

# Title battle at Red Bull?

Perez beats Verstappen again  
as Leclerc and Alonso star

'I really believe we  
are in the fight'

SERGIO PEREZ

'A few times we  
hit the wall'

MAX VERSTAPPEN

**PLUS**

Crashes hit Spa **WEC** as Toyota wins

McLaughlin defeats Grosjean in **IndyCar** duel





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# Perez makes the step F1 needs – can he keep his push going?

So, how did Sergio Perez defeat Max Verstappen to win last weekend's Azerbaijan Grand Prix? And can the Mexican provide a genuine championship threat to his illustrious Dutch Red Bull team-mate?

Jake Boxall-Legge tackles the first of those questions in our in-depth report of events in Baku (page 18), which also included star performances from Charles Leclerc, Fernando Alonso and Lewis Hamilton – as well as shambolic pitlane scenes at the end (p4).

Alex Kalinauckas takes on the second question on p15. It's hard to see Perez beating Verstappen over a 23-race season and it should be remembered that he has strong history at Jeddah and Baku – the two circuits he has won at so far in 2023 – but he is also the closest thing Verstappen currently has to a challenger thanks to the RB19's pace.

Another dominant team was given something to think about last weekend. Toyota finished 1-2 as the World Endurance Championship visited Spa but, as Gary Watkins reports (p34), the pace of Ferrari at the high-speed venue suggests the Japanese team might have to work hard to record a sixth consecutive Le Mans victory next month.

Not ready to join in just yet, even though it has an eligible car in the family, is Toyota's rival Honda. Its Acura brand has become a force in American IMSA racing, while Honda itself continues to battle Chevrolet in IndyCar. Charles Bradley went behind the scenes to find out more – and to see if he could persuade them to head to France sooner rather than later (p46)...



*Kevin Turner*

**Kevin Turner**  
Chief Editor

kevin.turner@autosport.com

**NEXT WEEK  
11 MAY**

**Can Perez do it again?**  
F1 in Miami, FE in Monaco,  
plus a special track test  
and Peugeot at Le Mans



Cover image

Ferraro/Motorsport Images

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# PIT + PADDOCK



## FIA investigates itself after Ocon pit

### FORMULA 1

After effectively marking its own homework, the FIA has promised to take “immediate steps” to avoid a repeat of the shambolic late scenes in last weekend’s Azerbaijan Grand Prix when Esteban Ocon had to avoid photographers and local marshals who were released too early into the pitlane.

The Alpine strategists had been hoping for a late safety car or red flag in Baku to hand their driver a ‘free’ pitstop since Ocon was still running on his starting hard Pirelli tyres as the tame 51-lap race drew to a close. But with no such event to help his cause, Ocon dived into the pits on the run to the chequered flag to complete a mandatory stop to escape disqualification. But with

Sergio Perez imminently about to clinch victory, the Red Bull crew had already started to make their way across the live pitlane to begin celebrations. Other personnel were also released prematurely, and it appeared that a metal barrier was about to be set up as part of the post-race parc ferme conditions.

All told, as Ocon slowed from nearly 190mph through the blind pit entry chicane to a speed-restricted 50mph, he had to steer around people still blocking his path before claiming a point-less 15th place. “That’s not something that we want to see,” he said. “I don’t understand why we are starting to prepare the podium and the ceremony when we are still racing, there is one lap to go and there are still

people who didn’t pit. Arriving at 300km/h, braking very late and I see the barriers and the people all around, this is crazy – it could have been a big, big one today. It’s definitely something that needs to be discussed. If I miss the braking point, it is a big disaster.”

In response, the FIA effectively placed itself under investigation when the stewards summoned the governing body’s own staff responsible for managing parc ferme to explain an episode that was “fortunate” to conclude with “no serious consequences”. The FIA has since called for immediate remedies for the end-of-race pitlane protocol, with input from Formula One Management and the FIA, to ensure no repeat.

A bulletin read: “The stewards heard from the FIA representatives and determined that the relevant representatives took steps to set up the parc ferme area and also permitted media and other personnel to gather in the start of the pitlane and the pitwall during the last lap of the race, while the pitlane was open and before the final pitstop of Ocon. We noted that it was not unusual for the representatives to allow such persons into the pitlane just before the end of the race, in the usual course of preparation for parc ferme and the podium ceremony. However, in this case, there was one driver that had to pit in the last lap and this created a very dangerous situation for





# Ferrari man Mekies to take over at AlphaTauri from Tost

## FORMULA 1

Veteran Formula 1 team principal Franz Tost will relinquish control of AlphaTauri at the end of the 2023 season to be replaced by highly rated Ferrari sporting director Laurent Mekies. This change represents the end of Tost's near-18-year reign at the top of the Red Bull sister squad and continues the senior-level brain drain at Maranello.

Tost has overseen two victories for the Faenza squad, formerly known as Toro Rosso, both of which arrived on home soil at Monza. But the 2008 wet-weather triumph for Sebastian Vettel and the 2020 success of Pierre Gasly now seem like distant memories. The squad has made a torrid transition to the ground effect era and sits ninth in the constructors' table. On course to match the dismal 2022 finishing position, Tost deployed his own special brand of diplomacy to declare that he no longer trusts his engineers.

To fill his shoes, former Toro Rosso and Minardi race engineer and head of vehicle performance Mekies will take over at a date that is yet to be decided. With press speculation concerning Mekies's Ferrari future growing, the move was hastily announced by AlphaTauri. This caught Ferrari boss Fred Vasseur unawares. He reckoned it was all "a bit aggressive". Ex-FIA executive director Peter Bayer will also join AlphaTauri later this season as its CEO.

Tost, who will retain links with the team via a consultancy role, said: "First of all, I would like to thank Dietrich Mateschitz [the late Red Bull co-founder], who gave me the incredible opportunity to be team principal of



Mekies is the latest departure from Ferrari

Scuderia Toro Rosso and Scuderia AlphaTauri for the past 18 years.

"It has been a true privilege to lead the team for such a long period and a great pleasure to work with so many motivated and skilled people, who share my passion for Formula 1. At 67 years old, it is time to hand over and with Peter as new CEO and Laurent as team principal, we found two very professional people, who will bring the team to the next level."

The departure of Mekies, a former FIA employee who was touted by many as a potential replacement for race director Charlie Whiting, comes alongside Ferrari head of vehicle concept David Sanchez switching to McLaren. Meanwhile, Ferrari remains without a technical director following the winter resignation of ex-team boss Mattia Binotto, who occupied a split role.

**MATT KEW**



Tost (right) celebrates 2008 Monza win with Vettel and Mateschitz

# shambles

those that were in the pitlane at the time. We considered that it was fortunate that there were no serious consequences on account of what happened today. We stressed that the requirements of ensuring a safe and orderly event are paramount. This was acknowledged by the FIA team.

"We walked through the relevant procedures and protocol with the FIA representatives in detail and required them to take immediate steps to reconsider these procedures and protocols with the relevant stakeholders (including FOM, the teams and the FIA) to ensure that this situation does not occur again. The FIA representatives expressed their regret at what happened and assured us that they would do so in time for the next event."

Notably, a similar scenario unfolded in Melbourne at the end of the 2022 Australian Grand Prix when Williams driver Alex Albon made a late pitstop. No FIA hearing or subsequent action was taken at the time.

Alpine sporting director Alan Permane said: "At that point, [Esteban is] going 80km/h. He can stop the car pretty quickly if he needs to. So, while it was quite scary to look at, I'm sure he was in full control and no one was in serious danger. It was a bit like a scene from the Group B rallying days with the sort of crowds parting as he got there."

**MATT KEW**

**P18 THE ACTION FROM BAKU**



# Browning joins Williams juniors

## FORMULA 1

Reigning GB3 champion and 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Luke Browning has been snapped up by the Williams Racing Driver Academy. The 21-year-old, who occupies 10th for Hitech GP in the FIA Formula 3 standings, will gain access to a personalised simulator programme and will be embedded in the team at Formula 1 races.

Browning, who bagged five victories and a further eight podiums to claim his GB3 crown, said: "I'm really looking forward to being a part of the Williams Racing Driver Academy. A huge thank you to everyone at Williams Racing for the opportunity to shoot for the stars. To be welcomed into the family is a dream come

true, the heritage of this team is phenomenal. I can't wait to see where we can go. Our journey starts here."

Williams sporting director Sven Smeets added: "We're pleased to have Luke join the Williams Racing Driver Academy. He's a highly talented driver with several major achievements already under his belt, including the 2022 Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award, the 2022 GB3 Championship and the 2020 British F4 Championship. Everyone at Williams Racing is looking forward to working closely with Luke throughout the year as he competes in FIA Formula 3 with Hitech Pulse-Eight. He'll have the opportunity to develop his abilities while providing useful feedback through simulator work at Grove."



He's just had a McLaren FE test, and now he's a Williams junior

BAGNALL

Browning joins Prema F3 driver and 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner Zak O'Sullivan, fellow F3 racers Franco Colapinto (MP Motorsport) and Oliver Gray (Rodin Carlin), plus Indy NXT driver and three-time W Series champion Jamie

Chadwick in the Academy. Previous members include Aston Martin F1 driver Lance Stroll and ex-Williams F1 racer Nicholas Latifi. Williams also helped fund the junior career of its current F1 rookie Logan Sargeant.

MEGAN WHITE

# Newey irons out new Red Bull deal

## FORMULA 1

Adrian Newey has agreed a multi-year contract extension with Red Bull. The pre-eminent Formula 1 car designer had a deal with the reigning constructors' champion that was up for renewal at the end of this year. But following a dominant start to the 2023 season that has resulted in a perfect win record, Red Bull and Newey have moved quickly to iron out the finer details of a new agreement.

Newey, 64, will continue in his role as chief technical officer, which gives him oversight of the F1 team, Advanced Technology business and fledgling Ford-backed Powertrains division. There has been no official announcement of the new deal, or precise information on its length. But Red Bull team boss Christian Horner has welcomed the commitment from Newey, who first joined the Milton Keynes squad in 2006. "Adrian has been such a fundamental



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part since almost the beginning," he said. "He covers a lot of areas and, to have the depth of his experience and knowledge to draw upon, and the way he works with the young guys, it's great."

Horner reckoned the Red Bull set-up, with Newey working in collaboration with senior figures including F1 technical director Pierre Wache (chassis) and powertrains chief Ben Hodgkinson, helped play to the designer's strengths. "It's a people business, and that enables [Newey] to apply his expertise," he added. "He doesn't have to

be there every single day on one particular topic. We're able to use the breadth of his experience across the group."

Horner also said that Newey is fired up by the prospect of Red Bull producing its own engines from 2026, which means the squad will design its entire package for the first time. "Adrian is a very competent engineer regarding all things to do with combustion," said Horner. "You can see that he's fully bought into the concept and sees the potential that it really brings longer term."

JONATHAN NOBLE





**LE MANS 24 HOURS** Porsche has unveiled a special livery in which its three Penske-run 963 LMDhs will run at the Le Mans 24 Hours next month to mark its own 75th birthday and the centenary of the French enduro. Each of the 15 stripes fanning out from the nose celebrates the colour scheme of a famous Porsche endurance racer. The orange tips its hat to the JW Automotive 917s of 1970 and the yellow Penske's American Le Mans Series RS Spyders of the late 2000s. The trio of cars will be distinguished by different coloured dorsal fins: the #5 will be black, #6 white and #75 red. **Photo by JEP/Motorsport Images**

## Truex ends drought in rain-delayed Dover NASCAR round

### NASCAR

Martin Truex Jr completed a family weekend sweep in Victory Lane at Dover by winning Monday's rain-delayed NASCAR Cup race.

After his younger brother Ryan earned his first Xfinity Series win on Saturday, Truex put himself in position for a win late in the Cup race by being first off pitroad thanks to having just two tyres changed at his stop. He quickly cleared Ryan Blaney for the lead on the restart with seven of 400 laps remaining and edged Ross Chastain, who took on four new tyres on his final stop, by 0.505 seconds at the chequered flag.

The win is the first this season for Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota star Truex and 32nd

of his career, and snaps a 54-race winless streak in points-paying races for the 2017 series champion. "It feels incredible," Truex said. "When we got the late caution I said, 'I wonder what's going to happen here,' but a great call by James [Small, crew chief] to take two tyres."

The win is the fourth of Truex's career at Dover, the Delaware track considered the family's home ground since they hail from nearby Mayetta, New Jersey.

Behind Chastain's Trackhouse Chevrolet, Blaney (Penske Ford) finished third from William Byron and Denny Hamlin.

Josh Berry finished 10th in his first race substituting for the injured Alex Bowman.

**JIM UTTER**



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## Confusion reigns over pre-Le Mans Hypercar balancing

### LE MANS 24 HOURS

Porsche says that the World Endurance Championship Balance of Performance is going to be adjusted before the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. Toyota says it can't be. Confusion reigns over what's happening in the Hypercar class with the new BoP system introduced for this season.

What we do know is that there was no BoP revision for last weekend's Spa round of the WEC. That was confirmed to the participating manufacturers on the evening before first practice.

A pre-Spa change of the so-called platform BoP – the balance between the Le Mans Hypercars and LMDh machinery that have come together in Hypercar – was the only opportunity for a tweak ahead of the Le Mans race on 10-11 June, according to Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon. But Porsche Motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach has insisted that there can, and will, be a change before the French enduro.

Asked ahead of the Spa 6 Hours on Saturday if there will be a BoP change for the 24 Hours, Laudenbach answered: "We clearly expect an adjustment before Le Mans. I was expecting it after Portimao [round two of the 2023 WEC in April], but I have been told we do it before Le Mans." He followed that up after the race with further comments: "I don't think the question is will there be a change, the big question is *what* will be the change."

Vasselon insisted that the opportunity for a pre-Le Mans change

had now passed. "There is no room for adjustment [before Le Mans]," he said. "There are documents saying what the rule is. There has been an agreement with a precise schedule. The regulation has been agreed and published."

Vasselon isn't quite correct on his last point. The regulations formulated by the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest with the manufacturers haven't been published and are not in the public domain. That has created the kind of murky pool of intrigue that the new BoP was specifically meant to avoid.

The system is based on simulation rather than lap time data from races. Primary among the targets was to remove the possibility of sandbagging, which is why the BoP was essentially fixed for the first four races. Only the balance between the cars built to two different rulesets can be adjusted in that period. That can be followed by wholesale changes to what is termed the manufacturer BoP post-Le Mans.

The FIA and the ACO have confirmed that much, although there has been no further clarification from the rulemakers in light of the BoP debate going public at Spa. An FIA representative pointed Autosport to a so-called 'explainer' released by the governing body over the week of the Sebring series opener in March.

It states: "There will be only one BoP adjustment throughout the season... after Le Mans, as well as possibly balancing out the LMH and LMDh platforms prior to that race."

**GARY WATKINS**

## Rockenfeller in Porsche seat

### IMSA

One-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Mike Rockenfeller will be back at the wheel of a Porsche this month. The German, who started his sportscar career with the German marque, will race the JDC-Miller MotorSports 963 LMDh prototype in the remainder of the 2023 IMSA SportsCar Championship.

The 39-year-old German, winner of the French enduro with long-time employer Audi in 2010, will be joined in the GTP class car from its race debut at Laguna Seca on 14 May by Dutchman Tijmen van der Helm. The 19-year-old comes into the line-up after driving JDC-Miller's LMP3 class entry at the Daytona and Sebring IMSA rounds earlier this year, and LMP2 experience in the European Le Mans Series in 2022 with TDS Racing and this season with Panis Racing.

Rockenfeller was a Porsche factory driver in 2002-06 before joining Audi for what turned out to be a 15-year stretch. He was picked up for its junior programme, racing in the Carrera Cup Germany before moving into endurance racing at the end of 2003. His credits with Porsche include a Le Mans 24 Hours GT2 class victory in 2005 while on loan to the Alex Job-run BAM! squad and a class title in the FIA GT Championship in 2005 with GruppeM the same year.

"So happy to see my name back on a Porsche," said Rockenfeller, who made only one prototype start in his time with the factory at the wheel of a Penske-run RS Spyder in 2006. "I am excited to be part of this team and the Porsche 963 project. I'm confident the JDC-Miller MotorSports team is on a very steep learning curve and will compete with the GTP teams very quickly."

**GARY WATKINS**







**RALLYING** Kris Meeke claimed victory last weekend on the Rali Terras d'Aboboreira, standing in for the late Craig Breen in the Portuguese Rally Championship. The five-time World Rally Championship round winner was invited by Hyundai Portugal to deputise for Breen, who lost his life in a Rally Croatia testing accident last month, and who won the opening round in Fafe. Meeke, joined by co-driver Ola Floene, drove an i20 N Rally2 car carrying a special livery featuring the Irish flag in honour of Breen and won by 15.5 seconds. **Photo by Hyundai**

## Japanese series eyes F1 support

### SUPER FORMULA

Super Formula chairman Masahiko Kondo has expressed an interest in holding a race as a support to the Japanese Grand Prix.

Former racer Kondo, who took over the chairmanship of Super Formula promoter JRP last month and whose Kondo Racing squad competes in Super Formula and Super GT, made the comments in an informal media gathering ahead of the recent round at Japanese GP venue Suzuka.

He said that previous attempts to arrange such an event were undone by the series' unwillingness to race in the shadow of F1. But amid the championship's drive to increase its popularity, Kondo believes that attitudes have shifted enough to make an agreement with F1 a possibility.

"Super Formula is Japan's top category, so there was a time when the series was too proud to take second billing to F1," said Kondo. "It was like, 'Why should we be



second-best to F1?' But now I think everyone's way of thinking has become more flexible and it wouldn't be an issue."

Kondo believes that the idea could boost the Japanese series' dwindling trackside attendances. "I'm thinking that, if we were able to show off Super Formula in front of that number of fans, it would be great if some of them would attend our final race [also held at Suzuka] that takes place after the F1 race," he added.

**JAMIE KLEIN**

### IN THE HEADLINES

#### SPA TO STAY ON CALENDAR

Spa's place on the World Endurance Championship calendar has been confirmed for another five years. The Belgian circuit, part of the WEC since its rebirth in 2012, will remain on the schedule until 2028 and will continue to host a round of the sister European Le Mans Series.

#### MOTOGP DROPS KAZAKH GP

The MotoGP calendar for this season has dropped to 20 rounds following the cancellation of what would have been the inaugural Kazakhstan Grand Prix. The Sokol track, which was due to host the race on 9 July, will not be ready in time due to "ongoing homologation works at the circuit, paired with current global operational challenges".

#### EUROCUP-3 TO KICK OFF

The new 'Formula Regional'-level Eurocup-3 series organised by the body behind the successful Spanish Formula 4 Championship has made it comfortably to double figures for this weekend's opening round at Spa. Among those on the grid will be 2021 French F4 champion Esteban Masson (Campos Racing) plus GB3 graduates Javier Sagrera (Palou Motorsport), Nick Gilkes (Drivex) and Jose Garfias (MP Motorsport).

#### GREEN REMAINS IN BMW

Briton Ben Green, who scored two race victories in ADAC GT Masters last season, is to remain in the German series for 2023 with Schubert Motorsport. Green will continue to campaign a BMW M4 GT3 (below), but will now share with Filipino Eduardo Coseteng, who has switched to GT racing after two seasons in the British Formula 4 Championship.



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## Injured Marquez misses home race

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### MOTOGP

Marc Marquez's injury woes continued at last weekend's MotoGP Spanish Grand Prix when he was forced to sit out his third event in succession while he recovers from a thumb fracture.

The eight-time world champion fractured his right thumb in a collision with Miguel Oliveira at March's season-opening Portuguese GP and underwent surgery immediately afterwards. This forced Marquez to sit out the Argentinian and Americas GPs, but he had hoped to be back for his home round at Jerez.

Following consultation with three medical teams, Marquez was advised not to ride in the Spanish GP since he risked doing

damage to his hand that could have ended his career. Doctors gave him a recovery time of six to eight weeks after surgery, which should put him on course to be fit to ride safely at next week's French GP.

Had he started the Jerez weekend, Marquez would not have served the double-long-lap penalty he was awarded for the Oliveira collision in Portugal. The matter is with the FIM's Court of Appeal (after Marquez's Honda team protested the penalty), which has granted a stay of execution until the matter is resolved.

Oliveira's luckless season continued at Jerez. After missing the Argentinian GP following his collision with Marquez in Portugal, the RNF Aprilia rider dislocated his shoulder in a tangle with Fabio

Quartararo on the opening lap of the Spanish GP. The Portuguese rider's initial scans revealed no breakages, but later tests in hospital found that the injury was "bigger than expected" – according to RNF – and a fracture in his right shoulder was diagnosed. It is unclear at this stage whether Oliveira will be able to compete in the French GP.

Ducati also had to do without Enea Bastianini for the fourth grand prix in a row. The Italian took part in Friday practice at Jerez when he was cleared to ride after breaking his shoulder in Portugal. But the pain proved too much for the Italian and he withdrew from the event after FP3.

LEWIS DUNCAN

➔ P54 MOTOGP ACTION

## King's breakthrough win on German debut



PORSCHE

### CARRERA CUP

British Porsche specialist Harry King claimed the most prestigious win so far of his Carrera Cup career by winning on his debut in the German series supporting last weekend's Spa 6 Hours.

King has claimed British and Benelux titles in recent seasons and has been a frontrunner in the Supercup, but the German branch is regarded as almost the equal of the F1-supporting series at the peak of the Porsche

one-make pyramid.

King qualified his Allied Racing car on pole position and went on to claim victory from two-time Supercup champion Larry ten Voorde and Loek Hartog, both Dutchmen driving for Team GP Elite.

King faced a fierce attack from ten Voorde, who put pressure on him through Eau Rouge after an early safety car before being forced to settle for second place.

"It's a great feeling to start the season with such a sense of achievement," enthused King.

"We used free practice to set the car up for the track. That's why I'm all the more pleased that we as a team were able to reward ourselves for this."

Hartog took his own maiden victory in the German series in the drizzly second race, followed by ten Voorde, Morris Schuring and King. As a result, Hartog now leads the points table.

King now turns his attentions to the opening rounds of the Supercup, which he will contest with Lechner Racing, at Imola and Monte Carlo.



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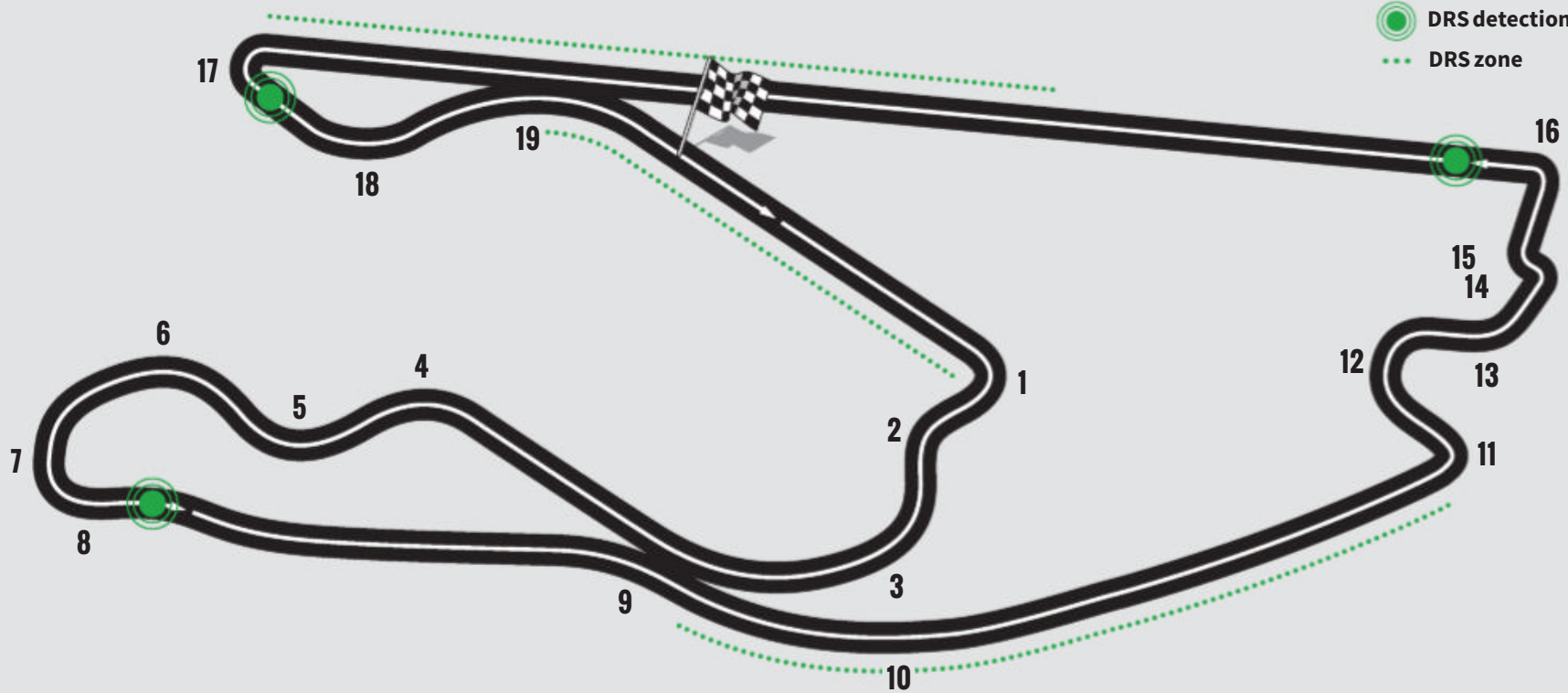


Miami

Length 3.363 miles

Number of laps 57

DRS detection  
DRS zone



UK START TIMES

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Saturday 6 May

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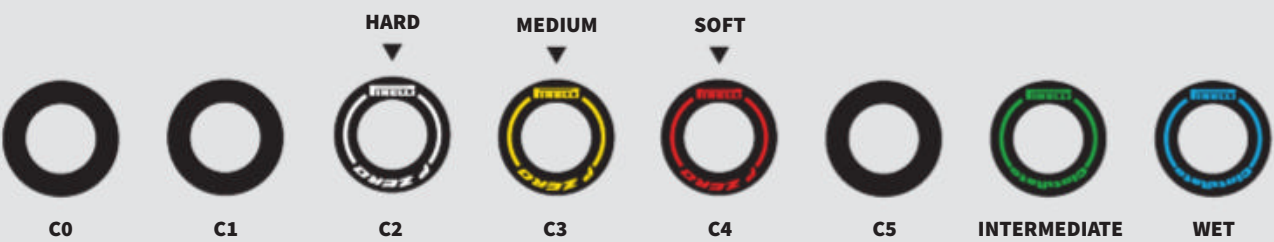
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CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	93
2	Perez	87
3	Alonso	60
4	Hamilton	48
5	Sainz	34

Constructors

1	Red Bull	180
2	Aston Martin	87
3	Mercedes	76
4	Ferrari	62
5	McLaren	14



Alpine off the boil of late

SUTTON

MIAMI STATS

Previous winners

2022 Max Verstappen Red Bull



HONE

2022 POLE POSITION

Charles Leclerc

1m28.796s

POLE LAP RECORD

Charles Leclerc

1m28.796s (2022)

RACE LAP RECORD

Max Verstappen

1m31.361s (2022)



PHIPPS

US street-track fun of old:  
Watson wins in Detroit, 1982

Laps led

Max Verstappen	48
Charles Leclerc	8
Carlos Sainz	1





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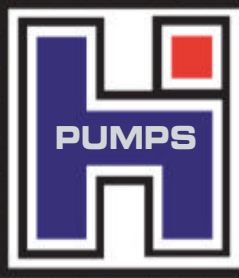
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# Is Perez a real threat?

*The winner of the Azerbaijan GP has taken the fight to his double world champion team-mate, and believes he can beat him over a season. Roll on the next round...*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

**“W**e dominated this weekend. We just have to sort out the issues. We cannot have the issues like Melbourne and are in the fight, guys.” Sergio Perez, after winning twice on the Baku streets last weekend, was certain: he believes he can push his

Red Bull team-mate Max Verstappen in the 2023 Formula 1 title fight. Perez, clearly, thinks he can win too. This is the Mexican’s best start to an F1 season, with two wins from the first four grands prix, plus a second place in the season opener. Perez’s Baku weekend was an important milestone for him, but what of the story of F1 2023?

In the opening stint of the Azerbaijan GP, Verstappen, for the first time this year, appeared the weaker of the two Red Bull drivers, but surely would have still won had circumstances not gone against him. But indeed, bar the Jeddah and Melbourne qualifying problems for each Red Bull driver, it’s been very fine margins between them. Yet Verstappen’s two victories don’t include the caveats hanging over his team-mate’s. That aside, the fact that the pair have been so closely matched so far in 2023 reflects very well on Perez.

It speaks to his character and determination — that he’s been able to put his 2022 drubbing behind him and come out fighting against a rival who just never stops doing exactly that. The opening phase of 2023 has included some beautiful driving from Perez, who is clearly settled now at Red Bull. And he appears to have addressed a key weakness from Bahrain and Jeddah, banishing the memories of those poor starts with good getaways when it mattered in Baku.

Points-wise, when it comes to Perez’s claim to be in title contention, he absolutely is in the mix. Perez actually feels he could be closer, and perhaps even leading Verstappen, had it not been for his Melbourne qualifying disaster. Logically, this stacks up. If we conservatively estimate that Verstappen would still win in Australia with Perez second, Perez would now hold a one-point lead. While that remains hypothetical, it’s worth sticking with Perez’s Melbourne Q1 off. He mentioned it again, after all, just seconds after crossing the finish line in Baku. But there’s also a bizarre mismatch in explanations from team and driver on what was behind the incident.

Perez said in Australia it was a “technical issue” that was “moving the brake balance quite far forwards on the braking”. Team boss Christian Horner said “he was late and hard on the brakes into T3”, and “there’s certain things that when you... all the bits and pieces together that weren’t quite perfect but often these cars aren’t”. This reveals, at least, that Red Bull is trying to keep something under wraps, either to protect Perez or a critical factor of the RB19’s design.

The car features a braking system that has been heavily revised from the RB18’s, with a bigger disc fairing and lighter caliper. And it’s worth recalling how Red Bull initially messed up lightening its DRS arrangement almost exactly a year ago and how that hampered Verstappen against George Russell in Spain. The team can need time

to get its innovations working perfectly. But undermining Perez’s position is that Verstappen faced the same thing in Melbourne — as evidenced by his brief off late in the race with front locking — and still delivered commandingly.

Yet the Dutchman does seem to be behaving more along the lines of his 2022 Brazilian GP attitude than might be expected in a season when Red Bull has no opposition. He’s not outright vocally defying team orders, but his reaction to Baku sprint defeat and Russell pulling a very Verstappen move was eye-opening. That can be chalked up to Verstappen’s unyielding character. Perhaps it was

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**“It’s all rather Hamilton versus Rosberg. Remember what that led to at Barcelona in 2016...”**

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a further reaction to his lack of enthusiasm for the sprint format overall. But claiming “Checo and I, we’re having a good time”, and Perez saying “there is a very high level of respect between Max and myself”, do little to dispel paddock rumours that the pair don’t really get on. It’s all rather Lewis Hamilton versus Nico Rosberg, and F1 fans remember what that led to at Barcelona in 2016...

Although F1 2023 is, overall, a one-team show, at least Charles Leclerc can get among the Red Bulls with the Ferrari’s only real strength — being a threat for pole. This raises hopes that Ferrari might be able to stop a Red Bull season whitewash at a track where overtaking is impossible, say Monaco, or disrupt the leading duo for a stint at a track where overtaking is hard, say Imola or Barcelona. Based on Bahrain, that is a bigger threat to Perez’s championship challenge than Verstappen’s. But the bigger cloud over Perez’s title ambitions is that he remains effectively untested on the tracks where he was so poor compared to Verstappen last year — the ones with high-speed turns where an understeer balance, so handy when needing to be precise around a street track, becomes a hindrance.

If he beats Verstappen in the upcoming rounds at Imola and Barcelona — even one would do — then yes, Perez really is in the hunt. But the evidence from 2022 is against him, as is his Bahrain defeat. Now F1 heads to Miami — a hybrid track in a savage Florida climate where driver fitness will be properly tested. The US is the spiritual home of show business, and for now F1 has got something approaching box office with Perez taking on and rattling Verstappen. Now F1 must hope that it lasts. ❧

 **P18 AZERBAIJAN GP REPORT**





# A ban that needs to be lifted

*The removal of tyre warmers from the WEC, while well intentioned, appears more likely to be environmentally counter-productive — not to mention a safety risk*

GARY WATKINS

I'm not sure that I've ever headed to the Le Mans 24 Hours hoping for high temperatures and sunny weather. I'm no sun worshipper and, as a pasty-faced Englishman, too much heat doesn't make life any easier over the busiest week of my year. But this time I'm praying that the 24 Hours is a hot one. That's not for my benefit, you understand, but for the sake of drivers' safety, the workload of the hard-pressed mechanics, and the environment.

Some decent temperatures during the night are what I'm really hoping for. The ban on tyre warmers in the World Endurance Championship for this year has created a situation that to my mind is dangerous and doesn't yield the intended environmental gains. The sight of cars spearing off into the barriers at Spa last weekend on an out-lap on cold rubber was somewhere between concerning and bloody frightening.

If you watched the race you'll probably understand my worries. If you didn't tune in, I'll just mention a couple of the incidents on cold tyres over the course of the three days of the Spa 6 Hours meeting. Brendon Hartley went off in his Toyota at the top of Eau Rouge in qualifying and, more worryingly, Antonio Fuoco crashed his Ferrari on that little kink on the old start/finish straight right after the pit exit during the race.

