

F1 Saudi GP Perez's greatest race?

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23 MARCH 2023

Rampant Red Bull

Inspired Perez holds off Verstappen's charge from 15th

'Red Bull is on another planet'

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'That was everything we had'

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PLUS

Ferrari fast on WEC debut but Toyota wins

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Red Bull rubs it in but Perez provides a Saudi surprise

At the 2004 Italian Grand Prix, Ferrari drivers Michael Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello were delayed early on, the German by a spin on the first lap that left him 15th, and the Brazilian with a poor tyre choice in the mixed conditions that necessitated a pitstop. The duo then proceeded to unleash the true performance of their dominant F2004s, setting fastest laps more than a second quicker than the rest, and had restored normal 1-2 service by the end of lap 43 of 53.

Red Bull's raw race pace advantage is not yet as big as that enjoyed by Ferrari in 2004, when the red team won 15 of the 18 races, but there was a similar feeling of inevitability when Max Verstappen lined up 15th on the grid in Saudi Arabia last weekend. A combination of the RB19's latent speed, the long Jeddah straights and powerful DRS meant that the double world champion could afford to be cautious at the start yet still easily overcome all the non-Red Bulls ahead.

What was less predictable was Sergio Perez's stern refusal to give in as he scored perhaps his finest victory. One factor that made some previous eras of domination entertaining was battles between teammates — think McLaren in 1988-89 or Mercedes in 2014-16. Alex Kalinauckas takes a look at the chances of Perez taking the fight to Verstappen on page 15, while our new F1 writer Jake Boxall-Legge explains how the race unfolded in our in-depth report from p16.

Far more surprising were events at Sebring, which included a shock Ferrari debut pole and an extraordinary late accident that decided the 12 Hours. Our reports start on p32 and p40.



Kevin Turner

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NEXT WEEK
30 MARCH

The trouble at Mercedes
What Toto Wolff's team needs to do next to stand a chance in 2023



Cover image

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PIT + PADDOCK

Alonso penalty farce prompts FIA rethink

FORMULA 1

When Aston Martin presented to the FIA seven unpunished past examples of jacks being in contact with Formula 1 cars while they were serving pitstop penalties, the stewards eventually scrubbed a 10-second reprimand originally handed to Fernando Alonso 20 minutes after the chequered flag of last weekend's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. The Spaniard was reinstated in third place to claim his 100th F1 podium. And as a result of the reversal, in time for next week's Australian GP, the governing body will have a new dictionary definition of "working on the car".

The two-time F1 champion was initially handed a 5s penalty for lining up with his front-left wheel over the painted box denoting his second place on the grid. While the Aston pitcrew duly delayed changing Alonso's tyres at his pitstop, and the stewards were happy with the way the penalty was served, on the final lap new information was flagged (likely by a rival team) and they placed Alonso under investigation before bumping him off the podium. This concerned the rear jack touching the AMR23 during those five seconds.

Aston sporting director Andy Stevenson led the team through its right of review appeal hearing by highlighting the inconsistent precedents – something Alpine failed to do in Bahrain when it accepted the same 10s slap on the wrists for Esteban Ocon. The team argued that there was no strict definition in the rules regarding touching the car, since regulations simply state that mechanics cannot work on it before the penalty is served. This rebuttal proved successful, meaning the FIA will issue a clarification after this "specific circumstance", as part of "ongoing missions to regulate the sport in a fair and transparent way".

An FIA statement read: "The request to the stewards for review of the initial decision was made in the last lap of the race. The subsequent decision of the stewards to hear and grant the right of review by the competitor was the result of new evidence regarding the definition of 'working on the car', for which there were



conflicting precedents, and this has been exposed by this specific circumstance. This topic will therefore be addressed at the next Sporting Advisory Committee [meeting] taking place on Thursday 23 March and a clarification will be issued ahead of the 2023 FIA Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix."

Further questions are being raised about why a formal investigation into Alonso serving his penalty was not launched until the final lap of the race, despite Aston being given the all-clear at the time. There has also been consternation over Alonso and Ocon, who met with the FIA after his hat-trick of penalties in Bahrain, being reprimanded for being out of position at race starts. Two incidences in as many races have led to questions over how difficult it is for drivers to see the grid box in this breed of large, halo-equipped cars. But the response to those complaints is that there have been 38 cases this year of drivers having no problem at all.

MATT KEW





Gasly (right) strays wide with Stroll at 2022 Mexican GP

Licence points tweak prompted by Gasly case

FORMULA 1

The Formula 1 penalty-points system has been tweaked to avoid drivers being handed a race ban for a string of minor offences.

This change has been prompted by Pierre Gasly's near-miss last season after an otherwise innocuous track-limits offence in the Mexican Grand Prix meant he had racked up 10 of the prescribed 12 points over a 12-month period to be considered borderline "dangerous".

If a driver was to be suspended for an event, their slate would be wiped clean. Otherwise, only on the one-year anniversary of each misdemeanour would the respective penalty points be scrubbed from their record. This element has not changed. But after Gasly met with the FIA, the system has been reviewed over the winter.

Subsequent talks with rulemakers, teams and drivers have resulted in points no longer being handed out for breaches considered more sporting-related, such as

track-limits offences. Penalty points will be reserved for more egregious acts, such as causing a collision.

From now on, straying beyond the painted white lines repeatedly will only be met with race-time penalties, as Nico Hulkenberg and Esteban Ocon found out to their cost in the Bahrain season opener. Gasly, meanwhile, remains on an unmatched 10 points. The first of those are due to expire on 22 May in time for the Monaco GP.

JONATHAN NOBLE

D'Ambrosio joins staff at Mercedes

FORMULA 1

Mercedes has recruited ex-Formula 1 and Formula E racer Jerome D'Ambrosio to partially replace former strategy chief James Vowles, who has recently become the Williams team boss. The Belgian will direct the Three-Pointed Star's driver development programme alongside long-time team youth management guru Gwen Lagrue.

D'Ambrosio wore a plain white shirt when he joined the team for the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix. As of last weekend in Saudi Arabia, he was fully decked in Mercedes gear. He is well known to team boss Toto Wolff, who considered managing the then-Renault junior driver in 2004. More recently,



The 2007 Formula Master champion is now installed at Merc

D'Ambrosio operated as deputy team principal of the Venturi Formula E team under Susie Wolff before taking full control from 2021 to 2022. He left when the squad was rebranded to Maserati for the Gen3 era. In his time at the electric Monegasque squad, it climbed from 10th to second in the standings. That experience, combined with the loss of Vowles, has given rise to speculation that D'Ambrosio could be a potential successor to Toto Wolff at the helm of

the eight-time constructors' champion.

"He has the knowhow of having been a racing driver at a very high level," said Wolff. "He was a go-karting world champion. He's been in F1, and on the other side the skills as a manager. So, where that will lead him is a question. Today it's at a very early stage. He is just coming in for the driver development part and administrative functions. We shall see where that goes."

ADAM COOPER & MATT KEW

AlphaTauri chief has his engineers on Tost

FORMULA 1

AlphaTauri boss Franz Tost has certainly put plenty of his colleagues' noses out of joint and tanked team morale by saying he no longer trusts the engineers responsible for designing the current and underwhelming AT04.

The Austrian delivered his bizarre outburst ahead of last weekend's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, which would soon become the team's second point-less outing out of two to leave it at the bottom of the championship with McLaren. His brusque assessment comes amid heightened scrutiny of the squad after Tost was moved to quash rumours of Red Bull considering a sale of its junior operation.

Tost began his beration with: "We have to do a lot of

things to make the car faster. Especially on the aerodynamic side, there are different programmes going on. The engineers are telling me that we will make some good progress, but I don't trust them anymore. I just want to see the lap time because this is the only thing which counts."

AlphaTauri was hamstrung in 2022 by switching to use the larger-scale Red Bull wind tunnel, for which the slow adaption resulted in an underbaked car only capable of ninth in the points. An inability to recover the lost ground over the winter by mimicking the RB18 concept that won 17 grands prix last season left Tost to double down on his criticism. "During the winter months, they told me the car is fantastic, we've made a big progress," he said. "Then we



Tost is not happy with his tech staff

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

come to Bahrain and we are nowhere. What should I say?"

He also didn't mince his words when reeling off the weaknesses of the AT04 package. "Not enough downforce," was his first complaint. "Therefore, the car is unstable under braking, overheating the rear tyres, washing out at the apex, bad traction – everything that you need to do a good lap time. We saw that at

least on the paper, on the computer, we made big progress in comparison to last year's car. But all these figures nowadays, I don't trust them anymore."

AlphaTauri will try to turn the tide by bringing a first upgrade package in time for the Australian GP next month, while another update will arrive for the following race in Azerbaijan.

ADAM COOPER & MATT KEW



Vasseur and Mekies are doing a good job of looking quite happy

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Vasseur denies Ferrari exodus

FORMULA 1

Ferrari Formula 1 boss Fred Vasseur insists that no more of his senior staffers are poised to hand in their notice following the team's disappointing start to the 2023 season. The shock resignation of head of vehicle concept David Sanchez earlier this month triggered a wave of speculation that

Ferrari could face fresh departures. There has been suggestion that race director Laurent Mekies is considering his position, and talk that Ferrari could be forced to take back Haas technical chief Simone Resta.

While Vasseur did not claim that there was no unhappiness inside camp, he made it clear that his colleagues were committed to the cause. "To have people who are unhappy,

it's two different things," he said. "It's quite normal to be unhappy when you don't get the results that you are expecting, and I'm unhappy... But leaving the company, it's another story. I've known Laurent for 25 years, when he was at school. I trust him, we have a very good collaboration together and he will be one of the pillars of the future of the company."

Vasseur said that the narrative had been skewed for what was otherwise a regular cycle of staff. "Honestly, it's the life of the team that we are recruiting a lot each year and we have a turnover each year," he argued. "If you want to speak about key people [leaving], I don't think so." The former Alfa Romeo boss would not elaborate on the circumstances of Sanchez's departure, but wished him well for the future. As for recalling Resta, Vasseur shut down the idea.

Then, following the team's failure to bounce back from Bahrain to challenge Red Bull in Saudi Arabia, Vasseur said: "The most important thing in this kind of situation is to know where we are going well and what we are doing wrong. But we cannot bullshit ourselves. We have to change. We have to understand where we are wrong, and we have to push. It's not [good enough] to speak, we will not be faster like this."

JONATHAN NOBLE

Ogier adds Croatia outing

WRC

Rally legend Sebastien Ogier has added the next round of the World Rally Championship in Croatia to his partial 2023 campaign with Toyota.

The eight-time world champion leads the WRC standings after scoring a dominant, record-breaking seventh victory in Mexico (right) last weekend. That success followed a record ninth Monte Carlo win at the season opener in January. Those wins have lifted the part-timer to the top of the table despite missing round two in Sweden, three points ahead of Hyundai's Thierry Neuville.

Ogier's 2023 plans beyond Mexico had yet to be officially confirmed although it is anticipated that the 39-year-old will participate in as many as seven rallies this year. But speaking in a stage-end interview after crossing the finish line in Mexico, he let slip that he will be in action at Rally Croatia on 20-23 April. Ogier later revealed that those plans played a role in his push to win the Power Stage in Mexico to ensure that he heads to the asphalt event with the best possible road position.

"That was one of the reasons why I wanted to score some points in the Power Stage as before the stage we were all extremely tight



in the championship," said Ogier, who won on the WRC's first visit to Croatia in 2021. "As I knew I was going to do Croatia then, it made sense to have the best starting position again and that was another reason to get some points in the Power Stage.

"I think this one came about after a discussion with the team and with my current form on Tarmac, and we decided

that could be an event where I could help the team. It was not necessarily my choice, but I'm happy to do it."

Ogier has quashed talk of completing the full season now that he is leading the championship standings.

TOM HOWARD

➔ **P46 RALLY MEXICO**



Hunter-Reay returns for 500

INDIANAPOLIS 500

Dreyer & Reinbold Racing is to field 2014 Indianapolis 500 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay in its Chevrolet-powered #23 entry in this year's 107th running of the race.

Hunter-Reay, the 2012 IndyCar champion, was dropped from the Andretti Autosport line-up at the end of 2021 and did not race open-wheel cars at all last season. Now he will return as team-mate to Stefan Wilson in a team renowned for punching above its weight each May. DRR is coming off back-to-back top-10 finishes with Sage Karam (2021) and Santino Ferrucci (2022). Its best result is fourth in 2012 with Oriol Servia.

This news brings the number of former winners entered in this year's Memorial Day Weekend classic to nine, with 13 victories between them. It also lifts the tally of entrants confirmed so far to 33, the event's traditional number of starters.

Hunter-Reay described himself as "laser-focused and energised", adding: "The Indy 500 isn't just a motor race for me; it's a way of life. I was incredibly attracted to the fact that DRR puts all of its energy into the month of May... Dennis Reinbold embodies everything the Indy 500 is about. He is, without a doubt, one of the Indy 500's most passionate entrants."

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

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ISOTTA FRASCHINI

Isotta Fraschini Hypercar to hit track next month

WEC

The revived Isotta Fraschini marque should be out testing with its Le Mans Hypercar early next month. That means, according to its bosses, that the Tipo 6 LMH Competizione remains on course to contest the Monza World Endurance Championship round in July, with the proviso that it receives a race-by-race entry.

Development of the Tipo 6 has continued apace since its launch at the end of February. The hybrid contender, powered by a bespoke three-litre twin-turbo V6 developed by HWA and a hybrid system supplied by Williams Advanced Engineering, has been put through an extensive programme on the AVL Racetech all-wheel-drive dyno

in Italy, with time also spent in the Sauber wind tunnel in Switzerland verifying the car's aerodynamics.

Isotta motorsport boss Claudio Berro stated that the car should be ready to start track testing in conjunction with the British Vector Sport team in "one or two weeks".

"We need the functionality to be perfect before we run the car for the first time, whether that's on a proper race track or in straightline testing," said Berro. "We have circuits booked and are planning an extensive test programme, and after that we will begin the homologation process with the FIA."

"The target is still to be at Monza, and we believe that is realistic. But that depends on the car performing correctly on track and the FIA accepting our entry."

Vector Sport team principal Gary Holland added that "the way things are going so far means that everything is pointing towards us being at Monza if we get an entry".

Berro explained that the intent is for the Tipo 6 LMH to contest all the remaining WEC rounds this year on race-by-race entries once it joins the series. Should Isotta miss its Monza target, it would reschedule the debut for the next WEC round at Fuji in September.

No drivers have been announced so far, but Holland explained that the Silverstone-based squad is talking to "a lot of drivers, a number with LMP1 experience". Vector regular Ryan Cullen is also expected to be heavily involved in the development phase of the Isotta.

GARY WATKINS

Pryce memory to live on through school prize



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FORMULA 1

The late Welsh Formula 1 folk hero Tom Pryce is to be commemorated by an annual trophy awarded to an outstanding pupil from Denbigh primary school he attended in the 1950s.

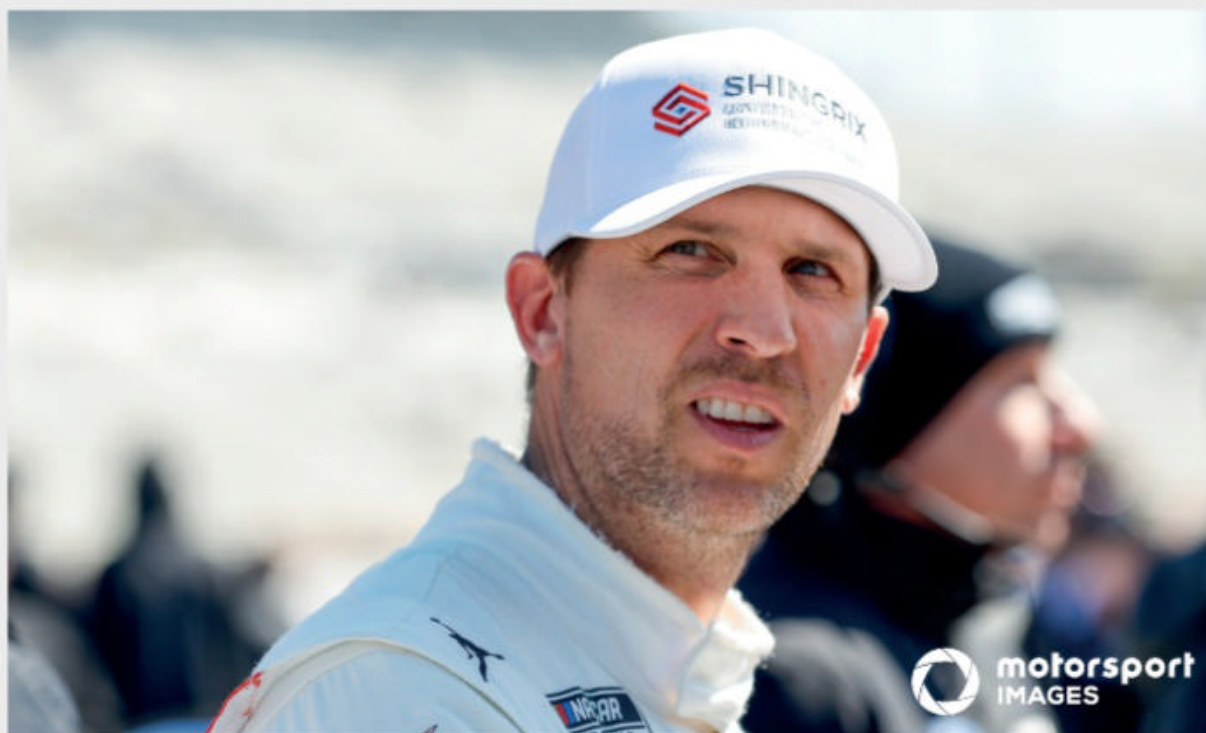
Pryce, who starred with the Shadow team before his fatal accident in the 1977 South African Grand Prix, was the subject of a recent book, *Tom Pryce: memories of*

a Welsh F1 star by those who knew him, written by Darren Banks and Kevin Guthrie. The two authors are donating proceeds from sales of the book to Ysgol Frongoch primary school via a £1000 annual sum.

The Thomas Maldwyn Pryce Inspirational Pupil of the Year Award trophy will be handed out to the child who has shown hard work, passion and determination in attempting to achieve

their goal, or demonstrated the quality of a caring and kind nature in helping others over the previous 12 months.

The award has the full approval of Pryce's widow Nella, because it means that her late husband's name will be associated with children, who he adored, but was denied the opportunity ever to become a parent. It will be first awarded on 11 June 2023, what would have been his 74th birthday.



Hamlin, Hendrick in hot water

NASCAR

NASCAR has penalised Denny Hamlin for intentionally walling Ross Chastain in the Phoenix Cup Series race earlier this month, as well as coming down hard on teams' unapproved modifications of single-source supplier parts.

Hamlin openly admitted on his podcast to the incident with Chastain during the final restart at Phoenix. The two drivers have a feud dating back to last June, and have clashed in multiple races since then. "It wasn't a mistake," said Hamlin. "I let the wheel go and I said he's coming with me."

NASCAR has docked Hamlin 25 points and fined him \$50,000. Elton Sawyer, NASCAR's senior vice-president of competition, said the sanctioning body likely would have viewed the contact

between Hamlin (above) and Chastain "as a racing incident", but that Hamlin's public admission forced an intervention.

"When you start admitting that you have intentionally done something that would compromise the results, then that rises to a level that we're going to get involved," said Sawyer.

Meanwhile, NASCAR hit all four of Hendrick Motorsports' entries and Justin Haley's Kaulig Racing effort with its biggest penalties yet for Cup Series teams altering parts on the Next Gen car. Hendrick trio Kyle Larson, William Byron and Alex Bowman (below left), plus Haley, have all been docked 100 driver points, 100 owner points and 10 playoff points. Hendrick's #9 car that was driven at Phoenix by Josh Berry, in the absence of the injured Chase Elliott, was deducted 100 owner points and 10 playoff points but no driver points. All five of the respective crew chiefs were fined \$100,000 and suspended for four races.

The violation concerned the bonnet louvers to the Chevrolets. These were discovered on the Hendrick cars at initial inspection on the Friday at Phoenix and confiscated after practice, and on the Kaulig machine before qualifying on the Saturday. Hendrick plans to appeal the penalties.

NICK DEGROOT & JIM UTTER



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

FEMALE SERIES JUST ONE SHORT OF FULL GRID

F1 ACADEMY

The all-female F1 Academy series, to be fought out in Formula 4 cars, is all but full after a raft of confirmations in the past few days.

Fourteen of the 15 seats have now been filled, with just one plum drive remaining at category dominator Prema Racing.

Two more British drivers have joined the grid. Chloe Grant takes her first international step after competing in 2022 in the GB4 Series for older-spec F4 cars, in which she placed ninth overall. The Scot (below) joins the line-up at ART Grand Prix. Meanwhile, 15-year-old British-Canadian Chloe Chong steps up from karting to make her car-racing debut with Prema. She was one of four finalists in last year's FIA Girls on Track contest.

The pair join fellow Brits, W Series ace Abbi Pulling and Grant's former GB4 rival Jessica Edgar, who are both at the Rodin Carlin squad.

MP Motorsport has secured Amna and Hamda Al Qubaisi. The Emirati sisters have both competed in open F4 championships. Amna, the older of the two, steps down from Formula Regional, while Hamda is six times a winner in the UAE F4 series. MP has completed its line-up with Dutch ex-W Series racer Emely de Heus.



JEP

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American WRC return to move closer with test event

WRC

Plans to take the World Rally Championship to the US in 2024 have progressed with the confirmation of a demonstration and test event that will take place this year.

Chattanooga, in south-east Tennessee, has been selected to host a Rally Tennessee demonstration event from 7-8 April, followed by a test rally in September, with the exact date yet to be announced. The event will be headquartered in Chattanooga and will use gravel roads located in the Cherokee National Forest and around the Ocoee River region in Polk County.

The planning committee for the project features an experienced group of rally competitors and organisers, and has the support of the American Rally Association (ARA), Chattanooga Tourism, the State of Tennessee, regional governments, and private sponsors.

Securing a round in the US has been a long-time ambition for the WRC, with the country identified as a key battleground for championship stakeholders. It has been off the calendar since Lancia driver Miki Biasion won the Olympus Rally

in Washington state in 1988 (above).

"We want to reintroduce international rally racing and we need to get the US back in this competition," said Chattanooga Tourism Co president Barry White. "The WRC has been looking to get back to the US, and we've been working them for the past year and a half."

WRC event director Simon Larkin added: "We are currently negotiating with a consortium that we believe has all the necessary ingredients to bring the WRC back to the USA and will make further announcements in conjunction with the FIA, when details and timelines can be confirmed."

Should September's Rally Tennessee test event be declared a success by the WRC and FIA, the rally could join a 2024 schedule that is shaping up to feature several new events, including the recently announced Rally Latvia. The WRC is also keen to add a potential Saudi Arabia round to the calendar after plans for a visit this year fell short. Work is also under way to bring the WRC back to the UK if the necessary funding can be secured for a revived Rally Northern Ireland bid.

TOM HOWARD

Glickenhauss skips 'Ring 24

NURBURGRING 24 HOURS

Glickenhauss will be absent from the Nurburgring 24 Hours this May for the first time in nine years. The American boutique manufacturer, which has raced at the Nordschleife enduro as Scuderia Cameron Glickenhauss 10 times since 2011, has opted to scratch its assault on the race to focus on its World Endurance Championship campaign.

Marque boss Jim Glickenhauss explained that it would be "logistically too difficult" to race both its 007 Le Mans Hypercar in the WEC and its 004C SP-X class contender in a programme of events on the Nurburgring Nordschleife around the 24 Hours on 20-21 May. The same team, made up of personnel from Podium Advanced Technologies and Joest Racing, runs the two programmes.

The task was not helped by the mandatory qualifying races for the German endurance race falling on the weekend between the Algarve and Spa WEC rounds in April. The first round of the Nordschleife-based NLS also clashed with last weekend's Sebring WEC season-opener, while there is a conflict between NLS3 and Spa on 29 April.

"Our 004C is ready to go, but we're not going to race at the 'Ring this year because we have to concentrate on the WEC," said Jim Glickenhauss. "We did do both in 2021 and 2022, but it was a real stretch."

But Glickenhauss vowed to be back at the 'Ring. "We will definitely go back because our 004 road car is our bread and butter," he explained. "It could be next year but it probably depends on what happens with the WEC."

The road type approval process for the SCG 004 is under way ahead of the start of full production at SCG's factory in Connecticut.

GARY WATKINS



IN THE HEADLINES

NEW DEAL FOR AUSTRIAN GP

The Red Bull Ring has secured a new four-year contract for the Austrian Grand Prix to remain on the Formula 1 calendar up to and including the 2027 season. After 10 years off the schedule, the track returned in 2014. Before then it staged the Austrian GP as the A1-Ring from 1997-2003, and also from 1970-87 as the much-missed and longer Österreichring.

TOYOTA STAYS ON FOR TEST

Toyota set out to complete its pre-Le Mans 24 Hours test programme at Sebring this week. The Japanese manufacturer stayed on at the Florida venue for three days of testing with its development chassis in the wake of the opening round of the WEC. It was the third endurance simulation for the 2023-spec GR010 HYBRID.

HARVEY OK FOR TEXAS

American-based Brit Jack Harvey has been given clearance to compete in the second round of the IndyCar Series next week at Texas Motor Speedway following his shunt in the St Petersburg season-opener. Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing driver Harvey slid into the crashed car of Rinus VeeKay, and was then struck by Kyle Kirkwood. Due to a sore right wrist and left forearm, he was forced by IndyCar's medical team to relinquish driving duties to ex-Formula 2 ace Juri Vips for last week's Barber Motorsports Park test.

JEFFERIES GETS ASTON NOD

Zimbabwean Axcil Jefferies was confirmed as the Silver driver in the factory-run NorthWest AMR Aston Martin Vantage GTE for the 2023 World Endurance Championship ahead of last week's Sebring season-opener. The GT specialist, who is racing alongside Nicki Thiim and Paul Dalla Lana in the GTE Am entry, was belatedly announced for the slot after American Thomas Merrill was brought in by the team for a tryout during the Prologue test the weekend before the race.

SCHMID STAYS AT GRASSER

Austrian GT stalwart Clemens Schmid will remain with the Grasser Racing Team Lamborghini squad for a second season in the DTM this year. Schmid, who took a best result of sixth in 2022, is the first driver confirmed by the team for its two-car Huracan GT3 Evo2 assault.



VANDER LAAN / DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY

Lebbon joins Arden for FRECA

FORMULA REGIONAL

GB3 star Tom Lebbon has become one of a host of driver confirmations in the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine in the run-up to the series' official pre-season tests kicking off.

The 17-year-old Briton, who finished third in the 2022 GB3 rankings and won the 2020 Ginetta Junior title, will compete with Arden. Lebbon will line up at the Banbury squad alongside Paraguayan Joshua Durksen, who remains at the team after taking four top-six finishes last year, and Hungarian Levente Revesz, who moves over from Van Amersfoort Racing.

Lebbon (above) was an encouraging seventh quickest in the afternoon of the opening day of the Barcelona test last Friday, but his chances of maintaining that momentum were scuppered on Saturday.

"He did six days' testing with us last year, and now it's the real thing," said Arden's FRECA team chief Ben Salter. "He's prepared himself really well for the challenge. Stepping up from the UK scene into Europe is a big step up now, but he did a really solid job at Barcelona. On day one he was just four tenths off, but on day two he got caught out by a red flag on his new-tyre run and didn't show his potential."

Quickest in the test was Tim Tramnitz. The German (right), who contested his rookie FRECA campaign with Trident in 2022, was confirmed with R-ace GP on the eve of the test. He ended up 0.072 seconds

clear of Frenchman Maceo Capietto – the son of Prema technical chief Guillaume Capietto switches from Monolite Racing to the RPM squad of Irish former racer Keith Donegan. Completing the top three was Trident's Anglo-Polish ex-GB3 and British F4 race contender Roman Bilinski.

Among other likely leading lights are Kas Haverkort and Josh Dufek, who both remain on board at VAR. Dutchman Haverkort scored two wins on his way to fifth in the 2022 standings, while Swiss Dufek was ninth. Former Spanish F4 champion Dilano van't Hoff stays at MP Motorsport – the Dutch racer scored a podium last year after missing some races due to a shoulder injury.

Emmo Fittipaldi, the 16-year-old son of Brazilian legend Emerson, steps up from Italian F4 to join Sainteloc Racing as the French Audi GT specialist spreads its wings into single-seater competition.

