

# F1 Ricciardo closer to Red Bull seat?

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2 NOVEMBER 2023

# AUTOSPORT

MEXICAN GP

## Verstappen's record

## Perez's nightmare

Max takes 16th win of 2023...

...as pressure mounts  
on Sergio after  
Mexico crash

PLUS

Rovanpera lands WRC crown  
despite Neuville victory



  
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# The pressure builds on one driver as another sets records

It doesn't seem that long ago (but is actually 20 years) that the length of a Formula 1 season was firmly 16 grands prix. But that's now the record for *victories* in a championship campaign thanks to Max Verstappen's latest success in the Mexican GP.

As Alex Kalinauckas shows in our report on (appropriately enough) page 16, there were a number of potential challengers to Verstappen, but each found a different problem that proved too difficult to overcome. Although the likelihood of any of them actually having the pace to *beat* the #1 Red Bull is highly questionable...

In such a season of domination, it's common to look to the second driver of the best car to provide some opposition. The fact that Sergio Perez has failed to do that by some margin in 2023 is one of the reasons why he is under pressure (p4), particularly after being outqualified by Daniel Ricciardo's AlphaTauri in Mexico City. We demonstrate how last weekend underlined the problems faced by the likeable Mexican ahead of 2024 on p13.

Elsewhere, Kalle Rovanpera secured back-to-back World Rally Championship titles in mature style (p32), and Liam Lawson – another Red Bull driver banging on the F1 door – narrowly missed out on the Super Formula crown in a dramatic Suzuka finale (p39).

Both of those drivers have been nominated for Autosport Awards. With the motorsport season heading towards its close, it's time for you to have your say on the top performers of 2023. Turn to p46 to see who's been nominated and prepare to cast your vote!



Kevin Turner  
Chief Editor

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Autosport p54



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# PIT + PAD



## Doubts mount on under-fire Perez with Mexico shunt

### FORMULA 1

Red Bull Formula 1 boss Christian Horner has maintained throughout this protracted period of poor form for Sergio Perez that the team will honour all contracts and retain the Mexican for 2024. But speculation surrounding Perez's future has only intensified following his first-corner tangle with Charles Leclerc on home ground last weekend, when he attempted to immediately recover from fifth on the grid to vie for victory.

Perez positioned his car on the outside of the polesitting Ferrari of Leclerc, who had the rapid-launching Max Verstappen to his inside. As Perez turned into the right-hander, he clipped Leclerc's front-left wheel and was vaulted into the air. He

recovered to the pits for inspection and wanted to resume, but the car was swiftly retired due to extensive damage. Perez's repair bills for 2023 could now total around £2.5million, surpassed only by Williams rookie Logan Sargeant.

Horner, who reckoned a clean Turn 1 would have paved the way for a "straight fight" between his two drivers for the spoils, implied that late company co-founder Dietrich Mateschitz would have condoned the manoeuvre. "[Perez] had a rocketship launch of a start and had so much momentum going into that first corner," he said. "You can't blame him for going for it to try and take the lead at his home race... Mateschitz always used to say, 'No risk, no fun'."

Even so, a headline-grabbing shunt for

Perez – who had to bat away rumours that he would announce his F1 retirement in Mexico – arrived during a weekend when Daniel Ricciardo excelled for the first time since replacing the sacked Nyck de Vries. In the second round of his return from injury, after he broke a metacarpal in his left hand to force a five-event spell on the sidelines, he guided the unfavoured AlphaTauri to a remarkable fourth in qualifying and then banked six points with seventh place. That was the team's best result of the season, and propelled it past Haas and Alfa Romeo to eighth in the constructors' standings, something that could net an extra £15m in prize money.

The Australian is already heavily touted to reprise his 2016-18 role as Verstappen's Red Bull team-mate. With Ricciardo on loan at AlphaTauri next season and Perez having another 12 months of paperwork in place, theoretically any switch wouldn't occur before 2025. But Red Bull's previous for mid-season chopping and changing would indicate this is far from sacred.

Horner's verdict was: "It's great to see Daniel performing so well and it fully endorses the reason why we brought him back into AlphaTauri just prior to the summer break. It was a great performance from him and certainly, it looked like the Daniel of old."

Given that Perez's confidence is clearly knocked, and he is a driver who responds





Moment of agony  
as Perez trips over  
Ferrari of Leclerc

## ALFA COULD SEND F2 ACE TO JAPAN

### FORMULA 1

Alfa Romeo is prioritising a Super Formula seat in 2024 for its Formula 1 reserve Theo Pourchaire. The team will retain Valtteri Bottas and Zhou Guanyu next year, and establishing an expensive private test programme for Pourchaire, who will likely win the F2 title this month in Abu Dhabi, is not viewed as the best use of limited funds.

As such, the Japanese flagship series is the target, although a World Endurance Championship programme is a fallback option for the Frenchman.

Alfa F1 boss Alessandro Alunni Bravi, who placed



SUTTON

No room at the F1  
inn for Pourchaire

Stoffel Vandoorne in Super Formula, said: “He needs to race... Super Formula is very competitive – we have seen different experiences with Stoffel in 2016, Pierre Gasly in 2017, and Liam Lawson this year. For me, it’s not important for the driver to be there to win the championship, but to be in a competitive category. The car is a high-

performance car with a cornering speed similar to F1. The championship is a good platform, similar to F2, so I see this as an opportunity.”

Meanwhile, Alpine junior Jack Doohan has confirmed that he will not give F2 a third go next year. He will continue his simulator and 2021 car testing duties and could land an Alpine WEC drive.

ADAM COOPER



POTTS

best to a gentler approach of having an arm put round his shoulder, Horner has restated that his driver is currently hitting his targets by holding onto second in the championship. A Red Bull duo has never finished 1-2 before. Perez is 20 points clear of Lewis Hamilton ahead of the final three rounds. But should Mercedes recover in time for 2024, and McLaren continue its resurgence to require Red Bull to have a rear gunner for Verstappen, there are doubts over Perez’s ability to consistently step up. He hasn’t finished second in a competitive session since early September’s Italian GP.

Horner said: “He’s got three races to convert that second place... He’s had some misfortune, he’s had some issues, but we still believe he can do it between now and the end of the year.” Asked if losing out to Hamilton would cost Perez his drive, Horner continued: “You’ve got to look at the circumstances and so on. Checo has an agreement with us for next year and that’s our intention: for him to be in the car in 2024.”

MATT KEW

➔ P13 OPINION



Bearman made his FP1  
debut in Mexico

TEE

## Bearman shines on FP1 run

### FORMULA 1

Formula 2 star Ollie Bearman “didn’t put a foot wrong” as he led the five rookies taking part in FP1 at last weekend’s Mexican Grand Prix. That was the glowing verdict from Haas Formula 1 team boss Guenther Steiner, who added that he was “very happy” with the Ferrari junior and 2022 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver Award finalist for cleanly guiding Kevin Magnussen’s car to 15th, 0.345 seconds slower than team-mate Nico Hulkenberg.

The rising stars were assigned varied tyre run plans – disguising their true pace – as teams minimise

the risk while they fulfil the FIA rule to run a rookie in both cars during a season. Isack Hadjar was next-best and clocked 17th for AlphaTauri. Jack Doohan ran the Alpine to 18th ahead of Mercedes’ Frederik Vesti and Alfa Romeo reserve Theo Pourchaire. But the F2 points leader could muster only four laps due to a brake-by-wire issue.

Following a sprint round in Brazil, and the full-time F1 drivers acclimatising to the new Las Vegas circuit, the rookies will return en masse in Abu Dhabi, where Red Bull will notably run Formula E champion Jake Dennis.

ADAM COOPER



# Sasahara escapes from Suzuka crossover fall

## SUPER FORMULA

Ukyo Sasahara escaped one of Japanese racing's scariest-looking crashes of recent years with no more than a concussion in last weekend's Super Formula finale at Suzuka.

TOM'S driver Sasahara was involved in a terrifying high-speed collision with the Nakajima Racing car of Hiroki Otsu at 130R as the pair dived over 17th place on the fourth lap of the first race of the weekend on Saturday. Such was the ferocity of Sasahara's impact with the barriers at the famous left-hander that his car was launched up and over the catchfencing before tumbling all the way down to the start of the Degner Curves, near the lower part of Suzuka's crossover.

The race was immediately red-flagged and had to be abandoned due to the

damage to the catchfencing, which was repaired later in the evening ahead of Sunday's final race.

Sasahara was taken to hospital, but was later diagnosed with nothing more than a concussion, and after being held overnight was released to travel home on Sunday. The 27-year-old Japanese went for a second medical examination in the following days, including an MRI scan, but no major injuries were found.

It means that he should be clear to race in this weekend's Super GT finale at Motegi, where he is due to share a TOM'S Toyota GR Supra with Giuliano Alesi.

Otsu, meanwhile, escaped the crash with nothing more than light bruising, and was seen back at Suzuka the next day. He had been filling in for Naoki Yamamoto, whose season came to a premature end after the crash he



suffered in September's Sugo Super GT round.

Sasahara was drafted into the TOM'S Super Formula line-up mid-season as a replacement for the underperforming Alesi, after making the move across from Honda to Toyota in the

off-season. Team-mate Ritomo Miyata went on to win the championship in Sunday's final race, beating Red Bull junior Liam Lawson by eight points.

JAMIE KLEIN

[P39 RACE REPORT](#)

# Porsche and Cadillac given boost for Bahrain

## WEC

The Porsche and Cadillac LMDhs have been given a weight break for the World Endurance Championship finale in Bahrain this weekend. Their respective 963 and V-Series.R contenders will go to the grid 7kg lighter than originally anticipated.

Series organisers have implemented a so-called 'platform change' to the Balance

of Performance after the post-Le Mans 24 Hours Monza and Fuji rounds in July and September respectively, as per the new rules introduced for this year. This is designed to level the playing field between LMDh and Le Mans Hypercar machinery on the WEC grid.

A Hypercar class BoP table was published for the Bahrain 8 Hours back in July after wholesale or 'manufacturer' revisions in

the wake of Le Mans. Different values were assigned to the cars for each of the remaining races to reflect the characteristics of the circuits. The Porsche was originally scheduled to race at a minimum weight of 1053kg and the Cadillac at 1037kg. They have been reduced to 1046kg and 1030kg, the lowest permissible in the regulations, for Saturday's race.

Power outputs for the two cars remain unchanged from the previous published BoP, but the amount of energy they can use over the course of a stint has been reduced by 1MJ to reflect their lower weights.

The 2023 BoP system allowed for a platform change following the first two races, and another two rounds after the mid-season manufacturer changes. The FIA and the ACO unilaterally opted to revise the BoP across all the cars without the consent of the manufacturers ahead of Le Mans as a result of what they called "greater than initially anticipated" differences between the LMHs.

GARY WATKINS





# Evans and Jag top fire-delayed Valencia test

## FORMULA E

Mitch Evans and Jaguar set the pace in Formula E pre-season testing at Valencia last week before a battery fire put the rest of the event in doubt.

The Kiwi had gone quickest in the opening three-hour session on Tuesday morning at the Circuit Ricardo Tormo when a small explosion and subsequent fire occurred in the garage of battery supplier WAE (formerly Williams Advanced Engineering). The paddock was evacuated, with one person taken to hospital for precautionary checks, while an investigation was carried out by the FIA and WAE. This meant no running took place on Wednesday.

The FIA explained that “there was an arc flash and some sparking” from the battery, removed from the DS Penske of Robert Schwartzman, who had come to a stop on track. With all the other batteries examined and none of them showing “the same type of symptoms as the unit that failed”, testing resumed on Thursday afternoon, but with power limited to 300kW.



Evans once again topped the session, while team-mate and fellow Kiwi Nick Cassidy was fastest on Friday, when nearly 10 hours of running took place to make up for the lost track time. Robin Frijns, who has returned to Envision Racing in place of Cassidy, made it three Jaguar-powered cars in the top four on Friday, and earlier headed the simulation race from Evans.

Nyck de Vries, on his FE return after his brief stint as an AlphaTauri Formula 1 driver, endured a difficult event as he got back up to speed. After finishing last of the runners on Tuesday morning, the Mahindra driver’s car was put out of action by the fire in the neighbouring WAE garage.

The team, which also had to replace all of its IT systems, only ran Edoardo Mortara on Thursday afternoon before de Vries had sole use of the car on Friday, with the team

VALENCIA TIMES		
POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Mitch Evans (Jaguar)	1m24.474s
2	Nick Cassidy (Jaguar)	1m24.617s
3	Antonio Felix da Costa (Porsche)	1m24.617s
4	Sebastien Buemi (Envision)	1m24.641s
5	Maximilian Guenther (Maserati)	1m24.658s
6	Edoardo Mortara (Mahindra)	1m24.701s
7	Robin Frijns (Envision)	1m24.710s
8	Pascal Wehrlein (Porsche)	1m24.747s
9	Norman Nato (Andretti)	1m24.754s
10	Oliver Rowland (Nissan)	1m24.762s

set to be “compensated” with extra running between now and the season-opener in Mexico City in January.

STEFAN MACKLEY



# Hanson gets Hypercar break

## IMSA

Phil Hanson, LMP2 title winner in the World Endurance Championship in 2019-20 with United Autosports, will race for the JDC-Miller Motorsports IMSA SportsCar Championship squad next season. He will drive its Porsche 963 LMDh in the five long-distance rounds that make up the IMSA Endurance Cup.

The 24-year-old Briton makes the move to the top flight of sportscar racing in the North American championship’s GTP class after seven years in LMP2, six with United. His credits with the

team include a Le Mans 24 Hours class win and titles in both the European and Asian Le Mans Series.

Hanson will team up with Tijmen van der Helm, who has been confirmed for a second campaign in the JDC-Miller Porsche. A second full-season driver to replace Mike Rockenfeller, who will be part of the Ford line-up in the GT Daytona Pro division in 2024, has yet to be announced.

Hanson said that he is “thrilled to be making my debut in the GTP class with JDC’s Porsche”.

GARY WATKINS



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## BTCC doubles hybrid boost to improve racing

### BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship's autumn rule-changing spree has continued this week with a doubling of the turbo-hybrid boost allowance for 2024.

The move comes after accusations that the racing had become more processional since the introduction of the Cosworth-supplied hybrid system in 2022. The old method of performance-balancing success ballast was jettisoned in favour of hybrid use restrictions for the leading drivers in the championship or preceding races.

Autosport understands that the boost from use of the turbo-hybrid system has amounted to 30bhp during 2022 and 2023, meaning it will now increase to 60bhp on cars with an estimated base power output

of 375bhp; in other words, a 16% boost.

The change to the hybrid boost regulations comes on the back of last week's revelation that the BTCC qualifying format has undergone radical change, with a three-stage system based on that used in IndyCar. This season, champion Ash Sutton qualified on pole five times while running the minimum level of hybrid boost – one second per lap, compared to 15s per lap for those outside the top seven. But at power-dependent Silverstone he struggled to make the top-10 shootout, and the new regulations will likely make it more difficult for those high up in the championship to progress to Q2 and Q3.

According to sources in the series, the amount of hybrid use allowed is unlikely to undergo significant change, because

otherwise it would be difficult to assess the impact of the new regulations. In races, this is currently half the laps at most circuits, decreasing in increments of one lap for each of the top seven drivers in the championship or the preceding race of the day.

The changes were trialled at Snetterton in September by Sutton on his Alliance Racing Ford, Tom Ingram (Excelr8 Hyundai) and Colin Turkington (West Surrey Racing BMW). "It will be much harder to defend from as the delta between a car with and without hybrid-turbo boost will be much greater," said Sutton. "You will see cars being able to pull alongside each other via the system and maybe even make overtakes at corners we traditionally haven't been able to before."

**MARCUS SIMMONS**

## Ticktum bids for third Macau victory

### FORMULA 3

As were literally going to press on last week's issue proclaiming that Richard Verschoor will attempt a record-equalling second Macau Formula 3 Grand Prix win, Dan Ticktum gave the nod to Rodin Carlin that he will join the British squad for the 18-19 November event to bid for a record-breaking third victory.

Formula E racer Ticktum won the 2017 and 2018 runnings of the race, and was fourth in the

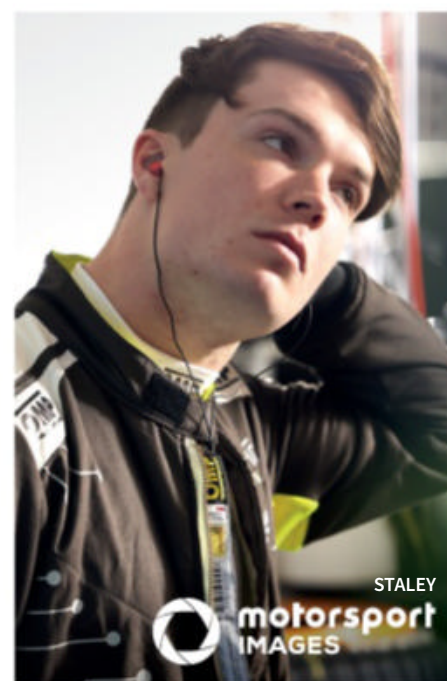
FIA Formula 2 standings with Carlin in 2021, his last season on the junior single-seater ladder. He also raced for the team in the 2019 Macau GP, the last time he drove the FIA F3 car.

"When you're looking at an event and you want to go and win it, then you look at *who* can win it," explained Rodin Carlin boss Trevor Carlin. "I was starting to think about who that can be, and obviously Dan's one of the best possible drivers you can get for Macau. Dan

responded and said he'd love to do it – so it's game on!"

Ticktum joins current Rodin Carlin F2 racer Zane Maloney, who has been out in the recent FIA F3 tests to reacquaint himself with the car, in the squad's Macau line-up. "Dan will be fine – he's a real driver, and real drivers just get in and get on with it," added Carlin. "By the end of quali one he'll be totally in tune with the car and then he'll just drive the hell out of it."

**MARCUS SIMMONS**







**TRACK DAYS!** Ferrari has taken the wraps off a trackday version of its Le Mans 24 Hours-winning Le Mans Hypercar. The 499P Modificata boasts a combined output of 830bhp from its hybrid powertrain, compared with the 700 of the race version. No price has so far been released for a car that will be run on behalf of its owners by the Italian manufacturer's Corse Clienti department. **Photograph by Ferrari**

## Lindblad leaps up to F3 seat

### FORMULA 3

British Red Bull Junior Arvid Lindblad will make the leap up from Formula 4 to the FIA Formula 3 Championship next season with leading team Prema Racing.

The 16-year-old (right) claimed third place in Italian F4 with Prema this year, his first full season of car racing. He joins Alpine Formula 1 protege Gabriele Mini and Ferrari Driver Academy prospect Dino Beganovic at the team.

Mini topped both days of last week's official post-season test at Imola. The Sicilian, runner-up in last year's Formula Regional European rankings, competed with Hitech in his rookie season of F3. Swede Beganovic beat Mini to the Regional crown and remains on board at Prema for 2024.

Mini set the fastest time at Imola on the first afternoon, eclipsing Campos Racing's



DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY/REDBULL CONTENT POOL

Oliver Goethe by 0.294 seconds, with Beganovic third. On the second morning, Mini finished 0.027s clear of Mari Boya (Campos); Beganovic was third again.

Rain hit the final afternoon, when GB3 star Alex Dunne lapped over 1s clear of the opposition with Hitech. The Irishman replaced Luke Browning, who did the first morning before heading to Silverstone for his Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award prize Formula 1 test!

Callum Voisin and Louis Sharp, Rodin Carlin's GB3 and British F4 champs, tested for the team alongside Ugo Ugochukwu.

## MULLER BACK IN PEUGEOT

Nico Muller will return to the Peugeot line-up at the Bahrain World Endurance Championship round this weekend after recovering from the undisclosed injuries that ruled him out of Fuji in September. The Swiss takes up his place alongside Loic Duval and Gustavo Menezes in the #94 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar.

## ILOTT SPLITS WITH JHR

British IndyCar racer Callum Iloft has parted company with the Juncos Hollinger Racing team that took him into the series in 2021. "My eyes are fully fixed on 2024 and the journey that follows," said Iloft in a social media post. JHR has retained Agustin Canapino for a second season. Meanwhile, Indy NXT champion Christian Rasmussen has joined Ed Carpenter Racing for his graduation. The red-headed Dane will contest the road and street-course races as well as the Indy 500, following a recent test at Barber Motorsports Park. Over at Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing, Juri Vips remains part of the squad after all as it seeks a fourth entry.

## COLAPINTO STEPS TO F2

Williams F1 Junior Franco Colapinto, fourth in this year's FIA F3 standings, is to step up to Formula 2 with MP Motorsport for this year's Abu Dhabi finale and the 2024 season. The Argentinian, who won two F3 feature races with MP this year, replaces Formula E-bound Jehan Daruvala, but first will enjoy his F3 swansong with the Dutch team in the Macau GP.

## GARCIA GETS FRECA RIDE

Inaugural F1 Academy champion Marta Garcia has been supported by the series to graduate into the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine for 2024. The 23-year-old Spaniard will remain with Prema Racing for her step up. "I think this will also be a good opportunity for F1 Academy and I cannot thank them enough," she enthused. "It is such a fantastic initiative and it is the right way to do it, trying to take drivers with the best results to the top level."

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and Lamborghini Super  
Trofeo cars



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WINTER SERIES  
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For GT4 cars only  
Separate class  
for Cayman GT4  
Clubsport



**PTWS**  
PROTOTYPE WINTER SERIES

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Ginetta G61 LTP3, Duqueine  
D08, Adess 03 Evo (Class 3)  
Class 4: Ligier JSP4  
Class N: Nova NP02



**FWS**  
FORMULA  
WINTER SERIES

For Formula 4 cars  
with Tatuus chassis  
and Abarth engine



### GT + GT4 WINTER SERIES

- 11/12 Jan Estoril /P - Test days
- 13/14 Jan Estoril /P - Race days
- 18/19 Jan Portimão /P - Test days
- 20/21 Jan Portimão /P - Race days
- 8/9 Feb Jerez /E - Test days
- 10/11 Feb Jerez /E - Race days
- 15/16 Feb Valencia /E - Test days
- 17/18 Feb Valencia /E - Race days
- 29/1 Mar Aragón /E - Test days
- 2/3 Mar Aragón /E - Race days
- 7/8 Mar Barcelona /E - Test days (tbc)
- 9/10 Mar Barcelona /E - Race days (tbc)

### PROTOTYPE WINTER SERIES

- 11/12 Jan Estoril /P - Test days
- 13/14 Jan Estoril /P - Race days
- 18/19 Jan Portimão /P - Test days
- 20/21 Jan Portimão /P - Race days
- 29/1 Mar Aragón /E - Test days
- 2/3 Mar Aragón /E - Race days
- 7/8 Mar Barcelona /E - Test days (tbc)
- 9/10 Mar Barcelona /E - Race days (tbc)

### FORMULA WINTER SERIES

- 8 Feb Jerez /E - Test days
- 9/10/11 Feb Jerez /E - Race days
- 15 Feb Valencia /E - Test days
- 16/17/18 Feb Valencia /E - Race days
- 29 Feb Aragón /E - Test days
- 1/2/3 Mar Aragón /E - Race days
- 7 Mar Barcelona /E - Test days (tbc)
- 8/9/10 Mar Barcelona /E - Race days (tbc)

**Additional race test days are bookable!**



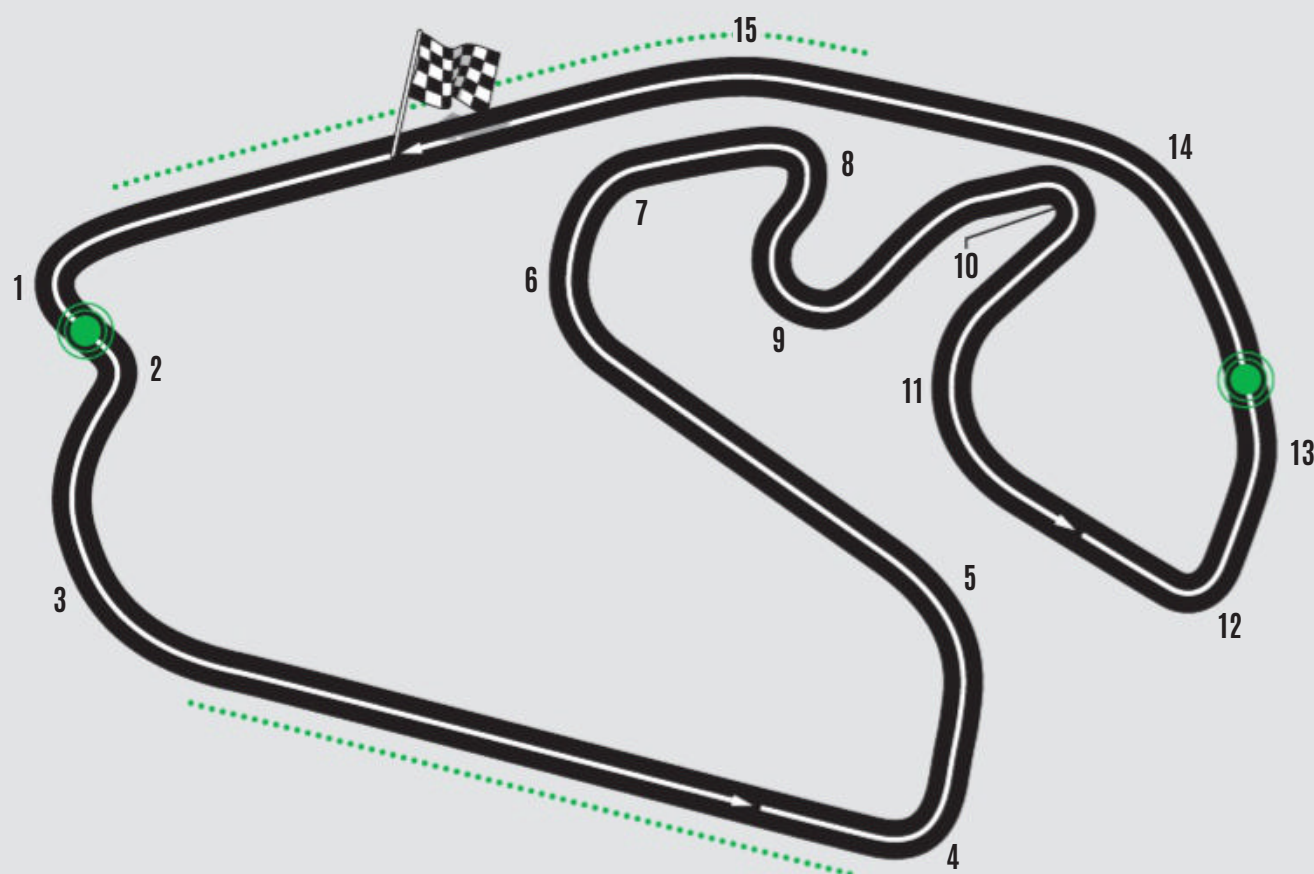
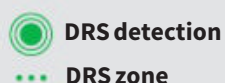
## F1 BRAZILIAN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



## Interlagos

Length 2.677 miles

Number of laps 71



## UK START TIMES

Friday 3 November

FP 1430 QUALIFYING 1800

Saturday 4 November

SPRINT QUALIFYING 1400

SPRINT RACE 1830

Sunday 5 November

RACE 1700

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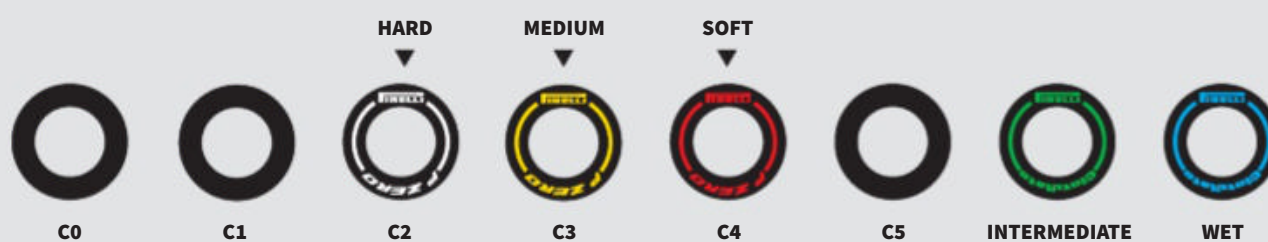
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## TYRE ALLOCATION



## CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

## Drivers

1	Verstappen	491
2	Perez	240
3	Hamilton	220
4	Sainz	183
5	Alonso	183

## Constructors

1	Red Bull	731
2	Mercedes	371
3	Ferrari	349
4	McLaren	256
5	Aston Martin	236

AlphaTauri went from 10th  
to eighth in points in Mexico



SUTTON

## INTERLAGOS STATS

## Previous winners

2022	George Russell	Mercedes
2021	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2019	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Jenson Button	McLaren

## 2022 POLE POSITION

Kevin Magnussen  
1m11.674s

## POLE LAP RECORD

Lewis Hamilton  
1m07.281s (2018)

## RACE LAP RECORD

Valtteri Bottas  
1m10.540s (2018)



Laffite beat Depailler  
for Ligier 1-2 in 1979

## Laps led

Michael Schumacher	236
Sebastian Vettel	233
Lewis Hamilton	184
Felipe Massa	183
Ayrton Senna	160
Juan Pablo Montoya	144
Max Verstappen	129
Nico Rosberg	124
Mika Hakkinen	118
Mark Webber	94





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# Wrong move for the right reasons

*Sergio Perez's combative start to his home race was understandable, but such a risky move isn't what's going to save his season*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

**I** had a very good start and I was only thinking of winning the race. I didn't want to be on the podium." Sergio Perez's attitude after his Turn 1 crash with Charles Leclerc in last weekend's Mexican Grand Prix was excellent. His thinking was clear and engaging, his move not to blame Leclerc on a weekend where there was significant tension around driver rivalry and ensuing fan response was classy.

