

Lewis Hamilton interview special

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

10 NOVEMBER 2022

'You're stuck with me for quite a bit longer!'

Hamilton opens up about recent challenges and his F1 future

On Abu Dhabi 2021

'It was spirit-breaking but I've moved on'

On the Mercedes W13

'The most unpredictable car I've ever driven'

On 2023 and beyond

'I want to keep racing – I love what I do'

PLUS
MAURO FORGHIERI
1935-2022



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Let's rejoice that Hamilton is not finished with Formula 1 just yet

A handful of so-so qualifying sessions, some fine George Russell performances plus a little bad luck with safety cars, and suddenly some people felt that Lewis Hamilton was past it. Of course, every sportsperson will eventually fade as their powers wane, but recent evidence suggests Hamilton has not yet reached that stage.

In this week's open and insightful interview (page 20), the seven-time world champion talks about how he got over the disappointment of the 2021 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, his and the Mercedes team's efforts to improve the difficult W13 this season, and how he sees the future. It's clear from Matt Kew's piece that, despite Hamilton's 103 world championship race victories, the 37-year-old still loves his racing and is highly motivated to chase that eighth Formula 1 crown.

Neutral fans should rejoice. Hamilton was Max Verstappen's main challenger at both the United States and Mexican GPs. Given Ferrari's problems and the gap between the top teams and the rest, which Alex Kalinauckas explores on page 17, Hamilton and Mercedes still appear to be the combination most likely to stand up to the Red Bull/Verstappen steamroller that is gathering momentum.

Motorsport lost one of its key players of the past in Mauro Forghieri last week. The Italian formed strong partnerships with John Surtees and Niki Lauda, and his impact on Ferrari should not be underestimated. Adam Cooper looks back at a fine career in our tribute on p12.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
17 NOVEMBER**

F1 battles in Brazil
Action from Interlagos, plus
WRC in Japan and the WEC
title decider in Bahrain



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Hone/Motorsport Images

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PIT + PADDOCK

Mercedes has 'lost 10 months' to porpoising

FORMULA 1

The time taken to truly understand and resolve the porpoising phenomenon that dogged the Mercedes W13 in the early part of 2022 has put the squad eight to 10 months behind schedule with its performance upgrades, according to team boss Toto Wolff.

Despite the data indicating to the team that it had produced leading levels of downforce for the return of ground-effects, it was apparent soon into pre-season testing at Barcelona that the car was severely afflicted by the pogoing sensation as the airflow stalled and reattached. That forced Lewis Hamilton to run with radical set-up extremes in a bid to try to prevent the bouncing, while the initial upgrades to the design of the floor also did not sufficiently rectify the issue. And despite the consistent run of top-five results in the early part of the campaign for George Russell, only after the summer break has Mercedes produced credible threats for wins – most notably in the Dutch, United States and Mexican Grands Prix.

This protracted troubleshooting has allowed constructors' champion Red Bull and Ferrari to march clear with their respective development programmes to find more pace, reckons Wolff (right). Therefore, the Silver Arrows – which sit only 40 points adrift of Ferrari – must target success in the longer term since it is unrealistic to close the gap fully over just one winter.

The Austrian said: "We believe that we understand where the gap comes from. [Red Bull and Ferrari] will carry over some of their sweetness in the car [to 2023], and we've maybe lost eight to 10 months in terms of development because we couldn't figure out what was wrong. So, there's definitely a challenge."

"But we're playing the long game here, all of us. Both drivers are playing the long game, the team. The judge around the team, of performance, is not based on a single year or weekend. It's how we have been able to win championships over the long term."

Despite the promise shown at the most recent Austin and Mexico City rounds, Mercedes has checked expectations ahead of the final two races, over the next two weekends in Brazil and Abu Dhabi. Ferrari is expected to be more in the mix after two decidedly



SUTTON

off-colour weekends that were hobbled by tyre degradation.

Mercedes chief strategist James Vowles said: "Ferrari won't be that far back and away from us as they were in Mexico. They will be closer in Brazil and Abu Dhabi and it will be a very close fight between our two teams. In terms of relative to Red Bull, they still hold the edge relative to us. I don't think it is quite the three tenths they outqualified us by [in Mexico], but it will be a few tenths across the next few races."

"We are getting closer and closer, compared to where we were at the beginning of the season where at times we were struggling to get out of Q1 or into Q3 to where we are now, which is within a whisker of fighting for our first win. In Brazil it's a track that both of our drivers have typically gone well at and it is a sprint race where we can pick up more points. And when you have a car within a few tenths of your competition you can make things happen."

MATT KEW & LUKE SMITH

➔ P20 HAMILTON RACES ON



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IMAGES

ETHERINGTON



Vandoorne has left Mercedes fold since Formula E title

STALEY

Vandoorne to Aston, Ricciardo to replace him?

FORMULA 1

Aston Martin has recruited Stoffel Vandoorne as a test and reserve driver for the 2023 Formula 1 season, roles he will share with recently crowned FIA F2 champion Felipe Drugovich.

This deal is intriguing because it hints at other moves in the grand prix paddock. Since winning the 2022 Formula E title with Mercedes, Vandoorne has cut ties with the squad to join the DS Penske team in the

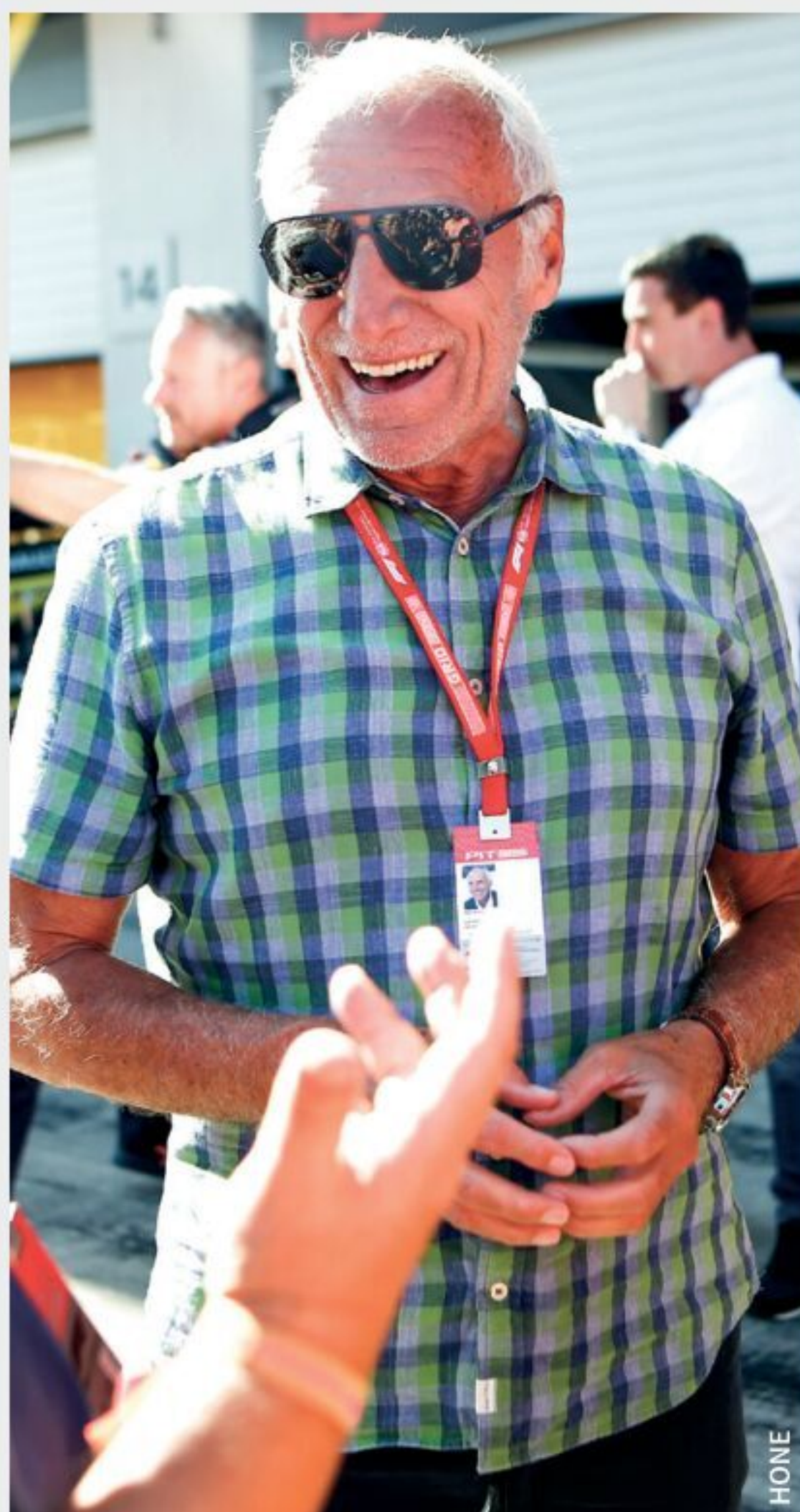
electric series. And now that Nyck de Vries has been poached by AlphaTauri for next season, the Silver Arrows are without a supersub should Lewis Hamilton or George Russell have to miss a race. That would seemingly pave the way for Daniel Ricciardo to take a third-driver role – a move that is widely mooted, although Mercedes insists nothing is signed yet.

Vandoorne's switch to again work with his 2017-18 McLaren F1 team-mate Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll also

indicates that Nico Hulkenberg will not stay put at Aston, and the experienced German remains a prime contender to replace Mick Schumacher at Haas.

As well as testing for Aston, Vandoorne will take part in an intensive simulator and development programme. "I've watched with great interest how the team has developed and expanded operationally, and I know how incredibly determined it is to make progress in every area," he said.

MATT KEW



Red Bull outlines succession to late founder Mateschitz

FORMULA 1

The overarching Red Bull group has outlined its succession plan following the death of co-founder Dietrich Mateschitz (left) last month. The Formula 1 operation will fall under the remit of Alexander Kirchmayr (CFO) and Oliver Mintzlaff (corporate projects and investments CEO), who has correspondingly stepped back from his role at German Bundesliga football club RB Leipzig.

In a letter to Red Bull staff, Mateschitz's son Mark explained a solution "proposed by my father" and "supported by our Thai partners" – referring to the Yoovidhya family of entrepreneurs. He added: "Franz [Watzlawick, CEO of the drinks business], Alexander and Oliver were our dream team. I am very happy that they will be taking on this task."

The division of responsibility means that F1 teams Red Bull and AlphaTauri will fall under the responsibility of Mintzlaff, who counts sponsorship among his new tasks, and Kirchmayr. It is unlikely that the grand prix operations will change drastically.

Team boss Christian Horner said that Mateschitz had ensured a secure future for Red Bull's F1 operation. "The future is set," said Horner. "He's put in place a very strong foundation for the future. And with, in 2026, Red Bull becoming a power unit manufacturer, that was the missing piece of our jigsaw, and he had the vision to enable that to happen. Just as we've done with the chassis, we will take that same spirit – his spirit – into the future engine company."

JONATHAN NOBLE & CHRISTIAN NIMMERVOLL

Iron Lynx to run LMDh Lamborghini assault

WEC/IMSA

Lamborghini will partner with the Iron Lynx team when it joins the top class of the World Endurance Championship and the IMSA SportsCar Championship in 2024 with its new LMDh prototype. The Italian Prema team, now owned by Iron Lynx's parent company, will be a key player in the programme.

Iron Lynx will be the sole Lamborghini entrant with its as-yet-unnamed LMDh developed in conjunction with Ligier Automotive in 2024, a situation that will most likely extend into 2025. It is planning to field a single entry in each of the WEC and IMSA, though it is unclear whether the car will be ready in time for the Daytona 24 Hours at the start of the North American season.

Iron Lynx has been confirmed as what is being billed as a "factory-supported" operation after much speculation. But team principal Andrea Piccini insisted that a deal that will also encompass assaults on the IMSA series, and the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup with the Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2 in 2023, remained fresh.

"It's a big deal that wasn't done until quite recently," said Piccini. "It has taken a long time to put together."

The Lambo LMDhs will be run under the Iron Lynx banner but will be supported by a new entity called Prema Engineering. It follows the single-seater squad's move into sportscars in LMP2 in both the WEC and the European Le Mans Series after Iron Lynx parent



DC Racing Solutions took a majority shareholding in the team in 2021.

Piccini said that the IMSA GT Daytona programme next year in the four enduros will be "important to start learning about American racing" ahead of the LMDh programme. It plans to run two cars, one in GTD Pro,

in each of the long races and three at Daytona.

Prema will remain in LMP2 in the WEC next year, possibly with two cars. It is unlikely to defend its ELMS crown, while Iron Lynx will not continue with Ferrari in GTE Am in the WEC or in the ELMS.

GARY WATKINS

Guenther joins Vandoorne in 9X8 test run

WEC

Formula E racers Stoffel Vandoorne and Maximilian Guenther will drive the Peugeot 9X8 at the World Endurance Championship 'rookie' test this Sunday in Bahrain. The duo are coming in to sample the Le Mans Hypercar from the French manufacturer's sister brands, DS and Maserati, for which they will race in the coming FE season.

The significance of their appearances with Peugeot at the test on the day after the 2022 WEC finale remains unclear for the moment. Peugeot Sport boss Jean-Marc Finot has stated that the marque will go into next season with a squad of seven drivers, as it was in 2022 prior to Kevin Magnussen's late defection to Formula 1 with Haas. James Rossiter, Peugeot's official reserve who stood in for the Dane on the 9X8's first two race appearances at Monza and Fuji, has become team principal of the Maserati MSG Racing team and will be replaced in that role.



Reigning FE world champion Vandoorne, who has switched from Mercedes to DS Penske in FE, has raced both LMP1 and P2 machinery in the WEC for SMP Racing and Jota. Guenther (above), who was confirmed by Maserati along with Edoardo Mortara last week, will be making his prototype debut.

Peugeot will also try out two-time World Touring Car Cup title winner Yann Ehrlacher and 19-year-old Dane Malthe Jakobsen, who won the LMP3 title in the European Le Mans Series this year.

Other names confirmed for the test include Nelson Piquet Jr, who will drive an LMP2 ORECA for United Autosports. The Brazilian, who has raced predominantly in his homeland since leaving the Jaguar FE squad in 2019, has already been announced for an ELMS campaign with the team in 2023.

Formula 3 race winner Juan Manuel Correa will take part in the test in Prema's ORECA after being brought into its ELMS line-up for the final two races.

GARY WATKINS

Peugeot gets weight break for Bahrain

WEC

Peugeot has received a performance break for this weekend's Bahrain finale to the World Endurance Championship at the same time as Toyota has taken a hit. The French marque gets a weight break for the eight-hour seasonal finale on Saturday, Toyota a power reduction.

The Peugeot 9X8 (right) will race at a minimum weight 12kg lighter – 1049 to 1061kg – than at Fuji in September under the Balance of Performance issued for Bahrain. The Toyota GR010 HYBRID will have lost four kilowatts, or a shade over 5bhp, and will now run at 509kW rather than 513.

The revisions represent the first changes to the balance between the Peugeot and the

Toyota Le Mans Hypercars since the arrival in the WEC of the 9X8 at the Monza round in July. Changes are made under the LMH BoP system according to data accrued over two championship rounds, which the 9X8 has now contested in Italy and then Fuji in September.

Alpine has been given a helping hand for the championship climax, into which drivers Nicolas Lapierre, Matthieu Vaxiviere and Andre Negrão head equal on points with Toyota's Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa. Maximum power of the French marque's Gibson-engined A480 has been increased from 403 to 407kW. The new figure for the Alpine follows a 26kW, or 35bhp, reduction in power for Fuji in the wake of its victory at Monza.



There are also changes to the BoP in what will be the final race for the GTE Pro class. The weights of the Ferrari, Chevrolet and Porsche remain unchanged, but the Ferrari and the Chevrolet will have power reduced from Fuji.

The boost curve for the turbocharged Ferrari 488 GTE Evo has been slightly reduced, while the Chevrolet Corvette C8.R will run an engine air-restrictor reduced in diameter by 0.4mm.

GARY WATKINS

Johnson back in NASCAR in Petty tie-up

NASCAR

Jimmie Johnson will return to the NASCAR Cup Series in 2023 as an owner-driver after the seven-time champion agreed a deal to buy into the Petty GMS Racing squad.

Johnson, who won all of his Cup titles with Hendrick Motorsports, has focused on IndyCar racing and selected IMSA SportsCar outings in the past two years since bringing his NASCAR career to a close in 2020.

The 47-year-old announced in September that he would step back from full-time competition next year and would not return to IndyCar with Chip Ganassi Racing. He has now entered an ownership agreement with Maury Gallagher and chairman Richard Petty at the Petty GMS organisation.

The team currently fields the famed #43 Chevrolet driven by Erik Jones, while Xfinity Series runner-up Noah Gragson will replace Ty Dillon in the #42 car next year. The team will enter a third car in a handful of events



Petty and Johnson have combined 14 NASCAR titles

for Johnson, including the season-opening Daytona 500. It will be his 20th appearance in NASCAR's biggest race, which he has won twice before in 2006 and 2013.

"Having a driver the calibre of Jimmie driving our equipment and being able to provide feedback to our crew chiefs and engineers but, most importantly, mentoring Erik and Noah will be invaluable," said Gallagher. "Perhaps most important of all, Jimmie will be a great partner."

"When the IndyCar season ended I

started on this journey of what was next," said Johnson. "Team ownership makes so much sense at this stage of my career."

• Johnson's part-time 2021-22 Ganassi team-mate Tony Kanaan will drive a fourth Arrow McLaren SP entry in next year's Indy 500. The 2013 winner will join team regulars Pato O'Ward and Felix Rosenqvist as well as new AMSP full-timer Alexander Rossi for his 22nd start in the big race.

NICK DEGROOT



BTCC hybrid rules tweaked for 2023

BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship has tweaked its hybrid deployment rules for 2023, its second season with the system.

Drivers will now only be able to use hybrid for 50% of the racing laps, while restrictions on usage previously applied to the top 10 in the championship or previous race will now affect only the top seven. Furthermore, the minimum speed at which hybrid can be deployed has been cut from 120km/h (75mph) to 115, although for the top seven it has been raised: 135km/h for the top three in points or the previous race; 130 for fourth and fifth; and 125km/h for sixth and seventh.

Series boss Alan Gow explained that the

recommendations had emanated from a BTCC Sporting Working Group comprising two drivers, including 2022 champion Tom Ingram, two team owners and series organiser TOCA. Gow added that they were passed unanimously at a teams' meeting.

The 50% rule was brought in "to put a bit more strategy into what they are doing", said Gow. "This year they had 15 seconds deployment every lap, so all they were doing was cancelling each other out. They were all exiting the corner and pressing the button at the same time. This will also help the frontrunning guy who might have had a DNF in an earlier race and was caught in the pack and couldn't make the progress he should have done."

Other hybrid tweaks include the freedom to now use the boost on the first lap after a safety car, but the minimum time between deployment has been raised to five seconds to prevent drivers using the boost at the end of one lap and into another.

As expected, the option-tyre rule – dropped for 2022 with the introduction of hybrid and increased weight of the cars – is making a comeback next season at all events except Thruxton. All three compounds – hard, medium and soft – must be used during race day at Snetterton and Croft.

The 'Top Ten Showdown' qualifying format has also been expanded, and will be used at five events in 2023.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Hyman set for Japan after American title win

SUPER FORMULA

Anglo-South African Raoul Hyman is set to race in Super Formula next year after clinching the HPD scholarship for winning the Formula Regional Americas title last week.

Hyman clinched the \$600,000 prize by winning the opening race of the season finale at the Circuit of The Americas on Thursday, and is now poised

to become part of Honda's driver roster in Japan's top single-seater series. He is expected to take part in Super Formula's post-season rookie test at Suzuka on 7-8 December, although the identity of the team he will drive for is unclear.

Hyman's FR Americas triumph comes after a two-year hiatus from racing since he raced in FIA Formula 3 in 2019.

He was set to race in Japan

in 2020 in the Super Formula Lights series following a test outing at Suzuka late in 2019 for B-Max Racing/Motopark, but the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant he was unable to take up his seat with the team.

He then sat out the 2021 season entirely before joining the TJ Speed Motorsports squad in FR Americas this year.

JAMIE KLEIN



GAVIN BAKER PHOTOGRAPHY

IN THE HEADLINES

CADILLAC'S 24-HOUR TEST

Cadillac undertook a successful 24-hour test at Sebring last week with its new V-LMDh prototype. The car run by Chip Ganassi Racing completed the test with "very limited downtime", according to a statement from the General Motors marque.

MALONEY TO GET F2 DEBUT

FIA Formula 3 runner-up Zane Maloney will make his Formula 2 debut next week at the Yas Marina finale. The Barbados driver, winner of the 2019 British F4 title, stays with Italian team Trident for his graduation. He replaces Calan Williams, who recently called time on his season, alongside Richard Verschoor.

HAUGER SWITCHES TO MP

F2 race winner Dennis Hauger will switch from Prema Racing to MP Motorsport for his second season in the category in 2023. The Red Bull Junior won the F3 crown with Prema last season but has had an inconsistent F2 campaign and sits 11th in the standings. MP carried Felipe Drugovich to this year's title.

MINI STEPS UP TO F3

Formula Regional European runner-up Gabriele Mini has secured an FIA F3 graduation for 2023, meaning the whole of this year's top three already have a place on the grid. The Sicilian will move up with Hitech Grand Prix. Another driver confirmed is 2021 Regional king Gregoire Saucy, who remains with ART Grand Prix for his second season.

HALSTEAD JOINS BTCC

British GT race winner Nick Halstead is switching codes to the British Touring Car Championship in 2023. The 50-year-old will line up alongside new champion Tom Ingram within the Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai stable for a full season. Halstead contested one BTCC round with Excelr8 in 2021 at Croft as stand-in for the injured Rick Parfitt.



Lappi tipped for Hyundai seat

WRC

Esapekka Lappi appears set to join Hyundai's World Rally Championship squad from Toyota as a replacement for the departing Ott Tanak for 2023.

After losing a drive at M-Sport in 2020, Lappi returned to the WRC's top tier this season, sharing Toyota's third GR Yaris with eight-time world champion Sebastien Ogier. The 31-year-old Finn impressed many by scoring three podiums from his seven events. He appeared likely to continue in his part-time role with Toyota into next year after confirming that negotiations were under way following his last outing of 2022 in Greece in September. Toyota boss Jari-Matti Latvala had also voiced plans to retain the team's driver line-up for 2023.

But confirmation that 2019 world champion Tanak had exercised a clause to end his contract with Hyundai a year early has triggered significant movement in the WRC driver market.

WRC2 champion Andreas Mikkelsen was the initial favourite to secure the vacant drive, but days after the announcement reports emerged from

Finland that Lappi has been offered a deal to join the South Korean marque for 2023.

Lappi's anticipated departure from Toyota will leave a seat free in the third GR Yaris alongside Ogier, who has indicated that he wishes to continue his part-time role next year.

Hyundai still has at least one more seat to fill for 2023. The experienced Dani Sordo is widely thought to be retaining his shared drive in the third car, while several drivers have been linked to emerge as his team-mate to replace Oliver Solberg.

Teemu Suninen strengthened his case for a promotion to the role when he tested Hyundai's Rally1 i20 N for the first time last week in Finland. "For sure, the goal is to get a full-season in Rally1 I would say," he said. "I would still be happy if I could get a few rallies and I'm sure I can be a good support for the team and give my experience from the fast rallies that I know very well."

While contracted to M-Sport for next season, Craig Breen has also been linked with a move back to a part-time role at Hyundai. Former Citroen and Toyota driver Kris Meeke is another on the shortlist.

TOM HOWARD

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PIQUET TAKES VICTORY IN LAMBO FINALS

LAMBO SUPER TROFEO

Ex-Formula 1 driver and Formula E champion Nelson Piquet Jr took victory in the annual Lamborghini Super Trofeo Grand Finals at the Algarve circuit last weekend with a win and a second place in the pair of 50-minute races.

Piquet, who has contested the North American series this year for Ansa Motorsports, finished behind Bonaldi Motorsport pairing Loris Spinelli and Max Weering on Saturday before dominating on Sunday.

“It’s an amazing feeling to win the title but it definitely wasn’t an easy race,” said Piquet, who had to fend off the Wayne Taylor Racing car of Danny Formal in the closing stages.

“I asked my engineer to bleed the tyre pressure a bit more in the pitstop, but it wasn’t enough, so I was struggling in the second stint. I knew that finishing second was enough for the title, but you always want to do it by winning the race.”

The Super Trofeo regional championships also reached their conclusions, with Scot Lewis Williamson picking up the European Pro-Am title with Massimo Ciglia, and 31-time MotoGP race winner Dani Pedrosa recording a breakthrough second-place finish in the same class.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON



EROS MAGGI/LAMBORGHINI



F3 gains Monaco GP support

FORMULA 2/3

Formula 3 will return to the Monaco Grand Prix undercard for the first time since 2005 next season. That’s the big news after the 2023 schedules for the twin FIA Formula 2 and F3 championships were announced.

The Monaco F3 GP was the category’s most prestigious European event from the 1960s until the early 1990s, and continued until 1997. Eight years later, the Euro Series earned a one-off slot at Monte Carlo. GP3, the predecessor to FIA F3, also made one visit to Monaco, in 2012.

It increases the calendar from nine rounds to 10 for F3, which appears to be taking the Monaco slot hitherto occupied by the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine and also makes a long-haul trip to the Australian GP for the first time.

Series CEO Bruno Michel said: “These two very prestigious tracks are the first street circuits to be added to the F3 calendar. They will offer the teams and the drivers an exciting new challenge, and I’m sure that the fans will love seeing the F3 cars race on both layouts.”

All the F3 rounds will take place in conjunction with F2, which keeps to its

2022 level of 14 events, including their British GP supports at Silverstone.

Michel added: “In 2022, we’ve enjoyed more action than ever [in F2], with a total of 28 races, and we wanted to keep this for next season.”

FORMULA 2/3 CALENDAR		
ROUND	VENUE	DATE
1	Sakhir BHR	4-5 March
2	Jeddah SAU*	18-19 March
3	Melbourne AUS	1-2 April
4	Baku AZE*	29-30 April
5	Imola ITA	20-21 May
6	Monte Carlo MCO	26-28 May
7	Barcelona ESP	3-4 June
8	Red Bull Ring AUT	1-2 July
9	Silverstone GBR	8-9 July
10	Hungaroring HUN	22-23 July
11	Spa BEL	29-30 July
12	Zandvoort NLD*	26-27 August
13	Monza ITA	2-3 September
14	Yas Marina ARE*	25-26 November

*No F3 at this event

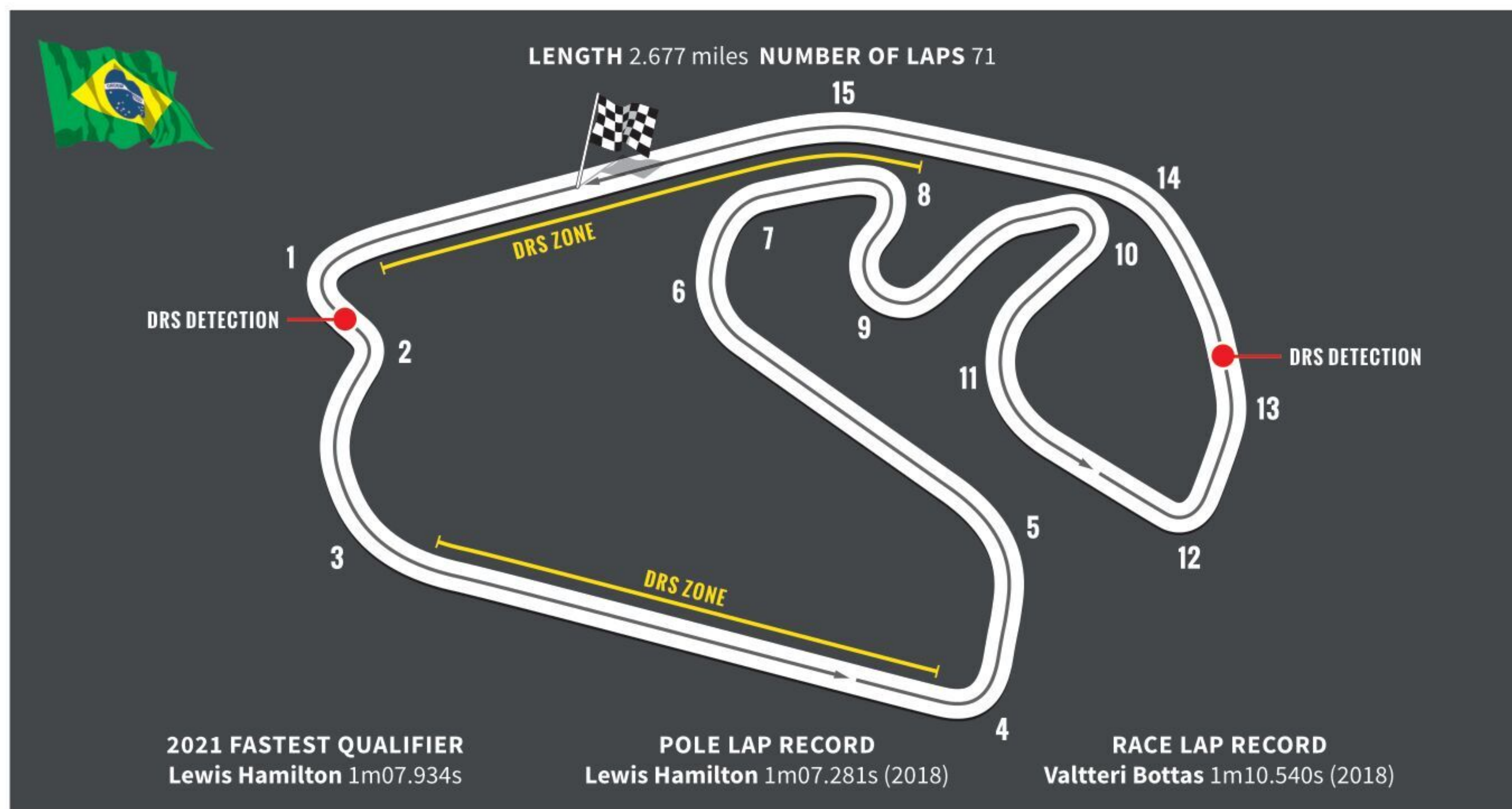
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ROUND 21/22 F1 SAO PAULO GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



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FP1 1530 QUALIFYING 1900

Saturday 12 November
FP2 1530
SPRINT RACE 1930

Sunday 13 November
RACE 1800

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TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	416
2	Perez	280
3	Leclerc	275
4	Russell	231
5	Hamilton	216

Constructors

1	Red Bull	696
2	Ferrari	487
3	Mercedes	447
4	Alpine	153
5	McLaren	146



INTERLAGOS STATS

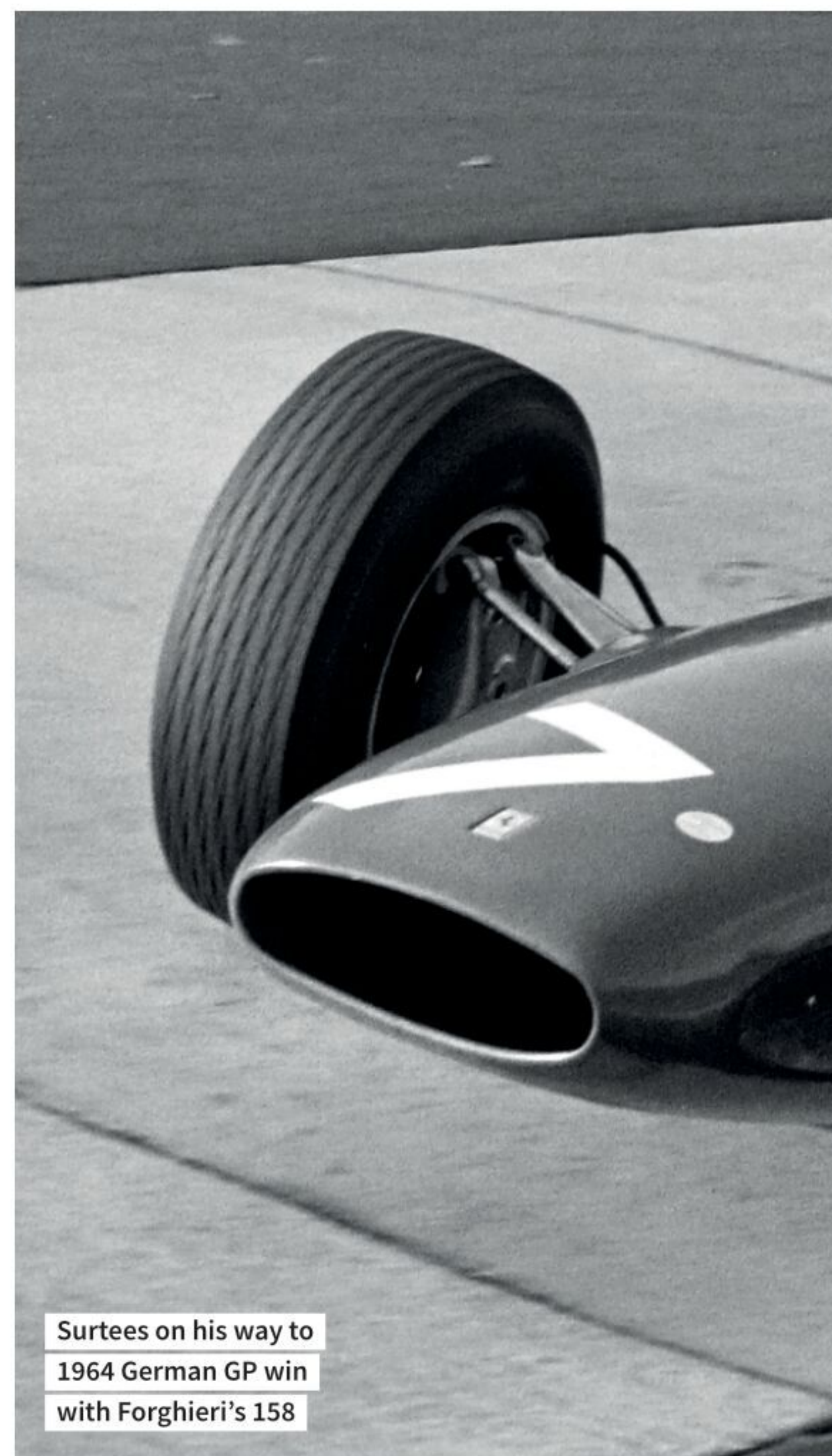
Previous winners

2021	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2019	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Jenson Button	McLaren
2011	Mark Webber	Red Bull



Interlagos points tallies

Hamilton	155
Vettel	154
Alonso	114
Verstappen	90
Bottas	57
Perez	38
Ricciardo	33
Sainz	32
Gasly	24
Leclerc	16



Surtees on his way to
1964 German GP win
with Forghieri's 158

Mauro Forghieri

1935-2022

OBITUARY

Mauro Forghieri, who has died at the age of 87, is widely regarded as one of the key players in the history of Scuderia Ferrari.