MARCUS SIMMONS



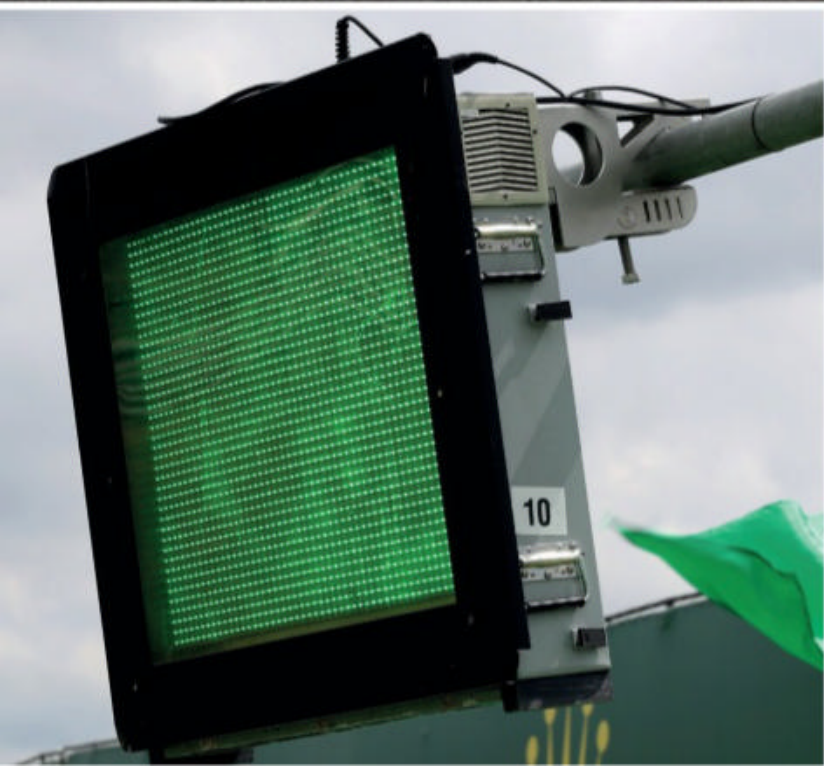
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TOP FIVE

➔ P32 WEC REPORT



HUTSON

The World Endurance Championship just kicked off at a classic venue – Sebring. Here are five circuits we’d love to see join the calendar for some battles between Toyota, Ferrari, Porsche *et al*

AUTOSPORT

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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5 ADELAIDE
It seems appropriate that a world championship should visit Australia, and the Adelaide street track would be a fitting host. The former Australian GP venue has sportscar history, too. Allan McNish and Rinaldo Capello’s Audi won the six-hour American Le Mans Series race on New Year’s Eve that closed the 2000 season by 21 laps. Supercars and WEC on the same weekend – now that would be a treat!



SUTTON

4 NORISRING
Running grids exceeding 30 cars at the Norisring would be a logistical nightmare. But reviving the sprint race that featured on the 1986 and 1987 world championship calendar, even if only for prototypes, would make an amazing spectacle. A sprint event differentiated from the enduros would give it an air of prestige, and on the bumpy street circuit entertainment would be guaranteed.



3 MONTREAL
One of the most popular venues on the Formula 1 calendar, Montreal does have some international sportscar heritage: it hosted a round of the 1990 world sportscar championship. That race was marred by a big shunt caused by a loose manhole cover, but we think the layout would give the Hypercars space to stretch their legs and provide good competition, all in one of the finest settings. It deserves another chance.



HUTSON

2 WATKINS GLEN
The former US Grand Prix venue should be on the WEC calendar because it epitomises the early growth of North American sportscar racing, which was so important in the eastern states. Not only that, but it remains a fabulous track in leafy New York State countryside and should also offer excellent racing. When our WEC guru Gary Watkins shares half his name with the track, how can it be left out?



1 SILVERSTONE
We make no apology for having a British venue at number one. The UK should have a WEC round. Brands Hatch would be the more romantic choice, but Silverstone’s Grand Prix circuit is surely more suitable for modern sports-prototypes, as shown by some great racing during the LMP1 era. Endurance events are part of its rich past, including the debut of the Porsche 956, so a return would be very appropriate.





Two Partners, One Mission: Einhell Launches Partnership with Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team

Landmarks in London, Barcelona, Montreal and Melbourne glowed red at the start of the F1 season.

The reason? A new partnership between Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team and Einhell Germany.

Before the Formula 1 season launched in Bahrain, the innovative DIY and garden tool manufacturer from Germany made a worldwide mark as the “Official Tool Expert” of the Mercedes Team, lighting up buildings in 3 continents and 4 cities, leaving fans eagerly anticipating what promises to be an exciting season.

CORDLESS EXCELLENCE IN THE FORMULA 1 PIT LANE

The Power X-Change battery platform from Einhell now covers over 250 tools for the home and garden. As the Formula 1 season launches in Bahrain, Einhell tools will be found in the racing team’s pit lane, and under the most extreme conditions for the first time. *“The team is delighted by the range of our cordless tools and more than happy with the power and endurance of our products,”* Andreas Kroiss reports.

Toto Wolff, too, believes it to be a convincing partnership: *“We are delighted to partner with Einhell. They are consistently setting new standards in their industry with the constant development of their technology. By using Einhell’s battery-powered tools and equipment, we benefit from the latest technology for maximum performance.”* As a visible symbol of the partnership, the Einhell logo will feature on the racing car and the clothing of the drivers and Mercedes team from the start of the Formula 1 season in Bahrain.

Toto Wolff will also play a role as brand ambassador in the future communications

of Einhell, including the TV campaign that will be broadcast internationally from May 2023.

BATTERIES ON THE MARCH

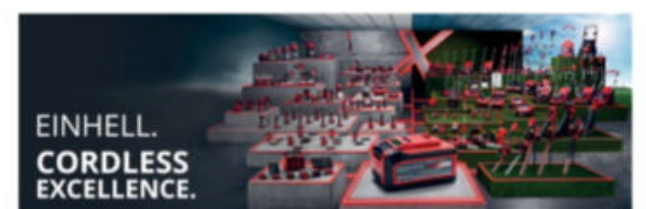
The cordless specialist is wowing DIY customers all over the world with its innovative Power X-Change battery platform. Boasting more than 40 subsidiaries, Einhell Germany AG has become a global player with an active presence in over 90 countries. The Power X-Change platform is symbolic of Einhell’s success, and positions the company as the category leader in the cordless tool sector.

“The partnership brings together two brands that stand for technology expertise. Our success comes especially from our team spirit, our dynamism and a clear, bold goal in mind. This is why the partnership with the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team is the strategic next step for us towards our goal of becoming an international market and technology leader in battery-powered tools for the home and garden,” explains Andreas Kroiss, CEO of Einhell Germany AG.

ABOUT EINHELL

Einhell is a leading manufacturer of state-of-the-art tools and equipment for the house and garden. From its headquarters in Landau/Isar (Bavaria), the internationally successful company has continuously expanded its innovative rechargeable battery platform Power X-Change and is now the market leader in the area of cordless tools and garden equipment. For many years Einhell has set new standards in terms of endurance, performance, and safety. Einhell customers appreciate the freedom of cordless operation for all their DIY projects, as well as the excellent value for money that Einhell products represent and the first-class customer service offered by the company.

For more information please visit our website: www.einhell.co.uk





Is Perez now ready to step up?

The Saudi Arabian Grand Prix winner needs to consistently produce his very best form if he wants to do more than nip at his world champion team-mate's heels

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Iwould say arguably that was Checo's best grand prix." Let's definitely argue with Christian Horner's point about Sergio Perez's victory in last weekend's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. After all, neither of Perez's outstanding victories in the 2020 Sakhir GP for Racing Point or his 2022 Singapore GP Red Bull triumph contained a start gaffe that allowed a slower car to seize a lead it really had no right to.

But Perez ended the Jeddah race just gone, by holding off a charging Max Verstappen to take his fifth F1 win, in unruffled style. Four of those victories have come at street tracks, leading many to anoint Perez as a master of the genre. It's not inaccurate. He's been doing well on them for years, as four of his Force India podiums attest. His comfort with understeer is rewarded when venues such as these require a stable front end to magnify driver precision.

The combination of Perez's typical street-track prowess and his obvious affinity with the Jeddah layout, which is much faster than most street circuits, no doubt helped him halt Verstappen's advances. But it was an impressive feat altogether. In 10 laps Verstappen closed Perez's 5.4s lead by just one second. Then came Verstappen's reliability fear, which was followed by Perez reporting a long brake pedal. They eased off a touch and instead turned their attentions to sealing fastest lap. This has been blown up into something of a saga by social media sleuths. Apparently because,

"If wins for rival squads are unlikely, F1 needs Perez to take things to Verstappen"

two laps from home, Perez was informed that he provisionally had the fastest lap and its bonus point. Then, on the slowing-down lap, engineer Hugh Bird informed him he'd been "pipped" to the accolade and its bonus point. "Ah, great," came a reply dripping in sarcasm.

In the other RB19, Verstappen's request on lap 46 of 50 to be told what the fastest lap was — Perez's race personal best of 1m32.188s — was rebuffed by his engineer (also Red Bull's overall engineering chief) Gianpiero Lambiase. Then, just a few corners later, Verstappen got the information he wanted, and four laps further on he beat Perez's time by 0.282s to nick the bonus point and retain the championship lead.

Obviously, it was an utterly massive conspiracy for those compelled to see one. But, (a) there may indeed have been a decision made at Red Bull we're so far unaware of regarding Verstappen

chasing the fastest lap, with Perez later saying cryptically "I got certainly different information" in the post-race press conference. Plus, (b) with 10 laps to go, Verstappen was lapping around half a second faster than the 1m33.0s Lambiase was regularly ordering him to target. Perez, having queried why his team-mate was going quicker than the target he'd also received, was told he could up his pace again. It was all very Brazil 2022.

Added interest in this course of events may reflect the fears that Verstappen is simply going to waltz to a third successive title in 2023; that, with no opposition from other teams so far, other storylines are being sought out. Perhaps Perez is providing one. He explained that his complaints about Red Bull's searing pace late in the Jeddah race were because he was concerned about the reliability issues cropping up and was also feeling "some strange vibrations". But it's worth recalling that Verstappen queried further instructions regarding pace late in the Bahrain race he and Perez were dominating, the Dutchman concerned that both cars must be circulating at the same pace if Red Bull wanted them brought home under no strain.

It all harks back to the fractious relationship between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg during their days dominating F1 for Mercedes in the last decade, just as the Red Bull duo are doing now. And, with Red Bull dominance looking set to become just as tedious as it was with Mercedes to everyone outside those respective camps and fervent fanbases, if Verstappen versus Perez were to get anywhere near close to that level of competition and bitterness, then the 2023 spectacle would surely be improved.

If wins for rival squads are unlikely bar the rare events where Red Bull gets things wrong, F1 needs Perez to take things to Verstappen. But, so far, his typical gap to his team-mate from their time sharing the Red Bull garage suggests that their battle will be far more along the lines of Valtteri Bottas versus Hamilton; that Perez, on his best day, can produce a performance that might topple Verstappen. But these are few and far between.

Perez's late race pace in Jeddah was impressive. But it was still a surprise on turf where he is typically excellent. He was also naive to assume that his team-mate wouldn't chase the fastest lap on the final tour given everything F1 knows about Verstappen's will to win and his actions in the team-orders spat in Brazil last year.

Now Perez needs to replicate his Jeddah form elsewhere, and do it regularly if he is to show he can be what F1 needs him to be in 2023. And those bad starts have to stop. Because, ultimately, it can't be forgotten that, had Verstappen's qualifying issue not happened in Jeddah, he appeared set for pole and race victory judging by his crushing practice performances. That's what Perez is up against, and it's he who still needs to prove he is a true title contender. 🏆

➔ P16 SAUDI ARABIAN GP REPORT

RACE CENTRE

Perez held his own, but questioned having to push *quite* so hard to maintain position



FORMULA 1

PEREZ TAKES CHARGE AS VERSTAPPEN CHASES

The Mexican wasn't going to let the golden opportunity offered by his Red Bull team-mate's mechanical problem in qualifying slip from his grasp

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY RED BULL AND  **motorsport**
IMAGES





SUTTON

“You might as well start writing your report now, mate,” mutters a media sage on his return from trackside wandering, as Max Verstappen flashes up on the paddock screens after eclipsing the rest of the field in FP1 by nearly half a second. Benched for Thursday’s media sessions due to battling a stomach bug, Verstappen rocked up to the Jeddah Corniche Circuit fashionably late and fired off a trio of hammerblows to the rest of the field by headlining the full set of practice sessions. Few in the paddock had any optimism that the race would be anything other than a foregone conclusion and yet, somehow, fate had its own funny way of intervening.

Come the end of Sunday’s race, Sergio Perez was the man standing on the middle step of the podium after largely dominating proceedings in Saudi Arabia, while Red Bull team-mate Verstappen had to dip into his back catalogue and perform a sterling recovery drive to rescue second after a mechanical issue knocked the wind from his sails in qualifying.

Across the three practice sessions, Verstappen’s margins over second place were 0.483s, 0.208s and 0.613s. Therefore, it seemed to everyone around the paddock that Saturday and Sunday were set for another Verstappian display of crushing dominance, all but

dispelling the hope that 2023’s settled ruleset could offer a closer championship fight. Instead, a faulty driveshaft denied the world champion another pole position, instead dumping him out of qualifying in a lowly 15th place and handing Perez the whip hand. Red Bull’s number two fulfilled his contractual obligations perfectly, picking up the pieces should Verstappen falter.

“First of all, I have to make sure I’m able to keep the lead on the initial laps,” said Perez after qualifying, as he was set to start next to Fernando Alonso on the front row. “And if I’m able to do that, to keep this lion behind, it will be good, because I think I can focus on my race.”

Among those practice chasms between Verstappen and the rest of the field, Alonso was the driver responsible for closing the gap to just over two tenths in the night-time FP2 session. Although pessimistic about his chances of battling with Perez in the race, the Spaniard continued to look assured behind the wheel of his Aston Martin.

The British squad had already upset the order considerably at the season-opening Bahrain GP in its stratospheric rise from midfielder to podium finisher, and had largely outperformed manufacturer operations Ferrari and Mercedes, both of which had hoped to challenge Red Bull for a title in 2023. The impressive Charles Leclerc’s penalty admittedly got Alonso onto the Jeddah front row, but the Silverstone team’s strengths lie in race pace. And, apparently, the Aston is also a dab hand off the line.



Irrepressible
Alonso steals
ahead at Turn 1 to
take what would be
a short-lived lead

Judging from GPS traces over the lap in qualifying, the AMR23 is particularly strong in the high-traction parts of the course. When the starting lights no longer permeated the Jeddah night sky, Alonso dropped the clutch and gathered pace at a considerably faster rate of knots than polesitter Perez. While the Guadalajara-born driver tried to close Alonso off, there was no stopping the green machine from threading the needle into Turn 1 and coming out the other side with the lead in its grasp. For those hoping Alonso could cause an upset, his lightning start captured the imagination... for about 10 seconds.

Alonso had got pretty much everything right about his start, except for one problem: he was too far to the left in his grid box. Like Esteban Ocon's grid-based misadventure in Bahrain, Alonso was pretty quickly slapped with a 5s penalty to serve at his next pitstop, even if he could retain the lead that far into the race. Perez was hardly going to allow the Asturian to scamper off and build enough of a buffer to nullify the effect of the penalty. Instead, he ensured that this would be moot.

“AT THE BEGINNING, IT WAS REALLY HARD TO FOLLOW CARS. THE CAR WAS A BIT ALL OVER THE PLACE”

At the end of the third lap, with the drag reduction system now activated, Perez captured a barrelling run on the leader and swept past with consummate ease into the first corner. Perhaps Alonso had dared to dream, fleetingly, that a first F1 win since 2013 was in the offing, but it instead looked as though Perez would now begin an irrepressible march into the distance. But if there's any maxim that can be applied to Alonso and the trajectory of his racing career, it's that he is completely unwilling to give up. Rather than let Perez run off unchecked and unchallenged, Alonso instead clung onto the Red Bull's coat-tails and remained within a second to drink in the DRS assistance for the following laps. But that couldn't quite last, and by the 10th lap the Aston Martin was dumped out of the one-second bracket; from there, the arrears began to grow rapidly in Perez's favour.

In the meantime, Verstappen was making steady progress from 15th. It hadn't been quite the progression through the ranks that many were expecting following his quickfire route to the front in last year's Belgian Grand Prix, but he reached seventh on lap 14 of 50 to settle in with the other frontrunners. "At the beginning, the first few laps it was really hard to follow cars – with the street circuit, fast corners, and the walls all very close, you get like a kind of a tailwind effect," he said. "So the car was a bit all over the place. But after a few laps, it all started to settle in a bit better and I could pick them off one by one."

Carlos Sainz and Leclerc then pitted on successive laps to give >>



Verstappen two further spots as the pitstop phase tentatively opened, but the bigger boost to the reigning champion emerged when Lance Stroll came to a stop at Turn 8 and the safety car materialised from the pits. With the order shuffled and set by the single-file running behind the Aston Martin Vantage, Verstappen could pit on terms with the leading pack and return to the track in fourth place, just behind the Mercedes of George Russell.

The safety car also helped Alonso out since he was able to serve his penalty ahead of his pitstop and retain second place, while also offering the opportunity to keep tabs on Perez for the lap 21 restart. In both events, neither quite worked out in his favour; Perez made the resumption of the race look simple and started to rebuild his lead over Alonso at a canter. When DRS was switched on for the start of lap 23, the lead was already bordering on 3s; Perez was away and looked untouchable.

Verstappen, meanwhile, was asked to be gentle with his tyres in the two laps following the restart. Race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase suggested that he wait until DRS was active once more to make his overtures towards the third place held by Russell. Studiously, he did so and waited until the end of the 23rd lap to pass, using DRS on the run out of Turn 24 to stalk the Briton and charge past into the final corner.

A podium secured for the time being, Verstappen's next target was Alonso. It took barely a lap for the gap to melt away, and he once again manoeuvred his way through with DRS at half-distance, cannoning past on the start/finish straight. This set up the Red Bull battle, and Perez was 5.5s clear at the point Verstappen climbed to second.

The more defeatist onlookers hoping that Verstappen would face more of a challenge in 2023 were likely expecting the two-time title winner to start carving into Perez's lead, and go one better than his Spa 2022 heroics. Instead, Perez held his own at the front, mitigating the damage from his team-mate behind, and allowing him to chip no more than a tenth of a second away each lap.

The one-tenth delta per lap ebbed and flowed between the Red Bull duo; sometimes, Perez was able to squirrel away more time to occasionally swing the pendulum in his favour, but Verstappen

kept chipping away and closed to 4.3s off his team-mate. Then came the moment of fear, as Verstappen reported further driveshaft concerns, saying it felt "rough" and "makes a weird noise at high speed". Reassurance emanated from the pitwall, because glances at the data had yielded no obvious causes behind the in-cockpit worries. But Verstappen nonetheless lifted off, reinstating Perez's lead to around 5.2s, before the leader had his own run-in with a long brake pedal.

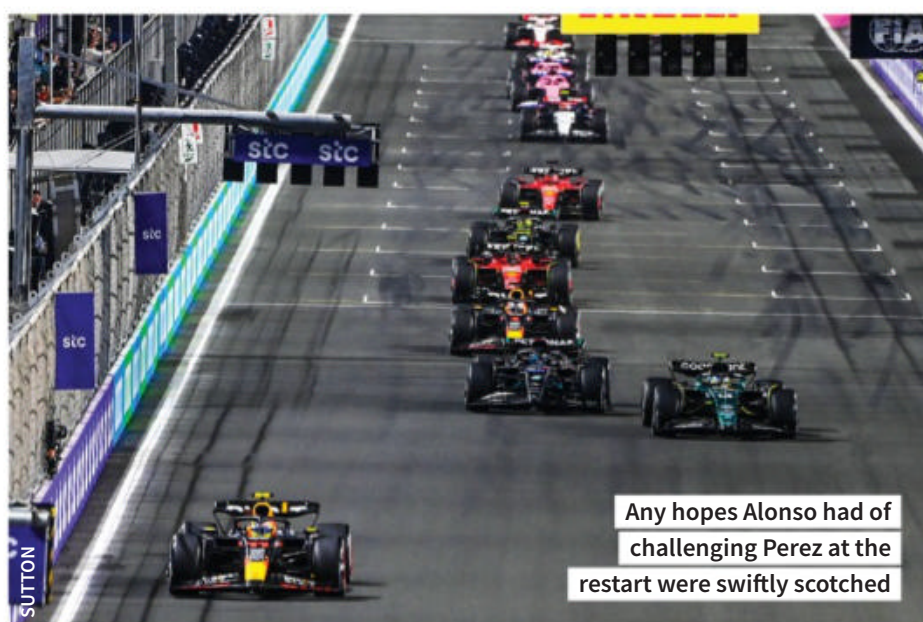
Race engineer Hugh Bird told Perez that the team was happy with the data on display, but it briefly looked as though the RB19s were walking wounded. Not that the lap times showed the drivers'

“WE WERE MAKING SURE WE KEPT THAT HEALTHY GAP. BUT THAT MEANT WE WERE PUSHING QUITE HARD”

worried countenances, as both were settling into the high 1m32s and low 1m33s and matching each other blow for blow. Perez wasn't entirely enamoured with the escalating pace, suggesting that the two drivers were "pushing without a reason".

But Verstappen's charge subsided; after a tense tug of war between the leading pair, the man in second "did the calculations" and elected to relent, allowing Perez to stack a couple more seconds onto his overall lead – at least, until Verstappen threw his remaining cards on the table and snatched the point for fastest lap on the final tour, 0.282s better than anyone else.

"Once I got past Fernando, I could do my own race," Perez reflected. "But when that safety car came out, it reminded me of Jeddah last year and I was like, 'Ah, not again!' But luckily we didn't repeat, as we hadn't pitted at the time. It was a new race after the safety car, and very early on, Max came back.



“We were basically towards the end just making sure we kept that healthy gap between myself and Max. But that meant we were pushing quite hard, trying to maintain the gap.”

Alonso had a gap of his own to maintain in his pursuit of third place; although he’d served his penalty in the pitstop, Mercedes had caught a whiff of a further investigation directed at Alonso and instructed Russell to push up on the Aston Martin ahead, aiming to keep within 5s on the off chance that the stewards would cast their magnifying glasses over Alonso.

Having been informed of Alonso’s earlier penalty in his pursuit of a podium, Russell had suggested over the radio that the team quell any hints of battle between him and Lewis Hamilton on a contra-strategy, and instead anoint the younger Brit with the tools to close the Spaniard down. Instead, he was informed that Alonso’s penalty had already been served, Russell later labelling their radio cross purposes as “confusing”. But when the call came later to keep hounding Alonso, Russell tried his best to comply.

Although the 5.1s difference at the line wasn’t enough to benefit from a possible further 5s penalty for Alonso, Mercedes’ prescience appeared to have paid off. Moments after Alonso had basked in the adulation of his 100th podium finish in F1, Aston Martin observed an unwelcome message upon the FIA bulletin board: a 10s penalty had been applied to its charge’s race time and relegated him to fourth.

Russell therefore didn’t get the satisfaction of standing on the podium. Instead, he was made to endure the more tedious fate of being probed by a room sparsely populated by journalists, as he attempted to explain the prelude to his sudden promotion into the top three. It emerged that Aston Martin, when avoiding contact with the car to allow Alonso to serve his penalty, had left a jack underneath its rear end. The FIA believed that this nullified the performance of the penalty, resulting in a 10s addition: the full 5s for the previous offence, and another five for the apparent insolence.

The story, however, did not end there. Aston Martin submitted a right-to-review request, which was then deemed admissible by »

QUALIFYING



After he chalked off top spot in each of the free practice sessions, qualifying was primed to be another Max Verstappen benefit given the gaping chasm he held in the performance stakes against everyone else. After a single hot lap in Q1 carried him to a near half-second advantage over team-mate Sergio Perez, the domination looked set to continue.

If the other teams had spent the Saturday intermission praying for the gods of unreliability to intervene, they got their wish in Q2. Verstappen made a slight mistake in his opening lap of the second session and aborted the run, instead opting for a brace of build laps to precede another tilt at breaking into the top 10. Then, just as he’d spooled up for another push and ticked off the first sector, the Dutchman’s progress through the gears tailed off as he lost drive and was forced to tiptoe back to the pitlane without a competitive lap in hand.

A driveshaft proved to be the culprit, relegating Verstappen to 15th on the grid. Pole was now up for grabs. Perez was primed to play the dutiful deputy role thanks to Red Bull’s considerable pace advantage over the competition, but Fernando Alonso and Charles Leclerc hoped to give the Mexican a run for his money.

The gauntlet that Perez threw down at the start of Q3 proved unassailable, even for him; his 1m28.265s set the benchmark and awaited a response, but no such competition came. Alonso was just a tenth away from Perez in the first half of the lap, but the Aston Martin was

considerably weaker in the final sector and the deficit grew to almost half a second. Leclerc then took his turn and, to his surprise, found a time good enough to go second fastest – just 0.155s away from Perez. With a 10-place grid penalty looming for taking his third set of control electronics, Leclerc had been able to lessen the damage, but the Ferrari lacked the legs to make a more concerted effort for pole.

Perez made a mistake on his final run and aborted the lap, but it was moot by then as he claimed his second pole in Formula 1, and his second consecutive first-place start in Jeddah.

George Russell was the best of the Mercedes duo, grabbing the fourth-fastest time to start third on the grid with Leclerc’s penalty, while Carlos Sainz joined him on the second row.

Rookie Oscar Piastri made his first appearance in Q3, beating Pierre Gasly to ninth place in the times. The young Australian carried McLaren’s hopes when Lando Norris brushed the wall in Q1 at the final corner and had to abort his session with broken front-left suspension.

“IF THE OTHER TEAMS PRAYED FOR THE GODS OF UNRELIABILITY TO INTERVENE, THEY GOT THEIR WISH”

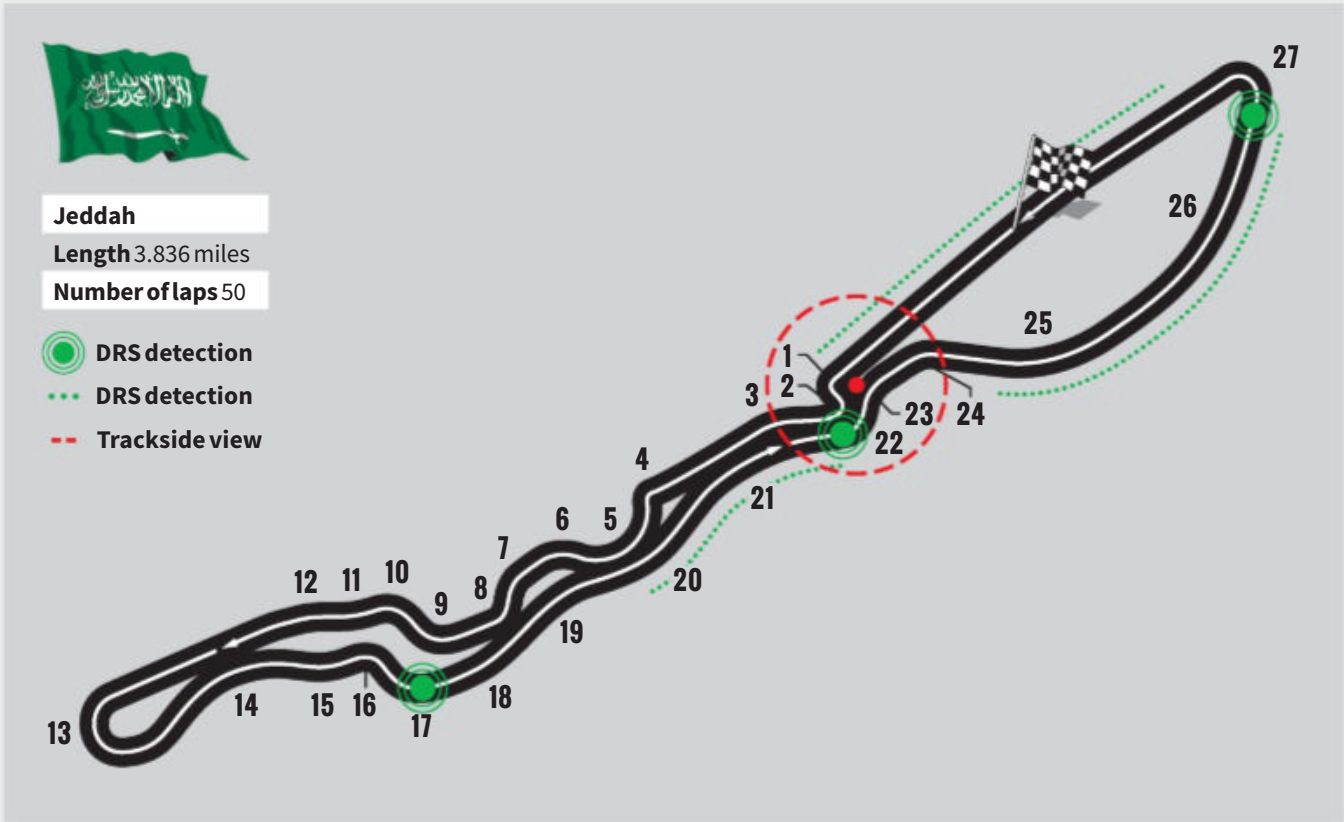


TRACKSIDE VIEW

A stiff sea breeze tousles the palm tree fronds ahead of Friday practice, offering fleeting respite from the 28C heat radiating the expansive Jeddah Corniche venue. Drivers have veiled their off-track excursions under the guise of gusts before, but few are blown off course by the prevailing winds on the Saudi Arabian coast.

There's the usual tentative start to FP1 amid the early observations at Turns 1 and 2, but the initial nerves soon give way to experimentation with the preferred line into the opening chicane. Most opt for a conventional journey through the low-speed left-right sequence, taking the shortest line between the inside kerbs of both corners, then gently pushing the throttle through the second to hang the car on the outside to straighten up.

AlphaTauri's Nyck de Vries and Red Bull's Sergio Perez are among those to try something different, lingering on the steering wheel for a fraction longer to sit in the middle of the track between the corners and collect a later entrance for the next corner. Squaring off Turn 1 doesn't quite seem to catch on, since there is still enough track on the outside to keep the accelerating car in bounds. Neither Ferrari fancies trying a different line, but Charles Leclerc can't quite get the



measure of the hard tyres early on and understeers out of Turn 1. He nibbles at the kerb politely, before wrapping the reins around his SF-23 to drag the car back on course and carry on with his lap. It's a very short hop to the high-speed and reprofiled Turns 22 and 23. To get through, the drivers have to tickle the brake pedal more than they had to before, squeeze the downshift paddle more than once, and then thread the needle with the accelerator

hovering close to the floor. The Red Bulls look planted, gracefully gliding through the quickfire bends and hunkering down over the exit kerb as the floor begins to produce the downward load. The Aston Martin pair have different styles through that sequence. Lance Stroll is aggressive and punches at the steering inputs like a welterweight boxer, taking as much kerb as the Red Bull duo to show his command of the car. Fernando Alonso, however, looks to be at one with the green machine. He barely touches the Turn 23 kerb, taking as much as he needs but no more, contrasting deeply with the fortunes of his old team.