It was somewhere around 10C for much of the Belgian round

**“I'm fearful that the Dunlop Chicane is going to become some kind of racing car graveyard”**

of the WEC on Saturday. It could be colder than that in the night and through to dawn at Le Mans. And neither should we forget that it tends to rain more often than not during Le Mans week.

I'm fearful that the Dunlop Chicane is going to become some kind of racing car graveyard, that the massive speed differential between cars on cold rubber and those on tyres already up to temperature is going to cause high-speed accidents through the Esses and at Tertre Rouge. And, most of all, I'm worried that someone is going to get hurt.

I understand the message that the FIA is trying to project at a time when sanctioning bodies need to be seen to be regulating themselves from within rather than waiting for a clampdown from outside. And clearly doing away with all those diesel-powered tyre heaters at the back of the pits sends out a message.

Yet I can't believe that the carbon footprint of the damage caused by drivers going off on cold tyres over the course of the Spa 6 Hours event last weekend hasn't already undone any gains the new-for-2023 rule might have had so far, or will have over the races or perhaps seasons to come. The manufacture of every component of a racing car creates emissions and so does shipping them around the world.

AF Corse had to bring in a Ferrari 488 shell from Italy around which to rebuild a GTE Am class car damaged in an accident during practice. I laid the finger of blame for that crash firmly on the new ruling. So it was responsible for however many tankfuls of diesel were required to get that chassis to Belgium.

The FIA points out that there are many series around the world that don't allow tyre warmers. It doesn't mention the IMSA SportsCar Championship by name, but that is the series to which it is primarily referring. But rarely do the races in North America take place in the kind of conditions we saw at Spa or could see at Le Mans. Single-digit temperatures at night — that's in our European Celsius, not America's Fahrenheit — are not even the norm during the night at the Daytona 24 Hours.

Tyre warmers are not part of the culture of North American sportscar racing and clearly teams and drivers are on top of running without them. I concede that there is a learning process going on in the WEC now, and we all have to admit that it doesn't seem to be a problem in LMP2 where the cars, unlike in Hypercar, are running tyres that weren't developed to run unheated. I don't have an answer as to why, but can only point to the fact that in P2 the cars have been progressively robbed of power since the start of 2021.

I understand that there is going to be a greater understanding with time on using the tyres from cold, but my argument is that the environmental gains just aren't there to justify it. Or, as I've said, the new policy might have already increased the emissions from the WEC paddock.

The FIA has a tyre road map for the WEC that's part of its drive for sustainability. The plan is to reduce the number of specifications available at each race. I wouldn't argue against that. Don't forget Michelin has been on a drive to increase the life of its racing tyres for years. It's particularly proud of the set that did a quintuple stint on the winning Audi R18 TDI in 2011.

Using fewer tyres is clearly a good idea, as is bringing fewer of the things to each race by limiting the number of specs. Those moves offer a significant environmental benefit. Saving a few litres of diesel with the ban on tyre heaters is merely paying lip service to the environment. ❄️

➔ P34 SPA REPORT



# YOUR SAY

*A hybrid honed of the very finest elements; part legendary Gilles Villeneuve and part mercurial Jean Alesi*

**ANDY RHODES**

## Leclerc must stay at Ferrari

If rumours in some quarters are to be believed, Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc are to play swapsies in the not too distant future. For various reasons, I cannot help but feel that would be a wrong move for the Maranello Massive.

In this hybrid era (and I consider myself something of a progressive hybrid being part Yorkshire and part ardent Tifosi), it's oft struck me that young Chuck is a once in a generation pedaller. A hybrid honed of the very finest elements; part legendary Gilles Villeneuve and part mercurial Jean Alesi. I cannot feel that his exit would be anything other than a huge opportunity missed.

I'll openly admit that, Michael Schumacher aside, I'm routinely fickle as a ficklestick when it comes to any onwards trajectory for the scarlet pilots. But in Charles's case I would lament his exit for a very long time indeed. John Wayne is synonymous with stating that "a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do" and it's hardly rocket science to understand the need for championship equipment to yield champion status.

With all my heart I hope the Prancing Horse can deliver sustainable goods and stave off the loss of their finest jockey in years. Maranello, we have a problem.

**Andy Rhodes**  
**Harrogate**

*Both Leclerc and Hamilton have of course reiterated their commitment to their respective teams – ed*

## Is this the more mature Max?

Oh dear, another display of petulance from Max Verstappen. Channel 4 pundit Alice Powell said if the roles had been reversed Verstappen would have said it was racing; Lando Norris said if you give it you must take it. Both on the money. George Russell kept his cool, as you would expect, but we have been told Verstappen is now more mature and less likely to get into situations like this!

Of course, he did try hard to smile and congratulate Sergio Perez for the win!

**Neil Davey**  
**Newport, South Wales**



## So done with 'Liberty 1'

Dear *Drive to Survive* fans, yes, Formula 1 can be boring! It often is... some entire seasons can be absolute stinkers! Dear Mr Domenicali, I see my usual grandstand at Monza is €1295 this year. Four times higher than 2019. I've been to 65 grands prix over the years but have a fundamental problem about being ripped off... so I'm done with 'Liberty 1'.

The sport is currently in an overinflated hype bubble – it's gonna bust!

**Tim Richardson**  
**Marlborough**

## Rally writer hits just the right note


Can I send my congratulations to Tom Howard for his beautifully written article last week on WRC Rally Croatia. It was written with great sensitivity and understanding of a situation that has shocked us all.

Thank you.  
**Kate Carmichael**  
**By email**

## Have your say, get in touch


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# RACE CENTRE

A moment to let  
it sink in: Perez  
believes he's in the  
championship fight





FORMULA 1

# BAKU MASTER PEREZ BEATS VERSTAPPEN

*The Red Bulls once again dominated in Azerbaijan but it wasn't the championship favourite who took victory. Is the Sergio Perez threat real?*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY RED BULL AND  **motorsport  
IMAGES**



Polesitter  
Leclerc leads  
away at the start,  
knowing he has little  
chance of retaining  
the position



It's not uncommon for drivers to have "their" circuit. Monaco served as such for Graham Hill and Ayrton Senna; Michael Schumacher had the tricky Magny-Cours venue wrapped around his finger; and Lewis Hamilton enjoys demigod status at Silverstone. But Baku is Sergio Perez's track, and it has been ever since it joined the Formula 1 calendar. For that first race in 2016, Perez qualified second, started seventh thanks to a penalty, and worked his way up to third in an unfancied Force India.

He'd won in Baku before, famously benefiting from Lewis Hamilton's 'brake magic' finger trouble on the late-race standing restart in 2021 to chalk up his first victory at Red Bull. He was second in last year's edition, albeit beaten by Max Verstappen after a slow pitstop allowed his teammate the opportunity to undercut him. The Mexican's key attribute here has been in finding confidence throughout the 90-degree corner entries around the unpredictable road surface, dialling in enough balance to ensure that the front end can turn in and the rear end can follow his lead.

But prior form was not necessarily on Perez's side. Sure, he had a grand prix win this season, but he'd needed Verstappen to be bogged down with a grid penalty to make his passage to victory in Jeddah easier. A fifth in Melbourne was the fruit of a damage limitation exercise after a pitlane start, while Verstappen's path to victory was largely untroubled — late restart notwithstanding. Now, with no penalties in the offing, Perez would have to beat Verstappen on merit to continue his outstanding

record in the Azerbaijani capital.

Plus, there was the interesting statistic that nobody had ever won twice at the Baku circuit. Sure, there was a sample size of just six races, but the organisers wanted to bring the self-proclaimed "Baku syndrome" to light to underline how unpredictable the races here are. But Perez would have delighted in the notion of predictability, so long as he was the main beneficiary.

In qualifying, however, Red Bull's streak had come to an end as Charles Leclerc continued his phenomenal one-lap form in Baku to notch up a third consecutive pole. The Monegasque, however, was particularly unconfident of remaining in the lead for long, having been dispatched in the sprint race swiftly after the safety car restart (see page 22). Perez booked himself a spot on the second row, a tenth behind Verstappen, despite having been almost 0.3 seconds up on Leclerc through the opening sector. The Ferrari was dynamite in the second sector, while Perez and Verstappen rather lost their momentum in the Old City section by comparison.

But the issues with tyre preservation that Ferrari has endured so far in 2023 were certainly on Red Bull's radar. Therefore it was aware that it needed to get its drivers past Leclerc in relatively short order. Leclerc preserved the lead at the start and Verstappen stayed in touch, having not faced the same difficulties getting off the line as he did in the sprint, which had put him into a contretemps with George Russell. Perez



Perez keen not to delay his  
pass of Leclerc to minimise  
the gap to Verstappen...

THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



...then Red Bull called in the  
world champion just before  
safety car was summoned

CAREZZEVI/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL





## “IF I WERE TO LOSE TOO MUCH TIME TO MAX, IT WOULD BE REALLY DIFFICULT TO CATCH HIM”

followed his team-mate through the opening laps, both hermetically sealed to Leclerc's gearbox as the Ferrari driver struggled to pull away.

Verstappen waited until DRS became available, Leclerc batting away the faintest whiff of an attack on the second lap and retaining the lead for the start of the third. But the gap was a scant 0.4s between the two, and Verstappen was now imbued with DRS at the start of the lap. Verstappen had a little look on the run to Turn 3, but decided discretion was the better part of valour and held out for the end of the 2.2-kilometre Neftchilar Avenue straight. The die was cast at this juncture and, once DRS was open, Verstappen had about 30km/h in hand over Leclerc to swoop past for the lead.

Leclerc managed to stay within DRS range for the straight between Turns 2 and 3, keeping pace with Verstappen to ensure Perez's job was made harder on the next two laps, but it proved only a matter of time before Leclerc no longer had the straightline speed to ward off the #11 car. Perez was through and up to second, and in doing so had dropped to only 1.3s behind his team-mate.

“That was key because, once Max got by, I knew that it was really important not to lose too much time with Charles,” Perez explained after the race. “If I were to lose too much time to Max, it would be really difficult to catch him. Luckily I managed to spend just [two] laps behind Charles and once I was able to clear him, then lap by lap, I got into the DRS from Max. And that really made my race; once I was in his DRS [range] it was about time to overtake him. But then he pitted...”

Once Leclerc had been dropped by the Red Bull duo, Perez became the quicker of the RB19s. It took just three laps for him to get within the golden one second of Verstappen, and he rifled in a lap 0.5s quicker on the ninth tour to sit pretty in his team-mate's wheeltracks. “I'm sliding,” Verstappen reported over the radio once Perez occupied his mirrors, and Red Bull readied to bring the Dutchman in for a set of hard tyres.

Verstappen was heading out of the final corner when his compatriot Nyck de Vries bundled into the inside wall at Turn 5, knocking his front-left steering arm out of whack and coming to rest at the smidgen of >>

## QUALIFYING

SUTTON



Ahead of the final efforts for pole position, Charles Leclerc and Max Verstappen were all square. Both were tied on a 1m40.445s but had vastly different methods of getting there. Leclerc's first sector stood out as the best, while Verstappen had the advantage in the second and third sectors. But Leclerc's efforts in practice had shown that the Ferrari was capable of much more in the second sector, and stood a realistic chance of breaking Red Bull's monopoly on poles in 2023.

But he had to tread lightly to do so around the punishing Baku circuit. The twice red-flagged Q1 had been a particularly messy affair, and the session was only eight minutes old when Nyck de Vries put his AlphaTauri into the wall at Turn 3. Pierre Gasly did the same after the restart, tearing off the right-hand sidepod from his Alpine to prompt another flurry of reds. Luckily, proceedings were clean following those indiscretions.

Leclerc was about a tenth and a half shy of his best first sector when it came to his final lap, but no matter. His visit to the tight Old City section proved more fruitful, and he'd reversed the arrears to flip sector two in his favour. With a tremendous run out of Turn 16, he fired in a 1m40.203s and laid down the gauntlet for the Red Bull drivers. Sergio Perez eclipsed Leclerc's first-sector time by 0.25 seconds, but faltered around the city walls and lost four tenths to Leclerc. Not even the RB19's straightline pace could carry him to pole because the Ferrari driver was simply earlier on the throttle out of the last braking zone.

Verstappen too had been stronger in the opening part of the lap, albeit less effective than Perez, but he could not match Leclerc's middle sector either. The streak was over for Red Bull, and Leclerc duly booked his place on pole for Sunday's race, explaining that the team's “good step in terms of set-up” was a legacy of a breakthrough found in Australia.

**“THE FERRARI DRIVER WAS SIMPLY EARLIER ON THE THROTTLE OUT OF THE LAST BRAKING ZONE”**

Carlos Sainz overcame a Q1 slide to make it onto the second row alongside Perez, while Lewis Hamilton was perilously close to being knocked out in Q2 – instead, it was his Mercedes team-mate George Russell who actually faltered. Hamilton beat Fernando Alonso to fifth on the grid, the Aston Martins struggling with DRS issues throughout the qualifying session.

The two McLarens made it into Q3 laden with their new updates, while Yuki Tsunoda qualified eighth. Tsunoda and Lando Norris had taken advantage of a loophole in which they could sacrifice their respective sprint shootout sessions by using an extra set of softs theoretically earmarked for SQ3, instead choosing to focus on the race with the biggest points payout.



## SPRINT RACE



Leclerc tried to hang on to Perez after being passed, but regaining lead not on cards

When Charles Leclerc plonked his Ferrari on the front of the grid for both the sprint race and the Grand Prix, it underlined the step that the Prancing Horse had taken in qualifying performance this year. The SF-23 in the races, however, has conversely proved something of a problem child, exemplified by Sergio Perez's effortless play for the lead past Leclerc with DRS in the 17-lap sprint in Baku.

Leclerc's first run in the sprint shootout's 'SQ3' session proved to be enough to beat the Red Bulls to the front of the grid – and a good thing too, because Leclerc unceremoniously binned his second lap when he came off worst in a bout with the wall at Turn 3, breaking off his front wing. But the pair of RB19s behind him posed a significant threat.

Leclerc had the itchiest trigger finger and sped away once the lights went out while Perez, who had started second ahead of team-mate Max Verstappen, was able to sit on Leclerc's gearbox at the start.

Perez's planned assault was then delayed once the race was paused thanks to a brace of squabbling AlphaTauris. Yuki Tsunoda clipped Nyck de Vries through Turn 3 and dislodged the left side of his front wing, later causing him to wash out into the Turn 13 exit wall. The resulting debris prompted an initial virtual safety car prior to the real thing emerging on track.

Leclerc kept his head above water on the restart and led the way through the next lap but, with DRS enabled at the start of the

seventh tour, his position looked increasingly precarious. Then came the inevitable; Perez drank up Leclerc's slipstream and opened his rear wing on the straight, and the Mexican rocketed into the lead with little response from Leclerc.

From there, Perez could begin to carefully plot his course to a first sprint win, while Leclerc simply hoped to cling on in DRS range and perhaps mount a challenge later. He managed to stay in touch with

Perez over the next couple of laps, but it looked done and dusted on the 11th when Leclerc's deficit extended to more than a second.

To his credit, Leclerc came back at Perez and got DRS usage once again but, in his efforts to push back up to the Red Bull's gearbox, the polesitter encountered degrading tyres. From there, Perez had it easy, admitting that he was hardly going all-out in his hunt for victory. "I think I had more pace than what I

showed today," he noted, "but it's difficult to know because if you use 100% pace, the tyres become a problem. I was just driving to the maximum capacity of the tyre."

Leclerc held on for second, with Verstappen running out of time to catch him. The Dutchman had lost third to Russell in Turn 3 of the first lap, the two making controversial

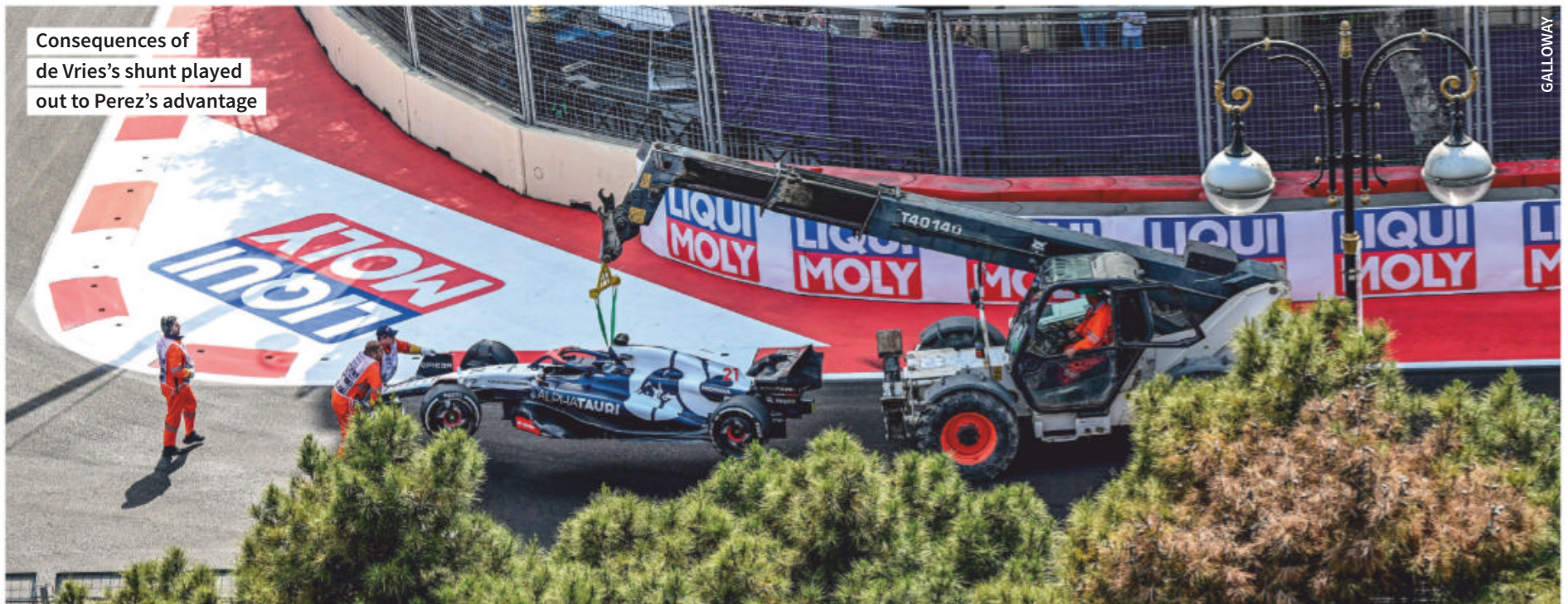
contact to leave a gaping hole in the Red Bull's sidepod. Verstappen repassed Russell on the lap six restart but struggled to make inroads to Leclerc once he'd been left for dead by Perez. Getting DRS at the end was too little, too late for Verstappen, who had to be content with third.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



Russell and Verstappen disagreed over robustness of the Merc driver's first-lap pass





Consequences of de Vries's shunt played out to Perez's advantage

run-off at Turn 6. Red Bull beckoned Verstappen into the pitlane and, unbeknown to it at the time, handed Perez control. Just as Verstappen exited the pitlane, the safety car was called into action. Perez could now respond to his team-mate's stop with a considerably cheaper trip to the pitlane, and duly did so to collect his own set of hard-compound Pirellis. To add further insult to injury, Verstappen fell behind Leclerc once again and was forced into having to round the Ferrari for a second time.

"I saw that there was a car stopped, I thought he maybe just locked up," Verstappen reflected afterwards. "In hindsight, I mean, I can't see that, but it's something to review. I mean, clearly you could see there was one wheel damaged, and it looked like he was not going to drive that anyway back to the pits, even if he would've reversed. So, it's something to look at, because of course that then did hurt my race after that."

Leclerc did not factor for long after the lap 14 restart; although the polesitter stuck with Perez once the field had accelerated away under green-flag conditions, the leader covered off the inside and made it difficult for Leclerc to take the optimal line through the opening corner. Verstappen, meanwhile, advanced through Turn 1 with great pace and immediately sat on Leclerc's tail through the next turn. This drew them side by side on the straight, and Verstappen assumed the inside line for Turn 3 to reclaim second at Leclerc's expense.

When the Ferrari roadblock had been moved aside the first time, Perez felt confident enough to charge up to Verstappen but, with roles reversed, the two-time title winner could not quite gather the same momentum. Perez instead sat 1.5s clear of Verstappen and, despite the reigning champion chipping away small fragments of time in a bid to enter his team-mate's DRS space, Perez was able to switch it on when he needed to.

It wasn't for the want of trying on Verstappen's part that the arrears

## "IN THIS PLACE YOU CANNOT, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE YOU ARE IN THE RACE, LOSE ANY CONCENTRATION"

could not be addressed, but rather that Perez had the wherewithal to respond every time the gap became even slightly tentative. This caused Verstappen to start to use more tyre life than he'd anticipated, especially early on when facing the wake of the car in front. In particular, the second sector was much harder for Verstappen to manage while following Perez, with the tight complex of corners leading into the fast and sweeping curves around the city walls much more difficult to navigate in the turbulent air.

This didn't stop the two from dominating the fastest-lap chart, trading blows between each other, but each punch that Perez was able to strike proved more decisive than those Verstappen could throw. Between laps 21 and 28, the gap started to grow piecemeal in Perez's favour, until a poor 29th trip around the circuit for Verstappen pushed the delta up to 2.3s.

Verstappen pinned that issue on a lack of balance between his differential and engine braking, and explained after the race that he was playing with the functions on his steering wheel to bring the handling of the car closer to his liking. He cited that he was lacking the "confidence needed on entry to the mid-corner", but that his work on the steering wheel had eventually yielded a "compromise" that bestowed him with a car closer to what he'd hoped for. Nevertheless, at this stage, he elected to settle in behind Perez for the time being and hope that an opportunity to close the gap could emerge.

Verstappen's main hope was for Perez to make some kind of mistake. After all, the Guadalajara-born driver had been playing fast and loose with the walls around Turn 15, sustaining a slide and barely missing the Tecpro barrier on the exit with his right-rear wheel. That Perez sustained a minor clip of his right-front on the entry to Turn 15, suggesting that it even was a benefit, underlined that fate could not even intervene on his path to victory. Admitting after the race that it was a "really hard" hit to the wheel, he caught the wall with the face of the tyre rim.

"It actually helped me!" Perez laughed. "I was struggling with the front end and somehow I picked up a bit of front end, so it's something to [look at]. But honestly, I was quite concerned because the paranoia starts, you start to look at the tyre and my engineer asked me what happened. And it was just looking at everything, [luckily] it was OK with the tyre. It was one of those moments where you drop a bit of concentration – and in this place you cannot, it doesn't matter where you are in the race, lose any concentration at all."

But it never quite came together for Verstappen. With about 15 of the 51 laps to go, the deficit on each tour began to grow; Perez was up to 2.7s ahead, then three, then 3.5, and only dropped down to three seconds »



Perez and Verstappen now equal on wins; Leclerc breaks 2023 podium duck





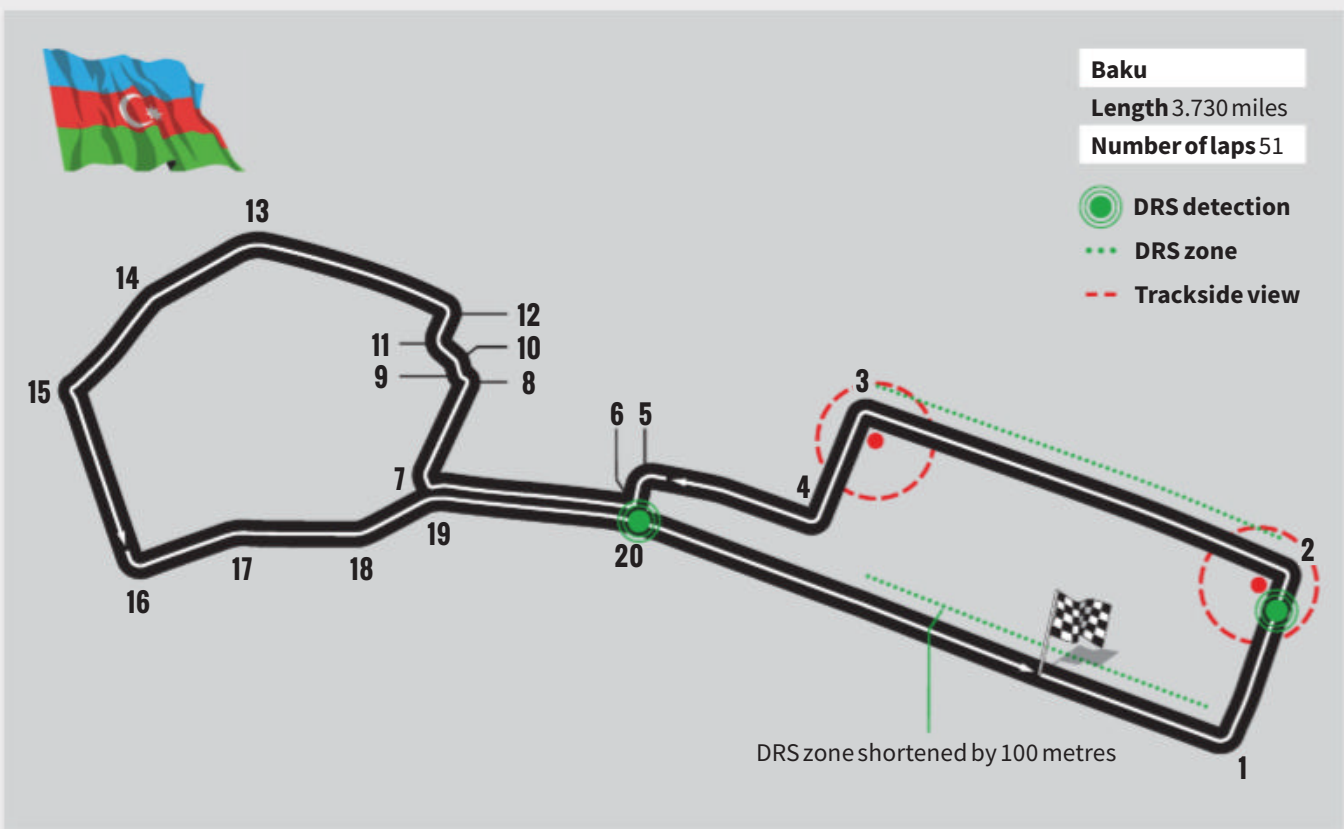
TRACKSIDE VIEW

An overcast sky suffuses the city of Baku until about 10 minutes before practice. A platinum cloud that has been sitting atop the still-unfinished Crescent hotel overlooking Turn 1 is now burning away as the seconds tick down to the start.

Autosport takes a pew on a concrete block at Turn 2 until the session begins, standing to attention when the track roars into life. It's a great spot to get up close and personal to the cars, and it's also a chance to see how early the drivers get on the gas.

Amid the frontrunners, it's much of a muchness; when Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton fire through, they're on the throttle at the apex like clockwork. Charles Leclerc seems to have a little more confidence on his Ferrari's loud pedal and hammers on the power a little sooner.

Despite topping the session, Verstappen is not impervious to being unsettled, and sustains a small wiggle as he gets the car to bite on his path to the corner apex. An unidentified Haas driver has a similar moment of hip and shoulder on the exit, but thankfully keeps the black-and-white chariot from a brush with the wall. The Haases and AlphaTauris appear to be the most susceptible to a bump on the entry to the corner, with a harsh scrape ringing through the city streets as they brake for the second turn.



“ON THE OPPOSITE WALL, THERE’S A WHEEL-SHAPED SCRAPE COURTESY OF TSUNODA”

The senses are further permeated by an acrid smell, a melange of an angle-grinder’s singe and burning oil. That’s Pierre Gasly’s Alpine, in which a hydraulic leak develops into a fire to bring his limited running to an end. The red flag waves shortly after, prompting

Autosport to walk down the straight and camp out at the inside of Turn 3.

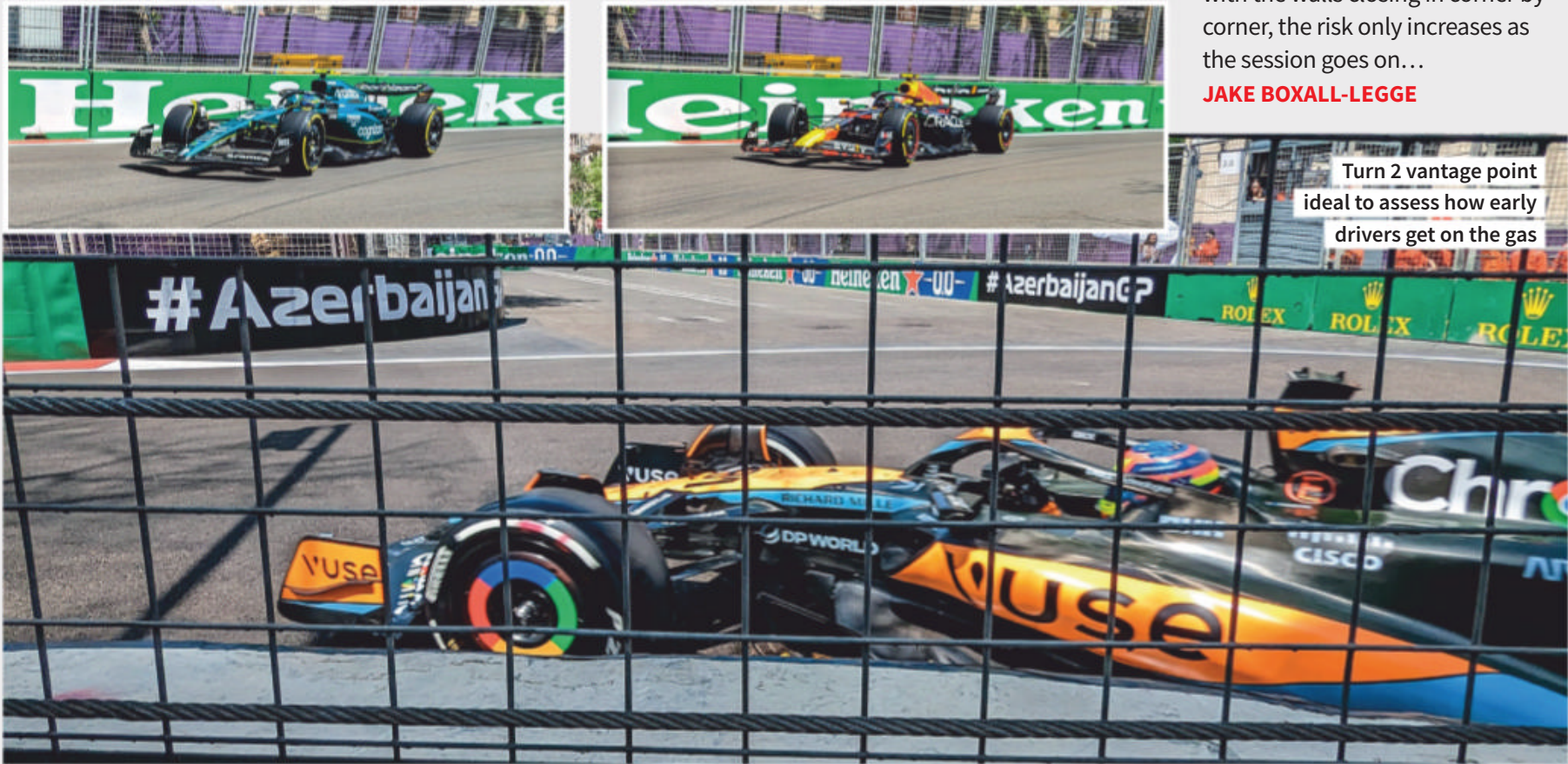
On the opposite wall, there’s a wheel-shaped scrape courtesy of Yuki Tsunoda, who has pitched his car into a spin and peeled the tyre off the rim before the pause in proceedings. Once running resumes, Alex Albon is first on the scene and begins a period of cars playing chicken with the battle-scarred exit wall. Albon gets close on his next tour, but Lando Norris is even closer.

It’s interesting to see the level

of confidence on the brakes, too; comparing Norris and Hamilton coming through, they’re in lockstep at the 100-metre board, and Fernando Alonso is the same. Tsunoda takes a slightly wider berth when we watch him on the medium tyres, and he hits the brakes just a little bit before the board.

With no further practice sessions in the offing owing to the new sprint weekend format, nobody wants to make a mistake. The drivers therefore look a little restrained, not wishing to push too hard. And, with the walls closing in corner by corner, the risk only increases as the session goes on...

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



ALL PICS: BOXALL-LEGGE



again when lapping a two-stopping Valtteri Bottas. Once Perez had rebuilt his advantage to 3.7s by the end of the 46th lap, he reckoned that was enough of a buffer to ease off in the last five tours.

At this point, Verstappen's mind was on the fastest-lap point, but he hadn't bargained on Fernando Alonso attempting to do the same. The Aston Martin driver had made up good ground, most notably with his post-restart overtake on Carlos Sainz at Turn 4, hardly a much-fancied passing spot, and was attempting to close in on Leclerc to secure a fourth successive third-place finish.

Alonso was 3.5s behind Leclerc with five laps remaining, with the AMR23's race pace superior to that of the Ferrari ahead. Alonso was most likely not even trying to get the fastest lap, but it was a byproduct of his last-gasp chase to taste more sparkling wine on the podium.

Verstappen punched in a 1m44.566s on lap 48, but Alonso was a fraction quicker. A lap later, Verstappen's 1m44.474s was smashed by a lap over 0.2s faster from Alonso. In the meantime, Verstappen had cut the gap to Perez to 2.8s with one more lap remaining, but it wouldn't be enough — this was Perez's day, and he'd done it by beating Verstappen on merit and with another Baku masterclass. "We delivered when we had to," Perez gushed, his Red Bull overalls drenched in bollicine. "It was a lot

## "I JUST HAD TO KEEP MY HEAD DOWN AND GET FOCUSED ON ATTACKING. I GOT RIGHT BACK IN THE RACE"

of pressure, I felt that with this [sprint] format, it puts a lot of stress on the drivers, on the engineers, the mechanics. So the way we delivered over the weekend was great. Yesterday we executed a good race. And the way we pushed each other, Max and myself, pretty much from lap one onwards, we really gave it our all lap after lap."

