CHRISTMAS DOUBLE ISSUE 140-page special

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

22-29 DECEMBER 2022

TOP 50 DRIVERS of 2022

How we rate the best drivers of the year

PLUS

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Nigel Mansell's greatest races

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Picking out the best performers of another fine motorsport year

Welcome to Autosport's traditional annual Top 50 drivers special. It's now 20 years since we started to assess and rank all the star performers across the motorsport season just gone and it's fair to say that it doesn't get any easier, particularly as it has grown from a six-page piece into the 27-page monster you see today (page 17).

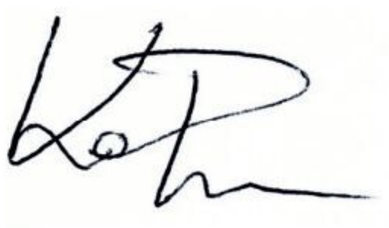
The aim is to highlight those who have done the best job across the year, with consistency of performance, level of opposition, machinery at their disposal and outstanding moments all part of the criteria. Versatility and shining in adversity are also considered.

We've tried to spread the joy to acknowledge fine efforts across a range of categories and disciplines, from Formula 1 to Extreme E via GTs, touring cars and rallying. All deserve a mention, as do many others who didn't quite make the cut in a hotly contested ranking.

While we take putting the list together very seriously, the results should be regarded with a certain amount of fun. You'll almost certainly disagree with something – as many in the Autosport office do – but we hope this is an entertaining way to look back at 2022 and spark some interesting debates during the festive season.

For those with an interest in club racing, fear not. We've got lists for that too – starting on p122. In between, we have our usual eclectic mix of double issue articles, including an interview with MotoGP legend Marc Marquez (p72), Nigel Mansell's greatest drives (p78), and the interesting tale of UK oval racing (p92). Merry Christmas!





Kevin Turner
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NEXT ISSUE
5 JANUARY 2023
Your greatest moments
We count down your top 10 motorsport memories. Plus Porsche's LMDh

Have your say, get in touch

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PIT & PADDOCK

4 Maserati tops Formula E dress rehearsal
6 Ford eyes F1 return with Red Bull
8 Stars assembled for Race of Champions
11 Opinion: Alex Kalinauckas
13 Opinion: Gary Watkins
15 Feedback: your letters

REVIEW

17 Autosport's Top 50 drivers of 2022
46 Pictures of the year
60 Fastest laps in the UK in 2022
62 World of sport review: ELMS; IMSA; Super Formula; Super GT; Indy Lights; Porsche Supercup; NASCAR Cup; Australian Supercars; GT World Challenge Europe; ETCR; World Rallycross; WTCR; Formula Regional European; W Series

INSIGHT

72 Marc Marquez on his MotoGP fightback
78 Nigel Mansell's top 10 races
86 Motorsport's last-minute stand-ins
92 The rise and fall of ASCAR
98 Autosport Williams Engineer Award
102 Index: who wrote what in 2022

CLUB AUTOSPORT

113 Driver given lifetime ban
114 Esterson loses Walter Hayes appeal
116 F1000 frontrunners commit to 2023 plans
117 Opinion: Stephen Lickorish
118 Marcus Pye's moments of the season
122 Top 10 club drivers of 2022
124 Top 10 club rivalries of 2022
126 National pictures of the year

FINISHING STRAIGHT

134 What's on this week
136 From the archive: 1974 British GP
138 My favourite 'car': Tom Kristensen

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

16 Christmas deal for Autosport

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McLaren duo Rast and Hughes lead practice 'race'

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

Maserati sets the pace as Gen3 era dawns for Formula E

FORMULA E

New Maserati recruit Maximilian Guenther headed Formula E's Valencia testing last week as the Gen3 cars were put through their paces in the first public collective sessions before January's Mexico season opener.

The Bavarian logged the top time on the final day of running in a week when he headed five of the seven timed sessions to underline the early strength of the Stellantis-conceived powertrain used by the Maserati MSG and DS Penske teams. They cumulatively logged 990 laps to demonstrate a solid turn of reliability.

Guenther was fastest in all timed sessions on the opening two days and, in a trio of qualifying duel simulations held on Wednesday against DS Penske's reigning champion Stoffel Vandoorne, he beat the Belgian 2-1. This preceded a 25-lap race simulation, with the grid decided purely on who could leave the pitlane first. Here, the McLaren pairing of Rene Rast and Jake Hughes proved most eager to get on track first to lead from the front, and rookie Hughes celebrated his progression into Formula E by securing the mock race 'win' from Guenther, Rast and Jean-Eric Vergne.

Not everyone treated the race as an opportunity to indulge in battling their rivals; Sam Bird explained that Jaguar "deliberately stayed at the back, because we wanted to get some some running on our own and not risk the cars". Undoubtedly there were others who followed suit, while NIO 333's Sergio Sette Camara was unable to join in at all following a technical issue.

Of the non-DS/Maserati teams, Nissan also looked to have made strides with its powertrain after a lean couple of years. The Japanese manufacturer was represented at the top of the charts in an extra hour of practice held after Thursday's media day thanks to the returning Norman Nato. The Nissan-powered McLaren cars also looked strong after a couple of stoppages on Tuesday, with Hughes feeling immediately comfortable with the Gen3 machinery to set the fourth fastest time overall, behind Guenther, Vandoorne and Vergne. Sacha Fenestraz, who has moved from racing in Japan to FE, also endured a Thursday halt on board the works Nissan car. DS Penske's Vergne was the other driver to head a timed session, on Friday morning.

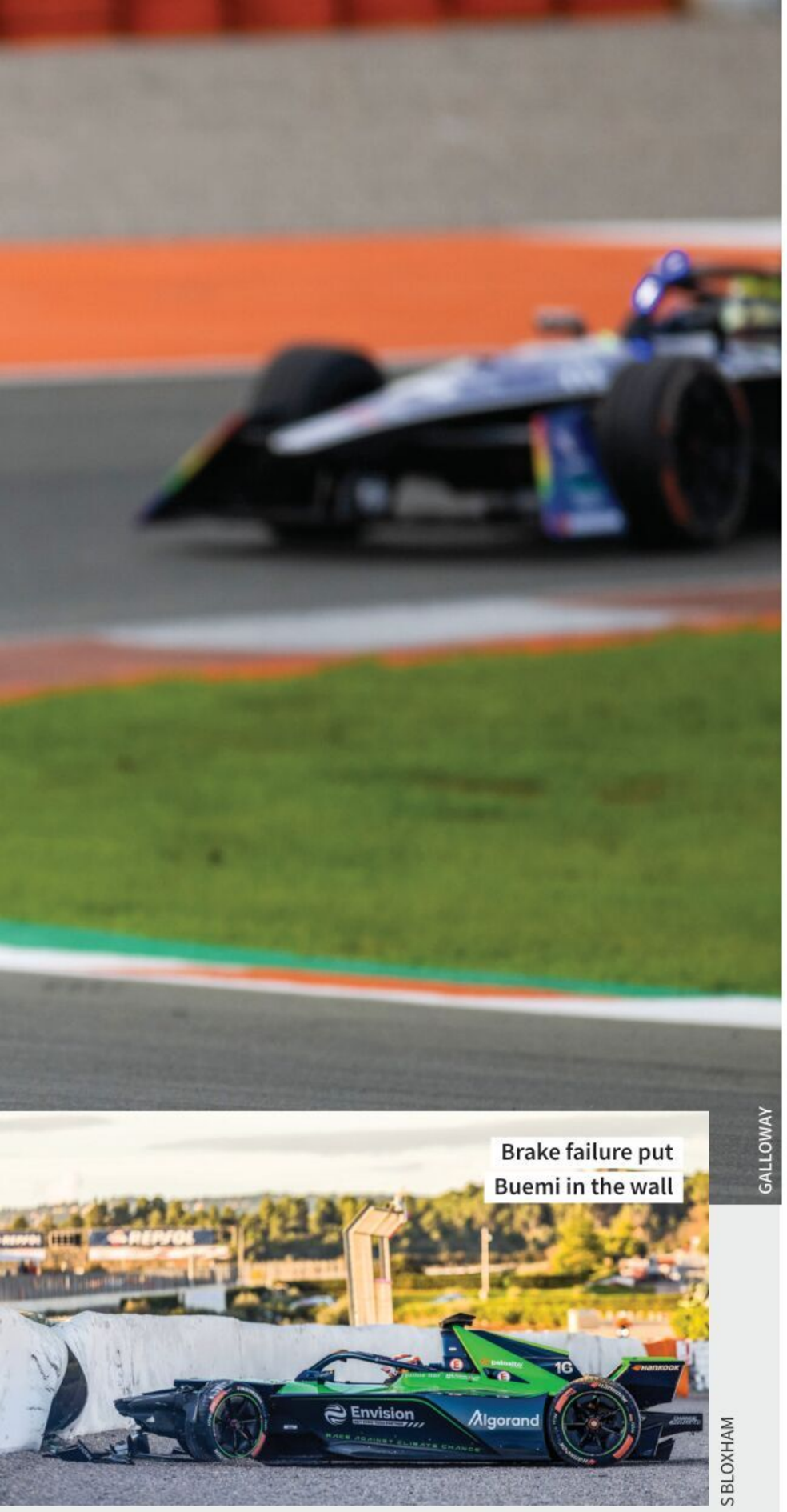
Following issues with reliability in private testing programmes, particularly with the single-specification battery that required a redesign to its packaging, issues were perhaps expected throughout, but not overwhelmingly prevalent. Despite a handful of stoppages through the test, the sole major reliability concern involved Envision Jaguar driver Sebastien Buemi's final-day trip to the Turn 4 wall with a braking issue. An emergency braking package will be fitted following the opening rounds to counter any further problems once the pedal is engaged.

The new Hankook tyres impressed with their durability, but drivers will be clamouring for more grip because Guenther's headline time was just 0.6s quicker than Edoardo Mortara's Gen2 benchmark on Michelins on the same circuit, despite the increase in available



Guenther leads Maser team-mate Mortara

BAGNALL



GALLOWAY

S BLOXHAM

power from 250kW to 350kW.

Buemi left the test with the fewest laps of anyone, clocking just 79 tours of the Circuit Ricardo Tormo; 58 laps fewer than the next lesser-spotted driver in Sette Camara (the Brazilian missed all of Friday's running). Maserati's Edoardo Mortara, who continues with the ex-Venturi squad through its rebranding, did the most running of any driver, with 265 laps across the four days.

Formula E's 2023 season kicks off on 14 January at the Mexico City E-Prix where the music will surely stop, and a pecking order will emerge at the shorter configuration of the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

TOP 10 TIMES

POS	DRIVER (CAR)	TIME
1	**Maximilian Guenther** (Maserati)	1m25.127s
2	**Stoffel Vandoorne** (DS Penske)	1m25.236s
3	**Jean-Eric Vergne** (DS Penske)	1m25.248s
4	**Jake Hughes** (McLaren Nissan)	1m25.284s
5	**Oliver Rowland** (Mahindra)	1m25.317s
6	**Sam Bird** (Jaguar)	1m25.388s
7	**Norman Nato** (Nissan)	1m25.417s
8	**Rene Rast** (McLaren Nissan)	1m25.470s
9	**Edoardo Mortara** (Maserati)	1m25.534s
10	**Robin Frijns** (Abt Mahindra)	1m25.597s

SCHUMACHER GETS RESERVE ROLE FOR MERCEDES

FORMULA 1



MERCEDES

Mick Schumacher has joined Mercedes as its Formula 1 reserve driver for the 2023 season after ending his four-year association with Ferrari.

Schumacher followed in his father's footsteps by linking up with Ferrari in 2019 ahead of his rookie season in FIA F2, with his championship victory the following year helping secure an F1 seat at Haas for 2021.

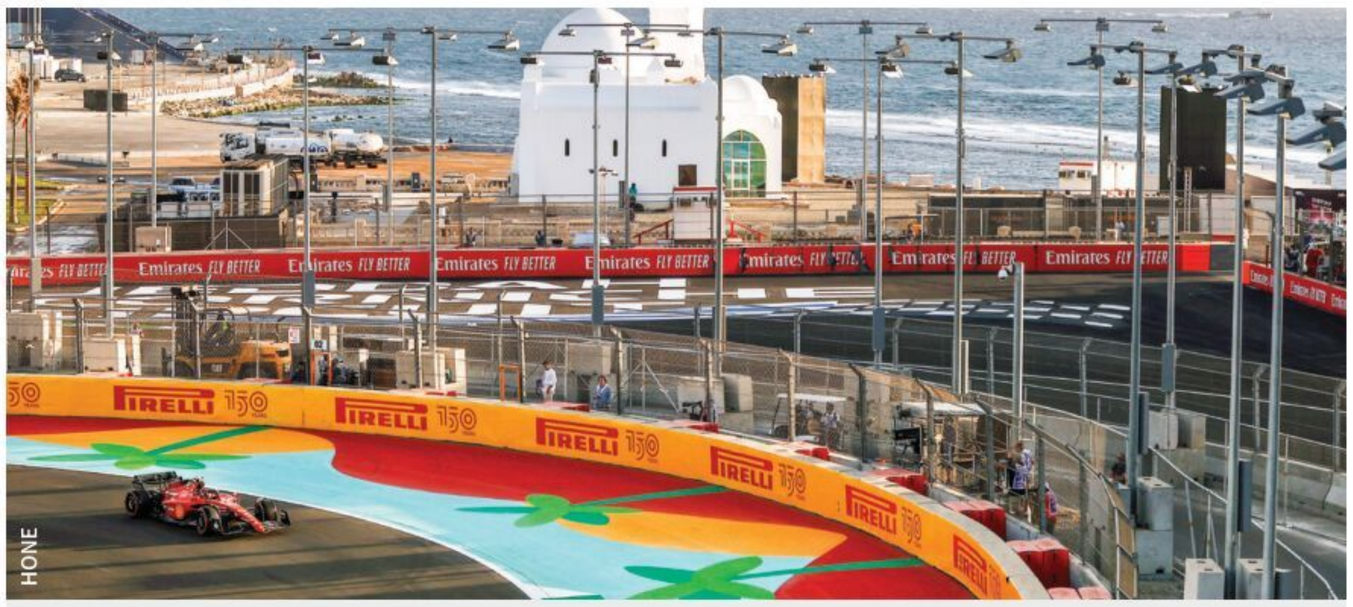
Autosport first reported in August that Schumacher was set to lose his Ferrari ties at the end of the year, and be dropped by Haas in favour of Nico Hulkenberg following a difficult second season.

Ferrari confirmed Schumacher's exit from its driver academy last week, swiftly followed by Mercedes announcing the German's reserve role. He therefore joins the team with which his father Michael made his F1 comeback in 2010, racing for three years before retiring for good at the end of 2012.

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff had been open about wanting to sign Schumacher, noting the family's importance to Mercedes. The team was in need of a new reserve following the departures of Nyck de Vries and Stoffel Vandoorne.

"I take this as a new start," said Schumacher. "I am just excited and grateful to Toto and everybody involved for putting their trust in me."

LUKE SMITH



HONE

Saudi Arabia to host F1 opener

FORMULA 1

Saudi Arabia is set to host the Formula 1 season-opener for the first time in 2024 after a change in plan for Australia to regain the slot.

It emerged in the announcement that Australia's F1 contract had been extended by a further two years that the Melbourne circuit would not be hosting the season opener in 2024 as planned following a request by the Saudi organisers to stage their race before Ramadan.

Ramadan in 2024 begins on Sunday 10 March in Saudi Arabia and lasts until 8 April, meaning the season would likely kick off at the very start of March.

Under its previous agreement, Australia had been due to host the opening race in 2024, but it will now need to wait until 2025 to return to the slot it held for most years between 1996 and 2019. Its new deal promises that Australia will be the first race for at least four years between 2023 and its expiry in 2037.

The 2023 calendar has the Bahrain and Saudi Arabian grands prix in early slots to ensure they take place before Ramadan, which lasts from 22 March to 21 April.

LUKE SMITH



Last Ford F1 project didn't go terribly well. This is Klien and Webber, Brazil 2004

Ford eyes F1 return with Red Bull tie-up

FORMULA 1

Ford has emerged as a surprise candidate for a Formula 1 return in 2026 after being linked to Red Bull's engine plans.

The American manufacturer's involvement would most likely come from badging Red Bull's new engine as a Ford, with the team gaining from the kudos of a tie-up with a global player in the car industry. Red Bull's current partnership with Honda runs until the end of 2025, but the team has been clear that it is open to interest from other manufacturers who may want a tie-up, either as a badging exercise or to offer some technical assistance.

Ford was last officially involved in F1 with Jaguar from 2000 to 2004, with very little success. After pulling the plug on the operation, it sold the squad to Red Bull, which has gone on to multiple world championship successes.

The Blue Oval has shown little interest in returning since, but the growth of grand prix racing, especially in the United States, is understood to have led to it evaluating options. Although there does not seem to be any eagerness for it to get involved in funding a full works team or producing its own power unit, sources suggest that one avenue being explored is a tie-up with Red Bull — the two companies already work together in the World Rally Championship.

Red Bull held advanced talks with Porsche this year about a partnership from the start of the new engine rules in 2026, but those discussions collapsed because of fears that the team would lose its full independence.

The end of that deal prompted talk that current engine supplier Honda could be favourite to get involved, especially with the Japanese marque keen to help develop the kind of electric power technology that will become more important in F1 from 2026.

It is suggested that Ford's preferred route is very different from Porsche, with no interest in formal ownership of the team. It is believed to be happy to leave Red Bull in charge of development of the power unit. Mark Rushbrook, global director of Ford Performance Motorsports, noted there had been "a lot of speculation out there", but it was "nothing we're going to comment on".

JONATHAN NOBLE & ROBERTO CHINCHERO

Loeb in limbo for Monte as Loubet confirmed

WRC

World Rally Championship legend Sebastien Loeb will not bid to repeat his 2022 Monte Carlo Rally win next month after M-Sport filled its line-up for the event.

The Cumbrian squad had been pushing to secure a deal with the nine-time world champion for the season opener, but a combination of factors has scuppered the plan. Loeb's Dakar Rally commitments with Prodrive's Bahrain Raid Xtreme squad finish a day before the Monte Carlo Rally recce begins, a much tighter turnaround than this year.

M-Sport team boss Richard Millener revealed to Autosport that securing the funding was also a hurdle.

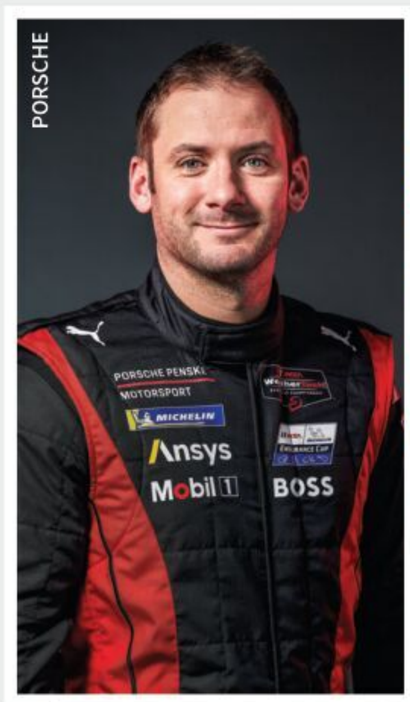
It is unclear whether Loeb will contest any WRC events this year with M-Sport after claiming his 80th career win on the 2022 Monte.

M-Sport will field three Ford Puma Rally1s in Monte Carlo, led by new signing Ott Tanak and Pierre-Louis Loubet (right), who is promoted to a full season.

The third car will be driven by Greek amateur Jourdan Serderidis. As a result, Gus Greensmith will not contest a full season for M-Sport — the Brit has been part of the team's full-time WRC roster since 2020.

TOM HOWARD







Porsche places Tandy in States

IMSA/WEC

Le Mans 24 Hours winner Nick Tandy will return full-time to the IMSA SportsCar Championship at the wheel of Porsche's new 963 LMDh prototype next year. The marque returnee was named alongside Mathieu Jaminet in the North American arm of the Porsche Penske Motorsport squad when the German manufacturer announced how it has divvied up the 10 drivers for its twin assaults on the IMSA series and the World Endurance Championship.

The second IMSA PPM 963 will be raced by Matt Campbell and Felipe Nasr. The third drivers named for next month's Daytona 24 Hours are Dane Cameron in the Tandy/Jaminet entry and Michael Christensen in the sister car. They will move over from the WEC line-up for the IMSA series opener and, most likely, subsequent endurance rounds.

Cameron and Christensen will drive together in the German-based arm of PPM together with Frederic Makowiecki. Andre Lotterer, Kevin Estre and Laurens Vanthoor will race the other entry in the seven-round WEC, which starts in March with the Sebring 1000 Miles.

Tandy, whose return to Porsche after a two-year stint with Chevrolet was announced in November, said: "The tracks it visits, the style of racing and the fan involvement make IMSA the most enjoyable series I've been part of. To be doing IMSA full-time was something I was keen to put my name forward for."

Tandy's role in the IMSA programme means he won't be in a factory car at Le Mans in June, although he expressed the hope that Porsche will bolster its assault on the blue-riband event in 2024 by bringing over its American cars.

"I feel I've got unfinished business at Le Mans because I went back there in the 919 Hybrid in 2017 two years after winning and it came to an end very quickly [when Porsche pulled out of LMP1]," he said. "But for me the draw of getting an overall Daytona victory is as big a draw as getting another Le Mans win."

Gianmaria Bruni, Richard Lietz, Romain Dumas and Thomas Preining remain on Porsche's factory roster for 2022. Neel Jani, Le Mans and WEC title winner in 2016, has confirmed that he is ending his 10-year relationship with the marque after a season as its Formula E reserve driver.

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

MARCIELLO PROTOTYPE DEBUT

Mercedes factory GT driver Raffaele Marciello will make his prototype debut in next month's Daytona 24 Hours. The reigning GT World Challenge Europe and ADAC GT Masters champion will race a High Class Racing ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 in the IMSA SportsCar Championship opener. Marciello will share the car with full-season drivers Ed Jones and Dennis Andersen plus Anders Fjordbach, who is on the squad for the four long-distance races.

GT CHAMPS IN IMSA MERC

Jules Gounon and Daniel Juncadella, winners of the GTWCE Endurance Cup with Marciello in 2022, will drive the Proton-run WeatherTech Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 over the full IMSA series. Fellow Merc factory driver Maro Engel will join them for the four enduros, with Cooper MacNeil coming in as the fourth driver for Daytona.

YOUNGSTERS DROP TO WRC2

World Rally Championship young guns Oliver Solberg and Adrien Fourmaux have dropped into WRC2 for 2023 after losing their top-flight rides with Hyundai and M-Sport respectively. Solberg will drive for top Skoda squad Toksport in a Fabia RS Rally2. Fourmaux will stay within the M-Sport enclave to rally a Ford Fiesta. Class regular Gregoire Munster joins him after a switch from Hyundai.

HARD TIME FOR PATTERSON

Teenaged British Touring Car Championship racer Dexter Patterson has switched from Laser Tools Racing to Team Hard for his second season in the series, to drive a Cupra Leon. Patterson's old team is no longer backed by Laser Tools, and is looking for a driver to join Aiden Moffat as part of a new-look assault, with a front-wheel-drive car – potentially the Cupra – replacing its Infiniti Q50s. Hugely successful BTCC engineer Kevin Berry, who ran Patterson in 2022, is also joining Hard.

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ROC stars join line-up for snow/ice festival

RACE OF CHAMPIONS

Event veterans David Coulthard and Tom Kristensen have joined IndyCar race winner Felix Rosenqvist, World Rally star Thierry Neuville and FIA Formula 2 champion Felipe Drugovich as the latest batch of names confirmed for next month's Race of Champions in Sweden.

As in 2022, the 28-29 January event will take place at the Pite Havsbad resort in the north of Sweden on a track on the frozen Baltic Sea.

Rosenqvist, Neuville and Drugovich will all make their ROC debuts, and the latest influx of names joins Sebastian Vettel, Mika Hakkinen, Valtteri Bottas, Johan Kristoffersson, Solberg father-and-son Petter and Oliver, and Jamie Chadwick. More names are to be announced in the run-up to ROC's second Swedish visit.

"I'm thrilled to finally make my debut in the Race of Champions," said Rosenqvist, who is renowned for his versatility from Formula E to sportscars. "It's an event I've followed throughout my childhood all the way until today, and I actually attended it once at Wembley with my dad a few years ago."

Five-time WRC runner-up Neuville, who joins the fold off the back of his win in 2022's Rally Japan season finale, said: "It's a race I have always wanted to do and I'm really looking forward to competing on snow and ice. I hope I can use my experience from Rally Sweden to perform at the top."



RACE OF CHAMPIONS

Event staples Kristensen and Coulthard hailed ROC's camaraderie, with the Dane in line for a record 17th appearance. "It's been a privilege to go up against legends from so many different fields of motorsport over the years, and many future stars too," said Coulthard. "It was Kristensen who knocked me out [in 2022], but thanks to the whole spirit of ROC you race hard but you don't get bitter when you lose. That won't stop me wanting to get him back though..."

Rossi joins Martin, Farfus in BMW attack

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

Valentino Rossi will remain in the GT World Challenge Europe with the new-look WRT team now running the BMW M4 GT3 after its departure from Audi. The bike legend will also contest the Bathurst 12 Hour with the team in February.

Rossi, who made a full-time switch to four wheels in 2021 aboard a WRT Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II, will be partnered in the GTWCE Sprint Cup by BMW returnee Maxime Martin, with veteran Augusto Farfus joining them for the Endurance Cup rounds of the series. The sister car will be driven by new BMW signings Dries Vanthoor and Charles Weerts, who will be bidding for a fourth consecutive title in the sprints, and in the enduros by DTM champion Sheldon van der Linde.

The same crews will be in the WRT Bimmers at Bathurst on 5 February at the start of the Intercontinental GT Challenge. It has yet to be defined how many of the five events the team will contest.



BRECHT DECANCQ

WRT is expected to run additional non-works BMWs in the GTWCE.

WRT will make its competition debut with the M4 at the Dubai 24 Hours on 14-15 January, where Rossi will also drive as part of the two-car entry. He will share with Martin, Sean Gelael, who is moving over from WRT's LMP2 squad, GT4 graduate Tim Whale and a yet-to-be-named fifth driver. Vanthoor, Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer and Mohammed Al Saud are the first drivers confirmed in the second car.

"I am delighted to have such strong driver line-ups for our programmes in the GTWCE and the IGTC," said WRT team boss Vincent Vosse. "Thank you to BMW M Motorsport for this fantastic opportunity. I have been trying for a long time to work together with Maxime in my team. It is awesome that this is now possible.

"Having Augusto, with all his knowhow and experience, and Maxime alongside Valentino is also a fantastic combination. I can hardly wait for the 2023 season and to fight to bring trophies to Munich."

GARY WATKINS

Andy Hallbery 1966-2022



Hallbery and Michael Andretti present 1992 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award to Dario Franchitti

OBITUARY

Former Autosport editor Andy Hallbery, who has died at the age of 56, was a man who was passionate about motorsport and particularly the people within it.

His love of racing came from being brought up watching speedway at Wembley and being taken to grands prix around Europe. He was drawn to the Brabham team and started a fanzine – *Cobra* – while attending the London College of Printing. This was his calling card in 1986 when he came for an interview for the first step on the Autosport ladder, as editorial assistant.

Helping to produce the magazine meant long nights at the typesetters, but Hallbery got to try racing in the Ford Fiesta Challenge, then the Mondello Park 2CV 24 hours. He cut his reporting teeth in the GM Lotus Euroseries and loved it, especially as most of the races were on the grand prix support programme. History relates that he had a special group of drivers in 1990 – Rubens Barrichello won the title, with Gil de Ferran and David Coulthard not far behind.

In 1992, Hallbery was promoted to editor, meaning less travel and more in his in-tray, before deciding that his expertise was better suited to working on editorial projects, so he leapt at the chance to head up Haymarket's new Special Projects department. It was a job that got his creative juices flowing, starting with the *Stars & Cars* magazine for Mercedes, for which he memorably recreated the Oasis *What's The Story Morning Glory?* cover shot very early one morning in London with Dario Franchitti. These were his happiest years, following the DTM around Europe. "We had a ball from Helsinki to Hockenheim and a spin on the Nordschleife in my company Mercedes," recalls Franchitti.

The biggest change of Hallbery's working life came when he transferred to *Racer* magazine in California in 2001. Not only did it take him to tracks he'd only dreamt of as he followed the Indycar trail, but it reunited him with Franchitti and de Ferran. "Andy was there the morning after my first Indy 500 win," recalls the Scot, "organising a photo in which I was surrounded by milk bottles and had a painted-on milk moustache. Only for Andy would I do that."

The highs were many, but he experienced the lows of losing good mates Greg Moore and Dan Wheldon. Another friendship forged was with Bryan Herta, the pair drawn together by their love of music.

Since returning to the UK, he produced two books, co-writing *The Romance of Racing* with Franchitti and later *Lionheart* on Wheldon's glories in the Indy 500.

Recently, Hallbery enjoyed going back to grassroots level in the UK and was at foggy Silverstone for the Walter Hayes Trophy meeting in November. Running parallel with the racing, he moved to Cardiff and was at a concert at least once per week, revelling in it all.

Hallbery lived a life he loved and was liked and respected as someone who really knew his stuff. As Franchitti concludes, "he brought a real rock and roll feeling to the sport". Autosport extends its sincere condolences to his family and many friends.

BRUCE JONES



With Jan Magnussen at Brands Hatch for the 2021 Formula Ford Festival









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Race Calendar 2023

Brands Hatch Indy	Apr 1/2	Oulton Park	Aug 5
Brands Hatch GP Circuit	May 13/14	Cadwell Park	Sept 2
Silverstone GP Circuit	Jun 10/11	Snetterton 300	Sept 23/24
Donington	Jul 8	Silverstone National	Oct 7
Zandvoort	Jul 15/16		

EQUIPE CLASSIC RACING

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F1 2022's hidden great drive

Eighth place in a McLaren? Hardly worthy of a headline this season past. But perhaps it should have been, given what Lando Norris put himself through

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

"I would say quite confidently, the toughest race of my life. Maybe it sounds easy and whatever, and people say I'm overexaggerating, but I was in a very bad way at that point." Anyone who saw Lando Norris or even heard him speak over the 2022 Spanish Grand Prix weekend — a rare thing in the circumstances — understands exactly how tough he had it.

Overall, the 2022 season was not what Norris and his McLaren squad had been expecting. McLaren worked on its challenger and gained pace and consistency, but it was never a contender. Only the wet Singapore race and Norris's Abu Dhabi happy hunting ground allowed the Briton to show his qualities late on, following his Charles Leclerc-gifted Imola podium. So, in a season when success was harder to see, it's worth taking time on these short, dark December days to consider another time Norris really shone in 2022. Not that it felt like a good time in the cockpit.

Heading into May's Barcelona weekend, Norris began feeling unwell. He took COVID-19 tests that came back negative. But after getting through the Thursday media day sounding fine but not quite right, Norris's illness really took hold. "I just didn't eat for three days," says the 23-year-old of the time leading up to race day. "I couldn't drink for three days."

His condition quelled his usual pre-race excitement and yet Norris was determined to give it a go. First, he had to be cleared by McLaren's doctor, then the team left the final decision to him. His main concern was hitting the required 100bar pressure to properly brake at Turn 1, with a very long straight ahead of Barcelona's main overtaking spot. Additionally, he and engineer Will Joseph had to come up with a plan to minimise communication, button pressing replacing speaking where necessary.

"As he's a reader, we wonder how Norris will reflect on sliding two places in our F1 top 10 drivers"

Although the rest of his weekend media duties were cancelled, for some reason Norris still took part in the pre-race driver parade, shielding himself beneath an umbrella from sunshine that ratcheted the temperature up to 37°C, and sitting on the floor of the flatbed track slowly touring the circuit. His discomfort was spotted by Lewis Hamilton, who checked on Norris, later seen bent double and retching on the grid ahead of the start. But start he did.

"The biggest thing was mentally just being able to keep going every lap," Norris explains, once he had navigated through the first corner braking feeling he "just felt slow with everything".

The result was impressive. While team-mate Daniel Ricciardo went backwards from ninth, Norris gained ground from 11th to come home eighth. The hot temperatures were both a curse and blessing. As well as the obvious difficulty of going racing in a confined and already stifling cockpit, the drivers were on a tyre-management task to get the Pirellis to the finish. While no easy ask, it meant this was not a charge at race-long qualifying pace. But it was made all the more remarkable by the fact that, thanks to an off over the harsh Campsa exit kerbs that sidelined him from FP2 early on, he had missed the chance to test his tyre-saving techniques on the new-for-2022 rubber in 49C track temperatures that, obviously, had not been reached there in winter testing.

Owing to a track-limits penalty in qualifying, objectively Norris couldn't score a top mark in Autosport's driver ratings in Spain. In fact, the way he flattered the McLaren in Jeddah, qualified so well in Australia, battled the best in Singapore and was commanding in Abu Dhabi all netted higher scores. But perhaps Norris's best performance of 2022 came just a week after Barcelona in Monaco, where being able to rest in his own bed aided his recovery, but he was still feeling only "95%". In fact, Norris's cough would continue until a month after he was diagnosed with tonsillitis, and past the Canadian GP, which is where he discussed his Spanish GP drive with Autosport.

Back to his jovial self in Montreal and merrily moving sofas around the McLaren hospitality tent, he could reflect on the ongoing challenges of McLaren's season, which continued to the end and meant just missing out on fourth in the constructors' standings to Alpine by 14 points. In a trying season, Norris did not lose his charms — during a season-closing media session in Abu Dhabi, he gently took Matt Kew to task for the ratings he and this writer handed out over the course of the campaign. As we know he's a reader, we wonder how Norris will reflect on sliding two places in our F1 top 10 and six spots in our Top 50 ranking from 2021 to 2022.

But it's worth remembering that Norris was fighting a different game to those above him, with no championship fight or race win pursuit to consider. That reduces pressures, and Ricciardo did not provide anything like a proper test of the true level of the MCL36 — not that this harmed an assessment of Norris's season, given he once again blew the Australian away. Heading into 2023 he's got a new one to drive alongside — Oscar Piastri. For once, Norris has a young[er] pretender eyeing his position as McLaren's star. But, for now, this represents just another chance to show his class, as he did on that sweltering, challenging, painful day in Spain.

P17 TOP 50 DRIVERS OF 2022

EUROPE'S BEST WINTER RACE SERIES

DECEMBER TO MARCH

PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

SEASON 2022/2023

12/13	DEC	Portimao
14/15	JAN	Estoril
11/12	FEB	Jerez
18/19	FEB	Valencia
04/05	MAR	Navarra
11/12	MAR	Barcelona

GTWS

GT WINTER SERIES



FACTS

- » 6 GTWS events on the best tracks in Spain and Portugal
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- » Participation possible with race licence National A, effective to obtain race licence International C
- » Race event alone or share with another rider
- » Day 1 provides an entire test day (GTWS Test Day), day 2 is the GTWS Race Day
- » Sign-up fee 2.990 € net per event including GTWS Test Day

THE RACE GOES ON

FWS FORMULA WINTER SERIES

FACTS

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SEASON 2023

11/12	FEB	Jerez	4/5	MAR	Navarra
18/19	FEB	Valencia	11/12	MAR	Barcelona



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The price we have to pay?

The addition of Qatar to the World Endurance Championship in 2024 raises troubling questions — not least that it might just be what the series needs

GARY WATKINS

Does the World Endurance Championship need another race in the Middle East? That's the question that needs to be asked after Qatar's Losail International Circuit was named earlier this month as the opening round of the series in 2024. Yet it's not an easy one to answer.

If you think of the likely make-up of the calendar come 2024, then it's definitely a no. It doesn't seem right that the WEC should have two races in a region where there's limited interest in our sport, and traditional motor racing territories will be missing. And I count South America, Australia and even South Africa among them. Don't forget that Kyalami was on the 2020-21 schedule that was blown out of the water by COVID.

And don't get me started on the absence of the UK from the WEC schedule. It's now more than three years since we've hosted a major international endurance race in this country, which quite simply is a travesty to my mind. But then, of course, I am biased.

Beyond a desire to see a balanced — or a truly world — calendar, as the WEC moves back to eight races the season after next, there's that word that was never far from the headlines during the FIFA World Cup just finished. The football extravaganza was a sportswashing exercise designed to try to legitimise a nation that allows abusive labour practices and has a questionable record on human rights, including a ban on homosexuality.

"As much as I'd like to jump on my high horse and say the WEC shouldn't go to Qatar, I can't"

There is always light and shade, of course. We shouldn't forget that this World Cup was the first to be hosted by an Arab state. The alcohol-free environment helped Muslim fans feel more comfortable and the associated support that brought undoubtedly helped Morocco become not only the first African, but also the first Arab semi-finalist in history.

Yet for any of the pluses of the World Cup, a nation rich in oil and natural gas reserves bringing the WEC to its Losail facility is also sportswashing, albeit on a tiny scale in comparison.

Should we object? Or perhaps that should be, *can* we object? Bahrain has been on the calendar every season bar one since the WEC's rebirth in 2012, largely without dissent. I always had the feeling that its presence on the inaugural calendar had something to do with the cancellation of the 2011 Bahrain Grand Prix as a result of protests in demand of increased political freedoms. A kind of penance, if you like, paid to the FIA.

Restrictions on freedom of expression still exist in Bahrain, and its reasons for hosting major international motor races are exactly the same as Qatar's. Yet I've happily flown over there to report on the event for Autosport for every race there's been. Can I now stand up and say that the WEC shouldn't be going to Qatar?

I'm not sure I'm qualified to draw a line in the sand and say we should go to one country and not to another. It's complicated. I don't believe in capital punishment, but I've still been a regular attendee at races in the United States for more than a quarter of a century. Do I say I'll only report on racing in states where there's no death penalty, so going to Watkins Glen in New York State is OK, but Daytona and Sebring in Florida isn't?

Neither should we forget that motor racing has a long history in terms of sportswashing going back to the Nazi-funded Auto Union and Mercedes grand prix teams of the 1930s. And F1, of course, visited apartheid-era South Africa deep into the 1980s.

The economic realities of our sport explain why we visit countries and ignore political concerns. The fat fee coming from Qatar will bolster the finances of the WEC at a difficult time as the world comes out of the COVID pandemic.

Look at Formula E. It finally moved onto a stable financial footing when it signed up to go to Saudi Arabia for 10 years starting in 2019. It wasn't beforehand, even with a grid bursting with manufacturers. Just because the WEC is on the cusp of what we are all quick to describe as a golden era doesn't mean that everything is lining up on the balance sheet.

The truth is that championships, F1 excepted, probably need the big money that comes from non-established motor racing countries, whatever their records on human rights. The addition of new F1 races financed by central government has put the squeeze on traditional European races, but as far as other series go such funding has probably helped guarantee their existence.

I know from speaking to Silverstone about the financial realities of hosting a WEC round. Getting a decent crowd was never easy and that clearly affected the fee that the WEC could demand. Just because there will be five major car makers, Ferrari included, on the grid next year, things aren't going to change overnight for the European races.

As much as I'd like to jump up on my high horse and say that the WEC shouldn't be going to Qatar, I can't. The world isn't that simple. I want a financially healthy WEC that can exploit the incredible assets it will have with all those manufacturers.

Two races in the Middle East in countries that don't confirm to our Western liberal principles may be the price we have to pay for a thriving world championship.

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YOUR SAY

Having been able to record footage of the car through Old Hall on four occasions, it just got better

JUSTIN LYLE

Echoes of the past, sound of the future

Setting the scene: 1985, European Grand Prix, Brands Hatch, free practice. Spectating from Paddock Hill, with many cars separated on track, I can hear individual cars on the Brabham Straight before seeing them.

It took a few laps, but one started to really stand out because the engine note hardly changed. I can only describe it as 'full chant' for longer than any other, before the briefest lift. I couldn't work out if there was a gearshift included, as it dived down Paddock Hill back at full chant. Being able to appreciate the individual sound, I realised the black flash of a Lotus was driven by Ayrton Senna.

It was the closest I had ever heard a racing engine in full song to Will Hoy's Mallock at Snetterton, engine screaming as he tore around Coram and down through the old Russell Bend without lifting. Incredible.

Fast forward to 2022, GB3, Oulton Park, first race. Spectating from the grandstand at Old Hall and the leader is really racing away from the rest. To the stage for the first time in 37 years I can hear an individual engine and it was just like Ayrton – full chant, the briefest lift, maybe a shift and back on full chant diving through Old Hall.

Having been able to record footage of the car through Old Hall on four occasions, it just got better. Checking the programme, it was driven by a lad called Luke Browning, now an extremely worthy winner of the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award, and a future motorsport champion like Ayrton and Will.

Justin Lyle
Glasgow



Is the clock ticking for McLaren and Norris?

Maybe it's just me, but I think I have detected concern in recent Lando Norris interviews about McLaren's F1 progress.

I guess it could be 2024/25 before the new windtunnel etc delivers a shot at a consistent winning car, if not necessarily a championship car, which with Max Verstappen, Charles Leclerc, George Russell and others at the front of the grid might stretch even Lando's good humour.

Taken with even faint rumours of long-term driver options already being lined up at the front, would the only option be to bet all on papaya? Or will admirers of his top-class talent lead to tempting approaches, say around the end of next season?

I am a great McLaren fan, so I wish them all the best. However, it seems to me that the clock is ticking.

Steve Singleton
Yorkshire

Irrepressible Barrichello

Wonderful to see Rubens Barrichello's exuberantly emotional reaction to winning the Brazilian stock car championship again (Pit + Paddock, 15 December); he was palpably as excited with this as he was with any of his greatest F1 achievements.

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland

Have your say, get in touch

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TOP 50 DRIVERS of 2022

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autosport.com/topic/top-50-drivers-of-2022

Jake Boxall-Legge, Charles Bradley, Haydn Cobb, Tom Howard, Alex Kalinauckas, Matt Kew, Jamie Klein, David Malsher-Lopez, James Newbold, Jeremy Shaw, Marcus Simmons, Damien Smith, Andrew van Leeuwen, Gary Watkins, Megan White



✚ NEW ENTRY

Mikel **Azcona**

1st in World Touring Car Cup

50

Expectations were high. A switch from Cupra to BRC Hyundai raised the stakes, especially as the 26-year-old was replacing newly retired tin-top legend Gabriele Tarquini, who became his team manager. But Azcona matched and surpassed Hyundai's hopes. Four wins in the World Touring Car Cup were the result of a new-found maturity and consistency that made him an easy champion, especially when Cyan Lynk & Co and its reigning double champion Yann Ehrlacher departed in a huff over Goodyear tyres. He would likely have beaten them anyway. Was also fifth in the eTouring Car World Cup.





▼ DOWN 45

Sebastien **Ogier**

6th in WRC, 16th in WEC (LMP2)

49

He chose not to defend his eighth World Rally Championship crown in favour of a part-time campaign with Toyota, combined with a partial World Endurance Championship run with the Signatech-run Richard Mille team, taking ninth in LMP2 on his Le Mans 24 Hours debut. Despite limited time in the WRC's new Rally1 machines, Ogier quickly adapted and should have won in Monte Carlo. He was also a contender in Portugal, Kenya and Japan before punctures struck, then dominated Rally Spain to help Toyota to a sixth world title, maintaining his record of winning at least one WRC event every year since 2013.





What next for WTCR's final champion?

Mikel Azcona is a proper elbows-out touring car racer. But the aggression that coloured his reputation during the early Cupra years is now matched by a canny understanding of what it takes, tactically in races and strategically across a season, to win championships.

Sadly, he won't get to defend his World Touring Car Cup title now that the troubled series has folded. So what's next? It would be fascinating to see him in the rough and tumble of the British Touring Car Championship, but without knowledge of the UK tracks that would be a massive risk. He's forged a strong bond with Hyundai this year, so until the FIA's plans for international touring car racing become clear he might have to settle for another eTouring Car World Cup campaign in its Velostar N ETCR. But will that be enough for a talent who should be making the most of his new status as a tin-top world champion? When Autosport asked him about his ambitions back in the summer, Azcona professed to a love for Le Mans and sportscar racing. But how and with whom? At season's end he claimed to be happy just to enjoy the sweet moment of securing his WTCR crown.

"You cannot control what they decide. Even without Cyan the series was very tough"

So would he have beaten Cyan Lynk & Co and reigning double champion Yann Ehrlacher, had they kept their toys in the pram following Goodyear's embarrassing tyre failures? In our opinion and given how well Hyundai played the Balance of Performance game this season, yes. This was his year.

"Of course, as a driver you want to fight until the last moment, but that's not something in your hands," he replied when asked whether Cyan's withdrawal had been a blow. "You cannot control what they decide. Even without them the series was very tough, with Honda, 'Bebu' [runner-up Nestor Girolami], the Audi drivers and Rob Huff as well. He was very quick in some rounds. I really enjoyed the season and we have to be proud. The level of competition was incredible."

For now, Azcona's future looks cloudy. But he's an ambitious young man. Those clouds will part somehow and in some way, and then watch him fly once more.



✚ NEW ENTRY

Lucas **Auer**

2nd in DTM

48 As reigning DTM title-winner Maxi Gotz arrived from HRT, Auer faced a challenge at his Winward Mercedes team. But it wasn't a contest. Twice a winner in 2022, the Austrian furthered his credentials and would have stolen the title without a puncture at Spa while second. His points tally from the second half of the season was unrivalled; he finished no lower than seventh (Spa DNF aside) during that time, and racked up the best qualifying record of a quality eight-strong AMG contingent. A race winner in European Formula 3 back in 2013/14, he's more than just Gerhard Berger's nephew.



TRIENITZ/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



✚ NEW ENTRY

Tom **Ingram**

1st in British Touring Car Championship

47 Nobody won as many races as Ingram in this year's BTCC. He was quick, kept up his superb racecraft and showed immense mental capacity in absorbing the requirements brought by the introduction of hybrid power boosts for 2022. So much so that Ingram is one of the two drivers who sits on the series' Sporting Working Group, which came up with the hybrid sporting rules tweaks for 2023. Ingram's move to Excelr8 Motorsport's Hyundai before 2021, far from being a risk, has turned the nearly-man into a champion with a team moulded around him. And don't they love him…



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Nick **Tandy**

6th in World Endurance Championship (GTE)

46 A low-key season with Corvette Racing? That overlooks a superlative performance at Le Mans – including pole position – that should have made the Brit and Tommy Milner WEC title winners. Add the 50 points lost when team-mate Alexander Sims was taken out of the lead and they would have sealed the final GTE Pro crown. That had a lot to do with an against-the-odds victory next time out at Monza. Tandy got his Chevrolet Corvette C8.R to the end without a late splash of fuel, giving them the victory. Years of driving to the fuel reading in IMSA came to the fore that day.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

TOP 50 2021 DRIVER LIST

1	Lewis Hamilton	18	Josef Newgarden	35	Filipe Albuquerque
2	Max Verstappen	19	Pato O'Ward	36	Thierry Neuville
3	Lando Norris	20	Alessandro Pier Guidi	37	Felipe Nasr
4	Sebastien Ogier	21	Valtteri Bottas	38	Edoardo Mortara
5	Alex Palou	22	Kevin Estre	39	Sebastian Vettel
6	Charles Leclerc	23	Oscar Piastri	40	Nirei Fukuzumi
7	Carlos Sainz	24	Fernando Alonso	41	Dennis Hauger
8	Kyle Larson	25	Sergio Perez	42	Will Power
9	Nyck de Vries	26	Kamui Kobayashi	43	Ash Sutton
10	Pierre Gasly	27	Martin Truex Jr	44	Robin Frijns
11	Mitch Evans	28	Tomoki Nojiri	45	Yann Ehrlacher
12	George Russell	29	Scott Dixon	46	Yifei Ye
13	Elfyn Evans	30	Daniel Ricciardo	47	Johan Kristoffersson
14	Colton Herta	31	Kalle Rovanpera	48	Dries Vanthoor
15	Jake Dennis	32	Sebastien Buemi	49	Kelvin van der Linde
16	Shane van Gisbergen	33	Esteban Ocon	50	Guanyu Zhou
17	Antonio Felix da Costa	34	Liam Lawson		



— RE-ENTRY

Kevin **Magnussen**

13th in Formula 1 World Championship

45 Did pole in Brazil get Magnussen over the line here? It helped, but he was in the frame for a Top 50 spot anyway. That's because he was brought back in from the cold and immediately moved Mick Schumacher aside to lead Haas. While fifth in the Bahrain opener was the high point, he scored points six more times to double his team-mate's tally. With Haas suffering in the development race, the second half of his year was quieter and typified by mainly bang-average drives. That was until he starred at Interlagos. Rapid in all three chunks of qualifying, his pole was far from a total fluke.



HONE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▲ UP 3

Johan **Kristoffersson**

1st in World Rallycross; 2nd in Extreme E

44 Another year, another World Rallycross title. But this time Kristoffersson did it with electric power as he produced a seamless shift into the series' new era. Unlike his triumph on wins countback last year, the Swede was the man to beat from the off, winning eight out of 10 rounds to secure his fifth world title. Kristoffersson also applied his electric racing knowhow in Extreme E as reigning champion for Rosberg X Racing alongside Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky. Two wins from the first three rounds put them on course for the crown, only to suffer a nightmare title decider in Uruguay.



STALEY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



✚ NEW ENTRY

Louis **Deletraz**

1st in ELMS; 5th in WEC (LMP2); 7th in IMSA (LMP2)

43 A prolific LMP2 racer – and winner with six victories – in his second full season of sportscar racing. He claimed one title, had a big hand in the victory in another, and finished on the podium at Le Mans. That's why he ended the year with a factory Acura deal for 2023. At Prema, he and Robert Kubica repeated the ELMS title they won in 2021, and in the WEC they were competitive even if there were no wins. An ELMS clash ruled out a second title in IMSA with Tower Motorsport, but Deletraz played a big part in the drivers' crown for team boss John Farano.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 7

Filipe **Albuquerque**

2nd in IMSA; 9th in WEC (LMP2)

42 Lady Luck rarely seemed to glance favourably at Albuquerque this year, but he continued to show why he is one of the world's top prototype exponents, especially in North America. Acura and Cadillac waged a titanic battle in IMSA, the Portuguese remaining with Ricky Taylor at Wayne Taylor Racing after an agonisingly close second in 2021. Opportunistic late passes at Laguna Seca, Watkins Glen and Road America sealed great victories and a slim points lead heading into the Petit Le Mans finale, only for a clash in traffic to spell the end of WTR's title hopes.



