

F1 Merc strategy boss to lead Williams

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

19 JANUARY 2023

LANDO NORRIS

What McLaren must do to keep its F1 star

– and his options at Red Bull, Mercedes, Ferrari and Audi

‘I don’t want to wait, the team have to make a **better car**’

PLUS

Formula E

Brit Dennis wins at start of new era

Autosport International

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**WRC
PREVIEW
18-PAGE
2023
GUIDE**





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How long will Norris really wait for his F1 breakthrough?

Since Lando Norris arrived on the Formula 1 grid in 2019, Pierre Gasly, Esteban Ocon, Carlos Sainz and George Russell have joined the list of world championship race winners. And two of those, one a former team-mate of Norris, now have seats in two of the big three F1 squads.

McLaren, of course, used to be an F1 powerhouse, and Zak Brown's team did give Norris his big break. But loyalty will surely only last so long as the Briton watches his contemporaries rack up wins and, perhaps, world titles. And given his recent performances, Norris would be hot property in the paddock if he decides to look elsewhere.

As Norris tells Matt Kew on page 16, he still believes in McLaren and is making all the right noises. But the 23-year-old is also clear about his goals and his desire to be competing at the front of F1 now. McLaren's recent progress stalled a little last year — it needs to make a big stride in 2023 to convince Norris he is in the right place.

The place to be for rally fans this week will be Monte Carlo as the World Rally Championship gets under way. Reigning champion Kalle Rovanpera is surely the favourite, but Tom Howard runs through the potential challengers in our extensive preview, which starts on p24.

Formula E's season kicked off even earlier, with Jake Dennis taking a surprisingly dominant victory last weekend. Jake Boxall-Legge was in Mexico to see the start of the Gen3 era (p42), while the rest of our team was in Birmingham for the Autosport International show. Find out about the highlights in our event coverage, which starts on p52.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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NEXT WEEK
26 JANUARY

Formula 1 2023

We look at the tech battles,
report from the WRC
opener and preview
Daytona



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Ben Peter Catchpole/McLaren

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FERRARI



CADILLAC



VANWALL



PEUGEOT



PORSCHE



Le Mans set for biggest top class for

LE MANS 24 HOURS/WEC

The Le Mans 24 Hours is on course for its biggest field in the top category since 2010. Additional cars from Cadillac, Glickenhaus and Vanwall could boost the 13-strong Hypercar class World Endurance Championship entry announced last week to 17 for the French enduro.

Cadillac appears set to bring both its regular IMSA SportsCar Championship entries over from North America for the centrepiece WEC round on 10-11 June, while Glickenhaus has committed to again fielding a second car and the ByKolles-run Vanwall Racing squad has revealed that it is working on one. That would make the Hypercar field at the 24 Hours the largest in the top class since 2010 when there were 18 LMP1s on the grid. Should the extra Vanwall fail to come to fruition, the Hypercar entry would still match the 17 P1s that started in 2011.

Cadillac is planning to enter “as many cars as we can”, according to General Motors sportscar programme manager Laura Wontrop Klauser. That can only mean a bid to bring the two IMSA V-LMDhs run by the Action Express Racing and Chip Ganassi Racing teams to Le Mans to race alongside

its full-season WEC entry from the latter.

Jim Glickenhaus has outlined an intent to repeat last year’s Le Mans-only entry to bolster a full-season attack with a single Pipo-engined 007 LMH. “The plan is absolutely to run two cars and we have the resources to do that,” he said. “We are confident we will get the second entry.”

Colin Kolles also expressed a desire to field a pair of Vanwall Vandervell 680 LMHs at Le Mans, while conceding that the plan had not been finalised. “We hope to have two cars there, but as always it is dependent on finance,” explained Kolles.

Entries for Le Mans close on 21 February.

Glickenhaus and Vanwall had their one-car WEC campaigns firmed up last week on the publication of the 38 cars that will contest the full WEC in 2023. Glickenhaus’s

entry came after it missed the final two races last year with its regular entry, and Vanwall’s after it was turned down for 2022.

There was no room for the Isotta Fraschini and partner Vector Sport, but they are hoping to join the series after Le Mans on a race-by-race entry.

Isotta general manager Claudio Berro admitted that the decision to reject a programme launched as recently as the end of October wasn’t a shock. “We are disappointed, but maybe not surprised,” he said. “The big problem is the homologation of the car, which is a long process, and when you homologate the car you freeze the specification. The FIA and the ACO told us that it would be better to do more testing on track before we homologate.”

Berro insisted that the programme is continuing full steam ahead and the link-up with Silverstone-based Vector remains unaffected, while outlining a plan for an LMH known as the Tipo 6 Competizione to join the WEC on a non-points basis as early as the Monza round in July. “The plan now is definitely to to some WEC rounds,” he explained. “We would like to be at Monza, first because it is an Italian race and we are an Italian company, but it will also give us

**“THE LARGEST IN THE
TOP CLASS SINCE 2010
WHEN THERE WERE 18
LMP1s ON THE GRID”**

GLICKENHAUS



TOYOTA



TOYOTA

13 years

time to fully test and develop the car.”

Glickenhaus listed team regular Romain Dumas against its 007 on the initial entry, while Jacques Villeneuve, who tested the Vanwall in November, completed the Vanwall line-up alongside test drivers Tom Dillmann and Esteban Guerrieri.

The driver line-ups from big car makers Toyota, Peugeot, Ferrari, Porsche and Cadillac were as already announced. Yifei Ye remains the only confirmed driver for Jota's customer Porsche, while factory contractee Gianmaria Bruni was listed alongside Proton's privateer 963 LMDh. Jota has confirmed that it will field an ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 in place of its 963 at the Sebring and Algarve WEC rounds before the customers get their cars in time to race at Spa.

The 2023 WEC entry includes 11 LMP2s, four down on last year. A solo ORECA from Vector was confirmed along with two cars from the Signatech team while it awaits the arrival of the Alpine LMDh in 2024.

Among the 14 GTE Am cars are two Iron Lynx Porsche 911 RSRs. The Italian team has swapped over from Ferrari following the announcement of its tie-up with rival Italian marque Lamborghini.

GARY WATKINS

Merc strategy chief Vowles to run Williams F1 team

FORMULA 1

Williams has named Mercedes strategy director James Vowles as its new Formula 1 team principal.

Vowles, 43, will step into a team principal role for the first time when he takes over at Williams following the departure of Jost Capito in December. He has worked in F1 for over 20 years, the majority spent at Brackley through the team's BAR, Honda, Brawn and Mercedes guises.

With Mercedes, Vowles established himself as the right-hand man to team principal Toto Wolff, playing a key role within the senior management of the team through its recent F1 domination. Talks accelerated with Williams over the past month, with Wolff and Mercedes giving their full support.

Vowles is under no illusions of the challenge he faces in turning Williams around. The team has finished last in the championship for four of the past five years, but he is eager to put his experience of the tough years at BAR and Honda to good use, placing a focus on the team culture.

“When you're hurting, and when you've been punished and you've been pushed down as an organisation because you're suffering, that doesn't get any better year on year unless you get a change to what's going on,” said Vowles. “A change to the culture, a change to the methods and systems.”

But Vowles denied that he would look to turn Williams into a “mini-Mercedes” despite the links between the teams. Williams is a Mercedes engine customer, and handed George Russell his F1 debut in 2019 before his eventual promotion to the Mercedes team.

Vowles gave his thanks to Mercedes



WILLIAMS

for its support in helping him develop and for being “hugely supportive” when he revealed he was set to join Williams, a team he said was an “icon” of F1.

“Mercedes have been hugely supportive and I am grateful for everything Toto and the team have provided, and it has been such a special experience to journey together through failure and success,” he said.

“Williams Racing have placed their faith and trust in me, and I will do the same in return. Williams has tremendous potential, and our journey together starts in a matter of weeks.”

Wolff paid tribute to Vowles, saying he was fully deserving of the move and that his experience and approach would be of benefit “for F1 generally”.

Lewis Hamilton also expressed his thanks to Vowles, writing on Instagram: “This is such a great move and I couldn't be happier for him.” Vowles called Hamilton to reveal his departure the day before it was announced.

Vowles will begin work with Williams on 20 February, three days before the start of pre-season testing in Bahrain.

LUKE SMITH

➔ P13 OPINION



Vowles has enjoyed many a success with Hamilton at Mercedes

Silverstone wants four-day British GP

FORMULA 1

Silverstone wants to extend the British Grand Prix to a four-day event to allow for more on-track action.

The race has become one of the most popular on the Formula 1 calendar amid the series' current boom, and enjoyed a record crowd of 400,000 over three days last year. Now Silverstone managing director Stuart Pringle wants to open up the track on the Thursday of race weekend to allow more scope for support categories to appear on the undercard.

A similar approach is adopted for the Australian GP to incorporate series such as Supercars, Porsche Carrera Cup and S5000. Silverstone has occasionally done the same for the British GP.

"We're looking to extend

the weekend," said Pringle last week on the main stage at Autosport International in Birmingham. "I'm working hard on Formula 1. I believe they need to change the format of the weekend. They say, 'Oh well it's the FIA, they've got to do the systems test and stuff' – well, do them a day earlier.

"Let's do some stuff on Thursday. There are a lot of people who want to come and see things, and three days isn't really enough. Let's make it that big, best part of a week's festival. People do turn up at Silverstone on a Tuesday and put the tent up, and that's it, they're in."

Pringle acknowledged that there had been a "huge change in our fortunes" for Silverstone, praising the approach of F1 owner Liberty Media for no longer trying



A four-day event? Let's have pre-qualifying like in 1977! Here's times-topper Villeneuve

to "crush the promoter" and allowing for better reinvestment in facilities.

NO CHINA REPLACEMENT

F1 has confirmed that there will be no replacement this year for the Chinese Grand Prix, setting the calendar at 23 races.

Restoring the Shanghai

event to the schedule was always understood to be unlikely despite the country's easing of COVID-19 restrictions, while a replacement race was eventually not viable. It leaves a four-week gap between the Australian and Azerbaijan GPs.

LUKE SMITH



Cadillac is returning to Le Mans for the first time since 2002

Cadillac: F1 no impact on LMDh

WEC/IMSA

Cadillac's proposed Formula 1 entry with the Andretti team will have no effect on its IMSA SportsCar Championship and World Endurance Championship campaigns. That was the message loud and clear last week from the General Motors marque.

Board member Rory Harvey, global vice-president of Cadillac, described the manufacturer's continuing involvement in sportscar racing with the new V-LMDh,

which will race for the first time this month in the Daytona 24 Hours IMSA opener, as "a complement" to what it has planned for F1 from 2026. "We don't see F1 impacting this series in any way," he added.

"The US is very important to us and the IMSA series is very important to us," said Harvey. "This season, with some new entrants, is going to be super-exciting. The fans are going to absolutely love it and it gives us the ability to showcase our vehicles. We're happy with the championship overall."

He explained that the convergence of the regulations between IMSA and the WEC that has facilitated its single-car assault on the world championship "gives us greater reach – we sell Cadillacs throughout the world". He described F1 as "another piece in the jigsaw".

Cadillac's F1 entry with Andretti, if accepted for 2026, would come in year four of the LMDh formula. That would mean a minimum of a two-season overlap between the programmes: LMDh has at the moment a five-season lifecycle up to the end of 2027.

The GM marque returned to front-line sportscar racing in North America in 2017 at the start of the Daytona Prototype international formula. Its programme this year encompasses two V-LMDhs in IMSA, one each fielded by Chip Ganassi Racing and Action Express Racing, and one in the full WEC run by the former.

Harvey didn't react directly to the lukewarm response from the F1 paddock to Cadillac's and Andretti's expression of interest to join the grid.

"We wouldn't have gone forward in announcing our intent to submit an expression of interest if we didn't think it was a proposition that fulfilled the requirements and give us the ability to succeed," he said.

GARY WATKINS

Harvick to quit at end of year

NASCAR

Former NASCAR Cup champion Kevin Harvick is to retire at the end of this season. The 47-year-old's title came in 2014 with the Stewart-Haas Racing Ford squad and he has been a regular with the team since then, but is calling time on a glittering career that counts wins in the Daytona 500, Coca-Cola 600, Brickyard 400 and Southern 500.

Harvick was promoted into the Cup series in 2001 by Richard Childress Racing to replace Dale Earnhardt Sr following his death in the Daytona 500 and won in his third start at Atlanta. Last year he made the playoffs for the 13th consecutive season. Since their inception in 2004, he's only missed the cut three times, and will end his career with over 800 Cup starts.

"There is absolutely nothing else in the world that I enjoy doing more than going to the race track, and I'm genuinely looking forward to this season," said Harvick. "But as I've gone through the years, I knew there would come a day where I had to make a decision. When would it be time to step away from the car? I've sought out people and picked their brains. When I asked them when they knew it was the right time, they said, 'It'll just happen, and you'll realise



that's the right moment. You'll make a plan and decide when it's your last year."

"It's definitely been hard to understand when that right moment is because we've been so fortunate to run well. But sometimes there are just other things going on that become more important and, for me, that time has come."

● Harvick's fellow NASCAR champion Kyle Larson will make his Indy 500 debut in 2024 with the McLaren team in a car co-owned by his NASCAR boss Rick Hendrick. He will become the first driver to attempt the dual 500 and Coca-Cola 600 on the same day since Kurt Busch in 2014.

NICK DEGROOT



Montoya is new Red Bull junior

FORMULA 3

Red Bull has promoted Sebastian Montoya, the son of former Indianapolis 500 winner and Formula 1 star Juan Pablo, to its full junior team programme.

The 17-year-old steps up from Red Bull athlete status on the cusp of his rookie season in the FIA Formula 3 Championship. Montoya finished 13th in the Formula Regional European standings in 2022 with top team Prema, but impressed in a one-off F3 debut at Zandvoort, where he finished eighth in both races with Campos Racing.

His 2023 team has not been confirmed, but is thought likely to be Hitech Racing,

with which he drove on all three days in the 2022 post-season Valencia test and is now contesting the Formula Regional Middle East series, in which he took a best result of 15th in last weekend's Dubai opener.

Montoya's father raced successfully for Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko's RSM team in Formula 3000 in 1997.

Also in F3, Williams F1 protege Oliver Gray will make the big leap up to the series after finishing runner-up in British F4 last year. Gray, 17, who remains with Carlin for the move, said that "hopefully this will be the first year of a two-year programme in F3, so the aim this season will be to really learn as much as possible".

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Sato to Ganassi for oval-only deal

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INDYCAR

Two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Takuma Sato will tackle this year's edition of the race from the seat of a Chip Ganassi Racing car after joining the Honda-powered team for an oval-only programme.

The Japanese star, who turns 46 next week, will share the full-time #11 Ganassi entry with ex-Formula 2 racer Marcus Armstrong, who was confirmed in December as Ganassi's replacement for Jimmie Johnson on road and street courses. Sato's arrival means that, despite Ganassi losing Tony Kanaan to Arrow McLaren SP for the Memorial Day Weekend classic and reducing its car count to four, it will still

have three former winners of the 500 on board: Sato, Scott Dixon (2008) and Marcus Ericsson (2022). The #11 car will be engineered by Eric Cowdin, Johnson's engineer for the past two years.

CGR managing director Mike Hull stated: "What a terrific opportunity to have Takuma Sato drive on the ovals in 2023. He contributes with the experience of knowing how to win, by matching the strength of his three team-mates [Dixon, Ericsson and Alex Palou], which equals four who race as one. Chip Ganassi Racing looks forward to the 107th running of the Indianapolis 500."

Sato's other rounds for Ganassi will be at Texas Motor Speedway, the Iowa Speedway double-header and at St Louis. He told

Autosport that he was grateful to his former team owner "Dale Coyne and the entire DCR team for a fantastic opportunity to work together in 2022", but that he is "very excited to join Ganassi".

"It was always my desire to compete at the highest level when I could, so this is incredible for me to join this team... the best team with the best team-mates. I feel like I have been chasing the Chip Ganassi team my entire IndyCar career – they were always the team to beat and they are always fantastic competition. Now is a time I join a team at the highest level."

Sato will be replaced at DCR by 2022 Indy Lights runner-up Sting Ray Robb.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Power to make sportscar debut at Daytona 24

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Reigning IndyCar champion Will Power is to make his sportscar debut in this month's Daytona 24 Hours IMSA SportsCar Championship opener. The 41-year-old has been drafted into the SunEnergy1 Mercedes line-up by team owner and fellow Australian Kenny Habul.

Power (right) will join Habul, against whom he raced in Formula Ford early in his career, in the Gradient-run SunEnergy1 Mercedes-AMG GT3 entered in

the GT Daytona class for the 28-29 January race. Merc regular Fabian Schiller and Axcil Jefferies will also drive.

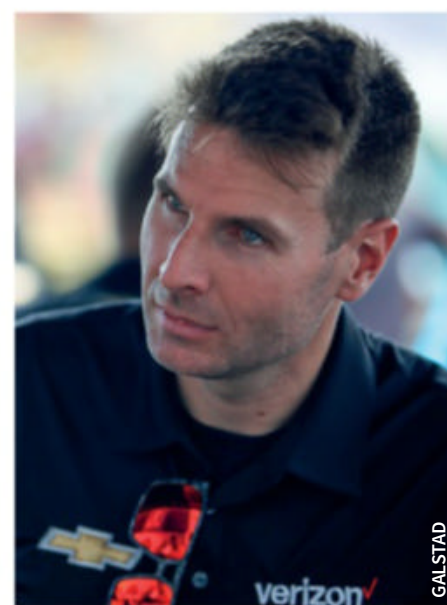
"The Daytona 24 is an iconic event on the bucket list of most drivers and I have to thank Kenny for the opportunity," said Power. "I am looking forward to driving the heavier GT car and getting experience for, hopefully, a lot more drives like this in the future – including the Bathurst 1000 and Bathurst 12 Hours."

Toyota World Endurance Championship driver Mike

Conway has been drafted into sister marque Lexus's Daytona line-up. The two-time WEC champion will join fellow Brits Ben Barnicoat and Jack Hawksworth in Vasser Sullivan's GTD Pro Lexus RC F GT3.

Haas Formula 1 driver Kevin Magnussen's participation aboard the MDK Motorsport Porsche alongside father Jan has been put in doubt by a hand operation. The need for him to rest after the removal of a cyst means he looks unlikely to race.

GARY WATKINS



IN THE HEADLINES

WADOUX'S WEC FERRARI

Lilou Wadoux has become the first female Ferrari factory driver. The 21-year-old Frenchwoman has been signed to the Ferrari Competizione GT roster for 2023 and will contest the World Endurance Championship in GTE Am with an AF Corse-run 488 GTE Evo entered under the Richard Mille banner. She drove the Richard Mille Racing ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 in the WEC last year.

STANEK MOVES UP TO F2

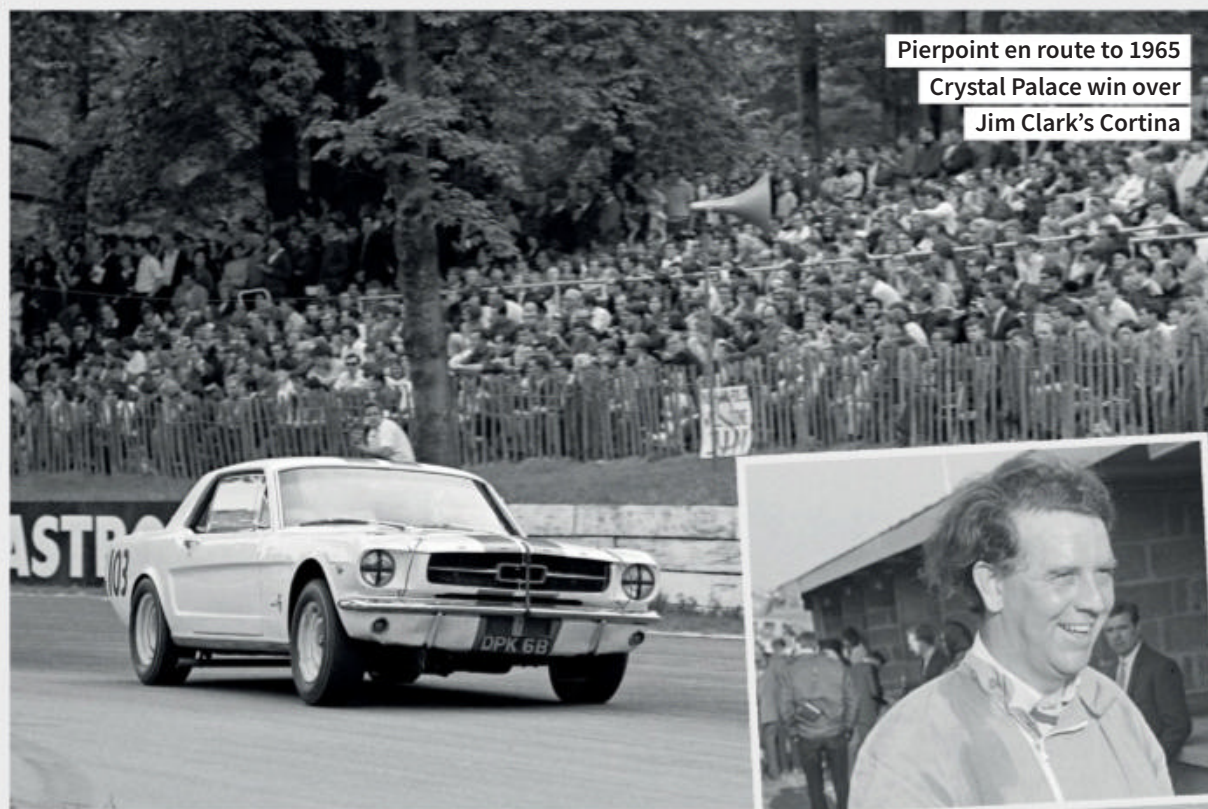
Czech talent Roman Stanek, one of the seven drivers who went into last season's FIA Formula 3 finale with a shot at the title, is to graduate to F2 this season. The 18-year-old, who ended up fifth in the F3 points, will stay with Trident for his move up after taking part in all three days of the post-season Abu Dhabi test with the Italian team.

BRIT LINDBLAD'S FIRST WIN

British Red Bull Junior Arvid Lindblad scored his first win in cars in last weekend's Formula 4 UAE opener in Dubai. The 15-year-old Anglo-Swede led from start to finish in a safety car-infested final race in his Hitech GP machine. Lindblad lost a second place in the opener to a false-start penalty. McLaren protege Ugo Ugochukwu won the other two races with Prema and leads the early standings.

FAN SURVEY REPORT OUT

Autosport parent company Motorsport Network launched its *Elite Motorsport in 2023* report at last week's Autosport International. The report was based on its recent global surveys of Formula 1, IndyCar and MotoGP fans, with an all-time sporting fan-poll record of 167,302 respondents to the F1 survey. It found increasing numbers of young and female fans across all three series, while IndyCar followers are the most likely to have attended a race in the past few years – 48%. F1 was voted as the most popular series, ahead of MotoGP, the WEC and IndyCar Series.



Pierpoint en route to 1965

Crystal Palace win over

Jim Clark's Cortina

Roy Pierpoint 1929-2023

OBITUARY

Roy Pierpoint, the British Saloon Car champion of 1965, died last week aged 93.

Through the 1950s, Pierpoint and Alan Mann made The Wayside Garage in Rusper, Sussex, an enthusiasts' mecca, but work precluded regular racing until 1961 (although he had made his debut at Goodwood in 1949), when he scored wins in his first Lotus 15. Fourth, behind Graham Hill (Lotus 19) and Mike Parkes and John Surtees (Ferrari 250 GTOs), in Snetterton's 1962 Archie Scott Brown Trophy race impressed too. He also shared Equipe Endeavour's Jaguar Mk2 with Bruce Halford in the Motor Six Hours at Brands Hatch.

Having piloted Val Dare-Bryan's Attila-Climax in 1963, a rare win in its Ford V8-powered Mk3 successor at Oulton in 1964 came amid much disappointment. Pierpoint thus looked to tin-tops, where defeating allcomers in V8 Americana coloured 1965-70. He won the 1965 BSCC in a Ford Mustang built by Mann and maintained by his own Weybridge Engineering Company. Six class wins – four outright – from eight rounds, and a perfect finishing record, beat Warwick Banks

(works Mini Cooper S) on a tie-break.

Subsequent Falcon Sprint and Chevrolet Camaro campaigns took his win tally to 14. He used both cars to win the 1969 BSCC class title with Bill Shaw Racing, claiming six victories. Pierpoint raced the Rover P6Bs developed by Shaw in 1970. With Clive Baker and Roger Enever, they led the Porsches in the Nurburgring's 86-hour Marathon de la Route, before propshaft vibration forced retirement. Clubbie wins in a sister car brought scant consolation.

Pierpoint had not forsaken sportscar racing, enjoying Lola T70 Mk1 spyders during 1965. Sharing hillclimber David Good's with Doug Serrurier, he entered the Kyalami 9 Hours, then won Lourenco Marques, Mozambique's 1966 Springbok round. In 1967, he co-drove Colin Crabbe's Ford GT40 and Terry Hunter's Porsche 911 internationally, and finished 10th with Hugh Dibley in the Brands BOAC 500 driving David Piper's Ferrari LM, which he shared to fifth in the 1968 edition of the race with Pedro Rodriguez.

Pierpoint graced historic events until 1984, when a startline shunt in a GT40 at Silverstone presaged retirement.

MARCUS PYE

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Wickham (in headphones)
at F1 debut of Spirit, at
1983 Race of Champions



McNEIL/SUTTON

John Wickham 1949-2023

OBITUARY

John Wickham did it all in a career that spanned five decades and all six continents. A Formula 1 team owner with Spirit in the 1980s, he was at the reins of the Bentley squad when it won the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2003. But those are just two of the credits to the well-travelled team manager's story.

Wickham, who has died aged 73 after a long and stoically fought battle with motor neurone disease, worked in just about every international racing formula bar Indycars, though that's to overlook the stillborn CART contender Spirit had on the go after its withdrawal from F1. Programmes in touring cars, Formula 2 and 3000 and Formula 3 all benefited from his meticulous organisational skills, which came into their own when he ran the A1 Grand Prix World Cup of Motorsport on the ground throughout its four-season life in 2005-09.

