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6 JANUARY 2022

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How Russell will take on Hamilton – the benefits and problems it could bring Mercedes

'It's never enough until you win'

GEORGE RUSSELL

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TEE/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

Hamilton's latest challenge and Russell's big opportunity

Two star drivers in one squad can cause fireworks. It's great for the fans but not necessarily for the teams involved. Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost at McLaren is perhaps the most infamous example, though the Lewis Hamilton-Nico Rosberg era was also painful for Mercedes at times, despite all the success the combination scored.

Things don't have to get nasty, as Niki Lauda and Prost proved at McLaren, but the more successful squads in recent years have tended to employ a pretty clear pecking order. Michael Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello at Ferrari, Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber at Red Bull, Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas at Mercedes.

Putting George Russell with Hamilton is a risk for Toto Wolff, but it's one taken knowing that he has to look to the future. Red Bull has Max Verstappen, Ferrari has Charles Leclerc (and Carlos Sainz Jr), McLaren has Lando Norris. Mercedes needs its next star to be ready for when Hamilton decides to hang up his helmet. It could wait no longer.

How the Hamilton-Russell dynamic plays out will be one of the fascinating subplots of 2022, however competitive the car is. Will it be more like Juan Manuel Fangio/Stirling Moss or Hamilton/Fernando Alonso? The ways of modern sport and Russell's determination mean it'll probably be closer to the latter but, as George says in our feature on page 18, he also knows that he is playing the long game...



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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13 JANUARY

Motorsport monsters
We look at some of the most spectacular race and rally machines



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Steve Etherington/Motorsport Images

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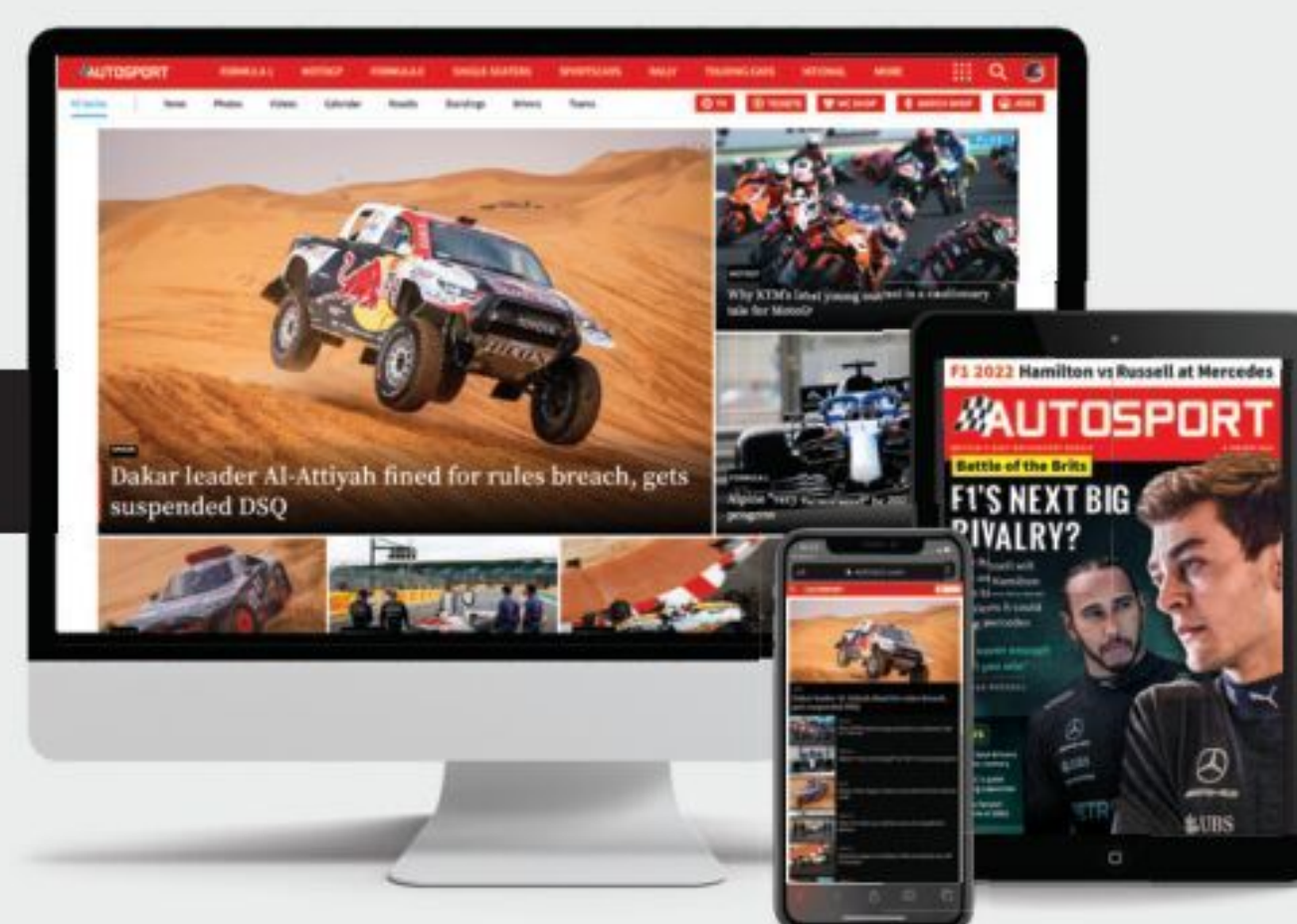
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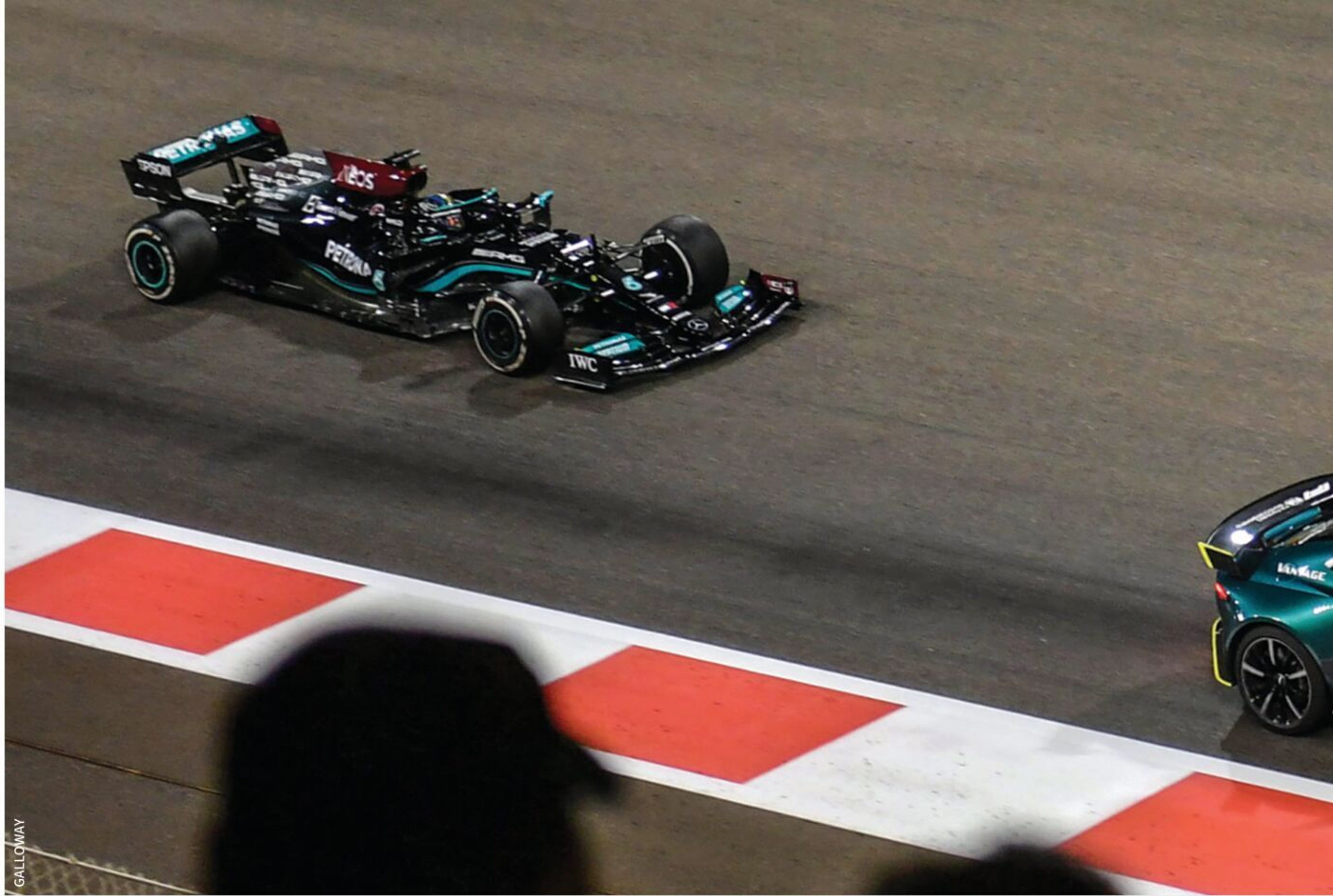
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HAMILTON WON'T QUIT, SAYS NEW FIA PRESIDENT

FORMULA 1

Newly elected FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem says he is confident that Lewis Hamilton will not walk away from Formula 1 after his controversial title defeat in last month's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Hamilton missed out on a record-breaking eighth world championship after being passed by Max Verstappen on the final lap following a late restart by race control. Mercedes initially protested the restart procedure and considered a further appeal, but ultimately put an end to pursuing any action after the FIA announced that it would launch a full investigation into what happened in Abu Dhabi.

Mercedes F1 chief Toto Wolff said that both he and Hamilton were "disillusioned" in the wake of events in Abu Dhabi, and that he "would very much hope that Lewis continues racing".

Ben Sulayem was elected as the new FIA president last month, defeating Graham Stoker, and has already

eyed changes to F1's rulebook to prevent a repeat of what happened at Yas Marina.

Asked during a press briefing ahead of the Dakar Rally if he was afraid that Hamilton may not race next year, Ben Sulayem said: "No, I don't think he will [quit]. I'll ask your question: did Lewis declare that he's not going to race? No. Exactly. Being a driver, you declare yourself, you don't let the rumours or someone who's pretending."

"I'm confident that Lewis [will return]. Lewis is a big part of motorsport, and of course of the Formula 1, the new era [is based] in Lewis's wins and achievements, and also Verstappen is there. I am very confident that you will see a very challenging Formula 1 season."

Ben Sulayem stressed the need for the FIA to be "proactive rather than reactive" in resolving the sporting regulations. "I am going to study the case of what happened in Abu Dhabi, and a decision will be taken how to go forward without any pressure from anyone," he added. "The integrity of the FIA, it is my job and duty to protect it, but it doesn't mean that we do not look into our regulations, and if there is any improvement [to make], we will. I said in my first press conference, this is not the book of God. This is written by humans. It can be improved and changed by humans. So that's it."

During his first press conference after being elected president, Ben Sulayem waded into the F1 row by saying that there could be "no forgiveness" for Hamilton if he was found to have breached the FIA's rules by skipping the end-of-season prizegiving in Paris last month.

Ben Sulayem revealed that he had reached out to Hamilton, but was yet to hear back from him. "I sent him messages," he said. "I think he's not ready now to be functioning 100%. You don't blame him. I understand his position, being a driver – of

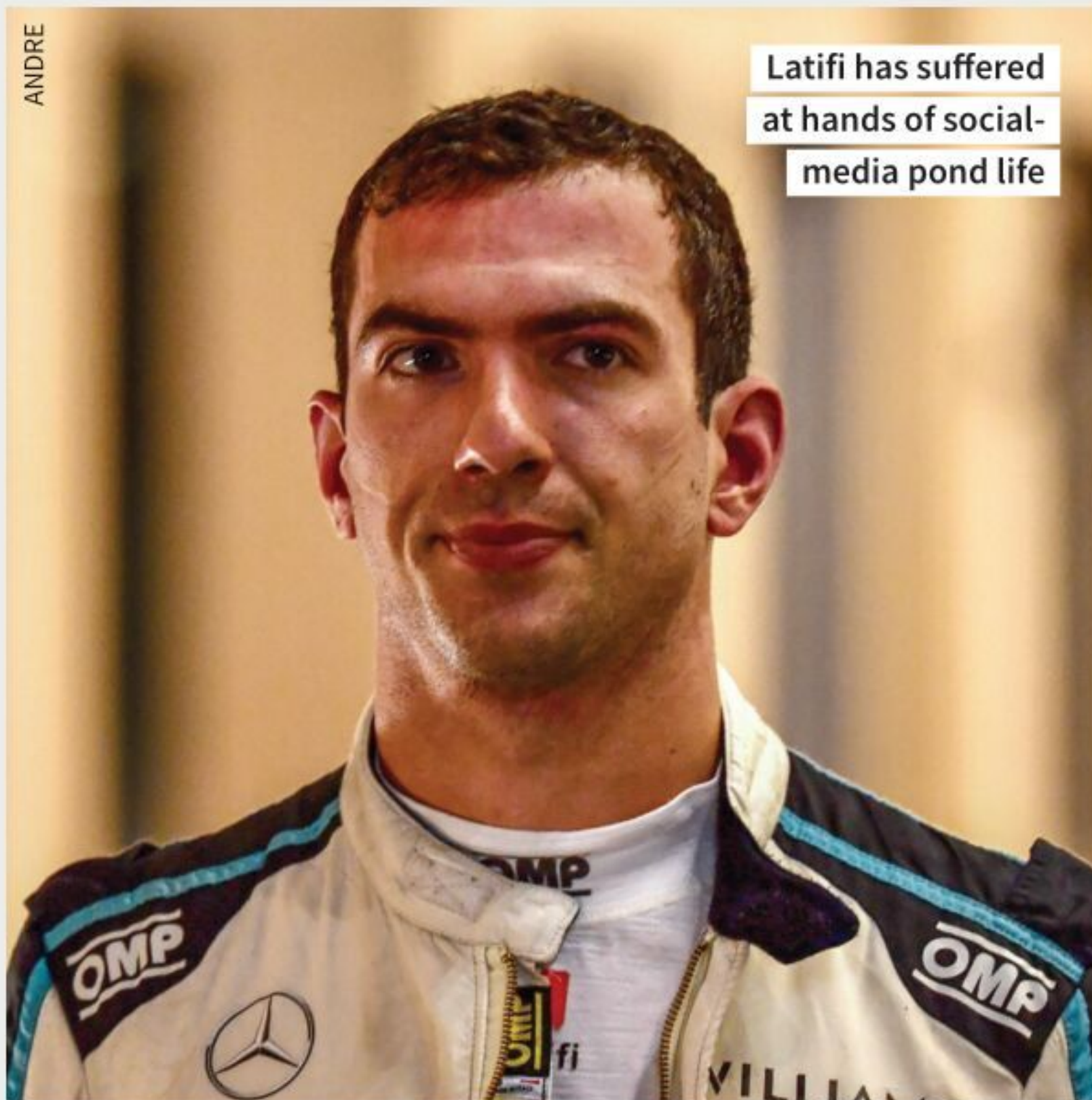


New FIA president
Sulayem with F1 chief
Stefano Domenicali

The cursed safety car leads Hamilton around before final-lap drama



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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IMAGES



Latifi has suffered
at hands of social-
media pond life

course he's on a different level."

Hamilton has not spoken publicly since a brief interview in parc ferme following the race in Abu Dhabi. He appeared at Windsor Castle a few days afterwards to receive his knighthood from Prince Charles, but has not posted on social media since the day before the decider.

Fans have been fervent in their support for Hamilton throughout the winter break, with hashtags pointing to campaigns backing the seven-time world champion regularly trending on social media. But the toxicity of the fallout from Abu Dhabi has also led to significant levels of abuse, most notably aimed at Nicholas Latifi, whose late-race crash sparked the safety car. Latifi revealed in a statement posted shortly before Christmas that he had even received death threats.

"People will have their opinions, and that's fine," said Latifi. "Having a thick skin is a huge part of being an athlete, especially when you are constantly in a position to be scrutinised. But many of the comments I received last week crossed the line into something far more extreme."

LUKE SMITH & SERGIO LILLO

SUTTON

Schumacher leads
Giovinazzi at 2021
British Grand Prix



Schumacher, Giovinazzi to share Ferrari role

FORMULA 1

Mick Schumacher will jointly serve as Ferrari's Formula 1 reserve driver this year, balancing the role with his Haas racing commitments.

Schumacher will be on standby to deputise for either Charles Leclerc or Carlos Sainz Jr for 11 of this year's 23 races, meaning he would be pulled out of the Haas cockpit if required. Ex-Alfa Romeo F1 driver Antonio Giovinazzi will be the nominated reserve for the remaining 12 races.

Schumacher will enter his second F1 season in 2022 with Haas. The 2020 Formula 2 champion and son of seven-time F1 title winner Michael Schumacher, who won five of his crowns with Ferrari in the 2000s, graduated to F1 last year as a member of the Ferrari Driver Academy.

"It will be his second season [in F1], he is a Ferrari driver, coming from the Ferrari academy," said Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto. "I'm very happy that he can be part of the team as a reserve driver whenever that will be necessary, but hopefully not. Those [new-for-2022] cars will be really a lot different to the current one for driving style, and I think it will be important to have one driver that knows those cars as a reserve driver."

"I can still count on Antonio because he has proved to be a good driver. Antonio will have a full programme of simulator to bring him up to speed in terms of 2022 driving style."

Ferrari will begin the 2022 season eager to build on its recovery to third place in the constructors' championship last year, and seek to end its longest winless run since 1993.

Ferrari sporting director Laurent Mekies explained there had been "zero compromise" on extending development of its 2021 car despite the fight against McLaren due to the importance of this year's regulations.

"We made very clear from very early on, we took the decision to switch to 2022," said Mekies. "We were hoping at the time, because we are quite distant from McLaren, which is early on in the season, we were hoping that we would be able to fight eventually for the third place."

Sainz managed to beat Leclerc in the standings, and scored four of Ferrari's five podiums last year. Binotto said that the two drivers would enter 2022 with equal status. "I don't think that we need at this stage, and certainly we will not have a policy, of number one or number two," he said. "We will simply discuss it based on positions on track."

LUKE SMITH

FORMULA E LOOKING INTO HYDROGEN CELLS

FORMULA E

Formula E could ditch batteries and turn to hydrogen fuel cell technology to power its Gen4 electric cars as series chiefs begin to consider a rules era that could entice new manufacturers.

Teaser images of the 470bhp delta wing-inspired Gen3 concept, which will debut in 2022-23, only broke cover in December and will be followed by an 'Evo' facelift. In the time that this ruleset has been formulated, Audi, BMW and Mercedes (below) have all announced their series exits.

But championship co-founder Alejandro Agag will imminently begin inviting current and new manufacturers to "brainstorm with a very open mind about how Gen4 should look".

The Spaniard reckons "everything is open", and an investigation into the viability of hydrogen fuel cell technology for Formula E will take place. "Hydrogen is within the licence of Formula E with the FIA [a supposed exclusive 25-year rights deal to electric-only single-seater racing]," he said.

"The one we would use is a hydrogen fuel cell that basically produces electricity that then powers an electric motor. So as soon as those technologies start being widely available and operating in a racing level, we will definitely look into those."

A hydrogen fuel cell is already used by Agag's Extreme E, effectively the sister series to Formula E, to charge the Odyssey 21 E-SUVs on site at each race event.

MATT KEW



STALEY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Belgians get the gravel installed

SPA

The extent of the changes being made to the Spa circuit has been revealed in new images released of ongoing work at the Belgian Grand Prix venue.

The major revamp is part of an upgrade aimed at improving safety, and homologating the circuit for motorbikes. The construction work, which began on 15 November, is set to cost the venue around €80million, but should help secure its long-term future for top categories including Formula 1.

Spa wants to host a 24-hour motorbike race as part of the FIM Endurance World Championship in June, as well as its major car events including the Belgian GP, the Spa 24 Hours and its World Endurance Championship round. For the two-wheeled event, the track needed to be upgraded to earn an FIM licence, and that has meant an overhaul of a number of runoff areas. Some asphalt runoffs have been enlarged, while

others are being replaced with gravel traps.

The section between La Source and Eau Rouge is hardly recognisable at the moment. On the outside of the hairpin, part of the asphalt runoff has been replaced by a gravel trap.

Opposite the old pits, the so-called 24-hour grandstand and the outdoor seating areas have been demolished, which will change the look of the run down to Eau Rouge. New grandstands as well as VIP areas will be constructed here.

At the top of the circuit, the outside of the Bruxelles right-hander is being reworked. As at La Source, part of the asphalt runoff area will make way for a gravel trap. On the outside of the super-fast Blanchimont left-hand kink, the crash barrier is being moved back to increase the runoff area. Here too the asphalt strip will largely be replaced by a gravel trap, while a service road will be built behind the tyre wall.

JONATHAN NOBLE



CIRCUIT DES SPA



CIRCUIT DES SPA



DAKAR RALLY The Dakar Rally got under way last weekend, and featured a maiden stage win on Monday for the Prodrive Hunter run by the motorsport giant's Bahrain Raid Xtreme team for Sebastien Loeb. The Frenchman finished 3m28s clear of the rally-leading Toyota of Nasser Al-Attiyah, who had taken the advantage with victory in the opening stage on Sunday. The rally continues and will finish on Friday next week. **Photograph by Maragni/Red Bull**

Lopez joins Kobayashi and Johnson in Cadillac

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Jose Maria Lopez is teaming up with Toyota World Endurance Championship team-mate Kamui Kobayashi for his Daytona 24 Hours debut this month. The Argentinian will drive the second Action Express Racing Cadillac DPi contender (right, below) in the IMSA SportsCar opener on 29-30 January.

Lopez joins Kobayashi, Mike Rockenfeller and Jimmie Johnson in the Caddy run in conjunction with the Hendrick Motorsports NASCAR squad, which will contest the four long-distance IMSA races. Kobayashi, Rockenfeller and Johnson have also been confirmed for the subsequent Sebring, Watkins Glen and Road Atlanta rounds.

"It's good to be a 'rookie' after 30 years of racing," said Lopez (right), who retained his WEC title last November with Kobayashi and Mike Conway. "I've been trying to race in North America for a long time. I always liked IMSA and American racing. Finally, this year I'll be part of an IMSA team."

Lopez does have one start in a US sportscar series: he contested the 2007 Sebring 12 Hours, when it was a round of

the American Le Mans Series, at the wheel of a Risi Competizione Ferrari.

WeatherTech Racing is expanding its assault for Daytona. In addition to the Porsche 911 GT3-R it will run in a full IMSA GT Daytona Pro campaign in conjunction with Proton Competition, it will field a Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo in the opener.

Cooper MacNeil, son of WeatherTech founder David, will drive both entries. Porsche factory driver Julien Andlauer and marque regulars Matteo Cairoli and Alessio Picariello will be his team-mates in the 911, while Merc works contractees Jules Gounon, Maro Engel and Daniel Juncadella will co-drive the AMG GT3. "I've won Sebring twice, Petit Le Mans three times, been on the podium at Le Mans twice, and now need to win the Rolex 24," he said.

Aston Martin will also be represented in GTD Pro this year. Heart of Racing, third in last year's GTD points, is expanding into IMSA's new top GT class. It will field a Vantage GT3 for factory driver Ross Gunn and Alex Riberas, with works star Maxime Martin joining them for the enduros.

GARY WATKINS



Hill gets BMW for 2022 title attack



Hill, with Blundell (left) and Bennetts in inset pic, will race BMW in 2022

BTCC

British Touring Car Championship rising star Jake Hill has secured a seat with the West Surrey Racing BMW squad, where he is expected to join four-time champion Colin Turkington and Stephen Jelley.

Hill makes the move thanks to the MB Motorsport concern of Mark Blundell, under whose banner he finished fifth in the 2021 BTCC points with a Motorbase-run Ford Focus before joining Blundell's management stable. Although Hill's BMW 330e M Sport (redubbed from '330i' thanks to the switch to hybrid power) will be run as a full WSR entry, it will be entered as MB Motorsport Powered by ROKiT, outside

the squad's Team BMW nomenclature in the same way as 2019 series runner-up Andrew Jordan's Pirtek Racing identity.

It will be Hill's first taste of a rear-wheel-drive NGTC car. "I'm really not fussed though," he told Autosport. "I drive a lot of rear-wheel-drive historic stuff on slicks that are good over kerbs. I'm excited to get into it and see how it compares to the very good front-wheel-drive cars I'd had over the past couple of years."

Hill expects to get up to speed in late February in the 2019 title winner that Turkington still races, while the other cars are converted to hybrid spec. He will remain with engineer Craig Porley, the Red Bull F1 suspension specialist who ran Hill in 2021

and in an AmD Honda Civic in 2020.

"Craig's a front-wheel-drive specialist, but his first job was actually at WSR as a data engineer [on rear-drive BMWs], so he's returning to where he started," said Hill.

Hill, a keen student of the sport's history, added that he was excited to enter the hallowed portals of WSR: "It's pretty special to say the least. When I went to the factory I nearly passed the helmet test in Dick's [team boss Bennetts] office. He's got 12 there and I had to name them all. I got eight!"

While sources indicate that it is a near-certainty that Turkington and Jelley will continue with the squad for another season, Bennetts could not be drawn on the topic.

MARCUS SIMMONS

F4 king Bearman gets plum Prema seat



FORMULA 3

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year finalist and newly appointed Ferrari protege Ollie Bearman has joined top team Prema Racing to contest this season's FIA Formula 3 Championship.

