

F1 What Vowles has to do to fix Williams

 **AUTOSPORT**

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F1 2023

McLaren and Ferrari launch their new challengers

MCL60 set for early upgrades to boost Norris and Piastri

'We have identified the shortcomings of last year's car and worked hard to tackle them'

ZAK BROWN

**F1
TESTING
7 DAYS
TO GO**



PLUS

Aston Martin's **AMR23**

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New cars break cover as F1 and WRC battles hot up

McLaren, Ferrari and Williams are three of the biggest Formula 1 names, and all had milestone moments in their 2023 campaigns as this week began. McLaren and Ferrari both launched their new machines, while the Williams FW45 hit the track for the first time.

We take a look at all of them this week, with technical editor Jake Boxall-Legge investigating the latest trends as the second season of this ground-effects era approaches (see page 12). Mercedes and Alpine, which were set to launch after Autosport closed for press, will be analysed in next week's issue, just in time for pre-season testing.

Many changes are needed for Williams to get back to the front of F1, a position it enjoyed for most of the 1980s and 1990s. Much has been made of the move of ex-Mercedes man James Vowles to head the team, so Matt Kew takes a look at the key challenges facing Vowles as he prepares to join the squad that propped up the grid last year (p26).

The 'change' that the World Rally Championship needed was for a real threat to Kalle Rovanpera's crown to emerge. Following a fine victory on Rally Sweden last weekend, Ott Tanak appears to be the contender many hoped he would be when he signed for M-Sport. Tom Howard braved the snow to watch Tanak take the championship lead, just ahead of Toyota rival Rovanpera (p38).

Formula E is always difficult to predict and, in just the third event with the Gen3 cars, the formbook took a surprising turn in India. The hard-working Boxall-Legge covered that too! (p44).



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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NEXT WEEK
23 FEBRUARY

F1 2023 takes shape
More launches – and Alonso
at Aston – plus action
from the Daytona 500



Cover image
McLaren

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First appearances
for new Haas (left)
and Williams



New F1 cars hit the track as launch season kicks into gear

FORMULA 1

Formula 1's nominal launch week is in full swing, and earlier livery unveilings from Haas and Williams have now been accompanied by their actual cars. Both teams have undertaken shakedowns at Silverstone, while AlphaTauri was set to debut its AT04 at Misano on Tuesday.

Haas took its VF-23 for a filming day on Saturday, enrobed in its predominantly carbon black livery with white and red accents in deference to new title sponsor MoneyGram. While several key design traits of the American squad's 2023 launch-spec F1 car look similar to last year's model, particularly at the front end with its wide nose and inboard-loaded front wing, there are visible differences to the aerodynamics further down the car. Chiefly, this can be seen around a slimmed down engine cover, which has opened up space for a curiously

polygonal shark fin to sprout out of the back, affixing to a more triangular roll hoop design to limit the overall dimensions.

As anticipated, the team continues to show its Ferrari influences, continuing with the large sidepods that it and the Ferrari F1-75 shared in 2022. Haas further leans into the Ferrari stylings with its own version of the channel atop the sidepods, which works with the cooling slots within to control the placing of air moving towards the rear of the car. Technical director Simone Resta — an ex-Ferrari man himself — says that while the VF-23 is an evolution of last year's car, many of the internals have been subject to a redesign.

"We try to save a few of the components on last season's car but try to improve the aerodynamic performance of the car, improve the weight of the component and improve the quality of the component," he said. "There has been a massive

rework of the car."

Williams unveiled its 'proper' FW45 ahead of its own shakedown on Monday, featuring a few key visual differences beyond its radically different sidepods. This features further bodywork lines not dissimilar to the title-winning Red Bull RB18, featuring a tunnel-shaped 'shelf' above the sidepods to create a clear path for airflow to fall into. The car also looks different from the front, with Williams opting for a marginally wider, flatter nose for 2023.

As is the case for everyone, the floor also has changes to satisfy the 15mm trim to all edges set in the 2023 regulations. Last year's FW44 became more bare throughout the season as paint was stripped away to save weight, but initial runs with the FW45 have indicated that the team has been able to reduce the damage to the scales without resorting to naked carbon.

Alex Albon took the car for its



➔ P26 THE WILLIAMS CHALLENGE

AlphaTauri AT04 was set to be shaken down at Misano



REDBULL

preliminary shakedown runs, before rookie Logan Sargeant drove it after lunch to ensure both drivers had a taste of the new machinery, which the team hopes will elevate it off the bottom of the constructors' championship standings.

Across the Atlantic, AlphaTauri unveiled

its 2023 livery in an event in New York City in a bid to tap into F1's growing popularity in the US. Thanks to a new sponsorship deal with Polish oil company PKN Orlen, the new paintwork features flashes of red alongside the now-established matte blue and white scheme. Although the livery at the unveiling

was painted on last year's car, the launch was accompanied by renders of an AT04 mock-up, featuring a notably thinner nose and revisions to the bodywork. The team was due to run its car for the first time at Misano in its own shakedown on Tuesday.

"We learned a lot from the AT03 during its development," explained technical director Jody Egginton, "and a lot of that information went into the overall layout of the AT04 in order to address some of the shortcomings identified on last year's car."

"Simply put, we lacked some downforce compared to our main competitors and identified opportunities to reduce mass. Almost all areas of the car represent a strong evolution from the AT03, and great attention was paid to packaging so that we would have the best basis for aerodynamic development."

"We keep some components with the same specifications as last year, while others have been modified, but the total range of components purchased from Red Bull remains virtually the same. This is a strategic choice we make from time to time, but overall it represents continuity with what we did last year."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

➔ P12 F1 LAUNCHES

Red Bull-Ford ruled as not an all-new engine

FORMULA 1

The new Red Bull-Ford Formula 1 partnership will not enjoy the full concessions given to new engine suppliers by the FIA for 2026, and will instead receive only 90% of the financial breaks.

Special arrangements for new suppliers were agreed upon as part of the package to encourage new manufacturers such as Audi to join F1 in 2026. This allows for extra spending power and dyno time than that allowed for the existing parties, giving them a chance to catch up.

While Audi's status as a newcomer is clear, that of Red Bull Powertrains has been called into question by rivals, notably Ferrari, given the new company's links with Honda. Red Bull team principal Christian Horner

has always insisted that Red Bull Powertrains is a new and separate entity with minimal links to Honda or access to the Japanese company's IP.

Red Bull had to ensure that was the case when it was pursuing a deal for Porsche to badge the engine, an arrangement that has subsequently been taken up by Ford for the next generation of power-unit rules starting in 2026.

The new regulations contain a provision for suppliers to be considered partially new by splitting the manufacturer into three categories: 40% for infrastructure, 50% for ICE status, 10% for ERS status.

With regard to the third item, the regulations note that the FIA will consider "the prior experience of the PU manufacturer in Formula 1



Ford-badged DFV was hardly new either when it took its 100th win in Scheckter's Wolf, Monaco 1977

motorsport IMAGES

ERS systems, and potential possession of significant recent intellectual property."

It is understood that the new partnership will not be guaranteed full new status because Red Bull Powertrains assembles battery packs for the existing Honda engine, therefore possessing prior knowledge of the technology. By losing the ERS 10%, this is why the project will only

be able to take advantage of 90% of the extra benefits on cost cap and capital expenditure limits that full newcomer Audi will enjoy.

It means Red Bull-Ford missing out on an extra \$1million spending allowance in 2023 and 2024, and \$500,000 in 2025, as well as \$1.5m in capital expenditure benefits over those seasons.

ADAM COOPER



U-turn made on weight loss

MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

That's 15,960kg of hardware thundering into Monza's Rettifilo

FORMULA 1

The plan to reduce the minimum weight of Formula 1 cars by 2kg for 2023 has been dropped, despite opposition from some teams.

The 2023 F1 technical regulations were published some time ago, with the reduction from 798kg to 796kg highlighted

as part of a general push to have lighter cars. In the interim, the 2022 car weight was increased from 795kg to 798kg early last year, largely in response to the porpoising seen in testing, accounting for items such as floor stiffening and stays.

At a meeting of the FIA's technical advisory committee, it was agreed to stick with the 2022 figure of 798kg for this

season. Due to an administrative oversight, the change was omitted from a technical regulation update that was formally passed by the F1 Commission, and which would have set it in stone. Efforts to pass an eight-team majority fell flat when some teams changed their minds, declining a switch back to the higher figure, presumably to gain an advantage over those who may struggle to get towards the lower limit.

The FIA was ultimately able to push through the 2kg increase without a vote because the regulations allow for a change of minimum weight limit if a set of tyres is heavier than the previous season due to a modified construction.

As seen last year, a number of F1 teams have retained bare carbon elements of their car designs this season in a bid to save weight, with the majority struggling to get close to the limit in 2022.

But it will be harder than last year for teams to get close to that limit because, in addition to the increase in the weight of the tyres, each car has to carry new electronic boxes mandated by the FIA and which are understood to add around a further 0.4kg from 2022. While this was significant for teams, it was not large enough to create a further automatic increase in overall weight.

ADAM COOPER

Sulayem eases off from F1

FORMULA 1

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem has stepped back from the day-to-day running of Formula 1 ahead of the new season.

Ben Sulayem was elected as president of motorsport's governing body in December 2021 and quickly outlined a plan to restructure the FIA's F1 operations. This included changes to race control and appointing a CEO of the FIA for the first time. As part of this process, Ben Sulayem informed teams in a letter last week that he would be stepping back from hands-on involvement in F1, leaving the day-to-day handling of operations with FIA Single Seater director Nikolas Tombazis.

Ben Sulayem will remain involved in high-level decision-making and focusing on strategic matters, but Tombazis will be the primary point of contact for teams.

The move, which the FIA says was planned for some time, follows a series of controversies involving the president. This included F1's claim that Ben Sulayem had "interfered" in commercial matters by suggesting a mooted \$20billion valuation was "inflated", only fanning growing tensions between the commercial rights holder, Liberty Media, and the governing body.



Teams will now report direct to Tombazis

Ben Sulayem also came under fire when comments published on his website back in 2001 surfaced, in which he said that he did not like "women who think they are smarter than men, for they are not in truth".

Regarding his shift away from day-to-day F1 matters, an FIA spokesperson said: "The president's manifesto clearly set out this plan before he was elected. It pledged 'the appointment of an FIA CEO to provide an integrated and aligned operation,' as well as to 'introduce a revised governance

framework' under 'a leadership team focused on transparency, democracy, and growth'.

"These goals, as well as the announcement of the new structure of the Single Seater Department, have been planned since the beginning of this presidency.

"The FIA president has a wide remit that covers the breadth of global motorsport and mobility, and now that the structural reorganisation in Formula 1 is complete this is a natural next step."

LUKE SMITH



Last places on F3 grid filling up

FORMULA 3

The FIA Formula 3 Championship grid for 2023 is now just one short of a full house of 30 drivers after five were confirmed in the past few days, but the intrigue could surround who fills that final seat in the field.

Campos Racing set the ball rolling last week by naming Spaniard Pepe Marti in its final berth. The 17-year-old stays on for a second season after getting on the points chart in 2022, and has become part of Fernando Alonso's A14 management stable.

New team PHM Racing, running in conjunction with Charouz, then weighed in with all three of its drivers. German Sophia

Florsch (left) returns to F3, in which she last raced in 2020, after two years in LMP2; Brazilian Roberto Faria makes the step up after finishing fifth in GB3 last season; Pole Piotr Wisnicki joins the grid after competing last year in Formula Regional European.

Israeli Ido Cohen stays on for a third year and returns to his 2021 team, Rodin Carlin.

Reigning GB3 champ and Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Luke Browning is taking part in this week's three-day test in Bahrain with Hitech in the only vacant seat. While this is ostensibly a prize test for his GB3 title, speculation insists that the Briton is among those in the frame for the squad, which ran him in GB3.

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TOYOTA

WEC

Toyota has focused on improving driveability and reliability on the 2023 version of its Le Mans Hypercar. The aim is to have a more raceable car when the World Endurance Championship kicks off at Sebring next month.

“The main target is to have a consistent car, easy to service and that is reliable,” explained Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon ahead of the virtual unveiling of the revised GR010 HYBRID on Wednesday. “Aero efficiency is capped, so what we have tried to achieve is aero consistency, trying to help driveability.”

In addition to new diveplanes at the front and revised rear-wing endplates, there are

bodywork changes aimed at improving brake cooling. “Within a balanced category, one of the items related to racecraft is serviceability of the car, and in the past two seasons we have been struggling to adjust the brake cooling,” said Vasselon. “Here we went to a different cooling duct arrangement, so we can add or remove blanking very easily.”

Improvements to reliability have been “made in all areas”, according to Vasselon, and “include a lot of small evolutions”. The problem with the ECU that required the GR010 to undergo full resets while stationary “has hopefully been fully addressed now”.

The GR010 is now close to the 1040kg minimum weight limit for a four-wheel-drive LMH, according to Vasselon. The savings have been made, he explained,

“mainly towards the rear in the powertrain – there were some cost-effective weight saving to be done”.

Three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Kazuki Nakajima, who retired from the cockpit at the end of 2021 to take up a role as vice-chairman of TGRE, has been named as reserve driver for 2023. Vasselon described this as a “pragmatic and efficient” approach.

He explained that, with the limited test mileage planned by the team this year, there was not time to give a suitable amount of cockpit time to a new driver. Vasselon revealed that Nakajima “came back at exactly the same level at which he left” during his reacquaintance with the GR010 at the two tests undertaken by Toyota so far this year.

GARY WATKINS

Alpine junior Pulling pushing on at Rodin Carlin

F1 ACADEMY

W Series ace Abbi Pulling has become a protegee of the Alpine Formula 1 team and is to contest the all-female F1 Academy Formula 4 series in 2023.

The 19-year-old Briton (right), who was sixth in the 2020 British F4 standings, has joined Rodin Carlin for her first year of racing as an Alpine Academy member. She is one of six drivers

already confirmed for the inaugural season of F1 Academy, which has a maximum grid of 15.

“Abbi is a driver we’ve wanted to work with for some time now,” said team chief Stephanie Carlin. “We’re really excited that we are able to work on this programme together and have no doubt that Abbi will be a huge asset to the team.”

Pulling lines up at Rodin Carlin alongside Jessica

Edgar – the cousin of former Carlin FIA F3 driver Jonny Edgar steps up after placing seventh in GB4 last season.

Apart from Pulling, two more ex-W Series drivers on the grid are Bianca Bustamante at Prema Racing and Nerea Marti at Campos Racing. ART Grand Prix has secured former British F4 racer Carrie Schreiner, who has been active in GT in recent years, and single-seater regular Lena Buhler.



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



ACE idea for electric juniors

ACE CHAMPIONSHIP

ACE Championship, a two-step junior electric category touted as a feeder series to Formula E, is set to begin in 2024 with ex-Mahindra boss Dilbagh Gill at the helm.

The series, unveiled at last weekend's Hyderabad E-Prix, has pledged to provide an affordable championship for junior drivers, while also providing opportunities for new talent to get into motorsport. It will comprise two levels – a top-tier 'Championship' and a lower-level 'Challenger Series' – although the same cars will be used in both, with power levels modified to vary between the two.

The specification of the cars is currently not known, although the images provided appear to show a Gen2 Formula E car with a revised bodywork package, with a level of performance similar to the obsolete FE machinery promised.

It is unknown whether the series will join the FE bill or run to its own calendar; the accompanying release only offered the nebulous suggestion of "a regional format and on regional circuits across continents".

"The ACE Championship is about innovation in motorsport and about opportunity," said Gill. "We are looking at the ACE Championship to provide

representation to people who are interested in driving, and engineers, around the world who have not had the opportunity to date and giving them a chance to level up."

FE and Extreme E founder Alejandro Agag will join the advisory board, while former Mahindra FE driver Nick Heidfeld will reunite with Gill (left, with Heidfeld) to serve as development driver and advisor.

"When Dilbagh talked to me about this I was interested straight away – an electric junior racing championship has not been done before," said Heidfeld. "We want it to be fair and affordable, and attract youngsters into the series from all regions of the world to make the step into motorsport."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



SBLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

ANTONELLI TOP AS BARNARD CLOSES GAP

FORMULA REGIONAL

Mercedes F1 protege Andrea Kimi Antonelli leads the Formula Regional Middle East standings going into this weekend's Abu Dhabi finale after picking up another win last weekend in Dubai, but Brit Taylor Barnard has closed the gap to the Italian after a string of consistently strong finishes.

Antonelli, driving for the Prema-run Mumbai Falcons squad, wrested the lead of the opening race from PHM Racing man Barnard, who had taken the advantage amid some ferocious early battling. Their respective team-mates, Rafael Camara and Josh Dufek, were second and fourth after a late lunge on Barnard by the Brazilian.

Pepe Marti led Lorenzo Fluxa throughout the reversed-grid race. When Nikita Bedrin spun Aiden Neate out on the last lap, Barnard was elevated to third and Antonelli to fourth, only for the series leader to cop two penalties and drop to 10th.

Russian youngster Bedrin grabbed pole for the final race and his PHM car led for some of the distance – although the only winner in this race was the safety car... A frantic late battle between Dufek, Antonelli and Barnard led to contact between the first two, Barnard slipping through to second and Dufek grabbing the final podium spot from Antonelli (below).



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Cassidy has Ganassi shot, while (inset) Grosjean, pictured at Thermal Club, was fastest on day one

Ganassi test puts Cassidy in frame

INDYCAR

Formula E race winner Nick Cassidy has moved into the frame for a switch to IndyCar in 2024. The New Zealander was due to test for top team Chip Ganassi Racing at Sebring on Tuesday.

After finishing a strong second in the inaugural Hyderabad E-Prix last Saturday, Cassidy flew straight to Florida to take part in the group test for Ganassi. His contract with Envision is up for renewal at the end of the 2023 Formula E season, giving him the option to pursue other opportunities.

When asked if he would like to continue in FE next year, the second season of the Gen3 era, Cassidy replied: "My options are open, so we'll see."

Cassidy competed in both DTM and the World Endurance Championship alongside FE last year, but is yet to add a second programme to his 2023 schedule. The DTM route was closed when Red Bull decided to withdraw its team from the series, while AF Corse has chosen Davide Rigon to take his place in the WEC.

The 28-year-old could potentially make his debut in Australian Supercars, however, after being linked to a plum enduro drive with Shane van Gisbergen at Triple Race Engineering earlier this year.

Ganassi could have a vacancy to fill for 2024 in the #10 car currently driven by 2021 champion Alex Palou. The Spaniard and the team were involved in an ugly contract saga last year after he tried to jump ship to



BLACK/PEC

Arrow McLaren and, while Palou said earlier this month that his relationship with the squad is now back to "100%", a move to McLaren in 2024 still appears likely.

Cassidy's most relevant experience to IndyCar came in Japan's Super Formula series, where he was champion in 2019.

Romain Grosjean led Kyle Kirkwood in an Andretti Autosport 1-2 on the first day of the Sebring test on Monday, with Callum Iloft of Juncos Hollinger Racing in third.

RACHIT THUKRAL

One finds oneself with a new name for 2023



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

BTCC

Reigning British Touring Car independents champion team BTC Racing has changed its name to One Motorsport.

The new identity for the Brackley squad eliminates the last vestiges of BTC founder Bert Taylor, who sold up to current owner Steve Dudman in 2019 but continued working with the team until the end of the

2020 season. It also removes confusion between BTC and the series' BTCC acronym.

The change comes hand in hand with the team's acquisition of GT squad Motus One. That operation's boss Will Powell, who competed as a driver in the BTCC last year in a Team Hard Cupra, has taken up the role of commercial and marketing director.

One, whose principal Danny Buxton was formerly

head of customer racing at McLaren before his arrival at BTC in early 2022, plans to compete in British GT, British Endurance and the McLaren Trophy, with both GT3 and GT4 machinery.

Although the Honda-equipped team is staying tight-lipped on drivers for now, it has long been widely expected that its BTCC line-up will once again be spearheaded by Josh Cook.

MARCUS SIMMONS

IN THE HEADLINES

LEGGE BACK IN INDY 500

American-based Brit Katherine Legge has secured her first Indianapolis 500 attempt for 10 years. Legge, 42, will drive a fourth Honda-powered car entered by Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing alongside team regulars Graham Rahal, Christian Lundgaard and Jack Harvey. Legge is a leading contender of late in the IMSA GTD ranks with Honda sub-marque Acura's NSX. She also has form with RLLR as a race winner in the Jaguar I-Pace eTrophy electric series.

RUTRONIK FOR GTWCE

The German Rutronik squad is swapping from ADAC GT Masters to the GT World Challenge Europe along with its move from Audi to Porsche for 2023. The winner of the Masters title in 2019 will field a single 992-shape Porsche 911 GT3-R in the Endurance Cup rounds of the GTWCE for an undisclosed driver line-up.

COSTA GETS WEC LMP2 SEAT

Former Lamborghini factory driver Albert Costa will move into the prototype ranks for the first time this year with Inter Europol Competition in the World Endurance Championship. The Spaniard will share the Polish team's LMP2 ORECA-Gibson 07 with Fabio Scherer and Kuba Smiechowski.

MINI STAR IN BTCC HYUNDAI

Mini Challenge ace Ronan Pearson has taken the final seat with British Touring Car Championship squad Excelr8 Motorsport. The 21-year-old Scot, who was Excelr8's top-placed driver in Minis in fourth place in 2022, will therefore line up alongside reigning champion Tom Ingram, Tom Chilton and Nick Halstead in the quartet of Hyundai i30 Ns. Pearson (below) was set to remain in Minis this year before aiming for the BTCC in 2024, "but then we started to look at whether it might be feasible to bring the plans forward," he said. "Having approached the team to say I wanted to be in the fourth Hyundai seat, we've been able to make it happen, and I couldn't be happier."



Ducati dominates Sepang test

MOTOGP

Ducati enjoyed a clean sweep across three days of testing last week at Sepang as the 2023 MotoGP pre-season got under way.

