

**F1 2023** Everything you need to know

# **AUTOSPORT**

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26 JANUARY 2023

# F1 2023

New tech battlegrounds  
Impact of Red Bull's penalty  
The rookie challengers



ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

**12-PAGE  
DAYTONA 24  
PREVIEW**

**PLUS** Ogier wins record **ninth** Monte





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# F1 2023, the Daytona 24 Hours and the master of Monte Carlo

The major Formula 1 rules revolution finally arrived in 2022. The first season of ground-effects went reasonably well and the regulations remain *fairly* stable for this season. There are, however, some minor tweaks – as well as three new drivers on the grid and an F1 returnee – so this week Autosport is your guide to F1 2023.

Our technical editor Jake Boxall-Legge runs through the changes on page 20 and looks at how much Red Bull's cost-cap penalty will really impact last season's pacesetter squad. He also picks out other things to watch out for, including the full-time arrivals of Oscar Piastri, Logan Sargeant and Nyck de Vries.

Joining the rookies will be Nico Hulkenberg, the 35-year-old German still in search of his first F1 podium. Adam Cooper catches up with the new Haas driver – and his fresh outlook on life – on p28.

The big event this weekend is the Daytona 24 Hours as the new LMDh era gets under way. Gary Watkins talks to the big four – Acura, BMW, Cadillac and Porsche – in our 12-page preview starting on p32.

Another motorsport classic, the Monte Carlo Rally, kicked off the World Rally Championship last week. Toyota part-timer and WRC all-time legend Sebastien Ogier underlined his mastery with a record-breaking ninth Monte victory (p44). Tom Howard was there to witness a tough event for Toyota's rivals, as Kalle Rovanperä took second while Hyundai and M-Sport Ford struggled.



*Kevin Turner*

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**NEXT WEEK**  
**2 FEBRUARY**

**Hamilton at Mercedes**

We take a look at Lewis's decade at the Silver Arrows and rank his seasons



**Cover image**

Matthew Fiveash

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# PIT + PADDOCK



## Acura claims Daytona pole as new sportscar era begins

### DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Tom Blomqvist and Meyer Shank Racing took first blood at the start of the new GTP era in the IMSA SportsCar Championship at Daytona last Sunday. The Briton claimed a last-gasp pole position aboard the Shank Acura ARX-06 LMDh as the team began the defence of its 2022 IMSA title over the test and qualifying weekend ahead of this weekend's season-opener.

Blomqvist snatched pole after a late red flag in the single 20-minute GTP qualifying session at the end of the Roar before the

Rolex, which left time for only one flying lap as the clock ticked down after the resumption. He had been two seconds off the pace on his initial run before pitting for a new set of tyres.

The tactic of going for new Michelins appeared to have backfired on Blomqvist and Shank when the red flags flew after Nick Tandy went off at the Le Mans Chicane (nee the Bus Stop) with seven minutes to go. Blomqvist had been unable to get a quick lap in before the stoppage, dropping to seventh of the nine GTP cars in the times.

With just one warm-up lap to get his tyres up to temperature, Blomqvist found nearly two and a half seconds, stopping the clock at 1m34.031s to snatch pole from Felipe Nasr's Porsche Penske Motorsport entry. Nasr had jumped to the head of the times with a 1m34.114s, but the closely following Acura bumped the Porsche 963 by just 0.083s.

"That was a bit wild; I had no real reference and to be honest I just had to kind of wing it," said Blomqvist. "I knew I had a good car and knew if it was under me I could do a good job. But the tyres weren't even up to temp, so I just sort of licked the stamp and sent it."

Blomqvist's performance came after the Shank Acura had been fastest in every test session in which it ran over the course of the Roar weekend: MSR opted out of the wet session on Saturday evening as the team prioritised one-lap pace ahead of qualifying.

Nasr insisted he wasn't overly disappointed to miss out on the top spot. "Pole position would've been nice but we're looking at the big picture, which is the race this coming weekend," he said. "I'm happy with my fastest lap. It's incredible how much progress we've made over the weekend:

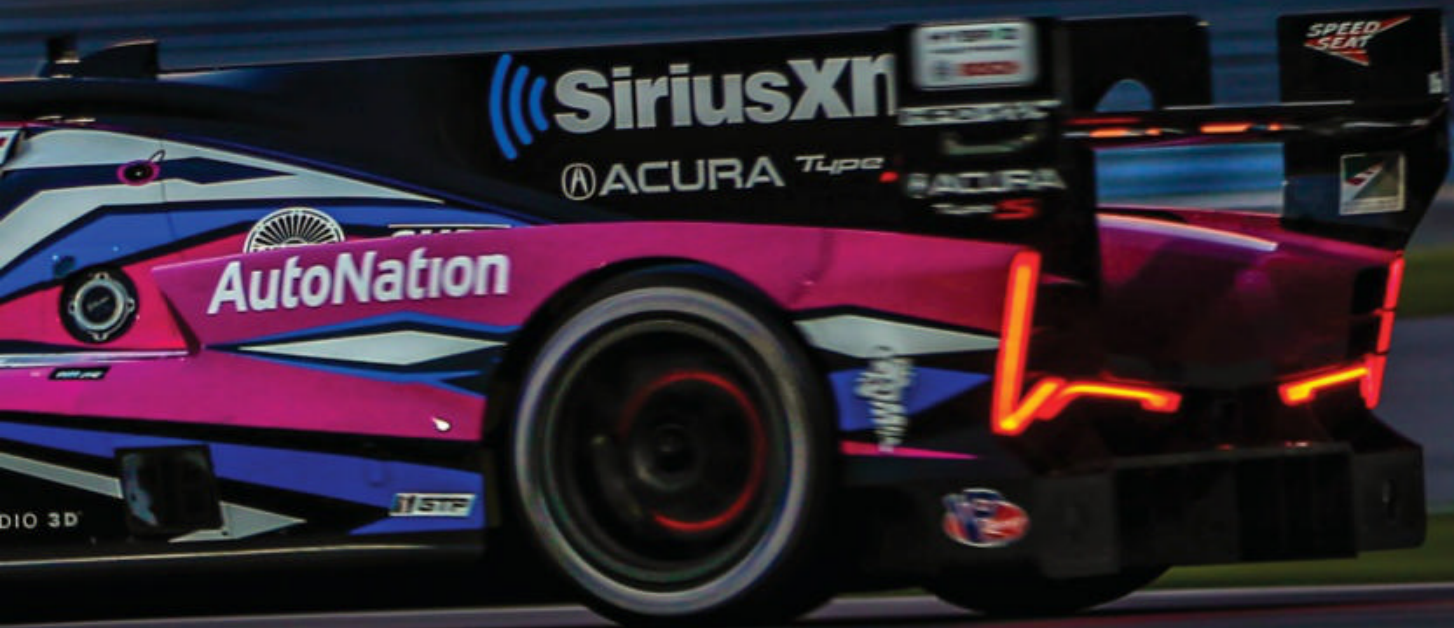


Tandy takes the scenic route to back of the GTP class grid

JOHNSON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Meyer Shank  
Acura will start  
Daytona 24 Hours  
from pole thanks to  
Blomqvist (below)



GTP TIMES

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Tom Blomqvist	Meyer Shank Acura	1m34.031s
2	Felipe Nasr	Penske Porsche	1m34.114s
3	Ricky Taylor	Wayne Taylor Acura	1m34.198s
4	Sebastien Bourdais	Chip Ganassi Cadillac	1m34.262s
5	Alex Lynn	Chip Ganassi Cadillac	1m34.389s
6	Pipo Derani	Action Express Cadillac	1m34.608s
7	Philipp Eng	RLL BMW	1m34.723s
8	Nick Yelloly	RLL BMW	1m34.846s
9	Nick Tandy	Penske Porsche	no time



DOLE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

we’ve now got a better understanding of the quirks of the car and the new tyres.”

The second Acura, the Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti Autosport entry, was quickest in Ricky Taylor’s hands before the stoppage: he had done two laps good enough for the top spot at that point. But the team opted not to send him out for the final one-lap dash, which meant his 1m34.198s best was only good enough for third on the grid.

Sebastien Bourdais didn’t manage a flying lap before the red flag in the Chip Ganassi Racing team’s full-season IMSA Cadillac, but afterwards pulled out a 1m34.262s to go fourth. That was just over a tenth up on Alex Lynn in the sister Caddy V-LMDh, which will switch over to a full World Endurance Championship campaign after Daytona.

Pipo Derani took sixth in the Action Express Racing Cadillac ahead of the two Rahal-run BMW M Hybrid V8s, which were seven and eight tenths off the pace in the hands of Philipp Eng and Nick Yelloly.

Tandy wasn’t credited with a time after an off in which his 963 sustained nose and front suspension damage. Under IMSA rules, he lost his quickest two laps for causing the red flag. They included a 1m34.453s, which would have been good enough for sixth on the grid, and he had been on for an improvement when the left front locked up into the chicane.

Mercedes had the quickest four runners in GT Daytona, three entries from the regular pro-am GTD class outpacing the best of the GTD Pro cars from the German

marque. Philip Ellis was quickest for Winward Racing, just shading Fabian Schiller’s mark in the SunEnergy1 Mercedes-AMG GT3. Mikael Grenier took third for the Korthoff squad, while Maro Engel took the qualifying points in Pro for the WeatherTech Racing squad. Best non-Merc was the Heart of Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 driven by Ross Gunn in fifth.

Ben Keating claimed qualifying honours in LMP2 aboard his PR1/Mathiasen ORECA-Gibson 07, while Nico Pino was quickest in LMP3 driving the Screen team’s Ligier-Nissan JSP320.

GARY WATKINS

 P32 DAYTONA PREVIEW



# De Vries faces lawsuit from F2 investor

## FORMULA 1

Formula 1 rookie Nyck de Vries is facing a lawsuit from a Dutch real-estate millionaire over a €250,000 loan used to support his junior career.

De Vries, a champion in Formula 2 and Formula E, will race full-time with AlphaTauri in 2023 after impressing on his debut as a late stand-in for Alex Albon with Williams at Monza last year. But he is now being sued by Jeroen Schothorst, who claims that de Vries withheld information and breached agreements relating to a loan in 2018.

De Vries reportedly took out a €250,000 loan from Schothorst's investment company, Investrand, to help secure an F2 seat with Prema in 2018. This allegedly came with a charge of 3% interest

per year as well as a cut of future income from F1 activities. It also stated that the loan would be waived if de Vries was not an F1 driver in 2022.

De Vries paid €190,000 in interest to Schothorst but, because he did not have an F1 deal in place for 2022, he was under the assumption that the loan would be written off. But Schothorst claims that de Vries failed to provide the required information about his earnings and contracts during the term of the loan. He is now requesting those details, including those relating to his AlphaTauri F1 deal, as well as contesting the definition of his role in F1 last year.

"We invested in de Vries's career at a crucial moment and when nobody else wanted to do it anymore,"



said Schothorst. "We now have different opinions on the interpretation of the agreement we entered into with each other at the time."

De Vries has denied all of the allegations. His lawyer, Jeroen Bedaux, claimed he has proposed to repay the €250,000 loan on top of the €190,000 interest already

paid, but this was rejected by Schothorst, whose sons Steijn and Pieter raced against de Vries in Formula Renault. Bedaux also claimed that another factor involved is that de Vries politely declined Schothorst's offer to become his F1 manager. A ruling is expected in early February.

**LUKE SMITH & ERWIN JAEGGI**



## FORMULA 1

The FIA has appointed highly respected former team manager Steve Nielsen as its sporting director inside a new Formula 1 structure.

Nielsen, who has most recently worked for Formula One Management, has enjoyed a lengthy career in grand prix racing, which included spells at Lotus, Tyrrell, Benetton and AlphaTauri. In his new role at the FIA,

he will be responsible for all sporting matters, including the development of race control and the remote operations centre, as well as updates to the sporting regulations.

Speaking about his new role, Nielsen said: "I have spent my professional life working for many teams and organisations in F1, and cannot wait to engage with another new chapter with the FIA. I'd like to thank the president and Stefano Domenicali [F1 chief] for their trust in me, and I understand and

appreciate the unique challenges that come with being the regulator.

"Having worked closely with a number of people in the federation over the years, I'm looking forward to tackling those challenges that lie ahead with them. F1 is in a great place, and it's our responsibility to ensure the future health of the sport that is at the heart of everything we do."

Nielsen's appointment is one of a number of changes that FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem has introduced to help better run F1 as part of the ongoing restructuring since he took office in December 2021. Nikolas Tombazis, who has led the FIA's technical team in F1 since 2018, will take on a more senior role as single-seater director. Reporting to him will be Nielsen, technical director Tim Goss, financial director Federico Lodi and operations director Francois Sicard.

Ben Sulayem believes that the changes will help improve the FIA's running of F1. "By developing and empowering people within our organisation, as well as bringing in expertise and experience from the outside, I am confident that we are in the best position possible to move forward together with our partners at FOM and the Formula 1 teams," he said.

**JONATHAN NOBLE**



# Wittich is sole director again

## FORMULA 1

Formula 1 race director Niels Wittich will continue in the role through 2023, and will help lead a programme bringing on the next generation of officials.

In the wake of the controversy at the 2021 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix season finale, the FIA implemented a dual race director system last year, with Wittich and Eduardo Freitas sharing the role through the season. That was until Wittich was assigned a role as the sole director from October's Japanese GP onwards, and it is understood that he will continue on that basis for 2023.

But with the FIA keen to ensure that there is a strong succession plan in place for the long term, the governing body does not want to hand over full responsibility of the race director role to just one individual. While Wittich will continue, the FIA is going to roll out a more intense training and development programme to help nurture race directors and stewards and which will be formally launched next month. Trainees will be given a bespoke programme of experience-building through attendance at FIA events to shadow and observe senior officials.

The FIA has also changed the format of its Race Director Seminar and International



Stewards Programme away from an annual event. For 2023, it will become a series of webinars to ensure improved dialogue as events develop over the course of the year.

Speaking at the Monte Carlo Rally, FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem said he was happy with the way the plans were evolving. "You see, I inherited a lot," he explained. "I won't say it was a good inheritance, but I am very happy that the

pathway for race directors and for stewards is going well. There will be in February the training in the FIA headquarters, and you will see changes and evolution thereafter."

The FIA has not yet confirmed those who will be mentored by Wittich at F1 races, but they are likely to include F3 race director Claro Ziegahn, F2 race director Rui Marques and senior stewards such as Silvia Bellot.

**JONATHAN NOBLE & TOM HOWARD**



# Van der Linde in for hurt Frijns

## FORMULA E

DTM race winner Kelvin van der Linde is to step in for Robin Frijns at the Abt Mahindra Formula E team starting from this weekend's Diriyah round while the Dutchman recovers from fractures to his left wrist and hand sustained in his Mexico crash.

Frijns ran into the back of the Nissan of Norman Nato on the opening lap at Mexico City, and the sudden motion of the steering wheel caused his injuries. He had surgery in Mexico that night before returning home.

Abt Audi DTM driver van der Linde will therefore make his FE race debut in Saudi Arabia. He drove Gen2 machinery for the

then-Audi team in a 2020 Marrakech test.

"To compete in Formula E is a dream of mine, but of course I wanted the circumstances of my debut to be different," said van der Linde (left). "I'm very sorry for Robin and I hope he'll be fit again quickly."

Van der Linde becomes the first South African to race in FE. His brother Sheldon was a contender for the BMW Andretti seat in 2020-21 that went to Jake Dennis.

It is unknown how long Frijns's layoff will be, and van der Linde could remain in the seat for the Hyderabad round, with the possibility of participating in his home race in Cape Town in late February.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**

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## Da Costa, Stevens in Jota Porsche

### WEC

Antonio Felix da Costa and Will Stevens will remain with Jota to race its customer Porsche 963 LMDh in the World Endurance Championship this season. The Porsche Formula E driver and ex-Formula 1 racer are moving across to the British squad's new entry in the Hypercar class after winning the WEC LMP2 title alongside Roberto Gonzalez with the team in 2022.

The duo have finally been named by the team after protracted speculation that they would be retained for Jota's graduation to the Hypercar division. The announcement finally came last week that they will join Yifei Ye, the Porsche Asia Pacific

Motorsport-contracted driver announced for the car in November.

Da Costa is remaining with Jota for a fourth WEC assault. Stevens, meanwhile, is going into a second consecutive campaign, having previously contested partial programmes with the team in 2016 and 2018-19 and then a full season in 2019-20.

The Porsche, to be entered under the Hertz Team Jota banner, is set to join the WEC for round three of the series at Spa at the end of April. Supply-chain issues have delayed the delivery of the cars to the customers scheduled to race them in both the WEC and the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America.

Jota has confirmed that its Hypercar crew

will race an LMP2 ORECA-Gibson 07 in the colours of new sponsor Hertz in all WEC rounds before the 963 comes on stream, which is likely to mean the Sebring opener in March and then Algarve in April.

Jota directors Sam Hignett and David Clark said in a joint statement: "Our line-up of Antonio, Will and Yifei is a strong mix of speed, experience and youthful exuberance. We've had success over recent years, and as one of the only privateer entries in the Hypercar class we'll be taking the challenge to our manufacturer counterparts."

Gianmaria Bruni is the only driver so far confirmed by Proton Competition, the other team running a 963 in the WEC this year.

**GARY WATKINS**

## Palou and his dad set up single-seater team



### EUROCUP-3

Alex Palou, the 2021 IndyCar Series champion, has turned team boss with a new squad that will enter the inaugural Spanish-organised Eurocup-3 single-seater series.

Eurocup-3 is the new series detailed in these pages last autumn being set up by the administrators of the hugely successful Spanish Formula 4 Championship. It has been conceived as a low-cost third-tier category, using the Formula Regional

Tatuus T-318 chassis and Alfa Romeo turbocharged engine, but with modified aerodynamics. The series kicks off at Spa in May, with other 'international' rounds at Monza, Zandvoort and Estoril added to Spanish events at Motorland Aragon, Jerez, Valencia and Barcelona.

Palou Motorsport last week became the first team to confirm its participation in Eurocup-3. Based in the family's home region of Catalonia, its team principal will be Ramon Palou (with

Alex, left), who has been by his son's side throughout his racing career dating back to acting as mechanic on his kart. Monaco Increase Management, which looks after Palou, is involved too.

With Eurocup-3 being a sister series to Spanish F4, which is owned by a consortium of leading teams, some squads from that series including Campos Racing, MP Motorsport, Drivex and GRS Team are also set to compete in the new initiative.





**ABU DHABI 6 HOURS** Porsche ace Harry King took victory in the Abu Dhabi 6 Hours after a thrilling climax. The Brit's hard work in the Pure RACING 911 GT3-R was undone by safety cars, and co-driver Joel Sturm had to overcome the similar Herberth Motorsport car of Markus Neuhofer in the final stint – and cancel out a 10-second penalty for passing a car off-track. This the German did to take victory for himself, King and Alex Malykhin, while Neuhofer claimed second with son Felix plus Renauer twins Robert and Alfred. A close third was the Haas RT Audi of Maxime Soulet, Mathieu Detry and Stephane Perrin, from the Pierre Kaffer-led Phoenix Audi. **Photo by 24H Series**

## GB3 top boys in Kuwait and US

**FREGIONAL/USF PRO 2000**

Reigning GB3 champion and Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Luke Browning is to make his Formula Regional Middle East debut this weekend at the new Kuwait Motor Town circuit.

Browning (right) has joined up again with his GB3 team Hitech Grand Prix in place of Red Bull Junior Jak Crawford. The American was initially slated to contest the first three of five rounds, but picked up a best result of eighth from a poor opening event in Dubai. Browning will take over for the two Kuwait outings and would appear favourite to race the car in the remaining rounds in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Gabriele Mini is also contesting the first three rounds only with Hitech; the Italian will be replaced for the final two events by British Formula 4 champion Alex Dunne. Sebastian Montoya and Daniel Mavlyutov are contesting the full series with Hitech.



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Joel Granfors, who was runner-up to Browning in GB3 in 2022, is veering in the opposite geographical direction. The 17-year-old Swede has set his sights on a career in the US, and has joined Exclusive Autosport to compete in USF Pro 2000. Exclusive carried Louis Foster to the title in 2022, when it was known as Indy Pro 2000.

Granfors recently had his first test in the car over two days at Sebring and will get more running as he builds up to the opening round in St Petersburg.

## WURZ BEATS HEDGE FOR KIWI DOUBLE

**FREGIONAL OCEANIA**

Charlie Wurz extended his lead in the Toyota Formula Regional Oceania series in New Zealand with two race victories at Teretonga last weekend.

The Austrian trailed local ace Callum Hedge in first qualifying at the world's most southerly racing circuit. But Wurz made a strong start, stuck it out around the outside at the first corner and slipped down the inside of his M2 Competition team-mate at Turn 2. Hedge kept the pressure on, but Wurz (below) stayed firm. American Jacob Abel held off Briton Josh Mason for third.

Wurz claimed pole for the feature race, and converted that into a lights-to-flag win. Once again he had Hedge filling his mirrors for the entire distance. As on Saturday, Mason was again pipped to the final podium spot, although this time it was Liam Sceats keeping him behind.

Hedge took a spectacular win in the slippery reversed-grid race two, for which everyone started on wet-weather Hankook tyres. He started seventh, survived being eased onto the grass in an early tussle with Abel, and passed American Ryan Shehan for the lead just before half-distance.

Hedge went on to win that one by over five seconds from Shehan, while Ryder Quinn kept Wurz at bay for third.



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## Star F3 names among those who complete the F2 grid

### FORMULA 2

A raft of announcements in the past week means that the grid for the FIA Formula 2 Championship is already complete, several weeks before the season kicks off.

Reigning FIA Formula 3 champion Victor Martins and 2022 F2 runner-up Theo Pourchaire will link up in a very tasty line-up at ART Grand Prix. Red Bull juniors Isack Hadjar and Jak Crawford will step up from F3 together with Hitech Grand Prix. Jehan Daruvala is off the Red Bull scheme as he enters his fourth season of F2, but joins Dennis Hauger in making the move from Prema Racing to reigning champion MP Motorsport, the Dutch squad that ran Felipe Drugovich to title glory in 2022.

Meanwhile, Red Bull's two newcomers Enzo Fittipaldi and Zane Maloney are teaming up together at Carlin after completing all three days of last November's post-season test in Abu Dhabi with the British squad.

Brazilian Fittipaldi was a breakthrough star of F2 in 2022 with the unfancied Charouz team, while Barbadian Maloney returns to Carlin, the team with which he

claimed the 2019 British F4 crown, after coming just five points short of pipping Martins to the title in his rookie F3 season.