Bearman makes the step up after becoming the first driver in history to win both of Europe's two premier Formula 4 titles — the Italian

and the German — in a campaign in which he won 17 races. He joined Prema for the end-of-season F3 test at Valencia, where he ran alongside Red Bull junior Jak Crawford, Mercedes F1 protege Paul Aron and fellow Ferrari Driver Academy recruit Arthur Leclerc.

Prema drivers have won all three editions of the FIA F3 Championship since it was born out of GP3 in 2019. "We worked really well

together in the post-season test at Valencia, and their results in previous years across everything which they do speak for themselves," said Bearman.

Drivers graduating straight from FIA F4 to F3 level have traditionally struggled, although 2019 German champion Theo Pourchaire broke the mould when he drove to the runner-up spot in his rookie F3 season in 2020.



NOW, WHERE'S MY WALLET? We like this! The Bermat GT-Pista was unveiled in Turin before Christmas. Designed and engineered by Milan-based JAS Motorsport, Honda's European customer racing house for touring cars and GT3, its carbonfibre chassis is powered by a two-litre, in-line four-cylinder engine capable of 320-400bhp, driven through a six-speed sequential gearbox – plus a moveable pedal box, handy for lanky and shorty drivers alike... The track-only car goes on sale early this year, with road versions to follow. **Image by Bermat**

Garage 59 back to McLaren

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES

Former McLaren factory team Garage 59 is switching back to the British manufacturer for its 2022 GT3 programmes after three seasons running Aston Martins. The British squad has revealed that it will field a pair of McLaren 720S GT3s in the two-weekend Asian Le Mans Series in February and will continue with the new cars for yet-to-be-announced campaigns in Europe.

It is a significant move for a team that took its name from the race number of the 1995 Le Mans 24 Hours-winning McLaren F1 GTR. It started life as the works offshoot of the CRS GT operation that developed the first two generations of the McLaren GT3 racer – the MP4-12C and 650S – and went on to claim the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup title in 2016.

“Garage 59 has a rich history with McLaren and it's great to be back with them for 2022,” said team principal Andrew Kirkaldy. “The 720S looked very promising throughout last year, so we are really looking forward to getting out there with ours and going racing.”

The team has yet to reveal drivers for the ALMS, but has confirmed that it will stick with the McLaren in place of the Aston for a likely assault on the GT World Challenge Europe, formerly the BGTS.

CRS GT split with McLaren Automotive after the marque took development of the 720S racer in-house for 2019. Garage 59's credits during its stint with Aston include winning the Pro-Am GTWCE Endurance Cup and finishing third overall in last year's Spa 24 Hours with a semi-works entry.

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

NEW M-SPORT TECH CHIEF

M-Sport has named Chris Williams as its new technical director ahead of the World Rally Championship season. Williams, who has spent almost 25 years at the team, replaces Christian Loriaux, who departed for Hyundai last summer. Williams designed and developed the Ford Fiesta WRC, which Sebastien Ogier drove to the 2017 and 2018 titles, and has been heavily involved in the birth of the new Rally1 Puma.

DALLARA EXTENDS INDY DEAL

Dominant production racing car supplier Dallara has been given a multi-year extension to its deal to supply spec chassis to the IndyCar Series. The Italian firm first entered the IndyCar arena in 1997 and has been the sole supplier since 2009. The current chassis is an evolution of the car that first appeared in 2012.

EXTREME E FIRMS UP DATES

Extreme E has announced a revised schedule for its five 2022 dates – with a mere six contenders, down from the 12 it announced last September in an attempt to attract high bids for events. As in 2021, it will kick off in Saudi Arabia, this time on 19-20 February in Neom in place of the AlUla desert. It then moves to Sardinia on 7-8 May, before a 9-10 July date that is between Senegal and Scotland – which sounds like a dead-rubber match at the end of the World Cup group stages. Chile follows on 10-11 September, and it finishes with a finale at Punta del Este in Uruguay on 26-27 November.

PAGENAUD IN MSR ACURA

Former IndyCar champion Simon Pagenaud will race the Meyer Shank Racing Acura ARX-05 in this month's Daytona 24 Hours. Pagenaud, who was on duty with the Action Express Cadillac team last year, teams up with MSR's new full-season signings Oliver Jarvis and Tom Blomqvist together with his new MSR IndyCar team-mate Helio Castroneves for the event.

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Matton departs FIA on eve of Rally1 debut

WRC

The FIA is searching for a new rally director following the shock departure of Yves Matton less than a month before the start of the World Rally Championship's new Rally1 hybrid era.

Matton joined the FIA as rally director in 2018 and has been a key figure in the genesis of the WRC's Rally1 machinery, which makes its debut on this month's Monte Carlo Rally. A former competitor, the Belgian previously enjoyed two stints as team manager and team principal of Citroen's factory WRC operation, before he was appointed as the FIA's head of rallying by outgoing president Jean Todt.

An official statement from the FIA said: "The FIA acknowledges Yves Matton's

decision to move forward to new challenges after four years as the Rally Director. Under his leadership, the Rally Department has contributed to a number of successes and significant achievements across the WRC, Regional Rally and Cross-Country categories, including the implementation of the Rally Pyramid, the move of the FIA World Rally Championship to new energies, the commitment of the manufacturers to the series' exciting new hybrid era, and the agreement with the ASO as the promoter of the inaugural FIA World Rally Raid Championship. We would like to extend our thanks for his great work and our best wishes for what comes next."

Matton's departure arrived a matter of days after the FIA



Matton with former rally star Michele Mouton

installed its new president Mohammed ben Sulayem following his election win last month. The former rally champion has already earmarked the WRC as a championship he wishes to improve, stating that "two and a half manufacturers competing in the

championship is not enough".

The FIA is yet to name a successor to Matton, who has since been linked with the vacant team principal role at Hyundai after the popular Andrea Adamo ended his six-year stint in charge for personal reasons.

TOM HOWARD

Vandoorne and co set for switch to WRT

WEC

World Endurance Championship LMP2 runners-up Stoffel Vandoorne, Tom Blomqvist and Sean Gelael look set to switch from the British Jota squad to the 2021 title-winning WRT operation for the coming season. They appear increasingly certain to be part of what the Belgian team has confirmed will be an expanded squad of two ORECA-Gibson 07s in 2022.

It is known that Jota is no longer working with the Gelael family, which bankrolled

its #28 entry through its Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in its Indonesian homeland. WRT boss Vincent Vosse, meanwhile, has admitted that he has had discussions with the Gelaels, but insisted that his driver line-ups for the 2022 WEC are yet to be set in stone. "I can confirm that we have made two entries, but the drivers are not done yet," he said. "We are still working with the Gelaels and we hope to confirm drivers in the next few weeks."

Vosse outlined a hope for Robin Frijns and Ferdinand Habsburg, P2 co-champions

last year with Charles Milesi, to remain part of the WEC set-up for the new season. "We are working on that and I hope it will be the case, but it is not something I can confirm yet," he explained.

WRT will need a new silver-rated driver, mandated by the class rules, to join them because Milesi has been upgraded to gold. "Circumstances have taken us in different directions, unfortunately," said Vosse.

WRT is looking increasingly unlikely to defend the European Le Mans Series title it won with Robert Kubica, Louis Deletraz and Yifei Ye. "It is not decided yet, but it will be very difficult to do the ELMS as well as running two cars in the WEC," said Vosse. "I'm not sure it makes sense." Kubica and Deletraz are known to have tested for the Prema team late last year as it gears up for its P2 entry in the WEC and the ELMS.

Jota still intended to file two WEC entries ahead of the closing date this week, despite the departure of the Gelaels. Team boss Sam Hignett confirmed that Roberto Gonzalez and Antonio Felix da Costa will continue, together with an undecided team-mate to replace the retired Anthony Davidson.

GARY WATKINS



Lyncar in action in
qualifying for 1974
British Grand Prix



SUTTON
motorsport
IMAGES

Martin Slater 1936-2020

OBITUARY

'Mr Lyncar' Martin Slater, who died last month aged 84, was far more than a Formula 1 cameo role player. A fine designer/fabricator/engineer and lateral thinker, his cars won British Formula Atlantic championships with New Zealander John Nicholson in 1973 and 1974.

Slater raced the Slater Special – Cheetah Mk1 – in Fjunior (1963) and F3 (1964), then worked with Lola, fledgling March, McLaren and Ron Tauranac before building the first Lyncar, named for wife Lynda. Hewland engineer Mike Endean raced the Ford twin-cam powered 001 in 1972, Nicholson its BDA-engined twin. 'Johnny Nick's' Mallory Park win was the marque's first.

Nicholson (the boss of Nicholson McLaren Engines) and sponsor Bruno Drury of Pinch Plant bankrolled the F1 Lyncar. Debuted at the 1974 Race of Champions, 006 placed sixth in the International Trophy race, but British GP non-qualification at Brands Hatch brought a reality check. They regrouped for 1975 and were classified 17th in Silverstone's GP. Emilio de Villota scored its only victory in

Mallory's 1977 ShellSport series opener.

De Villota and Kiwis Howard Wood and Don Halliday raced later Atlantics, but better-resourced opposition had moved on. Ken Ayers won five RAC British Sprint rounds – including the fabled Brighton Speed Trials – in his 3.9-litre DFL-powered MS84 version and Roger Orgee a BRSCC Open series 'F2' class with BDX power. Meanwhile Tony Broster had won the 1981 Monoposto title in 001.

In 1982 Slater designed and built the Lyncar MS83 Group C2 sportscar for Costas Los, raced with Hart 420R and DFV engines in world championship rounds and Thundersports. Los remembers Martin as "a one-stop shop. He did the clay modelling, the full-sized mock-up and the fabrication work in-house and favoured doing as much as possible himself, preferably in metal. He was so into detail that he could get carried away with perfection."

Lyncar's swansong was an FRenault car in 1992, with an offset engine. Australian Bruce Davies saddled it to little avail.

Slater is survived by second wife Sally, a son and daughter, and two stepdaughters.

MARCUS PYE

TOMCZYK RETIRES TO TAKE ON NEW ROLE WITH DTM

DTM/SPORTSCARS

Former DTM champion Martin Tomczyk has hung up his helmet and is taking up a behind-the-scenes role with the German championship.

Tomczyk, 40, was promoted from Formula 3 to the DTM with Audi in 2001, and went on to claim the 2011 title for the marque with Phoenix Racing. He then joined BMW as reigning champion when it re-entered the DTM in 2012, and represented the Munich manufacturer for 10 years, latterly as part of its GT roster.

The German has joined DTM promoter the ITR, taking on a management role for the GT4-based DTM Trophy as well as assisting with the main series' "external communications".

"When it hurts the most, it's the right time," said Tomczyk. "The step is neither easy, nor has it been easy for me. However, the general conditions have unfortunately changed significantly in recent years. That's another reason why I haven't found any further basis with BMW to continue in racing the way I think it should be.

"I love this sport and have fought for success with passion and great determination since I started 30 years ago. I am very pleased that I can now give something back to my sport."

JAMIE KLEIN



BMW

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How F1 is coping with COVID

Kudos is due to all concerned for the delivery of a much more 'normal' 2021 campaign. And, while the cloud of uncertainty still hovers this year, the show must go on

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Compared to the year before, the 2021 Formula 1 season was much more 'normal'. Not 'completely back to normal', as we've all said and hoped for so many times during these infernal pandemic times, but closer than many might have thought this time 12 months ago.

In what is currently a difficult time for the FIA given the furore surrounding the governing body's rather shambolic handling of many contentious sporting decisions last season, full credit must be handed to the organisation, plus the rest of F1's stakeholders, for the achievement of pulling off 2021 and that campaign of campaigns.

"We can be very proud of what we have achieved," says FIA operations director Bruno Famin. "The only [events] we have been obliged to cancel or to postpone was due to local authority lack of authorisation – it was not due at all to an outbreak we generated or something like that."

In many ways, the 2021 season was harder to organise than 2020. In the first year of the pandemic, once the FIA had established the protocol enshrined in its COVID-19 Code of Conduct regarding strict regular testing and controlled social interactions (which remained unchanged for 2021), it was able to take this to every country F1 planned to hold a race. At the time, when many countries were still considering implementing or working to build their own entry requirements and travel rules, this was

"It is to F1's credit that it's embraced the call to vaccinate, encouraging people to get a jab"

used to assure authorities that the arrival of F1's nomadic society would not disrupt life any further than the pandemic already had.

The second time around, travelling was harder as countries implemented their own arrivals requirements for entry administration (such as proof of vaccination, negative test rules and contact tracing). Sometimes this was fully digitised, generally it meant carrying reams of paper at all times, and "sometimes it got super complex", per Famin. At the same time, the FIA was looking to safely relax specific constraints in its protocol to allow things, as Famin puts it, "to be back to business as close to normal as possible". This meant teams being allowed sponsor guests in the paddock and their facilities, F1 getting its Paddock Club back to typical operation and the written media being able to roam events more freely. For the teams and F1 there were serious cash

considerations involved, for the media, deeper insight to be found.

In terms of the F1 paddock alone, because spectator attendance is not covered by the FIA's COVID protocol and is a concern for local authorities and promoters, restrictions began to ease in the late spring, specifically at the Monaco Grand Prix. There, the written media was allowed to enter the paddock for the first time since the Thursday of the abandoned 2020 Australian GP. But, even as races appeared more 'normal' over the summer, with typically huge crowds at events such as the second Red Bull Ring race and Silverstone, things remained quiet in the paddock.

After negotiating Zandvoort, "one of the more difficult events of the season" according to Famin because the compact venue meant spectator zones and the heightened security area of F1's paddock bubble ran close together, the Monza paddock was practically buzzing compared to the Silverstone ghost town. Things were eased further as the year headed towards its conclusion and Abu Dhabi was essentially business as usual, with a frenzied season finale compared to the sterile event that ended 2020.

The gradual relaxation of F1's COVID rules last year and the FIA being "quite comfortable" with its protocol's robustness meant it was "even open to the idea to be almost back to [totally] normal" for the coming year, according to Famin. But, as we know, the pandemic isn't over, with the Omicron variant sending case numbers soaring, even with the hope its apparent reduced severity versus Delta and dominance over that variant means the end may soon be in sight. But another variant may arrive to crush that hope...

So, the 23-race calendar for the coming year once more includes much uncertainty, as travel restrictions and local operating rules will again be the deciding factor for events such as Melbourne and Suzuka, which have been painfully absent from the past two campaigns, going ahead.

The FIA's COVID protocol works, but there is one serious change being considered, and apparently already approved according to comments made by F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali. That is to make vaccination mandatory for all event personnel. This was in effect already enacted at some events, such as Abu Dhabi, in 2021 to waive quarantine periods for vaccinated arrivals, but is a welcome step considering the effectiveness of these wonderful tools for finally ending the nightmare. It is to F1's credit that it's embraced the call to vaccinate, with the championship backing the drive by organising a video message to encourage people to get a jab featuring most of the 2021 grid, which went live over the Abu Dhabi weekend.

There are serious and often cynical financial considerations for modern sport, but it shouldn't be lost that it remains a brilliant, unifying force to capture our collective consciousnesses. The coming year is set to be challenging once again, but the show has proved it can safely go on and will do so again. 🏁

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How a NASCAR legend can take on the Indy 500

Having opted out of ovals in his rookie IndyCar season, Jimmie Johnson has committed to the full 2022 schedule. Given his pedigree, he should shine in America's greatest race

DAVID MALSER-LOPEZ

Following his test of a Formula 1 McLaren in the autumn of 2018, Jimmie Johnson wasn't reticent regarding his post-NASCAR career. No plans were in place but he said he wanted to try out IndyCars — on road courses specifically — and he wanted to return to sports-prototypes, where he had impressed in occasional forays in the Grand-Am series.

In 2020, those sparks of desire were fanned into flames and it came to pass that the seven-time NASCAR Cup champion ran all road and street course races in the 2021 IndyCar season driving a Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Honda.

After more than two decades in stock cars, and with the number of IndyCar test days so heavily restricted in this era, it was hardly a surprise to see Johnson having to do much of his basic learning during official practice sessions. But, as the season went on, he appeared more confident, and at Portland he drove like he'd been racing open-wheel cars all his life. No, he wasn't a pacesetter, but he looked like he belonged in the series. Finished on the lead lap, too.

Nevertheless, by foregoing ovals — for reasons of safety — it appeared that Johnson had shelved his best chances of success. His IndyCar oval test in Texas in August, and his Indy 500 Rookie

“He'll jump in and feel the old memories of winning there in the Brickyard 400”

Orientation Program in October suggested he might be thinking along similar lines — that it was time to commit to a full season.

“I'm as close as I've ever been,” he said. “The racer in me is taking a real serious look at this, but I still need to sit down and have that conversation at home.”

To no one's great surprise, Johnson has now committed to all 17 rounds in the #48 Ganassi entry, so that — assuming he completes his Indy ROP and then qualifies — the 106th running of the Indianapolis 500 will be his second ever oval race in an IndyCar, after the unusually early Texas round.

What hurdles will JJ face? I put this question to the last NASCAR champion to tackle the 500, Kurt Busch, who at the age of 35 in 2014 impressed everyone by racing his Andretti Autosport car to sixth place overall and Rookie of the Year honours.

“The biggest shock for me — and it felt like a rookie hazing by the other drivers — came at the drop of the green flag on race day,” Busch chuckles. “It was like they were trying to intimidate me, going three wide down into Turn 1, 11 rows deep. I qualified 12th, took it nice and easy at the start and by the time I got to the back straightaway I was about 20th!”

“The Month of May is a unique experience. The long practice sessions, the teamwork, the build-up, the pageantry... there's nothing like it. I've been privileged to race in the Daytona 500 for over two decades and it's pretty special but Indy is a unique place and the 500 is a one-of-a-kind event.

“Jimmie's experience with a full year of road courses in an IndyCar will mean the comfort level is high for him. That's why I think he was ready to go oval racing, and I believe he'll be fantastic. He'll jump in and feel the old memories of running and winning there in the Brickyard 400. He knows the track, he knows ovals in general, and now he knows an IndyCar much better than he did a year ago.”

In 2014 Busch had a nasty-looking crash at Turn 2 during Monday practice after qualifying, for which his engineer Craig Hampson assumed blame, saying he made the car too loose given Busch's level of (in)experience. At the age of 46, would Johnson be able to bounce back from a potentially confidence-sapping event such as that?

“Well, for one thing, Craig shouldn't take the blame for my crash,” insists Busch. “The lap before that, the car wiggled out of Turn 1 and I thought, ‘Ooo, you're starting to reach the limits and you can control it, or our car has too much oversteer...’ Well, you saw what happened. Truth is, I should have pulled in at the end of the previous lap, but I was so eager to learn about the draft, and both Craig and I were relying on my general racing experience even though we both knew I was an IndyCar rookie.

“That's a judgement call that Jimmie and his engineer will have to make next May. Jimmie will have to be humble and open to the idea of being a rookie again... But I'd say in my case, the wreck was a good lesson, because if I hadn't made that mistake in practice, I'd have done it early in the race instead, and it would've been a disaster.

“Obviously, there's still a lot for Jimmie to learn. For example, the draft feels like it's multiplied by 10 when you compare an IndyCar with a stock car at Indy. He's got to look at wing angles, wind direction, and so on. But he's smart, he can look at the data from the other drivers on his team, and he can get advice from all the motorsport fraternity. They're all your best friend until the green flag drops.

“Honestly, I think he's got the chance to do a really great job.”



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YOUR SAY

Loved and enjoyed this sport for long enough to know that drivers get momentum and others never get the breaks. Heroes and villains, winners and losers

PAUL NEAL

We need to talk about Charles Leclerc

Alex Kalinauckas's 16 December column reflecting on race direction and stewarding was an excellent summation and provided for me his best piece of the year.

However, we have to talk about Charles Leclerc. Just listened to the F1 review podcast and the comment that his season was "criminally underrated". Clearly not by Autosport! Global survey, ninth; team bosses, sixth; and your rating, fourth.

You say that he was nailed on for Monaco but the mechanics discovered damage. He bent it. You say he had a good first half but no luck in the second half where he got beaten in the championship by his new team-mate who was unlucky in the first half of the year. This is in a team where Leclerc has been embedded for years.

The backmarker-like error upon Max Verstappen leaving the pits at Abu Dhabi was really poor, and I notice an almost third party take on his flat spotting of tyres and his falling back from excellent qualifying to what often appears as pretty ordinary race outcomes.

The ridiculous and torrid nonsense on social media where everything becomes polarised seems to have led to an almost understandably over-defensive reaction and the Autosport consensus is this guy is the real deal and therefore cannot be assessed as a mere mortal like any other team driver will be.

Loved and enjoyed this sport for long enough to know that drivers get momentum and others never get the breaks. Heroes and villains, winners and losers, so can we begin to view this driver as you might any other?

It is true that if Ferrari does produce a new-regulation winner, Leclerc may become a world champion and if that is so then Autosport may have to go to the *Spinal Tap* ranking system where Leclerc's scores go up to 11.

Paul Neal

By email

It's not just Alex at Autosport who thinks that Leclerc is the real deal. We also rate Carlos Sainz Jr, but Leclerc came much closer to winning a race in 2021 (Silverstone, Istanbul) and was very unfortunate to end up seventh in the points. Autosport readers also ranked him fifth (ahead of Sainz) across the season — ed



Shout out for W Series

I was disappointed that there was no coverage of W Series events in any of your reviews in the Christmas double issue (23–30 December). Surely you could have included the close racing in the 'Best motorsport moments' feature, and the Belgium crash that took out four cars in the 'Moments that weren't so good'? Alice Powell deserves a mention for taking the title race with Jamie Chadwick to the last race of the season. Come on Autosport, give W Series recognition along with the other motorsport categories.

Elizabeth Dinnie

Aberdeenshire

We did a four-page article on the 2021 W Series, speaking to both Jamie Chadwick and Alice Powell, in the 25 November 2021 issue — ed

Bosses with much in common

In response to Salvador Valiente's letter (23–30 December), I too heard David Coulthard's remark about Sir Alex Ferguson never querying referees and was taken aback. Could this be the same Sir Alex that constantly questioned match officials' decisions to the point that he even got a £12,000 fine for misconduct? If anything, Messrs Wolff, Horner and Ferguson have much in common; apart from hefty fines for petulant outbursts.

Glenn Firstbrook

By email

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WHAT PART WILL RUSSELL PLAY

SUPER

IN THE NEW MERCEDES...

George Russell joining Lewis Hamilton gives Mercedes arguably the best line-up in F1 — if it can avoid too many fireworks. Here's what Russell makes of his big chance

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY



TEAM?

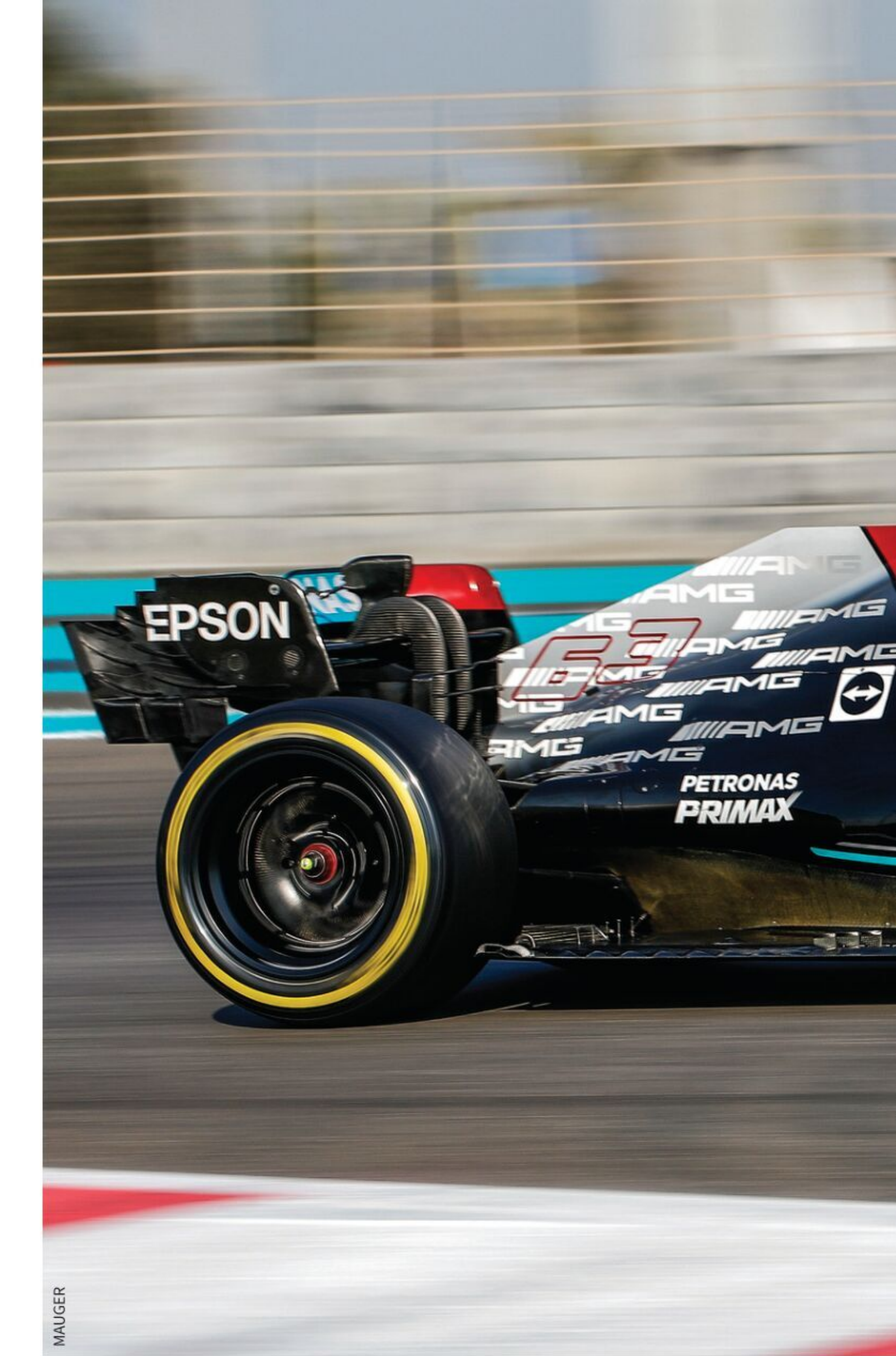


Sorry, Ferrari, but the mantle of having the best driver line-up in Formula 1 may well be about to slip. That's after just one season of the Charles Leclerc/Carlos Sainz Jr pairing. And that's because one of the championship's 'superteams' just got a few more powers. There's still the rest of the off-season to go before it becomes known how the reigning constructors' champion has coped with the second major rules reset to come its way since mastery of the V6 hybrid switch catapulted Mercedes into heading F1's pecking order. But, on paper at least, the second change to its driver line-up since 2014 – and the first one it has decided to do all by itself considering the circumstances of Nico Rosberg's post-title retirement five years ago – provides a big boost. Because, alongside statistically F1's greatest ever racer, Mercedes now has the driver it considers to be the next Lewis Hamilton primed to race alongside the real one.