FARMER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



ANALYSIS

BAKER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

New entry Louis Deletraz picks his favourite victory of the season

"The first victory for Prema at Paul Ricard in the ELMS was important, because it set out our goals for the season, but win number one for me was Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta.

"Tower arrived there second in all the championships: the drivers', the teams' and the Trueman Bronze Cup. We knew the job we had to do and were super-quick in the night. I had a fantastic fight with Juan Pablo Montoya [in the DragonSpeed entry]. I passed him at the restart and pulled away over the final 20 minutes. We'd fallen behind in the pits for some reason and we had to beat him to take all the championships.

"I just went out there fighting. It was one of those moments where you are in your bubble and everything goes right. OK, I couldn't win the championship because I had to miss Mid-Ohio because there was a clash with the ELMS, but I feel I can take a bit of responsibility in making it happen for John [Farano]."



▼ DOWN 24

Antonio **Felix da Costa**

1st in WEC (LMP2); 8th in Formula E

41 The 2019-20 Formula E champion's year began with a disappointing Diriyah weekend, but he gradually found greater consistency. Citing "small details" as the main mitigating factor in his results, da Costa had the best average grid position of anyone in 2022, but struggled for a podium until he'd claimed pole in Morocco. His New York win was masterful, but LMP2 honours with Jota at Le Mans were the highlight, en route to the #38 team's successful title push. A new relationship with Porsche in Formula E beckons – the last time da Costa switched teams, he ended the year with a title…



S BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▲ UP 8

Dries **Vanthoor**

1st in GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup;
1st in Nurburgring 24 Hours

40

That he won the GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup with Charles Weerts at the WRT Audi squad was hardly news, given they sealed a hat-trick of titles in the short-format segment of the premier GT3 series. But beyond the series he's made his own, the younger of the Vanthoor brothers notched up a second victory in the Nurburgring 24 Hours and once again reinforced his reputation with his non-GT3 activities. He proved at the Fuji WEC round why he deserves a place in new employer BMW's LMDh when it joins the series with WRT in 2024.



SRO/KEVIN PECKS



▼ DOWN 3

Thierry **Neuville**

3rd in the World Rally Championship

39

When everything clicked, he was extremely difficult to beat in 2022. But the Belgian was let down by an underdeveloped, tricky to drive and unreliable Hyundai i20 N on several occasions. Neuville's never-give-up attitude was seen in Croatia. He and co-driver Martijn Wydaeghe collapsed after pushing their unresponsive car for more than a kilometre into service, but still finished third. A morale-boosting first podium for Hyundai came in Sweden and he should have scored a victory on home soil in Ypres but for a driver error. He quickly atoned for the mistake with faultless drives to wins in Greece and Japan.



McKLEIN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



AUDI SPORT CUSTOMER RACING/BILDAGENTUR KRÄLING

ANALYSIS

WRT team boss Vincent Vosse on what makes Dries Vanthoor special

"What Dries did in Fuji [below] was impressive: he just jumped in the LMP2 and was quick straight away. OK, he'd driven the car at Le Mans, but that's a very different track. He didn't have experience of new tyres in practice, because Robin [Frijns] was always going to qualify the car. That means you have to learn about them in the race, but he was super-quick, among the quickest.

"Only [Antonio Felix] da Costa was quicker on the green-flag averages. Dries was actually faster than Robin in our car, though only by a couple of hundredths. When you are up there with the guys who are in the cars all season, it shows that you're a bit special.

"Sometimes Dries appears capable of doing the impossible. At Le Mans last year, he was moaning to me that the HubAuto car was so bad and there was no way he could be competitive. And then, bang, he goes out and puts it on GTE Pro pole ahead of all the factory cars.

"At Magny-Cours this year in the Sprint Cup, Dries was leading and [Raffaele] Marciello was coming back at him in the closing stages. We told him he had to find two tenths, and the next lap, bang, he was two tenths quicker.

"That's the thing about Dries: he's such an instinctive driver – he just gets in and goes. And we forget that he's still only 24."

"He's such an instinctive driver – he just gets in and goes. And we forget that he's still only 24"



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



✚ NEW ENTRY

Christopher **Bell**

3rd in NASCAR Cup

38 In his second year with Toyota's NASCAR Cup Series juggernaut Joe Gibbs Racing, Bell rose to the fore of its four-car team perhaps sooner than was intended. Three wins, along with making it to the Championship Four after an opportunistic victory at Martinsville, were a great return for the 2017 Truck Series champ in the #20 car he took over from Erik Jones only last season. With JGR's two-time champion Kyle Busch exiting its line-up, and at 28, Bell will put better-paid veteran team-mates Denny Hamlin and Martin Truex on notice if he keeps beating them like this…



THACKER / NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

TOP 50 NEW ENTRIES

20 Ross Chastain
20th in 2021 NASCAR Cup;
7th in 2020 NASCAR Xfinity

34 Felipe Drugovich
8th in 2021 FIA Formula 2 Championship;
9th in 2020 FIA Formula 2 Championship

37 Sheldon van der Linde (below)
11th in 2021 DTM;
2nd in 2021 Nurburgring 24 Hours;
6th in 2020 DTM;
3rd in 2020 Nurburgring 24 Hours

38 Christopher Bell
12th in 2021 NASCAR Cup;
20th in 2020 NASCAR Cup

43 Louis Deletraz
1st in 2021 European Le Mans Series;
8th in 2020 FIA Formula 2 Championship;
4th in 2020 Le Mans 24 Hours

47 Tom Ingram
4th in 2021 British Touring Car Championship;
4th in 2020 British Touring Car Championship

48 Lucas Auer
5th in 2021 DTM;
12th in 2020 DTM

50 Mikel Azcona
1st in 2021 TCR Europe;
3rd in 2021 Pure ETCR;
7th in 2021 World Touring Car Cup;
7th in 2020 World Touring Car Cup



GRUPPE C GMBH



✚ NEW ENTRY

Sheldon **van der Linde**

1st in DTM

37 What was already a good year for the van der Lindes thanks to Kelvin's Nurburgring 24 Hours victory was made exceptional when younger brother Sheldon scooped the DTM title. The BMW ace won more races than anyone, nursing his rubber with full ballast to complete a Lausitzring weekend sweep, but his most important result was recovering second at Hockenheim after a tyre infraction left him 16th on the grid. He knew when to take a longer-term view and picked battles well, while the few errors he did make had meagre points impact. Superb in qualifying, he's a champion with a bright future.



BEIL/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 21

Jake **Dennis**

6th in Formula E

36 A surprise title contender in his maiden Formula E season in 2021, Dennis did not struggle for pace this year, but Andretti's loss of works BMW support hurt the American squad's chances. Strong in qualifying, he could be counted on to deliver when Andretti had its software right, but there were often energy management concerns that cost him. London was the highlight, with back-to-back poles and a scintillating victory in the first of two ExCeL races delighting the fans. With Andretti gaining Porsche support for the Gen3 era, Dennis may be a dark horse once more.



STALEY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

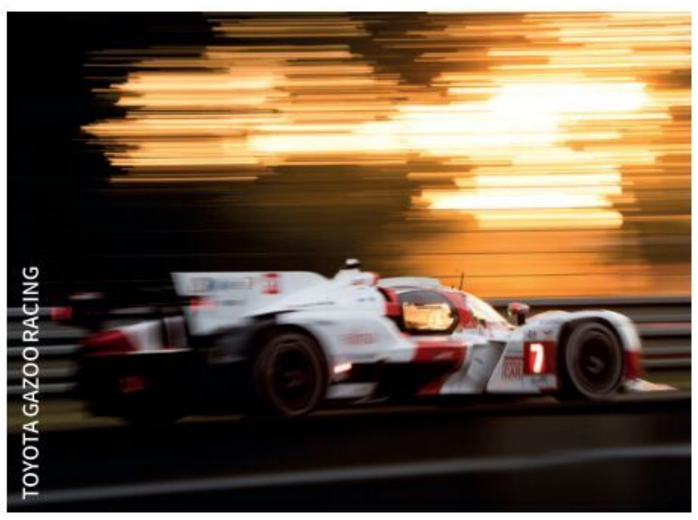


— RE-ENTRY

Jose Maria **Lopez**

3rd in WEC; 2nd in Le Mans 24 Hours

35 Should a driver whose mistake at the Sebring WEC opener resulted in a DNF really be this high in the list? Yes, if you consider the way the Argentinian performed under pressure at Le Mans in June. Lopez's seat at Toyota was under threat, but he produced his best performance of the season. He was the quickest of the trio in the second-placed #7 Toyota over the full distance, more than two tenths up on Kobayashi. In the race's final third when #7 was playing catch-up, he was head and shoulders clear at the top of the Toyota pack. Top drivers perform when the chips are down.



TOYOTA GAZOO RACING



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

The five key moments in Felipe Drugovich's Formula 2 title win

First win in Jeddah

Getting that first win on the board is crucial in any driver's title campaign, so for Drugovich to respond to Theo Pourchaire's Bahrain victory the following weekend in Jeddah proved key. Scoring 12 points at the opening round put Drugovich in fifth, with his ART rival leading the standings, but retaliation in Saudi Arabia as Pourchaire failed to score thrust Drugovich to the top spot.

Brilliance at Barcelona

Winning both races in Spain while Pourchaire scored just eight points gave Drugovich a 26-point lead – a valuable boost in their title battle. He lined up fourth on Saturday, was promoted to third after Calan Williams failed to get off the grid, before sweeping past Jake Hughes and Pourchaire by Turn 1 to take a comfortable win. Sunday's feature race was even more impressive. A clever pitstop strategy helped him to move up from 10th to the lead.

Staying consistent in Baku

F2's reversed-grid format can make it tricky for drivers to score points in both races, with the top 10 flipped for Saturday's sprint race and only the top eight scoring. But Drugovich managed to secure a decent haul in both Baku races, adding 19 points to his tally during a run of six consecutive points scores. Such consistency was key to Drugovich's title challenge.

Coming back strong at Spa

With just three rounds remaining after the post-Hungary pause, the return from F2's summer break was always going to be a crucial juncture in this championship. Drugovich capitalised on Pourchaire's struggles for pace, finishing fourth and second to open up a 43-point lead heading to Zandvoort. The Brazilian says it was after this weekend where he "really thought that [the title] was possible".

Pourchaire's crash at Zandvoort

Pourchaire's chances finally went off the rails in the Netherlands. A qualifying crash while running fourth left the Frenchman starting 16th for both races on a pivotal weekend, while Drugovich took a comfortable pole. He went on to win the feature race, and from here was unstoppable. He claimed the crown the following weekend at Monza, despite a rare DNF.



+ NEW ENTRY

Felipe **Drugovich**

1st in FIA Formula 2

34

Drugovich stunned onlookers with his charge to the F2 title among a strong field. In his third year of F2, the Brazilian claimed a points lead he would not lose during the fourth of 14 rounds, and took the MP Motorsport squad to its maiden F2 drivers' title while also leading it to the teams' crown. Five wins (including Monaco) and six further podiums were a strong return, and his reward was an Aston Martin F1 reserve role. Drugovich took four pole positions – almost a 30% hit rate – and also made some brilliant charges through the field, such as his feature race win from 10th on the grid in Spain.



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Alex **Albon**

19th in Formula 1 World Championship

33

Returns to the Top 50 for the first time since 2019 after being benched by Red Bull. Back then, Albon was criticised for too many crashes and falling too far behind his stablemate. Neither can be said of his distinguished F1 return, even if the intra-team competition wasn't anything like as stiff: he trounced Nicholas Latifi. His finest performance in the backmarker Williams came in Australia, where he excelled in qualifying – as often – and then managed his tyres for a points reward. Albon scored twice more and dragged the FW44 into the top 12 a further five times. But the comical Singapore shunt isn't forgotten.



BINGHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Jean-Eric **Vergne**

4th in Formula E

32

After a distinctly off-colour 2021, Vergne proved it was merely a blip and returned to championship contention in 2022. The double Formula E champion rivalled Stoffel Vandoorne for consistency in the opening rounds and stood atop the standings at the end of the Rome weekend, but DS Techeetah struggled to find the next level and Vergne failed to find a win. Also tasked with bringing in Peugeot's nascent WEC Hypercar programme, Vergne's #93 team bore the brunt of the 9X8's teething problems with fourth at Fuji his only finish, but he took fastest lap in the Bahrain finale.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 10

Valtteri **Bottas**

10th in Formula 1 World Championship

31

Led Alfa Romeo to the best constructors' result of its Sauber era and had the measure of rookie team-mate Zhou Guanyu – 14-7 and 11-4 in qualifying and race head-to-heads. Both gained from Alfa starting at the minimum weight limit, then struggled more as rivals slimmed down. Early highlights were his Emilia Romagna GP pace and points, and qualifying results in Bahrain and Miami. Zhou embarrassed him with his Baku pace pre-DNF, while Bottas clouting the wall distracted by the battling Mercedes behind in Miami and swapping fifth for seventh was poor, as was his Austin spin DNF.



GOODEN/DPPI





▲ UP 2

Sebastien **Buemi**

1st in World Endurance Championship;
1st in Le Mans 24 Hours; 15th in Formula E

30 The Swiss remained at the top of his game in WEC. Buemi was probably at his best when it mattered most – at Le Mans. He was quickest of Toyota's sextet over the first 16 hours. That means something because it really was nip and tuck better the two crews. It was a flat-out confrontation, even if the passes on the track were strictly choreographed from the pitwall. There was no return to winning ways in FE for the former champion, however, thanks to an uncompetitive Nissan. But he did outperform his team-mate, unlike last year.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

TOP 50 RE-ENTRIES

6 Stoffel Vandoorne
5th in 2015;
50th in 2016,
26th in 2020

11 Joey Logano
26th in 2015 and 2016;
27th in 2018

16 Ott Tanak
4th in 2018;
3rd in 2019;
41st in 2020

22 Brendon Hartley
50th in 2015;
23rd in 2016;
20th in 2017

24 Raffaele Marciello
48th in 2017 and 2020

25 Sebastien Loeb
7th in 2011;
4th in 2012;
12th in 2013

26 Tom Blomqvist
39th in 2014

28 Scott McLaughlin
38th in 2018;
14th in 2019;
13th in 2020

32 Jean-Eric Vergne
3rd in 2018;
10th in 2019;
35th in 2020

33 Alex Albon
30th in 2018;
25th in 2019

35 Jose Maria Lopez
18th in 2014;
33rd in 2015;
31st in 2016

45 Kevin Magnussen
42nd in 2014;
40th in 2017;
48th in 2018

46 Nick Tandy
47th in 2014;
8th in 2015;
50th in 2020



▲ UP 10

Sebastian **Vettel**

12th in Formula 1 World Championship

29 His season got off to a bad start by missing the opening two races with COVID-19, then Vettel crashed twice on his return in Australia. There were further frustrations such as his Austria qualifying track limits transgression, impeding Lewis Hamilton and Sergio Perez while being lapped in Zandvoort, plus turning in and glancing Fernando Alonso at Suzuka Turn 1. But he showed great tyre management skill to earn Imola points and generally had Lance Stroll covered on pace. Suzuka and Austin charges were highlights, as was his Abu Dhabi farewell despite Aston Martin's long-stint strategy.



HONE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Scott **McLaughlin**

4th in IndyCar Series

28 When he departed Supercars in 2020, you might have expected that was the last McLaughlin appearance in our Top 50. But an absolute transformation in qualifying pace for his second IndyCar season has catapulted him into our spotlight once more. Three top-drawer wins and three pole positions made him stern opposition for his Penske team-mates and Ganassi's aces. 'All' he needs in order to become a true title threat is to eliminate the little costly errors – in other words, improve his worst days. His best days have already proven he's got what it takes to be a champion at this level.



GALSTAD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 22

Alex **Palou**

5th in IndyCar Series

27 There's little indication that the Ganassi contract dispute and a potential move to Arrow McLaren SP distracted Palou from his job, but there were too many weekends this year when the reigning IndyCar champion looked solid but not a star. He was strong at Indy again – the only driver who kept up with Scott Dixon, until a badly timed yellow cost him dear – but on other ovals he was disappointing. He was dominant at the Laguna Seca season finale, just three days before Ganassi confirmed his return in 2023, but this still felt like a year of treading water for this highly talented racer.



ABBOTT/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Tom **Blomqvist**

1st in IMSA; 3rd in ETCR

26 Tangible success has been a long time coming for the Anglo-Kiwi-Swede. More than a decade after his second Autosport BRDC Award nomination, the now-29-year-old finally delivered. Some were surprised when Mike Shank tabbed Blomqvist to join IMSA veteran Oliver Jarvis for his Acura team following a promising test, but he was clearly the standout driver in this year's IMSA SportsCar series. He was fast, aggressive when he needed to be, and consistent with barely the hint of an error. Wins at Daytona and Road Atlanta bracketed a storybook campaign.



GALSTAD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Sebastien **Loeb**

1st in Extreme E, 1st in Race of Champions; 2nd in Dakar Rally; 2nd in World Rally-Raid Championship; 11th in WRC

25 Proof that class is permanent, as one of motorsport's all-time greats continued to deliver at the highest level. Runner-up on the Dakar Rally, one week later Loeb became the oldest winner in WRC history aged 48 when he claimed an 80th career win on the Monte Carlo. Of the four WRC rallies he contested for M-Sport Ford, Loeb led three. He beat Sebastian Vettel to a fourth Race of Champions crown, was second in the new World Rally-Raid series, then clinched the Extreme E title with Cristina Gutierrez.



MARAGNI/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



— RE-ENTRY

Raffaele **Marciello**

1st in GT World Challenge Europe; 1st in Spa 24 Hours; 1st in ADAC GT Masters

24 The accolades just kept coming: four pole positions from five GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup sessions, converted into three routine wins by Timur Boguslavskiy (a fourth at Valencia was only lost on the final lap amid changing weather), helped secure the overall GTWCE crown. A first 24-hour race victory at Spa contributed to a long-awaited GTWCE Endurance Cup title. He added the ADAC GT Masters crown, and led the Macau GT Cup until suspension failure put him out. For the Mercedes ace, the year underlined his status as a benchmark GT3 driver.



SRO / TWENTY-ONE CREATION - BENICHOU



▲ UP 10

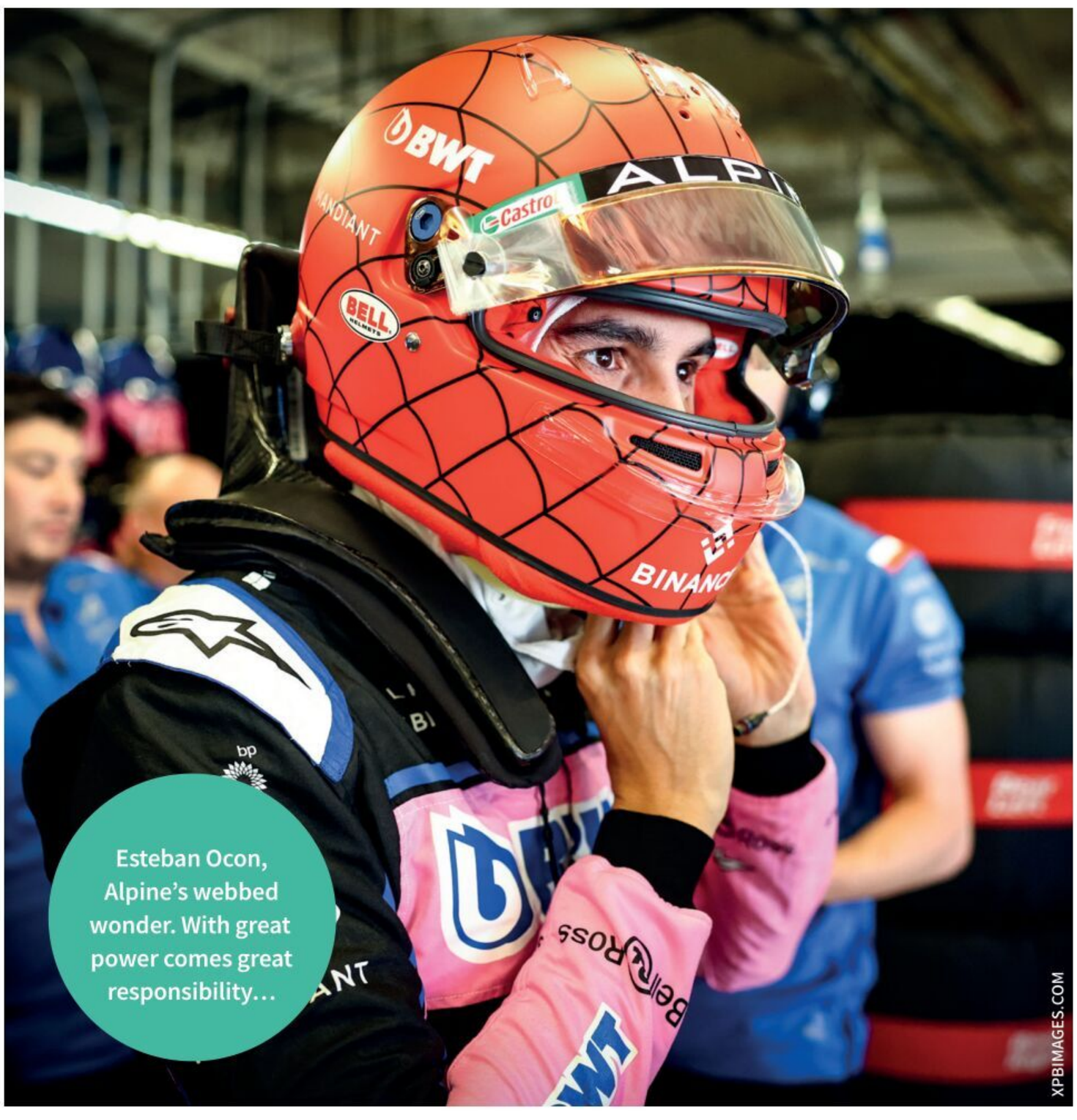
Esteban **Ocon**

8th in Formula 1 World Championship

23 An up and down F1 campaign, but he edged Fernando Alonso in their qualifying head to head, even if he generally trailed the Spaniard on race pace. Ocon had mid-season qualifying struggles with oversteer, put in fine overtaking moves in Spain and Belgium, plus a bold pass on Valtteri Bottas in Mexico where he battled an engine issue. But mistakes hitting Mick Schumacher in Bahrain and Yuki Tsunoda in France were punished, as was his defence against Lewis Hamilton in Monaco. But holding off Hamilton in Japan after starring in qualifying was up there with the best F1 race driving in 2022.



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Esteban Ocon, Alpine's webbed wonder. With great power comes great responsibility…

XPBIMAGES.COM



— RE-ENTRY

Brendon **Hartley**

1st in WEC; 1st in Le Mans 24 Hours

22 Separating Toyota's drivers isn't easy, so close are they on the stopwatch lap after lap, race after race – and season after season. So when one of them does something a bit special, he's an obvious candidate for this list, especially when he ended up as world champion and won Le Mans. Step forward Brendon Hartley. He starred in qualifying twice in 2022, first at Le Mans, where he denied team-mate Kamui Kobayashi a fifth pole, and then in Bahrain, where he took the top spot by the better part of a second. Both – Kobayashi missing pole at Le Mans and a margin of eight tenths between the Toyotas – are pretty unusual.



TOYOTA GAZOO RACING



▲ UP 7

Tomoki **Nojiri**

1st in Super Formula

21 For the second year running, Honda's man proved he is the current class of the field in Super Formula, becoming the series' first back-to-back champion since Tsugio Matsuda in 2007-08. But Toyota's resurgence meant he had to work hard to repel the threats of both Sacha Fenestraz and Ryo Hirakawa. Indeed, while Nojiri was the qualifying master, converting his frequent poles into wins was trickier, and it took him until the year's final race at Suzuka to take a second. By that time though, the title was in the bag and, after the pressure was released, he proceeded to devastate his rivals with a dominant pole-to-win.



ISHIHARA/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



TOYOTA GAZOO RACING

ANALYSIS

Brendon Hartley remembers his 2022 WEC qualifying heroics

"We all know that pole position isn't the most important thing for a 24-hour race, but you get caught up in the atmosphere, especially with the short, sharp Hyperpole format at Le Mans. It brings a lot more excitement for the fans, but it's a better system for the drivers, too.

"My heart was pounding in my chest beforehand, so I was definitely feeling the pressure, but the

"My heart was pounding in my chest beforehand, so I was definitely feeling the pressure"

pleasure I got from driving those laps was amazing. It's the only time during the week when the car is on low fuel and new tyres, so I got to drive the car at its best when you're in full-attack mode.

"I'd gone fastest on my first lap, but on my second run on a new set of tyres I hit traffic. I knew I had to improve because I'd lost the pole to the Alpine, and Kamui [Kobayashi] was out on track in the other car.

"I managed to get a clear lap and put it all together to end up ahead of them both. Lining up on the start/finish straight afterwards in front of all the photographers having put my name to pole position was a nice moment. Whenever you are ahead of Kamui over one lap at Le Mans it means something, because he's 'Mr Qualifying' there. The whole session felt strong and I was at one with the car.

"Bahrain was probably one of the best qualifyings I've ever done. It's pretty unusual to be that far ahead, but I'd done my homework in free practice. The tyre prep was pretty spot-on for qualifying and it was an incredibly clean lap. There's always room for improvement, but that was a nice one.

"Bahrain probably showed that it was right for one driver to qualify the car every time. We didn't start the season with that as a plan; it just kind of worked out like that, but it paid dividends."



✚ NEW ENTRY

Ross **Chastain**

2nd in NASCAR Cup

20 Breakout NASCAR Cup seasons don't get any bigger than this: Chastain wasn't even sure that he'd have a ride in 2022 after Trackhouse bought Chip Ganassi Racing – but new team boss Justin Marks put his faith in him, and Chastain paid him back handsomely. After starting the season with full funding for only the first 10 races, he delivered three top threes before his maiden Cup win at COTA in round six. He won race 10 too, at Talladega, and soon had sponsors doubling up on the #1 car! He sealed second in points at Phoenix, only after the wild Martinsville wall ride that made him an internet sensation.



ROSENBLUM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▲ UP 1

Alessandro **Pier Guidi**

1st in WEC (GTE); 1st in Gulf 12 Hours

19 Heroics from Pier Guidi in a Ferrari are nothing new. He did it again in the wet at Spa – this time in the WEC round, not the 24 Hours – over a marathon stint lasting more than four hours. But it was at the finale in Bahrain where Ale produced his most amazing performance, one that sealed the title for the Italian and James Calado when all looked lost. Had he not sussed, after fourth gear was lost, that rising transmission temperatures stabilised when he wasn't using the 'box on the straights, he and Calado probably wouldn't have claimed the final GTE Pro crown. His decision to leave the car in fifth was inspired.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



ANALYSIS

JARRETT/NKP

Chastain's remarkable emergence as a premier-tier NASCAR Cup star

Since the days of Jim Clark there probably hasn't been an elite-level driver who identifies as a farmer, yet here we are in 2022 with Ross Chastain, runner-up in NASCAR's Cup Series, being proud to call himself an 'eighth-generation melon farmer'.

Racing a go-kart around the farmhouse was what set him on the road to racing stardom, and he leant on his family business for the financial support to race locally. He then attracted support from the

"When I smashed my first watermelon, I was afraid my family might be upset I'd wasted it"

melon farming community as he rose into NASCAR's ranks, but what marked Chastain out from his early days was his willingness to race any vehicle, anywhere. He famously got on a Greyhound bus to get to Eldora to race his Truck; he even supplemented his income by driving Spire Motorsports' RV to races.

"Point blank, I'm still paying my dad back, and I will probably for the foreseeable future," says Chastain. "He sacrificed so much to put me in race cars coming up through the ranks and then went out to people that he knew, and that our family knew, and we leveraged a lot of relationships.

"We didn't own a team, we didn't know what we were doing. We spent a lot of our own money to get here. And it's not talked about enough in this sport because it's kind of the ugly truth, that you have to sacrifice a lot. But I feel as privileged coming up as any other kid or guy or girl that has, like, a direct family tie to a team. I think it could have went wrong for them just as much as it could have went wrong for me.

"It's not like it's just because I was a good race car driver that I got here. I had a lot of people, mainly in the agriculture industry, support me because they knew me and they knew my family. So I'm forever grateful for that. This is what built my family, we're proud of it."

And how about that celebration of smashing a watermelon when he wins races?

"When I smashed my first watermelon at the track, I was afraid my family might be upset that I'd wasted it. My grandad, he said, 'I loved it.' And I'm like, 'Really?' And he said, 'People in another country might see that, and go buy one.'"



▲ UP 7

Sergio **Perez**

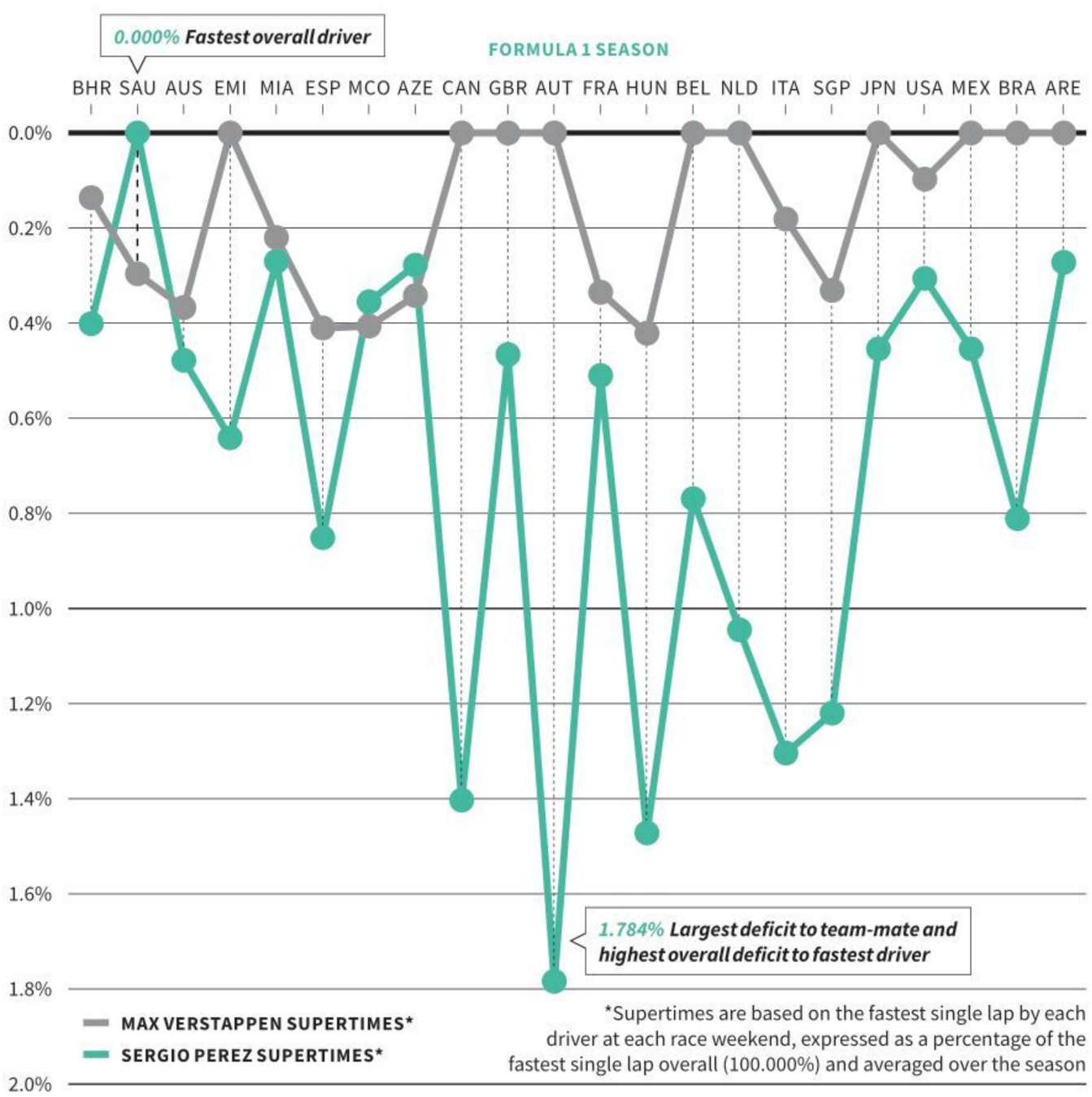
3rd in Formula 1 World Championship

18 Two wins and a sole pole position marked Perez's most prosperous F1 season to date. But he still paled in comparison to Max Verstappen. Especially when it's noted that, until the Red Bull went on a crash diet, its habit of understeering favoured the Mexican and hurt his team-mate. To his credit, Perez was a far better force in his second term at the team, hence climbing seven positions in the Top 50 from 2021. Had he escaped the early Red Bull unreliability, or a safety car not hurt him in Saudi Arabia, he might well have been the 2022 runner-up rather than third to Charles Leclerc.



S BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

RED BULL TEAM-MATES 'SUPERTIMES' COMPARISON



*Supertimes are based on the fastest single lap by each driver at each race weekend, expressed as a percentage of the fastest single lap overall (100.000%) and averaged over the season



▲ UP 12

Scott **Dixon**

3rd in IndyCar Series

17 A strange year because, while Dixon had the edge on reigning champion Chip Ganassi Racing team-mate Alex Palou overall, he sometimes struggled more than you would expect – a tad slower than Palou and Marcus Ericsson on occasion. For the third straight year, he was fastest at Indy and missed out, and this time it was his fault. Without that 1mph breach of the pitlane speed limit, he would have won, had 70 more points and a seventh title. But his two wins were classic Dixon: he outperformed all rivals in Toronto, and squeezed everything from a damaged car on worn tyres in Nashville.



ABBOTT/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Ott **Tanak**

2nd in World Rally Championship

16 The only driver able to apply pressure on runaway world champion Kalle Rovanpera. Had Hyundai delivered the fully fettled i20 N Rally1 with which it ended the season at the start of 2022, the title battle could have been a different story. Despite reliability issues and complications within the team, the 2019 champion extracted the most and more from his equipment to win in Sardinia, Finland and Belgium. His Finland triumph was among the best of his career as Tanak, on the ragged edge, tamed his wild-handling car and defeated Rovanpera on the Toyota man's home turf.



McKLEIN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▲ UP 23

Edoardo **Mortara**

3rd in Formula E

15 Mortara dropped a place in the Formula E standings, following his runner-up finish in the 2020-21 season, but the Swiss was much more impressive this time. A rapid start to the year preceded a dismal Rome and Monaco, but the Venturi driver bounced back in style, taking his first two poles in the Berlin races and winning the first. He led the standings with six races to go, but penalties and set-up pain contrived to put Mortara out of contention and he took just five points from New York and London. A Seoul finale win capped the year, but bad luck did for his title hopes.



GALLOWAY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 7

Carlos **Sainz**

5th in Formula 1 World Championship

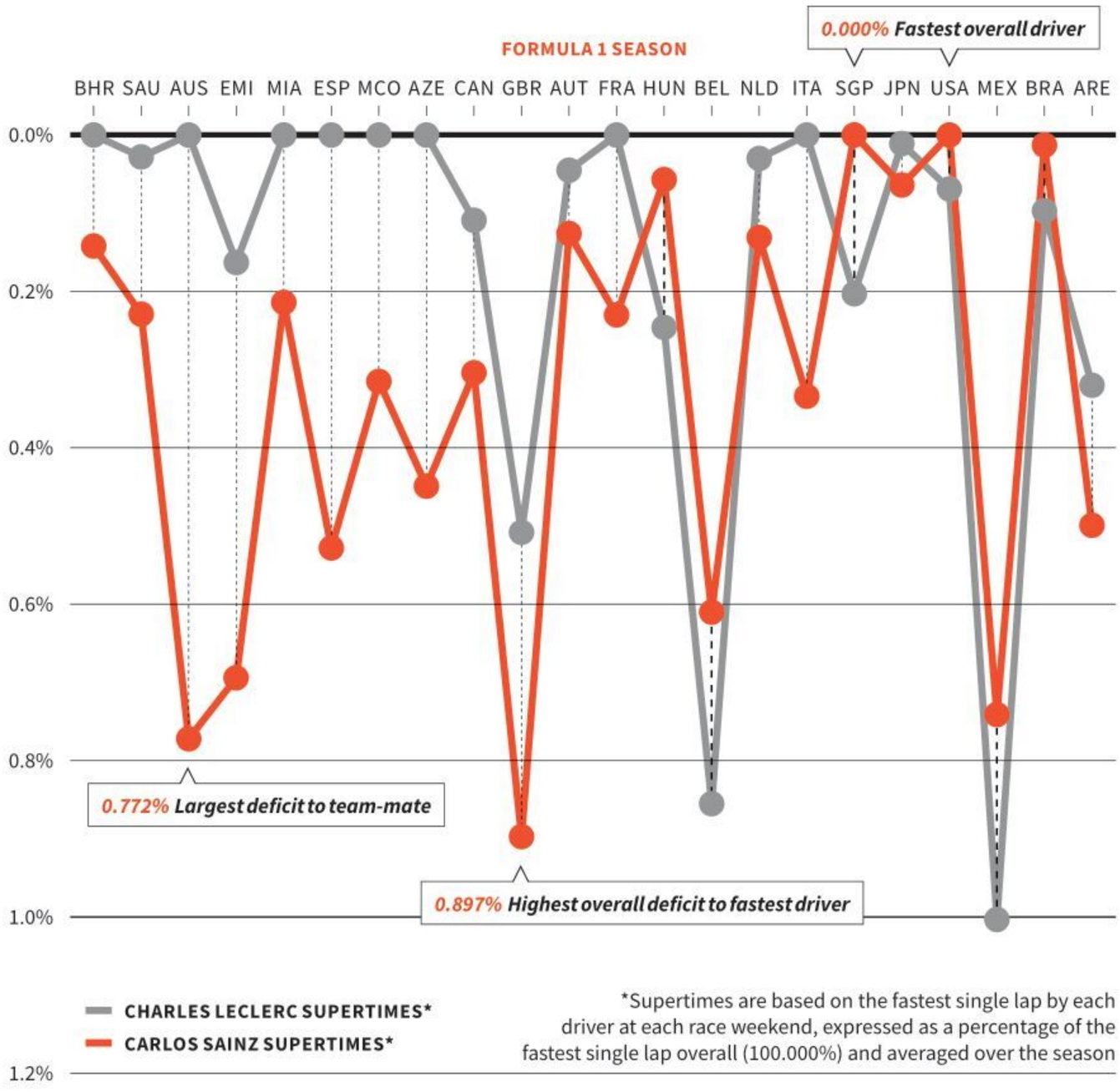
14

While Charles Leclerc found an instant affinity with ground-effects, Sainz took his time adapting to the twitchy Ferrari F1-75. He was too slow against his team-mate and too error prone. His spin into the Melbourne gravel was particularly poor. But from Canada in June onwards, he started to fulfil his brief as Ferrari's tacit number two before bagging his first F1 pole and win at Silverstone. After the summer break he was better still, often matching his partner in qualifying and notably outperforming his effective opposite number at Red Bull, Sergio Perez.



SCUDERIA FERRARI PRESS OFFICE

FERRARI TEAM-MATES 'SUPERTIMES' COMPARISON



*Supertimes are based on the fastest single lap by each driver at each race weekend, expressed as a percentage of the fastest single lap overall (100.000%) and averaged over the season



▲ UP 11

Fernando **Alonso**

9th in Formula 1 World Championship

13

Alonso was a regular F1 2022 qualifying star. His front row in Canada was the highlight, but that race ended with a downward slide due to an engine air leak, while he suffered five reliability DNFs that all cost points, and was hit by Mick Schumacher at Imola, so should have finished higher in the standings. He erred moving late when passing Lance Stroll and Esteban Ocon at Austin and Interlagos, crashing then recovering points in the US GP and getting penalised in Brazil. Crafty racing to hold up the pack then charge away from Lewis Hamilton at Monaco was brilliant.



HONE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 1

Mitch **Evans**

2nd in Formula E

12

The double victory in Rome that ignited Evans's championship aspirations was the best indicator of the Kiwi at his relentless best: the Jaguar driver roared through to the front of the pack in both instances, and left the Italian capital with a 50-point haul. The issue was that the opening three races had yielded just one point, and he was always playing catch-up afterwards. The electrical heartbreak in London, which effectively ruined Evans's title chances, was followed up by victory in Seoul's first race. That takes a special kind of determination.



BAGNALL/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



— RE-ENTRY

Joey **Logano**

1st in NASCAR Cup

11

Logano joined the two-time club of NASCAR Cup Series champions in 2022. Across the season he produced four victories, but it was his execution in the playoffs that truly sealed this deal. Two wins, including the all-important Phoenix finale, gave team supremo Roger Penske a unique double of NASCAR and IndyCar titles in the same season. It's Logano's second title in five years, and in two different generations of car, as Penske came out swinging with the Next-Gen machine. Logano won the pre-season Busch Clash at the LA Coliseum too.



THACKER/NKP



▲ UP 6

Shane **van Gisbergen**

1st in Supercars

10

Van Gisbergen took his brilliance to new heights in 2022. In Supercars he romped to a record-breaking 21 wins for the season, including the Bathurst 1000. That level of dominance would usually be tedious but, given he started from pole just seven times, there was plenty of showmanship on offer. He would consistently run long in races, take the undercut on the chin, and then charge his way back to the front with incredible passing moves. He also debuted at the 24 Hours of Le Mans and made a splash in rallying, scoring a remarkable debut podium in WRC2 in his native New Zealand.



HORSBURGH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



▼ DOWN 6

Lando **Norris**

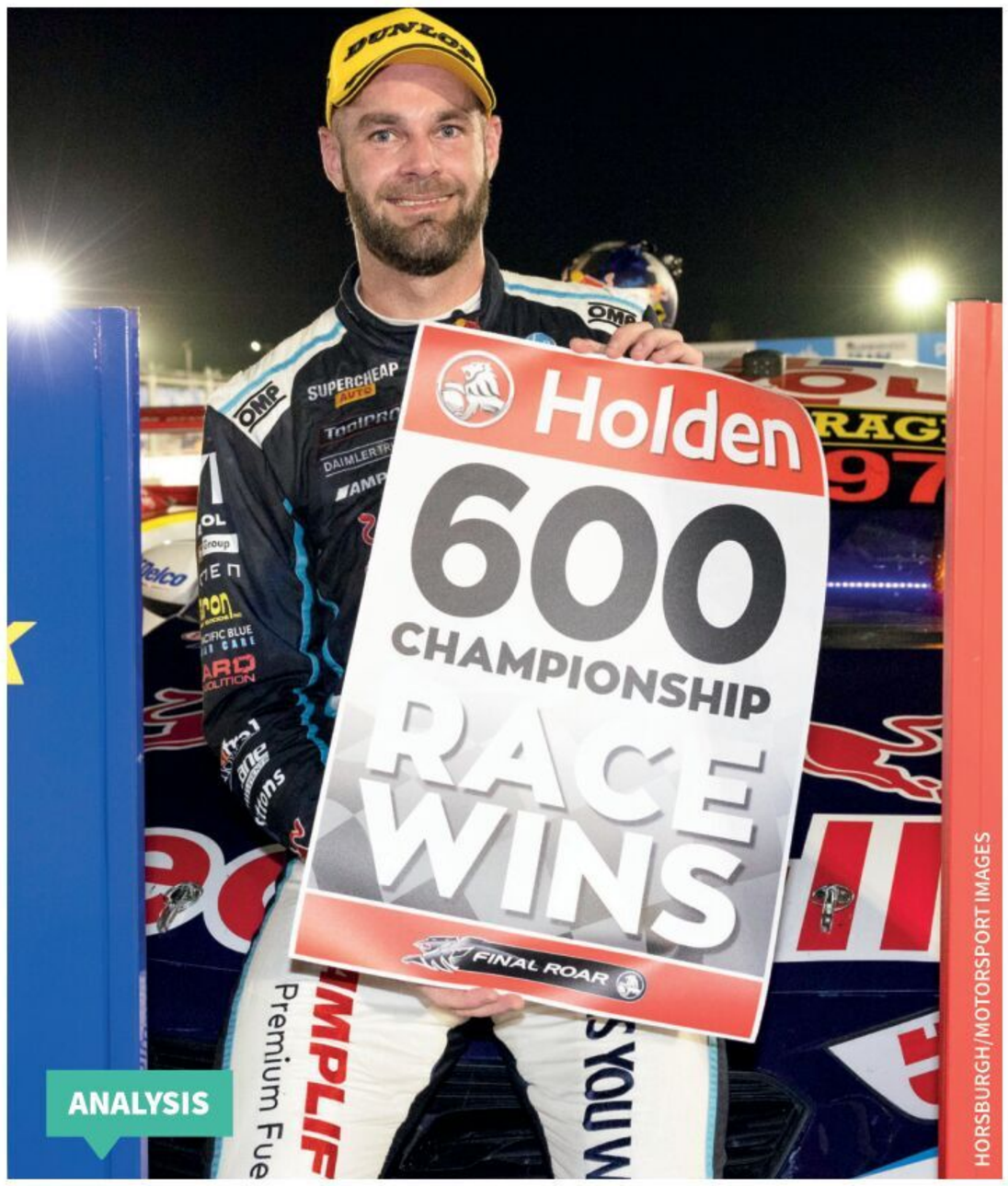
7th in Formula 1 World Championship

9

It was harder for Norris to shine quite so brightly this year compared to his star turn in 2021. McLaren took a backwards step and the obvious Daniel Ricciardo malaise meant beating the Australian became an expectation. For his own part, Norris concedes that his adaption to ground-effects really was too slow. Nevertheless, he was the only non-Ferrari, Red Bull or Mercedes driver to notch a podium all year, which he did with a sterling weekend at a greasy Emilia Romagna GP. That headline result shouldn't outshine what was almost always a high operating level and immense consistency.



MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



HORSBURGH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

ANALYSIS

How the 'animal' racer made the difference in Supercars

It's never been harder to pass in Supercars. The high-downforce Gen2 cars create unprecedented amounts of dirty air that cooks the front tyres once you're within roughly a second of another car.

Shane van Gisbergen knows it. He complains about it, often. But he also continues to just go out there and pass other drivers anyway.

Andrew Edwards already knew that van Gisbergen was a relentless racer when he joined Triple Eight as his race engineer this year. He'd

"Once he's got a sniff, he's on it. It's incredible to see sometimes. That's just his pure racecraft"

been watching him from the BJR garage since 2007. But even then, seeing it up close was eye-opening.

"I've been lucky to work with some really good drivers," explains Edwards. "They've all got talent and feel and good feedback and things like that. But what really sets Shane apart is his ability to race. And his ability to pass.

"That's the thing that lets you do different strategies and recover when others can't. That comes from having good capacity left to make decisions. And it's his attitude in that moment too. He… for lack of a better word, he's an animal in that moment. He loves the chase and he thrives with the challenge.

"Just when you think he can't go any faster, if he's got a sniff of it, he pulls another gear. That's where I've stood back at times and been so impressed.

"He understands the strategy, too. He can help you complete that. You don't need to give him much and he understands what's required of him. I just paint the picture for him, and he knows what needs to happen to help execute it. That's what works well as a driver and engineer, understanding what's needed.

"Once he's got a sniff, he's on it. It's incredible to see sometimes. This year there's been a couple in particular where I didn't think we could win the race from where we were, races like New Zealand. To see that is superhuman. That's just his pure racecraft."

If the new Gen3 car delivers on its low-downforce promise, passing will get a lot easier next season. That's probably not something the drivers who already can't keep SVG behind will want to think about.



▲ UP 34

Will **Power**

1st in IndyCar Series

8

Like all aces, Power constantly evolves, and this year he confounded those who thought he might never restrain his overt race-by-race desire to win, to instead focus on the ultimate prize. He still got irate with fate and poor strategies, but his driving was unaffected. If he started uncharacteristically low on the grid, he just carved through the field for a top-four finish. So what if he scored only one win? With five poles (and the all-time pole record) he can't be accused of taking it easy. Power played it smart, picked his battles and won the war.



▲ UP 11

Josef **Newgarden**

2nd in IndyCar Series

7

For a third straight year, Newgarden finished runner-up in the IndyCar championship, but in our estimation, by a small margin, he was top dog. He's the driver that his peers most often expect to be a winning threat, wherever he starts on the grid. This is partly down to traditionally strong strategies from Tim Cindric, but the Team Penske president has more options open to him because he can usually expect Newgarden to be fast, aggressive, relentless and opportunistic. His off days stand out because they are so rare, and his tally of five wins this year reflects that.



— RE-ENTRY

Stoffel **Vandoorne**

1st in Formula E

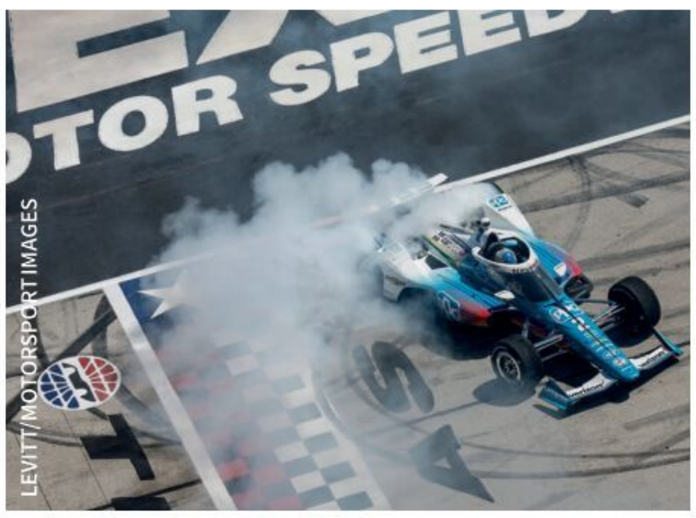
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A paragon of consistency, Vandoorne perhaps best encapsulated the idea of 'building a championship' through his near-omnipresence in the points. He ventured outside the top five only three times in his title-winning season, only failed to score points in Mexico, but took just one victory all year, when he beat Mitch Evans to Monaco glory. It helped that Mercedes continued its strong form before leaving Formula E, but Vandoorne ensured his driving was spotless. He also finished fifth at the Sebring 12 Hours on his IMSA SportsCar debut.