Carlin deputy team principal Stephanie Carlin explained: "Enzo was really impressive to come back from such a big accident [in Jeddah in 2021] and be so strong, and with a team that possibly isn't considered to be a regular frontrunner, and showed himself to be a really good racer."

"In F2, his racecraft and ability to conserve the tyres is almost more important than qualifying. No championship is more about consistency. And in testing he was really enthusiastic and a great team player."

Of Maloney, Carlin added: "He has a very different driving style, which is going to be interesting! Enzo builds up and Zane pulls back. It's great to have him back in the team. He did a fantastic job in F3, and we're coaching him to take it one race at a time. He needs to be patient."

Fittipaldi has been paired up with long-time top F2 engineer Stuart King, while Maloney is working with highly regarded Carlin 'driver whisperer' Matt Ogle.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**



### HOW THE F2 GRID IS LINING UP

#### MP MOTORSPORT

**Dennis Hauger/  
Jehan Daruvala**

Not content with having some top engineers from Prema's recent past, the reigning champion team has nabbed the Italian squad's 2022 F2 line-up. Both drivers need to improve on last year.

#### CARLIN

**Enzo Fittipaldi/  
Zane Maloney**

An intriguing combo. Fittipaldi was something of a surprise star of 2022 with Charouz, Maloney had a terrific rookie F3 season, and the team is always a contender in F2.

#### ART GRAND PRIX

**Theo Pourchaire/  
Victor Martins**

The best all-French F2 line-up since Arnoux and Pironi at Martini in 1977? Pourchaire was linked with a move to Japan and has to be a title favourite; Martins will surely be strong.

#### PREMA RACING

**Frederik Vesti/  
Ollie Bearman**

It didn't quite happen for Vesti at ART and now he returns to his old F3/FRegional home. Bearman is possibly a year away from being a top contender – but we thought that when he moved up to F3...

#### HITECH GP

**Jak Crawford/  
Isack Hadjar**

It's going to be tough with two F2 rookies with just three years of F3 experience between them and a combined age of 35. Hadjar looked exciting as a rookie in F3, if a rough diamond.

#### DAMS

**Ayumu Iwasa/**

#### Arthur Leclerc

Iwasa did enough in 2022 to suggest he'll be a title contender, while Leclerc needs a big step forward from his inconclusive F3 career.

#### VIRTUOSI RACING

**Jack Doohan/  
Amaury Cordeel**

For Iwasa (above), read the same for Doohan, three times a winner in 2022. Cordeel looked good at times last year with VAR, especially so for someone who never karted seriously.

#### PHM RACING

**Roy Nissany/  
Brad Benavides**

Few people are tipping great things here, although Nissany is capable of a strong turn of speed on his day.

#### TRIDENT

**Roman Stanek/  
Clement Novalak**

Italian team can't seem to regularly click in F2, but this is a line-up good enough for decent points. Promising Stanek stays in the fold for his move from F3.

#### VAN AMERSFOORT

**Richard Verschoor/  
Juan Manuel Correa**

Amazingly, Dutchman Verschoor has never started a race for his compatriots at VAR. Definitely capable of winning when the stars align. Correa is rebuilding his single-seater career.

#### CAMPOS RACING

**Kush Maini/  
Ralph Boschung**

Veteran Swiss Boschung seems to have been in F2 since compatriot Marc Surer won the 1979 title. A dedicated, quick driver who can shine. Maini's form was inconsistent in F3.





## Shwartzman for GT3 Ferrari

### GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

Ferrari Formula 1 test and reserve driver Robert Shwartzman will take his first steps in sportscar racing with the Italian manufacturer this year. The Russian-Israeli (above) will race a new 296 GT3 in the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup with AF Corse in conjunction with a third season in his F1 role.

The 23-year-old, part of the Ferrari Driver Academy since the end of 2017, will share one of three factory cars entered by AF in the five-round series incorporating the Spa 24 Hours with Nicklas Nielsen and Alessio Rovera. The move follows a season in which the 2021 Formula 2 Championship runner-up didn't have a race programme to supplement his F1 duties, which included two Friday free practice appearances.

"We wanted to give Robert a programme so he could see the GT side of the business," said a spokesman for Ferrari.

The second works AF car entered in the Pro class for the GTWCE enduros will be raced by Davide Rigon, Daniel Serra and Antonio Fuoco. The programme is a continuation of that run under the Iron Lynx banner in 2021 and 2022 by a team

largely made up of AF personnel.

The Ferrari spokesman explained that it was important that the marque maintained a presence in all the major GT3 series, especially in the first season of the 296. The switch to an AF-flagged assault follows the move by Iron Lynx to Lamborghini for its expanded GT3 programmes ahead of the arrival of the new LMDh for its entry into the top class of the WEC and IMSA SportsCar Championship in 2024.

Rigon and Serra will defend their IMSA Endurance Cup title in North America with Risi Competizione. They will also race in the GTE Am ranks in the WEC, Rigon at AF sharing a 488 GTE Evo with Francesco Castellacci and Thomas Flohr, and Serra with Kessel Racing alongside Scott Huffaker and Takeshi Kimura. Rovera will also race in GTE Am in the WEC: he will share an AF car run under the Richard Mille banner with new Ferrari factory driver Lilou Wadoux and Luis Perez Companc.

Ferrari stalwart Andrea Bertolini will return to the GTWCE Endurance Cup to defend the Pro-am title he won last year. The 49-year-old will share a car with father-and-son Louis and Jef Machiels.

**GARY WATKINS**



Ferrari 296 GT3 makes race debut at Daytona this weekend

GALSTAD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

### IN THE HEADLINES

#### POWER OUT OF DAYTONA

Reigning IndyCar Series champion Will Power has opted out of this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours IMSA SportsCar Championship season-opener while his wife recovers from surgery. The Australian has been replaced in the GT Daytona class Gradient-run SunEnergy1 Mercedes-AMG GT3 by factory driver Luca Stolz.

#### TUCK IN FOR ELMS ASTON

Briton Ben Tuck is moving up to the European Le Mans Series in 2023 with the TF Sport Aston Martin squad. The 25-year-old, a regular in GT3 in the NLS at the Nurburgring Nordschleife and a race winner in the DTM Trophy for GT4 cars, will share a Vantage GT3 with factory driver Jonny Adam and John Hartshorne.

#### FREY SWITCHES TO FERRARI

The Swiss Emil Frey Racing squad is swapping from Lamborghini to Ferrari for a programme expected to be focused again on the GT World Challenge Europe and ADAC GT Masters. The switch to the new Ferrari 296 GT3 follows four seasons running Lamborghini Huracans and the purchase of a Ferrari dealership in Munich by the team's parent company.

#### MONTOKA'S F3 DEAL

While Red Bull was announcing its glut of Formula 2 drivers (see left) for 2023, it also revealed, as expected, that new recruit Sebastian Montoya will race with Hitech Grand Prix for his graduation to FIA F3 this season. Another F3 recruit is promising Japanese-Australian prospect Hugh Barter – the Nicolas Todt-managed driver will compete with Campos Racing. Barter was runner-up in both Spanish and French F4 last year.

#### PANIS IS ICE CHAMPION

Aurelien Panis was crowned Andros Trophy champion at Lans en Vercors last weekend, with one round still to come. The Audi driver claimed victory in the first final of the weekend, but could not prevent Yann Ehrlacher (leading below) triumphing later on.



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## Le Mans racer Watson goes from Aston to Astra

Watson, with PMR chief Adam Weaver (inset), will race Vauxhall in 2023



JEP  
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### BTCC

Two-time Le Mans 24 Hours starter Andrew Watson has made a career change and will race in the British Touring Car Championship this season at the wheel of a Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra.

The 28-year-old therefore joins Jake Hill, his stablemate under Mark Blundell's management company, in the series, a decade after he raced on the BTCC undercard in Ginetta's Junior and GT4 Supercup support championships.

"I would have liked a trophy at Le Mans and that door is not closed," explained the Northern Irishman, whose 24 Hours starts came in Porsche and Aston Martin machines. "This is probably more of a timing thing. For

my partners and commercial aspects, a lot of these guys are based in the UK, and this gives a better platform than the World Endurance Championship where there's not a lot of racing. Also, I started a software business for the motorsport industry [Racing Connected], so focusing on the UK and not having to travel is another aspect."

So was Watson's upgrade from silver to gold status making it harder to get drives: "I'm not angry or bitter. I had a couple of years as a top-end silver but this is not my profession. But we had some good results and speed so I'm not surprised by that."

Watson added that his only competition experience in a front-wheel-drive car came when "I did a bit of rallying when I was 14!"

"I'm not sure what to expect," he added.



"This is a learning year. It's a competitive championship and the guys at the front have been there eight, 10, 15 years. I'm not going to go in and challenge for the championship, but I have the Jack Sears Trophy to aim towards. I'll learn the car, learn the hybrid, learn the craft and do what I can."

Autosport understands that PMR's 2022 BTCC rookie Ash Hand is looking good to remain in the series this season, but that his seat has yet to be nailed down.

MARCUS SIMMONS

## Loeb is late addition to Race of Champions field

### RACE OF CHAMPIONS

Rally legend Sebastien Loeb is to aim for his second successive Race of Champions title this weekend in Sweden.

Fresh from finishing runner-up on the Dakar Rally, nine-time World Rally champion Loeb (left) will line up alongside reigning FIA eTouring Car World Cup champ Adrien Tambay with Team France.



Loeb was victorious in the first RoC on snow and ice last year. He defeated Sebastian Vettel in the final for his fourth RoC victory, equalling the all-time record he now shares with fellow Frenchman Didier Auriol.

"I have so many good memories from the Race of Champions, going back 20 years," said Loeb, who won the event in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2022. "It's always great to meet up with all

the other drivers in such a nice atmosphere.

"In the racing we have to adapt to all the cars, which becomes even more complicated when you're faced with snow and ice in Sweden. It isn't easy going up against all the guys from the Nordic nations who know these conditions so well, so I was happy last year to find out I still have the pace!"

HAYDN COBB





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# One way to instantly improve F1

*Pithy explainers of official decisions delivered during TV broadcasts would be an easy win for the FIA, pleasing the fans and improving transparency*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

One of Formula 1's major selling points is that it is big business, big stakes. Interest levels are heightened because of the competition being readied for between legendary marques such as Ferrari, Mercedes, McLaren and Aston Martin, plus huge brands such as Red Bull. But the small details matter to motorsport fans too.

Autosport knows this well — we exist because our readers share our like-minded interest in all of motorsport's facets. And so, it's interesting to note how, as well as focusing on F1's big picture stuff this month with his comments on Andretti's possible entry and the speculated \$20 billion value of the championship to the Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund, FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem's more day-to-day concerns with the championship have been in the spotlight this January too.

Ben Sulayem has confirmed that the FIA is tightening the rules around shortened races following the baffling end to the rain-hit 2022 Japanese Grand Prix and Max Verstappen's second title coronation. Just as he did at the FIA prizegiving gala last month, Ben Sulayem recently hit out at teams "who approved" the previous definition of the rule that awarded full points to a shortened race — so long as it was restarted and concluded with a chequered flag. The tweak was only put in place from 2022 as a response to the Spa washout farce of 2021. The FIA president explained that

**“‘Small picture’ flashpoints can, after all, add up to big, and possibly costly, issues overall”**

responsibility for fixing this specific rule has been handed to the governing body's new sporting director Steve Nielsen as part of an overhaul of its F1 race management structure — it is understood to come with FOM's blessing given the well-respected former team manager was previously employed there.

Such a development is a welcome step, but it's surely worth noting that, as custodian of the rules, the FIA will always be the first, deserved point to place criticism for any problems with them. As with any big sporting governing body — and one charged with significant safety and legal oversights in what remains a dangerous pursuit — communicating the necessary complexities is a challenge. But those complexities are another key reason why fans enjoy motorsport. Again, Autosport knows this well and we share this passion. So, here's a friendly suggestion for how at a stroke the FIA

could improve F1. And it centres on fan communication.

While the governing body has an 'open door' media policy on stories regarding sporting and technical rules, it rather went against Ben Sulayem's statements from his FIA election campaign that transparency is "vital to good governance and accountability" when it removed the post-event F1 race director media calls (previously conducted by the late Charlie Whiting and then Michael Masi) in the aftermath of Abu Dhabi 2021. It did so in an effort to protect new race directors Niels Wittich and Eduardo Freitas, but it came with an accountability cost. Autosport knows requests for the reinstatement of these media calls have fallen on deaf ears, which doesn't stop it being right to keep making them. But if they are never coming back, how about something else that would improve F1's show?

Given it's *still* January, let's look outside F1 for a moment. In the NFL, a sport currently reaching its season conclusion and where very fast actions are governed by a massively complicated set of laws, TV broadcasts regularly feature ex-officials who explain why a call has been made one way or another by the referees. This writer has argued for F1 to adopt this before, but on reflection, given F1 actually is a world championship with myriad broadcasters compared to a handful of networks in the US, it would be tricky to implement. And the best person surely for such a role would be Masi and that just isn't going to happen.

But what about expanding the FIA's much vaunted remote operations centre to include regular explanations of race control and stewards' decisions during races as part of TV broadcasts? Yes, the latter operate independently of the FIA, but they interpret the rules based on the governing body's legislative wording. And sometimes race control baffles viewers even when this is done according to the established procedures. Such a movement could even be covered with slick graphics rather than another talking head.

It's right to praise the FIA for things it got right in tricky circumstances — after all, it's possible to discern that some of Ben Sulayem's frustrations lie with the governing body taking the blame for every F1 rules or systems debate, which seem to be happening regularly these days. Its explanation of the tractor-on-track scenes at Suzuka last year was brilliantly detailed, but these things take time to generate. An additional benefit of remote race control TV explanations would be to set out the procedures already swinging into action during the fallout from the inevitable next unexpected situation. People just appreciate being told what's happening.

Quick, succinct explanations during sporting events surely tick all the boxes on transparency, fan engagement and competitor relations that would be so handy during (relatively) 'small picture' flashpoints such as Spa and Abu Dhabi 2021. These can, after all, add up to big, and possibly costly, issues overall. How January's musings could boost the brighter days to come... 🍀





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# Rating the F1 races: 2021 vs 2022

*A system to score all the grands prix from the past two seasons produces some interesting results and sets a standard that 2023 should surely exceed*

KEVIN TURNER

**D**espite Max Verstappen's runaway Formula 1 championship success in 2022, the new ground-effects rules were generally well received. Cars could follow each other more closely and we had some great battles during the campaign. But how good were the races compared to what came before?

Autosport teamed up with author Roger Smith in 2021 to start rating each grand prix. Assessing races is always tricky – how do you compare, for example, a masterclass, a wheel-to-wheel lead battle and a race full of unexpected drama? All have their merits, and different fans will have varying preferences as to what they want to see. You could also have a fantastic fight further down the pack but, if it's not for the podium spots, it just doesn't have quite the same attraction. We've nevertheless attempted to turn the subjective into something approaching objective to create what we hope is a meaningful result, or at least one that is of interest and can encourage healthy debate.

Smith developed a fact-based, process-driven methodology to score each race against a list of researched criteria, including close finish, surprise winner, outstanding overtake, how incident-packed, titanic duels, shock factor, an exceptional drive plus the conditions/other circumstances. His final ratings were created from the average of the top three scores applied to the list. The average of that and Autosport's own score was then taken as the final race rating. We've now been doing this for two seasons, so what has the process produced so far?

In 2021, the top three races were the Sao Paulo GP (91%), scene of Lewis Hamilton's incredible charge through the field to victory, the dramatic Hungarian GP (89%) that resulted in Esteban Ocon's win for Alpine, and the Bahrain GP opener (85%) that featured the late lead battle between Verstappen and Hamilton. The worst scorers were the Belgian GP non-race (8%) and the dominant Verstappen wins in the Monaco (40%) and Styrian (42%) GPs, though that is of course no fault of the Dutchman that those contests were dull.

In 2022 the best performer was the British GP (88%), which featured Carlos Sainz's first F1 win and plenty of overtaking, the Sao Paulo GP (scene of another first-time victor in George Russell, scoring 80%) and the Hungarian GP (80%), which included Ferrari's strategy blunder and Verstappen winning and spinning from 10th on the grid. The worst races were the Azerbaijan (42%), Japanese (46%) and Mexican (53%) GPs, though they scored better than the lowest-rated events in 2021. In other words, 2021 had higher peaks but also lower troughs than last season.

Averaging out the scores across the campaigns gives 2021 a score of 66%, which rises to 69% if the Spa debacle is ignored – as this writer feels it should be, both for this process and as a points-paying world championship event. Last year averages

67%, which is very similar and begs the question of whether the new rules *really* were all that good...

But then we have to factor in context. The 2021 season was one of the hardest-fought championships in F1 history between two of its greatest drivers, following a regulation tweak that threw the dominant team (Mercedes) slightly off its stride. The only things it lacked was some cleaner racing between Verstappen and Hamilton, plus a better-run finale, though it's hard to argue that the Abu Dhabi GP wasn't dramatic. By contrast, Verstappen took the 2022 crown

**“The closeness of the scores underlines how many decent races there were last year”**

with four races to go, despite Ferrari's strong start to the season.

While we try to judge each race on its merits, there is no doubt that the presence of a championship fight, particularly in the closing stages of a season, adds tension and drama to an event, boosting its potential score. In that context, 2021 was always going to have an advantage over 2022, so the closeness of the scores underlines how many decent races there were last year even though the destiny of the crown wasn't in question following round 12 of 22 in France.

What could this tell us about 2023? If the new rules continue to deliver better racing *and* either Mercedes or Ferrari can up their game to take the fight to Red Bull, we should surely get a season that tops both 2021 and 2022. And that's before we talk about the impact of the cost cap and windtunnel restrictions, which should gradually bring the field together and increase the number of potential frontrunners over the coming years, one of the key aims of the 2022 changes that were never going to materialise overnight.

And we can go further. The next part of the task for Smith, writer of *Formula 1 All the Races*, and Autosport (apart from scoring the new season), will be to give scores retrospectively back in time all the way to the inauguration of the world championship in 1950. That will not only show us any trends and highlight brilliant (and poor) seasons, but it will also allow us to see which circuits have created the best races over the seven decades of F1. As it stands, of the venues that hosted races in both 2021 and 2022, the highest scorers are Silverstone, Interlagos, the Hungaroring and Sakhir. We have a strong suspicion that will change as we add more data. Watch this space – and cross your fingers that 2023 averages more than 67%. 🍀

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# YOUR SAY

*How disillusioned am I when I get to Pit+Paddock and see F1 teams won't even allow another team to participate*

**JUSTIN LYLE**

## Pioneering sporting spirit left behind

I read Autosport from back to front. So in the 12 January issue I started with an amazing archive image of Formula 1 pioneers in the 1965 Syracuse Grand Prix. I tried to imagine the organisation of the street race then and complication of trying to repeat it now.

How disillusioned am I when I get to Pit+Paddock and see F1 teams won't even allow another team to participate? These pages unfortunately demonstrate that pioneer sportsmen risked their lives to create a sport, only for it to be turned by greed into business.

Like superlicence points for drivers, the same should be created for teams, to allow them to enter F1. Like the FIA creating fines for drivers for sharing their unauthorised views, create a fine for teams restricting the sport's progress. As F1 has forgotten its roots, I am off to Le Mans.

**Justin Lyle**  
**Glasgow**

## Open up to greater competition

Once more the F1 teams show their addiction to the status quo and their greed for money. With the rejection (by the majority) of the Andretti Cadillac potential application the teams are adopting a closed-shop approach to retain the benefits they currently have.

If they were truly 'up' for competition, F1 should be open to anyone with ambition providing they can demonstrate the budget and the credibility to challenge the best. Come on F1, wake up and provide fans with fresh competition.

**Chris Willows**  
**Lymington**

## Who's the cricket gate-crasher?

I was fascinated by the 'From the Archive' picture (22-29 December), something I've seen before, but had never noticed the cheeky face that appears between James Hunt and Graham Hill and above Jackie Stewart's shoulder.

I wonder who it is? Obviously someone with a mischievous bent to photo bomb such illustrious company. Does anyone know who the person is? Whoever they are I would hazard a guess that they have a copy of this photograph hanging somewhere in their



residence as a reminder of a bygone escapade.

Sad to note just how many in the photo are no longer with us. But I'm thankful that I was around and about in 1974 and had the pleasure to see every one of these sportsmen in their prime on the racing circuits of the UK.

**Graham Harris**  
**By email**

## Fans' favourite moments not all about F1

I was interested to note that despite the best efforts over the years of Liberty, Bernie, Max, Balestre, etc, who've pushed the notion that the pinnacle of motorsport begins and ends with Formula 1, the top two memories of the fans were not F1 related (Autosport, 5 January).

Unfortunately, it's disappointing that neither the WRC nor the WEC currently have a British round, and there seems little likelihood of a swift return (particularly for the WRC). Come on Motorsport UK (or whatever you're currently called), what are you doing to ensure top-line sportscars and rallying return to the UK soon?!

**Sean Crockett**  
**By email**

## Have your say, get in touch


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# F1 2023 REVEALED

*Changes to the regulations for season two of the new ground-effects era aim to smooth out last year's troubles and shut down loopholes*

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**

3D ARTWORK **MATTHEW FIVEASH**



ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



FIA initially wanted floor height raised by 25mm, but has compromised on 15mm

ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



**L**ast year represented a seismic change for Formula 1 and its approach to car design. The return of a ground-effects formula and all its trimmings was conceived to make the on-track product better for fans, at the expense of restricting overall freedom for the aerodynamicist to exploit.

After a close-run 2021 season, however, 2022 was largely one-way traffic in the championship stakes as Red Bull understood the new rules best. The RB18 gave Max Verstappen the ammunition to sweep to the title largely unchallenged, prompting questions as to why the FIA and F1 had bothered to change things up. But now that the engineers have a year's worth of experience with the new rules, convergence will surely start to close the field.

That's not to say that the rules are exactly the same. Last season threw up a few curveballs as a consequence of the new regulations, particularly porpoising and bouncing in the early part of the season as the greater levels of underbody downforce upset the rest of the car. In the interests

of safety, the FIA has therefore mandated tweaks to the floor geometry to stop teams running their cars quite so close to the ground.

In other developments, the FIA reacted to Zhou Guanyu's nasty crash at Silverstone and added a series of further strength tests to ensure that the roll hoop provides further protection. The formula, to all intents and purposes, remains the same; since F1 now has a year's experience with the new rules, the 2023 tweaks have been designed to cover off any problems that cropped up throughout last season.

Here's a look at the key changes for the upcoming campaign.

## RAISED FLOORS

For 2023, all floor edges and fences have been raised by 15mm.