George Russell is finally where he's long wanted to be. The aim back when he was fresh from winning what was then known as BRDC Formula 4 in 2014, when he was impressing Mercedes' motorsport boss Toto Wolff with his determined attitude at their initial meetings, was to one day be in his new situation. And that is, after two years as a Mercedes junior in the lower categories that yielded back-to-back GP3 and Formula 2 titles, then three seasons honing his F1 craft with customer squad Williams, a works team driver taking on Hamilton.

"Teaming up with Lewis is obviously incredibly exciting," says Russell, just a few days before his penultimate race as a Williams driver will be ended in the pile-up at the second start in Jeddah. "I am in a privileged position. To go alongside the best ever. It's an amazing opportunity to again progress myself as a driver and see how I fare."

Russell has got his opportunity at the expense of Valtteri Bottas, who has been ushered out of the Mercedes line-up for 2022. He's now at Alfa Romeo, albeit with the considerable public expressions of fondness and farewell from his former squad still ringing loudly. The many heartfelt goodbyes made by Mercedes' employees and its official social media accounts stand as a testament to how well regarded Bottas



MAUGER

was at Brackley and beyond. On his day, Bottas was capable of besting Hamilton – over a single lap or a race distance. The problem was these days turned out to be pretty few and far between. He was regularly undone by his comparative weakness with either getting the best out of the Pirelli tyres or keeping them alive long enough to make the ultimate difference. This is one of Hamilton's best attributes, alongside the searing speed that has resulted in 103 F1 poles and counting. In five seasons as team-mates, Bottas's Mercedes stats sit at 10 wins and 20 poles, to Hamilton's 50 and 42.

But that imbalance alone was not what sealed Bottas's fate. After all, he helped Mercedes on its way to eight straight constructors' titles. More importantly, it was Wolff's need to future-proof Mercedes, a team run as a franchise-type business. Hamilton turns 37 tomorrow (Friday), while his latest former team-mate is now 32. Leclerc and Sainz are 24 and 27, with Red Bull and McLaren



Bottas was highly valued by Mercedes, but Wolff needed to future-proof the team

MERCEDES DRIVERS IN THE TURBO-HYBRID ERA

DRIVER	STARTS	WINS	POLES	POINTS
Lewis Hamilton	159	81	72	3063.5
Nico Rosberg	59	20	26	1024
Valtteri Bottas	101	10	20	1327
George Russell	1	0	0	3

Russell has achieved his long-held target of a Mercedes seat – “it’s an amazing opportunity”



“I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO BEING PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CAR THAT’S PROGRESSING DRASTICALLY”

also possessing youthful stars, and in the former’s case the new reigning world champion Max Verstappen. Russell, at 23 (he’ll be 24 in February), gives Mercedes a glimpse of its potential future. Although F1 careers are lasting ever-longer in the modern era, there’s simply no guarantee that Hamilton will continue racing as he heads into his forties. At the time of writing, speculation continues to mount that he could walk away from the championship entirely given his dissatisfaction at how the Abu Dhabi finale farce played out, even if that is an extremely unlikely outcome...

As his words above demonstrate, Russell is keen to make his case as a team player. It was there in his radio message during the 2021 Hungarian Grand Prix, when he told Williams to “prioritise Nicky” to aid former team-mate Nicholas Latifi’s first chance to score points in that chaotic event, and in the process end that squad’s two-year top 10 results drought. It was evident again in the emotion Russell showed after he’d eventually finished eighth to take his first points for Williams, with Latifi seventh on what turned out to be the first of two bumper days for the Briton’s previous team last year. The other was Russell’s first experience of an F1 podium – albeit in the strange circumstances in the Spa washout.

Taking on Hamilton with the same machinery is his privilege right now, but that comes with the added responsibility of keeping Mercedes’ title streak up – as Bottas helped to do so well.

“I am really excited to see the new cars and what they offer for everybody,” Russell says of the new era about to begin. “I think



First experience of an F1 podium came in Spa washout

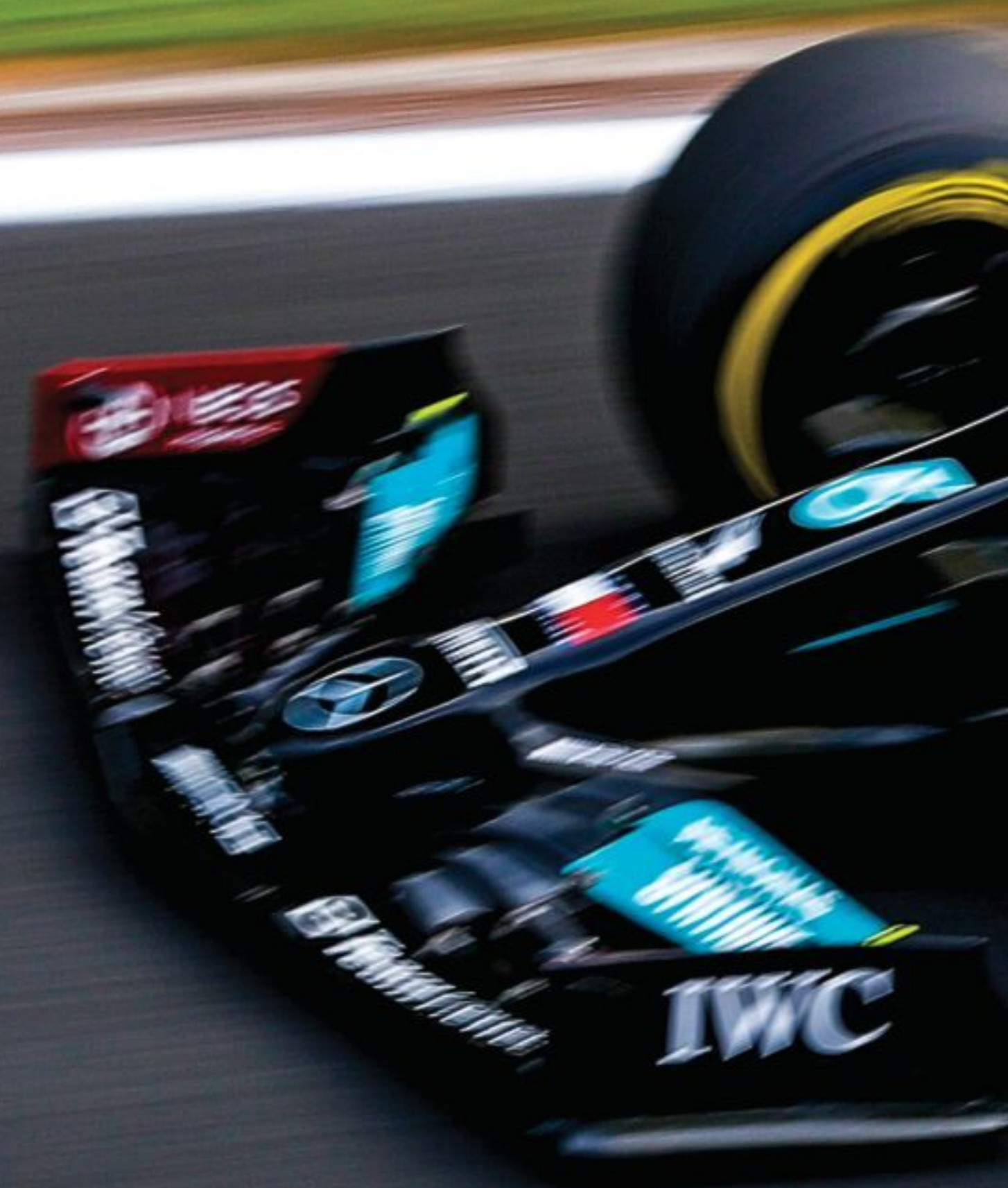
that is really exciting but also I’m looking forward to being part of the development of a car that will be progressing drastically throughout a season. So, working with the designers, working on the simulator, putting lots of work in to progress because I’m sure it won’t necessarily be whoever is quickest at race one that will win [the title]. It will be who progresses fastest. I am sure there will be some interesting designs out there and there might be some underdogs who prevail in the opening tests or races. It is whoever develops the fastest, whoever develops the best and to build those foundations for the coming years. That is a side I am really excited for – from an engineering perspective.”

Russell is smart enough to know the benefits of emphasising his >>



ETHERINGTON

“HE’S MY TEAM-MATE AND HE’S GOING TO BE THE NEXT BRIT THAT I WANT TO SEE WIN A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP”



DUNBAR

collegial attributes as he walks through the doors at Mercedes for the first times as a full works driver. He has a reputation for leaving few details untouched, and of being very demanding as he works to uncover such aspects, but also of understanding the value of appearances and getting the right messages across. But he’s far more than that too.

In 2022, Russell will enter his second season as a Grand Prix Drivers’ Association director, a position he moved into ahead of last season following Romain Grosjean’s F1 exit. With the responsibility that comes with that position, he’s unafraid to speak his mind when needed – such as following the Jeddah race shunt-fest and Russell’s comments about the track producing “unnecessary danger”. He also is keenly aware that he owes Mercedes plenty given that its support got him where he is, with quite the burgeoning reputation.

So, Russell has already got a plan to help his new team from the off in 2022, after taking an important “good holiday at the start of the year”.

“I believe that is important because I think 2022 will be the most intense year of my life in terms of racing schedules, but also from an off-track and marketing side of things,” he adds. “Going from Williams,

where I have been pretty fortunate in a way not having to do so many marketing activities just because of the nature of the position we’ve been in, to Mercedes where we’ve got tons of sponsors and lots of commitments that drivers need to attend to.

“This will be also off the back of COVID, when for all the drivers and all the teams next year it is all going to ramp up – because the partners have missed out on 18 months’ worth of activation. From a racing side and off-track side, it is going to be incredibly intense. So, January – take 10 days off, a nice holiday, reset – and then hit the ground running mid-to-end of January. Then put everything on the table and go for it.”

Russell will be doing that under the greatest scrutiny he’s yet faced in F1 – although he’s already had quite the taste of what it means to try to deliver in a frontrunning, uber-successful team given how things panned out in his one-off 2020 Mercedes outing in the Sakhir GP. The added expectation coming his way in 2022 is something Russell feels “absolutely fine about” and is “not something I’m going to shy away from” – because he can reflect positively on his first opportunity of stepping up the grid, even if that race didn’t turn out as brilliantly



Near-certain win was lost
in 2020 Sakhir GP one-off
outing for Mercedes

as it looked on course to be once he'd led 59 of the opening 63 laps.

"When the helmet's on, you forget everything else," he says. "I was obviously fortunate to have the experience in 2020 with Mercedes [after Hamilton contracted COVID-19 with two races remaining]. Lining up on the grid on the front row when the helmet was on, it hadn't even crossed my mind that I was going into Turn 1 fighting for the lead because you've got one vision, which is go as fast as possible and attack.

"When I was leading, it felt like another race. There was no additional pressure when I was driving because that is what I was there to do."

And Mercedes will need Russell to do it again as it looks to extend the streak that started with the Hamilton/Rosberg line-up and carried on all the way through Bottas's time. But the constant part of Mercedes' hybrid era driver line-up remains the most important. He's proved why time and time again.

Hamilton says, "I really want to see him succeed" when it comes to Russell's arrival, because "there's going to be a point where I don't continue in this sport". He adds: "He's my team-mate and he's going to be the next Brit that I want to see win a world championship. So, >>

I really hope that, while we are going to be competing and I want to win on track, I can have a positive influence on how he conducts himself within the team.”

But there was a sense that Hamilton would have preferred Bottas’s tenure as his team-mate to continue. The seven-time world champion, who in 2022 is entering the first year of his latest two-year contract at Mercedes, said three months before Mercedes’ decision on its 2022 driver line-up (which was finalised just before the Spa round last year) that he did not “necessarily see that it needs to change”.

From Hamilton’s point of view, it’s easy to see why he would have wanted Bottas to stay on. He knew he had him covered from a championship challenge perspective and the Finn didn’t cause intra-team instability — as famously happened regularly during the Hamilton/Rosberg years. Hamilton insists he is now a better team-mate five years on from his former karting rival and friend’s F1 departure and his respect for Bottas was clear.

But the additional benefits of bringing in an established junior in Russell, aside from his comparative youth, also stand out when considering Wolff’s thinking in finally changing his team’s driver line-up. For a start, Russell learned exactly how badly rocking the boat can go — he earned public and private dressing downs from Wolff in the aftermath of his ill-judged, heated comments following his crash with Bottas at Imola last year. That doesn’t mean he’s necessarily cowed by the experience, but a driver as sharp as Russell will think twice before making such a play again.

And this is a key part of what Russell now brings to Mercedes. He’s done his learning and under a far lower degree of scrutiny. Of course, every F1 team gets a great deal of media attention, but drivers away from the victory fight always naturally fly under the radar. The bad performances can be covered,

the better ones often struggle to poke out. Russell is thankful for three years of this learning with Williams — a period in which he played a role in helping the team battle back from its results nadir of 2018-19.

“I’m grateful for the difficulties I’ve faced on the track and throughout these years,” he says. “Because quite often when you get in a faster car and a car that is more complete, things just naturally feel easier. [At Williams we] had so many limitations — whether it was trying to get the tyres in the right window, the brakes in the right window, following other cars has been incredibly difficult, [as has] really fighting in battles and to hold onto positions. When the car is faster often everything feels good. The strategy always feels good when the car is fast. These sorts of things start feeling your way.

“I feel a more rounded driver because of these lessons. I talk about it with my trainer — about building this toolbox of experience and knowledge. I’m sure throughout my F1 career I’m never going to have the best car year after year. But, if I do have a car that’s very difficult to drive, I’ve had these experiences — that I can just go back into

the toolbox and remember what I experienced throughout 2019 or these last few years. So, I feel pretty fortunate to have had this.

“It’s all subconscious. You’re always learning and you’ve always got these experiences — good ones, bad ones — and you know how to exploit them in given circumstances. I want to win; I want to be a winner and obviously it would have been nicer fighting for points week after week for the past few years, but I’m sure if I was in a McLaren and was fighting for points week after week I’d still want more. Ultimately it’s never enough until you win.”

Russell says being out of the frontrunner spotlight meant he was able to “explore quite drastically with the set-up and with my driving style” because “we were effectively in this big and long test session”.



Hamilton reckons he's now a much better team-mate

Intra-team strife of the Hamilton-Rosberg era should remain a distant memory





Three-year stint at Williams has been invaluable

ANDRE

“I’M GRATEFUL FOR THE DIFFICULTIES I’VE FACED ON THE TRACK AND THROUGHOUT THESE YEARS”

This and his growing experience with every F1 race, Russell says, has given him “a better understanding of the technical side”. Here is a further benefit he brings to Mercedes, with Williams understood to highly value his decision-making on car set-up and tyre preparation. Plus, his progress on the delicate tyre management skill continues, with his drive to 12th at Paul Ricard one of three highlights he picks out from 2021 (the others were two bright weekends in Austria, the second including a scintillating battle with Fernando Alonso’s quicker Alpine).

But even when the spotlight is trained away from the back-of-the-grid battles, it can swing back very quickly when things go wrong. Russell knows this painfully well, as he still selects four moments that exposed “the ruthlessness of F1 – if you have a bad day everybody’s watching, everyone knows” as ones that aided his progression and will serve as key lessons when embarking on his Mercedes move.

These are: the 2020 Tuscan GP, the 2020 and 2021 Emilia Romagna GPs, and of course the Sakhir GP. In the first instance, Russell was running ninth and on for his first F1 points as he held off Sebastian Vettel’s faster Ferrari, but a poor third start following the second red flag meant he dropped back to eventually finish 11th. On F1’s return to Imola after 14 years, he famously crashed under the safety car while running 10th and then earned further infamy with his shunt and remonstrance with Bottas last



MAUGER



Imola crash and ill-judged blast at Bottas resulted in rapped knuckles

PROSTAR

season. While his Sakhir GP result was due to Mercedes’ pitstop calamity (and the additional misfortune of the late puncture), losing a near-certain win left a painful memory.

“These are the four moments in my three years that stick out to me that were pretty brutal emotionally,” Russell explains. “It was just learning how to deal with that.”

“You often feel like you’ve let the whole side down if you make a mistake, and letting that not drain you [is vital] because ultimately if you want to win a championship you need to perform over 23 races. You might have a bad race at race one, but you need to bounce back from that. Or you might have a bad race mid-season – you can’t let that affect the races following. So [you must] almost forget, move on and try to focus on the next race, because memories live short in Formula 1.”

“I look back on Bahrain with no frustration or hard feelings. It’s something that I guess has moulded me into a stronger driver.”

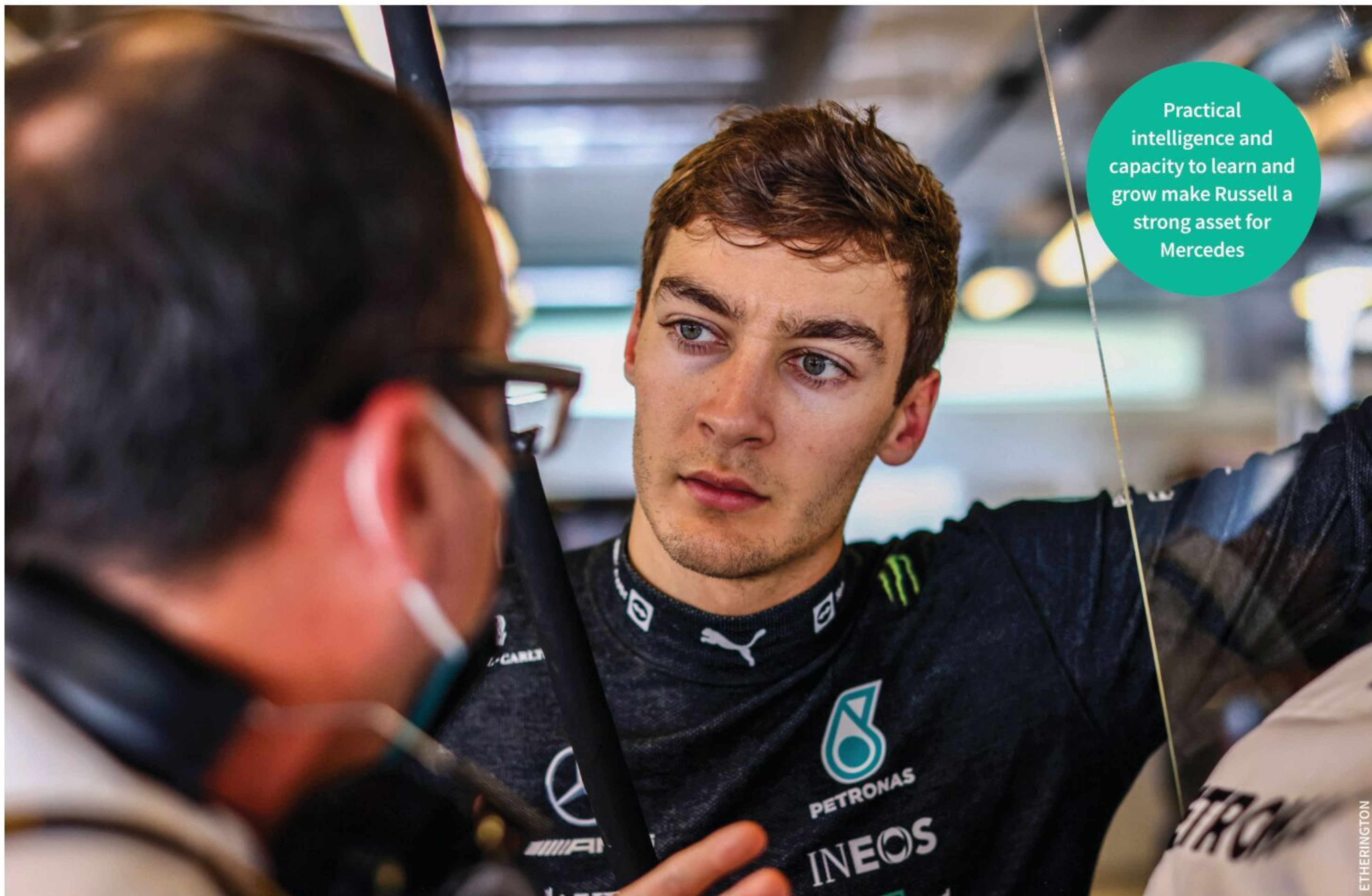
So, Mercedes is gaining a driver that has completed the oft-trodden journey of plying their trade at the back of the grid and has learned the value of failure along the way. At the same time, Russell has forged a reputation as a rapid and consistent qualifier with his 56-2 record in comparison to Robert Kubica and Latifi (Q1-Q2-Q3 sessions only), which includes four Q3 appearances in 2021 and only three times of not escaping the opening qualifying segment last year.

Russell also knows this move is one with long-haul potential. Not only will he have to produce his best consistently to earn a lengthy deal along the lines of those Verstappen and Leclerc were handed by Red Bull and Ferrari respectively, but he will have to aid Mercedes’ >>



Russell is part of Formula 1’s next generation of stars

TEE



development through the new design rules era. He must work to prove his late-2021 dip in form was just a blip, put in more consistently excellent race starts (something both Hamilton and Bottas have struggled with in the Mercedes package) and continue to show the adaptability and leadership that so impressed Williams, all while doing so with potentially rapidly changing machinery.

“The engineering side is something that I have definitely progressed a huge amount in these three years at Williams,” Russell says. “The simulator side of things is going to be very important to help work on the correlation and the development and try to direct the team on where the car’s limitations are and where it needs improving.

“I am not an engineer, but the driver can have a massive influence in the direction that a team can take so that is something I’ll be really focused on because I see this next chapter as a long journey together. Obviously, I want to win next year but it will be important to make sure we have got a car that is capable of winning over the next four years.”

And here we arrive at the main conclusion from Wolff’s move to upgrade his superteam with a new driver versed in what Mercedes

“I’M NOT AN ENGINEER, BUT A DRIVER CAN HAVE A MASSIVE INFLUENCE IN THE DIRECTION A TEAM CAN TAKE”

does and what it is. If it can be taken as read that Russell won’t destabilise his new environment given his proven nous and fast learning, then it appears right now to be win-win.

There’s how Hamilton may react to having a highly rated up-and-comer slot in on the other side of the Mercedes garage. Matching an older superstar with one projected to one day emulate them is a recognised tactic throughout sport. Hamilton has been open about how the new generation of stars has raised his own incredibly high level – now with one installed next to him it is logical to expect a further response.

If Hamilton goes on to take an eighth world title, that’s a win for Wolff and Mercedes. Should Russell sensationally take the title at his first shot, that’s another. But these are of course assumptions based on the team being in contention at the front of the grid for yet another year. That won’t be known until the new cars hit the track, but Mercedes maintaining its supremacy through the 2016-17 rule changes gives it a certain amount of credit on that front. Of course, the new duo will need to work together to secure a ninth straight Mercedes constructors’ title.

But as 2022 begins, Russell knows one thing for sure. His Mercedes move gives him his best chance to be a world champion. And, potentially, be champion many more times in the years to come. ❧



F1 DRIVER SUPERTEAMS

Putting two great drivers together often brings success – but it can also create fireworks that damage the harmony inside a team. Kevin Turner selects some of the ultimate F1 superteams



Fangio and Moss

Mercedes

Mercedes had struggled to find consistent support for Juan Manuel Fangio in 1954 and signed rising British star Stirling Moss for the following season. Moss dutifully fulfilled the protege role and the duo scored three 1-2s. The W196s steamrolled the opposition, losing only once as Fangio comfortably took his third drivers' title.



Brooks and Moss

Vanwall

Moss was in the lead role when he joined Vanwall in 1957, but Tony Brooks was also one of the world's top drivers. Moss took over the car started by the injured Brooks to win the British GP to get the ball rolling. They each won three races for the team in 1958, helping Vanwall to beat Ferrari to the first F1 constructors' crown.



