



Alonso and Aston – F1's new dark horses



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F1 2023

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As testing begins, we look at the big hitters...



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The big F1 hitters' chances of stopping Verstappen in 2023

It's here! Formula 1's only 2023 pre-season test kicks off today (Thursday) in Bahrain and we'll finally start to get an idea of which teams have made the most progress for the second year of this ground-effects era.

Ferrari and Mercedes are the squads most likely to challenge the Red Bull operation that dominated 2022. They had very different types of launches earlier this month, with Ferrari exuding confidence and Mercedes already showing signs of not having made the step it needed following a disappointing campaign last year. Alex Kalinauckas compares the two legendary squads in our cover article starting on page 26, while technical editor Jake Boxall-Legge takes a look at the latest F1 machines from Mercedes (p12) and Alpine (p16).

Although it only finished seventh in the constructors' table last year, Aston Martin could be one of the best-placed teams to start making inroads into the advantage held by F1's three dominant teams. Luke Smith hears from Fernando Alonso and key Aston figures, and points out some significant strengths the squad now has on p36.

Australian Supercars gets its new rules this year. Andrew van Leeuwen is your guide to Gen3, which is arriving with its fair share of issues and controversies (p42). America's premier tin-top series kicked off with predictable chaos last weekend at Daytona, which produced another surprise winner (p46)...



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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NEXT WEEK
2 MARCH

F1 2023 preview

Our 108-page guide to the year ahead, plus F2/F3 and IndyCar previews



Cover images

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PIT & PADDOCK

- 4 FIA clarifies driver clampdown
- 6 Kanaan to stand down after Indy
- 8 BTCC driver market shake-up
- 11 Pescarolo name back with Peugeot
- 12 Mercedes W14 technical analysis
- 14 Caution at Mercedes launch
- 16 Alpine A523 technical analysis
- 18 Can Alpine challenge the big three?
- 21 Opinion: Alex Kalinauckas
- 23 Guest column: Andy Meyrick
- 25 Feedback: your letters

FEATURES

- 26 Ferrari vs Mercedes: race to beat Red Bull
- 36 Alonso's Aston Martin gamble
- 42 Australian Supercars prepares for Gen3

RACE CENTRE

- 46 Stenhouse wins ridiculous Daytona 500
- 51 World of Sport: Asian Le Mans Series; Formula Regional Middle East

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 59 Loggie to 2 Seas for Brit GT title defence
- 60 Turner to make return after Hayes crash
- 62 Coates, Hammerton to Sprint Challenge
- 65 Huge interest in Clubsport Trophy
- 66 The rise of Esports in the UK

FINISHING STRAIGHT

- 70 What's on this week
- 72 From the archive: 1934 French GP
- 74 My favourite team-mate: Franck Lagorce

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

- 24 Special deals for Autosport

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FIA issues clarification on new ‘driver-gagging’ rules

FORMULA 1

The FIA has clarified the parameters of its deeply controversial clampdown on the political and personal statements that drivers may make under its revised International Sporting Code for 2023. As it stands, speaking out will be limited to personal social media accounts and in response to direct questions from journalists while the pre-race and podium ceremonies must remain strictly neutral.

A tweaked ISC issued ahead of the new motorsport season now classes the following as a rule breach: “The general making and display of political, religious and personal statements or comments notably in violation

of the general principle of neutrality promoted by the FIA under its Statutes, unless previously approved in writing by the FIA for International Competitions, or by the relevant ASN for National Competitions within their jurisdiction.” This applies across the categories and has received almost universal criticism from Formula 1 drivers and team bosses, who fear any compromise on free speech will turn racers into “robots” and “school kids”. It also further strains the soured relationship between the championship’s own bosses and the governing body after a turbulent opening 14 months to the FIA presidency of Mohammed Ben Sulayem, who has now stepped back from the day-to-day management of F1.

F1 drivers had hoped that their vehement disapproval would force a total U-turn. For now, though, competitors have been issued with official guidance on the contested clause. It clarifies that the FIA maintains a “principal of neutrality” like the “International Olympic Committee”.

An excerpt from the guidance reads: “When expressing their views, participants are expected to respect applicable laws, the FIA’s values, and all other participants. Any behaviour and/or expression that constitutes or signals discrimination, hatred, hostility, or the potential for violence is contrary to the FIA’s values and will not be tolerated.” But this does raise the question of the

governing body perceiving drivers speaking out or wearing clothing that draws attention to the human rights-violating states in which F1 docks as an act of “hostility”.

The FIA will consider case-by-case exceptions that are requested in writing at least four weeks before the event concerned. Any rejections have no right to be appealed. This theoretically means that from now on, Lewis Hamilton would need to seek permission to wear the T-shirt he famously sported on the podium of the 2020 Tuscan Grand Prix that read: “Arrest the cops who killed Breonna Taylor.” Given the timing of the clarification, it will likely rule out drivers gaining permission in time for the 2023 F1 season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix.

While the FIA has clarified that “private, non-proselytising religious gestures, such as pointing to the sky or crossing oneself, shall not be considered prohibited religious statements”, driver helmet designs remain a grey area. Always visible during a track session, these would be akin to European nations wanting their football captains to wear a rainbow ‘OneLove’ armband during the recent 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Talking prior to the clarification, Hamilton said he would speak up as usual and risk subsequent FIA penalties: “Nothing will stop me in speaking on the things that I feel that I’m passionate about and issues that there are. I feel the sport does have a responsibility



POTTS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Grosjean's Bahrain 'fire car' to go on display in Spain

FORMULA 1

Romain Grosjean's fire-damaged Haas that "saved my life" in his horrific Bahrain Grand Prix crash in 2020 will be displayed for the first time at the Formula 1 Exhibition in Madrid.

Grosjean speared into the barrier on the exit of Turn 3 after contact with Daniil Kvyat. His car split in half upon the violent impact and exploded into flames. Grosjean miraculously escaped with only minor injuries after 28 seconds in the car while it was on fire.

The wreckage of the Haas has been under wraps for three years, but will now go on display in the Spanish capital from 24 March as part of an installation that will also feature previously unseen footage of the incident.

Much of the monocoque remains intact, including the halo, which was instrumental in ensuring Grosjean survived the incident.

"From my point of view, it was a big accident but I didn't realise the impact or how violent it was from the outside," said Grosjean. "It was only the next day when I asked someone to show me what it looked like that I realised. My wife was actually watching that race with my dad and my kids. They will remember that moment their entire life. They were just spectators waiting to hear something... waiting to see something from Bahrain."

"I had to break the headrest, punching it with my helmet and then I eventually managed to get my helmet through and stand up in the seat. I realised my left foot was stuck into the chassis and I pulled as hard as I could on my left leg. My shoe stayed in the chassis but my

foot came loose so I was free to exit.

"It was 120 kilos of fuel plus the battery – both were on fire. Dr Ian Roberts, Alan [van der Merwe] from the medical car and one fireman were trying to open a gap in the fire to help me get out. I believe that helped me at least to get a vision of where I had to go and where the exit was.

"The survival cell is there for you in case of a huge impact. I was intact inside the shell. The chassis is still in one piece, the halo is there and apart from the damage and burn it is still as it should be. I guess that saved my life."

STROLL TO MISS BAHRAIN TEST

Aston Martin driver Lance Stroll has been forced to sit out this week's F1 pre-season test in Bahrain after sustaining injuries during a cycling incident while training in Spain.

"His fitness to return to the cockpit will be assessed daily and the team will issue an update ahead of the Bahrain Grand Prix," said a team statement.

Reigning Formula 2 champion and Aston reserve Felipe Drugovich was named as Stroll's substitute for the first day of testing as we went to press.

LEWIS DUNCAN



still, always, to speak out on things and create awareness on important topics, particularly as we're travelling to all these different places. So, nothing changes for me."

Similarly, Mercedes team-mate and Grand Prix Drivers' Association director George Russell added: "I'm not too sure why the FIA have taken a stance like this. I think it's totally unnecessary, and in the sport and in the world we live in at the moment... I'd like to think it's been some kind of misunderstanding. We're not going to limit our views or our thoughts because of some silly regulation. We're all here to have free speech and share whatever views we may have... This is part of freedom of speech, and we have our right to share our views across whatever platform we wish."

**ALEX KALINAUCKAS, ADAM COOPER
& LUKE SMITH**

P21 OPINION

Kanaan to stand down after 2023 Indy 500

INDYCAR

Tony Kanaan says that this year's Indianapolis 500 will be his final IndyCar race.

The popular 48-year-old Brazilian has been at the pinnacle of US open-wheel racing since 1998 when he graduated as reigning Indy Lights champion. He scored his first CART win in 1999, and went on to become the cornerstone of what was then called Andretti Green Racing between 2003 and 2010 in the Indy Racing League, winning the championship in 2004.

Kanaan finally took an Indy 500 victory with KV Racing in 2013 after suffering cruel misfortune at the event in previous years.

Four seasons at Chip Ganassi Racing yielded his 17th and most recent Indycar win, and then Kanaan spent

his final two full seasons at AJ Foyt Racing. He became an oval-only driver for the squad in 2020, before fulfilling the same role for Ganassi in 2021, sharing a car with Jimmie Johnson. The NASCAR legend ran every round in 2022, but Ganassi offered Kanaan a fifth car at the 500, where he finished third in his 389th Indycar start.

Kanaan will contest this year's 500 with Arrow McLaren. "I'm going to miss it every day of my life," he admitted. "End of May, I think it's going to get more difficult... I have a great team behind me. I have a really good shot of winning this thing.

"You're never ready for this, but you've got to weigh your options. You're 48. You had a great career... I would hate to be coming to this place just to participate.



PEC/SKIBINSKI

I think I can do it again for 10 more years the way I take care of myself, but that's not the point. Am I going to get the chance to do it at the right place again, to win it?"

Kanaan has no concrete opportunities for 2024,

but intends to keep racing.

"I have plenty left," he said. "I will drive anything — it has a steering wheel, four wheels, an engine, I'll be driving. But I haven't made any plans past this year."

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Latvia joins WRC schedule for 2024

WRC

Latvia will host a round of the World Rally Championship for the first time after securing a deal to join the 2024 calendar.

The WRC has elected to promote the Baltic nation's Rally Liepaja, which has featured in the European Rally Championship since 2013. The event takes place on gravel roads and has a reputation for being one of the most challenging rallies in Europe. It will cover a widespread area of Latvia, stretching from the cities of Riga and Liepaja to the regions of Talsi, Tukums, Kuldiga and Dienvidkurzeme.

It is unclear where Rally Latvia will fit into the 2024 schedule, or whether a current event will be replaced to accommodate its arrival. "It has always been our goal to keep at least one slot in the WRC calendar available to enable an event to rotate from the ERC to the WRC," said Peter Thul, senior director of sport for WRC Promoter. "Rally Latvia



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becoming the first to be granted this slot is a clear recognition of its sporting and promotional excellence, and the commitment of the Latvian government to rallying. This decision highlights the strategic importance of the Baltic regions for WRC."

Latvia's inclusion on the 2024 schedule follows news of a two-year extension for the Acropolis Rally, which will secure the Greek classic's future until 2025 at least. This year's edition of the rough gravel rally

will once again be based out of Lamia.

The WRC could feature further changes for 2024, with championship top brass keen to add rounds in Saudi Arabia and the US. The UK is a contender to rejoin the schedule courtesy of a revived bid to bring the series to Northern Ireland's asphalt roads. The event organisers, Motorsport UK and the UK government have been given an April deadline to secure the necessary funding.

TOM HOWARD



LE MANS 24 HOURS The Next Gen NASCAR Chevrolet on course to fill the Garage 56 Le Mans 24 Hours entry reserved for an experimental racer this year has been officially launched in livery. The Chevy Camaro ZL1 set to be raced by Jenson Button, Jimmie Johnson and Mike Rockenfeller that tips its hat to the pair of NASCARs that raced at the French enduro back in 1976 has the name of the stock car series written large on its flanks. The car developed by Hendrick Motorsports is powered by a V8 of the same 5.8-litre capacity as a Next Gen powerplant. Of the promised hybrid system there was no mention. **Photo by Chevrolet**

Frijns and Habsburg reunite at WRT LMP2 team for WEC

WEC

Robin Frijns and Ferdinand Habsburg are renewing the partnership that claimed Le Mans 24 Hours class honours and the World Endurance Championship LMP2 crown in 2021 (right). They are being reunited in the same car alongside Sean Gelael at the Belgian WRT squad in the WEC this season.

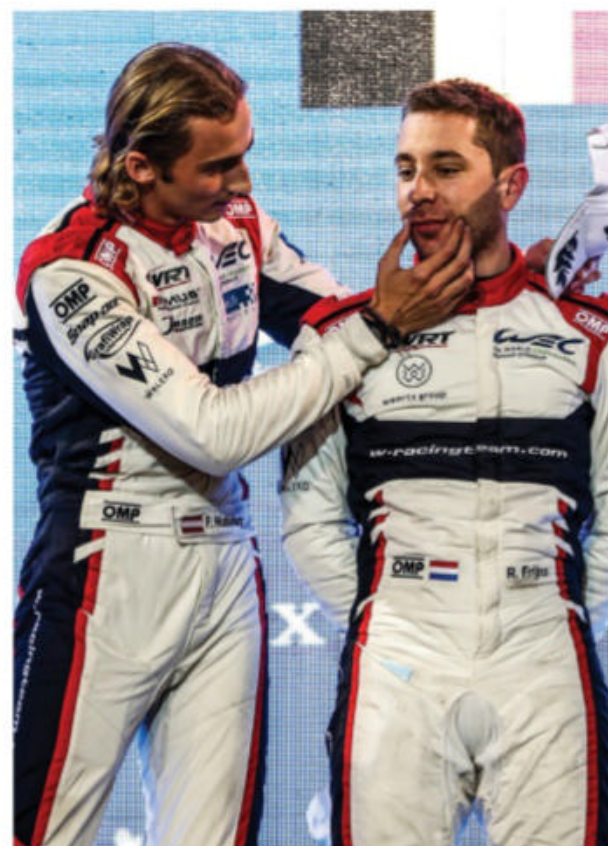
Habsburg is moving across from WRT's sister ORECA-Gibson 07 to join Frijns and Gelael, who drove as team-mates in 2022. It means that there is no place for Rene Rast, who was their regular team-mate last year.

The line-up in the #31 ORECA "contains no surprises", said team boss Vincent Vosse on the confirmation of Frijns and Habsburg.

It means that all six WRT drivers in the WEC this year are well-known to the team. Robert Kubica and Louis Deletraz have returned from Prema to the team with which they won the 2021 European Le Mans Series to drive alongside Rui Andrade.

"Robin, Sean and Ferdi were already part of the WRT family, and for quite a long time in the case of Robin, who first drove for us in 2015 [aboard an Audi R8 LMS GT3], and they all have been instrumental in the success of our LMP2 programme," continued Vosse. "Together with Rui, Louis and Robert, they make up a very strong set of drivers, which is an absolute must-have in such a competitive environment."

GARY WATKINS



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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Left to right: Osborne, Rowbottom, Cammish, Sutton. Inset: Cook and Moffat will race in this livery

Rowbottom to Motorbase

BTCC

After a period of quiet, it's been a busy week in the British Touring Car Championship. Reigning teams champion Motorbase Performance has confirmed a new face in the form of ex-Team Dynamics driver Dan Rowbottom, while One Motorsport has snapped up another race winner, Aiden Moffat, to join 2022 independents title winner Josh Cook.

Rowbottom, who scored one victory in his two-year stint in the Dynamics Honda team, joins three-time champion Ash Sutton, Dan Cammish and Sam Osborne in Motorbase's four-car Ford Focus line-up, replacing Carrera Cup-bound Ollie Jackson. The quartet will all run under the umbrella of NAPA Racing as that association expands from the two-car Sutton/Cammish line-up

of 2022. Rowbottom has already had his first taste of the Ford on a filming day at Anglesey, prior to a first test with Osborne at Donington Park today (Thursday).

"We've all seen what he can do in the Honda and there's no reason why he can't continue that form," said team manager Oly Collins of Rowbottom. "To have Dan [Cammish] and Ash as the benchmark is as good as you can get. That's what led him to the team, I think."

The loss of Rowbottom and his coveted Cataclean backing leaves Dynamics seeking a new driver to join three-time champion Gordon Shedden in its line-up. Shedden said: "There's a lot going on behind the scenes and we're all working to try and piece something together."

Moffat's arrival at Honda team One Motorsport, formerly BTC Racing, means



the end of his own family team's BTCC effort, which in collaboration with BMR Racing carried Ash Sutton to the crown in 2020 and 2021. Moffat owns two TBL entrants' licences and One team principal Danny Buxton says that his Brackley squad hopes to acquire an extra TBL to expand to four cars. Regular overall title contender Cook and Moffat will run in a new livery under the banner of Starline Racing by One Motorsport in deference to new backing from aftermarket giant LKQ Euro Car Parts, of which Starline is a division.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Mitchell upgraded to all-pro Lambo line-up

GTWCE

Lamborghini factory driver Sandy Mitchell will form part of an all-Pro lineup in the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup for the first time this year.

The 22-year-old Scot, who has been on the books of the Italian manufacturer since winning the British GT title in 2020, has joined K-PAX Racing. He has raced in the Silver, Pro-Am and Gold Cup

classes in GTWCE and has two class wins in the Spa 24 Hours to his name with Barwell Motorsport.

Mitchell will team up in 2023 with fellow works aces Marco Mapelli – the 2019 GTWCE Endurance champion – and Franck Perera in K-PAX's Huracan GT3 EVO2 as the American squad returns to GTWCE for the first time since it ran Bentleys in 2020. The team has annexed the past two GT

World Challenge America titles with Andrea Caldarelli and Jordan Pepper.

"I've raced in almost all the classes in GTWCE, so it's great to have a chance in a Pro car, which is a huge thing for my career and an opportunity that I've been working hard to get," said Mitchell. "I know Marco and Franck and get on well with them, so I think we'll work well together."

JAMES NEWBOLD





FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED

Verschoor tops Bahrain test

FORMULA 2/3

Dutch combination Richard Verschoor and Van Amersfoort Racing enjoyed a good start to their new relationship by topping last week’s three-day Formula 2 test in Bahrain as the opening round looms. Teams were given two sets of the soft-compound Pirellis to use during the test. In the first qualifying simulation session on the opening afternoon, it was Theo Pourchaire on top for ART Grand Prix. On the second afternoon, Verschoor (above) undercut Pourchaire’s time by

0.025s and the Frenchman’s rookie teammate Victor Martins also snuck ahead on his graduation as reigning F3 champion. Kush Maini was one of the few to use soft rubber on the final day, when he crept into the top 10 times overall. The F3 field was also testing. Gregoire Saucy, who remains with ART in 2023, topped three of the five sessions and was fastest overall by half a second. Three of last year’s Formula Regional standouts were next up in the times, with Prema’s reigning European champion Dino Beganovic ending up in second place.

TOP 10 F2 TIMES		
POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Richard Verschoor (VAR)	1m42.140s
2	Victor Martins (ART)	1m42.148s
3	Theo Pourchaire (ART)	1m42.165s
4	Dennis Hauger (MP)	1m42.378s
5	Arthur Leclerc (DAMS)	1m42.437s
6	Ralph Boschung (Campos)	1m42.489s
7	Jack Doohan (Virtuosi)	1m42.523s
8	Ayumu Iwasa (DAMS)	1m42.617s
9	Kush Maini (Campos)	1m42.623s
10	Ollie Bearman (Prema)	1m42.640s

TOP 10 F3 TIMES		
POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Gregoire Saucy (ART)	1m46.642s
2	Dino Beganovic (Prema)	1m47.121s
3	Gabriele Mini (Hitech)	1m47.166s
4	Gabriel Bortoleto (Trident)	1m47.197s
5	Franco Colapinto (MP)	1m47.266s
6	Nikola Tsolov (ART)	1m47.287s
7	Luke Browning (Hitech)	1m47.339s
8	Kaylen Frederick (ART)	1m47.359s
9	Taylor Barnard (Jenzer)	1m47.380s
10	Zak O’Sullivan (Prema)	1m47.387s

MULLER ON ENTRY LIST, BUT NO COMEBACK

LE MANS CUP

Touring car legend Yvan Muller will not be making a comeback to sportscar racing this year, despite his name appearing on the entry list of the Le Mans Cup with his own LMP3 team, but he does plan to take that squad to the Le Mans 24 Hours. Four-time World Touring Car champion Muller’s M Racing was a fixture on the LMP3 grid in the European Le Mans Series between 2016 and 2019, and has been competing in the Ligier European Series in recent years. Muller’s ambition “to be at the Le Mans 24 Hours in LMP2 or GT3 in the next two years” has prompted a return to LMP3 competition, but the team was unable to get an entry for the ELMS in addition to the Le Mans Cup support series in which the 53-year-old was listed as a driver. Muller therefore plans to switch an as yet unnamed silver driver from the planned ELMS effort to the Le Mans Cup, in which M Racing will run a Ligier.

“Now we have only one car so now we have to change the plan,” Muller told Autosport. He was non-committal on plans to race elsewhere this year, saying: “Maybe. I don’t know yet.”

JAMES NEWBOLD



Last Muller win came in 2020

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IN THE HEADLINES

BUTEL IN HARD CUPRA

British Touring Car Championship regular Jack Butel has joined Team Hard to race a Cupra Leon in 2023. The Channel Islander lines up alongside Dan Lloyd, Bobby Thompson and Dexter Patterson at the Kent squad after two seasons in the Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai line-up.

FERRARI JUNIORS CRASH

The Formula 4 UAE Championship finished in dramatic fashion at Yas Marina last weekend when title protagonists James Wharton and Tuukka Taponen crashed out as they fought for the lead in the final race. Finn Taponen needed a win with Australian Wharton, his stablemate in the Ferrari Driver Academy and the Prema-run Mumbai Falcons team, finishing outside the top seven. Wharton bounced over a kerb and crashed into Taponen at Turn 13 after both ran off track at Turn 12. Despite this, Prema boss Rene Rosin says they remain friends as they gear up for Italian F4. Prema's Ugo Ugochukwu was third in the points and Hitech's British charge Arvid Lindblad fifth. Both will also race in Italy for Prema in 2023.

OLIPHANT IN AUSSIE ALFA

BTCC race winner Tom Oliphant is to compete in TCR Australia this season after moving Down Under 12 months ago. Oliphant has joined up with Ash Seward Motorsport to race an Alfa Romeo Giulietta, and makes his debut at Symmons Plains this weekend.

