

F1 Lawson to miss out on 2024 drive?

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

28 SEPTEMBER 2023

AUTOSPORT

JAPANESE GP

Verstappen masterclass delivers for Red Bull

Suzuka success secures constructors' crown as Norris and Piastri star

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Red Bull back on song as Max secures constructors' crown

As expected, normal Formula 1 service was resumed at the Japanese Grand Prix, with Max Verstappen scoring his 13th win of the season and clinching Red Bull's sixth constructors' crown. Nevertheless, there is something to be said for enjoying the performance of a great driver in a brilliant car around a proper track, which Suzuka is.

As Jake Boxall-Legge shows in our race report on page 14, Verstappen wasn't the only star of the show last weekend. Lando Norris was brilliant for McLaren, while his team-mate Oscar Piastri – surely a race winner and title contender in the making – scored his first GP podium. We've also got the ongoing Mercedes-Ferrari fight.

Verstappen's crushing Suzuka performance was reminiscent of some of the drives Michael Schumacher put in there. This week we look back at the team with which he scored his first two world titles: Benetton. Experienced journalist and former Autosport staffer Damien Smith has just finished a book on the sometimes controversial squad, having spoken to the key players. Turn to p40 for an extract and p44 for his top 10 Benetton F1 drivers.

It's not too difficult to pick out the star performers in the British Touring Car Championship this year. Ash Sutton, Tom Ingram and Jake Hill all had rollercoaster rides at Silverstone last weekend but each showed their class. Marcus Simmons was there to see the drama unfold and the title race boil down to Sutton vs Ingram (p30).

The IndyCar crown emphatically went to Alex Palou in 2023. Charles Bradley charts the on and off-track drama on p50.



Kevin Turner

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FREE WITH THIS ISSUE



ENGINEERING SUPPLEMENT

The pros and cons of tyre wars in motorsport lead this issue of our free supplement, which also investigates how a NASCAR Cup machine was made ready for the challenge of Le Mans.

PIT + PADDOCK

Supersub Lawson overlooked for 2024 F1 race seat

FORMULA 1

Liam Lawson may have scored two of the five Formula 1 points earned by AlphaTauri all season during his impressive four-round substitute stint, but that has not been enough to secure him a race seat for the start of 2024. The Red Bull sister squad has instead signed Daniel Ricciardo and Yuki Tsunoda for next season, with Lawson reprising his role as a reserve for both teams. The Kiwi, who has filled in for Ricciardo while the eight-time grand prix winner recovers from a broken bone in his left hand, will attend all races next year alongside his testing and simulator duties.

After navigating the chaos of the Dutch Grand Prix on his debut and grabbing the team's best result of 2023 with ninth in Singapore, Lawson appeared to present Red Bull with a dilemma for 2024. With Nyck de Vries sacked after 10 rounds, the marketable Ricciardo returned to F1 and outperformed Tsunoda during his short-lived comeback in Hungary and Belgium. This earned him a full-time seat for next year before his injury.

Then Super Formula runner-up Lawson entered the frame, while Tsunoda was hobbled by unreliability and first-lap crashes. It appeared as though Tsunoda, by now a known quantity, was under threat to retain his drive. But terms were agreed with the Japanese ahead of his home race last weekend.

Outgoing team boss Franz Tost said:

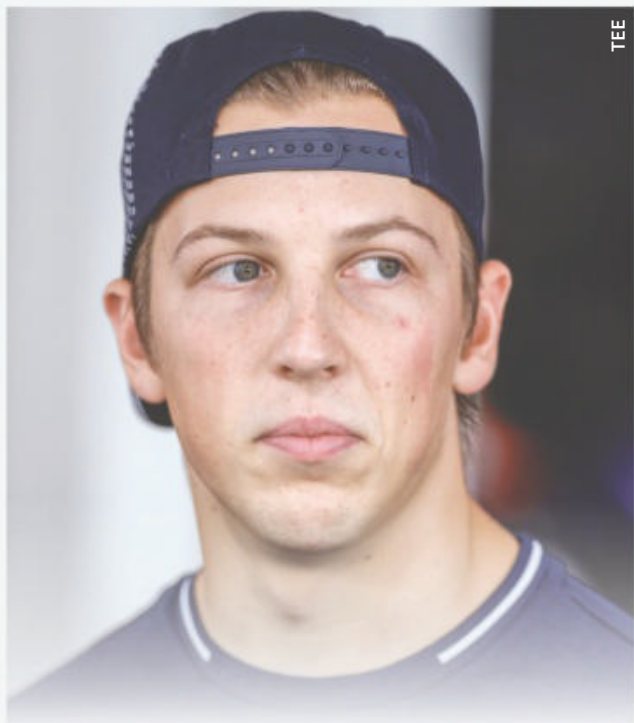
"Next year, the technical regulations remain largely unchanged and it was therefore logical to go for continuity in our driver line-up too. I am very pleased with the development that Yuki has shown over the last two and a half years... As for Liam, who has impressed everyone in his races so far, he will definitely help the team in his development role as a third driver, and I'm sure he will have a future in F1 soon."

The only remaining berth for next year is alongside Alex Albon at Williams, with rookie Logan Sargeant adding to the repair bills by crashing in both qualifying and the race in Japan. But Lawson, 21, will remain part of the Red Bull stable. Team boss Christian Horner says the youngster has time on his side and it is believed that he is a shoo-in for 2025, but an opportunity might present itself much sooner. Should Sergio Perez fail to rekindle his confidence over the winter and extend his poor form in the early races of next season, Red Bull will plausibly relieve the Mexican of his duties. That would afford Ricciardo a promotion to finally create a space for Lawson.

In the shorter term, Lawson's F1 audition is set to continue since Ricciardo remains a doubt for next week's Qatar GP. A return at Losail was targeted due to the week's break following the Singapore/Japan back-to-back races, but AlphaTauri head of trackside engineering Jonathan Eddolls reckons his driver's comeback is a "while away" yet. He added: "There's no rush to get him back too early. The worst thing would be to come back before it's properly healed and cause



Piastri has impressed McLaren bosses Zak Brown and Andrea Stella



TEE



MAUGER

any issues. I think the final decision is more than likely going to come from him rather than us. He will know better than anyone how is the pain and how is the recovery."

MCLAREN EXTENDS PIASTRI DEAL

Meanwhile, McLaren has moved to secure the services of Suzuka podium finisher Oscar Piastri until the end of 2026. The Australian, who joined after rejecting an Alpine seat, has earned a two-year contract extension owing to his standout rookie campaign. It theoretically keeps him at Woking a year longer than team-mate Lando Norris, who can count Ferrari, Red Bull and Aston Martin as keen admirers.

Team principal Andrea Stella said: "Oscar is an asset to McLaren and constantly impresses with his performance, work ethic and attitude, so it was an easy decision for the team to make. He has already proved pivotal to the team, so it's brilliant to have his vote of confidence as we push to win championships again. I look forward to seeing him develop with us as we continue this journey together."

MATT KEW



SUTTON

Eco-conscious Vettel would 'bee' a good fit at Jota, says team

Vettel in frame for race return with Jota Porsche Hypercar

WEC

Sebastian Vettel poured cold water on an immediate Formula 1 comeback over the course of a visit to Suzuka for the Japanese Grand Prix last weekend, but he is in talks about returning to the race track next year: there are discussions with the Jota Porsche team about joining its expanded World Endurance Championship assault.

Jota, the first customer team to run the Porsche 963 LMDh in the WEC, has revealed that it has approached Vettel about joining its assault for next year when it increases its Hypercar class campaign to include a second car run in the colours of car-hire giant Hertz. Team principal Sam Hignett has stressed that no deal has been done, but that talks are ongoing.

"We are speaking to Seb, there are discussions, but nothing is done," said Hignett. "There isn't any kind of contract signed and he certainly hasn't tested one of our cars."

Vettel, who called time on his F1 career at the end of 2022, has refused

to rule out the possibility of some kind of comeback. He declared that he remained race fit earlier this month, and said at Suzuka that he misses "the amazing feeling" of driving an F1 car.

But he scotched talk of a return to F1 in the short term. Asked if he was considering that, he said: "Not for now: F1 was the centre to my life for so long, but once you step out, you realise even more how big the rest of the world is, and how small in a way F1 is."

Jota has made it clear that it is in a position to pick and choose the line-up for its second 963 and that it does not require funded drivers. Hignett alluded to the environmental credentials of Jota as being part of its pitch to Vettel, who unveiled a number of bee hotels at Suzuka as part of his ambassadorial role with the BeesandApple environmental project. "Sustainability is important to us as a team, which is why our hospitality unit at Le Mans was solar powered," he said. "We know that is important to Seb as well."

Hignett revealed that Jota has a "long list of drivers" as it looks to put its two-car Hypercar assault together for 2024. "We are speaking to a lot of people, some who are high up on the list and some others who aren't so high," he explained.

It is known that another F1 world champion in the form of Jenson Button is on the list, while Hignett again confirmed that Robert Kubica, who is racing in the WEC in P2 with WRT this year, is in discussions with the team.

GARY WATKINS



Team plans to field second Porsche in 2024

EHRHARDT

Andretti through, Brit teams fall in FIA verdict

FORMULA 1

Andretti Global is believed to be the sole remaining candidate to form an 11th Formula 1 team now that the FIA has rejected the three other applicants. While there is still no official confirmation from the governing body, Autosport understands that the Andretti bid, supported by General Motors marque Cadillac, is the only one to have reached the final stage. Accordingly, FIA F2 squads Hitech and Rodin Cars (Carlin) have been rejected along with Asian start-up effort LKYSUNZ.

Michael Andretti still faces long odds to stick two cars on the grid come 2025 or 2026, however. The matter will now progress via F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali, but the 10 incumbent teams are cold on the prospect of a new playmate. They worry that

another entry will harm their income, and the current \$200million anti-dilution fee that Andretti would have to pay under the Concorde Agreement to protect against this no longer reflects F1's economic and popularity boom.

LKYSUNZ claims it is prepared to pay \$600m, thanks to fresh backing from a Floridian billionaire. But this announcement last week was met with surprise by employees of existing F1 teams amid speculation that LKYSUNZ staff have been applying for jobs elsewhere after learning their fate from the FIA. It is understood that LKYSUNZ submitted new documents in the hope of a revised assessment, but the deadlines stipulated in the FIA tender have passed and the rejection is said to be final.

Why LKYSUNZ, Hitech and Rodin Carlin were rejected is



Seems like Michael Andretti has FIA approval, but hurdles still remain

not yet known. Applicants were asked to prove that they have sufficient financial resources, demonstrate how the project will be environmentally sustainable to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions by 2030, plus present how they would achieve a positive social

impact. Staff diversity is a focal point. LKYSUNZ envisages a headquarters in South-East Asia, most likely in the greater Kuala Lumpur area in Malaysia, which would pave the way for new engineers and mechanics to enter F1.

CHRISTIAN NIMMERVOLL

Vandoorne in Peugeot Hypercar line-up for 2024

WEC

Stoffel Vandoorne will race for Peugeot's World Endurance Championship squad next season. The Belgian is stepping up from his reserve and test role with the team, his announcement coming after an outing at this month's Fuji WEC round and the news that Gustavo Menezes is

leaving the French manufacturer.

What hasn't been revealed is whether Vandoorne will slot into the seat vacated by the American in the #94 Peugeot 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar alongside Loic Duval and Nico Muller. That appears likely, though there has not been confirmation of the full 2024 line-up as yet.

Former McLaren Formula 1 driver

Vandoorne explained that returning to the WEC, in which he contested a full season with the Jota LMP2 team in 2021, has always remained a goal. "Having the opportunity to fight for the victory and at the Le Mans 24 Hours is fantastic, and I think it's a dream for a lot of drivers," said the 31-year-old. "I'm really glad to be part of this team and excited to start with Peugeot."

He outlined at Fuji, where he replaced the injured Muller, a desire to race in both WEC and Formula E next year. Negotiations to remain at the Penske FE squad, which is partnered with Peugeot sister marque DS, remain a work in progress, he said, pointing out that they are complicated by a clash between the Spa WEC round and FE's trip to Berlin.

Peugeot motorsport boss Jean-Marc Finot explained he was "proud to name Stoffel" for the full line-up. "As he showed in Fuji, his team spirit, his performance, and his consistency are in line with the ones of his team-mates," he said.

GARY WATKINS



De Vries in, di Grassi out at Mahindra

FORMULA E

Ex-AlphaTauri Formula 1 driver Nyck de Vries will return to Formula E for the 2023 season with Mahindra, with Lucas di Grassi leaving the team.

The 28-year-old Dutchman competed in 10 grands prix with the Red Bull junior squad before being sacked prior to the Hungarian Grand Prix in July. De Vries claimed the 2021 FE title with Mercedes during a three-year spell at the team before the German manufacturer's withdrawal at the end of 2022.

"Coming back to Formula E will feel like coming home," said de Vries. "I've been part of the Formula E family for three seasons, I know everybody very well. I'm looking forward to being back in a familiar environment, and to be back somewhere where ultimately I've always enjoyed my racing."

He is joined at Mahindra by Edoardo Mortara, who left the Maserati MSG squad after six seasons with the team previously



De Vries and Mortara join up in a potent Mahindra line-up

known as Venturi, during which time he claimed six wins and was in title contention in the 2021 and 2022 campaigns.

Brazilian di Grassi has been a mainstay of the all-electric championship since its inception in 2014, and the ex-F1 driver claimed the 2016-17 FE title with the Abt Audi team. The 39-year-old endured a difficult maiden season with Mahindra in 2023, taking just one podium in the Mexico City season-opener and two further points finishes. It is unknown whether he will

remain on the FE grid, with only Abt Cupra and DS Penske yet to confirm their driver line-ups as Autosport went to press.

Mortara has been replaced alongside four-time FE race winner Maximilian Guenther at Maserati by FE rookie and F2 veteran Jehan Daruvala. The Indian newcomer joins after conducting rookie tests as Mahindra's official reserve.

NIO 333 retains Briton Dan Ticktum and Brazilian Sergio Sette Camara for its line-up.

STEFAN MACKLEY



£100k bursary to help students

GRAND PRIX TRUST

The Grand Prix Trust has launched a £100,000 annual bursary scheme to help disadvantaged college students become part of the British motorsport industry in a partnership with the Silverstone-based National College for Motorsport (NC4M) and Silverstone University Technical College.

The programme, led by Formula 1 chief technical officer Pat Symonds, will assist young people from a variety of backgrounds and aims to break down barriers that would ordinarily hinder those who aspire to work in motorsport.

The GPT was founded by Sir Jackie Stewart in the 1980s to help personnel in need from the F1 paddock.

GPT Trustees chairman Martin Brundle said: "We are very pleased to be able to help college students who have the desire and motivation to be part of our exciting industry, but for whatever reason of circumstances find themselves unable to do so. Motorsport is crying out for young talent, and this perfectly closes the circle of what the Grand Prix Trust offers."

NC4M and Silverstone UTC will work closely alongside the GPT to carry out a talent detection programme to identify individuals who can benefit.

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Pearson (inset) leads Ingram at Silverstone before letting title-chasing team leader through



Ingram could join Pearson among up to six Hyundais

BTCC

The news has been pouring out of leading British Touring Car Championship team Excelr8 Motorsport in recent days, and the rumours have also been swirling around plans for its Hyundai i30 Ns in 2024.

What we do know about the Suffolk squad – because it's been announced – is that its tie-up with title sponsor Bristol Street Motors has been given a multi-year extension, that it will continue using the Swindon-built bespoke Hyundai engines that first appeared in 2022 and propelled Tom Ingram to his maiden title, and that the highly promising rookie Ronan Pearson will stay on for 2024 and 2025.

Then came talk that Excelr8 could expand from four cars to six. Team owner Justina

Williams scotched his, but there could be a customer squad of two Hyundais. "I don't know where that rumour has come from," said Williams. "Excelr8 are definitely not going up to six cars, but that doesn't mean we can't be involved in six cars. We're always happy to help people. As long as it works for all parties, that's something we'd consider."

The Bristol Street extension gives credence to reigning champion Ingram and Tom Chilton staying on. When collared about this, Ingram, who joined Excelr8 for 2021, was coy in his hints. "We'll see what goes on," he said. "My plan is consistency. I've always enjoyed the consistency of staying with the same team and the same engineers, mechanics for many years. That's always been my MO and will continue to be."

Pearson, meanwhile, is ready to crack on

after a rookie campaign slightly set back by the dismal British climate disrupting his pre-season testing programme.

"The raw pace is there, and I'm now getting into the swing of what touring car racing is about," said the 21-year-old Scot. "I'm loving the car, and there's nothing that comes close to it [in terms of preparation] unless you're actually doing it. Technically we had five days before the season, but we'd get to places and it was raining. But now it's finally clicking. In FP1 I leave the pitlane and we can turn it on. And I've been learning a lot from the two Toms."

Ingram added: "Ronan's really come on as a driver, which is really nice to see. He's a good lad. He's coming on strong. He'll be a force to be reckoned with in the future."

MARCUS SIMMONS

Optimum McLaren pair head points into finale



INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN

British pairing Charlie Fagg and Sam De Haan carry a narrow lead into the International GT Open finale at Barcelona next month after having a penalty reversed following last weekend's penultimate round at Monza.

The Optimum Motorsport McLaren (left) duo were initially penalised five seconds in Sunday's race for a start

infringement, before this was rescinded and they were promoted from ninth to fourth. Meanwhile, a 3s penalty for overtaking under yellow flags was imposed upon the winning AF Corse Ferrari of Riccardo Agostini and Nicola Marinangeli, dropping them to second and hoisting Irish-South African combo Reece Barr and Mikael Pitamber to a maiden win in their SPS Mercedes.

Two more Brits, 17-year-old pairing Aaron Walker and James Wallis, had provided something of a sensation when they finished third in Saturday's race in their GetSpeed Mercedes. DTM race winner Maximilian Paul and Pierre-Louis Chovet took their fourth IGTO victory of the season in their Oregon Team Lamborghini. Fagg and De Haan, who were 10th in that race, lead Diego Menchaca by four points.



BTCC British Touring Car Championship powerhouse Motorbase Performance turned out the Ford Focus ST of Jack Sears Trophy contender Sam Osborne in a Valvoline livery paying homage to the mid-1990s works Mondeos at Silverstone last weekend. Paddock wags suggested that Motorbase's Malcolm Swetnam, who team-manages two cars including Osborne's, may be having nightmares: he fulfilled the same role at West Surrey Racing in 1996 when it entered the BTCC saddled with Schubel-built Mondeos! The paintjob inspired Osborne to a best-ever qualifying position of 10th, and he was sixth fastest – just 0.068s off the pace – in Q1. **Photograph by JEP/Motorsport Images**

Hendrick gets to 300 with Byron

NASCAR CUP

William Byron benefited from his team-mate's misfortune and stole a milestone NASCAR Cup victory for Hendrick Motorsports last Sunday at Texas Motor Speedway.

After seeing the sister HMS Chevrolet of Kyle Larson, who dominated much of the second half of the race, wreck out late, Byron moved into position to challenge for the lead on a restart with six of 267 laps remaining. As leader Bubba Wallace raced side by side with Chase Briscoe, Briscoe drifted up the track, taking Wallace with him. Byron then dived low, went three-wide and came away with the lead.

Byron then held off a late charge from Ross Chastain to pick up his sixth win of the season and the 300th Cup victory for team owner Rick Hendrick, whose first success came in 1984 with Geoff Bodine.



Wallace ended up third, ahead of Christopher Bell and Denny Hamlin. Briscoe dropped to 10th behind Kevin Harvick, Brad Keselowski, Daniel Suarez and Ricky Stenhouse Jr.

With two races left in the Round of 12 – at Talladega and the Charlotte Roval – the four drivers lowest in points without a win and in danger of elimination from the playoffs are Kyle Busch, Ryan Blaney, Tyler Reddick and Wallace, who is just two points behind the cutline. Busch, Blaney and Reddick were all involved in wrecks.

JIM UTTER

TEN VOORDE IS THE KING

Harry King scored two more podium finishes in the penultimate Carrera Cup Germany round at the Red Bull Ring last weekend as Larry ten Voorde secured the title. Team GP Elite driver ten Voorde made a big stride towards that crown with victory in race one from the Allied Racing car of King. In the second race, he dropped back from a ferocious battle for third with King, and his final position of fifth was enough for the title. Bastian Buus won from Loek Hartog and King.

WAYNE'S WORLD AT SPA

Northern Irishman Wayne Boyd triumphed in the Le Mans Cup round at Spa last weekend with John Schauermaier in their United Autosports Ligier. In a rare period of racing amid an infestation of no fewer than four safety cars, Boyd swept around Tommy Foster's 360 Racing Ligier at Les Combes to take the lead.

MICHELISZ'S RALLY DEBUT

Ex-World Touring Car Cup champion and current TCR World Tour leader Norbert Michelisz will contest the final round of the European Rally Championship on 6-8 October. The Hyundai works driver will take the wheel of an i20 Rally2 car for his home event, Rally Hungary.

'THE GIZ' AT IT AGAIN

Is there any end to Shane van Gisbergen's versatility? The three-time Aussie Supercars champion, 2016 Blancpain GT title winner, 2021 New Zealand GP winner and 2023 debutant NASCAR victor finished second to Hayden Paddon's Rally2 Hyundai on the Daybreaker Rally last weekend – at the wheel of a seven-year-old, 1600cc Audi S1 (below)!



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IMAGE - DAN BATHIE



Using the rules the right way

Incidents involving Sergio Perez in the last two grands prix highlight the urgent need to re-examine two elements of the Formula 1 rulebook

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

There's famously no room for moral consideration in Formula 1's sporting realm. Red Bull demonstrated this with its shrewd/cynical call to put Sergio Perez back into the Japanese Grand Prix so he could serve the five-second time penalty he'd accrued for whacking into the Haas of Kevin Magnussen.

This exposed a longstanding loophole in F1's sporting rules. Having stopped Perez shortly after his Magnussen shunt and before the stewards' investigation was concluded, Red Bull feared that he'd carry his censure over to the next race in Qatar as a grid penalty. Fair enough, really – so long as the car Red Bull had previously decided was too damaged to continue was in a safe enough condition to re-enter the track, and no other driver was impacted by Perez slinking around. So, now it has been so brutally – to many, amusingly – exposed, the FIA should at least consider closing the loophole. The safety argument alone of sending out a quickly repaired car is surely overwhelming.

But there's a more pressing point regarding F1's rules, which involves the names covered so far, plus Logan Sargeant and Valtteri Bottas and their unrelated Suzuka shunt. This is how sanctions are being dished out by the stewards for poor driving actions. Perez and Sargeant earned the same 5s penalty, but they were not equal incidents. While he was unlucky that Sargeant messed up so badly on his inside, Bottas left himself exposed by attacking

“We know the FIA and its stewards can be open to admitting they get things wrong”

around the outside of a corner. A clash can happen in such circumstances and it was right of the stewards to call Sargeant “predominantly” to blame and hand him the penalty he got.

Magnussen played no part in Perez turning him around – such was the distance the Red Bull driver attacked from, with a car he felt was “struggling quite a lot on the braking with the front end” following the clash with Lewis Hamilton that broke his first front wing. That feeling should have increased Perez's caution, not the reverse. But it was bizarre to read the stewards' reasoning for his penalty that he was only “predominantly” in the wrong.

The Magnussen clash came one race on from the Singapore stewards deciding that Perez's lunge and crash with Alex Albon was “predominantly” the Red Bull driver's fault, when ‘wholly’ was more appropriate. There, Perez raced up the road in the

closing stages, passed AlphaTauri's Liam Lawson and rendered the sanction toothless. Albon and Williams were exasperated, given Albon lost four places and valuable points.

At Monza, the two Mercedes also overcame 5s penalties by pulling clear of rivals. In George Russell's case of leaving the track and gaining an advantage, however, that sanction felt appropriate. But this all serves to highlight how, of the four most pertinent options available to the stewards under Article 54.3 of F1's sporting rules (a 5s time addition, 10s time addition, drive-through or 10s stop-and-go), the harsher ones are not being applied to the more egregious incidents. The drivers are getting vocal about this – it's the consistency they're always calling for being applied in the wrong way, surely.

The counterpoint here is that the outcome of incidents should not be taken into account for sanctions, and that the cause alone should be judged within the penalty options available. Again, this chomps at any desire for justice in F1's vacuum of sporting morality, but nevertheless now it seems that all driving actions are somehow being penalised as if they're equal. Fernando Alonso jumping over the Singapore pit entry kerbs twice feels appropriate for a small time addition. Yet that is being lumped in with similar decisions over serious driving gaffes and crashes.

Yet common sense can prevail. At Suzuka, the Turn 1 clashes between Perez and Hamilton, and Esteban Ocon, Bottas and Albon just behind, were rightly considered for ‘first lap incidents’ leniency. Charles Leclerc's late pass around Russell's stern Turn 2 defence seemed to slip beyond track limits. Thankfully, this was dismissed because, at that point and in those circumstances, what advantage was gained given Russell's part in the move?

Yes, this is indeed inconsistency in considering how F1 rules and penalties are applied. But there's room for common-sense calls to ignore things the regulations aren't intended to stop sitting alongside the desire to eliminate glaring discrepancies. And we know the FIA and its stewards can be open to admitting that they get things wrong – such as the decision not to penalise Max Verstappen for his impeding in Singapore qualifying. The teams were told in Japan that this was indeed incorrect.

That these discussions can take place has long been a part of motorsport's history. Some will argue that wanting the full range of penalties for driving infractions to be used is over-regulation. But not only are they already in the rules, but adapting is part of evolution. And when misadventures such as these and the confusion they create come at a time when F1 audience numbers are apparently dwindling, then bringing a halt to baffling rules debacles is, surely, helpful. 🍷

 **P14 JAPANESE GP REPORT**



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An IndyCar loss at the right time?

Great racing memories aside, there was an inevitability about the parting of ways between North America's premier open-wheel series and Texas Motor Speedway

JOEY BARNES

The writing had been on the wall for several years, but the inevitable separation of the IndyCar Series and Texas Motor Speedway finally came with the arrival of the 2024 schedule. In a relationship that began in 1997, the two transitioned through nearly every phase possible in the best and worst ways. The reality, though, is that things have been turbulent for an extended amount of time. And both parties are at fault for it failing.

In many ways, it's fitting how everything started – with four-time Indianapolis 500 winner and Texas native AJ Foyt backhanding Arie Luyendyk in Victory Lane after the inaugural event in 1997. Factor in timing and scoring issues that delayed final results until the next day, and it also signalled the end of the United States Auto Club's involvement in the championship.

When the series needed to bolster its schedule in the early days and an ideal market to crown a champion, the 1.5-mile superspeedway stepped up and hosted races in summer and fall from 1998 to 2004. Breathtaking wheel-to-wheel battles and dramatic finishes were common. At one point, it owned the second-closest finish in Indycar history when Sam Hornish Jr edged out Helio Castroneves by 0.0096 seconds in a 2002 thriller. Even that took a back seat when Graham Rahal pulled the upset on James Hinchcliffe's dominant drive in 2016 to win by 0.0080s, which ranks as the closest in the track's history and fifth all-time.

The shine of aluminium grandstands under the traditional Saturday night shootouts in summer became more prominent as the crowd size trickled down in the late 2000s, but in many ways 2016 signalled the beginning of the end. Rahal's narrow victory put solace on an unprecedented situation when rain left the track surface with drying issues, which suspended the race after 72 laps on 11 June, only to return to finish out the remainder on 27 August.

What followed as a result of the persistent issues was a repave, reconstruction and reconfiguration. A symmetrical 24-degree banking in all four corners gave way to alteration, with Turns 1 and 2 decreased to 20 degrees and widened from 60 to 80 feet. An expansive French drainage system was installed on the frontstretch and backstretch of the track. Without an aged racing surface, the multiple lanes become non-existent in the events that followed, which was made increasingly difficult with NASCAR's track adhesive not meshing with IndyCar's package.

Even with all of those struggles, though, when the coronavirus pandemic happened in 2020 and IndyCar needed a place to jumpstart its delayed season, it turned to Texas for its behind-closed-doors race. Other events were more fortunate, with crowds, albeit in limited numbers at specific venues, able to attend as the year went on.

A stranglehold of single-file racing continued until IndyCar

gave way to Will Power's long-standing idea of a special session – consisting of only seven drivers – with extra tyres for the sole purpose of working the upper lanes in 2022. Track evolution followed for the race as the much-maligned high lane became usable, with Josef Newgarden using it to make the winning move on Team Penske team-mate Scott McLaughlin on the last lap. It was the only race that featured a winning pass on the final lap all season, too. This past season, the Texas on-track product showed

“When IndyCar needed a place to jumpstart its delayed 2020 season, it turned to Texas”

flashes of its glory days before an untimely caution stunted what would have undoubtedly been a wild finish, and left Newgarden to coast to victory for a second consecutive year.

So, even with an uptick in the quality of racing, why did it come to this? In this case, it came down to clash of dates, with rumblings of NASCAR eager to move off its September date, where fans sat in blistering heat reaching 100F, and to early April, the slot that IndyCar held this year. Simply put, the television money that TMS receives from NASCAR gives them priority. And with the number of NASCAR events at TMS reduced from two to one after 2022, flexibility is a requirement at this point on the track's part. Any efforts for IndyCar and TMS to reach an agreement on a new date were also impacted by the Summer Olympics, which are being broadcast by NBC Sports – the television partner for both IndyCar and NASCAR.

Next year's return of the historic Milwaukee Mile to the schedule for the first time since 2015 made it easier to drop Texas, with the addition of the oval returning in the form of a double-header on Labor Day weekend – a federal holiday in the United States to honour and recognise the American labour movement, which is celebrated on the first Monday in September.

Honestly, though, the turbulent history between TMS and IndyCar reached a point where a reset is best for all involved. “There's been fabulous racing there,” says Mark Miles, president and CEO of Penske Entertainment. “That sort of north Texas market is very important to IndyCar. We'll go back to work as we have some of the other building blocks like our own media partner in place for 2025.” ❄️

➔ **P50 2023 INDYCAR REVIEW**

RACE CENTRE

FORMULA 1

VERSTAPPEN STORMS TO RED BULL'S SIXTH TITLE

After the 'low' of Singapore, the reigning champion was back to his majestic best as he thrashed the field at Suzuka

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY RED BULL AND



motorsport
IMAGES

Verstappen heads under the crossover one more time. He was in a different class



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Albon's Williams rears after contact with Bottas, as McLarens swarm around Verstappen

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ormal service officially resumed last weekend at Suzuka, and a minor stumble at the line simply delayed Red Bull's collection of its sixth Formula 1 constructors' championship. Singapore?

Merely a blip; Max Verstappen's usual order of a leisurely Sunday afternoon cruise to victory was made almost inevitable following his demolition job of the rest of the field in qualifying.

The team's all-conquering RB19 had proved a tricky customer at Marina Bay a week prior, but the nature of the fast-and-flowing Suzuka circuit ensured that it was back to full strength. It was putty in the hands of Verstappen, and even Lewis Hamilton was complimentary of the car ahead of the weekend, suggesting that he was looking forward to watching the Dutchman's laps after the Japanese Grand Prix. The car had everything from speed, compliance and predictability: a racing driver's holy trifecta.

Despite joining Verstappen on the front row through Oscar Piastri, McLaren didn't think it had much of a chance of providing a challenge beyond the opening corners. Lando Norris jokingly suggested that Piastri should "emulate Ayrton Senna" into Turn 1 if McLaren was to have a chance of winning, in deference to the Brazilian's infamous clash with Alain Prost at the same place in 1990. Amusingly, Piastri found himself in what he later described as the "perfect" position if he was ever going to pull that move off.

Verstappen's start was marginally slower than the two McLarens that swarmed him on the run into the first corner. Piastri had the inside line and Norris the outside, which forced Verstappen into making a choice of where to defend ahead of the Esses. He guessed right to cover off Piastri, and had to hope that Norris ran his MCL60 out too wide to ensure that Turn 2 remained within his grasp.

Despite Norris's good speed into the opening corner, it seldom puts a driver on the racing line for Turn 2. Verstappen held that line, finding a much greater surplus of grip, which gave him the traction he needed to preserve his advantage over the Briton. "I saw in the right mirror that Oscar had a little bit of a jump on me, but then at the same time I saw in my left mirror that Lando had a real jump on me," Verstappen recounted. "I tried to close off Oscar but he was still there, and then I saw on the left side Lando coming with a lot more speed. He then moved a bit to the right and I was like, 'I can't go more to the right!' So I was trying to get it straightened and luckily, nothing happened. It all got quite close, but that's racing, that's how it goes at the start. We had a good battle also into Turn 1 and Turn 2. But I was lucky, I think, that there was a bit more grip in Turn 2, just on the normal line instead of trying to go around the outside."

Norris nonetheless used that outside line to skip ahead of Piastri, although Verstappen had already bolted, having once again demonstrated his colossal pace advantage through the opening



“I SAW OSCAR HAD A BIT OF A JUMP ON ME, BUT THEN AT THE SAME TIME LANDO HAD A REAL JUMP ON ME”

sector that he had flaunted throughout the weekend. There was only one more opportunity that McLaren could theoretically use to mount an audacious bid for the lead, owing to debris on the start/finish straight following a midfield skirmish. The clean-up operation invoked the appearance of the safety car, after Esteban Ocon had edged Valtteri Bottas into the path of Alex Albon, which pitched the Williams onto its two left-side wheels for a brief moment amid a cascade of carbon-fibre fragments.

But, as is customary, Verstappen had the restart licked. He compressed the field up to the Casio Triangle, took the chicane as normal, and booted the throttle to wheel away from Norris with no recourse. He eased out of DRS range to put almost two seconds over the McLaren in the following two laps, as he attempted to gather a lead that would be preserved during the pitstop phases.

The high degradation present over the Suzuka weekend could be



partly attributed to three things: the abrasive track surface, the high-energy corners and the high track temperatures. The F1 paddock carried some of the weather from Singapore with it, and the road surface soaked in the heat to lightly sauté the tyres. Two-stop strategies were expected, and the teams had an eye on what their rivals were saving from practice to make their predictions.

It became evident as early as Friday that Verstappen was going to run two sets of medium tyres in the race, while McLaren and Mercedes had opted for a double-hard strategy to keep overall degradation in check. Red Bull, however, could pretty much do as it pleased given its deft touch on its tyre life over the season so far.

“I could really look after the tyres well, the degradation was quite in control,” Verstappen revealed in the post-race press conference. “Of course, I knew that our strategy was going to be a little bit different with the medium tyres compared to two times hard for some >>



“HE WAS GOING SO SLOW AND THEN HE ALMOST CRASHED INTO ME. I JUST GOT SO CONFUSED”

others. But it was still OK. I think the balance was still quite good, with traction for the whole stint. Honestly, I had no real issues throughout the race, and I think that just sums up the weekend as well.”

Verstappen's lead after the safety car grew at around half a second per lap to keep Norris handily under control, and his Red Bull teammate's misfortune arguably helped to double an advantage that stood at just under five seconds. Sergio Perez had been dumped down the order by an early pitstop to repair his front wing after a first-lap clash with Hamilton, and his impatience to climb back up the order resulted in a Turn 11 hairpin contretemps with Kevin Magnussen. Stamping on the brakes from some way back, Perez unceremoniously divebombed the Dane and pitched the Haas into a spin. It was almost a carbon copy of his Singapore assault on Alex Albon, and smacked of little more than desperation.

The debris produced the need for a virtual safety car, which Piastri used to his advantage to make his first stop for the hard tyre. In the meantime, Perez's Red Bull was wounded and trundling around the circuit, which meant Norris caught him but, under VSC conditions, was unsure if he was allowed to pass the slow-moving #11 car without earning the ire of the stewards. “I don't know what happened, I mean, he must have had a problem, right?” Norris reflected of his brief hold-up from the beleaguered Perez. “But you can't overtake under the VSC – I don't know if he had a problem, whether he was just backing me up. I didn't know and I couldn't take the risk of just overtaking him. He was going so slow and then when we get the flashing dash for VSC ending, he went into first gear; I was on the outside of him because he



was going so slow and then he almost crashed into me. I just got so confused. I didn't know what I could do...”

Norris reckoned he lost 10s to Verstappen, although by the time the virtual safety car had shaken out it was just over half that, since the gap had stretched from 5.3s pre-VSC to 9.9s after. In reflection, the Bristolian said the growth in his arrears hadn't “changed the world”, but he'd hoped that he would have been able to nail the end of the VSC and perhaps place Verstappen under a modicum of extra pressure.

Instead, Verstappen had effectively doubled his advantage by the time he came in to make his first stop for that second set of medium tyres. With that gap, and having pitted first between the two, it covered off any chance that Norris could reel him back for an undercut.

After his stop, the two-time champion's relentless consistency was astounding. Every lap set between his out-lap and the in-lap for his middle stint sat within a 0.602s bracket; it was as if he had entered a state of being in which he could repeat the same lap on every tour of one of the world's most challenging circuits. His team had given him a target that would ensure he preserved the tyres enough to make the stint work, and he complied with very few problems. His hard-tyre stint at the end had much greater variance, partly because he set a time that ultimately became the fastest lap and partly because he had to contend with traffic towards the end. Not that it particularly mattered, as his lead continued to grow incrementally over the final third of the race. There was no misfortune to derail Verstappen's Singapore rebound, although he may consider just missing out on his targeted winning margin as the tiniest of blemishes.





QUALIFYING



Max Verstappen already had pole in the bag after his first Q3 lap. In stark contrast to Singapore, the Red Bull looked hermetically sealed to the track around Suzuka's famed Esses, requiring only the gentlest of inputs as it chalked up a time nearly half a second quicker than Oscar Piastri's McLaren. "I knew there was still a little bit left in a few places," revealed Verstappen. "And that's what I tried to tidy up."

His final flying qualifying tour was even more impressive, and he found a tenth in the opening sector to deliver his rivals a crushing blow. Incremental gains over the next two sectors followed to culminate in a hugely impressive 1m28.877s to put over half a second on the rest of the field, putting paid to paddock theories that the technical directives put in place for Singapore had hurt Red Bull. "We had a bad weekend, and people start talking about, 'Ah, it's all because of the technical directives.' I think they can go suck on an egg," was his matter-of-fact assessment.