Hill and Clark

Lotus

Jim Clark had been the focus of Lotus founder Colin Chapman's attention, but the arrival of 1962 world champion Graham Hill created a superteam for 1967. Unreliability hampered the DFV-engined Lotus 49's charge, with Hill getting more of the bad luck, but it was the Englishman who won the 1968 title after Clark's death.



Peterson and Fittipaldi

Lotus

Very different approaches resulted in two winners for Lotus. Ronnie Peterson was probably the faster, 1972 world champion Emerson Fittipaldi better at set-up. They won seven races and the constructors' title in 1973 but both suffered misfortune and took points off each other, helping Tyrrell's Jackie Stewart to scoop arguably his finest crown.



Lauda and Prost

McLaren

Niki Lauda looked to have things well set for 1984, with a John Barnard McLaren chassis and TAG Porsche turbo. Then Alain Prost replaced John Watson and an epic title fight ensued. Prost won more battles, but Lauda won the war – by half a point. They remained friends and Prost swept to the 1985 crown before Lauda retired.



Mansell and Piquet

Williams

Nigel Mansell was the Williams incumbent but two-time world champion Nelson Piquet joined expecting to be number one. Their tight 1986 battle, along with Mansell's infamous Adelaide blowout, allowed Prost to steal the drivers' crown. Mansell was the faster driver in 1987 but bad luck allowed Piquet to take his third title.



Senna and Prost

McLaren

Prost initially welcomed Ayrton Senna to the McLaren fold in 1988 and the duo put on a tight, but largely fair, fight for the crown. Prost scored more points but Senna won one more race and the championship, thanks to the dropped scores rule. Things turned sour in 1989, Ferrari-bound Prost becoming champion after their first Suzuka clash.



Hamilton and Alonso

McLaren

This could have been Fangio-Moss mark two, only times had changed and Lewis Hamilton had no intention of following Fernando Alonso at McLaren. Things got ugly between the double world champion and the precocious rookie, and both made mistakes that helped Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen take the title by a single point in the final round.



Button and Hamilton

McLaren

The Hamilton-Jenson Button combination was more harmonious, with McLaren insiders conceding that 2009 world champion Button played his part in keeping things that way. Many questioned Button's move to 'Hamilton's team' but he held his own and scored more points over their three years together, with Hamilton taking 10 wins to Button's eight.



Hamilton and Rosberg

Mercedes

Hamilton probably doesn't look back fondly on his time alongside Nico Rosberg and the intra-team politics, but the combination was undeniably successful. Three drivers' titles and three constructors' crowns, and 54 victories between 2013 and 2016 – when Rosberg retired after becoming champion – are the best tallies on this list.

20 YEARS

OF THE **TOP 50** DRIVERS LIST

2002 -21

THE BEST DRIVERS OF THE CENTURY – SO FAR

We've been running our Top 50 driver ratings since 2002. Time to see who the leading performers have been

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

Autosport's Top 50 drivers of the year rankings always cause controversy and debate – both within our office and the wider motorsport world. It's our attempt to assess and highlight the best performers each season, but that doesn't stop some fans (and even drivers) getting very cross about the final list.

The 2021 Top 50, which was topped by Formula 1 world championship runner-up Lewis Hamilton, was the 20th edition. Since the inaugural list in 2002, 292 drivers have appeared in the Top 50, some consistently, some just the once, while others have fallen in and out as their careers ebb and flow.

Autosport launched the Top 50 in the 19–26 December 2002 issue of the magazine, when it covered only six pages as opposed to the 26 in 2021, and much of the original premise remains: “We've tried to spread the drivers around the different categories of motorsport as much as possible. Some have received bonus points for versatility, others for shining in adversity. All of them, though, are bloody good drivers, and this is our salute.”

To mark the milestone, we thought it was time to tot up all the scores to find out which drivers have been the outstanding performers this century – or, at least, since 2002...

HOW WE RATE THE DRIVERS

The starting point each year is to rate the drivers within the major series, one of the core tasks of each journalist covering their championship. There are many factors taken into account, including the machinery at the drivers' disposal, circumstances (for example, were they in a title fight?), good and bad luck, outstanding performances and errors, and importance within the team. In 2021, on-track etiquette also had to be taken into account when it came to F1 and the DTM.

Once all these elements have been considered, each correspondent produces a top 10 drivers of the year in their championship, which traditionally appears as part of their season review. Drivers from the same categories in the Top 50 tend to appear in the same order, unless a driver appears across multiple series. For example, Alessandro Pier Guidi was second in the 2021 World Endurance Championship GTE Pro drivers list to Kevin Estre but jumped ahead in the Top 50 thanks to his efforts in GT World Challenge Europe, particularly the Spa 24 Hours. As our longtime sportscar

TOP 50 STAT

292

Number of drivers
who have appeared in
Autosport's Top 50
since it began
in 2002



Seven-time NASCAR champ Johnson has been a leading scorer

HARRELSON

correspondent Gary Watkins says, “special drivers do special things” and standout moments are also considered in the rankings.

Rating the different series then has to be factored in. This isn't an exact science and the strength of many categories changes over time. Some seasons are stronger than others, particularly when it comes to junior single-seater championships, which can oscillate significantly from one year to another. Trying to judge all the series and performers within them each year is a challenging task and creates much debate – how do you compare, for example, a Super Formula champion with a NASCAR or World Touring Car race winner?

World championships, most obviously Formula 1 and in rallying, tend to be at the top of the pyramid, with the leading categories of American motorsport – IndyCar and NASCAR Cup – also weighted strongly. Formula E and WEC tend to figure in the higher echelons, too.



Schumacher topped the first three Top 50 lists, from 2002 to 2004



Leclerc and Verstappen head the wave of recent F1 talent

Once all the championship top 10s have been collated, drivers competing in multiple series considered, and an initial list of 60-70 names (or more) has been produced, it is sent to the correspondents for feedback on who needs to move up or down, in or out. A small panel then determines the final Top 50 to prevent the debate going on forever!

For this '20 years' list, we gave 50 points for the number one driver in each annual list, 49

for second etc, all the way down to one point for 50th. We then added up each driver's scores over the years to come to a total.

Obviously, this is just one way of rating the drivers. A more holistic view of the century would include other factors, such as the varying gaps between drivers, which cannot be reflected in the data. Similarly, few drivers' careers fit neatly into our 20-year window. For example, Michael Schumacher would

undoubtedly be much higher up the list if we'd been doing this since 1992, while other drivers, such as 2021 F1 world champion Max Verstappen, have only recently got going and will doubtless climb up the rankings over the next few years.

Nevertheless, as a novel way of starting the conversation, and celebrating two decades of outstanding driving and the Top 50 itself, we hope this is a fun way to begin the New Year. >>



THE LEADING PERFORMERS

One of the key things about the Top 50 is that it is not restricted by championship finishing order. All but the most casual of motorsport fans (or those wanting to avoid a debate!) will concede that any given championship result does not necessarily reflect the performance levels of the drivers that year. Over the 20 editions, the Top 50 has been headed by someone other than that year's champion on six occasions.

This can help those sometimes saddled with mediocre machinery, so it is perhaps not a surprise that the top scorer is Fernando Alonso. In his two F1 title-winning years he was second (to World Rally champ Sebastien Loeb in 2005) and first (2006), and he has been a consistently superb performer for most of the period. He topped the list again in 2012, when his brilliant F1 campaign with Ferrari fell just shy of denying Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel the crown.

Alonso's quest for motorsport's triple crown, combined with some stellar performances for the then beleaguered McLaren team, also kept him in the frame when his F1 results alone looked unremarkable. He was third in our 2017 listings, when he made his first appearance

TOP 50 WINNERS 2002-21

POS	DRIVER	WINS	YEARS
1	Lewis Hamilton	7	2009, 2015, 2017-21
=2	Sebastian Vettel	3	2010-11, 2013
=2	Michael Schumacher	3	2002-04
=4	Fernando Alonso	2	2006, 2012
=4	Daniel Ricciardo	2	2014, 2016
=6	Sebastien Loeb	1	2005
=6	Kimi Raikkonen	1	2007
=6	Robert Kubica	1	2008

in the Indianapolis 500, and climbed to second in 2018 when he won the Le Mans 24 Hours with Toyota.

His quiet 2020 meant he dropped off the list but his return with Alpine in 2021 and subsequent finish of 24th meant he stayed ahead – by 12 points – of the second-placed driver on the list.

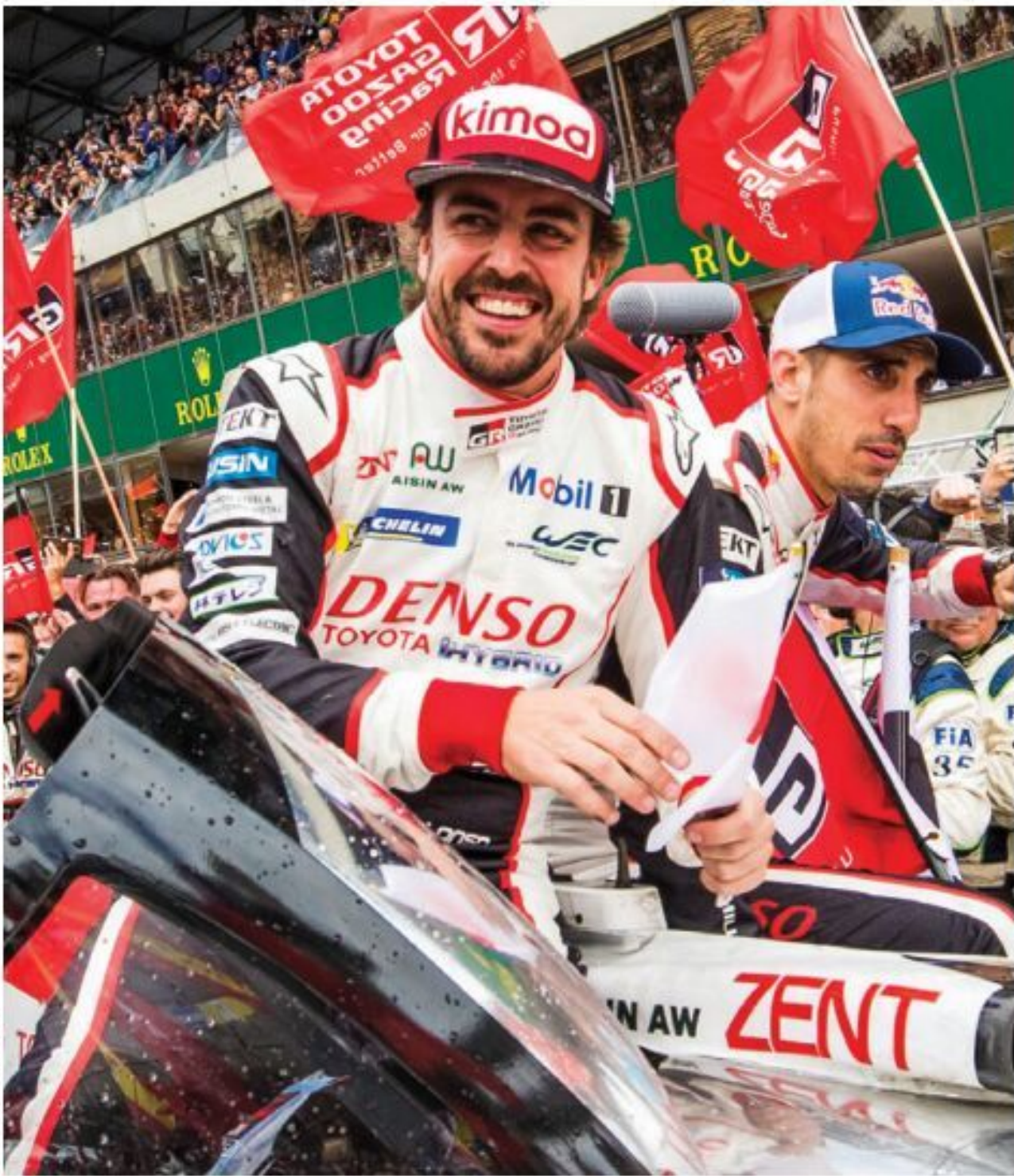
The battle between Alonso and Hamilton is the one motorsport has missed most over much of the past decade and a half, so it is perhaps appropriate that the Briton is right



behind the leader. Just as Alonso has both won the world title twice and topped our list twice, seven-time world champion Hamilton has taken our number one spot on seven occasions.

Whereas Alonso's first Top 50 appearance was second in 2003, Hamilton arrived in 24th two years later after his Formula 3 Euro Series title success. He was 11th after winning GP2 as a rookie in 2006, before rising to second – ahead of Alonso – in his first F1 season. He has been in the top two every year since then, apart from after his troubled year in 2011

THE TOP 50 LEADING DRIVERS 2002-21



POS	DRIVER (MAIN SERIES)	TOTAL POINTS	TOP 50 ENTRIES
1	Fernando Alonso (F1)	810	18
2	Lewis Hamilton (F1)	798	17
3	Sebastian Vettel (F1)	573	15
4	Scott Dixon (IndyCar)	558	15
5	Jenson Button (F1)	515	16
6	Sebastien Loeb (WRC)	513	12
7	Kimi Raikkonen (F1)	508	15
8	Sebastien Ogier (WRC)	496	12
9	Mark Webber (F1)	464	14
10	Nico Rosberg (F1)	407	12

11	Jimmie Johnson (NASCAR)	386	12
12	Daniel Ricciardo (F1)	364	10
13	Nico Hulkenberg (F1)	359	12
14	Max Verstappen (F1)	352	8
15	Valtteri Bottas (F1)	332	11
16	Will Power (IndyCar)	319	11
17	Rubens Barrichello (F1)	306	9
18	Jarno Trulli (F1)	284	8
19	Sebastien Buemi (WEC/FE)	279	8
20	Juan Pablo Montoya (F1)	270	8



Rosberg, Alonso, Raikkonen, Vettel and Button all currently sit in our overall top 10



Ricciardo got our vote in 2014 and 2016 as he starred for Red Bull



Hamilton and Vettel scored highly throughout their battles in the 2010s

(eighth) and first campaign at Mercedes in 2013 (seventh). If the 2021 Top 50 result is repeated this year, Hamilton will overtake Alonso for top spot.

There is a big gap to Vettel in third, partly because the German arrived in the higher echelons of the sport later and partly because his career, arguably, started tailing off sooner.

Vettel first made it into the Top 50 in 2006 in 41st as F3 Euro Series runner-up (behind Paul di Resta, 52nd in our big list) and rose to 22nd the following year, when he was

a Formula Renault 3.5 race winner and made his F1 debut. He was then a fixture in the top 10 for six years, topping the list as world champion three times (2010-11 and 2013). There was a dip as he struggled alongside Daniel Ricciardo – twice our top pick and 12th overall – at Red Bull in 2014, followed by a revival at Ferrari before a steep fall after 2018.

Three more F1 world champions, Jenson Button, Kimi Raikkonen and Nico Rosberg, make the top 10, while ninth-placed Mark Webber is the top F1 driver not to be world

champion – though of course he did become World Endurance champion with Porsche.

Aside from Verstappen, who on his current trajectory will make it into the top 10 in the next two years, there are several youngsters lurking in the list who will surely rise in the seasons to come.

Charles Leclerc is already 30th off the back of just six appearances, with a highest position of fourth in 2019. Incoming Mercedes driver George Russell has appeared five times and is 44th, while fellow McLaren Autosport >>

21	Carlos Sainz Jr (F1)	268	8	31	Robert Kubica (F1)	236	6	41	Rene Rast (DTM)	179	5
22	Sergio Perez (F1)	265	10	32	Sebastien Bourdais (IndyCar)	223	8	42	Ralf Schumacher (F1)	175	5
23	Michael Schumacher (F1)	258	6	33	Kevin Harvick (NASCAR)	215	9	43	Yvan Muller (WTCC)	174	9
24	Felipe Massa (F1)	258	9	34	Helio Castroneves (IndyCar)	212	9	44	George Russell (F1)	173	5
25	Marcus Gronholm (WRC)	252	6	35	Josef Newgarden (IndyCar)	202	7	45	Thierry Neuville (WRC)	170	7
26	Giancarlo Fisichella (F1)	251	7	36	Andre Lotterer (WEC)	202	6	46	Lucas di Grassi (FE)	164	6
27	Dario Franchitti (IndyCar)	250	8	37	Pierre Gasly (F1)	194	7	47	Tony Kanaan (IndyCar)	162	6
28	Nick Heidfeld (F1)	249	8	38	Kyle Busch (NASCAR)	194	7	48	David Coulthard (F1)	162	6
29	Petter Solberg (WRC)	242	7	39	Gary Paffett (DTM)	192	8	49	Jean-Eric Vergne (FE)	160	5
30	Charles Leclerc (F1)	237	6	40	Jamie Whincup (Supercars)	182	9	50	Lando Norris (F1)	156	5



Rally legends: Loeb narrowly outscores Ogier for top rally honours

BRDC Award winner Lando Norris is 50th, 17 points behind, having also made the Top 50 five times.

TOP NON-F1 DRIVERS

With F1 at the pinnacle of the sport, it is not a surprise that it normally provides the leading contenders for our Top 50. However, other championships have been well represented over the years.

The only non-F1 driver to so far top the list is World Rally legend Loeb. He was

number one in 2005, the year he won 10 of the 16 events to take his third consecutive crown with Citroën and won the Race of Champions.

He's the top WRC driver in sixth, just two spots and 17 points ahead of his successor Sébastien Ogier. Fittingly, given they are in the debate about the greatest rally driver of all-time, both have made 12 Top 50 appearances and are well ahead of the third-placed WRC exponent, double champion Marcus Gronholm in 25th.

But ahead of these rallying stars is

six-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon. The Kiwi has long been regarded as one of the best drivers outside of F1 and is fourth in the list. Although his peak of fifth in the 2013 Top 50 isn't as high as Loeb (first), Ogier (second in 2013) or Gronholm (second in 2002), his long career at the top of American single-seaters means he has 15 appearances. His longevity has been remarkable and it's possible he could yet overtake Vettel for third in the list.

Dixon's rapid but often unfortunate rival Will Power is 16th, just behind Valtteri Bottas, while four-time champion and three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Dario Franchitti completes the IndyCar top three in 27th.

The other big arm of American motorsport also appears in the leading places. Seven-time NASCAR Cup champion Jimmie Johnson – who rose as high as third in 2009, 2010 and 2013 – is 11th, well clear of old rival Kevin Harvick in 33rd.

Sportscar racing traditionally has its peaks and troughs, with the Porsche vs Audi vs Toyota LMP1 era of the last decade putting some drivers into the high placings. André Lotterer was sixth in 2013 and seventh the following year (both boosted by race-winning Super Formula campaigns), and Le Mans winner Nick Tandy was eighth in 2015. But in weaker years the leading endurance drivers have naturally fallen back.

Sébastien Buemi is the top WEC driver on the two-decade list, in 19th. He never made it into the Top 50 during his F1 career but





Paffett is the leading DTM driver in 39th overall



Buemi's WEC and FE efforts have earned good rankings



Muller's best score came in 2010 after his second WTCC crown

has been a constant presence since 2014. Normally his combined WEC/Formula E performances leapfrog him high up the list, though his dismal 2021 FE campaign actually dragged him back in last year's rankings.

Placing drivers from the various tin-top series, which are often esoteric even if competitive, can be tricky. But the main championships are represented.

The DTM has at times been home to some of the best drivers outside of F1 and double champion Gary Paffett's long and successful Mercedes career gets him into 39th on the list. That's just one place and 10 points ahead of outgoing Australian Supercars hero Jamie Whincup. The seven-time Supercars

champion is, in turn, one spot and three points ahead of triple DTM title-winner Rene Rast.

When it comes to the less-powerful touring cars, Yvan Muller is fittingly the top representative. The four-time World Touring Car champion is 43rd and is a driver who would surely be higher had Autosport's Top 50 started a few years earlier. The leading British Touring Car driver is Muller's old team-mate and rival Jason Plato in 125th.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

The names towards the bottom of the list tend to be up-and-coming single-seater racers, likely to score more points in future, or GT and tin-top exponents that have put in at least one

outstanding season in their chosen field.

GT aces Dries Vanthoor (twice), Christopher Mies (once) and Stephane Ortelli (once) have all made appearances, while Guanyu Zhou (50th in 2021 after finishing third in F2) currently props up the list but has the opportunity for more points with his graduation to F1.

Perhaps the most random entry towards the bottom, however, is 1992 F1 world champion Nigel Mansell. The 1993 CART champion and 31-time F1 race winner would have been a major factor in a 1980-90s version of the Top 50, but his only appearance in the actual list was 50th in 2005, thanks to his success in the short-lived Grand Prix Masters! ❧



Whincup tops the drivers from Australian Supercars



Great from another era: one point for Mansell



Cook on his way to a double success in the final round of the 2021 season at Brands Hatch

COOK GETTING THE RECIPE RIGHT

He's been creeping out from under the radar and nailed third place in the 2021 BTCC points with the BTC Racing Honda team. Are the ingredients there for title success?

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  **motorsport**
IMAGES

There's a Cook afoot in the British Touring Car Championship kitchen, rustling up a tasty title challenge for 2022. Amid the series' big-name winter moves, as things stand we can likely (albeit unconfirmed) expect Josh Cook in a BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R for a fourth successive season. Yet somehow, the tall West Country redhead doesn't register with tin-top followers in the same way as some of the other top names. That will surely change.

Perhaps it already is changing. He's a modest bloke, one who doesn't blow his own trumpet, yet his charge to third in the 2021 points — where he tied Ash Sutton for most wins with five — indicates that Cook is a force. From his first BTCC race win in April 2018, he's scored 13 victories, with only Sutton (17) and Colin Turkington (15) on more. Since his switch to the BTC Honda camp for 2019, he's stood atop the

podium 11 times; only Turkington (14) has a bigger tally, with Sutton level with Cook on 11. Ask him if he's averse to hogging the headlines, and he replies: "Being understated I don't mind too much. I still take comfort in the fact that every team-mate I've had in touring cars I've beaten them in the championship — Tom Chilton, Ash Sutton. Which gives me that confidence that I don't need to shout about myself."

Add in his busy life away from the track, and it's clear that Cook is multi-dimensional in ways that those who commit their whole lives to driving and racing can never be. He set up his Cooksport business — road car performance and tuning, and race-car preparation — in 2009, when he was only 18. It's now thriving. "I'm aware that racing drivers have shelf lives, and I'm 30 now, and there's going to be a point where I perhaps am not going to be in a position to be on my own, racing, doing my thing," he continues. "There might come a time when I



convert to pro-am racing, or GT racing, where I have to look after somebody else's interests, which is fine.

"Come that point I want to make sure that I've got something that I've built up, that gives me support in life financially. That's why I work very hard with other businesses that I'm involved in away from the race track, to make sure that come that time where I'm no longer able to be a professional race driver that I have a Plan B. I don't want to be at that point where I'm going round desperate for that day's work or that drive, selling your soul to desperately get something. And I think because I have that attitude, it allows me to be a little bit more relaxed in situations like looking for a touring car drive, that my life doesn't depend on that sole racing seat in that one season. Because I find it difficult living season to season."

Cook, therefore, perhaps doesn't need to be a BTCC driver as much as

"HE STOOD OUT IMMEDIATELY. NOT JUST RAW SPEED, I'VE NEVER COME ACROSS SOMEONE WHO WANTS IT SO MUCH"

some others, but you'd be making a massive misinterpretation to assume this means that he's not committed to it. Top driver coach Danny Buxton, whose SV Racing team ran Cook to the runner-up spot in the 2014 Renault Clio Cup, points out: "To me he just stood out immediately in many ways – not just raw speed, but Jeez, I've never come across someone who wants it so much, and a lot of people don't see that on the outside." Buxton has taken on an unpaid mentoring and coaching role with his protege ever since, and adds: "No stone unturned is our motto. He's so hungry. You come across so many drivers, and 90% don't want it enough to do enough off track. Being on track is the easy bit."

When Cook was a little kid standing by a hockey pitch, his dad certainly saw it... "I used to play hockey for Bath as a junior, and I'd recently been to a go-karting party," he laughs. "I must have been about seven. I really enjoyed it and I wanted to do some more karting, and I was at the side of a pitch, and I stood there crying, refusing to go on until my dad agreed to take me go-karting again. He eventually agreed, probably out of embarrassment, just to get me to stop crying!"

Cook moved through club-level karting and into Citroen Saxos >>



Friendship and mutual respect with Sutton began as MG team-mates in 2016...

for four years, first in the junior Saxmax series and then Stock Hatch. This is when Cooksport was born, and he claimed the 2010 Stock Hatch title. “I was in a position where while I’ve been very lucky with the opportunities I’ve had, I’m certainly not from a background where I could just throw money at racing,” he explains. “While I was racing in Stock Hatch I was running two other cars out of the garage at home to pay for my own racing. And while that was going on, I was also doing a degree in motorsport engineering at Bath University. That’s where Cooksport started from and why I was running cars at the beginning. It was a fun time actually.”

Those skills helped in 2011. Cook had been given an opportunity in Clios by Westbourne Motorsport late in the 2010 season, and looked very promising, but the funds weren’t there. Instead, he went into the little-remembered Production Touring Car Trophy with a Renault Megane: “It gave me a huge step up with my own engineering ability and my own understanding of how cars worked and how to build them. It was hugely important for me.”