“ALPINE’S PAIRING ARE PERHAPS GETTING TOO TRIGGER-HAPPY ON THE THROTTLE”
There, Alpine’s pairing of Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly are the most flagrant abusers of track limits, perhaps getting too trigger-happy on the throttle pedal and going well over the kerb. Subsequent runs hint at later shyness through the sweeping right-hander but, crucially, the car looks quick in spite of their wayward path.
JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE





Alonso savours his second successive podium position – which he then lost, and regained

the FIA (see news, p4). Given the precedent that Aston Martin had brought to the stewards' attention, Alonso's penalty was rescinded and his third-place finish declared perfectly cromulent.

Mercedes' first top-three result of the season will have to wait in that case, and it remains unknown how long Russell had custody of the third-place trophy. Even with Alonso's penalty, Hamilton had remained in fifth after making a long stint on the medium tyres work out.

The German manufacturer's squad had opted for an aggressive strategy and placed Hamilton on the hard tyres to begin with, and he therefore struggled to make headway early on as he skated about on a high fuel load and the least grippy rubber. But the race came to him, particularly as the Ferraris fell away, and yielded a solid fifth place after the seven-time champion admitted earlier in the weekend

“IF WE ALREADY OVERHEAT THE TYRES IN CLEAN AIR THEN IMAGINE FOLLOWING – WE EAT THEM ALIVE”



that he didn't feel “connected” to the W14.

Ferrari, meanwhile, felt that a podium was possible in Jeddah. Leclerc's run to second on the grid was impressive and, despite his 10-place penalty on the grid, the team started him on soft tyres to make an ascent through the ranks early on. But progress was less rapid than hoped, while Sainz lost a position to Stroll in spectacular fashion on the opening lap when the Canadian swept around the outside at Turn 13. It proved to be a harbinger of the miserable race the team was in for.

“A bit surprised because after Friday and before the weekend, I thought that we had a chance of being the second force here in Jeddah,” Sainz mused afterwards, shocked that Ferrari had been largely fourth-best in the pecking order. “But I think that last stint on the hard proves that we still have a lot of work to do.

“Right now, we're not where we want to be in terms of race pace, in terms of the car in general and the balance even in dirty air. We just struggled a bit, and if we already overheat the tyres in clean air then imagine following – we just eat them alive. And we need clean air to produce some kind of decent lap times.”

Leclerc, for his part, had been frustrated by a lack of communication from his own team during the safety car period. He'd left a gap to the car in front to ensure he didn't overheat the tyres, but was told late on that he could push up to try to emerge ahead of a pit-exiting Hamilton. “I was too late for being on the limit of the delta,” the Monegasque lamented, although the Mercedes driver later swallowed up Sainz regardless to move up to fifth.

There were no such communication issues at Red Bull, described by Alonso as being in a “different league” to everybody else so far in the 2023 stakes. A challenge from outside the team, unless the winds change drastically, looks increasingly unlikely at these early stages. Sure, a development race can turbocharge a team's ambitions if the new parts offer great impetus but, as it stands, Perez is the only real threat to Verstappen. And even then, a driveshaft has to break to keep them level... ❄️

NEXT F1 REPORT

AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX
6 APRIL ISSUE

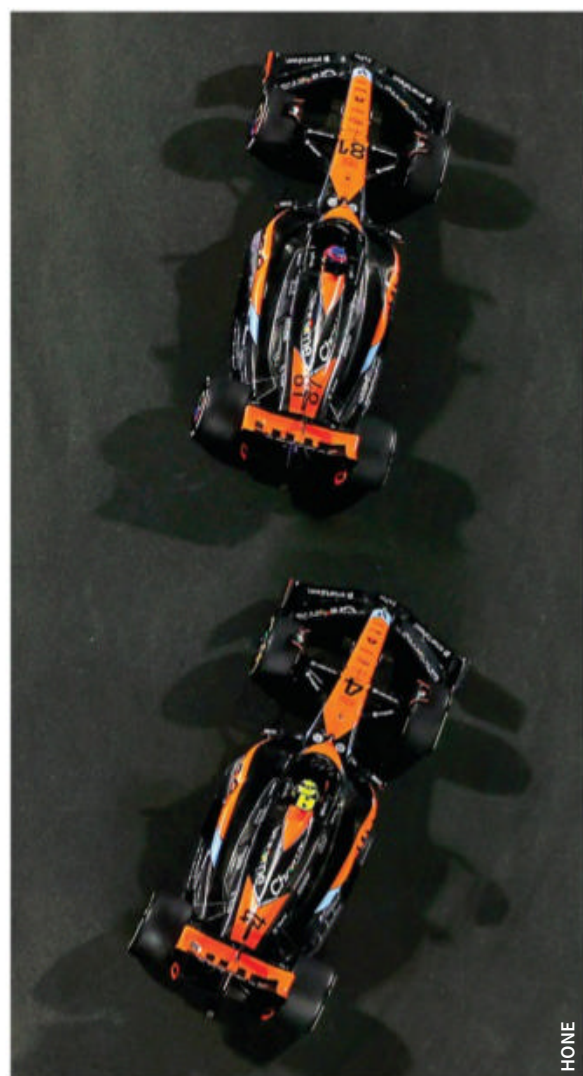
DEBRIS MISFORTUNE ADDS TO McLAREN'S JEDDAH MISERY

Although McLaren got both cars to the finish for the first time in 2023, the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix was another disaster for the team. Both its drivers picked up damage in the opening-lap chaos, and from there both Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris were mired in the battles in the pack.

The key damage for McLaren occurred when Piastri's right-front wing became detached and flew into Norris's path after the Australian had clashed with Pierre Gasly's Alpine exiting the ever-tightening Turn 3 approach. That caused Piastri to pit at the end of the opening lap, while the flyaway part smashed the left side of Norris's wing and caused a "massive loss of downforce", according to McLaren team principal Andrea Stella.

After sliding around dramatically for another lap, Norris also pitted and the pair ran adrift of the main pack until the safety car period. There, only Norris stopped, leaving Piastri to complete a mammoth 49-lap stint on the hard tyres while his team-mate ran the mediums.

Norris initially gained 17th place from the other orange car with his softer rubber, but that wore as they scrapped with Logan Sargeant's slippery Williams and Piastri was able to get back ahead for good late on, Norris choosing to aid his team-mate's ultimately successful bid to beat fellow rookie Sargeant on the last lap by not fighting too hard, as instructed by McLaren.



Magnussen pips Tsunoda to final point in late dice

Haas driver Kevin Magnussen edged AlphaTauri's Yuki Tsunoda for the final point in what was a thrilling, tight battle between the pair for much of the Saudi Arabian race's second half. But they both arrived at that position in different ways.

Magnussen was the first driver to stop for strategy reasons on lap eight, which he used to undercut team-mate Nico Hulkenberg and Alfa Romeo's Zhou Guanyu after being part of their lengthy battle early on. That gain turned into 11th place once the safety car stops had shaken out, by which time Tsunoda was running a surprise eighth from an initial position of 14th.

The safety car's appearance was behind his dramatic rise, with Tsunoda in a perfect position to pit first when it was called. He was quickly overcome by Alpine pair Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly, but then defied Magnussen for 20 laps. The Dane botched a first

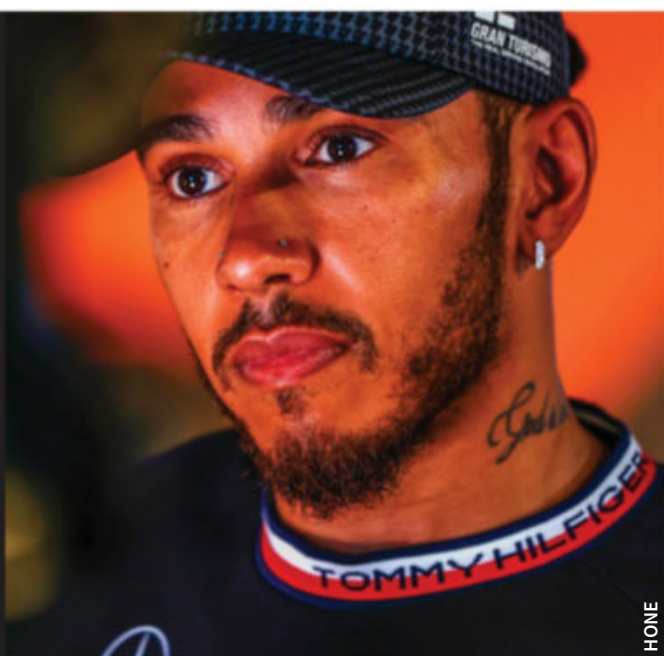
attempt to pass with a lock-up at Turn 1 on lap 35, but eventually got ahead at the start of lap 46 at the same spot after regaining DRS. It was in much different circumstances, however, since he had actually passed Tsunoda at the final corner on the preceding lap, then the AlphaTauri powered past with DRS on the outside line before Magnussen's braking bravery just made the difference in the contest for 10th.

"It's frustrating to lose the position with only four laps to go," said Tsunoda, who was followed home by Hulkenberg. The German had tracked Magnussen's Tsunoda battle a few seconds back, at one point glancing the wall on the super-fast approach to Turn 1 and lucky to escape a big crash.

In the other AlphaTauri, Nyck de Vries passed Logan Sargeant late on by surprising the Williams driver at the final corner with a dive that meant he could escape a DRS train to finish 14th.

"I THINK IT'S THE FASTEST CAR I'VE SEEN, ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO THE REST"

Lewis Hamilton on Red Bull's RB19 after finishing fifth in Jeddah





Alfa Romeo misses out on the streets

Alfa Romeo came away from Jeddah without points, despite Zhou Guanyu starting 11th and running 10th early on.

The Chinese gained on lap one as Oscar Piastri and Nico Hulkenberg fell behind. He was then overcome by Max Verstappen and became embroiled in a battle with the Haas pair.

Kevin Magnussen undercut ahead before the safety car, where neither Haas stopped and Zhou did, putting him back in the DRS train comprising the Williamses, McLarens and Nyck de Vries. He eventually worked his way up and away from that, but couldn't match Hulkenberg's pace a chunk ahead in the closing laps, and finished 13th.

Valtteri Bottas was anonymous in the other Alfa, his race apparently ruined by damage sustained hitting debris on the first lap, although his team could not confirm this. He slid around lacking pace at the back even as Alfa fitted all three tyre compounds on a desperate three-stopper.

Williams fails to capitalise on Saudi straightline speed

Williams could not repeat its Bahrain points haul despite the Jeddah track suiting its low-drag package, mainly because of Alex Albon's retirement with a mechanical brake problem just past half-distance.

Albon had been launched into the DRS train initially headed by Yuki Tsunoda after the safety car period as he too stopped as soon as it was initially activated. But just as Albon, who had been running 16th in the early stages, chased Nico Hulkenberg, his brake issue struck. He completed a further tour after reporting the problem as a "brake failure" while making settings adjustments on lap 26, before stopping in the pits.

"The pace was good and Alex had a good chance of finishing in the

top 10," reckoned Williams head of vehicle performance Dave Robson.

In the other blue car, Logan Sargeant had a battling drive from the off, initially with Nyck de Vries and then the McLaren pair. De Vries led Sargeant from the back on lap one, but his ambitious pass on the damaged McLaren of Lando Norris at the banked Turn 13 hairpin went wrong and Sargeant dived ahead as the AlphaTauri ran wide.

They were in the middle of the lower-pack DRS train after the safety car restart, and de Vries finally got in front on lap 41. From there, Sargeant tried to use his straightline prowess to keep the squabbling McLarens at bay, but was passed by Oscar Piastri on the final lap.



Q&A

ESTEBAN OCON ALPINE DRIVER

How was your race? Definitely cleaner than in Bahrain?

I'm happy to finally start my season, let's call it that way! A strong weekend for us. We maximised qualifying, we maximised the race as well. We couldn't hold the cars in front really. We thought at some point it was going to be possible to hold the Ferraris, but they were too fast, and they pulled away in that middle phase



DUNBAR

of the second stint. So, we just managed the pace, brought the car back home. A strong weekend as a whole, but we need a little bit more to be able to catch the cars in front. That's where we were. So, hopefully we understood plenty. And we can come back strong to the next one.

You spent some time fighting your new team-mate. What happened there?

At the safety car restart. After that

he was about two and a half, three seconds behind. I was obviously managing pace, he was managing pace also. We didn't want to have a sudden drop-off in tyres and half the other cars behind catch us. It was an easy race in that regard.

It seemed you had a slight edge on Pierre. Were you feeling comfortable from the start?

No, it hasn't been a good feeling from the start [of the weekend]. And especially in FP3 the car really didn't feel as I would have liked – the rear was very loose and the

car was quite tricky to put together. And we turned it around, from FP3 to qualifying. So, a strong job from my side of the team to have been able to do that.

Are you happy with Alpine's winter progress?

No, we can't be satisfied with where we are at the moment. There are a couple of teams that have improved massively over the others. It shows that it is possible, and we need to keep fighting, we need to keep digging, keep thinking. That's the atmosphere inside the team as well.



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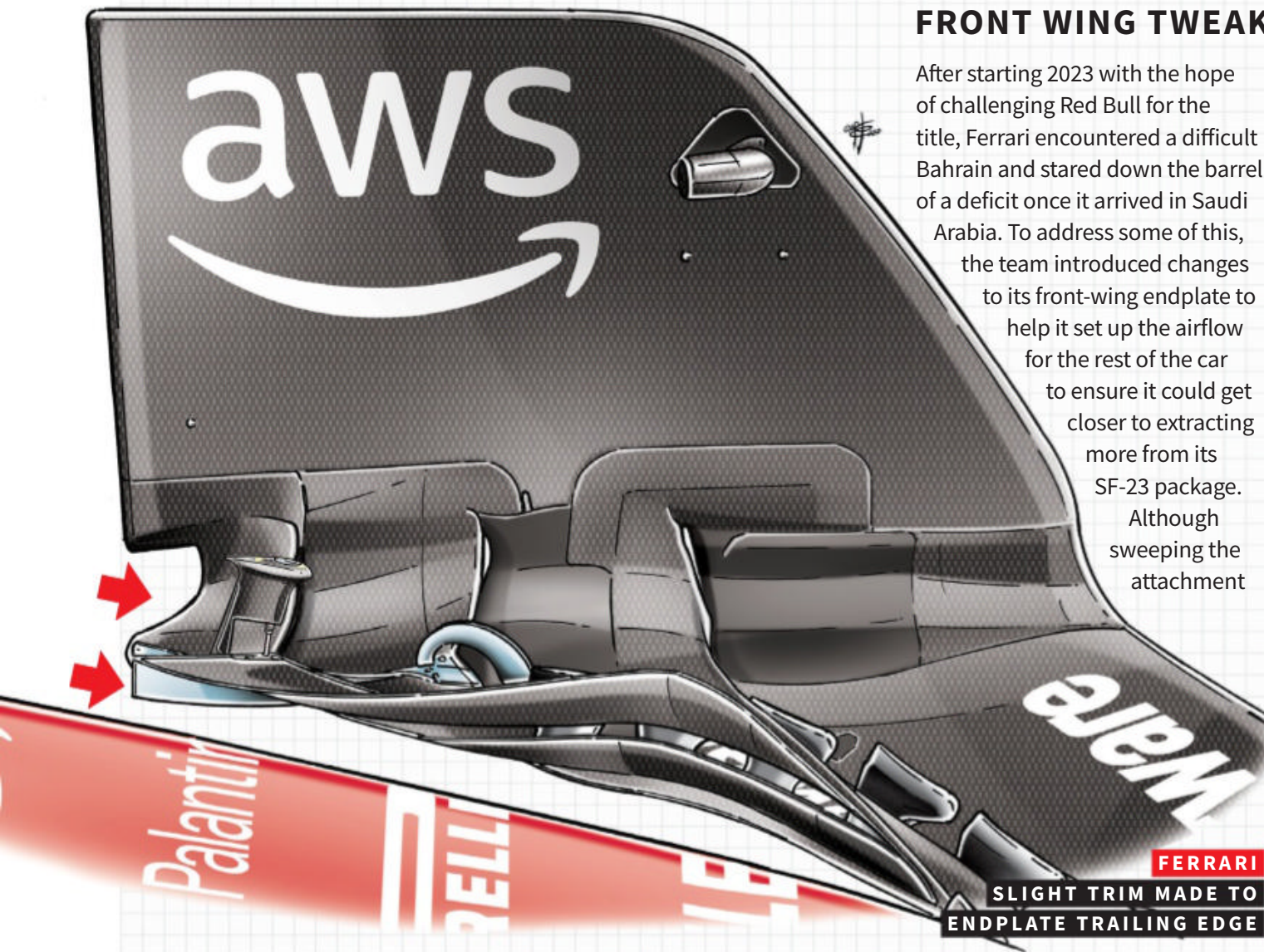
FRONT WING TWEAKS FOR FERRARI

After starting 2023 with the hope of challenging Red Bull for the title, Ferrari encountered a difficult Bahrain and stared down the barrel of a deficit once it arrived in Saudi Arabia. To address some of this, the team introduced changes to its front-wing endplate to help it set up the airflow for the rest of the car to ensure it could get closer to extracting more from its SF-23 package. Although sweeping the attachment

points of the front wing drastically forward to create an open slot in the endplate was banned ahead of the season, there's still some leeway to play with, and Ferrari has been able to trim its endplate's trailing edge slightly to assist with turning flow outwards. The team stated in its pre-event notes that the update was "not strictly linked to the peculiarities of the Jeddah Corniche Circuit, but more part of the standard development cycle. The effort on junction treatment pays off in terms of overall downforce, flow conditioning and car efficiency."

There was also the introduction of a new floor edge to improve the quality of the airflow within the underbody, in addition to a 'depowered' beam wing in a Jeddah-specific update to cut the overall coefficient of drag. With a reduction in drag, this was aimed at assisting the SF-23's overall straightline speed.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



ASTON MARTIN PULLS OUT THE STOPS IN PURSUIT OF MORE TOP SPEED

The clear improvement in performance that Aston Martin has made over the off-season catapulted Fernando Alonso to a podium in his first race with the British squad and, although the car appears to be nice to drive thanks to an improvement in overall downforce, it has a few weaker points with regards to outright top speed.

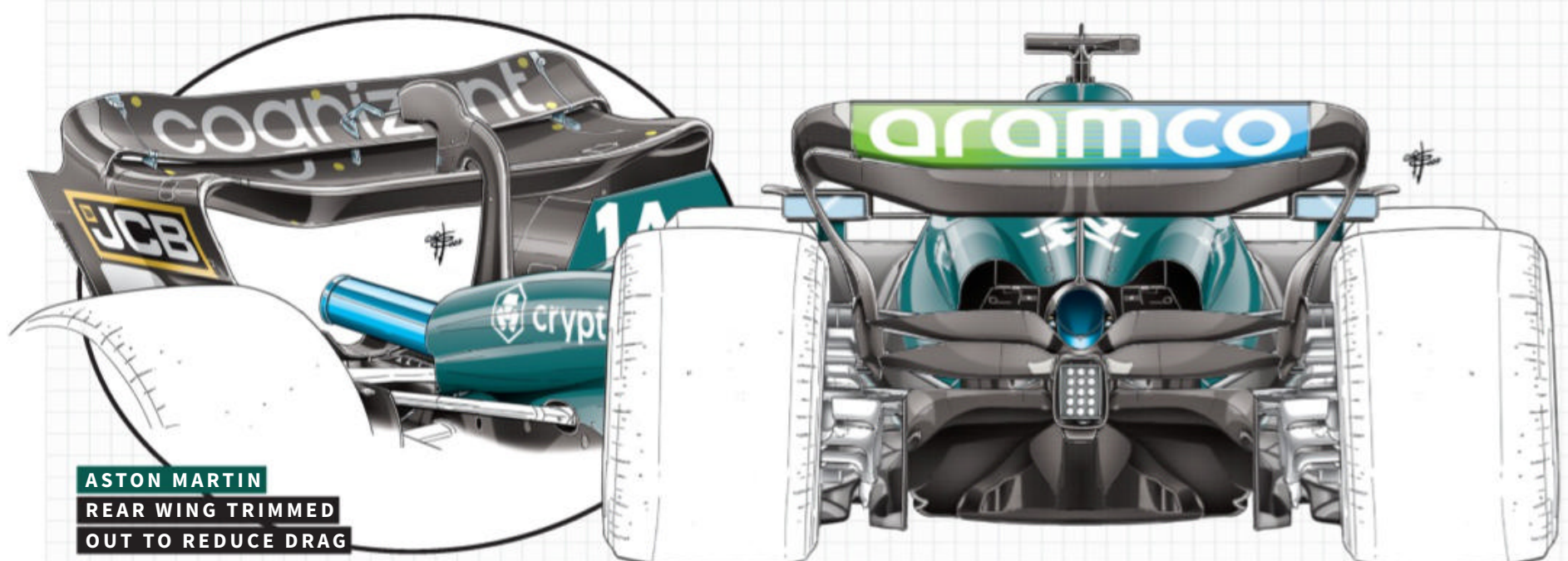
For the Saudi race, the team focused on

trimming out its rear wing geometry to gain more performance in the plethora of high-speed sections around the winding Jeddah course, reducing the incidence and chord length of the beam wing and running a shorter-chord main rear wing. "The geometric changes reduce rear-wing load and hence drag to allow the car set-up to be optimised for the characteristics of this

circuit," the team stated in its pre-event notes.

The team balanced that with a reduced upper front-wing flap to ensure the front end was not producing too much load relative to the rear. The AMR23 lost none of its edge in pure acceleration terms, but still lost out to the likes of Red Bull at the top end of the speedometer.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE





FREE PRACTICE 1		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m29.617s
2	Perez	1m30.100s
3	Alonso	1m30.315s
4	Stroll	1m30.577s
5	Russell	1m30.771s
6	Hamilton	1m30.787s
7	Sainz	1m30.924s
8	Gasly	1m30.949s
9	Albon	1m31.030s
10	Tsunoda	1m31.110s
11	Leclerc	1m31.118s
12	Ocon	1m31.181s
13	de Vries	1m31.450s
14	Piastri	1m31.491s
15	Hulkenberg	1m31.552s
16	Magnussen	1m31.566s
17	Sargeant	1m31.922s
18	Bottas	1m31.970s
19	Zhou	1m31.986s
20	Norris	1m32.149s

WEATHER Sunny, air 26-28C track 35-39C

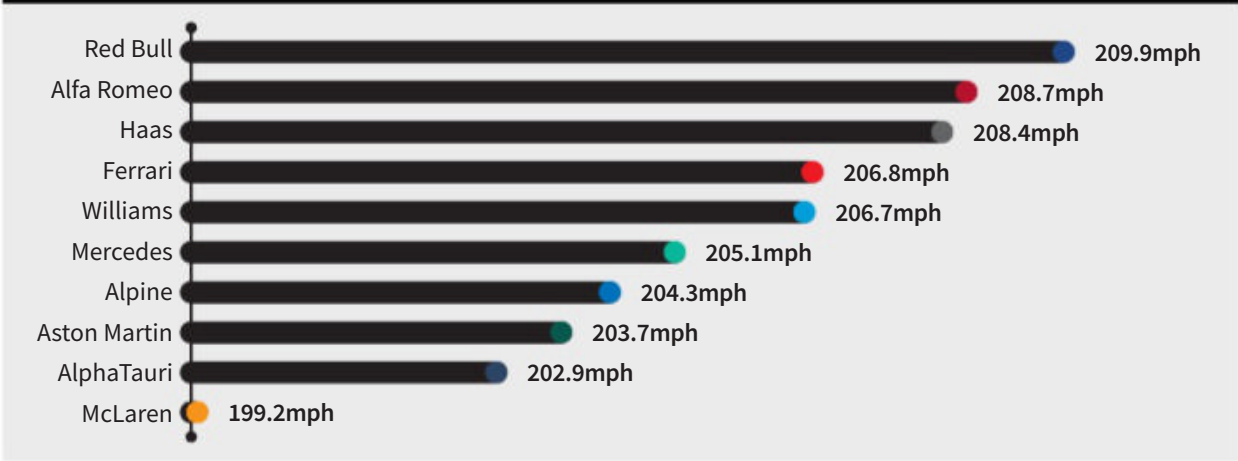
FREE PRACTICE 2		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m29.603s
2	Alonso	1m29.811s
3	Perez	1m29.902s
4	Ocon	1m30.039s
5	Russell	1m30.070s
6	Gasly	1m30.100s
7	Stroll	1m30.110s
8	Hulkenberg	1m30.181s
9	Leclerc	1m30.341s
10	Sainz	1m30.592s
11	Hamilton	1m30.599s
12	Norris	1m30.721s
13	Tsunoda	1m30.776s
14	Albon	1m30.810s
15	Magnussen	1m30.820s
16	Zhou	1m30.837s
17	de Vries	1m30.921s
18	Sargeant	1m30.959s
19	Piastri	1m30.964s
20	Bottas	1m31.052s

WEATHER Dry, air 26-27C track 31-32C

FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m28.485s
2	Perez	1m29.098s
3	Alonso	1m29.483s
4	Stroll	1m29.509s
5	Hamilton	1m29.568s
6	Leclerc	1m29.588s
7	Norris	1m29.690s
8	Piastri	1m29.698s
9	Gasly	1m29.701s
10	Sainz	1m29.761s
11	Russell	1m29.811s
12	Zhou	1m29.917s
13	Hulkenberg	1m29.933s
14	Ocon	1m29.953s
15	Albon	1m29.983s
16	Sargeant	1m30.035s
17	Magnussen	1m30.131s
18	Bottas	1m30.317s
19	Tsunoda	1m30.797s
20	de Vries	no time

WEATHER Sunny, air 27-28C track 37-40C

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m28.761s	1	Perez	1m28.635s	1	Perez	1m28.265s
2	Perez	1m29.244s	2	Alonso	1m28.757s	2	Leclerc	1m28.420s
3	Alonso	1m29.298s	3	Leclerc	1m28.903s	3	Alonso	1m28.730s
4	Stroll	1m29.335s	4	Sainz	1m28.957s	4	Russell	1m28.857s
5	Leclerc	1m29.376s	5	Stroll	1m28.962s	5	Sainz	1m28.931s
6	Sainz	1m29.411s	6	Russell	1m29.132s	6	Stroll	1m28.945s
7	Hulkenberg	1m29.547s	7	Ocon	1m29.255s	7	Ocon	1m29.078s
8	Russell	1m29.592s	8	Hamilton	1m29.374s	8	Hamilton	1m29.223s
9	Zhou	1m29.654s	9	Piastri	1m29.378s	9	Piastri	1m29.243s
10	Hamilton	1m29.689s	10	Gasly	1m29.411s	10	Gasly	1m29.357s
11	Piastri	1m29.706s	11	Hulkenberg	1m29.451s			
12	Ocon	1m29.707s	12	Zhou	1m29.461s			
13	Magnussen	1m29.744s	13	Magnussen	1m29.634s			
14	Gasly	1m29.890s	14	Bottas	1m29.668s			
15	Bottas	1m29.929s	15	Verstappen	1m49.953s			
16	Tsunoda	1m29.939s						
17	Albon	1m29.994s						
18	de Vries	1m30.244s						
19	Norris	1m30.447s						
20	Sargeant	2m08.510s						

WEATHER Dry, air 26-28C track 30-32C



SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	44	1	1
2 Perez	43	1	1
3 Alonso	30	3	3
4 Sainz	20	4	4
5 Hamilton	20	5	7
6 Russell	18	4	4
7 Stroll	8	6	6
8 Leclerc	6	7	2
9 Bottas	4	8	12
10 Ocon	4	8	7
11 Gasly	4	9	10
12 Magnussen	1	10	13
13 Albon	1	10	15
14 Tsunoda	0	11	14
15 Hulkenberg	0	12	10
16 Sargeant	0	12	16
17 Zhou	0	13	12
18 de Vries	0	14	18
19 Piastri	0	15	9
20 Norris	0	17	11

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP		PTS
1 Red Bull		87
2 Aston Martin		38
3 Mercedes		38
4 Ferrari		26
5 Alpine		8
6 Alfa Romeo		4
7 Haas		1
8 Williams		1
9 AlphaTauri		0
10 McLaren		0

QUALIFYING BATTLE			
Verstappen	1	0	Perez
Leclerc	2	0	Sainz
Hamilton	0	2	Russell
Gasly	0	2	Ocon
Norris	1	1	Piastri
Zhou	1	1	Bottas
Alonso	2	0	Stroll
Magnussen	0	2	Hulkenberg
de Vries	0	2	Tsunoda
Sargeant	0	2	Albon

