

**F1** The quest to find Britain's next star



# AUTOSPORT

1 DECEMBER 2022

**F1 2026**

# THE FUTURE OF F1

*Ross Brawn's verdict on the new rules and what comes next*

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# A true Formula 1 giant on the 2022 rules and future changes

Ross Brawn is a motorsport legend. Along with Adrian Newey, he has more Formula 1 world titles to his name than any other non-driver of the past three decades. That brings with it a huge amount of credibility, which is of course one of the reasons why he was brought in to help F1 revamp its technical regulations in the first place.

Now that Brawn is retiring from F1, it seems like a good time to get his views on how well the 2022 rules are going and, perhaps more importantly, what happens next. Alex Kalinauckas gets exactly that insight in this week's cover interview on page 18.

Ferrari is still searching for the magic combination to repeat the success of the Brawn/Jean Todt/Rory Byrne/Michael Schumacher era. Mattia Binotto's departure, despite the team's resurrection over the past two years, is the latest example of the struggles Ferrari has had in that quest (p4). It remains to be seen whether the move is the right one.

Sportscar racing was another realm in which Brawn tasted success, with Jaguar. Gary Watkins looks at the 2022 World Endurance season and picks out the best drivers in our season review (p34), while Tom Howard does the same for the World Rally Championship (p26).

Jenson Button won the 2009 F1 title with Brawn, becoming the first of our Young Driver Award winners to do so. We outline how to win the prestigious competition on p46, ahead of the revealing of the 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award victor this Sunday.



*Kevin Turner*

**Kevin Turner**  
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK  
8 DECEMBER**

**Merc's F1 recovery**

We investigate how far the Silver Arrows can climb and reveal the winners at our Awards



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Camille Debastiani

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# PIT + D DOCK



## Binotto stands down as Ferrari F1

### FORMULA 1

Ferrari Formula 1 team principal Mattia Binotto has quit the role after four seasons in charge, with a replacement set to be finalised in the new year.

Ferrari announced on Tuesday that Binotto had tendered his resignation as its F1 chief, and will depart from his role on 31 December. Alfa Romeo F1 chief Frederic Vasseur is the favourite to take over at Maranello.

"With the regret that this entails, I have decided to conclude my collaboration with Ferrari," Binotto said in a statement. "I am

leaving a company that I love, which I have been part of for 28 years, with the serenity that comes from the conviction that I have made every effort to achieve the objectives set. I leave a united and growing team. A strong team, ready, I'm sure, to achieve the highest goals, to which I wish all the best for the future."

The news comes after weeks of speculation about Binotto's potential exit that was initially dismissed by Ferrari as being "totally without foundation". Binotto said at the recent Abu Dhabi Grand Prix that he was "relaxed" about his future, but that it

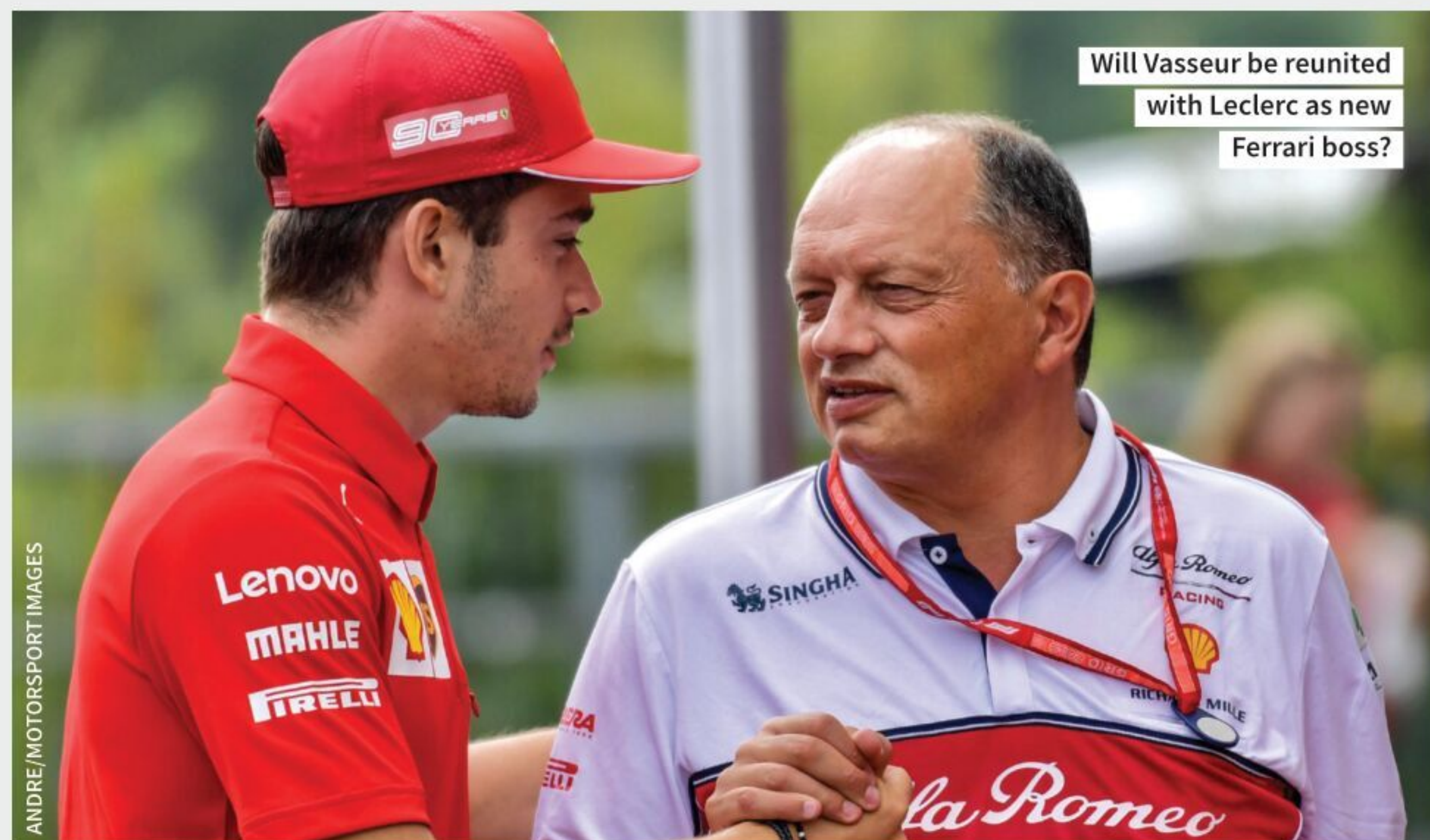
was out of his hands to decide whether he would still be in charge for the 2023 season.

It is thought that, after losing the support of Ferrari chairman John Elkann and CEO Benedetto Vigna, Binotto was left with little choice but to tender his resignation. "I think it is right to take this step at this time, as hard as this decision has been for me," Binotto added. "I would like to thank all the people at the Gestione Sportiva who have shared this journey with me, made up of difficulties but also of great satisfaction."

Binotto worked his way up the ranks at Ferrari, taking over its engine operations in 2013 before becoming chief technical officer three years later. He was appointed team principal ahead of the 2019 season following the departure of Maurizio Arrivabene.

During Binotto's first season in charge, Ferrari struggled to compete with Mercedes on a regular basis, scoring three wins before facing scrutiny from the FIA over the legality of its power unit. A private settlement followed ahead of the 2020 campaign, when Ferrari ailed to its worst season for 40 years as its draggy chassis struggled without the engine punch to make up for its deficiencies.

After recovering to third in the standings last year, Ferrari looked set to mount a challenge for both championships under the new regulations in 2022. It scored a 1-2 finish at the season-opener in Bahrain, where Charles Leclerc led home Carlos Sainz, and dominated in Australia with Leclerc.



ANDRE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Despite improved form, Ferrari's mistakes during 2022 have led to Binotto's departure

DUNBAR  
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# chief

But a number of opportunities slipped through Ferrari's fingers due to a mix of strategic errors and on-track mistakes, causing it to lose touch with Red Bull in the title race. Come the second half of the season, Red Bull had by far the quickest package, leaving Ferrari to endure a win drought lasting the final four months of the season, its final victory coming in Austria in July. Although it held on to second in the constructors' standings ahead of Mercedes, and Leclerc secured second in the drivers' championship, it nevertheless was seen as a missed chance to end Ferrari's 14-year title drought.

"I would like to thank Mattia for his many great contributions over 28 years with Ferrari and particularly for leading the team back to a position of competitiveness during this past year," said Ferrari CEO Vigna. "As a result, we are in a strong position to renew our challenge, above all for our amazing fans around the world, to win the ultimate prize in motorsport. Everyone here at the Scuderia and in the wider Ferrari community wishes Mattia well for the future."

Ferrari said that the process to find a new team principal was "under way". Favourite Vasseur previously worked with Leclerc when the Monegasque made his F1 debut with Sauber back in 2018, while the team has enjoyed close ties to Ferrari as an engine customer for over a decade.

LUKE SMITH

## Jeddah circuit changes to improve sight and safety

### FORMULA 1

The promoters of the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix have revealed further tweaks to the Jeddah Formula 1 track layout to improve safety and visibility.

The Jeddah Corniche Circuit hosted its first F1 race in 2021, becoming the fastest street circuit on the calendar, but it drew criticism from some drivers due to the tight layout and poor visibility in blind corners that contributed to the race being red-flagged twice. A series of changes was made ahead of the second race in March 2022 to widen corners and improve sightlines, and the latest round of modifications comes following conversations with drivers.

One of the biggest changes is at the high-speed left-right sequence of Turns 22 and 23, where efforts have been made to reduce speeds by around 50km/h (30mph) by adjusting the fence placement and adding a bevelled kerb. At Turns 14 (below) and 20 (bottom), two of the quickest blind corners on the

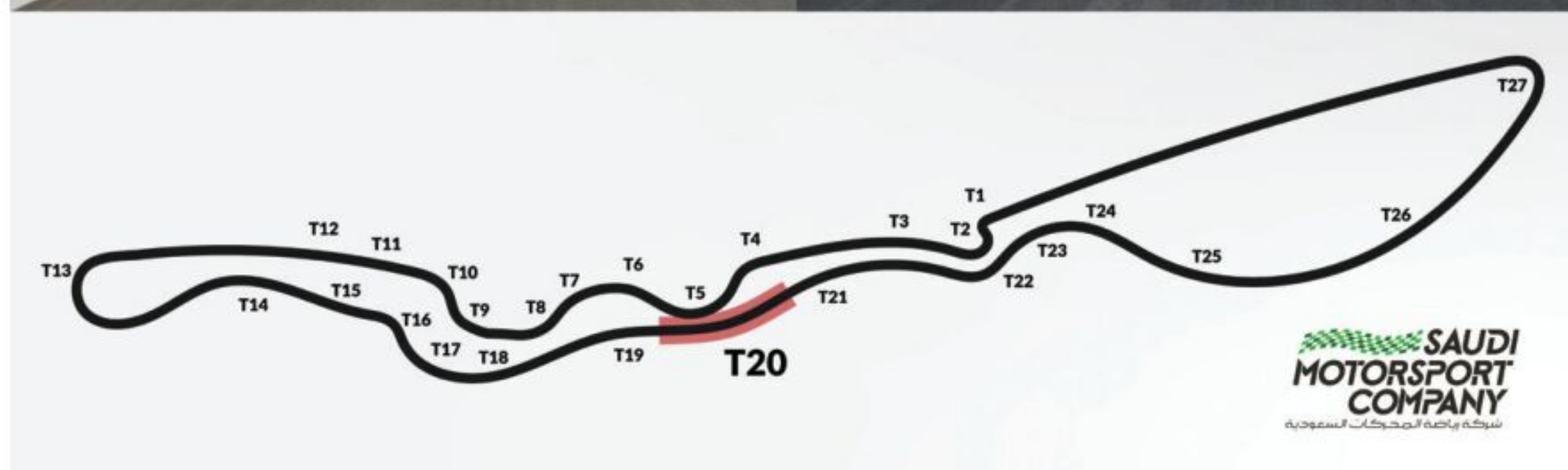
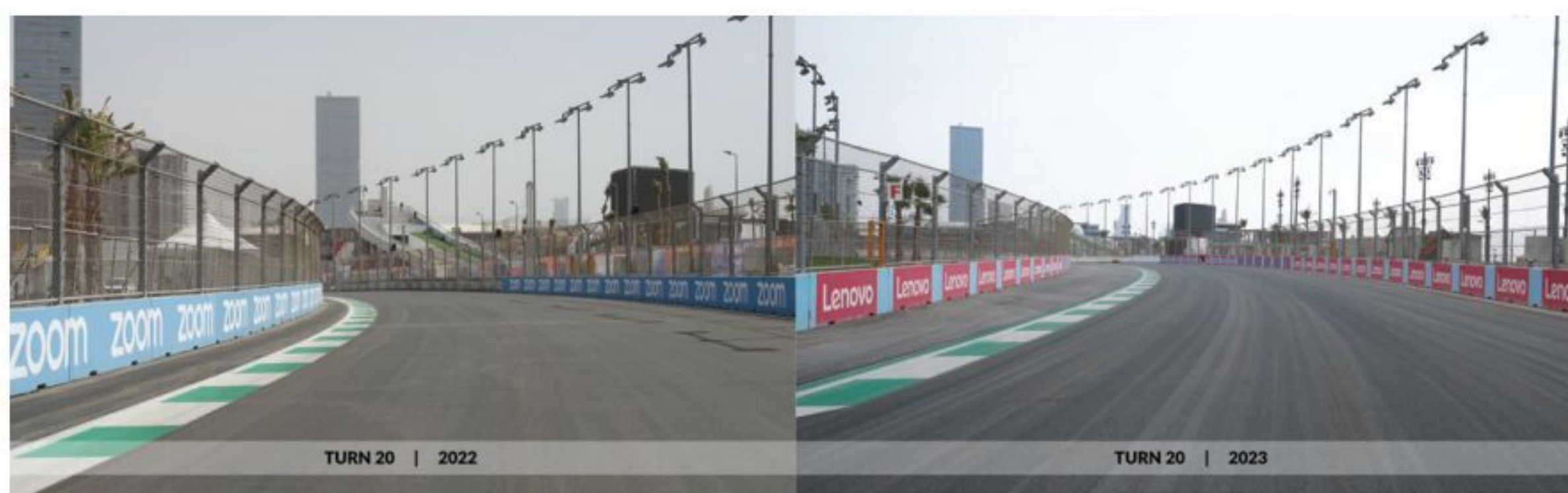
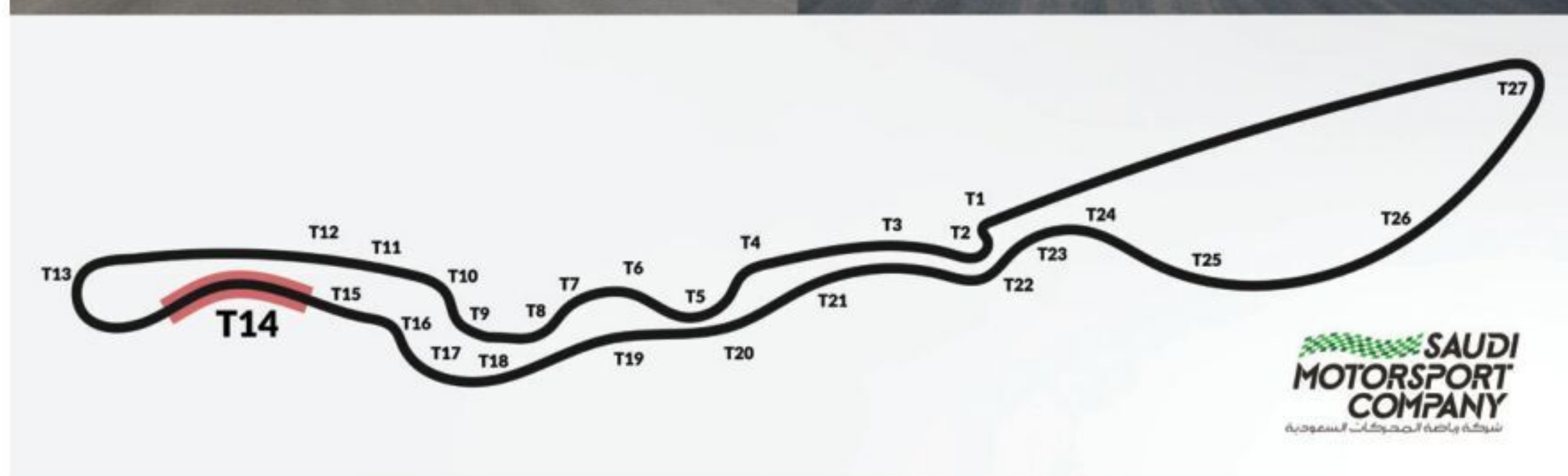
circuit, the fences have been pushed back to open up the corners and provide better sightlines to the drivers.

At Turn 14, the wall on the right-hand side of the track has been pushed back by 7.5 metres, while the left-hand wall at Turn 20 has moved back by five metres. The walls have also been pushed back at Turns 8 and 10 to improve visibility.

Bevelled kerbs have been added at Turns 4, 8, 10, 11, 17 and 23, while new 'rumble lines' have been placed at Turns 3, 14, 19, 20 and 21 to deter drivers from running wide and slow them down.

"It is vital for any circuit to listen and learn from those racing on it and use their feedback to grow and improve at all times," said Martin Whitaker, chief executive of the Saudi Motorsport Company that operates the circuit. "We are confident these changes will lead to even faster, more exciting and – crucially – safe racing and we can't wait to see the world's greatest drivers battle it out here under the lights again in 2023."

LUKE SMITH





# Alonso bullish after first Aston test



## FORMULA 1

Fernando Alonso revelled in his Aston Martin debut as a number of drivers represented their new teams at the post-season Formula 1 test in Abu Dhabi last week.

Alonso (above) was the highest-profile name switching colours as he jumped into Aston Martin's AMR22 for the day, running in an unbranded car and in black overalls. The Spaniard completed 97 laps and was enthused by his first impressions of the team. "When I signed for Aston Martin, I was 90% happy," said Alonso after getting out of the car. "When they started improving and finished the season on a high, I was 100%. This morning, I was 100 and now I'm 100-plus."

In a small dig at his former team Alpine, and its reliability struggles through 2022, he said he was "concerned" upon hearing how much mileage the Mercedes engine in his car had completed ahead of the test "because that number is a little bit high on my standards – but we did 97 laps no problem, so outstanding for sure".

The reins of the Alpine were handed over to Pierre Gasly, who was "very positively surprised" by the test, his first in an F1 car that wasn't in some way linked to Red Bull. "Very quickly I felt comfortable in the car," he said. "I understand now why they finished

fourth in the teams' championship, it all makes sense for me. So I'm very excited for what's coming."

Nico Hulkenberg's preparations for his F1 return with Haas in 2023 also stepped up across the test, leaving him feeling some "human degradation" by the end of the day. "But that was to be expected," he added. "I coped better than I expected to be honest. So that's good, but still obviously three months of hardcore preparation now."

Oscar Piastri also got the chance to bed in with McLaren and return to an F1 cockpit four months after his contract saga ended his Alpine test programme. The Australian will get to work at the team's factory this week ahead of his F1 debut next year.

The test day was topped by Carlos Sainz, who led a Ferrari 1-2-3 ahead of Charles Leclerc, with whom he shared Pirelli tyre test duties, and young driver Robert Shwartzman.

LUKE SMITH



## YAS MARINA TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Carlos Sainz (Ferrari)	1m25.245s
2	Charles Leclerc (Ferrari)	1m25.383s
3	Robert Shwartzman (Ferrari)	1m25.400s
4	Pierre Gasly (Alpine)	1m25.689s
5	Max Verstappen (Red Bull)	1m25.845s
6	Alexander Albon (Williams)	1m25.959s
7	Logan Sargeant (Williams)	1m26.063s
8	Nyck de Vries (AlphaTauri)	1m26.111s
9	Lance Stroll (Aston Martin)	1m26.263s
10	Liam Lawson (Red Bull)	1m26.281s
11	Jack Doohan (Alpine)	1m26.297s
12	Fernando Alonso (Aston Martin)	1m26.312s
13	Sergio Perez (Red Bull)	1m26.333s
14	Oscar Piastri (McLaren)	1m26.340s
15	Felipe Drugovich (Aston Martin)	1m26.595s
16	Valtteri Bottas (Alfa Romeo)	1m26.709s
17	Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)	1m26.750s
18	Lando Norris (McLaren)	1m26.890s
19	Nico Hulkenberg (Haas)	1m27.000s
20	Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri)	1m27.123s
21	Pietro Fittipaldi (Haas)	1m27.172s
22	Frederik Vesti (Mercedes)	1m27.216s
23	George Russell (Mercedes)	1m27.240s
24	Theo Pourchaire (Alfa Romeo)	1m27.591s





**SUPER GT** We'd recognise those eyes anywhere... It's none other than newly crowned two-time Formula 1 world champion Max Verstappen behind the wheel of Honda's Super GT NSX-GT development car last Saturday at Motegi for the marque's traditional Thanks Day, back for 2022 after its COVID-enforced hiatus. Verstappen and Sergio Perez also piloted a 2021 Red Bull RB16B, with Pierre Gasly and Yuki Tsunoda appearing in AlphaTauri machinery. Other Honda luminaries, including Takuma Sato, Naoki Yamamoto and bike king Marc Marquez, were also part of the celebrations. **Photos by Honda**

## McLaren LMDh still 'in progress', says Brown

**WEC**

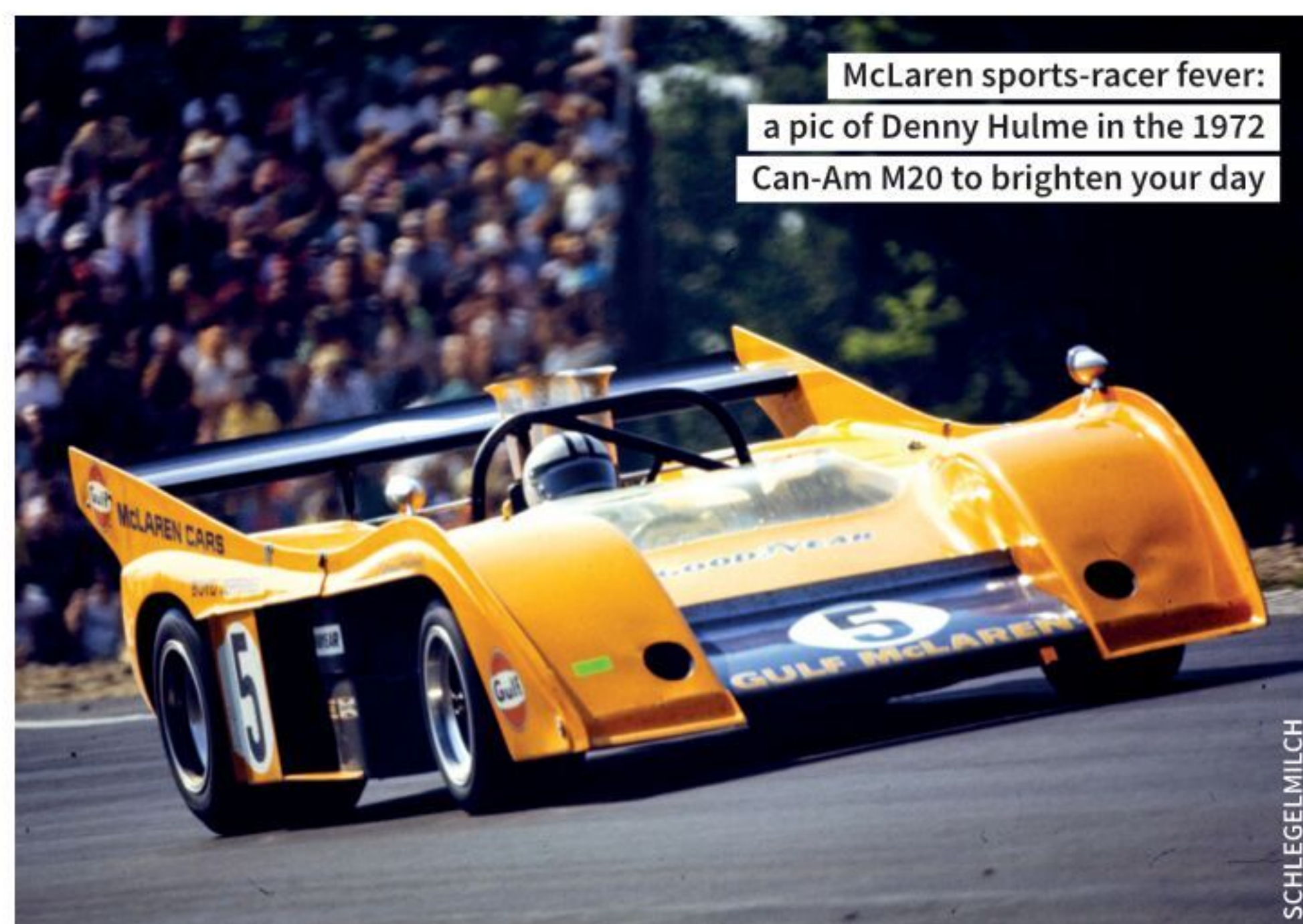
McLaren is still pursuing an entry into the LMDh prototype category. The project remains "a work in progress", according to the company's chief executive of racing Zak Brown.

The British operation went public on its ambitions to develop an LMDh two years ago for a factory assault on the World Endurance Championship and the possible sale of customer cars, but it has been largely quiet on its plans since. But Brown insisted that the

project is still live, even after the expansion of McLaren's racing activities into Formula E with the acquisition of Mercedes' FE operations.

"We are actively working on it with a view to being ready for 2025," said Brown. "We don't need to do it as a group, but we would like to do it and it fits in well with McLaren Automotive."

McLaren is known to have identified a chassis partner from the four licensed constructors on which an LMDh is required to be based some time ago, but the project stalled because



McLaren sports-racer fever: a pic of Denny Hulme in the 1972 Can-Am M20 to brighten your day

SCHLEGELMILCH

of the unsuitability of the twin-turbo V8 powerplant in its line of road cars. Brown said that the new V6 in the McLaren

Artura that went on sale this year was "one of a couple of options we are working on".

**GARY WATKINS**

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# Lopez keeps place in Toyota line-up

## WEC

Toyota will defend all the gongs it won this year in the World Endurance Championship, its Le Mans 24 Hours crown included, in 2023 with an unchanged driver line-up across its two cars. The significance of the Japanese manufacturer's announcement is that Jose Maria Lopez has retained his drive for a sixth season.

The Argentinian had looked set to be replaced by Toyota test and reserve Nyck de Vries had the Dutch driver not landed a Formula 1 deal for 2023. His seat with AlphaTauri means that Lopez continues for a sixth season, in the #7 Toyota GR010 HYBRID alongside Kamui Kobayashi and Mike Conway.

Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa will defend their titles in the #8 Le Mans Hypercar.

Kobayashi, who is also team principal of Toyota Gazoo Racing, said: "The drivers are an important part of our team and I am happy to drive alongside Mike, Jose, Seb, Brendon and Ryo again in 2023. We have a strong team spirit throughout the whole team, particularly among the drivers, and we race together as one family."

He described that spirit as "a big strength for our team" and stressed its importance for the new season when Ferrari, Porsche and Cadillac join the WEC's Hypercar class. "This big fight is what we all want in motorsport and I think it will be really exciting



for the fans," he added.

Lopez said: "I am very happy to continue in the team, especially alongside Mike and Kamui. We have a really close relationship and have become like brothers over the past seasons."

The confirmation of the Toyota line-ups came last week when the marque made its traditional announcement

of its motorsport programmes for the new season. No mention was made of the upgrades planned for the GR010, which will continue into a third season in 2023. Technical details of the 2022 version of the car were not announced until the week preceding this year's season-opener at Sebring in March.

**GARY WATKINS**

# Fast-charge pitstops set for 2023

## FORMULA E

Fast-charging pitstops are to be introduced to Formula E, while the much-maligned Fanboost concept has been dropped.

A combination of a fast-charging stop with the current attack-mode format will produce an 'Attack Charge' race, in which drivers must complete a 30-second 'charge stop' to access the higher power mode. The option exists for the double-header rounds to run one race to a conventional FE format, and use the second as an Attack Charge race.

This will remove the necessity of running over an off-line attack-mode loop. The pitstop will instead unlock the full allocation of attack-mode usage to be defined by the FIA before the race, along with an extra 4kW/hour of energy, supplied by the 600kW 'booster' charger.

FE CEO Jamie Reigle explained that although the championship could push for an Attack Charge debut in next month's Mexico season opener, it is better to wait until the teams and organisers have



"confidence" that it can be implemented hassle-free. This comes amid testing issues with the standard-supply battery packs, which Reigle added were "solved".

"The challenge we have is the supplier of the cells for the in-race charger, what we call the booster, is the same supplier as the cell packs for the batteries," said Reigle. "We need to prioritise making sure that the batteries were OK, and then we can get the cell packs ready for the chargers.

"Those could be ready by Mexico but ultimately, you look at all those things that are changing. So is it really advisable for the sport to say, 'let's pressure test that timing and make sure everyone has their charger; test them in Valencia and race in Mexico?'"

"We have this technology, but let's not force it by January, and let's bring it in when we have a high degree of confidence that it can be implemented in the right way."

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



Charouz has sold its entries, but will carry on operating them

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## Charouz sells up to F4 team

### FORMULA 2/3

It's hardly unknown for a new team to join the grid for the FIA Formula 2 and 3 championships. The surprise on this occasion is that it's a team that only started up in 2022 in Formula 4.

Berlin-based PHM Racing, which has acquired the assets of Charouz Racing System, is owned by software and app magnate Paul H Muller ostensibly as a non-profit operation. PHM began in German and Italian F4 this year using staff predominantly from fellow Berliners Mücke Motorsport, which had closed its single-seater squad. It ran Briton Taylor Barnard to second in the German series. He and 2022 team-mate Nikita Bedrin took part in the September post-season F3 test at Jerez with Jenzer Motorsport.