Thanks to the faith of 20Ten Racing chief Simon Hunt (“I wouldn’t have got into it without him”), Cook finally made the full-time switch to Clios in 2012. The following season he went to JHR Developments, but it was in 2014 when his life changed: he was selected to join the Jason Plato-mentored KX Academy. First, it brought him into Buxton’s orbit at SV: “Danny has been incredibly important for me over the past few years. He helps with my own personal development and with touring car deals and teams.” Further, Cook met the unrelated Stephanie Cook, who was working for Plato’s Brand Pilot business, and they have been an item ever since: “She does all the running of Cooksport day to day, keeps me all together and in the right place at the right time.” And her dad just happens to be respected engineer Mick Cook, best known for his work with Madgwick Motorsport in 1980s Formula 3 and Super Nova in 1990s/2000s Formula 3000/GP2.



Too many Cooks? Far from it! Josh with engineer Mick after Thruxton win



...and race winner Cook was one of the first to congratulate Sutton when he won 2021 crown

“SAXMAX, STOCK HATCH TAUGHT ME A HUGE AMOUNT – LOOKING BACK, MORE THAN I REALISED AT THE TIME”

Josh persuaded Mick to look after his BTCC graduation in a Power Maxed Racing Chevrolet Cruze in 2015, and they’ve stayed together throughout – apart from 2019 and 2020, when they were jointly part of BTC but intra-team obligations meant Josh had ex-GT racer Steve Brady on laptop duties. “Having Mick with me has been great,” enthuses Cook. “He knows how much I know about the car – he knows how much to tell me, he knows how much not to tell me. Because he knows I’m very mechanically minded, that relationship is super-important.”

That’s been key to the progress made with BTC. “While the team is vast and it’s got a good image, we’re still a developing team,” Cook asserts. “It is absolutely not easy to rock up and be perfect every weekend, which is what you need. There can’t be a weekend where you’re not 100% on form. 2019 [when Cook was fourth in the points] was a bit of a whirlwind for us because there were times where we didn’t have the outright pace, but we played the touring car game, we struggled with the weight in race one, and I was on the podium by race three.

“2020 was a really bad year for us. We struggled a little bit. The option tyres, which were where we really thrived, were removed [amid COVID logistical measures]. We had a lot of bad luck, a lot of distraction within the team [BTC founder Bert Taylor’s disagreements with owner Steve Dudman led to Taylor’s departure]. While I had a great time with Steve Brady as my race engineer, and we did some incredible things together as a team, what I perhaps lacked a little bit was that finer-finesse relationship that I have with Mick. That’s not to say that Steve’s any worse an engineer – I worked well with Steve but I work especially well with Mick. Having that back has allowed me to relax a little bit more in 2021.”

It allowed Cook to show his exquisite skills. Counterintuitively for a front-wheel-drive tin-top, the way he positions the car on entry to high-speed corners produces a beautiful, floating technique without scrubbing off speed – reminiscent of an old-school ‘proper’ F3 car being driven on the limit. Put this to Buxton, who in his current role as head of customer racing at McLaren employs Cook as part of his coaching staff, plus ‘hot laps’ programmes at grand prix events, and he enthuses: “100%! I take him on some of the ice-driving programmes that McLaren do, and that helps a lot in terms of understanding car control. He’s always been good in fast stuff, and there’s no time lost in the car going sideways. It’s his reading of the car balance – he’s just a joy to watch. On commitment circuits the car dances.”



Breakthrough BTCC win came in Power Maxed Vauxhall in 2018

Ask Cook about the genesis of this, and he responds: “I think it was probably underpowered front-wheel-drive cars to be honest. Saxmax, Stock Hatch taught me a *huge* amount – looking back, more than I realised at the time. I’m a huge fan of making sure the car is a little bit moving, you’re getting to where you’re not going to a point of having to give opposite lock to correct the car. I like to move the car on the pedals, and I like to balance it to make sure that I get to absolutely worst case a neutral steering, and set the car up with the geometry to allow it to do the rest, to make it so when you’re coming off the corner it’s still turning, but released – if that makes sense.”

It explains why he’s so mighty at Thruxton (seven of his BTCC wins have come here) and Brands GP (utterly dominant at the end of the 2021 season): “I’m not fazed by going in too quickly or being overcommitted. Church [at Thruxton] for instance – I don’t brake at all, and a lot of other people do have a little brush of the brake to settle it down. I’ve just found what works for me, and OK, it might sometimes be a little bit terrifying, but I’m not fazed by going off or running wide, or going in 10km/h quicker if I can make it stick. I don’t know where that comes from – it’s probably stupidity!”

Cook is the complete package, and that’s been clear to three-time champion Sutton since his rookie BTCC season in 2016, when they lined up together in the Triple Eight MG squad. “His knowledge on cars is fantastic, he’s great with set-ups, so I got quite a lot of information fed to me in that first year,” says Sutton of Cook, who was in his second BTCC campaign. “And I pretty much just acted as a sponge. We just bounced off each other so well. He’s a fantastic driver and we still go door to door now. He shows a lot of respect to drivers, he’s not one to take you out – that’s what I like about racing with Josh.”

But while Sutton’s BTCC path has been smoothed by his manager Warren Scott, Cook has had no such luxury. His rookie BTCC PMR Chevy year in 2015 “was a very difficult year for us financially to make work, very difficult to break into the touring car paddock”. He ran out of funds mid-season in 2017 with the Maximum Motorsport Ford Focus, before Triple Eight put him back in the MG for the rest of the year: “At that point I’d almost accepted that I wasn’t going to be able to carry on and that might have been the end. To then get called straight into the MG was really the saviour of me.” PMR gave him another chance in 2018, and Cook’s form in its Vauxhall Astra allowed him to show the promise that led to Dudman and BTC taking a punt on him the following year.



Teenaged team boss/driver Cook won 2010 Stock Hatch crown

And in 2021 came that breakout season. While Cook had the starter course nailed with two wins straight off the bat at the Thruxton opener, and the dessert was a treat with two victories at the Brands GP finale, some of the main courses were spoiled.

“We had that failure at Knockhill,” he muses of his first-lap retirement when the Honda coasted to a halt, which BTC described as a fuel system problem. Then there was Silverstone: excluded from second position because a kerb strike led to a wishbone failure and the car failed the rideheight test.

“Nobody could foresee that,” states Cook. “There were a lot of cars that had wishbones fail in that race but they only check the top three. We had other ones broken within the team, and other ones broken up and down the pitlane in that same race. I’ve been put into BTC Racing by Steve Dudman and my career was saved – without him I probably wouldn’t be on the grid or in the position I’m in. He’s been incredible to me. It’s absolutely true that you win and lose as a team, and a couple of mistakes cost us perhaps the championship win. Ultimately we have to look back and look at all the things that we did really well, and look at what we can do better if we can continue together.”

And then, no doubt, there will be plenty of compliments to the Cook being forwarded to that kitchen. ❧

FASTEST LAPS OF 2021

*From Formula 1 via old LMP1s to tin-tops
and bike-engined sportscars. Here are
the fastest laps set in car races on
each circuit in the British Isles*

COMPILED BY MARCUS SIMMONS

WALKER



TRACK, DRIVER AND CAR	TIME	SPEED	DATE
ANGLESEY INTERNATIONAL John Cutmore (Spire-Suzuki RB7)	1m29.358s	84.60mph	26 September
ANGLESEY COASTAL Ryan Yarrow (Spire-Honda GT3S)	1m10.77s	78.85mph	21 August
BRANDS HATCH GRAND PRIX Zak O'Sullivan (Tatuus-Mountune BF3-020)	1m20.808s	108.40mph	23 May
BRANDS HATCH INDY Stefano Leaney (Dallara-HWAF317)	42.981s	101.17mph	22 August
CADWELL PARK Michael Gibbins (MCR-Ford/Duratec S2)	1m26.567s	90.94mph	11 July
CASTLE COMBE Stefano Leaney (Dallara-HWAF317)	58.596s	113.66mph	12 June
CROFT Scott Mittell (Mittell-Suzuki MC41RR)	1m17.66s	97.35mph	30 May
DONINGTON PARK GRAND PRIX Stefano Leaney (Dallara-HWAF317)	1m23.070s	107.79mph	18 September
DONINGTON PARK NATIONAL Shaun Lynn (BRE-AERBR01)	1m01.226s	116.36mph	3 April
GOODWOOD Andre Lotterer (Ford GT40)	1m20.853s	106.86mph	17 October
KIRKISTOWN Paul O'Connell (Dallara-Renault GP2/05)	51.726s	105.228mph	28 August
KNOCKHILL Lorcan Hanafin (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	48.699s	93.65mph	15 August
KNOCKHILL ANTI-CLOCKWISE Ron Cumming (Nemesis-Vauxhall Kit Car)	51.065s	89.314mph	18 September
LONDON EXCEL Robin Frijns (Audi e-tron FE07)	1m21.635s	61.708mph	25 July
LYDDEN HILL Ray Harris (Ginetta-Vauxhall G40r)	43.530s	82.70mph	24 April





OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL

TRACK, DRIVER AND CAR	TIME	SPEED	DATE
MALLORY PARK Mark Charteris (Mallock U2-Ford Mk20/21)	45.072s	107.82mph	19 September
MALLORY PARK OVAL Reece Jones (SHP Pickup-Vauxhall)	35.224s	102.20mph	1 May
MONDELLO PARK INTERNATIONAL Paul O'Connell (Dallara-Renault GP2/05)	1m34.444s	82.970mph	12 September
MONDELLO PARK NATIONAL Sylvie Mullins (Gould-Judd GR37)	50.231s	82.386mph	3 October
OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL Stefano Leaney (Dallara-HWAF317)	1m29.679s	108.06mph	24 July
OULTON PARK ISLAND Lorcan Hanafin (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)	1m22.475s	97.16mph	31 July
PEMBREY CLUBMANS Keith Butcher (Audi R8 LMS)	1m06.270s	80.94mph	10 October
PEMBREY NATIONAL Chris Everill (Ginetta-Ford G55 GT4)	1m00.373s	86.82mph	12 September
SILVERSTONE GRAND PRIX Sergio Perez (Red Bull-Honda RB16B)	1m28.617s	148.704mph	18 July
SILVERSTONE HISTORIC GRAND PRIX Rob Wheldon (Lola-Mazda B12/60)	1m45.227s	124.50mph	1 August
SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL Jamie Stanley (Lamborghini Huracan GT3)	1m00.485s	110.16mph	24 April
SILVERSTONE NATIONAL Stefano Leaney (Dallara-HWAF317)	50.270s	117.47mph	16 May
SNETTERTON 300 Stefano Leaney (Dallara-HWAF317)	1m42.769s	104.00mph	25 September
SNETTERTON 200 Kevin Bird (BMW M3)	1m19.468s	89.87mph	26 June
THRUXTON Joel Granfors (Mygale-Ford/EcoBoost M14-F4)	1m13.751s	115.00mph	29 August



MONDELLO PARK INTERNATIONAL

CHESTER



SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL

JONES



THRUXTON

JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

SEASON
REVIEW

DID EXTREME E WORK?

A brand new motorsport series with a disruptive credo will inevitably suffer teething problems, but the electric off-road series put on a spectacular show

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

LOPEZ

It's the same question we posed after the debut season of Formula E — Alejandro Agag's other famous motorsport creation. The short answer, then as now, is largely positive. Unlike its effective sister series, Extreme E hasn't inspired and overcome an almost immediate financial breaking point (yet) and there's been no investor coup. They share the merit of a brilliant driver rollcall, and both created sound racing in spectacular locations. However, no one is singing the praises of the machinery this time around and manufacturers aren't expected to queue up to take part.

The world has moved on in the seven years since Formula E was launched. Electric racing has become far less countercultural. While Extreme E and its chunky Odyssey 21 tap successfully into the automotive zeitgeist and the contradiction that is eco-friendly SUVs, that alone is not enough of a reason to exist. Here, also in its corner, this championship strives for gender equality with its female-male driver pairings. It also has a genuine desire to draw more attention to the climate crisis than anything this side of a documentary narrated by David Attenborough.

These founding principles were decent, but Extreme E launched into the ultimate headwind thanks to the pandemic. Prospective squads looked for the break clauses in their contracts and hasty replacements had to be sourced to retain a nine-team grid. Tests to troubleshoot the car were canned and the calendar took a beating

An exceptional driver ensemble was enlisted



SBLOXHAM

before the incentives of a launch in oil-rich Saudi Arabia locked it in to an early April slot. As that date rolled around, Extreme E's parallels to Formula E were reaffirmed. It became clear there was going to be a fair amount of learning on the job. Ringing people for a steer on what an actual event might look like returned the answer 'Your guess is as good as mine'. Few, team bosses and drivers included, had a solid clue.

That was exacerbated by the desert dust in AlUla, which forced changes to the format before a wheel had whirled in anger. Single-



“EXTREME E TAPS INTO THE ZEITGEIST AND CONTRADICTION THAT IS ECO-FRIENDLY SUVs”

entry qualifying sprints were brought in to replace multi-car packs racing their way through the blind clouds. The finale was scaled back to three cars and high temperatures meant batteries were kept on a tight leash. Aside from the four-second hyperdrive activation, the nine Odyssey 21s got nowhere near their promised 400kW. They were running at barely half that power for the duration of the season. Where the lines are slightly blurred, though, is in the brief battery provider Williams Advanced Engineering was first given. Autosport understands the specification was made clear, a car was built, but then the championship's push to be 'extreme' moved the goalposts beyond what the machinery and its water-cooling was capable of.

While the power was indeed reigned in, this preventative measure at least stopped the battery from giving up the ghost after a troubled Saudi free practice initiation. The same can't be written for the rest of the car. Limited development from off-road novice Spark Racing Technology, which used budget components that cried mercy all too easily, proved to be a persistent, avoidable, and major frustration.

Snapped toe links and power steering failures were the repeat >>

HOW 'GREEN' IS THE ECO SERIES?



St Helena hosts lectures, has an onboard lab and freights the series' cargo

Extreme E isn't short of commercial partners and TV rights deals with major broadcasters. It's no coincidence that in every press release announcing such a tie up, brands are keen to highlight how this new relationship shows their environmental conscience. But what are they tapping into? For a series that says it exists to serve a wider purpose, how successful has the climate crisis-targeting modus operandi been?

Pleasingly, the paddock is small. While camera angles avoid capturing car parks and catering tents, the set-up is less than an average UK national meeting. Of course, there are champagne-sipping hospitality goers, but if they open their cheque books in return then that's no bad thing. What's good is that the size of the prawn sandwich brigade didn't dramatically shoot up tenfold for the European rounds. It seems Extreme E wants a small footprint, rather than having been logistically limited to one.

It's also to Extreme E's credit that it was present and active at COP26 in November and, despite COVID cancelling rounds in Brazil and Argentina, the local environment-benefiting Legacy Programmes have gone ahead in the Amazon regardless. It's not just a case of looking good while the camera is on.

Those altered dates meant Saudi Arabia and the UK came to start and end the calendar. Hardly economies that need a helping hand to fund climate action. But Extreme E's argument has been that it exists to "highlight the impacts" of the damage rather than to ignite change. A Saudi race date goes a long way to paying for a full season. But the reasoning that 'we don't mix sports and politics' has never been a satisfying reply from ex-MEP Alejandro Agag as to why he races there.

Extreme E scientist Richard Washington is more certain. He says: "We can say to Saudi, 'You can keep all that money we should have taxed and didn't', or we can work together and use that resource to move things forward. They have the resource, and that needs to be ploughed back."

Of course, the greenest motorsport is one that doesn't exist at all, let alone use the RMS St Helena to ship cars between hemispheres to be met by a few hundred people who have flown there. But by racing in landscapes already damaged, we're meant to feel better about the sandy ruts left behind by Extreme E and the trees and bushes that have been clipped.

It seems viewers and the more vocal social media users are far from sold on Extreme E's environmental credentials. But if the past 18 months teaches us anything, it's that we should listen to those who are experts in their field. Apply that to Extreme E and the Oxbridge professors on the scientific committee were quick to sign up when the concept was explained to them, more have come onboard during the year, and they all validate the good work that the series is doing. So perhaps their assessments are the best ones.

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Soft Dorset mud eased
the strain on the
bucking machinery...

offenders. Meanwhile, the unwieldy rear suspension was called out by Dakar Rally and trophy truck specialists as well as 2009 Formula 1 champion Jenson Button, who would soon vacate the JBXE cockpit after his unease during that Saudi opener. The issue was a tendency for the back axle to flick into the air with barely a moment's notice to force a driver to save a bad landing and prevent a rollover. This was ostensibly due to limited suspension travel and value dampers.

The crop of World Rally, Rallycross and cross-country champions grew increasingly miffed at the mass unreliability through Greenland and Sardinia as they felt their vast experience and input was being brushed aside. Abt Cupra's Mattias Ekstrom said: "Car development is a crucial part of your daily business. What we do now after having given feedback, how slow we are seeing development, that's the reason the racing is how it is. That's a shame. It's not finding the money or the time, it's just attitude. [Spark are] missing the right attitude. To make a change, someone must really want to do it."

The defence from the car constructor was robust. COVID cancelling tests to slash the pre-season troubleshooting from an ideal 400 miles down to 200 was one justification. The constraints of shipping cars aboard the RMS St Helena that then denied time for a full strip of the Odyssey 21 back at the French factory was another.

When development engineer Pierre Prunin did front a reply from Spark, he said: "We did this car with a limited budget; it's not like we're Audi or Peugeot. The drivers have huge expectations; they have driven the best cars in the world. Things need to be put in perspective. The drivers break the same parts and none of them tried to slow down. Truth is a slow driver would have been on the podium."



...after Greenland (pictured)
and Sardinia proved to
be the real car killers



“THE UNRELIABILITY, WHICH WAS OUR MAIN CHALLENGE, HAS NOW DISAPPEARED”

A post-event test at the penultimate round in Sardinia did offer respite. Larger spherical joints, upgraded toe links and beefier steering racks were signed off ahead of the climax in Dorset. These modifications, combined with the softer landings provided by the Bovington tank proving ground's clay floor, meant the fleet survived their muddy ordeal. Agag's final assessment was this: "I know how difficult it is. Of course, it's sometimes very easy to criticise and probably we didn't expect the amount of impact these cars were going to go through. But every time [Spark] have put their head down and continued trying to fix problems. We've seen the unreliability, which was our main challenge, has disappeared. We've used the season to test and now our reliability is OK."

The other major shortcoming for Extreme E as it made its debut was the unrelenting tweaks to the event format. While the switch to one-car qualifying runs worked by giving the weekend a sense of progression (if a car looked good on its own on Saturday, a bumper grid on Sunday came hotly anticipated). But in addition to the overhaul from Saudi, a points-paying super sector was introduced, finals went up to four and later five cars. Then in Dorset, the driver starting order was clumsily mandated for each heat. This move, wanted by the teams, deprived the series of its open competition in which males and females could race against one another as equals. For the UK, it was boys versus boys, girls against girls.

As for 2022, four-car grids for the semi-finals will come into play to ensure that if one team crashes or has a problem then there's still a fight for the top two places to progress into the finale. But a blueprint needs to be established. One, to prevent viewer fatigue and frustration. Two, to ensure a meritocratic title fight. This year, it was only marginal that Rosberg X Racing – the team to win three of the five events – still walked away with the crown over the Prodrive-run X44 squad that only tasted victory once.

Temperamental cars and a fluctuating format considered, and even the pandemic accounted for, Extreme E otherwise enjoyed a roaring success of an inaugural season. A launch in Saudi, while >> >>

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ALL MAJOR SERIES**



UNFAVoured BUT UNDERACHIEVING

In this disruptive series, should Chip Ganassi Racing have been the disruptive team? The names of driver pairing Sara Price and Kyle Leduc didn't carry much weight on an entry sheet that featured Sebastien Loeb and Johan Kristoffersson. But the American outfit lays a claim to being the lost champion.

Of the 19 waypoints marking the Senegal course, Leduc was fastest through 13 of them. He and Price were second only to qualifying topper X44 on the Dakar beach in Q1, third in Q1 in Greenland, second again behind X44 in Q2 in Sardinia. And they were nailed on for victory on the Italian island with a 45s lead in the final until a toe link failed. And that was the tone of CGR's campaign: blinding pace, woeful reliability and the occasional massive shunt for Leduc, who deployed a win or bust mentality.

Team boss Dave Berkenfield doesn't look for excuses. He says: "The challenge is you make your own luck, so you can't really put the blame on anyone but the team. A brand-new car for the first season, there's a level of expectation that it might not always be smooth and that's what you have to deal with."

While he says nothing is "locked in" for 2022 with regards to the driver line-up, Berkenfield does concede that if both Leduc and Price are to stay put then there must be a change of approach to prove CGR is an equal to the series' heavy hitters.

He continues: "Obviously, we've seen lots of little moments of really good stuff from Kyle and Sarah. The pace is there. I'm less worried about that. I'm more worried about consistency and driving smart. For our team right now, it's defining the racecraft, getting the car to the finish and bringing Kyle and Sarah into that mindset."

Should the machinery have been more up to the task, and had Leduc found a middle ground between seeking out the trees or a trophy, then the crew would have been a serious title contender. Nevermind finishing eighth of the nine teams and with less than half the points of Rosberg X Racing and X44.



LOPEZ



Andretti United won in gorgeous Greenland

MAUGER

"WE ONLY GOT THE PERMITS TO ENTER THE DAY BEFORE THE RACE. WE WERE BEGGING TO BE LET IN"

not particularly well justified by the championship's top brass, provided one of the most breathtaking backgrounds ever seen in motorsport. While the dust detracted from the racing, a move to Neom for 2022 will bypass that complaint. The Senegalese could not have been more hospitable, and the beachfront course gave way to the first 'Hamilton versus Rosberg' wheel-to-wheel contact of the campaign. Greenland blended an ethereal glacial setting with a course that was a smash hit with drivers. That said, Agag rates his mid-season host venue as the most difficult of the lot. "We only got the permits to travel to Greenland and enter the day before the race. We were begging to be allowed in."

Sardinia provided the unreliability flashpoint needed to inspire action from Spark and it showed the value of retaining a European adventure that media and partners could easily attend. Dorset did the job of filling in for an Argentinian round binned off by travel restrictions. That British title decider remains tough to assess. RXR and X44 tied on 155 points as the media lapped up the epilogue to the Rosberg-Hamilton rivalry. But the year-long narrative was a tale of how Molly Taylor and Johan Kristoffersson (who relied on countback to win a crown) dominated event after event, only for that to be lost by the fiddling to the points system.

Taylor, the 2016 Australian rally champion, who Rosberg approached via the 'Drop Me a Note' page on her website, and her

ROUND BY ROUND

AlUla, Saudi Arabia

- 1 Rosberg X Racing
- 2 Andretti United
- 3 X44

The desert dust creates a visibility problem to already force format changes for XE's grand debut. It's X44 that comes out on top in the new single-car qualifying runs. But RXR storms through to the inaugural win thanks to Kristoffersson's blind passes into the first corner. Agag has his proof of concept once again.

Dakar, Senegal

- 1 Rosberg X Racing
- 2 Veloce Racing
- 3 JBXE

Kleinschmidt massively impresses as she's drafted in to replace a very ill Claudia Hürtgen at Abt Cupra. Third in the combined qualifying times puts her and Ekström behind RXR and X44 only. An early tag for the pair in the finale eliminates Hamilton's car to leave RXR with a second victory in an many rounds.

Kangerlussuaq, Greenland

- 1 Andretti United
- 2 JBXE
- 3 Acciona Sainz

On what would become the favoured course by most drivers, X44 yet again sets the pace in qualifying before Loeb impresses by passing through supposedly single-file tracks. Car unreliability hands him a puncture and RXR hits trouble too, allowing Andretti United to win and prevent a Kristoffersson and Taylor whitewash.

Sardinia, Italy

- 1 Rosberg X Racing
- 2 Abt Cupra
- 3 JBXE

It's four from four for X44 as Hamilton's crew is quickest in the combined qualifying times. But Chip Ganassi is odds on for the win as Leduc carves out a 45s cushion in the finale. Then a substandard toe link snaps to send Agag into a fit of fury. RXR again picks up the pieces while attention turns to the cars.



Swedish team-mate (signed via a direct message on Instagram) used the might of their rehomed Team Rosberg DTM engineers to largely navigate the reliability woes that constricted their rivals. They were devastatingly fast and ruthlessly measured, and were the deserving champions – although the inconvenient truth is that in this most convivial of paddocks, inter-team rivalries were barely perceptible.

Kristoffersson and Taylor grabbed the first slice of history by winning the maiden event; a second triumph in Senegal looked ominous. Fortunately, Andretti United’s popular duo of Catie Munnings and Timmy Hansen broke the run of form in Greenland as reliability woes hit RXR. Then it stuck one hand on the recycled plastic trophy with its inherited Sardinian success after Chip Ganassi’s car broke and denied an almost certain win. Fourth place in the UK was the minimum required to take the spoils.

“It was already before the win in Saudi that the goal was to win the championship,” Kristoffersson says. “It was pretty clear from Nico that we joined to be able to win. This season, we’ve had so many technical issues and it’s not been up to the team every time either. But we performed well and preserved the car when we had to.”

A final word on Extreme E’s short-to-medium-term prospects. Plans to open elements of the powertrain to development have been pushed back to the fourth season at the earliest. That will help keep a lid on costs and seems wise, with the current question mark over

manufacturer interest. Cupra is committed, the Hummer-lookalike Chip Ganassi car is a styling exercise only and it is McLaren Racing – as opposed to the road car marque – joining next season. Building Extreme E to suit the privateers would be the smart money move following the recent troubles experienced by Formula E. But the off-roaders are already proving pricey, with Button’s JBXE scrabbling for funds to remain, while Hispano Suiza will need a generous partner as its current Xite Energy Racing bedfellow heads for the door.