Going for the lead from fifth on the grid with a lightning start, allied to a win-or-bust desire, is exactly what we want from a driver racing in one of F1's few top seats. That it happened at that driver's home race, with hundreds of thousands of adoring fans packing in over the weekend, adds a wonderful romantic tinge to the whole thing.

Perez had been boosted by Red Bull's best starts in ages – think the McLarens swamping Max Verstappen at Suzuka's opening corners, and the Mercedes pair doing the same in Qatar. Team boss Christian Horner said it was "probably his best start of the season", with Verstappen revealing after winning in Mexico City that Red Bull previously hadn't been doing "the right thing with tyre temperature, clutch settings" since addressing an early-season start problem. No wonder Perez wanted to have a go when the outside chance appeared on the long run away from the grid.

But that commendable approach met cold, hard, Formula 1

## **"Perez's move was all wrong – it was too much too soon, like his driving after his Miami defeat"**

reality. In crashing out with sidepod and floor damage, Perez is now just 20 points ahead of Lewis Hamilton in the 2023 drivers' championship. Were it not for the Mercedes driver's Austin disqualification, they would be tied on 238.

Given the Red Bull RB19 is going to go down as one of F1's most famous cars thanks to its steamrolling success this year, for it possibly not to have its drivers as the top two in the championship is shocking. That situation, which Hamilton's Qatar crash and final Austin result looked to have likely sealed in Perez's favour before last Sunday's events, does nothing to stop the speculation and questions over the Mexican's Red Bull future (see page 4). Ultimately, it increases the uncertainty.

"It's not as binary as [finish second in 2023 or you're fired for 2024]," Horner said after last Sunday's race. "We'll give him all the

support we can to ensure that he finishes second, but there's no prerequisite that if he doesn't finish second, 'you're out'."

That's as firm a backing as Perez is going to get at a team so famed for its ruthless treatment of underperforming drivers. But what went wrong for him in Mexico actually perfectly encapsulates what's hindered him when it really mattered in 2023, and what he must put right for next year.

In trying to go around the outside of Leclerc, with Verstappen on the inside and already on course to take the lead from starting third, just like in 2021, Perez tried too hard, too early. He was trying to make something up when it was already lost. His chances of making it through the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez's first corners in the leading places without even needing a do-or-die move had been severely hampered by his poor qualifying the previous day.

Perez says that he "didn't expect Charles to brake so late since he was the car in the middle", but this overlooks the 2019 Austrian GP-hardened Leclerc, who was the only driver to really take on Verstappen's US GP surge at the start of this current triple-header, as we covered in these pages last week.

But Perez's move was all wrong – it was, again, too much too soon, much like his driving following his Miami GP defeat, with that Monaco Q1 crash and run of five early summer Q3 misses. At the Spanish GP, Horner put this down to feeling the pressure of taking on Verstappen at the front of the pack. And it can be seen in the data.

In qualifying in Qatar, for example – where Verstappen scored GP pole and Perez was out in Q2 – he was braking later and losing time on exit to his team-mate through each of the critical corners. This was at a high-speed venue where the gulf between them is fully exposed. It comes down to overdoing it in areas where less can often be more.

The lesson for Perez, then, is that he's got to avoid trying too much – that is a terrible approach for the slippery Mexico City track anyway. Getting through the first corners last Sunday in a podium place would simply have been far better than a DNF. Even a strong second behind Verstappen, and lapping up the intense passionate support for him in the Foro Sol stadium, might just have provided Perez with critical momentum looking to the remainder of this campaign and onwards to 2024 too.

Now his current mindset and approach likely needs a full off-season reset to properly correct. The scale of the challenge facing Perez when he then returns is formidable given he's up against a true F1 great in Verstappen. But it's surely his only chance of recovering form and emerging as a fresh title contender. ❧

**P16 MEXICAN GP REPORT**



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# Power-steering to the top

*The Williams Racing Academy driver and 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner talks about his season in F3 and what it was like to sample an F1 car*

ZAK O'SULLIVAN

**M**y second season racing in the FIA Formula 3 Championship was probably not as good as I'd hoped at some points, but in the end second in the championship is not a bad result. I clawed back quite a few points on the leader [Gabriel Bortoletto], which was a nice way to end, so I can't complain too much. I'd say in general the weekend in Hungary was a highlight as we had strong pace throughout. I was fastest in free practice and qualifying, and I won the feature race. It was a pretty enjoyable weekend and it's a track that I really enjoy.

We finished the season with the most wins – two feature races and two sprint races. I wouldn't say it was one of my best seasons, but it was still good. Going into a second season of F3 with a team like Prema Racing, the expectation, not just externally but also internally, is to fight for the championship and try to win it. Unfortunately, we didn't get too close as we lost quite a lot of ground early on. We came back into it at the end, but having all those wins and not winning the championship isn't the nicest statistic. However, we were still very strong.

This time last year I got my first taste of a Formula 1 car when I claimed my prize for winning the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award in 2021. It was a bit of an eye-opener coming from F3. It's more than double the power I was used to, probably double the aerodynamics as well, but a really cool experience, especially around a track like Silverstone.

I will never forget those first few laps in the car as I realised it was a lot faster than I predicted. It's an awesome experience to be driving such a current car. The 2021 car is still faster than the ones that are racing now. It's something I'll never forget and also a very useful experience, because you don't get much running in modern F1 cars, so even one day like that is valuable.

I was able to do bits and bobs in preparation. Being a Williams Racing Academy driver, I'm used to driving F1 cars on the simulator, so from that side I wasn't too unfamiliar with everything. But there's only so much preparation you can do, you just have to jump in, hope your neck is strong enough and go from there. In that sense, it was quite cool: no pressure, open test day, one car on track and see what it's about.

Physically, the sim doesn't test you – it's only a bit sweaty

**“I will never forget those first laps in the F1 car as I realised it was a lot faster than I predicted”**

sometimes, so the physicality is the main difference. In F3 and everything below F1, there's no power-steering, so it's kind of an equal amount of torque for your arm and your neck, and you have to tense your body through high-speed corners. Whereas jumping into the F1 car with power-steering, it was a bit of a weird sensation where nothing else on your body was stressed; it was just my neck being strained through the high-speed corners.

From a technical point of view and driving-wise, I'd say I was quite prepared, having done sim work with Williams all year. Operationally the cars are quite similar, and they both have Mercedes power units. There was some stuff that carried over, which was quite nice.

It's a bit funny when you think about it, having my first F1 test in an Aston Martin when I'm a Williams driver, but it's an incredible prize and you'd be silly to turn it down. My fellow Williams junior Luke Browning had his test last week for winning the 2022 Award, and my words of advice to him would be: whatever you were expecting, it's going to be more than that. For people who jump from Formula 2 to F1 it's a big step, so from F3 it's massive.

This is also my third year with the BRDC SuperStars programme and their support is invaluable. It's such a prestigious club. I'm also a full member courtesy of winning the Award in 2021. It's really cool and from my side, for sponsors and guests, I'm racing on the F1 weekend at Silverstone, so it's a really nice opportunity to bring them an exclusive experience.

As for next season, we're still finalising everything as we speak. Motorsport is always a bit tricky at this point of the year, trying to get everything sorted, but everything is looking upbeat and on schedule. FIA Formula 2 is the plan. 🏁





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FORMULA 1

# MAX DELIVERS MEXICAN MAXIMUM

*Red Bull's triple world champion extended the F1 season wins  
mark to 16 as his key opponents flattered to deceive*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

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# A

another Mexican Grand Prix is in the books, another Max Verstappen victory at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez and, for the second year in succession, the Mexico City track has played host to the Dutchman securing a new record for victories in a single Formula 1 season. Really, Verstappen won two races last Sunday – the 71-lap GP

effectively split in two almost equal parts by Haas driver Kevin Magnussen's big crash. Once again, Verstappen looked effortlessly better than the rest. But is there a case to be made that Verstappen might have had to work harder had just a few things gone differently in what ultimately turned out to be his fifth Mexican F1 win? Was there a rival who could have beaten him on the day?

Well, at least four drivers had the chance to put pressure on the eventual winner. But, for various reasons, all were thwarted. Which isn't to say Verstappen contributed little to his success, for this was a day when he repeated his magnificent start from 2021 here. This time, the long run to Turn 1 allowed him to pass two Ferraris instead of a Mercedes duo, and he stole the lead beautifully on the inside line at the first corner rather than the outside. And this was exactly where his first potential rival fell.

### **Perez: goes for home glory, crashes out**

As good as Verstappen's first start was last Sunday, it wasn't even the best example from a Red Bull driver. That came from his teammate, home hero Sergio Perez. He started fifth after yet another underwhelming qualifying session, but immediately made amends, reacting to the lights going out, in front of his adoring home crowd, in just 0.23 seconds. This was 0.02s up on Verstappen.

That got Perez immediately ahead of Daniel Ricciardo's AlphaTauri and, as Verstappen was carving his way between the Ferraris of surprise polesitter Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz, one Red Bull got a beautiful slipstream from the other.

That the Red Bulls had made such great launches was against the run of recent play, based on Verstappen's comments the previous weekend in Austin about being swamped by the McLarens and Mercedes at the opening turns in the preceding Japan and Qatar

events. Red Bull team boss Christian Horner put his cars' successes this time down to his drivers and engineers working together to ace "the conditions, the Tarmac, the altitude and everything" for better start performances. "It was just doing our procedures a bit better, understanding the tyre grip, clutch settings," added Verstappen later. "I think we just have been probably a bit sharper on that."

Verstappen had made his way past Sainz and into a corner-winning position against Leclerc halfway down the run to Turn 1, and looked in command. But, actually, his was the second Red Bull in the order when the leaders finally hit the brakes for the 90-degree right-hander, such was Perez's slipstream slingshot around Leclerc.

This took him to the outside line and towards the same place where Verstappen passed both Mercedes so thrillingly here in 2021. Perez's run was so good that he got his nose – adorned with a local charm

## **"I'M SAD BECAUSE TODAY WAS MY OPPORTUNITY. I WAS ONLY THINKING OF WINNING THE RACE"**

figure on the grid – fractionally ahead of Leclerc, with Verstappen basically the same distance back but on the critical inside line. They braked virtually in unison 75 metres out, just after Verstappen had moved slightly left to open up his trajectory. Leclerc was caught with "nowhere to go", as Perez swept in nowhere near far enough ahead. With Leclerc committed, contact was inevitable.

Perez was launched briefly skywards, spinning to the back of the pack in the gigantic Turn 1 run-off. He got going again quickly but could immediately tell his car was damaged. In the end, after a check in the pits, Red Bull decided "there was just too much damage to the floor and underbody of the car", according to Horner.

"Without a doubt I'm sad because today was my opportunity," Perez reflected afterwards. "I had a very good start and I was only thinking of winning the race. I didn't want to be [just] on the podium. I've been





Things got just a little too busy at the first start, with the home hero (right) the main victim



Like so many before, Perez paid this price for getting a good run on the outside

on the podium two years in a row. I saw the opportunity and I went for it. In hindsight, I took a risk, but if I had pulled it off, I would have come out of Turn 1 in the lead.”

Horner reckoned that without the crash, Perez “would have been on the podium for sure”. But he also teased of a potential close race between his two drivers, with Perez’s mighty FP2 pace on the hard tyres worth recalling. He was 0.575s per lap quicker on average than McLaren’s Oscar Piastri, the only available comparison but a worthy one, thanks to the orange team being genuinely in the reckoning for second-best race pace last weekend.

“It would have been a straight fight between the two of them,” explained Horner. “Checo had good pace this weekend, it’s just frustrating that [there] was a first-corner incident. That was my fear going into the race.”

### Leclerc: undone by poor starts and strategy misfortune

For the 11th successive time from pole, Leclerc failed to convert searing qualifying speed into victory. The biggest potential for his (slim) chances of depriving Verstappen came at Turn 1, but a sluggish, very low-revving getaway meant the fight was swiftly over. But still, Leclerc could have made things more interesting for Verstappen thanks to the differing strategy games that played out once Perez was out of the race. Immediately after the Turn 1 clash, Leclerc took to the grass and rejoined ahead, wisely opting to cede the lead to Verstappen.

By the end of the first tour, Leclerc was 1.6s in arrears, but his immediate concern related to the damage he’d sustained as the filling of the Red Bull start sandwich. “When I saw Checo with his rear wheel touching my front wheel, I was like, ‘OK, that’s [the race] done for >>



me’,” Leclerc said of this stage. “And then I did two, three corners and it didn’t feel too bad.”

Indeed, with his left-side front-wing endplate broken, Leclerc was still able to lap quicker than team-mate Sainz behind, the Spaniard 0.332s per lap adrift of Leclerc’s 1m23.784s average over their first stints. This march included Leclerc’s loose endplate falling off at the start of the fourth tour, which triggered a near-two-lap virtual safety car neutralisation during which none of the leaders pitted.

Leclerc was investigated, but in truth he was never in any danger of a penalty as, since this race last year, the FIA has left it to the teams to decide whether their car is safe or not. This followed Magnussen’s spate of black-and-orange-flag interventions for similar endplate damage in 2022. Ferrari had been “about to take action when the endplate detached” after spotting “a serious deterioration in the data”, according to the FIA stewards’ bulletin announcing that

## “MAX WAS VERY KEEN TO DO AN ATTACKING STRATEGY, EVEN IF IT CONCEDED TRACK POSITION”

Leclerc would escape sanction. In any case, the officials and teams all agreed that “the detachment of an endplate and the location of its final landing place, was not to be deemed as ‘unsafe’” since October 2022, according to the stewards.

For all the good work Leclerc was doing with a car he suspected had “other small things that weren’t in the right place” to gap Sainz, by the start of lap 19 Verstappen had romped clear. He was 4.6s ahead, but at the end of this tour he headed for the pits to exchange his medium tyres for one of the two new sets of hards he had available. A surprise two-stop strategy clearly beckoned for the leader.

“We went aggressive because the compounds had gone a step down [C3-C4-C5 versus C2-C3-C4 in 2022] and a one-stop felt like you were hanging on a bit,” Horner explained. “We felt we’d attack the race and Max was very keen to do an attacking strategy, even if it conceded track position to be on the right tyre. That was the plan from Friday.” This strategy put Verstappen back in the pack, with a 16.0s deficit to Leclerc. In six laps he’d reduced that to 11.5s, all while passing George Russell, Piastri and Ricciardo.

By now it was clear that Ferrari was aiming to get both its cars (Sainz at this stage still ran second, well down on Leclerc’s “10 or 15 [downforce] points” hobbled SF-23) home on a one-stopper. This was the quickest route on paper, as it would have replicated Verstappen’s winning soft-medium one-stopper from the lifeless contest here last year. This meant Verstappen likely would have had to make another on-track move to get back to the front, which again would have added jeopardy to his victory path and increased Leclerc’s hopes.

But that wasn’t to be, thanks to Magnussen’s crash. Just two laps after Leclerc had finally pitted to get off the medium tyres on the 31st tour, the Dane hit the Turns 8/9 inside tyre barrier hard due to a suspected overheating-related rear-suspension failure aboard his Haas. This initially brought out the safety car, while the VF-23’s rear brakes burned in the wreckage.



Hamilton’s lap 40 pass on Leclerc was some of the hottest action seen on the Mexican weekend

Verstappen stopped under this caution, essentially sealing the win when he rejoined still ahead, before the decision was made to stop the race so the barriers Magnussen had whacked could be inspected.

“If we pitted [Charles] two laps after, it [would have been] with the red flag and we would have restarted from pole,” Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur said of the misfortune on strategy timing. “Races are like this; they have tonnes of events.”

After a 22-minute delay, during which time Ferrari replaced Leclerc’s front wing, the cars formed up again on the grid. Verstappen and Leclerc had stayed on the hard tyres fitted just before the red flag, and once again the world champion nailed the start. “The three starts we had here were all rocketships,” elucidated Horner. So, on the same tyres, with no chance of further green-flag pitstops, against a car that is vastly superior on in-race tyre management, Leclerc’s victory challenge was over. But his task to keep second had just begun.

### Hamilton: had a chance to push, but sagely gave up

With Verstappen clear to a 1.3s lead by the end of the first lap following the restart, Leclerc was now much more concerned with Lewis Hamilton’s Mercedes, now back on medium tyres, albeit used ones.

Hamilton had battled past Ricciardo in the early stages after gaining in the aftermath of the Turn 1 crash, then he’d closed right up to the rear of Sainz by lap 16. For seven laps Hamilton threatened closely, before Mercedes pitted him to go from his starting medium tyres to hards on lap 24, attempting to undercut the second Ferrari. “When I noticed that I had the pace on Carlos, I knew that with the undercut, it really [could] work quite well,” said Hamilton of his gains before the stoppage.

Indeed, when Sainz was called in for what had been set to be his sole pitstop, he emerged 6.5s behind Hamilton. But without the stoppage, Leclerc’s seven-lap tyre-life offset and 2.8s advantage would likely have sufficed to keep Hamilton at bay in a one-stop contest.





Mercedes' lack of straightline speed here was another factor, even though it needed less brake-cooling lift-and-coast than the Ferraris – judging by how Leclerc dropped back when sat in Hamilton's wake later on – even with Verstappen's two-stopper threaded around this battle. But the crash changed this fight in Hamilton's favour, with an added twist that Leclerc's pace on medium tyres in the opening stint proved to be his undoing.

"The medium compound was the one that performed better," explained Pirelli motorsport boss Mario Isola. "We saw very low degradation of the medium compound. The track evolution played the biggest part in this equation."

With no rain washing away all the rubber going down last weekend, bar the few spots that closed out FP2, the circuit just came to the mediums even with the scorching 51C track temperatures at the start, with the extra rubber reducing the ever-present risk of graining.

Mercedes had spotted that the mediums were "holding on strong in the first stint", said team boss Toto Wolff, who added: "Charles did 31 laps and didn't really drop off, so that's why we made the call. It was a courageous call from our strategy and tyre people, and it paid off."

With Hamilton's only remaining set of hard tyres being seven laps old, that also played a part in why he took the restart on mediums, with hopes of getting higher immediately dashed by Leclerc's swinging, left-right-left-right-left defence to Turn 1. But that mattered little – with his mediums faster up to temperature on the smooth track surface, Hamilton attacked with a bold dive to the inside line of Turn 1 at the start of lap 40. Leclerc came across hard – "But Charles was really fair, great racing" – as Hamilton braved it out, with his right-side wheels clipping the grass, to seize second.

He put 1.3s on Leclerc on that lap, with Ferrari soon telling its charge that by lap 50 the hard tyres would be faster than the mediums. >>

## QUALIFYING



No one knew quite what was going on. After Max Verstappen had swept all three practice sessions in Mexico City, topped Q1, and been so confident in Q2 that he'd needed only one run to progress just behind Lewis Hamilton, the Dutchman was the clear favourite for pole position. Then came Q3 and Ferrari's miraculous turnaround.

The red pair had been sixth and ninth in Q2, Carlos Sainz only just squeaking through after a Turn 4 lock-up, but they shot to the front on the first Q3 runs. Suddenly, Leclerc led with a 1m17.166s, up on Hamilton's Q2 1m17.571s and Verstappen's Q1 1m18.099s. Sainz was just 0.067 seconds in arrears and Verstappen 0.12s back.

What was going on? Well, the temperatures had dipped, the heat diminishing steadily as late afternoon at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez turned to early evening, then dropping even quicker from 44 to 41C as Q3 kicked off. This boosted the Ferrari pair and their "still a bit peaky" car (in Leclerc's words) when it came to rear grip late in sector three. Sainz, meanwhile, felt that his first Q3 run was the first "good lap" he'd done "all weekend".

In the Red Bull garage, Verstappen was rueing "where I tried to find a little bit more time, then the balance wasn't exactly there" given the tricky challenge of tyre preparation here – namely how to warm the tyres sufficiently on the smooth, low-grip surface, then keep them alive with low downforce in the thin air leading to many slips and slides, and so hotter tyre-surface temperatures and even less grip. The track evolution factor peaking by the start of Q3 was also a consideration in how things turned out, particularly for Red Bull.

**"Verstappen was pole favourite, but then came Q3 and Ferrari's miraculous turnaround."**

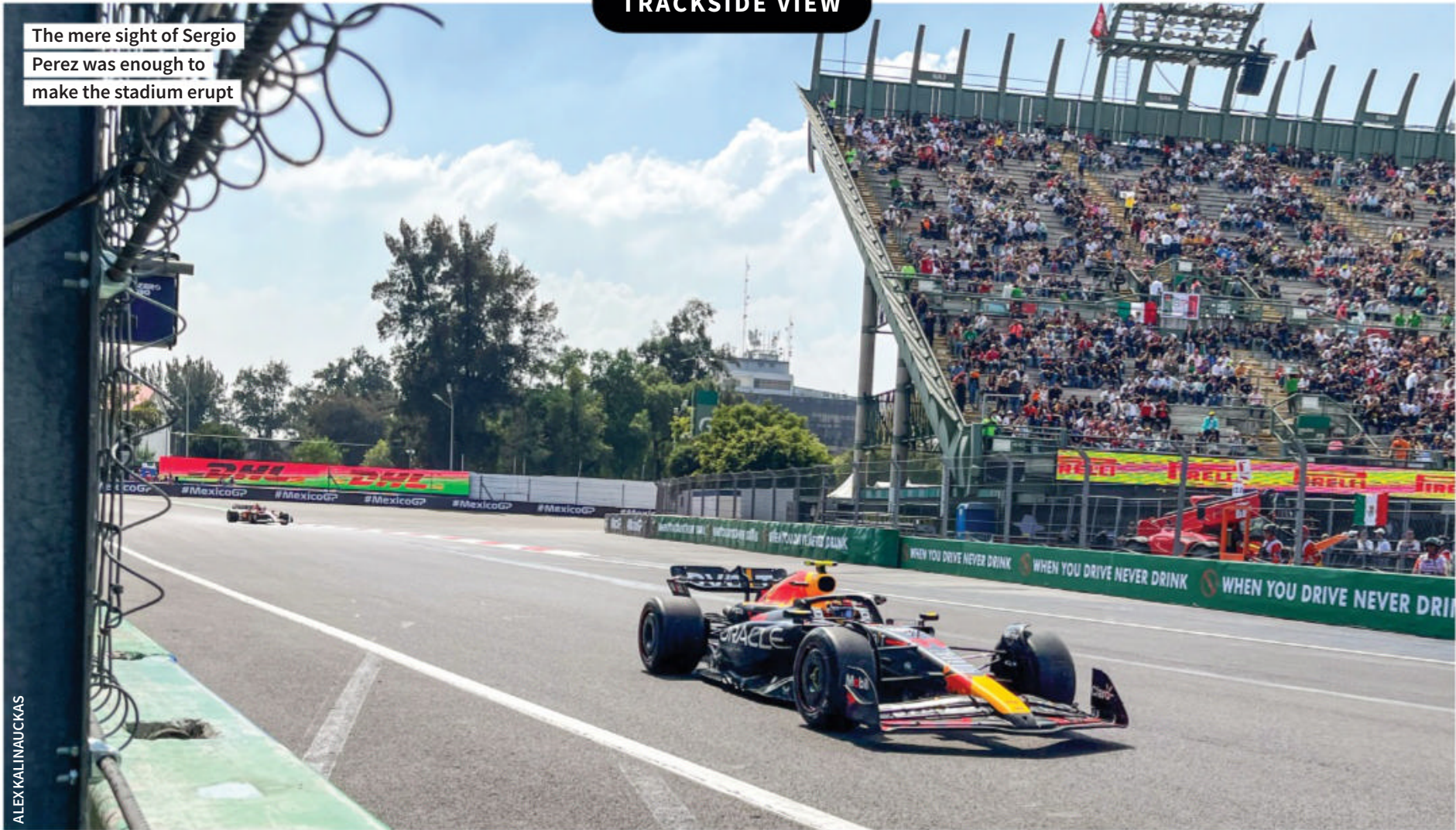
But there was still a final run to go. In this, Mercedes was on the wrong side of what team boss Toto Wolff said was an "almost incalculable" ideal tyre-preparation time as Hamilton slipped from his Q2 form to sixth. Ahead, Daniel Ricciardo's 1m17.382s Q3 first run stunned home hero Sergio Perez to secure fourth in the Australian's third qualifying effort since his return from injury.

Sainz led the pack around for the final Q3 fliers, with Leclerc, Perez and Verstappen following. Sainz reckoned "the second lap felt a lot cleaner than the first one", which left him with a "weird" feeling as he went 0.151s slower than his previous best. Leclerc too failed to improve, but he cited a Turn 4 lock-up and felt "from that moment onwards, I knew my lap was basically done".

So Verstappen had his chance. He "tried to get a bit of time back" from trailing Leclerc in sector one, and felt he then "was sliding around quite a bit". It all added up to a 1m17.263s personal best – still third and 0.097s down.



TRACKSIDE VIEW

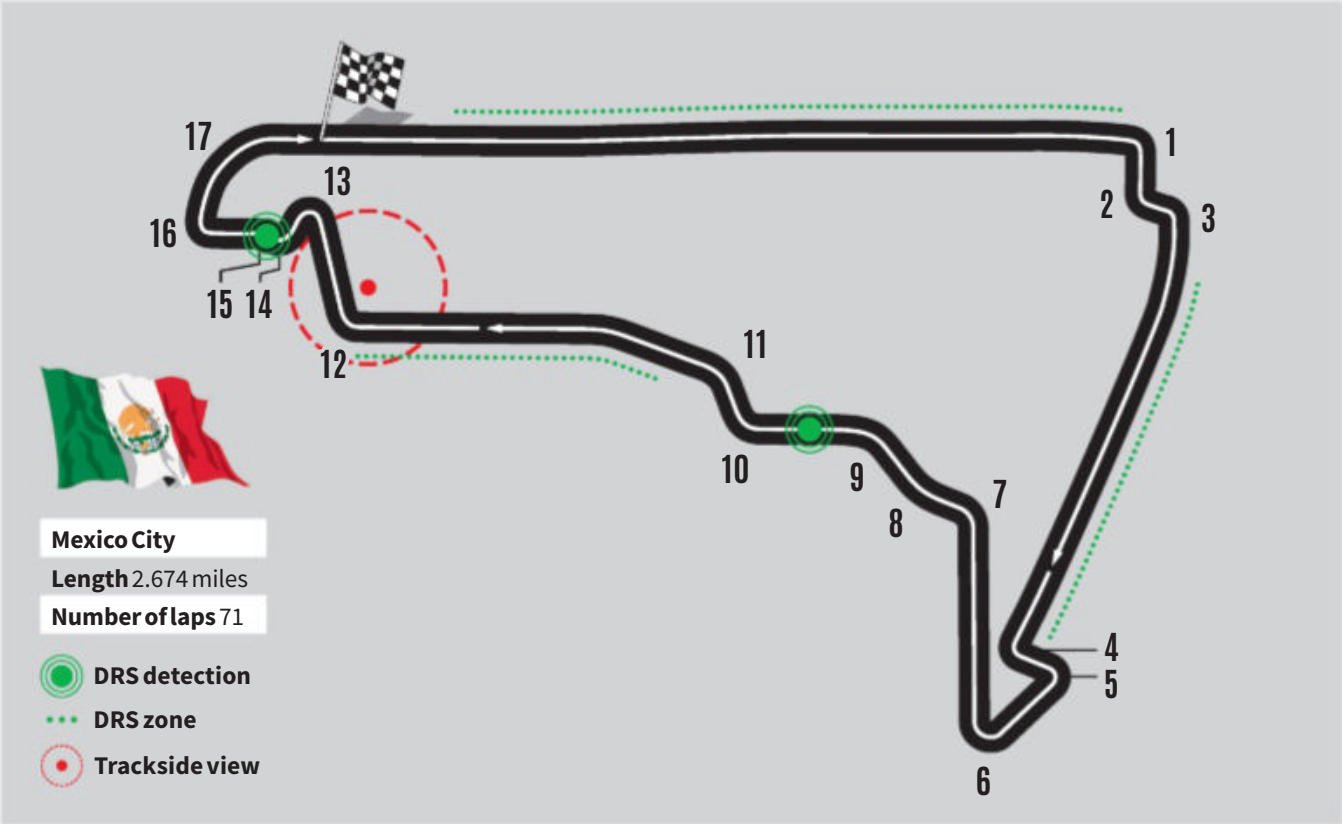


There’s no doubting who the crowd packing the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez is here to see. The huge cheers Sergio Perez receives in the Foro Sol stadium on his first lap out of the pits are repeated each time the home hero passes in FP1.