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

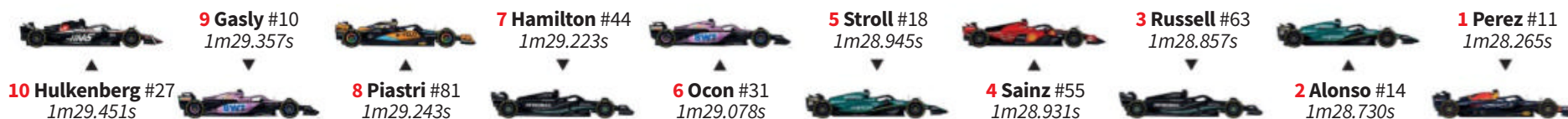
WINS	
Perez	1
Verstappen	1

FASTEST LAPS	
Verstappen	1
Zhou	1

POLE POSITIONS	
Verstappen	1
Perez	1

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

STARTING GRID



RESULTS ROUND 2/23 (50 LAPS - 191.66 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1h21m14.894s	47	Mn, Hn
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+5.355s		Mn, Hn
3	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+20.728s	3	Mn, Hu
4	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+25.866s		Mn, Hn
5	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+31.065s		Hn, Mn
6	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+35.876s		Mn, Hn
7	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+43.162s		Sn, Hn
8	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+52.832s		Mn, Hn
9	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+54.747s		Mn, Hn
10	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m04.826s		Mn, Hn
11	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+1m07.494s		Mn, Hn
12	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m10.588s		Mn, Hn
13	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m16.060s		Mn, Hn, Mn
14	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+1m17.478s		Mn, Hn
15	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m25.021s		Mn, Hn
16	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m26.293s		Hn, Mn
17	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m26.445s		Sn, Hn, Mn
18	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+29.584s		Mn, Hn, Mn, Sn
R	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	27 laps-brakes		Mn, Hn
R	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	16 laps-power unit/ERS		Mn, Hn

FASTEST LAPS

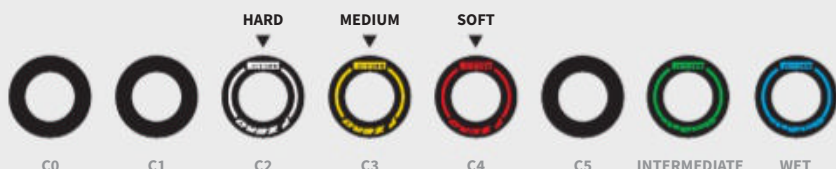
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Verstappen	1m31.906s	-	50
2	Perez	1m32.188s	+0.282s	38
3	Alonso	1m32.240s	+0.334s	50
4	Russell	1m32.433s	+0.527s	50
5	Sainz	1m32.822s	+0.916s	50
6	Hamilton	1m32.941s	+1.035s	47
7	Leclerc	1m33.056s	+1.150s	47
8	Ocon	1m33.222s	+1.316s	49
9	Magnussen	1m33.374s	+1.468s	44
10	Gasly	1m33.392s	+1.486s	50
11	de Vries	1m33.609s	+1.703s	49
12	Hulkenberg	1m33.780s	+1.874s	50
13	Zhou	1m33.894s	+1.988s	49
14	Tsunoda	1m33.931s	+2.025s	50
15	Norris	1m34.122s	+2.216s	49
16	Piastri	1m34.287s	+2.381s	48
17	Bottas	1m34.384s	+2.478s	37
18	Sargeant	1m34.469s	+2.563s	49
19	Stroll	1m35.140s	+3.234s	7
20	Albon	1m35.567s	+3.661s	24

WEATHER Dry, air 26C track 29-31C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 141.538mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 150.271mph

TYRES

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



RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

LECLERC 10-place penalty for additional power unit elements used (control electronics)

RACE PENALTIES

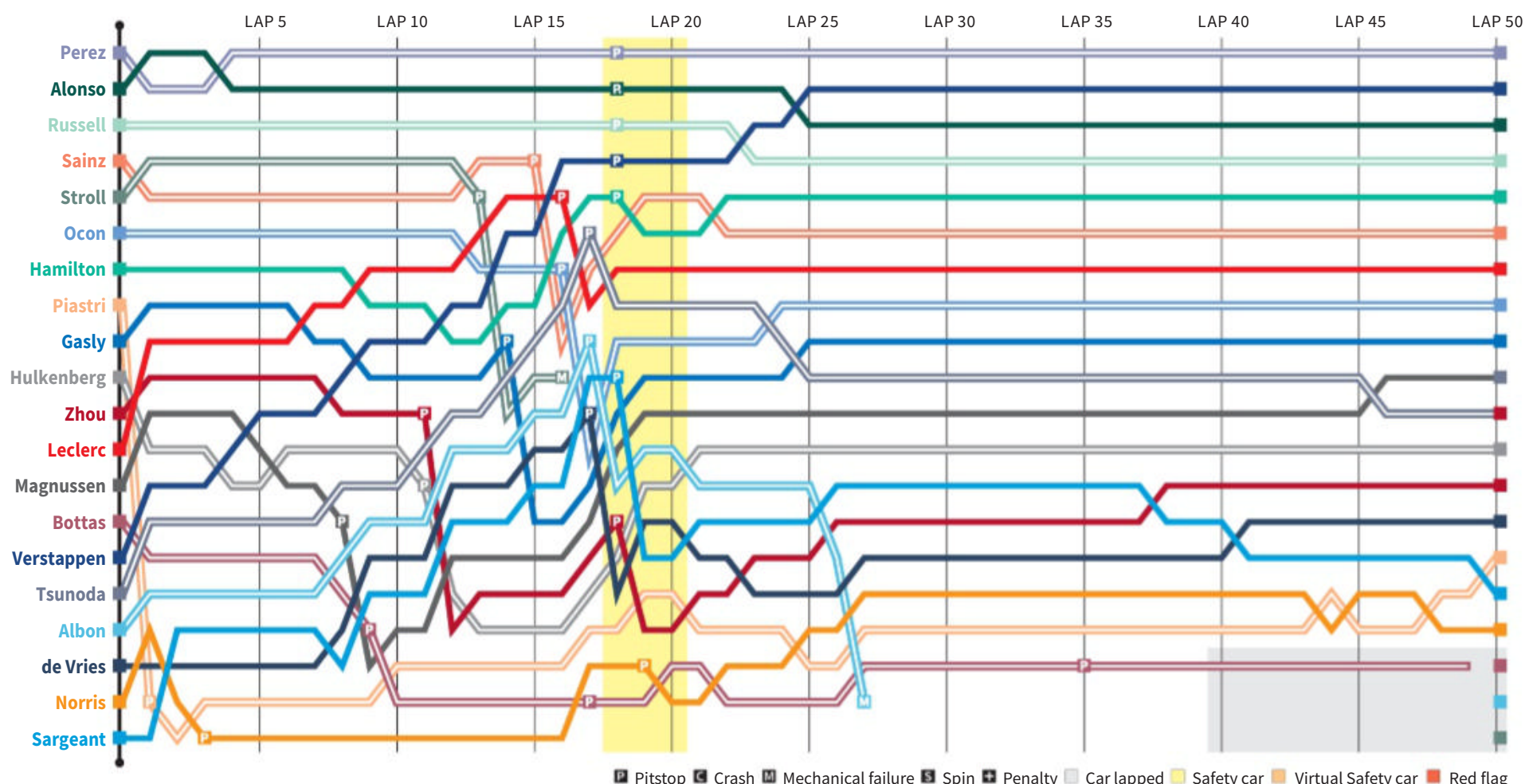
ALONSO Five-second penalty for incorrect starting location

STAT

5

Perez now has as many wins as Leclerc - and world champs Giuseppe Farina and Keke Rosberg

LAP CHART What happened, when

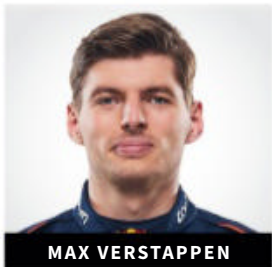


SAUDI ARABIAN GRAND PRIX DRIVER RATINGS

No perfect scores in Jeddah, although five drivers get closest after star performances

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

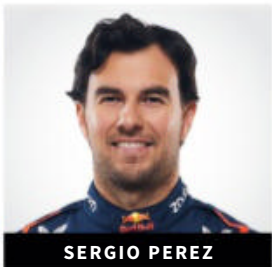
RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **15th** — Result **2nd**

9 Took things cautiously in the opening stages, aware that passing isn't a problem here. Then picked off his rivals one by one until he'd reached sixth just before the safety car, which bumped him ahead of the already-stopped Ferraris. Continued his charge, then couldn't close final gap to Perez.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **1st** — Result **1st**

9 Let a slower rival jump him off the line, but knew he would be able to bring his Red Bull's top speed advantage to bear. Eventually Alonso fell away pre-safety car, and at the restart Perez dropped the Aston brilliantly. But it was his pace compared to Verstappen late on that capped a fine overall drive.

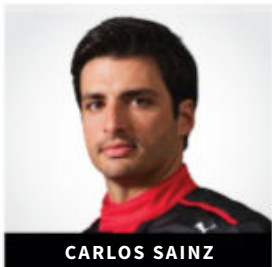
FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **12th** — Result **7th**

8 Launched aggressively then rose up the order smoothly. Pace and durability on the soft tyres in first stint were very impressive, then he was done over by the safety car and not helped by Ferrari telling him too late to push to keep Hamilton behind. No gains after restart means he doesn't score higher.



CARLOS SAINZ

Started **4th** — Result **6th**

5 Gets a 'par' score. Stroll powered around his outside at Turn 13 on lap one, then he could only track the Aston. But did execute the overcut nicely to jump Stroll before the safety car caused by the Aston's retirement meant Hamilton and Verstappen got ahead. Struggled for pace sliding the hard tyres.

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **7th** — Result **5th**

6 Maintained seventh initially on hard tyres – a weird strategy considering the likelihood of a safety car, and when that appeared he had to take the mediums. Got past Sainz after restart, then pressed Russell before the leading Mercedes moved clear and Hamilton's mediums wore.

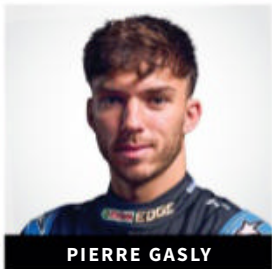


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **3rd** — Result **4th**

9 Hard to see what else he could have done better given Mercedes' performance deficit. Was managing his pace as Hamilton closed on medium tyres after the restart, before the news that Alonso ahead had already served his penalty spurred Russell into action and he dropped his team-mate.

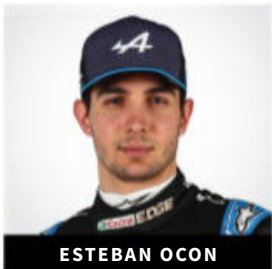
ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **9th** — Result **9th**

6 Launched well and took advantage of Piastri's cautious start, with both lucky that their clash didn't escalate. Inevitably picked off by Leclerc and Verstappen, then had to make his way past Tsunoda due to stopping before the safety car. Attacked Ocon at the restart but was rebuffed.

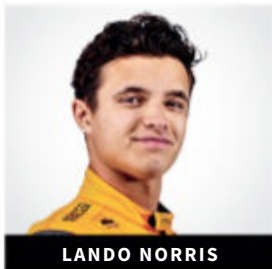


ESTEBAN OCON

Started **6th** — Result **8th**

7 A "largely uneventful evening", as Alpine's press release said, was probably exactly what he required after his Bahrain woes. Earns a bonus mark over Gasly for running just ahead of the faster Hamilton in the first stint. Saw off Gasly at the restart and led him home.

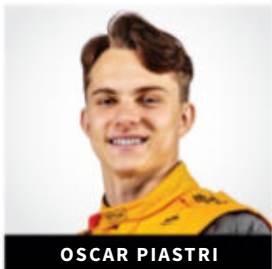
McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **19th** — Result **17th**

6 All a bit unfortunate, given that he made a good start to power past de Vries, but then struck the debris knocked off his team-mate's front wing so had to stop for a new nose too. This ruined his aggressive strategy of starting on the soft tyre and his race overall.



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **8th** — Result **15th**

6 He ended up behind Gasly after taking things steadily through the opening turns, and that meant they came together, the resulting damage undoing both McLaren's races. After the restart, raced nicely with Norris on different tyres, then boldly overtook Sargeant on the final lap.

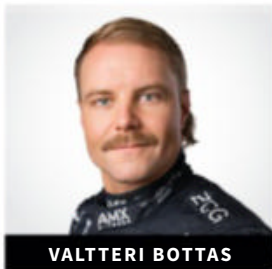
ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **11th** — Result **13th**

6 Gained a spot on the opening lap and was leading his Haas rivals before they all stopped before safety car, where Magnussen undercut to lead the trio. From there, he struggled to make progress because he was stuck behind Sargeant's Williams. Eventually got by with a lovely move in Turn 1.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **14th** — Result **18th**

4 A harsh mark but it's only because he and Alfa could not conclusively say whether the debris he ran over on lap one caused floor damage to hurt his performance so much. Couldn't match Zhou ahead and was struggling for grip on all three tyre types, his pace at the back so poor that he was the only lapped runner.



ASTON MARTIN



Started 2nd — Result 3rd

8 His gaffe in lining up too far left in his grid box should be scored down, but his driving afterwards was brilliant. His start was feisty, then he wisely chose not to fight the Red Bulls when they came past. Did superbly to stick with Perez for so long, and had pace to edge Russell's chase late on.



Started 5th — Result R

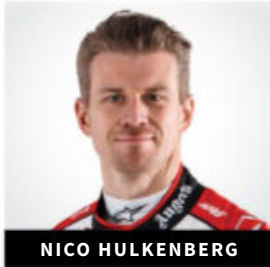
7 Can only be judged on what he did before an energy recovery issue stopped him after 16 laps. That was good, particularly his pass on Sainz at Turn 13 on the opening lap. Struggled to catch Russell's slower Mercedes, but was already starting to have issues with the power reduction that put him out.

HAAS



Started 13th — Result 10th

9 Passed Hulkenberg on lap one, then faded a touch as Verstappen and Hulkenberg came through. Was first driver to strategically stop, nine laps before the safety car, making his second-stint pursuit and defeat of Tsunoda so impressive considering his tyres were so much older.



Started 10th — Result 12th

7 His first lap was compromised by Piastri's struggles and he dropped behind Magnussen, although he repassed a few laps later. Then, having been undercut, he and Zhou exchanged DRS passes. After restart, having not stopped like Magnussen, he then couldn't get past Tsunoda.

ALPHATAURI



Started 18th — Result 14th

6 Early on, let Sargeant by with a botched Turn 13 pass on the hobbled Norris that nearly had him off-track, and later was too timid at the restart after gaining with a safety car stop to jump the Williams. But his late pass on Sargeant was neat, and stymied its straightline threat on the next straight.



Started 16th — Result 11th

9 Might be thought generous given he gained so massively to leap into the points when he was the first driver to pit when the safety car was called. But his defiance of Magnussen for 20 laps was seriously impressive and he didn't fold under pressure. Lost final point eventually, but to a faster car.

WILLIAMS



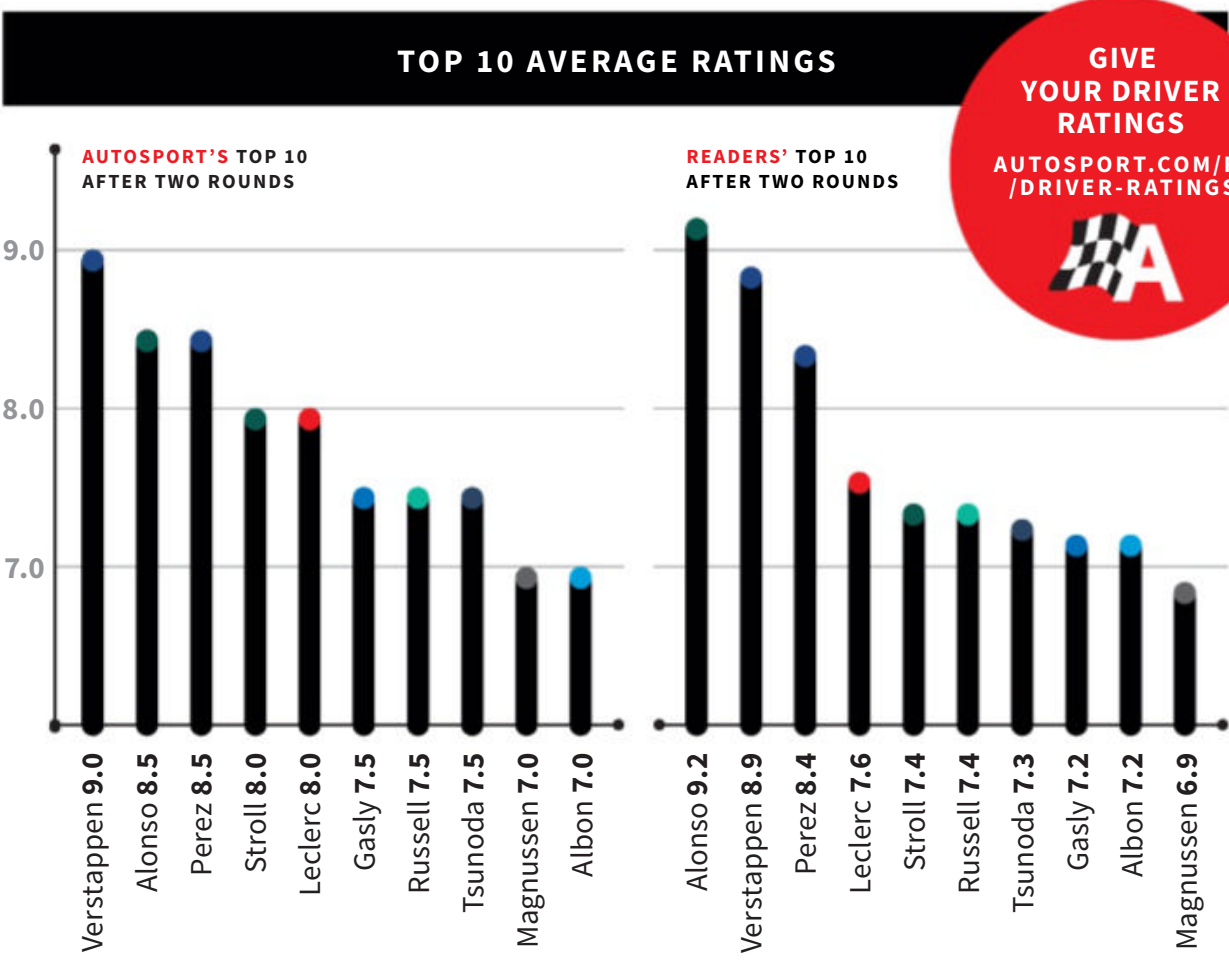
Started 20th — Result 16th

6 Made solid early progress and was chasing Albon when de Vries repassed. Being unable to stop on the same lap as his team-mate when the safety car appeared exacerbated the gap between them, and ruined his gamble of starting on hard tyres. From there, he struggled to keep the mediums in best shape.



Started 17th — Result R

6 Hard to score because his mechanical brake issue forced him out just past halfway. But before that Albon had impressed Williams with his pace on the medium tyre, and the team thought he had a chance of getting back into the points before his issue. Was another safety car stop gainer.





Toyota blazed
a trail the rest could
only follow at a distance
over the rough
Sebring bumps

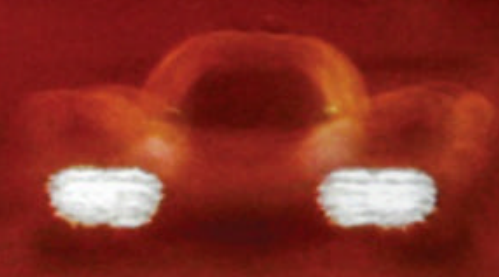
WEC SEBRING

Toyota experience tells as new Ferrari threatens

A stunning pole position was a great debut for the new 499P, but the Japanese cars set the target all must aim for as a new era kicked off

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  motorsport
IMAGES



Shock, sensational, spectacular. All those words correctly described Ferrari's pole position with its 499P Le Mans Hypercar at the start of the new era for the World Endurance Championship at the Sebring 1000 Miles. Yet come the race last Friday it was Toyota that was on top. That the Japanese cars were just too good for those from its Italian rival, as well as Cadillac, Porsche and Peugeot, was not a surprise.

Toyota, as the incumbent force in the WEC and the winner of four drivers' and manufacturers' title doubles in a row, had reinforced its status as pre-season favourite through the Prologue test the weekend ahead of the race week and then during free practice. In only one of the seven sessions of testing and practice was the GR010 HYBRID LMH beaten in the times. And in the race, Toyota sat pretty at the top of the leaderboard for all but 10 of the 239 laps on the way to a 1-2 victory, two laps up on the best of the Ferraris.

Victory went to the #7 Toyota LMH shared by Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez after the kind of fierce battle with the sister car that has become *de rigueur* in the WEC. The winning GR010 and the #8 driven by Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa were evenly matched throughout, witness the two-second margin between them at the chequered flag.

The #8 Toyota had the slightest of edges over the first half of a race that was always going to run to the maximum duration of eight hours rather than the full 1000 miles once there was an early safety car lasting 25 minutes. Buemi headed the Toyota train that gradually pulled away from the chasing pack after pole winner Antonio Fuoco ducked into the pits during the one and only safety car of the race.

The gap between the Toyotas in seconds never went into double figures over the opening four hours – even after #8 had to make an emergency pitstop for a splash of fuel under new rules that close the pits during a Full Course Yellow – and for most of the time »



was just one or two. Kobayashi moved the #7 car to the front late in the fourth hour when Hartley was asked to cede position on the pitstraight. The gap fluctuated more thereafter, before going out to 10s after Kobayashi and Buemi climbed aboard their respective mounts for the penultimate stint. The Swiss dropped back after what Toyota Gazoo Racing technical director Pascal Vasselon described as “three dreadful laps in dense traffic”.

Ten seconds turned into 20 when a mechanic tumbled over as he ran around the car holding a wheel and tyre at the car’s final stop. At that point, the positions at Toyota were frozen, which made Hartley’s charge up towards a conservative Conway an irrelevance.

Vasselon reckoned it wasn’t worth “overanalysing” the respective pace of the two Toyotas. “It’s difficult to elaborate when you are talking about a gap that was nothing,” he said, though it appeared that the #8 car picked up a degree of oversteer through the race.

The drivers of #7, meanwhile, were able to dial out the understeer they had at the beginning.

Whatever, the updated GR010 looked a class act around the 3.74-mile Sebring International Raceway last week, a far better racing car than 12 months ago. The drive to make a more consistent or raceable machine over the winter has clearly been a success. “The driveability is much better now,” said Lopez. “It gives you more confidence and allows you to push, but I’m not saying these are easy cars to drive.”

It was a particularly important victory for Lopez after his accident that put the #7 out of the race this time last year and another off during FP3, when he lost it on the brakes into the quick Turn 17 horseshoe and damaged the right side of the car. “Sebring has been tough for us and it wasn’t easy to jump back in the car after the incident yesterday,” said Lopez. “It took a few laps to get my confidence back. I had the support of the team to go out there





“I had the sun on my visor and it was tricky to see the corner, but in the end it worked out”

and get my rhythm back. I’m proud of that.”

Ferrari may have taken the pole, but it conceded after the race that it didn’t go into the 1000 Miles believing it could beat Toyota. Fuoco, who shared the #50 Ferrari with Miguel Molina and Nicklas Nielsen, found a whopping 1.7s in qualifying on Thursday evening over the simulated run he’d undertaken in the warmer conditions of final free practice. It was undoubtedly a special lap: the Italian admitted that he was blinded by the sun and couldn’t see through Turn 17 – sometimes aptly known as Sunshine Corner – as he came to the end of the lap. “If I’m honest, in the last corner I just sent it, because I had the feeling it was a good lap,” he said. “I had the sun on my visor and it was quite tricky to see the corner, but I had my reference points from free practice. I had a big moment on the bumps, but in the end it worked out.”

Ferdinando Cannizzo, Ferrari’s sportscar racing technical boss, was happy to admit that a victory was probably too much to expect on the debut for the 499P. “After the pole, we knew the race would be a different story,” he admitted. “A podium was a good result; this was the most we could achieve in our opinion.”

A top-three finish was one of Ferrari’s targets for this race, another to get both cars to the finish without reliability issues. It achieved both so, added Cannizzo, “we have to be happy with our first race”.

The #51 Ferrari was generally behind its sister through race week after the car was rebuilt around a new monocoque ahead of the start of the meeting proper. James Calado had lost it on cold tyres at Turn 1 on his out-lap in the Sunday morning session of the Prologue, an accident that brought the ban on tyre warmers for 2023 into sharp focus. >>

DISASTER FOR PEUGEOT



Peugeot opted against testing at Sebring over the winter in favour of a development programme in Europe focused on reliability, which included a trio of Le Mans 24 Hours simulations. It played down its lack of pace through the Prologue and free practice, stressing that it faced a steep learning curve to get the 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar sorted for the quirky Florida venue, only to have both its cars hit problems within an hour and a bit of the race.

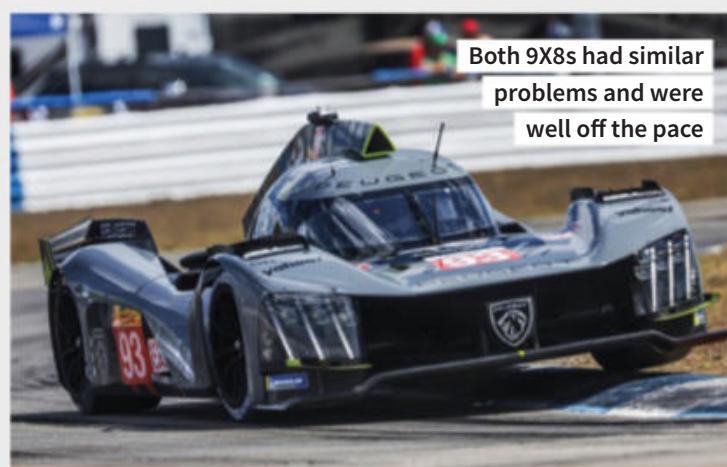
The disaster began when Loic Duval stopped in the pits after the opening lap. The #94 Peugeot he shared with Nico Muller and Gustavo Menezes quickly returned to the track for one slow lap before pitting again for a protracted 21-minute stop. The sister car driven by Paul di Resta, Jean-Eric Vergne and Mikkel Jensen would make a pit call of near-identical length just after the opening hour was completed.

Both cars were hit by the same problem, which was related to a gearbox actuator. It was a known issue, Peugeot Sport technical director Olivier Janssonie revealed, though he conceded it wasn’t something they were expecting to encounter, “especially not so early in the race”.

A solution is in the works and scheduled to be in place for round two at Algarve next month. That might have offered some consolation to the team had it shown any pace.

The best of the Peugeots qualified 2.4 seconds from the pole-winning Ferrari, and the two 9X8s were only slightly closer to the Toyotas when they were running in the race, which for #94 was only about five hours. It spent three hours in the pits after a hybrid system alarm went off. With nothing to gain after its early delay, the team opted not to hurry the fix “to be 100% sure the car was safe”. There was also an ignition problem for #93 in the final hour.

Janssonie said no conclusions could be drawn about the wingless 9X8 concept on such a bumpy track because the team failed to perfect the set-up: “The nature of the track magnified some issues we have had from the beginning.”



Alessandro Pier Guidi was running sixth in #51, also driven by Antonio Giovinazzi, as the race hit six hours when he made contact with one GTE Am car (the #54 AF Ferrari) going into Turn 15 and spun into a second (the #56 Project 1 Porsche) at Turn 16. The car sustained right-rear-suspension damage that resulted in a 20-minute stop, meaning it could finish no better than 15th, and seventh in the Hypercar class.

Cannizzo explained that Toyota “proved the value of experience” on Friday. “We definitely need to collect more experience, analyse the data and see what we can do better,” he continued. “There are things we can improve; this is something we expected.”

Ferrari wasn’t that far away from Toyota on the averages, just

“The car was bearable on new tyres, but you wondered how you would get through a double stint”

three tenths using a 100-lap sample, though the 499P clearly wasn’t as good over a double stint as the race-winning machine. The early stop under the safety car and a penalty for an infraction when it ended explained some of the #50 car’s two-lap deficit to the Toyotas.

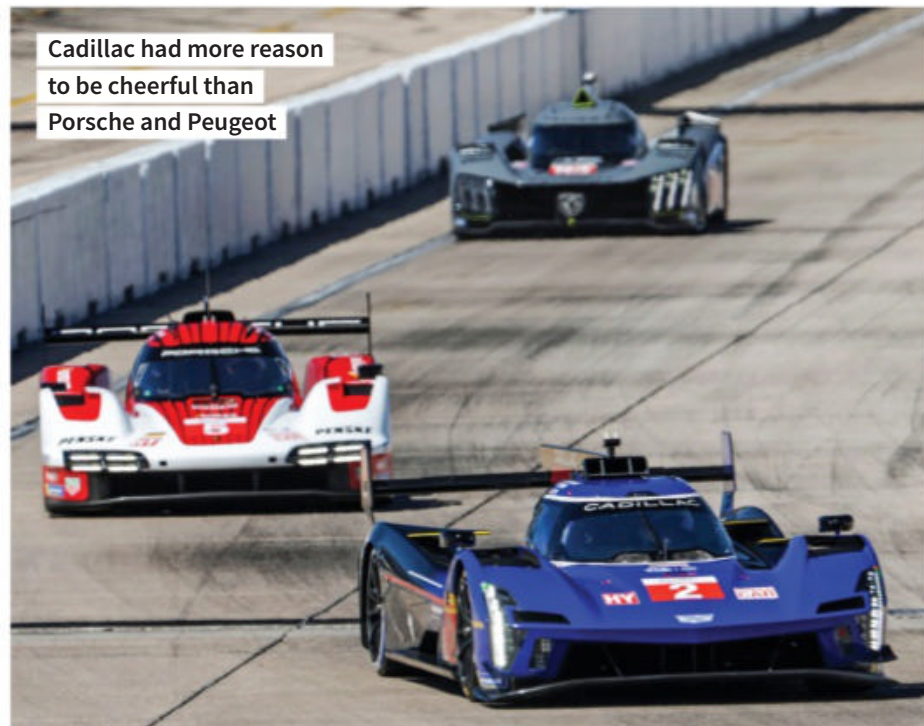
Cadillac pushed Ferrari close for the final position on the podium, the Chip Ganassi Racing-run V-Series.R LMDh ending up just 10s behind at the flag. The car driven by Earl Bamber, Alex Lynn and Richard Westbrook looked as though it might snatch the podium a couple of hours from home as Bamber homed in on the Italian car, but over the final stints the Ferrari was able to repel the advance.