Day one in Malaysia was topped by VR46 Ducati's Marco Bezzecchi, while his team-mate, Valentino Rossi's brother Luca Marini, set the best time of the test on the final day. Both will be riding the 2022-spec Desmosedici on which Francesco Bagnaia won the title last year.

Only one day was topped by a 2023-spec bike, with Pramac Ducati rider Jorge Martin fastest on day two, although Bagnaia was second overall at the end of the test. The reigning champion was pleased with the progress Ducati has made with its GP23, believing it to be already at the level of his 2022 bike. Bagnaia said that Ducati has also learned from its troubled pre-season last year and is not expecting a repeat of that in 2023.

Maverick Vinales was the top Aprilia rider. While both he and Aleix Espargaro were happy with the evolution of the RS-GP, Espargaro is not convinced that the current package is a title contender yet.

The mood at the Honda camp was mixed. New signing Joan Mir is happy with HRC's way of working compared to his old team Suzuki, and Marc Marquez has decided on the base of the RC213V after testing four bikes across the test. But both admitted that Honda is "still far" from being competitive, with Marquez convinced that he is currently without a bike to challenge for the championship.

Yamaha made the top-speed gains it needed with its 2023 bike, with the M1

much closer to the all-powerful Ducati. Fabio Quartararo, the 2021 world champion, felt that he was taking part in the first "real" test of his career given the volume of updates Yamaha took to Sepang, but was unhappy with the "nightmare" behaviour of the bike in qualifying trim.

KTM had a low-key test, with Pol Espargaro leading for the marque on his GasGas-branded Tech3 bike. Acceleration remains the key issue.

LEWIS DUNCAN

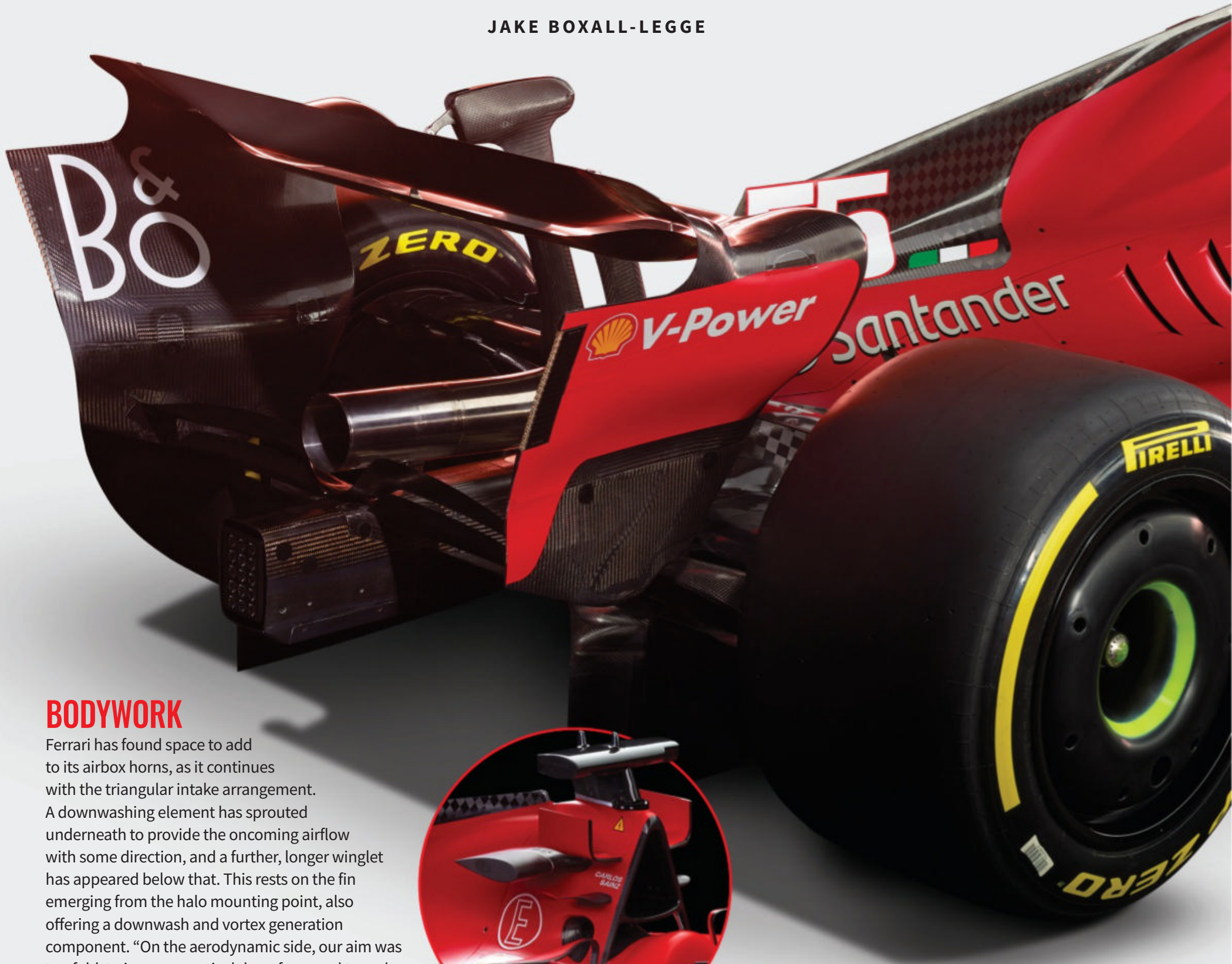
TOP 10 TIMES		
POS	RIDER (BIKE)	TIME
1	Luca Marini (VR46 Ducati)	1m57.889s
2	Francesco Bagnaia (Ducati)	1m57.969s
3	Maverick Vinales (Aprilia)	1m58.036s
4	Enea Bastianini (Ducati)	1m58.149s
5	Jorge Martin (Pramac Ducati)	1m58.204s
6	Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia)	1m58.307s
7	Fabio Di Giannantonio (Gresini Ducati)	1m58.344s
8	Marco Bezzecchi (VR46 Ducati)	1m58.363s
9	Alex Marquez (Gresini Ducati)	1m58.385s
10	Marc Marquez (Honda)	1m58.666s



FERRARI SF-23

The legendary Ferrari squad continues to go its own way as it tries to end a title drought stretching back to 2008

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



BODYWORK

Ferrari has found space to add to its airbox horns, as it continues with the triangular intake arrangement. A downwashing element has sprouted underneath to provide the oncoming airflow with some direction, and a further, longer winglet has appeared below that. This rests on the fin emerging from the halo mounting point, also offering a downwash and vortex generation component. "On the aerodynamic side, our aim was twofold: to increase vertical downforce and to make up for what was lost due to the new era regulations, and then to achieve the balance characteristics we had set ourselves," explained Enrico Cardile.



BUDGET CAP CARRYOVER

Development in 2023 for all teams has been limited by the budget cap, and Ferrari saved costs by carrying over any components with minimal effect on the overall performance. This forced the team to prioritise the lowest-hanging fruit and pour its resources into the areas it believed would offer the most improvement. "In numerical terms, it means the number of parts carried over in this year's car is double the figure of that of a car built to the previous regulations without the presence of a budget cap," said Enrico Cardile.

SIDEPODS

As an evolution of the aerodynamic philosophy set down by the 2022 car, the SF-23 breaks with the growing convention of opting for downwashing sidepods. The indent in the upper face remains, now featuring larger cooling gills and an outlet below the halo mounting. The cascade of stylised slots remains on the engine cover, appearing to bring the expelled air towards the centreline of the car. Greater sculpting has been applied to the sidepods as Ferrari persists with the inwashing arrangement to the rear of the car, particularly around the area where they meet the floor.

SUSPENSION

The suspension has been revised over last season, which has resulted in the front trackrod being moved downwards to clear the decks further up. “The suspension has also been completely redesigned,” said Ferrari’s head of chassis Enrico Cardile at the SF-23 launch. “On the one hand, to help the aerodynamicists get the results they were looking for, and on the other to increase the range of adjustments possible on the car at the track.” Reworking the aerodynamic impact was part of a wider effort to help restore downforce lost to the revised floor regulations and simultaneously improve on the weak points of 2022’s F1-75.

FRONT END

The new nose is shorter and less angular, falling in line with Red Bull’s design from last season. This is now divorced from the leading element of the front wing to open up a clear slot gap underneath to boost the underbody airflow. On the front wing, the most intriguing addition lies in the quintet of fins between the upper two elements. Mercedes tried this arrangement last season at Austin, but the FIA did not consider it legal. The off-season removal of the phrase “primarily mechanical, structural or measurement reasons” in the rules seems to ensure that these fins can now be included.



McLAREN MCL60

Sixty years after it was founded, McLaren is still trying to recover its former glory, but it might just need to wait a little while longer...

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



ENGINE COVER/BODYWORK

In forming the new sidepod design and dealing with the knock-on effects to cooling, the designers have decided to open up the rear of the engine cover's upper part, creating a 'shelf' around the tailpipe. In between, this leaves space for a channel, and that inward blend is visible around the suspension components at the back. This should open up the top of the diffuser and also ensure that the beam wing has plenty of clean air to play with. Despite the naked carbon aesthetic still prevalent on McLaren's car, the team has been able to strip weight for improved handling, which allows for a touch more orange wrap.



McLaren's 60-year anniversary is marked on the nose, but can it roll back the years?

FRONT END

The front wing looks similar to last season, complete with squared-off nose, but appears more modular in design as the tip shows a variety of carbon panels. Whether this is to obscure something else or done for customisability remains to be seen, but it's a curious detail nonetheless. Given the need for cost-cap savings in F1's new generation, teams have experimented with modularity to allow for bodywork changes, so they don't have to splurge on all-new pieces. A first round of upgrades is provisionally scheduled for the fourth race in Baku, fitting into the long gap between races in April.





SIDEPODS

The sidepods have been tightened up over the winter, continuing on from 2022's convergence in that area. McLaren shifted to a downwashing geometry midway through the year, having started off with an inwashing design. But alongside that, there's a bigger sidepod undercut to reduce the length of travel for the airflow moving around the car, complete with the inlet underbite introduced last season. Like the Red Bull RB18, the sidepods also feature a small indent in the middle in further airflow placement efforts.

INFRASTRUCTURE

McLaren's new windtunnel and simulator are expected to come online later this year and, although it'll be too late to have an effect on the 2023 car's development, both should play into the design and development of 2024's machinery. "There's quite a significant fee to pay the windtunnel owners when we rent it," mused new team principal Andrea Stella. "By having our own, we save quite a significant amount of resources that we want to reinvest in expanding the team. If I consider the lack of windtunnel and the size of the workforce, McLaren have been doing a competitive job in the past."

MUTED EXPECTATIONS

At the launch, it appeared that any hopes of McLaren's reignited ascent in the F1 pecking order may have to wait, and both Andrea Stella and CEO Zak Brown suggested that the team hadn't addressed everything it wanted to over the winter. Aerodynamics and improving interaction with the 18-inch Pirelli tyres have progressed, but Stella says further work will have to wait until the team introduces its first upgrade package. "We are happy, not entirely happy for what is the launch car, but optimistic that we should take a good step soon," he said.

[➔ MORE ON MCLAREN'S LAUNCH](#)

McLAREN STILL PREPARED TO PLAY THE WAITING GAME

The team's new facilities are yet to come on stream, so it isn't expecting to challenge the big three – yet

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Mclaren's season launch event at its sprawling Woking factory on Monday featured fresh faces taking centre stage, but an overall muted note to expectations of major Formula 1 success in 2023.

Ahead of the team celebrating the 60th anniversary of its founding in 1963 – special branding has already been attached to the McLaren Technology Centre's famous presentation boulevard, but look out for the team doing much more around the Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500 events – it revealed the specially named MCL60 to the world.

The car is very much an evolution of the aerodynamic concept McLaren was running at the end of 2022. Its latest colour scheme is also an updated version to the team's 2022 look, which changed significantly during last year's campaign as McLaren battled to hit the 798kg weight limit. That again is a serious concern for many teams, especially after the plan to reduce this to 796kg was recently dropped, and so the MCL60's panels feature several large patches of bare carbonfibre. The main change to its nevertheless eye-catching livery is therefore its rear wing being painted orange and front wing left bare, in a reversal of its 2022 approach to those areas.

The team has made clear that it expects established star Lando Norris to be its leader alongside new signing Oscar Piastri. Norris, now heading into his fifth F1 season, said he was relishing the challenge: "It's great – I definitely have more responsibility to uphold this season. My responsibility is to use [my extra experience] to our advantage."

Piastri's F1 debut is set to be one of the most eagerly anticipated in recent years given the war over his services between McLaren and Alpine. But the 21-year-old Australian doesn't think "that specifically adds anything" in terms of pressure to get good early results. "I'm just trying to get back up to speed," he explained. "Obviously, there'll be a bit of rust having not raced for a year. There are some things without racing that you just can't keep training. So, there'll be that there, that's why I'm looking forward to getting back out on track."

The launch event also featured new team principal Andrea Stella – the former long-time Ferrari performance and race engineer who had been McLaren's race operations director in a series of senior roles since 2015 – outlining his thoughts from his new position. Stella took over after Andreas Seidl's amicable split with McLaren in December (to run the Sauber operation as CEO ahead of its Audi buyout) and his promotion has been "very seamless", according to overall McLaren boss Zak Brown.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MCLAREN

"The change almost effectively happened overnight," he added. "Andrea is obviously very aware of the team having worked very closely with all of them for almost a decade, so it was exactly who we wanted to have run the racing team."

With the evolution factor of the MCL60's early design in mind, Stella acknowledged that McLaren was "happy, [but] not entirely happy for what is the launch car". But since a planned series of upgrades is set to start coming onto the new car from the fourth round in Baku, he explained that his team is "optimistic that we should take a good step soon".

After going slightly backwards in its plan to recover to the front of the F1 grid in 2022 with a defeat to Alpine over fourth place in the constructors' championship – in large part down to the ousted Daniel Ricciardo contributing just 30% of Norris's points haul – McLaren is staying low-key with its targets for 2023. As well as getting Piastri up to speed, and with the goal of him pushing Norris on to even greater levels of performance, McLaren is keen to highlight that the massive infrastructure investment it has made in recent years is still yet to bear fruit. Its windtunnel and other new design facilities won't be completed until midway through 2023, which makes the coming two McLarens of future years more important for gauging the team's rebuilding success.

"I think it's fair to say that over the course of the season, we



[P21 OPINION](#)

“OVER THE COURSE OF THE SEASON, WE’D LIKE TO ESTABLISH OURSELVES AS PART OF THE TOP FOUR”

would like to establish ourselves as part of the top four,” Stella explained. “We know realistically that with the top three teams, there may be potential just to be the fourth best car over the course of the season. We are realistic in the very short term. There are good developments already in the pipeline that should land

trackside very soon in the season. This should allow us to get to take a decent step forward.

“We are not naive. We know that pretty much everything will be staying the same with developments and so on. We’ll also add some more high-level development. So going overall for the team, I would like to remind of the importance of getting the new windtunnel to come to fruition. That should be a step change for many reasons, not only the fact that it improves your methodologies. And there’s also the new simulator coming. We have a new manufacturing facility.

“So, large investments that should come to fruition mid-year and these should be an extra boost in this race to become top four over the season, and hopefully race for more in the mid-term.” ❄



Performance should be bolstered by first batch of upgrades due in April

ASTON MARTIN AMR23

The team in green has gone for an aggressive push for 2023 as double world champion Fernando Alonso joins from Alpine

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

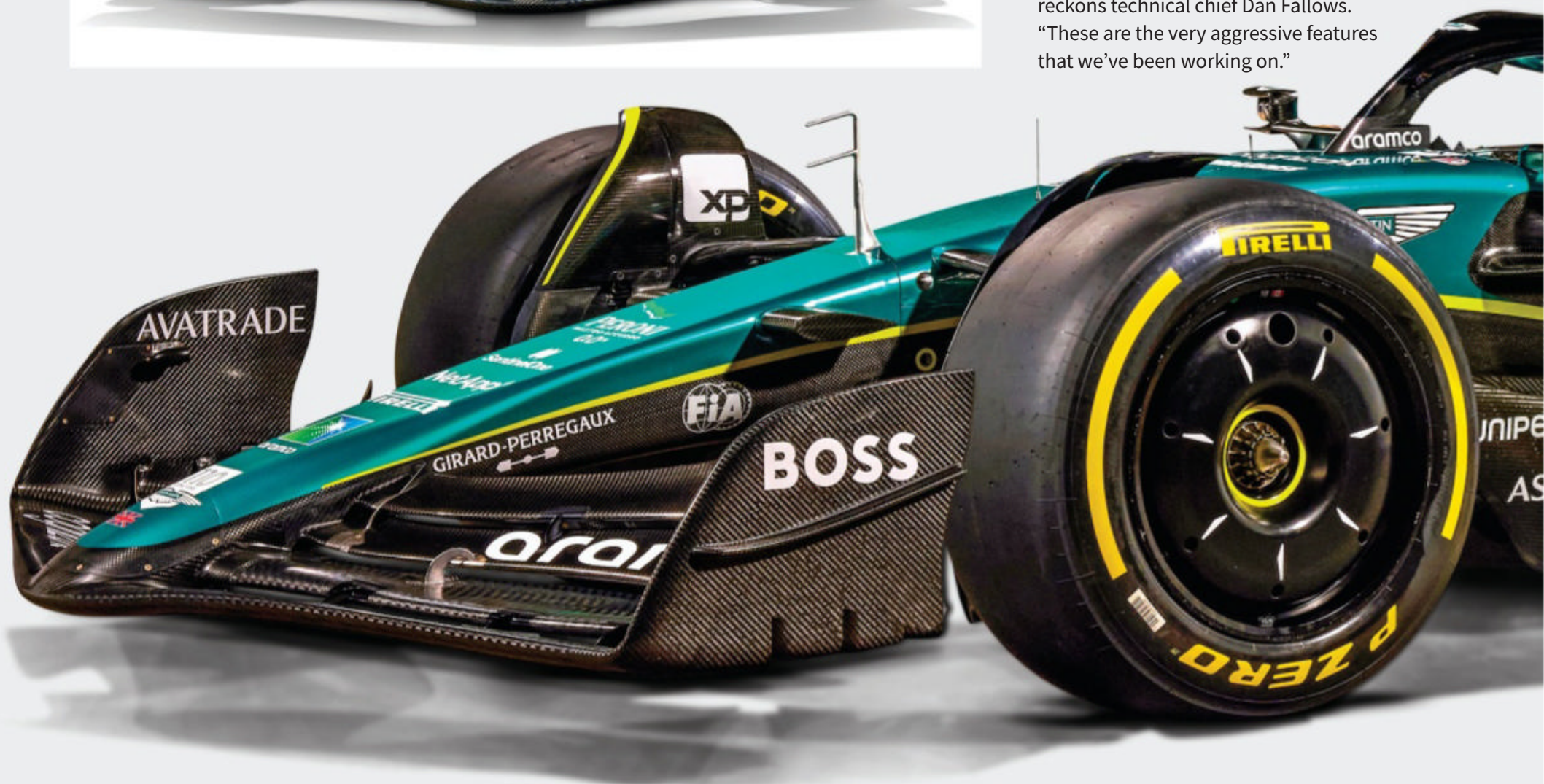
FRONT WING

Although only in launch spec, the majority of the front wings seen on the 2023 cars so far are 'inboard loaded', meaning that the wings are at their deepest at the point where they attach to the nose. Aston's wing is positioned lower in the centre than on the 2022 car, no longer featuring the raised nose tip, but there still seems to be a focus on loading the centre of each wing flap more. The outboard remains unloaded to promote outwashing, and the wing endplates have a small cut-out at the rear to elevate this.



NOSE

The nose is visually different to the AMR22; last year's car featured a flat nosecone that blended into the second wing element, but the team has opted for a larger and longer nose that extends down into the mainplane. This nose, similar to that of AlphaTauri and Haas last year, has been sculpted into the leading edge of the wing, and also features modular panels to afford customisability. "I think the things that really stand out from last year are the front end, the front wing particularly, right through to the sidepods," reckons technical chief Dan Fallows. "These are the very aggressive features that we've been working on."



