

F1 Alonso stars amid Interlagos drama

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The big question raised by Verstappen's F1 domination

We've become accustomed to Red Bull and Max Verstappen breaking records this season, with the Dutchman's 2023 grand prix wins tally now up to 17 and the team's score at 19 following the Interlagos event last weekend. Notwithstanding Fernando Alonso's brilliant efforts to deny Sergio Perez's faster car a place on the podium, the result in Brazil was never in doubt (see page 16). And that's now the norm.

While the brilliance of Red Bull and Verstappen cannot be denied, it's hardly made for a classic Formula 1 season. That has made some ask whether something needs to be done about Red Bull's domination, so this week we take on that very question (p30).

We look at previous eras of F1 domination, rule changes that helped mix things up (or not), and what some of the current key players think of the idea of slowing down Red Bull. Really, it comes down to a debate about whether you think F1 should primarily be a sporting contest, one that's meritocratic, or simply a form of entertainment. For a publication that has been around *almost* as long as the world championship itself, Autosport is clear about where we stand in the debate (p39)...

Elsewhere, Toyota underlined its dominance of the World Endurance Championship (despite Balance of Performance) with another 1-2 in the Bahrain finale. Gary Watkins was there (p40).

- There's still time for you to have your say on the best performers of the 2023 motorsport season by voting in the Autosport Awards. Head to awardsvoting.autosport.com to select your favourites.



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PIT + PADDOCK



Interlagos
sprint 'previewed'
Verstappen/Norris
battle

F1 sprint races: they're here to stay, now it's time to make them better

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 organisers and teams are evaluating yet more tweaks to the set-up of sprint race weekends amid ongoing complaints that six further 'trial' events in 2023 have often proved dull and revealed flaws in the rulebook.

The landmark format change was introduced in 2021 and, initially, a Friday qualifying shootout preceded an irrelevant practice session before the result of the sprint contest determined the grid for the full grand prix. That drew criticism when drivers appeared to duck out of overtaking moves in the second half of the sprint to protect their starting position. In response, the timetable was adjusted to the current

system whereby a Friday qualifying sets the GP grid and Saturday runs as a standalone, with a separate qualifying shootout deciding the sprint starting order.

Last Saturday's Brazilian Grand Prix sprint was more exciting than normal, albeit thanks to an old-school circuit layout allowing for passing plus the abrasive asphalt wreaking havoc with the Pirelli tyres, but before the weekend the Sporting Advisory Committee met, with changes to the timetable high on the agenda.

While many fans and competitors remain cold on the concept, the commercial reality is that F1 is closer to running a sprint race at every round than it is to binning the format altogether. Autosport understands that Sky Sports viewing figures for the final sprint of the season in Brazil were strong, and F1 has also presented data showing a growth in audience numbers, although the figures used for the comparisons appear to be particularly selective. Either way, the underlying sentiment is that even the worst sprint race will always be more interesting than the best FP2 and FP3 sessions, although Circuit of The Americas chief Bobby Epstein reckoned that hosting a sprint round had very little impact on the demand for US GP Saturday tickets this year.

With the format poised to stick around, attention has turned to optimising the configuration. One proposal is for qualifying for the GP to return to a Saturday

afternoon slot and take place after a sprint race. The sprint qualifying session would therefore be moved to Friday to run after a single practice session. In turn, this would plausibly allow parc ferme to be reopened on Saturday morning to enable teams to revise their set-ups. That might create welcome changes in the competitive order rather than the current problem whereby the sprint race essentially previews, and therefore takes away the excitement from, the first stint of the full GP.

Aston Martin performance director Tom McCullough said: "From a technical point of view, it's a headache. The car goes into parc ferme after one practice session and it is difficult. But from a commercial side and from a fan side, I think there are elements that are exciting. It needs tweaking a bit more because now even my dad, who's quite an understander and follower of Formula 1, sometimes says to me, 'So just remind me, is it qualifying on Friday for the main race?' And I just think if somebody at that level is having questions, the fans are going to get confused."

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner wants more meaningful action. He suggests offering cash prizes to incentivise the drivers to put on a better show. "Then you will see some celebrating at the end," he said. "It's also maybe worth looking at it slightly differently. If you look at other leagues of sport, they have their main

Perez reckons it's time
to try a reversed grid



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McCullough: even
his dad's confused

MAUGER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

league and then they have cup finals. Maybe you have to look at something that is a little bit different like that."

One more far-fetched idea is that teams wouldn't be obliged to field their grand prix drivers. Max Verstappen, an outspoken critic of sprints, could theoretically sit the Saturday races out to allow Red Bull reserve Liam Lawson to try to score points in what would be a standalone mini-series. After the recent glut of sprint races in Qatar, the US and Brazil, momentum has also gathered behind the idea of introducing reversed grids. Sergio Perez articulated it best, saying: "I would propose a reverse grid, something that can make it more interesting for the fans because I don't think it's working, what we want to achieve. Nothing really happens in this sort of race. If we want to keep this format, give it a go on something quite different, because I think for the last two years this sort of event hasn't brought a lot of good racing."

MATT KEW

➔ P16 BRAZILIAN GP ACTION

O'SULLIVAN TO GET FP1 RUN IN WILLIAMS

FORMULA 1

FIA Formula 3 runner-up Zak O'Sullivan will make his public F1 debut at this month's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix when he takes over Alex Albon's Williams for FP1.

The 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver Award winner will help the Grove team satisfy the demand to run a rookie in each of its cars during the season. O'Sullivan, who joined the Williams academy at the start of this year, will then remain in the United Arab Emirates to participate in the official F1 young driver test before graduating to



WILLIAMS RACING

FIA F2 next season with ART Grand Prix.

The 18-year-old Briton will share testing duties of the FW45 with Argentinian F3 hotshot Franco Colapinto, who makes his F2 debut with MP Motorsport over the Abu Dhabi weekend, direct from his Macau GP F3 swansong.

Williams sporting director Sven Smeets said: "We're looking forward to giving them

the opportunity... to aid their development as part of their roles in the Williams Racing Driver Academy. The pair have demonstrated a high level of understanding and maturity during their simulator work conducted at Grove. I know they'll both be working hard in preparation for this experience and will make the most of it."

MATT KEW



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Merc tech boss Elliott departs

FORMULA 1

Mercedes chief technical officer Mike Elliott has left the eight-time constructors' champion team and will take a break from Formula 1. With his contract due to expire soon anyway, his decision to depart comes after swapping roles with technical director James Allison earlier this season amid the team's ongoing ground-effect struggle.

Elliott, who joined the Brackley squad in 2012, said: "It has been one of the great privileges of my career to be part of this Mercedes team. Although the last two seasons have

not seen us winning races in the manner we aspire to, they have tested us in many other ways – and forced us to question our fundamental assumptions about how we deliver performance. During the past six months, I have enjoyed developing the technical strategy that we hope can provide the foundations of the team's next cycle of success.

"I have decided that now is the right time to make my next step beyond Mercedes – first to pause and take stock, after 23 years of working flat-out in this sport, and then to find my next challenge."

MATT KEW



Peugeot ready to set to work on revamp of 9X8 Hypercar

WEC

Peugeot will undertake what it is calling a significant revision of its 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar for next year. It will involve a major change in the concept of the car, one that will almost certainly result in it running a conventional rear wing – or something approaching it.

Peugeot Sport boss Jean-Marc Finot made the announcement at last weekend's Bahrain World Endurance Championship finale, describing the planned changes as a "big evolution". He confirmed that the upgrade will definitely involve a move away from the same size wheels and tyres all round to the narrower fronts and wider rears run by both Toyota and Ferrari. On the subject of the rear wing he was noncommittal, though it is understood that the car will have more conventional rear-end aero.