He set up the Audi Sport UK squad for Richard Lloyd that won the British Touring Car Championship first time out in 1996 with Frank Biela and the Audi A4 quattro. Before that there was another title in F2 in 1979 with the works March team, Marc Surer taking honours with a BMW-powered 792.

There was a near-miss with Thierry Boutsen in the same series three years later after he and designer Gordon Coppuck had set up Spirit with encouragement from engine supplier Honda. By the time of the 1982 season finale at Misano they were already hard at work building a test mule based on the

F2 201 for the Japanese manufacturer's new F1 twin-turbo engine.

Wickham persuaded his paymasters that racing was the best form of testing, which led to an initial outing at the non-points Race of Champions at Brands Hatch in April 1983 and on to participation in the second half of that year's world championship. Honda was scheduled to continue with Spirit the following season until it agreed a deal with Williams, which demanded exclusivity of supply.

Sponsorship from the Skoal Bandit chewing tobacco brand and a supply of Goodyear tyres disappeared with the Honda V6s. Spirit limped on in F1 with Hart power and Pirelli rubber until early 1985, before the deal for the latter was sold to the tyre-less Toleman team to pay off Spirit's debts.

Wickham returned to F1 when he brokered the deal for the Japanese Footwork logistics company to take over Arrows at the end of 1989, first as managing director and then team manager also up to the end of 1994.

It wasn't his last foray into F1: he briefly worked on the Adrian Campos-led HRT F1 start-up in 2010, and then as a paddock-side team manager for the Enstone Lotus team in 2011.

Wickham had two stints working with Bentley: he ran the team throughout its three-year adventure in the LM-GTP class that culminated in the Le Mans victory for the Speed 8 driven by Tom Kristensen, Rinaldo Capello and Guy Smith; he returned in 2012 to put together its GT3 programme with the Continental developed by M-Sport.

In between came the A1GP project. Initially engaged to run the test team in 2004, he set up the series as its general manager and stayed to the bitter end. It was arguably his greatest achievement.

Wickham was quietly spoken and laconic but, beyond a manner some regarded as gruff, he was at heart a motorsport enthusiast. He'd started marshalling before he was old enough to go trackside, and used to listen to Le Mans updates through the night in bed as a child. That's why he was so excited to finally work at the Circuit de la Sarthe with TOM'S and Toyota in 1987, then proud to win the race with Bentley 16 years later.

Stefan Johansson, who drove the Spirit-Hondas in 1983 and employed Wickham as TM of the Johansson-Matthews sportscar team in 2000, described him as "unflappable, totally calm and probably the most organised person I've met in my life". For Brian Gush, Bentley's long-time motorsport boss, Wickham was a "master organiser who was always on top of everything".

GARY WATKINS



BTCC titles for Audi and Biela
in 1996 were orchestrated by
Wickham at Audi Sport UK

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Is being a Merc B-team so bad?

As a long-time Brackley man, Williams's new team principal is steeped in Mercedes' culture. Closer ties with the Three-Pointed Star could be to his new employer's benefit

MATT KEW

Iwouldn't consider it a mini-Mercedes," says James Vowles of his vision for Williams after being made team principal last week. But it would be advisable to treat his words with an element of caution. For one, the ex-Mercedes Formula 1 chief strategist uttered them in a media call organised by Mercedes, during which he featured alongside Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff, and the pair spent plenty of time talking about their life together at, er, Mercedes...

It's easy to be flippant. The Three-Pointed Star made a conscious effort to control the narrative to ensure that no one was reporting any falsehoods. This is an amicable parting of ways between Vowles and the grand prix superteam that's won eight constructors' crowns. After all, he has been commuting to Brackley since 2001, when the letterhead read 'BAR Honda'.

With Wolff going nowhere any time soon, Vowles had to fly the nest to fulfil his ambition to become a team boss. Naturally, now in his new role, he wants to create a Williams in his own image. But it's seemingly inevitable that the target will revolve around resembling modern-day Mercedes, despite his reservations.

For starters, the philosophy at Grove is still the subject of criticism. Ex-team principal and CEO Jost Capito couldn't change it, but Vowles must. To do that, he will almost certainly look to instil the 'no blame' culture that has brought so much success to

“With Wolff going nowhere any time soon, Vowles had to fly the nest to fulfil his ambition”

the Silver Arrows and has subsequently been adopted by McLaren, and which Mattia Binotto tried to embed at Ferrari. Should Vowles fail to implement that change in mindset as his predecessor did, then Williams will continue to operate as F1's rank backmarker for the foreseeable.

At least Vowles can appreciate life towards the bottom of the order. Yes, he's enjoyed the turbo-hybrid-era dominance, and the troubled W13 might prove to be just a one-off problem child rather than the start of a protracted malaise for Mercedes. But he can also vividly recall the very worst of the Honda days through 2007 (eighth in the points) and 2008 (ninth) before the Japanese manufacturer exited stage left amid the global recession. He has been a key figure in the recovery through the 2010s. It is only natural that he transposes some of that successful model over to Williams, and this will

inevitably bring comparisons, whether Vowles wants to directly create a "mini-Mercedes" or not.

"For my perspective, Williams is an entirely independent organisation," he adds. "It's one that my success is subject and dependent on me doing a good job there. That has to be independent of Mercedes. It doesn't mean that Mercedes and ourselves won't have collaboration in some form or another. There was collaboration before I joined. But I have to do what is best for Williams... This is about me standing on my own two legs and making success with an organisation around me."

Although Vowles, 43, concedes that he's yet to visit the Williams factory, he will still have a decent appreciation for the scale of the task he faces. By virtue of being an amiable figure operating in the paddock for more than two decades, people will have opened up to him about the internal shortcomings at Grove. Word travels fast. He will likely be going in more aware than 2020 recruit Capito was – the German had been out of F1 since the late 1990s, except for an incredibly brief four-month stint under soon-to-be-ousted boss Ron Dennis at McLaren in 2016.

The Mercedes customer powertrain deal will almost certainly continue. Should Wolff take another junior driver under his wing, as per George Russell, you'd expect them to do their F1 apprenticeship at Williams until the team is a bona fide midfield runner. And when it comes to navigating politics and forwarding a certain agenda, you can bet the two teams will be aligned when it comes to the key votes. Wolff acknowledges this, saying: "Having a sparring partner at Williams – someone that's very logical, rational, while very experienced in Formula 1 – is of overall benefit for the Williams organisation as for Mercedes."

One of the first things in Vowles's in-tray will be helping to recruit a technical director, with Francois-Xavier Demaison having followed good pal Capito out of the door in December. The prime candidates will likely be very similar in stature to Vowles: experienced and deeply impressive operators who must depart a big team to gain a top job. Of the people who fit that bill, he will know those he worked with at Mercedes, last season or before, best of all. To recruit them, even if it means morphing into something of a B-team, would be no bad thing just so long as it lifts the team off the foot of the table.

The hiring of the comparatively young Vowles as Williams team principal by owner Dorilton is a display of ambition, and suggests that the investment group isn't a flight risk looking to sell up while F1 is a commercial sensation. It also heavily indicates that propping up the order just won't do. So, if Vowles sticks to what he knows as he tries to lift the team, Williams could do an awful lot worse than getting over the taboo and accepting life as something of a Brackley 'B-team'. ❁



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Lan (Dizz) Disney
1950-2022

Lan's motorsport career started in New Zealand racing motorcycles for Triumph Suzuki and Yamaha

He moved to the USA in the late 70s and worked as mechanic on F5000 cars he then went on to work at Kenny Roberts GP Team and also worked on Brett Lungers M23 McLaren (as I had worked at McLaren in that era he used to call me and ask about setup and things)

He went on to work at Honda building indycar Engines

Sometime after this he moved to Europe and worked on Yamaha GP bikes and ran a Yamaha scooter warehouse in France!

He was also involved in the build of the Bugatti Veyron (I did not know that either until now) he described the car as being built from the outside in!

This was followed by various projects at Suter Engineering in Switzerland

He also worked rebuilding classic racing cars for a German owner!

Lan passed away in Germany after suffering a stroke!

- Our thoughts are with his family and friends -
















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From Formula 1 to the WRC

New Hyundai rally team boss Cyril Abiteboul admits he's got a lot to learn, but his F1 experience and evident strengths could mean he turns out to be an inspired choice

TOM HOWARD

On paper, Hyundai's appointment of Cyril Abiteboul as team principal of its World Rally Championship squad seems a strange decision, but it could be the change of leadership it required. The Frenchman has spent the majority of his career in Formula 1, as team principal at Caterham before snaring the top role at Renault until it rebranded to Alpine in 2021. But by his own admission, he is new to rallying and has a lot to learn about the discipline.

For a team desperate to return to the top of the WRC pyramid, it seems odd to hire someone with no rally experience. In the past, team bosses have transferred from rallying to F1 — think Jean Todt (Peugeot to Ferrari in 1994) and more recently Jost Capito, who enjoyed roles at McLaren (2016) and more recently Williams until the end of last year after guiding the dominant Volkswagen WRC team. But few have gone the other direction.

When Abiteboul's name emerged as a candidate to join Hyundai as head of its rally and customer racing programmes, there was speculation that the signing may be an indication that the South Korean marque has aspirations to move into F1. That may still be the case in the future although, according to the man himself, the lure of joining the “most innovative and fastest-growing manufacturer among the top global brands” was key to taking up the role.

Speculation of an expansion into F1 aside, on closer inspection Hyundai may have pulled a masterstroke by biding its time to find

and unreliable i20 N built to the new Rally1 hybrid rules, amid a team scrambling for leadership following the departure of Adamo (its boss of six years), meant it was six months behind rivals Toyota and M-Sport Ford. Amid internal struggles, by the second half of the season, under the guidance of Julien Moncet, the i20 N was regularly outscoring the pacesetter Toyota. Despite a horrendous start, Hyundai ended the year scoring five wins, its best-ever return from a WRC campaign.

As Abiteboul says, the team is capable, but where the 45-year-old can lift it to the next level is through clear leadership and implementing lessons learned from F1. Abiteboul has been described as an honest character. This was evident last week, when he admitted that he needs to be patient while he learns and absorbs the WRC scene. “From a professional perspective, this will be my first foray into rallying, but I have been an observer of the series over the years,” he said. “In motorsport when you work in one category, you need to be so focused and become extremely specialised, so by virtue of what I was doing, I was specialised in Formula 1. Now I need to do the same in rally, which will take time, but I am very enthusiastic about the DNA and heritage of the sport.

“It is still all very new, and I still need to learn a lot, but I am very excited by the challenge. I think the Hyundai brand has been greatly enhanced through its motorsport activities, and it is now my responsibility to continue and further this growth. I'm approaching this like all the others I've been through in my life; with lots of humility, but I am excited and patient about what can and needs to be done. The challenge will be more within myself with the learning I need to go through, and quickly. There is not only an expectation but also an obligation to deliver. That is what lies ahead but I am up for it.

“To a certain degree, I can see the targets, processes and attention to detail are very similar; the relentless dedication to work and to consider the short, medium and long term at the same time. On the other hand, I can also see that this is totally different to what I have experienced before.”

Abiteboul is known to be a strong leader, unafraid to make big calls. Pinching Daniel Ricciardo from Red Bull while in charge at Renault is perhaps one example. It doesn't matter what sport you are competing in — this is a key trait for any leader and one Hyundai will relish. His voice, experience and political nous will be invaluable not only for Hyundai. The WRC is assessing its future as it bids to form a regulation package that can achieve its target of attracting more manufacturers. In Abiteboul, the WRC has a valuable asset.

For now, all eyes will be on Abiteboul on the Monte Carlo Rally to see how he tackles his first rally as WRC team boss for a squad targeting a drivers' and manufacturers' double. 🏆

“I am excited by the challenge. There's not only an expectation but also an obligation to deliver”

a successor to its charismatic former leader Andrea Adamo, who left in December 2021. The prospect of fresh eyes from operating in F1 could give Abiteboul an edge in an WRC environment. A combination of experience, new ideas and strong leadership could be a potent but valuable concoction for the Alzenau squad. But perhaps his management skills are where Hyundai could gain the most after a myriad of internal struggles last year.

While Hyundai is yet to deliver a drivers' title and was comfortably beaten to the manufacturers' crown in the past two seasons, the team, as Abiteboul said in a Hyundai Q&A, “does not need to be built. It is established, it functions, and it is capable of delivering extremely good results.”

Last season is a good case study of what Hyundai can achieve, despite adversity at times. The late arrival of an underdeveloped

➔ **P24 WRC SEASON PREVIEW**



How can McLaren keep hold of Norris?

He's no longer the young cheeky-chappy; he's now the established ace. And the big guns will come calling if McLaren can't give Lando Norris a competitive car

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

IF A SCRIPTWRITER was ever tasked with distilling the Formula 1 career of Lando Norris into a conventional story arc, this year and last would surely dominate and drive Act Two. It feels that now is the point in the plot where the lead protagonist begins to acknowledge an internal conflict and must soon make some life-altering decisions. In the case of the Brit, the main issue that needs resolving is this: for how long should he remain at McLaren?

This is the team that gave Norris a promotion to the top flight for 2019 and has provided him with the platform and support required to refine his world-class talent ever since. So much so that he is now rightly considered among the championship elite. By way of a mutual show of faith and thanks, in the second of two quickfire extensions, Norris signed a new deal 11 months ago that will provisionally keep him at Woking until the end of 2025. But that expiry date will come round soon enough. In the meantime, the Oscar Piastri contract saga

plus Mattia Binotto being cornered into handing in his notice at Ferrari have served to greatly devalue paddock loyalty and supposedly binding paperwork.

Therefore, if Norris is to stay put, it will be because McLaren is the best option available to him. But the case in favour of continuing in papaya has taken a couple of recent and sizeable blows. The team took its first major misstep on the path back to the top with a troubled ground-effects challenger in the form of the MCL36. Fifth in the 2022 constructors' championship, and a sole podium for Norris at Imola, was not good enough to feed his appetite for success. Norris might well sit among F1's top drawer, but so far he's been infrequently able to battle his pre-eminent peers on track. Adding to the dilemma, Andreas Seidl, the architect of the McLaren recovery plan, has now departed for Sauber.

These setbacks come at a time when it feels appropriate to re-evaluate Norris's entire standing in F1. Wind back to late >>





A lot has changed since the heady moments of McLaren's 1-2 in the 2021 Italian GP

September 2021. He was a young hotshot, one attempting to brave it on slicks to deliver a wet-weather upset in Russia by beating Lewis Hamilton to snare a maiden victory. He was then aged 21, and it was a demonstration of his skill, determination and strategic rawness. Missing out on the triumph didn't seem to matter. Time was on his side as McLaren – which had won the Italian GP last time out – pressed on with its resurgence.

Fifteen months and two birthdays later, it feels as though plenty has changed. In a world where 25-year-old Max Verstappen has two titles to his name, Norris is no longer the plucky junior who can afford to wait his turn. With McLaren choosing to jettison Daniel Ricciardo for 2023, like it or not, Norris isn't the protege anymore. In terms of age and experience, he will be the squad's elder statesman against rookie stablemate Piastri.

What's more, Norris has watched pals Carlos Sainz and George Russell surpass him on the grid. They have made their defining switches to Ferrari and Mercedes and duly joined the winners' circle. That's one element that hasn't come close to changing since Sochi 2021. Norris is still yet to trouble the top step of the podium. All told, he'd be forgiven for having itchy feet.

"I wish I was there with them," says Norris of his ex-McLaren team-mate Sainz and Russell, the driver who pipped him to the 2018 FIA F2 crown. "Of course, I wish I was in that battle. I feel like I deserve to be in that battle. It would be a great one. But it's just not the position that I'm in at the minute."

"Fair play to George – he deserves it. He's proven exactly what he's capable of doing through the whole year. Not just the one race in Brazil. He was ahead of [Lewis] Hamilton, on average, all season. He's doing a very good job. But that also gives me confidence that I can race against them in the future, and I can do the same as what they're doing."

The problem, of course, is that Norris can't race against Russell, Sainz, Hamilton and co. That's despite Mercedes enduring its worst campaign in a decade, and the frequent Ferrari blunders that blighted its 2022. McLaren has not been able to provide a grand prix machine that's capable of fighting for first place, and the way that the squad has started the second ground-effects era hasn't offered much in the way of confidence that it's about to change.

Regardless of how realistic it was for the regulatory overhaul to produce a more competitive field, McLaren let itself down. The MCL36 was unable to put in long runs in Bahrain testing because its brake ducts were too small. To avoid repeat fires, mileage was severely limited. That prevented Norris from fine-tuning a driving style that he'd had to massively alter. Even though Ricciardo couldn't run at Sakhir after returning a positive COVID test, he was the more settled in the car initially.

It took at least a third of the season for Norris to be comfortable

at the helm, and the rest of the term for him to chase anything close to perfection. "I really struggled with a bit of everything, just general cornering," reflects Norris. "The way you had to drive it is almost the complete opposite of the way I want to drive a car. I had to adapt and change my driving style a lot. Every corner is on such a knife-edge. It's impossible to be on it every single lap in every single qualifying and in every race. I struggled to find the limit."

"I struggled to adapt to how you have to drive every corner separately. It's never the same in every corner. But the job of a Formula 1 driver is to adapt to the car that you're driving... If [the car was designed to suit him], they've done a terrible job of achieving that!"

Modern McLaren doesn't operate with a set number one and number two driver. Even so, it would do well to build a chassis that is better suited to Norris's tastes in 2023. If he can be more comfortable, he will ultimately be faster. But that alone won't placate the team's talisman. Any upwardly mobile racer would quite happily adapt a driving style for as long as is necessary in return for an ultra-competitive car.

Norris is acutely aware that McLaren has lost ground with the regulation changes. He also fully appreciates that in a cost-cap era, his team cannot simply spend its way to success. Crucially, however, he sees no reason why over one winter – even during a period of stability – McLaren cannot take as big a stride forward as Ferrari made between 2021 and 2022. Asked how much the James Key-led technical team can recover from one car to the next, Norris says: "What Ferrari did, that's achievable. It was extremely good. Going from where they were, from almost getting beat by us [in 2021], to where they are getting wins, fighting for podiums every single weekend – that's what we need to be aiming for. That level of a jump from one season to another."

"They've obviously maximised a new era, a new ruleset for F1 with new cars, which has allowed them to make a bigger jump than ever. It's more than maybe you can make during a [rules cycle] of F1. But there's still plenty of opportunities for us to achieve something like that. That's where we need to be setting our goals. We have more chances

"What Ferrari did, that's achievable.

Getting wins, fighting for podiums – that's what we need to be aiming for. That level of a jump from one season to another"

now than ever to achieve something good and to be in that position. We have more people in place than ever before to achieve that, so we have more and more of what we need. It's just about actually doing it."

While Norris understands the landscape of F1 completely, it feels as though his immediate ambitions for McLaren might be a touch unrealistic. Bookies would quite happily welcome punters brave enough to bet on the MCL37 winning four GPs this year to match the record of the Ferrari F1-75 in 2022. So, what about the season after? Can Woking come up with a winner by the time Norris enters what will be the penultimate year of his contract? After all, the 2024 car is poised to be the first with major input from the team's new windtunnel.

Delays brought about by the pandemic mean upgrades to the infrastructure and simulator – essential projects identified and lobbied for by Seidl – are 18 months behind schedule. That has left McLaren to make do with using the famed Toyota facility in Cologne. Even when the new site comes online, as AlphaTauri learned with the underwhelming AT03 upon switching to the larger-scale Red Bull windtunnel for 2022, there's no guarantee of an instant uptick; it can take time to fully exploit the new digs. As such, McLaren might not even hit its performance peak until 2025. That will test Norris's patience considerably as he considers potentially another two seasons eating the dust of the top three teams.

Norris says: "I don't even want to wait for [the new windtunnel]. The fact is the team have to make a better car. The job we did with the 2022 car was not good enough. I think that has been made very, very clear. So, I don't think we need to wait. Already, in 2023, we need to >>



MAUGER



PORTLOCK

Norris would like nothing more than to be locking horns on equal terms again with 2018 F2 rival Russell



TEE

Norris's buddy and former team-mate Sainz has moved on and joined the winners' circle



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The MCL36 didn't make life easy for Norris; he had to work hard to adapt his style

make progress. I have faith that we can make good progress. We have a huge amount of what we need in the right areas and the right people and so on. It's just that final hurdle, the final thing to get us up to the same level to then have no excuse against Red Bull, Mercedes and Ferrari.

"They have better infrastructure than we have. I still have a bit of faith that [the new windtunnel] is going to help that last click, that last push. So, that's always a small part, but it's not the reason at the minute, and we need to do a better job with what we have. My contract is until the end of 2025, so I still have plenty of time. I can afford to wait, but I don't want to wait. The team know that they need to do a better job."

If McLaren doesn't do a better job, the price it will pay is becoming increasingly predictable. Norris, as anyone in his position might, would be well within his rights to shop around. And even before his contract is up, there are several tantalising positions that could plausibly become available.

Hamilton completed the 2022 season with the assertion that he would be sitting down with Mercedes management over the winter to forge a contract extension. At the time of writing, any new deal is yet to go public. Even when it does, F1 and the Three-Pointed Star must consider a future without its global superstar and seven-time world champion, who celebrated his 38th birthday this month.

Internally, Mercedes has all but ruled out ever making a play for abrasive Verstappen. As it stands, that would surely leave Norris as



Mansell knows all about putting in the hard yards before his first F1 victory



the best option alongside Russell. Now that the former Williams racer has been given his promotion, there's no obvious Toto Wolff-aligned protege waiting in the wings. Mercedes would have to dip into the transfer market. As for what a switch could offer Norris, despite Mercedes' worst campaign in a decade, a troubled W13 still proved more competitive than the MCL36. If Brackley's powers of resurrection are as strong as indicated, it can provide Norris with a car capable of wins and even titles before McLaren's new windtunnel is fully optimised. Given the deep pockets of Silver Arrows co-owners Wolff, Daimler and billionaire INEOS founder Jim Ratcliffe, shelling out to land Norris's services before time wouldn't present much of an obstacle.

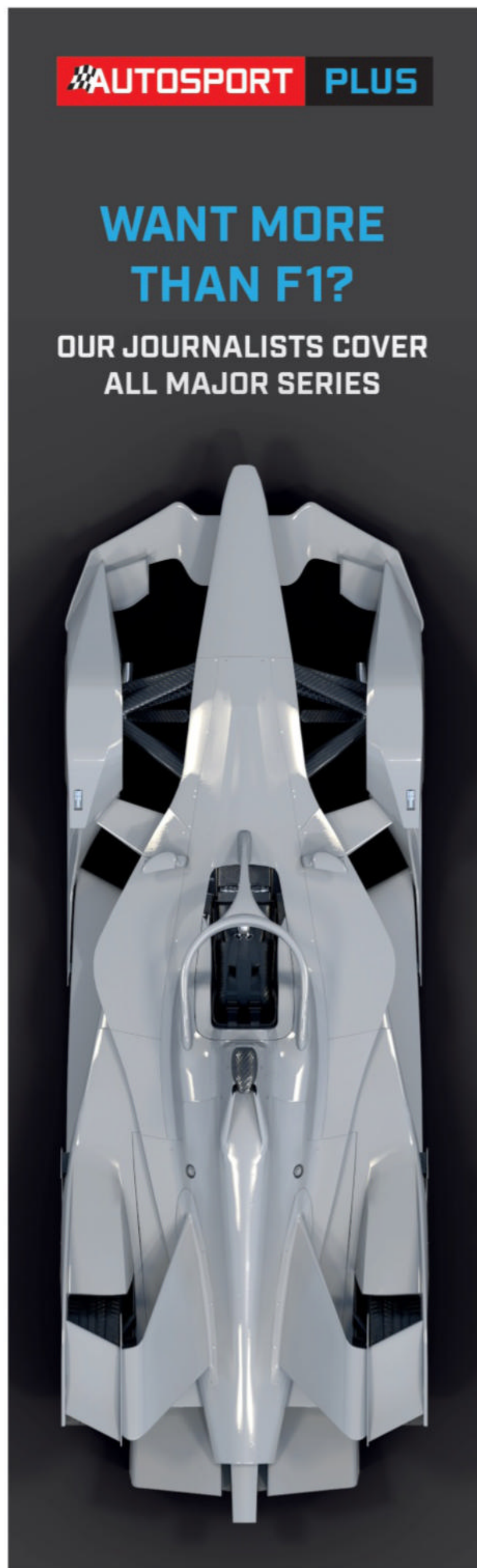
What if new Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur fails to eliminate the unreliability and strategic blunders that dogged its once oh-so-promising 2022 campaign? While there has been no indication so far that Charles Leclerc is looking elsewhere, at some point he might become so disenfranchised that he feels he must. The Monegasque is the other standout candidate to replace Hamilton at Mercedes. That, or a straight swap with McLaren, could potentially have Norris dressing up in red.

Still within the bounds of possibility, following the crazed 2022 driver-market silly season, would be a move to Red Bull. Amid an increased threat from Ferrari and an anticipated Mercedes comeback, repeats of the mid-season slump recently delivered by Sergio Perez will not always guarantee the team the constructors' title. While the

“My contract is until the end of 2025, so I still have plenty of time. I can afford to wait, but I don't want to wait. The team know that they need to do a better job”

Mexican is signed up until the end of 2024, Red Bull has plenty of previous for prematurely ousting those who pale in comparison to Verstappen. Also consider that the conveyor belt of talent that is the Red Bull Junior programme is currently enduring its lowest ebb in recent memory, and team boss Christian Horner has shot down the prospect of Daniel Ricciardo using his new third driver role as a springboard back to the first team. Therefore, an externally sourced top-level replacement for Perez will conceivably be required in the shorter to medium term. Norris would again be the prime contender.