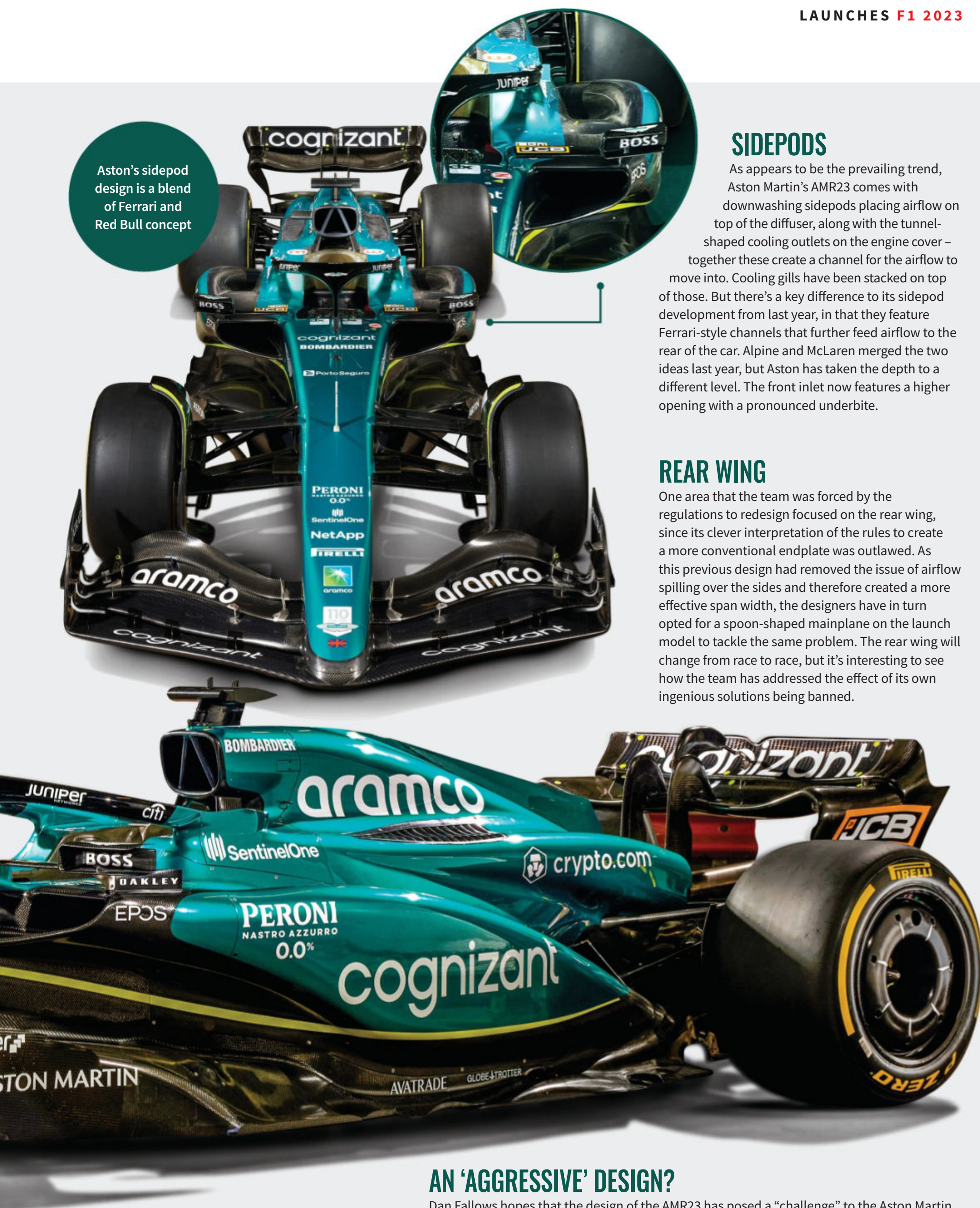
Aston's sidepod design is a blend of Ferrari and Red Bull concept

SIDEPODS

As appears to be the prevailing trend, Aston Martin's AMR23 comes with downwashing sidepods placing airflow on top of the diffuser, along with the tunnel-shaped cooling outlets on the engine cover – together these create a channel for the airflow to move into. Cooling gills have been stacked on top of those. But there's a key difference to its sidepod development from last year, in that they feature Ferrari-style channels that further feed airflow to the rear of the car. Alpine and McLaren merged the two ideas last year, but Aston has taken the depth to a different level. The front inlet now features a higher opening with a pronounced underbite.

REAR WING

One area that the team was forced by the regulations to redesign focused on the rear wing, since its clever interpretation of the rules to create a more conventional endplate was outlawed. As this previous design had removed the issue of airflow spilling over the sides and therefore created a more effective span width, the designers have in turn opted for a spoon-shaped mainplane on the launch model to tackle the same problem. The rear wing will change from race to race, but it's interesting to see how the team has addressed the effect of its own ingenious solutions being banned.



AN 'AGGRESSIVE' DESIGN?

Dan Fallows hopes that the design of the AMR23 has posed a "challenge" to the Aston Martin engineers. "We did make quite a bit of progress through AMR22, and we wanted to make sure that this is a sensible evolution of that, but it also gives us a really good platform to develop on," he said. "At the same time, we wanted to make sure that it was aggressive: to give a big challenge to all of the engineering team to make sure that they really push themselves."



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Upside of a demanding rookie

Twenty-one-year-old Oscar Piastri brings to McLaren a seemingly irresistible and compelling impetus that should help drive the team forward in its F1 revival

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Two teams have already gone to court over securing his services. He's left the squad that brought him through the junior ranks and drawn critical comment from some of the biggest figures in the paddock regarding his character. And he's yet to drive a Formula 1 car in competition. No pressure, Oscar Piastri...

Unsurprisingly for a driver who left home at 14 to follow his dream half a world away, Piastri doesn't view it that way. When asked what he makes of the impression created by the Alpine-McLaren tug of war last summer, which he refers to as "the drama", Piastri is unequivocal: "I don't think it adds any pressure."

But, given how much the F1 paddock revels in drama of any kind, let alone only the third requirement of the FIA's Contract Recognition Board, it certainly raises the interest level surrounding the 21-year-old. This should have been high in any case given his run of junior championships, where he demonstrated excellent racecraft and a knack for adapting fast to new machinery, and showed a confident, charming character.

It was halfway through his 2021 F2 title run, Piastri says, when he realised "realistically getting into F1 shifted from a dream to a goal". Now that goal is finally to be achieved and he'll be "getting paid to drive race cars" for the first time, after a pre-season in which McLaren has worked to get him as prepared as possible, despite the 50% reduction in testing from last year to this. The team arranged

"There's a characteristic we like a lot. He's a man of few words but the right words"

a programme of cockpit systems training, simulator running and practice in its 2021 MCL35M at Paul Ricard and Barcelona, as well as having him drive its 2022 car in the post-season Abu Dhabi test following his release from Alpine.

McLaren is so keen on Piastri that it paid his compatriot Daniel Ricciardo to exit his contract a year early. But it's also hopeful that his arrival will spur established star Lando Norris on to reach new heights across the garage. Given the Briton's reputation is sky-high – after all, he dented Ricciardo's comprehensively in the past two seasons – a further step keeping ahead of a fast rookie team-mate would create a potent line-up at McLaren, possibly one close to the level of F1's current best at Mercedes and Ferrari.

But that's if Piastri can deliver good results. And the mood emanating from the McLaren camp after its Woking factory

launch this week is one of tempered expectations. Even so, after the disastrous years with Ricciardo – excepting his glorious charge to 2021 Italian Grand Prix victory – Piastri's arrival alone is a positive moment for the still-rebuilding McLaren squad, which is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its founding.

It isn't just Piastri making a new outing for McLaren on Monday. Also speaking is Andreas Seidl's in-house replacement as team principal: Andrea Stella. He had a 15-year stint working at Ferrari, acting as performance engineer for Michael Schumacher and Kimi Raikkonen, and race engineer for Fernando Alonso, and makes quite the impression in his first appearance in the orange F1 team's top job. He's precise and generous in his answers, and wonderfully candid at times. One such explanation on his early impression of working with Piastri is revealing.

"There's a characteristic we like a lot," Stella explains. "He is a man of few words but the right words. That's become very apparent. Certainly focused and also demanding."

Considering F1's high-profile nature, rookie drivers can't really make a low-key entrance. But at the third most successful squad in the championship's history in terms of constructors' titles – which is somewhat reeling from the impact of a supposedly top-drawer driver losing his way in its machines so spectacularly that it cost the team fourth in the 2022 constructors' standings – it seems Piastri isn't doing that anyway. And McLaren is delighted.

Pressed to explain what he means by Piastri being "demanding" – a word not overly loaded with positive connotations – Stella uses an example from the training tasks McLaren drew up for its rookie this off-season. Given audio files of in-race team communications from recent seasons, Piastri, Stella says, was rapidly getting "to the bottom of matters and even questioning like, 'Why did you guys do this? You could have done that. You could have done this.'"

"Somehow he challenges you," Stella adds, "in a very polite and constructive way. But he doesn't take things superficially or just kind of stop challenging just for pleasing the environment."

Stella also reveals that Piastri had been quickly able to "go very close to the limit just exploring his own resources with a lot of awareness in the process" during sim sessions. But his initial explanation, no doubt familiar from working with relentless taskmasters Schumacher and Alonso, paints a familiar scene, one that should encourage McLaren fans as much as its engineers. This description of Piastri evokes a similar picture of George Russell's arrival at Williams in 2019, epitomised spectacularly in the first season of *Drive to Survive* and a brutal British GP debrief.

This doesn't mean Piastri is creating drama for the sake of it, or even being particularly vocal, but he's apparently unrelenting in his expectations of himself and therefore his new team too, which McLaren hopes will help power the next phase of its F1 revival. 🏁



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‘The Closer’ nears his final act

Kevin Harvick embarks on his last NASCAR season at this weekend’s Daytona 500, a race that made his name and his epithet

CHARLES BRADLEY

My first trip to the Daytona 500 produced the best finish to a race that I’ve ever witnessed live: Kevin Harvick’s duel to the stripe in 2007 with Mark Martin seemed to last forever, as thousands of race fans in the seats in front of me took to their collective feet and whooped them home. Harvick won by 0.02 seconds, the second-closest finish in the Great American Race’s history. Out of the corner of my eye, Clint Bowyer hove into my view inverted, as a huge wreck kicked off behind the leaders, and he somersaulted across the finish line in flames. Thankfully, Bowyer clambered out unhurt.

This weekend, Kevin Harvick will start his last Daytona 500, as the analytical yet often-outspoken Californian retires from full-time NASCAR racing to join Bowyer (a zany Kansan) in the TV booth at FOX Sports next year. While Harvick went on to win a Cup title, and become a senior figure among the drivers, it’s that victory that he’ll be most remembered for.

“Racing against Mark Martin and beating one of the sport’s greats back to the finish line, that’s a moment in time that will always be special, not only in my career, but the sport, in general,” reflects Harvick. And like all great victories, it had a major back story...

Harvick entered the Cup Series in its hottest seat, replacing Dale Earnhardt at Richard Childress Racing after the NASCAR legend was killed at the final corner of the 2001 Daytona 500. The #3 might have changed to #29, but Harvick — a Cup rookie at the time — was thrust into filling a void left by greatness.

“For me and my career, a lot of things happened backward, probably the opposite of the way they should have,” he says. “My first season in Cup, I ran every race but the Daytona 500 because of Dale Earnhardt’s death and replacing him in the car. Coming back to the Daytona 500 in 2002 was probably one of the bigger moments in my career just because of all the hype and anticipation from 2001.”

The hype was real, though: Harvick took his maiden Cup victory in Atlanta just three weeks after Earnhardt’s death, repeating the feat later in the season at Chicagoland Speedway. He also won the Busch Series (now Xfinity) that year, in a mammoth 69-race season. Harvick started from the front row for his first Daytona 500 in 2002 but ended his day causing an 18-car wreck while running second.

“The Daytona 500 can get your emotions and twist them upside down and make you just crazy,” he muses. “And want to do things that you know you shouldn’t do, and take risks that you know you shouldn’t take and aren’t going to work, but you’ll do them anyway just because of it being the Daytona 500.”

“It is the biggest race you’ll ever be a part of, and it’s the

biggest win you’ll ever have. It’s definitely the heart of NASCAR and what we do.”

Harvick’s sole 500 win was a classic in terms of wild fortunes: his Chevrolet Monte Carlo SS suffered from overheating, dropping him way back, but the team managed to rectify the issue — and with four fresh tyres fitted at the final pitstop, he was back in contention. Certainly when up against Martin, who had only taken two tyres.

“With 12 or 15 laps to go, we were thirtysomethingth — a long

“With 12 or 15 laps to go, we were thirtysomethingth — a long way from the front”

way from the front,” he recalls. “Those last several laps, when you go back and watch the in-car video, you see all the passes and us scraping the fence and yellows and restarts, and then the push down the back straightaway from Matt Kenseth, which really is what helped us win that race.”

“Then it was just a side-drafting game off Turn 4 back to the finish line, and we were in good position to be on the right side of that. It was an exciting last 12 or 15 laps when you look back at it.”

Harvick’s victory consigned veteran Martin’s career to being a perennial bridesmaid at Cup level (at the 500 and in the points), but included a tinge of controversy because the timing of the yellow flag for the huge wreck did cause some consternation. However, NASCAR decreed that the yellow only flew after Harvick had nudged his way ahead, and his victory was confirmed.

It took Harvick another seven years to claim his one and only Cup title, after a much-needed move away from Childress’s Chevys to Tony Stewart and Gene Haas’s Ford squad — a feat he almost repeated a year later but just came up short on Kyle Busch. He’s twice finished runner-up in the 500 too, as well as winning the summer race at Daytona in 2010, among his 43 Cup starts at the fabled Floridian superspeedway.

“My mentality heading into our last Cup season is to do the exact same things we’ve done for the last 22 years,” he says. “That’s be competitive and make sure that every week you show up at the race track and do all that you can do for your team-mates. We’ll be prepared just like we always would be, because that’s our job.”

Harvick gained his nickname ‘The Closer’ because finishing off races is what he does best. Just ask Mark Martin. 🏆

P34 NASCAR CUP PREVIEW

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YOUR SAY

*If someone does gain an advantage then yes they should be penalised.
But an inch of tyre over a white line? I don't think so*

GRAHAM RIDGWAY

Track limits proposal is utter nuts

Just read your coverage of the proposed new rules on track limits and Stephen Lickorish's editorial on the subject, which is spot on (Club Autosport, 9 February). It's utter nuts. It won't be able to be applied consistently unless clever tech is used. Then it'll be like speed cameras on the road, but with no leeway at all. Timing sheets littered with penalties, deeply flawed indeed.

One other point is that Motorsport UK can't quite seem to decide why they want to make the change. The rule change proposal cites fairness. The MSUK statement says damage and safety! If it's fairness, why is it a rule that is applied regardless of any advantage being gained? If someone does gain an advantage then yes they should be penalised. But an inch of tyre over a white line? I don't think so. If it's safety, where are these unsafe track limits violations? Again, same comment applies. Or is it just damage? If so just apply the current rules.

I'm writing my polite commentary to send in. And also reviewing whether I've got time to sell the racing cars before the death of UK club motorsport.

And finally, does it make sense that UK club racers are judged more harshly than F1 drivers?

Graham Ridgway
By email

Plans risk alienating fans

Speaking as a regular trackside spectator (I'm not a driver, and they will have their own views on this) and a fan of motorsport for over 40 years, when it comes to rules and regulations, they are essential. Travelling all over the country, fans spend lots of their disposable income on tickets, travel, accommodation, food and so on. We come to watch the cars race and be entertained. Regulations involving the cars are easy to understand, either a car is legal or it isn't, and if a car is disqualified for breaking the rules, fans understand that this can affect results.

These track limits proposals, from the fans' perspective, may cause us to think twice about attending events, if at the end of every race we have to wait to see if the final result resembles anything like the cars as they cross the line. After applauding



the top three finishers on the slowdown lap, will it be them who end up on the podium? Or do we have to wait all afternoon for the penalties to be worked out? Do we have to take the day off work on the Monday to see the drivers on the podium? It is easy to be flippant, but having regulations affecting the outcome of races is only going to turn people off.

I hope the outcome will not be to the detriment of both drivers and fans. Motorsport UK, please think long and hard about this — there is a lot riding on it.

Michael Skeet
Lordswood, Southampton

What next? Trackside speed cameras?

You are quite right to say that the proposed overhaul of track limits is deeply flawed. This is meant to be motor racing in case the powers that be have forgotten. There are already too many petty penalties as it is (how did we ever have racing without them?). It won't be long before there are speed limits and speed cameras at tracks!

Andrew Wallace
Hitchin, Herts

Have your say, get in touch


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WILLIAMS JAMES VOWLES

What Williams's new boss must do to change the fortunes of F1's backmarker

James Vowles arrives from Mercedes knowing how to win, but what does he need to do to revitalise the once-great team?

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY WILLIAMS RACING AND



For this chapter of the Williams story, perhaps it is indeed fair to judge a book by its cover. After all, the livery that the FW45 will wear in 2023 aptly reflects the current limbo in which this historic grand prix team now finds itself. The latest paint job is little more than a subtle evolution of what came before, when the cars were spotted racing at the back of the pack. Tweaks are minor rather than sweeping, in the same way that the Grove headquarters isn't set for a major infrastructure overhaul. It won't christen a new windtunnel and simulator like fellow heritage squad McLaren is busy building as a silver bullet to unlock performance.

Notable changes instead come in the form of a couple of absences. In deference to parting company with driver Nicholas Latifi after three seasons, the prominent stickers and backing of Sofina and Lavazza have gone and haven't fully been replaced. Much like CEO Jost Capito and technical director Francois-Xavier Demaison leaving at the end of last year. And where there is a shiny addition, it's barely visible, initially at least.

Forget an eye-catching blend of tangerine and zenith blue for the FW45 following a statement partnership with Gulf — there's just a couple of small logos for the oil company on the rear wing and monocoque. Likewise, for the 'season launch' event last Monday, marquee team principal hire James Vowles was nowhere to be seen. The ex-Mercedes strategy director, who stepped back from the Formula 1 pitwall more recently to occupy a holistic role overseeing driver contracts and managing the manufacturer's entire motorsport presence, won't clock in until 20 February. >>



ANTHONY-GARAND/JUNSPASH



Transforming the culture at Williams is central to Vowles's ambitions for his new squad

WILLIAMS RACING



From four podiums
and third in the
championship...

**WILLIAMS
IN 2015**

257
POINTS

3RD
IN THE STANDINGS

1.472%
OFF THE PACE



...to backmarker
status and points
in single figures

**WILLIAMS
IN 2022**

8
POINTS

10TH
IN THE STANDINGS

2.396%
OFF THE PACE

Until the Briton completes his Silver Arrows gardening leave, punches his new Oxfordshire commute into the sat nav and sets foot in the factory for the first time, the remaining Williams figureheads all talk of simply carrying on as before. Head of vehicle performance Dave Robson says of the leadership transition: “Technically, it’s been fine. It’s been smooth because a lot of the big decisions were all taken before [Capito and Demaison left]. So, we’ve just been, over the last six to eight weeks, putting the rest of that plan into action. Then we’ll wait until James joins and find out how we want to change and move things on.”

Altering the course of an operation staffed by over 700 people is akin to steering a container ship. As such, the impact of Vowles’s appointment will take years to be fully realised on track. Combine that fact with the current understandable conservatism within the camp, and there’s not an abundance of optimism to suggest that F1’s rank backmarker will climb off the foot of the constructors’ championship come the end of this season. But while the results at the chequered flag might not improve dramatically, plenty of change will at least be taking place behind closed doors as Vowles works through his overflowing in-tray.

The first problem on the agenda concerns Williams having split with Capito and Demaison in mid-December but so far only replacing the former. The technical division requires a leader, and Vowles needs a close ally at the top. Even if long-time Capito associate Demaison had no previous F1 experience, he was still tasked with managing the development path of the cars created during his short 19-month tenure. That clearly is a position that cannot be left vacant for the sake of both this season – even if Williams is only occasionally fighting for a points finish – and when it comes to the latter stages of 2023 and conceiving the FW46.

While Vowles doesn’t inherit the CEO title and more overarching responsibilities that his predecessor had, it is almost certain that he will be at the centre of this recruitment. He might therefore select someone similar in stature and ambition to himself: an experienced and impressive operator who isn’t currently in the limelight. A high achiever who must depart a larger and more competitive team to take full control. If that is the route Vowles goes for, then 21 years working in the paddock will have already provided him with a reliable shortlist of contenders. Thereafter, the actual business of hiring an outstanding candidate should be painless enough, unlike the next task on his agenda.

It is understood that Capito failed in his aim to quash the finger-pointing culture that has dogged Williams. While he at least identified the philosophy problem, it is said that the German was handicapped by a blend of his own leadership shortfalls and the difficulty in reversing an internal rot that had set in after, depending on how you measure it, at least five years of the squad languishing in F1’s doldrums. Vowles is similarly acutely aware of the need to upset the lingering status quo, lift the spirits and have everyone pulling in the right direction. And because Williams cannot fall any lower than its 2022 finishing position of 10th in the standings, perhaps now is the perfect time to encourage personnel to be bolder and more open to risk. The only way is up.

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

“The real gain that you get out of this is that you have to instil a culture that allows everyone to realise that you have to be empowered, you have to grow, you have to move forward as a unit and it has to be one collaborative motion. I strongly suspect that we’re just in a

“We’re ready now to go on that next stage of this redevelopment and get some sense of stability and a much longer-term plan. That will stand us in good stead”



situation where that collaboration isn’t quite at the level it could be or should be, just simply because it’s been a few years of pain that cemented it.

“Clearly one individual won’t make it. What’s required is restrengthening of the technical team, but also allowing those internally that are incredibly good to shine and prosper.”

Although Vowles has been quick to rubbish the notion that he’s at Williams simply to create a ‘mini-Mercedes’, he will of course transpose what he knows works best from his time at Brackley. After winning eight constructors’ crowns with the Three-Pointed Star, copying over the ‘no blame’ culture that has been so successful under Toto Wolff is guaranteed.

Such is the effectiveness of this way of working that even ex-Ferrari boss Mattia Binotto tried to replicate it at Maranello. His problem was that the ‘no blame’ part appeared to get lost in translation. When the Prancing Horse’s strategy and engine reliability came under heavy fire last term, he refused to concede any wrongdoing. But if the concept alone is good enough for Ferrari and Mercedes, it is one that the Williams incumbents must embrace readily this time around. Fortunately, Vowles knows how to implement it much more thoroughly.

The other long-standing problem at Grove has been underfunding during the latter years of the ownership of the eponymous founding family. Asked to identify the main cause of the decline from four podiums and third in the points in 2015, Robson replies: “I think you can’t get around the fact that the investment has been a problem. And although the regulations [with the cost cap] have improved in that regard, you’re not going to undo the sheer amount of money the big teams have been spending for a decade.

“They’ve got that, whether that’s equipment or knowledge, and it’s got some decay time and it’ll be a little bit of time before things are really reset. So, that certainly is part of it. I think the other thing we’re looking for with James is that stability. We’re ready now to go on that next stage of this redevelopment and get some sense of stability and a much longer-term plan. That will stand us in good stead.”

Again, it seems Williams now has its best chance of repairing the damage. Dorilton Capital bought the team in late 2020 for a reported \$200million. The private investment firm has pumped in another nine figures since. There has been speculation that it could be a flight risk, seeking to cash in on F1’s commercial boom with a quick sale. But the public line has long been that Dorilton is here to stay and propel Williams up the order.