Finot outlined the evolution of the WEC rulebook during the convergence process to align the performance of LMH and LMDh machinery as a precursor to his statement on the revised 9X8. He stated that Peugeot had been forced to exploit the 'evo joker' rules to upgrade the car because "after one year we see that the Balance of Performance is not fulfilling our expectations".

The 9X8 has not been truly

competitive on any circuit, despite its starring performance at the Le Mans 24 Hours in June and a first WEC podium at Monza in July. The use of the 31cm tyres at the rear has held back the 9X8 on tracks where slow corners proliferate. A lowering of the deployment speed of the front-axle hybrid system has failed to compensate for the Peugeot's lack of traction, which explains the move to the 29/34cm tyre sizes. "We have made the decision to design the car again," said Finot. "We will come with a strong evolution for next year to enjoy the 29/34 tyres."

Finot explained that both the weight distribution and the aerodynamic centre of pressure of the car will be pushed backwards to exploit the move to wider rear tyres. "We have to increase the downforce on the rear and decrease the downforce on the front," he explained. "There are many ways to do that, so we will keep a surprise."

Finot wouldn't be drawn on when the revised 9X8 might race for the first time. He explained that "the schedule is very tight", which hinted at it not being ready until after the Qatar season-opener next March.

GARY WATKINS

➔ P40 BAHRAIN REPORT

Porsche bars da Costa from WEC

WEC

Antonio Felix da Costa will not return to the World Endurance Championship with the Jota Porsche Hypercar squad in 2024. Porsche has pulled rank and demanded that he concentrates fully on his campaign in the Formula E World Championship next season.

Porsche motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach explained the decision followed an analysis of its 2023 FE campaign that yielded the squad four race victories, including one for da Costa, and fourth place in the teams' championship. "As long as there is room for improvement, we need to look at everything," said Laudenbach. "And one of the things you can do is to give the driver the possibility to focus 100% on one main job."

The decision will preclude him staying at a team with which he claimed LMP2 honours in the WEC and at the Le Mans 24 Hours over a four-season stint. "I am a little bit sad, but I understand why people higher up than me have decided this," said da Costa (below), who stressed his desire to return to the WEC in the future. "Porsche has given me the opportunity to race its car in FE, so if I have to make this compromise, I will."

"But the name of my profession is 'racing driver', so in my eyes I should be racing every weekend. I know myself better than anyone else, and I think I manage my fitness and fatigue levels well."

Norman Nato appears to be a strong candidate to join Jota's expanded, two-car Hypercar line-up next year. He tested its 963 LMDh in the WEC rookie test in Bahrain last Sunday. Negotiations with Robert Kubica "are moving to a conclusion", according to team boss Sam Hignett.

GARY WATKINS



Plan to expand WEC grid put on ice – for now

WEC

Plans to increase the size of the World Endurance Championship grid to 40 cars next year have been put on ice. The maximum capacity has been set at 37 cars for 2024, one up on the full-season entry this year.

But series organisers the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest have stated that they are still working on the idea. WEC boss Frederic Lequien said: "The goal is to increase the grid in 2025."

Plans for an enlarged grid next year were centred on demanding some or all of the field of two-car teams in the new LMGT3 class run both their entries out of a single garage. Lequien explained that there were still hurdles to overcome with regard to the refuelling of the cars, which for the moment would require two refuelling towers for each LMGT3 team. No insight was given on how this problem might be solved for 2025, when there were will be additional cars in the Hypercar class from Aston Martin and Lamborghini.

The capacity of the grid has been set by the number of pitboxes at the Imola and



Austin rounds, scheduled for April and September respectively.

ACO president Pierre Fillon insisted that no decisions on how the grid will be split between Hypercar and LMGT3 ahead of the closing date for entries on 20 November and the subsequent meeting of the FIA/ACO selection committee. But it can be taken as read that there will be 19 in the former class and 18 in the latter.

FIA Endurance Commission president Richard Mille confirmed that the organisers are expecting more than 37 entries. With regard to turning some

away, he said: "Unfortunately we have to make these decisions."

It appears that there will be 20 applications in the Hypercar class if Ferrari pushes forward with its plan to run three cars (see p8). That number includes only one from WEC newcomer Isotta Fraschini, which has confirmed that it has dropped plans to run two cars. The nine manufacturers in LMGT3 are set to be Porsche, Ferrari, Aston Martin, Chevrolet, Lexus, Lamborghini, BMW, Ford and McLaren.

GARY WATKINS

New awards to recognise motorsport stakeholders

AUTOSPORT AWARDS

A new section of the prestigious Autosport Awards will recognise the achievements of stakeholders in the motorsport and sponsorship industries alongside the traditional driver, team and car awards.

The Promoter of the Year category will be awarded for the second time at the annual celebration, held at London's Grosvenor House Hotel on 3 December. Making its debut is the Brand Partnership award, to honour sponsors and

agencies who created outstanding activations or campaigns in 2023 using motorsport as a platform. These sit alongside the traditional Pioneering and Innovation Award.

A judging panel for these business awards has been drawn up, comprising former Alpine and Aston Martin/Racing Point/Force India F1 team principal Otmar Szafnauer, ex-director of Hospitality F1 Kate Beavan, former World Endurance Championship CEO Gerard



Neveu, motorsport sponsorship and marketing guru Matthew Marsh, brand marketing professional Melissa Berry, and director of Global Motorsport Nigel Geach.

The winners of the three B2B awards will be announced on stage at next month's 36th running of the Awards, as well as across Autosport.com and Motorsport.com channels.

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Lilou Wadoux and Robert Shwartzman drove 499P in Bahrain rookie test

Ferrari could stretch to third Hypercar

WEC

Ferrari is eyeing an expansion of its assault on the World Endurance Championship with a satellite entry for a third 499P Le Mans Hypercar next year. The entry would be billed as a customer car but likely run under the umbrella of the AF Corse factory squad.

Ferrari sportscar racing boss Antonello Coletta outlined an intention to increase the marque’s representation in the Hypercar class with “a potential third car”, which he said “should be an option” for next year. “We consider that our knowledge is OK to manage another car,” he said. “I don’t know

if we will have a third car but we are ready to make [enter] another car. But it’s not confirmed if it will be 2024 or 2025.”

Coletta raised the prospect of AF Corse running the car alongside the two factory entries. “If it has the budget, it should be the idea for AF Corse to manage it,” he said.

The only other detail of the plan that Coletta offered was to stress that it wasn’t planning the extra car for a Le Mans-only attack. “If we consider a third car it will be for all the year,” he stated.

That would mean it being entered in what is known as the Hypercar Teams’ FIA Endurance Trophy, just as the Jota and Proton privateer Porsche 963s were this

year. Series rules preclude a manufacturer from entering more than two cars in the full manufacturers’ championship.

Coletta didn’t rule out watchmaker Richard Mille being involved in the project. The Frenchman, also president of the FIA Endurance Commission, has backed the GTE class car driven by Lilou Wadoux, now a Ferrari factory driver, for the past two seasons. But Coletta stressed that there was no link between her appearance in the Bahrain WEC rookie test on Sunday and the potential third car.

GARY WATKINS

➔ P40 BAHRAIN 8 HOURS



HARDWICK/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Corrado Provera 1941-2023

OBITUARY

Corrado Provera, the former head of Peugeot Sport who led the French marque to success in the World Rally Championship, has died at the age of 82.

After working as a journalist, Provera joined Chrysler Italy and progressed through the ranks at the manufacturer before it was bought by Peugeot, becoming head of Peugeot Sport in 1998.