It is also known that the two parties have previously held preliminary conversations. Horner addressed the matter late last year, saying: “We've talked to Lando a couple of times over the years, but every »



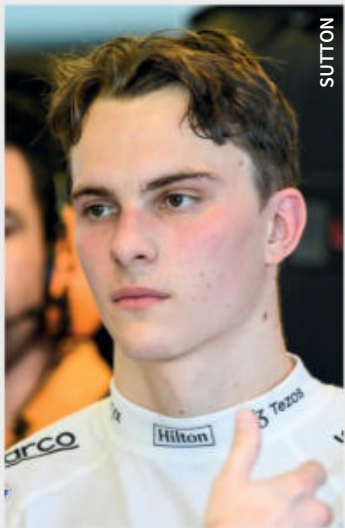
ORANGE LEADER, STANDING BY

For firmly trumping Daniel Ricciardo during their two terms as stablemates, there’s a case to be made that Lando Norris has already been McLaren team leader for some time. In 2023, it’ll be even less open to debate. Although a number one role isn’t specified in his contract, for the first time in his F1 career Norris will be older and more experienced than the driver on the other side of the garage.

Ex-team principal Andreas Seidl pushed to recruit FIA Formula 2 and F3 champion Oscar Piastri, 21, because of his skill and for how well he is expected to integrate into life at Woking. As such, Norris doesn’t expect to have to radically change his approach to accommodate the newcomer.

He says of welcoming Piastri: “It’s new for me. I’ve never been in a situation where I’ve been the more experienced one. Literally, back to probably my first years in karting, I’ve never been the old guy. I look forward to it. There’ll be things I have to maybe do better and learn. Will I have to help Oscar a lot? How do I treat that situation? I know what he’s capable

“**LITERALLY, BACK TO MY FIRST YEARS IN KARTING, I’VE NEVER BEEN THE OLD GUY**”



of achieving. So, for the most part, like 98% of it, I don’t think I need to change anything.” Perhaps contrary to initial expectation, Norris reckons he might even find himself learning from the Australian, who boasts something he cannot. Norris has only driven contemporary McLaren F1 cars. Piastri, meanwhile, boasts relevant and recent experience of testing the 2021 Alpine. “I’ll be the guy speaking with experience from McLaren, experience of Formula 1,” Norris continues. “That’s something he just can’t add to the table. I was the same when I joined, and it was with Carlos [Sainz, 2019]. He could add so many things that I wasn’t able to because it was my first year. There’ll be a lot of things Oscar is adding as well that I can’t add because he’s driven another car. I can’t physically offer that. So, it will be good for us.”



“The talks I had with Red Bull are a general thing. When you’re coming to the end of a contract, you want to have talks with as many people as you can”



time we've had a conversation, he's signed a contract with McLaren the next day." While finding out about those chats with Horner was seen as a revelation at the time, Norris brushes it aside. He reckons keeping team bosses close is par for the course.

"The talks which I said I had with Red Bull are a general thing," explains Norris. "Every driver is trying to talk to every team. Not always, though, and that's why I signed such a long contract, so I don't need to care about any of this for a while. But whenever you're coming to the end of a contract, you always want to have talks with as many people as you can to weigh up your options and know what might be a better path for you."

"So, it wasn't solely with Red Bull. It was different talks with different people about what could happen now and what could maybe happen in the future. Everyone has those talks. It's a fact. But I signed a long contract because I didn't want to think of those things. I knew that if there wasn't anything out there which was tempting enough to go and do, especially for me and where I am in my career at the minute with my age, McLaren was by far the best option for me. I'm sure, in a few years, it will come up again when I'm coming to the end of my contract."

And when the time does come for Norris to take stock and weigh up his options, should he remain at McLaren until the end of his current contract, there will be a new high-profile and well-paying gig well worth considering. Audi, or any major new manufacturer, will reasonably want to herald its proper F1 arrival with a statement signing. Since the single-seater ladder is conspicuously lacking a rising German talent who, come 2026, will be loudly banging on the door for a GP seat, the Ingolstadt giant may see a free-to-hire Norris as that worthy headline act.

While Audi has a mammoth task ahead to build up its nascent engine programme to be competitive from the off, the Sauber race

team is already beginning to feel the benefit of the Volkswagen Group's euros. Because the Swiss squad will finally have access to the resources required to spend up to the budget cap, there's every reason to expect its chassis and aero to progress markedly. Therefore, Audi's newcomer status might not necessarily entail Norris taking a step down the grid for a couple of years. An inevitable pay rise would only sweeten the deal.

Then there's the old flame with whom Norris would reunite should he jump ship: Seidl. McLaren Racing boss Zak Brown aside, it was Seidl who sold the papaya vision to Norris and convinced him to not allow those muted talks with Red Bull to progress into anything more serious. While replacement team principal Andrea Stella will continue the Woking rebuild programme in a similar image, the departure of Seidl is an inescapable blow to the team. His arrival as Sauber CEO only makes the Audi option more enticing.

Norris is hot property and, whenever his services become available, it's difficult to imagine he will ever be short of suitors.

As such, if McLaren is to retain its prize asset then it must, as the driver says, maximise its current potential to take a considerable step forward in 2023. After that, it must put its new windtunnel to good use in double quick time to become a frontrunner once again. If the team falls short and Norris is still to trouble the top step of an F1 podium, there's sound reason to expect the team and driver to part company rather than write a typical Hollywood happy ending. ❄

NEXT WEEK

F1 2023

What's new and what to expect ahead of Formula 1's busiest-ever season



Norris is confident about McLaren having many more of the right elements in place – now "it's just about actually doing it"

SEASON

PREVIEW

Rovanpera acknowledges that his challenge will be tougher this year. He's cool with that



ROVANPERA'S TOUGHEST CHALLENGE YET

Question: what could be harder than becoming the youngest-ever World Rally champion?

Answer: becoming the youngest-ever two-time World Rally champion

TOM HOWARD

It seems that Kalle Rovanpera has barely been afforded an opportunity for his record-breaking 2022 World Rally Championship title to sink in before thoughts switch to trying for a second in 2023. Such is the fast-paced world of the WRC, where seasons are split by a matter of weeks rather than months, that teams have emerged from a brief winter hibernation to do battle again this weekend at the time-honoured Monte Carlo Rally curtain raiser.

A wild silly season triggered by Ott Tanak's departure from Hyundai to M-Sport has resulted in Toyota, Hyundai and M-Sport reshuffling their driver line-ups. Now that the music has stopped, the WRC could be set for one of its most tantalising title battles, with all three teams boasting world champions or rally winners.

It appears that 22-year-old Rovanpera, the WRC's newest superstar and youngest ever champion, could face his toughest examination yet if he wishes to replicate his mesmerising 2022 run of six wins with Toyota. The Finn now has a target on his back as the one to beat, and is fully aware of the scale of the task ahead of him. "Of course it's going to be quite tricky to defend the championship," he acknowledges. "I think definitely Hyundai is levelling up quite a lot during the end of the season last year, so they were catching up a lot. And now with Ott at M-Sport it will be interesting to see their pace and I think the competition will be higher all the time."

A quick glance through the WRC history book shows that five drivers have won consecutive world titles. Nine-time champion Sebastien Loeb won all of his on the bounce from 2004-12. Sebastien Ogier picked up the baton to win six titles on the spin from 2013-18. In the 1990s, it was Tommi Makinen who ruled the roost, the Finn notching up four crowns from 1996-99. A decade earlier, it was Juha Kankkunen (1986-87) and Miki Biasion (1988-89).

Rovanpera is raring to go after an off-season that included a family skiing holiday in Lapland, and a title celebration event broadcast live



KALLE ROVANPERA
Toyota Gazoo
Racing

Co-driver
Jonne Halttunen
WRC starts 52
Wins 8 (2022
champion)
Podiums 13
Stage wins 99
Points 499

Can the young Finn
repeat his brilliant 2022
tally of six victories?

on Finnish television in front of thousands of fans in the Toyota team's home of Jyväskylä. "The feeling is quite good before the new season," he smiles. "Our championship celebration was really nice. It was a quite special feeling to do it in our home city with Jonne [Halttunen, co-driver], so that was a really cool thing to have. At that moment you felt the achievement quite well and you realise what you have done so it was a nice moment for sure."

Now Rovanpera faces a rejuvenated Tanak, back at M-Sport where his WRC career began, and hungry to add a second title after a disappointing three-year spell at Hyundai. Five-time championship runner-up Thierry Neuville is set to lead Hyundai's charge as he bids to finally break his WRC title duck. And then of course Rovanpera will face a fight from within his Toyota team in the form of two-time runner-up Elfyn Evans, eager to bounce back from a difficult 2022. >>



There will also be opposition from Esapekka Lappi, Hyundai's new signing from Toyota, while Ogier will offer a stern challenge in his partial campaign with Toyota, which begins in Monte Carlo.

The prospect of title contenders in all three teams has already whetted the appetite of Toyota WRC boss Jari-Matti Latvala. "I think 2023 is already giving us some goosebumps because generally it looks like every team has a winning driver and every team is able to win," he points out. "We also know that it is going to be harder and more challenging for us. I like the challenge and we want to go out here and really fight for the victories. We know we have the team and the car, but we just need to get working."

Likewise, the unflappable Roanpera believes that it could "be more difficult to defend the championship". "I think the biggest challenge will be just to try to step up our game also," he adds. "We need to step up and try to continue to stay and push on the same consistent level. I don't know if it [winning the title] helps a lot. Of course, it helps to know how everything happens and what it takes to win so in that sense it helps."

“2023 IS ALREADY GIVING US GOOSEBUMPS BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE EVERY TEAM IS ABLE TO WIN”

Just as Roanpera dominated the drivers' championship, Toyota emerged as the package to beat in 2022, when it stormed to a sixth manufacturers' title. For 2023 it has busily refined its GR Yaris, which now features an engine upgrade in addition to a new rear aero package, including a revised rear wing. According to Roanpera, it already feels better than the 2022 car after one test. "We have just had one test really so let's see how the car will feel," he says. "But the team has again done a good job trying to maximise the performance and make the car faster, so I'm hoping to have a faster and stronger car."

One area Roanpera is confident he can improve upon is his performance in Monte Carlo. Last year he found himself worryingly off the pace – behind WRC2 runners in his first competitive outing behind the wheel of the GR Yaris. Somehow, he channeled his anger into unlocking the secrets to driving Toyota's new weapon and managed to salvage a fourth-place finish. Despite having the >>

Continued on p29



THE CHALLENGERS

Ott Tanak

Had Hyundai's package been as good at the start of 2022 as it was at the end of the campaign, then Ott Tanak could have given Kalle Roanpera a much closer run to the title. In the second half of the season, he outscored the Finn thanks to a consistent run of results that included two wins among six podiums from the

final seven events. The 2019 world champion remains a force to be reckoned with and is tipped among the favourites to challenge for this year's championship, despite a switch to M-Sport following the breakdown of his three-year relationship with Hyundai.

Tanak faced an uncertain future when he dropped the bombshell that he would be leaving Hyundai, but after months of talks his move to M-Sport was secured, returning him to the team with which he claimed his first WRC podium in 2012 and

OTT TANAK
M-Sport Ford

Co-driver
Martin Jarveoja

WRC starts 136

Wins 17 (2019 champion)

Podiums 42

Stage wins 327

Points 1308





Late-season run of strong results
not enough to keep Tanak at Hyundai

victory in 2017. That has provided the Cumbrian squad with a real shot in the arm. While the Estonian admits that a title tilt will be a big challenge as he adapts to the Ford Puma, the motive for moving to M-Sport for 2023 is clear. "Since becoming a world champion I have not been able to defend the title, and I will not be able to make peace with myself until I do," he states. "I have had many discussions with Malcolm [Wilson, team owner] and we share the same ambition for the upcoming season. It's going to be a big challenge for us, but I know the people at Dovenby Hall, I know what they are capable of and with their passion to give everything they have, we can challenge for the championship."



REE/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Thierry Neuville

Five-time WRC runner-up Thierry Neuville is expected to lead Hyundai's charge now that Ott Tänak has swapped Alzenau for Dovenby Hall. The Belgian has played a perennial WRC bridesmaid role over the years, but remains one of the championship's brightest talents. Last season his title hopes were dented by Hyundai's problematic birth of the i20 N that left the car unreliable and lacking development in the first half of the year.

Once Hyundai managed to hone its i20 N, results arrived and Neuville scored victories on the Acropolis and in the season-ending asphalt round in Japan. Over the off-season, the team has carried out further development on its challenger, focusing on improving the car's aero courtesy of a new nose that acts as a splitter, front arches, wing mirrors and rear spoiler.

Neuville is expecting an intense fight for the 2023 title. "We saw at the end of last year in Japan that we were stronger than the Toyota," he recounts. "In Spain we were missing a little bit and in Greece we were much stronger. The performance was better in the second half of the season compared to the first. At times last year we were far off our competitors, but this year it should be an equal race and a more equal fight."

"It should be easier to keep up with the title contenders that's for sure, but it won't make it easier to fight for the title. It won't be an easy challenge just because we have managed to put some things right in our company and on our car. The fight will be tight and



Perennial runner-up Neuville
expects to be on more equal
terms in the title fight

THIERRY NEUVILLE

Hyundai
Motorsport

Co-driver
Martijn Wydaeghe
WRC starts 142
Wins 17
Podiums 55
Stage wins 325
Points 1676

maybe even tighter than what we have seen in the past, but it's going to be exciting to follow."

The team has boosted its leadership department with confirmation of a new team principal in the form of Cyril Abiteboul, who takes over from former de facto leader Julien Moncet. Neuville believes that this addition is as important as the i20 N's development.

"We were fighting to get a strong leader for the first part of last season, to get a good team spirit again and to keep the team together and pushing in the right direction," says Neuville. "Myself and Ott pushed for this very hard but it took far too long."

SEASON

PREVIEW



TOYOTA

Elfyn Evans

Toyota regular Elfyn Evans is hungrier than ever for a title challenge after a 2022 campaign that by his own admission fell well short of expectations. He was tipped to be in the thick of the fight last year after finishing runner-up to champion and Toyota team-mate Sebastien Ogier in 2020 and 2021, prior to the eight-time king moving to a part-time programme.

But Evans struggled to adapt to the new hybrid Rally1 GR Yaris as quickly as Kalle Rovanpera, who edged the Welshman into second place on three of his six wins. Evans ended the season without a victory for the first time since 2019, but provided

glimpses that he had finally gelled with the car.

“Of course we never know but, judging by the two seasons prior, last year I fell quite short in terms of our expectation,” admits Evans. “We did make some progress towards the end of the year, but let’s say the results were missing to a point, so of course we’re hoping to try and put better results together this year.

“It’s always difficult to change [your driving style] in a short space of time, but of course we’re working a bit with the car to get it to suit me better, and

ELFYN EVANS

Toyota Gazoo Racing

Co-driver

Scott Martin

WRC starts 118

Wins 5

Podiums 23

Stage wins 132

Points 961

Esapekka Lappi

Now back in a full-time manufacturer seat for the first time since 2019, Esapekka Lappi could steal in to pose a title threat with Hyundai. His return to form was one of the feelgood stories of last year — the Finn grabbed a career lifeline thrown by Toyota and guided the third GR Yaris to three podiums in seven events, helping secure the manufacturers’ title.

After slipping out of the WRC’s top tier at the end of 2020, the one-time rally winner (Finland 2017) has now found himself elevated back into one of the WRC’s plum seats thanks to Ott Tanak’s Hyundai departure. “It’s been crazy to go from not having a drive and then suddenly I’m a full-time driver again,” offers Lappi. “I can say that I was lucky that Mr Tanak was leaving so there was a space free, and then from Hyundai’s point of view I was the best

driver available so I was lucky in terms of that. But it also shows that we did something good last year to prove that we can do this still.”

Although he’s in one the best seats, Lappi has downplayed suggestions he could find himself in the title fight. “I think it would sound stupid if I said we would win the title,” he adds. “I need to see in the first race how we go and forgive myself if we are not in the top five. Then the results need to come. Hunting for my second victory is one of the biggest targets, and also I want to help the team. As we are scoring for the manufacturer we need to keep that in mind as well.”

Lappi has been impressed by the Hyundai: “We have seen that Hyundai caught up a lot of performance compared to Toyota, and maybe at some races they were better than Toyota. I think we are starting on a pretty equal level.”



Lappi's sole WRC victory so far came with Toyota in Finland back in 2017

ESAPEKKA LAPPI

Hyundai Motorsport

Co-driver

Janne Ferm

WRC starts 72

Wins 1

Podiums 10

Stage wins 57

Points 424



No wins last season for the Welshman, so he's hungrier than ever

I'm trying to adapt my style to get the most out of the car as well. We definitely hope we are moving in the right direction on both fronts. I have a great team around me and it's clear that we already had the tools to achieve it last year when you look at Kalle's results, but of course things didn't go so well for us. "Obviously being 12 months into the new car we understand things a lot better and of course the championship is the goal and I feel we are in a better position to challenge."



HYUNDAI

disadvantage of being first on the road this year, he has a much stronger mindset. "Of course I'm more confident than last year starting the event in Monte Carlo," he asserts. "At least I know we should be on the right direction with everything. Of course Monte Carlo is a special event and to be starting the event first on the road is always difficult and nervous. It's not easy to have a clean race there but that is our plan."

“MONTE CARLO IS A SPECIAL EVENT AND TO BE STARTING FIRST ON THE ROAD IS DIFFICULT AND NERVOUS”

The term "clean race" is appropriate. Avoiding dramas, such as the rare crashes he suffered in Belgium and Greece last year, and reaching the finish at every event could carry much more significance in 2023, when the WRC appears set for a tighter championship fight. But as Roanperra proved last year through his stunning powerstage prowess and ability to destroy his opposition, he has more than enough party tricks up his sleeve to again defy the odds and to join the club of consecutive WRC title winners. The question is, can anyone stop him? 🏆



So far five drivers have won consecutive WRC crowns. So far...

ENTRY LIST RALLY1		
NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	TEAM (CAR)
69	Kalle Roanperra/Jonne Halttunen	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1)
33	Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1)
17	Sebastien Ogier/Vincent Landais	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1**)
18	Takamoto Katsuta/Aaron Johnston	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1**)
11	Thierry Neuville/Martijn Wydaeghe	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)
4	Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)
6	Dani Sordo/ Candido Carrera	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1*)
42	Craig Breen/James Fulton	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1*)
8	Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team (Puma Rally1)
7	Pierre-Louis Loubet/Nicolas Gilsoul	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team (Puma Rally1)
9	Jourdan Serderidis/Frederic Miclotte	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team (Puma Rally1 ***)
37	Lorenzo Bertelli/ Simone Scattolin	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1 ****)

*Sharing the third car **Sharing the third car when Ogier is absent ***Contesting Monte Carlo, Mexico, Sardinia and Kenya **** Renting a Toyota for Rally Sweden



SEASON
PREVIEW

CAN OTT BRING M-SPORT IN FROM THE COLD?

The Cumbrian team had a disastrous 2022 with its Ford Pumas following Loeb's first-time-out win on the Monte. But now things are looking up with a Hyundai-deserting former champion in its midst

TOM HOWARD

M-Sport could have spent the off season licking its wounds after a difficult 2022, but instead it's gone all in to rejuvenate its World Rally Championship title hopes by luring back one of its favourite sons, Ott Tanak.

The news that Tanak will rejoin the Cumbrian squad, 12 years after it gave him his first break in the WRC, instantly added a new dimension to the 2023 title fight. That came after Tanak had dropped the bombshell that he would be leaving Hyundai at the end of last season with a year remaining on his contract. It means that all three teams boast either world champions or rally winners in their ranks of full-time drivers, a situation the WRC last experienced in 2019, when Tanak won the world title for Toyota. Last season again offered a reminder of the Estonian's mercurial talent when he emerged as runner-up, and perhaps the only driver able to regularly match and sometimes beat runaway champion Kalle Rovanperä.

Rumours linking Tanak with a return to M-Sport emerged as soon as the cracks in his relationship with Hyundai began to surface, most notably when he didn't receive the team orders he wished for at the Acropolis Rally in September. The Ford operation appeared the obvious choice given the abundance of talent already housed within the ranks at Toyota. After a 'will they, won't they?' saga, eventually a deal was done last month. And Tanak's motive for the move is clear: he wants an opportunity to win the world title again.

"I wouldn't call it unfinished business as we have already won the championship so the business has been done, but from the other side we have everything we need to challenge for the championship and fight for the title," declares Tanak. "I would like to give myself the chance to fight for it again. Toyota and Rovanperä, at the moment they are the two to beat and I would say M-Sport is the place to be. There are people here who are really passionate to do it, so I guess this is the place and it should give me the chance to do it. M-Sport was where I started my career, and I'm not going to say that I will finish my career at M-Sport, but I have been in other places recently and it is interesting to go back."

For M-Sport, snapping up Tanak was a top priority. Last season began with high hopes after Sebastien Loeb, on the first of his four appearances, gave the Puma a win on its debut on the Monte Carlo Rally, while Craig Breen snatched third and Gus Greensmith finished fifth. But that proved to be a false dawn — only one more podium followed, courtesy of Breen in Sardinia, before a run of high-profile crashes from the team leader and his team-mates Adrien Fourmaux and Greensmith.

The unravelling of what had promised to be an M-Sport return to the top prompted team chief Malcolm Wilson to make changes. Out »

Signing up Tanak, who started his World Rally career with M-Sport, was the top priority for Wilson

MCKLEIN



SEASON PREVIEW



GIBSON/M-SPORT

went Breen, who was just one season into a two-year deal and has moved back to Hyundai, Fourmaux has been placed in M-Sport's WRC2 programme, while Greensmith has also dropped into WRC2, with Toksport. "Last year was obviously very difficult for us and difficult for me," admits Wilson. "It was important for me to do something for all the people here that do such a good job to give them something to be motivated about. I'm delighted that we've managed to get Ott and I can't wait for the season to kick off."

Wilson says that the key to securing Tanak was a test behind closed doors at M-Sport's Greystoke proving ground. "The great thing is that he had the desire as well to come back to us," he adds. "Obviously I had the desire to get him. It was hard for me as everybody knows he doesn't come for free, shall we say. The most important thing for me was that he was happy with the car and our plans. The last thing I wanted was for him to come to us and then find that he wasn't happy with this and that."



McKLEIN

Estonian quit Hyundai with a year left on his contract

"I did exactly the same with Sebastien Ogier back in 2016. It was pointless getting into a relationship if he didn't have confidence in the car from day one. That was the first hurdle, and once we got over that the main thing that took the time was finding a way to piece the whole thing together."

The objective for 2023 is clear to Wilson. At times in 2022, M-Sport ran as many as five Pumas on WRC events, which stretched the resources of a team that is already dwarfed by those of manufacturer rivals Toyota and Hyundai. This year, the majority of the season will feature just two full-time Pumas,

with Pierre-Louis Loubet occupying the other seat alongside Tanak. There is also still hope of a deal with Loeb for selected outings.

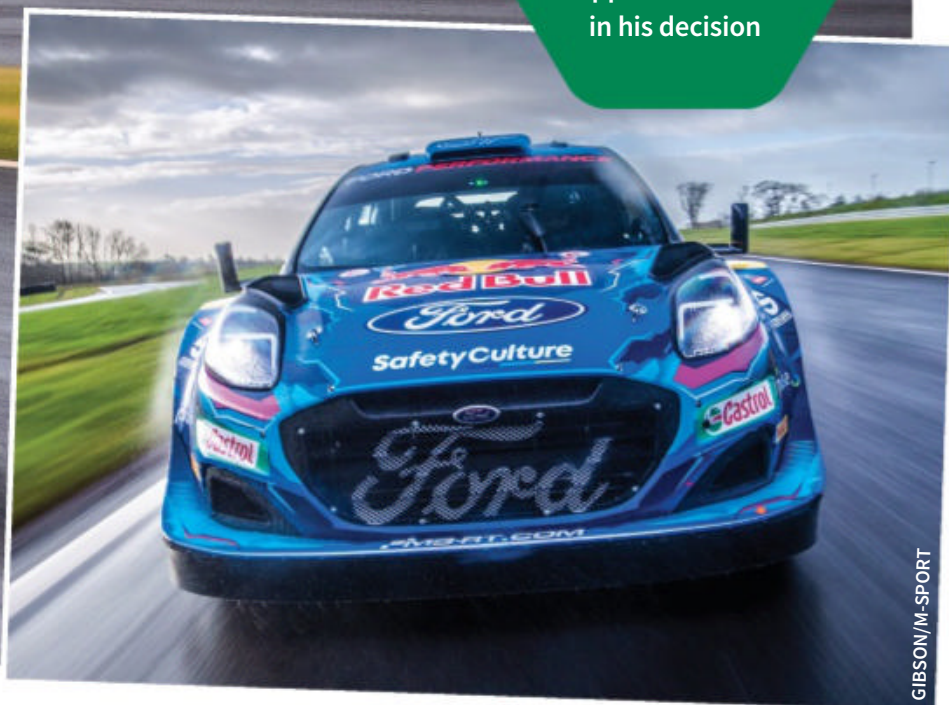
"I've got to be honest, I'm putting all of our effort in trying to get rally wins and to try and get him [Ott] the drivers' title," states Wilson. "We want to give him the best opportunity and by doing that it gives him more test days, so that's clearly the target. We haven't got the



Pre-Monte test has reinforced Tanak's favourable impression of the Puma after initial outing helped seal deal

M-SPORT

Tanak cites
M-Sport's strong
infrastructure and
support from Ford
in his decision



GIBSON/M-SPORT

“THERE WON'T BE ANY LIMITATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT SIDE, SO THAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING”

strength in depth and resource to challenge for the manufacturers' title, so we are putting everything into going for the drivers' and event wins.”

While the plan makes sense on paper, it remains to be seen whether M-Sport can provide the machinery to compete with Toyota and Hyundai, both of which have unveiled upgrades to their cars for 2023. But Tanak is already impressed with the Puma following his first proper test outing ahead of this week's Monte Carlo opener. The 35-year-old says he has been assured that the team won't be lacking in the development race.

“The team has a great infrastructure and they have strong support from Ford also, so if we all work together and we really want it badly then we can make everything happen,” adds Tanak. “For sure all the other big manufacturer teams when they get their things rolling they can move very fast, and I know from other places that the development rate can be very fast as well. I'm sure we can do it. There won't be any limitation on the development side, so that is the most important thing. They want to prove what they are in this sport so I'm sure it will be an interesting time.”

Wilson, likewise, is unconcerned about the development battle: “I think the great thing is with the way the technical regulations are now, there is very little you can do, and don't get me wrong – there is always something you can do. But we've got this fantastic resource from Ford in the US which we'll continue to use, so I'm not worried about that. I still believe we have an incredible car, and you've just got to look at what Loeb did last year. He led almost every rally he did, and no disrespect to Sebastien but he shouldn't be able to do that at the age he is.