AUER HOME AFTER SURGERY

DTM runner-up Lucas Auer has returned home to Austria after undergoing successful surgery in the US on fractured vertebrae sustained in a Daytona 24 Hours practice smash. The Mercedes factory driver speared into a concrete wall at Turn 1 in his Winward Racing AMG GT3. Winward is anticipating Auer to be fully fit for the start of the DTM season.

TRULLI JR HEADS TO JAPAN

Enzo Trulli, the son of Formula 1 race winner Jarno Trulli, will race in Japan's Super Formula Lights series in 2023 after failing to score points in FIA F3 last year. The 17-year-old Italian has joined the crack TOM'S team alongside Toyota juniors Hibiki Taira and Seita Nonaka plus Yuga Furutani in the squad's line-up of Toyota-powered Dallaras.

Pagenaud, Boullion and
Treluyer raced Pescarolo
Peugeot at Le Mans in 2009

HALL
motorsport
IMAGES



Pescarolo name back with Peugeot Le Mans attack

WEC

The Pescarolo name is set to return to the race tracks next year after an absence of more than 10 years with Peugeot in the World Endurance Championship. The owner of the Pescarolo Sport brand has announced plans to field at least one 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar in conjunction with the factory in 2024.

A team that no longer has any connection with its founder, four-time Le Mans winner Henri Pescarolo, has firmed up a deal to work in partnership with Peugeot Sport. Its car or cars will be entered under the Pescarolo Sport banner, but run from the French manufacturer's Satory base on the outskirts of Paris.

The plans were announced by owner Jocelyn Pedrono last week and confirmed by Peugeot, which said that it is "very proud that Pescarolo Sport chose our Hypercar". The search for backing for the programme is at an advanced stage, according to former Pescarolo driver Bruce Jouanny, who is working with Pedrono on the project.

"We would not have made the announcement and received the validation of Jean-Marc Finot [boss of Peugeot Sport] if the project was not going ahead," explained Jouanny. "We are finalising the biggest part of the budget right now

as the result of talks that have been going on for the past year and a half.

"Peugeot Sport will be looking after the technical side from A to Z; it's a lot easier at this stage rather than setting up the technical structure to run a 9X8. Our input is about putting the budget together, making sure that the Pescarolo spirit is maintained and choosing the drivers."

It is undecided, Jouanny revealed, whether Pescarolo Sport will field one or two Peugeots in the Hypercar class: "It would be easier to run one car and run one car properly, but we are aiming high."

Pedrono acquired the rights to the name of the Pescarolo Sport team, runner-up at Le Mans in 2005 and 2006, in 2016 from the Sora Group, the composites organisation that took control of the team ahead of the 2009 season. It ran a works-loaned Peugeot 908 HDi turbodiesel at the 24 Hours alongside one of its Judd-powered Pescarolo 01s but was not seen again after pulling the plug on its 2010 campaign at the French enduro.

Henri Pescarolo subsequently relaunched his squad as Pescarolo Team for 2011-12 before closing its doors. Pedrono announced plans for a one-make series in 2017 with a Chevrolet-powered prototype, which failed to come to fruition.

GARY WATKINS

SUTTON



Dave Price 1947-2023

OBITUARY

Dave Price did a hell of a lot in a long and varied motorsport career. Winning the British Formula 3 Championship as a team owner and helping to turn Sauber into a Le Mans 24 Hours-winning operation as a team manager and engineer are just two highs of his near-50 years in the sport. 'Pricey', who has died aged 75, did it all with a smile on his face and a firm belief that motor racing wasn't the be-all and end-all of life. That goes a long way to explaining the deep loyalty he engendered from those who worked for him and why he probably never made a single enemy in the paddock.

To those credits can be added a further eight British F3 wins for David Price Racing to go with the 10 – from 17 races – secured by Johnny Dumfries on the way to the 1984 title aboard a Volkswagen-engined Ralt RT3, not to mention another crown in France. DPR also took eight wins in the Global Endurance GT Series with the McLaren F1 GTR in 1995 and 1996, and would almost certainly have won Le Mans in the first of those years with Derek and Justin Bell and Andy Wallace but for a failing clutch release bearing on the Harrods-sponsored machine.

There were also a couple of race wins in GP2 with Olivier Pla when DPR ended a long hiatus from single-seaters in the mid-2000s. But that's to overlook the successful DPS Composites business he founded in the mid-1980s, his role in running British F3 as chairman of the Formula 3 Teams' Association right up to

the demise of the series in 2014, and that he was a founding partner in the MSL motor racing hospitality group active in Formula 1 and beyond. Largely forgotten is that DPR built and ran the first factory Rover SD1s in what was then the British Saloon Car Championship in 1980, and that its sister Bracey Price Motorsport operation fielded bike legend Giacomo Agostini in the Aurora British F1 Championship aboard a pair of Williams-Cosworth FW06s in 1979 and 1980.

Wallace, who also drove for DPR when it was running Panoz machinery in the FIA GT Championship in 1997, recalled Price as a "master tactician" and "a bloody good team boss". "Every car I ever drove for Dave was top notch," he said. "He understood that he needed the best people possible to prepare and run his cars and always made sure that was the case. But as deadly serious and as high-pressured as it all was, driving for Pricey was always fun."

Martin Brundle, who got his big break



Mansell won in Price's F3 March-Triumph in 1979

in single-seaters with DPR in British F3 in 1982, described Price as a "a great leader, a great character and a great bloke. As a team manager he could galvanise the people around him. DP got the fundamentals right because he always took a pragmatic approach and there was never any BS."

Price began his motorsport career in the late 1960s with the John Willment touring car squad and then progressed to the competition department of South London-based Ford dealer Adlards before setting up his own team with John Bracey in 1975. Their big break came when they landed the deal to run Triumph-engined F3 Marches for Unipart in 1978.

DPR shut its doors after a French F3 campaign in 1986 in order for Price to concentrate on his new composites business. He became a jobbing TM, working for Porsche entrant Richard Lloyd before being recruited by Sauber, newly with Mercedes factory backing, in early 1988. The Le Mans win for Manuel Reuter, Stanley Dickens and Jochen Mass followed in 1989 as it waltzed to the World Sports-Prototype Championship title.

Price also had a long relationship with Don Panoz that stretched beyond DPR running his Esperante GTR-1 in FIA GTs in 1997. He subsequently headed up the US-based full-factory team and then returned to look after the DeltaWing programme from 2013. There was also a short stint in F1 working as team manager at the fading Brabham in 1991.

GARY WATKINS



Harrods McLaren came close to 1995 Le Mans win

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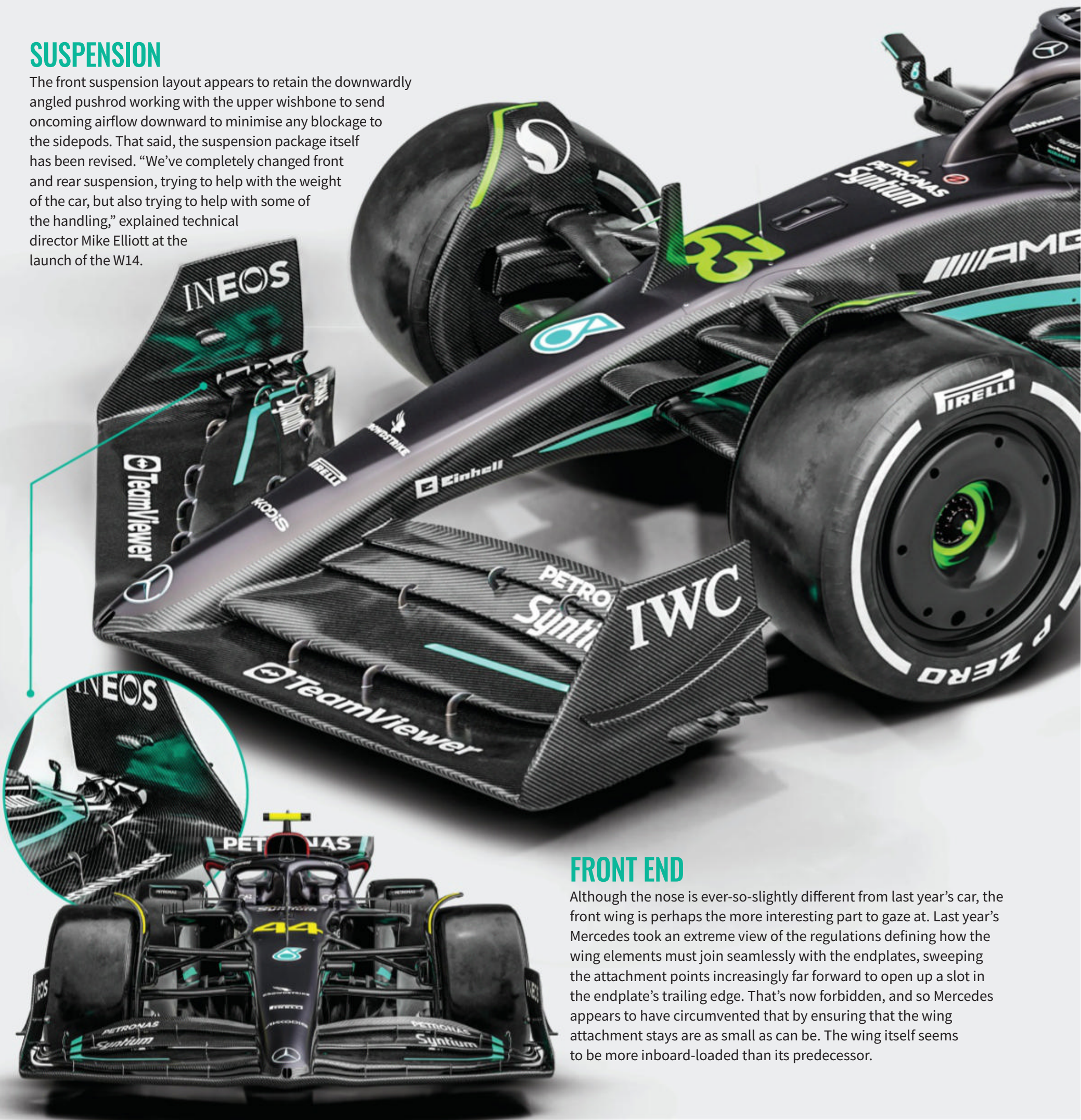
MERCEDES W14

After a misstep in 2022, the former dominator has returned to a black livery and hopes to be done with porpoising

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

SUSPENSION

The front suspension layout appears to retain the downwardly angled pushrod working with the upper wishbone to send oncoming airflow downward to minimise any blockage to the sidepods. That said, the suspension package itself has been revised. “We’ve completely changed front and rear suspension, trying to help with the weight of the car, but also trying to help with some of the handling,” explained technical director Mike Elliott at the launch of the W14.



FRONT END

Although the nose is ever-so-slightly different from last year's car, the front wing is perhaps the more interesting part to gaze at. Last year's Mercedes took an extreme view of the regulations defining how the wing elements must join seamlessly with the endplates, sweeping the attachment points increasingly far forward to open up a slot in the endplate's trailing edge. That's now forbidden, and so Mercedes appears to have circumvented that by ensuring that the wing attachment stays are as small as can be. The wing itself seems to be more inboard-loaded than its predecessor.


 A large, detailed image of the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 2023 car, showing the sidepods, rear wing, and front wing. The car is black with silver and red accents. Sponsors like INEOS, TeamViewer, AMD, and SOLERA are visible. A callout bubble points to the rear wing area.
 P14 MORE FROM MERC LAUNCH

SIDEPODS


Mercedes has persisted with its tiny sidepod footprint, complete with side-on letterbox inlet. The shrink-wrapped sidepods have been reformulated this time and are at their widest around the middle rather than at the front, perhaps to introduce some of the in-vogue downwashing towards the floor. As for the inlet, it's much squarer to allow for a subtle undercut further down the flanks. The cooling slots run along the top contours of the pods, helping with further flow direction. Although continuing to plough a lone furrow, Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said the design "is the first iteration and, when we're going through the first few races, that's going to change a bit".

BODYWORK

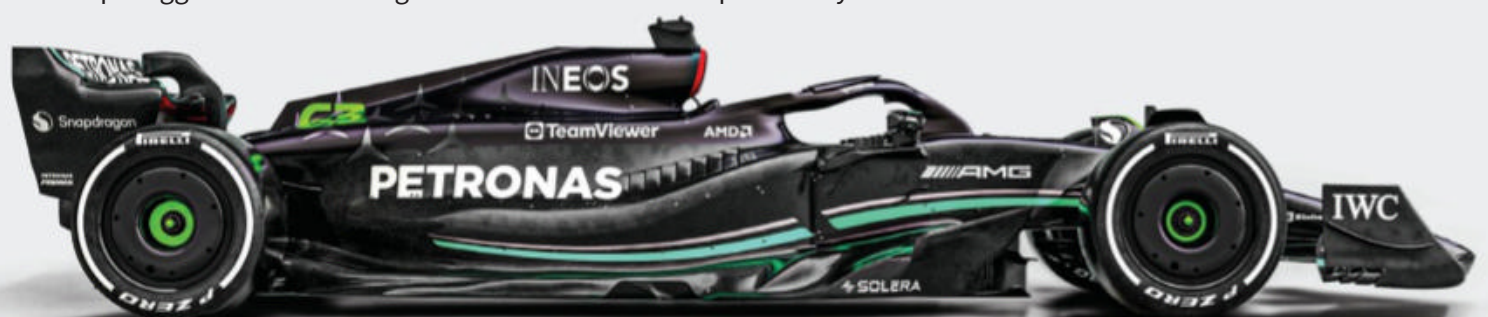
Above the sidepods, there are subtle influences from some of the design trends seen last year, particularly with the tunnelled bodywork opening. This should allow for more hot air to be displaced around the tailpipe, and presumably placing that air between the rear wing and beam wing isn't quite as aerodynamically critical. Therefore the bodywork directly around the air intake looks less bulbous than on the W13, allowing for a slightly more conventional shark fin. "The core DNA is still the same, but there's quite significant changes in the bodywork," said Mike Elliott. "We've looked at every area and said, 'Well, how can we improve what we've done? How do we guarantee as best we can we don't have those problems this year?'"

FLOOR

The elephant in the room – and one that remains obscured – is the floor. Much of Mercedes' 2022 woes stemmed from the philosophy of running the car close to the ground in pursuit of sheer out-and-out downforce, but the knock-on effect of that meant that the W13 was one of the worst affected by porpoising. Mercedes questioned if it had made a fundamental design mistake with its previous car, said Mike Elliott, but the tangible "goodness" in the W13 concept suggested that starting from scratch would have potentially left the team even further behind.


 A circular inset image showing a close-up of the Mercedes rear wing and beam wing area, highlighting the tunnelled bodywork opening.

Mercedes conformed to 2023's trends and opted for the tunnelled bodywork outlet



MERCEDES CAUTION INDICATES CHANGES AHEAD IN 2023

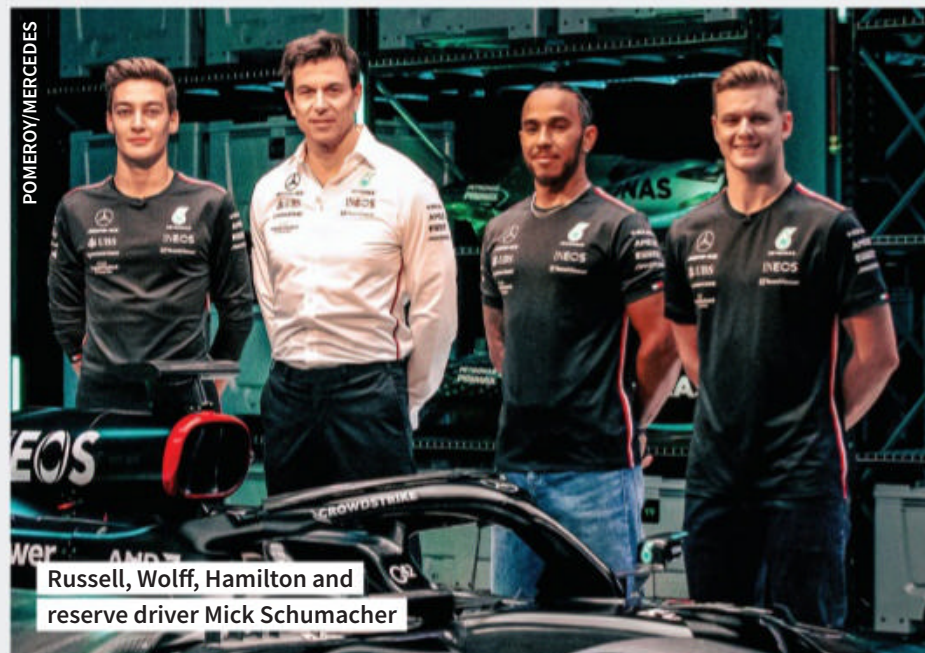
A muted launch for the Three-Pointed Star appears to set the tone for managed expectations and upgrades in the pipeline

MATT KEW

The launch event for the Mercedes W14 was pared back, much like its livery. And, perhaps more troublingly for those craving a two or even three-way fight for the constructors' championship in 2023, the expectations from the team's top brass for the early races of the season were similarly lean.

Forget hopping over to New York City like Red Bull and AlphaTauri or hiring a nightclub in London as per Alpine; there wasn't even a studio audience to applaud the latest grand prix creation to wear the Three-Pointed Star. Instead, the eight-time constructors' champion opted for a repeat of its straightforward 2022 unveiling. In the company of Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff and drivers Lewis Hamilton and George Russell, the dust covers were whipped off the W14 in an online-streamed show-and-tell at Silverstone before the car took to the track in the afternoon.

Most striking is the return to a predominantly black livery for the Silver Arrows. The draggy and bouncy W13 indeed proved unlucky for some as Mercedes clocked its least successful season in a decade with the sole win and pole, scored by Russell. In response, the team hopes that by mimicking the double title-winning 2020 and 2021 challengers, which wore a darker scheme, a return to form is imminent. But take a closer look and the paint stops in line with the halo and away from the nosecone. The remainder is in fact exposed carbonfibre. As with the rest of the class of 2023, even though the FIA has scrapped a proposed 2kg reduction to the minimum 798kg weight limit for this year, Mercedes is still



Russell, Wolff, Hamilton and reserve driver Mick Schumacher



“THE COLOUR BLACK BECAME PART OF OUR DNA, SO WE ARE PLEASED TO RETURN TO IT”

KAWKA/MERCEDES

struggling to match or dip below the threshold to then place ballast around the car to optimise handling and balance.

At least the weight-saving ties in smartly to Mercedes' racing history. Claims that the black palette echoes the Sauber C13 – the first F1 car to have Benz backing, with a sticker on the engine cover that read 'Concept by Mercedes' – of 30 years ago are merely a retconned convenience. But the peeling away of the W14's paint does tie in with the popular (though dubious) 1934 origin story of the 'Silver Arrows' nickname, whereby the W25s shone in bare aluminium after being stripped to pre-emptively meet a 750kg maximum weight limit for grand prix cars.

“We were overweight last year,” explained Wolff. “This year we have tried to figure out where we can squeeze out every single gram. So now, history repeats itself. You will see that the car has some raw carbon bits, along with some that are painted matte black. Of course, when we changed the livery in 2020 the main driving factor was to support the diversity and equality causes which are always close to our heart. The colour black became part of our DNA at that point, so we are pleased to return to it.”

Beyond the livery, the W14 is notable for retaining size-zero sidepods. While ground-effects ensure that underfloor aero dominates the picture, these distinctive top surfaces are notable for confirming that Mercedes has opted to evolve rather than scrap its design concept that proved so difficult to tame last season. Technical director Mike Elliott believes persistence is key, rather than turn to a clean-sheet design and lose a year of learning. The consistency does, therefore, leave the expected top three of Merc, Ferrari and Red Bull with radically different approaches. Meanwhile, revised suspension geometry should solve the tyre warm-up issues that dogged Hamilton and Russell so severely in anything but scorching conditions last season.

“The entire organisation was pushing flat-out last year,”



Mercedes has opted to evolve its design concept for W14, not start from scratch



Interruptions to demo run at Silverstone not the most positive omen

ETHERINGTON/MERCEDES

added Wolff. “When we realised that the car wasn’t where we wanted it to be, we mobilised every reserve we had. That never stopped throughout the season. We are now getting ready to start the next season. I see so much effort, motivation and energy in the organisation to launch a car that will eventually be competitive enough to fight at the very front of the grid.”

As the Austrian – and his colleagues for that matter – imply, Mercedes isn’t banking on a flying start. There’s talk that the windtunnel figures have not hit targets and there will be immediate upgrade packages, with the sidepods to be revised over the opening rounds. Although the team has previously unveiled and tested with one car specification before debuting a dramatically different design soon after, the prevailing sentiment this time around is one of underwhelming caution and managing expectations.

In its title-winning pomp, the Brackley squad was no stranger to

playing down its credentials before romping to success. That was often met with allegations of the team having ‘cried Wolff’. But the muted tone this time around feels much more in line with its sombre conclusions from 2022 testing prior to the W13 porpoising its way to a distant third in the points. While the team insists nothing was untoward, there has been considerable chatter that the afternoon demonstration at Silverstone last Wednesday was not trouble-free as it took several interruptions to hit the 15km allowance. An occasional engine start-up issue is not unheard of, or a subsequent misfire. But when this is compared to Ferrari’s ambitious and faultless rollout livestreamed from Fiorano and held in front of a Tifosi-lined grandstand, the suggestion is that Mercedes is already, and again, on the back foot. 🍀

🔁 P26 THE RACE TO TOPPLE RED BULL

ALPINE A523

Can the French squad finally break out from the midfield to challenge F1's heavy hitters?

JAKE BOXALL-LEGG



FRONT END

While the 'A523' unveiled at Alpine's launch event was last year's machine, the team did the dutiful job of unveiling a series of renders of a more representative car. The nose, for example, is wider, flatter, and blends into the mainplane – unlike last year's car, where the tip protruded slightly from the three pink wing elements. The endplates and front wing do not stray too far away from where the A522 left off; the renders show a Ligier JS37-esque mounting to the wing mainplane, but leaked images of the real car show the wing to be a lot more like Aston Martin's design from last year, with a more gradual rise in the mainplane to the nose tip.

SUSPENSION

Alpine has switched to a pushrod rear suspension on the A523, which has offered the team more leeway with not only its aerodynamics, but with its packaging at the back of the car. "It gives us quite a lot of nice aerodynamic features," explained technical director Matt Harman. "It's also freed up a little bit of space to have some more systems on the inboard to give us that mechanical balance adjustment that we need. There are also some cooling aspects that have been very useful at the rear of the car, and how we eject the mass flow out and into the rear wing. The whole rear end at the moment is still prime for development."