He was best known for managing Peugeot’s return to the WRC in 1999. Under his leadership, Peugeot won 27 WRC rounds from 1999-2005, with 24 of those delivered by the 206 WRC prior to the introduction of the 307 WRC from 2004. These victories helped Peugeot to three consecutive manufacturers’ titles from 2000-02, and two drivers’ titles claimed by Finn Marcus Gronholm.

Provera retired from the role after Rally Sweden in

2005, ahead of the company withdrawing from the WRC at the end of that season.

He also played a key role in Peugeot’s Formula 1 engine programme from 1994, until it pulled the plug after 115 grands prix in 2000.

“It is with great regret that we learn of the passing of Corrado Provera,” read a Peugeot Sport statement. “His years at the head of Peugeot Sport were marked by his charisma and energy.”

TOM HOWARD



WEC Bike racing legend Valentino Rossi got his first taste of a prototype at last weekend's Bahrain WEC rookie test. The Italian sampled an ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 run by the WRT team for which he has raced in the GT World Challenge Europe for the past two seasons. Rossi completed 67 laps over the day, setting a best time more than a second off fellow P2 debutant Charles Weerts in the team's sister car. **Photograph by JEP/Motorsport Images**

Huff samples Toyota in test

BTCC

Former World Touring Car champion Rob Huff's bid for a full-time return to the British Touring Car Championship in 2024 has stepped up with a test at the wheel of a Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla.

The 43-year-old, currently runner-up in the TCR World Tour standings, had a run-out recently at Croft before heading to Australia, where he took TCR victory at Sydney Motorsport Park last weekend.

Huff was much in evidence in the BTCC paddock at the end of this season following his one-off outing in a Team Hard Cupra Leon at Knockhill in August, and made no bones that he is seeking a first full BTCC season since his rookie tin-top campaign with SEAT in 2004.

Speedworks head of racing Danny Buxton reiterated that the team's priority is to negotiate with its 2023 trio of Rory



KALISZ/TCRAUSTRALIA

Butcher, Ricky Collard and George Gamble, but said of Huff's outing: "We needed something testing on our development plan, so it was a good opportunity for him to sample the car and for us to get some feedback. Whilst our focus is always to assess the situation with our current three drivers first, it's the nature of the beast to see who else is potentially on the horizon. It was wet, but it was good to have another eye new to the car.

"He's talented, he's got a great CV and he'd be a great fit for any BTCC team."

MARCUS SIMMONS

GRAHAM EDEN 1935-2023

OBITUARY

Graham Eden, who has died at the age of 88, held the unusual distinction of racing and running a team in Formula 1 but never at world championship level.

After making his name in sportscars, West Midlander Eden stepped up to F1 in 1961 with a two-year-old Cooper-Climax, claiming fifth in the Lewis-Evans Trophy at Brands Hatch and sixth in the Pau Grand Prix. By the mid-1960s he was racing the Cooper mostly in Formula Libre events, and later became a customer of Chevron.

After Eden retired from the cockpit in 1971, Cyd Williams took over driving duties of his Chevron B18C and finished as Formula Atlantic runner-up in 1971 and 1972. There was more success in 1977 when Tony Rouff took Eden's F2 Ralt RT1 to an overall ShellSport Group 8 win at Thruxton.

For 1979, timber magnate Eden took over the Chevron B41 F1 project and ran it in the Aurora series for promising Brits Tiff Needell (below), David Leslie, Ray Mallock and Kim Mather.



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Grosjean saves IndyCar career with JHR move

INDYCAR

Romain Grosjean admits that he feared for his IndyCar future after being dropped by Andretti Autosport at the tail end of this season, before finding refuge with Juncos Hollinger Racing for 2024.

Ex-F1 racer Grosjean, 37, split from Andretti after a strong start to 2023 was ruined by a dramatic tailspin of results that led to friction between himself and team owner Michael Andretti. Grosjean has since filed arbitration proceedings against Andretti.

The Swiss-born Frenchman says his late exit left him little time to find a seat elsewhere, with the JHR talks only starting ahead of the Laguna Seca season finale: “Yeah, there was some

fear. Especially in a situation where I didn’t talk to any other team until very late in the season. Most of the teams by then were fully booked.

“It was definitely a challenge to find a good spot for me to land. You have that risk that time has run out but I’m glad it worked out for me. I’m glad because I still want to go racing, I still love it.”

In 34 races across the past two seasons with Andretti, Grosjean netted three runner-up finishes, five top-fives and two poles. He finished 13th in the championship both years.

Although he leaves an IndyCar powerhouse team for one that has only a few years of full-time experience at this level, Grosjean believes he can help build a squad that is jointly owned by

Argentinian ex-Formula Renault racer Ricardo Juncos plus American healthcare millionaire and former Williams F1 shareholder Brad Hollinger.

“I think there’s a lot more to come from me, it’s a case of reset and bounce back,” said Grosjean. “Let’s see where we go with Juncos, let’s see what we can do. What I’ve seen from Ricardo is that he’s always giving his best to make things happen. And he knows that I will do the same.”

Grosjean, who replaces Callum Ilott at JHR alongside Agustin Canapino, will dovetail his IndyCar drive with an endurance role in Iron Lynx’s maiden IMSA campaign with the new Lamborghini LMDh car.

CHARLES BRADLEY

Armstrong makes surprise F3 return for Macau GP

FORMULA 3

It’s something of a tradition, in the weeks leading up to mid-November, for the pages of Autosport to carry news of drivers returning to Formula 3 from F2, the DTM, sportscar racing or Japanese motorsport to tackle the Macau Grand Prix. Not so for a driver from the IndyCar Series...

But that’s exactly what 2023 IndyCar Rookie of the Year Marcus Armstrong is doing, the Kiwi swapping his Chip Ganassi Racing Dallara-Honda for one of MP Motorsport’s F3 weapons. It will be his first time in an F3 car since the 2019 Macau GP,

the last time it was run for the category before the COVID-19 crisis effectively closed the event off to international participation for three years.

Armstrong’s F3 career was spent with Prema in 2018 and 2019, but Paolo Angilella, one of the team’s top engineering brains from that era, is now the technical chief at MP, which is also running its 2023 F3 regulars Franco Colapinto and Mari Boya in Macau.

MP’s F2/F3 team manager Jeremy Cotterill, who was saddled with the Ralt 93C in his own brief F3 career in 1993, said of 23-year-old Armstrong: “He’s worked with Paolo before,



so the engineering side is not new to him.”

The Dutch squad won on its first and only visit so far to Macau in 2019 with Richard Verschoor, who has stepped back from F2 for next week’s race but has joined Trident for the event. “It’s a limited format, and track knowledge is an

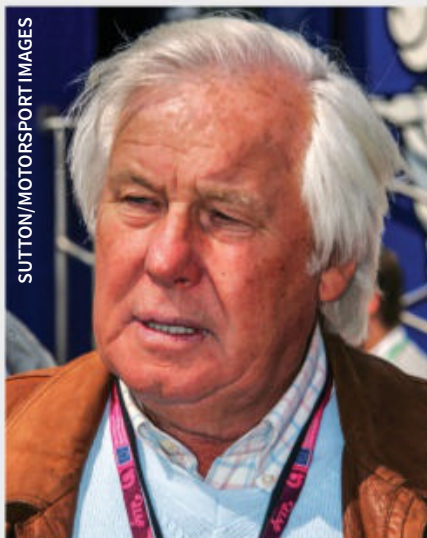
advantage,” added Cotterill.

“But having said that, the first and only time we’ve been to Macau was with three rookies and we finished first and seventh [with Liam Lawson].

“But even if we win it, I’m 100% certain that our weekend will not be as easy.”

MARCUS SIMMONS

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Ludwig won 1981
DRM in Capri run by
Zakowski (inset)



McKLEIN

Erich Zakowski 1933-2023

OBITUARY

Erich Zakowski, the man behind a line of talismanic Ford Escorts and Capris and less successful Formula 1 cars from his Zakspeed stable, has died at the age of 89.