Piastri and Lando Norris could not improve on their first laps of Q3, but it mattered little and the Australian claimed the first grand prix (as opposed to sprint) front-row start of his short F1 career, pipping Norris to the post by a scant 0.035s. McLaren had slightly trailed Ferrari during the Friday practice sessions, but overnight gains allowed the MCL60 to showcase its strengths in the array of high-speed corners prevalent throughout the Suzuka circuit.

Of Ferrari's charges, Charles Leclerc outqualified Monza and Singapore polesitter Carlos Sainz, with the pair split by Sergio Perez, who remained over three quarters of a second away from his Red Bull team-mate. Perez had been over a second slower than Verstappen during FP1 and FP2, when he cited balance struggles, but managed to cut the arrears from a gaping chasm to a slightly more respectable gulf.

Lewis Hamilton managed to disrupt George Russell's streak of outqualifying his more experienced team-mate as Mercedes occupied seventh and eighth. Russell had made it into the final part of qualifying at the last minute to eliminate Liam Lawson, as his team struggled to find a potent set-up for the W14 in single-lap trim.

Home favourite Yuki Tsunoda pleased the Japanese crowd with a Q3 appearance and beat a struggling Fernando Alonso to ninth, with AlphaTauri's Singapore upgrades continuing to bear fruit amid the Italian team's desire to haul itself from the bottom of the points standings.

Q1 was interrupted by a red flag for the second time in a week, when Logan Sargeant binned his Williams at the final corner while attempting to set his first timed lap.

"I played padel tennis with Max on Wednesday and he was properly fired up," related Red Bull team boss Christian Horner. "He made it clear – he said, 'I want to win the race by 20 seconds.' And in fairness, he came within 0.7s of achieving that. So had it not been for a blue flag at the end there..."

"You could tell from the very first lap in FP1, where on the hard tyre he was 1.8 seconds quicker than the rest on medium or soft tyres at that point. He was totally focused on this event. It's a circuit that he loves and enjoys. And I think it's one of the ultimate driver circuits as a test around here. It was an outstanding performance."

Verstappen's efforts to win and claim the fastest lap also sealed Red Bull's sixth constructors' victory – the team only had to outscore Mercedes to be sure of chalking up its second consecutive title. Horner paid tribute to his team, stating that its latest crown was "testimony to all the men and women in the team that have worked tirelessly to produce a car as competitive as we've had".

With Verstappen well out of the picture after the first round of stops, Norris then faced a threat from the VSC-pitting Piastri. The Australian had been able to make use of the reduced time loss in his stop to undercut Norris and reclaim second, albeit with about four laps offset between their respective sets of hard Pirellis – Piastri had stopped on lap 13 and Norris was called in on lap 17.

Although the 2021 F2 champion had proven his worth in qualifying through his higher grid slot, Norris still retains an upper hand in the race-pace stakes. This became evident when Norris started to reel in Piastri at a not insignificant rate of knots, after dropping just over four seconds behind through his team-mate's undercut strategy.

Over the radio, Norris was angling for a swap of position between the two and bemoaned that the race would be "worse" should McLaren's pitwall fail to react. The switch was eventually green-lit on lap 27, and Norris moved past the Melburnian into the first corner to resume his runner-up position. Norris was not attempting to give chase to Verstappen – that ship had long since sailed – but attempting to cover any threat of a challenge from the Ferraris and Mercedes that were battling over a potential fourth place.

In terms of sheer pace, Charles Leclerc was their most likely challenger for a podium, and the Monegasque was freely making use of the undercuts in his two stops to draw closer to Norris and Piastri. Ferrari had joined Red Bull in opting for the double-medium stints, a brave effort given its inconsistencies with regards to tyre >>

TRACKSIDE VIEW

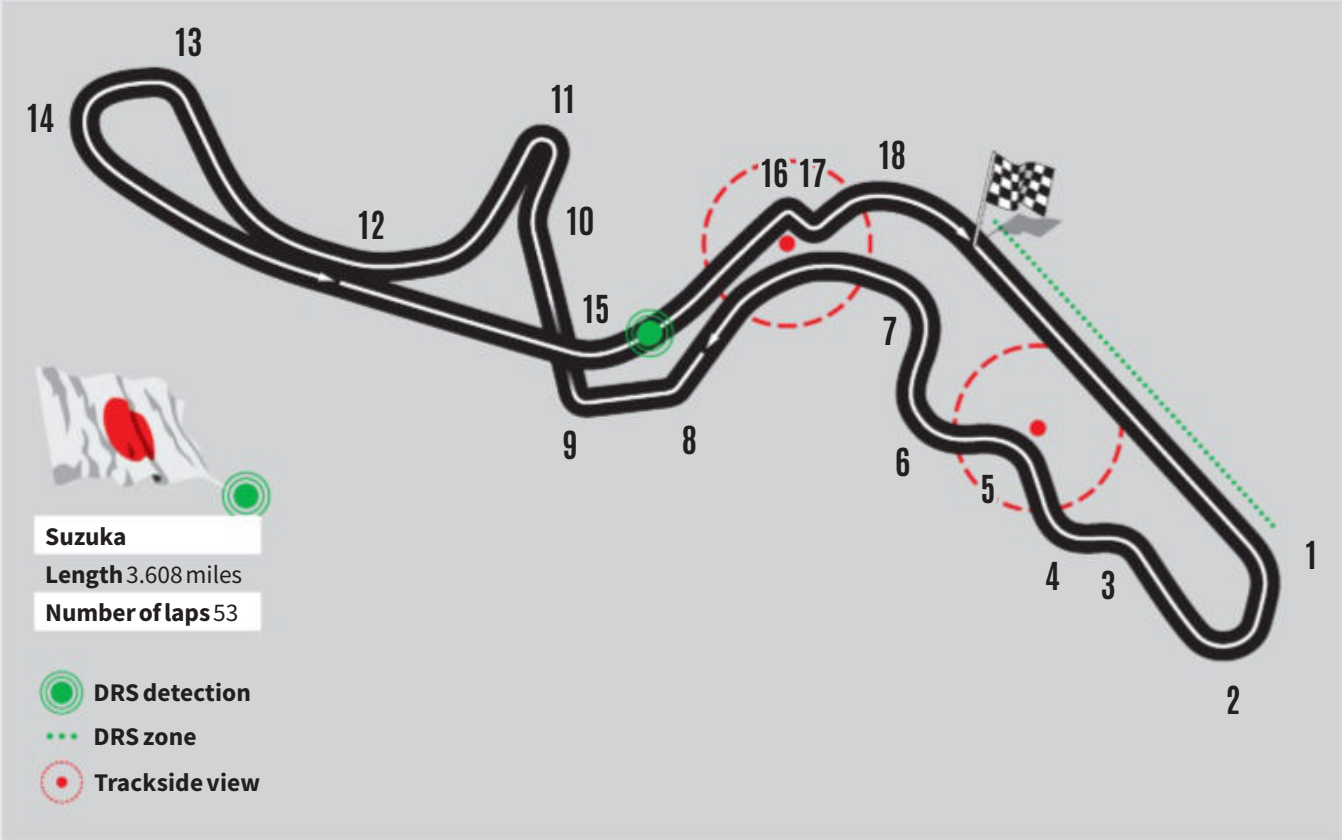


Tsunoda amid the Esses at Turn 5 for the pleasure of a small audience

Suzuka has been on this writer's bucket list for a while, having spent his childhood attempting to grapple with the circuit on the *Formula 1* and *Gran Turismo* games – and failing more often than not. So, when Autosport gets the chance to go trackside, we choose to meander along the Esses and the Dunlop Curve, a point at which the infamous Casio Triangle can be viewed if you simply turn around. Of course, it's the site of the Ayrton Senna-and-Alain Prost clash in 1989 (also, the lesser-heralded tangle between tail-enders Esteban Tuero and Tora Takagi in 1998), and

“Magnussen indulges in sabre-rattling against the kerbs, but it doesn't make up for the Haas's shortfall”

a huge departure from the rest of the high to medium-speed circuit. Even after revealing the Red Bull's weaknesses in slow-speed corners in Singapore, Max Verstappen flashes through and picks his entry point, turning right and holding it on the exit of the corner before applying the lock in the other direction for a later apex in the chicane's second half. His



change in direction is sharp, while team-mate Sergio Perez's car is less so; its languid entry requires a small correction, which precipitates a momentary slide before the Mexican gathers it all up and charges forward to the line. One thing notable about Verstappen's pass is how little he bothers the kerbs; Kevin Magnussen appears shortly after and indulges in

sabre-rattling against them, but the Dane's more combative style doesn't make up for the shortfall in Haas's performance here. We've seen enough chicanery, so we turn around to watch the cars come through the Esses. It's interesting to see how quickly the cars settle and change direction with surprisingly few inputs upon the brake pedal. A leaden foot is no good; the drivers must exercise patience and a feather-light touch on the throttle. That's something Verstappen proves with every lap through the first sector – fifth gear is enough to keep the car in the right torque band before he finally acquiesces to the brake pedal into Turn 6. As he unravels the steering through the Dunlop Curve, the Red Bull hunkers down and collects its downforce before he stabs the car into the first Degner.

Further back, the Mercedes pair look a little more unstable through the Esses, and George Russell just about clings onto the car through the final right-left as Lewis Hamilton's micro-twitches are just about kept under control. On entering the Dunlop Curve, it's noticeable how the drivers sacrifice the initial apex for a later one further up the hill to keep the car left for Degner 1. McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso leave an arm's length to the kerb, before winding in a little more lock as their chariots chase the ribbon of Tarmac up the hill. It's a joy to watch the cars at this circuit, and it's yielded a few pointers for the next time Autosport switches on the PlayStation. Now, where's that copy of *F1 97*...

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE





One-stop Russell let Hamilton past as Sainz loomed, but DRS games this time failed

SUTTON

preservation. This shortened Leclerc's opening two stints to make the undercuts possible, although would ultimately come at a cost later when he was unable to retain his tenuous grasp on the Woking team's coat-tails.

Further strategic variation was injected into the Ferrari-Mercedes battle courtesy of George Russell, who also posed a sporadic problem for McLaren in between stints. Although he'd suggested that the race was more likely to be a three-stopper than a one-stop strategy after qualifying, Russell called upon his team to try to make the latter of the two work out. It was a somewhat audacious request given the degradation prevalent throughout the weekend, but the Mercedes driver somehow managed to make it to the end.

Following the McLaren drivers' stops, Russell became an obstacle in their aspirations to secure a first double podium for the team since its Monza 2021 win. Norris did not find his countryman's defence too much trouble, but Piastri had to wrestle with the Norfolk native for a more prolonged period, which proved to be something of a time sink. Leclerc was inching closer to the back of them, which piled the pressure on Piastri to make his move. An attempt at the Casio Triangle at the end of the 41st tour yielded nothing in terms of position, but Russell couldn't get as much drive out of the corner on his ailing tyres as the McLaren. Piastri made the move at Turn 1 and, thankfully for the rookie's podium ambitions, Leclerc then needed another three laps to get past Russell himself. The Ferrari driver was more than three seconds behind Piastri once Russell had been dispatched, all but calling the remaining podium positions in McLaren's favour – this being Piastri's first trip to the F1 grand prix rostrum.

"It probably wasn't my strongest Sunday, so from that side there's things I want to work on," Piastri divulged self-effacingly. "I just

"THESE HIGH-DEG RACES ARE THE BIGGEST THING I NEED TO WORK ON. IT'S STILL QUITE FRESH FOR ME"

wasn't quick enough at certain points of the race. These high-deg races are probably the biggest thing I need to try and work on at the moment. I think it's still quite fresh for me; obviously, in all the junior racing before this there's no races like this, so the only way you can learn from it is by just doing the races. Had I had this race again, I would have done a bit different. But that's all part of the learning."

Leclerc ultimately preserved fourth, after electing not to give any further chase to the McLarens in order to preserve a result that brings Ferrari a step closer to Mercedes for second place in the constructors' championship. Russell, meanwhile, dropped to seventh by the end amid team orders that involved a store-brand imitation of Carlos Sainz's Singapore DRS tricks.

With Russell ahead, Hamilton was knocking on the door of his younger team-mate and was granted a free pass by Mercedes because Sainz was catching them rapidly. Russell suggested that they hold station until the last lap, and try to tow Hamilton to avoid Sainz's efforts with DRS – a role reversal from a week earlier. Mercedes opted for a halfway house, switching places and asking Hamilton to give Russell a DRS pull, but Sainz was unsurprisingly wise to it and the Ferrari cleared Russell to claim sixth.

"I was laughing in the car because I could see Lewis backing off in 130R to give the DRS to George," Sainz explained. "And I was like, I need to make sure I attack George into the chicane. If I don't throw him offline, it's going to be impossible to pass them."

It looks increasingly impossible that Verstappen will be passed at the top of the championship standings too. With 180 points available and Verstappen now 177 clear of team-mate Perez, just three points from Qatar next time out would be enough to clinch the title. That'll likely come in the sprint race, where he only needs to finish sixth.

In a week and a half's time, Verstappen will join the list of three-time champions, alongside Jack Brabham, Jackie Stewart, Niki Lauda, Nelson Piquet and Ayrton Senna. That's some truly exalted company, but the achievements he's garnered already place him in the pantheon of F1's greats. Another title will be merely the icing on the cake. ❁

**NEXT
F1 REPORT**

Qatar Grand Prix
12 October issue



First spray for Piastri on a grand prix podium

TEE

3

The number of drivers in Formula 1 history who have scored more world championship podiums than Lando Norris without claiming a win: Nick Heidfeld, Stefan Johansson and Chris Amon.



Alpine team orders baffle Gasly

Alpine left Suzuka swamped by a team orders controversy stemming from very late in its double-scoring result with Esteban Ocon ninth and Pierre Gasly 10th.

The blue team's race had got off to a poor start when Ocon jinked left in the pinched approach to Turn 1 and kicked off the clash with Valtteri Bottas and Alex Albon. He stopped from the rear of the pack under the safety car, then switched from the medium tyres to the hards and took up what was effectively a one-stopper.

Ocon's pace on these meant he climbed the order ahead of those who had to make two racing pitstops – including Fernando Alonso and team-mate Gasly. Alonso's short second stint got the Aston Martin back ahead when Ocon stopped for fresh hard tyres just past halfway, while Gasly arrived behind his team-mate following his second stop and passing the three-stopping Nico Hulkenberg. Here, Alpine gave Gasly the chance to attack Alonso

with his fresher tyres, but expected him to give the place back if this plan was unsuccessful.

On being told he had to hand ninth back to Ocon ahead of the final lap, Gasly was audibly stunned and only did so a full lap later with the finish line in sight.

Gasly, who had lost positions on lap one from his 12th place starting spot, with Ocon launching from 14th, claimed afterwards: "It was never said that we would need to invert the positions again because I started ahead and I was always in front." He felt he "overtaken him anyway on the race track because I had fresher tyres".

Ocon said "the rule has always been this one" since he joined the team in 2020, while interim Alpine team principal Bruno Famin felt "to swap back is very normal". Famin did concede "we need to check to be totally transparent" on the possible miscommunication issue.

Perez obliged to retire twice in disastrous outing

Sergio Perez had a disastrous 2023 Japanese Grand Prix, where he had the ignominy of being retired twice as Red Bull sought to avoid one of the two penalties he picked up being carried over to the next round in Qatar.

Perez had already underwhelmed in qualifying four places behind his polesitting team-mate Max Verstappen. Then, at the start, he was swarmed by the fast-starting Carlos Sainz and Lewis Hamilton. When Charles Leclerc – on the

inside and just ahead of all of them – jinked left on the approach to Turn 1 it set off a chain reaction that sent Perez into Hamilton and broke the Red Bull's right-side front-wing endplate.

Perez pitted at the end of lap one. The safety car had been called due to the Turn 1 debris, but on his way to the pitlane Perez passed Fernando Alonso in the safety car queue and received a five-second penalty. He served this at a second stop on lap 12, which followed his overly ambitious lunge that spun Kevin Magnussen's Haas at the hairpin as he tried to recover up the order.

Perez was stopped a lap after taking another new front wing, but was sent out from what was officially a 41m26s pitstop to serve the 5s penalty he was given for the Magnussen shunt before retiring for good.





LAWSON PIPS TSUNODA IN BATTLE OF THE ALPHATAURIS

“I had so much caffeine before the race, it lit me up!” Liam Lawson was delighted to finally make a good start to a Formula 1 race, which he did at Suzuka in the latest event of his Daniel Ricciardo replacement tour. The New Zealander also beat home hero and AlphaTauri team-mate Yuki Tsunoda to 11th.

From ninth and 11th on the grid, with Tsunoda starting ahead, the pair engaged in a thrillingly close battle over 10th across the first third of lap one, which Lawson won with a little help from Tsunoda backing out at Degner 2. When things settled down after the restart, Tsunoda’s early first stop undercut him ahead before both AlphaTauris struggled for pace on the medium tyres. Tsunoda went five laps longer on these than Lawson, helping the rookie undercut back in front with hard rubber for the final stint.

Multiple victims in Suzuka first-lap contretemps

Behind the clash between Sergio Perez and Lewis Hamilton on the approach to Turn 1, there was an almost identically caused shunt for Alex Albon, Valtteri Bottas and Esteban Ocon, albeit with far more consequences.

Albon was launched briefly but dramatically skywards, picking up floor damage. He stopped for more medium tyres behind the safety car, then switched onto the softs while running a net 18th on lap 13. But Williams opted to retire him just before halfway after seeing his damage increasing.

Bottas picked up a front-right puncture, which had him off the road briefly at Turn 3. He hobbled back to the pits and took on another set

of soft tyres. But his race barely lasted further than the restart. Back at racing speed, he attacked Logan Sargeant over 19th on the outside line at the hairpin. But the Williams driver erred massively in locking up on the inside and clattered into the Alfa, which was spun around and soon retired with the floor damage it had sustained in its two crashes.

Ocon had toured back to the pits on lap one and got started on his recovery drive, while Sargeant exited on lap 22 when Williams spotted that floor damage from his Bottas bash was also worsening. Sargeant had started from the pits and served a safety car 10-second penalty for Williams building up its spare chassis incorrectly after his Q1 crash.



Q&A

FERNANDO ALONSO ASTON MARTIN DRIVER

Why did you sound angry with your strategy on the way to finishing eighth?

Well, not angry. I think it’s the same classic FOM radio [broadcast] – completely out of context. I’m not sure exactly what other drivers say when they are behind a car that is slower and on the straight [as Ocon was] pulling away even when you open the DRS. Maybe they say, ‘I’m OK, I’m happy to stay here and to stay behind.’ But I prefer to be motivated to overtake

them. [With Ocon after stopping for the first time] I was slower even with the DRS open. So, I called for a different strategy. We stopped [again], we beat them. So that’s the way we do it.

But why did you say you were ‘thrown to the lions’?

I was upset because I think the first stop was too early. We were fast today, faster than what we thought, in terms of pace. I was



behind the Ferraris, in front of [Lewis] Hamilton [after the start] with not too much pressure. On lap 11 we stopped and I think it was to cover [Yuki]

Tsunoda, which was a bit of a surprise [he was 10th with Alonso sixth]. The race was very long from that moment onwards. And maybe that was a mistake. But easy to say now.

How did you find the start?

The start was good. Not bad for a 42-year-old.

Did soft tyres help there?

Yeah, definitely. Off the line the soft tyre gives you that extra grip. A little bit of chaos in Turn 2 with Checo [Sergio Perez] and Hamilton [the soft helped] capitalise on those moves. That’s why when we stopped in that privileged position being P6, it felt a bit strange. But the positive is the pace was surprisingly good. I didn’t expect to be as fast as Ferrari and Mercedes. With a more optimised strategy, maybe we could have finished P6 or P7.



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GIORGIO PIOLA



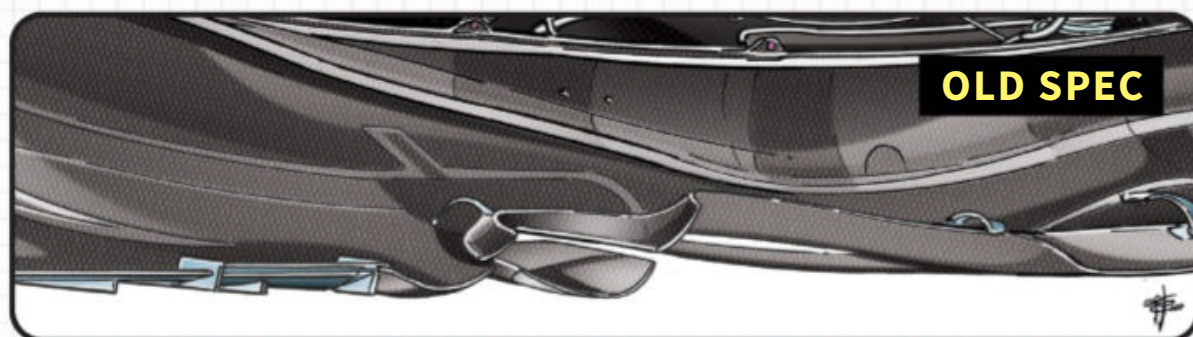
NEW SPEC

RED BULL 'FLOORS' THE OPPOSITION ONCE AGAIN

Part of the fallout in Red Bull's disappointing Singapore weekend was that a new floor was kept off the car beyond practice, because the team knew it would be off the boil over the rest of the weekend and chose not to risk the revised concept. This new floor was taken to Japan and, although Red Bull knew that it had offered hints of improved performance, the team needed a more conventional circuit (and a slightly more auspicious weekend) to truly assess its merits.

"It did what was expected," explained team boss Christian Horner. "To be honest with you, I think in Singapore we just wanted to eliminate a variable. Nobody believed it was the floor that was the issue; we just wanted to not come away from Singapore with that nagging question."

This revised floor features a new edge, with



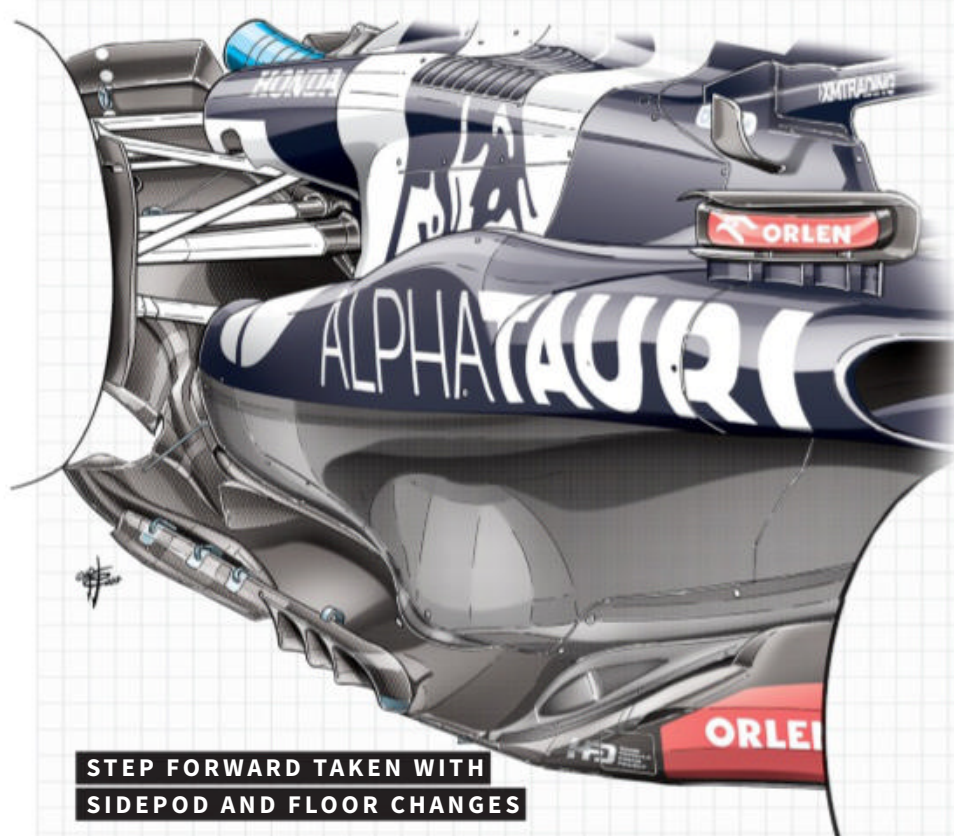
OLD SPEC

a series of flicks and structures to ensure that the underbody remains sealed and offers some degree of outwash to improve loading from the venturi tunnels and diffuser.

Max Verstappen's victory at Suzuka ensured that Red Bull could complete its successful attempt to retain the constructors' title.

"We've been fairly limited in the amount of development that we've done on the car," Horner added. "The development that we've done has been effective enough to maintain a reasonable margin that we've seen again here today."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



**STEP FORWARD TAKEN WITH
SIDEPOD AND FLOOR CHANGES**

ALPHATAURI'S LATE-SEASON RESURGENCE

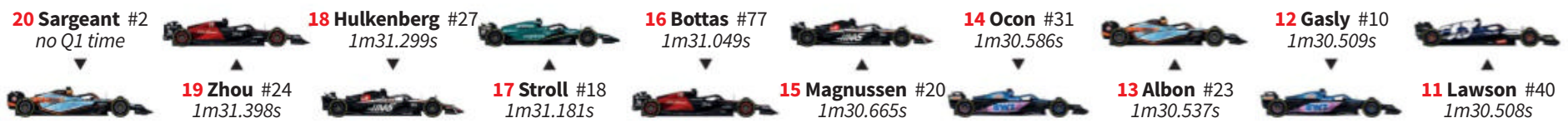
AlphaTauri introduced updates to its AT04 in Singapore, and its continued good performance in qualifying at the Japanese Grand Prix underlined the progress that the team has made. Sidepod modifications were some of the most visible changes, with the Faenza squad redeveloping its floor, bodywork and other aerodynamic components around the car.

This change in bodywork is to, said AlphaTauri's technical notes, "improve the interaction with the floor edge and strengthen floor edge vorticity for local load gain". The car has taken visual cues from this year's Red Bull and the addition of a small outwashing

crease atop the sidepods furthered that aesthetic alongside other changes to the geometry.

"Everything looked to be working as expected," explained senior race engineer Jonathan Eddolls. "The performance was there. Singapore's one of those special circuits where it's quite hard, particularly on the aero side, to validate 100% that the package and everything is as expected. [Suzuka is] a much easier track to understand if everything's working, and the data analysis live was all as expected. I think the performance is showing it looks like we are taking a bit of a step forward."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m31.647s
2	Sainz	1m32.273s
3	Norris	1m32.392s
4	Leclerc	1m32.574s
5	Tsunoda	1m32.597s
6	Alonso	1m32.650s
7	Piastri	1m32.713s
8	Albon	1m32.991s
9	Lawson	1m33.005s
10	Stroll	1m33.040s
11	Perez	1m33.043s
12	Gasly	1m33.129s
13	Russell	1m33.310s
14	Hulkenberg	1m33.448s
15	Ocon	1m33.516s
16	Hamilton	1m33.699s
17	Bottas	1m33.860s
18	Magnussen	1m33.975s
19	Sargeant	1m34.212s
20	Zhou	1m34.831s

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m30.688s
2	Leclerc	1m31.008s
3	Norris	1m31.152s
4	Sainz	1m31.237s
5	Russell	1m31.328s
6	Alonso	1m31.492s
7	Albon	1m31.555s
8	Piastri	1m31.662s
9	Perez	1m31.710s
10	Bottas	1m31.739s
11	Stroll	1m31.771s
12	Ocon	1m31.794s
13	Hulkenberg	1m31.797s
14	Hamilton	1m31.829s
15	Lawson	1m32.141s
16	Zhou	1m32.165s
17	Magnussen	1m32.169s
18	Tsunoda	1m32.178s
19	Gasly	1m32.179s
20	Sargeant	1m32.320s

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m30.267s
2	Norris	1m30.507s
3	Piastri	1m30.555s
4	Perez	1m31.004s
5	Leclerc	1m31.022s
6	Sainz	1m31.137s
7	Hamilton	1m31.159s
8	Russell	1m31.505s
9	Alonso	1m31.549s
10	Zhou	1m31.668s
11	Bottas	1m31.699s
12	Magnussen	1m31.880s
13	Ocon	1m31.924s
14	Tsunoda	1m31.951s
15	Hulkenberg	1m31.979s
16	Sargeant	1m32.002s
17	Lawson	1m32.048s
18	Albon	1m32.113s
19	Stroll	1m32.154s
20	Gasly	1m32.199s

WEATHER

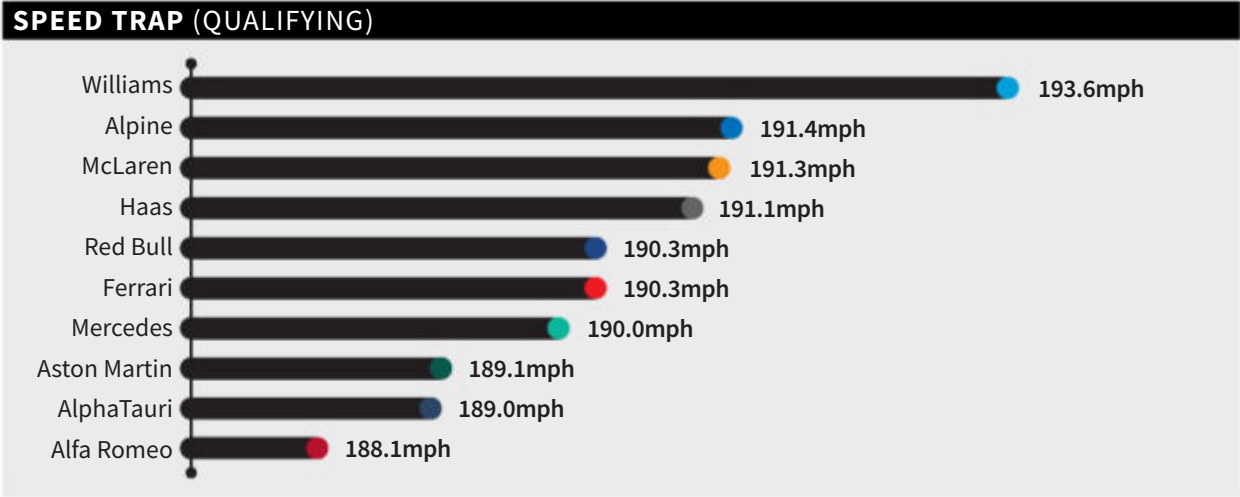
Cloudy, air 27-29C track 37-39C

WEATHER

Cloudy, air 28-29C track 37-39C

WEATHER

Clear, air 28-29C track 44-49C



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m29.878s
2	Norris	1m30.063s
3	Leclerc	1m30.393s
4	Lawson	1m30.425s
5	Piastri	1m30.439s
6	Sainz	1m30.651s
7	Perez	1m30.652s
8	Tsunoda	1m30.733s
9	Russell	1m30.811s
10	Hamilton	1m30.811s
11	Gasly	1m30.843s
12	Albon	1m30.941s
13	Ocon	1m30.960s
14	Alonso	1m30.971s
15	Magnussen	1m30.976s
16	Bottas	1m31.049s
17	Stroll	1m31.181s
18	Hulkenberg	1m31.299s
19	Zhou	1m31.398s
20	Sargeant	notime

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m29.940s
2	Verstappen	1m29.964s
3	Perez	1m29.965s
4	Hamilton	1m30.040s
5	Sainz	1m30.067s
6	Piastri	1m30.122s
7	Tsunoda	1m30.204s
8	Russell	1m30.268s
9	Norris	1m30.296s
10	Alonso	1m30.465s
11	Lawson	1m30.508s
12	Gasly	1m30.509s
13	Albon	1m30.537s
14	Ocon	1m30.586s
15	Magnussen	1m30.665s

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m28.877s
2	Piastri	1m29.458s
3	Norris	1m29.493s
4	Leclerc	1m29.542s
5	Perez	1m29.650s
6	Sainz	1m29.850s
7	Hamilton	1m29.908s
8	Russell	1m30.219s
9	Tsunoda	1m30.303s
10	Alonso	1m30.560s

WEATHER

Clear, air 26-28C track 34-38C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	400	1	1
2 Perez	223	1	1
3 Hamilton	190	2	1
4 Alonso	174	2	2
5 Sainz	150	1	1
6 Leclerc	135	2	1
7 Norris	115	2	2
8 Russell	115	3	2
9 Piastri	57	3	2
10 Stroll	47	4	6
11 Gasly	46	3	4
12 Ocon	38	3	4
13 Albon	21	7	4
14 Hulkenberg	9	7	2
15 Bottas	6	8	7
16 Zhou	4	9	5
17 Tsunoda	3	10	8
18 Magnussen	3	10	4
19 Lawson	2	9	10
20 Sargeant	0	11	10
21 deVries	0	12	12
22 Ricciardo	0	13	13

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

	PTS
1 Red Bull	623
2 Mercedes	305
3 Ferrari	285
4 Aston Martin	221
5 McLaren	172
6 Alpine	84
7 Williams	21
8 Haas	12
9 Alfa Romeo	10
10 AlphaTauri	5

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Verstappen	14	1	Perez
Leclerc	9	7	Sainz
Hamilton	8	8	Russell
Gasly	9	7	Ocon
Norris	12	4	Piastri
Zhou	6	10	Bottas
Alonso	14	2	Stroll
Magnussen	5	11	Hulkenberg
Tsunoda	3	1	Lawson
Ricciardo	1	1	Tsunoda
deVries	2	8	Tsunoda
Sargeant	0	16	Albon

WINS

Verstappen	13
Perez	2
Sainz	1

POLE POSITIONS

Verstappen	9
Perez	2
Leclerc	2
Sainz	2
Hamilton	1

FASTEST LAPS

Verstappen	7
Hamilton	3
Perez	2
Alonso	1
Piastri	1
Russell	1
Zhou	1

Head-to-head taken from usual qualifying, not the result of sprint qualifying/shootout

NEXT RACE

8 October
Qatar GP
Losail

STARTING GRID



RESULTS ROUND 16/22 (53 LAPS – 191.05 MILES)						FASTEST LAPS				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1h30m58.421s	51	Mn, Mn, Hn	1	Verstappen	1m34.183s	-	39
2	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+19.387s	1	Mn, Hn, Hn	2	Norris	1m35.247s	+1.064s	40
3	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+36.494s		Mn, Hn, Hn	3	Hamilton	1m35.611s	+1.428s	36
4	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+43.998s		Mn, Mn, Hn	4	Sainz	1m36.187s	+2.004s	40
5	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+49.376s		Mn, Hn, Hn	5	Piastri	1m36.328s	+2.145s	38
6	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+50.221s	1	Mn, Mn, Hn	6	Leclerc	1m36.362s	+2.179s	40
7	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+57.659s		Mn, Hn	7	Gasly	1m36.371s	+2.188s	36
8	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m14.725s		Su, Hn, Hn	8	Alonso	1m37.203s	+3.020s	28
9	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m19.678s		Mn, Hn, Hn	9	Hulkenberg	1m37.250s	+3.067s	44
10	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m23.155s		Mn, Hn, Hn	10	Ocon	1m37.398s	+3.215s	34
11	Liam Lawson (NZL)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+3.089s		Sn, Mn, Hn	11	Russell	1m37.653s	+3.470s	27
12	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+3.974s		Su, Mn, Hn	12	Tsunoda	1m37.768s	+3.585s	36
13	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+6.340s		Sn, Sn, Sn, Hn	13	Zhou	1m37.791s	+3.608s	45
14	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+9.598s		Sn, Mn, Hn, Mn	14	Magnussen	1m37.842s	+3.659s	41
15	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+29.570s		Mn, Hn, Hn	15	Lawson	1m38.267s	+4.084s	50
R	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	26 laps-accident damage		Mn, Mn, Sn	16	Sargeant	1m38.848s	+4.665s	7
R	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	22 laps-accident damage		Mn, Mn, Hn	17	Stroll	1m39.050s	+4.867s	16
R	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	20 laps-rear wing		Sn, Mn	18	Albon	1m39.185s	+5.002s	15
R	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	15 laps-accident damage		Mn, Hn, Su, Su	19	Perez	1m39.704s	+5.521s	8
R	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	7 laps-accident damage		Sn, Sn, Hn	20	Bottas	2m02.755s	+28.572s	5

WEATHER Clear, air 27-29C track 36-41C
WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 126.005mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 137.921mph.