PHM will take the 'soft step' of using Czech squad Charouz to oversee its F2/F3 operations in 2023.

Meanwhile, F2 teams were action at Yas Marina last week in a three-day test. F3 champion Victor Martins remained with

ART Grand Prix for his step up and set the pace. One of his main F3 rivals, Zane Maloney, joined Carlin for the test; F2 veteran Jehan Daruvala completed an all-2022-Prema line-up alongside the already-confirmed Dennis Hauger at newly crowned champion team MP Motorsport; and Red Bull-backed F3 aces Isack Hadjar and Jak Crawford took part with Hitech GP.

### YAS MARINA TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	<b>Victor Martins</b> (ART)	1m35.908s
2	<b>Jack Doohan</b> (Virtuosi)	1m35.935s
3	<b>Theo Pourchaire</b> (ART)	1m35.968s
4	<b>Roy Nissany</b> (Charouz)	1m35.978s
5	<b>Arthur Leclerc</b> (DAMS)	1m36.014s
6	<b>Kush Maini</b> (Campos)	1m36.041s
7	<b>Enzo Fittipaldi</b> (Carlin)	1m36.114s
8	<b>Jehan Daruvala</b> (MP)	1m36.160s
9	<b>Ayumu Iwasa</b> (DAMS)	1m36.165s
10	<b>Isack Hadjar</b> (Hitech)	1m36.207s

### IN THE HEADLINES

#### RICHARD MILLE OUT OF LMP2

LMP2 entrant Richard Mille Racing will not continue in the category next year. Launched for a European Le Mans Series programme in 2020 with an all-female crew, the operation run by Signatech subsequently graduated to the World Endurance Championship and counted rally legend Sebastien Ogier among the drivers aboard its ORECA-Gibson 07 in 2022. The end of its WEC participation comes as Signatech gears up to run a pair of P2 ORECA's in the WEC next year under the Alpine banner ahead of the arrival of the French manufacturer's LMDh prototype in 2024.

#### TOYOTA'S JAPANESE LINE-UP

Toyota has confirmed a little-changed line-up for its Super Formula and Super GT teams at the same time as its WEC squad (see left). New Super Formula Lights champion Kazuto Kotaka gets his chance at Kondo Racing in SF in place of Formula E-bound Sacha Fenestraz, while the TOM'S seat occupied this year by Giuliano Alesi is 'to be confirmed'. Alesi remains in the TOM'S SGT attack, but has shifted to the #37 car. His co-driver is 'TBC', while Ritomo Miyata switches to the #36 TOM'S Supra to replace Alesi alongside Sho Tsuboi.

#### MANSELL GOES F3...

Readers of a certain age are probably thinking we're going to say it's Nigel in a Triumph-engined March run by Dave Price. But it's actually Australian Christian Mansell. The ex-British F4 and GB3 race winner (below) has joined FIA F3 team Campos Racing for 2023. This season he was third in Euroformula Open, and did two FIA F3 rounds to get a taste of the series.



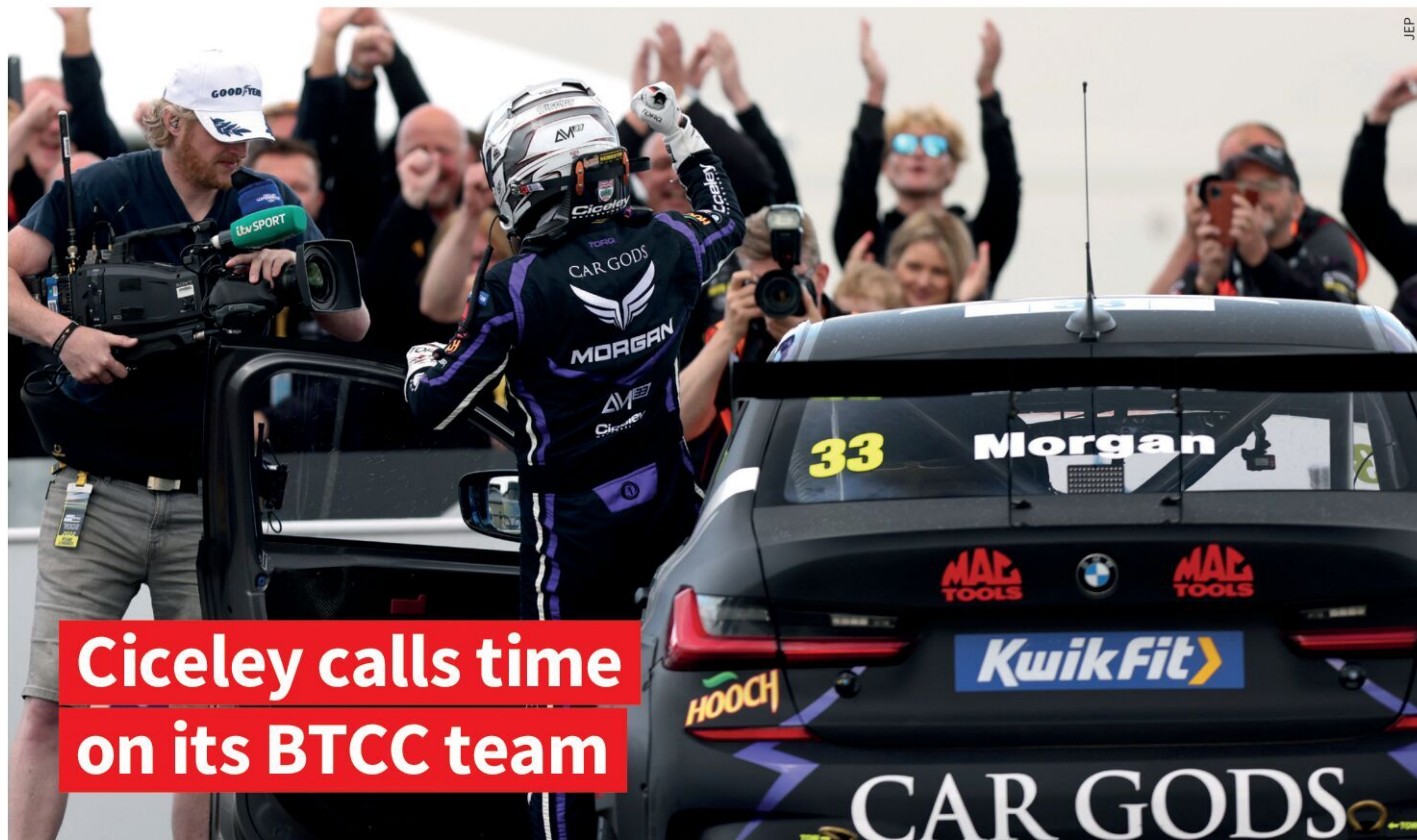
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## BTCC

The potential departure of Ciceley Motorsport from the British Touring Car Championship after 10 years in the series had been on the grapevine for some time, and it became fact this week.

The Lancastrian team, set up by ex-rally and Caterham ace Russell Morgan to run son Adam, is now moving into the historic racing arena. It leaves behind a legacy of 12 race wins, 11 of them taken by Morgan Jr – eight in the team's own-build Mercedes A-Class and three in the BMW 3 Series machinery it acquired from West Surrey Racing before the 2021 season.

It appears almost certain that Morgan,

along with the two Ciceley BMWs and one of the team's TBL entrants' licences, will head the way of official BMW squad WSR, which is expected to expand to four cars for 2023 and retain its incumbent trio of four-time champion Colin Turkington, Jake Hill and Stephen Jelley. Sources suggest that the other TBL will be snapped up by Toyota team Speedworks Motorsport, with an upgrade to three cars on the cards for that squad.

George Gamble, who was a race winner in an impressive rookie BTCC season with Ciceley in 2022, is understood to be seeking a new berth in the series, in either front or rear-wheel-drive machinery.

Ciceley's first foray into historics came in the recent HSCC Historic Touring Car

season-closer at Silverstone, with Morgan Sr driving a Ford Mustang. "It was a very emotional decision for me to call time on the team in its current form as Adam and I have raced as 'dad and lad' since he was seven years old," he said. "I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved at Ciceley Motorsport, initially from my garage at home and later having grown into a professional race car team competing at the very highest level in the UK."

"I fully intend to continue competing at the highest level of UK motorsport, so you can expect news on my plans in the very near future," added Morgan Jr. "Professionally, I owe the lads in the team so much."

**MARCUS SIMMONS**

## Extreme E heading to Scotland for May round

## EXTREME E

Extreme E will return to the UK in 2023 as part of a five-round calendar for its third season, with a Scottish round planned. The event is scheduled for 13-14 May following the usual Saudi Arabian opener on 11-12 March.

The electric off-road series visited the UK for its 2021 finale, the Jurassic X Prix in Dorset (right), and

an event in Scotland was in the frame for this season.

A venue for the Scottish round has yet to be established. XE will then return to Sardinia on 8-9 July, and plans to race in either Brazil or the US on 16-17 September before concluding the campaign in Chile on 2-3 December.

Series boss Alejandro Agag said: "We have had two spectacular seasons of Extreme E so far and the

third promises to be even more thrilling. I am proud to see the positive impact our electric series has had.

"It is also extremely exciting to potentially add a race in the USA or Brazil to our global championship, while returning to the UK, the birthplace of top level motor racing, is fitting. We cannot wait for the 2023 campaign to begin as the race for the planet continues."

**JAMES NEWBOLD**







## Rally schedule set for 2023

### WRC

The World Rally Championship has revealed a 13-round 2023 calendar that features the return of Mexico and Chile alongside an all-new European asphalt rally.

After a lengthy delay, the FIA has now ratified a schedule including four Tarmac and eight gravel rallies, alongside the traditional snow event in Sweden. Events are much more evenly spread unlike this year, when there was a seven-week gap between rallies in Sweden and Croatia.

The gravel of Mexico (above) is reinstated after dropping off the calendar following 2020's shortened edition, due to the pandemic. The country will host the third round in March following the traditional Monte Carlo and Sweden winter curtain raisers.

Chile also rejoins the calendar for its second WRC event, following its debut in 2019. The gravel rally was set to feature in 2020 but was cancelled due to political and social unrest in the country.

The WRC's new Central European asphalt event will be based in the south-east German city of Passau and will venture into Austria and the Czech Republic. The unique three-country event has a three-year deal and will effectively replace the popular Rally Spain, which has been a mainstay since 1991.

Croatia, Portugal, Sardinia, Kenya, Estonia, Finland and Greece have all retained spots on the calendar, while Belgium's Ypres Rally and New Zealand join Spain on the sidelines.

The championship will once again conclude on asphalt in Japan in November

following the country's return to the schedule for the first time in 12 years this season. While the event came under scrutiny following a serious safety breach, it proved popular among teams and the local crowd.

It had been hoped that the championship would return to the Middle East next year with an event tipped for Saudi Arabia, but those plans have been pushed to 2024. "In order to prepare a future event properly and to have sufficient time to realise this project together with all of our stakeholders, we are working very hard to have a WRC round in the Middle East in 2024," read a WRC statement.

**TOM HOWARD**

### ➔ P26 2022 WRC REVIEW

WRC CALENDAR		
ROUND	VENUE	DATE
1	Monte Carlo Rally	19-22 January
2	Rally Sweden	9-12 February
3	Rally Mexico	16-19 March
4	Croatia Rally	20-23 April
5	Rally Portugal	11-14 May
6	Rally Italy-Sardinia	1-4 June
7	Safari Rally	22-25 June
8	Rally Estonia	20-23 July
9	Rally Finland	3-6 August
10	Acropolis Rally	7-10 September
11	Rally Chile	28 Sep-1 Oct
12	Central Europe Rally	26-29 October
13	Rally Japan	16-19 November

## COLLABORATION ON THE CARDS FOR DTM

### DTM

The DTM and German motorsport promoter the ADAC are in dialogue with a view to a collaboration in 2023, which could lead to a sale of the DTM.

No calendar has yet been announced by the DTM or ADAC GT Masters, which since the former's switch to GT3 machinery for 2021 have been in competition to attract the same teams and drivers. This sparked a war of words between DTM boss Gerhard Berger and then-ADAC president Hermann Tomczyk, but relations have now cooled, helped by the appointment of Tomczyk's son, 2011 DTM champion Martin, as the de facto number two in the hierarchy of DTM organiser the ITR. Berger is known to have met Tomczyk Sr and his replacement, Gerd Esner, at the Norisring in July.

The prospect of a merger between the two series is complicated by rival partners and different support programmes, plus finite paddock space.

A statement from ITR acknowledged that "we are currently in discussions with regard to the coming year" with the ADAC, "and examining possible synergies that we could realise together in the future – especially for the benefit of the participating teams and partners".

No comment was made regarding a possible acquisition. Berger has repeatedly denied in the past that he wants to sell the DTM but, with the ADAC not required to make a profit from its motorsport activities, this cannot be ruled out.

**SVEN HAIDINGER**



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17/18 JAN Portimao

19/20 JAN Portimao

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# A stumble, not a fall

*There's plenty of precedent for F1 giants suffering a decline, then struggling to right themselves, but Mercedes has set out to show that 2022 was just a blip*

MATT KEW

**R**ed Bull bucked a Formula 1 trend on its way back to the summit. Even during seven comparatively fallow seasons after the Sebastian Vettel-fronted glory days, it never satisfied the criteria of a 'fallen giant'. The fractious Renault-powered fragility that bottomed out with a winless 2015 and fourth in the points took it close. And throughout its time off the top, it played second fiddle to Mercedes. But Christian Horner and co remained in the mix.

Certainly, the slump was not in the same league as its pre-eminent predecessors. An exceptional Fernando Alonso in 2012 merely masked a lukewarm Ferrari coming down from its 2000s pomp. The signs of a McLaren revival have only properly arrived under the leadership of Andreas Seidl. As for Williams, it remains one of F1's great 'superteams' only thanks to history.

So, immediately after a decline to third in the constructors' championship courtesy of its torrid adaption to ground-effects, where will Mercedes fit in? Has a ninth constructors' crown simply been delayed, or this the beginning of a decade or more lost in the wilderness? At first glance, there is cause for concern. Mercedes has got a major rule change wrong and, in this new cost-cap age, cannot simply spend its way out of trouble. Since the next landmark rejig is not planned until 2026, the potential competitive reset has been and gone. Irrespective of Red Bull facing a 25% cut to its aerodynamic testing over the next 12 months — a double whammy of winning the

## “Mercedes hasn't lost a talismanic figure to coincide with or even create its downfall”

crown and breaching the 2021 budget — and Ferrari having its own 7% slash for second, Mercedes has plenty of catching up to do.

Team chief Toto Wolff has revealed that the extensive toils to resolve the W13's porpoising put the team “eight to 10 months” behind with its usual performance-finding upgrades. That's compounded by the 0.684 seconds by which top Silver Arrows qualifier Lewis Hamilton was beaten at the Abu Dhabi finale. Then, to complete an initially bleak outlook, the goalposts are moving. Mercedes must improve above and beyond its 2022 shortcomings to try to match its rivals' own gains over the winter.

But the team has shown an appreciation for the situation. Wolff says: “We are analysing what were the reasons in the past that teams that dominated over an era suddenly lost performance. You can trace it back pretty well.” When it comes to the fall of sporting

dynasties, the Austrian doesn't just take inspiration from F1. He has brushed up on Manchester United to understand the post-Sir Alex Ferguson rot that still clouds the club.

Regardless of whether Mercedes is led by the example of football or F1, there's much to suggest that it isn't on the cusp of a dormant period. The Three-Pointed Star hasn't lost a talismanic figure to coincide with or even create its downfall. This is not like when Adrian Newey was placed on gardening leave by Williams in 1996 ahead of his McLaren move. Jacques Villeneuve still steered the squad to a title double the following year, but the triumphs were predicated on Newey's work. Behind the scenes, the ship was already sinking as his immediate legacy waned. Neither has Merc gone through anything like the dissolution of the Ross Brawn-Jean Todt-Rory Byrne-Michael Schumacher dream team that still haunts Ferrari.

“We have the same organisation, the same capability, the same financial funding,” adds Wolff. “I believe we have things in common and we can trace it back. We are aware of all that and the regulation changed. We got it wrong. But all the other pillars are still in place. We have to tune the systems and understand.” Stability is the order of the day, quite unlike the goings-on in Maranello, where Mattia Binotto is currently clearing his desk.

When it comes to retaining key personnel, Hamilton thinks Mercedes is well set up. On his team's chances of taking the fight to Red Bull as soon as 2023, he says: “We've got a great leader. We've got amazing support from the Daimler board, who all like racing. Then it's the core group of people. There's great communication throughout the organisation.

“Toto is very focused as a leader to really elevate people. I don't know any other leader, that I've worked with at least, that goes and says, ‘Hey, how're things at home? How can I help support you better, so you have more time with your wife or your husband or with your partner, with your kids, so that you come to work and be happier and want to commit more?’ That's who Toto is... because of that, there's a real general hunger within the team.

“I'd like to think that we're going to be the ones that are competing with [Red Bull and Ferrari] and being able to beat them again. I do believe that, for sure.”

Mercedes is keen to impress that it employs a 'no blame' culture. That stands to reason, since there have been no kneejerk firings. The key personnel have stayed put and owned the shocker that 2022 turned out to be. That stability has made it easier to pinpoint the windtunnel discrepancies that caused the season to unravel before it even began. So, although the curve to play catch-up is steep, there's reason to believe that a slip to third place is as bad as it gets, and that Mercedes is already picking itself back up. ❧

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# A world cup we will miss

*Across the border from football's quadrennial shindig, the WTCR ended in an anti-climax. It's a shame to see this highly competitive series go*

DAMIEN SMITH

**T**he World Touring Car Cup deserved better than to bow out under a safety car at its Jeddah finale last Sunday, but that's the hand dealt to a series that just couldn't catch a break in 2022. An accumulation of bad luck, thorny problems without obvious answers and manufacturer apathy led to the WTCR's demise, as French-based promoter Discovery Sports Events pulled the plug early on its deal with the FIA after five years running to the TCR rulebook, from what grew out of its old World Touring Car Championship.

As a certain other World Cup rumbled on over the border in Qatar, the first international tin-top races to be held in Saudi Arabia were marked by a mix of emotions: joy for deserving new champion Mikel Azcona, whose title was confirmed in the middle of qualifying on Saturday; frustration for hero-to-zero race one winner Nathanael Berthon, his stranded Audi the cause of the anti-climactic race-two safety car following the Frenchman's collision with Rob Huff; and sadness that a decent, highly competitive series has ended.

The Goodyear tyre failures that triggered embarrassing race cancellations at the Nurburgring in May were a serious blow, especially when further trouble at a sweltering Vallelunga provided a get-out clause for Cyan Racing to pull its five Lynk & Cos, including that of double champion Yann Ehrlacher and his uncle Yvan Muller. Organisers put on a brave face, then eventually admitted defeat.

But this failure was about more than tyres and petulant teams.

**“Our goal would be to maintain a world title for conventionally powered touring cars”**

As series chief Francois Ribeiro explained, plans to introduce an e-fuel proved too optimistic. “Unfortunately, it has become apparent that 100% fossil-free fuel is not yet compatible with the production engines used in the TCR category because it puts too great a demand on mechanical components,” he said. “With more corporate sponsors not wishing to be associated with a category that does not use fossil-free fuel, we have very real concerns that this will have a negative impact on WTCR grid numbers next season, which have already been compromised by the global health pandemic, the war in Ukraine and weakened economic outlook.”

That explanation indirectly adds further vindication to a major development in another series this year. In the context of fossil fuel's increasing toxicity far beyond physical emissions, it really is just as well that the British Touring Car Championship switched

to hybrid power in 2022. Fans of the UK series would say it's long been the case anyway but, in the wake of the WTCR's demise and the DTM having morphed into another GT3 series, the BTCC is now unequivocally Europe's premier touring car series.

As a formula, TCR is a huge success story, given how the number of cars built and sold has long surpassed four figures, mostly for use in national series as well as the low-key European championship. There's no reason why that story can't continue despite the sinking of the flagship. But the loss of WTCR does leave a gaping hole on the international scene, which is only partly filled by the short-format eTouring Car World Cup. So what's next?

There's no answer, yet. The FIA says it is undertaking a review. “There is a need to identify and assess what is the best and most sustainable future for top-flight touring car racing,” said the FIA's Touring Car Commission president Alan Gow, also captain of the good ship BTCC. “Our goal would be to maintain a world title for conventionally powered touring cars and ensure the competition is strong and prestigious. Throughout its history, world touring car racing used different formats, with titles decided either through a series or at a single event. We are considering all the possibilities.”

A one-off World Cup, like those that brought together star-studded grids from the national Super Touring series back in the 1990s, would be fun. How about holding it in Macau? But one weekend per year – and probably not until 2024 – is surely not enough to justify commitments from heavy-hitting manufacturer-backed customer teams such as BRC Hyundai, Munnich Motorsport Honda, Comtoyou Audi or indeed Cyan Lynk & Co.

As for Azcona, the new world champion is left with a crown he might never defend. Not that he seemed too bothered in Jeddah: “At the moment I'm not really thinking about the future. I want to enjoy winning the championship and celebrate a fantastic season. I would love to continue with Hyundai because if you are around such people good things can come. But I cannot tell you where I will be.”

More ETCCR seems likely, and doubling up with that title next year would complete a set. But Azcona has an eye on Le Mans too. As a world champion, momentum is with him and now is the time to strike while he's hot. Oh, and quite rightly he couldn't care less that Cyan and Ehrlacher didn't stick around to be beaten. His title shouldn't be cheapened by their absence. “As a driver you want to fight until the last moment, but that's not something in your hands,” he said. “You cannot control what they decide, and even without them the championship was very tough, with Honda, with ‘Bebo’ [runner-up Nestor Girolami], the Audi drivers and Rob Huff as well. I really enjoyed the season. The level of competition was incredible.”

It was. But now it's gone up in smoke. What a pity. ❧

P52 WTCR REPORT





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# From the GB3 title to the fight for an F1 test

*The 2022 GB3 champion and BRDC SuperStar reflects on his season and being an Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award finalist*

LUKE BROWNING

**T**his has been a great year. The guys at Hitech worked so hard and it was so nice to be able to reward them with both the drivers' and teams' titles in GB3. We could have sewn it up a lot earlier, but we made it a bit difficult for ourselves. Regardless, the outcome was still the same, and I'm absolutely delighted to be a double British champion. I'm the only person to win British F4 and GB3, so that in itself is a pretty special achievement.

Some highlights of the year were Spa and Oulton Park, as we won most races by an average of eight or nine seconds, so there were definitely scenes of dominance there. Some weekends we weren't as strong, but more often than not we were on the podium. There was only one [non-reversed-grid] race throughout the year where I was off the podium, disregarding the Silverstone rounds where we had to start last for everything. It was the consistency of being in the top three and always being close to pole, being on the front row of the grid, and when being on pole, having that 100% conversion rate that really helped me out.

Coming into the season, I knew we had a good shout. I had the right people around me, I was really well prepared, I knew the circuits, although there were circuits I'd not raced on before, such as Donington Park GP, but overall, the combination was really strong. Being with Hitech GP and with the experience that I had, I was confident of the title, and in testing it reaffirmed just how quick we were. It wasn't always simple, and we had our issues; sometimes our engine power was a little bit down, but that got sorted quickly. So, even in some races that we weren't as quick as we thought we should be, there were reasons for it. Overall, it was a pretty amazing year.

It's been incredible to be a member of the British Racing Drivers'

Club SuperStars programme. Having the advice from Andy Meyrick and others in the club is incredibly valuable, and they've helped me out so much this year, especially coming into the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award. It has been a massive help to be able to reach out, call different people, and get advice from all areas of motorsport. Being on the SuperStars programme has been a massive help in terms of connections, and I can't talk highly enough about the Club. I've had advice about general career progression, but also hopping into different cars for the Award I was able to pick up the phone and speak to people who had driven the cars before. That was a massive advantage.

Being nominated for the Award was something that I'd looked at for years and years. It was amazing to see it in Autosport – it's something that I dreamed about as a young kid. I've watched the finalists and contenders and all the videos on YouTube, so to finally be in the Award is pretty special. I missed out in 2020 because of COVID, so winning British F4 maybe would have been able to secure me a spot at that stage, but it didn't work out. However, winning GB3 this year granted me the chance and I'm hoping that I've done it justice.

I think it went really well, but you just don't know. I know how I did in comparison to the reference times, but I have no idea what the other drivers did, so it's all up in the air. I really did come in as well prepared as I could and I'm feeling confident. I think I did a good job on the two days, and it'll be what it'll be on the evening, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

Unfortunately for me, I hadn't driven any of the cars before the tests, so hopping between different disciplines (GT3, LMP3 and F2) was definitely difficult. It felt quite a natural step up for me from GB3. I tried to do as much research as I could prior, watching onboards, asking well-known people in the BRDC, like Darren Turner and Tom Gamble, who had already driven these cars, to try and get a little bit of advice going into it. At the end of the day, you've got to go and put it on its limit, and I felt like I did that.

I just had a smile on my face for the two days. It'll be interesting to find out what the results were and see how I did. I tried to take it my stride and enjoy it because focusing on other people at that stage isn't going to help you.

I think I'll be in a good place for next year, especially if the Autosport Award comes off – it'll be incredibly helpful. It's opened a lot of doors for me already, some that I can't mention, but we're looking good. 🍀



➔ **P50 THE 2022 FINALISTS**









# ROSS BRAWN'S VERDICT ON F1'S NEW RULES – AND **THE FUTURE**

*The multiple-title-winning designer and team boss is finally leaving Formula 1,  
but he still has plenty of insights on what's working and what comes next*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY



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ETHERINGTON



“I

m sailing off into the sunset and I’m really pleased – delighted – with where Formula 1 is today.”

Ross Brawn is sitting in his office in Formula 1’s designated hospitality building in the Abu Dhabi paddock. His desk is almost imposingly big, but empty. The room itself is without any fuss. Out of sight, Brawn has placed a present he will later hand to Sebastian Vettel – an unspecified gift he knows the four-time world champion will enjoy, rather than a mere gesture of token farewell.

The moment represents departures for both – Vettel from Aston Martin and into F1 retirement; Brawn likewise, but leaving the Formula One Management organisation itself.

The room, the desk, the man. A career of important decisions delivered – their resulting impact what matters, not theatrics along the way. Not that Brawn, the person who embodies F1’s 2022 car design rule changes more than anyone else, in his own understated way can’t leave an impression with just his words.

“Sort of, eight or nine out of 10,” is his no-nonsense verdict on the success of the new ground-effects cars – machines Brawn and his FOM team conceived to improve F1 racing.

Given Brawn’s role in crafting the rules and his position as technical and sporting boss at FOM since 2017, Autosport, who he’s chatting to exclusively at his farewell race, had been expecting reasoned positivity. It’s the remaining areas already identified for improvement in which we’re really interested. Because this is still F1 – the ever-lasting pursuit of motorsporting perfection at the pinnacle of the single-seater ladder. It’s where things are never quite finished regarding rules and cars, because the true game is getting around the restrictions of the formula set down to suit one competitor before all others. Everything else is entertainment around the art. And the debates that stem from that core within all combine to make the championship a dominant business.

“A couple of things we moved on, probably, retrospectively, we wouldn’t have done,” Brawn says of the rule-crafting process, which was first announced to much fanfare and eventually ended when F1’s latest ground-effects cars hit the track for the first time in early 2022, delayed a year by the COVID-19 pandemic. “There was a period when the teams were claiming the rules were too restrictive and the cars would all look the same, and as a consequence of that pressure we loosened up a little bit and we gave more freedom on various areas. But the consequence of that was that we got exploited! But that’s Formula 1, you know that is going to happen.”

## BRAWN ON HOW F1’S NEW RULES IMPACTED... TEAM SUCCESS

With the 2022 championship now in the books, it’s clear which teams understood the rules best and which did not – a pecking order obvious ever since Red Bull marched clear of Ferrari mid-season. Max Verstappen’s squad heads the board, obviously, followed by two of Brawn’s two former teams – Ferrari and Mercedes.

F1’s Class A/B divide remains, even though the total pace spread has come down from a 3.102% difference in 2021 to 2.379% (and actually that incorporates the undeveloped 2021 Haas package, with the 2022 first-to-ninth gap really up by 0.039%). This has more to do with the hangover influence of the teams’ experience and wealth accrued in previous F1 eras, as well as the impact of the championship’s other big regulatory changes – such as the cost cap – only starting to be felt.

Judging the success of the new designs has moved from slightly vague driver feedback about a reduced dirty-air effect and lessened slipstream in Barcelona testing, to Pirelli presenting data that it had clocked 785 overtakes in 2022 – an increase of 186 from 2021. But, of course, true success can’t be measured in such simple terms, and in



any case overtaking statistics are still down on those registered during the early years in which F1 cars were fitted with deliberately fragile rubber (the record is 870 in 2012).

When it comes to expanding the impact of the new rules to cover ‘competitive grids’, which was one of five key areas set out for improvement, Brawn says that F1 needs “another season” before a full judgement can be handed down. Again, no surprise there. “With the way things were, the big teams kept pulling away from the small teams,” he adds. “So, at least we’ve stabilised that.”

“And I think the small teams, or at least let’s say smaller teams, if they’re smart with how they use their components, how they carry pieces over, they can be more efficient. And perhaps get more done than a bigger team that’s a bit cumbersome and has still got the mindset of all the money you used to spend. That’s my hope! I’m optimistic.”

“It will take some time. It would be unrealistic to expect a switch to be thrown. But I think it’s going in the right direction.”

Although the problem has become far less prevalent and has rather disappeared from the media spotlight of late, there can be no doubt that one of the missing marks from Brawn’s assessment of the new rules’ success comes down to porpoising.