Zakowski's family moved from Prussia after World War 2 and eventually settled in Niederzissen, near the Nurburgring, where he trained as a mechanic and set up his own garage and racing team. From the start Zakspeed was closely associated with Ford, winning six titles in the DRM from 1972-81 with Hans Stuck, Dieter Glemser, Hans Heyer and Klaus Ludwig.

Zakspeed's Ford links led to the works C100 sports-racer, which was supposed to be the successor to the legendary GT40, with designer Len Bailey providing a direct link between the projects. First seen at the 1981 Brands Hatch 1000Km

and later reworked by Tony Southgate, the C100 was raced by Ludwig, Marc Surer and Manfred Winkelhock before Ford canned its official involvement, and Zakspeed continued to run a development of the car under its own name.

The company took a different direction when it entered F1 in 1985 with an ambitious project that included its own 1.5-litre turbo engine while continuing to run with success in the DTM. Initially, the F1 team ran a single entry for Jonathan Palmer, who was plagued by reliability issues. After he was injured in a sportscar crash at Spa, Palmer was replaced by Christian Danner late in the season.

In 1986 Palmer was joined by Huub Rothengatter as Zakspeed expanded to two cars, but reliability continued to be an Achilles' heel. For 1987, Palmer was replaced by Martin Brundle while Danner returned to drive the second car. By now the package was more competitive, and Brundle scored what would be the team's only points with fifth place in a high-attrition San Marino Grand Prix.

Two more poor years, with F1 new boy Bernd Schneider struggling to qualify alongside Piercarlo Ghinzani and Aguri Suzuki, led to Zakspeed's withdrawal at the end of 1989. Subsequently, Zakowski handed the company reins to son Peter, a successful racer in his own right, who continued to field Zakspeed entries in a wide variety of championships.

ADAM COOPER

MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Brundle on way to
fifth at Imola in 1987

INTERLAGOS OK TO 2030

Formula 1 has agreed a new five-year contract for the Brazilian Grand Prix to remain at Interlagos until the end of 2030. The series returned to the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace in 1990, and in 2020 event officials renewed terms with F1 for another five years. Previously, the venue did not pay a hosting fee. But that changed under the terms of the revised deal that runs until 2025, for which the city of Sao Paulo contributes £2.7million per year. This time around, amid F1's popularity and commercial boom, officials have moved early to extend the agreement again.

HAUGER TO STAY AT MP

Four-time Formula 2 race winner Dennis Hauger is to remain with MP Motorsport for his third season in the series in 2024. The Norwegian stepped up to F2 with Prema in 2022 as the reigning FIA F3 champion, before switching to Dutch squad MP this year. Hauger, who lies eighth in the points, will partner rookie Franco Colapinto in the team's line-up.

UGOCHUKWU'S FRECA SEAT

McLaren F1 protege Ugo Ugochukwu is to step up to the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine in 2024 with Prema Racing. The 16-year-old American, third in British F4 in 2022, has been with the Italian squad this year, winning the Euro 4 title and finishing runner-up in Italian F4. Recently he has been active in F3, completing six days of testing with Rodin Carlin and entering next week's Macau GP with Trident.

DRUGOVICH AT ASTON AGAIN

Felipe Drugovich will continue in his test and reserve role with the Aston Martin Formula 1 team in 2024. The Brazilian (below) drove the AMR23 in the Bahrain test earlier this year and will replace Fernando Alonso in FP1 at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, and had a Friday session at the Italian GP in Lance Stroll's car. He has also been conducting an extensive programme of private testing in an AMR21 this year, bringing his total mileage in the green cars up to 6000km.



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YOUR SAY

We would have the tantalising prospect of measuring Liam Lawson against Verstappen and Perez, or the highly rated Ollie Bearman against Leclerc and Sainz

STUART COULTER

Use sprint races to give young talent seat time

I think most people would agree that making the 'sprint' a standalone element of sprint weekends hasn't worked – it's too detached from the grand prix on Sunday, and doesn't add much to 'the show'.

We also lament that young drivers do not get enough seat time or opportunities to show us what they can do. So, if the sprint format is here to stay, why not use it as a test bed for future talent? If we have six sprint weekends a year, each team will have 12 'berths' to fill; why not spread these berths equally across three drivers (the two regular drivers plus a designated 'young driver' – however that might be defined)?

That way, not only do young drivers get valuable seat time, the team can also assess their performances against *both* regular drivers, in a competitive environment, four times a year (in the remaining two Sprints the two regular drivers take each other on). Also, why not create a standalone 'sprint championship' in which everyone competes in a maximum of four sprint weekends, to give the young drivers something to compete for (and to minimise distortion of the main drivers' and constructors' championships)?

We would then have the tantalising prospect of measuring Liam Lawson against Verstappen and Perez, or the highly rated Ollie Bearman (right) against Leclerc and Sainz. Or why not relax the superlicence rules and let the IndyCar, WEC and Formula E stars have a crack – or perhaps I'm just getting too carried away...

Stuart Coulter

Co Down, Northern Ireland

Sprint weekend format needs a shake-up

If, unfortunately, the F1 sprints are to continue, then Friday 1000, one-hour free practice to set up for sprint, 1330 sprint qualifying, 1630 sprint race. Race points 12, 9, 7, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Pole 2 points, second on grid 1. It would be a separate championship for the sprints, with a title sponsor putting up a prize fund.

Saturday, 1000, 90 minutes free practice to set up for grand prix, 1400 qualifying. Then Sunday, as we are, but drop the fastest-lap point, which has now become meaningless. Similar



overall scheduling to be followed for the 'late' starting races.

Graeme Innes-Johnstone

Elland

Grateful for early encouragement

I enjoyed the article on Andy Thorby (Autosport Engineering, 28 September), which brought back a few memories. My son Stewart worked as an engineer in motor racing for 20 years and his first job after leaving university in 1991 was with TOM'S GB, where he worked under Andy on the 031F car.

I was at Silverstone for the car's first race. I remember standing at the approach to Copse with Stewart and Andy. As the car crossed the line to win, Andy turned to Stewart, patted him on the back and said: "Well done Stewart."

I have always been grateful for that extremely generous gesture, as Andy was obviously the chief designer. Stewart went on to work as a race engineer on touring cars with TOM'S and then RML, before a spell with Jaguar F1 and then back to RML for Le Mans and the Saleen project.

I am sure that initial praise from Andy gave Stewart confidence at the start of his engineering career. Many thanks, Andy.

Brian Ayling

By email

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RACE CENTRE





Norris seized window of opportunity to attack before pragmatism took precedent

FORMULA 1

NORRIS GIVES CHASE AS VERSTAPPEN'S MARCH CONTINUES

McLaren's star was quick in Brazil – but not fast enough to stop the world champion taking his 17th GP win of 2023

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport
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Verstappen assumes control as Albon/Magnussen clash puts them both out of the race

“If I was going to have one opportunity, it was going to be there and then.” Lando Norris hadn’t exactly raced out of the blocks on the Brazilian Grand Prix’s second standing start, but he had gathered momentum after waving away a sniff of an attack from Lewis Hamilton as he gave chase to inevitable race leader Max Verstappen. It produced a showdown that was as fleeting as it was intense.

During the infant laps of the 71-tour race at the famed Interlagos circuit, a venue that has hosted more than its fair share of iconic F1 moments, Norris intended to fight Verstappen. The Red Bull driver was not given the opportunity to perform his usual trick of running off into the distance, at least, not until much later, as Norris’s McLaren stuck to his tail through the opening laps and then began to pile on the pressure.