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

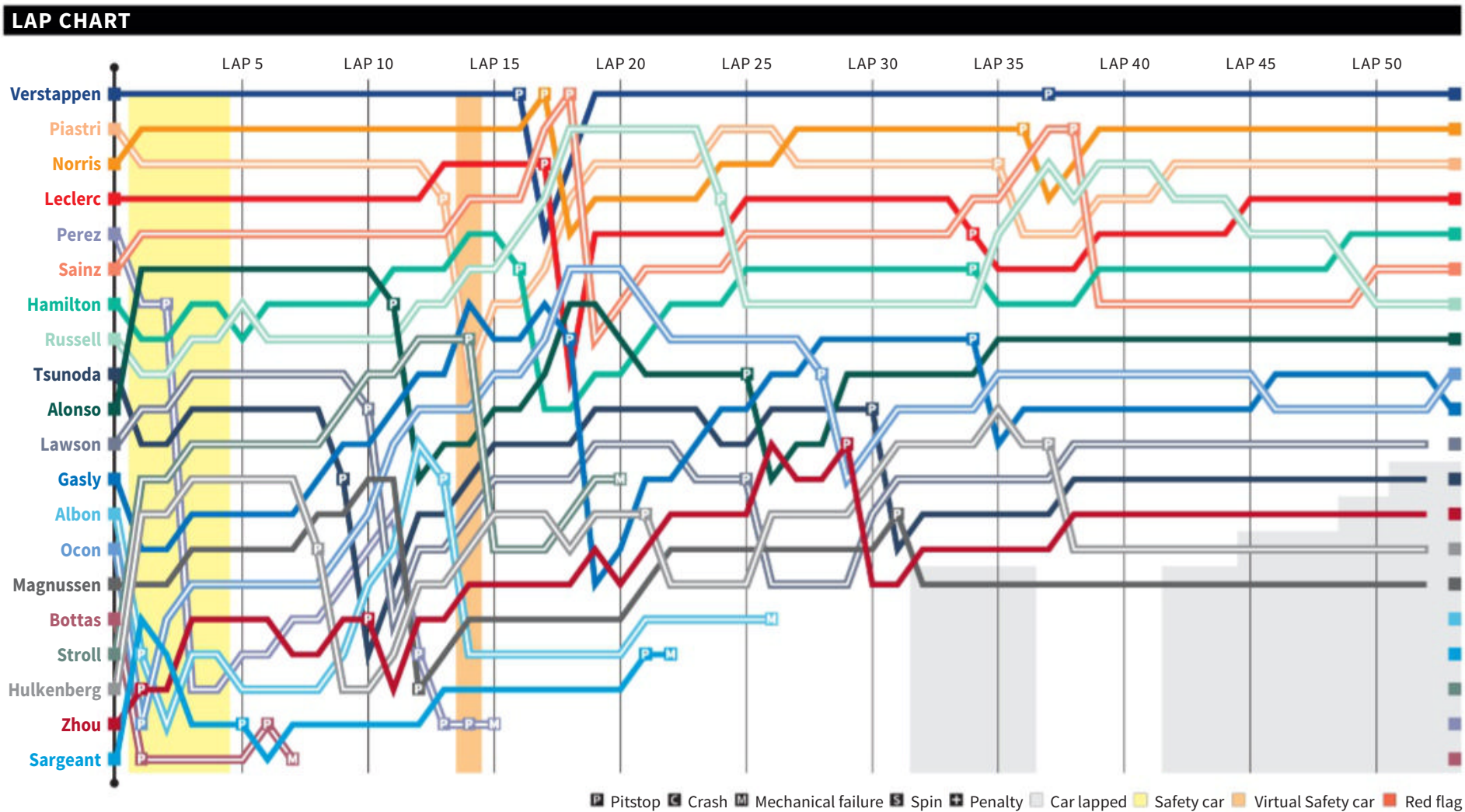
GRID PENALTIES
SARGEANT Required to start from pitlane and 10-second penalty for car being modified under parc ferme conditions

RACE PENALTIES
PEREZ Five-second penalty and two licence

points for overtaking Alonso under safety car conditions
SARGEANT 5s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Bottas
PEREZ 5s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Magnussen

6

Piastri is the sixth Australian to score a podium in a world championship GP

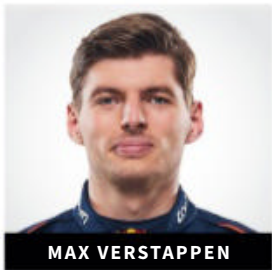


JAPANESE GP DRIVER RATINGS

Top-notch race performances from Verstappen and Norris rate a rare double highest score, while Piastri is best of the rest

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **1st** — Result **1st**

10 Wheelspin-heavy start did mean he defended hard against both McLarens, but staunch move against Norris was thrilling. Restart driving was spot on to drop Norris smartly and avoid another attack, after which he drove away, gaining time thanks to Norris's misfortune with VSC.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **5th** — Result **R**

2 Red Bull retiring him for a second time to serve his penalty for Magnussen gaffe says it all. Unlucky in pinches on approach to Turn 1, but was being swamped by cars starting behind. Magnussen attack was never on even though his front end handling was compromised. Penalised twice.

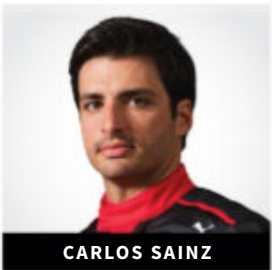
FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **4th** — Result **4th**

8 His jink left approaching Turn 1 started off contact chain reaction behind the leaders, not that this was his fault, after which he ran strongly in fourth. Scrapped his way past Alonso after pitstop. Outside Turn 2 pass on Russell was superb, if fortunate that the stewards were lenient on track limits.



CARLOS SAINZ

Started **6th** — Result **6th**

7 Innocent party in Turn 1 squeeze after good start, then held off Alonso, all while protecting his tyres. Hamilton's pace in second stint meant the Mercedes man undercut back past Sainz, who then ran long. Was able to catch Russell after second stop and was close to Hamilton by the end.

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **7th** — Result **5th**

6 Start contact and brief off didn't damage his car significantly. His off at Degner 2 before his pitstop was a rare mistake after he'd repassed Russell neatly post-restart having been mugged at chicane. Defended hard, with Russell Spoon move marginal. Later pace put Ferraris under pressure.

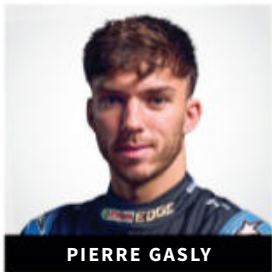


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **8th** — Result **7th**

7 Chicane dive after restart on Hamilton was cheeky and brilliant, as was muscular defence against Leclerc at Turn 2 much later as the leaders came back through. Frustrated by Hamilton's Spoon driving and that his DRS idea didn't work as planned when defending from Sainz.

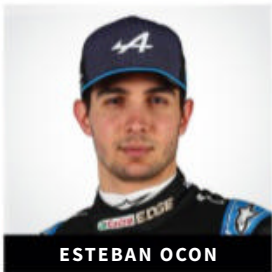
ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **12th** — Result **10th**

6 Slipped back at the start when he let Stroll and Hulkenberg nip past. Passed Zhou and AlphaTauris in second stint, getting Hulkenberg back after second stop. Was waved past Ocon to attack Alonso, which he couldn't do, so was asked to let his team-mate repass. Reacted with fury.



ESTEBAN OCON

Started **14th** — Result **9th**

7 Rebuked for his part in squeeze on Bottas and Albon at start. Pitted for repairs and switch to what was effectively a one-stopper, with two lengthy stints on hard tyres. Pace was good enough to climb into points contention. Let Gasly through to chase Alonso, then got ninth back before the line.

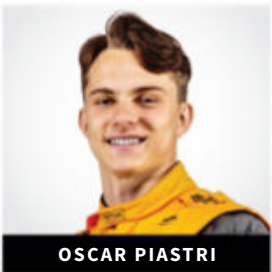
McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **3rd** — Result **2nd**

10 Start was rapid and nearly resulted in early lead, and race pace on tricky Suzuka surface and careful tyre management it required was seriously impressive as it exposed a gulf to otherwise excellent Piastri. This was enough to build 17s buffer by the end.



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **2nd** — Result **3rd**

9 Wheelspin meant he couldn't put in a sterner test for Verstappen at the start, after which he settled down barely behind Norris. Gained with a VSC stop, then got caught past Norris and was asked to let him by, which Piastri did. Knows he must make tyre degradation progress.

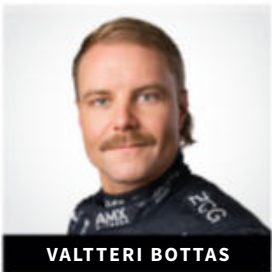
ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **19th** Result **13th**

6 Decent recovery given a piece of carbon fibre smashed his front wing approaching Turn 1 and so had to stop for repairs. Was given more soft tyres there, which meant he had to drive sensibly, but kept at it before switching to the hards and rising past the Haases.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **16th** — Result **R**

5 Good start from 16th but that sent him into the squeeze between Ocon and Albon and resulted in a front-right puncture. Pitted for more soft tyres and a nose change, but his race was ended when Sargeant spun him around and damaged his floor in their hairpin tangle.



ASTON MARTIN



Started 10th — Result 8th

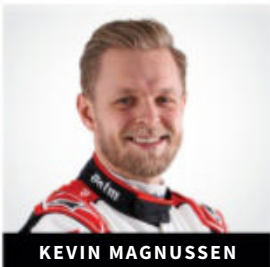
6 Avoided Turn 1 chaos, then swept around Perez and Hamilton to claim sixth. Frustrated to stop early to cover Tsunoda, both starting on soft tyres. Couldn't get hards working initially and was angry running further back in the pack with Ocon. Pace improved in third stint.



Started 17th — Result R

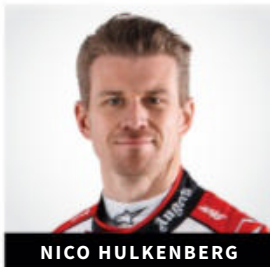
5 Made good start, then moved right as Albon-Bottas-Ocon shunt kicked off ahead and so gained from that and Hamilton-Perez aftermath. Ran 11th in early DRS train before being undercut by Hulkenberg at early stops before having to be retired due to rear-wing failure.

HAAS



Started 15th — Result 15th

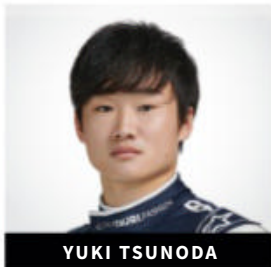
5 Unbelievably, the stewards ruled that Perez was only “predominately [sic]” to blame for hairpin shunt, where Magnussen couldn't do anything else. Spin and subsequent pitstop dropped him from fringes of points to back of pack and effectively “ended our race”.



Started 18th — Result 14th

6 Considering Haas's tyre frailties on this abrasive surface, there's little else he could have done on time-sapping three-stopper. Earns extra mark for bolshy pass on Gasly into Degner 1 on lap one before he became first real-strategy stopper to shed soft tyres and make others react.

ALPHATAURI



Started 9th — Result 12th

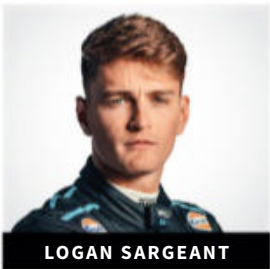
5 Lost ground on opening lap, where he did well to avoid contact with team-mate. Pitted early, which got him back past Lawson. Was left out longer chasing Gasly after the Alpine had gone through the AlphaTauris, which meant he slipped back behind his team-mate once again.



Started 11th — Result 11th

6 Gets scored above Tsunoda for blistering first-lap attack through Esses, then defence at Degner 2, where he did require cooperation. Was also pleased to finally make a good F1 getaway. Undercut by Tsunoda as they shed their starting soft tyres, but got back ahead with earlier second stop.

WILLIAMS



Started 20th — Result R

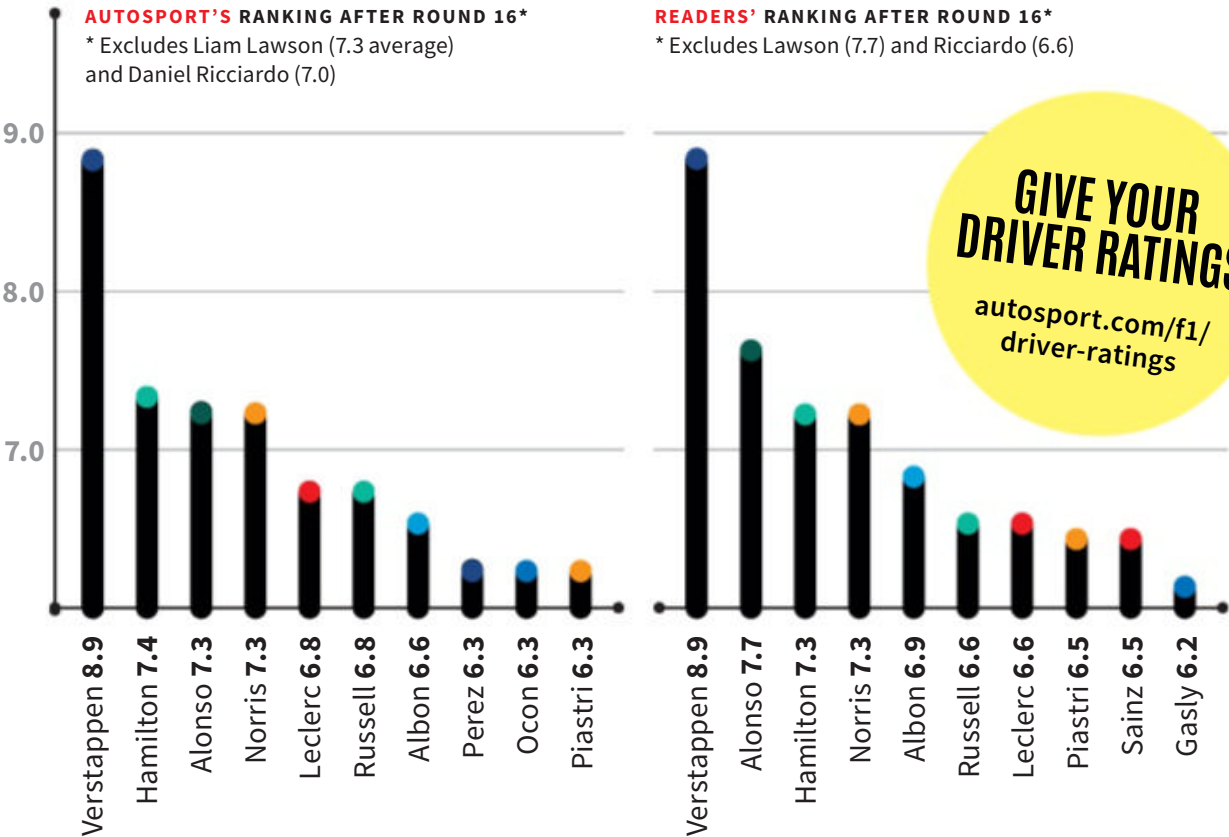
3 Stopped under safety car, which meant he was running with those who'd had incidents and pitted on lap one. Under pressure from Bottas at restart, he locked up, which was sloppy error and ruined both their races. Contact gave him floor damage and a time penalty.




Started 13th — Result R

4 Slow getaway is enough to cost Albon here, since it meant he lost the pack ahead and was being caught by Bottas and Ocon when the Alpine's jink left triggered their clash and Albon going briefly airborne. Front wing could be repaired, but floor damage only got worse.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS





BTCC

Sensational Sutton puts title in Focus

The Ford man went from 23rd to victory, but it was a day of what might have been for Tom Ingram and first-race winner Jake Hill

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



motorsport
IMAGES

Sutton (below)
sneaks through as
Ingram (1) is forced
wide after knock from
Butel (blue car)...

T

he Copse Corner crowd roared their approval as Ash Sutton surged alongside Aron Taylor-Smith down the pitstraight and then squeezed ahead right in front of them at the start of the final lap of race two.

Taylor-Smith, the popular underdog in the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra; Sutton, the impending fourth-time champion with his all-conquering Motorbase Performance-run Ford Focus ST; you'd think they'd have been cheering for the Irish veteran. But this is Ash Sutton, racer extraordinaire, the man who makes the impossible happen, in this case an incredible victory from 23rd on the grid.

Yet it might not have turned out like this. The British Touring Car Championship's annual visit to the Silverstone National Circuit last weekend was full of drama. Some of that hampered Sutton; arguably more of it knocked back Tom Ingram, now the only man who can deprive the Hertfordshire racer of the 2023 crown with one round remaining. The reigning champion put in his own sensational drive just behind Sutton at the wheel of his Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N, from 22nd to third. And he was sure that the victory should have been his...

The reason why Sutton and Ingram started so low down was because of the bizarre opening race. Indeed, with Colin Turkington and Dan Cammish behind them, has there ever been

a stronger bottom six on a BTCC grid? From this quartet, it was time for eight sleeves to be metaphorically rolled up.

Ingram, from his advantageous starting position, was the highest-placed of them as they headed down the Wellington Straight on the first lap, getting a cheeky nudge from Sutton, the two of them surrounded by Team Hard Cupra Leons. From the Kent squad's ranks, Jack Butel fired into team-mate Dexter Patterson as the braked (to wildly differing extents) for the Brooklands left-hander and shouldered Ingram wide. Sutton was through and, more importantly, five places ahead of the Hyundai.

Up the order they rose, helped by a mid-race safety car for debris on the track. At the restart, with eight laps remaining, Sutton was sixth and Ingram – who had set fastest lap – was 10th. The gap between them was 1.330 seconds. At the finish, the interval was almost identical: 1.405s, with the Astra of the gallant Taylor-Smith sandwiched between them. “We could have won that race had we not been held up in that first-lap incident,” claimed Ingram, and it was hard to disagree. “We were already ahead of Ash. After that I was on the catch-up. A couple of people moved over for Ash and they didn't for me, so it was just one of those things.”

In truth, the performances of both these superstars of the BTCC were absolutely mindblowing. Each deserved to win; on another day it would just as likely be circumstances turning Ingram into



“I think I owe ‘Rowbo’ a beer. The drinks are on me for any night out in our lifetimes”

the hero. And it represented a proper turnaround for Sutton.

Qualifying was tough for the championship leader. Sutton had been buried in the free practice times, but there’s nothing unusual in that. ‘Sandbagging’, claim some; ‘just doing our housekeeping’, the man himself often explains. In the last knockings of the first half-hour qualifying session, Sutton was on the bubble not to make the top-10 shootout, to the extent that Motorbase had to get on the radio and ask team-mate Dan Rowbottom to forfeit a promising looking lap to ensure that the squad’s top dog made the cut for Q2.

As it turned out, running round on ancient tyres in free practice had not given Sutton anywhere near as accurate a read as he needed on set-up for when fresh Goodyears were bolted on for qualifying. Furthermore, the reduced hybrid use allowed for the top seven in the championship has a bigger effect at Silverstone than anywhere else. “Thank God that’s over,” sighed Sutton after vaulting to fifth on the grid in Q2. “I think I owe ‘Rowbo’ a beer.



...and then they raced through to first and third

The drinks are on me for any night out in our lifetimes. Our simulations state we lose three and a half to four tenths [through lack of hybrid] here, and they haven’t let us down this year. This one is the biggest difference along with Oulton and Donington GP, but there you’ve got more corners to chase back the time.”

Ingram agreed. He had two seconds more per lap of hybrid use than Sutton, and had qualified third. The improved form of the Hyundai from last time out at Donington had apparently carried over; despite being off the front row, he was just 0.030s off pole.

Ahead of him were shock of the season Mikey Doble (see panel, p33) and Colin Turkington. But neither of them had a chance in race one. And the same went for the rest of the top nine on the grid, with the exception of Jake Hill. Unlike team-mate Turkington and the other leading lights, he had opted for wet-weather tyres on his West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport after a morning of drizzle, and this is what produced the crazy mixed-up grid for race two. »

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Sutton makes his
race-winning move
on Taylor-Smith

DOBLE MAXES THE POWER

BTCC rookie Mikey Doble would be the first to admit that he wouldn't have expected to be the one to break the Motorbase Ford team's 2023 stranglehold on pole positions. But that's exactly what the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra racer did at Silverstone, with not one but two laps good enough to top the qualifying shootout.

PMR has been a happy place of late. The Astra is venerable, and Doble races a 2017 car pressed back into service this season after two years dormant, but the son of ex-Formula Forward runner-up Mike Doble, fellow rookie Andrew Watson and the evergreen Aron Taylor-Smith have been taking it in turns to shine, and all three did so at Silverstone.

"The car's just been in the window all day," smiled Doble. "I was just focused on not overdriving and stringing the lap together. It was consistent, effortless, and we could do it lap after lap." Unfortunately, the pole was thrown away when, with wet weather for race one, Doble was told by the team to complete two green-flag laps. It wasn't until he was at Copse second time around, realised no one was behind him, and radioed the team that he knew the game was up.

That put him on the back foot in the hunt for points in the Jack Sears Trophy, the class for drivers who start the season without an overall BTCC podium to their name. Watson scored two wins here, and reckoned he could have emulated his outright third place from race one in the sequel were it not for a loose door sill. "I was trying to hold it because it was killing my straightline speed," he said after finishing sixth.

The upshot is that Watson heads to the Brands finale 18 points clear of Doble, with Sam Osborne, Dexter Patterson and Ronan Pearson also in the mix.



The Doble art was
mastered on Saturday

Hill, who like Turkington was still in with an outside shot of the title as they arrived at Silverstone, lined up fourth, but had set a lap 0.068s quicker than Doble's pole effort, only to get it deleted for a track-limits offence on the inside of Brooklands. "I tried my luck to be fair," he grinned. "I thought if I didn't get caught I'm quids in!"

It didn't matter. Hill sailed away from the pack and romped to a dominant victory. Owing to his career-long battle for finance, he relies heavily on his commercial deals, with the consequence that he always has huge battalions of sponsor guests at race weekends. And the Laser Tools-jacketed throng played into his hands on the grid. "There was a sea of blue surrounding us on the grid," laughed his engineer Craig Porley, "so no one could see what we were doing with the tyres!"

Sutton also knew that wets were the way to go. "We went to the

"There was a sea of blue around us on the grid, so no one could see what we were doing with tyres!"

grid on slicks, lined up on the grid, and I turned round to Tony [Carrozza, his engineer] and the guys and said we need to be on wets," he explained. "But we did all have a meeting beforehand and agree to just replicate Tom, because at the time he was our closest rival and that's who we were racing." Meanwhile, Ingram quipped: "I'm Teflon-coated so it's fairly easy for me; I just get Spencer [Aldridge, engineer] to do it! Very similar to the calls earlier on in the season, but in scenarios like that there's only so much from a driver's perspective you can actually see. You can see the bit of the road you're driving on, a bit further forwards, and a bit further back, but actually the bigger picture sometimes you need to know what's going on around you. Spencer's very good at that."

This time, they got it wrong. Albeit perhaps not disastrously so, had a second wrong call not been made. After all, Rory Butcher took the pain on slicks early on before racing through to sixth in his Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla, hotly pursued by the fastest lap-setting, slick-shod Taylor-Smith. On wets, Rowbottom got some payback for his qualifying altruism by racing through to second from Andrew Watson's PMR Vauxhall, Adam Morgan's WSR BMW and the Hard Cupra of Bobby Thompson.

But it was one of Thompson's team-mates who further nobbled Ingram – as, of course, would also happen in race two – when Michael Crees nerfed him into a spin at Becketts on lap three. >>



Hill dominated the opener, and should have scored second win

Both he and Sutton were ahead of Butcher at the time, but each pitted for wets, rejoined a lap down and sprinted round in tandem to the finish, Ingram just in front.

“I think had we made our bed and lied in it, we’d have been all right,” mused Ingram. “Because I was ‘Creased’ I dropped to 20th and I thought, ‘Well, I’ve got to overtake all the slick-shod cars to get back to what’s potentially slower’, so I thought that was the time if the heavens do start to open, which they normally do when you’ve had a little shower, that I needed to try and jump the gun to get ahead of the guys on slicks. More than anything it

“I had four laps’ hybrid, he had two, it was definitely in my favour, so I just used it to get past him”

was a case of covering our options. We’ll take what we can from it, learn what we can, and if a similar scenario happens again we’ll probably make the same choice – the wrong one!” Again, Sutton shadowed him: “The guys saw that all of Ingram’s crew were out ready to do a tyre change, so it was like, ‘We’re coming in to beat you to it’. That’s how that one unravelled.”

“It was a great decision,” Hill said of his and Porley’s tyre choice. “I could tell the time for slicks would come, but it would be too late, and as soon as they put the car back down on the floor it rained again.” And now he was up to second in the points, on pole for race two, and Sutton was worried: “It’s not until Jake goes and wins the race that you go, ‘Whoa, we maybe overlooked that one...’”

Hill was then struck by appalling fortune. He was cruising race two; of course he was. He lit up the restart after that safety car and was gone, leaving Taylor-Smith in his dust. And then the BMW began slowing: “I was monitoring the gap to Aron – sure, he was fast but I had it totally under control. But then the boost sensor failed me and gave me a misfire which was so bad – I lost so much, it was like being on two cylinders.” Going into the final corner of the race, Hill was still 12th and, not that anyone knew at the time, this was the number Sutton would pull out of the reversed-grid draw. Then the Honda of Aiden Moffat bashed the BMW at Luffield, chaos broke out behind and, in a 10-car free-for-all Talladega-style sprint to the line, it was Crees who nabbed that all-important 12th for pole, with the crestfallen Hill 20th.

The Kentishman then went on his own Sutton/Ingram-emulating charge in the finale. He was up to eighth with 10 laps

remaining, and then “the boost sensor went again. It wasn’t as violent as the first race, but it’s clear that we have an issue that lies deeper in the car. It’s an electrical fault no one can find.”

At least Hill this time maintained eighth, while Turkington sped to victory from fifth on the grid, but both are now out of the championship picture. Slicks in the wet on a rear-wheel-drive BMW are an even worse idea than using them on a front-driven machine, but Turkington had raced up to eighth in the sequel. “As we sat on the grid slicks seemed the right choice, but as soon as we dropped the car on the deck it started to rain and I knew it wasn’t to be,” he grimaced. “I was a dead man walking.” In the finale, he got through early battles with the hard-trying Dan Lloyd (Hard Cupra) and Rowbottom before hitting the front: “I had a really good front end compared to race two, and I felt if I was patient I could make the moves. Once I got in the lead I knew I had the pace.”

Ingram and Sutton were on the charge again, to second and third respectively, and mixed into their battles were their respective team-mates Ronan Pearson (the Scottish rookie led briefly on lap one) and Rowbottom. Ingram paid tribute to Pearson – “I owe him a couple of beers, or drams” – for letting him through, but said that a gradual power-steering loss prevented any ideas of taking it to Turkington: “That turns out to be quite difficult... Luckily I’m an absolute beefcake so it was all right!” Sutton also paid tribute to Pearson – “He’s a mega driver is Ronan. He’s got a bright future” – before adding that he had to fight past Rowbottom: “It was a possible podium for him so we were racing for that one. Ultimately we didn’t need a podium because we’ve got 45 points’ advantage. I had four laps’ hybrid and he had two, so it was definitely in my favour, and I just used the hybrid to get past him.”

Both title contenders were superb on Sunday, but the cards could only fall in one direction and they did so in the direction of the Focus driver. “We outqualified Ash, we’ve outpaced him all weekend as well, similar to Donington – it’s a case of what could have been I think,” concluded Ingram. “We’ve been in the pound seats with the car – it’s felt very good. Ash has just had a very consistent weekend and that’s where we’re at.”

“Overnight we made some improvements that we didn’t really get a true read on in race one,” summed up Sutton, who’d also enjoyed a rare thing for him: an arsenal of hybrid use. “We didn’t touch it for race two. The thing came alive – we unlocked some pace, that’s for sure. But then yeah, just having hybrid and using it in the right place and the right way to overcome your opponents, that was ultimately how we propelled ourselves through the field.”

[P68 BTCC SUPPORTS REPORT](#)

RESULTS

ROUND 9/10, SILVERSTONE (GBR), 24 SEPTEMBER RACE 1 (22 LAPS – 36.089 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Jake Hill (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	23m37.153s
2	Dan Rowbottom (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST	+5.355s
3	Andrew Watson (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+7.430s
4	Adam Morgan (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	+19.464s
5	Bobby Thompson (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+20.642s
6	Rory Butcher (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport	+21.197s
7	Aron Taylor-Smith (IRL)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+22.257s
8	Sam Osborne (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST	+22.776s
9	Josh Cook (GBR)	One Motorsport / Honda Civic Type R	+27.538s
10	Dan Lloyd (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+29.078s
11	Mikey Doble (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+29.926s
12	Michael Crees (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+33.983s
13	Tom Chilton (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	+36.002s
14	Daryl DeLeon (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+36.007s
15	George Gamble (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport	+38.320s
16	Jade Edwards (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+42.347s
17	Aiden Moffat (GBR)	One Motorsport / Honda Civic Type R	+44.334s
18	Dexter Patterson (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+47.163s
19	Stephen Jelley (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	+48.038s
20	Ricky Collard (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport	+48.280s
21	Jack Butel (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+48.551s
22	Tom Ingram (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	-1 lap
23	Ash Sutton (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST	-1 lap
24	Ronan Pearson (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	-1 lap
25	Nick Halstead (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	-1 lap
R	Colin Turkington (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	14 laps-steering
R	Dan Cammish (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus ST	4 laps-radiator

Winner's average speed 91.68mph. **Fastest lap** **Taylor-Smith** 1m02.449s, 94.56mph.

QUALIFYING

Q2 1 **Doble** 57.599s; 2 **Turkington** 57.611s; 3 **Ingram** 57.629s; 4 **Hill** 57.644s; 5 **Sutton** 57.663s; 6 **Chilton** 57.710s; 7 **Cammish** 57.786s; 8 **Taylor-Smith** 57.846s; 9 **Butcher** 57.880s; 10 **Osborne** 1m00.949s.
Q1 **Hill** 57.658s; **Taylor-Smith** 57.662s; **Ingram** 57.674s; **Turkington** 57.677s; **Doble** 57.688s; **Osborne** 57.726s; **Butcher** 57.746s; **Cammish** 57.753s; **Chilton** 57.759s; **Sutton** 57.767s; 11 **Morgan** 57.813s; 12 **Watson** 57.824s; 13 **Rowbottom** 57.829s; 14 **Pearson** 57.839s; 15 **Cook** 57.921s; 16 **Collard** 57.931s; 17 **Jelley** 57.943s; 18 **Thompson** 57.986s; 19 **Patterson** 58.036s; 20 **Moffat** 58.078s; 21 **Lloyd** 58.102s; 22 **DeLeon** 58.259s; 23 **Gamble** 58.353s; 24 **Butel** 58.378s; 25 **Crees** 58.405s; 26 **Halstead** 58.407s; 27 **Edwards** 58.644s.



GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1.

RACE 2 (24 LAPS – 39.369 MILES)

1 Sutton 24m27.732s; 2 **Taylor-Smith** +0.411s; 3 **Ingram** +1.405s; 4 **Butcher** +2.257s; 5 **Morgan** +2.578s; 6 **Watson** +3.093s; 7 **Cook** +3.774s; 8 **Turkington** +3.942s; 9 **Lloyd** +4.659s; 10 **Rowbottom** +4.984s; 11 **Pearson** +5.269s; 12 **Crees** +12.789s; 13 **Moffat** +12.794s; 14 **Collard** +12.952s; 15 **Doble** +13.026s; 16 **Chilton** +13.096s; 17 **Osborne** +13.153s; 18 **Jelley** +13.300s; 19 **Patterson** +13.332s; 20 **Hill** +13.550s; 21 **Halstead** +13.677s; 22 **Edwards** +15.539s; 23 **Gamble** -1 lap; 24 **Cammish** -1 lap; 25 **Butel** -1 lap; 26 **DeLeon** -3 laps; R **Thompson** 18 laps-window.
Winner's average speed 96.56mph.
Fastest lap **Ingram** 58.256s, 101.37mph.

GRID RACE 3 Decided by result of Race 2, with top 12 reversed. Butel given grid penalty so started 27th.

RACE 3 (25 LAPS – 41.010 MILES)

1 Turkington 26m32.144s; 2 **Ingram** +2.559s; 3 **Sutton** +5.541s; 4 **Rowbottom** +8.143s; 5 **Pearson** +8.583s; 6 **Cook** +9.389s; 7 **Collard** +10.693s; 8 **Hill** +14.564s; 9 **Taylor-Smith** +17.090s; 10 **Morgan** +17.287s; 11 **Lloyd** +17.625s; 12 **Moffat** +18.913s; 13 **Jelley** +19.243s; 14 **Doble** +20.397s; 15 **Gamble** +21.072s; 16 **Patterson** +21.574s; 17 **Osborne** +21.799s; 18 **Watson** +22.937s; 19 **Halstead** +23.295s; 20 **Edwards** +24.259s; 21 **DeLeon** +24.949s; 22 **Thompson** +31.727s; 23 **Cammish** +45.075s; 24 **Butel** -1 lap; R **Chilton** 20 laps-oil leak; R **Crees** 13 laps-damage; R **Butcher** 0 laps-accident.
Winner's average speed 92.73mph.
Fastest lap **Turkington** 57.948s, 101.91mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Sutton 398; 2 **Ingram** 353; 3 **Hill** 330; 4 **Turkington** 293; 5 **Cook** 237; 6 **Cammish** 220; 7 **Rowbottom** 198; 8 **Collard** 187; 9 **Morgan** 182; 10 **Butcher** 172.



Algarve Pro Racing claimed its second win of ELMS season after hectic final hour at Spa

Short stop leaves Lynn sitting pretty at Spa

**EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES
SPA (BEL)
24 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 4/6**

Algarve Pro Racing trio Alex Lynn, Kyffin Simpson and James Allen picked up their second victory of the season during the 4 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps after an incident-packed contest that featured no fewer than five safety car appearances.

Simpson started the race from pole, meaning the newly signed Chip Ganassi Racing IndyCar driver evaded the chaos that unfolded at the start when Panis Racing's Manuel Maldonado misjudged a lunge into the first corner. The Venezuelan locked up and triggered a multi-car collision that involved Duqueine Team's Rene Binder, Paul Lafargue (IDEC Sport) and Marino Sato (United Autosports). Simpson and later Allen maintained the lead and their ORECA built an advantage over chasing cars from Inter Europol Competition and Cool Racing, only to have the gap slashed when Martin Berry parked

his JMW Motorsport Ferrari 488 GTE Evo after contact with the barriers in a spin at Raidillon, triggering the safety car.

When the race restarted, Allen maintained his advantage until Eurointernational LMP3 driver Glenn van Berlo crashed his Ligier hard. The resulting safety car took half an hour as barrier repairs were required. Algarve Pro, meanwhile, lost the lead when Cool Racing brought its Pro-Am entry into the pits before the caution. This meant that Lynn found himself behind Danish youngster Malthe Jakobsen when he took over for the final portion of the race when it restarted with 55 minutes to go.

The safety car made two more appearances within the final hour, first coming when Ben Hanley crashed his Nielsen Racing ORECA hard. This safety car period swung the pendulum back in Algarve Pro's favour, when a shorter pitstop meant Lynn emerged on track ahead of Jakobsen before a brief, five-minute period of green flag running was interrupted once more. Jonathan Aberdein, running 10th,

had crashed his Inter Europol ORECA in a fashion eerily similar to Hanley's.

When three cars ahead of him pitted after the final restart, Lynn was able to keep Jakobsen behind by a narrow margin to claim the squad's second win of the season and move ahead of Duqueine in the standings. Jakobsen, Nicolas Lapierre and Alexandre Coigny finished second, while AF Corse rounded out the overall top three when Matthieu Vaxiviere, sharing with Alessio Rovera and Francois Perrodo, beat Racing Team Turkey's Louis Deletraz in a sprint out of Blanchimont in the final minutes of the race. But the AF car was then penalised down to fifth for a full-course yellow infringement, promoting Deletraz, Charlie Eastwood and Salih Yoluc to third.

In LMP3, Cool Racing picked up class honours with their Ligier driven by Adrien Chila, Marcos Siebert and Alex Garcia. The Swiss squad saw their main title rivals, the Racing Spirit of Lemans Ligier crew, eliminated in the opening-lap melee and picked up a third win from four races ahead of Inter Europol Ligier trio Miguel Cristovao, Wyatt Brichacek and Kai Askey.

The Iron Lynx Porsche of Matteo Cairoli, Matteo Cressoni and Claudio Schiavoni was classified as GTE race winner when Proton Competition Porsche driver Alessio Picariello picked up a post-race penalty for an FCY infringement after beating Cairoli to the line in a late-race battle. The Italian trio were therefore awarded the victory, while Picariello, Zach Robichon and Ryan Hardwick dropped to third behind Nicklas Nielsen with Johnny and Conrad Laursen in their Formula Racing Ferrari.

DAVEY EUWEMA

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Lynn celebrates narrow victory at Spa

Preining in pole for title as Rast takes a victory

DTM
RED BULL RING (AUT)
23-24 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 7/8

Kelvin van der Linde and Rene Rast scored their first DTM wins of 2023 at the season's penultimate round at the Red Bull Ring, while Thomas Preining snatched the championship lead.

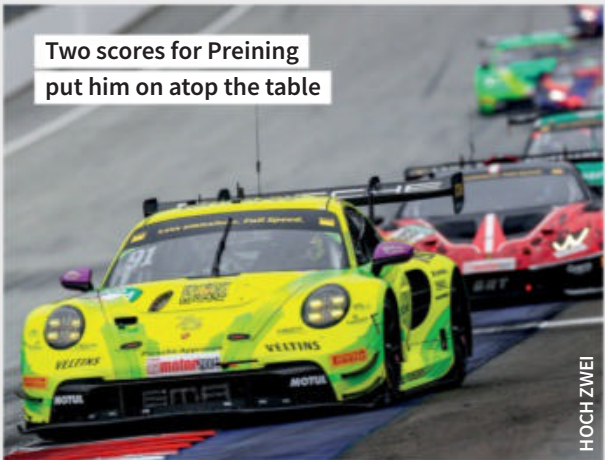
Team75 Motorsport's Laurin Heinrich held off van der Linde to lead the first half of Saturday's contest from pole in drying conditions ahead of Mercedes-AMG stalwart Maro Engel, while van der Linde ran wide and slipped to fifth. Van der Linde soon recovered to third ahead of Porsche duo Ayhan Guven and Preining, and an earlier pitstop for slick tyres enabled the Abt Audi driver to leapfrog Heinrich and Engel into the lead before a brief safety car period.

The South African remained ahead at the restart, eventually winning by 1.3s from Heinrich as battles raged behind.

Preining passed Engel for third before being instructed to hand the position back, but the pair lost out to van der Linde's team-mate Ricardo Feller. Rast climbed to fourth and engaged Feller, who put up a determined defence to keep the final podium spot.

Engel prevailed in his squabble for fifth with Preining, who finished three places ahead of Mirko Bortolotti to reduce the deficit in the title fight.

Rast took a record-breaking 26th pole position for Sunday's race, and resisted an opening-lap challenge from BMW team-mate Sheldon van der Linde. He dealt with a light rain shower to remain ahead during the mandatory pitstop phase and led home a Schubert



Motorsport 1-2 by 1.3s.

Preining took a lonely third to gain a 10-point championship advantage heading into next month's deciding round at Hockenheim, while Bortolotti failed to score after suffering an opening-lap puncture and trailing home in 21st.

BMW driver Marco Wittmann climbed one place to fourth, while one-time Formula 1 starter Jack Aitken slipped back from third on the opening lap and eventually came home eighth.

Feller lost crucial ground to Preining in the championship by scoring a solitary point in 15th, while Luca Stolz's remote title hopes were ended by a late retirement.

Kelvin van der Linde also failed to finish, eventually stopping after opening-lap contact left him spinning down the order.