The FIA sought to make changes to the floors on safety grounds, particularly because the drivers were concerned about porpoising and bouncing causing long-term damage to their health. Lifting the edges of the floor will reduce the effectiveness of the venturi tunnels underneath, and the reduced suction

Minimum weight is down by 2kg; mandatory rounded roll hoop less likely to dig in





TEE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Measures introduced at Spa to minimise bouncing will continue



Zhou's Silverstone crash has triggered beefing up of safety rules

SUTTON  
motorsport  
IMAGES

should limit the cars' oscillation.

The FIA initially proposed that the floor height would be increased by 25mm, but pushback from a handful of teams led to the compromise of 15mm. The diffuser throat height will also be raised. The difficulty for many of the teams will be in operating their underbody tunnels at a different height, particularly those that ran their cars low to the ground. There will also be more stringent tests to ensure that no teams are benefiting from flexing floors to produce more downforce, and the 250N load test on the floor's edge must produce no more than 5mm of flex – down from 8mm last season.

At the 2022 Belgian Grand Prix, an aerodynamic oscillation metric (AOM) was introduced to ensure that no team was running with excessive car bouncing. Spa was also where a trick used last season was outlawed; in splitting up the skidblock and allowing parts of it to retract, some of the cars can be run lower without scraping off too much of the skidblock surface. The AOM will continue to be used in 2023, and will be measured through an FIA-standard accelerometer to ensure that none of the cars transgress the limit. Although surpassing the AOM can result in disqualification, each team can play three 'jokers' per season to cover off any random spikes above the established metric.

To adhere to the modified rules, the floors will hence require a complete redesign for 2023. The knock-on effect on performance could influence the competitive order; it's not dissimilar to how the changes in floor design for the 2021 season shook things up over the off-season and helped Red Bull beat Mercedes. Over 2022, the teams that had started the season running their floors closer to the ground realised that, by raising the cars, the aerodynamic platform was slightly more stable anyway – so the modifications ultimately shouldn't make too much difference.

**FURTHER SAFETY AND TECHNICAL TWEAKS**

After Zhou's incident at Silverstone, in which his Alfa Romeo was flipped over during his crash into Abbey, the FIA has seen fit to redefine how the roll hoop will be designed and tested to ensure that it is more likely to stay affixed to the chassis in a repeat of that crash. »



ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



The changes have also been implemented to ensure that the roll hoop does not dig into the ground, with a rounded roll hoop now mandatory. Alfa Romeo has used a 'blade' roll hoop structure in recent years, but will likely have to opt for something more conventional. The new test includes a 49kN load in a forward direction and a 73.5kN downward load to ensure that there is no repeat of the Silverstone breakage.

Larger mirrors will be introduced to improve rearward visibility, and some teams have already tested these in practice sessions. These will be extended from 150mm x 50mm to 200mm x 60mm. Drivers have complained for years that they can never see out of the mirrors, and so the extended width should offer more peripheral vision.

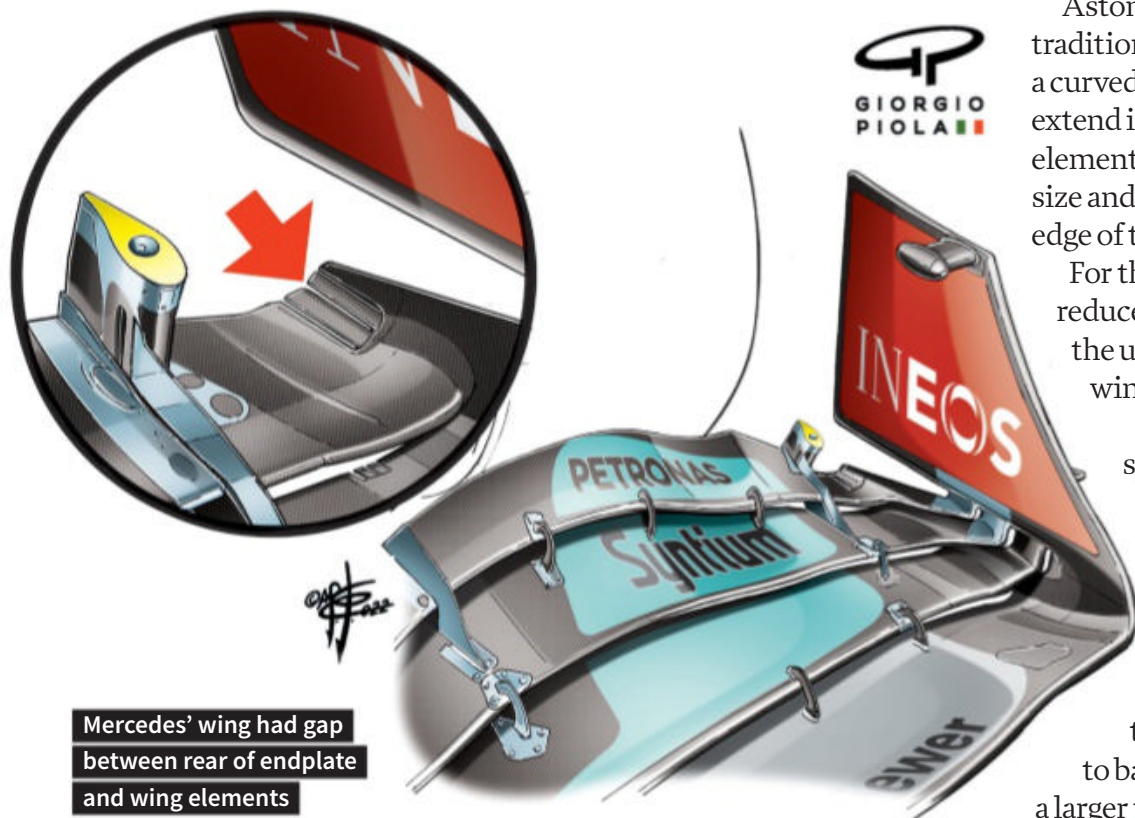
The 2023 cars should also be lighter than their 2022 counterparts, with the minimum weight of the car dropping to 796kg from 798kg last season. It's nice to see a drop in weight given that the usual trend over recent years has been for it to increase, but it shouldn't be forgotten that 3kg was tacked on ahead of last season because many of the teams were well over the weight limit.

After controversy over fuel cooling last season, which almost caught out Max Verstappen at the Spanish GP, the regulations have been clarified for 2023. Fuel can be cooled to 10C below ambient temperature, or to a limit of 10C if the ambient temperature is below 20 degrees. This must be the case as soon as the car is running after it leaves the garage.

## BANNED WINGS

As is ever the case in F1, the new rules produced loopholes. Although Ross Brawn and his team were keen to cover off any potential side-steps presented by the 2022 overhaul that could jeopardise the closer racing promised, they couldn't possibly anticipate everything.

There were two distinct designs that were outlawed following the 2022 season: Mercedes' front wing, and Aston Martin's rear wing. In the former case, Mercedes had introduced a front wing at Miami where its attachment points to the endplates were swept forward, leaving a gap between the rear part of the endplate and the wing elements. This was introduced to recover some degree of airflow outwash that had been lost with the introduction of the new rules.



Mercedes' wing had gap between rear of endplate and wing elements



Aston took novel approach to requirement for curved transition from wing to endplate

Aston Martin took a clever approach to introducing a more traditional rear wing, exploiting the regulations that required a curved transition from the wing elements to the endplate to extend it beyond the mainplane. The rationale behind looping the elements directly into the endplate for 2022 was to minimise the size and strength of the tip vortices produced by the exposed upper edge of the endplate, a key contributor to the 'dirty air' problem.

For the teams, however, the limitations in endplate design reduced the effectiveness of the rear wing since airflow could spill off the upper surface. Aston Martin hence introduced its revised rear wing to corral the air into passing over the top of the mainplane.

"I think what was nice is the fact that we came up with something novel and new," reckons Aston performance chief Tom McCullough. "It was a very difficult interpretation of the rules that added performance to our car. It was a part that people couldn't just copy quickly because of how complicated it was to get around several different regulations."

Even with the tight regulatory framework of F1, teams can still innovate, but the FIA reserves the right to ban those innovations if they could potentially create a larger performance loss for a following car.

Larger mirrors address driver complaints over poor peripheral vision

ARTIST'S IMPRESSION





## RED BULL'S TRAPPED WIND

A \$7million fine and a 10% cut in aerodynamic testing time was Red Bull's punishment for violating 2021's cost cap rules. This was a punishment arguably too harsh for the team's liking, and not harsh enough for its rivals, but will it actually affect the team?

In the new-for-2022 sliding scale for aero testing, the FIA had determined a base level to work from. This is assigned to the team that finishes seventh in the constructors' championship; teams below that get more testing time and resources and teams above it get less – in 5% increments. Red Bull, prior to its punishment, would have received 70% of that time. The 10% reduction is then applied as a compound reduction to the new total, so Red Bull now gets 63% of the base total. Within an aerodynamic testing period, which spans approximately two months, Red Bull has about 10 hours' less time with wind speeds of about 15m/s.

The cut in windtunnel testing time came in for Red Bull's next aerodynamic testing period (ATP), and lasts for 12 months. So the effect on the 2023 Red Bull, assuming the majority of the development work is already done, won't be anything like it would be on the 2024 car, although the windtunnel and CFD restrictions might hurt in-season development slightly simply due to the timing of the 12-month penalty span.

Perhaps the circa £8m ultimate spend – including overspend and penalty – along with the reduced testing time was worth it in the short term; this is equally something that the FIA must monitor to determine whether the punishment did indeed fit the crime.

If Red Bull is stripped of its wings and spends the next few years hobbling around in the lower midfield, then it will have been too heavy-handed, but the suspicion is that it will be a minor inconvenience at most. The aero team will have to cut its cloth accordingly, and no doubt it will. But there's a chance that the FIA might have to review cost cap penalties again, if it turns out that transgressions could be worth more than their consequences... ❄





# WHAT ELSE IS NEW IN 2023?

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

## WHAT GOES TO VEGAS...

For the first time since 1982, Formula 1 will race in Las Vegas. Thankfully, the race is not confined to the Caesars Palace parking lot this time, and instead the cars will have the freedom of the neon-illuminated Strip to race down. That's something that the championship has been after for decades and, thanks to F1's boom in popularity, it now has the draw of a magnetar in the United States. It'll be the third US race on the calendar – ironically, the first time since 1982 that F1 has had three US races in one season.

Of course, the Las Vegas Grand Prix will be held at night, since the majesty of the lights along the Strip was a key selling point to having the race there in the first place. It'll be the penultimate round, planned for 18 November – a week before the Abu Dhabi finale, which must surely pose a few logistical challenges in an already exhausting 23-race calendar.

China remains off the agenda despite the nation having recently lifted its zero-COVID measures. COVID cases have continued to surge in recent weeks, and China is experiencing the spike in known cases that the rest of the world went through many months ago. The French GP will also not go ahead, and its promoters are hoping to rotate its race with another on the calendar. Qatar returns to the schedule after a year's hiatus, fresh from hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

There will be six sprint race weekends in 2023, with the first being held at the Azerbaijan GP at Baku in April. The Austrian and Belgian GPs will also host sprint races prior to the summer break, with Qatar, Austin and Brazil making up the remainder of the sprint events.



## OSCAR'S WILD JOURNEY TO McLAREN

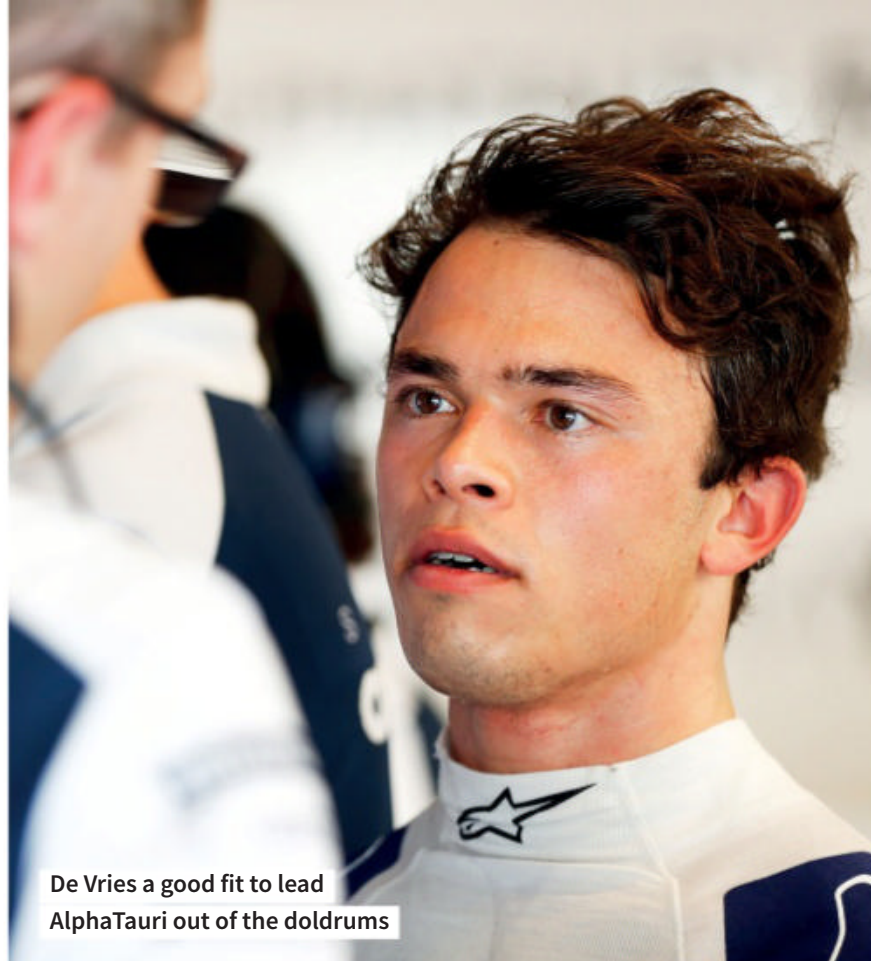
In the past year, Oscar Piastri's name has been largely augmented by the words "contract saga", owing to the acrimonious tug of war for his services between Alpine and McLaren. That's an association the Australian can do without, particularly as he embarks on his first season in the championship.

That two teams were willing to fight over the Melbourne's services for 2023 underlines his potential as an F1 frontrunner. In his junior career, he won three titles on the bounce: 2019's Formula Renault Eurocup, the COVID-affected 2020 FIA F3 season, and then the 2021 F2 championship, the latter two in his first season there. In recent years, Charles Leclerc and George Russell have won the GP3/F3 and F2 titles back to back, so Piastri is in exalted company.

Long-time Renault protege Piastri's move to F1 comes with McLaren, after the British team pounced on the Alpine team's "shilly-shallying" – as it was described in the Contract Recognition Board hearing – in its commitment to giving Piastri an F1 drive, having planned to farm him out to Williams on loan.

Piastri should be able to give Lando Norris a real run for his money. Where predecessor Daniel Ricciardo went to McLaren with difficulties in getting the car to his liking, Piastri arrives at the team with a clean-slate mind, and thus does not have quite so much baggage. Oh, and he's quick to boot. It might take a couple of rounds to shake off the race-rustiness, but Piastri's got what it takes to succeed in F1.





De Vries a good fit to lead  
AlphaTauri out of the doldrums

BINGHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## IN THE NYCK OF TIME

When George Russell left Williams at the end of 2021 to join Mercedes, the latter team's boss Toto Wolff had hoped to manoeuvre reserve driver Nyck de Vries into the seat. He missed out, as Red Bull's offer of Alex Albon's services proved more appealing to the British squad, owing to the Anglo-Thai's prior experiences of F1. But de Vries drove the car anyway, when Albon was sidelined for September's Italian GP with appendicitis, and it led to the diminutive Dutchman earning a late call-up.

The lukewarm reception that he'd garnered after winning the 2019 F2 title earned de Vries a move into Formula E, but F1 remained the dream. And de Vries's starring role for Williams at Monza, where he claimed a ninth-place finish, led to a sudden barrage of interest – and he was fully deserving of it.

Williams wanted to sign de Vries to partner Albon for 2023, but AlphaTauri pounced for the Frieslander once Pierre Gasly's move to Alpine was tied up. He's already earned plaudits from AlphaTauri principal Franz Tost and Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko, who suggested that de Vries "should lead the team" over current driver Yuki Tsunoda.

It's been a long road for de Vries to make it into F1, and he does so with F2 and Formula E titles. Technically astute and eloquent in the media, he should be a good fit for AlphaTauri in its bid to overcome a difficult 2022 season, particularly with his experience of working with Mercedes over the past few seasons.

"I think it's so richly deserved," says McLaren FE team principal Ian James, who de Vries raced for under the Mercedes guise. "He has a way of saying what needs to be said, pointing out where improvements can be made, but doing it in a diplomatic fashion that doesn't get people's backs up."

"I think that he's going to be very well positioned, notwithstanding Formula 1 is a different series. It's brutal, and I think he's going to have his work cut out, but his character I think will stand him in good stead."

## SARGEANT'S MAJOR PROMOTION

F1 has its first American driver since 2016 Indianapolis 500 winner Alexander Rossi made a handful of outings for the Marussia Manor team almost eight years ago. Logan Sargeant's arrival as Williams's new driver is something of a boon for F1 as it expands its growth into the US market, but don't think that the rookie's passport is the sole reason why he's replaced Nicholas Latifi at the team.

A world champion in karting, Sargeant spent his formative years in single-seaters as a bona fide frontrunner, but a lack of backing threatened to stall the Floridian's progress towards F1. He'd challenged Piastri plus Alfa Romeo reserve Theo Pourchaire for the F3 title in 2020 but, unlike his rivals, had to stay for a third year in the series with the unfancied Charouz squad rather than make a move to F2.

His exploits with the Czech squad brought him to Williams's attention, and he was snapped up for the Grove team's junior squad with a move up to F2 finally secured. His first year in the series with Carlin was impressive; he won twice, and had to bat off the pressure of securing enough superlicence points to cement a move to F1, helped by extensive running in free practice sessions. Perhaps less of a known quantity than the other two rookies on the 2023 grid, Sargeant has earned his place at the top, and has a low-pressure environment to learn in.



Sargeant's arrival chimes  
with F1's US expansion

POTTS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Rules have been clarified  
over grid position penalties

MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## FURTHER SPORTING CHANGES

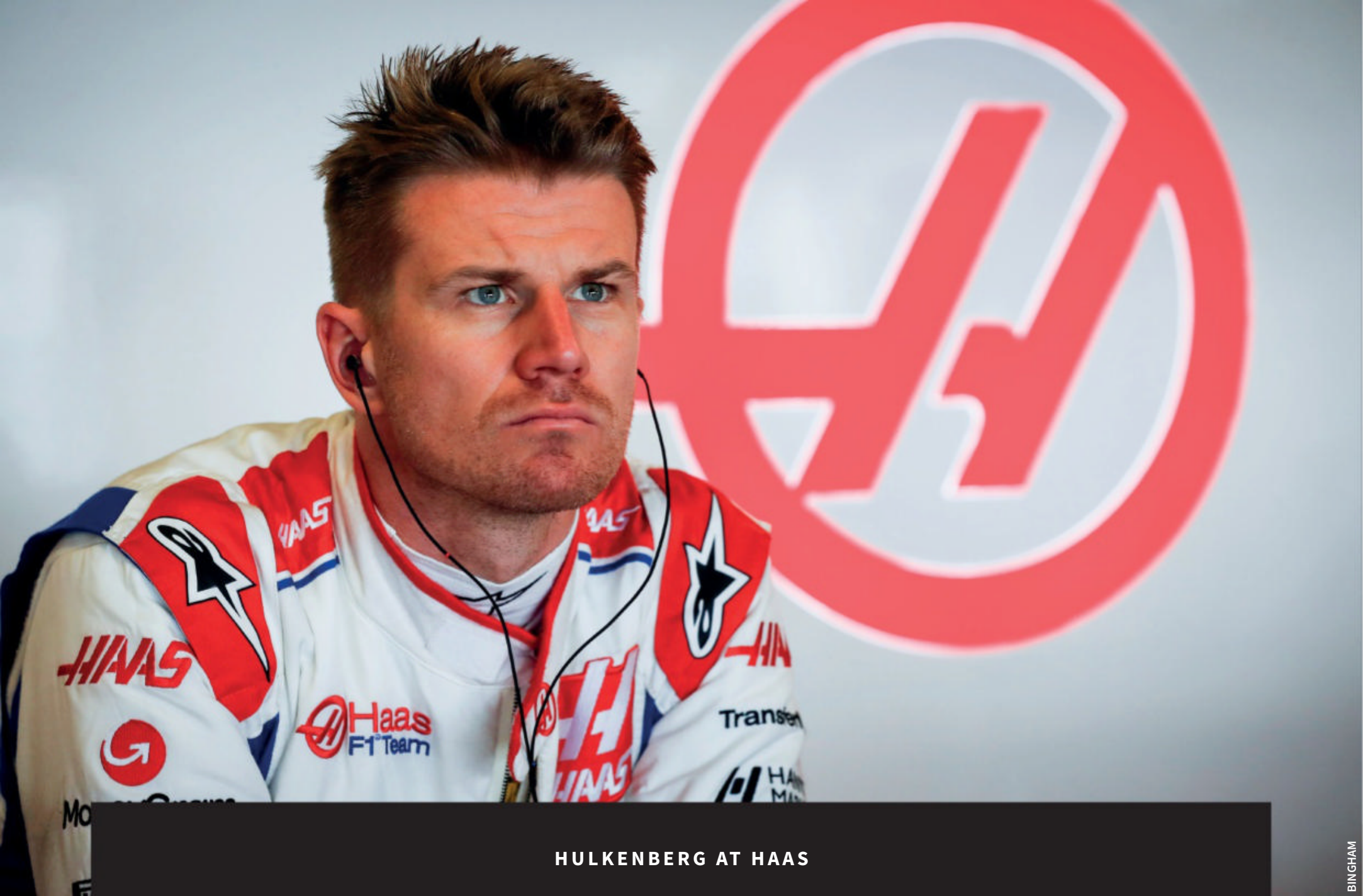
Because F1 can't resist the temptation to tinker with things that already work, there will be a few select rounds in 2023 where a new rule in qualifying will be toyed with. Rather than allowing for free tyre choice, these trials will mandate that only hard tyres can be used in Q1, mediums in Q2, with soft tyres only permitted in Q3. This is expected to be trialled in two qualifying sessions in 2023.

Although part of the 2022 rules' introduction was to reduce the reliance on DRS, the FIA is looking

at taking things the other way. In the 2023 sprint races, DRS will be activated a lap earlier after the race start and after restarts, with a view to introducing this rule for all races in 2024.

Any driver to have taken any more than 15 grid position penalties at an event or received a 'start from the back of the grid' penalty will begin the race behind every other driver, following confusion in setting the grid for last year's Monza race.