“Now Ott has done a bit of time in the car he's got a better idea of the direction he wants to go. Initially it will be tuning the car to suit him, but obviously the team has a plan as to what they're looking at to evolve throughout the season.”

Should M-Sport deliver on its development plan, it's now up to Tanak to rekindle the form that helped him achieve rallying's ultimate prize in 2019. “At the beginning of last year, Toyota was quite strong but going into this year everybody has some experience [with these new cars],” he points out. “For myself, it's going to be a bit more challenging with the new team going to the rallies. I won't have the experience from last year, but the team has the data and the information so I just need to put it together for myself.”

LOUBET'S FULL-TIME CHANCE

A disastrous 2021 left Pierre-Louis Loubet in a hospital bed contemplating an uncertain future in the World Rally Championship, but now he's set to embark on a “dream-come-true” moment. A whirlwind 12 months has led to the 2019 WRC2 champion being selected by M-Sport as one of its two full-time WRC pilots, alongside likely title contender Ott Tanak.

It has been quite some turnaround following the misery of 2021. The stages were littered with disappointment and accidents in his 2C Competition Hyundai, and then Loubet missed the final two rounds with a broken hip after he was hit by a speeding car while crossing a street in Paris.

M-Sport saw something in Loubet, and handed him a lifeline with a seven-round programme last year. The Frenchman grasped the opportunity with both hands. He scored two career-best fourth-place finishes in Sardinia and Greece, racked up his first three stage wins, and led a WRC round for the first time.

“It's something that I have been dreaming about since I was a kid,” smiles Loubet. “To do my first full season, and to do the main passion in my life every weekend is something truly fantastic.”



M-SPORT

Loubet – “an old head on young shoulders”

The full season takes off a lot of pressure because I know that I have 13 events to give me a chance to show all my potential, and gives me the space to grow and learn. In 2023, my most important goal will be to finish every event, to gain experience and learn to know where we can push and go for maximum speed.”

M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson believes that Loubet has proven he is now ready for his moment as a fully fledged manufacturer points-scoring driver. “From my side Pierre-Louis was the most improved driver in the championship last year,” he says. “He's ready to do the whole championship now, he's an old head on young shoulders.”

Fourth-place finishes in Sardinia and Greece (pictured) were 2022 high points



McKLEIN

SEASON
PREVIEW



HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT

HYUNDAI

M-SPORT FORD



GIBSON/M-SPORT

TOYOTA GAZOO RACING



TOYOTA

2023

WHAT'S NEW IN WRC

The second season of the new hybrid rules doesn't promise anything too radical, although there's a new event, a new team boss and a shake-up in the driver line-ups...

TOM HOWARD

REVISED RALLY1 CARS

WRC teams have spent the off-season refining their Rally1 machines ahead of a second season under the hybrid rules.

Reigning champion Toyota has not stood still. The pronounced airboxes that adorned the flanks of the car to cool the hybrid unit have been replaced with a much smoother, more aerodynamic design, since it was found that the 2022 design overestimated the amount of cooling required for the hybrid unit. This has resulted in a redesign of the rear fenders and arches. The rear wing has also been tweaked to compensate for the new aero package. In addition to the aero changes, Toyota has elected to upgrade its 1.6-litre engine to improve the delivery of power and torque.

Hyundai has revealed noticeable changes to the aero on its i20 N. The 2023 car features updated bodywork to the front and rear. The bonnet has been flattened and extended, while the front arches have also been modified. The team has opted for a heavily revised rear wing and wing mirrors. The new look extended front end has turned the nose of the car into effectively an extra splitter. A new rear wing has been designed, with last year's central wing and endplate option transformed into one continuous wing covering the maximum width of the car.

M-Sport has unveiled a bold new look for its Puma Rally1, with an electric-blue-and-pink livery. While the car looks similar to the 2022 model, the team plans to continue its development during the season.



REE/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

NEW CALENDAR

A brand-new asphalt rally is among a number of changes to the 13-round calendar for the 2023 season. The Central Europe Rally, based in Passau

in South-East Germany and venturing into Austria and the Czech Republic, will take place as the penultimate round from 26-29 October at the beginning of a three-year deal with the WRC. It effectively replaces Rally Spain, which has been a mainstay of the schedule since 1991.

Mexico's gravel stages return to the schedule for the first time since 2020, when the event was shortened due to COVID-19. It's just one half of the WRC's return to Latin America, with Chile also back on the calendar after its debut in 2019 – that country was due to host the WRC in 2020, but its gravel rally was cancelled due to political unrest.

WRC organisers had hoped to expand to 14 events before plans for a round in the Middle East were shelved until 2024. As a result, the calendar will include eight gravel rallies, four on asphalt and one snow-based event in Sweden. New Zealand and Belgium have joined Spain in falling off the calendar. It is hoped that New Zealand could return next year, while the WRC has not ruled out Spain rejoining the schedule in the future.

Japan will once again host the final round of the season following its comeback last year.

WRC 2023 CALENDAR

RD	EVENT (SURFACE)	DATE
1	Monte Carlo (asphalt/mix)	19-22 January
2	Sweden (snow)	9-12 February
3	Mexico (gravel)	16-19 March
4	Croatia (asphalt)	20-23 April
5	Portugal (gravel)	11-14 May
6	Italy (gravel)	1-4 June
7	Safari (gravel)	22-25 June
8	Estonia (gravel)	20-23 July
9	Finland (gravel)	3-6 August
10	Acropolis (gravel)	7-10 September
11	Chile (gravel)	28 September - 1 October
12	Central Europe (asphalt)	26-29 October
13	Japan (asphalt)	16-19 November

NEW TEAM BOSS FOR HYUNDAI

Hyundai has appointed ex-Renault Formula 1 team boss Cyril Abiteboul as new team principal of its WRC and customer racing programmes. Abiteboul effectively replaces Julien Moncet, who was the team's de facto leader in 2022 following the departure of long-time team principal Andrea Adamo at the end of 2021.

"I don't think anyone would be surprised to learn that we are targeting both championship titles in

WRC," says Abiteboul. "The team has previously won the manufacturers' crown twice, but never the drivers' title. Both tell a different story, yet they are equally important. The team won five rallies last year, and the goal is to improve on that. Again, I am taking that with humility; I can't say how many we will win this season as I am still new to the world of rally. First I need to understand the lay of the land, and then determine the contribution I can make."



HYUNDAI

TOYOTA



TESTING REDUCTION

The sporting regulations have undergone a refresh, with arguably the biggest change being a reduction in testing. Each team's allocation has gone down from 28 days to 21 (seven per driver) in a bid to reduced costs and improve sustainability. Last year, each manufacturer driver would complete a pre-event test day prior to all European rounds.

The move has prompted mixed views among teams and drivers. "We welcome it for sure," proclaims M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson. "Testing is one of the most expensive parts for us for WRC." But Hyundai's Thierry Neuville is damning. "For me it's ridiculous, we need to be prepared," fumes the Belgian. "We have many events with bad shakedown that are not representative at all, and not having a test could make it somehow dangerous at some point if you don't get the right

settings from the beginning. But it is what it is. I think teams will go and participate in small national rallies around the area, which again will be much more expensive and time consuming as well for the drivers and the team."

Also new for this year, Rally1 drivers will be restricted to a total of 28 tyres during an event, and will no longer be handed an extra four tyres for use in shakedown.

For gravel rallies only, organisers have removed the 15 minutes of service normally held before the start of each day. "By removing the morning service and trimming the flexi-service window for P1 cars, we can reduce the working day by up to three hours, which will benefit team members but also the many volunteer officials, including scrutineers and service park marshals," explains FIA rally director Andrew Wheatley.

WRC STARS RETURN TO WRC2

WRC2 is set for arguably its most competitive season, with the field now populated by three drivers who were competing in the top tier last year. Adrien Fourmaux has been moved into M-Sport's WRC2 programme, while his 2022 team-mate Gus Greensmith is lining up with Toksport. The Brit will begin his campaign in Mexico, and is joined at the squad by Oliver Solberg after the Swede was dropped from Hyundai's WRC line-up. The pair will both drive the all-new Skoda Fabia RS (right).

The trio join a packed entry including reigning champions Emil Lindholm and Reeta Hamalainen, who will be back at Toksport. They are likely to face competition from 2022 title contender Yohan Rossel (Citroen) and Junior WRC runner-up Sami Pajari (Skoda), while Briton Chris Ingram returns to the class in a Skoda.



NEW DRIVER LINE-UPS

TOYOTA



TAKAMOTO KATSUTA

HYUNDAI



CRAIG BREEN

One of the wildest silly seasons has resulted in all three Rally1 teams heading into 2023 with changes to their driver line-ups.

The driver merry-go-round was triggered by 2019 world champion Ott Tanak leaving Hyundai with a year remaining on his contract. The Estonian has secured a return to M-Sport, where he began his WRC career in 2011, to lead a much-changed line-up. French rising star Pierre-Louis Loubet will fill the second seat after impressing during a seven-round campaign for M-Sport last season. A third Puma will be entered on selected events, with Jourdan Serderidis locked in for Monte Carlo, Mexico, Sardinia and Kenya.

Hyundai has filled the void left by Tanak by signing one-time WRC rally winner Esapekka Lappi from Toyota, where he was sharing the third GR Yaris with Sebastien Ogier in 2022. The deal means Lappi returns to a full-time top-flight WRC drive for the first time since his season at M-Sport in 2020.

Craig Breen was vying for that seat after his exit from

M-Sport halfway through a two-year deal following a dismal 2022 campaign. The Irishman has secured a drive in the third i20 N, which he will share with Dani Sordo. Breen effectively replaces Oliver Solberg, while Hyundai stalwart Thierry Neuville will continue to lead the team. "It's something fresh and I'm looking forward to getting the whole thing under way," says Breen. "I just want to get back on form again and get some good results."

Lappi's surprise departure from Toyota has prompted a promotion for Takamoto Katsuta, who will now share the third GR Yaris with Ogier. Katsuta will drive the fourth GR Yaris at rounds where Ogier is driving the third car. World champion Kalle Rovanpera and Elfyn Evans lead the line-up. "I'm really excited to make this next step in my career," says Katsuta. "To have this kind of role with the team has been a big target for me. Of course it will bring a bit more pressure, but I'm very motivated to keep working hard and to do the best job I can for the team."



SEASON

PREVIEW

LANCIA

AND THE SMASH-AND-GRAB MONTE

Audi should have been invincible in the snow. But unexpectedly warm weather and some left-field thinking from the Italians turned the tables. Forty years on, it's time to look back with team boss Cesare Fiorio

TOM HOWARD

Lancia's surprise victory to kick off the 1983 World Rally Championship season on the Monte Carlo Rally, and in doing so defeat the all-conquering four-wheel-drive Audi Quattro, has gone down in rallying folklore and deserves a place among the great motorsport giant-killing stories. It was a win that kicked off a fierce yet fascinating rivalry with Audi that ultimately went the way of the plucky Italian marque. To this day, Lancia's rear-wheel-drive 037 rocket remains the last two-wheel-drive car to win the manufacturers' crown.

"I think the biggest surprise was for us to win the Monte Carlo event," recounts Cesare Fiorio, Lancia's team principal of the time.

"It was the first event of the year and normally it was a rally that we should have lost as there was snow, but we managed to take it away somehow. That is when we knew we were competitive."

Heading into 1983, the effects of a rule change from four years earlier, to admit four-wheel-drive vehicles in the Group B WRC regulations, was fully felt. The rally world was still in shock, with Opel, Toyota, Nissan and Lancia left dumbfounded by the dominance of Audi's new fire-breathing monster. Hannu Mikkola and Michele Mouton had accumulated five wins in 1982 as the Ingolstadt marque wrapped up the coveted manufacturers' title, while Opel's Walter Rohrl pipped Mouton to the drivers' crown.



MCKLEIN



Reigning champion
Rohrl joined Lancia
for selected events

"We had a long history of winning cars before with the Fulvia, the Stratos, and we were very competitive at that time, but all of a sudden the four-wheel-driven Audi arrived," continues Fiorio. "It was the only four-wheel-driven car in the championship and they were winning everything. We didn't have the technology of four-wheel drive to compete against them. So we thought, 'What are we going to do?'"

Lancia's response was to create the lightweight (975kg), mid-

engined, rear-wheel-drive 037. It was a game changer. A sleek body fitted over a tubular chassis was combined with a supercharged four-cylinder engine capable of producing a little over 300bhp. The car would be a rocket on Tarmac, but perhaps not a match for the Audi on the loose surfaces. The car made its debut at the back end of 1982, not to much fanfare, but the refined version that debuted in 1983 was a different matter – although heading into Monte Carlo, where ice and snow was expected, Audi appeared to be in pole position to dominate.

"Normally in Monte Carlo there is a lot of snow so the four-wheel-drive car had the big advantage," explains Fiorio. "But that year only on one stage there was some snow. We thought we had a better chance and we realised we were very competitive; it was a very good car."

Lancia also had a strong driver line-up. It had persuaded reigning champion Rohrl to leave Opel and join marque superstar Markku Alen, although Rohrl had no interest in defending his title and only wanted to contest certain events to his preference. Fortunately for Lancia, its Monte Carlo hopes were raised by unseasonably warm temperatures, meaning the customary snow and ice was limited to a smattering on sections of the famous Alpine ribbons of asphalt. To make the conditions even more favourable, Lancia took matters into its own hands thanks to the ingenuity of its flamboyant leader Fiorio – and some salt.

"I must say I knew there was a stage with a lot of snow on, so I went to the French police and I didn't wear my Lancia clothing and I was like a tourist," he recalls. "I said that I nearly got killed on this road because >>

the ice is absolutely dangerous, so I asked if they could clear this road because it was not possible to pass. They said they would take care of this and they did. But after that we did buy some salt to help clear the ice, but only on one stage.”

This wasn’t to be the only Lancia stunt. While snow and ice was at a premium, it was Audi that starred on the opening day. Stig Blomqvist opened up a 10s lead over Opel’s Guy Freuelin, while Rohrl was a further six seconds back in the lead 037. “It hasn’t been the conditions that this car needs, without the snow and ice, but now we can see this

“AT THE TIME THERE WERE NO RULES FORBIDDING CREWS TO CHANGE ALL FOUR WHEELS DURING A LIVE STAGE”

car works on Tarmac,” said a confident Blomqvist at the time.

Lancia would strike back on the second day, when the devastating performance of the 037 on dry asphalt was plain for all to see. The Quattros of Blomqvist, Mikkola and Mouton were outclassed by the mosquito-like 037s that ate up the twisty roads. Rohrl claimed nine of the day’s 14 stages as Lancia stunned Audi with its pace. The Martini-liveried 037s filled the top two spots, with Alen 3m26s behind Rohrl, while the nearest Audi, driven by Blomqvist, was a staggering 8m22s adrift in third.

While the conditions had been favourable for Lancia, it was also



Canny Lancia boss
Fiorio enlisted police
help in clearing ice

McKLEIN

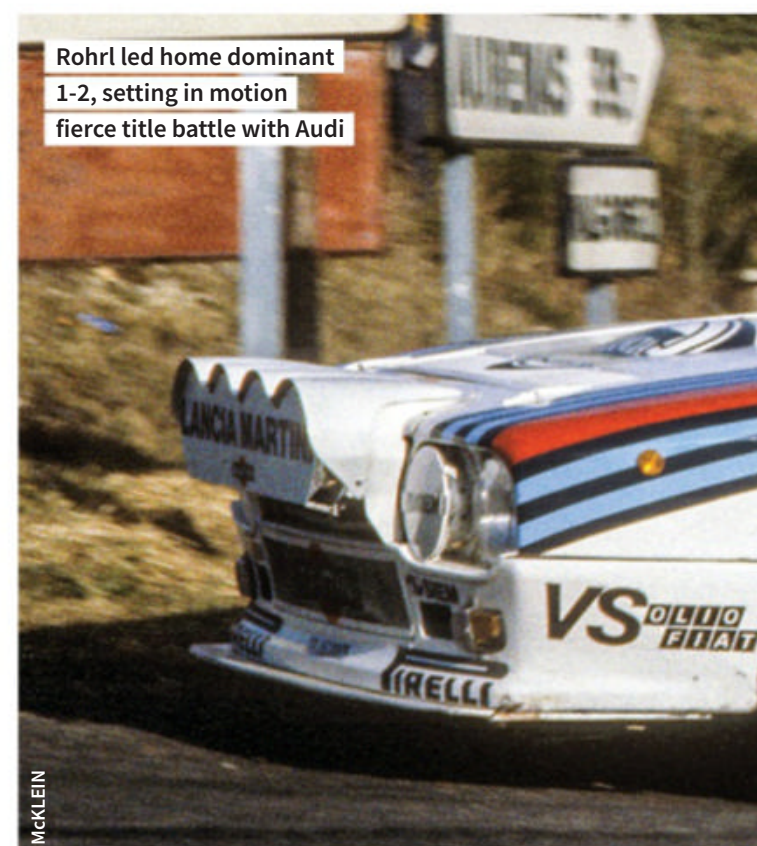


Mid-engined, two-wheel-drive 037 was a
giant-killer on the Monte

McKLEIN

helped by another party trick that caught its rivals napping. At the time there were no rules forbidding crews to change all four wheels during a live stage, and so the in-stage pitstop phenomenon was born. Having the opportunity to tackle the dry sections of the stages on slicks and stopping to fit studded snow tyres before the icy parts provided a huge advantage to the tune of two minutes, as Fiorio explains: “What I calculated was that it was an advantage as they were very long stages, some 40 kilometres. The stages were mostly dry or with some snow. There was a stage where the first 25 kilometres was without snow and the last 10 had the snow, so I said it is time we can gain by putting studded tyres on for the last 10 kilometres.

“I trained the guys to do that. We were not like Formula 1, who can do that in two seconds now, but at that time we had four studs for each wheel. I organised a big machine that could take all the studs out together and we came on the side on the road to do the pitstop. Putting on new studded tyres at the start of the snow we got a big advantage. We were doing it in 45 seconds which was a good time, but the gain was more, about two minutes.”



Rohrl led home dominant
1-2, setting in motion
fierce title battle with Audi

McKLEIN



Italian squad's service crew were deployed for in-stage tyre changes



Audi was strong on dry asphalt, with Blomqvist in front on the opening day

“We had a big discussion about it first but we had to do it: without the studs, we wouldn't have got up the hill,” remembers Rohrl. “I was first and it was horrible just sitting there in the middle of the stage for a minute, doing nothing. There was a fantastic atmosphere though, with all the spectators and journalists, just like a pitlane.”

The in-stage pitstop was quickly copied by rival teams in the events following, before the FIA eventually banned the practice in 1986. In the meantime, there was no catching the Lancias of Rohrl and Alen, and the pair completed a crushing 1-2. The third factory 037, driven by French ace Jean-Claude Andruet, finished eighth after suffering a supercharger failure on day two. The giant-killing was complete as Lancia won 20 of the 31 stages. The best from the shell-shocked Audi squad was Blomqvist, 11m18s adrift in third. “It was a big moment because Audi was dominating the scene with the four-wheel-drive car and all the other manufacturers didn't really have a chance,” reflects Fiorio. “So at that moment it was a great victory, but it was not the only win we had that year.”

Indeed, this was the start of a fierce battle against Audi that concluded with Lancia claiming an unexpected title win. Despite the Italian marque electing not to turn up to compete on the snow of Sweden or the rough Safari Rally — both events featured the

expected Audi domination — it managed to wrap up the title with two rounds to spare, courtesy of a memorable 1-2-3 on home soil in Sanremo. That success followed wins in Corsica (Alen), the Acropolis (Rohrl) and New Zealand (Rohrl).

The Lancia-Audi rivalry is even the subject of a movie set to hit the big screen. *Win*, directed by Italian Stefano Mordini, is currently in post-production. Riccardo Scamarcio, who plays the Italian mob boss in action thriller *John Wick: Chapter 2*, has been cast as Fiorio, while Daniel Bruhl, who played Niki Lauda in the Formula 1 film *Rush*, is to portray Audi chief Roland Gumpert. German actor Volker Bruch will play the role of Rohrl. London-based Hanway Films is handling the worldwide sale of the film, which is yet to receive a release date.

And how will Scamarcio portray the title-clinching event in Italy? “The thing I remember of Sanremo was that one of the Audi team arrived in our service where we had two of the cars on the jacks,” smiles Fiorio. “He came near our rally cars and he went underneath the cars. I said, ‘What are you doing? This is not the Audi service, this is Lancia.’ He said he was just looking because he also thought we had four-wheel drive in this car because he said you couldn't go this fast with a two-wheel-drive car. He was very disappointed to learn that we had only two-wheel drive.”



RACE CENTRE

Dennis was as surprised as anyone by the dominant nature of his victory



Di Grassi and Wehrlein flank man of the moment Dennis

Dennis and Porsche head the new generation

Formula E's Gen3 era kicked off with more unpredictability as Jake Dennis recovered from poor pre-season testing to dominate in Mexico in his Andretti Porsche

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

An undercurrent of trepidation accompanied the dawning of Formula E's third-generation era. Throughout the off-season, a series of concerns became apparent, and threatened to take the sheen away from the all-electric championship's next epoch. The paddock was hoping for a clean race, devoid of troubles; as the chequered flag fell in Mexico City, it appeared that it had got its wish.

Once last year's Seoul finale came to a close, the venerable Gen2 cars were put out to pasture. Formula E's facts and figures pertaining to the new car were impressive, but private and collective testing uncovered multiple teething issues. The new battery was prone to overheating and derating, requiring a packaging redesign. Supply chain problems interrupted manufacturer testing, meaning that spare parts were at a premium. But the biggest concern heading into Mexico's season opener related to the brakes, particularly since the Gen3 machinery relies purely on the motor to stop the rear wheels.

It was a troubled birth for the new car, but Formula E CEO Alejandro Agag reckoned those difficulties were small-fry compared to those on the series' first generation. History shows that the first Formula E race in Beijing, back in 2014, was surprisingly trouble-free – and it will show that the Gen3 era began in similar fashion. As the old saying goes: it'll be alright on the night.

The start of the Gen3 era yielded more parallels to the early days of the previous two generations. Lucas di Grassi won that Beijing race, albeit helped by a collision between Nicolas Prost and Nick Heidfeld on the final lap. When Gen2 started in 2018, the BMW Andretti team secured the first victory of that era thanks to Antonio Felix da Costa's efforts. That di Grassi secured pole in Mexico thanks to other drivers' misfortune and Andretti kicked off Gen3 with a win courtesy of Jake Dennis's crushing domination proved a befitting coincidence for the new season. The more things change...

Braking concerns remained at the forefront of people's apprehensions before the weekend, and so the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez 'short course' was given a few tweaks. The barrier at Turn 1 was removed, offering the entire straight on the full course as potential runoff, while a chicane was added after the hairpin to slow things down heading into the Foro Sol section of the course. An emergency braking kit has been fast-tracked for the Diriyah round at the end of the month to act as a failsafe, which should fix those concerns in the future.

While it's a fool's errand to read too much into testing, particularly in Formula E, Valencia's running suggested that the Maserati MSG team (formerly Venturi) and the new DS Penske alliance would go to Mexico as the firm favourites. Practice did nothing to scotch those opinions; DS Penske's Jean-Eric Vergne was fastest in Friday's FP1 despite not attempting a full 350kW lap, and 0.004 seconds behind Porsche's Pascal Wehrlein in FP2 after again resisting the temptation to try a run on the full allowance of power.

Formula E, however, doesn't do predictable. Vergne was arguably the biggest scalp taken in his qualifying group when he endured an incredibly messy session and, despite his efforts to find clear track



“The start to the Gen3 era yielded parallels to the early days of the previous two generations”

by stopping at the exit of the stadium and waiting for Sebastien Buemi to come past, he couldn't get into the duels. Instead, it was the first bellwether of the Andretti Porsches' seemingly sudden turn of speed as new recruit Andre Lotterer set the pace and could afford to sit back while his time remained unbeaten. The Envision Jaguar of Buemi knocked da Costa's Porsche out, and Mahindra man di Grassi and rookie Sacha Fenestraz (Nissan) booked their spots in the knockouts, to much surprise.

Reigning champion Stoffel Vandoorne, now with DS Penske, couldn't progress from the second group. In a group containing his 2022 title rivals Mitch Evans (Jaguar) and Edoardo Mortara (Maserati), there was some expectation that one of the three would make it into the top four, but all fell by the wayside. Instead, the British trio of Dennis, Dan Ticktum (who showed great pace in a revitalised NIO 333 team) and McLaren rookie Jake Hughes progressed, Wehrlein dumping Evans out in the final runs to set up a thrilling series of quarter-finals.

Di Grassi had perhaps confounded his own expectations already at this point. Mahindra had made no secret that it felt it was behind the other manufacturers owing to cancelled tests, and what the Brazilian described as “basic systems” for the interim as it aims to catch up on lost development. But he surprised again by dispatching old foe Buemi in their quarter-final bout, by a scant 0.019s, to become the first qualifying semi-finalist of the season. >>



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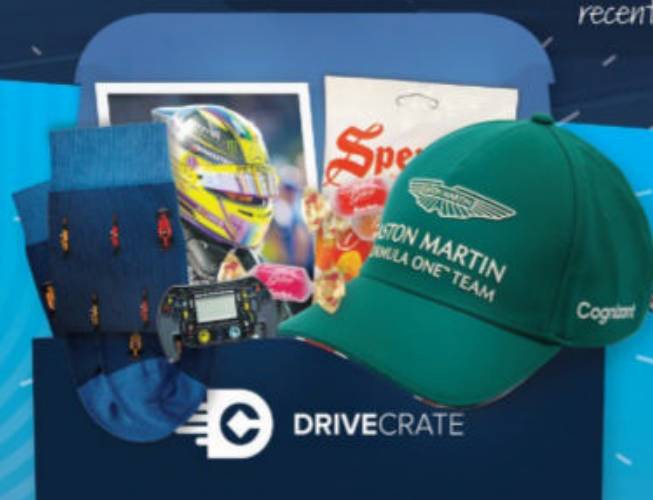
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Lotterer continued to show the Andretti pace by eclipsing Fenestraz in another close battle. Hughes, meanwhile, secured a top-four on the grid first time out in defeating Ticktum.

