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190.69MPH Castroneves wins fastest Indy 500

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

3 JUNE 2021

'I'm ready to fight for world championships'

GEORGE RUSSELL on *that* Imola shunt, driving for Mercedes and taking on Hamilton

'It would be amazing for the sport if Lewis continues. I'd absolutely love to go against him'

'The difficult moments bring you together'

'We all want something sorted by the summer'

PLUS

Dupasquier dies in
Moto3 Mugello crash

Rosberg beats Hamilton
after **Extreme E Senegal** clash



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Time for Russell to finally move into the F1 spotlight for good?

The 2021 Emilia Romagna Grand Prix was not George Russell's finest moment. It wasn't so much the failed attempt to pass Valtteri Bottas's Mercedes (with a Williams!) as the aftermath, in which Russell's criticism of Bottas was a tad harsh and went on for a bit too long.

But, as he tells Alex Kalinauckas in our open and interesting interview on page 14, he and Mercedes have already moved on. Russell is not one to dwell on his errors, but he is someone who will learn from them. His ambition is clear and, following his stunning 2020 Sakhir GP performance, there can't be many fans who don't want to see him in the championship-winning squad next year.

The only real argument against the move is if it upsets the intra-team peace at Mercedes, one the team treasures after the Nico Rosberg-Lewis Hamilton rivalry. But it also has to plan for the future; it needs a leader to fight Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc when Hamilton finally retires. Getting the 2014 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner in to learn alongside Lewis would be a tantalising prospect – one Russell would relish. And, as he says, to be the best you have to beat the best.

Helio Castroneves must now be considered one of the greatest Indianapolis 500 drivers of all time, following his fourth victory last weekend, at a record speed. That he did it for one of IndyCar's newest teams, and at the age of 46, makes his story all the more compelling. Turn to p24 for how he did it in a dramatic 105th edition.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

kevin.turner@autosport.com

**NEXT WEEK
10 JUNE**

Azerbaijan GP
All the action from the
sixth Red Bull-Mercedes
bout of 2021



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Etherington/
Motorsport
Images

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The Mugello paddock came together for a minute's silence for Dupasquier



GOLD AND GOOSE
motorsport
IMAGES

TRIBUTES TO FALLEN MOTO3 RIDER

MOTO3

The MotoGP paddock was left in shock last Sunday morning at the news of the passing of 19-year-old Moto3 rider Jason Dupasquier.

Dupasquier (right) was involved in an accident during qualifying for the Moto3 class at the Italian Grand Prix at Mugello, the Swiss rider crashing at the fast Arrabbiata 2 section before being struck by Tech3 rider Ayumu Sasaki. Gresini's Jeremy Alcoba was also involved, though his role remains unknown.

Dupasquier required trackside medical treatment before being transferred to the Careggi hospital in Florence. On Saturday evening FIM medical officer Giancarlo de Filippo said Dupasquier was in a "very serious condition". The Swiss rider – according to a statement issued by his family on his Instagram account – was declared brain dead on Sunday morning and was brought off life support. He was surrounded by his family.

Both Sasaki and Alcoba thankfully walked away from the incident unharmed. Sasaki said it was "the hardest afternoon of my life".

Dupasquier made his grand prix debut in 2020 with the Prustel GP team aboard KTM machinery and endured a tough maiden campaign, ending it without points. However, Dupasquier – still with the Prustel



GOLD AND GOOSE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

GP KTM team – made a stellar start to the 2021 season, scoring points in the first five rounds and occupying 10th in the standings with a solid haul of 27 points.

The paddock mourned Dupasquier's passing on Sunday afternoon with a moment of silence ahead of the MotoGP race.

Tributes from all over the motorsport world flooded in across social media on Sunday, while Fabio Quartararo dedicated his Mugello victory to Dupasquier, carrying a Swiss flag onto the podium in his honour.

"I get emotional really fast in every condition, so to start the race during that one minute of silence was really difficult and every time

I cross Turn 9, I was thinking about Jason," the Yamaha rider said. "This one is for him. It's not a great feeling. You achieve a win, but we lose one of our friends. So, it's not easy."

Quartararo's sentiments were echoed throughout the rest of Sunday's media debriefs with the MotoGP field, while Williams Formula 1 driver George Russell tweeted: "Motorsport can be so cruel. Thinking of the family and friends of Jason Dupasquier and everyone in the MotoGP paddock. Ride in peace, Jason."

In the World Superbike paddock at Estoril, Swiss rider Dominique Aegerter took his first win in the World Supersport class. He also dedicated his triumph to countryman Dupasquier.

Dupasquier's Moto3 team-mate Ryusei Yamanaka – who withdrew from Sunday's Moto3 race – also shared a tribute on his social media on Sunday evening to his "very good friend". "It hurts so much. No words. Still I can't believe it," he wrote. "We are very good rivals and very good friends. When [we] finish the races on Sunday, we ate cheesecake together – like routine. It was my pleasure to be [your] team-mate and work with you. Rest in peace. I will race with you Jason."

On Monday, Dupasquier's Prustel GP team released its own statement



DUPASQUIER

following his passing, in which it vowed to continue racing in his honour.

“We are extremely proud of what Jason Dupasquier has given us during his time with the Prustel GP,” part of the statement read. “Especially this year he was proving a great improvement, being constantly in the points. We firmly believe that he was close to his first podium in Moto3 World Championship.

“Now we want to go this last way together with him. We can’t tell you today what will happen next – but one thing is for sure, it will continue – for Jason! Always in our hearts – we are a family and Jason will remain in our hearts forever. Let’s stick together in this difficult time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your support and messages.”

Though the team has vowed to continue, at the time Autosport went to press it was not clear if it would enter into this weekend’s Catalan Grand Prix.

Dupasquier’s death is the first for a grand prix rider during an official race weekend since 2016, when Moto2 ace Luis Salom passed away from injuries sustained in a practice crash during the Catalan GP.

LEWIS DUNCAN



WOLFF: COSTS ‘ABSURD’ FOR MANY DRIVERS

FORMULA 1

Toto Wolff believes motorsport needs to be made “much more affordable” for youngsters after Lewis Hamilton said Formula 1 has become a “billionaire boys’ club”.

The seven-time world champion made the statement in an interview with Spanish publication AS, adding it would be “impossible” for him to break into motorsport today given his background.

Three drivers on the F1 grid – Lance Stroll, Nicholas Latifi and Nikita Mazepin – are sons of billionaires.

Mercedes F1 chief Wolff said that while even drivers who benefit from wealthy



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

backgrounds are “fighting their own demons”, he agreed it was important to get costs under control for young talent.

“What we can do is make sure that grassroots racing becomes more affordable, so kids that haven’t got any financial background can be successful in the junior formulas,” Wolff said.

“All the big F1 teams

[need to be] able to identify those kids, rather than making it so expensive that a good go-karting season costs 250,000 euros, an F4 season 500,000, an F3 season 1million.

“That is totally absurd, [and] needs to stop, because we want to give access to kids that are interested in the opportunity to race.”

LUKE SMITH



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Marko warns Merc over wings

FORMULA 1

Helmut Marko has warned Mercedes chief Toto Wolff that he should “look at his front wings” as Formula 1 heads for possible protests in Baku this weekend.

The FIA will clamp down on so-called ‘flexi-wings’ from the French Grand Prix (18-20 June) onwards by introducing new rigidity tests after Lewis Hamilton made a comment about Red Bull’s “bendy wing”.

But with teams still able to take advantage of the rule loophole for the Azerbaijan GP, Mercedes team boss Wolff warned F1 was heading for a “very messy” situation, indicating protests could loom.

But Red Bull advisor Marko feels the FIA had made it clear when the new tests would come into force, and indicated Red Bull could counter-protest Mercedes over the flexibility of its front wing.

“We find this a bit strange,” said Marko. “The FIA has decided that the rules for the test, especially for the torsion resistance, will be changed. This will apply from Paul Ricard onwards.

“If Mr Wolff thinks that is too late for him, if he does that [protest], he is free to do so. But I think he should also look at his front wings. Because on ServusTV and also on Sky, there was a recording where you saw how drastically this front wing approaches the ground.”

LUKE SMITH



Mercedes completes Bottas wheel change after 43 hours

FORMULA 1

Mercedes has revealed it was able to finally complete Valtteri Bottas's right-front wheel removal last week – 43 hours after his race-ending pitstop in the Monaco Grand Prix.

Bottas's tough start to the season (below) continued in Monaco after an issue in the pits caused the wheelnut to become stuck, bringing his race to an end when he looked set to finish second. Mercedes was unable to get the wheelnut off at the track, instead waiting to get the car back to the UK before using heavy-duty machinery to finally complete the job at its factory.

"We concluded that to remove that nut we were going to need some fairly specialist equipment and that would be better done here in the factory," explained Mercedes head of strategy James Vowles. "It allowed us an opportunity to do an autopsy on it to understand really how that nut was worn and gather some clues to allow us to do a better job in the future."

Mercedes released a video showing the wheelnut being removed from the car, two days after starting a task

that typically takes 1.5 seconds.

The team's commitment to a post-mortem of what happened in Monaco was not restricted to Bottas's dud pitstop after the team scored just seven points in the principality. Lewis Hamilton could only finish seventh after struggling for pace throughout the weekend, and then seeing his race strategy backfire after being jumped in the pitstops by two cars.

The result, combined with Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez finishing first and fourth respectively for Red Bull, meant Mercedes lost the lead in both the drivers' and constructors' championships. But Vowles made clear the team would look to learn from its defeat and come back stronger.

"It is a fair observation that one race a season ends up being very poor," said Vowles. "That is just an indication that we are a world championship-fighting team, on the limit of pushing every boundary."

"It doesn't matter whether it's car performance or pitstops or human endurance or the drivers taking everything they can to risk everything for every point that is available to them. When you are there, you will make mistakes."

"We had 29 points to Red Bull and we're one behind now," added team principal Toto Wolff. "So it isn't the prettiest of pictures, and Lewis is behind too by four points. It's clear that things are going to go to the very end and I hope that these seven points are going to make a difference. Let's just learn, move on and conquer again."

LUKE SMITH

Webb steps in to electric Alfa

PURE ETCR

British sportscar specialist Oliver Webb is among the latest additions to the inaugural series for the electric Pure ETCR touring car category.

Webb completes the line-up for the Romeo Ferraris squad of Alfa Romeo Giulias, alongside ex-GP2 veterans Luca Filippi and Stefano Coletti, and 2019 Le Mans 24 Hours GTE Am podium finisher Rodrigo Baptista.

While Filippi and Coletti were already confirmed for the squad, Baptista and then Webb have been named in the past week as the start of the season looms at Vallelunga on 18-20 June.

Long-time ByKolles World Endurance Championship LMP1 stalwart Webb has dropped down to that series' LMP2 class for this season while the German team readies its Hypercar contender, but said he threw his hat into the ring for a Pure ETCR seat at an early stage.

"I spoke online with the championship coordinator, and he said he'd keep my name out and about in teams' eyes," said Webb. "I understood that Hyundai and Cupra [the other two teams competing] would most likely take drivers with factory contracts with them already, but when I saw there was a team that hadn't announced all its drivers I got in touch. They told me to come and do a few laps."

Webb got his first taste of the Pure ETCR Alfa in a Vallelunga test. "Stefano and Luca were doing the main testing, and I fitted in around them," he added. "I just tried to do the best I could in that short of space of time, and give good feedback."

"The performance came as quite a shock: I've tested the Gen1 and Gen2 Formula E cars and raced the Jaguar I-Pace, and it was much quicker than the I-Pace and also quicker in a straight line than the Gen2 FE – it's got a lot of power."

MARCUS SIMMONS





DAKAR Audi announced the driver line-up for its 2022 Dakar entry with an electric car this week. Multiple Dakar Rally winners Stephane Peterhansel and Carlos Sainz move across from the X-raid Mini squad and will be joined by two-time DTM and 2016 World Rallycross champion Mattias Ekstrom. The trio will test and develop the electric 4x4 prototype that Audi has been designing in collaboration with Q Motorsport, led by X-raid boss Sven Quandt. **Photograph by Audi Communications Motorsport/Michael Kunkel**

Fuel concerns for new DTM era

DTM

DTM cars could run out of fuel at the Monza season-opener later this month, according to the boss of BMW squad Walkenhorst Motorsport.

The DTM wants to position itself as the fastest GT3 racing category following its switch away from Class 1 machinery, and is relying primarily on Balance of Performance to differentiate itself from other championships using the same ruleset. However, higher speeds also push up fuel consumption, which could become a problem on a power-sensitive tracks.

It is understood that if drivers run at full pace for the entire duration of the 55 minutes-plus-one-lap race, they could miss the chequered flag by not just a few miles, but several laps.

“If there is no safety car, we won’t be able to cover the full distance,” said Walkenhorst team boss Niclas Konigbauer. “We drive with maximum power. Monza

is extreme in terms of fuel consumption.”

Fuel management is not a new topic at Monza, with several teams struggling to complete the full 65-minute stint length in April’s GT World Challenge Europe round at the same venue. And that was despite series promoter SRO turning down the power of each engine as part of its BoP.

While the DTM races are comparatively short, each car requires additional fuel for warm-up and to return to the pits after the chequered flag – as well as a 2kg sample for technical inspection.

There are possible solutions. The drivers could resort to the usual lift-and-coast strategy seen elsewhere. The DTM could reduce the race length to ensure all cars make it to the finish without having to resort to fuel saving, or make tweaks to the BoP to increase the mileage of the cars.

GT3 cars, as homologated by the FIA, usually have some spare capacity in their fuel tanks, which could also help.

SVEN HAIDINGER

IN THE HEADLINES

HILL AND HERBERT TO STAR

Grand prix winners Damon Hill and Johnny Herbert are set to star in an ‘in conversation with’ evening show called The Inside Track at London’s Cadogan Hall on 14 July. During the build-up to this year’s British GP, 1996 Formula 1 world champion Hill and 1991 Le Mans winner Herbert will join forces for a one-off show to remember tales and stories from their time in F1. The two drivers-turned-pundits will be joined by Sky Sports F1 colleague Rachel Brookes. Tickets are available at aegrepresents.co.uk.

PEREZ TO WAIT FOR DEAL

Red Bull will not begin talks with Sergio Perez over a new contract with the team until Formula 1’s summer break at the earliest, according to Helmut Marko. “The race pace is there,” he said of Perez’s performances so far in 2021. “The area where we’re still lacking is in qualifying. We need to see an improvement there.”

ERIKSSON IN FOR MULLER

Ex-BMW factory driver Joel Eriksson will make his Formula E debut in the inaugural Puebla E-Prix in Mexico on 19-20 June, replacing Dragon Penske Autosport racer Nico Muller. Swiss driver Muller has a clashing commitment at the DTM season opener at Monza, where he will drive a Team Rosberg Audi.

MORE DUCATIS FOR 2022

Ducati is closing in on deals with Valentino Rossi’s VR46 team and Gresini that will see the brand’s presence on the MotoGP grid return to eight bikes next year. The make-up of the 2022 field is set to be the eight Ducatis (including the work’s team retaining Jack Miller and Francesco Bagnaia), four Hondas (factory team and LCR), four Yamahas (factory team and Petronas SRT), four KTMs (factory team and Tech3), while Suzuki and Aprilia will have just two bikes each.

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Ogier wants Toyota future and Le Mans outing as new car tests



WRC

Seven-time World Rally champion Sebastien Ogier wishes to continue his relationship with Toyota next year as he embarks on the next chapter of his career.

Ogier will heavily scale back his WRC involvement at the end of this season but intends to put together a partial programme in 2022 when the new hybrid Rally1 regulations come into effect.

“We definitely need to discuss at

some point with the team to see what is the strategy for the future, and what the strategy is for the driver line-up and how I could fit into that,” said the 37-year-old Frenchman.

Keen to remain with Toyota, which guided him to his latest WRC crown last year, Ogier has highlighted ambitions to race at the Le Mans 24 Hours. That could be more likely should he stay with the Japanese marque, which already has a new Hypercar for the World Endurance Championship.

“My dream is to stay with Toyota – but

I want to do Le Mans [24 Hours],” he explained. “But there’s nothing [to report on negotiations at the moment]. That discussion has barely started yet as we were very focused on this year, but my wish is to stay with the team.”

Toyota recently completed the first full test of its 2022-specification WRC car in Portugal. Test driver Juho Hanninen completed 600km on gravel roads in the new GR Yaris (above).

TOM HOWARD

New Glickenhaus passes endurance test

WEC

The Glickenhaus Le Mans Hypercar came through its first endurance test without major problem ahead of its World Endurance Championship debut at the Algarve circuit later this month.

The Glickenhaus-Pipo 007 LMH suffered only one issue over the course of 30 hours of running at the Aragon circuit last week. An electrical connector

broke, requiring a protracted delay in the pits, but team founder Jim Glickenhaus stressed that the part that failed was over life and had already completed 8000km.

“The car ran great, like a train,” said Glickenhaus. “We did almost 5000km at Aragon, which included running through the night, and by the time we finished, we had 10,000km on the car [since it started testing].”

The team also gave the car that it will race in the

Portimao 8 Hours on 13 June a shakedown – in its race livery – at Aragon. The car that undertook the race simulation is now set for a rebuild before Glickenhaus fields both its entries at Monza in mid-July.

Six of the seven drivers on the books of Glickenhaus Racing took part in the test. Romain Dumas, who will race in Portugal, was absent as he prepares for the Pikes Peak hillclimb.

GARY WATKINS



IN THE HEADLINES

COVID THWARTS SOLBERGS...

Oliver Solberg has withdrawn from this week's Rally Italy after his father, 2003 World Rally champion Petter Solberg, tested positive for coronavirus. The 19-year-old was set for his second top-flight WRC outing with Hyundai after finishing seventh at February's Arctic Rally Finland. Solberg Jr is currently serving a 14-day hotel quarantine period.

...AND AUSTRALIAN TIN-TOPS

Last weekend's Australian Supercars round at Winton was postponed as Victoria prepared to go into lockdown following a COVID-19 outbreak. The round will be moved to the break between Townsville and Sydney Motorsport Park, with 31 July-1 August the proposed new date.

WORLD CHAMPIONS TO SPA

Reigning World Endurance GTE Pro title winners Nicki Thiim and Marco Sorensen will contest this year's Spa 24 Hours as part of an all-factory Aston Martin driver line-up. The Danish duo will race in the blue-riband round of the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup on July 31-August 1 along with fellow works driver Ross Gunn in a Vantage GT3 fielded in collaboration with the British Garage 59 team.

FAMILY AFFAIR AT RICARD

French brothers Teddy and Jimmy Claret scored their first TCR Europe victories on home ground at Paul Ricard last weekend, Teddy in race one and Jimmy in the second encounter. Volcano Motorsport Cupra driver Mikel Azcona scored a sixth and a second behind the Peugeot drivers and extended his championship lead. The European GT4 races were won by the Mercedes of Lluc Ibanez/Xavier Llovetas and the Toyota of Stephane Lemeret and Antoine Potty. Brits Bailey Voisin and Charlie Fagg (United Autosport McLaren) were third in race one.



Hawkins to race Neate's Focus

BTCC

Jessica Hawkins will return to the British Touring Car Championship with Motorbase Performance as a stand-in for regular driver Andy Neate at Snetterton.

The 26-year-old has been drafted in to pilot one of the team's four Ford Focus STs after Neate elected to sit out the second round of the championship (12-13 June) due to personal reasons. The decision comes after Neate was at the centre of a dramatic accident in the second race at the Thruxton season opener, which also involved Team Hard's Glynn Geddie and BTC Racing's Jade Edwards.

Neate contacted Hawkins to offer

the W Series racer the drive. It will be her second BTCC appearance, having contested last year's Snetterton meeting in a Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra.

"Obviously, he didn't need to ask twice," said Hawkins. "I am humbled to be on the receiving end of Andy's generosity – I'll do my best to make the team proud."

Neate added: "In avoidance of any doubt, I will be returning behind the wheel of the Motorbase Ford Focus at Brands in June."

One-time BTCC race winner Senna Proctor will also return to the series at Snetterton, having secured a deal to drive the third BTC Racing Honda Civic (below) for the remaining rounds of the season.

TOM HOWARD



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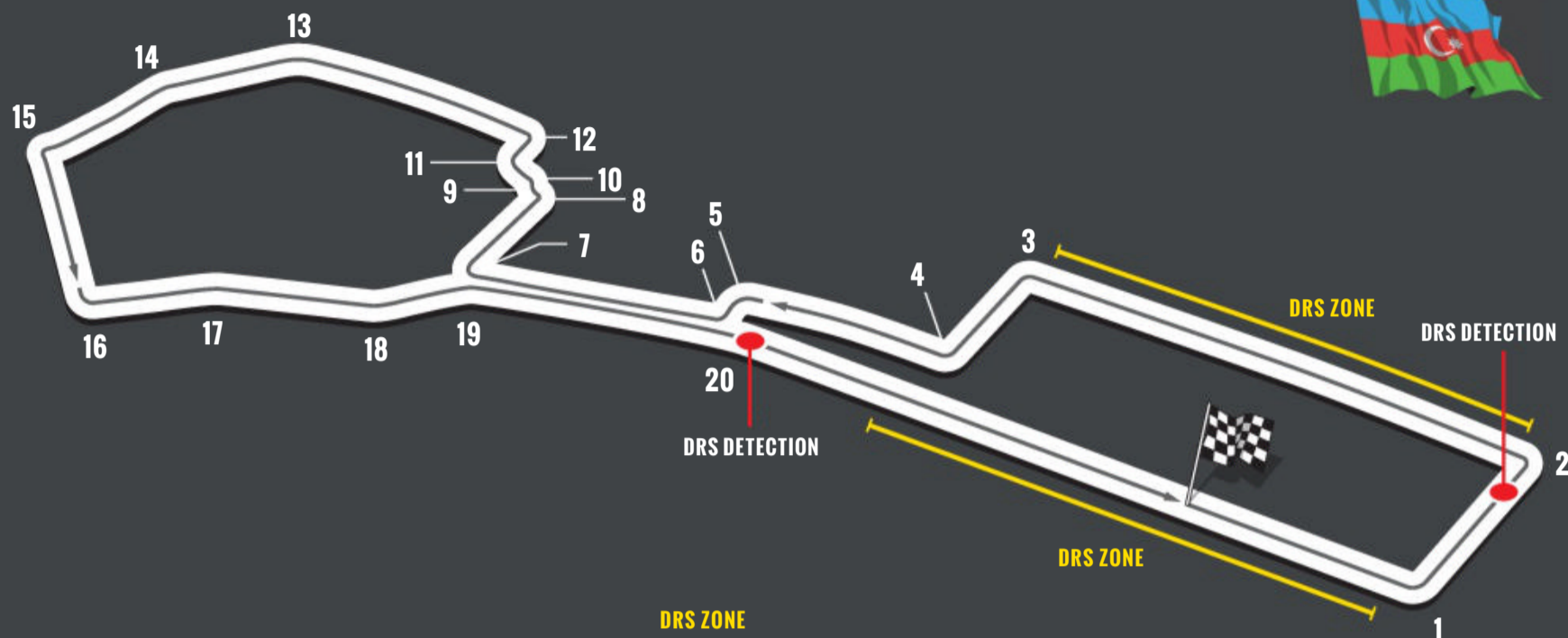
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F1 AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

LENGTH 3.730 miles NUMBER OF LAPS 51



2019 POLE POSITION
Valtteri Bottas 1m40.495s

POLE LAP RECORD
Valtteri Bottas 1m40.495s (2019)

RACE LAP RECORD
Charles Leclerc 1m43.009s (2019)

UK START TIMES

Friday 4 June

FP1 0930 FP2 1300

Saturday 5 June

FP3 1000

QUALIFYING 1300

Sunday 6 June

RACE 1300

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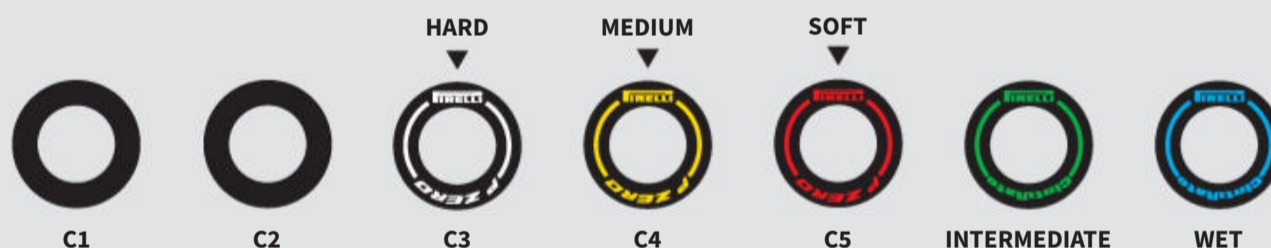
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HIGHLIGHTS

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CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	105
2	Hamilton	101
3	Norris	56
4	Bottas	47
5	Perez	44

Constructors

1	Red Bull	149
2	Mercedes	148
3	McLaren	80
4	Ferrari	78
5	Aston Martin	19



RACE STATS

Previous Baku winners

2019	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull
2016	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes



Best results

Hamilton	1st x 1
Bottas	1st x 1
Ricciardo	1st x 1
Vettel	2nd x 1
Raikkonen	2nd x 1
Perez	3rd x 2
Stroll	3rd x 1
Verstappen	4th x 1
Leclerc	5th x 1
Sainz	5th x 1



F1's unsung star of 2021

The young guard have been shining this year, according to our driver scores, but among them is a driver too easily overlooked: Alfa Romeo's Antonio Giovinazzi

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

After five races so far in the 2021 Formula 1 season, the average scores in Autosport's driver ratings make for interesting reading (even if we do say so ourselves!). This particularly applies when considering the generation-shifting narrative that appears to be playing out in the championship right now.