HULKENBERG AT HAAS

# F1'S NEARLY MAN READY FOR HIS RETURN

*He has more starts without a podium than anyone else in world championship history, but Nico Hulkenberg is back for one more shot*

ADAM COOPER

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES

BINGHAM

**A**fter three years as a reserve driver, Nico Hulkenberg returns to frontline Formula 1 duty with Haas this season following what was one of the most surprising twists of a rollercoaster silly season.

Given his absence from a regular race seat, Hulkenberg's time seemed to have passed, something that the German himself had acknowledged. But when Gene Haas and Gunther Steiner decided to drop Mick Schumacher and look for experience rather than youth for 2023, there was a very short list of possible candidates. Technical partner Ferrari lobbied hard for Antonio Giovinazzi, but any lingering hopes that the Italian had went up in smoke when he crashed heavily at the start of FP1 at October's United States Grand Prix.

Instead, the pieces fell into place for Hulkenberg. His case was helped by the fact that COVID misfortune for others had given him a few precious chances to race for Racing Point and Aston Martin, including the first two events of the 2022 season in Bahrain and Jeddah.

"I think it was crucial," he says of those stand-in outings.

"Obviously in 2021 I didn't have any opportunities. But the ones in 2020 were absolutely crucial to put my card down again, to remind team principals and people around the paddock that there's still some performance in me."

A possible shot at a full-time comeback appeared to arise when Sebastian Vettel announced his retirement in July. As Aston Martin's reserve, Hulkenberg was an obvious guy for the team to fall back on for 2023, but instead team owner Lawrence Stroll moved quickly to grab Fernando Alonso.

"That happened as we went into the summer break," says Hulkenberg. "I had some hope. And there were indications from some people in the team that there was perhaps an opportunity, but that disappeared very quickly again. I got the message from the team that they had reached an agreement with Fernando."

Alonso's departure and the Oscar Piastri controversy in turn freed up a slot at Alpine. Given Hulkenberg's experience with the former Renault squad from 2017-19 and his relationship from Force India with boss Otmar Szafnauer, he appeared to have a chance. But the team soon turned its focus to Pierre Gasly. "I was in contact



**NICO  
HULKENBERG****Age 35****F1 starts 181****Best result 4th****Poles 1****Fastest laps 2**

with Otmar, but I quickly understood that it was not going to happen, that it was not a realistic opportunity," adds Hulkenberg. "A different name now, but the team is obviously the same as Renault back then. And I think they just felt they wanted someone totally new that had never been with the team prior."

Fortunately for Hulkenberg, a third opportunity was emerging at Haas, a team he'd talked to briefly before its F1 debut in 2016. Looking to replace Schumacher, Steiner got in touch: "It was after the summer break, some time around then. I didn't know him very well, I knew him from the paddock and from chats on a few flights together. It happened pretty naturally and organically. There were some other people involved as well. I don't really have a manager, but I have some advisors and some other people that help me, and they knew Gunther. And somehow a conversation started."

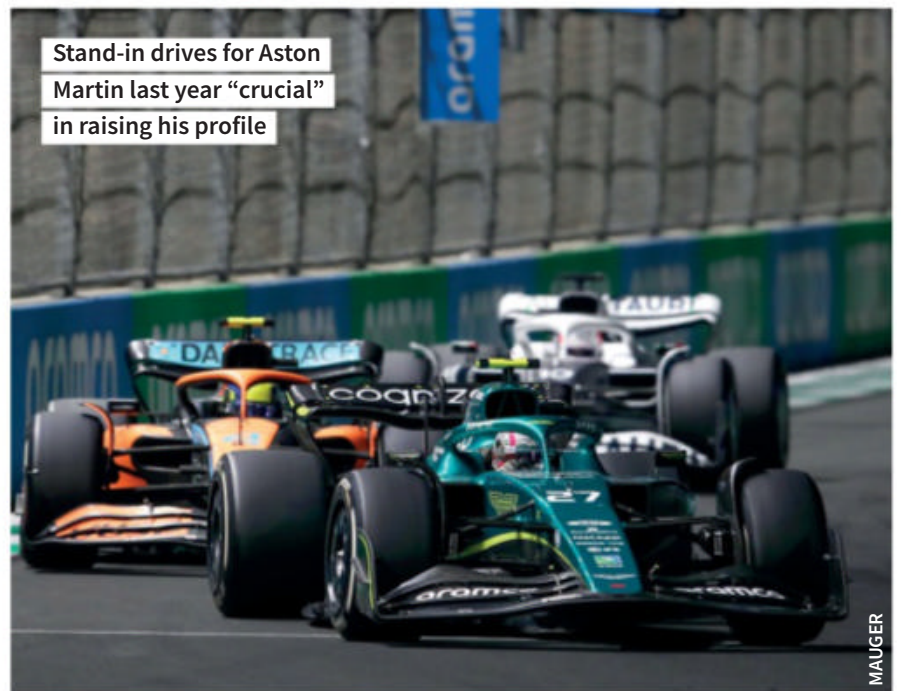
Did Hulkenberg have to sell himself to Steiner, and convince him that he was the right man to partner Kevin Magnussen? "Well, there was an element of that," he explains. "They were still looking at Mick, giving him time, being fair to him, having shown some lights of good performance that he could build on. So that's why it all took so long in the end."

"In the situation that I'm in, because obviously for three years I was kind of half out, whatever you want to call it, I had to do some work, some convincing words, come with some facts and get into his head. I feel very fresh, in a very good and positive mindset – which was not always the case. And therefore I have no concerns about that."

In his earlier career, Hulkenberg never had a truly competitive car, and indeed famously he has never even earned a podium. So what are his expectations with Haas? "At the end of the day, it's F1," he philosophises. "There are only so many opportunities, and I wasn't that spoiled for choice! But I still feel the burning desire to go and compete, to go and race, look for the competition."

"It's obviously a private team and a smaller team, but there are, I believe, things that can be improved, and you can challenge for good results and for points. And ultimately as a racer that's what I want, and what I love to do." »

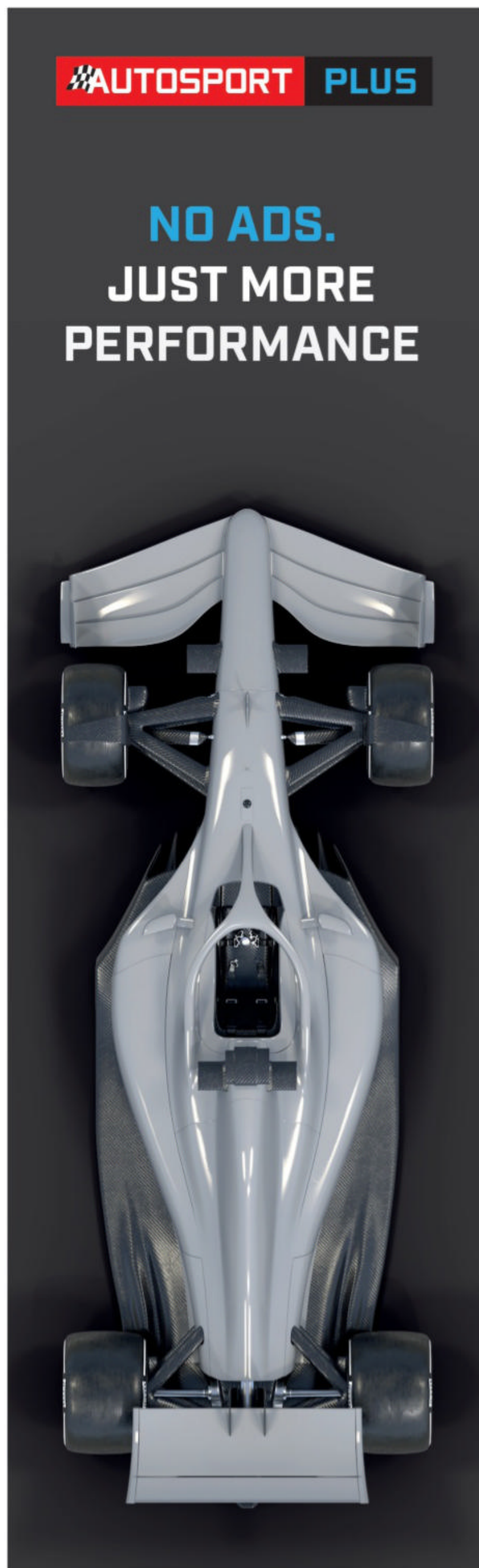
Stand-in drives for Aston  
Martin last year "crucial"  
in raising his profile



Steiner's been instrumental  
in reviving the F1 careers of  
Hulkenberg and Magnussen







The good news is that Haas made decent progress last year, rising from a point-less last in 2021 to eighth in the constructors' table, and in the new cost-cap era smaller teams can at least compete.

"I guess the whole field seems more compact," continues Hulkenberg. "There are definitely opportunities, and even after a bad qualifying you can still come through and have a good result. Racing and overtaking is more possible with these new cars. It doesn't take much difference and then you can be three or four positions ahead. You've got to dig deep, head down, and work hard."

Inevitably much has been made of the Hulkenberg/Magnussen combination given their infamous "suck my balls" confrontation at the 2017 Hungarian GP — after which they didn't speak to each other for five years.

"It's true, but he's not the only one," Hulkenberg smiles. "There are other drivers I haven't talked much with! I actually broke the ice in Bahrain on the grid. I went to him, gave him my hand and said his exact words, and he found that quite amusing. And since then we started talking more."

"That's in the past, and there are going to be no problems. Obviously we both drive and fight for our careers, but at the same time we're going to race for the team."

Has Magnussen's unexpected return from the F1 wilderness, replacing Nikita Mazepin on the eve of the 2022 campaign and then scoring points first time out, served as some sort of inspiration? "I wouldn't say so. I think a little bit different circumstances for him, because obviously how he came back was a different story, let's say. But then again, he came in and he did pretty well straight away."

As he noted earlier, Hulkenberg is now in a good headspace. He wasn't happy when he left Renault at the end of 2019, but three years on the sidelines, with time to do other stuff — not least getting married and becoming a father — have been beneficial, as breaks often are for drivers.

"It's been very positive for me," he says. "Obviously, I can only talk about my own case. But yeah, 2019 was not always great. I felt I wanted time away at that point. And then once you step away, you also develop a different understanding and new perspectives on how things went, what you've done. You reflect on many things, and process the whole thing."

"Even a winter break, you think three months is a lot — it's actually not, because you're still connected, you still do work. And the time properly away has helped me a lot."

The reserve job, doing just enough to keep him in the game, proved to be a good compromise: "It was a very different role






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**“ONCE YOU STEP AWAY, YOU DEVELOP NEW PERSPECTIVES. IT HAS HELPED ME A LOT”**

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to what I used to do. If you're not in the car, if you're not in the hot seat, and you don't have to perform day in, day out, it's a very different feeling. You're much more relaxed, because you just cut out the bad days that you get in the car.

“So, from that point of view that's been relaxed, but at the same time you miss what you get from racing, the excitement, the thrill, the kick. And that's also the feeling that prevailed, that I want to go back, and I want to do this for some more time.”

At 35, Hulkenberg is just 48 days younger than countryman Vettel, who has opted for retirement. You could perhaps draw parallels with the likes of Michael Schumacher, Kimi Raikkonen and Fernando Alonso, all of whom extended their F1 careers by taking two or three years out and returning refreshed.

“In that respect I'm kind of proud to have achieved that, to come back into a full-time drive after three years out of F1,” says Hulkenberg. “Like you say, I join a pretty exclusive club there – Michael, Fernando, Kimi, these are world champions. I don't have that to my name. So to have done that, and people still having trust and faith in me, I think is also a nice achievement.”

Hulkenberg's stellar junior career, which included title successes in F3, GP2 and A1GP, suggested that he was destined for the very top. Does he have any regrets about choices he made along the way? “I think I've said it before, the benefit of hindsight is a beautiful thing. Of course, I would have done a few things differently. But no point on dwelling on the past. Learn from it, try to correct it in the future, and do the right thing.

“What I said earlier about this time away, when you reflect on things, when you see things from a different angle, there are certainly some things that I will change how I will do them in the future. But there are very personal things that I don't want to go into detail.

“And frankly, there were a few missed opportunities to set the highlights that were necessary to do the final step to a top team, that's a fact. But I guess Haas want me for a reason – and they believe I've still got it and that I'm quality material.” ❄

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# A NEW ERA DAWNS AT DAYTONA

*It's what sportscar fans have been waiting for. But what are the chances of the new LMDh (or GTP in the States) machines proving reliable enough to win IMSA's 24-hour season opener?*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport  
IMAGES**

**A**fter an almost intolerable wait, the LMDh era is upon us. A full three years after the momentous day when a category billed as the saviour of top-flight sportscar racing was announced, the cars are finally going racing. Tens of thousands of kilometres have been completed by the four manufacturers that will go head to head in this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours, but many questions remained unanswered in the lead-up to the opening round of the IMSA SportsCar Championship. Not least whether the machinery racing in the GTP class is ready to go twice around the clock at the self-styled World Center of Racing.

What we shouldn't forget is that when LMDh was unveiled back on the eve of Daytona in 2020, the category was due to come on stream in 2022, in both IMSA and the World Endurance Championship. The world changed in the months that followed the so-called convergence announcement as COVID took hold and, by September and the delayed running of that year's Le Mans 24 Hours, it had become clear that the introduction of the new breed of hybrid prototype developed around the spine of a next-generation LMP2 car would be delayed until this year.

Announcements from major manufacturers that they would be taking the new cost-effective route of developing a top-class contender that could race in the world's two premier sportscar series quickly followed. There are six confirmed so far: Porsche, Cadillac, Acura and BMW, who will do battle this weekend, will be joined by Lamborghini and Alpine in 2024.

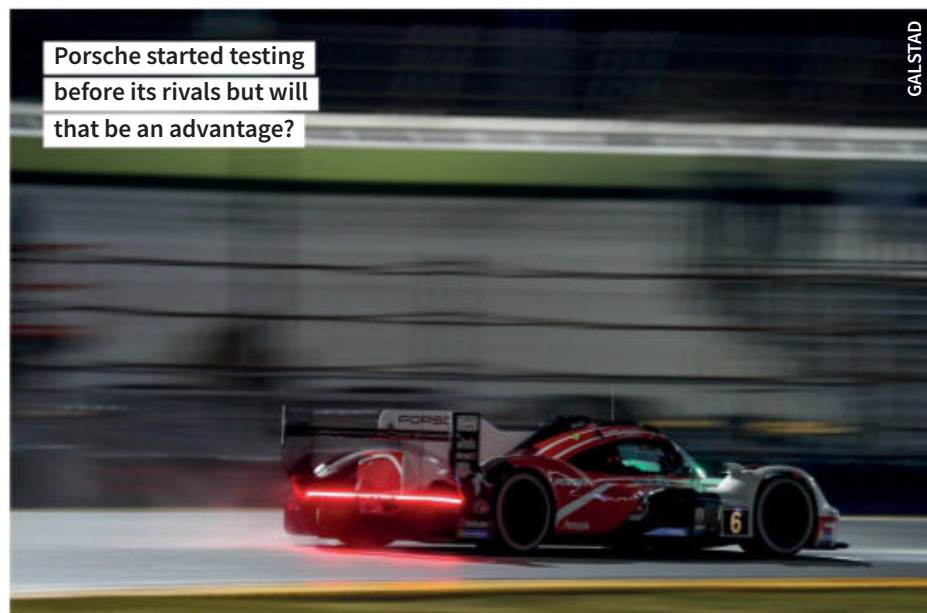
Porsche, the second to announce after the project from Volkswagen group sister marque Audi that never came to fruition, was first to get up and running with a car delectably dubbed the 963 in homage to the 962 Group C and GTP car. It hit the track just over a year ago, the German make getting a six-month head start on its rivals. None of the other LMDhs started running until the summer.

That would suggest that Porsche is much better prepared than Cadillac, Acura and BMW, but the reality is much more complex than that. Porsche spent much of those six months debugging the 30kW off-the-shelf hybrid drivetrain manufactured by Bosch, Williams Advanced Engineering and Xtrac. Had the 963 not been up and running back at the start of last year, the prospects for >>



GALSTAD





Porsche started testing before its rivals but will that be an advantage?

GALSTAD

Daytona might well be looking pretty bleak. It was only as the end of the summer approached that an update of the hybrid system dubbed internally by Porsche as “version 2.2” meant the corner was turned.

The Porsche Penske Motorsport squad, the new organisation that will run a pair of 963s in both IMSA and WEC, has covered the most kilometres of the LMDh operations. Of that we can be sure. It had twin test programmes in Europe and North America from the summer and has completed an endurance simulation. The total distance completed going into last weekend’s Roar test and qualifying days at Daytona has been put at “more than 30,000km” by Porsche director of factory motorsport Urs Kuratle, which he adds was the goal set by the marque earlier in the programme.

Porsche undertook what was a 36-hour test at Sebring in October, while Cadillac is the other LMDh manufacturer to have successfully gone through an endurance simulation. It ran 24 hours, also at Sebring, at the start of November with the Chip Ganassi Racing squad that will mount single-car campaigns in IMSA and WEC this year with the Caddy V-LMDh. It has been more forthcoming about the results of its long-distance running than Porsche. It suggested it was an encouraging test at the time, but a couple of months on it appears that it was near-faultless, or something approaching that.

“Just tyres and fuel the whole way,” is the description of the test by Earl Bamber, who drives the additional Cadillac Racing entry fielded at Daytona by Ganassi before it moves over to the WEC. “We had one or two things at the beginning, but that was just about learning how to handle the car. After that it was faultless. It was an impressive test.”

BMW, the last of the LMDh manufacturers to get its contender out

*“We had one or two things at the beginning, but after that it was faultless. It was an impressive test”*

on track right at the end of July, was at Sebring with its new MHybrid V8 at the same time as Cadillac, but its attempt to run a continuous 24 hours was thwarted early on by gearbox problems. There wasn’t time to reschedule another long-distance test. BMW had two cars present at Daytona in early December for the second of the so-called sanction tests organised for the LMDh manufacturers and appeared to have the most problems of the four. But Bobby Rahal, whose operation runs the two cars under the BMW M Team RLL banner, insists that his squad subsequently had “a very good test at CoTA [Austin.]” later in December.

Acura opted against running an endurance simulation, preferring instead for its Wayne Taylor Racing and Meyer Shank Racing teams, the former now partnered with Andretti Autosport, to rack up distance on components during regular testing of their new ARX-06s. The two teams had a car each from early in a programme that began in Europe with a shakedown and then one full test in mid-July.

“We were just trying to prioritise given where we were in the >>



Reigning IMSA champion Blomqvist took pole with Meyer Shank Acura

LEVITT



Cadillac has already completed successful 24-hour test run

GALSTAD





## GIANT-KILLERS OF AN EARLIER NEW ERA

Timo Bernhard and Jorg Bergmeister usually didn't get to talk much during races. The two Porsche factory drivers were regular team-mates in the early 2000s, but during the 2003 Daytona 24 Hours they had the chance to have a chat and set themselves what before the race would have looked like an outlandish target. That was to win the famous event outright aboard a GT class car, and not even an entry from the top category for production-based machinery.

"I'd stepped out of the car just before midnight and it was one of the rare times that I ran into Jorg during a race," recalls two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Bernhard, whose Porsche 911 GT3-RS run by The Racers Group had moved into the lead as early as the sixth hour. "We said, 'You know what, we can do this, we can win this overall.' I really believed we could do it."

Bernhard turned out to be on the money. They ended up taking the chequered flag with a nine-lap advantage at the front of the field aboard the car they shared with team boss Kevin Buckler and gentleman driver Michael Schrom. The highest-placed prototype, one of the new breed of Daytona Prototypes that came on stream at the race, was only fourth.

The Ford-powered Multimatic MDP1 dubbed a Focus (even though it bore absolutely no resemblance to one) and driven by David Brabham, David Empringham and Scott Maxwell was a further seven laps behind the winning car. The failings of the six-car DP field at the Grand American SportsCar Series opener 20 years ago are being trotted out today as an example of what can happen at the start of a new ruleset.

**"WE HAD WHAT I CALL A PROPER 911 RACE: NO ISSUES WHATSOEVER"**

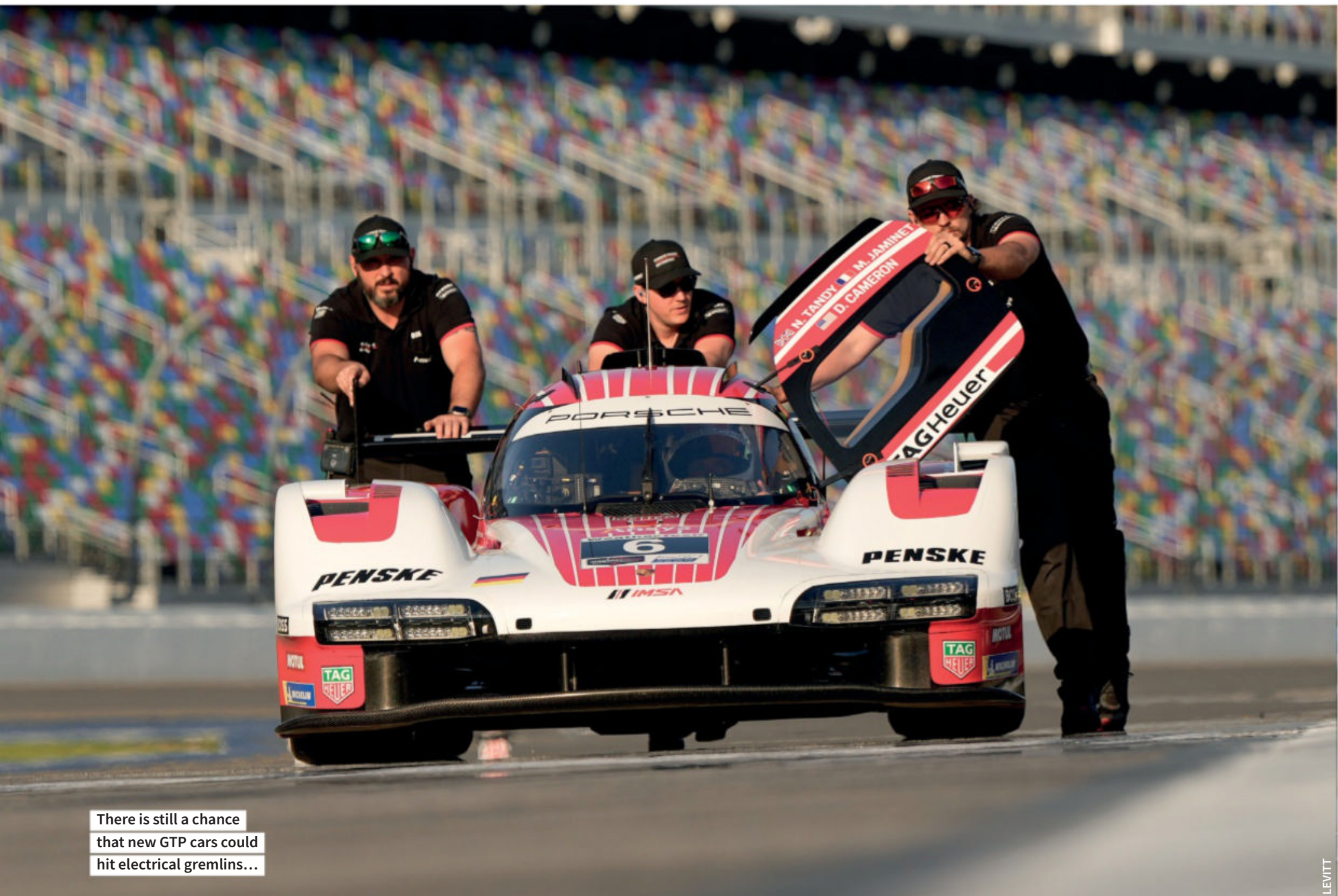
The fragility of the DPs on their debut was only half the story of the freak Daytona result, however. The cars from the GT class were barely much slower than the admittedly low-tech DPs. A three-second gap in qualifying between the new cars and the proven GTs came down dramatically in the race.