Leclerc held onto third, 21s behind Perez, despite the mounting pressure from Alonso. Before the Spaniard's fastest-lap exploits, Leclerc initially had the benchmark time, but was forced into struggling around in the 1m46s thereafter to allow the Aston Martin to close in much quicker than expected. But it had been a day of tyre management for the polesitter once again; while his performances over one lap had been stellar, stringing 51 of them together without draining life from the rubber was an altogether tougher ask for anyone contending with this year's Ferrari.

"We have to [manage] with our car, otherwise we kill the tyres and then we cannot get them back," Leclerc mused. "This has a big influence on our performance. So I think we did the perfect management today. But we are just not quick enough..."

Alonso couldn't help throwing a few barbs at his former team, unsentimentally suggesting that "on a bad weekend, let's say for an Aston, we are fighting for the podium against one of the best weekends for Ferrari". Once again, the double champion demonstrated his stunning bandwidth for reading the race, offering suggestions about when to push



Lewis Hamilton in the early phases as he spotted the Mercedes' rear tyres graining. He later chimed in with brake bias suggestions for Lance Stroll to use in his battle against the Mercedes pair, earning him a hug from the Canadian in the press pen.

When it came to it, Alonso didn't need to press Hamilton because the Briton had pitted a lap before Verstappen. After some mithering on the radio over lost positions, Hamilton got his head down and supplanted team-mate Russell, whose quick thinking to pass Stroll on the pitlane entry under the safety car was undone by a slow restart. Still, the Norfolk native earned a reprieve after bolting on soft tyres at the end to steal the fastest lap from Verstappen and Alonso.

Hamilton had dispatched Stroll on lap 19 and soon began to give chase to Sainz. Although he spent the rest of the run-time stuck behind the Ferrari because the W14 struggled to mount a charge with DRS, Hamilton admitted to enjoying the battle with the Madrid-born racer. "I think today shows that the hunger is there, and once I get that confidence in that car, the pace will come out," he remarked. "I couldn't get bogged down in that frustration — I just had to keep my head down and get focused on attacking. And that's what I did — I got right back in the race, and I really enjoyed those battles."

For Perez, there is no question of hunger; he's performing at the highest level we've ever seen him at in F1. When you consider that he was almost out of a seat when 2020 was drawing to a close, he's starting to really make the most of his Red Bull opportunity. With a sprint and a grand prix win in Baku, he sits just six points behind Verstappen.

A false dawn? Perhaps, but at this current time, Red Bull has an intra-team fight for supremacy to work with. Even though there are many who would doubt Perez's championship credentials, especially taking into account the driver next to him in the garage, the man himself does not harbour such apprehension.

"I think it's a long way ahead but, you know, I really believe that we are in the fight. I think without the problems we had in qualifying in Melbourne, we should be a lot closer. So it's important not to have those problems ever again. I think at the end of the day, it's just very important to make sure that whenever we cannot win, we finish second. It's a good day still." 🍷

NEXT F1 REPORT

MIAMI GRAND PRIX  
11 MAY ISSUE



## TOUGH WEEKEND FOR WILLIAMS DESPITE PACE

Alex Albon and Logan Sargeant both emerged battle-scarred from the Baku weekend, although the American's incident was considerably more costly.

Sargeant missed the sprint race because Williams could not rebuild his car in time after he had hit the Turn 15 exit wall hard while coming across the Ferrari pair going slowly early in Q2 in that race's dedicated qualifying session.

In the main race, he lost out big time with a stop before the safety car, and after that first trailed Kevin Magnussen, then Zhou Guanyu, with his inability to slipstream past the Alfa meaning Sargeant lost contact with the DRS train ahead. The F1 rookie defied Pierre Gasly for a time late on, but was eventually demoted to 16th.

Albon's damaging moment occurred very early in the GP when he left his nose inside Oscar Piastri and Valtteri Bottas at Turn 2 and whacked the McLaren, shearing his right-side front endplate. Williams left his nose on when he was the third driver to pit early on, which meant dropping from 12th to 14th while chasing Piastri, before the eventual pitstops for Nico Hulkenberg and Esteban Ocon reversed his safety-car misfortune.

"It was really tough out there," said Albon, who had a good sprint battle with Lance Stroll on his way to ninth place. "[The wing damage meant] there was a lot of management to do."



## Fire sets tone as litany of problems strike Alpine duo

When Alan Permane, a 34-year team stalwart, says "I can't compare this weekend to any other", it highlights how tough Alpine had it across the entire Azerbaijan weekend.

Things got off to an awful start in the sole Friday practice session when Pierre Gasly's engine caught fire following a hydraulics leak and needed replacing before qualifying. Esteban Ocon also missed most of practice due to a gearbox issue.

Gasly then crashed in Friday qualifying Q1. Ocon went on to record 12th, but lost it when Alpine subsequently realised that it needed to change his suspension settings to ensure his underfloor plank didn't wear illegally. This meant breaking parc ferme regulations and starting both races from the pitlane.

In the sprint, for which Gasly had qualified 19th, hobbled by an exhaust leak, the Frenchman at least made progress as he rose to 13th. Ocon started on medium tyres from the pits, but stopped for softs twice in 17 laps

— once under the safety car following Yuki Tsunoda's wheel coming loose — with high degradation and so finished last.

In the GP, both Alpines were given contra-strategies in audacious bids to recover from their latest lowly starting spots. Ocon's was more conventional as he and fellow pitlane starter Nico Hulkenberg started on the hards, using them to leap up the order by not stopping under the safety car. Ocon headed a mid-pack DRS train for most of the middle phase of the race before he dropped Hulkenberg and pitted on the penultimate lap, where he faced the shockingly busy pitlane entrance. He at least beat Logan Sargeant to 15th with his superior pace over Hulkenberg's.

Gasly was set on a genuine two-stopper (as opposed to George Russell's false one chasing fastest lap late on). That meant battles at the back, Gasly passing Valtteri Bottas and Logan Sargeant with DRS-assisted moves into Turn 1 on his way to 14th.

**"IT WAS PRETTY ROUGH. I THINK I'VE HAD ABOUT FOUR PIECES OF TOAST FOR THE WHOLE WEEKEND"**

McLaren's Oscar Piastri, 11th and 2.6 seconds outside the main race points, reflecting on his first Azerbaijan Grand Prix while enduring a stomach bug.







## ALFA ROMEO'S TROUBLES CONTINUE

Alfa Romeo had another difficult weekend as Valtteri Bottas's Azerbaijan GP hopes evaporated with early contact and Zhou Guanyu retired due to a cooling problem.

After Zhou led Bottas in taking 12th and 16th for the Sauber-run squad in the sprint, where the Finn's gamble on soft tyres didn't pay off, their positions were basically reversed for the GP grid thanks to Bottas's achievement in reaching Q2. From 13th, Bottas picked up wing damage in contact with Oscar Piastri at Turn 2 that Alex Albon – inside them both – had caused. He then stuttered and lost drive, which meant being tagged by Kevin Magnussen from behind. Bottas showed no pace with damage thereafter, with a subsequent speculative three-stopper leading the Red Bulls to lap him.

Zhou battled Magnussen but retired from 16th when his engine temperature spiked for a so far unspecified reason and dash alarms sounded.

## Close but no points for Haas

Haas left Baku empty-handed, with Nico Hulkenberg's set-up adjustment after the sprint race and Kevin Magnussen's Friday qualifying electrical issue meaning the pair faced an uphill GP battle.

Hulkenberg had faded from 12th early in the sprint with shocking late pace on medium tyres that had "heavy graining" and "were just completely shot".

After this, Haas opted to change his set-up and so he had to start from the pitlane behind Esteban Ocon. A race-long hope for a second safety car or red flag was in vain, and this meant that Hulkenberg was trapped in 17th when he emerged from pitting with two laps left. But he'd already lost contact with Ocon and been passed

by the McLarens, Yuki Tsunoda and Alex Albon as his ancient hard tyres gave up. Playing the team game and waving Magnussen through aided the Dane, who had finished 11th but well adrift of the top 10 in the sprint. Magnussen was 13th in the GP, but without losing ground to Albon up ahead.

Magnussen had reached that point after starting 16th thanks to an electrical issue causing his engine to cut power in Q1 and battling past Zhou Guanyu during the first half of the GP. By hitting the suddenly slowing Bottas exiting Turn 2, that damaged his front wing, and so he had further pain with pitstop under green-flag conditions while that was changed and he took the hard tyres.

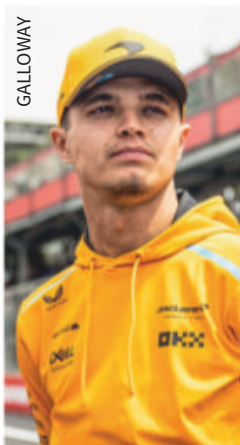


### Q&A

#### LANDO NORRIS McLAREN DRIVER

##### How happy are you to get points for the second successive race?

It's mega. As satisfied as I can be really. It's pretty much impossible to overtake, especially with our straightline speed and not with how short the DRS zone is now comparing to where it was last year [100 metres shorter on the main straight]. I did the best I could to try and keep up



with the cars ahead [in the first stint]. I just used the tyres up too much, because we're not on the same level.

##### Did shortening the DRS zone make sense to you?

No, none. All the drivers questioned it in the drivers' briefing.

##### Did the team's upgrades work as planned?

Yep. It isn't going to help that much in the very slow speed corners that we have here.

So if you look at it, like on a pure lap time basis, it probably didn't help us too much. A tiny bit, but not too much. Maybe Miami [this weekend] we'll see some bigger gains with some of the more medium speed corners. It's more of a different philosophy to have a baseline with. That is a small step forward. But more of the bigger gains are coming out in the future.

##### How good did it feel to get the update after waiting so long?

Yeah, a little bit. Definitely everyone back in the factory seem happier, more optimistic.

I have even more faith in terms of the ability with the new [design] structure and some of the new people we have and things like that – that everyone's a bit more free and willing to try new things and make bigger steps.

##### Did Alpine getting no points make the weekend sweeter?

Yeah! But even when we have an amazing weekend, it's only P9. So, it's hard to gain big points at the minute unless you have incidents like you had in Australia when you have a P6. P9 is making the most of it, but we'll take it for now.



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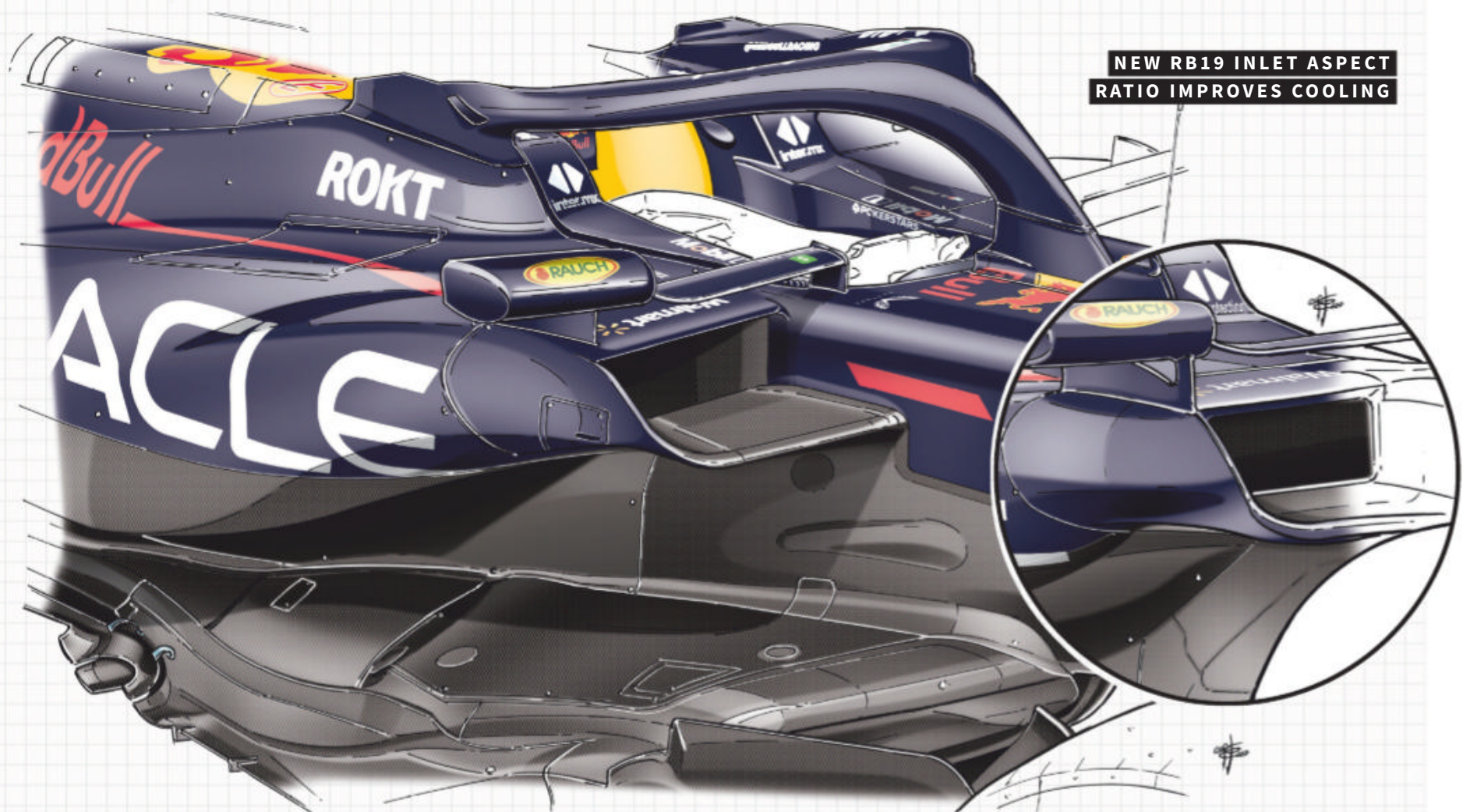
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# DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA



## RED BULL KEEPS ON PUSHING

Rather than rest on its laurels in the knowledge that it has a significant advantage over the rest of the field with its 2023 car, Red Bull introduced changes for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix to ensure it could retain its superiority.

The most visible of these was a new sidepod inlet featuring a wider, shorter opening versus the older layout (inset), which the team announced in its pre-event technical notes was a circuit-specific change

for the purposes of cooling: “[The] new shape exploits the higher-pressure air available for the inlet and improves cooling efficiency, which can reduce the magnitude of the exit opening, and is beneficial for performance and enlarges the ambient temperature range of operation.” In other words, it ensured that the size of the cooling outlets at the rear bodywork could be made smaller.

The team also made changes to the floor

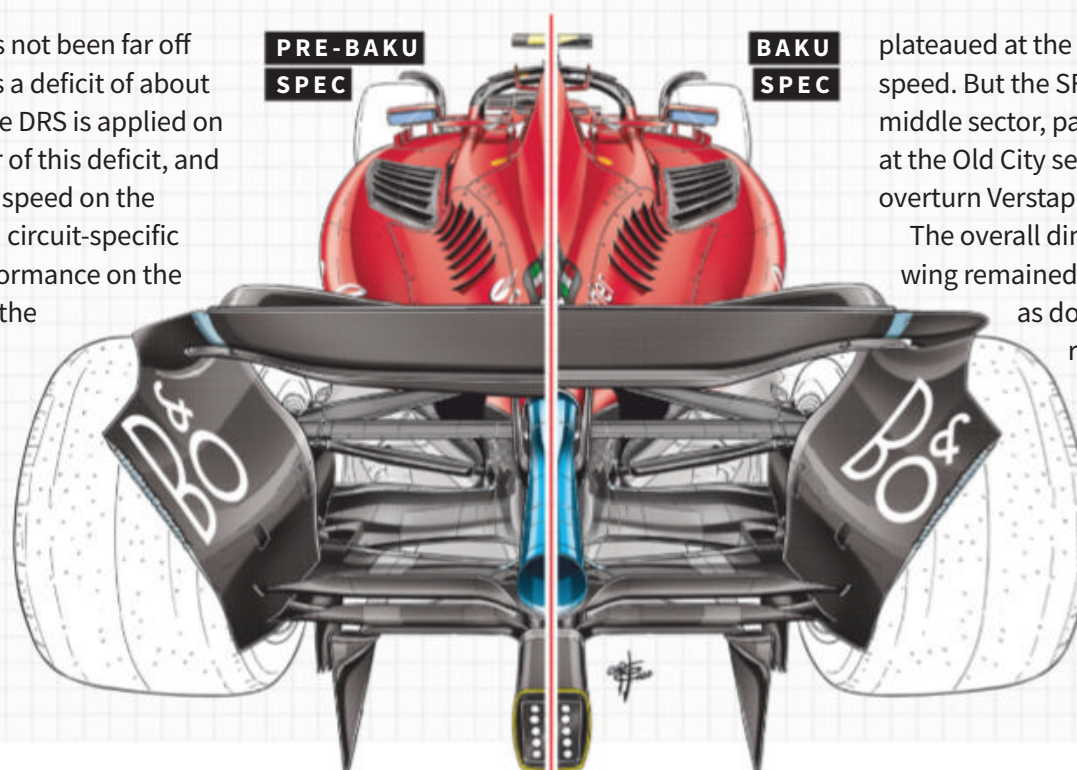
edges and fences in its general updates for the season, to improve local loading and also to adapt to the changes made to the sidepods and bodywork geometry. In particular, the outer floor fence featured a revised upper edge, offering “better alignment to the local conditions to ensure the surfaces are appropriate, and a small amount of load improvement will result”.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

## FERRARI SQUEEZES MORE SPEED

Ferrari’s overall top speed has not been far off Red Bull’s, but the SF-23 faces a deficit of about 10-12km/h (6-7mph) when the DRS is applied on the RB19. Knowing the power of this deficit, and simply to try to achieve more speed on the straights, Ferrari introduced a circuit-specific rear wing to derive more performance on the lengthy acceleration zone on the Baku City Circuit.

Comparing the GPS data between Ferrari and Red Bull in qualifying, particularly Charles Leclerc’s and Max Verstappen’s lap times, showed that the Ferrari had greater acceleration in the initial phase, but that this




plateaued at the top end as the Red Bull built up speed. But the SF-23 was much stronger in the middle sector, particularly around the sweepers at the Old City section, which helped Leclerc overturn Verstappen’s first-sector advantage.

The overall dimensions of the Ferrari beam wing remained largely the same, particularly as downforce and stability was required for the slower corners on the circuit, so the team made do with “depowering” the upper part of the wing. It still didn’t help Leclerc from being easy pickings for the Red Bull drivers, such was their continued strength in the DRS zone.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE






19

Ocon #31


1m41.798s



17

Gasly #10


1m44.853s



15

Zhou #24


1m42.642s



13

Bottas #77


1m42.259s



11

Russell #63


1m41.654s



20

Hulkenberg #27


1m42.755s



18

de Vries #21


1m55.282s



16

Magnussen #20


1m43.417s



14

Sargeant #2

1m42.395s



12

Albon #23

1m41.818s

FREE PRACTICE		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m42.315s
2	Leclerc	1m42.352s
3	Perez	1m42.454s
4	Sainz	1m42.899s
5	Norris	1m43.125s
6	de Vries	1m43.414s
7	Stroll	1m43.455s
8	Alonso	1m43.560s
9	Albon	1m43.628s
10	Zhou	1m43.748s
11	Hamilton	1m43.798s
12	Piastrri	1m43.980s
13	Bottas	1m44.010s
14	Tsunoda	1m44.137s
15	Hulkenberg	1m44.323s
16	Sargeant	1m44.900s
17	Russell	1m45.082s
18	Ocon	1m45.955s
19	Gasly	1m46.321s
20	Magnussen	1m47.498s

WEATHER Clear, air 23-24C track 42-44C

RACE QUALIFYING		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Leclerc	1m40.203s
2	Verstappen	1m40.391s
3	Perez	1m40.495s
4	Sainz	1m41.016s
5	Hamilton	1m41.177s
6	Alonso	1m41.253s
7	Norris	1m41.281s
8	Tsunoda	1m41.581s
9	Stroll	1m41.611s
10	Piastrri	1m41.611s
Q2 11	Russell	1m41.654s
12	Ocon	1m41.798s
13	Albon	1m41.818s
14	Bottas	1m42.259s
15	Sargeant	1m42.395s
Q1 16	Zhou	1m42.642s
17	Hulkenberg	1m42.755s
18	Magnussen	1m43.417s
19	Gasly	1m44.853s
20	de Vries	1m55.282s

WEATHER Clear, air 20-23C track 29-36C

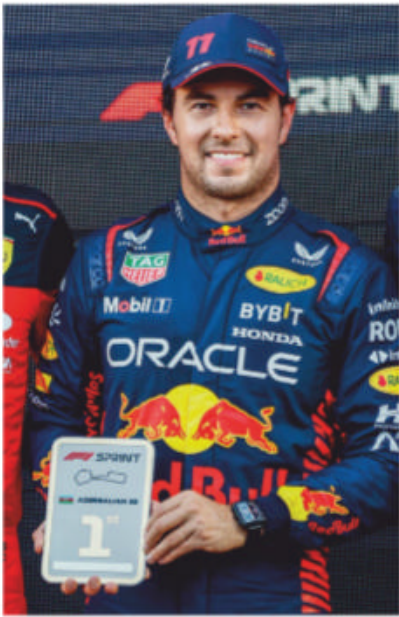
SPRINT QUALIFYING		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Leclerc	1m41.697s
2	Perez	1m41.844s
3	Verstappen	1m41.987s
4	Russell	1m42.252s
5	Sainz	1m42.287s
6	Hamilton	1m42.502s
7	Albon	1m42.846s
8	Alonso	1m43.010s
9	Stroll	1m43.064s
10	Norris	no time
Q2 11	Piastrri	1m43.427s
12	Hulkenberg	1m43.806s
13	Ocon	1m44.088s
14	Magnussen	1m44.332s
15	Sargeant	no time
Q1 16	Zhou	1m45.177s
17	Bottas	1m45.352s
18	Tsunoda	1m45.436s
19	Gasly	1m46.951s
20	de Vries	1m48.180s

WEATHER Clear, air 24-27C track 47-49C

SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	93	1	1
2 Perez	87	1	1
3 Alonso	60	3	3
4 Hamilton	48	2	3
5 Sainz	34	4	4
6 Leclerc	28	3	1
7 Russell	28	4	2
8 Stroll	27	4	6
9 Norris	10	6	7
10 Hulkenberg	6	7	10
11 Piastrri	4	8	9
12 Bottas	4	8	12
13 Ocon	4	8	7
14 Gasly	4	9	9
15 Zhou	2	9	12
16 Tsunoda	2	10	8
17 Albon	1	10	8
18 Magnussen	1	10	13
19 Sargeant	0	12	15
20 de Vries	0	14	15

SPRINT RACE 17 LAPS – 63.35 MILES

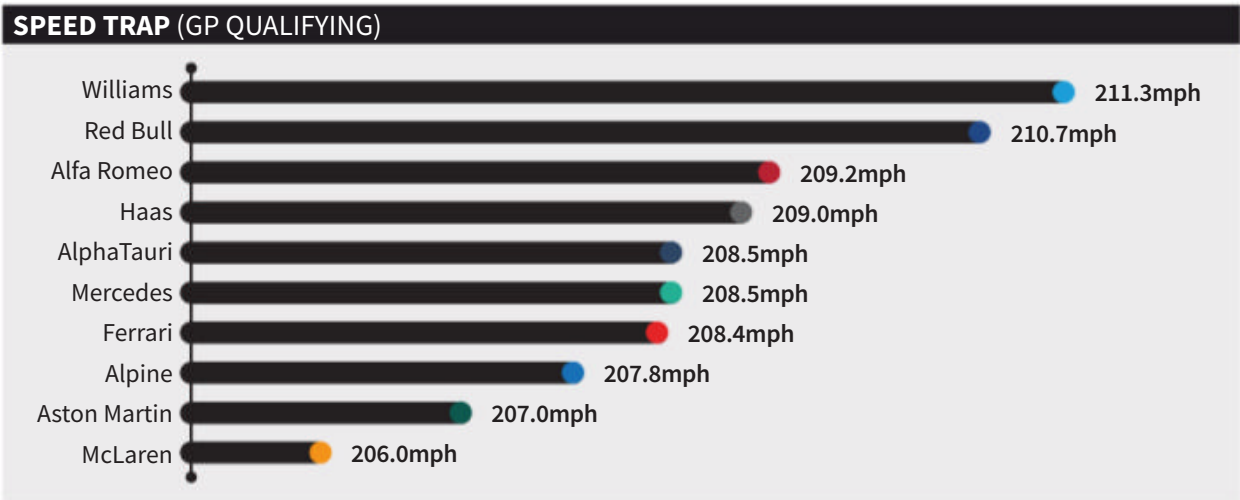
POS	DRIVER	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRE	FASTEST LAPS
1	Perez	33m17.667s	10	Mu	1m43.616s
2	Leclerc	+4.463s	7	Mn	1m43.646s
3	Verstappen	+5.065s		Mu	1m43.723s
4	Russell	+8.532s		Mu	1m44.409s
5	Sainz	+10.388s		Mn	1m44.398s
6	Alonso	+11.613s		Mu	1m44.544s
7	Hamilton	+16.503s		Mu	1m44.601s
8	Stroll	+18.417s		Mu	1m44.855s
9	Albon	+21.757s		Mu	1m44.915s
10	Piastrri	+22.851s		Mn	1m44.776s
11	Magnussen	+27.990s		Mn	1m45.349s
12	Zhou	+34.602s		Mn	1m45.766s
13	Gasly	+36.918s		Mn	1m45.883s
14	de Vries	+41.626s		Mn	1m45.768s
15	Hulkenberg	+48.587s		Mu	1m45.971s
16	Bottas	+49.917s		Sn	1m46.277s
17	Norris	+51.104s		Su, Mu	1m44.484s
18	Ocon	+1m00.621s		Mu, Su, Su	1m45.090s
R	Tsunoda	2 laps-accident		Mn	-
NS	Sargeant	0 laps-sprint qual acc		-	-



MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

WEATHER Clear, air 25-28C track 33-40C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 114.157mph  
FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 129.597mph



CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS
1 Red Bull	180
2 Aston Martin	87
3 Mercedes	76
4 Ferrari	62
5 McLaren	14
6 Alpine	8
7 Haas	7
8 Alfa Romeo	6
9 AlphaTauri	2
10 Williams	1

QUALIFYING BATTLE			
Verstappen	3	0	Perez
Leclerc	3	1	Sainz
Hamilton	1	3	Russell
Gasly	1	3	Ocon
Norris	3	1	Piastrri
Zhou	2	2	Bottas
Alonso	4	0	Stroll
Magnussen	0	3	Hulkenberg
de Vries	0	4	Tsunoda
Sargeant	0	4	Albon


Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control. Excludes sprint qualifying/shootout

WINS		POLE POSITIONS	
Perez	2	Verstappen	2
Verstappen	2	Perez	1
		Leclerc	1


FASTEST LAPS		Poles scores taken based on qualifying results, not the result of any sprint races or qualifying	
Perez	1		
Russell	1		
Verstappen	1		
Zhou	1		




STARTING GRID



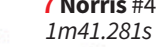
10 Piastrì #81  
1m41.611s




9 Stroll #18  
1m41.611s



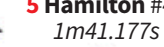
8 Tsunoda #22  
1m41.581s




7 Norris #4  
1m41.281s




6 Alonso #14  
1m41.253s




5 Hamilton #44  
1m41.177s




4 Sainz #55  
1m41.016s



3 Perez #11  
1m40.495s



2 Verstappen #1  
1m40.391s



1 Leclerc #16  
1m40.203s

RACE RESULTS

ROUND 4/23 (51 LAPS – 190.17 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1h32m42.436s	42	Mn, Hn
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+2.137s	7	Mn, Hn
3	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+21.217s	2	Mn, Hn
4	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+22.024s		Mu, Hu
5	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+45.491s		Mn, Hn
6	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+46.145s		Mn, Hn
7	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+51.617s		Mu, Hu
8	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+1m14.240s		Mn, Hn, Sn
9	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m20.376s		Mn, Hn
10	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+1m23.862s		Mn, Hu
11	Oscar Piastrì (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m26.501s		Mn, Hn
12	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m28.623s		Mn, Hn
13	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m29.729s		Mn, Hn
14	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m31.332s		Mn, Hn, Hn
15	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m37.794s		Hn, Sn
16	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m40.943s		Mn, Hn
17	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+9.937s		Hn, Sn
18	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+19.098s		Mn, Hn, Hn, Mn
R	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	36 laps-high temps		Mn, Hn
R	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	9 laps-accident		Hu

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Russell	1m43.370s	-	51
2	Verstappen	1m44.232s	+0.862s	51
3	Alonso	1m44.241s	+0.871s	49
4	Leclerc	1m44.561s	+1.191s	49
5	Perez	1m44.589s	+1.219s	50
6	Sainz	1m45.175s	+1.805s	48
7	Hamilton	1m45.346s	+1.976s	48
8	Gasly	1m45.540s	+2.170s	47
9	Stroll	1m45.627s	+2.257s	45
10	Piastrì	1m45.631s	+2.261s	51
11	Tsunoda	1m45.727s	+2.357s	51
12	Norris	1m45.738s	+2.368s	49
13	Magnussen	1m45.850s	+2.480s	51
14	Ocon	1m45.908s	+2.538s	49
15	Albon	1m45.925s	+2.555s	51
16	Bottas	1m46.304s	+2.934s	36
17	Sargeant	1m46.501s	+3.131s	49
18	Hulkenberg	1m46.731s	+3.361s	34
19	Zhou	1m47.553s	+4.183s	31
20	de Vries	1m48.781s	+5.411s	4

WEATHER Clear, air 26-28C track 36-44C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 123.077mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 129.905mph


TYRES

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


HARD

MEDIUM


SOFT




C0




C1




C2




C3




C4



C5



INTERMEDIATE



WET

RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

OCN required to start from pitlane for sprint and GP due to set-up changes made to suspension

HULKENBERG required to start from pitlane for GP due to set-up changes made to suspension

STAT

6


Perez now has as many world championship GP wins as title winners John Surtees and Jochen Rindt

NEXT RACE

7 MAY

MIAMI GP

Miami



LAP CHART

What happened, when

4 MAY 2023 AUTOSPORT.COM 31



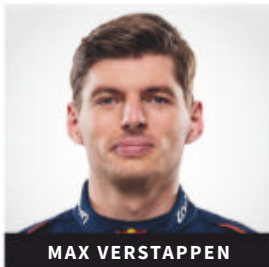
# AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX

## DRIVER RATINGS

*While there were no perfect 10s in Baku, Perez, Leclerc and Alonso collect the highest scores – and de Vries blots his copybook*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

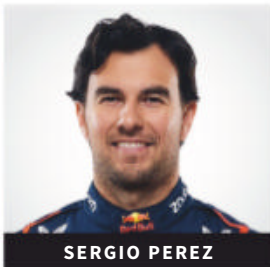
### RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **2nd** — Result **2nd**

**8** His turn to be unlucky with safety-car timing after he'd passed Leclerc so easily with DRS into Turn 1 on lap three that it was comical. Repassed the Ferrari after the restart, without DRS this time, at Turn 3. Then chased his team-mate in a pursuit so savage that he glanced the wall three times.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **3rd** — Result **1st**

**9** Fortune with timing of the safety car got him ahead of Verstappen after he'd also breezed past Leclerc early on, but was already closing on his team-mate as the medium tyres wore and felt a pass was coming. Nailed the restart, dropped Verstappen and gradually increased the gap.

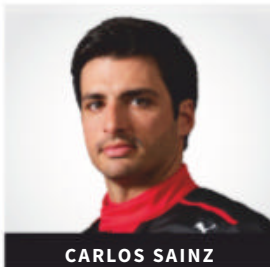
### FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **1st** — Result **3rd**

**9** Little else he could have done bar being closer to Perez at the restart. After securing two poles and leading early on, just as in the sprint he had no chance to defend against Red Bull's top-speed prowess. He went backwards, including after demoting Verstappen with a safety-car stop.



CARLOS SAINZ

Started **4th** — Result **5th**

**6** Was unable to match his team-mate's qualifying speed, but maintained his position off the line. Got surprised by Alonso's pass on restart lap, but was slightly pinched given Leclerc's positioning ahead. Fell back thereafter as Ferrari's tyre-management tactics kicked in.

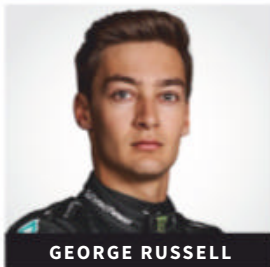
### MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **5th** — Result **6th**

**8** Held position at the start, but then wore his medium tyres, which meant the Astons were closing in and a stop to try to stay ahead. Lost five places when the safety car appeared, but escaped the Ocon/Hulkenberg train in three corners after the restart, then nailed Russell at the next try into Turn 1.



GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **11th** — Result **8th**

**6** Gained two spots in first-lap action, but was stuck behind Norris before getting lucky with safety-car timing. Was clever in not allowing Stroll's pitlane entry slowness to cost him time and in fact beat the Aston out. But immediately got repassed after the restart, and was jumped by Hamilton.