➔ P18 MORE ON ALPINE'S LAUNCH

SIDEPODS

The sidepods also take the Ferrari/Red Bull hybrid design that Alpine introduced part way through 2022 a step further, widening the channels and funnelling air to the top of the diffuser. Cooling louvres fit within that to ensure the airflow is all working towards the same direction. Images of the car on track

show that the sidepods have been further refined, with a Red Bull-style dip part way along the ridge to further promote the direction of airflow downwards across the face.



The pink livery will be run for the first three races of 2023: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Australia

POWERTRAIN

One key issue that the team needs to resolve going into 2023 is its reliability. The overall lack of that displayed by last year's car was partly down to the Renault engine department in Viry-Chatillon pushing the boat out on a new, more aggressive package that repositioned the turbocharger and the energy recovery systems. It proved to have the requisite grunt, terrifying the other teams with its top speed in Baku, but was probably the most frequent proponent of giving up the ghost while on track. The team identified the water pump as the key player in last year's failures, and powertrain director Bruno Famin reckons that this has now been fixed.



BODYWORK

Like last year, the two big cooling tunnels – painted black for clarity – also feature, wielded over the car's shoulders like two bazookas mounted akimbo on the world's most unlikely battletank. The trapezoidal air intake also remains on board, while the air intake cover on leaked photographs shows a clutch of further outlets at the back, in place of the little shark fin in the officially released images. It appears that the bodywork around this area is interchangeable, so a shark fin could presumably return if required.

ALPINE PROGRESSES BUT ARE WINS STILL OUT OF REACH?



The final team to reveal its 2023 challenger did so with a helping of razzmatazz, making clear its intention to consolidate its position in Formula 1's top four

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

The Alpine squad concluded Formula 1's 2023 launch season with an event at south-east London's Printworks nightclub, where it revealed and discussed its A523. The team was also keen to signal its intent to build towards bigger and better achievements in the championship with a large, glitzy event that featured major stars from around the sporting world and a big update on its Rac(H)er gender diversity improvement programme.

The French-British squad's team principal Otmar Szafnauer was joined by technical director Matt Harman, new signing Pierre Gasly and incumbent star Esteban Ocon as the A523 was unveiled, its new liveries adorning a pair of show cars at the Printworks, with its real design revealed in an accompanying series of distributed images. As it did in 2022, Alpine will start the season running the pink of its sponsor BWT, with the water technology company's colour scheme remaining on for an extra race this time to cover the Bahrain-Saudi Arabia-Australia opening leg before Alpine's typical blue returns.

Also in attendance were Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo and Alpine CEO Laurent Rossi, who revealed at the event's conclusion

that the manufacturer has hired French football legend Zinedine Zidane as a brand ambassador for Rac(H)er and its concurrent Concours Excellence Mecanique initiative. Double Olympic boxing champion Nicola Adams was also revealed as a mentor for Rac(H)er, which for 2023 features Sophia Florsch joining the Alpine's Academy young driver programme and racing in Formula 3, with Abbi Pulling doing likewise and entering the newly created F1 Academy series. Alpine has also signed female karters Aiva Anagnostiadis, Angelina Proenca, Chiara Battig, Lisa Billard, Maria Chiara Nardelli and Kaur Kera Sukhman to its young driver karting programme and created a Human High-Performance Centre at its Enstone factory to aid the development of its whole racing roster.

"It's great to have the support of Luca and Laurent," Szafnauer said of Alpine's on-stage announcements and revelations. "And not only for all of us that are here, it's also a statement to everybody at Viry [Chatillon, Renault's engine base] and Enstone that they're serious. We've got to improve. We've got to not scrape by in fourth [in the 2023 constructors' championship] but be solidly there and closer to third. And for us to be able to do that we've got to develop at a higher rate than every other team. That's not easy to do."



Ocon and Gasly pledge to keep things civil

“WE’VE GOT TO IMPROVE. WE’VE GOT TO NOT SCRAPE BY IN FOURTH BUT BE SOLIDLY THERE AND CLOSER TO THIRD”

initial ground-effects concept it started working on back in 2019, before starting with a pullrod suspension when F1’s new era finally commenced last year.

The team is expected to take a major upgrade package to the upcoming Bahrain season opener and has introduced a new front wing design that is expected to change considerably throughout 2023. Alpine says it has also fixed the engine water pump it claims was behind its substantial reliability problems last year.

“This year’s shakedown was much better,” said Szafranauer. “The quality of the car is a lot higher. We had three main objectives: one, fix the reliability issues that we had; two, be underweight significantly – because we were overweight last year; and three, make sure that we change the car such that we can continue to bring aerodynamic developments in the future to the car. And I think we’ve done all those three things.”

The new team-mate relationship between Ocon and Gasly is set to be a big storyline in 2023 as the pair are well known to have been junior adversaries. The topic came up immediately when they faced the media after the launch event. Ocon, who also revealed that he picked up a lung virus over the winter that impacted his training for six weeks, said: “There’s not going to be any headlines! There’s not going to be any of that. We are never going to be best friends. But the important thing for us is to keep the flow going together.”

Gasly, starting on his sixth full F1 season and first without Red Bull backing, said he was “very confident” and had “no doubt” there would be no intra-team war at Alpine in 2023.

“I’ve spent more time with him in the past two months than I’ve spent over the last 10 years,” said Gasly. “Things are going well. We are grown-up people now, more mature, and just aware of the responsibilities that we have being an Alpine driver and having such a big group behind us. We know we’ve got to work closely together. If we want to be competitive, we’ve got to push the team forward.”

Ocon concluded that “realistically” he doesn’t think “that’s where we set ourselves” on Alpine’s chances of securing 2023 race wins. ❄️

But it’s the goal that we set ourselves.”

Szafranauer also explained that the team’s objective of consolidating the fourth place it beat McLaren to in 2022 had started smoothly, with Alpine conducting a successful 100km shakedown/filming day at Silverstone three days ahead of last week’s public launch.

The A523 benefits from the team’s considerable efforts to get beneath the minimum weight target so it could make the performance gains of adjusting set-ups with ballast to run at F1’s 798kg limit. To do this, Alpine made efforts to reduce weight in its engine cooling approach and switched to the pushrod rear suspension layout it is understood to have assessed on the



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Alarm that still sounds from FIA

A clarification to the rule change about F1 drivers voicing their opinions on non-racing matters does little to lift the feeling that the whole saga has been a PR own goal

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

The new Formula 1 campaign is finally just around the corner. But before racing begins again, the fallout from a rather needless distraction is being discussed: the FIA's codified clampdown on driver expressions during the soon-to-conclude off-season.

As expected when they emerged in public properly for the first time since the 2022 season finale for the recent car launch events, the F1 drivers were questioned on a new Article 12.2.1.n in the FIA's International Sporting Code. This had come in pre-Christmas, apparently prohibiting drivers from making political, religious or personal statements at races without prior permission from 2023 onwards.

Although not all were asked, the message from most was the same: they were united against any clampdown on their freedom of expression. Max Verstappen pertinently said the overall move was "probably a bit unnecessary". Really, that's an understatement. A now-issued FIA clarification is a complex and confusing explanation of something that already worked – the "principle of neutrality as one of [the FIA's] guiding values", according to the FIA's own document.

But it at least eases a considerable number of fears ignited by the December 2022 ISC update – that the drivers might be in breach of the rules if they uttered anything not deemed compliant at any stage, even on social media, if not approved in advance. Now, the

"With Vettel gone, questions on non-racing topics will no doubt fall even more on Hamilton"

clarification explains that such expressions that would need approval only really concern certain times, generally involving competition or race promotion. Plus, drivers can speak freely in press conferences and interviews, but only when asked by an accredited journalist. Yet, confusion and grey-area concerns remain.

Let's start with what the drivers can say to the media. The F1 press pack – stuffed full of members looking for an excuse to show off – is delighted to be included in a rules requirement. But drivers rarely express non-racing issues unprompted. Which raises questions about the need to codify the situation anyway given how things previously ran. With Sebastian Vettel gone, questions on non-racing topics will no doubt fall even more on Lewis Hamilton, but it's good to see Verstappen speaking up on this issue too.

Secondly, the FIA's rules already restricted what can be expressed

– even as an item of clothing – during "activities on the track area or equivalent", according to its clarification document. The 'need' to further outline this is... unsettling.

And then there's the question of helmet liveries, which are not mentioned specifically in the clarification but are the most visible element of any racing driver. Famously, Hamilton wore a rainbow-flag-inspired helmet livery in the 2021 Qatar, Saudi Arabian and Abu Dhabi races – all countries that have LGBTQ+ laws. On a rainbow-flag helmet livery, the understanding is that such a move made now would likely need a request for permission. This is an appalling thought. Expressing support for the LGBTQ+ community in such a way isn't covered by the Article 12.2.1.n issue of religion, or its disturbingly vague concept of a 'personal' statement.

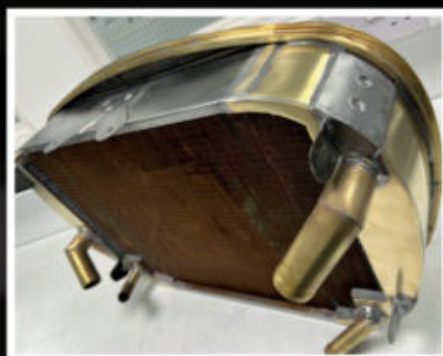
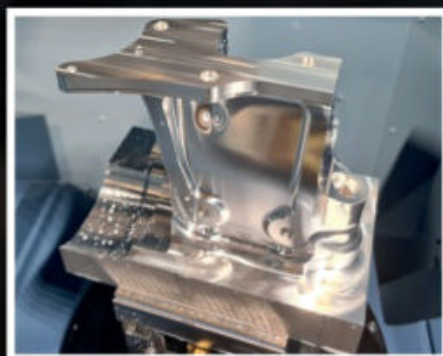
Perhaps the real issue is that F1 visits many countries around the world with at best questionable records on human rights and freedom of expression, and at worst awful ones. And in our ever-more progressive world, it's right that every time F1 races in such places that their practices are discussed.

Speaking to sources at the FIA, it's possible to discern a note of frustration over this whole saga, that it's the F1 organisation that signs the deals and takes the racing to these venues – many of which are sportwashing their images. F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali has said "F1 will never put a gag on anyone". This is laudable, but the decision to go racing in such places that pay a premium to sportwash in the pursuit of profits then goes in a circle back to the need for progress to be seen on improving human rights. And then the FIA comes back in with the rules.

It's now helmed by Mohammed Ben Sulayem, who is already thought by some – in the UK even by a member of the House of Lords – as Paul Scriven puts it, to be "[shielding] F1 host countries from scrutiny over injustice" via the Article 12.2.1.n changes. The FIA says the whole change has come so it can be closer aligned to the International Olympic Committee and has been done to "cement the FIA's longstanding commitment to protecting motor sport's neutrality". But this is only half an explanation. And for Ben Sulayem's own standing given Scriven's words, written in a letter to the FIA president regarding the sportwashing issue in the Middle East, a full explanation would surely be a positive step.

The root cause of this whole story is still unclear. And, when trust in institutions and authorities is so low, it raises the question of why the changes weren't fully explained at the start. Particularly with the timing of it coming so close to the World Cup.

Ultimately, F1 is booming right through the years in which some drivers have been their most vocal on serious issues in global society. People want to see them be leaders, and yes, some don't agree. But they should just be allowed to get on without fear of any punishment for doing so. ✿



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Next batch of British SuperStars

One of our sportscar racers has a lot of work on his hands this year but is relishing the chance to help more young talent

ANDY MEYRICK

This year is shaping up to be another busy one for me, but believe me I'm not complaining about it! As well as my own two racing campaigns in Europe this season, we have another fantastic crop of BRDC SuperStars to introduce to the world and I am extremely proud to remain as director of the programme.

Since its inception, the BRDC SuperStars has continued to focus on developing the most promising young British drivers across all classes of racing and sits alongside the British Racing Drivers' Club's introductory Rising Stars programme. When I became director in 2019 it was in a healthy state thanks to the previous efforts of Tim Harvey and Derek Warwick, and I'm delighted that it continues to go from strength to strength.

In 2022 we were again able to organise activities for the drivers to take part in, including a media training session with Louise Goodman at the BRDC Clubhouse, which helped those in attendance with techniques they can use when speaking to the media, especially on live television. We also travelled to St George's Park, home of England's football teams, for a training and team-building day. Beyond the team days we work to support each SuperStar with individual sessions, which could be time on simulators, advanced driver coaching, mental health training, contract negotiations, and much more.

A key part of being a BRDC SuperStar is the ability to network with fellow BRDC members, both at events throughout the year and also over the phone. Members are ideal role models, with long and successful careers, and their insight, advice and perspective can be invaluable to these young stars in the early stages of their careers.

Joining the BRDC SuperStars for the first time this year will be Adam Smalley, Callum Voisin and Louis Foster, while Kiern Jewiss makes a return, having been a SuperStar in 2019 and 2020. Coming back as BRDC SuperStars this year will be Ollie Bearman, Luke Browning, Jonny Edgar, Tom Gamble, Harry King, Zak

O'Sullivan, Seb Priaulx and Matthew Rees.

Adam, previously a BRDC Rising Star, is the current Porsche GB Junior Driver and finished runner-up in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB last season, his first in the series. Callum, also a Rising Star, excelled in 2022, just his second year out of karting, as he scored three wins in the GB3 Championship, had six podium finishes, and clinched five pole positions, which earned him the Jack Cavill Pole Position Cup.

Louis comes into 2023 as the Indy Pro 2000 champion, a finalist in the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award, and at the 2022 BRDC Awards was handed the Henry Surtees Award for the most outstanding performance by a BRDC Rising Star. Kiern makes a return to the BRDC SuperStars after two outstanding seasons in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, where he clinched the Rookie title in 2021 and followed up with the overall championship last season.

Ollie makes the step up to the Formula 2 Championship this season, remaining with Prema Racing, and continues to be a member of the Ferrari Driver Academy. Returning to F3 will be Zak O'Sullivan and Jonny Edgar, both of whom will compete with new teams this season in Prema and MP Motorsport respectively.

Luke had the 2022 of his dreams, not only being crowned the GB3 champion with five wins and 13 podiums but winning the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award. Matthew, meanwhile, makes a return to the GB3 Championship after claiming one victory and two other podium finishes last season.

Tom was a race winner and podium finisher in the European Le Mans Series in 2022, also adding GT performances in the Asian Le Mans Series and at the Daytona 24 Hours in an impressive resumé for a 21-year-old. Seb, meanwhile, clinched two GTE Am victories in the FIA World Endurance Championship during 2022 and raced at Daytona this year, albeit hampered by Porsche's Balance of Performance constraints.

Finally, Harry will compete in the German Porsche Carrera Cup this year, having been victorious at the Abu Dhabi 6 Hours in January, his first endurance win, and taken part in the Asian Le Mans Series over the past couple of weekends.

The 12 drivers make up some of the United Kingdom's brightest motorsport talents and will proudly carry the BRDC SuperStars badge throughout 2023, promoting the Club and its young driver programmes to the rest of the world.

I'll be racing in the European Le Mans Series this year, remaining with United Autosports but this time in LMP2 alongside Nelson Piquet Jr and Daniel Schneider. Pre-season testing is going well and we're looking forward to getting the season under way. I can also release a small spoiler in that I will be competing in GT World Challenge Europe, though the full details of that will have to wait another week or so! 🏁



Browning (left) and Bearman return as BRDC SuperStars

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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Keep your opinions to yourselves

Formula 1 drivers, please, please, please leave your political, religious or personal opinions/statement out of F1. Just do it during your free time like all of us.

Some F1 drivers think that they are above everything else because of their status and millions. If they were working in a normal job, they wouldn't be able to make those comments while working, ie in company time, which is quite correct.

So again, F1 drivers, do us all a favour, keep all your political statements to once you have left the race track. Thankfully, sport remains the only place where we can be free of the daily bombardment of goody-goody political statements.

If you don't agree with the new rules, leave F1. No such

problems in the rest of motorsport, let's keep that way.

S Valiente

Oakham, Rutland

Regulations for the sake of regulations

I can only agree with the sentiments expressed by Michael Skeet in last week's issue. Why do the powers that be constantly enforce change for the sake of change? The paying public won't benefit from the proposed track limits rules. One can only hope that administrators listen to long-standing fans and spare us this ludicrous nonsense.

James Stacey

Newton Abbot




IN MEMORIAM The life of much-admired and liked journalist Simon Arron, who died last November, was celebrated at Silverstone last Friday. As well as hordes of media, attendees included Mark Webber (foreground in anorak), David Brabham, Christian Horner, Alan Gow and Jonathan Palmer. Speakers included former Autosport editors Damien Smith and Mark Skewis – occasionally interrupted by noise from a passing F1 McLaren, which would no doubt have amused Arron immensely. **Photo by Gary Hawkins**

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FERRARI OR





MERCEDES?

THE RACE TO TOPPLE RED BULL

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

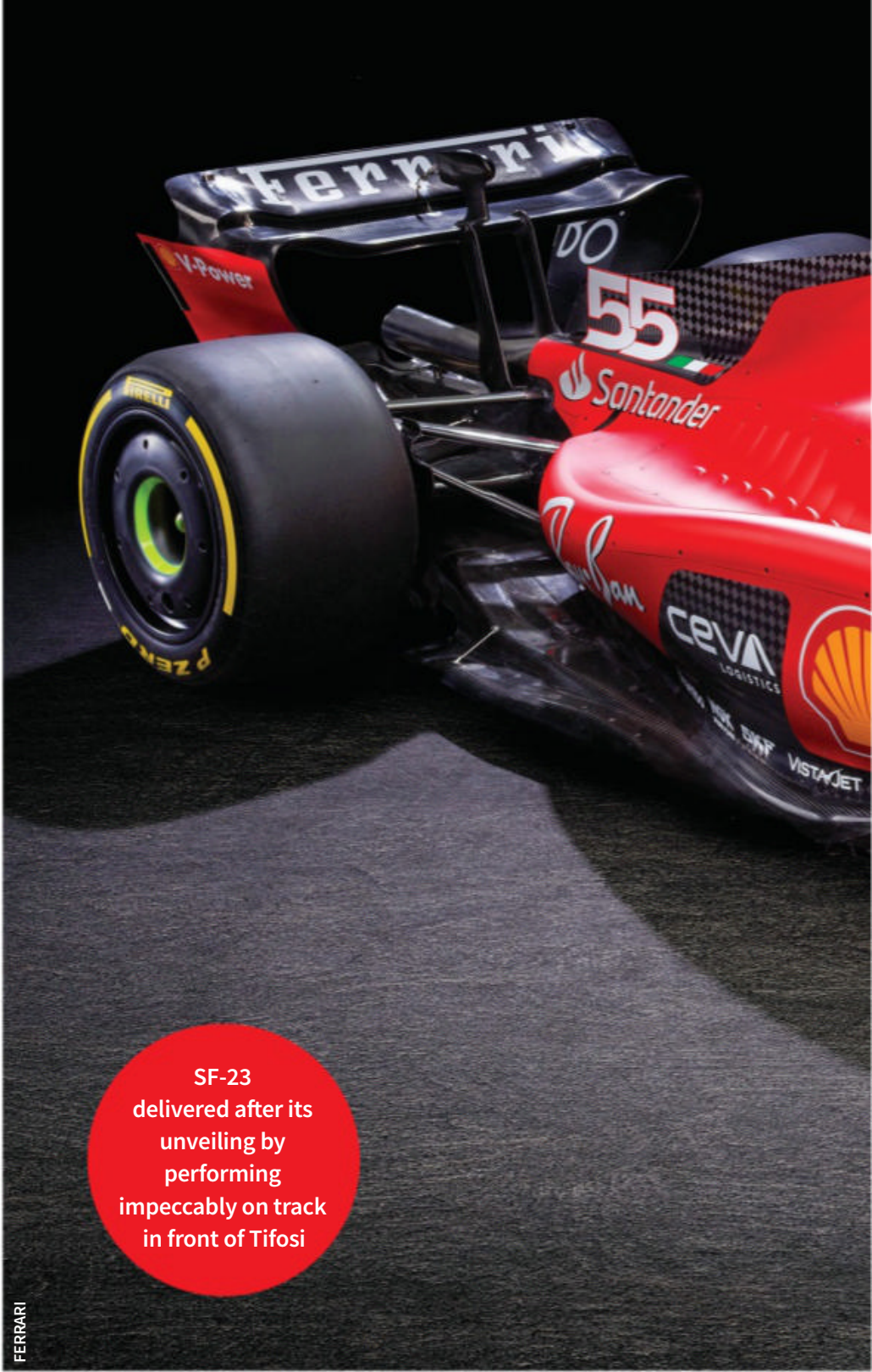


It might be enjoying an enormous popularity boom but, based on the mutterings from many teams coming out of Formula 1's 2023 launch season on the eve of Bahrain testing and the first race, the championship has a problem. Williams and Haas are still working their way back from recent investment-and-funding turmoil. AlphaTauri went backwards in 2022 and Aston Martin made no progress in the constructors' standings. McLaren is aiming to retake the fourth place it lost to Alpine last year, while the Enstone team speaks only of closing the gap to third place as its realistic 2023 aim.

This is not the thrilling spread of success that many fans envisaged when F1 revealed the first ambitious overhaul of the technical rules of the Liberty Media commercial rights ownership era. That was unlikely in any case but, with Red Bull's 2022 mulling of Ferrari's opposition, and Mercedes wildly bouncing out of the contest, still only two teams have taken drivers' or constructors' championship crowns since 2010 (and really that stretch encompasses Brawn in 2009). And so it seems that if F1 is to get the title fight thriller it desires in 2023, the red and (returning) black machines must take it to those taurus-adorned reigning champions. How the championship could do with a 2010-style season, when three teams won races and four drivers entered the season finale with a chance of title glory.

One intriguing element of the 2023 'Class A' fight is that all three teams will be running very different car concepts. No matter what was claimed at its livery launch and Ford-partnership-announcement event in New York three weeks ago, the actual RB19 is unlikely to have adopted Ferrari's downforce-packing wide and sculpted sidepods, or the very narrow 'zeropods' that remain on Mercedes' W14. The RB18 was simply too slippery and efficient at too many tracks as Max Verstappen swept to his second title last year. That is the design the rest are shooting for, and is indeed from where many teams in 'Class B' are taking their cues.