It was, he says, a “bigger issue than we anticipated”. But, again, the elements of self-immolation contained within the fabric of F1’s collective being meant the issue remained even after the teams were presented with the chance to make design changes aimed at addressing porpoising before their cars were finished. As Brawn acknowledges, “a ground-effects car by definition can porpoise because of the very concept”, but higher floors and diffuser changes are coming for 2023. A principal aim is to stiffen floors overall to make rideheights less critical, and the tweaks are aimed at moving on from the technical buzzword of 2022. Only at tracks such as Baku, where high speeds combine with road-course bumps to send energy through already solid suspensions, does F1 anticipate the issue really remaining.

“The changes they’re doing for 2023, we did propose for 2022 because we became aware of this sensitivity partway through the development of the car,” Brawn explains. “But the teams at that stage were too far down the line and didn’t want the change.”

Now, of course, the teams have largely solved their porpoising problems and of course these were issues not evenly shared across the grid. Brawn even highlights Red Bull technical supremo Adrian Newey for praise in not getting “sucked in, excuse the pun, to seeing how much performance there was if you ran the car close to the ground and as hard as possible”. Although he doesn’t name the teams that did, it doesn’t take much effort to infer to which Brawn is referring...

“Their car had hardly any issues,” Brawn does say of Red Bull, “because we all know that with a ground-effects car you can’t run it rock solid, close to the ground. It’s just too critical.” >>



Norris's Imola podium was the only top-three result of 2022 for a driver outside the Big Three



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"WE ALL KNOW THAT WITH A GROUND-EFFECTS CAR YOU CAN'T RUN IT ROCK SOLID, CLOSE TO THE GROUND. IT'S JUST TOO CRITICAL"

Newey was not caught out by the ground-effects trap

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## BRAWN ON HOW F1'S NEW RULES IMPACTED... CAR BEHAVIOUR

Another key objective of F1's rules reset was establishing "raceability". This was to be a new central factor in the rules that shaped car design, essentially translating into cars that could follow each other more closely, and in turn increase passing opportunities. As Brawn puts it, the aim was to "halt the descent into unraceable cars" that F1 was otherwise facing. This was that the ultra-high-downforce era, which, while greatly improving the visual look of the cars compared to the 2009-16 era of smaller and tidier aerodynamic surfaces, had a markedly negative impact on racing.

Not only did the high downforce levels massively exacerbate the turbulent air effect, but they also made it harder for drivers to control their machines when another came alongside. This was something Brawn and his team of engineers (including FOM chief technical officer Pat Symonds, who is remaining in post beyond 2022 despite being rumoured to be stepping back from active duties this year, and former Toyota, Lotus and Williams aerodynamicist Jason Somerville) only discovered when they started the work that would eventually become the initial models of the current cars.

"Those wheel-to-wheel battles we see where there's two cars, or sometimes even three cars, going through corners – I think they have much more confidence that they're not going to have anything strange happen," Brawn explains. "And the other comment that I got from the drivers – because I was quite keen when we introduced these cars – was that they're predictable. The balance doesn't change dramatically. So, you do lose downforce, but you know what the car is doing. You don't get the sort of understeer, oversteer – you don't get the unpredictability that you had last year."

"And I think we mustn't forget that the cars we had were getting worse and worse. And with no stop, no hiatus in the way they were going, they were only going to get worse and worse."

One element that remains from the previous era is the Drag Reduction System, which became a focal point for debate during the early races of the campaign just gone, when Verstappen and Charles Leclerc regularly exchanged the leading places in Bahrain and Jeddah.

DRS's place in F1 is intrinsically linked to the dirty-air effect, of which Brawn says "we've massively lessened the impact, but you can't eliminate it" with the new car generation. The aim, he says, is to have "judicious use" of DRS and not rather "ritualistic" and "not very impressive" simple passes on straights.

But if the current cars both need DRS to be a "useful tool" for





New F1 cars have  
improved the racing,  
as here at Silverstone

overtaking and can't have the dirty-air effect reduced much more, what comes next? This is the key question Autosport wants to put to Brawn. Because there is a much-discussed moment arriving in just three more seasons' time – F1 rolling on to its next evolution already – in 2026.

## BRAWN ON HOW F1'S NEW RULES IMPACTED... THINKING FOR ITS NEXT REGENERATION

"DRS will still be a tool we'll have to use," says Brawn. "Maybe with active aerodynamics that will change."

Here's the key thing. With Brawn now heading to retirement, where does he see F1's future based on the impact of the rules he and his team laid down? "There are various mad schemes" is the start of the response, but there's one overarching answer: active aerodynamics.

It's worth noting here that Somerville and a small engineering team have transferred from FOM to work for the FIA when it comes to forming the 2026 chassis rules, which will be implemented alongside the now-finalised engine regulation changes coming for that season. The personnel change reflects not only the teams' desire to reduce potential conflict-of-interest risks of F1's promoter forming car-design rules, but also because the 2026 changes will use real-world data from the current machines, and so from a transparency point of view it was important that this is instead held by the regulator. Work on the next generation is only at a very early stage, the impact of the 2023 rule tweaks also needing to be assessed.

But Brawn says that F1's latest car-design rule-shapers have "seen the light" on raceability being a driving factor on how those rules will come together. That factor, claims the 68-year-old, has been "endorsed and should now be very high if not at the top of the list of any future rule changes" based on what F1 experienced in 2022.

And so, to active aero likely coming for 2026. In essence, to solve the reduced-slipstream effect on the current cars, active aero would have chassis parts beefed up when traversing corners to increase downforce, grip and speed in those sequences, then hunker down to dramatically cut drag on the straights. Allied to this is a theorised idea of a reverse DRS – that a leading car would have its downforce cut or drag increased – by a moveable aero part to further increase the chances of a passing move.

"One of the big things about the 2026 car is whether we have active aerodynamics," says Brawn. "I think that's an efficiency step which is very appealing. It's still got to be sorted to see how that can be done and if it can be done safely and predictably. But, active aerodynamics, >>

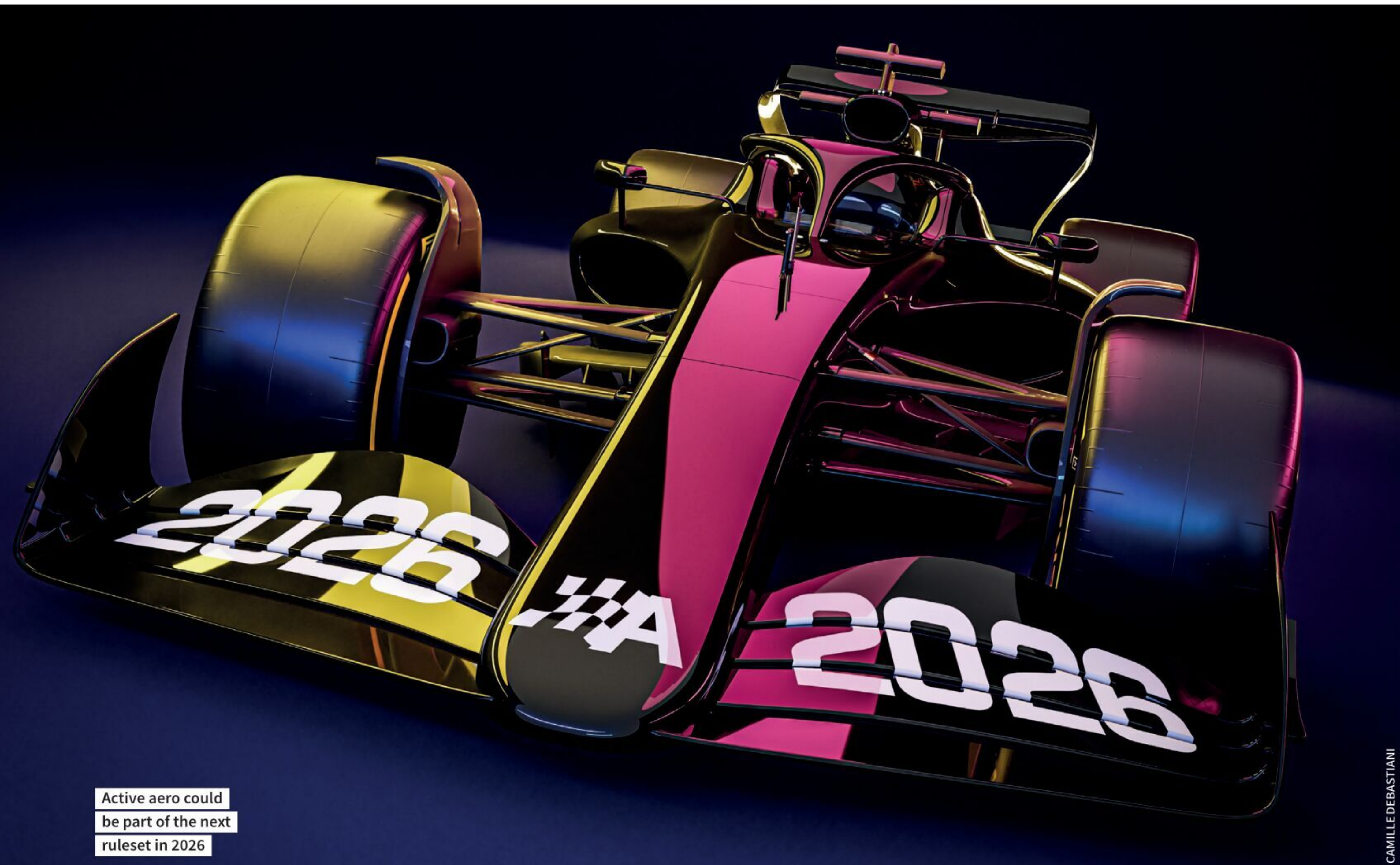
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Active aero could be part of the next ruleset in 2026

CAMILLEDEBASTIANI

## BRAWN'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

After nearly 50 years in motorsport, what message does Ross Brawn have for those who have followed his varied and ultimately ultra-successful exploits? Autosport offered him the chance to give a personal goodbye, and here's what he said...

"Well, it's a wonderful sport and it's this amazing combination of technology and talent. Great drivers in rubbish cars and average drivers in brilliant cars, and sometimes brilliant drivers in brilliant cars. And I just think the whole fact it changes so much during the season. If you look at most sports, if you look at athletics or tennis – someone tends to be at the top of the tree and unless they have an off day it's

very difficult for anyone to beat them. This sport, you might be winning – I know we've had periods of domination – then someone comes up and makes a lot of progress with the car and suddenly you're not winning. We have that dynamic going on all the time.

"It's shark-infested waters, Formula 1, but if you had a problem teams rallied around. If you look at what we did in COVID, it's an example of how [things went from], 'OK, one day we're on the track and

**"IT'S SHARK-INFESTED WATERS, F1, BUT IF YOU HAD A PROBLEM TEAMS RALLIED AROUND"**

trying to nail each other, the next day, crikey, we've got COVID, how are we going to [get through it]?' Not only the work the teams did on things like ventilators and so on [through Project Pitlane], but how the teams cooperated to get the sport going again.

"And the openness and transparency and commitment all the teams had to get the show on the road again I think shows that we can be a pretty hostile sport when it comes to the track, but we're actually all together when it comes to taking the sport forwards, which is great.

"So, I will be following with great interest!"



SUTTON





we semi have them at the moment with DRS.

“But can you do something much more significant? If you have active aerodynamics, then of course you could affect the car in front. You could have a proximity [that] once you get within a certain degree the car in front loses a little bit of downforce and you gain a little bit of downforce. There are tricks you can play with that. I’m not saying we would do that, but it becomes an opportunity. So, the 2026 car is lessons learned from what we have now and I think we’ll incorporate some form of active aerodynamics.”

An additional benefit of active aero would theoretically be improving fuel efficiency, with less drag carried down straights, but safety and costs will be factors the FIA and F1 must also balance with the teams. And, as ever, there are philosophical considerations too.

When asked about the mix of pulsating and dull races across the 2022 season, Brawn, charmingly, replies: “I’m a wine enthusiast and a very good friend of mine reminded me you should occasionally have some supermarket plonk to remind you how good your good stuff is! Not that there’s anything wrong with supermarket plonk, but just to get your references.”

The same thinking follows down the line to introducing active aero. If the aim is to ever-improve racing, then the argument that F1 is increasingly just entertainment grows louder. If active aero is aimed at eliminating DRS passes by having the rear-wing slot opening replaced by added drag for a leading car, then one gimmick is replacing another. It may even be that both will be combined – again adding to the entertainment-versus-sport debate.

But this is F1 – the same debates recurring through the ages. At the same time, change is coming in other areas for 2026, with far loftier and much more important aims.

One is the introduction of fully sustainable fuels that can also be used in most road cars, which follows the introduction of the 90% typical fuel and 10% renewable ethanol E1 fuel F1 has introduced this year. This is an area, Brawn says, where the initial expertise comes from outside F1, but that the championship aims to be “the catalyst and sort of bring that together”, as, in turn, more sustainable fuels will lessen humanity’s damage to the planet.

Another is changing tyre technology so that tyre-blanket usage is eliminated. The aim is to cut out the massive “power surge”, says Brawn, required to heat the rubber to the current required temperatures, an outlay that goes squarely against F1’s 2030 net-zero carbon target. While the plan to reduce tyre temperatures from 70°C to 50°C for 2023 is set to be dropped now that Pirelli has discovered, as a result of driver kickback from the Austin FP2 tyre test, that heating at 70°C for two hours saves more energy than 50°C at the current three hours, the ideal aim is not to need



heated tyres at all given the obvious energy wastage.

That would inevitably require a change in tyre-compound construction and possibly mandated chassis design changes from 2024 if the tyre blankets do get banned then, as is still planned. But a way of maintaining grip through tyre pressures might be retained, Brawn suggests, through “automated tyre valves” come 2026.

“There is back and forth,” Brawn says of setting out the full set of rule changes eyed for 2026. “I don’t think there are any barriers there, we’re always open to what could be done.”

But F1 will now do so without the former March, Williams, Haas Lola, Arrows, Jaguar, Benetton, Ferrari, Honda, Brawn and Mercedes engineer/manager – finally going fishing as often as he wants, although still willing to hold a temporary consultant role, should “very good friend” and F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali call in the future. Brawn recognises the importance of maintaining the championship for its fans above all else – for life-long supporters and new arrivals. Even here, with aspects such as DRS and entertainment-versus-sporting purity, F1’s contradictory nature is laid bare again.

And so, Brawn says farewell to “a unique sport”: “I’m just so pleased to see the passion that’s grown for the sport after, quite honestly, it was in the doldrums for a few years. I think we need to preserve this and protect this passion that’s grown.” ❧



# THE YEAR WHEN SOME FINN AMAZING HAPPENED

*With only cameo roles played by the legendary Sebastiens, Kalle Rovanpera ushered in a new era for the WRC by becoming its youngest champion*

TOM HOWARD

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN

It was somehow appropriate that the rise of a new rallying superpower should coincide with the World Rally Championship celebrating its 50th season and ushering in a new hybrid era. For the best part of two decades, rallying's top tier had been dominated by two Frenchmen, Sebastien Loeb and Sebastien Ogier, the duo's stranglehold punctuated only once since 2004 when Ott Tanak marched his way to the 2019 title.

With Loeb and reigning champion Ogier taking only part-time cameo roles this year with M-Sport and Toyota respectively, the prospect of a new name on the world championship trophy seemed likely. But few would have predicted Toyota's Kalle Rovanpera to rip up the record books and redefine the WRC winning formula so comprehensively. The son of former WRC rally winner Harri Rovanpera dominated the championship, scoring six wins and ending 20 years of Finnish national hurt to become the youngest ever champion at the age of 22. It's a record unlikely to be beaten.

It was a changing of the guard on several levels. Out went the much-loved previous WRC beasts, introduced in 2017, and in came the all-new monsters courtesy of Rally1 regulations. Toyota, Hyundai and M-Sport Ford burned the midnight oil over a busy off-season to create bespoke cars from the ground up as the WRC embraced arguably its most seismic set of rule changes.

The most significant was the introduction of a control 100kW hybrid unit married to the existing 1.6-litre turbocharged engine, now powered by 100% sustainable fuel. This was surrounded by

a new tougher spaceframe chassis, while trick centre differentials were replaced by simpler front and rear alternatives. Suspension travel and the effect of aero were also significantly reduced. The new beasts were capable of 500bhp in short bursts using hybrid power, initiated by the throttle pedal.

The WRC couldn't have asked for a better start to Rally1 than rally legends Ogier and Loeb going toe to toe to deliver a battle for the ages in Monte Carlo. Loeb ultimately came out on top after Ogier suffered a dramatic puncture heartbreak on the penultimate stage. It was Loeb's 80th career win, and the first for maths teacher-turned-co-driver Isabelle Galmiche.

It would have been a brave bet to back Rovanpera for the title after his display in the principality. He was among the pre-season title contenders after breakthrough wins in Estonia and Greece last year, but had struggled to gel with the new GR Yaris on the Monte, ending the first day more than minute adrift. Rovanpera even suggested that he was slower than Rally2 machinery, such was his pace deficit, but something began to click as the rally continued. He would ultimately power from 12th to fourth, claiming the first of seven signature powerstage wins.

"At the mid-point of the rally he was not performing very well," acknowledged Toyota boss Jari-Matti Latvala. "You could see he was angry with himself and he is normally very calm. His mind was processing all the time that he needed to improve and that was significant. Somehow he managed to change his mind and worked out how the car needs to be driven."



...and gets a hug from dad  
Harri after clinching the  
crown in New Zealand

**"YOU COULD SEE HE WAS ANGRY WITH HIMSELF AND HE IS NORMALLY VERY CALM"**

Indeed, a fire had been lit. A first win of the season arrived at the next outing on the Swedish snow, after seeing off challenges from Tanak's Hyundai and Elfyn Evans's Toyota. A hybrid failure ended Tanak's bid. While Evans pushed Rovanpera hard, a penalty for a wild shortcut in the Saturday superspecial, followed by a crash on Sunday, helped Rovanpera to victory.

It was in Croatia where the youngster sent a message to his WRC rivals, and 'Full Send' Rovanpera was born, as emblazoned on the back of his crash helmet. He dominated the wet asphalt roads, opening >>



Toyota star  
Rovanpera was flying  
for most of the season  
on his way to his first  
WRC title...







up more than a one-minute lead on Friday. A puncture brought Tanak back into the fight, and it was here when Roanpera's credentials were tested. The soft-tyre-shod Tanak overhauled a 28.4s deficit to snatch the lead, capitalising on a rain shower on the penultimate stage. But Roanpera blitzed Tanak on the final powerstage to pinch the victory by a mere 4.3s, in a seemingly against-the-odds triumph that he labelled as the toughest of his career to date.

Roanpera completed his hat-trick of wins on the gravel in Portugal, and was beginning to show a key attribute honed by Loeb and Ogier on their way to multiple titles – the ability to win despite the disadvantage of being first on the road. It was also in Portugal where Roanpera unleashed a party trick that would prove pivotal in his title campaign. When rain hit, he was simply untouchable, allowing him to overhaul Evans for victory. He had now conquered gravel, snow and asphalt.

The rough gravel stages of Sardinia didn't suit the Toyota, but a fifth place kept the scoreboard ticking over, while Tanak finally put Hyundai on the top step of the podium, after a myriad of reliability issues with its rushed i20 N.

By the halfway mark in Kenya, the title seemed likely, such was Roanpera's dominance. There was a minor scare on the opening stage, where he almost rolled, but that was the only blemish. He

breezed through the gruelling savannah wilderness to record a fourth win from six events, as Toyota underscored its claim to have the fastest and most reliable car thanks to a stunning 1-2-3-4. The key to victory again was Roanpera's unique ability when the rain hit, enabling him to slide his way clear of the chasing Evans.

A familiar script unfolded as Roanpera completed a dominant fifth win in Estonia, where again he was in a different league when conditions became wet and slippery, defeating Evans by more than a minute. It was a matter of when the title would be claimed, not if.

Roanpera didn't have it all his own way though. As Hyundai began to tame its i20 N, Tanak emerged as a genuine thorn in his side. The Estonian began to mount a challenge, and upset Roanpera's homecoming thanks to a sublime Rally Finland victory. It will be remembered among the 2019 world champion's best wins, as he corralled a wild i20 N that was far from the best.

Chinks in Roanpera's armour emerged in Belgium and Greece, two events where he could mathematically wrap up the title. A rattled Roanpera and co-driver Jonne Halttunen, following a delayed start to stage two in Belgium, were sent into a series of barrel rolls after an "optimistic pacenote". But the accident failed to dent Roanpera's impenetrable mature, calm and collected approach, and he ended the rally with the powerstage bonus points. Even so,



**“I WASN’T THINKING ABOUT THE TITLE, I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHAT ELSE TO DO WITH MY LIFE”**

**Safari victory was a tour de force for Roanperera. Locals clearly heartily approved**

## FIA HAPPY WITH RALLY1 ROLLOUT

Wheatley had to oversee hybrid implementation



While the Rally1 regulations are yet to achieve the goal of attracting a new manufacturer to the WRC, the FIA is content with the success of their introduction. The sport’s biggest sweep of rule changes for a generation led to all-new hybrid powered cars for 2022. And while FIA rally director Andrew Wheatley admits there have been challenges and niggles regarding the Compact Dynamics hybrid kit, he is proud of the machinery’s first season.

“The first year with this new technology was always going to be difficult, but the fact we have changed the chassis, the fuel, added hybrid and changed the concept of the car, the transmission and aero, and we still have rallies where we are fighting over seconds, I think we have to be content,” says Wheatley. “Everyone agrees that safety of the cars has been really positive as we’ve seen some fairly big accidents this year.

“There was talk that the new generation Rally1 cars would be quite a bit slower, but we now know the Rally1 car is a good level of performance. We had all three manufacturers win rallies in the first five events and the competition is very close, so that is a real positive. Yes, there has been plenty of challenges over the course of the year [with the hybrid unit], and the Compact Dynamics guys are 20 years older than when they started the year but overall, the drivers appreciate it’s a significant performance advantage.”

Tanak turned the screw with his third win of the year.

A collision with a tree wiped out his GR Yaris’s tailgate in Greece, but again Roanperera salvaged four points from the powerstage at a rally where Toyota was very much second best to Hyundai, underscored by a 1-2-3 led by Thierry Neuville.

The incidents only served to delay the inevitable, with Roanperera sealing the title in style in New Zealand as the nation’s famous cambered gravel roads returned to the WRC for the first time in 10 years. Normal service was resumed as Roanperera delivered another wet-weather masterclass to comfortably beat Ogier and win the rally a day after his 22nd birthday. A powerstage win wasn’t necessary but added the icing on the cake, and was somewhat fitting given these one-stage showdowns have become Roanperera’s forte, evidenced by 50 of his 255 points tally.

The reserved Finns, overtaken by emotion, celebrated by clambering onto the roof of the GR Yaris to perform a dance, which Roanperera explained “was not really prepared”. Fittingly, his title ended Finland’s 20-year wait in the same country where Marcus Gronholm had claimed the previous crown for the rally-mad nation in 2002. The feat was not lost on Roanperera, alongside his obliteration of Colin McRae’s record as youngest ever world champion by five years and 88 days.

“Of course it means a lot,” said Roanperera. “There is huge support from all the Finnish fans and it has been nice to see that the sport has been gaining more traction again. I’m not one to think about records, but taking it from Colin McRae is quite special. I went into the year hoping with the new car we can be in the title fight, but I was not sure we would be as strong as we were. I was not thinking about the title in Monte, I was thinking about what else I could do with my life as I was struggling. I don’t know why my driving style is good for these wet conditions. I always take these wet conditions on stages as an opportunity to push hard and make a difference.”

Toyota added to the drivers’ and co-drivers’ title successes by clinching a sixth WRC manufacturers’ crown, courtesy of Ogier’s run to victory on the smooth Tarmac of Rally Spain. It was a long overdue win for the eight-time world champion after suffering punctures in four of his six rallies. Toyota’s campaign was boosted by four second-place finishes for Evans. The two-time championship runner-up was tipped to challenge for the title, but struggled to gel with the new GR Yaris and went without a win for the first time since 2019. Mistakes in Monte Carlo, Sweden and New Zealand proved costly, while there was misfortune thanks to punctures in Croatia and Japan, among mechanical issues in Sardinia and Greece.

Esapekka Lappi proved a valuable addition to Toyota, delivering >>



Tanak was Hyundai's star turn, and won on the Ypres Rally, but he's not sticking around



## ROUND BY ROUND

### Monte Carlo Rally

- 1** Loeb/Galmiche  
**2** Ogier/Veillas  
**3** Breen/Nagle

Loeb rolls back the years to claim an 80th career win after a titanic battle with arch rival Ogier. The two WRC megastars go toe to toe swapping positions, and share the overall lead, before Ogier pulls clear. A front-left puncture for Ogier on the penultimate stage hands Loeb the lead and the win by 10.5s. Breen completes a double podium for M-Sport in third after an Evans error ends a podium tilt. Roanperera claims fifth.

### Rally Sweden

- 1** Roanperera/Halttunen  
**2** Neuville/Wydaeghe  
**3** Lappi/Ferm

Roanperera clicks with the hybrid GR Yaris and scores his first win of the season in a new-look Rally Sweden, held in a fresh location. In a brisk start there are five leaders across the opening seven stages before Roanperera takes command. Evans pushes Roanperera but crashes on the final day, allowing Neuville up to second for Hyundai's first podium of 2022. Lappi takes third on his WRC return.

### Rally Croatia

- 1** Roanperera/Halttunen  
**2** Tanak/Jarveoja  
**3** Neuville/Wydaeghe

Roanperera pulls off a stunning final-stage fightback to snatch victory from Tanak and move into a 29-point lead in the standings. Roanperera stars on the Croatian asphalt in difficult wet conditions to lead by more than a minute on Friday. A compromised tyre choice in heavy rain shifts the lead to Tanak, but the Finn overhauls the Estonian on the powerstage. Neuville secures third after two minutes of penalties.

### Rally Portugal

- 1** Roanperera/Halttunen  
**2** Evans/Martin  
**3** Sordo/Carrera

Loeb returns but crashes out in a rare error that hands the lead to Evans, who builds a 16.5s gap over Roanperera, before rain strikes on Saturday. Roanperera stars in the slippery conditions, and overhauls Evans to claim a third consecutive victory. Sordo pips Toyota's Katsuta to third on his first outing of the season for Hyundai. Ogier and Breen are among several drivers to suffer from a series of punctures.

### Rally Sardinia

- 1** Tanak/Jarveoja  
**2** Breen/Nagle  
**3** Sordo/Carrera

Tanak scores Hyundai's first win of the season as Toyota struggles for pace on the rough gravel stages. Lappi leads early on before a crash hands Tanak the advantage, which he holds until the finish. Breen ends run of misfortune in second, 1m03.2s adrift, but ahead of Sordo. M-Sport man Loubet impresses to score a career-best fourth in his third outing of 2022. Roanperera is top Toyota in fifth, three minutes adrift.



## “LAPPI DONNED GOGGLES TO REACH THE FINISH WITHOUT A ROOF AND WINDSCREEN”

three podiums from seven events on his return to the WRC's top flight, sharing the third car with Ogier. The Finn proved capable of challenging for rally wins, which ultimately led to Hyundai signing him full-time for 2023. His most talked-about accomplishment was a third in Finland after recovering from a roll on the final day that necessitated a dash to a nearby lake to fill up a leaking radiator, before he and co-driver Janne Ferm donned goggles to reach the finish without a roof and windscreen. Much like its dependable GR Yaris, Toyota also boasted the championship's most consistent driver in Takamoto Katsuta, who recorded well-deserved thirds in Kenya and Japan among his 12 points finishes from 13 rallies, earning him a promotion to the factory squad for next year.

The Japanese manufacturer was, however, beaten in both its home events: Hyundai took the spoils in Finland (where its team is based) and the season-ending Rally Japan, with Neuville beating Tanak in a 1-2 to complete a stunning turnaround for the marque after the bleakest of starts.

Hyundai was forever playing catch-up, stemming from the fact it was the last of the manufacturers to commit to the new Rally1 rules, but ended the year with five wins, its best total across a single season. At one point the team admitted that it was six months behind the opposition with the development of its i20 N, and it showed in Monte Carlo. The i20 N was unreliable and lacked speed, with Neuville its best-placed finisher in sixth, almost eight minutes adrift. Tanak had crashed out, while the team's nightmare start was compounded by the withdrawal of Oliver Solberg, who was suffering from inhaling fuel fumes that had entered the cockpit.

Podiums quickly arrived in Sweden and Croatia before Tanak delivered a first win in Sardinia. Reliability issues returned in Kenya, including a freak snapped gear lever for Tanak. But by mid-year Hyundai had got its act together to apply pressure to Toyota despite ongoing internal management struggles, with powertrain boss Julien Moncet installed as deputy team director as an interim replacement for team principal Andrea Adamo, who had left the team in the off-season.

The peak was Hyundai's first 1-2-3 on the rough gravel roads of the Acropolis Rally, although this victory was shrouded in controversy after the team elected against applying team orders to Neuville to hand Tanak, Roanpera's nearest title rival, the win to keep the pressure on the runaway Finn. A souring of the relationship resulted in Tanak leaving the team at the end of the year. The ever-reliable Dani Sordo scored three podiums from five outings and was only let down by a spectacular fire in Japan, while Solberg showed flashes of pace to claim four points finishes, including a fourth, before the team elected to part ways with the Swede. >>

### Safari Rally

- 1 Roanpera/Halttunen**  
**2 Evans/Martin**  
**3 Katsuta/Johnston**

Toyota bounces back to record a stunning 1-2-3-4 headed by Roanpera, who notches up a fourth win from six events to move 65 points clear. Despite almost rolling on stage one, Roanpera once again outlines his skills in wet weather to pull clear of Evans. Katsuta claims third ahead of Ogier, who leads on Friday before losing two minutes to a puncture. An engine fire halts Loeb as M-Sport and Hyundai struggle with reliability issues.

### Rally Estonia

- 1 Roanpera/Halttunen**  
**2 Evans/Martin**  
**3 Tanak/Jarveoja**

Roanpera produces another masterclass to overhaul early leader Evans and claim victory. Roanpera sets a blistering pace in tricky wet conditions to win by a minute, taking 22.5s out of the Welshman on a drenched powerstage alone. Local hero Tanak is well beaten to third as Neuville finishes fourth, while a crash puts Breen out of the victory fight on Friday. Katsuta and Lappi are fifth and sixth.