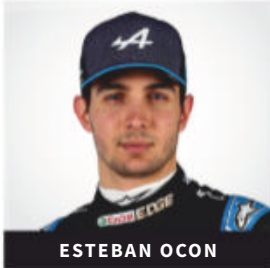
### ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **17th** — Result **14th**

**5** Fortunate that we no longer factor in qualifying mistakes here, given his Q1 shunt. Jumped the Alfas on the opening lap, then was the first driver to pit on what became a unique genuine two-stopper. Alpine hoped that the race circumstances would be favourable for this, but they weren't.



ESTEBAN OCON

Started **19th** — Result **15th**

**6** Suspension change after Saturday qualifying meant starting both races from the pitlane, which in the GP meant hoping for a late-race intervention that never came after starting with hard tyres. Headed the DRS train after safety car and eventually dropped Hulkenberg as he pressed on.

### McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **7th** — Result **9th**

**6** Lost out to Stroll on lap one, but was then holding Russell at bay before his stop before the safety car, required because he'd worn his rubber engaging with quicker rivals. Still-draggy car was then trapped in the DRS train behind Ocon and Hulkenberg, but late Turn 7 pass on the Haas was neat.



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **10th** — Result **11th**

**6** Jumped by Russell on lap one, and he too lost time with a pre-safety car stop, but this didn't mean much as he'd followed Tsunoda in. Was stuck in the same DRS train, but pace as second stint wore on dropped a tad and he lost contact. Gains a mark for good performance with a horrible stomach bug.

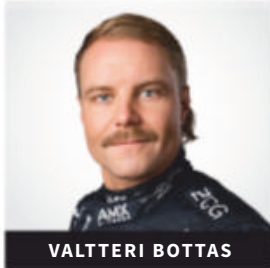
### ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **15th** — Result **R**

**5** Lost positions to Magnussen and Gasly on the opening lap, but rose back ahead of the Haas thanks to safety-car stop. They engaged in a battle after the restart that Magnussen ultimately won, with Zhou then running ahead of Sargeant until rising temperatures and dash warnings meant his withdrawal.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **13th** — Result **18th**

**4** Good launch was ruined by overall misfortune in getting hit at Turn 2, side-on (by Piastri's Albon-tagged McLaren), and from the rear (by Magnussen) after the first contact robbed him of exit speed. But he'd tried to brave it out on the outside line there. Damage hurt his pace, while third stop meant he was lapped.





One place short of the podium this time out, Alonso still deserves the joint highest score

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## ASTON MARTIN



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **6th** — Result **4th**

**9** Held position at the start, then harassed Hamilton before the Merc stopped to shed its medium tyres. Coached Stroll via his team radio and gains a bonus mark for brilliant pass on Sainz at Turn 4 after the restart. Maintained his hards adrift of Leclerc, then used that rubber to close late on.

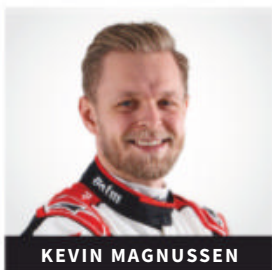


LANCE STROLL

Started **9th** — Result **7th**

**5** Aggressive start gained him two spots. Lost out to Russell's pitlane canniness, then jumped him at the restart. But it's his two subsequent errors that bring his score down: he was lucky that his Turn 5 whack didn't do more than superficial damage, and his slide at the exit of Turn 16 let Hamilton get past.

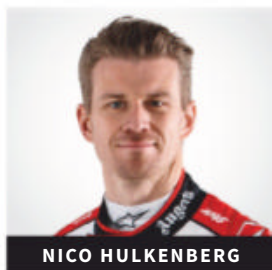
## HAAS



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Started **16th** — Result **13th**

**6** Beautiful launch and Turn 1 gains undone when he tagged Bottas's suddenly slowing Alfa in Turn 2. That meant a front-wing change and extra pain with his stop before safety car, after which he felt he was left helpless, trapped in the pack. Botched first Turn 1 bid to pass Zhou, but got him with a late dive two laps later.



NICO HULKENBERG

Started **20th** — Result **17th**

**5** Opted for pitlane start after feeling that his sprint set-up was causing heavy graining. Followed Ocon from their novelty starting spots and was naturally behind the Alpine once they leapt up the order by not stopping under the safety car. Was eventually dropped by the Frenchman.

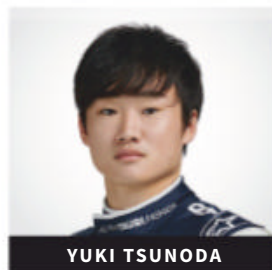
## ALPHATAURI



NYCK DE VRIES

Started **18th** — Result **R**

**2** Tough start to full-time F1 life continues. Started on the contra-strategy and took advantage of Bottas's Turn 2 incidents, but never got chance to make a GP impact as "very silly and unnecessary" error whacking the inside wall at Turn 5 broke his left-front track rod and put him out.

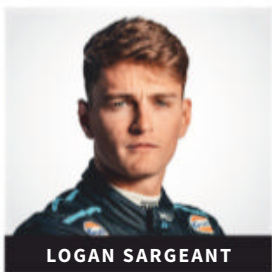


YUKI TSUNODA

Started **8th** — Result **10th**

**8** Lost two spots from impressive grid position and was another pre-safety-car stopper – not that this hurt him versus Norris ahead. But that did mean that he too was trapped behind Ocon and Hulkenberg for most of the race, with Tsunoda taking a little longer to finally demote the Haas late on.

## WILLIAMS



LOGAN SARGEANT

Started **14th** — Result **16th**

**5** By missing the sprint after his crash in Saturday qualifying, he missed out on extra mileage handy for rookies. Long-run pace not quite as strong as his team-mate's, which meant being confined behind Zhou after he had lost out badly with safety-car timing. Left adrift, then eventually overcome by Gasly.

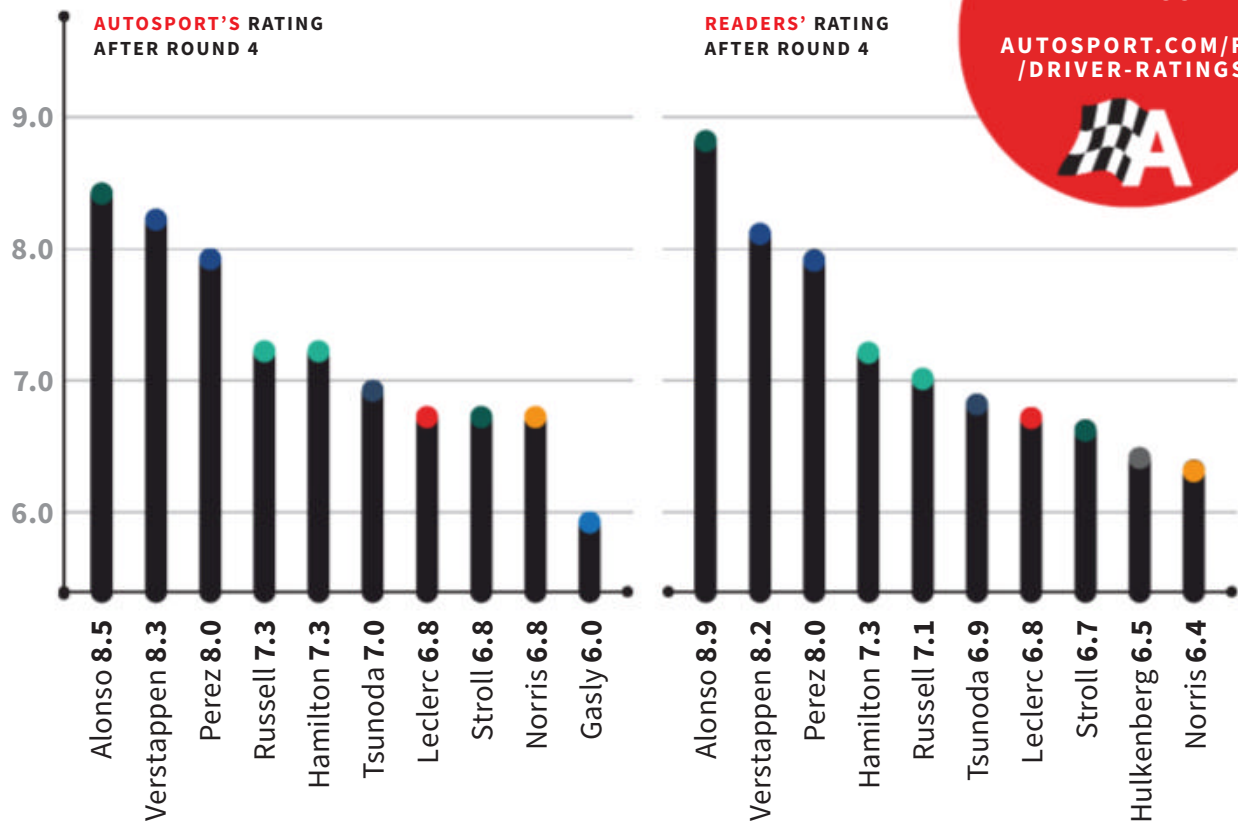


ALEX ALBON

Started **12th** — Result **12th**

**4** In what's otherwise a par-level performance, loses a mark for first-lap mistake at Turn 2, where he needlessly left his nose inside two other cars, got pinched and had his front-wing endplate shorn. Thereafter he chased Piastri's McLaren either side of a pre-safety-car stop.

### TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



GIVE  
YOUR DRIVER  
RATINGS

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/DRIVER-RATINGS







WEC SPA

# Toyota again but Ferrari threatens

*It was another 1-2 for the Japanese manufacturer, but this time there was a hint that it might not have things all its own way at Le Mans next month*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



motorsport  
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**A** third Toyota victory in three races and a second 1-2 suggested it was business as usual for the 2023 World Endurance Championship at Spa last weekend. That wasn't quite the case in the final race before the Le Mans 24 Hours. The Japanese manufacturer admitted that it "didn't have fantastic pace" on a day when its Italian rival showed real evidence that it will be a threat come the big one next month.

Kamui Kobayashi, Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez took the win aboard the #7 GR010 HYBRID Le Mans Hypercar, and on the face of it appeared to have continued Toyota's domination after the rulemakers opted against taking the opportunity to tweak the Balance of Performance. They led 132 of the 148 laps of an incident-packed event that started on a damp track and included four safety cars and three Full Course Yellows. But over the full duration of the Spa 6 Hours the Ferrari 499P was the quicker car on average, even if the best of its LMHs could finish only third behind the second Toyota of Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa.

That can partly be explained by the fact that the #51 car shared by Alessandro Pier Guidi, James Calado and Antonio Giovinazzi was in catch-up mode for more than five of the six hours. It came back from a series of delays to snatch a third consecutive podium for Ferrari, Calado sealing #51's first silverware on the

## “Calado flew over his double stint and closed down the better part of a minute on the Porsche”

final lap when he breezed around the outside of Frederic Makowiecki's Porsche at Les Combes.

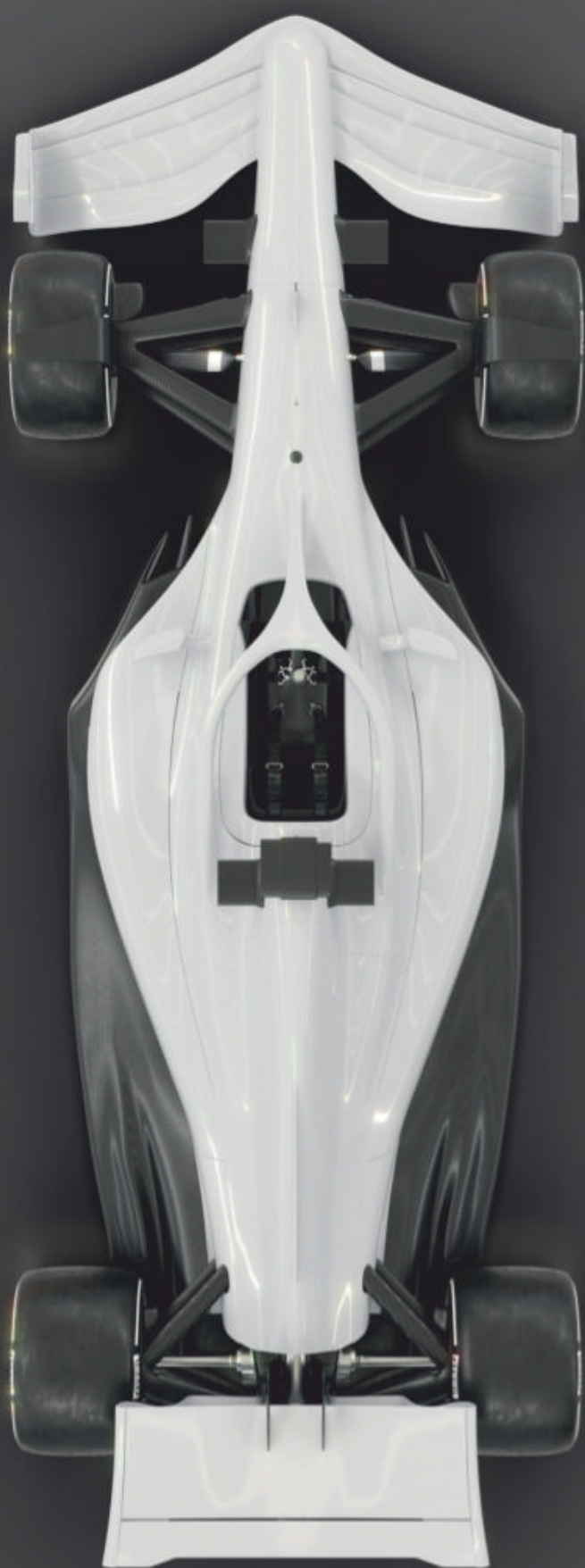
Calado and his team-mates came from a lap down to take third, just over a minute behind the winning Toyota. The Ferrari lost time with two emergency pitstops when the pits were closed – one for a deflating tyre caused by a damaged rim in the third hour; one to take a five-second dump of fuel in the fifth – but the biggest loss came early in the race. A safety-first decision to start on wet-weather Michelins, rather than on slicks like Toyota, and then the struggle that followed as Giovinazzi and Nicklas Nielsen in the sister car strived to bring their tyres up to temperature on a still-damp track, dropped the Ferraris off the lead lap in little more than an hour.

Ferrari had set its cars up for the second half of the race: the weather forecast suggested there was going to be no more rain. And Calado flew over his double stint and closed down the better part of a minute on the Porsche 963 LMDh Makowiecki shared with »





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#7 Toyota took victory  
despite a post-race  
five-second penalty

Michael Christensen and Dane Cameron over the final 50 minutes. The Ferrari was on the medium tyre, the hardest of the compounds available after Michelin successfully applied to bring three rather than two specifications of slick to Spa in light of an uncertain weather forecast. The Porsche driver was on softs, and ailing in the final laps. “I kept asking for the gap, just to keep me awake,” said Calado. “I was like, ‘OK I’m going to push and hope for the best.’ They told me I’d catch him on the last lap, but I needed to keep that pace. I risked quite a lot.”

The big question post-race was whether Ferrari could have won this event without its delays. After all, both the podium-finishing 499P and the sister entry had been able to get their lap back in the middle of the race, admittedly when Lopez was struggling at the end of a double stint. Calado wasn’t entirely sure: “The positive thing as well as the podium was that we were a lot closer to the pace of the Toyota. Without all the little things that went wrong, maybe we could have given them a fight.”

The sister car was ahead of #51 and running third early in the fifth hour of the race when Antonio Fuoco lost it on the front straight after exiting the pits. It wasn’t the first incident of the weekend to bring the 2023 ban on tyre warmers into sharp focus.

It wasn’t the decision to start on wets that prevented the 499P from taking a maiden WEC win, according to Ferrari race and testing manager Giuliano Salvi. “In hindsight you can say Spa is always Spa and you cannot underestimate the changeable conditions,” he said. “It was a choice based on the [weather] predictions we had and I don’t think it changed the result massively.”

The safety cars allowed the Ferraris to make up lost ground



Crashes marred the event.  
This is what was left of  
van der Zande’s Caddy





## “When the two Toyotas were neck and neck after the final stop, Hartley had nothing”

after they got back on the lead lap in hour three, but Salvi reckoned they were a hindrance, too. He suggested that they didn't come at the right time for the team's tyre strategy. “Quite painful for us,” was how he described them.

Toyota thought its decision to start on slicks was decisive. “The race has been decided in this early phase,” said Toyota Gazoo Racing technical director Pascal Vasselon, who then went on to make the comment about the GR010s not having “fantastic pace”.

The #7 car was always favourite to come out in an internecine Toyota battle. Hartley had crashed #8 on his out-lap at the top of Eau Rouge in qualifying, a double whammy for him and his team-mates. Not only did it mean that the car started from the penultimate row of the grid, but the drivers of #8 had to get through the six hours with a reduced tyre allocation. Series rules limit each Hypercar to 18 tyres for qualifying and the race. At least two of the Michelins on which Hartley had attempted to qualify were flat-spotted beyond use, while the team thought it might be able to press the other two into service. It intended to see whether they were fit for purpose on the reconnaissance laps but, with the track wet, Toyota decided to press on with just three and a half sets.

That meant that at the end of the race, when the two Toyotas were neck and neck after the final pitstop, Hartley had nothing for Kobayashi. The #8 car stopped a lap later and got out of the pits ahead, but lost a short-lived lead when the Japanese driver swept around the outside, all four wheels off the track, at the top of Eau Rouge as Hartley brought the two fresh tyres he had on the left side of the car up to temperature.

Hartley had got ahead because there were only two fresh tyres left to go on the car, whereas Kobayashi got four new Michelins. But he knew keeping the lead was a forlorn hope: “Kamui had new tyres at the end, so I was never going to challenge.”

Kobayashi was penalised for his move. He was given a five-second penalty while he was on his final lap, the addition reducing his winning margin from 17s to 12s in the final results. Toyota successfully argued that the Japanese driver shouldn't be given a drive-through, the more normal penalty for a track-limits infraction. “Brendon was being very careful, which we can understand after yesterday,” said Vasselon. “We immediately told race control that and there was no issue.”

Vasselon suggested that had Hartley been able to stay >>

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ahead, then Toyota would have swapped the positions “because #8 was slower”. Toyota traditionally calls off any fight between its two cars at the final pitstops, though it has modified those protocols slightly this year in light of the ban on tyre heaters. For how many corners Hartley would have had to stay ahead before Kobayashi was told to hold position isn’t clear.

Hartley admitted that it would have been tough to beat the winning car, even in a straight fight. “We went in different directions on set-up and it looks like they did a slightly better job,” he explained. “If you’d asked me before the race if I would be happy with second, I’d have said, ‘Absolutely.’”

The big challenge for the Toyotas was hanging on with the wet track at the start. Conway, who started #7, described it as a “matter of survival”, though he was sure that slicks was the right call: “Pascal lives 10 minutes up the road, so knows all about the weather here. I was happy with the decision and pretty sure it was the right one.”

“Once I’d got the settings sorted by playing with the traction

## “The real story was Ferrari’s performance on a track much closer to the profile of Le Mans”

control and things like that and the track started to dry a little bit, the tyres suddenly switched on,” added Conway, who started on the pole claimed by Kobayashi after Giovinazzi had lost his best to a track-limits infraction. “Suddenly the car was in the window and it was about being patient and picking off those ahead when we could.”

Conway had dropped to seventh on the opening racing lap, but was back at the front by the end of lap nine, three laps after a quickfire safety car. The only glitches for the race winners over the remainder of the race were a couple of slow pitstops, one in the middle of Lopez’s double when it was unclear whether he had made it into the pits before an FCY had been called, and then a problem with the jacks when Kobayashi took over.

Cadillac was in the mix, too, and might have notched up a maiden



WEC podium after falling short at Sebring and Algarve. Both the Ganassi-run Cadillac squad’s regular entry and the additional car, entered at Spa in preparation for Le Mans, had a shot at the top three.

The extra car was running second and only 37s off the lead in Renger van der Zande’s hands when he crashed heavily at Eau Rouge. Ganassi was offering no explanation ahead of a proper review of the data and played down the suggestion from Sebastien Bourdais, who was teamed with van der Zande and Jack Aitken, that the power steering had failed. What was clear, however, was that the Dutchman ran much more kerb at the bottom of the corner than the following Ferraris.

Van der Zande was on the money when he said that the accident was “almost out of a movie scene”. As dramatic as it

## WADOUX LEADS FERRARI TO GTE AM SUCCESS

Ferrari drivers Alessio Rovera, Lilou Wadoux and Luis Perez Companc ended Corvette Racing’s winning run in GTE Am, although the American squad still recovered to finish an improbable second after dropping a lap down early on.

Making the correct tyre choice early in opting for slicks kept Perez-Companc in the hunt, although it was during Wadoux’s double stint that AF Corse’s #83 488 GTE Evo came alive. She moved quickly to the front of a four-car group contesting the top spot, twice passing Zacharie Robichon’s Proton Porsche for the lead, before pulling a gap that Rovera extended to 18.653s with a fastest lap 0.369s quicker than anybody.

Avenging their defeat to Corvette trio Ben Keating/Nico Varrone/Nicky Catsburg in Portugal was “really sweet”, Rovera explained. Wadoux’s first class win for a female driver in the WEC’s modern guise put a cherry on the cake.



“We demonstrated that we were super-fast like in Portimao, but this time I started in front of the Corvette thanks to Lilou and to Luis, so it was more easy,” said Rovera. “I am really happy to win this race, especially with Lilou.”

Equally delighted with second was Catsburg, who fended off Charlie Eastwood in the TF

Sport-run ORT Aston Martin Vantage after pulling a neat move on the Northern Irishman into the Bus Stop. The “safe choice” of taking wets for the start had been the wrong call for Keating, but three safety-car passarounds helped drag the C8.R back into the picture. “We were ready to settle for P6, P7,” beamed Catsburg. “And somehow we got away with P2!”

“How they pulled a second out of that I have no idea to be honest!” chuckled Tom Ferrier. But the TF boss was still delighted with a maiden rostrum of the season for Eastwood, polesitter Ahmad Al Harthy and Michael Dinan after struggling at Algarve. Although a pre-event Balance of Performance tweak “helped a bit”, Ferrier felt the upswing owed more to his drivers after the safety car mitigated a penalty incurred when Dinan slithered over the pit exit line.

**JAMES NEWBOLD**







Ferraris led early on after starting on wet tyres in tricky conditions

was, he climbed from the car unaided and bowed to the crowd. The sister car ended up fifth in the hands of Earl Bamber, Alex Lynn and Richard Westbrook. The last-named had a 5s margin over Calado after they both climbed aboard their respective mounts, but fell behind inside six laps and then dropped away from the Ferrari. “We tried something with the tyres and it didn’t work as well as hoped,” said Ganassi team manager Stephen Mitas. “We definitely felt that we missed the opportunity to get on the podium because we had two quick race cars today.” The real story, however, was Ferrari’s performance on a track much closer to the performance profile of Le Mans. Roll on June. 🏆

[P41 FULL RESULTS](#)



Ferrari trio celebrate victory flanked by Chevy and Aston Martin crews

## PORSCHE AND PEUGEOT LOOKING FOR ANSWERS



Vanthoor flew for Porsche until mystery glitch struck the 963

Porsche came within three or so miles of another World Endurance Championship podium, and Peugeot got two cars to the finish more or less cleanly for the first time, but it wasn’t a good weekend for either marque. The events at Spa last weekend did little or nothing to suggest that either manufacturer is going to be in the mix come the Le Mans 24 Hours next month.

The most encouraging aspect of the race for the German manufacturer was the pace of Laurens Vanthoor in the #6 Porsche Penske Motorsport entry over the opening couple of hours. The biggest disappointment was that his 963 LMDh switched itself off 12 minutes into hour three when running second. The team was at a loss to explain what had happened.

The sister car, meanwhile, was a good second and a half off the pace in the hands of Frederic Makowiecki, Michael Christensen and Dane Cameron over the race duration.

“We are not where we want to be,” said 963 programme manager Urs Kuratle, who conceded that Porsche was only in the hunt for third place given that Ferrari was playing catch-up. “We are not happy, definitely not.”

Jota enjoyed a solid debut with its customer 963, which arrived at Spa after a one-hour shakedown at Porsche’s Weissach facility. The single delay for the sixth-placed car shared by Antonio Felix da Costa, Will Stevens and Yifei Ye came with an emergency pitstop for a splash of fuel.

The two Peugeot 9X8 LMHs reached the finish in 14th, one place behind the Glickenhaus-Pipo 007 LMH, and 17th overall on a day when they were less competitive than at Portimao. The #93 might have made it home ahead of all the LMP2s had Jean-Eric Vergne not lost pace at the end after sustaining damage in a hit from behind. An electrical issue linked to a sensor on the refuelling rig cost #94 three minutes.

“It was good on the reliability side,” said technical director Olivier Janssonie, “but the pace wasn’t good. It is not where we think we should be.”

GARY WATKINS



Once again, the wingless Peugeot struggled for raw pace



WRT CASHES IN AS UNITED LOSES BIG LMP2 LEAD

As in 2022, WRT claimed the LMP2 spoils at Spa in a topsy-turvy race that team boss Vincent Vosse admitted “was difficult to read”. His #41 ORECA-Gibson 07 driven by Louis Deletraz, Robert Kubica and Rui Andrade prevailed despite losing time to an emergency service under Full Course Yellow in the fourth hour, recovering to beat United Autosports’ #23 ORECA after a four-seconds-shorter final service got Deletraz out ahead of dominant early leader Tom Blomqvist.

Andrade “completely bottled the start” from second on the grid, outbraking himself at La Source in his efforts to recover. The Angolan plunged to ninth but recovered to third during his double stint. Poleman Blomqvist, sharing with Josh Pierson and Oliver Jarvis, initially lost out to Doriane Pin’s #63 Prema car into the Bus Stop on lap one, but immediately dispatched Pin after the restart and had a 45-second cushion over an out-of-sequence Fabio Scherer (Inter Europol ran a short second stint with Jakub Smiechowski) before the safety car for Renger van der Zande’s Cadillac Hypercar crash wiped it out.

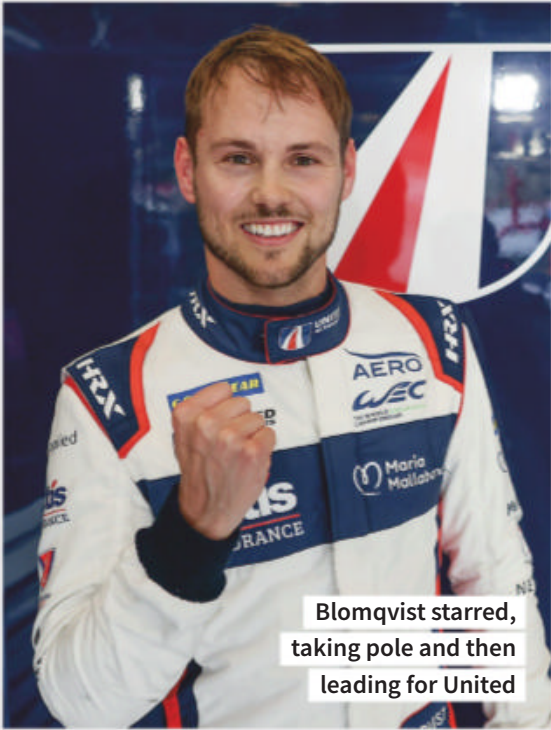
“There was always going to be a risk, and it didn’t work out for us,” lamented United boss Richard Dean. “If there hadn’t been a safety car, we would have been in a lot more control.”

“We all just assumed we were out of contention because we were so far back,” revealed Andrade.

The middle phase of the race was a WRT benefit, its two cars repeatedly trading the lead. But the third safety car arrival hampered car #41, Kubica requiring emergency fuel and stopping again immediately when the race went green. “We had an offset of two, three laps of fuel more in the car so we were looking good against our competition,” recounted the Pole. “But the safety car came just in the wrong moment.”

While all eyes were on the lead battle between Ferdinand Habsburg’s WRT ORECA and Mirko Bortolotti’s Prema version, which lost any hope of a result with a three-minute stop/go for making a normal pitstop during a safety car period, the cars that disputed the win were fifth and sixth with a little over an hour to go. Kubica played a long game in his tussle with Jarvis, running one lap longer before the pair made their penultimate stops with 48 minutes to go, leaving Deletraz with a shorter fill at the crucial final splash-and-dash.

“In the last stint I knew I was quicker, I wanted to go for the overtake,” said Deletraz, who passed team-mate Robin Frijns before closing down Blomqvist. They pitted nose to tail for the final time with 12 minutes remaining, and Dean reckoned the outcome was inevitable: “We knew the #41 was going to jump us at that stop, they had more fuel in the tank.” Sure enough, Deletraz went on to win by 6.042s.



Blomqvist starred, taking pole and then leading for United

The final podium position went to the yo-yoing Inter Europol car that Scherer, earlier delayed by a slow puncture, had pitted from the lead with 35 minutes remaining. Albert Costa rejoined sixth but with fresher rubber hunted down Frijns, Filipe Albuquerque’s #22 United machine – in which Phil Hanson had clouted the wall at Raidillon on the first warm-up lap – and Andrea Caldarelli’s #9 Prema entry for his elated Polish team’s first WEC rostrum.

JAMES NEWBOLD



WRT came out ahead in LMP2 after the late pitstops



RESULTS ROUND 3/7, SPA 6 HOURS (BEL), 29 APRIL (148 LAPS – 644.099 MILES)					
POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	Mike <b>Conway</b> (GBR) Kamui <b>Kobayashi</b> (JPN) Jose Maria <b>Lopez</b> (ARG)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	6h00m24.798s
2	Sebastien <b>Buemi</b> (CHE) Brendon <b>Hartley</b> (NZL) Ryo <b>Hirakawa</b> (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	+16.637s
3	Antonio <b>Giovinazzi</b> (ITA) Alessandro <b>Pier Guidi</b> (ITA) James <b>Calado</b> (GBR)	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	+1m14.439s
4	Michael <b>Christensen</b> (DNK) Dane <b>Cameron</b> (USA) Frederic <b>Makowiecki</b> (FRA)	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	Hypercar	+1m17.264s
5	Earl <b>Bamber</b> (NZL) Alex <b>Lynn</b> (GBR) Richard <b>Westbrook</b> (GBR)	Cadillac Racing (Ganassi)	Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	-1 lap
6	Antonio <b>Felix da Costa</b> (PRT) Will <b>Stevens</b> (GBR) Yifei <b>Ye</b> (CHN)	Jota	Porsche 963	Hypercar	-1 lap
7	Rui <b>Andrade</b> (PRT) Robert <b>Kubica</b> (POL) Louis <b>Deletraz</b> (CHE)	Team WRT	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
8	Tom <b>Blomqvist</b> (GBR) Josh <b>Pierson</b> (USA) Oliver <b>Jarvis</b> (GBR)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
9	Jakub <b>Smiechowski</b> (POL) Fabio <b>Scherer</b> (CHE) Albert <b>Costa</b> (ESP)	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
10	Filip <b>Ugran</b> (ROU) Bent <b>Viscaal</b> (NLD) Andrea <b>Caldarelli</b> (ITA)	Prema Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
11	Phil <b>Hanson</b> (GBR) Freddie <b>Lubin</b> (GBR) Filipe <b>Albuquerque</b> (PRT)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
12	Sean <b>Gelael</b> (IDN) Ferdinand <b>Habsburg</b> (AUT) Robin <b>Frijns</b> (NLD)	Team WRT	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
13	Romain <b>Dumas</b> (FRA) Olivier <b>Pla</b> (FRA) Franck <b>Mailleux</b> (FRA)	Glickenhause Racing	Glickenhause-Pipo 007 LMH	Hypercar	-2 laps
14	Paul <b>di Resta</b> (GBR) Mikkel <b>Jensen</b> (DNK) Jean-Eric <b>Vergne</b> (FRA)	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-2 laps
15	Julien <b>Canal</b> (FRA) Matthieu <b>Vaxiviere</b> (FRA) Charles <b>Milesi</b> (FRA)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
16	Memo <b>Rojas</b> (MEX) Andre <b>Negrao</b> (BRA) Olli <b>Caldwell</b> (GBR)	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-2 laps
17	Gustavo <b>Menezes</b> (USA) Loic <b>Duval</b> (FRA) Nico <b>Muller</b> (CHE)	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-2 laps
18	David <b>Heinemeier Hansson</b> (DNK) Pietro <b>Fittipaldi</b> (BRA) Oliver <b>Rasmussen</b> (DNK)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-3 laps
19	Doriane <b>Pin</b> (FRA) Mirko <b>Bortolotti</b> (ITA) Daniil <b>Kvyat</b> (RUS)	Prema Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-4 laps
20	Luis <b>Perez Companc</b> (ARG) Lilou <b>Wadoux</b> (FRA) Alessio <b>Rovera</b> (ITA)	Richard Mille AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-8 laps
21	Ben <b>Keating</b> (USA) Nico <b>Varrone</b> (ARG) Nicky <b>Catsburg</b> (NLD)	Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller)	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	GTE Am	-8 laps
22	Michael <b>Dinan</b> (USA) Ahmad <b>Al Harthy</b> (OMN) Charlie <b>Eastwood</b> (GBR)	ORT by TF	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-8 laps
23	Ryan <b>Hardwick</b> (USA) Zacharie <b>Robichon</b> (CAN) Harry <b>Tincknell</b> (GBR)	Proton Competition	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-9 laps
24	Sarah <b>Bovy</b> (BEL) Michelle <b>Gatting</b> (DNK) Rahel <b>Frey</b> (CHE)	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-9 laps
25	Ulysse <b>De Pauw</b> (BEL) Diego <b>Alessi</b> (ITA) Simon <b>Mann</b> (USA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-9 laps
26	Ian <b>James</b> (GBR) Daniel <b>Mancinelli</b> (ITA) Alex <b>Riberas</b> (ESP)	Northwest AMR (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-9 laps
27	Takeshi <b>Kimura</b> (JPN) Scott <b>Huffaker</b> (USA) Daniel <b>Serra</b> (BRA)	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-9 laps
28	Christian <b>Ried</b> (DEU) Mikkel <b>Overgaard Pedersen</b> (DNK) Julien <b>Andlauer</b> (FRA)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-10 laps
29	Tomonobu <b>Fujii</b> (JPN) Satoshi <b>Hoshino</b> (JPN) Casper <b>Stevenson</b> (GBR)	D'Station Racing (TF)	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-10 laps
30	Claudio <b>Schiavoni</b> (ITA) Matteo <b>Cressoni</b> (ITA) Alessio <b>Picariello</b> (BEL)	Iron Lynx	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-11 laps
31	Michael <b>Wainwright</b> (GBR) Riccardo <b>Pera</b> (ITA) Ben <b>Barker</b> (GBR)	GR Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-12 laps
R	Nicklas <b>Nielsen</b> (DNK) Antonio <b>Fuoco</b> (ITA) Miguel <b>Molina</b> (ESP)	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	106 laps-accident
R	Tom <b>Dillmann</b> (FRA) Esteban <b>Guerrieri</b> (ARG) Jacques <b>Villeneuve</b> (CAN)	Floyd Vanwall Racing Team	Vanwall-Gibson Vandervell 680	Hypercar	80 laps-accident
R	Thomas <b>Flohr</b> (CHE) Francesco <b>Castellacci</b> (ITA) Davide <b>Rigon</b> (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	79 laps-accident damage
R	Laurens <b>Vanthoor</b> (BEL) Kevin <b>Estre</b> (FRA) Andre <b>Lotterer</b> (DEU)	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	Hypercar	53 laps-electrical
R	Renger <b>van der Zande</b> (NLD) Sebastien <b>Bourdais</b> (FRA) Jack <b>Aitken</b> (GBR)	Cadillac Racing (Ganassi)	Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	40 laps-accident
R	Gabriel <b>Aubry</b> (FRA) Ryan <b>Cullen</b> (IRL) Matthias <b>Kaiser</b> (LIE)	Vector Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	14 laps-lost wheel
NS	PJ <b>Hyett</b> (USA) Gunnar <b>Jeannette</b> (USA) Matteo <b>Cairolì</b> (ITA)	Project 1 - AO	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	qualifying accident

In each car, first-named driver started race. **Winners' average speed** 107.251mph. **Fastest lap** Kobayashi 2m02.327s, 128.077mph.