STEVE WHITFIELD



WEEKEND WINNERS

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

- SPA (BEL)**
- LMP2** Alex Lynn/James Allen/
Kyffin Simpson
Algarve Pro Racing (ORECA 07)
- LMP3** Marcos Siebert/Adrien Chila/
Alex Garcia
Cool Racing (Ligier JSP320)
- GTE** Matteo Cairoli/Matteo
Cressoni/Claudio Schiavoni
Iron Lynx (Porsche 911 RSR)

DTM RED BULL RING (AUT)

- Race 1** Kelvin van der Linde
Abt (Audi R8 LMS Evo II)
- Race 2** Rene Rast
Schubert (BMW M4 GT3)

NASCAR CUP TEXAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY (USA)

- William Byron
Hendrick Motorsports (Chevy Camaro)

INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN MONZA (ITA)

- Race 1** Pierre Louis Chovet/
Maximilian Paul
Oregon (Lambo Huracan EVO2)
- Race 2** Nicola Marinangeli/
Riccardo Agostini
AF Corse (Ferrari 296 GT3)

EUROFORMULA OPEN MONZA (ITA)

- Race 1** Noel Leon
Motopark (Dallara-Spiess)
- Race 2** Charlie Wurz
CryptoTower (Dallara-Spiess)
- Race 3** Joshua Dufek
CryptoTower (Dallara-Spiess)



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Bezzecchi piles on heat as Bagnaia takes a spill

MOTOGP
BUDDH (IND)
24 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 13/20

MotoGP promoter Dorna's expansion to newer, unexplored territories in Asia took the series to India last weekend, with ex-Formula 1 venue Buddh International Circuit staging its first world championship event in a decade.

There were some concerns about the race going ahead at the beginning of the week, with teams delayed by visa issues and riders questioning whether the track was safe for bike racing. Eventually, the entire MotoGP fraternity was able to reach India and, once they had seen the track first-hand, all fears about the safety of riders were allayed.

This meant that the focus could shift

to on-track action, and from the very beginning it was clear that Ducati had an advantage, with the circuit's two long straights clearly playing to the strengths of the Desmosedici package. It was perhaps no surprise that Ducati riders then locked out the top four spots on the grid, with Marco Bezzecchi taking pole on the year-old GP22 ahead of Pramac's Jorge Martin, factory rider Francesco Bagnaia and Bezzecchi's VR46 team-mate Luca Marini.

Bezzecchi didn't make the best of starts from pole in the sprint and was dropping down the order when Marini completely misjudged the opening right-hander, clattering into the back of his team-mate and nearly taking him out of the race. With Bezzecchi dropping to the rear and Marini retiring altogether after their incident, Martin had an easy run to victory, carrying the momentum he had gained with a

double win at Misano just a fortnight ago.

Bezzecchi, meanwhile, was able to recover to fifth, putting in a heroic comeback on his VR46 machine. It was a sign of things to come in the Grand Prix on Sunday, which was reduced by three laps in response to extreme heat and humidity.

Much like Saturday's sprint, Bezzecchi didn't get the best of starts and slipped to third, behind the GP23 bikes of Martin and Bagnaia. But that would be the only time the Italian lagged behind his rivals, and he put in a crushing display. The 24-year-old got back up to second when Martin went wide at Turn 4, and in the final corner he made a bold pass over Bagnaia to snatch the lead of the race.

Now in front, Bezzecchi pulled out an advantage of over a second in just three laps and he continued to chip away from the rest of the field, eventually taking the chequered flag with a winning margin of nearly nine seconds – the biggest so far in 2023.

It was Bezzecchi's third win of the season and put him back in the title fight, especially with Bagnaia losing a major chunk of his points lead with a crash on lap 13. The reigning champion had been fighting with Martin for second and had just cleared the Pramac rider when he lost his Ducati into Turn 4, recording his third retirement of the season.

Martin moved up to second following Bagnaia's DNF, but he had to fight hard to hold onto the position after losing time redoing his racesuit, which had unzipped



Yamaha's Quartararo briefly held second but gave best to Martin



Marc Marquez fell off but recovered well to finish ninth for Honda



Bagnaia gets a lift after a tumble that's reduced his points lead

partially. Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo gave Martin a run for his money and even passed him after Turn 4 on the final lap, but the Spaniard retaliated just two corners later and defended to the finish.

The KTMs qualified poorly, but Brad Binder was able to recover to fourth ahead of Joan Mir, who recorded his best finish of the season in fifth. Mir's result came during a strong weekend for Honda, with Marc Marquez finishing on the podium in the sprint and running fourth on Sunday until a low-speed crash at Turn 1. He was able to remount on his bike and finish a respectable ninth, after dropping to 16th as a result of his crash.

Occupying positions between the two factory Honda riders were Pramac's Johann Zarco, Franco Morbidelli on his Yamaha and the sole-surviving Aprilia of Maverick Vinales. Vinales's team-mate Aleix Espargaro had a torrid weekend at Buddh, crashing in the sprint while running outside of the points and suffering another retirement in the main race when his bike developed mechanical problems.

Only 20 riders took the start of Sunday's race, with Gresini's Alex Marquez breaking his ribs in a fall in qualifying and Marini having to fly back to Italy due to the collarbone fracture he sustained in his crash with Bezzecchi in the sprint. Another Ducati rider, Martin, required medical attention after suffering from dehydration in the Grand Prix.

RACHIT THUKRAL

RESULTS ROUND 13/20, BUDDH (IND), 24 SEPTEMBER (21 LAPS – 65.374 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Marco Bezzecchi (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	36m59.157s
2	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+8.649s
3	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+8.855s
4	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+12.643s
5	Joan Mir (ESP)	Honda	+13.214s
6	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+14.673s
7	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Yamaha	+16.946s
8	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	+17.191s
9	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Honda	+19.118s
10	Raul Fernandez (ESP)	RNF Aprilia	+26.504s
11	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+28.521s
12	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	RNF Aprilia	+29.088s
13	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	GasGas Tech3 KTM	+29.728s
14	Jack Miller (AUS)	KTM	+31.324s
15	Stefan Bradl (DEU)	LCR Honda	+35.782s
16	Michele Pirro (ITA)	Ducati	+49.242s
R	Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	19 laps-injury
R	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	13 laps-crash
R	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	11 laps-mech
R	Augusto Fernandez (ESP)	GasGas Tech3 KTM	6 laps-acc dam
NS	Alex Marquez (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	
NS	Luca Marini (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2 BUDDH (IND)
Pedro Acosta (below)
Red Bull KTM Ajo (Kalex)

MOTO 3 BUDDH (IND)
Jaume Masia
Leopard Racing (Honda)

Winner's average speed 106.052mph. Fastest lap Bezzecchi 1m45.028s, 106.705mph

QUALIFYING 2 1 Bezzecchi 1m43.947s; 2 Martin 1m43.990s; 3 Bagnaia 1m44.203s; 4 Marini 1m44.215s; 5 Mir 1m44.454s; 6 M Marquez 1m44.469s; 7 Zarco 1m44.515s; 8 Quartararo 1m44.724s; 9 Vinales 1m44.741s; 10 A Espargaro 1m44.750s; 11 R Fernandez 1m45.194s; NS A Marquez.

QUALIFYING 1 R Fernandez 1m44.410s; A Marquez 1m44.519s; 12 Di Giannantonio 1m44.529s; 13 Binder 1m44.651s; 14 Nakagami 1m44.735s; 15 Miller 1m45.030s; 16 Morbidelli 1m45.037s; 17 A Fernandez 1m45.066s; 18 Oliveira 1m45.375s; 19 P Espargaro 1m45.452s; 20 Bradl 1m45.517s; 21 Pirro 1m46.147s.

SPRINT RACE (11 LAPS – 34.244 MILES) 1 Martin 19m18.836s; 2 Bagnaia +1.389s; 3 M Marquez +2.405s; 4 Binder +2.904s; 5 Bezzecchi +3.266s; 6 Quartararo +4.327s; 7 Miller +7.172s; 8 Vinales +8.798s; 9 R Fernandez +10.530s; 10 Di Giannantonio +10.826s; 11 A Fernandez +11.456s; 12 Oliveira +15.415s; 13 Nakagami +17.437s; 14 Pirro +23.714s; 15 Morbidelli +36.468s; R A Espargaro 7 laps-accident; R Zarco 6 laps-accident; R Mir 3 laps-accident; R Marini 0 laps-accident; R P Espargaro 0 laps-accident; R Bradl 0 laps-accident; NS A Marquez.

Winner's average speed 106.380mph. Fastest lap Bezzecchi 1m44.556s, 107.187mph.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Bagnaia 292; 2 Martin 279; 3 Bezzecchi 248; 4 Binder 192; 5 A Espargaro 160; 6 Zarco 157; 7 Vinales 138; 8 Marini 135; 9 Miller 109; 10 A Marquez 108.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ducati 453; 2 KTM 253; 3 Aprilia 228; 4 Yamaha 125; 5 Honda 123.



Martin won the Sprint on Saturday for Pramac

NEXT REPORT
Japanese GP
5 October
issue



FORMULA 1

THE BEGINNING OF BENETTON

History says the world championship-winning team arrived in Formula 1 in 1986, but that's not what the people involved believe – as revealed in this extract from a new book...

DAMIEN SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

The accepted wisdom in record books is that the Benetton Formula 1 team was born in 1986. Not so, according to those on the inside. During 1985, the team remained Toleman to the outside world, but purely in name alone. The new sponsor that introduced a novel car livery based on international flags was now at the helm – it just didn't shout about it.

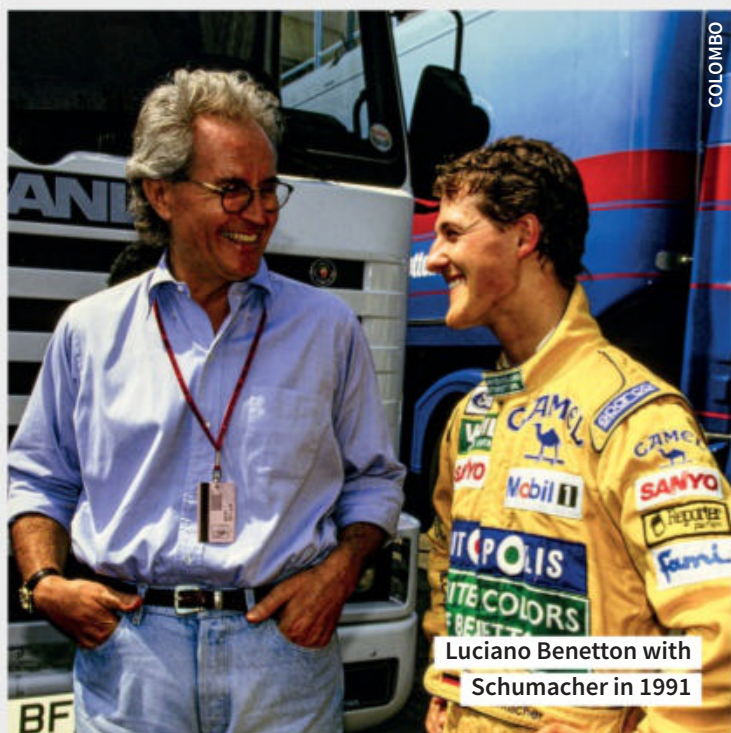
"It stopped being Toleman at the end of 1984 and became Benetton from the start of 1985," asserts Alex Hawkrige, who took responsibility for a traumatic and far from certain transfer of power over the winter and deep into the start of the new season. The bad taste left by Ayrton Senna's defection to Lotus combined with a direct physical problem – the team was snookered by a lack of tyre supply – forced Toleman to face reality. Grand prix motor racing never had been the *raison d'être*

for the transportation business. It was time for Toleman, and Hawkrige, to leave the stage.

Benetton had made a moderate splash into F1 with its striking green livery on Tyrrells in 1983, transferring to Alfa Romeo in 1984 with which it would remain the following year, in parallel with the Toleman campaign. But it was now ready to take a much more significant step and, as was becoming increasingly common, Bernie Ecclestone was at the heart of the dealings. "Yes, it was arranged through Bernie," confirms Hawkrige. "When we were looking for a tyre supplier Bernie said Benetton wanted to come into F1, they're Italian with a lot of media presence, especially in Italy, and they are more likely to get Pirelli to supply them than you are. Through him he floated a deal for us to talk with Benetton. At the time my main concern was the team, to keep it all together and we didn't want to sell it on to someone who would run it down >>

Toleman TG185
made its delayed
1985 debut as a sole
entry for Teo Fabi





Luciano Benetton with Schumacher in 1991

WHY BENETTON BOUGHT AN F1 TEAM

What motivated an Italian knitwear company to buy a Formula 1 team? “Yes, it is quite interesting,” muses Pat Symonds, Benetton’s long-time engineer and technical director. “The strange thing was with Luciano Benetton and the whole family, I never really saw that passion for motorsport. Luciano is a *fantastic* guy, a remarkable character in every respect, as a businessman and as a person. I really liked him – even though we didn’t have a great deal to do with him.”

Benetton’s oldest son, Alessandro, was drafted in as chairman in the late 1980s and appeared on the pitwall intermittently during the team’s 1990s heyday. “The common denominator was opportunity and a willingness to find a global way of communication,” he says. “The company wanted to expand globally. It wanted to be associated with dynamism and action, being courageous and young, a daring attitude that was typical of F1 – and F1 was the only global sport. There was no alternative to it. The bottom line is it showed an attitude of the entrepreneur, who had courage to do it. This is very important.”

Beyond its colourful knitwear, Benetton was best known for its provocative advertising tackling taboo subjects such as AIDS, racial and religious matters. “The company was not advertising directly a product, but a concept, to associate a name and a brand to an attitude that touched on very tricky areas,” explains Alessandro. “It did require a lot of courage.

“THE COMPANY WANTED TO EXPAND GLOBALLY. F1 WAS THE ONLY GLOBAL SPORT”

Nowadays, [the adverts] are recognised as a big success, but back then those campaigns were not so straightforward. There were a lot of questions: why are they doing it? But this was just a way of saying it’s time

to make a statement. And F1 was not so different from that.”

Does it ring a bell? There’s a strong case to be made that Benetton’s F1 exploits foreshadow the investment of another ‘left-field’ company, one built around a fizzy, sweet energy drink. As Flavio Briatore puts it: “We did what Red Bull has done since. Red Bull is a copy of Benetton, no?”

or [run it] in the wrong way.

In particular, it was important Rory [Byrne]’s technical side was maintained.”

The Benetton deal that followed was a decent outcome for all parties – but especially for the knitwear company. “What you’ve got to remember is at the end of 1984 here was this race team that had no debt whatsoever and that had amassed a large number of championship points [17,

enough for seventh in the standings] with a value attached to them, especially in those days when they only went down to sixth place,” says Chris Witty, Toleman marketing man and ex-Autosport staffer. “Benetton bought a going concern.”

But the stumbling block on tyres threatened to scupper the Benetton deal and left Hawkrige scrambling for months to get it over the line. Toleman had forged an alliance with Pirelli in F2 and maintained that partnership when it stepped up to F1 in 1981. But in 1984 the team had switched to Michelin, enraging the Italian supplier. Now the French company, having won the world championship with McLaren, proclaimed ‘mission accomplished’ and withdrew from F1. Toleman had burned too many bridges, including with Goodyear, which also refused to supply rubber to the team.

“The thing that determined the timing of the sale was Pirelli,” says Hawkrige. “Benetton couldn’t do the deal with us unless they had a tyre supplier. They had to get Pirelli to agree to supply them and Pirelli weren’t keen to do that initially, so there was a lot of toing and froing. Bernie got a little bit involved because he wanted Benetton. It was a nice name to have in F1. He had a vested interest in trying to get a deal to happen with Pirelli.”

Hawkrige claims he effectively left the team at the end of 1984 to focus on his ‘day job’ as the managing director of the Toleman Group. But his involvement did linger well into 1985 as the transfer of power lagged in the wake of the Pirelli troubles. Hawkrige even flew out to the first round in April, in Rio, where his team was a notable absentee. The new TG185, Byrne’s evolution of the successful TG184, had run briefly in the hands of Stefan Johansson on a few sets of Pirellis in pre-season Rio tests, the Swede setting competitive times. But as far as Hawkrige was concerned, the team was out of the F1 business.

New hope sprung when Pirelli’s winter freeze appeared to thaw. The team transporter even set off from Witney bound for the Portuguese Grand Prix loaded with three TG185s, only to be recalled when it emerged that there would still be no tyres waiting for the team at Estoril.

For the next round at Imola, Pat Symonds recalls: “Rory, myself and Alex went to the track and tried to persuade Pirelli, which was



Byrne’s tech input key to continued success



Hawkrige (right) happy to leave behind the politics of F1



1984 season ended on
a high with a podium in
Portugal – then Senna quit

“It was a hell of a workload travelling back from somewhere like Rio for a union meeting on Monday morning”

a 10-minute job: ‘Have you changed your mind?’ ‘No, f*** off!’ ‘Oh, OK...’ So we’d watch the race, stay at the hotel. But we had the truck positioned very close to the circuit so if one day Mario Mezzanotte, who was in charge of Pirelli at the time, agreed to something we could get the truck in very quickly.”

The situation was now critical, employees were leaving and Hawkrigde still didn’t have a solution to the impasse. The false start was also frustrating for Johansson, who had signed a deal to stay with the team following his late-season appearances in 1984. But he soon landed a bigger break when, after the Brazilian GP, he replaced Rene Arnoux at Ferrari. John Watson was the driver who really lost out. He had been lined up to race for Toleman in Portugal, but never did get to compete with the team, although he did test at Donington Park alongside Johansson, the TG185 running in a plain livery and on specially made Avon crossply tyres.

It’s a missed opportunity ‘Wattie’ still reflects on with some regret. The five-time grand prix winner had lost his McLaren seat at the end of 1983 when Alain Prost became available following his split with Renault. The Northern Irishman had almost headed to Lotus for 1984 to meet John Player Special’s requirement for a British driver and as replacement for Nigel Mansell, whom team boss Peter Warr held in barely concealed contempt. But Watson was put off by the circumstances.

“Then through 1984 somehow or other I was in contact with Toleman,” he says. “To cut a long story short, I ended up going to Donington on two occasions to drive the TG185. It looked like a nice team, they would have liked me, not just as a substitute for somebody they didn’t want. But then all of a sudden out of the woodwork came this Benetton proposition and everything was off. The guy from Benetton, said ‘No, we don’t want Watson, we want an Italian, we’ll take Teo Fabi.’ And that was it. It was their game, their toy.” That Italian would have been Davide Paolini, Benetton’s marketing man, who deserves much of the credit for the company’s team ownership ambition.

The breakthrough came ahead of the fourth race of the season, Monaco, where the TG185 finally made its debut. A deal had been struck for Toleman to buy the recently defunct Spirit team’s Pirelli supply for a single-car entry, driven by a returning Fabi.

Hawkrigde now bowed out of F1 for good. “FOCA rules meant

the team ran as Toleman throughout 1985,” he says. “The name-changing rules meant we had to be careful, plus Benetton needed my support to settle them down and advise them on any major issues, but there weren’t any. They came in, picked up from where we left off, kept our existing financial management and, like a lot of racing teams, it was run like a proper business. It had filed accounts and a lot of detail. So they were comfortable.” And what did Benetton pay to buy the team? “I can’t discuss it, that was part of the agreement.” But in the officially sanctioned book *Benetton Formula 1: A Story*, Luciano Benetton himself quotes the sum: £2million.

Was it strange after more than four years in F1 for Hawkrigde to suddenly find himself out of the sport? “It was not really a shock to the system,” he says. “It was a hell of a workload travelling back from somewhere like Rio to be in a union meeting on a Monday morning. I was quite glad in some ways to be relieved of the responsibility.

“I did miss being involved with a group of such creative and brilliant people,” he admits. “That was what I was most enamoured by. I didn’t miss the politics of F1, I particularly didn’t miss working with Bernie who I found to be a difficult character. But again that was probably because we didn’t want to go his way. That was a new experience for Bernie.”

Byrne has warm memories of working with Hawkrigde. “He was absolutely critical to my early career, especially the confidence and patience that he displayed when we started in F1,” says the South African. “We started so far back and it took us quite a few years to get on top of things, and there is many a person who would have abandoned the project along the way. But he stuck with it and I’m really grateful to him for that. He was an excellent manager and had a really good long-term vision. He could see where you needed to go. And he was instrumental in putting the whole F1 thing together.”

Those feelings are reciprocated. “It wouldn’t have happened without Rory,” says Alex. “Rory was the continuity into Benetton, without him it wouldn’t have been a happy story. They hadn’t

a clue how competitive the team was that they had acquired. Not in a negative way, they were just not that involved in technical things. They’re a knitting company.”



Benetton: Rebels of Formula 1

By Damien Smith

Published by Evro Publishing

ISBN 9781910505588

RRP £60

TOP 10 BENETTON F1 DRIVERS

DAMIEN SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

ITALIAN FASHION HOUSE Benetton was officially a Formula 1 constructor for 16 years between 1986 and 2001 – although it actually bought Toleman in the spring of 1985 and sold the team to Renault in March 2000. During those years a host of big-name racing drivers passed through

Team Witney/Team Enstone (from 1993). Some were on the way up... others were heading in the other direction. Here, we name and rate our best 10.

It's worth noting that we've only taken their performances into account from their Benetton years – hence no Jenson

Button thanks to his horrendous single Benetton season in 2001. Likewise, Riccardo Patrese in 1993. And given the dearth of victories – the team only scored 27, most of them by a certain chap from Kerpen – we've listed podiums too. But again, only those scored in Benettons.

Berger and Alesi formed Benetton's driver line-up in 1996-97, after Schuey left for Ferrari



SUTTON

10

TEO
FABI

Benetton years: 1986-87



SCHLEGELMILCH

Unofficially Benetton's first F1 driver, if you count 1985 (which team members do even if the record books don't). If 1985 was counted, the stat would read three pole positions thanks to Fabi's rain-affected effort at the Nurburgring, where he crashed on the wet Saturday, headbutted the steering wheel and likely had a concussion when he took the start.

Ferociously fast over one lap, Fabi contrived never to lead a lap of a grand prix despite his three poles. Those with Benetton proper came at the Osterreichring and Monza in 1986 with

the near-megawatt BMW turbo.

"I loved Teo, super guy, lovely bloke," says Pat Symonds, his engineer.

"An extraordinary driver with an amazing ability, particularly on a fast circuit. In fast corners there was no one like him, which is why he was so good at Indy [he took pole at the 500 in 1983]. He was so smooth. The trouble was he didn't have the mental strength, so when there was traffic around he couldn't handle it. I've had several drivers who have been like that in my time, but none that were as good as Teo."

Benetton starts	32
Benetton wins	0
Benetton poles	2
Benetton podiums	1





9

THIERRY BOUTSEN

Benetton years: 1987-88



Benetton starts	32
Benetton wins	0
Benetton poles	0
Benetton podiums	6

Williams saw the best of him, but his preceding two years at Benetton allowed Boutsen to solidify a respectable reputation founded at Arrows.

A lack of reliability held Benetton back. In Boutsen's first year, the team was powered by Cosworth's Ford GB turbo, which the team rated. But a problem with Mobil's fuel was only spotted and solved late in the season. Boutsen scored two fourths and three fifths (one of them in Japan with the new fuel), before inheriting his first

Benetton podium at season's end in Adelaide.

Ford chose to switch to the new, normally aspirated V8 DFR the following year, against the wishes of the team. Had Benetton stuck with the GB for the final year of turbo power (to that point), team manager Peter Collins remains convinced that the team could have threatened McLaren-Honda's dominance. As it was, the team was third in the constructors' standings, thanks largely to Boutsen's points.



7

ALESSANDRO NANNINI

Benetton years: 1988-90



Benetton starts	46
Benetton wins	1
Benetton poles	0
Benetton podiums	8

The good-looking, chain-smoking Italian was perfect for Benetton – and he was quick. Nannini showed well against Thierry Boutsen when he moved from Minardi in 1988. He looked embarrassed by his 'victory' on the podium at the 1989 Japanese Grand Prix, following Ayrton Senna's controversial disqualification. But that wasn't his fault.

Nannini didn't exactly blow Nelson Piquet away in 1990, as some might have expected given period perceptions of the three-time champion. But from mid-season, his currency grew after a number of impressive performances, including holding off Senna for longer than expected at Hockenheim – and he always reckoned the Hungarian GP would have been his, not Boutsen's, had Senna not turfed him off. Then came the helicopter crash that ended his F1 career. Doctors saved his severed right arm and reattached it, but it was never strong enough for F1 g-forces. Instead, he shone in the DTM/ITC for Alfa Romeo.

"One of the last of the old-fashioned drivers," says Pat Symonds. "He used to worry about drug tests because of the amount of coffee he drank! Very talented, very natural, never did any work, never spent time thinking about the car, did as little exercise as he could get away with. He was a throwback, not of his era. If he'd been racing in the 1970s he would have been brilliant. I was a heavy smoker then and we used to sit there smoking together, and I don't think he ever gave them up..."

Like another on this list, he might have placed higher without that life-changing injury.



8

GIANCARLO FISICHELLA

Benetton years: 1998-2001



Benetton starts	66
Benetton wins	0
Benetton poles	0
Benetton podiums	7

The driver with the most Benetton starts also drove for 'Team Enstone' in its Renault guise in 2005-07. First time around, Fisichella arrived fresh from a bitter tug of love between Eddie Jordan and Flavio Briatore, who was also his manager and had split from Benetton before Fisi began racing for the team!

There were bright sparks. Impressive consecutive second places in Monaco and Canada that first season served notice, but he was unlucky with his timing, joining Benetton at the start of its long, slow decline into mediocrity. Fisichella scored Benetton's final podium in the otherwise deeply uncompetitive B201 at Spa in 2001

(above), a season that almost finished the career of team-mate Jenson Button.

Alan Permane engineered Fisi throughout his time in Benetton blue and again during the Renault era: "First time around he was on the podium a few times and was very good. His team-mate Alex [Wurz] was a real thinker, an analytical driver and Giancarlo was the opposite, doing it all by feel and talent. Alex worked super-hard and really looked into every single thing, and probably they were pretty much even. I don't remember one being particularly on top." But Fisichella edges it here for surviving longer and making more of its customer engines era.

6

JEAN ALESI

Benetton years: 1996-97

Benetton starts	33
Benetton wins	0
Benetton poles	1
Benetton podiums	13



Benetton was the beginning of the end for Jean Alesi's F1 career. Following in the wake of Michael Schumacher did him no favours when he pitched up in tandem with Gerhard Berger from Ferrari in 1996. But actually the first season wasn't half bad. After a poor opener in Australia, he was second in Brazil, was let down by the car when seemingly motoring to victory in Monaco, and was beaten only by an inspired Schumacher at Monza.

Alesi was third in the championship in 1997, but perceptions were turning. He didn't help himself by embarrassingly running out of fuel in Australia as his team frantically waved from the pitwall. Alesi had a new race engineer that day. "It was not nice to have that as the first one, I must admit!" says Alan Permane, a fixture at 'Team Enstone' since 1989 until this summer. "We did fall out about it. The problem was the radio failed and we just couldn't get in touch with him. We had a pitboard, of course, but he was not used to using it at all."

The one that really got away was Monza that year (below), where Alesi took pole position. Pat Symonds loved working with him, but not that day. "Jean finished second at Monza and should have won," says Symonds. "He'd driven a faultless race, but did the most pathetic pitstop I'd ever seen in my life. David Coulthard's McLaren just came into the pits faster and left faster, nothing to do with the pitstop itself. We lost the race purely on that. I was livid."



5

GERHARD BERGER

Benetton years: 1986 and 1996-97



Benetton starts	46
Benetton wins	2
Benetton poles	1
Benetton podiums	4

He'd be higher were we judging him solely on the Berger who Benetton experienced first time around in 1986. After four starts for ATS and a season at Arrows, Berger was snapped up by Peter Collins and Rory Byrne for what turned out to be Benetton's only season with the Heini Mader-tuned BMW turbo. Reliability was poor, but Berger used the opportunity to jump to Ferrari for 1987. The breakthrough win for driver and team at altitude in Mexico City was down to long-lasting Pirelli tyres, but it was still a great drive. "Teo Fabi was quick, but he was inconsistent and Gerhard was a charger – and he had big balls," is team boss Peter Collins's direct assessment.

Much water had passed by the time Berger returned to Benetton post-Michael Schumacher in 1996. His two seasons were his last in F1 and were largely disappointing,

in cars that Pat Symonds and Flavio Briatore claim could still have been world title winners. Sinus problems disrupted his final season, but the comeback – after missing three races and in the wake of his father dying in an air crash – was Berger at his best, his German GP (below) victory the obvious standout. But Symonds recalls the Austrian's final GP in Jerez as a prime example of the "frustration" he felt.

"That last race was another highlight," says Symonds. "Part-way through that race he woke up and was on fire. He hadn't qualified particularly well, but drove a brilliant race. I was so frustrated and thought, 'I know bloody well what happened there: you realised it was your last race and put some effort in.' If he'd had that spark elsewhere it would have been a different picture."



4

JOHNNY HERBERT

Benetton years: 1989 and 1994-95



Benetton starts	24
Benetton wins	2
Benetton poles	0
Benetton podiums	2

He must be tired of hearing it: imagine where Johnny Herbert would be with two good feet. His debut fourth place in Rio 1989, just seven months after that devastating Formula 3000 smash at Brands Hatch, remains one of the great first races. Flavio Briatore dropped him just before a run of circuits where heavy braking wouldn't have been an issue... but was Herbert really in a fit state to be a grand prix driver in 1989? Not really.

He was back in vogue by the end of 1994, when Briatore rehired him for the final two races as replacement for the underwhelming Jos Verstappen, then Herbert kept the drive for 1995. Sure, the two wins at Silverstone and Monza were inherited, but Johnny added 45 points to Michael

Schumacher's bounteous 102 to help Benetton clinch its only constructors' crown.

Did he have a fair crack that year? There's little doubt that Benetton favoured Schumacher – but who wouldn't? "It's always daunting going up against the world champion," says Tim Wright, who was Herbert's race engineer for the first half of the 1995 season. "There were times when we would find something. At Barcelona we were struggling and I found something with Johnny that Michael then took on board. But I don't think there was any favouritism. Everything Michael had, we had. Michael was like Senna: he really would work hard at understanding where he could be better, whereas perhaps Johnny didn't delve into it that deeply. You always knew Michael would get the best out of whatever you gave him."

But Wright also acknowledges the pain Herbert lived with in the cockpit, even seven years after Brands Hatch. "Oh yes, I was very much aware of it," he says. "He confessed quite early on that it was going to be a struggle for him because he was still recovering. I always felt that was in his mind, and up against a really fit Schumacher you're on a hiding to nothing."



3

MARTIN BRUNDLE

Benetton year: 1992



Benetton starts	16
Benetton wins	0
Benetton poles	0
Benetton podiums	5

Only one season, but with hindsight those at the team wished it had been longer. Even Flavio Briatore, who replaced him with Riccardo Patrese for 1993, admits that. Brundle could have won twice in 1992: incorrectly fitted bolts in his transmission robbed him in Canada, and the wet/dry Spa race was another that got away. If only he'd had the view that Michael Schumacher enjoyed of his own rear tyres, Brundle would have pitted at the right time too...

The season started awfully and he didn't get off the mark until the fifth race (a record that proved his undoing with Briatore; Brundle had been a Tom Walkinshaw hiring). But as he puts it himself,

after the Canadian disappointment "it was all points and podiums". Third at Silverstone after a dice with Ayrton Senna was a highlight, along with second at Monza, by which time he knew he was out of a drive for 1993.

But the reason he's so high here is this, from Pat Symonds: "It's bloody hard being up against Michael. I feel of all the drivers I've worked with who were completely underrated Martin is at the top of my list. The trouble was when he was with Michael I don't think we appreciated just how bloody good Michael was. At times we were a bit critical of Martin, even though he was the guy who could probably race Michael closer than most."



One of Piquet's best F1 victories came at Adelaide in 1990

2

NELSON PIQUET

Benetton years: 1990-91



Benetton starts	32
Benetton wins	3
Benetton poles	0
Benetton podiums	4

Yes, really. And not just because he won more races in a Benetton than anyone except Michael Schumacher. Some thought Piquet was finished after two mostly poor years at Lotus, but Flavio Briatore signed him anyway.

"I signed Nelson first because nobody liked him and this was really good motivation, to have a world champion in the team," says Briatore, who cannily offered a 'carrot' deal: the more points Piquet scored, the more he'd

get paid. "This was the first time Benetton had a world champion. The management was against it, but for the mechanics it was fantastic to have a guy like Nelson. We had somebody serious."

The wins, back-to-back in Japan and Australia 1990, and Canada in 1991, were inherited – but he held off Nigel Mansell's Ferrari in Adelaide. Piquet was on it in 1990, outqualifying Alessandro Nannini across the season 9-5 and scoring more than double the Italian's points.

Even Pat Symonds, whose affection for the family is well under control, admits that Piquet was effective: "Flavio wanted to sign him and I didn't. I thought he was past it and was on the way down. And I didn't like him. But he was good, of course he was. And he seemed to spark up. He was on a deal that was a very small retainer and a very big bonus. It might be cruel to say that was the reason why, but he was a lot better than I thought he'd be.

"He was a hard guy and went through a few race engineers. But from a work-ethic side I wouldn't have a bad word to say about him. Piquet did work and I hadn't expected that from him."



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Schumacher takes the flag at Jerez, one of eight wins that helped him to the 1994 crown

1

MICHAEL SCHUMACHER

Benetton years: 1991-95



Benetton starts	68
Benetton wins	19
Benetton poles	10
Benetton podiums	19

Obviously. Poached from under the nose of Eddie Jordan after his striking debut at Spa in 1991, Schumacher immediately lived up to the hype, scoring points in his first three races for Benetton.

The first victory came just a year on from his debut, at Spa in 1992, and set an example for all that was to come: he went off the road, team-mate Martin Brundle came past, Schumacher spotted the state of the Briton's tyres and chose to pit for slicks. That won him the race.

Once Benetton provided him with a car of title-winning calibre, Schumacher was ready to wring every drop. Yes, the controversy of 1994 – and the dark insinuations that the team was illegally using traction control – are a stain that won't budge. But Schumacher was comfortably the best driver of that season, emphatically so in 1995 when he became champion again with far less rancour. When he left for Ferrari in 1996, Benetton never got over him.

"I was impressed with Michael right from the start," says Pat Symonds, who became his race engineer from the beginning of 1992. "And I really enjoyed working with him right from the start, too: the work ethic, intelligence, striving to get better.

"On top of it he was also a really nice guy who cared. I definitely saw the improvements.

He wasn't like a rookie because of his Mercedes training and how sportscars is a really good way to learn about looking after things, and for racecraft too. But like all rookies he had his silly incidents and mistakes. Still, you grow out of those. If you are a slow driver you don't grow into being fast. It was never a problem.

"A lot of the things he got wrong were actually when he wasn't 100% on it, like overrevving engines on in-laps. Through the year his racecraft got better, his confidence grew. All the good drivers I've worked with have this self-esteem and Michael had it right from the start, but it built. That qualifying in the Jordan at Spa must have shown him that he could do it, and by the start of 1992 he was mature beyond his age and experience."

Brundle offers insight into Schumacher's driving strengths from his single year at Benetton: "Where he was quicker was in the slow corners, just like Mika Hakkinen actually. It's not the big-balls corners like 130R at Suzuka. You used to keep it flat, but the payback was not very high for that kind of risk. In slow corners, he could rotate the car because he could left-foot brake and I couldn't because I smashed my left foot up in 1984. He could get the car straighter earlier. That was where Michael had me, and Mika was the same.

Schuey was the dominant force during 1995



It's not where you assume it might be in the brave stuff, it's in the technical stuff. It frustrated me enormously because he would get on the throttle harder at the same point as I was, with less wheelspin. How does that happen?

"In terms of fitness he moved the game on too. He was strong, young and super-fit in what were very physical cars. Michael was the right man at the right time, and he lit the track up with his speed."

SEASON REVIEW

INDYCAR

PALOU BATTERS THEM AGAIN FOR CHIP

As smooth as he was on track, the Spaniard was again making as many headlines off it as he added a second title with Chip Ganassi Racing – and shunned McLaren

CHARLES BRADLEY

 PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
IMAGES

It wasn't supposed to be this easy. IndyCar's USP is the high number of potential race winners in its pack for such a high-level open-wheel racing series. But Alex Palou defied this logic in 2023, making his second title appear routine on track with five victories. Off the track, however, it was an altogether more complicated story...

Palou only remained with Chip Ganassi Racing this season following a courtroom mediation after the veteran team owner sued his own driver in the middle of last summer. Back then, the Catalan wanted out, lured by the potential of a Formula 1 opportunity with McLaren. In a sense, he had his cake and ate it, getting multiple runs in McLaren's TPC (testing previous cars) programme and an FP1 outing at the United States Grand Prix.



And he got to stay with IndyCar's best team of the moment, adding a 15th title to Ganassi's glittering trophy cabinet.

While some in the team undoubtedly gave him the cold shoulder, keen to keep their secrets in house, it's worth noting that Ganassi himself never let the legal dispute get between their personal relationship. Undoubtedly, the turmoil affected Palou's form in 2022 – CGR's main strength is its togetherness, and he became its black sheep – but when it came to deciding his future, and the McLaren U-turn in August that shocked the world once more, the fact that Ganassi remained civil and upfront with him clearly paid off. And several more million dollars likely helped too.

Continuity is also what makes CGR tick, with a management backbone featuring faces who have been around since its first era of glory in the 1990s, the Jimmy Vasser and Alex Zanardi days. For example, Palou's strategist Barry Wanser was Zanardi's 'gearbox guy' and, along with Chip, managing director Mike Hull, race engineer Julian Robertson and crew chief Ricky Davis, Palou's #10 team not only has the feel of the spiritual successor to Zanardi or Juan Pablo Montoya or Dario Franchitti... it essentially is that same team of remarkable people.

This was reflected in the outpouring of emotion towards Wanser, who missed Palou's title moment at Portland (the champion Facetimed him from Victory Lane) as he recovered in hospital from cancer surgery. You wonder whether that emotive connection, and Palou's revelation that he and wife Esther are expecting their first child, might have swayed him away from chasing that F1 dream. Or perhaps he's been offered something else in that direction... Time will tell, or maybe he will one day in the book he keeps promising to write!

Palou was unstoppable on his way to victory at Mid-Ohio – a third win in a row



“HIS RIVALS WERE ALMOST BURSTING WITH JEALOUSY AT PALOU’S GOOD FORTUNE”

That Palou plugged in and won at his first attempt with these guys in 2021 was impressive enough. Franchitti, the team’s driver advisor, says that even in his first season with the team he was “already at that point where he knows what he wants, he’s very precise”, while the team’s 30-year veteran Hull says Palou’s mental strength reminds him of Dan Wheldon at his peak. High praise indeed.