His stint with the company as technical director and both chassis and engine designer lasted from 1959 to 1987, encompassing some of its most memorable successes. He is credited by the team with an involvement in 54 grand prix wins and nine world championships.

The fact that he survived for nearly three decades in an organisation noted for internal turmoil and a revolving door of top personnel says much about his close relationship with Enzo Ferrari. They didn't always agree, but the Commendatore had a huge amount of respect for the younger man, and usually backed his vision.

Forghieri was born in Modena in 1935. His father Reclus was a machinist and mechanic who worked with Enzo Ferrari at Alfa Romeo in the 1930s, and again from the early days of the new Ferrari marque after the Second World War.

The younger Forghieri studied mechanical engineering at the University of Bologna, and in 1957 he undertook a form of apprenticeship at Ferrari. At one stage he considered moving to the United

States to work in the aircraft industry, as planes were a big passion. Instead, when he graduated aged 24 in 1959 he stayed closer to home, joining Ferrari full-time.

Working initially under the volatile technical chief Carlo Chiti, Forghieri was involved with the development of the 1.5-litre Formula 1 V6 engine. He was thus part of the team's traumatic 1961 season with the Sharknose 156 in which Phil Hill's world title was overshadowed by the death of Wolfgang von Trips at Monza.

In October that year, Chiti and his key lieutenants were fired following a major fallout with Ferrari, and Forghieri was left as the most qualified engineer at Maranello. Ferrari took the bold decision to put the 26-year-old in charge of the whole racing department. Ferrari had a soft spot for the youngster, thanks to his long relationship with Forghieri's father and the family's origins in the Modena area, and they worked well together.

Paying tribute to Forghieri last week, Enzo's son Piero described what it was like at Maranello in those days. "When I joined the company in 1965, I shared an office with Cavalier Giberti, Ferrari's first employee," he said, "while Mauro Forghieri, taken on a few years earlier, was next door. We were therefore separated by 10 years of age and a window. We

saw each other all day every day.

"Forghieri was energetic and passionate about everything he did. He was sanguine and I recall that in many of those interminable meetings at the Gestione Sportiva, that started in the evening and went on into the night, I mediated between him and my father. I know my father appreciated his tireless work ethic and he knew that any mistakes only came about through an attempt to do something better and to look ahead."

One of Forghieri's early projects was sorting the legendary 250 GTO, and over the years he would oversee the development of a string of classic GT and sportscar machines.

But his main focus was GP racing. The team had a difficult 1962 season with the now outpaced Sharknose, but form picked up after John Surtees joined in 1963, with the Englishman winning the German GP with the updated 156. Forghieri formed a good working relationship with the technically inclined Surtees, and for 1964 he designed the new 158 chassis, which would race with both V8 and flat-12 power.

Surtees won at the Nurburgring and Monza and, helped by a string of solid podium finishes, he clinched the 1964 title at the Mexico finale. Ferrari also



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won the constructors' championship.

The team slipped back to fourth in 1965, the last year of the 1.5-litre formula, failing to win a race. Ferrari also faced intense competition from Ford in sportscar racing, and logged its sixth consecutive and last Le Mans win to date that year with the 250 LM.

For F1's move to three-litre power in 1966, Forghieri designed the 312 chassis and a new V12 engine. As rival new projects struggled to get up to speed, Ferrari had the potential to win the title. But after winning the Belgian GP at Spa, Surtees fell out with team manager Eugenio Dragoni and left, and the opportunity was squandered.

The death of Lorenzo Bandini following a fiery crash in Monaco in 1967 was a major blow for the whole team, and that season there were no race wins. The final years of the decade were difficult for Ferrari. In 1968 Chris Amon took several poles and regularly led races with the 312, but the only success was scored by Jacky Ickx in France. That year Forghieri conducted pioneering experiments with a rear wing, and he persuaded his boss to let him use a full-size windtunnel in Germany, putting a new focus on aerodynamics at a team where engine performance had always been the priority.



Forghieri and Surtees
 revived Ferrari's
 fortunes in 1960s

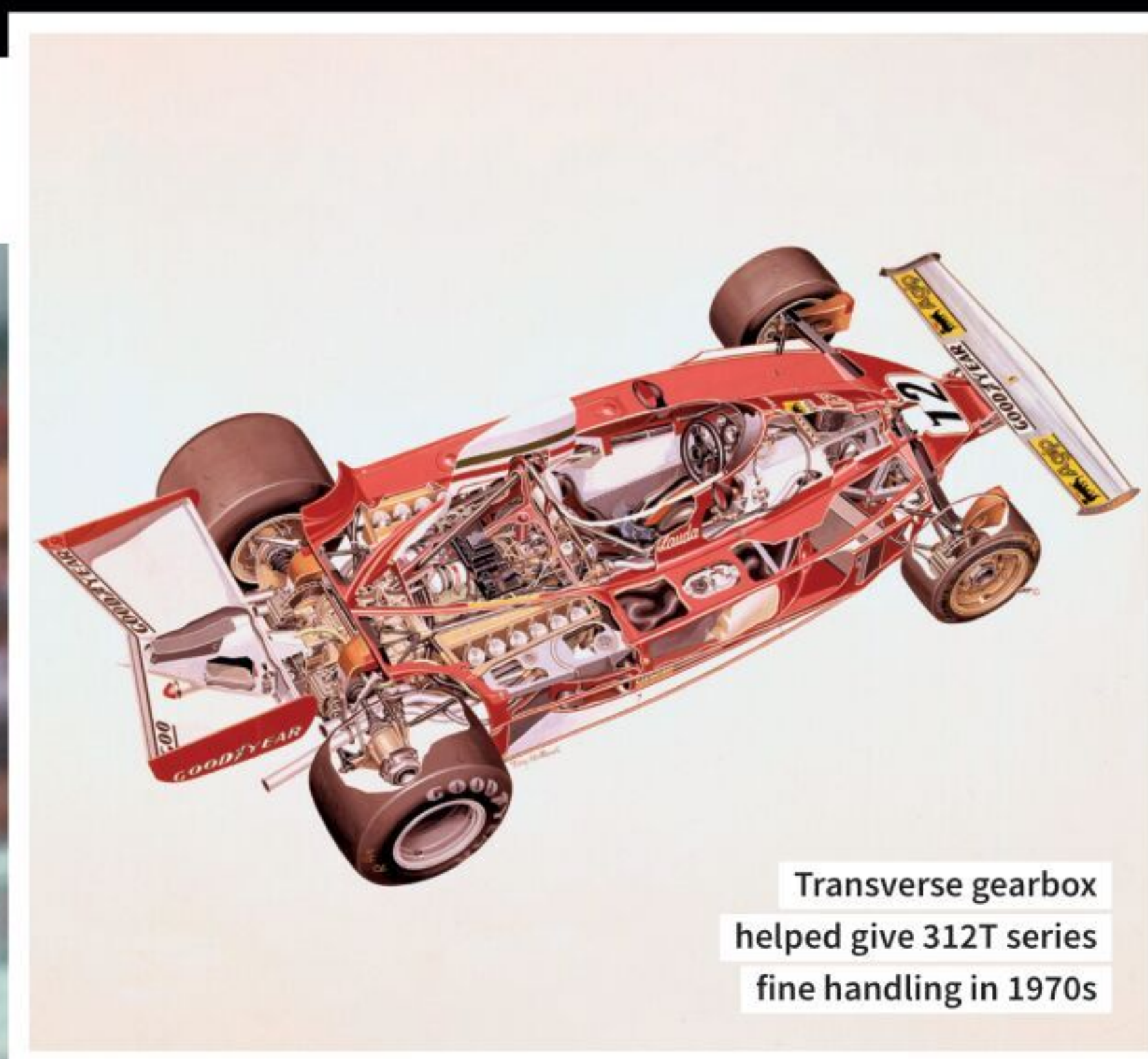
In 1969 Ferrari completed the sale of a shareholding in his company to Fiat, and he invested some of the funds into rebuilding the F1 team after another winless season. Forghieri was given some breathing space in a new Advanced Studies Office in Modena, away from the factory. There he created a new flat-12 engine that provided valuable weight distribution benefits and was a much better overall package than the V12.

The agile 312B chassis that it was mated to in 1970 proved to be very competitive in the hands of Ickx and Clay Regazzoni, with the Belgian winning three races and finishing a close second to the late Jochen Rindt in the title battle.

There would be more wins for Ickx and Regazzoni in 1971-72, despite some issues getting the cars to work with their Firestone tyres, while Forghieri's 312 PB proved successful in sportscar racing. >>



Lauda and the 312T were the combination to beat in 1975



Transverse gearbox helped give 312T series fine handling in 1970s

The Advanced Studies Office moved from Modena to the newly opened Fiorano test track at Maranello but, in 1973 and with Ferrari ill, Forghieri was switched sideways within the company by Fiat. Without him the F1 team lost its way, failing even to log a podium.

Forghieri was recalled to F1 duties by a recovered Enzo at the end of the year, and he would play a key role in an astonishing revival in fortunes. Ferrari's other crucial move was to hire Niki Lauda,

who had made a good impression at BRM in 1973. The young Austrian came in tandem with a returning Regazzoni, who had left Ferrari at the end of 1972 but was still favoured by the team boss.

Lauda and Forghieri quickly established a good relationship, and the engineer appreciated the new arrival's willingness to test as often as necessary, and offer unfiltered feedback. Not since Surtees had the team employed a driver with such an intense interest in technical matters.

"The fact that I was able to test regularly at Fiorano made genuine progress possible," Lauda wrote later. "And meant that Forghieri could be encouraged to experiment and eliminate shortcomings."

The new 312B3, a heavily revised version of the unsuccessful 1973 machine, proved to be very competitive in 1974. Lauda scored his first win in Spain and added another success in Holland, although the results didn't reflect his true pace since he logged nine poles. Regazzoni won in Germany, and the rejuvenated team jumped from sixth to second in the constructors' championship.

For 1975 Forghieri designed the heavily revised 312T, which featured a transverse gearbox ahead of the rear axle as he sought further benefits from optimum weight distribution. The attractive machine propelled Lauda to five GP victories and that year's title, while the team also secured the constructors' crown – both successes were the first achieved since 1964. Lauda later wrote that the 312T was a "permanent monument to Mauro Forghieri's skill, a gem of a car".

Lauda was the dominant force in early 1976, and he was heading for the title with the reworked 312T2 when he crashed at the Nurburgring. He returned to the cockpit just weeks later, but ultimately lost out to James Hunt at the famous Fuji



Lauda's honesty and work ethic helped Forghieri push Ferrari forwards



Final Forghieri F1 title came with constructors' crown in competitive 1983

finale. The constructors' championship provided some compensation for Ferrari.

Lauda bounced back to win his second crown with the 312T2 in 1977, while the team logged a third straight constructors' title. But by then he'd had enough of Ferrari polemics, and he moved on at the end of the year.

The brand new 312T3 was competitive in 1978 and won five championship races in the hands of Carlos Reutemann and Gilles Villeneuve, but it was quickly surpassed by the Lotus 79. Forghieri was obliged to design a ground-effects car for 1979, but the wide flat-12 engine didn't lend itself to the concept. Nevertheless, despite strong competition, the 312T4 proved to be good enough to secure both titles. Jody Scheckter beat team-mate Villeneuve to the last drivers' title achieved on Forghieri's watch, and the last for the team for 21 years.

After an awful 1980 season the team switched to turbo power for 1981 with a V6 overseen by Forghieri. Villeneuve wrestled the difficult 126CK to two famous wins in Monaco and Spain. By then Enzo Ferrari had decided that the chassis department needed some outside knowledge, and he hired Harvey Postlethwaite to design the 1982 car under Forghieri's direction.

The 126C2 represented a huge step

forward and it should have won that year's drivers' championship, but Villeneuve was killed at Zolder, and his team-mate Didier Pironi was badly injured at Hockenheim.

The team did at least win the constructors' title, a feat it repeated in 1983 with Rene Arnoux and Patrick Tambay driving.

F1 was no longer about having one man in charge of a whole project, and Forghieri had less hands-on involvement in the later turbo machines. In 1984 he was moved sideways into road car projects, and in 1987 he finally left the company, just a year before his friend and mentor Enzo died.

Forghieri joined forces with former Ferrari team manager Daniele Audetto and worked for Chrysler-backed Lamborghini on the V12 F1 engine that would be used by the Larrousse, Lotus, Ligier and Minardi teams in 1989-93, and which was also tested at one stage by McLaren. He also had a direct involvement in the Modena team's Lambo 291 car driven by Nicola Larini and Eric van de Poele in 1991, and which rarely qualified.

He left Lamborghini that year and worked for a while on supercar projects at Bugatti, including the EB110. In 1995



Enzo Ferrari knew Forghieri from a young age and trusted him

SCHLEGELMILCH

co-founded Oral Engineering, an R&D and design consultancy that worked for various manufacturers, including Ferrari.

Current F1 team boss Mattia Binotto noted last week that Forghieri was a great motivator with a charismatic personality: "He was appointed as team manager at a young age and, with his brilliant insights, he was one of the last all-round engineers in the car world.

"I met him on various occasions and each time was something special. He was, to the end, a truly charismatic individual. His revolutionary ideas, together with his vibrant nature, abilities as a great motivator, meant he played a very important role in some of the most significant moments of Ferrari's history and he did more than most to fuel the Prancing Horse legend. We will all miss him."

Forghieri's former colleague Piero Ferrari added: "We have lost a part of our history, a man who gave a great deal to Ferrari, and to the world of racing in general."

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F1 still has a 'Class B'

As the first season of Formula 1's new car design era draws to a close, there remains a division that needs to be addressed

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

The 2022 Formula 1 season is nearly over. The main narratives are already closed, with the two titles sealed. But there's one story that's rather gone missing from F1 overall in 2022. It's the nomenclature surrounding previous team success splits that was also a divide on budgets: 'Class A' versus 'Class B'.

As the only official F1 Class B recognition is the 1987 Jim Clark Trophy – contested by drivers not running turbocharged engines and claimed by Tyrrell's Jonathan Palmer – we can trace the recent philosophical class divide to comments made by Haas driver Kevin Magnussen. Back in 2018, the Dane, noting that only Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull drivers had won races in the previous four years, said he was “kind of creating this big championship in my head”. He was doing so to find motivation, with glittering F1 results out of reach for anyone but the three squads that hoovered up all victories from 2014–2019. In 2019, three drivers from 'Class B' stood on the podium alongside the regular visitors. In 2022, McLaren's Lando Norris is the only non-Red Bull, Ferrari or Mercedes driver to do so.

New stories have abounded this year. The competitive order was indeed shaken up, as was the intention behind those new rules, but only really in that Mercedes' W13 design stunningly dropped it from title contention. And Ferrari made good on its promise to get back into the title fight. Yet F1 has crowned the same champion

“The onus is now really on teams such as McLaren and Alpine to finally step up”

from one era to another. The cars have been well received for their dynamic looks and the racing is indeed better if circumstances permit. But the success spread that Norris's sole 2022 podium (he scored one in 2020 and four in 2021, years in which AlphaTauri, Racing Point and McLaren won races) illustrates is backed up by the numbers logging the ultimate pace of each car.

Where in 2021 the whole F1 field was covered by 3.102%, in 2022 this comes down to 2.442%. These gaps are calculated using Autosport's supertimes method, where the quickest times from every weekend are expressed as 100% total and a team's overall campaign speed becomes an average away from that.

But last year, Haas, with its non-developed package driven by two rookies, created an outlier bottom figure. It's therefore better to look instead at Williams being 1.929% off the ultimate 2021

pace in ninth. This then shows that the pace spread across the whole field has actually got worse at the start of the new era. That suggests a clear gulf in class across the grid. And perhaps one statistical reason why there's been little discussion of Class A or B denominations this year is because, on pure pace, it's more like a three-way split.

Ferrari leads the way, with Red Bull just 0.033% behind. But Mercedes' average comes in at 0.828% behind Ferrari's, which, although its development work to cure its porpoising ills has worked well, implies that the Silver Arrows' 15 podiums are more like shock results and that Red Bull and Ferrari should have cleaned up. This gap extends back to Alpine's 1.289% in fourth, with both numbers worse than the 0.761% gap McLaren produced in third in the 2021 calculations. There, Ferrari was fourth and AlphaTauri's 0.789% made it five teams covered by 1%.

This should all worry F1 – mainly because there's not a lot it can do about such gaps now. While Ferrari and Mercedes doing better in 2023 would help, the onus is now really on teams such as McLaren and Alpine to finally step up from 'Class B' and hit the targets they've long set for getting back into championship contention.

The cost cap, allied with F1's recent growth, is a key reason why midfield 'Class B' squads are financially healthier than they were before. And the hope is that by reining in the spending at the bigger teams, it will combine with the inevitable closing of performance gaps through rules stability to allow the success spread to swell too, as has historically happened.

But the spotlight is fixed on the cost cap now, given Red Bull's overspend and punishment. The next problem is that it will be many months before F1 discovers whether the FIA's \$7million fine and windtunnel resource restriction was enough to deter others from sailing too close to the wind or indeed breaking the cap intentionally to find a competitive edge if they can afford it – a luxury only the biggest teams could conceivably afford.

Other than the higher-floor and diffuser changes coming for 2023, F1's technical rules are relatively stable now that the move to lower tyre-blanket temperatures is on its way out. The likely need for all-new tyre compounds for 2024, with the current plan to get rid of the blankets entirely for that season still on, may force more comprehensive redesigns that could close up the field. Or, indeed, spread it out further again.

F1 will surely hope that a campaign like 2010 will unfurl next year, a season with four drivers as title contenders. But the performance gaps logged across 2022 suggest that won't happen without a massive Mercedes revival and Ferrari fixing its key weaknesses. If they do this, talk of Class A versus Class B will inevitably take a back seat and may allow longer reflection to hopefully allow the remaining team gaps to close. 🏁



What next for Ricciardo?

A switch to a test and reserve driver role at F1 powerhouse Mercedes could turn out to be a smart move for the Australian. But it could also spell the end of his career

MATT KEW

Daniel Ricciardo is poised to make a calculated gamble. In only two races' time, he will hit pause on his frontline racing career to seemingly occupy a third driver role. That spell on the sidelines, he hopes, will better position him to bag a plum seat for 2024.

The Australian, bought out of his McLaren contract a year ahead of schedule owing to his current nadir, has admitted to being caught a little off guard by the madness of the driver market silly season just gone. And with Alpine unwilling to reunite with an old flame, while Ricciardo didn't fancy plying his trade towards the back of the grid at Williams or Haas, suddenly his options to retain a race seat looked a little lean.

While Mercedes insists nothing is signed with any driver, Ricciardo appears to be the prime contender to land a test and reserve driver role. For one, there's been noise of such a move since September's Italian Grand Prix. No smoke without fire and all that. Second, with Monza supersub Nyck de Vries being poached by AlphaTauri and Stoffel Vandoorne cutting ties with the Three-Pointed Star to defend his Formula E crown with DS Penske, Mercedes has a vacancy that needs filling. Aside from helping with the development of its ground-effects car, should Lewis Hamilton or George Russell be forced to miss a race, the team could do a lot worse than Ricciardo. It's a move that makes absolute sense where the Silver Arrows are concerned.

It's certainly more of a risk for Ricciardo. For some time, it's been clear that Russell is the future of Mercedes. He will be the sporting face of the marque come Hamilton eventually retiring. Hence why he is under lock and key with a "long-term" deal. But now that the seven-time champion's stance has softened — he says he will absolutely sign an extension beyond his current 2023 deal — there will be no room at the Mercedes inn for 2024 should Ricciardo have ever considered it to be a plausible option to replace Hamilton.

If the Mercedes reserve role does come to pass, perhaps the shrewdest part of Ricciardo's backseat switch will be aligning himself with Toto Wolff. Russell, Valtteri Bottas and Esteban Ocon (who also was forced into a year on the sidelines at Mercedes) are all proof that good things happen to those close to the Austrian. While Ricciardo, 33, is considerably older than those three were when Wolff helped them make their career-defining moves, he is an eight-time grand prix winner and has time on Hamilton (37) and Fernando Alonso (41). With Wolff backing his corner, Ricciardo can certainly engineer that expertise into a comeback.

Nevertheless, if that is the end goal, as before, it can only be described as a calculated gamble. The chain of events that followed Sebastian Vettel announcing his retirement, with Alonso jumping ship to Aston Martin and the Alpine-McLaren contract saga over Oscar Piastri, shows how quickly the driver market can move. While there might not be an FIA F3 and F2 champion knocking on the door to F1 anything like as loudly as Piastri was, Ricciardo could again find himself caught out.

Certainly, having watched that famous, broad smile diminish as a torrid 2022 term has worn on, a year out of F1 to rekindle the love for the top flight might help Ricciardo no end. Given his achievements and experience, he can be an asset to most teams and arguably would improve the driver line-up of all but Mercedes and Ferrari should he hit the heights of his Red Bull and Renault peaks. Of course, though, that is a big question mark.

However, there is no guarantee that Ricciardo comes back at all, no matter how much he might want to. His stock has fallen considerably after his toils in the McLaren. An unlikely victory at Monza aside (not forgetting that even then, Norris was the quicker of the two MCL35M drivers) doesn't fully repair the damage of what have been two hugely underwhelming seasons.

The big-money move to Renault for 2019 might also create a scenario where Ricciardo and a team cannot agree terms. Either because he reckons he deserves a bigger paycheque, or he is overlooked altogether under the assumption that he will ask for too high a salary in the first place, so it's not even worth opening talks — albeit it's his management's job to dispel that notion.

All told, we could be entering what are Ricciardo's two final races in F1, regardless of how much we hope that isn't the case. F1 is a fickle business after all. Should that turn out to be true, it is surely better to go into Brazil and Abu Dhabi aware that Ricciardo might not come back, and therefore celebrate his career. If Ricciardo is dead set on a comeback, he won't want to acknowledge that his time could plausibly be up. That attitude is too defeatist. But as the planned 2002 sabbatical for Mika Hakkinen or the 11th-hour replacement of Rubens Barrichello at Williams for 2012 proved, every now and again, an F1 hero can unwittingly bow out to almost no fanfare. ❧



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YOUR SAY

If the track was so wet as to have deemed a safety car start necessary, then should a larger leeway for track limits have been allowed?

SIMON SCOTT

Ups and downs of Formula Ford

I spectated all weekend at both the Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy. Some tremendous racing but also frustrations.

At Brands the big problem was obviously the truncated final, which seems to largely be down to the BRSCC trying not to alter the timetable, even though the scheduled late time for the Grand Final meant there was absolutely no margin – as we all sadly found out.

At Silverstone, the HSCC should be commended, firstly for having a more sensible time for the Grand Final, which allowed some flex, but also for shortening races to make sure the final was going to happen. This foresight proved invaluable when the heavens opened at lunchtime, preventing racing from restarting on time.

But it wasn't all good news. Both 'historic' finals were started behind safety cars, which led to the most spread-out FF races I have ever witnessed. From the viewpoint I had, the track appeared suitable for a proper grid start. The Grand Final, fortunately, was a standing start and as dramatic as ever. However, after a three-hour drive home, I then find that two of the three FF finals were not won by the person I saw take the chequered flag.

I feel sorry for Cam Jackson (right) who dominated the Janet Cesar races and was then slapped with a penalty for track limits. If the track was so wet as to have deemed a safety car start necessary, then should a larger leeway for track limits have been allowed? Such a shame for Jackson after a great drive in tricky conditions. But rules are rules. However, I really do not feel the change of result in the WHT Grand Final was warranted. I saw the Mills/Esterson clash from a distance and thought there might be a protest. But, on seeing video footage, it shows Esterson lost the rear end on a damp track before running wide into Mills who was alongside. Not intentional by Esterson but a 'racing incident' in my opinion. It was a hard-fought race and that is what spectators want. I was rooting for Joey Foster but I am sure he will not have been happy to take victory in this manner.

My *cri de coeur* to the powers that be is to not let serious club racing go down the silly route taken by Formula 1, applying contentious penalties that spoil races for the spectator. Especially when we don't find out until hours later!

Simon Scott
North Yorkshire



Let WEC take care of itself

Although I respect last week's letter from Steve Singleton, it must have been tongue in cheek. Formula 1 is the pinnacle of motorsport, Max and co have nothing to prove.

WEC is just about to enter another golden age, which is fantastic for us – my only thought is getting the 1000km back to Silverstone. However much we love F1, let WEC take care of itself then we will have two different, great series to enjoy.

David Larkin
Market Deeping

Captivating image of a new champion

I just wanted to show my appreciation for the BTCC review (3 November) and the amazing image of Tom Ingram sitting at a dark Brands Hatch among the ticker-tape looking at the BTCC trophy. In that single image you can see just how much it means to Tom to have achieved his ambition.

I have had the pleasure of meeting Tom on a couple of occasions and have found him extremely pleasant and patient with his fans.

Congratulations to Tom, and thank you Autosport.

Dave Jacobs
By email

Have your say, get in touch

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‘YOU’RE STUCK WITH ME FOR QUITE A BIT LONGER!’

The disappointment of Abu Dhabi 2021 was followed by the challenge of the troubled W13, but Lewis Hamilton hasn’t had enough of F1 just yet...

MATT KEW

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Partisanship is fundamental to all sport for there is such an enormous thrill to be had in supporting a team through its highs and lows. The acrimony that's hung over Formula 1 since the 2021 title decider in Abu Dhabi has also typified how draining and toxic these allegiances can be.

Eleven months after that event, Red Bull finally learning of its fate for exceeding the cost cap last season and, rightly or wrongly, boycotting Sky Sports during the recent Mexican Grand Prix after declaring the broadcaster to be 'sensationalist', ensures that the controversy has not dissipated. But for the good of the entire motorsport community and its audience, at some point the time must surely come to definitively move on. One person at the very centre of the saga, someone who has a right to feel particularly aggrieved, is adamant he's done just that.

Lewis Hamilton's mentality has shifted since pre-season testing. On the eve of the second ground-effects era, he was emphatic that, with enough time away from F1 over the winter break, he had switched his focus on coming back stronger to be "the best you've ever seen". But the seven-time champion also talked of a need to see accountability and regain trust in the powers that be. For instance, although Hamilton reckons he didn't feel specifically targeted in the closing laps of last season when he was unseated by Max Verstappen, he does allude to 'people speaking into his ear', which is almost certainly in relation to FIA race director Michael Masi, ousted from his post ahead of this season.

Hamilton's approach at the start of this term seemed to be more one of putting a lid on what had happened on 12 December 2021

rather than fully making peace with the handling of that late safety car. Whether any elite sportsperson dedicating three decades of their life to a particular cause could ever truly come to terms with such a scenario is known only to them. But in public at least, Hamilton is now crystal clear. Despite Mercedes boss Toto Wolff saying he still thinks about Abu Dhabi "every day", and those rumours emerging in early 2022 that a then-silent Hamilton was weighing up quitting F1, it seems enough time has now passed.

"Feels like years ago," the Brit begins a candid and considered interview with select media at the recent United States GP. "It was definitely spirit-breaking, or soul-crushing, whatever you want to call it. Was I ever truly not going to come back? I am not one to give up like that."

He goes on: "I've moved on from it. I refuse to live in the past. When you hold on to some negativity, when you hold on to hate or whatever it is, it's just holding you back." This was a resolve tested once again when speculation of Red Bull's overspending first broke into the mainstream around the time of the Singapore weekend a few weeks ago. "I'm going up and I am going forwards, regardless of what's happened in the past," he continues. "I chose not to dwell on it. There is nothing I can do about back then. I gave everything. Like, I gave *everything*, and I sacrificed. But I am willing to do it again. That's what I'm trying to work towards."

Nevertheless, he had to get away. "I spent time with my family and that was the best part of the healing," he adds. "I just gave all of my time to the kids [his niece and nephew], building snowmen and just being present with them. That enabled me to really recover, really bounce back. If I wasn't with them, I would have been stuck in a hole."

While that's a more low-key getaway compared to Hamilton's past forays into the world of fashion or a session in the recording studio, it still tallies with what we've known about his methods for some time. He can get the best out of himself by focusing on ventures away from F1 rather than solely burning the midnight oil in the Brackley factory or pounding around unrelentingly in the simulator for the sake of a tenth of a second.

None of that downtime means his preparation for 2022 was easy, though. While 23-time Olympic gold medallist Michael Phelps and Formula E champion Antonio Felix da Costa, among many other high-profile sports stars, have discussed the pitfalls of success – how they struggled to gee themselves up for the next season after achieving a long-held ambition – Hamilton faced a similar mental hurdle when readying himself for the first campaign in five years when he wasn't about to defend the crown.