But, critically, not Ferrari and Mercedes. Both have preserved their distinctive top-surface designs from 2022, albeit with a series of evolutionary steps. It's important to remember that the upper aerodynamic surfaces on ground-effects cars are indeed of secondary importance to the powerful venturi tunnels sucking air along the bottom of the floors. But they do impact performance and, as the most visible aero elements with which many fans will



SF-23 delivered after its unveiling by performing impeccably on track in front of Tifosi

FERRARI

get familiar, can't just be ignored. Indeed, F1 observers can read plenty into what these two legendary teams have opted to do so far for 2023. And, while there's a massive amount of smoke-and-mirrors PR mischief at play at this time of year, the messages coming from the actual launch events held respectively by Ferrari and Mercedes hint at much about their chances of toppling Red Bull. But the moods of the red and black camps are starkly contrasting. This should result in doses of concern and confidence in Milton Keynes...

Will we have three teams fighting at the front from the off?



S BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



FERRARI 'WINS' F1 2023 LAUNCH SEASON

"It's relatively high risk to put a brand-new F1 car on track in front of so many people, and to actually get to enjoy it without any single problem on track [is rare]," said Carlos Sainz after his first sample of Ferrari's new SF-23 at the team's Fiorano launch.

Now that is a strong point to start with for Ferrari. It's often forgotten that, in 2022, the F1-75 chassis package was actually very good in terms of outright performance. It's downforce-packing top aero surfaces and potent power/traction punch off corners made it fearsomely fast in qualifying. There, Charles Leclerc led the way in the drivers' tallies on nine and Sainz added three more.

But the car was too often hobbled, most significantly by its fragile reliability. Time and again the Ferrari drivers were forced into engine-related retirements or grid penalties last year. Sainz's fiery Austrian Grand Prix exit at altitude forced the team to turn down its engine power yet more for October's even loftier Mexican race than it had already been doing since the summer. This left the F1-75s a minute in arrears, behind the resurgent Mercedes twins and commanding winner Max Verstappen.

Although Ferrari had made enormous progress since its 2020-21 fallow years, and deserves credit for making good on its many promises regarding the potential gains of the rules reset, the circumstances of its 2020 season are worth recalling here. Then, following Ferrari's controversial engine redesign 'settlement' with the FIA, the detuned power unit inside the SF1000 couldn't push the chassis fast enough to make its many aero parts work properly, and it therefore copped a big drag penalty. It's notable how Ferrari's performance with the downforce-laden F1-75 dropped off when running what's estimated at between 15-30bhp down, once it realised it had to make a power mode change to avoid even more non-finish disappointment.

When he faced the Tifosi for the first time last Tuesday as Ferrari

team principal, ex-Renault and Sauber/Alfa Romeo boss Frederic Vasseur had good news to share on this front. "The priority for everybody is the reliability," explained the Frenchman. "We did the mileage that we had to do on the dyno. We are all optimistic, but only Bahrain will tell us where we are in terms of reliability and performance. So far, I would say that it's all OK."

Since joining Ferrari in early January, Vasseur has been learning how F1's most famous team operates from the inside. So far, his efforts have left Leclerc "very impressed". The pair's previous relationship, from the Monegasque driving for Vasseur's ART Grand Prix squad in GP3 in 2015, and in Leclerc's 2018 debut F1 season at Sauber, was a key part of the considerations Ferrari made when hiring Mattia Binotto's replacement.

Vasseur, politically well-connected, with his Spark Racing Technology car manufacturing company building Formula E's spec machinery for the FIA, is known to run a tight ship, and his leadership potential is seen as crucial in Ferrari finally rescaling the title peaks it has missed since 2007 (drivers') and 2008 (constructors'). He also has a close relationship with Mercedes boss Toto Wolff, adding an interesting subplot to the often-Christian Horner-helmed team principal sparring sideshow.

"I spent the last couple of weeks meeting the people one to one," Vasseur said of his start to life at Ferrari. "To have discussions about themselves first and about the job and the structure of the company and organisation of the company."

As well as getting the best out of Leclerc and Sainz — and who better than a junior team owner who bonded well with Lewis Hamilton when the Mercedes star won GP2 as a rookie in 2006? — Vasseur must quickly address another key Ferrari weakness from 2022. This concerns its race strategy decisions, which were calamitous on occasion last year and cost the team major points in addition to the events compromised by poor reliability. >>

Vasseur has “spent the last four weeks to try and understand exactly what’s happened in the team and what’s happened last year”; but won’t “draw any conclusions before the first event”, and “will have to know each other before taking action”. That said, he’s eyeing making changes in the important strategy area. “We’ll make some small adjustments,” Vasseur explained, typically coy given the time of year and high-profile concern of the subject matter. “But you see just the visible part of the iceberg. And about strategy, [people outside speak] about ‘strategist’ and ‘strategy’. It’s not just one person pushing on a button. It’s software. It’s the team at the factory and it’s also process on the pitwall. And so, it’s a complete picture rather than about one person.”

Much like the debate on the importance of underfloor-versus-sidepod design for aerodynamicists, race strategy comes as a critical secondary element to car performance at a successful F1 team. And, most intriguingly, Vasseur concluded his launch press conference by hinting at a possible major car concept change to come for Ferrari, despite his new team set to start the season with an evolutionary design from the F1-75 in the form of the SF-23.

“We have the concept of the car as the same, the regulation is the same,” said the 54-year-old. “But we don’t have so much place to play with the regulation. It means that at the end of the day we’ll have a kind of convergence of the concept, convergence of performance. And you have to consider that at one stage you will have to do the carryover of parts for the cost cap. I think that quite soon in the next months, we’ll have strong convergence in terms of philosophies of the car.”

Whether that means Ferrari finally looking rather Red Bull RB18-like or not, Leclerc is clear how he wants his new machine to perform.

The SF-23 does feature a notable new design feature – an apparent S-duct arrangement around the cockpit, which is either aimed at channelling more airflow into the top sidepod louvres or is additional cooling. The former concept would presumably add even more downforce with minimal drag penalty and possibly help bring Ferrari into play at a greater range of tracks this time around. This is what Red Bull did so well in 2022 and is what Leclerc is after in handling terms too.

“Let’s say that the car balance last year was quite open, in a way, from



Vasseur aims to iron out poor strategy calls that hamstrung the squad

“WE’VE BEEN WORKING TO PUT THE BALANCE CLOSER TOGETHER FROM THE LOW-SPEED TO THE HIGH-SPEED”

slow-speed to high-speed corners,” he recounted, after completing the SF-23’s first shakedown laps before handing over to Sainz. “Then going into the specifics of that I won’t go. But, we’ve been working on that to try and put the balance closer together from the low-speed to the high-speed. And on the simulator, it seems good.”

Ferrari’s long-standing tyre management weakness was exposed again in 2022, with its drivers unable to consistently get the best out of Pirelli’s rubber across a stint as often as Verstappen in particular at Red Bull. The tyres have changed again for 2023, with the construction of all compounds altered and a new C1 coming in, while the previous one becomes a new Co step to close the performance gaps to the softer compounds. This mainly impacts the front tyres since Pirelli has worked to eliminate the understeer many drivers disliked in them last year.

The changes mean the target has moved again on tyre life, and the rubber is slightly heavier overall too, but Leclerc insists Ferrari has been trying to improve on tyre management – still the critical factor between closely matched cars in races. “We have done quite a lot of work during this winter break for that, because analysing the races where we struggled more last year, tyre management was a thing we have looked at,” he outlined. “And I’m sure that we are better prepared.

“Again, I’m pretty sure that there will still be some races where we’ll struggle with it, and we’ll analyse and grow from it. But there’s been a lot of work done and we know where to focus in order to get better. Now we need to prove it.”

Leclerc is aiming to “become a better driver overall”, but says there have been “different points of focus, there is not one area” on which he has been concentrating this off-season. His speed is clear, but he needs to consistently deliver under pressure in races.

Unlike at Red Bull following its late-2022 own goal on team orders, Ferrari isn’t heading into the new season with a concern over possibly warring team-mates. Leclerc was asked at Fiorano whether he wished that Vasseur had publicly named him as the team’s leader, as Binotto did for Sebastian Vettel when Leclerc first arrived at Ferrari in 2019, but he “completely agrees” with his philosophy of not doing so.

“You cannot start a year like this,” Leclerc added. “I think it’s important for Carlos and me to be fully motivated to do the best job possible in the first part of the season, to push each other to perform the best. And then, if at one point of the championship a driver is clearly in the fight for winning that championship, then I’m sure that the team will do everything possible for him to be in the best possible conditions. But this, we’ll talk later, obviously. At the >>



No worries about warring team-mates for new boss Vasseur

SF-23 has what looks to be an S-duct around the cockpit, which may help boost downforce



beginning of the season, I think it's the right thing to do."

Sainz, though, says he is "optimistic and hopeful" that "it should be a faster process" in getting up to speed with the SF-23, as he failed to do this time a year ago with the F1-75. This has raised the Spaniard's confidence and boosts Ferrari's case to having the strongest driver line-up on the grid, with only Mercedes out front in that regard.

Sainz feels that "in a non-easy season [in 2022], I won a race, made a lot of podiums, three poles, with a car that I maybe wasn't at my best" – that this is a strong building block for his third Ferrari season, and his second with title potential.

"The car should be an evolution from last year and I felt like last year I was very close to the limit of the car and performing at a very high level," Sainz added. "So, I'm hopeful that I can start where I left off and do a step in the right direction. And also, I wish the car can adapt a bit more to my driving and I can adapt a bit better to it and enjoy a strong start to the season. That's the target and that's what I hope."

Although it wasn't getting overly carried away at Fiorano, Ferrari's apparently solid winter and the confidence that such a scenario can instill in a team for a campaign ahead was summed up best by Sainz and his thoughts on the launch of the SF-23. Once the covers came off, Leclerc was quickly strapped aboard and the drivers shook the new challenger down. A risky move, but it paid off with fans and media raring at Ferrari's statement of intent.

"Everything went perfect," Sainz concluded. "I could actually push a bit on it and lean a bit in the car in the corners and feel the first things. And we've already given some feedback to the engineers to work on [for a subsequent 100km filming day and testing]. Obviously, until Bahrain we will not know how the car is performing and how the car is handling, but at least we've already covered some nice steps in the right direction."

MERCEDES REFUSES TO MATCH ITS 2022 CONFIDENCE

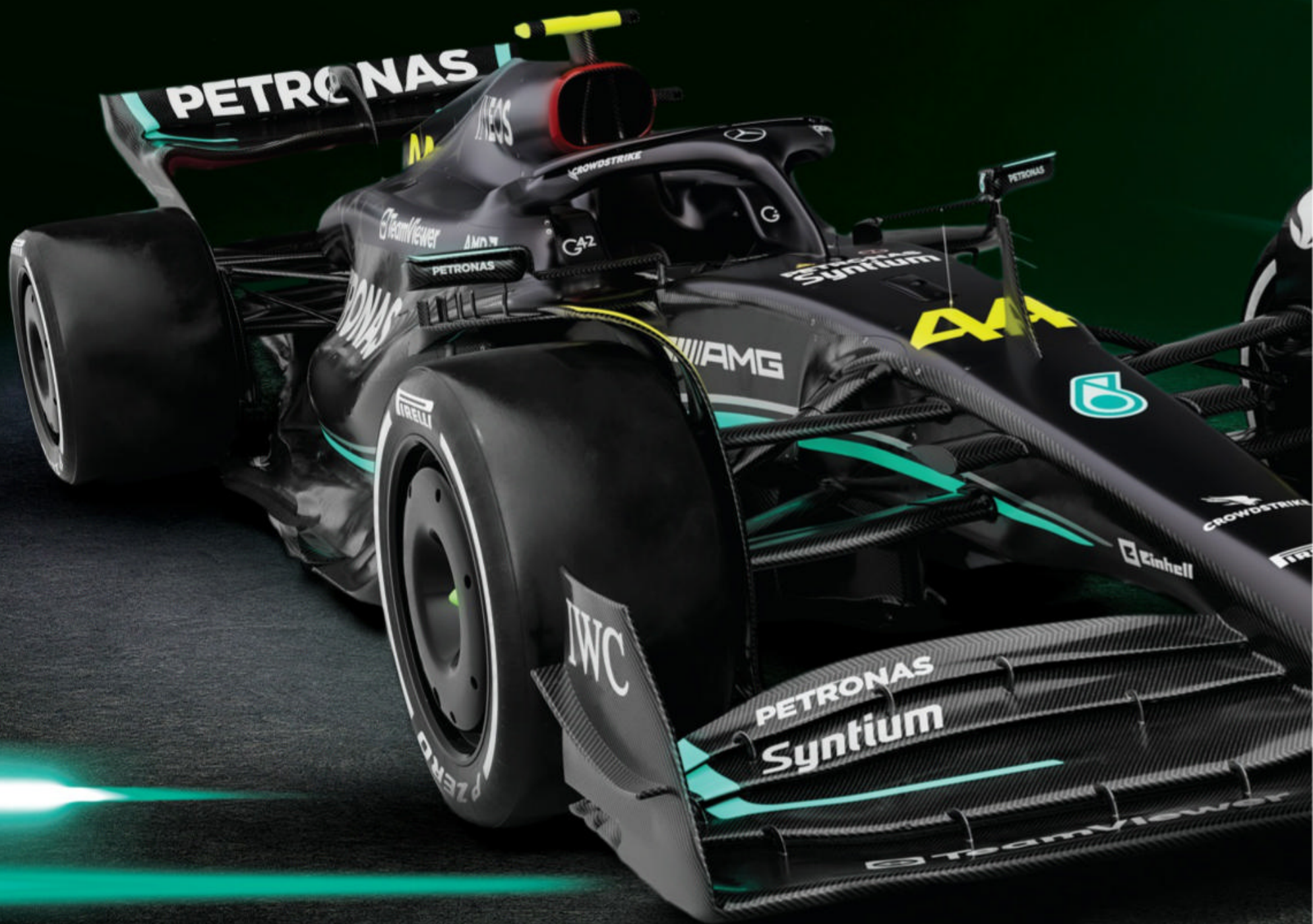
If Ferrari is feeling confident – impressive in its own right given how badly 2022 turned out for the red team – then things have a very different feel for Mercedes. Amid rumours of windtunnel numbers not hitting expectations and tricky simulator correlation sessions, Wolff then epitomised this sense when the W14 was revealed last Wednesday. And, of all places, in Mercedes' own press release introducing the new car.

"I see so much effort, motivation and energy in the organisation to launch a car that will eventually be competitive enough to fight at the very front of the grid," wrote the Austrian.

That is not the statement F1 fans hopeful of a three-team 2010-type title thriller will have been wanting to hear. It doesn't even bode well for the chance of Mercedes replacing Ferrari as Red Bull's top threat this time around. And, in justifying this press release position, Wolff left things wide open to the interpretation that Mercedes does not expect to be challenging for race wins from the off in 2023, something it did manage if conditions and tracks combined well with the fettled W13 late last year.

"We talked about the press release, because on one side, you want to say, 'We will be competitive,'" Wolff recounted. "On the other side, you need to stay humble and realistic. So, you could be saying, 'I hope that we will be competitive.' The midway is we know we will be competitive; we just don't know when. And that is the 'eventually'. I think we are on the slope that we wanted to be on in terms of our performance. But then you don't know where the other ones are..."

But Mercedes had hoped to release, at a stroke, 0.3-0.4 seconds of performance it had locked in, according to team insiders, due to the W13's design being led down an incorrect development path based on a





LAT/MERCEDES

Suspension has been revised at front and rear to address ride issues

single simulation result back in the concept’s initial creation process in 2021. This was thought to be related to the large floor area exposed by the W13’s ‘zeropod’ on-top design profile, which initially flexed badly under extreme load this time last year and revealed Mercedes’ porpoising misery. Allied to this was its suspension design problem, running near-rock solid in the real world so the “second and a half” (said Wolff) it had expected to pack on at the 2022 Bahrain pre-season test didn’t materialise. For 2023, Mercedes has revised the suspension for

both axles, which should aid the ride problems its drivers were suffering with all through 2022, most notably in slower-speed corners after the early porpoising problem had robbed them of braking confidence, something Hamilton particularly detests. But the sidepod concept hasn’t really changed – they’re simply at their widest around the middle on the W14 compared to the front on the W13.

Mercedes technical director Mike Elliott said when the W14 was unveiled that if the team had decided to “go in, tear it all up and start again, you know you’re going to start further backwards”, even with a Red Bull-like top-surface concept. This is a logical argument, but it seems that, possibly just like Ferrari, a major concept change for the W14’s upper aero surfaces is actually coming. It won’t be between Bahrain testing and next week’s race, Wolff pointing out that Mercedes had learned “a tough lesson” in launching with one car specification and making an early change between tests. Not that this can happen in any case with just a sole Bahrain test, which takes place this week.

But Mercedes is apparently eyeing “some development from now on that could be coming with the upgrades and the sidepods will change”, according to Wolff. He adds that “it’s not a core fundamental performance part, as we judge”, again highlighting how in this formula the upper aero surfaces complement the underfloor design’s potency.

But, ultimately, no team with immediate title expectations would be talking about making a big design concept change when the covers >>



MERCEDES

Targets have been met in reducing drag, so W14 should be faster in a straight line



MERCEDES

Wolff candid in use of the word “eventually” when talking of competitiveness



Any effect
of aero testing
restriction penalty on
Red Bull may not be
evident until later
in the season



have barely come off at a season launch. Yet there are still reasons for Mercedes to be optimistic heading into 2023.

For a start, it did turn the W13 into a race winner with George Russell late last year. The team then went from Brazil winner to Abu Dhabi also-ran, but that was because the Yas Marina track's long straights exposed its old car's drag problems, while Mercedes never operated at the 798kg weight limit in 2022 as it added additional aero parts in a bid to claw back performance with extra downforce.

Russell says that in the W14, Mercedes has been working "really well and hard on reducing the drag because we saw how much we were losing to Red Bull, particularly last year". He added that Mercedes believes it has achieved that target and so "should be faster in a straight line". The younger Briton is also confident that Mercedes has improved "the balance from the [corner] entry phase" in this car compared to its predecessor, based on his simulator running so far.

And the new car's most visible departure from the W13 — silver swapped out for the black livery Mercedes ran in 2020-21 to highlight the issues of motorsport's lack of diversity and global racial inequality, at Hamilton's behest — comes with a lap time gain too. In leaving huge swathes of its lower chassis as naked carbonfibre, with only the engine cover and nose painted black for its Silverstone launch, the team is "on the weight limit of what we wanted to achieve", according to Wolff.

"When we looked at all the weight savings, everybody needed to make a commitment," Wolff added, speaking from the Silverstone national pits because Aston Martin was set up in the track's Wing complex for a shakedown on the same day. "It's really a performance issue. But then there is not tonnes of weight that you can save on the paint, but it shows the intent of what we do."

Mercedes is also heading into the second year of its Hamilton/Russell era, with both now GP winners and, so far, showing no outward signs of cracks in their relationship. Hamilton and Wolff have had a "first chat" over a new contract for the 38-year-old, who Wolff feels is coming into the 2023 season "in great form — very positive, motivated, energised" and "maybe the best so far I've seen in these 10 years [at Mercedes]".

Hamilton says after his winter reset that he "can't remember the last time I felt as excited to get in the car — to even test", and feels "reinvigorated, really excited to work with the team". But, unlike this time a year ago when he came out swinging and vowing to be

even better than his formidable 2021 performance peaks, hopeful of quickly wresting back his crown from Verstappen and banishing the memories of the Abu Dhabi officiating saga, he's as cautious as his boss on Mercedes' 2023 potential.

"I wouldn't say I'm bullish like I was last year," he said (the story has since been revealed that his fighting talk of February 2022 was after being buoyed by what turned out to be misleading windtunnel potential of the W13's zeropod concept). "I would say just more cautious. I know that whatever we're faced with, we have the best team to deal with whatever we come across. Hopefully, we hit the ground running, but it's not always the case. And I think we showed last year that with whatever we're faced with we can recover. So, that's what we'll try and do this year."

"This year everyone is a lot more grounded. More of the approach of, 'We perhaps won't be the fastest out of the gate, but we have the potential to close.' Hopefully it will be close and hopefully we have the potential to close the gap early on in the season."

WILL RED BULL'S COST CAP PENALTY HURT?

For both of Red Bull's 'Class A' rivals, neither can yet know if the FIA's higher floor and altered diffuser tweaks have fully eliminated the porpoising problems Ferrari and Mercedes suffered in a way the RB18s really did not. Both were staying wisely quiet on this front at their respective launches, where it shouldn't be forgotten that teams can command the narrative out of the full media spotlight. After rumours of a stop-start shakedown following the W14's unveiling, Mercedes was keen to emphasise that the car had gone on to complete a 100km filming day the following day.

Perhaps Ferrari's confidence and Mercedes' caution will prove to be incorrect. But either way, both will be hoping that another so far intangible part of the 2023 season will have an impact at Red Bull — the aero testing restriction penalty for its 2021 cost cap breach.

"They've done a very good job last year in having a car out there that's half a second or more quicker than everybody else," Wolff concluded of this aspect, which is expected to impact Red Bull's later-season upgrades rather than the early design of its new challenger. "The lack of windtunnel time is not great for them, an advantage for us this season. But if you have an efficient machine, you can certainly compensate for that or large parts of it. So long term, good for us. But we've been in that situation, obviously without a penalty in the years before. We've won and therefore we had less windtunnel time than everybody else for the last two seasons. It's going to certainly bite them a bit."

When the RB19 is finally shown off in Bahrain today, the last piece of 2023's 'Class A' battle will be revealed. Against Ferrari's quiet confidence and Mercedes' notably downbeat forecast, Red Bull will be drawn the favourite. How close its rivals can get — helped by the aero development cut or not — will be the tale of the campaign to come.



ALONSO'S BIG BET ON ASTON MARTIN'S F1 MASTERPLAN

The double F1 champion's move looked a strange one last summer, but the people involved reckon it's making more and more sense as time goes by...

LUKE SMITH

"The passion comes from excitement. When I get excited about something, I get very passionate. And when I get very passionate, I win."

Standing in front of the new AMR23, the car covered by a Union Jack flag ahead of its official unveiling last week, team owner Lawrence Stroll again underlines his unwavering commitment to making Aston Martin a force in Formula 1. Since acquiring the old Force India operation in 2018, Stroll has made a number of big statement moves: rebranding as Aston Martin for 2021; signing four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel from Ferrari; committing to building a £200million factory, complete with a new, state-of-the-art windtunnel.

But perhaps the biggest move to date came as a sudden shock announced on the first day of F1's summer break last year: the arrival of Fernando Alonso for 2023 to replace the retiring Vettel.