"They were quicker, but over a stint it was probably only a second or a second and a half a lap," says Bernhard. "Jorg and I did most of the driving through the night, and we decided to really push to see what happened. At one point the Brabham Multimatic was catching us, but it wasn't enough, and then they had a problem near the end anyway."

"We had what I call a proper 911 race: no issues whatsoever. It was my first overall victory in one of the big endurance races. I was just 21 and I don't think I understood the significance. Over time it has come to mean more and more to me."







There is still a chance  
that new GTP cars could  
hit electrical gremlins...

LEVITT

programme and with parts supply,” says David Salters, president of the California-based Honda Performance Development operation that masterminds Acura’s motorsport activities. “It is what it is, and we believe that we have done the preparation we need.”

However much testing has been done, none of the four manufacturers is saying that they have unburstable cars. “We are happy with the milestones we’ve hit,” says Jonathan Diuguid, who is managing director of the Porsche Penske set-up. “But we’re not sitting here saying that we’re 100% confident the cars are going to run flawlessly through the race. We’re going in as prepared as possible for every scenario we can plan for. But testing is not racing.”

Every team in the nine-car GTP field will be competing with a hybrid racing machine for the first time. That brings many challenges. “Twenty-four-hour races are always harder when you don’t have a logbook or set-up book or all the other things ready to go when you get to the track,” says Gary Nelson, team manager of the Action Express Racing squad that is running a solo Caddy V-LMDh in IMSA this year. “We’re going to create pretty much from a blank sheet of paper a programme to try to win the 24 Hours. We don’t have that muscle memory we’ve had in the past, because everything is all-new.”

Nelson suggests that electronic glitches will be the most likely hiccups faced by the GTP field through the race. He points out that so many systems on the car are now controlled by computer. “We have a lot more things that go by wire now,” he explains. “Where we used to have manual shift, we went to shift by wire and paddleshift and then we went to throttle by wire. And multiply that by four or five other different components on the car that are now going through a computer. So, probably electronics will be the focus on trying to make sure all of those computers do what they’re supposed to do.”

These concerns over reliability beg the question whether this, the 61st running of the early-season Daytona enduro – not the 61st edition of the 24 Hours as IMSA proclaims – will turn into an old-style long-distance race with teams running to a reduced pace to try to get to the finish cleanly. Diuguid is insistent that isn’t going to be the case. “I think we all know racing drivers: even if we told them we want them to go out there and protect the car, they don’t listen very well all the time,” he says. “If you don’t go out and push, you are going to end up third.”

“It should be a GTP podium,” he adds, meaning an all-GTP podium. Neither Diuguid nor any of his opposite numbers at the other teams seem concerned that an LMP2 might be able to claim an upset victory.



...but Dalziel still  
thinks an LMP2 win  
overall is unlikely

GALSTAD



Wayne Taylor Racing  
has won four of the  
previous six editions

LEVITT

## *“We all know racing drivers: even if we told them we want them to protect the car, they don’t listen very well”*

The P2s have been slowed for Daytona this year in the name of what IMSA calls “class stratification”. A smaller-diameter air-restrictor has been imposed on the secondary prototype class, though not as small as mandated in either the WEC or the European Le Mans Series, and the same rev-limits from those series introduced. Weight has also been increased by 10kg and six seconds added to the minimum refuelling time.

Ryan Dalziel, P2 winner with the Era Motorsport team in 2021 and an overall winner in an Action Express Riley-Porsche DP in 2010, insists that neither he nor the Era team are going into this year’s race with thoughts of overall victory. “I’m definitely not approaching the race thinking about anything else other than class honours, even though we know there are doubts about the reliability of the cars in GTP,” says the expat Briton. “I don’t even know how many LMDhs there are, but you would have to think that at least one would run through the race reliably. And if they do hit problems, they will have the pace to catch back up.”

The P2 pole mark at the Roar last Sunday was a 1m40.5s, which compares to the best qualifying time last year of 1m37.2s. The LMDhs are pretty much on a par with the Daytona Prototype internationals of old: Tom Blomqvist claimed pole on Sunday with a 1m34.034s, which compares with Tristan Vautier’s qualifying mark for the JDC/Miller

Motorsports Caddy squad last year of 1m34.031s. What the LMDhs gain in having more power than their predecessors, they lose in the extra weight they carry.

That will take its toll on race pace. It is easy to overlook another big change at Daytona this year in the light of the arrival of the new cars. The tyre allocation has been drastically reduced, and that is going to make double stinting de rigueur. Last year, each DPi car had 38 sets of Michelin slicks for race week and 10 sets for the Roar, which included a 100-minute qualifying race. Typically in the past a team might go into the 24 Hours with 30 fresh sets available. This time only 33 sets are available, of which just 21 can be used in qualifying and the race. The other difference in 2023 is that there are now two specifications of slick available rather than the one of old.

“In the past you had so many tyres that you pretty much threw on a new set every time you put fuel in the car,” says Bamber. “Tyre degradation is definitely going to play a bigger role in the race this time, especially because of how heavy the cars are. There’s going to be significant disparity in times between someone out there on new tyres and someone on old tyres.”

On one-lap pace all nine GTP entries were within a shade over eight tenths in qualifying at the weekend. Whether or not IMSA planned to react to that and tweak the Balance of Performance wasn’t known at press time. But Daytona this weekend isn’t going to be about what the cars can do over one lap.

“You need an easy-handling car, one that feels good on full tanks or with a light fuel load and that still works at the optimum level at the end of the race,” says Porsche Motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach. “Time over a single lap will be balanced anyway, so having a peaky, fast car I don’t think will be the key to success.”



THE GTP PLAYERS

CADILLAC V-LMDH

Chassis partner     Dallara  
Engine                5.5-litre normally aspirated V8

Chip Ganassi Racing (Cadillac Racing)

- 01 Sebastien Bourdais/Renger van der Zande/Scott Dixon\*
- 02 Earl Bamber/Alex Lynn/Richard Westbrook\*\*\*\*

Action Express Racing (Whelen Engineering)

- 31 Pipo Derani/Alexander Sims/Jack Aitken\*



LEVITT



LEVITT

PORSCHE 963

Chassis partner     Multimatic  
Engine                4.6-litre twin-turbo V8

Porsche Penske Motorsport

- 6 Nick Tandy/Mathieu Jaminet/Dane Cameron\*
- 7 Felipe Nasr/Matt Campbell/Michael Christensen\*



GALSTAD

ACURA ARX-06

Chassis partner     ORECA  
Engine                2.4-litre twin-turbo V6

Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti Autosport

- 10 Ricky Taylor/Filipe Albuquerque/Louis Deletraz\*/Brendon Hartley\*\*\*

Meyer Shank Racing with Curb-Agajanian

- 60 Tom Blomqvist/Colin Braun/Helio Castroneves\*/Simon Pagenaud\*\*\*



LEVITT



GALSTAD

BMW M HYBRID V8

Chassis partner     Dallara  
Engine                4.0-litre twin-turbo V8

BMW Team RLL

- 24 Philipp Eng/Augusto Farfus/Marco Wittmann\*\*/Colton Herta\*\*\*
- 25 Nick Yelloly/Connor De Phillippi/Sheldon van der Linde\*\*



GALSTAD

\* Driver for IMSA endurance races    \*\* Confirmed for Daytona and Sebring only    \*\*\* Daytona only    \*\*\*\* WEC entry competing at Daytona only



**THE OTHER CLASSES****LMP2**

A total of 10 ORECA-Gibson 07s make up the LMP2 field for what is not a round of the full championship, only the IMSA Endurance Cup. The only two-car team is TDS Racing, second last year under the Racing Team Nederland banner, with a roster of drivers including Giedo van der Garde, Mikkel Jensen and Rinus VeeKay. Reigning class champion Tower Motorsports (below) has IndyCar stars Scott McLaughlin and Josef Newgarden on its books.



GALSTAD

**LMP3**

Another class racing only for endurance points is LMP3, which is made up of Ligier and Duqueine chassis. Riley Motorsports, class winner at Daytona last year, fields a solo Ligier-Nissan JSP320 for a line-up including Aussie Josh Burdon, who has swapped over from the frontrunning Andretti team (above).

GALSTAD

**GT DAYTONA PRO**

It's a mixture of the old and the new in the second year of GTD Pro in IMSA. The down-specced Chevrolet Corvette C8.R GTE car makes its final appearance in the race it won in the old GT Le Mans class back in 2021. A single entry from Corvette Racing goes up against the Ferrari 296 GT3 (above), the 992-shape Porsche 911 GT3-R and the EVO2 version of the Lamborghini Huracan GT3 on their debuts. Machinery from Lexus, Aston Martin, Mercedes and BMW make up the rest of the nine-car field.

GALSTAD

**GT DAYTONA**

McLaren and Acura join the GT3 manufacturers represented in Pro in a giant 24-car class in the pro-am ranks. The Winward (below), Paul Miller and Magnus teams, winners in 2021, 2020 and 2016 respectively, are all back seeking more class glory.



GALSTAD

 **P40 BMW'S COMEBACK BEGINS**



DAYTONA PREVIEW

# BMW'S BIG COMEBACK BEGINS

*The German manufacturer's long-awaited return to sportscar racing's top flight starts this weekend when a pair of M Hybrid V8 prototypes make their debut in Florida*

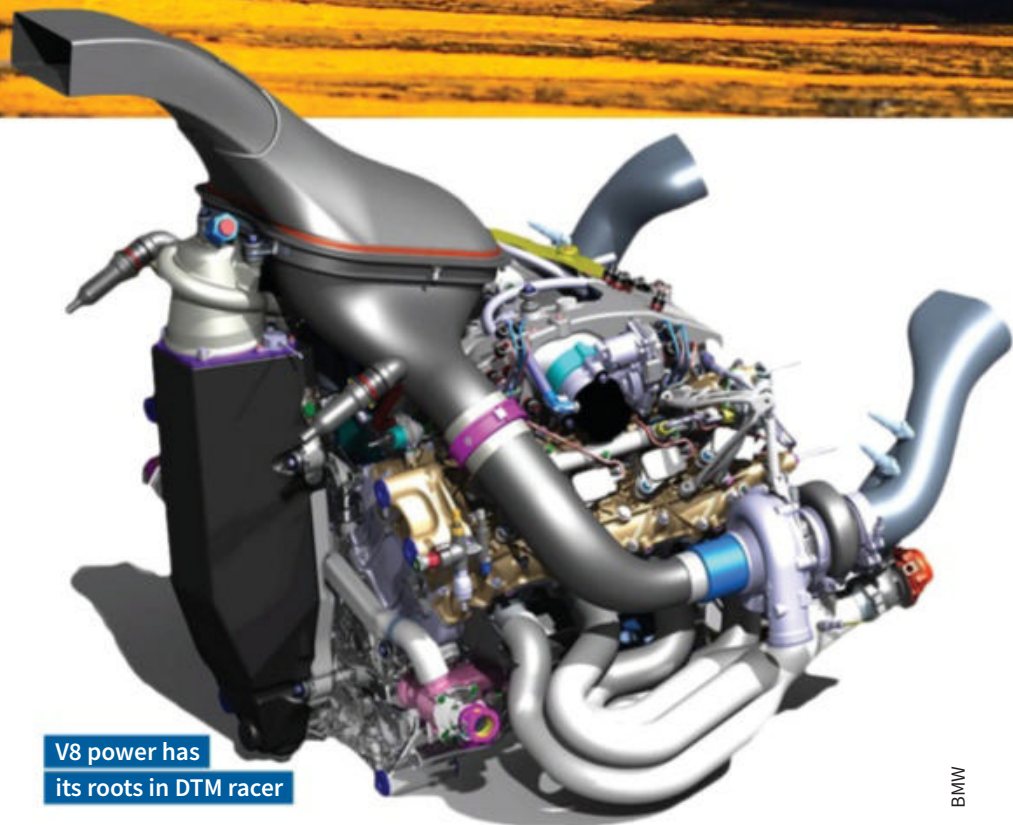
GARY WATKINS



BMW is back, shooting for outright honours in the big sportscar races after an absence of nearly a quarter of a century. The German manufacturer's attempt to follow up on its Le Mans and Sebring successes of 1999 with the V12 LMR begins at this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours with a new LMDh prototype called the M Hybrid V8. It won't be back at the Le Mans 24 Hours until 2024. And the reason for that can at least partially be explained by an ultra-tight timeline for a project described internally as a "zero error programme".

The decision for a marque steeped in motorsport tradition to return to the very pinnacle of sportscar racing wasn't made until June 2021. That gave its new LMDh just an 18-month gestation period before the two Rahal-run BMWs take the start of the opening round of the 2023 IMSA SportsCar Championship on Saturday. Ask M Hybrid V8 project manager Maurizio Leschiutta if it would have been possible, like Porsche and Cadillac, for BMW to mount dual programmes in the World Endurance Championship as well as the North American IMSA series in year one, and he comes back with an emphatic "no". Time was just too short, he says.

BMW started looking at the LMDh platform – and building a belated successor to the Williams-developed V12 LMR – at a watershed time in its motorsport history. It came back in December 2020 when it announced it would be quitting Formula E at the end of the 2020-21 season then in progress, just after it was finally announced the previous month that the DTM was switching from Class 1 to GT3 rules for 2021.



V8 power has its roots in DTM racer

BMW

"The idea of doing another racing programme was up in the air, DTM was grinding to a halt and FE was on its way to not being a factory programme anymore," explains Leschiutta. "We were looking to the future and the renewed interest in endurance racing was in our eye."

"The new LMDh regulations were coming together and we had been part of some preliminary meetings, just really listening rather than interacting. Then we said, 'What would it take to do an LMDh car?' Just before Christmas Mike Krack, who was at the time head of BMW Motorsport [before his departure to the Aston





Leschiutta has been a key figure behind the LMDh push

BEIL/BMW

Martin Formula 1 squad], said, ‘Why don’t we have a look at this category in a deeper way?’ We set up a study group, a smaller project group that did a complete plan from both a technical and a business point of view.”

BMW explained when it quit FE that it had exhausted the opportunities for development transfer from the FIA’s electric-vehicle series to its road cars. Yet it has swapped to a category where the hybrid components of the powertrain come off the shelf from three one-make suppliers: Bosch, Williams Advanced Engineering and Xtrac.

Andreas Roos, head of BMW M Motorsport since last February, insists that LMDh is the “perfect fit” for the marque: “We have just launched our new BMW XM [SUV], with a V8 hybrid powertrain. Our LMDh car is a V8 hybrid, so we are fully in parallel. We are currently in the transition on our M cars from pure combustion into hybrid and on into the electric world. LMDh allows us to work in the same direction.”

The LMDh study instigated at the end of 2020 was complete

*“We were looking to the future and the renewed interest in endurance racing was in our eye”*

by the following March and its findings presented to Markus Flasch, then head of the BMW M brand. He liked what he saw – including the first renderings of what an LMDh bearing the marque’s propeller badges might look like. What Leschiutta calls “a small budget” was then signed off to allow preliminary work to progress.

The choice of engine for what became the M Hybrid V8 was already made by the time it began to delve more deeply into the LMDh concept. Leschiutta explains that BMW looked at what it already had in its armoury as it made that choice. The in-line four-cylinder turbo of the final generation of BMW DTM car was >>





## RAHAL'S ENDURING AMBITION

Bobby Rahal won the Indianapolis 500 as a driver in 1986 and has twice reprised that victory as a team owner in 2004 and 2020. He now has the chance to follow up on his triumphs behind the wheel at the Daytona and Sebring enduros in 1981 and 1987 respectively from the timing stand. And he's relishing the prospect.

It is a target he's harboured for a long time, but it would be wrong to say that he was pushing BMW to make the jump up from the GT divisions to the premier class.

"It's always been an ambition to run for overall victories, but it wasn't an expectation; the BMW programme in North America has always been focused on the production categories," says the 70-year-old. "It was a bit of a surprise that BMW was going in the prototype direction, a very pleasant surprise."

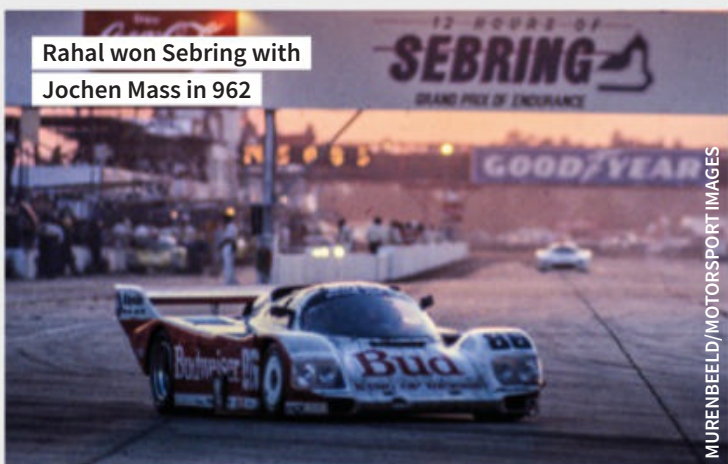
Rahal is a committed fan of sportscar racing. That's where he started his career in the footsteps of his father Mike. His first racing car was a Lotus 47 in 1973, quickly followed by a Ford-powered Lola T290 Group 6 car in which he first came to prominence in the Sports Car Club of America run-offs at Road Atlanta the following year.

"Sportscar racing is where I came from, what I grew up with," he says. "I was lucky enough to have a fair bit of success at the highest level over here."

Those successes include the Daytona and Sebring victories with the Bob Garretson and Bayside Porsche teams respectively, as well as a further four wins across the IMSA series. There were also three forays to the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1980-82 that yielded two retirements and a non-qualification, but he wishes that he'd done more in sportscars.

"One of the few regrets I have from my career is stopping driving sportscars after 1988," he says. "It was really driven by where I was in my Indycar career and the need to focus on that."

Rahal regards Le Mans as unfinished business: "I always thought growing up that would be wonderful to win. Our focus right now is on the one immediately in front of us in IMSA. But if there are to be additional BMW entries at Le Mans [alongside the WEC cars], I'd like to think we'd be looked favourably upon to do that. It's too late for me to win Le Mans as a driver, but maybe it can happen as a team owner."



Rahal won Sebring with Jochen Mass in 1987

MURENBELD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Rahal-run M8 won the GTLM class at Daytona in 2020

CANTRELL/NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

evaluated but "not considered the right engine for this category", while the twin-turbo V8 from the M8 GTE was deemed too heavy. It plumped for a previous DTM engine, the V8 that powered the M4 before the change of regulations in 2019 – the P66/3 LMDh engine retains the four-litre capacity of that powerplant, but is now turbocharged and runs direct-injection.

BMW made its choice of chassis partner in March 2020: it chose Dallara from the four constructors of LMP2 chassis on which an LMDh must be based. Flasch put the results of the second evaluation undertaken together with the Italian organisation to the board in mid-June and got the required sign-off.

The announcement of BMW's return to prototype racing was made on Flasch's personal Instagram account. "We Are Back! Daytona 2023" was the perfunctory message laid over an image of a V12 LMR.

Those words hinted at the initial focus on IMSA, confirmed when its official statement quickly followed. BMW has had a near-continuous involvement in North American sportscar

*"It's a bit like taking an exam: there's always something extra you want to do in preparation"*

racing dating back to 1995, when the Prototype Technology Group joined the 'old' IMSA series with an E36-shape M3. That involvement encompassed the American Le Mans Series campaigns with the V12 LMR in 1999 and 2000 run by Schnitzer and an engine programme funded by BMW North America for the Grand-Am Daytona Prototype category, which yielded a Daytona victory for Chip Ganassi Racing with a Riley chassis in 2011. Since 2009, these sportscar exploits have been masterminded by the Rahal team, now running under the BMW M Team RLL banner, first in the ALMS and, since the US sportscar merger, in 'new' IMSA.

"The North American market is one of the most important ones for BMW M and this is why we said for sure it will be



DOLE/IMSA





The M Hybrid V8 will take on Porsche's 963 on the Daytona banking this weekend



BMW is returning to the top of endurance racing with drivers it knows



Roos believes LMDh is "perfect fit" for BMW

the IMSA championship," explains Roos. "But Flasch said from the beginning, 'Let's have a look at a later stage to see if we can do WEC and Le Mans.'"

It was important to get the programme off the ground first, says Leschiutta: "We said, 'Let's get a car running and start with IMSA and then we will try to get the board on side to complete the picture.' In Italian we say *l'appetito vien mangiando*, which means your appetite grows once you start to eat."

The WEC announcement came in late July last year and was quickly followed by the news that WRT will mastermind BMW's return to Le Mans. The flurry of news followed straight on from the first test for the M Hybrid V8 at the Varano circuit in Italy. BMW opted to undertake the initial phase of testing in Europe, unlike Cadillac, which is also using the Dallara platform for its V-LMDh.

"We did the initial debugging of everything in Europe just because it was easier to manage being closer to home," says Leschiutta. "But we knew that the significant testing had to be done on American tracks, with American personnel and American conditions."

The single car used for testing moved Stateside in September. It was only at the second of IMSA's so-called sanction tests for the LMDh that another chassis, the first of the race cars, ran for the first time. The second of those was given a shakedown at Sebring on the way down from Rahal's new headquarters in Zionsville on the outskirts of Indianapolis to Daytona for testing and qualifying over the Roar weekend.

