

**F1 2023 is go! Aston shocks in Bahrain**

# **AUTOSPORT**

9 MARCH 2023

## **Alonso stars as Verstappen dominates**

**Red Bull unstoppable but Aston Martin humbles Ferrari and Mercedes**

**'This is just unreal'**

**FERNANDO ALONSO**



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# Max untouchable as another double champ saves the day

Thank goodness for Fernando Alonso and Aston Martin! As was expected following testing, Red Bull dominated the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix last weekend and Max Verstappen didn't even need to break sweat, but the 41-year-old Spaniard's charge to his 99th Formula 1 podium kept things interesting for much of the afternoon.

Aside from some brilliant racing – fans have been waiting for about a decade for Alonso and Lewis Hamilton to again go wheel to wheel – the genuine pace of the AMR23 suggests that, *finally*, a team from the midfield has made the jump into the lead pack.

The concern for the F1 paddock, of course, is that the RB19 already looks uncatchable. As Alex Kalinauckas shows in our report on page 18, circumstances did play to Red Bull's favour, but a 1-2 in both qualifying and the race is ominous. George Russell's suggestion that Red Bull should win all 23 rounds is perhaps a bit punchy (p4), but few would bet against Verstappen taking a third consecutive world crown.

To beat him in future, Ferrari and Mercedes have some serious thinking to do, particularly the Black Arrows. The W14 was the fourth-fastest car at Sakhir, and a change of ground-effects concept is clearly required if Russell and Hamilton are to be real contenders.

Elsewhere in this issue, we report on the IndyCar chaos in St Petersburg (p34), drive Peugeot's simulator with Anthony Davidson (p42) and pick out the top 10 pre-war GP cars (p50).



*Kevin Turner*

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**16 MARCH**

**World Endurance preview**  
Our guide to the dawn of a new sportscar golden age as Ferrari returns



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# PIT + PADDOCK



## Mercedes ready to abandon car concept after Bahrain struggle

### FORMULA 1

If at first you don't succeed, try once more. If that doesn't work, go back to the drawing board. That's how the Mercedes Formula 1 team appears to be operating presently, with boss Toto Wolff declaring at last weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix opening round that it is now time to bin its car concept to stop its grounds-effects rot.

Compared to the team's 2022 qualifying pace in Bahrain, Mercedes has gained 0.708 seconds per lap. That, and the elimination of porpoising, means the squad is understood to have largely satisfied its internal

performance targets. But that improvement returned only sixth on the grid last weekend for George Russell and seventh for Lewis Hamilton. As such, the 'Black Arrows' find themselves chasing the shadows of the Red Bull RB19s and shuffled down to fourth courtesy of the flying start made by Aston Martin. A retirement for Ferrari's Charles Leclerc did promote Hamilton to fifth in the race, but injured Aston Martin driver Lance Stroll was able to usurp Russell for sixth as the Mercedes duo finished more than 50s down on dominant winner Max Verstappen.

That has left Wolff to concede that the Brackley design team has got it wrong in persisting with its ground-effects aero concept pioneered by the troubled W13. There is no longer the belief that this car lineage can be developed into a title winner.

Russell reckoned that Mercedes needed to consider a change in design philosophy just as a 'box-ticking' exercise to at least try something new. But Wolff is more emphatic. "I don't think this package is going to be competitive eventually," said the Austrian. "We gave it our best shot all over the winter, and now we just need to all regroup and sit down with the engineers, who are totally not dogmatic about anything. There are no holy cows and we need to decide what is the development direction that we want to pursue, in order to be competitive to win races. It's not only like last year,

where you are scoring many podiums and eventually you get there. I'm sure we can win races this season. But it's really the mid and long-term that we need to look at, and which decisions we need to take."

It is understood that the W14 will receive a major upgrade package imminently, which will mean a return to larger sidepods. But it is estimated that top surfaces now only contribute 40% of the cars' performance, so tweaking the existing model will not entirely rescue the season.

"I'm looking at what can we find next week," added Wolff. "What can we add to the car? What is the change of direction that we can implement? And how quickly is that, so that maybe we can turn the ship around this year? I don't want to discount anything for this year, while being totally realistic that [the car] needs a lot to change a lot."

With the Three-Pointed Star unable to fight for victory in the short term, the Ferrari SF-23 suffering exaggerated tyre degradation in Bahrain and Aston Martin not quite class-leading, Russell now supposes that Red Bull can win every one of the 23 grands prix this term. His comments follow reigning two-time champion Verstappen seizing pole in Bahrain for Red Bull, managing his scrubbed set of soft tyres a lap longer than Leclerc (on his brand-new Pirellis) during the first stint and hardly being fazed by a locking rear axle on his way to an imperious 12s



Wolff: "There are no holy cows and we need to decide the direction"



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ETHERINGTON



Russell: "I expect Red Bull should win every race this season"

SUTTON

triumph over team-mate Sergio Perez. Meanwhile, the best non-Red Bull driver, Aston's Fernando Alonso, was 39s in arrears.

Rather than stick to F1 convention by toeing a more conservative party line, Russell said: "Red Bull has got this championship sewn up, I don't think anyone is going to be fighting with them this year. I expect they should win every single race this season. That's my bet. With the performance they've got I don't see anyone challenging them. Their pace seems weaker this weekend than it was in testing, which was a bit strange.

"But they've got it easy at the moment, and they can do what they like. They might not get on pole all of the time, because we know that Ferrari are very competitive in qualifying. But when it comes to race pace, I think they're in a very, very strong position."

JONATHAN NOBLE, HAYDN COBB & MATT KEW

➔ P18 BAHRAIN GP

# McLaren opens door to Red Bull power for 2026

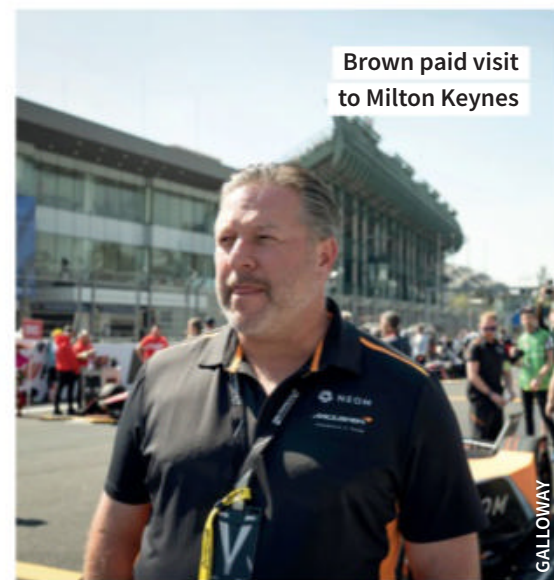
## FORMULA 1

McLaren Racing boss Zak Brown has paid a visit to the fledgling Red Bull Powertrains site in Milton Keynes to sound out the possibility of an engine supply for his team. Any such partnership would replace the current customer deal with Mercedes in time for the new Formula 1 regulations coming into effect for 2026.

Brown wrote to the FIA last year to indirectly accuse Red Bull of "cheating" when the team was found to have exceeded the 2021 cost cap, and his letter left Red Bull team principal Christian Horner "appalled". But it seems that's now water under the bridge, with Brown heading north from Woking to have a look around the new Ford-backed facility. His visit arrives hot on the heels of speculation that McLaren has also been weighing up a reunion with Honda following its disastrous 2015-17 dalliance. This further suggests that the team is considering a future without Merc's High Performance Powertrains units, which it has used since 2021.

Both Brown and Horner insisted these types of exploratory talks were par for the course. Horner joked: "I thought he was coming for lunch!" before adding: "As a powertrain manufacturer for 2026, it's inevitable that discussions are going to be had regarding potential powertrain supply. That's only natural that we would speak with potential customers."

New McLaren team principal Andrea Stella emphasised an initial commitment to Mercedes before repeating Horner's



Brown paid visit to Milton Keynes

GALLOWAY

sentiment that this was not a dramatic turn of events. He said: "We have a solid partnership with HPP. At the same time, it is obvious that looking further forward, you want to understand what's available. That's natural. It shouldn't be much of a surprise."

This aligns with what Brown had to say at last month's launch of the MCL60. "We're very happy with Mercedes," he said. "We have some time to decide what we want to do in 2026... It's something that Andrea and I are in the process of slowly reviewing. We're not in a big rush and we are very happy with Mercedes. So, we'll see how things play out in the next year or so before we need to make a decision."

Horner added that supplying another team alongside sister squad AlphaTauri would be of no financial benefit to Red Bull because the customer model is "not profitable". But Red Bull Powertrains would gain access to more data to refine its early engine concept.

MATT KEW



McLaren has used Mercedes engines since 2021

HONE



# Imola to host new qualifying format

## FORMULA 1

Formula 1 will trial a new qualifying format during the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix weekend at Imola in May.

In an effort to reduce the number of tyres brought to each event, at two rounds this year the championship will experiment with a new qualifying format. The number of tyre sets available to each driver for the weekend will be reduced from 13 to 11, and there will be a revised session format.

Drivers are currently completely free to choose which Pirellis are used in the three segments of qualifying, but at these two events the compounds will be mandated. Drivers will be forced to use hard tyres in Q1, mediums in Q2 and then softs in Q3. If any of the sessions are

declared wet, then tyre choice will become free.

Under the experiment, drivers will have access to three sets of hards, four sets of mediums and four sets of softs for the entire weekend. The plan is to have six sets of tyres available for qualifying, and five to juggle between practice and the race.

Although there has been no official confirmation of the final selected venues just yet, sources have revealed to Autosport that the Imola weekend from 19-21 May will be the first event chosen. The second will likely take place just before the summer break, which will give Pirelli and the teams time to assess whether the experiments have worked and if the format can become the norm, potentially from as early as 2024.

Early analysis from



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

engineers suggests that teams would likely use one set of soft tyres in FP2 and one in FP3, to guarantee two sets of softs for Q3. Teams that do not make it through to the final qualifying segment

would therefore in theory have access to two more sets of soft tyres for the race, something that could prove beneficial at some tracks.

**JONATHAN NOBLE & ROBERTO CHINCHERO**

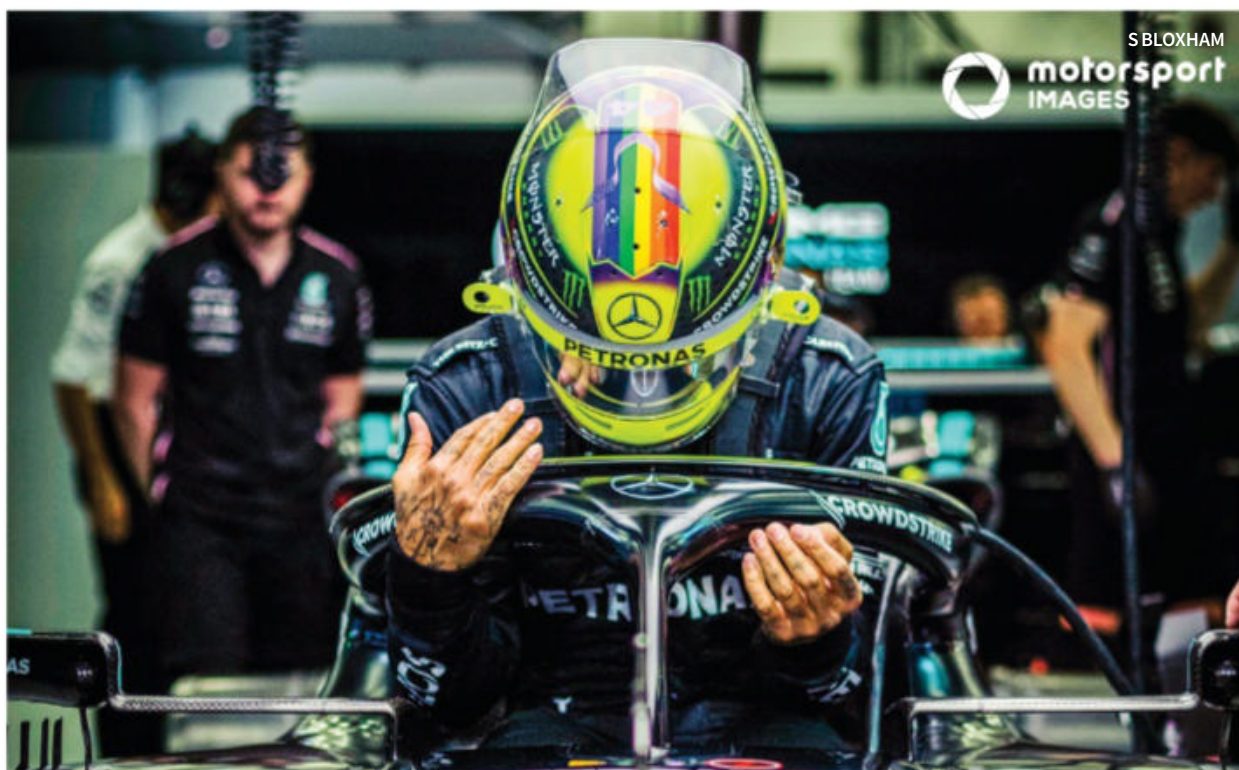
# Hamilton pushes FIA boundaries

## FORMULA 1

Mercedes star Lewis Hamilton has helped clear up a grey area of the FIA rules by adding a splash of colour in the form of a rainbow-themed crash helmet for last weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix.

The governing body added to its tedious recent run of controversy by updating the International Sporting Code for 2023 to clamp down on the personal, political and religious statements drivers may make during a race weekend. Under this new clause, it was believed that rainbow helmets would not be permitted since they risked skewing the FIA's supposedly unequivocal neutrality on societal issues.

But Hamilton donned a rainbow helmet anyway and rightly hasn't faced any repercussions for not seeking prior permission to do so. This is because no stakeholders, such as the race promoter, raised an objection to prompt an



investigation. F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali let it be known that he liked Hamilton's design.

But the seven-time champion may have been pushing his luck by turning up for the new season with a second nose stud. The subject of jewellery became a hot topic during 2022 under new race directors Niels Wittich and Eduardo Freitas. In order to pre-empt further problems heading into the new term, Mercedes submitted a medical

letter outlining why it is not practical for Hamilton to remove the stud.

The FIA noted: "The stewards consulted the FIA medical delegate, who viewed the medical report, examined the driver and concurred with the opinion therein. We have determined to take no further action as there are concerns about disfigurement with frequent attempts at removal of the device."

**ADAM COOPER**





**WEC** The new Isotta Fraschini Le Mans Hypercar is ready to go. The reborn Italian manufacturer last week unveiled a completed Tipo 6 LMH Competizione on the schedule it outlined back in October. Testing is due to begin shortly in conjunction with the British Vector Sport team ahead of a possible entry into the World Endurance Championship, possibly as early as Monza in July, on a race-by-race basis. “Today, we are exactly where we predicted four months ago,” said Isotta motorsport boss Claudio Berro. “The Tipo 6 LMH Competizione is now in its complete and real configuration.” **Photo by Isotta Fraschini**

## AlphaTauri and Red Bull deny speculation over team sale

### FORMULA 1

AlphaTauri team boss Franz Tost says there is “no foundation” to recent speculation that Red Bull is evaluating a sale of its junior Formula 1 team, after the Austrian sought assurances from the fizzy drinks company’s managing director.

“I had some very good meetings with Oliver Mintzlaff, who confirmed that the shareholders will not sell Scuderia AlphaTauri, and that Red Bull will continue supporting the team,” Tost (right) revealed. “All these rumours have no foundation, and the team has to remain focused to perform better than last year.”

Red Bull counterpart Christian Horner

followed suit. “As we all know, there’s always plenty of speculation in this paddock,” he said of the reports, which first appeared in the German media. “Of course, anything like that would be ultimately down to the shareholders and their commitment has always been absolute. So, it’s sometimes amusing to see how things get carried away.

“We have synergies and agreements with AlphaTauri where we supply various components. They share our wind tunnel, for example, as well. So, there’s nothing planned.”

But none of this directly tackles the gossip that AlphaTauri is considering fully relocating to Bicester, former hometown of the March F1 team.

**MATT KEW**



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JEP

## Glickenhaas firms up its squad for Sebring

### WEC

Glickenhaas will begin the new World Endurance Championship season with a familiar looking line-up in its full-season Pipo-engined 007 Le Mans Hypercar at this month's Sebring 1000 Miles. Olivier Pla and Ryan Briscoe will join Romain Dumas, but the team has indicated that there could be changes for rounds two and three at Spa and the Algarve circuit in April as it looks to fill the vacant berths in its additional entry for June's Le Mans 24 Hours.

The confirmation of Pla and Briscoe for Sebring on 17 March, along with the listing of Franck Mailleux alongside its Le Mans-only car, means that

Glickenhaas has so far named the four drivers from its 2021 and 2022 squads at the French enduro who are available for this season. Pipo Derani and Richard Westbrook are racing for Cadillac, the Brazilian in the IMSA SportsCar Championship and at Le Mans with Action Express Racing, and the Briton in the full WEC with Chip Ganassi Racing.

Dumas and Pla are "pretty much set for the season", according to team boss Jim Glickenhaas. Briscoe, he added, will definitely be in one of its cars at the 24 Hours, most likely alongside Mailleux.

"We could bring in another driver to join them for either Algarve or Spa as we look for drivers for our second car at Le Mans," explained Glickenhaas.

Glickenhaas is part of an 11-strong field in the Hypercar class for Sebring. The two customer Porsche 963 LMDhs are absent as expected, with the British Jota team set to debut its car next month at Spa, and Proton Competition ready to join the field at Monza in July.

Jota has brought in Porsche Formula E test and reserve driver David Beckmann to fill the spot for a Silver-rated driver in the extra LMP2 ORECA-Gibson 07 it will run in the colours of new sponsor Hertz until the arrival of the Porsche. The ex-Formula 2 racer will share with Will Stevens and Yifei Ye at Sebring, and with Antonio Felix da Costa and Ye in Portugal.

**GARY WATKINS**

## Ex-Audi chief Gass takes on Formula E role

### FORMULA E

Former Audi motorsport chief Dieter Gass is to join Formula E as its senior technical and sporting advisor, and will assist the promoter in defining the series' long-term plans.

In his new role, the German will assist with the development of the Gen4 regulations, planned for the 2026-27 season once the new-for-2023 Gen3

package has completed its four-year cycle.

"I will be working on behalf of the promoter to interact with the FIA and provide advice on the future direction of Formula E," said Gass, who will dovetail the role with his new position as team principal of customer Porsche LMDh team Jota in the World Endurance Championship.

"A big part of my commitment will be in very close contact with all the

involved parties and see what the thoughts are on their side. Then we'll bring everything together, everybody together with Formula E and the FIA, and then hopefully make the best decisions for the future."

"I think the impressive thing is that there has been a continuous development, very much from the outset. There was never a standstill and things were moving on."

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



AUDI





**BTCC** We're only a few weeks away from British Touring Car Championship kickoff, so it must be BTCC livery-revealing season. The West Surrey Racing-run Team BMW has a nifty take on the familiar theme as it continues with BMW UK support for the trio of Colin Turkington, Stephen Jelley and Adam Morgan. Jake Hill, who races the fourth BMW under the Laser Tools banner, has been named a 'friend of the brand', no doubt meaning he'll be trying to get his hands on some lairy, oversteering 1970s Munich machinery... Super Touring history buff Turkington, meanwhile, remains pleasingly old-school by sporting the #4, his points position last year. Carrying the #1, however, is your new reigning champion Tom Ingram, whose Excelr8 Motorsport squad also rolled out its 2023 warpaint for its leading Hyundai pair of Ingram and Tom Chilton, again with title backing from Bristol Street Motors. **Photos by JEP/Excelr8**

## Power Maxed up to three with double champ

**BTCC**

British Touring Car Championship underdog Power Maxed Racing has not only filled its two seats for the 2023 season, but now it has added a third.

The Midlands operation will give a BTCC debut to reigning Ginetta GT5 and BMW Compact champion Mikey Doble, who will join fellow series rookie Andrew Watson and the seasoned Aron Taylor-Smith in an expanded line-up of Vauxhall Astras. PMR boss Adam Weaver says the team is building up an additional machine for 2023 to go with last year's weapons, which debuted in 2017 and 2021 respectively.

PMR's expansion to three cars has been made possible after it secured a spare TBL entrants' licence from Team Hard. While the Cupra squad now has three TBLs and four drivers, it is using the TBL owned by its former driver Carl Boardley.

The 24-year-old Doble won an impressive 11 races across his Ginetta and BMW exploits in 2022. He has made it clear that, like sometime Le Mans 24 Hours racer Watson, he is targeting honours in the Jack Sears Trophy for drivers who have never stood on an overall BTCC podium before the start of the campaign.

The season begins at Donington in April.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**



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## F3 targeted to lead Macau junior single-seater festival

### MACAU GRAND PRIX

The Macau Grand Prix could turn into a festival of junior single-seater motorsport in 2023 if current plans reach fruition. There is still some way to go, but the target is for international grids to be assembled for three levels of FIA-sanctioned categories: Formula 3, Formula Regional and Formula 4.

The race in China's former Portuguese enclave was held for F3 machinery from 1983-2018, before the new-generation FIA F3 paid one visit in 2019. Then COVID-19 struck, and Chinese F4 teams fought for the coveted title from 2020-22.

The FIA is now working hard on an F3 return for the November fixture. Simultaneously, the event's planned expansion to two weekends for its 70th running (as it did for its 60th in 2013) means that the China-based Top Speed company, which operates the hugely successful Formula Regional Middle East and F4 UAE championships, is also in negotiations with the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee.

While the FIA F3 series' line is that Macau is nothing to do with them, some teams – particularly those that also run in FRegional and F4 – are very keen on the concept. But the stumbling block could be getting the cars out to the Far East after post-season testing and back in time for Mecachrome engine rebuilds in

December. "We are trying to see how we could organise it, because there is still interest and appetite for the race," said FIA single-seater strategy and operations director Francois Sicard.

"It's a tricky situation – the only way to make it happen is to air-freight to Macau and back to Europe. Because of the cost issue we are looking to find a solution and it's not an easy task. We are confident it can happen and will be happy to find a solution, but it's early to say."

Top Speed took its Asian VW Scirocco Cup, Lamborghini Super Trofeo and Formula Masters China to Macau in 2013, and is hoping to tie up slots on the first weekend – one week before the GP itself – for FRegional and F4. "We are under discussion to have both, and I am confident that we will have 25 to 28 cars in each," said company boss Davide de Gobbi. "Having extra track time, they are looking for support events."

Six of the 10 teams in FIA F3 ran squads in one or both of Top Speed's FRegional Middle East and F4 UAE series this year. One chief told Autosport that, with many of the current crop of Formula 2 drivers having missed out on competing in Macau in F3 during the COVID era, there could be high demand for seats and some degree of squad rotation to fit everybody in should all three categories make it onto the bill.

MARCUS SIMMONS

## Wolff in charge of female F4

### F1 ACADEMY

Susie Wolff has been appointed as managing director of the F1 Academy series for Formula 4 cars that aims to develop young female drivers.

Ex-Williams F1 test driver and DTM racer Wolff more recently served as the team principal and latterly CEO for the Venturi Formula E squad, and was a founder of the Dare To Be Different initiative, a programme conceived to boost female participation in motorsport.

In her new capacity, Wolff will report to F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali alongside FIA F2 and F3 boss Bruno Michel, whose company is organising F1 Academy.

The announcement of her appointment reads that Wolff will "be responsible for spearheading the development of female motorsport talent with a focus on creating a successful pathway to higher categories in the F1 pyramid".

"I believe the F1 Academy can represent something beyond racing," said Wolff. "It can inspire women around the world to follow their dreams and realise that with talent, passion and determination, there is no limit to what they can achieve."

The series has a mixed schedule of events where it will run alongside a variety of series. It kicks off at the Red Bull Ring on the last weekend of April before rounds in May at Valencia (with EuroNASCAR) and Barcelona (Formula Regional European). In June it supports the DTM at Zandvoort, and in July the WEC at Monza. Another event in July at Paul Ricard precedes a long pause before the finale supporting the United States Grand Prix in late October.

Campos Racing has in recent days become the first of the five teams to complete its driver line-up, with France's Lola Lovinfosse and Uruguayan Maite Caceres joining ex-W Series racer Nerea Marti in the line-up.

MATT KEW



BAGNALL/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Kovalainen buckles up  
during last year's Rally  
Japan WRC round



## Kovalainen joins electric series

### EXTREME E

Heikki Kovalainen has become the latest Formula 1 name to sign up for Extreme E ahead of the off-road series' third season of competition, which kicks off in Saudi Arabia this weekend. The Finn, who became the 100th winner of a world championship grand prix when he triumphed for McLaren at the Hungaroring in 2008, will link up with ex-F1 rival Jenson Button's JBXE squad alongside Norwegian Hedda Hosas.

Following his F1 career, Kovalainen won the Super GT title in Japan in 2016 and made a switch to rallying, claiming the Japanese national title last season. It was this pedigree that meant for Button it was

a "no brainer for the team to approach" the driver he replaced at McLaren for 2010.

"I'm always looking for new challenges and looking forward to giving this a try," remarked Kovalainen. "It'll be a steep learning curve no doubt but I'm up for it and hopefully we'll get up to speed quickly."

Meanwhile, the Sainz XE team has recruited two-time DTM champion Mattias Ekstrom to replace Carlos Sainz, who is still recovering from vertebral fractures sustained in his violent Dakar Rally crash. Ekstrom, Sainz's Audi rally raid team-mate, contested the inaugural XE season for the Abt Cupra team and managed a best finish of second. He will join incumbent Laia Sanz.

**JAMES NEWBOLD**

## ...as Hamilton makes big changes

### EXTREME E

Meanwhile, over at the Extreme E team of Lewis Hamilton, it's a case of hello Rodin Carlin and *au revoir* to reigning champion Sebastien Loeb.