With that, Extreme E feels like the star that will shine twice as bright but only live half as long. It’s already been disruptive in motorsport and spectacular. Yet there’s a whiff of A1 GP about the set-up in that it’s only a technical misstep or a reluctant investor away from its downfall. It doesn’t have the initial might of a series that can limp along on a needs must basis, like World RX, British and World Touring Cars and more have done in the recent past. Should that be the case, enjoy the ride while Extreme E is here. The machinery is on the way to restoring credibility and a pinch of salt resolves the contrived race format. But it’s the locations, TV footage, and the drivers – with Sebastien Loeb all but a certainty to remain next season – that are so deeply impressive. And as concluded in that first Formula E season review in the 9 July 2015 issue of Autosport, so too must Extreme E work to remain affordable for its teams and grow its audience after a decent debut album. 🎵

Dorset, UK

1 X44

2 JBXE

3 Andretti United

There’s no shock as X44 bags top spot in qualifying to keep its 100% record in this first season. But RXR is slow in the finale, which is far more unexpected. X44 finally wins its first event to tie at the top of the points with RXR, but three wins for Taylor and Kristoffersson secure them and Nico Rosberg the maiden title.

TEAMS’ CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	TEAM	DRIVERS	1	2	3	4	5	PTS
1	RosbergX Racing	Molly Taylor (AUS) Johan Kristoffersson (SWE)	1	1	5	1	4	155
2	X44	Cristina Gutierrez (ESP) Sebastien Loeb (FRA)	3	4	4	5	1	155
3	JBXE	Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky (SWE) Kevin Hansen (SWE)*	6	3	2	3	2	119
4	Andretti United	Catie Munnings (GBR) Timmy Hansen (SWE)	2	9	1	9	3	117
5	Abt Cupra	Jutta Kleinschmidt (DEU)* Mattias Ekstrom (SWE)	7	5	7	2	7	100
6	Acciona Sainz	Laia Sanz (ESP) Carlos Sainz Sr (ESP)	4	8	3	8	5	100
7	Veloce Racing	Jamie Chadwick (GBR)* Stephane Sarrazin (FRA)*	9	2	6	6	6	77
8	Chip Ganassi Racing	Sara Price (USA) Kyle Leduc (USA)	8	7	9	4	8	74
9	Xite Energy Racing	Christine Giampaoli Zonca (ITA) Oliver Bennett (GBR)	5	6	8	7	9	63

* driver completed majority of season amid changes in team line-up

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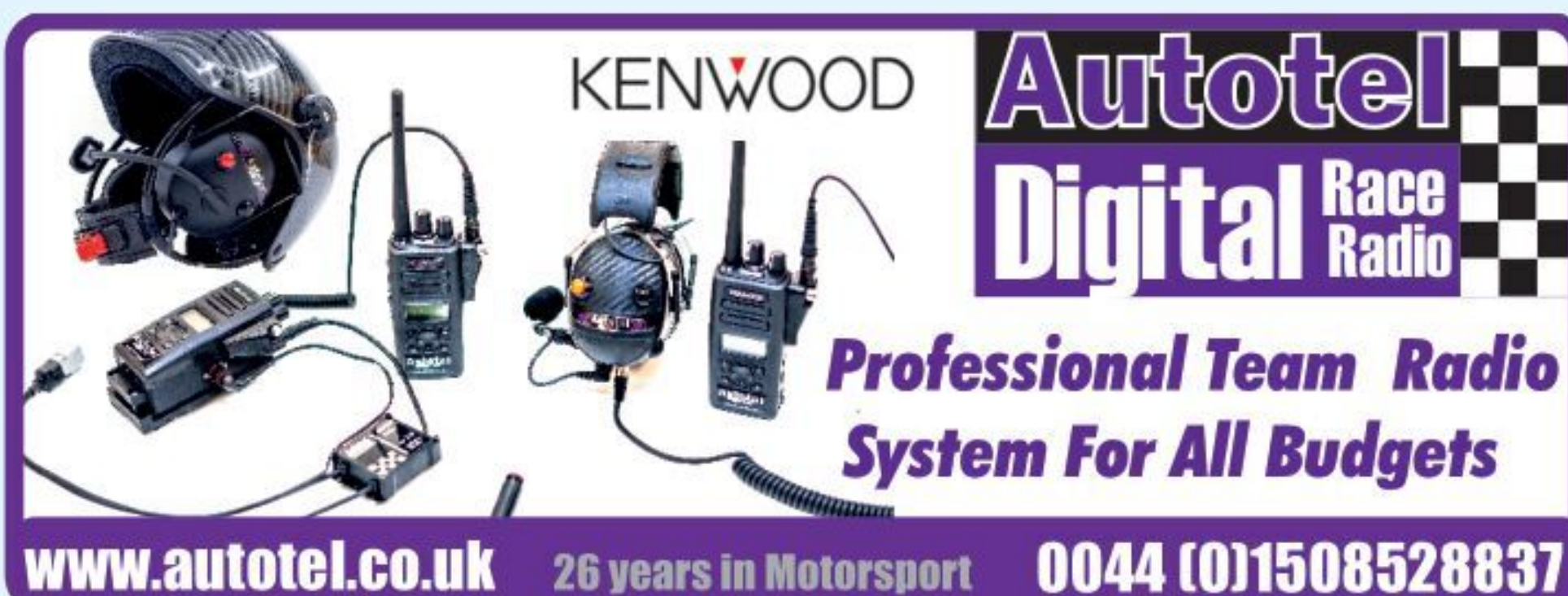
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JULY	3	LYDDEN HILL	RACE	JACK SEARS	ALLSTARS	ALFAS
JULY	16-17	SNETTERTON	RACE	JACK SEARS	ALLSTARS	ALFAS
JULY	30	OULTON PARK	RACE	JACK SEARS		
AUGUST	14	BRANDS HATCH	RACE			ALFAS
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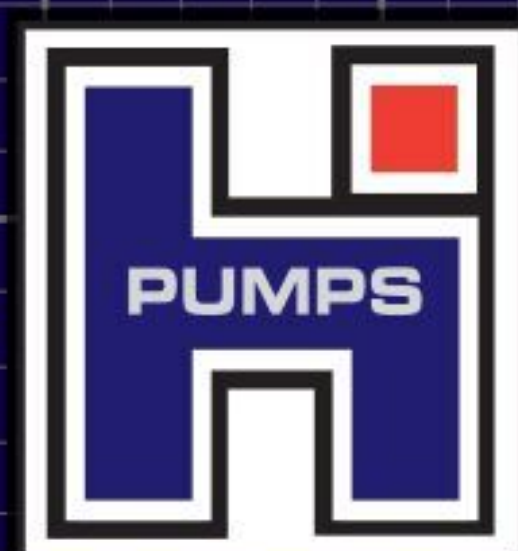
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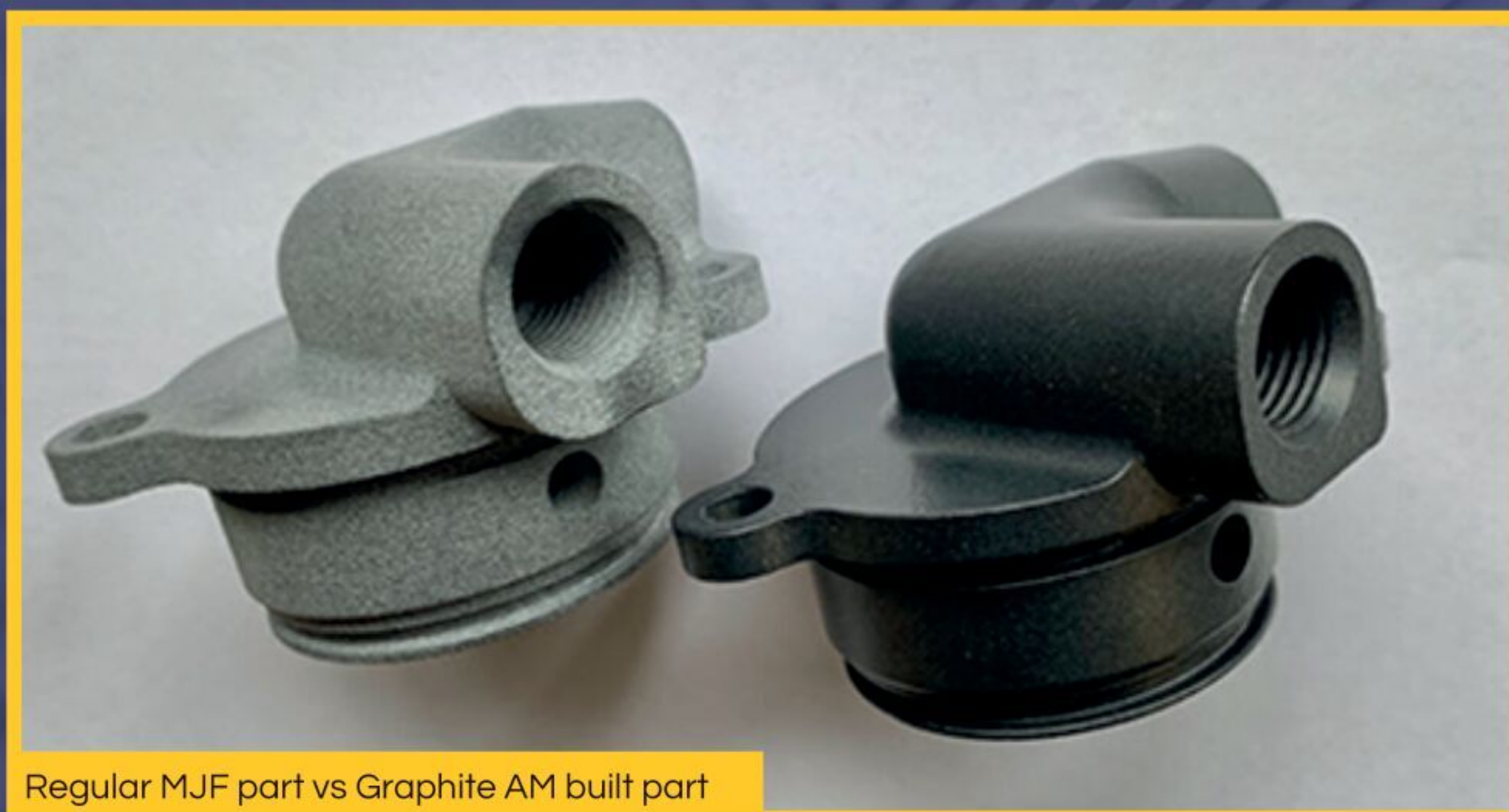


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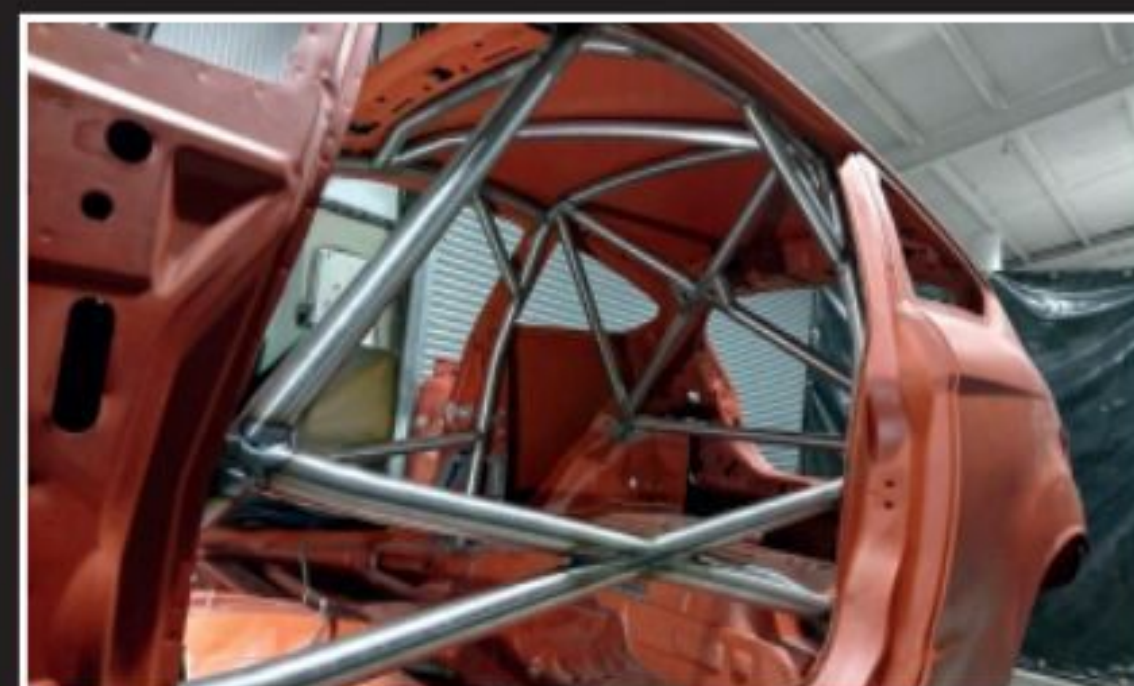


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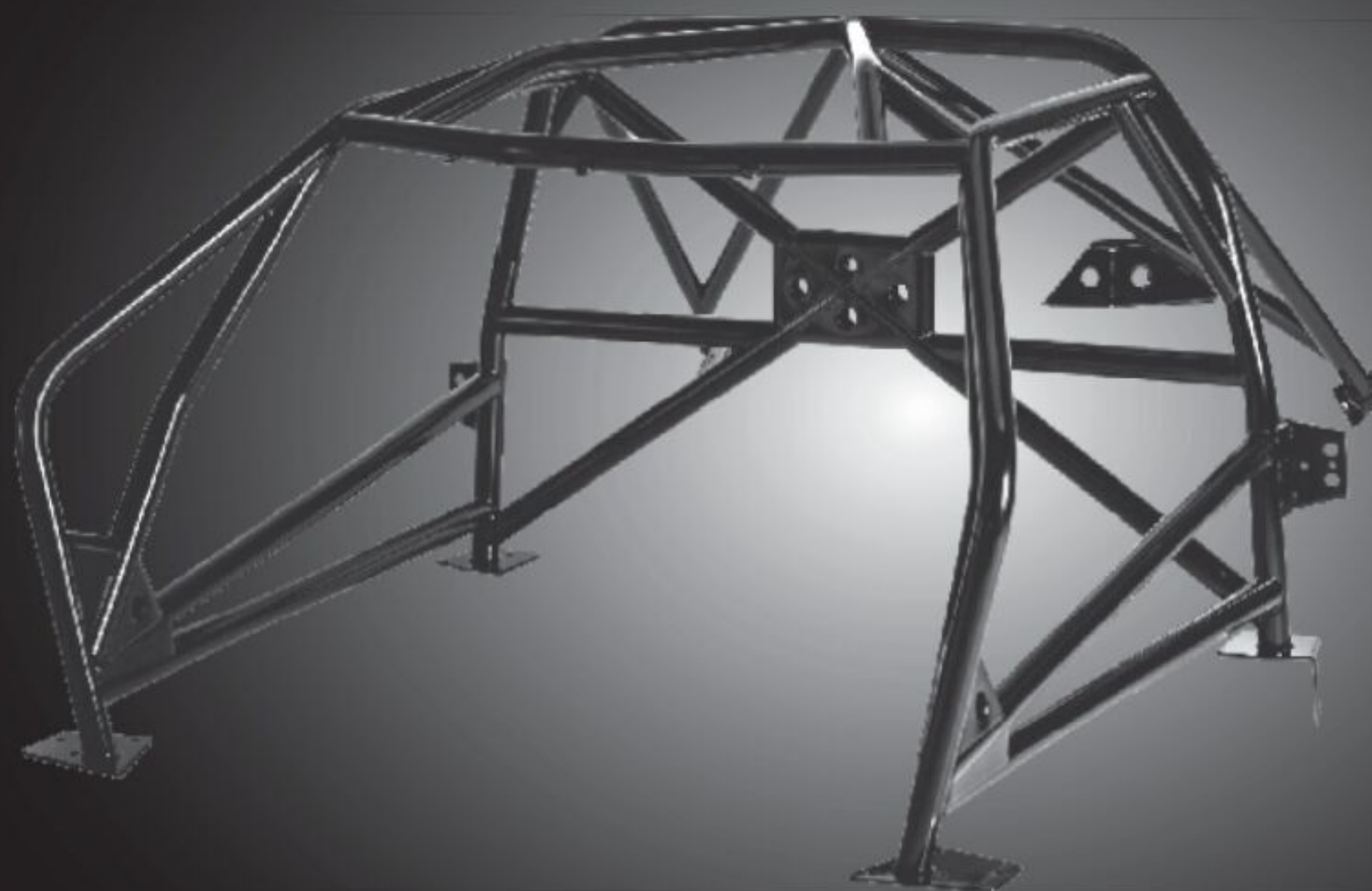
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MSVR EnduroKa gets 24-hour Anglesey race

AUTOSPORT NATIONAL

CLUB RACING • HISTORICS • FEATURES

The father-and-son pair reaching the top

How Richard and Sam Neary took the GT world by storm last year



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SECOND 24-HOUR ANGLESEY RACE

ENDUROKA

A second new 24-hour race will be held in the UK this year when the popular EnduroKa series visits Anglesey.

The event will be the first time in 10 years that MotorsportVision Racing has run a meeting at the North Wales venue, and is due to be held on 2-3 June (bank holiday Thursday and Friday to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee).

The EnduroKa series was created in 2019 as a cost-effective means of going racing. Up until now, the longest race has been a 12-hour contest at Snetterton, but the long-term plan centred on a 24-hour race.

"It has always been our ambition to introduce a 24-hour race, but our priority first and foremost has always been to ensure that we're offering competitors an excellent, cost-effective package with which to go endurance racing on UK circuits," said EnduroKa coordinator Stuart Garland.

"I believe we've done that, and that's been reflected with strong grids at all of our events, despite the ongoing global challenges. We're now in a position where we know EnduroKa can support a 24-hour event and this is the right time to introduce this event to the calendar."

Despite the unusual date of the event, taking place across a Thursday and Friday,

as well as the location of the Anglesey Circuit, Garland is confident that grid numbers will be strong.

"We're hopeful we can attract a near capacity, if not a full sell-out grid, for our first 24-hour race," he added. "This is not only our first foray into twice-around-the-clock motorsport, but also a first opportunity for those racing with us to compete at Anglesey and I'm certain that there will be a huge amount of interest."

The EnduroKa event is one of two 24-hour races set to be held at Anglesey in 2022, with a contest for under two-litre cars scheduled for 23-25 September.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Broadbent to continue racing Praga in 2022

PRAGA

Sim racing YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent will continue to race a real-life Praga this year, having made his competition debut last season.

Broadbent was part of Praga's guest driver programme and spent much of the Britcar Endurance campaign sharing an R1 with 2020 champion

Jem Hepworth. He then took his first two wins alongside former Ginetta GT5 Challenge frontrunner Gordie Mutch in the Donington Park finale.

Broadbent will again race a factory-run R1 in 2022 as the Czech sportscar manufacturer operates a standalone Praga Cup series for the first time with his team-mate for the season yet to be confirmed.



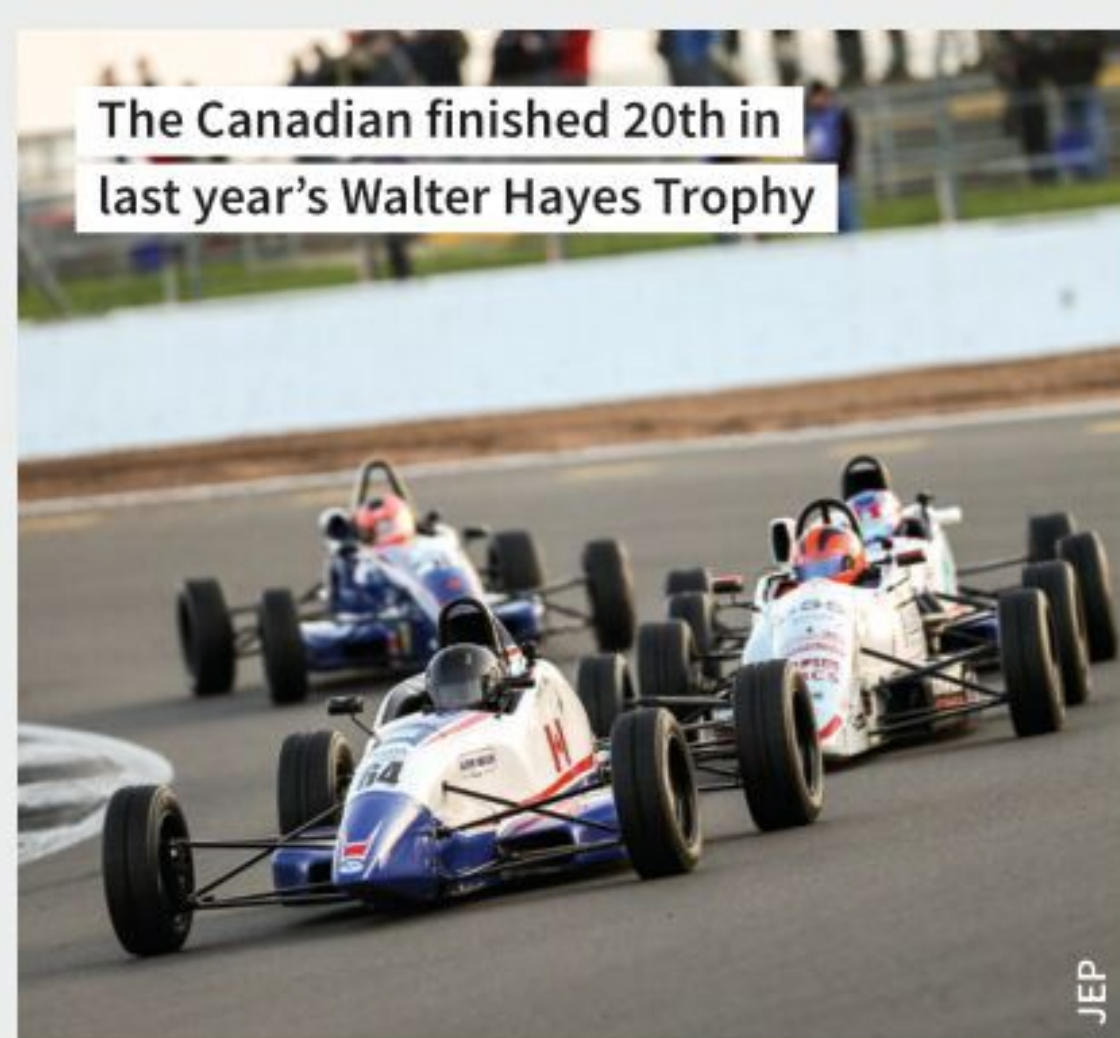
"I'm really excited to be continuing with Praga," he said. "I finished this season with two wins at Donington just as I was hitting my

stride, so I can't wait to be back in the R1 to build on everything I learned and keep improving to bring home more silverware."



NEW GB3 CAR BREAKS COVER The first images of the new-for-2022 GB3 Championship car have been released. The Tatuus MSV-022 was unveiled at Bedford Autodrome just before Christmas and will be used in the MotorSport Vision-run category this year. It features a halo head protection device, as well as further safety improvements compared with its predecessor. On the performance side, the car is set to produce 25% more downforce than last year's machine, while the Mountune-prepared two-litre, four-cylinder normally aspirated engine now produces 250bhp. Teams are expected to get hold of the new chassis this week. **Photograph by Lee Marshall**

Gilkes signs with Hillspeed for GB3 campaign



GB3

Hillspeed has signed Nick Gilkes as its first driver for the 2022 GB3 Championship campaign.

The 16-year-old younger brother of W Series driver Megan Gilkes won the Canadian F1600 title in 2021 and also competed in the end-of-season Formula

Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy fixtures with Kevin Mills Racing – his best result of 20th coming in the latter event.

Gilkes tested one of Hillspeed's older spec GB3 cars at Silverstone during a two-day outing in early November, having never raced slicks and wings before.

"I can't wait to get

started in February with a test programme," he said.

"In the meantime, I will be building my fitness levels, running a couple of races in the US, and doing a lot of sim work to ensure I can repay the faith Richard and Morgan [Ollerenshaw] at Hillspeed, and my sponsors, have shown in me."

STEFAN MACKLEY

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Guinchard is staying with Argenti squad as he graduates to cars



Double karting champion to step up to single-seaters in F4

BRITISH F4

Double British Karting champion Daniel Guinchard has become the latest driver announced for British Formula 4 this year.

He secured both the Junior X30 and Junior Rotax titles last season with Argenti Motorsport and will continue with the team as he steps up to single-seaters. Guinchard has already completed a number of test days in the old Mygale-Ford British F4 car ahead of the revamped category's switch to the second-generation Tatuus-Abarth machine for 2022.

"I'm really excited to start my next racing career move in cars," he said. "I know there is a lot for me to learn but I know I have the best people

guiding me through this experience.

"When I first joined the Argenti Motorsport kart team in December 2020, I had heard good things about them but could never have imagined we would achieve the results we have in the past 12 months in karting – they are extraordinary.

"The positive atmosphere at the team is what makes them stand out. Everyone is supportive of each other and we all work together to be the best we can be. I was really pleased to see these same values are replicated across to the F4 team."