Currently, the averages are topped by McLaren star Lando Norris, 21, who has delivered two podium finishes in the opening quintet and is yet to come home without points. Then there's Red Bull racer Max Verstappen, still only 23, who just happens to have won two races and currently heads Lewis Hamilton in the drivers' standings of what is so far shaping up to be an excellent, multi-team title fight. Exactly matching Verstappen's average so far is Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, also 23, who has been incredibly fast in what remains a power-deprived package and might have scored his first glittering result of the season without his latest home heartbreak last time out in Monaco.

Then comes 24-year-old Esteban Ocon, who has enhanced his reputation by leading the way for Alpine during the early races of Fernando Alonso's F1 comeback. He too has an identical average-twin right now and they're both just ahead of Hamilton.

It's Alfa Romeo's young ace: Antonio Giovinazzi. The 27-year-old Italian is really shining in his third full-time campaign. Plus, if just a few things had gone differently at a couple of key moments

"Giovinazzi's 4-1 qualifying score shows he has the edge on speed over Kimi Raikkonen"

(mainly in the pitlane), his results would look even better.

In the season-opener, Giovinazzi might have been the lead Alfa home if he hadn't dropped behind Kimi Raikkonen, who he battled in the early laps, with a slow first pitstop. At Imola he was outqualified by Raikkonen on the only occasion this has happened so far in 2021 — but can put a pretty big chunk of blame on Nikita Mazepin interfering at the end of Q1. In the Emilia Romagna race, Giovinazzi followed Raikkonen throughout before having to pit late on with a brake problem, which dropped him down the order.

In Portugal he was bizarrely hit by his team-mate in the early laps then chased Sebastian Vettel for most of the rest of the proceedings, beating the Aston Martin in the end after putting in a nice late pass. At Barcelona, he lost ground at the start and then had another pitstop disaster — the strangely punctured new left-

front — and then couldn't catch the safety car queue due to confusion over following his delta once he'd finally escaped the pits. But Giovinazzi still recovered a reasonable result with two long stints to the flag. And then came Monaco.

Progressing to Q3 in what was a challenging qualifying session given the cooler temperatures compared to practice was seriously impressive and there was a chance he could have qualified a few spots higher had he been able to recreate his Q2 time. In the race, getting briefly stuck behind Daniel Ricciardo after pitting meant Ocon was able to overcut ahead, but Giovinazzi was still able to bring home his best result of the season with 10th. It brought Alfa's first point of 2021 and included another bold lap one display (fast starts are usually a feature of his races).

Giovinazzi has clearly made significant progress, but Alfa reckons it began even before the current campaign. "He clearly made a step between the two seasons, but it was already like this in the second part of 2020," says Alfa team principal Frederic Vasseur.

It's not only his team that will be pleased with how Giovinazzi is performing so far in 2021. His F1 place comes via Ferrari, which he said at the end of last year had set him "clear" targets for his third F1 season. The suggestion was that the Scuderia wanted him to display the step up he has so far delivered.

But it remains rather difficult to assess exactly how far Giovinazzi has come because of Raikkonen's fortunes in the other Alfa. F1's most experienced driver is so far producing rather fluctuating form in 2021, but Giovinazzi's 4-1 qualifying score shows that the Italian has had the edge on speed. Last year, Giovinazzi pipped Raikkonen 9-8...

Raikkonen's results so far in 2021 may obscure exactly how big a step Giovinazzi has taken, but at least he is leading the way at Alfa. This could well be important when it comes to the team's future.

Sauber's sponsorship deal with Alfa ends at the conclusion of the current campaign and it is not a given that an extension will be agreed. This complicates its arrangements for 2022, which of course include its driver line-up. There are several Ferrari juniors eyeing an F1 graduation in Giovinazzi's footsteps — including one of Alfa's 2021 reserve drivers, Callum Ilott, who drove for the team in practice at Algarve. But there has also been speculation that Sauber could potentially end its Ferrari engine partnership and link up with Renault, which only supplies Alpine — its rebranded works squad. Right now, Alpine juniors occupy the top two spots in the Formula 2 championship...

But even if Sauber/Alfa did decide to make a change to its previously stable driver line-up for next year, the major regulation changes make a total pilot swap logically unwise.

So far in 2021, Giovinazzi is making an excellent case for why he deserves to extend his grand prix racing career. 🏆



Lessons from Dupasquier's crash

Some fatal accidents are impossible to legislate against, but there are still aspects of the Mugello tragedy where MotoGP fell significantly short in its response

LEWIS DUNCAN

This is not the first time that this happens, it's not going to be the last." Franco Morbidelli perfectly summed up the gut-wrenching reality of motorsport last Sunday following the MotoGP Italian Grand Prix, a day marred by the death of 19-year-old Moto3 rider Jason Dupasquier from injuries sustained in a horrible crash in qualifying on Saturday.

MotoGP is no stranger to rider deaths. Motorsport has taken wonderful strides in improving safety, but motorcycle racing – for all the advancements made – remains inherently more dangerous due to the simple fact a rider is exposed. The crash that ultimately killed Dupasquier was a freak incident, but it was the unavoidable danger in bike racing – a rider falling in front of another.

The paddock hadn't suffered such tragedy since 2016, when Moto2 ace Luis Salom lost his life in a crash during Friday practice for the Catalan GP. In the premier class, no rider has perished on a race weekend since that black day at Sepang when Marco Simoncelli was killed by a lap-two crash at the 2011 Malaysian GP.

The timing of the official FIM announcement on Dupasquier's passing was jarring. It came as the Moto2 field was getting ready on the Mugello grid for its race, while 15 minutes before the 23-lap MotoGP a minute's silence was held out of respect for Dupasquier. As a result, a number of riders – who were already upset at having to go straight into FP4 on Saturday minutes after Dupasquier had

“Danilo Petrucci admitted racing in the wake of the tragedy made him feel ‘dirty’”

been taken away in the medical helicopter – were even less happy that the decision had been made for the race to go ahead.

“I asked to not race today because it was not correct for me. Also, I think if it [a fatal crash] happened to a MotoGP rider we wouldn't race,” said Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia, who retired with a lap-two fall. “So, I'm not happy about today, I'm not happy about the decision of someone to let us race after news like this. Doesn't matter if I crashed, I'm just thinking about him [Dupasquier] and his family. We have lost a 19-year-old rider, so this is very difficult to accept, and to accept the decision of someone to let us race.”

Tech3 rider Danilo Petrucci was even more critical, blasting an apparent lack of dialogue between the riders and race organisers about continuing racing. The Italian admitted racing in the wake of the Dupasquier tragedy made him feel “dirty”.

MotoGP is yet to say whether it held any discussions with Dupasquier's family about racing on, as was the case in 2016 when Salom's family gave their blessing for proceedings to continue. However, cancelling the race isn't without precedent either. The 2011 Malaysian GP didn't restart after Simoncelli's crash. Perhaps this is where Bagnaia and Petrucci's frustrations stem from.

Cancelling a GP also isn't a simple decision for organisers, with complicated television deals and race contracts – something the COVID pandemic has undoubtedly made even trickier – needed to be taken into consideration. Then there is the argument to be had that the only way to honour a fallen racer is to continue racing. After all, Dupasquier loved the mad world of motorcycle racing but also knew the risks. For many a rider, racing on is how they cope.

Ultimately, this is the impossible situation that faces MotoGP whenever a tragedy like this happens. Unless there is a clear safety issue, more riders than not will want to race because, for many of them, that is their way of coping. “Sometimes life is a bastard, sometimes life is shit. But you need to go forward because it's life,” said Morbidelli, who lost his father to suicide back in 2013.

All MotoGP can do now is learn any lessons it can. From a safety point of view, there sadly isn't much it can do to avoid the type of incident that claimed Dupasquier. MotoGP's new LED marshalling panels made sure the red flags were visible for all, and the rapid response of the medical team cannot be faulted.

But how it covered the accident can definitely be improved. A replay of the crash was shown before Dupasquier's condition was known. And for the duration of the over half-hour delay to proceedings, constant live shots of the trackside response to Dupasquier as well as his transfer to the medical helicopter were continually broadcast.

Ducati's Jack Miller branded one broadcaster's repeated replays of the crash during an evening meal last Saturday as “unacceptable” and ordered Ducati to unplug all of its TVs in its hospitality.

But complaints about crash replay overkill aren't new. The same comments were made after the terrifying Johann Zarco/Morbidelli crash in Austria last year, likewise in the Formula 1 paddock following Romain Grosjean's fiery Bahrain accident. Social media only adds to an issue that is disrespectful to competitors and shows little regard for their families. Ultimately, world feed providers should have a duty of care to their competitors when it comes to how they broadcast serious incidents.

Whether the Italian GP should have been cancelled has no right answer. But it's clear motorsport must do better in broadcasting serious incidents. As for the riders, the fact they carried on in the wake of such tragedy deserves nothing but admiration. 🏁

➔ P38 MOTOGP REPORT

YOUR SAY

Rather than dismissing Monaco as a relic, something that does not work for modern F1, why not try to make F1 work for Monaco?

TOM MARTIN

Time for a change of format at Monaco

Monaco is still by far the best place to watch Formula 1 cars on the limit. Cambers and kerbs combine to create a piste that has to be fought, roads that aren't perfect, that create mistakes, giving us those moments where for a split second you don't know if the driver is in the wall or able to save it and survive for another lap. Those moments that are at the very heart of why we watch this sport.

Sadly they were few and far between in the grand prix, but I lost count of them in qualifying. It was pure sporting theatre.

But something does need to be done about the race. It's clear that Monaco does not work with these regulations. Heavy cars and delicate tyres don't mix well with the place. Earlier in the weekend Lewis Hamilton said that maybe it's time for a change of format at Monaco. I'm now starting to think he's right. Nothing drastic, just a bit of tinkering here and there. Rather than dismissing Monaco as a relic, something that does not work for modern F1, why not try to make F1 work for Monaco?

How about for one race only, the sport makes three pitstops mandatory. This will hopefully eliminate the turgid tyre saving, creating more of a strategy battle with the possibility of drivers having to push harder for longer around the stops.

It may not mean any more overtaking, but it might just create a race and if that gives us the opportunity of enjoying the magic that Monaco can provide without the yearly debate about a processional grand prix, then isn't it worth a shot?

The sport seems determined to create more of a show with format changes later this year, so isn't it also time to look after its so-called jewel in the crown?

Tom Martin

By email

No driver should benefit from their own mistakes

I don't think for one minute that Charles Leclerc deliberately crashed to keep his pole position – there are less risky places at Monaco to do that – but I do think that a rule needs to be implemented to stop those who have cheated and those who benefit from their own mistakes.



Simply, anyone who causes a red flag should lose all their times from that session up to that point. Also, drivers causing following drivers to abort their laps due to yellow flags should lose their fastest lap to that point. These rules should apply only to an 'at fault' driver, not any innocent victims of their mistakes.

Peter Allen

By email

Keep the point for fastest lap

I have to disagree, Kevin Turner, with your column (20 May) arguing that the point for fastest lap should be abolished. Personally, I think it adds some additional and much welcome variables to the race, together with the potential for added drama.

You noted that somebody could conceivably lose a race due to gambling on an extra 'fastest lap' pitstop, but again that's surely another supplementary dimension and a risk teams have to weigh up?

I'm strongly in favour of retaining it and I've also long thought that F1 ought to additionally award an extra point for pole position, as they do in IndyCar, and maybe also a point for most laps led, too.

James Rollin

Belper, Derbyshire


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GEORGE RUSSELL

‘I’D ABSOLUTELY LOVE TO GO AGAINST LEWIS’

George Russell is still searching for a first point for Williams, but he also feels ready for if – or *when* – he gets a seat at Mercedes

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

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GEORGE RUSSELL

Prix paddock. Beyond is another small walkway, and then it's the harbour, filled with excess and glistening in the sun.

This is how Autosport finds Russell. He's just finished a TV interview, the Wednesday before the race given over to the necessary distractions of a Formula 1 driver's life. He's chatty, friendly and calm. We're struck by his general sense of ease – at one point as we're setting up, a fan passes him a boat fender to sign. "I hope that's waterproof!" he laughs (hand sanitiser quickly provided once this exchange has finished, such is the way of the world in 2021).

Russell last featured as Autosport's sole cover star in August 2020. Then, we'd chatted via Zoom as he sat in the Silverstone paddock while we were confined to one of the unused TV commentary boxes overlooking the start/finish line. Back then, talk was of honing his craft and staying grounded. Russell still exuded confidence – he's got a demanding reputation, yet one that extends to his own expectations of his performances – but the 2020 Sakhir GP changed all of that. It was a self-assured drive befitting a driver who knows his own talent and potential, who seized his moment, even if things went terribly wrong through no fault of his own.

The figure facing Autosport now is rather different from the agitated, angry Russell who strode furiously through the Tamburello gravel trap on lap 31 of the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. He'd just climbed from his wrecked FW43B and marched over to remonstrate with the other driver involved in what was an

cuts a rather relaxed figure. The 23-year-old is leaning against a fence lining one side of the narrow pathway between the Williams motorhome and the edge of the Monaco Grand

enormous, and enormously expensive, crash. Valtteri Bottas more than held his nerve as Russell reached the cockpit of his similarly demolished Mercedes W12, his hand gesture leaving little interpretation required for what he thought of Russell's actions. But the mistake Russell made that day – one he acknowledged in the period following the Imola event, after initially giving fiery interviews pushing his perspective on the reasons behind the incident – was going over to immediately lodge his displeasure.

The attempted pass and the crash that followed were a part of racing. It was everything else that made observers wince. Russell flew home from the race with Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff, who clearly made his views known to his young charge.

"I think experiences from Bahrain last year, and other difficult moments throughout my junior career, have allowed me to put disappointment to one side and move on," Russell replies when asked how easy he finds it to push past sporting adversity. After all, at the next race in Portugal, he was 0.057 seconds from getting a Williams into Q3...

"I want to be a world champion. And to be a world champion, you've got to perform over 23 races, or 25 races, and you'll inevitably have a disappointing race or a victory taken away. But you

Russell remonstrates with Bottas after Imola clash – but he soon had to row back

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SUTTON



Team-mates next year at Mercedes?

can't dwell on it. I had that in Formula 2 [in 2018]. Most of the time, with reliability issues. It's so frustrating when you felt like it was something out of your hands. But I knew I needed to win that championship if I wanted to get to F1, therefore I had to put the disappointment behind me and focus on the here and now. And that's what I try to do in my everyday life. Looking forwards, not behind. If anything, my relationship with Toto has grown since the incident at Imola. There was a lot of tough love. But he ultimately wants to extract the absolute maximum from me, or from what he believes I can achieve.

"I think I'm mentally strong enough to be able to take this stuff on the chin, reflect on it, and come back stronger. Obviously, emotions were high... from all accounts. But my relationships with everybody – from everyone at Williams, to a number of the key people at Mercedes, who I've spoken with since – are better than ever. Often these difficult moments bring you closer together."

It's clear where Russell went wrong at Imola, and it wasn't in attacking a Mercedes that had no business running ninth, being lapped by the other Black Arrow that had the pace to win the race. He now stresses that "in that moment, I didn't really comprehend that it was effectively a team-mate of mine" he was racing when taking on Bottas, who was »



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struggling to find and keep critical tyre temperature. But simply by being in that position in what remains F1's ninth-fastest car after five races so far in 2021, it again highlighted Russell's potential.

That's critical when considering the futures of several F1 drivers. Last year, Mercedes had Bottas signed to a one-year contract extension, which it would have to re-evaluate while also trying to reach a long-term arrangement with its multiple world champion, Lewis Hamilton. By early August 2020, it had decided to keep Bottas on for a further season, but Hamilton's deal for this year was only announced in February and only covers 2021. The squad is therefore in an identical position 12 months on. But Russell is also approaching the end of his initial three-year deal with Williams, while former Mercedes junior Esteban Ocon is also coming to the end of a two-year contract at Renault/Alpine. Then, there's the vague possibility of Max Verstappen jumping ship from Red Bull...

There are lots of factors for Wolff to consider, but also no reason

"WE ALL WANT SOMETHING DECIDED EITHER WAY BY THE SUMMER BREAK. IT'S IN EVERYBODY'S BEST INTERESTS"

to believe that the Imola incident has significantly altered Russell's likely career trajectory. After all, he says that he and Wolff "don't even talk about it now, it's behind us" in their weekly chats.

Mercedes has created something truly excellent with Hamilton, and Bottas's contributions – mainly in not being a destabilising influence, as Nico Rosberg once was – should not be overlooked. But Wolff's way of operating a grand prix squad as a nimble, franchise-style business means, perhaps more than ever, that the set-up needs to be futureproofed. And Russell's Sakhir GP performance showed exactly what he can bring to Mercedes should he earn what he respectfully calls, for Williams's benefit, a "move" and not a promotion for 2022.

"I know that if I perform to the potential I believe I'm capable of, you're putting yourself in the shop window," says Russell. "And I think that race in Bahrain gave me a unique opportunity to almost



prove it. Whereas, prior to that, it was always a small unknown, because of the situation I found myself in [with Williams]."

A Mercedes graduation is, naturally, the dream scenario for Russell. But it also ticks a lot of other boxes. Hamilton has regularly said that he welcomes the challenge from F1's latest generation of rapid racers, and that contest would take on another tantalising dimension if one of the championship's most highly rated young drivers were on the other side of the Mercedes garage. Then there are the fans looking forward to the same thing, and Silverstone seeking to sell tickets for future British Grands Prix. It's not hard to imagine how F1, as a promoter, would also feel about such a move – probably along the same lines as the Fleet Street media pack wondering what would happen to their publications' interests in F1 post-Hamilton. The box-office potential of a Hamilton-Russell Mercedes line-up is clear.

Autosport braces Russell for an inevitable question about his future once this season ends and his latest understanding of the situation. His facemask aids the pokerface, but his answer is revealing. "Naturally, we all want something decided either way by the summer break," he says. "I think it's in everybody's best interests. But I'm not pushing the subject with anybody – with Mercedes, with Williams. Because I'm focused on my job here. >>

RUSSELL ON HIS UP-AND-COMING F1 RIVALS

Formula 1's new generation really starred in the 2021 Monaco Grand Prix. Charles Leclerc claimed pole in bizarre circumstances with his Q3 crash, before then being unable to start the race in the painful circumstances that followed the next day. Max Verstappen inherited 'pole' and, after a canny request from his Red Bull squad to move him up to actual pole was denied, he dominated the race to score his second victory of 2021 and take the points lead. Behind him on the podium came Carlos Sainz Jr, scoring his first Ferrari rostrum in a spirited display, and Lando Norris, who is now third in the drivers' championship.

But this pack of F1's best up-and-comers, in which George Russell surely belongs, has been tasting glory for a while now. So, who does Russell rate as particularly strong



among his up-and-coming peers?

"Nah, well, obviously, they're all very, very good," he replies, not wanting to take the bait. "Throughout their whole careers, we've all been at the front, all won in various categories, and have all got different strengths and weaknesses.

But on the whole, I think we're so fortunate to have had one another.

"Lando's slightly younger than us, so we never really came across Lando, as such. My first year was in Formula 2 [racing against him, in 2018]. But having so much talent across the board allowed us to really push each other. And it's been so helpful to come through the ranks together. Obviously, Max, Charles, Lando – they're gonna be here for the next 10 to 15 years.

"I want to do my talking on the track – that's not for me to judge. And I never like to say how good I

think I am or how bad I think I am. Everyone has their own opinion. At the end of the day, I believe in myself, and I believe I can be Formula 1 world champion. And at the end of the day, if I want to be a Formula 1 world champion, I am gonna have to beat Max, Charles and Lando."

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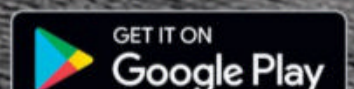
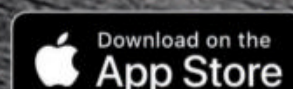
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Russell takes huge pride in being a Williams driver...

"I'm just enjoying every single race, enjoying where I find myself. But I think it's really exciting that Lewis has openly been talking about the next couple of years. And it's clear that he's still performing at an incredibly high level. And I think it will be amazing for the sport, and for Mercedes, if he were to continue. And obviously, as any young driver, you want to go against the best. And Lewis is the best."

We can't miss this chance to ask a question our editor made clear needed to be put to Russell during this interview: can he beat Hamilton if he does one day go up against him in equal machinery?

"Lewis's record speaks for itself," Russell replies. "I believe in myself that... I think I'm far from the finished article. I think I'm at a good level at the moment, but I feel like I've got so much more to offer. Every single race I'm learning more and more about how to extract more from myself, more from my engineers. And it's not just about pure pace, it's about everything. And that's what Lewis is clearly showing at the moment – that he has got that complete package sorted, and everything between him and that team is nailed on. And that's the goal, that's the target [for me]. So yeah, I would absolutely love the opportunity to go against him. Until I do, I couldn't answer that question."

Russell isn't alone in wanting to know how the next phase of his career will play out, with Hamilton also recently stating "it would be great to get something in place before the break". For the first time since 2018, Mercedes has been in a sustained title fight with another team from the off, and Red Bull shows little sign of its ambition waning to secure a title before Honda exits F1. Then there are the considerations of how teams must operate under the cost cap and (minor) new aerodynamic design tools performance-balancing rules and developing the 2022 machines. It's in everyone's interests to get deals sorted as early as possible this year. But the same was true for Mercedes and Hamilton in 2020.