X44 Vida Carbon Racing has formed a new partnership with the British single-seater powerhouse, which already has a history in electric motorsport after running Mahindra in the early days of Formula E.

Hamilton is using Extreme E as a vehicle to champion his

work on increasing diversity in the sport, led by The Hamilton Commission. Loeb's 2022 team-mate Cristina Gutierrez is therefore joined this year by Jamaican Fraser McConnell (right), a rallycross champion in the US who made his XE debut last year with the JBXE team.

Stephanie Travers, who in 2020 became the first black woman on an F1 podium as Mercedes' fluid engineer, is on board as deputy team principal under Rodin Carlin co-chief Stephanie Carlin.



### IN THE HEADLINES

#### LAMBO BIG GUNS TEAM UP...

The Iron Lynx Lamborghini team has announced its Pro class line-up for the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup this year. Factory drivers Mirko Bortolotti, Andrea Caldarelli and Jordan Pepper will race the Lambo Huracan EVO2 in the five-race series incorporating the Spa 24 Hours in July.

#### ...AS ENGEL MAKES SWITCH

The German GetSpeed Mercedes squad will field factory drivers Maro Engel, Luca Stolz and Fabian Schiller in the GTWCE enduros in 2023. Their Mercedes-AMG GT3 will be fielded under the title AlManar Racing by GetSpeed after the Omani sponsor's move from the Haupt Racing Team.

#### TOMCZYK'S NEW ABT ROLE

Ex-DTM champion Martin Tomczyk has become the motorsport director of Abt Sportsline. The German, who raced Audi machinery for Abt in the DTM from 2001-10, acted as second in command last year to Gerhard Berger at series promoter the ITR, before the DTM was taken over by the ADAC for 2023. Tomczyk will initially focus on Abt's GT3 activities in the DTM with Audi and the NLS with Lamborghini, before expanding to its electric racing projects.

#### EURO EXPATS IN STATES

Five drivers from the European scene were on the grid for the opening round of the IndyCar-supporting USF Pro 2000 series (formerly Indy Pro 2000) at St Petersburg last weekend. Ex-FIA F3 racers Francesco Pizzi and Reece Ushijima claimed best results from the double-header of fourth and fifth respectively, former F2 driver Lirim Zendeli also grabbed a fourth, while last year's GB3 runner-up Joel Granfors raced to eighth after failing to take part in qualifying due to running into the back of a stalled car at the green light. Ex-Formula Ford Festival winner Jonathan Browne is back for another year in the series and took a best of 10th.

#### A SPUR TO ACTION FOR F1

Formula 1 has signed a new 15-year tie-up with Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur that will feature the construction of a circuit for electric karts beneath the football stadium. It is set to become London's longest indoor kart circuit as part of a carbon-zero target for 2030.





# HOSPITALITY ON THE INSIDE TRACK

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# The best part of F1 2023?

*The performance of the Aston Martin/Fernando Alonso combination in Bahrain gives reason to believe that this year's headlines won't just be all about Red Bull supremacy*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

**“R**ed Bull... they should win every single race this season,” Mercedes’ George Russell reflected last Sunday at the Bahrain Grand Prix. But winning every race in a single campaign is still a huge challenge. Should Red Bull do that, it would achieve a unique and stunning piece of F1 history and the odds are stacked against it given such a feat has never been managed. Plus, there are reasons to expect things to be different at the changing track variants through the early part of the season.

Bahrain remains an outlier venue, with its abrasive track surfaces and high temperatures – even in the night sessions. And with Ferrari and Mercedes shedding peak downforce parts to match Red Bull’s typical straightline speed prowess, their tyre-degradation struggles were exacerbated over a stint. Indeed, the need not to stress the rears around the Sakhir track likely flattered Red Bull last weekend, given it proved it could win aplenty with an understeer balance on the earlier hefty version of the RB18 last year.

F1 next heads to Jeddah, where Ferrari’s quest for improved top speed should be realised. The SF-23s had the legs on the RB19s at the end of every Bahrain straight in qualifying, and the Saudi Arabian track is a high-speed blast on a very different surface that should mean fewer rear-tyre-life concerns. Heading onto Australia afterwards, the recent changes to the Albert Park layout mean good aerodynamic efficiency will be rewarded. And Ferrari also has a

**“It was wonderful to watch such brilliant drivers battle closely for so long and keep it clean too”**

history of succeeding in Melbourne anyway, even when facing big performance deficits elsewhere, such as against Mercedes during the ultra-high-downforce era.

But, of course, this all hypothetical – for now, it’s just as likely to become reality as a perfect Red Bull walkover. And if that does happen, F1 is going to need one hell of a major subplot to keep fans engaged without a title fight glory. Step forward, Fernando Alonso and his new Aston Martin team.

The AMR23 was the second quickest car last Sunday and, had it not been for Lance Stroll tagging his team-mate as Alonso tried to cut back against Lewis Hamilton’s surprise early pass at Bahrain’s famous Turn 4, things might have been closer with Red Bull than even the mighty Charles Leclerc was managing. Alonso is also adamant that there’s more to come from the Aston package, which

he claims is “95%” new compared to 2022’s ‘green Red Bull’ – a tag Max Verstappen’s squad hasn’t forgotten, judging by Sergio Perez’s press conference quip that it was “nice to see three Red Bull cars on the podium!” If that’s true, the AMR23 may well have a higher development ceiling compared to cars from teams deploying evolution designs such as Ferrari and Mercedes, which may be about to abandon what clearly doesn’t work, and Red Bull itself. That could make things more interesting down the line.

But for all his pumped-up radio messages and almost brutally happy hug with Aston owner Lawrence Stroll on the grid ahead of Sunday’s race, Alonso is sagely staying cautious when discussing what his team can achieve in 2023. His race in Bahrain wasn’t perfect – think those two wild Turn 4 slides while battling Hamilton and Carlos Sainz. In the first, he nearly dropped his car while booting on the power, which he put down to “getting used to the car” and things that “are not 100% tailor-made yet” in terms of needing to adapt to how the Aston delivers its Mercedes grunt differently to the Alpine/Renault package he was used to. It clearly does this very powerfully compared with the rest judging by the GPS telemetry traces in Bahrain, where the Aston was clocked punching off the slower corners. It also had excellent braking stability, which meant Alonso could generally brake later than any of his rivals.

Also, the Bahrain track surface may have flattered the tyre-massaging Aston pack. And the AMR23 is draggy, which meant it wasn’t a match for the Red Bulls, Ferraris or Mercedes in a straight line in Bahrain, and this forced Alonso to get creative with his passing. This was particularly the case with Hamilton, and it was wonderful to watch such brilliant drivers battle closely for so long and keep it clean too.

Back to the drag problem. This may temper Aston expectations at the higher-speed venues. And let’s not forget how good Red Bull was last weekend, with possibly more pace concealed given it was under no pressure. But even if at full whack Red Bull is rather untouchable in 2023, Alonso being around the top positions regularly would be box office for F1. And Aston’s leap up the pecking order is already providing inspiration to other long-midfield-mired squads hoping to one day do likewise.

In the post-race press conference, Alonso couldn’t help stating: “Only one team is willing to do whatever it takes to win.” It doesn’t take too much guesswork that his former squads Ferrari, Alpine and McLaren were drawing his ire, plus perhaps Mercedes too. This is Alonso, as interesting off-track as he is on it. And in what yet may be a long season of Verstappen/Red Bull success (not that that’s taking anything away from their excellent achievements), it could be just what F1 needs to keep 2023 stimulating. 🏁

➔ P18 BAHRAIN GP REPORT





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# An alternative Red Bull route

*Liam Lawson is poised to embark on his maiden season in Super Formula, hopeful that success in Japan's premier single-seater series will be the springboard into F1*

JAMIE KLEIN

**F**or the first time in at least three years, Super Formula will have a serious Formula 1 aspirant on the starting grid when the new season gets under way at Fuji next month. After two solid but inconclusive seasons in Formula 2, Liam Lawson is hoping to use a season dovetailing his Red Bull reserve duties with a programme in Japan to convince the energy drink firm to give him a chance to race for AlphaTauri in 2024.

The Kiwi conceded last year that, at the time Red Bull made the decision to look outside its own pool of juniors and hand its vacant race seat to Nyck de Vries, he hadn't made a compelling enough case with his results in F2 to replace Pierre Gasly. That's something he hopes to rectify in Japan, and so far the evidence suggests that he has the potential to be at the front of the field, much as Gasly was during his own one-year sojourn in Super Formula that preceded his graduation to F1 in the latter part of 2017.

Lawson now has four days of official pre-season testing under his belt, and finished the final one of those an encouraging fifth fastest and within half a second of the pace. With such limited experience, that's close enough to suggest that he can be upsetting the established order once the season begins in earnest, even if he still faces a steep learning curve.

Learning fast is a quality that Lawson has displayed in the past, notably by coming so close to the DTM title two years ago in his first season of GT3 competition. Indeed, according to his race engineer Tomo Koike, his style and capacity to adapt are reminiscent of Alex Palou, another foreign driver to have made a strong impression in Japan in recent seasons.

It's clear that Lawson is frustrated that he couldn't make a bigger impression in F2, where he placed third in the 2022 championship with four wins, albeit all in reversed-grid sprint races. But he is equally relishing the very different atmosphere of the Super Formula paddock, where the tendency is for the team to endeavour to adapt the car to the driver, rather than vice versa.

It's interesting to contrast Lawson's approach with that of Theo Pourchaire, who is understood to have held talks last year about replacing Sacha Fenestraz at Kondo Racing but ultimately opted to go for a third season in F2. Even if it makes his Red Bull reserve duties that much tougher, leaving F2 behind is something that Lawson is clear he wanted to do.

By heading to Japan, there's always the chance that he could be usurped in the pecking order, but the fact that Red Bull has so many of its junior drivers – no fewer than six, in fact – vying for attention in F2 this season could equally work in Lawson's favour.

Lawson has been placed at Team Mugen for this season, which is both a blessing and a curse – a blessing because for the past two seasons the team has been the strongest in the paddock, helping Tomoki Nojiri to back-to-back titles, but a curse because of the inevitable comparisons that will be made between Lawson and the two-time champion.

“Coming here is a big challenge and it's not realistic to expect to [beat Nojiri] straight away,” admits Lawson. “Everyone that comes here struggles initially, so for me it's about breaking that barrier as soon as possible and deliver as early as possible. The first races will be tough. I am here to win, but I'm not expecting to do that early on. I still need to learn.”

## “Leaving F2 behind is something that Lawson is clear he wanted to do”

That said, Lawson has described his new team-mate as being “extremely nice and extremely helpful” so far in helping him get to grips with Super Formula. Indeed, he could hardly hope for a better environment in which to flourish for his rookie campaign in Japan.

Mugen's ability to analyse and understand data is unrivalled, and it's also among the more ‘gaijin-friendly’ teams. His race engineer Koike, who helped Ukyo Sasahara to two race wins last year, is a graduate of Oxford Brookes University and speaks very good English.

Those aspects will be especially crucial this season as Super Formula introduces an updated chassis, the SF23, which features revised aerodynamics designed to decrease downforce levels by an estimated 8% in the hope of creating better racing. A new car can sometimes mean a new competitive order, as was the case the last time the championship introduced one back in 2019. But the indications so far are that Nojiri and Mugen will remain the target for the rest of the field, including Lawson.

Learning circuits quickly will also be key for Lawson, since all of his testing so far has taken place at Suzuka. He'll be tackling Fuji for the very first time when the track plays host to the opening two instalments of the nine-race campaign on 8-9 April.

From an international perspective at least, all eyes will be on Lawson as he begins his quest to prove that he belongs in F1 – and, at the same time, that Super Formula can be just as good a stepping stone to the pinnacle of motorsport as any other series. 🏁



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# YOUR SAY

*I fully support anyone in a position of influence to stand up and highlight inequalities within society. I think if they chose not to do so they'd be failing in their public roles*

**GLENN FIRSTBROOK**

## Those with high profiles are right to speak out

In regards to S Valiente's letter (Your say, 23 February), I fully support anyone in a position of influence to stand up and highlight inequalities within society.

Personally, I think if they chose not to do so they would be failing in their public roles. Just because they are rich does not mean that they should be quiet. They're in a position of privilege. They should speak louder because they have the ability to do so and get people to engage with issues.

**Glenn Firstbrook**

**By email**

## Put a stop to the Formula 1 closed shop

I don't like the lock-out attempts of established Formula 1 teams. Where would some of them be if this was in force not so long ago?

And what if Lotus wanted to come back? Who would want to stop that? For me F1 is not the same without Lotus anyway, but that's another matter.

I'm hoping the FIA puts a stop to this closed shop. It's reminiscent of the Super League soccer idea.

No, keep it open to all. Viva the garagistas!

**Robert Futcher**

**Chester**

## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Lewis Hamilton said he would "keep trying to be a positive light" for the team after Mercedes' painful struggles in Bahrain. Report, p18

ETHERINGTON

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# RACE CENTRE





Joyous Alonso  
joins the Red Bull  
duo on the podium for  
the “perfect start” to  
his Aston alliance

FORMULA 1

# ALONSO PROVIDES THE SPARKS AS VERSTAPPEN DOMINATES

*The Red Bull RB19s were on another level at the season opener,  
but Aston Martin’s 41-year-old star saved the day*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY



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Perez and Sainz are forced wide into the pitlane exit in the jostling at the start behind Verstappen

“It was quite straightforward.” Max Verstappen succinctly summed up his 36th Formula 1 victory, a crushing display from his Red Bull squad in the Bahrain opener to the 2023 season. For the world champion, there was little to worry about over 57 laps of the Sakhir circuit, but the nature of his and his team’s display left their rivals reeling. Because it was all very 2022 – Red Bull in control, Ferrari’s reliability failing, Mercedes badly off the pace – albeit with one new green podium shoot.

The start was Verstappen’s only real moment of peril. Ferrari claimed that it had stopped Charles Leclerc from attempting a second soft-tyre flier at the end of qualifying to give the Monegasque, who has clearly retained his searing speed to bother Red Bull over one lap, a brand-new set of the red-walled C3 Pirellis to use at the start.

Leclerc expected this to provide “a bit more grip” that he could use to get among the Red Bulls ahead, with Verstappen heading team-mate Sergio Perez on the front row. And it worked. When the lights went out, Verstappen shot ahead and swung right to cover any threat behind on the inside run to the Turn 1 right-hand hairpin. Behind him, Leclerc was quickly surging after the Dutchman and getting alongside the second Red Bull of Perez, whose team boss Christian Horner explained was “on the dirty side of the grid that benefited the brand-new tyre off the start for Charles”.

Perez said “Charles was a little too aggressive”, and indeed Leclerc’s jink as they both moved to stay in Verstappen’s slipstream did send Perez right, into the pitlane exit. That pushed the following Carlos Sainz wider still, sparks from all cars flashing wildly. But Perez had also dropped his revs fractionally just before the lights went out, which appeared to contribute to his sluggish getaway.

It all meant Perez was condemned to spending the race’s opening stint behind Leclerc, while Verstappen simply romped clear. Over the 11 laps that followed the first tour, which Verstappen ended with a 1.2-second advantage, the leader pulled clear of Leclerc by 0.68s each time. On lap 10, even as he was complaining about a downshift problem causing minor locking at the rear, Verstappen added 0.7s to his lead.

By the time Leclerc stopped to switch his much-discussed soft tyres for new hards on lap 13, the Ferrari driver was nearly 10s behind

Verstappen, with Perez ominously just 1.45s adrift. “He was very strong on that first stint and every time I could get close to him, I was just taking out my tyres,” Perez explained, Red Bull feeling that the added freshness of Leclerc’s starting softs also gave him a tyre-degradation boost across the first stint.

While Verstappen was brought in the lap after Leclerc, the leader taking a second set of softs as he did so, Red Bull waited until lap 17 to service Perez with the same strategy. This meant that the Mexican emerged with a 4s deficit to Leclerc – Sainz by this point nearly 12s in arrears of the lead Ferrari and 22s behind Verstappen – but the Red Bulls were perfectly suited to keeping the softer rubber alive while being rapid at the same time. “We focused on the race more than quali and that paid its dividends,” said Horner. “We were able to run on the softer compound, particularly in the middle part of the race, and still have the durability.”

Perez used his soft tyres to close the gap to Leclerc in six laps. Even though Ferrari informed Leclerc that the hards were lasting better than expected across the field, his briefly raised pace following that radio call on lap 24 wasn’t enough. On lap 26, Perez used DRS down the main straight to get close enough to the Ferrari’s rear to make a move. He went through on the inside of Turn 1 in a fairly simple move, though a late one, with Leclerc leading past the DRS detection line and so missing out on using the system on the second straight, which made his look to hit back at the inside of Turn 4 all the more speculative.

“I was as confident as I could be being one second off the pace, which is not really confident to be honest,” Leclerc said of his race with Perez. “Red Bull seems to have found something really big in their race pace...”

The coarse track surface meant that once again this event would be a two-stop affair, with Leclerc again the first of the leaders to pit – for more hard tyres in his case – on lap 33. By this point, he was 8.2s adrift of Perez, who in turn had a 14.0s gap to Verstappen and knew that “Max was just too far down the line” in terms of any remaining hopes for a lead battle. Red Bull’s victory was already complete. “The fact that they were able to do a two soft [strategy], [then] one hard when we have to do two hard, one soft, for sure it’s a game killer and we have to improve on





Perez's sub-optimal start left him chasing Leclerc in the opening stint



MAUGER

SUTTON

this,” said Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur of Leclerc’s key tyre-degradation weakness against his rivals.

It was clear that this was killing Leclerc’s pace from the off against Verstappen, despite Vasseur claiming “we were there, even to be able to match them the first 15 laps”; and that Perez was biding his time behind. Of the critical difference on tyre tactics lamented by Ferrari, Horner said that Red Bull had “discussed many different scenarios” but felt “both drivers were particularly happy on the soft tyre”. “We only had one set of hard tyres, so we didn’t want to expose ourselves had there been a safety car around half distance,” he added.

Had that hypothetical scenario somehow happened, and Leclerc had been armed with fresh hard tyres against Red Bull returning to the softs after running the hards in the middle stint, it likely wouldn’t

**“I WAS AS CONFIDENT AS I COULD BE BEING ONE SECOND OFF THE PACE, WHICH IS NOT REALLY CONFIDENT”**

have made a jot of difference to the results of the top two positions given what happened on lap 40.

Seven laps into his third stint, Leclerc suddenly slowed through the Turn 12 fast right. His drive gone, Leclerc crept almost silently through Turn 13, then pulled off and retired a short way down the penultimate straight. “I couldn’t do anything after [the car shutdown],” said Leclerc, who had seen his SF-23’s energy store and control electronics changed ahead of the race. Almost foreshadowing what was to come, he’d also climbed out of his cockpit at the back of the grid following the pre-race reconnoitering laps and walked ahead of the Ferrari mechanics pushing it to his third-place grid spot. Again, all very 2022.

“Honestly, we don’t know yet what’s happened exactly,” said Vasseur afterwards. “There was an issue in the morning and we changed the part. We don’t know where it’s coming from and we have the investigation soon. We never expected to have something like this, because it’s the first time that we had it and we didn’t face the same issue at all during the 6000-7000km that we did with the engine in the last week [during testing] with the three teams [Ferrari plus engine customers Haas and Alfa Romeo] and didn’t develop the same issue on the dyno.” >>



Leclerc's stoppage brought about a brief virtual safety car activation, after which the Red Bulls rolled home unchallenged, Verstappen winning by 12s. "We basically just maintained the gap throughout the race," concluded Perez. "So, I had no chance to fight for the win. But today was all about minimising the bad start."

Behind the dominant leaders and Leclerc, there was an excellent race — one that also featured a recovery after a shocking start.

There had been immense interest in how Fernando Alonso would get on during his Aston Martin debut. The Spaniard had shone in testing and was so strong on a race simulation run during FP2 that

## "I WAS JUST TRYING TO GET TO THE END. BUT IT WAS STILL JUST A LOT OF FUN TO DRIVE THE CAR"

he got very close to Verstappen's average, and at that point left the mighty Mercedes feeling it had underestimated exactly how good its engine customer could be this year.

The fuel adjustment understanding from the practice running was that Red Bull had a "substantial" advantage over Aston, according to team principal Mike Krack. That proved correct in the race, and it may actually be even more considering "we don't know how much management that Red Bull had to do and did", he added. But Aston really could take the fight to the other 'Class A' squads it has surely now joined. This was clear in qualifying, when Alonso took fifth behind Sainz and lined up ahead of the pair of Mercedes, with George Russell heading Lewis Hamilton.

When the lights went out, Hamilton jumped his slow-starting team-mate — Russell, like Perez, on the less grippy side of the track — and followed Alonso through the opening corners. But with Alonso, in the words of Krack, possibly "struggling" with "warm-up or whatever", Hamilton was able to mount an attack on his former McLaren team-mate.

The Mercedes dived ahead on the inside line at Turn 4, with Alonso appearing to cede ground in preparation for powering out of the open hairpin and responding as Hamilton swung towards the heavily monitored track limit on the outside. Here, Alonso felt he "got lucky", but was also unlucky, as team-mate Lance Stroll "braked late to stay in front of George", the second Mercedes attacking the second Aston to the outside. "Fernando went for a cutback on Hamilton at Turn 4 and it was just really bad timing," Stroll continued. "We came together..."

They did indeed, Stroll's left-front tagging Alonso's right-rear and somehow not giving it a puncture or spearing the lead Aston off track.



Nevertheless, Alonso's lost momentum meant Russell could power past and he ran sixth behind Sainz, Hamilton and the dominant leaders.

This order held until the first round of pitstops, which was kicked off by Hamilton coming in on lap 12, and on the next tour Sainz and Russell stopping behind Leclerc. Aston left Alonso out for an extra lap, with the Spaniard taking advantage of Russell's slow left-rear change and so emerging from his service for new hard tyres ahead, just as the Mercedes was diving past Kevin Magnussen's Haas into Turn 1.

They both then had to pass Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas, who had demonstrated the undercut's considerable power by using his lap 11 stop to briefly jump ahead. Stroll had to do likewise — he'd pitted last of all the leaders bar Perez — and the new order held until the second round of stops.

This was again kicked off by Mercedes bringing Hamilton in — not that he wanted it. But the Black Arrows squad had recognised that Alonso, once through the tyre-management phase required for a longer stint around this tyre-demanding venue, was an undercut threat. He'd erased Hamilton's post-pitstop 6.2s gap and was just 2.1s behind at the start of lap 30. When Hamilton therefore came in, Aston left Alonso out for four more tours, during which Stroll returned to the spotlight.

The Canadian had followed Hamilton in and so was able to use the undercut advantage to jump Russell when the Briton emerged from his own second stop for hard tyres one lap later (Sainz also stopped for a second time at this same stage up ahead). Stroll's pace (and Alonso's too) against the Mercedes duo all race had been aided by the black cars suffering from more extreme tyre degradation. This was exacerbated by the W14s running their low-drag rear wing — needed, according to team boss Toto Wolff, because "the single lap pace was just not there"

Hamilton enjoyed "little tussle" with Alonso, but it was only ever going to end in Aston driver's favour







with the higher-drag, downforce-boosting arrangement.

By using DRS on the second straight on lap 32, Stroll blasted alongside Russell and used his Aston's superior braking and apex confidence — features on both green machines all weekend — to sweep ahead on the outside line into Turn 4.

The move got Stroll into seventh, which became sixth after Leclerc's retirement. Stroll noted, understandably, that the pain from his broken right wrist "was the biggest limiting factor in the last 20 laps." "I was struggling to just turn in with confidence without the pain," he added. But Stroll did not, as he had in Friday practice, need to take his left hand off his steering wheel to support his right wrist in certain corners thanks to Aston upping the "assist level on the wheel a little bit for me. I was just trying to get to the end. But it was still just a lot of fun to drive the car."

That had been Alonso's feeling all through testing. And in the race's final third, he showed how impressively he could use the AMR23. He'd been left out until lap 34, which he thought was not long enough in his quest to beat Hamilton, before Alonso then started his third stint on the same hard compound that all the leading finishers took to the end.

After resuming 1.0s behind Hamilton, he was all over his old sparring partner in just two tours. On lap 37, Alonso used DRS to muscle his way to Hamilton's inside at Turn 4. But, just when it seemed that the place was his, Alonso slid wildly, his rear stepping out so badly that he had to fully cross his arms to avoid a spin. This, plus lifting off the throttle, allowed Hamilton back in front as Alonso gathered things up.

On the next lap, after locking up briefly at Turn 1 and then feigning inside and out at Turn 4 to no avail, Alonso powered up towards the rear of Hamilton exiting the downhill Turn 8 hairpin. "You normally >>



## QUALIFYING



"It was the sandbag!" Max Verstappen joked with Charles Leclerc as the regular 2022 qualifying toppers faced the 2023 Bahrain Grand Prix post-qualifying press conference, the Dutchman referring to the pieces of Ferrari wheel-cover fairing that had fallen off Leclerc's car at the start of his first Q1 lap and caused a brief red flag. After Red Bull had dominated testing here, Ferrari struck a notably downbeat tone about its chances with its car reconfigured to be quicker in a straight line. Then, when Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso got among and indeed led the Red Bulls during the three practice sessions, Ferrari wasn't expected to be a pole threat.

But as Verstappen shot to 2023's first pole, leading Leclerc by 0.103 seconds after the opening Q3 runs, it was the red team that came into focus. First, Leclerc insisted that his Q1 issue "was all fine" after Ferrari had fixed his right-front during the red flag. Then, with engine modes finally turned up and nowhere left to conceal performance potential, the best qualifier of 2022 gave Verstappen quite the near-run thing on that first effort.