The two M Hybrids will be raced by a familiar looking crew across the two cars. Philipp Eng and Augusto Farfus are the

full-season drivers in one car and are joined by Marco Wittmann for Daytona and Sebring plus Colton Herta, a regular at the season-opener for BMW and now officially a BMW factory driver, for the 24 Hours. Nick Yelloly and Connor De Phillippi are joined by Sheldon van der Linde for Daytona in #25.

Roos insists that BMW didn't look outside of its existing factory roster when putting together the squad for the two M Hybrids entered in the IMSA GTP class. "We made a clear commitment to our drivers and told them that we trust them and they are the drivers we will have in our line-up," says Roos. "In the end there wasn't much of a discussion. There were some drivers from outside asking for seats, so maybe some other drivers from our squad will get a chance when we enter the WEC or we will need some more drivers."

BMW has at least partially addressed that already: Rene Rast and Dries Vanthoor, both stalwarts of WRT's GT programmes with Audi, were announced as factory drivers by Munich before the end of last year. Rast has even tested the LMDh already.

The M Hybrid test programme has been torrid at times; Leschiutta describes it as like "rolling a rock up a hill, and sometimes it rolls down again". But BMW and Rahal know they have to be ready come 1340 local time on Saturday.

"I think we are in the best conditions possible given the timeframe of this programme," he says. "In some ways you can't ever be fully ready. It's a bit like taking an exam: there's always something extra you want to do in preparation. It's just at some point the exam happens." ❧



# RACE CENTRE



McKLEIN





WRC MONTE CARLO RALLY

# Ogier becomes the ultimate Monte master

*He might now be a part-timer, but Sebastien Ogier showed his class yet again with a ninth victory on the Monte Carlo Rally*

TOM HOWARD



**T**he Monte Carlo Rally has inspired many a driver over the years, but perhaps none more so than Sebastien Ogier, who can now call himself the undisputed Monte master after dominating the 2023 World Rally Championship opener.

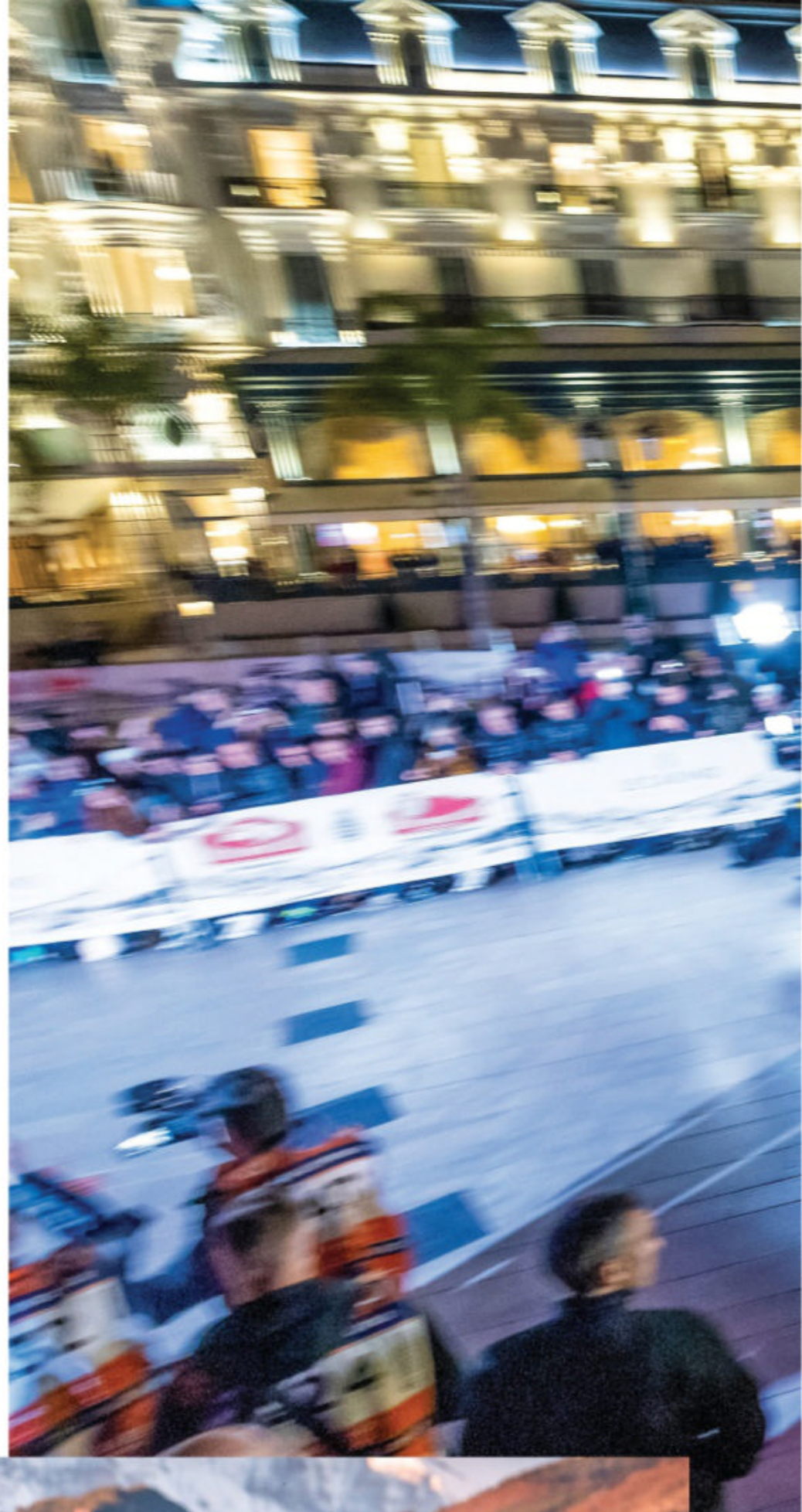
The 91st running of arguably rallying's most prestigious event provided the backdrop for the start of Kalle Rovanpera's title defence. This year has been billed as perhaps one of the closest title fights now that Toyota, Hyundai and M-Sport boast either world champions or rally winners in their ranks following a wild silly season triggered by Ott Tanak's move from Hyundai to M-Sport. That may still be the case but, when it comes to tackling Monte Carlo's hallowed ribbon of relentless mountain hairpins that overlook the principality famous for its casino, betting on Ogier to stand on the podium is as close to a sure thing as you can get.

Odds on the Frenchman adding a record ninth trophy to his glittering record were short, and the semi-retired 39-year-old once again outlined that experience is still worth its weight in gold when it comes to mastering the Monte. Twelve months on from the heartache of a penultimate-stage puncture that handed a fairytale Monte win to fellow Alpine master Sebastien Loeb – absent from this year's entry list – a fired-up Ogier swept all aside to become the most successful driver in the event's storied history.

In truth, Ogier's run to a record ninth Monte Carlo win was only half the story as Toyota sent a message to Hyundai and M-Sport by winning an astonishing 16 of the 18 stages, spread across three of its four GR Yaris drivers. While Ogier took the glory, it wasn't completely plain sailing and his world champion successor Rovanpera kept him honest. The Finn made a near-perfect start to his title defence, finishing best of the rest, 18.8 seconds behind Ogier on a rally that's not among his favourites.

Talk surrounding the potential for a three-way fight between Toyota, Hyundai and M-Sport was matched only by another topic – the weather. This year's Monte Carlo Rally will go down as perhaps the driest ever, with the fearsome mix of treacherous snow and ice largely absent from stages. It meant the event was a full-on asphalt sprint.

While the weather was very un-Monte Carlo-like, the opening stage remained true to the rally's heritage as thousands of fans lined the roads, armed with flares and fireworks for the traditional



Searing speed early on gave Ogier a margin to set up his 56th WRC win

REDBULL





Neuville chased as best he could but the Hyundai did not have the pace to defeat Toyota

## “There was zero grip and I was not the first to go wide. I saw the lines but it was already too late”

night-time run up to the famous Col de Turini to kick off the rally on Thursday. It was here where Ogier started as he meant to go on by claiming the first stage of the season, pipping Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans. The Welshman did, however, tease early strong pace, suggesting he has indeed found a direction with the GR Yaris he was at times lacking last year.

The pair occupied the top two positions after the two night-time blasts, and Ogier enjoyed a perfect start to lead from Evans by 6s. New M-Sport signing Tanak ended the night third, 15.4s adrift despite life behind the wheel of the Ford Puma not starting too brightly thanks to an electrical issue, and then the loss of fifth gear that made “every gear change a pain”, according to the Estonian.

Tanak wasn't the only driver to hit trouble. Hyundai's Thierry Neuville was caught out by black ice at a tight left-hander, which sent him skating into a bank. Luckily, he was able to continue, but it was a scare. “There was zero grip and I was not the first one to

go wide [referring to Roanperera's moment at the same corner],” said Neuville, who reached service in fourth. “I could see the lines but it was already too late. I lost probably seven or eight seconds because the car stalled.”

It was a relatively quiet start from world champion Roanperera, but he reckoned that “the main thing is that we are here” as he sat fifth, 17.1s behind.

Ogier showed why he is now the most successful driver in Monte Carlo history on Friday, but his sublime run to a sizeable lead wasn't without challenges. Moments before he left service, a clutch issue was discovered that could have derailed his 2022 Monte redemption effort. Toyota proved its mechanics are among the elite as they swiftly whipped out the gearbox and fitted a new one in “record time”. “They did it in 13 minutes, which was very impressive to watch,” admired Ogier.

He repaid his mechanics by extending his perfect start to the rally to five consecutive stage wins, the feat made even more impressive given the eight-time world champion had to take several risks to compensate for a hybrid boost failure.

What made life a bit easier was a drama for nearest rival Evans, who maintained his strong start and appeared to be the only driver able to live with Ogier's pace. Evans suffered heartbreak in the form of a sudden right-rear puncture. It cost him 42.1s, and with it »

McKLEIN





his hopes of a podium. “I have no idea [how that happened], it was at the top of a very fast place. Just a warning on the dash — that’s all I got,” said Evans, who would end Ogier’s run of stage wins on the very next test, stage six. The puncture dropped the two-time WRC runner-up to fifth overall, nearly a minute adrift.

Evans’s issue meant Ogier’s lead ballooned, and by the time crews returned to service in the Monte Carlo harbour the lead stood at a whopping 36.0s from Rovanpera, who found form on Friday afternoon. The world champion galloped up the leaderboard while also claiming his first fastest time of the year on stage eight.

At this point, the WRC’s new wonderkid was realistic about his victory hopes in the wake of the Ogier juggernaut. “It’s good to be in the fight,” said Rovanpera. “Seb has been much faster than anybody else so far, but we are still in a close fight with the guys behind, so we have to continue to push and see what happens.”

It proved to be a frustrating Friday for Hyundai. Neuville headed the South Korean marque’s charge in third, 1.9s behind Rovanpera, but there were clear signs of frustration in the sky-blue camp now led by former Renault Formula 1 boss Cyril Abiteboul, who was experiencing a WRC round for the first time. Hyundai had elected for a soft set-up across its three i20 Ns for Neuville, new signing Esapekka Lappi and Dani Sordo in expectation of traditional wintry conditions. Bone dry asphalt spelled disaster for that plan as all three drivers struggled to unlock the speed to match the Toyotas.

“I was quite on the maximum to be honest... that’s all I can do,”



explained Neuville. “We expected better pace in the afternoon but there wasn’t more to find. I tried to push a couple of times, but we were missing a bit.”

It was the same story for Lappi and Sordo, both perplexed by the lack of pace. “Everything is OK now, except the times,” puzzled eighth-placed Lappi, who faced the challenge of adjusting to a new car in the form of the i20 following his move from Toyota. “I just can’t understand because the car feels good and the driving is OK. I am disappointed.”

Sordo, who sat sixth, added: “I don’t understand where I can get the time. For me it was a clean run, but when you see the times of the others they are all faster. I think we had some good tyres now and the car was working well. I am a little bit confused.”

The nature of the WRC’s intense event schedule dawned on Abiteboul, who had just experienced a first full day of completion. “One of the main things I am learning in WRC is the longer days, and not having many opportunities to sit down with crews after







## “Everything is OK now, except the times. I just can’t understand because the car feels good”

a stage,” he said. “I am looking forward to catching up with them properly to see how we can make the car better to give them what is missing.”

There was also frustration in the M-Sport camp as Tanak continued to adjust to the Puma. “The car is very progressive and comfortable to drive but it is just not very racy, so we definitely need to try to do something,” he reckoned.

Team-mate Pierre-Louis Loubet had other concerns when the Corsican slid off the road at a hairpin left on stage five and punctured a hole in his power steering pump. Without a midday service to repair the damage, he was left to wrestle his Puma without steering assistance for the remaining three stages, earning him the ‘Corsican Hulk’ moniker after his heroic effort. At times co-driver Nicolas Gilsoul had to pull the handbrake to help navigate the hairpins and ease the strain on Loubet’s arms.

“If you do that for a day you can become quite strong, I can assure you,” said Loubet, who ran as high as seventh. Sadly, Loubet’s efforts would come to nothing. On Saturday morning’s first stage he entered the final corner a tad too hot and slid into the barriers, causing terminal suspension damage.

For rally leader Ogier, Saturday was all about preserving his advantage now that the hard work of establishing a healthy advantage was complete. With last year’s puncture nightmare fresh in his mind, a measured approach was adopted across the day’s six stages. Despite this he still notched up a win on stage 10.

“We had fun and there was a good rhythm,” smiled Ogier. “I took it a bit less in places where I thought there was a risk of punctures, but all good.”

Ogier’s defensive stance opened the window for his rivals to attack, and attack they did. Roanperera began to nibble at Ogier’s lead before slashing it with a blistering display on stage 14 to end the day’s action. A 36s lead at the start of the day was reduced to 16s as Roanperera injected excitement and thoughts that perhaps »

### TANAK M-SPORT CAN CATCH WRC RIVALS



Ott Tanak has conceded that M-Sport faces “quite a big job” to close the gap to World Rally Championship rivals Toyota and Hyundai, but is confident that it can be achieved.

The Estonian steadily made progress in unlocking speed from the Ford Puma package in his first competitive outing in the car at Monte Carlo, but ultimately was unable to sustain a consistent challenge at the sharp end. A glimpse into the potential of the Tanak/M-Sport package arrived on the Power Stage, where the 35-year-old was 0.6 seconds shy of the win.

“Generally it was still a good weekend,” said Tanak (below). “We were able to learn plenty and we got some good mileage as well. For sure, there are things we need to improve, we need to be more consistent and find some speed but I believe there are ways to achieve it.

“The Power Stage definitely showed that it could be possible to be competitive in this car, but we just need to find a way and a better balance to allow us to

drive like that through the whole stage loop because at the moment we are not able to keep the tyres alive for that distance.

“There are many things we need to do and we are behind at the moment and there is quite a big job to do. If there is a will then there will be a way.”

After falling short of repeating last year’s fairytale Monte Carlo win delivered by Sebastien Loeb, team principal Richard

### “THE POWER STAGE SHOWED THAT IT COULD BE POSSIBLE TO BE COMPETITIVE”

Millener doesn’t believe a kneejerk reaction is required to improve the car. “I think last year there was the added challenge of people not having driven these cars much before so that levelled the playing field,” he added. “I don’t think the car is not as good [as last year]. I think there are a few factors, conditions were more tricky [last year] and this has effectively been a flat-out Tarmac rally. If you are not 100% comfortable in the car you are going to struggle and Ott only had a day and a bit in the car.

“The good thing is Ott hasn’t mentioned anything about power, it’s not like the car is 25 horsepower down. It’s more that he wants to develop it to his style. We might need to look at some chassis stuff but we need to have a debrief after the event.”





Tanak narrowly failed to take a fastest stage time and finished fifth on his return to M-Sport



MCKLEIN

Ogier would have a fight on his hands for the win. “I think it [the lead] should be enough,” offered a nervy Ogier. “It was the most dangerous stage for punctures, so I took it easy and I am happy this stage is over now.”

Hyundai came to the fore on Saturday afternoon when Neuville won stages 12 and 13 to end Toyota’s stranglehold of the top of the timesheets. “We had a good stage but we had a huge jump and I feel a bit of back pain,” grimaced Neuville after stage 13. “We were a bit on the limit and over the limit a few times.”

There were also signs that Lappi was finding more speed too despite suffering a puncture, while Sordo found himself battling a persistent hybrid issue.

At M-Sport, Loubet’s retirement was compounded by an intermittent power steering issue for Tanak, which cost him more time, but he was able to hang onto fifth behind the recovering Evans. “When it gets twisty and in the last kilometres it’s hard,” said Tanak. “But in the fast parts and straights it’s not so bad.”

Any doubts that Ogier would loosen his grip on proceedings

were quickly quashed thanks to his ninth stage win of the rally on Sunday’s first opener, the penultimate test of the event, before he sealed victory with a relative cruise through the rally-ending stage – a final run up to the Col de Turini.

Of his ninth Monte win (and the first for his co-driver Vincent Landais), the joy was plain to see for Ogier, who had rewritten the history books at a rally he revered as a child. “I love this rally,” said a jubilant Ogier, who now leads Loeb 9-8 in the Monte Carlo stakes. “It’s the one which gave me the dream right at the beginning and I am so happy for Vincent.

“It means a lot. This rally is *the* rally for me. For sure, in my eyes it is always something special and I think I can be proud of myself and my team because it has been an amazing weekend as Toyota provided us fantastic tools. It will take a bit of time to sink in but I really appreciate this moment.”

There was still a sting left in the Monte Carlo tale though – Rovanner produced his 2022 party trick by winning the Power Stage, somehow pulling out half a second on Tanak



FABIEN/HYUNDAI

Sordo came home a disappointing seventh, nearly four minutes down

## “I love this rally. It’s the one which gave me the dream right at the beginning”

in the final sector to deny M-Sport’s new man a stage win.

“I have to say we are really happy with this weekend,” said Rovanner, who is effectively the championship leader given Ogier’s part-programme. “Big congratulations to Seb: he’s the master of Monte Carlo.”

Neuville was satisfied with a podium ahead of Evans, with Tanak in fifth. Takamoto Katsuta netted sixth despite suffering a rear suspension failure on the final stage and he limped home ahead of Sordo and Lappi. Loubet briefly returned on Sunday, before retiring due to a water leak repair that left him without enough time to reach the final stages.

While this weekend offered a timely reminder of Ogier’s class, maybe the battle to be the ultimate Monte Master is not over. Over to you, Loeb. “Bravo Seb Ogier. When is the revenge of the retirees of the WRC?” wrote Loeb on Twitter in the aftermath of Ogier’s win. 🏆



## NO NEED FOR PANIC AT HYUNDAI



McKLEIN

Thierry Neuville isn't scared by the pace Toyota displayed during its domination of the Monte Carlo Rally, but admits that Hyundai has work to do.

Hyundai found itself trailing Toyota for outright speed on the Monte Carlo asphalt as the Japanese make racked up 16 stages wins to the South Korean marque's two, delivered by Neuville on Saturday and helping cement third position.

Both Hyundai and Toyota upgraded the aero on their respective i20 N and GR Yaris challengers for the new season while Toyota also tweaked its engine. Despite a clear gulf in speed between Toyota and the chasing pack, Neuville is not too concerned given Hyundai's pace deficit stemmed from setting its cars up for wintry conditions that failed to arrive.

Asked if he was scared by Toyota's speed, he said: "Not so much. We saw in Spain last year they were stronger than us and we were 40 seconds behind the leader, but we went to Japan and we were stronger than them and won the rally by nearly a minute.

"I don't think we need to be concerned. With only one day of testing for such a rally, we decided to go in a direction of a car that works in all the conditions, but we found ourselves on a rally that was completely dry and a proper Tarmac event. I think the speed wasn't that great but it wasn't that bad, so there is no reason to be alarmed too much."

New Hyundai Motorsport boss Cyril Abiteboul (above) believes Neuville's run to third has provided the framework for the team to build on: "We shouldn't be too negative. There is plenty of time but at the same time the points you lose at the start will be missing also when you finish the championship. We need to make sure we are on top of the game as soon as possible."