The Dennis-Wehrlein quarter-final was one-way traffic in the opening two sectors; the Nuneaton native was 0.4s clear by the end of the second split, but an altercation with a bollard in the stadium wiped out his front-wing endplate and much of his patiently accrued buffer. Still, he had just enough in hand to progress, setting him up for a Great British Jake Off in the semi-finals with Hughes.

Lotterer went into his semi-final with di Grassi as the favourite,

“He had just enough in hand to progress, setting him up for a Great British Jake Off”

but his chances of making the final were ended when he went wide at the Turn 5 hairpin, giving di Grassi a safe passage into the shootout for pole. Dennis joined him there after progressing past Hughes, despite the FIA not granting him dispensation to change his front wing. With the car out of balance while the wing flapped about, Dennis suffered two lock-ups in the final shootout, and di Grassi simply had to keep it clean to secure his first FE pole in nearly five and a half years.

Although the Mahindra set-up had good one-lap performance, there were concerns about its race software. Abt driver Robin Frijns reckoned that “the efficiency is going to be fine, but we just don’t have the software to run it smoothly”. Di Grassi held the line at the start, while Dennis was preoccupied with getting the right line for Turn 1 to ward off a fast-starting Hughes, but a pin was put in proceedings when Frijns crashed into the back of Norman Nato



at the Turns 9-10 chicane. The violent twitch on the steering wheel broke the Dutchman’s wrist, and his stranded Cupra-liveried Abt Mahindra prompted the emergence of the safety car.

Green-flag running on the sixth-lap restart was fleeting, as Sam Bird pulled over with a driveshaft failure to cap off a torrid weekend. Di Grassi had therefore barely needed to defend his lead in the opening 10 laps, but on the second restart quickly found that Dennis was going nowhere. On lap 12, the Paulista felt the pressure and made a mistake into Turn 1, granting the Briton an opportunity to make a play for the lead. He grasped that opportunity with both hands.

The difference between Andretti’s Porsche powertrain and the Mahindra became apparent in the succeeding laps. Porsche had dominated last year’s Mexico City round and seemed to be enjoying a repeat of its fortunes despite the different technology, as Dennis quickly began to stretch his advantage to leave di Grassi trailing »

WHAT WERE THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF GEN3?

The Hankook tyres screeched like banshees as the drivers tortured the last ounce of grip from them through the medium-speed corners. And, through the Peraltada, they were on a knife-edge; Rene Rast and Edoardo Mortara went beyond the limits in practice as the cars bucked under load and threw them into the wall.

A lot was expected of the new cars during the race, particularly with how the drivers would go into battle in them. Their diminutive size hinted that they would be much more

conducive to close on-track fights through Formula E’s notoriously narrow cast of circuits, while the increase in power promised faster lap times. Both of those plot points remained relatively inconclusive in Mexico City, for multiple reasons. Firstly, the addition of the chicane for this year denied a true like-for-like comparison in the pace stakes, while overtaking proved slightly more difficult since the safety-car periods produced a surplus of energy. And, when everyone’s going flat-out,

it’s harder to plan passes around that.

The Gen3 machinery has potential to produce exciting races, but the drivers don’t quite have their heads around the new car when it comes to those on-track battles. The Gen2 car was much more forgiving when it came to drivers leaning on each other during overtaking opportunities, because they knew that the extra bodywork protecting the key parts could be risked for a shot at a do-or-die pass. With exposed wheels and a longer nose, the Gen3 doesn’t quite allow for that.

Regardless, from a purely visual standpoint, the cars look great on track. Early concerns over their aesthetics don’t quite translate to the TV screen, and the jet-fighter-inspired design adds to that sense of speed.

Were the early technical worries justified? To a degree, yes. You could argue that the emergency braking kit should have come as standard from the start, but it was pleasing to see that nobody suffered from any brake failures during the race. It’s still early days, but it’s been a solid start to Formula E’s new era.





Andretti's struggles in testing made Dennis's victory taste all the sweeter

in his wake. This was exacerbated once Dennis took his first minute of attack mode a lap later to build a one-second-plus gap, which continued to build to put the Andretti driver firmly in control.

With Dennis out of reach, di Grassi had to contend with Hughes and Lotterer behind him. Although in his first Formula E race, Hughes looked like part of the furniture. He impressed throughout the weekend, and was attempting to pressure the car ahead into another mistake. Di Grassi's pursuers took a minute of attack mode on lap 15 to try to forge a way past, but Wehrlein behind them had wisely decided to split his 350kW allowance into two sets of two minutes, which gave him the momentum to clear Lotterer for fourth.

Dennis was then reeled back in on lap 18, when Mortara lost the rear of his Maserati-powered car and hit the barrier backwards at Turn 1. This wiped out a near four-second lead out front, but di Grassi couldn't cling to the leader's coat-tails on the lap 21 restart and gave Dennis enough breathing space to rebuild his advantage.

Hughes continued his advances on di Grassi, hoping to snatch second place and chase after his namesake, having built a 2% energy advantage on the Mahindra ahead. But di Grassi's defensive moves were stellar, warding off any assaults into the Turn 5 hairpin by holding the inside line tightly and flooring the accelerator to get the drive out of the corner.

This continued to bring Wehrlein into play, and the German performed a repeat of the move he'd put on former team-mate Lotterer. After taking a second dose of attack mode a lap prior, Wehrlein followed Hughes through the stadium and, when the

"I asked for the gap. But five laps later it was like another second bigger. So I'd surprised myself!"

Birmingham-born McLaren man took his own second activation, slipped past to claim third.

Wehrlein waited for di Grassi's second attack mode, a three-minute spell of 350kW, to elapse before making an assault for second place. At this point, di Grassi was lower on energy than the cars around him and had to lift and coast into Turn 9, giving last year's winner an easy route past into the chicane to collect second place. With the works Porsche behind him, albeit now four seconds down the road, Dennis admitted to thinking that he was perhaps going to come under pressure for his lead. "When Pascal got into second, I asked for the gap," Dennis explained after the race. "But five laps later it was like another second bigger. So I'd surprised myself!"

The two were largely equal on power, but Dennis was ultimately quicker; as Wehrlein drew clear of di Grassi and the chasing pack, Dennis continued to expand his lead. Although the race was scheduled for 36 laps, the earlier safety-car interruptions took it into extra time, with five laps added on to the end. The lead gap was 5.5s at the end of the 36th tour, but that hardly stopped Dennis from pressing on. At the flag on lap 41, Dennis wheeled away in celebration with a crushing 7.8s in hand over Wehrlein. Although the teams were different, Mexico yielded another Porsche 1-2.

Di Grassi meanwhile continued to have the widest car on the track, albeit helped from Hughes's renewed challenge when Rene Rast's sister McLaren Nissan came to a stop on the exit of Turn 7. A yellow flag meant that Hughes could not make a way past through the chicane, and ended up overconsuming energy owing to a lack of rear grip. Once the yellow had abated, di Grassi was too far ahead, and Hughes then fell to Lotterer on the final lap.

The day belonged to Dennis, however, who admitted that Andretti's struggles in testing meant that a win (and the manner thereof) came as a surprise. "They don't come much better than that; I think it's my biggest Formula E win! I'm super-happy, but I didn't expect it at all," Dennis gushed after the race. "I'm a lot more confident than I was coming into this weekend; we were one of the slowest in Valencia, and to turn it around [even though] we haven't changed much..."

The difficult part was over for Formula E after the early worries and, despite Porsche's domination, the 2022-23 season still promises to be thrilling and unpredictable. The new cars did their part – but there's some way to go before the championship battle takes shape. 🏆



Di Grassi thwarted McLaren rookie Hughes with defensive masterclass

IN THE HEADLINES

WOES FOR VERGNE

Jean-Eric Vergne worked his way back into the points for DS Penske after a miserable qualifying session, but a battery issue at the end relegated him to 12th. He'd clashed earlier with Sacha Fenestraz, breaking his front wing. "I fought very hard with no front wing to score some points, but it all went away in the last lap," he lamented.

CONFUSION HURTS HUGHES

Jake Hughes looked set for a fourth place on his debut, and reckoned confusion over a Turn 9 yellow flag cost him a position to Andre Lotterer. "Apparently it was removed and I didn't get told," said Hughes. There was still a light on at the exit of Turn 6. I lifted and unfortunately Andre got told the right message, so he got me on the last lap."

ROWLAND AND RAST CLASH

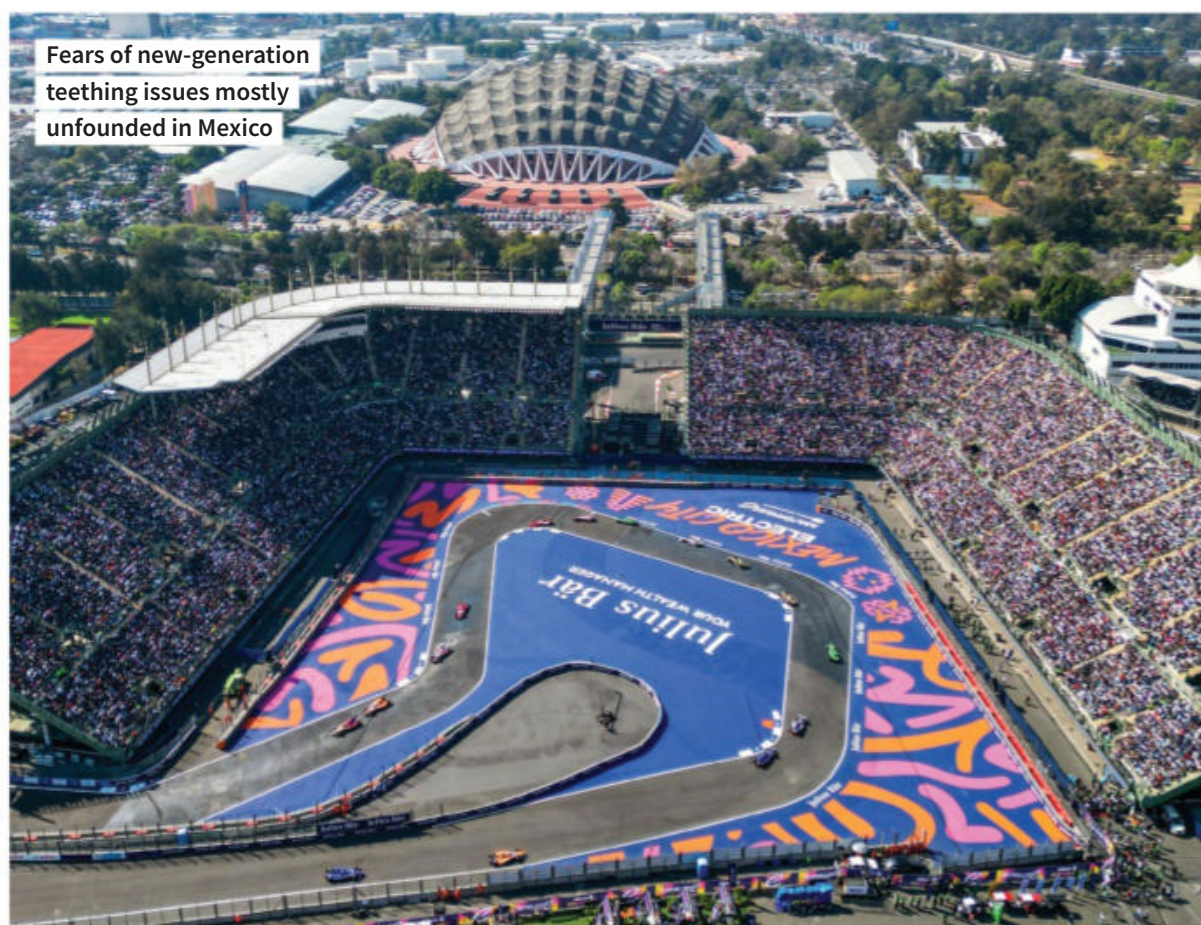
Rene Rast's return to Formula E ended four laps from home after a clash with Oliver Rowland at the hairpin, which broke his suspension. "I think it's pretty unfortunate for him to be out," Rowland said. "It must have hit at a really bad angle, but we barely made contact; it wasn't like we hit hard. I just think these cars are quite weak structurally."

FRIJNS OUT WITH INJURY

Robin Frijns was sent to hospital after his crash with Norman Nato on lap one, and it emerged that he had a broken left wrist and had to undergo an operation before flying home. This is expected to leave Frijns on the bench for Diriyah, with Abt DTM driver Kelvin van der Linde and Mahindra reserve Jehan Daruvala options to replace him.

BAD LUCK FOR BIRD

"It's been proper shit; everything that could go wrong, did go wrong and continued to go wrong," Sam Bird mused after a miserable Mexico round. Software issues plagued his FP1, while a motor failure in FP2 meant Jaguar had to rebuild the rear of the car. Bird explained that his car went into qualifying without a proper set-up and with incorrect components, resulting in 21st on the grid. A driveshaft failure resulted in his retirement.



Fears of new-generation teething issues mostly unfounded in Mexico

RESULTS ROUND 1/11, MEXICO CITY (MEX), 14 JANUARY (41 LAPS – 66.952 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Jake Dennis (GBR)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	58m25.974s
2	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+7.816s
3	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M9Electro	+18.611s
4	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+19.161s
5	Jake Hughes (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+20.289s
6	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+20.714s
7	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+21.051s
8	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+24.758s
9	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+29.150s
10	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	DS Penske / DSE-Tense FE23	+29.662s
11	Maximilian Gunther (DEU)	Maserati MSG / Maserati Tipo Folgore	+30.276s
12	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Penske / DSE-Tense FE23	+31.141s
13	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M9Electro	+31.537s
14	Nico Muller (CHE)	Abt / Mahindra M9Electro	+31.951s
15	Sacha Fenestraz (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+32.355s
16	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 ER9	+35.205s
17	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 ER9	+1m14.372s
18	Rene Rast (DEU)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	37 laps-accident
R	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Maserati MSG / Maserati Tipo Folgore	17 laps-accident
R	Sam Bird (GBR)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	5 laps-driveshaft
R	Norman Nato (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	2 laps-accident damage
R	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Abt / Mahindra M9Electro	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 68.747mph. **Fastest lap** Dennis 1m14.195s, 79.232mph.

QUALIFYING 1 di Grassi 1m13.575s; 2 Dennis 1m16.516s; 3 Hughes 1m12.721s; 4 Lotterer 1m14.551s; 5 Ticktum 1m12.922s; 6 Wehrlein 1m13.031s; 7 Buemi 1m13.100s; 8 Fenestraz 1m13.220s; 9 da Costa 1m13.504s; 10 Evans 1m13.405s; 11 Vergne 1m13.563s; 12 Cassidy 1m13.415s; 13 Sette Camara 1m13.613s; 14 Vandoorne 1m13.450s; 15 Rast 1m13.635s; 16 Mortara 1m13.618s; 17 Gunther 1m13.742s; 18 Muller 1m13.776s; 19 Frijns 1m14.125s; 20 Nato 1m13.785s; 21 Bird 1m14.145s; 22 Rowland 1m14.043s.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Dennis 26; 2 Wehrlein 18; 3 di Grassi 18; 4 Lotterer 12; 5 Hughes 10; 6 Buemi 8; 7 da Costa 6; 8 Evans 4; 9 Cassidy 2; 10 Vandoorne 1.

NEXT REPORT

DIRIYAH E-PRIX
2 FEBRUARY ISSUE

Al-Attiyah again as luck deserts rivals

DAKAR RALLY
SAUDI ARABIA
31 DECEMBER-15 JANUARY

Nasser Al-Attiyah cemented himself among the greatest competitors in the history of cross-country rallying with an emphatic fifth triumph in the Dakar Rally. The Qatari produced a virtually error-free drive across the two weeks in Saudi Arabia, earning plaudits for his measured approach to a rally that favours those who play the long game. Combined with the robust reliability of the Toyota Hilux, Al-Attiyah was an unstoppable force in the 45th running of the event, with his victory all but certain

well before the halfway point in Riyadh.

While Al-Attiyah had an easy run to the finish after all his rivals fell out of contention in quick succession, the Toyota star was still able to unleash his ultimate pace early on, picking up three wins in the opening six stages of the rally. It was only after he had moved an hour clear of the opposition that he switched to a conservative mode, showing the same maturity that helped him to the 2022 spoils.

With five career wins for three different manufacturers (Volkswagen, Mini and Toyota), Al-Attiyah has now surpassed former Peugeot star Ari Vatanen as the second most successful driver in the

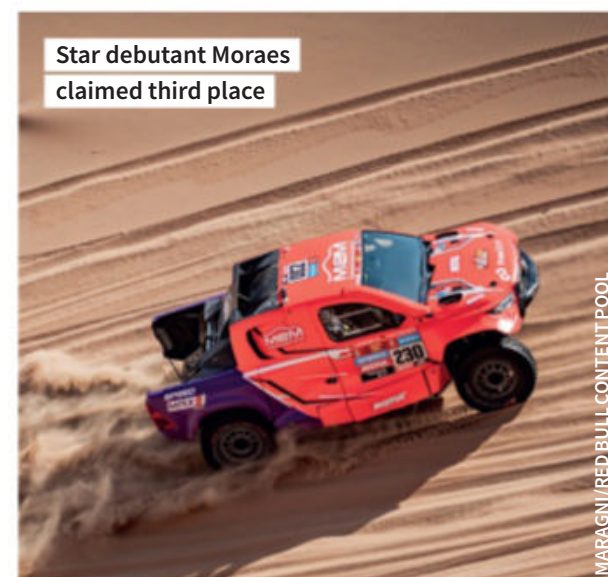
history of the event. Only Stephane Peterhansel's record of eight victories in the cars category (he also scored six on motorbikes...) now stands in the way of Al-Attiyah, who turned 52 last month.

Al-Attiyah's success was the cherry on the cake for Toyota, with the Japanese manufacturer securing four spots in the top five between its factory squad and the Overdrive customer team. The next-best was debutant Lucas Moraes in third, the 32-year-old belying his lack of experience to earn himself the honour of 'rookie of the year'. The Brazilian was incredibly consistent in his Overdrive Hilux, finishing just two of the 14 stages outside the top 10, while his



Baumel and Al-Attiyah
celebrate another win

DUHAMEL/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



Star debutant Moraes
claimed third place

MARAGNI/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



MARAGNI/REDBULL CONTENT POOL



Loeb started on his way to second...

DUHAMEL/REDBULL CONTENT POOL



...but there was disaster for Sainz and Audi

DPP/REDBULL CONTENT POOL

more experienced stablemates lost time due to technical issues or their own errors.

Moraes even outperformed factory duo Giniel de Villiers and Henk Lategan, who were engaged in their own scrap for fourth position in the final days of the rally. De Villiers finished ahead after Lategan suffered a lengthy stoppage on stage 12.

The four Toyotas were separated by the Prodrive Hunter of World Rally legend Sebastien Loeb, who finished runner-up to Al-Attiyah for a second year in succession. Although the Frenchman did miss out on a maiden victory yet again – this was his seventh Dakar appearance – his recovery drive was nothing less than heroic, even taking into consideration that Al-Attiyah was not driving at full throttle.

The Bahrain Raid Xtreme driver was in impeccable form during the second week of the rally, breaking the record for most consecutive stage wins with six. Only muddy terrain in the final showdown prevented him from scoring a complete sweep of the final seven stages, as Loeb preferred to play it safe and safeguard his second place in the overall standings. Still, it was a remarkable turnaround after multiple punctures on stage two and a roll three days later had left him nearly two hours down on Al-Attiyah, a deficit he cut by more than half an hour with his rapid speed in the second week.

One team that was not able to rebound from its early struggles was Audi, which failed to live up to the expectations it had set for its second appearance on the Dakar. Carlos Sainz Sr surrendered his early lead with mechanical troubles on stage three, before Audi's challenge imploded spectacularly three days later when Sainz and Peterhansel crashed at the same dune just minutes after one another. Peterhansel withdrew from the event immediately after co-driver Edouard Boulanger suffered a fractured vertebra, while Sainz carried on, only to suffer another crash on stage nine that sent him out of the rally. Two-time DTM champion Mattias Ekstrom was the only Audi driver who survived the marathon, but he finished a distant 14th after his own set of issues, including mechanical gremlins on his hybrid RS Q e-tron.

Sainz's victory in the opening test was the only time an Audi topped a stage, with even a mid-rally power boost insufficient to propel the German manufacturer to winning contention. That was a significant downturn in fortunes for Audi from its maiden appearance in 2022, when it won four out of 12 stages and Ekstrom finished ninth.

There were some strong performances from unheralded drivers and teams, not least Guerlain Chicherit and his self-owned GCK

Motorsport operation. Driving a Prodrive Hunter, like Loeb, Chicherit scored a win in stage three before repeating that result in the finale to take 10th overall. It meant Prodrive won a whopping nine of the 14 stages, including the seven victories of Loeb.

Local hero Yazeed Al-Rajhi was the other to win a full stage, with the Saudi claiming top honours on the seventh test for Overdrive. Two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Romain Dumas was also rapid in his Rebellion-entered Hilux and looked set to improve upon his career-best finish of eighth, only for late drama to send him tumbling down the order.

RACHIT THUKRAL

RESULTS

1 Nasser Al-Attiyah/Mathieu Baumel (Toyota GR DKR Hilux) 45h03m15s; 2 Sebastien Loeb/Fabian Lurquin (Prodrive Hunter) +1h20m49s; 3 Lucas Moraes/Timo Gottschalk (Toyota Hilux Overdrive); 4 Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy (Toyota GR DKR Hilux); 5 Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings (Toyota GR DKR Hilux); 6 Martin Prokop/Viktor Chytka (Ford Raptor RS Cross Country); 7 Juan Cruz Yacopini/Daniel Oliveras (Toyota Hilux Overdrive); 8 Wei Han/Li Ma (SMG HW2021); 9 Sebastian Halpern/Ronnie Graue (Mini JCW Plus); 10 Guerlain Chicherit/Alex Winocq (Prodrive Hunter).

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UAE architecture
forms the backdrop
to Belgian team's third
win in the event



BMW

WRT drives through for a debut BMW victory

DUBAI 24 HOURS
DUBAI (ARE)
14-15 JANUARY

Belgian sportscar monolith WRT's first race with BMW after a long history with Audi ended with its second consecutive Dubai 24 Hours triumph and a third place. Last year's winners Dries Vanthoor and Mohamed Al Saud were joined by Jens Klingmann, Diego Menchaca and Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer to bring victory for the squad's lead M4 GT3.

Haupt Racing Team's Mercedes-AMG GT3s locked out the front row of the grid and ran first and second during the opening laps in the hands of Luca Stolz and Jules Gounon, before Vanthoor climbed from sixth on the grid to take the lead shortly after the half-hour mark. Newcomer

Haas RT enjoyed a spell in front, following an impressive recovery from 43rd on the grid after engine issues with its Audi R8 LMS in qualifying, before a pitstop in the fifth hour allowed Klingmann to move the BMW back ahead.

HRT's challenge unravelled entering the sixth hour when both its Mercedes retired, with a fiery crash for Sebastien Baud in the Abu Dhabi Racing entry followed shortly after by a race-ending suspension issue for Stolz in the sister Al Manar Racing car.

That left the Porsche 911 GT3-R of Herberth Motorsport as WRT's closest challenger for the remainder of the race, with the pendulum swinging during the pitstop phases over the final six hours. A shorter fuel stop left the Porsche in front with 45 minutes remaining in the hands of Robert Renauer as Vanthoor went on a charge to set

up a potentially thrilling dice for victory. Both drivers incurred 10-second penalties for exceeding track limits, and a further penalty then cost Renauer the net lead before he made a further fuel stop during a Code 60 caution period in the final 20 minutes.

That allowed Vanthoor to cruise home for WRT's third success in the Dubai enduro – it also won in 2016 – and BMW's first since 2011. Renauer, who shared with twin brother Alfred, Ralf Bohn and Daniel Allemann, finished 32 seconds behind. WRT's second BMW finished two laps in arrears in third with Valentino Rossi, World Endurance Championship racers Maxime Martin and Sean Gelael, plus Max Hesse and Tim Whale. The entry had to overcome several time penalties in addition to Whale having a brush with the barriers early on.

The Earl Bamber Racing-run Grove Porsche was another in the mix at various stages, eventually finishing fourth with two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Bamber, father-and-son pair Stephen and Brenton Grove, plus Australian Supercars ace Anton De Pasquale. Early leader Haas RT, led by Frederic Vervisch and Maxime Soulet, came home fifth after a collision and a puncture cost the Audi time overnight.

There was less fortune for Audi with its other main contenders. The Attempto Racing car, with Porsche Supercup champ Dylan Pereira and Brit Finlay Hutchison among the line-up, lasted less than four hours. Sainteloc Racing, which included Simon Gachet and GT4 king Erwan Bastard, retired at the halfway stage.

STEVE WHITFIELD



Herberth Porsche
split the two BMWs

24H SERIES

Wurz speaks louder than action

**TOYOTA FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA
HIGHLANDS MOTORSPORT PARK (NZL)
14-15 JANUARY
ROUND 1/5**

Charlie Wurz began his bid for a second successive ‘winter’ single-seater title in strong fashion by topping the Formula Regional Oceania (nee Toyota Racing Series) points after the first round, even if the son of ex-Formula 1 racer and Le Mans 24 Hours winner Alexander didn’t win any races.

Wurz, who last year won the Formula 4 UAE title, is probably the most notable name from Europe contesting New Zealand’s premier series as it rebuilds following the country’s strict COVID measures. He burst from fourth on the grid to second at the start of the opening race, but could do little about M2 Competition team-mate Callum Hedge. The 2018 New Zealand Formula Ford champion has been racing Porsches in Australia of late, and showed class on his return to single-seaters. Wurz also had to keep his eye on American GB3 regular David Morales in his mirrors.

Morales, another with M2, was on form in the final race, during which he led Hedge



much of the way before the Kiwi pitted with damaged suspension. This promoted Wurz to second and Liam Sceats to third.

Local man James Penrose won the reversed-grid race, with Wurz the best of the main contenders in fourth.