Verstappen lost time with his rears spinning up as he hit the gas out of Turn 1, which cost him momentum running onto the next straight. All through qualifying, and in a complete reversal to this session a year ago, the red car was quicker to the end of every straight, with Verstappen typically better on traction. But it was in the corners where the Red Bull gained its advantage, again the opposite of 2022.

But there was to be no thrilling Q3 climax battle between the pair. Leclerc climbed out of his car ahead of the second runs to save "new tyres to put all the chances on our side [for the race stints]". With Leclerc absent and Carlos Sainz not getting as close in the other Ferrari, Perez edged in front to lock out the front row for Red Bull.

Verstappen went 0.189s quicker to set pole at 1m29.708s, 0.85s up on Leclerc's 2022 pole. He avoided his Turn 1 slip this time and showed mighty stability through the rapid Turns 5/6/7 complex and the swooping Turn 11 to shade Perez, who also had to catch a final-corner snap of oversteer. But the Mexican beat Verstappen's first-run time, meaning the Dutchman had to make that second step. Verstappen still wasn't happy because he "couldn't really find the comfortable balance I had in testing".

Behind, Alonso followed Sainz in fifth, feeling that "in practice, we knew that we were around third or fifth or fourth [on pure pace], we didn't know exactly what Ferrari was doing". The Mercedes drivers took sixth and seventh, the focus immediately turning to how soon the W14's aerodynamic platform will change if it's ever to reach Red Bull's level in this new era.

**"THE BEST QUALIFIER OF 2022 GAVE VERSTAPPEN QUITE THE NEAR-RUN THING ON THAT FIRST EFFORT"**



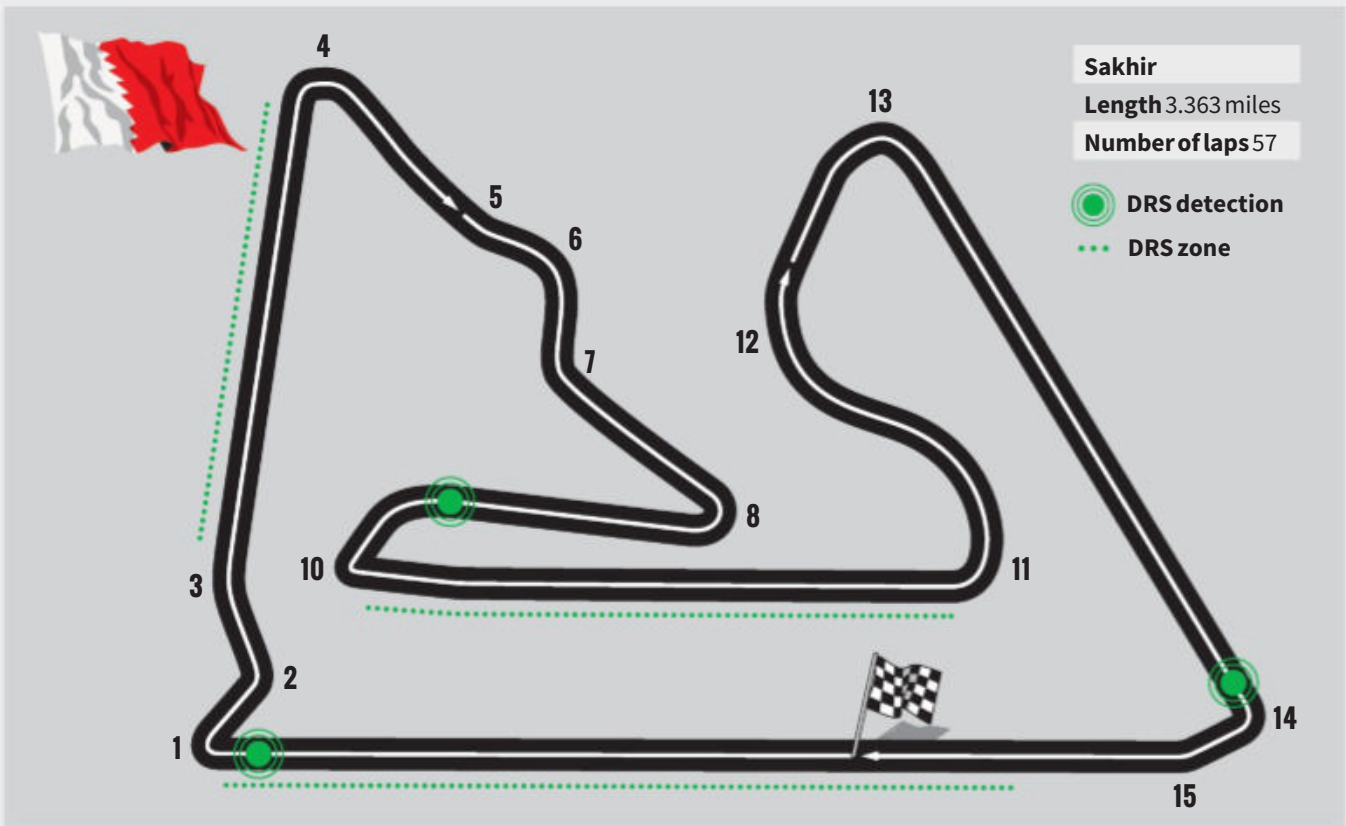


TRACKSIDE VIEW

Without doubt, first practice for the Bahrain Grand Prix presents a unique challenge for everyone involved and observing too. Having spent nearly half of the previous week pounding around the same venue, the teams and drivers understand the track's demands on their new machines, while the split day/night timetable means there's little action for the fans watching on TV (and the few putting up with the blazing 30C heat in the grandstands).

But, there's always *something* to learn from an F1 practice session. For this Autosport reporter, last Friday's FP1 running was all about studying the critical and complex Turn 4 open right-hander at the end of the second straight. It's a test for the drivers, who must try to hold speed through a corner that rolls away with the downward slope from the apex hillcrest, sending them slithering wide and towards the controversial track limits area over the kerbs and run-off beyond. A well-balanced car can sweep in with a single motion, while an unplanted machine here will buck and slide. As ever on the coarse Bahrain surface, the drivers must balance negotiating the corner as quickly as possible while not wasting tyre life that will be required most in the rapid curves at the end of the second sector. Today, strong crosswinds are adding an extra test.

There's little early action from



“THE REAR IS KICKING OUT EVERY TIME, BUT WITH LITTLE IMPACT ON THE TIMESHEETS”

our vantage point, but soon the Haas and Alfa Romeo drivers are shooting past. Each time through, Kevin Magnussen and F1 returnee Nico Hulkenberg are flirting most with a track-limits infringement, their left floor edges rubbing audibly on the exit kerbs, demonstrating their jeopardy.

Inevitably, once the Red Bulls

finally appear for more than installation running at the near-halfway point of the one-hour session, they are poised – even in conditions 7C hotter than will be experienced in FP2 nearly four hours later. The Ferrari drivers can match their rotation confidence, but as runs go on they seem to be losing rear-end grip quicker.

Ominously for Mercedes, both Lewis Hamilton and George Russell are having to regularly jink left over the exit kerbs, their W14s lacking rear stability and appearing rather a handful. The same is true for Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin,

which he nearly drops when correcting a huge sideways wobble just before 30 minutes have been completed. Indeed, the green machine's rear is kicking out every time through, but with little impact on the timesheets as Alonso ends up in second place, 0.4 seconds behind pacesetter Sergio Perez, at least making good on his commanding braking confidence on the entry to Turn 4 and the Aston's strong mechanical grip. Lance Stroll is calmer overall, but his running is generally on higher fuel in FP1, Aston easing him back in after his wrist injury.



Friskiness of Alonso's Aston Martin appears no hindrance to his pace

ALEXKALINAUCKAS





THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Verstappen dominated in Bahrain for “quite straightforward” 36th F1 win

pass into Turn 1 or into Turn 4,” Alonso later explained. “[But] we could not match their straightline speed.”

So, he had to try something different. Alonso chased Hamilton up the rise ahead of the plunging Turns 9/10 double-left complex and then “played a surprise move” on the Mercedes. This was completed by releasing the brakes and sending his Aston on a narrower line to the Turn 10 apex, where Hamilton was finally bested.

“I enjoyed the little tussle that we had and I knew he was going to come by due to the way he caught me,” the seven-time world champion reflected. “He was in a different league at the time, performance-wise.”

Despite their battle, both Alonso and Hamilton were now only 2.7s behind Sainz. This was down to 2.2s when Leclerc’s stoppage up ahead triggered the VSC two tours later. Sainz had been 9.2s behind his teammate before Leclerc retired, with “degradation on Carlos’s car the main problem”, according to Vasseur, who also felt that Leclerc’s new soft tyres at the start gave him an extra edge on the second Ferrari.

But Sainz concluded that, despite all the efforts gone into improving

## “AS SOON AS WE PUSH, WE GO BACKWARDS. THAT DOESN’T LEAVE YOU A LOT OF MARGIN”

on tyre management at his squad over the winter, “it’s about as bad as it was last year”. “It’s just that the other two cars [Red Bull and Aston] for some reason found something that means they degrade half,” Sainz added. “You could just see how much Fernando and Max could push on the tyres and how much we needed to save. As soon as we push, we go backwards. That doesn’t leave you a lot of margin.”

With that in mind and Alonso now bearing down on what had suddenly become the final podium berth, Sainz was concerned that his hard tyres wouldn’t make the finish when Ferrari requested he “protect position” against his compatriot. On lap 45, three laps after the VSC had ended, Alonso attacked. Just like with Hamilton, he knew that the Aston’s extra drag meant he had to wait for Turn 4. But when he sent the move to the inside of Sainz, another sudden snap left meant he clipped the Ferrari’s right-rear and lost momentum.

Sainz, who would hold on to beat Hamilton to the flag by just 2.9s, felt the contact but concluded it was “just a little touch”. In any case, just seven corners later, Alonso finally pushed his way by with a forceful move into Turn 11, benefiting from the shorter back straight meaning the Ferrari’s greater top speed couldn’t be brought to bear.

Those two Turn 4 slips, Alonso did his best to not fully explain, were down to the Aston “not 100% tailor-made yet”. That “getting used to the car, getting used to the driving input, feedback from the steering wheel and power assistance” was knowledge he still lacked and meant that when he stamped on the gas out of Turn 4, often the rear would buckle. Indeed, it had been doing so at the same spot throughout opening practice.

But the slides couldn’t take the shine off Alonso’s 99th F1 podium visit, and he concluded that his result was “a perfect start for this project”. He had, however, finished 38.6s behind the victorious Verstappen. 🏆



Alonso says he’s still getting used to the car, so expect more of this...

MAUGER

NEXT F1 REPORT

SAUDI ARABIAN GP  
23 MARCH ISSUE



## WILLIAMS DEFIES 2023 EXPECTATIONS

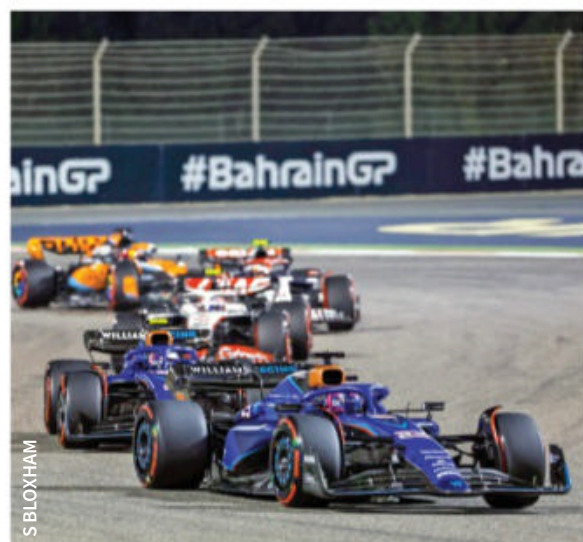
Despite Williams's downbeat expectations heading into the 2023 season, Alex Albon got the team off the mark in the opening race with 10th place, fending off Yuki Tsunoda in the closing stages.

Following a front-wing breakage in qualifying, Albon's hopes of making it into Q3 were dashed, but he quickly fired his way onto the cusp of the top 10 after dispatching Zhou Guanyu and Nico Hulkenberg.

When Lando Norris ailed and Esteban Ocon pitted for the first time, Albon's strategy was enough to break into the points, and he held his own thanks to Williams's top speed largely nullifying his rivals' DRS assistance. Pierre Gasly got enough of a tow into Turn 1 to move past on lap 42, but the chasing Tsunoda had no answer to the Anglo-Thai.

Logan Sargeant enjoyed a strong debut in the second Williams, putting a bold move on Tsunoda around the outside of Turn 4 as he followed his team-mate's lead through the early phases. Although the Japanese emerged ahead through the initial stops, Sargeant didn't put a foot wrong en route to a 12th-placed finish.

"I absolutely loved every second of my debut race," said the American. "The first time going off the line was special. I'm proud of the team; I think we outperformed everything we expected coming from testing."

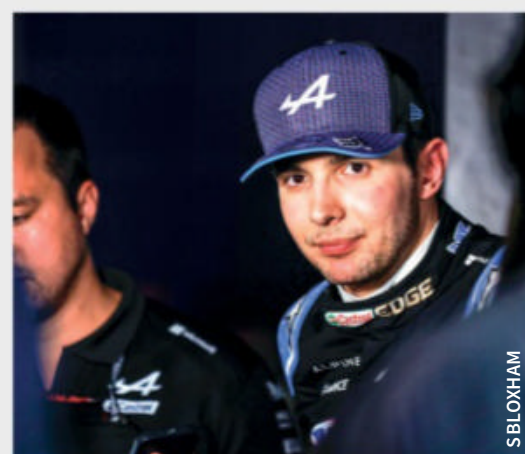


## Ocon's race of comedy errors

Esteban Ocon endured a wretched opening to the 2023 season, in which he picked up three penalties over the course of the race before he was mercifully brought in to retire the Alpine early.

The first of his transgressions occurred right at the start; the Frenchman had parked too far to the right-hand side of his grid marker, his right-front tyre visibly over the painted boundary. Therefore, he was awarded a five-second penalty to serve in his opening pitstop, which set the ball rolling in the comedy of errors he had to endure.

Ocon had to serve that penalty in his first pitstop, with the rules stating that the mechanics must not touch the car for five seconds, but the Alpine squad proved too trigger-happy in their bid to replace Ocon's front wing. The FIA adjudged that the team began working on the car 0.4s too soon and that the penalty had been incorrectly served, prompting a further penalty. This time, it was a 10s hit: five seconds was considered still outstanding from the first



penalty, with another five added on for the failure to serve it.

"It was just a timing issue," said Alpine principal Otmar Szafnauer. "We have a system that counts down in the mechanics' ears to tell them when they can start. And the system started the countdown 0.4s early."

On his way out of the pits during that stop, Ocon was also found to have surpassed the 80km/h (50mph) speed limit by 0.1km/h, earning a third penalty for his troubles.

"Today was not our day," he lamented. "We'll take it on the chin and look forward to the next race."

**"I WAS GOING THROUGH MY TYRES LIKE A HOT KNIFE THROUGH BUTTER"**

Nico Hulkenberg, following his first-lap front-wing breakage that placed him on a heady descent through the order from 10th on the grid







## GASLY CHARGES THROUGH FROM THE BACK FOR ALPINE

Pierre Gasly enacted a strong recovery drive from the back of the grid to claim ninth for Alpine, making an early pitstop count and leaning on the powerful undercut in Bahrain to make up ground.

He chalked off AlphaTauri's Nyck de Vries at the start, and then swept around the outside of Kevin Magnussen on the following tour at Turn 4. Locked in a DRS train behind Zhou Guanyu, Gasly cut his losses and pitted on lap nine, which placed him to the back of the field, but the undercut strategy pushed him into the midfield. His second stop on lap 25 ultimately got him ahead of Yuki Tsunoda and onto the back of Alex Albon, who he dispatched for what became ninth place.

The Frenchman ran out of time to mount an assault on Valtteri Bottas for eighth, the two separated by 1.1 seconds at the end.

## Bottas scores for Alfa as Zhou grabs fastest lap

After making up four places on the first lap, Valtteri Bottas converted 12th on the grid into a four-point haul from Bahrain amid a race he described as "a bit quiet at times" once he had made his early moves.

The Finn grabbed the inside line into the first corner to ease past Nico Hulkenberg and Esteban Ocon, and showed Lando Norris the door on the exit of Turn 3 in a lightning start to proceedings. At the following corner, Bottas found more fortune following Lance Stroll's contact with Fernando Alonso, and pounced on the recovering Canadian to shuffle up to eighth. Stroll captured Bottas's position with DRS on the fifth lap,

but the Alfa Romeo driver's 11th-lap stop handed him the undercut over Alonso and George Russell.

With faster cars at their disposal, the chasing duo put Bottas back in his place, and he eventually faced a lonely race to cross the line in eighth despite a looming Pierre Gasly threat.

Team-mate Zhou Guanyu endured a slower start to the race and dropped to 17th. He made up ground through the stops to sit with the Williamses and AlphaTauris in the midfield, but was called in two laps from home for soft tyres to take the fastest lap point from Gasly. Zhou complied, logging a 1m33.996s, but his 16th-place finish was not eligible for the point on offer.



### Q&A

#### ANDREA STELLA McLAREN TEAM PRINCIPAL

##### What was the issue with Oscar Piastri's car?

The steering wheel change didn't fix the problem because the electronic damage is further down the line around the steering column. It was probably a problem with the harness. We are investigating.

##### And Lando Norris's issue?

There was a pneumatic pressure leak on Lando's car. We discovered this leak relatively soon in the race. And then we knew that it was possible only



to do 10, 11 laps each time before having to refill. We decided to stay in the race, to try and stay at least within one lap from the leader within the last

10 laps. Then if there's a safety car, try and see if there was an opportunity. We did six stops.

##### Are there any positives to take from Bahrain?

I think the most positive element today is that without issues Lando would have been a strong contender for points. The pace of the car in the race was almost beyond expectation. In the race we saw some reward of the work we did over the winter of trying to improve the interaction of the car with the tyres. This was certainly a strong position on Lando's side, but also Oscar actually was having good degradation in the first stint.

He overtook cars. It was a very tight race so we could have been in the points with two cars.

##### Limited testing, now missing a full race distance. How damaging is that?

In terms of preparation for the next races, on Lando it was as valuable as a normal race. And even for the pitcrew, because they had quite a bit of practice. On Oscar's side, certainly a bit of a disruption because we do see that session after session, Oscar keeps improving. The first stint he has done in the race is by far the best long run he has done so far, because he keeps improving every session he does.



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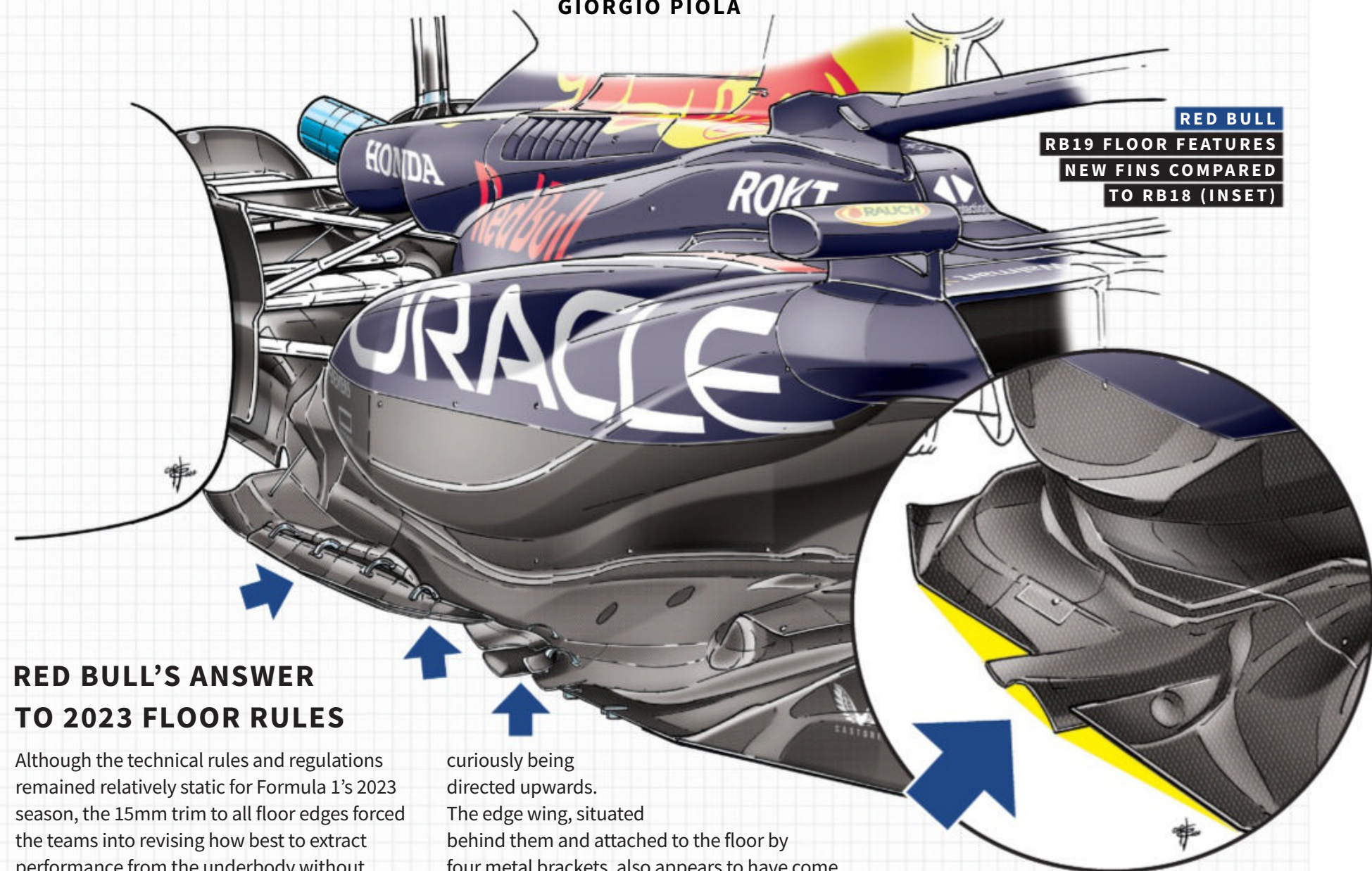
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# DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA



## RED BULL'S ANSWER TO 2023 FLOOR RULES

Although the technical rules and regulations remained relatively static for Formula 1's 2023 season, the 15mm trim to all floor edges forced the teams into revising how best to extract performance from the underbody without running their cars so close to the floor. The innovations underneath naturally remain obscured, but there have been a few different approaches to the edge of the floor to help provide a seal to ensure the airflow expansion underneath can be left relatively undisturbed.

Red Bull's RB19 features a collection of small fins, and their camber suggests that airflow is

curiously being directed upwards.

The edge wing, situated behind them and attached to the floor by four metal brackets, also appears to have come back into fashion and seems to have offered more tools for the aerodynamicists to play with.

Although the cuts to the floor geometry will have impacted performance, this appears to have been offset considerably by the understanding of the ground-effects aerodynamics. Max Verstappen's 1m29.708s pole time in Bahrain was almost a second

clear of Charles Leclerc's from last season, underlining the gains made despite those curbs to the underbody aerodynamics. The drawing also shows the differing size of the undercut in the RB19's sidepods over last year's car, as Red Bull has been able to sculpt them more tightly.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**

## ASTON MARTIN PUTS OWN STAMP ON RED BULL-STYLE CONCEPT

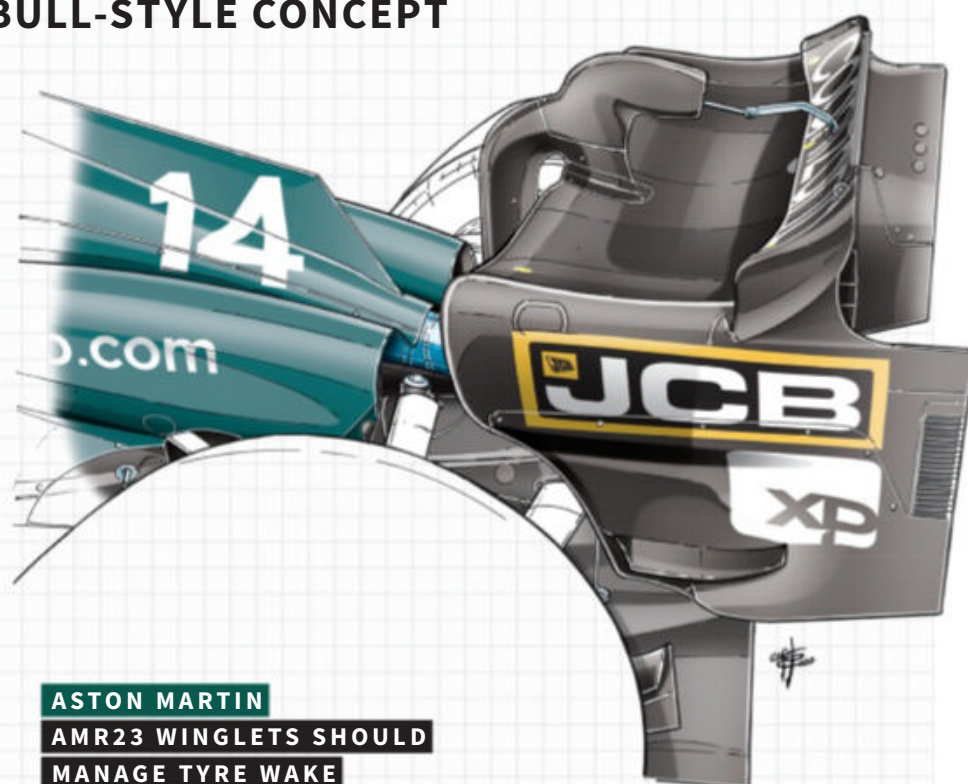
Already vying for the plaudits as the most improved team, Aston Martin has developed a car a cut above its effort from last season, with Fernando Alonso's podium in Bahrain demonstrating the AMR23's pace and potential. Under the technical stewardship of ex-Red Bull aerodynamicist Dan Fallows, Aston Martin's new charger features a revised aero package that has earned backhanded compliments from his previous team.