### Rally Finland

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja**  
**2 Roanpera/Halttunen**  
**3 Lappi/Ferm**

Tanak upsets Roanpera's homecoming and delivers one of the best drives of his career to claim a second win of 2022. The Estonian manages to tame a lively Hyundai to defeat Roanpera by 6.8s. Lappi secures a second podium of the season despite rolling his Toyota on the final day, ending the rally without a windscreen and roof. Neuville struggles for confidence and pace, and suspension damage hampers Evans.

### Ypres Rally

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja**  
**2 Evans/Martin**  
**3 Lappi/Ferm**

Former Ypres rally winner Neuville throws away the lead after running into a ditch, handing team-mate Tanak the advantage. Hampered by a transmission issue, Tanak makes no mistakes to claim his third win of the season, beating Evans by 5.0s. Roanpera suffers a huge crash on Friday, his first error of the year. A powerstage win limits the damage but his points lead reduces to 72. Solberg secures career-best fourth.

### Acropolis Rally

- 1 Neuville/Wydaeghe**  
**2 Tanak/Jarveoja**  
**3 Sordo/Carrera**

Hyundai claims a maiden WRC podium lock-out as Neuville heads Tanak amid a team-orders dispute. The team elects against orders to benefit title contender Tanak despite Roanpera finishing 15th, after a collision with a tree costs him more than six minutes. Loubet finishes fourth after dicing for the lead with Loeb on Friday, before an alternator failure ends Loeb's victory bid.



## M-SPORT TRIBULATIONS

Loeb's Monte win proved a false dawn



"We have mixed feelings as it has been our most successful season but we won nothing," said Moncet. "Thinking 10 or 11 months back, to win one race it would have been impossible. I think we have to be happy with that we have achieved."

M-Sport's season endured a different trajectory to Hyundai's — it started bang on form with Loeb's Monte Carlo victory, but that was the peak. The Ford Puma was able to match the best in the hands of Loeb, who led three of the four rallies contested, before a rare driver error in Portugal, followed by an engine fire in Kenya and an alternator failure in Greece, ended any hopes of a return to the

**"THINKING 10 OR 11 MONTHS BACK, TO WIN ONE RACE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE"**

Victory in Monte Carlo started M-Sport's season on the highest of highs, but it was a combination of factors that led to a frustrating steady decline across 2022.

The Ford squad couldn't have asked for a better start when Sebastien Loeb won on the new Ford Puma's debut, backed up by a third for Craig Breen and a fifth for Gus Greensmith, who enjoyed a maiden stage win to boot. But a second place for Breen in Sardinia was the team's only return to the podium as a combination of driver errors and technical issues meant it struggled to match the results of its counterparts Toyota and Hyundai.

"Despite people's views on the internet, I think we had a fairly positive season in terms of the pace of the car with Seb leading pretty much every rally he was involved in with us," says team principal Richard Millener. "The car showed that it has performance across all surfaces, which is key, so we can be reassured that we can go into next year with a car that can fight for podiums and wins."

"I think we developed it as much as we wanted to and planned to this year. There were a couple of small issues with the car but I think every team had issues. I'm sure there are places we can improve on and over the off-season we will look at to make sure we are as good as we can be for next year."

podium. The team's nadir came in Belgium where Craig Breen, Gus Greensmith and Adrien Fourmaux all finished outside the points. Breen was signed to lead the team's charge and it seemed the perfect partnership after Monte Carlo. Apart from a second in Sardinia, his season began to unravel as errors became a regular occurrence, with crashes in Sweden, Estonia, Finland, Belgium and New Zealand, resulting in a premature end to a two-year deal.

Fourmaux recorded five retirements and was lucky to emerge unscathed from a huge shunt in Monte Carlo when his Puma fired off a cliff. Extra stress on the team to complete car repairs plus budget constraints forced the Frenchman to sit out Greece, New Zealand and Japan. Greensmith continued his progression, netting two stage wins and five top-seven finishes, but was also susceptible to mistakes and reliability issues. A seven-round deal for Pierre-Louis Loubet provided a glimmer of hope and the Frenchman impressed many by claiming two stage wins and leading in Greece on merit, while scoring two career-high fourth-place finishes.

The battle for the WRC2 honours went down to the wire. Finnish pair Emil Lindholm and Reeta Hamalainen beat reigning champion Andreas Mikkelsen and fellow Skoda driver Kajetan Kajetanowicz to the crown.

But the 2022 season will go down in history as the year when the WRC was redefined by Roan Percora, who appears on course to become one of rallying's all-time greats. ❄️

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Rally New Zealand

**1 Roan Percora/Halttunen**

**2 Ogier/Veillas**

**3 Tanak/Jarveoja**

Roan Percora secures a maiden world title in style with victory and a powerstage win to become the youngest ever world champion, aged 22 and one day. He powers from fourth to lead on Saturday, dazzling in treacherous wet conditions on New Zealand's return to the WRC. Ogier claims second, 34.6s adrift as Tanak finishes third, with Neuville almost two minutes adrift. Mistakes from Breen and Greensmith leave M-Sport disappointed again.

### Rally Spain

**1 Ogier/Veillas**

**2 Neuville/Wydaeghe**

**3 Roan Percora/Halttunen**

Ogier dominates the opposition to claim a comfortable victory, helping Toyota wrap up the manufacturers' crown with a round to spare. Neuville pushes Ogier hard but finishes second, while new champion Roan Percora is 34.5s off the win in third, after a late puncture caused by a protruding drain. Tanak battles hybrid issues to fourth ahead of Sordo and Evans, who both suffer punctures.

### Rally Japan

**1 Neuville/Wydaeghe**

**2 Tanak/Jarveoja**

**3 Katsuta/Johnston**

Hyundai halts Toyota's homecoming party with a 1-2 in Toyota's backyard. Neuville emerges from a tense head to head with Evans, whose bid to deliver Toyota a home win ends after a puncture on Sunday. Tanak scoops up second and Katsuta claims a well-received home podium. Ogier claims more stage wins than anyone after a puncture derails his bid on Friday. Roan Percora also suffers tyre trouble after a run-in with a rock face.



Neuville won the Japan curtain-closer



## AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



KALLE ROVANPERA

**1** Defied belief at times in the way he dominated his opposition. Was superb in his six victories from 13 rallies. Claimed 70 stage wins, including seven powerstages, to wrap up a history-making title with two rounds to spare.



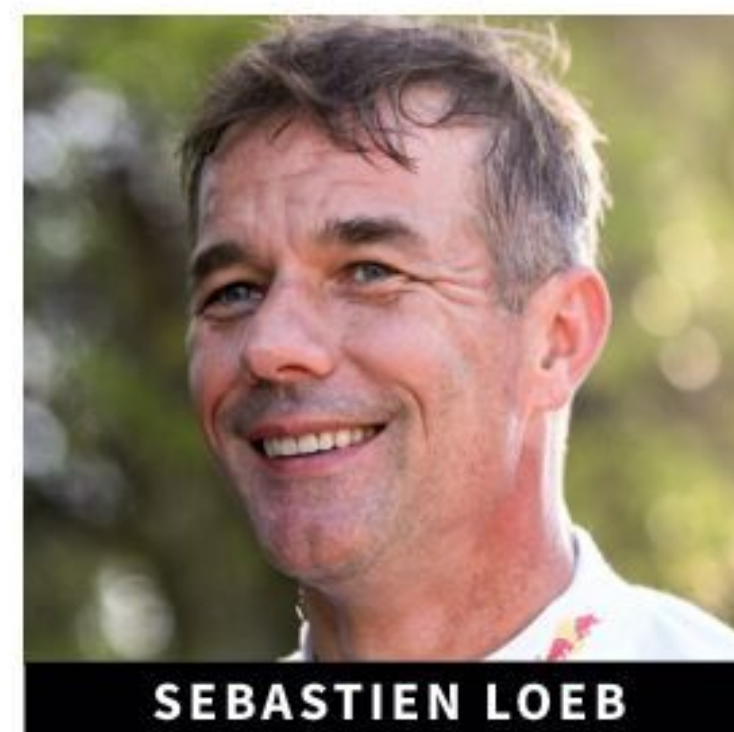
OTT TANAK

**2** Extracted the most from a difficult-to-tame Hyundai to emerge as Rovanner's toughest rival. Three wins, including a sublime victory in Finland, kept fading title hopes alive, but early reliability issues cost him a realistic title tilt.



THIERRY NEUVILLE

**3** Hyundai's reliability woes hampered him perhaps more than anyone. Showed strong pace to deliver two victories and nearly as many stage wins as Tanak, and never gave up. But struggled to consistently match Tanak.



SEBASTIEN LOEB

**4** At 48 years old, the nine-time world champion showed there is plenty of life left in him in becoming the oldest ever WRC winner in Monte Carlo. Led three of the four rallies he entered before trouble hit.



SEBASTIEN OGIER

**5** Unlucky to suffer punctures in four of the six rallies he entered, he still has the speed to dominate WRC events. Finished sixth in the championship, a key part in helping Toyota win the manufacturers' crown.



ELFYN EVANS

**6** Never completely gelled with the GR Yaris and often struggled to match team-mate Rovanner for pace. Four second-place finishes showed glimpses of rally-winning speed, although costly errors and reliability issues were damaging.



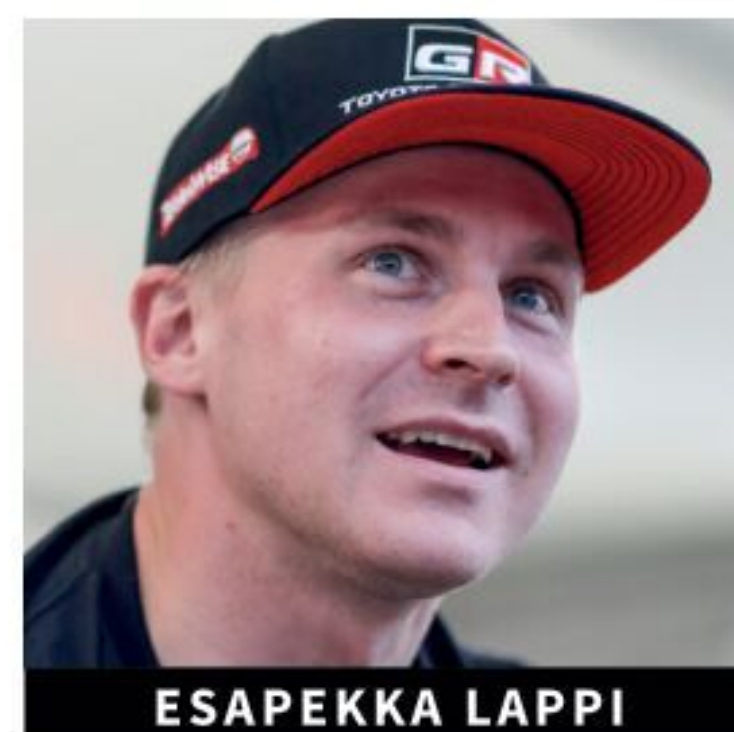
TAKAMOTO KATSUTA

**7** Was the championship's most consistent driver, scoring points in 12 of the 13 rallies, including two podiums, to net a career-high fifth in the standings. The results have earned promotion to the lead Toyota team next year.



DANI SORDO

**8** One of the safest pairs of hands in the championship delivered again. Three podiums from five outings represented a strong return for Hyundai. Only a fire in Japan halted his charge from scoring points in every event entered.



ESAPEKKA LAPPI

**9** Returned to the top flight in style, notching up three podiums from seven events to help Toyota to the manufacturers' crown. Delivered pace capable of challenging for wins and was resourceful to salvage valuable points.



PIERRE-LOUIS LOUBET

**10** Bounced back from a disastrous 2021 to score two career-high fourth places, led a rally for the first time and claimed his first stage victories in Greece. Overshadowed his full-time M-Sport team-mates at times.

## DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	PTS
1	Kalle Rovanner (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	4	1	1	1	5	1	1	2	60	15	1	3	12	255
2	Ott Tanak (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	R	20	2	6	1	R	3	1	1	2	3	4	2	205
3	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	6	2	3	5	41	5	4	5	19	1	4	2	1	193
4	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	21	R	5	2	40	2	2	4	2	R	R	6	5	134
5	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT NG	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	8	4	6	4	6	3	5	6	5	6	R	7	3	122
6	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	2	-	-	51	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	1	4	97
7	Craig Breen (IRL)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Puma Rally1	3	36	4	8	2	6	30	32	61	5	19	9	24	84
8	Dani Sordo (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	-	3	-	5	R	59
9	Esapekka Lappi (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	-	3	49	-	44	-	6	3	3	22	-	-	-	58
10	Gus Greensmith (GBR)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Puma Rally1	5	5	15	18	7	15	R	7	18	29	R	55	6	44

11 Sebastien Loeb (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Puma Rally1) 35; 12 Oliver Solberg (Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT Hyundai i20 N Rally1) 33; 13 Pierre-Louis Loubet (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Puma Rally1) 31; 14 Andreas Mikkelsen (Toksport Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 25; 15 Emil Lindholm (Toksport WRT 2 Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 16; 16 Adrien Fourmaux (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Puma Rally1) 13; 17 Yohan Rossel (PH Sport Citroen C3 Rally2) 11; 18 Nikolay Gryazin (Toksport WRT 2 Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 11; 19 Kajetan Kajetanowicz (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 10; 20 Teemu Suninen (Hyundai Motorsport N Hyundai i20 N Rally2) 9; 21 Stephane Lefebvre (Citroen C3 Rally2) 8; 22 Hayden Paddon (Hyundai i20 N Rally2) 8; 23 Lorenzo Bertelli (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Puma Rally1) 6; 24 Jourdan Serderidis (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Puma Rally1) 6; 25 Gregoire Munster (Hyundai i20 N Rally2) 6; 26 Jari Huttunen (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Fiesta Rally2/Ford Puma Rally1) 5; 27 Ole-Christien Veiby (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 4; 28 Mauro Miele (Toksport WRT 2 Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 4; 29 Erik Cais (Yacco ACCR Team Ford Fiesta Rally2) 2; 30 Jan Solans (Citroen C3 Rally2) 2; 31 Chris Ingram (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 2; 32 Alexandros Tsouloftas (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 2; 33 Shane van Gisbergen (Skoda Fabia R5) 2; 34 Egon Kaur (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 2; 35 Eyvind Brynildsen (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 1; 36 Harry Bates (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 1; 37 Heikki Kovalainen (Skoda Fabia R5) 1; 38 Fabrizio Zaldívar (Hyundai Motorsport N Hyundai i20 N Rally2) 1.

MANUFACTURERS' 1 Toyota 525; 2 Hyundai 455; 3 M-Sport Ford 257; 4 Toyota NG 138.



WEC title for Buemi, Hirakawa and Hartley was set up by Le Mans triumph (both pics)



SEASON  
REVIEW

# TOYOTA ON TOP BEFORE HYPERCARS GET HYPER

*Brendon Hartley, Sebastien Buemi and Ryo Hirakawa outscored their rivals in the last season before the WEC's top class gets ultra-competitive*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  **motorsport**  
IMAGES

**T**oyota duly collected another clean sweep of World Endurance Championship titles – drivers' and manufacturers' – as well the piece of silverware that mattered: the one on offer at the Le Mans 24 Hours. Yet unlike last year in season one of the Le Mans Hypercar rules, it was made to sing for its supper, though more in terms of the mathematics of the points table than the action out on the race track. Alpine went into the curtain-closer in Bahrain equal on points with the Japanese marque in the drivers' championship. The French manufacturer may have had the points on the board ahead of the Bahrain 8 Hours last month, but it didn't have the

performance to mount a challenge when the WEC circus arrived in the Middle East. Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa duly sealed the title with a safe second aboard the #8 Toyota GR010 HYBRID behind the sister car of Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez. The Alpine-Gibson A480 shared by Nicolas Lapierre, Matthieu Vaxiviere and Andre Negrao trailed home third to no great surprise.

The Balance of Performance hit that Alpine had taken ahead of the previous round at Fuji in September had only been partially reversed after Lapierre and his team-mates had finished the same margin down on the Toyotas. A couple of tweaks – a tad more





HYPERCAR WEC CHAMPIONSHIP										
POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	PTS	
1	Brendon Hartley (NZL) Ryo Hirakawa (JPN) Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID	2	R	1	2	1	2	149	
2	Andre Negrão (BRA) Matthieu Vaxivière (FRA) Nicolas Lapierre (FRA)	Alpine Elf Endurance Team (Signatech) / Alpine-Gibson A480	1	2	5	1	3	3	144	
3	Jose Maria Lopez (ARG) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Mike Conway (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID	R	1	2	3	2	1	133	
4	Olivier Pla (FRA) Romain Dumas (FRA)	Glickenhaus Racing / Glickenhaus-Pipo 007 LMH	3	3	4	R	-	-	70	
5	Pipo Derani (BRA)	Glickenhaus Racing / Glickenhaus-Pipo 007 LMH	-	3	4	R	-	-	47	
6	Gustavo Menezes (USA) Loïc Duval (FRA)	Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	-	-	-	4	5	4	40	
7	Ryan Briscoe (AUS)	Glickenhaus Racing / Glickenhaus-Pipo 007 LMH	3	-	3	-	-	-	23	
8	James Rossiter (GBR)	Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	-	-	-	4	5	-	22	
9	Nico Müller (CHE)	Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	-	-	-	-	-	4	18	
10	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA) Mikkel Jensen (DNK) Paul di Resta (GBR)	Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	-	-	-	R	4	R	12	

MANUFACTURERS 1 Toyota 186; 2 Alpine 144; 3 Glickenhaus 70; 4 Peugeot 42.

power for the A480, a bit less for the GR010 – still left it lingering some way back on performance.

Yet there were occasions when Alpine’s old ORECA LMP1 design, which formerly raced as the Rebellion R-13, was in the mix, or was even the cream on top. Nowhere was that more the case than at the Sebring 1000 Miles season-opener in March. Vaxivière put the car on pole by a whopping 1.3s and, quite frankly, the ageing machine developed out of the ORECA 07 LMP2 design was in a different class to both Toyota’s GR010 and the Glickenhaus-Pipo 007 LMH, the only other participant in the Hypercar class.

A 37s victory for the Alpine over the #8 Toyota didn’t tell the

full story of a race that was red-flagged three times and curtailed early as a result of the threat of lightning strikes in the vicinity. The gap would have been much more had the race run its course without interruption. It was much closer when Alpine won for a second time at Monza in July. Much, much closer given that the race was effectively decided by a controversial coming together on the main straight between Vaxivière and Kobayashi.

But the real controversy, perhaps, was the Balance of Performance, though less so than over the course of Sebring week. The BoP for the grandfathered Alpine, which worked to a separate set of guidelines to those covering the LMH machinery, >>





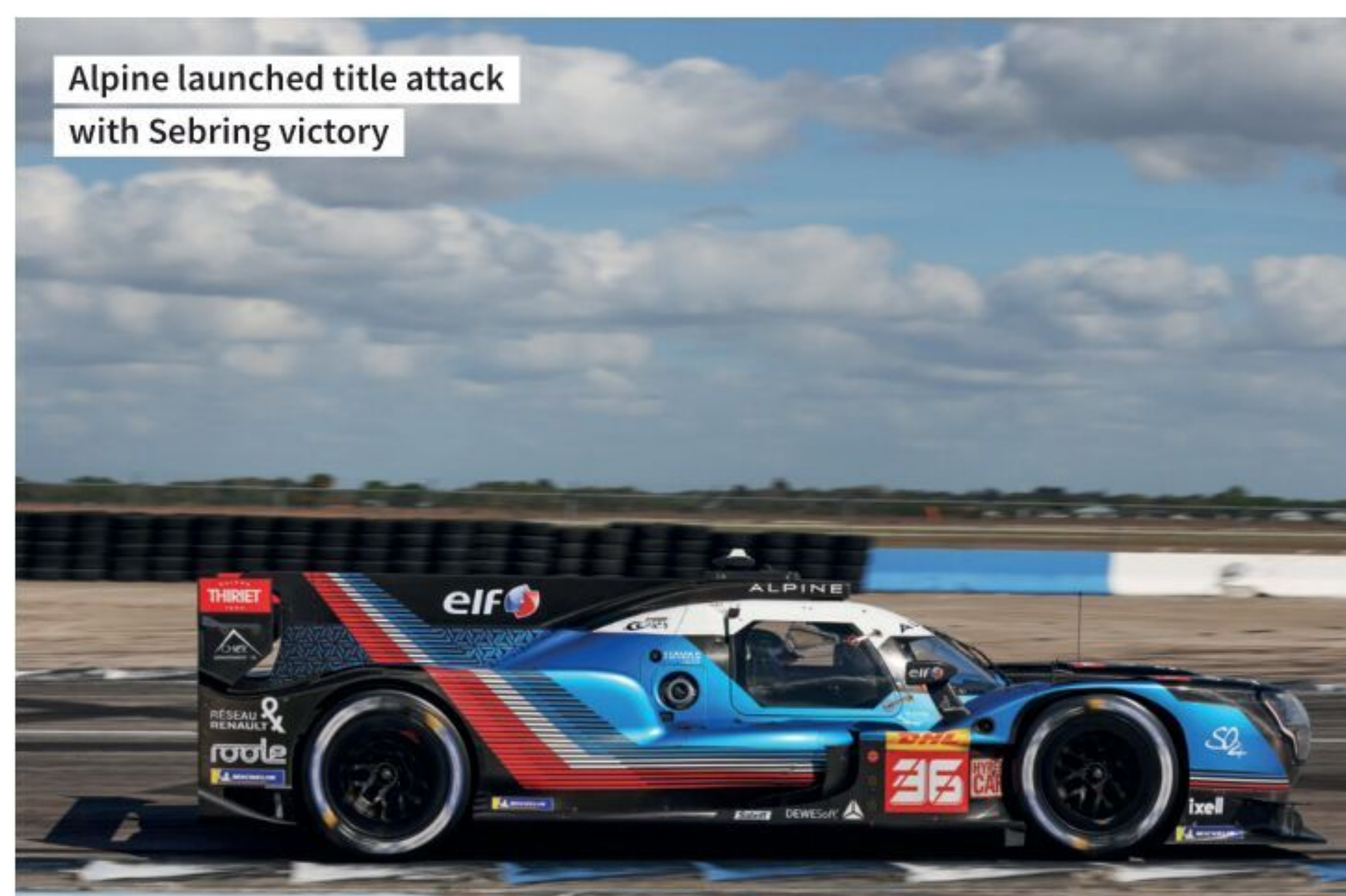
Bahrain win came too late for #7 Toyota crew



Radical wingless Peugeot made its debut in Monza 6 Hours, but reliability not formidable

see-sawed through the season. It was unfathomable to such an extent that it was difficult to understand what the rulemakers – the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest – were trying to achieve.

If it was trying to conform to the generally held philosophy that grandfathered cars should be competitive enough to pick up the pieces should the new machinery somehow hiccup, then they got it wrong, spectacularly so at Sebring. If they were trying to make for decent racing, they got it wrong too. As far as the races went, only at Monza were the Alpine and Toyota close in performance, and then



Alpine launched title attack with Sebring victory

the Glickenhaus was a few tenths up the road from the pair of them.

But if the intent was to keep the championship open deep to the end of the season, they got it spot on. Witness the tie on points going into the Bahrain weekend. The FIA and ACO chose never to offer an explanation of its intent.

Le Mans was a case in point of the continual tinkering with the Alpine's BoP. When the car proved to be a couple of seconds off the pace in practice and first qualifying, the car was given a not-insignificant increase in power for the Hyperpole qualifying session on Thursday. Those two seconds suddenly became a few tenths, and the A480 was promptly partially pegged back again. It would have been nowhere in the race even without the technical issues and a stop for repairs after an off that left it 18 laps behind at the finish.

Alpine's championship challenge was aided by the failure of Toyota to get one of its cars to the finish at both Sebring and Spa: each car registered a retirement in the opening two races. In terms of the internecine battle within the Toyota Gazoo Racing squad it kind of levelled things up in the fight between the two revised GR010s, now with wider rear wheels and tyres than fronts, rather than the equal sizes of 2021. The two cars headed into Le Mans separated by two points, #8 ahead of #7, down in third and fourth positions behind the Alpine crew and Glickenhaus drivers Romain Dumas and Olivier Pla.

Le Mans ultimately decided the destiny of the drivers' title. A double-points race was always going to skew the championship more in a six-race contest than in the days when the WEC was contested over eight or more rounds.

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Sebring 1000 Miles

**LMH** Lapierre/Vaxiviere/Negrao  
**LMP2** Jarvis/di Resta/Pierson  
**GTE Pro** Estre/Christensen  
**GTE Am** Thiim/Pittard/Dalla Lana

Alpine pretty much dominates on the WEC's return to Sebring on a day when the BoP appears seriously out of kilter. The car is over a minute up when the race is red-flagged for the first of three times in the third hour, though the interrupted nature of the race means the winning margin is an unrepresentative 37s over the #8 Toyota.

### Spa 6 Hours

**LMH** Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez  
**LMP2** Frijns/Rast/Gelael  
**GTE Pro** Pier Guidi/Calado  
**GTE Am** Tincknell/Priaux/Ried

The #7 Toyota takes a clear victory that shouldn't be described as easy. Conditions are treacherous at times during a race red-flagged three times. Life is made simpler for the reigning champions by the retirement of the sister car early in hour two. Neither Alpine nor Glickenhaus offer a threat on the way to second and third respectively.

### Le Mans 24 Hours

**LMH** Buemi/Hartley/Hirakawa  
**LMP2** Da Costa/Stevens/Gonzalez  
**GTE Pro** Bruni/Lietz/Makowiecki  
**GTE Am** Sorensen/Chaves/Keating

The Toyotas fight hammer and tongs for more than 15 hours. There's nothing between them until a hybrid problem forces #7 to undertake a series of system reboots, which puts a two-minute gap between them. Glickenhaus takes the final spot on the podium in a 3-4 finish, while the delayed Alpine comes home 23rd.





Le Mans could have gone either way. It was close between the two Toyotas until just before two-thirds duration. The Japanese cars were generally separated by just a handful of seconds in a race where the two crews left nothing on the table. If you do the lap time averages between the two cars over those first 16 hours, they were separated by less than a tenth using almost any sample.

The race was ultimately decided by one of those electrical glitches that hit hybrid racing cars from time to time. Lopez had to bring #7 to a halt just after Arnage corner to perform a full systems reboot. When he made it back to the pits, he had to go through the procedure twice more. The time lost meant that after Hartley had made his next scheduled stop the gap was out to nearly three minutes. With the Toyota crews so evenly matched there was no way back for Lopez and his team-mates. The gap between them stood at almost exactly two minutes at the finish.

A hat-trick of WEC titles for Kobayashi, Conway and Lopez was looking unlikely even before the drivers of #8 overturned the qualifying form of their in-house rivals on home ground at Fuji. Buemi and co anticipated the warmer conditions of race day with a set-up tweak to take a clear win. The #7 crew now needed the sister car to non-finish in Bahrain if they were to win the title.

Glickenhauser achieved a lot with its Pipo-engined 007 LMH. Podium finishes in the first two races owed everything to Toyota's failure to get two cars to the finish, though the one at Le Mans didn't. Third place for Richard Westbrook, Ryan Briscoe and Franck Mailleux was the team's biggest achievement, and it

ran Toyota close for the first quarter of the race: Pla in the sister car shared with Dumas and Pipo Derani was only a couple of minutes behind the battling GR010s when he looped it at Tertre Rouge, glanced the barrier and lost nine minutes to suspension repairs.

Yet Glickenhauser could have finished up with a race victory. It had the speed at Monza after Dumas had taken a second pole for the 007 following Pla's qualifying top spot at Spa. The #708 car was delayed with a drivethrough for a Full Course Yellow infraction, but had the pace to claw back the lost time. A turbo failure saw that it didn't. >>



## Monza 6 Hours

**LMH** Lapierre/Vaxiviere/Negrao  
**LMP2** Habsburg/Nato/Andrade  
**GTE Pro** Tandy/Milner  
**GTE Am** Tincknell/Priault/Ried

Alpine wins again after a controversial clash between Vaxiviere and Kobayashi in full view of the pits. The Frenchman is on a charge as the last hour approaches and almost certainly has the pace to beat the Toyota. But not to beat a reliable Glickenhauser. The American entrant misses out on a first WEC victory courtesy of a turbo failure.

## Fuji 6 Hours

**LMH** Buemi/Hartley/Hirakawa  
**LMP2** Frijns/Vanthoor/Gelael  
**GTE Pro** Pier Guidi/Calado  
**GTE Am** Sorensen/Chaves/Keating

The drivers of #8 put the title all but beyond the reach of their team-mates. They anticipate the hotter conditions of race day, tweak their set-up and race to a one-minute victory. Alpine isn't a contender after another BoP change and trails home two laps in arrears. Peugeot repeats its fourth position on the debut of the 9X8 at Monza.

## Bahrain 8 Hours

**LMH** Kobayashi/Conway/Lopez  
**LMP2** Frijns/Rast/Gelael  
**GTE Pro** Fuoco/Molina  
**GTE Am** Cairoli/Pedersen/Leutwiler

Toyota triumphs with #7 as the drivers of #8 take the title with a conservative run to second. Alpine is again not at the races and ends up third. Peugeot shows some form with a front-row starting slot and a fastest race lap, but once again there are reliability issues that mean it takes only a fourth-place finish for the third race in a row.



Glickenhauser had committed to a single full-season entry and duly got a second car in for Le Mans. The FIA and the ACO made it clear that the team would be cut some slack when it came to fulfilling that single-car entry at all the races. Whether they were expecting Glickenhauser to give both the final two races a miss isn't clear. The same goes for whether we will see Glickenhauser back next year.