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WEEKEND WINNERS

**DUBAI 24 HOURS
DUBAI (ARE)**
Dries Vanthoor/Jens Klingmann/
Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer/
Diego Menchaca/Mohamed Al Saud
Team WRT (BMW M4 GT3)

**TOYOTA FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA
HIGHLANDS MOTORSPORT PARK (NZL)**
Race 1 Callum Hedge
M2 Competition
Race 2 James Penrose
Kiwi Motorsport
Race 3 David Morales
M2 Competition

**FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST
DUBAI (ARE)**
Race 1 Dino Beganovic
Mumbai Falcons Racing
Race 2 Nikhil Bohra
R-ace GP
Race 3 Mari Boya
Hyderabad Blackbirds by MP Motorsport

POWERED BY



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

Beganovic is super mighty over Mini

**FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST
DUBAI (ARE)
13-14 JANUARY
ROUND 1/5**

Dino Beganovic and Gabriele Mini may be taking their rivalry into FIA Formula 3 this season, but they’re giving it one last hurrah at Formula Regional level and it resulted in a thrilling opener to the renamed FR Middle East (formerly FR Asian) series at Dubai Autodrome.

Mini qualified his Hitech Grand Prix car on a dominant pole, while Swedish Ferrari protege Beganovic, who beat the Sicilian to the FR European crown in 2022, started his Prema-run Mumbai Falcons car from fourth. Beganovic made quick early progress to move past Matias Zagazeta and then Andrea Kimi Antonelli into second place, but it wasn’t until after the last of two safety car interludes that the race really caught fire.

There was time for three more laps of racing, and on the second of these Beganovic was swarming all over Mini,



the duo completing almost an entire lap of the circuit side by side. As they crossed the line to begin the final tour, Mini swerved Beganovic towards the pitwall. Then Mini slowed, believing the race to have finished... An elated Beganovic took the honours, while Mini picked up the pace again to finish sixth – then he got hit with a five-position penalty for his aggressive move on Beganovic, dropping him to 11th.

The two were at it again in the reversed-grid race two, and again Mini was penalised for contact that sidelined Beganovic. The finale was drama-free, with Mini fifth and Beganovic slipping down the field to ninth. This race was won in dominant fashion by Mari Boya, who jumped ahead of poleman

Antonelli at the start and led all the way in his MP Motorsport-run car. With a second, a fourth and a sixth, reigning double F4 champion Antonelli has moved into an early series lead.

The other star was Taylor Barnard. The Brit was excluded from qualifying because of a refuelling mix-up on the part of his PHM Racing team. He then somehow charged from 27th to third behind Zagazeta in the opener, and fought from eighth to the podium again in the reversed-grid race, which was won by Nikhil Bohra from Aiden Neate.

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THE RACING CAR SHOW

Stewart regaled
returning crowds
with memories of
shows past and his
motorsport career



STEWART HEADS THE STARS AS SHOW RETURNS

Three-time Formula 1 world champion Sir Jackie holds court at the NEC as Autosport International raises the curtain on the 2023 motorsport season

HAYDN COBB

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

The theme of memories was fitting for the return of Autosport International following two years away due to COVID-19, because it was the first talking point that sprang up for most – including three-time Formula 1 world champion Sir Jackie Stewart when he took to the main stage at the Birmingham NEC.

As the opening UK motorsport event of the year, it had been sorely missed by fans, competitors and tradesfolk alike, a feeling Stewart shared as he offered his fondest memory of the show, from 26 years ago.

“One of the biggest years I ever had here was when we started Stewart Grand Prix,” he told a packed audience. “I came straight from Detroit, when Ford said they would

support us starting up a Formula 1 team. The first media event we did was right here, so it has been a good house for me.”

Stewart headlined the show with the Motorsport Memories gallery, curated to raise money for the Race Against Dementia charity he founded, with prints from the gallery supplied by Motorsport Images offered in a free prize draw.

The Scot regaled fans with tales of his own motorsport memories, aided by a special exhibition from the Silverstone Interactive Museum and *GP Racing*, highlighted by the Autosport International Racing Car of the Year of 2022, the record-breaking Red Bull RB18, plus a stunning BRM V16 Mk1.

Showgoers were also treated to special guest appearances from three-time Le Mans

24 Hours winner Allan McNish, F1 chief technical officer Pat Symonds, Silverstone Circuits managing director Stuart Pringle and Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers, plus a host of national racing stars past and present, including five British Touring Car champions.

The return to the NEC also meant a comeback of the Live Action Arena hosted by three-time grand prix winner Johnny Herbert and presenter Emma Walsh to preside over stunts and spills – including crashes of their own.

Along with the memories there was a look to the future, led by an International EV Showcase, the F1 in Schools UK finals and an array of national motorsport to look forward to in 2023, to bring together the past, present and future.

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL 2023 STAGE GUESTS

Jonny Adam, David Addison, James Allen, Lewis Appiagyei, Bridget Barker, Alicia Barrett, Ollie Bearman, Clive Bowen, David Brabham, Ian Burrows, Hugh Chambers, Josh Cook, Alex Dunne, Jade Edwards,



SUTTON

Nigel Geach, Bradley Gravett, Robb Gravett, Kevin Hansen, Mark Harrison, Tim Harvey, Jake Hill, Hedda Hosas, Tom Ingram, Rob Jaina, Mr JWW, Shane Kelly, Emily Lane, Stewart Lines, Daire McCormack, **Allan McNish**, Katie Milner, Tamara Molinaro, Catie Munnings, **Matt Neal**, Nick Owen, Paul Owen, Stuart Pringle, Kyle Ryde, Eliza Seville, **Gordon Shedden**, Jodie Sloss, Rob Smedley, Ruben Stanislaus, **Sir Jackie Stewart**, Pat Symonds, Bobby Thompson, Darren Turner, Ryan Vickers

Stage hosts: Stuart Codling and Alan Hyde



SUTTON



AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some of the standouts our staffers hope you didn't miss in Birmingham

PHOTOGRAPHY



**motorsport
IMAGES**

HISTORY OF F1 SHOWCASE



MATT KEW There's a very big difference between beautiful patina and plain old wear and tear. The former tells a story of a life well lived. That's why it was so pleasing to see the nicked seat upholstery

and stress cracks in the dark green paint of the ex-Reg Parnell BRM P15, chassis #1, which headlined the *GP Racing* magazine and Silverstone Interactive Museum stand.

Housing a 1.5-litre V16 that's quite capable of blowing the roof off the NEC, the Bourne-built machine lays claim to being the best-sounding grand prix car of all time. And it's back in the headlines now that historic racing specialist Hall & Hall (based in the same Lincolnshire town) is building three continuation examples comprising 36,000 parts. Nick and Paul Owen – grandsons of period BRM backer Sir Alfred Owen – were on hand to talk through their revival plans for the



BRM P15 provided
fascinating contrast
to modern F1 machinery

JORGENSEN

1962 Formula 1 constructors' champion.

Famously, the P15 from 1951 was neither reliable nor successful. Neither of which can be said of the Red Bull RB18 show car that sat alongside. The ground-effects machine enabled Max Verstappen to successfully defend his F1

world title in 2022 and restored Red Bull to the top of the constructors' championship after amassing an incredible 17 victories. Aston Martin and Alpine also provided their F1 challengers while, away from the top flight, a classic Viking Formula 3 racer and hardcore Radical sportscar also featured.



F1 TAKES CENTRE STAGE



LUKE SMITH Since Autosport International last took place, Formula 1 has changed dramatically. We've had a new champion, new cars, and an influx of new fans thanks in no small part to *Drive to Survive*.

It meant the future of the series was a fitting topic of conversation for the F1 names who graced the stage over three days, including current technical chief Pat Symonds, ex-F1 driver Allan McNish, and Rob Smedley, best known for his time as Felipe Massa's engineer at Ferrari.

All three shared inside stories, but also had plenty to say about F1's future. Symonds discussed the 2022 regulations that he played a key role in designing, but also threw forward to what the next shake-up in 2026 will look like, promising that cars will follow even closer. That campaign will also feature Audi's entry to the F1 grid, a key point of interest for Audi lifer McNish, who was part of talks



Symonds looked ahead to F1's next rules shake-up

to make the move happen. "Everybody is buzzed about it," he said, giving the audience an update on where Audi's F1 plans stand.

Smedley's time on the pitwall may be over, but he's also playing a key role in shaping F1's future through the use of data in F1 via its relationship with Amazon. But there was no escaping the "Fernando is faster than you" incident from Hockenheim 2010, a story he politely reflected on and joked about following him everywhere – even revealing he has a novelty coffee mug at home!

GETTING BACK TOGETHER



LEWIS DUNCAN

The last time Autosport International was held, large gatherings and events were things we all took for granted. Just a few weeks after that 2020 event in January,

COVID struck and we wondered if something like ASI could ever happen again. And so, it

was a heartwarming feeling to return through the doors of Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre to be welcomed by the sights and sounds of ASI.

With the quiet period of January generally devoid of motorsport, ASI offers the first chance of a new year for likeminded fans to get together and indulge their passion for racing. It's lovely to see so many motorsport fans in one place. From an Autosport perspective, ASI

offers one of the few chances where most of the editorial team is actually able to gather in one place. Such is the hectic nature of our schedules that simply getting together to drink and share many laughs in the hotel after each day of the show was a highlight.

While we're all looking forward to the racing season beginning properly now, ASI proved once again in 2023 its importance in the motorsport schedule.



Great to be back under the NEC's roof again

SUTTON

DUNBAR

F1 IN SCHOOLS



Trophy time for F1 in Schools' budding motorsport engineers



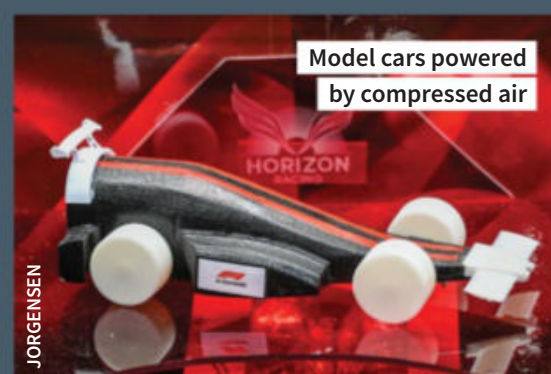
ALEX KALINAUCKAS
Autosport International's early place on the motorsport calendar signals the start of a new year and new season. For the returning 2023 event,

hosting the F1 in Schools 2022-23 UK National Finals hopefully means the start of many careers in the industry from the budding hopefuls who competed at the NEC last weekend.

Located in Hall 4, the vast F1 in Schools arena was hard to miss – complete with an Aston Martin F1 display car. The complex featured an elevated stage/broadcast area overlooking the 20-metre track down which

the scale-model designs – powered by compressed air power units – were fired. A seated auditorium allowed spectators, chaperones and supporters to watch proceedings live via on-stage screens, with the action hosted by F1 Esports presenter Tom Deacon and also broadcast live on YouTube. Beside the stage was the dedicated judging area where the students – dressed in dedicated team kit – presented their CAD-designed and CNC machine-produced cars, which were also checked in a dedicated scrutineering process. Each team built a 'pit' stand behind the auditorium where show visitors could learn about each school and the cars its team had produced.

The Pro class winner was the Eclipse



Model cars powered by compressed air

team from Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in London, which will now represent the UK at the World Finals at a 2023 F1 race. Cheadle Hulme School's CHS Lightning squad took the Dev class, while the Primary Class national championship was clinched by the Astro team from Caedraw Primary.





Take your pick from variety of series on 750MC stand

JORGENSEN

SUTTON

NATIONAL RACING'S METTLE



STEFAN MACKLEY

"Thank you very much to Autosport and Motorsport Network for bringing the Show back to the NEC. I think everybody is so excited to be able to see old friends and new

friends in the corridors and on the stands."

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers was one of the first guests to appear on the stage at this year's show, and his opening statement was apt. Not only because what he said rang true for many, but also because of his role with the governing body that oversees motorsport in the UK, and which had

such a large presence at the event.

While many of the visitors at the show will have converged around the latest generation of Formula 1 cars on display, or flocked to the Autosport stage, it's national racing that is something of the lifeblood of the event.

And this year's running was no different. Nearly all the UK's racing clubs had a presence in Birmingham, including the 750 Motor Club, British Racing & Sports Car Club and Castle Combe Racing Club, among many others.

For the clubs it was, and always has been, an opportunity to showcase the latest championships and series on offer, many of which have been a mainstay for a number of years but with a number of new additions



Hugh Chambers flew the flag for UK motorsport

(see page 82). It's also the chance to entice new drivers into the sport, with cars on display and organisers on hand to help make what for many is a lifelong dream become a reality.

The show is also the perfect place for making announcements, which in 2023 included a rebrand from the Castle Combe Circuit and UK unveiling of the new Hyundai Elantra N TCR machine (see National News).

Autosport International has always been the perfect curtain raiser to the UK racing season and the national presence was as strong as ever.



Two Brits to watch: Browning (left) and Bearman

SUTTON

BRITAIN'S FUTURE STARS



MEGAN WHITE

FIA Formula 2 rookie Ollie Bearman and 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Luke Browning drew a large crowd of those keen to hear from Britain's

next F1 hopefuls when they took to the main stage on Thursday.

The pair shared stories from their successful 2022 seasons, when Bearman finished third in FIA Formula 3 and Browning was crowned GB3 champion. They were both Award finalists, with Browning emerging victorious following a close-call shootout after the pair were "split by nothing", and discussed

how they would "never have had the opportunity" to drive an LMP3 or GT3 car without the Award process.

Browning said victory in the Award has "changed his life", with the phone ringing ever since. Despite his recent success, he didn't take the idea of racing as a career seriously until 2019, when he made his British F4 debut.

Ferrari Academy driver Bearman discussed his move from F3 to F2 with Prema and how he expects a challenge amid a talented grid this year. He also told the audience how he was one of the few people who benefited from the COVID pandemic, with the delayed start to the ADAC F4 season falling after his 15th birthday and so allowing him to compete in the full season...

ENVISION TWO-SEATER



HYDROGEN FUEL CELL FORZE VIII



FINDING THE SILVER BULLET

Motorsport's role in creating a sustainable future is much-discussed. A satisfying one-size-fits-all answer may prove elusive, but collaboration is required

JAMES NEWBOLD

Technology has advanced a great deal in three years. Since Autosport International was last held in 2020, the world's first electric SUV championship has come to life, the World Rallycross Championship has switched to EVs, and battery technology has even filtered down to the grassroots of club racing with the announcement of a new single-seater series set to begin in 2024 that will be promoted by the British Racing & Sports Car Club.

The presence of the new Formula

Foundation-E alongside Extreme E's Spark-built Odyssey 21 was therefore fitting as part of the show's EV Showcase feature, where they were joined by the Delta Cosworth-built Envision two-seater, Delta Cosworth's joint venture with Ariel (the new Hipercar), and one of ex-Formula 1 engineer Rob Smedley's electric Total Karting chassis. The sixth member of the exclusive club, the hydrogen fuel cell Forze VIII sports-racer built by Dutch students at Forze Hydrogen Racing to race in the Dutch Supercar Challenge, only served to underline the number of approaches that are

open for engineers to pursue as they seek to exploit new sustainable technologies.

This was a common discussion point in the Business Forum, where leading industry figures considered the future direction of travel. The UK government's move to ban the sale of new internal-combustion-engined cars from 2030 is set to have a significant impact. But that doesn't mean a linear move towards battery electric vehicles (BEVs) is inevitable. As Cosworth CEO Hal Reisinger put it: "For us, one size doesn't fit all."

"There's electrification, fuel cells, hybrid



Ex-F1 technical director Mike Gascoyne (right) joined the Business Forum

ARIEL HIPERCAR

JORGENSEN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

**Stephane Bazire****Cristiana Pace****Hal Reisinger**

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“YOU DON’T NEED TO GO 100% IF IT’S NOT FEASIBLE, BUT IF 70% IS POSSIBLE THEN DO IT. IT’S SUPER-IMPORTANT TO NOT ONLY FOCUS ON THE POWERTRAIN”

a sustainable future for motorsport is about more than merely powertrains. For Gascoyne, “one of the fundamentals of making any vehicle more efficient is to make it lighter”. To make alternative power sources such as hydrogen viable, he said, “you’ve got to have a more efficient powertrain structure *and* vehicle. It’s not just the fuel, it’s the vehicle you’re putting them in as well that’s key.”

The Odyssey 21 has swapped carbon body panels for natural fibre composites supplied by Swiss firm Bcomp. Its influence in racing has grown in recent years from F1 — McLaren uses seats made from Bcomp’s natural fibre composites — to GT4 and Super Formula, with the updated bodywork on the Japanese series’ 2023 challenger comprising 70% natural fibres. Motorsport manager Johann Wacht believes that, just as with powertrains, a blended approach to composites can have sustainability benefits. “You don’t need to go 100% if it’s not feasible, but if 70% is possible then do it,” he said. “It’s super-important to not only focus on the powertrain. There is so much different other stuff that you can do on vehicles.”

The prospect of motorsport ever being truly sustainable was also a subject for discussion at the Business Forum. Enovation CEO Dr Cristiana Pace argued that its reliance on the

shipping and aviation industries means the debate must be focused far more widely.

“It’s not just one industry, it’s the whole industry,” said Pace, who believes motorsport has also been “reticent” to change because people “just didn’t understand the language” of sustainability. “Whether [motorsport] can be truly sustainable 100%, I would say unless everybody else is, it’s going to be very difficult.”

Pace was clear that motorsport can do its bit by sharing the sustainability message with enthusiasts and leading technology development. And despite the costs involved, proactive steps are being taken.

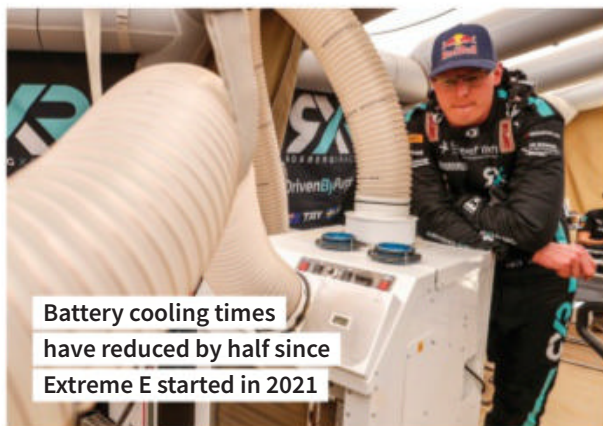
Motorsport UK head of sustainability Jess Runicles revealed that the governing body will launch a carbon calculator for clubs in the spring, with work ongoing to make the use of e-fuels “more realistic” for club competitors. Silverstone, meanwhile, has invested in solar panels on the Wing pit complex that its head of business sustainability Stephane Bazire said will generate over 10% of its annual consumption. Bazire regards it as proof for visitors that the circuit’s ‘Shift to Zero’ strategy “is really happening, it’s not just words, they will see it”. “When you start doing it, you realise it’s not actually that complicated,” he added.

What there is agreement on is the urgency of a sustainability push, which Runicles says “does have to be done by everyone” to be a success.

“We may come up with another fuel, but we may not have a planet to live on at that stage,” said Gascoyne. “We’ve got to solve that quicker.”

“Don’t then do nothing because you say, ‘100% is not possible,’” Wacht implored. “As a society, we don’t have the time to wait. Everything we can, we should do.”

S BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Battery cooling times have reduced by half since Extreme E started in 2021

systems — I think there’s a role for all of them,” he said. “But it has to be the right technology for the right application.”

And that principle doesn’t just apply for motorsport. “In the aerospace world, you’re not going to stop the batteries in the middle of the Atlantic and change them,” said former F1 technical director Mike Gascoyne, who today services the aerospace industry through his MGI Engineering consultancy. “You’re going to need a transportable fuel solution. Batteries, in their current guise and with their current energy density levels, are not going to solve the world’s transport problems.”

Clearly, improvements in battery range and treatment are ongoing. Extreme E championship manager James Taylor revealed that cooling times have been halved since the inaugural Desert X-Prix in 2021. But the series isn’t putting all its eggs into the same basket either — it has already announced an Extreme H hydrogen offshoot for 2024.

While hydrogen is gathering momentum,

Bcomp’s natural fibre composites are used in Super Formula



JRP



BLOCK BUSTER

The show's seismic riot of indoor action pulled out the stops to entertain the crowds, paying a fitting tribute to recently departed American stunt-driving icon Ken Block

HAYDN COBB

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

As the motorsport world mourned the loss of Ken Block, Autosport International took its moment to provide a tribute, and perhaps it was the most fitting of all. The thrill ride that is the Live Action Arena was made for Block, or rather the American's exploits gave the daredevil acts on show a greater platform to shine upon, as the NEC was shaken into life by the noise and action.

Like the rest of the show, two years away from Birmingham due to COVID-19 meant

many in the grandstands struggled to remember the last time they'd got this up close and personal with the thunderous display of horsepower and bravery. Picking the opening show slot, one of five held each day over the weekend, acted as the perfect wake-up call – no morning coffee required.

But it was clear that those in the show had enjoyed their caffeine hit, if any is needed at all for the adrenalin-inducing acts, kicked off by the back-flipping Bolddog freestyle motocross squad.

The Live Action Arena hosts, three-time grand prix winner Johnny Herbert and presenter Emma Walsh, intersplined the on-track entertainment with chat and a drive-by interview with British Touring Car champion Tom Ingram.

It's important not to take yourself too seriously in these events, and to Walsh's credit she didn't shy away from a heavy crash in a supertruck during practice as she hinted that "she does her own stunts" in the show.

An assortment of races maintained the



GRANT



JORGENSEN



DUNBAR



DUNBAR

1 BriSCA brings the noise

The thundering stock cars race around the arena

2 Electric charge

A pair of RX2e cars battled against a 5 Nations British Rallycross army

3 A hero remembered

Ken Block's Ford Fiesta RS led a tribute to the late stunt king

4 Fiery finale

All the stunt acts combined to put on a frenzied finish

pace, from Autograss Class 7 super saloons — the very definition of pocket rockets — and a similarly miniature spectacle by BTRDA's Cross Cars, to the eardrum-shattering BriSCA F1 stock cars and Autograss Class 8 specials. All interspersed with the stunt experts, show regular Terry Grant and Maltese magicians Team Maximum Lock.

Rallycross took a leading role, starting with a historic RX car display led by surprise guest, two-time World Rallycross race winner Kevin

Hansen, before making way for the 5 Nations British Rallycross crews and then a pair of electric FIA RX2e OMSEs, which beat their petrol rivals in a head-to-head.

The show then made its mark with a fitting tribute to the biggest star in stunt and seat-of-your-pants driving, as one of Block's Ford Fiesta RS machines arrived in the arena against a backdrop of a video montage of his greatest feats caught on film. As a star who inspired a generation of stunt acts and fans,

Block's legacy was fittingly celebrated.

The show also paid homage to another recently departed icon, Maxi Jazz, who died over Christmas, with his band Faithless's *Insomnia* soundtrack used for the big finish. In a true celebration of the genre, a symphony of dance music and engine roar played out the crescendo as Grant, Team Maximum Lock and Bolddog put on a firework-flinging finale — one that Block would no doubt have approved of. 🎆



THE SHOW IN PICTURES

Autosport International highlights captured on camera

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

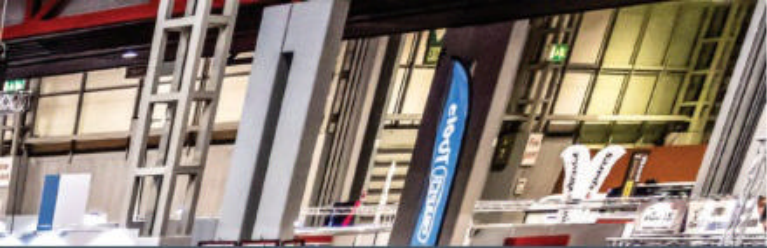


1 Top tuned car
Simon Kelly's racing car-inspired Vauxhall Astra VXR won the UK's Top Tuned Car competition, organised by Autosport International and the Performance and Tuning Car Show.

2 British winners on show
Frontrunning United Autosports LMP2 ORECA and Cosworth had a big presence close to the main Autosport stage.



DUNBAR



Spotlight on TCR UK
TCR UK, which will headline some BRSCC events in 2023, was out in strength. As well as an array of cars, several drivers appeared on stage, including reigning champion Chris Smiley.

3 Focus on Engineering

As usual, clubs, tuners and engineering firms formed a key part of Autosport International across the trade days on Thursday and Friday.

4 Live podcast GP Racing's Stuart Codling joined our very own Luke Smith and Alex Kalinauckas on stage for a live Autosport Podcast looking ahead to F1 2023.



7 Ribbon cutters British Touring Car champion Tom Ingram officially opened the show on Sunday. Sportscar legend Allan McNish did the honours on Saturday.



5 Classics on display
GT40 and Cobra designs were among the historic machines to grab fans' attention around the NEC's various display halls.

6 Smedley supports charity
Ex-Formula 1 engineer Rob Smedley was one of many to pay a visit to the Motorsport Memories gallery, supplied by Motorsport Images, supporting Sir Jackie Stewart's Race Against Dementia charity.