Red Bull boss Christian Horner congratulated the team on its podium, stating: "I think it is flattering to see the resemblance of that car to ours", as advisor Helmut Marko suggested the

technical figures that followed Fallows along the A5 had benefited from photographic memories.

Potshots aside, Aston Martin has been able to put its own spin on a similar concept, with a few small details to assist the car. By creating a slight indent in the rear wing endplate, Aston's engineers could affix a small winglet behind the rear tyre, which can help control some of the turbulent airflow pouring off the rear wheel. It's a minor detail but shows how aerodynamicists are able to create space for themselves amid the tight regulatory boxes to manipulate the airflow around the car.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



**ASTON MARTIN AMR23 WINGLETS SHOULD MANAGE TYRE WAKE**



20 Gasly #10  
1m32.181s

18 Piastri #81  
1m32.101s

16 Sargeant #2  
1m31.652s

14 Tsunoda #22  
1m32.510s

12 Bottas #77  
1m31.443s

19 de Vries #21  
1m32.121s

17 Magnussen #20  
1m31.892s

15 Albon #23  
no Q2 time

13 Zhou #24  
1m31.473s

11 Norris #4  
1m31.381s

FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2			FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Perez	1m32.758s	1	Alonso	1m30.907s	1	Alonso	1m32.340s
2	Alonso	1m33.196s	2	Verstappen	1m31.076s	2	Verstappen	1m32.345s
3	Verstappen	1m33.375s	3	Perez	1m31.078s	3	Perez	1m32.446s
4	Norris	1m34.165s	4	Leclerc	1m31.367s	4	Hamilton	1m32.555s
5	Leclerc	1m34.257s	5	Hulkenberg	1m31.376s	5	Leclerc	1m32.624s
6	Stroll	1m34.298s	6	Stroll	1m31.450s	6	Russell	1m32.731s
7	Magnussen	1m34.402s	7	Gasly	1m31.475s	7	Stroll	1m32.919s
8	Zhou	1m34.575s	8	Hamilton	1m31.543s	8	Sainz	1m32.945s
9	Bottas	1m34.689s	9	Norris	1m31.570s	9	Piastri	1m33.045s
10	Hamilton	1m34.917s	10	Zhou	1m31.586s	10	Gasly	1m33.064s
11	Russell	1m34.966s	11	Ocon	1m31.608s	11	Ocon	1m33.116s
12	Piastri	1m34.997s	12	Bottas	1m31.793s	12	Zhou	1m33.180s
13	Tsunoda	1m35.015s	13	Russell	1m31.882s	13	Norris	1m33.202s
14	Hulkenberg	1m35.043s	14	Sainz	1m31.956s	14	Magnussen	1m33.381s
15	Ocon	1m35.105s	15	Piastri	1m32.024s	15	Hulkenberg	1m33.423s
16	de Vries	1m35.402s	16	Magnussen	1m32.110s	16	Tsunoda	1m33.475s
17	Gasly	1m35.455s	17	Albon	1m32.440s	17	Bottas	1m33.629s
18	Sargeant	1m35.749s	18	Tsunoda	1m32.525s	18	Sargeant	1m33.665s
19	Albon	1m36.018s	19	de Vries	1m32.605s	19	Albon	1m33.882s
20	Sainz	1m36.072s	20	Sargeant	1m32.749s	20	de Vries	1m34.082s

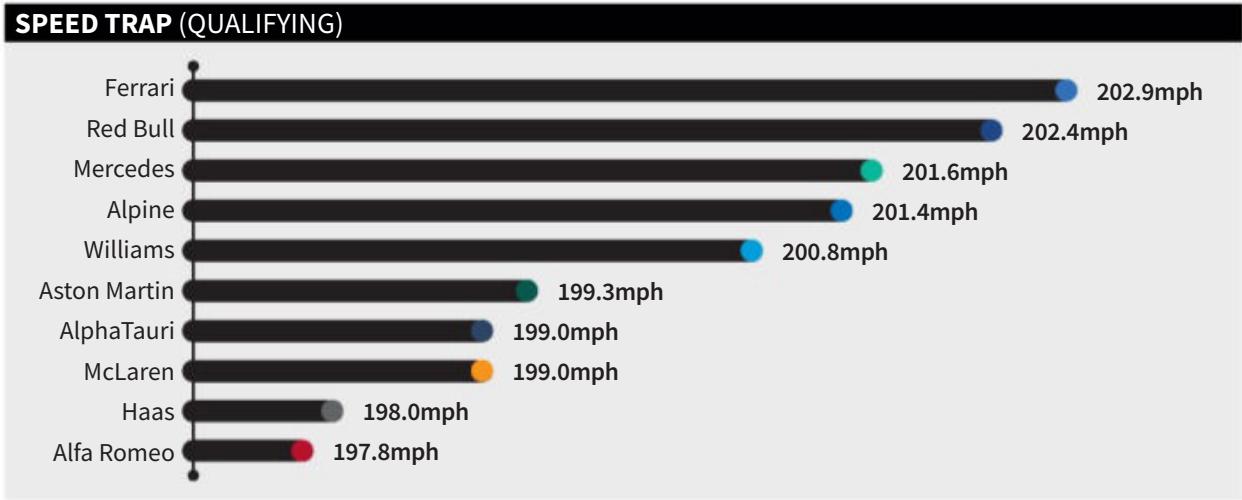
WEATHER Sunny, air 28-30C track 39-40C

WEATHER Night, air 23-24C track 25-27°C

WEATHER Sunny, air 30-31C track 39-42C

SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	25	1	1
2 Perez	18	2	2
3 Alonso	15	3	5
4 Sainz	12	4	4
5 Hamilton	10	5	7
6 Stroll	8	6	8
7 Russell	6	7	6
8 Bottas	4	8	12
9 Gasly	2	9	20
10 Albon	1	10	15
11 Tsunoda	0	11	14
12 Sargeant	0	12	16
13 Magnussen	0	13	17
14 de Vries	0	14	19
15 Hulkenberg	0	15	10
16 Zhou	0	16	13
17 Norris	0	17	11
18 Ocon	0	-	9
19 Leclerc	0	-	3
20 Piastri	0	-	18

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP		PTS
1 Red Bull		43
2 Aston Martin		23
3 Mercedes		16
4 Ferrari		12
5 Alfa Romeo		4
6 Alpine		2
7 Williams		1
8 AlphaTauri		0
9 Haas		0
10 McLaren		0



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Sainz	1m30.993s	1	Leclerc	1m30.282s	1	Verstappen	1m29.708s
2	Russell	1m31.057s	2	Verstappen	1m30.503s	2	Perez	1m29.846s
3	Leclerc	1m31.094s	3	Russell	1m30.507s	3	Leclerc	1m30.000s
4	Alonso	1m31.158s	4	Hamilton	1m30.513s	4	Sainz	1m30.154s
5	Stroll	1m31.184s	5	Sainz	1m30.515s	5	Alonso	1m30.336s
6	Hulkenberg	1m31.204s	6	Alonso	1m30.645s	6	Russell	1m30.340s
7	Verstappen	1m31.295s	7	Perez	1m30.746s	7	Hamilton	1m30.384s
8	Tsunoda	1m31.400s	8	Hulkenberg	1m30.809s	8	Stroll	1m30.836s
9	Albon	1m31.461s	9	Ocon	1m30.914s	9	Ocon	1m30.984s
10	Perez	1m31.479s	10	Stroll	1m31.127s	10	Hulkenberg	no time
11	Bottas	1m31.504s	11	Norris	1m31.381s			
12	Ocon	1m31.508s	12	Bottas	1m31.443s			
13	Hamilton	1m31.543s	13	Zhou	1m31.473s			
14	Zhou	1m31.615s	14	Tsunoda	1m32.510s			
15	Norris	1m31.652s	15	Albon	no time			
16	Sargeant	1m31.652s						
17	Magnussen	1m31.892s						
18	Piastri	1m32.101s						
19	de Vries	1m32.121s						
20	Gasly	1m32.181s						

WEATHER Night, air 24-25C track 27-29C

NEXT RACE

19 MARCH

SAUDI ARABIAN GP

Jeddah

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Verstappen	1	0	Perez
Leclerc	1	0	Sainz
Hamilton	0	1	Russell
Gasly	0	1	Ocon
Norris	1	0	Piastri
Zhou	0	1	Bottas
Alonso	1	0	Stroll
Magnussen	0	1	Hulkenberg
de Vries	0	1	Tsunoda
Sargeant	0	1	Albon

Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control

WINS

Verstappen	1
------------	---

FASTEST LAPS

Zhou	1
------	---

POLE POSITIONS

Verstappen	1
------------	---

Polescore taken based on qualifying results, not the result of any sprint races



STARTING GRID

10 Hulkenberg #27 no Q3 time	9 Ocon #31 1m30.984s	8 Stroll #18 1m30.836s	7 Hamilton #44 1m30.384s	6 Russell #63 1m30.340s	5 Alonso #14 1m30.336s	4 Sainz #55 1m30.154s	3 Leclerc #16 1m30.000s	2 Perez #11 1m29.846s	1 Verstappen #1 1m29.708s
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RESULTS ROUND 1/23 (57 LAPS - 191.53 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1h33m56.736s	54	Su, Su, Hn
2	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+11.987s	3	Su, Su, Hn
3	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+38.637s		Su, Hn, Hn
4	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+48.052s		Su, Hn, Hn
5	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+50.977s		Su, Hn, Hn
6	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+54.502s		Su, Hn, Hn
7	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+55.873s		Su, Hn, Hn
8	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m12.647s		Sn, Hn, Hn
9	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m13.753s		Sn, Hn, Hn, Sn
10	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m29.774s		Sn, Sn, Hn, Su
11	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+1m30.870s		Sn, Hn, Hn, Su
12	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+1.136s		Sn, Sn, Hn, Sn
13	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+16.757s		Hn, Hn, Sn, Sn
14	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+22.523s		Sn, Hn, Hn
15	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+38.911s		Su, Hn, Hn, Su
16	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+39.649s		Sn, Hn, Su, Su
17	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	-2 laps/+6.636s		Sn, Hn, Su, Mn, Hn, Su
R	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	41 laps-withdrawn		Su, Hn, Hn
R	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	39 laps-engine		Sn, Hn, Hn
R	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	13 laps-electrical		Sn

FASTEST LAPS

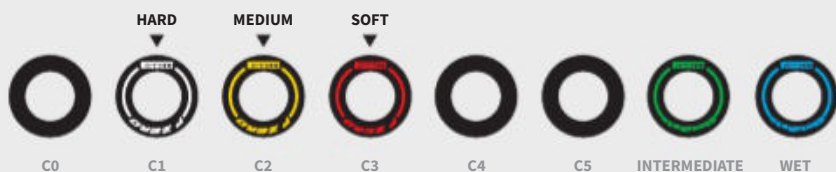
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Zhou	1m33.996s	-	56
2	Gasly	1m35.068s	+1.072s	42
3	Norris	1m35.822s	+1.826s	50
4	Sargeant	1m36.037s	+2.041s	42
5	Alonso	1m36.156s	+2.160s	36
6	Verstappen	1m36.236s	+2.240s	44
7	Perez	1m36.344s	+2.348s	37
8	Magnussen	1m36.471s	+2.475s	42
9	Stroll	1m36.546s	+2.550s	32
10	Hamilton	1m36.546s	+2.550s	36
11	Hulkenberg	1m36.616s	+2.620s	42
12	Tsunoda	1m36.637s	+2.641s	42
13	Ocon	1m36.797s	+2.801s	34
14	Sainz	1m37.130s	+3.134s	37
15	Albon	1m37.144s	+3.148s	43
16	Leclerc	1m37.170s	+3.174s	37
17	Russell	1m37.221s	+3.225s	42
18	Bottas	1m37.379s	+3.383s	31
19	de Vries	1m37.709s	+3.713s	30
20	Piastri	1m40.691s	+6.695s	3

WEATHER Night, air 27-28C track 29-31C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 122.324mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 128.795mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

RACE PENALTIES

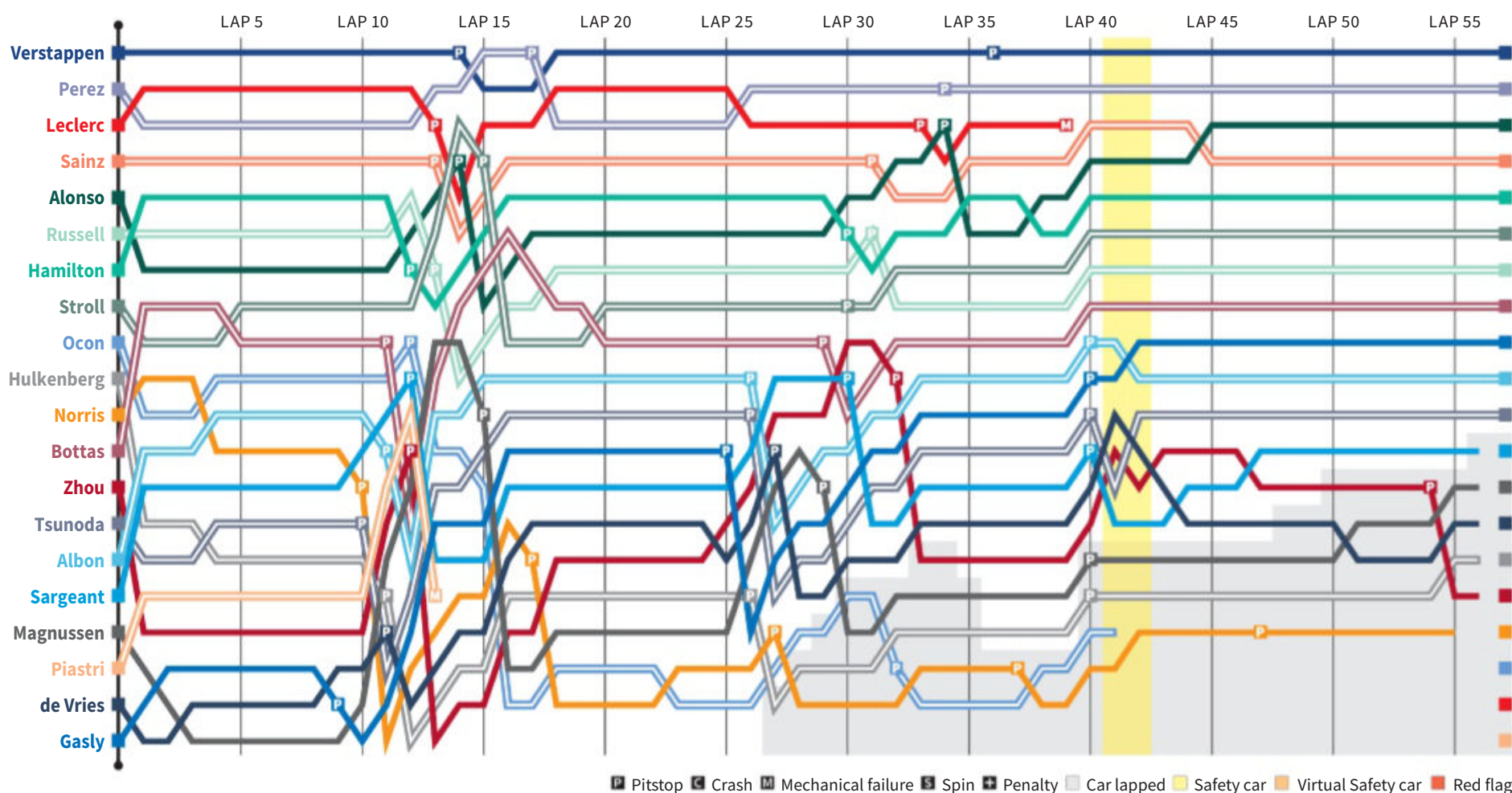
**OCN** Five-second penalty for inaccurate start position, then 10s penalty for failure to properly serve penalty during pitstop, then another 5s penalty

for exceeding pitlane speed limit  
**HULKENBERG** 5s penalty for leaving track without justifiable reason multiple times, then a 10s penalty for more of the same offence

STAT  
**99**

Alonso now has 99 podium finishes in F1, sixth on all-time list

LAP CHART What happened, when



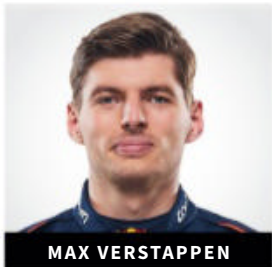


# NO 10s IN OUR NEW DRIVER RATINGS

*We've tweaked our scoring to only consider race performances, resulting in some harsher scores than we had before...*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

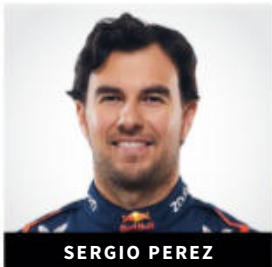
## RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **1st** — Result **1st**

**9** Doesn't quite hit full marks under our new scoring system because he barely needed to break a sweat. Under no pressure he was simply able to focus on his own race and bring the car home. A dominant performance that will deliver a crushing blow to the other teams' confidence.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **2nd** — Result **2nd**

**8** Iffy start counts against him here, and he probably spent too long trailing behind a slower Ferrari in the early stages. Once he'd cleared Leclerc, Verstappen was too far down the road for Perez to make a play for the lead. Pace was comparable with his team-mate's once in clear air.

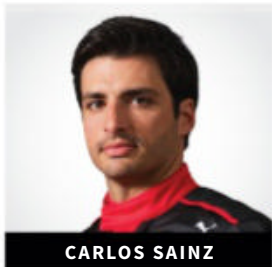
## FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **3rd** — Result **R**

**8** Lightning reflexes carried Leclerc into second, and he acquitted himself well to build a gap over Perez. Unsurprisingly lost second when Perez had more speed on the softs, but Leclerc punched above his weight and looked set for a solid run to a podium until his engine packed up.



CARLOS SAINZ

Started **4th** — Result **4th**

**6** Tyre degradation stymied chance of a podium finish, but did well to keep Hamilton at bay as the Mercedes driver overcame struggles to pose a brief threat for fourth. Couldn't challenge the Red Bulls like Leclerc had, and was nine seconds off his team-mate when the Monegasque retired.

## MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **7th** — Result **5th**

**7** Early stint management yielded a good result despite inconsistent tyre degradation. Made ground at the start over Russell and Alonso, and enjoyed a hearty battle with Alonso later in the race. Challenged Sainz in final quarter and, although he could not hang on, did well to challenge faster cars.



GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **6th** — Result **7th**

**6** Lost a place to Hamilton at the start and was a step behind his team-mate all through the race. Was easy pickings for Stroll as Aston Martin looks to have eclipsed Mercedes this season. Race pace was consistent, but the Briton was ultimately lacking outright performance.

## ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **20th** — Result **9th**

**9** Overcame dismal qualifying to get into the points, rescuing a solid result. Stuck behind Zhou in the early laps, Gasly made an early pit call work when the undercut proved strong. Neatly dispatched Albon to double his points haul, and cut a near-20s deficit to Bottas by the close of the race.



ESTEBAN OCON

Started **9th** — Result **R**

**3** The second time penalty was hardly his fault since Alpine had neglected to serve the first properly, but starting out of position and speeding in the pitlane were needless errors. Getting passed by Norris's crooked car added further salt to the wound, and was later brought in to retire early.

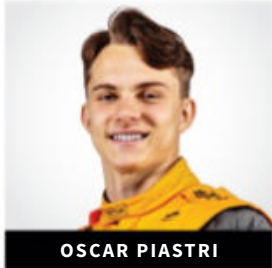
## McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **11th** — Result **17th**

**7** Amid a miserable race in which he required multiple top-ups to the air supply with a pneumatic leak, Norris showed more than a few glimmers of pace. A lap down, he still clung on to the back of Sainz and Hamilton for a spell despite contending with a car that was off the mark for pace and reliability.



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **18th** — Result **R**

**5** Barely had a chance to flex his muscles in his first GP start owing to electrical issues, and a steering wheel swap did nothing to alleviate this. Kept his cool in the 13 laps of running he managed. Took two places at the start and made no mistakes, but early unreliability will be alarming.

## ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **13th** — Result **16th**

**5** Lost four positions on lap one but made a decent recovery despite being stuck in a lower-midfield DRS train. VSC timing hampered progress, and Alfa's decision not to pit him left him a sitting duck. Was brought in to pit late on to steal the fastest lap point away from Gasly.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **12th** — Result **8th**

**8** Gained four positions on the opening lap and managed to undercut Russell and Alonso after opening flurry of stops. Dropped back as his Alfa Romeo slipped into the clutches of faster cars, resulting in a largely quiet race in which he likely scored the maximum possible for the Sauber-run squad.



Stroll scores a strong 9/10  
for his drive to sixth despite  
injury and lack of testing

DUNBAR  
motorsport  
IMAGES



## ASTON MARTIN



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **5th** — Result **3rd**

**9** Was at his canny best in Bahrain and executed stunning moves on Hamilton and Sainz to claim a podium in his first Aston Martin appearance. Loses a point for his first lap slip down to seventh, tied to his touch with team-mate Stroll, but the veteran recovered phenomenally from that early setback.

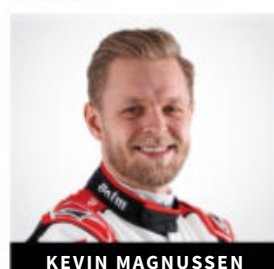


LANCE STROLL

Started **8th** — Result **6th**

**9** First-lap contact with Alonso notwithstanding, he transcended the limitations of the restricted mobility in his hands following his pre-season wrist-break. Managed to dice with Russell to claim an impressive sixth place. Spent the last 20 laps in considerable pain, but hung it out to the end.

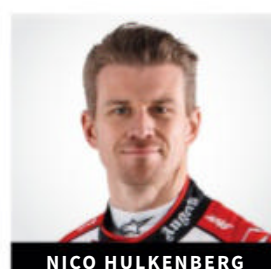
## HAAS



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Started **17th** — Result **13th**

**5** Tried something different on strategy and was the sole driver to start on hard tyres. Early lap times were miserable, however, and he dropped to the back as a result. Never really recovered from there as Haas called the experiment off early, although his pace later in the race proved much stronger.

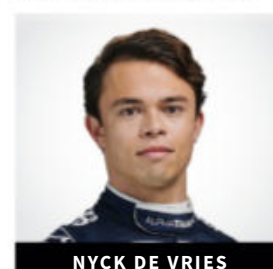


NICO HULKENBERG

Started **10th** — Result **15th**

**4** Front-wing endplate was knocked off in contact with Ocon. From there, his race was compromised with high tyre wear. Briefly showed some good pace with a new wing, but ultimately dropped off and copped two track-limits penalties. A bruising start to his full-time F1 return.

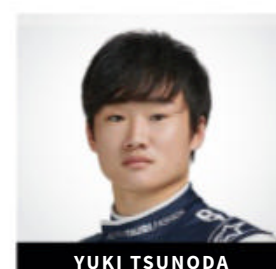
## ALPHATAURI



NYCK DE VRIES

Started **19th** — Result **14th**

**5** Hamstrung in the end by his team's decision not to pit him under the VSC, but was otherwise largely on par with expectations. Early pit call offered some reward with a powerful undercut, but was never really in the hunt for points. Reckoned 12th was possible if he'd pitted with other lower-midfield runners.

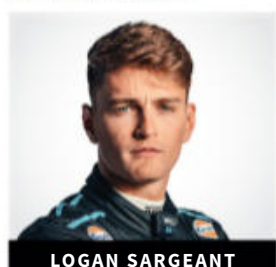


YUKI TSUNODA

Started **14th** — Result **11th**

**6** Lacked grip, with his AlphaTauri showing a tendency to slide and overheat its tyres. On pace with new team-mate de Vries, but Tsunoda's race was boosted by call to pit under VSC conditions. Struggled to keep within a second of Albon towards the end, citing a 7mph deficit on the straights.

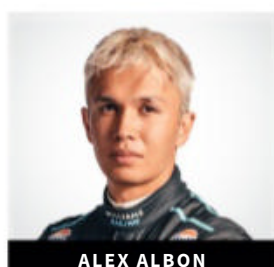
## WILLIAMS



LOGAN SARGEANT

Started **16th** — Result **12th**

**7** The most impressive of the rookies in the opening round, Sargeant put together a clean and consistent drive. Made good ground at the start and briefly factored in the battle for points, but could not quite keep hold of Albon and Tsunoda. Managed tyres well on Bahrain's abrasive surface.



ALEX ALBON

Started **15th** — Result **10th**

**8** Another typically strong defensive drive, in spite of the car's limitations. Had to contend with less downforce in the corners as the team focused on straightline speed. A used set of soft tyres versus Gasly's fresh rubber in the final stint cost Albon, but a point was nonetheless a strong return.

## NEW SCORING SYSTEM EXPLAINED

**10 A remarkable race.** One where a driver has hit a true performance high, for example Max Verstappen at the 2022 Belgian GP. This doesn't mean 'perfection' – a small error such as Lewis Hamilton going off at Abbey during his 2008 British GP masterclass would not mean a cost when we consider all scores as getting close to a 'maximum'.

**9 A very good race.** One where a driver has left their rivals trailing, beaten a series of faster cars or produced excellent defensive or attacking moves.

**8 A good race.** One where a driver has made impressive gains against their typical rivals or perhaps beaten faster rivals. A driver overcoming a team mistake would score this mark even if their result is compromised.