That stands to reason with the appointment of Vowles. His signing is a coup that arguably makes the team more appealing to prospective buyers than Capito (ostensibly the 64-year-old was only ever >>

delaying his retirement by two years and was always planned as a short-term appointment). But for Vowles to have willingly flown the Mercedes nest, it seems reasonable to expect that he was given certain assurances over job security. Namely, that he will be afforded the necessary time and patience to change the fortunes of a struggling squad. Also, that he won't soon be dealing with new owners and a new board who might then want to install their own chosen one at the top to leave him clearing his desk. As such, Dorilton will likely be around for some time to keep writing the big cheques required to lift the concern.

Alex Albon is similarly confident in the commitment. "I get to speak to the board quite often," he says. "The main thing is long-term vision. I think that's important for any kind of investment company. They really do see the future; they are investing. You see also with James, and I know in the areas that he wants to improve, you have this big sense that they're fully behind everything."

But even regular healthy cash injections won't automatically give Williams's on-track results a shot in the arm. At best, they will ensure that the team is operating up to the budget cap, as Sauber will now begin to do thanks to the deep pockets of Audi, while a new title sponsor helps fund fellow rival Haas. The financial regulations prevent Dorilton from ever throwing caution to the wind and outspending all other parties to get to the front of the grid in double-quick time – something the firm could reasonably do now that Williams is no longer a public company that must appease markets and shareholders.

"If we go back a few years, we didn't have the strength that is Dorilton," explains Vowles. "Dorilton really want and will invest the correct amount to make this a performant team. And I don't think it was fair to say that was the case just a few years ago. The impact of them will take a while to probably kick in."

If Williams can't initially bank on the financial regulations to aid its revival, another recent addition to the rulebook might prove more promising. Also designed to create a tightly contested grid are the Aerodynamic Testing Restrictions whereby, according to a sliding scale, the teams at the top of the championship are entitled to fewer windtunnel runs and CFD (computational fluid dynamics) hours than the strugglers. Williams will therefore receive the greatest allocation for bringing up the rear in 2022, having poorly adapted to the new ground-effects era with an overweight car that loved to lock its front tyres at low speed.

"It is useful as part of the general handicapping system," says Robson of the ATR. "Hopefully, we've exploited that to the full. But clearly you need to be extremely efficient and not just rely on more time and more resource. So, we'll see what everyone else has been up to. Obviously, the

regulation change will have knocked everyone back. It certainly knocked us back. But hopefully we have the opportunity to get all of that back and more."

When the benefits of the ATR, renewed and reliable investment and a culture change are combined, there isn't the clamour for another redevelopment of Grove. Vowles believes these other priorities will instead provide the bulk of the gains. He recalls: "When we asked our senior leadership team [at Mercedes] what's the most important element of the team, it will always come back to two things: people and culture. Not the machine shop floor, not the windtunnel tools, not the driver-in-the-loop simulator. It comes back to people and culture."

"I believe exactly the same is true within Williams... It is the highest thing on my priority list: making sure everyone understands that it's about working together, about empowerment, about treating your colleagues with the respect that you want back from them, the growth you want back from them, so that we can work together towards an end goal."

What Vowles has no intention of doing to change the fortunes of Williams, though, is to simply morph it into a Mercedes B-team. Although the ownership has changed and bosses have come and gone, that's one principle that has remained entirely consistent at Grove over the decades. Williams wants to be recognised independently and cultivate any success on its own terms. While the customer engine relationship with the Silver Arrows will almost certainly continue for the foreseeable future, and the two squads will surely be political allies in all the key votes thanks to the bond and similar views of Vowles and Wolff, Williams won't be to Merc what Haas is to Ferrari.

Unlike that American-Italian alliance, there will not be an entrenched technical partnership whereby Williams can access a supply of 'transferrable parts' beyond the expected engine and gearbox. Nor will there be a 'design hub' based at Brackley or extensive use of the windtunnel. And since Mercedes has already made its redundancies to comply with the cost cap, staff won't be loaned out to bolster the Williams effort. And, for Vowles, that's just fine.

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

"You put a crisp Williams shirt on. That's where you are, that's where your loyalty is. And that's where my success and the team's success will come from. So, there's no mini-Mercedes or 'B team'

"It's about working together, about empowerment, about treating your colleagues with the respect that you want back from them"

or any of that notion. This is about me standing on my own two legs and making a success with an organisation around me."

In his own words, Robson has only said 'hello' to Vowles so far (Albon has been taken out for dinner by the new boss, at least). Nevertheless, for this matter, they happen to already be completely aligned. Asked if Williams could ever adopt a subordinate role to Mercedes, Robson responds: "I don't think so. I think we can do what we need to do with the relationship we currently have with Mercedes for the next couple of years. They provide us with some amount of hardware that's extremely good. But we are an independent team, and we need to take the rest of it forwards on our own or at least be prepared to do that. We'll see what the future holds for 2026 when things get shaken up again [with new engine regulations]. But I don't think we want to follow a Haas model." >>



Albon has full confidence in Dorilton's long-term vision for Williams

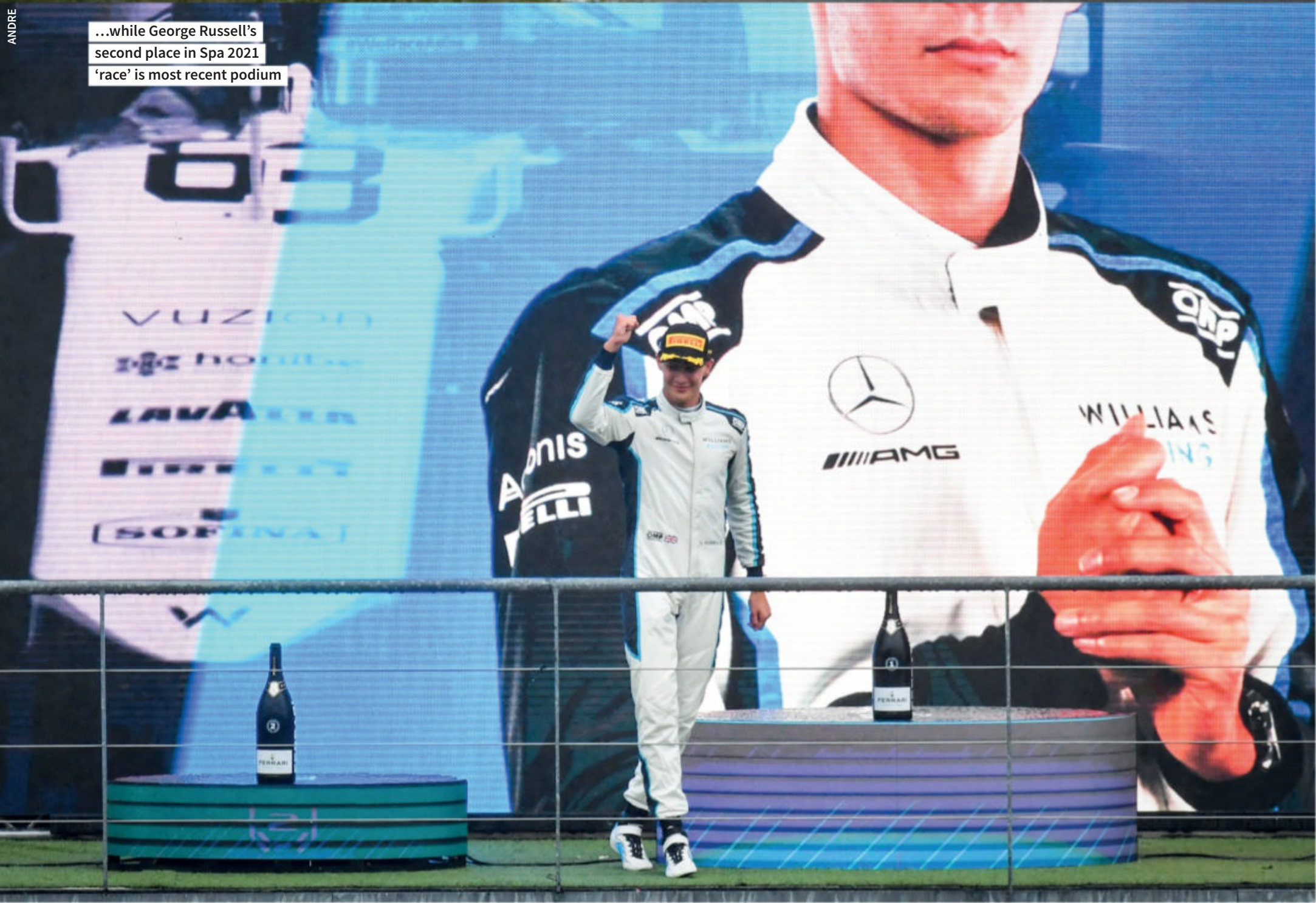
WILLIAMS RACING



Pastor Maldonado
took Williams's last win
at Barcelona in 2012...

ANDRE FERRARO

...while George Russell's
second place in Spa 2021
'race' is most recent podium





2022's overweight
FW44 was too prone to
locking up at low speed

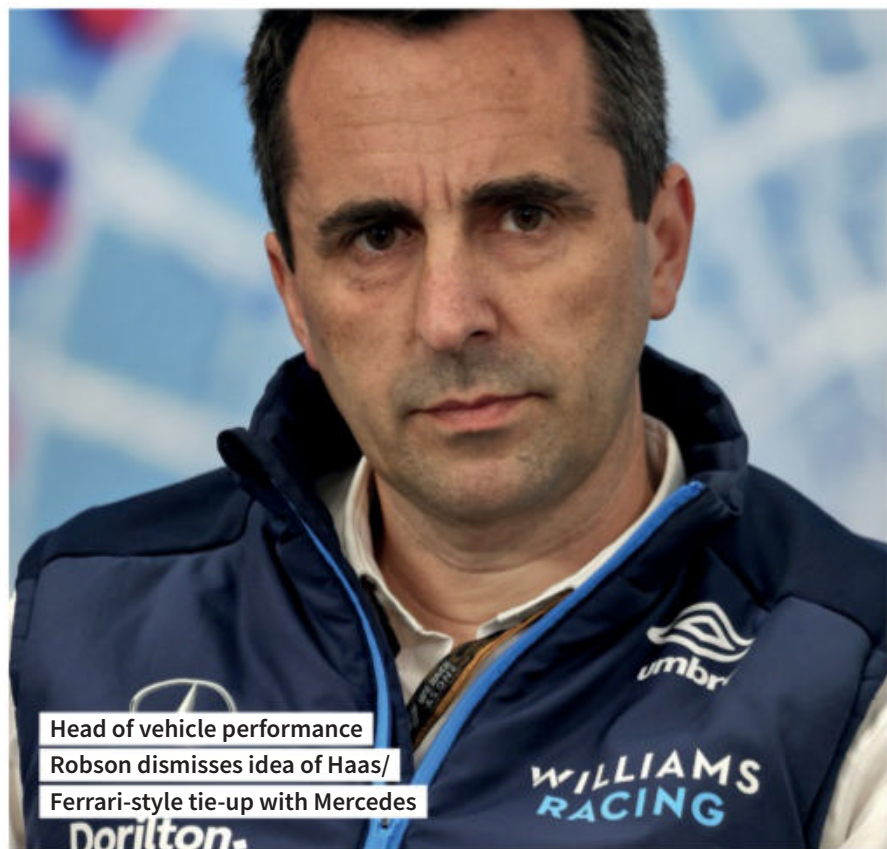
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WILLIAMS RACING

WILLIAMS RACING

“Williams is filled with incredibly talented people who were just hurting a little bit from the last few years, but it has great potential. I’m very, very excited”



Head of vehicle performance
Robson dismisses idea of Haas/
Ferrari-style tie-up with Mercedes

Vowles recalls gripping the catch fencing at Silverstone in the 1990s as he paid particular attention to the Williams machines that were testing. Back then, the team was in its active car, Nigel Mansell and Alain Prost-fronted pomp. Rediscovering that championship-winning potency seems an incredibly tall order just now. But, with Vowles at the helm, perhaps it can at least begin a sustained recovery. The new boss reckons that’s entirely achievable.

“Williams is filled with incredibly talented people who were just hurting a little bit from the last few years, but it has great potential,” he says. “For me personally, I’m very, very excited. I think it’s a good fit for myself and I’m looking forward to working with Williams in order to move forward up the grid. I’m confident we can.”

For his shock signing, a remarkable CV and the vision that he has sold to his new colleagues and the Dorilton board, there’s a great buzz around the appointment of Vowles and what he can bring to Williams. If he successfully changes the culture, makes employees feel loved again and uses the reliable investment to effectively delegate the technical department, then better times are plausibly on the horizon for this famous team.

It will likely be several years before Vowles’s grand plan produces obvious gains on track. But plenty will already be changing in 2023 behind the scenes. And if that is the case, livery aside, it would finally then be unwise to judge this book by its cover. ❄️

NEXT WEEK

GUIDE TO F1 TESTING

What to look out for as 2023’s new crop of cars takes to the track for the first time in Bahrain.

THE EARLY CLUES ABOUT THE FW45

The earlier a team reveals its ‘new car’, the less likely it is that we’re looking at the real thing. Had Williams whipped the dust sheet off its 2023 challenger a week ahead of McLaren, the engineers would have seen it purely as seven days of research and development time lost to a competitor. And in Formula 1, there can be no excess fat. Hence it wasn’t until last Monday, a week after the muted ‘livery launch’ at Grove, that the genuine FW45 finally broke cover at Silverstone for its shakedown.

Despite the team’s troubled start to the ground-effects era, it’s a case of evolution rather than revolution when it comes to underbody aero philosophy. But the top surfaces look pleasingly different as the FW45’s sidepods feature an

extended undercut below the cooling inlets more akin to the Red Bull RB18. Williams head of vehicle performance Dave Robson reveals: “Most obvious is an update to the sidepod package. We were a bit constrained by the radiator layout [previously]. We’ve had an opportunity to work on that and lay things out a little bit differently.”

For car handling, as in 2022, the low-speed and high-downforce corners are still expected to be the Achilles’ heel. Spa and Monza will favour Williams; the more twisty tracks will not. But progress is being made.

“HOPEFULLY, IF WE’RE BACKING IT IN ON THE REAR AXLE, THAT’S A GOOD SIGN”

Robson continues: “We’ve done a lot of work on that. We think we set some good targets. We think we’ve seen some good progress when we take the aero map data from the windtunnel and run it through the simulator.”

Alex Albon reckons the first test will be the downhill, off-camber braking zone into the tight Turn 10 left-hander in Bahrain. If the front wheels are still locking up, then another year of pain might lie in wait. “That’s the notorious corner,” he says. “Hopefully, if we’re backing it in on the rear axle, that’s a good sign.”

“We’re trying to change the [mid-corner] behaviour of the car. That might take a bit of time to understand and optimise. I don’t think we’re going to come out of the blocks firing, but we need to be smarter.”



Team is cautiously confident
tangible steps have been
taken to improve handling





NASCAR CUP PREVIEW

WHAT'S NEW IN NASCAR 2023?

A street course, wet tyres on ovals, a returning seven-time champion, a retirement tour, big driver moves and even a trip to Le Mans! Here's how NASCAR is getting wild in 2023 ahead of the Daytona 500 this weekend

NEW RULES AND REGULATIONS

NASCAR racing in the wet – on ovals? It seems unthinkable, but so did racing on dirt and street tracks until very recently.

Series officials have approved the use of specially designed wet tyres for “limited use” on several of the shorter ovals, including Phoenix, which hosts the series finale. The package will include windshield wipers, rain lights and mud flaps, as per the road courses, but NASCAR has made it clear that it will not race in full-blown rain, more likely in light drizzle, damp or drying conditions.

NASCAR has ruled out a repeat of Ross Chastain's ‘Hail Melon’ Martinsville wall-ride move, when he charged the barrier at full speed to gain places on the final corner of last year's race. In future, any “unsafe manoeuvre” will be penalised by a time or lost-lap sanction, to prevent it from being attempted again.

“It just felt like that we needed to make a move,” says senior vice-president of competition Elton Sawyer. “We needed to step in, and we will officiate that differently as we move into the 2023 season.”



Another significant issue that was raised last year was the rear-impact crashes that led to concussions for Kurt Busch and Alex Bowman, which has led NASCAR to revise the rear-end ‘clips’ and bumper structure of the cars. This has been designed to allow for more “crushability” in rearwards impacts, to avoid the force being transmitted directly to the driver.

Revised mufflers for the Los Angeles Memorial

Coliseum and Chicago Street Race have been adopted, while the sport's three manufacturers – Chevrolet, Ford and Toyota – have been allowed to redesign their cooling vents on the hood, as well as implement new nose designs.

Road courses will no longer feature stage breaks, to add an extra element to race strategies, although points will continue to be awarded mid-race.

CHARLES BRADLEY



NASCAR's pre-season Busch Light Clash at LA Coliseum part of its opening up to new venues

CHICAGO STREET COURSE

Continuing with its trend of new venues, NASCAR this season will conduct the first street-course race in its 75-year history.

On 2 July, the Cup Series will run on a 2.2-mile, 12-turn course in downtown Chicago, anchored around the area of Grant Park and the iconic Buckingham Fountain. The layout mirrors the one developed by iRacing in 2021.

The street-course race, combined with the pre-season Busch Light Clash held on a custom-built quarter-mile oval inside the LA Coliseum for the second consecutive season, opens the door to potential new venues for future Cup Series schedules.

NASCAR has also championed efforts to improve inclusion and diversity within the

sport in recent years, and the addition of a street course in downtown Chicago is seen as a chance to embrace those ideals while also exposing its product to a new audience.

Julie Giese, the president of the Chicago Street Course, says the race is being marketed more as an 'event', which NASCAR hopes will help expand its reach. "This is a two-day racing and music festival," she says. "We're having full concerts, full sets, down in the footprint of where Lollapalooza hosts its main concerts. It's racing but it's also so much more."

NASCAR has added several road courses to its Cup series schedule in recent years – it only ran on two annually until the 2020 season. This year, outside of Chicago, the Cup Series will compete on five road courses.

The closest the Cup series has ever come to this was the Daytona Beach and Road Course used in the sport's infancy, which used the A1A highway towards Ponce Inlet before circling back along the beach.

"To me this is the continued evolution of where we want to take the race experience for our fans," Giese says. "Ultimately, it's a race weekend but with a lot of other things to allow people to experience it how they want."

JIM UTTER





JOHNSON IS BACK! BUT HARVICK IS GOING

Two huge NASCAR Cup stars with eight Cup titles between them have provided major headlines already this year for very different reasons: Jimmie Johnson is returning to NASCAR competition, just as Kevin Harvick prepares to make his exit.

Johnson will contest a part-time campaign after joining the team ownership of Legacy Motor Club, the new name for the Petty GMS Motorsport operation. His first attempt is to qualify for the Daytona 500 in the #84 Chevrolet Camaro, which would be his 20th appearance in NASCAR's biggest race that he's won twice, alongside the team's full-time drivers Erik Jones and Noah Gragson.

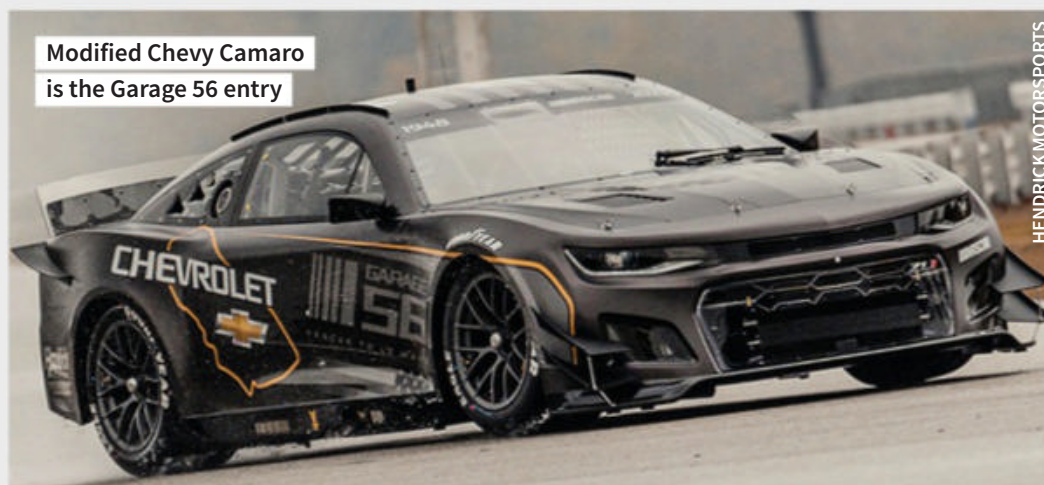
The seven-time champion hasn't raced in NASCAR since the 2020 season finale at Phoenix. Since then he's had a two-year IndyCar campaign with Chip Ganassi Racing, as well as selected IMSA events for Cadillac. Although he's not revealed the full scope of his programme, he will contest the inaugural Chicago Street Course event in July.

As Johnson rejoins the NASCAR fray, Harvick makes his full-time exit at the end of 2023. At the age of 47, he's going to move into the TV commentary booth with FOX Sports next year, while mentoring his son Keelan's racing career as well as his athlete management business interests.

He will end his career with over 800 starts, and with 60 Cup victories under his belt Harvick is in the top-10 all-time winners list. Along with his Cup success in 2014, he also has two second-tier Xfinity titles to his name. His '4EVER' tour moves on to this weekend's Daytona 500, which he won in 2007.

"It was as tough of a decision as I've ever had to make," he says. "I had been contemplating it for the last five years probably. All signs just professionally pointed to 2023 and doing it the right way."

CHARLES BRADLEY



Modified Chevy Camaro
is the Garage 56 entry

NASCAR GOES TO LE MANS

NASCAR will make its return to the Le Mans 24 Hours this season after a nearly 50-year absence.

In June, a modified version of the Cup Series' Next Gen Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 race car will compete in the famous enduro as the Garage 56 entry, which the Automobile Club de l'Ouest sets aside each year for the "technology of tomorrow and beyond" of innovative machinery.