Peugeot made a belated WEC debut at Monza in July, a shade over 10 years after it almost pulled the rug from underneath the series when it announced that it wouldn't be joining the born-again WEC in 2012. It was late in that sense, but not in terms of its entry halfway through the season with the new 9X8 LMH. It entered the full series with two cars as it had to, because race-by-race entries are not permitted in Hypercar. Yet it always reserved judgement on when it would join the fray.

A mid-summer entry more or less corresponded to the timeline it laid down on the announcement of its return to the sportscar big time back in November 2019. Back then, when the WEC was in the midst of its first and, as it turned out, only season run to a winter-series format, Peugeot said it would be joining the party at the start of the 2022-23 season, which meant the end of the summer.

Peugeot always said it would be taking part in races in 2022 to learn ahead of the big push next year and the return to its happy hunting ground at Le Mans. It certainly did a lot of learning with its avant-garde contender, which remained sans rear wing like the first show car revealed in 2021.

The in-house Peugeot Sport team failed to get a car to the end of a race cleanly, which has to be regarded as a significant failure. It endured technical problems each time and registered retirements with one of its cars in two of the races. It could do no better than three fourths, each time some way in arrears of the third-placed car. There were signs that the car had the pace, as it should given the prescriptions of the LMH rulebook, especially when it got a BoP break for the Bahrain finale.

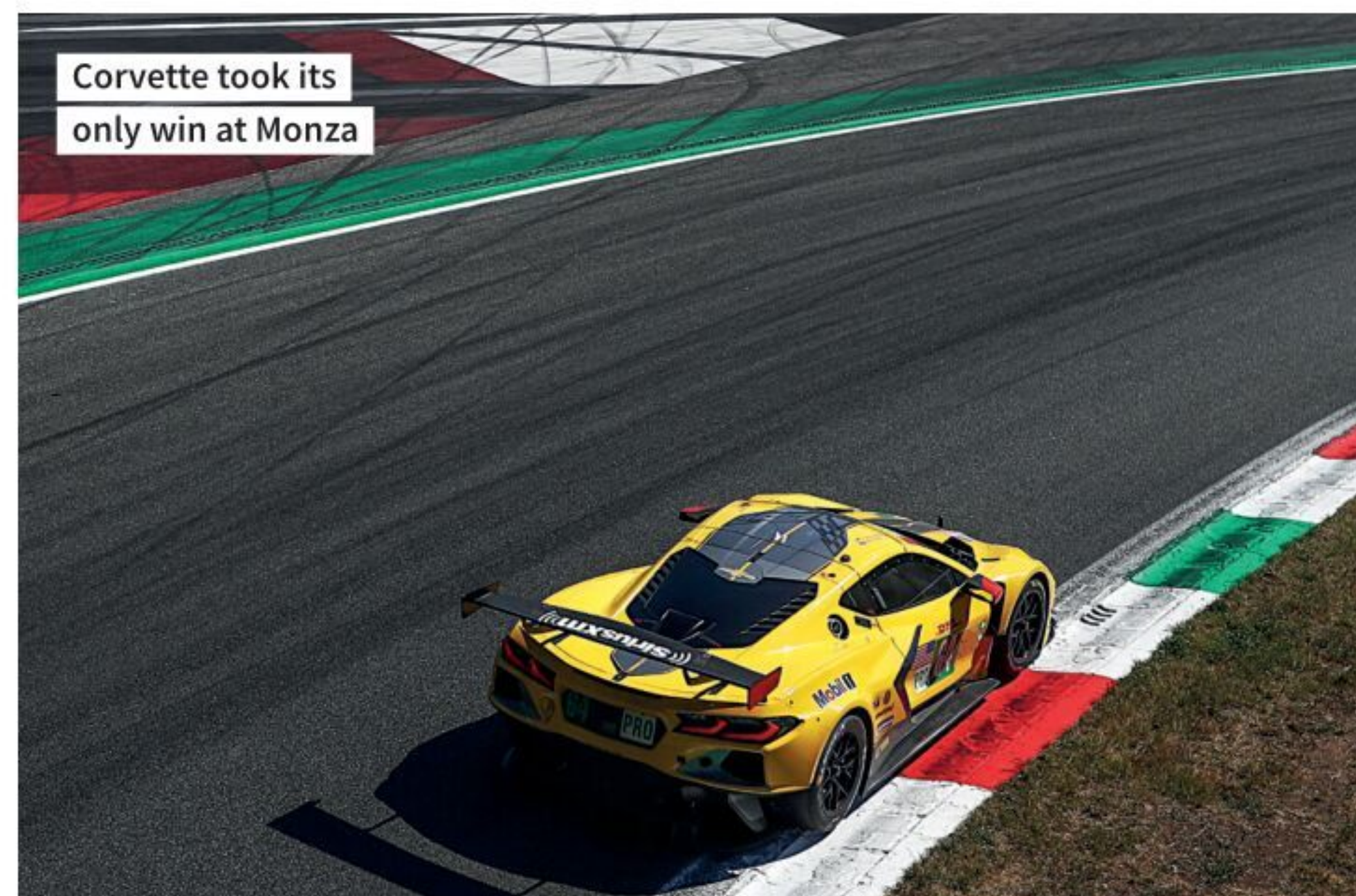
Paul di Resta put the #93 9X8 on the front row and was pretty much in the hunt over the opening double stint. Jean-Eric Vergne then took fastest race lap on the car's return to the track after the gearbox issues that would eventually put it out of the race.

The 9X8 wasn't so far off the pace at any of the races, at least over the opening stint on the tyres. It looked less convincing over the course of a double on a set of Michelins, though making judgements was difficult given the technical problems the cars encountered.

## GTE PRO

Ferrari didn't look like a championship challenger in GTE Pro at the start of the campaign at Sebring when its 488 GTE Evo was just plain slow. Nor as it drew to a close in Bahrain as the car that could do the business limped around seven or so seconds off the pace with a gearbox problem. Yet Alessandro Pier Guidi and James Calado somehow managed to mount a successful defence of their title in the final year for the class.

Ferrari was nowhere at Sebring and again in the dry at Spa



after a BoP reset following the introduction of a new biofuel from WEC supplier TotalEnergies. Pier Guidi and Calado's season changed when the rain came at Spa. The Italian propelled the car from nowhere into the class lead over the course of a mammoth stint lasting four and a half hours, and then Calado successfully fought a rearguard action against Porsche driver Michael Christensen to seal the victory.

Ferrari was still not a match for the Porsche 911 RSR or the Chevrolet Corvette C8.R at Le Mans, but the misfortune of others allowed Pier Guidi, Calado and Daniel Serra to take a big tranche of points with second position. A BoP change in Ferrari's favour for Monza changed the course of the season. Porsche struggled thereafter and wasn't a competitive proposition. It meant that after a win at Fuji the lead Ferrari crew went into the series decider with a points lead they miraculously managed to hang onto, despite Pier Guidi spending the final hour and a half in fifth gear.

Porsche wasn't happy with its BoP over the second half of the season, and neither was Corvette Racing on its first full-season participation in the WEC. The automatic system introduced back in 2017 was effectively abandoned. The off-season reset meant no





GTE WEC CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	PTS
1	Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA) James Calado (GBR)	AF Corse/Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	4	1	2	3	1	5	135
2	Kevin Estre (FRA) Michael Christensen (DNK)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey) / Porsche 911 RSR	1	2	4	4	3	3	132
3	Antonio Fuoco (ITA) Miguel Molina (ESP)	AF Corse/Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	6	3	3	2	2	1	131
4	Gianmaria Bruni (ITA)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey) / Porsche 911 RSR	3	5	1	5	4	4	125
5	Richard Lietz (AUT)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey) / Porsche 911 RSR	3	5	1	-	4	4	115
6	Nick Tandy (GBR) Tommy Milner (USA)	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller) / Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	2	4	R	1	5	2	102
7	Frederic Makowiecki (FRA)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey) / Porsche 911 RSR	-	-	1	5	-	-	60
8	Ben Keating (USA) Marco Sorensen (DNK)	TF Sport / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	7	7	6	R	6	9	46
9	David Pittard (GBR) Nicki Thiim (DNK) Paul Dalla Lana (CAN)	Northwest AMR (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	5	8	8	12	10	10	38
10	Henrique Chaves (PRT)	TF Sport / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	-	7	6	R	6	9	37

MANUFACTURERS 1 Ferrari 269; 2 Porsche 257; 3 Chevrolet 102.

change for the regular races (Le Mans laid outside the system) could occur until Monza, but the lack of dry laps at Spa prevented that. The changes that started at Monza were all so-called ‘black balls’.

Christensen and Kevin Estre ended up second in the standings, though only because Porsche swapped the positions of its two cars in third and fourth places on the final lap in Bahrain. A last-gasp problem for the ailing Ferrari could still have given them the title.

The lead Porsche duo had started the season with victory at Sebring and second at Spa, but together with Laurens Vanthoor they lost a shot at victory at Le Mans with a tyre blowout. Christensen had locked up at Mulsanne Corner before the front-right gave up and ripped apart the front end.

That left the way clear for the full-season Chevy entry in which Alexander Sims joined Nick Tandy and Tommy Milner, only for the first-named to be sideswiped into the barriers by pro-am LMP2 driver Francois Perrodo. Gianmaria Bruni, Richard Lietz and Frederic Makowiecki came through to take the win ahead of the Ferrari.

The solo WEC entry from Corvette Racing won at Monza when the second Ferrari shared by Antonio Fuoco and Miguel Molina ducked into the pits right at the end for a splash of fuel. Second

at Sebring and Bahrain, Tandy and Milner would have won the title with the 50 points they lost at Le Mans.

LMP2

Jota had been at the forefront of the LMP2 pack almost from the moment it joined the division in the European Le Mans Series back in 2012. Ahead of this season it had two Le Mans wins to its name, and no fewer than six runner-up spots, but missing from its CV was a WEC title. It put that right with a championship triumph for Antonio Felix da Costa, Will Stevens and Roberto Gonzalez anchored by win number three at the French enduro.

That Le Mans victory for the #38 ORECA-Gibson 07, best described as sublime, was one of the twin building blocks of its championship assault. The other was consistency: da Costa, Stevens and Gonzalez finished off the podium in only one of the six races.

Da Costa took the lead during the first round of pitstops at Le Mans. With track position in its favour, the Jota ORECA then won time during a series of Full Course Yellow virtual safety cars. The Portuguese and his team-mates would lead all but 15 laps.

Le Mans was also significant in the story of Jota’s run to the title because none of its nearest competitors managed a significant points haul. WRT, champion in its maiden season in the class in 2021, ended up second in the classification with its lead ORECA shared by Robin Frijns, Sean Gelael and Rene Rast, who was replaced by Dries Vanthoor when he was on DTM duty on the Fuji weekend. They won three times – at Spa, Fuji and in dominant style in Bahrain – but Frijns crashed out at Le Mans in a car delayed by a penalty for Rast’s role in a bizarre startline incident. Another non-score at Monza with a water leak meant Frijns and Gelael had only the remotest of chances of taking the title heading into the final round.

WRT fielded a second car, in conjunction with Swiss entrant Realteam, in 2022. This ORECA shared by Ferdinand Habsburg, Norman Nato and Rui Andrade was also a race winner, at Monza, >>

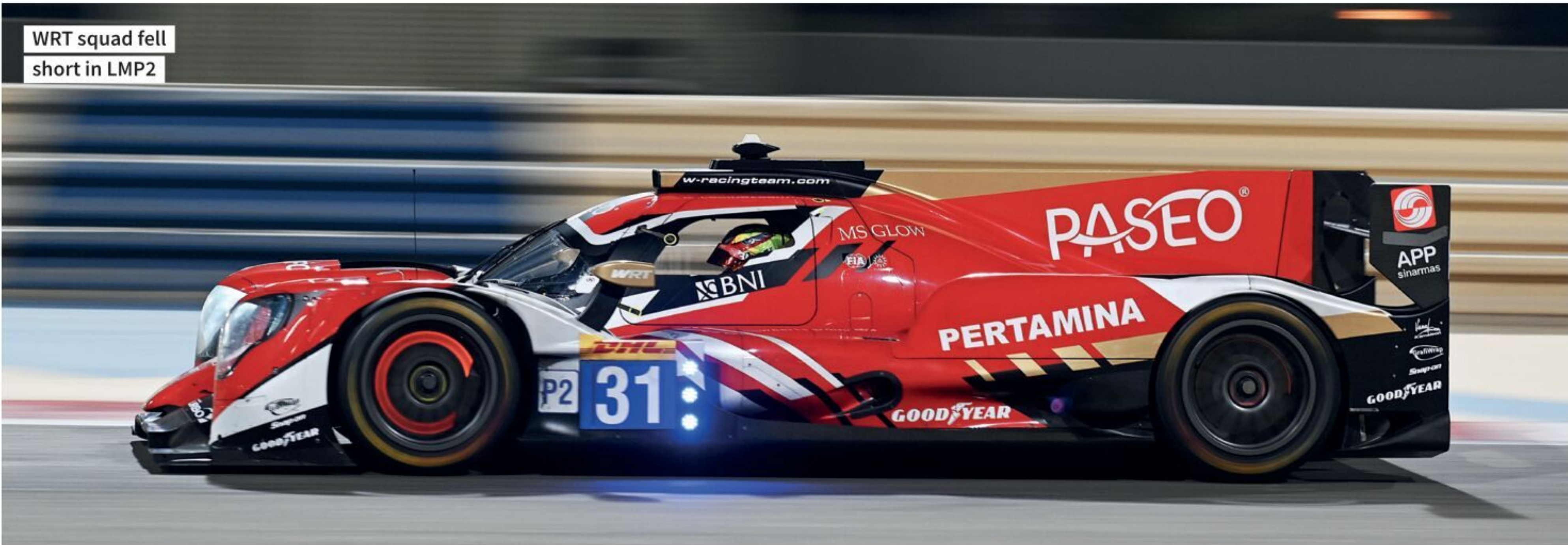


Title-winning Pier Guidi/Calado car leads Ferrari flotilla at Fuji



Jota trio won the LMP2 crown





LMP2 ENDURANCE TROPHY											
POS	DRIVER			TEAM / CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	PTS
1	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT) Roberto Gonzalez (MEX) Will Stevens (GBR)			Jota/ORECA-Gibson 07	6	3	1	2	2	3	137
2	Robin Frijns (NLD) Sean Gelael (IDN)			WRT/ORECA-Gibson 07	2	1	R	12	1	1	116
3	Josh Pierson (USA) Oliver Jarvis (GBR)			United Autosports/ORECA-Gibson 07	1	6	6	5	5	2	113
4	Ferdinand Habsburg (AUT) Norman Nato (FRA) Rui Andrade (PRT)			Realteam by WRT/ORECA-Gibson 07	3	2	17	1	4	5	96
5	Lorenzo Colombo (ITA) Louis Deletraz (CHE) Robert Kubica (POL)			Prema ORLEN Team/ORECA-Gibson 07	4	7	2	6	6	4	94
6	Rene Rast (DEU)			WRT/ORECA-Gibson 07	2	1	R	12	-	1	91
7	Alex Lynn (GBR)			United Autosports/ORECA-Gibson 07	-	6	6	5	5	2	75
8	Ed Jones (ARE) Jonathan Aberdein (ZAF) Oliver Rasmussen (DNK)			Jota/ORECA-Gibson 07	5	R	3	10	3	7	70
9	Filipe Albuquerque (PRT) Phil Hanson (GBR) Will Owen (USA)			United Autosports/ORECA-Gibson 07	7	5	10	13	7	6	50
10	Dane Cameron (USA) Emmanuel Collard (FRA) Felipe Nasr (BRA)			Team Penske/ORECA-Gibson 07	8	4	5	-	-	-	42

and claimed a further two podiums on the way to fourth in the points behind the best of United Autosports’ entries.

The British team started the season in style at Sebring; either of its two cars could have won the 1000-mile fixture. Oliver Jarvis and 16-year-old Josh Pierson ended up taking the victory together with di Resta, who came in for Alex Lynn, who was racing in the 12 Hours the following day with the Ganassi Cadillac squad. Pierson would go on to become the youngest driver to start Le Mans three months later in the middle of an up-and-down season for United.

Francois Perrodo, Nicklas Nielsen and Alessio Rovera won the pro-am LMP2 sub-class in their AF Corse-run ORECA after winning four of the six races. The other two, Le Mans included, went to the Algarve Pro crew of Rene Binder, James Allen and Steven Thomas.

GTE AM

Ben Keating, consistently among the quickest bronze-rated drivers since joining the WEC, claimed the big prizes in GTE Am with victory at Le Mans and, at the third time of asking, the title with the TF Sport Aston Martin squad.

The American and co-champion Marco Sorensen, on loan from the factory, took a big step towards the crown with victory at Le Mans together with Henrique Chaves, who joined the team at Spa. They didn’t have the fastest car in the Aston Martin Vantage GTE, but good fortune behind the safety car with five hours to go propelled the car into a lead it would hold to the chequered flag. Another win at Fuji, to go with the runner-up spots in the first two races, gave Keating and Sorensen a near-unassailable lead ahead of Bahrain.

The works-run NorthWest AMR Aston shared by Nicki Thiim, David Pittard and Paul Dalla Lana was on the podium for the first three races, winning at Sebring and finishing second at Le Mans, but thereafter its challenge faltered.

The all-female Iron Dames Ferrari looked increasingly competitive over the second half of the year, taking a podium



GTE AM ENDURANCE TROPHY										
1 Marco Sorensen/Ben Keating 141; 2 Nicki Thiim/David Pittard/Paul Dalla Lana 118; 3 Henrique Chaves 113; 4 Rahel Frey (Iron Dames Ferrari 488 GTE Evo) 93; 5 Michelle Gattling/Sarah Bovy (Iron Dames Ferrari 488 GTE Evo) 92; 6 Harry Tincknell/Seb Priaulx/Christian Ried (Dempsey-Proton Racing Porsche 911 RSR) 83; 7 Matteo Cairoli/Mikkel Overgaard Pedersen/Niki Leutwiler (Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR) 71; 8 Francesco Castellacci/Thomas Flohr (AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo) 58; 9 Ben Barnicoat (Team Project 1 Porsche 911 RSR) 55; 10 Ben Barker/Riccardo Pera/Michael Wainwright (GRRacing Porsche 911 RSR) 50.										

in each of the final three races with Sarah Bovy, Rahel Frey and Michelle Gattling. Behind them in the championship came the top Porsche crew, the Multimatic-run Dempsey-Proton entry driven by Harry Tincknell, Sebastian Priaulx and Christian Ried that won twice. A suspension problem at Le Mans and then retirement with driveshaft failure at Fuji did for their championship chances. ❄



## AUTOSPORT'S TOP FIVE LMH DRIVERS



BRENDON HARTLEY

**1** Anyone who beats Kobayashi over one lap at Le Mans has to be doing something right, and that's what Hartley did this year, depriving his boss of a fifth pole for the French enduro. The Kiwi then did the business by eight tenths in Bahrain. In the races, Hartley always performed and was right up there in the averages: he was fastest Toyota driver at both Monza and Fuji. The mistakes that sometimes reared their head in his Porsche days have long since been eradicated.



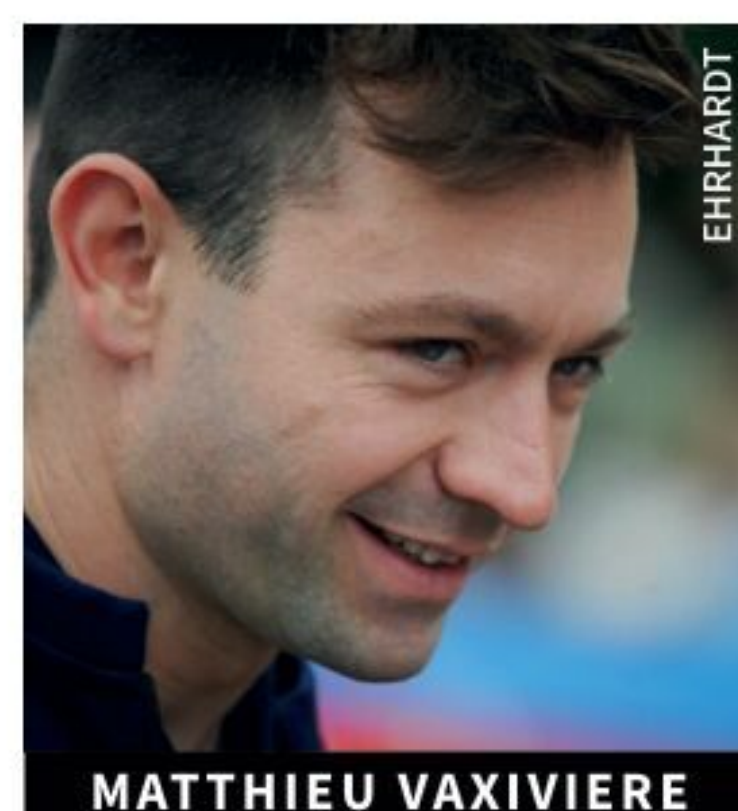
SEBASTIEN BUEMI

**2** There were no qualifying heroics from Buemi – he always gets the opportunity to start #8 rather than going for one-lap glory – but he was always on the top of his game on the way to becoming a three-time world champion. The Swiss was probably the pick of the Toyota drivers at Le Mans this year: over the first 16 hours when the two GR010s duked it out he was quickest of the six, though only by the odd hundredth.



JOSE MARIA LOPEZ

**3** The Argentinian might be higher up this list but for the shunt that put #7 out at Sebring, or rather the clash and nudge of the barriers earlier on the lap that precipitated it. But it is for his performance at Le Mans that he gets on our driver-rankings podium. At a time when his drive was clearly under threat for next year, Lopez was the pick of the bunch in #7, particularly over the final third of the race as he and his team-mates strove to catch up.



MATTHIEU VAXIVIERE

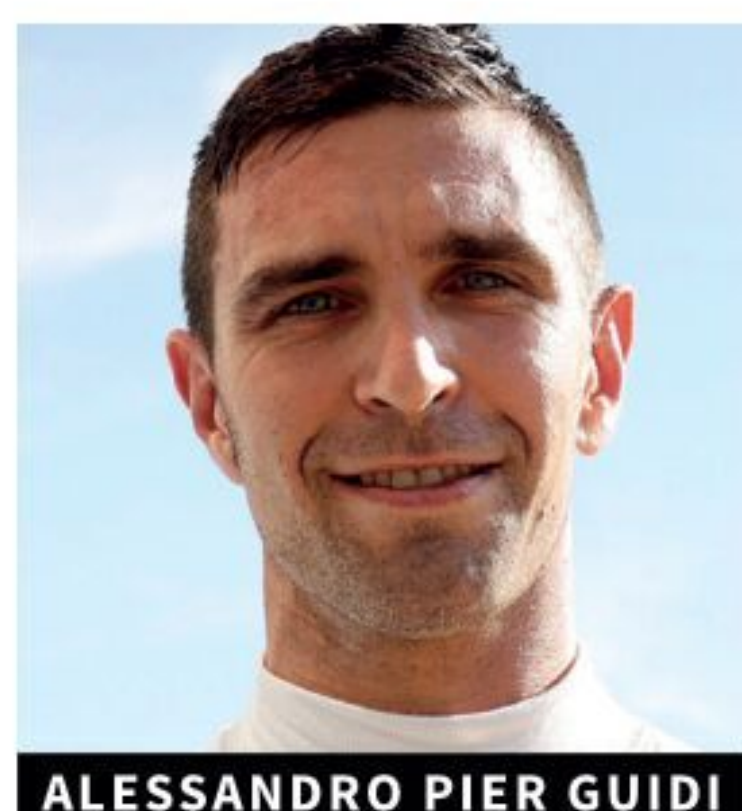
**4** The Frenchman undoubtedly took a step forward in his second year in the top class with Alpine. The high points were his pole at Sebring, or rather the margin of it, and then his charge past one Toyota and up to the rear end of the other at Monza. No blame should be attributed to Vaxiviere for the clash with Kobayashi that followed – and the rate at which he'd caught the race leader suggests he would have propelled the Alpine to the win anyway.



RYO HIRAKAWA

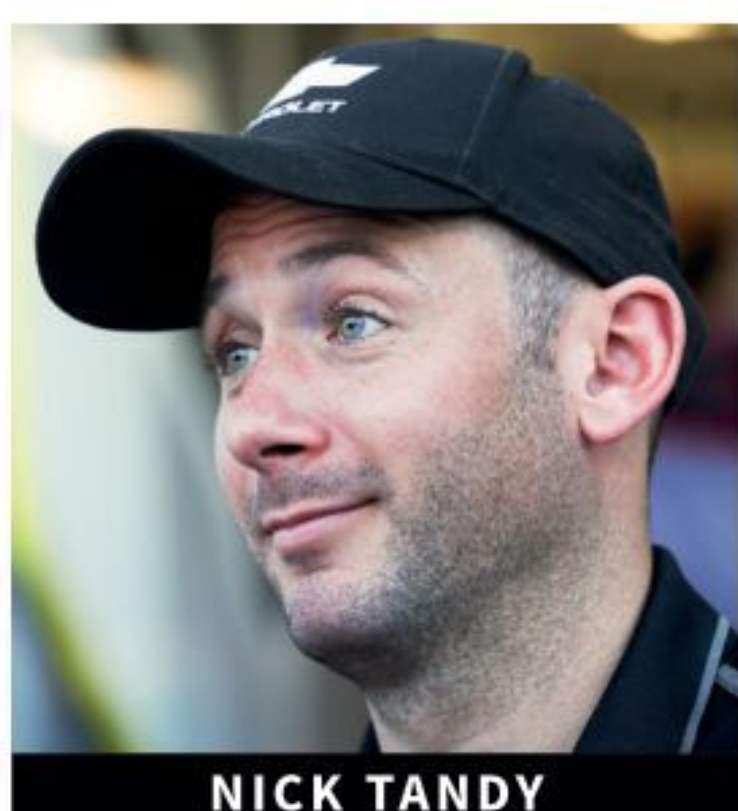
**5** The Japanese grabbed the opportunity he was presented by Toyota last year when he was invited back to test for the team for the first time in four years. He impressed enough to land the seat vacated by Kazuki Nakajima and didn't disappoint across his maiden WEC campaign on the way to becoming a Le Mans winner and world champion. He showed no signs of letting the pressure get to him. Perhaps not surprisingly was at his best on home ground at Fuji.

## AUTOSPORT'S TOP FIVE GTE DRIVERS



ALESSANDRO PIER GUIDI

**1** The heroics performed at Spa and in Bahrain make him the stand-out GTE Pro driver. A stint lasting four and a half hours through dreadful conditions at Spa, during which his Ferrari went from an also-run to the lead was almost mesmeric, his foresight to leave the ailing machine in fifth gear over the final 90 minutes in Bahrain to seal the title with Calado inspired. Pier Guidi's efforts in the late battle with the #91 Porsche for class lead at Le Mans also deserve mention.



NICK TANDY

**2** Back in the WEC full-time for the first time since 2017 and now aboard a GTE car, the Briton performed in 2022 at the level expected of him. He was super-impressive in Corvette Racing's backyard at Sebring, claimed pole at Le Mans and should have walked away with a class win to go with his overall triumph with Porsche in 2015. His pace while saving fuel in the closing stages was key to Corvette's solo win of the season at Monza.



KEVIN ESTRE

**3** He did mostly what you would expect of one of the class drivers in GTE Pro over a sustained period, though with the odd exception. His multiple contacts with Pier Guidi as they battled over third place at Monza looked like a case of 'afters' following on from the Ferrari driver's clash with team-mate Christensen in Bahrain last year. Apart from that, the Frenchman was just super-quick and the fastest Porsche driver in half the races.



GIANMARIA BRUNI

**4** Since joining Porsche for 2018, the Italian has never quite looked the force of nature he seemed to be when kingpin in Ferrari's GT set-up. But Bruni was on point in 2022. It wasn't so much that he added a fourth class win at Le Mans to his tally – and got back on the top step of the rostrum after an absence of seven seasons – more the couple of pole positions and his race pace at the end of the season. Was quickest Porsche driver at Fuji and Bahrain.



ANTONIO FUOCO

**5** Long on Ferrari's books as part of its academy and then a Formula 1 test and simulator driver, Fuoco showed he was worthy of a factory drive in the WEC on his promotion to the AF squad this year after three seasons cutting his teeth in GT racing. He and Molina notched up a first win for the second AF entry since 2017 in Bahrain after coming so close at Monza. Fuoco got better through the season and was fastest Ferrari driver over the final two races.





ZAK O'SULLIVAN CV	
Age	17
2023 plans	FIA F3 with Prema
2022	11th in FIA F3 with Carlin
2021	GB3 champion with Carlin (7 wins) and Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner
2020	2nd in British F4 with Carlin (9 wins)
2019	2nd in Ginetta Junior with Douglas Motorsport and R Racing (3 wins)







# MAKING HIS F1 MARK ON A SPECIAL DAY

*Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award winner  
Zak O'Sullivan relishes his first taste of a Formula 1 car at Silverstone*

MEGAN WHITE

PHOTOGRAPHY **motorsport  
IMAGES**

**H**earing the roar of a Formula 1 car around the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit is always special, especially for whoever is lucky enough to be behind the wheel. But for one young British driver on a cold and damp October morning, it's truly a momentous occasion.

Zak O'Sullivan is stepping into an F1 car for the first time, but he's cool, calm and collected — far more so than you'd expect given the nerves he must be feeling. Aged just 17, the FIA Formula 3 driver, as newly crowned GB3 champion, beat three other Brits to secure the 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award and, as his prize, a test in Aston Martin's AMR21.

The Gloucestershire teenager has arrived clad in the marque's signature green, and shows no sign of trepidation as he prepares for his first taste of F1. After taking an F3 podium at the very same circuit just a few months earlier, O'Sullivan is familiar with the layout, but not with the beast he will attempt to tame — the same Mercedes-powered car that took Sebastian Vettel to a podium at the 2021 Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

O'Sullivan is used to somewhat smaller machinery — he's spent his F3 season with Carlin, ending the campaign 11th for the team's best finish in the series' modern era. But he's riding high off the back of a post-season F3 test with long-time pacesetter Prema, which he has subsequently joined for 2023, and he's ready for the challenge.