**LMP2** Milesi 2m06.732s, 123.625mph.  
**GTE Am** Rovera 2m14.829s, 116.201mph.

QUALIFYING

**1** Kobayashi 2m00.812s; **2** Molina 2m00.836s; **3** Giovinazzi 2m00.973s; **4** Bamber 2m01.043s; **5** Bourdais 2m02.138s; **6** Estre 2m02.306s; **7** Stevens 2m02.907s; **8** Pla 2m02.960s; **9** Vergne 2m03.217s; **10** Makowiecki 2m03.650s; **11** Menezes 2m03.879s; **12** Dillmann 2m04.614s; **13** Blomqvist 2m05.979s; **14** Deletraz 2m06.318s; **15** Kvyat 2m06.506s; **16** Frijns 2m06.532s; **17** Fittipaldi

2m06.556s; **18** Viscaal 2m06.601s; **19** Albuquerque 2m06.684s; **20** Scherer 2m06.825s; **21** Aubry 2m07.035s; **22** Caldwell 2m07.099s; **23** Milesi 2m07.157s; **24** Al Harthy 2m17.216s; **25** Bovy 2m19.150s; **26** Hardwick 2m19.481s; **27** Keating 2m19.506s; **28** Perez Companc 2m19.723s; **29** James 2m19.976s; **30** Flohr 2m20.382s; **31** Hoshino 2m20.507s; **32** Kimura 2m20.515s; **33** Ried 2m21.247s; **34** Wainwright 2m22.469s; **35** Schiavoni 2m23.097s; **36** Hartley no time; **37** De Pauw no time; **NS** Hyett no time.

CHAMPIONSHIP

Hypercar drivers

**1** Hartley/Hirakawa/Buemi **71**; **2** Lopez/Kobayashi/Conway **66**; **3** Fuoco/Molina/Nielsen **42**; **4** Lynn/Bamber/Westbrook **40**; **5** Pier Guidi/Giovinazzi/Calado **32**; **6** Cameron/Makowiecki/Christensen **28**.

Hypercar manufacturers

**1** Toyota **90**; **2** Ferrari **57**; **3** Porsche **42**; **4** Cadillac **40**; **5** Peugeot **19**; **6** Glickenhause **12**; **7** Vanwall **6**.

LMP2 drivers

**1** Lubin/Hanson **66**; **2** Deletraz/Kubica/Andrade **58**; **3** Albuquerque **48**; **4** Pierson/

Jarvis **45**; **5** Kvyat/Pin/Bortolotti **41**; **6** Costa/Scherer/Smiechowski **40**.

GTE Am drivers

**1** Keating/Catsburg/Varrone **82**; **2** Rovera/Wadoux/Perez Companc **43**; **3** Mann/de Pauw **36**; **4** Ried/Andlauer/Pedersen **35**; **5** Gatting/Frey/Bovy **32**; **6** Serra/Huffaker/Kimura **28**.

NEXT REPORT

LE MANS 24 HOURS  
15 JUNE ISSUE



# McLaughlin denies Grosjean in Alabama duel

*The three-time Supercars champion came out on top to take his fourth IndyCar victory in a thrilling battle with the polesitting ex-Formula 1 driver*

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES

**I**t's a true measure of Scott McLaughlin's standing within IndyCar in this, his third year, that we are no longer surprised at his achievements. Autosport was speaking to a race engineer from a rival team back in March, after the 16-car test at Barber Motorsports Park, in which the driver of the #3 Chevrolet-powered Team Penske entry emerged quickest by two tenths. Asked what he learned from the test, the engineer's instant reply was: "That McLaughlin is one f\*\*\*ing quick dude around here."

Then you remembered that McLaughlin won at Mid-Ohio and Portland last year, and even aced the virtual race around Barber, when IndyCar kept us entertained in the early months of COVID-cursed 2020 by hosting online sim racing. Natural-terrain road courses are very much his thing.

So it was a surprise last weekend that he wasn't on pole position, or even the front row. Instead it was Andretti Autosport's Romain Grosjean who scored his second pole of the season, the third of his IndyCar career, by outpacing Chip Ganassi Racing's 2021 Barber winner Alex Palou by 0.073 seconds. Pato O'Ward was third in his Arrow McLaren entry and McLaughlin fourth. The Kiwi outpaced his Penske team-mates: Josef Newgarden would roll off seventh, with Will Power 11th.

Of the top dozen on the grid, only the three Penske drivers and Christian Lundgaard (see panel, p45) started the race on Firestone's harder primary tyres, and they were prepared to be flexible on pitstop strategy; normally two stops, maintaining track position, has been the way to go. But the track wasn't quite as hot as feared, and the surface wouldn't tear alternate tyres to shreds. Besides which, Barber long ago ditched the reputation of being a course where track position is all; there are passing opportunities if you're



quicker and braver than your opponent... or if they're on a fuel-saving strategy and you are not.

Grosjean defended from strong attacks from first O'Ward then Palou over the opening laps, but it soon became clear that all three were aiming for a two-stop strategy, as was Scott Dixon who jumped compatriot McLaughlin to run fourth. But Dixon was impressed by McLaughlin's innate speed, regularly having to resort to the push-to-pass button to stay clear of a car that was on the harder-compound tyres, and thereby hurting his own fuel consumption. The man who had earned nine podium finishes at Barber yet never won would have a frustrating day.

Newgarden was the first to commit to a three-stopper, pulling in to change from the primaries for a fresh set of the softer red-sidewalled tyres. Despite having demoted Lundgaard at the start to run sixth, the three-time Barber winner was not having an easy time, having collided – apparently quite gently – with Felix Rosenqvist exiting Turn 1 on the opening lap. Something on his rear suspension wasn't quite right, and it had vastly increased the wear on his left-rear. For Newgarden it was an easy choice to hit the pitlane early. Alexander Rossi followed him in a lap later, as did McLaughlin and Power after that. Of the leading runners, these were the only four to choose three stops and, while Newgarden and McLaughlin (now in that order) and Rossi elected to grab new reds, Power went for used reds. At this stage this quartet's decision to go





McLaughlin rates his Barber victory as “the most complete race I’ve ever driven in an IndyCar”

## “McLaughlin was trying to pressure Grosjean into a mistake without cooking his tyres”

for three stops looked brave for they emerged in positions 18-21.

“In the first stint when I saw everyone saving fuel about eight to 10 laps in, I said to the guys, ‘Maybe we should switch to a three-stopper here, do you want me to push?’ explained Power. “It was the best thing to do at that time.”

Sure enough, they then started making good progress. Even before the two-stoppers hit the pitlane from lap 27 onwards, Newgarden was up to 10th... which became the lead once Grosjean, Palou, O’Ward et al pitted for the first of two stops.

Crucially at this stage, O’Ward and Dixon stopped a lap before the leaders, got in a tight battle with each other on the pit exit, and the Ganassi driver conceded. A lap later, Grosjean and Palou emerged from their stops ahead of O’Ward but on cold tyres, and Palou couldn’t hold back the McLaren driver. In fact, his pace on colder tyres held up Dixon so that the six-time champ lost just enough momentum that he fell victim to an opportunistic lunge by Lundgaard – now on warm alternates – down the inside at the final turn.

Now the three-stoppers occupied the top six, Newgarden ahead of McLaughlin, Rossi and Power, covered by six seconds. Rosenqvist had switched from two stops to three after his impact with Newgarden had spun him to the back of the field on the opening lap, and he was fifth, 2.7s down but on primaries, with David Malukas sixth but 13s further back. Then came the

two-stoppers, led by Grosjean.

McLaughlin snatched the lead from Newgarden on lap 37, and Penske president Tim Cindric called the erstwhile leader in. Then when Sting Ray Robb stopped his Dale Coyne Racing car with a mechanical issue, McLaughlin, Rossi, Power and Rosenqvist were called in before the pitlane closed under caution. Rossi and Rosenqvist took on more primaries, unlike the Penske drivers: McLaughlin was given scuffed reds, Power fresh reds.

The caution helped the two-stoppers save fuel, but now the fastest three-stoppers were in the same boat as them – they required just one more pitstop – but they also had alternate tyres that would be faster at coming up to racing temperature. Grosjean would take the restart in front, but vulnerable to McLaughlin...

After the green waved on lap 42, Lundgaard dived past Palou at Turn 5 to claim fourth (alternate tyres passing primaries), while the same rubber differential ensured Newgarden passed Rossi for seventh and then Dixon for sixth, while Power deposed Rossi.

Up front, McLaughlin was trying to pressure Grosjean into a mistake without cooking his tyres, and by lap 53 these two were only 0.7s apart yet 7s ahead of fuel-saving O’Ward. Building towards his final stop, Grosjean set his fastest lap times to eke 1.5s over McLaughlin, and now he had 11s on O’Ward on the same strategy. The Andretti and McLaren drivers pitted on lap 60 of 90.

Newgarden’s first-lap damage was again causing problems late in a stint, resulted in him bottling up those behind. When the dam burst on lap 61 and Dixon zoomed through, the Kiwi veteran immediately pitted for fresh primaries, as did Palou. Newgarden pitted next time around, by which time he had also lost spots to Power, Rossi and Rosenqvist.

McLaughlin went one more lap, but now Power, who had started this stint on fresh reds and had then saved plenty of fuel in the >>





Grosjean fended off spirited attacks from O'Ward and Palou in the opening laps

Newgarden train, delivered three outstanding laps, including the fastest lap of the race by 0.44s. The Australian ducked into the pits for the final time on lap 66 and emerged ahead of the fuel-mileage-crippled O'Ward and Palou to run third, albeit still 10s off the Grosjean-McLaughlin battle.

And what a battle it was! The duo that had so infamously sparred and collided at St Petersburg were at it again. McLaughlin had emerged from his last stop on lap 64 ahead of Grosjean and had to vigorously defend as he worked his primary tyres up to temperature. He thought he had it done too, but then Grosjean carried more speed into the right-handed penultimate Turn 16 and found just enough of a gap – and just enough grip on the outside of the corner – to put himself on the inside through Turn 17, the left-hander onto the start straight. It was a brilliant move.

“We kissed each other a touch,” smiled the Andretti driver post-race. “I know with Scott, a few guys out there, that I’m really not worried about racing. Scott made a mistake in St Pete. I know he doesn’t race that way. It was all clean.”

Grosjean’s joy was short-lived. McLaughlin is a terrier in the vein of O’Ward or the late, great Justin Wilson and he will not let his head drop. So he was forcing Grosjean to lean on his push-to-pass button to fend him off. This was hurting Grosjean’s mileage, because P2P gulps fuel, and he was soon out of it. Surprisingly



Newgarden, hamstrung by lap-one damage, is demoted by Dixon

## “There’s that fine line. You can overdo it. I had a big moment where I was opposite lock...”

soon, in fact, having conserved it through the first half of the race.

“Maybe I just had a brain freeze and it actually went down,” he remarked afterwards. “I thought it was 99 [seconds, from 200 at the start of the race] and the next thing it was zero. We’re just going to have a look. Maybe it’s a glitch in the dashboard or software, I don’t know. I don’t feel like I used 200 seconds. I just want to make sure we understand what happened.”

Whatever, the result is that when the Andretti #28 car ran wide at Turn 5 on lap 72, the ex-Formula 1 driver had nothing left to fend off McLaughlin at the exit. McLaughlin hit the button for his extra boost on the long drag that followed and had him clean before Turn 8.

With 10 laps to go, Power had closed his deficit to the leaders to 2s, but he had taken another set of scrubbed reds at his final stop and now he started to pay the price. “I started getting Romain’s dirty air,” said the reigning champion. “He was doing a really good job of saving fuel and also getting big exits, not making mistakes. I did everything I could to get to him and I just couldn’t get there...”

“Obviously there’s that fine line, right? You can overdo it. I did have a big moment in Turn 2 where I was opposite lock... So I just had to weigh that up. That’s the most I could get out of the day.

McLaughlin took the flag 1.8s clear, his fourth IndyCar victory, and the fourth different winner in the first four races of the season. “I’m really proud to execute today,” he said. “Probably the most complete race I’ve ever driven in an IndyCar, to be honest, from a strategy perspective, picking people off.

“When Grosjean got me out of the pits, didn’t catch me by surprise. Well, he caught me napping! It was a great move by him. To reset, go again, then pass him back with the pace that we had, that’s a proud drive for me personally, but from a team perspective, really proud.”

NEXT REPORT

INDIANAPOLIS GP  
18 MAY



## LUNDGAARD SHOWS SIGNS OF RAHAL RECOVERY



GALSTAD

It's no secret that Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing has had a frustrating start to 2023, just like 2022. But while it took until mid-season for the Bobby Rahal, David Letterman and Mike Lanigan-owned squad to turn its fortunes around last year, second-year IndyCar driver Christian Lundgaard took only until the fourth round of this season to prove that there are signs within the team of true progress.

He outqualified two Penske cars, two Arrow McLaren machines, two Ganassi cars and three Andretti Dallaras to line up sixth. Electing to run a two-stop strategy, Lundgaard initially struggled on Firestone's primary compound and fell to 10th by lap four. But as those who had started on alternate tyres lost grip and the three-stoppers pitted, the Dane passed Colton Herta and Rinus VeeKay to run fifth by the time he pitted for the first time.

Lundgaard was able to pass Scott Dixon after the first round of stops and Alex Palou following the restart, only losing a spot to Palou's pitcrew and Will Power's tactics at the next stops, to eventually come home sixth.

"The #45 guys had some of the best stops we've had all season," said Lundgaard. "We've got to take the positives from this weekend. We took a big step forward. Just looking at my overtake [on Dixon] – these were the kind of moves that we had to get done today. I knew I had to be aggressive."

Team-mate Graham Rahal qualified 19th, switched to a three-stop strategy and came home 17th, while Jack Harvey started 24th, collided with Helio Castroneves on the opening lap, and didn't switch tactics. A two-stop strategy and wing damage limited him to a 24th-place finish.



GALSTAD



LEVITT

McLaughlin is in his element on natural terrain road courses like Barber

### RESULTS ROUND 4/17, BARBER MOTORSPORTS PARK (USA), 30 APRIL (90 LAPS – 207.0 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	<b>Scott McLaughlin</b> (NZL)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	1h47m58.9401s
2	<b>Romain Grosjean</b> (FRA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+1.7854s
3	<b>Will Power</b> (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+3.2699s
4	<b>Pato O'Ward</b> (MEX)	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+20.5745s
5	<b>Alex Palou</b> (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+20.9762s
6	<b>Christian Lundgaard</b> (DNK)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+23.5319s
7	<b>Scott Dixon</b> (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+24.2769s
8	<b>Alexander Rossi</b> (USA)	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+25.0582s
9	<b>Felix Rosenqvist</b> (SWE)	Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet	+25.5107s
10	<b>Marcus Ericsson</b> (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+26.0190s
11	<b>Marcus Armstrong</b> (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+28.5527s
12	<b>Kyle Kirkwood</b> (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+36.3667s
13	<b>Callum Ilott</b> (GBR)	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+42.4441s
14	<b>Colton Herta</b> (USA)	Andretti Autosport with Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Honda	+43.7781s
15	<b>Josef Newgarden</b> (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+45.7346s
16	<b>Rinus van Kalmthout</b> (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+55.1118s
17	<b>Graham Rahal</b> (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+56.4422s
18	<b>Simon Pagenaud</b> (FRA)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+56.7500s
19	<b>David Malukas</b> (USA)	Dale Coyne Racing with HMD / Dallara-Honda	+57.7650s
20	<b>Santino Ferrucci</b> (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+58.5106s
21	<b>Helio Castroneves</b> (BRA)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+1m00.0847s
22	<b>Benjamin Pedersen</b> (DNK)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m01.3063s
23	<b>Devlin DeFrancesco</b> (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+1m03.1924s
24	<b>Jack Harvey</b> (GBR)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+1m04.5393s
25	<b>Conor Daly</b> (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m05.6055s
26	<b>Agustin Canapino</b> (ARG)	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1m06.1483s
27	<b>Sting Ray Robb</b> (USA)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR / Dallara-Honda	36 laps-engine cut out

**Winner's average speed** 115.019mph. **Fastest lap** Power 1m07.8022s, 122.120mph.

#### QUALIFYING

**Q3 1 Grosjean 1m05.8396s; 2 Palou 1m05.9130s; 3 O'Ward 1m05.9382s; 4 McLaughlin 1m05.9515s; 5 Dixon 1m06.0723s; 6 Lundgaard 1m06.1601s. Q2 Grosjean 1m05.6829s; O'Ward 1m05.7512s; McLaughlin 1m05.8061s; Palou 1m05.8386s; Lundgaard 1m05.8661s; Dixon 1m05.8986s; 7 Newgarden 1m05.9603s; 8 Rosenqvist 1m06.0930s; 9 van Kalmthout 1m06.1222s; 10 Rossi 1m06.2091s; 11 Power 1m06.3790s; 12 Kirkwood 1m06.3963s. Q1 – GROUP 1 Newgarden 1m05.5883s; Grosjean 1m05.6839s; Rossi 1m05.6939s; Kirkwood 1m05.7353s; Dixon 1m05.7721s; van Kalmthout 1m05.7808s; 13 Ericsson 1m05.9207s; 15 Ilott 1m06.0642s; 17 Malukas**

**1m06.1851s; 19 Rahal 1m06.2504s; 21 Castroneves 1m06.2715s; 23 Robb 1m06.5925s; 25 Pedersen 1m06.9327s. Q1 – GROUP 2 Palou 1m05.5871s; O'Ward 1m05.7400s; McLaughlin 1m05.7478s; Lundgaard 1m05.8342s; Rosenqvist 1m05.8696s; Power 1m05.9768s; 14 Herta 1m06.1850s; 16 Pagenaud 1m06.2433s; 18 DeFrancesco 1m06.4415s; 20 Daly 1m06.4810s; 22 Canapino 1m06.5158s; 24 Harvey 1m06.7181s; 26 Armstrong 1m07.2378s; 27 Ferrucci 3m49.1462s.**

#### CHAMPIONSHIP

**1 Ericsson 130; 2 O'Ward 127; 3 Palou 121; 4 McLaughlin 119; 5 Grosjean 115; 6 Newgarden 105; 7 Power 104; 8 Dixon 98; 9 Kirkwood 92; 10 Herta 85.**



INDYCAR/IMSA

# THE POWER BEHIND HONDA'S AMERICAN DREAMS

*For 30 years, Honda has flexed its muscle in US motorsport and enjoyed a fair share of success in IndyCar and sportscars. We went behind the scenes to find out more*

CHARLES BRADLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY HONDA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT AND



# TAG Heuer





In the rolling hills north of Los Angeles, next door to a movie lot, Honda's American motorsport division HPD has produced some of the most potent engines in US motorsport; powerplants that have claimed 18 IndyCar championships and 15 Indianapolis 500 wins, along with a surfeit of sportscar titles and a trio of overall Daytona 24 Hours victories for its luxury Acura marque.

But Honda is a Japanese company, right? Parent company Honda Motor Co is the multinational conglomerate based out of Tokyo, but the American Honda Motor Company, founded in 1959, has grown into a massive concern in its own right – not bad from an initial staff of three with a start-up budget of just \$250,000 to sell motorbikes! Based out of Torrance, a few miles south of Honda Performance Development's 123,000-square-foot facility in Santa Clarita, it began building road cars in the US in the 1980s. It is now one of the top-selling automotive OEMs in a humongous market.

Honda began its US motorsport operations in 1993, joining the CART Indycar series as an engine builder (with support from Ilmor) in 1994, and then became a bedrock supplier for the Indy Racing League and IndyCar series, where it currently supplies 15 cars in competition with Chevrolet (which, ironically, now uses Ilmors).

In sportscars, after a Spice-chassised programme in the early 1990s using engines straight from Japan, Acura's entry into the American Le Mans Series raised its game in 2007 – it featured a first bespoke racing engine built completely in-house – beginning with an LMP2 class win at the 12 Hours of Sebring. That very car, the Andretti Green Racing-run ARX-01a piloted by Dario Franchitti, Bryan Herta and Tony Kanaan, resides in a back room at HPD. It's pointed to by company president David Salters as the starting point to its heritage as a true factory sportscar entrant, and that reworked Courage chassis has led to a firm partnership with its spiritual successor, ORECA.

In 2023, Acura's ARX-06 LMDh cars have made a fast start to the IMSA SportsCar Championship, and you could argue that it's got the second or third-fastest sportscar prototype on the planet, after the World Endurance Championship's Toyota and Ferrari. Its winning start at the Daytona 24 Hours followed the three-time championship success of its DPi predecessor and, coupled to its successful NSX GT3 project, Acura has scored over 100 race wins in sportscars.

Salters, who hails from the north-west of England, moved to the US in 2015, after working for Ferrari in Formula 1 and, before that, at Mercedes-Benz High Performance Engines and Cosworth. He says his time in F1 taught him to "see how it can work... and cannot work! Some people were awfully good – Ross Brawn, what a genius – and I've been lucky enough to see a lot of different things."

Of his role today, Salters explains that HPD works independently of its equivalent HRC in Japan, but that they communicate on a regular basis. "We respond to the marketing side of the brand, and our goal is to promote Honda and Acura, and to develop people and technology," he says. "We're



Schifsky (left) and Salters work independently of Honda in Japan

*“Racing can be quite an aggressive environment, but there’s a real respect for the individual inside Honda”*

all crazy motorsport people, we communicate well together, and Honda is a very respectful company. Racing can be quite an aggressive environment, but there's a real respect for the individual inside Honda.

"We do our own thing, because you need to do that to be fast, but we come together every so often. It'd be pretty stupid if we spent all this money and didn't share the knowledge. The mission here is different to Japan, really. They go and win F1 world championships, so they're the best in the world. And [Toyoharu] Tanabe-San, the technical director there, used to work here."

Honda motorsport manager Chuck Schifsky adds:

"I think there are two big misnomers about us – the first is that this programme is overseen by Japan and that David does everything they tell him to. He actually reports straight to our North American CEO Mr [Noriya] Kaihara.

"The second is that our operation is exactly the same as Chevy's, especially in IndyCar, where Ilmor is their partner. There is not another building, with another name on it, that is making all of our engine components for us."

HPD's staff level is running at a record high of 250 after, Salters says, "we decided it was a great idea to do new IndyCar and current IndyCar, plus DPi and new GTP all at the same >>



Franchitti/Herta/Kanaan ARX-01a took breakthrough LMP2 class win, Sebring 2007



Multiple projects mean HPD staff level is at a record high

HONDA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT



point”, so an extra 100 staff were effectively brought onboard in six months. “Four projects meant more firepower, but that number will come and go,” he adds.

Our tour of the factory starts at the assembly shop, where 20 or more engines are in various stages of build in the bays. One thing jumps out immediately: there are many more powerplants covered with red dust jackets (IndyCar units) than blue ones (IMSA units) – a simple, yet effective, way of avoiding confusion when not being worked on! – and we’ve arrived in mid-April just as the Indianapolis 500 qualifying motors are being crafted.

Next door is another huge production room that’s crammed with humming CNC machinery, where the engine parts are created. These machines can be programmed to work ‘lights out’ – to ensure 24/7 production if need be, much as you’ll find in the aerospace industry.

We encounter some neat stuff at every turn as we meander around HPD’s rooms, including a metallurgy office boasting some electro-microscope and analysis equipment that Autosport has only encountered previously in the back of the Ferrari F1 pits. Its sample testing identified a problem with IMSA’s new 80% blend of renewable fuel for 2023, which led to an oil contamination issue inside its GTP powerplants. After finding levels of up to 20% of fuel (a far from ideal lubricant) in its oil, HPD found a novel solution to an age-old problem.

“We actually discovered a [scientific] paper that was 100 years old,” says Salters. “All those years ago, a group at a university had modelled the equilibrium status of how fuel and oil interact. So, we did loads of classical sums and we were able to use that old

*“It’s not rocket science, it’s about getting the right people in the right places, to push in the right direction”*

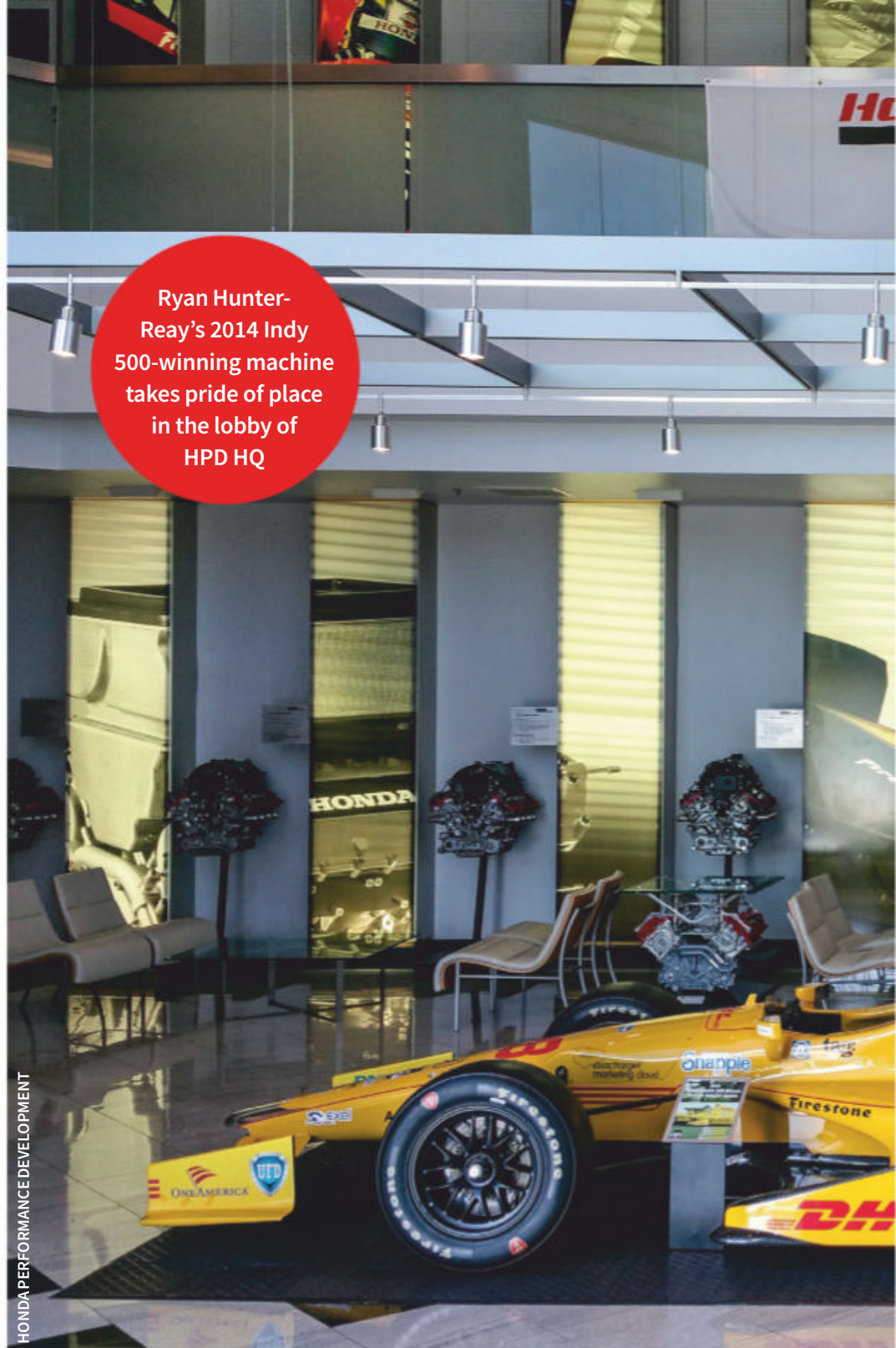
paper with 21st century measuring equipment, and we were able to figure out how the oil and fuel would reach an equilibrium state.”

A short-term fix led to a 1-2 finish in the Daytona 24 Hours, and it has since “done the engineering, so now it’s more-or-less under control”.

The real mindblower of this facility is seeing the dynamometer cells, where all the engines are tested to ensure their performance levels. One of the Indy 500 units is revving flat-out on a qualifying simulation, and it’s an awesome sight to see the exhausts glowing brightly on the other side of the window. “How hot are they running?” we ask. “950C,” is the matter-of-fact answer.

Assembly of twin-turbo 2.2-litre V6 IndyCar engines (inset) prioritised in Indy run-up

HONDA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT



But it’s not just proving out the existing kit; there are specific dynos for research and development, including a neat single-cylinder set-up featuring all kinds of measuring equipment. We can even see inside the cylinder, as it fires, via a tiny camera linked to the plethora of screens outside.

The best is yet to come: a transient dyno that not only tests the engine but the gearbox and the energy store. This is where HPD can trial the business end of its car on a virtual race track, even simulating the air pressure into the engine and its physical responses to being driven around... while completely stationary! Today it’s an IndyCar V6 that’s being developed for the series’ 2024 hybrid era, when supercapacitors will give a 100bhp boost.

There’s also a high-voltage battery lab, and a refrigerator-sized dSPACE simulator that is attached to the F1-spec GTP ECU. This is constantly being put through its paces, with three full-time coders working on updates for the open-software IMSA hybrid control system.

Upstairs, in an airy corner of the offices, is its mission control for the GTP programme. Banks of huge screens are situated in front of multiple workstations, where remote engineers support those at the track. Today, there’s a test session running at HPD’s simulator in Indianapolis, where we can see Filipe Albuquerque behind the wheel of the full-motion rig that’s running the virtual ARX-06





at Long Beach. In a side room at HPD, IMSA racer Matt McMurry is part of this process, and has his own static simulator that runs the same rFactor2 software.

“It’s predictive simulation,” says Salters. “This car has never run at Long Beach, but we know how it performed at Daytona and Sebring, so it’s about correlating the model of the car and tyres with data from the track.”

It’s just another example of the amazing level of technology to power success at the elite level of American motorsport, but Salters is keen to point out that the kit is nothing without the people who use it.

“It’s all about those boys and girls who work here, so it’s nice you got to see them at their work to show you what it’s all about,” he says. “It’s not rocket science, it’s about getting the right people in the right places with good energy, to push in the right direction. That’s when you achieve a lot. All the rest is just fluff!”

Looking to the future, HPD’s programmes are set in IndyCar, with the hybrid era kicking off next year, and IMSA GTP. After the Long Beach GP, the top brass of American Honda and Acura met for a future strategy discussion. They looked at two years out, but time was set aside for five or 10 years hence, and Salters and Schifsky also got a steer from an advisory board that guides them on the direction of Honda and Acura as automotive brands.

“It’s a great discussion of HPD asking, ‘What do you want us to do?’, and marketing saying, ‘Well, what can you do?’, and that leads to an outcome of what’s best for selling cars,” says Schifsky. “Otherwise, you’re racing, which is lovely and kudos to everyone, but at the end of the day we do it to sell cars.”

But if Acura doesn’t sell cars outside of the US, does that mean we’ll never see the ARX-06 race at Le Mans?

“I disagree,” says Schifsky. “There’s some difference of opinion. If and when we go, do we run it as a Honda or an Acura? The Acura

## HONDA IN THE USA



Metallurgy office's analytical capability a problem-solving boon

HONDA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT



Hands-on machining alongside CNC tools that can operate 'lights out'

HONDA PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT



Acuras looked set to dominate at Sebring last month but were dogged by misfortune

ABBOTT

team in the US will say it’s a global race, and the effect of that race is not just felt in Europe. It’s a wide-reaching event.”