Soon after Stroll's car launch speech, Alonso and new team-mate Lance Stroll take to the stage and watch as the cover is whipped off, revealing the AMR23. It's the car that will start the next chapter of Alonso's career, and which he hopes can give him a final shot at glory.

Alonso is under no illusions that, at 41, he won't be racing forever. "I know it's probably my last team to drive for," he says. "Unfortunately, I'm not 20. But I will do my best to help the team."

But why, after investing the past two years of his life into Alpine's F1 programme and helping its rise to top the midfield, would he quit for a team that is building for the long term?

At the time Alonso's move was announced, observers quickly pointed to the constructors' championship where, after a disappointing start to the year, Aston Martin sat ninth out of 10, five places behind Alpine. Yet as the season wore on, and Aston

Martin got around the early concept issues that blighted the first iteration of the AMR22, its form took a big upswing. By the end of 2022, it was capable of fighting Alpine and McLaren, and only missed out on sixth to Alfa Romeo on countback.

It was a recovery that gave Alonso encouragement. He said after his first day with the team in Abu Dhabi that it took him from being 90% happy with his decision to 100%; he then said the test itself made it "100-plus", exalting the package's reliability, a major source of frustration with Alpine.

So, after spending a winter with the team, completing hours and hours of sim work – including four hours in the morning before the launch – how happy is Alonso now? "Every day I'm happier,"

he declares. "I've been coming to the factory regularly in January. There is a lot of teamwork at the moment and I love that. Between the drivers and all the departments, we've been following the windtunnel model for two months. Finally, today, we saw the real car."

He can't help but get in a dig at the teams who opted for show car unveilings. "I think the fans will appreciate as well that we launched the real car," he pokes. "It is sometimes disappointing to see a show car with different stickers. This team is just more fair on everything." »



Spaniard was pleased with Aston reliability during his first runs

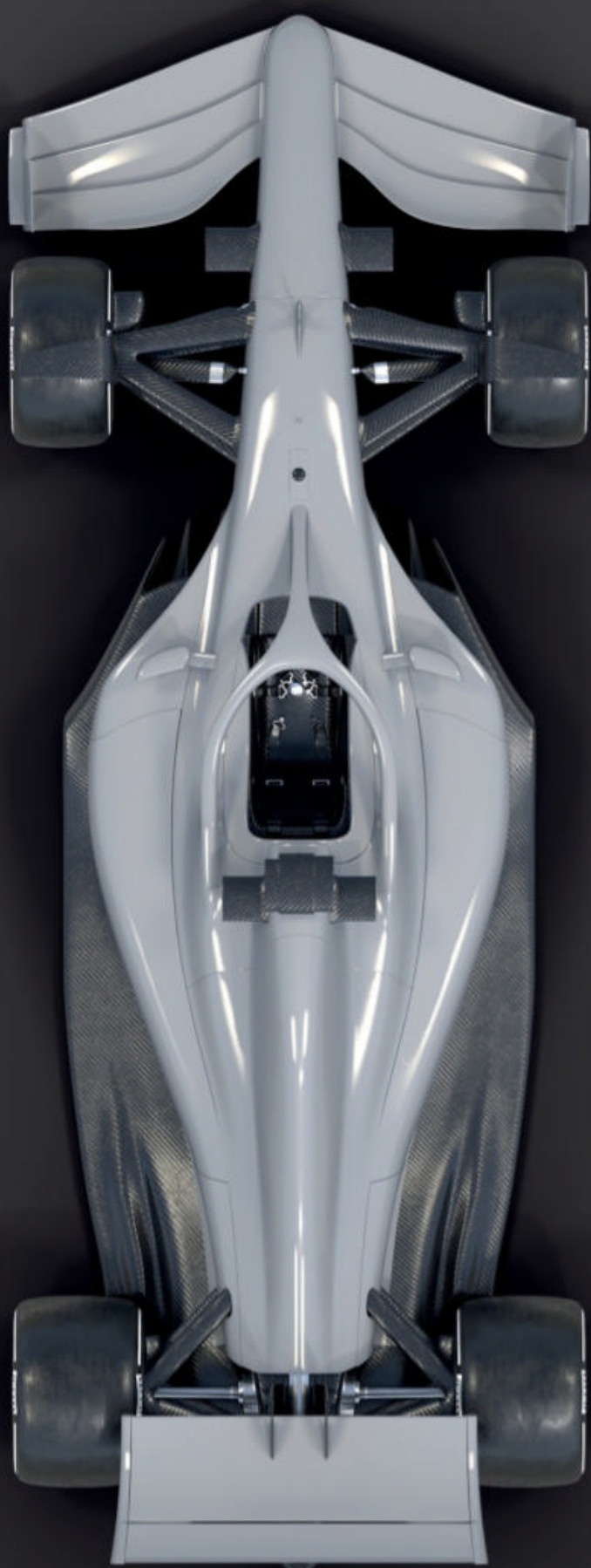
POTTS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Alonso is up for more midfield battling but believes there is potential for better



**NO ADS.
JUST MORE
PERFORMANCE**



**“I’M VERY DEMANDING. I GIVE MY
100% AND EXPECT THE SAME FROM
THE PEOPLE THAT I WORK WITH”**

It’s a sign that Alonso’s political nous remains as sharp as ever. Now 22 years on from his F1 debut, he knows how to play the game, particularly through the media. But it’s also the trait that has seen bridges burned spectacularly in the past with his teams, particularly at McLaren and Ferrari. His approach is tenacious and all-encompassing. He’ll settle for nothing but the very best.

“I’m very demanding in everything that I do,” Alonso affirms. “I expect a lot from people that I work with. I give my 100% and expect the same from the people that I work with.”

It’s a mentality that may have led to frustration in the past, particularly through last year when he fumed at the points Alpine’s poor reliability had cost him. But he’s seeing the same kind of hunger reflected by Aston Martin. “Since the first day, I felt exactly the same values from the people around me,” he states. “We have the leadership of Lawrence. He had a lot of success in many different things and many different projects in his life. And I see there is no doubt that F1 will not be different. He will succeed sooner or later.”

The challenge of managing Alonso’s expectations and reaction when the going inevitably gets tough will lie chiefly with Mike Krack, Aston Martin’s team principal. He’s under no illusions that there may be a need for “difficult conversations” at times if things aren’t going well. But the approach Alonso is taking to their new project is one he agrees is essential to make the team a success.

“We are really happy with his demanding attitude,” says Krack. “It pushes us forward, and we are prepared to do the extra mile. It is the only way to move on up the grid. So from that point of view, all is very good so far.

“Obviously if the car is not what we want it to be, then there will be some difficult conversations. But we’ll have to be prepared to have them, because there is no hiding. I think you cannot hide also in front of Fernando Alonso. So we go with an open visor into the discussions: be honest, be open, be transparent, and I do not expect any issues.”

Other members of Aston Martin’s technical team have also been impressed by their first dealings with Alonso. Following his initial outing in Abu Dhabi at the end of last year, Alonso got another opportunity to acclimatise to his new team in a tyre test at Jerez earlier this month. Aston Martin performance director Tom McCullough found him to





Alonso was surprisingly cool following scary clash with Stroll Jr in 2022 US GP

BINGHAM
motorsport
IMAGES

be “very engaging and very focused” in every aspect. “When he’s describing the car, when he’s describing the way he thinks a report should be written, a configuration on the steering wheel, there’s no wasted words,” he relates. “It’s just focus, focus, this is what we should be doing, this is my idea.” He adds that having Alonso is “like an extra, very experienced, good engineer” at his disposal.

The relationship between Alonso and those working on the car is off to a good start, but the one most will focus on this year will be with Stroll across the garage. Alonso has a reputation for regularly being the ‘alpha’ driver within team-mate partnerships. Defeating Stoffel Vandoorne (now Aston Martin’s reserve) 21-0 in qualifying over 2018 was an achievement he was still touting years later. But the difference this time around is that his team-mate is the boss’s son.

They’re hardly strangers. Alonso first met Stroll when the Canadian was in Ferrari’s young driver academy, and has been in contact with the family for some time. After their clash in Austin last year, when his Alpine was sent airborne after Stroll’s late move, Alonso downplayed what was a pretty major incident. The cynical view would be that it’s a driver knowing what side their bread is buttered. But Alonso says he is relaxed about the new team-mate dynamic he faces.

“I have been here for long enough to know different things and to experience different team-mates, different personalities,” he insists. “I was thinking about Jacques Villeneuve when you were asking the question. That was an experience...”

Stroll, sitting next to Alonso, quips back to the journalist who asks the question that he’ll be getting a special spec front wing for the first race, sparking laughs through the room and a chuckle from Alonso. The pair seem relaxed. “We have this wonderful opportunity to share the team,” adds Alonso, “to work together towards an Aston Martin hopefully in contention for championships in future.” >>



Alonso’s Alpine podium came in Qatar in 2021

ETHERINGTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

WANT MORE
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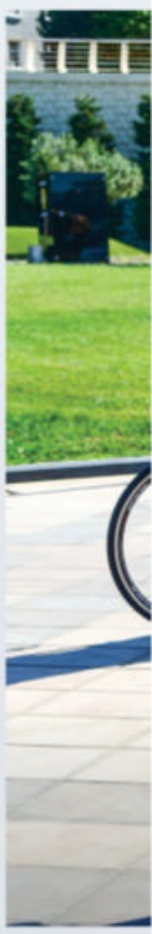
OUR JOURNALISTS COVER
ALL MAJOR SERIES

“WE HAVE THE INVESTMENT, WE HAVE THE FACILITIES, WE HAVE THE TALENT, SO IT’S JUST A MATTER OF TIME”



McDONNELL / ASTON MARTIN

SUTTON / MOTORSPORT IMAGES



It's an awareness that shows Alonso is grounded in what is really achievable with Aston Martin in the short term. While he thinks it a "possibility" that he could yet fight for a third world title, he knows this is still a midfield team waiting to get all of the pieces in place.

The aggressive approach taken to the design of the AMR23 is encouraging, with suggestions being that the numbers also point in a very promising direction. But he admits that this will not be a year to think about winning, accepting there may be some "difficult races" to start with as he adjusts to the team.

"I cannot say to anyone that we will be fighting for victories this year," argues Alonso. "I will lie if I say that. But at the same time, we want to have a good car to start with, and to work and develop that car throughout the season. Maybe in the second part of the year we can get closer. If there is an opportunity that comes, we will not miss that opportunity."

It's a realism that Aston Martin also appreciates. This campaign will be year three of the five-year plan to get into contention at the front of the field. Quite whether Alonso will still be with the team then is unclear, but he has shown little sign of thinking about hanging up his helmet. The McLaren doldrums sapped his enthusiasm prior to walking away at the end of 2018, but now he has an exciting new project to invigorate him. He also claims to feel "fitter than ever", noting this is the first winter of his F1 comeback that has gone uninterrupted. A cycling accident in early 2021 ahead of his return with Alpine left him unable to train properly for three weeks, while he underwent surgery last winter to remove the plates and architecture needed after the crash from his face. "This was really the first winter that I could do a normal preparation," he says.

Alonso is far from the first high-profile signing to have been impressed by Aston Martin's grand plan for F1 domination. Luring away the likes of Dan Fallows, a key part of Red Bull's winning machine, and Mercedes aerodynamicist Eric Blandin was proof of the team's appeal. "There is something for sure going on in this team that makes things special," reckons Alonso. "You need the



It's now nearly a decade since Alonso's last GP win

ALONSO IN F1			
YEAR	TEAM	CHAMP POS	WINS
2001	Minardi	23rd	0
2003	Renault	6th	1
2004	Renault	4th	0
2005	Renault	1st	7
2006	Renault	1st	7
2007	McLaren	3rd	4
2008	Renault	5th	2
2009	Renault	9th	0
2010	Ferrari	2nd	5
2011	Ferrari	4th	1
2012	Ferrari	2nd	3
2013	Ferrari	2nd	2
2014	Ferrari	6th	0
2015	McLaren	17th	0
2016	McLaren	10th	0
2017	McLaren	15th	0
2018	McLaren	11th	0
2021	Alpine	10th	0
2022	Alpine	9th	0

investment and you need the talent in F1. We have the investment, we have the facilities, and we have the talent, so it's just a matter of time."

Rediscovering that winning feeling will be long overdue for Alonso in F1. Nearly 10 years have passed since his most recent GP victory, on home soil in Spain with Ferrari in 2013, and he's scored only one podium since leaving the Prancing Horse at the end of 2014.

Just because he can't expect to fight at the front in 2023 doesn't mean that will be the case in 2024. "I think we'll have more possibilities to fight for wins and podiums next year if we have a good baseline this year," predicts Alonso. "What we have this year will not be our normal position, I believe."

The prospect of Alonso being back at the sharp end of F1 is tantalising, and something that has fuelled excitement among his fans. Over the winter, '33' started trending in Spain thanks to Alonso's passionate fanbase, making it their new goal: to add to the haul of 32 F1 wins. While he is appreciative of their enthusiasm, he is not making it his focus: "It was 'El Plan' [at Alpine] and the mission now is 33. To get the 33rd win will be amazing, but I'm not focused too much on that. That's

unstoppable on social media. I am happy for them to follow that."

Aston Martin is quickly putting in the building blocks to become a team that drivers wanting to fight for wins and championships will be clamouring to join. As Stroll Sr said during the launch, his passion is what motivates him to go all in on projects, determined to make them a success. The old cliché about there being no short cuts in F1 applies, though; factories, windtunnels and team assembly don't happen in a heartbeat.

But that is why Alonso is going to be so key to the success of Aston Martin. He's worked with the very best, known what it takes to get the most out of teams, win championships, and haul squads up the grid. His uncompromising style may not be to everyone's taste – yes, there'll be fireworks at some point – yet that is precisely what Aston Martin needs.

Alonso says it would be a "proud moment" for him to see Aston Martin one day dominating F1 like Red Bull or Mercedes, even if he's no longer in the car. But with the momentum that is building, the commitment to making the team a success and Alonso's own craving for glory, it would be little surprise to see his F1 career stretch a little longer so he can cash in on his final big move. 🏆



His 2023 prep has been without cycling incident



ALL CHANGE IN AUSSIE RULES

Australia's Supercars series has new regulations and new cars for 2023.

But what does Gen3 mean for the competition and the fans?

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

Not since the end of the Group A era three decades ago has Australia's Supercars championship undergone a technical revolution as big as this one. Even the Gen2 cars were a clear evolution of the first five-litre Group 3A Holden Commodores and Ford Falcons that debuted way back in 1993. Of course, the product was refined over the journey. Car of the Future, introduced in 2013, was a significant turning point with the introduction of a control chassis. But it was still an evolution of the V8-powered, four-door sedan formula.

Gen3 is something new. The old highly strung V8 motors have been replaced by modern, production-based units. The new control chassis is specifically designed for two-door coupes. There have never been more control parts. And downforce has been slashed in a bid to kill off aero wash once and for all.

The key objective Supercars has tried to hit with its new platform is cheaper, better racing that retains the visceral experience for the drivers and fans. Has it hit the mark? Let's take a look at the burning questions heading into this brave new era.

WILL THE GEN3 CARS BE RELIABLE?

The Gen3 roll-out has been anything but smooth. There has been delay after delay in both the design and development process and the team-builds process.

Initially the hold-ups were about the car itself. Early prototype testing revealed that the cockpit was too cramped for the taller drivers in the field, with complaints of leg numbness after a handful of laps. At the same time, the incredibly compact front end made performing even simple servicing tasks way too time consuming. All that led to a significant redesign well into 2022.

The design and redesign of parts has continued until now, on the eve of the new season. And adding to the time stress has been the availability of raw materials and completed parts, thanks to the challenges the world has been facing over the past year. Combined, these factors have left teams in a last-minute scramble to build their cars. It wasn't until 16 February that every single team had run at least one of its Gen3 race cars on track. That's effectively three weeks out from round one in Newcastle.



GRANT BAILEY AND HORSBURGH/EDGE



The rush to build cars caused panic in itself but, despite the limited running, there has been little concern over major reliability issues. That's because the car has been designed and developed in its entirety by Supercars and its technical partner Triple Eight. It is more of a 'kit car' than any of its predecessors. This isn't like Formula 1, where teams are handed a set of rules and go and design their own car. It's not even like Car of the Future where there was a control chassis and rear suspension, but still a relative amount of freedom.

The kit nature of the Gen3 platform means more teams than ever have built their own cars, with PremiAir Racing the only team opting to buy turnkey cars as a customer of Triple Eight.

“DOWNFORCE FIGURES HAVE BEEN SLASHED BY AS MUCH AS 64% WITH THESE NEW CARS”

Engines, meanwhile, have gone the other way, with a complete centralisation of supply. KRE builds the GM motors, HPE builds the Fords. They are then dished out to teams in a random 'lottery'. The transaxles, meanwhile, carry over from the old car.

So, while teams will head to the first race with just three days of running with each car under their belts, there is confidence that the development work done on the prototypes, both chassis and engine, means reliability shouldn't be an issue. At the very least, the brutal streets of Newcastle will provide one heck of a durability test.

WILL THE GEN3 CARS BE FASTER?

This is one of the more fascinating questions as we head into the 2023 season. The Gen3 cars are very different beasts to their predecessors. Depending on who you talk to, downforce figures have been slashed by as much as 64% with these new cars. That's a performance disadvantage, obviously – but there are things the new car does better. Firstly, less downforce means less drag. The motor also creates more torque, while the overall weight of the car could be down by as much as 100kg (although that is yet to be formally set). All of that combined makes these new cars rockets >>

in a straight line. They also generate more mechanical grip thanks to being lower and wider.

The indications from testing at both Queensland Raceway and Winton has been times on a par with Gen2. “I think it will be track-dependant,” says Erebus CEO Barry Ryan. “Across the top at Bathurst, for example, you won’t be as strong. But acceleration up and down the hill... you can see it at Winton. We’re pulling sixth gear much earlier. I honestly think lap times will be similar. What we saw at Winton, you wouldn’t expect to do anything faster in the same conditions with a Gen2 car.”

Ryan is even tipping that we could see a Supercar finally break the magic 300km/h (186mph) mark down Conrod Straight: “On a qualifying run, on a gripped-up track if the weather is right, and all the stars align, we could do it...”

WILL THE RACING BE BETTER?

This is the big one. If the cars can follow and really race, issues such as cost and outright speed become less important. Gen3 will be seen as a win regardless of those other factors.

The whole point of slashing aero is to eliminate dirty air, which increasingly became an issue across the COTF era, particularly with the Gen2 cars. As well as decreasing turbulence, the drop in aero is expected to increase rear-tyre degradation, another factor that, it’s hoped, will improve racing.

During the initial shakedown of its two Camaros, Triple Eight did some close quarters running – and there was some positive feedback on the dirty air front. But the jury is still out on whether the racing will be better. Tickford Racing driver Thomas Randle, who completed a race run on his second day of testing, noted that the rear-tyre degradation was significant, particularly with the cars not fitted with roll-bar adjusters at the moment. Will that mean lots of passing, or will it mean driving to a number? “Because the car moves around so much more the rears are going to be going off sooner,” Randle says. “You’ll be driving to a number and the number will be slower. Who knows what they will be like when we get to Newcastle. We might have to do an extra stop for tyres. Everyone might just be running around trying to hang on.

“I really don’t know at this point. It’s all a bit of an unknown. It would be nice to have better racing. They are a wider car, on the same-width street circuit in Newcastle, so it might be a bit tricky.”

WILL THE CARS BE CHEAPER?

Whenever a new car comes along there is the promise of cost-cutting. In Supercars, NASCAR is often cited as the ideal model – make cars cheap enough to basically be disposable. As was the case with COTF, it appears that Gen3 has missed the mark when it comes to a radical reduction in costs. Teams are bracing themselves



Erebus CEO Barry Ryan reckons lap times will be similar

HORSBURGH/EDGE



Gen3 racer is more of a 'kit car' than any of its predecessors

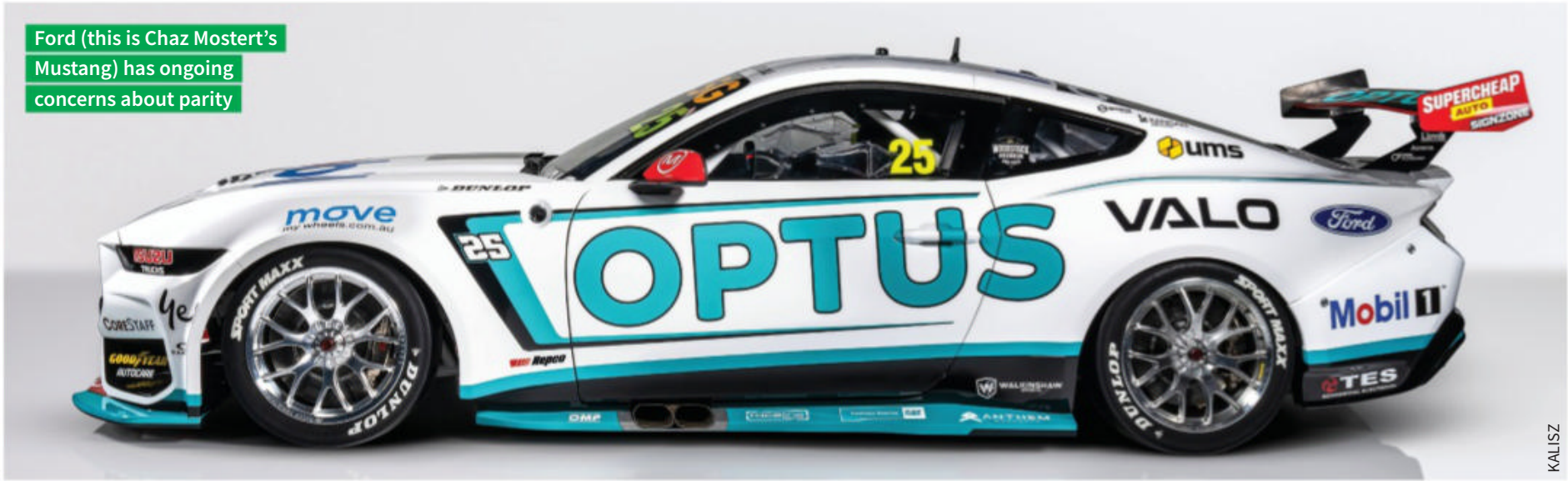


ROEHLER/PACE IMAGES

for the changeover to cost around AUS\$1million per car, including a spares bank and all the new gear needed for the new fuel fillers and wheelnuts and so on. Some of the changeover cost will be covered by Racing Australia Consolidated Enterprises, which owns the series, but far from all of it.

But there could be cost-saving down the track for teams, particularly when it comes to motors, thanks to a proposed service life of 10,000km – up from 4000km with the outgoing motors.