“I think we had the better double-stint car,” said Bamber, who pointed out that the run of FCYs meant teams had enough tyres left in their allocations to go onto singles for the run to the flag. “Our pace was good today, probably better than expected.”

The Ganassi team was at pains to highlight the fact that there was more to come for a team that was working together for the first time at Sebring. The #2 Caddy was overseen by the definitive WEC squad that from next month will begin working out of a base in Germany, rather than the crew made up largely of Ganassi IndyCar mechanics on its appearance at the IMSA SportsCar Championship opener at Daytona in January.

“We had a clean race and there is definitely a lot of low-hanging fruit,” said Bamber. “We’re gutted to miss out on the podium after getting so close, but if you’d told us we’d end up fourth before the Prologue, we would have taken that.”

Porsche didn’t have a great race with its 963 LMDh, though unlike on the debut of the car at Daytona it got both to the finish largely without issues. But the pair of Porsche Penske Motorsport entries weren’t on the pace and looked real handfuls out on track on the way to finishing four laps down in fifth and sixth positions.



There was a brief period in the middle of the race when the quicker of the two Porsches, the #6 entry shared by Kevin Estre, Laurens Vanthoor and Andre Lotterer, looked as if it might have something for Ferrari and Cadillac in the battle for the last podium spot, but the German cars were more than a second off the race pace of the Toyotas.

The #6 fell behind the sister car driven by Michael Christensen, Dane Cameron and Frederic Makowiecki in the penultimate hour when Estre found himself without power as he approached pitlane entry. The car restarted as he ducked into the pits, but the loss of time in the confused stop that followed – he caught the team by surprise – restricted him and his team-mates to sixth. The sister car had also lost time with an electrical glitch, sorted by changing the steering wheel, and a drive-through.

“It was hard out there,” said Christensen, who didn’t argue with the assessment that the Porsche looked an ill-sorted racing car. “I would agree with that. The car was bearable on new tyres, but then it started to move around and you wondered how you are going to get through a double stint.”

Estre insisted that there were positives to take away from Sebring. “There were times when we were as good as Ferrari and Caddy, but obviously at no point were we anywhere near as quick as the Toyotas,” he explained. “But I remember last year following them when I was driving the 911 RSR [in GTE Pro] and they didn’t look good, probably not much better than we were today. We’re going through the same learning process as they did, and we definitely learnt a lot today.”

The garagistes, Glickenhaus and Vanwall, weren’t in the mix at Sebring. That was no surprise given how much they each had to learn with their respective non-hybrid LMHs. >>



UNITED PROVES CAMERA SHY AS JOTA WINS

Jota picked up a victory
in odd circumstances



The British Jota team, reigning LMP2 class champion, started the new season with a victory, albeit with the extra ORECA-Gibson 07 it's fielding in the first two races prior to the arrival of its new Porsche 963 LMDh. Will Stevens, Yifei Ye and David Beckmann took the win by a couple of seconds over the only United Autosports entry to finish the race.

Filipe Albuquerque, Phil Hanson and Freddie Lubin were just 2.9 seconds behind at the chequered flag in a race that United could and probably should have finished 1-2. The only consolation for the British team was that it took the lead in the P2 championship because the Hertz-sponsored Jota entry

was ineligible for points.

This was a day of high drama for United. It was dominating the race with the sister car shared by Oliver Jarvis, Tom Blomqvist and Josh Pierson when it retired from the race early in the third hour courtesy of what team boss Richard Dean called a "one in a million" chance. The cockpit TV camera on the #23 ORECA, installed by the race organiser and not the team, worked its way loose and hit the external kill switch from the inside, knocking it outwards as though it had pulled to the off position. The car ground to halt on Pierson, who was unable to restart the engine. When the car was returned to the pits, the problem

was spotted and the Gibson V8 growled into life at the first time of asking.

The second-placed car came back from a full lap down courtesy of some extreme fuel saving to avoid the splash taken by the other frontrunners. Sportscar debutant Lubin mistakenly stopped in the pits at the first Full Course Yellow – a new rule for this year closes the pits under FCY – shortly after taking over the car. The team undertook a full service and then sent him out a lap down, as required by the regulations.

"It was a tough day because we had the pace to finish 1-2 today," said Dean. "Josh [as the crew's Silver driver] had done his minimum drive time and we'd lapped everyone up to P4 in class. You don't have that sort of pace advantage every race, and when you don't capitalise on it through massive bad luck, it sucks.

"I have to give credit to Filipe for our second position because he did some amazing fuel saving. I don't think there's anyone else out there who could have done that while maintaining the kind of pace he did."

The United cars were the quickest P2s last week, while the winning Jota was third fastest on the averages. The Prema car shared by Mirko Bortolotti, Daniil Kvyat and Doriane Pin was restricted to the final place on the podium as a result of #22 doing without a splash. Team boss Rene Rosin wasn't disappointed. He reckoned it was a good result after a poor qualifying performance, and in the first WEC round at which Prema has run two cars.

Made for TV? Not this time
when it came to United
Autosports' cruel luck





A big win for Toyota and satisfaction for Ferrari to achieve a debut podium

TOYOTA

US entrant Glickenhaus always knew it would be up against it as it revived its programme for the new season: the Pipo-engined 007 LMH hadn't run in anger since its previous race outing at Monza last July, and it had the 2023 specifications of Michelin tyre to get used to on a track on which it had struggled last year.

The Glickenhaus shared by Romain Dumas, Olivier Pla and Ryan Briscoe outqualified the Vanwall-Gibson Vandervell 680 and ran ahead of it until the second hour when the American car briefly came to a halt after a mis-shift by Briscoe. The car wouldn't make it past the third hour because of a problem with the ignition switch.

The former ByKolles team exceeded its own expectations with its new contender shared by Jacques Villeneuve, Tom Dillmann and Esteban Guerrieri. It got a car that has done a fraction of the testing mileage of its rivals to the finish, albeit in second to last position.

A big chunk of the 24 laps by which it trailed the Toyotas was the result of a 25-minute stop to repair a rear suspension problem that sent Villeneuve into a spin at Turn 17. The team couldn't be sure if it was the result of a tap from one of the Peugeot 9X8s earlier on.

Experience was key at Sebring as sportscar racing's latest golden age kicked off. That's something Toyota has by the bagful, but also something that its rivals are picking up fast with their challengers.

"We are impressed with some of the newcomers," said Vasselon. "Ferrari and Cadillac have done eight hours without any problems, which is impressive. I think they will very quickly be close to us."

NEXT REPORT

PORTIMAO 6 HOURS
20 APRIL ISSUE

KEATING'S CORVETTE TO THE FORE IN GTE AM

Ben Keating has a new team and car for this season, but it was business as usual for the reigning GTE Am World Endurance champion at Sebring. The American took victory on his first outing with Corvette Racing and 2023 team-mates Nico Varrone and Nicky Catsburg after another battle with the Iron Dames crew in which he did much of the heavy lifting during an opening triple stint.

The Chevrolet Corvette C8.R triumphed by

two laps, but during the opening hours Keating renewed the rivalry with fellow Bronze Sarah Bovy that began last year when the Iron Lynx team was fielding Ferraris. It continued with a thrilling tug-of-war over pole position between the 'Vette and the Porsche 911 RSR Bovy shared with Michelle Gatting and Rahel Frey, and then on into the race.

Keating lost out in qualifying, just as he had last season at Monza and in Bahrain when

driving for the TF Sport Aston Martin team. The Corvette and Porsche then swapped positions four times before the only safety car of the race when the chasing Luis Perez Companc crashed his AF Corse Ferrari 488 GTE Evo heavily at Turn 1.

The battle swung in the favour of the Iron Dames around the 90-minute mark when Bovy pitted just before the second Full Course Yellow of the race. New rules mean the pits are closed the moment an FCY is called, but the Porsche was already in the pitlane at the magic moment and won more than half a minute over the Corvette.

The gap between the Porsche and the Corvette, now in Varrone's hands after Keating had completed two hours and 40 minutes, stood at 30s towards the end of the third hour when Frey went wide onto the dirt on the exit of Turn 1. The rough surface ripped off the floor and rear bumper, and with it the chance of a first WEC victory. It was plain sailing for Varrone and then Catsburg thereafter in the absence of any threat from the other cars that had qualified in the top four.



Iron Dames Porsche took the fight to new Corvette of Keating

RESULTS WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 1/7, SEBRING (USA), 17 MARCH (239 LAPS – 893.868 MILES)					
POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	Mike Conway (GBR) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	8h00m19.877s
2	Sebastien Buemi (CHE) Brendon Hartley (NZL) Ryo Hirakawa (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	+2.168s
3	Antonio Fuoco (ITA) Miguel Molina (ESP) Nicklas Nielsen (DNK)	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	-2 laps
4	Alex Lynn (GBR) Earl Bamber (NZL) Richard Westbrook (GBR)	Cadillac Racing (Ganassi)	Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	-2 laps
5	Michael Christensen (DNK) Dane Cameron (USA) Frederic Makowiecki (FRA)	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	Hypercar	-4 laps
6	Laurens Vanthoor (BEL) Kevin Estre (FRA) Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	Hypercar	-4 laps
7	Will Stevens (GBR) David Beckmann (DEU) Yifei Ye (CHN)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
8	Phil Hanson (GBR) Freddie Lubin (GBR) Filipe Albuquerque (PRT)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
9	Daniil Kvyat (RUS) Doriane Pin (FRA) Mirko Bortolotti (ITA)	Prema Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
10	Jakub Smiechowski (POL) Fabio Scherer (CHE) Albert Costa (ESP)	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
11	Robert Kubica (POL) Rui Andrade (PRT) Louis Deletraz (CHE)	Team WRT	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
12	Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA) David Heinemeier Hansson (DNK) Oliver Rasmussen (DNK)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
13	Sean Gelael (IDN) Ferdinand Habsburg (AUT) Robin Frijns (NLD)	Team WRT	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9 laps
14	Bent Viscaal (NLD) Filip Ugran (ROU) Andrea Caldarelli (ITA)	Prema Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-10 laps
15	Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA) James Calado (GBR) Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	-11 laps
16	Julien Canal (FRA) Matthieu Vaxiviere (FRA) Charles Milesi (FRA)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-11 laps
17	Ben Keating (USA) Nico Varrone (ARG) Nicky Catsburg (NLD)	Corvette Racing	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	GTE Am	-18 laps
18	Christian Ried (DEU) Mikkel Overgaard Pedersen (DNK) Julien Andlauer (FRA)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-20 laps
19	Takeshi Kimura (JPN) Scott Huffaker (USA) Daniel Serra (BRA)	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-20 laps
20	Stefano Costantini (ITA) Simon Mann (USA) Ulysse de Pauw (BEL)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-20 laps
21	Thomas Flohr (CHE) Francesco Castellacci (ITA) Davide Rigon (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-20 laps
22	Claudio Schiavoni (ITA) Matteo Cressoni (ITA) Alessio Picariello (BEL)	Iron Lynx	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-20 laps
23	Michael Wainwright (GBR) Riccardo Pera (ITA) Ben Barker (GBR)	GR Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-21 laps
24	Sarah Bovy (BEL) Michelle Gatting (DNK) Rahel Frey (CHE)	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-21 laps
25	Gabriel Aubry (FRA) Ryan Cullen (IRL) Matthias Kaiser (LIE)	Vector Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-21 laps
26	Michael Dinan (USA) Ahmad Al Harthy (OMN) Charlie Eastwood (GBR)	ORT by TF	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-22 laps
27	Tomonobu Fujii (JPN) Satoshi Hoshino (JPN) Casper Stevenson (GBR)	D’Station Racing (TF)	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-22 laps
28	Paul Dalla Lana (CAN) Axcil Jefferies (ZWE) Nicki Thiim (DNK)	Northwest AMR (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-23 laps
29	PJ Hyett (USA) Gunnar Jeannette (USA) Matteo Cairolì (ITA)	Project 1 - AO	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-24 laps
30	Tom Dillmann (FRA) Esteban Guerrieri (ARG) Jacques Villeneuve (CAN)	Floyd Vanwall Racing Team	Vanwall-Gibson Vandervell 680	Hypercar	-24 laps
31	Paul di Resta (GBR) Mikkel Jensen (DNK) Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-26 laps
NC	Loic Duval (FRA) Gustavo Menezes (USA) Nico Muller (CHE)	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	141 laps
R	Memo Rojas (MEX) Andre Negrao (BRA) Olli Caldwell (GBR)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	139 laps-ECU
R	Oliver Jarvis (GBR) Josh Pierson (USA) Tom Blomqvist (GBR)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	91 laps-TV camera/electrical
R	Ryan Briscoe (AUS) Romain Dumas (FRA) Olivier Pla (FRA)	Glickenhause Racing	Glickenhause-Pipo 007 LMH	Hypercar	62 laps-ignition switch
R	Luis Perez Companc (ARG) Lilou Wadoux (FRA) Alessio Rovera (ITA)	Richard Mille AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	4 laps-accident
NS	Ryan Hardwick (USA) Zacharie Robichon (CAN) Harry Tincknell (GBR)	Proton Competition	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	practice accident

In each car, first-named driver started race. **Winners’ average speed** 111.656mph.

Fastest lap Buemi 1m47.885s, 124.800mph
LMP2 Milesi 1m51.406s, 120.856mph.
GTE Am Serra 1m59.143s, 113.008mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Fuoco 1m45.067s; **2** Hartley 1m45.281s;
3 Kobayashi 1m45.548s; **4** Pier Guidi 1m45.874s; **5** Lynn 1m46.082s; **6** Este 1m47.193s; **7** Christensen 1m47.210s;
8 Duval 1m47.455s; **9** Jensen 1m48.205s;
10 Pla 1m49.164s; **11** Dillmann 1m49.329s;
12 Jarvis 1m49.974s; **13** Fittipaldi 1m50.067s; **14** Frijns 1m50.155s;
15 Vaxiviere 1m50.174s; **16** Ye 1m50.218s;

17 Kubica 1m50.291s; **18** Hanson 1m50.408s; **19** Caldarelli 1m50.417s;
20 Aubry 1m50.710s; **21** Bortolotti 1m50.726s; **22** Costa 1m50.889s; **23** Negrao 1m51.284s; **24** Bovy 1m58.949s; **25** Keating 1m59.345s; **26** Al Harthy 1m59.657s;
27 Perez Companc 1m59.733s;
28 Costantini 1m59.992s; **29** Hyett 2m00.588s; **30** Kimura 2m00.591s;
31 Dalla Lana 2m00.807s; **32** Hoshino 2m00.941s; **33** Flohr 2m01.041s; **34** Ried 2m01.054s; **35** Wainwright 2m02.588s;
36 Schiavoni 2m02.820s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

Hypercar drivers

1 Lopez/Kobayashi/Conway 38; **2** Hartley/Hirakawa/Buemi 27; **3** Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen 24; **4** Lynn/Bamber/Westbrook 18; **5** Cameron/Makowiecki/Christensen 15; **6** Lotterer/Estre/Vanthoor 12.

Hypercar manufacturers

1 Toyota 38; **2** Ferrari 24; **3** Cadillac 18; **4** Porsche 15; **5** Vanwall 6; **6** Peugeot 3; **7** Glickenhause 0.

LMP2 drivers

1 Albuquerque/Lubin/Hanson 38; **2** Kvyat/Pin/Bortolotti 27; **3** Costa/

Scherer/Smiechowski 23; **4** Deletraz/Kubica/Andrade 18; **5** Fittipaldi/Rasmussen/Heinemeier Hansson 15; **6** Habsburg/Frijns/Gelael 12.

GTE Am drivers

1 Keating/Catsburg/Varrone 38; **2** Ried/Andlauer/Overgaard Pedersen 27; **3** Serra/Huffaker/Kimura 23; **4** Mann/Costantini/de Pauw 18; **5** Rigon/Castellacci/Flohr 15; **6** Picariello/Schiavoni/Cressoni 12.

Cadillac emerges from the carnage

A dramatic late crash eliminated the top three and left Jack Aitken, Alexander Sims and Pipo Derani to take victory for Action Express

CHARLES BRADLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

The history books will show that Jack Aitken's Cadillac crossed the finish line of the 71st running of the Sebring 12 Hours three seconds ahead of fellow Brit Nick Yelloly's BMW, but the wild denouement to this classic was more NASCAR Cup than IMSA GTP.

Run less than 24 hours after the 2023 World Endurance Championship season opener at the historic 3.74-mile track, this was IMSA's crazy gang to the WEC's culture club. Twelve safety car periods were caused, in the main by lame driving among the 53-car field – mostly reserved to the LMP2/3 and GTD ranks throwing themselves at the scenery or each other. But the final one was all on the premier class.

With less than 20 minutes remaining, Mathieu Jaminet's Porsche Penske Motorsport 963 led the Acura ARX-06 of Filipe Albuquerque for Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti Autosport by half a second as they came up to lap the GTD-leading battle pack. Sensing his chance, the two having already twice clashed physically on-track moments earlier, Albuquerque attempted to brave it out around the outside of Jaminet at Turn 1, which didn't work, so he veered across through Turn 2 as Jaminet toiled to pass the squabbling Risi Competizione Ferrari 296 of Daniel Serra and Antonio Garcia's factory Corvette C8.R.

In trying to cover his move, Jaminet swiped Albuquerque onto the grass approaching Turn 3, a first side-to-side contact followed by the faintest of taps on his right-front corner. "The second touch threw me completely in the grass," said Albuquerque. "I couldn't stop the car then. I was a bowling ball, just knocking cars down."

Completely out of control, Albuquerque slammed into Jaminet at the apex, just as the Frenchman was punting Serra into a spin in front of him. Into the chaos ploughed the second Porsche 963 of Felipe Nasr, with an assist from behind by the Porsche GTD car of Kay van Berlo, the Brazilian's car slamming into Albuquerque and then flying over the nose of his team-mate. In only its second race, the reincarnated GTP class had suffered its first 'big one'.

"Filipe was on a tear and he clearly got on the inside of the Porsche, who pushed him off"

Jaminet rued: "In the close finale on the pitch-black Sebring track, sadly such incidents can happen sometimes. I wanted to go all-out and take advantage of a small gap – unfortunately, that resulted in a big accident."

Following a frank exchange of views trackside after they climbed unhurt from their battered machines and into the medical car, Albuquerque and Jaminet agreed that it was a racing incident. Team boss Wayne Taylor reckoned: "Filipe was on a tear and he clearly got on the inside of the Porsche, who just pushed him off. You don't expect to be run off the road like that. This one was one of the craziest [races] I've seen, really. And I've seen a lot."

On the Porsche side of the pits, Penske's Jonathan Diuguid said: "It was real hard racing between two fierce competitors. The #10 car raced us similarly a few laps before and, ultimately, we don't want to crash race cars, but we were racing for the win."

As the chaos unfolded ahead of him, Aitken was "counting the cars" on the grass and just had a five-minute sprint to the finish to deal with. But despite worries about the state of his tyres, Aitken got a free run to the chequered flag as Yelloly was in no mood to challenge. Second place for BMW, in a car he shared with Sheldon van der Linde and Connor De Phillippi, after a torrid start to the season for the Bobby Rahal-run team, was almost like a victory.

Joining Aitken on the top step of the podium were team-mates Pipo Derani – now a four-time winner of this sportscar classic, joining Frank Biela and Allan McNish – and Alexander Sims. Their race was hamstrung by a refuelling issue that led to the bizarre sight of a crew member stood with his finger on the fuel socket at the end of pitstops – before the car was released – to ensure it didn't get a penalty. >>



GALSTAD



Enjoying the fireworks? Aitken, Derani and Sims couldn't believe their luck

LEVITT



Ricky Taylor's Acura challenged Derani for the lead at Turn 1

But before we get to the fun stuff of what led to that wild finish, let's cover the science part: since the Daytona 24 Hours in January, IMSA's Balance of Performance for the GTP cars had undergone a rescript. All of the four different LMDh cars ran on the same minimum weight of 1030kg at Daytona, but for Sebring each was given a raise on a sliding scale, starting with Cadillac (1038kg), BMW (1040kg), Porsche (1048kg) and Acura (1053kg).

The cars' maximum power allowances were also increased, unshackled from the safety concerns of Daytona's high banks, with BMW and Cadillac at 513kW (688bhp), Porsche at 517kW and Acura at 520kW – and maximum stint energy figures were altered to BMW and Cadillac at 905MJ, Porsche at 912MJ and Acura at 917MJ. The upshot of all this fiddling, done in the name of equalising the field, was at least everyone had something to complain about.

It meant that Cadillac's V-Series.R was the weapon to have in qualifying, with Derani beating Sebastien Bourdais (Chip Ganassi Racing) to pole by 0.087s, while the first Acura, the WTR example of Ricky Taylor, was in third, a quarter of a second back. Over half a second off was the first of the Porsche 963s – Jaminet in the #6 – while Matt Campbell binned the #7 sister car at Turn 1 and would start from the back.

Straight from the green flag on Saturday morning, Taylor immediately spoiled the Cadillac front row by launching his Acura



Porsche hopes of a maiden win for its new 963 were wrecked by wild and late collision

past Bourdais, almost grabbing the lead from Derani around the outside of Turn 1, but the Brazilian clung on. Following a brief full-course caution, Derani pulled an initially healthy lead, with Taylor attacking again as they hit traffic, and a pulsating dice ensued between Derani, Taylor and Bourdais as they weaved their perilous route through the GTD, LMP3 and LMP2 cars.

The first half of the race was meant to be tyre-save mode for the GTP runners, and Taylor pointed out "we have at least 15 pitstops today with only 11 sets of tyres", but Derani's race almost came undone immediately. Opting to double-stint the tyres on which he had qualified, when everyone else went for fresh rubber at the first pitstop, sent him tumbling down the order.

Even worse, Derani had very little grip to avoid Robert Mau's LMP3 car that spun in front of him at Turn 13, and slammed into it, requiring multiple pitstops to repair the damage. "Perhaps not the smartest decision we made today," Derani mused of their strategy to

McLAUGHLIN STARS IN LMP2 RECOVERY



Tower hit new heights despite Kyffin Simpson's mid-race low point

More used to IndyCar podiums than those in IMSA, Scott McLaughlin added another string to his bow as he charged to victory in LMP2 for Tower Motorsport – and took third overall.

This win looked unlikely when teenage team-mate Kyffin Simpson binned the #8 ORECA on the exit of Turn 2 in the middle stages of the race. But McLaughlin, in only his second sportscar start, hit the front with 30 minutes remaining in the rebuilt, and rather second hand-looking, car. After the late yellow for the GTP lead battle implosion, McLaughlin had to fend off Mikkel Jensen's TDS Racing ORECA shared with Steven Thomas and Scott Huffaker. Less than a second covered them at the finish.



Rahal BMW was more than happy to settle for a surprise second place

GALSTAD

“Before darkness fell Bourdais chugged into the pits with his car’s hind quarters ablaze”

stay out, but the car just stayed on the lead lap.

That allowed the Ganassi Caddy and WTR Acura to squabble over the lead in the early hours, yet just as CGR’s Scott Dixon looked to have pulled out a decent lead he was forced into a dramatic spin approaching Sunset Bend. “I got sandwiched between a P3 car and the inside wall at Turn 17 and did a big spin, a complete 360!” he reported with wide eyes.

Not only did that lead to a premature pitstop, but it left team-mate Renger van der Zande hanging out on well-worn tyres as the team tried to catch up on its rubber allocation and rearranged driver schedule. That led to another spin, this time at Turn 5, which dropped van der Zande to the back of the GTP pack with five hours to go. “It looked really bad and it felt *really* bad,” said the Dutchman after handing the car back to Bourdais.

Comparatively, the WTR Acura was in plain-sailing mode on the tyre front, and the Ganassi Cadillac opposition was replaced by the

Lazarus of this show – the Action Express version, which had bounced back from its earlier travails and took the lead as Taylor got stung for pitlane speeding, dropping him to the tail of the pack.

Porsche was running third and fourth at this stage, but the #6 was ridiculously harpooned – under yellow – by Mau, the same hapless driver who’d spun in front of Derani earlier. The first GTP retirement had happened by this point, with the #24 BMW M Hybrid of Philipp Eng, Augusto Farfus and Marco Wittmann going out with an engine problem. It wouldn’t be the last...

Bourdais dragged the CGR Caddy back into the mix and grabbed second place with less than four hours remaining, restoring the GM 1-2, ahead of the recovering Taylor, who had benefited from a quick yellow when the GTD class leaders collided at Turn 1, and was able to pass both Porsches. Bourdais then passed Derani for the lead, quickly followed through by Taylor.

But just before darkness descended, Bourdais chugged into »

“It’s a bounceback for the whole team,” said McLaughlin. “Kyffin and John [Farano] drove well, and that put us on the right path. Our guys got the car back together after our little guy’s misdemeanour – we’ll let him off now we’re in Victory Lane! Glad I could hold on for them.”

It was the first overall Sebring podium for a secondary class team since 2012.

Era Motorsport finished third, with Christian Rasmussen, Ryan Dalziel and Dwight Merriman, ahead of the PR1 Mathiasen car of Ben Keating, Paul-Loup Chatin and Alex Quinn, which had led in the early stages. The CrowdStrike by APR machine, that came so close to winning at Daytona, suffered more late-race heartbreak as

Nolan Siegel slipped out of the lead in the final hour to finish fifth, sharing with Ben Hanley and George Kurtz, who had both suffered spins.

In LMP3, there was a cruel end for the longtime leading Jr III Racing Ligier of Garrett Grist, who lucklessly struck an errant right-rear wheel from Pietro Fittipaldi’s crashing LMP2 car at Turn 1 with just over an hour remaining. Grist, partnered by Ari Balogh and Dakota Dickerson, had just been passed for the lead by Felipe Fraga in the Riley-run Ligier. “The wheel just bounced in front of me and hit him!” said Fraga. “I’m so sorry for Garrett but very happy for us.”

Fraga, along with Gar Robinson and Josh Burdon, won by a lap.



Riley Ligier missed errant wheel and won LMP3

LEVITT



the pits with the leading car's hind quarters ablaze. A failure in the fuel distribution system explained why Bourdais had smelled gas in the cockpit, and he also reported that he'd lost traction control and that the engine had shut down a few times for good measure. "The Cadillac was so good, this is heartbreaking," he grimaced. "We could definitely keep up with the Acuras – they were strong and were starting to put the heat on, but this was a big jump in performance from us since Daytona."

Entering the frame at this point was the Meyer Shank Racing Acura, the black sheep of the field after what had transpired since Daytona. This car had been allowed to keep its 24 Hours victory despite giving false data readings to IMSA's tyre supplier Michelin, essentially allowing it to run at lower pressures to give a warm-up advantage. But the chance of the Acuras going

head to head for victory was undone when Tom Blomqvist lost a left-rear wheel eight laps into his final double stint, forcing the MSR car out of the race.

As the sun set, the race got into its calmest phase with over two hours of green-flag running until a late flurry of yellows kicked off the fight between the WTR Acura and the Porsches. The #6 963 had suffered a troubled day – it had clobbered a GTD Acura NSX, been smacked by an errant LMP3 car under yellow, and even suffered a liquid spillage in the cockpit that had Nick Tandy

“The Cadillac was so good, this is heartbreaking. This was a big jump from us since Daytona”

gasping for air at one point. But after climbing its way back onto the lead lap, it took the fight to the WTR Acura in Jaminet's hands in the final 30 minutes.

Before the big wreck that defined the outcome, Jaminet and Albuquerque had already clashed twice around the back of the circuit in their thrilling lead battle in the darkness. Then Penske got the #6 car out of the pits ahead of the Acura during the penultimate yellow, which set up the huge drama that dropped the race into Action Express's lap – and resulted in Cadillac's third consecutive win here in Florida.

"That was just crazy," laughed Sims in victory lane. "It's a race of attrition sometimes."

Derani added: "I'm sorry for the guys that crashed, but you have to be lucky a little bit." ❄

REDEMPTION FOR HARD-WORKING PORSCHE TEAM

Following a disastrous debut for Porsche's new Type-992 911 GT3-R at Daytona, where its cars were embarrassingly slow, this was a rags-to-riches tale for Pfaff Motorsports.

But another blow occurred before redemption at Sebring, when Klaus Bachler shunted its car in qualifying, forcing the team to stay up past midnight before the 12-hour event. Then Bachler came within millimetres of ending its race at the first corner when he just missed a stranded LMP3 car.

Since Daytona, a Balance of Performance change allowed for a 5mm larger air restrictor, and this put Porsche firmly back in the hunt at Sebring. The strategy gods also smiled upon Pfaff's 911 – crewed by Bachler, Patrick Pilet and Laurens Vanthoor – when a well-timed full-course yellow allowed it to jump into the lead of GTD Pro with four hours remaining, just as the non-Pro class leaders Zach Robichon (Wright Porsche) and Philip Ellis (Winward Mercedes) collided.

This meant that, despite the flurry of late cautions, its remaining fuel stops played out perfectly, while the WeatherTech Racing Mercedes – stacked with factory drivers Daniel



Juncadella, Maro Engel and Jules Gounon – was forced to stop for a late splash.

Despite a long run at the end, Pilet beat the Lexus of Jack Hawksworth (who shared with Ben Barnicoat and Kyle Kirkwood) by 2.7s, with the Merc another 1.6s in arrears. "Just amazing, this group of people on the team that worked until 1am to repair the car after qualifying yesterday," gushed Pilet, who claimed his third win at Sebring. "They call me the fuel-saving expert – that can be a big advantage and today it paid off."