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GALLOWAY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

TOP 50 DROP-OUTS FROM 2021

Drivers' 2021 Top 50 position and their 2022 results

8 Kyle Larson
7th in NASCAR Cup

9 Nyck de Vries
9th in Formula E;
1 grand prix with Williams

10 Pierre Gasly
14th in F1 World Championship

13 Elfyn Evans
4th in World Rally Championship

14 Colton Herta
10th in IndyCar Series

19 Pato O'Ward
7th in IndyCar Series

22 Kevin Estre
2nd in World Endurance Championship (GTE)

23 Oscar Piastri
Alpine F1 reserve driver

26 Kamui Kobayashi
3rd in World Endurance Championship;
17th in Super Formula

27 Martin Truex Jr
17th in NASCAR Cup

30 Daniel Ricciardo
11th in F1 World Championship

34 Liam Lawson
3rd in FIA Formula 2 Championship

37 Felipe Nasr
10th in World Endurance Championship (LMP2)

40 Nirei Fukuzumi
19th in Super Formula

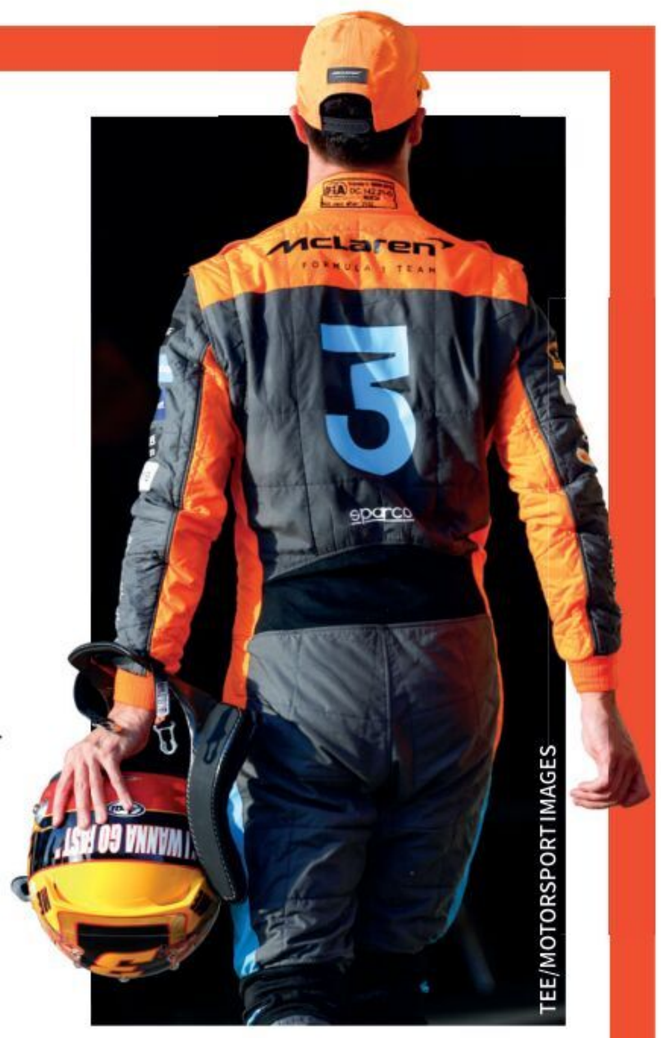
41 Dennis Hauger
10th in FIA Formula 2 Championship

43 Ash Sutton
2nd in British Touring Car Championship

44 Robin Frijns
2nd in World Endurance Championship (LMP2);
7th in Formula E

45 Yann Ehrlacher
9th in World Touring Car Cup

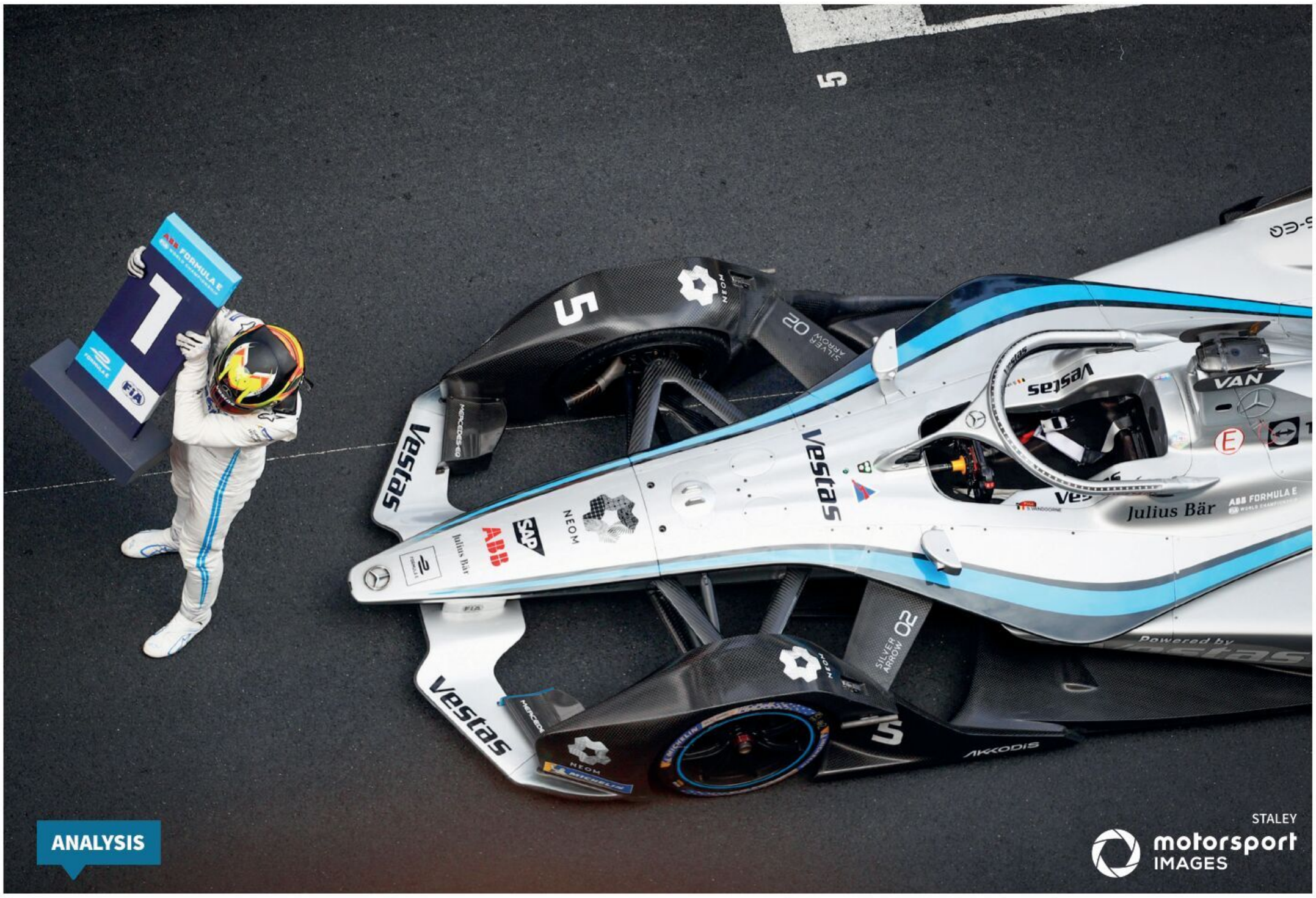
46 Yifei Ye
5th in European Le Mans Series



TEE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

49 Kelvin van der Linde
1st in Nurburgring 24 Hours; 9th in DTM

50 Zhou Guanyu
18th in F1 World Championship



Why Vandoorne's Formula E title showed his greatest strength

There's a lot to be said for taking a title down to the wire and winning it in flamboyant fashion, but that's simply not Stoffel Vandoorne's style. Nor has it ever been. There's a key theme from the titles he won in junior categories that's present in his latest crowning achievement, and that can be underlined with one word: control.

His rekindled approach all stems from his disappointment at losing out on a shot at the title in 2020-21, when his Mercedes team-mate Nyck de Vries claimed it at the final race. Vandoorne pledged that he would leave nothing on the table in the following season.

Sure, there were a couple of times over the year when the title lead briefly left Vandoorne's grasp, but he trusted that it would come back to him. As much as the Monaco win bolstered the Belgian's ambitions, in retrospect it was almost gilding the lily; rather, being able to put a bit of shine on the more difficult days gave Vandoorne's challenge a solid foundation.


STALEY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

He cited Berlin as one of the best examples of that, a race where he dropped to 12th at the start and worked his way back up to third. On a circuit where there's ample room and opportunity to pass, Vandoorne knew he could take those risks to make his way back up the order.

Compare that with the opening London race, and the approach was very different. Here, on a much smaller and more compact layout, Vandoorne knew it would be difficult to pass polesitter Jake Dennis. Also knowing that his main title rivals Mitch Evans and Edoardo Mortara weren't really in the same postcode, Vandoorne was able to settle for second and scoop up the 18 points on offer.

"There's a key theme in his achievement that can be underlined with one word: control"

Cast your mind back to his 2015 GP2 title, and Vandoorne's season was similarly consistent – albeit with more wins. He'd also pulled it off in his 2012 Formula Renault Eurocup campaign to beat Daniil Kvyat to the title, never finishing a race outside of the top four.

The 2021-22 season was a typically Vandoornian showing of consistency, and it's something he'll need to draw on again as he joins DS Penske for the start of the Gen3 era.





▲ UP 7

George **Russell**

4th in Formula 1 World Championship

5 Although Mercedes was out of title contention, Russell ended 2022 with his stock greatly enhanced by beating Lewis Hamilton in the standings and with a Formula 1 grand prix win to boot.

Russell said he still "felt a bit of a rookie" at times in 2022, but only in the sense that, now racing for Mercedes, he had a bigger workforce and additional tools and systems to call upon. It was a moving target too, because the team had to redesign its simulation and analysis tools to ensure it could really replicate porpoising, which meant that what its drivers felt in the simulator wasn't always as it really was on track.

But the previous three years spent at Williams benefited Russell when he stepped up from junior to works Silver Arrows driver because he was more quickly comfortable with the unpredictable W13 than was new team-mate Hamilton, or so Mercedes feels. Russell reckons this is why he didn't need to try the extreme early-season set-ups Hamilton did in a bid to find any way to improve car balance, and instead just got on with it.

Hamilton's methods did give Mercedes additional data, but it wrecked weekends, while Russell was able to be smoother overall, such as in Saudi Arabia. Russell was, however, still struggling with Mercedes braking issues deeper into the season than Hamilton, which included his Brazil qualifying off ahead of his weekend of weekends at Interlagos.

Russell was praised for his consistent results in 2022 – he rode his luck at times to take 15 top-five finishes in the first 16 races, with his unfortunate Silverstone crash with Zhou Guanyu the only blemish. He earned respect for going to check on the trapped Alfa Romeo driver in the Abbey barriers, while his calm and measured words as a Grand Prix Drivers' Association director came to the fore.

His team radio was brash and hilarious at different times, something Russell is already reflecting on going into 2023. And sometimes he erred while trying too hard, such as clouting Carlos Sainz at the start of the US GP or going off late in Mexico qualifying. Russell's speed and progress throughout qualifying segments returned, with his Hungary pole an accolade topped only by his sprint and GP wins in Brazil.

There, he beat Max Verstappen in sprint battle after defying him with a slower car in Spain, and soaking up late pressure from Hamilton in the GP proved Russell can succeed at the highest level.



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Why Hamilton gets the nod over victorious team-mate Russell

The case for George Russell outperforming his Mercedes Formula 1 team-mate in 2022 is both compelling and touted by many a fan and motorsport commentator. Including sprint races, the former Williams driver beat his seven-time champion colleague on 15 out of 25 occasions and ended the Silver Arrows' dry spell by chalking victory in Brazil, having already stuck it on pole in Hungary.

But when it hit home that the W13 was a turkey, it was Hamilton who was quick to sacrifice his weekends to sort it. Mercedes admits sending its driver out with "dangerous" set-ups just so it could understand and try to resolve the porpoising issue. This meant, from one practice run to the next, that Hamilton could be circulating with the rideheight raised as high as it would go and then trying to hang onto a car that was slammed into the ground.

"It is important to acknowledge the touch of good fortune that came his way"

It was his experience, his ability to have "constructive arguments" with the engineers, and the fact that an eighth title very soon looked well out of reach, that meant Hamilton was willing to sacrifice a huge chunk of his season. It wasn't Russell's fault that he was the newcomer, but he didn't face this problem-solving obstacle as much when he ran to top-five finishes in the opening nine rounds.

As for Brazil, there is no doubt that Russell thrived. He nursed the soft tyres wonderfully and raced fiercely to depose Max Verstappen in the sprint before controlling two safety car restarts to lead the Grand Prix fairly serenely to victory. But that was predicated on qualifying third, which was the somewhat fortunate byproduct of him ditching the W13 into the gravel early into Q3, allowing rain to arrive. No matter how brilliant Russell was for the rest of the weekend, it is important to look beyond the headline result and acknowledge the touch of good fortune that came his way.

All that said, picking between Russell and Hamilton was very tough. That's reflected in the fact that no driver from F1 or any other series has split them in our ranking. But, when push came to shove, it was the elder statesman who got the nod. **MK**



▼ DOWN 3

Lewis **Hamilton**

6th in Formula 1 World Championship

4

Hamilton needed time to clear his head away from the fallout from the 2021 Abu Dhabi Formula 1 title decider. But when he emerged from a winter silence to dismiss rumours that he might call time on his frontline career, the seven-time champion declared: "I'm putting every ounce of my energy and time into making sure that I'm the best you've ever seen." But that promising level wasn't quite what fans were treated to.

Hamilton has not long finished his first winless F1 season after 16 years in the top flight. Neither did he notch a pole position, while new team-mate George Russell achieved both. Those raw facts contribute to him falling to fourth in the Top 50 after five editions in a row at the very top. Of course, though, he was plying his trade in the Mercedes W13, which will likely go down as the worst car of his career, despite his efforts to troubleshoot and tame it.

"Guiding the W13 to a podium in the Bahrain opener was superb in the context of the rubbish ride"

Where it is possible to set the bad machinery fully to one side, Hamilton admits he didn't quite hit the heights. "Not as many as in the past," is his response when asked how many races he might have won this term should he have had a more competitive car.

But he still turned in plenty of standout drives. Guiding the bouncing and draggy W13 to a podium in the Bahrain opener once the Red Bulls retired was superb in the context of the rubbish ride. His qualifying speed and mastery of the Pirellis in France to clock second place was archetypal of what had previously delivered him 103 poles and grand prix wins.

It is the final Mercedes upgrade package of the season, rather than recency bias, that keeps him in fourth on our list. The tweaked aerodynamics and fortunate circumstances (Max Verstappen's bad pitstop at Austin and the drag-mitigating altitude of Mexico City) enabled Hamilton to excel at the end of a difficult term. In North America, he was twice a genuine threat for victory before his new team-mate did the job in Brazil.





▲ UP 28

Kalle **Rovanpera**

1st in World Rally Championship

3

A dominant run to a maiden World Rally Championship title, while smashing Colin McRae's youngest-ever World Rally champion record by five years and 88 days, proved Rovanpera is indeed a very special talent. The 22-year-old Finn enjoyed a sensational season, displaying not only phenomenal speed but maturity well beyond his years to make history as he redefined the WRC title-winning formula.

Rovanpera was simply untouchable at times during a season where he claimed six wins and 70 fastest stage times, as the WRC welcomed new Rally1 hybrid regulations. After initially struggling in Monte Carlo, victories followed in Sweden, Croatia, Portugal, Kenya and Estonia. Rovanpera could have mathematically sewn up the title with four rounds to spare, such was his dominance.

Crashes in Belgium and Greece proved Rovanpera is human and delayed the seemingly inevitable until Rally New Zealand, where he clinched the title in style, with a victory and a sixth powerstage win. The son of 2001 Rally Sweden winner Harri Rovanpera was crowned just one day after celebrating his 22nd birthday.

Rovanpera stood out from the rest particularly in the wet. Nobody could match him for pace in the new Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 hybrid when conditions became slippery. He was also master of the one-shot-showdown powerstage, where he racked up 50 of his 255 points.



McKLEIN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

The WRC's new wonderkid also produced shades of the 21st century's standout rally drivers, Sebastien Loeb and Sebastien Ogier, by breezing to five victories despite the disadvantage of starting first on the road. Three of his wins came at rallies where either Loeb or Ogier was among the field, by virtue of their part-time campaigns.

Rovanpera's performances left onlookers dumbfounded. These included Alister McRae, who witnessed his late brother's youngest-champion record fall after 27 years in New Zealand.

"We knew he was quick but the maturity and the ability this year has got a lot of people wondering how he is able to do it at that age," enthuses McRae. "It's pretty amazing to have that composure and the ability to push and set the times he sets, when at times he doesn't need to do it. He just seems so comfortable in the car and in his own driving. He is doing things having just turned 22 that's just not normal.

"I'm sure Colin would be looking in a bit of amazement at how good he actually is at such a young age. I think it's a worry for everybody else in the championship."

The WRC may have said goodbye to the Loeb and Ogier eras, but it appears that a new one of Rovanpera dominance has dawned.





▲ UP 4

Charles **Leclerc**

2nd in Formula 1 World Championship

2

Prior to the Formula 1 summer break, it was tough to choose between opponents Leclerc and Max Verstappen as the standout. The Ferrari driver shone bright aboard the first grand prix car that had the potential to take him to a title.

He opened the campaign in Bahrain by deliberately letting his rival overtake, only to regain DRS to surge past on the next straight. Prior to Verstappen breaking down, Leclerc was already poised to triumph after outwitting his opponent. Leclerc ran away to a dominant victory at the Australian GP, and he was simply staggering in Austria also. He had the pace to pass Verstappen three times before nursing a sticking throttle to chalk what would unbelievably be his last win of 2022. The drought from then on reflected how badly Ferrari let the nine-time polesitter down.



Already, there were the notable British and Hungarian strategy shockers that dashed hopes of Sunday success. The ruinous unreliability that cost potential victories in Spain and Azerbaijan further contributed to his title challenge crumbling. And in response to the fragility, Ferrari wound down the engines for the rest of the year to prevent the qualifying king from properly fighting for a fourth win.

After the summer, Verstappen delivered top-drawer displays weekend after weekend while Leclerc was too humdrum in Japan. There, he aborted the chicane to cop a 5s penalty that finally decided the crown in the Dutchman's favour. He also fell short of his best in Mexico and Brazil, independent of the latest pitwall and performance missteps.

While Verstappen did make mistakes, such as his off in Spain and spin in Hungary, the cost was minimised as he recovered to win both. The price Leclerc paid was much higher. His grassy excursion to fall from third to sixth at Imola while pursuing Sergio Perez was needless, and the shunt while leading at Paul Ricard calamitous. That smash was when Verstappen and everybody else knew that the crown was effectively decided. It is noted that Leclerc felt the need to push the limits to make amends for his team dropping the ball so spectacularly.



ANALYSIS

Why there was no coming back from Paul Ricard

Charles Leclerc doesn't hide entirely behind Ferrari's strategic, reliability and latter-half performance shortfalls when assessing why his first shot at the Formula 1 world title fell spectacularly apart. Ultimately, he barely scraped over the line as the runner-up.

When asked to review his own work in 2022, he admits he overdid it once or twice, particularly when trying to defend against Max Verstappen's undercut to cement first place in the French Grand Prix. In reference to that now infamous shunt into the wall of the Beausset right-hander, Leclerc says: "I could have pushed less on some occasions, like in France. I think in the first few years, this was always an area I was focusing on because I knew it was a weak point."

For this, see Leclerc also missing out on a likely pole when he binned it in Baku qualifying in 2019 or losing the rear at Monza in 2020. Then securing pole on his home turf in Monaco the year after before promptly finding the wall.

The howler at Paul Ricard helped propel Verstappen into a 63-point lead. The margin was so considerable that even the Red Bull pilot, who seldom acknowledged his title chances in public, knew he was on course for a successful defence.

"When asked to review his own work in 2022, Leclerc admits he overdid it once or twice"

Speaking shortly after his second coronation, Verstappen said: "There were a few moments where I thought, 'You know, we have a good chance of winning it.' But the moment where I thought, 'Now we are going to win it' was after Paul Ricard. The lead increased by quite a bit. I knew it was going to be quite close in the coming races. But I was like, this is a gap which we cannot give away anymore."

Verstappen took – and would maintain – first place in the points in the Spanish GP, when Leclerc retired from a 13-second lead with a power unit failure. But five rounds later in Austria, the Ferrari's pace advantage over the Red Bull gave a glimmer that the fight might still be on. A fortnight later, though, the Paul Ricard clanger put paid to whatever hope remained.



▲ UP 1

Max
Verstappen

1st in F1 World Championship

MOVING TO THE TOP

Why Verstappen is our number one driver of 2022

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

"You just have to be confident. Otherwise, I don't think you can succeed in the world here." Max Verstappen is speaking in the Abu Dhabi night, three days out from the end of the 2022 Formula 1 season, which he has utterly dominated. He's at a table outside the Red Bull hospitality building in the Yas Marina paddock, albeit one that's squeezed in between that structure and Mercedes' next door. It's private, away from the busy paddock, but the team isn't letting the media view the inner sanctum.

This is Autosport's first sit-down interview with Verstappen in nearly two years — the two slots bookending his two world title campaigns. Back in March 2021, we wondered if the Dutchman might finally be the driver to end Lewis Hamilton's F1 domination.

Now we know he has.

But it's still too early to tell whether we're living through the early years of a new era of superiority by one driver, or if Verstappen's story will be more like Fernando Alonso's nearly 20 years ago. With Charles Leclerc a title contender at Ferrari, George Russell now an F1 race winner with Mercedes, and Lando Norris really just as good as he was in 2021 for McLaren, the neutral would be forgiven for wanting a 2007-10-style spread of championship success.

And yet Verstappen's 2022 performance overall contained enough to suggest he and Red Bull have what it takes to see off all-comers. >>

ISTITENE/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

PREVIOUS DRIVERS OF THE YEAR

2021 Lewis Hamilton
2020 Lewis Hamilton
2019 Lewis Hamilton
2018 Lewis Hamilton
2017 Lewis Hamilton
2016 Daniel Ricciardo
2015 Lewis Hamilton
2014 Daniel Ricciardo
2013 Sebastian Vettel
2012 Fernando Alonso
2011 Sebastian Vettel
2010 Sebastian Vettel
2009 Lewis Hamilton
2008 Robert Kubica
2007 Kimi Raikkonen
2006 Fernando Alonso
2005 Sebastien Loeb
2004 Michael Schumacher
2003 Michael Schumacher
2002 Michael Schumacher

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His early battles with Leclerc were thrilling and fair – just like his Spain and Brazilian sprint scraps with Russell later on. This factor was the difference in why he tops this list and was second in 2021. His speed, even in the initially overweight and understeering Red Bull, was phenomenal. Once that was sorted and Verstappen had the "agile" car he wanted, with the RB18 eventually under the weight limit by the summer – "You could really use the front end", he says – he was essentially unstoppable.

And yet, again, Verstappen's fantastic campaign ended on downbeats: the team orders spat with his squad and Sergio Perez in Brazil, which followed yet another shunt with Hamilton. So, consider again the words with which Verstappen starts our interview, where we explain he is the number one pick in this list, but that we understand racing drivers *always* consider themselves the best.

Verstappen is very, *very* confident. And yet he rails against a "lot of people in this world that try to put you down". You sense there's plenty of point-making in his actions and words, and we're speaking just a few hours after he has blasted media reports "not knowing the full facts" about his refusal to help Perez at Interlagos, then refused to clarify anything when given the chance. It's motivational fuel; seeking an edge against rivals and not giving anything away at the same time.

So, does he go into every race thinking 'I'm in charge here', considering moves such as his ultra-aggressive defence against Mick Schumacher over a mere seventh position at Silverstone with a hobbled car and an already massive 49-point lead over Leclerc? "Well, nowadays, I don't really think about it anymore," Verstappen replies. "It's more like when you are pushing your way into F1."

Interesting. It rather explains many of Verstappen's actions in what has been an explosive arrival at the top level, where he has now raced for eight years. And he's still just 25.

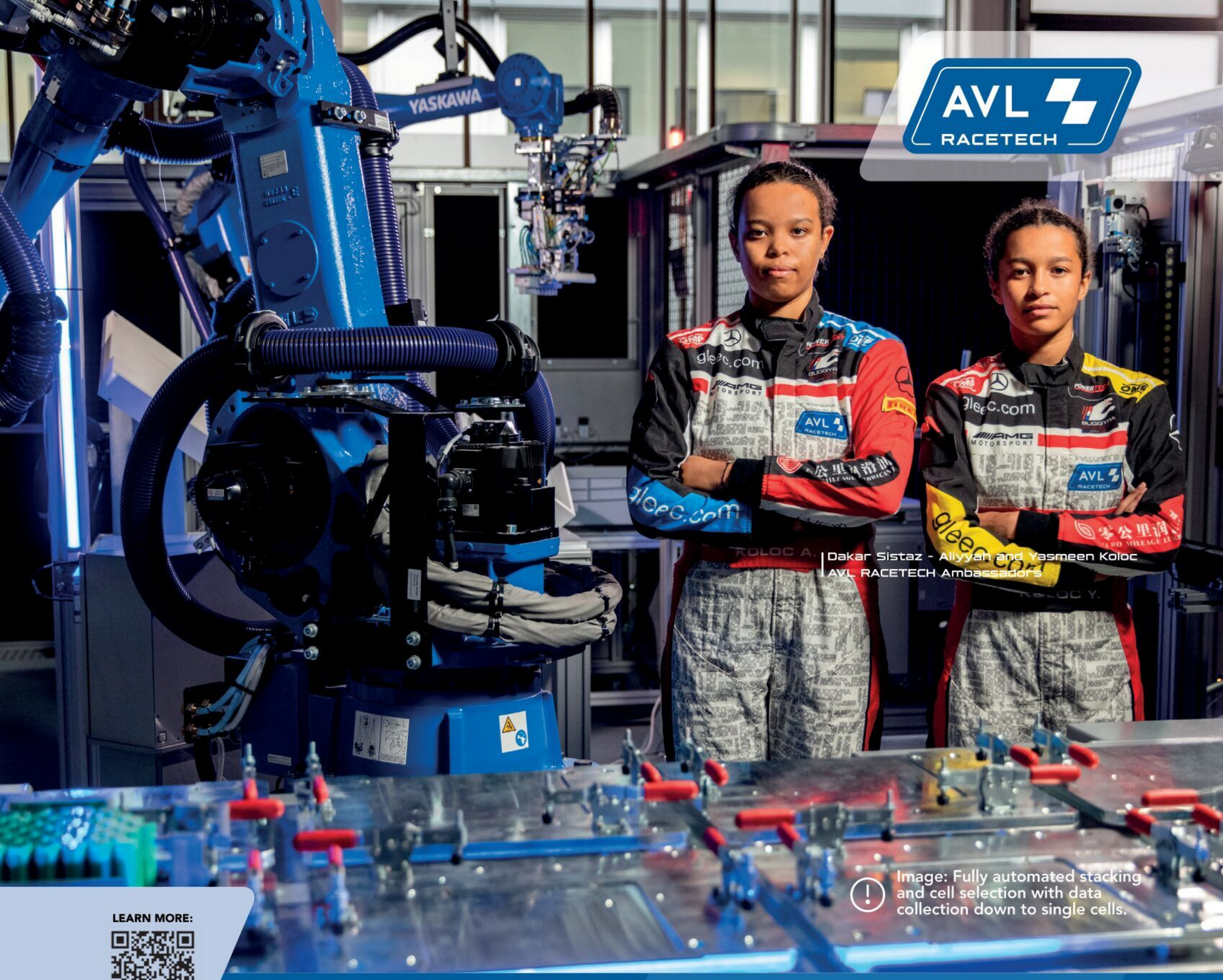
The wilting of Ferrari's challenge with a litany of errors and issues, plus Leclerc's mistakes, made things easier this year. As did Mercedes' >>



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ROSE/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



Dakar Sistaz - Aliyyah and Yasmeen Koloc
AVL RACETECH Ambassadors

Image: Fully automated stacking and cell selection with data collection down to single cells.

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total absence from the championship fight thanks to the W13's problems. But Red Bull was also the class leader this time, even if, much like the Ferrari F2004, its advantage was in races and not in qualifying thanks to its slippery and efficient package, which got better on its tyres as the year went on.

But Verstappen wasn't fully confident that Red Bull could overcome the early-season points loss, because "you can never imagine what happened throughout the season". "But as a team we just stuck together and we really worked well," he adds.

Ahead of the campaign, we wondered how Verstappen would wield the new and not-inconsiderable power an F1 world champion possesses. This could often be seen in his media engagements. Remember, Verstappen played the game in trying to ward the FIA off making rule changes to eliminate porpoising when his team wasn't suffering on this front, and most spectacularly when he boycotted Sky Sports F1 in Mexico. That Red Bull team boss Christian Horner and Perez followed his lead speaks much about the power Verstappen holds in his own squad too.

He says that this, though, is "not about how much power I have or much I'm known in the world". Instead, "it's all about just trying to win races and trying to win championships". Again, the subtext is key. Verstappen knows that off-track point-scoring can turn into actual ones too.

Many of the 454 points (another new record, with the caveat that the scoring system changed for 2010) he ended up with were taken thanks to his impressive tyre management displays in 2022. Verstappen says that this area is not something he's "really worked on" and instead "came quite natural". But it's been a factor where Verstappen has been able to rival Hamilton for quite a while, considering how close he regularly was to the Briton in 2020 — a year when Mercedes had a massive car advantage. Horner, who feels Verstappen improved because of 2021's titanic title fight, suggested his charge doesn't get enough credit for his abilities to race with F1's fragile modern rubber. »



Life's a blur: his rivals could barely keep him in focus. Above: who holds the most power at Red Bull?

TEE motorsport IMAGES

"I don't get it. I don't feel like I'm doing anything different to Lewis or to the others in how we race"

And yet there were still points lost – or almost lost – in 2022. In Spain, Verstappen went off after being caught out in the wind early on, while in Singapore he was needlessly urgent in passing Norris after the second safety car and went off, damaging his tyres and needing an extra pitstop. His struggles with the RB18's early-season understeer meant he needed circumstances to get ahead of Perez in Jeddah, and the Mexican crashing in Monaco qualifying created circumstances that went the other way.

Verstappen is still as explosive with his engineer Gianpiero Lambiase as he always has been. Bahrain out-lap speed, DRS malfunctions in Spain, the second Austin stop going wrong – all ignited Verstappen's wrath. But it clearly works and Lambiase sounds very unbothered.

But there were elements that he might consider addressing for the future – not that he ever publicly admits to adjusting his approach. By acting as he did on the final lap in Brazil, he risks alienating Perez to the point where his team-mate might not defend against a rival as forthrightly as he did at Abu Dhabi 2021. It seems a needless possibility.

Then there's his latest Hamilton crash. "I have to be careful what I'm saying here," Verstappen replies when we suggest he's uncompromising with all his rivals, but to another level with Hamilton. "But with everyone I've been fighting this year, it's been really hard, aggressive battles. And we never really came together. Somehow, with Lewis it's a different story.

"And I honestly don't understand. Like, this year, OK we haven't really had a lot of battles, but Brazil we got together. It was not my intention. I got the blame for it, which I didn't find fair. If it would've been more of a racing incident, that I could live with.

"I don't understand. Maybe it's just a generation thing [with Leclerc and Russell] – that we understand each other better, we are racing nicer to each other. I don't get it. But I don't feel like I'm doing anything different to Lewis or to the other drivers in terms of how we race.

"In England this can very quickly be received as criticism. And then I'm being called out on it. I always respect Lewis a lot for what he has achieved in the sport, but that's why I don't really understand why we cannot really race like I've been doing with the others. Of course, everyone is different in their approach. I know that Charles is a bit different to George, or to Carlos [Sainz] or to Checo, or whoever."

When Autosport spoke to Verstappen in Bahrain in 2021, he said "for me, it doesn't matter what driver you're fighting against." But when considering his continuing crashes with Hamilton, it seems it does.

There are a few ways of assessing this. One could be that as clearly the best two drivers of the current era – with Verstappen still ascending his peak and Hamilton gradually coming down from his – Verstappen is subconsciously unsure that he has the edge, and that this factors into his tiny judgements that lead to big outcomes, such as the urgency of his driving at Monza 2021 when suddenly behind Hamilton, which was very similar to Brazil 2022. Also, rivals from 'Verstappen's generation' might not be at his ultimate level, so miss out. Or perhaps because they don't yet possess his glittering palmares, they may be more wary of colliding and losing a good result in pursuit of a great one.

Then there's how Hamilton acts in their fights. He is now matching Verstappen's aggression level and has done since the 2021 British GP. The champion may reflect that this is why their crashes don't yet make sense to him. Hamilton isn't perplexed, saying after the Interlagos race: "You know how it is with Max..."

And so, to 2023: Verstappen will not yield. Expect more explosiveness.



THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



Why Spa serenity made the Belgian GP Verstappen's pick of his best wins

In 2022, Formula 1 did not gain a new world champion as it did in 2021. But, thanks to Max Verstappen and Red Bull, and plenty of assistance from their vanquished rivals, the championship did collectively witness something new. That was the 15 race wins Verstappen accrued (17 if you count sprints too) across the campaign, breaking the record established by Michael Schumacher in 2004 and shared with Sebastian Vettel since 2013.

Not that Verstappen was particularly bothered by the feat, or, at least, so he said publicly. As he closed in on matching the previous record, the Dutchman regularly highlighted how many more races F1 has these days. Although 22 is not really many more than the 19 Vettel completed in 2013, and Lewis Hamilton never got so close during Mercedes' dominant run. But such is Verstappen's style.

At the time Autosport spoke to the world champion in Abu Dhabi, season review considerations were in full swing – the tension of the previous year gone, but not forgotten. We can't know how many times Verstappen was asked to pick his best race of the year, but every time we heard him answer it was the same.



"The best one was Spa. The whole weekend was really enjoyable to drive the car"

It wasn't edging Leclerc in another thrilling desert fight in Jeddah, nor Hungary, where Verstappen spun and passed his rival twice to complete a rise from 10th to the win. Nor did he plump for his Suzuka wet-weather masterclass. No, it was his Spa victory on home soil for the Dutch-Belgian racer, which would be followed a week later by his second Zandvoort triumph in two years in front of an expectant and exultant crowd.

"I think the best one was Spa," he tells Autosport. "But that of course is also in combination with the car. Overall, the whole weekend was just really enjoyable to drive the car – everything was just working and we didn't really need to change too much on the set-up the whole weekend. That's always pretty special. Even with an engine penalty. It didn't matter where we started, at the end of the day we would've won that race.

"The first lap was really chaotic. I had to really stay out of trouble. But, after that, we literally just flew through the traffic."

Verstappen was so fast he'd risen from his 14th-place starting spot thanks to his engine-change grid penalty (after topping qualifying by 0.6 seconds) to eighth by the end of lap one. He was in the lead 11 tours later and, after his first pitstop, passed the Ferrari of early leader Carlos Sainz before simply romping to his most crushing and impressive win of a record-breaking season.

Pictures of the year

The quality of our photographers' prodigious output never ceases to impress. Here's our snapshot of some of their finest work from across the 2022 season

ETHERINGTON motorsport IMAGES

The conflict that defined 2021 returned in dramatic fashion at last month's Sao Paulo Grand Prix, Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton locking horns


PETRONAS
CROWDSTRIKE
CROWDSTRIKE
AKKODIS
CROWDSTRIKE
PETRONAS
Syntium
PETRONAS
Syntium



MAUGER motorsport IMAGES

Carlos Sainz parks his Ferrari F1-75 after qualifying second for the Hungarian GP

Jake Hill's BMW was flying at Knockhill, with pole position and three podiums topped by a win

JEP

LEVITT motorsport IMAGES

A roar of triumph from milk-drenched Indianapolis 500 victor Marcus Ericsson


GOLD AND GOOSE
motorsport IMAGES
A rain shower spurs on wet-weather ace Jack Miller in the Dutch GP at Assen





MAUGER motorsport IMAGES

The cockpit of an Aston Martin AMR22 aglow in the Melbourne pitlane lights



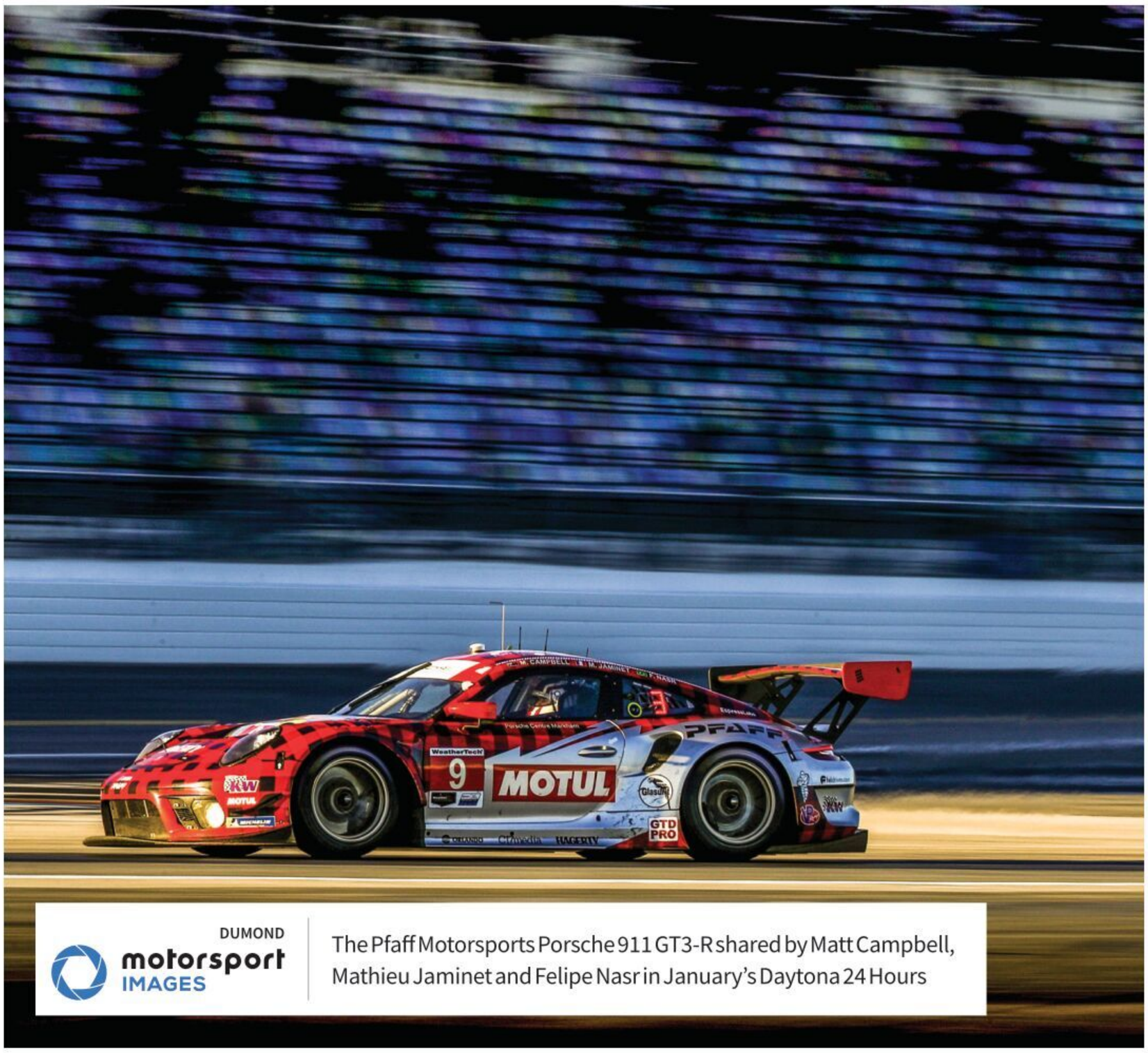
STALEY motorsport IMAGES

Sergio Sette Camara's Dragon Penske Autosport Penske EV-5 is an electrifying blur of colour and motion in Rome



MILLER motorsport IMAGES

Chase Elliott's #9 Hendrick Motorsports Chevy Camaro and the Stewart Haas Racing Ford Mustang of Aric Almirola jockey for position on the Martinsville short oval

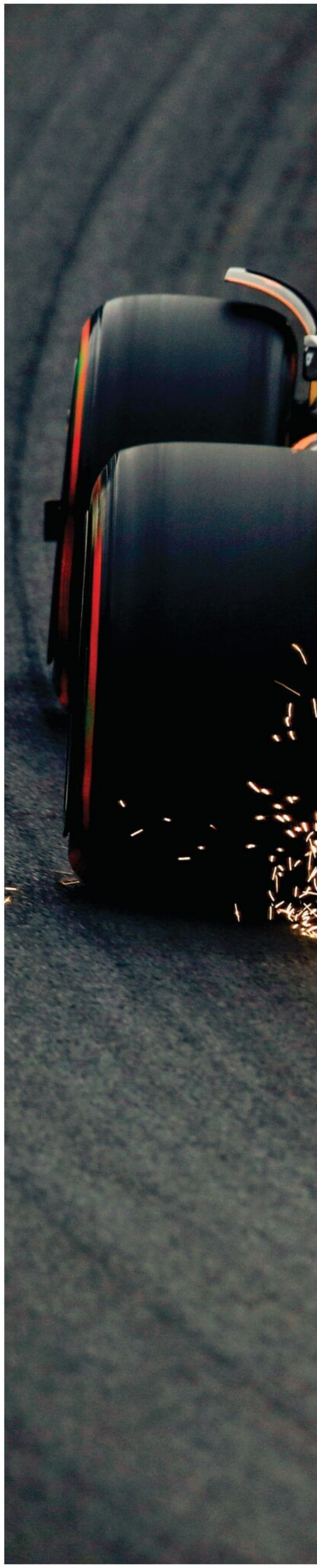


The Pfaff Motorsports Porsche 911 GT3-R shared by Matt Campbell, Mathieu Jaminet and Felipe Nasr in January's Daytona 24 Hours



Ott Tanak's Hyundai i20 N Rally1 makes haste in the Swedish snow

McKLEIN/LAT IMAGES





MAUGER motorsport IMAGES

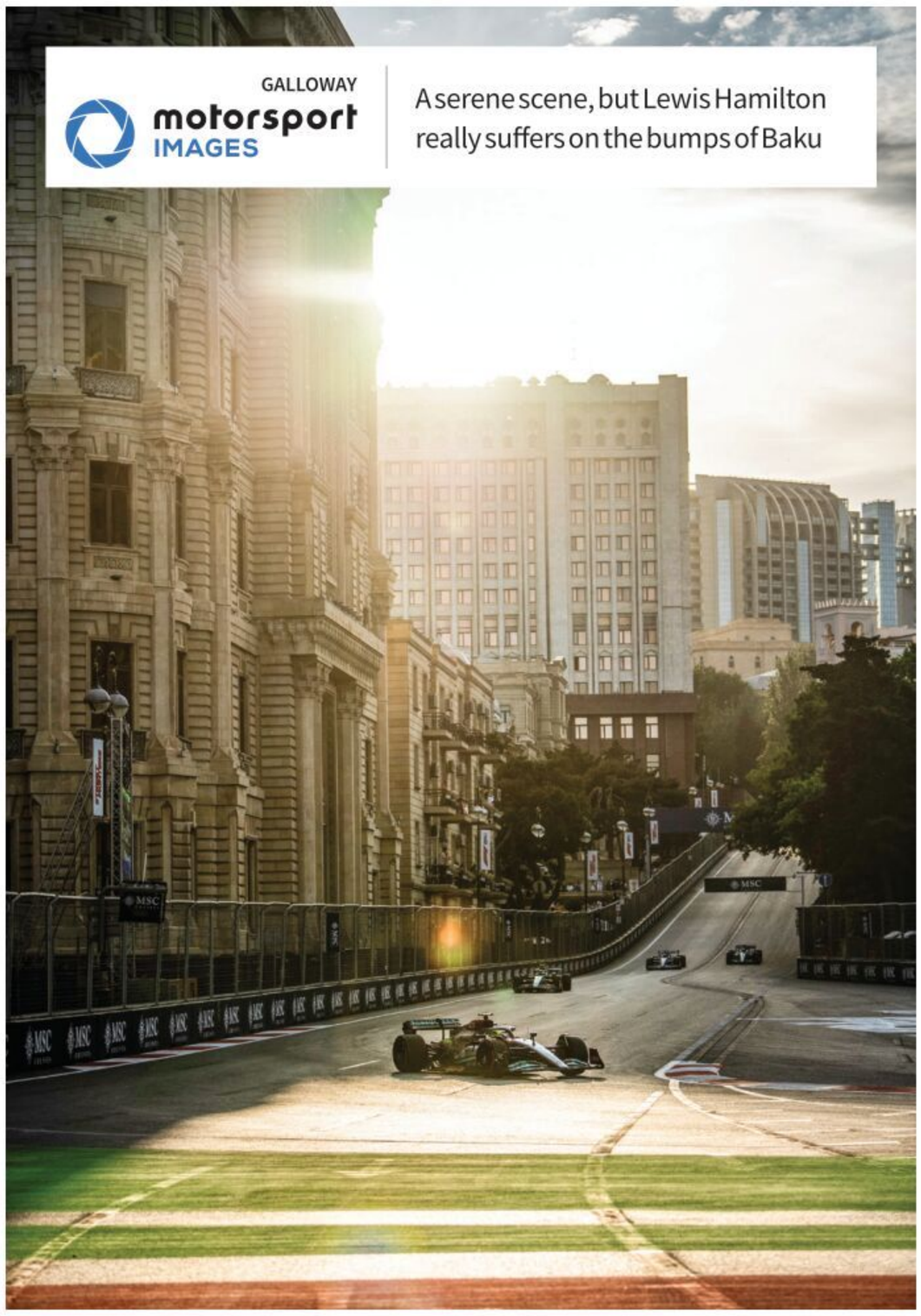
Lando Norris's McLaren MCL36 sends up a shower of sparks at Spa

S BLOXHAM
motorsport IMAGES

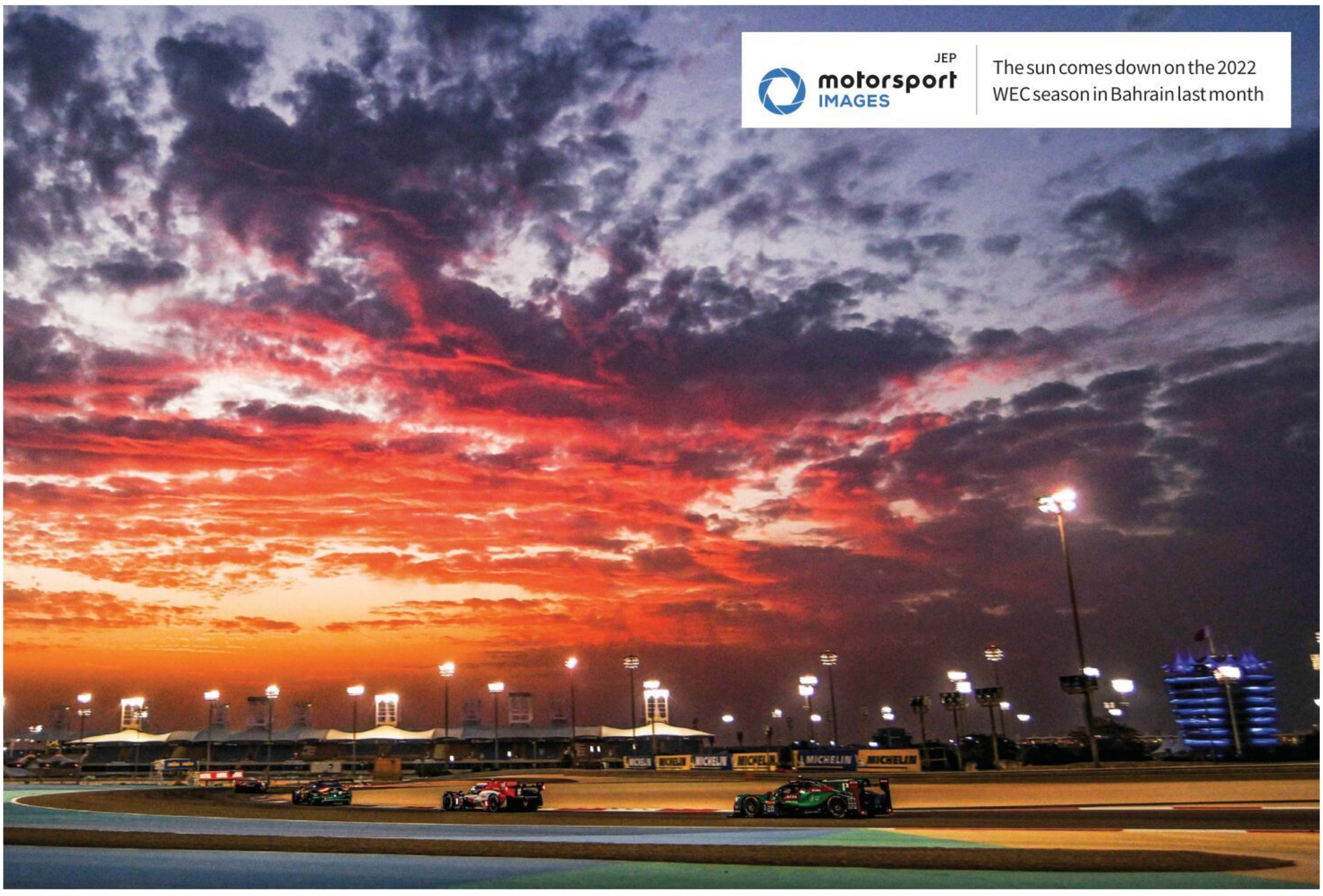
Sergio Perez's Red Bull RB18 heads the pack on the opening lap of the Saudi Arabian GP