**7 A decent race.** One where a driver has executed a difficult strategy or taken on and defeated a car-level

rival. A driver unable to overcome a team mistake would likely score this mark. No major errors.

**6 A solid race.** One where a driver has made progress up the grid or taken advantage of situations to beat a faster car. In the event of a driver making a good start and then slipping behind faster rivals, they should still earn a mark above 'par'.

**5 Consider this 'par'.** A driver finishes where they started with an unremarkable race. They have achieved the minimum of expectations. In the case of faster cars being out of position, the slower rivals they pass will still have been considered to have scored 'par'.

**4 A performance with some merit,** but one that ended underwhelmingly or with a minor mistake that cost positions or impacted race time.

**3 A poor performance** either through

struggling to get the most out of the car or, through some massive error later in the race, falling short of a team's targeted result or the achievement of a team-mate.

**2 A driver crashes early in proceedings without a car problem.** An example would be Sebastian Vettel at the 2022 Australian GP.

**1 A driver has caused a lap one crash that eliminates many rivals** – think Valtteri Bottas and Lance Stroll at the 2021 Hungarian GP. Or just bins it solo at a similar part of the race.

**0 A rare case,** but if a driver crashes on the way to the grid without car failure at play and cannot take part in the race, they must get this score.

**N/A DNS** due to car failure in the garage, on formation laps or on the grid. We can also use this in circumstances where a driver has been injured in a crash.





INDYCAR ST PETERSBURG

# Ericsson's late steal amid IndyCar drama

*The Swede seized his chance for victory in the series' opening round on a day of crushed hopes for pacesetter Grosjean, multi-car shunts, underdog inspiration and comeback fights*

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY



**T**he great aspects of the 20th edition of the Grand Prix of St Petersburg, the inaugural round of the 2023 IndyCar season, include the fact that we had a less-than-obvious winner, there were as many questions raised as answered, the field looks tighter than ever in the front half, there were some brilliant comebacks from lowly grid positions, and there were a couple of stirring underdog tales.

The downsides? Well, a couple of great performances were hampered through no fault of the drivers themselves, 26 of 100 laps were run under yellow, a shunt on the opening lap took five drivers out of

contention and caused a red flag, and there was a lot of expensive damage incurred.

For fans of Romain Grosjean, it was a heartbreaking event, yet also a source of encouragement. The Swiss-born ex-Formula 1 star looked the class of the field in both qualifying and the race. He could have been beaten to pole by a couple of hundredths if Andretti Autosport teammate Colton Herta had reproduced his Q2 time in the Fast Six shootout, but the young American's sloppy final flier meant Grosjean topped it by well over four tenths.

For this year, Firestone supplies three sets of alternate tyre compounds for the three segments of qualifying, so that those

expecting to make it through to Q3 – the Fast Six – don't need to nurse the softer rubber in Q1 and Q2 to leave maximum life on a used set for their final run. It's flat-out on fresh rubber in each segment...

Unless, like Marcus Ericsson of Chip Ganassi Racing and Andretti Autosport's latest recruit Kyle Kirkwood, you got held up by traffic in an earlier segment, thereby requiring two sets of the 'green' tyres to graduate to the next qualifying stage. And yes, you read that right – the sidewalls of alternates on street courses is now made from Firestone's sustainable crop of the guayule desert shrub, and are therefore marked in green, rather than the traditional





O'Ward had to settle for second after engine hiccup cost him the lead



red. Kirkwood (shunt) and 2022 St Pete winner Scott McLaughlin (spin-and-stall) both brought out the red flag in Q3 but had done enough to line up fifth and sixth, behind Grosjean, Herta, Pato O'Ward of Arrow McLaren and Ericsson.

Given the heat and humidity, there was much debate regarding tyre strategy, for Firestone had created a satisfyingly large difference between 'greens' and primaries, with most eager to dispense with their newly coloured softer alternates as soon as possible. A two-stop strategy was by far the quickest way to go, but even the most economical drivers such as Scott Dixon and Will Power were only going to get 32 or 33 laps from a tank of fuel at racing speed, so everyone would have to make their alternates last a full stint whenever they used them.

The top five on the grid chose alternates at the start, as did Ganassi's Alex Palou, who lined up seventh. The remainder of the top 10 – McLaughlin, Felix Rosenqvist in the second Arrow McLaren car, Dixon and Power – went for primaries, hoping to capitalise and run a long stint when those ahead felt their rubber wilting.

Everyone's plans were put on hold by a 20-minute red flag on lap one, when there was a six-car pile-up towards the back of the field. When Rosenqvist was edged into the wall at Turn 3 as he fought with Dixon, the chain reaction of cars checking up meant Santino Ferrucci nudged Helio Castroneves into a spin. The ensuing carnage collected Simon Pagenaud, rookie Sting Ray Robb and Devlin DeFrancesco. Then another

rookie, Benjamin Pedersen, rammed hard into the side of DeFrancesco's machine, launching it high into the air, where it performed a Harrier-style 180-degree turn before landing again. Rosenqvist's car had also suffered significant damage and he was out of contention too.

At the restart, Grosjean held off Herta, and the pair rapidly eased away from O'Ward, who was wisely pacing himself to his tyre life, and doing just enough to keep clear of Ericsson, Palou, who had made a fine start to jump Kirkwood and McLaughlin, with Dixon and Power in close pursuit.

While Grosjean had clear air in which to nurse his alternates, the closely following Herta found by lap 20 that his greens were giving up in his team-mate's wake, and he started dropping into the clutches of O'Ward. On lap 25, Herta was down to third and struggling while, just a little way behind, Kirkwood was finding the same issue and was losing out to the primary-tyred runners, yet both of these Andretti drivers were obliged to stay out until laps 27 and 28 respectively to make a two-stop strategy work. This loss of time would cost them dearly and, once everyone had pitted by lap 36, Herta was down to a net seventh, and Kirkwood had suffered a bad stop that dropped him to the back of the lead lap.

Grosjean, pursued by the primary-tyred cars of McLaughlin, Dixon, Power and Alexander Rossi, was able to make his alternates last until lap 32, but that was one lap too long for he lost a lot of time on his in-lap and, while his pace after

## “Everyone's plans were put on hold by a 20-minute red flag on lap one, when there was a six-car pile-up”

switching to the harder compound was strong, swift work by the Penske crew got McLaughlin out just ahead of the erstwhile leader. Now on alternates, the Kiwi flicked to the inside on the run down to Turn 4 and, while the Andretti driver had the momentum to draw alongside on his warm tyres, McLaughlin found just enough grip from his cold greens to brake at the same time and retain the lead.

McLaughlin would also stave off Grosjean on the lap 41 restart, following a caution for Conor Daly spinning and stalling, and then again after the third caution. This one was caused by the other Ed Carpenter Racing car of Rinus VeeKay getting on the marbles while being passed by Josef Newgarden and thumping into the Turn 4 tyre wall. Jack Harvey was left with nowhere to go and struck the ECR car hard, while Kirkwood was similarly unlucky, launching off the Rahal Letterman Lanigan entry and landing on its nose. Kirkwood was able to limp his wreckage to the pitlane and later rejoin.

The next restart went smoothly but, »



after Dixon took advantage of his alternate tyres into Turn 4 to snatch fourth from team-mate Ericsson, who was on primaries, Power sought to also find a way past the reigning Indianapolis 500 winner around the outside of Turns 5 and 6. Firmly rebuffed, the 2022 champion's Penske-run Dallara-Chevrolet lost traction through Turn 7, allowing Herta alongside, and the Andretti driver squeezed Power towards the inside wall. He pulled clear just for a second but, into Turn 8, Power braked later and went down the inside, understeering just wide enough on the exit to send Herta into the tyres. Perhaps in light of Herta bumping into him one corner earlier, Power's punishment from Race Control was not a drive-through

## “McLaughlin braked late and lost the rear just enough to tap Grosjean and send him into the barrier”

penalty but an order to take the next restart from the back of the field.

Yet again, McLaughlin held off Grosjean at the drop of the green but, despite being on softer tyres and in clean air, McLaughlin couldn't shake his pursuer. Andretti then appeared to have pulled off the perfect strategy when it pitted Grosjean on lap 70, just as McLaughlin hit traffic and suffered a slow in-lap for his stop next time by.

Despite this, Penske did get its driver out just ahead of Grosjean, but it was even closer than their lap 36 encounter. McLaughlin replicated his earlier move of protecting the inside down the straight from Turn 3

to Turn 4, but on the outside Grosjean had momentum, warmer tyres, and greater grip on the racing line. And this time McLaughlin was on cold primaries, which couldn't quite take what was now asked of them; he braked late and lost the rear just enough to tap Grosjean and send him into the tyre barrier. The impact also straightened up the Penske car, so that McLaughlin too plunged into the stack of rubber. He restarted but served a drive-through and later apologised to his disconsolate rival.

O'Ward therefore inherited the lead, ahead of Ericsson, who had got back ahead of Dixon in the last round of stops. At the final

restart with 22 laps to go, Ericsson got on the marbles at the final turn so that rather than attack the leader, he found his mirrors full of his six-time champion team-mate. But having cleaned his tyres, he then closed the 2.7s gap to O'Ward to just 0.6s, and was plotting when to pass the Arrow McLaren car. Suddenly, exiting the final turn on lap 96, the decision was made for him: a flash fire in the plenum chamber of O'Ward's Chevrolet engine caused a brief hiccup and loss of power, allowing Ericsson to move past and into a lead that he held to the end. A disbelieving O'Ward retained his composure well enough to hold off Dixon.



## JUNCOS HOLLINGER DUO ILOTT AND CANAPINO SHINE

Juncos Hollinger Racing is proving why IndyCar is so alluring to drivers and teams who can find the requisite budget. With a staff headcount dwarfed by the likes of Team Penske, Chip Ganassi Racing, Arrow McLaren and Andretti Autosport, JHR is capable of turning out a fast car, hiring a fast driver, hiring a fast pitcrew and competing with the best. And for this year, it has two full-time entries.

If anyone thought the team was overstretching by adding rookie Agustin Canapino to the roster with

incumbent star Callum Iloft, there's little evidence of it yet. Traffic meant that Iloft didn't get a representative run in qualifying and he started alongside his team-mate on row 11, but by keeping his head when many about him were losing theirs – and by taking a cautious approach to restarts – he climbed through to fifth.

As for Canapino, he was 1.1296 seconds off the fastest time in Qualifying 1 Group 1 as opposed to Iloft's 0.5655s off the top of Q1 G2, yet by the quirk of the melding of the two groups for positions 13-27

on the grid, the 33-year-old touring car ace was a place ahead of the ex-F2 racer on the grid. Luck played no other part in Canapino's results throughout the weekend, except perhaps the number of caution periods that eased his muscles in a fatiguing race. The fact is, he made no major errors in a weekend full of incidents and accidents for not only a couple of his fellow rookies but also several veterans, and he deserved his 12th-place finish.

Long Beach and Barber should prove happy hunting grounds for both JHR drivers next month.






Rossi had a quiet run to fourth in his first race for Arrow McLaren, ahead of the underdog story of the day – Callum Iltott, who avoided the carnage, drove hard and fast and claimed his first IndyCar top-five for Juncos Hollinger Racing. Another driver who somehow avoided drama, despite starting 20th, was Graham Rahal and he, along with Power, got around Palou with two laps to go.

Newgarden made a bad final restart from which he never recovered, but might still have claimed ninth had he not suffered a mechanical failure that obliged him to retire with five laps to go.

While four of its cars were taken out in incidents, Andretti's 1-2-5 in qualifying suggests it has regained some of the street course supremacy that it ceded last year, but all of fellow Honda squad Ganassi's drivers admit they could have done a little better in qualifying and looked very strong on both tyre compounds on race day. Penske appeared not to have the traction on corner exits that it enjoyed at St Pete this time last year, whereas fellow Chevrolet runner McLaren has made vast improvements and perhaps vaulted the Penske team... for now, at least.

We won't get a clearer picture for six weeks, at Long Beach. In between – but still four weeks away – is the second round, at Texas Motor Speedway. 

## NEXT REPORT

**TEXAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY**  
**6 APRIL ISSUE**



## RESULTS ROUND 1/17, ST PETERSBURG (USA), 5 MARCH (100 LAPS – 180.000 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	<b>Marcus Ericsson</b> (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	2h05m30.7907s
2	<b>Pato O'Ward</b> (MEX)	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+2.4113s
3	<b>Scott Dixon</b> (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+2.9257s
4	<b>Alexander Rossi</b> (USA)	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+6.7689s
5	<b>Callum Iltott</b> (GBR)	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+8.2650s
6	<b>Graham Rahal</b> (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+10.7671s
7	<b>Will Power</b> (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+11.6798s
8	<b>Alex Palou</b> (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+14.7244s
9	<b>Christian Lundgaard</b> (DNK)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+14.9528s
10	<b>David Malukas</b> (USA)	Dale Coyne Racing with HMD / Dallara-Honda	+15.4401s
11	<b>Marcus Armstrong</b> (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+15.8049s
12	<b>Agustin Canapino</b> (ARG)	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+28.1332s
13	<b>Scott McLaughlin</b> (NZL)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
14	<b>Conor Daly</b> (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
15	<b>Kyle Kirkwood</b> (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	-3 laps
16	<b>Sting Ray Robb</b> (USA)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR / Dallara-Honda	96 laps-off
17	<b>Josef Newgarden</b> (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	95 laps-fire
18	<b>Romain Grosjean</b> (FRA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	71 laps-accident
19	<b>Felix Rosenqvist</b> (SWE)	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	51 laps-accident damage
20	<b>Colton Herta</b> (USA)	Andretti Autosport with Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Honda	49 laps-accident
21	<b>Rinus van Kalmthout</b> (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	41 laps-accident
22	<b>Jack Harvey</b> (GBR)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	41 laps-accident
23	<b>Helio Castroneves</b> (BRA)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
24	<b>Santino Ferrucci</b> (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	0 laps-accident
25	<b>Devlin DeFrancesco</b> (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport / Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
26	<b>Simon Pagenaud</b> (FRA)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	0 laps-accident
27	<b>Benjamin Pedersen</b> (DNK)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	0 laps-accident

**Winner's average speed** 86.047mph. **Fastest lap** Palou 1m01.5104s, 105.348mph.

**Q3** 1 Grosjean 59.5532s; 2 Herta 59.9687s; 3 O'Ward 1m00.0163s; 4 Ericsson 1m00.4435s; 5 Kirkwood no time; 6 McLaughlin no time.

**Q2** Herta 59.5442s; Kirkwood 59.6357s; Grosjean 59.7320s; O'Ward 59.7367s; Ericsson 59.7624s; McLaughlin 59.7686s; 7 Palou 59.7781s; 8 Rosenqvist 59.7971s; 9 Dixon 59.8010s; 10 Power 59.9482s; 11 Lundgaard 59.9618s; 12 Rossi 1m00.0040s.

**Q1 – GROUP 1** Rosenqvist 59.9396s; Lundgaard 1m00.0121s; Kirkwood 1m00.0451s; O'Ward 1m00.1146s; McLaughlin 1m00.1201s; Ericsson 1m00.2018s; 13 Armstrong 1m00.3158s; 15 Castroneves 1m00.5049s; 17 Ferrucci 1m00.5301s; 19 Harvey 1m00.7270s;

21 Canapino 1m01.0692s; 23 Robb 1m02.3711s; 25 Pagenaud 6m37.4112s.

**Q1 – GROUP 2** Dixon 59.8213s; Herta 59.8220s; Grosjean 59.8790s; Palou 59.8879s; Rossi 59.9527s; Power 1m00.0211s; 14 Newgarden 1m00.0605s; 16 Malukas 1m00.0796s; 18 DeFrancesco 1m00.1798s; 20 Rahal 1m00.3714s; 22 Iltott 1m00.3868s; 24 van Kalmthout 1m00.4831s; 26 Daly 1m00.6066s; 27 Pedersen 1m01.4355s.

## CHAMPIONSHIP

**1** Ericsson 51; **2** O'Ward 41; **3** Dixon 36; **4** Rossi 32; **5** Iltott 30; **6** Rahal 28; **7** Power 26; **8** Palou 24; **9** Lundgaard 22; **10** Malukas 21.



Pourchaire leads Boschung  
during the feature race...



CAREZZEVOLI/FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED

## Pourchaire drives away to beat Boschung

**FIA FORMULA 2**  
**SAKHIR (BHR)**  
**4-5 MARCH**  
**ROUND 1/14**

Theo Pourchaire opened the Formula 2 season with a bang last Sunday by dominating the opening feature race, ART Grand Prix's 2022 runner-up cruising to a lights-to-flag win by almost 20 seconds. The Frenchman made a long stint on the soft tyre compound work in his favour to crush any of Ralph Boschung's hopes of completing a double win.

Alfa Romeo F1 reserve Pourchaire had taken a crushing pole position by 0.751s from ART team-mate Victor Martins. He preserved the lead off the line at the start, meaning he was clear of the chaos behind him. A first-lap melee shook up the order at Turn 4, when Frederik Vesti knocked Richard Verschoor into a spin, and a slow-starting Martins and Roman Stanek also made contact. A rapid getaway for Kush Maini had already elevated him to second, while the seas

parted through the chaos for Boschung, who rose from 10th on the grid to third. The Swiss then passed his Campos Racing stablemate on the restart.

Sprint-race winner Boschung, running on the alternate strategy of starting on the soft Pirelli, attempted to find a way past Pourchaire, but his challenge floundered. The leader had a big lock-up at Turn 10 on lap 12, prompting him to pit early for the soft tyre, with Boschung inheriting the lead.

Boschung followed suit two laps later for hard rubber, emerging from the pitlane some way behind Pourchaire, who was now 10.6s in front. Remarkably, Pourchaire was able to nurse his soft tyres and pull away to win by 19.7s.

The podium was completed by Rodin Carlin's F2 rookie Zane Maloney, who made a storming charge from 18th on the grid. The Barbados racer was still down in 10th just past half-distance once all the pitstops were done, but his soft tyres lasted much better than those of his rivals, and Maloney passed Maini for third on the penultimate lap. Arthur Leclerc and Ollie Bearman had

been among those who led the massive struggle behind Maini, but it was Van Amersfoort Racing man Verschoor who completed a storming comeback to take fifth from Leclerc on the final tour.

Boschung's maiden F2 victory in Saturday's sprint race came after leading from lights to flag on his 96th series start, and he cruised home 10.8s clear of runner-up Dennis Hauger.

Reversed-grid poleman Boschung held firm off the line, while Ayumu Iwasa came out on top of a ferocious first-lap battle with DAMS team-mate Leclerc for second, and Alpine Academy driver Martins moved into fourth around the outside of Turn 11 past Stanek.

From 10th on the grid, Pourchaire had made it up to fifth past Hauger by lap four as Martins took third from Leclerc, both moves up the inside of Turn 1. Pourchaire continued his progress by passing Leclerc with the confidence you'd expect of a third-year driver.

Martins claimed second from Iwasa up the inside of Turn 1 on lap 13. The Red Bull junior attempted to reclaim his position, but was forced to concede as Pourchaire closed in behind them.

As the race wore on it was another Red Bull protege, Hauger, who came to the fore. MP Motorsport seemed to be able to make the soft Pirellis last well, and the Norwegian was able to pass Pourchaire for fourth place before setting about Iwasa, who he demoted after a big lock-up from the Japanese. Hauger completed his charge by snatching second from Martins on the penultimate lap at Turn 11. Iwasa was fourth, while Pourchaire kept the second MP car of Jehan Daruvala at bay for fifth.

**MEGAN WHITE**



...and the two are all  
smiles afterwards

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



# Bortoleto inherits after Mini penalty

**FIA FORMULA 3**  
**SAKHIR (BHR)**  
**4-5 MARCH**  
**ROUND 1/10**

Following the exodus of last year's top contenders to Formula 2, it was rookies who dominated the opening FIA Formula 3 round in Bahrain, and it was Gabriel Bortoleto who inherited his maiden win when fellow Formula Regional graduate Gabriele Mini was hit by a penalty.

Hitech-run Alpine protege Mini claimed pole, but Trident driver Bortoleto got up his inside to lead at Turn 1, and Gregoire Saucy (ART Grand Prix) grabbed second after running side by side with Mini from Turns 4 to 6. The Sicilian repassed the Swiss after more entertaining two-abreast battling on lap four, but Bortoleto now had a handy advantage of over three seconds. Then it was wiped out by a safety car.

By the time of the restart, Mini had been handed a 5s penalty for a start procedure infringement. He wasted no time in passing Bortoleto for the lead at Turn 6, but stood no chance of building up the necessary 5s margin as the Brazilian stuck resolutely to his tail. Bortoleto's Trident team-mate Oliver Goethe, third on the road, was also within that time window, but Mini still looked set to retain third before a penultimate-lap safety car scuppered his chances. The field finished in formation, and the condensing of the order left Mini shouting over the radio and thumping his steering wheel as he was relegated to an unlucky eighth.

Goethe had passed Saucy with seven laps remaining before being promoted into second place, while Prema Racing's Dino Beganovic had just got past Saucy for what became third when the final safety car was called. Both cautions involved Tommy Smith, the first when the Australian came together



Bortoleto heads  
Saucy and Mini  
in the early going

with Mari Boya, the second for an incident with Roberto Faria. That brought an end to the fantastic progress of Luke Browning, who had been confirmed with Hitech on the eve of the race weekend and charged from 17th on the grid to be classified fifth.

Bortoleto's win made it two out of two for proteges of Fernando Alonso's management company after Pepe Marti's maiden F3 victory in the reversed-grid sprint race. The Spaniard lined his Campos Racing car up second behind MP Motorsport's Franco Colapinto, but fell to third on the opening lap behind Caio Collet (Van Amersfoort Racing).

Following an early safety car, Marti immediately made it back up to second before another caution, caused by Browning getting turned around at Turn 1.

Two laps after the next restart, Marti made the deciding move by swooping around the outside of Colapinto into Turn 4. Williams Academy driver Colapinto looked close to retaking the lead several times, but Marti had preserved his Pirelli tyres and managed to break DRS by the final lap. Collet

completed the podium, while Beganovic beat Paul Aron and Goethe to fourth.

It was a bad race for the men who would star on Sunday. Mini stalled on the grid and finished 17th, while Bortoleto was penalised down to 19th for the Rafael Villagomez shunt that triggered the first safety car.

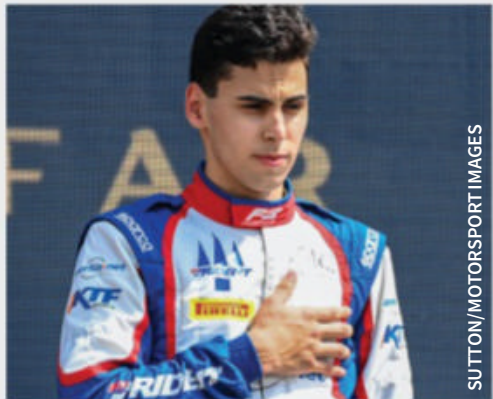
MEGAN WHITE



Sprint-race winner  
Marti leads Aron

## WEEKEND WINNERS

- FIA FORMULA 2**  
**SAKHIR (BHR)**  
**Race 1** Ralph Boschung  
Campos Racing  
**Race 2** Theo Pourchaire  
ART Grand Prix
- FIA FORMULA 3**  
**SAKHIR (BHR)**  
**Race 1** Pepe Marti  
Campos Racing  
**Race 2** Gabriel Bortoleto (below)  
Trident



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Frost leads one of the many restarts from ex-F2 racer Matteo Nannini

## Spinners and sinners get Frosty reception

JONES/PEC/IMS/INDYCAR

**INDY NXT**  
**ST PETERSBURG (USA)**  
**5 MARCH**  
**ROUND 1/12**

The Indy NXT opener proved to be a sad foretelling of Andretti Autosport's fortunes in the IndyCar race a few hours later in St Petersburg, and ended with a win from seventh on the grid for HMD Motorsports' Danial Frost.

Briton Louis Foster, the reigning Indy Pro 2000 champion, took pole in his Andretti car and led the opening seven laps, surviving the first restart following a caution triggered by a collision between Reece Gold and Enaam Ahmed. A second yellow then came when Jagger Jones was

knocked into the Turn 4 tyre wall, and Andretti's three-time W Series champion Jamie Chadwick hit the wreck.

At the second restart, Jacob Abel (Abel Motorsports) passed Christian Rasmussen and Foster down the inside into Turn 1 to claim the lead, while Nolan Siegel moved his HMD car into fourth from team-mate Frost. Abel stretched his lead over Foster to 2.5 seconds with Rasmussen third, this trio pulling away from their pursuers. But just as Foster pared down Abel's advantage to half a second, the full-course yellows flew for another shunt.

Abel made the best getaway at the green flag, while Foster moved right in Turn 1 to defend from Rasmussen, but slid wide, allowing Rasmussen and Siegel through.

As he battled to defend fourth from Frost, Foster struck the Turn 3 wall and hobbled to the pitlane for a new toelink. Team-mate Chadwick outbraked herself for Turn 4 and went into the tyres, so out came the full-course caution.

On the restart, Abel and Rasmussen went long into Turn 1, opening the door for Siegel and Frost to claim first and second. Further around the lap, a three-car pile-up brought out *another* caution. At the last restart, Siegel outbraked himself slightly into Turn 1, allowing Frost to drive around the outside of him in Turn 2 and claim victory. Siegel held off Abel and HMD-run Dane Rasmussen to take the chequered flag in second place.

**DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ**

## Raptor-ous cheers as Byron heads 1-2-3

**NASCAR CUP**  
**LAS VEGAS (USA)**  
**5 MARCH**  
**ROUND 3/36**

The fastest car dominated and won at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, but William Byron needed a rally in overtime to do it.