The project was announced last March as an homage to NASCAR founder Bill France Sr, who first took NASCAR to the French classic in 1976, sending a Dodge Charger and Ford Torino overseas.

The Chevrolet has been prepared in a

collaboration between NASCAR, Hendrick Motorsports, Chevrolet, IMSA and Goodyear. Last month at the Daytona 24 Hours, NASCAR unveiled the driving line-up for its Garage 56 entry: seven-time Cup champion Jimmie Johnson, Le Mans winner Mike Rockenfeller and 2009 Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button. The three drivers took part in a two-day test last month on Daytona's Road Course.

Project manager Chad Knaus says: "Our car is big, so we will be slower than the GT cars [in corners] for sure. How much? Don't know yet. All the GT cars are usually maxed out on downforce, so their mid-corner speeds are pretty high, but at Le Mans they trim out a bit, so I expect they'll get a bit closer to where we are. None of us will know until we get there."

Johnson describes NASCAR's entry to Le Mans as "a brilliant idea". "Kudos to [NASCAR CEO] Jim France for having this vision and the effort he's put in to bringing this to life over the last few years," he says. "I think the car is going to sound amazing, perform very well and truly be a memorable component to the centennial year for Le Mans and NASCAR's 75th anniversary as well."

JIM UTTER



Le Mans trio Johnson,
Rockenfeller and Button



Gragson aims to learn
from Johnson and Petty

TWO STARS IN ROOKIE CLASS

The NASCAR Cup Series' 2023 rookie class is a small one, but it has the potential to produce some surprise results.

Going toe to toe for rookie honours will be reigning Xfinity Series champion Ty Gibbs, competing for Joe Gibbs Racing in the #54 Toyota, and Noah Gragson, an eight-time winner in Xfinity in 2022, driving the #42 Chevrolet for the rebranded Legacy Motor Club.

Both drivers have showcased plenty

IT'S A DRIVER MERRY-GO-ROUND

Among the raft of driver/team moves following the 2022 season, none is more notable than Kyle Busch's switch to Richard Childress Racing after 15 years at Joe Gibbs Racing. Two-time Cup champion Busch, already considered one of the best drivers of his time, faces a new challenge as he joins an organisation that hasn't won a Cup title in nearly three decades.

It will be a true test of Busch's ability and his patience as he becomes acclimatised to RCR. But should the growing pains prove manageable, Busch is absolutely capable of returning RCR to its former glory as champions of the sport – and it started well with a podium finish at the LA Coliseum.

The man he has replaced is Tyler Reddick, a young gun who earned three victories last year, which is the most an RCR driver has managed in a single season since 2013. Reddick joins Michael Jordan and Denny Hamlin's 23XI, a fairly new organisation still trying to assert itself at the front of the pack – but it's shown flashes of promise with Bubba Wallace.

Reddick's transition should be less severe than Busch's, and he could very well find Victory Lane quicker too. Either way, both of these drivers could be playoff-bound in 2023, and will be frequent threats for race wins.

Ty Dillon is likely facing a critical year as he moves to yet another different team, Spire Motorsports, with hopes of finally winning a Cup race after over 200 starts. And then there's Ryan Preece, a driver who has fought hard for the chance he's finally getting at Stewart-Haas Racing. Only time will tell whether he rises to the occasion or sinks, but his past record indicates that he may be just the person SHR needs behind the wheel of that #41 machine.

NICK DEGROOT

ROSENBLUM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

of talent in NASCAR competition and are matched with organisations where they should be able to compete for wins. They also have some experience in the Cup Series: Gibbs, 20, ran 15 races last season as a substitute driver for the injured Kurt Busch at 23XI Racing. His best finish was 10th at Michigan.

Gragson, 24, competed in 18 races with three different teams – Beard Motorsports, Kaulig Racing and as a substitute for Alex Bowman at Hendrick Motorsports. His best finish was fifth at Daytona last August.

"Definitely a big jump for sure and [it's all about] just getting more time in this car that's so different," says Gibbs. "And the more

times I was in it, I feel like I was learning and getting more used to how it handles and how it is. I think all the time was progression and just keep moving forward."

Gragson believes there's a lot for him to learn on the track and off from Legacy MC owners Jimmie Johnson and Richard Petty, both seven-time Cup champions. "They're great mentors and leaders – there's a lot of great qualities in those two guys," says Gragson. "They're obviously champions of the sport, but I think there's more to the day-to-day stuff, learning how to become the best version of myself and the best driver that I can be."

JIM UTTER



Ty Gibbs is reigning Xfinity Series champion

NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

RACE CENTRE



WRC RALLY SWEDEN

Tanak restores M-Sport's WRC faith

After a difficult 2022, M-Sport needed a boost. And the World Rally Championship needed a rivalry at the front. In Sweden, we got both

TOM HOWARD

W

hen M-Sport rehired Ott Tanak for the 2023 World Rally Championship season the objective was clear: return to the top step of the podium after a trying campaign last year. In Sweden last weekend, Tanak delivered at just the second attempt.

The 2019 world champion outlined why he remains the sought-after talent M-Sport was desperate to bring back, proving it's possible to win in the WRC without the fastest car. Tanak's run to an 18th career victory also confirmed the hype that the Estonian's return to M-Sport, the team that nurtured his talent back in 2011,

will add extra spice to the championship battle. Reigning world champion Kalle Rovanperä had anticipated strong opposition this year, and now he knows he'll have a fight on his hands.

While Tanak ultimately claimed the spoils to end M-Sport's almost-13-month victory drought, Sweden was far from a dominant win and the WRC served up one of its most intense head-to-head battles in years. To add to the narrative, Tanak's sparring partner on this occasion was his M-Sport predecessor Craig Breen, who put his dismal 2022 at the Ford squad to bed on his WRC return with Hyundai. The Irishman almost stole the show on the Swedish



Rovanpera was hindered by running first but still managed to finish fourth

MCKLEIN



Tanak celebrates his 18th WRC victory, his third for M-Sport

MCKLEIN

snow to score a maiden WRC win.

After his team was resoundingly beaten 16-2 on stage wins by Toyota on the Monte Carlo Rally, Hyundai's new boss Cyril Abiteboul chose Sweden as the location to debut his first structural and procedural changes by bringing a dose of "F1 thinking" to the squad to fulfil his wish for the team to be more engineering-led. "Formula 1 is impressive with its chain of command and the amount of information that we have to digest in very little time," explained the former Renault F1 chief. "I think here it is a little bit different but there are some things we can transfer from F1 to this world."

While Hyundai enjoyed a far stronger showing in Sweden, it was Toyota that drew first blood when the action kicked off on Thursday night. The consensus was that starting first on the road would be a clear disadvantage, but last year's Sweden winner Rovanpera appeared to rip up that theory by winning the curtain raiser. Tanak was only 1.6 seconds shy, while Esapekka Lappi emerged as the top Hyundai driver in fourth despite skating into a snowbank, with Thierry Neuville fifth and Breen seventh.

Thoughts that Rovanpera would waltz his way into a commanding lead were quickly put to bed on Friday morning when the Finn struggled while cleaning the roads of snow. When conditions featured packed ice he was able to threaten the top of the times and even snatched two stage wins across the day's seven tests. But largely it was about damage limitation and Rovanpera had problems being first to tackle the second pass of the now rutted roads.

Rovanpera jokingly outlined the grave situation he faced on stage five after he emerged slower than WRC2 runners Oliver Solberg and

Emil Lindholm. "Just before the stage I got a message that traction has left the chat," he smiled. "There was not much I could do – I barely survived the stage, it was really tricky."

His struggles were highlighted by ending the day fifth, 31.1s adrift of the lead, a gap he believed was already too big to recover. "The gaps are not so big during the stages and with really fast stages tomorrow I think it will be difficult to do much," he predicted. "Every time we had a chance with the road condition we pushed hard and we were on the top times, I couldn't do much more."

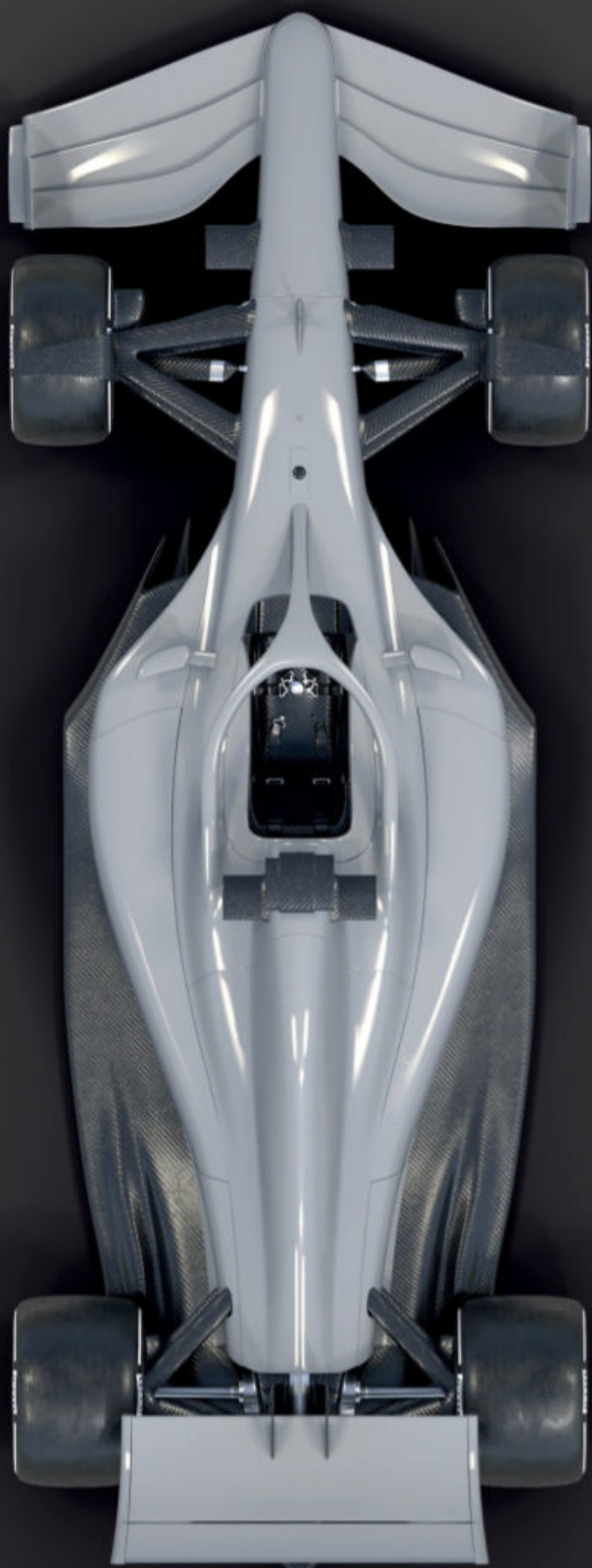
That lead Rovanpera thought insurmountable was held by Breen, who had produced the drive of the day. Breen has history on the snow in Sweden, highlighted by a second in 2018, although last year he found himself stuck in a snowbank on stage two. This was one of the moments from a disastrous 2022 season that took him to some dark places. The effects of last year, resulting in a move to a part-time seat at Hyundai, were clear to see when Breen won Friday's opening stage, which almost brought him to tears. "I've missed that feeling," he said. "Very, very simple, completely effortless. Second chance – I'm a very lucky boy."

A second stage win on the Brattby test (stage five) at the start of the afternoon brought the smile back to his face and the Breen that had been missing for some months returned. "I could probably be the mayor of Brattby at this stage," he joked after clocking a blistering time 7.8s quicker than his nearest rival. "The car is absolutely on rails – I've never had anything like this before. More of that please."

It was enough to snatch the lead away from Tanak, who had held sway in the morning despite failing to win a stage, but this »



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consistent pace was to prove the key for later success. Breen's day wasn't without a lucky brush with a snowbank on his way to extending the advantage to 10.5s, before ending Friday with a margin of 2.6s over Tanak. The biggest smile in the service park still belonged to Breen.

"Last year I was usually upside-down or stuck in a hedge somewhere, so it's music to my ears to be in the lead tonight," he grinned. "You have no idea of the darkness that went on last year and fortunately I ride the crest of the waves when things are good, but I unfortunately ride the down parts too."

While still not overly happy with his Puma, Tanak offered a glimpse into his potential by reeling in Breen, thanks to what would be his only fastest time on stage seven. "Result-wise, we can definitely be quite happy," stated Tanak. "It's much more than we expected coming here. We could be a lot better."

Lappi was another driver to enjoy a favourable road position, heading into Saturday 11.2s adrift in third ahead of Toyota's Elfyn Evans, who had struggled for confidence in his GR Yaris. Neuville was sixth, after finding the going extremely tough on the rutted roads.

Despite suffering from a lack of hybrid, M-Sport's Pierre-Louis Loubet inherited seventh following Takamoto Katsuta's wild exit from the rally. The Japanese, promoted to the third full factory Toyota for the first time in 2023, clouted a snowbank while occupying fifth, which sent his GR Yaris into a high-speed roll. The car lost its entire rear-wing assembly and suffered damage to the radiator that ultimately led to a retirement



Katsuta set a fastest stage time but shunt ended his challenge

MCKLEIN



Breen was back on form and led Hyundai's attack for much of the event

“The biggest smile belonged to Breen: ‘Last year I was usually stuck in a hedge somewhere’”

from the day's action. He would retire from the event completely on Sunday due to an engine issue.

If Friday had produced an intense duel between Breen and Tanak, then Saturday's events took it to the next level. The battle continued after Breen had a time penalty scare overnight when stewards issued the Hyundai driver with a reprimand for driving 30 metres in a designated EV-only zone under internal combustion engine power on Thursday. A fourth stage win for Breen on Saturday morning briefly helped extend the lead to 5.7s before Tanak again nibbled away at the advantage to 3s by midday service.

Again, a second pass took the cars through incredibly rutted stages, with exposed gravel now replacing the snow and ice surface. Tanak picked this moment to attack, and that coincided with misfortune for the leader. Breen somehow managed to escape a trip through a snowbank on stage 12 that no doubt last year, given his luck, would have halted him. The lead reduced to 1.7s. Then came stage 13 and drama overload.

First, Rovannerper suffered a spin after charging hard to catch Neuville following a morning during which the world champion labelled his GR Yaris “s*** to drive” after a failed set-up tweak. While much happier and faster in the afternoon, he lost control and managed to spin at a fifth-gear left-hander. Somehow he avoided all the snowbanks to slot his GR Yaris into an access road that allowed him to continue with minimal time loss.

Luck wasn't shining on third-placed Lappi when his front-right tyre delaminated, causing his Hyundai i20 N to snap and spin deep into a snowbank at the final corner with the stage end in sight. Spectators were able to eventually dig the Finn out, but seven minutes were lost as well as his podium hopes.

Moments later, team-mate Breen suffered a similar delamination, this time his front-left, but was able to reach the stage end. The lead dropped to 0.5s, but Breen had other problems in the form of a loss of hybrid boost.

Unaware of Breen's lack of hybrid, Tanak was next to suffer a tyre failure when his front-left punctured on a long straight, resulting in a junction overshoot. It halted a blistering run >>

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through stage 14 that had Tanak predicted to gain 12s. “Ask the Pirelli guys, it’s delaminated on the straight like the Hyundai guys,” fumed an angry Tanak when asked what had happened. Fortunately for him, Breen’s dramas catapulted him to an 8.6s rally lead heading into Sunday’s final three stages.

After a swift investigation, Pirelli confirmed that Tanak had suffered a puncture likely to have been caused by low tyre pressures. “There were in some cases tyre pressures that were much lower at the finish than we recommend at the start: we have never seen tyre pressures that low until today,” offered Pirelli rally manager Terenzio Testoni.

“It must also be said that in the afternoon the road conditions were completely different to the pure winter conditions in the

“We were not the fastest car and to be honest Ott has just done an incredible job”

morning, with a lot of exposed gravel and a rough surface, unsuitable for studded tyres. This situation was the cause of the slow puncture suffered by Tanak on SS14, just three kilometres after the start. Speeds, on the other hand, have no relevance: if they had, there would have been problems even this morning. On the contrary, we are witnessing very high and above-average speed peaks.”

While the battle for the lead captivated the large crowds flocking to the stages, it was Neuville and Roanpera – now elevated into a fight for the final podium spot after Lappi’s spin – who lit up the timing screens. At one point the pair shared third on identical overall times before a fourth stage win of the day lifted Neuville to a 3.8s advantage over Roanpera.

The prospect of a maiden win for Breen still being alive meant Tanak couldn’t rest on his laurels, but ultimately Sunday’s final three stages turned into a relative cruise compared to the previous three. After pulling away from Breen in the morning, Tanak’s victory was in the bag.

That was clearly the thinking at Hyundai too, and Abiteboul made the first big call of his tenure by deciding to deploy team orders to benefit lead driver Neuville by checking Breen in a minute late before the final stage to incur a 10s penalty to drop the Irishman to third, 0.5s behind the Belgian.

It created a dramatic and confusing finale after Neuville made an error on the final stage and, with Breen next on the road order, he was unaware and ended up reclaiming second by accident.



“That wasn’t the plan, but I had no way of knowing,” said a sheepish Breen when told the news. “We’re happy – it’s been an incredible weekend and great to be back at the front again.”

While the team orders backfired, Lappi did claim the full Power Stage bonus points to recover to seventh, and Neuville held off Roanpera for third. Evans was a distant fifth ahead of Loubet, who took sixth despite stopping on the final stage with an engine problem. He reached the finish using EV mode. Eighth overall was claimed by the impressive Solberg, who stormed to an emotional victory on home soil in WRC2.

But the rally belonged to Tanak as he swept to an 18.7s win to return the belief to the M-Sport team, and vindicate his decision to rejoin the Ford Puma squad in the hope that they can offer a shot at another world title.

“It is a great start [to the championship] and probably more than we expected,” said Tanak, who now tops the table by three points. “For sure, we can improve a lot this year and it is up to the guys how fast we can do that. Hopefully, when we get things rolling, we can be a bit more competitive.”

“Everybody has done a good job but we were not the fastest car and to be honest Ott has just done an incredible job,” added M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson. “It has been really difficult [last year], but I never lost the belief in the guys and girls and the Ford guys, and that we still had a world-beating car. Thankfully it has been proved again on this rally.”

The WRC title fight has been well and truly ignited. ✨



HYUNDAI'S TEAM ORDERS ATTEMPT



New Hyundai boss Cyril Abiteboul maintains that a backfired attempt to employ team orders to benefit Thierry Neuville's World Rally Championship title aspirations in Sweden was the correct call.

In only the second round of the season, the South Korean marque tried to switch the positions of Neuville and Craig Breen ahead of the final Power Stage.

With Breen sitting 8.5 seconds behind Tanak before the final stage, Hyundai chose to deliberately check the Irishman into the final stage a minute late to trigger a 10s penalty to place him 0.5s adrift of Neuville. But a mistake from the Belgian meant that he dropped back behind Breen into third.

"To a certain degree I think we did the right thing," argued Abiteboul. "For a team perspective when you are fighting for a championship you want to give the drivers maximum opportunity, which is what we did for Thierry. The God of Speed decided otherwise, but I like the God of Speed so the result will stand.

"We have lots of smiles from everyone, including Thierry who had a fantastic comeback having started the weekend on the back foot for lots of reasons, so to be back on the podium is a good story for him."

Neuville explained that he had simply misjudged his braking. "I tried to do a good stage as I wanted to take some Power Stage points, but I went a bit late on the brakes in the only corner where I have been too early all weekend," he explained. "That was the target [to beat Kalle Rovnanpera] and in a straight fight we were faster than Kalle this weekend, but it doesn't mean we are going to be fast in Mexico [for the next round next month]."

RESULTS ROUND 2/13, RALLY SWEDEN, 9-12 FEBRUARY

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	2h25m54.5s
2	Craig Breen (IRL) James Fulton (IRL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+18.7s
3	Thierry Neuville (BEL) Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+20.0s
4	Kalle Rovnanpera (FIN) Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+25.1s
5	Elfyn Evans (GBR) Scott Martin (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+1m24.1s
6	Pierre-Louis Loubet (FRA) Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+5m59.1s
7	Esapekka Lappi (FIN) Janne Ferm (FIN)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+7m42.5s
8	Oliver Solberg (SWE) Elliott Edmondson (GBR)	Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+7m48.1s
9	Ole-Christien Veiby (NOR) Torstein Eriksen (NOR)	Volkswagen Polo GTI R5	+8m30.4s
10	Sami Pajari (FIN) Enni Malkonen (FIN)	Toksport WRT / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+9m03.3s

OTHERS

14	Lorenzo Bertelli (ITA) Simone Scattolin (ITA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+10m36.1s
R	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN) Aaron Johnston (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 SS17-engine	

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Umea Sprint 1 (3.21 miles)	Rovanpera 3m23.3s	Rovanpera	Tanak +1.6s
SS2 Brattby 1 (6.69 miles)	Breen 6m24.8s	Tanak	Breen +1.3s
SS3 Sarsjoliden 1 (8.84 miles)	Rovanpera 6m28.3s	Tanak	Breen +1.9s
SS4 Botsmark 1 (16.04 miles)	Katsuta 12m00.0s	Tanak	Breen +2.1s
SS5 Brattby 2 (6.69 miles)	Breen 6m25.1s	Breen	Tanak +7.7s
SS6 Sarsjoliden 2 (8.84 miles)	Breen 6m35.0s	Breen	Tanak +10.5s
SS7 Botsmark 2 (16.04 miles)	Tanak 12m02.3s	Breen	Tanak +6.4s
SS8 Umea Sprint 2 (3.21 miles)	Rovanpera 3m28.1s	Breen	Tanak +2.6s
SS9 Norrby 1 (7.79 miles)	Neuville 5m20.2s	Breen	Tanak +4.6s
SS10 Floda 1 (17.55 miles)	Breen 12m11.5s	Breen	Tanak +5.7s
SS11 Savar 1 (10.74 miles)	Rovanpera 8m07.2s	Breen	Tanak +3.0s
SS12 Norrby 2 (7.79 miles)	Rovanpera 5m23.6s	Breen	Tanak +1.7s
SS13 Floda 2 (17.55 miles)	Neuville 12m10.0s	Breen	Tanak +0.5s
SS14 Savar 2 (10.74 miles)	Neuville 8m21.8s	Tanak	Breen +2.3s
SS15 Umea 1 (6.26 miles)	Neuville 5m49.2s	Tanak	Breen +8.6s
SS16 Vastervik 1 (16.45 miles)	Rovanpera 12m41.0s	Tanak	Breen +11.6s
SS17 Vastervik 2 (16.45 miles)	Neuville 12m37.0s	Tanak	Neuville +18.0s
SS18 Umea 2 (Power Stage) (6.26 miles)	Lappi 5m42.1s	Tanak	Breen +18.7s

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Tanak 41; 2 Rovnanpera 38; 3 Neuville 32; 4 Evans 29; 5 Sebastien Ogier 26; 6 Breen 19; 7 Lappi 15; 8 Katsuta 8; 8 Loubet 8; 10 Dani Sordo 6.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 80; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 66; 3 M-Sport Ford WRT 51.