“Engines are the biggest part of the budget for most teams,” explains Ryan. “If we can get to 10,000km and our engines are a bit cheaper to build, we can certainly save a couple of hundred grand a year. That’s a small percentage of your budget, but it’s



Ford (this is Chaz Mostert's Mustang) has ongoing concerns about parity

KALISZ

Jack Smith
(Brad Jones
Racing Camaro) at
Winton. Test mileage
for all has been
limited



ROEHLIN/PACE IMAGES



GRESHAM

**“THERE WILL BE AN
ELEMENT OF LUCK WHEN
IT COMES TO SET-UP”**

still significant. I think ultimately they can be cheaper cars to service over their life. But there is still some work to do on components, making things like front splitters cheaper. We don't want team owners telling drivers to be careful not to crash, that's not what Supercars is about. You want to be able to push someone and break a front splitter or rear bumper and not worry about it. But until we start racing, and start crashing, we don't know if you'll have to write parts off all the time, or if you'll be able to repair them.”

WILL THE CARS BE EVEN?

This is another incredibly important question heading into the season. It wasn't until December last year, after the aero homologation testing (known as VCAT) was complete and, supposedly, signed off on, that Ford's concerns over parity came to light. Supercars was adamant that the Mustang and Camaro were equal; Ford was anything but. So the prototypes were put back to work in January to look for answers.

Initially it was thought that the concerns were based on aero alone. Over time it became clear that there were engine issues too. Not issues with the Ford engine itself, but how it interacts with the control electronics, and how the overhead cam unit then stacks up against the pushrod Chevy in terms of acceleration.

As Autosport went to press there was still no outcome to the parity saga. It could be that more runway testing takes place between now and Newcastle, with the Vehicle Specification Documents still not finalised for either the Mustang or the Camaro. At the start of this month, Ford Performance chief Mark Rushbrook made his thoughts on the matter very clear: “I think the industry,

the media certainly, has sensed or heard bits that, as a manufacturer, and aligned completely with all of our racing teams, we are not satisfied that parity has been reached either for engine or aero. That goes back to some of the VCAT testing that was done, and when we left there not satisfied that parity had been achieved. And also, more recently, with some of the testing, comparative testing that was done on track that the acceleration of the cars down the straightaway is not equivalent.”

If there is a disparity in aero, we might not be able to tell on the tight confines of Newcastle. But the wide, flowing Albert Park circuit? That will be the big test.

WILL IT SHAKE UP THE ORDER?

History certainly suggests so. Back in 2012, the last year of Project Blueprint, Triple Eight and Tickford dominated. The following year, as teams grappled with their COTF cars, there were 13 different race winners from eight different teams. The upswing to the relative lack of testing time means the teams will all head to Newcastle with limited understanding of what makes these cars fast. That means there will be an element of luck when it comes to set-up – and it's feasible that anybody in the field could stumble across something and look like a hero until the others catch up.

Adding to the intrigue is the sheer variety of circuits that make up the first part of the season. What works on the streets of Newcastle won't work on the wide-open roads around Albert Park. Then it's on to the bullring that is Wanneroo. And then Symmons Plains with its long straight and incredibly tight hairpin.

Anything could happen. And that's what makes this season such an exciting prospect. ❧

RACE CENTRE



DAYTONA 500

Crowded Stenhouse

He was a rank outsider to win the Daytona 500. But even with his fuel light blinking and a pal bailing out on him, he didn't dream that it was over

CHARLES BRADLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY



motorsport
IMAGES

Every now and then the Daytona 500 serves us winners that we don't expect. For every great like Richard Petty, Cale Yarborough or Bobby Allison we get a Trevor Bayne, Ward Burton or Derrike Cope. It's a race that chooses its winners, rather than dead certs. Last Sunday, The Great American Race gave us its latest unlikely hero: Ricky Stenhouse.

A hard trier, with a reputation for causing wrecks or jumping headlong into them, Stenhouse enjoyed his day of days on Sunday by adding the 500 title to his previous Cup wins, recorded back in 2017, on superspeedways at Talladega and Daytona's summer race. This was an equally amazing success for his single-car Chevrolet team, JTG Daugherty Racing, which deserves its moment in the spotlight in front of all the powerhouse operations.

As Stenhouse rushed across the finish line to take the white flag in overtime, with what he assumed was 2.5 miles of steep-banked Florida asphalt remaining, he got detached out front – a lone raider with two groups of three cars bearing down on him with huge

momentum. A bit like his career for the past six years, you felt that nobody really believed in him... and his fuel light was blinking!

But the race only had 10 seconds remaining. Although his dirt racing buddy Kyle Larson bailed on him, Stenhouse backed himself. And that inner belief sent him to Victory Lane – via a push from a wrecker, as he really did run out of gas on the in-lap...

Stenhouse hugged the yellow line as he led the snarling pack at 200mph – literally everyone behind was catching him. With everything on the line, he found sanctuary in Christopher Bell (Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota) and AJ Allmendinger (Kaulig Chevrolet). They didn't follow Larson's Hendrick Motorsports Chevy to the middle lane, and hooked up to give Stenhouse a crucial shot to his rear bumper. Moments later, action sports hero Travis Pastrana, who admitted he'd earlier led a lap "by mistake" and was "really trying not to crash", got loose off a vicious shove from Aric Almirola's Stewart-Haas Ford Mustang, and punted Larson headlong into the fence. Even as this unfolded, Joey Logano's Penske Ford was just ahead of Stenhouse, but that final push from Bell shoved the victor



MAIN IMAGE: ROSENBLUM

a yard or so in front as they hit NASCAR's timing loop. In a split-second, Stenhouse's stock car immortality was assured.

Over three hours earlier, Alex Bowman, who'd set a record with six consecutive 500 front-row starts, led from pole position in his Hendrick Chevrolet Camaro. Bell then made a smart move to hit the front, after Logano pushed Larson too far out front on the inside of Turn 3. After the first round of green-flag pitstops, three-time 500 winner Denny Hamlin (JGR Toyota) led Bell, Tyler Reddick (23XI Toyota), Chase Briscoe (SHR Ford) and Bubba Wallace (23XI Toyota).

Wallace worked his way to the front, only to get pushed into the wall on the backstretch by fellow Toyota racers Martin Truex Jr and Hamlin — his team boss. Truex continued out front ahead of Hamlin and Ty Gibbs (JGR Toyota). Behind the three Toyotas came a Ford gang comprising Almirola, Brad Keselowski and Chris Buescher (both RFK Racing) and Ryan Preece (SHR).

Seven-time Cup champion Jimmie Johnson, making his first NASCAR start in two years in a Legacy MC Chevy, started from the back row but gained 12 spots in the opening 20 laps. By lap

60, he was up to eighth, to remind us of his stock car talents.

As they headed into the final lap of the opening stage, Keselowski jumped Gibbs — powered by huge pushes from squad-mates Preece and Buescher — then zoomed past leaders Truex and Hamlin, with Kevin Harvick (SHR) and Michael McDowell (Front Row Motorsports) also joining in the Ford steamroller move.

After the first pitstops under yellow of the day, Preece led Keselowski, Harvick, Almirola, McDowell (the 2021 winner) and last year's victor Austin Cindric (Penske). William Byron (Hendrick Chevy) ran seventh, with Truex the only other non-Ford driver in the top 10 in eighth.

As the race settled into single-file running, Kyle Busch worked his way up into the top 10. He'd started from the rear due to taking his back-up car after wrecking in his Duel qualifying race (see p49), in his first points race with Richard Childress's Chevrolet team.

At the halfway point, Keselowski led Preece, Harvick, McDowell, Erik Jones (Legacy Chevy), Johnson, Larson, Reddick, Stenhouse (the first time he'd registered in the top 10 all day) and Truex. >>

Annual 'here's a massive Daytona 500 wreck' photo. It all goes wrong for Johnson (84), Gragson (42), Dillon (3)...



The third pit cycle began under green flag running on lap 107 with 18 cars – mainly Chevys – hitting the lane for fuel only. Busch was pinged for speeding at this point and sent to the rear. The last group to stop were the Penske Fords led by Logano, Ryan Blaney and Cindric, who ran long with Buescher and Harrison Burton (Wood Bros).

Logano led as the field came back together after the green-flag stops, ahead of Blaney (who took one for the team when he blocked a charging Reddick), Truex (who butt-slammed Blaney in retaliation), Gibbs, Larson, Jones, Buescher and Byron. The action was ramping up, and the next lap proved it: Reddick got shoved by Harvick at Turn 3 – “I just got him in the wrong spot of the corner,” admitted Harvick – and was turned into Blaney (who slammed the wall) and Truex (who escaped). Behind them, Jones and Larson got together as they dived to the apron, Jones collecting Chase Elliott (Hendrick Chevy), who cannoned into Daniel Suarez (Trackhouse Chevy). Seven cars were involved in total.

Logano and Truex stayed out under yellow to maintain track position while many pitted with only a half a dozen laps remaining in the stage. They restarted in the order Logano, Truex, Ross Chastain (Trackhouse Chevy), Allmendinger, Bell and Bowman, with Logano and Chastain soon banging wheels on the back straight as they battled for the stage win.

Chastain hit the front with three to go, chopping across Logano's nose to head the inside lane. That was the move that won the stage for Chastain, who just beat Bowman, Logano, Stenhouse, Cindric, Truex, Byron and Allmendinger.

With the preamble of the stages over, it was now time to decide who won the Daytona 500. After a false start, when Blaney's battered car blew a right-front tyre, Almirola led, pushed by team-mate Harvick. Buescher headed the outside lane, shoved by his car's co-owner Keselowski, and they swept in front with 50 laps remaining in an RFK power move. Ford's powerplay was then to

“Dillon held up the inside lane to allow Busch to chop across, but this choreography fell apart”

overload the top lane, with Buescher sitting out front ahead of Keselowski, Almirola, Cindric, Preece and Burton.

The final pitstops played out with 25 laps to go, with the first group of Fords blinking first ahead of the sprint to the finish. Buescher was slightly delayed on his exit, allowing Keselowski ahead. The final group to stop was the Logano, Burton and Busch gang, who pitted with 20 to go. The all-important rejoin played out with Larson pushing Busch hard in pursuit of leaders Burton, Logano and Byron – just before a wreck at Turn 1 took out Preece, Truex, McDowell, Briscoe and Harvick.

The race went green again with 13 laps to go, with the Fords of Burton and Logano leading the Chevys of Byron and Busch. Logano got pushed onto the apron in the tri-oval as the race got so wild that even Allmendinger briefly led, while Burton and Busch clashed but continued behind him.

Keselowski and Buescher got connected again, running solidly as a couple to lead with 10 to go. RCR team-mates Busch and Dillon were tucked in behind them, with Byron running as Chevy tailgunner, ahead of the Penske Fords of Logano and Cindric.

The moves came thick and fast: the Chevrolet trio mugged Keselowski and Buescher around the outside at Turn 3 with four laps to go. Busch now led Dillon, Byron, Logano and Keselowski, before Suarez spun off Turn 4, sending the race into overtime. “Back in 1998 that would be the win boys,” deadpanned Busch over the radio about Dale Earnhardt's only 500 win here, harking back to the days when races ended under yellows.

The RCR Chevys opted to load the inside and outside lanes at the first attempted restart, Busch choosing outside with Dillon to his left. Dillon deliberately held up the inside lane to allow Busch to chop across his nose, but this choreography fell apart as the outside lane got huge momentum. Logano got a big push to lead, before Stenhouse and Larson rocketed past him.

Behind them, Dillon got fired into the backstretch wall by Byron, who was being pushed by Keselowski, taking out most of the chasing pack – 13 cars turned to trash in a big melee. “The 6 car [Keselowski] just drove through the 24 [Byron], and that is just what he does,” raged Dillon.

Attempt two saw Daytona choose the winner of its 65th 500-mile race, and all that was left was for Stenhouse to tell the crowd: “Man, this is unbelievable. The fuel light was going crazy, we were out of fuel. I hope y'all had fun.”



...and here's another for y'all.
It's McDowell (34), Preece (41),
Truex (19), Briscoe (14), Harvick (4)

DUAL DUELS FEED APPETITE FOR ACTION

The Daytona 500's unique qualifying format provides a taste of things to come, and Thursday night's 150-mile Duel races were quite the appetiser as the grid was set by their outcomes.

Ryan Blaney snatched the early Duel 1 lead from poleman Alex Bowman. After nine laps, it was single file: Blaney led Bubba Wallace, William Byron and Joey Logano.

The Chevrolets took an early stop at the end of lap 22, with Byron giving up his track position to pit with his marque-mates. But that gamble backfired.

The race-leading Ford/Toyota group caught the Chevys on track as they picked up their draft. Before lapping them, they too dived for the pits. Logano rejoined ahead of Kevin Harvick, Christopher Bell and Blaney.

Blaney quickly passed Bell for third, pushed by Chris Buescher, with Bell dropping to fifth. Lessons were being learned; plans were soon hatched...

Wallace pushed Bell hard in a final-lap charge, as Logano blocked Harvick at Turn 2, despite the spectre of his crash here 12 months earlier. Logano then blocked Bell through Turn 3 to take victory, pushed home by Penske Ford team-mate Blaney, with Bell's Joe Gibbs Toyota a close second. As lead 'open' car, without a guaranteed starting spot, Zane Smith qualified for his first Daytona 500 by finishing eighth.

The second Duel quickly went yellow when Justin Haley's window blew out. Aric Almirola led at the resumption, before Kyle Larson blasted past. Kyle Busch and Daniel Suarez then worked together to draft past Larson for the lead on lap 16.

With 20 to go, Suarez's persistent bumping of Busch eventually fired him hard into the backstretch wall. Busch's dizzying spin caught up six other cars, including Austin Hill who needed to race his way in.

Todd Gilliland led the start of the final lap but was pushed sideways at Turn 1 by Larson. Almirola's Stewart-Haas Ford scooted by on their outside to win from Austin Cindric, Chase Elliott and Brad Keselowski. IndyCar star Conor Daly somehow qualified for the 500 by finishing last in by far the worst car in the field.



RESULTS ROUND 1/36, DAYTONA (USA), 19 FEBRUARY (212 LAPS – 530 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME	GRID
1	Ricky Stenhouse Jr	JTG Daugherty Racing Chevrolet	3h38m53s	31
2	Joey Logano	Team Penske Ford	+0.669s	3
3	Christopher Bell	Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota	+0.670s	5
4	Chris Buescher	RFK Racing Ford	+2.738s	9
5	Alex Bowman	Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet	+5.471s	1
6	AJ Allmendinger	Kaulig Racing Chevrolet	+6.034s	29
7	Daniel Suarez	TrackHouse Racing Chevrolet	+6.395s	24
8	Ryan Blaney	Team Penske Ford	+6.816s	7
9	Ross Chastain	TrackHouse Racing Chevrolet	+8.302s	23
10	Riley Herbst	Rick Ware Racing Ford	+10.020s	38
11	Travis Pastrana	23XI Racing Toyota	+12.539s	40
12	Kevin Harvick	Stewart-Haas Racing Ford	+12.540s	13
13	Zane Smith	Front Row Motorsports Ford	+16.060s	17
14	Cody Ware	Rick Ware Racing Ford	+16.396s	35
15	Martin Truex Jr	Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota	+23.773s	16
16	Corey LaJoie	Spire Motorsports Chevrolet	+23.774s	12
17	Denny Hamlin	Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota	+53.264s	18
18	Kyle Larson	Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet	211 laps-accident	2
19	Kyle Busch	Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet	211 laps-accident	36
20	Darrell Wallace Jr	23XI Racing Toyota	211 laps-accident	15
21	Aric Almirola	Stewart-Haas Racing Ford	211 laps-accident	4
22	Brad Keselowski	RFK Racing Ford	211 laps-accident	10
23	Austin Cindric	Team Penske Ford	210 laps-accident	6
24	Noah Gragson	Legacy Motor Club Chevrolet	-2 laps	22
25	Ty Gibbs	Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota	-2 laps	33
26	Harrison Burton	Wood Brothers Racing Ford	-2 laps	19
27	Todd Gilliland	Front Row Motorsports Ford	208 laps-accident	14
28	Michael McDowell	Front Row Motorsports Ford	-4 laps	11
29	Conor Daly	TMT Racing Chevrolet	-6 laps	34
30	BJ McLeod	Live Fast Motorsports Chevrolet	-8 laps	32
31	Jimmie Johnson	Legacy Motor Club Chevrolet	203 laps-accident	39
32	JJ Haley	Kaulig Racing Chevrolet	203 laps-accident	28
33	Austin Dillon	Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet	202 laps-accident	27
34	William Byron	Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet	202 laps-accident	21
35	Chase Briscoe	Stewart-Haas Racing Ford	182 laps-accident	30
36	Ryan Preece	Stewart-Haas Racing Ford	181 laps-accident	20
37	Erik Jones	Legacy Motor Club Chevrolet	118 laps-accident	25
38	Chase Elliott	Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet	118 laps-accident	8
39	Tyler Reddick	23XI Racing Toyota	117 laps-accident	26
40	Ty Dillon	Spire Motorsports Chevrolet	26 laps-engine	37

Winner's average speed 145.283mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Logano 52; 2 Buescher 50; 3 Stenhouse 48; 4 Bell 44; 5 Bowman 41; 6 Chastain 38; 7 Blaney 37; 8 Harvick 37; 9 Allmendinger 34; 10 Truex 32.



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Eastwood drives DKR to Le Mans invite

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES
YAS MARINA (ARE)
18-19 FEBRUARY
ROUNDS 3&4/4

Luxembourg squad DKR Engineering claimed the title – and with it an automatic invitation to the Le Mans 24 Hours – with its first LMP2 race win, when Charlie Eastwood, Ayhancan Guven and Salih Yoluc steered the team’s ORECA 07 to victory last Sunday.

The Irish-Turkish line-up moved into the box seat for the crown with third place on Saturday. Algarve Pro Racing, which led the points pre-weekend, took a massive blow when Kyffin Simpson crashed its ORECA while chasing United Autosports’ Oliver Jarvis, and fell to the back of the class with a broken gearbox.

Teenaged Danish talent Malthe Jakobsen moved into the lead in the final hour in the Cool Racing ORECA he shared with Alexandre Coigny. The Paul di Resta-led United ORECA finished



second, but a penalty for a pitstop infringement promoted the sister Jarvis car to the position from the DKR trio.

Eastwood looked to be heading for third late in the race on Sunday. But then Jakobsen was given a stop/go penalty for a pit infringement and Nolan Siegel slowed from the lead with a gearbox drama on the Inter Europol ORECA. The American had moved in front with a pass on 99 Racing’s Nikita Mazepin, despite the Russian swerving him off the track at high speed. Eastwood led home Neel Jani in the 99 car by two seconds, with Jakobsen third.

Graff Racing and Walkenhorst

Motorsport secured the other two Le Mans invites. Graff’s came at the eleventh hour in LMP3, when Jerome de Sadeleer in the second-placed MV2S Racing car was passed in the dying stages by Cool Racing’s Marcos Siebert. The lost points denied MV2S the title. After its Dubai double win, a second and a fourth in the GT class was enough for the Walkenhorst BMW line-up spearheaded by Nicky Catsburg, although it was the Haupt Mercedes that won both races.

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Antonelli champ despite clash

FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST
YAS MARINA (ARE)
18-19 FEBRUARY
ROUND 5/5

Mercedes Formula 1 protege Andrea Kimi Antonelli clinched the crown in the second of the three races at the season finale, but not before a drama with main title rival Taylor Barnard in the opening encounter.

The Italian and the Brit were enacting a thrilling battle for the lead when the slightest contact from Antonelli’s Prema-run Mumbai Falcons car spun around the PHM Racing

machine of Barnard. Antonelli took the lead, and even when a 10-second penalty was issued he looked good for strong points in fifth. But a late safety car bunched up the pack and he plummeted to 15th – one spot behind the recovering Barnard.

Barnard appeared to stall at the start of race two, finally relinquishing his title hopes. Both he and Antonelli failed to score points again after picking up penalties for incidents during the race.

The first race was won by Mari Boya, who had just passed Hyderabad Blackbirds with MP Motorsport team-mate Sami Meguetounif for third when the top two collided. Rafael Camara chased them home. Pepe Marti (Pinnacle VAR) made a late pass on Michael Shin for reversed-grid honours.

Barnard’s PHM team-mate Nikita Bedrin claimed pole position for the finale and went on to claim victory under sustained pressure from Antonelli, with Camara third and Barnard fighting up to fourth. Antonelli did take the lead by short-cutting Turn 7 as he ran side by side with Bedrin, but sportingly handed the position back immediately.