Two years on from his first title with Ganassi, Palou’s 2023 performances were frankly astounding. His worst finishes of the season were a pair of eighth places, coming at St Petersburg and the Iowa Speedway oval, but five wins, nine podiums and two poles sealed this deal with a race to spare. That’s another thing he’s learned from Franchitti and similarly illustrious team-mate Scott Dixon: you’re only as good as your worst results. And he sailed with an even keel even through the headwinds of the off-track dramas.

The true damage was inflicted on his opposition – just as Team Penske’s trio of drivers likewise unleashed last year – via a trio of wins in the post-Indy 500 stretch of Detroit, Road America and Mid-Ohio. Suddenly his points lead was massive, requiring a similar stretch of dominance from someone, *anyone*, to catch up.

His rivals were almost bursting with jealousy at Palou’s good fortune. For instance, when Penske’s two-time champion Josef Newgarden got within 80 points of him after his own imperious »



ROUND BY ROUND

St Petersburg

1 Marcus Ericsson

2 Pato O’Ward

3 Scott Dixon

Grosjean and McLaughlin crash out together after lead duel explodes straight after final pitstops. Leader O’Ward suffers a plenum issue that causes his Chevy engine to hesitate, handing victory to Ericsson. Palou a subdued eighth; Newgarden blows up with five laps to go.

Texas

1 Josef Newgarden

2 Pato O’Ward

3 Alex Palou

A brilliantly frantic oval race ends under yellow following a superb lead battle between Newgarden and O’Ward, who even bang wheels at north of 200mph at one point, with Palou also in the mix. Grosjean’s late crash, after a touch with Malukas, causes the race to finish under caution.

Long Beach

1 Kyle Kirkwood

2 Romain Grosjean

3 Marcus Ericsson

In only his 20th career IndyCar start, Kirkwood scores his first victory. He escapes a mid-race clash with O’Ward, who earlier puts Dixon in the wall. Newgarden leads but Kirkwood and Grosjean overcut him at the final pitstop. Newgarden tumbles to ninth due to fuel consumption issues.

streak of oval victories by dominating the tricky Iowa double-header, he'd lament his engine failure at St Pete and some poor qualifying performances that truly hampered his campaign. It was encapsulated when Newgarden then expressed his disbelief at Palou scoring a podium in Iowa from 12th on the grid. There's a belief in that paddock that Palou will never enjoy such a season of fine fortune again, or perhaps they're all just kidding themselves.

While many of Palou's results were richly deserved, it's true that he did ride his luck on some occasions. A caution at Nashville saved a fuel mileage gamble, just moments after he'd bailed on it, that would likely have meant at least one finish outside the top 10. Race Control turned a blind eye to his front wing hanging by a thread in the closing stages in Toronto, after a clash with Helio Castroneves and the wall. A sturdy clash of wheels with Newgarden at Road America didn't lead to any adverse effect either.

But it wasn't totally plain sailing: Rinus VeeKay's wild pitlane half-spin that put Palou in the wall at the Indianapolis 500 ruined his chances of victory that day, but the comeback drive from last to fourth was quite the achievement in itself. It was also the only moment all season where we heard Palou lose his rag in the car, with a sarcastic "absolute legend" zinger in VeeKay's direction. It was far more common to hear his excited screams of "let's go!" at the chequered flag. Besides that, he's a very cool, calm and collected character in the cockpit, but possesses sharp elbows when he needs to make progress.

He also maintained a decorum outside of the car when it came to questions about his future. Bearing in mind his lawyers have briefed him to say "no comment" to any contractual matters, somehow he still manages to generate goodwill among the media as he gracefully swerves their questions. He'd make a formidable poker opponent.

His team-mate, six-time champion Dixon, was runner-up for the third time in his illustrious career and took a long time to rediscover his race-winning form. But when he did, he almost



Newgarden's (#2, right) rotten fortune on road and street courses highlighted in Laguna chaos

couldn't stop! Three victories in the final four races left the flame-haired Kiwi wondering what might have been; for him, a grid penalty for an engine change or a first-lap spin are simply an opportunity to shine. For all of Palou's excellence, he remains the benchmark of this series.

The Ganassi squad's 1-2 was the mirror image of Penske's result last year, and this season 'The Captain's' line was mostly led by Newgarden. He was imperious on ovals, almost sweeping the season from the high banks of Texas Motor Speedway, the cathedral of speed that is Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the relative minnows of Iowa and St Louis. His only failure came at



Supercars legend McLaughlin has proved a title tilt is within reach

ROUND BY ROUND

Barber

1 Scott McLaughlin
2 Romain Grosjean
3 Will Power
McLaughlin triumphs thanks to a bold three-stop strategy, which enables him to beat St Pete nemesis and polewinner Grosjean after the final round of pitstops. They fight an epic duel, until a mistake by Grosjean allows McLaughlin to romp away. Power finishes third, well clear of the rest.

Indianapolis

1 Alex Palou
2 Pato O'Ward
3 Alexander Rossi
Palou dominates, winning by 16.8s, ahead of a 2-3-5 for Arrow McLaren. Lundgaard scores his first series pole but Palou passes him at the end of the opening lap and streaks to victory. Lundgaard falls back to fourth, behind O'Ward and Rossi. Newgarden manages seventh on a poor day for Penske.

Indy 500

1 Josef Newgarden
2 Marcus Ericsson
3 Santino Ferrucci
A last-lap pass on Ericsson rewards Newgarden with a first Indy 500 win at his 12th attempt, after a crash-marred conclusion takes out frontrunners Rosenqvist, O'Ward and Kirkwood. Ericsson is second by 0.097s, Ferrucci a stunning third. Palou rebounds to fourth after pits clash with VeeKay.

Detroit

1 Alex Palou
2 Will Power
3 Felix Rosenqvist
A return to downtown Detroit, after several years on nearby Belle Isle, sees Palou take a hard-fought win against Power's alternate strategy – although a flurry of late yellows doesn't make things easy. A gearbox glitch briefly costs him the lead, but Palou repasses Power for victory.

Road America

1 Alex Palou
2 Josef Newgarden
3 Pato O'Ward
And another one! Palou scores the win but it's heartbreak for polewinner Herta, who dominates the race only for his team to pit him one lap earlier than his rivals in the final round of stops. The fuel number required means he also gives up spots to Newgarden, O'Ward and Dixon.

Mid-Ohio

1 Alex Palou
2 Scott Dixon
3 Will Power
And it's a hat-trick! Palou can't be stopped, aided when early leader Herta gets caught speeding in the pitlane, dropping him to 11th. Dixon finishes a strong second, ahead of Power. Lundgaard (fourth) and Rahal (seventh) are strong all day; O'Ward fights back to eighth after qualifying spin.



ABBOTT

the last-named, where he clipped the wall in a vain attempt to keep up with Dixon's alternate strategy.

One of the most misleading stats of the season is laps led, where Newgarden beat everyone by miles (Palou was closest to his 602, with 377!), which served to reflect his oval prowess. And his day of days came on Memorial Weekend Sunday when he swept to his maiden Indy 500 success after a thrilling final-lap pass on last year's winner Marcus Ericsson.

It's fair to say that Chevrolet's top-end grunt played its part in Newgarden's success on ovals, while Honda's frugality and driveability meant he struggled to match them on road and street courses. But that was where his team-mate Scott McLaughlin truly excelled to power ahead of the two-time champion in the closing stages of the season to finish third in points. After claiming a great win at Barber Motorsports Park by beating Andretti Autosport's Romain Grosjean, with whom he'd driven both into the wall in their duel over the lead in the St Pete season-opener, former Aussie Supercars legend 'Scotty Mac' didn't find Victory Lane again. But top Penske driver in points is a fine bragging right, and one place better than he finished in 2022 when the team was top dog.

The sight of Penske drivers looking frustrated after non-oval qualifying was common. Newgarden took an inherited pole at St Louis, and only featured three times in Fast Six shootout sessions on road and street courses, while Will Power and McLaughlin



O'Ward never made it to Victory Lane, ending season fourth in points

BAKER

“THREE VICTORIES IN THE FINAL FOUR RACES LEFT THE FLAME-HAIRED KIWI WONDERING WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”

scored two poles apiece. Their repeated struggles to make it through IndyCar's qualifying knockout system were a far cry from the nine poles of last season. Was Penske's focus placed too much on conquering the Indy 500 after a few years in the wilderness? Newgarden's success there certainly sweetens the pill of the pendulum swinging towards Ganassi.

The only other driver to score multiple wins was Andretti Autosport's new signing Kyle Kirkwood, who produced two sparkling drives on the streets of Long Beach and Nashville. After his glittering junior career, the 24-year-old clearly has a huge future, although his youthful enthusiasm needs to be curbed – that can be blamed for his finishing outside the top 10 in points.

Christian Lundgaard is two years Kirkwood's junior, but the Dane produced a veteran's season in the unfancied Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing Squad. After a turbulent season for the team, highlighted by a wretched Indy 500, his affinity with Indy's road course shone once more, and it was a surprise that his breakthrough win actually came in Toronto. Lundgaard was imperious that weekend, yet this was his only podium. »

Toronto

- 1 Christian Lundgaard
- 2 Alex Palou
- 3 Colton Herta

Breakthrough win for Lundgaard, and a first triumph for Bobby Rahal's team since 2020 Indy 500. Palou escapes clash with Castroneves and the wall to finish second, despite front wing hanging off. Herta back on the podium; Ericsson and Power suffer late fuel drama and slump to 11th and 14th respectively.

Iowa 1

- 1 Josef Newgarden
- 2 Scott McLaughlin
- 3 Pato O'Ward

Newgarden battles past team-mates McLaughlin and Power to lead by half distance, his only rivals after that the lapped cars racing him hard, which causes him to vent afterwards. McLaughlin is second after Power glances a wall. O'Ward a distant third as Power falls to fifth; Palou a lapped eighth at worst track.

Iowa 2

- 1 Josef Newgarden
- 2 Will Power
- 3 Alex Palou

Newgarden again, but this time he triumphs from seventh on the grid. Only takes 31 laps for him to hit the front, as Power rebounds from R1 woes to finish a close second. A charge from Palou nets third after late-race passes on McLaughlin and Rosenqvist. O'Ward slumps to 10th.

Nashville

- 1 Kyle Kirkwood
- 2 Scott McLaughlin
- 3 Alex Palou

For the second year running, McLaughlin is beaten by a narrow margin after starting from pole. A badly timed caution (for him, anyway) lets Kirkwood overcut ahead, despite starting from eighth, by running a long first stint. Palou gets lucky in third with two late yellows that save his fuel strategy gamble.



Rising star Kirkwood on song in Nashville

TOWS

A PAINFUL END FOR PAGENAUD



Pagenaud failed to return after Mid-Ohio practice crash

LEVITT

If it was replayed once, it was replayed a hundred times on TV: Simon Pagenaud’s horrendous accident in practice at Mid-Ohio was the season’s most shocking moment.

Caused by a manufacturing failure in the braking system of his Meyer Shank Racing Dallara-Honda, as soon as the former series champion and Indy 500 winner touched his brake pedal, at an indicated 181mph, his car snapped sideways. It was launched by the grass verge across the huge gravel trap, where the topography of the downhill slope only added to his wild momentum as the car was launched into a dizzying series of six and a half rolls. It came to rest on its side against the tyre wall, where the AMR safety crew rushed to his aid.

Little did we know it, as he walked away and waved a thumbs-up to the spectators, but 30 June would be the end of his season. After being checked over by medical staff, he was able to give a TV interview just a few minutes later, reporting “a helluva ride for sure. Definitely the wildest ride of my career. I’m ready, I can get back in now, it’s not a problem.”

Only it was. He was repeatedly checked for post-concussion symptoms, but he failed to pass each and every time. It was a deeply saddening way for his season to end, with doubts now cast over his IndyCar career as MSR has already opted for an all-new line-up of Felix Rosenqvist and Tom Blomqvist for next season.

The other winner was last year’s Indy 500 victor Ericsson, who lucked into honours at St Petersburg when the plenum chamber of Pato O’Ward’s Arrow McLaren machine hiccupped at a crucial moment in the closing laps, allowing the Swede to scoot past. He didn’t look like winning another, apart from the 500, where he came within half a lap and 0.0974s of going back-to-back.

And what of Power? The Australian veteran, champion in 2022, recorded his first winless season in over a decade and a half. He seemed to be in a funk at times, in stark contrast to his brilliant preceding campaign, and even his amazing qualifying form

“POWER RECORDED HIS FIRST WINLESS SEASON IN OVER A DECADE AND A HALF”

deserted him everywhere but Iowa – where he added to his amazing all-time record tally – on his way to seventh in the points.

The series started with five different winners from three different teams, until Palou grabbed the points race by the throat after the Indy 500. It ended with only two more drivers claiming victories (plus one extra squad) and even the improving Arrow McLaren operation was shut out, which was galling after coming so close in the opener and in Texas with O’Ward.

That was way more reflective of IndyCar’s mantle as the most competitive, top-tier open-wheel series on the planet. It should be tough to win here. And next year its contenders will have the curveball of a new common electrical hybrid system to master. It sounds like something right up Dixon’s street... 🍀



Newgarden (2) fought off Ericsson (8) and Ferrucci (14) for maiden Indy 500 win

DUMOND

ROUND BY ROUND

Indianapolis

1 Scott Dixon
2 Graham Rahal
3 Pato O’Ward
Following a first-lap spin, after team-mates Palou and Armstrong collide ahead and Grosjean rear-ends him, Dixon takes a ‘free’ pitstop under yellow. He then runs a sublime two-stopper on durable alternates to beat Rahal, who starts from his first pole in six years by 0.5s, in a nailbiting climax.

St Louis

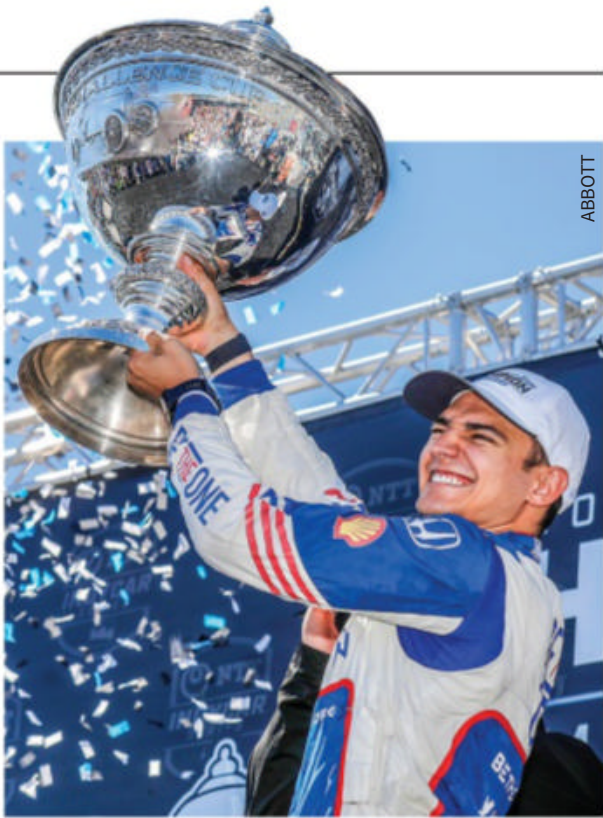
1 Scott Dixon
2 Pato O’Ward
3 David Malukas
Dixon pits three times in this race, while the rest of the top 10 stop five times (one takes six!). Despite an engine-change penalty, a virtuoso fuel-save performance (again) seals victory by over 22s. O’Ward best of the rest, Malukas biffs McLaughlin for third, a desperate Newgarden hits the wall.

Portland

1 Alex Palou
2 Felix Rosenqvist
3 Scott Dixon
How to seal your title in style: Palou vaults from fifth to third at the first chicane and unleashes a textbook overcut to dispatch everyone else. Rosenqvist gains second from an infuriated Dixon when race control delays throwing a caution to the Swede’s benefit. Rahal on pole again but tumbles to 12th.


Laguna Seca

1 Scott Dixon
2 Scott McLaughlin
3 Alex Palou
The finale on a repaved track is a recipe for a chaotic crapshoot, with no grip offline leading to desperate lunges and eight caution periods. Dixon wins from 11th to Victory Lane after an engine penalty, McLaughlin goes from the gravel on the opening lap to second, Palou cruises to third.



ABBOTT

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS




ALEX PALOU

1 Made a tame start but then decimated the pack at Indianapolis road course. Consecutive wins at Detroit, Road America and Mid-Ohio put his title rivals in the shade. Sealed title in typical winning style and improved his oval game.




JOSEF NEWGARDEN

2 An oval victory feast, but famine elsewhere. Besides a popped engine at St Pete, a run of bizarre crashes and collisions meant his season tailed off woefully. Maiden Indy 500 victory cushions the blow of no third title yet.



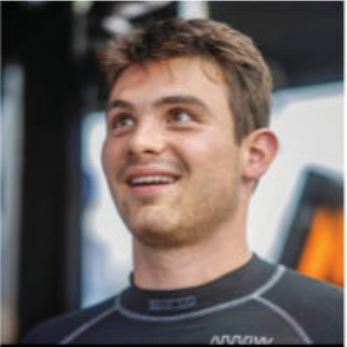
SCOTT DIXON

3 Too little, too late for the six-time champion. Stunning comeback victories at Indy road course and St Louis proved the high points of an otherwise frustrating season as he watched his team-mate hog the limelight.



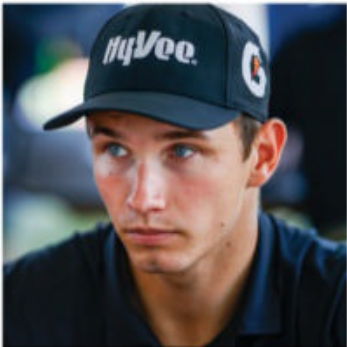
SCOTT McLAUGHLIN

4 He's so close to mastering this IndyCar lark. Has a couple of edges to smooth off and needs to get his head around his blind spot – the Indy road course – but has proved he's got what it takes to win everywhere else.




PATO O'WARD

5 Capable of magic with his quick hands and on-the-fly thinking, then downright bonkers with his decision-making and silly lunges. One day it will all click and we'll get a title battle royale with Palou et al.



CHRISTIAN LUNDGAARD

6 Maiden win in Toronto was as impressive as anyone's all season and he continues to be the benchmark at Indy's road course. Oval form must improve, though. Going to be a hot property for big teams when RLL contract expires...




KYLE KIRKWOOD

7 His stunning drives at Long Beach and Nashville were the high points of a breakout season, although he's got to ditch his accident-attracting magnet, as he's prone to getting involved in unnecessary scrapes.




MARCUS ERICSSON

8 A paragon of consistency, finishing sixth in points for third year running. Qualifying remains a work in progress. Lucked into his St Pete victory but sublime again at the Indy 500, where he very nearly went back-to-back.



WILL POWER

9 After 2022's sublime season, this was very much a below-par year. His streak of 16 seasons with a win was snapped, although he came close to victory in Detroit. Added a couple more poles to his record tally.



COLTON HERTA

10 Very nearly didn't make this list despite his undoubted speed. Two years of finishing 10th in points now, after the top-five seasons that sparked F1 interest. A campaign riddled by errors and misfortune.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP																				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	PTS
1	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing	8	3	5	5	1	4	1	1	1	2	8	3	3	7	7	1	3	656
2	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing	3	5	27	7	6	6	4	4	2	4	6	6	5	1	1	3	1	578
3	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske	13	6	10	1	16	14	7	8	5	6	2	5	2	8	5	9	2	488
4	Pato O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren	2	2	17	4	2	24	26	3	8	8	3	10	8	3	2	4	9	484
5	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske	17	1	9	15	7	1	10	2	12	5	1	1	4	25	25	5	21	479
6	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing	1	8	3	10	8	2	9	6	27	11	4	9	7	10	10	7	15	438
7	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske	7	16	6	3	12	23	2	13	3	14	5	2	10	6	9	25	4	425
8	Christian Lundgaard (DNK)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing	9	19	14	6	4	19	16	7	4	1	20	13	9	4	17	11	6	390
9	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Arrow McLaren	4	22	22	8	3	5	5	10	10	16	10	15	19	5	4	20	7	375
10	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Autosport	20	7	4	14	9	9	11	5	11	3	19	7	21	13	6	13	23	356
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Record-breaking **British Drag** racing title for Wallace



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Smalley celebrates after sealing Carrera Cup glory a round early



Flying Fourmaux lands **BRC** crown



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Dan Kirby 1985-2023

OBITUARY

Dan Kirby, the founder of Trade Price Cars Racing who died suddenly last week aged 37, was also a highly capable driver behind the wheel and a popular figure in British tin-top racing.

As a driver, the Essex car-dealership king progressed through the Ginetta GT4 Supercup into TCR UK. At the wheel of a Power Maxed Racing Cupra Leon, Kirby finished third in the 2021 TCR rankings with a race win to his credit at Brands Hatch. He then stepped back from competition before returning for the opening two rounds of 2023.

As a team owner, Kirby and TPCR partner Andy Wilmot secured two British Touring Car Championship TBL entrants' licences from AmD Tuning for 2019 and contracted that team to stay on and run the Audi S3s – initially for Mark Blundell and Jake Hill, then for a revolving cast in 2020 spearheaded by Bobby Thompson. TPCR then had a title sponsorship deal with Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai in 2021, before the Suffolk squad acquired the TBLs for 2022. Kirby also supported up-and-coming talent including Harry King and Tom Lebbon.

"We used to run his hospitality when Trade Price Cars Racing was in the BTCC and he was always good and easy to deal with," said TCR UK chief Stewart Lines, who added a tribute will be organised at the series' finale next month. "He was just really good to work with and very professional. When he came racing with us, he was a good driver – and he would always accept decisions that didn't go his way. He was very consistent. Everybody



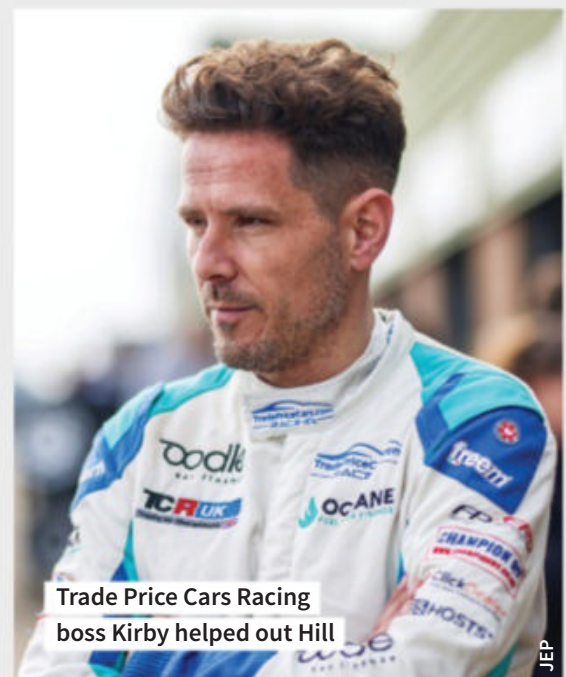
Kirby was a TCR UK winner at Brands Hatch in 2021

wanted to be like Dan Kirby because he was that kind of guy that everyone looked up to."

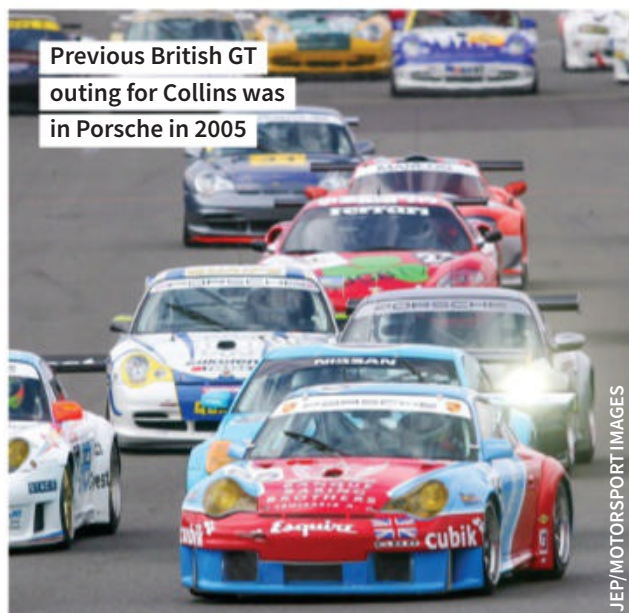
Hill, who dedicated his BTCC win at Silverstone last Sunday to Kirby, added: "Dan was a special friend and a really good fun team boss. That year I had with him got me enjoying racing again and it's because of 2019 I'm doing it now – before then I was down and out and didn't want to go racing anymore, but we had an awesome year with our first win.

"I'll forever remember Dan closely in my heart. I loved the bloke, and I feel incredibly sorry for his two little girls and his wife."

MARCUS SIMMONS & STEPHEN LICKORISH



Trade Price Cars Racing boss Kirby helped out Hill



Previous British GT outing for Collins was in Porsche in 2005

Collins to make British GT return

BRITISH GT

Ben Collins will return to British GT for the season finale at Donington Park next month.

Professional racing driver Collins, who is best known for portraying The Stig on BBC TV programme *Top Gear*, will partner Tom Holland in one of Raceway Motorsport's Ginetta G56

GT4s in the 22 October race.

The last British GT outing for Collins was during the 2005 season, when he raced a Porsche 996 GT3 RSR in the Silverstone season-closer alongside the late Neil Cunningham, and they finished second.

"Delighted to be back in British GT and at one of my favourite home circuits, Donington," said Collins.

"I'm ready to rumble!"

Holland added: "Ben was my childhood hero when growing up. I'm so excited to be sharing my car with him for the final round. Thank you to everyone for making this possible."

Collins replaces Morgan Short, who made his series debut last time out at Brands Hatch as he and Holland finished 12th in class.

Upgraded RS Cayman for Sprint Challenge

PORSCHE

The upgraded RS version of the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport has been confirmed for the marque's Sprint Challenge GB for next season.

The RS offers a significant increase in performance compared to the existing model, with its engine producing an additional 75bhp and improved aerodynamics offering better grip. The RS version will race alongside the current cars on the same grid, with Porsche GB motorsport manager James MacNaughton stressing the importance of both iterations being present to create a large field. Since the new machines will not be available until March, the start of the season has been pushed back to the third British Touring Car event at Snetterton at the end of May.

"It's pretty much slap bang in the middle of the Cayman and the Carrera Cup car in terms of lap times," said MacNaughton of



the RS. "It's not just the extra speed, it feels more planted because it's got more aero."

"The cars are not going to be ready until March, so Carrera Cup will do the first two [BTCC] events and then the Sprint Challenge season will begin at Snetterton, so it gives teams and drivers time to get their heads around the car. The next two events are just going to be Sprint Challenge, so we can focus on that."

The reshuffled Sprint Challenge schedule

means that the Carrera Cup is due to visit Croft for the first time since 2021 next year, while organisers are also working to increase the number of Am drivers in the championship after just three have regularly competed this season. It is intended that the addition of ABS for the Am class will make it less daunting for drivers stepping up. "Ams are really important for us and the teams," added MacNaughton.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Smalley delighted to seal Carrera Cup title early



CARRERA CUP GB

Adam Smalley says that winning the Porsche Carrera Cup GB title with a round to spare is a "massive weight off my shoulders" after provisionally sealing the spoils at Silverstone.

A pair of podiums – his 12th and 13th from 14 races to date – mean closest rival

James Kellett can no longer catch the Porsche GB Junior in the points.

"It means absolutely everything to me," said Smalley of his success. "It's been the best season of my life and I feel I've been driving the best I've ever been. Team Parker have done an amazing job – without those guys, it wouldn't have been

possible. It's so nice to win early – it's testament to the effort everyone's put in."

Smalley said that there was no time for celebration because he was back in the gym and on the sim ahead of next weekend's Brands Hatch finale, where he is aiming to help Team Parker to secure the teams' championship.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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Trice and Jones avoid serious injury in crashes

TOCA

Porsche Sprint Challenge GB frontrunner Toby Trice and Caterham Seven UK competitor Carl Jones both escaped serious injury following accidents at Silverstone last weekend.

Trice was battling with Will Jenkins in the second Cayman contest when the slightest of touches on the approach to Copse Corner sent his Redline Racing car spearing into the concrete wall head first at an estimated 130mph.

While Trice was taken to hospital for scans, he was released later on Sunday and did not suffer any broken bones; just a swollen ankle, bruising and concussion from the sizeable impact that briefly knocked him out. "I'm really bruised but OK," said Trice, who does not expect to race in next weekend's Brands Hatch finale. "It's a massive testament to Porsche and how strong



the cars are that I was able to walk away from it."

Jones, meanwhile, tangled with Oliver Smith at Becketts in the third Caterham race and experienced some back pain. He was taken to hospital as a precaution, but the 61-year-old also avoided serious injury. "He's a bit bruised but he was back home Sunday night and he's just got to rest up for a little bit," said Caterham chief motorsport and technical officer Simon Lambert.

The race was red-flagged after six laps but there was no chance for it to be restarted amid the tight Silverstone timetable.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Caterham Seven UK series to guest at a BTCC meeting again in 2024

CATERHAM

The top-tier Caterham Seven UK series will again make a guest appearance on the British Touring Car support bill next season after joining the package for the first time at Silverstone last weekend.

The championship for Caterham 420Rs has secured a space at the Oulton Park meeting on 22-23 June next year as part of a calendar that also includes a British GT support outing at Donington Park and a trip to Zandvoort for all of the Caterham categories, aside from the Academy.

"It's a great seal of approval for the championship," said Caterham chief motorsport and technical officer Simon

Lambert of the BTCC date. "We're not professional racing, we're club racing, but we like to think TOCA have given us the opportunity to show this championship is the pinnacle of Caterham club racing.

"Everyone except for Academy will also be off to Zandvoort in May, which is epic – it's such a great circuit. The changes they've put in have made an amazing circuit just something else."

Caterham's series are also due to make a return to Knockhill, where they will use both configurations of the Scottish circuit, while a Caterham-only Festival will again be run at Donington in October following the success of the recent anniversary event.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



PREPTECH PLANS GB4 BID

Ginetta Junior squad Preptech UK has announced plans to move into single-seater racing and join the GB4 field next year. The team has bought two cars and has begun testing. "We feel the series is continuing to grow as a formula that really offers drivers great experience of single-seaters," said team owner Oliver Barnard. Meanwhile, Ginetta GT driver Lexie Belk will contest this year's finale as a privateer after buying a GB4 car from Hillspeed.

WILLIAMS IN DE SANCTIS

Mark Williams has owned his De Sanctis Formula Junior for three years, but was cajoled into racing it for the first time at Castle Combe last Saturday. The Fiat-powered monoposto represents a major change for Williams, who races a Renault Clio in Combe's Hot Hatch series. After testing it for the first time on Thursday, working down to 1m26s laps, Williams improved further in qualifying before a mechanical failure ended his day.

CTCRC TO JOIN TCR UK

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club's 2024 calendar features seven double-header rounds across six weekends. Super Touring Power at Brands Hatch in June will again be the headline event, with two races for each CTCRC series on each day. The season begins at Donington Park on Good Friday and Easter Saturday, before visits to Cadwell Park, Mallory Park and Snetterton. September's Thruxton finale will be the first occasion that classic touring cars have featured on the bill of TCR UK.

STEVENSON RACES A MINI

Fiesta frontrunner Spencer Stevenson joined the Mini Challenge grid at Silverstone last weekend with Graves Motorsport (below), taking a best result of sixth on his debut event. Also joining the field was Sam Smith, the Hybrid Tune driver who has been absent since a sizeable shunt with Dan Zelos at the Donington Park opener. After finishing ninth in the first contest in Northamptonshire, he opted to sit out the other two races.





Wallace (inset) failed to make the final but still claimed the title after a strong season

SANTA POD RACEWAY

Wallace seals drag racing title as Dulamon wins with new PB



SANTA POD RACEWAY

DRAG RACING

Bobby Wallace only had to turn up to Santa Pod last weekend to seal the Motorsport UK British Drag Racing Championship, but lifting off the gas was never an option for the high-achieving family team with another event to be won.

At the age of 30, Wallace is the youngest driver to wear the crown since Pro Modified became the championship class in 2007. Until this month, he had reached six consecutive final rounds stretching back to last year, winning four. Only the FIA European champion,

Jan Ericsson, had defeated him. Yet two weeks ago at the European Finals, Dutch opponent Michel Tooren ended his streak in the opening round. Had the bubble burst?

For the STP National Finals, Wallace qualified fourth, hampered by a rare parts failure needing a late-night repair job. He was drawn in the first elimination round against past champion Kevin Slyfield, and lost again in the tightest of matches. There would be no race win to cap the championship celebrations.

Jean Dulamon has raced for longer than Wallace has been

alive. Like Wallace, the French veteran favours the original type of Pro Mod powerplant: unblown, petrol-burning and spiced with nitrous oxide. With a brand-new motor installed in his 1969 Camaro, Dulamon set a fresh personal best, 5.955s, to earn his first pole position, then laid down three stout 6.0s passes to launch himself through the eliminations and to the third final of his career.

There he met Wayne Nicholson, another who has laboured long in the ranks with no trophies to show for it but

who has lately surged up the charts, last weekend's final his fourth of 2023. The head-to-head was decided even before the start, when Nicholson launched 0.120s too soon and triggered the red light. Dulamon complemented his maiden victory with a personal best, 5.918s, the quickest elapsed time of the event.

ROBIN JACKSON

Moran calls time on British Hillclimb Championship career

HILLCLIMB

Six-time British Hillclimb champion Scott Moran has called time on his career in the series after 21 seasons. The 47-year-old says he wants to spend more time with his family but has certainly not retired from motorsport.

"I'm really just stepping down from chasing the British Championship – that's as much as it is," said Moran. "I've been so lucky to be able to share Graham Wynn's car for the last couple of seasons. It is a massive commitment, and I've done it most years for 20 years now. I'm not retiring, I'm just stopping

competing at this level."

With six British championships between 2008 and 2016, Moran matched the record set by Tony Marsh in the 1950s and 1960s and had considered chasing a record seventh title. "I'd love that number seven but, if I don't do it, I'm not going to worry about it," he said.

Moran finished second this year to Wallace Menzies in Wynn's Gould GR59. The Ludlow driver remains the most successful hillclimb driver to date with 173 run-off victories, and has qualified 518 times for the top 12 run-off. He has scored far more points than



PAUL LAWRENCE

Six BHC titles went Moran's way

any other driver.

"I'm looking forward to having a go at other things and there's plenty of things on the cards, and I've still got the old car," he said of the Gould GR61 that took him to his championship successes.

PAUL LAWRENCE

Litchfield raced
a number of cars,
including an Elden



Mark Litchfield 1941-2023

OBITUARY

Mark Litchfield, who died of cancer last week, was a gentleman racer of a bygone era. While he harboured no aspirations of reaching the top, he competed against many drivers who did, notably future Formula 1 world champions Emerson Fittipaldi and Keke Rosberg in Formulae Ford and Super Vee respectively.

The Kentishman's racing exploits began in the mid 1960s with a Morgan, then an AC Cobra. He was enthused by the Formula Ford phenomenon, joining its ranks with Lotus, Merlyn and Crossle chassis and contesting the early British Racing & Sports Car Club Festivals at Snetterton.

Air-cooled Formula Super Vee, which Volkswagen GB put weight and cash behind, fulfilled his need for adventure with European Championship races

offering big prize money. Litchfield started with a Crossle, then one of the Dennis Falconer-bodied Elden PRH14s from 1973.

As part of a travelling circus, he and VW specialist Bruce Venn of Shooters Hill Garage campaigned Eldens.

Litchfield's great passion was sailing tall ships, which he did long after his racing days. After a four-decade hiatus, however, he was tempted back into the cockpit by old friend John Finch who arranged a race in one of Ken Thorogood's Classic FF2000 Van Diemen RF82s at Mallory Park. Typically, he gave a good account of himself.

Litchfield, who in later life enjoyed karting at Buckmore Park with Finch, is survived by daughter Larissa and son Vasco by his former Brazilian wife, and five grandchildren.

MARCUS PYE

CRASH FOR CROWHURST

Graham Crowhurst's BMW E46 M3, dominant in the BMW Car Club Racing Championship's premier BM1 class, suffered heavy damage in a qualifying crash at Donington Park last weekend. After winning Saturday's Roadsports race, Crowhurst lost control on a damp track on the Sunday morning before striking the barriers exiting the Melbourne hairpin. "I think there was some oil down but ultimately I'm the one in control so I'm a bit annoyed with myself," he said. "I'd already got pole in the bag so didn't need to be pushing that hard, but I'm a racer."

NEW RIDE FOR PLACE

Recently crowned Classic Stock Hatch champion Stewart Place contested the season's final rounds at Donington Park in his pal Jason Watkinson's Ford Fiesta XR2i at the weekend rather than his regular Peugeot 205 GTI. "I always wanted a go in an XR2 and Jason kindly offered me the car – a different driving experience!" he said. "But I'll be sticking with the Peugeot for next year and 2025." He retired from the first race and was unable to start the sequel.

BTRDA CROWN FOR PAYNE

Elliot Payne and Tom Woodburn won the BTRDA Rally Series after taking victory on the Trackrod Forest Stages last Saturday. Payne's Ford Fiesta Rally2 headed title rival Arron Newby (Skoda Fabia R5) by more than five seconds at the end of the Yorkshire event. The 20-year old becomes the first driver in almost 30 years to take back-to-back BTRDA titles.

BHRC TITLE STILL OPEN

Jason Pritchard and Phil Clarke (below) continued their build up to November's Roger Albert Clark Rally by scoring a hard-earned victory on the Trackrod Historic Cup in their Ford Escort Mk2. The Yorkshire event was the penultimate round of the British Historic Rally Championship, with seventh in their Escort Mk2 helping Roger Chilman and Patrick Walsh retain the points lead.



Four-way title fight after Combe crash

FORMULA JUNIOR

The dramatic crash that put Historic Formula Junior race leaders Horatio Fitz-Simon and Stuart Roach out of Saturday's Castle Combe Autumn Classic round has set up a titanic championship battle.