BINGHAM
motorsport IMAGES
Charles Leclerc can't quite believe he crashed out of the lead in France



GALLOWAY
motorsport IMAGES
A serene scene, but Lewis Hamilton really suffers on the bumps of Baku

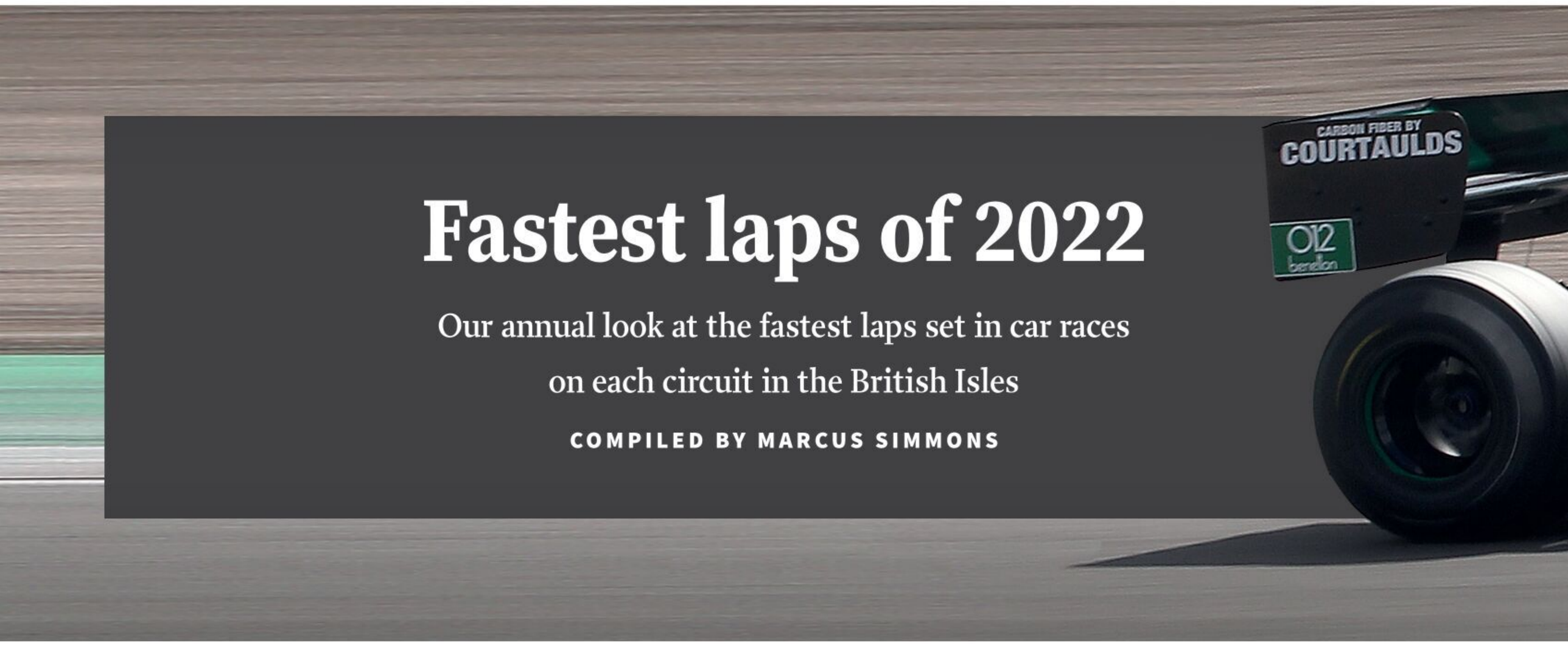


JEP
motorsport IMAGES
The sun comes down on the 2022 WEC season in Bahrain last month



LEVITT motorsport IMAGES

AJ Foyt Enterprises' Dalton Kellett lights up his Firestones during the Indianapolis 500



Fastest laps of 2022

Our annual look at the fastest laps set in car races on each circuit in the British Isles

COMPILED BY MARCUS SIMMONS

TRACK, DRIVER AND CAR	TIME	SPEED	DATE
ANGLESEY INTERNATIONAL Aaron Head (Caterham-Ford/Duratec 420R)	1m32.146s	82.04mph	14 August
ANGLESEY COASTAL Lee Morgan (Jedi-Suzuki Mk6/7)	1m04.64s	86.32mph	11 September
BISHOPSCOURT Aaron Gaughran (Dallara-Toyota F312)	1m03.748s	103.006mph	8 May
BRANDS HATCH GRAND PRIX Matthew Rees (Tatuus-Mountune MSV-022)	1m19.231s	110.56mph	11 September
BRANDS HATCH INDY Alex Dunne (Tatuus-Abarth T-421)	44.929s	96.78mph	14 May
CADWELL PARK Jon Woolfitt (Spire-Suzuki GTR)	1m29.488s	87.98mph	23 April
CASTLE COMBE Craig Dolby (Volvo-Chevrolet S60)	1m03.332s	105.16mph	1 October
CROFT Thomas Gadd (Jedi-Suzuki Mk6/7)	1m17.34s	97.75mph	28 May
DONINGTON PARK GRAND PRIX Max Esterson (Tatuus-Mountune MSV-022)	1m23.123s	107.72mph	29 May
DONINGTON PARK NATIONAL Martin Stretton (Tyrrell-Ford/Cosworth 012)	1m01.773s	115.33mph	16 April
GOODWOOD Oliver Bryant (Lola-Chevrolet T70 Spyder)	1m18.443s	110.14mph	10 April
KIRKISTOWN Cian Carey (Dallara-Mercedes F317)	51.883s	104.910mph	27 August
KNOCKHILL Ugo Ugochukwu (Tatuus-Abarth T-421)	48.356s	94.32mph	31 July
KNOCKHILL ANTI-CLOCKWISE Aaron Head (Caterham-Ford/Duratec 420R)	51.655s	88.29mph	18 September
LONDON EXCEL Nick Cassidy (Audi e-tron FE07)	1m14.349s	64.416mph	31 July



STEVE JONES



OLLIE READ



GARY CRAIG



DONINGTON PARK NATIONAL

MICK WALKER

TRACK, DRIVER AND CAR	TIME	SPEED	DATE
LYDDEN HILL Daniel Smith (Mercedes-Ford/Duratec SLK)	44.586s	80.74mph	23 July
MALLORY PARK Paul Collingwood (Eclipse-Ford/Duratec SM1)	47.47s	102.38mph	16 October
MALLORY PARK OVAL George Turiccki (SHP Pickup-Vauxhall)	35.472s	101.48mph	21 May
MONDELLO PARK INTERNATIONAL Paul O'Connell (Dallara-Renault GP2/05)	1m35.285s	82.237mph	12 June
MONDELLO PARK NATIONAL Cian Carey (Dallara-Mercedes F317)	49.275s	83.984mph	10 April
OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL Luke Browning (Tatuus-Mountune MSV-022)	1m29.205s	108.64mph	18 April
OULTON PARK ISLAND Alex Dunne (Tatuus-Abarth T-421)	1m20.473s	99.58mph	11 June
PEMBREY NATIONAL Richard Webb (Spire-Suzuki RGBR)	59.23s	88.50mph	19 June
SILVERSTONE GRAND PRIX Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes F1 W13)	1m30.510s	145.595mph	3 July
SILVERSTONE HISTORIC GRAND PRIX Timothy de Silva (Pescarolo-Judd LMP1)	1m46.158s	123.41mph	28 August
SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL Joe Stables (Radical-Suzuki PR6)	1m02.62s	106.36mph	21 August
SILVERSTONE NATIONAL Gordie Mutch (Praga-Renault R1T)	52.884s	111.67mph	4 June
SNETTERTON 300 Javier Sagrera (Tatuus-Mountune MSV-022)	1m41.885s	104.90mph	26 June
SNETTERTON 200 Bryan Bransom (BMW M3)	1m16.034s	93.93mph	27 August
THRUXTON Alex Dunne (Tatuus-Abarth T-421)	1m10.848s	119.71mph	29 May

OULTON PARK INTERNATIONAL



JEP

SILVERSTONE NATIONAL



OLLIE READ

THRUXTON



JEP

World of sport

The competition was fierce – for the most part – as the heartlands of international motorsport emerged into the sunlight from their post-COVID trauma. Here's the lowdown on what happened in 2022

Prema's prototype premiere

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES



Title-winning Prema ORECA is steered between the trees at the Circuit de Catalunya

With the power of hindsight, Prema's charge to a debut season title in the European Le Mans Series bears a significant resemblance to the campaign upon which Team WRT embarked one year earlier. A hugely experienced and successful operation from a different discipline comes into the series and exceeds expectations with a dominant run to the championship in its first year.

The trio of Ferdinand Habsburg, Louis Deletraz and Lorenzo Colombo (the Italian replaced for the final two rounds by Juan Manuel Correa returning from injury) appeared to be on a different level for much of the season. They won four out of six races, and beat nearest rival Panis Racing's trio of Job van Uitert, Nico Jamin and Julien Canal – who finished every race in the top four – to the crown by 31 points. Prema's ORECA faced resistance from several of the championship stalwart squads. But none of them seemed to be a match for the blinding pace that the Rene Rosin-led operation laid down throughout the season.

Standout moments for Prema include its commanding debut victory at Paul Ricard, as well as Habsburg's stunning opening stint during round four at Barcelona. From seventh on the grid, the Austrian charged up through the field and moved into the lead before the end of the first hour. Out of the six races, Prema only finished off the podium once, at Monza in a race that was won by IDEC Sport's ORECA.

The French squad was one of two teams to return to winning ways. In Italy, Paul-Loup Chatin, Paul Lafargue and Patrick Pilet ended a win drought that lasted over two years. United Autosports livened up a so far winless season with a victory for Duncan Tappy, Tom Gamble and Phil Hanson at Spa, where Prema finished third.

The LMP2 Pro-Am class, reserved for teams with a Bronze-rated driver in their line-up, went the way of Racing Team Turkey. Salih Yoluc and Charlie Eastwood, joined in all but one race by Jack Aitken, dominated much of the season in the TF Sport-operated ORECA, only missing out on victory to Nielsen Racing at Monza and AF Corse at Barcelona – the only race they finished off the class podium.

In LMP3, a season-long battle between Ligier teams Inter Europol Competition and Cool Racing went the way of Cool in a dramatic conclusion at the Portimao finale. After coming into the race as the points leaders, Inter Europol's trio of Nico Pino, Charles Crews and Guilherme Oliveira was eliminated after late-race contact with a GTE car. Cool line-up Malthe Jakobsen, Michael Benham and Maurice Smith won the race, turning a 19-point deficit to a seven-point lead and claiming the title.

The GTE crown went to the Proton Competition Porsche of Gianmaria Bruni, Lorenzo Ferrari and Christian Ried. They scored only one win, but in a series where the six races all had different victors that didn't matter. They beat Kessel Racing Ferrari duo Mikkel Jensen and Frederik Schandorff by a mere four points.

DAVEY EUWEMA


JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

Veterans Ried and Bruni plus youthful Ferrari claimed GTE honours



Meyer Shank leads WTR. The Acuras were rarely further apart than this

Meyer Shank wins the final DPi battle of the Acuras

IMSA SPORTSCAR

These are exciting times for the IMSA SportsCar Championship. There is a huge wave of optimism for the new-generation GTP cars that will take centre stage in 2023, and in the meantime the DPi era certainly ended on a high note in early October after another thrilling season.

Appropriately, the outcome was decided by a straight-up battle between Acura teams Meyer Shank Racing and Wayne Taylor Racing and the respective teams' standout drivers, Tom Blomqvist and Filipe Albuquerque. Their battle for supremacy waged throughout the season.

MSR ended WTR's streak of three 24-hour wins in the opening event at Daytona, but played second fiddle through the majority of the 10-race season, including an agonising run of second-place finishes. Spectacular late-race passes at Laguna Seca and Watkins Glen by Albuquerque secured two of those victories for WTR, but in the end it was Blomqvist's brilliance at the Road Atlanta finale, following a superb final pitstop, that resulted in Meyer Shank snatching its first prototype title. It was richly deserved. Blomqvist and Oliver Jarvis had been models of consistency, with the evergreen Helio Castroneves also playing an important role in the endurance events.

Sebastien Bourdais, with four poles, and team-mate Renger van der Zande led the Cadillac charge with three wins. Included among them was an astonishing effort by the Frenchman at Long Beach where he annihilated the qualifying lap record, threw away his lead with a spin, then charged back through the field to win. Unfortunately, the Chip Ganassi-run team's hopes of victory at Petit Le Mans were ended by an embarrassing clash in the late stages between van der Zande and the sister car driven by Earl Bamber.

Canadian gentleman racer John Farano earned the LMP2 title for Tower Motorsport, thanks primarily to Swiss ace Louis Deletraz, while Jon Bennett and Colin Braun capped a successful final year for the former's CORE autosport team by securing LMP3 honours.

It was a successful first year for GTD Pro, which replaced the popular GTLM class, with double-digit fields for the opening long-distance races at Daytona and Sebring. Matt Campbell and Mathieu Jaminet, along with Porsche factory driver Felipe Nasr, took a sensational last-ditch win at Daytona for the Canadian Pfaff Motorsports team, which had earned the GTD (semi-pro) spoils in 2021. Half a dozen cars was the norm for the majority of the year, featuring some tremendous competition even though the Pfaff duo won precisely half the races.

The 'regular' GTD title fell in favour of young Canadian Roman De Angelis (Heart of Racing Team Aston Martin) following a tense battle in which no fewer than seven marques claimed a win.

JEREMY SHAW



FARMER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

2022 CHAMPIONS


S5000

S5000
JOEY MAWSON


TGR

SUPER FORMULA LIGHTS
KAZUTO KOTAKA


FOTOSPEEDY

EUROFORMULA OPEN
OLIVER GOETHE


FREGIONAL ASIAN

FORMULA REGIONAL ASIAN
ARTHUR LECLERC


GAVIN BAKER PHOTOGRAPHY

FORMULA REGIONAL AMERICAS
RAOUL HYMAN

motorsport STATS
For full results visit **motorsportstats.com**



Nojiri joins the ranks of the Super Formula greats

SUPER FORMULA

Honda driver Tomoki Nojiri mounted Super Formula's first successful title defence in 14 years as he won the title with a race to spare for the second year in a row.

The foundation of Nojiri's success was his unbelievable qualifying record – the Team Mugen man won six of a possible 10 poles – and his unmatched consistency – he was off the podium only twice all season and never finished a race lower than fourth.

A Toyota resurgence meant Nojiri had two serious rivals in the first part of the season in the forms of Sacha Fenestraz, who was at the vanguard of a Kondo Racing revival, and perennial contender Ryo Hirakawa, who scored two wins in the first four races for Team Impul.

But the turning point came just after Fenestraz scored his first win at Sugo in June. In the following round at Fuji, both he and Hirakawa were taken out in incidents not of their making, and their title hopes really never recovered.

Mugen also won the teams' title thanks in part to Ukyo Sasahara, who went from not having a drive as late as February to scoring two wins, the first in the summer Fuji race and the second at Suzuka, where he passed team-mate Nojiri en route to glory. Shortly after the season, he quit the Honda camp and, at the time of writing, looked set to join the Toyota stable for 2023.

The remaining race winners were Yuhi Sekiguchi, who came out on top in a thrilling battle against Impul team-mate Hirakawa at Motegi, Nobuharu Matsushita (B-Max) in the wet at Suzuka, and Naoki Yamamoto (Nakajima Racing) in similar conditions at Motegi.

Besides Fenestraz, the only 'gaijin' on the grid was Giuliano Alesi, promoted to a full-time drive at TOM'S. But with just one finish in the points, he went into the winter uncertain whether he would keep his seat, with Sasahara a candidate to replace him.

JAMIE KLEIN

It's A-plus for the Zs with Nissan on top

SUPER GT



The 2022 Super GT season will be remembered as the year when Nissan blew away its rivals with the introduction of the brand-new Z GT500.

After two years of struggling with the overdragged Class 1 iteration of the GT-R, Nissan's new weapon was much more potent in a straight line, but crucially without sacrificing the downforce levels that made its predecessor so strong on certain types of track.

In the end, it was Team Impul and the Bridgestone-shod Z of Bertrand Baguette and Kazuki Hiramine that got the job done, but such was the potency of the new package that it could have just as easily been the NDDP Racing car of Katsumasa Chiyo and Mitsunori Takaboshi on Michelin rubber that ended a Nissan barren streak going back to 2015.

What made the difference in the end was Nissan newcomer Baguette outqualifying Chiyo for the final round at Motegi and then holding his nerve on the opening lap, while Chiyo earned a drivethrough penalty for making contact with Tomoki Nojiri's Honda.

Honda, which upgraded the bodywork of its NSX-GT in line with the latest 'Type S' road car, had two cars in the title fight in the final round. But neither Team Kunimitsu (Naoki Yamamoto/Tadasuke Makino) nor Real Racing (Koudai Tsukakoshi/Nobuharu Matsushita) were consistent enough across the year to truly challenge Nissan.

Toyota, meanwhile, struggled in the third year of the GR Supra, despite some minor upgrades to the front aero. Its top-placed entry, the Rookie Racing car of Kenta Yamashita and Kazuya Oshima, ended up fifth overall behind the Hondas.

GT300 honours went to Joao Paulo de Oliveira and Kiyoto Fujinami for the second time in three years, the Kondo Racing Nissan pair winning the title in a heart-stopping finale in which standout rookie Riki Okusa (Gainer Nissan) was denied the title on the very last lap.

JAMIE KLEIN

Swede mashes Andretti mob

INDY LIGHTS

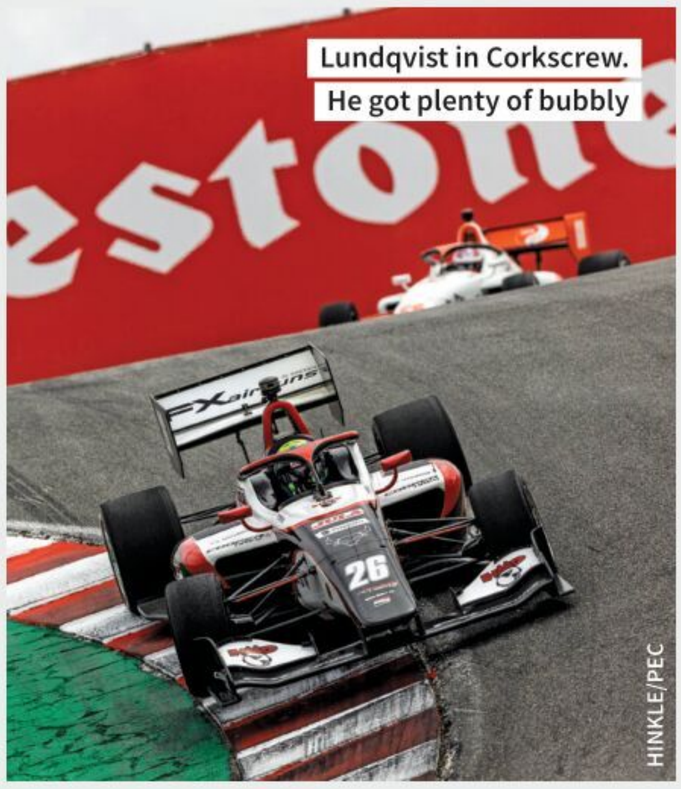
If Andretti Autosport's talented quartet of Sting Ray Robb, Matt Brabham, Hunter McElrea and Christian Rasmussen been forced to work in a hierarchical manner, then one of them — maybe even two — might have defeated Linus Lundqvist of HMD Motorsports with Dale Coyne Racing to the Indy Lights title. But that would have been an unfair policy to impose in a junior formula where everyone's fighting for their right to graduate to the top rank. So the foursome scored seven wins between them, whereas Lundqvist accumulated five for himself.

In fact, the damage the Swede inflicted on everyone else's title chances was largely done after the first week of June, by which time he had triumphed in four of the first six rounds. Thereafter, he was able to take fewer chances and accumulate podiums, his only black mark being when he inadvertently squeezed Brabham into the wall at Iowa Speedway as the American-Australian tried to pass him for the lead. That incurred a penalty, and subsequent car damage cost Brabham the win... which ultimately cost him runner-up spot in the championship.

That said, Brabham was the most convincing of Andretti's drivers only on the ovals, his long stretch away from single-seaters appearing to have cost him a couple of tenths in qualifying on road and street courses. Robb was steady and consistent, but it may be McElrea (like Brabham, he has strong racecraft) and Rasmussen (occasional blinding speed) who have more potential.

Yet at the time of writing, it's only Benjamin Pedersen, Lundqvist's team-mate who scored his first Lights win in September, who is confirmed in an IndyCar seat for 2023.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ



Lundqvist in Corkscrew. He got plenty of bubbly

HINKLE/PEC

Pereira finally gets his reward

PORSCHE SUPERCUP

'All good things come to those who wait' is a mantra that Dylan Pereira would most definitely abide by. It's hard to imagine that the Luxembourger is still only 25, because 2022 was his seventh full season in the Formula 1-supporting Porsche Supercup, and his sixth with Lechner Racing. And it was a year when he finally became the champion.

Pereira started the campaign with a win at Imola, and added further successes at the Red Bull Ring and Spa. But it was what he was doing when he wasn't winning that was key. In the first seven of eight races he never finished outside the top four, and in the finale at Monza fifth was good enough for that long-awaited title.

Closest to Pereira was Larry ten Voorde. The Dutchman remained with Team GP Elite, with which he won the 2020 and 2021 crowns, and was another with massive consistency although he only took one win, in Monaco. But it was getting shunted out of the Austrian GP support that hit hard.

Ten Voorde therefore had to recover to second in the points ahead of promising Porsche junior Laurin Heinrich — the German stayed at Huber Racing for his second year in the series and took a victory at Silverstone. Heinrich outscored rookie Bastian Buus by just one point, the Danish teenager winning at Paul Ricard and Monza.

British talent Harry King, like Pereira running out of the Lechner stable, stayed in title contention for much of the season, despite not winning a race. He finished fifth, comfortably clear of Marvin Klein, who was the other winner of 2022 at Zandvoort.



Pereira was in the pink at last

PORSCHE

2022 CHAMPIONS



USF PRO RACING

INDY PRO 2000
LOUIS FOSTER



USF PRO RACING

USF2000
MICHAEL D'ORLANDO



ACI SPORT ITALIA

ITALIAN AND GERMAN FORMULA 4
ANDREA KIMI ANTONELLI



F4 SPAIN

SPANISH FORMULA 4
NIKOLA TSOLOV



FFSA

FRENCH FORMULA 4
ALESSANDRO GIUSTI

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Logano celebrates his second Cup title with team boss Roger Penske

Consistent Logano peaks at the right time

NASCAR CUP

Joey Logano turned out to be one of the few constants in a very unpredictable and especially competitive 2022 NASCAR Cup Series season.

Logano bookended the year with victories, the Team Penske Ford star kicking off the series debut of the Next Gen car in style and capping it with a dominating win at Phoenix that earned him his second championship.

The Next Gen car, which originally was to debut in 2021 but was delayed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, got its first racing action in the pre-season non-points Busch Clash. Logano held off veteran Kyle Busch for the win in the event, which was held on a made-from-scratch quarter-mile asphalt oval built inside the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. It was the first time the race had been held on a track other than Daytona since its inception in 1981.

NASCAR'S continued effort in changing up the series schedule, combined with the improved racing at most tracks from the new car, produced exciting results. The season featured a record-tieing 19 different winners, including five drivers — Austin Cindric, Ross Chastain, Daniel Suarez, Tyler Reddick and Chase Briscoe — scoring their first-ever victories. No one organisation or driver seemed to be able to overshadow any other on a consistent basis through the year.

Fans also appeared to take notice as overall television ratings of races on Fox Sports and NBC increased by 4%. The overall share — the percentage of televisions turned on and watching NASCAR — increased by 10%. There were eight races that enjoyed a full house in 2022, including two of the earliest sellouts in recent history with the Daytona 500 and the championship race at Phoenix.

Chastain's last-lap, wild wall-riding move at Martinsville to earn a spot in the Championship 4 has become one of the most talked-about events in NASCAR history. NBC's video of the move produced more than 50.4million impressions and 27.9million video views.

But the season wasn't without its problems. Safety concerns grew over the Next Gen car when two drivers — Kurt Busch and Alex Bowman — missed races from concussions amid rising complaints over the severity of rear-end crashes. In addition to working on fixes for the rear-end clips, NASCAR found itself having to address lacklustre racing on its road courses and short tracks with the new car. And with the approaching renewal of team charters and TV broadcast rights coming up in 2024, teams made public their desire to seek a new revenue-sharing proposal with NASCAR; their first was rejected by the sanctioning body.

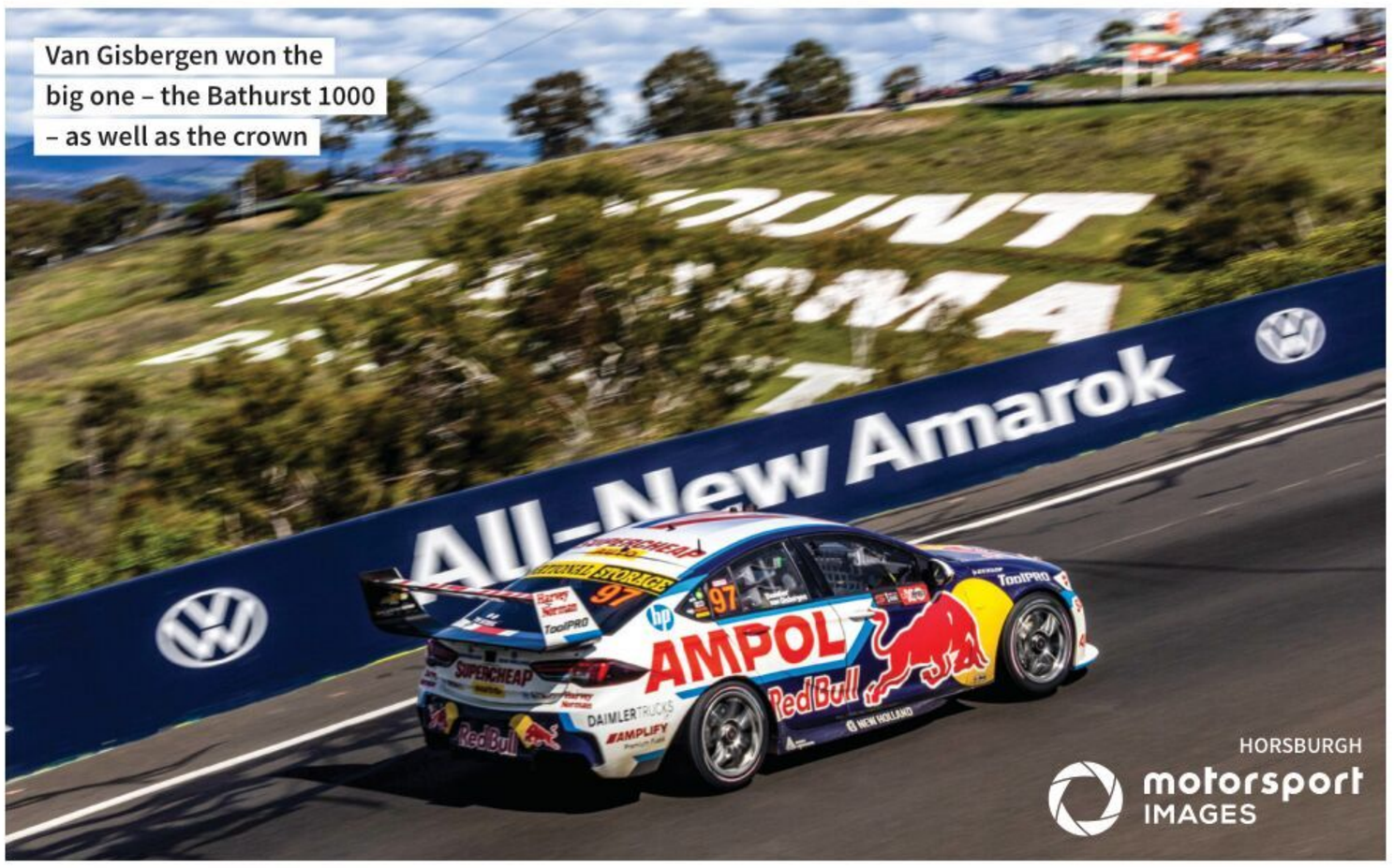
When it came to the season's biggest prize, Logano and Penske were the masters to defeat rivals Chastain, Christopher Bell and Chase Elliott in the winner-takes-all finale.

JIM UTTER



Chastain (1) only made final four with his wild wall ride at Martinsville

MILLER/MOTORSPORTIMAGES



Van Gisbergen won the big one – the Bathurst 1000 – as well as the crown

It's Shane van Whizzbergen as Aussies can't stop flying Kiwi

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Complete and utter dominance. There is no other way to describe what we saw from Shane van Gisbergen in Supercars this year.

The Kiwi went into the 2022 season as the overwhelming favourite, so the fact that he ended it as a three-time champion is far from a surprise. But even the most optimistic SVG fans couldn't have imagined how comprehensively he would thrash the rest of the field. His campaign included 21 victories from the 34 races, breaking the season wins record set by Scott McLaughlin in 2019. And as van Gisbergen himself pointed out when he claimed the record at Bathurst, this time around there weren't the underlying concerns over parity that dogged the 2019 season and McLaughlin's early dominance.

Van Gisbergen's 2022 campaign was a lesson in racecraft. His Triple Eight Holden was rarely the fastest car in the field over a lap – just six of his 21 wins came from a somewhat meagre tally of seven poles. Instead it was Ford squads Dick Johnson Racing and Tickford Racing that had the single-lap speed, Cam Waters ultimately just shading the evergreen Will Davison for the season pole award.

But in the races van Gisbergen was unstoppable. At times he and new engineer Andrew Edwards could extract ridiculous tyre life out of the #97. So often in the single-stop sprint races van Gisbergen would run a long first stint; he wouldn't be immune to the undercut, but he'd be quick enough to limit the damage. He'd then take on fresher rubber later than anybody else and relentlessly hunt down those in front of him as he charged to victory, ignoring the popular opinion that it's impossible to pass in the Gen2 cars.

It wasn't just a lot of wins for van Gisbergen, but some important ones as well. The race of the year was undoubtedly race three at Pukekohe. He gave his home circuit the perfect send-off before it's turned into racehorse stables by storming through the field from eighth to victory. He won the Bathurst 1000 with Garth Tander and clean-swept the Gold Coast 500. The only big race he didn't top was Holden's farewell from Supercars (and the end of the Gen2 era) in Adelaide.

Waters was 'best of the rest' in 2022, finishing second in the points as he continued his development into one of the top drivers in the category. The Tickford driver was, at the very least, prepared to race van Gisbergen harder than most. Third was Walkinshaw Andretti United Holden driver Chaz Mostert, ahead of DJR pair Anton De Pasquale and Davison.

The reset button will now be hit, with the brand new low-downforce Gen3 cars set to debut in Newcastle next March.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN



HORSBURGH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Waters hits the kerbs at Surfers Paradise

2022 CHAMPIONS


F4 JAPAN

JAPANESE FORMULA 4
SHUN KOIDE


GAVIN BAKER PHOTOGRAPHY

US FORMULA 4
LOCHIE HUGHES


FOTOFORMULAK

UAE FORMULA 4
CHARLIE WURZ


JEP

LE MANS CUP
TOM DILLMANN/ ALEXANDER MATTSCHULL



ADAC MOTORSPORT

ADAC GT MASTERS
RAFFAELE MARCIELLO

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Marciello is the star, but it's Audi pair on top in Sprint Cup

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

So often over the years, final standings have not painted the whole picture. The data didn't lie at the end of the 2022 GT World Challenge Europe campaign, though. Two teams dominated, with one man emerging beyond doubt as the best GT3 driver of 2022.

Raffaele Marciello picked up the overall series title for the second time, and secured the Endurance Cup crown in dramatic fashion at Barcelona alongside ASP Mercedes team-mates Dani Juncadella and Jules Gounon. Competition throughout the year came from perennial frontrunner Team WRT who, with the trusted Charles Weerts and Dries Vanthoor, claimed another Sprint Cup title in the Belgian squad's final season with Audi before switching to BMW for next year.



While the Sprint Cup offered a nailbiting season-long scrap between two of GT3 racing's most prolific teams, the level of opposition paled in comparison to the Endurance Cup, where there was a different winner in each of the five races.

Weerts, Vanthoor and Kelvin van der Linde kicked off the year with a crushing victory in the three-hour Imola opener, with ASP taking second. The Audi endured a nightmare race into the night at Paul Ricard at the start of June, as Iron Lynx's Antonio Fuoco, Daniel Serra and Davide Rigon led a 1-2 for Ferrari.

Thanks to a third in France, ASP arrived at the Spa 24 Hours with a 100% podium finishing rate and produced one of the best all-round performances in recent memory to take Mercedes' first victory in the race since 2013. The car took pole but lost out to the fast-starting Dinamic Porsche of Klaus Bachler before returning to contention thanks to superb team strategy. Gounon brought the car home to a rapturous response, despite a hair-raising panel-bashing run through Eau Rouge with Nicki Thiim's Aston Martin in the closing stages.



The Spa triumph was the last Endurance Cup podium for ASP but, as it turned out, that mattered little. Retirement at Hockenheim dented their charge, but fifth at Barcelona was enough to be crowned as Fuoco agonisingly missed out on the victory he needed in the season finale.

Tambay beats the boss at the first attempt

eTOURING CAR WORLD CUP

The second season of touring car visionary Marcello Lotti's electric variant was blessed with FIA World Cup status and a much-improved quality of driver.

The FIA ETCR-eTouring Car World Cup – to give it its full rename after its inaugural season as Pure ETCR – has much to commend it once you get past the quirks. For example, the car-sharing format meant that the top two in the final standings never once faced each other on track.

In his first season of ETCR, Adrien Tambay claimed the title from 2021 Pure ETCR champion Mattias Ekstrom, whose EKS squad had taken over the running of the works Cupra effort for 2022. The duo dominated their respective 'pools' in the first half of the six-round season, with Ekstrom twice proclaimed 'King of the Weekend' (top points scorer) and ex-DTM racer Tambay once. From summer onwards other drivers were on top; Tambay kept up his consistently high scoring, but Ekstrom had a couple of disappointing rounds.



Tom Blomqvist, another ETCR new boy, made it a 1-2-3 for EKS Cupra. He got more and more competitive, and was the weekend king in the finale at the Sachsenring – a maximum score from the same pool as Ekstrom was an impressive achievement.

Other 'kings' were Zolder winner Maxime Martin in the Romeo Ferraris Alfa Romeo Giulietta, and Hyundai's World Touring Car Cup champion Mikel Azcona, who was invincible at Vallelunga. They finished fourth and fifth respectively in the points. Bruno Spengler, Norbert Michelisz and Jean-Karl Vernay were next in a top-class field.



ASP Mercedes presses on at Variante Alta in Imola Endurance round

Ferrari was a threat in Sprint Cup too, with AF Corse duo Pierre-Alexandre Jean and Ulysse de Pauw bookending the year with victories at Brands Hatch and Valencia, but generally it was the WRT and ASP show.

Marciello, sharing with Timur Boguslavskiy, showcased his skill with a dominant drive at Brands, while Weerts and Vanthoor strolled to victories at Magny-Cours and Zandvoort before utterly sweeping up at Misano, their home away from home, during the summer.

Third in the penultimate race of the year at Valencia wrapped up the title for the Belgians, and it was a superb tyre gamble in changeable conditions that produced their fifth win – a fitting way to end a glorious era with Audi as they finished 24 points clear of the ASP duo.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

Kristoffersson in electric dreams

WORLD RALLYCROSS

As if the COVID-19 saga hadn't been enough, the World Rallycross Championship's electification and the global componentry-supply crisis meant more delays in 2022. But once it got going it was a familiar story – a fifth WRX crown for Swedish maestro Johan Kristoffersson.

Hell in Norway was the venue for the belated dawn of the electric WRX era, and the eight-car field that assembled in mid-August formed the bedrock across the six race weekends. Driving a Volkswagen run by the family Kristoffersson Motorsport team, the eventual champion emerged on top. And, remarkably, he would go on to take the chequered flag first in nine of the 10 finals, although Kristoffersson lost one of his wins at Montalegre to a penalty.



Kristoffersson rags it at Montalegre

The beneficiary at the Portuguese track was Niclas Gronholm in the Swedish-built PWR. The son of ex-World Rally king Marcus Gronholm found himself in a season-long battle for second in the standings with Hansen brothers Timmy and Kevin, the sons driving Peugeot 208 machinery run by their former rallycross legend father Kenneth, plus Kristoffersson's team-mate Ole Christian Veiby.

Veiby looked strong, but a few technical gremlins struck and it was Timmy Hansen, the older of the two brothers (and who scored the only remaining win when he triumphed at Barcelona), who prevailed from Gronholm, Veiby and the younger Hansen.

A ninth car appeared at the series finale – the intriguing Lancia Delta of Guerlain Chicherit. Definitely a series to watch...

2022 CHAMPIONS



GT WORLD CHALLENGE ASIA
KEI COZZOLINO/TAKESHI KIMURA



GT WORLD CHALLENGE AMERICA
ANDREA CALDARELLI



GT WORLD CHALLENGE AUSTRALIA
YASSER SHAHIN



INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN
LEONARDO PULCINI/BENJA HITES



EUROPEAN GT4 SERIES (SILVER)
ROEE MEYUHAS/ERWAN BASTARD

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GOODEN/DPPI

Azcona in flight on the Nordschleife, but it was all to no avail when races were cancelled

Azcona from Cupra cadet to Hyundai commodore

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP

Mikel Azcona repaid BRC Hyundai for its faith following his big winter transfer from alma mater Cupra. The 26-year-old Spaniard slipped into the seat vacated by newly retired legend Gabriele Tarquini, so the pressure was on – especially when the Italian became his team manager. But Azcona barely broke a sweat as he became Hyundai's third champion in five years in the World Touring Car Cup.

Sadly, he'll also be the last. The series just couldn't catch a break, and after a season of turmoil the French promoter decided enough is enough. Plans are forming for a world ranking system for TCR races around the globe, with a World Cup finale to cap the season. But for now, a series that grew out of the old World Touring Car Championship is history.

Grid numbers were down, despite more than 1000 TCR cars having been sold around the world. Nestor Girolami in his Munnich Motorsport Honda and Azcona won the first two races on WTCR's maiden visit to Pau, before the series was derailed by a humiliating last-minute cancellation at the Nurburgring Nordschleife. Concerns over Goodyear's spec tyres lasting the three-lap race distance triggered the drama, although Hyundai and Azcona won their class in the 24 Hours running on the same tyre later that weekend.

Reigning double champion Yann Ehrlacher and Cyan Lynk & Co were discombobulated, especially after Vila Real when the Swedish squad called a team order against the Frenchman in favour of Uruguayan Santiago Urrutia. Cue much pouting, as Urrutia emerged as the biggest threat to Azcona's title hopes. Until Vallelunga.

Intense heat in Italy and the demands of the long Turn 2 right-hander caused fresh tyre failures, Yvan Muller crashing heavily in practice. Cyan chose melodrama over diplomacy by pulling in all five cars at the end of the warm-up laps in protest, then withdrew from the series entirely. The WTCR wouldn't recover from the blow.

Would Urrutia or Ehrlacher have beaten Azcona to the crown had Cyan stuck around? Perhaps, but it would have been a tall order. BRC Hyundai played the Balance of Performance game to perfection, scoring podiums at every round, while Azcona channelled maturity into his natural aggression. He won four times and became champion before qualifying at the Jeddah finale was even done.

Girolami had his best WTCR season to cling on to second, while Nathanael Berthon finished third for Comtoyou Audi despite colliding in the finale with Rob Huff – the hero of the season. Little Zengo Motorsport only just scraped two Cupras together for a woefully underfunded campaign. Yet top independent Huff won twice overall and was on for at least third in the points, until the lack of finance bit hard. Still, he and Zengo offered much-needed light in a season dominated by gloom.

DAMIEN SMITH



VINCENT/DPPI

Girolami and Honda started well with a win at Pau, but couldn't stop Hyundai star

Ferrari's Dino is the Prancing Horse of FRECA

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN



Beganovic was crowned at Mugello

Prema-run Ferrari junior Dino Beganovic stormed to the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine title. The second season since Formula Regional's merger with the Formula Renault Eurocup was again immensely popular, with the entry list exceeding 35 cars on average.

But the success was concentrated among few. Beganovic won a race at each of the first three rounds, and after seven races the Swede held a colossal lead of 65 points. Then a disqualification at the Paul Ricard June round for a hub-flange torque-tightening infringement — which is still rumbling on through the courts — plus a rich vein of form from ART Grand Prix's Gabriele Mini brought the gap down to nine points after round six of 10.

Beganovic's Mercedes F1-backed team-mate Paul Aron found success too, and at the mid-season Zandvoort round became the only driver to score a weekend double victory, but then Beganovic was able to grow his lead again. He finally clinched the title with a race to go at the Mugello finale, but with his likely reinstatement at Ricard he would have been already crowned before the trip to Tuscany.

Mini did just enough to deny Aron the championship runner-up spot, with both winning at Mugello. Other race winners were R-ace GP pair Hadrien David and Gabriel Bortoleto, and Van Amersfoort Racing's Kas Haverkort. Leonardo Fornaroli (Trident) claimed the rookie title.

IDA WOOD



Chadwick broke her home-soil duck at Silverstone

Chadwick champion again

W SERIES

Another W Series season, another title for Jamie Chadwick. The Briton dominated the Formula 1-supporting all-female championship once more to take her third consecutive title, winning five of the season's seven races.

After missing out on pole at the Miami season opener, Chadwick took the lead off the line and, despite being passed by Emma Kimilainen, emerged victorious from a last-lap shootout after the safety car. She went on to do the double the following day, leading from lights to flag.

Chadwick repeated the feat across the following two rounds at Barcelona and Silverstone, finally taking the home win she had been denied in 2019 and 2021. She was fastest in qualifying again at Paul Ricard and started third after a two-place grid penalty, but took the lead by Turn 3 for her seventh consecutive win dating back to the end of the 2021 season.

Alice Powell took a lights-to-flag victory next time out at the Hungaroring, the 2021 runner-up ending the winning streak of Chadwick, who finished second. The champion then had a dismal weekend in Singapore. She lined up eighth after a red-flagged wet qualifying, and crashed out of the race.

With three races remaining on the schedule, that meant Singapore winner Beitske Visser, Powell and Abbi Pulling had slender mathematical chances of the title. But the season was curtailed amid the championship's financial issues, and Chadwick was handed a third crown.

MEGAN WHITE

2022 CHAMPIONS



TCR EUROPE
FRANCO GIROLAMI



BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS
RUBENS BARRICHELLO



ARGENTINIAN SUPER TC2000
LEONEL PERNIA



NASCAR XFINITY SERIES
TY GIBBS



NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
ZANE SMITH

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PULL&BEAR
REPSOL
HONDA
93

IS MOTOGP'S COMEBACK KING READY TO RECLAIM HIS THRONE?



Marc Marquez's sixth premier MotoGP title seems a long time ago given the injury woes he has faced in the three years since. At the end of a fraught 2022, in which he had a fourth major operation on his right arm, the Spaniard speaks exclusively to Autosport

LEWIS DUNCAN

PHOTOGRAPHY **GOLD AND GOOSE** motorsport IMAGES

The 2022 season concluded with Marc Marquez having achieved two milestones. The first was his 100th podium in MotoGP, which he celebrated with a second-place finish at the Australian Grand Prix in October. Given his 99th came in 2021 at the Emilia Romagna GP, where he was still basically riding with one arm, a century of podiums was a longer time coming than anyone would have predicted. But then, nothing that has happened to Marquez over the past three years has been remotely predictable.

Despite a Honda bike that was proving difficult to manage, there was nothing to suggest during the COVID-delayed start to the 2020 season at Jerez that Marquez wouldn't be adding another premier class title to his haul of six in seven years in MotoGP. The crash four laps from the end of the Spanish GP that resulted in him badly breaking his right arm began a prolonged period of misery for the Spaniard, one that wouldn't really come to an end until he stood on that podium at Phillip Island.

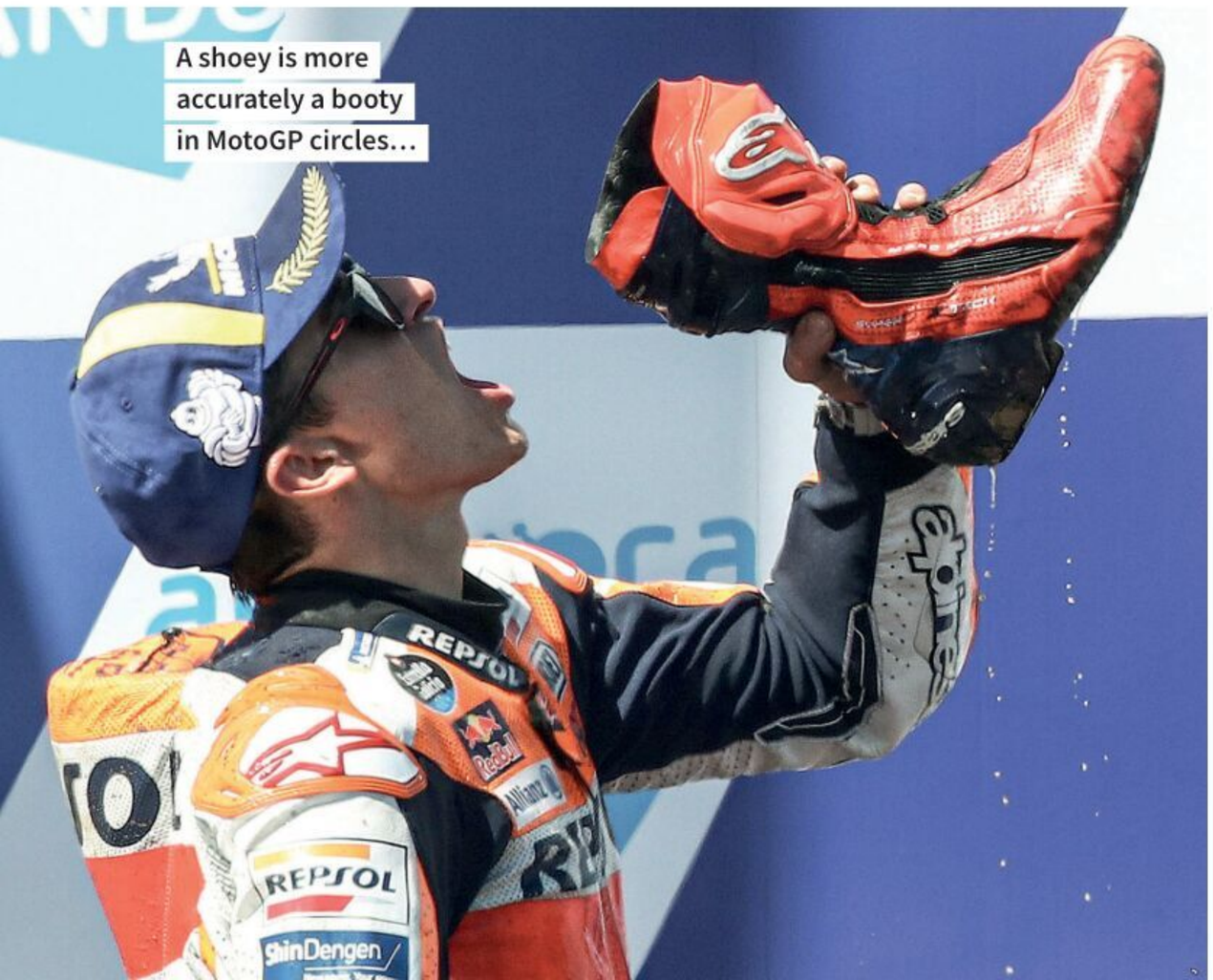
There have been four operations since the crash, the final of which came at the end of May this year when he elected to pause his season after the Italian GP to go to the US to have the bone in his right arm rebroken and rotated over 30 degrees back to its original position. Marquez takes a pragmatic view of his injury when he sits down with Autosport in Honda's private office on the eve of the final round of 2022 at Valencia.

"Of course, many times you think a lot of things about your arm," he says when asked what goes through his mind when he looks at the numerous scars. "And many times it's difficult to realise sometimes or admit that you have this injury. But, in the end you must say, 'OK, this is what I have.' It's true that I had the fourth surgery, it's true that an arm that has been opened four times will never be a normal arm, because you have some limitations. But then you need to accept those limitations, try to compensate with your body, with different things. I'm not thinking a lot about it, just how to improve, about how to manage it, how to adapt."

Marquez has regularly been compared to a machine in the way he used to dispatch his rivals so clinically and emphatically when he romped to his six MotoGP titles between 2013 and 2019. Certainly, when he speaks of his arm now, he does nothing to dispel the robotic accusations when he tells this writer that his arm is "working like a normal arm. When I say normal, I mean mechanical. On the mechanical side, it's working normal, but it's true that the 'software' – which means the muscles, the nerves, all these things – still they are growing."

Marquez returned to action at the Aragon GP in September to begin an extended on-bike recovery period after six rounds on the bench, knowing that he would never be 100% fit without putting his arm through the strains of riding a MotoGP beast.