The other big player in the hunt for victory

was the Corvette C8.R of Antonio Garcia, Jordan Taylor and Tommy Milner, but its chances were harmed by a left-rear damper failure that dropped them off the lead lap. Garcia battled back into the reckoning only to be involved in the late-race GTP shemozzle along with the Risi-run Ferrari of Daniel Serra, who had been in the podium hunt sharing with Davide Rigon and Gabriel Casagrande.

The non-pro class was a BMW benefit, with Paul Miller Racing's M4 of Madison Snow, Bryan Sellers and Corey Lewis heading home the Turner Motorsport version.

RESULTS SEBRING 12 HOURS, IMSA SPORTSCAR CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 2/11, SEBRING (USA), 18 MARCH (322 LAPS – 1204.28 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME	GRID
1	Pipo Derani /Alexander Sims /Jack Aitken	Action Express Racing	Cadillac V-LMDh	GTP	12h00m53.382s	1
2	Connor De Phillippi /Nick Yelloly /Sheldon van der Linde	BMW M Team RLL	BMW M Hybrid V8	GTP	+2.940s	8
3	John Farano /Scott McLaughlin /Kyffin Simpson	Tower Motorsport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4laps	14
4	Steven Thomas /Mikkel Jensen /Scott Huffaker	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4laps	11
5	Dwight Merriman /Ryan Dalziel /Christian Rasmussen	Era Motorsport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4laps	16
6	Ben Keating /Paul-Loup Chatin /Alex Quinn	PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4laps	9
7	George Kurtz /Ben Hanley /Nolan Siegel	Crowdstrike Racing by APR	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4laps	12
8	Dennis Andersen /Ed Jones /Anders Fjordbach	High Class Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-5laps	13
9	Mathieu Jaminet /Nick Tandy /Dane Cameron	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	GTP	315laps - accident	4
10	Ricky Taylor /Filipe Albuquerque /Louis Deletraz	Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti	Acura ARX-06	GTP	315laps - accident	3
11	Matt Campbell /Felipe Nasr /Michael Christensen	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	GTP	315laps - accident	7
12	Gar Robinson /Felipe Fraga /Josh Burdon	Riley Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-13laps	19
13	Orey Fidani /Matthew Bell /Lars Kern	AWA	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	LMP3	-14laps	23
14	Daniel Goldburg /Till Bechtolsheimer /Tijmen van der Helm	JDC-Miller Motorsports	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	LMP3	-14laps	18
15	Anthony Mantella /Wayne Boyd /Nico Varrone	AWA	Duqueine-Nissan M30-D08	LMP3	-15laps	21
16	Tonis Kasemets /Seth Lucas /Trenton Estep	Ave Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-16laps	25
17	Klaus Bachler /Patrick Pilet /Laurens Vanthoor	Pfaff Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD Pro	-19laps	49
18	Jack Hawksworth /Ben Barnicoat /Kyle Kirkwood	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	GTD Pro	-19laps	27
19	Daniel Juncadella /Jules Gounon /Maro Engel	WeatherTech Racing (Proton)	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	GTD Pro	-19laps	52
20	Franck Perera /Jordan Pepper /Romain Grosjean	Iron Lynx	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo2	GTD Pro	-19laps	37
21	Antonio Garcia /Jordan Taylor /Tommy Milner	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller)	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R GTD	GTD Pro	-19laps	26
22	Daniel Serra /Davide Rigon /Gabriel Casagrande	Risi Competizione	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD Pro	-19laps	30
23	Bill Auberlen /Chandler Hull /John Edwards	Turner Motorsport	BMW M4 GT3	GTD Pro	-20laps	50
24	Tom Blomqvist /Colin Braun /Helio Castroneves	Meyer Shank Racing	Acura ARX-06	GTP	-21laps	5
25	Madison Snow /Bryan Sellers /Corey Lewis	Paul Miller Racing	BMW M4 GT3	GTD	-21laps	34
26	Patrick Gallagher /Robby Foley /Michael Dinan	Turner Motorsport	BMW M4 GT3	GTD	-21laps	35
27	David Brule Sr/Alec Udell /Julien Andlauer	Kellymoss with Riley	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-21laps	48
28	Brendan Iribe /Frederik Schandorff /Ollie Millroy	Inception Racing (Optimum)	McLaren 720S GT3	GTD	-21laps	38
29	Aaron Telitz /Frankie Montecalvo /Parker Thompson	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	GTD	-21laps	31
30	Jan Heylen /Ryan Hardwick /Zacharie Robichon	Wright Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-21laps	32
31	Alan Metni /Kay van Berlo /Jaxon Evans	Kellymoss with Riley	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-21laps	43
32	Alan Brynjolfsson /Trent Hindman /Maxwell Root	Wright Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-21laps	45
33	John Potter /Andy Lally /Spencer Pumpelly	Magnus Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	GTD	-21laps	44
34	Mikael Grenier /Mike Skeen /Kenton Koch	Team Korthoff Motorsports	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	GTD	-21laps	51
35	Michelle Gatting /Rahel Frey /Sarah Bovy	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo2	GTD	-22laps	41
36	Sheena Monk /Katherine Legge /Marc Miller	Gradient Racing	Acura NSX GT3	GTD	-24laps	47
37	Alex Riberas /Ross Gunn /David Pittard	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	GTD Pro	-25laps	29
38	Simon Mann /Miguel Molina /Francesco Castellacci	AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	-28laps	40
39	Chris Allen /Robert Mau /Tristan Nunez	Performance Tech Motorsports	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-29laps	22
40	Giorgio Sernagiotto /Roberto Lacorte /Antonio Fuoco	Cetilar Racing (AF Corse)	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	-32laps	39
41	Eric Lux /Devlin DeFrancesco /Pietro Fittipaldi	Rick Ware Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	289laps – lost wheel/accident	15
42	Ian James /Roman De Angelis /Marco Sorensen	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	GTD	287laps – accident damage	42
43	PJ Hyett /Seb Priaulx /Gunnar Jeannette	AO Racing	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-37laps	46
44	Lance Willsey /Joao Barbosa /Nico Pino	Sean Creech Motorsport	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	-39laps	24
45	Ari Balogh /Garett Grist /Dakota Dickerson	Jr III Racing	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	282laps - accident damage	20
46	Loris Spinelli /Misha Goikhberg /Benja Hites	US RaceTronics	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo2	GTD	279laps - accident	36
47	Sebastien Bourdais /Renger van der Zande /Scott Dixon	Chip Ganassi Racing	Cadillac V-LMDh	GTP	241laps - fuel system	2
48	Glenn van Berlo /Jarett Andretti /Gabby Chaves	Andretti Autosport	Ligier-Nissan JSP320	LMP3	230laps - accident damage	17
49	Philip Ellis /Russell Ward /Indy Dontje	Winward Racing	Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo	GTD	198laps - accident damage	53
50	Kyle Marcelli /Ashton Harrison /Danny Formal	Racers Edge Motorsports with WTR	Acura NSX GT3	GTD	186laps - accident damage	28
51	Augusto Farfus /Philipp Eng /Marco Wittmann	BMW M Team RLL	BMW M Hybrid V8	GTP	172laps - cooling/engine	6
52	Francois Heriau /Giedo van der Garde /Josh Pierson	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	132laps - accident	10
53	Alessio Rovera /Onofrio Triarsi /Charles Scardina	Triarsi Competizione	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	95laps - alternator	33

Winners' average speed 100.232mph. Fastest lap van der Zande 1m48.311s, 124.308mph.

POINTS

GTP 1 **Sims**/Aitken/Derani 670; 2 **Albuquerque**/Deletraz/Taylor 660; 3 **van der Zande**/Dixon/Bourdais 600; 4 **De Phillippi**/Yelloly/van der Linde 586; 5 **Cameron**/Jaminet/Tandy 580; 6 **Nasr**/Campbell/Christensen 556.

GTD Pro 1 **Juncadella**/Gounon/Engel 708; 2 **Barnicoat**/Hawksworth 682; 3 **Bachler**/Vanthoor/Pilet 659; 4 **Garcia**/Taylor/Milner 643; 5 **Pepper**/Grosjean 612; 6 **Riberas**/Pittard/Gunn 532.

NEXT REPORT

LONG BEACH
20 APRIL ISSUE

WRC
50
YEARS



Two out of three ain't bad for masterful Ogier

Sebastien Ogier tops the standings after a dominant seventh WRC victory in Mexico. Not too shabby for a part-timer

TOM HOWARD

It's a tradition that the winner of Rally Mexico is awarded a special pair of locally made cowboy boots. After recording a record seventh win on the gruelling gravel rally, World Rally Championship legend Sebastien Ogier could probably set up a shoe shop. "I still keep the boots," smiled the Frenchman of his latest victory. "I'm pretty reluctant to throw away things. I always think maybe one day I will make a small museum. It's a nice feeling to wear them again."

Mexico is a special place for the eight-time world champion. It's where the journey to becoming a global rallying superstar began, thanks to a maiden Junior WRC win in 2008, the season his life changed after winning the coveted title. Since that breakthrough, six wins on Mexican soil followed in rallying's top flight, with Volkswagen (2013–2015), M-Sport Ford (2018), Citroen (2019) and Toyota (2020). So when Mexico rejoined the calendar this year for the first time since 2020 after a COVID-19 lay off, it seemed inevitable that Ogier would add this event to his partial WRC programme with Toyota.

It's also a rally that plays to Ogier's strengths. His smooth driving and ability to be kind to his tyres is rewarded handsomely across Mexico's tricky mountainous stages, which are made even more difficult by the high altitude. Once again, these skills were used to devastating effect as Ogier, guided by co-driver Vincent Landais, put in a dominant display to prove he is the master of Mexico.

While there were no concerns over Ogier's ability to perform, there were plenty of question marks heading into the event. Ogier's Toyota team might have won the constructors' crown last year, but the GR Yaris's Achilles' heel had been its pace on hot, dry and >>



Co-driver Landais and Ogier soak up that winning feeling



Pole-axed: Lappi surveys the scene of his rally-ending crash

rough gravel rallies. Would the hard work behind the scenes make Toyota competitive in this scenario? Likewise, there were unknowns surrounding how the Rally1 cars would perform at high altitude for the first time, with hybrid power earmarked as vital by drivers due to the thinner air reducing engine power by up to 30%. These questions were answered emphatically once the action began.

Before the cars hit the gravel stages, there was the small matter of entertaining the hordes of fans who packed into the historic UNESCO World Heritage site of Guanajuato to catch a glimpse of the rally stars they had sorely missed. Rally Sweden winner Ott Tänak kicked off proceedings by winning the two blasts through Guanajuato's famous streets and tunnels, which this year featured a touching mural tribute to the late Ken Block. "When you arrive here it is full of crowds, they are passionate," said the M-Sport Ford star. "Today was a bit of fun, tomorrow is the job."

By starting first on the dusty gravel roads, Tänak knew he would face an almost impossible job to win, although thoughts of the podium quickly moved to survival when M-Sport came crashing down to earth after its Swedish high. All three Ford Pumas hit trouble, and officials were forced to red-flag stage three, El Chocolate. Tänak was the first to suffer when a "dead turbo" forced the Estonian to pull over to attempt a fix, but it was to no avail. Severely down on power, he had to rely on hybrid boosts to limp to Friday's service for a much-needed repair, losing more than 12 minutes in the process.

To compound M-Sport's misery, Pierre-Louis Loubet, on his

"It couldn't get worse than this. It's survival of the fittest and we're only one gravel stage in"

Mexico debut, clouted a rock to force his early retirement, swiftly followed by privateer Jourdan Serderidis spinning his Puma to draw the red flags. "It couldn't get worse than that for us," grimaced team principal Richard Millener. "It's survival of the fittest in this rally and we're only one gravel stage in."

M-Sport's El Chocolate meltdown handed control of the rally to Hyundai and Toyota, and Esapekka Lappi and Ogier made the most of their advantageous positions to rise to the top of the leaderboard. Lappi scored two stage wins to Ogier's one so that his Hyundai held a slender 1.4s lead, while Toyota's Elfyn Evans sat third, 12.5s adrift. Dani Sordo held fourth ahead of Hyundai team-mate Thierry Neuville and Toyota's reigning world champion Kalle Rovanperä, who was now effectively the road sweeper after Tänak's problems.

Rovanperä and Neuville were lucky to reach service at all after the pair were almost caught out by a bump in stage four that wasn't in their pacenotes. "We came through at speed and the hit was quite big," related Rovanperä, while Neuville added: "It was crazy and very painful. A bump came as a surprise and I thought we were going to go off as I couldn't see the road."

The pair would lose the use of their hybrid power on the following stage, which Neuville put down to the impact from the compression. Mexico's reputation of being a rally of attrition was bolstered by another addition to the list of retirements when Toyota's Takamoto Katsuta slid off the road and down an incline on stage five.

The afternoon provided a resumption of Lappi versus Ogier. The Finn proved more than capable of matching the Mexico master, taking another three stage wins to increase his lead over Ogier to 5.3s at the end of Friday. It was a day that Lappi, competing in only his third event with the i20 N, hailed as one of his best. "I hoped that I could fight at the top but to be leading and fighting all the time against Seb, this was not in my mind to be honest," he admitted. "I'm a bit surprised." Ogier acknowledged the effort from his former team-mate, before adding: "I don't think there was much more we could do except taking a lot of risk, but that's not really the approach I want to have on this rally."



Good Evans! Elfyn churns through the loose stuff

JELONEK/MCKLEIN



Rally Sweden winner Tanak bumped back to earth with Puma turbo trouble

The pair were in a league of their own, with Evans the best of the rest, 30.1s adrift. Neuville held fourth, despite battling a blocked damper and broken driveshaft that left him covered in oil after an attempted repair. Roanpera declared himself happy with his damage-limitation act to sit fifth. The pair had also benefited from Sordo falling to sixth after losing a minute to a puncture on stage eight. After resolving the turbo failure, Tanak battled another mystery issue that seemed to affect his speed. The Estonian was able to reach service in 17th overall, 14 minutes off the pace.

Lappi, who had been the talk of the service park after his dazzling Friday, found himself centre of attention on Saturday, but for altogether different reasons. His starring cameo came to an abrupt halt on the day's first stage when his Hyundai ran slightly wide at a left-hander, the mistake punished by a brutal rally-ending crash. The i20 N nosed into an embankment before firing across the road and rear-ending a telegraph pole. A small fire then broke out after oil from a canister placed at the top of the pole trickled onto the car.

Lappi and co-driver Janne Ferme were unhurt in the crash, but required the help of WRC2 crew Gus Greensmith and Jonas Andersson, who were first on the scene, to control the situation before firefighters arrived. The stage was red-flagged and the second pass was cancelled due to the fallen pole. "It's hard to swallow, but on the other hand when you fight for the win you still need to push and maybe I was not pushing hard enough actually," explained Lappi. "When you drive more safe it is actually more difficult. I think I was a bit caught out. I thought we were going to lose the car but I got an extinguisher from Gus and we managed to almost shut it down, and then the firefighters came and finished the job."

News of Lappi's exit was met with disappointment from Ogier, who had been enjoying the intense head-to-head battle. "I always enjoy the fight and yesterday he was really having amazing speed, so it's a big shame," shrugged Ogier, who inherited a 27.3s lead over Evans. "I would have liked to have this go on longer as it's fun and exciting for the fans, but that is rally."

Equipped with a healthy advantage, Ogier was afforded the luxury of being able to manage the lead and dial back any risk-taking. But



Lappi took the fight to Ogier on the first leg

HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT GMBH/FABIEN DUFOUR

the times didn't reflect this on stage 16, where Ogier reminded the rallying world why he is such a force to be reckoned with, even as a part-time driver. A mesmerising time 8.1s faster than Neuville put the rally victory beyond doubt barring a mechanical issue. The effort stunned both Ogier and Toyota boss Jari-Matti Latvala.

"When I saw the time I said, 'Woah, that is something because these days you don't see gaps like that in normal conditions,'" exclaimed 2016 Rally Mexico winner Latvala. "That was something unique. But he loves this rally, he is the master of this rally, he knows how to attack with clean driving and not be too aggressive."

With Ogier seemingly in control at the front, all eyes turned to a battle for second brought to life by a charging Neuville. Four stage wins reduced the gap to Evans from 11.6s to 4.3s before they headed into Sunday's final four tests. Despite admitting that at times he was struggling to speak the Puma's language, Tanak ended the day with two superspecial stage wins that hauled him to the fringes >>

of the points-paying positions in 11th. “Compared to yesterday it’s been a fantastic day,” he related. “It has generally been trouble-free and quite a bit more fun, but we are still lacking. I struggle to find a way to drive the car fast and for me it’s a bit unnatural.”

Ogier’s lead stood at a commanding 35.8s but, with Sunday’s loop arguably the toughest of the rally, and featuring the longest stage of the rally at 35.63km, he was well aware of how Mexico can bite. A no-risk approach was taken through the first three, resulting in a time loss of 13.3s, before he launched a surprise attack on the final Power Stage. Unbeknown to many onlookers, unannounced plans to contest the WRC’s next stop in Croatia spurred him to push in a bid to secure a better road position for the asphalt event. The result was a stunning 43rd career Power Stage win to thoroughly underline

“I am proud, but this win is for my friend who I lost not long ago. I am thinking of him”

a dominant run to victory in true Ogier style.

“I like this stage!” grinned an emotional Ogier. “The car was great and it was a faultless weekend from us. As I am doing the next rally, it’s important to start first on the road there and it was important to get the points for the team as well. I am proud, but this win is for my friend who I lost not long ago. I am thinking of him.”

In the end the winning margin stood at 27.5s, and it was Neuville who snatched second away from Evans on a dramatic final stage. The fight between the pair had raged across Sunday morning. Evans won the mammoth Otates test, his only stage win of the rally, to hold off Neuville, who lost time avoiding a couple of dogs that ran out into the road. But the Welshman’s efforts had damaged a suspension arm on his GR Yaris, which required a fix witnessed by Neuville on the following road section. Unable to take a maximum attack approach to the final two stages, Evans lost second by just 0.4s.

Rovanpera came home a frustrated fourth after his Midas touch on Power Stages deserted him. A brush with a tree ripped most



Greensmith claimed WRC2 and sixth overall on his Skoda debut

McMASTER/McKLEIN

of the rear wing from his Toyota, leaving him to pick up just two bonus points. Sweeping the roads on Friday resulted in a compromised tyre choice for Saturday, and that left the Finn unable to fight for a podium. “It was a difficult weekend to be honest,” he acknowledged. “I lost out in the fight on Friday opening the road, and then we were a bit behind all the time with the starting place for the rest of the weekend. From opening the road, this is quite OK [in terms of] points so we just have to take what we can.”

Tanak was rewarded for plugging away after his Friday heartbreak to snatch ninth overall and four bonus points from the Power Stage to remain firmly in the championship hunt. The 2019 world champion finished behind the top three WRC2 runners, who were led home by former M-Sport WRC driver Greensmith, who starred throughout to finish sixth overall in his Skoda Fabia on his first outing of the year.

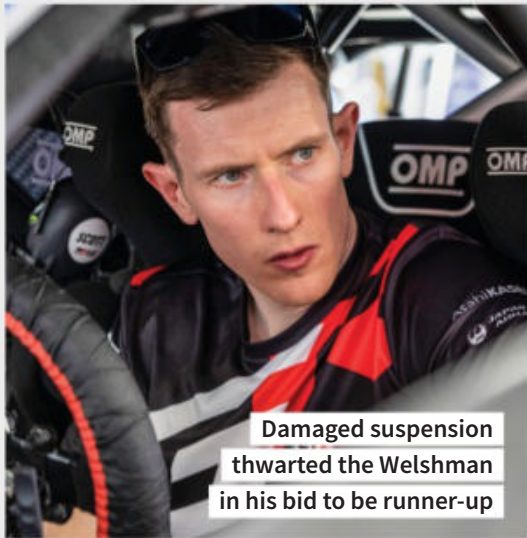
But the biggest smile was left on the face of new championship leader Ogier as he slipped into a fresh pair of the WRC’s most sought-after boots. 🏆



Neuville put in a charge after oily dramas to fly up to second place

RED BULL

BRAVE EVANS MAKES THE PODIUM



Damaged suspension
thwarted the Welshman
in his bid to be runner-up

Although he was disappointed that a bent suspension arm had proven costly in the fight for second place, Elfyn Evans was relieved to end his six-month World Rally Championship podium drought.

The two-time WRC runner-up completed 2022 without a victory after struggling to gel with the Rally1 Toyota GR Yaris as fast as his team-mates. The campaign did yield four second-place finishes, with the Ypres podium last August his most recent taste of champagne. A puncture in this year's Monte Carlo season opener robbed him of a likely podium, while all three Toyotas struggled for pace in Sweden.

After losing second to Thierry Neuville by 0.4s in Mexico, Evans was left with mixed emotions. "I think overall it has been a solid weekend," opined the Welshman, who sits 12 points behind championship leader Ogier in fifth in the standings. "I think we had the speed to be second to be honest, but unfortunately I didn't quite execute a few things. The positive thing is I'm back on the podium for a first time in a while and it has felt like a really long time, so I'm happy for that and I'm happy with the feeling in the car on gravel. I'm a bit disappointed of course. It was quite difficult to fight at the front with the damaged suspension arm and we had to look after this arm as we didn't want to return with zero points."

After witnessing Evans attempt a repair on the suspension arm using whatever he had available in the car, Neuville applauded his bravery for continuing to fight with a wounded car. "When I saw that he was still flat-out, I said that this guy really has big balls," approved the Belgian. "The arm was broken and he fixed it with some masking and some tie wraps. I found out at the end that he wasn't so confident."

"But, if I had been in the same position, you need to play with your luck and he did it and it worked well and he took the fight until the end. But we can be proud of what we have done this weekend."

RESULTS ROUND 3/13, RALLY MEXICO, 16-19 MARCH

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA) Vincent Landais (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	3h16m09.4s
2	Thierry Neuville (BEL) Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+27.5s
3	Elfyn Evans (GBR) Scott Martin (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+27.9s
4	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN) Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+1m55.3s
5	Dani Sordo (ESP) Candido Carrera (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+2m58.8s
6	Gus Greensmith (GBR) Jonas Andersson (SWE)	Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+12m31.5s
7	Emil Lindholm (FIN) Reeta Hamalainen (FIN)	Toksport WRT 2 / Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo	+13m04.4s
8	Oliver Solberg (SWE) Elliott Edmondson (GBR)	Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+13m37.7s
9	Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+15m19.6s
10	Kajetan Kajetanowicz (POL) Maciek Szczepaniak (POL)	Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo	+15m56.6s

OTHERS

23	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN) Aaron Johnston (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+1h04m34.5s
25	Jourdan Serderidis (GRC) Frederic Miclotte (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+1h34m55.6s
26	Pierre-Louis Loubet (FRA) Nicolas Gilsoul (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+1h54m02.0s
R	Esapekka Lappi (FIN) Janne Ferm (FIN)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	SS11-accident

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Street Stage GTO 1 (0.70 miles)	Tanak 58.0s	Tanak	Rovanpera +0.8s
SS2 Street Stage GTO 2 (0.70 miles)	Tanak 56.2s	Tanak	Rovanpera +1.7s
SS3 El Chocolate 1 (18.06 miles)	Lappi 22m00.2s	Lappi	Ogier +1.2s
SS4 Ortega 1 (9.76 miles)	Ogier 8m27.8s	Lappi	Ogier +0.8s
SS5 Las Minas 1 (8.57 miles)	Lappi 8m55.6s	Lappi	Ogier +1.4s
SS6 El Chocolate 2 (18.06 miles)	Lappi 21m54.1s	Lappi	Ogier +2.2s
SS7 Ortega 2 (9.76 miles)	Ogier 8m20.8s	Lappi	Ogier +0.3s
SS8 Las Minas 2 (8.57 miles)	Lappi 8m47.7s	Lappi	Ogier +3.4s
SS9 Las Dunas Superspecial 1 (2.30 miles)	Lappi 3m15.0s	Lappi	Ogier +6.9s
SS10 Distrito Leon Mx SSS (1.71 miles)	Sordo 1m29.9s	Lappi	Ogier +5.3s
SS11 Ibarrilla 1 (9.21 miles)	Ogier 8m35.6s	Ogier	Evans +27.3s
SS12 El Mosquito 1 (14.02 miles)	Neuville 14m38.1s	Ogier	Evans +26.6s
SS13 Derramadero 1 (13.48 miles)	Neuville 12m23.1s	Ogier	Evans +27.0s
SS14 Las Dunas Superspecial 2 (2.30 miles)	Neuville 3m11.4s	Ogier	Evans +28.5s
SS15 Ibarrilla 2 (9.21 miles) Stage cancelled			
SS16 El Mosquito 2 (14.02 miles)	Ogier 14m24.8s	Ogier	Evans +36.8s
SS17 Derramadero 2 (13.48 miles)	Neuville 12m16.0s	Ogier	Evans +36.3s
SS18 Las Dunas Superspecial 3 (2.30 miles)	Tanak 3m13.6s	Ogier	Evans +35.4s
SS19 Rock & Rally SSS (1.71 miles)	Tanak 1m29.6s	Ogier	Evans +35.8s
SS20 Las Dunas Superspecial 4 (2.30 miles)	Neuville 3m10.9s	Ogier	Evans +32.2s
SS21 Otates (22.14 miles)	Evans 24m37.7s	Ogier	Evans +23.2s
SS22 San Diego (7.84 miles)	Neuville 7m11.8s	Ogier	Evans +22.5s
SS23 El Brinco (Power Stage) (5.96 miles)	Ogier 5m14.8s	Ogier	Neuville +27.5s

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 **Ogier** 56; 2 **Neuville** 53; 3 **Rovanpera** 52; 4 **Tanak** 47; 5 **Evans** 44;
6 **Craig Breen** 19; 7 **Sordo** 17; 8 **Lappi** 15; 9= **Katsuta & Loubet** 8.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 **Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT** 127; 2 **Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT** 100;
3 **M-Sport Ford WRT** 73.

NEXT REPORT

CROATIA RALLY
27 APRIL ISSUE



SUTTON
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Great Dane Vesti is let off the leash in Jeddah

FORMULA 2
JEDDAH (SAU)
18-19 MARCH
ROUND 2/14

Frederik Vesti prospered on a weekend when many of the title contenders threw away big chances to take his second Formula 2 win, and his first in a feature race. Prema Racing's Mercedes Formula 1 protege held firm as his main rivals, rookies Victor Martins and Ollie Bearman, spun out of contention moments apart during a dramatic race.

Vesti lined up sixth, and the Dane immediately made it up to fourth. ART Grand Prix-run Alpine junior Martins had taken a superb pole by 0.744 seconds, with Prema's Ferrari-backed youngster Bearman making it an all-rookie front row. It was the Briton who snatched the lead at the start, with Martins just clinging onto second from Jack Doohan. There was a virtual safety car on lap two, and Bearman was alert when it ended to have a strong gap from the chasing Martins, Doohan and Vesti.

Vesti and Doohan were the first of the leading quartet to pit to exchange their supersoft tyres for mediums on lap six, and Vesti managed to leapfrog the Virtuosi Racing car. Meantime, Martins was eroding Bearman's advantage and was less than 1s adrift when the leading duo pitted one lap later. They emerged in the same order, and shortly afterwards Martins made a bid to pass Bearman. The Frenchman succeeded, but only by running off the track at Turn 1, and he quickly handed the position back.

Next time around Martins tried again into Turn 1. He made the pass, and Bearman's strenuous efforts to fight back left him running wide out of Turn 2, allowing Vesti through. Bearman was still in a net third position a few laps later when he spun at Turn 22, and moments later there was more drama when Martins looped his car around at Turn 4 while defending what was effectively the race lead from Vesti. He couldn't get the engine refired, and that prompted another VSC.

Vesti went on to win by 4s from Doohan,

with MP Motorsport's Jehan Daruvala securing his second third-place finish of the weekend. Ayumu Iwasa was fourth from Dennis Hauger, while Richard Verschoor used the alternate strategy of starting on the medium tyres and pitting late to rise from 20th on the grid to sixth. Bearman, on his flat-spotted tyres, faded to an eventual 10th.

Red Bull junior Iwasa had taken victory in Saturday's sprint race. From fourth on the reversed grid, the DAMS driver jumped Campos Racing pair Kush Maini and Ralph Boschung off the line, before taking the lead from polesitter Jak Crawford on lap two.

After a safety car triggered by a Zane Maloney spin, Boschung took second from Crawford at Turn 2, while Daruvala and Bearman moved up to fourth and fifth. Theo Pourchaire was also making progress, and ART's Bahrain star made a move on lap seven to pass team-mate Martins into Turn 1. But Pourchaire got it wrong and smashed into the innocent Bearman. As the safety car emerged again, Pourchaire apologised to Bearman and he was later handed a five-place grid penalty for Sunday's race.

Martins took fourth from Crawford when the action resumed, with Daruvala grabbing second from Boschung the following lap amid a fierce battle. Martins then made it past Campos Racing's Swiss veteran for third before setting about the leading pair.

He was with them by the 15th lap of 20. Daruvala took the lead from Iwasa at Turn 1, but had gone off track and let the Japanese back in front. Two laps later, another bid by Daruvala slowed the leading pair, and Martins sped past the Indian as they exited Turn 2. Boschung's fourth place gave him the series lead and he kept it on Sunday, when neither he nor Pourchaire got into the points.

MEGAN WHITE



Iwasa leads Daruvala and Martins. His wasn't the last Red Bull #11 car to win in Jeddah

DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Logano pips ex-team-mate Keselowski

NASCAR CUP
ATLANTA (USA)
19 MARCH
ROUND 5/36

Last Sunday's race at Atlanta Motor Speedway came down to a battle between Team Penske's past and present.

Brad Keselowski, who won the 2012 Cup championship with team owner Roger Penske, was in control as the laps wound down and in position to earn his first win as an owner/driver for Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing. But Joey Logano, Keselowski's former team-mate at Penske, was able to power back into contention on the final lap.