It was at the end of the seventh lap that Norris closed the arrears down to less than half a second, setting up a pair of assaults on Verstappen on lap eight that he hoped would reward him with the lead. The first was precipitated by Norris’s run on the start/finish straight; Verstappen found the papaya-tinged MCL60 barrelling toward him in his mirrors at a vast rate of knots, prompting him to make a subtle manoeuvre towards the left and collect the inside line into the downhill Senna S. This forced Norris to the outside and left one more chance for him – this time, at Turn 4 – to come up for air with the lead.

Norris stayed close to Verstappen, but had lost a little of the ground he’d made up through Turn 2; he had to lean on his DRS activation to catch back up, before hoping to dummy the car ahead into chasing shadows. But Verstappen was, once again, wise to it. Again, he assumed the inside line to force Norris to the outside, and the McLaren was only able get to the braking zone level with Verstappen’s Red Bull. There was no chance that Norris could cruise around the outside, and he instead decided to consolidate on what he already had through backing off over the rest of the lap.

“The opportunity to race against Max was only going to be for a few laps,” Norris concluded in his post-race musings. “We weren’t going to find all of a sudden the pace we needed to compete against him

for a whole race. And Fernando [Alonso] was behind me; we know that [Aston Martin’s] race pace, especially when it’s high deg, can be very good. He didn’t have clean air [in the sprint]; today he was going to be in a position to potentially achieve a lot more.

“I didn’t want to compromise my own race by having one more attempt. At the same time, I was low on battery, and if you overheat the tyres too much, too early, you can pay the price quite heavily. It wasn’t worth a second attempt, as much as I would have loved to. I think it potentially could have happened, but it wasn’t worth the risk and potential consequences of being in the hands of Fernando and the people behind.”

Luck and opportunism had opened Norris to the possibility of challenging Verstappen for the lead, amid early-race chaos that had afflicted the fortunes of one driver before the start had even taken place. Charles Leclerc was left to wallow in his own misfortune before the lights had gone out after departing his front-row seat for the formation lap.



QUALIFYING



A deluge in the darkness brought Q3 to a premature end. The final phase of qualifying began as a convocation of dark clouds sat upon the brink of the Interlagos circuit, but they held off from delivering a session-ending burst of rain until all 10 drivers had completed their grid-deciding laps, with Max Verstappen judging the conditions the best.

He, like his other pole-chasing rivals, had to deal with a shift in conditions during Q3 even if the rain was not immediately forthcoming; instead, a flip in wind direction changed the balance. A moderate southbound tailwind along the start/finish straight reversed and intensified, ensuring that the middle sector was particularly tricky to navigate because the ideal braking points had moved.

The Aston Martins, both in Q3 for the first time since the Belgian Grand Prix, took the initiative and queued up for their laps first, a decision that netted a second-row lockout. Lance Stroll had followed Fernando Alonso across the line and outqualified his veteran team-mate, which offered the Canadian the third-best lap of the session.

Aston's proactivity could not deny Verstappen and Charles Leclerc from finding a smidgen of extra pace, however, and the two claimed the spoils of a provisional front row. The order was locked in when the red flag was thrown as the rain arrived by the bucketload, with the FIA opting not to restart the session since the cloud had plunged the immediate vicinity into darkness. Verstappen's 1m10.727s pole time was some way short of the 1m10.021s that Lando Norris had set in Q2, denoting the wind's transitional effects.

Norris had been a key contender for pole, but McLaren's position towards the back of the queue took the MCL60s out of contention. Norris thus had to be content with the seventh-best time, behind Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton and George Russell, after setting a time almost two seconds off his Q2 headliner. Russell was subsequently hit with a two-place grid penalty for impeding drivers on the pit-exit road, moving Norris up a place to sweeten the pill; the McLaren driver believed he had the pace to beat Verstappen to pole.

Carlos Sainz and Sergio Perez completed the top 10 with Oscar Piastri, the Australian falling off the road at Juncao amid the escalating winds. Stroll's Q3 heroics were made possible thanks to the relative gulf between he and the quintet eliminated in Q2, where the Haases and Alpines attempted in vain to reach the final stage. Nico Hulkenberg got closest, overcoming Esteban Ocon as he and team-mate Pierre Gasly were hit with the same penalty as Russell. This elevated Alex Albon to 13th on the grid as the sole Williams to make Q2.

"I DIDN'T WANT TO COMPROMISE MY OWN RACE BY HAVING ONE MORE ATTEMPT. IT WASN'T WORTH IT"

At the uphill Ferradura right-hander, Leclerc first lost his Ferrari's power steering before the engine locked, causing him to spin into the wall. He suspected a hydraulic issue to begin with, but would not divulge any further details following his failure to start the race.

This left a gaping void alongside Verstappen, one that the fourth-placed Alonso had a clear run at if his Aston Martin was willing to provide the traction out of the blocks. Unfortunately for the veteran Spaniard, it didn't quite pan out like that. His AMR23 ambled off the starting grid with enough speed to dive past third-placed team-mate Lance Stroll, but not enough to combat Norris's move down the inside or Lewis Hamilton's outside-line sweep.

Norris was up to second, but the race was quickly neutralised when a crash between Alex Albon and Kevin Magnussen prompted the emergence of a safety car followed by a red flag. Having felt that the pace in his McLaren was good enough for pole, and proving that hypothesis in the sprint shootout, Norris at least had been rewarded with a front-row start for the Grand Prix at the second attempt.

We left the Verstappen-Norris battle just as it had ended; the fizz of ignition had burned brightly, but Norris's retreat brought an end to the duel at the front. Alonso was less than two seconds behind, after getting back ahead of Hamilton's Mercedes at Turn 4 on a restart that "changed my race", and thus compelled Norris to prioritise the bigger picture rather than purely gazing upon glory.

Two laps after the main assault, Verstappen had a lead of almost two seconds, which continued to incrementally expand by a tenth or two each lap until the first pitstop phase began. Verstappen came to the end of his soft tyres on lap 27 and called in for mediums, but McLaren decided to respond by pitting Norris on the same lap >>

SPRINT RACE



Having been usurped by Verstappen, Norris now in Russell's sights

Victory was decided as early as the first corner in the final sprint of 2023. Although Lando Norris and Max Verstappen had largely matched each other in their initial getaways from their grid slots, Norris found himself unable to keep up during the 'second phase', which allowed the Red Bull to build up speed on the inside line and take the prerogative into Turn 1. And when Verstappen takes a lead, he rarely relinquishes it.

To compound Norris's first-lap misery, the McLaren driver was "caught sleeping" by a fast-starting George Russell, who had already dispatched Sergio Perez to move up to third. Russell made a snap decision to bleed off the brakes and charge down the inside of Bico de Pato and was met with surprisingly little resistance. It fleetingly looked like Russell could continue with his early progress and begin to reel Verstappen in, but that split-second glimmer of a contested race faded when the Mercedes fell out of DRS range during the fourth lap of 24. This left Russell vulnerable to a renewed advance from Norris, who had stabilised after his early descent down the order; the Bristolian collected DRS and slotted his McLaren down the



Norris's bid to get within DRS range of Verstappen proved fruitless

inside into Turn 1 on lap five.

Norris now had second, but was 1.6s adrift of Verstappen after Russell's drop in pace had hindered the two. "I tried then to get into the DRS of Max," Norris explained. "I thought if I had an opportunity, I would try and get it early on, so I could control the race a little bit more from out front and in some cleaner air. But I never quite got close enough..."

The McLaren held a small advantage in the medium-speed corners that had allowed Norris to inch a little closer lap by lap, but Verstappen was told that he could

start to expend more of the tyres' energy and push more through those corners. This was when the gap started to grow, breaking free of the 1.4-1.6s stalemate, and expanded beyond two seconds to put the race beyond doubt. By the end, this lead had more than doubled to 4.3s.