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WEEKEND WINNERS

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES
YAS MARINA (ARE)

- Race 1**
- LMP2** Malthe Jakobsen/Alexandre Coigny
Cool Racing (ORECA 07)
 - LMP3** Matt Bell/Tony Wells
Nielsen Racing (Ligier JSP320)
 - GT** Luca Stolz/Faisal Al Zubair/Martin Konrad, HRT (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

- Race 2**
- LMP2** Charlie Eastwood/Ayhancan Guven/
Salih Yoluc
DKR Engineering (ORECA 07)
 - LMP3** Xavier Lloveras/Francois Heriau/
Fabrice Rossello
Graff Racing (Ligier JSP320)
 - GT** Stolz/Al Zubair/Konrad

FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST
YAS MARINA (ARE)

- Race 1** Mari Boya
MP Motorsport
- Race 2** Pepe Marti
Pinnacle VAR
- Race 3** Nikita Bedrin
PHM Racing

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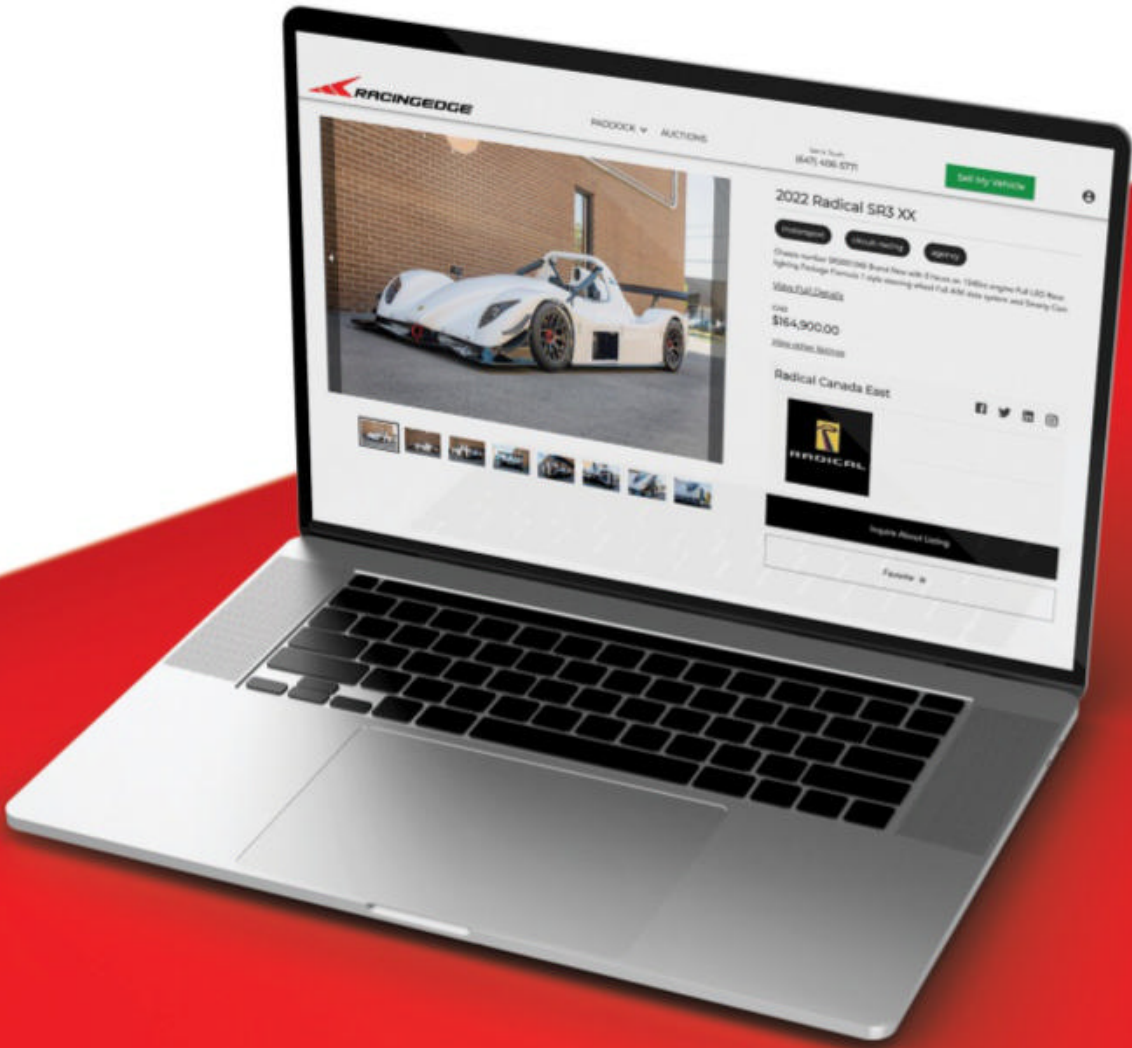


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COMPOSITE DESIGN ENGINEER Haas F1 Team

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- It will be expected to have a thorough knowledge of composite materials and composite production techniques.
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The Role

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- Support in the definition of performance and reliability test & development programs for relevant designs & projects.
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British GT Loggie to defend title with 2 Seas

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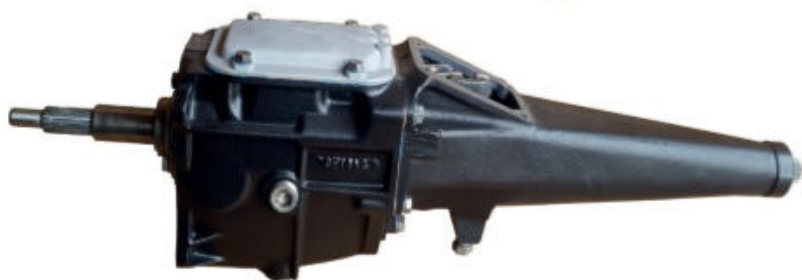


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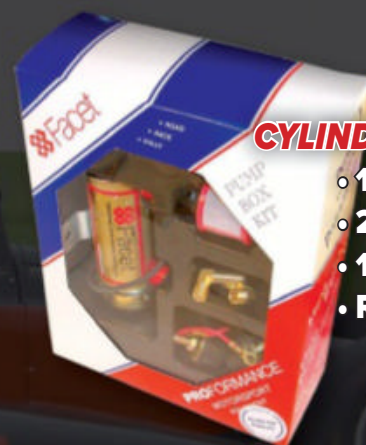
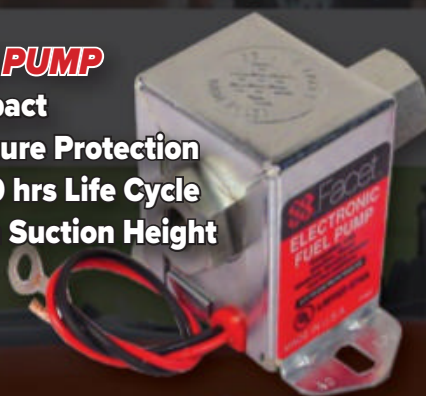


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Loggie to defend title after 2 Seas switch

BRITISH GT

Reigning British GT3 champion Ian Loggie will defend his crown alongside Jules Gounon this season, having made the switch to 2 Seas Motorsport.

The Scot claimed his maiden British GT title at the Donington Park finale last year after taking two wins and a further four podiums during the campaign at the wheel of a RAM Racing-run Mercedes-AMG.

Having raced with the squad since 2019, Loggie has decided to move away from RAM – with founder Dan Shufflebottom leaving his role at the end of last season.

Loggie has previously raced with 2 Seas, however, achieving a class podium at the Gulf 12 Hours last January, and has high hopes for this season.

“I can’t wait to be back on the British

GT grid this year, wearing the #1 that we worked so hard to earn last year – that’ll be a very proud moment for me,” he said. “After many great years with RAM Racing, I felt the time was right for a change, and 2 Seas is a great team.

“I have history there, having raced in the Gulf 12 Hours with them, so I know how capable they are at turning out a competitive Mercedes-AMG.”

Reigning GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup champion Gounon will partner Loggie after co-driving with him at four races last season – achieving a rostrum finish at each of them – and intends to complete a full campaign alongside Loggie in 2023.

“To be back with Jules is also something special,” said Loggie. “He’s one of the best GT3 drivers in the world and I learned a load working with him last year. With him alongside me for the whole of this season I know we’ll only get stronger and stronger as a partnership. The aim is to go for race wins and podiums from the very start as we try and defend this championship title.”

This will be 2 Seas’ third full season in British GT, having run James Cottingham and Lewis Williamson last season en route to fourth overall in the standings. The squad intends to run a second full-time entry in 2023, which will be announced in the coming weeks.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

ACADEMY STICKS WITH COWLEY IN GT4 LINE-UP

BRITISH GT

Academy Motorsport has announced its driver line-ups for a two-car assault on British GT this year.

Matt Cowley (below) will remain with the squad for a fourth British GT season having taken at least one outright GT4 victory in each of the past three years. He will be joined by Erik Evans in a Ford Mustang, the 19-year-old American having made his series debut with Academy at the Donington Park season finale last year.

Will Moore and team owner Matt Nicoll-Jones will share the second Academy Mustang, the former having missed most of last season through injury. The pair previously raced together in 2017 and 2018.

“It was a last-minute deal to get Matt and I back in the car and I can’t wait,” said Moore. “I’ve just recovered from a posterior cruciate ligament reconstruction, which is why I didn’t race last year and to be honest I thought I’d probably retire. So it’s great to have this opportunity with my old team-mate.”

Also on the grid this year in GT4 will be One Motorsport, a partnership between British Touring Car Championship outfit BTC Racing and ex-British GT entrant Motus One. Pro-Am duo Ed McDermott and Mikey Broadhurst will continue aboard the same Mercedes-AMG GT4 they used towards the end of last season.

The rebranded squad will remain in the BTCC and will also field cars in the new McLaren Trophy and British Endurance Championship.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Turner plans comeback in Merlyn FFord

FORMULA FORD 1600

The indomitable Colin Turner has targeted a return to racing in Formula Ford this season less than two and a half years since he lost his legs following a horrific incident while contesting the Walter Hayes Trophy event at Silverstone.

The 72-year-old Scot's "phenomenal but emotional" demo laps of the National circuit in double Historic FF1600 champion Callum Grant's Merlyn Mk20A at last year's Hayes earned a standing ovation from marshals, some his first respondents in November 2020. He has now acquired a sister car for his comeback and has regained his Motorsport UK licence.

Alerted to the availability of the Merlyn last used by Alistair Littlewood in 2017, Turner snapped it up and entrusted a programme of initial preparation and updates to Grant and his father Nigel.

"I have a [replacement] Ray coming together but, when we discovered that the GR15 chassis was not standard, but modified for Jamie Thorburn, it slowed the build process down," said Turner this week. "At that point, I decided that I needed a ready-made car to get back on track sooner.

"My first outing is scheduled to be at an



Turner completed poignant demo in a Merlyn at last year's Hayes, two years on from his accident

JEP

open-wheel trackday at Anglesey in March, to which a number of friends are going. All being well, we'll then do a test day at Croft at the end of the month.

"I'm not setting agendas but will see how I get on. If I feel comfortable and confident, I'll book in for a race. I don't care if I'm tooling round at the back. Just as long as I'm enjoying myself and not getting in anybody's way, it'll be a starting point.

"I am really excited about getting the Merlyn back home in the garage so I can tinker with it," added Turner, whose adventurous life is not about to slow down. The career RAF Jaguar strike aircraft pilot, who subsequently flew Boeing 757, Airbus A319, A320 and A321 and Boeing 767 airliners for commercial operators, will re-livery the car in his favourite BMW Estoril Blue hue before racing it.

MARCUS PYE

Harrison to race ex-Westbury BT21B

HISTORIC F3

The Brabham BT21B in which Peter Westbury won 1000cc Formula 3 races on two of continental Europe's fastest road courses in 1968 is set to be a pre-season favourite for the UK's Historic F3 championship 55 years on, with Autosport's top national driver of 2022 Samuel Harrison up.

Driving chassis AM231 for Ian Walker Racing, double British hillclimb champion Westbury won the GP des Frontieres at Chimay (Belgium) and the Coupe de Vitesse at Reims (France).

The combo also placed fifth in Monaco.

Subsequently owned by Chuck McCarty, the car was reimported in kit form by James Murray. Mike O'Brien acquired the project from Murray in late 2018 and his Speedsport Historic Racing team has restored it over the past two years.

Now equipped with a Ford MAE engine and Hewland gearbox, the BT21B was shaken down by O'Brien's McLaren GT ace son Michael at the end of last year. Newly repainted in IWR's yellow and green warpaint, it will be among the stars of this



Successful driver will pilot 1968 F3-winning Brabham

weekend's Race Retro show at Stoneleigh.

Although Harrison missed Dijon's crucial finale, eight straight Historic F3 race wins in Speedsport's Chevron B15 last season – in addition to dominating the Historic FF1600 championship in a Merlyn Mk20 run by O'Brien's equipe – mean the Yorkshire teenager will be the

man to beat in the Brabham.

Speedsport is now rebuilding the unique 1967 F3 Chevron B7, Derek Bennett's marque's first single-seater – raced by works driver Peter Gethin – to run alongside the BT21B as Historic F3 builds towards the 2024 60th anniversary of the 'screamer' category's debut.

MARCUS PYE

Oliver and P153 are due to be part of Race Retro's BRM focus



BRM cars, drivers and personnel set to star as Race Retro returns

HISTORICS

There will be a strong BRM presence at this week's Race Retro event, with several cars and key figures from the Formula 1 team's history set to be in attendance as the historic motorsport extravaganza returns following its three-year pandemic-enforced absence.

The continuation BRM P15 V16 machine, which competed at the Goodwood Revival last year, is set to be on display alongside a 1970 Yardley P153 at the event, which runs from Friday to Sunday (24-26 February) at the Stoneleigh

Park site in Warwickshire. BRM designers Tony Southgate and Mike Pilbeam are set to be at the show, alongside period BRM racers Jackie Oliver, Howden Ganley and Mike Wilds, while Rick Hall will give details of the latest chapter in BRM's story.

Alongside the static displays from various historic racing clubs and organisers, a plethora of different machines is set to take to the live rally stage over the weekend. Silverstone Auctions will also have a range of cars on show that are due to be sold at the event, including the Subaru Impreza that Colin McRae drove on the 1997 Monte Carlo Rally.

LACKFORD TO BE REMEMBERED BY COMBE RACE

CCRC

Popular special saloon, GT and sportscar racer Norman Lackford's contribution to Castle Combe's history is to be remembered with a memorial trophy to be presented for a Sports Racer Challenge double-header within July's Combe Carnival meeting.

Lackford (below), who died last October having raced since the 1960s, was a popular Combe championship competitor who won his class title thrice driving the Saxon sportscar built at his home in Cornwall. He subsequently saddled Radicals in the Sports Racing series and Open Sportscar Series events.

Lackford's widow Rachel has given wholehearted support for the Castle Combe Racing Club's initiative to run the event over two 20-minute legs at the 15 July meeting. The races will feature 1400cc, 2000cc and over 2000cc capacity splits, with free tyre choice. Cars must meet Motorsport UK regs and not exceed 108dB. Robin Lackford, Norman's younger brother – who helped him build his Ford Anglia and Fiat 850 – will represent Rachel.

"We are delighted to be able to commemorate one of the CCRC's most loyal and stalwart racing members," said club chairman Ken Davies. "Norman's enthusiasm was infectious, as was his sporting attitude, which aligned perfectly with the club's values."

It is hoped that it can become an annual feature, like the Dave Allan Trophy run at Combe in memory of the Honda test driver who died in 2012.

MARCUS PYE



Goodyear to make historic F1 tyres

HISTORICS

Goodyear and Dunlop have announced an expansion and increased investment in their historic tyre ranges, including the reintroduction of Goodyear's 1970s and 1980s Formula 1 tyres.

Goodyear remains the most successful tyre manufacturer in F1 history and will begin a test programme this year for the historic tyres. They will be showcased at this week's Race

Retro event with a 1974 Ronnie Peterson Lotus 76 on the stand of leading historic rubber distributor HP Tyres.

In addition, Goodyear is also reintroducing its historic F2 tyres and has developed an all-weather Appendix K tyre for 1960s/'70s sportscars.

Dunlop, meanwhile, is bolstering its historic range and several product lines will now be made using new moulds. An ex-Jackie Stewart and Graham Hill BRM P261 will be on the

HP Tyres stand at Race Retro to highlight Dunlop's investment in historic tyres.

"We are proud to bring new products from two of the most successful companies in motorsport and introduce them at Race Retro," said HP Tyres director John Pearson. "With new tyres from Goodyear and new production investment on the Dunlop brand tyres, HP Tyres is in a strong position to service a wider range of cars than ever before."

Cayman move for Coates and Hammerton

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Mini Challenge racers Max Coates and Ethan Hammerton will both switch to the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB series this year as part of Graves Motorsport's line-up for its maiden Porsche campaign.

The duo have competed in the Mini category following the demise of the Renault UK Clio Cup at the end of 2019, a season in which they were team-mates and Coates narrowly missed out on the title, while Hammerton was a regular podium finisher. But both have endured difficult seasons in Minis and are now opting for a fresh challenge in the Cayman series, which is making a full-time move onto the British Touring Car support bill this year.

"I'm back to rear-wheel drive after seven years!" said former Ginetta racer Coates. "It's a little bit different but not something I'm overly concerned about. All of my coaching roles in the last seven years have been in rear-wheel-drive cars, it's not like



I've not been in the rear-wheel-drive world.

"Ultimately, my goal has always been to go and race in touring cars and if I'm not going to race a touring car, you want to be as close to it as possible. The support package is where I enjoy racing and where my sponsors want to be as well.

"The aim has always got to be to try to win the championship. It's a big challenge – as well as being a new driver to Porsche, the team is new to Porsche. There's a lot to learn against more established teams and drivers in the series."

Both drivers have so far only completed

a handful of laps in a Cayman but have already been impressed by the machine. "I loved it – it was really nice to drive, it was quick and very grippy and responsive compared to the Mini," said Hammerton. "The first impression was very good and the car gives you a lot of confidence. If we get some testing in the car and get comfortable with it, I see no reason why we can't be up at the sharp end."

The Yorkshiremen are also relishing the chance of competing at local venue Croft, which was not on last year's JCW calendar.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Scholarship finalist Coyne to race Dragon Clio



BRITCAR TROPHY

Type R Trophy racer Travis Coyne will drive a Renault Clio for Dragon Sport by Amigo Motorsport in the Britcar Trophy this year after impressing in the team's scholarship event.

The inaugural Dragon Sport scholarship was held

last November and Coyne was selected as a finalist, while Jack Meakin was chosen to receive a funded Britcar Trophy drive.

But Coyne now also has the chance to compete in the series and will share a second Clio with a yet-to-be-confirmed driver after also receiving some Dragon Sport funds.

"I was very impressed with Travis at the scholarship day and it's been great to see his development in early pre-season testing, which he has taken to exactly as we wanted," said Dragon Sport founder Rhys Lloyd, who ran the scholarship alongside team-mate Max Coates.

ANGELO R. DRIVE

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Rob Boston Racing expands into TCR UK

TCR UK

Ginetta GT4 Supercup and British Endurance Championship winning squad Rob Boston Racing will expand into TCR UK this year.

The team will field two new Audi RS3 LMS TCR Gen2 cars driven by Jac Constable, a winner of four races over the past two seasons with Power Maxed Racing, and a second driver to be announced.

“We’ve had an eye on it for the last two years, watching it grow, and it definitely looked like something we would like to do,” said team principal Rob Boston. “It’s a new challenge for us. The cars are different to what we’ve run previously, being front-wheel drive, so it’s something really interesting for us to get our teeth into.”

“I’m really excited to be working with Jac.



Having what I think has been a good choice of car, and a driver who’s very, very hungry to win and has done some winning over the past two years, I think all the ingredients are there to have a very good crack at it.”

Constable’s announcement takes the list of confirmed starters in TCR UK to 20 drivers. The championship begins at Snetterton on 8-9 April.

MARK PAULSON

McLaren reveals upgraded version of its 720S GT3 car

BRITISH GT

McLaren has unveiled an evolution of its successful 720S GT3 model that is set to take to the track this year in both British GT and further afield.

The 720S GT3 Evo features improved aerodynamic performance with several new bodywork panels, including alterations to the front bumper and splitter, and changes to the rear wing. Both front and rear upper wishbones have been updated, while there are new four-way adjustable dampers and the brakes now have closed face bells for improved disc durability.

The original 720S made its competitive

debut with customer teams during the 2019 season, and has registered wins in British GT every year since. Customer teams can either buy the new package as a bolt-on, or they can buy a new car that has been built up.

McLaren Autosport director of motorsport Ian Morgan said: “We’ve maintained a close relationship with our customer teams and have incorporated many of their recommendations into the new Evo package. Improving consistency of performance and serviceability [is the focus], which will ensure that the McLaren 720S will continue to set the pace in GT3 racing for many more years to come.”



IN THE HEADLINES

MORE GB3 RECRUITS

Rodin Carlin and Douglas Motorsport have completed their GB3 line-ups for this season. Australian Costa Toparis will race for the former, the 15-year-old having competed with the team in the Formula 4 United Arab Emirates Trophy last year.

“Costa has already made a huge amount of progress since he first made the big step to leave Australia and test with us in the UK,” said team boss Trevor Carlin. Meanwhile, Pole Tymek Kucharczyk, 16, joins the Douglas squad after finishing third in Spanish F4 last year.

STILP HAS F4 TEST RUN

British Karting champion Gabriel Stilp had his first run in a race car at Donington Park earlier this month when he tested a British Formula 4 machine with Fortec Motorsport. Stilp is the son of 2003 Caterham Superlight champion Daniel.

KERRIDGE TO JCW MINIS

Jordan Kerridge is the latest driver announced as part of Excelr8’s Mini Challenge JCW line-up. He only made his racing debut last season in the CityCar Cup before contesting the Cooper class finale. “Hopefully I can inspire some people to have belief, and to try and achieve their dreams,” said Kerridge, who long held racing ambitions before a cryptocurrency investment helped fund his competition.

EAST RIDING STAGES FULL

This Sunday’s closed-roads East Riding Stages Rally in Yorkshire boasts a capacity 150-car entry for the opening round of the 2023 Asphalt Rally Championship. Leading the crews away will be last year’s winners David Henderson and Chris Lees (below) in an all-Ford Fiesta top six. Last year’s Circuit Rally champions and Asphalt runners-up Neil Roskell and Andrew Roughead, Frank Bird/Jack Morton, current BTRDA Gold Star champion Elliot Payne and reigning Asphalt title holder Steve Wood are among the key contenders.



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Huge interest in Clubsport Trophy

CLUBSPORT TROPHY

The British Racing & Sports Car Club has reported huge interest in its Clubsport Trophy mini-endurance series for this year, with well over 100 registrations and its Silverstone Grand Prix circuit season-opener almost sold out.

The series was introduced in 2019 and features 45-minute races for a variety of production-based club-level tin-tops, such as BMW Compacts and Honda Civics, divided into different classes based on power-to-weight ratio. While it has regularly produced some impressive grids, interest appears even higher this year and the club has so far received 119 series registrations. Almost all of the 61 places for its 18 March first round have also been filled.

“We’ve seen growth in the portfolio, however Clubsport Trophy has surprised us,” said BRSCC chief operating officer Paul McErlean. “I’ve got to give credit to Charlotte [White, coordinator], she’s incredible at the job. I think the class structure is well refined and that works really well, and it’s got a great calendar.”

The series is due to race on all three main configurations of Silverstone this year, alongside both the National and GP layouts at Donington Park and trips to Snetterton and Oulton Park – a combination of venues that McErlean believes has proven attractive, alongside



the continued popularity for series where drivers can share a car and costs. The BRSCC’s fledgling Supersport Endurance Cup, offering longer two-hour contests, is also growing for its first full season.

McErlean says the strong interest is far from reserved for endurance racing, picking out the club’s Mazda MX-5 Supercup securing record registrations, strong interest in Fiesta Junior and high hopes for the new Audi TT Cup Racing as others that are proving popular.

“It’s really encouraging – we’ve done some analysis of this time last year and our numbers are up,” added McErlean, who said the large numbers show the industry to be “stable”, despite the

current of cost-of-living crisis.

“There were justified nerves in the winter but now, looking back, I think it’s one of those things where you fear the unknown. We’re very optimistic for this season.”