The other side of Russell's future career direction concerns his current squad. Williams has carried on building back towards the front of the grid with the FW43B, and is far from the doldrums of 2018-19. But the car is peaky and has a particular problem with wind sensitivity, so points continue to prove elusive.

But the team at least has a regular starring role during qualifying sessions, with Russell boasting a 100% record of progressing from Q1 at each event so far this season. His results in 2021 (see page 22) are not going to stand out in the history books, which is another reason why the Imola incident was costly. But anyone who says this is evidence of Russell not living up to the billing he's getting



...and has the confidence to push development forward

as a Mercedes star-in-waiting is missing the reality of where Williams remains, despite its recent efforts.

"He is very good at getting [everything] out of it [in qualifying], but the race performances, they're more a function of the car, I think," Williams head of vehicle performance Dave Robson says of Russell's results. "Which I think is what you saw [with] the occasion of the one-off in the Mercedes last year – he had no problems racing there, I don't think. So, I still think he's got everything he needs to complete a really strong weekend, he just needs a bit more from us unfortunately."

After Hamilton secured his 100th pole position at the Spanish GP, Robson was asked to recall his memories of the world champion's early experiences as an aspiring F1 driver with McLaren. Robson was a test engineer at the team when Hamilton was a junior and later preparing to make his F1 bow, and was race engineer to Jenson Button during his time as Hamilton's team-mate at the start of the last decade. He explained that there was "something" Hamilton "always had", and says "there are definitely some similarities" with Russell.

Now that Russell is two and a half years into his stint with Williams, the team has witnessed his development and growth. "He's not all that different, I don't think," reckons Robson. "Just more experienced and just got a much better understanding of the complexities of F1 – with the tyres, how that interacts with the brakes, how you've just got to kind of build up over the weekends. And a lot of it is just experience. >>

“It’s undoubtedly changed him a little bit but, fundamentally, he’s not much different at all. His attitude is just the same; his ability to drive the car kind of aggressively but controlled is just the same. Still all that raw talent there, just with a bit of experience dropped on the top.”

If Russell were to leave Williams at the end of this season, the squad would still be in a much stronger place than when he joined. The team, which celebrated 750 F1 race starts at Monaco (now relying on a new counting method), is on course to benefit from the investment and reorganising implemented by new owner Dorilton Capital. Its senior management and technical leadership set-up has been strengthened, and the engineering teams – particularly in the aerodynamic department – are on a recruitment drive.

Much like Racing Point in 2019, Williams will have to wait to see the full benefit of a cash injection – in classic F1 style, everything takes time. But Russell reckons “things are stable,



Russell came so agonisingly close to victory in Merc cameo

“I FEEL LIKE I’M READY RIGHT NOW TO FIGHT FOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS”

and the future looks bright for the team”.

“You can’t just suddenly inject a load of cash and expect results because your baseline is so far away,” he explains. “And, again, it would not have been wise for [Dorilton] to have done that. Because they’re not looking to rush, they’re looking to do things properly, which is absolutely the right way.

“They’re here for the long haul. They’ve got a very strong, mid-to-long-term target. And now with the arrival of Jost [Capito, as team CEO] and technical director in F-X [Francois-Xavier Demaison], the team is now finally starting to have some real stability, which will allow all of the other workers to fully focus on their own roles under the direction of the guys at the top. Which we didn’t really have for so long.

“As I’ve said before, when Claire [Williams] and Mike [O’Driscoll, former CEO] were here, their main objective was to keep the team alive, which is absolutely the right objective, but performance was a secondary target. Whereas now, performance is everything. And potentially a lot of us would not have been here today, had it not been for the great efforts

of Claire and Mike to keep the team alive during the pandemic.

“It fills me with a lot of pride to be part of this amazing history. The team have achieved so much, there is so much history here and success within the team and it’s now [about] remembering those glory days, but not holding all of our hopes over that. That is the past, we do need to look forward.”

Williams’s F1 fortunes are closely channelled with Mercedes. The team has run the manufacturer’s engines since 2014, and next year will take its gearboxes and related hydraulic components too – a development that moves Williams away from its previous policy of producing such parts in-house. But it has also helped to develop Russell into the prospect he is today. At the same time, agreeing to let the Briton replace Hamilton on what turned out to be a one-off basis in Bahrain late last year has meant additional gains for Williams.

“The major benefit is just the confidence it has brought me,” says Russell of his experience of nearly winning – twice – the race ultimately won by Sergio Perez for what is now the Aston Martin squad. “Knowing that, with the right material, I can do the job.

GEORGE RUSSELL’S 2021 RESULTS SO FAR



Start 15th — BAHRAIN — Result 14th

Made it through to Q2 with a massive 1.2-second improvement on his final Q1 run, after which yellow flags caused chaos for others. In the race he made a good start, but around the rest of lap one he paid the price for being a little too timid in battle. He executed a two-stopper nicely and finished just under two seconds behind Esteban Ocon, albeit after the Alpine had been assaulted by Sebastian Vettel’s Aston Martin.



Start 12th — EMILIA ROMAGNA — Result R

Felt somewhat knocked off his stride by team-mate Nicholas Latifi’s strong start to the weekend, but come Q1 was able to pull off his usual qualifying heroics, which he backed up in Q2. His race in the tricky wet-to-dry conditions was excellent, right up until his attempted pass on Valtteri Bottas went disastrously wrong and another chance to score his first points for Williams went begging.



title with Red Bull this year. And a fresh deal to remain with Alpine has got to be the most likely outcome for Ocon at this stage.

Given Russell's clear confidence in what is still not an easy situation fighting for any major results in 'Class C', plus the proof that he's the real deal provided by the events of the Sakhir GP, either Mercedes or Williams

would gain/retain a valuable asset with his services next year.

But should he move to the team that has just won seven world title doubles, and could yet add an eighth in 2021, he'll have the chance to succeed in situations that should excite every F1 fan. As well as the potential to race alongside one of the championship's greatest-ever drivers in one of its best-ever teams, he'll be taking on Verstappen, Charles Leclerc and Lando Norris at the front of the pack — drivers he knows are "going to be here for the next 10 to 15 years" and knows he'll have to best if he's to reach his dream level.

"If [Mercedes] believe I deserve the opportunity, then it'll be there," he concludes. "If they don't believe I deserve it, then they will find me a seat somewhere where I can continue to develop.

"But I feel like I'm ready to fight for world championships and fight for victories. I feel ready right now to be able to do that, let alone with another year under my belt by the end of this season.

"So, wherever I find myself next year, I want to be in a car that will give me the chance to win races. Because I didn't fight my whole career to get to F1 to be fighting for 15th and 16th. I fought my whole career to get here and to win."

"And if there were ever a very small doubt, in the back of my mind, thinking, 'Is this the maximum the Williams car can do on one of our good days?'; I think now I can put it aside and say, 'Actually, on our good days, and when I believe I've done a good job, that was a good job.' That for all of us has been so beneficial. If anything, it has probably allowed me to unlock a bit more performance within myself.

"But absolutely, the level Mercedes work at is extraordinary. Just feeling how that car is to drive, knowing how great it is, how balanced, how much confidence it gives me, I know that is the target. And I give feedback to the designers here to say, 'I know this is possible, because I've driven a car that allows me to do this, that and the other. We need to keep on pushing to give me more of that because that will make me go faster.'"

The way F1's driver market is currently stacked surely means Russell's place in 2022 will be at either one of two teams: Mercedes or Williams. While Verstappen remains the championship's hottest prospect should Hamilton decide to move on, it's still unlikely that he would be available to Mercedes, particularly if he does win the



Start 11th — PORTUGAL — Result 16th

Another typical Russell F1 performance thanks to Williams's qualifying/race pace imbalance. He was excellent in Q2, so nearly making it through to the final part of qualifying for the first time with Williams. The race was a rather painful different story, as the FW43B's aerodynamic sensitivities made things very tricky when running in the pack and around the Algarve Circuit's undulating, coastal setting.



Start 15th — SPAIN — Result 14th

Another Q1 escape was far from guaranteed, but he delivered yet again. In the race, the early safety car to recover Yuki Tsunoda's AlphaTauri gave Williams the chance to stop early and Russell effectively went onto a one-stopper. From there, he was able to run clear of having to obey blue flags for a lengthy period, and briefly threatened the positions on the edge of the top 10 before those on fresher rubber swamped him.



Start 15th — MONACO — Result 14th

On what Williams was expecting to be a difficult weekend because of Monaco's tight, slow-speed turns not suiting its car, Russell still extended his Q2 appearance streak. But the race was as hard as the team imagined, with Russell and Latifi essentially engaged in private tussle between themselves and Tsunoda. After pitting, Russell was in the tough blue-flag territory that means losing tyre temperature letting the leaders past.

RACE CENTRE

INDIANAPOLIS 500 • EXTREME E SENEGAL • WORLD OF SPORT





Castroneves matches the legends with record run

Helio Castroneves joined AJ Foyt, Al Unser and Rick Mears with the most Indy 500 wins after edging past Alex Palou on the penultimate lap of a thrilling race

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY



motorsport
IMAGES

Twelve years after his third Indianapolis 500 victory, Helio Castroneves won his fourth and joined AJ Foyt, Al Unser and Rick Mears in an exclusive club. No one has conquered the Memorial Day Weekend classic at Indianapolis Motor Speedway more times.

The round-numbered anniversaries lay thick on the ground – it was 60 years since Foyt's first, 50 years since Unser's second, 30 years since Mears' fourth and 20 years since Castroneves' first. It was also 10 years since a part-timer in a part-time entry – Dan Wheldon for Bryan Herta Autosport – had won America's greatest motor race.

But there were also more geeky stats to absorb. The three times that Castroneves had finished as gutted runner-up – to Gil de Ferran in 2003, Ryan Hunter-Reay in 2014 and Takuma Sato in 2017 – his losing margins came to a total of just 0.4901 seconds, while his winning margin over Alex Palou last Sunday was 0.4928s. Oh, and it was the fastest Indy 500 ever, won at an average speed of 190.69mph.

It was Castroneves' 31st IndyCar win, which in the all-time roster lifts him to equal 10th, alongside Dario Franchitti and Paul Tracy, the man he so controversially beat in the 2002 Indy 500. He became the first driver in history to win the Daytona 24 Hours and the Indianapolis 500 in the same year... prompting the thought that maybe a World Endurance Championship team owner should have considered hiring him for the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

And at 46 years and 20 days old he became the fourth-oldest winner in Indy 500 history, beaten only by Al Unser in 1987, Bobby Unser in 1981 and Emerson Fittipaldi in 1993.

But arguably the number that mattered most was 135,000 – that was the official number of spectators that the Speedway's owner, Penske Entertainment, was allowed to let in, as per current statewide and local COVID restrictions regarding mass gatherings. That's supposedly only 40% capacity at the Speedway, but still there were enough fans to help expunge the memories of the eerily empty grandstands of the postponed Indy 500 last August



GALSTAD

during the pandemic – and enough to celebrate with Castroneves. After his slowdown lap, he parked his Meyer Shank Racing Dallara-Honda just beyond the yard of bricks start/finish line, clambered out of the car and did his famous 'Spider Man' routine, clambering up the debris fence to share the joy with his adoring public. Coming down from the fence, Helio crouched on the wall and for a long time embraced team co-owner Michael Shank, as they absorbed what they had achieved together. MSR had given its 'temp' proof that there is such a thing as Life After Penske, while Castroneves had brought star power and firepower to a team still in its infancy as an IndyCar entity. Team and driver had validated one other, culminating in the biggest prize in motorsport.

For both, this journey had started in 2017, when Michael Andretti asked Shank if MSR – which then stood for Michael Shank

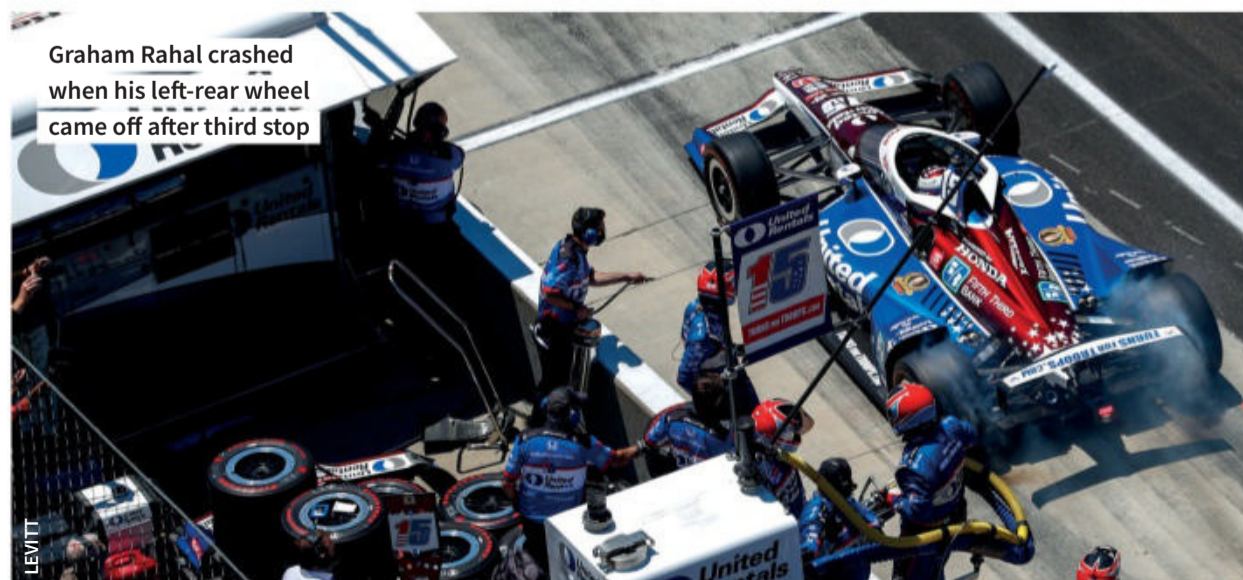
Racing – could help run Andretti Autosport's sixth entry in Indy. Having previously made a few attempts to expand his highly respected IMSA team into IndyCar, Shank leapt at the opportunity to run Jack Harvey as a one-off.

The following season, he partnered with Jim Meyer to form Meyer Shank Racing, and formed a technical alliance with Schmidt Peterson Motorsports to enter six races, which became 10 in 2019, and saw Harvey deliver the team a podium finish on a wet day at IMS road course. When Schmidt Peterson switched to Chevy engines for 2020, Honda stalwart MSR turned back to Andretti for its technical collaboration, and went full time but still running just one car. This year is the next step in a process, adding a second car for Castroneves in six races, and with the ultimate ambition of running two cars full-time.

"I got a bit tired of reading we're the little team that could," said Meyer. "We've never believed that. We had a plan and Mike was incredibly disciplined. I wanted to go faster earlier. He explained to me how fast we could waste our money if we weren't careful."

"We believe every day we can compete with anybody out here. I will also tell you having data from eight cars [at Indy] is certainly really helpful. That's where the relationship with Andretti Technologies really pays off for us."

The Brazilian veteran's availability for this project is a whole other story. Four years ago, on learning that 2017 would be his last driving a Team Penske IndyCar full-time, he agonised over whether to shop around for



Graham Rahal crashed when his left-rear wheel came off after third stop

LEVITT



Scott Dixon led from the start but luck was not with him yet again

“I got a bit tired of reading we’re the little team that could. We can compete with anybody out here”

an alternative team, or take up Roger Penske’s offer of a three-year deal to race the new Acura programme in IMSA, combined with Indy 500 entries. He still felt strong, had scored three poles and a win, and finished fourth in the championship.

But sticking with The Captain and having a Penske to drive at Indy was too tempting — and last year resulted in him scoring his first championship title in 31 years! But that was also the last year of Penske’s deal with Acura, and, with Scott McLaughlin being transferred from Supercars to form a four-strong full-time IndyCar squad, RP had nothing left for Castroneves to race, so they went their separate ways after 21 years.

So far, that’s worked out better for driver than team. Castroneves joined the Wayne Taylor Racing line-up as the ‘extra’ pilot of WTR’s Acura for the Rolex 24 in January and emerged triumphant. Now, after signing a six-race IndyCar deal with Meyer Shank Racing to drive a car crewed by only two full-timers, he’s won the Indy 500. Meanwhile, the six different IndyCar winners this year have come from six different teams — none of them Penske. >>

OTHER STARS IN THE 105TH INDY 500



Pagenaud and his Penske pitcrew fought hard to earn third

Having said beforehand that his car was even better than his winner in the 2019 Indianapolis 500, Team Penske’s Simon Pagenaud lived up to his word. In the first stint, he remained stuck near his desultory qualifying position of 26th, and then he was one of the eight drivers who got pinged for emergency service in a closed pit during the first caution.

However, Pagenaud then put on a charge, carrying his speed through the turns to great effect and picking cars off, while his crew performed perfect pitstops — as they have all year. On the final lap, he came off Turn 2 like a rocket and zapped past Pat O’Ward long before Turn 3, and crossed the yard of bricks less than half a tenth behind runner-up Alex Palou.

Will Power had made similar progress from the back row after a fumbled start when his engine temporarily died on a parade lap, and he should have finished in the top five. But he was penalised for not maintaining the speed of the pace car under caution. He eventually joined the ‘got no brakes’ crowd and had to spin his car to get it stopped in pitlane, and then later served a pitlane speeding penalty.

Rookie Scott McLaughlin ran firmly in the top 10 for much of the day, admitting afterwards that he’d survived a couple of trips into the marbles at the top of the track, but had to serve a drivethrough penalty after speeding in pitlane, which dropped him to 20th. Rookie of the Year Award was scant consolation.

And Josef Newgarden, on a slightly bold strategy, inched his way forward and drove hard but never felt his car had the balance to join the fight near the front.

The Penske-affiliated Paretta Autosport car of Simona de Silvestro ran as high as 19th, but didn’t seem to have the pace to stay ahead of the penalised frontrunners, the pitstops were inevitably rusty compared with those of full-timers, and eventually de Silvestro spun in the pits and made enough contact with the wall for the car to be retired with 30 laps to go.

Scott Dixon’s recovery drive from his pitlane disaster saw him swing off-strategy, to the extent that he led four further laps... but his last stint had to be 38 laps long! For him to run at truly competitive speeds, therefore, he needed to save fuel with a few laps of yellow. They never came, and he wound up 17th.

Another former Indy winner, Juan Pablo Montoya, had a strong day in the extra Arrow McLaren SP machine, having a good wrestle with former team-mates Pagenaud and Power and landing a top-10 finish.

But the quiet heroes of the day were Santino Ferrucci in the extra Rahal Letterman Lanigan car and Dreyer & Reinbold Racing’s Sage Karam. Ferrucci finished sixth, so second only to Pagenaud among the penalised eight from the first caution period. Karam, from 31st, simply drove a clean race to take seventh, thanks to the DRR squad’s fine strategy and crew.



Sage Karam drove well for Dreyer & Reinbold Racing to finish seventh

“Jim and I looked at the numbers – the performance numbers from Helio in 2017,” said Shank. “I didn’t quite get him not running anymore. I thought he still had something left in him. He went on to do the Acura programme, did really well in Prototypes. We felt like we needed a veteran to come in and help our programme overall and also help Jack.

“Jack was involved at every step of this kind of talk. We want a young guy and an experienced guy. We all agreed that we wanted Helio. Man, I tell you, he’s just so good here...”

“We practised here in April,” added Meyer. “After Helio ran his first five laps, Mike looked at me, I looked at him, we go, ‘Turns out he still has got it’. We were very, very confident that we would have good outcomes today. We’re just thrilled.”

Throughout the six-day week of practice and qualifying for the 500, MSR had seen Castroneves and Harvey on pace with the best Andretti cars of Colton Herta, Ryan Hunter-Reay and Alexander Rossi, which ensured they were contenders for the Fast Nine. On Saturday, Harvey suffered a bizarre tyre failure on his first qualifying run and then could only reach 20th on his second attempt as the track heated up. Castroneves, meanwhile, did get into the Fast Nine, and landed a place in the middle of the third row of three.

Everyone felt Ganassi’s four-car armada had the advantage but knew also that on this unusually cool day that allowed everyone to run close, Scott Dixon would not be able to exploit the superiority of his car – and talent – for he’d end up towing along his fastest rivals. So instead, he’d drop back behind the aggressors, sit in their wake and save fuel. Leading a whole stint – breaking the air – can cost you two laps of stint length compared with an otherwise identical car that sits in the tow of one or two cars. Were the race to run green all the way (the 500 never does), with a stint length of around 33 laps, that means six pitstops will be required, but you’re always trying to shorten that last one into a splash ‘n dash if possible.

So it was no surprise when Dixon



“Everything Helio did after lap 150 was a chess match. That’s the ‘greatest of all time’ in him”

dropped to third by the end of lap two, behind Rinus VeeKay’s Ed Carpenter Racing Dallara-Chevy, and Herta. Meanwhile, Castroneves muscled past Hunter-Reay and Ganassi’s Palou on the opening 2.5 miles, and on lap 16 deposed fellow veteran Tony Kanaan to move onto Ed Carpenter’s tail.

Inevitably, VeeKay had to stop first, on lap 31, whereas his rivals managed to fuel-save – some even made it to lap 34. But that was to be their undoing on this day. Stefan Wilson crashed at the entry to pitlane, which temporarily closed the pits as cautions always do. Eight cars were running on fumes by now, and had to violate the rule regarding emergency service in closed pits, and would be forced to restart from the back of the field. Three of these were Ganassi cars – Dixon, Kanaan and Marcus Ericsson.

Had that been Dixon’s only problem, he still might have won. Instead, his car ran out of fuel as he coasted down pitlane and, once filled up, the car wouldn’t restart. A lap later, the same thing happened to Rossi.

Meanwhile, local hero Conor Daly had



moved up from 19th to third, thanks to being at racing speed after his pitstop, just as the majority of cars pitting at the same time were held down to caution speed. So, soon after the restart, he and team-mate VeeKay zapped past Herta, and Daly went to the front, to roars from the crowd. Stalking these three, however, were Castroneves and Palou (now Ganassi’s only realistic hope), Pato O’Ward in the Arrow McLaren SP, Hunter-Reay and the Rahal Letterman Lanigan cars of Graham Rahal and defending winner Takuma Sato. No one was able to make a break.

Then, as he exited the pits following his third stop, Rahal’s left-rear wheel came off, sending him across the grass on pit exit and hard into the Turn 2 exit wall. The wheel, too, bounced off the wall and came down on the nose of Daly’s car, causing enough damage to take him out of the running.

Swift in and out-laps and flawless stops by his MSR crew had put Castroneves in the lead. And while he swiftly lost a couple of spots to O’Ward and Palou, they weren’t





Palou and Castroneves
engaged in a thrilling
battle in the final laps

escaping from him — occasionally he'd pass them, then drop back.

Shank: "Finally I figured out about [lap] 155 he's doing this on purpose. Everything he did from 150 on was a chess match. He knew exactly what he was doing. That's the 'greatest of all time' in him. He was calculated — exactly what I expected."

VeeKay's and Herta's cars had faded the further back they ran, and Hunter-Reay was out of the equation, when, like Penske's Will Power, he found his brake pedal went to the floor without causing retardation as he attempted his fourth pitstop and he blew through the pitlane speed limit, inducing an inevitable drivethrough.

O'Ward had the opposite problem, not quite having the 'go' necessary to battle with Palou and Castroneves. The very much off-strategy Felix Rosenqvist and Sato ran up-front over the closing laps, and the Arrow McLaren SP driver inadvertently helped Palou pull a slight gap over Castroneves when he rejoined right in front of him (almost a lap down) but on fresh tyres was able to run at the leader's pace. However, Rosenqvist had to serve a drivethrough penalty for a pit speed violation, so that left Palou vulnerable.