"I would say getting back into training was not easy," he explains. "It's not like you can just say, 'OK, right, motivation's there.' It definitely took a minute for me to build back in. I stayed training through the phase. I generally try to keep my fitness up. I didn't take a week off or two weeks off and not do any training. I tried to keep in rhythm. So, it wasn't actually that I was unfit and had to climb a mountain. But still, just having that drive to keep on pushing each day and dig deeper and push your body and mind further..."

"When you have won seven world titles and more races [103] than anyone, just tapping into what keeps you hungry... because I don't want to be less hungry than I was when I started. If I can't find that, then I don't feel there's any reason to continue. I wanted to come back stronger and that's why I came back [with a] fighting mentality. But then we had all the dramas with the car."

When the first iteration of the Mercedes W13 was unveiled to the world on 18 February in a presentation streamed from Silverstone, many quite understandably thought they were clapping eyes on a creation that would be at the heart of the forthcoming championship fight. And why wouldn't they, since this was an operation that had not long won its eighth consecutive constructors' title, having already maintained its dominance across one major regulation change in 2017? Ahead of the car hitting the track for the first time in a shakedown that afternoon, everyone at the team believed they too were looking at a potential world-beater. Then the realisation soon struck that, after picking themselves up from the >>



Hamilton had to dig deep after the 2021 finale

COATES

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CAR I HAVE EVER DRIVEN”**



Singapore GP provided
a rare 2022 opportunity but
ended in disappointment



**NO ADS.
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Testing soon
revealed issues
with the W13

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events of Abu Dhabi, the whole crew would all immediately need to dig deep once again.

“We sat in February, and we were all upbeat,” Hamilton recalls. “They were all telling us we were going to have a massively quick car, and I’m sure everyone who was working on it was so hyped with all the hard work they put in through the winter. It’s such a gruelling time for everyone in the team. That’s when they really crunch and put in the crazy hours. In normal life, you expect that period to be a more relaxed time for people. To then find out the damn thing doesn’t work, and we’ve got bouncing, that was hard for everybody. Everyone was really struggling.

“We all went through our own process of how to deal with it. But I think, surprisingly, it’s been a really powerful, transformational time for us all. We’ve got stronger and tighter as a team.”

As the new generation of cars rolled out for the first pre-season test at Barcelona, and Red Bull had finally taken the covers off its dramatic RB18, the litany of issues that would come to hobble the W13 soon made themselves apparent. Even though an already heavily evolved racer with its size-zero sidepods was in development and would soon be unleashed when running commenced in Bahrain a fortnight later, it was still clear from day one in Spain that Mercedes was among the worst afflicted by the return of this strange porpoising sensation.

Although the data on the computer screen indicated to the Brackley design office that it had crafted another possible standard-bearer, you didn’t need a degree in engineering to realise that something had gone badly amiss in the transition to the circuit. Just watching trackside, you could see the car violently pogo all the way down the main straight before respite finally came with the braking zone into Turn 1. That bouncing hogged the headlines, but the W13 has been further blighted by excessive drag and persistent tyre warm-up headaches.

Hamilton soon knew he wasn’t driving a machine that would require him to extend his trophy cabinet. “I had a feeling when I first drove the car,” he says. “But you can never say never. Maybe we would have fixed it by the first race. Who knows? It’s sometimes difficult to know how long it’s going to take to fix those things. Plus, I’d never had bouncing like that. The guys didn’t expect it to take as long as it’s taken them to understand what’s causing the bouncing. They’ve had to create new tools, all these things we didn’t have before.”

Hamilton headed the Silver Arrows charge when he qualified fifth for the Bahrain curtain-raiser. But the more revealing metric was lapping 0.68 seconds slower than the Ferrari F1-75 of polesitter Charles Leclerc. A retirement for both Red Bulls salvaged a podium.



Problem solving has been a key part of 2022 for Mercedes

WOLFGANG WITZEL FOR MERCEDES-BENZ AG

The following round in Saudi Arabia was worse still. Hamilton was eliminated in Q1 for the first time since a crash in Brazil in 2017. A point was mustered with 10th in the race. Hamilton then wouldn't beat his new stablemate George Russell until round nine in Canada. And as a legacy, ahead of a return to Interlagos this weekend, he sits 15 points in arrears of the former Williams racer down in fifth overall. This gave rise to a narrative that Hamilton might have had his day, that he should retire, that the student had already become the master. But it wasn't quite so straightforward, since the elder statesman was taking a hit by deploying his 16 seasons of top-flight experience to lead the troubleshooting.

"George and his team, they don't experiment the same obviously," explains Hamilton. "But that's because I've been here for a long time. I have the big, deep conversations with people I've been with for 10 years, so me and [Andrew Shovlin, trackside engineering director] can have constructive arguments. George, it's his first year with the team so he's come in and he's just doing his job to the best of his ability. Very little movement of set-up. I'm doing back and forwards, here and there, different wings. All these different things, and I like that anyway.

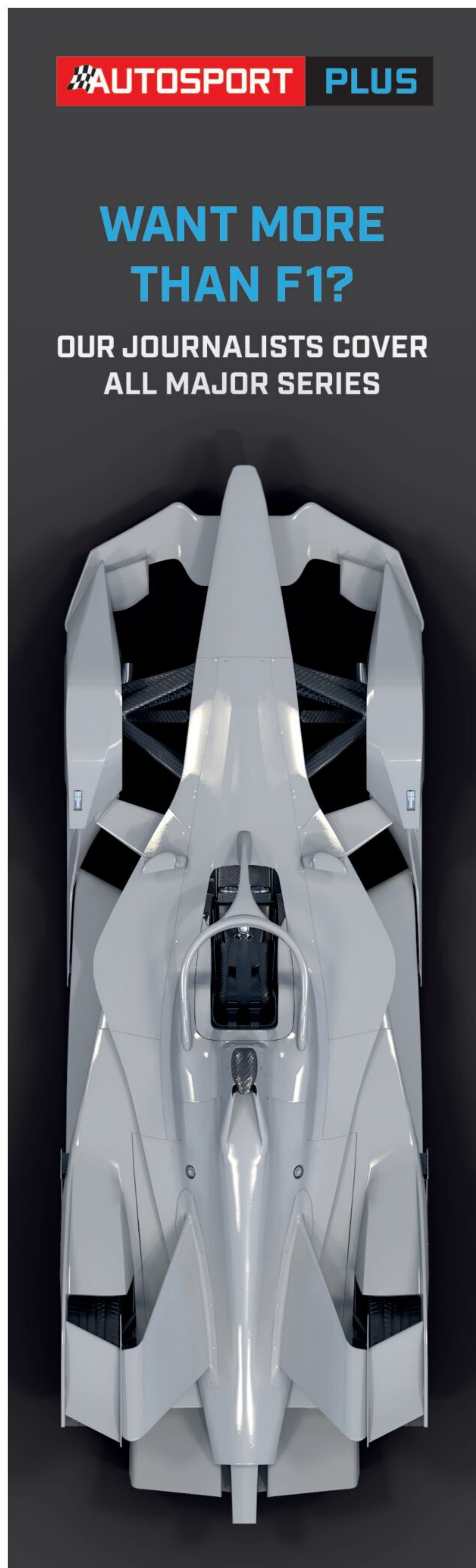
"I have tried everything. I've tried every setting you can possibly do. That's what I was doing at the beginning of the year. The whole idea of performing at your best and getting the best result from each weekend would be nice, but I was really about problem solving. I will sacrifice this session or all the sessions to be able to find more data and information so that when we go back to the factory, they've got a better understanding of what's going on. But it ultimately hindered a lot of the weekends."

Despite Hamilton bearing the brunt of radical set-ups that had the car's rear axle raised as high as it would go in one practice and slammed into the ground the next, conventional methods of playing around with springs and dampers to better control the W13's ride and stalling airflow had been exhausted. That left it to updates to refine the car's aerodynamics to provide a fix, which they didn't.

"You just hold on to hope," Hamilton continues. "The next upgrade comes, and it doesn't work, and the next one comes and doesn't work. Imagine the people that are building those things and they are seeing performance in the windtunnel, but not seeing it on the track.

"Ah, Jesus. You just keep getting knocked back down. But what doesn't kill you makes you stronger and we're still standing tall. It's not going to be easy to change the car into a leading car for next year, but I think we have a much better understanding of why the car is the way it is."

Yet again, Hamilton and his colleagues would have their mental >>



“IT’S JUST A CONFUSING
OVERALL YEAR OF EMOTIONS”

Second place in France was
part of a run of five podiums
during the summer

Hamilton feels he has
become a better team
player this season

SUTTON

JIRI KRENEK FOR MERCEDES-BENZ GRAND PRIX LTD

resilience put to the test as the season wore on, and updates to the W13 didn't break its bad habits. His and Russell's brains and bodies were also suffering physically. The images of 37-year-old Hamilton gingerly twisting himself out of the cockpit after 51 laps around the bumpy streets of Baku at 208mph will live long in the memory. Four days later, the FIA announced plans to begin measuring the vertical oscillations exerted on drivers amid concerns over the long-term health impacts.

Little wonder Hamilton describes the W13's mannerisms as like a bucking bronco: "The car kicks. I described it to my engineers the best I could. It's like you are creeping up behind a horse and you're trying to get as close as possible. What's the breaking point before it kicks you in the face? You know it's going to hurt when it hits your face! That's one of the best ways I can say when you're trying to lean on the car and it's snapping and unrecoverable. This car, it's random... the most unpredictable that I've ever driven." Austria was a prime example, when both Mercedes drivers were spat off into the barriers in Q3 without a moment's notice.

Russell chalked top-five finishes in all but his home race (he was involved in Zhou Guanyu's terrifying first-lap Silverstone shunt) until he got to Singapore in October. Hamilton, meanwhile, enjoyed a run of five straight podiums between the Canadian and Hungarian GPs. Regardless, the W13 remained largely immune to set-up changes, and no one upgrade package yielded a silver bullet. All told, heads began to drop. "From the initial phase, at the beginning, it didn't feel too difficult," says Hamilton. "But definitely, it starts to wear down on you."

"Then all of a sudden, we start having those races where we get into second and then the next race. The car one weekend is good. Then it's one, two, three, four not good, then it pops up. So, you don't know. It's just a confusing overall year of emotions."

"The engineers say, 'OK, we've got an upgrade that's worth three tenths'. You get there and it's a tenth slower. You're, 'Oh shoot'. I think I've learned just not to get my hopes up on anything. It's better to kind of under-expect."

Of course, there is value to be found in adversity. It provides an opportunity to learn and, through the frustration, can galvanise a team. In response to not challenging for race wins every weekend, Hamilton has found himself needing to adopt a slightly revised role to better handle the hardship than he might have done in the past. He reckons he has been "a better team-mate to my colleagues than I have ever before", something that has come through spending more time at Brackley to boost morale. Being on site has also "magnified" his appreciation for how hard the team is working.

"These guys here are just leaving the race and back in the factory Monday morning, not even taking a morning off," says Hamilton. "I'm having to remind them, 'Hey, man, take some time for yourself because you're going to burn out. I need you strong in the next week.' [I am] remembering I need to do that also."

Objectively, the currently winless W13 is the worst car of Hamilton's career since the 2009 McLaren MP4-24. But even then, he scored victories in Hungary and Singapore. In that context, it would be understandable for Hamilton to wait until he is a decent chunk into next season to see if sufficient progress has been made before taking stock as the final year of his current Mercedes contract comes to an end. But his stance on his F1 future has softened greatly.

Ahead of the Bahrain test, it was announced that Verstappen had signed a deal with Red Bull until the end of 2028. It was put to Hamilton that he will be 43 when that runs out, to which he responded: "I don't plan on being here close to that age." Then, when speculation arose at Monza that Daniel Ricciardo might be in line for a Mercedes reserve driver role in 2023, Hamilton was asked about the prospect of the Australian replacing him the year after. The tone was much lighter. He replied that he felt fitter and healthier than ever, adding that he had no plans to walk away — before apologising to Ricciardo.

And now, his intentions are firm and on the record. Despite the storm of Abu Dhabi, the noise of a Red Bull cost cap breach, the



underperforming W13, even foe-turned-ally Sebastian Vettel showing it can be done by announcing his plans to retire at the end of this season, Hamilton is to race on. When the relative calm of the winter arrives, negotiations with Mercedes will begin.

"At the end of the year, you're sitting there trying to figure it out," says Hamilton. "I'm trying to analyse my year and analyse like my next three to five-year plan. Where do I see myself? What are the things I want to do? What are my goals?"

"I'm adding in lots of business things," adds the new stakeholder in American football team the Denver Broncos. "I have a lot of successful, really positive things that have lots of opportunity for success outside [of F1]. But I want to keep racing. I love what I do. I've been doing it for 30 years, and I don't feel that I should have to stop. I think I'm currently still earning my keep. I want to do better still. I am planning to be here longer."

Although it's not quite the full 180 from his position in Bahrain eight months ago, Hamilton does now say: "Do I imagine myself being here beyond 40? Maybe." Sporting icons and his friends Serena Williams (41) and Tom Brady (45) have set the precedent there. But precise age aside, he is emphatic. Despite having the enthusiasm, opportunity, money and platform to solely dedicate himself to his off-track pursuits, the grand prix grid is where it's at. An eighth world title is still the aim.

There is no 'if' about extending his stay with Mercedes beyond the end of 2023. It's only a question of 'when'. Hamilton says of his future with the Three-Pointed Star: "We are going to do another deal. We're going to sit down and we're going to discuss it in these next couple of months."

"My goal is to continue to be with Mercedes. I've been with Mercedes since I was 13. And it really is my family. They've stuck with me through thick and thin. They stuck with me through being expelled at school. They stuck with me through everything that was going on through 2020 [his fierce advocacy of Black Lives Matter in the turbulent wake of the killing of George Floyd]. They've stuck with me through my mistakes, and shit that's been in the press. They've stuck with me through the ups and downs."

"And so, I really believe in this brand. I believe in the people that are within the organisation. I want to be the best team-mate I can be to them, because I think we can make the brand even better, more accessible, even stronger than it is. I think I can be an integral part of that."

"I could stop now. I have lots of other things in the pipeline that I will be super-focused on and super-busy. So, I'm here for the sheer love of working in the organisation that I'm in. You're stuck with me for quite a bit longer!"



NASCAR

Should NASCAR ban Chastain's wild last-corner move?

Perhaps this was NASCAR's greatest-ever Hail Mary — an American football term for a desperate attempt to score late in a game — but will Ross Chastain's last-corner charge into the Playoffs be allowed to ever happen again?

CHARLES BRADLEY

 PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES


“T

he best thing of 2022 in motor racing!” Fernando Alonso spoke for many after Ross Chastain’s ‘Hail Melon’ move at Martinsville — Chastain freely admits he put more thought into naming it than the move itself, which quickly went viral on social media.

Part inspiration, part insanity: if you haven’t seen it already, Chastain didn’t lift off, didn’t even brake for Turn 3 on the final lap of the recent NASCAR Cup Series Playoff race, but instead kept his throttle foot nailed to the boards and actually changed up to top gear — traditionally never used at NASCAR’s tightest track.

Chastain deliberately drove into the SAFER barrier to rim-ride the turn as fast as he possibly could, and in doing so made the cut for the Championship Four finale last weekend in Phoenix. It made Cole Trickle going low, instead of high, to pass Russ Wheeler in *Days of Thunder* look lame. Heck, Tom Cruise’s character didn’t even celebrate his wins properly; Chastain habitually destroys a watermelon from the roof of his car! >>

The true brilliance of the Melon Man's move was its total commitment, inspired by a video game he used to play with his brother on a Nintendo GameCube. Yes, he was helped by the toughness of NASCAR's Next Gen car – all the wheels were still pointing in the right direction at the finish when previous bodies would likely have crumpled – but the speed he needed to gain those five spots was considerable. One thing to think about it, quite another to pull it off successfully.

"It's wild because in, like, the same breath I can get excited for what we've accomplished and scared to death about what we've accomplished," he admits. "[Action sports hero] Travis Pastrana said the difference between brilliance and stupidity is success. This one is brilliant because it succeeded."

The physics of the move

It's been reported that data pulled from Chastain's beaten-but-unbowed Chevrolet showed a top speed that was up to 50mph faster than a regular lap – he bounced along the wall for a full four seconds, and his momentum was such that he still had the speed to ram into the back of Brad Keselowski before the finish line.

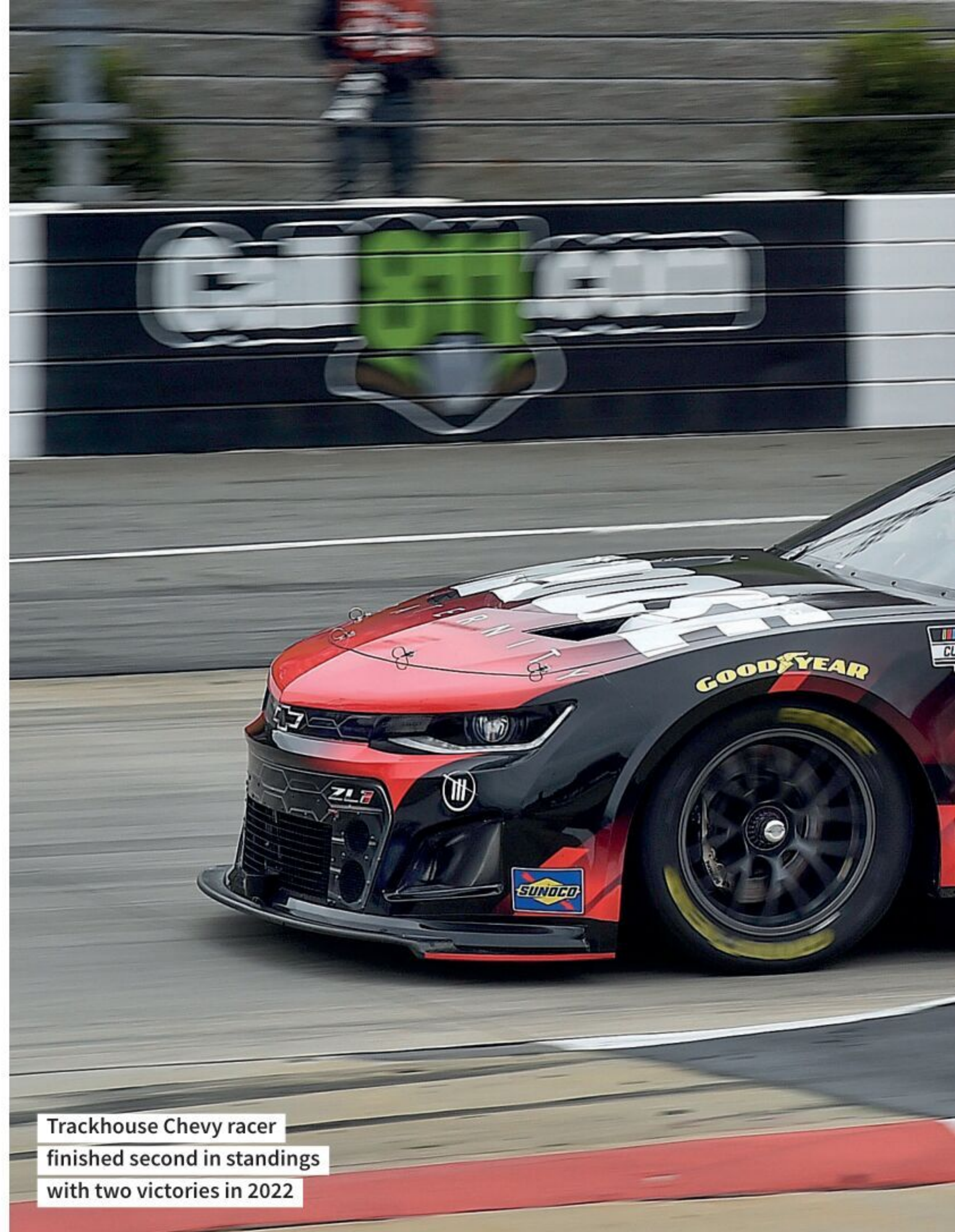
Chastain's 18.845-seconds final lap was faster than Kyle Larson's pole-winning time and also eclipsed the previous track record held by Joey Logano, set in March 2014, at 18.898s. The fastest lap of the race until then was 20.020s, set Kyle Larson on lap seven of the 500, and Chastain's new track record lap gained almost two seconds on third-placed Ryan Blaney at Martinsville on that fateful last tour; Mike Wheeler, 23XI Racing director of competition, estimated that Chastain pulled about 5g as he rattled around the wall.

"I look at the physics of it, I have people explain to me what happened, what I felt, why that car did not slow down, why it kept air in the tyres," says Chastain. "The right front suspension broke, the right front upper control arm is broken, but I was able to get across the line before I could feel it."

"Why it worked, I don't know. My brain could not comprehend, my bandwidth was shot when I entered Turn 3 and I grabbed fifth gear. Everything went blurry. I couldn't comprehend it. I have no ideas or plans to ever do that again because it was not pleasant."

Reaction from his peers

Opinion between drivers was split in the aftermath. The majority, even Kevin Harvick (who tends to keep his praise to himself), were impressed that Chastain had gone for and executed the move. But others, notably Larson (who tried a similar manoeuvre to pass Denny Hamlin at Darlington's Southern 500 in 2021), labelled it "embarrassing" and, to be fair, admits now he wished he hadn't tried his own move.



Joey Logano (right) added: "Now the box is open, right? This wall riding is going to be a play. That's not good. I mean, it was awesome, it was cool. It happened for the first time, there's no rule against it."

On media day, Logano got to confront Chastain about it: "You obviously thought about this for a while – you had to have..."

"Nobody believes me," he replies.

Logano: "I've thought about doing this for years, I just never had the reason to actually do it and you did..."

Chastain: "I'm telling you man, I did not, no."

Apart from driver banter, the grown-ups in the NASCAR garage also had their say. Veteran crew chief and now vice-president of competition at Hendrick Motorsports Chad Knaus has frowned upon it becoming an option in the long term. "I don't know how I feel about it deep in my heart to be honest with you," he said. "I think it's a good one-time thing. I don't think the industry needs to see that kind of thing happening consistently. I think that could be a problem, right?"

"I think there's a few knock-ons that could go wrong. For instance, I've seen cars hit with the right sides and climb up on the wall. So what happens if you commit to that and you climb up into the wall and ship off into the stands? There's a lot of safety things to go on – what if you hit that access gate? What if you ricochet off that wall into somebody else? There's a lot of bad things that can happen with that. But, the way the game is right now, it's a Hail Mary move and it's there and it's legal."

So what happens next?

In the wake of Martinsville, NASCAR chief operating officer Steve O'Donnell made it clear that Chastain's move was "within the rules". "As with anything you see for the first time, you've got to take a look," said O'Donnell (above, right). We've had a number of discussions internally about that move and what-ifs. [It's] something we can





JARRETT/NKP



it should be less effective or even feasible on faster tracks, although Larson proved its potential at Darlington.

And what of safety? The only second-thought Chastain had mid-move was that the track's access gate might fail – Martinsville is so small that there's no vehicle tunnel, so hauliers have to drive to the centre of the track across the racing surface itself via an opening in the concrete wall. Mike Harmon and Michael Waltrip both survived two brutal crashes at Bristol when the access gate burst open, slicing their cars into shrapnel, in genuine accidents.

"Halfway through the corner I saw [the gate], and I had not thought about that," Chastain admits. "I did see it when I was in the middle of the corner, but it was too late. Testament to the wall."

Also, do all SAFER walls react in exactly the same way? Will they stand up to repeated abuse if everyone tries to gain spots like this on the final lap? And who foots the bill for the damage? The Next Gen cars were meant to save the team bosses money...

If NASCAR does nothing going into 2023, it would certainly risk some potentially farcical situations being played out, but it's actually quite a difficult rule to write if you think about it – how would you word what is essentially an 'intentional barrier charge'?

You could set a time limit rubbing against the fence, like they do with locked-in tandem drafting at superspeedways in some series. Perhaps the best way would simply be objective and call it an illegal 'offensive charge' like you get in basketball. Or treat it like going below the yellow line on a superspeedway – you can't pass someone if you're

evaluate in the off-season."

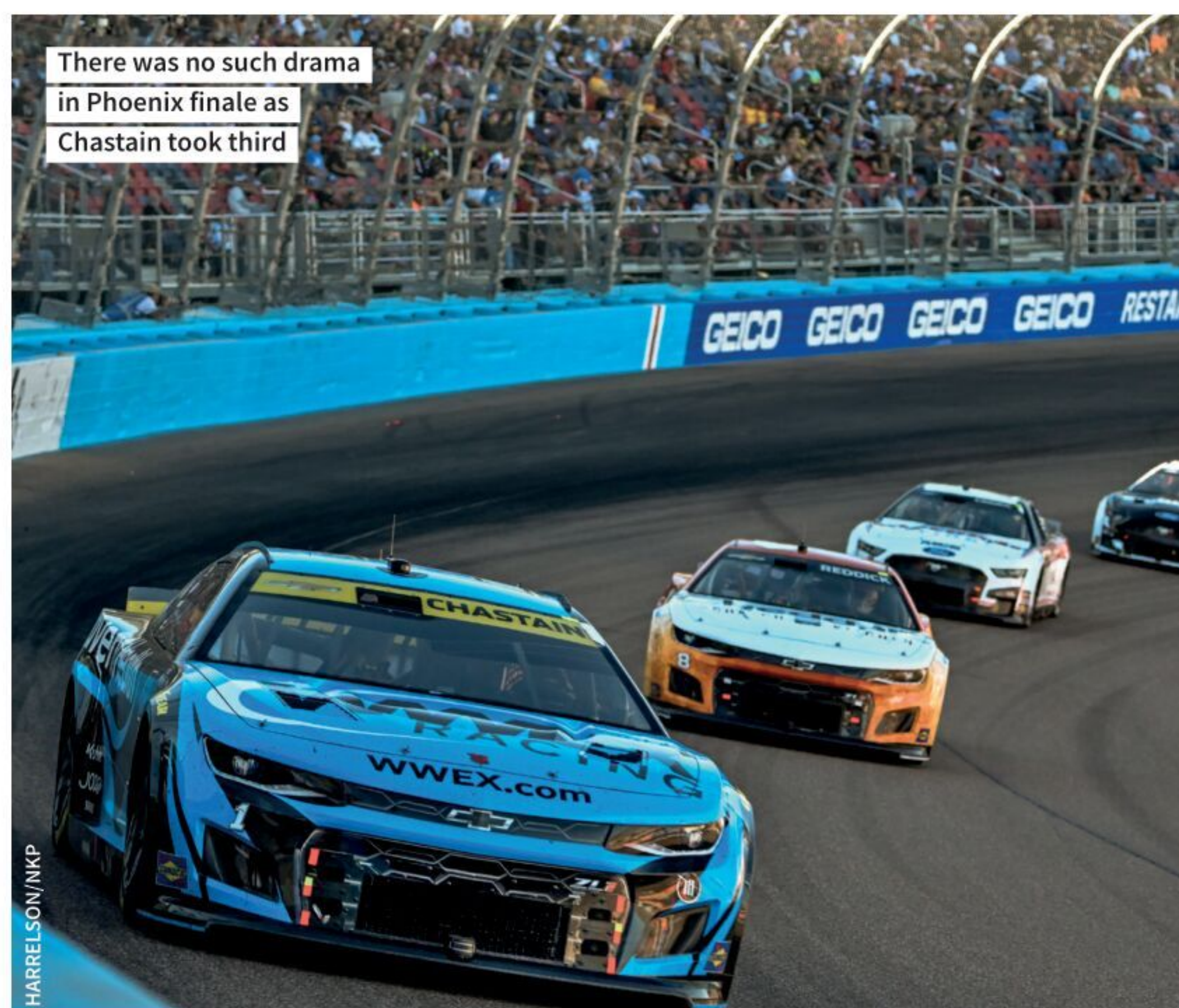
With Pandora's box now opened, as Logano rightly says, until NASCAR comes up with a rule to prevent this, drivers and crew chiefs will likely spend the off-season checking out circuits where it could feasibly be repeated. It was one thing to do this at the shortest and slowest track on the NASCAR Cup schedule – barring the pre-season LA Coliseum event – but

running against the wall on the final lap, unless you're being pushed into doing so... Can you believe we're having a track limits debate about a wall-lined oval?!

The night before the Martinsville Cup race, the buzz was all about Ty Gibbs wrecking his team-mate Brandon Jones out of the Xfinity Series Playoffs on the final lap. NASCAR is about show as well as sport – perhaps more on the former than any other form of motorsport – and it chose to turn a blind eye to that one. Maybe this too will simply become a regular aspect of its 'overtime' jeopardy.

Christopher Bell spoke for most when he said: "I hope that they do [something] because I can promise you that move will be used again." ❄

➡ P37 PHOENIX REPORT



SEASON
REVIEW

SCHUBERT SYMPHONY FOR CHAMPIONSHIP GLORY

BMW secured its first DTM title since 2016 with a team new to the series. Here's how they did it

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY DTM



Van der Linde celebrates with Torsten Schubert (left) and Marcel Schmidt (right)

Schubert Motorsport enjoyed a dream maiden DTM campaign in 2022 as it swept to the drivers' crown with Sheldon van der Linde and collected the teams' title too. New to the series, its control Michelin tyres and the BMW M4 GT3 that replaced the venerable M6 GT3 this year, it had a mammoth learning curve to get on terms with teams who had enjoyed continuity from the DTM's first season with GT3 rules in 2021.

But in van der Linde and series returnee Philipp Eng, it had two drivers with DTM race-winning pedigree, while a two-car parallel programme in ADAC GT Masters helped to level off its M4 learning curve. Although that series runs on Pirelli rubber, the Italian company's new DHF range means "the difference between these two tyres is not so big anymore", according to Schubert team manager and van der Linde's DTM engineer Marcel Schmidt. "I would say maybe 70-80% of the baseline set-up work is the same," he says. "That's helped quite a lot to learn the car. The last 20-30% is really related on the tyre, set-up wise, but the rest was the same."

Tyres were a major talking point all year, chiefly because of supply chain problems that meant there were none available at points when teams wanted to test. But that wasn't a problem for Torsten Schubert's well-prepared team. "We were quite happy that we bought quite a lot of tyres at the beginning of the season," says Schmidt. "We were not limited on our test days during the season. We did a private test in Portimao before, we were on so many tracks before the season started just to sort out everything."

Little wonder then that van der Linde "had a [good] feeling from the start of the season". He was in the points for both races in the Portuguese opener, where Grasser Lamborghini's Mirko Bortolotti took the early points lead with two podiums, only losing out in race one to Winward Mercedes man Lucas Auer after a misfire on a restart.

Then came the Lausitzring weekend in May, the first of Schubert's two GT Masters clashes, which Schmidt reveals "was difficult to manage". But it did have an upside: "I went to the Thursday test at Red Bull Ring for the GT Masters and tested some stuff there, and then I brought this to Lausitzring. We put it on the car and it worked quite well."

Van der Linde got his title challenge under way with victory in race one, blasting past poleman Auer into Turn 1 and winning comfortably from Luca Stolz's HRT Mercedes. Then, in race two, he defied his 25kg success ballast and converted pole to a second win. No other driver managed a weekend clean sweep in 2022, and Schmidt reckons the series' Balance of Performance partner AVL Racetech "learned quite a lot off that".

"This was the second weekend and they had not enough data to really put the car in the right spot on the BoP side," he says of a weekend when Schubert also swept both GT Masters races.

Remarkably, Lausitzring was the scene of van der Linde's only technical glitch, a stone in second practice causing his engine to stop. "That was quite lucky because that can be in the quali," says Schmidt, who tasked his mechanics with working collaboratively across both cars rather than splitting them into separate crews. "The rest was 100%, we had no issues."

This was an important factor in van der Linde's title success. His only non-finish came when he was one of several innocent drivers caught up in the Norisring race one start melee and, unlike his rivals, he never once lost hefty points to contact or mechanical problems (see panel, p34). "He was really strong in these battles," points out Schmidt. "He was not stupid and was every time there when others made mistakes."