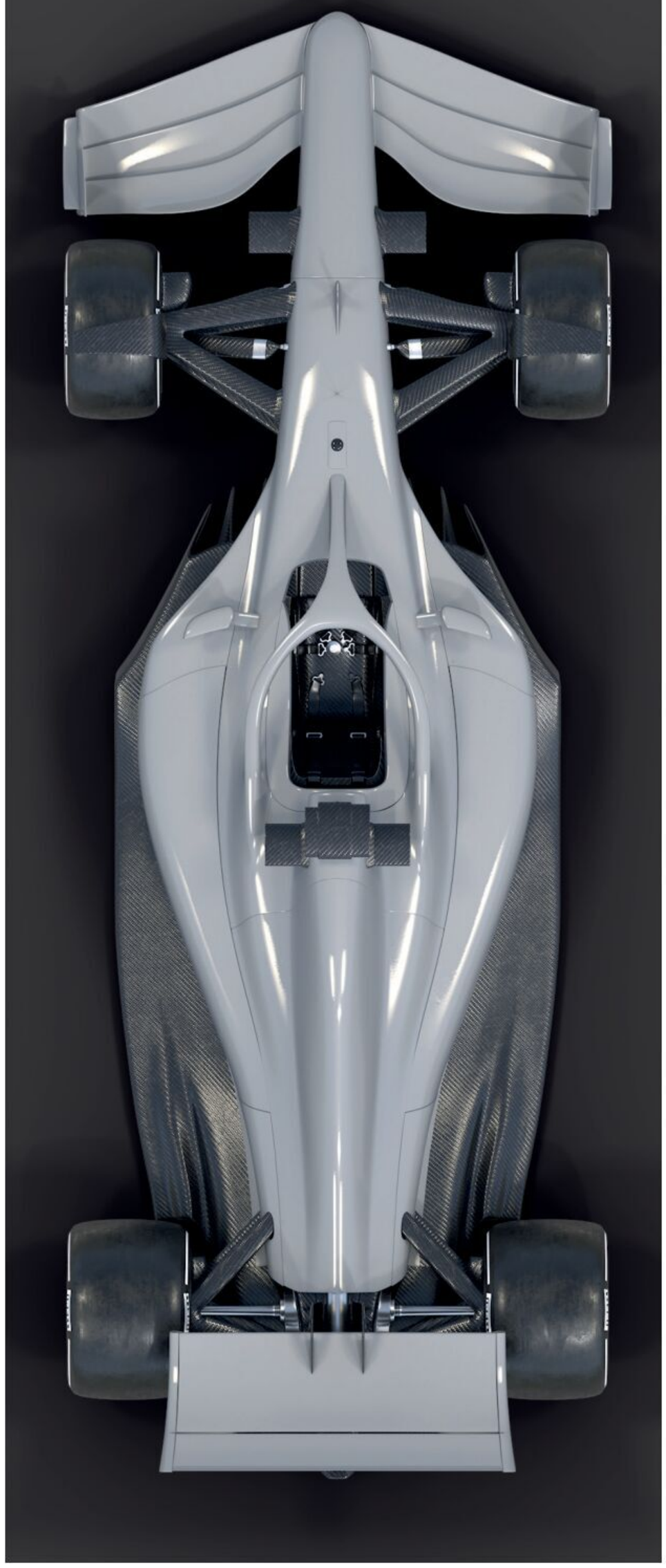
Over the final six races, signs of the old Marquez steadily began »



A shoey is more accurately a booty in MotoGP circles...

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PERFORMANCE





Australia podium was his 100th – and first since 2021

"AT THE MISANO TEST, I WAS RIDING THE SAME BIKE AS POL ESPARGARO AND I WAS ALREADY IN FRONT"

to show. In the wet Japanese GP qualifying in his second race back, he showed he'd lost none of his instincts on the bike to take a first pole since 2019. Throughout the following weekend in Thailand, he was making mistakes and saving moments on the way into corners like he used to – something which, since breaking his arm in 2020 and prior to his fourth surgery, he was unable to do. And then came his Phillip Island rostrum.

There was no fairytale victory like there was on three occasions in 2021 when he came back for the first time – albeit two of those came on anti-clockwise tracks that put less strain on his right shoulder, and the other was a result of a crash for another rider. But it had become clear to Marquez in the early races of 2022, either side of his two-round layoff after a practice crash in Indonesia with a recurring vision issue (the same issue that forced him to miss the final two races of 2021, and which threatened his career when the injury first occurred in 2011 while he was still in Moto2), that his time in MotoGP was nearing its end if nothing could be done about his arm. Unable to ride in the way he needed to, he had long been evaluating a fourth operation, but was not given the go-ahead until the Friday of the Italian GP in late May, once it was clear that his bone was ready for it following consultation.

His time away from the paddock while he recovered also gave Marquez chance to thoroughly evaluate what was going wrong at Honda. By the end of the Italian GP, HRC had just one podium to its credit courtesy of Pol Espargaro in the season-opening Qatar GP. A difficult winter on the radically overhauled RC213V preceded myriad struggles for all four Honda riders, Marquez included.

As European powerhouses Ducati and Aprilia took major steps forward in 2022, the working methods and mentality of the Japanese manufacturers as they lagged behind was under scrutiny. Marquez made a visit to the paddock in Austria during his recovery in what turned out to be something of a rallying cry for Honda.

Such were its problems in 2022 that Marquez, who had missed eight races and crashed out of two more, still ended the year as the marque's top rider by a staggering 57 points. He found that the 2022 RC213V had lost the front-end feeling he needs to extract the best from his riding style in order to fix the bike's rear-grip issues. This prompted his Austria visit, since he felt he was too out of the loop on his previous layoffs due to injury in 2020 and late 2021, and which ultimately forced Honda into its shift in philosophy with its 2022 bike.

When the subject of Honda's philosophy is brought up, Marquez approaches his answer with caution, noting that "I'm not the guy to say to Honda you must change strategy", and points out that some concessions must be given, because the Japanese marques were hit



Marquez carries the scars of previous operations on his arm

harder by the COVID pandemic since many engineers had to spend the 2020 and 2021 seasons exiled in Europe due to travel restrictions. But he is keen to point out that making one step forward with its bike for 2023 won't be enough for Honda. "We are always talking about my physical condition, but I'm the best Honda rider in the championship missing – I don't know – seven, eight races," he says matter-of-factly. "So, where is the level of my bike and where is my level? I know that I can improve, but to fight for the championship now every time the bike becomes more and more important because you have more things: aerodynamics, the holeshot [device], the rear device. And they [Honda] know, and they realise and they accept that they must change something and they know that next year they need to take not one but two steps, because the other manufacturers will do one step and then we are [already] one step behind. So, you need to do one plus one to be equal. So, they are working very hard to do it."

Marquez came away from the first test for 2023 following the Valencia GP in November less than enthused about what Honda had delivered him, although the reality seems to be more positive than he made out at the time, when he said the bike he rode wouldn't be enough for him to fight for the world championship.

Had Honda elected to ditch some of its past ways and allowed its departing runners in Pol Espargaro (who is KTM-bound with Tech3 in 2023) and Marquez's younger brother Alex (off to Gresini Ducati) to continue to test new items, perhaps it would be a bit further along with its 2023 prototype. It would have been a move welcomed by Marquez Sr, although he points out that it wouldn't have made much of a difference.

"At the Misano test [in September], I was riding the same bike as Pol and I was already in front," he explains. "And I was coming »



Close work with Honda engineers is key for 2023 hopes

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Last of his eight world titles came in 2019. Will there be a ninth?



MotoGP landscape has changed with new emerging rivals

back from an injury. So, then if you are fast or if I come back and I am slower than another Honda rider, they will give it to the fastest rider because they will try it in a better way. But when I arrived in Misano with the same bike exactly as Pol I was faster than him. So, then Honda said, 'OK, we will give Marc everything.'"

Even through all of Marquez's injury woes, Honda has made it clear how vital he is to its cause and its hopes of digging itself out of the depth in which it sits following a second winless season in three years — unprecedented for the make, given it had won at least one race every year from the point when it returned full-time to MotoGP in 1982 through to the end of 2019. But the time Honda has to convince him to commit his future is beginning to run out. Marquez is in the middle of a four-year deal to take him to the end of 2024 thought to be worth around €100million. Through the COVID years and his injury layoffs, Honda has honoured its agreement to him, and this is a fact that is not lost on the eight-time world champion (including his 125cc and Moto2 titles).

This hasn't stopped rumours already spreading of rival marques expressing interest in him. At 29, Marquez still has at least another decade of racing in him if he wants it — and he very much believes he can still fight for the title and wants to do so with Honda. But he seemingly makes his first real suggestions that there is the potential for a life outside of Honda if MotoGP titles are on the line.

"I feel a lot of respect for Honda, because the way that during these two years that I was injured, the way that we speak, the way that they take care of me was special," Marquez concedes, adding that "in past contracts, I respected them a lot and Honda always had the first option and I didn't speak with anybody".

"I CHOSE THE CORRECT OPTION TO TAKE THE OPERATION, TO BREAK MY ARM AGAIN AND PUT IT STRAIGHT"

"I know that [treatment] was not normal, but it was special, and I will always have full respect for Honda. But now my mind is only on coming back to the top with Honda. Then of course if I cannot, because I feel like I don't have the tools, I will try to find the best for me. And this is something that I already said to them. But now in 2022 I only want to stay with Honda, and staying with Honda is my target. But, my biggest target is to win championships. So, this is what I will look at for the future. So, yeah, for the future we will see. You never know. As I say, Honda is Honda, it's my dream to stay in Honda. But my biggest dream is to win championships."

The path to that next world championship — which would put him equal with Valentino Rossi's once-thought-unmatchable tally of nine titles overall — hasn't gotten any easier. While the old rivals such as Rossi, Jorge Lorenzo, Dani Pedrosa and Andrea Dovizioso are gone, in their place has come the new, fresh breed of fast superstars in the forms of 2022 world champion Francesco Bagnaia, predecessor Fabio Quartararo and Enea Bastianini.

Their own merits as genuinely great riders will be validated when they can fight fair and square with Marquez. He brushes off our question asking him if he is quietly confident that at full strength, both physically and in terms of machinery, he can swiftly move back to the top of the pile. But he does pass caution that the nature of bikes now in MotoGP is making riding them "less manual", and thus it's harder for the rider to make the difference. It leads him to warn MotoGP of going down a path similar to Formula 1, where he believes the importance of the car outweighs the driver.

"The guys at the top are always the fastest guys," Marquez says. "It's true that now, or by the years, every time the machine I feel is [becoming] more important than the rider. Still the rider is more important than the machine — or this is what I want to believe.

"But every time you are depending more on what you have, because if you don't have the bike you can't do anything. It's not like Formula 1, which is another extreme, but we are going in that way and we need to be careful. And I said already in some safety commissions that, 'Guys, we need to be careful because in the end we need to keep it that the riders are more important than the bikes.'"

Marquez goes into another winter break facing uncertainty in his future, but the second milestone he has achieved in 2022 is that the worst of his plight does genuinely look like it's finally behind him.



Honda faces a long winter as it looks to give Marquez the tools he needs to fight for the championship he still believes is possible, something he has proven with the way he has developed post-fourth surgery in 2022. But with Marquez back at the helm, his leadership as much as his talent should steer HRC in the direction it needs to go.

As we wrap up our chat, the future isn't the most pressing thing on his mind. Reflecting on everything he has been through, Marquez ends on a note of contentment since he achieved his most important victory this year: a happier life.

"For me, looking at this season, the sentence is this: I chose the correct decision, because one option was to finish the season and let's see [how his arm was]," he concludes. "But now, thinking that it could have been Valencia and then an operation and then a full winter with recovery, I was not ready to do it — on the mental side also. So, I chose the correct option to take the operation, to break my arm again and put it straight.

"For the future, we will see if I have enough power, enough strength, enough possibilities to fight for the championship. Life is better, coming in a normal way. I've started to do some motocross training, so it's coming in a good way."

And a Marc Marquez that is happy is a Marc Marquez to be feared by his rivals...

MARQUEZ MOTOGP STATS

Starts: 154
Wins: 59
Poles: 63
Fastest laps: 59
Titles: 6

NIGEL MANSELL'S TOP 10 GREATEST DRIVES

It's 30 years since Nigel Mansell won the Formula 1 world title and then headed off to do battle in America. Here are his best races — and the Briton's memories of them

KEVIN TURNER



10 1989 BRAZILIAN GP

RIO FERRARI 640 1ST

McLaren had dominated 1988, while Mansell suffered a torrid season at Williams. He then jumped to Ferrari, but the semi-automatic-gearbox-equipped 640 gave trouble throughout testing. Things didn't look positive heading to the season-opening race in Rio.

"The gearbox kept breaking down," remembers Mansell. "I couldn't do more than five or six laps before something happened. I was so sure I wouldn't finish this race, I booked an early ticket back on British Airways and told the captain – who had been at the track – to wait for me. I was quite relaxed because I knew my race would be over within three or four laps."

He was gifted an immediate bonus when team-mate Gerhard Berger clashed with polesitter Ayrton Senna, and Mansell took second from Thierry Boutsen's Williams on lap three of 61. He then closed on Riccardo Patrese and overtook the Williams with a touch on the grass.

After the tyre changes, Mansell found himself chasing early stopper Alain Prost's McLaren. "When I was catching Prost, I actually got quite angry," says Mansell. "I'm saying, 'Oh, please don't stop now'."

The Ferrari kept going and Mansell overtook Prost on lap 28, only to suffer an unexpected issue: "Then the steering wheel came off in my hands. All the bolts had come undone. I yelled on the radio, 'I'm coming in for tyres – and a new steering wheel!' The chief mechanic thumped the new wheel into place so hard, the radio button left a scar on his hand. But the wheel stayed on, the gearbox kept working."

By contrast, Prost was hindered by a clutch issue that prevented him stopping for another set of tyres and Mansell reeled him in. Mansell regained the lead just three laps after the stop and made it to the finish to win on his Ferrari debut.



9 1993 AUSTRALIAN INDYCAR GP

SURFERS PARADISE LOLA T93/00 1ST

"I noticed these yellow stripes on the back of my rear wing," recalls Mansell of his first CART race after leaving F1. "I was a rookie, and I was told this was my Learner Plate. I went to the officials and said, 'Look, please; this is insulting'. They said, 'That's the rules. You haven't driven before; everybody needs to know that you're a rookie.' So, this rookie put it on pole. I went to them again and said, 'Look, I'm on pole now. Surely my learner stripes can come off?' 'No. They stay on.'

Mansell was outfumbled at his first rolling start, dropping to third behind the Penskes of Emerson Fittipaldi and Paul Tracy, and was overcome by Robby Gordon.

Tracy dropped out with suspension failure, but Mansell still had plenty to do. He took second from Gordon and closed on Fittipaldi, outbraking him in dramatic style on lap 16 of 65. The move flat-spotted his tyres *and* was deemed to have happened under yellow flags.

"I get a penalty because they said I took Emerson under a yellow flag, which was bullshit," says Mansell. "We'd gone into the corner together, tyres smoking. If there was a yellow flag, you couldn't see it because of the tyre smoke! It was a great overtaking manoeuvre."

Mansell was handed a stop/go penalty but pitted for new tyres anyway and was able to continue without losing extra time. He thus kept the advantage as others stopped.

Still the race had a twist. Mansell clipped a wall, got a puncture and had to pit again. This relegated him to fourth, whereupon he began a charge that took him past Newman/Haas team-mate Mario Andretti, then into the lead as Fittipaldi and Gordon made their second pitstops. Mansell needed a late splash-and-dash, but resumed still ahead and beat a charging Fittipaldi by 5.1 seconds despite cramp.

It hadn't been Mansell's cleanest race, but to conquer a new series, car and circuit on the first time of asking in such dramatic circumstances gets it onto this list: "No more stripes after that!"





8 1991 FRENCH GP

MAGNY-COURS WILLIAMS FW14 1ST

Alain Prost, Mansell's Ferrari team-mate during a tumultuous 1990, had his hands on Ferrari's new 643 for his home GP and he qualified second to Riccardo Patrese's Williams, with Mansell fourth behind the McLaren of Ayrton Senna. Patrese suffered gearbox trouble at the start and Mansell jumped Senna, setting up a duel with Prost.

Around one-third distance Prost was delayed by Andrea de Cesaris's Jordan and Martin Brundle's Brabham. Mansell took his opportunity to snatch the lead down the inside at the Adelaide hairpin. Although he edged away, the gap was still small and, not for the last time, Mansell lost the lead thanks to a slow tyre change by Williams. Prost inherited an advantage of over 5s, but Mansell was back with the Ferrari 12 laps after the pitstop.

This time Mansell needed no assistance, going around the outside of Prost at the hairpin under braking on lap 55 of 72. He then pulled away to secure victory by 5s.

"In 1991, I made the decision to really focus on the first part of the lap and be super-quick there," says Mansell, a fan of the Magny-Cours circuit. "I set the car up accordingly, knowing that I would have to carry the car on the latter stages of the lap, because it didn't work well there. But it certainly worked into the hairpin.

"I got a lot of satisfaction doing that to Prost on his home territory after all we'd been through at Ferrari the previous year."



7 1992 BRITISH GP

SILVERSTONE WILLIAMS FW14B 1ST



It almost became a cliche that Mansell was mighty in front of his home crowd. As early as 1983 he had charged from 18th to fourth at Silverstone in a hastily fixed new Lotus-Renault, and several other drives could have made this list.

Mansell's domination of the 1992 F1 season in the active-ride, traction-control-laden FW14B, by contrast, means there were few candidates from that campaign. But at high-speed Silverstone, Mansell's home virtuosity and the superiority of the Williams achieved a level of performance seldom seen. His pole lap was 1.9s faster than team-mate Riccardo Patrese. As a percentage of the lap, that is the most dominant pole in world championship history. Ayrton Senna's McLaren and the Benetton of Michael Schumacher were 2.7s and 3.1s behind in third and fourth respectively…

He briefly lost the lead with too much wheelspin at the start but powered past Patrese between Copse and Maggotts, completing the first lap 3.3s clear. It was 6s one lap later. After 10 of the 59, he was 20.6s ahead.

Thereafter Mansell added to the lead when he felt like it, made a pitstop around half distance, and then let rip in the closing stages to smash the lap record and set a time 1.8s faster than the next best. His winning margin was 39.1s in a dry race.

"In an average car, he would be favoured to win his home race, and the FW14B is not an average car," reported Autosport's Nigel Roebuck. "There was no doubt that Mansell was wringing everything from it. He may never again have such an absolute victory."

6 1988 BRITISH GP

SILVERSTONE WILLIAMS FW12 2ND

The 1988 British GP is largely remembered for one of Ayrton Senna's great wet-weather wins, but Mansell also starred. Woeful reliability with his underpowered Williams-Judd meant Mansell arrived for round eight still waiting for his first finish of the season. Unsurprisingly on a high-speed circuit, he qualified down in 11th, but the downpour gave Mansell an opportunity – after he'd got the car switched from active to passive suspension.

"This one brings a great memory because I remember being almost on my hands and knees asking Patrick [Head] to convert the Williams back to a passive, old-school car," says the 69-year-old. "Active suspension was the big thing at the time but compared to what we were to have later [in 1992], the 1988 system was completely primitive. I'd had a failure in the previous race at Paul Ricard and, when I had a couple of scares during practice at Silverstone, I really pleaded for a return to passive. The guys at Williams worked round the clock. What they did was incredible. When I got back in the car, it was like night and day. When rain came, I thought we were in with a chance."

Mansell leapt to seventh on lap one, then picked off Ivan Capelli's March at Stowe on lap three. On lap 16 of 65, Mansell followed the impressive Alessandro Nannini (Benetton) past the other March of Mauricio Gugelmin to run fifth as they lapped traffic. Nannini spun as he battled Michele Alboreto's Ferrari and Mansell, and the Williams swiftly overtook Alboreto. After 22 laps Mansell was therefore third. Nannini wasn't done yet, though, for the Benetton retook Mansell just before half-distance. But the Italian soon spun again, leaving the Williams on its own.

At one stage Mansell had been 48s behind second-placed Gerhard Berger, but the Ferrari driver had used up too much fuel battling Senna and had to back off. Mansell closed inexorably in the second half of the race, setting fastest lap as he did so, before moving in to second with 15 laps to go.

"The crowd went barmy when I took second," enthuses Mansell. "But Senna was out in front and had everything under control. Nonetheless, second in a car that had been more or less cobbled together overnight was a heck of an achievement."





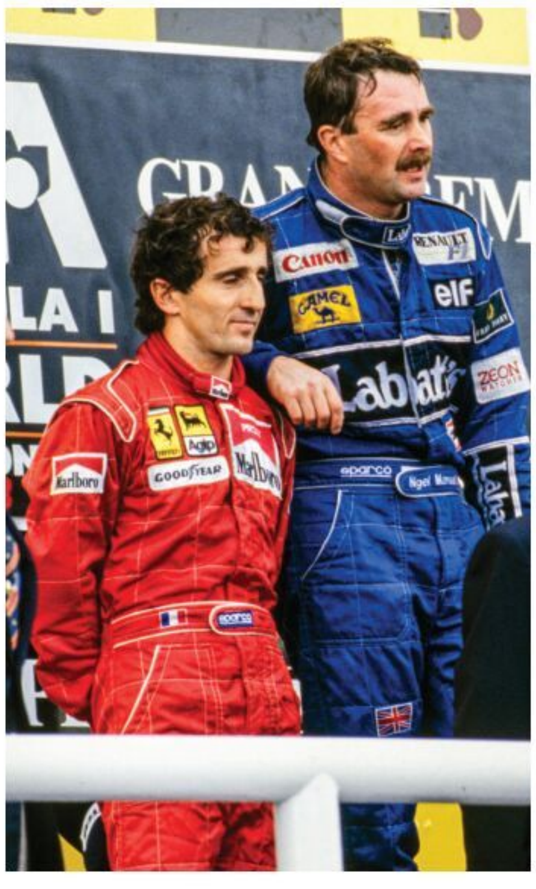
5 1991 SPANISH GP

BARCELONA WILLIAMS FW14 1ST

"Nigel keeps the dream alive," said Autosport after Mansell took victory at the new Circuit de Catalunya to keep himself in championship contention.

Mansell qualified second behind Gerhard Berger's McLaren and lost out to title rival Ayrton Senna on the run to the first corner on a damp track. Michael Schumacher's Pirelli-shod Benetton also made it by before spinning on lap two.

As Berger edged away, Mansell pressured Senna. On lap four, the Williams emerged from the high-speed right-hander at the end of the lap right underneath the McLaren's rear wing. Mansell pulled out and the two ran side by side, almost touching.



"People still talk about me going wheel-to-wheel with Senna at 190mph, it was pretty meaningful," says Mansell. "It's become an iconic F1 image, but there was a lot more going on that weekend.

"When Jean-Marie Balestre [president of FISA and the FIA] had asked for questions, I asked if he could please tell us why there were rules for one driver – pointing at Senna – and different rules for everybody else. Much as I respected Ayrton, he seemed to think he had a divine right to barge through and push people out of the way and get away with it. I'd had enough of that.

"Ayrton went bananas, shouting at Jean-Marie and pointing at me. I just sat there. It was like catching a shark on a fishing line. So, in the race, Ayrton and I are at each other's throats. It was, as you might imagine, very satisfying to take the lead in that manner."

Mansell made it through, but when they pitted to switch to dry tyres McLaren's stop was significantly faster and Senna emerged ahead.

Berger's stop had also been slow, so the order was briefly Senna-Berger-Mansell. Senna wasn't comfortable and allowed Berger through, but any plan to delay Mansell's charge was derailed when Senna spun out of the final corner. It took Mansell just three laps to close the 4s gap to Berger. He took the lead just before one-third distance and controlled the rest of the 65-lap contest.

4 1993 NEW ENGLAND 200

NEW HAMPSHIRE LOLA T93/00 1ST

His Surfers Paradise win is more famous, but Mansell's victory at New Hampshire was better – and represents the mastery of ovals that was key to his CART title.

Mansell arrived at the one-mile oval with the points lead and three wins from 10 rounds. He took pole and led early on, but was soon embroiled in a battle with the Penskes of Paul Tracy and Emerson Fittipaldi, the trio swapping places as they carved through traffic.

A cross-threaded wheelnut at his final stop dropped Mansell from second to third. Tracy edged away, while Mansell battled to repass the double F1 world champion and finally did so with 26 of the 200 laps to go.

The Lola chipped away at the leader's advantage, setting up a superb duel in the closing stages. Mansell edged briefly ahead, only for Tracy to regain the initiative. Then, on lap 197, Mansell made his move, boldly going around the outside as they lapped (remarkably, given his role in the 1989 Hungarian GP!) Stefan Johansson.

"This was pure racing at its best," said a fired-up Mansell on his 40th birthday. "Running 200mph with Ayrton Senna doesn't even come close to this. It was a beautiful race."



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1986 BRITISH GP

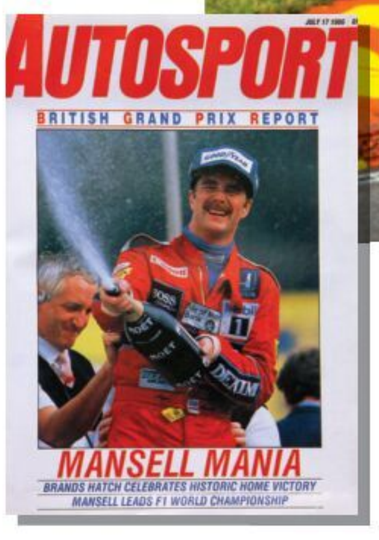
BRANDS HATCH WILLIAMS FW11 1ST

3



There have been times when Mansell has picked this as his greatest race, but he's relegated it a bit, and we agree given the strength of the top entries on this list. Nevertheless, it remains a milestone moment.

The intra-team rivalry with Nelson Piquet was ramping up as Williams-Honda underlined its supremacy in the middle of 1986. Piquet took pole and the battle looked all over when Mansell's left driveshaft broke at the getaway. But a multi-car accident behind forced a restart and gave Mansell the chance to jump into the spare car, set up for Piquet…



"I have to say this drive is close to being number one," asserts Mansell. "We had no choice but to go into the T-car, which was set up for Nelson; gear ratios, suspension settings, pedals. We were able to change the seat and adjust the belts, but that was it. The car set up this way frightened me to such an extent that it took me 10 laps to learn how to drive it. I liked going deep into the corner, turning in and then carrying the speed. But Nelson liked the car much softer, which meant it would step out on me – and you didn't want that at Brands because it was, in my opinion, quite a dangerous circuit at the time. I learned to adapt, which sounds easy but not really what you want to be doing in the middle of a race."

Mansell initially dropped behind Gerhard Berger's Benetton, but soon retook second and the two FW11s headed off into a race of their own. "With every lap, the confidence started to come as I found I could trust the car more than I thought," says Mansell. "I was stalking Nelson for quite a long time and he was driving superbly. He made only one mistake when he missed a gear. And that was enough."

Piquet stopped for fresh tyres first and, as Mansell emerged from his own stop, the Brazilian attacked. Mansell defended with some help from traffic and held on to win by 5.6s, the duo *a lap* ahead of third-placed Alain Prost.

"It was very uncomfortable in that car and I'd no drinks bottle," concludes Mansell. "But it was a very emotional weekend as this was the first race Frank [Williams] had attended since his [road car] accident. A 1-2 was very special for everyone in the team."

1987 BRITISH GP

SILVERSTONE WILLIAMS FW11B 1ST

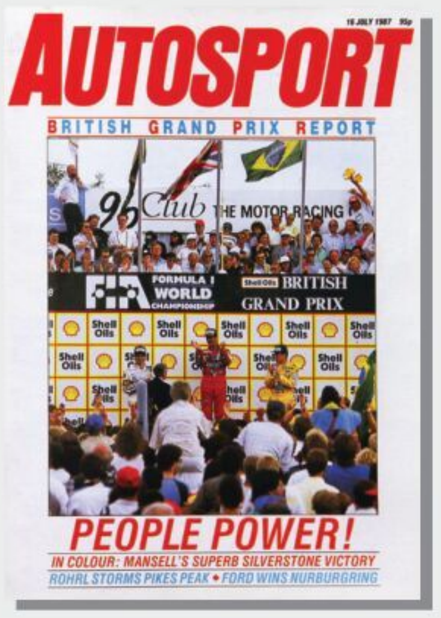
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Williams co-founder Patrick Head is pretty certain which Mansell drive stands out for him: "It has to be his 1987 Silverstone race, when he dropped well behind [team-mate] Nelson Piquet, complaining of a bad vibration, we think due to a wheel balance weight coming off."

Mansell, having stayed in range, dived into the pits on lap 35 of 65. At the end of his out-lap he was 28.4s behind Piquet.

"We assumed they would finish in that order but, lap by lap, with Nigel setting new fastest laps each lap, he closed on Nelson," adds Head. "Nelson ran the race on a single set of tyres, and I think we had not realised at that stage how much gain there was from changing tyres, but it was still an outstanding drive from Nigel, real gritty stuff."

Mansell, who famously outfoxed Piquet into Stowe with two and a half laps to go, agrees: "This was one of the proudest moments of my career. Winning your home GP is obviously very special, but to do it in the way I did at Silverstone in 1987 was made even more special by the reaction from the crowd. It was like there was this Mexican wave following me all round the circuit! The power of the fans was just incredible and did a lot to help me.



"When the front wheel balance weight came off the vibration started to blur my vision and forced a pitstop. I remember rejoining 28s behind with 29 laps to go. There was only one thing for it. Every lap had to be a qualifying lap. Nelson responded, but I was on the limit – everywhere.

"Eventually I could see him on Hangar Straight and that, plus the crowd reaction, spurred me on even more. The team were showing me signs saying 'FUEL', but I didn't care about that. I wasn't going to back off now.

"I caught him going onto Hangar Straight and I knew I had to keep the momentum going and not hesitate. Going into Stowe at about 190mph, I sold Nelson the dummy – right, left, and then right again. I had the inside line; there was nothing he could do about it.

"When I crossed the line, the place erupted. I've never experienced anything like it. I'd broken the lap record 11 times. On the slowing down lap, my car ran out of fuel. It was one of those incredible days."



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MANSELL'S F1 STATS

Starts: 187

Wins: 31

Poles: 32

Fastest laps: 30

1 1989 HUNGARIAN GP

HUNGARORING FERRARI 640 1ST

Mansell is best remembered for his time at Williams, but his greatest drive was surely winning from 12th on the grid around the tight and twisty Hungaroring for Ferrari.

"This was one of my greatest drives for many reasons," explains Mansell. "My engineer, Maurizio Nardon, and I just couldn't get rid of terrible understeer, so we decided the best thing was just to work on the race set-up. We decided we needed more downforce on the front wing. We had these sheet metal extensions with Gurney flaps made overnight. [Designer] John Barnard went mad and ordered us to take off 'those Mickey Mouse ears'. But when I went a second a lap faster in the morning warm-up, I said they were staying on!"

Mansell jumped to eighth on the first lap before looking after his soft-compound C tyres (most were on harder B Goodyears): "The one thing I didn't want to do was make a pitstop, so I took it easy, looking after my tyres with a full load of fuel," recalls Mansell.

At one stage, he was 19.7s behind the leader but, once past Alex Caffi's Dallara, Mansell hacked the gap to the top four. He had already overtaken Alain Prost when long-time leader Riccardo Patrese's Williams radiator punctured, leaving reigning world champion Ayrton Senna's powerful McLaren-Honda leading Mansell, who was about to pull off one of the great F1 passes.

"I knew Ayrton was going to make it very difficult to get by and I had to await my chance," says Mansell. "I saw Stefan Johansson ahead but we didn't know he was struggling to select gears. He saw us coming and moved left – but Senna misjudged the speed of the Onyx, backed off slightly and got boxed in as I darted right and passed them both. You can't plan things like that. You've got to be ready and I was there to take full advantage of it.

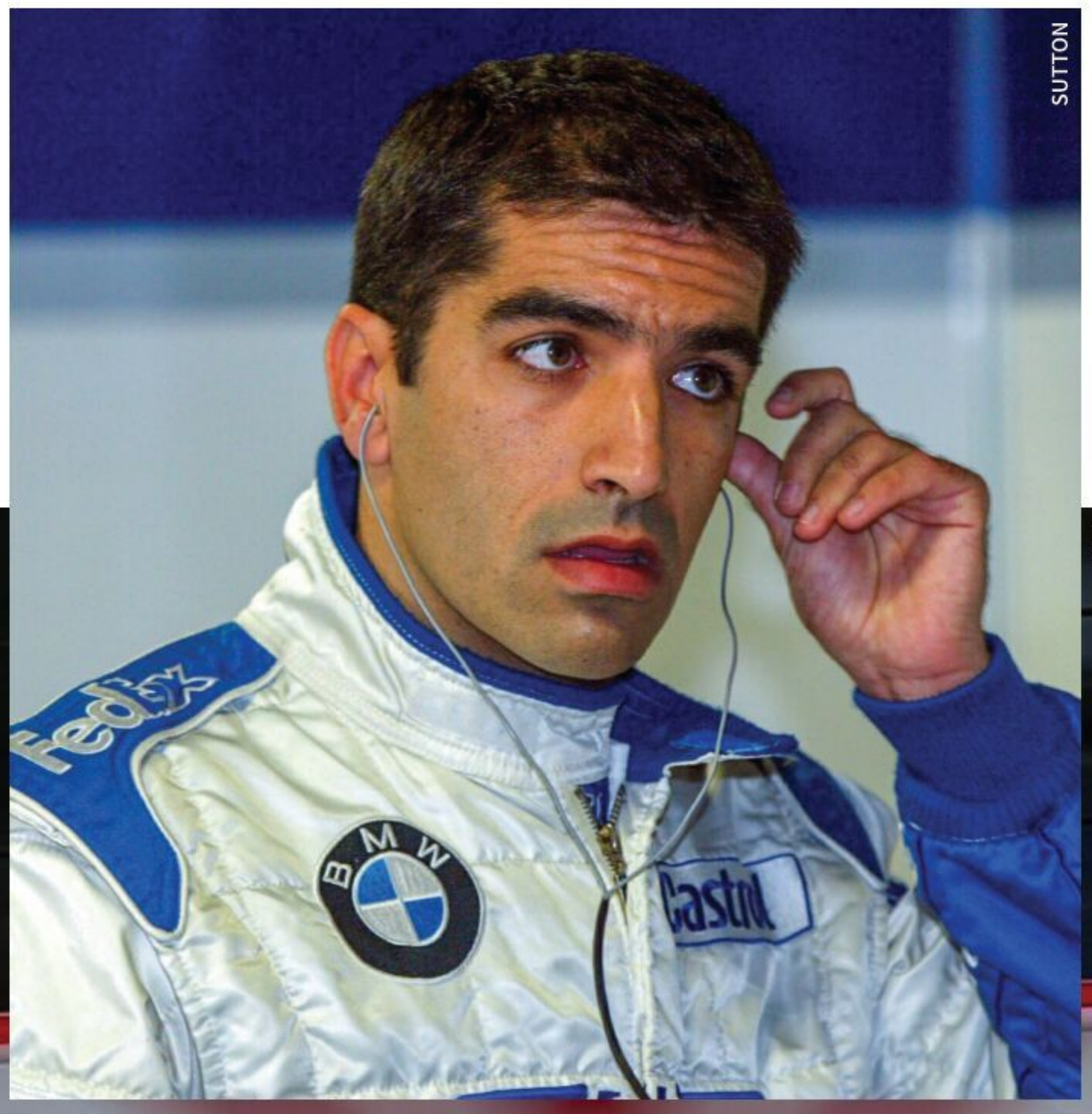
"Of all the races I've won and the moves I've pulled, that's one of the most satisfying. Twelfth to first at the Hungaroring is not something we see every day."

Plug in and play

Nyck de Vries's Italian GP exploits weren't the first post-eleventh-hour call-up in motorsport history, and won't be the last either. Here are some offbeat tales from the past

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES



Marc Gene

ITALIAN GRAND PRIX 2003

The Williams Monza prelude to de Vries

When Nyck de Vries was called up by Williams on the Saturday morning to race at this year's Italian Grand Prix, he was already at the circuit. Nineteen years ago, Marc Gene was in bed when he received his call from the British team — and didn't answer first time! But on second ring, he was up and on





the go at the beginning of a whirlwind ride that took him to his best Formula 1 finish and, albeit very briefly, the lead of a grand prix.

There's another key difference between de Vries's and Gene's experiences as Monza stand-ins with Williams. The Dutchman took part in practice on Friday, admittedly in an Aston Martin; the Spaniard wasn't even at the circuit for much of the first day. Rather, he'd been out and about in nearby Milan with his wife "doing a bit of tourism".

The Williams test driver travelled to Italy knowing there was a chance he might have to replace Ralf Schumacher after the German had crashed heavily in testing at Monza in the lead-up to the event. But the chances of a race outing in the Williams-BMW FW25 looked unlikely on the Friday.

"There was no sign that Ralf was feeling unwell," recalls the former Minardi F1 driver. "If I'd thought there was a chance I was going to race, I obviously wouldn't have gone into Milan. Maybe at seven the next morning, the phone rings, but I thought it was my alarm. Basically, I turned it off. Three minutes later it rings again. I looked at the screen and saw +44 and thought, 'That's the team calling me'. It was Sam Michael [then senior operations engineer], who told me to come straight to the circuit."

That wasn't as straightforward as it might sound: "At Monza there's always traffic, but when they called me again I was already in the park, so they sent a moped to come and get me to gain a few minutes. There was so much happening that I didn't have time to be nervous. The following year when I replaced Ralf [at Magny-Cours and Silverstone after he crashed at the US GP], I was much more nervous because I had time to think about it."

Gene was happy with his performance at Monza. He qualified fifth, eight tenths behind team-mate Juan Pablo Montoya in second position after having to run first in the old one-shot qualifying procedure. "Track evolution was against me; there were probably four or five tenths in that," he says. "So I think it was a hell of a lap looking back; it was just one lap with no room for error.

"I finished in my position really – fifth was probably where I should have been," adds Gene, who finished 28s down on race winner Michael Schumacher. "I felt I was competitive. I was fit and did thousands of kilometres of testing for Williams.

"I don't have many mementos of my racing career at home, but I do have a photo of me leading the race with Michael [Schumacher] behind. I stopped later than him and Juan Pablo, so I can say that I led a grand prix, even if it was just for a little bit."





Tiff Needell

DONINGTON FORMULA 2 1981

French find a Needell in a haystack

Tiff Needell may have made his grand prix debut with Ensign the previous year, but he was on his uppers in 1981. He'd raced only a handful of times and never in a single-seater at Donington Park when he pitched up for the European Formula 2 Championship round. He didn't have a drive, but he came fully prepared just in case. "That was in the period where I didn't go to a race track without my helmet and overalls," recalls Needell. "You never knew what might happen."

Needell can't remember the exact circumstances of how the tiny French AGS squad came to call on his services when a slipped disc ruled the team's regular driver Richard Dallest out of the weekend. "I think someone told me to get up to their pit because he'd heard they might be looking for a driver," Needell recalls.

Derby Royal Infirmary couldn't do anything for Dallest, so Needell was strapped into the AGS-BMW JH18 and got 20 minutes in second qualifying aboard the unfamiliar car. After a bit of work to get the set-up more to his liking, he matched his best time on full tanks in the race morning warm-up.

Needell doesn't remember that he finished a respectable 11th. In fact, he only recalls the scrapes and bruises on his shins resulting from the tight fit in a car he wasn't meant to be driving.



AJ Foyt

DAYTONA 24 HOURS 1983

Old fox in a Henn house

AJ Foyt's return to sportscar racing would probably have been short-lived but for a showman by the name of Preston Henn. The Indianapolis 500 legend had been lured back for the first time since his Le Mans-winning year of 1967 to contest the 1983 Daytona 24 Hours in a car backed by race sponsor Pepsi-Cola. The unfancied Aston Martin-Nimrod went out of the race early, but Henn spotted a mid-race opportunity.

The late owner of the Swap Shop flea market in Fort Lauderdale invited Foyt to join the crew in his Porsche 935, the rather special 935L built in the famed Andial workshops. More to the point, it was the car that Bob Wollek had put on pole and was now shooting up the order in his and Claude Ballot-Lena's hands after early turbocharger problems.

"Preston asked me about putting AJ in the car," says Kevin Jeannette, who prepared the 935. "I told him that we had a chance of winning the thing and that AJ had never driven a Porsche before. He looked at me as though I was from another planet. To him it didn't matter if we didn't win because he'd still have had AJ Foyt in his Swap Shop Porsche."

Foyt's preparation for taking the controls of the Porsche stretched



DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY

to sitting in another 935 that was already out of the race. “AJ said, ‘Can I ask a stupid question? What’s the shift pattern?’” recalls Jeannette. “I said, ‘It’s just like a Volkswagen, except that reverse is over and forward’. His reply was, ‘First of all, do you think I’ve ever driven a Volkswagen? And second, why would I need reverse?’ I thought, ‘You’ve got a point there Mr Foyt’.”

What happened when Foyt was strapped into the Porsche on Sunday morning has gone down in history, and not just motor racing history. One story suggests that the late Wollek knew exactly what was happening when he came into the pits for the handover and tried to keep the door closed. Another claims that he had no idea that the team had brought in a fourth driver. Whatever, the events that followed are indisputable because they were captured live on television. The question from the pitlane reporter was obvious: “So Bob, what do you think of AJ Foyt joining the team?” The response was less so: “Who the f*** is AJ Foyt?” It is generally reckoned to be the first time the f-word was uttered on network TV in the USA.

Wollek, Ballot-Lena, Foyt and Henn went on to claim victory by six laps. It was the start of a second sportscar career for Foyt, who would go on to do the Daytona-Sebring double in 1985. And despite Wollek’s comments, it was also the start a long friendship between two legends of different branches of the sport.



DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY

Max Angelelli

MACAU GRAND PRIX 1997

Angelelli is no angel

Max Angelelli was finally done with Formula 3 in 1997. The Italian had gone back to the Macau Grand Prix as a ringer the year before and finished second, but now he was focusing on the sportscar career that would ultimately encompass two victories at the Daytona 24 Hours and a pair of Grand-Am titles in North America. Yet he still fancied a trip to his old stamping ground that November.

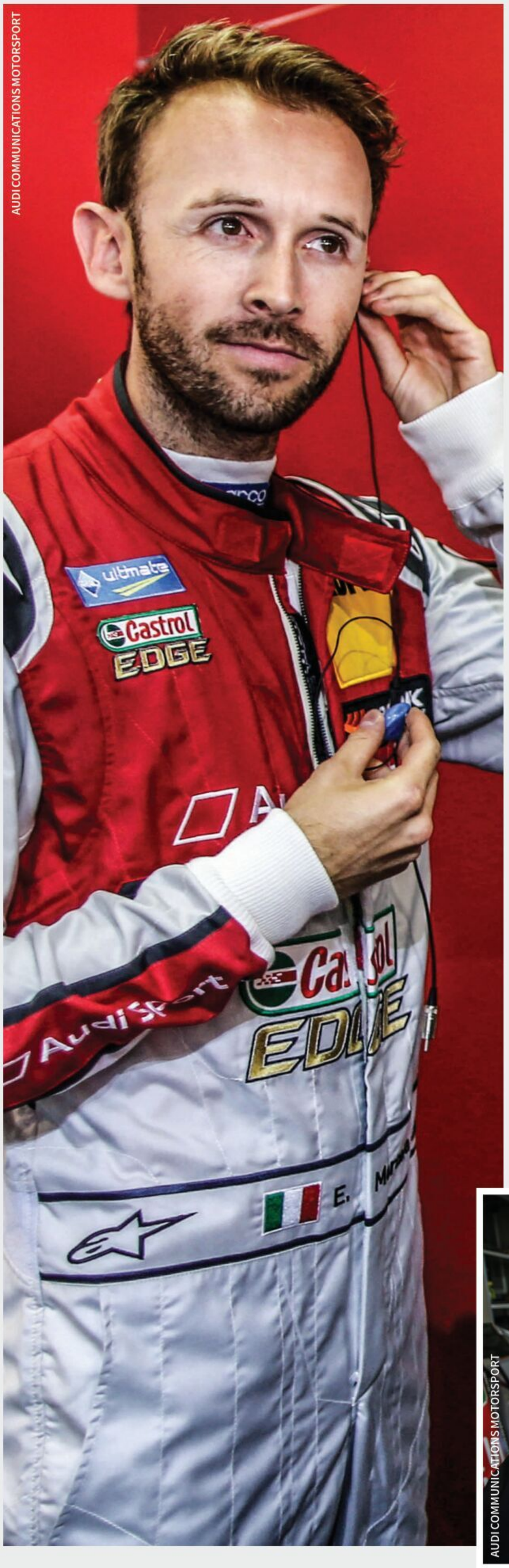
That explained the call a few months before to the late Barry Bland, whose Motor Race Consultants organisation put together the grid for the F3 extravaganza. Angelelli only wanted a pass so he could spectate, but Bland reckoned he should be driving and insisted he bring his helmet.

It turned out to be a prescient move when Nick Heidfeld fell ill with food poisoning. He’d meant to be competing for Bertram Schafer Racing, the team with which Angelelli had been a regular in F3 in 1993-96. The team had its replacement when Schafer spotted his old driver wandering up the pitlane. “So they gave me Nick’s overalls, and you know how short he is,” explains Angelelli. “I looked ridiculous and it was so painful in my balls!”

Angelelli might have been in Macau ostensibly on holiday, but his competitive instincts quickly kicked in. He qualified second to eventual winner Soheil Ayari and won the first heat aboard ‘his’ BSR Dallara-Opel F396 courtesy of a touch of gamesmanship that ultimately resulted in his exclusion from the event.

The late stand-in had been hit up the rear at Mandarin Corner by Ayari’s Graff Racing entry when race leader Tom Coronel had crashed at the restart. The damage was significant, so Angelelli deliberately brought the car to a halt at Lisboa to get the race stopped. He won the restarted heat in the repaired car and went on to finish fourth on aggregate across the two races, before his name was expunged from the results.

“They called me to race control and I lied and lied, telling them my differential had locked,” says Angelelli. “What I didn’t know was that they had downloaded all the data from my car, so they knew exactly what I had done.”





Rene Rast

ZANDVOORT DTM 2016

A birthday party – and then a present

Rene Rast got lucky twice over in July 2016. His biggest stroke of fortune was that he was not at home when the call came from Audi to see if he could replace Adrien Tambay for the second of the two races at the Zandvoort DTM round. The next was that he wasn't drunk!

Rast was with his girlfriend's (now wife's) parents in Hannover rather than at home in Austria on the Saturday evening after Team Rosberg driver Tambay was ruled out of the following day's event by a hand injury. That meant that the German was only four or so hours away from Zandvoort rather than 10. His problem was that he couldn't drive himself to the track – the reason for his and Diana's presence in Hannover was to celebrate her 30th birthday.

"I'd had a couple of glasses of wine or so, not too much that I couldn't race the following day, but certainly too much to drive myself to Zandvoort," says Rast. "Luckily my manager Dennis [Rostek] didn't live too far away and he could take me. The other lucky thing was that I had my helmet in the car. I'm not sure why, because I didn't have anything else. I had to borrow a pair of overalls from Edoardo Mortara and boots, gloves and underwear from the mechanics."

Rast, who'd been on Audi's books since 2012, had never driven the 2016 RS5 DTM, only the previous-generation Audi with a sequential 'box. That caused an embarrassing moment when he tried to go out at the start of free practice on Sunday: "I didn't know how to engage first gear, so a mechanic had to open the door to explain it to me. The result in the race [19th] wasn't so good, but the important thing was that I was getting faster and faster all the time."

That resulted in an invite to return for the DTM finale at Hockenheim when Mattias Eskstrom was on World Rallycross Championship duty. This time Rast got to test, and impressed again over the course of a weekend that yielded sixth place in the opening encounter.

The following year he was a full-time DTM driver, and three titles in the German-based tin-top series followed. "That's motor racing," says Rast. "You have to be in the right place at the right time." Which in his case meant not being at home.





BOLAND

Marc Gene/Oliver Turvey

LE MANS 24 HOURS 2014

Merry-go-round goes all topsy-Turvey


BOLAND

Le Mans 2014 was the year of the last-minute stand-in. But the back story to two late replacements putting in starring performances began a couple of years earlier.

Marc Gene had joined the Audi LMP1 line-up in place of the injured Timo Bernhard ahead of the Spa World Endurance round in 2012. He helped secure a victory in the Belgian six-hour race, so he kept his seat alongside Romain Dumas and Loic Duval for Le Mans that year and drove the third car the next. But he was just a reserve after youngsters Marco Bonanomi and Filipe Albuquerque came into the additional entry in 2014. Albuquerque was also racing in the European Le Mans Series in Jota's LMP2 Zytek and, due to the Portuguese's commitment to Audi, Gene was slotted into the British team's line-up for the 24 Hours.

The Spaniard practised the Zytek on Wednesday but, when he saw the aftermath of Duval's horrific shunt in the Porsche Curves during that evening's practice sessions, he knew Audi would be on the phone imminently. His crash at the same place six years earlier told him that. "That was where I had the biggest accident of my career," he says of his flip during the Le Mans test day in 2008. "I knew whoever the driver was wouldn't be able to race: the forces from the deceleration are just too big."

Call Audi did, so Gene had to swap his Jota race suit for his Audi overalls and move down the pitlane to share the R18 e-tron quattro with Tom Kristensen and Lucas di Grassi. That, of course, meant Jota was now in need of a stand-in. It turned to a driver who'd helped it to third place in the previous year's ELMS. The team's luck was that Oliver Turvey didn't have a Le Mans drive that year after the Delta/Millennium team's withdrawal.

Turvey had been fulfilling F1 simulator duties for McLaren on the Wednesday of Le Mans week, and was in the gym when the call came from Jota boss Sam Hignett. "I was asked if I was available, then it was all confirmed about 10pm," recalls Turvey. "They had a plane going from Southend airport, I think it was, at 6am the next day, so I ended up getting something like three hours' sleep."