Salters adds: “Of course we’d all love to go, who wouldn’t? We’re here to look after the US so let’s do a reasonable job of that first. It’s what pays the bills! We’ve got to get to grips with these cars.

“We speak with our Honda Motor colleagues in Japan, they’re quite interested – they love what we are doing – but because it’s global, it’s out of our remit. So, it’s what works for Honda Motor, it’s got to be coherent, but it’s in discussion. It’s a big picture thing, it’s up to them to sort out.”

Schifsky clarifies: “Formula 1, MotoGP and Le Mans are the three main areas they have direct control over.”

And that leaves HPD to its own devices, with an Indy 500 crown and an IMSA title to defend, so it’s plenty to be getting on with. For now, at least... ❧





GALLOWAY

## Stunning Bearman scores a double in Baku

**FORMULA 2**  
**BAKU (AZE)**  
**29-30 APRIL**  
**ROUND 4/14**

Ollie Bearman completed a rare Formula 2 double on a sensational weekend in Azerbaijan. The 17-year-old series rookie and Ferrari Driver Academy protege claimed pole before securing both victories in his Prema Racing car for a near-maximum haul of 38 out of 39 points.

The waxing was lyrical about Bearman even on Friday. When he swiped the wall exiting Turn 2 on his final flier in qualifying he bent the steering, yet he kept it lit to snatch pole from Enzo Fittipaldi by 0.012 seconds, with Theo Pourchaire and Frederik Vesti also within 0.1s. A three-place grid penalty for Pourchaire, for impeding Kush Maini, promoted Bearman to ninth on the reversed grid for the Saturday sprint race.

It was a chaotic race from the off, with the top three on the grid all involved in incidents in the opening seconds. Victor Martins

made contact with Zane Maloney off the line, while poleman Richard Verschoor hit the wall at Turn 1. That put Maloney briefly into the lead, but a right-rear puncture caused by the contact from Martins sent the Rodin Carlin driver to the pits and handed fellow Red Bull Junior Dennis Hauger the advantage in his MP Motorsport car.

The safety car came out on lap three after Ralph Boschung clipped the wall in the Castle section and came to a stop just off the track. Bearman was seventh as racing resumed, but soon passed Pourchaire and Jak Crawford. Vesti in the other Prema car was also making progress — he secured third from Jehan Daruvala on lap 10 at Turn 3, before Bearman followed him through on the straight. Now the Prema duo trailed only Hauger and ART's Alpine junior Martins.

The safety car was deployed again after Roy Nissany crashed at Turn 15, and racing resumed with three laps remaining. Incredibly, Hauger and Martins both smacked the wall at Turn 1, and Daruvala submarined under the Frenchman.

Moments before a race-ending safety car was called, new leader Vesti took a slightly defensive line into Turn 4, ran wide on exit, and Bearman got in front. Crawford completed the podium, with just 11 of the 22 starters managing to complete the race.

Bearman's brilliant weekend continued on Sunday when he took a commanding win ahead of Enzo Fittipaldi (Rodin Carlin) and Pourchaire after an early battle with the ART-run Frenchman. Pourchaire claimed second from Fittipaldi on lap two on the run down to Turn 3 and then he captured the lead from Bearman down to Turn 1 with the aid of DRS. But it wasn't to last, and Bearman replicated Pourchaire's move on the following lap. The Essex lad then quickly built a gap of over one second before the pitstops began.

Bearman and Pourchaire were among the latest of those who had started on supersoft Pirellis to pit for the medium tyres, on lap eight, and the Brit retained the advantage. Now it was Pourchaire who came under pressure, and with five laps remaining Fittipaldi finally made it past, around the outside of Turn 3, to take a net second place.

Up front, Isack Hadjar and Ayumu Iwasa were on the alternative strategy. After they pitted late for supersofts, that left Bearman back in front to win by 2.3s from Fittipaldi, with new series leader Pourchaire third. With Martins excluded from fourth for a technical infringement, it was Vesti who claimed the position by holding off Maini and Hauger, while Hadjar used his new rubber to claim fastest lap on his way to seventh. That was the only point dropped all weekend by the remarkable Bearman!

**MEGAN WHITE**



GALLOWAY



# Tensions mount for T8 and Erebus

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS  
WANNEROO (AUS)  
29-30 APRIL  
ROUND 3/12

Erebus Motorsport and Triple Eight locked horns both on and off the track across the Perth SuperSprint weekend. The two Camaro squads, which have emerged as the heavyweights early in the Gen3 era, shared the spoils from the three short-distance races at Wanneroo as tensions simmered.

The drama started in Saturday's opening race when Triple Eight's Shane van Gisbergen ran down the Erebus car of long-time leader Brodie Kostecki. The pair wound up in a wild paint-swapping battle as a slower Kostecki defended aggressively in the closing laps. He was eventually hit with a bad sportsmanship flag right before van Gisbergen forced his way into the lead after making contact at Turn 6.



Kostecki heads Brown on a dramatic weekend

Unhappy with van Gisbergen's race-deciding move, Erebus lodged a formal protest on Saturday evening that was heard on Sunday morning. It was dismissed by the stewards on the basis that Kostecki hadn't left a car width of room, and that contact was more side-to-side than front-to-rear. That meant van Gisbergen remained as the winner from Kostecki and David Reynolds.

Erebus may have lost the protest but it was a big winner on track on Sunday with its first 1-2 finish in Supercars. That came in race two, Will Brown taking his second

career victory with a dominant drive to lead home Kostecki and James Courtney.

The final heat was Triple Eight versus Erebus again, although this time it was Broc Feeney representing the Red Bull T8 camp. The young gun stormed to a second win of the season from Brown and Kostecki, while van Gisbergen finished 12th after starting 21st thanks to a poor qualifying.

The trio of podiums helps Kostecki extend his series lead to 100 points over Chaz Mostert, with van Gisbergen 136 adrift.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

# Rasmussen clear of drama

INDY NXT  
BARBER MOTORSPORTS PARK (USA)  
30 APRIL  
ROUND 2/12

Christian Rasmussen led at Barber Motorsports Park from green flag to chequered flag, while it was his teammates who provided the controversy.

The polewinning Dane burst away ahead of HMD Motorsports stablemate Nolan Siegel, while Louis Foster and Hunter McElrea led the Andretti Autosport charge in third and fourth. Then Kyffin Simpson, who had passed series returnee Toby Sowery on the opening lap, spun McElrea at Turn 5 on lap two, allowing Sowery into fourth ahead of Danial Frost and Josh Green.

While Rasmussen eked out a 2.5s lead out front, Foster pressured Siegel for second. Meanwhile, Foster's fellow Brit Sowery had a wild moment on the grass at the crest of Turn 15, allowing Frost and Green ahead.

There was a full-course caution when Matteo Nannini and Jacob Abel collided on the pitstraight. The restart was uneventful aside from a Frost-versus-Foster battle for third before Frost slid down the order. Then Foster appeared to suffer a stuck throttle that sent him into



Rasmussen leads the way in Alabama

the barrier at Turn 9, bringing out another caution, which turned into a red flag when the rescue truck got stuck in the mud.

HMD's 1-2-3-4-5 following the restart was spoiled when Frost tried to take Green for fifth on the last lap. He clouted the Turn 12 kerb, launched and struck the rear of Green's car, sending them both off the track. Enaam Ahmed therefore scooped a surprise fourth behind Rasmussen, Siegel and Sowery.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

## WEEKEND WINNERS

FORMULA 2  
BAKU (AZE)  
Races 1 & 2 Ollie Bearman (below)  
Prema Racing

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS  
WANNEROO (AUS)  
Race 1 Shane van Gisbergen  
Triple Eight (Chevrolet Camaro)  
Race 2 Will Brown  
Erebus Motorsport (Chevrolet Camaro)  
Race 3 Broc Feeney  
Triple Eight (Chevrolet Camaro)

INDY NXT  
BARBER MOTORSPORTS PARK (USA)  
Christian Rasmussen  
HMD Motorsports



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motorsport  
STATS

For full results visit [motorsportstats.com](https://motorsportstats.com)





Michelisz leads  
Azcona and Huff

WSC GROUP

# Michelisz gets inaugural honours

**TCR WORLD TOUR**  
**ALGARVE (PRT)**  
**29-30 APRIL**  
**ROUND 1/9**

Norbert Michelisz and Santiago Urrutia took a win each in the opening round of the new TCR World Tour, the spiritual successor to the FIA World Touring Car Cup, at the Algarve Circuit near Portimao. The new series takes a travelling group of nine factory-supported touring car drivers to

rounds of various regional championships, and the opener was shared with TCR Europe in Portugal, creating a 22-car field. Michelisz, the 2019 WTCR champion, placed his Hyundai Elantra on pole ahead of team-mate Mikel Azcona, while Audi Sport drivers filled the second row, with new signing Rob Huff ahead of marque stalwart Frederic Vervisch. Michelisz led throughout an orderly first race ahead of Azcona and Huff, while Vervisch dropped back and was fighting to hold off the sole Honda Civic of Nestor Girolami. The only drama came in the midfield at the start of the race, when the two Cyan Racing Lynk & Cos of Santiago Urrutia and Yann Ehrlacher made contact battling for ninth into Turn 1, and Urrutia became the only retirement of the race with broken suspension. Urrutia had the chance to redeem himself

from pole position for the reversed-grid race on Sunday. The Uruguayan got away well at the start and was quickly joined at the front by team-mate Thed Bjork. A clumsy collision at Turn 4 between Girolami and touring car rookie Kobe Pauwels, followed by a bruising rejoin as Pauwels slammed into the side of Dusan Borkovic's Hyundai, led to a lengthy safety car deployment. The length of this was then doubled when Girolami's steering collapsed at the first restart, with the Argentinian stopping his Honda on the final bend. Another safety car period meant only six laps of green-flag running took place. Urrutia went on to win the shortened heat ahead of Bjork and Vervisch, while Michelisz – eighth in this race – leaves the opener with a two-point lead in the table.

**NEIL HUDSON**

# Motopark wins on debut as Brits claim podium

**INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN**  
**ALGARVE (PRT)**  
**29-30 APRIL**  
**ROUND 1/7**

GetSpeed Performance pair Fabian Schiller and Al Faisal Al Zubair lead the International GT Open standings after two races at the Algarve circuit, but it

was another team using Mercedes-AMG GT3s that really starred over the weekend. After spending four years dominating the sister Euroformula Open single-seater series, German squad Motopark decided to expand its efforts for 2023. Team principal Timo Rumpfkeil put himself in an Am class car, and signed Diego Menchaca and Marcos Siebert to target overall honours.

Siebert qualified fifth for race one, in a top 15 covered by 0.998 seconds. On pole was David Fumanelli, and he led the 70-minute race aboard Kessel Racing's Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo until a very late driver change to Frederic Jousset. Al Zubair had run fourth before a relatively early change to Schiller, who was in front once the stops were complete. While the German went on to win, Charlie Fagg climbed to a distant second in the Optimum Motorsport McLaren started by Sam De Haan, with Menchaca and Siebert claiming third. Schiller took pole for the one-hour race two and built a comfortable lead before Al Zubair took over. But the Omani faced traffic that cost him time, so it was Menchaca who emerged in front once Siebert had pitted the Motopark car. Al Zubair never got close enough to threaten Menchaca for victory. Fagg and De Haan were fourth this time behind the Christopher Haase-led Eastalent Audi.

**IDA WOOD**



FOTOSPEEDY



# Trulli among winners as EFO gets going

**EUROFORMULA OPEN**  
**ALGARVE (PRT)**  
**29-30 APRIL**  
**ROUND 1/8**

The Euroformula Open season started with a small grid, but the 10 cars put on some entertaining action. CryptoTower Racing Team's cameoing Enzo Trulli and Tim Tramnitz topped qualifying, with BVM Racing's Francesco Simonazzi in third. Trulli won the opener from pole, while Tramnitz lost out early on to Simonazzi and Noel Leon. A mistake by Simonazzi dropped him to fourth, allowing Tramnitz, whose main programme this season is in Formula Regional European, to track down the leading duo. He passed Leon, then pressured Trulli, who will race in the EFO-equivalent Super Formula Lights



series in Japan this year, towards the end. Motopark-run ex-GB3 racer Cian Shields had reversed-grid pole for race two, but missed the start with a battery plug problem. Simonazzi and Trulli raced ahead on lap one, with Tramnitz eventually joining them. Simonazzi resisted both to win, and Trulli took second after clashing

with Tramnitz, who claimed third. Shields also had reversed-grid pole for race three, and led until the Motopark-run CryptoTower pair came through. Tramnitz then led before a spinning Trulli hit him, and Leon profited to win in his Motopark car.

IDA WOOD



# Garcia's double for series lead

**F1 ACADEMY**  
**RED BULL RING (AUT)**  
**29 APRIL**  
**ROUND 1/7**

Former W Series racer Marta Garcia took the lead in the new Formula 4-based series for women thanks to two victories in the opening round at the Red Bull Ring. The Prema-run Spaniard inherited a pair of pole positions when Abbi Pulling, who had been quickest in both wet qualifying sessions, was excluded and banished to the back of the grid along with her Rodin Carlin team-mates due to non-homologated parts on the leading edge of the floor under the sidepods, which the British team claimed was not performance enhancing. Garcia enjoyed an all-Spanish battle for the lead with Nerea Marti (Campos Racing) in the opening race following an early safety car for a three-car shunt. Eventually Garcia got back in front and drove away to victory.

The excitement was in the fight for third, where a four-way scrap between recovering Rodin Carlin teamsters Pulling and Jessica Edgar, plus Bianca Bustamante and Hamda Al Qubaisi, was resolved in Prema driver Bustamante's favour at the flag, less than 0.1 seconds in front of Edgar. They were then promoted when Marti was excluded for a front-camber-shims infringement. Garcia's win in the weekend finale was a tough one. Al Qubaisi was on a mission in her MP Motorsport car and rose from seventh on the grid to second within six laps. The Emirati then clawed back Garcia's lead and put her under huge pressure, falling short by just 0.346s. Al Qubaisi's big sister Amna was third, just ahead of Pulling. Al Qubaisi Sr prevailed in the reversed-grid race in the middle, followed by Lena Buhler and Lola Lovinfosse. Garcia, Pulling and Bustamante had a scrap for most of the way, with the double race winner prevailing to grab seventh spot.

## WEEKEND WINNERS

- TCR WORLD TOUR**  
**ALGARVE (PRT)**  
**Race 1** Norbert Michelisz  
BRC Squadra Corse  
(Hyundai Elantra N TCR)  
**Race 2** Santiago Urrutia  
Cyan Racing (Lynk & Co 03 TCR)
- INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN**  
**ALGARVE (PRT)**  
**Race 1** Fabian Schiller/Al Faisal Al Zubair  
GetSpeed (Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo)  
**Race 2** Marcos Siebert/Diego Menchaca  
Team Motopark (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

- EUROFORMULA OPEN**  
**ALGARVE (PRT)**  
**Race 1** Enzo Trulli  
CryptoTower Racing (Dallara-Spiess)  
**Race 2** Francesco Simonazzi  
BVM Racing (Dallara-Spiess)  
**Race 3** Noel Leon  
Team Motopark (Dallara-Spiess)

- F1 ACADEMY**  
**RED BULL RING (AUT)**  
**Races 1 & 3** Marta Garcia  
Prema Racing  
**Race 2** Amna Al Qubaisi  
MP Motorsport

- NASCAR XFINITY SERIES**  
**DOVER (USA)**  
Ryan Truex  
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Supra)

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## Bagnaia bounces back as rivals falter

**MOTOGP**  
**JEREZ (ESP)**  
**30 APRIL**  
**ROUND 4/20**

Francesco Bagnaia's ability to bounce back in emphatic fashion from setbacks remains unparalleled in the MotoGP World Championship. The Ducati rider arrived at Jerez facing questions about his ability to handle pressure after back-to-back grand prix crashes in Argentina and the US had caused him to surrender 45 points, but left with another Spanish GP victory and the championship lead.

The beginnings of Bagnaia's Jerez weekend didn't look positive. He was locked out of a direct passage to Q2 in qualifying as he battled front-end problems on his GP23. His Ducati team rallied overnight to deliver him what he needed, and he duly put his bike fifth on the grid after coming through Q1 before finishing second in the sprint race.

Both the sprint and the Grand Prix were red flagged on lap one, both because of

incidents involving Yamaha riders. Franco Morbidelli copped a long-lap penalty for a collision with Alex Marquez that swallowed up pre-weekend championship leader Marco Bezzecchi. In the GP, Fabio Quartararo's miserable weekend nosedived when he got tangled up with Bezzecchi and the luckless Miguel Oliveira at Turn 2.

Oliveira suffered a dislocated shoulder, Quartararo was hit with a long-lap penalty that stunned most in the paddock – not least the Frenchman, who felt it “was clearly not a penalty”. This reignited the stewarding consistency debate, which also enveloped Bagnaia. The Ducati rider overtook KTM's Jack Miller for second with an aggressive-but-fair move at Turn 6 on lap five of the GP when the Australian left just enough room for a look. Bagnaia was ordered on lap eight to cede the position back to Miller, who had made an equally aggressive move on the Pramac Ducati of Jorge Martin, costing the Spaniard two positions, but received no penalty.

This didn't bother Bagnaia much in

the moment. He repassed his former team-mate on lap 15 of 24 when Miller ran wide through the fast right at Turn 12. Considering the squabbling Bagnaia had dealt with up to this point, race leader Brad Binder had only pulled 0.8 seconds.

On an exceptional weekend for the factory KTM team, Binder had beaten Bagnaia to victory in the sprint race after qualifying fourth, while Miller celebrated his first front row and podium for the Austrian marque on Saturday too.

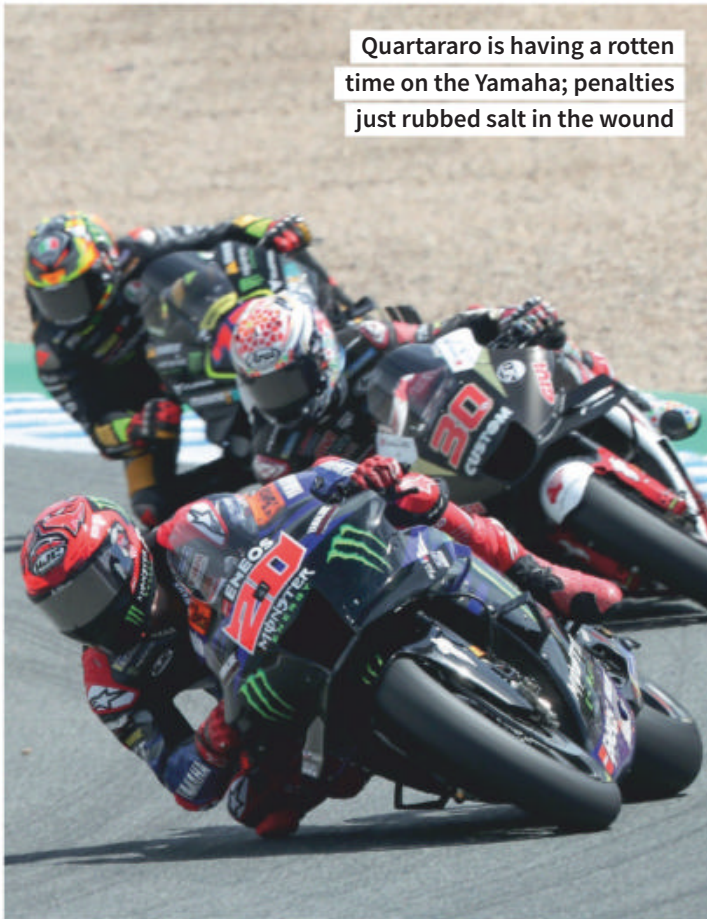
In both starts in Sunday's GP, Binder got the rapid-launching RC16 into Turn 1 first ahead of poleman Aleix Espargaro. Miller had led much of the sprint before Binder sidestepped his way into first late on. In the GP, Miller only headed the pack for one full lap before Binder muscled his way back through on the fourth tour.

A crucial lap 19 for Bagnaia, who fired in a race fastest lap of 1m37.989s, put him onto the tail of Binder. The decisive move came on lap 21 at the last corner. Despite his best wishes to add his name to the list of

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famous last-lap, last-corner overtakes at Jerez, Binder had nothing for Bagnaia.

A crash for Bezzecchi in the GP handed the championship lead back to Bagnaia, who is now 22 points clear of his fellow Italian.

A KTM 2-3, with Binder leading Miller, capped off a weekend in which the Austrian marque truly appears to be emerging as a title threat. The fact that wildcard Dani Pedrosa, retired from full-time competition since the end of 2018, was sixth in the sprint and seventh in the GP was a bonus.

Martin was fourth after his Miller moment, while Aleix Espargaro rued having an Aprilia he “can’t race the way I want” in fifth. Luca Marini upheld VR46 honour, while his brother Valentino Rossi watched, to complete the top six.

Quartararo had to serve a second long lap for failing to correctly take the first one. He recovered to 10th as Bezzecchi, Johann Zarco, Americas GP winner Alex Rins, Joan Mir and Maverick Vinales dropped out of the race.

The penalty was just the icing on top of a barbed-wire cake for the 2021 world champion. Quartararo qualified a lowly 16th, and the Yamaha has shed all of its strong points from when he took a maiden pole at Jerez in 2019 as far as he is concerned. The M1 doesn’t turn well and he can’t get close enough to anyone to mount any overtaking manoeuvres. While he is only 47 points adrift of Bagnaia with 16 rounds remaining, Quartararo’s hopes of staging a championship tilt already look impossible.

**LEWIS DUNCAN**

## NEXT REPORT

**FRENCH GP**  
**18 MAY ISSUE**



## RESULTS ROUND 4/20, JEREZ (ESP), 30 APRIL (24 LAPS – 65.960 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	<b>Francesco Bagnaia</b> (ITA)	Ducati	39m29.085s
2	<b>Brad Binder</b> (ZAF)	KTM	+0.221s
3	<b>Jack Miller</b> (AUS)	KTM	+1.119s
4	<b>Jorge Martin</b> (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+1.942s
5	<b>Aleix Espargaro</b> (ESP)	Aprilia	+4.760s
6	<b>Luca Marini</b> (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+6.329s
7	<b>Dani Pedrosa</b> (ESP)	KTM	+6.371s
8	<b>Alex Marquez</b> (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	+14.952s
9	<b>Takaaki Nakagami</b> (JPN)	LCR Honda	+15.692s
10	<b>Fabio Quartararo</b> (FRA)	Yamaha	+15.846s
11	<b>Franco Morbidelli</b> (ITA)	Yamaha	+17.209s
12	<b>Fabio Di Giannantonio</b> (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	+17.911s
13	<b>Augusto Fernandez</b> (ESP)	GasGas Tech 3 KTM	+19.010s
14	<b>Stefan Bradl</b> (DEU)	Honda	+27.294s
15	<b>Raul Fernandez</b> (ESP)	Aprilia RNF	+36.371s
16	<b>Iker Lecuona</b> (ESP)	Honda	+36.753s
17	<b>Jonas Folger</b> (DEU)	GasGas Tech 3 KTM	+47.146s
R	<b>Maverick Vinales</b> (ESP)	Aprilia	23 laps-broken chain
R	<b>Johann Zarco</b> (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	16 laps-accident
R	<b>Marco Bezzecchi</b> (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	16 laps-accident
R	<b>Alex Rins</b> (ESP)	LCR Honda	2 laps-accident damage
R	<b>Joan Mir</b> (ESP)	Honda	1 lap-accident
R	<b>Miguel Oliveira</b> (PRT)	Aprilia RNF	0 laps-injury
NS	<b>Enea Bastianini</b> (ITA)	Ducati	injury

**Winner's average speed** 100.230mph. **Fastest lap** Bagnaia 1m37.989s, 100.970mph.

**QUALIFYING 2** 1 Espargaro 1m37.216s; 2 Miller 1m37.437s; 3 Martin 1m37.458s; 4 Binder 1m37.532s; 5 Bagnaia 1m37.557s; 6 Pedrosa 1m37.583s; 7 Oliveira 1m37.596s; 8 Zarco 1m37.616s; 9 Marini 1m37.666s; 10 Vinales 1m37.765s; 11 Nakagami 1m37.876s; 12 Marquez 1m37.920s.

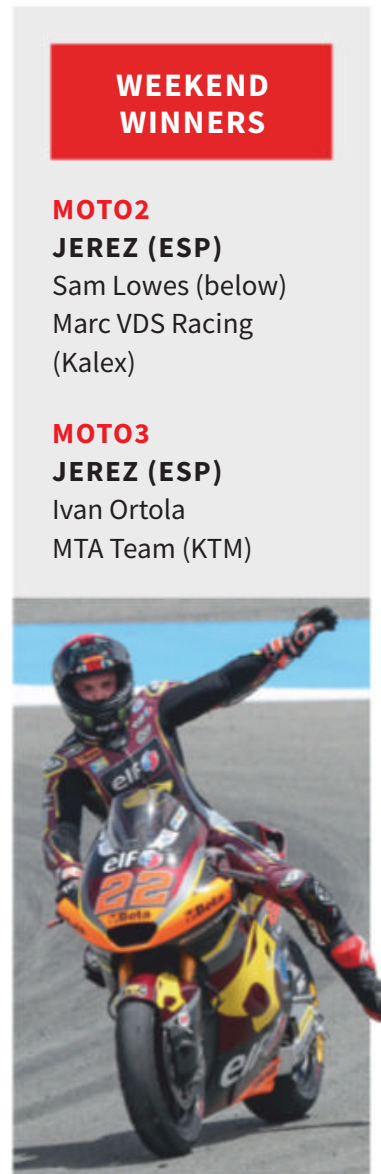
**QUALIFYING 1** Bagnaia 1m36.493s; Binder 1m36.541s; 13 Bezzecchi 1m36.578s; 14 Morbidelli 1m36.793s; 15 Di Giannantonio 1m36.967s; 16 Quartararo 1m37.072s; 17 R Fernandez 1m37.164s; 18 Rins 1m37.256s; 19 Bradl 1m37.297s; 20 Mir 1m37.346s; 21 A Fernandez 1m37.753s; 22 Folger 1m38.492s; 23 Lecuona 1m38.582s; NS Bastianini.

**SPRINT RACE** (11 LAPS – 30.232 MILES) 1 Binder 18m07.055s; 2 Bagnaia +0.428s; 3 Miller +0.680s; 4 Martin +0.853s; 5 Oliveira +1.638s; 6 Pedrosa +1.738s; 7 Vinales +3.248s; 8 Zarco +3.380s; 9 Bezzecchi +5.711s; 10 Marini +7.015s; 11 Di Giannantonio +7.174s; 12 Quartararo +7.467s; 13 Rins +9.867s; 14 R Fernandez +11.550s; 15 Bradl +15.455s; 16 Morbidelli +15.849s; 17 A Fernandez +15.969s; 18 Lecuona +25.356s; 19 Folger +25.530s; R Mir 7 laps; R Espargaro 5 laps; R Marquez 3 laps; R Nakagami 3 laps.

**Winner's average speed** 100.117mph. **Fastest lap** Pedrosa 1m37.927s, 101.034mph.

**RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Bagnaia 87; 2 Bezzecchi 65; 3 Binder 62; 4 Miller 49; 5 Vinales 48; 6 Marini 48; 7 Martin 48; 8 Rins 47; 9 Zarco 46; 10 Marquez 41.

**CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Ducati 137; 2 KTM 81; 3 Aprilia 67; 4 Honda 61; 5 Yamaha 49.



## WEEKEND WINNERS

### MOTO2

#### JEREZ (ESP)

Sam Lowe (below)  
Marc VDS Racing  
(Kalex)

### MOTO3

#### JEREZ (ESP)

Ivan Ortola  
MTA Team (KTM)



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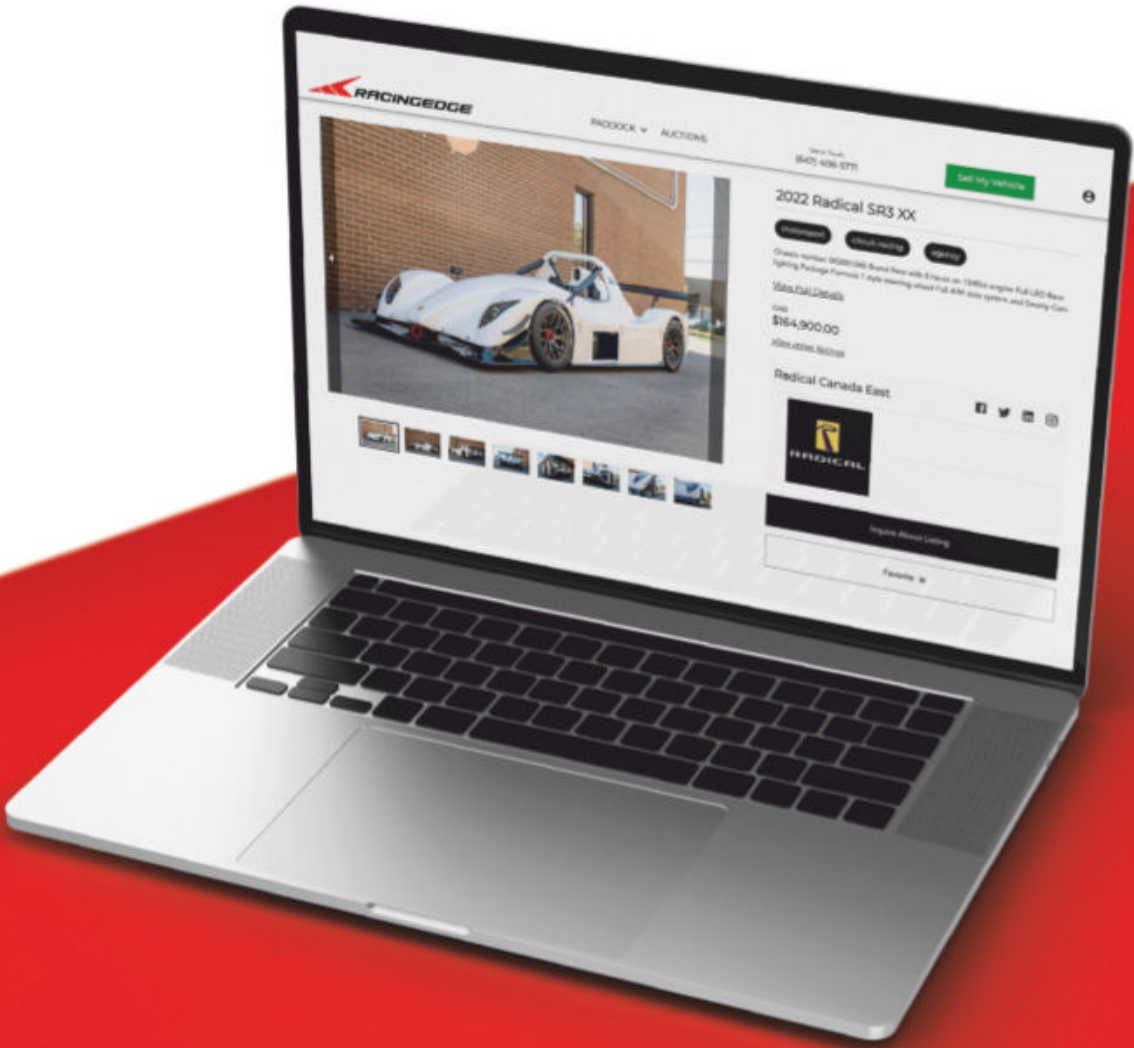


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- A good understanding of technical correlations?
- Good oral language skills in English; German would be an advantage?
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RFK Racing

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**Responsibilities:**

- Perform vehicle simulation model validation and correlation
- Troubleshoot issues with vehicle simulations and correlation
- Assist with the advancement of current simulation tools and the development of new tools to assist in race weekend performance
- Collaborate with race team engineers on the development of vehicle setups and simulation needs

**Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's Degree (four-year college or technical school) in Mechanical Engineering or related degree
- Excellent understanding of vehicle dynamics principles required
- Experience with utilizing vehicle simulation tools on vehicle development required
- Previous experience with suspension kinematics design and vehicle simulation required
- Solid understanding of core concepts including mechanics, kinematics, aerodynamics, fluid mechanics, energy and structural analysis required
- Advanced computer skills required. Experience in Engineering software, such as MATLAB or similar software required
- Experience in the following programming languages C#, Python, VBA or similar programming languages required

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**JUNIOR ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN**  
Haas F1 Team

**General Summary:**

- This position reports to the Electronics Workshop Team Leader or their designee; located in Banbury, UK. The Junior Electronics Technician is responsible for manufacturing, maintenance and testing of harnesses, sensors, actuators, and electronics assemblies for On- and Off car systems. The role will also include supporting RIG testing, car build and race/test events when required.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Promote teamwork and effective communications to develop working relationships between all personnel and departments.
- Play an active role in the manufacturing of chassis wiring harnesses, building-up of sensors, actuators and electronic assemblies for use with On- and Off Car systems.
- Continuously monitor and improve design and manufacturing standards and operational processes and procedures.
- Support race/test car build at the factory ensuring all electronic units, wiring harnesses, sensors and actuators are fitted correctly.

**Education and Work Experience:**

- GCSE, High School diploma or equivalent required. Further education including electronics training to HNC level, desirable. Previous experience of working in a high-level motorsport environment is essential.