Van der Linde's healthy run of points finishes continued at Imola, but he entered the second half of the season at the Nurburgring trailing Bortolotti by nine points following a pointless Norisring. On the Nurburgring's sprint layout, which Schmidt reckons should have been "the worst track for our car", the South African came away leading the standings by 21 points.

Fog caused qualifying for race one to be canned, and the grid lined up in championship order. Van der Linde was set for third

when Bortolotti's ill-judged move on Norisring winner Felipe Fraga's AF Corse-run Red Bull Ferrari put both out and opened the door to an unexpected win. He then took pole for race two and, although he dropped back with a cautious restart that allowed Stolz to win, ninth still extended his advantage over Bortolotti, who clashed with Kelvin van der Linde while disputing fourth.

"The Nurburgring weekend was the key for the championship," Schmidt reckons. "We had so many points at Nurburgring and we never expected that on this track."

One-lap pace was a real van der Linde strong suit relative to Eng, reckons Schmidt. Only once all season was the Austrian BMW's highest-placed driver in qualifying, but he could have won the second Nurburgring race without a safety car that ruined his afternoon.

Neither Schubert driver scored in race one at Spa after changeable conditions in qualifying left them line astern in 22nd and 23rd. But van der Linde was in inspired form for race two, leading from his front-row grid slot until a slow tyre stop dropped him behind Nick Cassidy's Ferrari. Mental strength in responding to setbacks, Schmidt believes, is one of van der Linde's best traits. >>



Extensive pre-season testing aided progress at Portimao opener

"THE NURBURGRING WAS KEY FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP. SO MANY POINTS WE NEVER EXPECTED"



Double victory at Lausitzring was season's sole clean sweep

VAN DER LINDE'S RIVALS

Triple champion Rast took time to bed in to DTM's GT3 format



HOCHZWEI

Without suffering a puncture apiece at Spa, there's a case to be made that either one of Lucas Auer or Rene Rast could have been the 2022 DTM champion.

In race one, where eventual champion Sheldon van der Linde languished outside the points, Winward Mercedes driver Auer was running second behind Dennis Olsen's Porsche when his front-left tyre gave up. That cost him a likely haul of 18 points, which would have given the Austrian the title by seven points.

Three-time champion Rast's case is less strong. His Abt Audi was running third in race two – although a five-second penalty due to be added to his race time for earlier contact with Nick Cassidy means the position wasn't assured – when his left-rear failed. Add the 15 points he *might* have scored and his seasonal tally is level with van der Linde's, albeit with one win to the South African's three.

Auer was also left to rue a wheelgun problem during his pitstop in the second Algarve race, which forced his retirement after running well early on, while Rast suffered an early puncture in the second Imola race and was turfed off by David Schumacher at the Nurburgring. He could have won the Hockenheim finale, but ran wide and lost out to BMW veteran Marco Wittmann.

Mirko Bortolotti's biggest points hit came at the Nurburgring, but other factors also cost the Lamborghini man. He was denied victory in the Portimao opener by a misfire, had the pace to win at Imola without a grid penalty for using incorrectly allocated tyres in practice, and lost out badly to a slow pitstop in the Hockenheim opener.

"For me one of the strongest points is really the pressure," he states. "Every time when you have a down, then he is coming back faster and stronger than before. In Spa we had a zero-point race and then he was completely bang on in qualifying and quite close to a win in the second race.

"Through the whole season it was a little bit like this. Every time after a down, he came back stronger. Especially the qualifying, he is so strong and really on-point. That is really the key to win this championship... We were there when it counts."

That was evidenced again after van der Linde's worst weekend

"EVERY TIME YOU HAVE A DOWN, THEN HE IS COMING BACK FASTER AND STRONGER THAN BEFORE"

of the year at the Red Bull Ring, where Schmidt believes BMW had a less than optimal BoP to ensure the championship went to the Hockenheim finale. Van der Linde earned a nine-place grid drop for excessive track limits abuse in the dry opener, which he finished 11th, before spinning on the opening lap of a soaking race two.

With van der Linde non-scoring in Austria, the top five were split by just 16 points heading to Hockenheim with Auer (11), Rene Rast (12), Thomas Preining (14) and outsider Bortolotti covered by the proverbial blanket. And van der Linde's weekend got off to a nightmare start when he was hit with a 10-place grid drop for a procedural tyre infringement, leaving him 16th.

"It was obviously hard for me to keep a cool head after I experienced what happened," van der Linde reflected after his title win, admitting he "thought [Schmidt] was joking actually" when informed of his penalty. But he picked himself up and, as chaos ruled, cleanly picked his way through to second. While race winner Auer closed to two points adrift in the standings, the damage could have been far worse.

A battling run to third in the finale was enough for van der Linde to secure the crown, the culmination of "a childhood dream of mine ever since I was four or five years old". It was also a high-water mark in Schubert's BMW story, the team having returned to the marque after a brief dalliance with Honda in 2018 when, Schmidt says, "some personnel changed at BMW and relationships started getting better again".

"The passion that the team has with Torsten, it is amazing to see," van der Linde observed at Hockenheim. "You don't have that in some teams, where you really feel that they put in everything in to win.

"They are also a lot more freestyle, which I think could help in a sense because you kind of don't overthink things. They are very intelligent on the fly and we can just adapt to new situations and that is where the team is extremely strong, it's not in overthinking things."

"Absolutely," Schmidt agrees, when asked about his driver's comment. "Especially when you work with a new car, you have to be a bit more open and try things. At some points it paid off, and some points it was the wrong direction, but that was quite important to learn so quickly about the car. If you have just one direction, then maybe you are lost.

"It's important that we continue on this level and then maybe we get also this name like Schnitzer and the others."

Schmidt is hopeful that van der Linde will stay on at Schubert to defend his title next year. But whether he does or not, the team has done more than enough this year to show that it merits being taken as seriously as one of BMW's most esteemed names. ❧



GRUPPE C&MBH

Third place in Hockenheim finale sealed the title for van der Linde

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



SHELDON VAN DER LINDE

1 Lausitzring clean sweep was foundation of his title bid, van der Linde the only driver to win more than twice. Took his opportunities to score big points when they came and kept out of trouble that dogged his rivals – see Nurburgring.



LUCAS AUER

2 The form man in the season's second half, he closed to two points from van der Linde before final race. Would have been champion without Spa race one puncture while second. Shaded 2021 champion Max Gotz at Winward.



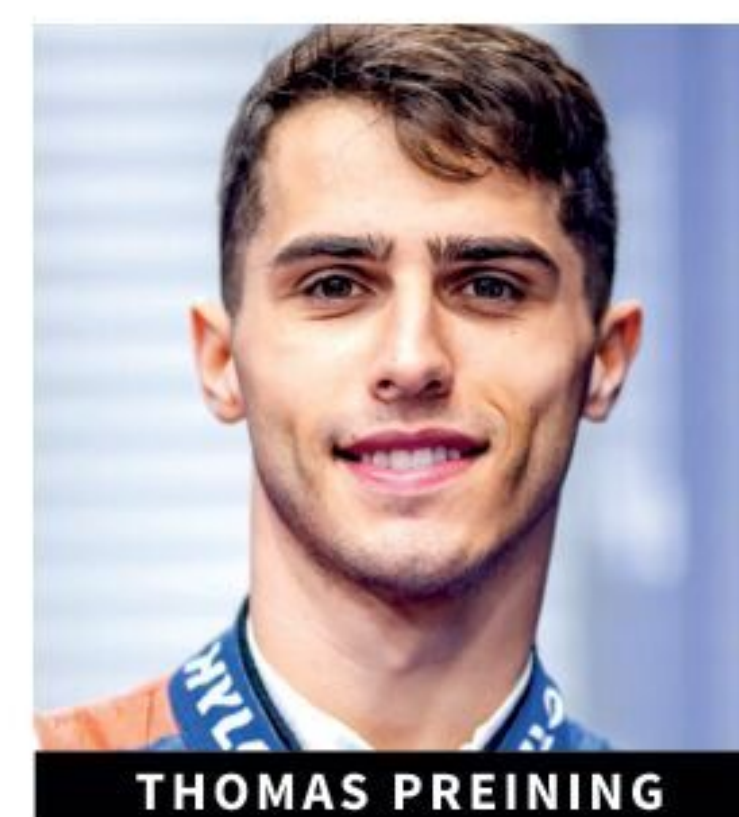
RENE RAST

3 Back after a year away, the triple champion took time adjusting to GT3 format but grew into the year's standout Audi driver. Victorious at Imola, he topped qualifying a season-high four times (though lost one to a penalty).



MIRKO BORTOLOTTI

4 Lamborghini's talisman was ultra-consistent in early rounds and led the points at halfway, but eventful Nurburgring weekend dealt a heavy blow to his title hopes. Charge from 16th to third at Imola was one of the season's best drives.



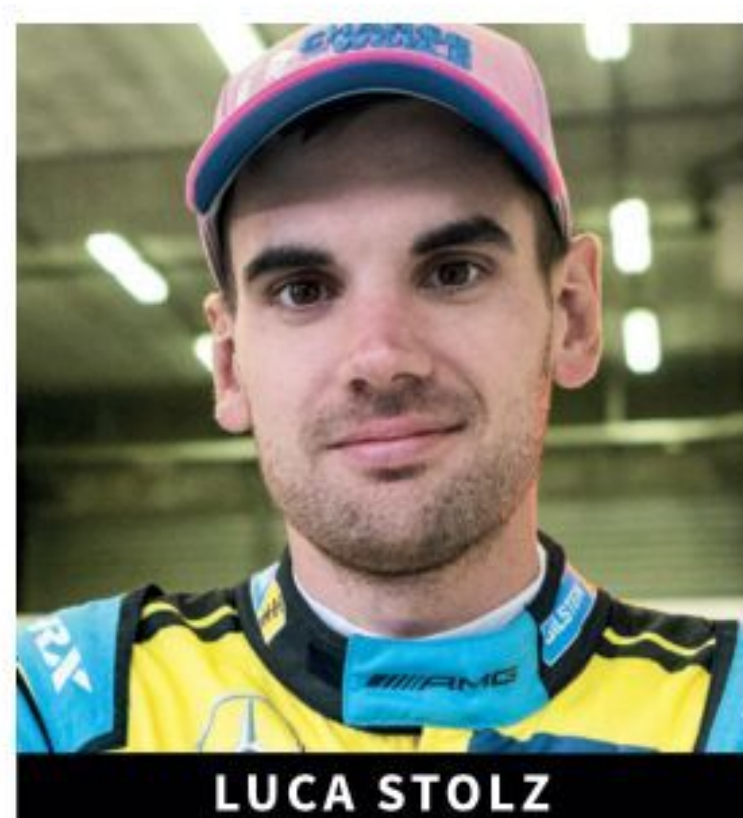
THOMAS PREINING

5 Bernhard team unlocked Porsche's pace sooner than SSR at Imola, where Preining nearly took a podium. Things clicked at Norisring to secure Weissach's first DTM win, and he was unstoppable at a soaking Red Bull Ring.



NICK CASSIDY

6 Reminded everybody of his sportscar prowess with excellent campaign. Missed two rounds on Formula E duty, but scored two wins at Spa and Red Bull Ring and beat AF Corse Ferrari team-mate Felipe Fraga in their qualifying head-to-head.



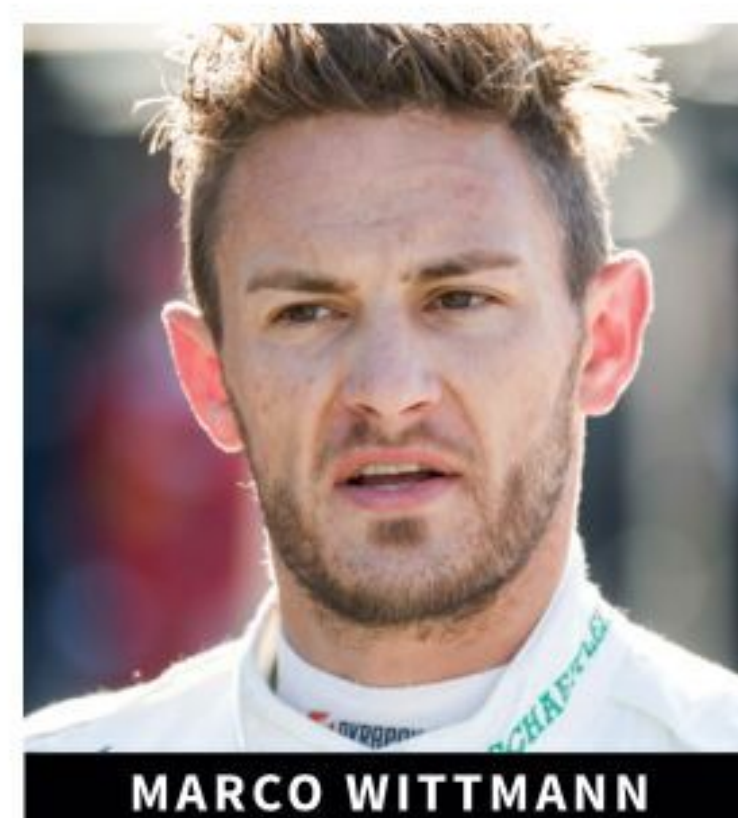
LUCA STOLZ

7 Paddock's quiet man took HRT seat vacated by champion Gotz and started well with two runner-up finishes. Was never the quickest Mercedes man in qualifying, but raced strongly. First win came at Nurburgring after a typically rapid pitstop.



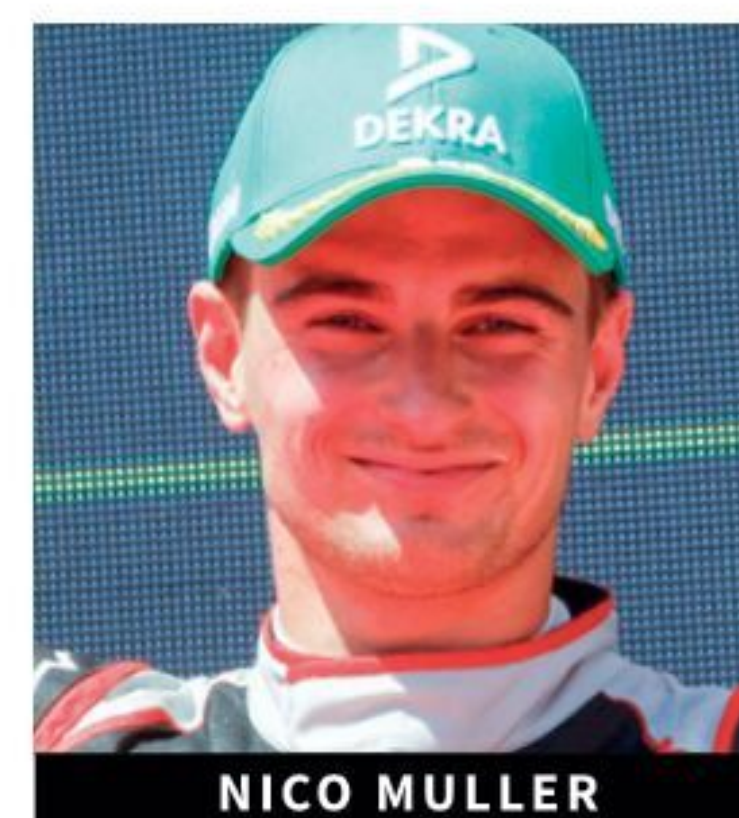
DENNIS OLSEN

8 Boosted his credentials by outshining SSR team-mate Laurens Vanthoor. Chased Preining home for a Porsche 1-2 at the Norisring and followed another second at the Nurburgring by converting pole into victory at Spa.



MARCO WITTMANN

9 The best BMW driver in qualifying more often than van der Linde, but the Walkenhorst man's peaks weren't as great. Shone at Imola and Norisring before hitting form at Hockenheim, following race one podium by outduelling Rast to win finale.



NICO MULLER

10 After a trying 2021 as Team Rosberg adapted to GT3 rules, he ended a year-long victory drought with a dominant win in Portugal, but Abt always had the upper hand thereafter. Imola was his only other podium.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	PTS
1	Sheldon van der Linde (ZAF)	Schubert Motorsport/BMW M4 GT3	7	8	1	1	8	5	R	15	1	9	12	2	11	11	2	3	164
2	Lucas Auer (AUT)	Winward Racing/Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	1	22	3	8	R	4	R	13	5	3	R	4	4	6	1	7	153
3	Rene Rast (DEU)	Abt Sportsline/Audi R8 LMS Evo II	R	12	8	3	1	R	3	3	9	R	4	R	2	10	5	2	149
4	Mirko Bortolotti (ITA)	GRT Grasser Racing Team/Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo	3	3	6	6	3	10	R	2	R	20	8	10	3	8	7	R	121
5	Thomas Preining (AUT)	Team Bernhard/Porsche 911 GT3-R	13	R	R	R	4	R	1	9	R	7	3	3	5	1	R	-	116
6	Luca Stolz (DEU)	HRT/Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	2	R	2	12	11	12	7	8	17	1	15	5	10	2	9	9	108
7	Nico Muller (CHE)	Team Rosberg/Audi R8 LMS Evo II	R	1	R	5	2	8	R	12	R	6	6	22	6	7	8	6	105
8	Marco Wittmann (DEU)	Walkenhorst Motorsport/BMW M4 GT3	NC	4	R	10	7	3	R	4	8	10	9	9	14	12	3	1	98
9	Kelvin van der Linde (ZAF)	Abt Sportsline/Audi R8 LMS Evo II	4	6	R	20	5	13	R	R	2	4	5	14	8	R	12	5	90
10	Dennis Olsen (NOR)	SSR Performance/Porsche 911 GT3-R	5	11	R	11	9	R	2	5	R	2	1	19	R	9	R	-	89

11 **Maximilian Gotz** (Winward Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo) 74; 12 **Maro Engel** (GruppeM Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo) 65; 13 **Nick Cassidy** (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo) 64; 14 **Philipp Eng** (Schubert Motorsport BMW M4 GT3) 64; 15 **Ricardo Feller** (Abt Sportsline Audi R8 LMS Evo II) 63; 16 **Felipe Fraga** (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo) 60; 17 **Dev Gore** (Team Rosberg Audi R8 LMS Evo II) 30; 18 **Laurens Vanthoor** (SSR Performance Porsche 911 GT3-R) 30; 19 **Arjun Maini** (HRT Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo) 24; 20 **Mikael Grenier** (GruppeM Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo) 17; 21 **Marius Zug** (Attempto Racing Audi R8 LMS Evo II) 13; 22 **Clemens Schmid** (GRT Grasser Racing Team Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo) 11; 23 **Ayhancan Guven** (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo) 7; 24 **Leon Kohler** (Walkenhorst Motorsport BMW M4 GT3) 4; 25 **Maximilian Buhk** (Mucke Motorsport Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo) 1; 26 **Alessio Deledda** (GRT Grasser Racing Team Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo) 1; 27 **Rolf Ineichen** (GRT Grasser Racing Team Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo) 1. **MANUFACTURERS** 1 Audi 441; 2 Mercedes 413; 3 BMW 327; 4 Porsche 234; 5 Lamborghini 130; 6 Ferrari 129. **TEAMS' CHAMPION** Schubert Motorsport.

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WORLD OF SPORT

MILLER

Logano peaks at the right time

Logano leads from Blaney and main rival Chastain

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

Joey Logano rallied to win last Sunday's NASCAR Cup Series finale at Phoenix and with it claimed his second championship. The title – Logano's first came in 2018 – also handed team owner Roger Penske the

IndyCar (taken by Will Power) and NASCAR championships in the same season for the first time.

Logano ran third on the final restart on lap 280 of 312 but his Ford had been dominant for much of the race, and he ran down and passed leader Chase Briscoe with 29 laps to go. From there, Logano had to hold off his team-mate Ryan Blaney and Ross Chastain, the closest of the four title

WORLD OF SPORT RACE CENTRE

contenders, whose Trackhouse Chevrolet was the fastest car on the track at the finish.

"Man, I can't say enough about this race team," said Logano. "They just grind it out. They're so amazing. Paul Wolfe [crew chief], everybody that puts so much time and effort into the last few weeks."

Logano started the weekend by taking pole position, and led 187 laps of the race, including the first 60. Only for a handful of laps was Logano not the highest running of the four title contenders.

"It's all about championships," he added. "That's what it's all about, and we worked so hard the last couple weeks trying to put ourselves in position. And everything that happened in 2020, I knew we just wanted to have a solid run and do this today."

The win was Logano's fourth of the 2022 season, with two coming in the playoffs, and the 31st of his career.

Chastain, who used a daring last-lap wall-riding move in last weekend's race at Martinsville to advance to the Championship 4, wasn't able to muster such a 'Hail Mary' this time. "I think we were going too fast here and didn't think it would work," he said.

Christopher Bell (Gibbs Toyota) finished third in the season standings and Chase Elliott (Hendrick Chevy) ended up fourth.

JIM UTTER

Baguette earns crust with title

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

Nissan ended its Super GT title drought when Team Impul drivers Bertrand Baguette and Kazuki Hiramine were crowned champions in a dramatic season finale at Motegi.

Baguette and Hiramine had trailed NDDP Nissan pair Katsumasa Chiyo and Mitsunori Takaboshi by 2.5 points, but second place behind the race-winning Team Kunimitsu Honda was enough to overturn the deficit and secure a

first Impul title since 1995.

Kunimitsu pair Naoki Yamamoto and Tadasuke Makino had a straightforward run from pole to a first win of the season, but all eyes were on Baguette and Chiyo on the second row of the grid. Chiyo made a critical error when contact with Tomoki Nojiri's ARTA Honda NSX-GT at Turn 5 on the opening lap earned him a drivethrough penalty.

A safety car period following a five-way pile-up allowed the NDDP car to recover some ground, but Takaboshi could only get back up to fourth after taking over from Chiyo, and was powerless to threaten Hiramine in the Impul Z.

Nobuharu Matsushita and Koudai Tsukakoshi didn't have the pace to fight for the title in their Real Racing Honda, ending up fifth from 10th on the grid.

Toyota arrived at Motegi with only the faintest of title hopes, and suffered a disastrous qualifying with the five GR Supras at the back of the grid. Rookie Racing pair Kenta Yamashita and Kazuya Oshima recovered to third to end the year as the marque's top crew in the standings.

JAMIE KLEIN

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Second place did the trick for Impul Nissan pair Baguette/Hiramine

ISHIHARA

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WEEKEND WINNERS

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
Joey Logano
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

NASCAR XFINITY
PHOENIX (USA)
Ty Gibbs
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Supra)

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
PHOENIX (USA)
Zane Smith
Front Row Motorsports (Ford F-150)

SUPER GT
MOTEGI (JPN)
Naoki Yamamoto/Tadasuke Makino (below)
Team Kunimitsu (Honda NSX-GT)



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MOTUL DE LA COMUNITAT VALENCIANA

Circuit Ricardo Tormo | 2022



Bagnaia ends Ducati's drought

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MOTOGP
VALENCIA (ESP)
6 NOVEMBER
ROUND 20/20

The finale to the 2022 MotoGP season ended largely as predicted, for all of the championship's best efforts to hype up 'the decider' between Francesco Bagnaia and Fabio Quartararo at Valencia.

Ducati star Bagnaia, despite five DNFs and a 91-point disadvantage as late into the season as the German Grand Prix in June, had everything in his favour to secure the title in Spain. He led outgoing champion Quartararo by 23 points and needed only to finish 14th, regardless of where the Yamaha rider was, to take the crown.

Still, qualifying left the door cracked open for something to happen. Quartararo was fourth, Bagnaia eighth. The Frenchman

had the best race pace in practice, but needed to lead to make that work; the Italian just had to be sensible, but has been prone to major errors in 2022.

Quartararo didn't get the start he needed, instead getting passed by Bagnaia into Turn 1 before instantly retaliating for fifth. The pair would come to blows when Bagnaia's team-mate Jack Miller steamed up the inside of Quartararo at Turn 2 on lap two of 27, the Australian – who would crash out of third later on in his final Ducati outing – opening the door for the championship leader to pick off the Yamaha.

But contact led to a wing on the right of Bagnaia's Ducati detaching. He later admitted that his race became "a nightmare" from that point as his pace dropped off and he was forced to go on the defence.

A brief duel across lap two gave way to Quartararo making a definitive move on

Bagnaia at Turn 6 on the fourth tour.

The pair wouldn't see each other again until they embraced on the runoff area of Turn 1 after the chequered flag, but for now Quartararo set off to bridge a 1.7s gap to the quartet ahead.

That gap did come down, with a crash for Marc Marquez on lap 10 at Turn 8 removing one obstacle from Quartararo's path.

But KTM's Brad Binder was easing his way through the field from seventh and picked off Quartararo on lap 18. By now, Miller had fallen out of contention and Bagnaia was being shuffled down to the outer reaches of the top 10. Quartararo was on the limit the whole race as the hotter-than-expected conditions on race day made his hard front-tyre option too soft for his needs.

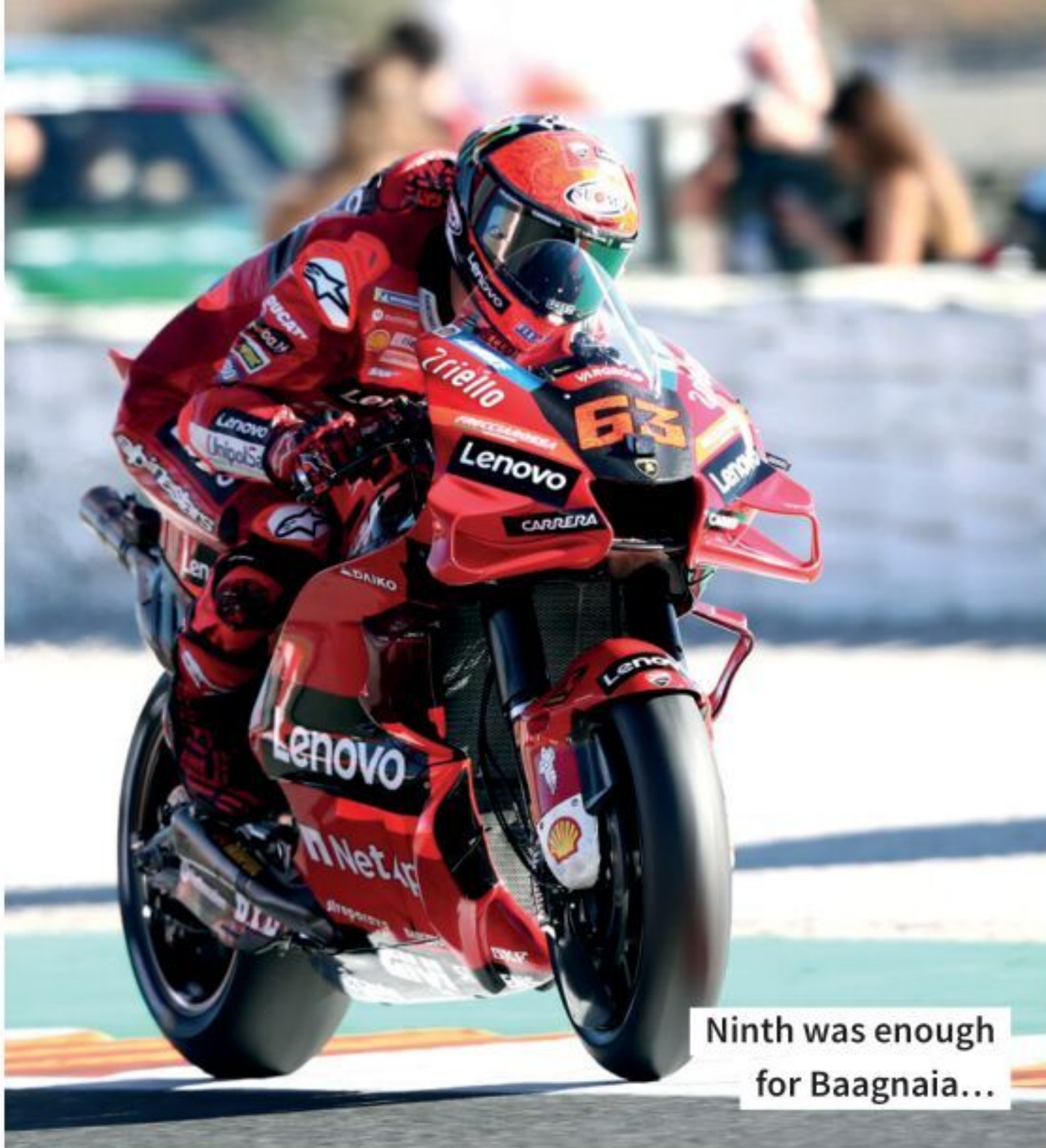
As a result, he later admitted, he had no chance to win the race, and therefore the championship, while Bagnaia ended up ninth with the sensible ride he required to end Ducati's 15-year wait for its second MotoGP championship. That Bagnaia is also the first Italian since Valentino Rossi to be crowned champion held added significance, given Bagnaia's ascent to the top of the world came via Rossi's VR46 Academy.

As the celebrations for Bagnaia's championship bled into the post-race press conference, there was a bittersweet feeling emanating from Suzuki.

Alex Rins perfectly launched from fifth to first on the opening lap, and led the field through to the chequered flag in one of his finest displays to end the season with one final victory for Suzuki as it officially bows out of MotoGP – maybe for good this time.



Rins was untouchable
in Valencia finale



Ninth was enough for Bagnaia...



...while Rins dominated on Suzuki swansong

Rins had fought the tears on the grid, and his performance simply brought more emotion as one of the paddock's best teams scored yet another of those results that make Suzuki's decision to pull the plug on the project all the more baffling.

Second for Binder gave cause for optimism for KTM, with Miller and Honda's Pol Espargaro both joining the Austrian marque for 2023, while third for Jorge Martin following pole signalled another missed opportunity for the Pramac Ducati team.

A struggle to eighth position was enough for Gresini Ducati rider Enea Bastianini to take third in the points over Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro, who was left distraught by an engine issue forcing him into retirement early on in the race.

With both Marc Marquez and Pol Espargaro crashing their Hondas, the magnitude of the marque's job ahead was laid bare as it was consigned to last place in the constructors' table.

That is true of the rest of the field, which heads into the winter with the task of trying to dethrone a mighty Ducati juggernaut that, helmed by Bagnaia, managed the biggest overturning of a points deficit in grand prix history to become champions of the world.

LEWIS DUNCAN

SEASON REVIEW

HOW THE TITLE WAS WON
24 NOVEMBER ISSUE

RESULTS ROUND 20/20, VALENCIA (ESP), 6 NOVEMBER (27 LAPS – 67.192 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	41m22.250s
2	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+0.396s
3	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+1.059s
4	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+1.911s
5	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	+7.122s
6	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+7.735s
7	Luca Marini (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+8.524s
8	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	+12.038s
9	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	+14.441s
10	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Yamaha	+14.676s
11	Marco Bezzecchi (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+17.655s
12	Raul Fernandez (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+24.870s
13	Remy Gardner (AUS)	Tech3 KTM	+26.546s
14	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+26.610s
15	Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	+31.819s
16	Cal Crutchlow (GBR)	RNF Yamaha	+1m28.870s
17	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	-1 lap
R	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	22 laps-accident
R	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	15 laps-accident
R	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	15 laps-bike issue
R	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Honda	9 laps-accident
R	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	4 laps-accident
R	Darryn Binder (ZAF)	RNF Yamaha	4 laps-accident
R	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	3 laps-engine

Winner's average speed 97.448mph. Fastest lap B Binder 1m31.192s, 98.242mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Martin 1m29.621s; 2 M Marquez 1m29.826s; 3 Miller 1m29.834s; 4 Quartararo 1m29.900s; 5 Rins 1m29.940s; 6 Vinales 1m29.955s; 7 B Binder 1m30.039s; 8 Bagnaia 1m30.049s; 9 Zarco 1m30.102s; 10 A Espargaro 1m30.124s; 11 Marini 1m30.143s; 12 Mir 1m30.241s.