NEXT REPORT

RALLY MEXICO
23 MARCH ISSUE

With his energy running low, Vergne played a canny game to win a dramatic race in India



Vergne holds firm in classic encounter

In one of the best Formula E races yet, the double champion held on to take an unexpected victory as the quick Jaguars hit trouble – and each other

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

In the middle of the Hussain Sagar lake, which Hyderabad's Formula E circuit overlooks as it sweeps along the waterfront, a statue of the Buddha dwarfs the surrounding landscape. His teachings encouraged the pursuit of a lifestyle free from desperate clinging to impermanent objects or phases, based on the notion that remaining tethered to them propagates an endless cycle of death and rebirth. Today, Buddhism's teachings of liberation are commonly associated with mindfulness and meditation. To truly find inner peace, the Buddha walked what became known as "the Middle Way" – the line between the extremes of hedonism and asceticism. It's an expression of moderation, not denying oneself basic pleasures, but not overindulging in them either.

Overindulgence in motorsport can be common. Competitive sport necessitates both greed and restraint in equal measure, but it's all too easy for a racing driver to take too much rope and subsequently deal with the consequences. With two laps remaining of Hyderabad's inaugural E-Prix, Formula E's first race in India, it looked as though Jean-Eric Vergne had overindulged in his energy consumption.

The chasing Nick Cassidy had around 4% more usable energy left in reserve in his Envision Jaguar than did the Frenchman, whose DS Penske car had been thrust into the lead of a wild race. But Cassidy's multiple attempts to pass Vergne in the closing stages came to naught; it proved to be that the Kiwi racer had been too restrained in his energy use, and Vergne reaped the rewards of finding the correct balance. He'd walked the Middle Way, and his patience was rewarded with his first victory in nearly two years.

It's fair to say that the DS-Penske alliance promised much in testing but had delivered little in the opening rounds in Mexico

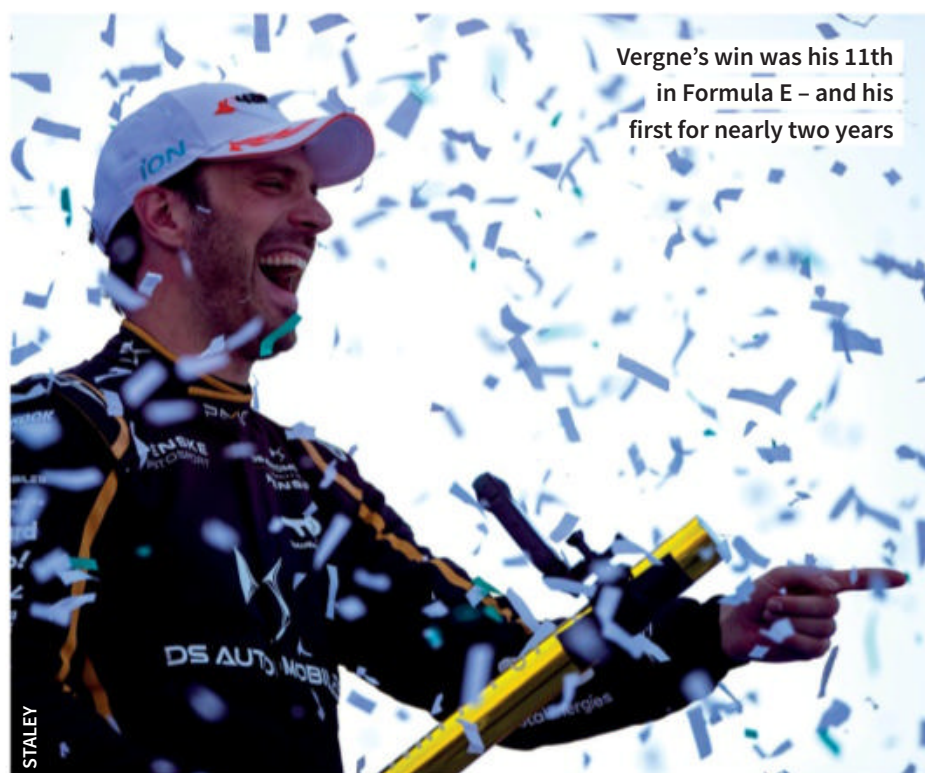
and Saudi Arabia. Glimpses of pace appeared to be restricted only to practice sessions. Vergne and reigning champion Stoffel Vandoorne had struggled to break out of the group stages of qualifying. But Vergne's speed came the race was marginally surprising given the strength shown by the Jaguar-powered cars on the grid, with the works Big Cat squad taking the lion's share of plaudits after heading both practice sessions.

This came amid a miserable swing for Porsche, which had controlled the opening three races. FP1 had already been delayed for a series of comical reasons, with police deciding to open the track for general traffic moments before the session began. Then, after the series of scooters and tuk-tuks were eventually cleared off the circuit, the session faced another pause when the marshals' walkie-talkies began to run low on battery. Oh, the irony...

When the session was finally under way, championship leader Pascal Wehrlein sustained a heavy crash owing to a vehicle control unit failure. The German was carted off to hospital for precautionary checks but was discharged after reporting only soreness from the impact. Regardless, Porsche and Andretti sat out the rest of FP1 as a precaution, losing valuable track time.

This was music to Jaguar's ears. Jake Dennis had singled out the British manufacturer as a threat to Porsche's dominance given Sam Bird's impressive efficiency in Diriyah's second race, and it seemed that the Andretti driver was right. Envision's Sebastien Buemi underlined the Jag powertrain's pace to lead FP1, while Bird was on top of second practice. While Vergne had been second in the Saturday morning session, DS Penske's tendency to flatter then subsequently deceive suggested that this half-hour of running was not going to be the true bellwether.

It looked as though normal service had resumed for the >>



Vergne's win was his 11th in Formula E – and his first for nearly two years



Points leader Wehrlein's weekend did not start well with this shunt

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Franco-American squad when Vandoorne was dumped out of qualifying's group phase. Mitch Evans and Buemi cemented the place of two Jaguar runners in that group, joined by Nissan's Sacha Fenestraz and Maserati MSG driver Maximilian Guenther, who was elevated into the top four when Jake Hughes had his best times stripped away following a minimum pitstop time infraction.

Despite his team-mate's continued qualifying woes, Vergne broke with tradition and looked effortlessly quick throughout. He hurled his car to the top of the times in Group B and stayed there until moments before the end, when the McLaren Nissan of Rene Rast shaded him by just 0.004 seconds. Bird got the works Jaguar into the top four, but Envision driver Cassidy was chiselled out by Edoardo Mortara (Maserati) by the close of the session.

To put it bluntly, the quarter-finals were a dog's dinner – and it was all down to one corner. The Turn 1 chicane was distinctly un-Formula E; no kerbs, walls or bollards were put in place to keep the drivers off. Instead, they swept through as if the corner wasn't there, flirting with the white line to stay within the confines of the circuit. This hadn't affected the opening pair of duels, where Buemi overcame Fenestraz in an incredibly tight battle separated by just a tenth, while Evans breezed by Guenther by over a second.

Bird had been drawn against Vergne and, having gone 0.3s up in the second sector, the Briton nearly gave that all away through the final corners and stayed just 0.036s ahead when Vergne finished his lap. Following that, Rast lost to Mortara after shipping half a second with a Turns 12-13 slide, with the two separated by just 0.05s before the German's slip.

It all proved irrelevant. Bird lost his time for track limits and hurled his gloves at the wall in frustration. Mortara's time was then chalked off, setting up what would have been a losers' semi-final between Rast and Vergne. But Rast lost his lap too, and Vergne was hence in the bizarre situation of having to go through the motions and contest the duel on his own. Evans then beat Buemi to join Vergne in the final, which the Kiwi won by a slender 0.021s for pole.



Here, Jaguar's cars looked like the overwhelming favourites. Evans had the whip hand, Buemi was right behind Vergne, and Bird was out for blood. Cassidy, with his proclivity for making up ground in the races, was also going to be a factor from ninth on the grid.

Although Vergne began with the inside line for the first corner, Evans chopped across when the lights went out and kept the Parisian at bay into the hairpin. From there, Evans tried to grow his advantage, but at no point did Vergne countenance an early breakaway. Instead, it remained under a second for the first six laps, which made Evans's next move rather curious.

On lap seven of 33, Evans took his first two minutes of attack mode. As in Diriyah, Jaguar elected to take attack mode early on in a presumed desire to be proactive. But it was hardly the pragmatic approach, particularly with the chasing pack so close behind, and the order shuffled at the hairpin as Buemi was simultaneously launching a move down the inside of Vergne. The Swiss went >>

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT RETURNS TO INDIA

Formula E made a long-anticipated debut in India last weekend as Hyderabad played host to round four of the 2023 season. A world championship race of any sort in India had seemed like a pipedream until a few years ago, so the fact that the organisers could tap support from the state government and pull off the event was an achievement in itself.

The significance of the Hyderabad E-Prix cannot be understated, since India hadn't

witnessed a motor race of this scale since Formula 1 last visited the Buddh International Circuit back in 2013. In fact, the taxation saga and the bureaucratic issues that clouded F1's brief visit to the subcontinent had so badly dented India's reputation that few thought it would be able to host a significant international race again. Hence, the Hyderabad event will go a long way in rebuilding confidence in the government and

could open the door for more championships to arrive or return to the country.

The race itself was largely a success and generated plenty of buzz among the locals, partly because it took place in the very heart of the city at a street circuit built around the Hussain Sagar lake. The organisers have also erected permanent garages, showing how serious they are about making the race a long-term fixture on the Formula E calendar.

The track layout also received a thumbs up from the drivers – save for the chicane at Turns 1 and 2 – with Porsche's Antonio Felix da Costa describing it as “one of the most fun tracks we've had to drive a fast lap”.

But there were several complaints regarding substandard facilities in the paddock. Some fans also took to social media to share their poor experiences, including a lack of basic amenities. So, while Hyderabad has all the ingredients in place to make it a successful annual event, the organisers clearly have a lot of work to do for the second edition next year.

RACHIT THUKRAL





down the inside, and Vergne tried to defend around the outside and came up for air two-wide on the corner exit, Buemi grabbing the lead. With Fenestraz just behind them, Evans was boxed in and had given away three positions in one fell swoop – to his audible displeasure on the radio.

Evans repassed the Franco-Argentinian to sit third, but could not capitalise on the leading duo trading places once again on the ninth lap. Buemi grabbed the first two minutes of his attack mode, remaining ahead of Evans, to let Vergne move up into the lead. The two again swapped around a lap later as Vergne opted for a one-minute power boost to keep another three in reserve for later.

With a clean run, Evans reckoned after the race that he had enough about him to win in Hyderabad, and had been patiently tracking the leading pair as they dined for supremacy. But the race's first act ended with a sudden implosion in the Jaguar camp, the team's misfortune compounded on the 13th lap. Bird, who had made early progress to move up to fifth, was planning to take his first attack mode activation of the race. But with the train of cars ahead blocking the route to the timing loop he elected to go down the inside and looked to be making a move on Fenestraz. Instead, Bird misjudged his braking entirely and Fenestraz took evasive action, and thus the #10 Jaguar speared directly into the side of the #9. Team principal James Barclay, understandably, had his head in his hands.

Fenestraz and Guenther were innocent bystanders but ended up getting surrounded by the two Jaguars and haemorrhaged positions. With the hapless four having to manoeuvre their way back onto the circuit, the pack was shuffled once again to bring Cassidy, Rast and Dennis into the top five.

Arguably, the impromptu traffic jam at Turn 3 was more important for Vergne; since Cassidy was over two seconds behind, it gave the Frenchman clear space to consume his second attack mode a lap later. With those three minutes of 350kW, Vergne could

“I was able to lift in some places where it allowed me to block. It was not a peaceful race for sure!”

close in on Buemi once more and mounted a lap 15 overtaking move to firmly sink his talons into the lead. Immediately knowing that the battle was lost, Buemi changed course to pick up his own remaining attack mode, lifting Cassidy into second place.

At this stage, there was a glimmer of a Dennis special because he'd carried out a near-carbon copy of his Diriyah races with a quiet ascent to the front. When Cassidy grabbed attack mode to respond to team-mate Buemi, Dennis was up to second and looked clear to challenge Vergne, but this was where the British driver peaked. Instead, Cassidy proved too rapid with his extra 50kW and swept past the Andretti Porsche machine to resume his victory challenge.

Vergne had been 1.6s up the road at this point, and therefore the Kiwi had a gulf to traverse. By neatly pruning the gap on the following tours, Cassidy had managed to get to within half a second of the gold-and-black DS Penske, and with an extra 2% of energy in hand. But the challenge was paused on lap 23 when Hughes dumped his McLaren machine into the wall on the exit of Turn 3, caused by his mirror bizarrely getting lodged behind his steering wheel, to prompt two safety car laps.

After the restart, Cassidy spent the race throwing the kitchen sink at Vergne. He got alongside into Turn 3 on multiple occasions, but Vergne wisely placed his car to the inside. “I just put the [Boeing] 777 wings on the side,” Vergne joked afterwards of his defence, having been offered stern tests by Cassidy.

The energy deficit to the New Zealander was rising: 3% became 4%, while the gap was a scant 0.2s two laps from home. But Vergne held on in a breathless encounter, claiming his first win since April 2021 by just 0.4s, crossing the line with no usable energy left in a perfectly judged defence. Cassidy was set to be joined on the podium by team-mate Buemi, but an overpower spike for the Swiss cost him dearly, elevating Antonio Felix da Costa's Porsche into third place.

“I was able to lift in some places where it allowed me to block,” Vergne explained after the race, “and that's what I've done until the end of the race. It was not a peaceful race for sure!”

For Formula E's first trip to India, the race itself was an unquestionable success. In a championship that looked to be going one way, the events in Hyderabad disrupted that perception and produced a scintillating encounter that will surely go down as a series classic. And, on a day where all was chaos, it was Vergne who serenely presided over the rest of the field – and, after two troubled seasons, he appeared to be a man reborn. ✨



IN THE HEADLINES

DA COSTA HITS 100

Antonio Felix da Costa conceded that he got “a little lucky” with Sebastien Buemi’s penalty for overpower, but was pleased to conclude his 100th Formula E race with a podium for Porsche. “The short-term goal is to try and be quicker in one-lap pace, because clearly we do have a great race car,” he explained. “It’s a matter of starting to put it all together.”

‘HOME’ MAGIC FOR ROWLAND

Oliver Rowland jokingly praised “Indian magic” for a strong sixth place at Hyderabad, in Mahindra’s first home race. The Briton crossed the line in fifth before dropping down a place with a five-second track limits penalty. “Our energy management hasn’t been very good, so I was wondering with 10 laps to go if we got something wrong and we were one lap short,” he admitted.

NEW 2023 SCORERS

NIO 333 driver Sergio Sette Camara and Nissan’s Norman Nato picked up their first points of the season with fifth and seventh respectively, both enjoying clean races to work their way through much of the chaos. This leaves the Abt trio and Maximilian Guenther as the only drivers yet to get off the mark.

DENNIS THWARTED

A clash with Rene Rast ruined Jake Dennis’s hopes of cutting his points deficit to Pascal Wehrlein. The McLaren driver went straight into the rear of the Andretti Porsche and caused damage, prompting the Briton to pit for a check-up. Dennis finished a lowly 16th, while Rast got a three-place grid penalty for Cape Town. Sam Bird received a five-place grid penalty for his clash with Mitch Evans.

WEHRLEIN BOUNCES BACK

After his trip to hospital following his FP1 crash, Porsche’s Pascal Wehrlein (below) felt discomfort during Saturday’s running but was able to extend his lead to 18 points over Jake Dennis by finishing fourth. “The mechanics did a fantastic job, they slept only one hour – I didn’t sleep much more,” said Wehrlein. “I think after today, we got payback. We can be happy and go home with a good feeling.”



S BLOXHAM



BAGNALL

RESULTS ROUND 3/11, HYDERABAD (IND), 11 FEBRUARY (33 LAPS – 59.450 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Penske / DSE-Tense FE23	46m01.099s
2	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+0.400s
3	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+1.859s
4	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+2.855s
5	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 ER9	+3.523s
6	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M9Electro	+7.138s
7	Norman Nato (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+7.318s
8	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	DS Penske / DSE-Tense FE23	+7.564s
9	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+8.703s
10	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Maserati / Maserati Tipo Folgore	+9.073s
11	Nico Muller (CHE)	Abt / Mahindra M9Electro	+10.622s
12	Sacha Fenestraz (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+11.635s
13	Maximilian Guenther (DEU)	Maserati / Maserati Tipo Folgore	+15.446s
14	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M9Electro	+15.999s
15	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+17.735s
16	Jake Dennis (GBR)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+1m10.562s
R	Rene Rast (DEU)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	25 laps-accident damage
R	Jake Hughes (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	22 laps-accident
R	Sam Bird (GBR)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	18 laps-accident damage
R	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 ER9	15 laps-mechanical
R	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	12 laps-accident damage
R	Kelvin van der Linde (ZAF)	Abt / Mahindra M9Electro	9 laps-brakes

Winner’s average speed 77.513mph. **Fastest lap** Muller 1m14.656s, 84.945mph.

QUALIFYING 1 Evans 1m13.228s; 2 Vergne 1m13.249s; 3 Buemi 1m13.533s; 4 Fenestraz no time; 5 Guenther NT; 6 Bird NT; 7 Mortara NT; 8 Rast NT; 9 Cassidy 1m14.234s; 10 Rowland 1m14.721s; 11 Dennis 1m14.377s; 12 Wehrlein 1m14.663s*; 13 da Costa 1m14.732s; 14 Nato 1m14.420s; 15 Sette Camara 1m14.756s; 16 Ticktum 1m14.539s; 17 Vandoorne 1m14.823s; 18 Muller 1m14.549s; 19 di Grassi 1m14.917s; 20 Lotterer 1m14.818s; 21 Hughes 1m15.118s; 22 van der Linde 1m15.173s. * = grid penalty.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Wehrlein 80; 2 Dennis 62; 3 Vergne 31; 4 Buemi 31; 5 Cassidy 28; 6 Bird 28; 7 Hughes 27; 8 Rast 26; 9 da Costa 21; 10 di Grassi 18.

NEXT REPORT

CAPE TOWN E-PRIX
2 MARCH ISSUE

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Interest rate goes up on APR chances

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES
DUBAI (ARE)
11-12 FEBRUARY
ROUNDS 1 & 2/4

Algarve Pro Racing leads the race for Le Mans 24 Hours qualification following the first half of the Asian Le Mans Series over eight hours of racing in Dubai.

Daytona 24 Hours LMP2 winner James Allen plus Kyffin Simpson did the heavy lifting alongside bronze John Falb in the APR ORECA to claim a win on Saturday and fourth on Sunday. Allen enjoyed a battle with Charlie Eastwood, leading the line in the DKR Engineering ORECA, before gaining a decisive advantage at the final stops.

Eastwood, sharing with Turks Ayhancan



Guven and Salih Yoluc, led late on Sunday before a pass just ahead of the final stops from Nolan Siegel. The teenaged American was the weekend's breakout star, and he and compatriots Christian Bogle and Charles Crews took victory in their Inter Europol Competition ORECA after being sidelined from Saturday's race with a wheel problem.

Nielsen Racing, led by Ben Hanley and Mathias Beche, took fourth on Saturday and beat the APR trio to third on Sunday.

MV2S Racing leads the LMP3 standings after a victory on Saturday and a third

on Sunday, with Graff (two seconds) and DKR (Sunday winner) close at hand.

Walkenhorst Motorsport's BMW, with Nicky Catsburg leading the line-up, was a double winner. GetSpeed's Mercedes took two seconds, with Raffaele Marciello battling past third-placed Miguel Molina (AF Corse Ferrari) late on in Sunday's race. Late call-up Tom Gamble headed a Garage 59 McLaren 4-5 at the flag on Sunday.

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Wurz gets Hedge trimmed out

FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA
TAUPO (NZL)
11-12 FEBRUARY
ROUND 5/5

Charlie Wurz claimed New Zealand's Toyota Formula Regional Oceania title despite losing the points lead to Callum Hedge after the first of three races over the series' final weekend.

Hedge pipped Louis Foster to pole for the Saturday race, with Wurz down in fifth on the grid. The Kiwi talent staved off everything Brit Foster could throw at him to take victory. New Zealand Grand Prix winner Laurens van Hoepen was third from Liam Sceats and Wurz in an M2 Competition 1-3-4-5, interrupted only by Foster's Giles Motorsport car.

Wurz reclaimed the championship lead thanks to a great start vaulting him from

fifth to third in the reversed-grid race. Hedge got ahead of Foster but could do no better than sixth. Up front, American W Series racer Chloe Chambers held off local Kaleb Ngatoa for the win.