Autosport arrives early on the outer edge of the former baseball complex for the one-hour session. As the drivers venture out, and Perez is getting the welcome he has no chance of hearing, we’re initially covered in a deluge of track surface mess. Whereas the new asphalt surfaces in Miami and Qatar have left Autosport faces silently

“Zhou Guanyu and Lewis Hamilton are among the many having to tame tail-end slides”

streaked with grime in 2023, here we feel the various bits float down and cover our arms and notebook. The track-surface detritus is part of the early challenge here in Mexico City, where the park setting puts regular showers of nature across the 2.7-mile layout. The thin air here also means brake cooling is a challenge from the off, with the drivers trying not to let the hot temperatures generated by slowing their machines seep into their tyres and reduce grip further. We’re paying particular attention to the track surface early on, as the



drivers get up to speed on a tyre compound range that is a step softer than it was here in 2022. And looking far out left at the exit of Turn 12, we spot how many of the drivers are struggling to stay on the track here. Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon are fully off the road as they complete their first pushing laps, the Ferrari ace just catching a rear slide with the thin air reducing downforce significantly, the Williams man caught out in the dirty air coming off Zhou Guanyu’s Alfa Romeo. Zhou and Lewis Hamilton are among the

many having to tame tail-end slides as they hit the gas out of the not-quite-90-degree right. What’s making their lives harder is the white line marking for the Formula E layout, which runs around the Foro Sol and then heads back out at Turn 12 to complete the full Peralta challenge. The F1 drivers must hit the gas earlier and take a narrower line to avoid spinning up the rears on what is now a black-paint-covered FE line. That will help in-race tyre degradation, but in qualifying they’ll just try and live

with it. It’s not too long before most of the slips and slides are over. Midway through the session, Hamilton is struggling with the rear of his W14 stepping out as he brakes for Turn 12. For FP1’s finale, we head back to the foot of the Foro Sol’s south-facing side, where we note how the McLaren pair are moving wider out of Turn 12 earlier than the rest. Strong sun might be beating down throughout, but nothing dampens the crowd’s enthusiasm for Perez. **ALEX KALINAUCKAS**





TILTON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

No matter how many times you've been there, a trip to the podium is always worth a selfie

But this crossover only came “quite late” according to Isola – on lap 67, after many fluctuations between the pair. By this point Hamilton was 7.6s ahead, a gap boosted by Leclerc’s apparent extra lift-and-coast requirements. Isola added that this was “later than expected because of the lower degradation of the medium”.

“With the hard, we were never able to ‘restart’ the tyres,” explained Vasseur. “And we were always on the shy side. It didn’t work at all.”

Hamilton set the race’s fastest lap on the final tour. But this raised the question of whether he could have pushed harder earlier to try to pressure Verstappen to the flag, which the Red Bull driver reached with a 13.9s margin.

Well, it turns out that Hamilton did try. “For sure I could have pushed a little bit harder,” he explained afterwards. “I did at one time try to see, [thinking], ‘OK, I think I’ve saved enough [tyre life], let me see if I can try and close this gap to Max.’ It was like 10 laps to go and I did a 22.0 and Max did a 21.9. I was like, ‘Nah, I’ll leave it.’ He was just cruising at 21.9.

“Also, I had to be cautious. Just careful because obviously my tyres, if I really pushed them for the last 10 laps, probably would have opened up. Who knows, maybe Charles would have caught me up.”

### Norris: the race’s biggest unknown Verstappen threat

Lando Norris finished just 6.1s behind Sainz to take fifth, after starting 17th and battling past Ricciardo and Russell (who jumped the AlphaTauri and Piastri with a great restart launch and some boldness at Turn 1) late on.

This capped a brilliant rise from Norris, which included losing



## “WE WERE NEVER ABLE TO ‘RESTART’ THE HARD TYRE. WE WERE ALWAYS ON THE SHY SIDE. IT DIDN’T WORK AT ALL”

three places to a pitstop before the pre-red flag safety car, and an awful, wheelspin-heavy restart that shipped four more places. But Norris just would not be denied, gaining nine spots in the ‘second’ race and doing so all while coping with the same brake temperature management as the rest. His pace from the lap after the second restart to the end came in at a 1m22.924s average, which compares very favourably, all that overtaking considered, to 1m22.582s for Hamilton and even Verstappen’s 1m22.237s.

Quite rightly, he rued his Q1 mistake on soft rubber in the track’s quick swoops, which followed McLaren having to pull Norris in to check that his fuel system was working properly when he was on a medium-tyred banker-lap effort.

Therefore, Norris said afterwards that, despite a race McLaren team boss Andrea Stella called “one of the best of all [he’d seen in F1]”, and like the Fernando Alonso Valencia 2012 victory that Stella race-engineered, the Briton felt he couldn’t “put a smile on my face”. This was after apparently letting down “700 to 800 people [at McLaren], who are relying on me to do a good job”.

Going back to FP2 again, there Norris had actually shaded Verstappen’s long run on the critical medium tyres by a 0.274s average. This suggests that he too could have made things harder for the winner had he started anywhere near the top positions. That’s even if it was just forcing the Dutchman to press on with tyres he said were “giving up” by the time he stopped for the first time.

Yet, for all Norris’s thwarted potential, perhaps the biggest regret for these races that never were goes back to Perez. He “had two new mediums, so he could have been in good shape”, explained Horner, for the second start and ‘second’ race. Armed with the race’s best tyre on the season’s best car, Perez might indeed have made this race “an interesting afternoon”.

But it wasn’t to be. Verstappen now has a record-breaking 16 wins in a single Formula 1 campaign. Hamilton would “probably put money on it that he’d get to 18, 19, with that car” by the time the season concludes back in Abu Dhabi in three races’ time. 🏆

**NEXT F1 REPORT**  
Brazilian Grand Prix  
9 November  
issue





## Aston Martin ‘not lost’ despite continued woes

Damage to Fernando Alonso’s car hampered an already off-colour Aston Martin in Mexico as the British squad endured a miserable weekend that resulted in a double retirement.

Indications from the team were that Alonso’s machine had been afflicted by debris from the Turn 1 clash between Sergio Perez and Charles Leclerc, which relegated the two-time champion into a bit-part role before retiring on lap 47.

“It is hard; we are working as much as we can,” Alonso pondered after the race. “It’s not that we are just happy with the situation, and it’s not the position we wish we were, but at the same time we are working very hard to reverse the situation.”

Alonso had allowed team-mate Lance Stroll to go past as the Canadian sought to make up ground from a pitlane start, his second-successive getaway from the garage after Aston Martin broke parc ferme to make tweaks to his car.

Stroll made good progress in the first half of the race, although a lap 30 pitstop was unfortunate given its proximity to the red flag. He made his way to the back of the Nico Hulkenberg train, and looked to have found a way past Valtteri Bottas’s Alfa Romeo with five laps to go, but their clash left Stroll with too much damage to continue.

Aston team principal Mike Krack denied that the squad was lost amid its upgrade path, stating: “I think when you are lost, you’re rolling the dice, then you try things that are not reasonable. And this was not the case. We have focused engineering discussions, weighing options against each other. We want to go racing, not to go from the pitlane, but it is very important that we understand the findings that we have in the data. We have to take pragmatic decisions sometimes; it’s not easy, but it’s the right way to move forward.”

## Piastri-Tsunoda clashes judged as racing incidents; no penalties

The two clashes between Oscar Piastri and Yuki Tsunoda in the Mexican Grand Prix were adjudged to be racing incidents, with Piastri shrugging off floor damage while Tsunoda was tipped into a spin.

The Japanese AlphaTauri driver’s effort to pass Piastri’s McLaren for seventh through Turns 1-2-3 on lap 48 of 71 ended with a smidgen of contact between the two, and the Australian ultimately held

the position. Tsunoda hit back on the following lap and chopped across Piastri, precipitating further contact to leave the AlphaTauri in the weeds.

“I’m not really sure what happened; I was just braking and then we touched wheels, so nothing really more than that,” Piastri reckoned.

It put a dampener on Tsunoda’s initially impressive run from the back of the grid. He became the first driver to pit when he called in on the ninth lap, and had employed the hard tyre to cycle out in eighth by the time the red flag emerged.

After the incident, Piastri faced a threat from team-mate Lando Norris as the Briton recovered from a surprise Q1 exit with a rapid ascent through the second half of the race. Initially Piastri was given the hurry-up, but a lock-up prompted him to wisely give up the position to Norris, who was able to successfully clear George Russell and Daniel Ricciardo by the end.



“THE SUSPENSION GAVE UP”

Haas driver Kevin Magnussen, whose left-rear trackrod deformed as brake temperatures became excessive, causing him to crash out and cause a race stoppage.





## MORE POINTS FOR ALBON'S WILLIAMS AS FUEL PUMP PUTS SARGEANT OUT

Alex Albon reckoned that the ground he made up at the standing restart was crucial to his points-scoring efforts in Mexico, because it meant he avoided the train stuck behind Nico Hulkenberg.

Williams had kicked off the weekend strongly, with Albon claiming the second-fastest times in FP1 and FP3, but the hotter temperatures in qualifying and the race had affected the FW45 and put a premium on tyre management.

Albon rocketed up to ninth on the restart. He later lost a place to Lando Norris, but gained one from Yuki Tsunoda's clash with Oscar Piastri, and was not troubled over the final laps when the cars behind lost ground.

"I don't think I remember the last time I scored points and not had to defend from my position," Albon said of his ninth place.

Fellow Williams driver Logan Sargeant retired a lap from the end with a fuel-pump issue, though was classified 16th.

## Alfas slide out of top 10 before Bottas takes rap

Alfa Romeo got both its cars into the top 10 in qualifying, but fell out of the points when the red flag dented a one-stop strategy with both cars.

Zhou Guanyu remained in the points beyond the first lap, although Valtteri Bottas went wide in the opening corners and dropped from ninth to 12th. Although Bottas made up ground when he went long on his opening set of medium tyres, a pitstop on lap 31 cost track position by the time the red flag for Kevin Magnussen's crash had emerged.

He moved up to 13th on the restart to join the Alpines in battling Nico Hulkenberg, putting pressure on Pierre Gasly ahead, but towards the

end of the race came under fire from the Aston Martin of Lance Stroll.

Bottas ran wide in the Foro Sol hairpin, which allowed Stroll to inch past, but speared into the Canadian when the door was slammed on him in the next corner. Stroll retired, and Bottas was handed a five-second penalty and two points on his licence for the incident. This put him behind Zhou in the classification. The Chinese had to endure a long final stint on hard tyres, on which he had stayed during the red flag. This left him "a sitting duck" at the restart, where he dropped two positions and continued to fall backwards as the tyres continued to fade.



### Q&A

#### DANIEL RICCIARDO ALPHATAURI DRIVER

##### Are you satisfied with the weekend?

Everything was working pretty well. It's honestly the red flag, I think, but I don't want to say it too selfishly because there was a big accident. As much as that hurt our race, I would like to think on strategy, everything was looking pretty smooth then. It was probably a bit more nervous on the pitwall after that!

##### Too conservative when attacking George Russell?

I was honestly trying as much as

I could. It was a little weird. At the start of the stint, I didn't feel as good as towards the end. I felt like it took me a little bit to get a rhythm with the tyre and then, on the last 10 laps, I was able to start really pushing harder. I think ultimately just to be battling the Mercedes at the end makes me more happy than missing out on sixth.

##### Are your first points of the year a good outcome?

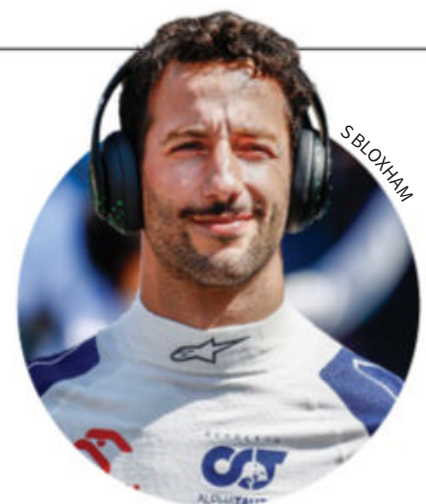
Yeah, absolutely. After last week, Yuki got five points and it was huge for the team. Everyone was cartwheeling, and backflipping. So a week later, to get six points, we're very happy.

##### Were you comfortable before the restart?

We were holding Oscar [Piastri] at bay. It felt like at least at that moment it could be a nice lonely fifth place. And I was OK with that. So I definitely think we could have been better than seventh without the red. But that's racing.

##### Can you catch Williams in the points?

I think, if this weekend's form continues, absolutely, but it's hard to know. Brazil is a very different track but it's similar altitude, you still run pretty much high downforce, so maybe it could help us.



##### Are you surprised by the performance?

You can never guarantee a good weekend, but I'm not surprised. We had a good weekend because I was just ready for it. The direction we went with set-up allowed me to have a bit more confidence with the car.





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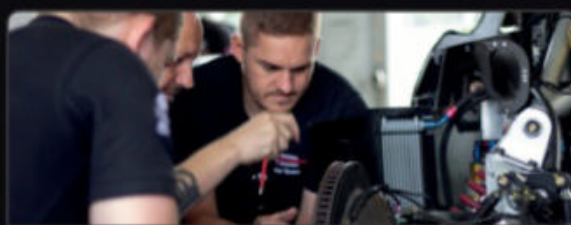
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GIORGIO PIOLA

## PROBLEMS POSED BY THE HEIGHTS OF MEXICO CITY

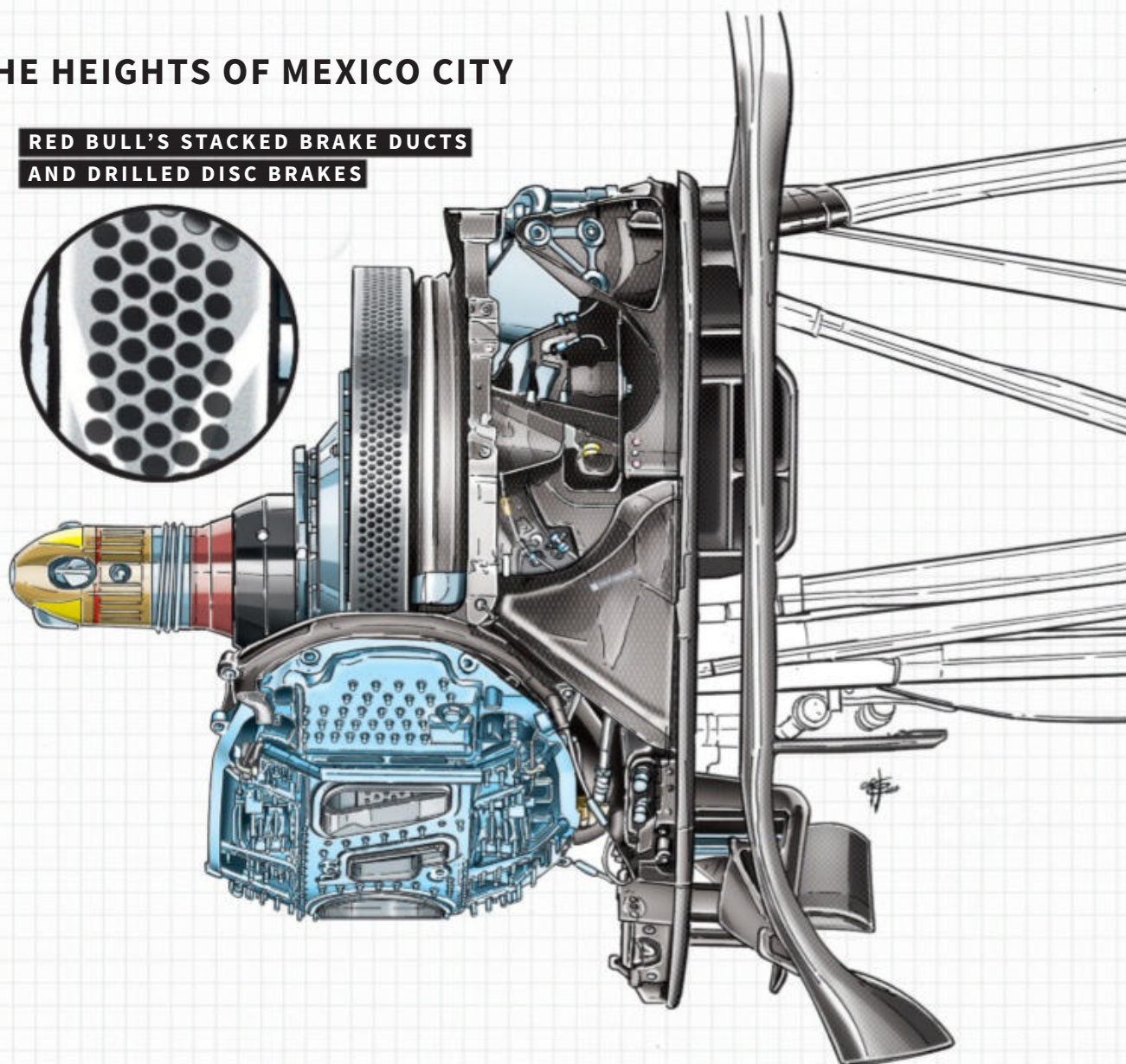
Different circuits have unique characteristics that must be accounted for, and Mexico City's Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez offers its own challenge thanks to its altitude.

Mexico City sits 2250 metres above sea level, contributing to a 22% reduction in air density. Although this used to be a significant hurdle for naturally aspirated cars, particularly when faced against the turbocharged cars that could use forced induction to overcome the thinner air, this is scarcely an issue in modern-day F1's turbo-hybrid formula. Instead, achieving the requisite level of cooling is a more arduous task.

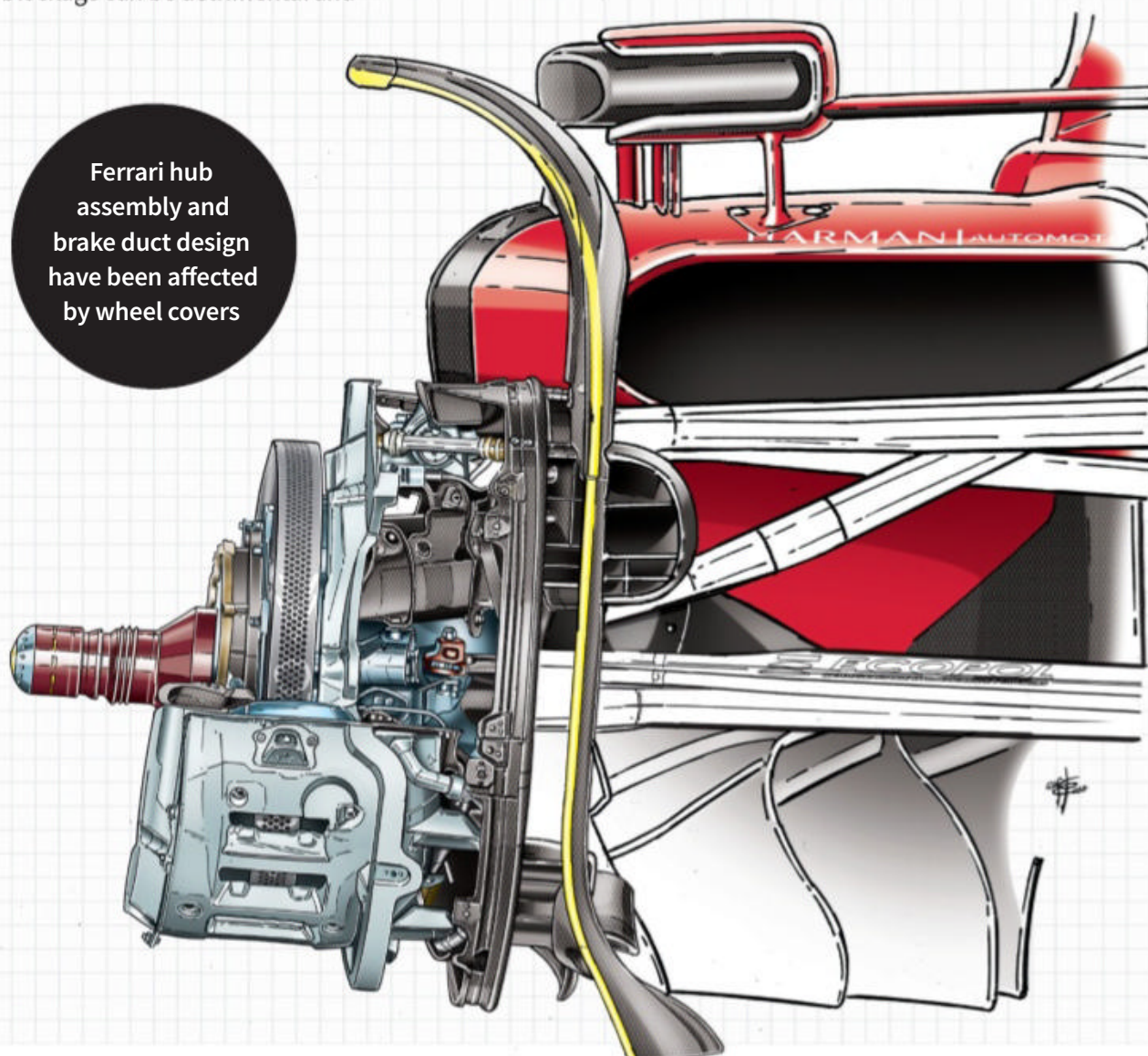
An engine can be cooled sufficiently with a given mass flow rate and, without that thanks to the drop in air density, requires the bodywork to be opened up more to allow heat to escape.

It's the same for the brakes, where the inlets are kept open to ensure that the brake components receive adequate airflow. Any kind of blockage can be detrimental and

### RED BULL'S STACKED BRAKE DUCTS AND DRILLED DISC BRAKES



Ferrari hub assembly and brake duct design have been affected by wheel covers



related issues with the suspension components can occur, as demonstrated by Kevin Magnussen's crash in Mexico.

Ferrari and Red Bull operate with different brake duct designs, with Red Bull opting to stack its inlets vertically while Ferrari has a more protruding aperture, and both inlets are divided to distribute the incoming airflow to the parts that need it.

One of the challenges thrown up by the shift to 18-inch wheels and the return of wheel covers has been in the expulsion of hot air from the braking system, and an age-old technique has been to cross-drill holes into the brake disc to enlarge the exposed surface area. This allows heat to escape more readily.

Red Bull has also experimented with adding tiny bumps on the outer surface of the caliper to improve this effect, since the transfer of energy is improved through the greater surface area.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



20 Stroll #18  
1m19.227s

18 Tsunoda #22  
no Q2 time

16 Magnussen #20  
1m19.163s

14 Albon #23  
1m19.147s

12 Hulkenberg #27  
1m18.524s

19 Sargeant #2  
no Q1 time

17 Norris #4  
1m21.554s

15 Ocon #31  
1m19.080s

13 Alonso #14  
1m18.738s

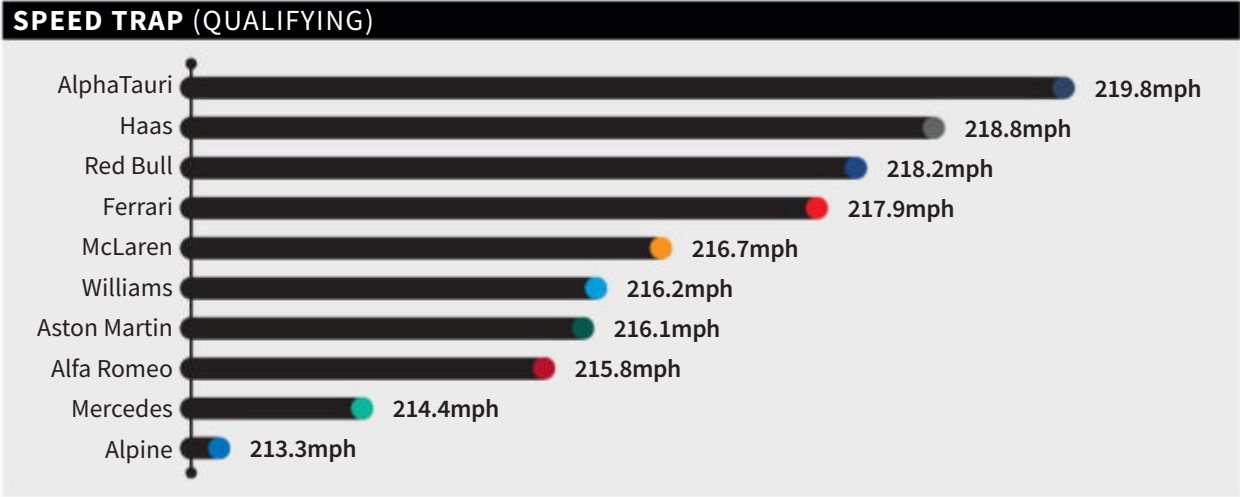
11 Gasly #10  
1m18.521s

FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2			FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m19.718s	1	Verstappen	1m18.686s	1	Verstappen	1m17.887s
2	Albon	1m19.813s	2	Norris	1m18.805s	2	Albon	1m17.957s
3	Perez	1m20.015s	3	Leclerc	1m18.952s	3	Perez	1m18.026s
4	Norris	1m20.237s	4	Bottas	1m18.955s	4	Russell	1m18.248s
5	Leclerc	1m20.297s	5	Perez	1m18.988s	5	Piastri	1m18.392s
6	Piastri	1m20.463s	6	Ricciardo	1m19.002s	6	Bottas	1m18.437s
7	Sainz	1m20.479s	7	Hamilton	1m19.024s	7	Tsunoda	1m18.450s
8	Ricciardo	1m20.568s	8	Ocon	1m19.077s	8	Norris	1m18.480s
9	Ocon	1m20.677s	9	Piastri	1m19.163s	9	Ricciardo	1m18.499s
10	Stroll	1m20.687s	10	Russell	1m19.227s	10	Hamilton	1m18.522s
11	Hamilton	1m20.724s	11	Sainz	1m19.257s	11	Sargeant	1m18.718s
12	Hulkenberg	1m20.968s	12	Tsunoda	1m19.290s	12	Zhou	1m18.917s
13	Zhou	1m21.129s	13	Zhou	1m19.415s	13	Leclerc	1m18.970s
14	Sargeant	1m21.157s	14	Albon	1m19.446s	14	Stroll	1m19.094s
15	Bearman	1m21.313s	15	Hulkenberg	1m19.535s	15	Sainz	1m19.293s
16	Alonso	1m21.347s	16	Gasly	1m19.642s	16	Hulkenberg	1m19.320s
17	Hadjar	1m21.941s	17	Sargeant	1m19.900s	17	Alonso	1m19.471s
18	Doohan	1m22.109s	18	Stroll	1m20.075s	18	Gasly	1m19.509s
19	Vesti	1m22.937s	19	Magnussen	1m20.112s	19	Magnussen	1m19.573s
20	Pourchaire	notime	20	Alonso	1m20.426s	20	Ocon	1m19.839s

WEATHER Sunny, air 26-28C track 41C

WEATHER Sunny then overcast, air 29-24C track 41-31C

WEATHER Sunny, air 26-27C track 44-47C



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m18.099s	1	Hamilton	1m17.571s	1	Leclerc	1m17.166s
2	Piastri	1m18.241s	2	Verstappen	1m17.625s	2	Sainz	1m17.233s
3	Ricciardo	1m18.341s	3	Russell	1m17.673s	3	Verstappen	1m17.263s
4	Leclerc	1m18.401s	4	Ricciardo	1m17.706s	4	Ricciardo	1m17.382s
5	Bottas	1m18.429s	5	Piastri	1m17.874s	5	Perez	1m17.423s
6	Perez	1m18.553s	6	Leclerc	1m17.901s	6	Hamilton	1m17.454s
7	Hamilton	1m18.677s	7	Bottas	1m18.016s	7	Piastri	1m17.623s
8	Sainz	1m18.755s	8	Perez	1m18.124s	8	Russell	1m17.674s
9	Albon	1m18.828s	9	Sainz	1m18.382s	9	Bottas	1m18.032s
10	Alonso	1m18.848s	10	Zhou	1m18.440s	10	Zhou	1m18.050s
11	Tsunoda	1m18.890s	11	Gasly	1m18.521s	WEATHER Sunny, air 28-29C track 47-44C		
12	Russell	1m18.893s	12	Hulkenberg	1m18.524s			
13	Gasly	1m18.945s	13	Alonso	1m18.738s			
14	Hulkenberg	1m18.969s	14	Albon	1m19.147s			
15	Zhou	1m19.016s	15	Tsunoda	notime			
16	Ocon	1m19.080s						
17	Magnussen	1m19.163s						
18	Stroll	1m19.227s						
19	Norris	1m21.554s						
20	Sargeant	notime						

SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	491	1	1
2 Perez	240	1	1
3 Hamilton	220	2	1
4 Sainz	183	1	1
5 Alonso	183	2	2
6 Norris	169	2	2
7 Leclerc	166	2	1
8 Russell	151	3	2
9 Piastri	87	2	2
10 Gasly	56	3	4
11 Stroll	53	4	6
12 Ocon	45	3	4
13 Albon	27	7	4
14 Bottas	10	8	7
15 Hulkenberg	9	7	2
16 Tsunoda	8	8	8
17 Ricciardo	6	7	4
18 Zhou	6	9	5
19 Magnussen	3	10	4
20 Lawson	2	9	10
21 Sargeant	1	10	10
22 de Vries	0	12	12

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP		PTS
1 Red Bull		731
2 Mercedes		371
3 Ferrari		349
4 McLaren		256
5 Aston Martin		236
6 Alpine		101
7 Williams		28
8 AlphaTauri		16
9 Alfa Romeo		16
10 Haas		12

QUALIFYING BATTLE			
Verstappen	17	1	Perez
Leclerc	12	7	Sainz
Hamilton	10	9	Russell
Gasly	12	7	Ocon
Norris	13	6	Piastri
Zhou	7	12	Bottas
Alonso	17	2	Stroll
Magnussen	6	13	Hulkenberg
Ricciardo	1	2	Tsunoda
Tsunoda	4	1	Lawson
de Vries	2	8	Tsunoda
Sargeant	0	19	Albon

WINS		FASTEST LAPS	
Verstappen	16	Verstappen	8
Perez	2	Hamilton	4
Sainz	1	Perez	2
		Alonso	1
		Piastri	1
		Russell	1
		Tsunoda	1
		Zhou	1

POLE POSITIONS	
Verstappen	10
Leclerc	4
Perez	2
Sainz	2
Hamilton	1

NEXT RACE

5 November

Brazilian GP

Interlagos



10 Zhou #24  
1m18.050s

9 Bottas #77  
1m18.032s

8 Russell #63  
1m17.674s

7 Piastri #81  
1m17.623s

6 Hamilton #44  
1m17.454s

5 Perez #11  
1m17.423s

4 Ricciardo #3  
1m17.382s

3 Verstappen #1  
1m17.263s

2 Sainz #55  
1m17.233s

1 Leclerc #16  
1m17.166s

RESULTS ROUND 19/22 (71 LAPS – 189.74 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	MaxVerstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	2h02m30.814s	59	Mn, Hn, Hn
2	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+13.875s		Mn, Hn, Mu
3	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+23.124s	12	Mn, Hn
4	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+27.154s		Mn, Hn
5	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+33.266s		Sn, Hn, Mn
6	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+41.020s		Mn, Hn, Mu
7	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+41.570s		Mn, Hn
8	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+43.104s		Mn, Hn, Mu
9	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	+48.573s		Hn, Mn
10	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m02.879s		Hn, Mn
11	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m06.208s		Mn, Hn
12	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+1m18.982s		Mn, Hn, Hn
13	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m20.309s		Mn, Hn, Mn
14	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m21.676s		Mn, Hn
15	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+1m25.597s		Mn, Hn
16	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	70 laps-fuel pump		Mn, Hn, Mn
17	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	66 laps-damage		Mu, Hu
R	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	47 laps-withdrew		Mu, Hu
R	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	31 laps-suspension		Mn, Hn
R	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1 lap-accident damage		Mn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Hamilton	1m21.334s	-	71
2	Verstappen	1m21.644s	+0.310s	40
3	Norris	1m21.944s	+0.610s	71
4	Leclerc	1m22.332s	+0.998s	38
5	Tsunoda	1m22.501s	+1.167s	11
6	Sainz	1m22.539s	+1.205s	57
7	Ricciardo	1m22.679s	+1.345s	66
8	Piastri	1m22.760s	+1.426s	53
9	Albon	1m22.773s	+1.439s	65
10	Russell	1m22.780s	+1.446s	38
11	Ocon	1m22.976s	+1.642s	66
12	Sargeant	1m23.003s	+1.669s	24
13	Magnussen	1m23.146s	+1.812s	25
14	Bottas	1m23.166s	+1.832s	43
15	Hulkenberg	1m23.222s	+1.888s	43
16	Gasly	1m23.230s	+1.896s	43
17	Stroll	1m23.257s	+1.923s	43
18	Alonso	1m23.531s	+2.197s	40
19	Zhou	1m23.567s	+2.233s	39
-	Perez	no time	-	-

WEATHER Sunny, air 28-31C track 44-51C  
WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 92.922mmph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 118.373mph







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

FP1

OLLIE BEARMAN replaced MAGNUSSEN at Haas, ISACK HADJAR replaced TSUNODA at AlphaTauri, JACK DOOHAN replaced GASLY at Alpine, FREDERIK VESTI replaced RUSSELL at Mercedes, and THEO POURCHAIRE replaced

BOTTAS at Alfa Romeo

GRID PENALTIES

TSUNODA Required to start from the back of the grid for additional power unit elements used

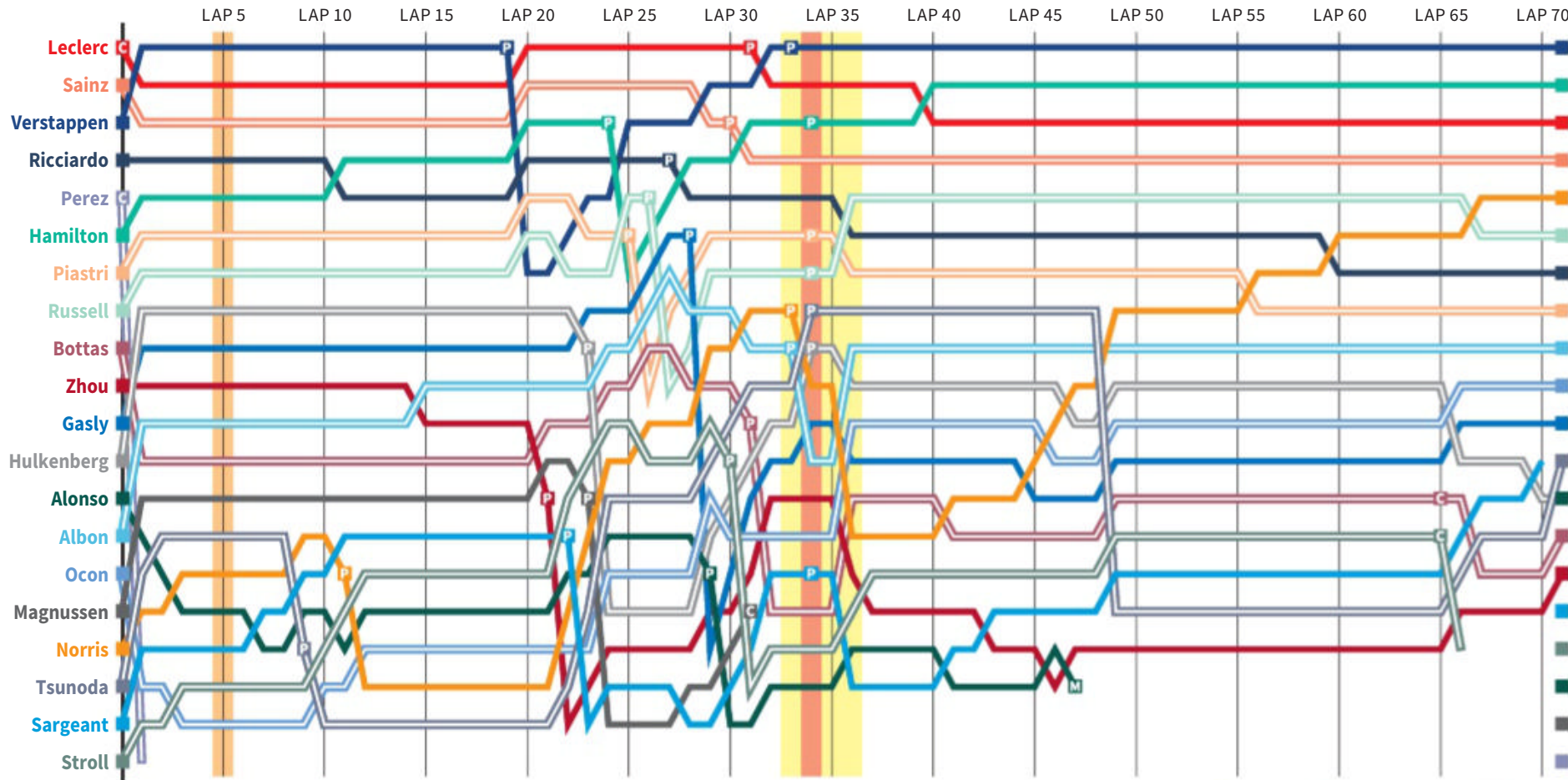
SARGEANT 10-place penalty for overtaking under yellow flags

STROLL Required to start from the pitlane for set-up changes while under parc ferme conditions

RACE PENALTIES

BOTTAS Five-second penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Stroll

LAP CHART



P Pitstop

C Crash

M Mechanical failure

S Spin

Penalty

Car lapped

Safety car

Virtual Safety car

Red flag

2 NOVEMBER 2023 AUTOSPORT.COM 29

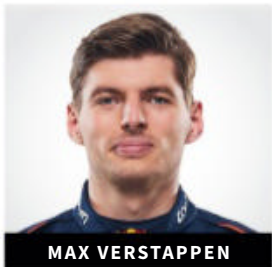


# MEXICAN GP DRIVER RATINGS

*Daniel Ricciardo is back in rarefied company after a performance that turned back the clock to his best days - which might not be over after all*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

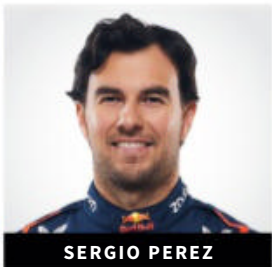
## RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **3rd** — Result **1st**

**9** His race was defined by both standing starts. Strong getaway from third offered the inside line, along with a lead he could easily build as the Ferraris focused on a one-stop strategy. Good launch at the red-flag restart warded off second-half threats, and he could focus on pace rather than battles.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **5th** — Result **R**

**2** Admitted to “only thinking of winning” into Turn 1. Seemed to expect Leclerc to disappear, and made no accommodation for other cars while turning in, yielding a clash and a seismic crowd reaction. Gets one point for strong getaway, and the other for having a go. But a wasted opportunity.

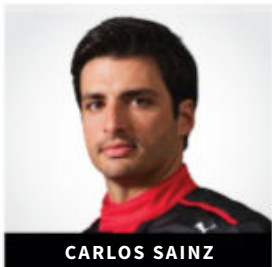
## FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **1st** — Result **3rd**

**8** Blameless in first-corner clash with Perez. Soldiered on with broken front wing, but threat was dulled by Ferrari’s cooling concerns, prompting lift-and-coast. One-stop plan unfortunately timed two laps before red flag. Gave Hamilton enough room – but no more – in Turn 1 pass.



CARLOS SAINZ

Started **2nd** — Result **4th**

**7** A solid race, but unable to beat a team-mate with a clipped front wing. Lost ground to Perez and Verstappen off the line, but did well to avoid chaos. Could not prevent Hamilton undercut after agreeing to stick to a one-stopper. Later defence against Russell forced the Briton into a retreat.

## MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **6th** — Result **2nd**

**9** Questioned the long medium stint at the end and, although pace was not enough to challenge for a win, he still made the strategy work. His pass on Leclerc was daring, but was vital to lock out second. Nicked the fastest lap at the end to capitalise on Perez non-score in fight for second in the points.

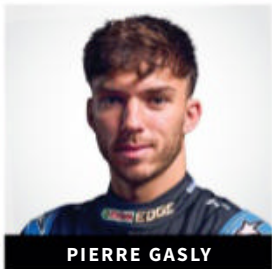


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **8th** — Result **6th**

**6** Like the first half of the season, his small advantage over Hamilton post-summer break seems to have melted away. Fell behind Piastri at the start, and stayed there either side of his pitstop. Used second standing start to make his way past Ricciardo and Piastri, but was outfoxed by Sainz.

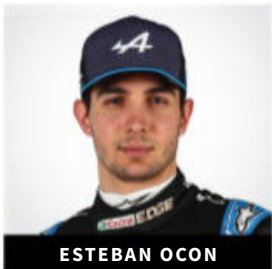
## ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **11th** — Result **11th**

**5** Started 11th and finished 11th, and was ahead of team-mate before restart. Was jumped off the line, and sat behind Ocon for second half while waving away threats from Bottas and Stroll. Broke past Hulkenberg when usual Haas tyre issues flared up, but not enough for points in a middling display.

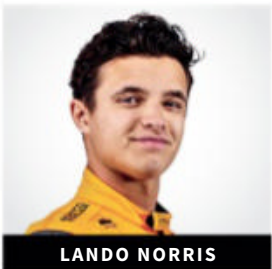


ESTEBAN OCON

Started **15th** — Result **10th**

**6** Overconfident in radio broadcasts for his move on Hulkenberg, only to be stuck behind the Haas for a few more laps. Fell to the back at the start, and looked to be out for the count until the restart after the red flag, where he made up three places. Hulkenberg’s tyre woes offered a point at the end.

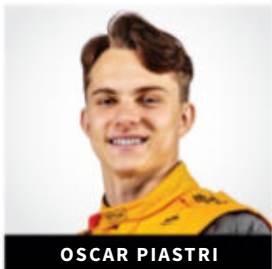
## McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **17th** — Result **5th**

**9** Not quite a 10, as an iffy second getaway cost four positions, but recovery from lowly grid slot was immaculate. Made medium tyres last and reeled off impressive overtakes. Moves on Russell and Ricciardo particularly strong. What could have been with a better qualifying session?



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **7th** — Result **8th**

**6** Marked down because he was comprehensively shown up by Norris. First-lap move on Russell was well-executed and did well to keep Mercedes behind, but race pace tailed off in the second half. Tsunoda duel got spicy. Probably too brusque in their first contact, but not to blame for second hit.

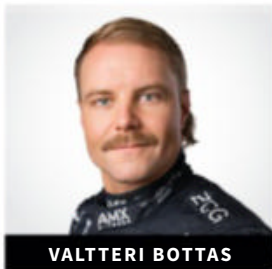
## ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **10th** — Result **14th**

**4** Retained 10th at the start, but that proved to be the peak. Was among the first to switch to the hard tyre, which left him with no new sets when the red flag emerged. Therefore began a drop down the order on restart, as he persisted with tyres that had already done around 15 laps for the second half.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **9th** — Result **15th**

**4** Had the book thrown at him for late Stroll clash, but wasn’t wholly to blame and was entitled to more room. Lost positions at the start, but broke back into top 10 before tyres cried enough. Stuck in the Hulk train for second half, which bunched up the order and precipitated Foro Sol contact with Stroll.





ASTON MARTIN



Started **13th** — Result **R**

**4** Had no pace, which he attributed to floor damage. Let Stroll go after struggling in the early stages, and effectively used the race as an extended test session before the team chose to retire the car. Seems to be fully focused on next year, so his mind presumably wasn't in Mexico.



Started **20th** — Result **17th**

**4** Possibly a harsh score given team was nowhere, but carries equal blame for Foro Sol clash with Bottas. Never really in hunt for points, and just hung on to Hulkenberg train during the second half. Retired with damage following Bottas clash, which rather summed up Aston's weekend, though was classified.

HAAS



Started **16th** — Result **R**

**5** On the fringes of points during the early phases. Suspension break produced monster crash at Turn 10. A weird off-track moment after the Peralta seemed to forecast the issue, which the team suspected was heat related. Before that, reckoned traffic hurt his tyre life.



Started **12th** — Result **13th**

**7** Defence of 10th place from Ocon, Gasly, and co was inch perfect, and relied on car positioning as traction began to weaken. Tyres ran out of life five laps from the end, resulting in the plummet down the order. Getting up to eighth from 12th on the grid is also worthy of merit.

ALPHATAURI



Started **4th** — Result **7th**

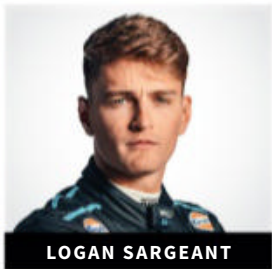
**9** That's more like it. Strong team pace offered a good platform, and he defended well from Hamilton at the start. Couldn't keep the Mercedes back and later lost fifth at the restart to Russell, but was great in combat and was on the #63 car's tail at the end. Cue the Red Bull speculation...



Started **18th** — Result **12th**

**4** Hotheadedness undid early good work. Made up three places at the start from 18th; an early stop assisted his rise, which got him up to eighth at the restart. Was probably entitled to an inch more room in first clash with Piastri, but cut the McLaren off in the second, ruining his own race.

WILLIAMS



Started **19th** — Result **16th**

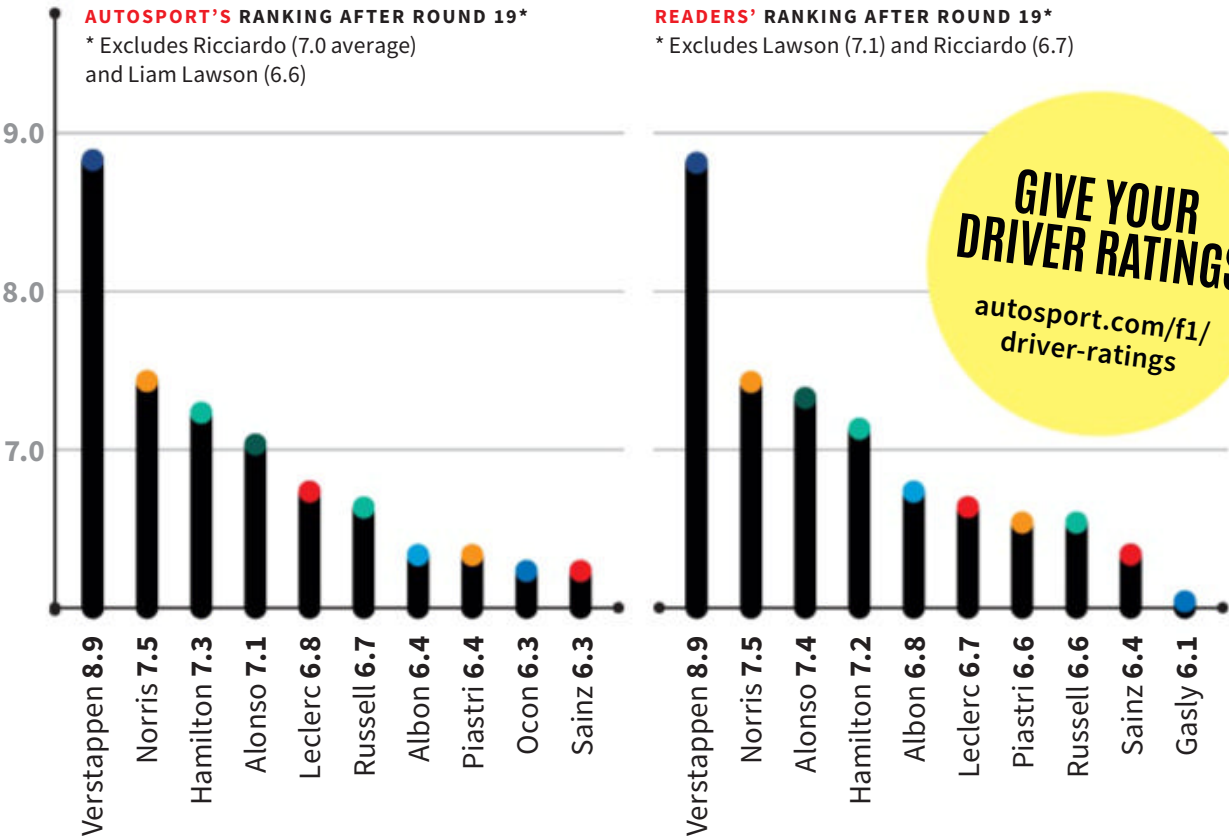
**5** Looked to have decent pace in the early stages, but a poor getaway on the restart put him to the back – the inverse to Albon's path to the points. Frustrated by Stroll's lines ahead, but made a burst of late progress amid rearguard battles. Had to call it a day early with a fuel pump issue.



Started **14th** — Result **9th**

**8** Felt warm track sapped speed, but early efforts to defend place in points translated into a serene final quarter as he was left unbothered at the end. Strong getaways were key to points, as tyre management had to be prioritised over the stints, and avoiding Hulkenberg train was also vital.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS





WRC  
**50**  
YEARS



V for victory?  
Rather, it's two for  
two. Halttunen (left)  
and Rovanperä enjoy  
their moment



# Rovanpera joins the greats as Neuville wins for Hyundai

*Once title rival Elfyn Evans had eliminated himself, Kalle Rovanpera showed his maturity by backing off to make sure of a second consecutive WRC crown*

PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN AND RED BULL

**S**ebastien Loeb, Sebastien Ogier, Juha Kankkunen, Miki Biasion, Tommi Makinen and now Kalle Rovanpera all have something in common – they’re back-to-back World Rally champions. This is the latest exclusive club of which 23-year-old Rovanpera can now call himself a signed up member after sealing the 2023 title at the inaugural Central European Rally.

“It sounds quite good – it’s clear that it’s not so easy to do it back to back,” enthused Rovanpera after the finish in Germany.

This championship-clinching triumph wasn’t the emphatic victory and Power Stage domination of 12 months ago at Rally New Zealand, when the Finn became the WRC’s youngest champion. Instead, the rally spoils were claimed by Hyundai’s Thierry Neuville. Rovanpera’s defeated title rival, Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans, even pinched the Power Stage, which has become one of Kalle’s party tricks.

That aside, the run to second for Rovanpera and co-driver Jonne Halttunen, which was more than enough to repeat their crown, summed up their season perfectly. There were moments of sheer brilliance in tricky conditions that left jaws on the floor on some of the toughest asphalt stages. Then there was the incredible dose of maturity beyond Rovanpera’s years to know when to push and what is required at any given moment to achieve his goals that has put him a cut above the rest this year.

These two attributes were key to avoiding the pitfalls at the Central European Rally, the WRC’s newest event and the first running of an entirely different concept to the series, where crews crossed borders to contest stages in the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany. On paper the idea ticks a lot of boxes. It offered the rally-mad nation of the Czech Republic its WRC debut while bringing rallying’s top flight to the people of three nations, and they turned out in their droves.

There was, however, one drawback: it took 1380.69km (over 850 miles) of road section – the highest of the season – to complete 310km (just under 200 miles) of competitive stages, ensuring long days for everyone associated. It’s a factor that will be addressed by organisers for next year’s edition.

This voyage into the unknown battleground comprising various changes of asphalt and unpredictable weather was the backdrop for a significant act in the title race between Toyota pair Rovanpera and Evans. The equation was simple: Evans needed to outscore his young stablemate to take the title fight to a deciding round in Japan. His case was backed up by a more impressive record on Tarmac than his opposite number – a 50% podium conversion rate since 2020 compared to 29% for Rovanpera.

But Rovanpera was on a mission, stating before the event that he was planning a “big push” to wrap up the title. Likewise, Evans was realistic, knowing that he would need his rival to suffer misfortune, but maintained an “anything can happen” outlook.

A three-and-a-half-hour road trip from the rally’s service park in the German city of Passau, located near to Austrian and Czech



Thierry Neuville was a comfortable winner after Rovanpera backed off

**“There were moments of sheer brilliance in tricky conditions that left jaws on the floor”**

borders, to the Czech capital Prague began this marathon. Two superspecial stages later, and Neuville emerged with a 1.2-second lead over M-Sport’s Ott Tanak after a tricky stage two, held at night in damp conditions.

Neuville’s pace wasn’t a surprise, after topping shakedown. The Belgian is renowned for his record on new asphalt events, having won the all-new Rally Japan last year. Speaking after Wednesday’s shakedown, he exclaimed: “The stages look good – challenging of course but exactly what I like.” It was a sign of things to come.

In the title race, first blood went to Rovanpera, who headed into Friday fourth, 5.8s adrift, while Evans was down in eighth, 10.7s in arrears after overshooting a junction on stage two. The Welshman fared better than Hyundai’s Esapekka Lappi. A jump-start on the opening stage, held around a horse racing track packed with fans, cost the Finn a 10s penalty.

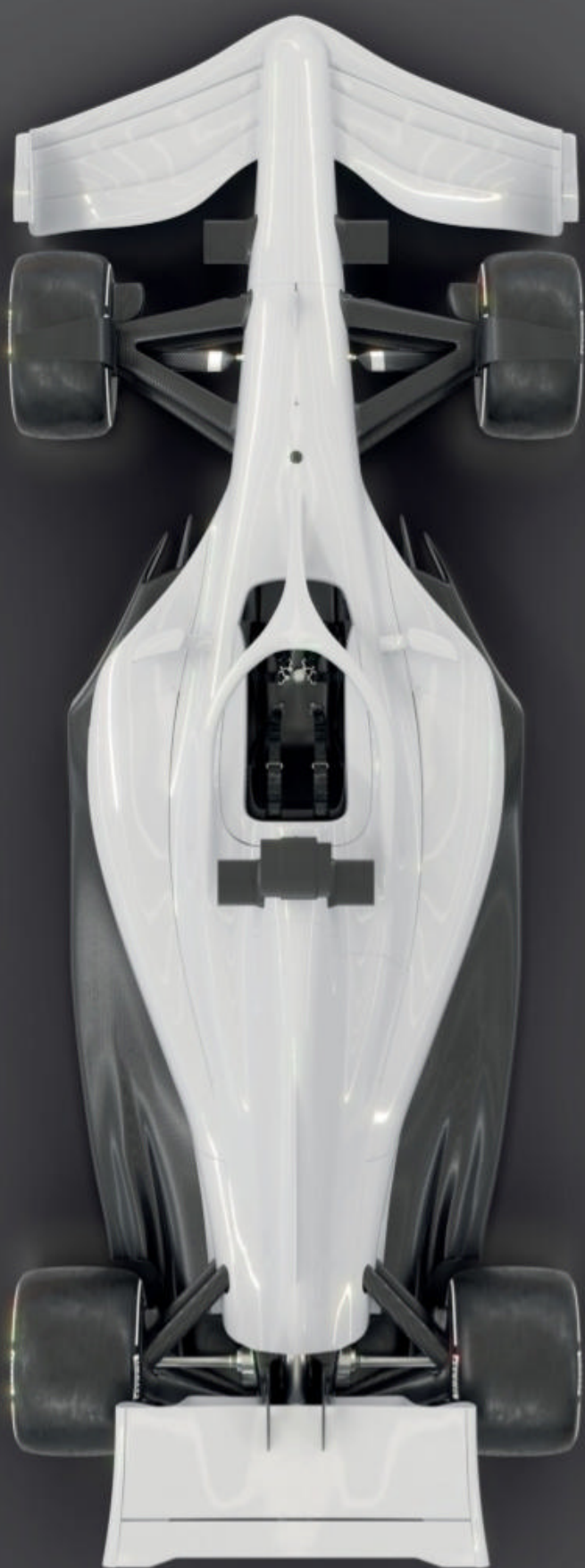
The nature of crossing borders made headlines on Thursday night when WRC3 champion Roope Korhonen, who had received his championship-winner plaque hours earlier, was forced to retire after German police stopped him at the Czech/German border. The issue was the validity of the registration plates and documentation for his BMP Srl-run Skoda. German police imposed a ban on the car while the FIA found the documentation contained “various falsifications”, resulting in a €10,000 fine for the team. Rally2 competitors Matteo Gamba, Eamonn Boland and Christian Windischberger were also stopped at the border.

If crossing borders to tackle brand-new stages wasn’t enough, »





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Evans gave it his all as he attempted to keep the title battle alive until Japan

## “When you hit the trees you know it’s game over. It’s one of my biggest disappointments”

the heavens opened on Friday to create some of the most challenging conditions of the season. It played into the hands of Rovanner, who has turned mastering slippery road surfaces into an art form. His task was made somewhat easier by his advanced road position as conditions worsened and every car passing through dragged mud onto the road from the myriad of cuts.

A clean sweep of the morning loop on Czech roads thrust Rovanner into the rally lead, but it was his stage-four performance that turned heads, posting a time 10.1s quicker than anyone else. In classic Rovanner style, he brushed off the performance. “It was not so easy to get on the pace here,” he stated of opening up an 18.1s lead over a struggling Neuville. “We got the info that this was to be even more wet than the first one, so I think I was a bit too careful in many places.”

Overnight leader Neuville started third on the road, but even his reasonably elevated road position cost him valuable time, while visibility issues contributed to his losses. “The conditions are really, really tricky,” muttered the Hyundai star. “The visibility’s bad and we lost the car a little bit in the fast section. I can tell you at that speed with all the surprises, it’s really dangerous.”

His team-mate Lappi appeared to thrive. Boosted by a new front differential and brake pads, he was much more comfortable driving the i20N and was Rovanner’s nearest rival, despite facing



Tanak takes a big cut in his Puma. The Estonian finished on the podium





muddier roads. Recovering from the jump-start penalty, Lappi climbed to third before his progress was halted spectacularly on stage five. The Hyundai driver misjudged a narrow section and clipped a tree with the right rear, triggering an enormous crash that was lucky not to cause any injuries to crew and spectators. “When you hit the trees for sure you know it’s game over,” stated Lappi after his third high-profile crash in the past four events. “This was one of the biggest disappointments for me this season.”