QUALIFYING 1 Vinales 1m30.090s; Rins 1m30.126s; 13 Bastianini 1m30.193s; 14 Oliveira 1m30.236s; 15 A Marquez 1m30.453s; 16 Morbidelli 1m30.504s; 17 Crutchlow 1m30.548s; 18 Bezzecchi 1m30.588s; 19 Di Giannantonio 1m30.695s; 20 Gardner 1m30.804s; 21 Nakagami 1m30.830s; 22 P Espargaro 1m30.936s; 23 Fernandez 1m31.676s; 24 D Binder 1m31.989s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Bagnaia 265; 2 Quartararo 248; 3 Bastianini 219; 4 A Espargaro 212; 5 Miller 189; 6 B Binder 188; 7 Rins 173; 8 Zarco 166; 9 Martin 152; 10 Oliveira 149; 11 Vinales 122; 12 Marini 120; 13 M Marquez 113; 14 Bezzecchi 111; 15 Mir 87; 16 P Espargaro 56; 17 A Marquez 50; 18 Nakagami 48; 19 Morbidelli 42; 20 Di Giannantonio 24; 21 Andrea Dovizioso 15; 22 Fernandez 14; 23 Gardner 13; 24 D Binder 12; 25 Crutchlow 10; 26 Stefan Bradl 2; 27 Michele Pirro 0; 28 Lorenzo Savadori 0; 29 Tetsuta Nagashima 0; 30 Danilo Petrucci 0; 31 Kazuki Watanabe 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ducati 448; 2 Yamaha 256; 3 Aprilia 248; 4 KTM 240; 5 Suzuki 199; 6 Honda 155.



Quartararo would end up handing the trophy over to Bagnaia

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

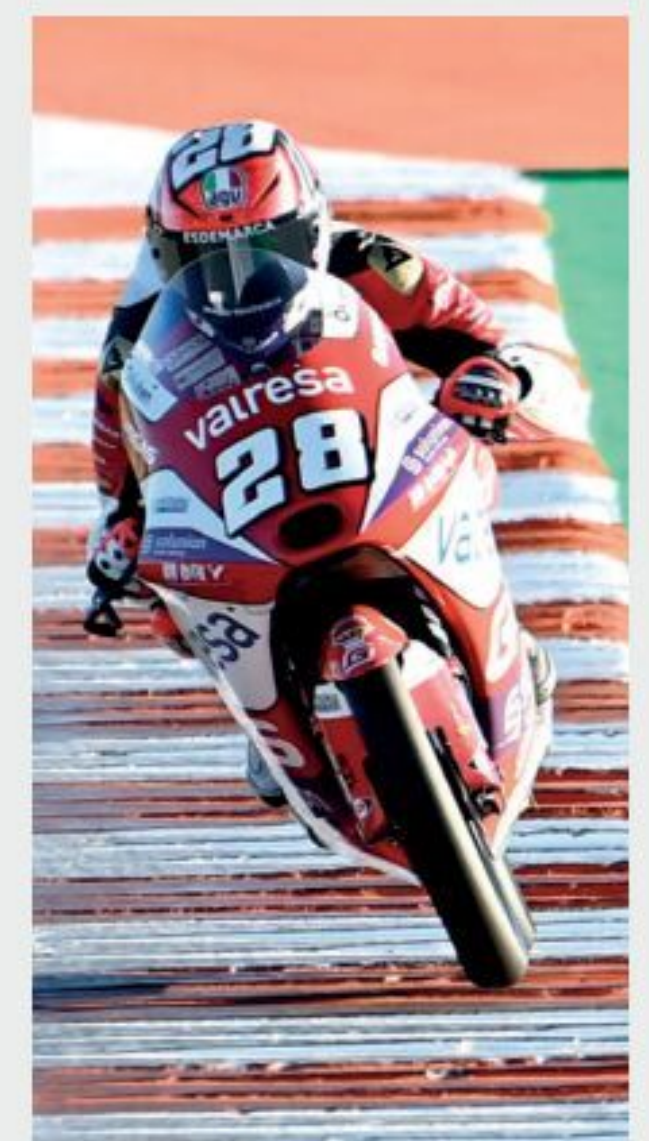
VALENCIA (ESP)

Pedro Acosta
AJ Motorsport
(Kalex)

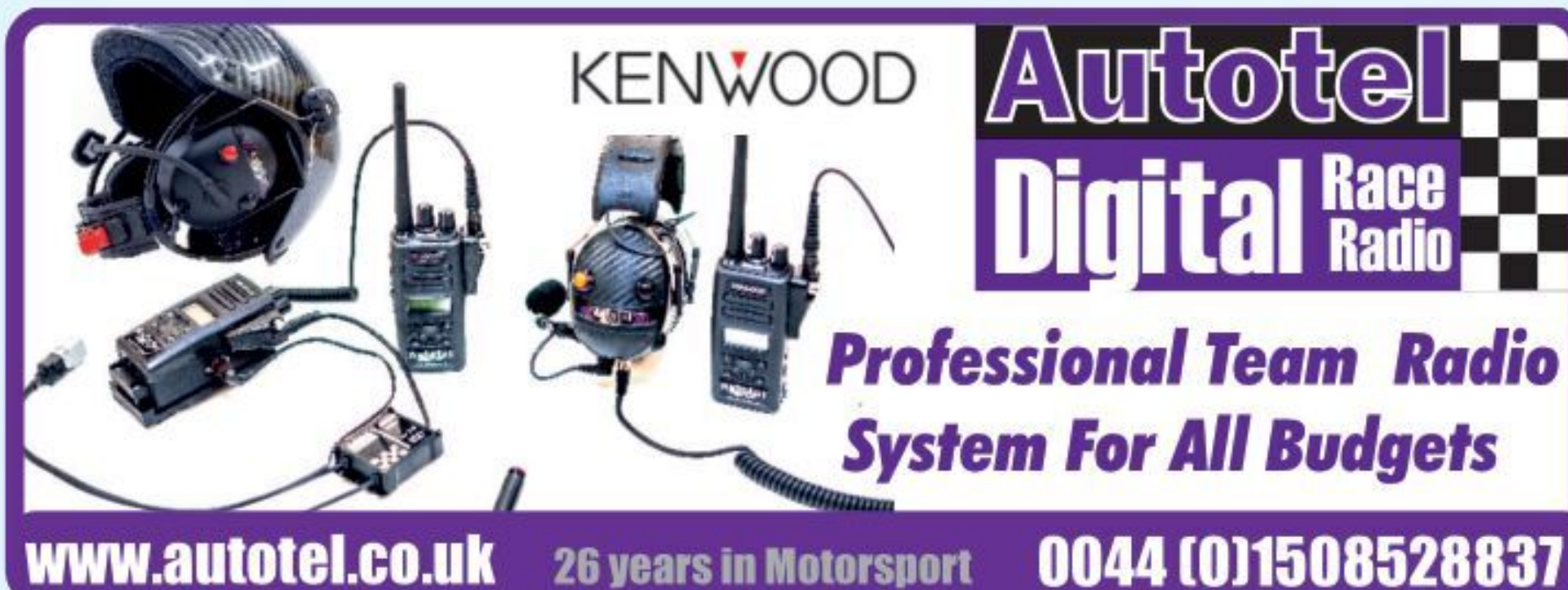
MOTO 3

VALENCIA (ESP)

Izan Guevara (below)
Aspar Team
(Gas Gas)



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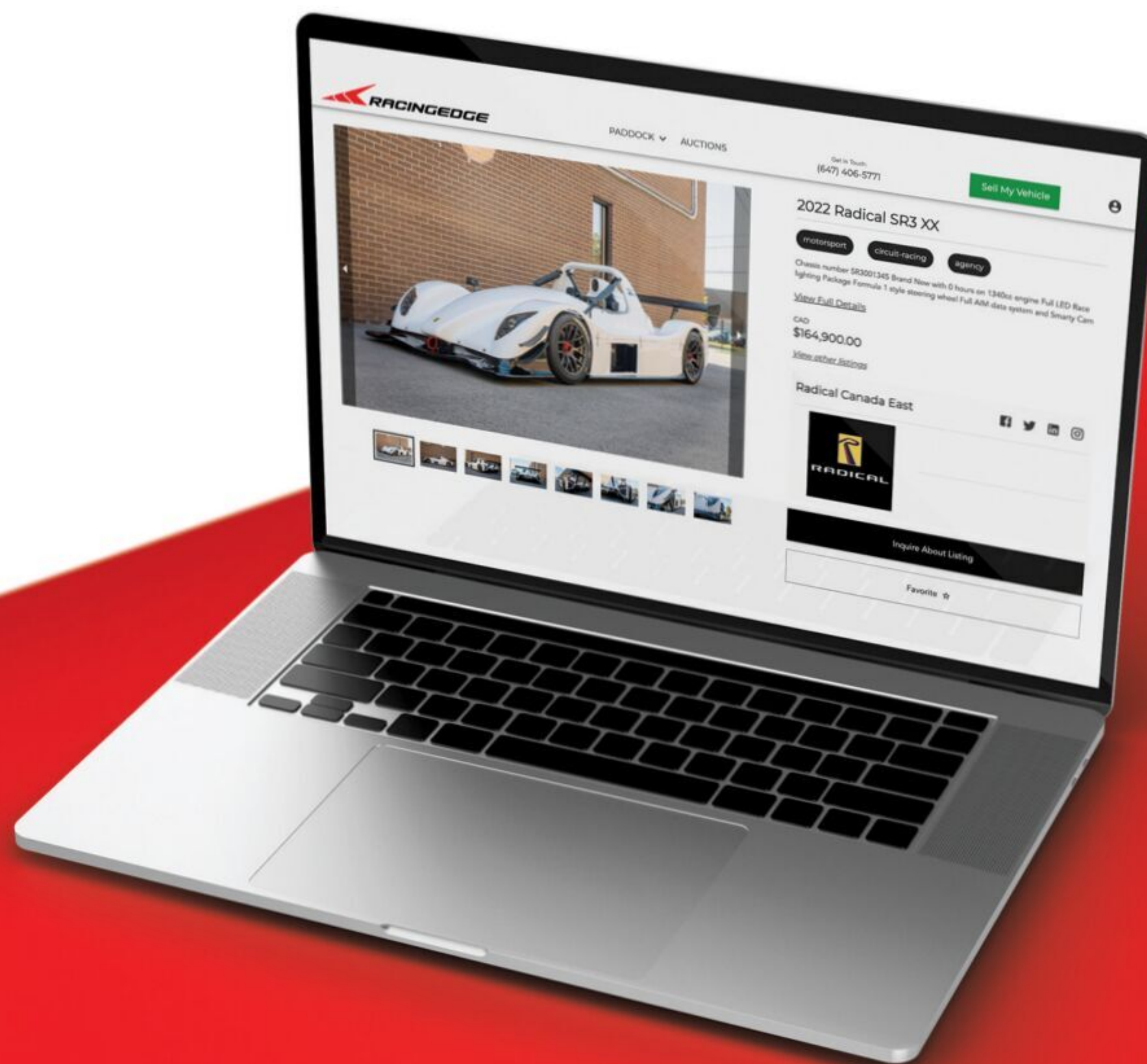


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**HOW LOGGIE LANDED
BRITISH GT3 CROWN**



**BROWNING'S BATTLE WITH
GRANFORS FOR GB3 GLORY**



**CLASSIC TOURING CAR
FESTIVAL FOR BRANDS HATCH**



LOGGIE AT LAST

After coming close in the past, RAM Racing's Ian Loggie finally fought his way to the British GT3 title

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  **motorsport
IMAGES**

“Today it was a Benny Hill show and we still finished second. It just shows that you never give up, keep going.” The opening laps for Ian Loggie at the British GT Donington Park finale, which included a first-corner excursion and a harmless spin a few tours later, may have been somewhat comical, but there was nothing funny about the situation for the Scot in search of the GT3 title.

But it was a testament to the RAM Racing Mercedes-AMG driver's grit and determination that with perseverance, and a little luck, he was able to relay to team-mate Jules Gounon with the car in an unlikely second place – more than enough for Loggie's maiden British GT Championship success.

Loggie had signalled his intent to win the title, which had narrowly eluded him and team-mate Yelmer Buurman 12 months earlier, by embarking on an incredible season of racing. As well as British GT, he competed in the GT Cup, GT World Challenge Europe, Asian Le Mans Series and Gulf Radical Cup – a total of more than 80 races.

“He's in the car as much as some of the Pros,” says RAM team boss Dan Shufflebottom. “He's not having to spend time getting used to being back in the car again, he gets straight on it so that

saves a lot of time, and because he's in the car so often you can do useful work with him. All those things really have helped us to be able to get the most out of every weekend.”

The results certainly justified the means, with two wins and a further four podiums across the nine-race calendar helping Loggie claim the title. The first victory came in the second of the two one-hour races at the Oulton Park opener. Gounon took pole with Loggie bringing it home – via an appeal to the UK National Court regarding whether success penalties should be applied post-race after an earlier red flag – while the second win arrived in the first one-hour race at Snetterton after Loggie bagged pole.

There were podiums in race one at Oulton (when Gounon put in the drive of the season to charge from sixth to within sight of victory), the first visit to Donington, and Spa. Joined by both Gounon and Callum Macleod over the season, Loggie's focus centered not only on consistency, but also becoming the best Am driver possible. “They've been working with me on brake heating, safety cars, just a whole load of things that the Pros know but Ams never get taught,” he says.

Effectively having the mindset of a Pro arguably prevented his

GT3 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX



POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	PTS
1	Ian Loggie	RAM Racing	Mercedes-AMG	162
2	Sandy Mitchell/Adam Balon (left)	Barwell Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	128.5
3	Marcus Clutton/Morgan Tillbrook	Enduro Motorsport	McLaren 720S	123.5
4	Lewis Williamson/James Cottingham	2 Seas Motorsport	Mercedes-AMG	114
5	Jules Gounon	RAM Racing	Mercedes-AMG	92.5
6	James Dorlin/Alex Malykhin	Redline Racing	Lamborghini/Porsche 911	82

retirement on the opening lap at the Donington decider, when he was forced into the Redgate gravel by a crash ahead. Told by Gounon that he should switch the traction control off if he ever went through the gravel to not get bogged down, in Loggie's words his time in the car has meant interactions have become "like second nature".

Generally staying out of trouble put Loggie on course for the title but, like any championship tilts, there were low moments. He was eliminated on the opening lap at Silverstone when he was the innocent victim in a collision between fellow Mercedes racers Richard Neary and James Cottingham. And at Brands Hatch, Loggie suffered damage after a collision with title rival Adam Balon's Lamborghini in the opening stint, which limited the car to a sixth-place finish in the hands of Macleod.

These moments allowed Balon and team-mate Sandy Mitchell to challenge for the crown, the Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini Huracan Evo crew hitting their stride in the second half of the season with podiums at Snetterton, Spa and Brands Hatch.

They scored maximum points at the three-hour Silverstone event with victory, after Mitchell's qualifying time had been a staggering 0.693s faster than his nearest Pro rival. But collisions at Oulton, where Mitchell was handed a penalty for contact with Marcus Clutton, and a retirement after Mitchell was tagged by Scott Malvern exiting the pits at Donington meant they always faced an uphill challenge.

Mitchell and Balon weren't the only crew to enter the season finale with a shot at usurping Loggie. Clutton and Morgan Tillbrook

"WHEN I GET SOMETHING IN MY MIND I NEVER GIVE UP. I'M LIKE A JACK RUSSELL TERRIER"

(Enduro Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3) and Lewis Williamson and James Cottingham (2 Seas Motorsport Mercedes) also had an outside chance of glory at Donington.

Two wins went the way of Clutton and Tillbrook, in the opening Donington meeting where they took pole, and at Brands Hatch when they benefited as the race-leading Abba Racing Mercedes of Sam Neary suffered fuel pump problems two laps from home.

But a charge at the title was thwarted by a mix of bad luck and errors. Tillbrook missed the pitbox in the opening Oulton Park race when in with a shot of victory, while a mechanical issue ruled them out of the sequel and at Silverstone. Clutton took to the grass at the start of Snetterton race two, and Tillbrook was knocked into a spin at Spa, which all had an impact.

While there was no win for Williamson and Cottingham, two runner-up finishes over the course of the season put them within touching distance. A puncture for Williamson in the second Snetterton race thwarted a realistic chance of victory, while an unforced mistake from Cottingham at the Old Hairpin put them out of contention in the Donington finale.

Other crews to record wins included Adam Carroll/Shawn Balfe (Balfe Motorsport Audi R8) in the opening race after Carroll had put up an incredible defence against Gounon over the final 15 minutes, the second RAM Racing Mercedes in the hands of Ulysse De Pauw/John Ferguson at Snetterton, and Jamie Stanley/Nick Halstead (Fox Motorsport McLaren) at Spa after successfully appealing a technical infringement violation. And the returning Alexander Sims and GT3 debutant Darren Leung took the top step of the podium at the final round aboard a Century Motorsport BMW M4.

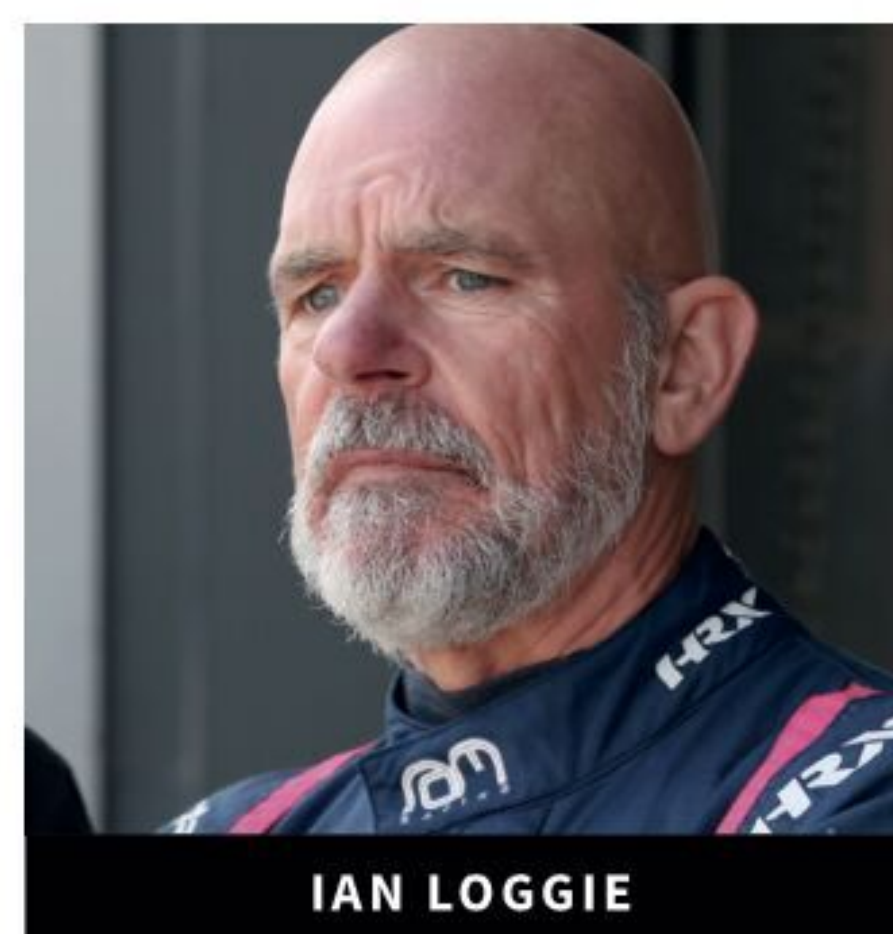
Yet the consistency and determination of Loggie meant he secured a title he had sought since 2017: "When I get something in my mind I never give up. I'm like a Jack Russell Terrier and I was going to win this one way or the other." ❧

AUTOSPORT'S TOP FIVE GT3 DRIVERS



SANDY MITCHELL

1 Stunning Silverstone qualifying lap set him and team-mate Balon on course for the win, with further Pro pole coming at Spa. Neat pass on Macleod gave Balon chance of Snetterton II victory, while consistently strong race pace brought title within reach. Low point was silly collision exiting pits at Donington Park I.



IAN LOGGIE

2 Finally secured long-coveted GT3 title through consistency and generally staying out of trouble. Drove well to win Oulton Park II and first Snetterton race after taking pole. Contact with Balon at Brands Hatch and harmless spin in Donington finale only blemishes for a worthy champion.



MARCUS CLUTTON

3 Generally went under the radar but was a safe pair of hands and got the job done at Donington I – after taking Pro pole – and Brands having pressured Neary throughout. Passed Mitchell to secure podium at Donington II, with excursion at start of Snetterton II only real error of note.



JAMES COTTINGHAM

4 Unlucky not to win a race but edges out Morgan Tillbrook here after outscoring him in qualifying and leading on merit at Donington I, Spa and Brands Hatch – the first after passing polesitter Tillbrook around the outside at the start. Off-track moment at Donington II ended title hopes after another mega start.



JULES GOUNON

5 Laid the foundation for Loggie's title success with performance of the season in first Oulton Park race despite just missing out on victory – which was achieved in the sequel. Did what was required at Spa and Donington finale, but can't be placed higher as only competed in four races.



STELLER SEASON FOR FIELDING AND WILLIAMS

Despite numerous setbacks, the British GT4 crown went the way of Audi pairing Sennan Fielding and Richard Williams

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  **motorsport**
IMAGES

A points deficit, success penalty and positions to be gained created an uphill challenge for the Steller Motorsport pairing of Sennan Fielding and Richard Williams at the British GT Donington Park finale.

A constant battle to the end was a fitting way for the duo to take the British GT4 title, the pairing having generally been the class of the field in their Audi R8 LMS. But “lots of little things”, according to Fielding, meant they trailed the Newbridge Motorsport Aston Martin Vantage of Darren Turner and Matt Topham on points heading into the final round.

“I feel like we’ve been so fast all year and then we’ve just had some slight misfortune throughout which has been really frustrating,” adds Fielding. “I feel like outright pace we’ve had a slight advantage. We’ve always been up front; the car’s been unbelievable.”

They did things the hard way from the outset, with victory in the opening round at Oulton Park coming after a Fielding fightback, which became something of a theme during the season. Williams led

after briefly dropping to second, but a short mandatory pitstop meant the car had to serve a penalty before Fielding hunted down Ross Wylie for the win.

They doubled up in the sequel, in which Fielding got the jump on polesitter Turner at the start before the crew were helped when a red flag annulled their pitstop success penalty, but only after a successful appeal to the UK National Court.

Although there were a further four podiums over the season, incredibly there were no more wins since at each meeting the duo had to overcome a setback. They were never able to negate the pitstop disadvantage of being an all-Silver pairing at Silverstone and finished third, while the Pro-Am pairing of Turner and Topham won after serving 14s less at all three stops.

It was the same situation at Brands Hatch, where safety cars meant Williams was unable to build a big enough gap for Fielding to rejoin in the lead and he followed Turner home.

There were also low points in the middle of the season — they

GT4 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX				
POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	PTS
1	Sennan Fielding/Richard Williams	Steller Motorsport	Audi R8 LMS	168.5
2	Darren Turner/Matt Topham (left)	Newbridge Motorsport	Aston Martin Vantage	163
3	Jamie Day/Josh Miller	R Racing	Aston Martin Vantage	156
4	Tom Edgar	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR Supra	127
5	Jordan Collard	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR Supra	111
6	Will Burns/Jack Brown	Century Motorsport	BMW M4	107

“I THOUGHT WHOEVER IS IN FRONT OF ME I’M GOING TO GET PAST BY HOOK OR BY CROOK”

finished eighth on the first visit to Donington after Williams spun from the lead in the opening laps, while there was a non-score in the second Snetterton race due to a post-race penalty after they were caught speeding in the pitlane.

Victory looked assured at Spa but, with Fielding on the cusp of taking the lead, the team was again hit with a penalty for a short pitstop. After dropping down the order, he charged back through to overtake both Tom Edgar and Turner on the final lap to finish fourth.

It was another scintillating performance from Fielding, who had shown similar brilliance a month earlier in the opening race at Snetterton. The Steller Audi suffered a gearbox problem shortly before the start, meaning Williams started from the pits and made steady progress before relaying to Fielding. He rejoined ninth and moved up to third on the road – which became second post-race – culminating in an incredible pass on Turner into Riches, which included using the pit exit and making door-to-door contact.

“He’s a person I’ve looked up to for years and to be racing against him, I’ve got so much respect for him, but when you’re out on track everyone is the same,” enthuses Fielding. “I’ll always race fair and after we came together, we shook hands. So yeah, it was a good moment – to be fair I was quite proud of that move, and to pull it off on him made it a little bit more rewarding.”

Turner and Topham made good on their potential from last year, with the Am putting in a good defensive drive in the second Oulton race to finish runner-up before the wins at Silverstone and Brands Hatch, as well as podiums in both Snetterton outings.

Scoring points in every race put the Aston pair in the pound seat for the Donington finale, 12.5 points ahead, but they never featured in the two-hour race. Topham struggled to keep pace during the opening stint while also picking up a safety car infringement penalty, meaning Turner rejoined well down the order. While the three-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner failed to make progress – he finished seventh – it was the opposite for Fielding, who took over from Williams in fourth and once again needing to make up places.

“We knew we had to push 100%, every lap was a qualifying lap,” says Fielding of his final Donington stint, where he passed Moh Ritson and Jamie Day to finish second and claim the title. “I thought whoever is in front of me I’m going to get past by hook or by crook and thankfully we did that. I’m chuffed to bits to win this championship with this team. They deserve it more than anyone.”

Arguably the surprise of the season was Day and fellow British GT rookie and R Racing Vantage team-mate Josh Miller. The pair secured two wins, the first at Snetterton making them the youngest winners in the championship on combined age after on-the-road victors Jamie Orton/Seb Hopkins (Team Parker Porsche 718 Cayman) were penalised for a collision. A further victory followed at Spa, and they too headed to the final round with an outside shot of the title, but third was not quite enough.

Matt Cowley and British GT newbie Marco Signoretti took the top step with the Academy Motorsport Ford Mustang on the first visit to Donington, but lacked consistency to mount a title tilt, Signoretti also taken out from the lead at Snetterton by Hopkins. Reigning GT4 champion Will Burns and Century Motorsport BMW M4 team-mate Jack Brown finished in the points at every race but took only three podiums, Brown overtaking Topham for their sole win at the second Snetterton race.

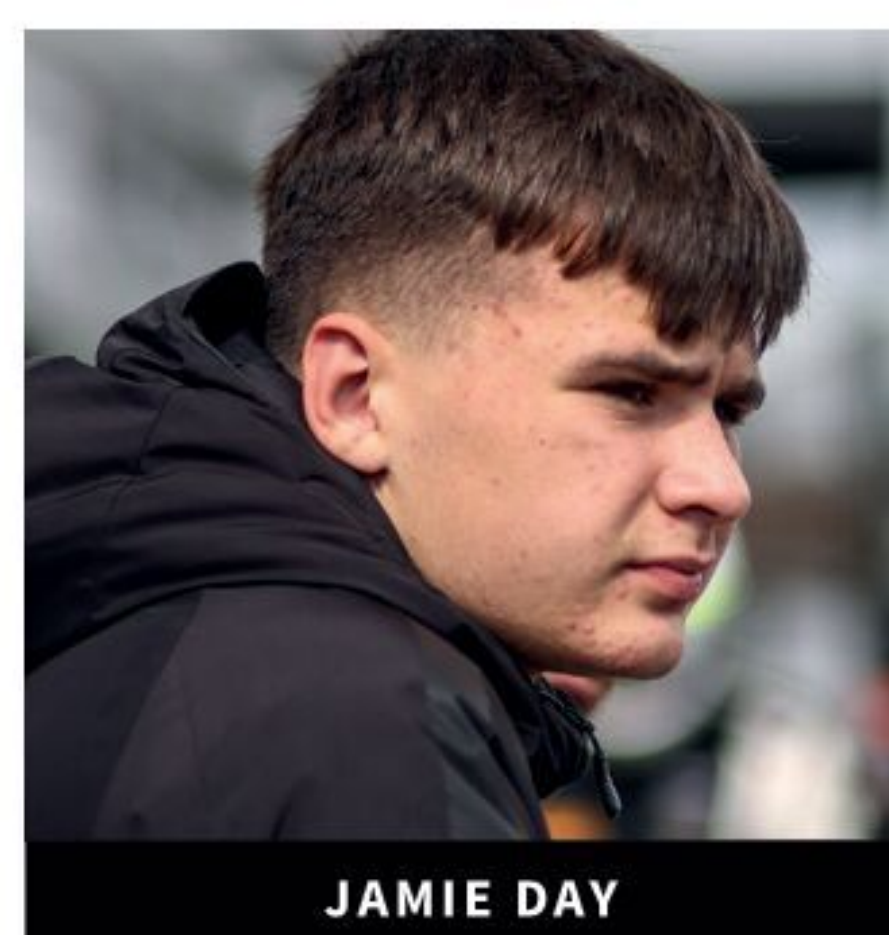
Edgar and Jordan Collard finally delivered on flashes of speed with Toyota Gazoo, guiding their GR Supra to victory at the final race, with not even Fielding able to close the gap. ❦

AUTOSPORT’S TOP FIVE GT4 DRIVERS



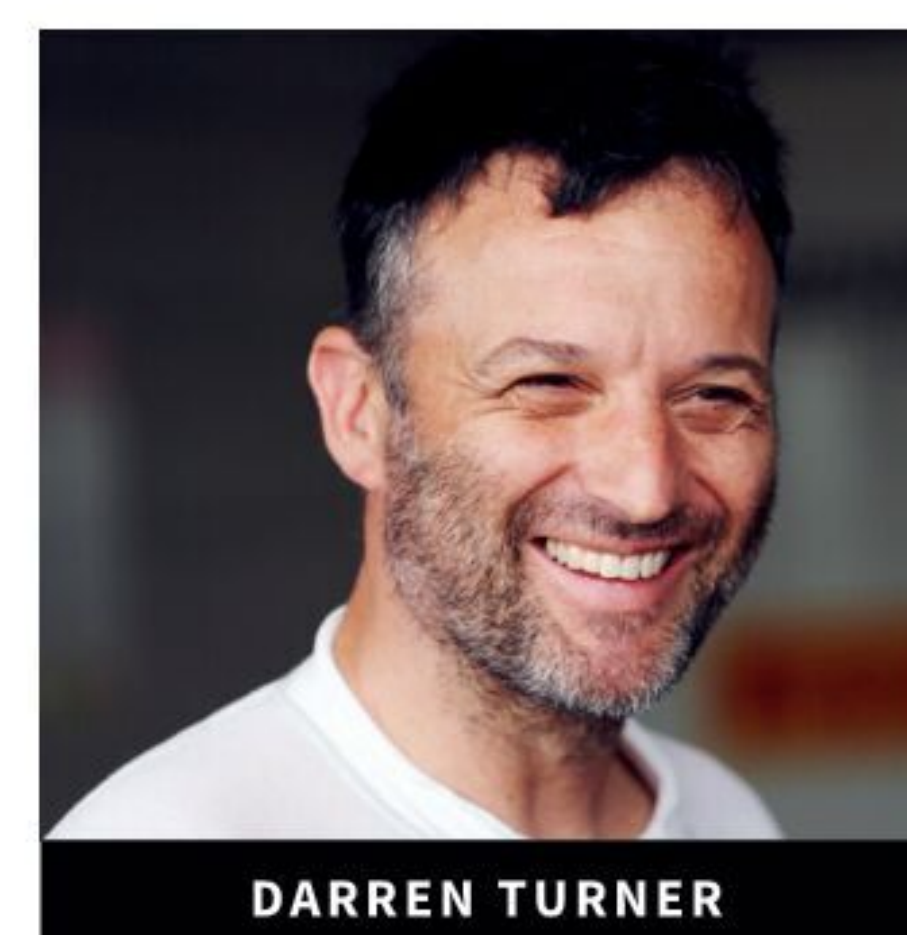
SENNAN FIELDING

1 Never qualifying outside the top three all season was a testament to his speed and consistency. Displayed fantastic racecraft following several setbacks, the culmination being his hard, but fair, overtake on Turner in the first Snetterton race. Earned the title at Donington finale with more on-track overtaking moves.