Perez joined his team-mate and Norris on the podium, after recovering the positions lost on lap one to the two Mercedes drivers. Lewis Hamilton had bravely dispatched the Mexican around the outside of Turn 4, but the early offensive could not hold up and

the W14's dragginess on the back straight proved to be exploitable when Perez got past at the start of the fourth lap – and the Red Bull driver defended successfully after the Senna S. Russell was then reeled in and, four laps after the Hamilton overtake, Perez cruised around the outside into Turn 1. The Briton got the better exit from the Curva do Sol, however, and made a similarly impressive outside-line

"I thought if I had an opportunity, I'd try and get it early on. But I never quite got close enough..."

move through the Descida do Lago to keep the battle going for two more laps. Perez eventually made it permanent on lap 10, but was too far behind to pressure Norris.

Russell kept fourth, but Hamilton's tyres had begun to ail, with degradation in the soft rubber proving particularly high over the course of the shortened race. This cost him fifth following an attack from Charles Leclerc on lap 21, which also allowed Yuki Tsunoda's AlphaTauri to slip through for sixth. Carlos Sainz completed the scorers after shading Daniel Ricciardo to the line.

rather than opting for an offset in strategies. The gap at the time of their stops – around 3.6s – was perhaps too much to overcome with an undercut, and an overcut did not seem particularly effective given the high levels of degradation, so McLaren probably needed to go like-for-like.

Norris's stop was not slow by any measure – 2.6s relative to the Red Bull crew's 2.2s service on Verstappen – but his longer overall tenure in the pitlane grew the margin by a second. A slower out-lap put the gap between the front two at over 5s, which ensured that any

“FOR MOST OF EVERY STINT, LANDO WAS MATCHING MY LAP TIMES. I DEFINITELY HAD TO FOCUS A LOT”

remaining hopes that Norris could still win had become increasingly sparse. That's not to say Norris didn't try to whittle down the time, and he managed to find a good turn of pace on his new medium boots to get the gap down to 4.8s as he kept pace with Verstappen. But anyone who has watched the reigning champion this season has become accustomed to his *modus operandi* of winning races; he does not sledgehammer away at the timing board and flex his muscles with single-lap break-builders, but instead creates that impending sense of dread among the other drivers as he slowly turns the screw.

Red Bull's stronger grasp of tyre degradation assists his recent style of slowly torturing the rest of the field, allowing the small but defensible gaps to multiply into massive deltas at the end of a stint. That became apparent during the medium-tyre phase in the middle of the race. Norris was keeping about five seconds in hand to Verstappen and hoping to close in, but the McLaren hit the point of no return with the tyres far sooner. This helped the gap open to more than seven seconds by the end of the stint as the Red Bull driver's pace proved more ruinous to Norris the longer they stayed out. That said, it was Verstappen who called his second stint to an earlier end, with his team knowing it could play it a little safer with a lap 56 pit call.

This put the pressure on McLaren to do something different, after electing not to build on an offset strategy earlier on, and therefore Norris put an extra three laps on his medium tyres to give him a little more to play with on the final set of softs.

Verstappen's earlier stop offered the standard fare associated with an undercut and, when Norris emerged from the pits on lap 60, he



was 13.4s adrift of the front because the medium had been about two seconds per lap slower than the new softs Verstappen was enjoying.

Norris could afford to push a little harder to get the gap down, however, and he demonstrated that intent with a 1m12.486s on his first full lap on his new boots. He then kept his pace over the remaining laps resolutely within the 1m13s, while Verstappen straddled the 1m14s barrier, having been under little pressure at the front of the field. It was enough for Norris to take the ultimate margin down to 8.3s, if nothing else but to retain a sense of respectability to the results tables when viewed devoid of context.

Verstappen, for his part, extended his record of wins in one season to 17, which he celebrated with an impromptu spot of karaoke over the radio with a rendition of an unlikely favourite song. “Jos [Verstappen] told me in Qatar,” explained team boss Christian Horner. “I asked, ‘What is his favourite song?’, you know maybe Paul [Smith, team PR] can play it. And he went *Green Green Grass of Home* by Tom Jones. Obviously, after the Spice Girls, I’m thinking he would be totally into Ed Sheeran, or somebody contemporary of his age. But Tom Jones?!”

Noting that the rest of the race might have looked easy from the outside, Verstappen was keen to point out that the threat from Norris and McLaren had been genuine, but the longer stints began to play into Red Bull's hands since it could start to lean on its tyre management superiority. “I think for most of every stint, Lando was matching my lap times,” Verstappen explained after the race. “It was always like the last five to 10 laps when it seemed like then, of course, we had better tyre degradation. But the beginning of every stint, I definitely had to focus a lot and I couldn't afford to make mistakes.

“Around here with the high deg as well, it's not the easiest to drive. It's not like you can just relax and let the car just roll into the corners without any consequence. You had to be really on it. Luckily, everything we did today, also strategy-wise, pitstops, were good.”

If the Verstappen-Norris battle had largely amounted to a flash in the pan, the fight over the final podium position had burned slowly throughout the race to deliver a final crescendo between two racers amid a resurgence in Brazil. It was during the middle stint that the battle for third was forecast between Alonso and Sergio Perez, the latter of whom had climbed from ninth to contend for his first top-three finish since Monza. Perez had opted for a heavy undercut after his first stint, and the 8s gap that had split them at the time of his pitstop had shrunk to about 3s when Alonso left the pitlane. Initial progress on the medium tyre went Perez's way, and the Red Bull managed to get within 2s of the Aston Martin, but Alonso had been doing enough to stabilise. The difference between them started to grow again towards the end of that middle stint, and Alonso inflated the gap back up to 3s before Perez stopped for a final time.

To minimise a potential undercut, Alonso stopped a lap later than Perez – lap 47 versus lap 46. These were long stints to produce at 24 and 25 laps apiece on the soft tyres, but the fuel had burned off, and the softest rubber seemed to be the far preferable option, despite the high levels of degradation. »