Lappi’s exit helped elevate Evans into second overall, 29.2s behind Roanpera. A benchmark time on stage six, which was cancelled after five Rally1 cars passed due to spectators standing in dangerous positions, nibbled a small chunk of time out of his title rival. But his work came undone in a difficult run through stage eight, which dropped him back behind Neuville, 47.2s behind leader Roanpera. The title battle swung away from him.

“Clearly the gap is not going to be reachable by pure driving,” Evans explained. “Kalle has done an incredible job today. Of course, he made the use of his road position but also more than that he has done a really great job and I couldn’t follow his speed. We’ll continue to do the best we can until the end.”

Roanpera refused to think about a second world title. “There is quite a long way to go,” he pointed out.

Outside of the top three, Tanak battled with the set-up of his Ford Puma to reach the end-of-day service in fourth, 1m30.4s adrift, but ahead of Toyota’s Takamoto Katsuta. Eight-time world champion Sebastien Ogier recovered from 10th to sixth after his morning was derailed by tyre damage caused by a broken rim on stage three. “Unbelievable, unbelievable. What can I say? I can’t wait for when Michelin is back,” fumed an angry Ogier, who later explained he’d lost his “motivation”, before beginning a recovery across the afternoon. He admitted to being close to giving up completely after revealing he was fighting a mystery illness. “I’m not so sure what it is, but it’s definitely affecting my head with a headache and concentration, and I feel a bit dizzy as well,” he said. “It has been like this for some days. Today with the [tyre] problem as well, I was close to giving up, to be honest.”

If Friday’s action shortened the odds on Roanpera becoming world champion, a dramatic Saturday more or less ensured that he had two hands on the trophy. But it wasn’t without a scare for the championship leader as the rally moved into Austria and Germany.

Rival Evans lived up to his “doing all he can” mantra by starting the day with a stage win. The next test, stage 10 (Muhltal 1, 27.15km) offered a glimmer of hope thanks to a rare Roanpera mistake. With the road order reversed, the rally leader faced the worst of the damp roads and overshot a hairpin left. Luckily, his GR Yaris skidded straight on and arrowed into a gap in the trees. He recovered but 24.7s was lost, slashing the deficit to the »

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chasing Neuville, and more importantly Evans.

That glimmer of hope for Evans was quickly extinguished on the very next stage. The Toyota driver locked an inside front wheel, which pushed the car wide and off the road at a relatively slow speed. The GR Yaris clattered into a shed, damaging the radiator while ripping off a rear wheel. Evans would rejoin the rally on Sunday, but it was match point to Roanpera.

“We were heading into the shed, let’s say, too fast to go in head first,” recounted Evans. “We tried to rotate the car to maybe see if I could get away with hitting it sideways, but unfortunately I caught the radiator on the corner of the shed and ripped off a wheel. Of course it’s a disappointment. We

## “We knew the title was a long shot. This type of incident is just one of those things”

knew anyway it [the title] was a long shot. We knew we had to try what we could in a way, and having said that I think this type of incident is just one of those things.”

Upon hearing the news before he started the stage, Roanpera showed his maturity and opted to back right off, surrendering his lead to Neuville. Roanpera said he had a battle with himself not to push across a dry afternoon loop, but stuck to his plan, allowing Neuville to open up a commanding lead. But Roanpera couldn’t completely resist the urge to “drive a bit”, as he put it, ending the day with a remarkable fastest time on stage 14, which was likened to Rally GB thanks to being caked in mud.

“There was a big fight in the car between myself not to fight for the win and just trying to keep the car on the road, which was a big challenge today, but the plan worked well,” said Roanpera. “It [stage 14] was something crazy. I haven’t seen anything like this before and I don’t think many drivers have. There were a few corners on Tarmac and everything else on mud and gravel.”

With Roanpera focused on bringing the car home to claim the title, Neuville also didn’t have to push to protect his 26.2s lead. As a result, Neuville cruised to a second win of the year after navigating Sunday’s four stages on German roads. “First of all, really a relief to be at the finish, but I think overall we’ve done a very good job – good consistency, which basically paid off,” smiled Neuville, who took the spoils by 57.6s.

Roanpera stuck to his conservative plan, unusually elected not to unleash on the Power Stage, and sealed a deserved title. It prompted the latest choreographed rooftop title celebration from the Roanpera and Halttunen double-act.

Tanak claimed the final podium spot after surviving various issues. The Hyundai-bound Estonian suffered a broken gear lever



and knob, which he jokingly put down to “going to the gym too much”, a puncture on a road section, and a hydraulic issue that briefly meant he slid into a ditch on Saturday night.

Ogier’s difficult rally ended with the Frenchman fourth ahead of Katsuta, who found the confidence to push on challenging roads and hold off the Hyundai of Teemu Suninen. M-Sport’s Gregoire Munster, in only his second Rally1 start, finished seventh and in front of team-mate Adrien Fourmaux, who recovered from 15th in class to take the Rally2 category, prior to his Rally1 promotion for the Japan season finale. Nicolas Ciamin claimed a maiden WRC2 win, the Frenchman finishing ninth overall.

Pierre-Louis Loubet rounded out the top 10 in his final Rally1 outing of the year for M-Sport after a challenging first rally alongside new co-driver Benjamin Veillas. Loubet was handed a one-minute penalty for failing to correctly fasten his helmet, before losing five minutes to a crash on stage eight. A transmission issue halted his progress on Sunday.

Three-time WRC rally winner and Toksport Skoda driver Andreas Mikkelsen recovered from a Friday crash to claim a second WRC2 title. Despite finishing 13th in class, a fastest time on the Power Stage brought him level on points with Gus Greensmith, winning the title on countback by virtue of three wins to the Briton’s two.

But the final words belonged to the new two-time World Rally champion Roanpera, as he joined rallying’s elite. “I think this year is for me personally more important than last year,” he reflected. “The competition was tighter, we did a good job. Big thanks to Jonne, he is the world’s best co-driver and the team is the best as well. It’s nice – I cannot say much more. I’m going to enjoy this one more than the first one.” ❄





## ROVANPERA: SECOND WRC TITLE 'MORE SATISFYING'



@WORLD/REDBULL CONTENT POOL

Rovanperera takes flight  
en route to second title

Kalle Rovanperera says winning a second World Rally Championship title after a much tougher fight than last year's record-breaking crown is more satisfying.

Unlike last year, when Rovanperera dominated with six wins to wrap up the title with two rounds remaining, this season developed into a closer battle.

Rovanperera has won three 2023 rallies, in Portugal, Estonia and Greece, while his rivals, namely team-mate Elfyn Evans, have offered stronger opposition. This put more of a focus on consistency, where the Finn has excelled in finishing no worse than fourth and retiring only once following a crash in Finland.

"I've not had so much time to think about it [winning the title], but of course it means a lot and when you have a bit more time to think about it I will appreciate it more," said Rovanperera. "I'm quite proud of the year and I think the performance was more important.

"The competition was stronger and there weren't many easy points to get like last year when there was much more trouble between everybody. This year it was important all the time to take the points and stay in good positions.

"Yeah, it is [more satisfying to win it this way]. In a way last year was not bad either but this feels quite good also. The plan was to just stay consistent and I'm quite happy we can do it.

"Let's say it's a long year to do it like this when you can see a few positions more ahead of you in rallies and you just stay in your place as points are important.

"Of course [it's difficult not to push to win all the rallies], and with so many gravel rallies like we have and always starting first on the road it's not easy to win most of them. Sometimes you just have to settle for the points, but as we have seen this is quite clever."

## RESULTS ROUND 12/13, CENTRAL EUROPEAN RALLY, 26-29 OCTOBER

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	<b>Thierry Neuville</b> (BEL) <b>Martijn Wydaeghe</b> (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	2h52m39.9s
2	<b>Kalle Rovanperera</b> (FIN) <b>Jonne Halttunen</b> (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+57.6s
3	<b>Ott Tanak</b> (EST) <b>Martin Jarveoja</b> (EST)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+1m52.8s
4	<b>Sebastien Ogier</b> (FRA) <b>Vincent Landais</b> (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+2m08.6s
5	<b>Takamoto Katsuta</b> (JPN) <b>Aaron Johnston</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+2m48.3s
6	<b>Teemu Suninen</b> (FIN) <b>Mikko Markkula</b> (FIN)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+3m06.3s
7	<b>Gregoire Munster</b> (LUX) <b>Louis Louka</b> (BEL)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+4m22.3s
8	<b>Adrien Fourmaux</b> (FRA) <b>Alexandre Coria</b> (FRA)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Fiesta Rally2 Mk II	+11m35.8s
9	<b>Nicolas Ciamin</b> (FRA) <b>Yannick Roche</b> (FRA)	Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+11m53.1s
10	<b>Pierre-Louis Loubet</b> (FRA) <b>Benjamin Veillas</b> (FRA)	M-Sport Ford WRT / Ford Puma Rally1	+12m04.3s

### OTHERS

31	<b>Elfyn Evans</b> (GBR) <b>Scott Martin</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+39m58.2s
R	<b>Esapekka Lappi</b> (FIN) <b>Janne Ferm</b> (FIN)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	SS5-accident

## STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 <b>Velka Chuchle</b> (1.58 miles)	Tanak 1m51.2s	<b>Tanak</b>	Ogier +0.7s
SS2 <b>Circuit of Klatovy</b> (5.54 miles)	Neuville 4m14.7s	<b>Neuville</b>	Tanak +1.2s
SS3 <b>Vlachovo Brezi 1</b> (8.49 miles)	Rovanperera 7m08.2s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +1.4s
SS4 <b>Zvotoky 1</b> (14.79 miles)	Rovanperera 12m30.8s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Neuville +18.1s
SS5 <b>Sumavske Hostice 1</b> (14.56 miles)	Rovanperera 13m13.5s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Evans +29.2s
SS6 <b>Vlachovo Brezi 2</b> (8.49 miles)	Evans 7m15.0s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Evans +27.5s
SS7 <b>Zvotoky 2</b> (14.79 miles)	Rovanperera 12m55.5s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Evans +37.2s
SS8 <b>Sumavske Hostice 2</b> (14.56 miles)	Neuville 13m46.5s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Neuville +36.4s
SS9 <b>Schardinger Innviertel 1</b> (9.77 miles)	Evans 8m17.4s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Neuville +35.6s
SS10 <b>Muhlal 1</b> (16.87 miles)	Neuville 16m06.7s	<b>Rovanperera</b>	Neuville +10.9s
SS11 <b>Knaus Tabbert Bayerischer Wald 1</b> (7.38 miles)	Neuville 7m38.4s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +11.1s
SS12 <b>Schardinger Innviertel 2</b> (9.77 miles)	Ogier 8m15.0s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +14.5s
SS13 <b>Muhlal 2</b> (16.87 miles)	Ogier 16m24.2s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +26.7s
SS14 <b>Knaus Tabbert Bayerischer Wald 2</b> (7.38 miles)	Rovanperera 8m04.5s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +26.2s
SS15 <b>Bohmerwald 1</b> (10.72 miles)	Ogier 8m14.4s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +30.4s
SS16 <b>Passauer Land 1</b> (10.17 miles)	Evans 8m36.5s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +37.8s
SS17 <b>Bohmerwald 2</b> (10.72 miles)	Ogier 8m11.1s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +43.9s
SS18 <b>Wolf Power Stage Passauer Land 2</b> (10.17 miles)	Evans 8m42.3s	<b>Neuville</b>	Rovanperera +57.6s

**DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Rovanperera 235; 2 Evans 191; 3 Neuville 184;  
4 Tanak 162; 5 Ogier 114; 6 Lappi 98; 7 Katsuta 89; 8 Dani Sordo 63;  
9 Suninen 42; 10 Oliver Solberg 33.

**MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 504;  
2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 399; 3 M-Sport Ford WRT 271.



Crews represent three  
different makes on podium

**NEXT  
REPORT**  
Rally Japan  
23 November  
issue



# Waters and Reynolds have Ford jumping

**AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS**  
**SURFERS PARADISE (AUS)**  
**28-29 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 11/12**

It may have taken 10 rounds and two parity adjustments, but Ford fans finally got to enjoy a double 2023 Supercars success after two hard-fought battles on the streets of the Gold Coast. After taking pole position, Cameron Waters prevailed in Saturday's 300km race in his Tickford Mustang GT, while on Sunday it was the turn of Grove Racing's David Reynolds to fight off a Chevrolet Camaro all the way to the flag.

Both wins came after intense late-race battles. Waters just held out a charging Shane van Gisbergen (Triple Eight), while Reynolds fought a lengthy battle with points leader Brodie Kostecki to repass the Erebus Motorsport driver in the closing laps.

The Mustang's third and fourth wins of the season (from 26 races) came immediately after aerodynamic parity revisions to the Fords, approved only days before the event, were made due to Supercars' parity 'trigger' being activated



following the Bathurst 1000 earlier last month. Waters adjusted to the revisions quickly, snatching pole for the opening race, and led a Ford train in the first half of the race. But van Gisbergen, who started third, bided his time, and fell just 0.19s short of the win. Reynolds took third place ahead of Thomas Randle (Tickford Ford).

Any hopes Waters had of a qualifying double ended on Sunday when his Ford skated up an escape road during the single-car top 10 shootout. Poleman Kostecki looked to be in control of the race but Reynolds stuck to his strategy, overtaking him at the second and final pitstop. Shortly after that Kostecki found

a way past, before a rare mistake gifted Reynolds back the lead, which he maintained despite a late-race safety car.

Waters took third ahead of Matt Payne, Reynolds's 21-year-old Grove team-mate making a polished debut on the Surfers Paradise streets, and van Gisbergen, who started from the fifth row after he exceeded track limits during the shootout.

The 5-2 and 2-5 results for the two title contenders mean that Kostecki leaves the Gold Coast with the same 131-point lead over van Gisbergen he enjoyed prior to the weekend. Just two 250km races remain on the streets of Adelaide on 25-26 November.

**PHIL BRANAGAN**

# Blaney on the bullring to make NASCAR's final four

**NASCAR CUP**  
**MARTINSVILLE (USA)**  
**29 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 35/36**

Ryan Blaney pulled off a surprise win at Martinsville Speedway to provide him with the opportunity to race for the

NASCAR Cup title for the first time.

Blaney and several other lead-lap contenders played it safe by waiting to make their final pitstop well within their fuel window, while Aric Almirola was among those who pitted earlier, hoping there would be one or more late cautions.

Instead, the race ended with an unusual

168-lap green-flag run and Blaney, with fresher tyres on his Team Penske Ford, eventually ran down Almirola's Stewart-Haas Racing Ford to take the lead for the final time with 22 of 500 laps to go. Blaney easily held Almirola at bay the rest of the way, and cleared him by 0.9 seconds at the chequered flag to secure the critical playoff victory.

The win automatically advances Blaney to this weekend's final four of the playoffs at Phoenix, where he will join Kyle Larson, Christopher Bell and William Byron in the race for the 2023 series title. It was his third victory of the season, with two coming in the playoffs. Knocked out of further playoff contention were Denny Hamlin, Martin Truex Jr, Tyler Reddick and Chris Buescher.

Hamlin finished third in the race, followed by Chase Briscoe and last year's champion Joey Logano, who was eliminated from the playoffs weeks ago.

**JIM UTTER**







# Miyata crowned over Lawson as Ota takes breakthrough victory

**SUPER FORMULA  
SUZUKA (JPN)  
28-29 OCTOBER  
ROUND 7/7**

Toyota’s Ritomo Miyata was crowned Super Formula champion at the end of an eventful double-header finale at Suzuka. Second place in a shortened opening race on Saturday and third in the decider on Sunday was enough for him to claim the title ahead of Red Bull junior Liam Lawson by eight points.

Saturday’s action was overshadowed by a huge crash at 130R involving Miyata’s TOM’S team-mate Ukyo Sasahara, who made contact with Nakajima Racing’s Hiroki Otsu. Sasahara’s car was launched up into the catchfencing, whereupon the monocoque (now separated from the engine and gearbox) cleared the fence and landed near the Degner Curves, plunging from the upper part of the famous Suzuka crossover to the lower part.

The race was red-flagged and then


abandoned owing to the damage to the catchfencing, with a result declared after just three laps. Sasahara luckily escaped the crash with little more than a concussion. Team Mugen’s Tomoki Nojiri won the race from pole ahead of Miyata and Dandelion Racing rookie Kakunoshin Ota, but with half points awarded.

Lawson was classified sixth after qualifying seventh, a legacy of his Motegi crash in August that left him lacking a fresh set of tyres to use in Q2 following a red flag. The New Zealander made amends in Sunday morning’s qualifying session, scoring his first pole for Mugen to close the gap to Miyata, who qualified fourth, to 12 points.

But Lawson didn’t reckon on Ota, who grabbed the lead from second on the grid and then held off Lawson’s attacks all the way to the finish for a surprise maiden win. Miyata passed Nojiri off the line for third place, and circulated in that position for the duration, safe in the knowledge that he would be champion

even if Lawson won the race. Lawson had the consolation of beating two-time champion team-mate Nojiri to second position in the standings by just half a point.

**JAMIE KLEIN**

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## WEEKEND WINNERS

**AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS  
SURFERS PARADISE (AUS)**  
**Race 1** Cameron Waters  
Tickford (Ford Mustang)  
**Race 2** David Reynolds  
Grove Racing (Ford Mustang)

**NASCAR CUP  
MARTINSVILLE (USA)**  
Ryan Blaney  
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

**SUPER FORMULA  
SUZUKA (JPN)**  
**Race 1** Tomoki Nojiri  
Team Mugen (Dallara-Honda)  
**Race 2** Kakunoshin Ota  
Dandelion Racing (Dallara-Honda)

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## Clever Martin sets up title showdown

**MOTOGP**  
**BURIRAM (THA)**  
**29 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 17/20**

Three points separated Francesco Bagnaia and Jorge Martin at the top of the standings at the beginning of MotoGP's October triple-weekender. At its conclusion, the gap is 13, but the story goes much deeper.

Pramac Ducati rider Martin arrived at last weekend's Thai Grand Prix under scrutiny. In Indonesia, he'd crashed out while leading the Sunday race comfortably. In Australia, an unnecessary tyre gamble meant he fell from an easy lead to fifth on the final lap. Reigning champion Bagnaia capitalised on both occasions to pull his lead out to 27 points before Buriram. But the pendulum would swing again on Saturday in the sprint race.

Martin converted pole to victory, his fifth

sprint success in a row, while Bagnaia could do no better than seventh. The reigning champion blamed a poor start and then getting stuck behind a "useless" Alex Marquez/Johann Zarco scrap for stunting his progress. But the fact remained: this simply was not good enough from the factory Ducati rider, and continued a generally lacklustre run on Saturdays in comparison to Martin in recent rounds.

The 26-lap Grand Prix on the Sunday was a strategic affair. Only Alex Marquez differed on rear tyre choice with the medium option, while the rest – Martin included – went with the hard. Off the line, Martin's initial launch wasn't as good as second-placed Luca Marini's on the VR46 Ducati. But, like in the sprint 24 hours earlier, Martin got to Turn 1 first.

Bagnaia's start was better and he jumped up to fourth, but he found himself involved in various scraps that pushed him down to

seventh. It wasn't dissimilar to how his Australian GP, in which he rode steadily early on to keep his tyres alive, played out.

Tyre consumption would be the critical factor – Martin had expressed concern about this on Friday after what had happened to him in Australia. That helped to explain why he would later admit to being "mentally destroyed" by the Thai weekend and why he didn't celebrate his sprint race win.

Martin was racing strategically, however. His lead never swelled above 0.4 seconds, and KTM's Brad Binder, who moved up to second place on lap four, sat right on his tailpipe.

Bagnaia made it into third on lap 13, having cleared himself of his early battles, when Alex Marquez crashed out ahead of him. Bagnaia admitted after the race that he'd used too much rear tyre in his early battles, so having to engage with Marquez's Gresini Ducati wouldn't have given the Italian much of a leg to stand on in the late fight with Martin and Binder.

Martin arguably wasn't the fastest of that leading trio, his best race lap turning out to be almost two tenths slower than Bagnaia's (who was the fastest of the three). But his race management is what ultimately secured his fourth grand prix victory of the campaign.

When Binder overhauled him on lap 23, Martin quickly spotted that the KTM's rear grip wasn't as good as his. On lap 25, Martin went back through and wouldn't be caught again on the run to the chequered flag –



Martin (middle) shaded  
 Bagnaia (left) and  
 Binder in Thailand





though not by much, the gap between Binder and Martin 0.114s at the finish.

What should have been a nine-point championship lead for Bagnaia was boosted to 13 when Binder was demoted a spot for exceeding track limits on the final lap at Turn 4, which came as a result of his fading rear grip.

Bagnaia tried a daring raid on the outside of both riders at the last corner on the penultimate lap when he outbraked both. It didn't work, but he claimed that it allowed him to "discover something important" for the final three rounds. Bagnaia settled for third in the end, and the four points he has gained for his promotion to second could prove vital come the final reckoning at the end of this month. But he will need to raise his game to arrest Martin's march, with the Pramac rider clearly learning from his errors.

Marco Bezzecchi remains just in touch, 79 points adrift, after finishing fourth, and Ducati is now assured a second successive riders' title in 2023.

A three-second penalty for breaking the tyre-pressure rules dropped Aleix Espargaro – whose Aprilia got so hot he "couldn't breathe" and "thought I was going to die" – from fifth to eighth, promoting Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo to fifth and Marc Marquez on the Honda to sixth. Fabio Di Giannantonio – who makes way for Marquez at Gresini next year – was ninth, days after he emerged as Honda's new first choice for the 2024 season.

**LEWIS DUNCAN**

**RESULTS ROUND 17/20, BURIRAM (THA), 29 OCTOBER (26 LAPS – 73.573 MILES)**

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	<b>Jorge Martin</b> (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	39m40.045s
2	<b>Francesco Bagnaia</b> (ITA)	Ducati	+0.253s
3	<b>Brad Binder</b> (ZAF)	KTM	+0.114s
4	<b>Marco Bezzecchi</b> (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+2.005s
5	<b>Fabio Quartararo</b> (FRA)	Yamaha	+4.550s
6	<b>Marc Marquez</b> (ESP)	Honda	+5.362s
7	<b>Luca Marini</b> (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+6.778s
8	<b>Aleix Espargaro</b> (ESP)	Aprilia	+7.303s
9	<b>Fabio Di Giannantonio</b> (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	+7.569s
10	<b>Johann Zarco</b> (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+9.377s
11	<b>Franco Morbidelli</b> (ITA)	Yamaha	+11.168s
12	<b>Joan Mir</b> (ESP)	Honda	+11.990s
13	<b>Enea Bastianini</b> (ITA)	Ducati	+12.323s
14	<b>Takaaki Nakagami</b> (JPN)	LCR Honda	+14.537s
15	<b>Raul Fernandez</b> (ESP)	RNF Aprilia	+15.093s
16	<b>Jack Miller</b> (AUS)	KTM	+17.640s
17	<b>Augusto Fernandez</b> (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+21.307s
18	<b>Pol Espargaro</b> (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+21.435s
R	<b>Maverick Vinales</b> (ESP)	Aprilia	23 laps-heat exhaustion
R	<b>Alex Marquez</b> (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	12 laps-accident
R	<b>Miguel Oliveira</b> (PRT)	RNF Aprilia	6 laps-technical

**Winner's average speed** 111.284mph. **Fastest lap** Bezzecchi 1m30.896s, 112.073mph.

**QUALIFYING 2** 1 **Martin** 1m29.287s; 2 **Marini** 1m29.425s; 3 **A Espargaro** 1m29.461s; 4 **Bezzecchi** 1m29.483s; 5 **Binder** 1m29.496s; 6 **Bagnaia** 1m29.527s; 7 **A Marquez** 1m29.600s; 8 **M Marquez** 1m29.622s; 9 **Vinales** 1m29.701s; 10 **Quartararo** 1m29.707s; 11 **Zarco** 1m29.923s; 12 **A Fernandez** 1m30.077s.

**QUALIFYING 1** **A Marquez** 1m29.743s; **M Marquez** 1m29.830s; 13 **Di Giannantonio** 1m29.850s; 14 **R Fernandez** 1m29.914s; 15 **Miller** 1m30.096s; 16 **Nakagami** 1m30.115s; 17 **P Espargaro** 1m30.124s; 18 **Morbidelli** 1m30.158s; 19 **Mir** 1m30.263s; 20 **Oliveira** 1m30.442s; 21 **Bastianini** 1m30.677s.

**SPRINT RACE** (13 LAPS – 36.786 MILES)  
**1 Martin** 19m41.593s; 2 **Binder** +0.933s; 3 **Marini** +1.841s; 4 **M Marquez** +3.503s; 5 **A Espargaro** +3.581s; 6 **Bezzecchi** +4.029s; 7 **Bagnaia** +4.121s; 8 **A Marquez** +6.727s; 9 **Zarco** +7.323s; 10 **Miller** +9.240s; 11 **Quartararo** +9.339s; 12 **Mir** +10.356s; 13 **Bastianini** +12.312s; 14 **R Fernandez** +15.390s; 15 **Morbidelli** +15.535s; 16 **P Espargaro** +15.644s; 17 **Oliveira** +17.753s; 18 **Vinales** +22.675s; 19 **Nakagami** +37.854s; R **Di Giannantonio** 9 laps-technical; R **A Fernandez** 5 laps-accident.  
**Winner's average speed** 112.078mph. **Fastest lap** Martin 1m30.178s, 112.965mph.

**RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 **Bagnaia** 389; 2 **Martin** 376; 3 **Bezzecchi** 310; 4 **Binder** 249; 5 **A Espargaro** 198; 6 **Zarco** 194; 7 **Vinales** 170; 8 **Marini** 164; 9 **Quartararo** 145; 10 **Miller** 144.

**CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 **Ducati** 589; 2 **KTM** 321; 3 **Aprilia** 287; 4 **Honda** 166; 5 **Yamaha** 165.







Deletraz (left) with Ricky Taylor



The Swiss put the car on pole for the Petit Le Mans IMSA title decider

CALSTAD



JEP

Le Mans LMP2 podium this year with Kubica, Andrade and WRT...



JEP

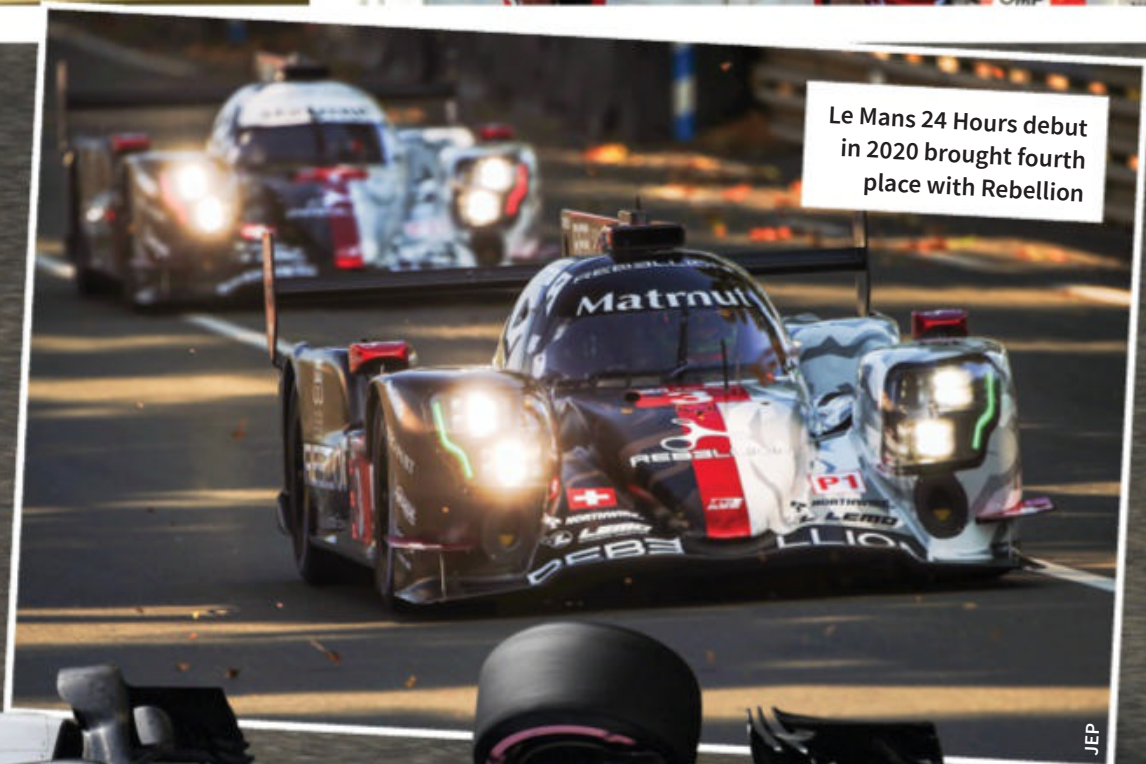
...two seasons after maiden ELMS title with Kubica, Ye and WRT



MAUGER

On Monaco 2018 F2 podium with Norris and Fuoco

F1 Haas test came in 2018



Le Mans 24 Hours debut in 2020 brought fourth place with Rebellion

JEP



ANDRE



## SPORTSCARS

# THIS IS WHAT DELETRAZ IS DOING

*Almost three decades ago, the late, great Murray Walker mistakenly and famously maligned his dad. Now Louis Deletraz is riding the crest of a sportscar wave to become a full-time Acura Hypercar racer for 2024*

JAMES NEWBOLD

 PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**  
IMAGES

**L**ife for many is considerably different since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in 2020. That certainly applies to Louis Deletraz, whose career has gone from strength to strength since that much-disrupted season when his sportscar journey truly began.