Four competitors – Alex Morton (Condor S2), Michael Hibberd (Lotus 20), Nic Carlton-Smith (Kieft) and Fitz-Simon, all in different classes – can still win the

crown at Silverstone's finale on 14-15 October.

Fitz-Simon and Roach were lapping the duelling Peter Edbrooke and Ian Robinson at Old Paddock on lap four at Combe when the clash occurred. Fitz-Simon went wide at the fast right-hander and was on the grass when space was made for the fast-closing Roach. As Fitz-Simon regained the track, his Lotus 22 contacted Robinson's Lola Mk2 and

continued into the path of Roach's Alexis Mk4.

"Stuart did brilliantly not to hit me side-on," said Fitz-Simon. "At 100mph that could have been nasty. His reactions resulted in him clipping my front-right corner with his left rear. I tried to continue but the brake calliper mount had sheared and the radiator was holed. My first non-finish of the season, but fortunately the chassis was not damaged."

MARCUS PYE

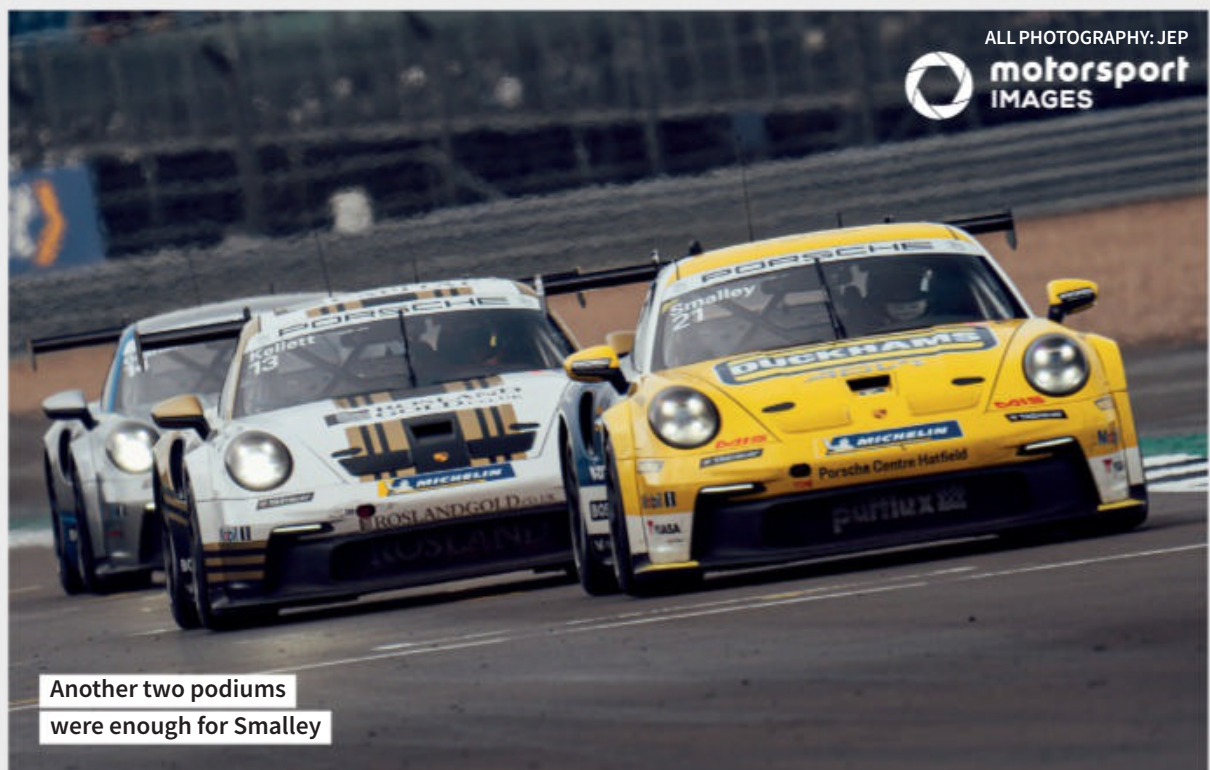
Smalley seals his title with event to spare

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

For much of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB season, it had looked like Adam Smalley would emulate the previous four Juniors and claim the title. Yet, despite arriving at Silverstone with a strong 37-point lead, the opener was a reminder of how quickly things can change.

Smalley had qualified on the front row alongside first-time polesitter Matty Graham but plummeted down to 14th on the opening lap, his Team Parker team having fitted slick tyres to his Porsche on a wet, but drying, track. As he languished down the order, Smalley was wondering whether that call was a mistake. However, he remained calm and, as the circuit rapidly dried, so he surged back up the order. By the end of lap 10 of 30, Smalley had passed Graham and Charles Rainford – whose wets were now wilting to such an extent the pair ultimately finished a lap down – for second. Although he pressurised leader Gus Burton (who also opted for slicks), Smalley settled for runner-up spot, which put him on the cusp of glory.

“Credit must go to Team Parker – I knew it would come to us,” he said.



Another two podiums were enough for Smalley

“The killer instinct wanted to win but I didn’t want to risk anything.”

And, sure enough, third in the finale was enough for him to seal the title. “I’m lost for words – what a way to finish the season!” said the delighted Smalley. “There’s all the pressure on the Junior to win the title and massive thanks to Porsche GB.”

Incredible consistency has been key to Smalley’s success and, after being promoted to third, it means just once has he failed to finish on the podium this year.

But Smalley was not the only one celebrating at Silverstone, with Burton also delighted with his second 2023 win after joining Smalley and James Kellett in falling and then rising up the order

on slicks. “It was like I was playing an F1 game in easy mode!” said Burton on passing those on wets. “After that, it definitely wasn’t easy with Adam pushing me every corner.”

Then there was even more for Team Parker to cheer alongside Smalley’s title as the sister Duckhams Yuasa car of Harry Foster led throughout race two from pole on the partially reversed grid to claim his maiden win from Hugo Ellis, after Josh Malin picked up a penalty for exceeding track limits. But Foster’s delight was nothing compared to Smalley’s as he impressively wrapped up the title with two races to spare.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Wonderful Warhurst sprints clear to Cayman hat-trick

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

For a driver who entered the Silverstone Porsche Sprint Challenge GB weekend without a win, it was quite the turnaround for Joe Warhurst to leave with three to his name and the points lead to boot.

Warhurst led throughout the opener

from pole to break his duck, having previously taken seven podiums – although the teenager’s success began even before topping qualifying. “I’m over the moon – it’s been a great day,” he said. “It started in the morning by winning the tyre [prize] draw, then I got a double pole in qualifying and my first win!”

And Sunday proved to be another good day for the Team Parker racer. He briefly lost out to stablemate Matthew Armstrong at the start of the second contest but fought back on the inside at Becketts and continued to lead until the race was red-flagged following a high-speed crash for Toby Trice at Copse (see News). But this did not faze Warhurst as he again headed Max Coates on the five-lap restart.

Coates then demoted Warhurst out of Luffield on lap four of the finale. But his lead lasted just half a lap as Warhurst shot ahead again on the inside of Becketts to take another win.

To add to Warhurst’s perfect event, erstwhile points leader Steve Roberts had a miserable one. He only qualified sixth before a track-limits penalty in the opener left him seventh in class and his best result proved to be fifth, thereby ensuring Warhurst had a weekend he will not forget.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Warhurst went from without a win to claiming all three

Zelos on the cusp of more Mini glory

MINI CHALLENGE

Two wins and a second place made for another impressive points haul for Dan Zelos and puts him in prime position to seal a second Mini Challenge title. Zelos continued his unbroken run of 2023 poles at Silverstone but his lead in the opener only lasted a lap before main title rival Will Orton squeezed ahead on



the inside at Becketts. Zelos stayed close to Orton for the remainder but the Hybrid Tune driver did not put a foot wrong and took his fifth win. Zelos also had to watch his mirrors and Nelson King did edge ahead towards the end only to run wide at Copse and ensure Zelos kept second. “That was enjoyable!” said Zelos. “Every time I got close to Will, he knew I was coming and would back me into Nelson. I got an overlap on him at Turn 3 but I didn’t have enough grip in the tyres. It was good, close and really clean racing.” Zelos was able to pass Orton on the second lap of race two with a good run through Woodcote and went on to win as Orton fell back with a gear-change issue. And Excelr8 driver Zelos concluded the weekend in style with another win in race three, jumping into the lead at Copse from fourth on the partially reversed grid to leave with a 111-point advantage.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

A Head twice ahead in Caterhams

CATERHAM SEVEN UK

DPR Motorsport duo Gordon Sawyer and Aaron Head shared the Caterham Seven UK spoils as the top rung of the manufacturer’s racing ladder made an action-packed guest appearance on the British Touring Car bill at Silverstone. With Lewis Thompson having already wrapped up the championship at Donington Park last time out and deciding to skip this one, it gave other drivers the chance to shine. It looked like Paul Donkin could be one of those when he qualified on pole but he was taken out at Becketts by Mike Evans on the second lap of the opener. After a safety car period, the battle for the

win developed between Head, Sawyer and Stephen Lyall, with Sawyer ultimately taking the spoils. Sawyer and Head broke clear from the chasing pack in the wet race two and had their own battle until Sawyer had a scruffy last couple of laps as the rain intensified. He spun at Copse on the final tour, giving Jake Swann the runner-up spot. Head had again pulled ahead in the finale, but this was sadly halted after six minutes following a crash for Carl Jones and Oliver Smith at Becketts that left Jones taken to hospital as a precaution (see News) and there was insufficient time for it to be restarted later.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



RACE RESULTS



PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB
Race 1 (both 30 laps) 1 Gus Burton (above); 2 Adam Smalley +0.969s; 3 James Kellett; 4 Josh Malin; 5 Hugo Ellis; 6 Harry Foster. **Fastest lap** Smalley 56.050s (105.36mph). **Pole** Matty Graham. **Starters** 21.
Race 2 1 Foster; 2 Ellis +0.879s; 3 Smalley; 4 Charles Rainford; 5 Graham; 6 Burton. **FL** Graham 55.033s (107.31mph). **P** Foster. **S** 21.
Points 1 Smalley 129; 2 Kellett 84; 3 Rainford 61; 4 Graham 60; 5 Malin 58; 6 Burton 46.

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB
Race 1 (21 laps) 1 Joe Warhurst; 2 Matthew Armstrong +3.784s; 3 Callum Davis; 4 Marc Warren; 5 Ethan Hammerton; 6 Max Coates. **FL** Will Jenkins 58.190s (101.48mph). **P** Warhurst. **S** 18.
Race 2 (5 laps) 1 Warhurst; 2 Coates +0.236s; 3 Armstrong; 4 Hammerton; 5 Warren; 6 Davis. **FL** Coates 1m03.251s (93.36mph). **P** Warhurst. **S** 18.
Race 3 (18 laps) 1 Warhurst; 2 Hammerton +1.020s; 3 Armstrong; 4 Warren; 5 Coates; 6 Davis. **FL** Jenkins 58.707s (100.59mph). **P** Warhurst. **S** 17.
Points 1 Warhurst 100; 2 Steve Roberts 93; 3 Coates 88; 4 Armstrong 80; 5 Toby Trice 66; 6 Hammerton 58.

MINI CHALLENGE
Race 1 (20 laps) 1 Will Orton; 2 Dan Zelos +0.545s; 3 Nelson King; 4 Oliver Meadows; 5 Thomas Jack Lee; 6 James Griffith. **FL** Meadows 1m01.474s (96.06mph). **P** Zelos. **S** 17.
Race 2 (18 laps) 1 Zelos; 2 King +1.646s; 3 Meadows; 4 Lee; 5 Lydia Walmsley; 6 Orton. **FL** Bradley Gravett 1m07.426s (87.58mph). **P** Orton. **S** 18.
Race 3 (20 laps) 1 Zelos; 2 Lee +0.487s; 3 Meadows; 4 Orton; 5 Jamie Osborne; 6 Spencer Stevenson. **FL** King 1m01.650s (95.79mph). **P** Lee. **S** 18.
Points 1 Zelos 775; 2 Orton 664; 3 Joe Tanner 566; 4 King 561; 5 Meadows 544; 6 Lee 491.

CATERHAM SEVEN UK
Race 1 (19 laps) 1 Gordon Sawyer (below); 2 Stephen Lyall +0.064s; 3 Aaron Head; 4 Ben Simonds; 5 Jake Swann; 6 Charlie Lower. **FL** Simonds 59.445s (99.34mph). **P** Paul Donkin. **S** 24.
Race 2 (18 laps) 1 Head; 2 Swann +0.159s; 3 Angus MacLaine; 4 Justin Armstrong; 5 Matt Dyer; 6 Tim Dickens. **FL** Jack Sales 1m06.914s (88.25mph). **P** Sawyer. **S** 22.
Race 3 (6 laps) 1 Head; 2 MacLaine +2.255s; 3 Dyer; 4 Finlay Cooper; 5 Dickens; 6 Lower. **FL** Lyall 1m00.376s (97.81mph). **P** Head. **S** 22.



Chiles play as Cobra beats Elan to GTSCC gold

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC AUTUMN CLASSIC
23 SEPTEMBER

Castle Combe's packed paddock was buzzing on Saturday as competitors in fabulous cars spanning 1951 to the 1990s entertained the largest Autumn Classic audience in its 12-year history on a gloriously warm sunny equinox. Feature marque Lotus, in its 75th anniversary year, came closest to outright victory in the 90-minute GT & Sports Car Cup enduro at the circuit where founder Colin Chapman opened the account in 1951 with a 750 Formula win aboard the Mark 3.

The AC Cobras of series debutant Alex Thistlethwayte/John Bussell (ex-Leo Voyazides), last year's winners Chris Chiles Jr and Sr and Mark Williams (a new car) headed GTSCC qualifying, the top seven of 32 inside 80-second lap times. Chiles Jr led initially, but Williams crashed out of second at Tower on lap 10, triggering a six-lap caution, during which the first of two mandatory stops created frantic pit activity. Thistlethwayte stayed out, though, pursued by the Lotus Elans of Steve Jones/Ben Tinkler and Graham Ridgway/Tom Smith.

Chiles Sr put in a strong middle stint, relaying his son to charge back up the order. Tinkler led before reinstalling Jones, who ceded top spot to the Cobra on lap 51, after a short yellow to retrieve Karsten Le Blanc's Le Mans Healey DD300, stranded at Camp with clutch failure. Chiles Jr more than erased a 30s pit infringement penalty to complete the job, reducing his lap record to 1m16.612s (86.93mph).

Cliff Gray, in Stephen Bond's Elan, overhauled Jones with three laps to spare for a great second. Behind them, the GT3 class battle raged. Jeremy Welch in Doug Muirhead's famous Healey TON 792 reeled in the Theo Hunt/Mike Grant Peterkin



The Chiles Cobra (right) was king of GTSCC pack

version, prevailing by half a second! In GT2, the TVR Granturas of Malcolm Paul/Rick Bourne and Joe and Piers Ward finished 11th and 13th, the latter almost caught by Oliver Marcais (MGB).

As if 17 marques among 27 starters in the FiSCaR pageant was not impressive enough, the top seven were different after 30 minutes. When the chequered flag fell, an elated Marc Gordon acknowledged it from his long-serving Jaguar XK150S. "I've scored many class wins, but this is my first overall win ever – I'm so happy," effused the Londoner.

The fight for second ended with Scott Quattlebaum in father Alex's diminutive MG XPAG-engined LECO getting the better of Murray Shepherd in the AC Ace-Bristol started by dad Andy, and the boisterous Kellison-Chevrolet of veterans Richard Tyzack and Nick Taylor, who set fastest lap. Brian Arculus (Lotus Elite) pipped Alistair Pugh, in Peter Mann's ex-Tony Crook Cooper-Bristol T24/25, for fifth.



Two Griffiths Haig Trophy wins for Wilson's Maserati

Richard Wilson dominated the first Griffiths Haig Trophy race in his slender ex-Carroll Shelby/Jim Hall Maserati 250S. Tim Llewellyn's diametrically opposed Allard-Cadillac J2 fell when its oil-filler cap popped, leaving Tony Bianchi's similarly underpinned Farrellac second, with Malcolm Harrison's ex-Noddy Coombs Cooper-Bristol on its tail. Pugh, James Owen (Elva Mk5) and the contrasting Frazer Nash Le Mans Replicas of Theo Hunt and Cliff Gray squabbled in their wake.

Wilson was clear of Oliver Llewellyn, in dad's J2, in the sequel when Bianchi clouted the barrier at Camp. The safety car reunited them and Llewellyn gave it everything when the track went green seconds from the finish, but Wilson held on by 0.161s, with Pugh and Harrison behind.

Combe debutant Horatio Fitz-Simon (Lotus 22) claimed pole for the Formula Junior championship round and quickly repassed Stuart Roach (Alexis Mk4) after the start. When HF-S and Roach tripped over a backmarker on lap four, going little



Carter defeated Underwood for a surprise Formula Junior win



WEEKEND WINNERS

GT & SPORTS CAR CUP

Chris Chiles Jr/Chris Chiles Sr (AC Cobra)

FISCAR

Marc Gordon (Jaguar XK150S)

HSCC GRIFFITHS HAIG TROPHY**Races 1 & 2** Richard Wilson (Maserati 250S)**FJHRA HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR**

Mark Carter (Brabham-Ford BT6)

CMMC CLASSIC CHALLENGE

Grant Williams (Jaguar Mk1)

FERRARI CLUB CLASSIC**Race 1** Gary Culver (328 GTB)**Race 2** Nigel Jenkins (355 Challenge)**For full results visit:** tsl-timing.com

further, Brabham drivers Mark Carter and Geoff Underwood couldn't believe their eyes. Underwood ramped up his challenge but Carter, 67, clung on, dedicating his maiden victory to his late father, and Speedsport spannerman Jordan Taylor. Two engine failures torpedoed Nic Carlton-Smith's title hat-trick aspirations a while back, but he shot his Kieft to a class-winning third ahead of Alan Schmidt (Lotus 22) and Andrew Hibberd (Lola Mk2), who robbed Alex Morton (Condor S2) of maximum front-engined points.

Welshman Grant Williams and Tom Smith made the initial running in the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club race, incorporating Norman Dewis Trophy and Mike Hawthorn Challenge Jaguar contests. The fly in the ointment for the Jags was Peter Fisk in his ex-Pete Hall ICS Opel Commodore. Fisk picked his way past them and took the chequer, only to be penalised for a yellow-flag infringement, which handed victory to the ever-spectacular Williams. John Young and Smith were third and fourth behind Fisk.

MARCUS PYE

PUGH MANS CROOK'S BRISTOL Future Bristol Cars owner Tony Crook won twice at Castle Combe in July 1950, in his Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica. This Cooper-Bristol served him well subsequently. A regular club race winner from 1952, it carried him and Guy Gale to 10th in the 1953 Goodwood Nine Hours (in cycle-winged form) and brought Crook a 1953 British Grand Prix start. Owned by Peter Mann, the 71-year-old warhorse was entrusted to Alistair Pugh who briefly led the FiSCaR race.



PORSCHE'S PEDIGREE Porsche authority Jeff Moyes's 1958 356A Speedster may not have been among the quickest cars at Castle Combe, but its competition pedigree is impeccable. Floridian Robert Overby raced '83839' to second in the Sports Car Club of America's E Production national championship run-offs at Road Atlanta in 1976 and 1977. Driving another 356 'bathtub' Porsche, Overby won the coveted crown in 1978 and 1979, before launching a successful IMSA career.



ITALIAN FLAVOUR TO COMBE The Ferrari Club Classic double-header brought a welcome new Italian flavour to the event, with 20 V8 stallions competing. Gary Culver (328 GTB) and Nigel Jenkins (355 Challenge, above) battled for supremacy in the opener. Pressured into a mistake at the Esses, Jenkins went mowing and Culver pounced gleefully. Jenkins retaliated later, while Culver chased as James Cartwright, who crashed his 328 GTB in qualifying and on lap one of the first race, atoned with third.

Sixth in the opening race was enough for Johnson to deny Hancy the MX-5 Cup title



Johnson clinches Mazda crown as titles are decided at Donington

DONINGTON PARK
750MC
23-24 SEPTEMBER

Jordan Johnson clinched the 750 Motor Club's Mazda MX-5 Cup title in dramatic fashion in the championship-deciding round on the Donington Park Grand Prix circuit last weekend.

The 31-year-old secured the crown in the first of three races after he survived an early scare and main rival Ben Hancy suffered dramas in sight of the flag. Johnson had slumped to 12th after contact with Andy Baylie sent him spinning into

the pitlane entry. He recovered to an eventual sixth place – on its own still not quite enough – but entering Goddards on the final lap his prayers were answered.

Hancy, leading and on course for full points, was clipped under braking by Oak Richardson and both were left fighting to regain control. Thomas Holland directly behind squeezed by the duo, but passing the lot to pinch the win on the run to the line thanks to his greater momentum was Scott Leach, who had sat fourth approaching Goddards.

Holland took second and Hancy, his hopes of title number three dashed,

completed the podium. "When I was spinning, I was just trying to keep it out of the pitwall," said Johnson. "Then it was head down and see what result I could claw back. I was a bit cross but then I saw all the tyre smoke up ahead on the last lap and, when I found out later the championship was in the bag, then any anger soon went away."

Baylie and Hancy took the wins across Sunday's races, while Johnson produced a champion's drive in the finale by coming through from 27th and last to third.

Chris Lawrence wrapped up the Clio Sport title in the first of two races when a late move on Oliver Waind gave him his seventh win of the season in the 182 class. "Olly was quicker to start with but I came back at him and suddenly there was the chance to win it with a win, so I went for it," said Lawrence, fourth overall behind the 197s of Jack Kingsbury, Jason Pelosi and Jack Dwane.

Kingsbury had to work hard for his win in race one against Pelosi, but his later victory was less of a hassle – Pelosi retired from second after Dwane, who eventually finished as runner-up, had slithered out of the lead and down to ninth on the opening lap. "There was oil down at Goddards and it messed Jack and me up, but he came off worse," said Kingsbury.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE JONES



Clio Sport title went to 182 of Lawrence



Roadsports victor Crowhurst in BMW M3



Classic Stock Hatch was dominated by Bateman's and Hammond's (red) Novas

In similar fashion to Lawrence, Steven Schweikhardt's greater score in the BM6 division assured him of the BMW Car Club Racing championship, although his E46 Compact had to give best to Thomas Singleton's E36 328i in both races.

With Schweikhardt's chief challenger Graham Crowhurst failing to start after qualifying his BM1 class E46 M3 on pole (see News), Ben Pearson was a dominant outright winner of both races, although there was a scare in the first when his M235i stuttered, almost out of fuel. "I needed to stop briefly at Melbourne and put the car through a power cycle but it ran OK after that," said Pearson.

Earlier in the weekend, Crowhurst had won the 45-minute Roadsports encounter. Josh Lawton (Honda Civic) led the first dozen laps before Crowhurst struck. "Josh had a bit of a moment as we were lapping slower cars and I got a run out of the Old Hairpin up to McLeans," said Crowhurst. "Then I chose to pit and hope him and Ryan Parkin [Audi TT TDi] would scrap and lose a bit of time, which they did – that really paid off for us."

Neven Kirkpatrick remains on course for the Mighty Minis title but will be wary after retiring with a gearbox issue at Donington. Ian Slark took both wins, the first from Kirkpatrick and the second

ahead of Neven's brother David who, with Steven Rideout, could also still clinch the crown at Castle Combe next month.

Matt Wilkins was twice a winner in the Type R Trophy. Miles Nathaniel-James proved his biggest rival, hounding him to the flag in race one and then winning the sequel on the road, only for a five-second track-limits penalty to drop him to fifth. "I could see others in my mirrors off the track, too," said Nathaniel-James. "I'm taking that as a win; I feel I earned it."

Daniel Chapman enjoyed a strong weekend too, with third and second-placed finishes. He headed race two for a spell after passing early leader Joseph McMullan before being usurped by Nathaniel-James and Wilkins. After qualifying 15th thanks to a troublesome gearbox, changed for the races, recently crowned champion Joe Jessup recovered to take fourth and third-placed results.

Even with more than 50kg of success ballast, nothing could stop the Vauxhall Nova GTEs of Ben Bateman and Pip Hammond ruling the roost in Classic Stock Hatch. Bateman kept his nerve to hold off the closing Hammond in Saturday's race. In the damp on Sunday, it was Bateman doing the chasing before his car stopped with fuel pump failure exiting the Fogarty Esses. Lee Scott (Ford Fiesta XR2i) took a third place

WEEKEND WINNERS

MX-5 CUP

Race 1 Scott Leach

Race 2 Andy Baylie

Race 3 Ben Hancy

CLIO SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jack Kingsbury (197)

BMW CAR CLUB RACING

Races 1 & 2 Ben Pearson (M235i)

ROADSPORTS

Graham Crowhurst (BMW E46 M3)

CCRC MIGHTY MINIS

Races 1 & 2 Ian Slark (Super)

TYPE R TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Matt Wilkins (below)

CLASSIC STOCK HATCH

Race 1 Ben Bateman (Vauxhall Nova GTE)

Race 2 Pip Hammond (Vauxhall Nova GTE)

HISTORIC 750 FORMULA

Races 1 & 2 John Village (Village V2)

CLUB ENDURO

William Stacey/Rob Boston (Lotus Elise S2)

ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE

Races 1 & 2 David Shead (BMW E36 Compact)

ALFA ROMEO CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jamie Thwaites (Giulietta)



For full results visit: 750mc.co.uk

in the opener and then, in race two, a second following Bateman's exit, which also promoted Neil Dudman (Peugeot 205 GTI) to the podium for the first time.

John Village (Village V2) was again the dominant force in the Historic 750 Formula. Juerg Schneider's Arthur JSG took a pair of seconds.

In spite of a late misfire, Will Stacey and Rob Boston (Lotus Elise S2) took a hard-fought win in the two-hour Club Enduro race. After nursing his brakes in the opening stages, Joel Oswick (BMW M4) came close to passing Boston late on before falling back in second, this after he'd handed the lead back for having inadvertently moved ahead in a yellow-flag zone. He was handed a penalty as a result, which dropped him to third in the final classification behind Robert Baker and Bradley Burns (VW Golf GTI), who had led the early stages.

CARL MCKELLAR



Saunders (right) battled
Cull at Snetterton but
just came up short

RICHARD STYLES

Cull overcomes Saunders challenge in GTS battle

**SNETTERTON
EQUIPE
23-24 SEPTEMBER**

Rob Cull and his TVR Grantura came out on top in both Equipe GTS races at Snetterton last weekend, resisting the threat of MGB driver Lewis Saunders.

Cull was steadily building an advantage in race one, but Saunders was then forced to slow after his alternator failed. He remained second heading onto the last lap as the MGBs of Babak Farsian and Mark Holme duelled for third. Holme had been ahead but, with oil down at Agostini on lap 10 of 13, he got sideways and Farsian went through. Third became second when Saunders slowed further, and he also dropped behind Holme and Jonathan Hughes (in another MGB) before the flag.

Cull started to pull away during the

second half of race two after he and Saunders had run nose to tail and battled for the lead early on. Cull secured his second win by more than 10 seconds, with Saunders over 30s clear of Farsian in third.

It was a dominant win for the Morgan +8 of Andrew Wenman in the Equipe 70s/Pre-'63 and 50s race after he nosed ahead of Kevin Kivlochan's similar car into the opening corner. As the lead grew, Martin Reynolds (Ford Mustang Mach 1) snatched second into Agostini on lap four and began closing on Wenman until he started to lose fuel pressure. Reynolds held onto second, but third-placed Kivlochan was almost caught by Antony Ross's TVR 3000M. Mark Holme (Austin-Healey 3000) and Richard Woolmer (Elva Courier) won the Pre-'63 and 50s classes respectively.

Both Wenman and Kivlochan were early retirements in race two, which left

Reynolds with a dominant win. John Dickson's Mustang was a distant second after ousting the Ford Capri of Neil Merry, while fourth and the Pre-'63 spoils just went to Healey driver Jack Rawles after Holme missed a gear at Brundle.

Danny Winstanley's Lightweight Jaguar E-type was a class apart in the Equipe Libre contests, winning the first race by more than one and a half minutes. There was a titanic duel for second, though, between Kivlochan's Cobra and Andrew Giles in his Lotus Elan. Giles managed three spins, leaving Kivlochan to claim the place, with Gerard Buggy (Elan) a close third. Frederic Laurent's E-type claimed fourth from the recovering Giles.

The second race was red-flagged after eight laps with oil down between Coram and Murrays. It was restarted for just three laps, with Winstanley in front and Dickson passing Laurent on the last lap.

No one could catch Martin Morris in the Midget & Sprite Challenge and he took two lights-to-flag victories. Pippa Cow and Richard Bridge could barely be separated in the duel for the remaining podium places. Cow came out top on both occasions, via a little contact in the second.

Mark Wright and Keith Egar, in MGF and Midget respectively, shared the Cockshoot Cup spoils. Wright dominated race one, while Egar recovered from a grassy moment to take second from Chris Greenbank's MGF on the last lap, after both had demoted the Midget of David Morrison. Egar led for most of the second race although Wright got ahead a couple of times, while Greenbank grabbed a



Ford Mustang Mach 1 of
Reynolds came first in
Equipe 70s contest

RICHARD STYLES

WEEKEND WINNERS

SNETTERTON**EQUIPE GTS****Races 1 & 2** Rob Cull (TVR Grantura Mk3)**EQUIPE 70s/PRE-'63/50s****Race 1** Andrew Wenman (Morgan +8)**Race 2** Martin Reynolds (Ford Mustang Mach 1)**EQUIPE LIBRE****Races 1 & 2** Danny Winstanley (Jaguar E-type)**MG MIDGET & SPRITE CHALLENGE****Races 1 & 2** Martin Morris (MG Midget)**COCKSHOOT CUP****Race 1** Mark Wright (MGF)**Race 2** Keith Egar (MG Midget)**MGCC BCV8s****Race 1** Russ McCarthy (BGT V8)**Race 2** James Wheeler (BGT V8)**MG CUP****Races 1 & 2** Steve McDermid (ZR 190)**SNETTERTON SALOONS**

James Mumbray (BMW M3)

MG TROPHY**Race 1** Graham Ross (ZR 190)**Race 2** Doug Cole (ZR 190)**For full results visit:** tsl-timing.com**TRACKROD RALLY YORKSHIRE (BRC)****1 Adrien Fourmaux/Alexandre Coria (Ford Fiesta Rally2);** 2 Garry Pearson/Daniel Barritt (VW Polo GTI R5) +44.6s; 3 Stephen Petch/Michael Wilkinson (Skoda Fabia Rally2); 4 Tom Williams/Ross Whittock (Fiesta Rally2); 5 Alan Carmichael/Claire Williams (Hyundai i20 R5); 6 Kyle McBride/Liam McIntyre (Fiesta Rally4). **JBRC** McBride/McIntyre.**For full results visit:**
britishrallychampionship.co.uk

last-lap third from Morrison.

The BGT V8s of James Wheeler, Neil Fowler and Russ McCarthy battled for the BCV8 victories. Wheeler led until half distance in race one but slipped back to third and left McCarthy and Fowler duelling. McCarthy made the decisive move at Wilson two laps from home, taking the flag just 0.248s clear of Fowler.

With McCarthy retiring after one lap, Wheeler and Fowler went head to head in the sequel, with Wheeler narrowly staying ahead to take the win.

There was another good scrap in the MG Cup, with the ZRs of Steve McDermid and Jake Fraser-Burns locked in combat in both races. McDermid took both wins, while Stuart Tranter's Rover 220 Turbo took a brace of thirds.

Snetterton Saloons winner on the road Luke Allen was penalised a lap for a short pitstop with his VW Golf TCR, while David Marcussen's BMW M3 in second was also sanctioned for a collision. This meant that another M3, that of James Mumbray, was declared the winner.

PETER SCHERER

Fantastic Fourmaux makes it five wins to seal BRC title



TRACKROD RALLY BRC 22-23 SEPTEMBER

With four wins from four starts in the British Rally Championship this season, it was perhaps a foregone conclusion that M-Sport factory driver and WRC2 ace Adrien Fourmaux would bolster that tally at Trackrod Rally Yorkshire.

If there were odds to be stacked, they would undeniably be in the Frenchman's favour, but the super-fast forest tests would also play host to a duel for the BRC crown, with Fourmaux just needing to finish ahead of nearest title rival Garry Pearson.

Fourmaux and co-driver Alexandre Coria are among the best in the world and, with apparent ease, the Ford Fiesta Rally2 crew dominated the top of the times to add the BRC title to their impressive season, joining an illustrious list of rallying greats such as Colin McRae and Richard Burns.

"What a fantastic season in the BRC and it is really nice for me to have my name alongside so many

famous names on the trophy," said Fourmaux. "We can be really proud of what we have done this season and I have really enjoyed coming to Britain and competing on so many different events."

"Five wins is a nice feeling actually and the team have done such a good job on the car. We came here for time in the car and to try some new things and it has worked really well. I have really enjoyed my time in the championship and actually, it's been a tough season. I am happy to win the trophy."

Matching Fourmaux's pace has been a tough ask for many but, with a chance at the title, Pearson dug deep, stopping the clocks just over a second shy on Friday night's 12-mile Dalby test.

But, when the daylight arrived, Fourmaux flourished and headed off into the distance, leaving Pearson to ponder what could have been. His season in the VW Polo has been largely consistent, but second place in Yorkshire sums up his year.

Stephen Petch (Skoda Fabia Rally2) scrapped with the returning Tom Williams (Fiesta Rally2) for the final BRC podium spot. Although 42s down on the leaders after the opener, Petch kept Williams at bay on stages he knows well, taking his best BRC result in the process.

Alan Carmichael did enough to claim the National Rally title honours, while Kyle McBride was the sole Junior BRC entrant, scooping his first maximum score to take the title fight to the Cambrian Rally in October.

MATT COTTON

Hughes' Frogeye Sprite jumps rivals for first win

**OULTON PARK
CSCC
23 SEPTEMBER**

A packed field of 37 Swinging Sixties Group 1 cars made for a fine sight at Oulton Park last weekend as James Hughes earned a maiden series win in his sophomore season.

Hughes, who had topped three of the four legs in Anglesey's 24-hour event before a heartbreaking retirement, put his Austin-Healey Sprite on pole by half a second. But he was jumped by Matthew Howell's Mini before a multi-car tangle exiting the first corner brought the race under caution. Hughes needed only a lap and a half to get in front on the resumption, passing Howell at the Shell Oils hairpin.

A second safety car was called just after the pit window opened and most frontrunners dived in immediately. But Howell and fellow Mini man Chris Watkinson fell out of contention by circulating for another lap. Thereafter, Hughes was chased by Connor Kay (MG Midget), Paddy Shovlin's Lotus Cortina started by son Julian, Ian Staines (Midget) and two-time winner Sam Polley (Mini Marcos). Polley had pitted a lap earlier, helping eliminate his winner's penalty. As Kay and Shovlin faded, Polley followed in Staines's wake then got inside at Old Hall to take second. But Hughes already led by 6s, doubling that over the final 10 minutes to clinch his overdue winner's trophy.

Swinging Sixties Group 2 combined with Future Classics for another race impacted by a safety car during the pit window. While Richard Harman's Porsche 944 Turbo jumped early-stopping leader Tim Bates (Porsche 911 RS), Mark Campbell (Triumph TR5)



and Stephen Pickering (Sunbeam Tiger) – benefiting from Swinging Sixties' shorter pitstops – vaulted both. Bates picked his way back through while Campbell held off Harman by 0.031s!

Classic K winner Jamie Boot qualified his TVR Griffith only fifth in greasy morning conditions as the Shovlins and John McGurk's similar Cortina secured a front-row lockout. But, as the Cortinas slipped to an eventual sixth and seventh, Boot and Paul Tooms (Lotus Elan GTS) duelled for the win. Tooms led the majority as the pair traded times, but the Elan was increasingly locking its rear brakes on worn tyres. One such lock-up sent Tooms through the Druids gravel and let Boot roar to victory. Tooms remained well clear of the Harry Wyndham/Tom Woods Jaguar E-type, which just edged Malcolm Johnson's newly built Elan.

Dominic Malone scored a somewhat fortuitous triumph in the combined Slicks and Open Series contest, by virtue of leaving his pitstop late. The race – shortened and with the pit window removed after a BMW

bust-up – was dominated by Craig Dolby in the Solution F Volvo S60 silhouette of Nigel Mustill (sitting out after feeling ill). Dolby, whose best lap was nearly 4s clear of the rest, passed four cars in one lap to regain the net lead after his stop, extended by a winner's penalty and additional handicap. But a late red flag effectively handed Malone victory while sitting in the pits.

Matthew Sanders and Jack Layton, eliminated in that Slicks/Open smash, fared better in New Millennium. Relayed the lead by Sanders, Layton withstood pressure from Mark Smith's older E36 Evo BMW M3 for victory.

Andrew Thompson powered to a Morgan Challenge double despite Shane Kelly's best efforts. After a split-rim failure on his CX in the opener, Kelly later charged from the back to within a few seconds of Thompson.

MARK PAULSON

WEEKEND WINNERS

SWINGING SIXTIES GROUP 1

James Hughes
(Austin-Healey Frogeye Sprite)

FUTURE CLASSICS/ SWINGING SIXTIES GROUP 2

Tim Bates (Porsche 911 RS)

CLASSIC K

Jamie Boot (TVR Griffith)

SLICKS & OPEN SERIES

Dominic Malone (BMW M3 E90 WTCC)

NEW MILLENNIUM

Matthew Sanders/Jack Layton
(BMW M3 E46)

MORGAN CHALLENGE

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Thompson (+8)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com





Ryder the top driver as Moran is denied fairytale final victory

**LOTON PARK
BRITISH HILLCLIMB
23-24 SEPTEMBER**

Matthew Ryder was the star of Loton Park during the season finale of the British Hillclimb Championship when he took his Gould GR59 to a commanding double victory last weekend.

As the 30-round season came to a conclusion, Ryder made his plans for 2024 abundantly clear with two superb climbs to scoop maximum points on the day when six-time champion Scott Moran said farewell to contesting the series. With new champion Wallace Menzies absent while his car starts a winter rebuild, Ryder seized his chance and won twice in some style.

Moran chased Ryder home in the first of the day's run-offs and went out on the attack with the last run of the season, only to slide wide at the final corner and lose the chance of a fairytale victory.