Qualifying for the decisive Denny Hulme Trophy finale ended with Wurz on pole and Hedge fifth. Wurz took the lead, while Hedge got a break after a poor start when he was restored to fifth due to David Morales turning Foster around. Wurz led van Hoepen, Liam Sceats and the charging Hedge as rain fell with the field on slicks. Hedge was jumped by James Penrose on a safety car restart, and was promoted back to fourth by a penalty for Sceats for a starting infringement. But it wasn't enough to prevent Wurz being crowned.

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WEEKEND WINNERS

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES
DUBAI (ARE)
Race 1

- LMP2** James Allen/Kyffin Simpson/John Falb, Algarve Pro Racing (ORECA 07)
- LMP3** Jerome de Sadeleer/Fabien Lavergne/Vyacheslav Gutak
MV2S Racing (Ligier JSP320)
- GT** Nicky Catsburg/Thomas Merrill/
Chandler Hull, Walkenhorst
Motorsport (BMW M4 GT3)

- Race 2**
- LMP2** Nolan Siegel/Christian Bogle/Charles Crews, Inter Europol (ORECA 07)
- LMP3** Valentino Catalano/Tom van Rompuy, DKR Engineering
(Duqueine M30-D08)
- GT** Catsburg/Merrill/Hull

FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA
TAUPO (NZL)

- Race 1** Callum Hedge
M2 Competition
- Race 2** Chloe Chambers
Giles Motorsport
- Race 3** Charlie Wurz
M2 Competition

FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST
DUBAI (ARE)

- Race 1** Andrea Kimi Antonelli
Mumbai Falcons Racing
- Race 2** Pepe Marti
Pinnacle VAR
- Race 3** Nikita Bedrin
PHM Racing

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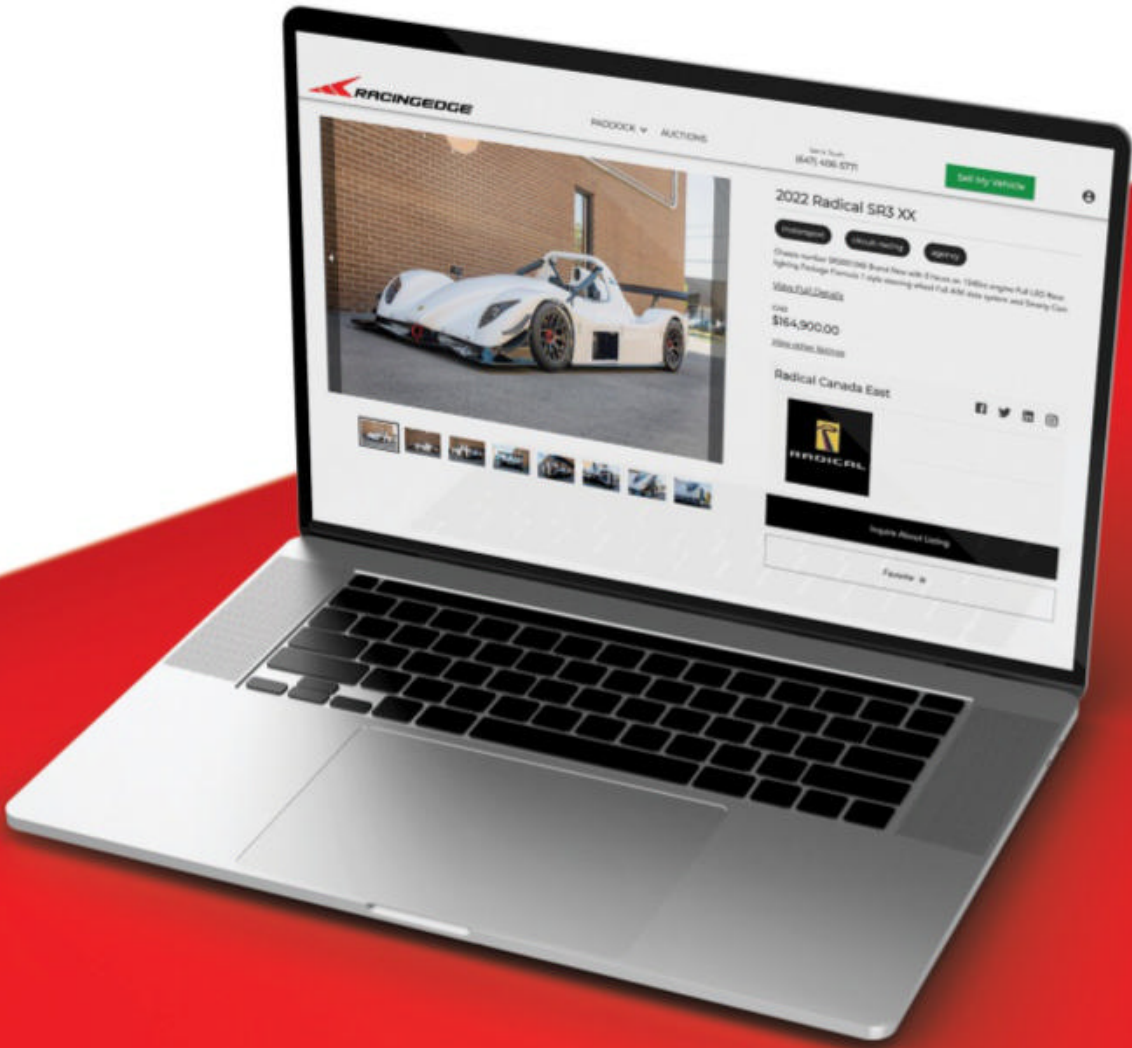


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GIRLS MENTORING SCHEME
Alpine F1 Team

BWT Alpine F1 Team, with support from Motorsport UK and Girls on Track UK, have launched a new mentoring scheme and are now inviting secondary school-aged girls in Year 9, who aspire to work in motorsport, to apply.

The mentoring scheme has been designed for future motorsport professionals interested in factory, office and engineering roles.

Individuals selected to enter the mentoring scheme will have a BWT Alpine F1 Team member as their dedicated mentor. The mentor will provide guidance and support via regular video conferences and face-to-face meet-ups, giving regular advice and encouragement to the mentee. These great opportunities would all come as standard for all mentees who take part in the scheme.

If you are interested in applying for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, please complete the application by Friday 17 February.

The applications will be looked at by the BWT Alpine F1 Team and successful applicants will be notified by Monday 6 March.

A launch event will be held on Tuesday 4 April at BWT Alpine F1 Team in Enstone, Oxfordshire and candidates will need to be free on this date to start the programme..

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- Skilled in creating system designs by appropriately allocating functionality between hardware, firmware and software based on experience within one or more of these fields.
- Ability to clearly articulate design intent using design documents, block diagrams, flow diagrams and system level schematics.
- Experience in Model Based Systems Engineering and related standards and tools such as UML, SysML, Sparx EA, Rhapsody.
- A methodical thinker with an eye for detail.

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- Work alongside the Quality Control Engineer working within the guidelines set out in the Haas Quality Manual.
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- Raising of concessions and rejection notes where appropriate, in accordance with the Quality Management System.
- Ensure parts are laser engraved with the identifying information required
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- Assist the R&D group in performing rig testing of components.
- Other duties as assigned by the Head of R&D.

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- Must have experience of complex low-voltage wiring harnesses manufacture including the following techniques:
 - Wire wrapping/twisting
 - Moulded parts/System 25
 - Service loops
- Ability to read and interpret electrical schematics and harness manufacturing drawings
- Ability to work to a high level of dimensional accuracy and repeatability.
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- Knowledge of and experience of working to automotive and/or motorsport wiring standards
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- Knowledge of parts lifting and component tracking. Including how assemblies and components can be related and interchange.
- Microsoft: 365 Suite (Excel, PowerPoint, etc.)
- Knowledge of production, stock management, sales and procurement process across the industry.

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Special 70 years of Corvette races

MSVR

A trio of special events for early Chevrolet Corvettes will be held this year, which will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the American car's launch and have attracted interest from around the world.

Standalone contests are planned at two special US-themed events – the American SpeedFest at Brands Hatch in June and the second running of the US AutoShow fixture at Oulton Park in August – while Corvettes are also set to have a strong presence on the Thundersports grid at the rebranded Silverstone Festival at the end of August.

The races will be open to the C1, C2 and C3 Corvette models. Sprint races for the cars will be held at Brands and Oulton, while

the Silverstone race will be a mini-enduro.

The Corvette contests will be organised by the team behind the successful Bernie's V8s & Historic Outlaws series – who also plan to create a fun atmosphere in the paddock – and they have been amazed by the amount of interest generated.

“We're such Corvette fanatics – we've been racing Corvettes for a long time,” explained Simeon Chodosh, who is set to join father Bernie and brother Adam racing Corvettes on the same grid for the first time. “My dad started racing a Corvette, that my brother and I have been sharing, about 35 years ago. We always thought we would put on this 70th anniversary race and see what happens.”

After getting support from MotorSport

Vision Racing to organise the grids at the US-themed events, a website was built and an enquiry form created for those with Corvettes interested in taking part. To date, 45 drivers have expressed interest in competing, the majority being those with C2s and C3s. The list includes cars from across Europe and beyond, with the organisers helping owners to transport their Corvettes to the UK.

“We know the power of social media but we never expected anything of this magnitude – you would be hard pushed to find a full grid of early Corvettes even in America,” added Chodosh. “The response we got from all around the world was just incredible. We had the first car from America sign up last week and there are plenty of cars from Europe.

“This is a history-creating moment – there's not going to be another big anniversary for Corvettes like this and it's never been done before in this country. The Classic Corvette Club is going to bring up to 250 Corvettes at Brands Hatch and we've been speaking to GM Heritage.”

Chodosh added that they opted to limit the races to the older Corvettes to provide “close battles” that would not occur if more modern cars were also eligible. Despite the interest, he says more Corvette-only races are unlikely next year and instead other special races to sit alongside the regular Bernie's V8s series are already being planned.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



GT4 ace Kellett joins Century's Porsche squad

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Dominant Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion James Kellett will progress into the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this year as part of an expanded Century Motorsport operation.

The team has been an established frontrunner in British GT and Ginettas and moved into the Carrera Cup for the first time last year, running a single car for 2021 British GT4 champion Gus Burton. He qualified on pole for the first round of the season, before taking two wins and finishing fourth in the standings.

Burton is now aiming for a title bid this year and will be joined by Kellett in two Rosland Gold Racing-entered cars. Kellett's fellow GT4 Supercup graduate Henry Dawes and sophomore Pro-Am Carrera Cup racer Angus Whiteside complete Century's four-car line-up.

Kellett, who won 13 of last year's 20 GT4 Supercup bouts and is a two-time GT5 Challenge champion, has only completed a dozen laps in the Porsche on a wet taster day but is relishing the prospect of joining the series. "I'm absolutely ecstatic – I can't wait," said Kellett. "It's a new challenge I'm going to grab with both hands. It's something I'm not used to and, for me, that is even more exciting. If it wasn't for Stuart [Kinner] and the guys at Rosland Gold, I would've never had the opportunity.

"It's a championship I've always wanted



Ginetta star Kellett (left) joins Burton at Century



PORSCHE

to race in. Porsche is my favourite road car manufacturer so it's always been a dream of mine to race one. Century Motorsport is a team I've been racing for since the end of 2017, I've won multiple championships with them so I've got confidence in the team."

Despite his lack of experience in the car, Kellett is optimistic about challenging from the off. "I wouldn't be racing if I wasn't going to try and win the championship – I'm not here to make the numbers up," he said. "I'm hoping to jump in and try to qualify on pole and win the first race. I know there's some drivers that have more experience in the cars than I have but I don't let it worry me."

Century team boss Nathan Freke also believes that both Burton and Kellett can fight for the title. "There's going to be a learning process for James but, like Gus, he's exceptionally talented and very dedicated," said Freke. "We came out of the blocks last year super-strong – the championship is now the sole target.

"Henry is in his third year with us and he lights up the awning. I think he should get some good results. Then Angus was a direct result of Gus doing well. We came close to signing him last year and we stayed in contact. It's nice to know you're going into a season with a great dynamic in the team."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Cayman champion Foster steps up

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP

Porsche Sprint Challenge GB champion Harry Foster will graduate to the Carrera Cup this year, continuing with Team Parker Racing.

Foster, the older brother of Indy Pro 2000 champion Louis, won the Cayman crown during his first full season in the series and took eight wins. He will now join team-mate and Porsche GB Junior driver Adam Smalley in having Duckhams backing as he progresses up the marque's pyramid.

"I was really hoping I'd be able to do the Carrera Cup this season and progress to the next level," said Foster. "When I heard the news from Stuart Parker I was over the moon as he told me on my 21st birthday, which started the day off nicely! I'm hugely grateful to Stuart and Chris Hodgen for putting it all together and Duckhams Yuasa Racing for giving me the opportunity."

Aiming to follow in Foster's Sprint Challenge title-winning footsteps will be Ginetta Junior

frontrunner Joe Warhurst, who has been confirmed as a Team Parker driver.

"We were looking at options at the end of last year and were hoping that we'd go into Ginetta G55 or something similar but that isn't really a thing anymore," said Warhurst. "We heard that the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB was going to replace them on the TOCA package, which is a huge advantage, as it will help me a lot with media coverage."

Warhurst took two Porsche Sprint Challenge Southern



PORSCHE

Foster will continue with Team Parker

European victories in the Cayman class at the Algarve circuit last weekend, while Richardson Racing's Robert de Haan was again the overall winner each time.

Gough and Wrigley to support charity in Race Lab McLaren

BRITISH GT

Race Lab has confirmed that it will run three cars in the British GT Championship this year, including Ian Gough and Tom Wrigley at the wheel of a new McLaren Artura GT4.

Gough, who has raced primarily in Formula Ford and took a British Endurance Championship win with Race Lab last season, is making his BGT debut. Wrigley, the 2016 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion, will embark on his first full season campaign since finishing third in the 2018 Porsche Carrera Cup GB table.

The entry has partnered with mental health charity The Lions Barber Collective, which focuses on the high rate of suicide among men aged 45 and under in the UK.

To raise awareness, the charity will offer free haircuts in the paddock at all six UK rounds, while the pop-up barber shop will also include a racing simulator and 'beat the pro' challenge. "I can't wait to get going with this – it's a life goal realised racing in British GT," said Gough. "But the stakes are high; raising awareness for The Lions Barber Collective is an important purpose that is driving our team. At the same time, we're here to win."

Race Lab has also confirmed that it will run two GT3 cars in British GT, with Pro-Am duo Euan Hankey and Lucky Khera sharing a McLaren 720S GT3. Khera will embark on his first full-time British GT campaign, while Hankey, who is Race Lab's sporting director, previously raced the McLaren with Mia Flewitt.

Former FF1600 driver Gough and Ginetta champion Wrigley team up



British GT bid for Macleod and Price

BRITISH GT

Multiple race winner Callum Macleod will partner Mike Price at Greystone GT in British GT this season, aboard a Mercedes-AMG GT3.

The Pro-Am pair have raced together extensively prior to this year, taking wins in

the GT Cup for the past two seasons, which included fifth in class in 2022 for Price's maiden season of GT3 racing.

Macleod last raced full-time in British GT in 2019, but helped Ian Loggie to the overall GT3 crown last season with victory alongside the Scot at Snetterton.

"Mike was keen to step up to British GT this year and Greystone GT do seem to be the ideal fit for us for the coming season," said Macleod, a class winner at the Spa 24 Hours. "Mike's progress was rapid in GT3 across his rookie season in 2022 and he was easily the most-improved driver in the class in GT Cup. If Mike can continue to progress at the rate he's shown over the past few years, I think we can aim for podiums by the end of the season."

Greystone, which made its debut in British GT last year, has already confirmed that it will run a McLaren 720S this season for Oli Webb and Andrey Borodin alongside the Mercedes.

Duo will progress from GT Cup with Greystone



IN THE HEADLINES

SPECIAL BARC AWARDS

A number of special accolades were handed out at the British Automobile Racing Club's awards night earlier this month, including MG Owners Club ace Steve McDermid claiming the President's Cup for the most successful driver. Also honoured was Hyundai Coupe Cup coordinator Jon Winter with the Gerry Marshall Trophy, while Britcar boss Claire Hedley was handed the Densley Trophy. Junior Saloons champion Maximus Hall was given the Peter Collins Trophy for most promising newcomer.

NEW SUPERSPORT CLASS

An extra class has been created in the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Supersport Endurance Cup for its first full season this year. A new top class has been added for cars with a power-to-weight ratio of 311-350bhp per tonne to enable a greater range of machinery to compete. Six two-hour Supersport contests are planned this season.

BREAKELL TO GINETTA GT

Breakell Racing has announced that it will compete in the new Ginetta GT Championship this year and has revealed a three-car line-up. The new series features a class for a mid-specification G56 alongside one for GT5 Challenge G40s. GT5 frontrunner Ruben Hage will move into the G56 division with the team, alongside former GT4 Supercup racer Carl Garnett, while Karim Sekkat will drive for Breakell in the GT5 class.

SCHWARZE TO ELITE

Hugo Schwarze has become the latest driver announced at top Ginetta Junior squad Elite Motorsport. The 16-year-old German (below) only began karting last season but impressed in the Rotax European Golden Trophy race at Genk. "He did his first day in a car with us at the end of last summer and has progressed extremely well," said team boss Eddie Ives.



Prize fund of £75,000 for TCR UK racers

TCR UK

TCR UK has introduced a new prize fund totalling £75,000, including £30,000 to be split between the top three overall in the 2023 championship.

Now entering its sixth season, the series has previously offered a British Touring Car Championship test for its champion driver. The new rewards will be part of the podium ceremony for every race as well as the final championship standings.

Each weekend's opening race top three will earn £1500, £1000 and £500, with podium finishers in reversed-grid races receiving half those amounts. There will also be a £1000 bonus for the fastest qualifier at each round.

Champions of the Tom Walker Memorial and Goodyear Diamond Trophy sub-classes – for rookies and drivers aged over 40 respectively – will earn £2500 each.

“We’re trying to differentiate ourselves from some of the other championships to make ourselves stand out a bit more,” said



championship promoter Stewart Lines. “We’ve already got a decent sized grid so we didn’t do it to try and attract a load of drivers in, but another three or four would be great. It’s not just about the top three [in the championship]. There’s a lot of people who can win some money. When I used to race motocross years ago, we always used to get start money or earn a bit of prize money. But car racing costs a lot more money, and there’s nothing.”

It’s a further boost for the category, which

has blossomed in recent years, with grid sizes reaching an average of 22 cars in 2022. That number looks set to be topped this year, with two-time Kumho BMW champion Rick Kerry among the latest to join the grid in a Cupra TCR.

Former Power Maxed Racing driver Callum Newsham, a podium finisher last season, will remain in the championship but switches to a Hyundai i30 N run by James Hone’s new JH Racing team.

MARK PAULSON

Douglas and Hillspeed confirm first drivers

Brazilian Staico joins Douglas

GB3

Four more drivers have been confirmed for this season’s GB3 Championship, taking the total number of competitors to 16 so far. Brazilian Lucas Staico and American Shawn Rashid have both joined

Douglas Motorsport for their maiden campaigns in the category. Staico finished runner-up in last year’s Brazilian Formula 4 Championship, while Rashid placed fifth in the British Racing & Sports Car Club’s National Formula Ford standings. Joining them on the grid

this season will be Gerrard Xie and Daniel Mavlyutov, who will both drive for Hillspeed. Hong Kong’s Xie won the Chinese F4 title last term, and was an impressive runner-up on his Macau GP debut, while Mavlyutov graduates from British F4 after finishing 15th overall with Hitech.

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IN THE HEADLINES

SHERWOOD AND CDR IN F4

GB4 race winner Jack Sherwood will continue with Chris Dittmann Racing in British Formula 4 this year after joining the team for the final four events of 2022. Sherwood took two wins and was fifth in the GB4 standings in his main campaign, while his best F4 result was eighth. "I feel at home in the F4 car, so it will be a case of fine tuning in the pre-season and make sure we're ready to hit the ground running," he said.

NEW GB4 DRIVERS JOIN

Two more drivers have joined the GB4 Championship this season. Scottish karter Harry Burgoyne Jr will drive for Graham Brunton Racing, the 15-year-old having finished third in the CIK-FIA OKJ World Championship in 2020. American Jason Conzo, who had raced single-seaters in his home country, will join Oldfield Motorsport. It takes the total number of GB4 drivers confirmed so far to 10.

BRX CALENDAR TWEAK

The British Rallycross Championship has slightly tweaked its schedule for this season, and there is now just one visit to Pembrey instead of two. The originally planned May trip has been canned, while the August one has been pushed back a week to 19-20 August to avoid clashing events. This meeting will also feature Irish Rallycross competitors as part of a bid to form a "stronger link" between the two series.

BHRC BACK IN ACTION

Roger Chilman was top of the pack as the British Historic Rally Championship opened on the Riponian Rally in the forests of North Yorkshire. Chilman and Patrick Walsh's Ford Escort Mk2 (below) emerged at the top of a fabulous battle that involved five crews and left the quintet split by just 28 seconds after six fast gravel stages. The season resumes with Rally North Wales on 25 March.



PAUL LAWRENCE

Six out of eight stage wins meant no one could get near the Fiesta crew



PAUL LAWRENCE

Snetterton Stages win hands Griffiths/Morrison a hat-trick

CIRCUIT RALLYING

John Griffiths and Emma Morrison consolidated their lead at the head of the Circuit Rally Championship, with a 24-second victory on the Snetterton Stages in their Ford Fiesta R5 securing them a third successive win.

Initially, it was former British GT racer Michael Igoe and Will Atkins heading the pursuit with their Fiesta Rally2, from Kieran Hankin/James Swallow (Peugeot 208 T16 R5) and Ollie O'Donovan/Ashleigh Morris (Hyundai i20 R5).

But Igoe clipped a chicane on stage three after he was distracted adjusting his anti-lag and missed his braking point, and Hankin had also lost time, allowing

O'Donovan up to second.