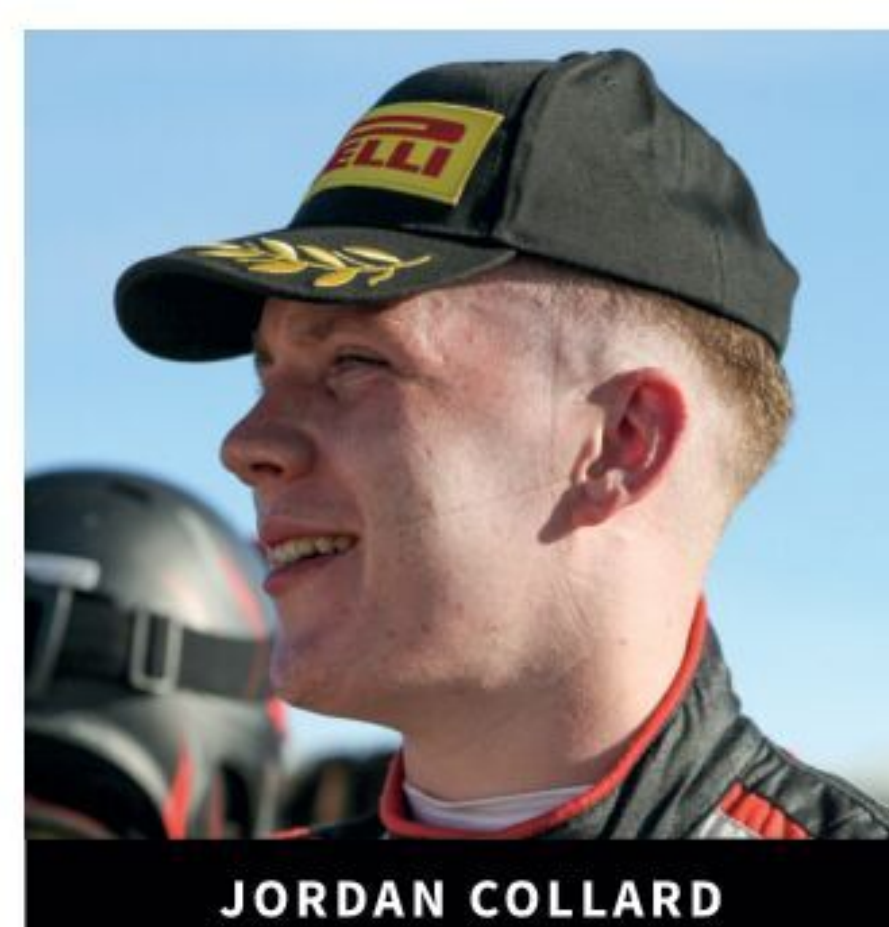
JAMIE DAY

2 Brilliant maiden season for the 17-year-old, which culminated in two wins at Snetterton I and Spa, as well as two further podiums. Made fewer mistakes than team-mate Miller and was generally the faster of the two in races, which included impressive passes for the lead at Spa and Brands.



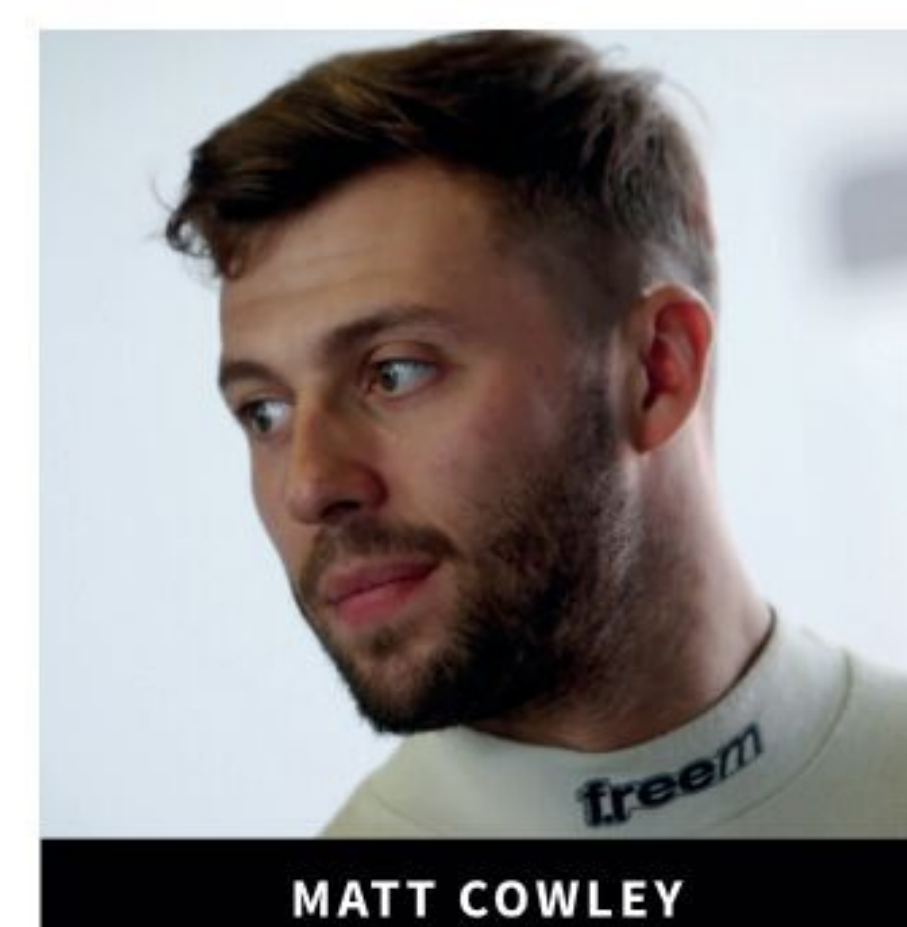
DARREN TURNER

3 A solid if unspectacular performer all season, Turner used vast experience to good effect. Ensured victory at Silverstone and managed gap to Fielding at Brands for another win. Struggled to overcome Aston speed deficit at Spa, and couldn’t make up lost ground at Donington II with title on the line.



JORDAN COLLARD

4 Up to speed quickly despite missing opening round, but strong Silverstone start was undone by a puncture. Brilliantly climbed from sixth to lead convincingly at Spa despite nursing a vibration. Overtook Miller for Donington I podium, and victory on return for season finale was fully deserved alongside Edgar.



MATT COWLEY

5 Edges Will Burns to final spot. Was instrumental in Donington I victory, resisting pressure from Turner, but also had bigger picture in mind. Led impressively at Snetterton I during opening stint and passed Topham for second in final minutes of sequel. Lack of consistency and bad luck hampered any chance of a title challenge.

Title rivals: Granfors
pushed Browning (l)
all the way in GB3



BROWNING DELIVERS ON POTENTIAL

A move into the GB3 Championship for 2022 put all eyes on Luke Browning, and the Hitech GP driver lived up to those expectations

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



motorsport
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The raw statistics suggest Luke Browning was never troubled on his way to winning the 2022 GB3 Championship, living up to his pre-season tag as title favourite. With more wins, podiums and laps led than his rivals, the Briton earned the title, but the story of the season is one of a hard-fought, season-long championship battle.

The 2020 British Formula 4 champion had decided against the category last term, instead focusing on the German F4 series – finishing third – while his former F4 rival Zak O’Sullivan took the GB3 title in convincing style.

Despite a win at Oulton Park in a one-off appearance with Fortec Motorsports last year, Browning’s decision to commit to a full-time GB3 campaign with Hitech GP in 2022 seemed like a sideways career move at best to some. There were no guarantees of success, especially as a new car – the Tatuus MSV-022 – was introduced ahead of the season with an increase of around 50bhp and 20-25% more downforce, which teams needed to get to grips with.

But, at the opening Oulton round, Browning was untouchable, recording a double pole/victory combination even if the weekend was blighted by a retirement in the full reversed-grid race. But any

thoughts that the season would be a walkover soon disappeared.

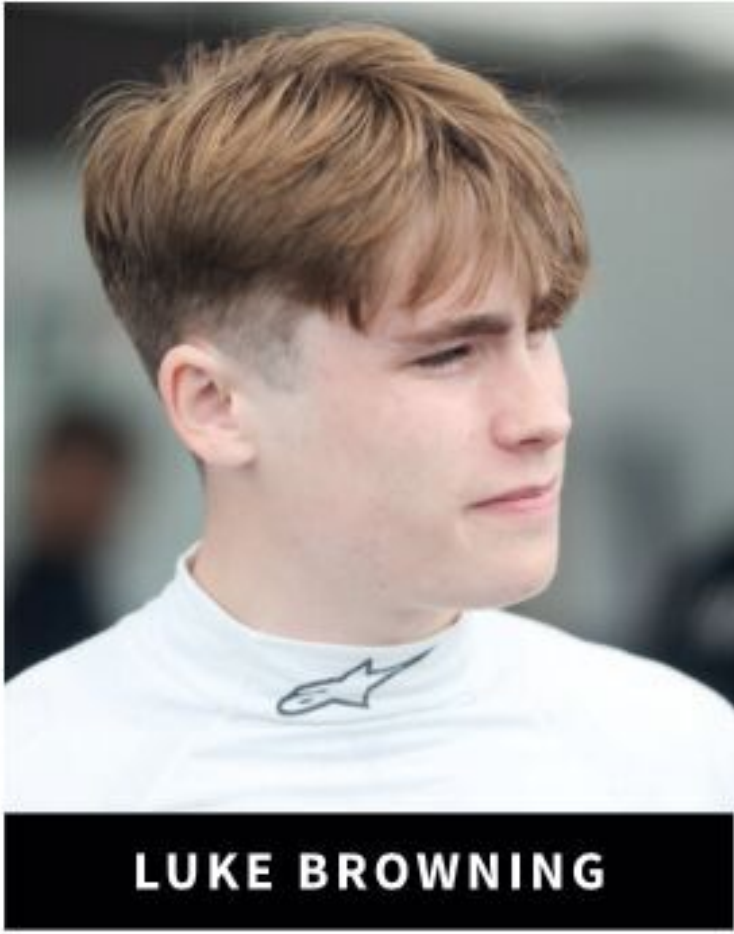
“We were so quick at the start of the season, I mean to the point we were slowing ourselves down to make sure that it wasn’t so obvious,” admits Browning. “Especially in these cold conditions, we just had the car absolutely nailed.

“[But] people got on the pace so much quicker than we thought and it almost caught us out a little bit. It’s been a constant sort of progression, trying to keep ahead of the curve the whole time.”

Two further podiums followed at Silverstone but, somewhat surprisingly, Browning lost the championship lead as Fortec’s Joel Granfors moved ahead by three points. The Swede, with a single British F4 victory to his name in 2021, had already proven himself something of a dark horse at the first round, qualifying on the front row twice before being demoted for race one after blocking during the session.

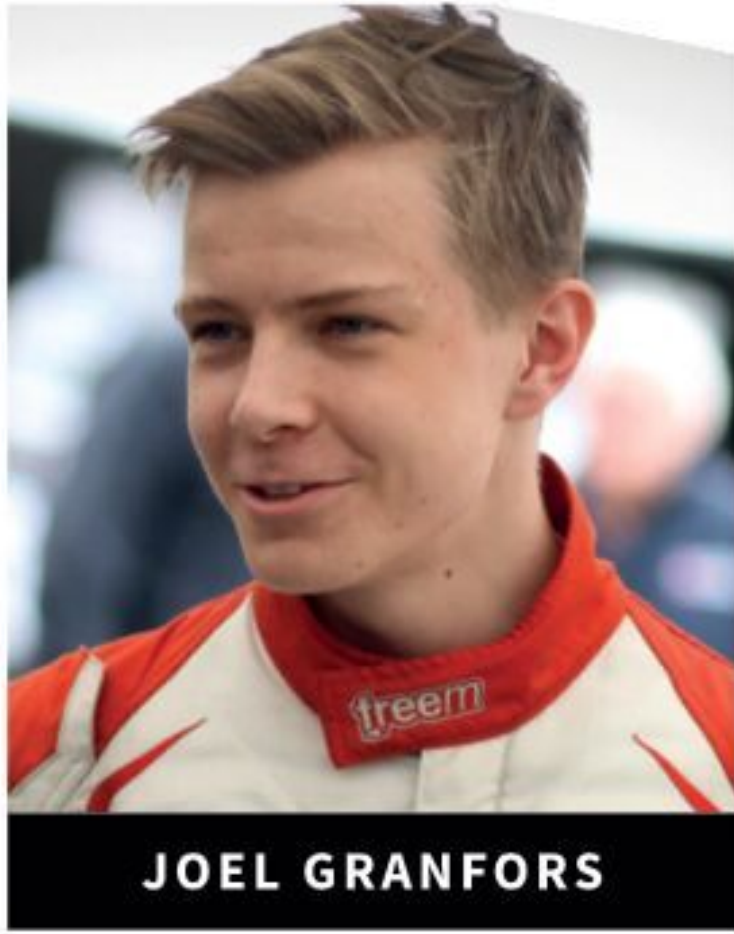
A win in the opening Silverstone race and a further podium launched the Fortec driver to the top of the standings and marked him out as a season-long title rival, with the points lead changing no fewer than six times between the pair. “He’s been an incredible opponent and I can’t talk highly enough about him, he’s probably one of the most underrated drivers in the paddock,” says Browning.

AUTOSPORT'S TOP FIVE GB3 DRIVERS



LUKE BROWNING

1 Incredible consistency was backbone to his campaign, securing podiums in all but three non-reversed-grid races, one of which was a retirement not of his own making, with the other two being from back-of-the-grid starts at Silverstone. Made no major mistakes.



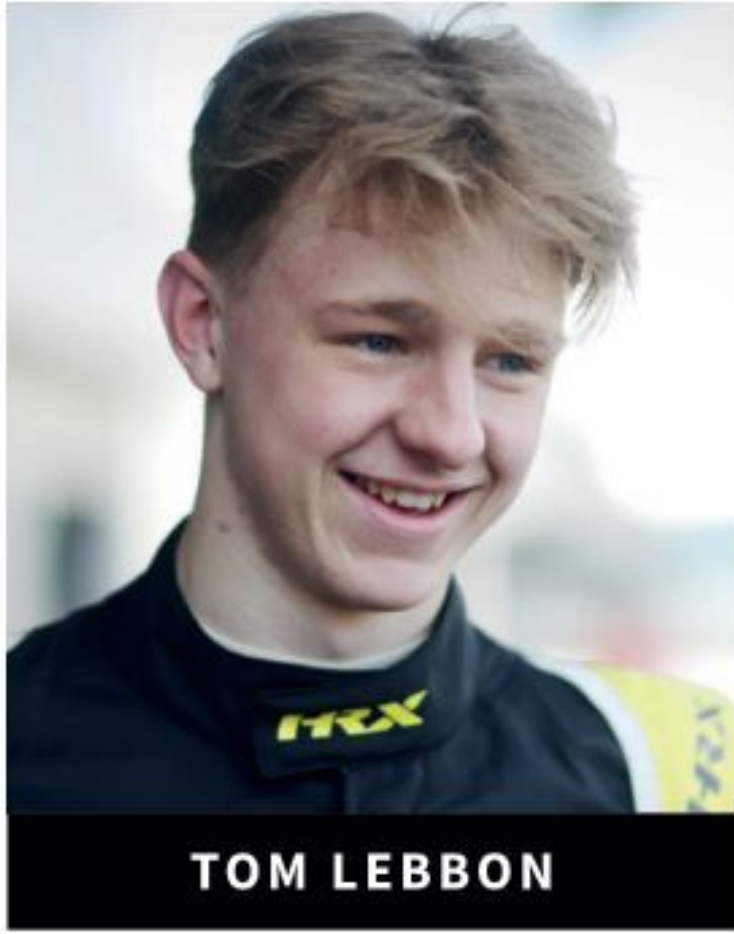
JOEL GRANFORS

2 Despite less experience than Browning, the Swede kept him honest throughout the season. Showcased impressive racecraft, notably in the second Silverstone full reversed-grid race, becoming the only driver to score a podium in every race at a meeting.



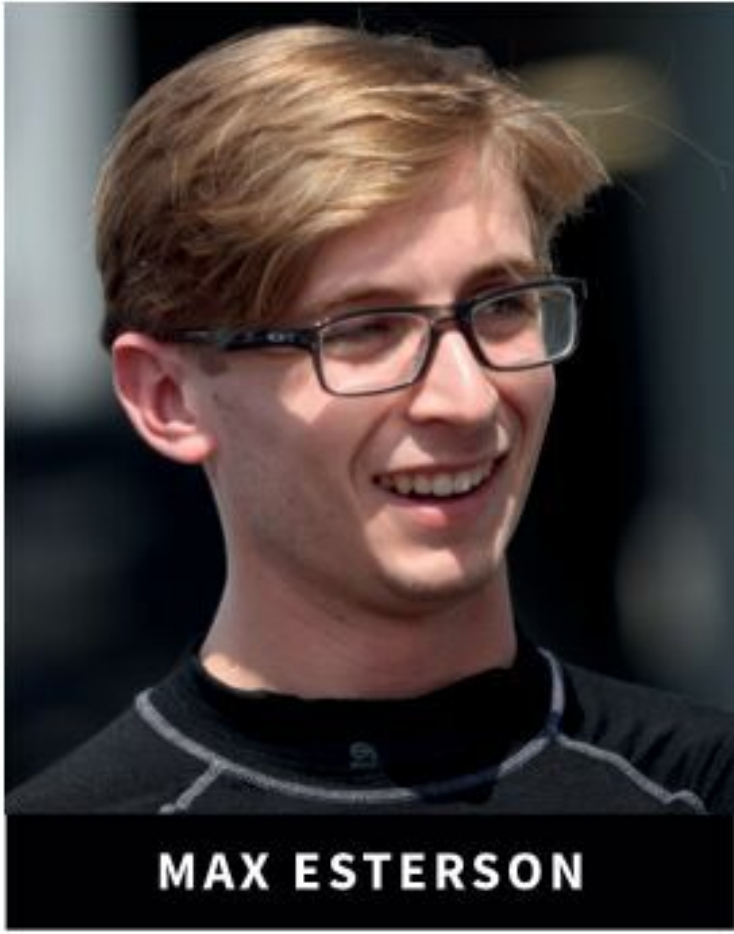
CALLUM VOISIN

3 Excelled in maiden season of single-seaters, taking three victories and same number of pole positions (five) as Browning. Brands was the low point, with two accidents across the meeting, but trounced Carlin team-mates and sophomore drivers Roberto Faria and Javier Sagrera.



TOM LEBBON

4 Hit his stride in the second half of the campaign, scoring wins in each of the final three rounds with only Browning beating his season total of four. Proved himself to be best of the rest, but loses out to Voisin here with it being his second year in the championship.



MAX ESTERSON

5 Pips Matthew Rees to the final spot after both took a win and two further podiums in their maiden GB3 campaigns. Each suffered from lack of pace at times, but the American stayed out of trouble more having also come into the season with less experience of slicks and wings.



Lebbon impressed in sophomore season with four victories

“YOU REALLY HAVE TO PUSH 100% TO BEAT HIM BECAUSE HE’S QUICK”

Granfors adds: “It’s been a good year to battle with him. I think that’s been a good experience for me, you really have to push to 100% to beat him because he’s really quick.”

Granfors held the initiative after Donington, where both retired in the first race after getting caught up in an accident, before another win for Browning at Snetterton swung the title again in his favour.

On the trip to Belgium, Browning asserted his dominance by taking another comprehensive pole/victory double at Spa, despite never having raced at the circuit before, and stretched

his advantage in the standings to 30.5 points.

Then came the second visit to Silverstone. Having secured pole for the opening race, Browning – along with Hitech GP team-mates Cian Shields and Bryce Aron – was excluded from the results due to a technical infringement.

The issue centred on a piece of metal trim that sits on the leading edge of the plank, but was missing from the Hitech machines. The consensus among most in the paddock was that there was no performance benefit to running without the part – although in theory the car could be run lower. Hitech claimed that the part had been unavailable earlier in the year due to a shortage of spares with the introduction of the new car, which was confirmed by championship organiser MotorSport Vision. But, for that weekend, the part had been available, and Browning was consigned to starting all three races from the back.

“To put it on pole and to lead [the standings] heading into the meeting by 30-odd points, and then just have all those points stripped was absolutely gutting,” he says. “But that’s when I thought I’ve got to get my head down and catch up. I had to do him [Granfors] in every race to do it and that’s where the racecraft and experience really helped me get through the pack and be smart in certain situations.”

To make matters worse, Granfors secured his second, and what would prove to be final, win of the season, and a further two podiums – which included a sensational charge through the field from 18th in the full reversed-grid race.

“I think I learned a lot through all the weekends, but Silverstone was a great weekend to learn overtaking,” says Granfors. “I think that’s also been one of the most learning curve weekends, if you can call it that.”

Browning lost the lead in the standings but his 47 points >>

GB3 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	WINS	PTS
1	Luke Browning	Hitech GP	5	507
2	Joel Granfors	Fortec Motorsports	2	460.5
3	Tom Lebbon	Elite Motorsport	4	363.5
4	Callum Voisin	Carlin	3	359
5	Roberto Faria	Carlin	0	316.5
6	Matthew Rees	JHR Developments	1	310.5

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TAYLOR TAKES INAUGURAL GB4 TITLE



The GB4 Championship joined the UK’s single-seater ranks in 2022 with the aim of being a low-cost entry-level alternative. While grid numbers were mostly modest, the series – using older generation Tatuus Formula 4 chassis – delivered some spectacular racing, and there is optimism it will grow in 2023.

Nikolas Taylor emerged as the winner from a 12-car field in the inaugural race at Snetterton, but the Fortec Motorsports driver faced early season competition from Elite Motorsport’s Alex Walker, who won three of the next four races.

Walker’s surprise mid-season withdrawal should have made the title a formality for Taylor. Despite taking an emphatic hat-trick of wins at Silverstone in July, crashes from the lead at both Snetterton and Brands Hatch, as well as a heavy qualifying shunt at the Donington Park finale, opened the door for his rivals.

Consistency kept Hillspeed’s Max Marzorati in the hunt, despite a race win eluding him all year. Strong late form also brought Kevin Mills Racing duo Jarrod Waberski and Tom Mills and Elite’s Jack Sherwood into the mix. But Taylor held his nerve to seal a deserved title, having won nine times.

“Nerve-wracking,” was car racing rookie Taylor’s view. “Inexperience really cost me at Brands and Snetterton. I owe the team every race because the hard work they do is amazing. Every time I went into the factory they were on it.”

There were also wins for Megan Gilkes, Logan Hannah and Lucas Romanek – his success achieved with Oldfield Motorsport, one of three teams to make a one-off appearance. Grid numbers disappointingly fell below 10 as the year progressed, but picked up to a season-high of 14 at the final round.

“I think the grids will grow in season two,” said GB4 promoter MotorSport Vision’s CEO Jonathan Palmer. “It’s not going to be a GB3 level of grid. I think we’ve just got to work hard and keep filling that low-cost niche.”

Fox Motorsport’s 2023 entry provides an additional boost, and the expected graduation of Taylor to GB3 will be important in showcasing GB4 as a viable step on the ladder.

STEVE WHITFIELD

GB4 DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	WINS	PTS
1	Nikolas Taylor	Fortec Motorsports	9	546
2	Jarrod Waberski	Kevin Mills Racing	4	496
3	Max Marzorati	Hillspeed	0	482
4	Tom Mills	Kevin Mills Racing	1	435
5	Jack Sherwood	Elite Motorsport	2	417
6	Megan Gilkes	Hillspeed	2	375

from the meeting – his lowest total of the season bar the first visit to Donington – proved pivotal, as come the end of the year, 46.5 points separated the pair.

Perhaps of more significance, Browning found another level across the final two events and scored his two highest points totals at Brands Hatch (73) and Donington (76), all without scoring a win. His driving at the former in particular indicated a racer who was grabbing the championship by the scruff of the neck.

“WE’VE NOT CRASHED INTO EACH OTHER ONCE, WHICH IS RARE FOR CHAMPIONSHIP RIVALS”

Having qualified behind Granfors for both races, the 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year finalist muscled ahead on each occasion with decisive and firm opening laps to take vital points away from his rival and regain a championship lead he never lost again.

For the final round at Donington, Browning put in a champion’s drive – quite literally – in the second race. With the majority of the field using wet tyres on a damp but quickly drying track, he bided his time, eventually moving ahead of early race leader Granfors having run side-by-side through Goddards and Redgate – the respect between the pair clear on and off the track.

Browning adds: “We’ve not crashed into each other once during the whole season, which is rare for championship rivals.”

The title protagonists certainly weren’t the only drivers to impress, with Callum Voisin making the jump into single-seaters seamlessly with Carlin. The Ginetta Junior graduate was best of the rest for most of the season as he often matched the raw speed of Browning and Granfors, securing three wins.

He just lost out to sophomore Tom Lebbon in the final standings, the Elite Motorsport driver proving himself to be a master of Silverstone with two wins, as well as a well-judged performance in the damp-to-dry Donington race.

Matthew Rees, 2021 British F4 champion, and last year’s Walter Hayes Trophy victor Max Esterson also secured a win each following flashes of speed, while seven different drivers triumphed in reversed-grid races.

For Browning, his success makes him the only driver to secure the GB3 and British Formula 4 titles: “We deserved it and it’s nice this year to be able to seal it and have absolutely no doubts that I’m a deserved champion. It’s a nice feeling.”



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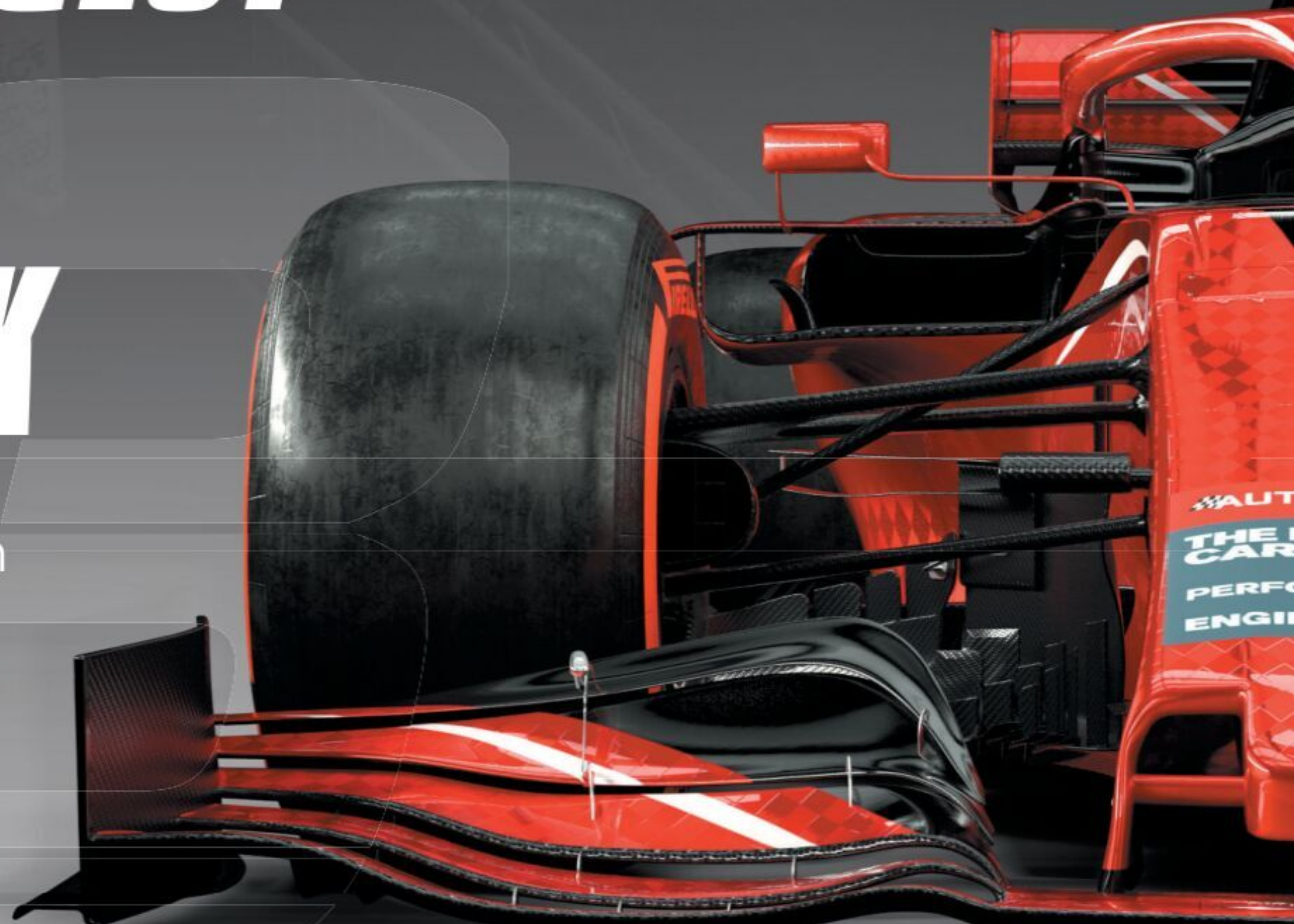
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NETWORK

Super Touring Power event to bring back 1990s tin-top classics

TOURING CARS

A touring car festival headlined by Super Touring cars of the 1990s will be staged at Brands Hatch next year.

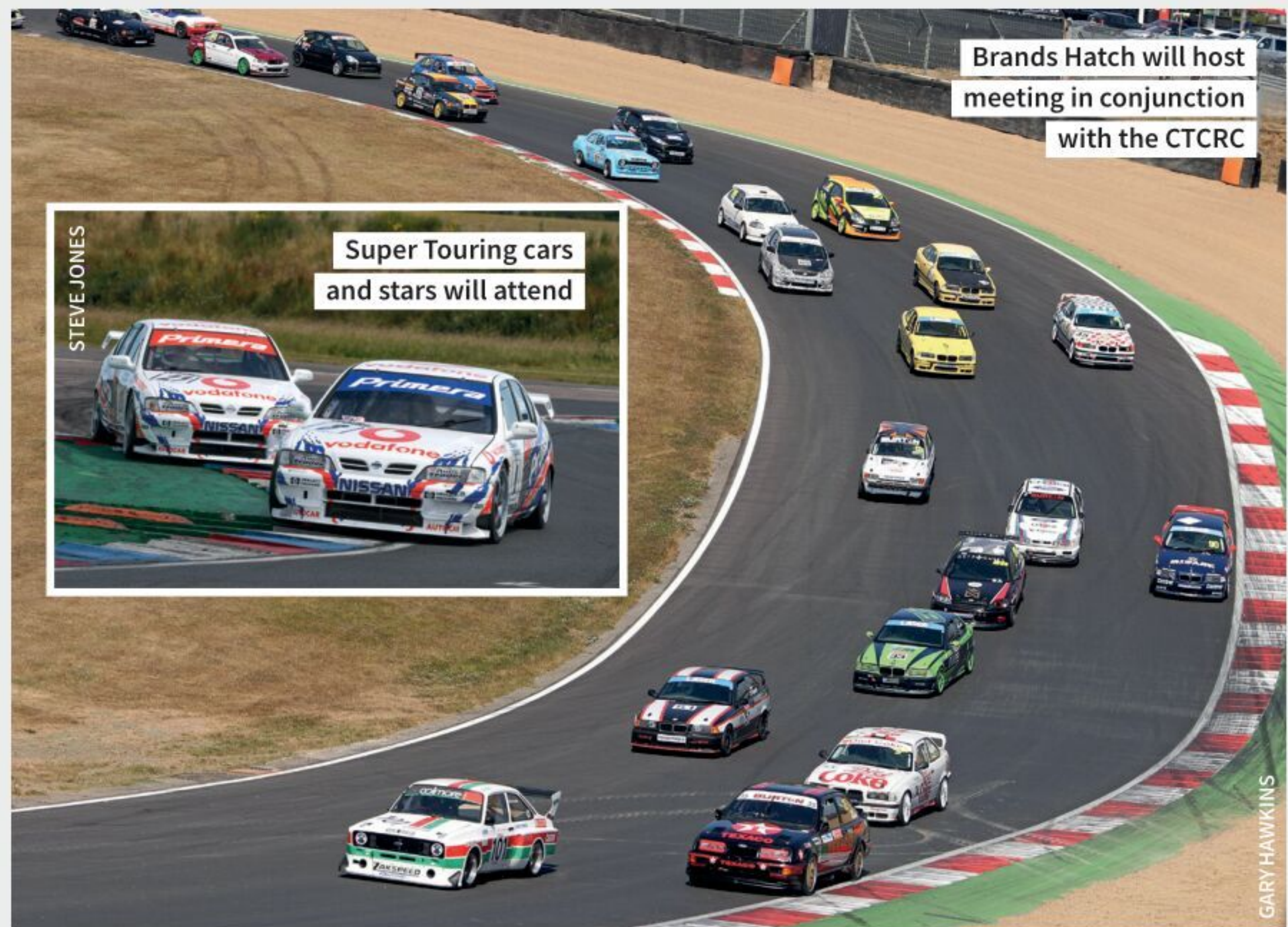
Super Touring Power will take place on 1-2 July with one day on each of the venue's Grand Prix and Indy circuits.