In preparation for his test, O'Sullivan has spent some time in Aston Martin's simulator and had a seat fit at its nearby headquarters. But despite being a relative outsider — and a Williams Driver Academy member — he says the team is “super-welcoming, considering I've just kind of turned up here as my prize test”.

**“PRETTY CRAZY. THE FIRST INSTALL LAP WAS A BIG WAKE-UP CALL WHEN I FIRST WENT FULL-THROTTLE”**



“Calm and collected”  
O'Sullivan impressed  
Aston Martin crew

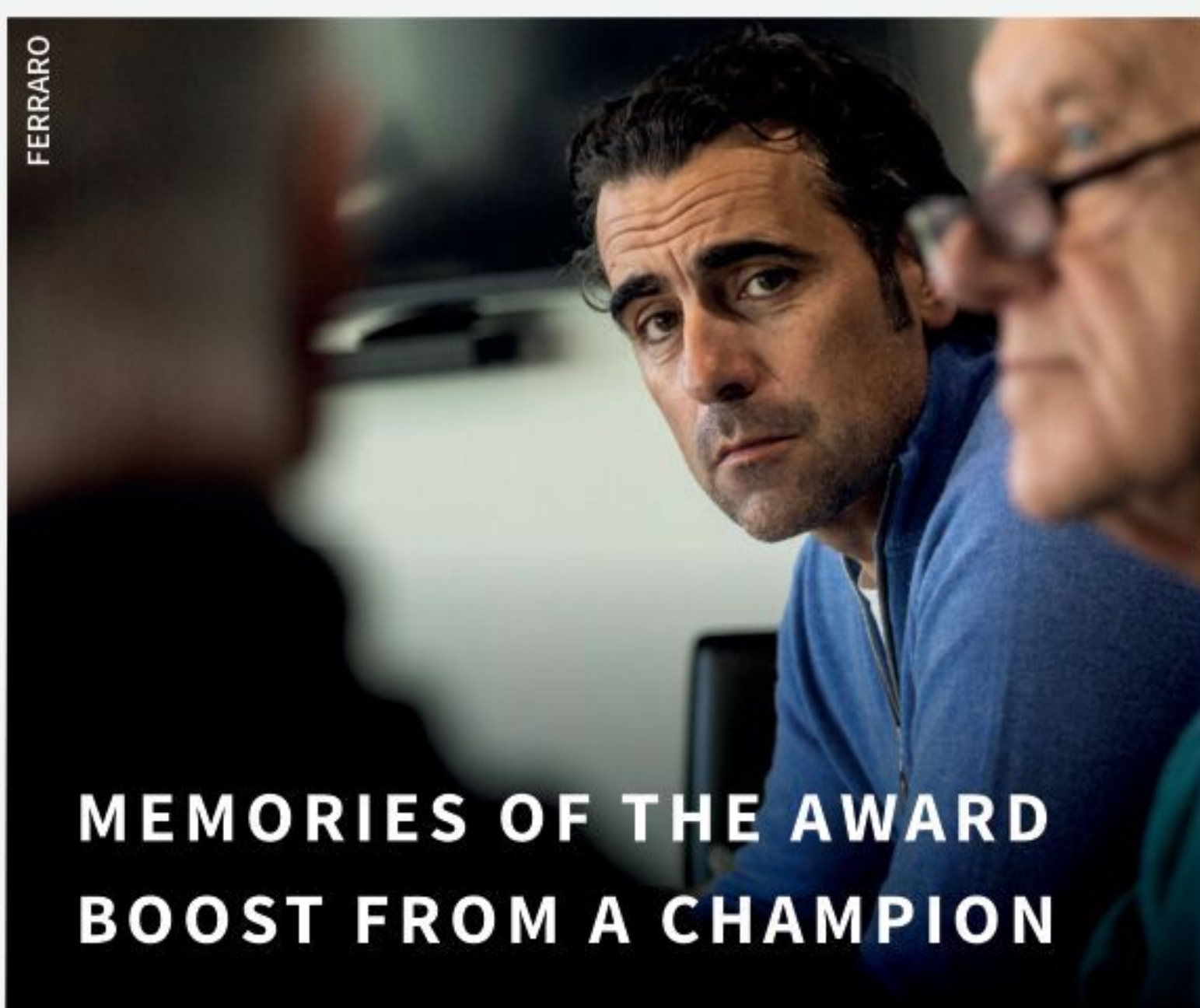
This is the first year the team has run the Award test, following in the footsteps of McLaren and then Aston Martin Red Bull Racing, which handled Johnathan Hoggard's COVID-delayed 2020 run.

In damp conditions, O'Sullivan first ventures out for an installation lap on wet tyres before a further three on the same set as the track dries out. He remains calm, despite more than 48 Aston Martin team members — as well as friends, family and fellow drivers — looking on. The spectators include 2022 finalists Ollie Bearman and Luke Browning.

“Pretty crazy — it's a different world compared to what I'm used to in F3,” is O'Sullivan's initial reaction. “I think especially the first install lap was a big wake-up call when I first went full-throttle. I got put through the back of the chassis, basically. There are obviously a lot of areas to build on early on with the high-speed and a bit of confidence in the car. But yeah, crazy experience, easily the fastest car I've driven.”

With the wet tyre runs complete, O'Sullivan swaps to the soft-compound slick tyre for his first real attack at the circuit. A five-lap run on those tyres is first up, with a brief break before >>





## MEMORIES OF THE AWARD BOOST FROM A CHAMPION

Thirty years after Dario Franchitti won our Award, the four-time IndyCar champion still remembers how he felt when his success was announced.

The Scotsman had been nominated a year earlier, losing out to Oliver Gavin, but returned in 1992 to become the Award's fourth winner – something he says was a “big deal” for him, and ultimately changed the course of his career.

“I remember that feeling of absolute elation when my name was called out

**“I REMEMBER  
THAT FEELING OF  
ABSOLUTE ELATION  
WHEN MY NAME  
WAS CALLED OUT”**

and standing up on stage,” he says. “That was a big deal for me. I met Michael Andretti, who I ended up driving against and then with as a team-mate and a team owner. Being up on stage with Nigel Mansell, all these different people, it was a big thing for an 18-year-old kid from Scotland. The Award itself I remember the first year was a Vauxhall Lotus, I think I drove.

“I'd been racing Vauxhall Junior that year, and they put you in the next category above. Then the following year, I didn't have a particularly great year in Vauxhall Lotus, but they put me in an F3 car at Donington Park, and I guess I got the job done.”

Franchitti subsequently joined Mercedes in the DTM after then-motorsport boss Norbert Haug called former Autosport editor Peter Foubister to ask which young British drivers he should be watching.

Franchitti went on to test a McLaren MP4/10B at Jerez in the winter of 1995. Though the Formula 1 test was “massive”, he believes an added bonus of winning the Award is the connections it can give you.

“The headline figures of the Award are the F1 test and the money the drivers get, and the prestige of winning the Award. But the stuff that goes on in the back rooms, it's those sort of connections that the judges and all the people involved in the Award, the way they can help the drivers, was really important to me,” says the triple Indy 500 winner, who is now a key figure on the judging panel.



heading out for another five laps. He puts in respectable times, and improves by almost 1.5 seconds across the first 10 laps.

The hard tyre comes next, and he shaves off even more time, before he finishes his day with five more laps on another set of new softs. His best lap time is almost five seconds faster than those initial tentative steps in what must be the fastest F1 car yet used for the Award prize test.

Though the hard tyre is “more predictable”, he finds the soft better for overall lap time, as you'd expect, with a push-cool-push sequence rounding off his time in the car for a true qualifying experience, during which he finds another 1.5s.

Given this is his first time in the car, O'Sullivan wouldn't be blamed for taking things easy. But he's pushed himself throughout, and says he's been “nearly flat” around Copse by the end of the day. “I think at the end I still had a bit of margin in the high-speed corners,” he adds. “I didn't want to crash the car because they haven't got too many bits. But the places where I wanted to be flat I was nearly flat around Copse, which was kind of my mental game at least, and obviously Turn 1 [Abbey] was all flat.

“I was trying to push the limits. I think I found the limits a bit easier in the slow-speed corners. But still, the high-speed aero corners are a big step up from what I'm used to.”

Compared to an F3 car, he says the power is “crazy,” but the balance is “a lot more predictable and stable”, given the team's







FERRARO

## “HE WAS SUPERB. HE WAS CALM, HE WAS IN CONTROL, HE WAS VERY PROFESSIONAL”

ability to make more changes. O'Sullivan points to the brakes as the main difference, getting on the anchors “15, 20 metres later than I would have in F3 and coming in 80 or 90mph faster”, though he jokes that the effect of the increased g-force on his neck is the biggest limitation: “I’m pretty sure 25 laps was enough for my neck.”

His lap times are 15 to 16 seconds a lap quicker than those of an F3 car, but O'Sullivan admits he is still “not even near the qualifying pole pace”. “It’s a different world,” he adds. “It’s going to put a new perspective on Silverstone for me – it feels a lot smaller than it did before, and I’m sure when I jump back in an F3 car it won’t feel so nice anymore, but I really enjoyed it.”

Enjoying a test is one thing but performing well is another – and O'Sullivan nails both counts. Mark Gray, Head of Car and Build at Aston Martin, says he has approached the test “very professionally” and “did himself proud”. Though he initially struggles with applying enough brake pressure and has a harder time on his third run using



STALEY

a cold set of used slicks, Gray says confidence has improved throughout the day, with a “nice gradual decline in lap times”.

With team and driver working well together, they’ve been able to make adjustments based on O'Sullivan’s feedback, which Gray says is “pretty spot on”. “What was impressive about him, he came in quite quiet, asking the right questions,” says Gray.

“He didn’t get panicked by anything, he obviously had a lot to absorb from us, and a lot going on in his own mind to drive this car. But the way he went about it, very calm and collected, got out the car, took a break when he needed to. He was just very professional in how he went about it, which was really good to see.

“I think he was quicker than we expected him to be out of the box, which was good, and then he improved on that. Overall, he was where we would have expected him to be, but the speed in which he got to those times or got close to those times in these conditions was quite impressive and exceeded what we thought he was going to be able to do.”

Head judge Derek Warwick, who has overseen the Award’s testing process for 13 years, is also impressed by O'Sullivan. The ex-Formula 1 driver says it is “really special” to be involved in giving a young driver their first taste of F1 machinery: “It’s a very proud moment for me and all the judges and Aston Martin.”

Reflecting on O'Sullivan’s outing, Warwick says he has done an “amazing” job, following in the footsteps of the likes of George Russell and Lando Norris, Award winners in 2014 and 2016 respectively. “He was super-quick, he was very competent,” says the 1992 world sportscar champion. “The team were super, super-impressed with him. The way he handled first of all the simulator – they gave him a run before the test so he was familiar with the steering wheel, the buttons and everything. They were so impressed with the way he understood the steering wheel, because it’s one of the most difficult things to get used to in a Formula 1 car nowadays. He understood what was needed, he changed things as requested. He spoke very eloquently and precisely back to the team.

“He was superb. He was calm, he was in control, he was very professional. He approached it with complete calmness, but speed as well. He looked absolutely amazing out on the circuit.”

With his first F1 test prompting glowing reviews, and a second F3 season ahead of him with Prema, O'Sullivan’s future looks very bright indeed. ✨

[P46 HOW TO WIN THE ASTON MARTIN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD](#)





# HOW TO WIN THE ASTON MARTIN AUTOSPORT BRDC AWARD

*It's one of the biggest prizes in motorsport, but what are the key things to do to give yourself the best chance? One of the judges reveals all – or, at least, a bit!*

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY



**motorsport**  
IMAGES

It's almost time to reveal the winner of the 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year. At Sunday night's Autosport Awards at Grosvenor House, Ollie Bearman, Luke Browning, Jamie Chadwick or Louis Foster will be crowned as the 33rd winner of the initiative to find and help the best up-and-coming British single-seater talents.

Of the previous 32 winners since David Coulthard became the inaugural victor in 1989, seven have gone on to start a Formula 1 world championship grand prix, three have taken F1 victories and one – Jenson Button – has been world champion. Outside of F1, Award winners have scored numerous successes around the globe, most notably three-time Indianapolis 500 winner and four-time IndyCar champion Dario Franchitti, and 2014 World Endurance title winner Anthony Davidson. Quite aside from the £200,000 prize and F1 test, that's quite a list to join. But what are the key things finalists should do? Here's our guide.

## BE PREPARED

We're taking as a given that the finalists will have had successful seasons – that's how they get selected by the panel of judges in the first place. And as soon as the final four is announced, there are things they can do.

The days of a finalist rocking up and saying, "Oh, this is quite a big deal" in surprise are over, but different levels of preparation are still apparent. Speaking to previous finalists to get an idea of the process is an obvious place to start. The cars for the test are usually known at that point too, so getting information and tips from relevant teams or drivers is often something winners have done. 'Leave no stone unturned' is the message. Talking to the judges is not forbidden either, though few are bold enough to do so beforehand...

## TAKE THE FITNESS AND SIMULATOR TESTS SERIOUSLY

Part of being prepared in any motorsport competition is being fit. Chairman of the judges and 146-time F1 starter Derek Warwick

has always recommended drivers be strong enough for the category above the one in which they are competing in case of a call-up or test opportunity. The same applies for the Award tests, particularly as the MotorSport Vision F2 machines are often described as "beasts" by finalists (see page 50).

The results of the fitness tests, conducted this year by Athletic Thinking, don't decide the competition, but they do give important insights. They can reveal how seriously drivers already take their fitness and highlight any potential strengths and weaknesses. The fitness results can also be useful when the time comes to give all the finalists, win or lose, feedback the following January.

It's a similar story with the simulator tests, run again in 2022 by the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team. This year, each driver was given 40 laps of Silverstone's Grand Prix layout in a Mercedes W13. The runs were divided into 10-lap stints consisting of three runs using a baseline set-up and a final run using an option set-up. Some drivers have more simulator experience than others, so







STALEY

progression is also taken into account.

Mercedes feeds back to the judges by assessing the drivers across four categories – pace, consistency, feedback and approach/attitude – underlining the need to have a rounded approach and not *just* to find lap time.

### DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Across all the judges, engineers and drivers involved in the process, there is a lot of expertise available to the finalists. This includes the benchmark drivers for the Beechdean Motorsport Aston Martin Vantage GT3 (Jonny Adam in 2022) and United Autosports Ligier JSP320 LMP3 (Wayne Boyd).

Warwick often points out that the judges “are not policemen” and are there to help the finalists perform to the best of their ability. There is a lot of information thrown at the finalists, who have to get on top of new cars and how the various runs will work. It’s much better to ask questions rather than stay quiet and miss an opportunity or make an unnecessary mistake.

Listening to detail is important, too. Track limits is often something that finalists have to be reminded about during the two days.

As with anything, trying to relax and enjoy the process can help ease the pressure, though that is easier said than done with so much at stake.

Understanding the best way to prepare and use the Pirelli tyres across all three cars is also important and specialists are on hand to advise (see panel, p49). This can be particularly crucial given the cold or wet conditions often encountered at Silverstone’s Grand Prix circuit in October.

### ADAPT TO THE MACHINERY

It’s pretty unusual for a professional driver to jump into three different machines on the same day in modern motorsport. But, with testing being restricted in many series, being able to get quickly on the pace with a car is important. As is



being able to adapt as tyre degradation, fuel loads, set-ups and weather conditions change.

All that helps to explain why the presence of the GT3 and LMP3 cars at the Silverstone test is so important. Almost without exception, the strongest driver in the F2 car also provides the highlight of the running in the other machines. And if performances in the F2 car are close, the shorter runs in the GT and sportscar can be crucial to the result. They can also help open up future career options, as recently demonstrated by 2018 winner Tom Gamble now racing in endurance events.

Being successful in cars unusual to them usually requires drivers to do their homework and to learn to use the tools they have at their disposal. The GT car, for example, has ABS and traction control. In the past, some finalists have found these too intrusive and complained about them, while others have worked with the systems to get more out of the car. Guess which approach is normally better! >>





BE FAST BUT DON'T CRASH

This might be obvious but, ultimately, the biggest single factor in determining the winner is pace. It's not just about topping a session – in most years two or three of the finalists will manage that at least once – but being consistently fast across the two days.

Being instantly quick out of the blocks is not essential, but the winner often is. More crucial, though, is being fast across all the different tests, often in different conditions, across all three cars.

The big no-no is, quite obviously, crashing. The odd running wide happens and we've seen the odd spin that finalists have got away with, but seriously damaging a car will put finalists out of the competition. It fortunately rarely happens, but this judge can think of at least two subsequently successful drivers who

could have won had they not crashed...

Finalists spend most of the test in their own F2 car, with a randomly selected engineer. Forming a strong relationship with their engineer – another crucial general skill in motorsport – brings obvious benefits and helps the finalists get comfortable in the car quickly and find set-up tweaks to improve further.

Playing with the onboard anti-roll bar and front-wing adjustment is encouraged, providing the youngsters don't go down the proverbial rabbit hole or end up losing focus on their driving. With unfamiliar cars – one of the strengths of using the F2 cars is that they no longer compete – more time can usually be found in driving style than set-up.

The F2 running is often tweaked and the timetable moved around depending on weather and circumstances, so finalists need to be ready to go at all times and there is little space in their schedule. The first F2 outing at the start of day one is the familiarisation run, after which the drivers are allowed to focus on the other cars.

In the GT3 and LMP3, they are given two runs on older rubber before a final session on fresh tyres. Lap times on used and new Pirellis are factored in by the judges, who also receive feedback from the teams running the cars. How the drivers interact with teams new to them is part of that assessment.

The rest of the running takes place in the F2 cars, with old and then new rubber. The sessions lengths vary – normally five flying laps but sometimes a one-shot 'qualifying' run is introduced – and all cars are out on track at the same time. The aim in most of the sessions is to set the best single lap time, so it can often be more sensible for a finalist to back off if they make a mistake or to find space than pressing on regardless.



### THE 2022 CARS

**LIGIER JSP320 (LMP3)**  
**Run by** United Autosports  
**Engine** Naturally aspirated 5.6-litre V8  
**Power** 455bhp  
**Silverstone GP lap time** 1m52s-1m55s  
**2022 benchmark driver** Wayne Boyd

**WILLIAMS JPH1B (F2)**  
**Run by** MotorSport Vision  
**Engine** 1.8-litre turbo R4  
**Power** 425bhp  
**Silverstone GP lap time** 1m45s-1m48s  
**2022 benchmark driver** n/a

**ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GT3**  
**Run by** Beechdean AMR Motorsport  
**Engine** Four-litre turbo V8  
**Power** Over 500bhp  
**Silverstone GP lap time** 1m58s-2m01s  
**2022 benchmark driver** Jonny Adam

STALEY





Chasing a single lap time takes back seat in 'pursuit' run, which rewards consistency

The exception is the 'pursuit' run in which the drivers are given an out-lap (and tyre prep lap if needed) and then timed over a 12-lap run. The fastest lap is not important, it's the overall 'race' time that is, so consistency and relevant use of the onboard set-up tools are key. Speaking to previous finalists about this particular test can be useful because even previous winners have been caught out here, with the dilemma of how far to manage tyre degradation being much more of a factor than in the other parts of the test.

So, being prepared, taking it seriously while enjoying the process (if possible!) and being fast without crashing. Sounds easy... The reality is of course much harder, but this weekend one finalist will add their name to the list of drivers who have proved it can be done. 🏆



## THE 2022 JUDGES

Ex-Formula 1 driver and 1992 world sportscar champion Derek Warwick is the chairman of the judging panel. This year's panel also included Award winners Dario Franchitti, Darren Turner, Andrew Kirkaldy and Alexander Sims, British Touring Car legend Jason Plato, successful Lola and McLaren designer Mark Williams, Le Mans-winning engineer Leena Gade, leading commentator Ian Titchmarsh and Autosport Chief Editor Kevin Turner.



## AN UNSUNG HERO OF THE AWARD TESTS

Many organisations come together to make the Award happen, and that includes tyre supplier Pirelli. This year it brought nearly 400 tyres, slicks and wets, for the MotorSport Vision-run Formula 2, United Autosports Ligier LMP3 and Beechdean Motorsport Aston Martin GT3 machinery. It's a crucial contribution.

"It's a long-running, prestigious award that has had lots of big names come through it," says Pirelli's UK motorsport manager Jonathan Wells. "Pirelli has

as some other categories, so it had to produce a batch of new front tyres for the tests, which fortunately coincided with a similar requirement for the Motorsport Games.

United's switch to Pirelli rubber for the tests also created set-up challenges. "We did support the LMP3 Cup and cars in the Gulf 12 Hours, but it's quite a challenge," adds Wells, who says the compound on the front is softer than at the rear because so little of an LMP3 car's weight is on the front. "It's important to get the front axle working in the right way.

"Silverstone is always a challenge too. It's one of the most aggressive circuits in the world in terms of load and high-speed corners, and the surface is quite abrasive."

Pirelli also had to take into account the cold weather of the UK in October when it came to the GT3. "Our new DHF tyre is faster but the compound is not as benign – it's more temperature-dependent," explains Wells.

Aside from supplying the tyres and answering questions, Pirelli is otherwise happy to let everyone else do their thing at the tests. "If everything is going well, we're just here," says Wells.

## "IT'S A LONG-RUNNING, PRESTIGIOUS AWARD, AN EASY FIT FOR US"

heavily invested in racing for 15 years. We're at every stage of the FIA pyramid, plus GB3, GB4, and we're in GTs at a high level globally so the Award is an easy fit for us."

Not everything is straightforward. Pirelli was not the supplier for the MSV F2 championship when it ran in 2009-12, so has used a Formula Regional European-style tyre. It's also not been as heavily involved in LMP3



**OLLIE BEARMAN**  
AGE 17 2022 Third in FIA Formula 3  
with Prema Racing

“It was really difficult conditions, on and off with the wets and the slicks. I would have preferred some dry running but that’s how it goes – you can always trust the British weather to throw a spanner in the works – but I really enjoyed driving different cars. It’s fun to get out of the comfort zone, drive a car with a roof and test you in different ways. They all require the same things, pretty similar braking references, but you have to have a bit more finesse in different categories.

“I’m definitely a better driver this year. Maybe there was more expectation because I’d done it before but I didn’t let that increase the pressure. I did everything I could and we’ll see. It’s close I know.”



**LUKE BROWNING**  
AGE 20  
2022 GB3 champion with Hitech Grand Prix

“I’ve absolutely loved it. Driving the F2 cars is something I’ve looked at in the past and watched other finalists do, and it was something I was really looking forward to getting into. I knew it would be a different beast, with how much power it’s got, and it was certainly a joy in the wet – I had a few drifts here and there and it was properly enjoyable.

“The pressure was off. I knew if the other finalists had done it before they’ve got to be a lot quicker than me. I just drove the best I could. It’s difficult not knowing what others are doing. I put everything on the line, even got a little bit close to having a few moments here and there.”







**JAMIE CHADWICK**

**AGE 24 2022 W Series champion with Jenner Racing**

“It’s nice coming back and being more familiar with it; it’s a little bit less intimidating the second time and I feel like the progression has been really good. Last time the F2 car felt like a massive step up in comparison to what I’d done. To now come in and straight away feel more comfortable and better about it I was really happy with.

“It’s so important to be able to jump into different cars because I think you need to have that skill and it’s something that’s good to be in the assessment. You’re trying to achieve the same thing but the way you do that in all the different cars is so different. To adapt in only a handful of laps is tricky.”



**LOUIS FOSTER**  
**AGE 19 2022 Indy Pro 2000 champion with Exclusive Autosport**

“It was fun, it’s not often you get an experience like this in motorsport. The sickness [tonsillitis] didn’t help at all, it kind of set the mood for me because I was having to manage my health more than manage tyres and stuff. It was bad timing but you can’t do anything about it and I did the best I could do. You can’t just walk away!

“I felt better on day two and the wet conditions were helpful – it was easier to drive. I do enjoy the wet but I haven’t driven in the rain for about a year because in America we don’t get any rain. I miss driving in it so it was fun to get back into it.”







Berthon heads Michelisz to victory in first race

LENORMAND / DPPI

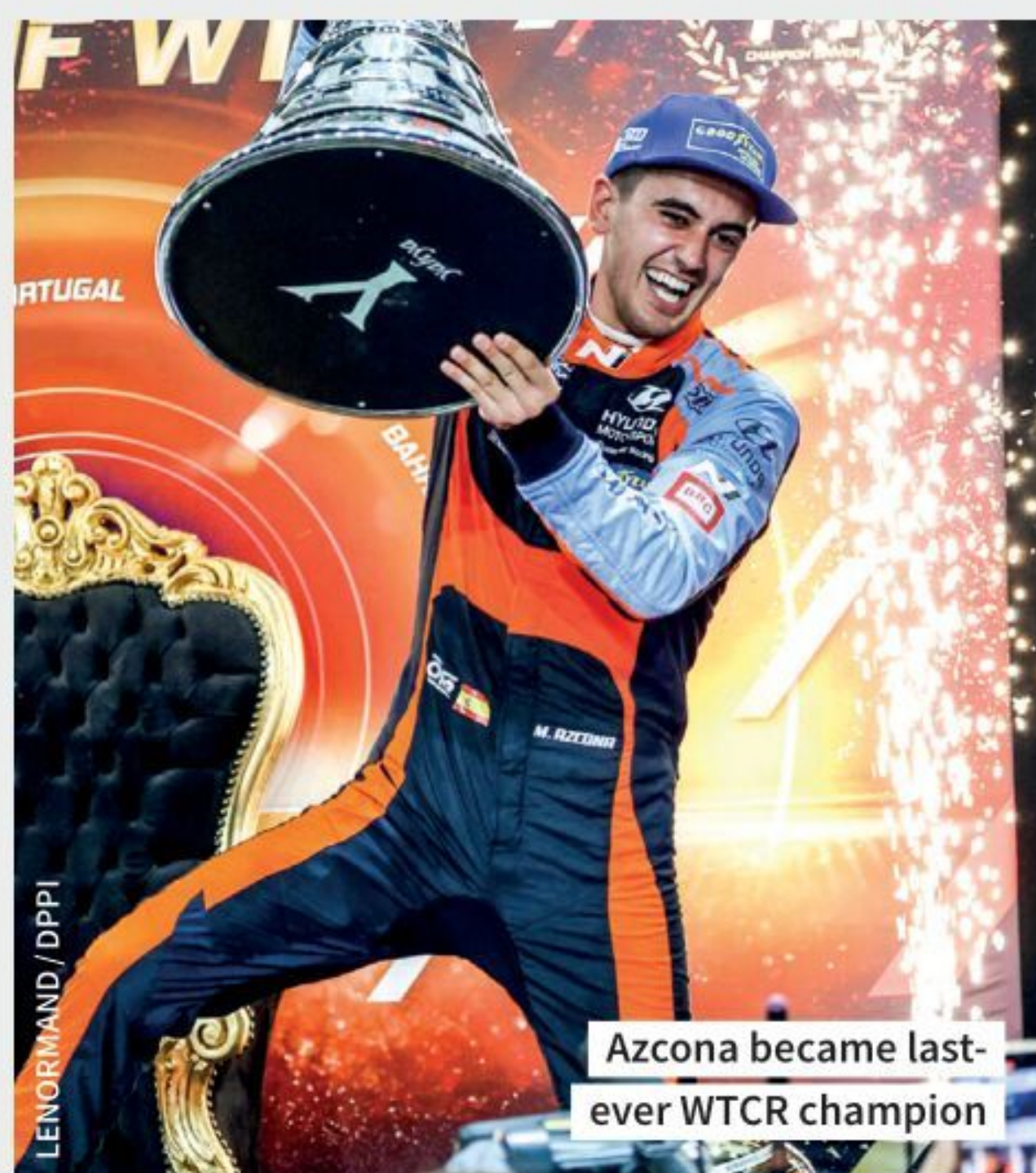
## Azcona crowned as his rivals go for a Berthon

**WORLD TOURING CAR CUP**  
**JEDDAH (SAU)**  
**27 NOVEMBER**  
**ROUND 9/9**

Mikel Azcona didn't need to race in Jeddah as the curtain came down on the World Touring Car Cup after five seasons. The Spaniard was confirmed as the final WTCR champion at the end of Q2 last Saturday when his only points rival, Nestor Girolami, not only failed to score, but slumped to 12th and last in the session. Such was Azcona's advantage that it was all over.

"What a fantastic feeling," said the new world champion, BRC Hyundai's third after his team manager Gabriele Tarquini – the retired legend who Azcona replaced this year – and Norbert Michelisz. "It is something I have been working for basically all my life. This season was a perfect one, from the first moment I entered into the team."

The following day, the WTCR curtain came down in a blaze of controversy... and anti-climax. Comtoyou Audi racer Nathanael Berthon went from hero to zero, winning the opening night race from his first pole position of the season, only to crash out in a collision with Rob Huff in the second. Berthon's Audi was left with a broken front-right wheel, and by the time the RS3 was cleared away the clock had run down. The final WTCR race had finished with a bang and then



Azcona became last-ever WTCR champion

a whimper – behind the safety car.

The fight to be Azcona's runner-up had been the main focus but, with Girolami enduring a horror show, Berthon looked odds-on to steal the spot at the last. The Munnich Motorsport Honda not only lacked pace in qualifying, but it also lacked fuel – and without the requisite sample for FIA tests the Argentinian was dumped to the back of both grids.

Berthon's race-one win left him just five points shy of Girolami ahead of race two, but there were always likely to be fireworks in the finale. Attila Tassi started on the partially reversed-grid pole position and survived a second-lap attack as Esteban Guerrieri came skating up his inside into Turn 1 and spun.

Tassi wasn't so lucky a lap later.

Franco Girolami, Nestor's younger brother, let the blood rush to his head as he made a dive on Nicky Catsburg – and wiped out both Tassi and the second-placed Hyundai in a single moment of ineptitude. That handed the lead and a third victory of the campaign to Comtoyou Audi man Gilles Magnus, who had suffered his own moment of madness two weeks earlier in Bahrain, where he clobbered into former team-mate Mehdi Bennani.