Byron, who won the first two stages and led 176 of 271 laps, lost the lead during a round of pitstops late in the race, which opened the door to the win for his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet team-mate Kyle Larson. But a spin and wreck by Aric Almirola with three laps remaining sent the race to overtime. Martin Truex Jr was the only driver not to pit, while Byron and Larson lined up second and third respectively after taking just two new tyres.

After a brief side-by-side duel, Byron powered past Truex entering Turn 3 with one lap remaining and held off Larson by 0.622 seconds. "We spent a lot of time in the off-season just going through running



at the sim with Chevy and running on iRacing and just trying to get better as a race car driver and as a team," said Byron.

With Alex Bowman ending up third, Hendrick claimed its third-ever 1-2-3 finish. Byron's win was also the third straight by a Chevrolet driver to start the season, which last occurred in 2010.

JR Motorsports Xfinity Series driver Josh Berry, who substituted for injured Hendrick driver Chase Elliott, ended up 29th and two laps down. Elliott suffered a broken left leg in a snowboarding accident on Friday in Colorado and required surgery. He was expected to begin rehabilitation on Monday.

**JIM UTTER**

### WEEKEND WINNERS

**INDY NXT**  
**ST PETERSBURG (USA)**  
Danial Frost  
HMD Motorsports

**NASCAR CUP**  
**LAS VEGAS (USA)**  
William Byron  
Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet Camaro)



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# DAVIDSON THE VIRTUAL LION TAMER

*The 2014 World Endurance champion and latter-day WEC TV expert gets behind the wheel of one of the new breed of Le Mans Hypercars – in Peugeot’s simulator*

GARY WATKINS

Anthony Davidson is back at the wheel of a prototype, just a year and a bit on from his retirement from the cockpit. And he now understands the challenges faced by the drivers out on track in the World Endurance Championship aboard the successors to the LMP1 machinery in which he carved out a stellar sportscar career. “They’re having to wrestle the steering wheel much more than I ever did,” he reckons. “So they’re definitely earning their money out there.”

The 2014 World Endurance Championship title winner with Toyota comes to that conclusion after a handful of laps around the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe aboard Peugeot’s 9X8. Only he’s a good 100 miles to the north-east of Le Mans, on the outskirts of Paris at Peugeot Sport’s Satory base in fact. His experience of the French manufacturer’s Le Mans Hypercar is firmly in the virtual realm. He’s just sampled the hybrid machine with which Peugeot is aiming to repeat the successes of its 905 Group C contender and the LMP1s he raced in 2010-11 – two generations of 908 turbodiesel – not on the race track but in a simulator.

Davidson describes his handful of laps in the Peugeot sim as a “real eye opener”. It gives him a feel for a breed of car designed to look different, lap slower and, crucially, be more cost-effective than the high-tech P1 rocketships they replaced.

“The cars are definitely exciting to look at and the Peugeot has a quirky look because it doesn’t have a rear wing – one of the beauties of the new rules is the freedom it gives the designers,” says Davidson. “It was good to get a chance to drive the 9X8 in the sim to understand a bit more about it and just how different the new cars are to the prototypes I drove during my career.”

They are cars that, until the trip to Paris, he’d only witnessed at close quarters from the cockpit of the LMP2 ORECA he drove in his final year of racing in the WEC with the Jota team in 2021, and from slightly further away in the commentary box where he has been the expert voice on WEC TV since the start of last season. His try-out in surroundings similar to the ones he experiences every week in his ongoing role as one of the mainstays of the Mercedes Formula 1 team’s simulator programme confirms that things have changed since his days of racing in LMP1 with Aston Martin, Peugeot and Toyota between 2009 and 2017.



An LMH, like the LMDh prototypes from Porsche and Cadillac joining the WEC this year, is heavier, has less downforce and less combined power from the internal combustion and front-axle hybrid element of its powertrain than the previous generation of prototypes. And unlike the last two iterations of the Toyota LMP1 hybrid that Davidson raced, it is not really four-wheel drive at all.







Davidson's stint in the Peugeot simulator a "real eye opener" on sportscar state of play

The advantages that come with all-wheel traction have been pretty much removed as part of the convergence process designed to align the performance of the LMHs with the rear-hybrid LMDhs.

The minimum weight of four-wheel-drive LMH is 1040kg, though both the Peugeot and Toyota raced significantly higher than that under the Balance of Performance last season. The Peugeot topped out at 1079kg, the Toyota at 1071kg. That compares with the 870kg base weight of the LMP1 in the days when Davidson and his team-mates were battling Porsche and Audi for supremacy at the front of a hotly contested WEC.

"I did get a sense of the mass of the vehicle and the inertia that comes with it straight away," says Davidson, who has a quick spin early in his run out of the Ford Chicane. "That was me struggling to slow the car down as I was getting used to it and then hitting the kerb. I'll allow myself one spin on a sim brand new to me, but the car definitely doesn't like heavy braking and changing direction at the same time. When you have a moment and slide the car, it slides for longer than you think it should. It doesn't like being thrown around."

"I could really feel the weight in the Dunlop Curve and the

*"It's good to understand a bit more just how different the new cars are to the prototypes I drove during my career"*

sequence after the chicane leading up to Tertre Rouge. It took me a couple of laps to take the Dunlop Curve flat. I thought, 'Whoa, this thing wants to understeer when I want to be squaring it up for the left into the chicane.'

"The right-hander out of the chicane and over the brow of the hill was a really intimidating corner. Then at the bottom of the hill, in the left-right that takes you up towards Tertre Rouge before the Mulsanne Straight, I could really feel the pendulum effect caused by the weight. An LMH is definitely not as nimble and agile as the P1s I drove, nor the LMP2 I raced at the end of my career, but with the extra weight that's to be expected. It's simple physics."

The weight of the car is only one of the things that come as a culture shock to Davidson, although his driving environment is »





Davidson happy that his time behind the wheel remains off the race track

somehow familiar. The Peugeot sim, a system developed in-house by the Stellantis brand, has been built up around the monocoque from a V8-powered 908. That's the car sometimes referred to by its internal codename, the 90X, and a machine in which the Briton won three races in the 2011 Intercontinental Le Mans Cup that led into the rebirth of the WEC the following year. The tub was written off in an accident during testing, subsequently built up as a show car and then given another lease of life in the sim.

Davidson gets behind the wheel of the hybrid with certain preconceptions about what the front-only system on the latest Peugeot prototype would give him as a driver. "There's something about driving a four-wheel-drive hybrid that must be hardwired into me," he explains. "My brain was telling me that I'd have traction at the front to give me extra stability on corner exit, but I didn't feel any four-wheel drive at all."

That's because the speed at which electric power from the front-axle motor generator unit can be deployed is now strictly controlled. The original minimum on the introduction of LMH in 2021 was 120km/h (75mph), but from last year it became part of the system of Balance of Performance central to the new



Sim constructed using the rebuilt tub from a crashed V8-powered 908



era of sportscar racing that begins with the Sebring 1000 Miles on 17 March. The Toyota ran to a 190km/h (118mph) minimum in 2022, the Peugeot on its arrival in the series at Monza in July 150km/h (93mph), because it runs wider front wheels and tyres and narrower rears than its Japanese rival. It changes the whole dynamic of driving a prototype of today compared with what came before.

"You haven't got the front wheels clawing away on the surface of the track, which gave those Toyotas I drove so much stability," points out Davidson. "There was an understeery feel to the Peugeot in the sim, while you could also feel the rear end squirming away on the power. Having a car that I knew was a hybrid snapping around at the rear was counter-intuitive for me."

"You've got corners like Tertre Rouge and exiting the Porsche Curves where you are in the speed range for the four-wheel drive to in theory be kicking in, but you've got so much downforce at those speeds that you aren't traction limited. Four-wheel drive wouldn't give you much of an advantage at those points on the track."

In the new era, a clearly defined torque curve is laid down for each car in the BoP ahead of every race. The 200kW (260bhp) maximum power allowed from the MGU doesn't come in on top of the 500kW (670bhp) allowed from the internal combustion engine. That 500kW figure for Le Mans – and 520 for other WEC races – is also maximum total power allowed, no matter how much the MGU at the front is working.

"Getting on the power was really interesting, and night and day compared with the four-wheel-drive Toyota LMP1 cars I drove," continues Davidson. "In my day we treated the throttle like a switch – you could just mash the pedal. It had a very small range of travel because it didn't need it. We had a massive amount of torque in the old days, because we had the power from the conventional engine and then the hybrid system on top of that. We had 500bhp from the combustion engine and at one stage





GOODEN/DPPI

Car's weight and lack of perceptible front-axle traction a culture shock

*“Having a car that I knew was a hybrid snapping around at the rear was counter-intuitive for me”*

another 500bhp from the hybrid when we needed it, which was usually on corner exit.”

The way that the torque comes in from the Peugeot's 2.6-litre twin-turbo V6 is something that strikes Davidson on his brief acquaintance with the 9X8. “Peak torque was at surprisingly high revs,” he explains. “At first I felt I could labour a taller gear for a lot longer and it would still deliver enough torque. I realised after a few laps it was better to rev it, so you end up hovering quite close to the shift point a lot of the time. That makes catching slides and snaps a bit more tricky.”

There are a couple of final questions that have to be asked of Davidson after his return to the cockpit of a contemporary prototype. One is specific to the 9X8: did he feel the absence of the rear wing when driving the car? “I didn't even think about

it when I was in the sim,” he responds. “Sure there's a big visual impact when you look at a car without a rear wing because we've all grown up seeing wings on the back of racing cars, but this car develops its downforce through ground-effects. If you can balance the car without a wing on the back, why not?”

And has his brief time in the Peugeot sim whetted his appetite for a comeback in sportscar racing's new golden age? “I know the Peugeot has air-conditioning, something the Toyota never had, so it would have a bit of creature comfort for an old man like me. But I've done my time on the race track: I'll talk about what I see happening out there on TV instead.”

## > NEXT WEEK

Our 17-page guide to the 2023 World Endurance Championship



Wingless design stands out but doesn't get a moment's thought inside the sim

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IMAGES



# SECOND TIME AROUND

*They've been there, done it and worn the T-shirt in F1.  
But for ex-GP racers, helping their offspring up the  
single-seater ladder is no easy pursuit*

JAMES NEWBOLD

**Y**ou don't have to look far to find the inspiration for the helmet design used by newly crowned Formula Regional Oceania (nee Toyota Racing Series) champion Charlie Wurz. The 17-year-old is the second son of three-time Formula 1 podium finisher and two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Alex Wurz, who famously painted his own zig-zag helmet designs that were instantly identifiable wherever he went.

Of course, a distinctive helmet livery isn't the only benefit Wurz Jr and his younger brother – kart racer Oscar – can derive from their father. The Austrian's years of extensive racing and testing experience mean he has unparalleled knowledge of tyre behaviour and vehicle dynamics, while his time leading the FIA's Young Driver Excellence Academy and running his own Test & Training driver school makes him uniquely positioned as an asset to call upon. What Wurz Sr doesn't know about driver improvement isn't worth knowing. But how best to use that knowledge is something he admits is a constant learning curve as his "very analytical" approach, he discovered, was "perhaps overwhelming for the teams and engineers as well as Charlie".

"There are a lot of things I have experienced, but this is still in the pinnacle of motorsport that's not always applying to a single brand car," Wurz Sr admits. "If I'm looking for issues which might be applicable in





Montoya Sr  
recognises that  
Red Bull Junior  
son Sebastian  
“needs to lead his  
own career”

Back in the day: Montoya  
leads Barrichello in 2001  
French Grand Prix

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

DUTCH PHOTOAGENCY/REDBULL CONTENT POOL



DUNBAR/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

top cars because they're individual parts – well, if Tatuus [Formula Regional constructor] makes 10,000 or 1000 roll bars then the fact that maybe one or the other is different, it's very small. My input has to be adjusted to not be invasive, to be productive. What I'm learning myself is to let them come. If they are opening up and say, 'What do you think about tyre temperatures or set-up direction, should I confront my engineer or should I not?', then it's easier to give a direction."

In a similar position is Rubens Barrichello, who won 11 grands prix during a lengthy F1 career that has him third on the all-time starts list. For his sons Eduardo (21) and Fernando (17), he says: "I'm there when they ask. If I tell them all I think, they're going to change the whole set-up! They have to grow by themselves, like we did ourselves."

As such, Barrichello Sr only ever attends debriefs when asked to do so, although he relishes poring over data with his offspring afterwards: "It's very important that whatever is happening to the car, it's equal to what they feel about it."

Therein lies the paradox. But it's a very different approach to the sometimes "harsh" and ultra-hands-on approach adopted by Jos Verstappen that helped shape son Max's prodigious talent. His record as the youngest F1 winner ever is unlikely ever to be surpassed, and you wouldn't bet against him adding to his two world titles. >>



## FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

Having years of finely tuned insight is all well and good, but how advantageous actually is it for the prospects of their aspiring young F1 racers when – such is the nature of youth – the last person they often want to listen to is their parents?

History shows that just two sons of previous champions have emulated their fathers by winning the F1 World Championship, Damon Hill's and Nico Rosberg's achievements coming 20 years apart. That Verstappen Jr and Kevin Magnussen are the only drivers on the current grid whose fathers also competed in F1 underlines the scale of the challenge facing the many ex-F1 aces – including 2004 Monaco Grand Prix winner Jarno Trulli and long-time Ferrari tester Luca Badoer with their sons Enzo (17) and Brando (16) – trying to help their children follow in their footsteps. Even if you do prise open the door and your name happens to be Schumacher, there may be a Nico Hulkenberg waiting to take your seat...

"For sure the name opens doors," says Barrichello. "But to keep it open, it depends on them."

That's not going to put off Juan Pablo Montoya, whose 17-year-old son Sebastian is now a Red Bull Junior and has stepped up full-time to Formula 3 with Hitech after racing against Eduardo Barrichello in the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine last season. It brings the Colombian seven-time grand prix winner's life full circle – he raced for Helmut Marko's RSM team in the 1997 Formula 3000 championship.

"The thing that has changed for Helmut now is he's got so many more drivers that I think he cannot push the drivers day in, day out and it becomes more of a driver responsibility to do his bit," the former Williams and McLaren driver points out. "We tell Sebastian, 'This is your career, if you want to be better than somebody else, you need to do more than the rest.'"

"Sometimes we can't afford to do as much testing as somebody else, but we compensate. We have our own simulator, we do a lot of training, we're going to start doing a bunch of shifter karts, we're going to do everything in our power to maximise his performance."

Montoya Sr says that he's now reached a point in his own career where the "number one [focus] is him for sure". He found that Sebastian "really could have used my help" on his first visit to Monaco last year, the same weekend Montoya Sr was racing at the Indianapolis 500 with Arrow McLaren. But he too recognises that being too hands-on can be detrimental.

"He needs to figure out a lot of these things himself," Montoya states. "He needs to lead his own career – I try not to get too involved."



View from the top:  
Montoya and Barrichello  
have been there, done it

I intervene more when things are not going well and they need guidance. But at the end of the day, he's the one that has the relationship with the engineers and with the team, not me."

This is a point that teams recognise too. Some take proactive steps to ward off interference, even the well-meaning sort.

"I did learn quite quickly, I just sit in the motorhome and enjoy the coffee," smiles Wurz. "The teams want to make sure, 'please don't engage with us with your experience because we have to build it up together ourselves', and you have to respect that."

It's a situation familiar for Barrichello too: "There are teams that hate if I have a radio, even if I don't talk," he concedes.

Wurz reckons that letting the youngsters make their own mistakes, "for Charlie in terms of set-up or direction or the way he handles a situation", can be helpful in the long run "because it's from the mistakes you learn". Micromanaging, he says, is "definitely not happening in our family" – not least because his work commitments as an ambassador for Toyota, chairman of F1's Grand Prix Drivers' Association and his track design business meant he could attend "one third of the races last year [when Wurz Jr raced in F4] maximum if not less".

"Sometimes it's not good to hold them on the hand at every step," Wurz says. "You have to see the bigger picture, don't see every day as a real deciding moment, it's rarely like that. Therefore it's sometimes



Charlie Wurz was crowned  
Formula Regional Oceania  
champion last month



Montoya Jr (left)  
and Barrichello Jr  
raced in FRECA in 2022





"I'm there when they ask"  
is Barrichello Sr's perspective

## "IT'S SOMETIMES GOOD THAT MISTAKES HAPPEN OR PEOPLE ARE STUBBORN, WANT TO GO THEIR OWN WAY"

good that mistakes happen or people are stubborn, want to go their own way. Those are usually the people who learn the most."

For all of these dads, who are so accustomed to being paid to race, the experience of going back to chasing sponsors has been an eye-opener. "It's not easy," admits Montoya.

For Wurz, who secured a spot for Charlie with ART in the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine, his surname makes no difference when it comes to negotiating with teams given the high demand for seats, but reckons it has its advantages when it comes to sponsorship. On the subject of special events such as private driving days, Wurz "can also offer myself as part of the value".

"You have to think of how to return favours like organise incentive programmes, company visits," he explains. "With Charlie we went for example to Remus [an Austrian exhaust manufacturer], we organised a pizza truck and made pizzas for 500 of the employees. We know that a few months later, internally they still talk about it."

Barrichello has raced for Toyota in his domestic Stock Car series since 2020, and Toyota Gazoo Racing Latin America was a prominent backer of Eduardo's racing through to last season's FRECA campaign. But while Fernando has a seat locked in with Spanish Formula 4 squad Monlau Motorsport, nothing has yet been signed for Eduardo, with Barrichello Sr admitting "it's been hard to find a budget". A future in touring cars or GT machinery in Brazil appears to be his most likely career option.

A successful racing parent is therefore no guarantee of a smooth path right to the top and, as Wurz points out, "it gives disadvantages too". He takes a balanced view of the pros and cons.

"Of course, you have advantages and it would be wrong not to use them because it's a competitive game," he says. "Knowing a circuit is an advantage, being able to call up people because I have built up my network, it's an advantage. We have to make use of this. Equally there are disadvantages. When expectations are too high, perhaps some sponsors might think, 'They seem to be well off, why do I need to help them?' And sometimes because there have been racing drivers with their kids, some of them didn't do a good job with the team so everyone says, 'Someone like Alex will come in and dictate everything.'"

It's hard enough to make the journey to the top once. But to do it a second time, supporting the ambitions of your offspring – well, that's a whole different story. ❄



Sharing a car much more  
than just quality father and  
son time for the Montoyas

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## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

When Alex Wurz's youngest son Oscar steps up from karting this year, he will be immersed in "doing all sorts of different things" including Formula 4 and touring car tests, plus rallycross. This sensory assault previously experienced by elder brother Charlie, his father explains, is intended to "give him experience in different scenarios, different weather conditions, different cars, front-wheel, rear-wheel drive, just so you learn about vehicle dynamics, tyres and also learn how to quickly adjust to new cars and circuit conditions".

As the son of European Rallycross champion Franz, it's no surprise to hear Wurz extol the discipline's virtues, and he reckons it will have benefits for "anyone who pursues a single-seater career or any professional career".

"In split seconds you have to take decisions because you can't wait for another lap," he points out. "So they're training for the mind to make fast decisions and live with the consequence. And you learn equally if you don't take the decision, the guy behind you takes it for you because he dives into half a hole."

"It's very explosive, you also go sometimes to the most deciding heat race, early Sunday morning, there is no

warm-up and you go from zero to one hundred adrenalin and you have to make this work. That's really valuable lessons, beside the fact it's really fun."

Juan Pablo Montoya has also seen to it that his son Sebastian builds experience outside single-seaters – they shared a DragonSpeed LMP2 ORECA-Gibson 07 in three IMSA SportsCar Championship outings last year. Montoya Jr had to adapt to racing faster DPi prototypes and slower LMP3 and GT machinery,

### "IF YOU DON'T TAKE THE DECISION, THE GUY BEHIND YOU TAKES IT FOR YOU"

which meant he was overtaking and being overtaken several times per lap, all the while being encouraged to broaden his understanding of car set-up.

"Being on the same car has been very useful," says Montoya Sr. "It's been a bit of an eye-opener to [realise], 'OK, the car is bad, they can actually change the car and make it drive better', because a lot of the junior formula teams taught the drivers that 'this is the car and you've just got to drive it.'"



# TOP 10 PRE-WAR GRAND PRIX CARS

*We pick the most successful and important machines from the 1906-39 GP period*

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY GPL AND  **motorsport  
IMAGES**

9

**FIAT  
804-404  
1922**

Fiat was one of the major players in the early days of GP racing, and the 804-404 was the best car at the start of the new two-litre regulations in 1922. It won the all-important French GP and the Italian GP.

Felice Nazzaro, a winner with Fiat before the First World War, overcame the Bugatti opposition in Strasbourg, but a lost wheel due to the rough circuit caused his nephew Biagio Nazzaro to crash fatally in one of the sister cars.

Nevertheless, the 804 helped set the template for the future. "It showed that a racing car should be small, light, and compact, with a body of efficient aerodynamic shape that the driver and mechanic could sit in instead of on," wrote Autosport's legendary technical editor John Bolster. "The 1922 Fiat was the biggest advance in the design of the complete racing car until the Auto Union came along. No racing car was built after 1922 that did not betray some Fiat influence."

Fiat managed another major milestone in 1923, before withdrawing from GP competition. While others followed the 804's lead – Sunbeam was even accused of copying the car for its successful 1923 contender – Fiat introduced the 805, which at Monza became the first supercharged machine to win a major GP.

10

**DELAGE TYPE 15 S8  
1926-27**

There were various regulations prior to the arrival of the famous 750kg weight formula in 1934, and one of those was a 1500cc engine limit for 1926-27. The exquisite Delage straight-eight Type 15, designed by Albert Lory, was undoubtedly the car of the era, but minimal opposition means it can't climb higher on this list.

Teething problems, including extreme cockpit heat, were addressed following outings in 1926, and the Type 15 was ready for the following season. Delage's lead driver Robert Benoist won four of the five qualifying races for the short-lived World Manufacturers' Championship, including the French GP, easily giving the financially troubled firm the 1927 title.

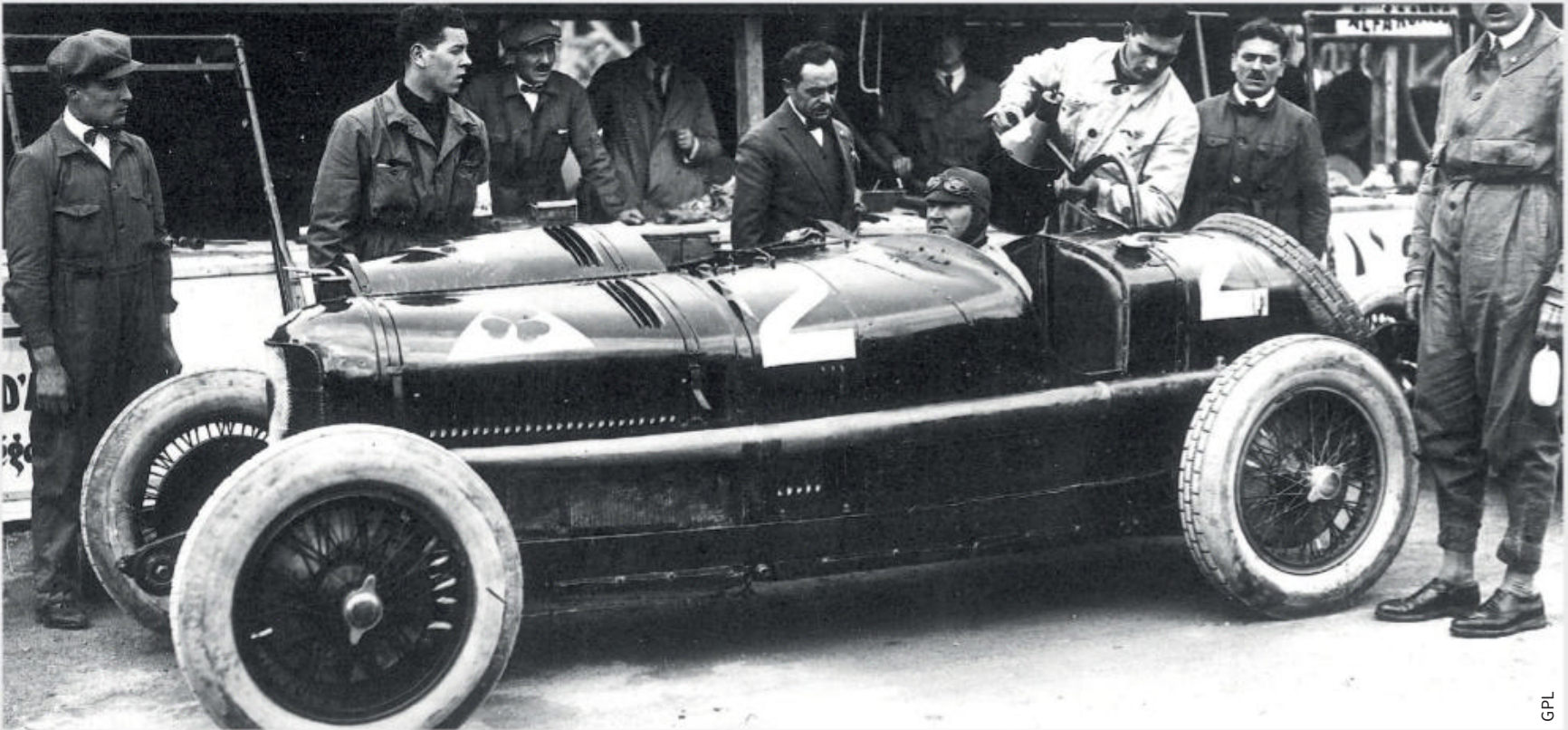
Key to the car's success was its expensive powerplant, which featured a nickel-chromium crankshaft and nine roller bearings, producing 170bhp at 8000rpm, a high engine speed for the time. "The Delages were masterpieces of design and construction," wrote George Monkhouse in his 1950 book *Grand Prix Racing*. "They were extremely reliable and ran like sewing machines."