The event, organised by Brands Hatch owner MotorSport Vision in conjunction with the Classic Touring Car Racing Club, builds on interest generated by the CTCRC's new-for-2022 Super Tourers series. It will celebrate 65 years since the start of the British Touring Car Championship in 1958 with the club's championships for earlier Pre-'66, Group 1 and Group A touring cars set to feature prominently alongside the Super Tourers.

In addition to the CTCRC's eight categories – supplemented on the Grand Prix layout on Saturday by MotorSport Vision Racing support series – there are planned to be demonstration runs and displays for period touring cars and star drivers.

"It's going to be a wonderful celebration of touring car racing," said CTCRC chairman Stuart Caie. "This meeting will bring it all together and say, 'This is the place where you can race a classic touring car.'"

The Super Tourers series featured the



likes of BTCC champions John Cleland, Colin Turkington and runner-up Anthony Reid racing period machinery this year. It will run at three or four events in 2023, with the Silverstone GP circuit and Croft joining the summer festival at Brands on the calendar.

"I wasn't sure if it would take off," said Caie. "But, when Colin Turkington turned up, I thought, 'This may be something quite special!' It was very

good and next year we'll build on that."

The CTCRC is targeting more Group A machinery for its Pre-'93 category. "Pre-'93 is for Group A cars," said Caie. "We modified our regulations and are pushing it in that direction because there's lots of genuine cars out there."

Anyone wishing to race or display classic touring cars of any era should contact the CTCRC.

MARK PAULSON

Pearson stays with Excelr8

MINI CHALLENGE

Mini Challenge race winner Ronan Pearson will continue in the series with Excelr8 Motorsport next year and will also enjoy an expanded role as the British Touring Car squad's development driver.

Pearson finished fourth in the standings with three wins this season, his third in the series. He is now targeting the title in 2023, with an eye on progressing to the BTCC the following year, and will get the chance to test one of Excelr8's Hyundai i30 Ns for the first time.

"This season I've shown that I am capable of winning races and putting together a championship challenge, and there is no



doubt that the title has to be the goal for 2023," he said. "I just need to keep working hard and hopefully we will be able to build on the platform I've put in place this year.

"The opportunity to not only return to

the JCWs to chase the title in 2023, but to also strengthen my ties with the BTCC team, is really pivotal for me as a driver as my goal is to try and make it onto the touring car grid."

Bell Sport & Classic plans Ferrari series

MSVR

Ferrari restoration, servicing and sales specialist Bell Sport & Classic is planning to launch its own one-make race series next year open to all paddleshift Ferrari Challenge cars.

The new category will cater for a range of models from the 360 Challenge through to the latest 488 Evo machines, with dedicated classes for each. Races of around 30 minutes are planned, and a calendar is being assembled with support from MotorSport Vision Racing.

It is intended that the Bell Sport Challenge will sit below the Ferrari Challenge UK series and will be focused on a different market, while featuring newer cars than those in the Pirelli Ferrari Formula Classic competition. Tyre usage is likely to be restricted in a bid to keep costs down, while qualifying and two races will be held on a single day to reduce the time drivers spend away from their families at the track.

"Time and time again we've come across these Challenge cars that many of our clients now own and they're sitting dormant," explained series coordinator Peter Smith. "There's a great number of these cars not really doing a great deal on track other



All paddleshift Ferrari Challenge models will be eligible for new series

than trackdays. There's not a one-make official series for these guys to go racing – they want to race in a field of similar cars with like-minded people.

"We want a really good, social atmosphere in the paddock. We will have a hospitality centre where our guys can get a coffee and have a chat and us organisers and promoters can listen to feedback."

Smith envisages making a number of changes to the series based on that feedback, describing 2023 as a "toe-in-

the-water year". "We're in this for the long-term," he added. "This is a three-to-five-year plan and we're very excited."

Smith says the amount of interest in the new series is very encouraging after recently revealing the plans. "The initial interest we've had to date has been amazing – the feedback has been overwhelming," he said.

A provisional calendar and regulations for the new category are set to be released within the next couple of weeks.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Ginetta runner-up Macintyre joins Hitech

BRITISH F4

Ginetta Junior runner-up Will Macintyre will join fellow race winner Kanato Le in driving for Hitech GP in British Formula 4 next year.

Macintyre (right) impressed in his maiden car racing campaign this season, taking six wins with Elite Motorsport and winning the rookie class. He also enjoyed his first single-seater experience with the team in the GB4 finale, taking two second places. His move to Hitech means he arrives at the team that powered Alex

Dunne to the title in its maiden year in the series.

"I am really looking forward to racing with Hitech in British F4," he said. "Their results last season were brilliant and it's clear for me that this was the right team to drive with, as they not only help develop me as a better driver, but also win races."

Macintyre will be joined by a familiar face at Hitech as his 2022 team-mate Le makes the same move. The Japanese finished runner-up to Macintyre in the rookie standings, and seventh



overall in the Ginetta contest, with two race victories.

"It's an exciting time to be a part of the championship and was the obvious next step for me to further my ambitions of becoming a Formula 1 driver," said Le. "We had testing at Snetterton in the official New

Driver Test, which puts us in a good position with the preparations for next year."

Among a raft of British F4 announcements in the past week, Argenti Motorsport has also revealed its first signing, New South Wales Formula Ford frontrunner Patrick Heuzenroeder.

IN THE HEADLINES

GOODWOOD AND LE MANS

Alongside commemorating various anniversaries of its own in 2023, Goodwood has announced that a special 100 years of the Le Mans 24 Hours celebration will be held at next year's Festival of Speed. "I'm already looking forward to seeing the greatest collection of Le Mans cars and drivers that we've ever had at Goodwood in action on the Hill next year – it's going to be spectacular!" said the Duke of Richmond.

LONDON TO BRIGHTON RUN

Almost 350 pre-1905 cars braved the elements for the annual London to Brighton Veteran Car Run last weekend. Among those taking part in the event included former Formula 1 racer Max Chilton at the wheel of a 1901 Pope Waverley. Also involved were actor Rowan Atkinson in an 1893 Salvesen steam car and RAC president Prince Michael of Kent (1903 Daimler).

MICKEL MISSES OUT

Multiple Legends champion John Mickel lost his chance to challenge for this year's title when medical advice ruled him out of the Brands Hatch finale. "I've had a sore right foot for some time and it was finally diagnosed as a cracked bone," he explained, "although I don't know exactly what caused it. I suffer from gout and initially put it down to that." Mickel took part in Saturday's Legends qualifying and felt fit enough to race, but doctor's orders forced him to watch instead.

NEWBERY CAR TRANSFORMED

Legends racer James Newbery competed at the weekend to raise awareness and money for research into Motor Neurone Disease, which claimed his father Paddy. The Sussex driver and his team found a novel way to draw attention to their efforts by switching the appearance of his car between races. Based on scenes from the film *Cars*, it started as a rusty brown before transforming into duck egg blue (below).



Classic Minis will be popular addition to BTCC package



Mini 7 Racing Club to join BTCC support bill for Thruxton round

TOCA SUPPORTS

The Mini 7 Racing Club will make a return to the British Touring Car support bill at Thruxton next year.

The classic Minis proved popular when they previously appeared at BTCC events at Thruxton in 2019 and Brands Hatch in 2020. The club will now be back on the bill in Hampshire after space was created by Ginetta's decision to end its relationship with BTCC organiser TOCA and instead race at British GT fixtures next season.

The June BTCC event is the highlight

of M7RC's calendar for the new season, which also features a return to Zandvoort in July alongside trips to Silverstone, Donington Park, Snetterton, Brands Hatch and Croft.

"This is my 35th year with the club, and the calendar for 2023 looks one of the strongest ever, and we are set for another epic season of classic Mini racing," said club chairman Nick Cooke.

The Minis fill the final vacant slot on the slimmed-down supports roster for 2023 and join Legends, Radicals and Caterham in making a guest outing as part of the revamped line-up.

Brits win Paul Ricard V de V enduro

V DE V

Competing as Equipe Rosbif, Britons Chris Snowdon, David Houghton, Mike Fry and Josh Law scored a victory in V de V Racing's 30th anniversary Deux Tours d'Horloge (two laps of the clock) 24-hour race at Paul Ricard on Sunday, sharing Snowdon's newly restored Sports 2000 Tiga SC84.

But for losing some coolant and a misfire in the closing stages, the Pinto-powered car, crashed in 1999 and imported from the US in boxes, did not

miss a beat as they covered 519 laps, one more than the Porsche 930 Turbo of Pascal Duhamel, Sebastien Crubile and Romain Rocher.

S2000 Pinto veterans Snowdon and Fry, and Duratec standouts Law – the current champion – and Houghton, beat more than 40 rival teams on consistency, reliability, fuel efficiency and tactics.

"This race is won by staying out of the pits," said Snowdon. "We led after three laps, but there's no point trying to race more powerful cars you can't

keep up with, so we stuck to a plan. It was nerve-racking in the last 90 minutes, with the misfire on left-handers, but the Porsches ahead had to stop again so it came to us, rewarding a team of volunteers."

The sister Tiga SC83 of Ross Hyett and sons Nick and Charlie, run by Trevor Foster of Pegasus Classic Engineering, suffered clutch and brake issues, and a broken exhaust, but they soldiered on to finish 18th overall and third in the S2000 division.

MARCUS PYE

O'Donovan makes history with title win

BRITISH RALLYCROSS

Patrick O'Donovan's poor start in the semi-finals during round 10 of the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy appeared to have ended his hopes of wrapping up the title with a round to spare.

But the 18-year-old then delivered a performance at Lydden Hill that not only underlined why he is a deserving winner of the prestigious GB1 plate awarded to the British Rallycross title winner, but set him up for one of the most dominant final victories in modern rallycross history.

O'Donovan had entered the final weekend of the campaign needing just 11 points to put the title out of reach of his rivals, and he took eight of the required score by securing the top qualifier position on Saturday.

Having been left on the line in the semi-final, the Ford Fiesta driver overtook two cars on the opening lap of Lydden Hill's revised layout – now complete



GB1 plate went the way of O'Donovan (inset) after epic drive

with a large jump on the infield – before passing nearest rival to the crown, six-time title-winner Julian Godfrey, over the jump with a couple of laps to go and secure the points needed to become the youngest-ever British Rallycross title winner.

The final was held under the cover of darkness, the track floodlit for the occasion as consistent rain fell even harder. O'Donovan, having won the dash to the opening corner, was the only driver to have a clear run as he stormed to victory by almost 40 seconds, despite picking up a left-rear puncture in the closing stages.

Behind, Godfrey traded places early on with O'Donovan's father Ollie, the 2007 title winner, but Godfrey ran clear after contact between the pair broke a steering arm on O'Donovan Sr's Ford Focus.

Outgoing champion Derek Tohill spun his Fiesta at the circuit's fast chicane and lost his rear spoiler having hit the tyre wall, but salvaged third by the finish, ahead of Michael Sellar, Swedish guest Daniel Thoren and Steve Hill.

After heavy overnight rainfall, the final round of the season the following day was abandoned on safety grounds.

Bird and Morton fly to victory at Oulton Park



PAUL LAWRENCE

Fiesta crew overcame very wet conditions

CIRCUIT RALLY

Frank Bird and Jack Morton's Ford Fiesta Rally2 was never headed in last Saturday's Neil Howard Stages Rally at Oulton Park, the MGJ Engineering Circuit Rally Championship opener.

Bird mastered the mixture of wet and greasy conditions to

consolidate his lead over day-long pursuers Steve Simpson/Chris Williams' similar car. Fastest on six of the eight stages, Bird "nearly lost it" after hitting a bump on a gravel section during the penultimate test, with Simpson spinning and stalling on the stage.

Two penalties lost Joe Cunningham/Josh Beer's

Fiesta an early third place before a gearbox failure after stage five ended their day early.

Kevin Procter/Laura Connell's Fiesta retained third from stage four, despite being penalised too, while John Griffiths/Emma Morrison's Fiesta took fourth having earlier lost boost.

PETER SCHERER

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Ashton flew in Rover
Metro while Absolom
won opening race

STEVE JONES



Underdogs shine in the rain on support bill at Silverstone

WALTER HAYES TROPHY

A remarkable spectrum of cars and stellar giant-slaying performances characterised last weekend's Walter Hayes Trophy support programme at a wet Silverstone.

The Historic Sports Car Club's Closed-Wheel races were fully subscribed, and front-wheel drive was king on Saturday as Tony Absolom dominated in his Vauxhall Cavalier. Debutant 'Frankie Wilde' (BMW E36 M3) led the distant chase as Mike Williams (Rover Metro) passed Steve Watton (Turner) for third.

A Metro GTI lapping within four seconds of winner Chris Fox's Cosworth DFV-powered Lola T282 in Sunday's sequel was priceless, but Jack Ashton defied all odds, finishing third behind Absolom.

Graham Charman started his Juno from the back in the Pumpkin Smash race after missing qualifying while its Ford Duratec engine's exhaust manifold was repaired. Chris Hodgen (Porsche Cayman GT4) led initially, but Charman reeled everybody in, including leader Alastair Smart (Radical PR6) at Brooklands. Alternator failure stopped Charman at Becketts on the final lap, leaving Smart, Hodgen and Doug Carter (PR6) the podium trio.

Tiedeman Trophy Monoposto runners joined in on Sunday. Robbie Watts trumped George Line and Gilles Cloet on the opener's final lap, the Dallara F308s blanketed by 0.841s at the flag. Watts and Line survived a moment exiting Luffield as Cloet took the win in race two.

MARCUS PYE

IN THE HEADLINES

MORANS TOP OF THE HILL

The Skoda Fabia R5 rally car of Roger and Scott Moran dominated Rallye Prescott last Saturday. The hillclimb event, run primarily for rally cars, took competition into the darkness on Saturday evening, as six-time British Hillclimb champion Scott beat his father Roger by three quarters of a second to the best time of the day.

PODIUM ON DEBUT

'Frankie Wilde' enjoyed his car racing debut at Silverstone last weekend, finishing second in the first Closed-Wheel Allcomers race in a BMW M3, having previously run cars at the event. "I was always putting off getting my licence," he said. "I can't really explain the emotions [of debut podium]. It's a good piece of kit on good tyres, so I can't take all the credit!"

WHITE'S UPHILL BATTLE

It was an eventful Walter Hayes Trophy for 2020 winner Oliver White this year as he was unable to take part on the Saturday and had to start at the back of Sunday's Progression race. "My dad was away yesterday and I had to look after the farm!" he said. At the wheel of a Don Hardman-run Firman, he fought up to seventh before climbing through the Last Chance and second semi-final to just sneak into the final on the back row of the grid, but retired on the last lap.

TURNER BACK ON TRACK

Colin Turner returned to the wheel of Formula Ford machinery at Silverstone last weekend two years after a serious Walter Hayes Trophy crash resulted in both of his legs being amputated. Turner drove the Nigel Grant Racing Merlyn Mk20A (below) successfully raced by Callum Grant in historics and completed a couple of demonstration laps during the lunchbreak. "It's fantastic," he said. "To be allowed out in this car is a real privilege."



'Four nations' calendar for 2023

SMRC

The Scottish Motor Racing Club has undergone the most significant calendar upheaval in recent years as it revealed a unique "four nations" style 2023 schedule.

All of the club's championships will contest six rounds next season, running alongside each other at the Knockhill season opener and finale as well as a standalone SMRC-organised away round

at Anglesey in Wales.

The rest of the calendar will be split up between the championships, with the Scottish Classics, C1 Cup and Fiesta Championship racing two more times at Knockhill – including once on the anti-clockwise direction – as well as one additional away meeting.

The Fiestas will race at Kirkistown in Northern Ireland on the final weekend in May while the C1s head to Cadwell

Park in August. The Classics then visit Croft on the opening weekend in September.

The Mini Cooper Cup and the turbocharged R53 series also have a six-round calendar but split across five tracks. In addition to the three SMRC-sanctioned meetings, they will also visit Croft in May and Kirkistown in June before racing the reversed layout of Knockhill for the penultimate round.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON



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When there is no winner

Max Esterson was denied another Walter Hayes win with a post-race penalty that sadly overshadows the great event

STEPHEN LICKORISH

There is no disputing that the end-of-season knockout Formula Ford 1600 showpieces are brilliant events. Close racing, entry lists packed with potential winners, and more than a fair share of drama are the perfect ingredients for an entertaining weekend. And there is usually a dose of controversy, too. But, sadly, this last element – in a variety of forms – has either threatened to overshadow, or actually has overshadowed, the past three events.

Last year's Walter Hayes Trophy final was delayed by over 45 minutes with cars waiting in the assembly area and eager spectators clueless as to what was happening amid ongoing appeals and hearings into incidents from earlier races. It was fortunate that there was even time for a final at all before darkness descended. There was no such narrow escape at the Formula Ford Festival last month when poor planning that did not take into account long-predicted heavy rain or give any margin for trouble left a pathetic two-lap 'final'. And now we still don't know who won last weekend's Hayes after on-the-road victor Max Esterson was penalised for a clash with Tom Mills that he unsuccessfully appealed and will now be settled in the National Court. And all that leaves a very sour taste.

These events should be fun for all involved and should be entered in that spirit. We all have to accept that the days when winning an event like the Festival would transform a career and propel a driver on a path that could lead to Formula 1 are long gone. Of course,

a lighter touch from race control. That does not mean that abysmal driving should go unpunished but, instead, only the most serious indiscretions are investigated after the final. Continual appeals and protests could be banned. The notion seems fanciful and impractical when aligned to myriad rules and regulations that exist, but could help prevent the sort of uncertainty that now shrouds last weekend's event. By entering, competitors could even sign up to undertaking such an approach.

Also, let's not forget that track conditions were incredibly tricky for the final, and that inevitably contributed to Esterson sliding into the path of Mills and should therefore set the bar even higher for any punishment. Instead, those leaving Silverstone on Sunday evening – including beneficiary Joey Foster – departed believing one driver had won the race when it could now actually be someone else.

But at least we had a full-length final, and there was a moment on Sunday afternoon when that looked uncertain. The organising Historic Sports Car Club had already done a tremendous job to get roughly back on schedule following significant time lost with red flags and delayed starts for the Progression race and second semi-final. Then torrential rain struck. The track flooded, darkness fell and huge plumes of water were being shifted by the tractors that tried to clear the circuit. But the sun soon came out, the Silverstone staff and marshals minimised the standing water, and racing could resume with the timetable being successfully completed.

That was just one of a number of positives from the event that should not be forgotten. Another was the size of the entry assembled by organiser James Beckett. A total of 116 cars took part – a very impressive number, and one that significantly dwarfs the field at the Festival two weeks earlier. It was a truly international entry too because, in addition to the Team USA and Canada scholars, there was an influx of South Africans and Australians – including 2008 British Formula Ford runner-up Tim Blanchard, back in the UK having progressed to Supercars in his homeland. Sunday's action was also livestreamed for the first time and there was the brilliant sight of Colin Turner – seriously hurt in the 2020 Hayes – getting back behind the wheel of a Formula Ford for a few laps during the lunchbreak, a remarkable achievement from the tenacious Scot.

It's just a shame that these positives were somewhat diminished by events off-track after the final. Regardless of what happens now, many will remember Esterson as the winner after another impressive performance – his fightback from 12th to first in a lap and a half after being sent spinning in the second heat (contact for which there was no penalty) was remarkable. We may now find out the final winner before Christmas, but the reality is no one truly wins when the outcome is determined so long after the chequered flag. ❧

“The culture of appealing and protesting anything and everything is not helpful”

everybody wants to win and that's what makes these events special, but it should not be at all costs. The culture of appealing and protesting anything and everything is not helpful and the winner should be decided on track, not in race control or a courtroom. What is the point in spectators braving the elements – and the BRDC grandstand at Brooklands seemed even more packed than usual last weekend – if what they witness does not match the final result?

The controversial clash in question was far from the worst piece of driving ever seen and was not a malicious move. Undoubtedly, this type of incident sometimes goes unpunished, while other times there is sanction – in other words, it's far from clear cut. Mills took a risk putting his car around the outside and could have backed out.

Given the nature of these events and how a crescendo builds to the all-important final, perhaps this situation could be avoided with

➔ **P62 WALTER HAYES TROPHY REPORT**

Esterson penalty opens door to fourth win for Foster – for now



SILVERSTONE HSCC WALTER HAYES TROPHY 5-6 NOVEMBER

It was an easy error to make, given the tricky wet conditions of the Walter Hayes Trophy final. Yet the seemingly innocuous moment of Max Esterson putting a wheel on the wet white line at Brooklands and running slightly wide proved to have huge significance to last weekend's Silverstone event.

That error allowed second-placed Tom Mills to draw alongside the leader around the outside into Luffield, only for GB3 driver Esterson to slide into the path of Mills, sending the GB4 racer into the gravel and ending his victory hopes. Then, over two hours after the final had concluded, it was the consequences of that original error that led to Esterson being penalised to fifth behind Mills in the provisional result, handing Joey Foster a record-breaking fourth Hayes victory. And it is that error that means we still do not know the eventual winner, since Esterson and his Ammonite Motorsport team are now taking the matter to the National Court after an unsuccessful appeal to the stewards.



Eastwell inherited strong second place after Esterson penalty

"He went off the track at Brooklands and, into Luffield, I had my wheels in front," said Mills of the collision. "He slithered wide and didn't leave me a car's width." Esterson, speaking immediately after the race and long before any penalty was announced, did not believe he had done anything wrong, saying Mills "just ran out of room".

Aside from that key moment, the final was generally pretty tame by Formula Ford 1600 standards. But it was certainly close.

The top five circulated almost as one for much of the first seven of the 15 laps before the controversial clash.

Polesitter Foster was expecting a battle at the start as he was on the less favourable outside line for Copse. "I wasn't sure how much grip there was going to be – I knew it was going to be a fight," he said.

And, sure enough, Esterson had powered his Ray GR18 into the lead from the front row into Copse, while Mills's Spectrum



The original podium was altered by officials post-race



Mills (121) heads for the gravel after race-defining contact with Esterson

had also relegated Foster to third. Mills continued his momentum and then challenged Esterson around the outside at Becketts but could not quite get ahead.

Behind, Mills's Kevin Mills Racing team-mate Michael Eastwell was the driver on the move, climbing from sixth to fourth off the line as he continued his recovery from a heat-two incident, where three KMR Spectrums all wanted the same piece of track at Brooklands. He was showing impressive pace considering his relatively recent return to racing after three years out and was putting Foster under pressure.

While Esterson was eking out a lead of a few tenths, Eastwell eventually passed the Firman of Foster on lap six. Having gone around the outside of Brooklands, he then had the inside for Luffield. But it was not long before Foster was back ahead, profiting from the chaos of the Mills collision to nip past Eastwell again.

The pair proceeded to switch places twice more over the next couple of laps, with Foster making the decisive move around the outside of Brooklands to seal the place and set off after Esterson.

He got incredibly close on a couple of occasions but a slide at Copse on the final >>

PERFECT START FOR ESTERSON AND FOSTER IN THE HEATS

Whatever decision the National Court makes in respect of the result of the Grand Final, the eventual WHT winner started their weekend with a perfect Saturday, with both Max Esterson and Joey Foster claiming pole position and victory in their heats.

Esterson had perhaps the toughest heat draw, but also the most resounding margin in qualifying – he was 0.8 seconds faster than South African Andrew Rackstraw's Kevin Mills Racing Spectrum. They were closer than that into Copse for the first time, though, making contact and spinning to allow Team USA Scholarship Ray GR17 driver William Ferguson into a temporary lead. While Rackstraw had to make a big effort to climb back to an eventual fourth, Esterson had retaken the lead by Becketts on the second lap – despite dropping to 12th – and claimed heat two spoils. Michael Moyers was second in his first race in the Simon Hadfield Motorsport Medina, up from fourth on the grid. As conditions deteriorated, Brandon McCaughan fell out of third when he dropped his Oldfield Motorsport Van Diemen at Luffield on the penultimate lap, promoting Ferguson.

Foster had Tom Mills alongside him on the heat three grid, but it was Cameron Jackson's 32-year-old Van Diemen RF90 that was the thorn in the side of the modern Firman. Jackson momentarily took the lead at Copse on lap two, and for a slightly longer period after driving around the outside of Foster at Luffield on lap five, but his hopes of a third stint in front were dashed by a red flag. Mills and Ben Mitchell (Wayne Poole Racing Van Diemen JL16) were within striking distance of the lead, too.

The first heat was the most entertaining

of the four, and also contained the biggest flashpoint. Julian van der Watt won in his Mygale SJ01 after passing Shawn Rashid's Ammonite Motorsport Ray GR18 on the final run through Woodcote.

Combe champion Felix Fisher was running fourth in the TM Racing Ray GR05 when he spun after contact at Brooklands. Chris Middlehurst claimed that he found Fisher's car "stopped" on the exit of the corner, while Fisher said Middlehurst "wiped [him] out". Fisher was thus condemned to the Last Chance race – which he won after overcoming the B-M Racing Medina of Megan Gilkes – but he didn't make much more impression thereafter.

Another heat one victim was David McArthur, who spun his Medina at Brooklands on the opening lap after being left "nowhere to go" by the polesitting Elliott Budzinski. Suspension damage ensued when he was clattered into by Sam Street's Swift, which was having its own incident. Unable to have his planned lie-in on Sunday, McArthur will have wished he'd stayed in bed when he was eliminated from the Progression race after a clash at the second corner. That race was won by ex-British Touring Car racer Mike Epps, whose Border Reivers Ray GR18 caught fire on his FF1600 debut in the heat. After charging through the first repechage race, he soon crashed out of the Last Chance bash.

Josh Fisher won the final Saturday heat, but only after on-track winner Rory Smith picked up a 5s track-limits penalty. The B-M Racing driver was thus classified behind Luke Cooper's Swift Cooper SC20 and Andre Lafond's Team Dolan Van Diemen BD22.

IAN SOWMAN



Esterson recovered from first-corner spin to win heat

tour meant he was unable to mount a proper attack into Brooklands for the last time, and Esterson crossed the line half a second clear after what he described as a “stressful” race. It initially looked like the American had joined an elite club of drivers, alongside Foster and Niall Murray, to win the Festival and the Hayes in the same year before proceedings in race control intervened.

“It was a fantastic race – and that’s why I’m here,” said Foster. “The track evolved through the race. My car got a bit more front-end positive and I made a couple of mistakes. I needed a couple more laps [to pass Esterson].”

Eastwell, meanwhile, was delighted to

take his first podium at an event where he has suffered misfortune in the past. “If you’re going to come second to anyone, Max and Joey are both class acts,” he added.

With Esterson’s provisional penalty, Eastwell was promoted to second and that brought Wayne Poole Racing’s Josh Fisher (Van Diemen RF99) into the top three for a fourth time. On his sole outing of the year, Fisher had been right in contention in the middle phase of the race before slipping back a little in the final couple of laps. “I was hoping they were going to take each other off!” he said of the trio battling ahead. “We made some changes to the car for the final and put new tyres on the back to try and

give a bit more traction. But it took more laps than I thought for them to come in.”

Mills survived his gravelly moment, despite getting a collection of stones in his footwell that made the final laps tricky, but still picked off Lucas Romanek (Oldfield Van Diemen JL13) to take fifth across the line – which became fourth post-race, frustrated given he felt he had the pace to win.

Further back, South Africans Julian van der Watt and Robert Wolk had a thrilling battle in their Mygales to be best of the rest, before dropping back late on. Instead, it was 2020 Festival winner Rory Smith (B-M Racing Medina) who ended up seventh.

Wolk finished eighth at the head of an incredible train of nine cars that took the flag separated by just five seconds. This also included best Team USA Scholar Elliott Budzinski (Ammonite Ray GR18) and two-time winner Michael Moyers, debuting Simon Hadfield Motorsport’s new modified Medina, which completed the top 10.

While we know where these drivers finished, it is still unclear whether Esterson or Foster will be the eventual winner. The pair were the standout drivers of the event, each qualifying on pole and topping their heat and semi-final, and would therefore be deserving victors. But we now have to wait for the final chapter of the 2022 Walter Hayes Trophy to play out in the courtroom.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Wolk headed a huge train of cars for eighth

MORE SUCCESS FOR FIRST HAYES WINNER FOWLER

On a weekend when the Walter Hayes Trophy seemingly got its first four-time victor, there were celebrations too for its very first winner, when Neil Fowler took the honours in the Carl Hamer Trophy for pre-1982 cars.

There had been eager anticipation of a great scrap in Saturday’s pre-final, with Fowler – in the March 709 campaigned by Ross Drybrough this season – lining up against 2017 and 2019 winner Richard Tarling in the SDC Builders-livered Royale RP26. But the battle got no further than the first corner, with a light touch between the two cars breaking the Royale’s steering. Fowler didn’t look back for the remainder of the two races, taking a comfortable win in Sunday’s main race after a two-year layoff from FF1600.

Matt Wrigley and Ben Tinkler,

in Merlyn Mk11A and Van Diemen RF80 respectively, fought an entertaining enough battle for second position, but more attention was focused on what was happening behind them. Charging from the back, Tarling set fastest lap – around a second faster than the rest – before overtaking three cars on the penultimate tour, then being gifted fourth position when Sam Mitchell scurried through the Luffield gravel trap in his Merlyn.

The Janet Cesar Memorial final was more complicated, with penalties being applied shortly after the leading cars crossed the finishing line, resulting in the win changing hands twice in the moments after the race.

Cam Jackson had clearly been the class of the field – as he had been in the pre-final 24 hours earlier – to secure what appeared



Fowler was unstoppable in Carl Hamer Trophy

STEVE JONES

to be a convincing win in his Van Diemen RF90. It was decided, however, that he had gained an unfair advantage by exceeding track limits and had 10s added to his time.

There had been a fine race-long battle between Tom Bradshaw – in Callum Grant’s usual RF91 – and James Clarke, in an RF90 that hadn’t raced for the

previous three decades. A feature of the scrap had been the pair’s differing lines through Becketts, with Bradshaw sometimes using the run-off area on the exit. Like Jackson, he was given a penalty – this one 5s – and consequently Clarke was awarded victory from Doug Crosbie’s RF89 and Swift SC92 driver Sam Street.

IAN SOWMAN

SILVERSTONE
WEEKEND WINNERS

JEP

WALTER HAYES TROPHY

Heat 1 Julian van der Watt (Mygale SJ01)**Heat 2** Max Esterson (Ray GR18)**Heat 3** Joey Foster (Firman RFR20)**Heat 4** Josh Fisher (Van Diemen RF99)**Progression race** Mike Epps (Ray GR18, above)**Last Chance race** Felix Fisher (Ray GR05)**Semi-final 1** Joey Foster (Firman RFR20)**Semi-final 2** Max Esterson (Ray GR18)**Final (15 laps) 1 Foster**; 2 Michael Eastwell (Spectrum 011C) +0.533s; 3 J Fisher; 4 Tom Mills (Spectrum KMR); 5 Esterson; 6 Lucas Romanek (Van Diemen JL13). **Class winners** Tom Bradshaw (Van Diemen RF91); Neil Fowler (March 709). **Fastest lap** Foster 1m08.857s (85.76mph). **Pole** Foster. **Starters** 36.