AUSTRIAL/HYUNDAI

## RESULTS ROUND 1/13, MONTE CARLO RALLY, 19-22 JANUARY

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	<b>Sebastien Ogier</b> (FRA) <b>Vincent Landais</b> (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	3h12m02.1s
2	<b>Kalle Rovanperä</b> (FIN) <b>Jonne Halttunen</b> (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+18.8s
3	<b>Thierry Neuville</b> (BEL) <b>Martijn Wydaeghe</b> (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+44.6s
4	<b>Elfyn Evans</b> (GBR) <b>Scott Martin</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+1m12.3s
5	<b>Ott Tanak</b> (EST) <b>Martin Jarveoja</b> (EST)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+2m34.8s
6	<b>Takamoto Katsuta</b> (JPN) <b>Aaron Johnston</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+3m32.5s
7	<b>Dani Sordo</b> (ESP) <b>Candido Carrera</b> (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+3m47.4s
8	<b>Esapekka Lappi</b> (FIN) <b>Janne Ferm</b> (FIN)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+3m51.3s
9	<b>Yohan Rossel</b> (FRA) <b>Arnaud Dunand</b> (FRA)	PH Sport / Citroen C3 Rally2	+10m07.8s
10	<b>Nikolay Gryazin</b> (RUS) <b>Konstantin Aleksandrov</b> (RUS)	Toksport WRT 2 / Skoda Fabia RS	+10m08.4s

### OTHERS

24	<b>Jourdan Serderidis</b> (GRC) <b>Frederic Miclotte</b> (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+26m50.2s
R	<b>Pierre-Louis Loubet</b> (FRA) <b>Nicolas Gilsoul</b> (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	SS16-leak

## STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 <b>La Bollene-Vesubie / Col de Turini 1</b> (9.40 miles)	Ogier 10m22.9s	<b>Ogier</b>	Evans +1.3s
SS2 <b>La Cabanette / Col de Castillon</b> (15.47 miles)	Ogier 16m10.8s	<b>Ogier</b>	Evans +6.0s
SS3 <b>Roure / Roubion / Beuil 1</b> (11.39 miles)	Ogier 9m54.7s	<b>Ogier</b>	Evans +9.2s
SS4 <b>Puget-Theniers / Saint-Antonin 1</b> (12.30 miles)	Ogier 11m44.7s	<b>Ogier</b>	Evans +11.3s
SS5 <b>Brianconnet / Entrevaux 1</b> (9.04 miles)	Ogier 8m30.7s	<b>Ogier</b>	Neuville +32.7s
SS6 <b>Roure / Roubion / Beuil 2</b> (11.39 miles)	Evans 9m49.3s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +36.0s
SS7 <b>Puget-Theniers / Saint-Antonin 2</b> (12.30 miles)	Ogier 11m38.7s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +39.1s
SS8 <b>Brianconnet / Entrevaux 2</b> (9.04 miles)	Rovanperä 8m24.0s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +36.0s
SS9 <b>Le Fugeret / Thorame-Haute 1</b> (10.44 miles)	Rovanperä 9m05.5s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +33.5s
SS10 <b>Malijai / Puimichel 1</b> (10.76 miles)	Ogier 9m27.1s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +34.6s
SS11 <b>Ubraye / Entrevaux 1</b> (13.53 miles)	Rovanperä 11m35.7s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +30.0s
SS12 <b>Le Fugeret / Thorame-Haute 2</b> (10.44 miles)	Neuville 9m01.8s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +29.5s
SS13 <b>Malijai / Puimichel 2</b> (10.76 miles)	Neuville 9m27.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +25.8s
SS14 <b>Ubraye / Entrevaux 2</b> (13.53 miles)	Rovanperä 11m30.2s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +16.0s
SS15 <b>Luceram / Lantosque 1</b> (11.69 miles)	Ogier 12m17.9s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +18.7s
SS16 <b>La Bollene-Vesubie / Col de Turini 2</b> (9.40 miles)	Rovanperä 10m08.9s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +17.2s
SS17 <b>Luceram / Lantosque 2</b> (11.69 miles)	Ogier 12m17.0s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +23.5s
SS18 <b>La Bollene-Vesubie / Col de Turini 3</b> (Power Stage) (9.40 miles)	Rovanperä 10m00.5s	<b>Ogier</b>	Rovanperä +18.8s



Team boss Latvala celebrates  
with Landais and Ogier

### DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

**1 Ogier 26; 2 Rovanperä 23;**  
**3 Neuville 17; 4 Evans 15; 5 Tanak**  
**14; 6 Katsuta 8; 7 Sordo 6; 8 Lappi**  
**4; 9 Gryazin 2; 10 Rossel 1.**

### MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

**1 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 51;**  
**2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 27;**  
**3 M-Sport Ford WRT 16.**

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**16 FEBRUARY ISSUE**



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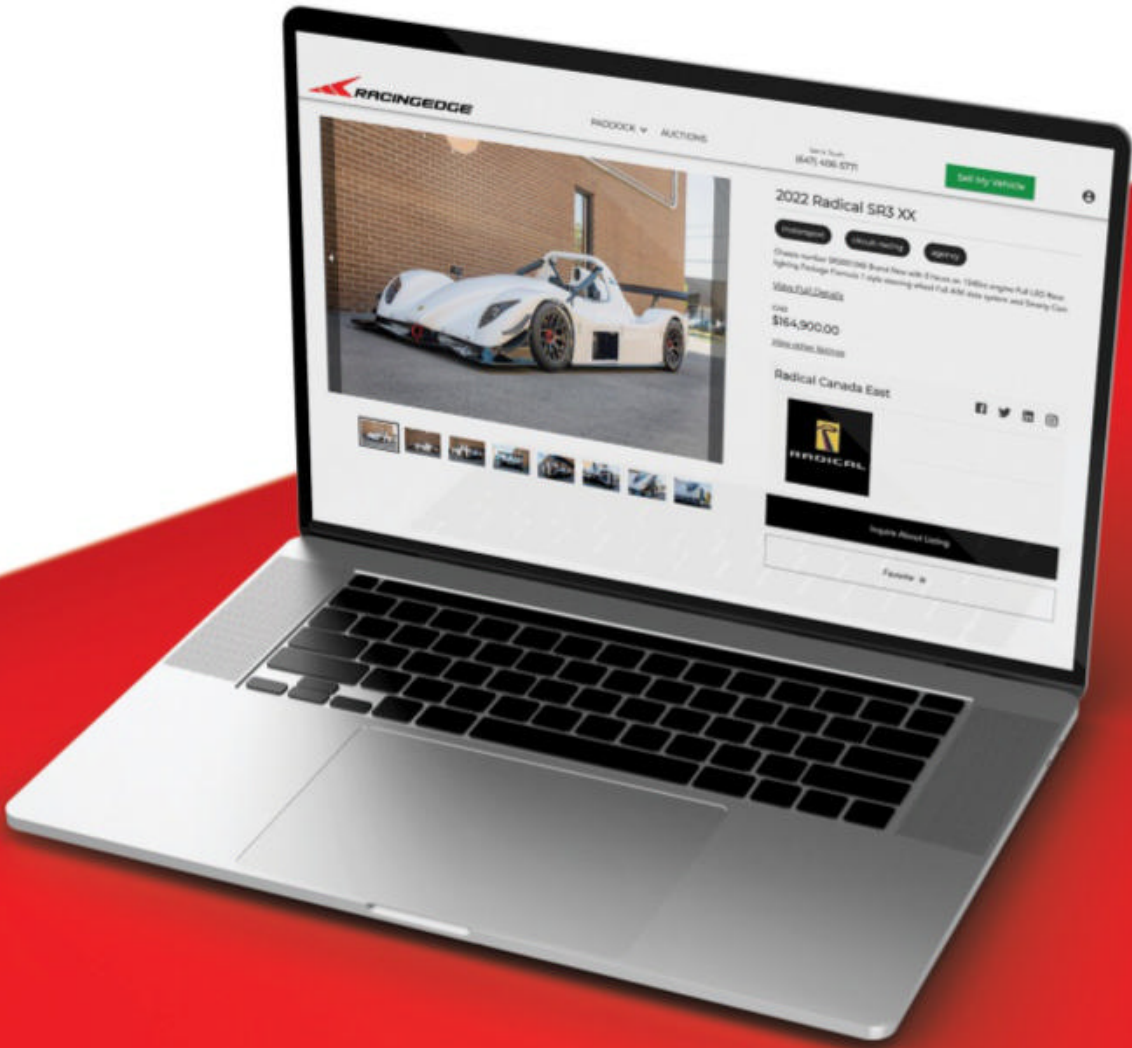


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**Requirements**

- High level of computer literacy
- Good Communication
- Ability to manage own time and tasks
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- Ability to fabricate small parts as and when required on projects
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- Identify and help resolve issues with car build, reliability or equipment which need attention, service or repair.
- Follow up on issues, ensuring problems are resolved ahead of the next race event.
- Assist with the loading and unloading of trucks and freight both at an event and at the workshop.
- Assist with setup and dismantling of the garage infrastructure on event

#### Essential skills / experience:

- Knowledge and ability in all aspects of race car maintenance and repair.
- Sub assembly/ gearbox build knowledge and experience would be advantageous
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Inquest rules C1 driver's death was an accident

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Angela Lucas was killed in a crash during a C1 race at Snetterton in 2021

RICHARD STYLES

# Fatal C1 crash deemed an accident

## MOTORSPORT UK

An inquest has ruled that the death of a Citroën C1 racer during an endurance race at Snetterton in 2021, when her safety harness came unbuckled, was an accident.

Angela Lucas, 42, died from head injuries after the C1 she was driving left the track and crashed into barriers at the opening Riches corner after contact from behind from another competitor. The inquest heard that she had been unsecured when she crashed, with Motorsport UK finding that her safety harness had probably become accidentally unbuckled as she tried to correct her steering.

Jamie Champkin of the governing body's serious incident response executive, which investigated, said the harness locking buckle had been incorrectly positioned on her stomach rather than her pelvis.

"It's our belief and supposition that

Angela's right arm may have come into contact with the harness buckle and may have accidentally released it," said Champkin. He added that the harness had been in working order and described the incident as "unique". Champkin added that Lucas's driving had been "exemplary" before the crash.

One of the team's other drivers, Shaun Fray, had claimed that the harness had "popped open" when he was driving on an earlier practice lap. But Motorsport UK sent the harness for testing and it fully conformed with FIA standards, while the alleged incident involving Fray was never reported at the time.

The inquest jury took two hours on Wednesday last week to reach a conclusion that Lucas had died as the result of an accident. "At the time Mrs Lucas collided with the barrier, her harness was not buckled and she was unrestrained,"

they said. "Mrs Lucas was thrown to the left and partly through the side window and sustained a severe head injury and died at the scene. We find the buckle was not in the correct position on Mrs Lucas. If the buckle was in the correct position as specified by the FIA regulations, it would not be possible for the safety release lever to be accidentally activated."

But Lucas's sisters, Lorraine Hall and Caroline Dally, who attended the inquest hearing, said the exact circumstances of how the harness became unbuckled were still "not completely proven".

"Knowing our sister and her body shape we don't feel that what they said happened was physically possible," said Hall. "We also struggle with the fact that they didn't seem to find it highly relevant that Shaun Fray said that the harness came undone when he was driving over the same weekend. To us, it is very relevant because it is not a unique situation because it happened the day before."

Motorsport UK said lessons could be learned from the Snetterton crash and added in a statement: "This tragic accident is a stark reminder of the need to ensure that motorsport regulations are complied with and that safety equipment – in particular harnesses – are properly located at all times, for all competitors and where relevant co-drivers.

"Angela was a very experienced and popular competitor and member of our community and part of a close-knit caring family; she is and will always be sorely missed by everyone."

**SIMON PARKIN & STEPHEN LICKORISH**



Motorsport UK investigation found Lucas's harness came unbuckled but met FIA standards





## Ginetta champions Millar and Rowledge pair up at DTO



### BRITISH GT

Ginetta Junior champions Aston Millar and Josh Rowledge will make their British GT debuts this season, driving a DTO Motorsport-run McLaren Artura GT4.

Millar and Rowledge claimed Junior success in 2021 and 2022 respectively, with Millar competing last term in the Ginetta GT4 Supercup with the DTO outfit. Together they finished third overall and achieved a win at the final round, and will now move into British GT for 2023.

"I've always loved GT racing

and my plan has always been do Supercup and then British GT4 and work my way up all the way to Le Mans," said Millar (above right). "You see a lot of these pairings in British GT that are obviously a pairing together on track, and they don't really get along off track, but I feel like me and Josh have got this bond where we can help bring the best out of each other."

The Silver-Silver teenage pairing, who raced against each other in karting, spent time in the older McLaren 570S model prior to Christmas, but have yet to sample the new-for-2023 Artura machine.

"I've heard good things about it and, providing our testing plan goes well, I think we're going to be right on the money," added Millar. "I think the pairing we've got is definitely strong enough to go and win."

Last year was DTO's first foray into competitive motorsport after starting out as a driving events and experience company, but Millar has been impressed by the growth of the squad.

He said: "It was a massive learning curve [last year] and, although we didn't get the results we wanted, we learnt a lot together. DTO being new

to racing, it's almost like we've grown together and it didn't feel right to leave them."

Ex-Formula 1 driver Karun Chandhok is the team's head of motorsport while head of engineering, Eddy Hall, has previously spent time in British GT.

"Improving on our debut season in 2022, this is a fantastic opportunity to showcase what DTO are capable of," said Hall. "We're pleased to be continuing our racing journey with Aston Millar and with Josh Rowledge joining the DTO team, we'll be highly competitive."

**STEFAN MACKLEY**

## Balfe to partner Mitchell at Barwell for British GT assault

### BRITISH GT

British GT stalwart Shaun Balfe will join Sandy Mitchell at Barwell Motorsport for the 2023 campaign at the wheel of a new Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2.

Balfe, who made his championship debut in 1999, has come close to winning the title on two occasions and most recently competed in a family-run Audi R8 LMS in 2022.

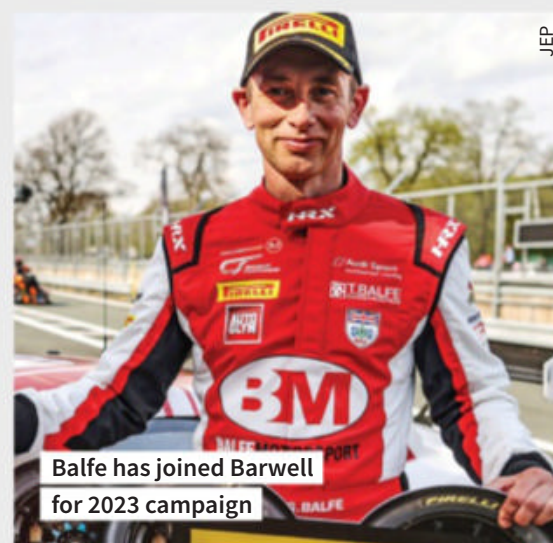
He and Adam Carroll took victory in the opening round at Oulton Park and were in championship contention until work commitments curtailed Balfe's remaining campaign.

He will now join 2020 GT3 champion Mitchell and Barwell, which is statistically the championship's most successful team.

"Having competed against Barwell for several years, I'd always seen them as the ones to watch, the team that consistently delivers results," said Balfe. "I'm clearly very excited and motivated to help keep Barwell in the top tier of British GT."

The pair will drive a second Huracan, with Will Tregurtha and Mark Sansom already confirmed for Barwell.

Team principal Mark Lemmer added: "I've known Shaun for as long as I can



remember and he's quick, professional and focused. Plus he has motorsport DNA running through his veins, which makes him a perfect fit for Barwell."

The season begins at Oulton Park on 8-10 April.





## Griffiths/Morrison overcome heating problems to win

### CIRCUIT RALLYING

John Griffiths and Emma Morrison consolidated their MGJ Engineering Circuit Rally Championship advantage, leading last weekend's Brands Hatch Winter Stages from start to finish.

The Ford Fiesta R5 duo had just a one-second lead over Paul Murro/Callum Cross's similar car after an icy opening stage. Murro opted for supersoft tyres on stage three, though, which cost him dearly as the deficit became 6s.

However, Griffiths also had troubles. "We had an overheating problem, it was OK on the stages but not on the drive to service," he explained.

Griffiths managed to cure his problem for the second half of the rally, but admitted he was "so close to pulling out".

In the end, his winning margin over Murro was 29s.

John Stone/Callum Young's VW Polo GTI R5 came under threat for a while for third from Ollie O'Donovan/Ashleigh Morris, until the Hyundai i20 R5 crew got a 10s penalty for hitting a chicane.

O'Donovan held on to fourth, while Michael Igoe/Will Atkins were fifth at one point in their Fiesta Rally2, on the former British GT title contender's rallying debut (see story right), until they retired.

Kieran Hankin/James Swallow's Peugeot 208 T16 occupied fifth from stage five, with Richard Weaver/Dylan Thomas's Mitsubishi Lancer E6 completing the top six after Mike English/Andy Robinson's Fiesta Rally2 went grass-tracking one stage from home.

**PETER SCHERER**

## Paddock co-founder Fletcher leaves

### BRITISH GT

Actor and driver Kelvin Fletcher has split with the Paddock Motorsport squad he co-founded, with the team set to return full-time to British GT this season.

Fletcher and fellow co-founder Martin Plowman created the outfit in 2021 having secured the Pro-Am British GT4 title together in 2019 with Beechdean.

Last season Fletcher only

competed in four of the nine races as work commitments meant he couldn't participate in a full season.

Further clashes in 2023 have meant that Fletcher has stepped away from the team, which will announce its driver line-up in the coming weeks.

"Making a decision of this magnitude is never easy, so it is with a heavy heart that we agreed the move was for the best," said Plowman.

"Kelvin and I are friends as

well as colleagues; however, as Kelvin's acting career continues to evolve, it is compounding the fact that he can't be in two places at once.

"Kelvin had to miss several rounds during the 2022 season due to schedule clashes, and this will only become more acute as his acting career and other public appearances continue. I wish Kelvin and his family continued success, and I can't wait to see him back on the big screen."

## IGOE MAKES RALLY DEBUT AFTER SWITCH

### CIRCUIT RALLYING

Former British GT racer Michael Igoe made his rallying debut last weekend in the Brands Hatch Winter Stages at the wheel of a Ford Fiesta Rally2.

Igoe previously competed in the British GT championship over the past four seasons with his WPI Motorsport outfit, firstly in a Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car and then a Lamborghini Huracan GT3.

He took one victory alongside Andrea Caldarelli at Donington Park in 2020, before adding another two wins with Phil Keen the following season as they finished fourth in the overall standings.

Work commitments meant he only competed part-time in 2022, before moving his focus towards rallying this year.

"I just wanted a change from racing and liked the look of this," said Igoe (below). "I had never been in a rally before, though, but we did a post-Christmas test at Pont and it was great fun and I thought then that I had made the right decision."

He was fifth quickest on the opening test, despite a stall at the hairpin, and was still running fifth before a front diff failure on stage five ended his day early. Igoe will be next out again for the Circuit Rally Championship at Snetterton on 11 February.

"I am only interested in Tarmac rallying, as I don't fancy being so close to trees," he added. "But it worked well with my co-driver Will Atkins and I think I learned a lot."

"This is the level I want to learn from, so I am not looking beyond this at present."

**PETER SCHERER**





# Club Enduro class champion upgrades Golf

## CLUB ENDURO

Club Enduro Class B champion Luke Handley is stepping up to the top division this year, where he will face Area Motorsport team-mates Rob Baker and Carl Swift in a formidable five-pronged Volkswagen Golf GTI Mk7 onslaught.

Handley's car has been reconfigured to the regulations of the highest power-to-weight ratio class of the 750 Motor Club championship and has been relivered.

Class winner at Croft and Spa last term, and on the podium in all seven races, Hampshireman Handley, 38, joins reigning champions Baker/Swift, and Chris Freeman in A-spec cars. Jonathan Packer and Chris Plaskett will continue to run theirs in the equally competitive Class B.

"The changes [which bring the power to 388bhp] include different turbo, intercooler, mapping, low-pressure fuel pump and oil control, but otherwise the two-litre engine remains stock," said Handley.

"Aero upgrades [developed on the car



Handley's reworked Golf was on display at ASI

JEP

Freeman crashed at Anglesey last year], have also helped bring us closer to the performance of the TCR cars in the championship. In fact, the team matched their times in testing at the end of the year."

The Area Golfers expect stellar competition, with William Beech's Capture Motorsport squad increasing its TCR strength to four – three SEAT Cupras (including the ex-Baker/Swift car) and a Golf – for proven drivers, plus the Lotus Elises of last year's Croft victor Will Stacey and Rob Boston, and a strong BMW M3 turnout.

To augment his Club Enduro programme, Handley is building an Audi TT for the

British Racing & Sports Car Club's new one-make series. "I bought a donor car for £3000 and the package of control parts [developed by SW Motorsports] for £8000," he said. "But for bolting the spoilers on and doing the livery it's ready to go.

"It will be fun to try some sprint races and interesting to compare the discipline with the Club Enduros. The TTs' spec is mild, not overly stressed, so the cars should also be inexpensive to run. My wife is up for a go on trackdays and, if she enjoys the experience, could take an ARDS test and race it."

MARCUS PYE

## Fiesta Junior runner-up jumps to JCW Mini



Lee was a high flier in Fiesta Junior

### MINI CHALLENGE

Fiesta Junior runner-up Thomas Jack Lee will graduate to the top JCW class of the Mini Challenge this year with the frontrunning Excelr8 Motorsport team.

Lee narrowly missed out on the Fiesta title

last season after taking nine wins in his first full year of car racing, after contesting two Ginetta Junior rounds in 2021.

His leap up to a JCW Mini means Lee will be one of the youngest drivers on the grid. He will celebrate his 16th birthday less than a

month before the season is due to begin at Donington Park.

"The higher speeds, longer races and the fact the JCW is more on edge compared to what I have raced before means there will be a lot of new challenges, but I feel ready for it," said Lee.

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## IN THE HEADLINES

## SNETTERTON IMPROVEMENTS

A range of improvement works have been carried out over the winter at Snetterton. The Norfolk circuit's race control and medical centre buildings have undergone refurbishments, while electric vehicle charging points have been added. Drainage has also been improved in the paddock and 160 sheets of Armco barrier have been replaced.

## JOHN WATT 1932-2023

We regret to record the death last week of John Watt, former North West chairman of the British Motorsports Marshals Club and a respected Motorsport UK steward, aged 90. Popular officials at Oulton Park, Donington and elsewhere, deerstalker-hatted John and his wife Audrey (who survives him) mentored generations of marshals. Their children followed them into the sport, daughter Alison marrying Autosport photographer Jeff Bloxham.

## ANOTHER WEBB CAMPAIGN

Greystone GT has announced Oli Webb and Iain Campbell as its second pairing for the new-for-2023 McLaren Trophy. Former single-seater star Webb has already been confirmed as driving a GT3 McLaren in British GT this year but will also share an Artura in the McLaren series with Campbell, who he partnered in the GT Cup last season.

## MORE JUNIOR DRIVERS

Ginetta Junior rookies Tom Spragg and Charlie Hart are set to contest full campaigns this year. Spragg took part in two events at the end of last year with Preptech, claiming a best result of 16th, before also competing in the Winter Series. He will now remain with Preptech for a full season, while fellow Winter Series driver Hart stays with Elite Motorsport. New Ginetta Junior scholar Chase Fernandez (below) has been announced as driving for Assetto Motorsport.



## Alpine F1 coaching support for 2023 British F4 champion

## BRITISH F4

This year's British Formula 4 champion will benefit from physical coaching support from the Alpine F1 team during 2024.

The title winner will undergo an extensive initial assessment at the start of the year, from which a tailored training and improvement plan will be developed. They will then have "regular" access to the facilities and staff at the Alpine Racing Human Performance Centre – a privilege normally reserved for Alpine's drivers and academy members.

"The facilities and knowledge we have here at Alpine is invaluable to an upcoming driver and their next step in their career,

and we are eager to be on board with this journey to promote young talent in grassroot series like British F4," said Alpine Academy director Julian Rouse.

Hugh Chambers, CEO of British F4 promoter Motorsport UK, added: "This is a fantastic opportunity for the 2023 champion to receive regular human performance coaching and instruction from a leading Formula 1 team as they take their next steps on the single-seater pathway."

Josh Irfan has become the latest driver announced as competing for that prize. The karting graduate is the third racer confirmed as part of Carlin's 2023 British F4 line-up.

## De Haan stars in Richardson Porsche

## PORSCHES

Former Ginetta Junior racer Robert de Haan was in unstoppable form in the opening Porsche Sprint Challenge Southern Europe event at Valencia last weekend, taking two dominant victories.

The Dutchman was a race winner with Richardson Racing in the Ginetta series in 2021,

prior to racing in Spanish Formula 4 last year, and linked up with the British squad again for the Porsche winter series. De Haan qualified on pole by over half a second for each race before converting them to two victories.

He was joined at Richardson by new DTO British GT signing Josh Rowledge (see p60), who took a best result of fifth on his

Porsche debut. Porsche GB Junior Adam Smalley was third in the second contest – in his maiden event with Team Parker Racing – after a tricky qualifying session.

