the pressures that being a racing driver can put on personal relationships. In principle, that’s absolutely fine as a way to contextualise the drama of Le Mans in the first instance, but *Become Who You Are* never moves beyond these topics. Footage of Gounon’s massive Corvette shunt at Hockenheim and Dixon’s enormous collision with Jay Howard in the 2017 Indianapolis 500 are present and as sobering as ever. But just when you hope you’ve cleared these themes to focus on the events at the Circuit de la Sarthe, they work their way back in again.

From the opening gambit, which focuses on Ayrton Senna, it’s clear that this documentary is aimed at a non-motorsport audience. But post-production sound effects of tyres screeching and bodywork crunching when the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix is mentioned are simply ill-judged.

It labours the point and does so insensitively, meaning the actual race at the centre of *Become Who You Are* is largely forgotten. It seems as though clips of the event have then been edited back in, to the accompaniment of a bombastic soundtrack with title cards that flash up featuring the race time. Although licence has been given to use the Radio Le Mans commentary feed, little of the meaningful coverage is featured. Viewers will not know what’s going on in the race, despite the promise of a “fast-paced and intimate motorsport documentary”. It falls well short.

Positives include additional interviews with Chip Ganassi and ex-Minardi and Simtek Formula



EHRLHARDT/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

PAST ITS PRIME



Jules Gounon shared Ferrari 488 GTE Evo with Pipo Derani and Oliver Jarvis in 2019 race

1 driver Jean-Marc Gounon. They ‘get it’ and offer meaningful insight, but that’s not enough to sustain the protracted running time.

“*Shoestring, Taggart, Spender, Bergerac, Morse* — what does that say to you about regional detective series?” asks Alan Partridge when he pitches an array of television shows to Tony Hayers. The fictional BBC chief commissioning editor replies: “There’s too many of them.” Partridge comes back with: “That’s one way of looking at it. Another way of looking at it is, people like them, let’s make some more of them.”

It seems a similar mentality was used when *Become Who You Are* was given the green light.

There’s little joy to be had in throwing punches at a project that’s meant to engage the masses who are ambivalent towards racing. But to stand a chance of achieving that aim, the execution needs to be solid, not a repeat of tired tropes that are deployed without finesse and then slapped with a meaningless title.

MATT KEW

FINISHING STRAIGHT



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



Following the recent death of ex-Minardi Formula 1 driver Adrian Campos, Autosport remembers when the successful junior single-seater team owner attempted to return to the grand prix fold with a squad of his own. Although Campos never reached the grid due to financial perils, it did briefly live on thanks to the renamed Hispania Racing Team. **Go to bit.ly/CamposF1**



autosport.com/podcast



Autosport assesses how the 2021 Formula 1 technical regulations are impacting the teams courtesy of plans to cut downforce levels by 10%, change the floor design, and the token system in an effort to control development. We also look at the driver line-up changes, how smaller teams will benefit from the budget cap, plus Renault’s rebranding as Alpine.