JANET CESAR MEMORIAL TROPHY

Pre-final Cameron Jackson (Van Diemen RF90)**Final** James Clarke (Van Diemen RF90, below)

CARL HAMER TROPHY

Pre-final & Final Neil Fowler (March 709)

STEVE JONES

HSCC CLOSED-WHEEL ALLCOMERS

Race 1 Tony Absolom (Vauxhall Cavalier)**Race 2** Chris Fox (Lola-DFV T282)

PUMPKIN SMASH RACE

Alastair Smart (Radical PR6)

MONOPOSTO TIEDEMAN TROPHY

Race 1 Robbie Watts (Dallara F308, below)**Race 2** Gilles Cloet (Dallara F308)

STEVE JONES

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

STEVE JONES

Mills draws alongside
Foster approaching Luffield
but couldn't quite get throughSEMI-FINALS PROVIDE CLOSE CONTESTS
BUT FOSTER AND ESTERSON WIN AGAIN

While the Grand Final was, for the most part, quite a cagey affair, some of the best racing of the weekend came in the semi-final contests. These followed the theme of the event with wins for Joey Foster and Max Esterson – but they had to work for those triumphs.

Foster briefly lost the lead at the start of the first semi-final to fellow front-row man Julian van der Watt but powered back ahead approaching Becketts. Further back, contact sent Ben Mitchell spearing hard into the barriers exiting Copse and that ended the Van Diemen JL16 driver's event after he was on the podium last year. He was not the only frontrunner dropping out of contention on the first lap – Shawn Rashid spun his Ray at Brooklands and could only recover to 24th.

Meanwhile, Tom Mills was on a charge, picking off Tom McArthur and van der Watt with brilliant dives on the inside into Brooklands on successive tours. He then reeled in leader Foster and was right on the Firman's gearbox with two laps to go. Mills twice attempted a move at Luffield, coming incredibly close to contact, but Foster just held on, with van der Watt a solitary third. Lucas Romanek was fourth after Elliott Budzinski and Cam Jackson tangled at Brooklands.

Just like Foster, Esterson – the second semi-final's polesitter – lost his lead at the start. The race had to be restarted after Ivor McCullough, Rob Wainwright and Gaius Ghinn collided when the lights went out, but each time Esterson lost out to Josh Fisher. "I just struggled off the line with wheelspin – Josh had so much traction," said Esterson. "The first lap I was pretty close to making a move but I didn't want to risk anything."

Behind, fourth-place starter Luke Cooper was in strife. After backing out of a move for second on the inside at Copse, he was sandwiched approaching Becketts, with the

ensuing contact leaving him with damaged steering and a fall to an eventual 13th. "To make the final is a miracle – I shouldn't have finished the race," said Cooper of the damage he sustained, bemoaning the misfortune on a weekend where he "had so much pace", and he eventually ended the final 14th. Team USA driver William Ferguson was also involved and spun at Becketts, leaving him unable to make the final.

Back at the front, Fisher continued to lead either side of a brief safety-car period to retrieve Miles Griffiths's Ray from the Copse gravel, but was under intense pressure from Esterson. The Ammonite driver attempted a move down the inside of Brooklands on lap five of 10 but ran wide, and that allowed Fisher to power back ahead into Luffield.

The pair were at it again the following tour but, this time, Esterson judged his move perfectly and pulled a second clear by the flag, while Fisher used his first wheel-to-wheel racing experience with Esterson to understand the Festival winner's strengths and weaknesses. Rory Smith completed the podium after emerging unscathed from a Brooklands tangle with Andrew Rackstraw, while Michael Eastwell fought up to fourth on his recovery from his Saturday heat drama.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



STEVE JONES

Fisher initially led
Esterson in semi-final

Champions crowned as rain hits Brands Hatch finale

BRANDS HATCH
BARC
5-6 NOVEMBER

A high-quality, 19-race programme building up to Brands Hatch's celebrated fireworks display drew a sell-out crowd on Sunday despite conditions, which were never less than damp and sometimes verged on the impossible. Despite the weather, champions were crowned among the heavyweight trucks as well as their smaller Pickup cousins, in the national Legends series and for two different kinds of Minis.

Two commanding wins on Saturday wrapped up Ryan Smith's seventh British Truck racing title in succession. The Midlander came to Kent as favourite and took both opening races from pole, although some of his rivals complicated things by prompting red flags each time.

Race one was stopped twice, the first time after a clash at Clearways and the second when Smith's leading points rival, David Jenkins, was edged wide at Druids and crunched the barriers. Race two was halted when Tom O'Rourke spun and nudged the pitwall with a truck already battered from race one. Stuart Oliver was runner-up both times, and the third podium step was shared by Craig Reid and John Newell.

Sunday's three races featured reversed grids, but the first of them started in single file due to dreadful morning conditions. This gave Steven Powell the chance to lead, bottling up an increasingly impatient queue. Powell defended his position while chaos reigned behind, with Newell brushing the barriers before spinning across the track along Cooper Straight.

When Michael Oliver slid sideways at Paddock Hill Bend, the incident triggered



Smith took three wins over the weekend, which was enough for seventh title

a chain reaction that sent trucks bouncing off one another and the barriers, causing another red flag and leaving a number of teams with heavy damage to repair. Smith's truck was one of those returning to the paddock on a suspended tow.

In Division 2, Luke Garrett spun at Graham Hill Bend and took several laps to find enough traction to escape from the slippery grass, damaging his title hopes.

Heroic efforts in the paddock produced a near-complete grid for race four, Michael Oliver's rig the only one out for the day. Smith was back in winning form, while Newell defended aggressively to hold second from Reid, who was later handed a penalty that relegated him to fourth. Division 2 swung back in Garrett's favour with a class win, three of the D2 trucks having collided

at Surtees on lap one before rejoining.

After another downpour, blinding sunshine welcomed the fifth and final truck outing and, despite its end-of-season status, this was the least eventful of the weekend. Reid was a popular winner, while Jenkins's second place pipped Stuart Oliver for runner-up spot in the championship. Third in class won the Division 2 title for an emotional Garrett.

Will Gibson dramatically cut Miles Rudman's Legends championship lead by winning both of Saturday's heats, helped by reigning champion Rudman not starting heat two due to an electrical problem. The first day's finale looked like a different story, though, Rudman ninth on the road to Gibson's 16th, but officials decided that Rudman had gained a place after safety car

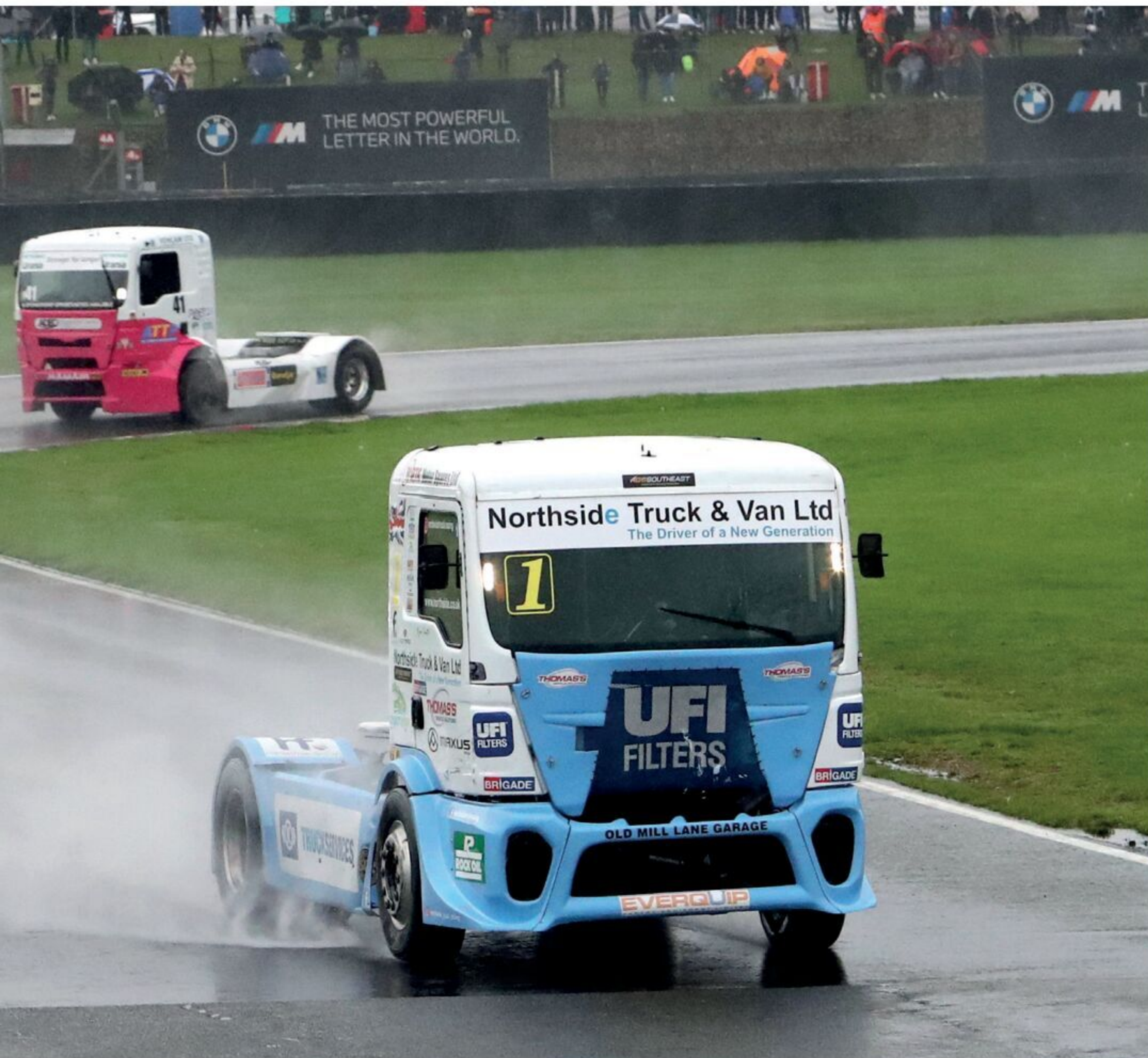


Simpson claimed a Pickup double as title went the way of Jones



Smith and Deeth battled hard and shared the Mini 7 winter spoils

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: GARY HAWKINS



lights appeared and he was demoted behind his rival in the results.

Sunday's first heat was won by Gibson behind the safety car, with Rudman a frustrated fifth after a bad opening lap. It was Rudman's turn to win heat two with Gibson third, leaving the title battle finely poised heading into the finale.

Guest driver Ryan McLeish won but wasn't eligible for points, meaning Gibson's second place earned a maximum score. But it wasn't quite enough to beat third-placed Rudman to the title, the reigning champion adding this year's crown to his 2019 and 2021 triumphs.

All six Legends races were enlivened by the reappearance of the car campaigned for many years by the late Gerard McCosh. It was fielded by Sussex driver Glenn

Burtenshaw as a guest entry, complete with Napoleon, the pink pig soft toy clamped to the back of the car.

A three-round Mini 7 Racing Club Winter Championship started at Silverstone in March and ended at Brands with a trio of races. Jeff Smith won twice on Saturday, the second outing easily the race of the day as Smith grappled with Rupert Deeth and Joe Ferguson on a streaming wet track while they sliced past slower cars. All three survived some wild moments, along with the chasing Scott Kendall and Colin Peacock.

Deeth won Sunday's decider, adding the Winter Championship to his main national Miglia title after another frantic battle involving Smith and Ferguson. Sadly, this ended when the latter pair plunged off together at Clearways and brought out the red flag.

Nelson King just needed a good points score to be crowned Mini Challenge Trophy champion, and he did it with two races to spare thanks to a convincing win on Saturday. King was chased home by Nicky Taylor and a tight group of three at the head of a field of more than 30 cars.

King won again on Sunday morning in monsoon conditions, Taylor having followed closely before hitting a puddle and aquaplaning. He recovered to just pip Nathan Edwards for third place, but was demoted to 10th for a yellow-flag infringement as Lee Pearce finished second.

Another downpour greeted drivers for



WEEKEND WINNERS



BRITISH TRUCKS

Races 1, 2 & 4 Ryan Smith (MAN)

Race 3 Steven Powell (MAN TGS)

Race 5 Craig Reid (Iveco Stralis)

LEGENDS

Races 1, 2 & 4 Will Gibson

Race 3 Rickie Leggatt

Race 5 Miles Rudman

Race 6 Ryan McLeish

MINI 7 WINTER CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jeff Smith (Miglia)

Race 3 Rupert Deeth (Miglia)

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Nelson King (above)

Race 3 Lee Pearce

PICKUP TRUCKS

Races 1 & 2 Matt Simpson



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

race three, and a huge effort by Pearce from a reversed grid helped him to keep King at bay. The pair pulled clear of the next five cars, which finished covered by just over 1s, Taylor making spectacular progress into sixth from his penalised starting position.

Matt Simpson won both Pickup Truck races while people with calculators worked out who would be this year's champion. George Turiccki wasn't there to defend his lead for unspecified personal reasons, leaving the title up for grabs.

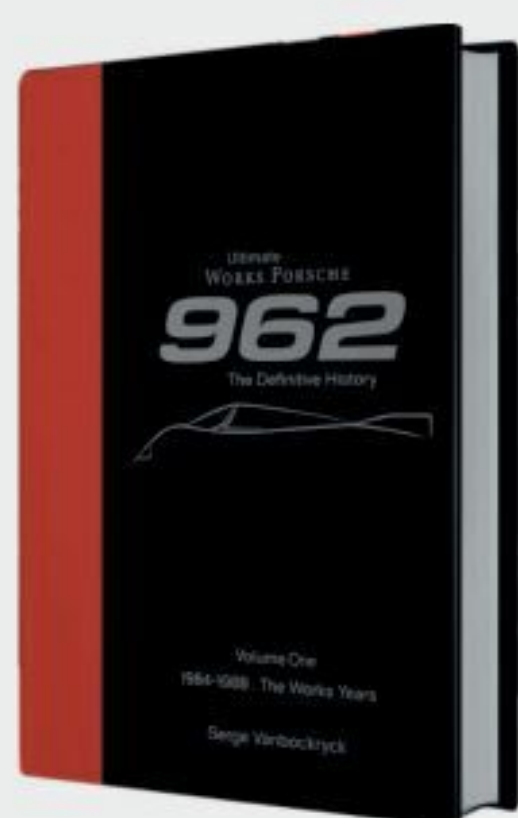
Third place in race one enabled Reece Jones to take over the lead and a steady race-two finish would guarantee him the title, although Dale Gent and Mark Willis were still just about in the running. Jones was third for part of the distance, until a mid-race mistake dropped him to 10th, but this was still enough to take the crown.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

FINISHING STRAIGHT



A pinnacle in Porsche's history



BOOK REVIEW
ULTIMATE WORKS
PORSCHE 962 – THE
DEFINITIVE HISTORY
Serge Vanbockryck
RRP £850

Do you need another book about the Porsche 962 on your shelves? If you think the answer is

no, better change your mind. That's if you want to fork out £850 for this magnum opus by Serge Vanbockryck.

But there's another problem beyond the lofty price tag – this is Vanbockryck's second work on the great Porsche prototype that started life as the 956 Group C car, and not the last if the Belgian completes his odyssey to write the definitive history. So, here, you're not getting the full story of the seven-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner.

This three-volume work amounting to 1400 pages, as the title *Ultimate Works Porsche 962 – The Definitive History* suggests, focuses on the factory chassis, so just 16 Group C 962C cars and the three GT1-class Dauer 962 LM Porsches of 1994.

Its predecessor, *Ultimate Works Porsche 956*, also published by Porter Press International, looks at the 10 956s

employed by the Stuttgart marque's in-house squad. Given that there were a further ninetysomething customer versions of the 956 and 962 (its long-wheelbase cousin) built by the factory and not far short of 100 specials developed by privateers around the original concept, there's no telling how many more pages are to come and at what cost.

But then Vanbockryck was never going to be brief because he has been working on his 956/962 history for more than 30 years. He first mentioned it to this writer back in 1991 and was already three or so years into his quest. He says he set out to be definitive because in the late 1980s, when the first raft of books on the car he loves were emerging, he spotted inaccuracies and inconsistencies.

This is the kind of work that gets labelled a collector's book (and there is a special £1750 edition autographed by many of the drivers featured that goes by that name), but the reality is that it's a history book. And one far too good to loiter unread on the coffee table.

Vanbockryck, best known these days as Corvette Racing's European PR man, but once a journalist and TV commentator, has put in the hours of research. The late, lamented Motorsport Images photocopier was never the same after he gave it a

hammering over the course of two visits to the Autosport offices – he copied every story in which the 956/962 was mentioned!

More pertinently, he spent hundreds of hours in the Porsche archive at its museum in Stuttgart, tracked down images of windtunnel models no longer retained there, and had what probably should be called unprecedented access to the contemporary documents of the IMSA sanctioning body in North America.

That's key because it was IMSA's steadfast refusal to allow the 956 into its GTP class that resulted in the development of the 962 – with the driver's feet behind the front-axle line – in double-quick time for the 1984 Camel GT Championship.

The opening chapter tells the full story of how the 962 came to be. It describes the interplay between Porsche and IMSA, and is, quite frankly, fascinating. Another highlight is the chapter explaining how the privateer Joest Racing squad beat the Rothmans-sponsored 962Cs with its 956 at Le Mans in 1985. Vanbockryck almost certainly buries age-old rumours that there was anything untoward involved.

The author's completist approach means there are effectively reports of every race at which the factory – whether the in-house team or later Joest – was represented with

Every factory
962C outing (here's
Le Mans 1988)
is detailed



SCHLEGELMILCH
motorsport
IMAGES



Porsche legend
Derek Bell with
Vanboockryck

the 962C. Volume three is essentially an appendix, with detailed chassis records of the 19 cars, as well as in-depth profiles of all the drivers to grace their cockpits. Unnecessary? Not to Vanboockryck and presumably the publisher of such a work where size appears to be everything.

If you're a fan of the 956/962 or just have a deep love of sportscar racing, and don't have that £850 to spare for one of the 962 copies of the regular or limited edition, I don't know what to say. It's either start saving or wait in hope for some kind of abridged version.

GARY WATKINS



[autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)



MotoGP Valencia GP review

Francesco Bagnaia clinched the 2022 MotoGP world championship after finishing the Valencia Grand Prix in ninth place – with title rival Fabio Quartararo fourth – as Alex Rins took an emotional Suzuki-swansong win. Lewis Duncan and Oriol Puigdemont are back with The Tank Slappers Podcast for the final time this season to analyse all the action.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Sao Paulo Grand Prix F1 World Championship

Round 21/22

Interlagos, Brazil

13 November

TV Live Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1755

TV Highlights Sky Sports F1,
Sun 2130, Channel 4, Sun 2255

Rally Japan

World Rally Championship

Round 13/13

Nagoya, Japan

10-13 November

TV Live BT Sport 1, Fri 2300,
Sat 0430, BT Sport 2, Sat
2300, BT Sport 3, Sun 0500

TV Highlights BT Sport 2,
Fri 1600, BT Sport 3, Sat 2000,
Mon 0100, Red Bull TV, Fri
1300, Sat 1300, Sun 1300

WEC

Round 6/6

Sakhir, Bahrain

12 November

Livestream on
motorsport.tv, Fri 1340,
Sat 1030

TV Live Eurosport 2,
Sat 1030

World Touring Car Cup

Round 8/9

Sakhir, Bahrain

11-12 November

TV Live Eurosport 1,
Fri 1600, Sat 0645

World Rallycross

Round 6/6

Nurburgring, Germany

13 November

TV Highlights BT Sport 7,
Sun 1400

UK MOTORSPORT

Brands Hatch BARC

12-13 November

CTCRC Allcomers, Ginetta
Junior, Hyundai Coupe Cup,
Intermarque Silhouettes,
JSCC, Super Saloons/
CMMC Tin Tops

Anglesey BRSCC

12-13 November

Clubsport Trophy,
Race of Remembrance



Can Verstappen
be bested as
F1 hits Brazil?

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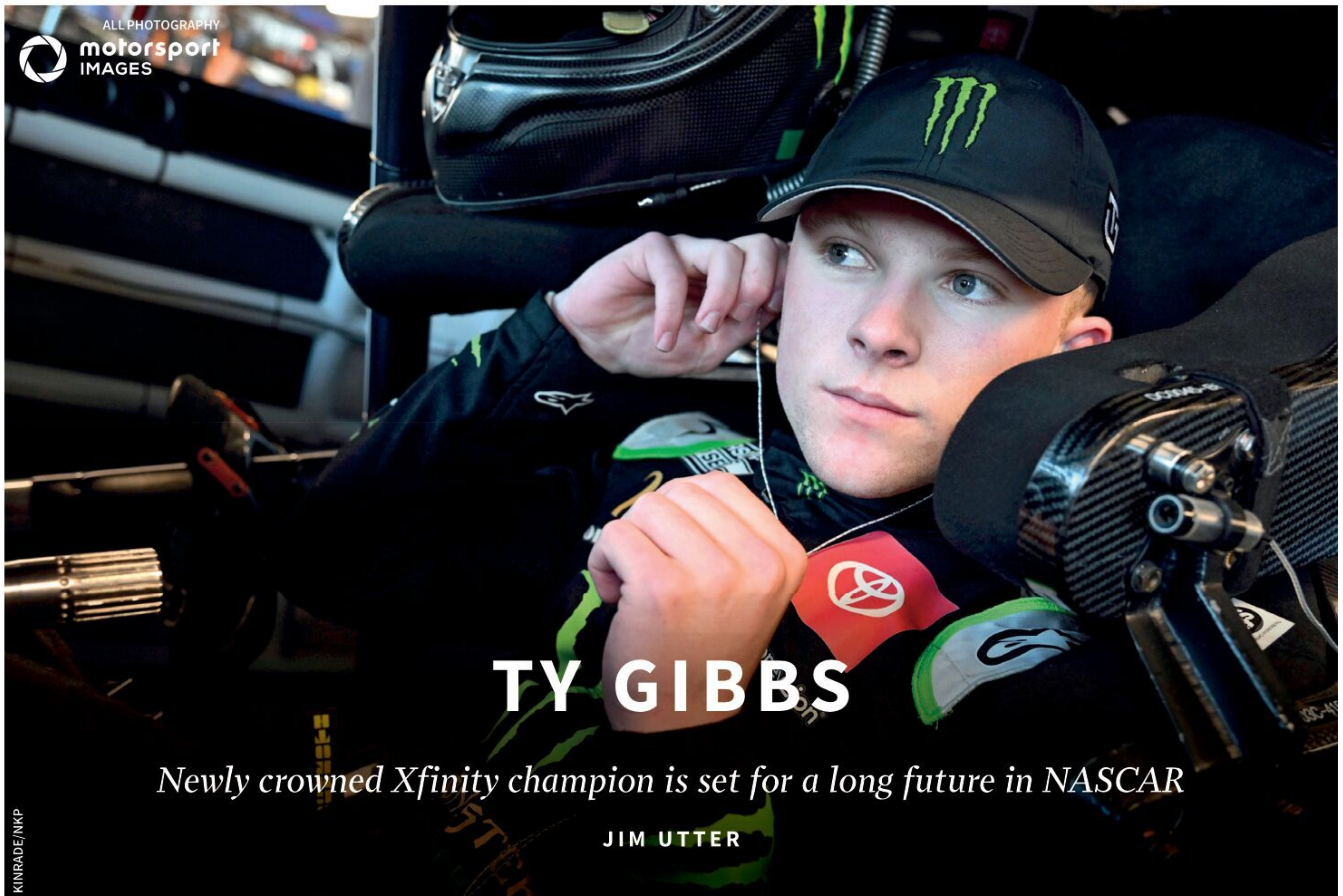


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INTRODUCING



TY GIBBS

Newly crowned Xfinity champion is set for a long future in NASCAR

JIM UTTER

N

ASCAR got a taste of the worst and best of what Ty Gibbs has to offer in 2022, and it's clear he has a path to be one of its future stars.

Gibbs's track record in NASCAR national series competition is relatively short, but his success cannot be questioned. A week after experiencing perhaps the lowest point of his racing career so far, he was enjoying his best last Saturday when he won the Xfinity Series season finale race at Phoenix Raceway, and with it the series championship. The victory was his seventh of the season and 11th from 51 Xfinity starts — a remarkable 22% winning rate from fewer than two full-time seasons.

That joy was replaced by sorrow on Sunday, when the 20-year-old grandson of team owner Joe Gibbs suffered the loss of his father, team vice-chairman Coy, at the age of 49. He was duly withdrawn from the Cup championship race he'd been due to contest in the 23XI Racing Toyota vacated by Kurt Busch.

It was just over a week before that Gibbs received nearly universal condemnation for wrecking his Joe Gibbs Racing team-mate Brandon Jones on the final lap to win at Martinsville. Gibbs was already qualified for the Championship 4 at the time, while Jones needed the win to advance and compete for the series title.

"What I did last week was unacceptable,

and I apologise once again, but it was unacceptable because we could have had two shots to win this deal, and it was stupid from an organisation standpoint," Gibbs said after his victory. "All my fault. I can sit here and tell you I'm sorry as much as I can, but it's not going to fix it. I've got to fix my actions."

While many of Gibbs's competitors spent the week criticising the young driver, he put on a racing clinic on Saturday, battling main rivals Justin Allgaier and Noah Gragson, trading passes for the lead while marching to victory. In this case, actions spoke louder than words.

"He did a great job, they won the race fair and square today," says Gragson, who will move into the Cup Series next season with GMS Petty Racing. "It takes great people around you to learn, and I think he is capable. He's got potential, and he hasn't reached his full potential yet off the track."

For the record, Gibbs, who is likely to replace the departing Kyle Busch in JGR's four-car Cup line-up in 2023, doesn't want to be the object of fans' contempt — even if he recognises "I'm the one that put myself in that position".

"I don't want this championship to be remembered for boos," he adds. "I want it to be remembered for hard work and our team. Thank you to the fans, even though I don't have that many of them. Hopefully, I earned some respect back, and we'll move on." ❧

"THANK YOU TO THE FANS, EVEN THOUGH I DON'T HAVE THAT MANY OF THEM"



THACKER/NKP

CV

Age	20
2022	1st in NASCAR Xfinity Series with Joe Gibbs Racing (7 wins), 15 Cup races with 23XI filling in for Kurt Busch
2021	1st in ARCA, 13th in part-time Xfinity Series season (4 wins) both with Joe Gibbs Racing
2020	2nd in ARCA East with Joe Gibbs Racing (1 win)
2019	13th in ARCA Racing with Joe Gibbs Racing (2 wins)



FROM THE ARCHIVE

The Williams team's trio of FW09s (for Keke Rosberg and Jacques Laffite, plus spare) are prepped in the makeshift pit area during the weekend of the 1984 Detroit Grand Prix. Laffite

and Rosberg qualified their ill-handing machines 19th and 21st respectively on the 26-car grid, both more than five seconds off the pole time of Nelson Piquet (Brabham-BMW BT53). In a race of high attrition, a typically doughty

Rosberg had made it up to fourth before his turbo failed; Laffite finished sixth and last car running, which later became fifth after star of the afternoon Martin Brundle (Tyrrell-Ford 012) was disqualified from second place.



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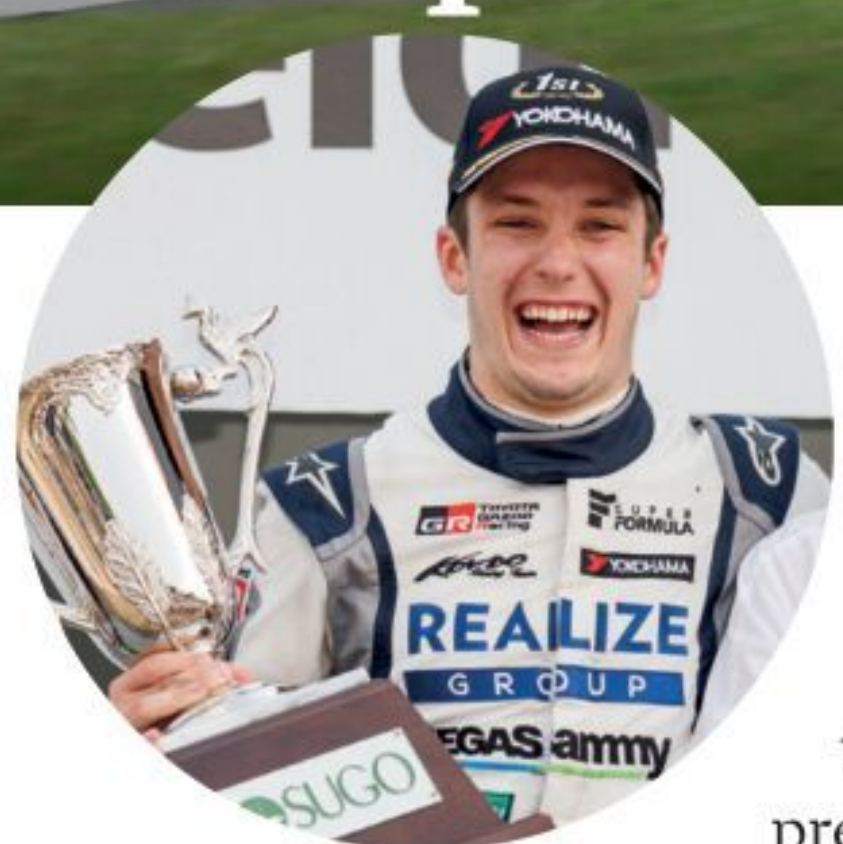
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SACHA FENESTRAZ

MY FAVOURITE... TRACK

Autopolis



Japan is blessed with more than its fair share of hallowed racing venues, but perhaps one that doesn't get the recognition it deserves is Autopolis.

Nestled in the mountains on Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four home islands, Autopolis requires a two-hour flight, followed by a one-hour drive, to be accessed from Tokyo. But according to Sacha Fenestraz, it's well worth the trip.

"It's an amazing track," enthuses the Toyota Super Formula and Super GT ace. "There are a lot of ups and downs, like a rollercoaster. After Turn 10 [an off-camber left-hand hairpin] you go down that massive downhill straight, then you have the crazy-fast downhill right-hander. Then that final sector has a lot of very tight corners, very harsh on the tyres. That's where it's important to manage them because it's so easy to destroy your rear tyres."

"It's bumpy as well, so it's tough physically. At Turn 1 [a medium-speed right-hander] you don't see the apex, it's slightly blind and the braking area is

bumpy and easy to lock-up. Like Sugo, if you go off, you don't have [Tarmac] runoff; you're in the gravel and probably the wall. I always enjoy the pressure of not having any margin to make mistakes."

Autopolis has been relatively kind to Fenestraz, who took a hat-trick of wins upon his first visit to the venue in 2019 for his title-winning campaign in All-Japan Formula 3. In his second outing at the track in Super Formula this year he finished a strong second behind Ryo Hirakawa to cement his status as a bona fide title contender.

As well as the track layout itself, Fenestraz also raves about its location. The drive to the track along the 'Milk Road' from the nearest major city, Kumamoto, is also a favourite among Super Formula and Super GT personnel.

"The surrounding area is beautiful with the mountains, the volcano [Mount Aso]... sometimes you can even see an eruption!" Fenestraz says. "Even the drive to the track is super-fun. Everything is really nice, it's a good place to visit."

JAMIE KLEIN

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Sensational Sao Paulo

CAN ANYONE STOP VERSTAPPEN IN BRAZIL?





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pit talk from the HRDC



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