**Specialized Knowledge and Skills:**

- Knowledge and practical experience of working with Raychem System 25 and motorsport/ aerospace connectors.
- Strong technical background in racing car electrical and electronic systems. Work to a consistently high standard in stressful and time sensitive situations.
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PWR Europe

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**Leadership/ Management**

- Provide leadership within the sales team in regards to assigned autonomous tasks from the Sales Manager and report back to sales team for review and action.

**Specific Duties of Role**

- Respond to all incoming sales calls and emails in a timely and professional manner;
- Ensure all sales related paperwork is complete for every sale with a high level of accuracy;
- Work in collaboration with the design team and production departments to ensure products are built and delivered to each customer within agreed time frame;

**Key Competencies**

- High level communication skills – both written and oral
- Persuasive and effective sales techniques
- Team player
- Highly motivated personality

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- Are safe with handling of MS Office and desirable with SAP knowledge
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- Have a high degree of independence, initiative, reliability, flexibility in completing tasks as well as a structured way of working and the ability to work in a team
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# Vettel to drive own F1 cars at Goodwood FoS

## FESTIVAL OF SPEED

Four-time Formula 1 champion Sebastian Vettel will make a return to the Goodwood Festival of Speed this year and is due to drive several F1 cars from his own collection up the hill, including Nigel Mansell's title-winning Williams FW14B.

Vettel, who retired at the end of last season, last appeared at the Goodwood event in 2012 when he piloted the RB7 he took to the previous year's championship title. As well as the 1992 Williams, he is due to guide his ex-Ayrton Senna McLaren MP4/8 from 1993 up the hill over the 15-16 July weekend. All the cars Vettel drives at the event will be powered by sustainable fuels, following the 'Race without Trace'

initiative he launched last year at Silverstone when he drove the FW14B using e-fuels.

"It's great to be coming back to Goodwood after all these years," said Vettel. "I can't wait to get behind the wheel of some of my most memorable cars, which will be running on sustainable fuel over the weekend. I'm a passionate racer and it's important to me that we continue to enjoy driving iconic racing cars today, and in the future, but that we do so in a responsible way."

It is estimated that 20% of the cars in action at this year's Festival of Speed, the 30th edition of the event, will be powered by alternative methods, whether electric, hydrogen or synthetic fuels.

The Duke of Richmond added: "I am enormously excited to welcome Sebastian back to Goodwood this summer. I know our fans will be delighted to have an opportunity to celebrate his incredible career and to see him in action on the hill."

Meanwhile, it has been announced that Porsche will be the celebrated marque at this year's event. The manufacturer is recognising the 75th anniversary of the creation of its first car this year – the same milestone the Goodwood circuit is also commemorating – and a special parade of Porsches will take to the hill.

Vettel last attended  
Festival of Speed in 2012



KALISZ/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## SYNTHETIC FUELS FOR REVIVAL'S 911 RACE

### GOODWOOD REVIVAL

A special race for Porsche 911s running on synthetic fuel is among the line-up for this year's Goodwood Revival.

The Fordwater Trophy contest will celebrate 60 years of the 911, and a grid of 30 pre-'66 Porsches (below) is expected at the 8-10 September event. All will be powered by fully synthetic fuel, the first such race to be held in Goodwood's 75-year history.

Another new addition for 2023 will be a special Rudge Whitworth Cup encounter that will commemorate 100 years of the Le Mans 24 Hours. It is expected to be contested by the Bentleys, Alfa Romeos and Bugattis that were commonplace during the early years of the legendary enduro.

It is not just Porsche that has a special one-make race this year – the Lavant Cup will be run for 1960s Ferraris in tribute to Graham Hill's 1963 RAC TT win at Goodwood in a 250 GTO. Continuing the GT theme, the feature two-driver race on the Friday night will be the Freddie March Memorial Trophy, which recreates the 1950s Goodwood Nine Hours sportscar battles.

A host of other traditional Revival contests will also be on the timetable for this year's 25th edition, including races for pre and post-war grand prix cars, 1960s sports-prototypes and Formula Junior machinery. Meanwhile, the St Mary's Trophy tin-top battle will be for 1950s saloons as the race rotates between the decades.

Other celebrations already announced include centenary commemorations for Carroll Shelby and 75 years of Lotus.



J BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



# Aussie tin-top stars to race at Brands Hatch

## SUPER TOURERS

Down under tin-top stars Greg Murphy and Steve Richards are due to head to the UK to compete in July's Super Touring Power event at Brands Hatch.

The Kiwi duo have enjoyed significant success racing touring cars in Australia and have secured nine Bathurst 1000 wins between them. Richards has connections to the British Touring Car Championship from a brief stint as test driver for the Nissan team in 1998.

Both have been racing historic machinery increasingly in recent times, including competing in a pair of Nissan Skylines at the Phillip Island Classic earlier this year, and will now switch to Super Tourers. Each raced in the Australian Super Touring Championship in the early stages of their careers, Murphy as a work driver for the Audi Australia team.

Murphy is due to drive a Peter Sturgeon-owned Nissan Primera in the races on both the Brands Grand Prix and Indy layouts, while Richards is set to pilot Lindsay O'Donnell's Volvo S40. Murphy is also due to be reunited with the Holden Commodore that he competed in during 2008 and 2009, which now belongs to Holden collector Alex Sidwell.



"I've never raced at Brands, I think I've only been there once to watch racing and that was in the '90s," Murphy told the V8 *Sleuth* website. "It was Super Tourers – I think Steve Richards was actually [testing] a Primera at the time when I went over there. It's one of those iconic race tracks everyone knows about and I'm very excited about getting the chance to drive it."

"I love those cars, they're great cars and played a big part in the early stages of my career. The BTCC was just enormous, it was the place that you really needed to be in touring cars to make a name. It was just a real special period for touring car racing so it's pretty neat to go to one of the homes



in England of Super Touring and do that."

Alongside contests for the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Super Tourers series, and a host of off-track celebrations of the famous period of tin-top history, the club's other categories – spanning pre-1966 machines to more modern Super 2000 cars – will also be in action.

# BTCC greats join 750MC BMW grids

## 116 TROPHY

There was a 1990s British Touring Car Championship reunion of sorts at the 750 Motor Club's Silverstone meeting last weekend, with Matt Neal and Steve Soper joining 116 Trophy regular Tim Harvey on track.

Soper was victorious in the second round of the new 120 Coupe Cup, which runs alongside the 116 Sprint Trophy, while Harvey was second in the 116 Trophy enduro in a car entered with Richard Lakey. Neal, sharing with Richard Phillips, was 17th. Harvey also contested the Sprint Trophy, but retired



due to car trouble.

Soper was initially only at the event to provide some coaching and technical support to a former business associate. "It didn't really take much persuasion, but I didn't come to do it," he said.

He spoke highly of the 120 Coupe itself and how economical it was to prepare one.

Soper also joked that there was another reason for all three tin-top stars being in attendance: "We

wanted to make people think that someone was paying us £20,000 each to race, so John Cleland will come down and race next time! Don't tell him that."

For Neal, the 90-minute 116 Trophy outing was all about having fun. "It's just nice to see people actually smiling," he said. He also enjoyed competing against his son Henry, who shared a car with Sam Holman and finished 25th, although Neal Jr outqualified his father. "I always wanted to race against my dad," added Neal Sr of his own father, Steve, "but he wouldn't do it."

**RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER**



This weekend's entry is largest since Silverstone 2013 event



## Largest British GT field for a decade as 43 set for Silverstone

### BRITISH GT

British GT is set to feature its largest grid for a decade with 43 cars entered for this weekend's three-hour race at Silverstone.

The field has been bolstered by several guest entries, which will not score points, and is the largest since 48 cars took part in the equivalent round in 2013.

Among the crews joining for this weekend is an expanded entry for Porsche squad Team Parker Racing. In addition to its regular Cayman GT4 of Zac Meakin and Dan Vaughan, it will also field two GT3 Porsches – one for team regulars Scott Malvern and Nick Jones, who are primarily competing in Europe this season, and the

second for British GT race winner Charles Bateman and Alex Martin.

Also joining the GT3 grid at Silverstone will be Claude Bovet and David McDonald, who triumphed in the opening British Endurance Championship round at the circuit earlier this year, and will drive a Blackthorn Aston Martin, while GT Cup victor James Wallis is set to contest the remainder of the British GT campaign in a Track Focused-run Drivetac Mercedes.

One driver unexpectedly on the grid is Jonny Adam. His place alongside James Cottingham in a 2 Seas Mercedes was due to be taken by Phil Keen but, with the clashing European Le Mans Series round at Imola cancelled, Adam is able to take part.

## Porsche champion Clark eyes BEC

### BRITCAR TROPHY

Reigning Porsche Club Class 1 champion Simon Clark is eyeing a British Endurance Championship graduation next year via his successful switch to the Britcar Trophy.

Clark has swapped his 996 for a newer 997 Carrera S, which slots into Britcar's Class 2. It has taken him to three class wins from three races this

year, including second overall at Brands Hatch last month.

"We just felt that it was time to try something new," said Clark. "It's a different discipline and there's obviously strategy involved. The aim is that we win the championship, hopefully overall, possibly with the intention of stepping up into Endurance next year. So this is a bit of a test for us, and it's quite nice to give our

sponsors, and me, a bit of a progression path."

The next step on Porsche's ladder, the Sprint Challenge GB, would have required a substantial increase in budget. "This seemed to be a better fit for us," said Clark. "Plus we've got the option to bring in a second driver to help with budget, which we'll probably have to do in Endurance."

MARK PAULSON

### IN THE HEADLINES

#### DE HAAN TAKES ANOTHER WIN

Robert de Haan has continued his successful start to 2023 by taking victory in a third different Porsche series. Following his domination of the winter Sprint Challenge Southern Europe and then a Carrera Cup GB win last month, the Dutchman took his Richardson Racing machine to glory in the second race of the Benelux contest at Spa last weekend. De Haan finished second in race one.

#### MARSHALL'S DROOP SNOOT

Gregor Marshall's Vauxhall Droop Snoot Firenza – a homage to his late father Gerry's 1972 Group 1 Firenza – made an appearance at the Donington Park Historic Festival last weekend. He was due to share the car with LMP2 driver Alex Kapadia for the first time in the Historic Racing Drivers Club's Gerry Marshall Trophy but it retired at mid-distance.

#### GT CUP DISQUALIFICATIONS

Six teams were disqualified from the fourth GT Cup race at Brands Hatch last Sunday for failing to adhere to safety car regulations. The McLaren 720S GT3 of Andrey Borodin, the Mercedes-AMG GT4s of Gustavo Xavier, Stephen Walton and Jon Currie, the Aston Martin GT4 of James Guess and Phil Carter's McLaren 570S were all found to be in breach of the rules and penalised.

#### XAVIER JOINS GT CUP GRID

Swiss endurance racer Gustavo Xavier enjoyed a relatively successful Brands Hatch debut last weekend when he subbed for the injured Charles Dawson in the GT Cup round. Teamed with 2017 British GT champion Seb Morris, Xavier claimed three GTH class wins across the weekend aboard his Mercedes-AMG GT4 (below). Disqualification from race four prevented any chance of a clean sweep of successes.





# Motorsport UK eyes creation of rally festival

## RALLYING

Motorsport UK is evaluating the creation of a new rally festival to help re-energise the discipline and increase fan engagement.

The governing body met with stakeholders last November to devise a new strategy to help grow rallying in the UK and promote the discipline to a new audience. The introduction of a festival was tabled by M-Sport Ford World Rally Championship team principal Richard Millener.

While the concept is in its infancy, the idea is to bring rallying to the public through a showcase of historic and modern vehicles, featuring the current WRC Rally1 cars, and to include a competitive stage rally element, held in either an urban environment or at a bespoke venue.

"I think it's unrealistic for the public to come to you so you have to take the sport to them," Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers told Autosport. "The beauty of it is that, if you get a Chatsworth House and its grounds, you can put on a wonderful



Events such as Rallyday at Castle Combe have proven to be popular

display of Group B rally cars, modern machinery and get some Rally1s there and some manufacturer involvement and really have a rally festival a bit like the Chris Evans Car Fest. That's something we are looking at. I think we have got to get the population excited about rallying again and find new ways of doing that."

Millener added: "I think we have to be very open and able to critique ourselves and the facts are the numbers aren't good, rallying isn't growing and, if it is, it's marginal and certainly not at the rate it should be. We need to find

a host town or city that is forward thinking and get people into the area. It's about parents bringing their sons and daughters to a day out which is rally themed and we hope they can become rally fans off the back of it.

"It has happened before. Rallyday [at Castle Combe] started it, then Steve Perez did with the Chatsworth Rally Show [2008-10] and Race and Rally Retro do a similar thing, but I would like to see something with a venue where you can see a lot and it's good action."

**TOM HOWARD**

## Eaton to race Rebelleo Lamborghini in Europe



Eaton is a former W Series driver

SBLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

### SUPER TROFEO

Former W Series driver Abbie Eaton will make her Lamborghini Super Trofeo Europe debut this season, driving for Rebelleo Motorsport alongside Daan Pijl.

Eaton is the co-founder of Rebelleo, which aims

to break barriers and encourage diversity within motorsport.

While unfamiliar to the one-make championship, Eaton has raced a Lamborghini with success, taking GTO class wins in the GT Cup at the wheel of a Huracan GT3 in 2021.

The Yorkshire driver will contest the full season in the Pro category, teaming up with Dutchman Pijl, a three-time race winner who is dovetailing a campaign in International GT Open with Italian squad Oregon Team.

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CELEBRATING THE 1993 EUROPEAN GRAND PRIX

Daily Formula 1 demonstrations at last weekend’s Donington Historic Festival turned the clocks back 30 years to the 1993 European Grand Prix. Enthusiasts appreciated Steve Ottavianelli giving his ex-Michael Schumacher Benetton-Ford B193 plenty of welly (above). One of Alain Prost’s 1993 championship-winning Williams-Renault FW15s was on static display alongside an ex-Ayrton Senna McLaren MP4/7, while Alastair Davidson demonstrated his ex-Senna Toleman-Hart TG184. **Photograph by Mick Walker**

IN THE HEADLINES

A UK TREAT FOR FUDGE

American historic racer Chip Fudge made his UK debut at Snetterton last month in the one-off Lightning Envoyette Formula Junior previously owned by Alex Morton. The now 65-year-old Oklahoma driver hopes to compete in several European events this season. He particularly wanted to race at Snetterton because one of his former cars was an ex-Archie Scott Brown Lister, built in nearby Cambridge. “I was a custodian of his former car and I really connect with him,” he said.

NO PAIN NO GAIN

Morgan three-wheeler ace Sue Darbyshire’s fifth place in last Sunday’s ‘Mad Jack’ pre-war sportscar race at Donington Park was a particularly gallant effort. After watching Duncan Wood bring her 1929 Super Aero up to third, Darbyshire climbed aboard unusually gingerly, later revealing that she had recently broken an arm and a leg in a fall while pruning a tree!

COEN ENDS 20-YEAR WAIT

Fifty years after he raced the ex-Lee Kaye March 713S in Formula 3, Steve Coen broke a 20-year layoff at Castle Combe last Monday in a Lotus Elise. Coen, who subsequently operated the START and Brensec racehire teams and ran an indoor kart centre, competed in Thundersports (Harrier-Chevrolet) and Classic F3 (Sparton SE420) in the 1980s.

CLASSIC CAR AND BIKE MEET

Silverstone Museum has launched a new Classic Car and Bike Meet, which will take place on a monthly basis. “These meets will be hosted by the museum for the first time and we anticipate they will be extremely popular with classic car and bike enthusiasts as well as motoring fans,” said the museum’s Rachel James. The first event will take place on 10 May. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

HSCC headlines Gold Cup event with Thundersports category

GOLD CUP

The Historic Sports Car Club has announced its programme for this year’s Gold Cup meeting, with the Thundersports category making its debut at the event. Open to sports-racing and GT cars of the 1970s and early 1980s, the series is one of four HSCC grids set to be at the Oulton Park event on 28-30 July. The others are Historic Formula 3, Historic Touring Cars and Historic Formula Junior. As was the case last year, a number of

other clubs will also provide grids at the Gold Cup, including the Historic Touring Car Challenge (from Motor Racing Legends, a new addition for 2023), Gerry Marshall Trophy for Group 1 touring cars of the 1970s and early 1980s (Historic Racing Drivers’ Club), as well as outings from the Vintage Sports-Car Club and Classic Sports Car Club. The Jim Clark Trust has also confirmed its attendance, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Scot winning the Gold Cup and the Formula 1 world championship in the same year.







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# Summers debuts self-built hillclimb car after seven years

## HILLCLIMBING

After seven years of hard work, the P4t car conceived by leading British Hillclimb contender Alex Summers made a successful recent debut at Loton Park. Summers started the initial design for the single-seater in 2016 and finally had the car running at the end of this March. The sleek, low-line machine drew immediate praise from fellow competitors as it ran reliably and set good times on its first weekend of action. Summers has no plans to drive it himself in the BHC and will remain with his Cosworth Indy-powered DJ Firestorm. “It’s a car for my wife Debbie and my mum Lindsay,” said Summers, who wants to use the project to promote women in

motorsport. The P4t uses the 2.5-litre Cosworth engine previously fitted to the DJ Firestorm. “We bought a donor car, a Formula 4 Van Diemen, and stripped it down and had a good look at it,” added Summers. “As soon as the V6 engine became available from the Firestorm in 2019, we abruptly changed course and designed it around the V6.” With huge support from his parents Richard and Lindsay, the family team built the chassis from the ground up. The P4t is likely to be back out once the early season rush of BHC events is complete and will be ideally suited to Debbie and Lindsay, who are both accomplished hillclimb competitors in their own right. **PAUL LAWRENCE**

## IN THE HEADLINES

### TAYLOR’S CZECH MOVE

Reigning GB4 champion Nikolas Taylor made an appearance in the new ACCR Czech Formula Championship at the Hungaroring last weekend. Taylor competed with Renauer Motorsport in the F4 series and finished fourth in the opening race before taking the final step of the podium in race two.

### HSCC CHAPLAINCY TEAM

The Historic Sports Car Club will have a motorsport chaplaincy team at all of its UK events this season following a successful pilot project. It will be led by Classic Formula Ford racer and Anglican Priest Revd James Rigby.

### THOMPSON BACK ON TRACK

Ex-Caterham racer Ian Thompson impressed on his return from a seven-year layoff by claiming Pre-’66 Touring Car pole on his debut in a Lotus Cortina at Brands Hatch last month. Thompson broke his back in a crash at Snetterton and, having only driven the Cortina twice, he snatched pole by 0.03 seconds, then recovered from a slow getaway to finish third before sitting out the wet second race.

### SHINNER TARGETS HFF1600

Ex-works karter Spencer Shinner made his car debut at Snetterton at the end of last month when he raced his father Neil’s Merlyn Mk20 in Historic Formula Ford. The 19-year-old is studying motorsport engineering after karting at a high level in Europe and is now planning a full HFF1600 season. He took eighth and sixth places at Snetterton.

# Parker replaces recovering Mickel for TOCA events

## LEGENDS

Jack Parker will replace the recovering John Mickel for all rounds of the Legends Elite Cup in support of the British Touring Car Championship this season. Five-time Legends champion Mickel suffered a spectacular crash at Cadwell Park last month, which required him to spend two nights in hospital. Unable to drive due to

Motorsport UK guidelines, his place for the Brands Hatch meeting this weekend on the TOCA support bill will be taken by Parker. “That crash was a big one and I’m obviously very disappointed not to be allowed to drive at Brands for such a prestigious event,” said Mickel. “But I am also very grateful that I’m OK and to have been supported by so many fantastic people. It was important for me to ensure my marketing partners are represented at the BTCC rounds, especially as there is live coverage on ITV and ITV4 of the event. “Even if I can’t drive myself, it was also important for me to have a great driver in my seat, and I feel Jack is a great fit with us!” Legends will support the BTCC at two further rounds this year, also appearing at Croft and Knockhill.





# Littlejohn and Evans win the battle of Elans

**DONINGTON PARK**  
**MSVR DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL**  
**29-30 APRIL**

Four seconds separated the Lotus Elans of James Littlejohn (Simon Evans's) and Andy Jordan (bookending for John Tordoff) after three hours in Saturday's Royal Automobile Club Pall Mall Cup contest, the 12th Donington Historic Festival's racing highlight. Only the fourth-placed TVR Griffith of Ollie Reuben and Harry Barton prevented an all-Lotus top six.

Julian Thomas, in Robin Ellis's Elan Shapecraft coupe, and Evans chased Jordan and Reuben from the off. Reuben led when AJ relayed Tordoff, then Thomas moved in front when Barton saddled the big V8 and was about to lap Evans when they pitted as a safety car was deployed. A charging Littlejohn subsequently reeled Ellis in and led when Thomas was reinstalled in the car. Further cautions, refuelling infringement penalties and a drive-through for Ellis thwarted some tactics, but double-stinter Littlejohn remained beyond Jordan's grasp once the ex-BTCC champ lost top gear.

Having changed the engine in Austrian Stephan Jobstl's Elan's after qualifying, Andy Willis and George McDonald shared it, the latter ousting Chris Atkinson (in Steve Jones's example) from fifth on the home run. TVR Grantura stalwarts Rick Bourne/Malcolm Paul headed the pursuers.

Graeme Dodd's tactical stop from third as the all E-type Jaguar Classic Challenge pit window opened proved pivotal. With Danny Winstanley sidelined by a snapped fan belt, James Dodd powered ahead when Jonathan Mitchell and Matt Wrigley pitted as a long trail of oil leading to Marc Gordon's roadster in the Coppice gravel triggered a seven-lap safety-car interlude. When it ended, Dodd was inadvertently waved through amid lapped traffic and built an unassailable lead.



Historic Touring Car Challenge poleman David Tomlin's Ford Sierra RS500 led the BMW E30 M3s of Colin Turkington – a fly in his ointment piloting Mark Smith's – Darren Fielding and Tom Houlbrook to the stops. The RS500s and Nissan Skylines must remain stationary for 45s more this season, which emboldened Tomlin. He was catching Smith when he rotated into the chicane, but kept second from Fielding, who Houlbrook was shadowing when he retired with tracking awry.

Mike Whitaker Jr led the Tony Dron Trophy subset until his Sanyo Rover SD1's driveshaft broke, promoting father Michael debuting a Patrick Motor Group version. Josh Cook anchored Mike Gardiner's Lotus Cortina to Under 2-Litre Touring Car glory, disputed initially by Ambrogio Perfetti, David Dickenson and Paddy Shovlin.

Beaten to Historic Racing Drivers Club Gerry Marshall Trophy pole by his papa, Whitaker Jr scarpered at the start, defeating Skid Scarborough (Ford Capri), who had Mat Jackson in Jim Morris's VW Golf GTI in his mirrors. A stirring battle for fourth concluded with Ben Mitchell – in Tula Engineering's Hertz Capri started by Tom

Waterfield – staving off Ollie Hancock in John Spiers's Hermetite version, with Whitaker Sr growling up behind.

Shaun Brereton's Mike Keele-built coil-sprung Cooper Monaco fell to driveshaft failure following a first corner knock in the '50s sportscar feature named for Stirling Moss, its original driver. When Spiers's Lister-Jag's battery died, stranding Hancock, Ollie Crosthwaite/Nick Finburgh capitalised in the former's T49, from Gareth Burnett in Michael Birch's ex-works Lotus 15, which Birch had pitted briefly with fuel pick-up problems. John and Gary Pearson floated their Jaguar D-type to third and RAC Woodcote Trophy Pre-'56 honours, pursued by Richard Wilson's Maserati 250S.

Rudi Friedrichs (Alvis) dominated the 'Mad Jack' Shuttleworth Pre-War race, unusually a Frazer Nash-free zone. Birch's lofty Talbot 105 and Clive Morley's Bentley completed the podium.

Whitaker Sr (TVR Griffith) outran Dave Methley's Cobra to win the HRDC Allstars race, bisected when Andrew Bergbaum's Alfa GTA smote the pitwall. First touring car was Whitaker Jr's Mustang, fourth with Ambrogio Perfetti's Cortina in tow. Jonny Horsfield (Alfetta GTV) took Classic Alfa gold on Chris Snowdon's GTV's demise.

Peerless in tricky wet conditions, Cook converted Gardiner's brilliant opening stint – with fastest lap – to Jack Sears Trophy victory in the Moore Racing Cortina. When Jeff Smith lunged his Mini past Whitaker Jr's Mustang for second into the Old Hairpin, both went off but recovered to third and fourth behind Dickenson.

The three Superperformance Ferrari Club races produced different victors, James Cartwright coolly withstanding three successive fastest laps by the resurgent Gary Culver to take the wet finale by 0.521s.

**MARCUS PYE**



Both Whitakers took a win, Mike Jr claiming Gerry Marshall Trophy spoils





The Evans/Littlejohn Elan (left) triumphed in Pall Mall Cup with TVR (right) only non-Lotus in the top six



**PRESENT PAST** The first of 12 Bentley 'Blower' Continuation cars finished 16th on its competition debut – following a six-hour high-speed shakedown test at Goodwood – with Stuart Morley up in the annual 'Mad Jack' race, named for 1935 Donington Grand Prix winner Richard Shuttleworth. Magnificently remastered from works car number 2, it recreates the mighty 4.5-litre supercharged models. 'Car Zero' will compete at June's Le Mans centenary, 20 years after the marque's sixth win.

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### RAC PALL MALL CUP

Simon Evans/James Littlejohn (Lotus Elan)

### MRL JAGUAR CLASSIC CHALLENGE

Graeme & James Dodd (E-type)

### MRL HISTORIC TOURING CAR CHALLENGE

Colin Turkington/Mark Smith (BMW E30 M3)

### HRDC GERRY MARSHALL TROPHY

Michael Whitaker Jr (Rover SD1)

### MRL WOODCOTE TROPHY/ STIRLING MOSS TROPHY

Ollie Crosthwaite/Nick Finburgh  
(Cooper T49 Monaco, below)

### MRL 'MAD JACK' PRE-WAR SPORTSCARS

Rudiger Friedrichs (Alvis Firefly Special)

### HRDC ALLSTARS/CLASSIC ALFA CHALLENGE

Michael Whitaker Sr (TVR Griffith)

### HRDC JACK SEARS TROPHY

Mike Gardiner/Josh Cook (Ford Lotus Cortina)

### FERRARI CLUB CLASSIC

**Race 1** Gary Culver (328 GTB)

**Race 2** Tristan Simpson (F355 Challenge)

**Race 3** James Cartwright (328 GTB)



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



**'LAIRY CANARY 2'** A wonderful scrap for fifth in the HTCC race embroiled the stunning Ford Escorts of Nick Whale/Alistair MacKinnon, whose car was making its debut, and Ian and Frank Guest, who narrowly prevailed. Silverstone Auctions boss Whale's 1975 square-winged Zakspeed tribute (above) – "built from an 1100, in beige" – is the 11th Mk2 to emerge from rally specialist Nick Carr's CarrPrep workshops. The livery is a nod to the late Mike Bell, creator of the Escort Mk1 'Lairy Canary' Whale raced last year.



**GALAXIE GRUNT** Local Austin 7-to-AC Cobra pilot Matt Moore drove his Ford Galaxie 500 to Donington for its race debut in the Jack Sears Trophy, finishing 23rd. After he rescued it from a US scrapyard for \$3000 13 years ago, it was left dormant for seven years. "The chassis was OK, but I changed the body," said Moore, who has liveried it per the Holman & Moody car raced by 'Fireball' Roberts in NASCAR in 1963-64. It was shaken down recently at Goodwood, and Jake Hill also had a run at Silverstone last week.



Problems for his  
rivals allowed  
Thwaites to take a  
brace of wins



# Alfa reliability gives Thwaites the double

## SILVERSTONE 750MC 29-30 APRIL

The two Alfa Romeo Championship races at the 750 Motor Club's Silverstone meeting last Sunday both looked like a walkover for Jamie Thwaites's mighty Giulietta TCR on paper, but that didn't tell the full story.

The opener began with a thrilling side-by-side duel between Ian Stapleton's Special Saloon-spec GTV6 and Scott Austin's modified 156, and the two were inseparable, classic versus modern, for

the first two laps. Austin did eke out a lead, but a split turbo pipe sapped the 156's power, sending him to the rear of the field. Just after setting a new class record, Stapleton retired to the pits with water in his car's engine, which left the way clear for Thwaites – the first driver to enter a TCR-spec Alfa in the category – to dominate, finishing almost a minute ahead of Tom Hill's GT.

Stapleton wasn't able to start race two, but Austin was back out at the rear of the field. Thwaites suffered another slow start and needed to pass Hill to regain the lead.

Meanwhile, Austin quickly stormed up the order and was second by the start of lap two, passing Thwaites not long after. Austin ran wide at Becketts later to let Thwaites back through, and his efforts ultimately proved futile when he was disqualified for overtaking under yellow flags. This promoted Riccardo Losselli in his MiTo to second, after passing Hill on the final tour.

F1000 provided the fastest action of the weekend, although race one effectively became a four-lap sprint due to startline issues, a red flag and a safety-car period while cars that had hit oil patches were retrieved. The restart benefited eventual winner Dan Gore, who had struggled with the initial launch. He held on to first place despite attacks from Thomas Gadd and reigning champion Robert Welham, with Gadd losing out to Welham on the last lap.

Welham won the reversed-grid race from ninth place after a finely balanced contest with Gadd. Gadd took the lead early on from Matthew Higginson and Dax Ward, who had come off best in a frenetic start. A confident Welham then took on Gadd, passing him and pulling a small gap. Gadd closed towards the end but had to settle for second.

Startline problems marred the first BMW Car Club race – failing gantry lights meant that polesitter Graham Crowhurst hesitated, letting eventual winner Niall Bradley build up a lead in his similar E46 M3. Crowhurst



F1000 provided plenty of  
action as Gore took the  
win in opening race

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE JONES





Pither dominated  
in 750 Formula



Kirkpatrick took another  
win in Mighty Minis



Johnston went up against  
the old guard in MR2s  
and came out on top

got very close but could not catch his rival, although he was some way ahead of third-placed Brad Sheehan's M3.

Crowhurst came closer in race two after a much better start, even taking the lead a few times. This included a daring move up the inside at Luffield, but Bradley managed to reclaim the advantage late on and won by 0.76 seconds.

Karl Johnston ruffled a few feathers in the Toyota MR2 Championship, winning both races from the experienced Adam Lockwood. Johnston's rookie cross on the back of his car was a slight red herring, since the young Northern Irish driver has rallying experience. In race one, he waited until the final tour to lunge for the lead while, in the sequel, he held off Lockwood and Shaun Traynor. Traynor's car had no brakes in the first race and he quickly dropped back to finish 11th and, although he locked up again on the opening lap of race two, he kept hold of third.

Paul Cook was another double winner, claiming both Armed Forces Race Challenge victories in his BMW E46 M3. His fellow guest entrant Wayne Lewis, in a similar BMW, led the first half of the opener after getting a better start than Cook, but he was caught and passed later amid backmarkers struggling for grip. The pair continued their duel in the second race, but Lewis was disqualified for overtaking under yellow

flags, handing the win to Cook.

New for 2023, the 116 Sprint Trophy and 120 Coupe Cup was dominated by the latter class. Louis Woodward and Steve Soper (see News) netted a win each, with their main challengers Tim Harvey and Anthony Seddon running into trouble. Harvey did not finish race one and Seddon dropped out of contention after visiting the pits in race two. Jack Godden and Daniel Hands each took a win in the 116 class.

In the 116 Trophy enduro, Matthew Highcock took the long way round to the race win. Two safety-car periods left him stranded in the midfield after making an early pitstop, but he shot to the front after the second stops and stayed there. After incurring a track-limits penalty early on, he needed to keep a decent lead over Mack Priestwood, but this later proved academic when Priestwood himself was also penalised. This promoted Harvey and Richard Lakey to second, after overtaking the Woodward/Andrew Haddon car on the last lap.

Ed Pither (PRS 1b) won the first 750 Formula race comfortably from Dave Hodkin's HRD, but it was the third-place tussle that was the most engaging. David Watts's Centaur, the Cowley of Bill Cowley and the Darvi of Peter Bove were locked in a slipstreaming thriller until Watts's car damaged a timing wheel and Cowley's broke an oil cooler, sending

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### ALFA ROMEO CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jamie Thwaites (Giulietta)

### F1000

Race 1 Dan Gore

Race 2 Rob Welham

### BMW CAR CLUB RACING

Races 1 & 2 Niall Bradley (E46 M3)

### TOYOTA MR2s

Races 1 & 2 Karl Johnston (MR2 Roadster)

### ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE

Races 1 & 2 Paul Cook (BMW E46 M3)

### 116 SPRINT TROPHY & 120 COUPE CUP

Race 1 Louis Woodward (E82 120i)

Race 2 Steve Soper (E82 120i)

### 116 TROPHY

Matthew Highcock

### 750 FORMULA

Races 1 & 2 Ed Pither (PRS 1b)

### CLIO SPORT

Races 1 & 2 Tim Bentley (182, below)

### CLASSIC STOCK HATCH

Races 1 & 2 Stewart Place (Peugeot 205 GTI)

### MIGHTY MINIS

Race 1 Neven Kirkpatrick (Super)

Race 2 Greg Jenkins (Super)



For full results visit: [750mc.co.uk](http://750mc.co.uk)

them both into retirement.

Pither's second win was aided by polesitter Hodkin's slow start, although he tried hard to regain the lead. It was Watts's turn to be sprayed with oil and Cowley also retired, leaving Bove to take third again, despite a spin.

All three small tin-top championships provided enthusiastic and spirited racing. For the Clio Sport and Classic Stock Hatch races, respective double winners Tim Bentley (Renault Clio 182) and Stewart Place (Peugeot 205 GTI) just held on to their leads throughout.

Neven Kirkpatrick and Greg Jenkins took a win apiece in Mighty Minis after coming through intense race-long slipstreaming contests.

**RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER**





## More Mosler joy for the Short family on Brands GP

### BRANDS HATCH

#### MSVR

29-30 APRIL

Two decades after Martin Short claimed the British GT title on the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit, his son Morgan provided one of the standout stories from the GT Cup round held on the track last weekend by steering his Mosler MT900 to a memorable triumph in Saturday's pitstop race.

Short had already shone in the sprint contest earlier in the day when a superb pass at Hawthorn helped him usurp the McLaren 720S of Lucky Khera for third in the closing stages. Yet Short's performance was overshadowed by James Wallis, who scored his third win on the trot at the wheel of his Mercedes-AMG GT3 after dominating the race from pole. Second place was taken by the 720S of Simon Orange, who later shared with multiple Mazda MX-5 champion Tom Roche.

Hopes of a fourth straight success for

Wallis vanished after just six laps of the subsequent pitstop event when his co-driver Sam Maher-Loughnan spun into the Surtees gravel due to gear selection problems. His retirement left a three-way McLaren battle for the lead between Orange, Khera and Morgan Tillbrook.

A spin at Stirlings ruled Khera (partnered with Euan Hankey) out of victory contention, but Orange/Roche remained close to the lead, even after emerging behind Short following the mandatory stops. Despite Roche applying strong pressure, Short hung on to secure an emotional win for himself and his onlooking father.

Hugo Cook, third in the pitstop race with Sacha Kakad, dominated Sunday's sprint encounter in his Audi R8 GT3, leading home Maher-Loughnan. Marcus Short, Morgan's younger brother, looked set to add to the family success with another podium, only to be disqualified for passing a tailender under safety car conditions.

An impressive opening stint by Khera in

Sunday's pitstop event helped him and team-mate Hankey triumph in the finale. After snatching the lead from early pacesetter Kakad at Westfield, Khera built up a sizeable advantage that Hankey was then able to consolidate once the stops were completed. Kakad/Cook held on to second ahead of the Porsche 997 GT3 RS of Shamus Jennings and Greg Caton.

There was a dramatic start to the first Porsche Club race when reigning champion Colin Tester went off at Druids on the second tour, forcing a race stoppage so barrier repairs could be completed. Bill Caley, who had survived a spin at Graham Hill Bend when challenging Steve Wood for the lead prior to the red flag, grabbed the advantage at the restart and looked all set for victory, only to be beaten on the run to the line by Wood in a thrilling conclusion.

Caley made amends in the second encounter, taking an immediate lead and never being headed thereafter, although he had to hold his nerve to withstand a late challenge from Pete Morris and Wood as the trio charged to the finish.

Jonny Lovell dominated the first Boxster Cup event after getting a great launch at the start. Vikram Sudera outdragged Mike Thompson on the run to the line to grab the runner-up spot, while Donington race one winner Tom Andrew salvaged fourth after a sluggish getaway. Andrew look set to make amends in race two after he grabbed the lead from Lovell at Druids in the closing stages, but a spin exiting Westfield moments later while coming across a backmarker handed the advantage back to Lovell. Thompson claimed another third after usurping Perry Darling at Druids on lap six of 10.

Daryl DeLeon was the victor of an





WEEKEND WINNERS

BRANDS HATCH

GT CUP

Race 1 James Wallis (Mercedes-AMG GT3)

Race 2 Morgan Short (Mosler MT900)

Race 3 Hugo Cook (Audi R8 GT3)

Race 4 Lucky Khera/Euan Hankey  
(McLaren 720S GT3)

PORSCHE CLUB

Race 1 Steve Wood (996)

Race 2 Bill Caley (Cayman)

PORSCHE CLUB BOXSTER CUP

Races 1 & 2 Jonny Lovell

RADICAL CUP UK

Races 1 & 2 Daryl DeLeon (SR3, below)

Race 3 Ben Caisley (SR3)

FOCUS CUP

Race 1 Jon Baker

Race 2 Simon Warr

MODIFIED FORDS

Race 1 Simon Light (Capri V8)

Race 2 Piers Grange (Escort Mk2)

MIATA TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Aidan Hills (Mk3)

SNETTERTON

FERRARI CHALLENGE TROFEO UK

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Morrow



GARY HAWKINS

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

opening Radical Cup UK event disrupted by two safety-car periods. Reigning champion James Lay took second ahead of Ben Caisley. Front-row starters DeLeon and Lay made contact at Druids on the first lap of race two, causing Lay to spin and drop down the field. Caisley initially took advantage of the clash to move in front, only for DeLeon to snatch back the lead with a neat move at Westfield. Third went to Jacek Zielonka after he came out on top in a five-way tussle. Caisley then won race three ahead of the battling DeLeon and Peter Tyler.

Jonathan Baker topped a safety-car-interrupted opening Focus Cup race ahead of Lewis Clark (driving Simon Walton's car) and Ian Mitchell, but the trio tripped over each other at Sheene in the sequel. Simon Warr avoided the chaos to claim the spoils ahead of Gary Mitchell.

MARK LIBBETER

# Morrow cruises in bruising Ferrari Challenge opener



There was no stopping  
Morrow all Snetterton event

RICHARD STYLES

SNETTERTON

MSVR FERRARI

29-30 APRIL

Ferrari Challenge Trofeo UK launched into 2023 at Snetterton last weekend to its now familiar fanfare of perfectly tuned V8s.

Arriving in Norfolk, it would be easy to imagine that the location was Fiorano instead; the venue swathed in banners of red and flags of yellow and, in the heart of the paddock, Pirelli's tyre trucks, newly arrived from Milan, together with the magnificent hospitality complex, framed by a fine collection of the latest cars and sought-after classics.

Polesitter Andrew Morrow was new to motorsport in 2022, yet became a race winner in only his second weekend of competition. Now, along with former Porsche racer Carl Cavers, and series regular Han Sikkens, his focus is the title. Each carries front-row pace but Morrow showed more than an edge in qualifying, whereas Cavers was forced to sit out the session with a cracked heat exchanger.

When they arrived in formation



Hogarth heads Marston  
in Coppa Shell battle

RICHARD STYLES

for race one's rolling start, Sikkens went early, gaining an advantage as they crossed the line. Morrow's response was instant, braking late into Riches, then holding firm into the hairpin, sending the Dutchman deep and leaving the Northern Irishman the freedom to push on.

Paul Rogers was another to start well; quickly up into third before falling back into a dusty duel with Marcos Vivian, who suddenly lost traction before running wide out of Agostini. Rogers went to make the pass but, as Vivian rejoined, he nudged Rogers sideways then fired him into the barrier. With debris covering the track and the remains of Rogers's car requiring recovery, the race was red flagged.

At the restart, Cavers (who had earlier made swift progress) was lying in third and wanting more, but his challenge ran deep at Murrays, which kept the podium positions as they were.

Race two was a similar affair. Morrow (coached by Jonny Kane) lapped ever quicker until he'd built enough of a gap to ease home, then did it again after a safety-car period. Sikkens, also for the second race in succession, found himself in trouble at the hairpin, this time leaving Cavers with an easy pass for second.

Meanwhile, the battle for Coppa Shell honours took centre stage. Race one class winner Paul Hogarth came under relentless pressure from Stuart Marston, who tried everything to get by (including an ambitious attempt around the outside at Oggies), but Hogarth held firm to seal the double.

STEVE HINDLE





Medcalf came out on top in both Benjafield Bentley Challenge encounters

STEVE JONES

# Bentleys pick of the bunch at May Day Madness

**CASTLE COMBE**  
**CCRC**  
**1 MAY**

Grand Touring cars spanning 90 years delighted Castle Combe spectators on Monday, the most eye-catching being 25 vintage Bentleys driven by intrepid Benjafield's Bentley Challenge competitors.

William Medcalf and David Little dropped the pack, with Medcalf proud to score landmark victories on synthetic fuel. Peter Little, Nigel Batchelor, Louisa Getley and Andy Buchan were among the standouts.

Superb cars and racing atoned for a sparse resident GT championship entry. Poleman Doug Watson started his turbocharged Ferrari strongly and repelled Keith Butcher's Lamborghini Huracan EVO GT3, which had the Ginetta-Chevrolets of Chris Everill (G55) and Dylan Popovic (G50) in tow at the chequer. Kevin Bird's Porsche 991 was in the fight until Popovic ambushed him at Folly.

Felix Fisher and Luke Cooper finished line astern after a two-lap dash decided the disjointed Formula Ford opener, which had already been restarted. Sam Street was leading Class B when he tagged Kane Tilley along Westway, whereupon Nathan Ward took phenomenal avoidance on the grass. Ward pitted to clear his Swift's radiators, rejoined the safety car crocodile and robbed rival Shaun Macklin.

Cooper started the sequel superbly, but reigning champion Fisher took his opportunity into Tower on lap two, extending his unbeaten run to four races in the process. Lucas Romanek muscled past Ben Mitchell for third, while Street shaded Ward in Class B.

MG BCV8 ace Neil Fowler twice pulled away from Ian Prior. Reigning champion James Wheeler trailed his V8 with oil pressure problems after qualifying, leaving Andy Young (MGC GT) atop Class C in the opener. Wheeler qualified dad Jonnie's car at lunchtime, started race two from the back and eagerly joined an epic scrap embroiling rivals Young, Steve Wells, Ben Tovey and Oliver Wardle. Wheeler dived past Young into Quarry, lost out at Old Paddock but regained the initiative at Camp in one lap to finish third overall.

Rob Ellick (Audi TT) annexed Combe Saloon pole, but a battle with Adam Prebble was denied when he received a 10-place grid drop for overtaking under yellow flags. Ellick soon moved up to second, but couldn't catch Prebble's Vauxhall Astra.

In the Combe Hot Hatch bout, Chris Southcott screamed his Honda Civic past Easter double winner Shaun Goverd's lighter Citroen AX, but he refused to be shaken off. Quicker out of Camp, Goverd saw a chance with Southcott entering a gaggle of traffic, but clipped the outside kerb and rode out a lairy spin into the infield. So far was Goverd ahead of team-mate Shaun Deacon (Peugeot 106 GTI) that the podium order remained unchanged.

Kevin Bird and son Charlie won the 10th anniversary Dave Allan Trophy, chasers Everill/Ben Scrivens's Ginetta retiring on the penultimate lap, as Popovic pitted with a smoking G50. Matthew Stockford/Alyn James (Audi RS3 TCR) and Jordan Billinton (Lambo Gallardo) were promoted to second and third, ahead of the top Honda – David Smitheram and Tom King (S2000).

**MARCUS PYE**

## COMBE RACE WINNERS

**BENJAFIELD'S BENTLEY CHALLENGE**  
**Races 1 & 2** William Medcalf (3/4½)

**CCRC GTs**  
Doug Watson (Ferrari 488 Challenge, below)

**CCRC FF1600**  
**Races 1 & 2** Felix Fisher (Ray GR05)

**MG BCV8s**  
**Races 1 & 2** Neil Fowler (B GTV8)

**CCRC SALOONS**  
Adam Prebble (Vauxhall Astra)

**CCRC HOT HATCH**  
Chris Southcott (Honda Civic EK9)

**CCRC DAVE ALLAN TROPHY**  
Kevin Bird/Charles Hyde-Andrews-Bird (Porsche 991.1 Cup)



STEVE JONES

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





# Hall wins as Menzies edges clear

CRAIGANTLET  
BRITISH HILLCLIMB  
29 APRIL

Wallace Menzies has broken free from an early joint British Hillclimb points lead after a visit to Belfast's Craigantlet course to now sit two points ahead of Matthew Ryder thanks to another win and a third place.

A fog-afflicted practice session cleared for Will Hall to win the first run-off and display fine sportsmanship, permitting Scott Moran to use his new-for-2023 Gould-Judd GR59 after the Ludlow man's car developed a rear-wing issue. Fastest off the line, Hall held a 0.55-second advantage over his rivals' efforts by the crossroads and, over the high-speed top section of the Belmont Road, Ryder could only pull back a

slender 0.04s to sit second.

Menzies arrived in Northern Ireland as favourite, having won both run-offs last year and claimed the 2021 title at the venue, so fifth fastest to the mid-point was somewhat surprising. Two places pulled back through the Allard left-hander and flowing right turn at Pringle meant another podium result settled Menzies ahead of the second opportunity to boost points.

An increasingly wet course for the second round meant Hall's earlier run remained faster than Menzies's winning time by 1.38s but with points, and not times, the key to championship success, all remains in the Scot's favour heading to Harewood next.

Menzies's long-time rival Alex Summers, only sixth in his DJ Firestorm earlier, was slower off the line than his previous attempt

## CRAIGANTLET HILLCLIMB RESULTS

**ROUND 3**  
**1 Will Hall (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59) 40.63s;**  
2 Matthew Ryder (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 41.14s; 3 Wallace Menzies (3.3 Gould-Cosworth GR59M) 43.59s; 4 Darren Gumbley (1.7 Force-Hayabusa TA) 44.66s; 5 Richard Spedding (1.6 GWR-Hayabusa Raptor) 45.07s; 6 Alex Summers (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Firestorm) 45.25s; 7 Scott Moran (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59) 45.40s; 8 Sean Gould (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 47.51s; 9 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS 28-RTE) 47.99s; 10 Paul Haines (1.3t Gould-Suzuki GR59) 48.80s.

**ROUND 4**  
**1 Menzies 42.01s;** 2 Summers 42.61s; 3 Moran 43.81s; 4 Ryder 45.62s; 5 Willis 45.67s; 6 Gould 46.35s; 7 David Uren (3.5 Gould-NME GR55B) 46.45s; 8 Hall 46.86s; 9 Spedding 47.51s, 10 David Warburton (1.6 Gould-Suzuki GR59) 48.02s.

**POINTS**  
**1 Menzies 36;** 2 Ryder 34; 3 Moran 29; 4 Summers 27; 5 Willis 22; 6= Gould and Spedding 16.

For full results visit: [britishhillclimb.co.uk](http://britishhillclimb.co.uk)

but still claimed second, 0.6s from matching the winning pace but 1.2s up on Moran, who headed back across the Irish Sea third in the points.

WILLIAM NEILL

# Wallace pips Nicholson in first event

SANTA POD  
BRITISH DRAG RACING  
29 APRIL-1 MAY

The 2023 Motorsport UK British Drag Racing Championship is only one event old yet already a candidate exists for the Pro Modified run of the year.

Wayne Nicholson and his Yorkshire team have been stalwart backmarkers in Pro Mod since stepping up to the class in 2008, with just two runner-up finishes to show for their labours – the supercharged, 1963 Corvette-bodied machine has served throughout.

Nicholson's career-best quarter-mile marks (6.082s/234.96mph) would have been frontrunning figures a decade ago but not in today's 5.8s/240mph-plus world. But there was surprise and joy in equal measure when Nicholson blasted



to a 5.889s/243.71mph, not only shattering the team's previous bests but securing Nicholson a first-ever pole position and the lowest elapsed time of the event.

In the end, Nicholson had to settle for one more runner-up finish among a small field of entries. With the transatlantic supply chain issue remaining, some racers still awaited delivery of parts, while twice-champion Kevin Slyfield and title contender Nick Davies had retired.

In their semi-final, multiple champion Andy Robinson, fearing another Nicholson

blast, left too soon, triggering a red light and advancing the Yorkshireman to the final. There, young Bobby Wallace and his mammoth-motored, unblown 2017 Camaro beat Nicholson in a wild, sashaying match, 6.169s to Nicholson's 6.614s.

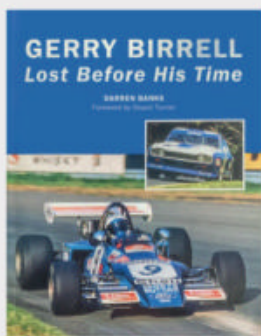
Wallace's earlier 243.85mph speed narrowly pipped Nicholson's mark for top speed of the event, but the Nicholson team will remember this weekend as a triumph after so many years.

ROBIN JACKSON



# FINISHING STRAIGHT

## The story of a natural successor to Stewart



**BOOK**  
**GERRY BIRRELL:  
LOST BEFORE  
HIS TIME**  
Darren Banks  
RRP £29

On 23 June 1973, the highly promising Gerry Birrell was killed when a punctured tyre pitched his Chevron B25 off the road at Rouen and into a crash barrier – and underneath it. Such was the brutality of motorsport in those days. The French organisers had already been lobbied about the insecure mounting of their supposedly protective measures, yet everyone turned a blind eye and qualifying for the following day's round of the European Formula 2 Championship proceeded until tragedy struck and a 28-year-old Scottish father of infant twin girls needlessly lost his life.

Half a century later, author Darren Banks has had his work – *Gerry Birrell: Lost Before His Time* – published after half a decade of phenomenal research. For those who have a passion for 1970s single-seaters, Banks will likely be familiar for his past work on Stephen South. He has surpassed that here.

Ford protege Birrell was touted as a natural successor to fellow Scot Jackie Stewart, who had emerged from the same motorsport scene and been friends with Birrell and his racing older brother Graham since their early days in the sport. At the time of the Rouen accident, Stewart had already secretly decided to retire at the end of the 1973 season, and the evidence suggests that Birrell had a very strong chance of being promoted to the Tyrrell Formula 1 team in his place in 1974. Indeed, the third Tyrrell entered for the 1973 season-closing Canadian and United States Grands Prix for Chris Amon likely would have been Birrell's bow at the pinnacle of the sport. Of course,



Birrell was competing for Ford in 1973, here at the Nurburgring 1000Km...

neither Amon nor Stewart would start the latter race at Watkins Glen due to the fatal accident that befell team-mate Francois Cevert in qualifying, and which was eerily similar to Birrell's.

Banks has excelled in speaking to an extraordinary number of Birrell's friends, family, motorsport associates and rivals. The project was undertaken with the full support of his widow Margaret, who happily is subsequently remarried. Graham Birrell, an excellent driver in his own right if perhaps slightly more motivated by business than a career behind the wheel, is also good value, and from here Banks takes us down a pleasing rabbit-warren of 1960s Scottish motorsport history, even from before Gerry's race debut at Charterhall in his brother's Austin A40 immediately after his 17th birthday.

The Birrells – and Scottish motorsport in general – hugely benefited from the opening of Ingliston in the mid-1960s. Here Gerry

shot to prominence by winning the Saloon car title in a Singer Chamois (Hillman Imp to you and me!) and, without wishing to denigrate a very competitive scene, could have stagnated as a big fish in a small pond had he not been given an opportunity in Formula Vee. That sent him to England for 1968 – in between a host of returns home to take part in anything and everything – and eventually the (in)famous Clapham race-preparation scene. From here on, the reminiscences of Birrell's faithful mechanic and confidant John Catt are fascinating.

With Catt, Birrell progressed through Formula Ford into F3 and F2 thanks largely to the faith of others. At the same time, he became a professional with Ford, hugely impressive in Capri machinery, first on the domestic scene, then at Le Mans and in the European Touring Car championship, where he formed a strong bond with fellow Blue Oval rising star Jochen Mass. The German's tales of his and Birrell's exploits at the wheel of a works Chevron B21 in southern Africa in late 1972 are hilarious, as are extracts from Birrell's own columns in the magazines of the time. You get a flavour of what an adventure the life of a racing driver was.

Birrell, you see, was not just an enormously versatile driver – he competed in rallies too – but was also a gifted mechanic and all-rounder who thought nothing of telling his story and allowing followers of racing into his world. Banks has benefited from the editing assistance



...while also racing in F2 for Chevron, here at the Hockenheim round

COLOMBO





ALL PHOTOGRAPHY  
motorsport  
IMAGES

SCHLEGELMILCH



SCHLEGELMILCH

of David Tremayne for this book, and you wonder whether Birrell deserved to be part of Tremayne's *The Lost Generation* that tells the stories of his fallen contemporaries Tom Pryce, Tony Brise and Roger Williamson, all of whom could have contended for the sport's ultimate prize. Perhaps, but there's also a case for suggesting that his driving career could have more closely resembled that of his 1972 Ford team-mate Hans Stuck – whose off-track exploits provided much mirth to Birrell and Mass – as an all-rounder of the sport.

What is clear is that driving would have been just the start. With his immense practical skills, Birrell would likely have risen to prominence as a team or manufacturer boss, or possibly even administrator of the sport. This book, which includes wonderful images from Scottish club events to Birrell's international career, leaves you in no doubt of the accuracy of its title and a poignant feeling of what might have been.

MARCUS SIMMONS



### F1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix review

Sergio Perez did the sprint and grand prix double at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix to put himself firmly in Formula 1 world title contention. Host Martyn Lee is joined by Matt Kew and Filip Cleeren to analyse how the Azerbaijan GP was won.

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

## WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

**Miami Grand Prix**  
F1 World Championship  
Round 5/23  
Miami, USA

7 May  
**TV Live**  
Sky Sports F1, Sun 2025

**TV Highlights**  
Sky Sports F1, Mon 0000,  
Channel 4, Mon 0125

**Formula E**  
Round 7/11  
Monte Carlo, Monaco  
6 May  
**TV Live** Channel 4, Sat 1330,  
Eurosport 2, Sat 1400

**Spa 12 Hours**  
24H Series  
Round 4/8  
Spa, Belgium  
6-7 May  
**TV Live** on

Motorsport.tv, Sat 1100,  
Sun 0930

**Super GT**  
Round 2/8  
Fuji, Japan  
3-4 May  
**TV Live** on Motorsport.tv,  
Wed 0710, Thu 0515

**NASCAR Cup**  
Round 12/36  
Kansas, USA  
7 May  
**TV Live** Viaplay, Sun TBC

**NASCAR Truck Series**  
Round 8/23  
Kansas, USA  
6 May

### UK MOTORSPORT

**Brands Hatch BARC**  
6-7 May  
BTCC, British Formula 4,  
Legends, Mini Challenge,  
Porsche Carrera Cup  
**TV Live** ITV4, Sun 1115

**Silverstone BRSCC**  
6-7 May  
British GT, GB3, GB4,  
Ginetta Junior, Ginetta  
GT Academy, Ginetta GT  
Championship  
**TV Live** via  
[britishgt.com](https://www.britishgt.com)

### Croft BRSCC

6-7 May  
CityCar Cup, Civic Cup,  
Fiesta Junior, Mazda MX-5  
(Championship, Clubman,  
Supercup), TCR UK

**Cadwell Park HSCC**  
6-7 May  
70s Roadsports, Allcomers,  
Bernie's V8s, Historic F3,  
Historic FF2000, Historic  
Formula Junior, Historic  
Roadsports/Historic Touring  
Cars, Superkarts

**Thruxton CSCC**  
6-7 May  
Classic K, Future Classic,  
Modern Classics, New  
Millennium, Open Series,  
Slicks Series, Special Saloons  
and Modsports, Swinging  
60s, Tin Tops, Turbo Tin Tops

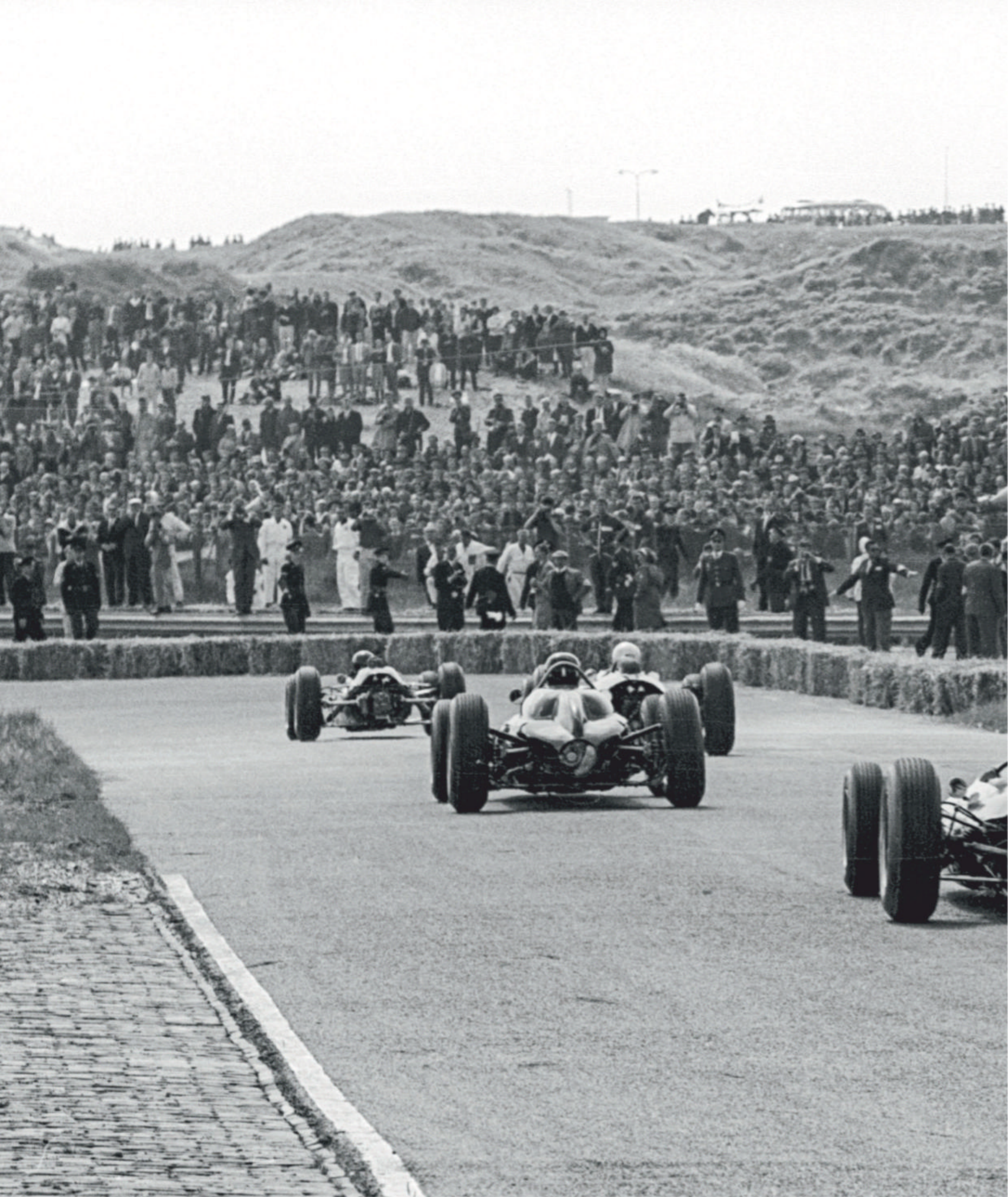
**Bishopscourt BARC**  
6-7 May  
Formula Vee, Formula  
Sheane, Future Classics,  
Global GT Lights, HRCA,  
Mazda MX-5, NI Saloons,  
NI Sportscars, SEAT  
Supercup, Sevens, Strykers,  
Wildcat Supercars

**British Hillclimb Championship**  
Round 3/14  
Harewood, England  
7 May

### NATIONAL MEETING OF THE WEEK

The British Touring Car Championship is back on track at Brands Hatch, but the best of the weekend's action could come from the TOCA support bill as the Legends cars appear for the first time





#### FROM THE ARCHIVE

Jim Clark (Lotus-Climax 25) leads Bruce McLaren (Cooper-Climax T66), Graham Hill (BRM P57), Jack Brabham (Brabham-Climax BT7) and McLaren's team-mate Tony Maggs on the opening

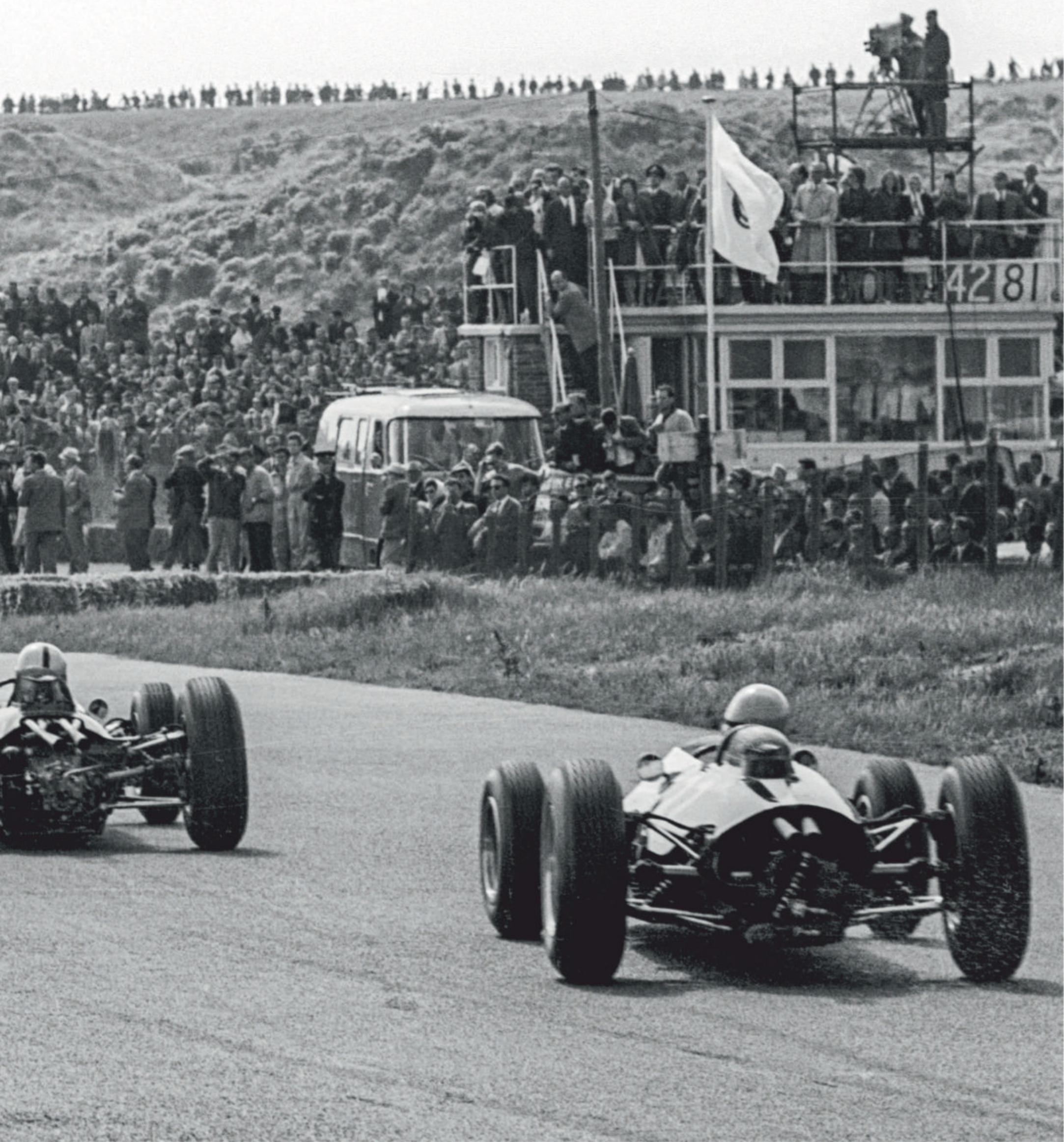
lap of the 1963 Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort. In a demonstration of smooth, controlled domination, polesitter Clark went on to lap the entire field to take the second of the seven wins he would clock up in this

10-round season. None of the other drivers pictured made the finish. Brabham driver Dan Gurney was a crowd-pleasing runner-up, fighting back after a fluffed shift off the line dropped him to the back of the field.



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# Dallara T08

(FORMULA RENAULT 3.5)

FLAMAND/DPPI

There are certain ways of going about winning a championship. One is to patiently bank points and profit from others' misfortune. Then there's the approach taken by Giedo van der Garde in snaring the 2008 Formula Renault 3.5 title, breaking the back of the opposition with morale-crushing early victories.

"The way we started off that year was spectacular," says the Dutchman of his three wins from the opening four races with the Renault World Series' new-for-2008 Dallara To8, which established the P1 Motorsport driver in a lead that he never relinquished. He followed up his "perfect" Monza double and Spa triumph with wins at the Hungaroring and Le Mans to secure the title with a round to spare.

"To start a season like this was just wonderful," says the 38-year-old, who qualified lower than second only three times all season. "That's why also I won the championship. Every track I was always one of the fastest."

A machine that the LMP2 gun-for-hire today describes as "just unbelievable" is an automatic choice for his favourite car ahead of weaponry he tested for four Formula 1 teams and the 2013 Caterham CTo3 he twice hauled into Q2. Such was his appreciation for the To8 that van der Garde cut short his first weekend of GP2 Asia with iSport at Shanghai to take a



red-eye flight to Barcelona for the final FR3.5 round of 2008. His commitment was unrewarded though: an unexplained car failure pitched him off on the opening lap.

It helped that van der Garde was in a winning environment in 2008, as P1 boss Roly Vincini "trusted my ability and we found a super-good set-up", but the car also rates well against its contemporaries. He raced the highly evolved To5 in 2007 before driving the second-generation GP2/o8 chassis also built by Dallara the year after, and reckons the only superior element of GP2's 612bhp machine over the 3.5-litre V6 To8 was engine power.

"Driveability, the World Series car was better because they also had the Michelin tyres that were very good [compared to the Bridgestone-shod GP2]," he says. "It was a very enjoyable car to drive."

JAMES NEWBOLD



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Autosport Media UK Ltd, The Power House, Isleworth, London, TW7 6QG **Email** [autosport@autosport.com](mailto:autosport@autosport.com)  
**Individual email** [firstname.surname@autosport.com](mailto:firstname.surname@autosport.com)  
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[james.robinson@motorsport.com](mailto:james.robinson@motorsport.com)

## ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

[autosport@tandemmedia.co.uk](mailto:autosport@tandemmedia.co.uk)  
**Tel** +44 (0) 1233 220247

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Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT.  
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