Meanwhile, the BRSCC has announced new ‘Pro’, ‘Club’ and ‘Masters’ divisions within its rebranded Fiesta ST240 Championship for this year. Any driver who has previously taken a podium at the wheel of an ST240 will automatically be entered into the Pro contest, while drivers not expecting to fight at the front can enter the Club class. The Masters Trophy is being introduced for racers aged over 45.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Ex-British F3 racer to Radicals

RADICAL CUP UK

Former Radical Gulf champion Alex Khateeb is planning to contest this year’s Radical Cup UK in a new SR3XX with North Motorsport.

UK-born Khateeb started racing in Formula Ford at Castle Combe and was a race winner in the ARP F3 Series before moving on to British F3 in 2006. Driving for Promatecme, he started with the National class and

later moved on to the main championship for two events, but didn’t finish any of his races in the top division in a Lola B05/30. Khateeb was also the driver for Team Lebanon in A1GP in selected 2006-07 events.

He subsequently contested a few Formula Renault Eurocup races with Carlin before changing disciplines when he started drifting.

“I hadn’t raced for 12 years when I came back

for the 2020-21 Radical Gulf Cup and won the championship,” he explained. “I looked at the new cars and decided to have a go at the UK championship.”

Radical has revamped its UK motorsport offering for this season and combined the Challenge – predominantly for SR3s – and the SR1 Cup into the single Radical Cup UK contest.

PETER SCHERER

THE EMERGENCE OF ESPORTS

It may have taken some time, but national motorsport has started to embrace sim racing

STEFAN MACKLEY AND MEGAN WHITE

“T

here were news articles saying that we were essentially going to kill people by putting gamers in proper racing cars and things like that. We’ve certainly moved on from that.”

The recognition of Esports and the genuine skill of its competitors may have been in short supply when the Nissan GT Academy – aimed at turning gamers into real-life racing drivers – launched in 2008 but, in the intervening 15 years, much has changed in both the virtual and real worlds. The on-track success of inaugural GT Academy winner Lucas Ordonez, and subsequently Briton Jann Mardenborough, showed the true potential and value of Esports, which – particularly in the last three years – has flourished.

Paul Crawford, who is quoted above, knows the journey of Esports better than most – he worked on GT Academy until it ended in 2016, including dealing with the initial criticism. Using his experience in a new role with Motorsport UK as the governing body’s Esports manager, Crawford has been at the heart of a new concept launched last month – an Esports Hub – which intends to bring the expertise of the industry together in one place.

“We had to be really careful how we entered the space,” admits Crawford, who has also managed Mercedes’ Formula 1 Esports team and worked on the World’s Fastest Gamer initiative. “The Esports world is lawless, there’s no governing body for it, but we’re not trying to be [that] either. We had to make sure we didn’t come in and try and implement licences and permits because it just wouldn’t work, people would just dismiss us and carry on with what they were doing anyway, so we had to make sure we came into it in the right way.

“Sim racing is a very fragmented, tribal environment. If you play a certain game, that’s the best game ever and you shouldn’t play anything else and it’s the same with equipment. We came upon this idea of being a non-biased central hub to help add credibility and professionalism to the space.”

Anyone can sign up to the hub for free, which will grant them access to information across the various aspects of Esports, from the different equipment available to the plethora of platforms and events out there. In addition, those willing to pay an annual subscription of £24.99 will be given access to discounts and offers for several sim racing services and equipment providers.

The plan is to offer more real-world opportunities for users, such as visiting the Williams F1 Esports facility, with Crawford intent on bringing more partners into the fold, including manufacturers, to further boost opportunities for those who commit to the hub.

“In the world of Esports, there’s a lot of precedent in terms of subscriptions and paying for memberships but, like anything, it’s got to be worth it,” he says. “If we just say, ‘You pay this money and you get some discounts’, if you’re not actively



Burnley College's Esports programme is rapidly expanding

CLIVE LAWRENCE

looking to buy those products anyway then you’re not going to pay for it, and rightly so.

“It’s on us to make sure we provide the right things, offer things you wouldn’t normally be able to do and keep it exciting, interesting and pushing the industry forward.”

The hub is the latest Esports initiative by the governing body. Last season it launched the British F4 Esports Championship, which fielded a mix of sim and real-world drivers, and will return in 2023.

And it’s not the only collaboration with a real-world series. At the end of 2022 it worked alongside Britcar to host a 24-hour virtual race, which will go ahead again this year. The Britcar Endurance Championship – now rebranded the British Endurance Championship – was one of the first national categories to embrace Esports in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While real-world racing was on hold for an unknown period, Britcar ensured that its drivers and teams could still compete against each



Britcar's
Esports success
has been a catalyst
for national
motorsport
expansion

“SIM RACING IS VERY TRIBAL. IF YOU PLAY A CERTAIN GAME, THAT’S THE BEST GAME EVER”

other in the virtual world – something that continues to this day.

“I’ve been in motorsport all my life as a competitor and an organiser and I’ve always been involved in some form of sim racing just for fun,” says David Hornsey, Britcar’s technical and Esports manager. “I knew that world as well and I just saw it as an opportunity to keep the Britcar brand doing something and in the public eye when we were all starved of live sport to watch.

“When you’re playing *FIFA*, you’re sat twiddling your thumbs on a joypad whereas when you’re sim racing you’re sat in a seat, you’re pressing pedals and turning a wheel. It’s much more relatable to the real-world side of the sport, so it’s got an extra draw I think to sim racing enthusiasts because immersion is a big thing about it. The thing you’re missing is the money and the fear.”

It acted as something of a catalyst – in the following three years there’s been no shortage of national clubs, championships and series that have followed in the wake of Britcar and invested in the concept. The Porsche Esports Carrera Cup GB, British

Racing & Sports Car Club’s Winter Series and MotorSport Vision Trackdays’ EnduroKa series are just some currently running ahead of the new real-world season, and more are actively looking into how to become involved.

Crawford admits that the pandemic “was a very good accelerator” for the emergence of Esports, but that it had been on an upward trajectory for some time. “It [COVID-19] almost forced people to focus on it because it was the only real opportunity to do any form of motorsport,” he says. “I think it opened up a lot of eyes from clubs to organisers to partners and even manufacturers. I think it would have got there in the end anyway but, when you have that captive audience, it obviously helps massively.”

While the UK’s governing body and national racing clubs continue to look at new avenues within Esports, further down the ladder at a grassroots level opportunities are also being presented to get more people into the discipline. Burnley College launched its Esports programme in 2021 with just 16 students but has expanded to more than 100 in fewer than three years. While to some the course might seem like an excuse to sit on a rig all day playing racing games, there’s far more to it than that.

“It’s more like a business course,” says Jac Cowie, a second-year Esports student at the college. “We learn about branding, how to run an Esports team and what it’s all about. Stuff like what players go through, what they need, we’ve got a nutrition unit, so it’s a bit like traditional sports. You learn a lot – video production, >>

shoutcasting, streaming, event organising.”

With funding from Burnley Football Club, two racing rigs have recently been installed in the department and are available for use by all at the college, not just those on the Esports course, and the department has created further opportunities for those studying other topics.

“Each driver needs their own set-up,” says course leader and ex-Burnley College student Andrew Chapman. “It’s great that the drivers themselves can do it, but why not include engineering students who actually understand degrees of camber, tow, rake and stuff like that? This year we’ll be involving engineering students to do the set-ups of the cars. They built the rigs themselves, the engineering students, which is amazing. So again, that’s those cross-transferable skills.”

Being located in one of the poorest areas in the country means the course is offering students opportunities they otherwise

wouldn’t be able to reach. The college competed in a pilot league run by the Williams F1 Esports team as a test for an upcoming national student sim league, for example. Greater accessibility and further opportunities are also on the agenda of Crawford, who believes much more can be done to help those with talent.

“We do want to help with things like pathways within Esports competitions,” he says. “At the minute, it’s very much like if you put in the time on your own at home and get good at a certain title, you’ll eventually get cherry-picked by a pro team, whereas we want to make that opportunity a bit more obvious. The real world has got very good with obvious pathways and steps that you go through, whereas Esports doesn’t. That’s another thing that we’re looking at for the future.”

Helping with that drive is the fact that Esports is now accepted at the highest levels of the sport, and is included in the FIA’s Motorsport Games. James Baldwin, winner of the World’s Fastest Gamer in 2019 and current Mercedes F1 Esports driver, took part in the event for the UK. He’s also taken to racing in the real world – he competed in British GT in 2020, driving for 2009 F1 world champion Jenson Button’s Team Rocket RJN squad.

Crawford knows that the skills for sim racing are transferable to



“THE REAL WORLD HAS GOT VERY GOOD WITH OBVIOUS PATHWAYS AND STEPS THAT YOU GO THROUGH, WHEREAS ESPORTS DOESN’T”

real-world motorsport and there are opportunities for those with talent to make the jump between both. “People like James Baldwin, who I worked with on World’s Fastest Gamer and went to the British GT rounds with, is a perfect example of that skillset,” says Crawford. “And people like Lucas Blakeley and Jarno Opmeer [F1 Esports drivers] doing eROC and going to the Race of Champions just shows that the talent is there. I think one day we will see an Esports driver in an F1 car, which will be mega, but I still think that there is work to be done.”

Although there’s a clear link between real and virtual racing, Crawford is keen to stress that Motorsport UK hasn’t entered the



world of Esports primarily to push sim racers into real-life racing. Instead, it’s more about making people aware of the opportunities and accessibility out there, and that the two disciplines can work in tandem to boost each other.

“It’s putting those opportunities in front of the Esports audience, but then it’s actually putting the Esports opportunities in front of the motorsport audience,” concludes Crawford. “It’s here to stay for sure. I’m not trying to replace real-world motorsport with Esports; I’m a massive fan of motorsport and consume it almost every day. I think it should be added as a category of motorsport and the crossovers will happen naturally.”



FINISHING STRAIGHT

Putting customers in the driving seat



F1 ARCADE

One of the most telling signs of Formula 1's global boom in recent years is that you no longer need to explain to many people what F1 is. Fuelled by the success of Netflix's *Drive to Survive* series, a social-savvy grid and a bigger awareness from the series of the outside world, F1 has really gone mainstream – something Liberty Media was always keen to make happen.

Part of this push has led to the creation of F1 Arcade, a new facility that has opened in St Pauls, London during the off-season.

The prime location looks to tap into the growing interest for activities as part of an evening's entertainment or for a work event, in a similar way to Junkyard Golf, Flight Club (darts) or Bounce (ping pong) have done in London.

F1 Arcade is a 16,000 square-foot space featuring 60 simulators, allowing friends, colleagues and families to go head to head on the virtual track. The game model is bespoke for F1 Arcade, powered by rFactor 2 that is provided by Motorsport Games, and features the official F1 cars and tracks that are currently being used.

One of the coolest elements of F1 Arcade is that it's fully accessible to all-comers. When you hop into the motion simulator, it gives you four different settings, ranging from rookie to pro, that will impact things such as braking assists and steering wheel feedback. It means anyone can jump in and have a fun race, while the die-hard gamers can try to get as immersive an experience as possible. But don't go thinking this will be

the closest thing you can find to driving an F1 car; the whole point is to have fun, not shave thousandths off your lap time.

When Autosport gave F1 Arcade a go, we tried out the head-to-head mode, going into a race against five other drivers who are sitting alongside you – for bigger groups, you're able to do team racing, while further modes are planned. The race lasted three minutes around Monza, and proved competitive. There is the bumping and clashing you would expect in any F1 game, but it proved to be a rewarding and fun experience.

The game looks good, particularly with the broadcast presentation element including a full leaderboard at the side of the screen. Each simulator has two screens; one in front of the seat that is your typical cockpit point of view, and a second above that has the 'TV feed' so that spectators can watch.

The rest of the space is arguably even more impressive than the game. A 40-foot long bar serves F1-themed cocktails and mocktails – the Grand Chelem Old Fashioned was delightful – while there are also plenty of delicious food offerings. The seating areas and high tables made to look like F1 pitwalls are a nice touch, while you can also try your hand at a batac machine to test your reactions away from the simulators.

For those looking for a more bespoke setting, there's a private event space, The Briefing Room, that can be hired out for events. Even if you're not using the simulators, the whole facility is a cool





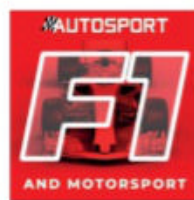
F1-themed addition to London's nightlife has already been a hit

space to head with your mates after work to get a drink and your fix of F1 fun.

It's safe to say that F1 Arcade has already proven immensely popular since it opened to the public. "The launch of F1 Arcade has been a great success, with 3000 reservations made on the first day of bookings opening and a total of 11,000 bookings made in the first week alone," said Brandon Snow, F1's managing director of commercial. "This launch provides a launchpad for an ambitious plan for national and global expansion."

F1 Arcade may not be a mass expansion of sim racing, but that's precisely the point — this is intended to be something accessible to all, a fun alternative to London's entertainment offering. It's achieved that in buckets, and will remain a healthy addition to F1's offering outside its traditional fanbase.

LUKE SMITH



autosport.com/podcast



Analysing F1 2023 launch season

Following the conclusion of the Formula 1 launch season, the latest episode of the Autosport Podcast considers what we've learned as testing begins in Bahrain this week. While several cars have already been pictured out on track, there remains an aura of mystery around a few teams ahead of the three-day test...

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Formula 1 testing

Sakhir, Bahrain

23-25 February

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Thu/Fri/Sat 0650

Formula E

Round 4/11

Cape Town, South Africa

25 February

TV Live Channel 4, Sat 1330, Eurosport 1, Sat 1400

Intercontinental GT Challenge

Round 2/5

Kyalami, South Africa

25 February

NASCAR Cup Series

Round 2/36

Fontana, USA

26 February

TV Live Viaplay, Sun 2000

NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 2/33

Fontana, USA

25 February

UK MOTORSPORT

Silverstone CSCC

26 February

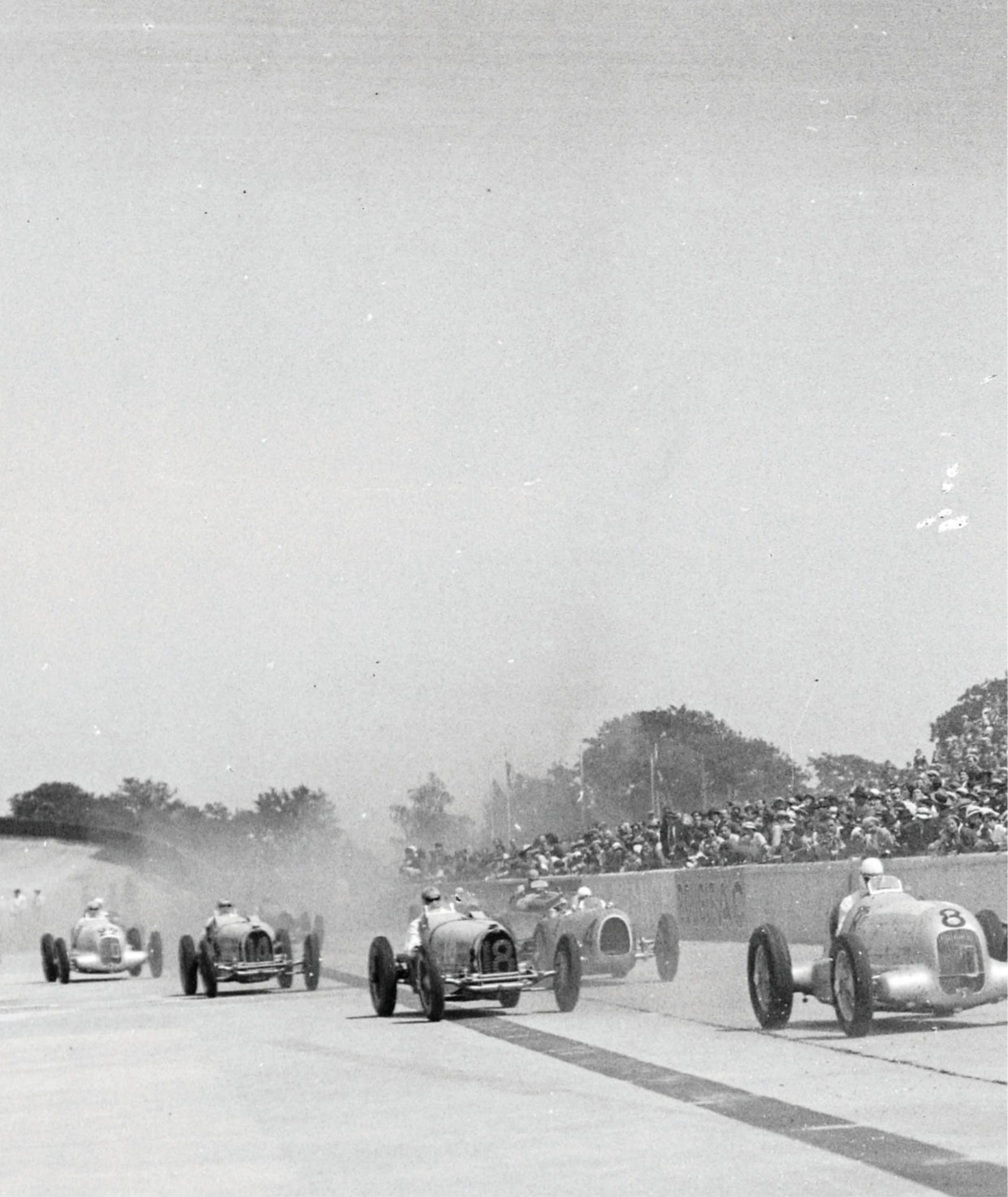
Future Classics, Magnificent Sevens, Modern Classics, New Millennium, Open Series, Slicks Series, Tin Tops, Turbo Tin Tops

Formula 1 testing



SUTTON

motorsport IMAGES



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Having rocketed away from his sixth-place grid position – decided by ballot – Louis Chiron (Alfa Romeo Tipo-B P3) leads Rudolf Caracciola (Mercedes-Benz W25) and Achille Varzi (Alfa

Romeo) at the start of the 1934 French Grand Prix at Montlhéry. The race marked the international debuts of the Silver Arrows of Mercedes and Auto Union. Although they showed the speed that would result in pre-war

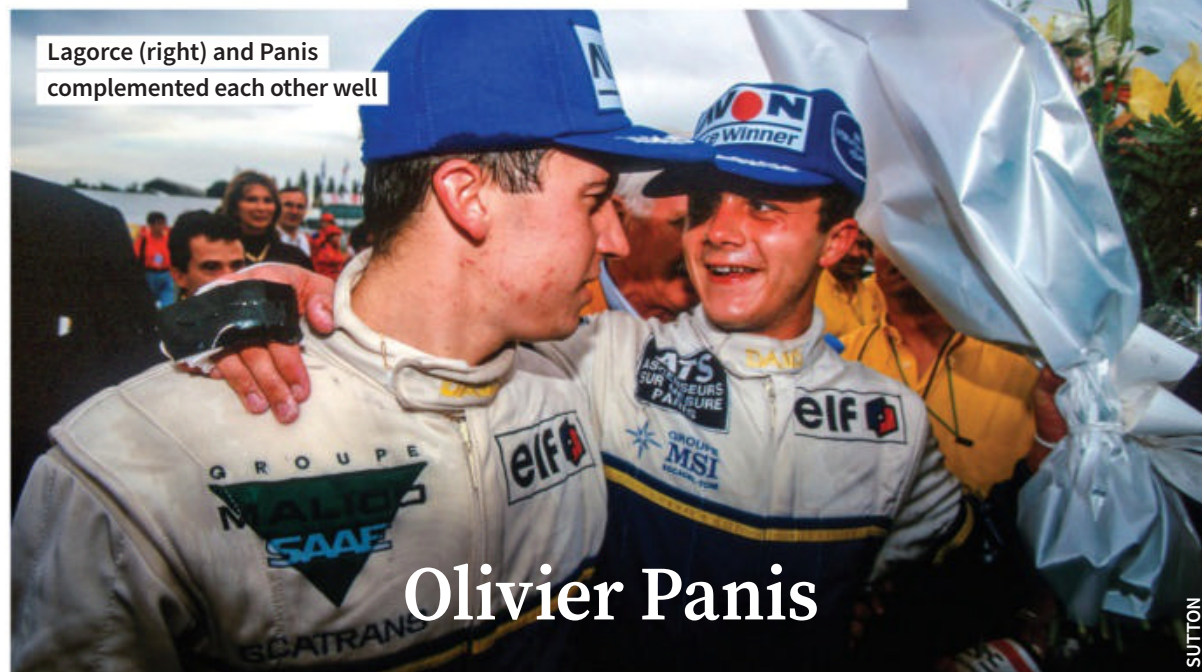
grand prix racing supremacy, none of the German cars survived to see the finish, leaving Chiron to take the glory at the head of an Alfa Romeo 1-2-3. Look out for more on this era of motorsport next month.



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FRANCK LAGORCE MY FAVOURITE... TEAM-MATE



Alpine's decision to pair Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly means Formula 1 has its first all-French line-up since Ligier called up Franck Lagorce to join Olivier Panis for the final two rounds of 1994.

The circumstances of his debut couldn't have been much more challenging for Lagorce, who replaced Benetton-bound Johnny Herbert. Suzuka is as difficult a circuit as they come, and the bad weather that blighted that year's Japanese Grand Prix didn't help. To follow that up with the tricky Adelaide street track, also new to the 1992 French Formula 3 champion, meant the odds of impressing were long.

One consolation was the identity of the driver on the other side of the garage. Olivier Panis was well known to Lagorce from their time in the junior categories, and the pair remain good friends today.

"Definitely it was Olivier," says Lagorce, when asked to choose his favourite team-mate. "All the time we go in the same way. It was very clear all the time about the adjustment of the car, about the session [plan]. With Olivier it was fantastic."

Rivals in French F3 in 1991, when Panis finished second and Lagorce fourth, they became team-mates at DAMS in Formula 3000 in 1993. Second-year driver Panis went on to beat Pedro Lamy to the title after a mid-season hat-trick of wins, but



Lagorce contributed too. His two end-of-season victories stretched DAMS's winning run to five on the spin. Lagorce says he and Panis "are very different" characters, which made their collaboration "very interesting".

"Because we drive different, it's possible to try something for the other," he explains. "I can try something on my car and he can try something on his car, and after we can guess something for the other one."

After narrowly missing out on the 1994 F3000 title, Lagorce's brief Ligier stint was unfulfilling. He recalls that Panis "tried to help everybody" with the benefit of a 14-race headstart on his compatriot, and the debutant was only one place behind on the Suzuka grid. But in the race Lagorce was spun out by Pierluigi Martini before driving steadily to 11th in Adelaide. He never got another shot at GP racing before switching to sportscars.

JAMES NEWBOLD



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