TRACKSIDE VIEW



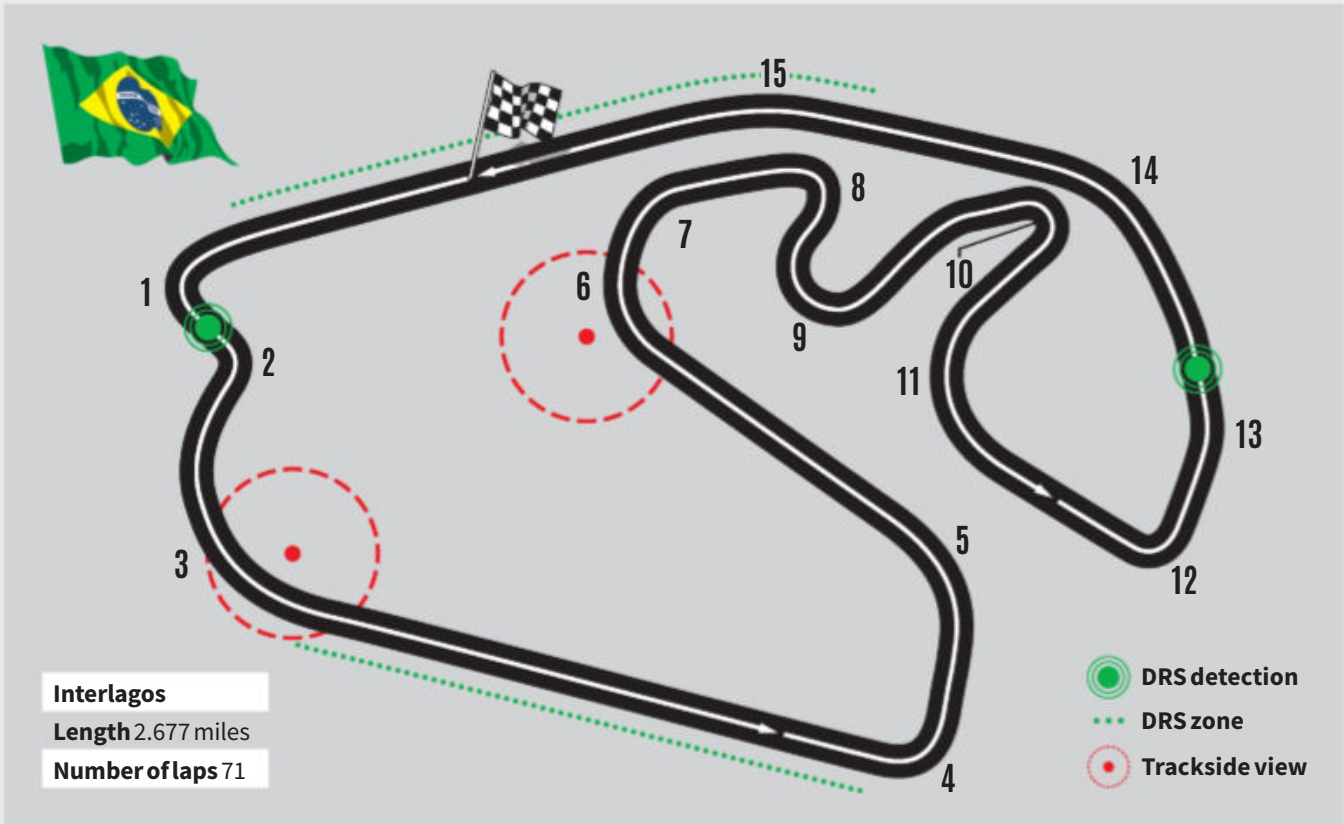
Being trackside at Interlagos always a bit special; crowds are out in force at Turns 6-7

There's a lot of undulation packed into the short Interlagos lap. Pick your point just right and, from ground level, you can view the drivers plotting their assault through almost the entire circuit and its array of mixed-radius sweeping corners. It's already pretty special to stand trackside at one of F1's most famed venues, the scene of so many of its greatest moments, and that's before the cars even leave the garage.

We start at Turn 6, perched upon a bank that allows a full vista of the cars departing the Descida do Lago to begin the climb through the

“Hamilton has become such a fan favourite that he now holds honorary Brazilian citizenship”

ribbon of tight corners that pockmark the second sector. Daniel Ricciardo flashes through, picking an early apex for Turn 6 and allowing his AlphaTauri to get wide. He picks a line that then allows him to take the apex at Turn 7, drive straight to the next corner, and wind the steering in that gives him the opportunity to open up Turn 9 – Pinheirinho. The majority of the field, veterans of this circuit, take similar approaches and rely on a sharp front end that allows them to make their quick transitions



Interlagos
Length 2.677 miles
Number of laps 71

DRS detection
DRS zone
Trackside view

through the trio of hairpins. For the second half of the session, we traverse to a platform in the paddock that offers an all-encompassing view of the opening three corners. Lewis Hamilton, who has become such a fan favourite in these parts that he now holds honorary Brazilian citizenship, rolls his Mercedes down the hill through Turn 1 and attempts to carry speed through the right-left sequence of Turns 2 and 3. Out of Turn 2, the W14 steps out



Different approaches feeding steering into Turn 3

of line and prompts an unsettling wiggle at the rear as he squeezes the throttle through the Curva do Sol. Here, there are a few variations in line; the drivers seem to reach a consensus on hugging the initial phase of the corner, but the differences are at what point they stop feeding steering into the left-hand sweeper. Let it wash out too early, and the exit kerb will be rattled excessively – but too late, and the driver scrubs off speed along the Reta Oposta straight and loses time. Here, there's a difference

between Ferraris. Charles Leclerc has to make a minor correction out of Turn 2, so feels compelled to get more aggressive on the throttle to find time in Turn 3, while Carlos Sainz enjoys a much more controlled exit and can place his car where he feels he needs to. It's only free practice, but the crowds are out in full force. You'd imagine they'd be even more enthralled if they had a home driver to celebrate – it's not quite the days of Senna and Piquet, after all... **JAKE BOXALL-LEGG**



Ricciardo picks early apex for Turn 6

ALL PICS: BOXALL-LEGG



Aston Martin's resurgence results in joyful third and fifth for Alonso and Stroll

After out-laps, Alonso and Perez were separated by 3.3s, and the veteran Spaniard had probably hoped that the final stint would play out in very much the same way as before. Instead, Perez had other ideas. Seeking retribution for Mexico, Perez dearly wished to join team-mate Verstappen on the podium for the first time in a little over two months. Without taking too much life from his tyres, he gave chase to Alonso's Aston Martin and hoped that the superior DRS activation on his Red Bull would be enough to plunder third place from the two-time champion's grasp. But he'd have to outfox Alonso to do it – an undertaking that few truly master.

Getting to within DRS range of Alonso was the easy bit; Perez had got that done on lap 55 and was tracking the AMR23's movements ahead to detect any weaknesses. Owing to the Aston's strengths at low speed, a daring move through the infield would be a tad tricky, so the DRS-assisted options were Perez's best bet.

It seemed that Alonso knew this too, and so his prerogative was to experiment with lines out of Bico de Pato and Juncao to have enough of a gap by the time they reached the start/finish straight. Giving the apex a wide berth at both corners seemed to offer traction without burning the tyres out completely.

The battle was distilled into the final two laps. Perez's patience was rewarded with a mighty run out of Juncao at the end of lap 69; he galloped up the hill with great tempo and melted away at Alonso's advantage at the business end of the start/finish straight. Lap 70, Turn 1, Perez had the inside line and looked to have sealed a last-ditch


“SEEKING RETRIBUTION FOR MEXICO, PEREZ DEARLY WISHED TO JOIN HIS TEAM-MATE ON THE PODIUM”

podium finish. “I thought, ‘OK, this is gone,’” Alonso admitted when Perez flashed past. But although his confidence may have wavered by just an iota, the Asturian is rarely so easily beaten.

Having the outside for the first part of the Senna S was not such a bad thing, because it offered a bit more momentum through the Curva do Sol, and the DRS chase to Turn 4 forced Perez to take a defensive line. At this point, Alonso realised that he had Perez where he wanted him, and could keep forcing him into blocking hypothetical passes while his Aston took the racing line through the second half of the lap. This gave Alonso enough to stay close, crucially preserving his position within DRS range to set up a thrilling last-lap showdown. Assuming the outside once more, albeit this time as an offensive posture, Alonso again put Perez into a defensive position into Turn 1, which hampered the Red Bull's momentum down the hill. The slight drop in speed was vital to the next phase.

In Perez's wheeltracks, Alonso hoovered up the remaining gap with DRS and then tilted his steering wheel to the left, forcing Perez to take a defensive line once more. Now stuck, Perez could not cut back across to the racing line prematurely, leaving Alonso the opportunity to hang it out around the outside. He managed it, and again helped stall Perez's momentum through the Descida do Lago.

Perez wasn't quite done, and his exit from Juncao at the end of the lap was far stronger. Reclaiming third at the line was the only bet, and he was probably about 10 metres from making it. Alonso nosed ahead by just 0.053s to clinch his first podium since the Dutch GP in August.

Two very different battles for position defined the top four order in Brazil, but both were as memorable as each other as tactical gambles both succeeded and failed to reward the drivers with their expected outcomes. It's those kinds of gambles that will be fitting for F1's return to Las Vegas for the first time in 40 years, and Sin City's new circuit could prove to be something of a roulette wheel if the expected cold conditions prove to be the defining factor. 