At the start of lap 199, Castroneves drafted the Ganassi driver down the pit straight, swung out and passed him around the outside of Turn 1. As they homed in on backmarkers, now it was Helio getting the benefit of the tow...

And the rest is — literally — history.

"I believe Helio deserves to go for a fifth Indianapolis win," concluded Shank. "We're going to do everything we can to make that happen for him. You agree, Jim?" "I agree," said Meyer. "It's fantastic." It is. 🏆

RESULTS ROUND 5/15, 105TH INDIANAPOLIS 500 (USA), 30 MAY (200 LAPS – 500.000 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME	GRID
1	Helio Castroneves (BRA)	MeyerShank Racing / Dallara-Honda	2h37m19.3846s	8
2	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+0.4928s	6
3	Simon Pagenaud (FRA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+0.5626s	26
4	Patricio O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+0.9409s	12
5	Ed Carpenter (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1.2424s	4
6	Santino Ferrucci (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+9.0876s	23
7	Sage Karam (USA)	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+13.4359s	31
8	Rinus Van Kalmthout (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+14.2415s	3
9	Juan Pablo Montoya (COL)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+14.8808s	24
10	Tony Kanaan (BRA)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+15.4428s	5
11	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+16.5166s	9
12	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+22.3045s	21
13	Conor Daly (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+22.6921s	19
14	Takuma Sato (JPN)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+23.2955s	15
15	JR Hildebrand (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+23.5277s	22
16	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Autosport with Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Honda	+28.8029s	2
17	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+38.6410s	1
18	Jack Harvey (GBR)	MeyerShank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+40.1572s	20
19	Marco Andretti (USA)	Andretti Herta with Marco & Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Honda	+40.3591s	25
20	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+40.8337s	17
21	James Hinchcliffe (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+40.8464s	16
22	Ryan Hunter-Reay (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+41.5762s	7
23	Dalton Kellett (CAN)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap	30
24	Max Chilton (GBR)	Carlin / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap	29
25	Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap	13
26	Sebastien Bourdais (FRA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap	27
27	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap	14
28	Ed Jones (GBR)	Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap	11
29	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	-2 laps	10
30	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	-3 laps	32
31	Simona de Silvestro (CHE)	Paretta Autosport / Dallara-Chevrolet	169 laps-accident	33
32	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	118 laps-accident	18
33	Stefan Wilson (GBR)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	32 laps-accident	28

Winner's average speed 190.690mph. **Fastest lap** Ferrucci 39.5874s, 227.345mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Palou 248; 2 Dixon 212; 3 O'Ward 211; 4 Pagenaud 201; 5 Kalmthout 191; 6 Newgarden 184; 7 Herta 154; 8 Rahal 148; 9 McLaughlin 143; 10 Ericsson 138.



NEXT EVENT

DETROIT GP 17 JUNE ISSUE

Alex Palou will be looking to build on his 36-point championship lead when the IndyCar field descends on Detroit for the street circuit double-header

ROSBERG'S TEAM WINS AGAIN AS EXTREME E STEPS UP

After an average season-opener, the all-electric off-road series delivered more in round two, but the victorious squad was the same

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES





Epic locations, thrilling car chases and executives who possess more than a passing interest in (the) Amazon. There are just about enough similarities to draw comparison between Extreme E and the James Bond film franchise. And that's before mentioning the RMS St. Helena 'floating paddock' that freights the championship's cargo from one venue to the next. No hollowed-out volcano, but it surely has all the credentials of a nautical villain's lair.

Stretch the analogy a little further and an inaugural event for the all-electric SUV off-road racing series in Saudi Arabia back in April was akin to *Dr. No* releasing in 1962. A fine entry but perhaps a touch plain with no overtakes coming beyond the first corner of each race. Nevertheless, it provided a sound enough platform upon which to tinker with the idea.

That's exactly what Extreme E did in time for last weekend and a visit to Lac Rose in Senegal, as the Rosberg X Racing duo of Johan Kristoffersson and Molly Taylor again snared the glory.

When the crabs had danced around the plastic-strewn beachfront and the sea eagles had flown out of shot, this *From Russia with Love* style sequel retained all the successful hallmarks of the first round and refined the format to deliver sterling action scenes and compelling storylines. All that's needed for the next event in Greenland in August is a thrilling climax like the siege of Fort Knox in *Goldfinger*. Find that in time for the third instalment of this fledgling and disruptive series and Extreme E will have entered its stride.

The tweak that was to be relished most for the second round was the addition of another entry to the finale. Excessive dust levels in Saudi had meant qualifying heats on Saturday were dispensed with in favour of single-car time trials. Initially underwhelming, that soon didn't seem to matter as it gave the weekend a natural crescendo and such a set up remained in place for Senegal. As did the three-car semi-finals and a wooden spoon Shootout race to decide positions seventh through to ninth.

But with the Atlantic Ocean shoreline sand far more settled for the four-mile lap this time around, it was deemed safe enough for the final to gain another entry. Now, two cars would progress from each semi-final to decide the grid and, with a unique format, it bestowed the showdown with added prestige. That kudos was only enhanced when it transpired that the three teams of fellow Formula 1 world champions Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Jenson Button would feature alongside Veloce Racing in the battle for the champagne spoils.

Rosberg X Racing and the X44 squad that partners nine-time World Rally champion Sebastien Loeb with spare-time orthodontist Cristina Gutierrez — cherry-picked by Prodrive chairman David Richards after impressing on the Andalusia Rally — earned their progression from the first semi-final at the expense of Abt Cupra.

Two massive Saudi shunts for Claudia Hürtgen had left the team to burn the midnight oil to repair its car in time for Friday >>

Four-car final
promised much
but incidents left
Rosberg X Racing to
take a second
victory



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Rosberg's team won again (above), while LeDuc was spectacular for Ganassi (below)



practice. With strict deadlines to load the St. Helena and limited spares on site, it wasn't possible to complete the work in the AIUla desert. That left the outfit to work with constructor Spark Racing Technology, with Veloce Racing also lending a hand, to rebuild the machine from Tuesday through to Thursday in Senegal.

Team technical director Florian Modlinger said: "The mechanics were there for one more day to build down in Saudi, to take the tents down and during this time they already stripped the car. They checked what was the main damage and in collaboration with Spark they had a complete damage picture and diagnosis. The spare parts needed for Senegal were already listed, the whole diagnosis was done at AIUla but the car was still as it had left Saudi."

The better part of €95,000 later, Abt Cupra lead charge Mattias Ekstrom flew out the blocks. With toasty temperatures again dictating that power for all cars was wound down from 535bhp to 300bhp, the two-time DTM title winner and 2016 World Rallycross king posted the fastest individual lap in practice. He ran to third in first qualifying and was second in the afternoon bout. That earned the Swedish ace, alongside temporary team-mate Jutta Kleinschmidt (see page 35), his place in the opening semi-final.

He enjoyed the best launch from the outside of the grid and sat comfortably in first place. As Kristoffersson firmly shut the door in his scrap with Loeb, it allowed Ekstrom to break into a defined lead of around one second. But suspect parking at the driver changeover meant Kleinschmidt couldn't see when to rejoin and so fell to third. She clawed the gap back valiantly but finished 2s adrift and sent Abt Cupra for an early bath as Taylor won for RXR and Gutierrez arrived home in second for X44 to book places in the final.

There they would be joined by JBXE and Veloce Racing. With Button working remotely from Los Angeles, not necessarily unrelated to his chagrin at the Odyssey 21's skittish rear axle that fires the car into the air at will, Kevin Hansen was called up alongside Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky with the genuine prospect of holding on to the seat for the remainder of the season.

Wearing its Brawn GP livery homage, the JBXE machine was



the runaway winner in the second semi-final as the team streaked clear for a 30.95s triumph. Veloce Racing's Stephane Sarrazin, fresh from testing for the Nissan e.dams Formula E concern, overcame a faulty pit-limiter that sporadically cut in to robustly bash his way past Christine Giampaoli Zonca for the rebranded Xite Energy Racing – with the Hispano Suiza name and much of the Spanish electric automotive manufacturer's presence dialled back in Senegal.

"Unfortunately, I [and team-mate Jamie Chadwick] have a problem with the pit-limiter," explained Sarrazin. "It was coming on, a cable contact kept dropping out. When I got in the car, first corner, woah, 28km/h. I pressed it off, it was OK, I overtook. In the last sector it came on again, woah, and it was not possible to remove it. I blocked and [Giampaoli Zonca] was coming, coming, coming. Then the car restarted and we got P2."

Up to this point, there had been just six races in the very short history of Extreme E. But even within that limited context, the two semi-finals were outstanding for their drama. Unfortunately, events conspired to deny a similarly gripping battle between the red-hot favourites X44 and Rosberg X Racing in the decider.

A new rule for Senegal compelled teams to alternate their starting driver. As such, with Loeb and Kristoffersson in the very hot and sweaty seat for the semis, it was over to 2016 Australian Rally champion Taylor and Gutierrez to belt in first for the finale.

As they drifted across the course at the launch, Sarrazin was sandwiched with Ahlin-Kottulinsky and soon dropped three car lengths. Taylor and Gutierrez both thumbed their 'Hyperdrive' power boosts to streak into the lead on the long run to the first >>



Ahlin-Kottulinsky's JBXE machine did not make it very far in the final

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corner, a 90-degree right hander. But akin to the tearing up of a rally stage as each car passes over, come the last race there were clear and deep ruts in the sand.

At the apex, Taylor clouted one of these banks and it jolted the nose of her car into the side of the X44 machine. Gutierrez bore the brunt of the whack and was eliminated almost immediately when the steering arm cried mercy and snapped.

Taylor said: "I had the inside of the corner and then it's quite a steep bank as you go through there. You're just trying to keep the car in as tight as you can but, unfortunately, we made some contact. It's close racing."

Very soon after, just two cars were left in contention. Ahlin-Kottulinsky decided to swap lanes on the beach and, as she traversed a crest of sand, it buckled the right-rear corner as the suspension and driveshaft failed in tandem.

The Rosberg X Racing machine wasn't a patch on its imperious Saudi set-up, lurching this way and that and exaggerating every bump on the course. Nevertheless, Taylor fought off Sarrazin to lead by 1.53s as they pulled in for their driver change over. However, with recovery vehicles still attending to the stricken X44 and JBXE runners, Formula E and Extreme E race director Scot Elkins flew the red flag. He would later opt for the two remaining cars to return to the starting grid and line up in formation, calling for Kristoffersson and Chadwick to sub in for their turn.

An inside line at the restart gave Kristoffersson the advantage, overcoming his previous poor starts that had necessitated his first-corner heroics in Saudi. Chadwick shied away from bullying it up the inside and that allowed Kristoffersson to streak clear for an emphatic 14.676s triumph to uphold a perfect record for RXR.

"We weren't really 100% on pace when we arrived here," was the lanky Swede's assessment. "We managed to pick it up in the crucial moment. We've been able to manage the pace a little bit and try to keep the car in one piece and not go completely crazy. It was a well-balanced weekend. We were fast when we needed to be, and we were able to do the overtaking and good starts when we needed to."



It was no doubt an anti-climax, like Bond's clumsy fist fight with Rosa Klebb in the final minutes of *From Russia with Love* arriving after the brutal train bout between the double-o agent and Red Grant. But, as with *Goldfinger*, perhaps an American influence can restore the drama in Greenland. Extreme E is yet to see the full potential of the Chip Ganassi Racing squad and its potent combination of Kyle LeDuc and Sara Price.

LeDuc's Senegalese qualifying heroics were curtailed by a "one in a million" occurrence when running through the wooded section. A rogue branch yanked a loop on the rear-three quarter panel to prime the onboard fire extinguisher and shut the car down. But the way in which he strongarmed his way past his Andretti United rival on Sunday – a muted precursor to that evening's Indianapolis 500 – and then quite literally jumped ahead of the Acciona Sainz machine of Carlos Sainz Sr and Laia Sanz for the Shootout victory was the highlight of the weekend for many. Following on from his rollover crash before wiping out Hurtgen in Saudi, there's an air of Colin McRae. A win or bust, trees or trophy streak. Incredible to watch.

A truncated five-race calendar, with two contests already run, makes CGR something of an outsider for the title. Its team principal Dave Berkenfield also called on Extreme E organisers not to make "knee-jerk" changes to the rules that might help his squad: "These are the storylines. That's what the season wants. That's what our fanbase wants – the underdog dealing with adversity."

Should the team find its rhythm in Greenland and should X44 survive any further skirmishes, Rosberg X Racing won't have it all its own way. If that comes to fruition, this box-fresh championship is already capable of creating a vintage motorsport spectacle. 🏆



A DAKAR LEGEND MAKES ELECTRIC RETURN

Two enormous shunts during the maiden Extreme E round in Saudi Arabia were bound to leave Claudia Hurtgen lacking confidence. But that couldn't fully explain why the former Helmut Marko protégé's practice lap in Lac Rose was slowest by some 26 seconds. Turns out the tempting shrimp at dinner had taken their toll on the Abt Cupra driver.

However, Hurtgen's digestive strife did tee up the most romantic subplot of the weekend in Senegal. Still recognised in the country where she became the first and so far only woman to win the Dakar Rally in 2001, Jutta Kleinschmidt made her front-line motorsport comeback 20 years on from that defining success.

Being hired as an official Extreme E reserve driver and course design consultant complements a variety of roles at the FIA. But, bar a couple of amateur rallies, 58-year-old Kleinschmidt hadn't driven in anger since 2016.

In Senegal, she stunned in qualifying when standing in for Hurtgen. Alongside Abt Cupra team-mate Mattias Ekstrom, they snared the third-fastest time despite landing a penalty when Kleinschmidt ran into the driver changeover zone before her stablemate had come to a complete stop and selected neutral.

She said: "I was very nervous before because I had no idea where I would end up – one minute slower or 15s slower. I'm happy that it worked out quite well."

Despite hasty homework to adjust to the bespoke settings of the Abt Cupra machine, advancing into the final wouldn't come. Ekstrom led the first semi when he handed over the car, but Kleinschmidt didn't plug in her radio and couldn't see her mechanic waving from the sidelines. Without a stream of instructions, she sat still well beyond the 45s minimum pitstop time and conceded positions to both X44 and Rosberg X Racing.

Regardless, it was a superb and fitting storyline. One that could well leave Kleinschmidt in demand and needing to update her CV for the 2022 campaign.



Rosberg, Taylor and Kristoffersson kept their 100% record

RESULTS ROUND 2/5, LAC ROSE (SEN), 30 MAY (FINAL)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	TIME
1	Johan Kristoffersson (SWE) Molly Taylor (AUS)	RosbergX Racing	21m52.101s
2	Jamie Chadwick (GBR) Stephane Sarrazin (FRA)	Veloce Racing	22m06.777s
3	Kevin Hansen (SWE) Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky (SWE)	JBXE	suspension and driveshaft
4	Cristina Gutierrez (ESP) Sebastien Loeb (FRA)	X44	acc damage/steering arm

SEMI-FINAL 1

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	TIME
1	Kristoffersson (SWE) Taylor (AUS)	RosbergX Racing	11m05.029s
2	Gutierrez (ESP) Loeb (FRA)	X44	11m07.291s
3	Mattias Ekstrom (SWE) Jutta Kleinschmidt (DEU)	Abt Cupra	11m08.271s

Top two finishers move into the Ocean X-Prix Final.

SEMI-FINAL 2

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	TIME
1	Hansen (SWE) Ahlin-Kottulinsky (SWE)	JBXE	11m24.263s
2	Chadwick (GBR) Sarrazin (FRA)	Veloce Racing	11m53.966s
3	Oliver Bennett (GBR) Christine Giampaoli Zonca (ITA)	Xite Energy Racing	12m07.504s

Top two finishers move into the Ocean X-Prix Final.

SHOOTOUT

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	TIME
1	Sara Price (USA) Kyle LeDuc (USA)	Chip Ganassi Racing	11m17.759s
2	Carlos Sainz (ESP) Laia Sanz (ESP)	Acciona Sainz	11m25.507s
3	Timmy Hansen (SWE) Catie Munnings (GBR)	Andretti United	11m26.528s

Decides the final points positions for 7th, 8th and 9th place.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Gutierrez/Loeb 10m47.289s; 2 Price/LeDuc 10m51.528s; 3 Ekstrom/Kleinschmidt 10m58.122s; 4 Kristoffersson/Taylor 11m02.310s; 5 Hansen/Ahlin-Kottulinsky 11m13.405s; 6 Chadwick/Sarrazin 11m37.599s; 7 Bennett/Zonca 11m52.806s; 8 Hansen/Munnings 14m39.665s; 9 Sainz/Sanz no time.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Gutierrez/Loeb 10m57.567s; 2 Ekstrom/Kleinschmidt 11m07.691s; 3 Kristoffersson/Taylor 11m10.128s; 4 Hansen/Ahlin-Kottulinsky 11m12.021s; 5 Hansen/Munnings 11m17.403s; 6 Sainz/Sanz 11m23.131s; 7 Chadwick/Sarrazin 11m27.771s; 8 Bennett/Zonca 11m43.655s; 9 Price/LeDuc 14m50.287s.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Kristoffersson/Taylor 71; 2 Loeb/Gutierrez 57; 3 Ahlin-Kottulinsky 44; 4 Munnings/Hansen 37; 5 Bennett/Zonca 37; 6 Sanz/Sainz 36; 7 Ekstrom 35; 8 Chadwick/Sarrazin 31; 9 Price/LeDuc 30; 10 Hansen 27.

NEXT RACE

ARCTIC X-PRIX 2 SEPTEMBER ISSUE

Rosberg X Racing wasn't the fastest in Senegal but still came up trumps. Will the glacial conditions in Greenland help X44 or Chip Ganassi Racing fight back?



Surprise Porsche turnaround thwarts GT rivals

**GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE
ENDURANCE CUP**

PAUL RICARD (FRA)

29 MAY

ROUND 2/5

Never discount Porsche. If ever these three words were more pertinent, it was at the end of a gruelling six hours of racing as the GPX Racing trio of Earl Bamber, Mathieu Jaminet and Matt Campbell pulled off a veritable 'Houdini' to secure victory in the six-hour Paul Ricard 1000Km.

It was a victory that seemed almost impossible at the start of the weekend following a troubled practice, after which 21st was the best result the ART-run 911 GT3-R could muster. It qualified 10th, something of a small miracle, while FFF's Lamborghini works line-up of Andrea Caldarelli, Mirko Bortolotti and Marco Mapelli claimed their second straight Endurance Cup pole position.

The opening salvo of the race followed the apparent form for the weekend, with Bortolotti taking the Lambo into

a comfortable lead over Antonio Fuoco's Iron Lynx Ferrari, which deployed tactful defence to stave off the attentions of Vincent Abril's HRT Mercedes for second.

Caldarelli took over from Bortolotti at the end of an opening hour which turned decidedly against Mercedes after the front-engined GTs had topped Friday's timed action. Abril's hopes of a podium finish went up in smoke with a front-left puncture at Turn 4, necessitating almost a full lap at reduced pace. Things weren't nearly as bad for the Auto Sport Promotion example of Jules Gounon, but the Merc did have to make an earlier-than-planned first stop following complaints of tyre trouble.

Meanwhile Bamber, who admitted to struggling slightly in the opening part of the race, was in fifth after Abril's strife but it was the efforts of Jaminet and latterly Campbell that made the decisive tidal change in favour of Porsche after halfway.

GPX's stint length was around three laps shorter than the leading FFF Lambo and it used this undercut to reduce what had been a 12s deficit to just six seconds after

jumping the erstwhile second-placed Walkenhorst BMW of Marco Wittmann.

Jaminet was the fastest of the leading dozen at this stage of the race but the GPX car was delayed by a slow penultimate pitstop, after being boxed in by an Audi in the narrow Ricard pitlane. Campbell, having taken over for a double stint to finish, dropped behind Sheldon van der Linde, who took over from Wittmann, but made it back into second following the only full course yellow of the race.

Campbell then went in pursuit of Mapelli, who was in the leading Lambo for the final stint, and showcased Porsche's straightline speed down the Mistral as much as it exposed the Huracan's lack of speed by breezing past for the lead twice – the first having been wasted by Campbell through a mistake at Le Beausset, which resulted in contact with 40 minutes left.

The Lambo's goose was cooked now as Fuoco – benefiting from strong pace from co-drivers Callum Iltott and Davide Rigon – took second, while Dries Vanthoor took the WRT Audi he shared with Kelvin van der Linde and Charles Weerts to the podium with a daring last-lap pass.

The Lambo that had led for so long finished fourth on the road but inherited third following a 10-second penalty for the Ferrari after a pitstop infringement. That left the Iron Lynx crew fourth.

A Silver Cup win for ASP's Thomas Drouet/Konstantin Tereschenko/Simon Gachet was scant consolation for the Merc attack that had looked so promising.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

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Iron Lynx Ferrari held off the Mercs as FFF Lambo made early escape

Saucy wins, is excluded, then wins again

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN
PAUL RICARD (FRA)
29-30 MAY
ROUND 4/10

Gregoire Saucy was only an ill-fitted washer and a stewards' decision away from the perfect Formula Regional European by Alpine display at Paul Ricard last weekend.

Following a brace of non-scores last time out in Monaco, the Formula Renault Eurocup graduate bounced back with pole for race one and led at the delayed start.

Saucy's initial advantage was quashed by a safety car interlude resulting from Van Amersfoort Racing team-mates Mari Boy and Lorenzo Fluxa coming to blows on the opening tour. Saucy started from scratch at the restart and built a gap to Hadrien David's R-ace GP car to cross the line for what might have been a fourth win of the campaign.

However, he was dumped out of the results and handed David a first series win when it was discovered that a Belleville washer had been mounted the wrong way. A statement read: "Even if there could be no



gain of advantage, the stewards determined [the car] was therefore in breach of the technical regulations."

The ART Grand Prix driver made amends the following day as he landed pole again and then converted it to a 0.739-second triumph over JD Motorsport's Michael Belov.

David left his front-row grid slot vacant when he needed to start from the pitlane,

leaving Saucy to worry about the first-corner attempt from team-mate Gabriele Mini. But as Mini's speed fell away and he soon retired, Saucy restored his championship lead to 23 points over R-ace GP's Zane Maloney.

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Larson breaks NASCAR record

NASCAR CUP
CHARLOTTE (USA)
30 MAY
ROUND 15/36

Kyle Larson's dominant victory in the Coca-Cola 600 at the Charlotte Motor Speedway never appeared to be in doubt last Sunday night, but the result was a historic one for NASCAR.

Larson took pole, led 327 of the 400 laps and cruised to a 10.051-second win over Chase Elliott for his second Cup success of 2021. And the win was the

269th in the Cup Series for Hendrick Motorsports – breaking the record of 268 previously held by Petty Enterprises. Petty has been the organisation with the most Cup wins since 1960.

"It feels so good," said Larson of his eighth Cup victory. "It wasn't easy – I felt like I had to fight off William [Byron] and Chase a lot. It kind of worked out the last run as Erik Jones had to pit and pulled out in front of me and I just towed with him for a while and stretched my lead out.

"It feels great to help Mr H [Rick Hendrick] break that record finally."

There was some nice historical symmetry for Hendrick, too. Its first Cup win came with Geoff Bodine in 1984, driving #5, the same number as Larson.

Larson's only serious competition in the race was from his HMS Chevrolet team-mates. Both Elliott and Byron took brief turns in the lead, only to see Larson fight his way back to the front with the help of a fast and efficient pitcrew.

Kyle Busch's Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota ended up third, with Byron fourth.