The Shropshire hill was still not completely dry for the opening run-off, but Ryder grabbed his chance and topped the times with a 43.44s best. However, it was far from perfect. "There were patches that looked damp, but I drove it as if it was dry – however, I made a complete pig's ear of the last corner," said Ryder of the right-handed Museum turn that would catch out

more people than usual. "I thought it was going to go round," he added, having lost as much as six tenths in the moment.

Later, Ryder did it all over again with a best shot of 43.09s, even though he was cautious at Museum. "I settled the car first and then went over the brow," he said of the challenging corner. "That's a great way to end the season."

Moran, having confirmed that he will not chase the BHC again for the foreseeable future, took a second and a fourth and it was a case of what might have been on his final run at this level. He was close to Ryder's pace as far as Museum but then went in just too hot and understeered wide. He managed to keep it out of the wall but the time dropped left him fourth. "I thought that was going to be embarrassing," said Moran of the moment.

Will Hall was right on the money with a fourth and then a second, while Trevor Willis was as quick and consistent as ever as he took third and sixth. Others to star included David Warburton, who made sure of number 10 for 2024 with a sensational first run-off in his 1600cc Gould when he absolutely nailed it with a 44.82s to take fifth.

Alex Summers had a fantastic day in his AFS P4t, scoring sixth and then fifth places to underline just how much potential this



HILLCLIMB RESULTS

ROUND 29

1 Matthew Ryder (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 43.44s; 2 Scott Moran (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59J) 43.70s; 3 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS 28-RTE) 43.95s; 4 Will Hall (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59) 44.74s; 5 David Warburton (1.6 Gould-Suzuki GR59) 44.82s; 6 Alex Summers (2.5 AFS-Cosworth P4t) 44.86s; 7 David Uren (3.5 Gould-NME GR55B) 45.07s; 8 Richard Spedding (1.6 GWR-Suzuki Raptor Gen 2) 45.52s; 9 Paul Haines (1.3t Gould-Suzuki GR59) 45.69s; 10 Zach Zammit (1.3t Empire-Suzuki Wraith) 46.42s.

ROUND 30

1 Ryder 43.09s; 2 Hall 43.66s; 3 Sean Gould (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 43.76s; 4 Moran 44.00s; 5 Summers 44.21s; 6 Willis 44.29s; 7 Uren 44.35s; 8 Jack Cottrill (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Dallara) 44.63s; 9 Warburton 45.16s; 10 Johnathan Varley (2.0 GWR-TKD V8 Predator) 45.99s.

POINTS

1 Wallace Menzies (3.3 Gould-Cosworth GR59M) 222; 2 Moran 211; 3 Ryder 198; 4 Summers 164; 5 Hall 154; 6 Willis 128.

For full results visit: britishhillclimb.co.uk

package has. Work since Prescott to get him settled in the seat paid dividends and the car responded by going better than ever. "It's superb now, I'm really pleased with it," said Summers after joining an elite club of racers and engineers to score BHC points in a car of their own design and construction. "I didn't think a 44s was in it," he said before going out in the afternoon and chalking up a 44.21s climb.

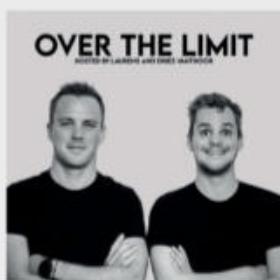
David Uren, Richard Spedding, Paul Haines and Jack Cottrill all bagged points as the season concluded in fine style. On this form, Ryder will truly take the battle to Menzies next year, while Moran will watch with interest from the sidelines.

PAUL LAWRENCE

FINISHING STRAIGHT

Chemistry between Vanthoor brothers is their podcast's crucial element

Sportscar-racing siblings' entertaining



PODCAST
OVER THE LIMIT
Hosted by Laurens and Dries Vanthoor

Podcasts are all the rage these days for racing drivers.

NASCAR megastars Dale Earnhardt Jr and Denny Hamlin command huge followings on their shows, Hamlin even receiving sanction for admitting on *Actions Detrimental* that he deliberately hit Ross Chastain at Phoenix earlier this year, while in the world of IndyCar *Speed Street* with Conor Daly, and *Off Track* with James Hinchcliffe and Alexander Rossi can be

relied on for regular topical insights from the cockpit.

But sportscar racing is somewhat underrepresented in this regard, which makes the *Over the Limit* podcast a breath of fresh air. Porsche World Endurance Championship star Laurens Vanthoor is joined in each episode by his brother, BMW GT ace Dries, to talk shop. It often feels like you're earwiggling on an intimate post-race chat, particularly when they've both been in action in the same event and haven't had a chance to catch up before hitting 'record'.

"Sometimes it even feels like you're just sitting at the table and we forget we have the mic with us," acknowledges two-time Spa 24 Hours winner Laurens. He explains

that episodes reviewing races in which both brothers have competed are the most listened to. "I guess people hear from us from a different perspective how the race went and we're able to talk about things which are maybe not mentioned in social media or the press," he says.

The desire to reveal more about a world in which Aston Martin Formula 1 team principal Mike Krack recently remarked "you can steer the media quite a lot, and you only give what is really important" was a key motivator for Vanthoor in committing to a podcast, having been particularly inspired by the "pretty big" *Dale Jr Download*.

"But I didn't see any drivers really doing it in Europe," says Laurens, the elder of the brothers by seven years. "I thought it was a different way to reach people." He makes it clear that setting the agenda is preferable to press conferences where "we most of the time get asked the same questions and you have the same answers".

The Belgian is quick to stress that "we have still boundaries" but it's interesting to note how open both brothers are when they get onto a topic they feel strongly about. Whether it's incidents with lapped traffic, decisions made by race control, or car performance, both are good talkers. That's despite BMW Motorsport boss Andreas Roos being a regular listener.

"I think since Dries knows that, he's a bit more polite!" Laurens chuckles. "I'm



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



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Japanese Grand Prix review

Filip Cleeren joins the podcast from Suzuka alongside Grand Prix Editor Alex Kalinauckas and Autosport.com Editor Haydn Cobb to discuss the Japanese Grand Prix with host Martyn Lee. Red Bull clinched its sixth Formula 1 constructors' title as Max Verstappen scored a dominant victory from Lando Norris and first-time podium finisher Oscar Piastri.



shoptalk

surprised myself how often I hear from another driver a comment about the podcast, they actually listen to it. It exceeded my expectations."

Several sportscar heavy hitters have made appearances, but it's the chemistry between the brothers that makes it. As you'd expect from two competitive brothers, who famously clashed in the 2022 Nurburgring 24 Hours that Dries went on to win, digs at the other's expense are standard fare. Jibes about Laurens' passion for cycling are frequent, although neither is too proud to spare their own blushes; take Dries mistaking a late-night firework display prior to the Le Mans 24 Hours for his house coming under attack. It all makes for an engaging listen.

"Because we're brothers, I think it makes it quite unique," Laurens says of their entertaining bickering. "Even my father called me after one and said, 'You should stop making fun of your brother'. We obviously respect each other but if we can have a dig at each other, it's an open goal."

Laurens clearly enjoys podcasting and says he plans to continue "until we're running out of subjects or guests". He has no particular intention of "earning big money with the podcast" and says "the main thing is to have fun and tell stories which people don't really know".

There's certainly plenty you can learn from tuning in. It's well worth doing so.

JAMES NEWBOLD

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Rally Chile

World Rally Championship

Round 11/13

Concepcion, Chile

28 September-1 October

TV Live TNT Sports Extra,

Fri 1230, TNT Sports 2,

1830, Sat 1145, 1400,

TNT Sports 4, 2100,

TNT Sports 3, Sun 1200,

1300, 1530, 1700

TV Highlights TNT

Sports 1, Sat 0300,

Sun 0330, Mon 0000

Red Bull TV, Sat 0300,

Sun 0300, Mon 0300

MotoGP

Japanese Grand Prix

Round 14/20

Motegi, Japan

1 October

TV Live TNT Sport 2,

Sun 0630

TV Highlights ITV4, 2000

Euroformula Open

Round 7/8

Mugello, Italy

30 September-1 October

Livestream via
Motorsport.tv, Sat 1645,
Sun 0850, 1545

GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup

Round 5/5

Barcelona, Spain

1 October

Livestream via YouTube,

Sun 1330

NASCAR Cup

Round 31/36

Talladega, USA

1 October

TV Live ViaplayXtra,

Sun 1830

UK MOTORSPORT

Oulton Park MSVR

30 September

EnduroKa, Miata Trophy

Silverstone BRSCC

30 September

Civic Cup, MG Metro

Cup, National FF1600,

Supersport Endurance

Kirkistown 500MRCI

30 September

Fiestas/Minis, Formula

Vee, NI FF1600, NI Sevens,

Roadsports/Globals,

Saloons/GTs/Mazdas,

Superkarts



RICHARD STYLES

MG Metro Cup

FINISHING STRAIGHT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

The strikingly liveried BMW M1s crewed by Johnny Cecotto, Philippe Alliot and rally driver Bernard Darniche (#51), and Pierre-Francois Rousselot, Francois Servanin and Laurent Ferrier, later of high-end watch-making fame, are lined up in the pitlane ahead of the 1981 Le Mans 24 Hours. The #51, a Group 5 car run by ORECA, finished third in class and 16th overall after a 90-minute delay to change the clutch. The #72 was a Group 4 machine run by Martini, a close affiliate of ORECA, and entered under the banner of car owner Servanin's Zol-Auto BMW dealership in Paris. It led its class but was forced to retire with engine problems at around 10am on Sunday.



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FRACOM



Lois

51

24

FRANCE



Lois

24 HEURES DU MANS
A.S. AUTOMOBILE CLUB DE LOUEST
FIA FFSA
G4
81
1981

THOMSON-CSF
TELEPHONE

V8



Subaru Impreza S12B WRC 07

Robert Kubica has a broader range to pick from than most for the favourite car of his career. The Pole regards the 2005 Formula 1 title-winning Renault R25 that he tested at Barcelona for winning that year's Formula Renault 3.5 title as "the most amazing car I drove", above the BMW-Sauber F1.08 that he took to his only F1 victory in the 2008 Canadian Grand Prix. But Kubica's favourite is from an entirely different discipline.

The February 2011 Ronde di Andora Rally crash that changed his life forever abruptly halted a promising F1 career, but Kubica maintains that he "never doubted I will be back" competing in some form. After 19 months and 16 operations, in September 2012, he duly made a winning return in the car he selects as his favourite on the Ronde Gomitolo di Lana rally.

The Subaru Impreza S12B WRC 07 was dogged by complaints of evil handling during its World Rally Championship tenure – Petter Solberg even withdrew from Rally Finland, feeling his mount was undriveable. Kubica acknowledges that it was "not necessarily super-nice to drive" although he enjoyed its full WRC-spec four-wheel drive.

"I always liked the sound of that car, it was incredible," the World Endurance Championship LMP2 points leader



recalls. "The launch control at the start, active diffs, it was something special. There is a lot of romantic history behind Subaru rally cars."

He won two of his three events in the First Motorsport-run car, before Citroen came calling. He'd demonstrated that he could target a return to circuit racing, which ultimately yielded an F1 comeback in 2019 with Williams and two cameo appearances with Alfa Romeo in 2021 when Kimi Raikkonen caught COVID-19.

"It was the way of getting back to the environment which I know, which I was in love with," adds Kubica, whose first road car was the Impreza's arch rival, the Mitsubishi Lancer Evo. "Subaru was a kind of low-profile restarting thing and I just wanted to enjoy it. And I paid by myself from my pocket. It was just pure enjoyment and fun."

JAMES NEWBOLD



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Lambo's Le Mans racer

THE STORY BEHIND THE NEW HYPERCAR

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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd, The Power House, Isleworth, TW7 6QG, United Kingdom. Air freight and mailing in the USA by World Container Inc., 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records maintained at Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd, The Power House, Isleworth, TW7 6QG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Autosport, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc., 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

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Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000. Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary Road, Willenhall, Wolverhampton WV13 3XT. ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is published weekly by Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd, The Power House, Isleworth, London, TW7 6QG

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PLUS
NASCAR
AT LE MANS
The changes needed
for the 24 Hours

THE SLOW DEMISE OF


TYRE WARS

**How tyre competition has fallen out of fashion
...and why there's no going back**



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for optimum performance
and longevity."

// AR-1: 90% Track / 10% Road



The Nankang AR-1 is available in 12" to 21" with more sizes constantly being added. It's a faster, more refined track tyre, designed to combat high intensity circuits such as Nurburgring and Spa, for the track enthusiast who is hunting lap times. With only one compound option and with all tyres being produced with 5.5mm tread depth, the AR-1 is positioning itself in amongst the greats of the track tyre market. The AR-1 is used as a control tyre by championships like BMW 1 series SuperCup, Civic Challenge & Classic VW Cup as well as a podium winning tyre in open tyre series such as Tourismo X, BMWCCR and 750MC Club Enduro. 100TW tyres in 17" and above now contain a kevlar lining to further increase stability and consistency. The AR-1 has achieved EU tyre labelling giving it MSA List 1B approval



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TYRE COMPETITION LOSES ITS LUSTRE, BUT THE INNOVATION REMAINS

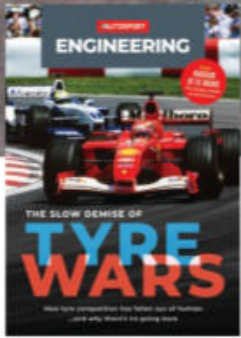
One of the very first races I remember watching was the 2001 Austrian Grand Prix, which was enlivened by the stern defence of Juan Pablo Montoya's Williams (on Michelins) against Michael Schumacher's Ferrari (on Bridgestones). The battle between the two ended in tears, but had this young fan hooked.

Tyre wars were a core element not only of Formula 1, but also a feature in the World Rally Championship, with Pirelli-shod Subarus exchanging honours with Peugeots on Michelins, while sportscar racing was another arena where tyre competition was wide open. Five different companies were represented on the grid at Le Mans for much of the early 2000s.

But times change. The increasing importance placed on sustainability and cost effectiveness has made competing

tyre suppliers a luxury that few series regard as worthwhile, while the single-supplier route has tangible benefits to manufacturers too. As this issue's cover feature (p10) explores, Super GT, the European Rally Championship and NLS Nurburgring Endurance Series are clear outliers in the current landscape.

But it would be wrong to suggest that a tendency towards single-supplier tyre deals automatically comes at the expense of innovation. They may still be black and round but, as Michelin's Matthieu Bonardel explains in our guest column (p9), Hypercar tyres designed to run without heaters have been developed using cutting-edge simulation technology. As the only part of the car designed to intentionally touch the ground, the importance of tyres cannot be understated. And that is unlikely to change any time soon.



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HONDA RESTRUCTURE COULD OPEN DOOR TO FUTURE WEC, LE MANS ENTRY

Japanese giant's global motorsport operation to include American arm

A restructuring of Honda's global motorsport operation to include its American arm could lead to it joining the World Endurance Championship ranks and a Le Mans 24 Hours attack in 2025.

Honda Performance Development, the motorsport arm of American Honda Motor Co, will join Japan's Honda Racing Corporation to become HRC US from 2024. The move comes ahead of Honda's 2026 re-entry to Formula 1 with Aston Martin, with the aim of combining the expertise of one global HRC entity.

HRC Japan president Koji Watanabe said: "Our goal is to increase the HRC brand and sustain the success of our racing activities and we believe that

uniting Honda motorsports globally as one racing organisation will help achieve that."

HPD was established in 1993 to produce engines for Indycars, and has gone on to claim 280 wins from 510 races including 15 Indianapolis 500 victories. HPD expanded into the IMSA SportsCar Championship with its Acura marque in 2018, winning titles in 2019-20 and 2022, while going unbeaten in the past three Daytona 24 Hours.

The collaboration with HRC in Japan means that HPD's programme with the Acura ARX-06, which runs in IMSA's GTP class, will have a smoother pathway to becoming a Honda or Acura WEC and Le Mans project. A potential programme

outside of the US has so far been a barrier with HPD's remit limited to North America.

HPD president David Salters, who will take on the same role at HRC US, said the company would "continue to challenge ourselves in US motorsports activities even as we develop our people and technology to compete on a rapidly changing global motorsports stage". Addressing the potential to enter the WEC, Salters said there now "is a more formal setting" to weigh up its next move. He has ruled out talk of a programme in 2024, adding there are "no definite timescales at the moment, but we are evaluating it seriously".

CHARLES BRADLEY



GOODYEAR HAILS POSITIVE LESSONS FROM BTCC GROUP TEST AT SNETTERTON

British Touring Car Championship tyre supplier Goodyear conducted what it described as a successful group test at Snetterton earlier this month to evaluate options for the series.

Series leader Ash Sutton's Motorbase Performance Ford Focus ST, main rival Tom Ingram (Exceler8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) and Colin Turkington's West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport were on hand for the test, with all three completing close to 100 laps of the Norfolk circuit.

Goodyear's BTCC event leader Michael Butler described it as "a

really good test" that had given the company, whose current deal agreed in 2021 runs to the end of 2026, "a clear direction moving ahead to the 2024 season".

He explained that it had concentrated on construction work, specifically with regard to "how the new construction and new materials affect the tyres on the current compounds". The test was attended by 14 Goodyear staff and live-linked to its German technical centre, Butler added.

The drivers were tasked with a mixture of qualifying and race simulations, but Turkington said



details of what tyres were being trialled remained a secret.

"The Goodyear technicians tend not to tell us what tyres they're putting on the car and just

ask for our feedback," explained the four-time champion, who admitted to feeling sore after he had completed "pretty much two days' worth of normal running".

New trackday model is not approved for road use



MASERATI REVEALS 730BHP MCXTREMA TRACKDAY SPECIAL

Italian sportscar manufacturer Maserati pulled the covers off a new 730bhp trackday special called the MCXtrema at last month's Monterey Car Week. Only 62 editions of the track-only car, which has a flat carbon-fibre floor and is not approved for road use, will be built as the Italian marque prepares its imminent return to sportscar racing with the MC20 GT2, which could debut in the GT2 European Series finale at Paul Ricard next month.

Powered by the same V6 engine as the GT2 racer, but with upgraded turbochargers, the 1300kg MCXtrema has a six-speed sequential

racing gearbox and a Hypercar-inspired shark fin connected to a fully adjustable rear wing. Maserati states that it "reflects the desire to create a racing car capable of passing on the legacy of the glorious Maserati MC12" GT1 racer and will inspire the marque's future racing production, with its product range set to be entirely electric by 2030.

Maserati CEO Davide Grasso labelled the MCXtrema as "a declaration of a new pathway for our brand, devoted to superlative manufacturing and able to stand out in the world of luxury engine production with uncompromising performance".

IN BRIEF



DUNGAN/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

NISSAN FE TEAM'S NEW HQ

Nissan's Formula E team has begun a process of relocating to a new base in Paris, departing the Le Mans headquarters it has operated from since it was founded as e.dams in 2014. Team principal Tommaso Volpe hailed the new facility as "a very important" step for the squad as "part of our wider plan to improve our performance". Following its buyout by Nissan in 2022, the treble teams' championship winner improved from ninth to seventh in 2023, beating its new powertrain customer McLaren.

M-SPORT VETERAN RETIRES

World Rally Championship squad M-Sport has announced a restructuring of its leadership team following the retirement of long-serving commercial director John Steele. The "eyes and ears" of M-Sport owner Malcolm Wilson since 1985, Steele will move into an advisory role after 38 years of service, assisting company director Matthew Wilson, technical director Chris Williams, WRC team principal Richard Millener, finance director Paul McKnespiey and M-Sport Poland board member Maciej Woda.

GERMANS WIN F1 IN SCHOOLS

German team Recoil Racing triumphed in the F1 in Schools World Finals in Singapore earlier this month, beating 67 other teams from 26 countries. The team of six students aged 16 to 18 from Marie-Therese-Gymnasium Erlangen impressed a judging panel headed by ex-Formula 1 technical director Gary Anderson in the 18th edition of the STEM challenge, also scooping prizes for the best R&D and verbal presentation. "Speed is not everything in this competition: project management, marketing, teamwork, innovation and communication all matter," Anderson said. Nightingale, from Robert May's School in Hampshire, took third.



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

BMW BEGINS TESTING OF M4 GT3 EVO FOR 2025

BMW has started work on the EVO upgrade to its M4 GT3 racer ahead of a 2025 release. The current model won the DTM title in its first season of competition in 2022, but the Bavarian marque has already identified areas for improvement that were tested late last month at Spa.

BMW will spend the remainder of this year and 2024 honing its GT3 EVO package. Factory driver Bruno Spengler noted that it had made "progress in many areas", citing improvements in driveability and "tyre durability over longer distances". Emphasis has also been placed on enhancing functionality, component reliability and handling.

BMW Motorsport boss Andreas Roos said: "We're intentionally taking the time to improve our already highly successful model for the 2025 season."

The M4 GT3 achieved its latest accolade earlier this month at Indianapolis when Paul Miller Racing secured the IMSA SportsCar Championship GTD class title.



BMW



OSCAR MALMLUND/STCC

CUPRA BORN BECOMES LATEST STCC CAR REVEALED

The latest car that will contest the Scandinavian Touring Car Championship's new all-electric era was unveiled last week at Mantorp Park. The series has been impacted by supply chain delays that meant its fleet of near-550bhp machines, prepped by Swedish company EPWR, weren't ready for a planned debut in September, forcing the STCC to postpone until 2024.

The rear-wheel-drive Cupra Born will be run by PWR, the racing arm of the PWR Group that also comprises EPWR. Three cars will be entered, with four-time TCR Scandinavia champion Robert Dahlgren and Axel Bengtsson its first drivers. The Born's launch follows the revealing of Brink Motorsport's Tesla Model 3 at Knutstorp.

STCC CEO Micke Berne said: "PWR and Cupra have been successful key players of the championship since they entered it in 2016, and we look forward to see them continuing their strong programme with us for 2024 and beyond."

Sportscar ace Alexander Sims was at Mantorp to track test the STCC's PWR002 prototype for Autosport in a feature that will appear in the next issue of the Engineering supplement.



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DRIVING CHANGE LUCAS DI GRASSI

HOW TYRE DEVELOPMENT IMPROVES A RACING DRIVER

A two-year stint as Pirelli's Formula 1 tyre tester was an invaluable experience for our regular columnist, who wishes he'd acquired that knowledge sooner

I have always liked the technical aspects of racing and felt that understanding the engineering aspect would work in my favour.

Sure enough, I managed to beat drivers who were probably more talented than me because I understood better how the car works. For me, this was always as important as the driving skills.

Probably the years that I learned the most in my racing career were in 2011-12, when I was developing the Pirelli tyres for Formula 1. We used the unraced Toyota chassis, then in 2012 the Lotus. It was the best school, driving good F1 cars, learning the intricacies of tyres and having the engineers there to exchange ideas. In Formula E now you do around 2000km a year, so I did almost five seasons worth of testing! It was very useful in the next years of my career and gave me a lot of insights I wish I'd had when I started in F1.

We were using 20 sets per day – I think one day at Monza I used 26 sets and drove around 1000km – and these included tyres with very different configurations. We even tried tyres that were already cambered, which I didn't know existed; instead of being completely symmetrical, the internal side had a smaller radius. Then there were different thicknesses of walls, different

compounds and construction. We tried lots of combinations to see which tyres blistered or grained, and which tyres didn't, across circuits with varying degrees of surface roughness, and some of them put more energy into the tyres than others.

Ultimately, it wasn't up to me to decide the tyres that got carried forwards. Tyres that are softer normally degrade faster and lose lap time more quickly than harder tyres, and there is a crossover point where the harder tyres are faster. But many times we tried a tyre where the degradation was actually better; it was softer, faster and lasted longer. But this tyre was probably

“The most interesting tyre that I raced was a rain compound, but without any grooves!”

discarded from the batch because you needed a tyre that matched F1's brief. It wanted to move away from what we'd had during my 2010 season on the Bridgestone, which was a very conservative, stable tyre. We weren't looking to find the best tyre; it was more about putting them in a window and giving F1 the possibility to choose which ones they wanted to have.



A strong grounding in tyres was especially useful over longer stints in LMP1 days

Tyres are among the most important things on a racecar and, if you make a bad choice or if the right one isn't available, your performance will be compromised. In LMP1 they were crucial because we had a free choice. When I joined Audi in 2013, Michelin would give us a lot of options including a night and day tyre for Le Mans. The most interesting tyre that I raced was a rain compound, but without any grooves! In some situations at Le Mans, it was better to double-stint and change tyres, and other times we were quadruple-stinting, so we had to make tough decisions. A good feel for the tyres was definitely an advantage.

Still now it is helpful to understand the techniques you need for generating or managing wear. But the Hankook we use in Formula E is very stable, so it's hard to overheat the tyres like you did with the Michelins we had before. The difference between a driver being very smooth or not is almost negligible, but with the Michelin that wasn't the case. You would even compromise sometimes the energy you put on acceleration to reduce stress on the tyre and keep them in a certain window. A tyre that is less stable, harder to switch on or maintain means the differences between set-ups and driving styles extrapolate.

The next product for Season 11 [2025] I've been told is going to be grippier, and that should allow us to put more power down. Currently you can't apply full throttle in a zero to 100km/h acceleration because that only results in wheelspin. Then hopefully also there will be more of a management process with the tyre which will create another element of difficulty and will be good for the spectacle. ■



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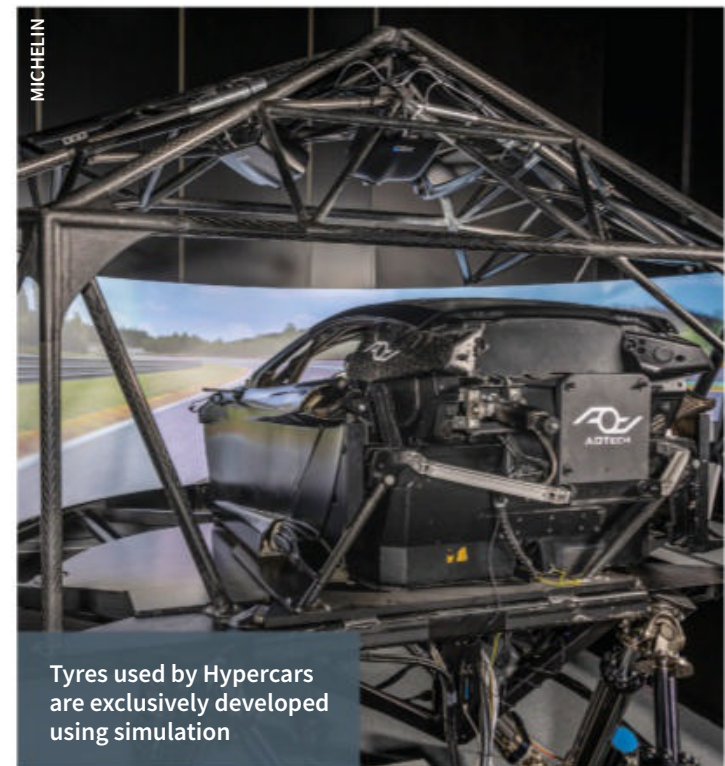




ENGINEER'S VIEW MATTHIEU BONARDEL

THE CHALLENGES OF MAKING TYRES WITHOUT HEATERS

Michelin's motorsport director reveals how its World Endurance Championship Hypercar tyres developed exclusively in the virtual realm break the mould



Tyres used by Hypercars are exclusively developed using simulation

I was excited and happy to get the brief from the FIA and Automobile Club de l'Ouest to develop tyres that work without using warmers for the 2023 World Endurance Championship. It's a regulation change that Michelin has been strongly pushing for the last couple of years. We included it in our proposal answering the tender for Hypercar tyres in 2019 as an idea of an innovative change we could bring.

It can look odd for fans to see the family of racing spending energy to heat tyres – even when it's 40C in Bahrain. It's not easy to explain the need to do that when fewer series are depending on tyre warmers now. Having supplied IMSA since early 2019, we said: "We feel capable of making tyres that start from cold and last two or three stints as long as it's a different compound between Bahrain and Spa."

We want to respect the safety of drivers because it's in nobody's interest to have accidents. And we know that a tyre starting at cold is never going to be as performant as its operating temperature range, so you want it to work relatively well at the first corner. But a tyre that reaches its optimal window faster will normally drop off sooner, so we had a Catch-22. For it to

be durable and reward those who don't change tyres – I believe whoever can manage their materials the best should have an advantage – then it will take time to warm up because it's a hard tyre. But we were confident that we had the technology and experience to make this possible.

The 2023 Hypercar tyres were developed entirely using simulation, a process that was well-defined from the range for 2021. We didn't get any data on the previous generation of Hypercar tyres starting from cold because teams were still permitted to use tyre warmers, but we had plenty of information from the DPi tyres in IMSA

“Simulation has helped to avoid the overlap between the two specifications”

about where we need to be and we had the information on the previous Hypercar tyres. So we devised a mix in the design philosophies to come up with a model which was tested in the simulator, and this helped us to define the three different compounds: the soft, medium and hard.

At some tracks it's hard to know what

temperature to expect – and as the LMDh and LMH cars are different in terms of stress and the set-up, our recommendation has always been to bring two options per track to give us a good compromise. Simulation has helped to avoid the overlap between the two specifications and ensure you don't have a big zone where one is too hard and the other one is too soft.

Tame Tire is for us the magic tool that has been coupled with the simulator to allow us to accurately model how a tyre will perform at a given temperature, over a given mileage on a particular surface. The physics is in the public domain, but it's how

you assemble these where there is a lot of knowhow, and Tame Tire is the result of 20 years of efforts in simulation at Michelin in motorsport. How you use a tyre at the start of its life naturally impacts its performance in the end, so wear models and various phenomena are all integrated. We can always do more to tune it to the real data; we're still unable really to simulate the wet, and even in the dry some things aren't easy to reproduce like how the track rubbers in, but it's improving all the time.

Based on driver feedback in the simulator you can adjust the parameters, and from the virtual tyre we know what functional parameters have to be designed to reproduce the feeling this model gives the driver. As a designer, it's useful to know 'he likes stiffer tyres, we need to change the compound properties', and we can take that information back to the physics. We use Tame Tire not just to reproduce what happened on the track, but also to design a tyre with no information except the feedback from a driver in a virtual car. ■



Michelin brings two compounds to each track



Competition between
Bridgestone and
Michelin in Formula 1
between 2001 and 2006
was especially fierce



WHY THEY HAVE BECOME A THING OF THE PAST

ARRS

Once a significant factor in motorsport, opportunities for tyre suppliers to compete against each other have become preciously limited. But is that a good thing?

BY JAMES NEWBOLD

The dramatic sight of Damon Hill's Bridgestone-shod Arrows overtaking the Goodyear-rubbered Ferrari of old rival Michael Schumacher for the lead in the 1997 Hungarian Grand Prix is one of the enduring images of the decade in Formula 1. For a different reason, so was the sight of Schumacher, now with Bridgestones on his Prancing Horse, leading away a grid of six cars at Indianapolis in 2005 after the withdrawal of Michelin's runners on safety grounds.

Tyre wars have been missing from F1 since Michelin's departure at the end of 2006. Long-serving Bridgestone engineer Kees van der Grint regards it as a seminal moment in recent motorsport history, because in the years since competition between tyre companies has been slowly disappearing from categories around the world.

"Some team bosses complained – and were obviously not the team bosses on Bridgestone – that they had the best car but because they had no control over the tyre they could not win," the Dutchman recalls. "The lobby was strong, and then it all changed. Michelin wanted a challenge, they pulled out because they didn't want one-make tyres, they wanted to beat Bridgestone."

Super GT in Japan, the European Rally Championship, and the Nordschleife-based NLS endurance series are increasingly outliers among the herd as most leading series on the international and national level today have single-supplier deals, with many unwilling to ever countenance tyre competition. Formula E has followed this model since its inception when it partnered with Michelin, before Hankook took over for the Gen3 cars.

"Definitely we're not interested in a tyre war," insists FE co-founder Alberto Longo. "We're way more interested in a sporting equality. Having two sets of tyres, coming from two different manufacturers, the tyre could give you three seconds' ►



Hill's challenge for victory in Hungary in 1997 was facilitated by his superior tyres

advantage. That would go, in my point of view, against the sporting equity of any sporting property.”

Another series formed in 2014, the World Rallycross Championship, has also been single-supplier since the outset. With the Melksham manufacturing plant of its long-term partner Cooper scheduled to close down at the end of this year, change is imminent, but series coordinator Tim Whittington is adamant that “it will still be a single-supply deal”. Cost and sustainability are cited as “the two biggest items” behind that stance.

To van der Grint, a key player in Schumacher's title-winning armoury during Ferrari's pomp, the gradual decline of tyre wars is cause for regret. Describing himself as a “big fan of competition”, he points to Hill's surprise emergence in Hungary in 1997 as an example of the benefits it can bring, and reasons that competing suppliers in F1 2023 “would be great for the sport” by introducing greater unpredictability. “I don't think a tyre competition would damage the show at all,” he asserts.

But as FIA director of circuit sport Marek Nawarecki points out, the on-track show makes up only a fraction of the criteria when deciding whether or not to have a tyre war. “It's not only what we see on the track which is the full picture,” he argues.

THE UPSIDES OF A MONOPOLY

For British Touring Car Championship boss Alan Gow, there are considerable upsides to ditching tyre competition. Its exclusive contract with

Goodyear until the end of 2026 allows organising body TOCA to subsidise the cost of rubber. He jokes that “the only thing [teams] never whinge about is the price of tyres”.

It follows that jettisoning a tyre war from a championship is a straightforward means of saving costs and cutting down the production of rubber. When tyre competition is ditched, Nawarecki says “the benefits in terms of costs and sustainability are massive”.

“Ask a team the number of tests they had to perform in this situation in the past with the tyre wars compared to the current situation, ask the tyre manufacturer the number of tyres they used in this situation of tyre wars – it's not comparable,” the former deputy team principal of Citroen's World Rally Championship operation adds.

Today's restrictions on testing limit the ability of teams and their partners to fine-tune a bespoke tyre in the way Ferrari and Bridgestone did 20 years ago. Van der Grint concedes that

this was both labour and cost-intensive. “The car was running basically three days a week,” he says. “I would not say 52 weeks but a lot of time. And this is the expense in tyre competition, because I presume Michelin did the same. Most of the time on the Friday we decided which spec to use for the next race, and they were produced in a small quantity, in this case only for Ferrari, shipped out on Monday or Tuesday and then fitted on Thursday for first practice on Friday.

Nawarecki says the on-track show isn't everything



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World RX, WEC and BTCC have all derived cost and sustainability benefits from shunning tyre wars



Goodyear has slashed the number of tyre options available to LMP2 customers

JEP

Of course, everything was air-freighted.”

Once it is no longer fixated on beating a competitor, a single tyre manufacturer is freed up to focus on the bigger picture and find a better balance between performance and durability. As Nawarecki puts it: “When you have the tyre war, it’s clear that everybody will go on the performance side.”

Goodyear’s position as the sole approved LMP2 tyre supplier has given it scope to slash the number of compounds it brings to every World Endurance Championship race. The company has developed a single slick-tyre specification capable of working across the full threshold of temperatures, from 40C in Bahrain to 4C at Spa, and ditched its intermediate offering to instead present teams with a single wet option that boasts a wider working window. Endurance programme manager Mike McGregor says that this results in a handy reduction in the company’s overall footprint when freighting tyres around the globe, while also levelling the competitive playing field.

“When people have this multiple choice, they feel that they can gain an advantage here or there,” states McGregor. “But also they can gain a disadvantage by making the selection at the wrong time. So us bringing tyres that perform better in these windows and by having less choice means they can be on the

“When you have the tyre war, it’s clear that everybody will go on the performance side”

right product at the right time.”

Having a single supplier also makes it easier to lay down rules governing the number of tyre sets that can be used per weekend. Former Autosport correspondent Whittington recalls days where rallycross events got out of control.

“It wasn’t that uncommon for the people with the biggest budgets to be burning through half a dozen sets of tyres, which is clearly ridiculous when you’re doing 40 or 50 kilometres in an event,” he says. “They would use new tyres at every four-lap race. Every single heat race they would just put new tyres on, especially on a dry, hot day maybe on an abrasive track.”

For a promoter, there are clear commercial upsides to working with a single supplier too. Even at the peak of its manufacturer involvement, the DTM shied away from tyre competition, instead partnering with Dunlop, then Hankook, Michelin and now ►

Pirelli. It's now a rebooted GT3 series for customer teams under the control of the ADAC and its motorsport director Thomas Voss says: "It's much easier to do all the marketing and activation things with one supplier than if you have two or three different." When it comes to choosing between development and advertising, for a business-savvy promoter there can only be one winner.

ARE TYRE WARS ALL THAT BAD?

Safety, clearly, is one of a tyre's primary purposes as the only contact between the car and the road. But van der Grint is adamant that the farcical scenes at Indianapolis in 2005 "had nothing to do with a tyre war" and was merely a product of Michelin taking "too much risk" by taking two competitive specs that weekend. After all, he points out in a thinly veiled reference to Pirelli's difficult task to meet F1's mandate for fast-degrading tyres, "even with one-make tyres as we have seen over the years, you can have a problem".

Van der Grint maintains that the 2005 F1 season, when regulations required tyres to last a full race distance, serves as proof that sustainability and tyre wars can still go hand-in-hand. "As long as the rulemaker writes good rules" that emphasise sustainability, he believes there should be no issues with tyre competition, particularly since improvements in simulation mean a greatly reduced reliance on track testing. For instance, Michelin developed its 2021 WEC Hypercar tyres entirely in the virtual realm.

By the same token, van der Grint points out that single-supplier deals don't necessarily result in increased sustainability where tyres take on a primarily tactical purpose. He declares F1's current approach, which

involves the production and transportation of three compounds per weekend, with the softest usually reserved for qualifying, as "a waste of energy, a waste of rubber, a waste of resources" that "makes no sense anymore". Would F1 teams have been more willing to accept a move to running without tyre blankets in 2024, which Pirelli had been pushing hard on, if competing suppliers had been ploughing resources into the matter?

"Many people criticise Pirelli about the product, but nobody knows exactly if the tyre is bad or if the tyre is really good," van der Grint reckons. "You can only judge that if there is another one. I do not understand why chassis designers can compete with each other, engine manufacturers can compete with each other, and why tyre manufacturers are not allowed to compete with each other."