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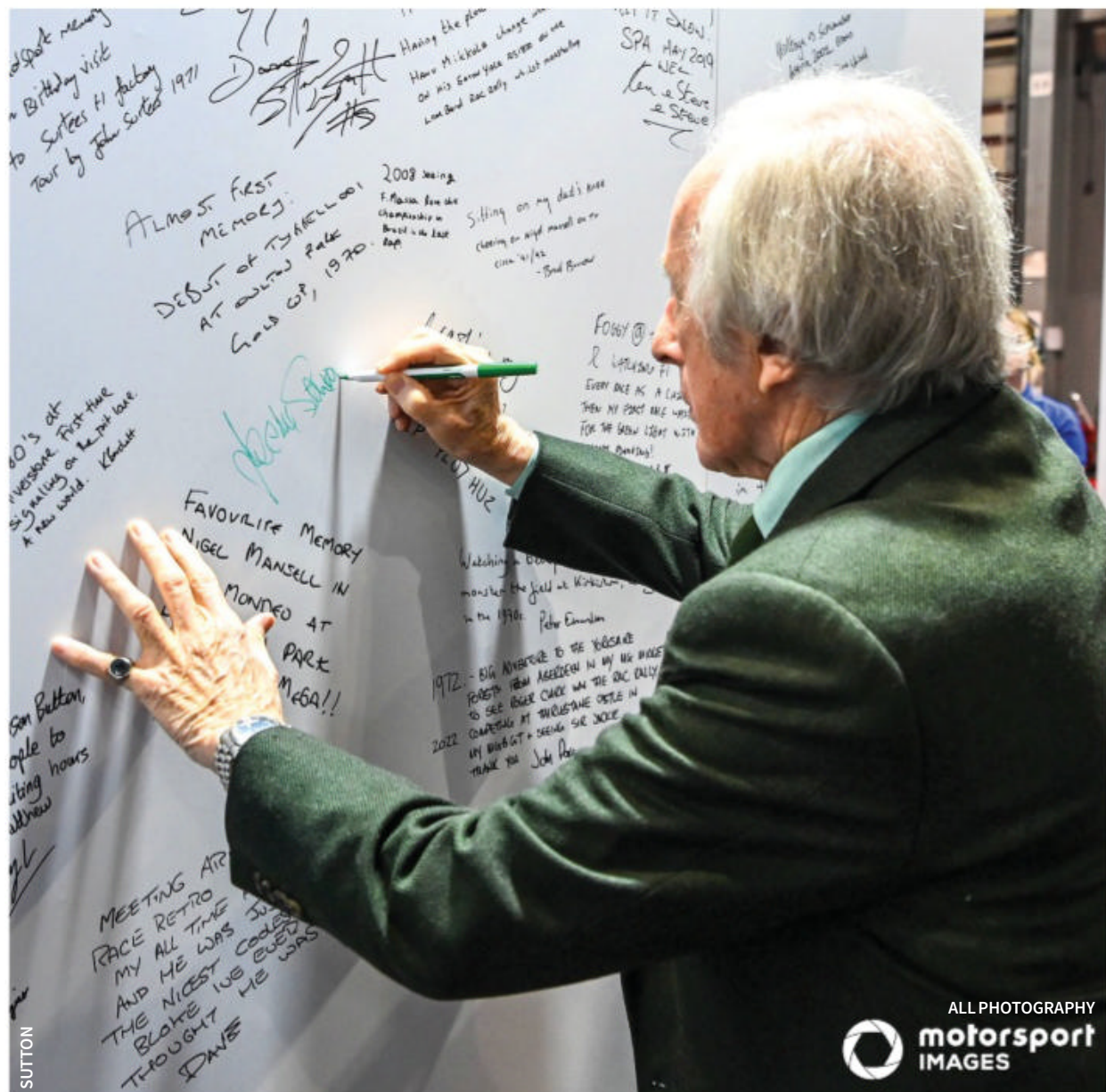
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Autosport would like to thank all the drivers, team bosses, designers and industry specialists who generously gave us their time and for their valued contributions to this year's Autosport International show. We would like to give special appreciation to Sir Jackie Stewart and the Race Against Dementia team, David Brabham, Tom Ingram, Allan McNish, Darren Turner, Car Composites, Cosworth, eBay, Demon Tweeks, F1 in Schools, Sadev Racing Transmission, Silverstone Interactive Museum, Wera Tools, Williams Esports, all the contributors to the EV Showcase and many other supporters.

Thanks also to Solutions2, Image Innovations and Network Productions for their work on the excellent Live Action Arena. Finally, our thanks to the tireless Autosport International production team, especially Mandy Cox, for their amazing work in putting the 2023 show together.



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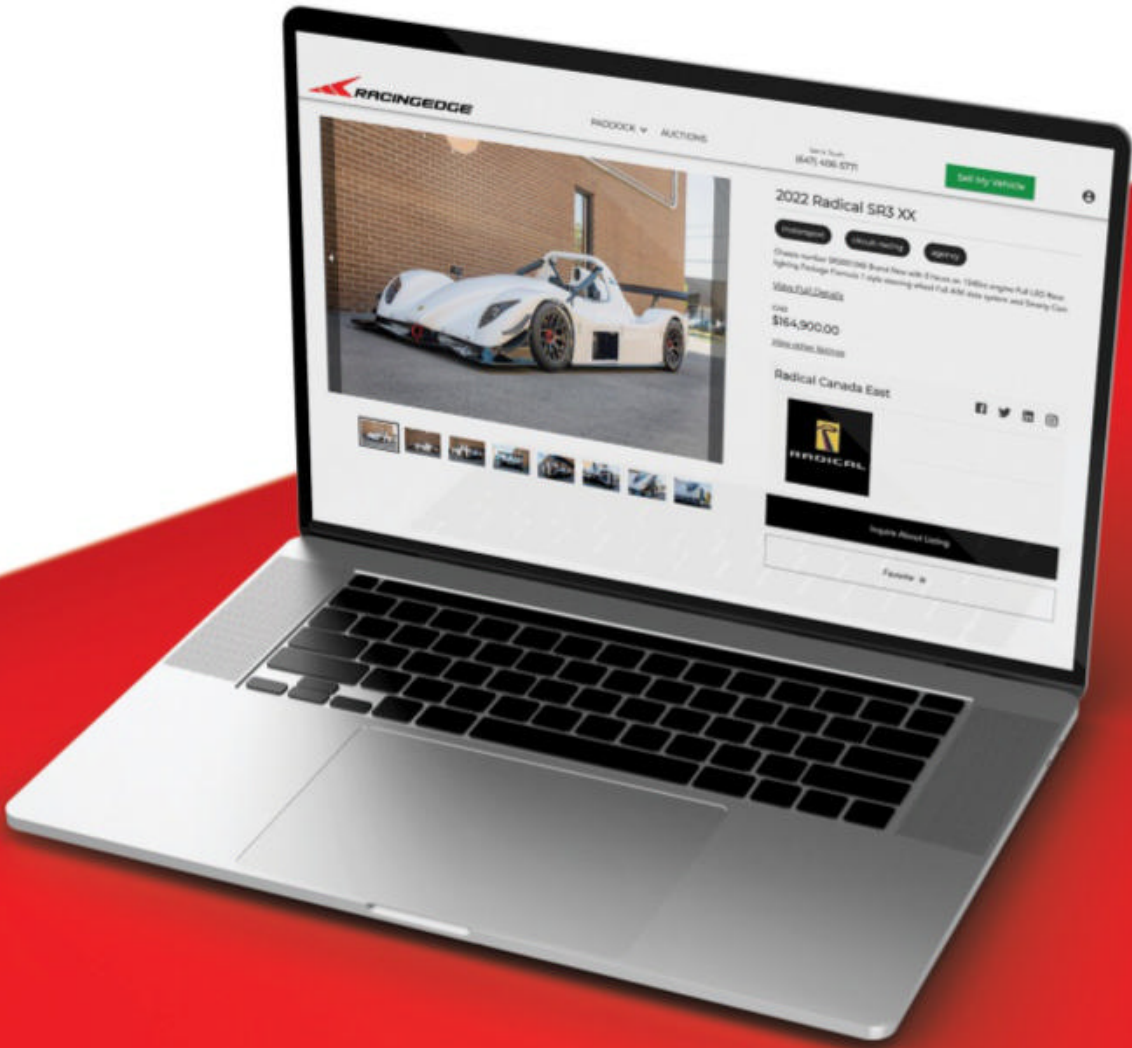


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- Required to demonstrate a company focused attitude organizing and guiding your team whilst keeping morale high when fulfilling the often-difficult goals set by Design, Engineering and Management to meet the Companies expectations for future success.
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- Have meticulous attention to detail and a practical approach to problem solving.
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- Ensuring that the area or parts of the car assigned to you are consistently assembled in a safe and reliable manner.
- You will be expected to be an integral part of the team, take part in pit stops and assist other team members in various tasks as required.
- Responsibility for the cleanliness and condition of your work area, the garage, the factory and all tools and equipment.
- Assist in the set up and operation of the garage and its infrastructure.
- Assumes any responsibilities and duties delegated by the Race Team Chief Mechanic and/or their Number 1 Race Mechanic.

Relevant skills / experience:

- GCSE, High School diploma or equivalent required. Further education including Trade School, Apprenticeship or University Degree may benefit your application. Previous experience as a No 2 Mechanic gained within motorsport, ideally working on GT3 and GT4 machinery will be preferred however consideration will be given to a candidate who can demonstrate a sound record of service within the industry.

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Carrera Cup Smalley moves to Team Parker

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We assess the categories launched last year and what's new for 2023



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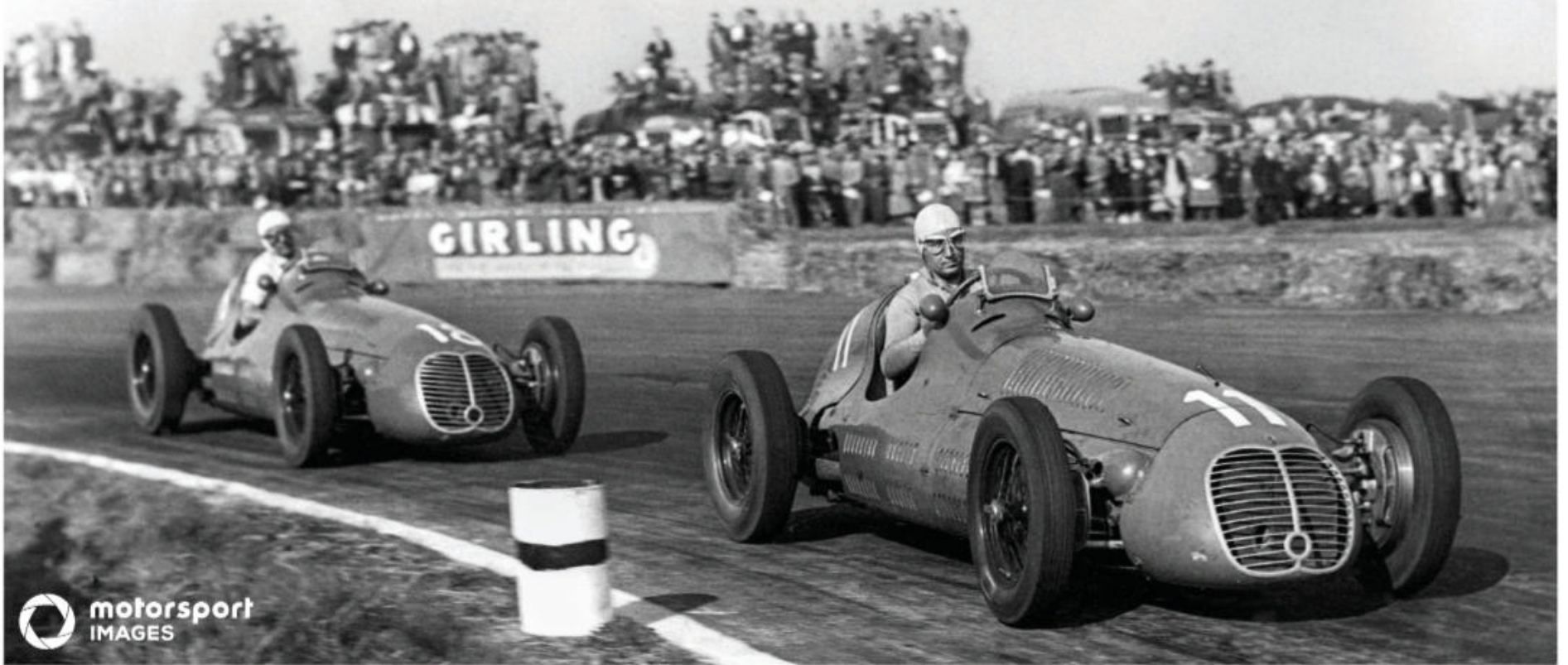
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Front-engined GP car race celebrates
Silverstone's first event in 1948



Special races for Silverstone's 75th

SILVERSTONE FESTIVAL

This year's Silverstone Festival will celebrate the circuit's 75th anniversary with several special races, including one for the front-engined grand prix cars that were in action at the Northamptonshire venue's inaugural event and also a Formula Libre contest.

The circuit's first race meeting in October 1948 was an international grand prix event with the headline race won by Luigi Villorosi in a Maserati 4CLT. Those machines will get a standalone contest at the rebranded Festival, formerly the Silverstone Classic. The Historic Grand Prix Cars Association will invite 30 front-engined and 30

rear-engined cars, which will share a grid for two races in addition to a trophy contest just for the older models.

Another special feature for the 25-27 August fixture is due to be a Formula Libre contest that commemorates the popular and eclectic single-seater races that used to be held at the circuit. A wide range of 1960s and 1970s machines are expected, including pre-'78 Formula 1 machinery, F5000, F2, F3 and Formula Ford 2000.

Alongside the racing, there is set to be a parade of grand prix cars taking to the track to celebrate Silverstone's history.

"We really wanted to mark Silverstone's 75th anniversary with a bumper track

programme celebrating the circuit's incredible heritage – notably its unique place in Formula 1 history," said event director Nick Wigley. "While the Festival is broadening its appeal, the racing remains right at its heartbeat and I'm thrilled with the fantastic range of grids we've assembled to mark this important landmark in Silverstone's ever-evolving story."

Masters Historic Racing and Motor Racing Legends will also run a variety of grids at the event, including a Big Cat Challenge for pre-'66 Jaguars, while the Historic Sports Car Club will organise Formula Junior, Thundersports and Road Sports Trophy encounters.

Rebrand start of Combe's new vision

CASTLE COMBE

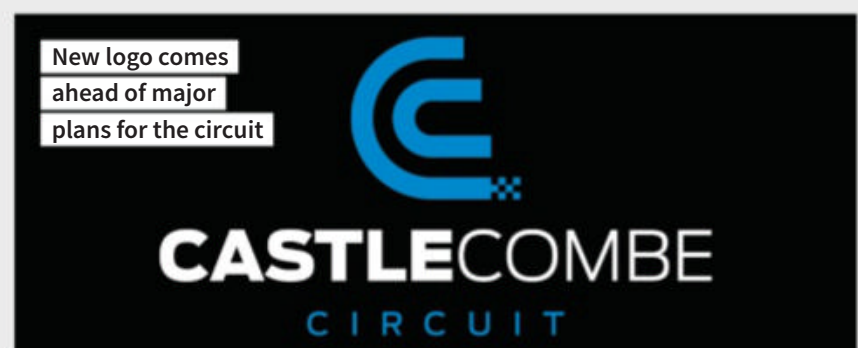
Castle Combe has undergone a rebrand that is the beginning of "an aggressive regeneration vision", according to new managing director Piero Stobbia.

The Wiltshire circuit's rebrand, which includes a new logo, was unveiled at the Autosport International show. Stobbia indicated that

this was the first of a number of developments set to be announced in coming weeks.

"It's more than just a logo, it's building a new brand, a modern vision," said Stobbia. "I want it to look modern, clean and professional."

Stobbia, who took over as MD in October last year, has put together a comprehensive development plan for the circuit that will



be fully unveiled in the near future once a new management structure has been assembled.

"I want to be the best at what we do, I don't want to compare ourselves with other circuits," he added. "I have

not heard one person say that [the development] is a bad idea in practice. Everyone is for the idea of bringing something new to Castle Combe. I want to create something amazing."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Smalley joins Team Parker in Porsche series

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Porsche Carrera Cup GB runner-up Adam Smalley has moved to Team Parker Racing for his second season as the Porsche GB Junior, and will also tackle the new Southern Europe winter series that starts this weekend.

Smalley, the 2021 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion, took one win and nine further podiums with Redline Racing on his Porsche bow last year, but now switches to the team that carried Kiern Jewiss to the title.

“Finishing vice-champion was a very strong result in my first year having to learn the car and I’m looking forward to returning to Carrera Cup GB this season,” said Smalley. “Finishing second was more than I could’ve hoped for and Team Parker Racing have now offered me some very good opportunities, like racing in the Porsche Sprint Challenge Southern Europe championship. It seemed like a good move – they had very impressive pace last season with Kiern and it seemed a strong fit.”

Smalley will use the three-event Southern Europe championship – which is for Carrera Cup and Cayman machinery and has rounds at Valencia, the Algarve circuit and Barcelona – as an opportunity to get to know the team.

“It feels very strange in January to be



Smalley (inset) finished second in Carrera Cup points last season



MAIN AND INSET: JEP motorsport IMAGES

saying it’s race week!” added Smalley. “I’m not putting any pressure on myself – the goal is to be Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion, which is the dream and that’s what I’m working towards. For this winter series, it’s about getting some valuable time in the car – hopefully in some dry conditions.

“It’s a very good opportunity to learn the team in a more relaxed environment. Getting the experience of these new tracks

and time in the car is exactly what I need to progress and give me a strong shot at the GB championship.”

Smalley will be joined in Team Parker’s PSCSEC line-up by regular drivers Ryan Ratcliffe and Will Aspin, while Jake Giddings also moves to the team after previously competing with Toro Verde. Ginetta Junior graduate Zac Meakin is a fifth entry, but will race a Cayman.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Red Bull Junior Arao to GB3 with Hitech

GB3

Red Bull Junior driver Souta Arao will join reigning champion Hitech GP for a season in the GB3 Championship.

The Japanese teenager took two wins on his way to finishing third in French Formula 4 last year, his maiden season of car racing, as a protege of both Red Bull and Honda.

Arao now steps into the team that guided Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Luke Browning to last season’s GB3 title as well as securing the

teams’ crown.

Also confirmed for a season in GB3 is Nico Christodoulou, who will remain with Arden Motorsport. The Canadian missed the opening two rounds of the 2022 season but raced with Arden thereafter, securing a best result of fourth in the final race of the season at Donington Park.

French karter Arthur Rogeon will also contest GB3 both this year and in 2024 for Chris Dittmann Racing. The 16-year-old most recently appeared in the FIA Karting World Championship in Italy,

and will make his car racing debut this season.

“We set up some testing at the end of last year with Arthur in the GB3 car, but we also managed a few days in the F4 car before that, which helped to get him up to speed with some of the circuits and get familiar with the squad,” said team boss Chris Dittmann.

“He’s only done a handful of days in the GB3 car, but every time he went out, he improved massively. It’s a big jump from karting but he’s taken on the challenge well. We see a lot of potential in Arthur, so it’s a case of helping him develop as quickly as he can.”



Arao will compete in GB3 with Hitech GP and is backed by Red Bull

DUTCH PHOTOAGENCY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

IN THE HEADLINES

DARKSIDE'S AUDIS

Darkside Developments, the Barnsley-based VAG tuning business run by twins Ryan and Scott Parkin, plans to field a pair of Audi TTs in the 750 Motor Club's Club Enduro Championship this year. Subject to driver signings, the intention is to run one diesel and one petrol-fuelled car. The latter was shown in a new Advan/Yokohama-esque livery at the Autosport International show.

GB4 PRIZE CONTINUES

The winner of this year's GB4 Championship will once again receive a prize fund of £50,000 to fund their racing careers. The prize will cover the GB3 Championship or British Formula 4. The same prize was on offer last season and was collected by champion Nikolas Taylor, who will now move into GB3 this term.

CLIFFORD JOINS KMR

Australian Formula Ford driver Jack Clifford will compete with reigning teams' champion Kevin Mills Racing in GB4 this season. The 17-year-old will make his European racing and slicks-and-wings debut with the team alongside American Jeremy Fairbairn. "The learning curve in England is much steeper than Australia, and one which will develop my driving throughout the year," he said.

FATHER AND SON OUTING

Fox Motorsport shook down its ex-Van Amersfoort Racing GB4 single-seaters at Bedford Autodrome last week (below) ahead of a maiden season in the championship. Race drivers Liam McNeilly and Sid Smith were joined by fathers Paul McNeilly (Fox team principal and former British GT racer) and Rob Smith (Le Mans 24 Hours class winner).



Hyundai Elantra N model will make its UK racing debut in TCR UK

JORGENSEN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Hyundai presence grows in TCR UK with new partnership

TCR UK

Maximum Motorsport has become the UK agent for Hyundai TCR machines, with the Elantra N model set to make its racing debut in the country this year.

The partnership, announced last week at the Autosport International show, means that teams running cars – including Hyundai i30 N TCR and Veloster N TCR examples – can now rely on a full spare-parts supply service from Maximum at the circuit and between races.

Maximum team principal Stewart Lines, whose organisation also runs TCR UK, said: "This is another step forwards for TCR UK, having factory support by Hyundai which involves

providing spares, race cars and engineering to our UK customers. This will enable us to grow the Hyundai brand even further in the UK and present the TCR UK Touring Car Championship as the best choice for aspiring touring car racers."

Three models of Hyundai will compete in this year's TCR UK season, with Jamie Tonks set to debut the Elantra in the UK for the first time, in a car that will be run by Area Motorsport.

Elsewhere, Paul Sheard Racing has expanded to running three Audi RS3 LMS TCRs with former Junior Saloon and Ginetta GT5 racer Oliver Cottam joining Joe Marshall and Garry Townsend, while Bradley Hutchison will continue with his family-run Audi.

Full season for Webb and Borodin

BRITISH GT

Former European Le Mans Series champion Oli Webb will contest a full season of British GT alongside Andrey Borodin aboard a Greystone GT-run McLaren 720S GT3 this year.

Webb, who won the ELMS LMP2 crown in 2014, competed with Greystone at the Spa round of British GT last season with Iain Campbell. He has also competed in the World Endurance Championship, and took an LMP2 class podium at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2014.

"It's super-exciting to be racing full-time in British GT for the first time," said the 31-year-

old Webb, who has raced in the British Endurance Championship and GT Cup. "Before I joined Greystone GT, I hadn't done a UK series since British Formula 3 a decade earlier, but all the tracks came back quite easily."

Webb's 2010 British F3 exploits brought him third place in the standings behind Jean-Eric Vergne and James Calado.

Elsewhere in British GT, Porsche Carrera Cup GB squad Toro Verde will make its debut in the GT4 division this year, with Ginetta GT4 Supercup rivals James Townsend and Ian Duggan driving the team's Ginetta G56 GT4 after racing together in the GT Cup.

Dragon Sport's new scholarship and academy

BRITCAR TROPHY

British Endurance Championship racers Rhys Lloyd and Max Coates have launched a new Dragon Sport Scholarship and Academy to help young drivers progress through the sport, with inaugural winner Jack Meakin securing a season alongside Lloyd in the Britcar Trophy.

Former Welsh Sports and Saloons champion Lloyd shared an Opel Astra TCR in the BEC last season with Mini Challenge racer Coates, and now wants to help others climb the motorsport ladder. He came up with the scholarship idea and 30 drivers took part in a shootout at Blyton Park last November to win the prize drive in a Renault Clio in the Britcar Trophy. As well as the drivers' on-track performance, their media skills and fitness were also tested.

Winner Meakin graduated from Junior Saloon Cars into Britcar Trophy last season, while the runners-up – Type R Trophy champion Jake Hewlett, fellow Type R racer



Travis Coyne and JSCC frontrunner Harry Hickton – will all benefit from support through the Academy.

“I’ve been involved in motorsport for a long time but there’s not many scholarships around,” explained Lloyd. “The goal is to give someone a leg-up and the shootout was about finding the right person.

“[Alongside the main prize] we laid on a test drive for those coming second, third and fourth and will continue to support them. It’s about giving something back.”

Meakin added: “Winning the scholarship was brilliant and it’s allowing me to focus on my future plans within the sport. The opportunity isn’t just a free drive, but one that I know will be competitive given Rhys’s ability he showed last year.”

Lloyd and Coates intend for the scholarship to become an annual feature and have plans to expand it this year. Further announcements about the Dragon Sport Academy are expected in the coming weeks.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

BRSCC and The Motorsports School team up



Fiesta will be used for ARDS tests and training

FIESTA JUNIOR

The British Racing & Sports Car Club has joined forces with The Motorsports School and given the training organisation a Fiesta Junior-specification car to use.

The Mk7 Fiesta will enable youngsters having their first experience of a car on a track to drive something that much more

closely represents what they would actually race, offering a more exciting glimpse of competition than a standard road-going vehicle.

The Motorsports School will run taster days where teenagers will get the chance to drive the car for free, and it will also be used for junior ARDS tests and training.

“The idea is to get them closer to the race car experience – it’s got the

cage, the race seat and the harnesses,” said BRSCC chief operating officer Paul McErlean. “The plan is to try to improve that conversion rate [getting more people to race].”

The Motorsports School’s Pete Edwards added: “We can’t wait to give new young drivers the opportunity to get behind the wheel of the new car.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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IN THE HEADLINES

DONINGTON HISTORIC RACES

The 2023 Donington Historic Festival timetable has been revealed. Alongside tin-top, sportscar and pre-war races from Motor Racing Legends, the full complement of Historic Racing Drivers Club series will be in attendance, while the event will also feature the Ferrari Club Classic category for the first time.

MG CUP INTEREST, AND TYRES

The MG Cup has already secured 27 registered drivers for its 35th anniversary season this year. The series will be switching tyre supplier after agreeing a deal with Toyo Tires for it to supply control rubber, a move that was supported by its drivers. All competitors must have switched to the new tyres by the third round at MG Live at the latest.

CIRCUIT RALLYING RESTART

The MGJ Circuit Rally Championship resumes this weekend with the Brands Hatch Winter Stages. Last season's winners Frank Bird and Jack Morton lead the field again in their Ford Fiesta Rally2, with 2022 runners-up John Stone/Callum Yates starting at number two again in their Volkswagen Polo GTI R5. Current points leaders after two rounds are John Griffiths/Emma Morrison, who will be third on the road in their Fiesta R5, while 2007 British Rallycross champion Ollie O'Donovan is also back out in his Hyundai i20 R5.

WATTS TO MX-5 SUPERCUP

After spending the past few seasons sharing a Citroen C1 with her father, ex-British Touring Car racer Patrick Watts, Aimee Watts (below) is following in his footsteps by competing in the Mazda MX-5 Supercup this season. "We took a look at a Mk1 MX-5 first, but it had leaves in the back of it, so we thought, 'Why not the Supercup?'" explained Watts Jr, who sampled a Mk1 at the end of last year. "We will still be doing some C1 racing too, and definitely the 24 hours at Silverstone."