JIM UTTER



WEEKEND WINNERS

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE
ENDURANCE CUP
PAUL RICARD (FRA)
Matt Campbell/Earl Bamber/Mathieu Jaminet
GPX Racing (Porsche 911 GT3-R)

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN
PAUL RICARD (FRA)
Race 1 Hadrien David
R-ace GP
Race 2 Gregoire Saucy
ART Grand Prix

NASCAR CUP
CHARLOTTE (USA)
Kyle Larson
Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet Camaro)

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES
CHARLOTTE (USA)
Ty Gibbs
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Supra)

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
CHARLOTTE (USA)
John Hunter Nemechek
Kyle Busch Motorsports (Toyota Tundra)



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Quartararo's great ride overshadowed

MOTOGP
MUGELLO (ITA)
30 MAY
ROUND 6/19

What should have gone down as arguably Fabio Quartararo's greatest day on a motorcycle, following a stunning display of dominance to win the Italian Grand Prix, ultimately left him with "not a great feeling" after the chequered flag.

At Mugello on Saturday, 19-year-old Moto3 racer Jason Dupasquier was left in a serious condition following a horrible accident in qualifying. On Sunday, he passed away in hospital in Florence, casting a shadow of sadness over the event.

With the news announced just minutes before the Moto2 race and a minute of silence observed 15 minutes before the

MotoGP contest, some of the riders felt the decision to continue was wrong. But racing did, and the riders tried their best to block out the tragedy from their minds and focus on the job at hand.

Quartararo's race hinged on the start. Strong throughout practice in terms of race pace and smashing the Mugello lap record for pole, the Yamaha's top speed deficit would have been a major Achilles heel in the race if it had been swamped by Ducatis – the dominant manufacturer at the Italian GP in the three previous editions.

Finally armed with Yamaha's front holeshot device, Quartararo only dropped a spot on the run to San Donato at the start – though that was to Francesco Bagnaia on the rocketship Ducati.

Lessons learned in Qatar meant Quartararo's race wasn't over at that point.

This 2021 Yamaha can overtake, but he would need to get the job done early in Mugello's twisty sections to manage any straightline threat posed by the Ducati.

His afternoon was made easier when Bagnaia – pushed slightly off line by wind – crashed on the second lap at Arrabbiata 2. For the second time in his MotoGP career, the chance to score his maiden win on home soil cruelly slipped away from Bagnaia – but it was of little consequence to him, the Italian vocal about his dismay at racing in the first place.

Quartararo saw off a minor threat from Johann Zarco on the Pramac Ducati with a precise scythe up the inside of the Turn 3 right-hander at Poggiosecco on lap four of 23. From there, he instantly built up a Ducati-taming gap over Zarco – who was lucky to even start the race after Avintia rookie Enea Bastianini ran into the back of him on the grid on the warm-up lap.

From there, Quartararo controlled the race perfectly to move 24 points clear in the standings with his third win of 2021. The result came at a track few predicted would be a happy hunting ground for Yamaha this year. Quartararo is emerging as a force the field is struggling to contain.

The battle for the final podium slots played out between Zarco, KTM's Miguel Oliveira and the Suzuki duo following an early skirmish – Joan Mir coming out the victor against Alex Rins.

As Zarco's pace faded in the closing stages, he was easy prey to an Oliveira



Quartararo dominated on his Yamaha to win at Mugello



Bagnaia's threat ended when he crashed on the second lap



Oliveira led the rest of the field home on the Red Bull KTM

rejuvenated by a new KTM chassis. Mir would run him close in the final laps, Rins' hopes ending with his fourth-successive race crash on lap 19.

Oliveira fended off the world champion but was initially demoted to third for exceeding track limits on the final lap. The positions were reversed again after Mir was found to have committed the same offence. Zarco held on to fourth, Ducati surrendering its Mugello podium run in meek fashion.

KTM's Brad Binder spent lap two struggling to breathe after contact with Marc Marquez set off the airbag in his leathers. He recovered to fifth while the Honda rider was unable to remount, missing out on the crucial race running needed to continue to rebuild strength in his injured right shoulder.

Jack Miller ended his Mugello curse in sixth on his Ducati, ahead of Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro, while Maverick Vinales rued his decision to run the medium front tyre, having been forced to recover from 16th after a bad start from 13th to finish eighth. Danilo Petrucci was ninth on the Tech3 KTM ahead of Valentino Rossi, the Petronas SRT rider hardly showing the form required to inspire hopes he may extend his illustrious racing career into 2022.

Motor racing demands respect at all times, but what the MotoGP field did on Sunday against the tragic backdrop of the death of Dupasquier commanded an even greater level of admiration.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 6/19, MUGELLO (ITA), 30 MAY (23 LAPS – 74.959 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	41m16.344s
2	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	+2.592s
3	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+3.000s
4	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+3.535s
5	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+4.903s
6	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	+6.233s
7	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+8.030s
8	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Yamaha	+17.239s
9	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Tech3 KTM	+23.296s
10	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+25.146s
11	Iker Lecuona (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+25.152s
12	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	+26.059s
13	Michele Pirro (ITA)	Pramac Ducati	+26.182s
14	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	+29.400s
15	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	+32.378s
16	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+37.906s
17	Luca Marini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+50.306s
R	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	19 laps-accident
R	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	18 laps-accident
R	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	1 lap-accident
R	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Honda	1 lap-accident
NS	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	accident

Winner's average speed 108.972mph. **Fastest lap** Zarco 1m46.810s, 109.846mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Quartararo 1m45.187s; 2 Bagnaia 1m45.417s; 3 Zarco 1m45.432s; 4 A Espargaro 1m45.538s; 5 Miller 1m45.598s; 6 Binder 1m45.743s; 7 Oliveira 1m45.745s; 8 Rins 1m45.996s; 9 Mir 1m46.076s; 10 Morbidelli 1m46.084s; 11 Marquez 1m46.125s; 12 P Espargaro 1m46.393s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Marquez 1m45.924s; 2 A Espargaro 1m46.024s; 3 Vinales 1m46.045s; 4 Bastianini 1m46.129s; 5 Nakagami 1m46.195s; 6 Pirro 1m46.302s; 7 Marini 1m46.481s; 8 Petrucci 1m46.548s; 9 Rossi 1m46.770s; 10 Lecuona 1m47.084s; 11 Savadori 1m47.146s; 12 Marquez 1m47.216s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Quartararo 105; 2 Zarco 81; 3 Bagnaia 79; 4 Miller 74; 5 Mir 65; 6 Vinales 64; 7 A Espargaro 44; 8 Binder 35; 9 Morbidelli 33; 10 Oliveira 29; 11 P Espargaro 29; 12 Nakagami 28; 13 Rins 23; 14 Petrucci 23; 15 Marquez 20; 16 Bastianini 20; 17 Jorge Martin 17; 18 Marquez 16; 19 Rossi 15; 20 Lecuona 13; 21 Stefan Bradl 11; 22 Marini 9; 23 Pirro 3; 24 Savadori 3; 25 Tito Rabat 1.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Yamaha 132; 2 Ducati 123; 3 Suzuki 69; 4 KTM 58; 5 Honda 47; 6 Aprilia 44.



Zarco slipped back to fourth late on

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

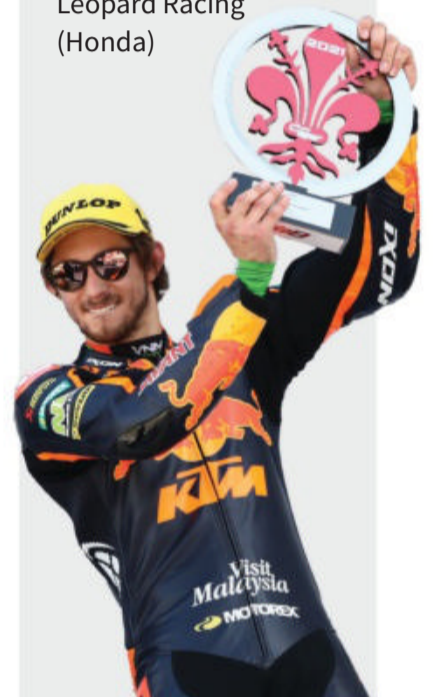
MUGELLO (ITA)

Remy Gardner (below)
Ajo Motorsport (Kalex)

MOTO3

MUGELLO (ITA)

Dennis Foggia
Leopard Racing
(Honda)

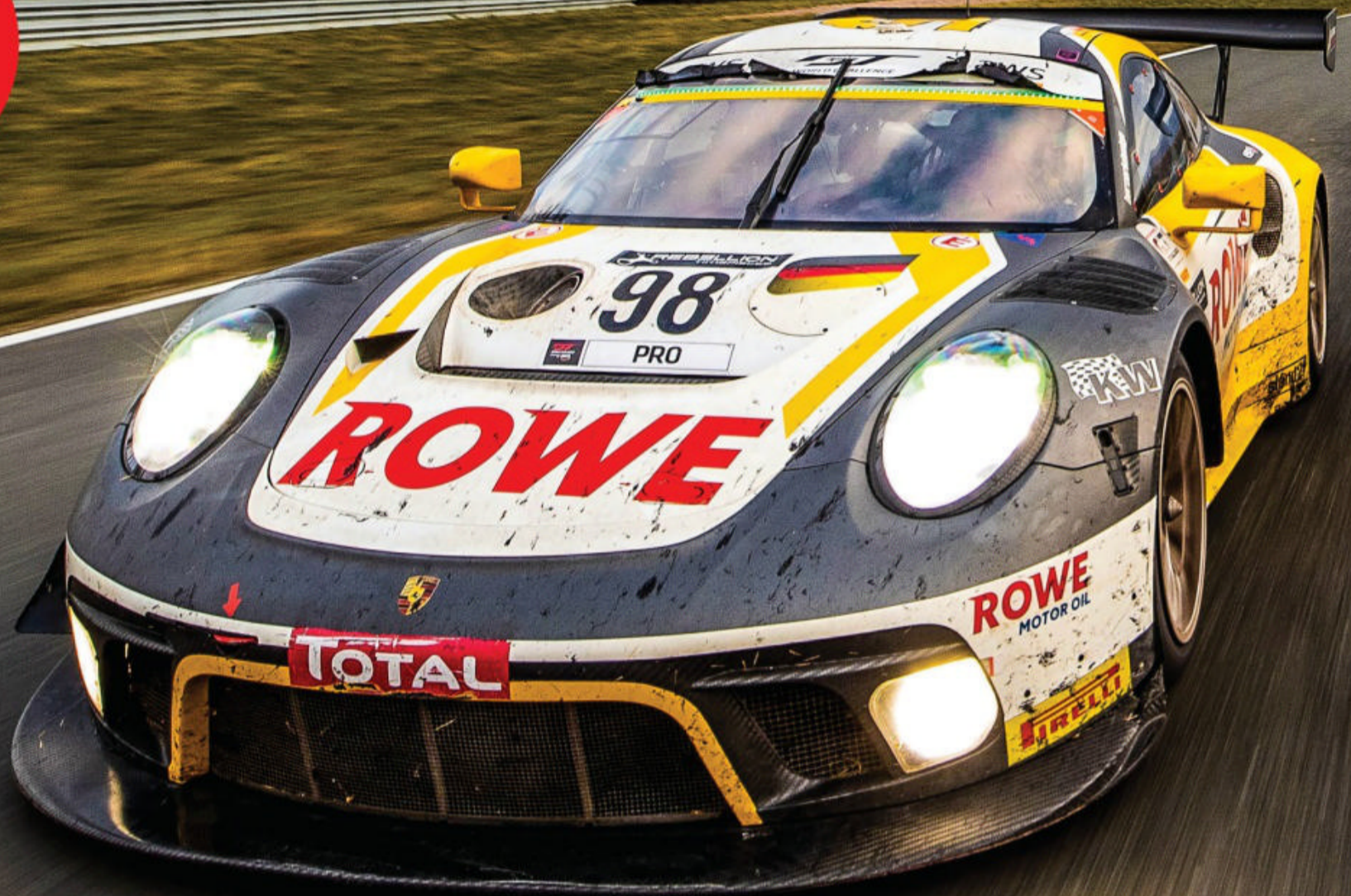


NEXT REPORT

CATALUNYA GP 10 JUNE ISSUE

Will anyone else be able to mount an effective counter-attack to stop Quartararo extending his championship lead further at a track the Yamaha rider won last year?

Rowe won two of the 24-hour classics in 2020, Spa with Porsche (l) and the Nurburgring with BMW



The vitesse of Rowe

The winner of last year's Nurburgring and Spa 24-hour classics is bidding for a repeat of its German success this weekend, and it's stepping into the DTM. Time to tell the story of Rowe Racing

GARY WATKINS

Rowe Racing is bidding for a second consecutive Nurburgring 24 Hours win with BMW this weekend. It would be a record of sorts: no team has notched up back-to-back victories at the Nordschleife enduro during the ultra-competitive GT3 era. But the German operation has already made a bit of history. Last year it became the first operation to triumph in the twice-around-the-clock classics at the Nurburgring and Spa in the same year with different manufacturers, BMW and Porsche. Not bad for a team that only 10 years ago was operating out of a couple of lock-up garages.

Rowe, pronounced 'Rover' as in the car or the dog, has come a long way in a short space of time. It has become established as one of the top GT3 endurance teams, up there with WRT, Phoenix and the Haupt Racing Team that has grown out of two-time Nurburgring winner Black Falcon.

It won Spa for the first time back in 2016 in the maiden year of its relationship with BMW, was a close second in 2018 and again 2019 after a switch to Porsche for a second programme focused on the Belgian enduro. It had also been on the podium twice at the Nurburgring, in 2013 (with Mercedes) and then 2017 (BMW), prior to last year's victory with BMW.

Rowe Racing is described as a project name for the endurance operation run by Motorsport Competence Group AG. Yet it would be wrong to describe Rowe simply as a customer of MCG's. The founder of the Rowe Oil brand, Michael Zehe, is a partner in the company together with Hans-Peter Naundorf, who as team principal runs the operation based just outside Saarbrücken.

Rowe Racing or MCG, call it what you will, has its roots in amateur racer Zehe's aspirations to compete at the wheel of one of the new Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3s when the car was released to customers for 2011. He'd flown the flag for the



Racing partnership:
Naundorf (left) and Zehe

GRUPPECGBH



#12 Mercedes SLS failed to finish 2012
Nurburgring 24H – today Rowe is
“at a completely different level”

GRUPPECGBH

GILBERT/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

lubricants company he'd founded in the 1990s with a variety of cars on the Nordschleife through the late 2000s and into the following decade, and was looking for a team to run a Merc. He contacted the Persson Motorsport DTM squad, where a mutual contact put him in touch with Naundorf, who'd been a race engineer with the team in the DTM for 10 years.

Persson had been eyeing the new GT3 Merc with interest, but ultimately decided to remain focused on the DTM. “I had to call Michael to tell him that Persson was out of the project and also that I was leaving the team,” recalls Naundorf. “He asked me what I was going to do, but at that stage I only had a few ideas and some talks. Then he phoned me back, said we should meet and, when we did, he asked what I thought about founding our own team. I told him everything we would need, and the next day he came back to me with a big Excel file. I realised that he really understood what was required and

“For the first year Rowe ran out of two garages. They were ‘luxury lock-ups, but still lock-ups’”

the cost structure involved, so I thought, ‘Let's do this.’”

Within a month of their first meeting, land had been bought to build the workshops out of which the team now operates, but for the first year Rowe ran out of what Naundorf calls “two garages that you might park a street car in”. They were “luxury lock-ups, but still lock-ups”, he adds. Neither did the team have an auspicious start when it first wheeled its Merc out onto the Nordschleife for its first test ahead of a campaign in the VLN long-distance series, now known as the NLS. The car didn't >>



BMW M6 GT3 shared by Sims, Catsburg, Yelloly and Eng takes the flag at the Nurburgring in 2020

complete a proper lap. “One of our drivers crashed on the first flying lap,” recalls Naundorf. “He was an amateur driver who’s not racing anymore, so let’s leave it like that.”

But Rowe did win a VLN round in July of that year, although good fortune was on the team’s side, reckons Naundorf: “We won because others dropped out, but I still have the trophy. Today we are at a completely different level.”

The level at which Rowe operated quickly changed early in its history. “Michael asked himself, ‘Do I want to have some fun by driving or do I want a team that has a chance of getting on the podium?’” recalls Naundorf of the sea-change in Rowe’s approach. “Michael is a guy who when he sets his mind to something, he really goes for it. He understands what it takes.”

With a roster of drivers including two-time American Le Mans Series champion Klaus Graf and former Nurburgring 24 Hours winner Lance David Arnold on its books in 2013, Rowe ended up third and fourth at the Nordschleife classic. A year later, it was third again with a Merc, this time with factory driver Maro Engel on the squad.

Two years after that, for 2016, Rowe switched from Mercedes to race the new BMW M6 GT3 for its regular programme at the Nurburgring, as well as a second one in the Blancpain GT Series (in which it had contested a full schedule for the first time in 2015) with a full-factory line-up of drivers.

“We didn’t want to stay with Mercedes and be one of 10 teams running their cars,” says Naundorf. “For a sponsor like Rowe, if you are with a manufacturer with only two teams and four cars,

“We’d told our drivers to stay off the kerbs. If they didn’t, the bonnet would work loose”

you get more airtime. There was also a chance for us to work much more closely with a manufacturer. A development contract for multiple years and access to the kind of drivers they were offering looked a very sensible way forward.”

Naundorf admits that becoming to all intents and purposes a works team wasn’t an easy adjustment for Rowe. “For Spa that year, for example, we were 64 people for two cars, half of them from BMW,” he recalls. “They had ideas on how to do things and we didn’t want to change our style, but we learned a lot and it has helped us to be able to perform at the level where we are now.”

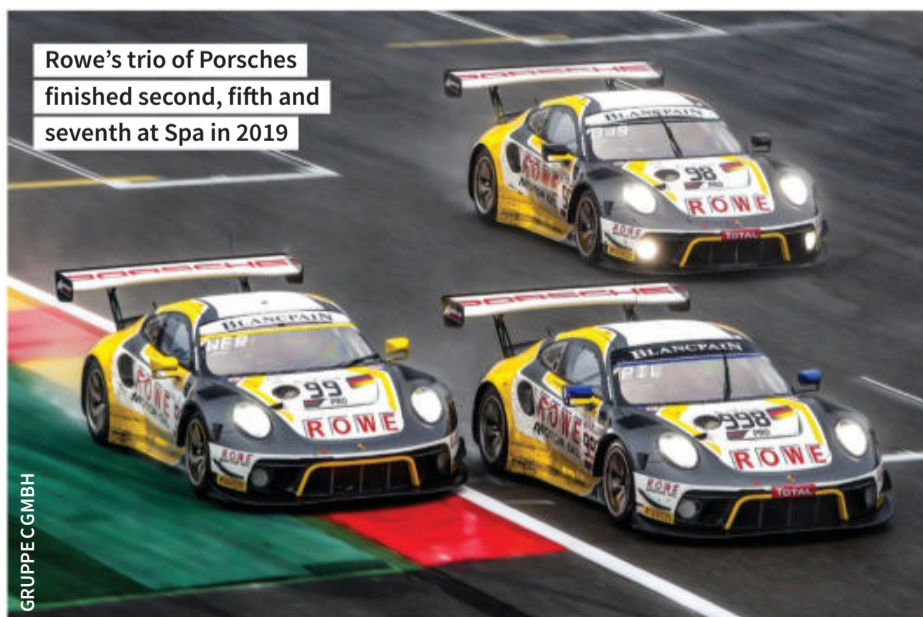
Rowe got one of its BMWs to the finish in fifth place at the Nurburgring that year, and went on to claim victory at Spa with Alexander Sims, Maxime Martin and Philipp Eng. The team had doubts that the new car would even survive the Spa classic, but a trouble-free race for the winning trio proved decisive in an event interrupted by 15 yellow-flag periods.

“Others were quicker, but they got penalties so spent more time on pitlane,” says Naundorf. “Track limits weren’t a problem for us, because we’d told our drivers to stay off the kerbs. If they didn’t, the bonnet would work loose.”

There was a near-miss at Spa in 2018 when Rowe completed a BMW 1-2 behind the winning Walkenhorst M6. Yet Naundorf insists that there’s no comparison between Rowe Racing now and then. “It’s night and day,” he says. “Looking back, we weren’t at the same level of organisation, infrastructure and approach that we have been for the past three years.”

The most successful period so far in Rowe’s history has coincided with it working with two manufacturers. The team moved over to Porsche for its BGTS campaign after BMW opted to shift resources to an Intercontinental GT Challenge effort in 2019. “We didn’t want to do the Interconti, but we still needed a second programme,” explains Naundorf. “The possibility of working with Porsche came up. Our contract with BMW allowed it, so we thought we’d go for it.”

Rowe came within five seconds of another first-time-out victory representing a new manufacturer at Spa with Nick Tandy, Frederic Makowiecki and Patrick Pilet in 2019. Its other two 911 GT3-Rs



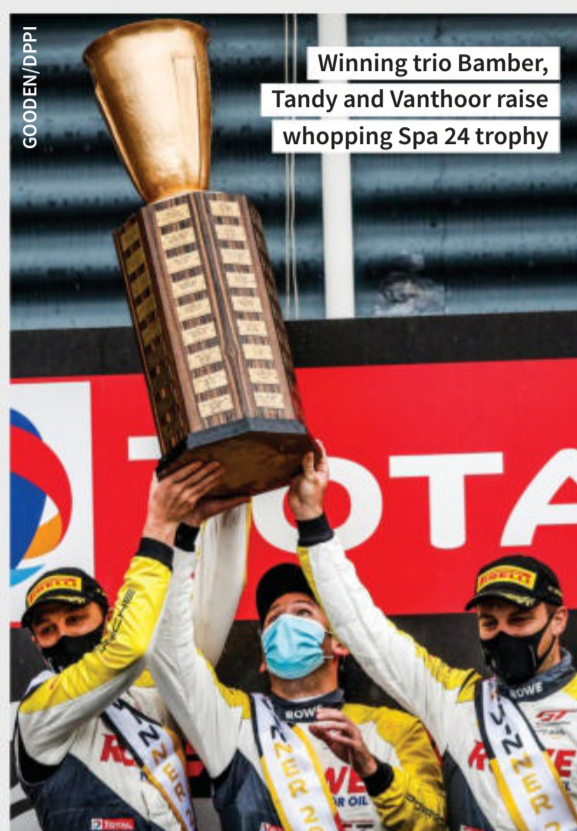
Rowe’s trio of Porsches finished second, fifth and seventh at Spa in 2019

HOW ROWE DID THE DOUBLE IN 2020

A spot-on strategy call and a stirring performance from Nicky Catsburg sealed Rowe Racing's first Nurburgring 24 Hours victory last September. Catsburg was chasing down the factory Car Collection Audi R8 LMS GT3 with Christopher Haase at the wheel when the rain that had caused a stoppage of nine and a half hours during the night returned in the closing stages. Rowe brought the BMW straight in for grooved rubber, whereas the Audi stayed out a lap longer.

"I told Nicky he needed to do the best out-lap he'd ever driven," recalls Hans-Peter Naundorf. "Nicky was outstanding. He says he hates those conditions, but we know he's one of the best in the rain." Catsburg found himself with 15-second lead after the Audi pitstop, and maintained it to the flag.

Rowe made a mistake at the Spa 24 Hours in 2019. That's what Naundorf believes. Nick Tandy was closing down Kevin Estre in the winning GPX Racing Porsche as the



Winning trio Bamber, Tandy and Vanthoor raise whopping Spa 24 trophy

chequered flag approached, but the team was worried about the Pirelli tyres holding up through Eau Rouge, and told the Brit to slow down. "That was our first race with Nick, and if you don't know the talents of a driver you can't exploit them fully," he says. "Now I understand that sometimes Nick can walk on water. If I had known that in 2019, I think we could have won."