As he took the white flag, Keselowski led the outside line while Logano led the inside. Logano went to the outside of Keselowski heading towards Turn 3 and, thanks to a big push from Christopher Bell, was able to clear Keselowski for the



lead. Logano then held off Keselowski's Ford by 0.193 seconds to give the reigning series champion his first win of the 2023 season.

"This thing was an animal – very, very fast," Logano said of his Ford, which led 140 of 260 laps. "Able to lead a ton of laps, race really hard there at the end, get a good push from [Bell] to clear myself."

Keselowski, who was trying to snap a 66-race winless streak, said he was surprised that Logano was able to get back to the front using the inside lane. "The bottom came

with a huge run," he said. "I don't know how. I thought I had it blocked. Joey just kept shaking. His car didn't stall out."

Bell ended up third in his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota, while Corey LaJoie (Spire Motorsports Chevrolet) finished a career-best fourth. Tyler Reddick, who raced with flu-like symptoms and had a relief driver standing by, raced home fifth. Next were Denny Hamlin, Ryan Blaney, Erik Jones, Ty Gibbs and Kyle Busch.

JIM UTTER

WEEKEND WINNERS

FORMULA 2
JEDDAH (SAU)

Race 1 Ayumu Iwasa
DAMS

Race 2 Frederik Vesti (below)
Prema Racing

NASCAR CUP
ATLANTA (USA)

Joey Logano
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

NLS
NURBURGRING (DEU)
Maxime Martin/Dries Vanthoor
Rowe Racing (BMW M4 GT3)



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

Belgians master Nordschleife

NLS
NURBURGRING (DEU)
18 MARCH
ROUND 1/8

BMW took first blood on the Nurburgring Nordschleife for 2023 thanks to victory over four hours for the Rowe Racing-run M4 of talismanic GT3 Belgians Maxime Martin and Dries Vanthoor.

A variety of different strategies across the elite GT3 teams meant that the winning car didn't hit the front until the 22nd of 28 laps. On the same strategy was the Phoenix-run Scherer Sport Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II in the hands of Kim-Luis Schramm, who was sharing with Ricardo Feller. Vanthoor was driving the final stint in the BMW, and managed to keep Schramm at bay through various Code 60s to win by 6.4 seconds.

BMW had also claimed pole via Walkenhorst Motorsport and Kuba Giermaziak, and the car the Pole shared with Andy Soucek stayed in the top-five hunt all day until the final lap when a puncture from a collision forced it out. The sister M4 of Jake Dennis and Thomas Neubauer was delayed by an alternator problem.

Third went to the Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Schnitzelalm Racing duo Marek Bockmann



and Marcel Marchewitz, with Car Collection Audi pairing Luca Engstler and Dennis Marschall in fourth and BMW Junior trio Dan Harper, Neil Verhagen and Max Hesse fifth ahead of the Mercedes of Raffaele Marciello and Luca Stolz.

The latest iteration of the Porsche 911 GT3-R took seventh with Manthey duo Thomas Preining and Marco Holzer. Abt Lamborghini pair Kelvin van der Linde and Marco Mapelli were next up.



SPRINTS MAKE FOR ENDURANCE

As if a record 21 grands prix isn't enough for this year's MotoGP schedule, there will be 42 races... And reigning champions Francesco Bagnaia and Ducati are looking tough to topple

LEWIS DUNCAN

PHOTOGRAPHY GOLD AND GOOSE  motorsport
IMAGES





Bagnaia knows he has a fast bike but isn't yet bigging up his chances

MotoGP's new campaign begins at this weekend's Portuguese Grand Prix with the biggest format shake-up the series has undergone in decades as the sprint revolution comes to town. In a kneejerk bid to overturn the slide in television and trackside interest suffered by the series over the past couple of years, every round of the 2023 calendar (and there is a record 21 of those) will feature a sprint race run on Saturdays to half the distance of the following day's grand prix.

Unlike Formula 1's sprint races, which are essentially a final stage of qualifying, MotoGP's Saturday race will be independent of the grand prix and the grid for both will be decided via the usual time attack. How the sprint races will actually increase enthusiasm for MotoGP is uncertain at this point, but what is sure is that it will have a major impact on the destiny of this year's world championship. Not only does it double the amount of races – and, therefore, the risk factor – but sprint races will add an extra 252 points to the 525 already on offer in 2023. So, in an already tight field, the margin for error has diminished further.

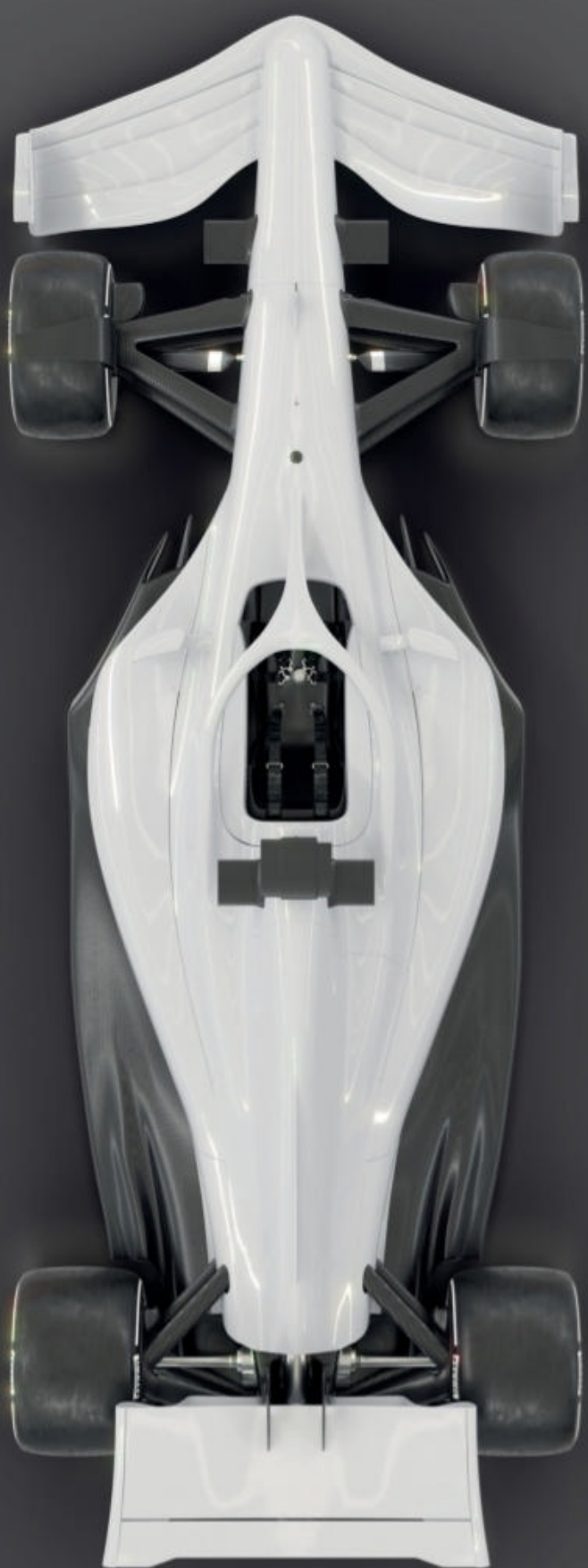
Based on what we've seen in winter testing, it's hard to imagine anyone other than Ducati stamping its authority upon the season. The Italian manufacturer's unorthodox journey to its first crown in 15 years in 2022 highlighted the shortfalls of its rivals, particularly Yamaha with Fabio Quartararo. But this should take nothing away from the fact that Ducati ended 2022 with a motorcycle far superior to its rivals, and looks to have taken another step with its GP23.

Across the five days of winter testing in 2023, Ducati riders – on a mixture of 2022-spec and 2023-spec machinery – took a clean sweep of the times. In Portugal, a humble Francesco Bagnaia set an unofficial lap record to top the test outright, his 1m37.968s met with a “f***ing hell” from an onlooking Quartararo.

“I saw at this moment that Ducati and Aprilia are unbeatable,” reigning world champion Bagnaia said on the penultimate day of the Sepang test. “They are very competitive. But it's very difficult >>



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**“I THINK HE’S LOOKING STRONGER
THIS YEAR. HE SEEMS MORE OF A
CHANGED MAN, A CONFIDENT MAN”**

to know, because sincerely it was easier to understand the tests years ago. Now, looking at the pace, looking at everything, you don’t know which tyres, which part of the bike they were testing. So, I don’t know. But at this moment it looks like we have more advantage than last year. But I don’t want to say anything before the race because I already did this mistake [last year] and I don’t want to repeat the same mistake.”

The mistake Bagnaia made last year was bigging up his chances after a two-day test at Jerez in November 2021, only to find during the pre-season of 2022 that the updated GP22 was not ready to mount a title challenge. This ultimately forced his record-breaking bounce back from a 91-point deficit to win the title. That said, the Italian made his title challenge harder than it needed to be with five DNFs (four of which were his own fault). That school of hard knocks carried on off-track, where a drink-driving offence in the summer in Ibiza and a bizarre tribute helmet to famed North Korea supporter and spousal abuser Dennis Rodman at the San Marino GP piled on unnecessary pressure.

But the Bagnaia who finished up the 2023 pre-season in fine form is a rider who genuinely seems to have learned from what happened last year and has grown accordingly. This has transferred to the way he’s been riding, as former team-mate and current KTM rider Jack Miller noted: “I think he’s looking stronger this year than last year, even in the run he had in the back end of the season in 2021, the run he had coming back into last season. I think this year he seems more of a changed man, a confident man, and he’s riding pretty impressive.”

Given the Ducati has always been strong on one-lap pace (the marque secured 16 of the 20 poles on offer in 2022), that should play to its strengths in the sprint races. Ally that to the impressive long-run pace Bagnaia had in testing, and the competition will have to step up in a big way to dethrone him.

That threat could well come from within. New team-mate Enea Bastianini’s pre-season didn’t deliver any standout moments, but four wins in his sophomore year on a 2021-spec Ducati last season mark him out as a major threat, as did his inability to allow Bagnaia an easy run to the championship in the latter stages of last season’s campaign. The Pramac duo of Jorge Martin and Johann Zarco are always brimming with potential, while Alex Marquez’s switch



Indicators from testing point to Aprilia (this is Vinales) following up on fairytale 2022

from Honda to Gresini on a 2022-spec Ducati looks to have unlocked untapped form from the Spaniard, whose two world championships at junior levels and double MotoGP podiums are often unfairly overlooked.

Aprilia enjoyed a strong winter with an RS-GP that was, according to Aleix Espargaro and Maverick Vinales, a bit better all round than its race-winning predecessor. While headlines in testing focused on its radical Formula 1-style aero push, the Aprilia was solid over a single lap and on long-run pace. A fibrosis issue in his right arm cut short Espargaro's running in Portugal, while Vinales focused solely on race preparation and not on out-and-out speed. But both felt at the Algarve track that they are ready to race, and it seems that Aprilia's fairytale 2022 isn't going to be a flash in the pan.

As testing entered its final day, Yamaha firmly looked like the third-best marque. Last year's runner-up Quartararo warned after the first day of the Portugal test that Yamaha "will not be ready" for the opening round due to the problems he was having on the bike, which were in all areas bar braking. Chiefly, his main issue centred on not being able to extract pace on fresh rubber. Numerous voices from Yamaha over the past few months have praised the fact that it has been churning out mountains of updates. As far as Quartararo was concerned, this was perhaps "too much", as the M1 went from having a fairly stable base for three years to being radically different. So, to >>



After early wobbles, Quartararo reckons Yamaha took "massive step" on final day of testing

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Concerns are high that the Honda isn't good enough for even Marc Márquez to win races

go forward, Yamaha took a step back and adapted some 2022 set-up ideas to the 2023 bike. And it worked, Quartararo making a lap time gain of 1.3s from day to day in the Portugal test.

"It's not about new things," Quartararo said of Yamaha's "massive step" on the last day of testing. "Basically, it's old things, but it was all about set-up and it was working pretty well because [on day one] on the time attack I made 1m39.6s on one lap. And [on day two] on the [race] pace I made 1m39s low, 1m38s high. So, it's close to one second faster in the pace. It's getting the tyre to work better, but also physically. [On day one] the bike was tough, it wasn't turning. Basically, all the worst things you can have, and now we are back to good things."

The long-requested top speed gains have been delivered by Yamaha. It's not going to blow Ducati away, but Quartararo feels that Yamaha is "in a better position" to actually be able to fight with its bike now. So, for the time being, Yamaha has averted disaster.

The same can't be said of Honda. Throughout winter the Japanese marque and KTM have been vying for the spot as MotoGP's fourth-best marque, with neither showing anything particularly positive when testing concluded. Eight-time world champion Marc Márquez wasn't enamoured with the 2023 RC213V prototype when he rode it at the post-race Valencia test in 2022, saying then that it didn't feel like it was a bike he could fight for the title with. That tone hasn't

"SOME OF THE THINGS THAT HONDA EXPECTED WOULD WORK ON TRACK WERE NOT WORKING LIKE WE EXPECTED"

really changed across the Sepang and Algarve tests. There were some positive steps, but seemingly only minor ones as he made his frank assessment of where Honda is.

"Unfortunately some of the things that Honda expected would work on track were not working like we expected," said Márquez. "And then we were riding the same bike [on the last day in Portugal] as we finished with in Malaysia. It's true that we changed the set-up a bit, my team organised a good plan and we did a few steps and I was feeling better and better. I was able to work on the rhythm, because when you try different things every run it's more difficult. But now, for Portimao [in this weekend's race], we cannot think about the podium or victory. We have to think about what we have, try to take the best. Also, the conditions will change, the rubber on the track. We will see, but at the moment if [at the test] was the race with the conditions we had on track we can fight for fifth to 10th, I believe."

Honda, it seems, is running out of ideas as it faces the real possibility of suffering a third winless campaign in four years.

TYRE PRESSURE RULES HAVE THE GRID WORRIED

To clear up a grey area in the regulations, MotoGP rulemakers have mandated strict enforcement of minimum tyre pressures on the front and rear Michelin compounds for 2023. Revelations that many riders had been operating outside of the front limit last year prompted the rule change, although most argued that they did so on safety grounds.

For 2023, riders and teams must adhere to a minimum front-tyre pressure of 1.9bar (27.6psi), and 1.7bar (24.7psi) on the

rear. This has led to fears of an increase in crashes in 2023, because many riders believe that the risks of falling will greatly increase once the front tyre reaches 2.2bar (31.9psi) – something that will affect those riding in packs. Any riders found to have operated outside of the minimum limits could face lap time deletions in practice and qualifying, and disqualification from races.

Riders have been adhering to the new limits throughout testing, but most are still uncertain as to how they will be affected

when racing gets under way. While safety has been a primary concern of this new ruling, others have raised the point that it could be detrimental to the show as podium ceremonies may

frequently not reflect the final result.

"If you are behind and the pressure goes more than 2.2bar, you will crash," Alex Márquez stated. "So, it's not really fair. We will arrive

on the podium and we will not know if we are on the podium, or we are with zero points."

Márquez noted that, had the rule been in force last year, around 13 riders would have faced disqualification for not running at the minimum front pressure. Given how silly other series have looked with some of their post-race penalties, strict enforcement of the new tyre pressure rules could prove detrimental to MotoGP as it hopes to make its show more exciting by introducing sprint races.





Over the winter it brought in Ken Kawauchi, who spearheaded Suzuki’s bike development, as technical director along with ex-Suzuki riders Joan Mir and Alex Rins. While time is still needed for the new technical chief and riders to gel with the HRC structure, it is time that Honda can ill-afford as Marquez’s future becomes a topic of discussion.

The Spaniard told Autosport last year (22-29 December) in an exclusive interview that his “dream” is to stay with Honda, but that he will look at alternative options when his contract expires at the end of 2024 if HRC cannot give him the bike he needs to deliver his desire of a seventh MotoGP world title. With contract negotiations for 2025 likely to open up later this year, Honda needs to quickly transform its motorcycle. Now fully recovered from his myriad injury woes, there is no question that Marquez is still the best of the bunch on the 2023 grid. But he is only human, and there is only so much you can do with substandard equipment.

The introduction of sprint races and the questions surrounding whether anyone can dethrone the juggernaut of Ducati provide an intriguing storyline for MotoGP’s new era in 2023. But it is the developing subplot at Honda and its mission to keep its star asset happy that may well come to define the 2023 MotoGP season. And, as proven time and time again since 2013, Honda needs Marc Marquez more than he needs Honda... 🏁



MOTOGP ENTRY LIST

NO	RIDER	TEAM
1	Francesco Bagnaia	Ducati
23	Enea Bastianini	Ducati
5	Johann Zarco	Pramac Ducati
89	Jorge Martin	Pramac Ducati
10	Luca Marini	VR46 Ducati
72	Marco Bezzecchi	VR46 Ducati
12	Maverick Vinales	Aprilia
41	Aleix Espargaro	Aprilia
20	Fabio Quartararo	Yamaha
21	Franco Morbidelli	Yamaha
25	Raul Fernandez	RNF Aprilia
88	Miguel Oliveira	RNF Aprilia
30	Takaaki Nakagami	LCR Honda
42	Alex Rins	LCR Honda
33	Brad Binder	KTM
43	Jack Miller	KTM
36	Joan Mir	Honda
93	Marc Marquez	Honda
37	Augusto Fernandez	Tech3 GasGas
44	Pol Espargaro	Tech3 GasGas
49	Fabio Di Giannantonio	Gresini Ducati
73	Alex Marquez	Gresini Ducati

MOTOGP CALENDAR

RD	VENUE	DATE
1	Algarve (PRT)	26 March
2	Rio Hondo (ARG)	2 April
3	Austin (USA)	16 April
4	Jerez (ESP)	30 April
5	Le Mans (FRA)	14 May
6	Mugello (ITA)	11 June
7	Sachsenring (DEU)	18 June
8	Assen (NLD)	25 June
9	Sokol (KAZ)	9 July
10	Silverstone (GBR)	6 August
11	Red Bull Ring (AUT)	20 August
12	Barcelona (ESP)	3 September
13	Misano (ITA)	10 September
14	Buddh (IND)	24 September
15	Motegi (JPN)	1 October
16	Mandalika (IDN)	15 October
17	Phillip Island (AUS)	22 October
18	Buriram (THA)	29 October
19	Sepang (MAL)	12 November
20	Losail (QAT)	19 November
21	Valencia (ESP)	26 November

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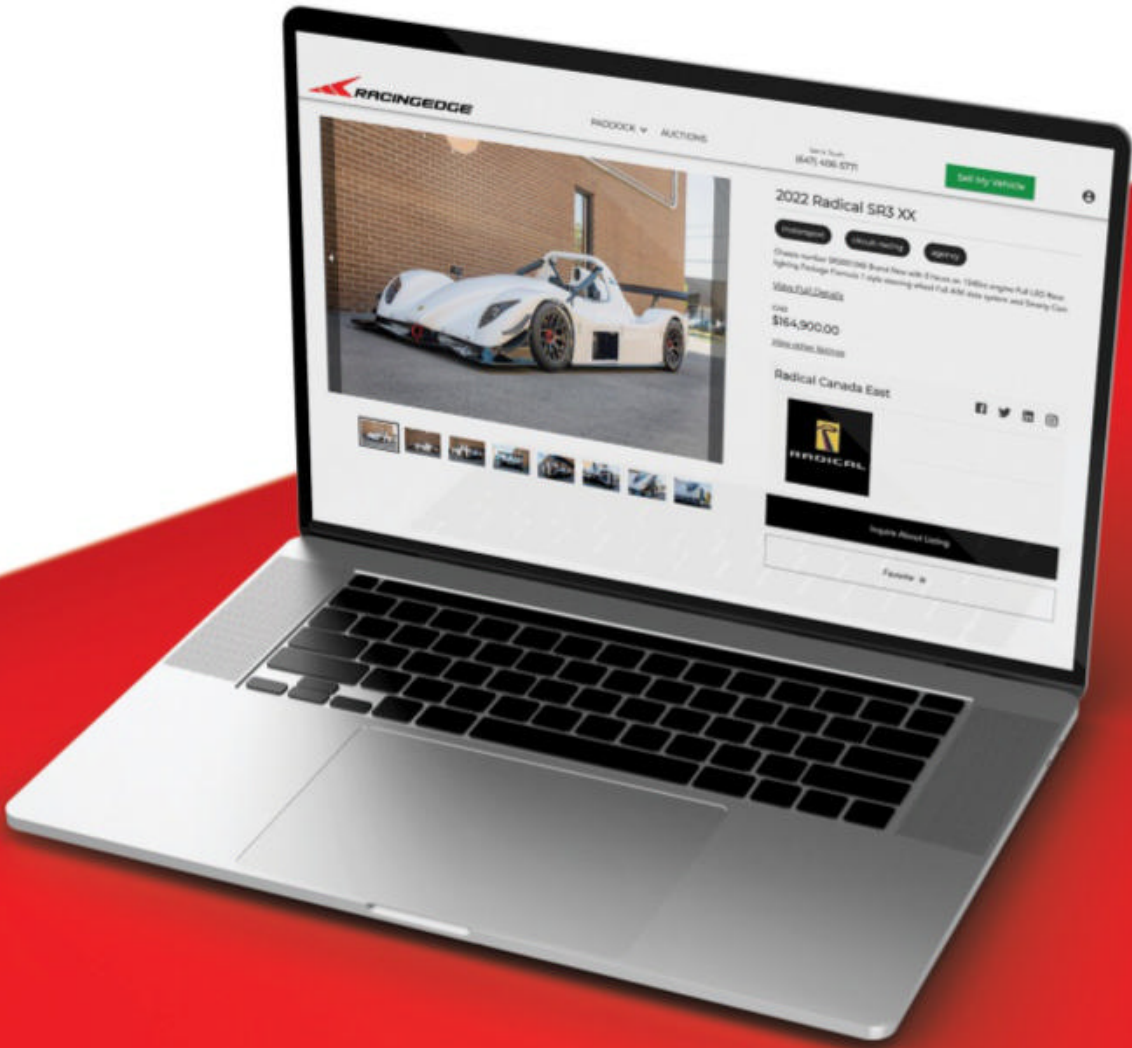


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- Attend race events and test days

Skills and qualifications required:

- Possess a qualification in motor mechanics
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- Pit stop experience
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HISTORICS Alesi to race Elan in Paul Ricard enduro

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Alesi to Paul Ricard historic enduro

HISTORICS

Formula 1 race winner Jean Alesi is due to make his latest historic outing at Paul Ricard next month at the wheel of a Lotus Elan in V de V's six-hour contest at the Grand Prix de France Historique meeting.

Since retiring from F1 and his subsequent sportscar career, Alesi has made a number of appearances in historic machinery, including competing at the Goodwood Revival and in the Monaco GP Historique.

His latest is due to be on 7-8 April at Paul Ricard, the circuit that Alesi has recently been appointed president of. He will share the Elan with sportscar racer Philippe Gache – who Alesi competed alongside in junior single-seaters – along with rally competitor Jean-Pierre Richelmi and Richelmi's son Stephane, a GP2 race winner and 2016 LMP2



Endurance Trophy champion.

"It's going to be a one-off," said Alesi. "I've had this plan to race with my old friend Philippe Gache for a long time, who

is going to run the Lotus from his SMG factory, and the car's owner is Jean-Pierre Richelmi, and we have his son Stephane in the line-up too, so the plan is for the kid to do all the driving as it's a very long race!

"Now I'm the president of the track, I think I will put a special sticker on the back of the car – 'Take care of the President' – so they have to treat me like they would with Macron!

"I'd love to have a racing programme for some more fun events like this, but this is just a one-shot in a nice car with friends."

The race is open to a wide array of GTs, tin-tops and sports-racers from the mid-1960s to 1990 and there is one British crew among the entry, the Equipe Rosbif Tiga SC83 of Ross and Charlie Hyett that also tackled last November's 24-hour race at Paul Ricard.

CHARLES BRADLEY & STEPHEN LICKORISH

Jackson plans to share Elan with sons

HISTORICS

Experienced historic racer Simon Jackson has added a Lotus Elan to his fleet alongside his Lenham sports-racer and Historic Formula 3 Chevron B43.

Jackson, who often races alongside his sons Cameron and Dominik, has recently spent 11 weeks in Australia and New Zealand but ran

the Elan for the first time in the Masters test day at Donington Park recently.

"That was the first time I'd seen it," said Jackson of the car previously owned and raced by Mel Taylor. "We will do some Masters events and we're looking at the Autosport 3 Hours at Snetterton."

Jackson is likely to share the car with either or both



of his sons during the season and has an ambition for all three to contest the Spa Six Hours together in September. So far, the three racing Jacksons have never competed in the same car

in the same race.

"The Elan is the main focus for this year," added Jackson Sr. "But we'll do one or two races in the Lenham and in the Chevron."

PAUL LAWRENCE

National champions join packed MX-5 Supercup



MICK WALKER

MAZDA MX-5

The past three Mazda MX-5 Championship winners all made their debuts in the MX-5 Supercup at Silverstone last weekend among a grid of nearly 50 cars.

Reigning champion Fraser Fenwick (above) was joined by Oliver Allwood and Joe Wiggin – title winners in 2021 and 2020 respectively – as all three made the step up from the MX-5 Mk1 to Mk3 models.

“I’m enjoying it so far, it’s a new challenge,” said Fenwick, whose best result came in race three, where he missed out on a podium finish by 0.1 seconds. “A lot of people said to me, ‘Are you going to defend your title [in the Mk1s]?’ I get why people

do that. But, when there’s a jump available, I may as well make the most of it.

“The Mk3s are quicker, more power to the rear wheels, and cut slicks. It’s completely different but it suits my driving a lot more; you’ve got to be smoother.

Allwood, who was sixth in race one, added: “We’ve spent a year building this car – I took a year out. It’s going to be a really competitive championship.”

Three-time Toyota MR2 champion Aaron Cooke was another to join the series, but it proved a difficult debut after a qualifying infringement left him having to recover from the back of the huge grid. He claimed 13th in the final contest.

“I was two kilos under the weight

limit, slight fuel issues caused it,” Cooke revealed. “So I started last with a 10-second on-the-grid penalty.

“It feels like it has a lot more grip [compared to the MR2], you can chuck it into the corners a bit more. A lot closer, a lot more elbows out. I just needed a different challenge and hopefully this is it.”

Another to experience a tough debut was 2022 MG Trophy runner-up Josh Bromley. “It’s not been amazing at the minute,” he admitted. “We did half a lap [in testing] and had engine issues, so we went into qualifying completely blind and still had issues with the car. I’m looking forward to the challenge, it’s a big step up.”

STEVE WHITFIELD

Guintoli swaps two wheels for four again

MAZDA MX-5

Sylvain Guintoli, the 2014 World Superbike champion, is hoping to make more car racing appearances after competing in the Mazda MX-5 Clubman opener at Silverstone last weekend.

The Frenchman, whose only previous four-wheel experience came in the Radical Challenge in 2016 and at last year’s Birkett

Relay, qualified 14th before finishing 12th in race one.

“I love it, good fun,” he said. “Nothing scary with the straightline speed, but the cornering is great. So just learning, trying to get better at it. I made a few mistakes – you lose the corner speed somewhere and you get punished on the straights.”

When rain arrived for race two, Guintoli made up seven positions on the



Frenchman was out in the Mazda Clubman series

MICK WALKER

opening lap and went on to finish eighth.

“I don’t think I can do any more [MX-5 races] because I still race World Endurance motorbikes,” he added. “Every

time I have a free weekend, I’m going to try some more [four-wheeled] racing. Just try different experiences and learn. That’s the idea.”

STEVE WHITFIELD



Track-limits plans go to judicial committee after consultation

MOTORSPORT UK

Controversial plans to overhaul track-limits regulations in the UK are due to go before the judicial committee after tweaks were proposed following a consultation.

The consultation on the plans, which annoyed many and include redefining what constitutes a track-limit violation as well as harsher penalties for those who exceed the boundaries, ended last month.

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers admitted that the governing body “probably didn’t do as good a job as we could have done to communicate” the reasons behind the changes, which include a better definition of the track limit and improving general driving standards. “The track licence that’s being implemented by Motorsport UK works on the principal of a car leaving the circuit,” he said. “If it unfortunately hits the barrier, the barrier

is positioned at a point that assumes the trajectory from the circuit, not from two metres further towards the apex of the corner. It’s really our belief that you’ve got to have a much clearer definition of what the track limit is.”

Chambers added that “the track limits group has met and has modified certain aspects” of the proposal, but would not be drawn on when the changes would be implemented if approved.

“There’s definitely been a shift a little bit back more towards where we are today, which is to allow some leniency so that there is not an immediate sanction from the first transgression,” he said. “I think that’s taking on board the feedback, from competitors, clubs, organisers and officials. I firmly believe that a stronger application of the rules of track limits is absolutely linked to general on-track behaviour.”

STEFAN MACKLEY

Tomlinson sisters to race together

GINETTA GT ACADEMY

Four female drivers will compete in the Ginetta GT Academy this year, including three siblings from the Tomlinson family.

Ginetta managing director Amy Tomlinson will be joined by two of her sisters, Emma and Lucy, for the eight-round calendar, which begins on

8-10 April at Oulton Park.

They will be joined on the grid by Charlotte Lowe at the wheel of G56 GTAs, with a further five female drivers competing in Ginetta’s other two championships.

“We are extremely excited to be joining the GTA grid this season, especially all being able to compete together,” said Amy Tomlinson, who will follow in

the racing footsteps of her father, Ginetta owner and Le Mans 24 Hours class winner Lawrence.

“Having been part of the paddock supporting our brother Freddie throughout his racing career, to be on the other side of the fence will give us all a completely new perspective and we are excited for the challenge ahead.”