Although not strictly top-level GP events, the 1936 Voiturette successes scored by Richard Seaman in his modified and lightened 1927 Delage – against strong, newer ERA and Maserati opposition – underlined the design's quality and helped launch the Briton's GP career.



GPL





8

## ALFA ROMEO P2 1924-25

Designed by the legendary Vittorio Jano, poached from Fiat, the straight-eight, supercharged P2 was a winner from the moment it appeared, when Antonio Ascari (father of Alberto) claimed the Cremona GP. It was probably the best car of GP racing's two-litre 1922-25 period.

Alfa Romeo faced strong opposition at the blue-riband 1924 French GP at Lyon in a field

that included Fiat, Sunbeam and Delage entries, as well as the new Type 35 Bugatti. After the early pacesetters – Henry Segrave's Sunbeam and the Fiat of Pietro Bordino – hit trouble, Alfa Romeo took control. Ascari suffered late engine problems, but Giuseppe Campari came through to take a big win.

Ascari won the Italian GP against weaker opposition and Alfa Romeo then took the

often-forgotten inaugural world championship in 1925, despite the death of Ascari at the French GP.

When European motorsport entered a tumultuous and random period in terms of regulations late in the decade, the reliable P2 was still good enough to compete and won the 1930 Targa Florio in modified form, driven by Achille Varzi.

7

## AUTO UNION TYPE C 1936-37

The ultimate evolution of the first line of Auto Unions designed by Ferdinand Porsche, the mid-engined V16-powered Type C wrestled the advantage away from German rival Mercedes in 1936. Although tricky to drive, with a tendency to oversteer, the six-litre, 520+bhp Auto Union had its perfect foil in the fearless and flamboyant Bernd Rosemeyer.

Aside from a wet-weather masterclass from Mercedes ace Rudolf Caracciola in Monaco, Rosemeyer dominated the major races of the season. He won the German, Swiss and Italian GPs to secure the 1936 European crown, as well as taking non-championship victories at the Eifelrennen and Coppa Acerbo, while Achille Varzi won in Tripoli.

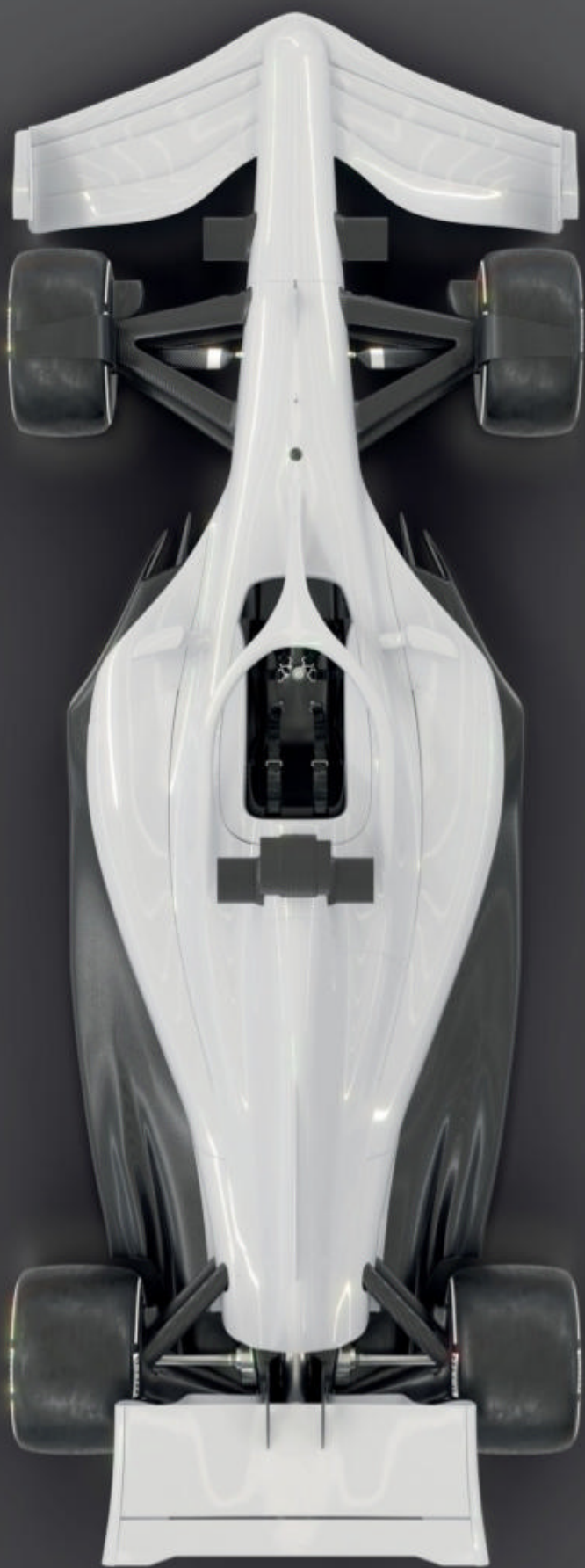
It might sound harsh, but perhaps the Type C's greatest contribution was to force Mercedes into producing the W125, a legendary car that appears higher on our list. Nevertheless, even against that big, front-engined monster, the Auto Union still won the Belgian GP, Eifelrennen, Vanderbilt Cup, Coppa Acerbo and Donington GP in 1937.







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6

**MERCEDES W25**  
**1934-36**

Mercedes was already a proven force in GP racing – most notably with the 1914 18/100 that almost made this list – when it decided to return to the pinnacle of motorsport for 1934.

The straight-eight W25, built to the new 750kg maximum weight formula, was the car with which Mercedes made its comeback and featured all-independent suspension.

The W25, a streamlined machine for the era that utilised light materials to keep weight down, took the Eifelrennen, Coppa Acerbo and Italian and Spanish GPs. It then won almost all the major races in 1935 as Mercedes' lead driver Rudolf Caracciola took the European championship, roughly akin to a world title.

Developments and increasing engine capacity pushed power output well beyond 400bhp but, when combined with the lighter and shortened 1936 chassis, the W25K's handling deteriorated. Bernd Rosemeyer and Auto Union dominated that season and Mercedes withdrew before the end of the campaign to develop a new car, but Caracciola still managed wins in Monaco and Tunis.



GPI



5

## ALFA ROMEO P3/TIPO B 1932-35

Grand prix racing's requirement for a riding mechanic had already gone, but the Vittorio Jano-designed P3 was the first true single-seater GP machine. The P3 arrived for 1932 and Tazio Nuvolari took the European title, winning the Italian and French GPs, while Rudolf Caracciola won the German GP.

The Alfa Romeo factory temporarily withdrew in 1933, leaving Enzo Ferrari to run the main Alfa attack. He was not initially allowed to use the P3s, having to make do with the 8C Monza, but that decision was reversed when Maserati's 8CM started winning and Nuvolari defected to the 'other' Italian team.

Luigi Fagioli's P3 immediately beat Nuvolari's Maserati in the Coppa Acerbo and Italian GP, while Louis Chiron won the Spanish GP after Nuvolari crashed. Maserati had undoubtedly shown its pace, but the P3 kept Alfa at the top of the GP tree... until German teams Mercedes and Auto Union arrived for 1934.

The Tipo B's engine grew from 2.6 to 2.9 litres for the 750kg formula and won both the Monaco GP (before the silver cars arrived) and the French GP (when the new German cars failed). But the P3 was increasingly outgunned.

The engine continued to grow, but the P3 was still on the back foot in 1935, aside from Nuvolari's most famous win in the German GP with the ultimate 3.8-litre version. The P3's time at the top was over.



4

## PEUGEOT L76 1912

Simply making engines bigger so they could produce more power was one of the main methods of improving performance in motoring's early days. The arrival of the Peugeot L76 in 1912 changed that.

Ernest Henry designed a four-cylinder, twin overhead camshaft 7.6-litre engine that produced nearly 150bhp at a time when monsters such as the gargantuan 14.1-litre Fiat S76 gave less than 200bhp.

David Bruce-Brown's Fiat led the first day of the French GP but was disqualified after refuelling away from the pits following a collision on day two. That left Georges Boillot's Peugeot to beat Louis Wagner's Fiat to win.

"Peugeot's defeat of Fiat was justification for the French company's faith in the new philosophy of small engine and light construction," wrote Adriano Cimarosti in *The Complete History of Grand Prix Motor Racing*. "Racing engine design underwent tremendous technical change in the 1912-13 period, much of it pioneered by Peugeot."

Peugeot's success continued when Jules Goux won the 1912 Grand Prix de France (a separate race to the French GP!) and the 1913 Indianapolis 500.

Rule changes meant Peugeot produced the 5.7-litre EX3 version of its concept for the 1913 French GP. It also used dry-sump lubrication, another trendsetting development, and Boillot led Goux in a Peugeot 1-2.

Engine capacity was restricted to 4.5 litres for the 1914 French GP and Boillot's EX5/L45 led for much of the race, chased by the crack Mercedes team, before being struck by engine problems in the closing stages. The start of the First World War made the Lyon event the last in Europe for five years, but Dario Resta scored another big Peugeot success in the 1916 Indy 500.

"The design concept devised by Henry for the 1912 Peugeot was almost universally adopted after the First World War," concluded Cimarosti. "It would not have been possible to develop such powerful engines with the push-rod and rocker-arm system in use before then."

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3

## BUGATTI TYPE 35 1924-30

The most successful racing car of the pre-Second World War era, with probably more wins than any racing car in history, the Bugatti T35 was driven by professionals and amateurs alike in a wide variety of events. It became a workhorse in GP racing and there was even an easier-to-maintain, less-powerful 'sportscar' version available for privateers.

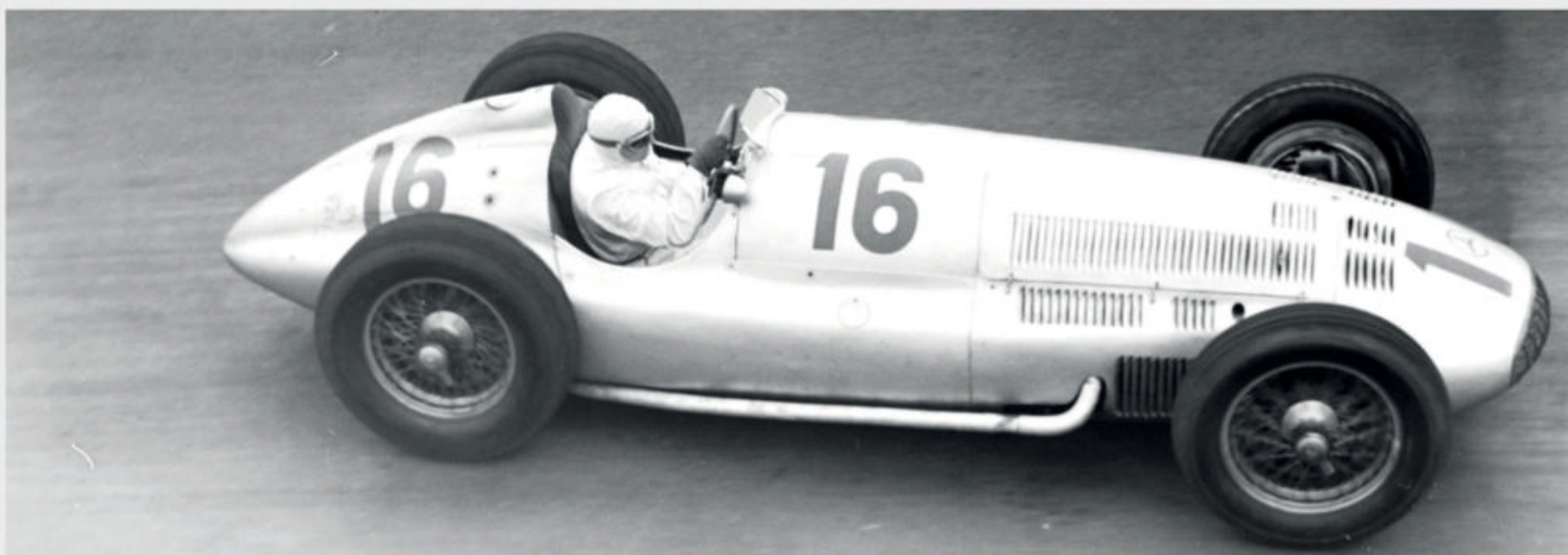
The T35 appeared at the 1924 French GP, but the elegant two-litre machines hit trouble with their non-standard tyres. The wheels had the novelty of featuring the brake drums as an integral part, but that year and 1925 belonged to Alfa Romeo's P2.

Various developments and different engines nevertheless kept the T35 in play throughout the decade, helped by its fine handling and light weight. Bugatti won the five-round world manufacturers' championship in 1926 – the first year of the 1500cc regulations – with the related T39, while the T35 carried on winning elsewhere.

GP racing entered a somewhat odd period in 1928, with few races being run to the official AIACR (forerunner of the FIA) regulations. Although the P2 scored some success, the next three years really belonged to the T35, which by now was also available in supercharged form despite Ettore Bugatti's dislike of the technology. The T35B, featuring a 2.3-litre supercharged engine, was perhaps the ultimate version.

Even as late as 1930, the six-year-old design was capable of winning the Belgian/European (Louis Chiron), French (Philippe Etancelin) and Monaco (Rene Dreyfus) GPs.

Bugatti produced the Type 51 for 1931, outwardly similar but featuring a double overhead camshaft engine that produced an extra 25bhp. Chiron and Achille Varzi shared one to win the epic 10-hour 1931 French GP and there were other victories, but the T51 was quickly surpassed by the Italian opposition and could not repeat the success of the legendary T35.



2

## MERCEDES W154 1938-39

Mercedes' answer to the three-litre regulations of 1938 was the W154, a culmination of all the research and development the team had conducted during the 1930s. Its road-holding matched its near-500bhp output as well as could be expected in a pre-downforce, pre-slick-tyre era, and the W154's engineering was regarded as the sport's benchmark for years following the Second World War.

No expense was spared. "I could have as much as I wanted, nobody said I was spending too much," said chief engineer Rudolf Uhlenhaut in a 1984 TV interview

on the cost of Mercedes' racing programme. "I don't even know what we spent..."

The W154, which even in its earliest form produced more than 150bhp/litre, won most of the major races in 1938, aside from its troubled debut at Pau (won by Delahaye) and two Tazio Nuvolari victories in the Auto Union Type D. Rudolf Caracciola won his third European title, but the balance of power within the team was shifting and it was Hermann Lang who made the car his own.

Lang was the top driver of 1939, with the developed W154 now sporting two-stage

supercharging to boost acceleration, and more streamlined bodywork. Due to confusion over the points system and the outbreak of war, Lang was never officially made European champion, but he won the Pau, Belgian and Swiss GPs, as well as the Eifelrennen, while Caracciola added the German GP to underline Mercedes' position as the top team of the time.

The W154s did appear after the war for two 1951 races in Argentina, but the tight circuit and local fuel did not allow the cars to run to their full potential and they were beaten by Jose Froilan Gonzalez in a newer Ferrari.



1

## MERCEDES W125 1937

The W154 was probably the *better* car, but the W125 is simply one of motorsport's great monsters. Powered by a 5.6-litre, supercharged straight-eight producing over 600bhp, the W125 made a mockery of the 750kg maximum weight regulations aimed at limiting performance. It produced 114bhp per litre, impressive for such a large engine, and 850bhp/tonne.

Stung by defeat at the hands of Auto Union in 1936, Mercedes withdrew from the final races and reorganised its team. Rudolf Uhlenhaut's design department came up with a response and the W125 turned the tables in 1937. Uhlenhaut

identified that the car's predecessor, the W25, had a chassis that flexed too much and suspension that was too stiff, so addressed both.

The result was that even Auto Union's 1936 European champion Bernd Rosemeyer was left struggling. Mercedes won all but one of the five European Championship rounds and its drivers filled the top four spots in the final standings, led by Rudolf Caracciola.

The ludicrous speeds of the leading 1937 cars (Hermann Lang won the Avusrennen at an *average* speed of over 162mph, faster than any world championship F1 race), which sorely tested the

tyre technology of the era, resulted in GP cars being limited to three-litre supercharged engines for 1938. That meant the W125 held lap records for several years. It also stood as GP racing's most powerful car until the first turbo era got into its stride in the early 1980s.

"The designers had developed a machine whose performance would not be surpassed for decades," wrote Adriano Cimarosti. "Mercedes once again took the limelight."


### ➤ NEXT WEEK

We rank the top 10 pre-war GP drivers





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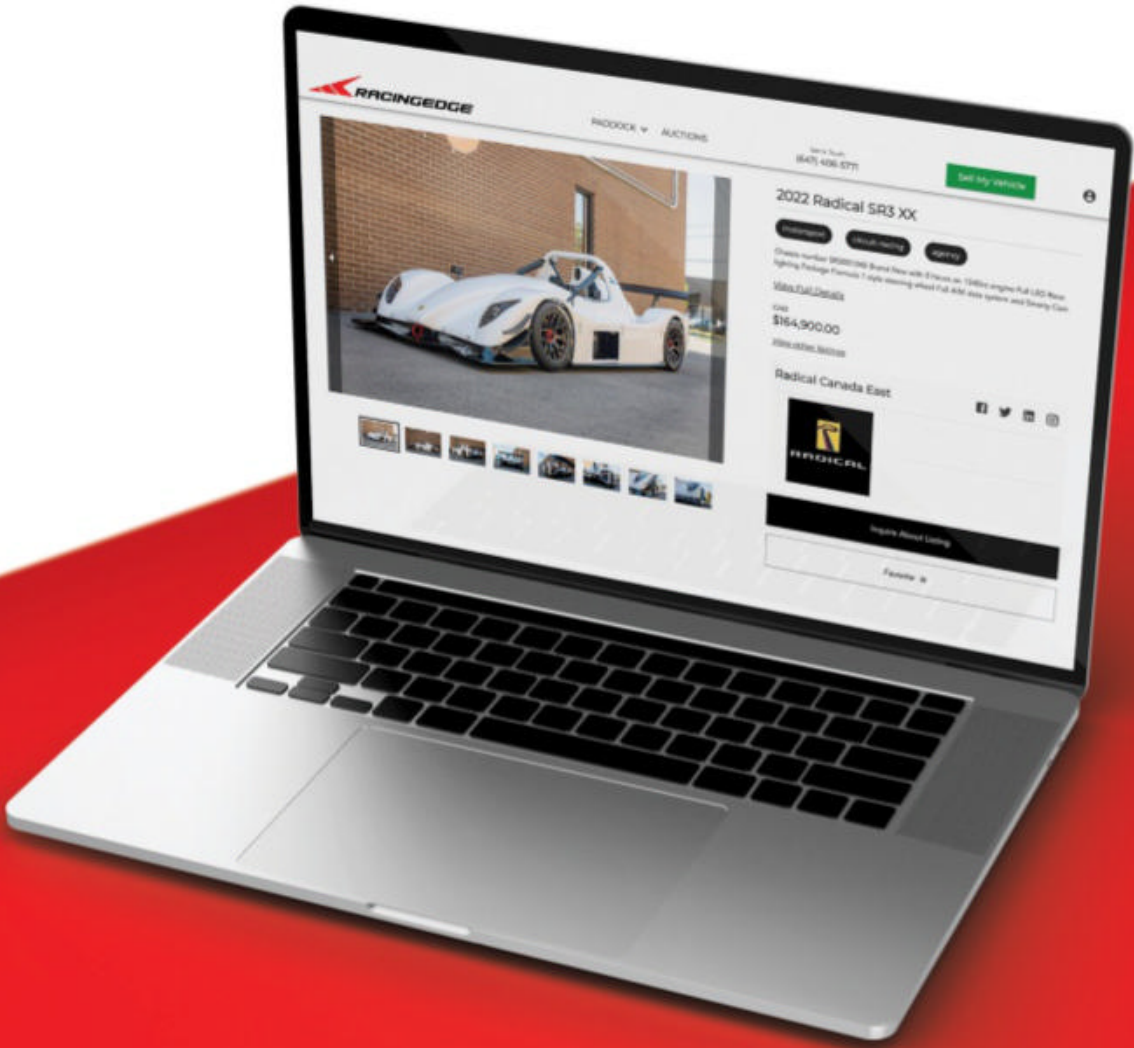


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**British GT Former GT4 champion Middleton back**

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## **Fourmaux heads the BRC entry**

WRC2 star to Malcolm Wilson Rally  
while Cronin targets a fifth crown



**ADAM IN MERC FOR  
BRITISH GT ATTACK**



**LEGENDS STAR RUDMAN  
SWITCHES TO SE-VAN**



**HUGHES FLIES TO ANGLESEY  
CIRCUIT RALLY GLORY**



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Adam drove 2 Seas  
Mercedes at two  
events last season



# Adam and Cottingham to race 2 Seas Merc

## BRITISH GT

Four-time British GT champion Jonny Adam will race part-time in the series this year alongside James Cottingham in a 2 Seas Motorsport-run Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Factory Aston Martin driver Adam will partner Cottingham at five of the seven events this year, but will have to miss the Silverstone three-hour race in May and the Donington Park finale in October due to clashes with the European Le Mans Series.

The 38-year-old, who took British GT3 honours in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019, raced with Anglo-Bahraini squad 2 Seas

at Silverstone and Snetterton last year.

“It’s nice to come back to British GT and nice to do it with James,” said Adam. “I’ve spoken with him on and off for the last year about looking at doing something, and last year obviously it was nice to have a run in the Mercedes with 2 Seas.

“James looked like a championship contender for the final round [last year], so clearly he’s a very good Am. There’s one goal from my side really and that’s to try and put something together for him to try and become a champion – and I think he can. The team is strong, the package is strong with the car and for sure with James and his second year with the car and the team, he’ll improve again.

“British GT is always a tough championship to win, and you have to have consistency through results. This year you can see the strengths of all the line-ups, from the Pro side to even the Am side. It’s going to be a tough year.”

Cottingham competed full-time in British GT last season with 2 Seas alongside Lewis Williamson, after contesting selected rounds in 2021. The duo went to the Donington finale with a chance of the GT3 title, but finished fourth overall. His partner for the two rounds Adam is unable to attend has yet to be announced.

STEFAN MACKLEY



Cottingham finished  
fourth overall last  
year in British GT

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## CLUTTON AND TILLBROOK TARGET TITLE

### BRITISH GT

Marcus Clutton and Morgan Tillbrook will continue for a third year together in British GT in 2023.

The Pro-Am duo finished third in the GT3 standings last year in an Enduro Motorsport-run McLaren 720S, with wins at Donington Park and Brands Hatch. Clutton believes that the pairing and the team, which was founded in 2020, have enough experience to now launch a full assault on the title.

“The championship is the main target, nothing else,” said Clutton. “We’re not there to make up the numbers anymore. We’ve done our homework, we’ve made our mistakes, we’ve proved our pace. With the Evo McLaren that’s come out, I think we’ve got a good chance.”

Enduro will also expand into GT4 for the first time, with Caterham frontrunner Harry George and 2020 Mini Challenge Trophy champion Harry Nunn sharing a McLaren Artura in British GT.

Meanwhile, leading GT World Challenge Europe squad Garage 59 will undergo its first full-time GT3 programme in British GT in 2023 with a pair of McLaren 720S Evos.

Garage 59 finished a close second on its sole 2022 British GT outing at Silverstone with Alexander West and McLaren factory racer Marvin Kirchhofer. Both will now embark upon a full season, with a second car run under the Sky Tempesta banner for series race winner Kevin Tse and Chris Froggatt.

It’s the first full-season campaign in the UK for the Brackley squad since 2017, when it ran two McLaren 570S GT4s.

STEFAN MACKLEY



ENDURO



## ARMSTRONG TO HAVE ANOTHER CAYMAN CRACK

### PORSCHE

Porsche Sprint Challenge GB frontrunner Matt Armstrong will continue in the series for a third year with the Team Parker Racing squad.

Armstrong was a title contender for much of last season before a tricky end to the campaign dropped him out of the top three in the standings. But he is now determined to bounce back when the series joins the British Touring Car support bill full-time this year.

“Last season was good on the whole, but the last few rounds didn’t go to plan, so the aim is to fight for the championship this year as a minimum,” said Armstrong. “I have progressed quite a lot from my first season, and this year I’m aiming to be at the front much more consistently.

“There was no consideration of racing anywhere else. The experience of everyone at Team Parker Racing is key and it’s not just about racing, though results are important, as the team and the atmosphere are a big part of the weekends. With these guys, they are enjoyable ones, and everyone is really supportive.”

FIRST 4 VANS



## Legends champion Rudman to race Se-Van at BTCC events

### LEGENDS

Reigning Legends champion Miles Rudman will switch to the unusual ‘Se-Van’ model for this season’s three-event Legends Elite Cup contest.

Rudman, who claimed a third title last season, was not expecting to continue in Legends this year but, after discussions with the First 4 Vans squad, he will now appear in a newly built sister Se-Van to Nathan Anthony’s existing machine. Rudman will tackle the three Legends rounds that support the British Touring Car Championship, held at Brands Hatch, Croft and Knockhill.

“I wasn’t planning to come back this

year, I’d sold everything and then I saw the Elite Cup BTCC events announced!” said Rudman. “I’d mentioned to Nathan about driving one of his vans a while ago, then we had a couple of messages between us and here we are!

“It’s going to be a new challenge for me in the Se-Van but my main ambition is to get Nathan a win. He’s given me a fantastic opportunity to race on the touring car package, I’m very thankful to Nathan and I really hope we can deliver a great season.”

Anthony added: “Everyone at First 4 Vans is buzzing, we can’t wait for the season to start. I’m hoping I can learn a thing or two from the champion!”