Turvey ended up winning the class with Jota regulars Harry Tincknell and Simon Dolan. That's despite their Zytek Z11SN going three laps down in the early hours thanks to a series of misjudged calls on tyres in changing conditions and the need to change the illuminated number on the side of the car. "After that it was a qualifying push every lap," remembers Turvey. "I loved that car, it gave me so much confidence and was always a joy to drive."

Gene finished runner-up with Kristensen and di Grassi, though he might have been rewarded with a second Le Mans victory on another day. They led what was an old-school race of attrition late on Sunday morning before, like the winning car of Andre Lotterer, Benoit Treluyer and Marcel Fassler, their R18 required a change of turbo.

"I'd only tested that year's car two or three times, and the original plan for the race was that I wasn't going to get so much time in the car, but when I showed I was competitive they extended my stints," says Gene. "To do my last Le Mans with a legend like Tom was amazing; to have shared a victory with him would have been even more amazing."



GILBERT



THUNDER

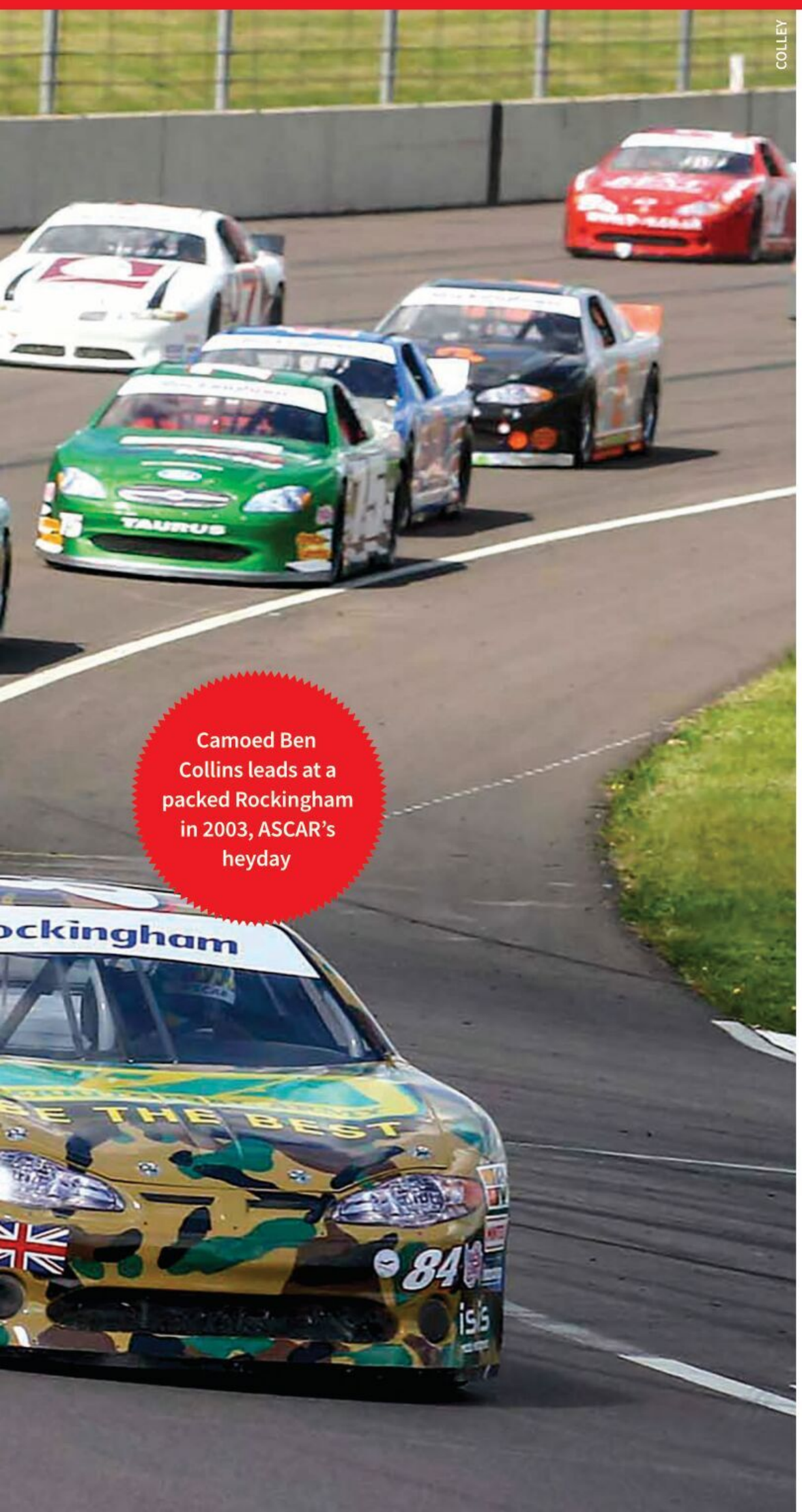


BALL

It's 20 years since ASCAR hit its peak, filling grandstands and luring top international and BTCC talent. This is how the domestic stock car curio exploded, then imploded

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES



Camoed Ben Collins leads at a packed Rockingham in 2003, ASCAR's heyday

STAMP, STAMP, CLAP. STAMP, STAMP, CLAP.

When the public address system at Rockingham Motor Speedway near Corby blared out *We Will Rock You* by Queen in the early 2000s, it spelled doubly good news. Firstly, spectators sitting in the chilly grandstands could start to get circulation back into their feet. Second, it signalled that an ASCAR race was about to begin.

The largely unimaginative acronym stood for Anglo-American Stock Car Racing. As implied, this was about importing the NASCAR model. Big names, rivalries, plenty of noise, shunts and lots of turning left. Short-oval racers would graduate to a larger platform, while the audience would be so great and sponsorship money so lucrative that no driver this side of Formula 1 was unobtainable.

The opening line of Brian May's anthem goes: "Buddy, you're a boy, make a big noise." That's exactly what the fledging series intended to do. The Northamptonshire quiet would be shattered by small-block Chevrolet V8s reverberating off, and crashing into, the concrete walls of a £70million, 1.5-mile oval plonked on an ironstone quarry. This wasn't conceived to be a pure form of motorsport. Instead, shock and awe tactics would have the turnstiles spinning off their hinges. "ASCAR is about delivering motorsport as entertainment," said series CEO Mike Schmidt. "Teams should be prepared not to take themselves too seriously – that will endear them to the fans."

It was all coming along swimmingly at the dawn of the new millennium. The machinery was sorted: Chas Howe Racing Enterprises of Michigan would construct a steel-tube chassis based on the design of the American Speed Association Series on the NASCAR ladder. This would be draped in one of three body styles – Chevrolet Monte Carlo, Ford Taurus and Pontiac Grand Prix – that resembled the contemporary Winston Cup cars. Chunky tyre sidewalls would give the impression of brawn, but the skinny Goodyears would allow for exciting sliding. And, thanks to 565bhp, the test car was only 2.5 seconds slower than a Super Tourer around Donington Park. »

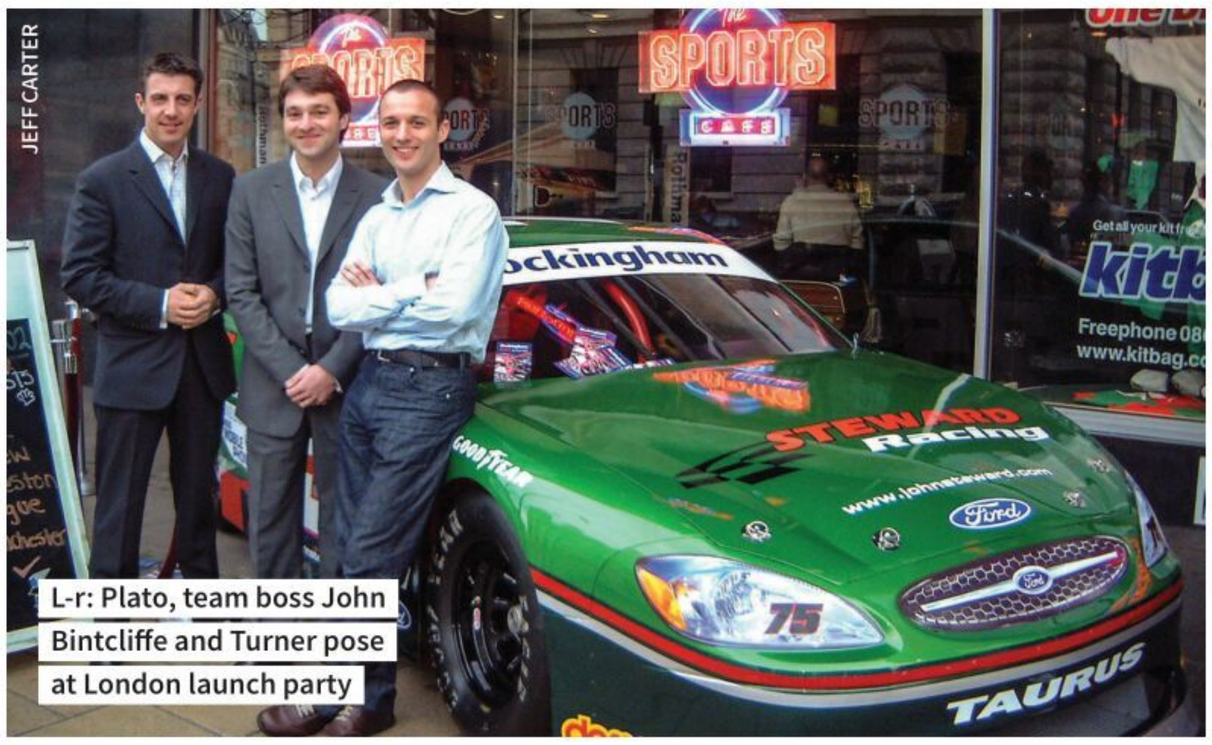
An inaugural 2001 season was billed as a learning year, so teething problems were numerous. Rockingham founder Peter Davies pulled his private funding of ASCAR due to discontent with how it was being run. Although his circuit had capacity for 44 cars and 32 were targeted for the maiden venture, as race day approached, talk was of only 19 entries. Eventually, the series made its bow on Saturday 26 May with the Goodyear 100. This formed part of the Coys Historic Festival, the venue's public debut after a behind-closed-doors national meeting to troubleshoot the infrastructure.

This crucial first impression would dabble with farce. Punters could buy radio scanners to listen to each team. What they heard was total frustration over engine oil surge, as the UK-specification motors couldn't cope with the lateral forces exerted by the banking. Drivers were advised to avoid the 6800rpm limit for what became a glorified demonstration. After a few V8s detonated in practice, just 12 cars took the rolling start. The AC Cobra safety car even had to be deployed to give the engines a breather. At least a high-profile winner was selected, with two-time British Touring Car champion John Cleland leading at the flag. Embarrassment aside, the Scot reckoned: "It's going to be the biggest thing since *Ben-Hur*; we've just got to make the series work."

After that rockiest of starts, an alternative engine was required. But with Davies gone, which hurt the fundraising, Schmidt quickly vacated his role as the ASCAR company ceased trading and the calendar was suspended for three months. Fortunately, team owner Bob Berridge came to the rescue at the helm of Oval Racing Management. The new promoter was financed almost entirely by the deep pockets of Rockingham to obtain a lease supply of less powerful 5.7-litre General Motors LS1 engines direct from the USA.

Then came take two. The revitalised ASCAR emerged on Bank Holiday Monday 27 August for two 70-lap sprints and was backed by a stronger entry list, with teams now having faith that the future of the series was stable. While there were only 14 starters, at least the cars were reliable, the competitors happy and 15,000 onlookers entertained. John Mickel chalked the first *proper* win and later sealed the inaugural title (his third of 2001 to go with his British and World Legends crowns) by a single point.

ASCAR had come too close to death in its first year. The only way was up. And with no-nonsense Berridge in charge, it rapidly climbed higher than anyone might have imagined. For 2002, Channel 4 picked up the TV deal, support categories were organised, and a £100,000 prize fund



JEFF CARTER

L-r: Plato, team boss John Bintcliffe and Turner pose at London launch party

was on offer for the first female to win a race. Then, in the biggest coup of all, reigning BTCC champion Jason Plato was signed ahead of a showy season launch party at the Sports Cafe in Piccadilly, London.

Never one to mince his words, Plato was clear that ASCAR would serve as a means to an end: "The main reason I am doing ASCAR is because I am desperate to get to America. I want to live there and race there but the longer I focused on touring cars, the harder it was going to be to get into US oval racing." To the series, that ulterior motive didn't matter in the slightest. Plato's defection was a huge shot in the arm. And they kept coming. Crack tin-top squad RML was to form a team, ex-Formula 3000 racer Darren Manning signed up, so too did 1993 British Formula 3 champion Kelvin Burt, McLaren F1 tester Darren Turner, Toby Scheckter (son of 1979 F1 world champion Jody) and so on. The star names had people interested. A £15 ticket for adults and under 16s going free converted that intrigue into bums on seats.

Ousted Chip Ganassi Racing CART pilot Nic Minassian explains his involvement: "I arrived by reading Autosport. It was just beginning and when I saw that Bob was recruiting so many high-profile drivers, I called him. He offered me a drive. I could see with the push they had that it was going to be fun. To bring oval racing to Europe, I thought, was a very good idea."

But in what was already becoming a tradition, things couldn't go



McNEIL

Only 12 cars entered a debut 'race' dogged by unreliability


Slick tyres put ASCAR at the mercy of the Midlands mizzle

DOWKER


Rarer Lausitz outings ensured the calendar lacked track variety

REINHOLD

off without a hitch. The opening race was put under threat due an eleventh-hour need to resurface Rockingham. This was to resolve 'weepers' on the brownfield site. Water oozing through the asphalt wasn't new. It did, though, become a major problem when the cracks were filled with a sealant, which had all the grip properties of glass, for a bodged fix. During a test in a couple of two-seater ASCARs, Mickel and Paul Sheard followed one another into the wall. Plato, a nervous passenger anyway, was riding shotgun and cracked two ribs and a vertebra in the smash. That probably wasn't what the glossy pre-race advertising campaign meant when it proclaimed: "Jason Plato, watch it. These cars BITE!"

Short-oval king Colin White won the first bout before Minassian triumphed. Plato managed sixth and eighth in the double-header. He declared: "ASCAR is definitely the way forward for motorsport. It's hard work, but it's going to be a cracking year. I'm glad I got out of touring cars — this is the best." The series then docked in Europe for the first of three meetings scheduled at the Lausitzring in Germany. But in another long-running flaw, inclement conditions scuppered plans. Sunday action was lost to a downpour as drivers instead played football in the pitlane. For the next round in Corby, the second race was canned for similarly slippery reasons. The equipment was too basic and tracks too dangerous to risk it on slicks. Goodyear did develop a wet-weather tyre that might have been used on the infield layout at Rockingham, but it wasn't much cop and never progressed beyond testing.

A second visit to the EuroSpeedway ran well enough, but a third in late September was cancelled when ASCAR couldn't put together a cross-Channel support package, with CART having already pulled out of its event due to the circuit filing for bankruptcy. At least Berridge and co had sensed that the championship was too reliant on one venue, so recces were completed of the planned tri-oval in Abbeville, northern France and of Venray in the Netherlands. If the calendar could grow, ASCAR might keep kicking its domestic rival when it was down. "We just happened to launch when BTCC was in one of its natural troughs [following the post-Super Touring manufacturer exodus and the sale of TOCA by Alan Gow]," says Berridge. "ASCAR was accidentally launched at the perfect time."

Helping matters, the entry list was increasingly star studded. Matt Neal and Kevin McGarrity made cameo appearances, as did 1995 World Rally champion Colin McRae, who recruited compatriot Dario Franchitti to be his spotter. Grids were still far from chocka, but there was no shortage of compelling plotlines. For one, Turner had been unable to contest the early rounds while budget was sourced, and his car shaken down. He then turned up, won a remarkable six races and should have been the 2002 champion only for the points system to

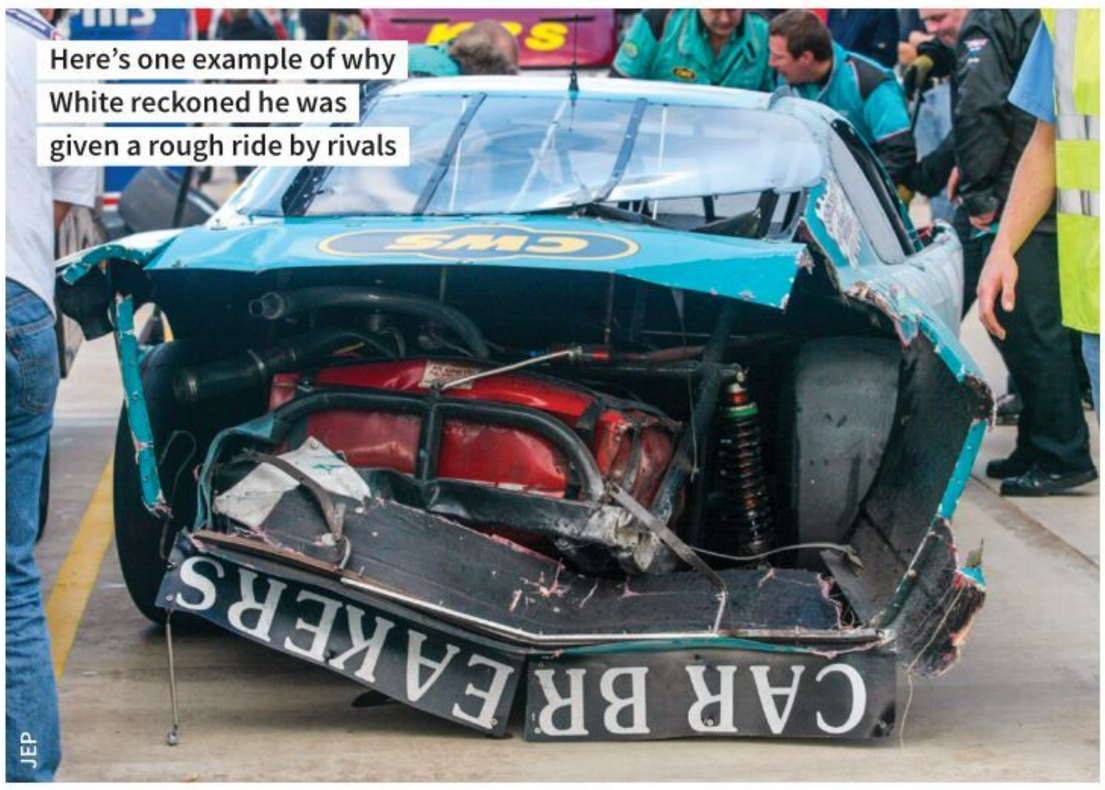

McRae consults with spotter Franchitti before snaring sixth during guest outing

CAPLITAN

"IT'S GOING TO BE THE BIGGEST THING SINCE *BEN-HUR*; WE'VE JUST GOT TO MAKE THE SERIES WORK"

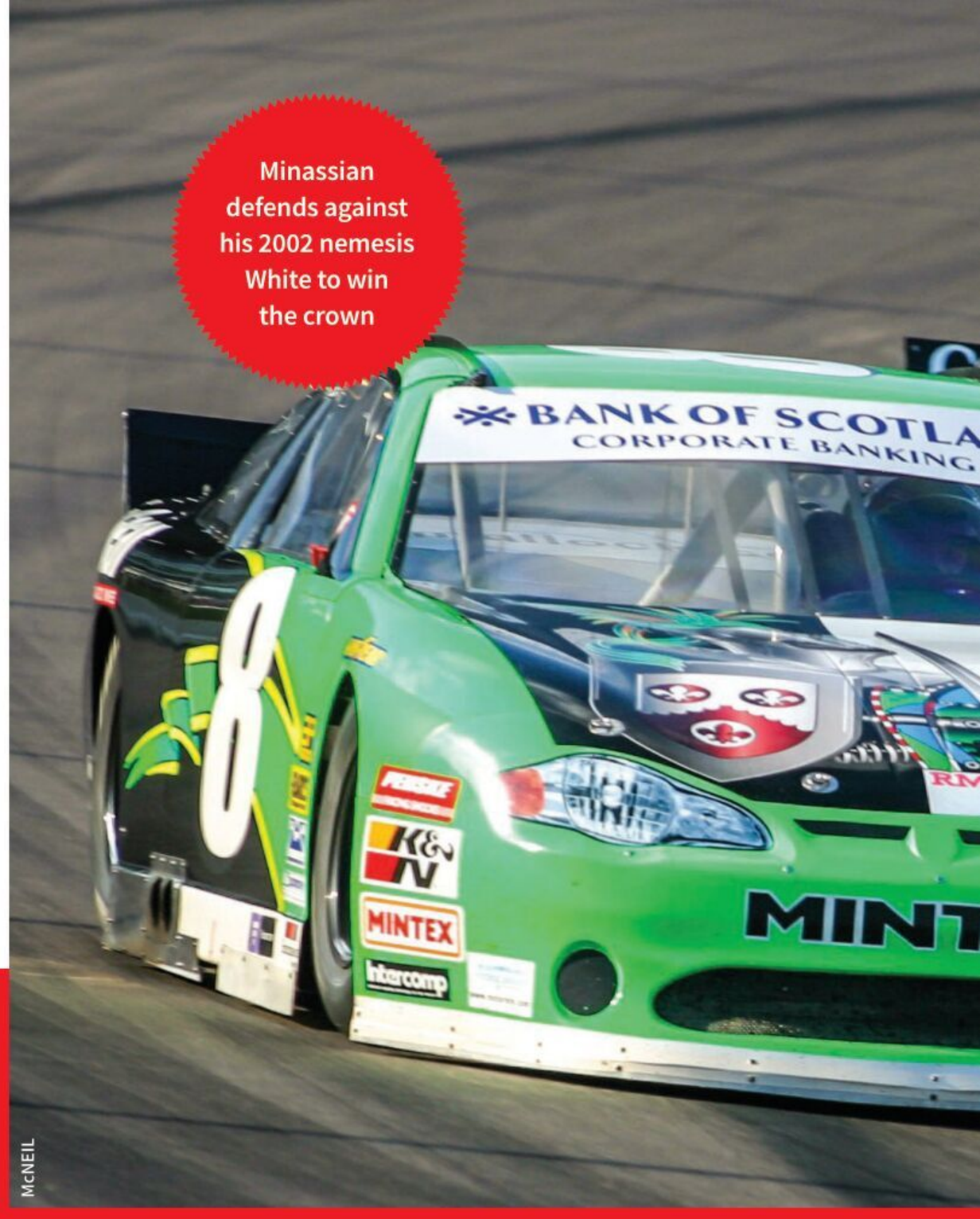
heavily favour consistency, so his early absences couldn't be overcome. It's also said that tweaks to the rules governing the rear wing, whether directly aimed at his ultra-efficient Pontiac aerokit or not, hurt Turner the most. To bunch up the pack, it was also not unheard of for a yellow-flag caution period to be spuriously thrown for a piece of non-existent debris just out of view on the far side of the circuit...

For good measure, ASCAR was also enjoying the fruits of a bitter rivalry. Independent underdog White represented those running on humble budgets; French foe Minassian was in a pukka RML machine. Their dissatisfaction with one another spilled over frequently. Both were threatened with being stripped of their licences for repeat on and off-track clashes before it boiled over in mid-September. During the second race of the penultimate round at Rockingham, with the title at stake, the pair collided as Minassian tried to pass on the outside with a handful of laps to go. White was knocked into a spin. This played out in front of a bumper crowd during the second and final year that »



Here's one example of why White reckoned he was given a rough ride by rivals

JEP



Minassian defends against his 2002 nemesis White to win the crown

McNEIL

"MINASSIAN KNEW ALL ABOUT WHAT YOU COULD GET AWAY WITH IN TERMS OF GIVING PEOPLE A NUDGE"

ASCAR would share an event with CART. Accounts are a little patchy due to the consumption of alcohol, but those at the end-of-season awards shindig recall White not taking kindly to eventual champion Minassian grabbing his tie…

White, who contested every ASCAR season, says of his former nemesis: "Minassian knew all about the book and the regulations – what you're allowed to do and what you can't get away with in terms of giving people a nudge. I had some pretty rough treatment!" he laughs. "We had some meetings with the promoters, and they wanted to put more of a show on. I didn't like that idea at all because they wanted us to pay the bills! We were there because we liked racing, not because we wanted to smash the cars up."

Minassian, who won just once on the way to the crown, adds: "It was really real! He was a tough competitor, a hard guy! Quite a few times we were shouting. But now it makes me laugh. He was a hard cookie to play with. It was a massive rivalry together. That's what made it fun."

A crowd of 20,000 attended the 2002 season finale to witness the closing chapter of their grudge match. White says of the popularity: "I tried going to hotels and then going back into the track, but it would just take so long [due to queues] that we always ended up staying in the team bus. There'd be so many people that wanted to talk to me that you felt like a full-blown popstar."

Despite the popularity, teams concluded more had to be done to promote the series – grids only ever approached 20 cars in 2002 – and still there was no recognition of ASCAR across the pond. Its potential to be a route to Winston Cup success was nil. That led Rockingham to appoint a new chief executive in the form of Ashley Pover. The circuit couldn't bankroll ASCAR forever, so those grandstands needed to be sold out. Pover devised that motorsport couldn't lead the package. Instead, each round needed to be headlined by chart-topping music acts. Busted, Girls Aloud, The Darkness and Liberty X were just some of the bands to perform on the Smash Hits stage.

This was too much for Berridge, who departed soon after Pover's appointment. He recalls: "Rockingham spent a huge amount of money [getting the circuit up and running] but there was a mistake made by the management. They didn't have any content apart from a CART race. I was brought in by the chief exec to set up ASCAR. The idea was for it to be a franchise system, and the teams would make money off sponsorship and we would make money off the entry fees and tickets.

"We eventually got the product spot-on. The whole spectacle was terrific. We were onto a winner. Rockingham had a fantastic opportunity, which they wasted. They brought in Ashley Pover, who was a financial derivatives trader. As a motor racing promoter, he didn't have a clue. I could see that he had a totally different idea. He went off in completely the wrong direction, and it died more or less within two seasons. He wanted to dumb it down, and he did. He got what he deserved. We were right on the cusp, at the end of 2002, for four or five years of sustainable growth."

Trying to cut costs for 2003 resulted in a less decorated grid. Plato was extricated from his three-year deal and returned to the BTCC. The venue also exited its CART-hosting contract. When Jean-Paul Driot opted against relaunching his DAMS concern with an oval assault, Minassian wasn't tempted to defend his crown. The knock-on effects of the Iraq War also left sponsors to tighten their purse strings. Then, when NASCAR did take notice, it spelled bad news. Former ASCAR press officer Neil Randon explains: "It didn't help that they had to change the name because NASCAR was causing a real stink. They thought it was almost a breach of copyright." Therefore, for 2003, the series would be known as Days of Thunder in deference to the questionable Tom Cruise flick.

Regardless, fans returned in their droves and 2003 was seen as a step forward. Ben Collins, who starred during his cameo the previous year,



Massive music acts helped drive people through the gates

COLLINS



excelled with six wins from 13 races. The former Indy Lights runner had not long thought his career was over, so enlisted for the Territorial Army. Then he signed for RML and dominated in between suspect pitstops. This included smashing the series lap record at Rockingham as he bolted round in 34.475s at an average speed of 154mph.

Despite his command, Collins couldn't gain a foothold Stateside. "You might as well be racing on the moon," he says of ASCAR's transatlantic recognition. "You could show photos and a nice winning record but really, the only thing that counted was racing in the States. Still, I was offered an ASCAR seat when I had no drive, so I would not have done anything different. I'm proud of what we achieved as a team."

Another 31,000 people attended the season finale, and Pover was intent on trumping that in 2004 with a colossal music booking: American rap sensation 50 Cent. But as Randon says: "He cost an absolute fortune to coax over. And, because you needed parental guidance to see his events, families didn't attend because the kids couldn't come because of the strong language. It cost Rockingham a bloody fortune." Berridge reckons he could have bankrolled two full seasons of ASCAR for the price of one 50 Cent gig.

Those kinds of losses at a time when Rockingham was racking up considerable debt with the shaky Royal Bank of Scotland weren't sustainable. Pover was out and in came Joe Dickson, who talked of launching ASCAR in the Middle East. A rebrand to become the Stock Car Speed Association in an ill-fated attempt to inspire a Ryder Cup-style competition with US drivers failed. Hiking up the ticket prices then killed the crowds. After that, the series was in terminal decline, barely limping along as the crashed and rewelded cars grew tired. The quality of the grid suffered throughout, and former backmarkers became title challengers. So, with entries dwindling, in September 2007 the championship status was axed by the Motor Sport Association governing body.

The colossal cash injections were short-lived because ASCAR never washed its own face. The more hardcore racing fans were dismissive of this American imitation and it never looked like being the launchpad to US stardom, as Plato and Collins once thought. While Rockingham needed a flagship series, there was only so much excitement that could be generated from almost always racing on the same oval. So, much like the now-closed circuit that housed it, the UK's take on top-flight stock car racing is rendered as a once-loved but fleeting white elephant.

WHAT ASCAR MEANS TO MY FAMILY



MATT KEW Once I'd begrudgingly accepted that 'James Bond' wasn't a viable career choice, motorsport hogged my attention. Since ASCAR was my first in-person exposure to this world, it was central to the obsession. Calls of 'start your engines!', brilliant access, massive Scalextric layouts and Michael Vergers occasionally barrel-rolling captivated this eight-year-old. It wasn't perfect. I recall an invariably cold Corby climate and seemingly endless rain delays. There was also some sort of family 'discussion' on whether it was safe to eat a sausage roll that was due to expire. I'm still here, so it must have been OK! Anyway, I owe a lot to those thumping V8s and their gung-ho drivers.

MY DAD Having ASCAR at Rockingham on our doorstep proved an ideal introduction for Matthew and his brother to motorsport. Long intervals when debris was cleared or for the track to dry allowed time for us to relocate to the centre of the circuit and watch the pits. We saw wheels changed, bodywork replaced and drivers including former *Top Gear* Stig Ben Collins raring to go.

MY MUM "Let's go racing" was the reply when I asked the boys: "What would you like to do this weekend?" They loved it. Matthew would visit the pits after the races and return with various car parts. Once with a large chunk of front wheel arch, which he kept in his bedroom! Perhaps he was hoping to build his own ASCAR one day.

MY BROTHER It seems like a cheesy dream all these years later. A proper bit of abstraction from your subconscious. Remember there was a banked oval teeming with V8s, spectators, live music, and merchandise tents… just outside Corby? Rockingham's ASCARs holds a place in my heart for being the first time I saw racing cars at speed, smelled the fuel and heard the 'crump' as drivers nerfed each other into the wall. It was a momentary firework of a series, but superb entertainment while it lasted.





AUTOSPORT
WILLIAMS
ENGINEER OF THE FUTURE

NEW WAYS TO FIND THE ENGINEERING STARS OF THE FUTURE

A trail blazed in Esports has inspired a revamp of the annual prize that aims to discover the best young talent

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



The Williams FW44 is blasting along the pitstraight at the Red Bull Ring. After sweeping through the rapid final double right-hand sequence that ends the lap, it picks up even more speed powering past the pits and grandstands and heading up the hill to the Turn 1 right. But here, it swings wildly left and traverses the braking zone over the kerbs lining the outside of the track in a way Alex Albon and Nicholas Latifi would never do. Autosport is perplexed...

“The Esports drivers can run kerbs a lot more aggressively than you would in the real world. And, aside from that, you also wouldn’t do that in a real car because you’d probably break it after 10 laps!”

We’re hearing from Michael Preston, an up-and-coming engineering graduate who has spent the past year working with Williams’s professional Esports team. He’s standing next to a group of eight simulators running the *F1 2022* game for a gang of journalists to sample (unfortunately there is some Autosport friendly fire when we have a go later — apologies to Jonathan Noble and Luke Smith, but not Stuart Codling!). There are even more sophisticated rigs lining the room, with giant, very comfortable sofas on which to watch the various rounds of Event Two from F1’s 2022 Esports Series, which is taking place at the same time. We’re in Williams Esports’ HQ.

Two months on from this conversation, Preston will be awarded the revamped Autosport Williams Engineer of the Future prize at the 2022 Autosport Awards. The Award had to be paused during the opening years of the COVID-19 pandemic and is being fully relaunched in 2023. Then, a group of budding engineers will compete in a series of tests that have been modelled on Preston’s 2022 part-time work, which ended in him being recognised with this year’s prize solo. Given Preston spent much of his time

Prize package includes a day shadowing a race team engineer at an F1 test



MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



BINGHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Preston receives his prize at the Autosport Awards

"WILLIAMS FEELS THIS REFLECTS THE CHANGING ROUTES INTO MANY MOTORSPORT ROLES"

working across the categories in which the Williams Esports team competes, next year's Award applicants can expect the same approach. This, Williams feels, reflects the nature of the changing routes into many motorsport roles, including engineering.

"It's told the innovation story for us," says Williams director of Esports Steven English of the thinking behind the Award changes. "It's like it's [now] decided, 'Here's a really futuristic way to build a pathway for engineers.' And a lot of it is down to Michael and the work he's done this year and the value he's brought to the team, to show that we're blazing a new trail here."

Preston, who quipped on stage at the Autosport Awards that "this time last year I was delivering Christmas trees", was head of race engineering for the Southampton University Formula Student team during his time at the institution. A friend from the same squad went on to be hired by Williams and, when they heard about the Esports team requiring an engineer, asked if Preston wanted to be considered.

He did, and "then I got touch in with Steven in September 2021-ish", Preston explains. "And then it took a couple of months from his side to work out where engineers would go and the initial structure he wanted. And then, January of this year, it finally came together — we started getting some people in place and went from there. Never looked back."

Now that he has experienced engineering Williams's drivers through their virtual competitions in Formula 1, NASCAR and others including the Le Mans Virtual Series, Preston is best placed to explain precisely how engineering in the virtual world translates so easily into work on real-life cars.

"A lot of it is really very similar," he says. "The only things that sim racing really lacks »

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"THE TRACK IS MY CANVAS, THE CAR IS MY BRUSH"

GRAHAM HILL



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is the sort of physical g-force that is going through a car and a driver. And the danger.

"Everything else – all of the data-logging of driver inputs – is the exact same. And you use the exact same software whether it's sim-racing or real-life racing. So, sim racing in that sense is a really good practice for engineers, because you can just build up hours and hours and hours practising using the tools that you'd spend looking at, say in a 30-minute practice session on a weekend.

"And then, obviously with the number of drivers that a team like Williams has, there's so many hours of data to process

"IT'S THE SAME DATA CHANNELS THAT YOU'D GET OFF A REAL CAR THAT YOU HAVE IN SIM RACING"



and things like that. It's not something that the drivers want to sit and go through and work out – the perfect strategy and stuff like that. So, that works quite well, where engineers can benefit from the experience that they gain in Esports. But, also, the Esports side benefits from just the data-handling that engineers can bring to the motorsport [discipline], effectively.

"It's the same data channels that you'd get off a real car that you can have in sim racing. In many cases, you can have even more in sim racing because it's a simulation – it's just a pure physical model. You can get more channels like forces and stuff that you'd have to create maths channels to work out in a real car. You just get those as channels in the sim world."

Looking ahead to those who will follow his path as part of next year's Award programme, Preston says they shouldn't "be afraid of long hours!"

"Especially going into engineering," he adds. "People aren't going to give you things. You have to go out and look for either a result and ask somebody else to help you get there, or look at how to learn to do something specific. I'd guess that's good enough advice!"

In addition to his Esports work, Preston also spent the season-ending Brands Hatch and Donington Park weekends working with the Carlin squad during its GB3 campaign, as well as engineering driver Will Tregurtha in GT racing this year. In addition to receiving his Autosport Award statue, he will now begin a full-time engineering role at Williams Esports and will go to a 2023 F1 test to spend a day shadowing a race team engineer.

But what of the long-term future for Preston? Just two weeks before we met, Autosport observed Peter Bonnington – Lewis Hamilton's race engineer at Mercedes and the voice on the radio through all six of the Briton's world title wins for the Silver Arrows – unpretentiously signing autographs for fans leaving the track at the Singapore Grand Prix. Even if fame isn't a goal, what about the role?

"I guess a race engineer in F1 is probably the ultimate goal," Preston concludes modestly. "But equally, since starting sim racing properly and getting involved with engineering in sim racing, I've been working a lot more on endurance-style racing and started getting a lot more into the Le Mans 24, Sebring – those sort of tracks that you don't really hear a lot about if you're just an F1 fan. There's so much that goes on in motorsport that isn't F1. I think it would be a shame if you just only ever get to work in F1 and don't sample everything that there is to offer."

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE 2023 AUTOSPORT WILLIAMS ENGINEER OF THE FUTURE AWARD

After its revamp for 2022, the Autosport Williams Engineer of the Future Award will soon be open for applications for 2023.

In January, Williams will convene a panel to begin creating a shortlist of suitable candidates – applications are set to open soon, so keep an eye on the team's social media channels and public communications. Unlike when the Award was handed out up to 2019, and only nominees from eight of the country's leading universities with a strong reputation in engineering were considered, applications will now be accepted from engineering students from any college or university.

Once the shortlist has been agreed, the finalists will complete specially designed tasks from the spheres of Formula 1 and junior formula racing, as well as Esports, before entering a period of mentoring placements with Williams that will include working with its Esports squad and its driver-in-the-loop simulation and/or race engineering departments, which will take place between January and July next year.

After the summer, the finalists will then engage in an assessment period in trackside engineering support. Once this has been completed, the judging panel will convene again to assess the performance of each finalist through the various phases of the programme. Once this has concluded and a winner has been selected, the victorious engineer will be announced at the 2023 Autosport Awards next December.

"The gap when the Award wasn't happening was an opportunity for us to consider what is the right format, structure, future of the Award," says Williams director of Esports Steven English. "I think the fact that it is the 'Engineer of the Future' Award, the opportunity to bring as much innovation and try something new and look at 'what is the future of engineering?', is really exciting."

INDEX

WHAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE MAGAZINE THIS YEAR, WHEN, AND BY WHOM

BA Ben Anderson
OB Ollie Bearman
JBL Jake Boxall-Legge
CB Charles Bradley
LB Luke Browning
GB Grahame Butterworth
KC Karun Chandhok
HC Haydn Cobb
AC Adam Cooper
MC Matt Cotton
MIC Mike Cotton
ND Nick Degroot
KD Katie Disken
LD Lewis Duncan
JE Jonny Edgar
DE David Evans
TG Tom Gamble
MH Michael Haffenden
SH Sven Haidinger
MHA Maurice Hamilton
PH Phil Hanson
DH Dan Harper
THL Thomas Harrison-Lord
MHD Martin Harrold
JH Jake Hill
SHI Steve Hindle
TH Tom Howard
RJ Robin Jackson
LJ Laura Jones
AK Alex Kalinauckas
MK Matt Kew
HK Harry King
JK Jamie Klein
PL Paul Lawrence
SL Stephen Lickorish
SM Stefan Mackley
DML David Malsher-Lopez
DM Dan Mason
JM Jessica McFadyen
JN James Newbold
ZOS Zak O'Sullivan
MPA Mark Paulson
SP Seb Priaulx
MP Marcus Pye
MR Matthew Rees
JS Jeremy Shaw
MS Marcus Simmons
DS Damien Smith
LS Luke Smith
HS Heiko Stritzke
RT Rachit Thukral
DT Dan Ticktum
BT Ben Tuck
KT Kevin Turner
JU Jim Utter
AVL Andrew van Leeuwen
GW Gary Watkins
MW Megan White
SW Steve Whitfield
MWI Mark Williams
TW Tim Wright

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award

The wait to discover the next British ace (3 Feb-**KT**)
Awards test's worst job (3 Feb-**KT**)
Winner's prize F1 drive (1 Dec-**MW**)
How to win the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award (1 Dec-**KT**)

Autosport Awards

All the 2021 winners (10 Feb)
Voting nominations (3 Nov)
All the 2022 winners (8 Dec)

British Touring Cars

Josh Cook's rise (6 Jan-**MS**)
Season preview (21 Apr-**MS**)
1. Donington (28 Apr-**MS**)
2. Brands Hatch (19 May-**MS**)
3. Thruxton (2 June-**MS**)
4. Oulton Park (16 June-**MS**)
5. Croft (30 June-**MS**)
6. Knockhill (4 Aug-**MS**)
7. Snetterton (18 Aug-**MS**)
8. Thruxton (1 Sept-**MS**)
9. Silverstone (29 Sept-**MS**)
10. Brands Hatch (13 Oct-**MS**)
Season review (3 Nov-**MS**)

Club Column

New Year's resolutions (6 Jan-**SL**)
New dawn for endurance racing (13 Jan-**SM**)
Race to make a change (20 Jan-**SM**)
Will new tin-top series be super? (3 Feb-**SL**)
Finding female racing stars of the future (17 Feb-**LJ**)
Perception of a problem (3 Mar-**SL**)
Outlier among increase (10 Mar-**SL**)
A forgotten problem (17 Mar-**SL**)
Learning on the 'Ring (24 Mar-**BT**)
A mixed picture (31 Mar-**SL**)
Promise of a new series (7 Apr-**SM**)
Dark-arts revolution (7 Apr-**JN**)
Opening round to remember (21 Apr-**JN**)
A new beginning (28 Apr-**SM**)
An encouraging start… (5 May-**SL**)
Provisional problems (12 May-**JN**)
Official mistakes (26 May-**SL**)
Attracting best guests (2 June-**SL**)
The UK's hidden gem (9 June-**SM**)
Amalgamate to survive (16 June-**MP**)
A calm crossing (7 July-**SL**)
The surging '70s (14 July-**SL**)
Next step up the ladder (21 July-**MR**)
Plenty to play for (28 July-**SL**)
Missing parts and ignoring flags (4 Aug-**SM**)
Prospecting for gold in Cheshire (11 Aug-**MP**)
Walking the tightrope (25 Aug-**SL**)
Racing for a cause (1 Sept-**SM**)
Unnecessary race against time (15 Sept-**SM**)
Glorious Goodwood (22 Sept-**MP**)
Focus on safeguarding (29 Sept-**SL**)
Ginetta's gamble (6 Oct-**SL**)
All to play for at Donington (13 Oct-**SM**)
Festival farce a low point (27 Oct-**SM**)
When there is no winner (10 Nov-**SL**)
Thinking outside the box (17 Nov-**SL**)
Helping untapped talent (24 Nov-**SM**)
Is the Silverstone Classic changing too much? (1 Dec-**SL/KT**)
Why entry numbers matter (8 Dec-**SL**)

F1 launches

'Haas VF-22' (10 Feb)
'Red Bull RB18', McLaren MCL36, AlphaTauri AT03, Aston Martin AMR22 (17 Feb)
Alpine A522, Williams FW44, Alfa Romeo C42, Mercedes W13, Ferrari F1-75 (24 Feb)
Red Bull RB18, Haas VF-22 (3 Mar)

FIA Formula 3

Season preview (17 Mar-**MW**)
1. Sakhir (24 Mar-**MW**)
2. Imola (28 Apr-**MW**)
3. Barcelona (26 May-**MW**)
4. Silverstone (7 July-**MW**)
5. Red Bull Ring (14 July-**MW**)
6. Hungaroring (4 Aug-**MW**)
7. Spa (1 Sept-**MW**)
8. Zandvoort (8 Sept-**MW**)
9. Monza (15 Sept-**MW**)

FIA Formula 2

Season preview (17 Mar-**MW**)
1. Sakhir (24 Mar-**MW**)
2. Jeddah (31 Mar-**MW**)
3. Imola (28 Apr-**MW**)
4. Barcelona (26 May-**MW**)
5. Monte Carlo (2 June-**MW**)
6. Baku (16 June-**MW**)
7. Silverstone (7 July-**MW**)
8. Red Bull Ring (14 July-**MW**)
9. Paul Ricard (28 July-**MW**)
10. Hungaroring (4 Aug-**MW**)
11. Spa (1 Sept-**MW**)
12. Zandvoort (8 Sept-**MW**)
13. Monza (15 Sept-**MW**)
14. Yas Marina (24 Nov-**MW**)

Formula E

Season preview (27 Jan-**MK**)
1. Diriyah (3 Feb-**JBL**)
2. Mexico City (17 Feb-**JBL**)
3. Rome (7 Apr-**JBL**)
4. Monte Carlo (5 May-**JBL**)
5. Berlin (19 May-**JBL**)
Jake Dennis makes his point (2 June-**JBL**)
6. Jakarta (9 June-**JBL**)
7. Marrakech (7 July-**JBL**)
8. New York (21 July-**JBL**)
9. London (4 Aug-**JBL**)
10. Seoul (18 Aug-**JBL**)
Season review (8 Sept-**JBL**)
A home in London (29 Sept-**GW**)

Grand prix features

Hamilton vs Russell (6 Jan-**AK**)
What's new for 2022? (20 Jan-**JBL**)
Raikkonen unfiltered (20 Jan-**LS**)
McLaren building for title challenge (27 Jan-**LS**)
Ferrari's driving force (3 Feb-**AK**)
What can go wrong with the new F1 cars? (10 Feb-**AK**)
When good teams got new rules very wrong (10 Feb-**MK**)
Big questions of 2022 (17 Feb-**KC**)
Hamilton's battle plan (24 Feb-**AK**)
Ferrari goes radical (24 Feb-**LS**)
Test winners and losers (3 Mar-**AK**)
Allan McNish's F1 debut (3 Mar-**JN**)
What kind of champion will Verstappen be? (10 Mar-**AK**)
Honda's Red Bull redemption (10 Mar-**AC**)
Making of a champion (10 Mar-**MS**)
Greatest #2 drivers (10 Mar-**KT**)
F1 season preview (17 Mar-**AK/JBL/MK/LS/TW/KT**)
Mercedes in trouble (7 Apr-**AK**)
Hulkenberg: F1 supersub (7 Apr-**AC**)
Can Ferrari get it right? (21 Apr-**MK**)
How F1 cracked America (5 May-**MK**)
F1's newest track (5 May-**CB**)
Audi and Porsche in F1 (19 May-**MK**)
Vettel on *Question Time* (19 May-**LS**)
Haas revival (9 June-**AK**)
Time for Schumacher to deliver (9 June-**AK**)
Leclerc drives Villeneuve's Ferrari (23 June-**LS**)
Gilles Villeneuve's greatest F1 races (23 June-**KT**)
British GP preview (30 June-**AK/MK/MW/SL**)
Perez at Red Bull (21 July-**MK**)
Hamilton turning silver into gold (11 Aug-**AC**)
Stories to watch (18 Aug-**AK**)
Has Verstappen really changed? (22 Sept-**AK**)
Why Oscar Piastri is F1's most sought-after rookie (29 Sept-**AK**)
Nyck de Vries's chance (29 Sept-**MK**)
Verstappen's road to the title (13 Oct-**AK/MK**)
Ferrari's next step (20 Oct-**AK**)
Hamilton's future (10 Nov-**MK**)
Verstappen's record-breaking season (24 Nov-**KT**)
Brawn on F1 (1 Dec-**AK**)
Mercedes' F1 revival (8 Dec-**MK**)
F1 season review (15 Dec-**AK/MK/JBL/LS/HC/KT**)

Grand prix reports

1. Bahrain (24 Mar-**AK**)
2. Saudi Arabia (31 Mar-**MK**)
3. Australia (7 Apr-**AK**)
4. Emilia Romagna (28 Apr-**MK**)
5. Miami (12 May-**AK**)
6. Spain (26 May-**MK**)
7. Monaco (2 June-**AK**)
8. Azerbaijan (16 June-**MK**)
9. Canada (23 June-**AK**)
10. Great Britain (7 July-**AK/MK**)
11. Austria (14 July-**MK**)
12. France (28 July-**AK**)
13. Hungary (4 Aug-**MK**)
14. Belgium (1 Sept-**MK**)
15. Netherlands (8 Sept-**AK**)
16. Italy (15 Sept-**MK**)
17. Singapore (6 Oct-**AK**)
18. Japan (13 Oct-**MK**)
19. United States (27 Oct-**AK**)
20. Mexico (3 Nov-**AK**)
21. Sao Paulo (17 Nov-**MK**)
22. Abu Dhabi (24 Nov-**AK/MK**)

Have-a-go hero

Fredrik Ekblom (8 Sept-**JN**)

IndyCar

Rise of Kyle Kirkwood (17 Feb-**DML**)
Season preview (24 Feb-**DML**)
1. St Petersburg (3 Mar-**DML**)
Scott McLaughlin stakes his claim (10 Mar-**DML**)
2. Texas (24 Mar-**DML**)
3. Long Beach (14 Apr-**DML**)
4. Barber Motorsports Park (5 May-**DML**)
5. Indianapolis (19 May-**DML**)
Indy 500 preview (26 May-**DML**)
6. Indianapolis 500 (2 June-**DML**)
7. Detroit Belle Isle (9 June-**DML**)
8. Road America (16 June-**DML**)
9. Mid-Ohio (7 July-**DML**)
10. Toronto (21 July-**DML**)
11. Iowa (28 July-**DML**)
12. Indianapolis (4 Aug-**DML**)
13. Nashville (11 Aug-**DML**)
14. St Louis (25 Aug-**DML**)
15. Portland (8 Sept-**DML**)
16. Laguna Seca (15 Sept-**DML**)
Season review (6 Oct-**DML**)

In the paddock

F1 coping with COVID (6 Jan-**AK**)
How a NASCAR legend can take on the Indy 500 (6 Jan-**DML**)
Maserati's return (13 Jan-**JBL**)
Audi's Dakar boost (13 Jan-**RT**)
Second time's a charm for Schumacher (20 Jan-**LS**)
Restoring F1's credibility (27 Jan-**AK**)
Wickens's new challenge (27 Jan-**CB**)
2022 matters for Ferrari (3 Feb-**AK**)
A new format that's fun (3 Feb-**JBL**)
Hamilton's power to effect lasting change (10 Feb-**AK**)
Quartararo's hope (10 Feb-**LD**)
Key test Ricciardo faces (17 Feb-**AK**)
Missing a sportscar opportunity (17 Feb-**GW**)
Challenge shared with Moss (24 Feb-**AK**)
NASCAR's Next Gen (24 Feb-**CB**)
Mixed first impression (3 Mar-**AK**)
A comeback story (10 Mar-**AK**)
Surprising trend of F1 openers (17 Mar-**AK**)
What Bahrain taught us (24 Mar-**AK**)
Why Mercedes was right (24 Mar-**MK**)
A hint of change in Verstappen (31 Mar-**AK**)
Can F1 live without Saudi Arabia? (31 Mar-**LS**)
F1 owes Melbourne (7 Apr-**AK**)
DRS: stay or go? (7 Apr-**MK**)
Leclerc was already 'Charles 2.0' (14 Apr-**AK**)
The sprint race problem (21 Apr-**AK**)
Indy winner's dilemma (21 Apr-**DML**)
How Russell led the line (28 Apr-**AK**)
Final lesson for Leclerc? (28 Apr-**MK**)
Miami is key for Ferrari (5 May-**AK**)
The point Hamilton doesn't have to prove (5 May-**KT**)
Switch to the world stage (5 May-**SP**)
Ferrari's Miami GP silver lining (12 May-**AK**)
F1 in Miami: more pros than cons? (12 May-**MK**)
Why a lack of needle is a mirage (19 May-**AK**)
Leclerc left blushing (19 May-**MK**)
Red Bull's team orders danger (26 May-**AK**)
Remember the past (26 May-**TH**)
Lamborghini's Mr Dependable (26 May-**JN**)
How Perez struck back (2 June-**AK**)
Tin-tops' '2005 Indy'? (2 June-**DS**)
A career move for the better (2 June-**DT**)
Heavy going in F1 (9 June-**MK**)
Reaping rewards in sportscars (9 June-**JN**)
Don't forget a true classic (9 June-**LD**)
F1 2022's true nature (16 June-**AK**)
Would Leclerc have won in Baku? (16 June-**MK**)
Sainz's breakthrough (23 June-**AK**)
What to expect from Mercedes (30 June-**AK**)
Safari is more than just a rally (30 June-**TH**)
Path to Le Mans (30 June-**TG**)
What made British GP a great race (7 July-**AK**)
Another story in a great campaign (14 July-**AK**)
A glimpse of the new (14 July-**GW**)
F1's new rules assessed (21 July-**AK**)
Saga of Palou's future (21 July-**DML**)
Red Bull's last weakness? (28 July-**AK**)
Strange way to make a stand (28 July-**DS**)
Deciding when to stop (4 Aug-**AK**)
Could Leclerc leave Ferrari? (11 Aug-**MK**)
Bouncing back with a bad car (11 Aug-**MWI**)
Dark horse for Le Mans 2024? (11 Aug-**KT**)
Inconvenient truth about F1's 'US driver' dream (18 Aug-**MK**)
Formula E's 100 races and beyond (18 Aug-**JBL**)
Battling back after illness (18 Aug-**JE**)
Bouncing back (25 Aug-**MK**)
Battling on two Porsche fronts (25 Aug-**HK**)
Alonso on Hamilton (1 Sept-**AK**)
Audi's F1 challenges (1 Sept-**MK**)
Sprint races aren't a golden bullet (1 Sept-**LD**)
Stats aren't whole story (8 Sept-**AK**)
Dovizioso's legacy (8 Sept-**LD**)
A healing rule change (15 Sept-**AK**)
Power's new approach (15 Sept-**DML**)
Can Russell steal second? (22 Sept-**AK**)

Rallycross's critical balancing act (22 Sept-**JN**)
Ferrari's other big asset for 2023? (29 Sept-**MK**)
Disability champion (29 Sept-**JN**)
Climbing BMW ladder (29 Sept-**DH**)
Perez's next challenge (6 Oct-**AK**)
Set for a new golden era (6 Oct-**GW**)
What FIA should do next (13 Oct-**AK**)
A year of learning (13 Oct-**ZOS**)
Busting an F1 myth (20 Oct-**MK**)
Ferrari's UK rising star (20 Oct-**OB**)
Why Hamilton could be wrong (27 Oct-**AK**)
Evolution of Verstappen (3 Nov-**AK**)
Seeing is believing (3 Nov-**GW**)
F1 still has a 'Class B' (10 Nov-**AK**)
What next for Ricciardo? (10 Nov-**MK**)
Ready for a rematch? (17 Nov-**AK**)
Building on a great year (17 Nov-**JH**)
Next step for Ferrari and Leclerc (24 Nov-**AK**)
Vettel among the greats (24 Nov-**KT**)
A stumble, not a fall (1 Dec-**MK**)
A world cup we will miss (1 Dec-**DS**)
From the GB3 title to the fight for an F1 test (1 Dec-**LB**)
One more version of Hamilton? (8 Dec-**AK**)
Fighting back from a tricky year (8 Dec-**PH**)
Is Alonso really back to his best? (8 Dec-**AK**)
Glimpse of the new age (15 Dec-**CB**)
Tanak's homecoming (15 Dec-**TH**)

Introducing...