Guinchard is the second driver announced as racing for Argenti in F4 this year, following confirmation that Aiden Neate will continue with the squad for a second season.

IN THE HEADLINES

RACING STAR UNDER WAY

Qualifying is under way for the first round of the Racing Star Esports initiative that offers two teenagers fully-funded drives in British Formula 4 in 2023. The brainchild of FIA Single-Seater Commission president Bob Fernley, 14-15-year-olds can now enter the Silverstone opener and the 20 fastest boys and girls by 2 February will get to compete in the first race. The top 16 male and female drivers after the five rounds will take part in the finals in May.

GINETTA TEAM EXPANDS

Race Car Consultants plans to run an expanded five-car operation in the Ginetta GT5 Challenge this year. Podium finishers Nat Hodgkiss, a former British Formula 4 racer, and 2020 Fiesta Junior runner-up Will Orton will continue with the team. Mazda MX-5 competitor Kian Donaldson will also make his debut, while the team intends to run two further drivers.

McRAE CELEBRATION CARS

The postponed McRae Rally Challenge, now due to run at Knockhill on 2-3 July this year, is set to feature more than 25 cars from Colin McRae's career on display to help celebrate the life of the 1995 World Rally champion. Crews with cars of note that are interested in competing in the 70km rally that forms part of the event can email enquiries@knockhill.co.uk.

BRUNDLE JAGUAR FILM

A special film has been produced that chronicles Alex Brundle's efforts racing a Jaguar E-type (below) during the iconic car's 60th anniversary year in 2021. Brundle contested races at the Donington Historic Festival and Brands Hatch Masters event before sharing the car with his father Martin at the Silverstone Classic. The video has been created by sponsor Adrian Flux and explores why Brundle Jr took on the challenge of racing the E-type.



Irish Go Girls karting event is success

KARTING

The delayed shootout for the Go Girls All Ireland Schools Karting competition was held last month and featured 24 students from the country.

The initiative was set up in 2019 and aimed to encourage more Irish girls to participate in motorsport and engage with STEM subjects. A series of qualifying experience days took place at various karting

centres in 2019 and 2020 but the coronavirus pandemic meant that the final had to be put on hold.

However, it was able to run in December at the Kiltorcan Kart Track in Kilkenny and the karters battled to win three prize test and experience days in a race-spec Tillotson T4 kart. The three winners were Eimear Curtin, Ava Archer and Rosie McMahon.

The late John Campion was

one of the supporters of the Go Girls Karting campaign, alongside Sport Ireland, and Amber Jordan won an award in his name for showing the most spirited performance on the day as she markedly improved her lap times throughout the event.

A panel discussion on women in motorsport also took place, which included Irish Formula 1 engineer Pippa Treacy.



New Year's resolutions for 2022

Two years ago, Autosport set some aims for national racing. Given how much has changed since then, it seemed the right time for five more

STEPHEN LICKORISH

New Year's resolutions. Yep, it's that time of year again when many are setting goals for the next 12 months — some of which inevitably fall by the wayside as the realities of life make them difficult to stick to. Two years ago, Autosport (9 January, 2020) set five resolutions for the world of club racing, and it is interesting to see whether they were achieved.

The pandemic helped with two of them as, since COVID-19 hit, there has been far greater collaboration between clubs and that's set to continue this year. And it helped solve the issue of organisers booking too much track time. The shortened 2020 campaign meant available dates were at such a premium that there was no wastage. The three-month hiatus between March and June 2020 also meant there was far greater enjoyment when racing did finally resume and there was a sense of nothing being taken for granted. It was just a shame it required a pandemic for some of these attitudes to change. Given how different the world was two years ago, it seems appropriate to set five fresh resolutions for 2022.

1 Improve standards

Autosport club reports were littered with instances of bad calls from race control during 2021. We appreciate that being a clerk of a course is a difficult task requiring split-second decisions. But the number of times a stricken car was recovered in a questionable way or a safety car failed to pick up the leader, completely skewing a pitstop race, was unacceptable. Perhaps more stringent monitoring of clerks (and stewards, too) is needed and additional training given where necessary. One of the 2020 resolutions was for motorsport to 'stop shooting itself in the foot' but, when the upper echelons of the sport featured such farcical scenes, maybe it is no surprise there are gripes in the grassroots. However, the problem of bad standards is far from exclusive to officials. Drivers must improve as well. One problem area was failing to slow for yellow flags, while there was a worrying number of exclusions for abuse — physical or verbal. This is unacceptable and needs to be stamped out.

2 Recruit more volunteers

During the early phases of the pandemic, it was impossible for new marshal recruits, for example, to be trained. But, if conditions allow this year, it is vital that more volunteers join the ranks. It is no secret that marshals, scrutineers, clerks and timekeepers are getting older and there is a desperate shortage among some of these volunteer roles. It must be noted that a number of key figures in these positions died in recent years and there needs to be a concerted effort to get the next generation involved. But thinking outside the box is also needed: perhaps

there should be an obligation that in order to get a race licence you must also have completed a day's marshalling or assisting in race control the previous year?

3 Support smaller venues

At the end of 2021, Autosport pored over the data from the club racing season and looked at series that performed well and those that struggled. One of the most staggering takeaways was the sheer domination of circuits such as Silverstone, Brands Hatch, Donington Park and Snetterton over the schedules. Yes, these attracted slightly larger grids, but it is important for the health of motorsport as a whole that smaller, independent venues are supported. There are some encouraging signs for 2022, such as new events planned at Anglesey. But that trend is not universal and it is worth noting that these circuits need to play a part, too. Their staff must be accommodating, delivering good service and facilities, in order for clubs to want to visit in the first place.

4 Sort out scrutineering

Another impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was the drastic change to the way race meetings were run. Scrutineering was one area affected, with assessments of every car before qualifying replaced by spot checks and an online pre-event self-declaration. As restrictions eased last year, clubs had more flexibility, but Motorsport UK did not fully grasp this opportunity to devise a new strategy for the future. Instead, the 2022 default is that pre-pandemic mass scrutineering returns while clubs will be permitted to submit alternative proposals for trial ahead of new guidelines being produced for 2023. This means a hotchpotch of different procedures is set to be in place, creating confusion for competitors. It is imperative the issue is resolved for next year.

5 Consider the environment

That may be an incongruous statement for a motorsport publication to make. But last year's COP26 summit was one example of how the issue of climate change is not going to disappear, and for motorsport to have a future it is vital it starts playing its part now. Don't worry, we're not suggesting anything as radical as banning petrol or diesel-powered cars, instead other actions need assessing. Some clubs have begun offsetting the carbon produced from their racing activities, and this is a sensible way to lessen the environmental impact of the sport we love. Perhaps it's time for all the major racing clubs to adopt such practices. Last year's Walter Hayes Trophy was a Motorsport UK sustainable pilot event, but the effect was limited. Adding a few recycling bins in the paddock and 'encouraging' people to share cars when travelling to the circuit is not going to be enough. A far greater plan is needed. ❧



Ivey beat Hicklin in race one but couldn't ensnare his Radical rival second time around

Ivey takes festive win on return as he shares spoils with Hicklin

MALLORY PARK
750MC PLUM PUDDING
26 DECEMBER

Jon-Paul Ivey and Ash Hicklin shared the Sports Car victories at the traditional finale to the racing year at a stygian Mallory Park. The two Radical protagonists were comfortably the class of the field for the 750 Motor Club-organised contests.

Ivey elected to start at the back for the opener, concerned not to ruin his – or anyone else's – Boxing Day by stalling on the grid at the beginning of his first race in two years. His PR6 was turning a wheel for the first time since it intermittently stopped without warning last time out. "We've changed everything, and it doesn't seem to be doing it now," he said.

He soon shook off the rust, climbing to second within half a lap of the start and taking the lead from the fast-starting SR3-mounted Hicklin at Shaw's Corner on lap three. He eased clear from his nearest competitor but, towards the end, the

gap closed as Ivey was delayed by Paul Woolfitt's Lotus Exige clone, which did not want to go a lap down. "He went past quite a few blue flags, and it is quick in a straight line," mused Ivey.

Hicklin took second, with a convincing gap back to the third-placed Stuart Pearson, who was sampling his newly acquired AB Sabre for the first time. "It's different," admitted the long-time Ginetta racer and 2020 Historic Formula Ford 2000 Class B champion, who will appear at selected British Automobile Racing Club North Western Sports/Saloons rounds in 2022. Woolfitt and his Spire GTR-mounted brother Jon completed the top five.

From the reversed grid for race two, Jon Curry made the best start in his Caterham 310R but he was soon passed by Pearson. Hicklin took the lead into Gerard's Bend at the start of lap two, with Ivey grabbing second along the Stebbe Straight.

Hicklin maintained his lead until lap 10 of 17, when Ivey opportunistically took the place as they both went either side of



Birley ended his 2021 campaign with double Saloon Car victory

WEEKEND WINNERS

SPORTS CARS

Race 1 Jon-Paul Ivey (Radical PR6)

Race 2 Ashley Hicklin (Radical SR3)

SALOON CARS

Races 1 & 2 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

the slower MEV of Micky Scott on Stebbe Straight. But Hicklin wasn't to be denied, and he repassed Ivey on the run to Gerard's Bend on lap 14, capitalising after Ivey made a mistake exiting the hairpin. Pearson was again a distant third and, with the Woolfitts heading home, Gary Mitchell claimed fourth in his Global GT Light.

There was no beating Rod Birley in the Saloon Car races, the Kent man notching up two more wins in his Ford Escort WRC. Andy Thompson pushed hard, however, slashing Birley's advantage every lap until the eighth of 16. "The exhaust started blowing about halfway through," rued SEAT Toledo racer Thompson. "Then some oil went down, so I bailed out, but still stupidly went off onto the grass on the last lap."

Following Thompson's late exit, Wayne Ward's Subaru Impreza was promoted to second, while Giles Kirk took third in his Renault Clio following a lengthy tussle with Sam McKee (BMW 328i).

After Edward McDermott's Audi TT slithered out of its early race-two lead, Kirk briefly took over before Birley powered ahead. Thompson and Ward swapped places a couple of times, but eventually Thompson got clear only to fall off at Gerard's on the 11th tour. Ward consequently took second, with Kirk the only other driver on the lead lap, although he was disqualified for a yellow flag infringement. Mick Storey was therefore classified third in his Clio.

IAN SOWMAN



A FAMILY BUSINESS

GT Cup title winners Richard and Sam Neary emerged as a race-winning force in British GT in 2021. The father-and-son pairing have done it the hard way with their family team — and 19-year-old Sam is only just getting started

JAMES NEWBOLD

It's been a long and eventful road to a first British GT win for Richard Neary since his entry into the championship with a BMW Z4 back in 2016.

In the intervening years, he's had his car engulfed in flames, causing burns to his co-driver Adam Christodoulou (Spa 2018), been hooked into the wall at flat chat (Oulton Park 2017) and suffered heartbreak when a gearbox let go while well-placed to challenge at Silverstone last year. But, when his Team Abba Mercedes-AMG GT3 came across the line first at Donington Park in July, the result was made even sweeter by the fact that his 19-year-old son Sam was at the wheel for

the giant-killing performance of the year.

The Neary family had already emerged as regular winners in Bute Motorsport's GT Cup series angled at smaller, private teams, running an ultimately successful campaign that yielded both the GT3 class and the outright title last season. But there could be no denying that this victory for the family-run team against the heavyweights of British GT, including top Mercedes customer team RAM and proven title-winning squads Barwell and Beechdean, was a hugely significant accomplishment. Not least after a brake disc explosion in FP2 had forced them to miss qualifying and required an all-hands-on-deck repair late into the night. >>





Father-and-son Neary duo took a giant-killing British GT victory at Donington Park last July



Neary Sr first began racing in British GT with BMW Z4 in 2016

“We’ve had quite a few standout performances [in 2021] where I think we’ve surprised a lot of people,” says Sam Neary, who started racing alongside his father in 2018, entering the 24H TCE Series round at Spa in their BMW M3 GTR before embarking on a Britcar campaign together in 2019. “Being a family-run team, it’s not easy to compete with big teams like RAM and Barwell, but we seem to be doing it and that stint at Donington has helped with confidence. The more confident I’m getting, the faster I get.”

Coached by AMG driver Christodoulou and by former British Touring Car Championship racer Luke Davenport, Neary Jr has come a long way since his first involvement with the team “when I was about 12, I think” washing the cars. His father observed in those initial BMW outings that he had “got a flair for it, he took to it very well”, and wasted no time plugging Sam into the GT3 Mercedes in 2019. Then, in 2020, he replaced Christodoulou as the ‘Pro’ in their British GT Pro-Am line-up.

There was still plenty of learning to do, and usually it was done buried in the pack as the proliferation of Silver squads left the Pro-Ams to feed off scraps – though the distinctive black and green-liveried machine shone at the Silverstone finale, where Neary Jr kept pace with the leaders until a penalty for his father’s start procedure indiscretion dropped him back.

“WE’VE HAD QUITE A FEW STANDOUT PERFORMANCES WHERE I THINK WE’VE SURPRISED PEOPLE”

But the series’ return to a solely Pro-Am footing for 2021 played into the Nearys’ hands, beginning the year with a strong fifth at Brands Hatch. Their final championship position of eighth is skewed somewhat by the Silverstone DNF following Neary Sr’s charge from 10th to third, his huge startline shunt at Spa that required the car to be reshelled and miss Snetterton, and a gearbox infringement that disqualified the car from Oulton Park after they had scored maximum points for Neary Jr’s wheel-perfect defensive drive to second in race one. Behind him was none other than champion-to-be Dennis Lind, but Neary wasn’t bowed by the pressure.

Amid it all came that famous first win at Donington, Neary Sr taking advantage of a first-corner fracas before passing Ian Loggie for a lead they would never lose, Neary Jr ensuring the gap – inflated by a 10-second success penalty for RAM – was never truly threatened by Loggie’s team-mate Yelmer Buurman. “A lot of the Pro drivers now



respect me as a Pro,” Neary Jr said at the time. It was an important mental step.

For Neary Sr, though, the satisfaction taken from individual British GT performances is no greater than their achievements in the GT Cup last year, beating Topcats Racing’s GTC contenders Jensen Lunn and Warren Gilbert by 22 points after the Abba crew tallied 17 class top scores across the season.

“The championship fight in GT Cup was really hard-fought in the end,” he says. “I know it looked like we had some dominant performances, but the visual on-track performances that people compare us against aren’t actually what we’re fighting. What we’re fighting is someone in another class, so it’s like an invisible contender. But, nonetheless, it went down to the final race in the final round, it couldn’t have been closer and, at the end of that race, we were as elated as if we’d just won the Oulton Park [British GT] round.”

Sam maintains that you cannot easily



Richard believes son Sam can still learn from him



Neary Jr put in a brilliant drive to defend from Brit GT champion Lind at Oulton



The Abba pair are targeting more success with older Merc in 2022

compare success between the two categories. “Obviously British GT is a harder-fought championship, there are bigger drivers, bigger teams, bigger cars, but to be perfect all season, they both add up to the same amount,” he says. “You can’t say one of them is easier than the other.”

Although they don’t have especially similar driving styles, taking different lines through some corners and even using different gears in places – “I like to get the rear out by using the gears,” says Sam – they make a formidable pair. With Neary Jr now capable of performances matching the championship’s best, it has meant a shift in their dynamic from the early days when Sam was still very green, but Richard still believes he can help as “more of a mentor”.

“I can still help Sam by teaching him not to make the mistakes that I’ve already done, so he can circumnavigate them,” says Neary Sr. “When to do things, when to go for things, what not to do. They’re the things I’ve already



A common sight during 2021: the Neary Merc leading GT Cup field

got wrong, so he doesn’t need to. That’s where I see my role is – about scenarios and how they might play out.

“Sam coaches me through data and what I’m doing wrong on-track. He has the ability to think while driving the car, that’s the bit I don’t have because of my age, your brain capacity slows down as you get older.”

The relationship has benefited both parties, allowing Neary to learn under the radar without the weight of expectation to distract him – “It started off very low-key, go out and enjoy yourself and see what you can do,” Neary Jr recalls – and means the niceties of the usual Pro-Am coaching relationship don’t apply. They can be totally straight with each other. That has helped when it comes to building trust in their feedback.

“If you look at every great driver pairing, there’s always a great friendship,” says Neary Jr. “Obviously him being my dad, it’s a bit more than a friendship, but everything is built on trust. I tell him something I’m doing and he has to go out there at 150mph and try it, trusting what I’ve said is correct. Because we have that dynamic, I tell him something and he does it straight away. He’s been so consistent and that’s because of the dynamic of trusting in each other.”

Neary Sr – who also charged to the lead in the Donington finale, where they ultimately finished third – believes this factor is just as important as the benefit of gaining

more track time across both series.

“Seat time definitely helps,” he says. “Obviously we get more at one with the car and we just know what we’re doing. You know exactly what the other is doing and nine times out of 10, we’re thinking the same stuff. We just come to the same conclusions.”

“We’re running the car better now as well,” he adds. “I don’t think it’s just that we’re driving quicker, I actually think that we’ve managed to engineer more speed into our car.”

Neary Sr is as hands-on as it gets, driving the team lorry to the track himself, working on the car and sleeping in the lorry at the end of the day’s work. Together with loyal team members Stuart Donohue, team manager, and number one mechanic Shane Fearn, it’s a tight-knit unit.

“For me, this is how you go racing,” he says. “I always stay in the lorry. Once I come to the race circuit, I stay here all weekend and then go home. And I’ve always worked on my cars, I quite like racing something I’ve engineered.”

That makes the Nearys’ shared experiences – good or bad – all the more special. They plan to keep the original Generation 1 car in 2022, rather than take the pain of starting afresh with the updated model used by RAM.

“We’ve spent so much time and we think we’ve gone so far with this car, we think as a little team we can run a Gen 1 car better than we would run a Gen 2 car,” Neary Sr says. “We’d have to start again gaining our experience with that. At the moment, our yardstick is RAM and, while we can beat them with a Gen 1 car, we’re going to keep doing it.”

Further success will only help the younger Neary in his long-term ambitions to establish a career in racing as a factory driver, with membership of the BRDC Rising Stars scheme a clear step in the right direction.

“Anything I’m in I want to try and win,” he says. “Becoming a factory driver would be the ultimate aim. And now GT3 is going into Le Mans and DTM has gone GT3, I feel like I’m in the right area for the changes that are coming. By the time Le Mans is [GT3, it will be] 2023, so two years on I’ll be 21 and right in the prime age to jump in and give it a good go.”



Sam has his eyes on a future factory drive

NEW YEAR, NEW ERA FOR CLIOS

The renamed Clio Sport Championship will introduce a newer model of car for 2022, which Autosport got to drive

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP

It was one of the worst-kept secrets in national paddocks last season, with little attempt to hide the news that many welcomed. The popular Clio 182 Championship was going to introduce a new model of car, the Renault Clio 197/200, and the series was being rebranded as the Clio Sport Championship.

Despite it only being officially announced in November at MotorsportDays LIVE, those already in the 750 Motor Club-run championship were informed of the proposed change months earlier in order to gauge interest and gather feedback.

“It’s not exactly been a secret around the Clio paddock – we made all the drivers aware at the beginning of 2021 what the plan was,” says James Winstanley, 750MC commercial manager. That plan is to breathe fresh air into the championship, which has been a mainstay of the 750MC for the past eight seasons as a standalone series.

While grids have been healthy – averaging 20 entries last season and 19 the year before – as well as providing competitive racing action, it remains one of the smaller championships the 750MC has to offer. Which is more of a testament to how well the club’s other series have been performing than how poorly the Clio championship has been doing.

“We’ve always had very good grids for Clios, but it’s never been 30-plus and we’re always working harder to get the big grids that we’re kind of known for,” adds Winstanley.

The reason for the introduction of the newer model is twofold. With the 197 being more modern – it was launched in 2006 – there are more donor cars available as well as a healthy market of spare parts for a moderate price, something that can’t be said for the 182s as parts become rarer and prices climb higher. The 197’s shape and aesthetics, it is hoped, will also be more appealing to a younger

audience and bring fresh blood into the championship – the idea being to attract new drivers rather than convert those already in the category.

Winstanley is keen to stress that the new model isn’t a replacement for the older 182, but rather that the two will both vie for the outright title, although there will also be separate class titles on offer similar to the 750MC’s Toyota MR2 Championship.

“It’s a new era for the championship,” he says. “The idea is that it’s not intended as a replacement for people that currently race in 182s, it’s just another option so anybody that’s coming in afresh to the Clio championship has got two different options. They might prefer a 182 or they might prefer a 197.”

Tight regulations should ensure a reasonable level of parity across the field, but the notable difference between the two models remains the weight, with the newer 197 version weighing 1175kg, some 105kg heavier than the older 182 chassis. That being said, the newer model is expected to have more power, and Winstanley is confident that the performance of both cars will be evenly matched across the season.

“We’ve had people that raced 182s in the 197 and back-to-back on track with it in the 182. The pace is exactly where we want it,” he says.



Finding the limits of the Clio 197 at Silverstone



Five cars are already in-build for new season



Corner (l) and Mackley in discussion about Clio



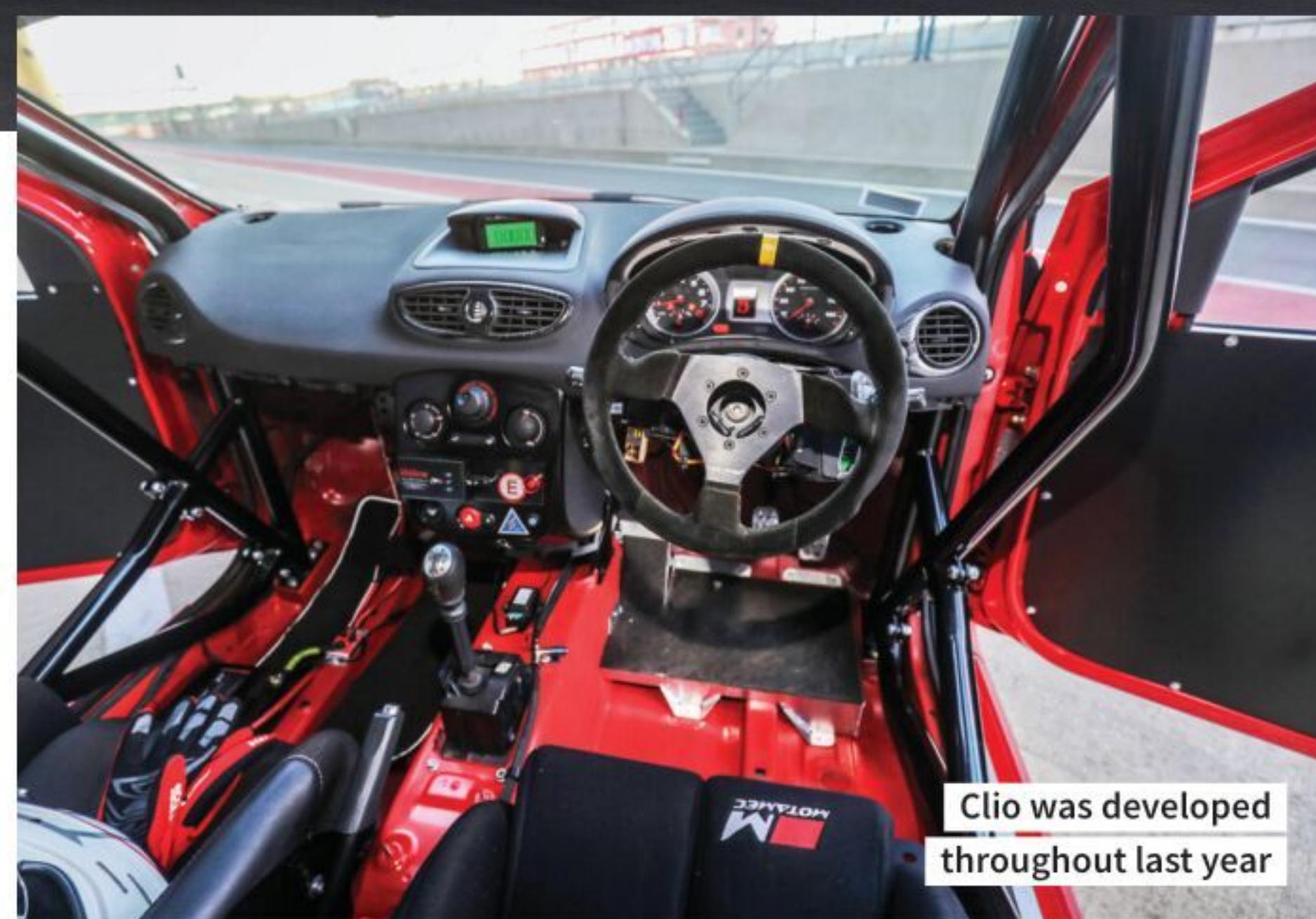
To experience this performance first-hand ahead of the new car's introduction this year, Autosport was given the chance to get behind the wheel of a 197 at its official launch last November. This particular car was put together by Stephen Corner, workshop manager at K-Tec Racing, which is technical partner to the championship. Corner made a number of outings in the 750MC's Hot Hatch Championship last year aboard the car, as a means of testing its performance and to showcase it to prospective drivers.

Those capabilities were on display as I was given a passenger lap alongside Corner around the Silverstone International layout. One of the most surprising things that comes across even as a passenger is just how much it revs – something that catches me out during my stint behind the wheel. It feels nimble, with plenty of grip, although Corner proclaims that a full tank of fuel means it's perhaps not as nimble as it could be.