The Swiss will be a full-time Acura GTP driver in the IMSA SportsCar Championship next season after impressing in a third-driver role with Wayne Taylor Racing this term, and appears odds-on to end three successful years in LMP2 by clinching the class's final World Endurance Championship title with WRT. Already twice an LMP2 champion in the European Le Mans Series, Deletraz went into the recent Portimao finale with a shot at a third, having begun the season at Barcelona with a buccaneering outright victory aboard his Pro-Am TF Sport-run ORECA.

All told, it's been a fulfilling period for a second-generation racer whose four-year Formula 2 career was largely frustrating after a stunning maiden season in Formula V8 3.5 in 2016. After coming close to beating the vastly experienced Tom Dillmann to the crown, his move to F2 with Racing Engineering didn't go to plan. For the 2015 Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup runner-up and champion of the category's NEC contest, F2 "was proof of how quickly your reputation in motorsport can turn around," he remembers. "Racing Engineering was supposed to be a good team but, for whatever reason, something changed in the management and it was a disaster."

Without any F2 experience, he struggled to turn the situation around and lost confidence. Sebastian Viger, now technical director for WRT's LMP2 programme, held the same position at Racing Engineering in 2017, and thinks Deletraz suffered from putting expectations on himself that were "too high versus the level of understanding". "It was a lot of pressure on his shoulders," adds the Belgian. "We were second [in the teams' championship] twice in a row, and when you join a successful team like we were back then you expect it to be plug-and-play. But it was different tyres – back then it was Michelin to Pirelli – it was a different car, different approach. And that year he was missing experience."

Over his next three F2 campaigns, Deletraz claimed six second places, but never managed to win a race across two spells with Charouz and one year with Carlin. "Because we had such a bad year, it's hard to find a good team," he recalls of joining series newcomer Charouz for 2018. "F2 is so competitive, it's hard to win. I'm very happy with my 10 podiums, I sadly never

got a race win but I learned a lot and in the end in tyre management, pace, we were always strong. And if you look at the grid that we were racing in, it's pretty incredible names. Leclerc, Norris, Russell, they were all here."

Deletraz did get to test for Haas in 2018 at Yas Marina, but it proved his closest encounter with Formula 1. Overlooked for fellow Haas reserve Pietro Fittipaldi when Romain Grosjean was ruled out of the final two grands prix in 2020, Deletraz committed to switching codes.

He had previously dabbled in sportscars by entering four ADAC GT Masters rounds in 2016 as a BMW junior team member, plus the 2017 Dubai 24 Hours in a GPX-run Renault RS01, experiences he believes explain his confidence in jumping between cars, and he picked up the baton again in 2020. That year, Deletraz combined his F2 programme with three GT World Challenge Europe Endurance

***"If you look at the grid we raced in, it's pretty incredible. Leclerc, Norris, Russell, they were all here"***

Cup outings in a GPX Porsche 911 GT3-R and raced Rebellion's Gibson-powered R-13 LMP1 car at the Le Mans 24 Hours. The deal with GPX, a backer of his since karting, was only ever intended to be a one-off at Imola to stand in for Dennis Olsen, who had a clashing IMSA date. But he also contested the Spa 24 Hours and Paul Ricard 1000Km after winning SRO's GT Esports title.

"Pascal Zurlinden [then Porsche's factory motorsport boss] asked me at that time if I wanted to do more with the team, so it was actually the first time I got a drive coming from Esports!" recalls Deletraz. But it was in the higher-downforce prototype, in which he finished fourth on his first crack at Le Mans, that he felt most comfortable due to the stylistic similarities with single-seaters. "I enjoy prototypes more also because I'm better in them I think," he explains.

Deletraz believes that turning down some "very good offers" for a fifth year of F2 and accepting WRT chief Vincent Vosse's proposal to join Robert Kubica and Ye Yifei in the 2021 ELMS was "the best thing I could have done". The WRT trio won the title and, but >>





for an agonising electrical failure on the final lap at Le Mans, would have conquered the French classic too. Le Mans 2021 “broke my heart and makes you think that motorsport can be very cruel sometimes,” reflects Deletraz. It’s an event he thinks about daily. “Now it’s better two years after but you still think, ‘How is it possible?’” he ponders.

Deletraz switched to Prema for 2022 to claim another ELMS title, although second at Le Mans was the highlight of his WEC season with Kubica. They paired up again upon returning to WRT this year and, together with Rui Andrade, once more finished runners-up at the Circuit de la Sarthe. But wins at Spa and Fuji have put them 33 points clear with a maximum 39 available in this weekend’s Bahrain finale, meaning they only need to finish eighth regardless of what closest challenger Inter Europol can muster.

Viger notes that Kubica has served as “kind of a mentor” to Deletraz and recognises that he is now “able to deal with all kinds of scenarios in the car and not be thrown off completely if things don’t go to plan.” Viger also observes that Deletraz has learned “when to speak up”, and that in his earlier career he “was maybe

*“I wouldn’t be the same driver today without Robert. His experience, feedback, he taught me a lot”*

too gentle on some teams that maybe gave him some solutions which were not perfectly suited for him.” “We became extremely good friends and super-close,” Deletraz agrees of his relationship with Kubica. “I wouldn’t be the same driver today without him. His experience, technical feedback and knowledge of how to see a project, how to talk about things openly, he taught me a lot.”

Viger reckons the pair have clicked so well because both are “only goal-driven, that’s why also you never have a fight for who is doing the quali”. He adds that “this is their best strength”, which enables the squad to “nearly work as a factory team. It’s pretty equal, I have to say. They learned to drive the car in a similar way. When you put them in the car, they just deliver and you get what you





Deletraz joins  
Wayne Taylor  
Racing full-time for  
2024 IMSA SportsCar  
Acura attack



expect. It's a luxury situation that you can actually use them both."

Deletraz contributed heavily to Tower Motorsport driver John Farano securing last year's IMSA LMP2 crown (although the Swiss missed Mid-Ohio, so didn't get to share the honour), and high-stirring performances put his name on the map in North America. But the trigger for joining WTR was the recommendation of team regular Filipe Albuquerque, who had enjoyed many bouts against Deletraz with United Autosports in LMP2. For Albuquerque, Deletraz satisfied the criteria of being fast, experienced in different series and having a good attitude. "He's humble and he keeps humble after being fast, which some of the young drivers they start to lose their contact with earth and that ruins the appeal of a team to approach somebody," points out the Portuguese.

After holding discussions at Road America, Deletraz duly joined Albuquerque and Ricky Taylor in the Wayne Taylor Racing Acura for the four endurance races, finishing second in the season-opening Daytona 24 Hours. Deletraz admits to finding the third-driver role tough – "You are compared to drivers who are always in the car when you are not" – but never let the team down.

And at the Petit Le Mans finale, when entrusted with qualifying duties, he rewarded his team's faith with pole in the wet. "No one had doubts or questions, and it felt very good for me," he grins.

Albuquerque believes that Deletraz has "totally deserved" his promotion to a second car with Jordan Taylor for 2024 and anticipates that this "will make us stronger" when it comes to unlocking set-ups. But before he can look ahead to next year, Deletraz is anxious to finish off 2023 on a high with the WEC title. It's likely to be his final outing with Kubica for the time being, since the Pole is seeking a WEC Hypercar drive for 2024. "I've never won WEC, I want to win it," he stresses. "It's the last opportunity to do it in a P2 and again if we can do it with Robert, it would be at least a payback for 2021. It's not Le Mans, but it's already big to win a world championship."

As for Le Mans, Deletraz is determined to be back next year since he believes "it's most important for the driver to be there, to keep learning, to keep improving". And after two runner-up finishes and one gutting loss, there's only one thing on his mind: "With or without Robert, I will try to win it!" ✨

## FAMILY BUSINESS

"And what is Deletraz doing?" As Jean Alesi and Michael Schumacher motored past the Pacific wiggling erratically down the Nurburgring back straight during the closing stages of the 1995 European Grand Prix, Murray Walker's famous commentary line became an indictment of Jean-Denis Deletraz's otherwise unmemorable three-race Formula 1 career. It didn't matter that Walker had misidentified his team-mate Andrea Montermini, who retired shortly afterwards out of fuel. It fit the narrative assigned to a driver who had qualified well off the pace.

But it would be wrong to say that

Deletraz Sr was bereft of talent. Twice a Formula 3000 podium finisher in 1988, he briefly ran his own team in the F1 support series before going on to enjoy success in sportscars, with two Le Mans 24 Hours class wins in the LMP675 division that preceded LMP2. But the most notable successes came in the FIA GT championship, where he claimed four outright wins aboard Scuderia Italia's Ferrari 550 GTS Maranello in 2002 and two with Carsport's Corvette C6.R in 2007, including that year's Spa 24 Hours.

Louis Deletraz joined his father on the podium after he'd finished second

at Spa in 2006 with a Phoenix-run Aston Martin DBR9, and is proud of his feats. "I remember very well Spa," he says of his first visit to a podium he'd stand on for real eight years later

### "MY DAD NEVER THOUGHT HE WOULD DO F1 RACES, BUT WHO SAYS NO TO THAT?"

in Formula Renault 2.0 NEC. "I'm proud of what he achieved in his career. My dad never thought he would do F1 races, but an opportunity came up for him and he took it. Who says no to that?"

Obviously, he knows the results were not great, but he still did F1.

"What I really am proud of is his endurance career and it taught me a lot. That's the reason why I'm here today, because my dad started this family passion."

Jean-Denis, now 60, took a hands-on role and "in the beginning he was very involved with choosing teams", recalls Deletraz Jr, before stepping back once his son "evolved into my own person, my own driving style". But he still attends races today. "He's passionate and we're sharing this as a family," adds the 26-year-old. "It's pretty awesome."





# #AUTOSPORT AWARDS 2023

The Autosport Awards are back next month for the 36th time, with the ceremony taking place at its usual venue of the Grosvenor House Hotel on London's Park Lane on Sunday 3 December.

But we can't do it without our readers. By now you'll know our opinions on the stars of 2023, but this time we're listening to you. So

we need you to vote, and over the following pages you will see the nominees for International Racing Driver of the Year, British Competition Driver of the Year, UK National Driver of the Year, Rookie of the Year, International Competition Car of the Year, and Rally Driver of the Year.

You can vote for the candidate you think

performed best in each category during the season. The winners will be announced across multiple digital platforms including autosport.com, as well as in this magazine.

It's a huge extravaganza that is attended by key figures from the sport, including Formula 1 champions and World Rally stars. And it's about far more than the reader votes. The

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## INTERNATIONAL RACING DRIVER

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SBLOXHAM

### Fernando Alonso

The oldest driver on the F1 grid – he made his debut a month before Oscar Piastri was born! – has still got it. The 42-year-old has been stunning for Aston Martin, four times starting from the front row, and taking seven podium finishes. Sits fifth in points, with 78% of Aston's total.



GALLOWAY

### Jake Dennis

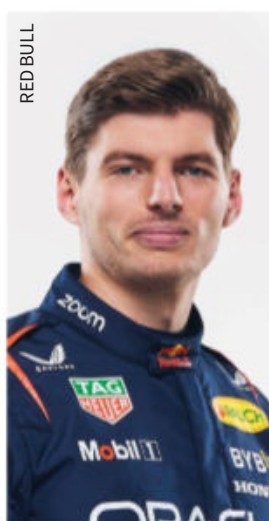
The lanky Brit had already excelled in his first two seasons of Formula E with the Andretti team, but this year he cracked it and became electric world champion. With customer Porsche powertrains, he outdid the factory squad, with two race wins and no fewer than 11 podiums.



LEVITT

### Alex Palou

No wonder everybody wants to sign him! The Spaniard's maiden title as an IndyCar sophomore had rather taken people aback in 2021. This year, he matured into a driver who was almost unbeatable mid-season with Chip Ganassi Racing. Five wins went his way in total.



RED BULL

### Max Verstappen

The Red Bull superstar has been breaking almost every record in the books on his way to a dominant third F1 crown. His tally of 16 wins from 19 grands prix is extraordinary. The Dutchman's solo points score is over 100 clear of Mercedes, Red Bull's closest rival in the constructors' table!



## INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION CAR

OF THE YEAR

Open to cars competing in any class of international circuit racing or rallying



JEP

### Ferrari 499P

Ferrari has claimed only one win from the six World Endurance Championship rounds held to date in 2023, but it was the big one: the Le Mans 24 Hours. On its debut season in the Hypercar ranks, the Prancing Horse came out on top in a thrilling battle against Toyota with the beautiful 499P.



DUNGAN

### Jaguar I-Type 6

Dennis (left) may have won the title with customer Porsche power, but the car to beat in the first season of the Gen3 Formula E era was the Jaguar. Nick Cassidy, with the customer Envision team, pipped works driver Mitch Evans to runner-up; between them they won eight of the 16 races.



GRANT

### Red Bull RB19

Only at the Singapore GP – round 15 – did the wheels fall off the wagon of Red Bull's quest to win every single race in an F1 season. The RB19, again using Honda-derived power, has to date won 18 of the 19 races, and claimed 12 poles. It hasn't always been out-and-out quickest but is the best all-round.



McKLEIN

### Toyota GR Yaris Rally1

However hard Hyundai and the M-Sport Ford squad push, Toyota always seems a step ahead in the World Rally Championship. From the 12 rallies to have taken place so far, the Yaris has been driven to victory in eight of them by three different drivers. Another drivers'/manufacturers' title double.

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award is one of the most prestigious and coveted in all of motorsport. And the awards also include the Autosport Williams Engineer of the Future Award, the Autosport Gold Medal incorporating the Gregor Grant Award for lifetime achievement, the John Bolster Trophy for technical achievement, the Pioneering and Innovation Award and Promoter of the Year. A new award for 2023 is Sponsor of the Year, which is awarded by a panel of industry judges.





## INTERNATIONAL RALLY DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to professional or semi-professional rally drivers in international events



### Elfyn Evans

The Welshman is on course for his third WRC runner-up spot in four years. He's been closer than he was in 2022 to Toyota team-mate Kalle Rovanpera, and two victories – in Croatia and Finland – have gone his way. Has finished all but two rallies in the top five this season to stay in the mix.



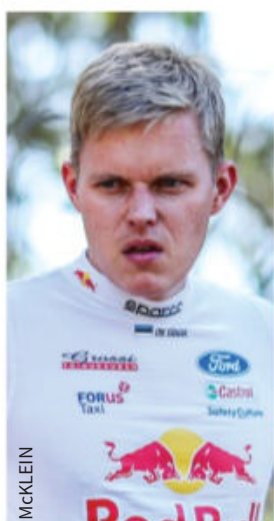
### Sebastien Ogier

Another part-time campaign for the French eight-time world champion, who pops in from time to time to remind everyone how brilliant he is. This season he's contested seven WRC rounds with Toyota, and has won three of them, including the Monte Carlo and Safari.



### Kalle Rovanpera

The Finnish sensation followed up becoming rallying's youngest ever world champion by becoming its most youthful two-time title winner last month. The 23-year-old has won three times this season for Toyota, and has had another fantastic campaign to take his career wins tally to 11.



### Ott Tanak

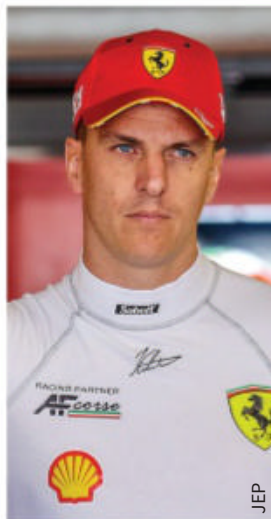
The 2019 world champion landed at the M-Sport Ford team for his one-year sabbatical from Hyundai, and has absolutely starred. Two wins have gone his way – on the snow of Sweden and gravel of Chile – and he still has a chance to finish in the top three of the points with one rally to go.



## BRITISH COMPETITION DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to British drivers competing at an international level



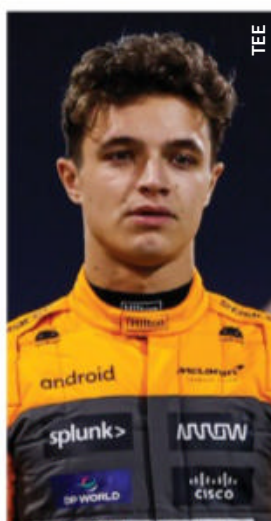
### James Calado

With three GTE Pro crowns under his belt for Ferrari in the WEC, he was justly rewarded with a seat in the marque's AF Corse-run factory squad for its Hypercar bow. Victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours is the season's standout moment, and he is part of the trio that lies third in the points.



### Lewis Hamilton

The 2022 F1 season was a difficult one for the seven-time world champion, but he has bounced back this year with Mercedes. Pole position for the Hungarian GP was a highlight, and he has finished second four times – although he only got to keep three of them. Still got the fire.



### Lando Norris

The remarkable turnaround in fortunes for McLaren since the early stages of 2023 has allowed the popular Bristolian to rise to the fore. A remarkable run of six podiums in nine grands prix has propelled Norris to sixth in the points, with a top-four spot very much within sight.



### George Russell

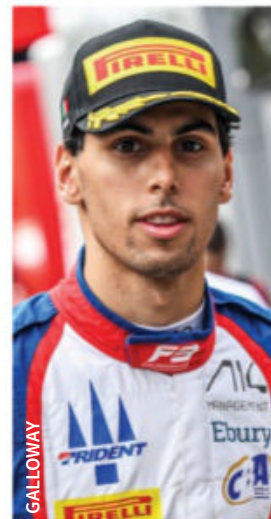
His maiden season with Mercedes in 2022 coincided with a downturn in the team's form, but he still became a GP winner. This year he hasn't come close to matching that, but is still neck-and-neck with team-mate Hamilton on qualifying stats and was third in Spain.



## ROOKIE

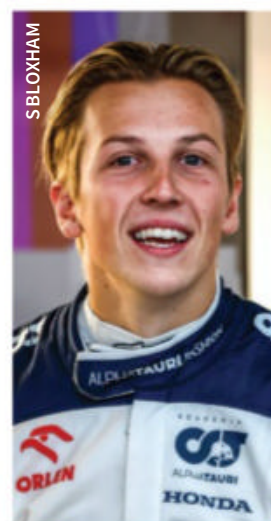
OF THE YEAR

Open to professional drivers in their first season in their respective categories



### Gabriel Bortoleto

The Brazilian was sixth in Formula Regional European last year, and for 2023 graduated to FIA F3 along with the series' top three. He leapfrogged them all with a stunning campaign with Trident, two wins and consistent form elsewhere giving him the title.



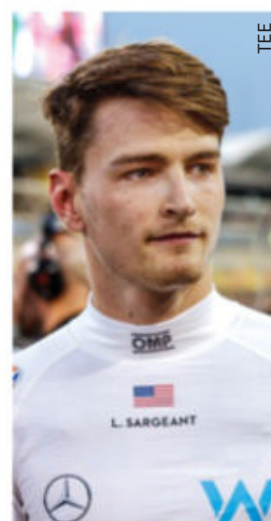
### Liam Lawson

His form as a Super Formula rookie is fabulous in itself. His title fight with superstar team-mate Tomoki Nojiri and Toyota talent Ritomo Miyata means the Japanese cognoscenti will not have been surprised by his eye-opening F1 form on his five-race AlphaTauri shift.



### Oscar Piastri

Who would have guessed that the Aussie would become an F1 race winner in his rookie season? OK, so the Qatar sprint, which he won from pole, wasn't a full-fat GP, but he has been a sensation with McLaren. He's also taken two GP podiums, with third at Suzuka and then second in Qatar.



### Logan Sargeant

The American took the fight to Piastri for the 2020 FIA F3 title, and was pipped by one point by team-mate Lawson in F2 last year. It's therefore a case of 'what might be' for him. Rookie F1 campaign with Williams, earned on merit, has been tough but he scored a maiden point at home.





## NATIONAL DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to drivers racing in the BTCC, British GT or support categories and equivalent



### Dan Harper

The BMW factory driver returned for his first full season of UK racing – in between his international commitments – since his Carrera Cup GB title of 2019. With Century Motorsport's M4 GT3, he snatched the title at the last gasp with a brilliant comeback drive in the Donington Park finale.



### Tom Ingram

He had to hand over his BTCC crown to Ash Sutton, but was on top form throughout the season with his Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai. Ingram scored just two race wins, but his consistent, 'pointsy' weekends kept the title fight against 12-time winner Sutton alive to the Brands finale.



### Freddie Slater

Absolutely dominated the Ginetta Junior series in his first full season of car racing. Took 16 wins from 21 races before his 15th birthday, then upgraded his licence to compete in F4. Finished the year with strong showings in Britain and abroad, including a pole in the Euro 4 series.



### Ash Sutton

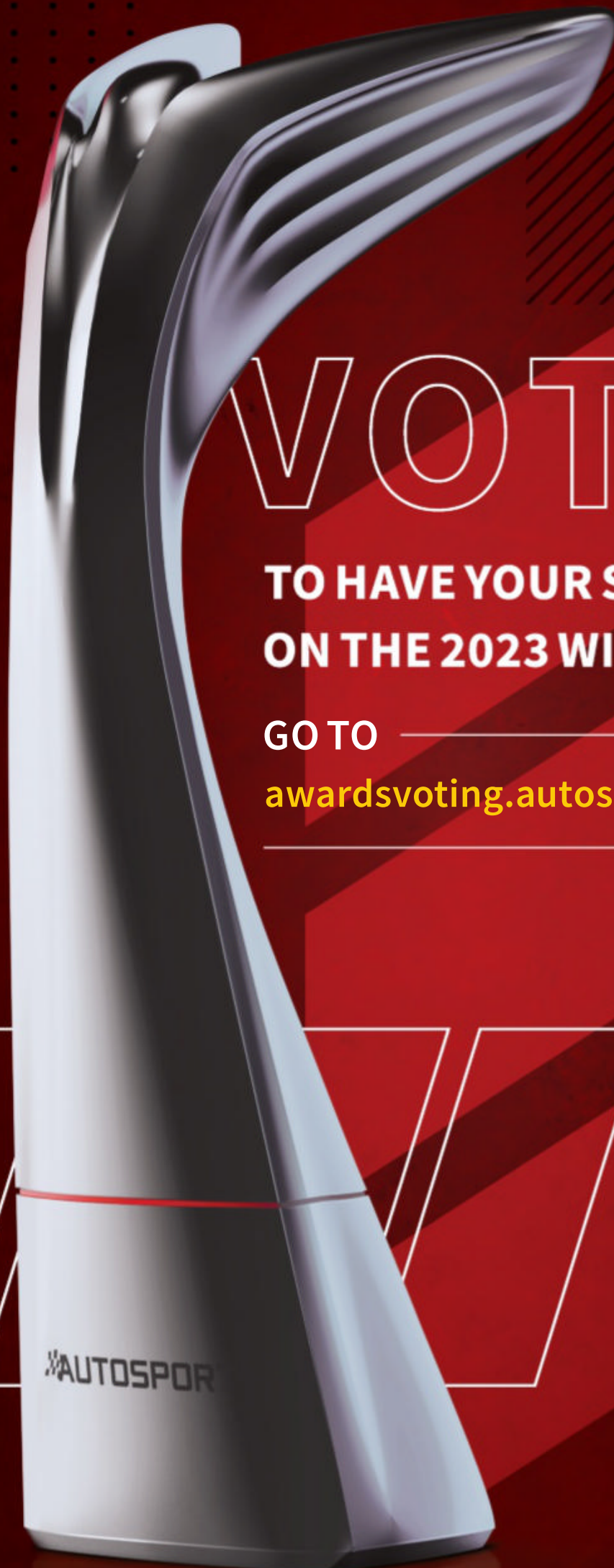
Sledgehammered his way to his fourth BTCC title at the wheel of the much-improved Ford Focus from the Motorbase/Alliance squad. Many of his 12 race wins came via dominating from the front, but he also had his racecraft on display, with a 23rd-to-first charge at Silverstone.

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### WEC TECHNICAL MANAGER ACO

**Overview:**

- Reporting to the ACO Competition Director, the WEC Technical Manager will be primarily responsible for:  
Leading the ACO's scrutineering team dedicated to WEC (including technical checks)  
Participating in the homologation process of cars  
Producing technical regulations
- The WEC Technical Manager's responsibilities will contribute to the highest standards of the WEC championship by embodying the ACO's values at race events, representing the institution with competitors, manufacturers and partner governing bodies.

**Missions and responsibilities:**

- The WEC Technical Manager will be entrusted with the responsibilities set out below:  
Handling autonomously the following topics:
- Management of the technical matters related to race events (preparation of technical documents, validation of BoP/EoT calculations, scrutineering, technical checks, liaison with other officials, technical reports, post-event reports, etc.)
- Management of FIA TWGs (Hypercar, LMP2, LMGT3) and structuring inputs for FIA SWG
- Writing technical regulations, amendments and proposals related to Endurance Commission and WEC Committee decisions
- To fulfill the above responsibilities, the FIA WEC Technical Manager will be required to attend all World Endurance Championship events, as Technical Delegate.  
Supporting the Competition Director and its Deputy in:
- The elaboration of future technical and sporting regulations
- The preparation and follow-up of Working Groups and FIA Commissions relevant to WEC

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- Work in a professional manner at all times regardless of the task set.
- Execute the day-to-day tasks including keeping aero tracking systems up to date.

**Experience**

- Your areas of knowledge and expertise that matter most for this role:
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  - Understand the challenges that other Design groups may be faced with Solid foundation of engineering principles and the application of them to engineering problems.
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- You will be responsible for the functional coordination of the following in the team:
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- The production and assembly technologies and driving their implementation
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As a team coordinator, you will also be responsible for:

- A balanced and technically appropriate division of work within your team and in this function provides organizational support to the Head of Development MGU-K
- Creating project schedules and ensuring that they are adhered to

**Your profile**

- You have a technical degree in a field such as electrical engineering, drive technology, mechatronics or comparable
- You have professional F1 experience in a comparable position in motorsport and have gained leadership experience
- You have very good and implementation-oriented expertise in the fields of electric drives, magnetics, thermodynamics and mechanics
- You have mastered the development tools necessary in the development of electric drives (design, simulation and calculation software)
- You are proficient in the coordination of complex, technologically interlinked tasks and projects
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- Minimum degree education in Electronic / Electronics Engineering or a related Subject
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- Experience in circuit analysis, schematic capture and PCB design (Altium, NI etc)
- Experience in prototyping and development of digital and/or power electronics
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IMSA

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- Assist in the development of data acquisition requirements and methodologies as it relates to scrutineering and performance analysis.
- Conduct data monitoring, collection, analysis, and reporting across multiple series and classes. Assist in development, integration, and support of data acquisition systems.
- Further develop performance algorithms, statistical analysis tools, simulations, and standardized reporting to the IMSA Technical Committee.
- Contribute to writing and revising regulations, further developing enforcement methods, and refining the Balance of Performance (BoP) process.
- Approximate travel 50% including weekends.

**Required skills / experience:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering or equivalent; and a minimum of five (5) years professional motorsports experience.
- Skilled with Excel and MATLAB.
- Some data acquisition software experience.
- Some experience in CAD and UG/NX-solid modelling
- Position is safety sensitive and participates in the corporate Substance Abuse Program (SAP).
- Strong mathematical skills and an engineering background
- Competence in modelling and simulation techniques
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- Interfacing MoTeC electronics with other vehicle electronics including sensors, actuators and data communications.
- Analysing, investigating and documenting sensors.
- Carrying out first time installations and fully documenting this process.

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- Performance Markers: Develop metrics (KPIs) to support performance analysis optimisation
- Optimization: Apply and develop in-house optimization techniques to enhance vehicle performance and reliability
- Documentation: Regularly communicate findings and recommendations of simulation and analytical studies with clearly written documentation including assumptions, methodologies and results
- Continuous Improvement: Contribute to the development and improvement of internal processes and methodologies while contributing to vehicle development through evaluation of new vehicle concepts. Stay updated on industry trends, emerging technologies and best practices

**The successful candidate will:**

- Have a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, mathematics, computer science or a related field. A master's or Ph.D. may be an advantage
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- BRSCC Event Staff & Race Coordinator Recruitment
- Rescue Unit Demonstrations & Recruitment
- Race Officials Training & Volunteer Recruitment
- Scrutineering Demonstrations & Recruitment
- Take or discuss booking an ARDS Test
- Motorsport Equipment Exhibitors





# Edgar targets GT3 after British GT debut

## BRITISH GT

FIA Formula 3 race winner Jonny Edgar has his sights set firmly on a future in GT3 and endurance racing after making his British GT Championship debut last month. The 19-year-old received a last-minute call-up on the Friday before the Donington Park season finale to race Garage 59's McLaren 720S GT3 Evo alongside Miguel Ramos.