Ricardo Feller (12 May-**JN**)
Ty Gibbs (10 Nov-**JU**)

MotoGP

Season preview (3 Mar-**LD**)
1. Losail (10 Mar-**LD**)
2. Mandalika (24 Mar-**LD**)
3. Rio Hondo (7 Apr-**LD**)
4. Austin (14 Apr-**LD**)
5. Algarve (28 Apr-**LD**)
6. Jerez (5 May-**LD**)
7. Le Mans (19 May-**LD**)
8. Mugello (2 June-**LD**)
9. Barcelona (9 June-**LD**)
10. Sachsenring (23 June-**LD**)
11. Assen (30 June-**LD**)
12. Silverstone (11 Aug-**LD**)
13. Red Bull Ring (25 Aug-**LD**)
14. Misano (8 Sept-**LD**)
15. Motorland Aragon (22 Sept-**LD**)
16. Motegi (29 Sept-**LD**)
17. Buriram (6 Oct-**LD**)
18. Phillip Island (20 Oct-**LD**)
19. Sepang (27 Oct-**LD**)
20. Valencia (10 Nov-**LD**)
Season review (24 Nov-**LD**)

My favourite...

Car – Nicky Catsburg (6 Jan-**JN**)
Track – Bruno Junqueira (13 Jan-**JN**)
Team-mate – Derek Warwick (20 Jan-**KT**)
Car – Daniel Juncadella (27 Jan-**JN**)
Track – Augusto Farfus (3 Feb-**JN**)
Team-mate – Olivier Panis (10 Feb-**JN**)
Car – Craig Breen (17 Feb-**TH**)
Track – Esteban Guerrieri (24 Feb-**JN**)
Team-mate – Jimmy Vasser (3 Mar-**CB**)
Car – Damon Hill (10 Mar-**JN**)
Circuit – Lucas di Grassi (17 Mar-**JN**)
Team-mate – John Fitzpatrick (24 Mar-**KT**)
Car – Nicky Pastorelli (31 Mar-**JN**)
Track – Allan McNish (7 Apr-**JN**)
Team-mate – Al Unser Jr (14 Apr-**JN**)
Car – Karl Wendlinger (21 Apr-**JN**)
Track – Josh Cook (28 Apr-**MS**)
Race – Danny Sullivan (5 May-**CB**)
Team-mate – Paul O'Neill (12 May-**JN**)
Car – Martin Tomczyk (19 May-**JN**)
Track – Kenny Brack (26 May-**JN**)
Team-mate – Darren Turner (2 June-**JN**)
Car – Will Power (9 June-**DML**)
Track – Gianni Morbidelli (16 June-**JN**)
Team-mate – Mikko Hirvonen (23 June-**TH**)
Car – Karun Chandhok (30 June-**KT**)
Car – David Coulthard (7 July-**KT**)
Team-mate – Jordi Gene (14 July-**JN**)
Track – Nick Cassidy (21 July-**JBL**)
Track – Thierry Tassin (28 July-**GW**)
Team-mate – Timo Bernhard (4 Aug-**JN**)
Car – Olivier Beretta (11 Aug-**JN**)
Track – Peter Kox (18 Aug-**JN**)
Car – Hans Stuck (25 Aug-**JN/SH**)
Team-mate – Manuel Reuter (1 Sept-**JN**)
Track – Yvan Muller (8 Sept-**JN**)
Team-mate – Carlos Sainz Sr (15 Sept-**TH**)
Car – Jerome d'Ambrosio (22 Sept-**JBL**)
Track – Louis Deletraz (29 Sept-**GW**)
Team-mate – Richard Dean (6 Oct-**JN**)
Car – Adam Carroll (13 Oct-**JN**)
Track – Rick Mears (20 Oct-**DML**)
Car – Vincenzo Sospiri (27 Oct-**JN**)
Team-mate – Andrew Jordan (3 Nov-**KT**)
Track – Sacha Fenestraz (10 Nov-**JK**)
Team-mate – Gil de Ferran (17 Nov-**JN**)
Car – Richard Attwood (24 Nov-**KT**)
Track – Kenneth Hansen (1 Dec-**JN**)
Team-mate – Christian Fittipaldi (8 Dec-**JN**)
Car – Bruno Spengler (15 Dec-**JN**)

National focus

The Neary family (6 Jan-**JN**)
Clio 197 track test (6 Jan-**SM**)
Radical SR10 track test (13 Jan-**BA**)
Autosport's driver rankings (20 Jan-**SL/MS**)
How Porsche picked its next potential star (27 Jan-**SL**)
2021's new categories rated – and predictions for 2022 (3 Feb-**SL/SM**)
Building a 2CV racer (10 Feb-**SL/MHD**)
Team USA Scholarship (17 Feb-**SM**)
Team BRIT (3 Mar-**SL**)
Junior racing series (10 Mar-**SM**)
Very special saloons (17 Mar-**MP**)
State of the UK single-seater scene (31 Mar-**SL/SM**)
Richard Chamberlain's Porsche 935 (7 Apr-**MPA**)
British GT preview (7 Apr-**JN**)
GB3 preview (7 Apr-**SM**)
TOCA supports preview (21 Apr-**SL**)
Revolution 500SC track test (5 May-**BA**)
Lotus Emira GT4 (12 May-**SL**)
Jimmy Broadbent (26 May-**THL**)
Fastest Minis in the world (9 June-**SL**)
EnduroKa racing (23 June-**SM**)
Caterham's finest hours (30 June-**SHI**)
Shelsley Walsh Classic Nostalgia preview (14 July-**PL**)
Fiat versus Ford(28 July-**PL**)
F4 rising star Alex Dunne (11 Aug-**SL**)
In at the deep end in Ma7da Championship (8 Sept-**SM**)
Hillclimbing's young challenger (6 Oct-**PL**)
The power of 'Patch' (20 Oct-**SHI**)
TOCA supports review (3 Nov-**SL**)
British GT review (10 Nov-**SM**)
GB3 review (10 Nov-**SM**)
Farewell to the Ginetta GT4 Supercup (17 Nov-**SL**)
20 years of Fun Cup (24 Nov-**GB**)
2022 state of club racing (8 Dec-**SL**)
Plato drives Team Brit McLaren (15 Dec-**MS**)
Britain's 'other' championships (15 Dec-**RJ/MC**)

Obituaries

Martin Slater (6 Jan)
Kevin Kalkhoven (13 Jan)
John Blanckley (20 Jan)
Vince Granatelli (27 Jan)
John Lancaster (27 Jan)
Mike Kimpton (27 Jan)
Nick Jesty (3 Feb)
Stephen Minoprio (3 Feb)
Mike Pendleton (10 Feb)
David George (10 Feb)
Colin Gigner (24 Feb)
Danny Ongais (10 Mar)
Roger Bell (10 Mar)
Jurgen Lassig (17 Mar)
Vic Elford (17 Mar)
Martin Colvill (17 Mar)
Mike Irons (17 Mar)
Kunimitsu Takahashi (24 Mar)
Reine Wisell (24 Mar)
Tim Jackson (24 Mar)
Martin Davidson (24 Mar)
David Sheane (7 Apr)
Sid Taylor (28 Apr)
Brian Chatfield (28 Apr)
Peter Gaydon (5 May)
Tony Brooks (12 May)
Simon Diffey (19 May)
Tick Steward (19 May)
Peter Dalkin (26 May)
Andy Barton (9 June)
Bruton Smith (30 June)
Alain de Cadenet (7 July)
Chris Randall (14 July)
Paddy Hopkirk (28 July)
Ken Bowes (28 July)
Niel Allen (18 Aug)
George Copeland (18 Aug)
Barry Sheppard (8 Sept)
Ted Williams (8 Sept)
Mike Blanchet (15 Sept)
Norman Lackford (13 Oct)
Dietrich Mateschitz (27 Oct)
Mauro Forghieri (10 Nov)
Ron Overend (1 Dec)
Patrick Tambay (8 Dec)
Charles Barter (8 Dec)
'Silverstone Syd' Herbert (15 Dec)

Pit+Paddock

Lewis will stay, says new FIA president (6 Jan)
Maserati returns to racing (13 Jan)
FIA Abu Dhabi inquest to drag on (20 Jan)
Daytona kicks off US season (27 Jan)
U-turn keeps Honda in F1 (3 Feb)
Haas first with F1 images (10 Feb)
FIA sorts Spa, but delays on Abu Dhabi (17 Feb)
FIA drops Masi (24 Feb)
F1 reacts to Russian invasion (3 Mar)
Mazepin dumped (10 Mar)
Magnussen's F1 return (17 Mar)
Abu Dhabi GP findings (24 Mar)
Questions over Saudi GP (31 Mar)
F1's Las Vegas return 2023 (7 Apr)
Audi and Porsche hold fire on F1 future (14 Apr)
BTCC's new hybrid era (21 Apr)
Push for six sprints in 2023 (28 Apr)
Formula E reveals Gen3 (5 May)
Red Bull running up to budget cap? (12 May)
McLaren takes over Mercedes FE team (19 May)
Dixon sets record Indy pole (26 May)
F1 teams 'could miss races' (2 June)
Glickenhaus bullish for Le Mans (9 June)
Cadillac expands on LMDh programme (16 June)
Row over porpoising intervention (23 June)
Lola name returns (30 June)
Zhou survives Brit GP smash (7 July)
Ferrari hypercar hits track (14 July)
Honda leaves door open to F1 in 2026 (21 July)
F1 argues over floor rules (28 July)
Alonso heads to Aston (4 August)
Alpine and McLaren at war (11 Aug)
Ferrari sticks to guns on strategy (18 Aug)
F1 2026 rules get green light (25 Aug)
Audi in F1 for 2026 (1 Sept)
McLaren wins Piastri case (8 Sept)
Hulkenberg in F1 frame (15 Sept)
De Vries gets chance (22 Sept)
Monaco saved in 24-round F1 calendar (29 Sept)
Red Bull in budget-cap allegations (6 Oct)
Suzuka tractor scandal (13 Oct)
Young drivers get FP1 shots at US GP (20 Oct)
F1 reveals Suzuka findings (27 Oct)
Red Bull penalised for cost-cap breach (3 Nov)
Merc: W13 caused development delay (10 Nov)
Red Bull conflict over orders (17 Nov)
Vettel waves farewell to F1 (24 Nov)
Binotto stands down (1 Dec)
DTM uncertainty (8 Dec)
Vasseur joins Ferrari as Seidl quits McLaren for Sauber (15 Dec)

Reports – miscellaneous

Daytona 24 Hours (3 Feb-**GW**)
Daytona 500 (24 Feb-**CB**)
Sebring 12 Hours (24 Mar-**GW**)
Goodwood Members' Meeting (14 Apr-**MP**)
Nurburgring 24 Hours (2 June-**HS**)
Goodwood Festival of Speed (30 June-**MH**)
Spa 24 Hours (4 Aug-**GW**)
Silverstone Classic (1 Sept-**MP/KT**)
Goodwood Revival (22 Sept-**MP**)
Petit Le Mans (6 Oct-**JS**)
Bathurst 1000 (13 Oct-**AVL**)
Motorsport Games (3 Nov-**SW/DM**)

Special features

20 years of the Top 50 (6 Jan-**KT**)
Fastest British circuit laps of 2021 (6 Jan-**MS**)
Extreme E 2021 review (6 Jan-**MK**)
Monsters of motorsport (13 Jan-**KT/JBL/DE/TH/PL**)
What made Whincup so special (13 Jan-**AVL**)
Daytona 24 preview (27 Jan-**GW**)
Veteran team manager Marvin Humphries (3 Feb-**MS**)
Gregoire Saucy's rise (10 Feb-**HC**)
Martin Tomczyk steps back (17 Feb-**JN**)
Daytona 500 preview (17 Feb-**CB/JU/ND**)
Extreme E preview (17 Feb-**MK**)
Supercars preview (3 Mar-**AVL**)
Hawksworth and Barnicoat on racing in the US (10 Mar-**CB**)
Speed comparison (31 Mar-**MS**)
The rise of Yifei Ye (7 Apr-**GW**)
Tarso Marques's NASCAR venture (7 Apr-**JN**)
Goodwood Members' Meeting preview (7 Apr-**MP**)
WTCR season preview (5 May-**JN**)
Goodwood Festival of Speed preview (23 June-**MH/GW/MK**)
Wickens winning again (14 July-**CB**)
DTM's Muller and Rast (28 July-**JN**)
Sacha Fenestraz getting big in Japan (28 July-**JK**)
BMW Motorsport at 50 (11 Aug-**KT/GW**)
Brabham special (18 Aug-**DS/KT**)
Porsche 956/962 special (25 Aug-**MIC/GW/KT**)
Silverstone Classic preview (25 Aug-**MP**)
Rising tin-top star Mikel Azcona (8 Sept-**DS**)
Hyundai WRC/ETCR car swap (22 Sept-**TH**)
Skip Barber School (22 Sept-**JM**)
Racing at Crystal Palace (29 Sept-**MP**)
Mark Webber's greatest drives (20 Oct-**MHA**)
Motorsport Games preview (27 Oct-**GW**)
Ferrari 499P launch (3 Nov-**GW**)
Chastain's wild move (10 Nov-**CB**)
DTM review (10 Nov-**JN**)
How Trackhouse flipped NASCAR script (24 Nov-**CB**)
BRM special (8 Dec-**KT**)
Christmas gift guide (8 Dec)
Van der Linde brothers (15 Dec-**JN**)
Clean fuels for all (15 Dec-**KD**)

Supplements

Engineering (24 Feb)
Formula E Berlin E-Prix (15 May)
Le Mans preview (9 June)
Engineering (15 Sept)
Engineering (24 Nov)

Top 5

DAMS drivers (24 Feb-**JN**)
Porsche Group C privateers (14 July-**GW**)
Minardi F1 drivers (28 July-**JN**)
Tyrrell F1 drivers (6 Oct-**KT**)

WEC

Season preview (17 Mar-**GW**)
1. Sebring (24 Mar-**GW**)
2. Spa (12 May-**GW**)
Porsche gears up for return to top flight (12 May-**GW**)
Peugeot's Hypercar (26 May-**GW**)
3. Le Mans (16 June-**GW**)
4. Monza (14 July-**GW**)
5. Fuji (15 Sept-**GW**)
6. Bahrain (12 Nov-**GW**)
Season review (1 Dec-**GW**)

What could have been

Rickard Rydell (6 Jan-**JN**)
Stephane Sarrazin (17 Feb-**JN**)
Sebastien Bourdais (20 Oct-**JN**)

WRC

Season preview (20 Jan-**TH**)
1. Monte Carlo (27 Jan-**TH**)
2. Rally Sweden (3 Mar-**TH**)
Life as an M-Sport mechanic (31 Mar-**TH**)
3. Croatia (28 Apr-**TH**)
4. Portugal (26 May-**TH**)
5. Sardinia (9 June-**TH**)
6. Safari (30 June-**TH**)
Kenya's rally stars (7 July-**TH**)
Hyundai's mobile home (21 July-**TH**)
7. Estonia (21 July-**TH**)
8. Finland (11 Aug-**TH**)
9. Ypres (25 Aug-**TH**)
10. Acropolis (15 Sept-**TH**)
Dark art of co-driving (29 Sept-**TH**)
11. New Zealand (6 Oct-**TH**)
12. Spain (27 Oct-**TH**)
13. Japan (17 Nov-**TH**)
Rovanpera rewrites record book (24 Nov-**TH**)
Season review (1 Dec-**TH**)

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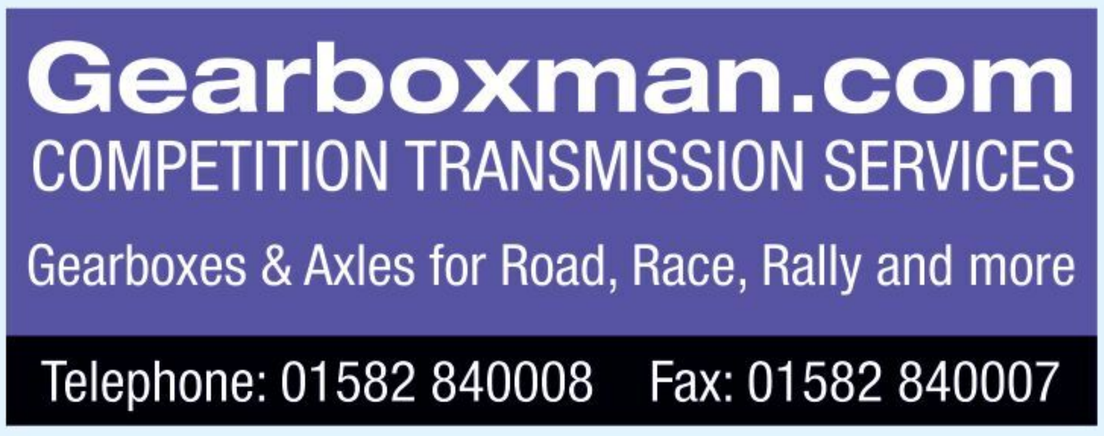
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SENIOR PRESS OFFICER
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The senior press officer will ensure that the schedule runs smoothly in alignment with all parties involved (FIA, F1, Promoters, Partners & Sponsors, Media representatives). Among the responsibilities there is also the internships' development.

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- Multiple years' experience, at least 3, in the Motorsport PR;
- A team player with excellent communication and organisational skills
- Excellent communications skills
- Persuasive, resilient and able to handle criticism attitude
- Ability to work under pressure, in a fast paced-environment and deadlines
- Innovative, Can-do forward-thinking attitude
- Willingness to travel extensively, at least 150 day per year.

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HEAD OF DIGITAL MEDIA
Alpine F1 Team

Key responsibilities include:

- Strategic definition of all aspects of multiple social media accounts, including weekly and monthly planning, community development, plus identifying new platforms that could be exploited by the team.
- Define the strategy and create a strong voice for team management across social media channels, including CEO, Team Principal and other senior management.
- Responsible for all the Production of in-house content and/or management of external agencies.
- Responsibility for content and posts across all F1 team social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, list non-exhaustive).
- Share and manage content streams from other Alpine and F1 stakeholders and partners.
- Working with communications and marketing team to create long-term digital media communications plans to improve brand visibility and align with strategic brand objectives.
- Liaison with Group corporate communications and partners, plus key F1 stakeholders to maximise digital media coverage.
- Shape the day-to-day social voice of the company.
- This role is based at our factory in Enstone, Oxfordshire but will require some worldwide travel.

The person

- We're looking for experienced applicants (8+ years working within digital communications), from within corporate multinational organisations.
- You will have demonstrated experience in developing and writing cutting edge creative campaigns with an emphasis on innovation.

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MARKETING EXECUTIVE
Aston Martin F1 Team

Purpose

Support the Team's brand and marketing function by contributing to the delivery of high impact and integrated marketing campaigns for our brand and partners.

You Are

- Organised yet agile – Thrives working off a plan but adapts to change and pivots easily where necessary.
- Team player – carries a teamship mentality knowing it's the collaboration that drives collective success.
- Brand ambassador – you are motivated by your passion for our brand and the impact it has and can have in the market.
- Passionate – At AMF1 we put our fans at the centre of everything we do. You will understand the relationship between sports and its fans and as such, the importance of a fan-first mindset.

Primary Responsibilities

- Be responsible for updating all marketing plans across all digital and physical touchpoints, providing weekly updates on the status of activations and campaigns to the marketing team.
- Support the Marketing Manager in the creation of brand and partner campaign briefs and support delivery of all activation.
- Assist in the briefing and approval of creative assets for key internal and external activations, campaigns and events.
- Support BAU and promotional content deployment on digital channels such as email and paid social.
- Collaborate with, and provide updates to, colleagues across the Commercial team on relevant marketing activations.

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CHIEF MECHANIC
Haas F1 Team

General Responsibilities:

- Provides day-to-day management of departments within the team; directs and coaches team members to maximise the team performance, and oversees daily activities.
- Manage department personnel from recruitment, onboarding and employee engagement through to separation.
- Mentor, train and guide personnel as required. Develop staff using effective performance reviews and development plans.
- Promote teamwork and effective communications to develop trustworthy relationships between all personnel and departments.
- Responsible for establishing standard operating procedures and budgets to maintain a practical yet functional department.
- Assumes any responsibilities and duties delegated by the Race Team Operations Team Manager or his designee.
- Responsible for the planning & scheduling of car build and race team workflow for all race and test events to ensure a smooth delivery to the race team.

Key Responsibilities:

- Work with the race team to manage pit stop sessions, develop staff and equipment ensuring incremental improvements.
- Ensure that cars and sub-assemblies are consistently prepared to the highest standards, adhering to all set up parameters, and meeting the criteria stipulated in the build specification and associated aero quality standards.
- Document any problems and issues as they occur and ensure fault fixes and improvements are reported to the relevant department. Ensure correct procedures are followed.

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F1 COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE

McLaren Racing

Role Dimensions:

- You'll be based at our McLaren Technology Centre in Woking, but there may be some international travel to events on occasion. You'll be reporting into the F1 Communications Manager and you'll need to build strong relationships with people across both the wider Communications team and the Commercial team. There is no such thing as a standard working week, and you'll need to be prepared to be flexible with working hours.

Principal Accountabilities:

- You'll be the backbone of the Communications team, supporting McLaren Racing's media relations activities, including but not limited to:
- Press office support and managing the day-to-day running of the Comms team's operations and activities across our Formula 1 and esports teams
- To oversee, manage and develop the range of comms tools required for general running of the press office, including press release distribution systems, image libraries, online media centre, content plans and file sharing platforms
- Management of the McLaren Media Centre and StoryStream platform – content curation, upload and registrations
- Daily management of Media Centre requests and inbox
- Assisting in the creation of quarterly, monthly, KPI and flash reports
- Creating daily news rounds ups
- Conduct regular coverage monitoring
- Responsibility for press release distribution and support on wider integrated communications campaigns
- Organise and manage the schedule of regular team meetings
- Proactively raise and action media opportunities where appropriate

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CONTROL SYSTEMS ENGINEER

Mercedes F1 Team

General Responsibilities:

- The Control Systems Engineer role will have responsibility for the design and implementation of control systems destined for the race yacht and test platforms, from high level flight control laws to low level control loops for electro-hydraulics. Working with a dedicated team of control systems engineers and within the Performance group, the successful candidate will need to assist the team in meeting project requirements and help deliver a highly capable and robust set of control systems.

The Role

- To develop control systems designs in conjunction with other engineering groups to ensure yacht control is performed within the bounds of competition regulations & to achieve the desired yacht performance.
- To apply the best possible development techniques, ensure robust systems are deployed to all facilities (rigs, simulator, yacht) to enable highly efficient use of those facilities.
- To participate in design meetings across controls groups and advise on the practical considerations of control systems requirements within.

What we are looking for:

- Strong academic background with an appropriate technical engineering or other relevant degree. (e.g. Control Systems, Mechanical or Electronic engineering, Cybernetics, Robotics, Mathematics or similar)
- Proven background of model-based design (e.g., Simulink) including code-generation to real-time target systems. Use of advanced techniques (for example: test driven development, large-scale modelling, asynchronous/multi-rate models) will be considered an advantage.

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NO.2 MECHANIC - HERITAGE

Red Bull Racing

Job Description

- We are looking for a highly motivated and enthusiastic No. 2 Mechanic to join our Heritage Team. In this role you will be undertaking the preparation of all Red Bull Racing cars, past and present, as well as representing Red Bull Racing at a variety of events, setting up and running our cars for the fans to see, as well as demonstrating a variety of our different project vehicles for Red bull Advanced Technologies. This role is the first step into eventually joining the fastest pit stop team on the grid!
- You will be an avid team player, who is optimistic, enthusiastic, motivated, meticulous and a diligent worker as well as ambitious with the determination to progress into the fastest pit stop team on the grid. You will have experince in a similar role within F1,F2, F3, Touring car or other high level Motorsport series and will be used to working in a fast-paced & high-pressured environment. This role requires frequent travel in and outside of the UK, so flexibility is a key attribute to be a successful.
- This is a physically demanding position, and we take functional fitness and attitude to health very seriously. The successful candidate will train with the team regularly to maintain a good level of fitness to ensure you can effectively perform in this role.
- Not only is this a fantastic No 2 – Heritage Team role, but it is also a fantastic team to work with here at Red Bull Technology. A good salary is just the start, there are many other benefits too such as our bonus scheme, private health care cover, life assurance scheme, workplace nursery scheme, company contributed pension scheme, on site gym & fitness classes, free daily food allowance, and a cycle to work scheme; but above all, the job satisfaction doesn't get any better than the feeling of making a real contribution to our championship winning grand prix cars.

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SYSTEMS DATA CONTROLLER

Williams Racing

The Position:

- Williams Grand Prix Engineering is continuing to invest in its operations and parts management capability, and we're excited to announce another role that will be critical to the success of our future F1 car programmes.
- We are seeking a Systems Data Controller to join our Operations team, reporting to the Inventory Control Manager. If you are interested in how an F1 operation works, and in particular using an ERP system to manage parts, then we would be interested to hear from you.

Role purpose:

- Our F1 operation is built around delivering a series of complex projects to quality, time and budget. Projects range from race specific developments to full car programmes, involving input from a wide range of business functions.
- The System Data Controller role ensures that data relating to parts is accurately set up and maintained within our ERP system – for example material type or out-sourced processes. In addition, the role monitors the ERP system interfaces with other systems in order to ensure data consistency, working with cross-functional teams to resolve any issues.
- Working with a wide range of stakeholders from different functions, the role is also well placed to assist in defining new operating procedures to deliver continuous improvement in our operational performance.

What we're looking for:

- Experience working in an ERP or production management system
- Analytically minded and methodical worker with strong attention to detail.

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MONTH	DATE	MEETING	CATEGORY	SERIES	SERIES	SERIES	SERIES
MARCH	27	GOODWOOD MOTOR CIRCUIT	TRACK DAY	ALL HRDC	ALL HRDC	ALL HRDC	ALL HRDC
APRIL	29-30	DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL	RACE	HRDC JACK SEARS TROPHY	GERRY MARSHALL GP.1	HRDC ALLSTARS & ALFAS	
MAY	28	MASTERS FESTIVAL BRANDS HATCH GP	RACE		GERRY MARSHALL GP.1		
JUNE	25	HRDC HISTORICS ON THE HILL LYDDEN HILL	RACE	HRDC JACK SEARS TROPHY		HRDC ALLSTARS & ALFAS	PRE-'66 MINIS
JULY	29-30	OULTON PARK GOLD CUP	RACE	HRDC JACK SEARS TROPHY	GERRY MARSHALL GP.1		
AUGUST	13	BRANDS HATCH INDY / FESTIVAL ITALIA	RACE			HRDC ALLSTARS & ALFAS	
OCTOBER	21-22	SILVERSTONE GP MRL MEETING	RACE	HRDC JACK SEARS TROPHY	GERRY MARSHALL GP.1	HRDC ALLSTARS & ALFAS	

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Lifetime ban for driver who threatened clerk

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ESTERSON LOSES WALTER HAYES APPEAL



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- Test and Taster day- Anglesey
- Silverstone GP - 4hrs
- Oulton Park GP - 3.5hrs
- Silverstone GP 24hrs
- Donington Park Nat - 3hrs
- Snetterton 300 - 5hrs
- Brands Hatch Indy - 3hrs
- Pembrey - 2x6hrs
- Snetterton 300 - 2x3hrs
- Race of Remembrance (Anglesey Int) - 12hrs
- Portimao (Algarve) - 24hrs



Audi driver Baxter has been banned after confronting clerk

GARY HAWKINS

Lifetime ban after clerk threatened

CMMCS/MSVR

A club racer has been given a lifetime motorsport ban after threatening a clerk of the course with a chair and making death threats following an earlier paddock dispute.

The matter related to a Classic and Modern Motorsport Club Southern Super Saloons and Tin Tops race at Brands Hatch last month. BMW 318Ti driver Paul Kaynes was left "unnerved", according to the report of a National Court hearing into the case, by the variable speed of Bernard Baxter's Audi A3 during the contest and, after the race, Baxter approached Kaynes to explain that there was a problem with his car's engine cutting out. But Kaynes raised his voice at Baxter and began swearing at him, leaving Baxter's 10-year-old daughter "visibly upset".

This incident was then investigated by clerk of the course Andy Stevens, who invited Baxter into the room to give his side of the story, having already heard Kaynes's.

Following the National Court disciplinary hearing earlier this month, chair of the panel Mark Heywood said in his report: "Mr Stevens describes Mr Baxter arriving in a state of agitation, which rapidly progressed to 'stratospheric rage'.

"Mr Stevens has described his concern at the escalating seriousness of Mr Baxter's behaviour, which culminated in Mr Baxter picking up a substantial metal-framed chair, pointing the legs close to Mr Stevens's chest in a threatening manner, and threatening to kill him, before throwing the chair to the ground with such force as to bend one of the heavy metal legs.

"We are satisfied the severity of the incident calls for an exclusion pursuant to General Regulation C2.7. Accordingly, Mr Baxter is permanently forbidden from taking part in any competition whatsoever, nationally, and internationally."

Baxter did not attend the National Court hearing and submitted no statements or evidence in his defence. He was also fined £1000 in costs but does have the right to appeal his lifetime ban.

A National Court disciplinary hearing was also held into the conduct of Kaynes in the earlier incident. At the time, he was excluded from the meeting and given six points on his licence, but his only further sanction was an order to pay £100 in costs.

In his report, Heywood said: "Mr Kaynes has expressed remorse for his conduct, which we have to observe took place in the public area of the paddock and is in any circumstance to be disapproved of. For the offence, Mr Kaynes was disqualified from the meeting and his licence endorsed with six penalty points. On the evidence before us, we confirm the penalty, but do not consider any further penalty is appropriate."

DRIVER DEFIES MARSHALS

A completely separate National Court hearing was also held earlier this month into another incident at Brands Hatch, this time involving Trackday Trophy driver Andrew Coombs, who was left angry by contact on the first lap of the race.

He defied marshals and proceeded to move to the edge of the circuit to repeatedly rudely gesticulate at the driver he believed responsible, before later confronting that driver in the paddock.

Coombs was given a six-month ban for his treatment of the marshals, but this was suspended for a period of six months. He also has to pay £100 in costs.

"We are satisfied that Mr Coombs's treatment of the marshals in particular is such as to call for a further penalty," read Heywood's report. "We moderate this in light of Mr Coombs's genuine remorse."

P117 OPINION



Kaynes was sanctioned for his abusive language to Baxter

GARY HAWKINS

Esterson loses Hayes appeal, Foster is winner

FORMULA FORD 1600



Esterson (left) penalised for clash with Mills

Formula Ford Festival winner Max Esterson has lost his National Court appeal against his penalty in the Walter Hayes Trophy final, meaning Joey Foster has been confirmed as the victor.

Esterson had been in impressive form at the Silverstone event last month, winning his heat and semi-final before also crossing the line first in the final. But he was later given a 4.5-second penalty for a tangle with Tom Mills at Luffield that resulted in the Kevin Mills Racing driver taking to the gravel. Mills finished fifth but was promoted to fourth by Esterson's sanction.

Esterson and his Ammonite Motorsport team appealed the decision to the stewards, but were unsuccessful and took the matter to the National Court earlier this month. This also proved fruitless, meaning Foster has now been officially crowned as the event's first four-time winner.

In his report of the hearing, chair of the panel Mark Heywood said: "Mr Chapman [Esterson's lawyer] contended that this was properly described as a racing incident. He submitted that Mr Esterson's driving could not be characterised as departing from the standard of a reasonably competent driver, and did not warrant the conclusion that he had caused a collision. However, it is not necessary to establish that a driver fell below that standard for them to be responsible for causing a collision.

"Like the clerk of the course and the stewards, we conclude, on the balance of probability, that Mr Esterson did cause the collision and that a gross miscarriage of justice is not made out. Consequently, we have considered the penalty imposed upon Mr Esterson, but conclude that, in the circumstances, it was appropriate."

Following the hearing, Esterson wrote on social media: "I say this with the utmost respect for Joey Foster and DHR as they had nothing to do with any of the off-track noise and are real racers and great competitors, but what happened after the Walter Hayes this year was hugely disappointing in so many ways. For some unknown reason, the cards have fallen as they have and I've been given a penalty that has denied me the win.

"The real silver lining is that from what I've seen, nearly all the Formula Ford people who I respect so greatly and so many other racers from around the world have reached out and shown their support for me. Most importantly, I know I did everything right to win it but it turns out it was not to be."

Roy Hunt 1935-2022

OBITUARY


Hunt continued to race beyond his 87th birthday

The death of Roy Hunt has robbed the 500 Owners Association of not only a stalwart racer but also a lynchpin of the organisation whose members he served diligently as club secretary and registrar.

It's a rare breed of driver who competes long into his eighties, but the ever-competitive Hunt – a renowned engineer who worked on heavy diesel equipment during his career – stoically continued past his 87th birthday!

Hunt joined the 500OA in 1989, having repatriated from Germany the intriguing one-off Jason (named after the initials of the months July to November in 1952, when Briton Roney 'Godfrey' Messervy built it).

A cameo Goodwood competitor in 1956, the Jason was used sparingly in races and speed events before industrialist Messervy became chairman of Lucas Industries in Birmingham and was later knighted.

Hunt debuted the car, with a single-cylinder JAP engine in place of its original fuel-injected Triumph twin, at the 500OA's Wiscombe Park hillclimb in 1989 and campaigned it successfully until the end of 1995.

Re-armed for 1996 with the ex-Charlie Banyard-Smith Martin-Norton, previously saddled by Reg Hargrave, indefatigable self-preparer Hunt scored many class and overall victories and podiums, plus three fourth places in the spectacular Earl of March Trophy features at the Goodwood Revival.

Overall 500OA champion in 1997 and 2012 (he also won numerous class titles), Hunt was a vital friend and mentor to all in the circus. His final appearance was at Castle Combe's Autumn Classic in September, when mechanical problems in practice precluded a race start. Shortly afterwards he was diagnosed with incurable cancer.

Hunt leaves a widow Pat, to whom Autosport extends sincere condolences.

MARCUS PYE



New engine among the tweaks for revised Radical SR3 XXR

RADICAL

Radical has unveiled its all-new SR3 XXR, the latest iteration of its popular SR3 prototype, featuring an improved engine and better handling.

The new 1.5-litre motor from in-house Radical Performance Engines produces 232bhp and has been designed so that it can run on biofuel.

A number of other tweaks have also been made based on driver feedback, including a new pit limiter fitted as standard and a central tail 'shark fin' that improves entry and mid-corner stability. With the improved performance, a new technical partnership with AP Racing has led to an upgraded braking system.

"The SR3's handling is renowned as a masterpiece, so for XXR we took the approach of evolutionary improvements across multiple areas," said James Pinkerton, Radical's head of research and development. "We looked at customer feedback as well as a list of items we'd personally like as racers. We then set about scrutinising every system on the vehicle to see where improvements could be made, while staying true to the SR3 formula.

"We've carried over the sidepod profile from the SR10 to improve airflow and reduce turbulent drag, and the new Generation 5 RPE engine is undoubtedly the star of the show."

Production of the SR3 XXR is due to start in February 2023, with deliveries expected later the same month.

New Oz GB4 team gets S5000 star

GB4

Australian team Evans GP has become the latest squad to join the 2023 GB4 Championship, with Red Bull Esports racer Cooper Webster the first driver revealed by the squad.

Evans GP has competed in the Formula Regional Asian Championship since 2021 and is planning a two-car effort for its move into UK racing. Webster, a 19-year-old Australian, has raced in S5000 for the past two seasons, taking three victories and finishing third overall this year. He also placed runner-up in the Tasman Series this term.

"I am really excited to join Evans GP for the 2023 GB4 Championship," he said. "It's an amazing opportunity to race in the UK on some world-class tracks and against some top drivers. It will be a big challenge, but I am ready to give it everything and can't wait to get the season started."

Evans GP becomes the second new GB4 team confirmed for 2023, after Ginetta and British GT operation Fox Motorsport announced Liam McNeilly and Sid Smith. Privateer Dylan Hotchin and GB4's National Formula Ford shootout winner Colin Queen will also join the grid.

The shootout and £20,000 prize, which Queen won before joining Fortec Motorsports ahead of 2023, will again take place next year. The assessment is open to the top three teenage drivers in the National FF1600 standings, with the winner receiving £20k towards a GB4 drive in 2024.

IN THE HEADLINES

MOSS IN THE FOX RANKS

Harry Moss has been named as Fox Motorsport's first driver for its Ginetta Junior attack next season. The 14-year-old son of International GT Open runner-up Nick Moss made his car racing debut in the Winter Series with Fox last month prior to contesting the full series in 2023. "I feel so much more aware of what's needed to succeed now, and a lot more confident in my ability to do it," he said.

FAIRBROTHER'S MINI MOVE

Karting graduate Gabe Fairbrother will move to car racing in the Mini Challenge Trophy next year with Excelr8 Motorsport. "I see the Cooper class as the ideal place to go in this next stage of my career and, even though it will be my first season, I'm going into 2023 with my focus firmly on challenging towards the front of the grid," he said.

DAVIES TAKES THE TITLE

Ford Sierra Cosworth driver Jason Davies has been confirmed as the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Classic Thunder champion following a review of the points allocated at Snetterton. Davies had been provisionally awarded only half points for his two wins in Norfolk. When his engine then blew in qualifying for the Donington Park finale, it allowed AJ Owen (Honda Civic Type R) to overhaul Davies's total before his points were revised.

PROTOTYPE COLLABORATION

The Sports Prototype Cup (below) will continue to collaborate with the Zeo Prototype Series at UK meetings next year. The categories will share a grid for two 30-minute races at Silverstone in May and Donington Park in June. The remainder of the Sports Prototype Cup calendar features European events at Barcelona, Spa and the Algarve circuit.



Welham/Gadd stay in F1000 as Booth leaves

F1000

This year's F1000 champion Rob Welham and fellow race winner Tom Gadd will both stick with the 750 Motor Club-run series in 2023, but title rival Matt Booth plans to instead switch to historic racing.

Welham secured his first F1000 crown in a nailbiting season finale at Snetterton, where seven drivers went into the event with a chance of the title.

The 21-year-old said: "I don't see a reason to do anything else for now – if something comes up with another formula then it comes up. But F1000 is right for the budget we've got and it'll be the first time after winning a championship I've been able to use the number 1 on my car. Another appeal is how competitive it is with so many drivers in with a chance of winning it. That adds credibility for you."

Gadd finished third in the standings, behind Welham and Booth, and is also planning to continue. "We won a lot of races in 2022 and had great pace and I want to build on that momentum with the Sellars team," said the 25-year-old.



Welham took his maiden F1000 title after facing tough opposition

STEVE JONES

"They have an engine rebuild programme to get through, which gives me time to recover from an op on my cruciate ligament before we get testing in February or March. I tore it in an American football game and I could feel it quite a lot in the car."

Booth, meanwhile, is planning a move into historics with an MGB. The 2019 F1000 champion, and runner-up the past three years, says buying his first property has influenced his plans. "I won't be able to put my full effort into running a car, particularly as a privateer with all the preparation I do," said the 27-year-old.

"I've just bought an MGB road car and will convert that to race in historics, hopefully in 2024. Ideally, I want to get the car to FIA Appendix K specification as that opens possibilities such as Equipe GTS, HSCC Road Sports or CSCC, which is a club I really like the look of."

CARL McKELLAR

New separate classes for 270R and 310R models



7 Race Series has proved popular with drivers

GARY HAWKINS

7 RACE SERIES

The popular 7 Race Series will be split into three classes for next year, with the 1600 division separated into contests for 270R and 310R models.

When the MotorSport Vision Racing-run category first launched in 2017, it featured just one grid before growing interest meant this soon split into standalone races for the 420R and 1600 Caterham machines. If entry numbers continue to grow, it is expected that three distinct grids will be run in the future but, for 2023, the 270Rs and 310Rs will share and have separate starts.

"Due to a large number of enquiries from 270R and 310R drivers, we feel our 1600 class will grow and warrant being split into two separate championships," said series coordinator Sean Bicknell.

"The 270Rs will start behind the 310Rs in our regular rolling start formation with the usual 5-10 second gap, so they will still get their own race, unhindered by cars from the other class."

STEPHEN LICKORISH





Racing with respect

Three recent disciplinary hearings paint a sorry picture, and it's important that unacceptable behaviour is stamped out

STEPHEN LICKORISH

This week's lead national news story (p113) is one that doesn't exactly reflect the Christmas spirit. Three drivers being investigated in National Court disciplinary hearings, with one banned for life after throwing a chair and making death threats towards a clerk of the course, is a depressing snapshot of some of the characters who can be found in national racing.

Governing body Motorsport UK is placing renewed emphasis on its Race With Respect campaign, designed to stamp out abusive and unacceptable behaviour in the motorsport community. Yet there have been worryingly high levels of indiscipline away from the track this year, and some questionable driving standards on it.

"Motorsport UK demands high standards of behaviour from all participants within the sport to create an accessible and welcoming environment for all," the organisation stated. "All Motorsport UK licence holders sign up to the Race With Respect Code of Conduct when applying for their licence. It is important that the community calls out poor standards of behaviour and respect all those participating in the sport, including officials and marshals. [We] will review and process all reports regarding Race With Respect and a range of actions can be taken in response to deliberately disrespectful behaviour. This starts from helping the individual to understand why their behaviour is below the standard expected and can be escalated as needed."

"These cases provided a perfect opportunity to reinforce the culture change that is needed"

And the case of Bernard Baxter at Brands Hatch last month is one that was rightly escalated. Swearing at and threatening a clerk of the course with a chair is intolerable behaviour and undeniably deserves serious punishment. Banning him for life sends a very clear signal that such actions will not be accepted and exemplifies the messaging around racing with respect. Yet other National Court decisions on the same day in other disciplinary hearings seem to somewhat undermine that very same point.

Take Paul Kaynes, the driver who so angered Baxter in the first place. It's worth remembering that this saga began when Baxter approached Kaynes to explain why his Audi was erratic on track – his engine was cutting out. But Kaynes did not accept this and instead began swearing at Baxter in a very public way in the paddock, this in turn leading to Baxter being incensed. Kaynes's punishment? Merely the exclusion from the meeting and six points on his licence that were issued on the day.

If such an example is being made of Baxter, then should Kaynes face further sanction? Prior to the National Court panel's conclusions, the committee of the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club Southern – the club the drivers were competing with – took into account the whole weekend's events and independently decided to ban both drivers from competing with it. There is no disputing that Baxter's misdemeanours were infinitely more serious, but Kaynes's role should not be overlooked either.

More surprising is the punishment for Andrew Coombs. Disobeying marshals and moving to the edge of the track to gesticulate at another driver seems a pretty serious offence. His actions not only endangered himself but also other competitors and the marshals who tried to tell him to get back behind the barriers. Yet Coombs escaped with what amounts to nothing more than a slap on the wrist. He had the same exclusion from the meeting plus six penalty points imposition as Kaynes, along with a six-month ban suspended for six months. Considering the majority of those six suspended months are over the winter when there is no racing anyway, that sanction is, in effect, meaningless.

The common theme between these cases is unnecessary anger from competitors. At the end of the day, club motorsport should be fun. Autosport has written before about how some seem to be taking grassroots motorsport too seriously and that enjoyment factor is being lost. This is perhaps indicative of a wider change in society, where events of recent years have seemingly left people with shorter fuses that lead them to be more easily wound up.

But, whether you are a driver, marshal, clerk of the course or anyone else at a race meeting, you should not turn up and be abused by a fellow member of the racing community. This is not professional motorsport and winning should be seen as a bonus, not something that must be achieved at all costs. Instead, the attitudes displayed by Baxter, Kaynes and Coombs in these incidents – and there have been plenty of other examples this year – serve only to put people off from giving up their spare time or parting with their hard-earned cash to get involved in motorsport at the weekends. At a point when there are concerns over the numbers of volunteers, it is important that any abuse directed at them is seen to be appropriately punished.

These cases provided a perfect opportunity to reinforce the culture change that's needed within some areas of motorsport, but instead there have been slightly mixed messages. Christmas is known as a time of goodwill and cheer, and that is something it seems club motorsport could do with throughout next year.



Memories of a poignant year

There were some golden moments during the 2022 season but also some sad occurrences, too

MARCUS PYE

Following pandemic-devastated 2020 and 2021, in which amateur competitors were trying to regroup, the past 12 months brought unexpected challenges for everybody, not least those rooted in war-torn Ukraine. On a personal level, the passing of my father — who took me to a Silverstone MG Car Club clubbie in 1958, and British Grands Prix in 1967 and 1973, then saw me land a Clubmans podium there in the 1980s — in August had a greater impact than I could have imagined. Drawing positives, I hope the experience enabled me to empathise more closely with friends facing illness and bereavement. I've written 32 tributes to fallen racing folk in Autosport this year, most thankfully of a decent age. But it wasn't entirely an *annus horribilis*. There were golden memories too.