## De Haan champion of Sprint Challenge Southern Europe

### PORSCHE

Former Ginetta Junior racer Robert de Haan secured the inaugural Porsche Sprint Challenge Southern Europe title at Barcelona at the end of last month, despite his winning streak being broken.

The Dutchman had triumphed in the opening four contests of the winter series after reuniting with the Richardson Racing squad that powered him to Ginetta Junior rookie honours in 2021. He continued his impressive run of Porsche poles at the Spanish finale, making it six from six, but was spun out at the first corner of the opening race

and then settled for second in race two, after losing the lead at the start.

“We knew he would be quick but the pace he showed was quite remarkable,” said team boss Gwyn Richardson. “I don’t think there were many sessions he wasn’t the quickest in.”

Richardson explained that his team was keen to field de Haan again after the teenager impressed in a test in one of its Porsches last year. “We never lost touch with them [the de Haans] all last year when they were doing Spanish F4,” he added.

“We put him in the car for a test day in October. It was his first time in the

Six poles from six races  
for the Richardson racer



PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE SOUTHERN EUROPE

car and he didn’t hook up a complete lap but, if you looked at his fastest sectors, he would’ve been on pole, so we were quite keen to have him on board. We could see his potential when he was in Ginetta Junior.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Four Minis will join the four  
BTCC Fords in NAPA colours



## NAPA Racing UK expands beyond BTCC with Mini entries

### MINI CHALLENGE

The Motorbase-run NAPA Racing UK squad has revealed a major expansion for this year, including entering cars in the Mini Challenge and fielding quadruple Renault UK Clio Cup champion Paul Rivett in the British Truck Racing Championship.

Alongside NAPA increasing its British Touring Car involvement to cover all four of the Motorbase Ford Focuses, it will also now field two JCW Minis as well as a brace of Coopers in the Mini Challenge Trophy. The Minis will also be overseen by Wayne Eason – the boss of successful Clio Cup squad WDE Motorsport – and he will be supported by several WDE mechanics.

Jamie Osborne – who took a best result of ninth in his rookie Mini campaign last year and is the son of Motorbase owner

Pete – and former Mini Se7en title contender Lewis Selby will race the JCWs. Eason's son Callum, who is a Focus Cup frontrunner, and novice Cam Richardson will pilot the Coopers.

"It's going to be a nice additional bolt-on to what NAPA are doing in touring cars," said Eason Sr. "Pete Osborne is a really good friend of mine. NAPA's plans were they wanted to move into a few more things, I was always going to put Callum in Mini Trophy and bought a car, so it just made sense really.

"I love a challenge – we got to grips with the Clio pretty well and I think the Mini is going to present a whole new challenge, but it should be good. In Trucks, to go and win the championship is the minimum expectation."

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

### IN THE HEADLINES



PHIL TAYLOR

### SPORTS 2000 DRIVERS TO OZ

Sports 2000 Historic Pinto champions Jon Harmer and Clive Steeper are due to race at the Phillip Island Classic in a Tiga SC85 (above) this weekend. Joining them on the circuit will be another dozen or so Australian Sports 2000 campaigners. It is hoped that Tiga co-founder Tim Schenken will be in attendance.

### SALLY MASON-STYRRON

Synonymous with competing in the finest Ferraris for four decades, and omnipresent at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, Sally Mason-Styrron died last month. Having first saddled Richard Colton's Prancing Horses in speed events, Sally was better known for hillclimbing 166 MM barchetta, 246SP Dino, and the ex-Jacky Ickx/Derek Bell Formula 2/Tasman 166/246 Dino with verve.

### GB3 ENTRIES FLOOD IN

The number of drivers confirmed for GB3 this year has risen to 23. David Morales will race with JHR after driving for Arden last season, when he took a best result of third. Ayato Iwasaki, who raced in the 2022 season finale with Elite, stays with that team. British Formula 4 race winner Michael Shin will also step up to the series with Hitech.

## Guinchard switches to CDR for second F4 season

### BRITISH F4

British Formula 4 race winner Daniel Guinchard has switched to Chris Dittmann Racing for his second season in the category.

Guinchard arrived in F4 last year with Argenti Motorsport, the squad that had powered him to two British Kart Championship titles in 2021, but the former Mercedes junior was unable to repeat that form and he finished ninth in the standings with six podiums.

"My first season in British

F4 was a bit underwhelming for a lot of different reasons," he admitted. Of his switch to CDR, Guinchard has described the atmosphere in the team as "really happy and upbeat and I feel at home already".

"I think my previous experience in the F4 car will be an advantage to an extent, but then you'll also have the new drivers that will come into the championship all guns blazing," he added. "We definitely have a good shot of winning this year, but we're focusing on



Karting ace was a winner  
with Argenti last season

MICK WALKER

having a good start to the season and we'll go from there."

CDR, meanwhile, has also announced Zak Taylor as its second GB3 driver for this year.

Taylor started last season with Fortec Motorsport, but joined CDR for the final two rounds and is now set to contest a full campaign with the squad.



# WRC2 star Fourmaux to BRC opener

## RALLYING

Scroll down the entry list of this weekend's opening round of the British Rally Championship and you will observe a distinctly different look to the UK's top-flight series in 2023.

The Cumbrian forests of the Malcolm Wilson Rally will host the championship for the first time in decades and, although the one-day blast has the infamous Grizedale Forest and tricky Greystoke tests on the bill, it is the BRC frontrunners who are grabbing the headlines.

With the season starting at the home of the M-Sport Ford World Rally Team, it made sense for the squad to bring out the big guns, and it has duly delivered. WRC2 ace Adrien Fourmaux was looking for additional seat time ahead of Rally Mexico, and the 'Wilson' was the ideal opportunity. Arguably the perfect benchmark for BRC hopefuls, Fourmaux is aware that a win is not a foregone conclusion, despite having succeeded on this event in 2020.



Fourmaux previously won  
Malcolm Wilson Rally in 2020

"Honestly, I don't really know [what to expect]," he said. "I think we will have a very high level of competition, it's always interesting to fight in a national championship. I'm expecting a nice rally on the Malcolm Wilson. It's a good opportunity to support the WRC2 fight this year."

Behind him, a fascinating mix of contenders are eager for their shot at glory. Irishman Keith Cronin is desperate to secure his record-equalling fifth title and placed a late entry in his Volkswagen Polo, while James Williams – third in last year's standings – heads the chasing pack, aptly switching allegiances to Ford's Fiesta Rally2.

Skoda Fabia driver Garry Pearson returns

to the mix and BTRDA champion Elliot Payne (Fiesta) mounts a full campaign. He will be flanked by Callum Black (Fiesta), who contests his first BRC assault in eight years.

Reigning Junior BRC champion Eamonn Kelly steps up to BRC1 alongside his Junior WRC commitments and National champion Alan Carmichael also joins the fray in his Hyundai i20. Newcomers include American Allen Dobasu (Fiesta), Hugh Brunton (Fabia) and Gavin Edwards (Fiesta).

In the JBRC, Kyle White brings the noise in his Peugeot 208, while Fiesta Rally4 rivals include Casey Jay Coleman and Academy Trophy champ Kyle McBride.

**MATT COTTON**

# Hughes/Cunniff lead the way at Anglesey rally

Fiesta R5 pairing was  
fastest on every stage



PAUL LAWRENCE

## CIRCUIT RALLYING

Fastest time on every stage at Anglesey ensured a dominant win for Rob Hughes and Sion Cunniff on the latest Circuit Rally Championship event last weekend.

Despite a spin at the first corner, Ford Fiesta

R5 driver Hughes pulled out a 13-second lead on the first test. Hughes continued to ease himself clear and finally took the victory spoils by 47s, with Michael Igoe/Will Atkins retaining a solid second in their Fiesta after settling to the showery conditions.

The Fiesta R5 of

championship leaders John Griffiths/Emma Morrison climbed to third after they had a first stage spin and stall – a result that gave them a maximum points score and means they could seal the title at Donington Park this weekend.

**PETER SCHERER**

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# Eddie McLurg 1943-2023

## OBITUARY

Hard-charging Scot Eddie McLurg, a stalwart of Special Saloon, Donington GT and Formule Libre racing, has died just short of his 80th birthday, having battled asbestosis lung cancer for over 18 months.

A seven-year joinery apprenticeship underpinned Kirkcudbrightshire-born McLurg's successful career as a building contractor in South London from 1973.

After debuting a shared Mini in 1974, McLurg graduated to a Hillman Imp, a familiar combo at Brands Hatch and Lydden until the end of the decade. Rolled at Lydden in 1979, it was replaced by a John Maguire spaceframe version.

In 1983, McLurg bought Roger Matthews's 1500cc Maguire Lotus Esprit-BDA principally for the Donington GT championship, which he won outright in 1985. After adding a class title, he

ran it sparingly until 1989.

By then, he had switched focus to the March-BMW 822 that Quique Mansilla raced in the 1984 Can-Am two-litre division. A Thundersports outing with Simon Hadfield at Snetterton in 1988 netted fifth, before post-race exclusion because the car was 320kg inside the Can-Am class weight limit!

Thereafter the March graced Interserie and National Libre events, where McLurg earned the final crown in 1989. Back at Lydden, Eddie was first to lap inside 40 seconds.

The new BOSS Formula brought the F2 March out again, before McLurg acquired an F1 Footwork Arrows FA13B for 1997. Undeterred by a huge shunt in Donington's Craner Curves in 2000, in which its tub and Hart V8 engine were separated, Eddie demoed it until he was 77.

MARCUS PYE



# MIDDLETON AIMS TO ADD TO 2017 BRITISH GT4 TITLE

## BRITISH GT

Stuart Middleton, the 2017 British GT4 champion, will return to the series this season to share a Ginetta G56 (below) with Freddie Tomlinson at Raceway Motorsport.

Middleton and Will Tregurtha became the youngest crew to win the GT4 title when they drove a Ginetta G55 to the crown. Since then, Middleton has raced in the Lamborghini Super Trofeo in Europe and North America, as well as becoming a race winner in Italian GT.

"It's a pleasure to be back on home soil and to compete in British GT again," he said. "I'm looking forward to getting behind the wheel of the Ginetta and working with the team. I won the championship back in 2017, so there's only one aim: win the title again."

Tomlinson, son of Ginetta company owner Lawrence, will continue for a second British GT season after competing with Assetto Motorsport last year. Raceway makes its BGT debut after several years in Ginetta series, including taking multiple G40 and GT5 titles over the past three seasons and the 2022 GTA championship.

Team principal Luca Hirst said: "[Middleton] was one of those who looked to be going places when he raced in Ginetta's junior categories but still probably surprised a few people outside of those circles when he won the GT4 title.

"He's gone on to race faster cars, but I also know he's relishing the opportunity to be the elder statesman – if that's possible at 23. Between him and Freddie I think we've put together a very capable pairing."



# CTCRC to trial start money at Croft

## CTCRC

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club will trial the introduction of start money for its drivers this year.

The club, which runs eight championships for tin-tops spanning five decades, introduced prize money for the top three in each of its series two years ago. It is now altering its approach so that more of its drivers can benefit.

Competitors contesting the CTCRC event at Croft in mid-August will receive £50 start money for each race of the double-header, effectively reducing entry fees by £100 for drivers who start both races.

"We felt that prize money was good but we wanted it to be more inclusive for everybody," said chairman Stuart Caie. "This will make a difference to people's race-weekend costs. We're

trialling it at Croft because that is a long journey for many people and we want to help them. It may also give a little extra incentive for those who have a problem in the first race to persevere with fixing the car for race two.

"We're a non-profit-making club and so it's the members – the competitors – who should benefit from our success."

MARK PAULSON



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# Should more circuit racing events be held during winter?

*This year's club racing season began in February. Our writers debate whether such an early start should become a regular occurrence*



**YES**  
**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

This time last year (Autosport, 10 March), we were eagerly looking forward to a club racing season about to begin in March, after two years of delayed starts due to the coronavirus pandemic. Twelve months on, however, and the campaign is already under way thanks to the Classic Sports Car Club taking a gamble and holding its curtain-raiser at Silverstone on the last weekend in February.

As my colleague Marcus Pye detailed last week (Autosport, 2 March), the event was a success. Almost 170 entries were received, the combined Tin Tops and Turbo Tin Tops grid attracted over 50 cars alone and the meeting drew plenty of praise.

And it should embolden organisers to break from the norm. For too long, the traditional car racing season of March to November has been rigidly stuck to by all – instead, innovation should be encouraged and let's have more winter events in the future.

Now, hold on, you may be thinking, is this the same writer who has long argued there are too many national events, which dilute the pool of competitors, now suggesting there should be more racing? Well, no. Any winter meetings should not be extra ones, instead they should be an elongation of a club's calendar, not an addition to it.

It's no secret there are concerns over the number of marshals, officials and other vital volunteers available during the peak of the season when the majority of circuits in the country are hosting events. But, by having the campaign spread over a wider timeframe, some of the pressure could be removed from those busy weekends, making them more manageable. It also means drivers can spread the cost of going racing over a longer period.

Now, there are undeniably a few pitfalls. Some circuits undergo development works during the winter, for example. Some racers may be reluctant to fire up their steeds in the cold winter months – yet there is no guarantee of avoiding snow as late as Easter.

Instead, let's seize the positives and have more variety. Rather than some clubs effectively copying and pasting a calendar from one year to the next, why not mix things up a bit? Bravo to the CSCC for showing what can be done and once again leading the way when it comes to club motorsport innovation.

**“For too long, the traditional car racing season has been rigidly stuck to”**



**NO**  
**STEFAN MACKLEY**

Disappointment and anger were the two emotions prominent among drivers, teams and spectators at the Formula Ford Festival last October. Officially, a two-lap 'race' was held for the final after forecast heavy rain arrived and forced organisers to put out the red flag, while a subsequent lack of daylight meant a restart was never possible. It left a bitter taste for many – not least this writer – when, after months of planning, days of testing and several thrilling heats, the main event was effectively cancelled.

But at least there had been almost a full weekend of action at Brands Hatch, while the same couldn't be said in 2018 at Donington Park when the 750 Motor Club had to cancel its mid-March meeting in the wake of heavy snowfall.

While the club was able to reorganise another meeting at Anglesey for the majority of series and championships, it took a hit financially and has avoided a repeat of an early season meeting on its calendars in the following years. The point is that organisers

**“Any forced cancellation could leave clubs open to big losses”**

can plan to the best of their abilities and even account for delays, with a buffer ahead of sunset to try to ensure all races are completed. But there's no denying that at times we're all at the mercy of the elements, even more so with unpredictable and severe weather on the rise. Of course, a sudden thunderstorm can strike in the middle of summer

and force cancellations, but the probability of bad weather goes up ten-fold by holding meetings as early as February.

Having national meetings earlier in the season is a good idea on paper – outlined by my colleague – and hats off to the Classic Sports Car Club for taking the gamble and holding a well-attended and successful meeting. But playing devil's advocate, what if the scheduled cold weather and predicted snowfall for this week had arrived on that February weekend?

They may be ifs, buts and maybes, but any forced cancellation could potentially leave clubs open to big financial losses – something none of them can afford in this current cost-of-living crisis – as well as potentially leaving competitors out of pocket. We all want to be back at the circuits as soon as possible but, for the sake of waiting a few more weeks, is it really worth the risk?



# FINISHING STRAIGHT



## Rivalries and battles that defined F1



### **BOOK REVIEW** **THE RIVALS: F1'S GREATEST DUELS**

Tony Dodgins  
RRP £35

The rivalry between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen over

the course of the 2021 Formula 1 season was box-office material. Regardless of which camp you sided with, or your opinions on the numerous collisions and controversies, there's no denying that it brought the championship to the attention of the wider public.

Rivalries can often transcend the sport and bring it to the masses, whether that be Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in tennis or Muhammed Ali and Joe Frazier in boxing. The human element is often what attracts us to sport in the first place, as greats in their chosen field go head to head. F1 is certainly no different.

The subject is the basis of a new book released last month, *The Rivals: F1's Greatest Duels*, from renowned motorsport journalist and former Autosport staffer Tony Dodgins. Across its 240 pages, 16 rivalries are covered, beginning in the 1950s with Juan Manuel Fangio and Alberto Ascari, and culminating in Hamilton versus Verstappen. It makes for fascinating reading and, while much of the subject matter has been written about elsewhere and perhaps at greater

length, there's still plenty to enjoy for old and new fans of F1.

Unsurprisingly, the clashes between Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna and the politics at McLaren between Hamilton and Fernando Alonso are given plenty of space, but other rivalries also get a fair mention. These include Stirling Moss and Mike Hawthorn fighting for the 1958 title, the general early 1980s disdain between Alan Jones and Nelson Piquet, and the internal Red Bull battle between Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber – the Australian has written the foreword to the book.

Each chapter is worthy of its place, although some are much less obvious than others, such as Fangio/Ascari and Jim Clark/John Surtees. Although there were instances where each would go up against one another,

a general lack of competitive machinery for either at the same time meant on-track battles were few and far between.

That Fangio and Clark are considered two of the greatest drivers of all time means their exclusion from this book would have perhaps seemed odd. But somewhat ironically, the mention of Surtees's victory in the 1963 German GP at the Nurburgring doesn't highlight the fact that this was the only F1 world championship race Clark finished as runner-up, surely a significant point of this rivalry.

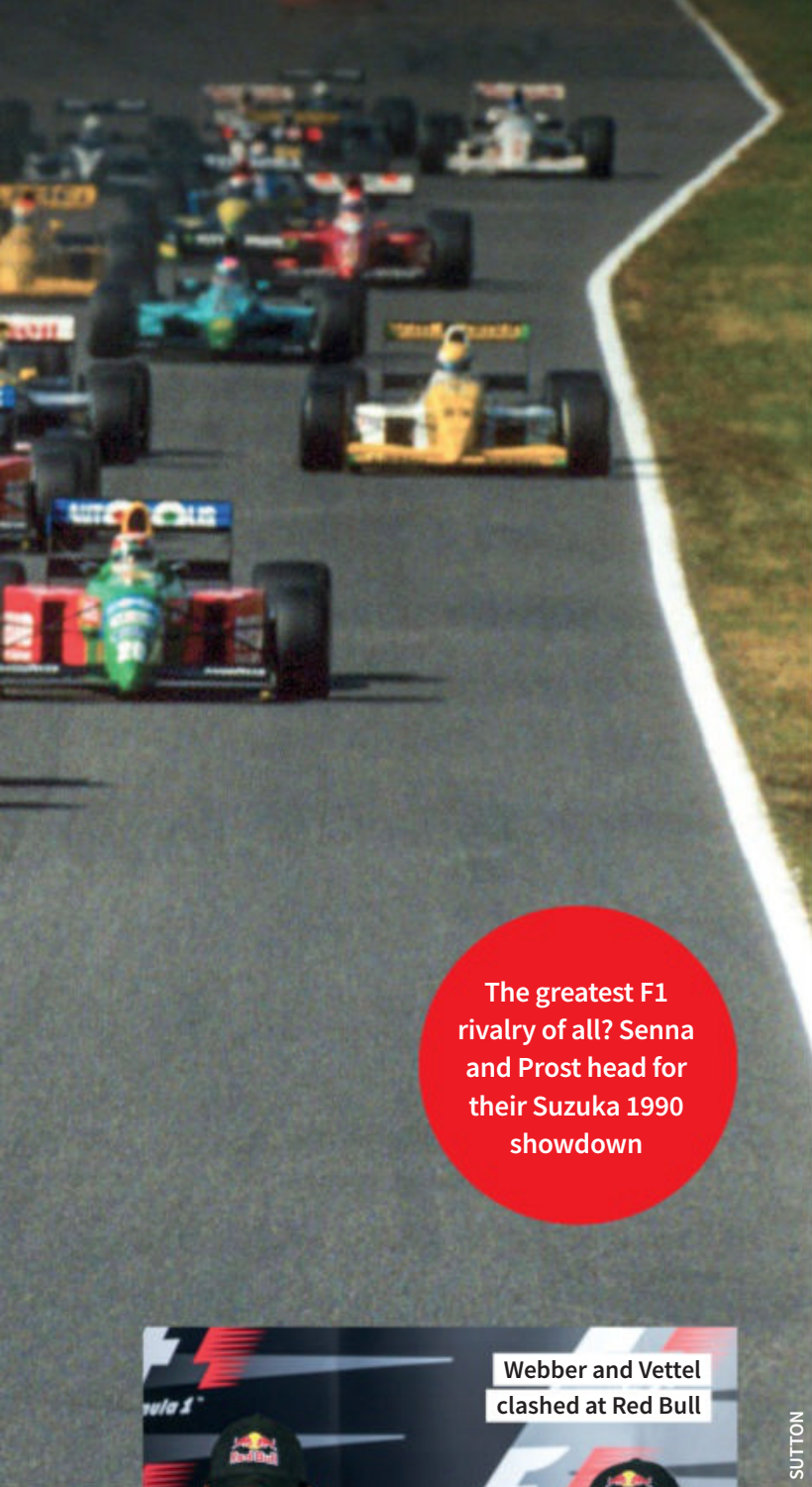
Perhaps the most notable omission is the rivalry between Senna and Nigel Mansell. Considering the Brummie nearly thumped the Brazilian on more than one occasion, it could have merited inclusion. But there's no shortage of either character given the

Stewart and Rindt were rivals but also friends



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The greatest F1 rivalry of all? Senna and Prost head for their Suzuka 1990 showdown



Webber and Vettel clashed at Red Bull

SUTTON

Senna/Prost feud, while there's a lengthy chapter on Mansell versus Piquet during their time at Williams.

Not all rivalries featured are acrimonious, with the exploits of Jackie Stewart and Jochen Rindt built upon friendship and a mutual respect, and it's the same with Michael Schumacher and Mika Hakkinen, despite some disagreements. And the Gilles Villeneuve/Didier Pironi feud only came to a head over the course of two weeks in the wake of the 1982 San Marino Grand Prix.

Dodgins writes with a wry sense of humour at times and isn't afraid to profess an opinion one way or the other. There are several 'off-the-record' theories put forward that add another dimension to topics, even if some are more far-fetched than others.

It's clear that there's no love lost when describing former FIA president Max Mosley, and an obvious admiration for Senna, with his highly dangerous and deliberate crash into Prost at the start of the 1990 Japanese GP referred to merely as a 'punt'.

Regardless, it's still an enjoyable read with the text complemented by 300 stunning photographs from across the decades.

STEFAN MACKLEY



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### Red Bull dominance and Aston Martin magic at the F1 Bahrain Grand Prix

Red Bull and Max Verstappen proved to be the strongest of the 2023 grid in the Bahrain Grand Prix, but behind the main headline there were plenty of interesting developments. From a strong showing at Aston Martin with Fernando Alonso, to a worried Mercedes and a struggling Ferrari, Jon Noble, Matt Kew and Martyn Lee discuss how the season opener played out.

## WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

#### Australian Supercars

Round 1/12  
Newcastle, Australia

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#### NASCAR Cup Series

Round 4/36

Phoenix, USA  
12 March

#### NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 4/33  
Phoenix, USA

11 March

#### Extreme E

Round 1/5  
Neom, Saudi Arabia  
11-12 March

TV Live ITV4, Sun 1200, Delayed, ITV4, Sat 1600

### UK MOTORSPORT

#### Malcolm Wilson Rally

British Rally Championship  
Round 1/7  
Cockermouth, England  
11 March



Australian Supercars

HORSBURGH/EDGE PHOTOGRAPHICS





#### FROM THE ARCHIVE

Patrick Tambay is strapped into the cockpit of his McLaren-Ford M26 in the Watkins Glen pitlane during the 1978 United States Grand Prix, Formula 1's second visit to North America that

year following the round held in Long Beach, California, six months earlier. For the final two races of the season (Montreal was to follow), Tambay's and team-mate James Hunt's cars sported this fetching beer-brand livery in place

of the iconic red-and-white colour scheme. The Frenchman qualified 18th in New York State, nearly four seconds off the pole time, but grabbed a point by finishing sixth, one place ahead of Hunt, who had started sixth.



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# Zandvoort

**I**n his third DTM season, back in 2005 when the series was a powerhouse touring car championship rather than a GT3 category, Gary Paffett chalked up five wins en route to his first title.

Of those wins, Zandvoort was the most dominant; Paffett crushed the rest of the field from fourth on the grid and beat Mattias Ekstrom by a comfortable 12-second margin to reclaim top spot in the drivers' championship. With three more wins at the twisting and technical Dutch venue, it's no surprise that Paffett picks it as his happiest hunting ground.

"Zandvoort was always the one, for whatever reason," Paffett reflects. "I don't know why, but I just turned up and I was quick there every time. Some of my more dominant performances in DTM were at Zandvoort, either in races just walking away with a win, or in qualifying being on pole by a significant margin."

"And it just happened, it just worked for me there. So I would say out of all the circuits we raced at, that was probably the one that I just naturally got on with and went well at."

The Briton won again in 2009, finishing 6.2s up the road from Audi driver Oliver Jarvis, and repeated the feat the following year as Mercedes enjoyed a dominant 1-2 finish, with Paul di Resta taking second.



In a pleasing parallel to his first title-winning season, Paffett won at the seaside circuit again in 2018, claiming the first of two races from pole. Like 2010, he beat di Resta to the punch to bolster his ultimately successful championship aspirations in what proved to be his DTM swansong before heading to Formula E.

Since then, Zandvoort has been remodelled extensively with the Dutch Grand Prix returning to the F1 calendar in 2021. Even though the banked corners have changed some of the circuit's challenge, McLaren FE team manager Paffett reckons some of the old magic still lies within the confines of the 2.646-mile course.

"I haven't been there since they changed it for F1, so I don't know what it's like now," he admits. "But I think a lot of the old character is still there."

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

## SPORTSCARS' NEW GOLDEN ERA BEGINS

*Our guide to the 2023 World Endurance Championship*

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



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