IN THE HEADLINES

BRITISH F4 ENTRIES HIT 19

Swedish karter Gustav Jonsson has become the 19th driver confirmed for British Formula 4 this year. The single-seater rookie is the third racer announced as part of an expanded Chris Dittmann Racing line-up. Team boss Dittmann said: “It’s going to be a competitive field this year, so it’s a big ask for Gustav coming straight from karts, but driver development is our bag and he’s already shown he’s got potential.”

MONOPOSTO DOUBLES UP

A second grid has been added for the Monoposto opener at the Snetterton Historic Sports Car Club meeting next month after an “unprecedented level of demand”. Among the entries for the 22-23 April contests, which will be held on both the 300 and 200 layouts of the Norfolk track, is an ex-British Formula 4 Mygale, which is set to appear in Monoposto for the first time with Phil Chappell driving.

NEW HOME FOR RADICAL

Radical has revealed that it will open a new corporate headquarters at Donington Park later this spring in the old Formula E building next to the circuit’s main entrance. While manufacturing will continue at Radical’s original Peterborough base, its sales and marketing teams will move to the new location. It will be open to the public during the week and selected race events.

MARTIN TAKES PODIUM

Porsche Carrera Cup GB frontrunner Will Martin (below) took a podium at Sebring last week after agreeing a late deal to join JDX Racing for the equivalent North America series. Martin finished third in the opening race and was fourth in race two. He was not the only British driver on the grid, with former Champ Car podium finisher Dan Clarke picking up two fifth places and Euro NASCAR racer Alex Sedgwick taking a best result of seventh.



Ex-Radisich BTCC Peugeot returns to UK

SUPER TOURERS

An ex-Paul Radisich Peugeot 406 is set to return to racing in the UK this weekend as Colin Sowter fields his new acquisition in the Super Tourers season opener on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit.

Two-time Touring Car World Cup winner Radisich drove the Motor Sport Developments-built car throughout the 1998 season, placing 14th in the standings with a best finish of fourth in a rain-hit race at Silverstone. After some time in Australia, the Peugeot was driven by Malcolm Harrison in the Historic Sports Car Club's Super Touring Challenge in 2015 before it was shipped to New Zealand and raced regularly by Stephen Grellet.

Sowter, whose Superformance parts business sponsors the Ferrari Formula Classic series, has raced in various GT machinery in recent years, but this will be his first foray into front-wheel-drive touring cars. "I'm a fan of the Super Touring era," said Sowter, who suffered a head gasket



failure on the car in testing at Brands Hatch last week but plans to contest all three rounds of the series. "I'm not expecting to be quick in it, certainly initially, because they take such a lot of learning. It's completely the opposite to what I'm used to – you've constantly got to rev it and keep it on the boil absolutely all the time."

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club's components of the British Automobile Racing Club's Silverstone meeting will be split across three grids totalling nearly

120 entries. A handful of Super Tourers will compete alongside the Pre-'93 and Pre-'03 series, while further highlights include a 38-car combined grid of Pre-'66 and Pre-'83 Group 1 Touring Cars.

Multiple Classic Thunder champion Andy Robinson (Ford Falcon) returns to the series, which features a 23-strong entry including debutants Chris McGinley (BMW E36 M3 GTR) and Matthew Skidmore (Hayabusa-engined Mini).

MARK PAULSON

Eaton back in father's V8 Holden with CTCRC



CLASSIC THUNDER

Abbie Eaton will return to racing her father Paul's V8 Holden Commodore in the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Classic Thunder championship in 2023.

Eaton, the former test driver for Amazon TV

show *The Grand Tour*, suffered nasty back injuries in a W Series crash at the end of 2021. She returned to compete in the formula's truncated season last year, taking a best result of seventh at Silverstone, and was 13th in the standings.

"It'll be the first time

I've raced since W Series," said the 31-year-old. "It's one-off races for now and we might make appearances in a few other championships too.

"I'll also be doing something else in an historic Mustang – watch this space."

CARL MCKELLAR

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Hewlett joins Dragon Sport for Britcar Trophy campaign in Clio

BRITCAR TROPHY

Reigning Type R Trophy champion Jake Hewlett has completed Dragon Sport's Britcar Trophy line-up after signing to partner Travis Coyne in the championship aboard one of its Renault Clios.

Hewlett won last year's 750 Motor Club Type-R title after a season-long duel with Christopher Nylan, coming out on top by just one point.

The 30-year-old telecoms engineer said: "It's a different discipline – instead of sprints, the races are between 50 minutes and two hours and you've got to learn how to keep up the speed while nursing the car."

Team boss Rhys Lloyd and Dragon Sport scholarship winner Jack Meakin will share a second Clio in the same class, with both cars being run in partnership

with Amigo Motorsport.

Lloyd will also race an Opel TCR machine alongside Max Coates in the British Endurance Championship.

"Jake and Travis have been evenly matched with Jack and me in testing so it's going to be close between the two cars," said Lloyd. "If it's dry, we're going for class wins but, if it's raining, then maybe we can do some giant-killing."

CARL MCKELLAR



Hewlett (inset) will race Renault Clio alongside Coyne in Britcar Trophy

IN THE HEADLINES

INGRAM SETS UP NEW TEAM

Former British Formula 3, GT and Le Mans Series racer John Ingram has formed his own team to contest the C1 Endurance Series. Joining Ingram in the Jolt Racing line-up is Richie Benjafield-Metcalf, who is the great-grandson of Dudley 'Doc' Benjafield, one member of the Bentley Boys who won the 1927 Le Mans 24 Hours and one of the founders of the British Racing Drivers' Club. The final member of the team is novice Rupert Williams, who made his car racing debut at Silverstone last Sunday.

CHANGES TO SUPERKARTS

The British Superkart Racing Club's Super Series will not run special plates in 2023, including 0, 1 or GP, following a decision by Motorsport UK. It will be the first time in over 35 years that none of the 'triple crown' will be competed for. Ahead of the opening round at Cadwell Park, reigning F125 Open champion Jack Tritton has stepped up to the Division 1 class this year, and will partner champion Lee Harpham.

NEW ROLES AT COMBE

Castle Combe Racing Club has appointed the popular and highly respected clerk of the course Ian Danaher as its competition director with effect from 1 April. The Welshman's predecessor, Steve Weston, has transferred to the Wiltshire circuit's staff as full-time track manager.

TILLEY TAKES ON F2 MARCH

Historic racer Benn Tilley tested Rudolf Ernst's ex-Hans Binder Formula 2 March 752 at Blyton Park on Monday (below). The former Classic FF1600 and Classic F3 champion stepped up to score fine victories in Simon Hadfield's FAtlantic Modus at Thruxton and Donington last year. The 23-year-old will contest Historic F2 events in the March, powered by a rare Schnitzer-originated BMW engine.



Sean Woods 1962-2023

OBITUARY

The Irish motorsport community was saddened to learn of the recent passing of former driver and race team owner Sean Woods.

From Dundalk in County Louth, Woods was originally a rally competitor, but transferred to circuit racing with aplomb, when he competed in the highly competitive manufacturer-backed Fiat Uno Cup in the early 1990s. Despite budget restrictions, Woods's distinctive yellow Kaliber-liveried car was never far from the sharp end.

Following on from this, he ran Michelle Graham to much success in the same championship before launching Sean Woods Racing, his team fielding cars in RT2000, SEAT Supercup and many other classes.

Woods was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease a number of years ago,



and family and friends organised a fundraiser race weekend at Mondello Park in aid of the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association. Incredibly, Woods led the Fiesta Zetec race before retiring with a puncture at mid-distance.

He will be remembered as a real character, but also as a man who helped many people around the Mondello paddock. Autosport sends its condolences to his wife Siobhan, his family and his many, many friends.

LEO NULTY

WORK BEGINS TO IMPROVE CASTLE COMBE FACILITIES

CASTLE COMBE

A programme of developments at Castle Combe is under way as the privately owned circuit builds towards its 75th anniversary in 2025.

A new logo was revealed earlier this year as part of a “regeneration vision” for the venue as owners the Strawford/Marshallsay families take “a step back” from the front line.

New managing director Piero Stobbia outlined plans last Saturday for a new paddock entrance – visibly taking shape – plus on and off-track investments aimed at “improving the customer experience for competitors and spectators” as part of an ambitious “five-year plan” for the Chippenham venue.

The initial phases of the work will involve toilet facilities being upgraded and a further 28 metres of debris fencing being installed at Quarry corner.

Longer-term changes, with outline project proposals “at planning permission stage”, will target the possible return of higher-profile events, such as British GT or the GT Cup.

MARCUS PYE

GARY HAWKINS



Wilson to return ex-works Cobra to Le Mans 60 years on

HISTORICS

The ex-works AC Cobra Le Mans Coupe that raced at Le Mans in 1963 is due to return to the French track this year with new owner Richard Wilson.

Sixty years on from racing at Le Mans in the hands of Ed Hugus and Peter Jopp, 645 CGT will now make another appearance for the Le Mans Classic event in July when Wilson will share the car with its preparer Gary Pearson.

Wilson bought the car from previous owner Carlos Monteverde just before lockdown and has recently started testing it. “I’m taking it back to Le Mans this year,” said Wilson. “It’s a nice time to

take it there as it is 100 years of Le Mans and 60 years since this car first raced there. We’ll do four or five other races as well and maybe the Goodwood Revival as there’s a Carroll Shelby celebration.”

Wilson’s car is the left-hand-drive machine that was disqualified from the 1963 contest after a premature oil change, while the main works Cobra – which finished seventh – that year was a right-hand-drive model with Ninian Sanderson leading the driver line-up.

As well as the Cobra, Wilson also has a rare Maserati 250S sportscar and a Brabham BT6 Formula Junior.

PAUL LAWRENCE

CCRC tweaks format of GT series to boost grids

CASTLE COMBE

Castle Combe’s GT championship has expanded to nine rounds this year, with four double-headers and a singleton, while a revised scoring system to aid car sharing is also among changes aimed at reducing costs and increasing entries.

The category has struggled with poor numbers in recent years, leading the organising Castle Combe Racing Club to consider ways of boosting grids.

“Modern GT racing is about teams not individuals so, at the double-headers, two registered competitors can share a car, contesting one race each,”

said club chairman Ken Davies at Saturday’s media intro. “Both will be awarded their total points, so as not to disadvantage them against a soloist rival. At the single [non-pitstop] race event, both drivers will be awarded points, irrespective of who competes.”

Two of last year’s frontrunners have re-armed in bids to depose champion Kevin Bird in his Porsche 991 Carrera Cup car he plans to share with son Charles Hyde-Andrews-Bird. Doug Watson, a 2022 winner in a Ferrari 458 Challenge, has upgraded to a newer 488 model. Fellow series stalwart Keith Butcher is switching from the Audi R8 LMS Ultra to a Lamborghini Huracan powered by the same 5.2-litre V10.

MARCUS PYE



MIKE STOKES/TRACKSIDE IMAGES



Goodwood's diamond shine

A year of anniversaries has been launched as the Sussex circuit lifts the curtain on its 75th birthday celebrations – and it's clear the track remains as popular as ever

CARL MCKELLAR

The buzz for any of the events is the same – it's a privilege. You're not there to prove you can outdrive everybody. It's important to understand those things, it's competitive theatre." Wise words from Rob Wilson, who most reckon has driven more laps of the Goodwood Motor Racing Circuit than anyone else since winning its race school apprenticeship in the mid-1970s.

Offering tutelage in a modern-day Ford Mustang, the Kiwi was one of a dozen or so racing names allowing themselves to be driven around the world-famous West Sussex track in an assortment of machinery during a pre-season media launch as Goodwood prepares to celebrate several major anniversaries in 2023. These include 30 years since the first Festival of Speed, 25 since the Revival was launched and 75 since Goodwood Circuit opened. It's a big year for patron the Duke of Richmond and his team and, going by their media event, it's clear no stone will be left unturned as they look to make it the most exciting yet.

Outside Goodwood House, a display of cars and motorcycles that have a history with the hill or the circuit – reminiscent of the launch for the first Festival of Speed in 1993 – sent the 'vloggers' into overdrive.

"Comment c'est possible!?" exclaimed one to camera in awe of the line-up – the 1977 Le Mans-winning Porsche 936 of Jacky Ickx, Jurgen Barth and Hurley Haywood, and a 1986 Group B

"For all its ability to take people back in time, the estate is just as astute in looking ahead"

Tony Pond/Rob Arthur Metro 6R4 making me turn seven and 16 years old all over again.

The Duke of Richmond's appreciation of others' "goodwill" to make such events happen is heartfelt and sincere. "We've had more great cars here than anywhere else in the world by a mile when you think about all the genres we celebrate," he says. "That's not me trying to blow our own trumpet; it's just the fact that it's a bizarre thing."

The memories are too many to mention, but some inevitably have left their mark, including Ray Hanna buzzing the circuit's pitstraight in a Spitfire at the first Revival in 1998. "It's one of those moments people never capture, but everyone seemed to get that picture of him flying below the height of the pitlane," recalls the Duke.

Some in authority "took a very dim view indeed" of the stunt, but "Ray was such a highly thought of pilot that he got away with it. It was a big moment that set the whole thing off and us trying to do something that was exceptional and different and moved people."

Another memory of his is being at Maranello in 1995 when Ferrari boss Luca di Montezemolo declared to Jean Todt and co, "We go to Goodwood!" – "I was pinching myself thinking this is amazing, and sure enough they were here and have been every year since."

Seeing a Silver Arrows W165 run for the first time since its one and only race at Tripoli in 1939, Valentino Rossi riding his MotoGP Yamaha YZR-M1 inside Goodwood House and World Trials Bike champion Dougie Lampkin ascending the roof of His Grace's residence also stand out.

As for the Revival, the Duke adds: "I recall Martin [Brundle] being completely blown away by Stirling [Moss] as he overtook Martin's yellow D-type, I think on the outside and waving as he went past. Barry [Sheene] having his last race here – that was very, very emotional. He rang me one lunch time and said, 'I'm not well, I'm going to be racing for the last time'."

There's a true romance to driving Goodwood thanks to its fierce speeds and an appreciation of the names who have graced the very same configuration with extraordinary levels of ability. Hitting 148mph alongside British GT racer Joe Osborne in a McLaren Artura during the media event and the handling of Toyota's Yaris GR with Abbie Eaton tutoring were both highlights.

So, too, the ride of Bentley's exquisite 'Flying Spur' with Mark Cole, so close to winning the Revival's Lavant Cup last year, in the passenger seat. He sums up the Revival as "an event you can race at and enjoy the environment when not in the car. A lot of kudos."

The #Goodwood75 hashtag is being used as Goodwood asks fans to post their memories of the past 30 years. But, for all its unrivalled ability to take people back in time, the estate is just as astute in looking ahead.

"I'm feeling pretty confident about the next 75 years," says the Duke. "We will continue to champion exciting new technologies and showcase the future of mobility. Alternative and sustainable fuels are high up the agenda as is the whole 'revive and thrive' ethos of the Revival itself. It's important for us to protect and nurture the historic and classic car scene for future generations. The world is changing fast, it certainly never stands still and nor will we."

One final thought from Wilson: "At the Festival one year, I drove Dan Gurney's Eagle-Weslake. Coming to the startline, in front was Jack Brabham in a mid-1960s Brabham-Honda F2 car and behind me John Surtees in the Honda V12 he won with at Monza in 1967, and ahead of the lot of us was Chris Amon in a 1968 F1 Ferrari. It was one of those moments you will always remember. It's full of them." 🌟

Hills repeats winning Mazda hat-trick at opening round

SILVERSTONE
BRSCC
18-19 MARCH

Aidan Hills took a clean sweep of victories at the British Racing & Sports Car Club's season-opener on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit last weekend, repeating his feat from the first round last year by winning all three Mazda MX-5 Supercup races.

Reigning champion Will Blackwell-Chambers topped qualifying to take pole for the first two encounters, but a difficult opening lap in race one left him in the lower reaches of the top 10. Hills climbed from the third row to take the lead from Richard Amos, who pulled off shortly afterwards with an issue on the third tour. Hills fended off James Cossins and Tom Griffiths for the remainder of the race, the trio separated by less than a second, while Blackwell-Chambers came home fourth.

A similar pattern emerged in the sequel, with Hills moving from the inside of the front row into the lead while another poor start dropped Blackwell-Chambers to fifth.

Hills eventually broke clear of his pursuers to win by almost two seconds in a slightly shortened contest, with Griffiths this time getting the better of Cossins in the battle for second. Amos ran second early on before being edged to fourth by Blackwell-Chambers, but all were bumped up a position after Cossins was handed a post-race penalty and dropped to fifth for not respecting yellow flags.

Griffiths climbed from sixth to first during a frenetic opening lap in the partially reversed-grid race, but a mistake exiting Club left him fighting for second with Hills, and enabled Amos to move to the front.



Hills then picked off both Griffiths and Amos, with Blackwell-Chambers fighting his way up to second.

The front two were able to build a gap, with Hills withstanding the pressure in the closing laps to complete his perfect weekend ahead of Blackwell-Chambers and Amos. "It was a lot harder this year," said Hills of his latest clean sweep. "The reversed-grid race was particularly difficult. I just had to stay calm the first few laps while everyone was three-wide, I just tried to pick the right lines."

Brad Jones starred in Mk1 MX-5 machinery with three podium finishes on Saturday. He took a comfortable victory

ahead of Oak Richardson and Jon Pethick in the opening Clubman race, but had to settle for the runner-up spot in a close fight with Richardson in the second contest.

Jones was also second in race one of the MX-5 Championship, which produced some of the most thrilling action of the weekend. Pre-season favourite Steve Foden's challenge evaporated before the opener had even started, when a repeat of a fuel leak from qualifying forced him to be pushed off the starting grid.

Sixteen-year-old Ted Bradbury lined up on pole for his first ever car race, but a bad start cost him several positions, and Jason Greatrex passed Thomas Langford for the



Foden overcame earlier fuel problem to win in MX-5 Championship



Allen (left) and Light shared the spoils in Modified Fords



King of the Hills: No one could beat Mazda MX-5 Supercup dominator

lead into Brooklands. Langford soon regained the advantage, however, with a move into Stowe on lap three of eight.

Luke Pullen climbed up to second and then made a lunge into Brooklands on his AB Motorsport team-mate Langford, with contact allowing Jones to pass the pair of them. Langford was able to recover and beat Jones by 1.6s at the flag, while Bradbury edged Pullen to the final podium place by 0.036s after a penalty for exceeding track limits cost Oliver Graham third.

A great start enabled Langford to immediately put daylight between himself and his pursuers in a damp race two on Sunday morning. With his issue fixed,



Jordan (right) managed to beat Smith to the win in second Mini Miglia race

Foden made up 15 places from 27th on the opening lap, and continued to scythe through the field. Adam Sparrow was another on the move, climbing from eighth to take the lead away from Langford into Maggotts on lap two before pulling clear.

Foden was soon up to third, and he profited from Langford missing a gear to eradicate a 4s deficit and snatch second. Pullen's chances of fighting Langford for a podium were ended by front-left suspension damage on the final lap, while Sparrow recorded a maiden triumph by a sizeable 8.5s.

The best action came in a dry final race, which featured a nine-car lead battle. Foden took the lead from Sparrow on the opening lap, but was unable to break the slipstream from the chasing pack. Tom Smith and Langford worked together on the Hangar Straight to pass Foden, before another missed gear dropped Langford to fifth. He soon recovered to regain the lead, but then lost out to both Smith and Foden at Abbey. Smith then ran wide at Stowe and dropped to third, with Foden defending from Langford throughout the final lap to win by 0.176s.

"I was a bit upset with what happened on Saturday, but you've just got to keep looking forward," said Foden. "I do enjoy those drives back through the field. You've got to play a tactical game here because the tow is massive. It was one of my best drives."

WEEKEND WINNERS

MX-5 SUPERCUP
Races 1, 2 & 3 Aidan Hills

MX-5 CLUBMAN
Race 1 Brad Jones
Race 2 Oak Richardson

MX-5 CHAMPIONSHIP
Race 1 Thomas Langford
Race 2 Adam Sparrow
Race 3 Steve Foden

C1 ENDURANCE
Mac Tools Racing
(Sylvain Rubio/Jade Edwards/Josh Cook)

MINI CHALLENGE MIGLIA/SE7EN
Race 1 Jeff Smith (Miglia)
Race 2 Andrew Jordan (Miglia)

MODIFIED FORDS
Race 1 Simon Light (Capri V8)
Race 2 James Allen (Focus Mk2)

CLUBSPORT TROPHY
Liam Crilly (BMW Z4 Coupe, below)



For full results visit: [tsl-timing.com](https://www.tsl-timing.com)

Mac Tools Racing triumphed in the four-hour C1 Endurance race, with Sylvain Rubio sharing the spoils with British Touring Car racers Jade Edwards and Josh Cook. JW Bird Motorsport duo Philip House and Nick Beaumont finished 42s behind, having been in contention throughout, while Emax Motorsport came up short in its quest for a fourth straight victory in third.

It was former BTCC stars in the thick of the Mini 7 Racing Club action, with Jeff Smith winning the Miglia opener after prevailing in an early scrap with Nick Padmore, while Andrew Jordan fended off Aaron Smith by 0.4s to win race two.

Simon Light was victorious in the first Modified Ford race in his fearsome Capri V8. After finishing runner-up to Light, James Allen (Focus RS Mk2) went one better to win a wet race two ahead of Kester Cook (Fiesta ST150) and impressive debutant Josh Payton's striking Cortina Mk2.

Liam Crilly dominated the Clubsport Trophy in his BMW Z4, while polesitter Scott Parkin retired on the opening lap with a driveshaft failure to his Audi TTCR.

STEVE WHITFIELD

FINISHING STRAIGHT

The tale of F1's most tragic rivalry



SKY DOCUMENTARY VILLENEUVE PIRONI: RACING'S UNTOLD TRAGEDY

The history of Formula 1 is full of intense rivalries and bitter feuds that have come to define the championship, but perhaps the most tragic rivalry is that of Ferrari team-mates Gilles Villeneuve and Didier Pironi.

Their friendship, the fallout from the 1982 San Marino Grand Prix and the horrendous sequence of events that followed are the subject of a new documentary from the Noah Media Group and director Torquil Jones.

It's a story that's been well-documented before – how Villeneuve felt that Pironi robbed him of victory at Imola, vowing never to speak to him again before the popular French-Canadian was killed just two weeks later at Zolder. An appalling crash for Pironi at Hockenheim – eerily similar to Villeneuve's accident – ended his F1 career when on the cusp of the title, before he too was killed during a powerboat race off the Isle of Wight in 1987.

But even for those who think they know the topic well, the documentary, which has a running time of one hour and 40 minutes, is a must-watch.

The rise of both drivers to the pinnacle of F1 is covered and is very much narrative driven. Villeneuve is the all-out hero, adored by the tifosi and even considered a second son by Enzo Ferrari himself. It's a direct



contrast to Pironi, who had a more methodical approach, the Frenchman portrayed as cold and calculating – essentially taking on the role of villain to some extent.

Former F1 ringmaster Bernie Ecclestone suggests he could have become a politician, which given Pironi's decision to pick then-Ferrari sporting director Marco Piccinini as best man for his wedding just a week before Imola certainly fits this narrative.

Where the film excels is with archive footage, some of which has likely never been shown publicly before.

The biggest input comes from the relatives of Villeneuve and Pironi, with the former's widow Joann and two children, 1997 F1 world champion Jacques and

Melanie, offering their voice. Pironi's former partners also have their say, as well as his twin sons, aptly named Didier and Gilles – the latter an engineer for the Mercedes F1 team.

It's clear that Joann has never fully forgiven Pironi for his “dishonesty, disloyalty [and] a betrayal”, but the death of her husband “can't be on him”. It all makes for powerful viewing.

Outside of the immediate families, there's no shortage of input from F1 alumni including Alain Prost, Jackie Stewart, John Watson and Jody Scheckter, but the most compelling testimonies come from those who worked at Ferrari, including Piccinini, ex-technical director Mauro Forghieri and Brenda Vernor, personal assistant to the ‘Old Man’.

Considering what resulted from the Imola race, there's surprisingly little analysis of the exact details of what transpired, with contradictions from both sides.

And at times it's clear an artistic licence has been used, which for some F1 fans might be frustrating. There's no mention of Villeneuve's one-off drive at Silverstone with McLaren in 1977 (his F1 debut) or how generally he struggled in his early races with Ferrari. Instead, viewers make the jump to his maiden F1 victory at the 1978 Canadian GP. Even his most famous exploits, wheel-banging with Rene Arnoux



1982 San Marino GP marked
the start of a shocking
sequence of events

Pironi and Villeneuve's friendship soured, descending into bitter acrimony



over the final laps of the 1979 French GP at Dijon, or speeding back to the pits on three wheels after a puncture at Zandvoort, only feature briefly.

But that's not really the point of this documentary. It's not meant as a blow-by-blow account of Villeneuve's and Pironi's careers. Instead, it delves into what made each of them tick and strive to become F1 world champion even in the face of danger, and ultimately death.

And this it certainly doesn't shy away from, showing Villeneuve's horrendous accident in full, and the aftermath of Pironi's crash at Hockenheim. At times it becomes a difficult watch, from seeing Villeneuve's parents in tears after the death of their son, to hearing Pironi's sons talk about the father they never met.

While Villeneuve is generally portrayed as the hero, he doesn't escape criticism, his son Jacques describing him as a "selfish man". And while Pironi begins the documentary as the villain, a lot of empathy is generated towards him, especially in the wake of undergoing 30 operations to his shattered legs.

There's a real sense that at more than one point in his life, he deeply regretted his decision at Imola in 1982 and somehow felt responsible for Villeneuve's death – only compounding the pathos of this tale.

STEFAN MACKLEY



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Alonso's regained podium & more Red Bull power – F1 Saudi Arabia GP review 2023

Martyn Lee speaks to Matt Kew and Alex Kalinauckas to discuss all the top stories from Formula 1's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, including the FIA's decision to strip Fernando Alonso of a podium before reversing its judgement, and Max Verstappen's charge from 15th to second.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Formula E

Round 5/11

25 March

Sao Paulo, Brazil

TV Livestream Channel 4 Sport YouTube, Sat 1630

MotoGP

Round 1/21

26 March

Algarve, Portugal

TV Live BT Sport 2, Sun 1200

TV Highlights ITV4, Mon 2215

NASCAR Cup

Round 6/36

26 March

Austin, USA

TV Live Viaplay, Sun 2000

NASCAR Xfinity

Round 6/33

25 March

Austin, USA

NASCAR Truck Series

Round 4/23

25 March

Austin, USA

TV Live Viaplay, Sat 1700

UK MOTORSPORT

Kirkistown 500MRCI

25 March

Fiesta/Minis, Formula Vee, NI FF1600, NI Sevens,

Roadsports/Global, Saloon/GT/Mazda, Superkarts

Snetterton CSCC

25-26 March

Classic K, Future Classic, Magnificent Sevens, Modern Classics, New Millennium, Open Series, Slicks Series, Special Saloons and Modsports, Swinging 60s, Tin Tops, Turbo Tin Tops

Silverstone BARC

25-26 March

BEC, Britcar Prototype Cup, Britcar Trophy, CTCRC (BOSS/Thunder/Jaguars, Pre-'66/Pre-'83, Pre-'93/Pre-'03/ST

TV Livestream via barc.net



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FROM THE ARCHIVE

Those who watched Robert Kubica's horrifying 186mph crash unfold during the eventful 2007 Canadian Grand Prix would have been forgiven for being surprised that he was

extracted from the wreckage of his BMW Sauber suffering nothing more than light concussion and a sprained ankle. And that just five days later at Indianapolis, ahead of the US GP, he stated he was "100% OK... I feel like

nothing happened". The FIA, however, decided that Kubica's best medical interests would be served by sitting this one out, opening the door for a 19-year-old Sebastian Vettel to make his Formula 1 race debut.



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DAIMLERAG

Mercedes 300 SLR

Dario Franchitti isn't short of remarkable cars to choose from when it comes to selecting a favourite. The four-time IndyCar champion has driven dozens of notable racers, from the Mercedes-Benz W196 that Juan Manuel Fangio took to the 1954 Formula 1 world championship to the banned Lotus 88. You might have expected the Scot to choose something once raced by his hero Jim Clark, but he instead opts for something more "left field" as his ultimate favourite.

During three-time Indy 500 winner Franchitti's tenure with Mercedes, after securing a DTM drive for 1995, he was handed the keys to the 300 SLR in which Stirling Moss and navigator Denis Jenkinson famously won the 1955 Mille Miglia, the pair tearing through 992 miles of Italian countryside in just over 10 hours to set a record that would never be broken.

For Franchitti, driving the Mercedes #722 was a "wonderful" experience in the early years of his career. Perhaps unsurprisingly, despite his tender age, he was absolutely "aware of the history".

"I was 21 when Mercedes threw me the key to that thing," Franchitti relates. "It's one of the most important cars in the world, but what a wonderful thing to drive. It was a lot of fun."

"I did a couple of demos in it for Mercedes when I was part of the junior



DOLE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

team. They asked Jan Magnussen [Franchitti's 1995-96 team-mate in the Class 1 Mercedes squad] if we would care to go for a play. Of course, we said yes. There was also a W196 GP car [from 1954-55]. The first time I drove it, I remember it was a test track at the Mercedes Centre in Stuttgart, and then I drove it subsequently in a couple of places. I think I drove it at Hockenheim, the Nurburgring Grand Prix circuit. That was a pretty special car."

But it's the 300 SLR that stands out most. And Franchitti didn't hold back: "Its performance was pretty mindblowing. Of course, you drive on the limit, which looking back is mildly terrifying!"

It was retired from use following the 2021 Goodwood Revival, but the car's legacy will live on far into the future.

MEGAN WHITE



ETHERINGTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

What Mercedes does next

ANOTHER MEDIOCRE F1 SEASON BECKONS, TIME FOR CHANGE...



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