"The main thing for me was making sure that I got through the race and gained experience," said Edgar, who finished 13th. "In general, when battling with cars, I was a being a little bit safe just because I wanted to

make sure that I got through and obviously was still learning how big the car was and how you race in them.

"You don't want to get in the way of someone's championship when you're just there for a first weekend. I'd say, just in general with everyone, I wasn't being aggressive."

Although conceding that a return to the British championship is unlikely, Edgar is determined to get as much GT3 seat time as possible in 2024, and cited the World Endurance Championship as a possible destination.

"There's nothing confirmed yet but there

are a few options, more likely endurance racing," said Edgar. "But, especially next year, pretty much every series is in a GT3 car now in endurance racing, so it was really good experience to drive a GT3. At the moment, we're looking at everything really. Next year, for me, we want to do as much as possible to get experience, so I'd do anything."

"WEC is an option because, next year, every GT3 will need a Silver driver, so that's quite good for me. There's a chance I could be racing there next year but it would be a big step to do that in my first year in endurance racing."

**SAM HALL**

## Ginetta names its 2024 Junior scholar

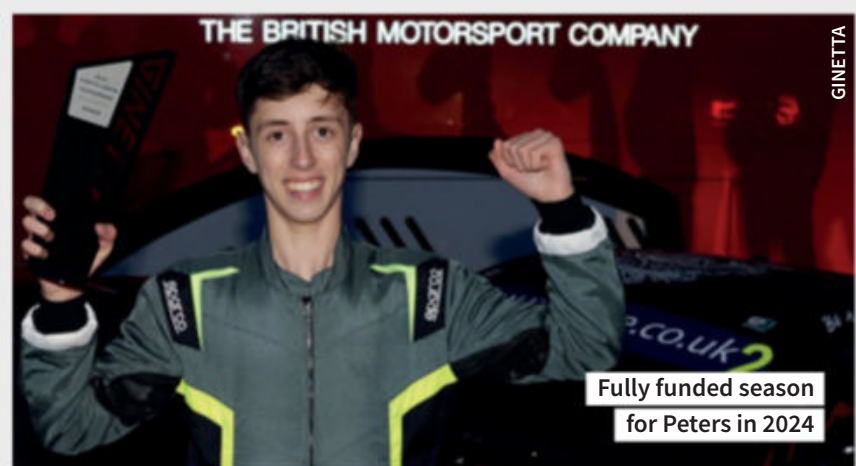
### GINETTA JUNIOR

Sim racer Jude Peters has been named as the winner of the Ginetta Junior Scholarship for 2024 and has secured a fully funded season.

Sixty drivers took part across last month's three-day event, which included driving, fitness and media assessments. Judges included 2017 scholarship winner and

two-time Ginetta champion Adam Smalley, plus fellow Junior alumni Jack Mitchell, Max Coates, Ben Green and Scott McKenna.

"I really wasn't expecting to win the Scholarship," said Peters. "We came along thinking it would be a good opportunity for me to gain experience in the car, with the media and the fitness, but we never thought about winning



it. I'm so happy to have won.

"I will be looking to represent Ginetta in a professional way, do the best I can through the 2024 season

and prove that you don't necessarily have to do karting to be successful, and can progress through sim racing like I have."





JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## BTCC support bill slots for Legends again in 2024

### LEGENDS

Legends will again support the British Touring Car Championship at three events next season as the category celebrates its 30th anniversary.

While there will continue to be awards for the BTCC-only three-round Elite Cup contest, these events will also count towards the main Legends championship. The Legends are due to feature at the first two BTCC events of the campaign – Donington Park on 27-28 April and Brands Hatch on 11-12 May – alongside again visiting Knockhill in August.

Outside of these fixtures,

there will be four other meetings for the Legends, which includes the popular American SpeedFest at Brands Hatch in June, and the season will culminate at Oulton Park at the end of September.

“This season seemed to go well,” said Legends championship owner Phil Cooper of the inaugural BTCC appearances. “It was good for us, the drivers loved it and being on national television for the first time, that was great.”

The Legends appeared at Croft this season, but the circuit’s inability to run on Sunday morning made for a congested timetable and there

was insufficient time to hold the final race before the curfew. “Croft is so difficult to do three races in one afternoon and our drivers love Donington,” said Cooper. He added that organisers have “really thought about” including the Elite Cup scores as part of the main championship, and believes this will have the added benefit of encouraging more drivers to contest the whole season rather than just the BTCC events.

Cooper said there has already been strong interest for next year, with a number of guest drivers joining the grid for the 2023 finale at Brands Hatch this weekend. “I think we’ve got

eight or nine new drivers already,” he said.

BTCC chief executive Alan Gow added: “The short, sharp and action-packed racing that the Legends Cars provide is in keeping with the BTCC itself, so it was little surprise that our loyal fanbase loved the addition of the Legends last season.”

Legends has become the second guest category officially confirmed as appearing at BTCC events in 2024 following the announcement that the top-tier Caterham Seven UK championship will again join the tin-tops for one event, this time at Oulton Park.

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

## Lydden Legend Festival set to embrace history

### LYDDEN HILL

A new event will be held at Lydden Hill next year celebrating the glory days of rallycross and rally machinery.

Lydden Legend Festival will take place on 19-21 July and will follow in the footsteps of the Loheac Legend Festival held in France earlier this

year and run in collaboration with the Rallycross Legends Show.

Star names and international cars are set to appear at the event, while machinery and drivers from the Retro Rallycross Championship will be in action on both the circuit’s rallycross and Tarmac layouts.

Lydden managing director Hannah

Bennett said: “We had a fantastic taste of international period rallycross cars in action during our round of the World Rallycross Championship this year and, coupled with the success of other events elsewhere, especially Loheac Legends in France, we are so excited to be revealing the Lydden Legend Festival for next July.

“We are sure it will be our biggest and most anticipated event of the year. There is nothing not to like about having a whole weekend dedicated to an amazing array of period rallycross and rally machinery at the birthplace of rallycross, and we have a number of surprises already in place, which will start to be announced in the coming weeks.”

Various cars are set to attend the event

LYDDEN HILL





After starting at the back, Harmer took first in class



MICK WALKER

## Winning debut for Revelation as Harmer plans more outings

### BIKESPORTS

Tim Harmer's Revelation LF2R sports-racer made a dream race debut at Silverstone last Sunday, finishing fourth overall in the opening 750 Motor Club Bikesports race and winning class A for cars with modified engines.

Lessons learned from Harmer's cost-effective Revelation single-seaters – of which a dozen have been made since 2005 – have shaped the prototype, which was started six years ago although other priorities delayed its completion.

A devastating battery fire during testing at Blyton, where Harmer is a leading driver coach, set the project back, but the former 750MC Kit Car champion from Bradford has bounced back stronger.

"I wanted to be out regularly this year but the LF2R is evolving," he said. "We have moved away from the [Honda] Fireblade engines and are now using DayTuner Performance 1000cc Suzuki GSXRs, which are fantastic." Having not run the car in the wet, Harmer had no baseline settings for the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit, so qualified at the back.

"From there, I gambled on wet tyres and enjoyed charging through the field," he said. "It's got huge potential for affordable racing and driver training, but my philosophy has always been to develop a project before looking to sell replicas.

"We've already had interest in it from potential customers, but I want to do a full season in 2024."

MARCUS PYE

### BURTON OUT IN ENDUROKA

Porsche Carrera Cup GB race winner Gus Burton was a guest driver in Sunday's EnduroKa race at Brands Hatch, taking the wheel of the Burton Power car shared with the unrelated Andy Burton and others as they finished seventh. "As a near-professional, I don't often get a chance to race just for fun," he said prior to the race. "I have never sat in the Ka before I get in to race it, but think I'll be able to handle the power!"

### DRIVERS JOIN INDIAN F4

Two drivers who achieved success in British single-seater series this year are on the entry list for the inaugural round of Indian Formula 4 at Chennai this weekend. Dion Gowda finished fourth in the British F4 standings this season and is set to be joined in India by GB4 race winner Cooper Webster. All of the Tatuus-Abarth cars in the series are centrally run by MP Motorsport.

### JSCC SCHOLARSHIP OPENS

The Junior Saloon Car Championship has announced that its 2024 scholarship will take place at Croft on 17 February, where one teenager will win a fully funded season in the series, worth more than £30,000. Entrants will take to the track to showcase their driving abilities, as well as face the media and take part in a fitness test in front of a judging panel made up of championship organisers and partners. Previous scholars include Scott McIntyre, British Formula 4 race winner Deagen Fairclough and last year's victor Will Fallon.

### END OF AN ERA AT 750MC

Last weekend's 750 Motor Club Birkett Six Hour Relay and championship finals race meeting at Silverstone marked the end of a 25-year era. Terry Stevens and his wife Avril (below), who have timed the club's events since 1999, will hopefully enjoy a long and happy retirement.



STEVE JONES

## Later start for CSCC 2024 calendar

### CSCC

The Classic Sports Car Club is set to return to a more conventional schedule next season after its 2023 campaign began unusually early at Silverstone at the end of February.

The CSCC opener next year will be at Donington Park on 23-24 March and follows a pre-season trackday at the Leicestershire circuit. Club director David Smitheram said that the CSCC wanted to run a Silverstone February

event again but faced a significant increase in costs, and has instead opted for a single day on the Grand Prix circuit on 22 June.

Other changes include its Thruxton event switching to just one day, while Swinging Sixties will form part of the Thruxton Historic meeting, and the club's Anglesey event will revert to a more regular format on the Coastal circuit after a series of races were run over 24 hours this year.

"People are voting with their feet and they're wanting to do

the bigger circuits – at the same time, we haven't turned our back on places like Anglesey," said Smitheram, who added that the chance to visit circuits such as Thruxton was attractive for the wealth of championships joining its portfolio for 2024.

New Millennium and Turbo Tin Tops will also get to appear at the GT World Challenge Europe fixture on the Brands Hatch GP layout in May, while two visits to Spa had already been announced.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



# Turner enters WHT three years after his crash

FF1600

Colin Turner is set to make a return to competing in the Walter Hayes Trophy this weekend, three years after he lost both legs following an accident in the Silverstone Formula Ford event.

The indomitable Scot, who turns 73 on Sunday, has attended both WHTs in the interim, essentially to thank the marshals and medics who tended to him in the aftermath of the shunt, then supported him during his remarkable recovery.

Having helped his pal and compatriot Neil Broome run his Ray GR17 at the 2021 WHT, then demonstrated Callum Grant's Merlyn Mk20A to a fine reception from marshals during the Sunday lunch break last year, it's a poignant step for Turner to be competing again this time around.

"It's a big weekend and I'm looking forward to it," he said on Tuesday, having loaded his Merlyn Mk20A for the seven-hour, 300-mile trip south. "Unfortunately, my motorhome's



clutch failed last week, so I'm having to tow it with a car and stay locally.

"The marshals at Silverstone are tremendous – I can't praise them highly enough. Callie Plant and her husband Kevin have been in constant touch [since my accident] and I'm friends with many of them on Facebook, so I'm doing it for them."

Turner made his racing comeback this season and has competed at three meetings in his Merlyn. "I've done Anglesey, Croft and last month's HSCC finals on Silverstone's

National circuit," he said. "My 1m07.848s in the second race was only a second outside my personal best."

Nigel and Callum Grant – now a three-time Historic FF1600 champion – are running Turner and will oversee a test session on Friday "to bed the car and myself in".

Turner, who has been given number 73 to mark his birthday, is one of 85 drivers that had entered the event as Autosport closed for press on Tuesday.

MARCUS PYE

## HSCC reveals a reshuffled 2024 event calendar



HSCC

The Historic Sports Car Club has revealed its provisional 2024 calendar. This features an earlier August date for the Croft Historic Race Weekend (to avoid clashes) but does not have a spring Silverstone Grand Prix visit.

While staple meetings

such as the Brands Hatch Super Prix and Oulton Park Historic Gold Cup are part of the schedule, the club has opted not to run an event on the Silverstone GP layout, as it traditionally does for the International Trophy, amid rising circuit hire costs. It will, however, still hold its October finals on the National circuit.

"We've got some good events, starting off with Snetterton [on 20-21 April]," said HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. "The disappointment is we're not going to the Silverstone GP circuit, but we have to look at the finances given the market circumstances at this time."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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## Marshall reunites with his father's old Triumph Dolomite Sprint

### HISTORICS

Gregor Marshall was reunited with his late father Gerry's Triumph Dolomite Sprint production saloon car in the recent Historic Racing Drivers Club Gerry Marshall Trophy race at Silverstone.

Gerry Marshall raced the distinctive Triplex-liveried car to two production titles in 1978 before selling it to David Yates. It was then acquired by Irish racer Reg Tuthill, who placed it in storage in 1986.

"Reg and his son Jason decided about five years ago to restore it and Ken Clarke [ex-TWR] got involved to check it was the original," said Marshall Jr.

"He rubbed the bodywork right back to find it was blue underneath. Only when we found the original Autosport article [of when Marshall Sr bought the car], which

showed it was blue when dad bought it just after I was born, were we 100% certain!"

Marshall, aged 45, shared the two-litre car at Silverstone with Jason – witnessed by Tuthill Sr plus Clarke – and plans further outings in it.

"The car was finished just in time to deliver it on the Saturday evening and I only just fitted in it!" added Marshall.

"A trackrod arm bush had fallen out meaning in the race the left-front wheel had a mind of its own. The car also has over-drive in third and fourth gears, which took Jason [a regular on Ireland's rallying scene] and I some time to get used to.

"It's still got a production saloon-spec engine in it so we need to think whether to upgrade that to Group 1-spec, which would give us 30-40bhp more."

CARL MCKELLAR

## Meeke impresses in R.A.C. preparation

### HISTORIC RALLYING

Former World Rally Championship driver Kris Meeke completed a successful warm-up for the Roger Albert Clark Rally by tackling the Carlisle Stages at the end of last month in a Ford Escort Mk2 from Wales Motorsport.

Meeke and co-driver Noel

O'Sullivan contested the Kielder event as practice for the five-day marathon and as a chance to get accustomed to using organisers' notes rather than making their own pacenotes.

Meeke ended the day 14 seconds up on the next historic crew of Jason Pritchard and Phil Clarke. "It's been a useful day to be honest and I really enjoyed

it," said Meeke. "It was useful for many aspects and it gave us a lot of information to chew on. It was nice to be back in Kielder because it's a bit tricky in there with deep ditches. And you have no margin."

Meeke will now start the R.A.C. Rally later this month as one of the leading contenders.

PAUL LAWRENCE

### GOODYEAR MASTERS TYRES

Goodyear has struck a new agreement with Masters Historic Racing in a deal that will result in the brand returning to supplying tyres for several categories, including for historic Formula 1 and Le Mans machinery. Earlier this year, it was announced that Goodyear was developing a new tyre for 1970s and 1980s F1 cars and this rubber will gradually replace the Avons currently used in Masters' F1 Legends series. Goodyear will also supply tyres manufactured alongside those currently used in the World Endurance Championship for the Masters Endurance Legends division.

### HAYES CLASSIC TROPHY

Construction company SDC, once a major Formula Ford sponsor in the 1980s, will extend its support for the Classic Formula Ford category by offering an annual trophy to the highest-placed driver in a pre-1982 car during the Walter Hayes Trophy, starting at Silverstone this weekend. The award was the idea of former Royale boss Alan Cornock.

### MORE GO FREE TO MUSEUM

Silverstone Museum will extend its Girls Go Free initiative due to popular demand, with the offer running until this Sunday (5 November). Silverstone Museum chief executive Phil Lawrie said: "We have been delighted with the fantastic and positive response the Silverstone Museum Girls Go Free initiative has received so far, with almost 1000 girls and young women visiting the museum for free in October alone."

### GINETTA SPECIAL DEBUTS

Alan Robinson's intriguing Ginetta G12-esque Sport Special (below) debuted at Silverstone last Sunday. The fruit of five years' toil, its tubular chassis features a Ford Duratec engine mated to an Audi A4 transaxle, with Mazda MX-5 suspension uprights and steering located by bespoke wishbones. "I stopped counting at 4000 hours," said the 72-year-old semi-retired Pershore sailmaker, who spent a year working on the body plug alone.







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# Historic F1 entertains at Algarve Classic

## HISTORICS

The Algarve Classic weekend started in glorious sunshine at the Portimao circuit, although by Sunday the weather was more familiar for the large contingent of British drivers in action.

Crowd favourites, the Formula 1 Legends, were among three Masters Historic Racing grids in action and raced twice on Saturday. Werner d'Ansembourg took his first pole in a Brabham BT49 and, after initially dropping a few places, he fought back to finish second behind the Ligier JS21 of Soheil Ayari in the opener. Nick Padmore topped the pre-1978 class in a Lotus 77. Ken Tyrrell won the sequel in his Tyrrell 011, with d'Ansembourg finishing second again despite starting seventh. Pre-1978 was won by Marco Werner (Lotus 76), in third overall.

The Endurance Legends also had two races on Saturday. Steve Brooks's Peugeot 90X prevailed in the opener from pole ahead of Keith Frieser in



Tyrrell was among the winners in Portugal

RED WATER IMAGES

a Zytec 09S, with Andy Cummings and Alvaro Fontes (Morgan Pescarolo) third to win the P2 class. Andrew Donaldson took the GT class win in a Lister Storm, his first race in a car newly restored by BBM Sport.

The Peugeot was forced to retire on the first lap of the second race with a gearbox issue, leaving Frieser victorious. Cummings and Fontes were second, with Donaldson enjoying further class success.

The biggest race of Saturday was a 90-minute contest featuring Gentlemen Drivers and Pre-66 Touring Cars. Gary Pearson took victory in his Jaguar E-type in a close-fought race after the TVR of John Spiers and Nigel Greensall was forced to retire with brake issues. Harry Barton had a dominant drive in the Pre-66 class in his BMW 1800 TiSA.

Elsewhere, Clive Richards secured Formula Junior spoils on both days, demonstrating great skill piloting his Lotus 22 in torrential rain on Sunday. Philipp Buhofer took two second places

in his Lotus 27. His son, Lukas, had overtaken him in the opener but lost that position on countback when it finished under a red flag.

Some of the best racing of the weekend came from the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association. Justin Maeers triumphed first time around, with Rudi Friedrichs second. But their positions were reversed for race two, with the two Cooper T53s separated by just 0.011 seconds in a photo finish. Tim Child was third both times in his Brabham BT3/4.

Sunday's big race was for the GT & Sports Car Cup, although the opening laps took place under safety car conditions due to torrential rain. The eventual winners were Richard Kent and Chris Ward in their E-type, with Gary Pearson taking second. Doug Muirhead and Jeremy Welch won the GT3 class in their Austin-Healey, and Rob Cull and John Pearson took the GT2 honours with a TVR Grantura.

JAMES WADHAM



The Ward and Kent E-type won in GTSCC

RED WATER IMAGES

# Solberg Subaru tops Madeira event

## RALLY MADEIRA LEGEND

The third edition of the Rally Madeira Legend took place on the island last weekend, with a range of rally machinery from the 1960s to more modern cars tackling stages made famous by the European Rally Championship.

Among the cars in action were an ex-Petter Solberg Subaru Impreza WRC S14, an Audi Sport Quattro S1

Evo 2, a 1963 Trabant, and many Ford Escorts in between. But it was Rally Madeira icon Andrea Aghini and Massimiliano Cerrai who won the first stage in a Lancia Delta Integrale 16V. A broken driveshaft caused the Lancia to fail stage two, allowing Gil Freitas/Duarte Miranda to take the lead in the ex-Solberg Impreza.

Freitas/Miranda then dominated all five stages

on day two, despite nursing a clutch problem, while Bernardo Sousa/Victor Calado trailed behind in their Ford Fiesta S2000 with a deficit of 3m50.3s.

The only UK entrant, Stewart Bowes, had been invited to showcase his self-built Quattro. A suspected cracked flywheel stopped him and Luis Boica from progressing after completing day one.

DAVID WARBURTON



RALLY MADEIRA LEGEND



# No ordinary job as RAF hits sixth Birkett target

**SILVERSTONE**  
**750MC BIRKETT RELAY**  
**28 OCTOBER**

The calmness under pressure, fastidious preparation and laser focus exemplified in their day jobs underpinned Royal Air Force personnel's coveted handicap victory – their sixth since Ian Fletcher's Team Flywheel hit its target in 2007 – over 69 rivals in last Saturday's 750 Motor Club Birkett Six Hour Relay race at Silverstone.

Three members of 2021's winning squadron – Alexander Smith, David Russell (on a mission to prove sustainable fuel in his reliveried BMW 328i) and Simon Frowen (now in a Ginetta G20) – brought experience. Alex Waldeck and James Flint joined them on previous competitor Brian Watson's watch as they also strove to defeat strong Army and Royal Navy teams.

Although BMWs have superseded Caterhams as weapons of choice for many, the event featured some interesting entries. Formula Woman's Jaguar XE Project 8s – in which Ginetta Junior champion Freddie Slater's engineer Steph Sore showed gutsy pace – and Matt Skidmore's Hayabusa-engined Mini were newcomers.

With ambient temperature peaking at



nine degrees Celsius, Aaron Cooke set the handicap pace in his squad's Ginetta G55. ACR led to two hours, chased by the RAF, then Future Classico – with Stephen Scott-Dunwoodie's Ford Sierra Cosworth breathing fire – and Team 348's BMW 116is of Simon Hopcroft-Lopez, Freddie Tatham and Matt Highcock. CAP (CALM All Porsche) it All subsequently went top with Warren Allen's Cayman and Boxsters.

Double winners The 3 Amigos (Paul Hinson, David Drinkwater and Adam Read) posed their usual BMW Compact threat. Royal Navy Motorsport, led by Keith Attwood (Mini Cooper S R53), rose to second, with Scratch contenders Area

Motorsport also on the lead lap at half-way once playing-field-levelling credits were added. Behind the top four, 17 teams were within a lap.

The RAF fired their afterburners in the fourth hour and moved ahead in the fifth, but could not break free from Team 348, The 3 Amigos or Area Motorsport. Rain made the final hour more intense and, if nerves jangled through a final short safety car interlude, it didn't show. Russell kept his BMW ahead of Area boss Rob Baker, back in a Honda Civic EP3. Although Area completed 135 laps, seven more than the airmen, on handicaps adjusted for minimal caution periods the latter held on. The

## Hot Hatch high five for BMW ace Drinkwater

**SILVERSTONE**  
**750MC**  
**29 OCTOBER**

Of several title races that went to the wire on Sunday, the 750 Motor Club's 35th and final 2023 race day, Hot Hatch's was closest. Six aspirants had a chance of glory, but it was BMW Compact maestro David Drinkwater who denied Martyn Paget Class C and secured the overall crown for a fifth successive year!



Missing Brands Hatch in May left Drinkwater playing catch-up, without the safety of another slip in the contest in which each driver counts 14 of 16 results. Dan Silvester beat Dan Brown – in similar Honda K24-powered Civic EGs – to both victories and seasonal Class A honours. Silvester carved through the Alfa Romeo grid in the wet morning race, which finished behind a safety car after Adam Chafer's Peugeot hit the Wing pitwall.

Mathew Mandipira and team-mate Joel Arguelles have disputed Class B all year in Renault Clio 197s, but late starter David Walsh's Clio headed divisional champ Mandipira both times. Among the Alfas, Tom Hill and James Ford topped the four-class table but, with more suitable tyres, Mike Hilton won the afternoon race in his delicious 4C from Silvester's Honda.

The Sport Specials field was split when Class A hopeful Paul Collingwood's Eclipse-Honda overshot Becketts on lap one, then spun wildly. This gifted rival

Andy Hiley a huge lead in his Ford Duratec-powered Chronos, which he extended to more than a minute. Hiley repeated in the afternoon, with Anton Landon (Cyana) again second.

Neil Turner, overall champion in the Caterham he bought new in 1995 then "retired for 20 years", aced Class B from Andrew Hayward (Sylva Clubman) and 2022 title winner Stuart Thompson (MK Indy) both times. Class C champ Stewart Mutch (MEV Exocet R) bounced back from a qualifying shunt and skittling two cars out at Village to beat Micky Scott in race two.

Lincolnshire farmer Eddie Mawer won both Ma7da contests. His half-second victory over seasonal runner-up Ben Powney and champion Jonathan Lisseter in race two was the day's finest in conditions Mawer described as "quite snotty".

Leading Charles Hall by a point in Bikesports, Leon Morrell's late wet tyre call for the opener tested his crew's mettle and proved decisive. His comfortable win, with



WEEKEND WINNERS



Skidmore's Mini was a novelty

STEVE JONES

BIRKETT RELAY

HANDICAP

**1 RAF Motor Sport: Alexander Smith (Honda Integra Type R), Alex Waldeck (Peugeot 306 S16), James Flint (Ford Fiesta ST150), David Russell (BMW 328i), Simon Frowen (Ginetta G20) 156 laps (128+28 credit);** 2 Area Motorsport: Josh Files, Cameron Elder, Rob Baker (Honda Civic Type Rs), Bradley Burns (Renault Clio Cup), Luke Handley (Audi TT) 156 (135+21); 3 The 3 Amigos: Paul Hinson, David Drinkwater, Adam Read (BMW Compacts) 155 (129+26); 4 Team 348: Simon Hopcroft-Lopez, Freddie Tatham, Matthew Highcock (BMW 116is) 155 (119+36); 5 Mazda Misfits: David Brown, James McCann, Stephen Reed (Mazda MX-5s); Stephen Reece (Lotus Elise 111R) 155 (122+33); 6 Ashgood Porsche Specialists with CAP: Andrew Duce, Richard Neall, William and Mike Curtler, John Westbrook (Porsche Boxster Ss) 155 (122+33).

SCRATCH 1 RSR Motorsport: John Macleod (Radical SR3 XXR), Ben Stone, James Lay (Radical SR3s) 148 laps;

2 RJ with Daytona Motorsport: Alastair Smart (Radical SR10), Charles Graham, Matthew Jones (Radical SR3 RSXs) -1 lap; 3 RJ Motorsport: Tom Walpole (Radical SR10), Ash Hicklin (Radical SR3 RS), Leon Morrell (Radical SR3 RSX); 4 Atomic Racing - The 'B' Cups: Rich Webb, John Cutmore, Matthew Booth, Dave Watson, Mark Goodwin (MK Cup 200s); 5 Datum Motorsport: Axel van Nederveen, Marco Anastasi, Maurizio Sciglio (Ginetta G56 GTAs); 6 Prepnlay/Gee Sport: Russell Dack (BMW E46 Compact), Paul Wood, James Card, Jason West (BMW E46 M3s). **Fastest lap** Lay 2m06.71s (104.00mph). **Pole** RSR Motorsport. **Starters** 70.

SILVERSTONE

HOT HATCH/ALFA ROMEOS

**Race 1** Dan Silvester (Honda Civic EG)

**Race 2** Mike Hilton (Alfa Romeo 4C)

SPORT SPECIALS/MA7DAS

**Races 1 & 2** Andy Hiley (Chronos HR1S)

BIKESPORTS/SPORTS 1000

**Race 1** Leon Morrell (Radical SR3)

**Race 2** Charles Hall (Mittell MC-41R)

CLUB ENDURO

Rob Baker/Bradley Burns (VW Golf GTI, below)



MICK WALKER

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

Radicals led the way again this year with RSR winning by a lap



STEVE JONES

3 Amigos, Team 348, Mazda Misfits and Ashgood Porsche Specialists' Boxsters completed the top six, all a lap down.

Radical teams, Scratch winners 14 times since 2000, were again in a race of their own, but each had trials and tribulations. RSR Motorsport's SR3s led throughout, John Macleod netting an unprecedented fifth win, Ben Stone his second and James Lay his first. One of RJ Motorsport's trios, each including a 425bhp Ford Duratec-powered SR10, was penalised five laps early on for having two cars out simultaneously, while Charles Graham's SR3 conked out, torpedoing his triple crown hopes.

The performance of the Atomic 'kittens'

- Hayabusa-engined MK Cup 200 cars - was extraordinary on their Birkett debut. RLM's Rich Webb, John Cutmore, Matthew Booth, project partner Dave Watson and Mark Goodwin finished a sensational fourth, clear of Datum Motorsport's Ginetta G56 GTAs. Both won classes, as did Allan Curtis, Tim Steel and Mike Kerley of Brake Dancer Racing 1 in Caterham 310Rs.

First saloons were Prepnlay/Gee Sport's BMW E46s in sixth, chased by the Parkin twins' Darkside Developments VAG troupe. Capture Motorsport's SEAT Leon TCRs claimed eighth despite Mark Grice hitting a BMW 116i at Brooklands.

MARCUS PYE



Yarrow achieved more Sports 1000 success

MICK WALKER

Tim Harmer claiming Class A and fourth overall from the back in his new Revelation, put the overall title beyond reach. Class A champ Hall, in Scott Mittell's 1340cc MC-41R after gearbox issues sidelined his 1000cc version in testing, won race two.