Tandy was again at the wheel of a Rowe Porsche for the wet-weather finish at Spa last October, and he put in a phenomenal charge over the final three hours. "Nick is always on the radio asking the gap to the car in front and how much of the stint is left," says Naundorf. "He can calculate the risk he needs to take to make up the time."

Tandy leapfrogged into the lead with just under an hour and a half to go due to the team double-stinting him on the tyres when it went for a so-called short fuel stop. He stayed there to the end to win by five seconds.



Rowe won at Spa in October after an epic charge in the final three hours by Tandy

finished fifth and seventh on a good day for the team, but there was an even better one the following year when Tandy, Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor made amends with a result that went in its favour by an equally small margin. That triumph followed hot on the heels of a win at the Nurburgring with the BMW M6 GT3 shared by Sims, Eng, Nicky Catsburg and Nick Yelloly.

Rowe won't be defending its Spa crown in what became the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup last year. Instead, it is undertaking a new challenge with BMW in the born-again DTM on its switch to GT3 regulations. The team is fielding a pair of M6s for factory BMW drivers Timo Glock and Sheldon van der Linde.

The idea of doing the DTM came up while Rowe was in the midst of discussions with Porsche about continuing in the GTWCE for a third season together. "There was this DTM thing coming and we asked ourselves if it was worth looking at,"

says Naundorf. "The costs of doing Spa are going up every year and Porsche wanted to spread its drivers around its teams more than in the past, so we thought let's try the DTM. The important thing was to have the support of a manufacturer. BMW had said they didn't want to do the DTM, but we were able to convince them that it was a good thing."

Naundorf has further aspirations for MCG. He'd like to take the team into the IGTC, perhaps as early as next year, and, in the longer term, has his eye on the Le Mans 24 Hours. But right now the focus is on the Nurburgring 24 Hours and its two-car assault with BMW. American John Edwards has taken Sims's place in last year's winning entry, while van der Linde, Martin Tomczyk, Marco Wittmann and Connor De Phillippi drive the second car. "Our goal is always to be on the podium, because you cannot say that you are going to win in such a competitive environment," says Naundorf. "We want to go into every race we do with a real sporting chance."

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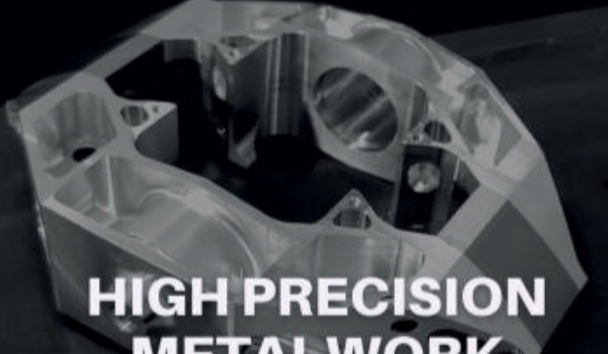
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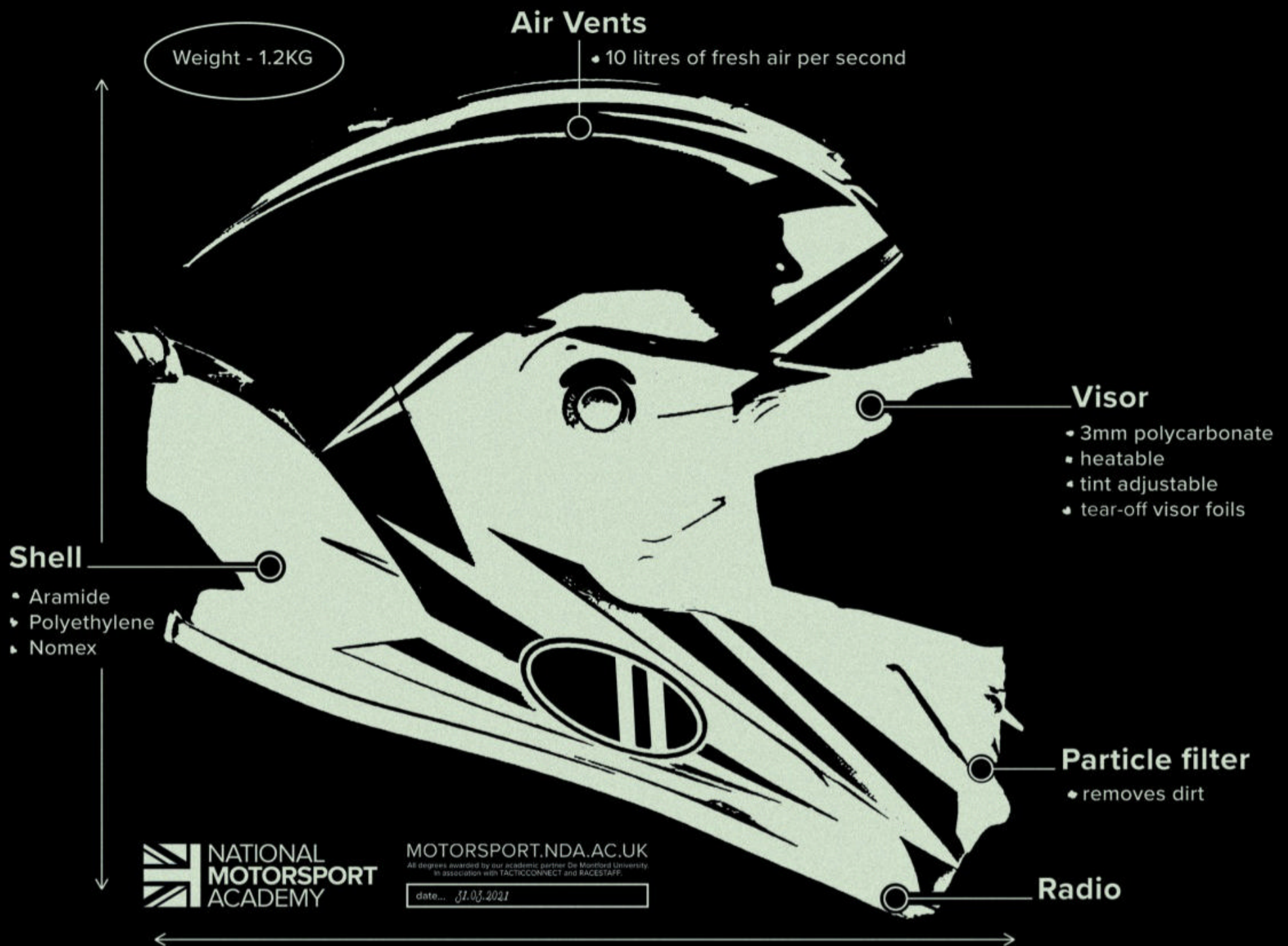
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DRIVERS ESCAPE MAJOR SHUNTS AT BRANDS MASTERS HISTORIC

MASTERS HISTORIC RACING

Brazilian racer Carlos Monteverde remained in hospital when Autosport went to press, but Briton Jonathan Mitchell escaped injury following separate incidents that punctuated last weekend's Masters Historic Festival at Brands Hatch.

Monteverde sustained a fractured sternum and broken ribs when his Ferrari 512M – a toolroom copy of Jose Juncadella's 1971 Escuderia Montjuich car – went straight on at Graham Hill Bend, during qualifying for the Masters Historic Sports Car race on Saturday.

The yellow car rode the steep grassy incline and impacted the barrier close to the paddock access tunnel. Monteverde, who tried to climb out, was treated by marshals and medics, then at the medical centre, before being evacuated to London's Kings College Hospital by helicopter.

"We don't know what caused it at this stage, but [Motorsport UK] scrutineers went over the car with a fine-toothed comb and the brakes were working," said preparer Gary Pearson – who had qualified the Ferrari seventh before handing over to Monteverde – on Monday evening. "It was reported that a puff of grey smoke was seen before it left the track.

"Carlos called me this afternoon, in pain from his chest, which hit the steering wheel. He was in surprisingly



Monteverde was airlifted to hospital after Ferrari shunt, while Mitchell (inset) was unhurt after flying over the barriers

good spirits and was anticipating an MRI scan [to ascertain whether further injuries had been sustained]. Amazingly, the car is not that badly damaged. The chassis stood up remarkably well."

Chevron B19 driver Mitchell's escape was miraculous. He was running fourth on lap 12 of Sunday's race when track camera footage shows the red car spearing left across the gravel trap approaching the fast right-hander Hawthorns – taken in fourth gear – on the Grand Prix circuit, being launched by the

barrier and rolling into the trees.

"Jonathan walked away without a scratch – I was incredibly relieved when I saw him appear, standing," said preparer Luke Stevens of Team LEOS.

"We believe from footage that the right-rear tyre had deflated, thus the [unloaded] left front locked as he hit the brakes, preventing the car from turning. The Chevron is not pretty – it needs a chassis – but stood up spectacularly well, considering it was upside down into the trees."

MARCUS PYE



Porsche Cayman was badly damaged after Sunny In off

McEwan unhurt in Croft crash

750 MOTOR CLUB

Ross McEwan was fortunate to walk away from a sizeable shunt at Croft last weekend in which his Porsche Cayman became trapped underneath a barrier – an accident that forced an early red-flagging of the planned two-hour Club Enduro race.

The former Scottish

FF1600 champion took three attempts to free himself after the 90km/h head-on impact with the barriers at Sunny In.

"I was caught out by how early the car in front braked, jinked left onto the grass and that was it," said the Glaswegian. "The top of the door had become deformed under the barrier, but I managed to force it

open at the third attempt.

"It was only when I walked away did I see how far the car had penetrated the barrier. On reflection, I'm extremely lucky.

"The car is probably a write-off – it's only its second race after Donington. Hopefully we can salvage the engine and gearbox."

CARL MCKELLAR

Heathcote and Webb make Masters debuts

MASTERS HISTORIC RACING

Former British Rallycross champion and Ginetta racer Nathan Heathcote and World Endurance Championship driver Oliver Webb made their Masters Historic debuts at Brands Hatch last weekend.

Heathcote campaigned a Mini in both the Pre-66 Mini and Pre-66 Touring Car contests, having been inspired by watching Minis race at the Goodwood Revival.

"I was just watching it on TV with the family," he said. "I've never really watched much of it but I saw the Mini race and it just looked absolutely amazing."

He then set about acquiring a Mini and organising his first outing in it, which resulted in a second place in the first Masters Pre-66 Mini race. He was then pushing for the lead in race two when he felt a wheel come loose and had to retire.

"It's probably more fun than I thought it would be, to be honest," he added. "Every time you go into a corner, they slide a little bit. Compared to anything else – I mean, rallycross was amazing – but on the circuit racing side of things, this is the most fun I've ever had in a car. I love it."



The new historic direction his career has taken means he does not have to commit to a full championship and can organise his racing alongside his work in the agricultural business sector. He is now targeting an entry for the Revival.

Webb, meanwhile, shared Guy Ziser's Porsche 911 in the Gentlemen Drivers race, the pair having previously made a lower-key entry into the GT and Sports Car Cup at Silverstone last month.

Webb's involvement came about through Ziser himself, who asked

him to do some driver coaching after a chance meeting in Barcelona. "We were sat on the same table at a black-tie event and got speaking," Webb explained. "I had a little look round his Lancia road car and we stayed in touch."

They were 27th overall and fourth in their class in Gentlemen Drivers, in spite of a penalty for a pitlane near-miss. Ziser hesitated when leaving the pits, trying to let a quicker car through and inadvertently ended up obstructing it.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER

Historic F1 grids dented by travel restrictions

MASTERS HISTORIC RACING

Masters Historic Racing president Ron Maydon says the coronavirus pandemic is particularly affecting Historic Formula 1 as European drivers with cars are reluctant to travel.

The Historic F1 races at the Brands Hatch Masters meeting last weekend were contested by just 12 cars, despite big grids for the other Masters categories.

"There is a reluctance [for European drivers] to travel to England in the first place at the moment, and then on Tuesday last week, when Germany put Britain on the red list, that meant Germans couldn't travel here, or they faced quarantine when they went back," Maydon explained. "In one day, we lost five F1 cars and four Masters Endurance Legends cars, from Germany and Belgium."



"It's disappointing, but that's the way it is. This is meant to be fun. You can't expect people to do it if there are problems going home."

The situation is simpler in continental Europe and 22 F1 cars have registered for the Paul Ricard meeting next weekend.

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Whale fell in love with ex-Bell car during his company's own auction



Whale shakes down Bell canary Escort ahead of Thruxton outing

HISTORICS

Nick Whale shook down his freshly rebuilt Ford Escort Mk1 race car at Silverstone at the end of last month ahead of a planned first outing next weekend.

The car, famous in its Norwich City canary colours, was built and raced by the late Mike Bell, the former Mitsubishi Ralliart engineer and historic racer and preparer being a Norwich football fan.

When Whale's Silverstone Auctions organisation took on selling Bell's fleet of racing cars after his death, Nick fell in love with the Escort, and bid for it within his own auction.

"It's just a lovely thing," he said, of the two-litre BDG-engined Escort, which is fresh from a full rebuild with the Jordan Racing Team. He plans to race it for the first time in the Historic Touring Car Challenge at Thruxton on June 12-13, even though it's a circuit, he doesn't know very well. "I've only been there three times, and two of those were in the BTCC," said Whale.

The experienced all-rounder also has the ex-Phil Collins Ford Escort Mk2 rally car, which he has already used in rounds of the Circuit Rally Championship, co-driven by his wife Sally.

PAUL LAWRENCE

John Sprinzel 1930-2021

OBITUARY

Berlin-born John Sprinzel, who has died aged 90, was a charismatic and extraordinarily gifted man.

The family relocated to London in 1934, and young John became fanatical about cars. Following his competition debut in 1955, rallying his mother's Austin A30, he ambitiously contested the 1957 Sestriere Rally, supported by Marcus Chambers and the BMC Competition Department.

After winning his debut

race at Goodwood that year with an Austin A35, Sprinzel announced it was prepared by Speedwell, a company the entrepreneur hadn't yet founded! But disciples flocked to the speedshop, in which he sold his shares to future Formula 1 world champion Graham Hill in 1959.

John and Austin-Healey Sprites were synonymous. He completed the 1960 Sebring 12 Hours and finished a magnificent second – to Erik Carlsson/Stuart Turner's factory Saab and ahead of the

Morley brothers' works Healey 3000 – on that year's RAC Rally in PMO 200 with Richard Bensted-Smith, and sixth in the European Championship.

British rally champion with Turner – and the S in Sprinzel LawrenceTune Racing, builder of the three Morgan +4 SLRs and a Triumph version – Sprinzel also organised and contested the 1968 London-Sydney Marathon in an MG Midget and ran the 1970 London-Mexico World Cup Rally.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

SCOTTISH RACING IS GO

After the first Northern Irish circuit racing event of 2021 took place last weekend, this weekend it is the turn of Scotland to get competition under way. A crowd of 250 people is permitted for the opening Scottish Motor Racing Club fixture of the year at Knockhill on Sunday and tickets have sold out. The event features the David Leslie Trophy Formula Ford contest, with National drivers joining their Scottish counterparts.

BELL ON SPORTS 2000 POD

Le Mans legend Derek Bell is the latest guest to appear on The Sports 2000 Podcast. The Sports Racing Car Club has launched the podcast series this year to promote the category and club president Bell is the next guest. He will appear on two shows, one more focused on his own career and how he started racing, while the second will be focused on his interest in Sports 2000. The podcast can be found via sports2000.co.uk

ROLLING STREEK CONTINUES

Lotus Cortina driver Mel Streek had the luckiest of escapes in the Pre-66 Touring Car race at Brands Hatch last weekend after sliding onto the gravel at Surtees. The car rolled onto its side before dropping back onto the wheels and Streek was able to drive away and continue in the race with the car showing no sign of damage, finishing in 18th place.

HADDON'S TYRRELL TROPHY

A new Tyrrell Trophy was awarded at last weekend's Masters event at Brands Hatch, marking 50 years since the team claimed the Formula 1 constructors' title with a car of its own design. Andrew Haddon was presented with the award by Ken Tyrrell's grandson Adam (below, left) for his frontrunning Lotus Elan solo drive in the 90-minute Gentlemen Drivers contest. He only dropped out of podium contention with a lap to go after contact from another driver.



British RX wins shared by Vitols and Tohill

BRITISH RALLYCROSS

A rising star and an experienced charger claimed victory in the opening two rounds of the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy at Lydden Hill, but it was reigning champion Mark Donnelly who left the Kent circuit leading the points.

The entire Supercar field set a blistering pace throughout the weekend, with little to choose between the frontrunners. Such was the close nature of the lap times that ultimately it was a case of who faulted that mixed up the results throughout.

Donnelly twice took top spot in the Intermediate classification at the close of the qualifying stages, claiming a solid points haul but, while he won his semi-final on Saturday, he retired from pole in the final immediately with a broken subframe.

On Monday, the turbocharger on his LD Motorsports Citroen DS 3 seized during the semi-final stages, a period of the event that was a serious race of attrition among the leading contenders. The LDM squad replaced the turbo for the final but, with the car still not fully right, Donnelly could only finish fourth.



His team-mate Roberts Vitols, the reigning Super1600 champion making his top-class debut – his prize for winning the front-wheel-drive category last year – drove a Citroen C4 to victory on Saturday, beating former champion Ollie O'Donovan in a straight fight in the final thanks to an early joker lap. Tristan Ovenden scored a maiden Supercar podium in third.

O'Donovan again finished second on Monday, even with a turbo boost problem in his semi-final. But it was Derek Tohill who shone brightest in the final. Despite coming under pressure from O'Donovan

and the returning Andy Scott, double European champion Tohill came out on top.

Also taking place was the UK's first-ever electric rallycross race, as the single-make Electro Rallycross category for production-based Fiat 500es joined the BRX roster.

Polish driver Tomasz Wielgosz qualified on pole for the final in round one, but it was former British Touring Car racer Dan Welch who claimed the historic win. Wielgosz finished second with Autosport's Hal Ridge third. In the second round on Monday, Retro Rallycross competitor David Halford claimed victory.

HAL RIDGE

Launch of Ginetta's GT Pro class put on hold

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

The proposed GT Pro class within the Ginetta GT4 Supercup will not run this year as the manufacturer has focused its efforts on producing G56 machines for its new GT Academy series.

GT Pro was due to feature an uprated version of the GTA car and was open to drivers aged between 16 and 21. It was designed to help young racers step up from

Ginetta Junior or the GT5 Challenge without the leap up to the G55 GT4 Supercup cars.

But amid parts shortages following the coronavirus pandemic, Ginetta concentrated on getting 19 GTA machines ready for the opening round and decided now was not the right moment to launch GT Pro.

"Producing the cars has been a bit of an issue," said Ginetta motorsport manager Ash Gallagher. "We've run up against so many challenges with parts supplies

because of COVID-19 and Brexit and the lockdown over winter hurt us. GT Pro was probably a step too far and the timing just didn't work for us."

Gallagher said the concept can still work and it will be assessed whether to introduce it at a later point. Even without the GT Pro class, 22 entries are expected for the GT4 Supercup opener at Snetterton next weekend.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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Impressive debut for new uprated Revolution A-One

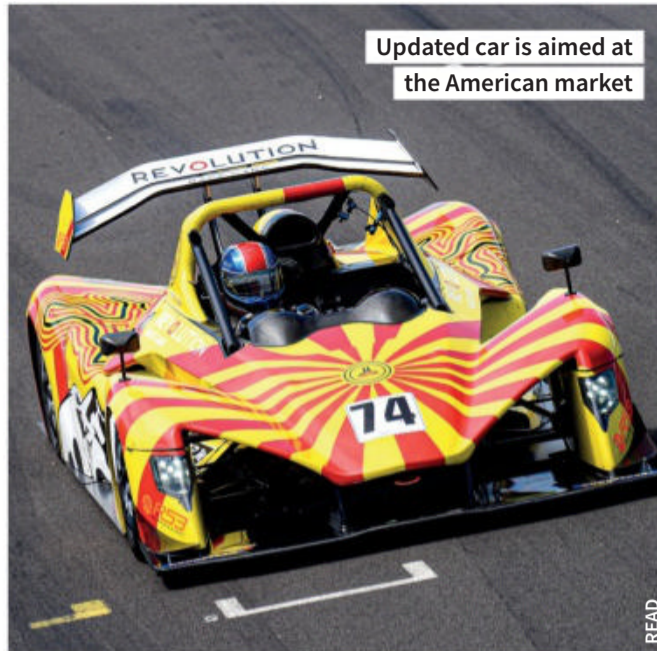
SPORTS PROTOTYPE CUP

James Abbott took two podiums in last Saturday's pair of Sports Prototype Cup races at Silverstone in a new, uprated version of the Revolution A-One tailored for the needs of the American market.

The 3.7-litre Ford-sourced engine has received a 40bhp boost, taking the output from 380bhp to approximately 420bhp. This has largely been achieved by way of a new exhaust and throttle body work from Jenvey Dynamics. In addition, the car has received upgraded R53 brake dampers that, in the words of Abbott – responsible for vehicle development at Revolution Cars – “helps an awful lot at the bumpier tracks”.

“There's some very clever valving in there, which helps control the pitch of the car while keeping the tyre in contact with the ground more readily,” said Abbott. “This is ideal for the rougher tracks that they have in America.”

Of the power increase, Abbott noted: “It is [noticeable], more towards the end of the



straight, as the torque figures are the same. We're certainly getting more acceleration and top speed at higher revs.”

While the faster car is targeted at the US market, it is also under evaluation for introduction in Europe.

“The US market is rather different from the UK and Europe; it's a lot more trackday-oriented, and straightline speed is more important,” added Abbott. “It's going to be less of a noticeable difference on European circuits, but we want every tenth!”

ADAM WELLER

Bearman confirms limited F3 season despite strong start

BRDC BRITISH F3

Oliver Bearman has confirmed he is likely to miss at least three rounds of this season's BRDC British F3 Championship despite taking a double podium on his debut in the category at the first round.

The Briton made his debut with Fortec Motorsport at Brands Hatch last month having never driven around the Grand Prix loop until practice, but lined up second on the grid and finished there in the first race before grabbing another runner-up spot in race two.

The 16-year-old was a late entry to the event having prioritised campaigns in German and Italian F4 this season. It means he will likely only be able to compete in five of the eight British F3 events scheduled for this season, despite only sitting four points off Zak O'Sullivan at the top of the standings.

“Probably around five [rounds we will do],” he said. “I don't think it will be enough to challenge for the title but the rounds that I do will help put me in the shop window.”

“The main aim was always F4 this season. I think we prioritised F4 racing in Europe because there are a lot of young F1 driver programmes. You see a lot of people dropping their drivers [in those championships] and there are a lot of F1 teams involved in that championship.

“I will definitely be missing Spa, which is a shame because I was really looking forward to Spa, and I'm not sure about the others.

“There's no pressure, I feel like I can take a few more risks whereas they're playing the long game.”

STEFAN MACKLEY



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

IN THE HEADLINES

CROFT DRIVERS REINSTATED

Five drivers were excluded from the opening Sports 1000 race at Croft – only to be all reinstated when two lodged successful appeals. Winner on the road Ryan Yarrow, Daniel Larnier, Tim Hoverd, Jonathan McGill and Tom Johnston were removed from the result after their cars failed rideheight checks. However, Yarrow and McGill argued accurate readings hadn't been possible – largely due to damage caused by kerbs or off-track excursions – and, on listening to the claims, officials rescinded their original decision.