Wilson has refettled the DAF during the winter

DAF V8 set for race return in Historic Modsports and Saloons

HISTORICS

The DAF V8 that wowed spectators in Special and Super Saloon races in the early 1970s is an early registration for the inaugural Historic Sports Car Club Historic Modsports and Saloon series, organised in response to competitor interest in pilot events last year.

Owner Andy Wilson, a seasoned V8 tamer, has spent the winter refettling the car and the five-litre engine, which broke a valve seat following a run last year.

Ford Cortina V8 graduate Tony Hazlewood and Ray Kilminster originally shoehorned an aluminium Oldsmobile V8 into a factory DAF 55 coupe shell fitted with March Formula 2 corners, set up by Chas Beattie in 1972.

Initially unruly, the short-wheelbase car

became wieldier on F1-sized wheels and tyres. In October 1973, Hazlewood posted the first 100mph saloon lap at Thruxton.

Corbeau Seats' Colin Folwell and Demon Tweaks founder Alan Minshaw subsequently owned the DAF, which Tony Sugden also raced for the latter as a Volvo with Ford BDX power. Hazlewood reacquired the dormant shell and rebuilt it, entering Mike Wilds for the Classic Sports Car Club's Special Saloons & Modsports reunion race at Mallory Park in 2011.

Fifty years after its immortal Thruxton performance, the little monster is immaculately refinished in DT/Manchester Liners colours. "It's got a good engine with all the right bits, we've redone the brakes and fitted Historic F1 shock absorbers – it's ready to go," said Wilson.

MARCUS PYE

Fiesta ace McGill eyes Civic Cup bid

CIVIC CUP

Scottish Fiesta ST champion Liam McGill has confirmed that will defend his crown and also attempt to compete in the Civic Cup this season.

The 28-year-old won the Scottish Motor Racing Club-run championship last year at the final round, and

also took title success in the Focus Cup, where he secured 12 wins plus the crown with three rounds to spare.

He will now continue in the Scottish category at the wheel of his family-run Fiesta ST and is seeking further funding to contest a second campaign.

"We're going to be defending the title for Fiestas

and hopefully will do the Civic Cup, but that depends if we can get some sponsorship together," he said. "It's got young drivers coming through the ranks, it's on the TCR UK package, which makes it a lot more exciting, and they have bigger crowds. I know it wouldn't be easy."

STEFAN MACKLEY

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Giving something back

It can be easy to focus on the negatives, but there have been some reassuring stories to emerge in recent weeks of individuals keen to help the sport's future

STEPHEN LICKORISH

All too often in recent weeks and months, this page of Autosport has been dedicated to analysis of a somewhat depressing topic or news story. From poor decisions by those in race control, and drivers (or, for that matter, clerks) behaving badly, to concern about Brexit's impact and fears for the future of the sport, it can be easy to focus on the negatives. But, when there is good news to tell, it's important that it's properly celebrated – and there have been some happier stories to emerge from last week's Autosport International show that provide welcome reassurance that things are far from all bad.

Take the expanded partnership between the British Racing & Sports Car Club and The Motorsports School. This has resulted in a car being developed that is virtually identical to the club's Mk7 Fiesta Junior racer (p76), designed for young drivers to undertake their ARDS test and initial driver training in. As a sport, we should all be encouraging more young people to get involved, and this new vehicle is set to offer teenagers a much closer idea of what car racing involves than the more standard machines that are currently used – right down to it featuring a proper race seat and harnesses. Anything that makes that initial experience more exciting is likely to have an impact, but The Motorsports School's Pete and Mel Edwards are going above and beyond by offering taster days in the car for free. Their passion for motorsport is obvious and their

“It's interesting that volunteers were very much the focus of the BRSCC's stand at the NEC”

generosity has the potential to really make a difference. “Unless you invest in the sport, we won't have a sport – I want to give something back,” says Pete.

And it's that exact admirable sentiment that is also underpinning the new Dragon Sport Scholarship and Academy created by British Endurance Championship racers Rhys Lloyd and Max Coates (p76). Lloyd wanted to give something back to the sport and offer a helping hand to young drivers trying to progress up the ladder. While the headline prize may be sharing a Renault Clio with Lloyd in the Britcar Trophy – a club competition that is far more attainable for many racers than other scholarships that are pitched at a much higher level – just as important is the Academy's efforts to help budding drivers on and off the track. Any initiative of this nature makes a difference, and it's

refreshing to see those who have enjoyed competing – Lloyd progressed from karting to participating in the 2006 Rally GB and racing TCR machinery in Europe and beyond – now trying to give others a helping hand.

On a related note, it was interesting that volunteers were very much the focus of the BRSCC's stand at the Birmingham NEC. Rather than a traditional collection of cars from the club's portfolio of championships, instead there was a new rescue unit and Jaguar safety car taking centre stage. Given the fact that the BRSCC was the only major club to grow its average entry size during the tricky financial climate of 2022, it could be argued that the organisation can afford to focus on areas beside the obvious promotion of its race series. Nevertheless, it was still very welcome to see that a desire to recruit more officials and volunteers in a variety of different capacities is a clear priority for the club, and underlines the importance of this unpaid army in running successful events.

Marshals are one such group of volunteers falling into that category. Earlier this month (5 January), on this very page, Autosport wrote about the importance of recruiting more members of the Orange Army, particularly in the face of rising costs raising questions about the numbers volunteering at this year's events. That struck a chord with former British Touring Car racer and team owner Shaun Hollamby, who floated the idea on social media of offering marshals a range of discounts on products and services to help them feel appreciated.

Hollamby met with British Motorsports Marshals Club chair Nadine Lewis at ASI and discussed suggestions for assisting the marshalling community. While discounts may not be the most practical path forward, particularly when there is no guarantee that they would actually significantly benefit marshals, Hollamby is keen to give them more recognition in other ways. “I just think they're a key part of what we do in motor racing and they get slightly sidelined sometimes,” he says. “The one thing Nadine thought would be very beneficial was a bit more appreciation. It could be every meeting, one marshal could present one of the trophies. Also, having something on the entry form to give a £20 donation towards that day's marshalling. If 400 competitors put £20 that would pay all the marshals their fuel to get there. It's just to try and raise a bit of awareness.” Some clubs already have such focus on their marshals, but Hollamby is keen for this to be more widespread.

These individuals are far from alone in wanting to contribute for the good of the sport, but their actions and intentions are a great demonstration of how people can do their bit. Just think of what could be achieved if more were prepared to see the bigger picture. And such positivity is a nice distraction from the doom and gloom elsewhere. 🌱

2022

Rating the new championships

There weren't many standout stars from the selection of series launched during last year's tricky financial climate

STEFAN MACKLEY AND STEPHEN LICKORISH



GB4 CHAMPIONSHIP

★★★★☆

Exciting racing was overshadowed somewhat by low average grid sizes for the inaugural season of the GB4 Championship, an entry-level single-seater category from MotorSport Vision.

Only nine drivers completed the full eight-round campaign – this total also proved to be

a season low at the second Snetterton meeting – but come the Donington Park finale a high of 14 drivers took to the grid.

Fortec Motorsports' Nikolas Taylor claimed the title at the final round, winning the £50,000 prize fund, and will graduate with the squad into GB3 this season, fulfilling the main purpose of the championship. Last term's National Formula

Ford shootout winner Colin Queen will also move into GB4 this year, again fulfilling another aspiration set out by MSV, while interest for the upcoming campaign looks strong. Seven drivers have already been confirmed and three new teams have joined, paving the way for a strong sophomore season, which could cement the championship's place in the UK racing landscape.

PRAGA CUP

★★★★☆

After enjoying success running its R1 prototypes within the British Endurance Championship, the logical next step for Czech manufacturer Praga was to launch its own standalone series – and the company bit the bullet and committed to one last year. An attractive prize package was offered, some top club racers were tempted, and a minimum of 16 cars were promised.

The reality was slightly different. Sadly, the series struggled for numbers in 2022 and never reached that figure of 16, instead falling as low as nine. At some events, poor driving standards and repeated reliability gremlins, which were



tackled for the second half of the year, meant there were few finishers.

With the company also now launching its track-focused, road-legal Bohema hypercar, it has taken the sensible decision to scale

back its ambition for 2023 and no longer run a standalone grid. Instead, the R1s will form a key part of Britcar's new prototype series, offering the chance for Praga to build up the interest without committing to the track time on its own.

JEP

STEVE JONES



MICK WALKER

SUPER TOURERS

★★★★☆

Very few cars evoke such enthusiasm from motorsport fans as Super Touring tin-tops. Over 20 years from the end of the machines' stint in the British Touring Car Championship, they remain as popular as ever, so the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's new series for these iconic models sparked plenty of interest.

Yet, we've been here before. Sadly, as predicted, the numbers were never high, with the significant running costs proving a barrier to success. While the Super Tourers (and newer BTC-T and Super 2000-spec cars) shared grids with a plethora of other CTCRC categories, this series only once got into double figures – although tempting out Super Touring legends John Cleland and Anthony Reid does give it an extra half a star!

This year there will be nowhere to hide as the Super Tourers are due to get top billing at a new touring car festival planned for Brands Hatch in July, but this could also tempt more to join the fray.



MICK WALKER

TURISMO X

★★★★☆

The MotorSport Vision Trackdays-run championship, a little surprisingly, never reached the heights of the Supercup category it replaced. Across the six-round season, which featured two 20-minute races and a new 'Super Pole' format, numbers for Turismo X averaged only 14 entries – far below the 26 average that were attracted to the previous iteration.

Even the inclusion of a Mazda Demio – a car featured in the popular Gran Turismo franchise, which was a theme the championship embraced – as a prize for the champion could not bring in competitors.

Rather than stumble on, MSVT organisers have taken the sensible decision and canned the championship for the 2023 season, focusing instead on its current roster of EnduroKa, Trackday Championship and Trackday Trophy.

UNITED FORMULA FORD

★★★★☆

Formed from the ashes of Heritage Formula Ford, United Formula Ford proved there's still an appetite to race the Kent-engined machines outside the popular end-of-season events. That said, grids fluctuated widely throughout the seven-round campaign and just eight competitors made the trips mid-season to Cadwell Park and Snetterton.

This was in stark contrast to the 28 drivers who took to the grid for the first of three visits to Brands Hatch, which formed the Champion of Brands element of the new series. Organiser James Beckett has expanded the 2023 calendar to eight events, consisting of visits to Donington Park, Silverstone, Snetterton (x2), Oulton Park and Brands Hatch (x3), with interest supposedly already strong.



OLLIE READ

HISTORIC RACING SOFT LAUNCHES



RICHARD STYLES

HRDC's 'Gerry Marshall Trophy' series had a very strong start

Alongside these categories, there was also a host of other new series from the world of historic motorsport that enjoyed much softer launches during 2022 with just a few trial events. The Historic Sports Car Club was among the organisers taking this sensibly cautious approach as it tentatively kickstarted two new creations.

The first was the Griffiths Haig Trophy for drum-braked 1950s sportscars, harking back to the club's very origins. There were three UK appearances for these machines, with an encouraging 15 cars participating in the Silverstone opener. Entries were more modest for its Historic Modsports and Saloons offering,



Three outings for the Griffiths Haig Trophy field

OLLIE READ

but plenty of enquiries for 2023 mean a fuller programme of six events is now planned.

Other historic racing organisers are looking to capitalise on the popularity of the Group 1 cars that have featured at Goodwood Members' Meetings in the Gerry Marshall Trophy. The Historic Racing Drivers Club has launched its own series named after the legendary national racer and enjoyed a very strong start, attracting 29 cars to its inaugural event at Snetterton before impressively rising above 30 at Silverstone in October. Now a full season is planned for this year, including rounds at the high-profile Donington Historic Festival, Brands Hatch Masters and Oulton Park Gold Cup fixtures.

Equipe Classic Racing, meanwhile, is pressing on with plans to launch its Equipe 70s category that it first announced last season. This is open to a wider array of cars than just the Group 1 tin-tops, with Group 3 and 4 sportscars also eligible, along with road-going 1970s machines, as it intends to create a grid reminiscent of the diverse entries at Le Mans of the period. A small clutch of cars appeared at Silverstone last year, while standalone races are planned for 2023.

2023

Broad new horizons

Despite the current financial climate, there's a multitude of new categories being launched this year

STEPHEN LICKORISH AND STEFAN MACKLEY



BRITCAR PROTOTYPE CUP

If you're getting a sense of déjà vu here, there's good reason. After all, this is not the first time Britcar has launched a series for prototypes. But organisers are confident that this one will prove better than the shortlived initiative of 2016.

And there are several reasons why this

Prototype Cup stands a better chance. First, it has the Praga R1s at its core following the Czech company's decision to step back from running a standalone series. Many of last year's teams have committed to continuing, and therefore up to a dozen cars could already be accounted for.

Alongside the Pragas, there will be a class for

LMP3 machines (above) and two divisions for prototypes that fall within specific bands of the Britcar Endurance Performance Indicator (that considers various factors of a car's performance, not just engine size). With lessons learned from the previous incarnation, it seems that this series has more of the ingredients needed to succeed.

MINI CHALLENGE CLUBSPORT

This is another series that might seem familiar. Prior to shaking up its offering when it joined the British Touring Car support bill, the Mini Challenge had a third dedicated series for

Cooper S machinery and 'Am' drivers in the standard Cooper cars. But, amid declining numbers, this was dropped.

Now, former racers Tom Halliwell and Robin Austin felt it was time for a revival and a new Clubsport series has been created. As well as

catering for the Cooper Ss, it's designed to be a lower-cost alternative for Cooper drivers.

Ahead of its official launch, 40 competitors had already expressed interest, suggesting there is a gap in the market for more modern Minis to be raced at a truly club level.



FORMULA FOUNDATION-E

Perhaps the most ambitious new series of 2023, Formula Foundation-E is an all-electric category that organiser the British Racing & Sports Car Club intends to launch this year. The concept is billed as the world's first club-level single-seater EV racing opportunity, open to teams and privateers.

The FF-E1 machine features a steel chassis created by RSR Technology, also includes a halo, and is built to the latest FIA safety regulations. It weighs just 550kg and, with a power output of around 160bhp from a 120kW power unit, a time of 0-60mph in under three seconds is expected.

The car made its first public appearance at the Formula Ford Festival at Brands Hatch last October, with the BRSCC intending to run demonstration races this year ahead of a full season in 2024. The current battery allows for a minimum of 20-minute sessions on a single charge.

GINETTA GT CHAMPIONSHIP

Ginetta Junior's move from the British Touring Car package to the British GT bill and the GT4 Supercup's axing were the main headlines from the Yorkshire manufacturer's complete overhaul of its motorsport offering for 2023, but there was also news of an additional contest.

The new Ginetta GT Championship has not been given much promotion but is set to feature two classes: GT Pro will be for a G56 with a specification that will sit between the entry-level GT Academy car and the full-blown GT4; while the series will also be the new home of the older GT5 G40s.

AUDI TT CUP RACING

This could well be the highlight of all the new categories launched for 2023. The British Racing & Sports Car Club and series creator SW Motorsports seem to have struck a chord with the Audi TT Cup Racing concept.

Using 2.0 TFSI Audi TT models, complete race cars could be built for less than £12,000. That price point is proving popular, with over 40 in varying stages of build. Even if only half of those are able to commit to a full season, it would still be an incredible start for this series – and it could be far better than that.



EVOLUTION TROPHY

The Evolution Trophy is an intriguing concept from the British Racing & Sports Car Club. All too often, new series are launched and given a standalone grid in their first year when there is not the interest to justify it. And that's where the Evolution Trophy fits in.

Instead of the club's newest offerings being forced to take that leap of faith, they can spend a year or two as part of the Evolution Trophy to prove the concept works before committing to

more track time (the incredible Audi TT Cup Racing popularity means it has skipped this stage).

For its inaugural season, the Evolution Trophy is set to be headed by the previously nomadic Classic VW Cup and a new Cooksport Renault Cup, both of which have had encouraging early signs. They will be combined with the BMW 1 Series Supercup, which never got off the ground last year, and the Mazda MX-5 Mk4 Trophy. The indications are that this is going to be one packed grid and it may not be long before some divisions are able to evolve and go solo.



LEGENDS BTCC

With Ginetta taking the decision not to renew its partnership with the British Touring Car Championship, the door has opened for new series to join the TOCA support package. One of those is Legends Cars, which will hold an entirely separate championship solely for its three outings alongside the BTCC – at Brands Hatch, Croft and Knockhill.

Unsurprisingly, demand from competitors is already high, with several drivers expected to return for the TOCA outings. A non-BTCC championship will also be held this year consisting of five events for Legends competitors.



THE

RACER

Pit talk from the HRDC



HRDC FEATURE RACES

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BELL SPORT CHALLENGE

The latest addition to the cluster of UK Ferrari contests is the Bell Sport Challenge, the creation of Ferrari restoration and servicing specialist Bell Sport & Classic. It will be administered by MotorSport Vision Racing and open to a variety of paddleshift Ferrari Challenge cars, stretching from the 360 Challenge up to the current 488.

Good customer service is set to be at the heart of this series with a hospitality centre due to feature at each event, while qualifying and two races will all take place in a single day. Getting the chance to race on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit in July is set to be a highlight.



116 SPRINT AND 120 COUPE CUP

The 116 Trophy has enjoyed strong entries since it moved to standalone grids ahead of 2020, the 90-minute endurance races and BMW 1 Series model proving popular.

The same technical team is now behind the 120 Coupe Cup, which will use the first-generation 120i Coupe model from the German manufacturer. With an output of 190bhp, it's a step up from the 116, but both will be used in the new sprint series from the 750 Motor Club.

Four rounds will be held in 2023 with two sprint races at each. The races will be run at the same events as the existing 116 Trophy, allowing competitors with that model to take part in both series if they wish.



RICHARD STYLES

MIATA TROPHY

Despite several series already in existence for Mazda MX-5 machinery, MotorSport Vision Trackdays will launch the Miata Trophy this season for Mk1 and Mk3 models.

One class for NA Mk1 chassis and another for the NC Mk3 and 3.5 machines will form the basis of the championship, with a prize drive in the 2024 EnduroKa series going to each champion. The 'Super Pole' qualifying format will be used, and two sprint races will be held at six rounds.

RACING HONDAS CHAMPIONSHIP

Honda is another Japanese marque that will have a greater representation in national motorsport this season, with the Racing Hondas Championship created by Club Time Attack.

Open to all cars manufactured by Honda and powered by a Honda VTEC engine, vehicles will be split into four classes depending on power output. Six rounds are due to take place, all in support of Time Attack.



STEVE JONES

MK CUP 200

A performance step above the Locost and Ma7da championships that are already a mainstay of the 750 Motor Club, the MK Cup 200 is the newest series for kit car models.

The Seven-esque chassis from MK Sports Cars features a Hayabusa bike engine from specialist

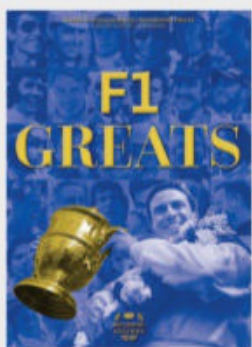
RLM Racing, and already took to the track last season. There were three experimental outings in the Sports 1000 Championship at Pembrey, Donington Park and Brands Hatch to test the concept. A fully formed series will now continue alongside Sports 1000 in 2023, with 10 cars already built ahead of the opening round at Croft and more expected throughout the season.

FINISHING STRAIGHT

Niki Lauda at the
1984 Austrian GP



F1 lives seen through a lens



BOOK REVIEW

F1 GREATS

Rainer W
Schlegelmilch/
Motorsport Images
and Hartmut Lehbrink
RRP €299

Back in 2017, Autosport published a pair of supplements to celebrate the expansion of Motorsport Images following the acquisition of two remarkable picture archives, one of which represented 50 years of Rainer Schlegelmilch's extraordinary output.

At the time we described him as one of the world's most respected photographers. He's arguably the most famous, and a strong case can be made for him being the finest.

This writer spends no small amount of time sourcing images for Autosport's 'From the Archive' pages. And no other photographer's work is so immediately recognisable – there's little need to check the accompanying info, you just know an image is one of his. It's the result of a rich chemistry of innovative composition and technique, the use of top-notch optics and the best film stock, followed by painstaking thoroughness in the process of development and retouching. In the results you'll often see a crossover

from sporting reportage into fine art.

Schlegelmilch himself describes his latest tome, *F1 Greats*, as "a monumental coffee table book". Emerson Fittipaldi, one of three luminaries to have written a foreword – the others are Mika Hakkinen and Stefano Domenicali – calls it a "masterpiece".

It's a big, glossy love letter to the drivers and other significant figures who've dedicated themselves to making Formula 1 the finest sporting endeavour in the world. It's divided into five sections: The World Champions; Other Memorable Drivers; Past Leaders; Team Principals and Key People; and Today's Stars. While the first compiles itself, the others are Schlegelmilch's choices – the list of those who did, and indeed didn't, make it into the second category is the stuff of enjoyable pub debate.

Words are provided for each F1 Great by motorsport journalist Hartmut Lehbrink, first in English, then German, followed by French as the default third language, which is replaced if the subject's native tongue is

none of these three. Lehbrink knows his subject matter very well, and even readers steeped in F1 lore will find themselves discovering new facts and insights as they progress through the book.

These are not dry, stat-laden texts, though. They often border on the poetic, and can be quite poignant, especially when reflecting on the cruel nature of the sport. Lehbrink will frequently employ an enjoyable, and sometimes quirky, turn of phrase, and humour is by no means absent. The description of Giuseppe Farina: "his posture behind the wheel... made him famous, driving with his arms outstretched and his head tilted backwards and to the side, observing the road in front of him like an art lover gazing at a Botticelli". And in reference to the 1992 world champion at the very height of his powers, "there is no doubt that Nigel Mansell was channelling Nigel Mansell".

But this book remains all about the images. Schlegelmilch was just nine at the founding of the F1 World Championship, so for the period from 1950-62, plus 2013-22, he has personally selected the photos used here from the Motorsport Images archive. But there's still half a century of his work to enjoy. And while there are many stunning action shots, this book's subject matter means it's the portraits that take centre stage. And they are peerless – often close-cropped, not

**"NO OTHER
PHOTOGRAPHER'S
WORK IS SO INSTANTLY
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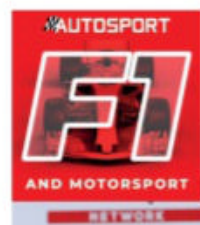


always entirely flattering, but always capturing the essence of the individual, or laying bare a particular characteristic that exemplifies the subject.

If there are criticisms to be made, they are minor. There are a few style inconsistencies in the copy and, while the translators appear to have done an excellent job of maintaining Lehbrink's voice, there is the occasional slip. And, of course, in an ever-changing world, words committed to print can soon be overtaken by events – for instance, the sword of Damocles is poised no more for Mattia Binotto...

No matter. It's the proverbial feast for the eyes that counts. And if this book doesn't find a place on your coffee table – the price is, after all, significant – be sure you'll see some of its highlights in this magazine under the heading 'From the Archive'.

PETER HODGES



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



Live from the Autosport International Show

The latest episode of the Autosport podcast was recorded live from the Autosport International main stage at Birmingham's NEC. Host Martyn Lee is joined by Autosport F1 reporter Luke Smith, Autosport Grand Prix editor Alex Kalinauckas and *GP Racing* editor Stuart Codling to discuss what's new in Formula 1.



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



The top 10 Red Bull drivers ranked

Red Bull is much younger than F1's other big teams, but in less than two decades it's racked up some impressive achievements. For this list, we've taken into account the level of success the drivers achieved with Red Bull and its sister team Toro Rosso/AlphaTauri, the impact they had, and the circumstances of their time within the Red Bull fold.

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

Lewis Hamilton catches the tail of his McLaren-Mercedes MP4-22 during qualifying for the 2007 Hungarian Grand Prix, on a day fraught with intra-team strife. Hamilton was knocked off

pole position in the dying moments of Q3 by team-mate Fernando Alonso, but started the next day's race from P1 after Alonso was demoted to sixth on the grid as a penalty for delaying Hamilton in the pitlane. This was in

retaliation for Hamilton's refusal to cede position to the Spaniard at the start of the final qualifying session. And so 'pitlanegate' joined the lexicon, only to be overtaken in significance and notoriety by 'spygate'...



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SASCHA MAASSEN
MY FAVOURITE... CAR

Porsche RS Spyder

Great expectation greets the renewal of the Penske and Porsche partnership with the new 963 LMDh car. That owes much to the success of their last joint venture – the RS Spyder.

The V8-powered LMP2 machine was lighter and nimbler than the LMP1 Audis it raced against in the American Le Mans Series. Sascha Maassen, who gave the RS Spyder its baptism in 2005 in a continuation of his successful partnership from GT racing with Lucas Luhr, doesn't hesitate to label it as his favourite car.

"You can ask any driver, and they will always say how good this car was," says Maassen, praising Porsche's work on revised bodywork for 2007 that increased downforce and reduced drag. "Especially the 2007 and 2008 car, it was even easier to drive and much faster. That was *amazing* how much they made in one year."

The 1994 Macau Grand Prix winner was heavily involved in developing Porsche's first bespoke prototype since the LMP2000 was canned, rushing back from a hernia operation in "one of my most memorable moments" to complete a

shakedown on the private Weissach test track. "Sitting in the beginning in a wooden box and designing where the buttons go – for me it was like, 'Why are they asking me?'" says

Maassen, three times a champion with Luhr aboard GT cars prior to their RS Spyder involvement. "I was so honoured."

He won seven times in the ALMS aboard Penske-run Spyders, including twice outright alongside Ryan Briscoe in the hallowed 2007 campaign when the secondary-class leader beat the Audis eight times in a row. In addition to regular partner Luhr, he also took two class wins alongside Timo Bernhard in 2006. "They split us because they were afraid of DNFs, and we never had any more!" chuckles Maassen. "We [he and Luhr] both had the same points and we became co-champions. I found it nicer to share it."

Maassen also took a class second place at Le Mans with the Essex-run RS Spyder in 2008, a year in which resurgent Acura took LMP2 spoils six times to Porsche's five in the ALMS, and continued to race the car until 2010 with the privateer Cytosport Muscle Milk team.

JAMES NEWBOLD



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Battle of the Alps

WHO WINS THE MONTE CARLO RALLY?



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