"Man, did I need this," said Magnus. "For the team, for myself, for my confidence. We've been through tough times. Bahrain was tough. Now I can give something back I'm really happy."

So was his 'wildcard' team-mate Viktor Davidovski. The inexperienced Macedonian had started on the front row beside Tassi, slumped to sixth, then rose back to second amid all the troubles ahead of him. He could barely believe it. Azcona blessed his luck too as he finished his masterpiece of a season with a third.

But there were no smiles from Berthon, who was furious with Huff, back with Zengo for one final swing after missing Bahrain. The Frenchman tried everything to pass the Cupra as he chased vital points, complaining about Huff's defence on the radio, only to come unstuck – and come up short. Still, a suitable ending to a tumultuous year and series.

**DAMIEN SMITH**



# Loeb gives Hamilton a 2022 title

**EXTREME E**  
**PUNTA DEL ESTE (URY)**  
**27 NOVEMBER**  
**ROUND 4/4**

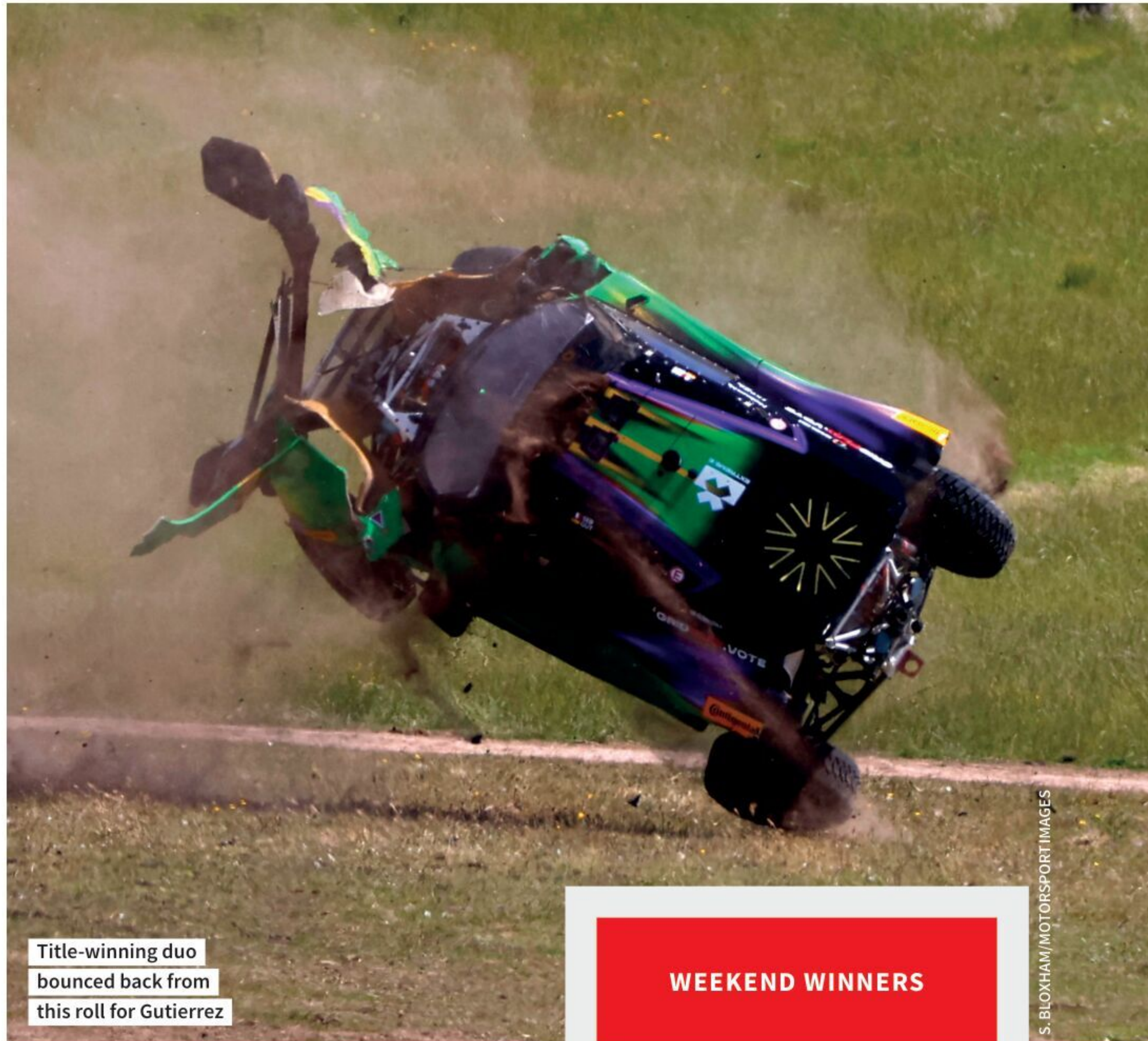
Lewis Hamilton's X44 squad clinched the Extreme E title in a highly eventful season finale, as Abt Cupra took a maiden win in the Energy X-Prix in Uruguay. Nasser Al-Attiyah and Klara Andersson bounced back from a penalty in their qualifying heat to win the final for Abt, ahead of McLaren pair Tanner Foust and Emma Gilmore, but third was enough for X44 duo Sebastien Loeb and Cristina Gutierrez to seal the crown.

Hamilton's squad secured the Extreme E crown after all three of its championship rivals failed to progress to the final, but the decisive result only came after a time penalty cost Timmy Hansen and Catie Munnings a podium spot for Andretti.

Reigning Extreme E champion Rosberg X Racing led the teams' standings by 17 points at the start of the deciding event, but an incident-filled two days started with a roll for Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky in qualifying and ended prematurely with elimination in the Crazy Race.

With the likelihood of its having secured five additional points for the best time in the Traction Challenge, X44 needed third or better in the final to overhaul RXR in the standings. But Loeb ran wide after the start while battling with Al-Attiyah and dropped to fourth, and then made contact a couple of times with Hansen as he tried to recover.

Al-Attiyah built a 3.3-second advantage over Foust before the driver swap, with Andersson maintaining that gap on the second leg to give Abt victory. Gilmore held off Munnings for second, with Gutierrez finishing a further two seconds adrift after taking over from Loeb. But a seven-second penalty for speeding in the switch zone crucially dropped Munnings to fourth, promoting X44 to third and with it the



Title-winning duo  
 bounced back from  
 this roll for Gutierrez

Extreme E title in the series' second year.

Veloce's new pairing of Kevin Hansen and Molly Taylor ended the final in fifth place.

X44's route to the final was far from easy, with Gutierrez cartwheeling out of single-car qualifying, and it then came home a distant fourth in its qualifying heat, which was won by Andretti despite a five-second penalty for a switch zone infringement.

RXR retired from the subsequent heat after Johan Kristoffersson was rear-ended by Al-Attiyah as the pair contested the lead. Abt won on the road after Andersson passed Taylor following the driver change, but a 30s penalty for the incident with Kristoffersson handed victory to Taylor.

That left X44 and RXR vying over a single final berth in the Crazy Race, which became the title decider after Chip Ganassi Racing and Acciona Sainz saw their championship



Al-Attiyah and Andersson  
 won for Abt team

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### WORLD TOURING CAR CUP JEDDAH (SAU)

**Race 1** Nathanael Berthon  
 Comtoyou Racing (Audi RS3 LMS)

**Race 2** Gilles Magnus  
 Comtoyou Racing (Audi RS3 LMS)

### EXTREME E PUNTA DEL ESTE (URY)

Nasser Al-Attiyah/Klara Andersson  
 Abt Cupra XE



For full results visit [motorsportstats.com](https://motorsportstats.com)

hopes ended in the semi-finals.

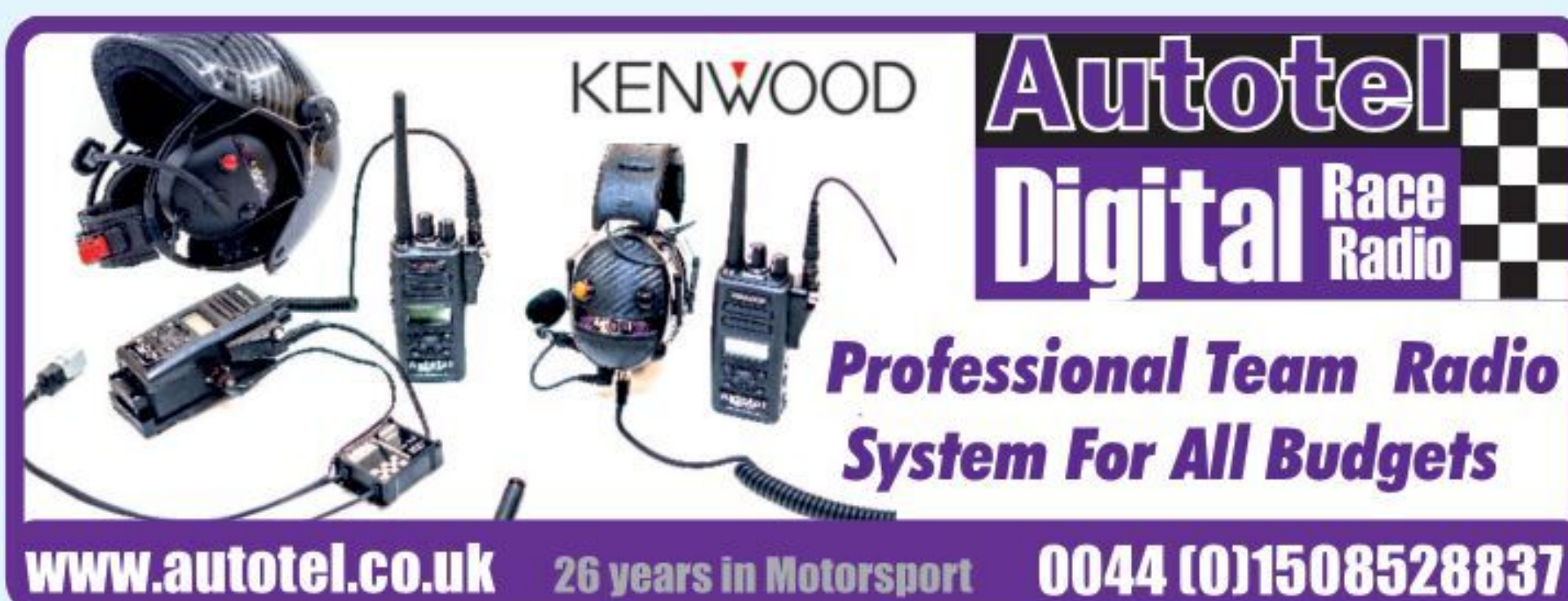
Ganassi finished second on the road behind Abt in the first semi-final, but a 20s penalty for striking two flags on the opening leg eliminated its pairing of Sara Price and RJ Anderson. Andretti triumphed in the second semi-final, while Acciona Sainz's Laia Sanz remarkably was able to continue after an early roll before handing over to Carlos Sainz. Despite their valiant effort, the pair lost out on a final spot in third.

Victory in the Crazy Race would have sealed the crown for RXR, but its hopes unravelled when Ahlin-Kottulinsky collided with JBXE's Hedda Hosas, incurring steering damage, while Hosas retired on the spot. X44 overcame a 5s penalty to take what would prove a crucial win.

**STEVE WHITFIELD**



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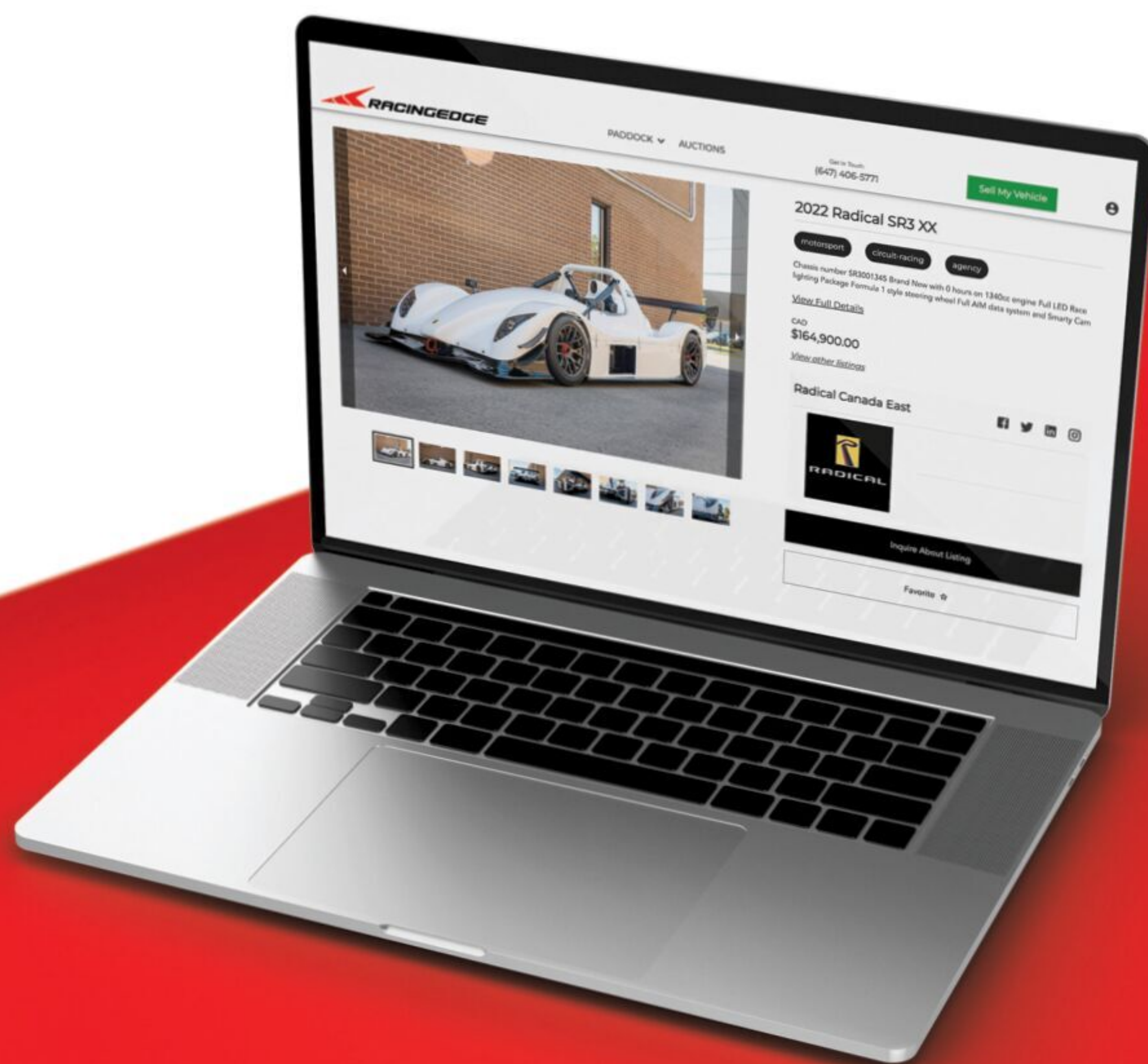


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- Understanding of time series data analysis using Matlab or other similar tools.
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WORLD GT SUPPORT SLOT**



**LEGENDS TO RUN SECOND  
2023 CHAMPIONSHIP**



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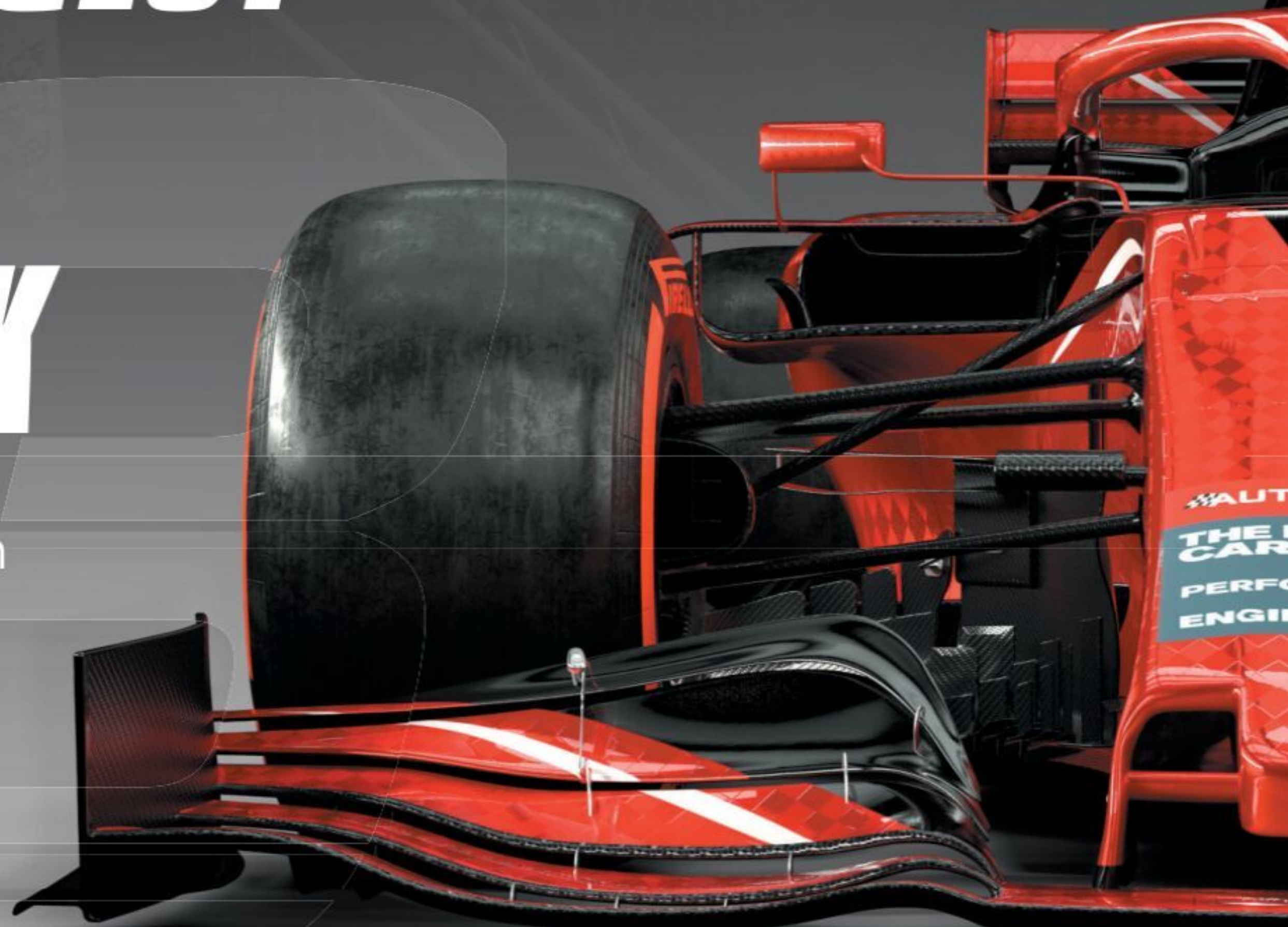
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Three visits to Brands  
Hatch are planned for  
2023 Legends season



GARY HAWKINS

# Standalone Legends title for BTCC supports

## LEGENDS

Two separate championships will form the 2023 Legends calendar as the category prepares to join the British Touring Car Championship support bill at select rounds next season.

Legends will join the TOCA support package at three events in the wake of Ginetta ending its 15-year partnership with the organiser, which has led to the creation of the Legends Cars 'BTCC' Championship.

The events will take place at Brands Hatch (6-7 May), Croft (29-30 July) and Knockhill (12-13 August), with an overall champion being crowned.

"We did think about it [a standalone BTCC championship] for a considerable amount of time, just to make it as exciting as possible," said Legends Cars owner Phil Cooper. "There are a number of people not competing in Legends that would be interested in coming back, just to be part of the BTCC dates. However, the people that are not in Legends [at the moment] will have to go on the waiting list."

"When you think we've been going for so long [29 years], we're still one of the most secret racing series or championships there is. We get people saying, 'We've never seen this before,' but all of a sudden, we're doing it with the big lads [BTCC] in front of their spectators. The ITV4 [live]



Cooper has taken decision  
to award two Legends  
titles next season

programme opens the door for us and we're hopefully going to capitalise."

A non-BTCC championship will also be held next year consisting of five meetings, including Cadwell Park (15-16 April) and two visits to Brands Hatch (17-18 June and 4-5 November), the first of which will be part of the American SpeedFest fixture, the second alongside the British Truck Racing Championship. Snetterton (7-8 October) will host a round, as will a yet-to-be-announced venue in September.

Cooper added: "All in all, we feel we have a fantastic offering next year for drivers, teams and, of course, the race fans!"

STEFAN MACKLEY

## OPINION



Months before Ginetta announced it would be leaving the British Touring Car Championship support bill,

Autosport had advocated adding greater variety to these meetings and giving a wider range of series the chance to shine on the biggest UK motorsport stage. That is now exactly what is happening for 2023.

There is an intriguing mix of categories that will be joining TOCA regulars British Formula 4, Mini Challenge and Porsche Carrera Cup GB (along with its sister Sprint Challenge division) next year.

Over the past month, there has been confirmation that the ever-popular classic Minis of the Mini 7 Racing Club will make a return after wowing the BTCC audience at Thruxton in 2019 and Brands Hatch in 2020.

There will be an appearance from the top-tier Caterham Seven UK championship, famed for its ultra-close racing, with a visit to the Silverstone touring car fixture being the perfect celebration for the manufacturer's 50th birthday. And there will also be two outings for the revamped Radical Cup UK.

But perhaps the most eye-catching of the announcements was three events for the Legends. These pocket rockets are another category that produces frenetic action and will be the perfect replacement for the equally frantic Ginetta Juniors. This week's news that those three fixtures will form their own mini-championship takes the excitement to the next level.

Expect some new drivers to join the established series regulars for these events, and it adds extra importance to them without the BTCC rounds becoming a distraction from the main championship. There will be no margin for error across those three weekends but, equally, no time for drivers to be cautious, and that should create the perfect recipe for entertaining racing.

We may have only just entered December, but this second Legends championship, alongside the other TOCA guests, is certainly something to look forward to next year as we now head into the winter months.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



# Esterson joins Fortec for GB3 title assault

## GB3

Formula Ford Festival winner Max Esterson will move to Fortec Motorsport for a title challenge on the 2023 GB3 Championship.

The 20-year-old American undertook his rookie season in GB3 this season with Douglas Motorsport, and finished seventh in the standings with a win at Donington Park and a further two podiums. He tested Euroformula Open, Formula Regional European and FIA F3 machinery during the summer, but his experience of GB3 led him to remain in the series and switch to Fortec, which ran this year's runner-up Joel Granfors.

"I think, whatever series I chose, it will have to be one I'm winning in and, with GB3, I've already got a year of experience," said the Red Bull-backed athlete. "They [Fortec] have good history in this series and other series. I was impressed how well they did considering they only had rookies and they were fighting for the championship [this year]. I had to choose an option where there's no excuses. The goal next year is to win GB3 and then try to do some FIA F3 testing on the side."

Esterson admitted that one area he needs to focus on ahead of 2023 is qualifying, with overtaking at a premium in the high-downforce GB3 car. Prior to joining the series, his only UK experience was in Formula Ford. Esterson won last year's



The American has already tested with Fortec ahead of 2023 title bid

JEP

Walter Hayes Trophy event at Silverstone and, following his Festival victory, repeated the feat this season before being stripped of the win post-race, a decision that he is appealing to the National Court.

"A lot of it is just about the tyres and how to manage them in qualifying," Esterson added. "I've never had to worry about that in Formula Ford and it's never a huge stress because you can come from 20th and win. But qualifying is huge in GB3 because there's very little overtaking so that's the main thing."

Also racing with Fortec next season

will be South African Jarrod Waberski, who moves up from GB4. The 17-year-old finished runner-up to Fortec's Nikolas Taylor with four wins, and helped Kevin Mills Racing to the inaugural teams' title.

Fortec team manager Oliver Dutton said: "We were able to follow Jarrod's progress very closely this year, as he pushed us all the way for the GB4 title. That he was able to do so with little to no pre-season preparation was very impressive. He's already had more experience of GB3 machinery than he did with the GB4 car before this season!"

STEFAN MACKLEY

# Cadwell event added to Ginetta calendar

## GINETTA

Ginetta will organise a second standalone event next year with a Cadwell Park meeting added to the revamped calendars for its portfolio of championships.

It was revealed earlier this year that the Yorkshire manufacturer was planning a major overhaul of its categories for 2023, with its longstanding Ginetta GT4 Supercup being axed and Ginetta Junior leaving the

British Touring Car support bill. Instead, the Junior racers, a new GT championship and the GT Academy will all appear alongside British GT at its six UK rounds, while a standalone 'G Fest' was announced for Silverstone.

More details about the schedule have now been revealed, with the Silverstone fixture running over four days from 1-4 June with racing on both the Grand Prix and National layouts, while it will also be a



Ginetta Junior will feature at two standalone events

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

celebration of Ginetta's 65th birthday. In addition to this, the Cadwell Park event will be organised on 22-23 July, and will feature Ginetta Junior's first visit to the Lincolnshire venue since 2008.

"The 2023 schedule brings together a fantastic variety

of circuits and layouts for the three championships, with a mix-up of the calendar bringing with it new opportunities for our teams and drivers to tackle configurations they may not have raced on before," said Ginetta championships manager Steph Bush.



# New Praga hypercar to be built after Grosjean challenge

## PRAGA

Praga has revealed a new limited-edition 700bhp road-legal hypercar that has been inspired by a challenge from marque ambassador and IndyCar racer Romain Grosjean to create a car suitable for the road and the race track.

The new Praga Bohema will be powered by a 3.8-litre, twin-turbo Nissan V6 engine, and the car is due to weigh less than 1000kg. The monocoque will be made of carbonfibre and on-track performance equivalent to that of GT3 machinery is being targeted.

The car is due to go on sale in the second half of next year for £1.1million, and it is intended that just 89 models

will be produced to celebrate the 89 years since the company won the 1933 1000 Miles of Czechoslovakia road race in its native country.

"I was astonished by the Bohema's amazing performance on track, its accessibility on road, and the ease of transition between the two," said Grosjean. "Praga has truly delivered on my challenge! On the road, you get a smooth ride, the car eliminates the bumps, you can chat with the passenger, and everything is calm and OK.

"Then simply switch focus and you are on the track. The same clothes, the same car, but the feeling changes and you are pushing the limit and collecting amazing lap times again and again."



Just 89 models of the Praga Bohema will be produced

# Turismo X scrapped for 2023 season

## TURISMO X

The Turismo X championship run by MotorSport Vision Trackdays will not be held next year after receiving a disappointing number of entries this season.

The series was rebranded from the MSV

Supercup for 2022 in an attempt to "boost average grid sizes". A *Gran Turismo* theme was adopted, with inaugural champion Darren Goes receiving a Mazda Demio as a prize, a car that also features in the popular video game.

But the series attracted just 14 entries on average this year – significantly down on the 26 of the final MSV Supercup season – and has therefore been scrapped.

"The format is quite popular among the drivers that committed to it – they like the sprint races and the Superpole session – but the championship didn't connect with the wider audience in the same way that Trackday Trophy, Trackday Championship and EnduroKa do, but those set extremely high benchmarks," said MSVR competitions manager Joe East. "We felt we did everything possible to make Turismo X work but, ultimately, it was a straightforward decision not to run it in 2023."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Mazda Demio was prize for Goes this year

STEVE HINDLE

## IN THE HEADLINES

### 750MC 2023 CALENDAR

The 750 Motor Club has revealed its schedule for 2023, which includes two trips to Anglesey rather than the one each at the Welsh Pembrey and Anglesey venues that happened this year. An additional date on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit the day after the Birkett Relay has also been added to the schedule.

### JOHN NICOL TROPHY

Student Motorsport founder JP Latham was presented with the John Nicol Trophy at the recent British Racing & Sports Car Club awards evening in recognition of the work the organisation has carried out introducing students to motorsport. "Student Motorsport and the SMO Challenge exist to allow students and the next generation of motorsport professionals to gain real-world experience in a competitive, track-based environment and I truly believe that we are making a difference," said Latham.

### DONINGTON SIX-HOUR RACE

Britcar will host a non-championship six-hour race at Donington Park on 22 July next year using the Grand Prix layout. The single-day event will be open to all Britcar Trophy and British Endurance Championship competitors, with organisers hoping to eventually bring back a UK 24-hour GT race in the coming years.

### STAYING PUT WITH EXCELR8

Luca Marinoni Osborne will continue in the Mini Challenge Trophy with Excelr8 Motorsport in 2023. The teenager finished fourth in this season's rookie class (below), which was his first full year of car racing after previously competing in karting. "This year for me has been a huge learning curve and there have been mishaps and misfortune along the way, but I know I'm with the best possible team to help me progress and improve," he said.







#### GT1s TO ROAR AROUND GOODWOOD

Goodwood has announced GT1 sportscars as the first of its demonstrations planned for the Members' Meeting next April. It will be the first time that top-flight sportscars from the 21st century have taken to the Sussex track and forms part of the circuit's celebrations of 100 years of the Le Mans 24 Hours, with a large gathering of Le Mans racers expected to attend the Festival of Speed. The Aston Martin DBR9, Ferrari 550, Maserati MC12 and Chrysler Viper GTS-R (above) are among the GT1 machines likely to be in the Members' Meeting demo. **Photograph by Motorsport Images**

## New Silverstone Festival name for the Classic



#### HISTORICS

The Silverstone Classic will be rebranded the Silverstone Festival for next year in a move that "reflects the event's broadening appeal".

First held in 1990, the meeting has become an increasingly popular fixture in the historics calendar, and next

season's edition is set to continue to feature grids from the Historic Sports Car Club, Motor Racing Legends, Masters Historic Racing and the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association.

But, with displays of modern F1 machinery being a feature of the 2022 event and with a growing array of off-track

entertainment, organisers have decided to rename the annual extravaganza.