WHAT’S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Super TC2000

Round 9/10

Buenos Aires, Argentina

7 February

F3 Asian Championship

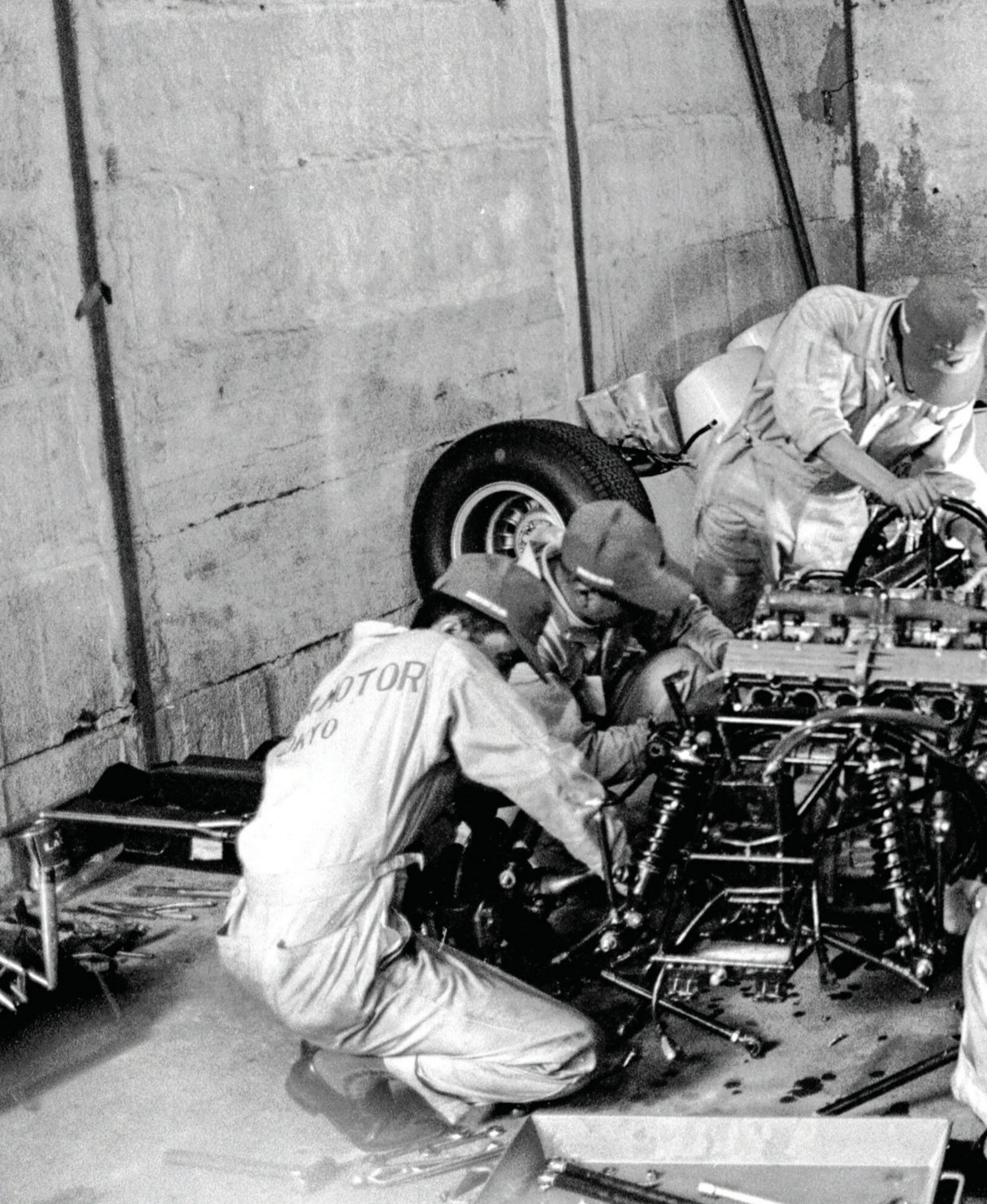
Rounds 2&3/5

Yas Marina, Abu Dhabi

4-7 February

Livestream on Motorsport.tv,

Fri 1130, Sat 0615, 1130



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Honda mechanics busy themselves addressing the many mechanical issues that dogged the sole V12-powered RA272 entered on the manufacturer's Formula 1

debut in the 1964 German Grand Prix at the Nurburgring. US driver Ronnie Bucknam, also a first-timer, just made it onto the grid in 22nd and last place with a new engine fitted (and reportedly after an

extra session was laid on so the required minimum of five practice laps could be run), then put in a decent showing in the race before spinning at the Karussell and ending up 13th of 14 classified finishers.



For classic 1960s Formula 1 DVDs head to dukevideo.com/F1





IN DEFENCE OF...

DRS

'Artificial', 'gimmick', and 'a band-aid' are just some of the criticisms levelled at the Drag Reduction System since it was introduced at the beginning of the 2011 Formula 1 season.

The system was seen as a quick, affordable and efficient fix to improve overtaking. The need for such a device was perhaps best illustrated at the last race without it, the 2010 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, where Ferrari's Fernando Alonso spent lap after lap stuck behind Vitaly Petrov, unable to get within striking distance of the Renault to make a pass as his chances of a third title slipped away.