As both Griffiths and O'Donovan consolidated at the head of the field, Igoe took the wrong route on stage five, earning a stage maximum time. Hankin had suffered a brake failure, so into third jumped Sean and Colin Quigley (Fiesta R5).

With fastest times on six of the eight stages, Griffiths completed a trouble-free run to head home O'Donovan and Quigley, with Darrell Taylor/Steve McNulty fourth from stage six in their Fiesta R5.

Hankin had been trying to hang on to fifth until his clutch failed on the final test, which promoted Tony Robinson/Paul Spooner (Skoda Fabia R5) and Fiesta R5+ crew Steve Finch/Sam Fordham.

PETER SCHERER

Fallon picked as scholarship winner

JSCC

Will Fallon has been named as the latest winner of the Junior Saloon Car Championship's scholarship prize after impressing during a shootout at Pembrey last weekend.

Competitors took part in a number of assessments, ranging from fitness tests and a media presentation to driving challenges that

included an autotest.

Fallon now receives a fully funded season in the Citroen Saxo-based Junior Saloon series, a prize estimated to be worth more than £30,000.

"This year's winner Will shone in every one of our scholarship categories, proving himself to be a clear winner," said series coordinator Dave Beecroft. "We're looking

forward to having him on our grid in 2023!"

Meanwhile, the JSCC has also announced that it will be sponsoring The Kart Championship's Bambino, Cadet and Junior categories as part of a bid to forge closer connections between the worlds of karting and junior car racing. The series will offer various prizes to drivers in the kart categories during the year.



MICK WALKER

More Gerry Marshall Trophy races after successful pilots

GERRY MARSHALL TROPHY

The Historic Racing Drivers Club's Gerry Marshall Trophy series for Group 1 tin-tops will feature an expanded four-event calendar this year after pilot races attracted strong interest last season.

Two races were held for the fledgling series during 2022, with an impressive 29 cars entering the inaugural Snetterton contest in June. Grid numbers then further increased for the second race on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit in October, when 32 cars took part.

Following that success, the

1970s touring cars are now set to feature at four major historic events this year. Alongside continuing to appear at the October Silverstone Motor Racing Legends fixture, races will also be held at the Donington Historic Festival in April, the Masters Festival at Brands Hatch in May and the Oulton Park Gold Cup in July.

"We're really chipper about it – since the winter layoff, I've been inundated with calls from people building cars or restoring cars and it seems there's a rich stream of cars wanting to come out," said HRDC boss Julius Thurgood. "We've selected four

really good events – there's two grand prix tracks and two other major historic tracks. We've noticed there's enthusiasm from spectators [for Group 1]. Our pre-'66 cars are not in livery but these are in a livery and they look quite spectacular.

"Also we've been given the backing of the Marshall family. Gerry was a very close friend of mine, so it's quite poignant for me. We're curating the grids – we've turned down quite a number of Group A cars because it just doesn't work. It will bring up the problems other series have had with cars of different abilities trying to

race on the same level."

Meanwhile, the HRDC has opted to combine its Classic Alfa and Allstars (pre-1966 GT) grids after a smaller number of Alfas made it harder to justify having standalone races. The two series have successfully shared a track in the past.

"The consensus was the Allstars and Alfas were on a parity in terms of speed and everybody said this works," said Thurgood. "It's a tough year [financially], there are going to be people sitting out the season, it seems to work and why not run it and see what happens?"

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Interest builds for the CSCC's February Silverstone opener

CSCC

The Classic Sports Car Club says it has been "reassured" by the interest in next weekend's season-opening event on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit.

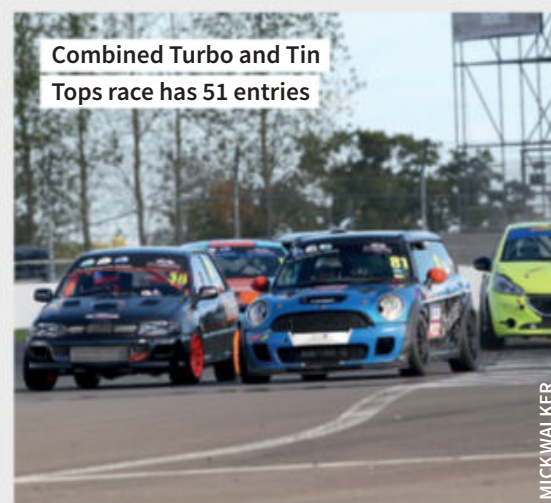
The club decided to break from the norm this year and run a race meeting in February, three weeks before club racing's traditional mid-March start. While the final number of participants is set to be determined by the weather forecast – either leading to withdrawals or additional late interest – just over 150 entries have been received.

There are due to be four 40-minute

races at the meeting, alongside a pair of sprint contests for Magnificent Sevens, and the combined Tin Tops and Turbo Tin Tops grid leads the way on 51. The Slicks Series is much lower, on 19, but that number is still encouraging given the likelihood of cold conditions.

The 26 February event follows the day after the Vintage Sports-Car Club's multi-discipline Pomeroy Trophy, and the CSCC is accepting entries for its meeting until Wednesday (22 February).

"People have entered it as a bit of pre-season testing," said CSCC director David Smitheram. "We're not scared to do something a bit different –



MICK WALKER

sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Silverstone have been very good to work with, while a number of our drivers are using The Pom as a bit of practice ahead of our event and the VSCC have also been helpful."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

It's also 30 years since the first Festival of Speed event



Goodwood reveals further details of 75th birthday plans

GOODWOOD

More details have been announced about Goodwood's plans to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Sussex circuit's opening in 1948.

While races named after key figures from the venue's history, including the Moss Trophy and Tony Gaze Trophy, have already been revealed as part of April's 80th Members' Meeting, it has been confirmed that the central theme for the Festival of Speed – founded 30 years ago – will be 'Goodwood 75'. A collection of cars from across Goodwood's 75 years will tackle the hill at the event, split into groups for The Racing Years (1948-66),

The Testing Years (post-1966), 30 Years of the Festival of Speed, Racing Returns (1998-23), and The Next 75 Years.

Lotus, which is also celebrating its 75th birthday this year, has been selected as the honoured marque for the Revival in September, while the circuit is also looking to the future and a new driving simulator room is due to open this spring.

"It's fantastic to be able to celebrate 75 years since my grandfather opened our wonderful motor circuit back in 1948," said the Duke of Richmond. "We have a very special year planned for 2023 and I can't wait to celebrate with our fans as we reflect on our history but also look ahead to the next 75 years, and beyond."

JAMES BAREHAM

IN THE HEADLINES

HARRISON SWAPS TO FF2000

Classic Formula Ford champion Jordan Harrison is moving into the Historic Formula Ford 2000 championship in 2023. This will be the first time he has raced anything other than an FF1600. Harrison and his father Mark have acquired a Lola T580 from Phil Walker that is being prepared by Simon Hadfield over the winter after being rebuilt by Walker. The car is a 1980 model and has chassis number 16, of 17 built.

SMITH'S FUNERAL DETAILS

Members of the Formula Ford fraternity who wish to pay their respects to long-serving series coordinator Ian 'Diz' Smith (see obituary, Autosport, 9 February) are invited to attend his funeral service at Walton Lea Crematorium, Higher Walton, Warrington, WA4 6TB at 1000 on 3 March.

ALEX GRAHAM 1942-2023

Double Scottish hillclimb champion Alex Graham died of pneumonia on 1 February, aged 80. He won his national road car title jointly in 1980 driving a diminutive Mini-Jem. Graham then graduated to a Mallock Mk20, winning the headline title in 1984. He was a very popular competitor on the British championship scene too, making its top-12 run-off cut several times. In recent years, Graham proved he'd lost none of his old touch, piloting Opel Manta 400 and hot Vauxhall Firenzas with his customary verve.

MASTERS TWEAKS RULES

Masters Historic Racing has made several changes to its Masters Sports Car Legends series (below). GT and sportscar machines built up to the end of 1976 will now be eligible (the previous cut-off was 1974), while a new De Cadenet class has been created for two-seater cars with DFV engines or motors of 3000cc. The race format has also been tweaked from a one-hour contest to two 40-minute mini-enduros.



SDC offers Classic FF1600 fee rebates

CLASSIC FF1600

SDC Builders is sponsoring the Historic Sports Car Club's Classic Formula Ford series for pre-1982 cars with an innovative support package that will give each competitor a £75 entry fee rebate on each of its six double-header race weekends contested.

On top of the overall HSCC entry fee reduction programme for the season-opening events, a Classic FF1600 entry for Snetterton on 22-23 April will now be just £240. Meanwhile, entry to the pair of Silverstone Grand Prix circuit races on

27-28 May will now cost £435.

Classic FF1600 chairman Stuart Kestenbaum welcomed the sponsorship with open arms: "I think we will get more entries. Entry fees are the one thing that everyone is unanimous about. We've taken the pricing back about 10 years thanks to SDC's support."

Founded in 1972 as Survey Design and Construction Ltd, the Bedford-based building contractor enjoys a long association with FF1600 at Silverstone, where it renovated hospitality units and networked business around the BRDC's championship in the

1980s. It also backed drivers such as David Wheeler, Trevor van Rooyen, John Village, Jonathan Palmer and Bernard Dolan. Last year, it celebrated its 50th anniversary with a return to the sport, branding Richard Tarling's Royale RP26 provided by Alan Cornock.

Chairman Francis Shiner explained SDC's new sporting deal: "Formula Ford is an important part of our history and quite a few of our staff are interested in racing. But it's more of an emotional involvement for us rather than traditional sponsorship."

MARCUS PYE



THE RACER

Pit talk from the HRDC



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Breaking down barriers

A pioneering Esports college course is inspiring young people and opening up opportunities in motorsport that many would never have considered otherwise

MEGAN WHITE

Motorsport is a notoriously difficult and expensive industry to break into, especially for aspiring drivers who require vast amounts of money to compete the further up the ladder they climb. Even becoming an engineer or a mechanic can prove a tricky path to follow, with a limited number of opportunities, and those chances are further limited by socio-economic factors.

But Burnley College is aiming to change that. Despite being located in the 11th most deprived area in England in 2019, it was named as the country's highest achieving college the following year.

At the heart of that success is a burgeoning Esports department, which has recently acquired two Formula 1 simulator rigs paid for by Burnley Football Club. Students can now compete in online leagues against other schools and colleges using equipment that would otherwise be unaffordable.

This writer visited the impressive set-up, touring two fully kitted out computer rooms and meeting students to hear about the difference it has made to their lives, now and in terms of increasing their career opportunities.

Many students have been inspired to take up sim racing, and the college hopes to give all its students the best possible chance of getting into careers in motorsport, regardless of the challenges they may face. The equipment is not only available to Esports

“He began with a plastering course, but ditched his trowels and signed up to study Esports”

students, either – young people studying any course are able to join thrice-weekly practice sessions.

The college competed in a pilot league, run by the Williams F1 team, as a test for an upcoming national student sim league alongside nine other colleges, including one of the UK's most prestigious boarding schools. Esports course leader Andrew Chapman says the rigs allow students to “bridge that gap” between themselves and those from higher-income backgrounds.

“Our students then have a connection to those students from a completely different walk of life,” explains Chapman. “But they all have this one big thing in common, which is that on Wednesday evenings they sit down and play against each other, and it removes that barrier for access.”

Chapman, a former student of the college and an avid sim

racer himself, praises the sims for their ability to break down barriers between students, adding: “It gives people the opportunity to sim race without having to spend lots on equipment. You can get sim racing gear now relatively cheap, but that's relatively cheap for two adults. For us, we could go out and buy a sim wheel because we have full-time jobs. We're adults, but for a 16-year-old, how are they going to afford a sim wheel?”

The Esports courses are booming. They started with 16 pupils in year one, and there are now 110 students across three levels of qualification. The course encompasses more areas than just gaming, with young people learning about events management, marketing, business and more.

Jac Cowie, who drives for the college team and is a second-year Level 3 Esports student, praises the opportunities it has given him. He began with a plastering course, but he ditched his trowels for a steering wheel and signed up to study Esports in his second year.

Kitted out in the college's Esports kit – also gifted to students by Burnley FC – Cowie is clearly passionate about the course, and had no idea that his enthusiasm for playing F1 games on his Xbox at home would lead him to opportunities in education and beyond.

“I was surprised to hear that they have this [sim] and how much money they put into it, which is a lot,” he says. “I didn't know Burnley College was the number one college in the country until a few years ago. I was surprised that it's Burnley of all places – I've grown up here and this is actually a good place. It's definitely given me opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise. If you'd have said to me three years ago what I'd be doing, I'd have said no way.”

It's clear from speaking to Cowie and fellow driver Ethan Willis what a difference the programme has made, and their passion for both Esports and the college shines through.

Dave Easton, programme leader for games, Esports and media, says the course is a “win-win” for students. “You can't be what you can't see, can you?” he says. “So if they're seeing people playing online, competing in a Formula 1 official league, there's just a link. How many students would have had that opportunity years ago? None. It's that stepping stone. When we spoke to Williams, they were saying there aren't that many spaces to be a driver, but having the cockpit here opens that door.”

Easton and Chapman have big plans for the department, hoping to become the “leading northern powerhouse”. Whatever happens, the students of Burnley College will have benefited hugely from an opportunity they almost certainly wouldn't have had otherwise. ❄

FINISHING STRAIGHT

The highs and lows of a MotoGP legend



AMAZON DOCUMENTARY
MARC MARQUEZ: ALL IN

The roaring success of Netflix's *Drive to Survive* in the last few years has opened the gates for others to create their own docuseries. MotoGP wasn't immune to that pull, commissioning MediaPro to create *Unlimited*, which covered the 2021 season and was released on Amazon Prime Video early last year. It was hoped this would propel MotoGP into the limelight such as *DTS* has done with Formula 1.

But it flopped spectacularly, as an ill-defined media strategy and clunky launch consigned the programme to the purgatorial wasteland of Amazon's vast catalogue of programming.

While *Unlimited* series two was scrapped early in production, Dorna Sports hasn't been put off the idea of making another docuseries with Amazon.

Created by Fast Brothers in collaboration with Red Bull Media House, TBS and Dorna, *Marc Marquez: All In* is the series MotoGP hoped *Unlimited* would be. As the name suggests, the series focuses exclusively on eight-time motorcycle grand prix world champion Marquez, and does so during one of the toughest periods of his life. Format-wise, it's not dissimilar to Amazon's excellent *All or Nothing* series, but where it differs is in the fact that Marquez

essentially watches *All In* with you.

The Spaniard is followed by a camera crew across the 2022 season as he comes to realise his badly broken right arm is putting his career under threat. Seconds into the opening episode, we are greeted by Marquez talking about how he considered retirement – breaking out in tears as those words come out of his mouth.

And thus, the tone has already been set for the five-episode run of *All In*, with Autosport granted access to the first three ahead of its worldwide release on 20 February. *All In* shows Marquez at his most candid and vulnerable, shedding the defences he – and generally all racers –

puts up when confronting the media during a race weekend.

The series provides a look behind the curtain as he battles the limitations of the right-arm he badly broke in 2020, and the consultations he underwent in America prior to going for his fourth major operation in June of last year to have his right humerus rotated back to its original position.

Before he gets there, though, Marquez is faced with more injury woes after suffering from a third bout of diplopia (double vision to you and me) after a crash in warm-up at the Indonesian GP. The recovery from this shows just how resilient – but weary – Marquez was at the time, while also giving us a glimpse of just how important family is to him as he reveals brother Alex told him not to race at Mandalika after the crash; advice that was heeded.

The first three episodes don't delve much into the woes Honda faced in 2020, but that will come later. Episode three focuses on his feud with MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi, and it's here where *All In* becomes essential viewing for racing fans.

The bitterness of the rivalry is well-documented, and Marquez's opinion on it hasn't changed – just as Rossi's never will. But we finally get an idea of how the fallout

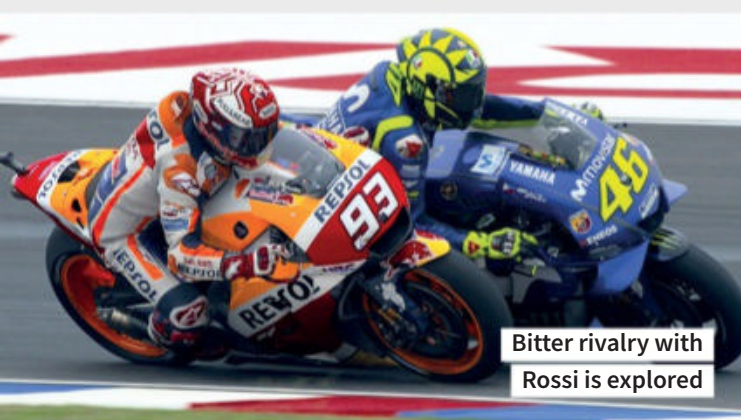


MotoGP superstar
Marquez is shown at
his most vulnerable

Focus on one rider –
and his humanity –
is key appeal of series



GOLD AND GOOSE
motorsport
IMAGES



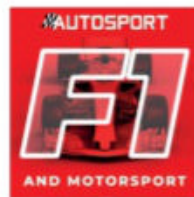
Bitter rivalry with
Rossi is explored

from that infamous 2015 season affected Marquez, and just how fragile Rossi's ego truly could be as Marquez reveals his usurping of Rossi's best lap at his VR46 ranch in 2014 changed the dynamic between them.

For someone so successful, Marquez is a far cry from how Netflix portrays F1 drivers in *DTS: All In* does a wonderful job in humanising Marquez, though doesn't shy away from his – as he puts it – “asshole” on-track personality. Crucially, following him around at such a low point doesn't feel cheap. If anything, it will only boost your admiration of him.

All told, *All In* may just be the best character-focused motorsport documentary in a long time.

LEWIS DUNCAN



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KINRADE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Karun Chandhok's Big Questions on F1 2023

Once again, Autosport has teamed up with Formula 1 racer-turned-pundit Karun Chandhok for our traditional Big Questions piece looking at the campaign ahead. Chandhok takes on topics up and down the grid, alongside podcast host Martyn Lee, Autosport Chief Editor Kevin Turner and Grand Prix Editor Alex Kalinauckas.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Daytona 500
NASCAR Cup Round 1/36
Daytona, USA
19 February

NASCAR Xfinity
Round 1/33
Daytona, USA
18 February

NASCAR Truck Series
Round 1/23

Daytona, USA
17 February

Formula Regional Middle East
Round 5/5
Abu Dhabi, UAE
18-19 February
🔧 **Livestream** on
Motorsport.tv, Sat 1535,
Sun 0550, Sun 0950

F4 UAE
Round 5/5
Abu Dhabi, UAE

18-19 February
🔧 **Livestream** on
Motorsport.tv, Sat 0535,
Sat 0925, Sun 0650

Asian Le Mans Series
Rounds 3 & 4/4
Dubai, UAE
18-19 February
🔧 **Livestream** on
Motorsport.tv, Sat 0635,
Sat 1030, Sun 1130



Austin Cindric won
last year's Daytona 500

KINRADE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Michael Schumacher (Benetton-Ford B192) makes a botched attempt to pass Jean Alesi (Ferrari F92A) at the hairpin during the 1992 Monaco Grand Prix. After qualifying sixth, the German

first dispensed with Gerhard Berger (McLaren-Honda MP4/7A), then harried fourth-place starter Alesi for a dozen laps before making his move. Both continued in the same positions, but the damage sustained by Alesi

forced a drop in pace, allowing Schumacher past. The Ferrari eventually succumbed to its injuries, while Schumacher couldn't depose Riccardo Patrese (Williams-Renault FW14B) from the final podium slot.



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FROM THE ARCHIVE

This year is the 100th birthday of MG, and one of the manufacturer's most iconic cars has to be the Metro 6R4. Here, two examples of the popular machine are tackling the British

round of the European Rallycross Championship at Lydden Hill in 1989, an event that was supported by Autosport. While Aidan Creegan (right) and Michael Shield (who won the British Rallycross title that year)

lead the Division 2 field away, the Ford RS200 of Martin Schanche is looming large behind as he attempts to pass the pair. The overall event winner proved to be the Peugeot 205 of Matti Alamaki.



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GARY HAWKINS
PHOTOGRAPHY



Mount Panorama

David Brabham agonises for a while before picking the Mount Panorama circuit at Bathurst as his favourite track. A veteran of the British, Japanese and US racing scenes, as well as enjoying international exploits in Formula 1 and sportscars, the 2009 Le Mans 24 Hours winner has raced on more circuits than most would care to name.

But it's not the Circuit de la Sarthe that gets the nod as his top pick. Neither is it Sonoma, which he praises for its "variety and challenging, blind corners". Instead it's the classic Australian track where in 1997 Brabham paired up with brother Geoff to win the Bathurst 1000 in a Super Touring BMW, benefiting from Paul Morris and Craig Baird's disqualification due to a drive-time violation.

His first recollection of racing at the track was in 1993, finishing fourth in the 1000 alongside Anders Olofsson in a Fred Gibson Holden. Learning track and car together made for "a bit of a baptism of fire" and he admits "probably I left a bit on the table". "Back then there was not the runoff that you have now over Skyline," he says. "If you made a mistake, you were in the wall. Simple as that."

On his return three years later, Brabham had just taken third from Jean-Francois Hemroulle's bulky Audi when the Belgian turned them both around at the Cutting.



Still, he recovered to finish second on the road, which would become victory in Australia's most famous event. Brabham cherishes the "really cool" memory that "makes the track a little bit more special too", despite the Super Touring machines making the track "less daunting because the cars weren't as fast".

He was never again a victory contender in seven further Bathurst 1000 appearances as a V8 ringer, but derived huge satisfaction from keeping pace with the Supercars series regulars on the calendar's most fearsome track on his final outing in 2011.

"If I'm doing Le Mans and one of those guys came over and was within a tenth of me, I'd be going 'fair dos'," he says. "So me doing that over there, I thought, 'That's good, I feel like I'm doing my job.' I could be half a second off and the team would be happy, but I wasn't happy."

JAMES NEWBOLD



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Alonso at Aston Martin

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