With seat and wheel changes made to accommodate my much shorter frame, it's my turn to hit the track. The first word that comes to mind from my 15-minute stint is 'fun'. The car is well-balanced, with surprisingly little understeer for a front-wheel-drive car, especially compared to the Citroen C1 I've raced before. Lap after lap I'm able to throw it into the corners without fear of missing the apex or spinning out. Only once through Stowe did the rear step out slightly, but even when I'd reached this limit there wasn't a moment of fear that it was going to spit me off.

As mentioned already, the high-revving nature and speed at which it climbs to the limiter catches me out on two occasions, as with my right foot planted it just wants to continue pulling. Entering Hangar Straight in fourth via the cut-through at The Loop, you're easily in sixth before the end of the straight, while you're only as low as third for Vale/Club. The sheer performance for something that doesn't *really* cost that much in the world of motorsport is pleasantly surprising.

To put it into context, C1s and BMW 116 Trophy cars, which were both out in the same session, were being blown away by the Clio. Yes, that is to be expected, but it still put into context what a little pocket-rocket the 197 is.



Affordable, competitive grids is what the 750MC is renowned for and financial packages being put forward should only make the 197 more of an appealing proposition.

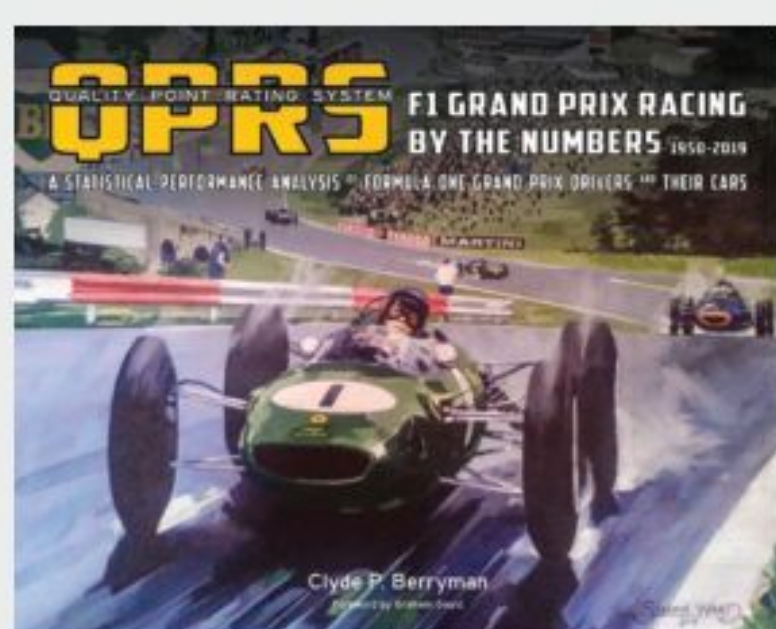
Last year the club offered Foundation packages for the Type R Trophy, which averaged nearly 23 entries last season, and a similar deal is available for the 197 this year.

For those wishing to get behind the wheel, with entry to all 14 races across six weekends, registration fees, a pre-season testing day and additional spares and discounted technical support included, it will cost just over £15,000 including the donor car for current licence holders. Those taking up racing for the first time who will need to complete their ARDS and acquire equipment can do so for less than £16,500, while the cost of both packages will be less if drivers source their own donor cars.

During my time at MotorsportDays, a number of potential drivers inquired about the new machine and Winstanley says five cars are already in-build, with hopes that as many as 10 could be on the grid for the opening round of the season at Croft in April.

If that's the case, the target of 30 Clios could be hit at the opening round, and few would bet against that number growing as word spreads about one of the worst-kept secrets in club racing. 🏁

RATING THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME



BOOK REVIEW
QPRS: F1 GRAND PRIX RACING BY THE NUMBERS
 Clyde Berryman
 RRP £69

For much of the Formula 1 2021 season finale at the

Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, it appeared as though Lewis Hamilton would move clear of the joint record he shared with Michael Schumacher and claim his eighth title.

As we know, he didn't, but if he had, he'd be regarded as the greatest F1 driver of all-time, right? Statistically he already has the most wins, poles, points and laps led to his name, and to some he is the greatest, achieving his successes in the fastest cars ever to hit the track. But to others, his achievements are down to the car he drives in a period where driver skill counts for less than in decades gone by.

Comparing drivers from across 70-plus years of the championship is a minefield, with various caveats to consider, from the different driving styles required, level of competition, reliability, safety and many other

differences, which only make the debate even harder.

Taking up the challenge to determine who is the greatest F1 driver of all time, though, is Clyde Berryman in his book *QPRS: F1 Grand Prix Racing By The Numbers*.

The book was released last year and covers up to the end of the 2019 season and uses a formula, or Quality Point Rating System (QPRS), to determine the greatest drivers and cars. A simple enough premise, and the opening of the book explains what factors determine the score (success, outright speed, retirements, etc) but bizarrely not what points are actually offered out per race.

The book is broken into decades and begins with several pages of text offering an overview of the following 10-year period, before each season's drivers' and teams' points tables are laid out, with a rating then given for each driver and car from every season.

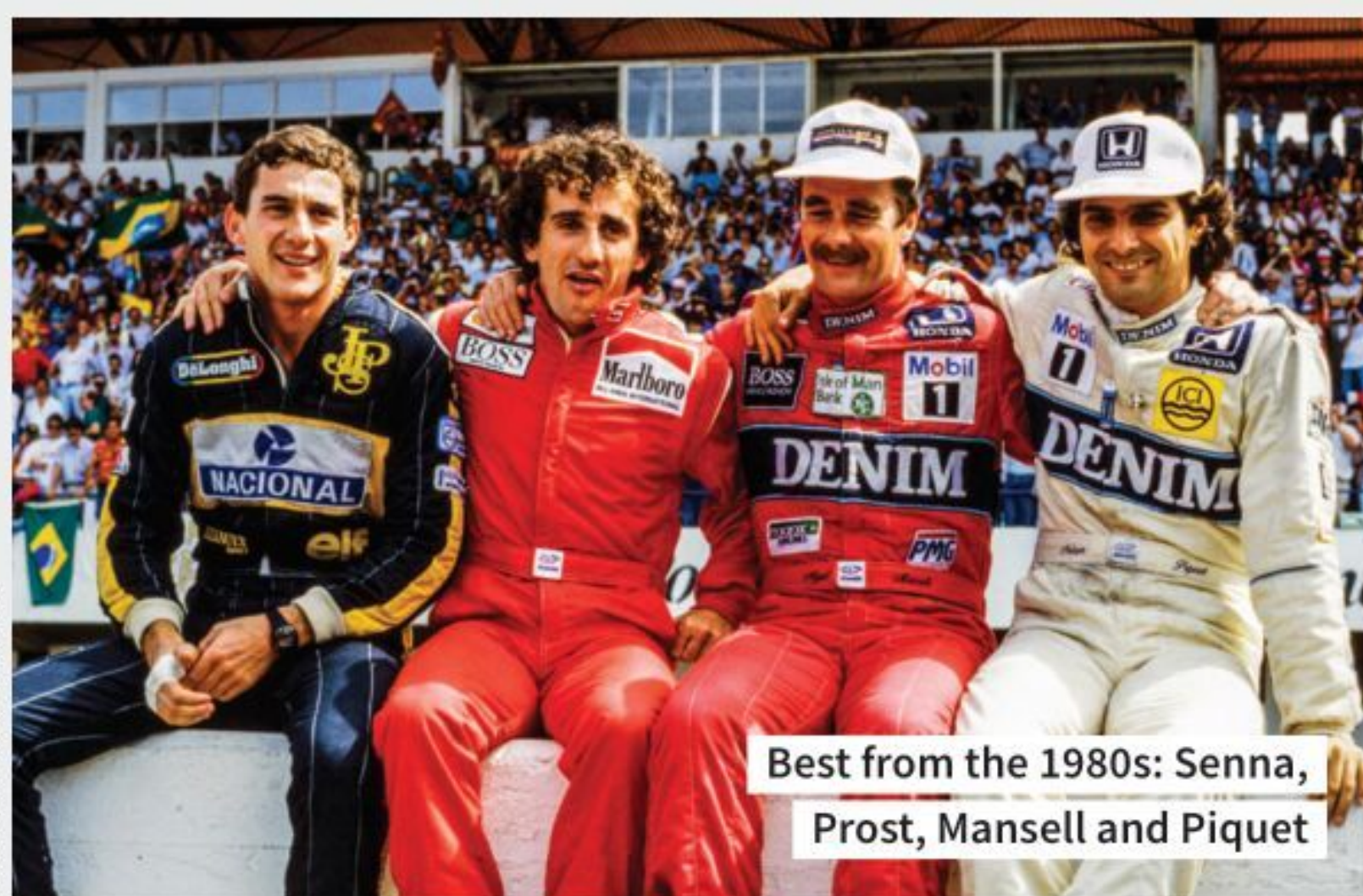
Bookending each decade is an overall rating from that period, with the top 10 drivers and cars listed. For something that has the possibility to create robust debate, there is little to be too upset about regarding the drivers of the decade, in this writer's opinion.

Juan Manuel Fangio tops the 1950s, Jim Clark the 1960s, Jackie Stewart the 1970s, Alain Prost the 1980s, Ayrton Senna the 1990s and Michael Schumacher the 2000s — although Sebastian Vettel ranking ahead of Hamilton for the 2010s might raise some eyebrows.

It's the final part of the book where the most controversy will likely be found, though, as rankings for the all-time top 100 grand drivers, top 50 grand prix drivers 'at their peak' (best three seasons) and the driver that made the difference among other ratings are here.

At nearly 550 pages it's a lengthy tome but one that is generally well-researched and a clear labour of love for Berryman, whose formula does seem to be on the sensible side rather than completely outlandish.

The words and statistics are brought to life by more than 300 hundred impressive illustrations of drivers,



Best from the 1980s: Senna, Prost, Mansell and Piquet

Schumacher,
Senna and Prost all
come out on top in
different eras using
QPRS rating

 **motorsport**
IMAGES



Fangio (l) or Moss, who
was the greatest?

SCHLEGELMILCH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

cars and circuits from 23 artists and mean that this is far from just a numbers-in-a-table approach.

As ever with a book of this nature, it's not without drawbacks. While Berryman has decided to do his rankings decade by decade, the careers and fortunes of a driver and team never coincide with such timeframes, which can blur the ratings.

Then there's the entire matter of what constitutes the greatest. The most successful? The fastest? The driver who inspired you the most?

One point raised by Berryman at the opening of the book is that "emotion and the heart often prevail over the historical record", stating that the flamboyant antics of Gilles Villeneuve and others outweighs the abilities of those "that don't have the same rakish image".

While this is indeed a valid point, it overlooks that many fell in love with F1 to begin with because of some heroic moment by a driver who might not be the greatest statistically, but is the greatest to them.

Ironically, no matter how well a book such as this is researched and the facts laid bare, it's arguably even more likely to stir debate and conjecture among fans about who is the greatest driver of all time.

STEFAN MACKLEY

 **YouTube**

youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



FIRING UP THE 2022 MERCEDES-AMG F1 CAR

The first race of the 2022 F1 season won't take place until 20 March, but teams have been hard at work behind the scenes for months on their newest challengers. Watch, and hear, Mercedes fire up its car ahead of the new season. Go to autosport.com/f1/videos/



autosport.com/podcast



F1 2021 SEASON REVIEW

The 2021 Formula 1 season will go down as one of the closest fought in the history of the championship, as Max Verstappen prevailed on the final lap at Abu Dhabi to beat Lewis Hamilton. Martyn Lee (Head of Podcasts, Motorsport Network) is joined by Alex Kalinauckas (Grand Prix Editor) and Luke Smith (F1 Reporter) for a two-part F1 season review looking back at all the twists and turns of 2021.

WHAT'S ON

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2022 CALENDAR



2/3 APRIL
SNETTERTON 300
(HEADLINE ROUND)



16 & 18 APRIL
OULTON PARK
(BRITISH GT/GB3)



7/8 MAY
SILVERSTONE GP
(BRITISH GT/GB3)



28/29 MAY
DONINGTON PARK GP
(BRITISH GT/GB3)



25/26 JUNE
SNETTERTON 300
(BRITISH GT/GB3)



30/31 JULY
SILVERSTONE GP
(GB3)



10/11 SEPTEMBER
BRANDS HATCH GP
(BRITISH GT/GB3)

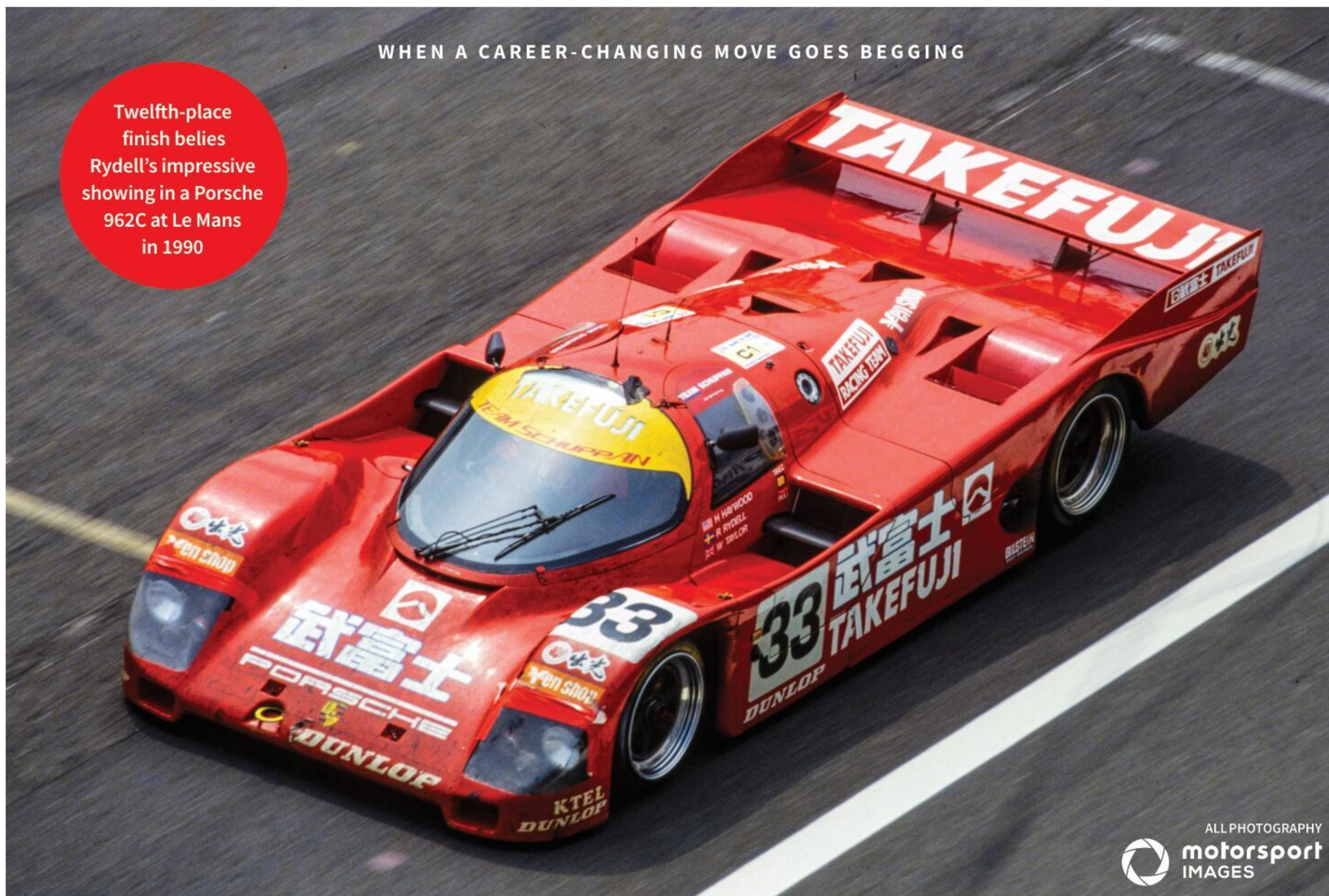


15/16 OCTOBER
DONINGTON PARK GP
(BRITISH GT/GB3)

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

WHEN A CAREER-CHANGING MOVE GOES BEGGING

Twelfth-place finish belies Rydell's impressive showing in a Porsche 962C at Le Mans in 1990



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
motorsport
IMAGES

RICKARD RYDELL

Rickard Rydell is best known for his tin-top exploits during a 20-year run as a professional driver that peaked with the 1998 British Touring Car Championship title. But had the first of his manufacturer affiliations panned out differently, he might never have gone on to represent Volvo, Ford, SEAT and Chevrolet in saloons.

The Swede had been courted by Toyota partner team TOM'S after impressing at the 1989 Macau Grand Prix and would be paid to race in Japanese Formula 3 the following year. But future F1 team boss Eddie Jordan – who signed Rydell to a management contract as part of his 1989 British F3 deal – had arranged for him to contest a dual programme in British Formula 3000 and sportscars that restricted him to just four Japanese F3 outings in 1990.

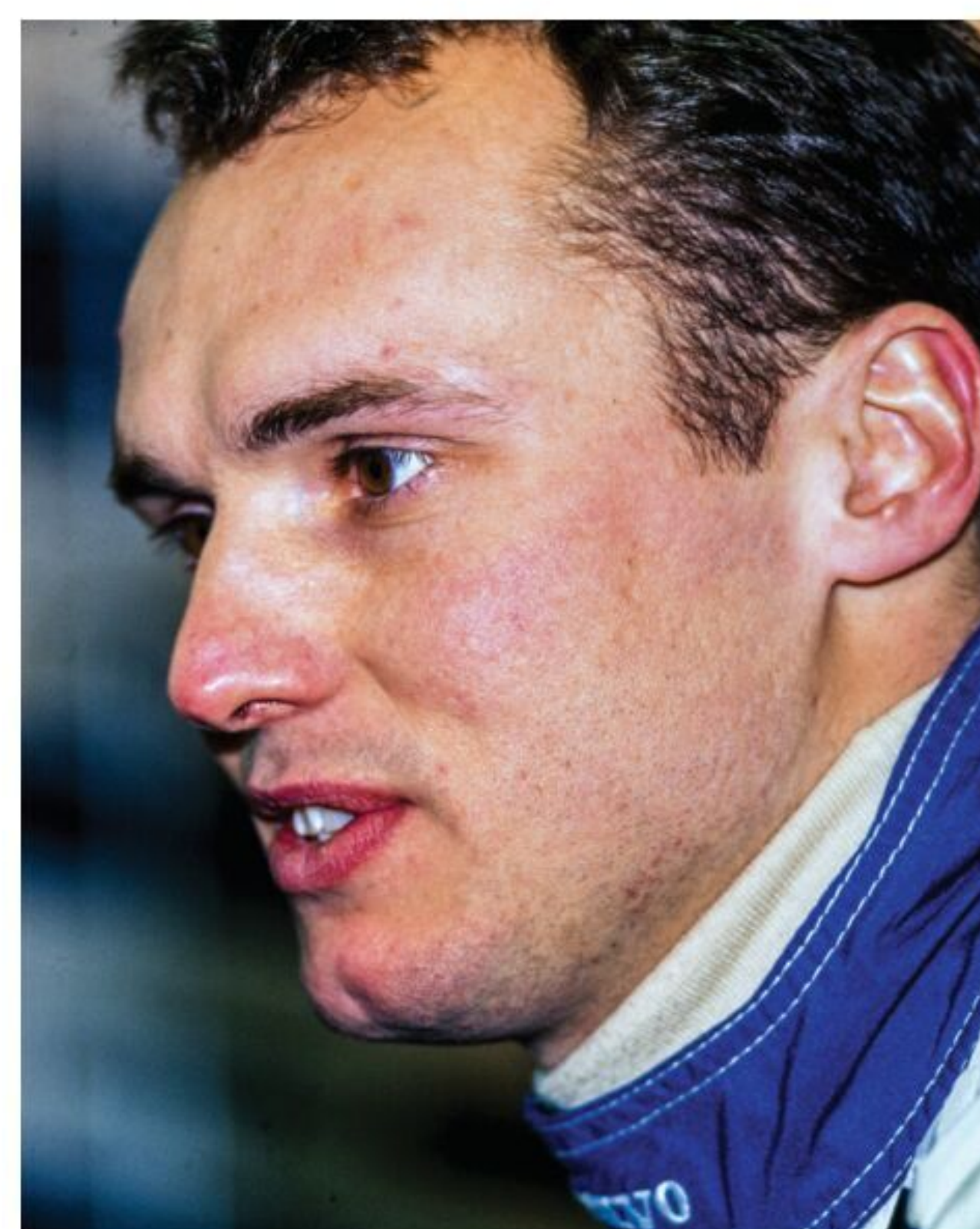
“IT’S A BIG STEP FROM F3 TO SPORTSCARS. IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT BUT I ENJOYED IT”

His limited schedule with a Schuppan Porsche 962C in the All-Japan Sports-Prototype championship, against Toyota, would also include Le Mans, where Rydell shone on his way to 12th alongside Hurley Haywood and Wayne Taylor, despite myriad mechanical problems hampering the build-up and lingering wrist pain from a huge Snetterton F3000 shunt. Rydell remembers his Group C outings affectionately, including hitting 364km/h (226mph) at the end of the Fuji pitstraight.

“It’s a big step to go from F3 to sportscars,” says Rydell, whose best Group C result was fourth at Fuji. “It was completely different, being so heavy and quite slow in reaction. But I enjoyed it and of course it was nice to get paid...”

However, it didn’t lead to further sportscar chances with Toyota – Rydell maintains “there was never a discussion” – which he puts down to not living in Japan during 1990. He spent the next three years in F3 with TOM’S but turned down the chance of combining it with Group A touring cars, which he reckons Toyota took as an indication that he “was probably not committed enough”.

“If I stayed in Japan and did everything they asked me to do, I probably would have been able to have a sportscar career with them,”



says Rydell, who went on to win the GT1 class at Le Mans in 2007 with Aston Martin. “But I decided for 1993 to commute back and forth and I only did F3, I thought that was enough.”

He doesn’t regret turning down a Japanese F3000 deal for 1994 to join Volvo in the BTCC, though had some second thoughts after a few races in the “absolutely useless” 850 estate...

JAMES NEWBOLD



FROM THE ARCHIVE

David Coulthard soaks up victory at the 2002 Monaco Grand Prix, flanked by the Schumacher brothers. Starting second on the grid, his McLaren beat pole position winner Juan Pablo

Montoya into Ste Devote and held off the Colombian until the Williams suffered a BMW engine failure. Coulthard emerged from his single pitstop with a one-second advantage over Michael Schumacher's Ferrari,

then managed his lead until the flag. It would be his only win of a season dominated by Ferrari, Schumacher scoring 11 victories and Rubens Barrichello four. Ralf Schumacher, third here, won in Malaysia.

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FINISHING STRAIGHT





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Jonathan Palmer is best known for his exploits in Formula 1 (both racing and commentating) as well as for being the boss of circuit operator MotorSport Vision. But, long before

he was in charge of Brands Hatch, Palmer was also a rallycross winner at the Kent track. Driving John Welch's Xtrac Ford Escort in the British Rallycross Grand Prix at Brands in 1987, Palmer was in

the thick of the action as he swapped disciplines and achieved a victory in the B final. In the picture above, he can be seen defending from Trevor Hopkins's Ford RS200. The main A final was won by Mikael Nordstrom.

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GARY HAWKINS
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Nicky Catsburg

MY FAVOURITE... Car

BMW Z4 GT3

Nicky Catsburg's choice of the BMW Z4 GT3 as his favourite car should come as little surprise, as it's the machine that launched the BMW factory driver's professional career. The Dutch racer had dominated the Megane Trophy in 2010, and gained GT1 experience in Nissan and Chevrolet Corvette machinery in the 2011 world championship, but had to stump up for a parallel programme in a DB Motorsport Z4 in the FIA GT3 European championship.

"It was with a gentleman so the budgets were lower than we were expecting, but I paid for driving," he says.

In 2012 Catsburg "had to settle for something way less because we didn't have the money anymore", but a lifeline from top BMW customer concern Marc VDS proved the making of his career. With the Belgian squad, he showed well at the 2013 Spa 24 Hours until a flat battery put him out. Then his breakout victory came in the 2015 event. Together with Markus Palttala and Lucas Luhr, he had to fight back from two laps down following a premature call for slicks in the wet early phases. But on a day Catsburg "felt in the zone", he starred in the night and passed Stephane Ortelli's Audi for victory.

"I was the quickest car on track by quite a bit, it came so easy," he recalls fondly.



VISION SPORT AGENCY

Catsburg's affinity with a car he admits was "so difficult to drive, very snappy from the rear" in its early years before "it was massively improved in the last bit of its lifespan" was helped by his driving style, which "somehow always matched" the car's requirements. That point was magnified by his difficulties adjusting to its successor, the longer-wheelbase M6 GT3.

"Especially the first year, I was, 'Ah man, I wish we could go back to the Z4'," admits Catsburg of a car he drove to victory in the 2020 Nurburgring 24 Hours.

The Z4's 4.4-litre V8 soundtrack only added further to its appeal. "It completes the image I have of that time," concludes Catsburg. "Every time you see a video of it, you think, 'Wow, this was really nice.'"

JAMES NEWBOLD

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Monsters of motorsport

WE LOOK AT SOME OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR COMPETITION MACHINES



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