"We're so excited to mix the very best historic motorsport on track, with even more energy and adventure off track to entertain the whole family," said event director Nick Wigley.

[P69 CLUB COLUMN](#)

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Another Ultimate BMW race  
is due to be held in 2023



STEVE JONES

## BMW Car Club series to support GT World Challenge at Brands

### 750MC

The popular BMW Car Club Racing series will support the Brands Hatch round of the GT World Challenge Europe next year, while organisers will also run at least one Ultimate BMW race in 2023.

Next season's schedule for the 750 Motor Club-administered championship has been unveiled and, in addition to appearing at five 750MC events, the highlight is supporting GTWCE on the Brands Grand Prix circuit on 13-14 May.

"I think people were taken aback by that a little bit," said series organiser Neil McDonald, who thanked 750MC competitions secretary Giles Groombridge for his help in securing the prime date. "It's great for the club. I always ask the

drivers what they would like to do for the following year and lots of drivers have been gagging to do the GP circuit at Brands for quite a while."

Meanwhile, after 27 cars took part in the inaugural Ultimate BMW race — featuring far less restrictive regulations than the main championship and open to a wide range of models from the German manufacturer — at Donington Park, another race is being planned in 2023. This will take place on the Brands Indy circuit in August, and McDonald says a second contest could also be held.

"It's got some following and there's other people who weren't able to make it [this year] — hopefully some others will join the fun as well," added McDonald.

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

## Fiestas star as Croft rallying returns

### CIRCUIT RALLYING

David and Katie Henderson came out on top of a terrific day-long, all-Ford Fiesta Rally2 duel with Frank Bird and Jack Morton as rallying returned to Croft last weekend after a three-year absence.

By half-distance, Henderson and Bird had each recorded two fastest stage times, but it was Henderson who had a four-second lead, after both changed from wet-weather



The Hendersons enjoyed  
a close fight with Bird

PETER SCHERER

tyres to slicks from stage four. From then on, Henderson gradually increased his lead to secure a 9s victory over Bird.

Kevin Procter and Tom

Woodburn (Fiesta S2000T) had an early duel for third with Fiesta R5 pair Joe Cunningham and Josh Beer, before Cunningham began to consolidate. Cunningham had 10s over Procter at the finish to complete the podium.

Further back, Dan Roskell celebrated his previous day's birthday, taking fifth place with Sion Cunliffe on his second-ever rally and his first in father Neil's Fiesta R5.

**PETER SCHERER**

### IN THE HEADLINES

#### COMBE CLUB'S 2023 DATES

The Castle Combe Racing Club has released its provisional calendar for 2023. Its season is due to begin on Easter Monday, with traditional May Day and August Bank Holiday dates also being held, alongside a two-day fixture in June, a Carnival event in July and the finals day on 7 October. The Wiltshire venue's annual Autumn Classic is scheduled for 23 September.

#### APP LAUNCHED BY HSCC

The Historic Sports Car Club has launched an app to enable competitors to more easily access important information both at and between race meetings. The app is available for Apple and Android devices and is set to feature calendars, timetables, regulations and links to live timing, while alerts will be sent out to competitors in particular championships. It is primarily aimed at club members, but could also be useful for officials and marshals.

#### NO BRITISH SUPERKART GP

The British Superkart Championship and annual Superkart Grand Prix will not take place next year after governing body Motorsport UK revealed that it had received no tenders to run the contests. They were administered by the British Racing & Sports Car Club this year, but Superkart events will still be held in 2023 by the British Superkart Racing Club.

#### BLOWER BENTLEY ON TRACK

Several Blower Bentley continuation models (below) were shaken down at Brands Hatch last week. The cars, mirroring the 4.5-litre supercharged models of the late 1920s and early 1930s, were built after more than 600 components of the original cars were scanned and then digitally recreated. Twelve of these faithful recreations are due to be built in total.





# Ron Overend 1924-2022

## OBITUARY

It seems incredible that somebody who was to have a profound influence on motor racing only discovered the sport in his forties, but that is true of Mallory Park legend Ron Overend, who died peacefully last week, not far short of his 98th birthday.

Born into a military family in Bristol – his father was a Royal Artilleryman – Overend was raised in Kent, close to Brands Hatch, then a grass track used by cyclists and motorcyclists. During the Second World War he was evacuated from Chatham to Staffordshire.

While serving in the RAF, he met vivacious local lass

Edwina Pinson at a dance. Soon married, the swashbuckling duo became a formidable force. But it was only through car-mad son David's racing passion that builder/surveyor Ron's involvement started in 1966.

"Spectating was not enough for Dad – he volunteered as [successively] a corner marshal, flag marshal and observer with the British Racing & Sports Car Club Midlands Centre of which he was later treasurer and Mum competition secretary," recalled David.

Teamed with charismatic clerk Don Truman, Overend Sr organised Mallory's first F2 event. Ron was subsequently a director of the BRSCC.

The Overends were running Mallory Park in the later 1970s, when ShellSport Group 8, then Aurora British F1/F2 had supplanted European F2 as its headline events. Under their watch, club car and motorcycle meetings thrived and Bay City Rollers mania filled the Leicestershire speedbowl, gridlocking the locality.

When Grovewood Securities (owner of the Brands Hatch-led circuit group) dropped the bombshell that Mallory was for sale, Ron and Edwina's friend Chris Meek – the mercurial Leeds racer and property developer – bought it for them and business continued.

While the relationship with



Overend was a key figure in Mallory Park's history

Meek was sometimes rocky, the Overends, as lessees operating as Mallory Park Motorsport Ltd, hung on and developed the venue with accountant David as MD. After Edwina's death in November 2003, they sold the lease to the British Automobile Racing Club.

MARCUS PYE



After finishing second in opener, Webb won race two

SID PANDEY

# Webb wins in Hesketh in Dubai

## DUBAI GP REVIVAL

Briton Oli Webb's victory in Sunday's Historic Formula 1 race, for 1970-85 cars, driving an ex-James Hunt Hesketh 308B capped a memorable weekend for the 31-year-old at the second Gulf Historic Dubai GP Revival event.

The 2014 European Le Mans Series LMP2 champion, who has achieved extensive endurance racing success at the Emirate's Autodrome in recent years, had earlier finished second to Michael Cantillon (Tyrrell 010-2) on Saturday.

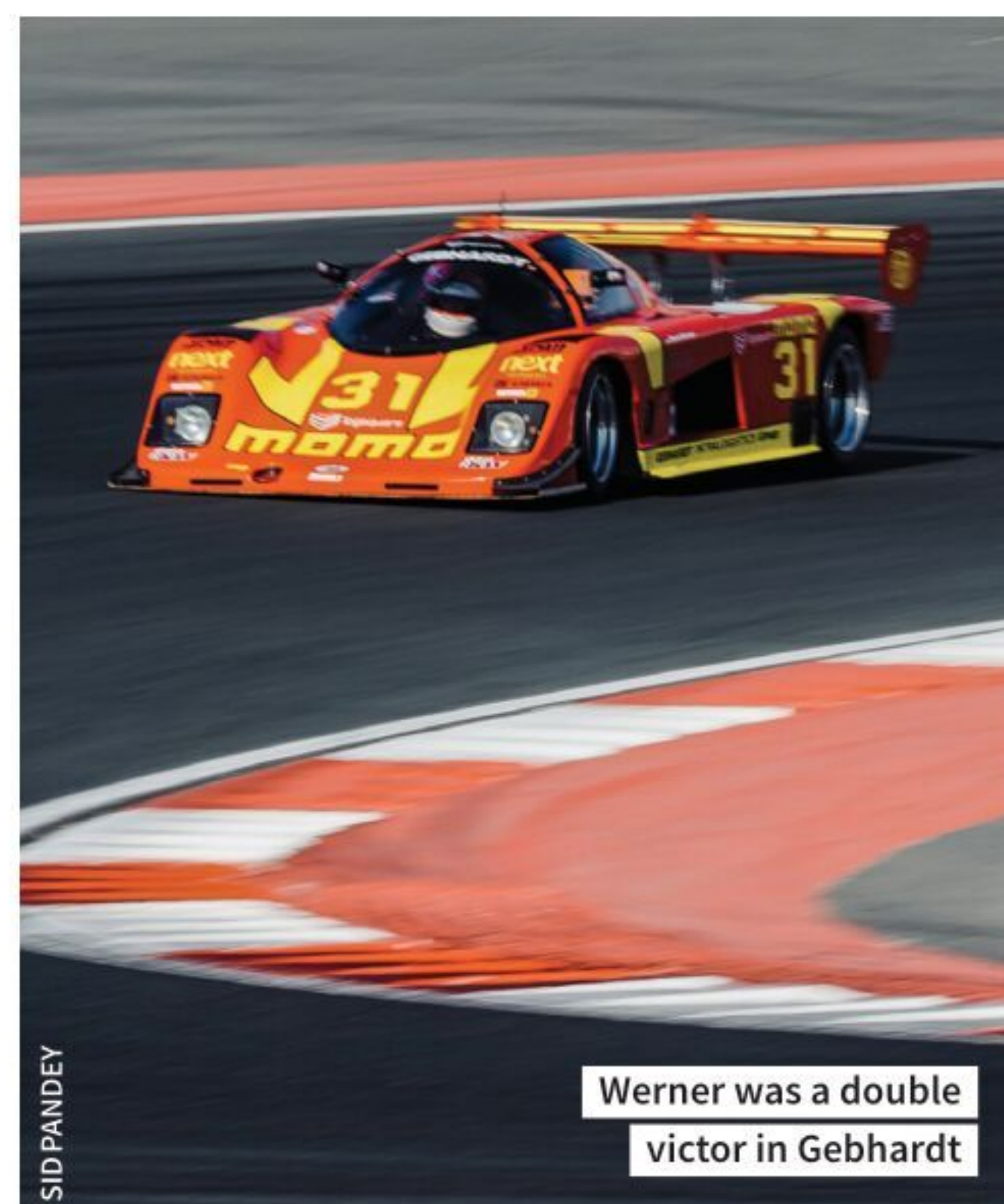
In the presence of racing luminaries of yore, including Alain Prost, Thierry Boutsen, Stefan Johansson, Mark Webber

and Marco Werner, the second GP Extreme-organised event included a sportscar double-header.

Triple Le Mans winner Andre Lotterer (Porsche RS Spyder) and Emmanuel Collard (Pescarolo LMP1) scored a victory apiece in the modern plateau, while Werner won both 1980s legs in a Gebhardt C88.

The gathering featured F1 demo sessions for 1990s F1 cars in which German Sophia Floersch, 21, was excited to experience the ex-Giovanna Amati Brabham-Judd BT60B for the first time.

Supercar displays, a concours d'elegance and a bicycle race were also on the bill. More events built around the GP Extreme car collection are in the pipeline for 2023.



Werner was a double victor in Gebhardt

SID PANDEY



# Is the Silverstone Classic changing too much?

*With a new name and more modern elements creeping in, our writers debate whether the event is moving in the right direction*



YES

KEVIN TURNER

There's a fine line between being innovative to stay fresh and changing things for the sake of it. The historic extravaganza at Silverstone has brought in many positive new elements over the years, but some recent changes seem a little odd.

The rebranding of the August event to the Silverstone Festival for next year, following years as the Silverstone Classic and more recently 'The Classic', is one of them. It's likely that the word 'Festival' means more than 'Classic' to the more casual fans that the event has done so well to attract with its array of impressive off-track entertainment. But doesn't it create potential confusion with other events, not least the well-established Goodwood Festival of Speed? Is the change necessary?

There's also the matter of certain ideas on track. The Classic (sorry, we're sticking to that for now!) being involved in the revival of Super Touring and Masters Endurance Legends undoubtedly brought something extra to the historic-racing party. But this year's Masters GT4 Classic Silverstone Challenge, which is morphing into a series next year, is a little harder to get enthusiastic about.

GT4 is undoubtedly a sensible category to keep an eye on. There are dozens of cars racing around the world and, like GT3, having them on the radar for *future* historics makes a lot of sense. The thing is they are too current. Even though some cars are out of homologation, there are still places for them to race and it's more than a little odd that one of the races in August was won by a brand-new car. It made its racing debut as a 'historic'!

There were also only 16 cars, when half the appeal of GT4 is that it is relatively affordable and should attract big grids. It neither showed GT4 at its best, nor captured the imagination of historic-racing enthusiasts.

Testing the water is fair enough, so why not invite current series to showcase a contemporary category that might one day join the historics menu? A full grid of, say, the GT4 European Series might have got more cars while not having the pretence that the race was historic. An openly modern race at the Classic. Or perhaps Festival *would* be better...

**“One race was won by a brand-new car. It made its debut as a ‘historic’!”**



NO

STEPHEN LICKORISH

It may be a cliché, but the saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' does not really apply to the Silverstone Classic. No one is suggesting that the event is broken — far from it, with some great racing and a range of off-track entertainment again characterising this year's edition — but, equally, changes can still be made.

Completely altering the name for 2023 to the Silverstone Festival is a pretty significant 'fix' to make (we shall ignore the slight shift from Silverstone Classic to The Classic in recent years). But, to me, it seems entirely justified. As well as the usual feast of historic racing, the 2022 event also featured a collection of Lewis Hamilton's title-winning Formula 1 cars and other modern F1 machinery on display. Yes, the definition of historic motorsport should always be changing and the passage of time should mean more cars become classified as 'historic', but no one can claim that Hamilton's 2020 Mercedes W11 is any way classic or historic.

**“Clearly, organisers are trying to appeal to a broader group”**

If such displays, demos and even races — there was a contest for essentially current GT4 cars — are to become a regular feature of the meeting, then sticking with the 'Classic' name seems inappropriate. Clearly, organisers are trying to appeal to a broader group of people and ensure that there is something

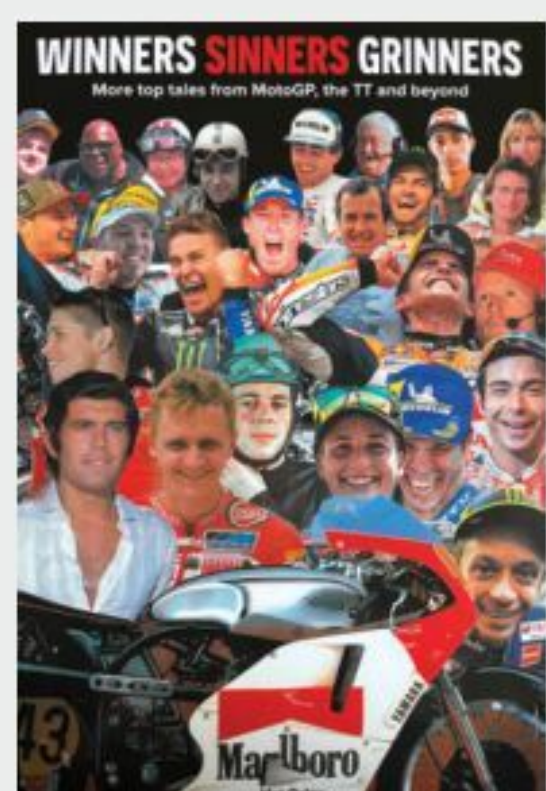
on and off track to amuse everyone in attendance. Historic motorsport purists may not like the attention shifting away from the veteran machines doing battle around the Northamptonshire circuit, but highlighting the event to those interested in F1 can bring benefits. These new attendees will have their eyes opened to the world of historics, and what better way to do that than with a grid of 60-plus 1960s GTs charging into Abbey or a pack of storied F1 machines jostling for position.

Yes, the new name may not be perfect — it does not necessarily even suggest that the fixture is a motorsport event rather than, say, a music one — but anything that helps shine a spotlight on this branch of the sport has got to be welcomed. If changing the name helps in some small way to do that, then it was undoubtedly right to fix the unbroken.



# FINISHING STRAIGHT

## Tales from the world of motorcycle racing



### BOOK REVIEW

#### WINNERS SINNERS GRINDERS

Mat Oxley

RRP 29.99

Covering motorsport as a career is no small endeavour. It requires tireless hours building up contacts and slogging away at open media sessions to get to a point where you can speak to people one on one and get exclusive content – only for people on social media to

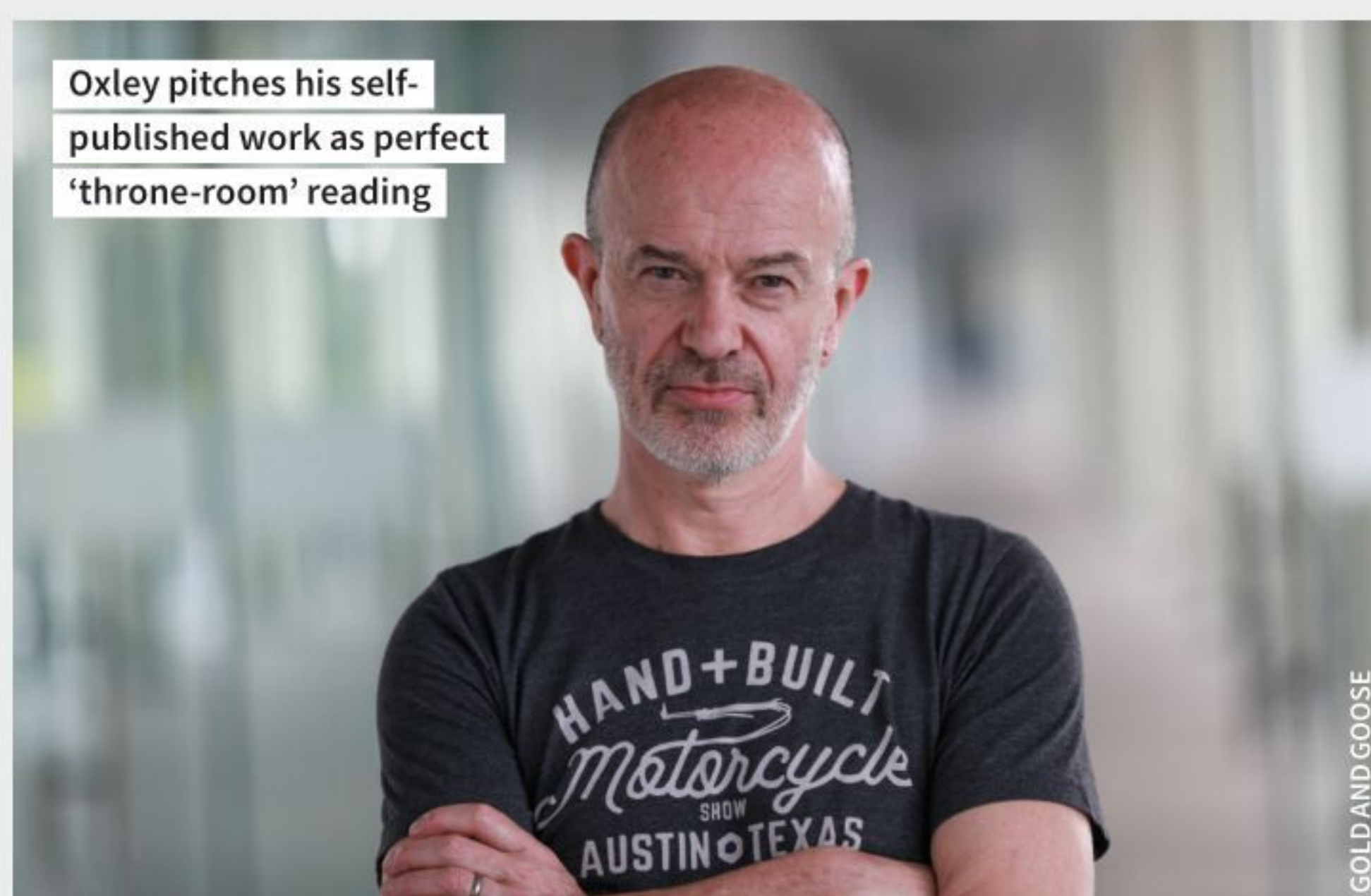
immediately dismiss something you've written and form a million opinions after reading only the headline!

It's a fickle world in that respect, but that hasn't stopped ex-racer, Isle of Man TT winner and now respected journalist Mat Oxley from continuing to ply his trade through to 2022. He's covered motorcycle racing since The Beatles breaking up could be considered recent-ish history, so Oxley has seen and written more about the sport than the rest of us could scarcely hope to.

After dropping an absolute corker in his *Valentino Rossi: All his races* book – an immensely detailed and enjoyable tome charting the nine-time grand prix motorcycle champion's entire career (reviewed in *Finishing Straight*, 17 February) – Oxley has got something new for racing fans just in time for Christmas.

*Winners Sinners Grinders* is an extensive compilation of 80 stories, interviews and features Oxley has written from his decades of scouring racing paddocks across the globe. This

Oxley pitches his self-published work as perfect 'throne-room' reading



MAIN PIC: SUTTON

GOLD AND GOOSE

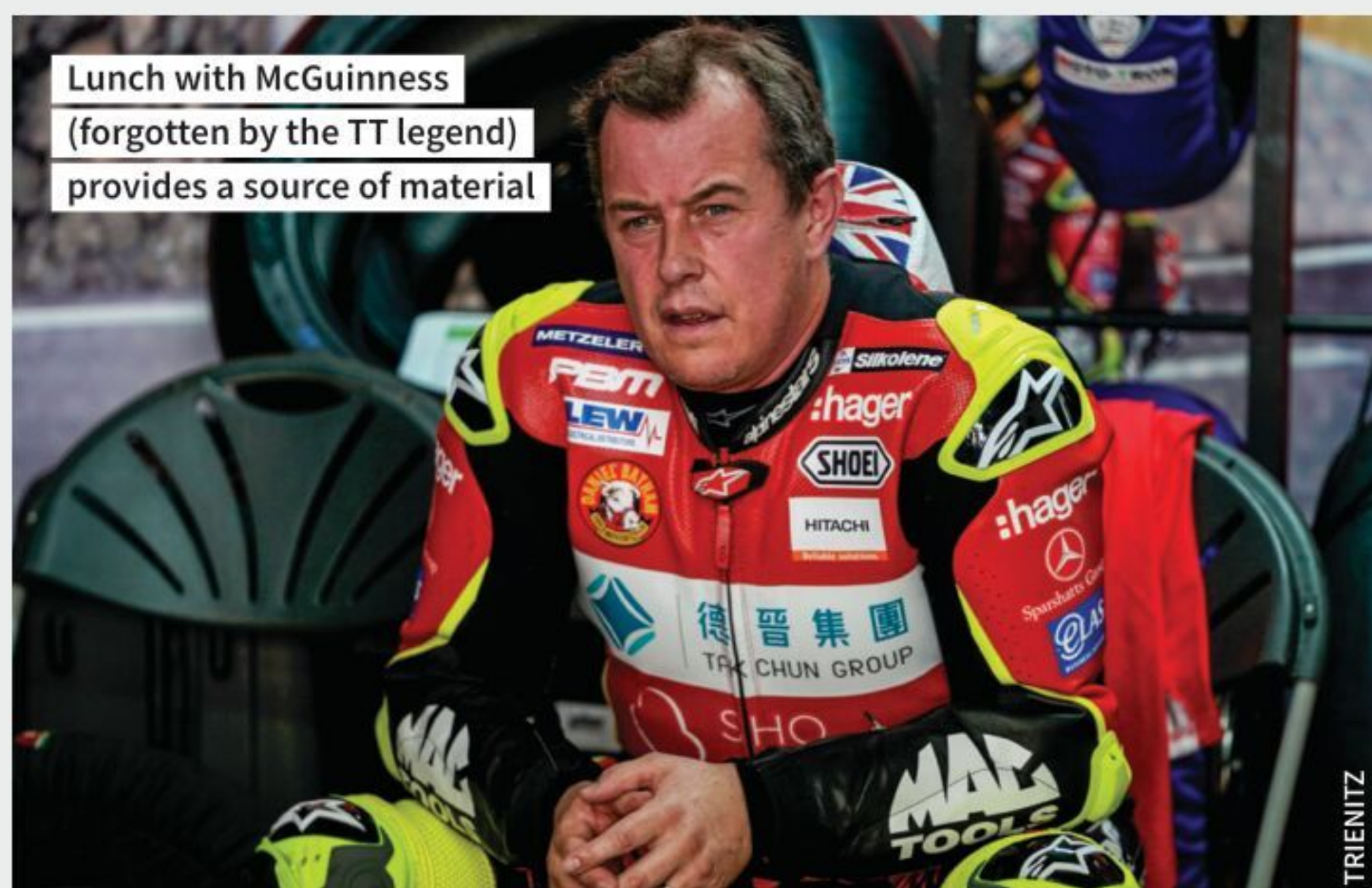
is the third instalment of similar books he has released following on from *The Fast Stuff* and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Racing* – both of which are long out of print and highly sought-after collectibles for bike enthusiasts.

Oxley, who features in numerous publications – in English and foreign languages, but chiefly *Motor Sport* magazine – has spent years positioning himself as one of the leading authorities on motorcycle racing, combining his own racing experience and technical knowledge to produce some of the most detailed features on the subject and some of the most enthralling interviews.





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As it turns out, he's also quite handy with a Pritt Stick. Self-published, *Winners Sinners Grinners* is fronted by an excellent cover Oxley did himself of cut-and-pasted images of various racing heroes and machinery to illustrate his no-nonsense approach to his craft.

While Oxley is a paddock lifer in the MotoGP world, and therefore many of the features included come from there, he also includes stuff from World Superbikes and the Isle of Man TT.

The author himself pitches this as a book to leave in the toilet to dip in and out of when nature calls. Doing so is at your own peril, however, as it's likely that you'll lose feeling in your legs! Because



#### The most dominant race win in modern F1

Winning margins in Formula 1 are usually measured in seconds. Occasionally, in a wet race, a grand prix can be won by more than a minute. But sometimes we've needed another unit of measurement altogether, such as been the dominance by one driver. In the latest of our 'Short View Back to the Past' series, Autosport Chief Editor Kevin Turner looks at when an F1 driver won by two laps...

[youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom](https://youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom)

#### WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

#### Australian Supercars

Round 13/13

Adelaide, Australia

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HORSBURGH

once you start to flick through the work on offer with *Winners Sinners Grinners*, it's hard to put down.

Interestingly, as with any retrospective look at past work, some things are viewed in new light during the present day. Chiefly, Oxley's interview with double MotoGP world champion Casey Stoner back in 2011 offered veiled glimpses into the Australian's mindset at that point. Come May 2012, Stoner – then 26 – announced his retirement from MotoGP at the end of that season. In his interview with Oxley, he tells the Brit that he won't be around long enough to rival fellow Aussie Mick Doohan's five titles.

Across its 412 pages, Oxley brings you tales from legends such as John McGuinness (from a lunch the 23-time TT winner forgot about!) and Kenny Roberts, who reveals the history of Yamaha's famous yellow-and-black livery it raced in the 1970s. He also speaks to people who the casual observer will have no clue about, but who are vitally important to the sport they love, such as teams' association chief Mike Trimby.

If you're stuck for gift ideas for your motorsport-loving pal or loved one (or indeed for yourself!), *Winners Sinners Grinners* is a perfect package of tales to get you through the long winter into the new racing season.

**LEWIS DUNCAN**









## FINISHING STRAIGHT

### FROM THE ARCHIVE

Twenty-three-year-old Ron Dennis takes a break from his responsibilities looking after the #3 Brabham BT33 piloted by his employer Jack Brabham to have a shuftly at the Lotus crew's preparatory work on Emerson Fittipaldi's #17 Lotus 49C ahead of the 1970 German Grand Prix at Hockenheim. It was a weekend to forget for Dennis's boss – he qualified 12th, one place ahead of F1 rookie Fittipaldi, then was stranded on the grid at the start of the race and, once away, lasted just four laps before succumbing to an oil leak. The Brazilian finished a creditable fourth in only his second grand prix, the last runner on the same lap as winner (and his Lotus team-mate, though in a 72) Jochen Rindt. Later in the season Dennis realised his role at Brabham, which developed considerably beyond spannering duties, gave him the skill set and motivation to follow a new path. The next year he was running his own Formula 2 team...



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MAIN: REE/REDBULL CONTENT POOL; INSET: MITTER/REDBULL CONTENT POOL

KENNETH HANSEN

MY FAVOURITE... TRACK

# Holjes

**W**hen it comes to making a good rallycross track, a few key ingredients are needed. First, a mix of challenging corners where drivers can take different racing lines. Then you need a passionate crowd creating an amphitheatre atmosphere. A good history also helps.

Throw in some spectacular jumps and blind crests, and in Sweden's Holjes Motorstadion – which first hosted the European Rallycross Championship in 1991 and has been a permanent fixture since 1999 – you have a circuit that ticks pretty much all the boxes.

A six-time winner at Holjes in the ERC as a driver, 14-time series champion Kenneth Hansen says the track “has quite a lot” going for it. He doesn't hesitate to pick out his fast and flowing home circuit as his favourite on the world championship trail, although success took longer to come as a team boss when the WRX era began in 2014.

After Timmy Hansen was docked the win in 2015 for an overly robust final-lap move on Mattias Ekstrom, Hansen Sr had to wait until 2021 for another taste



of home glory. But it was a particularly sweet one, as Timmy led home team-mate and brother Kevin for Hansen Sr's top Holjes memory. “It's our home circuit

but still it's not the most successful circuit that I have had – or Timmy and Kevin have had,” he says. “So to be 1-2 was a big moment, that was something fantastic.”

In his own driving career Hansen acknowledges that “the atmosphere did do something” to his performance level at Holjes, although recognises that he sometimes lost sight of the bigger picture in his desire to please the locals.

“When you had a lot of spectators some days, you felt [the pressure] was on another level,” he says. “Somewhere in the back it was there to push you to do something extra.

“I think I was quite a clever driver, but sometimes in the finals I forgot about the championship and it was a little too much into winning the race. But it's a little boring if you don't try. Even if it can be a small chance, you need to try. That's rallycross.”

**JAMES NEWBOLD**

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

## Mercedes' F1 recovery

HOW STRONG CAN RUSSELL AND HAMILTON BE IN 2023?

PLUS BRM SPECIAL AND THE AUTOSPORT AWARDS

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