'SCRAPYARD FIND' PODIUM

Luke Rosewell had an overnight 'scrapyard find' to thank for his third-place finish in Croft's second Type R Trophy race after blowing his original engine in Friday testing. “We managed to find a broker on eBay selling one for £1200 so paid him a bit extra to drive it up from Birmingham in the footwell of his Civic,” said Rosewell. “We've no idea how many miles are on it, but it's worked a treat.”


NEW BRSCC APPOINTMENT

The British Racing & Sports Car Club has appointed Luke Souch as its new competitions coordinator. His most recent roles have included being senior clerk of the course at BRSCC race weekends, as well as assisting in clerking the British GT Championship and Masters Historic events. He will take up his new role from 1 July.

DEBUT FOR AMERICAN IMPORT

A Datsun 240Z (below) with IMSA and Trans-Am history made its UK debut in Sunday's Classic Sports Car Club Special Saloons & Modsports events at Donington Park. Raced at Portland by Jim Murch and Gail Woodworth from the late 1970s to the mid-80s, with support from Kellum-Datsun in Oregon City, it was imported by series regulars Alan and Kevin Cooper in 2015. It took a best finish of 14th across the three races.





Thomas and Lockie came through to win Pre-66 Touring Cars as others suffered myriad woes

Fans treated to Masters Historic spectacle

BRANDS HATCH MSVR MASTERS HISTORIC 29-30 MAY

Spectators were back at Brands Hatch for the second time this year for last weekend's Masters Historic Festival and were treated to some eventful racing.

The Pre-66 Touring Cars race was a perfect close to Saturday's timetable, its hour-long contest full of action and unpredictability. Julian Thomas and Calum Lockie eventually finished clear winners in Thomas's Ford Falcon, but were made to work hard for it. Polesitter

Henry Mann — sharing Steve Soper's rebuilt Ford Mustang, which had a spectacular off at the same meeting last year — looked to be in control from the start, but he was forced to retire before handing over to Soper. A combination of brake problems and swerving to avoid a backmarker at Surtees were the culprits.

Rob Fenn and Jake Hill in the former's Mustang were the next obstacle to a Thomas/Lockie victory. Thomas had started just behind Fenn and managed to pass him, but a slide on dropped oil gave the position back to Fenn and also allowed David Coyne through in his Mustang.

As Fenn handed over to Hill, problems with the Mustang's fuel line and gearbox intensified and Lockie took advantage, claiming the win as the race finished behind the safety car. Alex Taylor's Mustang had become beached, having started at the back due to a noise issue and had battled into the top 10 before his off.

Coyne, who had qualified eighth, took the runner-up spot, while Roy Alderslade was third in a Lotus Cortina, having kept on the back of the lead battle and handled the pitstops a little better than Tom Ingram and Marco Attard. British Touring Car Championship frontrunner Ingram had run as high as second mid-race with some flamboyant driving, but he and Attard had to settle for fifth, behind Shaun Balfe and Tom Ashton in a similar Cortina.

The Gentlemen Drivers contest provided another unpredictable outcome. James Cottingham played a clever waiting game in his Shelby Cobra, making steady and stealthy progress from 13th on the grid into a strong position from which to strike when the leaders repeatedly succumbed to problems. He passed the AC Cobra Daytona Coupe of Alderslade for second, then inherited the win when Oliver Bryant's Cobra developed gearbox troubles.

Bryant had started the weekend as second reserve before qualifying on pole, but he was overhauled at the start by Alex Brundle (Jaguar E-type) and Andrew



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: HAWKINS



Cottingham: the man to beat in Gentlemen Drivers



Tandy's Lola twice topped Masters Endurance Legends



Hartley won both Masters Historic Formula 1 races in a McLaren MP4/1

Jordan, who was sharing Alderslade's Cobra. The early laps were dominated by Brundle and then Jordan, but solo driver Bryant took the same steadier approach as Cottingham and looked to be a convincing winner until the last 10 minutes.

John Pearson, sharing with Brundle, finished second, with John Spiers and Tiff Needell third in a TVR Griffith. Mike Whitaker's Griffith inherited fourth from Jake Hill who, sharing Fenn's Lotus Elan, was penalised five seconds after tangling with Andrew Haddon's similar car on the last lap. Haddon was awarded fifth, ahead of Hill and Fenn.

Brundle secured a dominant win in the Historic Sports Cars, driving Gary Pearson's Lola T70 Mk3B. He had been expecting a fight with Tom Bradshaw's lighter, nimbler Chevron B19 but he was already ahead when Bradshaw retired with a snapped throttle cable.

The race was affected by a lengthy mid-point safety car period after Jonathan Mitchell's B19 breached the barriers at Hawthorns. Confusion in the pits ensued as a string of cars were waved through for stopping too early, but Brundle, Bradshaw and others managed to make a stop and were subsequently given time penalties post-race.

On-track, Martin Stretton pushed through to second place in Nick Sleep's T70. He benefited from Henry Fletcher's

B19 serving a drivethrough penalty but was impressive nonetheless. Fletcher finished third ahead of the T70 of Robert Beebee and Steve Brooks.

Steve Hartley was the winner of the first Historic F1 race, driving a McLaren MP4/1. He had built up a big lead over Warren Briggs's McLaren M29 and held on to it in the last-lap dash that followed a late safety car period. Briggs was demoted to third by Lukas Halusa's M23, making it an all-McLaren podium. Hartley repeated the win in race two, although a partially reversed grid meant he had to work harder, disposing of Halusa and polesitter Mark Hazell's Williams FWo8C.

Equipe Libre provided two lively races, both won in strong sideways style by Tom Smith's MGB. The biggest story in the second encounter was the progress of the 'Cobra Shelby American' driven by Charlie Allison and Peter Thompson. The 4700cc beast started from pole but had to retire from the opening race. Starting from the back in race two, the duo managed to slice through to second by the flag.

The fortunes of race one runner-up Robert Binfield (Jaguar E-type) were the reverse. Binfield got an excellent start from fifth in the opener and finished in a strong second, but his race two launch was slower and he dropped down the order. He fought back to take fifth.

Ian Curley was the winner of both

WEEKEND WINNERS



MASTERS PRE-66 TOURING CARS

Julian Thomas/Calum Lockie (Ford Falcon)

GENTLEMEN DRIVERS

James Cottingham (Shelby Cobra)

MASTERS HISTORIC SPORTS CARS

Alex Brundle (Lola T70, above)

MASTERS HISTORIC FORMULA 1

Races 1 & 2 Steve Hartley (McLaren MP4/1)

EQUIPE LIBRE

Races 1 & 2 Tom Smith (MGB, below)

MASTERS PRE-66 MINIS

Races 1 & 2 Ian Curley (Austin Mini Cooper S)

MASTERS ENDURANCE LEGENDS

Races 1 & 2 Steve Tandy (Lola-Judd B12/60)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Pre-66 Mini races, but he was pushed to varying degrees by newcomer Nathan Heathcote. Former rallycross ace Heathcote was second in race one by just 0.162s, but had to retire from a tense lead battle with Curley in the second outing, having noticed that a wheel was about to detach itself from his car.

Jeff Smith was caught on the back foot by both Curley and Heathcote, finishing third in race one and hit the wall at Hawthorns during the opening lap of race two. The leaders had to stop abruptly on their last tour in the opener after marshals mistakenly tried to flag them in at Surtees.

Steve Tandy won both Endurance Legends races in his Lola-Judd B12/60. Second-placed Shaun Lynn briefly led both times in his BR01 but could not hold off Tandy for long.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER



Baby Bertha thwarted in Special Saloons thriller

DONINGTON PARK
CSCC
29-30 MAY

Driving the fabled Vauxhall Firenza V8 'Baby Bertha' in which Gerry Marshall was rarely defeated in 1975, Joe Ward came within 0.166 seconds of winning the Special Saloons & Modsports finale, among the highlights of the Classic Sports Car Club's 475-entry Donington Derby extravaganza.

Malcolm Harding needed all his short oval experience to land his maiden victory, wrestling his wayward Ford Escort Mk2 for the last three laps, its tracking askew following a clonk from odds-on favourite Andy Southcott's MG Midget-Vauxhall at the chicane, which sidelined the latter.

Wayne Crabtree had earlier extended his undefeated run to three bouts in the spectacular Subaru turbo-powered Abespeed Ford RS200, but retired from race three. After Southcott revolved at Roberts, Crabtree was chased home by Clive Anderson's splendid BMW E30 turbo and Laki Christoforou's pristine Millington-engined Escort Mk2 in the opening salvo.

The second was stopped with Anderson's ochre monster ahead, but he was erroneously banished to the pitlane

for the restart having been misidentified as the red flag's catalyst. Crabtree blitzed the four-lap sprint, finishing clear of Ward – in pain from a broken rib – who just kept Harding's Escort in Bertha's mirrors. Best of the Bernie's V8s pack, which added colour and depth, was Matt Holben in his ex-Ian Flux TVR Tuscan.

Penalties applied post-race, mainly for short pitstops, abounded across the mini-enduro races, changing the results of four, which will confuse spectators at the circuit and those watching livestreaming of the event. Among them was the weekend's best, the Swinging Sixties Group 2 set, in which Simeon Chodosh in his thuggish Chevrolet Corvette appeared to masterfully repel Steve Hodges' zippy Lotus 7.

Following an almighty dust-up that embroiled Malcolm Johnson's Lotus Europa, the Sunbeam Tigers of Stephen Pickering and Simon James, Ben Cater's Elan and Dean Halsey's Datsun 240Z at its height, Johnson – despite excursions at the Esses and Coppice – finished third on the road but was declared the winner from Halsey. Chodosh and Hodges were classified sixth and seventh.

Group 1 was equally enthralling with Mini men Ralph Budd, Tom Bell, Phil

Bullen-Brown, Clive Tonge and Chris Watkinson screaming round as one. Bell floated his Cooper S to extraordinary angles as he and Budd traded places, but post-stops his partner Joe Ferguson was clear of Charlie Budd. Only Tom Pead's BMW 1600Ti was on the same lap at the chequer.

Bellowing bewinged BMWs blitzed Saturday's New Millennium and Open races. Darren Fielding's E46 M3 GTR took the former after the Russell Humphrey/Mark Wyatt E92 faded. Rear axle location mods improved Matty Evans' previously unruly V8-engined 1M Coupe sufficiently to see off Michael Pensavalle's E46 M3 in the Open. David Harvey's bizarre supercharged Rover K-engined Lotus 340R finished third.

Despite being sideswiped by a lapped BMW at Redgate, as he and Nigel Jenkins battled for supremacy, Evans looked to have earned Slicks Series gold, too. But a short stop penalty advantaged Jenkins, whose Ferrari lost its rear valance in a first corner shemuzzle that ended top qualifier Kevin Jones' Noble challenge.

Rallyman Tom Delaney, 21, was robbed of a debut race victory in Turbo Tin Tops, when a heat sensor put his Mini Cooper S R56's engine into limp mode, cutting 50bhp. Third behind Carl Chambers (Peugeot 208) and John Hammersley (VW Scirocco) – reprimanded for cannoning the lapped Charlie Newton-Darby's Mini off at Old Hairpin while leading – was poor reward.

Despite his Nissan's engine block cracking, Mark Chilton won Future Classics, beating the TVR Tuscan of Stuart Daburn (ex-Steve Guglielmi, subsequently bumped to fourth) and Aston and Tony Blake.

Spireman John Cutmore topped both Magnificent Sevens races against the Caterhams. Tim Davis outbraked himself and took out BOSS team-mate Colin Watson trying to wrest the opener's lead at



WEEKEND WINNERS

DONINGTON PARK CSCC**SPECIAL SALOONS & MODSPORTS****Races 1 & 2** Wayne Crabtree (Ford RS200-Subaru)**Race 3** Malcolm Harding (Ford Escort-S&J Mk2)**SWINGING SIXTIES****Group 1** Tom Bell/Joe Ferguson (Austin Cooper S)**Group 2** Malcolm Johnson (Lotus Europa)**NEW MILLENNIUM/MODERN CLASSICS**

Darren Fielding (BMW E46 M3 GTR)

OPEN SERIES

Matty Evans (BMW 1M Coupe)

SLICKS SERIES

Nigel Jenkins (Ferrari 458 Challenge)

TURBO TIN TOPS

Carl Chambers (Peugeot 208 GTI)

FUTURE CLASSICS

Mark Chilton (Nissan Skyline GT-R R32)

MAGNIFICENT SEVENS**Races 1 & 2** John Cutmore (Spire-Suzuki RB7)**TIN TOPS**

Andrew Windmill (Honda Civic Type R)

CLASSIC K

Jamie Boot (TVR Griffith)

DONINGTON PARK BARC**CLASSIC THUNDER & BLUE OVAL SALOONS****Race 1** Andrew Wilson (Holden Monaro)**Race 2** Matty Evans (BMW 1M)**PRE-03 & PRE-93 TOURING CARS****Race 1** Gary Prebble (Honda Civic)**Race 2** AJ Owen (Honda Civic Type R)**PRE-66 TOURING CARS****Race 1** Tom Bell (Austin Mini Cooper S)**Race 2** Joe Ferguson (Austin Mini Cooper S)**PRE-83 TOURING CARS & JAGUARS****Races 1 & 2** James Ramm (Jaguar XJS)**KUMHO BMW****Race 1** Brad Sheehan (M3 E46)**Race 2** Michael Pensavalle (M3 E46)**MIGHTY MINIS****Race 1** Stuart Coombs (Super)**Race 2** Ian Slark (Super)**For full results visit: tsl-timing.com**

the chicane, then a short-stop penalty undid Jonny Pittard's glory in his supercharged CSR. Race two finished behind a safety car as Pittard was reeling Cutmore in.

The extra 30s imposition for winning Thruxton's Tin Tops event was a bridge too far for Andrew Windmill's Honda Civic – until Nigel Tongue (Peugeot 306) took out leader Martin Addison (106), having already attracted a short-stop penalty.

MARCUS PYE

Wilson, Wood and Evans had thrilling Classic Thunder fights

Classic Touring Car contests provide thunderous action

DONINGTON PARK BARC 31 MAY

A bank holiday spectacular of Classic Touring Car racing delivered thrills and spills aplenty at Donington Park on Monday.

Leading the way were the Classic & Historic Thunder Saloons, pitching Holden V8s against a swarm of ultra-rapid BMWs and an ex-Jason Plato Vauxhall Vectra. James Card's E46 delivered a series of blistering laps to claim pole but, as he and the Vectra headed to the grid, neither car seemed prepared to go any further.

All seven litres of Andrew Wilson's Monaro therefore took the lead from Matty Evans' BMW and Ric Wood's Commodore. These three quickly broke free but were never more than a few lengths apart, Wood taking Evans, then Evans taking him back. But, as the race neared its end, it was Wood who held second as Evans launched his attack, only to find the Redgate gravel. Wilson's

power along the straight kept Wood at bay while Evans recovered to the final podium place.

It looked to be much of the same for race two, the Monaro thwarting repeated Commodore attacks, while Evans searched relentlessly for gaps. Crossing the line at the end of lap eight, Wood's momentum pushed him towards a seemingly uncovered inside line for Redgate, only for Wilson to snap across in a late attempt to cover. This resulted in contact, nudging Wilson into the gravel and out of contention.

If this wasn't drama enough, just seconds later, the Ford Escort of Colin Voyce dumped oil heading into the chicane, sending those behind (including newly promoted P2 man Evans) scattering over grass and gravel and causing the race to be red-flagged. Evans was declared the winner after Wood was given a penalty for causing the collision.

In the Pre-2003 races, Gary Prebble and AJ Owen took a win apiece, the Honda Civic men never more than a few tenths apart as they were forced to cut a tight line, often side-by-side, past backmarkers.

But driver of the day had to be Joe Ferguson in the Pre-66 Mini shared with Tom Bell. Required to start at the back of the 28-car grid for race two, Ferguson made an astonishing 23 places on the first tour to cross the line in fifth and, by lap five of 11, was firmly in the lead, heading to a remarkable win.

STEVE HINDLE

Ferguson was on a mission in second Pre-66 race

Pollard bears down on Vee leader Harridge

CROFT
750MC
29-30 MAY

Craig Pollard closed the gap on James Harridge at the top of the Formula Vee table with wins in both races at a hot and sunny Croft, but was only handed victory after the flag in their second clash.

Pollard's Bears GAC had romped to a pair of pole positions ahead of Harridge's Maverick in qualifying, before leading race one from start to finish. Harridge kept close throughout, but a succession of fastest laps mid-race – including a new lap record – ensured Pollard was never truly threatened.

By contrast, race two was a nail-biter. The lead changed hands six times in the opening two laps alone – Harridge getting ever more inventive with moves around the outside into Clervaux off the start, then down the inside into Sunny In and the Complex.

Pollard was in front as racing resumed after a short safety car period, only for Harridge to pull a demon move round the outside into Tower. Pollard struck back at Tower on the next tour but a slow exit enabled Harridge to move past again into the Jim Clark Esses. Entering the final knockings, the red flag flew (see News) and, on countback, officials declared Pollard the winner.

"It's not how I want to win – I'd rather be leading at the chequered flag, but what a race that was," said Pollard.

Harridge reflected: "I'm not sure why they counted it back so far but I'm not going to protest – I'm still leading in the points."

Tim Probert's Storm took third in Saturday's opener after surviving an opening corner skirmish that accounted for Andrew Cooper's GAC and Peter Belsey's Spyder. Peter Studer's TCR Challenger



Pollard's Bears GAC battles with Harridge (1) en route to two Vee victories at Croft

secured the final podium position in race two, while there was a pair of epic recovery drives from Daniel Hands – up to seventh and ninth in his AHS Dominator after a rear suspension breakage in qualifying had left him 31st and last on both grids.

Adam Shepherd won both Type R Trophy races, but neither triumph was straightforward. In the first race, he had to drive around second-gear selection issues to keep clear of the chasing Mark Balmer and Lee Deegan.

At the start of the second race, Balmer was ahead of them both entering Clervaux but the lightest of contact sent him spinning left into the barrier before Hawthorn. Shepherd and Deegan survived the drama to take the top two spots ahead of Luke Rosewell, who added a third to his fourth in race one.

Joe Stables (Radical) and Scott Mittell (Mittell) were out on their own in both Bikesports races. Stables led all the way in race one as Mittell gradually fell back

with overheating rear tyres. However, Mittell took his revenge in race two, winning after making his move for the lead exiting Sunny Out.

The Spires of Ryan Yarrow and Rich Miles similarly dominated the opening Sports 1000 race, although they had the Mittell machines of Victor Neumann and Daniel Larnar for company early on. Yarrow lost the win after technical checks but was reinstated on appeal (see News).

Miles was unchallenged in race two, grabbing the lead at the start and then benefiting when Yarrow was tipped into a spin by Neumann at Hawthorn. Michael Roots (Mittell) snuck through to take second ahead of the following Neumann.

Locost and the MX-5 Cup each had triple-headers that all produced breathtaking action. Geoff Peek led all three Locost races, but it was only the first that he won, ahead of Mark Burton and Andrew Tait.

Burton emerged the winner in race two after braving it out with Tait through the Jim Clark Esses on the final lap. Peek then lunged past Tait to grab second at the hairpin. But it was Martin West who left it latest of all to snatch a win, hanging on around the outside into the Complex to just pip Burton and Tait in the finale.

Ben Short won races one and three in the MX-5s, each time ahead of Tom Roche, who was victorious in the intervening encounter. Michael Comber, Bens Hancy and Abbitt, and Courtney Milnes were all in the mix at various stages.

Carl Swift and Robert Baker (SEAT Leon) were the dominant force in Club Enduro, winning by over a lap from Steve Cheetham (Porsche Boxster).

CARL MCKELLAR



Balmer (53) gets tipped into a spin at start of Type R Trophy contest as Shepherd goes by



WEEKEND WINNERS

FORMULA VEE

Races 1 & 2 Craig Pollard (Bears GAC)

TYPE R TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Adam Shepherd

BIKESPORTS

Race 1 Joe Stables (Radical PR6, below)

Race 2 Scott Mittell (Mittell MC-41RR)

SPORTS 1000

Race 1 Ryan Yarrow (Spire GT3S)

Race 2 Rich Miles (Spire GT3RM)

LOCOST

Race 1 Geoff Peek

Race 2 Mark Burton

Race 3 Martin West

MX-5 CUP

Races 1 & 3 Ben Short

Race 2 Tom Roche

CLUB ENDURO

Carl Swift/Robert Baker (SEAT Leon Eurocup)

ROADSPORTS

Simon Mauger/Matthew Faulkner
(Honda Civic Type R)



For full results visit: 750mc.co.uk

HOW THE VEE TINKERERS KEEP MOVING FORWARD



Studer's TCR Challenger started out as a Sheane

There's a magic about the 750 Motor Club's Formula Vee Championship that makes walking its paddock just as fascinating as the titanic on-track title scrap that is currently brewing between James Harridge and Craig Pollard.

There's something special about the formula's 'garagista' rules that continue to spark innovation among those with a passion for mechanical engineering. Or who simply love tinkering. It's a hark back to Formula Ford 1600 of the 1970s and 1980s, when dreams of designing, building and winning in one's own single-seater chassis were achievable. Take Croft at the weekend, where the entry list comprised at least 10 different 'marques', and cars with a decade or more of service still figured at the sharp end thanks to ongoing modifications over the years.

Peter Studer's car, now a 'TCR Challenger' "started out as a late-1990s Sheane that [stalwart team owner] Alan Harding modified to be one of his early AHS Challengers". Studer added: "I've applied my own suspension ideas and it had its first race in 2017."

Those tweaks included "making it in-board front suspension and converting to zero roll stiffness at the rear, and a pretty novel roll damping system" – tricks that helped it win 2019's Vee Festival.

"It's 100% the open-book rules that attracted me – the fact they aren't too restrictive," Studer said. "There are spec components you have to use on the engine, uprights, brakes, trailing arms, front beam and transaxle, but how you control the motion of that suspension is totally up to you."

Pollard's Bears set-up includes modifications to help overcome his car's brake discs flexing and pushing back into the caliper, while Harridge's

self-designed Maverick machine sprouted new brake ducts at Croft.

"They essentially started as a cardboard cut-out and some gaffer tape in the back garden at home and then taking the mould from that!" explained Harridge. "It's a great formula for innovation. No two cars are the same, but the regulations keep it close, particularly on the engines."

"It's a very friendly paddock as well; everyone helps out. We mucked in on an engine rebuild with Sam Engineer on Saturday night – he pulled a valve out of the head and, with a bit of sandpaper, reused the same head for the races!"

Harding's own set-up "has something to do" with about a third of the 35-plus entry. "The beauty of it is you can try anything," he said. "If it's not in the regulations, you make it and it might get banned, but you've at least been able to try it. You can machine the engine to take away weight and that means you can change shape – that opens up a whole new world."

"I'm sure if I went and looked at other people's cars I'll find things I've never thought of. As for us, we've not even got started yet – we've got loads coming."

Roll on Snetterton in mid-July when we'll see what this network of tinkerers has been up to in the intervening weeks.

CARL MCKELLAR



Wide variety of machines on the Formula Vee grid

Sheridan and McMillan share Mazda wins as NI racing restarts

KIRKISTOWN
500MRCI
29 MAY

After what felt like a very long winter, both summer and racing returned to Kirkistown together last weekend.

Warm sunshine and some equally hot competition kept the crowd – consisting entirely of club members only – entertained as the 500 Motor Racing Club of Ireland's venue got back into action just a few days after the Northern Ireland government eased a six-month motorsport lockdown.