Van der Grint also rejects the view that increasing car speeds necessitate a control supplier, with grooved tyres an effective means of achieving this. "There is always a way by the rulemaker, if they want, to make the tyres for the car go slower, but that is not a reason to stop," he insists. "Give the tyre manufacturer a challenge and with that challenge, like it was with the grooved tyre, you can control more or less the speed."

But is there any way back?



Bridgestone stalwart van der Grint relished F1's tyre war

WHY IT'S NOT GOING TO CHANGE

Tyres rank fairly low on a list of priorities for a promoter to cultivate a perception of their series as being forward-thinking, especially given the current landscape, where alternative powertrains are all the rage. DTM gatekeeper Voss says tyres aren't of interest to most enthusiasts, for whom it's merely "a black, round thing", and that apathy means it's not worth losing the benefits that

Tyres that lasted the whole race in 2005 showed tyre wars don't always hurt sustainability



F1's full wet is scarcely used, and it's hard to know how effective it is without a competitor



MOUHARPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

result from a single-supplier relationship.

"The spectators don't see the development in the tyres, they are still black and round since 200 years!" he laughs. "They don't take so much care about the technology and the differences between the tyres."

Voss believes a tyre war in the DTM would only make sense "if some time there would be a real different type of tyres" to showcase, but adds: "I don't see this development at the moment." Even if the sustainable content of tyres was increased to a point close to 100%, it would require tightly written rules to prevent manufacturers increasing the number of tyres taken to events to avoid undermining the very sustainable credentials they seek to promote.

It's difficult to see a way back for tyre wars in sportscar racing, which is reliant upon Balance of Performance to secure

"To spend money just to beat Bridgestone, Yokohama... It's fun, but it doesn't have much value"

manufacturer participation. Nawarecki points out that in the context of the WEC it "would be completely impossible to manage" BoP with a tyre war. In such a circumstance, the WEC "would be a completely different championship".

"We know that one of the reasons that we have today seven manufacturers in Hypercar, and hopefully we'll have even more next time, is because we, together with all the stakeholders, managed to have a category which is pretty much cost-controlled," he relates.

The very fact that so many series are now single-supplier is also driving down participation in open competition forums. In its decision to withdraw from the Japanese series at the end of this season, Michelin cited the reduced relevance of Super GT as a laboratory for the WEC since Hypercar became a single-supplier category, with Bridgestone left to fight against a small contingent from Yokohama and Dunlop from 2024.

"To spend money just to beat Bridgestone, Yokohama... it's fun, but it doesn't have much value," points out motorsport director Matthieu Bonardel. "We are not going to sell more tyres, because Japan is not a big market for us, and we won't learn things we can use in endurance racing."

And in those series that do still welcome tyre competition, ►



DRIVER'S VIEW PETER DUMBRECK

You might expect that drivers would welcome tyre wars since intensive development in rubber generally results in faster lap times. But for Peter Dumbreck, who spent four years in Super GT with Kraft Toyotas and contested the Nurburgring 24 Hours 14 times for the racing arm of Japanese tyre company Falken, there are plenty of frustrating complications too.

The Scot recalls his first Super GT test at Fuji in 2005 with wonderment as a car he'd thought would be comparable to the Opel Vectra he'd raced in the 2004 DTM – both had sequential gearboxes and "decent" downforce – surpassed all expectations. Where the Opel "had a very small window of compliance in the tyre", in the Toyota "you could play with the car in the corner".

"I could feel the car stepping out and just control it, it was no big deal," he remembers. "You'd throw the car in, and it went. You could literally hit the brake as hard as you could, you couldn't lock the tyres until right near the end of the braking cycle."

But running on Dunlops meant he was in the minority against the numerically superior Bridgestones: "We got so many sets of tyres thrown at us and a lot of test days, but essentially you're always playing catch-up."

Victory at Fuji in 2006 was seen as a breakthrough, but "actually the following year we were nowhere, worse than ever", which prompted a switch to Bridgestone for 2008. Joining the consistent majority, he recalls, at least "made things more simple".

"With the Dunlop it was peaky," Dumbreck explains. "If you got it right, you got it right, but the window of driveability of the car was tiny. If you managed to get in that window, you were one of the quickest cars out there, but sometimes you didn't know when it was coming!"

As tyre wars become rarer, fewer drivers will get to build up the same knowledge base. Dumbreck is "glad to have experienced that feeling", and knows it expanded his horizons. But he reckons he "spent too long in underdog teams" in the second half of his career, with the imbalance between his performances and results due to the tyres now a cause for regret.

"I don't think as a driver you lose from not having tyre wars, because you transfer all your time into car set-up," Dumbreck concludes. "When you have a tyre war, you're doing both car set-up and tyre development and the car set-up gets hampered. You're too busy keeping the car the same so we can actually do tyre development."



Dumbreck laments spending too much of his career in underdog teams

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the model isn't easily transplantable elsewhere. WRC Promotor's senior sporting director Peter Thul is adamant that the world championship won't go back to open tyre competition, with only one supplier since DMACK stepped back at the end of 2016. But he's happy to see different suppliers in sister series the ERC – Haydon Paddon won the 2023 title on Pirellis against rivals using Michelin, Hankook and MRF, which operates its own squad – because many of its entrants are drawn from national series. For Thul, “it's a championship dedicated to professional privateers plus

Paddon won ERC title on Pirellis against rivals on MRF and Hankook

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Super GT will lose Michelin next year from its tyre war

“When tyre choice is free, you see the people with the biggest budgets buying an advantage”

maybe some importer teams, so it's a complete different story to the factory-run cars in the WRC.”

DO WE MISS ANYTHING?

Although it might mix up the F1 pecking order from time to time, there's uniform consensus that reintroducing tyre competition into other disciplines wouldn't improve the show.

The primary purpose of rallycross, Whittington acknowledges, is “for entertainment rather than racing to develop new technologies”. As a result, he says “there's not really a huge amount of point in every team having a tyre technician trying to optimise which tyre to run in which condition”.

“It's about delivering good racing and not being too bogged down in the engineering detail,” he adds. “When tyre choice is free, you see the people with the biggest budgets buying an advantage and that's rarely good for the entertainment.”

Gow is in no doubt that tyre wars don't benefit the competition because “inevitably, one tyre dominates”. As a result, he's clear that it won't be coming back to the BTCC for the first time since 1998, when Audi ditched its Dunlops and joined the rest onMichelins at the height of the Super Touring era.

“It's never equity,” says Gow. “When you've got competition one tyre company will Hoover up the top teams and then leave the other tyre company to do otherwise, and that'll mean that

tyre company will go out of the championship in another year or two because they realise they have no chance of winning.

“Having one spec rather than two different tyre manufacturers means you've got the quality of competition, but everyone runs on the same tyre, so no one has got a better tyre. It's fairer if they all run on the same tyre.”

While clearly the loss of tyre wars changes an engineer's outlook – van der Grint admits that “I didn't like it at all” when he became Bridgestone's head of track engineering to service all F1 teams in 2007 – the job satisfaction of engineers is not a determining criteria for the health of a series. That comes from teams and manufacturers filling grids each year.

Goodyear's McGregor concedes that “there's an excitement from the tyre war” in sportscars, having previously worked on Dunlop's motorsport programmes competing against Michelin in LMP2, and in GTE Pro with Aston Martin. But he reasons that “as an overall benchmark for a championship and from a fan perspective, it's much easier to understand without tyre wars”.

“As a pure engineering enthusiast – someone who is really involved in the detail – I can see where they would see plus points in a tyre war,” he says. “Looking at a general competitor point of view, I see a huge benefit to not having tyre wars.

“In terms of equality across the grid, in terms of making more competitors competitive in the same arena to create overall

better racing, I think LMP2 is testament to that. You look at the last few years and at the end of Le Mans they're still racing each other after 24 hours. It doesn't matter which car you are [so long as it's an ORECA! – ed], you can extract the same levels of performance out of the tyres. Nobody is turning up and winning every single race.”

Tyre wars have largely become a thing of the past. Whichever side of the fence you're on, it seems there's no going back. ■

Gow is clear that the BTCC won't return to tyre competition



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ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY STEFAN MACKLEY, MARCUS SIMMONS, JAMIE KLEIN, TOM HOWARD



BINGHAM

INTO THE UNKNOWN

Meeting the challenge of supplying tyres for Formula E's Gen3 car was a journey of discovery for Hankook

BY STEFAN MACKLEY

The Formula E Championship entered a new era this season as the all-electric series hit the track with the Gen3 car, which promised greater performance in several areas over its predecessor.

But the new machine was not the only new aspect to the championship, as Hankook arrived as the category's sole tyre supplier. The South Korean manufacturer had big shoes to fill replacing Michelin, which had supplied rubber to Formula E since its inception in 2014.

While the name on the side of the

tyre may have been different, the purpose was the same – to be used in all weather conditions and temperatures, as well as on various surfaces. It's a challenge made even greater due to the previously unknown quantities of the Gen3 machine, and just how much performance it had gained over the previous iteration of car.

"This was the big challenge because we started almost from zero when we started our development work, and there was no car available at all," says Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook's European motorsport director. "It meant we had to go through it in a different way to get the first impressions and then, as soon as the first car was ready, we adjusted the tyre to the car."

"We were pretty much satisfied with the first run and from this moment the focus was on fine-tuning to find the right compound, to have the right balance from the rear axle and of course also the right balance between dry and wet. But this was a real challenge to find and therefore compliments to our engineers and technical team to find this in a really short time, because the time period for testing was also very much limited."

This time period with the Gen3 car was the equivalent of "almost half a year", according to Sandbichler. Not long to



Muller shone in Berlin rain and says grumbles have disappeared

BAGNALL

GALLOWAY



“The mood in respect to the tyre is good. I don’t hear anyone complaining anymore”

ensure that the tyre was capable of withstanding vastly different conditions.

The two extremes during the season came only a round apart, as the deluge that hit the season finale at the London E-Prix followed just two weeks after the heatwave in Rome. The Hankook tyre came through in both conditions, and perhaps more impressively there were no failures or punctures outside of those caused by accident damage during the season.

“It was very tricky to develop the tyre for all these conditions because you can have only one set of tyre, you cannot have a wet and slick,” says three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Benoit Treluyer, Formula E’s test driver who was integral to the Hankook tyre’s development.

“You need to make a tyre fit to

every condition, every temperature, so that was demanding and you have to do compromise. For sure we could have got a better tyre in the wet condition but that would have compromised the dry.

“We can always improve, this is something that everybody knows, but for the first year I think it is a really good result and I’m pretty happy with what we have done.”

But while Hankook was happy with the performance on-track, there had been small issues off it. Not least a factory fire in South Korea, which although had no impact on the supply of tyres to Formula E certainly caused disruption for the company. It ceased its supply of rubber to the Euroformula Open championship as a result.

In Formula E, a number of drivers also voiced their displeasure towards the start of the season, claiming the new rubber to be too hard compared with what they had previously used with Michelin. But as Abt Cupra driver Nico Muller pointed out, “when the voices disappear, it’s a very good sign” after initial criticism subsided.

“People have realised, maybe we can do a better job in exploiting the maximum out of the product,” he says. “And they got to a stage where they probably realised

it’s actually working pretty well and we have conditions that will be completely different throughout the season.

“Yes, when you go to Valencia and you have in mind what you have done with an old car before and you look for the last little detail, you might think, ‘It would have been nice to go through Turn 1 with 10km/h more’. But then over the course of the year that loses its relevance and the focus shifts. The mood in respect to the tyre is good. I don’t hear anyone complaining anymore.”

Hankook has already confirmed that the exact same tyre will be used during the 2024 campaign, which is due to get under way with pre-season testing in Valencia during the week starting 23 October. But while no changes will be brought in for that season, focus is already shifting to the following campaign, when an evolution of the current car, ‘Gen3.5’, will hit the track.

An uprated version of the Gen3 car was used in London as Jake Hughes set a new indoor land speed record, and it featured a softer compound of Hankook tyre, which may well be a sign of things to come. As ever, Hankook’s goal will be to find a balance between performance, durability and above all safety as it continues its journey in Formula E. ■



HONDA CIVIC TYPE R TCR FL5

INSIDE HONDA'S NEW TCR WEAPON

JAS Motorsport's project leader on the Honda Civic Type R TCR FL5, Mads Fischer, is your guide to its third-generation model introduced for 2023

BY JAMES NEWBOLD



TYRES AND BRAKES

The FL5 has to work on different tyres in the various series it contests, from Kumho in TCR World Tour and TCR Europe, to Michelin in the IMSA-sanctioned Pilot Challenge and Goodyear in Britain. Understanding the nuances of each tyre, Fischer explains, is “the biggest challenge we have” because it has significant implications for the camber and suspension set-ups JAS advises teams to run. Fischer feels it “managed to find a very good base for all the tyres that we’re working on, but this can only be done because you have so much experience”.

The FL5 also has an upgraded braking system featuring monoblock calipers designed in-house with greater stiffness than on the FK7. ABS from Bosch is an optional extra for endurance racing.



AERO AND STYLING

Keeping in step with Honda's new FL5 road model drove some of the main styling choices on the TCR racer, but key considerations from the old FK7 were also incorporated into the aerodynamic package. An important focus was to boost top speed, achieved by reducing emphasis on what Fischer calls “the family feeling” where that resulted in unnecessary drag.

This involved some compromise, with JAS keen to reduce the size of the badge on the front to improve airflow into the intercooler and Honda keen to retain its prominence to underline its membership of the Type R family. As a result, the Honda badge was “like just a mesh” says Fischer. He adds that aerodynamics were influenced by the JAS-built NSX GT3 Evo 22, which also informed vehicle dynamics and cockpit functionality.

COCKPIT

JAS has worked extensively on the cockpit layout to make it “more GT-looking”, Fischer explains, with more sophisticated steering controls and a bespoke JAS interface on the wheel itself developed with Italian sim racing hardware company Cube Controls. A new power-steering system represents a move away from running standard Honda OEM steering racks, with the new rack deemed to be “stronger and having more options also for us to work with”. It has also beefed up the rollcage to meet the latest safety standards.

CHASSIS AND SUSPENSION

A new chassis features a floor tunnel redesigned for a more central seating position that Fischer says is around 40mm lower. This desire to maximise the opportunities presented by the regulations and follow trends set by other manufacturers was also driven by an awareness that JAS could accommodate taller drivers up to 2.05 metres. But Fischer adds that it didn’t want to go “extreme” as greater visibility from a higher seating position is a worthwhile trade-off on street tracks. “Sometimes you see that when you’re making a big effort and making everything lower, then the driver cannot see where the car ends,” he says.

The FL5 has new front and rear dampers developed with KW Automotive and a new multi-link rear suspension concept. The philosophy of the geometry is similar, but with new features on the rear axle. These include modified wheelarches that follow the trend set by other manufacturers, Fischer says, by cutting “the unnecessary stuff away to have more wheel clearance”.

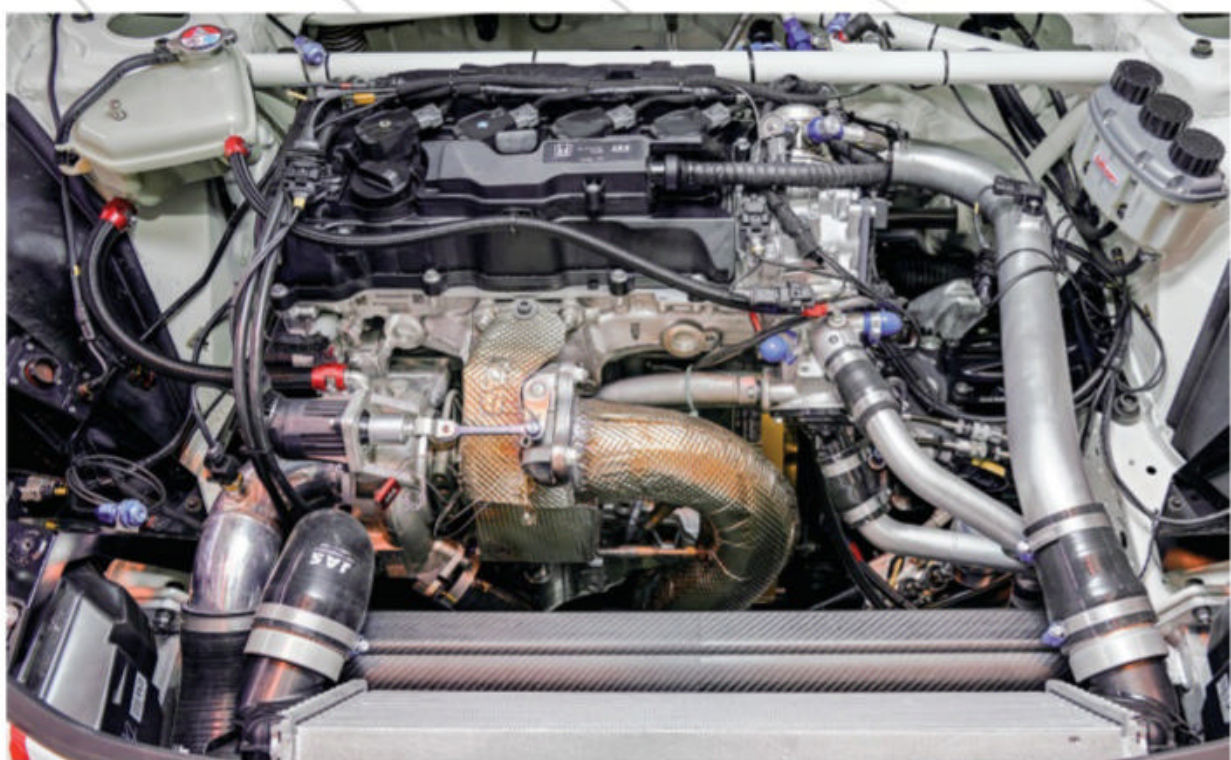
Unlike on previous models, options required for endurance racing aren’t fitted as standard, chiefly to save weight. These have their own power box and wiring loom, not needed on the sprint version.

ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION

The FL5 features a race-prepared version of the four-cylinder, two-litre turbocharged engine from the production Type R. Mated to a new JAS-developed turbocharger, it produces 340bhp. It comes as “all the other manufacturers are also going away from standard off-the-shelf turbochargers,” Fischer explains. The turbocharger, he admits, has been a “limitation” on previous TCR models, with the new spec bigger on the compressor and exhaust side, resulting in improved reliability.

Fischer regards the new six-speed sequential Sadev gearbox in the FL5 as “a huge step forward”, incorporating “a lot of new features for reliability”. Having worked with the French supplier, deemed “the benchmark for quality versus price”, throughout its time in TCR, JAS has total faith in its capabilities and also called on Sadev for a new hydraulic pressure unit.

“One of the strong points is the transmission,” adds Fischer. “We do 4500km on a set of driveshafts and that’s important for customers.” Reliability and ease of servicing have been important considerations as customers range from full-time race teams to plucky privateers operating out of a garage.



SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE

Accommodating a NASCAR Cup machine into the Le Mans 24 Hours was no small task for the FIA

BY GARY WATKINS

“Strange and exciting.” Those are the words that came into FIA chief technical and safety officer Xavier Mestelan Pinon’s mind when he was told about the Garage 56 entry for this year’s Le Mans 24 Hours. And for good reason. The car that filled the grid slot reserved – but not always allocated – for an innovative or experimental car at the World Endurance Championship blue riband was, off all things, a NASCAR Cup contender.

It was strange because an American stock car, Next Gen Cup racer developed in conjunction with Dallara or no, is very different from the prototype and GT machinery that makes up the WEC grid. And it was exciting for the very same reason. Incorporating the Chevrolet Camaro LS1 run by Hendrick Motorsports and driven by Jenson Button, Jimmie Johnson and Mike Rockenfeller into that field of Hypercar, LMP2 and GTE Am cars was the challenge faced by Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l’Ouest in conjunction with the FIA, co-organisier of the WEC.

“The car was extreme,” he says. “That’s in terms of power, weight and design. It’s very different from what we are usually looking at in Formula 1, endurance and rallying. It was something completely new, a breath of fresh air, a nice project for the FIA and myself personally.”

Mestelan Pinon, who joined the FIA in February 2021 after a 20-year career at Citroen and sister brand DS, stresses that Garage 56 is what he calls “an ACO project”.



Mestelan Pinon says the Garage 56 project was “a breath of fresh air”

But the FIA has the responsibility for the safety, which was the twin challenge faced along with just how it would fit into the existing class structure at the French enduro. He describes meeting those challenges as “a collaborative effort” involving the twin sanctioning bodies of the WEC and also NASCAR and IMSA, which oversaw the project under the leadership of its boss, John Doonan.

It was far from a new collaboration, however. The FIA, ACO and IMSA had jointly devised the LMP2 rulebook that

came into force in 2017 and then the LMDh category, which from this year is an integral part of the WEC. NASCAR, meanwhile, has an involvement in a number of FIA working groups, including the one headed ‘research and strategy’, which looks at the future of motorsport.

“The FIA’s role was to assess the safety and give feedback,” explains Mestelan Pinon. “The redline was to certify the car.” It was, he says, about “trying to take the best from each set of regulations”.

The driver’s seat of the Camaro, for example, remained pure NASCAR. “We clearly considered that their technical choice was something very relevant for such a car,” he explains. On the other hand, the fuel tank was moved, as per FIA regulations, from the boot to the centre of the car within the rollcage structure. There was, meanwhile, “some small work and adjustment to do” on the steering column and on the thickness of the polycarbonate windscreen and windows.

The main task, however, was to bring the Camaro in line with the crash test requirements of the GTE regulations. This was inextricably linked to the attempt to equate the performance of the Camaro with the Porsches, Ferraris, Aston



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



The Camaro outqualified its GTE opposition at Le Mans by 4.4s



Hendrick-run Chevy finished the gruelling 24 Hours 57 laps down on the winner in 39th overall

“The car was extreme. That’s in terms of power, weight and design”

Martins and the Chevrolet competing in what had become the WEC’s lone GT class.

Central to that was an extreme diet. The dry weight of the Garage 56 entry at Le Mans this year was 1340kg, around 150kg less than a pure Cup Camaro. The reality was the weight saving was much greater than that. The car had to incorporate extra kit necessary for it to take part in an endurance race. For example, a NASCAR doesn’t have lights!

This diet involved changes to the rollcage. The FIA oversaw static load tests and crash testing in the virtual realm to make sure it complied with FIA regulations and standards.

The target wasn’t just for the Camaro to lap the 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe at GTE Am speeds. Rather it was for the car to have a similar performance profile to the cars in that class. The changes to



Rollcage and steering column were identified among the changes needed

the car, including a switch from steel to carbon brakes, was aimed at making it quicker into and through the corners. A 1500kg NASCAR with 700bhp would have been a rocketship on the straights and potentially able to lap at GTE Am pace, but it could have been a disruptive influence on the race.

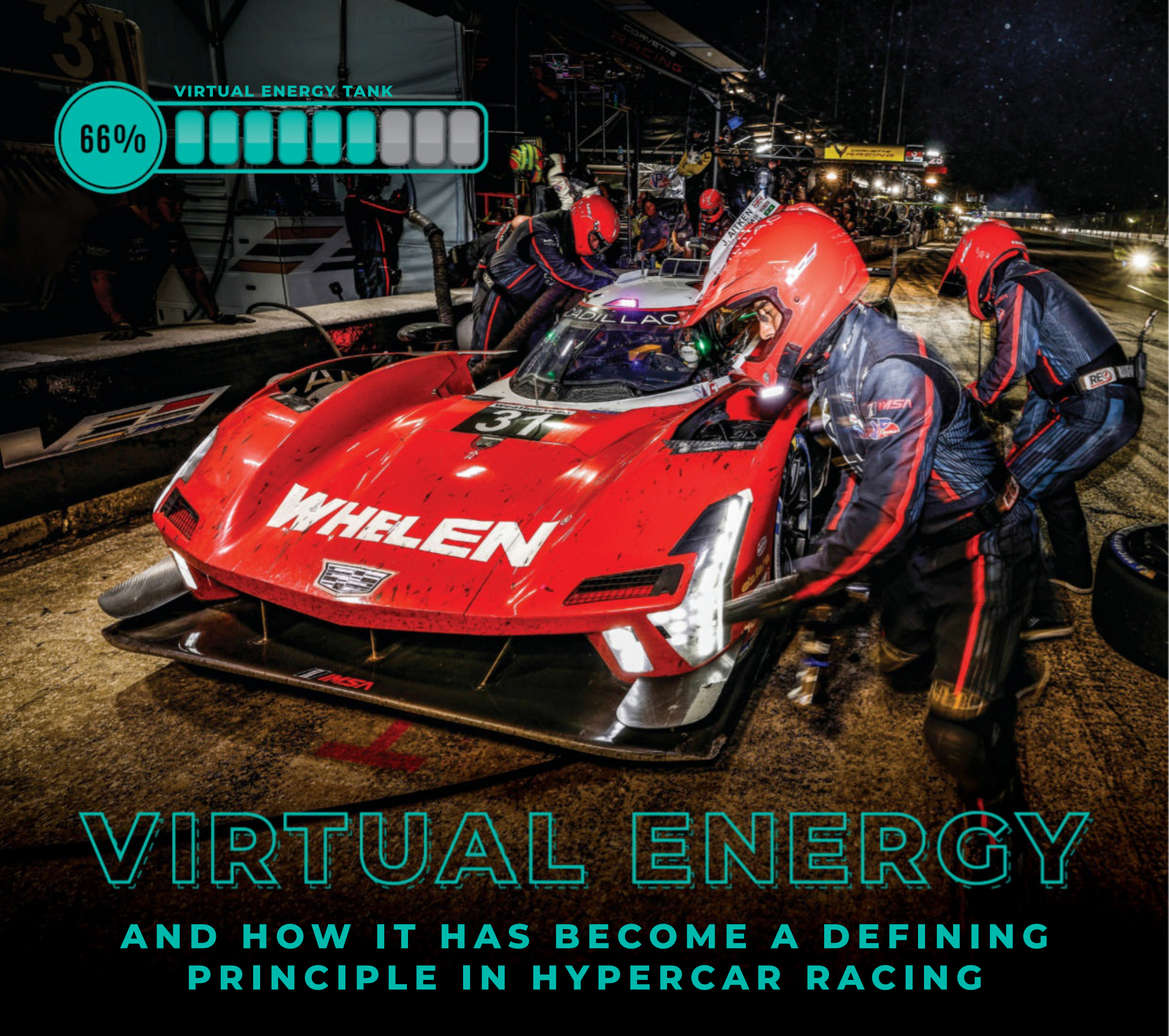
“We had to imagine how the car could be manageable in the middle of the track with the other GTE Ams, LMP2s and Hypercars,” explains Mestelan Pinon.

Rockefeller qualified the Camaro more

than four seconds ahead of the best GTE Am. But Mestelan Pinon explains that the efforts of the FIA, the ACO et al to equate its performance with the GT machinery pretty much hit the target.

“Before the race, it was difficult to know exactly if the car would be faster or slower than a GTE,” he says. “We can say it was half a second faster if we take the 20% best lap times from the race.”

Mestelan Pinon has no doubt that the project was a success: “It was something good for the fan and everybody.” ■



VIRTUAL ENERGY

AND HOW IT HAS BECOME A DEFINING PRINCIPLE IN HYPERCAR RACING

LMH and LMDh prototypes have a virtual fuel tank to which the rulebook assigns a greater importance than physical fuel, requiring a mindset shift for teams

BY JAMES NEWBOLD

The IMSA SportsCar Championship underwent a profound shift with its adoption of new rules for 2023. Teams now had a spec hybrid system to optimise, while the move from DPi to LMDh (known Stateside as GTP) also meant a new philosophy for calculating energy usage – falling in line with the World Endurance Championship, allowing for the platform to be equalised against Le Mans Hypercars.

The consequence of stretching a tank of fuel too far is unchanged. But no longer is stint length dictated entirely by fuel numbers. Instead, the primary concern is now how a car uses energy from a virtual tank – think of it as a combination of fuel used by the internal combustion engine and torque produced by the hybrid system – measured by sensors attached to the rear axle (or both axles for LMH cars). The importance to the rulemakers of tracking the so-called Maximum Stint Energy (entirely separate to the actual fuel load) was underlined at the WEC's 6 Hours of Portimao, where the #7 Toyota was heavily delayed while a malfunctioning torque sensor was fixed.

In both series the stint energy (measured in megajoules) prescribed to each car falls under the Balance of Performance, so differs for each car and track. While fuel flow rates are now unrestricted, the BoP also determines a replenishment rate for the virtual tank (also in MJ). A subtle difference, but a significant one.

“We’re governed by energy; we want to make sure that we have to pit because of virtual energy, not because we’re running out of fuel,” says Iain Watt, technical director for Cadillac squad Action Express Racing. “There’s a sensor on the side of the car that picks up when we’re adding fuel and that’s the trigger for adding energy, so it’s purely virtual. There’s no add-in electrical energy.”

Stint energy isn’t a new concept. It’s formally been part of the WEC since the Hypercar class replaced LMP1 in 2021; LMP1 cars had been subject to caps on fuel usage per stint and energy deployment over a lap. But for IMSA stalwarts and newcomers to the platform alike it has taken some getting used to.

“It’s more complicated, because it’s another layer,” concedes Watt. “It took the first race for us to really see how this was all

Bourdais and van der Zande broke through at Laguna Seca



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USED
ENERGY

VIRTUAL ENERGY TANK



Tracking energy and fuel usage provides another layer of complexity

Bourdais, there's no reason to brim the tank at each stop since that means carrying extra weight unnecessarily. There's nothing to gain from holding more fuel than virtual energy capacity.

"Say we're adding 25s of energy – I don't want to fill the car in 25s," Watt outlines. "But I want to have something that's close to that amount, maybe two thirds of a tank, plus a little bit of fuel."

As such, cars can remain stationary in the pits with the fuel probe attached after the actual process of fuelling has been completed. "You can be 'plugged in', not take fuel, and replenish the virtual tank," says Bourdais. As Eng notes, for drivers this

"For the engineers it's quite a big challenge to always get the energy right"

going to work because it was new for everybody."

BMW racer Philipp Eng says his simulator work as a Formula E reserve "definitely helped" his adaptation, but finds that the extra parameters to keep tabs on mean that engineers are heavily relied upon. "You definitely need that guidance on what to do," he says.

Exceeding the stint energy limit, which was 920MJ at the start of the year before creeping down to 902MJ for BMW and Cadillac at the most recent Indianapolis round, carries a heavy penalty. IMSA regulations stipulate that the first violation incurs a 100-second hold in addition to the pitstop, increasing in increments of 100s for each further offence, so teams must log both the virtual and real tank figures. Complicating this, the virtual tank doesn't begin to deplete until the race has started, while the pitlane is exempt too. Fuel used for pace laps and driving through the pits therefore means it's not entirely in sync with the virtual energy, but it would take several lengthy cautions for fuel to become a limiting factor.

Since teams "can pretty much pick how much fuel we actually put in the car," explains Chip Ganassi Cadillac driver Sebastien

makes little difference to their process as they still have to wait for the nozzle to be removed and the lollipop to drop, "but for the engineers it's quite a big challenge to always get the energy right".

This was doubly so for Action Express at Sebring, a race it went on to win after being delayed when the sensor to replenish energy wasn't triggering during fuelling. "We ended up having to poke a finger in the proximity sensor hole," recalls Watt.

Knowledge of how much energy you start a stint with "opens up tricks in races when you have a lot of yellows and you're not actually going to be limited by fuel but limited by energy to get to the end," according to Bourdais. Fortunately, techniques to save fuel are hand-in-glove with saving energy, lifting and coasting being the primary method. "To save energy is basically the same thing as to save fuel," confirms Eng.

But while monitoring fuel levels is still necessary, Bourdais says drivers "mostly have to keep an eye on the energy you have left to finish the race". And just like that, fuel mileage in and of itself is no longer an endurance racing kingmaker. ■

HOW TO BE AN ACE ENGINEER

Andrew Thorby looks back on his lengthy career in race engineering and car design

BY JAMES NEWBOLD

Andrew Thorby didn't heed the best advice he received in a motorsport career that has spanned over four decades designing and engineering single-seaters and sportscars. Ignoring Eric Broadley's plea to stay at Lola, his move to join Nimrod Racing Automobiles proved ill-advised when the company soon went bust, but going it alone in the drawing office to design the NRA/C2 in then-new carbon fibre reveals a determination to push the envelope despite less-than-ideal circumstances that he'd come to rely on again in future years.

After initially pursuing a law career, Thorby never looked back upon taking the plunge into motorsport. He cut his teeth working on glass-fibre bodywork at Specialised Mouldings in Huntingdon before making the short trip to Lola in 1977, gaining experience with a wide variety of machinery, and learning the discipline of "engineering for value as well as for performance". He credits Broadley as "the best concept designer" he worked with.

Thorby admits to lacking patience for the driver-management side of race engineering, but believes strongly that designers "need to work with racing cars on track to find out what makes them go fast in the real world". He ran Martin Donnelly when the Northern Irishman won the 1987 Macau Grand Prix in a Ralt fielded by Glenn Waters's Intersport team, which preceded joining the TOM'S GB Group C operation also headed up by

Waters as chief engineer on its Toyotas. But far from the dominant force of today's World Endurance Championship, Toyota was never in the fight, deficient both in downforce and fuel consumption. He describes the 88-C and 89-CV as "both a little behind the state of the art".

Frustrated at toiling with a car upon which he'd had no input, plus a technical basis that was "low-key, and outdated", Thorby turned his attention to the sleek all-carbon TOM'S 031F that won on its British Formula 3 bow at Silverstone in 1991. He remained in F3 to devise the 1992 Ralt RT36, also a winner, finding he preferred "ploughing my own furrow" outside Formula 1. His only grand prix dalliance, tending to Bertrand Gachot's Pacific-Ilmor in 1994, was forgettable.

Affiliations with Panoz, forged initially as a contractor via Reynard on its Q9 hybrid coined 'Sparky', became something more when he was tasked with developing the LMP-1 Roadster S. Thorby is proud of its aero efficiency gains relative to its predecessor, but his ambitious LMP07 struggled for performance and reliability

as a disrupted wind-tunnel programme meant a lack of cooling went undetected. His hands were also tied over the choice of a 4.0-litre Zytek engine, which Thorby believes wasn't properly configured for a front-engined racer. Its vibrations caused manifold issues. "The main lesson was the one that all designers learn – don't let your ambition outstrip your resources," he says.

Thorby classes another forgotten early 2000s prototype in the Lister Storm LMP among his favourite projects along with the 031F. "Time, total responsibility and just enough resources to do what I wanted" on both projects gave him "the biggest buzz".

Perhaps on a par was the season Thorby regards as the highlight in results terms, when he ran Carlin's Alvaro Parente to the 2005 British F3 crown. They were reunited in 2011 when Thorby joined CRS GT as chief designer on the McLaren MP4-12C. Parente was integral to developing a car Thorby concedes was "too conservative".

Still a close observer of industry trends, he applies his generalist perspective to automotive and motorsport projects. ■

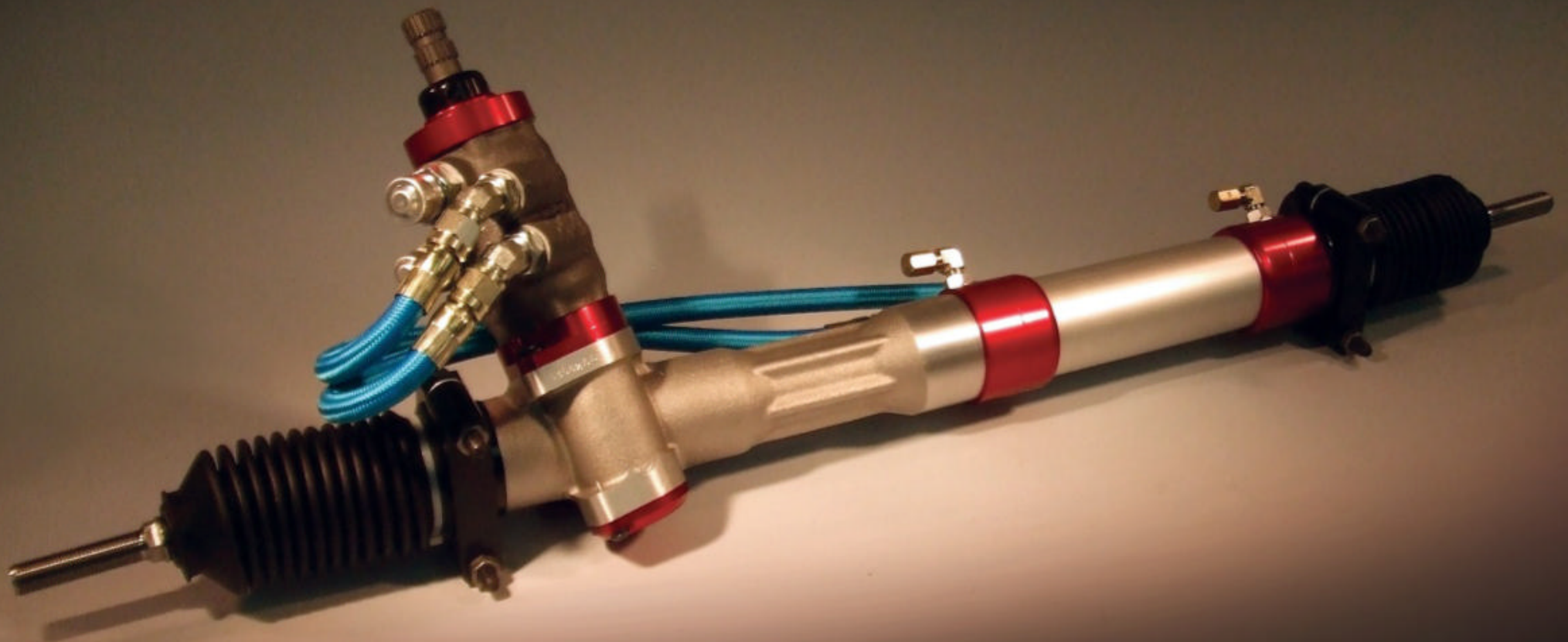


TOP TIPS FROM ANDREW THORBY

- Use the analysis tools you have, but understand their limitations. That's particularly applicable to race engineers: looking up at the clouds or at the tyres are inputs as valid as sensor readings or lap simulations to any set-up call.
- If you're a designer, don't allow your ambition to outstrip your resources on any given project!
- Value your colleagues. It's as simple as that.

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