Goodwood 79th Members' Meeting

Throbbing V8-engined sportscars were emerging as the big ticket in the twilight of Goodwood's 1948-66 contemporary era. McLaren M1s and a Lola T70 Spyder raced at the Sussex aerodrome circuit, which closed two months before the Canadian-American Challenge Cup made its debut at Mont Tremblant. John Surtees (Lola) won three of the six rounds and the title and Bruce McLaren two of the next three crowns before his testing accident at Goodwood in June 1970. Seeing similar cars, raced with supreme skill by Rob Hall (M1A) and Olly Bryant (T70), wowed onlookers at April's 79th Members' Meeting. Bryant's last-gasp victory rewarded his tenacity and unwillingness to give best as they darted through traffic at 170mph. Mighty fine racing without trading paint!



Stacey's efforts made the trek to Croft worth it

STEVE JONES

Two pilgrimages to Croft

Despite being 315 miles from home, Croft holds very happy memories, having attended the 'old' circuit's 1981 swansong. The bumpy Railway Straight — which never troubled folk hero Andy 'Iron Man' Barton's imagination — is the secondary paddock on the current iteration, a challenge since 1997. I made the trip twice this term, each a comfortable and surprisingly 'economical' (given painful diesel prices) five-hour run. May's focus was a splendid 750 Motor Club miscellany, topped by Lotus Elise racer Will Stacey defeating a brace of SEAT Leon TCRs in a mesmerising and packed Club Enduro contest. Richard Evans showcasing a stunning Formula 2 March 782, with dad Jim spannering, on the Historic Sports Car Club's Nostalgia event's comeback in September, was special too.



Hall leads Bryant in entertaining, and clean, Goodwood battle

GARY HAWKINS



Jochen Rindt Trophy at Thruxton

Thruxton was my local circuit for 15 years before I joined Autosport, and is now, but I missed Jochen Rindt's devastating 1968-70 European F2 hat-trick. I witnessed the great Austrian in F1, however, albeit saddling a flabby and thirsty Cooper-Maserati. The Jochen Rindt Trophy — awarded to F2 winners following his death — is now presented to the victor of a two-part contest for 1600cc and early 2000cc F2, FAtlantic, F3 and FF2000 cars, promoted by Rob'Pret A'Manger, circuit manager Pat Blakeney's old team-mate. Rob Wainwright won June's corker in Nick Pancisi's March 722-17, Ronnie Peterson's 1972 Thruxton winner. Young Benn Tilley (FA Modus), who won Saturday's leg magnificently, kept Wainwright honest before suspension failure thwarted his challenge.

The rise of Samuel Harrison

Focused'natural'drivers have usually outshone the hardest grafters, as Jim Clark and Ayrton Senna proved. Blinding first-lap pace, then phenomenal consistency in all conditions identifies their gift. Minimalist steering, throttle and brake inputs make progress look unspectacular, almost serene, with spare mental capacity to deal with the unexpected. Yorkshire teenager Samuel Harrison demonstrated such qualities this season, winning more than 20 races in a spectrum of cars. The pre-season favourite dominated the HSCC's Historic Formula Ford championship — before strong opposition ebbed away — in Mike O'Brien's first-string Speedsport Merlyn. But Samuel leapt into the team's 1000cc F3 Chevron B15 and FJunior Brabham BT6 and did the same. Quiet and hungry, with the connections to succeed, he should go far. »





Special Saloons and Modsports joined the Gold Cup bill

MICK WALKER

Special Saloons hit Oulton Park gold

Special Saloons always tripped my trigger, and Jonathan Palmer was a fan of Modsports. Having started racing in a 'frog-eye' Sprite, then a three-litre Marcos GT, MotorSport Vision's boss invited the Classic Sports Car Club's Special Saloons & Modsports series to the new-look Oulton Park Gold Cup, shuffled forward to July. Resembling the pick 'n' mix sweet counter in the Woolworth stores of my youth, the programme featured tasty fare from several sources, including the nostalgia-rich Historic Racing Drivers Club. The season's best Special Saloon grid, plus a reunion of non-running 'loons' and 'loonatics', excited spectators. They're back in 2023, when the HSCC's own series properly launches. Andy Wilson's immaculately refettled ex-Tony Hazlewood DAF V8 is already registered, 50 years after the combo's landmark 100mph lap of Thruxton.

F1000 hits new heights

Motorcycle engines – OK, internal combustion engines originally configured to power one wheel – in single-seaters caught on in the 1950s as a training ground through which Stirling Moss and hotshoes rapidly rose. F1000 does not fulfil the role of its F3 forbear, but it's a cracking class that is getting ever more competitive. I've been watching the Corbyn family's cars since 1984, when John debuted the first Jedi in hillclimbs, and you won't go quicker for less in an open-wheeler than with Suzuki GSXR or Yamaha power and an all-up weight of 480kg. The action was sensational at Donington, where a record field underlined its value. Could building new chassis to meet demand lead to a first 30-car grid next year?

Formula Ford still thrills

Formula Ford celebrated its 55th birthday in July. The engines and tyres have 'evolved', but there is nothing wrong with it now the aberrations are forgotten and it largely mirrors Geoff Clarke and John Webb's original, branded by Blue Oval visionary Walter Hayes. There are ample races nationally, locally and further afield for cars of all vintages, and the end-of-season British Racing & Sports Car Club Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone are surely the holy grail of pure racing. With the best international entries in years, sadly controversy marred both. If running out of October daylight for a meaningful Brands final was numb, waiting over a month for November's Silverstone result to be confirmed was not ideal. Must do better in 2023.

Remembering fallen heroes

The loss of Simon Diffey, 57, in a tragic road traffic accident in May made the vintage and historic car worlds stand still. The news lit my phone while commentating at Silverstone and was hard to assimilate. His widow Sarah Adams-Diffey's brave response in establishing the Simon Diffey Heritage Motorsport Apprentice Award – to fund young technicians developing specialist engineering skills – and son George's courageous appearance in his dad's ex-Peter Warr Formula Junior Lotus 22 at the Silverstone Classic in August means Simon's memory lives on. 'Diffmeister' was a good friend, like Ted Williams and Charles Barter who died in August and November respectively. Other legends who passed in 2022 include Lola stalwart Mike Blanchet and racecar constructor Barry Sheppard (Rawlson).



Diffey was one of many much-missed characters lost during the past year

JEFF BLOXHAM

Autosport's highlights from the year

Some memorable Minis, a dramatic Formula Ford Festival moment and thrilling hillclimb action were among the significant occasions of the past season

STEPHEN LICKORISH, STEFAN MACKLEY AND PAUL LAWRENCE



GARY HAWKINS



STEPHEN LICKORISH
GROUP NATIONAL EDITOR

The weather may have been memorable for all the wrong reasons — it was bucketing it down — but this wet May day at Brands Hatch was enjoyable in other ways. The incredible machines that feature in the Fastest Mini in the World race really are something very special. And it was fantastic to get up close and personal to them and hear their creators' brilliant stories. Getting Le Mans winner Nick Tandy's thoughts on the monsters from behind the wheel was then truly fascinating. Thankfully, the weather was very different for the actual event in August, when the flame-spitting Rollcentre-built V8 of Harvey Death was the class of the field in scorching conditions.



GARY HAWKINS



STEFAN MACKLEY
DEPUTY NATIONAL EDITOR

It's a cliche, but seconds seemed like minutes looking into the Paddock Hill Bend gravel at what remained of Matt Rivett's Van Diemen RF91 following a horrendous accident at the Formula Ford Festival. After seeing his car hurtle through the air and smash into the barriers, I and the hundreds of people in the grandstand feared the worst. When he extracted himself from the car — something he didn't remember, since he was suffering concussion — after several agonising moments, applause erupted from the crowd. Seeing him standing there with no significant injuries, and knowing just how different things could have been, really was the moment of the year.



PAUL LAWRENCE



PAUL LAWRENCE
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

The speed and commitment at the top of the British Hillclimb Championship was a joy to behold in 2022. My highlight of the season came at Bouley Bay and was only shared with two marshals. The hill was dusty and slippery, and Wallace Menzies joked that he needed a handbrake on his Gould GR59 for the two hairpins. In the first run-off, he pitched the car into the final hairpin and it snapped into oversteer. He kept the throttle planted as the rear wheel brushed the bank in the arc of a glorious powerslide. The three of us caught our breaths as Menzies rocketed over the line to beat Scott Moran by a hundredth of a second!

Top 10 club drivers of 2022

Long-overdue title success and victories in different series and cars. Autosport picks the very best performers from the season

ENTRIES BY STEPHEN BRUNSDON, PAUL LAWRENCE, MARK LIBBETER, STEPHEN LICKORISH, STEFAN MACKLEY, MARCUS PYE, IAN SOWMAN AND STEVE WHITFIELD



OLLIE READ

10 FELIX FISHER
CCRC FF1600

Felix Fisher was the 'nearly man' of Castle Combe's super-competitive Formula Ford championship. Tantalisingly close to the crown several times, with numerous race wins to his credit, the ultimate prize always eluded him. Fed up with being the dynasty's underachiever – brother Josh and late father Brian are triple Combe FF1600 and Special GT champions respectively – Felix dug deeper in 2022. The electrician won six of the 11 rounds, beating two-time FF1600 Combe champion Luke Cooper to the crown.



JIM MOIR

9 LEWIS THOMPSON
BRSCC CATERHAM SEVEN UK

Reigning Caterham 310R champion Lewis Thompson graduated to the premier Seven UK championship in 2022, and could have been a title contender had he not missed the opening two rounds while his car was still being built. He took an incredible eight wins and a further five podiums from the season's remaining 15 races, which included a win on his debut at Silverstone. This was followed by two more wins at Donington Park, a hat-trick at Knockhill and another brace at Spa.



JIM MOIR

8 SAM CORSON
SMRC SCOTTISH C1 CUP

It wasn't that long ago that Sam Corson was racing – and winning – in the virtual world. A product of the Scottish Motor Racing Club's Esports scene, Corson has shown an incredible adaptation to real world racing, to the extent where he was the driver to beat for most of the year in the local C1 Cup. A disqualification for chief rival Finlay Brunton made life a little bit easier come the end of the season but, make no mistake, this was a reference year for Corson and he came up trumps in every area.



PAUL LAWRENCE

7 WALLACE MENZIES
BARC BRITISH HILLCLIMB

In taking his third straight British Hillclimb title, Wallace Menzies seldom, if ever, put a wheel wrong. The Scot was only out of the top three twice in 29 run-offs; once at a rain-hit Prescott and once, by 0.04 seconds, in a topsy-turvy season opener. Yet his hat-trick was only concluded at the final event after a fabulous battle with Alex Summers. The combination of Menzies and Gould GR59 proved unbeatable, and he was a fabulous ambassador for the championship out of the car.


GARY HAWKINS

6 MAXIMUS HALL
BARC JUNIOR SALOON CARS

Never giving up is a crucial factor for any ambitious driver, and Maximus Hall's efforts in the Junior Saloon Car Championship were proof of that. With Westbourne Motorsport team-mate Harry Hickton showing strong winning form in the early part of the year, Hall had to keep racking up points consistently if he was to have any chance of the title. He hit his stride in the latter part of the year, including a memorable hat-trick of wins at the Brands Hatch finale that helped seal the crown.


JEP/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

5 NELSON KING
BARC MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

There was no disputing who would be crowned as Mini Challenge Trophy champion this year. Despite a competitive field and an average of 30 cars in the series, Nelson King was unstoppable. He won seven of the opening eight contests, putting the Graves Motorsport driver into a commanding position at the top of the standings, before he duly sealed the title at a very wet Brands Hatch finale. Not bad for a driver in just their second season of car racing and up against more experienced rivals.


OLLIE READ


STEVE JONES

4 LIAM McGILL
SMRC SCOTTISH FIESTA ST AND MSVR FOCUS CUP

Two titles and 19 victories represented a stellar year for Liam McGill. His first triumph in the Scottish Fiesta ST Championship didn't come until round three but, from there, he didn't look back. Five wins from six races set up a showdown with Steven Gray in a rain-soaked finale, which McGill won to seal the crown. A planned one-off appearance in the Focus Cup season-opener turned into a full campaign, from which he scored 12 victories, wrapping things up with three rounds to spare.

3 BEN SHORT
750MC 5CLUB RACING MX-5 CUP

Ben Short had already won three 5Club Racing MX-5 Cup titles – in 2015, 2017 and 2021 – but this year he did something quite special, adding a fourth title by winning all 17 races that he started. Most drivers with such a record make it look easy, but Short rarely dominated a race. And, despite his relentless success, the idiosyncratic points system – and his absence from an early-season Silverstone meeting – meant the title wasn't secured until the final event.


RICHARD STYLES


STEVE JONES

2 SAMUEL HARRISON
HSCC HISTORIC FF1600/F3/FORMULA JUNIOR

When Samuel Harrison celebrates his 19th birthday on Christmas Day, he can reflect on a remarkable season in historic racing. In only his second year in cars, the former karter blitzed the Historic Formula Ford 1600 Championship with the Speedsport Merlyn Mk20, and jumped at the chance to race a Chevron B15 in Historic F3 and a Brabham BT6 in Formula Junior. He was unbeaten in both cars, while he also triumphed in a newer Dallara F397 in Monoposto to take his season's tally to 21 wins.

1 MIKEY DOBLE
BARC GINETTA GT5 AND BRSCC BMW COMPACT CUP

An impressive year for the third-generation family racer ended with the unusual task of trying to win two titles at different venues on the same weekend. The first of them, at Silverstone, proved a formality – he'd dominated the BMW Compact Cup season with 10 victories. He then took the Ginetta GT5 Challenge crown on the road in an extremely tight Donington Park decider, but it wasn't until a month later that he was officially crowned champion after a penalty was overturned.

Top 10 club rivalries of 2022

From last-corner-of-the-season clashes, to titles decided in court and when the scores have been level, here are some of this year's closest battles

ENTRIES BY STEVE HINDLE, MARK LIBBETER, CARL McKELLAR, MARK PAULSON, MARCUS PYE, IAN SOWMAN AND STEVE WHITFIELD

10 ROB WELHAM v THE F1000 FIELD

Seven drivers went into the finale of one of the UK's most competitive single-seater categories with a chance of the title

Consistency was key to Rob Welham's title-winning campaign after another wide-open F1000 season (seven drivers had a mathematical chance at Snetterton's finale). The 18 races were won by six different drivers, with Welham (leading below) taking two victories compared to three for runner-up Matt Booth, five for Tom Gadd and six for outgoing champ Lee Morgan. Gadd's electrifying pace in Silverstone's opener was a concern, but he and Morgan suffered mechanical frustrations that cost them dear.


GARY HAWKINS

9 BENN SIMMS v GRAHAM FENNYMORE

The star drivers from Historic FF2000 last year enjoyed another close fight, with Simms prevailing this time around

Historic Formula Ford 2000's 2021 rivalry continued, but 2014 champ Benn Simms regained the crown with his Reynard SF77. "Battle was the word," said Simms – who, unlike Fennymore, did not test. "It's taken five or six years to get the car right, and we hit the ground running." Five straight wins, then second from the pitlane at a soggy Silverstone showed Simms's (leading below) grit, but Fennymore was stronger mid-season. "I didn't quite have the wet pace," said Simms, whose nine-six victory tally proved decisive.



MICK WALKER

8 MILES RUDMAN v WILL GIBSON

They shared the majority of the Legends wins this season but Gibson couldn't quite deny Rudman another success

Despite drawn-grid heats and reversed-grid finals, two drivers dominated in Legends, winning 31 of 45 races. Fine form at Brands Hatch, including 10 wins, helped Will Gibson overcome a disastrous opener to challenge reigning champion Miles Rudman. Mechanical gremlins and a safety-car infringement at the Kent venue's season finale further dented Rudman's lead. But Rudman (leading below) held his nerve to follow his rival home in the final race and clinch a third title by the equivalent of a top-10 finish.



OLLIE READ

7 DAMIEN HARRINGTON v MATT AYRES v FRAZER HACK v MICHAEL WINKWORTH

Brilliantly close racing from a pack of Mini Se7en S Class rivals

Those at the Brands Hatch Mini Festival were treated to some memorable action, not least in the first-ever standalone Mini Se7en S Class double-header. Fierce battling took place as four drivers – Matt Ayres, Michael Winkworth, Damien Harrington and Frazer Hack – indulged in some of the most exciting racing of the year. Ayres and Harrington shared the spoils that day and the quartet were at the heart of a gripping title battle, too. It was Harrington (leading below) who emerged triumphant by just two points.



GARY HAWKINS

6 CHRIS DEAR v PETE MORGAN

Bold pass at Mallory Park finale helped Dear move a vital step towards avoiding a second Morgan defeat

In 2021, it was Ryan Morgan who defeated Chris Dear in Classic Stock Hatch, but in 2022 it fell to Ryan's father Pete to try to retain family honour. The experienced Morgan held the initial advantage, taking his Fiesta XR2 to three of the first six wins at Croft and Pembrey, whereas Dear didn't taste victory until the penultimate event, but did secure several second places in his Peugeot. An audacious final-corner move to win the first race at the Mallory finale was emblematic of Dear's eventual narrow success.


STEVE JONES

5 CRAIG POLLARD v JAMES HARRIDGE v DANIEL HANDS

A thrilling Vee fight was denied when this rivalry boiled over

The anticipated Formula Vee title tussle between champions James Harridge, Craig Pollard and Daniel Hands instead turned sour amid a slew of accusations and ill feeling. Things boiled over at Brands Hatch, where Pollard and Hands were excluded for exhaust infringements. Harridge was then excluded from the second race because – get this – his Maverick didn't run the regulation decals. Disgusted, he quit, leaving Pollard's WEV (below) to dominate. Later, all three admitted they missed their on-track rivalry.


STEVE JONES

4 CHRIS SMILEY v ISAAC SMITH

Dropped scores decided this one after a season in which the TCR UK championship momentum continually swung

Wins in his Restart Racing-run Honda Civic at the opening round and season finale helped British Touring Car refugee Chris Smiley to the TCR UK title. But, after Max Hart's bid faltered, it was Mini Challenge convert Isaac Smith who was Smiley's biggest threat. The 2019 Fiesta champion channelled natural aggression in his ageing ex-Sebastien Loeb Racing Volkswagen Golf, executing fantastic passes as a constant frontrunner. While Smiley prevailed in a tense finale, without dropped scores Smith would have edged it.


JEP

3 JENSON BRICKLEY v ALASTAIR KELLETT

Another close Fiesta fight for Brickley as he steps up to senior series and ties with Kellett, before dropped scores intervene

Although still a teenager, Jenson Brickley is no stranger to intense rivalries – he made this list last year. For 2022, the Fiesta Junior champion moved up to the main grid and faced the determined challenge of Alastair Kellett. The duo were barely seconds apart over 18 hard-fought rounds, finishing equal on points, but Brickley (leading below) took the title on dropped scores. The racing was fast and feisty, Brickley's pace countered by Kellett's guile. Either could have come out on top, both were equally worthy.


STEVE JONES

2 MIKEY DOBLE v WILL JENKINS v HARLEY HAUGHTON

It took a National Court hearing to decide Ginetta GT5 scrap

The title was ultimately decided in the National Court, but that shouldn't overshadow the Ginetta GT5 Challenge battle. Jenkins took three early wins before Haughton rallied with five victories on the bounce. They both won at Brands Hatch but collided in race three, with Doble the beneficiary. Doble triumphed again at the Donington Park finale, leaving the trio eight points apart, and he snatched the crown with second in the decider, a result only confirmed after Doble's post-race penalty was overturned.


JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

1 JOE DALGARNO v JOSH BROMLEY

The MG Trophy tussle went down to the final corner of the season with a controversial clash between the contenders

A lack of entries from the ZR 190s meant the MG Trophy title was fought among the competitive ZR 170s in Class B. The year-long tussle, also involving James Cole and Tylor Ballard, boiled down to a shootout at Snetterton between Joe Dalgarno and Josh Bromley. The pair traded places multiple times on the final lap and made contact at the last corner as Dalgarno edged it. Bromley (97) was five-four ahead on class wins, but more poles and fastest laps for 21-year-old Dalgarno (93) clinched the crown.


RICHARD STYLES

CLUB AUTOSPORT

Pictures of the year

Autosport's national photographers have captured the thrills and spills of the 2022 season from across the UK

COMPILED BY STEFAN MACKLEY

Poleman Felix Fisher leads in his Ray GR05 from Luke Cooper's Swift SC20 in the Castle Combe Formula Ford Championship. Fisher matched the achievement of brother Josh this season by winning the title

OLLIE READ


AVON
CASTLE COMBE



Osian Pryce and co-driver Noel O'Sullivan fly high on the Nicky Grist Stages on their way to victory. It was one of four wins the VW Polo GTI R5 crew claimed on their way to the British Rally title

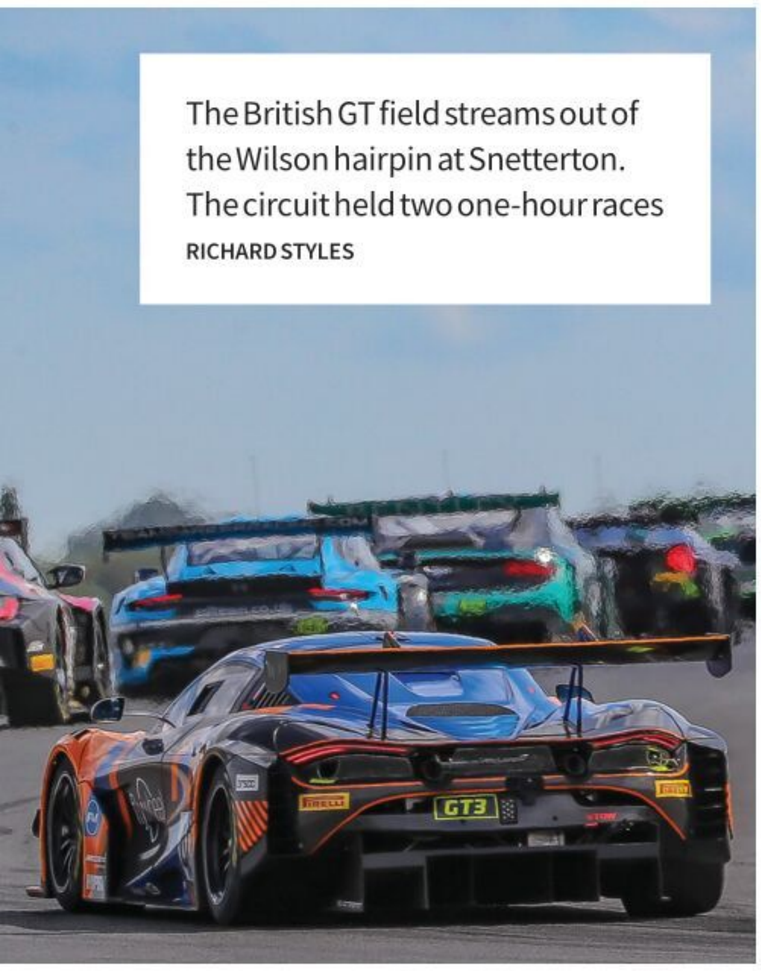
JAKOB EBREY



The 60th anniversary of Graham Hill's 1962 Formula 1 title with BRM is celebrated at the Goodwood Revival, with machines raced by the late two-time world champion during his career put into action again

GARY HAWKINS





The British GT field streams out of the Wilson hairpin at Snetterton. The circuit held two one-hour races

RICHARD STYLES



Richard Tarling (Crossle 25F) and Jordan Harrison (Lola T540E) leave no margin for error in Classic Formula Ford on the Historic Sports Car Club's visit to Donington Park

MICK WALKER





Visibility is at a premium for Robin Walker during MG Live at Silverstone…

MICK WALKER



Nine-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Tom Kristensen at the wheel of the Lister-Jaguar he shared with Frederic Wakeman at the Goodwood Revival

GARY HAWKINS



The sky's the limit at Santa Pod Raceway as a dragster launches – almost literally – off the line

CALLUM PUDGE





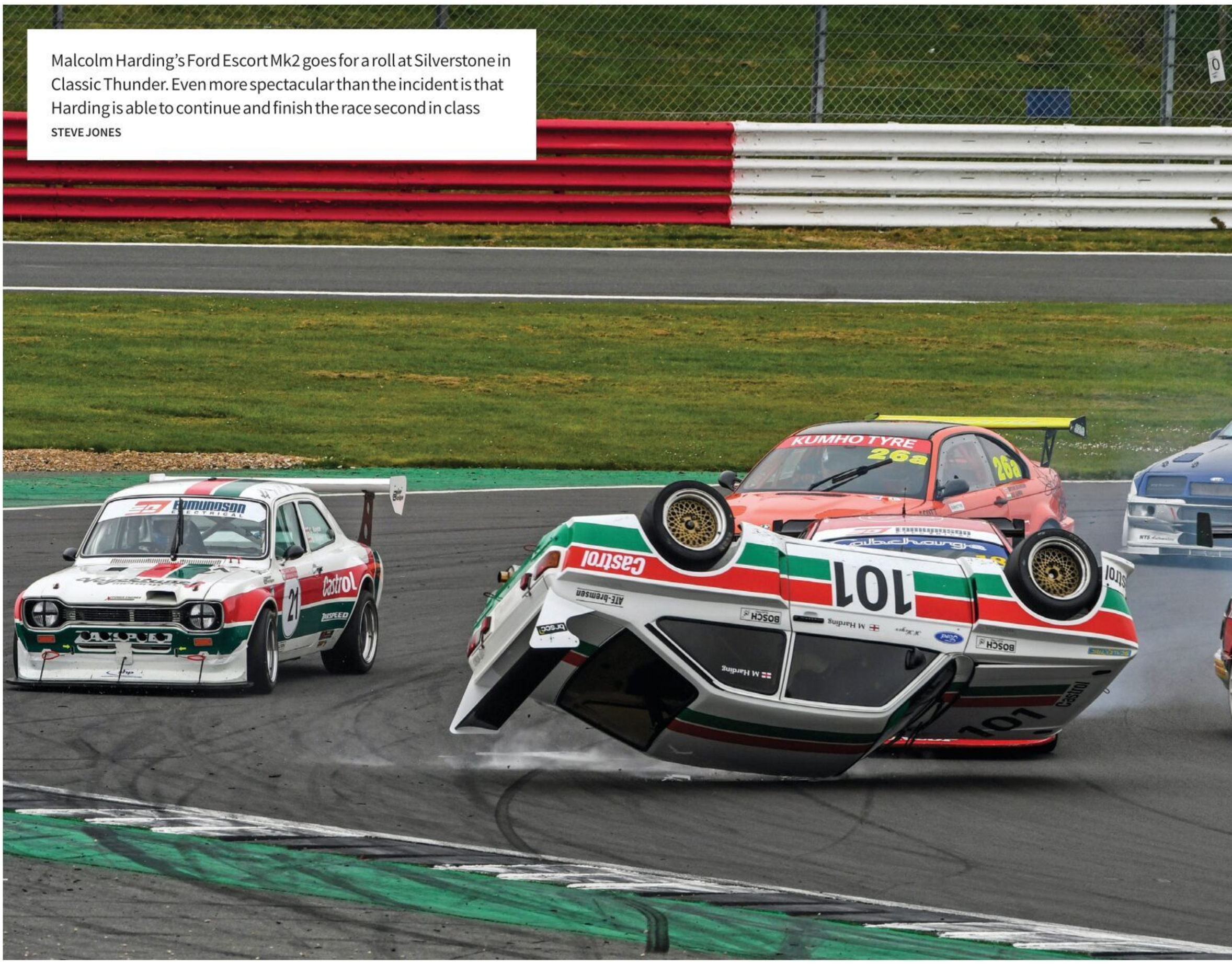
Relief all round after no one is injured when Will Martin's Porsche Carrera Cup car ends up on top of a marshals' post on the run to Druids at Brands Hatch

STEVE HINDLE



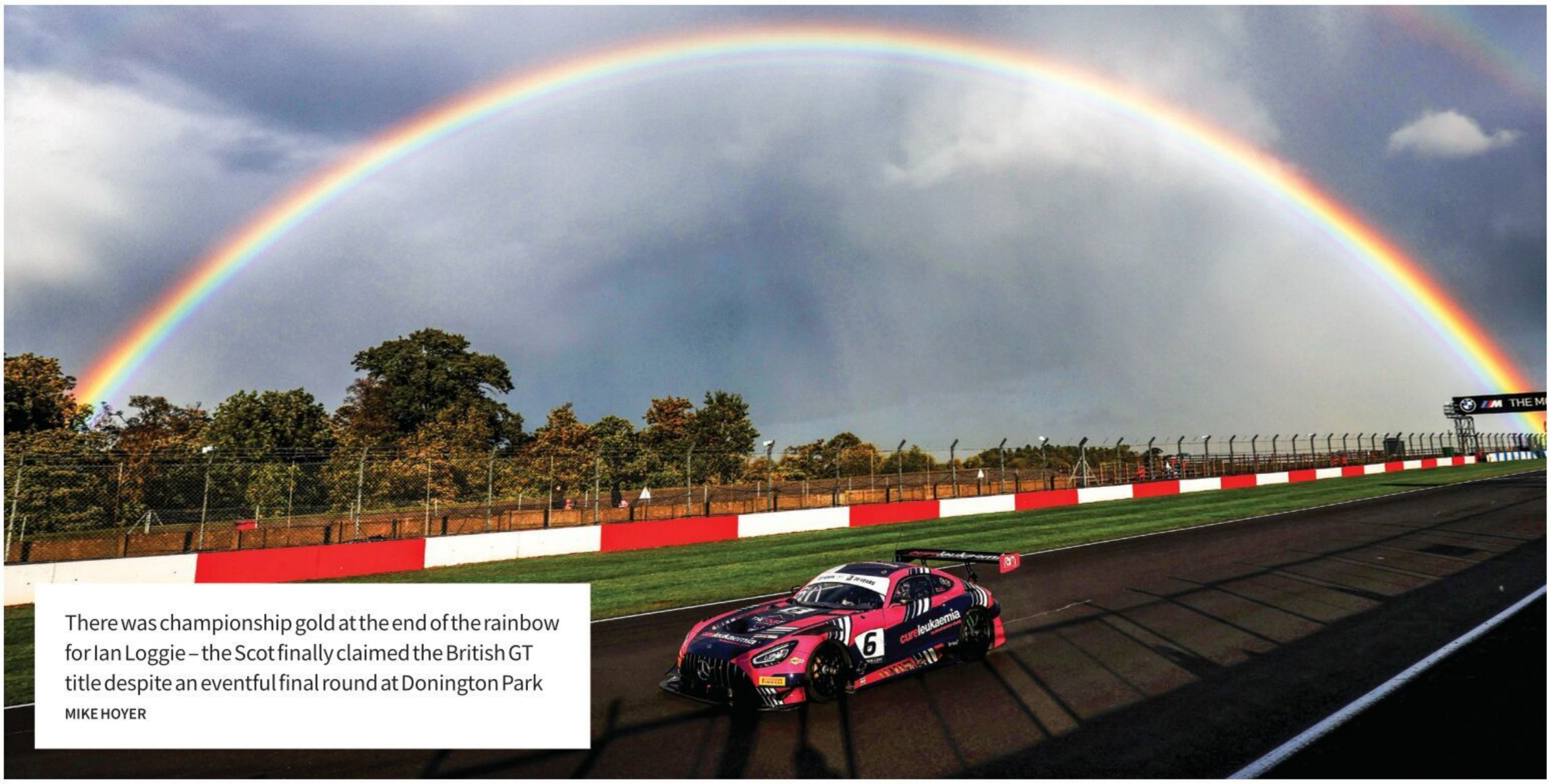
Side-by-side action in Porsche Carrera Cup GB. Eventual champion Kiern Jewiss (nearest the camera) took a win at the Snetterton meeting

STEVE HINDLE



Malcolm Harding's Ford Escort Mk2 goes for a roll at Silverstone in Classic Thunder. Even more spectacular than the incident is that Harding is able to continue and finish the race second in class

STEVE JONES



There was championship gold at the end of the rainbow for Ian Loggie – the Scot finally claimed the British GT title despite an eventful final round at Donington Park

MIKE HOYER





Exit stage right for one of Paul Daly's wheels, leaving his Ford Focus RS sparking at Knockhill

JIM MOIR



The Mini Challenge Trophy field makes a splash on a wet visit to Donington Park

STEVE JONES

FINISHING STRAIGHT

Our favourites: the winless F1 wonders

George Russell became the 113th driver to win a points-paying World Championship race in Brazil. Autosport has picked some of those who should have also been part of that illustrious club.



CHRIS AMON

That the Kiwi never won a round is a statistical anomaly up there with Stirling Moss never being crowned world champion. He led 183 laps across seven different races, yet bad luck was never far away. Amon's visor woes at Monza in 1971 are oft-discussed, but even more galling was leading the first 72 laps of 90 at Mont-Tremblant in 1968 before his Ferrari's gearbox expired.

JAMES NEWBOLD



JEAN BEHRA

As quick as the best of them on his day, Behra amassed nine podiums from 52 starts, leading 107 laps. There were numerous non-championship F1 wins, but two second places in consecutive Argentinian GPs (1956-1957) were the closest he came to a points-scoring win despite drives with Maserati and Ferrari. The cards never fell the Frenchman's way before his death on the Avus banking in a sportscar race in 1959.

STEFAN MACKLEY

STEFAN BELLOF

Spectacular. There's no other way to describe Bellof's driving style. The German's talent had already taken him to the World Sportscar crown in 1984 before his untimely death in a Spa Porsche crash a year later prevented him joining F1's winners' circle. Being voted the 35th greatest F1 driver in a 2009 Autosport poll says it all.

STEPHEN LICKORISH




SCHLEGELMILCH

TONY BRISE

It's a cold Sunday morning, November 1975. The death in a plane crash of British motor racing's Graham Hill is being reported on the radio. As if that isn't sad enough, among those who have gone with him is Brise. Hill won two world titles; who's to say Brise wouldn't have? As an F1 rookie in 1975 with Hill's team, he absolutely demolished all his team-mates – including fellow newcomer Alan Jones...

MARCUS SIMMONS

MARTIN BRUNDLE

The Briton seemed destined to be a Formula 1 race winner after narrowly missing out on the 1983 British Formula 3 title to future three-time F1 world champion Ayrton Senna. Alas, an F1 victory eluded Brundle in his 158 starts despite nine podiums, including two second place finishes at Monza 1992 and Monaco 1994. His most prolific campaign was 1992 for Benetton, where he scored five of his nine rostrum finishes.

TOM HOWARD

MARCUS ERICSSON

It's a shame Ericsson had to move away from Formula 1 to make his name, winning the 2022 Indy 500. His F1 career was marred with reliability issues, both at Caterham and Sauber. Scoring on his debut with the latter, the Swede showed flashes of promise, and a best finish of eighth didn't demonstrate his potential. Someone give him another chance!

MEGAN WHITE


COATES


FERRARO

ROMAIN GROSJEAN

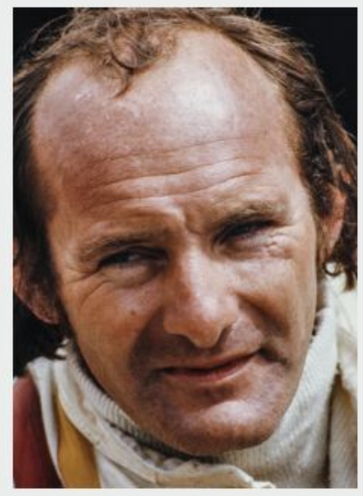
The Frenchman's peak years with Lotus should have allowed him to become a grand prix winner. In 2013, he was often the only man to run Sebastian Vettel close – Nurburgring and Suzuka being his best chances – but Grosjean couldn't stop the Red Bull juggernaut. Often in the right place at the wrong time, he was winless from 179 starts.

LUKE SMITH

MIKE HAILWOOD

Motorcycling legend Hailwood's F1 travails weren't as successful as fellow bike hero John Surtees'. Two podiums and an unfortunate footnote in one of F1's greatest races in the 1971 Italian GP, where he was just 0.018s (in a Surtees, ironically) away from winner Peter Gethin in fourth, don't do the sorely-missed Britain's prowess as a pretty solid pedaller justice.

LEWIS DUNCAN


SCHLEGELMILCH



CHRIS AMON
Brilliant for Ferrari in 1968, he could have been champion



NICO HULKENBERG
A career pitched off course? Brazil 2012 his missed chance

DUNBAR

NICO HULKENBERG

The podium-shy German probably should have made the most of the chaos that defined the 2012 Brazilian Grand Prix, but his flailing defence against Lewis Hamilton ultimately wasted an impressive drive. Easily good enough to win talent-wise — Ross Brawn suggested Hulkenberg would have joined Mercedes had the Hamilton move not worked out — his career rather stalled out in the midfield. He is, of course, back for more in 2023!

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



TOM PRYCE

I've sat in an ex-Pryce 1975 Shadow DN5. A plaque showing the Virgin Mary cradling an infant Jesus was fitted to the chassis. If that was his, as the mechanics reckoned, and he had lived to win a championship grand prix — to go with his Brands Hatch non-championship success — the bright Welsh talent and a young marshal might still be around...

MATT KEW

DEREK WARWICK

A born leader, a Le Mans 24 Hours winner and a driver Ayrton Senna vetoed as a team-mate. Of course Warwick should have won in F1. Suspension failure (Brazil, 1984), one poor decision (Renault instead of Williams for 1985) and Senna's power at Lotus (1986) meant none came, but Warwick has since won many times over with his support of British drivers.

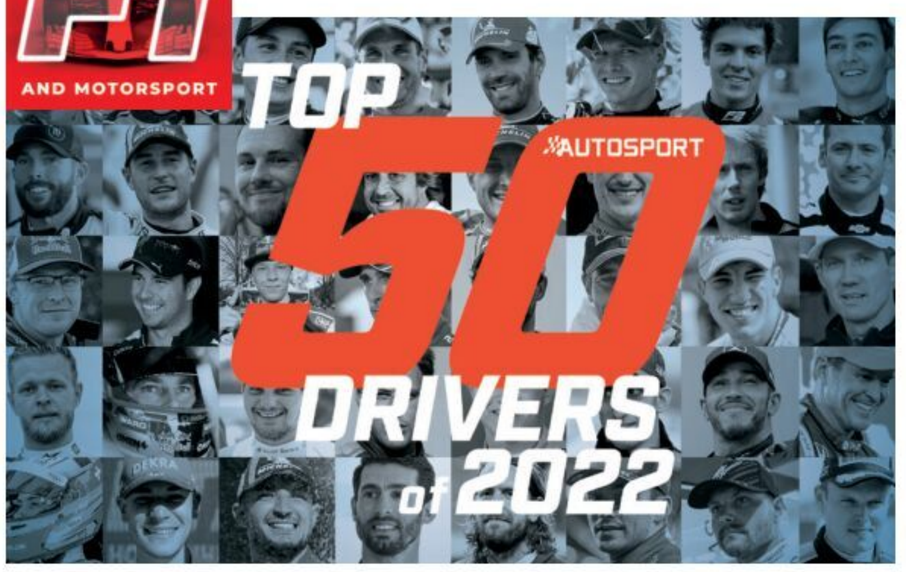
KEVIN TURNER



SUTTON

AUTOSPORT F1 AND MOTORSPORT

autosport.com/podcast



Top 50 drivers of 2022
This week's issue of Autosport includes the Top 50 drivers from the past 12 months across the motorsport landscape. Martyn Lee hosts the latest Autosport Podcast and is joined by Kevin Turner (Chief Editor), James Newbold (Plus Editor) and Tom Howard (News Editor) to explain the process and discuss the 2022 final selection.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Dakar Rally
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
31 December-15 January

UK MOTORSPORT

Mallory Park 750MC
26 December
Plum Pudding, Saloon, Sports/Sports Racing

FROM THE ARCHIVE

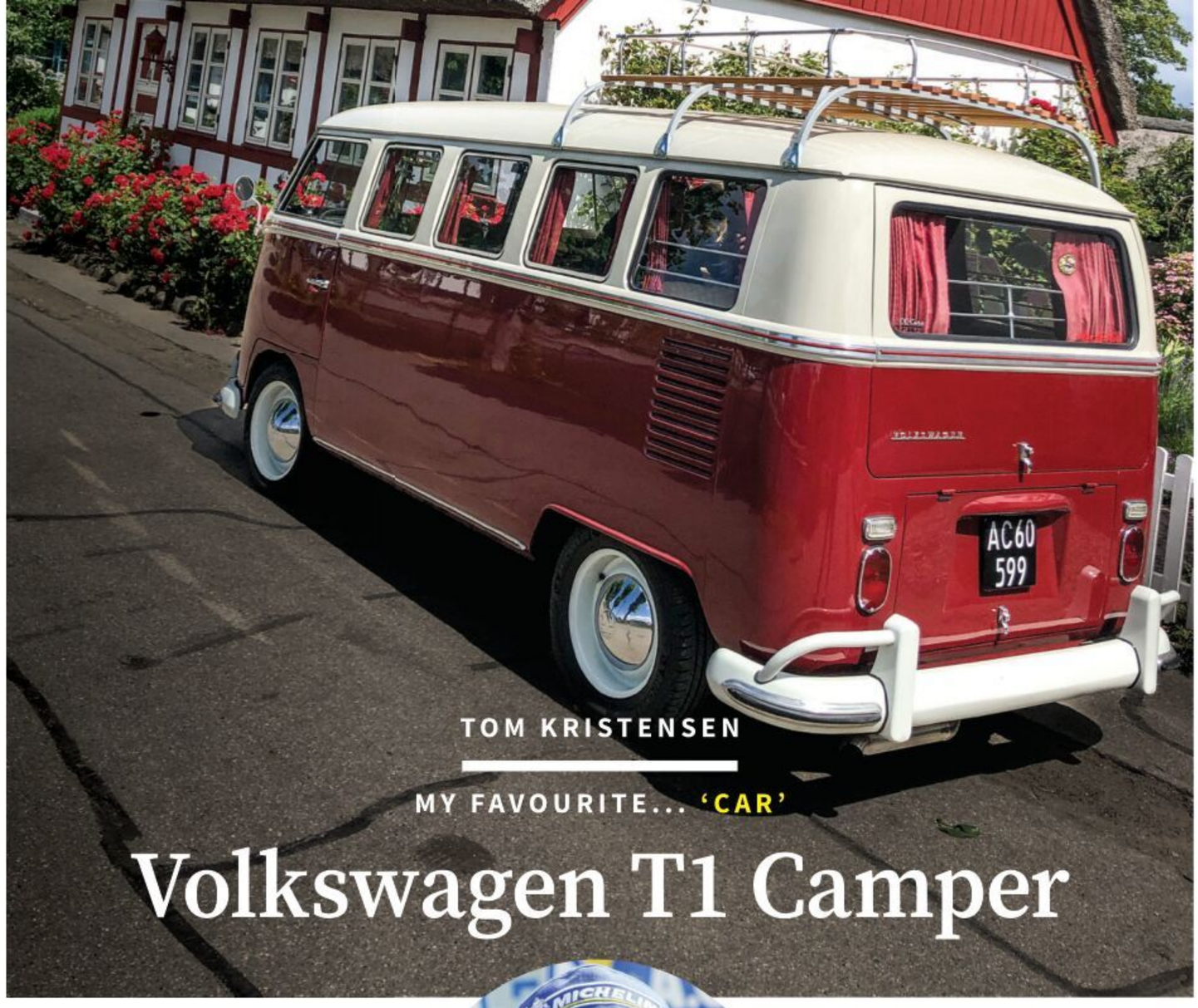
Whiter than white? Pull the other one. Formula 1 stars are clearly bowled over as they pad up for the pre-1974 British GP charity cricket match. Back row, from left: Ken Tyrrell, John Watson, Guy Edwards, Mike Hailwood, James Hunt, Graham Hill, Patrick Depailler, Peter Gethin, David Purley and Clay Regazzoni. Front row, from left: Jody Scheckter, Derek Bell, Niki Lauda, Jackie Stewart, Ronnie Peterson, Jochen Mass and Denny Hulme. Note the branding on the pads of Tyrrell and Stewart… As F1 traditions go, this is one we reckon is ripe for revival. Can you imagine? No, probably not.

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TOM KRISTENSEN

MY FAVOURITE... 'CAR'

Volkswagen T1 Camper

INSET: DOLE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Nine-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Tom Kristensen is spoiled for choice when it comes to picking a favourite car. He won the world's most prestigious endurance race five times in an Audi R8, and once each in a TWR Porsche WSC-95, Bentley Speed 8 – which he calls "the most elegant" of the lot – plus the Audi R10 and Audi R18.

Then there are his six Sebring 12 Hours wins to consider: two in the R8, and individual successes in the BMW V12 LMR, Audi R10, R15 and R18. It was also the R18 with which he added the accolade of world champion to his CV in the 2013 World Endurance Championship.

But the Dane has a surprise in store when Autosport asks him to pick a favourite. "I will go with my VW T1 bus from 1967, that's my favourite car," says the 55-year-old. "The whole family love the car. It's sort of a begonia red and white, it's a lovely old car. And my favourite moment with that was maybe three or four years ago when the sun came up, we decided to go to a small island called Samso with the family.

"We filled it up, we were seven people, we drove off and we were already close to the ferry, and the car had a problem with the starter. Every time we had to start it, we had to jump-start it, so everyone got out of the bus, jump-starting the car and on we went.

"And how it was to drive? It's terrible. It's really not very well sprung and its favourite speed is between 73 to 85km/h [45-53mph], in that zone – a little bit faster than that and it doesn't like it."

Of his racing cars, Kristensen reckons the R8 was the pick of the bunch. It was with Champion Racing's R8 in 2005 that he broke Jacky Ickx's record of six Le Mans wins that many thought would never be surpassed.

"There's no doubt that it's very close to my heart," he says of the R8. And no wonder, given that he was in the winning line-up on all five occasions when it crossed the line first.

JAMES NEWBOLD

NEXT ISSUE

Your favourite motorsport memories

OUT 5 JANUARY

MOY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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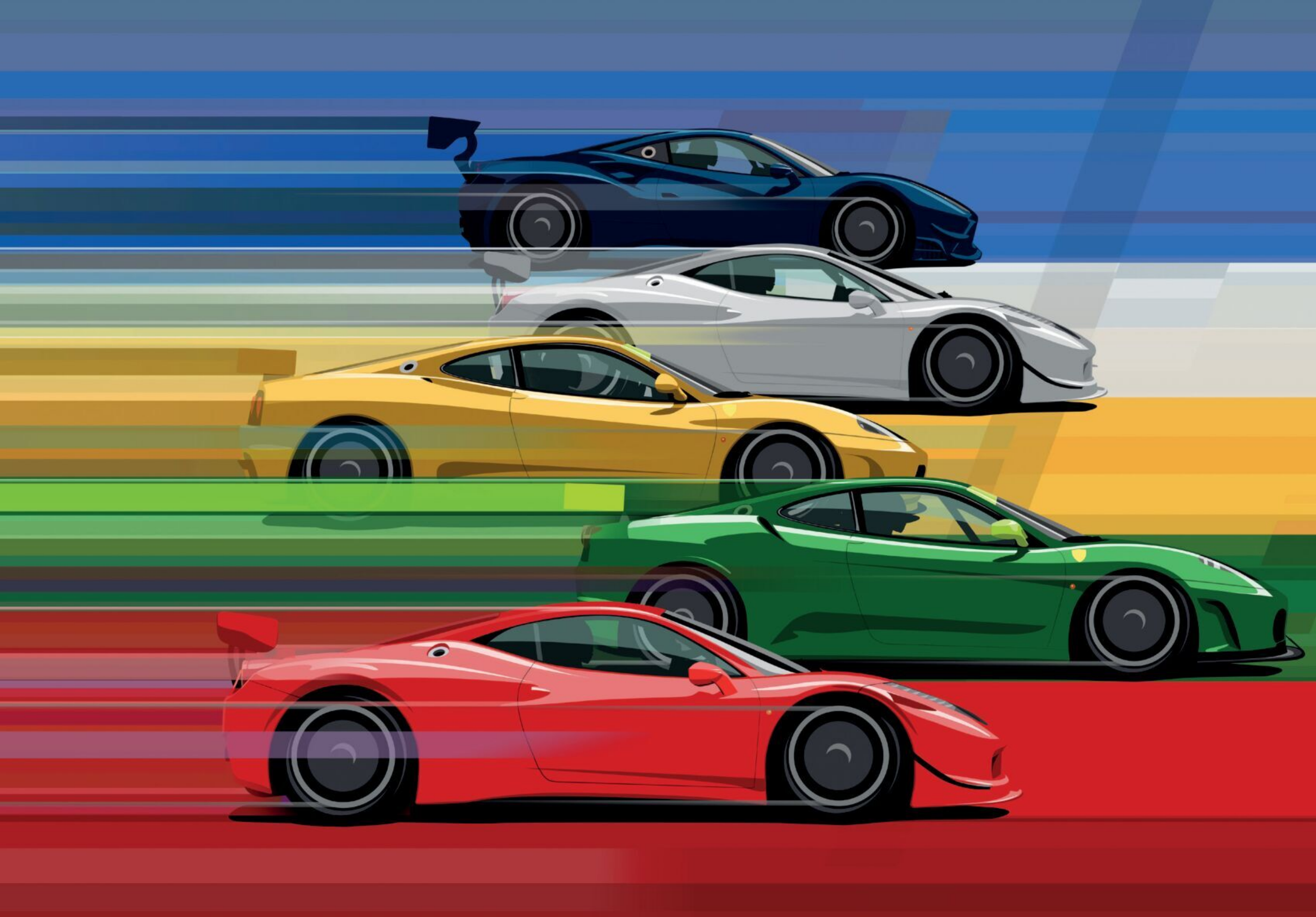
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4 June	2	3 & 4	Snetterton 300
8 July	3	5 & 6	Brands Hatch GP
13 Aug	4	7 & 8	Brands Hatch Indy
30 Sept	5	9 & 10	Oulton Park International
8 Oct	6	11 & 12	Snetterton 300

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