Zac Meakin, meanwhile, topped the Cayman class in each race, defeating fellow Ginetta Junior graduate and Team Parker driver Joe Warhurst both times.



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# Details firm up for Autosport 3 Hours race

## HISTORICS

More details have been announced about the revived Autosport 3 Hours, which will be held at Snetterton in April for pre-1966 GT cars.

The Historic Sports Car Club revealed in November that it would be holding a three-hour race at the Norfolk circuit after a break of eight years. Autosport will be supporting the event, which will be run in the spirit of the original 1950s and 1960s races.

The 23 April race is set to feature four different classes for GTs, based on engine capacity. Drivers who do not regularly compete with the HSCC are invited to take part in the race, which takes place on Snetterton's 200 layout – the configuration that is closest to the track layout originally used. The entry fee will be £1295 per car, covering the 50-minute qualifying session and three-hour race, while day membership of the HSCC will be included in the price for drivers who are not already members.

Cars can be driven solo or shared by two or three drivers, and entrants are also encouraged to form teams of three cars – each from a different class – to compete for a special trophy.

“We’re delighted to be working with



Autosport on this great event,” said HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. “It’s something we’ve been looking to try to run for a while – the HSCC doesn’t have an endurance race so we were very keen to get the Autosport 3 Hours back.

“What we’re trying to do is recreate a moment from history, looking back to the 1950s and 1960s and recreate that kind of atmosphere. People from any club and who don’t normally race in endurance races are more than welcome and should contact us. It represents incredible value

for money for drivers when you compare and contrast it with other endurance races.”

The contest was first held in 1957, when it was won by Ken Rudd in an AC Ace, and other former winners include two-time Formula 1 champion Jim Clark (in 1959 and 1963) and inaugural British Saloon Car champion Jack Sears (1964).

“It’s a bucket list event,” added Dee-Crowne. “It’s a fantastic opportunity to get your name on a trophy that had some great period winners.”

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

# Jaguar celebrated at Taupo Historic GP

## HISTORICS

The history of the Jaguar and Daimler brands was celebrated at the Taupo Historic Grand Prix in New Zealand last weekend, an event that was postponed from 2022.

The racing was based on handicap, mainly due to the variety and age of the machines competing, therefore giving everyone a fair chance of success. But it was a C-type that won both of the races in the hands of Robert Moston, although he triumphed in race two by

less than a second.

One of the Jaguars of particular significance in New Zealand was a 1962 Mk2 3.8. These cars were successful racers in the 1960s, winning events such as the 1962 Australian Touring Car Championship and the 1963 Brands Hatch 6 Hours with New Zealander Denny Hulme. This particular model had its first race at Pukekohe with Dave Silcock at the wheel.

Also racing was a TWR replica XJS, which had been rebuilt in the image of the famous machine after a



major crash in 2016.

During the lunch break, over 100 Jaguars took to the track for a parade to showcase the many different models.

Aside from the Big Cats, the event also included other categories such as the Formula 5000 Tasman Cup Revival, in which Grant

Martin (Talon), Bruce Kett and Brett Willis (both Lola T332s) shared the spoils.

There were also three historic junior single-seater contests, all won by Grant Clearwater's Brabham BT16, while Historic Muscle Car races centred on American and Australian bangers.

**STEVE RITCHIE**



# FROM FROZEN OUT TO CHAMPIONS

*Chris Smiley and Restart Racing chief Bert Taylor found too many obstacles to remain in the BTCC.*

*Now they're reigning champions of TCR UK, a series that's massively on the up*

MARCUS SIMMONS

**B**ert Taylor is laughing and, all things considered, it's lovely that he's able to do that. At the end of 2020, he exited the British Touring Car Championship when he quit the BTC Racing squad he had founded, but sold to fellow ex-short-oval man Steve Dudman. It's fair to say that the two did not split on good terms. In early 2021, Taylor became ill with COVID-19 and then suffered a debilitating stroke. For 2022, he was knocked back in his attempts to rejoin the BTCC with his long-time protege and friend Chris Smiley driving. Then, within a couple of weeks, came a last-minute decision, a dash to Italy and a race win. A few months on from that, Taylor's new entity — appropriately named Restart Racing — was celebrating TCR UK title success with Smiley.

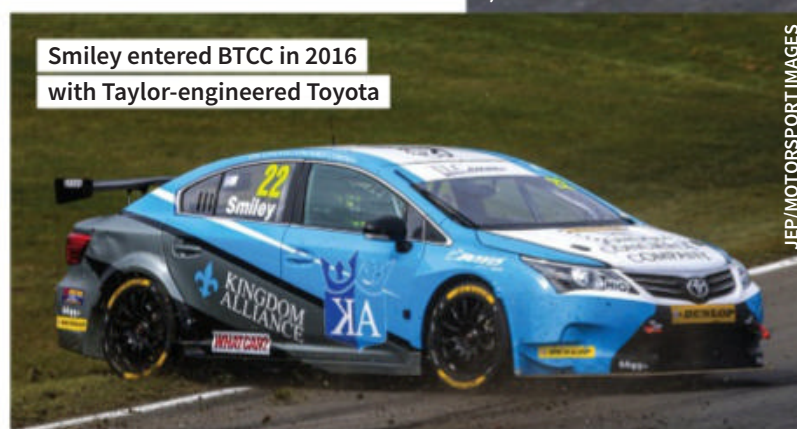
As happens so often in motorsport, this was a domino effect of chance happenings, culminating in a call from an ex-journalist who now runs a PR company, for whom one client is JAS Motorsport, which looks after Honda's European customer racing... Taylor takes up the story: "Jamie O'Leary [the ex-Autosport staffer who used to cover the BTCC in these pages] rang me up and said, 'What are you doing?' And I said, 'Well, Chris has lost his drive'. He said, 'Oh right, have you ever thought about TCR?' And I said, 'Yeah, I've looked at it loads of times'.

"It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and literally about 15 minutes later the phone went and it was Mads [Fischer, the Dane who is JAS's TCR project leader], and he said, 'Do you want to do TCR UK for us in our Honda? You've been in the family [running Hondas in the BTCC], would you do it?' So I said, 'Well not really, because I'm at home relaxing, getting over a stroke'. And he said, 'Listen, I'll make it easy for you. You get a car and I'll sort it all out.' I said, 'OK, there's only one person I'll do it with and that'll be Chris. I'll ring him up and ask him.' I didn't want to tell him it was TCR because I didn't want him to say he didn't want to do it.

"I rung him up and said, 'Do you want to drive for us again?', and he said yeah. I said, 'But you don't know what it is'. He said, 'I don't care. I'll do it.' So I rung Mads and I said, 'OK, we're on'. He said, 'Have you told him?', and I said, 'No not yet, but I will when you agree the deal and we sort out the paperwork'. I couldn't drive [because of the stroke], so I rung Chris back and said, 'We're doing TCR with Honda, the downside is your dad's got to go to Italy to get the car!' And that's what he did. It



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Smiley entered BTCC in 2016 with Taylor-engineered Toyota

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

was on the Thursday, and by the Monday morning he was outside my house with the car and the trailer, and then the first race was the following weekend. Absolutely mad!"

The Taylor-and-Smiley partnership goes back to 2016. The Northern Irishman had a Mini Challenge title under his belt and had shone in the DTM-supporting VW Scirocco R-Cup when he entered the BTCC with Team Hard in a Toyota Avensis; Taylor, who had previously run cars in the series, was his engineer. "It was an absolute disaster," shudders Smiley, "and Bert did everything he could to try and improve it for me. Halfway through that season we decided that wasn't for us, and we were going to work hard to get the funding together to have a proper go at it in a car that we were in control of."

This happened via a late-2016 stopgap in the Renault Clio Cup, with the involvement of Taylor, who adds: "The rest is history. We had a chat and he said would I do the BTCC again, and I didn't really know if I wanted to do it under the stress from trying to raise the money." Luckily, Smiley had the budget from property developer





Victory came first time out at Oulton Park in TCR UK opener with Honda Civic...

## “I SAID, ‘IT’S TCR WITH HONDA, THE DOWNSIDE IS YOUR DAD’S GOT TO GO TO ITALY TO GET THE CAR!’”

Norlin, a company owned by a relative. “I think it was the last Clio round at Brands Hatch that he said, ‘We’re doing it with Norlin’, and Monday morning there was £550,000 put in my bank account to start a team up,” recounts Taylor. “Me and Chris built it up from nothing.”

The team ran Smiley and Dave Newsham in Chevrolet Cruze machinery in 2017, before switching to the Honda Civic Type R in 2018. That year, Smiley took his only BTCC win to date in a reversed-grid race at Rockingham, but across that season and the following term, when the FK8 Civic replaced the old FK2 model, he proved capable of showing genuine speed at several events. The problem was, Norlin had been sold and, says Taylor, that was “just such a shame that it happened for Chris because I do believe that if we’d carried on then we would have won again”. >>



...and six months later came title at Snetterton

JEP



During this time, Smiley was being engineered by Taylor's son Ben: "Chris lived at our house for the three years – I'd pick him up from or take him to the airport or the station, wherever he was going, so he was more of a son really. They're both about the same age, they're both doing the same thing, so of course he fitted in our family. It was going really well. Ultimately he won my first race [in BTCC] – that's something you never forget."

Before the 2019 season, BTC announced that Dudman had bought a 50% stake in the team, and he had outright ownership by the time Taylor walked at the end of 2020. That year, and 2021, Smiley had surfaced at Excelr8 Motorsport, which at his time of joining was trying to establish a foothold in the BTCC with its new Hyundai i30 N Fastback machinery. But he was still closely associated with the Taylor family, with Ben moving to the Suffolk squad to engineer him in 2021.

Smiley looked good to stay with Excelr8 for 2022, but it fell through ("I have to be careful what I say on that one..."). After that, "I had the deal done to be in the third Speedworks Toyota last year, but Toyota canned the third car [Speedworks had been loaned an extra TBL entrants' licence for 2022]. It was almost at the start of the season. That left us with no choice but to look for other things." Taylor's BTCC plans had also hit the buffers. "At that point of the year there's no licences, all the deals are done – you can't make a deal out of thin air," continues Smiley. "This [TCR] was looking on the up, and the cars looked good, and Honda offered us a deal to have the car."

Now he was armed with the ex-Nestor Girolami weapon that had been a race winner in the World Touring Car Cup. Any test mileage before the season? "None!" Yet Smiley claimed pole position and

## "I THOUGHT LE MANS WITH TVR WAS THE HIGHLIGHT OF EVERYTHING, BUT THAT TCR RACE WAS FANTASTIC"

a race victory first time out at Oulton Park. "It was good to get the first weekend out of the way considering how tight we were on time and everything, and thankfully the guys from JAS Honda in Italy sent us over a guy [ace tin-top techy David Scott] to give us a hand with the car for the first weekend, which was good. They were a big part of it as well, making sure that we were organised. If we needed any help with anything, we got it."

Restart took its green flag with Taylor Jr on engineering duties, plus Darryl Taplin and Russ Higgs – from Excelr8 and BTC respectively – as mechanics, Colin Hewett (who previously worked with Taylor Sr on the TVR Le Mans project) as team manager and Mark Smart



Smiley also represented Team UK at Motorsport Games. He couldn't test Pirellis so eighth place was solid

SRO



Smiley's solitary BTCC win came at Rockingham with BTC Honda in 2018

looking after everything else.

After that Oulton victory, there was a win drought until the finale at Snetterton, but in part that's due to TCR's joint balance of performance and compensation weight measures that are decreed direct from the category's worldwide organiser WSC. The latter measure is based on the qualifying results from the previous round. As Smiley points out: "You also score points in qualifying, so it's a double-edged sword – you score the points but it means you carry the weight for the following weekend. It's a fine line whether you want to qualify on pole, take the points, or you want to race your way through the day differently."

By the time the final event came around, Smiley had clocked up

two non-finishes owing to contact from other cars, and was locked in a battle with youngster Isaac Smith – who hadn't won a race but had a 100% record of top-seven finishes – for the title. He could have been out of the picture completely, but key to his campaign was an extraordinary day at Castle Combe: the Honda took pole but, as Smiley says: "The clutch plate welded together on the line, and we started from the back. We finished fifth in the first race and we finished fourth in the second race, and we started from the pitlane in the second race because we hadn't time to change the clutch. The weekends where we worked hard and things didn't go our way, and we still scored good points, was what saved us." Smiley's race pace was half a second quicker than anyone else's, and crucially he outscored Smith on that day in Wiltshire.

"It [the second race] was probably one of the best races in all the time I've known him





Smiley lived with Taylor's family during his BTC days. Taylor regards him as like a son

that Chris ever did," enthuses Taylor. "It was a brilliant race – he drove magnificently. I thought when I went to Le Mans with TVR was the highlight of everything, but that TCR race was fantastic. The pressure he was under... he drove that car at 110% the whole day."

And what's it like for a driver coming from the indigenous-to-UK NGTC formula used in the BTCC to the more production-based TCR? "There's very, very little in it," asserts Smiley. "Some circuits less than a second on lap time. It's a slightly different driving style from the BTCC. The cars in the BTCC, you have a more aggressive driving style than what you have in a TCR car. BTCC, you roll up your sleeves and you hang onto it."

"These feel like they're proper racing cars," says Taylor, who reckons the budget for TCR UK is around a third of the BTCC. "They're a manufacturer-built car, and they're so rewarding for the teams and drivers because they're driving a proper TCR touring car.

They are good. When we got the opportunity to go with Honda it was a no-brainer – they didn't have any other cars on the grid. Also, they took as big a chance as I did by doing TCR UK. They went away and had a look at all the history, what we'd done, what we were hoping we were going to do for them, so they have as much a part to play in winning that championship as we have. The racing is insane – it really is brilliant. We love it."

Is that it, then, for the two parties in the BTCC? Restart is upgrading to JAS's new FL5 model of the Civic, and is adding a second car to Smiley's in 2023 for Scott Sumpton. "I wouldn't say never," offers Taylor,



"but the plan is now we've done a deal with Scott and Chris, and we want to do TCR UK, and go round the world, race in Europe, Asia, Australia..."

"We go racing because we enjoy doing it together," says Smiley. "Whatever the plan was on the table, that's what we were going to stick with. A British championship is never easy to win, there's a lot of new cars around, there's going to be a lot of new drivers, so you never know who the next guy is going to be or where it's going to come from. We've now got a year's experience in the championship, we've learned a lot together with Honda, and we're feeling good to get going again this year."

Sounds like they can't wait to, ahem, restart their racing. 🏁



# FINISHING STRAIGHT



## The F1 star who never was



**BOOK REVIEW**  
**FROM MECHANIC**  
**TO FORMULA 1**  
Geoff Lees  
circa £22

He started five world championship Formula 1 grands prix, each of them with a different team. If that sounds like

perfect motorsport pub-quiz fodder, it can't possibly do justice to the stories behind each one. And there should have been far more starts – plus arguably at least a handful of wins – for Geoff Lees, who at times in the 1970s and early 1980s was regarded as Britain's best prospect, ahead of Nigel Mansell or Derek Warwick.

The thing with Lees was you couldn't imagine him playing up to a man-of-the-people role or being all matey bonhomie. Perhaps he wasn't pushy enough. And really, this couldn't be better illustrated than the production of his autobiography: distinctly no-frills, just honest. If this book was a racing car, it would be unloaded in a plain-white livery from a van at the far end of the paddock, dwarfed by the other teams' all-singing-and-dancing transporters. It is privately published, available only from Amazon.

Partly because of this, what you get is Lees unfiltered. This is not a conventionally ghost-written autobiography. Superb motorsport historian Richard Jenkins

interviewed him for a book on the history of Tyrrell that is scheduled for release this July, Lees mentioned his idea for a book on his life story, and Jenkins literally typed it as Lees said it – bar, Jenkins says, just one paragraph. The idea was to get the full – modest – flavour of the man. Jenkins has also downloaded figures such as Mike Thackwell and John Watson for reminiscences in handily placed interludes to the main narrative.

What of those five F1 teams? After a superb seventh place subbing for the unwell Jean-Pierre Jarier at the 1979 German GP, Lees "fell out" with Ken Tyrrell because of what he felt was a betrayal in putting Derek Daly in the car for the next race in Austria. At Shadow, he feigned illness after the first qualifying day at Long Beach because he felt the car was so dangerous; this was the weekend when Clay Regazzoni was paralysed... With Regazzoni's old team Ensign, it's a Tiff Needell interlude detailing that the team as good as finished four drivers' F1 careers in one year.

On Theodore, it's a harrowing there-but-for-the-grace-of-God-go-I tale of his pre-race conversation with the doomed Riccardo Paletti in Canada 1982.

And Lotus... Lees' hero was Jim Clark, so he was ecstatic to get the chance to replace the injured Mansell at the 1982 French GP. His version is that Colin Chapman, who died a few months later, was so impressed with his drive that "he threw his cap in the air to celebrate" and told Lees he wanted him to replace Mansell in 1983...

Of course, the F1 career he deserved never happened for Lees, and he became a pioneer for western drivers in Japan. He was in the right place at the wrong time when he won the 1981 European Formula 2 Championship for Ralt because its engine supplier Honda wasn't going F1 until 1983. But he went east and forged a hugely successful career. This is fascinating, from his early weeks in a mountain chalet in the snow near Fuji, surrounded by chattering monkeys, to the frustrations of working with Honda and Toyota, via his vain attempts to be

On his way to the 1981  
European Formula 2  
title with Ralt and Honda





With McLaren's  
Niki Lauda in Lotus,  
Paul Ricard 1982

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



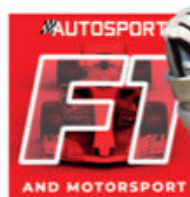
The happiness of the  
Theodore Shadow era...

entered for the 1987 Japanese GP in a third Williams.

What comes across is a gritty story of a man whose blue-collar background as a motorsport-mad garage mechanic, from preparing a Lotus 23B to becoming a triple Formula Ford champion in 1975, could never allow him a shot at such a career in the high-cost current era. There's also an element of 'an innocent abroad' in his tales of his late-1970s Can-Am exploits. You might not agree with everything Lees says – his damnation of one driver for a particular incident is perhaps unnecessary – but it leaves you wanting more.

This book has clearly been a cathartic experience for a man who wanted to get his story out there and has achieved happiness after a period of personal tragedy. It certainly doesn't belong on a coffee table, but that doesn't matter – you don't want to put it down anyway.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**



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



### Formula 1's one-hit wonders

This week's podcast looks at the drivers who took a single Formula 1 world championship victory. Some of those drivers should have won many more races, while others got on the list through good fortune or an outstanding performance. Host Martyn Lee is joined by Kevin Turner, Damien Smith and Haydn Cobb to pick F1's top 10 one-hit wonders.

## WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

**Daytona 24 Hours**  
IMSA SportsCar  
Round 1/11  
Daytona, USA  
28-29 January

**Formula E**  
Round 2/11  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
27-28 January  
**TV Live** Channel 4 Sport  
YouTube, Fri 1630, Sat 1630,  
Eurosport 1, Fri 1630,  
Sat 1700

### Race of Champions

Pitea, Sweden  
28-29 January  
**TV Live** Sky Sports F1,  
Sat 1100, Sun 1100  
[raceofchampions.tv](https://www.raceofchampions.tv)

### Toyota Formula Regional Oceania

Round 3/5  
Manfeild,  
New Zealand  
27-29 January  
**TV Live** on  
Motorsport.tv, Fri 2200,  
Sat 0000, Sat 2100,  
Sat 2300, Sun 0100

### Formula Regional Middle East

Round 2/5  
Kuwait Motor Town, Kuwait  
27-28 January  
**TV Live** on  
Motorsport.tv, Fri 1240,  
Sat 0750, Sat 1220

### Formula Regional Middle East

Round 3/5  
Kuwait Motor Town, Kuwait  
31 January-1 February  
*Please check Motorsport.tv  
for live timings closer  
to the event.*



GALSTAD









#### FROM THE ARCHIVE

Juan Manuel Fangio takes some liquid refreshment while his Alfa Romeo 158 is refuelled during the 1950 British Grand Prix at Silverstone, the Argentinian's head and upper body shrouded by a protective tarp-cum-hood to keep hazardous spillages at bay. He qualified third of the four Alfas that filled the front row of the grid (behind Giuseppe Farina and Luigi Fagioli and ahead of Reg Parnell), and the domination by the Italian squad that concluded in a 1-2-3 headed by Farina could have gone one better had the #1 car not clipped one of the straw bales that lined the circuit, likely triggering the engine ailment that forced Fangio's retirement eight laps shy of the finish.



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MARTIN DONNELLY

MY FAVOURITE... TRACK

# Brands Hatch GP



**M**artin Donnelly regards the Brands Hatch Grand Prix loop as the circuit that has “been the kindest to me”, both in single-seaters on his way up the ladder and aboard Lotus sportscars following the Jerez 1990 crash that curtailed his promising Formula 1 career.

He won at the Kent track on his Formula 3000 debut in 1988 and repeated the feat in 1989, his third victory at the venue in as many years after triumphing over Damon Hill in a 1987 British F3 race. The Northern Irishman says that the circuit has plenty of character that continues to captivate him whenever he ventures onto its ribbon of asphalt.

“You can’t do it every week and month [due to noise restrictions], so to get onto it is pretty special,” Donnelly says backstage at the Autosport International show. “If you get a good dry day there, it’s perfect. If you get a wet, nasty day, it’s ‘I’ll just sit here and drink coffee’, because once your back end steps out and you’re on the grass out there, it’s a big accident.”

Sure enough, it’s a circuit that requires

a healthy respect. Donnelly says he would always “work your way into it”. “I wouldn’t go out there within 10 laps and go ‘bang’,” he states.

But it’s not all about bravery. Donnelly, who reckons fast tracks were “definitely not” the ones that most suited his skillset, notes that there are “little knacks that you’ve got to take into account”, which can give thinking drivers an edge. Paddock Hill Bend is almost certainly the most famous corner at Brands, but he reckons “the back part of the circuit is more of a challenge” and cites Surtees, Hawthorn and Stirling’s, where the camber gives drivers more grip only to cause moments when the road levels out again.

“You have to psychologically prepare yourself to go in there faster because all of a sudden your car has got more grip,” he says, describing Hawthorn’s banking as “like a mini-Monza”. “But as you exit, it very quickly drops off. The back end of the car steps out because you lose that grip all of a sudden. So you’re always prepared to put lots of lock on!”

**JAMES NEWBOLD**



IN NEXT WEEK’S ISSUE

# Hamilton’s decade at Mercedes

WE LOOK AT HIS BIGGEST CAREER MOVE AND RANK HIS SEASONS

STALEY

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