Ryan Yarrow needed to finish second in either Sports 1000 counter for a title hat-trick, but won both superbly, balancing his Spire on the limit of treaded tyre adhesion. Seamus Heaney (Wolfe) and the evergreen Colin Chapman (Spire) were delighted with seconds. David Watson and Rich Webb shared Cup 200 gold.

Club Enduro victory for Golf GTI pair Rob Baker and Bradley Burns over Mark Grice/Will Beech (SEAT) was hard-earned after Baker had a grassy moment onto the Hangar Straight as they lapped two BMWs on either side. Third for Alan Henderson/Dan Irving in AK Automotive's Mazda MX-5 turbo car, which started on pole, was gratifying. Scott Parkin arrived as champion in the VW Golf shared with Dan Silvester, but Parkin's exclusion for a post-race Copse incident will unravel later.

MARCUS PYE





JTR hub failure in final minutes gave the win to Pro-Am crew

GARY HAWKINS

## Pro-Am wins after JTR suffers late drama in IndyKa 500

**BRANDS HATCH**  
**MSVR**  
**28-29 OCTOBER**

The most successful team in this year's EnduroKa series, Pro-Am Racing, snatched a last-gasp victory in Sunday's IndyKa 500 at Brands Hatch after more than eight hours of action in conditions that ranged from damp to torrential rain.

For many laps, Nick Tandy's JTR crew seemed on course for victory and to add to their success from 2019 but, with the Le Mans 24 Hours victor driving, their car shed a wheel just 15 minutes from the end. Tandy had been put under pressure after a late safety car – the 22nd intervention of the day by MotorSport Vision's electric BMW – which brought Scott Thompson into contention for Pro-Am.

Supporting roles by Lewis Selby and Elliot Mason built on the foundations established by Tandy taking the first and last stints for JTR. Equally impressive, and ultimately more successful, were the efforts of Louis Harvey, Justin Roberts, Nicole Drought and Thompson for Pro-Am.

Jonny Milner with George and Jack Wright took second place, just 4.3 seconds behind for MilnAir Racing as Autotech Motorsport finished third, two laps adrift, thanks to Taylor Norton, Jonathan Ogden, Chris Hilson and Sam May.

Among the many hard luck stories, Ferguson Motorsport's Lee and Shayne Deegan, along with Damon and Thorburn Astin lost a potential podium when Lee was penalised for exceeding the maximum driving time. The sister machines of Joe, Daniel and Billy Ferguson, along with Tom Bell, suffered a puncture, a failed

alternator and a multiple roll at Paddock Hill Bend.

The dominant driver in the inaugural Miata Trophy season, Declan Lee, secured the championship with a win on a damp Saturday. Lee had to work hard after a poor start from pole left him grappling with Michael Knibbs and Aidan Hills, but he drove clear once in front. Alex Miller started with a mathematical chance of snatching the title from Lee but finished sixth. Lee enjoyed the podium champagne knowing he wouldn't be taking part in the day's second race, which was won by Hills from the duelling Knibbs and John Langridge.

Already confirmed as winner of the United Formula Ford Championship, Lucas Romanek crushed a thin field by almost 30s in the first of two races. South African Andrew Rackstraw had no practice before official qualifying, but his pace improved on a drying surface in second place ahead of the Walter Hayes Trophy meeting this weekend. Also notable was Ben Powney, best of the historic cars in a Jamun

more than 30 years old.

An interrupted and shortened second race restricted Romanek's winning margin over Rackstraw's Spectrum and the Medina of Jacob Tofts. Powney shone again, fourth overall for the second time.

The Trackday Championship finale was one for mathematicians as places changed in mixed conditions. Adrian Pottinger (Renault Clio) led the race from pole, but it was only when team-mate Charlie Palk passed Stewart Donovan (Toyota Celica) for second that the title contest swung in Pottinger's favour. However, it went wrong for Pottinger in the final minutes when contact with a backmarker and a post-race penalty handed the title to Donovan.

Jack Goes, still an official novice and son of multiple Trackday winner Darren, added to sixth in the earlier race with his first outright win in the non-championship Trackday Trophy. He drove the same VW Scirocco in both. Second after leading was the Justin Roberts/Nicole Drought Honda Civic.

**BRIAN PHILLIPS**



Maiden Miata Trophy title went to Lee after another victory

GARY HAWKINS



# Olympian crowned Fun Cup champions as JPR makes history

**OULTON PARK**  
**BRSCC**  
**28 OCTOBER**

Ted Bradbury, joined by Ginetta Junior frontrunners Reza Seewooruthun and Mikey Porter, made Fun Cup history as they became the youngest winners in the category with a combined age of 49.

The trio took victory in the one-hour sprint race, from MJ Tec's Scott Jeffs/Will Abraham and Team Olympian's Chris Dovell/Kristian Rose/Riley Phillips.

But it was the three-hour enduro that finally settled the title. It came down to a five-lap sprint after a safety car, as Scott Fitzgerald led for UVio/Hofmann's from

JPR's Porter, Team Viking/Ursus Capital's Jonny Hoad, Axiometrics's Neil Burroughs and Signature RV's Marcus Clutton.

Three abreast through Shell four laps from home, Hoad had the lead from Clutton and Porter, after Burroughs received a stop/go penalty and Fitzgerald lost his power steering. Clutton made the decisive move into Lodge with a lap to go, with Porter second from Fitzgerald, as Hoad dropped to fourth. Despite finishing 15th after being stuck in fifth gear and having an alternator connection problem, it was enough to crown the Olympian trio champions.

Rhys Claydon dominated the first Metro Cup race having eased clear of



Mike Williams on the opening lap. Both finished well clear of Robbie Kenning in a race-long, but distant, third.

Williams had the early lead from Claydon in race two, until Kenning took them both on lap three. But Williams snatched it back a lap later, holding off Kenning to the flag, with Matthew Simpson third.

**PETER SCHERER**



## Pearson takes BRC honours, Cave wins Cambrian overall

**CAMBRIAN RALLY**  
**BRC**  
**27-28 OCTOBER**

With the newly crowned British Rally champion Adrien Fourmaux away on World Rally Championship duties, the Cambrian Rally was the perfect opportunity for Garry Pearson to take his maiden BRC win.

Tom Cave claimed overall bragging rights on the Cambrian but, not being registered, the top BRC score went to Pearson. Cave had made his rallying return in fine style to take victory by 21.5 seconds over Pearson's similar VW Polo GTI R5. Leading from the outset, Cave proved to dominate the timesheets aside from a scratch time from Pearson on the last test.

"It's been a really enjoyable day, it feels good," said Cave. "I was really nervous this morning, more than I have ever been, so I'm thrilled to get the win." Pearson added: "It's been a long year to get to this point,

but I'm delighted to get the job done."

Max McRae, son of 1995 BRC champion Alister, made his gravel debut in Rally2 machinery with a Skoda Fabia R5 and duly delivered the same pace he has shown in the Junior European Rally Championship this season, taking third overall.

The Junior BRC title was still up for grabs at the final round, and it was a two-horse race between Kyle White and Kyle McBride. Early boost issues for White's Peugeot 208 left him languishing, allowing McBride to head off into the distance in his Ford Fiesta Rally4. However, with just a finish required, White nursed the 208 through the remaining tests, taking the title.

"I can't really put it into words at the moment," said an emotional White. "It's been an incredible three years in the Junior BRC, I really can't believe it. We are just a wee four-man team from Northern Ireland and to come here and do this, well it's just extra special."

**MATT COTTON**

### WEEKEND WINNERS

#### BRANDS HATCH

##### ENDUROKA

Pro-Am Racing (Louis Harvey/Justin Roberts/  
Nicole Drought/Scott Thompson)

##### MIATA TROPHY

**Race 1** Declan Lee

**Race 2** Aidan Hills

##### UNITED FORMULA FORD

**Races 1 & 2** Lucas Romanek  
(Van Diemen JL13)

##### TRACKDAY CHAMPIONSHIP

Charlie Palk (Renault Clio)

##### TRACKDAY TROPHY

Jack Goes (VW Scirocco)

#### OULTON PARK

##### FUN CUP

**Race 1** JPR Team BSP (Ted Bradbury/  
Reza Seewooruthun/Mikey Porter)

**Race 2** Signature RV (Steve Ruston/  
John Whitehouse/Marcus Clutton)

##### MG METRO CUP

**Race 1** Rhys Claydon

**Race 2** Mike Williams

##### SUPER CLASSIC PRE-'99 FORMULA FORD

**Races 1 & 2** Richard Freye (Van Diemen RF92)

**For full results visit:** [tsl-timing.com](http://tsl-timing.com)

#### CAMBRIAN RALLY (BRC ONLY)

**1** Garry Pearson/Hannah McKillop  
(VW Polo GTI R5); **2** Ollie Mellors/Ian  
Windress (Proton Iriz R5) +1m11.5s;  
**3** Kyle McBride/Liam McIntyre (Ford Fiesta  
Rally4); **4** Keelan Grogan/Ayrton Sherlock  
(Peugeot 208 Rally4); **5** Kyle White/Sean  
Topping (Peugeot); **6** Stephen Waugh/  
Mark Broadbent (Ford Fiesta R2T).

**JBRC** McBride/McIntyre.

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



# SLOWING DOWN FROM FTD

*Scott Moran has won six British Hillclimb titles, but he won't be chasing a seventh. It's a good moment to look back at his time at the peak of the sport*

PAUL LAWRENCE

**O**n an autumnal Sunday a few weeks ago at Loton Park, Scott Moran climbed out of a top-flight hillclimb car for perhaps the final time to end his career at the top of the sport. Though this is far from retirement for the Ludlow driver, it signalled the end of an era that took him to six British Hillclimb Championship titles, and run-off victory stats that will go unbeaten for a long time.

Now 47 years old, Moran had decided that the time demands of chasing a full British championship campaign were just too much to balance with family and business commitments. There is every chance that the younger Moran, 13-year-old Ollie, will soon make his first steps in the sport, following his father and grandad Roger in extending the Moran motorsport dynasty.

"It's been fantastic," says Scott, reflecting on his stellar career.

"Winning the championship six times is incredible. I'd love that number seven, but if I don't do it I'm not going to worry about it. I'm just stepping down from chasing the British Hillclimb Championship, that's as much as it is. The BHC is a massive commitment and I've done it most years for 20 years now.

"I'm not retiring," adds Moran, who will compete at Prescott this weekend alongside Roger in their Skoda Fabia R5 rally car. "I'm just stopping competing at this level."

The Moran story goes back to the young Roger competing as a 19-year-old in road rallies in the early 1970s. He progressed through rallying and eventually into hillclimbing, and it was there that Scott first started to compete. Scott ran an ex-Simon Durling Delta racing car for a couple of years in the mid-1990s, and then shared a Caterham with his sister Marie.

*"I couldn't comprehend how anyone could drive this thing. But I thought it was incredible"*







Sharing a Caterham with his sister helped set Scott on his way



Moran and the GR61 was a formidable combo and took six titles

Success followed, and it wasn't long before he took up the chance of sharing a V6-engined Pilbeam MP88 with Roger, who won the BHC crown in 1997. Scott's first experience of the car was at Curborough on a test day: "I squeezed the throttle and it just went. I thought I was going to the moon! I couldn't comprehend how anyone could drive this thing. But I was bitten by the bug and thought it was incredible."

He gradually built his pace in the Pilbeam, sharing the car with his dad.

By 2005, the Gould GR61 that would bring them so much success was being put together. "We already had the tub for the Gould from Ralt," recalls Moran. "It's a 1999 tub built

for F3 and they never actually used it. I really found my feet in that car. The Pilbeam was really difficult to drive, and then I got in the GR61 and it just gelled."

With a Nicholson McLaren engine installed, the first title came in 2008. Moran won again in 2009, lost out to Martin Groves in 2010, and then took a third crown in 2011, when Roger finished

second in the shared car. After Trevor Willis took the 2012 title, Scott took three more titles over four years, and in the year he didn't win, 2015, Alex Summers shared the car and bagged his first BHC crown.

It was at the June 2007 Shelsley Walsh meeting, when battling with Groves, that they blitzed the all-important Shelsley record, one of hillclimbing's most coveted spoils. "I think we broke the record five times between us," Moran grins. "There were other people under the record, but only Martin and I went home with sub-23s runs. Now there are eight people under 23s!"

Wallace Menzies, an arch rival of recent seasons, reckons that Moran has a button in the car where he keys in the time he wants to set, and simply goes out and does it.

After a couple of quiet seasons when Moran didn't chase a full campaign, the GR61 was put away in the garage and he moved to sharing the later GR59 of Graham Wynn. The package got quicker and quicker, and by the second half of 2023 was a match for anything. It was inevitably tempting to roll the dice one more time and go into 2024 chasing a seventh title. But Moran made the decision not to, and instead he will drive a variety of cars in a less busy schedule, and will surely not lack invitations to share cars with other drivers. Roger has several cars in the garage, and more time in the increasingly developed Fabia R5 hillclimb evolution is an option.

So for now, at least, Scott Moran has served his time at the top of British hillclimbing. He's been a popular and deserving champion, and the close-knit community will rejoice in the fact that he's not quitting, just scaling back a little. 🍷



PAUL LAWRENCE

### THE RECORD BREAKERS

The British Hillclimb Championship is the UK's longest-running national motorsport series, easily outdating the British Touring Car Championship and the British Rally Championship. It started in 1947 as Britain emerged from the Second World War and has only been stopped once, by COVID in 2020.

Across 76 years, multiple champions are common and Scott Moran stands right at the very head of the pack alongside Tony Marsh, with six titles. Marsh took two hat-tricks, one in the 1950s and one in the 1960s, in between trying his hand at grand prix racing.

Six other drivers have won the title four times and, with four on the trot to his credit so far, current pacesetter Wallace Menzies could be heading towards joining Moran and Marsh at the top of the rankings.

To win six times is a remarkable achievement that takes consistency, pace, determination and tenacity. And Moran can be justifiably proud of it – not to mention his record 173 run-off victories.

Moran, here in his final run-off at Loton Park, remained a threat in 2023 with the Gould GR59



PAUL LAWRENCE



# FINISHING STRAIGHT

Take your pick of liveries, teams and drivers from the WRC, WRC2 and JWRC – then hit the dirt!



## If in any doubt, just go flat out



**VIDEO GAME**  
**EA SPORTS WRC**  
PC, PlayStation  
PlayStation 5 and  
Xbox Series X|S  
RRP £44.99  
Release date:  
3 November 2023

EA Sports WRC sees Codemasters leaning on its previous rally game, *DiRT Rally 2.0*, (*DR 2.0*) to bring an all-encompassing World Rally Championship experience to PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S and PC.

All of the 2023 WRC season's rallies are represented – last weekend's Central European Rally arrives as a free, post-release DLC. The drivers, teams and liveries of the WRC, WRC2 and Junior WRC classes are all included – that's an impressive 78 cars and 200+ stages.



There are online modes such as Clubs, where you can set up and enter online rallies using EA's companion Racenet app, and Moments, where you take on curated rally scenarios aiming for the fastest time on the leaderboard. The initial challenge is to recreate Colin McRae's infamous attempt at the 1992 1000 Lakes Rally in Finland. Fitting, as this is the outfit that created the *Colin McRae Rally* titles in the 1990s-2000s.

From the main menu, you can also customise your driving avatar, choose your favourite rally car (featuring all the big hitters from the 1960s to the present day) and even build your own challenger using the Builder mode.

This new addition allows players to construct a Rally1, Rally2 or Rally3 car from scratch, choosing the location of the engine and selecting from numerous cosmetic and mechanical components, with better parts unlocked during the game's career mode.

Speaking of which, WRC's career mode is where players will spend most of their time, electing whether to begin in the Junior WRC, WRC2 or WRC classes. There are plenty of events to sink your teeth into here, with players' WRC commitments interspersed with invitational rallies and opportunities to upgrade and modify their burgeoning team.

You can hire engineers, a team-mate and even buy new cars, all while staying within a strict budget set by your eye-rollingly

named benefactor, Max Lucre.

It's only possible to perform one task per calendar week (with two weeks set aside for full WRC events), so players need to prioritise their requirements: will you give your engineers a much-needed rest or squeeze in another drive in a Metro 6R4?

Just like *DR 2.0*, WRC's audio design is exemplary, with Rally1 cars' anti-lag effects captured to perfection alongside robust aural recreations of Group B classics such as the Audi Quattro S1 Evo 2.

New additions include a photo mode and regularity rallies, but most prospective players will be focused on how well WRC drives. Well, those who enjoyed *DR 2.0* are in luck, as WRC feels remarkably like Codemasters' previous rally game.

If anything, gravel handling is improved, with the first joyous kilometres in a Rally1 car showcasing a hefty physics model as your car dances from corner to corner.

The driving experience is less fun on asphalt, however – despite an increase in steering weight – as most cars feel floaty on the limit. The asphalt issues are exacerbated by the tardiness of co-driver calls, which sometimes arrive too late to avoid a massive accident.

WRC is compatible with most steering wheel peripheral brands, including the likes of Fanatec, Thrustmaster and Logitech, but the progressiveness of the game's handling model also translates well to a gamepad, with numerous driving





EA SPORTS



EA SPORTS

assists and difficulty sliders ensuring maximum accessibility.

*EA Sports WRC* is a rally buff's dream. Its authentic cars, realistic exhaust notes, hefty career mode and expansive stages are a recipe for success.

However, too often the game is spoiled by performance and stability issues, making progress frustrating. Asphalt driving, while an improvement over *DiRT Rally 2.0*, is still lacking, but can be an enjoyable challenge with the right car and stage combination.

EA and Codemasters have, however, stressed that stability improvements are expected shortly after the game's launch, with VR implementation also slated for the PC version post-release.

Those issues aside, when everything clicks, *EA Sports WRC* is an excellent follow-up to *DiRT Rally 2.0* and should move to the top of any rally fan's wishlist.

**ROSS MCGREGOR**

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



THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

### Mexican Grand Prix review

The only records left for Max Verstappen to break this year are his own ones from last year, but could he reach 16 wins in one season despite a Ferrari front row lockout? To analyse all the action from last Sunday's Mexican Grand Prix, Martyn Lee is joined by Alex Kalinauckas and Filip Cleeren.



### WHAT'S ON

## INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

### Brazilian Grand Prix F1 World Championship Round 20/22

Interlagos, Brazil

**4-5 November**

**TV Live** Sky Sports F1, Sat 1730, Sun 1655

**TV Highlights** Sky Sports F1, Sun 2030, C4, Sun 2235

### World Endurance Championship Round 7/7

Sakhir, Bahrain

**4 November**

**TV Live** Eurosport 2, Sat 1030

### Super GT Round 8/8

Motegi, Japan

**5 November**

**TV Livestream** via Motorsport.tv, Sun 0345

### NASCAR Cup Round 36/36

Phoenix, USA

**5 November**

**TV Live** Viaplay, Sun 1900

### NASCAR Xfinity Round 33/33



FLORENT GOODEN/DPPI

Phoenix, USA

**4 November**

**TV Livestream** via Viaplay, Sat 2230

### TCR World Tour Round 7/9

Eastern Creek, Australia

**3-4 November**

**TV Livestream** via Viaplay, Sat 0200

## UK MOTORSPORT

### Silverstone HSCC 4-5 November



JEP

Walter Hayes Trophy, Allcomers, Monoposto

### Brands Hatch BARC 4-5 November

British Trucks, JSCC, Legends, Mini Challenge Trophy, Pickup

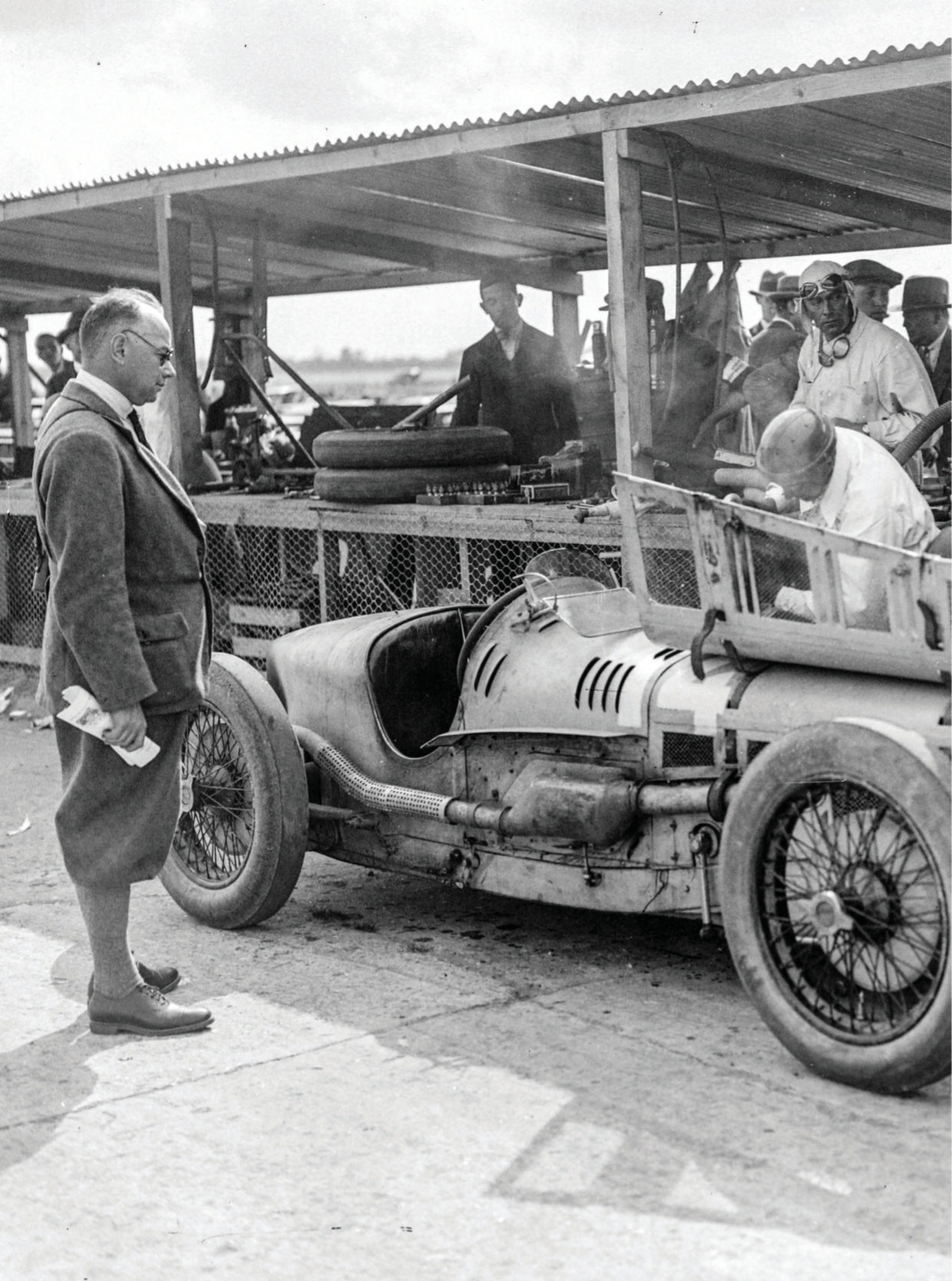
**TV Livestream** via barc.net

### British Rallycross Championship Round 6/6

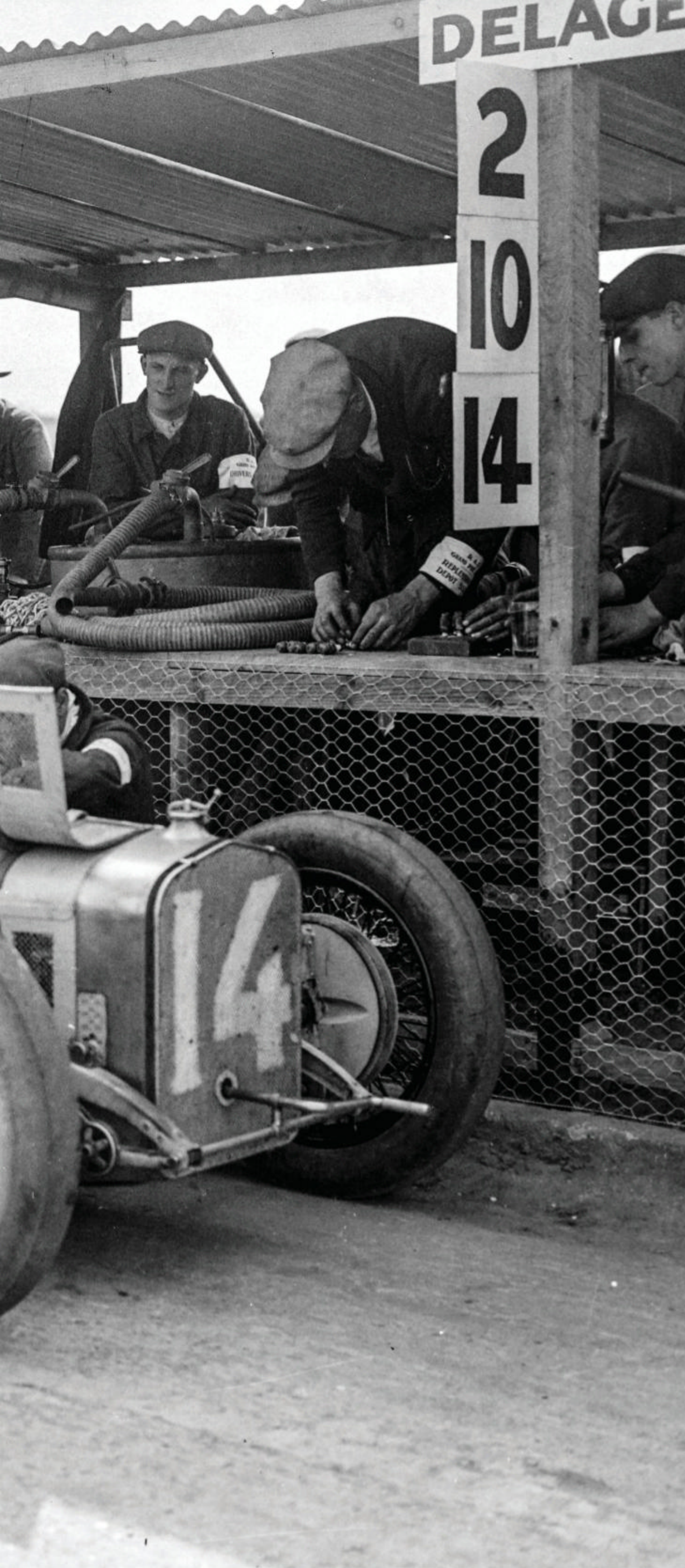
Lydden Hill, England

**4-5 November**









## FINISHING STRAIGHT

### FROM THE ARCHIVE

A nattily dressed official looks on as the Delage 15 S 8 shared by Robert Senechal and Louis Wagner is worked on in the pits during the inaugural RAC Grand Prix at Brooklands on 7 August 1926. The pair took victory despite intense heat causing them both problems. In the closing stages Wagner, in significant pain, was forced to stop frequently to dip his feet into water. Just three cars completed the full distance, the winning duo completing 110 laps in just over four hours. Malcolm Campbell was second in a Bugatti ahead of another Delage shared by Robert Benoist and Andre Dubonnet.



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De Ferran (left) and  
Castroneves clown around.  
Below: they battle on track

## Gil de Ferran

There is no one who had quite the impact on the career of Helio Castroneves that Gil de Ferran did.

The two Brazilians first met in the mid-1990s. Castroneves joined Paul Stewart Racing for British F3 in 1995 just as de Ferran left the squad's F3000 operation for his rookie CART season, and they became team-mates in 2000 for a struggling Team Penske, which had failed to produce a win or pole in either of the previous two seasons in CART. At the time, de Ferran was already an accomplished race winner, while Castroneves was still seeking his maiden victory at that level.

"When I was young, I never won a race and he sort of was battling for championships," recalls Castroneves. "Finally I said, 'I've got to follow this guy. I've got to learn from this guy.' And he definitely put me on the right path."

From 2000-03, the duo led Team Penske to a staggering 20 race wins and 25 pole positions, with de Ferran claiming back-to-back CART championships in 2000 and 2001. Meanwhile, Castroneves became the first driver to win the Indianapolis 500 in his first two starts (2001 and 2002), and de Ferran won the 2003 edition of 'The Greatest Spectacle in Racing' to make it three in a row at Indy for Team Penske.



Those early days set up a lifelong friendship. For Castroneves, even with a plethora of quality team-mates to choose from, de Ferran still stands out.

"I became good friends with Gil," says Castroneves. "I learned a lot from him at the beginning of my Penske days. We're still friends to this day, so if I have to pick one it's him. But I had tremendous team-mates. Ryan Briscoe was another fantastic guy – I still like him very much. Will [Power] was another. Simon [Pagnaud]. It's hard to just pick one. I always got along well with my team-mates."

"Even Sam Hornish Jr, we had a lot of competition prior to being team-mates and inside the team, but in the end we were sort of on good terms with each other, which I like. So, [with] all of them, I didn't have any issues."

JOEY BARNES



## F1 back to Brazil

CAN MERCEDES REPEAT 2022 JOY?

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES

SUTTON



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