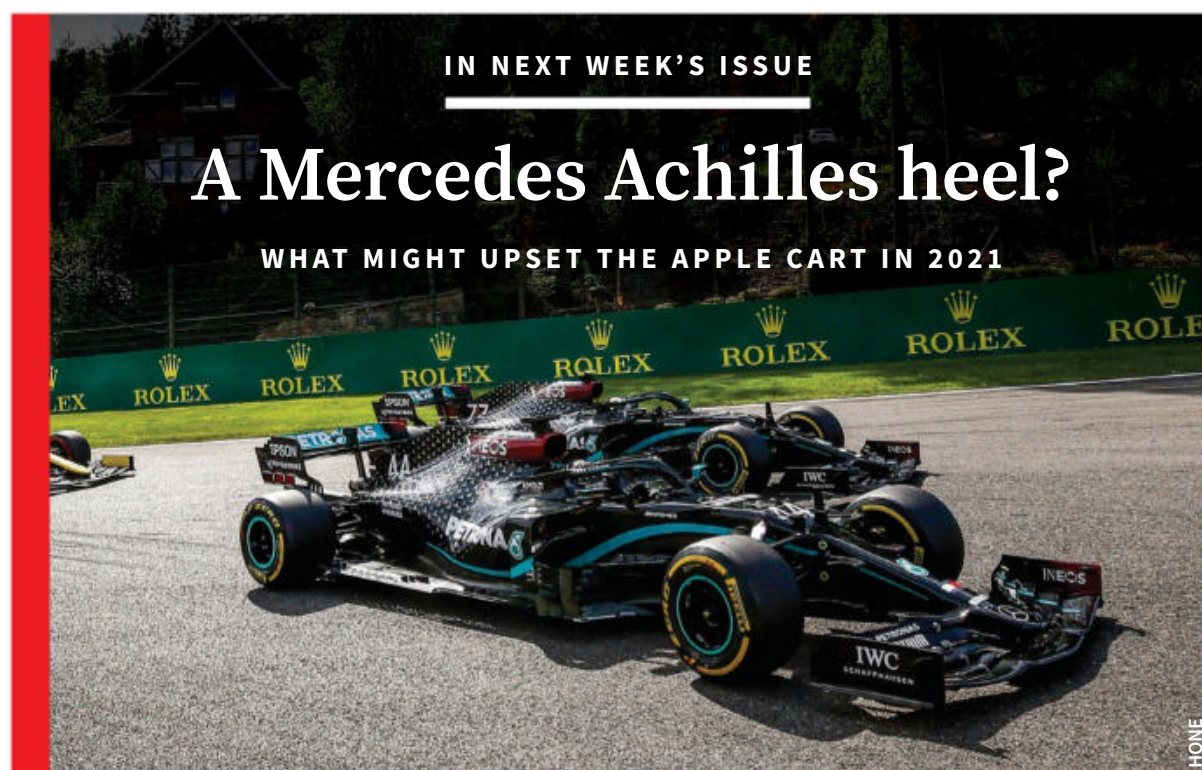
Trial-and-error was the order of the day for much of DRS's inaugural season, with some circuits implementing two activation zones, and the lengths of those zones differing to find the desired middle ground. Its use allowed one of F1's greatest ever comebacks, when Jenson Button activated his McLaren's DRS on a drying track during the 2011 Canadian GP to pass Michael Schumacher's Mercedes in the closing stages, before going on to pressure

Sebastian Vettel into a mistake and take a famous win. Without DRS, it's unlikely that Button would have found a way past Schumacher, and certainly not with enough time to pressure Vettel into dropping his Red Bull on the final lap.

The length of the activation zones has meant that overtakes are sometimes too easy, leaving armchair critics feeling vindicated, but that's a problem with how DRS is implemented on each circuit, not a fundamental issue with it. When it's implemented correctly it can produce great racing, such as the 2017 Spanish GP, when it allowed both Vettel and Lewis Hamilton the opportunity to make a pass, but not so that it was a foregone conclusion.

Over the years, other series such as Formula 2, FIA F3 and the DTM have introduced DRS. Ten years after it was first introduced, it may not be universally loved but, with cars still producing too much air turbulence to follow closely, it's certainly offered the chance for more entertaining races, regardless of what the critics say.

STEFAN MACKLEY



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Our goal is to re-create the vibrant clubman racing of the late '50s and early '60s where fantastic classic sports cars can be driven on track by passionate amateur enthusiasts.

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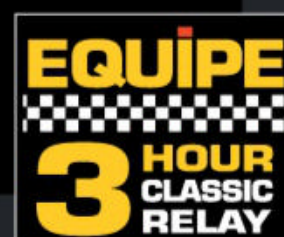
Run under Appendix K regulations on Dunlop Historic Tyres, FIA papers are welcome but not demanded. We have races and classes to accommodate from Sprites to Cobras, MGBs to Mustangs and A40s to Lotus Cortinas.

New for 2021 – Equipe Libre, open to any pre '66 race car from GT, GTS or Touring Cars.

Come and join us.

Race Calendar 2021

🇬🇧 Track Day - Brands Hatch	March 4th
🇬🇧 Silverstone National	March 20th
🇬🇧 Brands Hatch Indy	April 24-25th
🇬🇧 Oulton Park International	May 22nd
🇬🇧 Silverstone GP Circuit	June 12-13th
🇬🇧 Castle Combe	July 3-4th
🇬🇧 Donington	July 17-18th
🇬🇧 Snetterton	September 4-5th
🇬🇧 Silverstone National	October 2nd
🇵🇹 Estoril Classic - Portugal	October 10th



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