As is so often the case at Kirkistown, Formula Ford provided plenty of action, but other classes had their moments too, with the Ford Fiesta Zetecs and Mazda MX-5s kicking proceedings off with a double nail-biter.

The Mazdas quickly turned into a head-to-head battle between Paul Sheridan, series 'father' David Cousins and Eugene McCann, with newcomer Gregory McMillan in the mix. Sheridan won from McCann, as McMillan claimed the final podium spot after Cousins slipped back. McMillan really got to work in race two, romping away from Sheridan to win by nine seconds.

Meanwhile the Fiestas, running concurrently, produced a win apiece for Mark Stewart and Neville Anderson after two fiercely contested side-by-side battles. The winning margin in both races was less than 0.4s.

Not to be outdone, FF1600 provided plenty of drama, too. Poleman Jordan Dempsey grabbed the initiative at the start, his Van Diemen RFoo just about holding off the RF01 of David McCullough, with Alan Davidson in very close attendance, accompanied by front-row starter Dave Parks' Ray and Neville Smyth's similar car.

It was too good to last and, after just four



laps, it all went wrong. Davidson had been trying to get past McCullough, and at Colonial on the fifth tour he managed it – very briefly.

The Mondiale spun to a halt mid-corner and, while McCullough squeezed through, Smyth was left with nowhere to go, the impact bringing out the red flags and putting both out for the day. Dempsey managed to keep McCullough at bay after the restart, with Trevor Delaney taking third spot after Parks slipped back.

It looked as though Dempsey and

Wilson and Kent take maiden TCR UK victories

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC
31 MAY

Darelle Wilson and Bradley Kent made it four winners from as many rounds this term as TCR UK returned to Castle Combe on Bank Holiday Monday. Wilson's maiden victory ended four years of trying in his Vauxhall Astra, while series rookie Kent put one over older brother Lewis in a wonderfully tight second stanza.

Max Hart, who with defending TCR UK champion Lewis Kent shared honours at

Silverstone's opener, was the quickest driver and took the chequered flag in the opener, but his Maximum Motorsport Hyundai i30 N TCR machine was excluded for a wheel spacer issue. Hart's drive in the second race demonstrated why he is such an exciting prospect, but he kissed Darron Lewis's Mercedes and spent too much time skirting the grass to pass the Kent boys once he caught them with a lap to run. He was later, once again, excluded for causing a collision.

Combe Saloon racer Alex Kite's Cupra TCR was savaged on his debut but the Maximum/Grant Motorsport conglomerate

repaired it and he rewarded them with fourth later. Olly Turner (Golf) and Jack Depper (Scirocco) won the concurrent Volkswagen Racing Cup element.

Felix Fisher broke Oliver White's stranglehold on the resident Formula Ford championship by winning the first race of a double-header from pole in his Ray GR05. White (Medina JL17K), Luke Cooper (Swift SC18) and Ben Mitchell (Van Diemen RF99) jostled in his wake, finishing in that order.

Mitchell was leading the train second time out when he clipped the kerb on the exit of the Esses and hit the barrier. White, Fisher and Cooper reordered at the front before the safety car was deployed and, when it pitted, the chequered flag was waved seconds later.

Fresh from finishing the Citroen C1 24 Hours at Silverstone, Adam Prebble scored his first Saloon win of the year, maintaining his family's presence at Combe. C1 team-mate James Keepin (MG ZR) extended his unbeaten Class C record to protect his narrow points lead over Class D standout Michael Good in his Vauxhall Corsa.

Ollie Bull scored another GT win in his





First Mazda MX-5
victory at Kirkistown
went to Sheridan

McCullough would repeat the exercise in race two but, when the former pulled off after just four laps, reigning FF1600 champion McCullough romped off to win from Ryan Campbell's Pre-90 topping Reynard.

Jim Larkham and his Radical PRO6 returned to racing after taking a year out and celebrated with back-to-back Roadsports wins. In the first race it was Niall Fitzsimmons' Radical that took the runner-up position, ahead of Connaire Finn's Ginetta G50. In race two,

Fitzsimmons retired with a broken driveshaft, allowing the 'big' Ginetta to finish second, ahead of Paul Thompson's one-litre Stryker-Honda.

In the absence of Gerard O'Connell's Ford Escort-Millington, which suffered engine problems in practice, Ciaran Denvir's Honda Civic topped a tiny Saloon field. Donal O'Neill took second spot in his evergreen SEAT Cupra, from Hugh McEvoy's Clio Cup car, the pair reversing their positions in race two.

RICHARD YOUNG



Fisher (leading) got the
better of White in FF1600

Vauxhall Tigra silhouette, as Bradley John's Mitsubishi E9 again broke early. Alan Hamilton (Westfield-Duratec) outqualified points leader Tony Bennett (Caterham R300), joining Bull on the front row. The defending champion overtook Hamilton twice but, in retaliating, Hamilton clipped Bennett's rear mudguard and shot into the barrier at Tower. Martin Thomas (BMW M3) inherited third.

Chris Southcott battled past May Day winner Tim Adams in the typically frenetic Hot Hatch thrash, but contact between them at Quarry planed the rear bumper

off Southcott's Peugeot 205 and the front from Adams' Honda Civic, for which the latter was forced to pit. Class B standout Tony Cooper (Peugeot 106) thus moved up to second, with Darren Duffield promoted to Mini Cooper S victory when impressive race debutant Owen Hillman was penalised for overtaking under yellows.

Steve McDermid stretched his unbeaten MG Owners' Club record to five races, the ZR driver gapping brawlers Steve Darby and Dave Mellor both times. Among the MGFs, Stuart Plotnek leapt from eighth to third at the start of the opener, but slipped

to fifth and was almost caught by Simon Kendrick. Mark Baker reasserted his Mallory supremacy in race two as Kendrick spun wildly at Quarry and Camp later.

Despite losing his clutch at the start, Martin Morris juggled third and fourth gears to win the first Midget and Sprite contest from Edward Weston and Mike Chalk. Pippa Cow finished fourth overall and won the tighter Class E. Earlier retiree Richard Wildman won the sequel in which Weston spun away the lead but fought back from fifth to second.

MARCUS PYE

WEEKEND WINNERS

KIRKISTOWN

MAZDA MX-5/FORD FIESTA ZETEC

Race 1 Paul Sheridan

Race 2 Gregory McMillan

NORTHERN IRISH FORMULA FORD 1600

Race 1 Jordan Dempsey (Van Diemen RF00)

Race 2 David McCullough (Van Diemen RF01)

ROADSPORTS

Races 1 & 2 Jim Larkham (Radical PRO6)

SALOONS/GT

Races 1 & 2 Ciaran Denvir (Honda Civic)

For full results visit: speedhive.mylaps.com

CASTLE COMBE

TOURING CAR TROPHY/TCR UK

Race 1 Darelle Wilson (Vauxhall Astra TCR)

Race 2 Bradley Kent (Hyundai i30 N TCR)

CCRC FORMULA FORD

Race 1 Felix Fisher (Ray GR05)

Race 2 Oliver White (Medina JL17K)

CCRC SALOONS

Adam Prebble (Vauxhall Astra)

CCRC GT

Oliver Bull (Vauxhall Tigra)

CCRC HOT HATCH CHALLENGE

Chris Southcott (Peugeot 205)

MG OWNERS' CLUB

Races 1 & 2 Steve McDermid (ZR, below)

MG MIDGET & SPRITE CHALLENGE

Race 1 Martin Morris (MG Midget)

Race 2 Richard Wildman (MG Midget)



READ

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

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Hybrid Tune whizzes to C1 24 Hour victory

SILVERSTONE
BARC
28-30 MAY

The Hybrid Tune crew of Sam Weller, David Meenan, Mark James and Stephen James overcame night-time contact and a subsequent delay to beat the AB Motorsport entry of Oliver Allwood, Stuart Symonds and Brian Trott by just 48 seconds in the Citroen C1 24 Hour race at Silverstone.

The polesitting Fake-Shake 'n' Bake outfit – comprising Matt Maxted, Tommy Field and Graham Coomes – rounded out the podium, two laps behind the leading pair.

Following an initial flurry of pack racing action in the opening hours, the pitstops began to spread and settle the field. After a near two-hour safety car period due to thick fog at sunrise, the eventual top two cars traded positions numerous times at the head of the field. The Hybrid Tune team claimed an unassailable lead after



the last pitstop for AB Motorsport, just before the start of the final hour.

Bonamy Grimes claimed two dominant victories in the pair of Sports Prototype Cup races in a Duqueine D-08 LMP3. Fellow Open class runners Mike Jenvey (Gunn TS6) and James Abbott completed the overall podium in both races, Abbott giving the uprated USA-spec Revolution A-One its European debut.

In the Revolution class, Bradley Ellis and Sir Chris Hoy took victories in the

first and second races respectively, the Olympic champion embroiled in a battle with Chris Short until Short spun at Luffield just over half-way through race two.

The Caterham Graduates were also out in full force. Jamie Ellwood and Jason McCormack shared the spoils in the Sigma 150 contests. In the second race, McCormack was able to distance himself from the chasing pack and win by almost four seconds, a rare luxury in the category.

ADAM WELLER

Masterful Menzies takes a hat-trick at Gurston Down

GURSTON DOWN
BRITISH HILLCLIMB
29-30 MAY

Defending champion Wallace Menzies (Gould GR59) made it five wins from six rounds in this year's British Hillclimb Championship with a tremendous weekend at Gurston Down.

The double-header event included four top 12 run-offs and Menzies was on stunningly fast and consistent form to win three of them. The one he missed, which was the second run-off



on Saturday, fell to the barnstorming Will Hall, who turned in a mighty run to snatch victory from Alex Summers (DJ Firestorm) by two hundredths of a second as Menzies was edged back to third.

However, on Sunday, things were rather different for Hall as he crashed out over the finish line during the second run-off, fortunately without injury, in a sizeable shunt as his Force flipped several times.

Summers and Sean Gould (Gould GR59) were in contention all weekend and joined Menzies and Hall by setting times in the 25s bracket. But it was the Scot who claimed another scalp with a new record in 25.34s, narrowly beating Scott Moran's 25.37s mark from 2014.

Moran (Gould GR59) and Trevor Willis (OMS 28) were always in the top six, although an engine that refused to fire forced Moran to miss the final run-off. Graham Wynn, owner of the Gould being shared by Moran, was eighth three times. "Not bad for a 71-year-old granddad," said Wynn.

Menzies stated: "It's a great start to the season but there's a long way to go yet."

PAUL LAWRENCE

WEEKEND WINNERS

SILVERSTONE

C1 CHALLENGE (24 HOURS)

Hybrid Tune (Sam Weller/David Meenan/Mark James/Stephen James)

SPORTS PROTOTYPE CUP

Races 1 & 2 Bonamy Grimes (Duqueine D-08 LMP3)

CATERHAM GRADUATES SIGMA 150

Race 1 Jamie Ellwood
Race 2 Jason McCormack

CATERHAM GRADUATES SIGMAX & SIGMA 135

Races 1 & 2 Harry Senior (SigMax)

MAX5

Races 1 & 2 Paul Roddison (MX-5 Mk4)

GURSTON DOWN

BRITISH HILLCLIMB

Rounds 3, 5 & 6 Wallace Menzies (3300cc Gould-Cosworth GR59M)
Round 4 Will Hall (2000t Force-Xtec)

Points 1 Menzies 59; 2 Alex Summers (2650cc DJ Firestorm-Cosworth) 52; =3 Sean Gould (4000cc Gould-Judd GR59JB) and Hall 39; 5 Trevor Willis (3200cc OMS-RTE 28) 34; 6 Scott Moran (4000cc Gould-Judd GR59J) 32.

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



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Making a splash:
Moffett won the first
BRC event to be held
since February 2020



Moffett grabs late lead in season opener for first BRC victory

OULTON PARK
BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
31 MAY

Sam Moffett was left basking in the sun – literally and metaphorically – at Oulton Park Circuit on Bank Holiday Monday when he won the opening round of the 2021 British Rally Championship.

Moffett made his move on the penultimate stage of the Neil Howard Stages in Cheshire, nabbing top spot from series returnee Rhys Yates before hanging on to secure his maiden BRC victory by just a second.

Moffett was the third different leader of a pulsating curtain-raiser that was played out in front of fans – and surely silenced those who questioned if a gated-venue was a shrewd addition to the calendar.

“I cannot believe it, I cannot believe it,” said Moffett who, like many of his fellow countrymen, decided to enter the BRC

due to there being no Irish Tarmac Championship this year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“It’s been a phenomenal day. I think stage five and six really helped us – we had a really good push on those two and it put us back at the front. Credit must also go to Dom Buckley [RSC, which runs his hired Ford Fiesta Rally2 car] and to Keith [Moriarty, co-driver] who agreed to sit alongside me for the day.

“Everything went so well, so credit to the organisers, my team, the spectators and the marshals – it was a fantastic day. And this result means that we have more of an interest in the title than before.”

Yates – who is only three points adrift of Moffett going to next month’s Nicky Grist Stages by virtue of the fact he used his points-boosting joker – played himself into victory contention right from the word go.

The Chesterfield man was perfectly placed to capitalise on an uncharacteristic error by self-professed track specialist – and BRC debutant – Frank Bird who spun on stage six and lost the lead. Up until that point, the 21-year-old son of ex-MotoGP team owner and rally driver Paul was in complete control.

He recovered to end the day third and top of the Motorsport News Circuit Championship contenders, only for his new Fiesta Rally2 car to be deemed underweight following routine post-event checks.

Osian Pryce – at the wheel of a Volkswagen Polo GTI R5, and with Noel O’Sullivan co-driving – was the beneficiary. “It’s a good start to our BRC campaign, and it’s nice to be out in the car again,” he said.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP

RALLY RESULTS

BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Sam Moffett/Keith Moriarty (Ford Fiesta Rally2) 49m32s; 2 Rhys Yates/James Morgan (Fiesta Rally2) +1s; 3 Osian Pryce/Noel O’Sullivan (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5); 4 Matt Edwards/Darren Garrod (Polo GTI R5); 5 Desi Henry/Dale Furniss (Hyundai i20 R5); 6 Seb Perez/Gary McElhinney (Fiesta Rally2).

MN CIRCUIT RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mark Kelly/Neil Colman (Ford Fiesta R5)

For full results visit:

britishrallychampionship.co.uk

Positive though it was, Pryce’s BRC title bid begins proper on home soil next month – a sentiment no doubt shared by defending champion Matt Edwards. Fourth was the best he could muster, although with the top four covered by 13 seconds, he knows he is already in the ball park with his Polo GTI R5.

The Junior BRC fight was a more straightforward affair as William Creighton and Liam Regan cantered to an 11s triumph in their Fiesta Rally4 over the older-specification Peugeot 208 of Kyle White.

White was left feeling somewhat aggrieved at the finish and hinted that he could have been closer to the Ulsterman had his charge not been halted on stages two and four by slower cars. Eamonn Kelly – the son of Irish Tarmac title victor Donagh – rounded out the top three places on his Rally4 debut.

With Bird removed from the MN Championship equation in surprise fashion, Mark Kelly (Fiesta R5) capitalised to move into the title mix with two counters remaining.

JASON CRAIG



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
motorsport
IMAGES

THE RISE OF MAX VERSTAPPEN



BOOK REVIEW

**MAX VERSTAPPEN:
THE INSIDE TRACK ON
A FORMULA ONE STAR**
RRP £14.99

His victory at the Monaco Grand Prix last month put Max Verstappen on top of the Formula 1 drivers' world championship for the first time in his brief but already glittering career.

It's perhaps fitting then that at the greatest moment so far in the Dutchman's short life, a book detailing his meteoric rise has been released (*still a tad early?! — ed*).

James Gray — a sports journalist for *The i* newspaper — charts Verstappen's career from karting under the ever-present eye of his father and ex-F1 driver Jos, to his incredible jump into cars where, after just one season in European Formula 3, he made his F1 debut in 2015, becoming the youngest driver to compete in the championship at 17 years and 166 days old.

This is very much an unofficial Verstappen biography, with no exclusive input from the now 23-year-old. Instead, quotes from the man himself, Jos and others have been taken from podcasts, press interviews or written publications over the past decade and more.

This is certainly no bad thing, and the period quotes serve to paint a picture of Verstappen at each specific moment in his life, charting the highs and lows, and how he has matured as a driver and as a person.

His karting triumphs are covered in good detail but the book really picks up pace with the efforts behind the scenes to get him first into the Red Bull junior

single-seater fold, and then into an F1 seat.

It's at this point there's a startling reminder of just how much opposition Verstappen faced prior to making his F1 debut, with FIA president Jean Todt proclaiming he was too young, even going as far as to change the regulations to stop a driver as young from entering the championship again.

This isn't just a book about the Verstappens either, as Gray explores other areas such as how racing came to be in the Netherlands, the history of Dutch drivers in motorsport and how Esports has taken off over the past 12 months in the wake of COVID-19. For die-hard Verstappen fans this might be a turn-off — although it invariably links back to him — but there's plenty of detail and insight to keep it genuinely interesting for general motorsport enthusiasts.

Gray certainly doesn't hold back in his criticism of Jos and from the outset we're given effectively a rap sheet of the incidents Verstappen Sr has been involved in, from breaking a restraining order against Max's mother, to essentially being charged with attempted murder at one stage!

It's easy to see Jos as the focus for everything negative in his son's life and also just how he has come to influence his development, both on and off the track. There are also some striking similarities in their respective careers, with Jos also having been drafted into F1 with relatively little experience in cars.

Generally the book is well researched, but there are factual errors. Most notably a glaring omission of Tony Brise from the list of those who died when Graham Hill's plane crashed in 1975, and the claim that Graham's son, Damon, joined Nigel Mansell at



Verstappen's win at the Monaco GP has taken him to a career high – but this story is far from over

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Azerbaijan Grand Prix

Formula 1 World Championship
Round 6/23

Baku City Circuit,
Azerbaijan

6 June

TV Live Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1255

TV Highlights

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

FIA Formula 2

Round 3/8

Baku City Circuit,
Azerbaijan

5-6 June

TV Live Sky Sports F1,
Sat 0815, Sat 1430,
Sun 0935

Nurburgring 24 Hours

Nurburgring
Nordschleife,
Germany

6 June

Livestream on
motorsport.tv Sat 1330

World Touring Car Cup

Round 1/8

Nurburgring
Nordschleife,
Germany

5 June

TV Live, Eurosport 1,
Sat 0755, Sat 0900

European Le Mans Series

Round 3/6

Paul Ricard, France

6 June

Livestream on
motorsport.tv Sun 0940

NASCAR Cup

Round 16/36

Sonoma Raceway, USA

6 June

TV Live Premier
Sports 1, Sun 2030

NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 13/33

Mid-Ohio, USA

5 June

Rally Italy

World Rally
Championship

Round 5/12

Sardinia, Italy

3-6 June

TV Live BT Sport 3,
Sat 0700, Sun 0730,
BT Sport 1, Sun 1100

TV Highlights

BT Sport 2, Fri 2300,
BT Sport 3, Sat 2330,
Sun 2030, Red Bull TV,
Fri 2100, Sat 2100, Sun
2100, ITV4, Thur 2000

MotoGP

Round 7/21

Barcelona, Spain

6 June

TV Live BT Sport 2, Sun
1315

TV Highlights

BT Sport 3, Sun 1900,
ITV4, Mon 2200

UK MOTORSPORT

Oulton Park MSVR

5 June

Elise Trophy, Production
BMW/Golf, Production
GTI, New PBMW,
Sports 2000, Toyo Tires
Saloons, Z Cars

Brands Hatch BARC

5-6 June

2CVs, Intermarque
Silhouette, Kumho BMW,
Legends, MG Owners'
Club, Mini Challenge,
Pickups, Trucks

Cadwell Park HSCC

5-6 June

70s Roadsports,
80s Production
Challenge, Classic
Clubmans, Classic
FF1600, Heritage FF1600,
Historic F3, Historic
FF1600, Historic FF2000,
Historic Formula Junior,
Historic Roadsports

Snetterton MSVR

5-6 June

7 Race Series, 911
Challenge, Clubmans
Sports Prototype,
GPR Trophy, GT Cup,
Porsche Club

Knockhill SMRC

6 June

C1 Cup, Classic Sports
& Saloons, Fiesta ST
Cup, Mini Cooper Cup,
National/Scottish
FF1600, Northern
Sports & Saloons



Father Jos has been a big influence - for better and for worse

Williams for the 1993 season – not Alain Prost.

While there's also no denying Verstappen's almost super-natural ability behind the wheel, the book does sometimes border on the fanatical in places, even going as far as to suggest that he "will one day surpass" both Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel. Yes, Verstappen's talent is all too obvious, and yes, he seems destined to win multiple titles, but to say he will surpass arguably the championship's greatest ever driver when he himself has yet to win a title in any car-racing championship – never mind F1 – seems an unnecessary comment and comparison.

It's still an interesting book and a timely reminder of just how phenomenal the Dutchman is. But how ironic that its release should come just as Verstappen could well be writing the best chapter of his career so far.

STEFAN MACKLEY



F1 hits the streets of Baku this weekend for the first time since 2019

FINISHING STRAIGHT



FROM THE ARCHIVE

The Matra 530 of Jean-Pierre Jabouille clips a snowbank during what organisers dubbed the *Rallye Méditerranée*, officially a stand-alone event for non-homologated,

FIA-unapproved cars, but to all intents and purposes part of the 1969 Monte Carlo Rally. Ten of the *Rallye Méditerranée*'s 13 starters retired, including Jabouille and fellow Matra drivers Jean-Pierre

Beltoise and Henri Pescarolo, but the winning time recorded by Harry Kallstrom's Lancia Fulvia would have been good enough to depose the event proper's second-place finisher, the Porsche 911 of Gerard Larrousse.



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CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

When a GT ace realised his F1 dream

THOMAS BIAGI

The Midland era is a forgettable chapter in the esteemed history of the Formula 1 team now known as Aston Martin. But to Thomas Biagi, his December 2005 test at Jerez in the EJ15B that had competed that year as a Jordan is a prized memory of a career that never graced an F1 grid.

The 2003 FIA GT champion hadn't raced a single-seater for three years by the time he landed his long-awaited test opportunity, a decade after his first run with Minardi in 1995. A stalwart of International Formula 3000 and its Italian/European cousin between 1995 and 2002, his crushing victory at Donington Park in 2001 – against opposition that included Felipe Massa – was the exception rather than the rule.

But Biagi never lost sight of his F1 goal – “I believe in the power of your dream,” he says – and, despite having no manager in his corner, the then-29-year-old convinced team boss Colin Kolles to give him a trial with a view to racing in 2006.

With the 2005 Toyota V10 powerplant behind his back, he completed 91 laps and lapped 1.37 seconds quicker than new Midland signing Christijan Albers (his EJ15B equipped with a 2006-spec V8) and

soon felt at ease with a car he found easier than his regular steed, the Maserati MC12, due to its array of electronic gizmos.

“The test went extremely well – in the end they were extremely happy about my performance and my consistency,” Biagi says. “It’s a shame because they showed me an agreement to make a full season, but I was just missing the budget. We were pretty close.”

Biagi also had a chance at replacing Albers in 2007 when the Dutchman’s money ran out, only for sponsorship to again prove a stumbling block. He would go on to win a second FIA GT crown that year, as well as titles in the Italian-based Superstars tin-top series, Italian GT and International GT Open.

“I’m sorry I didn’t have the opportunity to do a couple of races, but that’s life,” he says. “I’m happy about my career.”

And he at least had the good fortune to drive a contemporary V10...

“There are no words that can describe the feeling,” he says. “I miss the F1 of the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. For me, F1 is that kind of sound. It was fabulous.”

JAMES NEWBOLD



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