**NEXT
F1 REPORT**

Las Vegas Grand Prix
23 November
issue



Perez and Alonso's fight for final podium position was a last-gasp thriller

RICCIARDO AND PIASTRI RACES RUINED EARLY

Australian duo Daniel Ricciardo and Oscar Piastri were effectively twice eliminated from contention by the fallout from the start crash at the Brazilian Grand Prix.

When Nico Hulkenberg's pinch between Kevin Magnussen and Alex Albon ended up with Albon being speared into Magnussen, the Dane's wrecked Haas then collided with the rear end of Piastri's McLaren, which was left with rear wing, floor and rear brake damage and out of the race in the pits. Ricciardo was in a similar situation after Albon's flying left-rear tyre smashed his AlphaTauri's rear wing.

After the red flag was called, McLaren and AlphaTauri made hasty repairs but, because the pair had not completed the second lap behind the safety car, they were a lap down for the restart, which they had to take from the pitlane. Ricciardo called this "really frustrating" and "something a bit lame in the rules".

Piastri led their battle, initially adrift of the pack, before Ricciardo easily came past while his compatriot struggled with "brake duct winglet [damage] we couldn't repair", according to McLaren team boss Andrea Stella. As they pressed on, Ricciardo gathered valuable tyre data for team-mate Yuki Tsunoda and eventually finished a lapped 13th. Piastri finished behind, two laps down and feeling "we just needed a safety car to unlock us, which sadly never came".



Disastrous day for Mercedes with 'fundamental' problem

Mercedes was left to rue what team boss Toto Wolff described as a "totally baffling" Brazilian weekend performance. Its struggles in the grand prix and the sprint reversed its recent form as podium and even possible victory contenders.

Mercedes started strongly in the main race when Lewis Hamilton carved past the Aston Martin pair. George Russell, meanwhile, leapt ahead of the slow-starting Carlos Sainz, and at the restart he jumped Lance Stroll and briefly raced with Fernando Alonso. But when Hamilton locked up while fighting Lando Norris, this allowed Fernando Alonso to forge ahead of him at Turn 4. Things then went rapidly downhill for the Black Arrows squad.

Hamilton could not keep pace with Alonso as he slid around in fourth place, uncomfortable in the wind. This had an inevitable knock-on for his pace and tyre degradation, with a queue of five cars forming behind him.

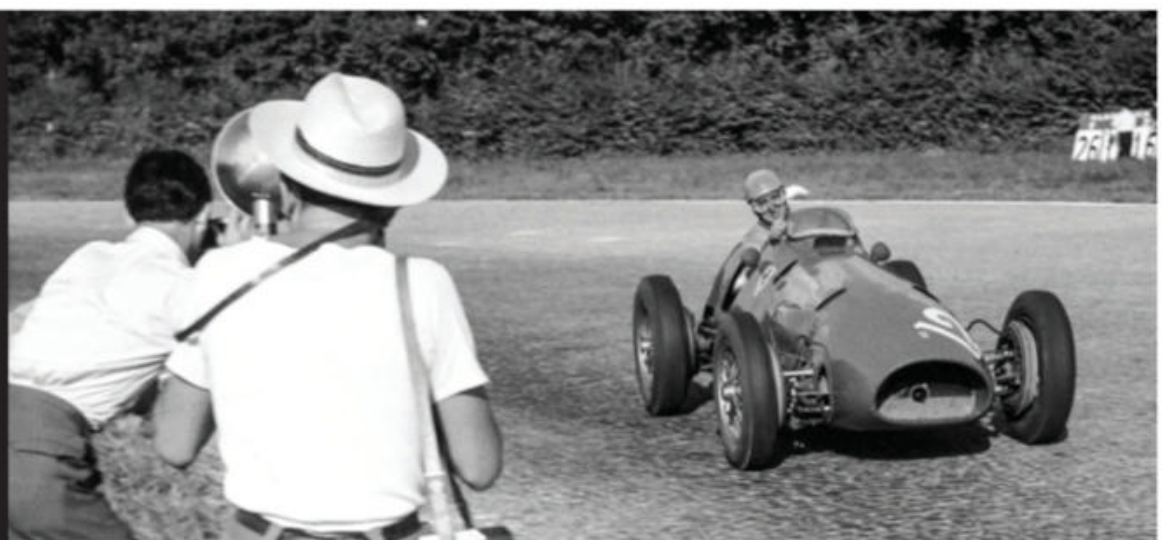
Russell was frustrated to not be allowed past, or for Hamilton to aid him with DRS ahead of Sergio Perez. When Russell lost DRS, the Red Bull powered in front before getting ahead of Hamilton too.

Mercedes' early stops meant Perez was undercut before he easily repassed. Sainz also made simple moves on the British duo, and Pierre Gasly did likewise late in the race. Hamilton's car was so draggy, with added downforce to try to ease its tyre-chewing woes, that it meant he couldn't hold on for a fightback even with DRS. By this stage, Russell had been forced to drop back, lifting-and-coasting in an unsuccessful bid to stop climbing oil temperatures that resulted in his retirement from ninth.

"We ran the car way too high," said Wolff. "There's something fundamentally wrong mechanically. It's not a rear wing and it's not the car being slightly too high. That is performance that isn't the explanation for a total off [weekend]."

77.3%

This is the lowest GP win percentage Max Verstappen can now achieve in 2023, although Alberto Ascari still holds an 85.7% record from his seven championship starts in 1952.



Q&A

**CHARLES LECLERC
FERRARI DRIVER****What happened on the formation lap to cause you to crash?**

I went to the corner, I lost the power steering first and then the engine cut off for safety reasons. And then the rear wheels locked up and that made me spin. So, I had no control over the car to any point. Hydraulics, that is what I felt. But at the end, I don't think that is the issue, after speaking with the engineers. We know what that is, but I cannot go into details.

Was the car too damaged to continue?

I moved the car again – only the front wing was damaged. But apart from that, nothing else. I started again, I got the hydraulics for 15 seconds, but



then exactly the same thing happened. I lost the hydraulics, and then the engine cut off. So that was something else.

Did the team tell you to give it up then?

Yeah [because] it happened again. And obviously, it was clear that I couldn't go forward anymore because [I'd only gone] 20 metres. The next time would have been two metres and then that was it.

Why do you think you've been so unlucky at times this year?

I don't know. I was very frustrated. I'm annoyed because obviously, especially in the second part of the year, I finally found the confidence with the car. Then you start second [here], you sacrifice a whole weekend for the Sunday's race, you do six corners and that's it. So, I'm very frustrated for now. But now I need to move on, and obviously focus on the last two races – that's the best thing I can do as a driver. But it's of course frustrating to lose so many opportunities throughout the season. I just hope that after this race we can still be in the fight for second in the constructors'. That is my only motivation for the rest of the year.

MORE POINTS FOR ALPINE AS DRIVERS AVOID CRASH

Alpine pair Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon had very different runs to points finishes in Brazil, with both fortunate that their reflexes kept them out of trouble in the early shunt chaos.

Ocon jinked left just as the crash occurred ahead, while Gasly hit the brakes and avoided the worst of the debris. At the second start, Gasly jumped past Yuki Tsunoda and his team-mate, with Ocon rueing a clutch problem before a lock-up at Turn 1 as he unsuccessfully battled the AlphaTauri.

This likely contributed to his inferior tyre degradation compared to Gasly, with their strategy paths splitting as a result when Ocon was pitted first in the race's opening stint. He therefore moved onto the three-stopper that Alpine had planned if he spotted "very high degradation" in a similar manner to the sprint. Ocon had a yo-yoing afternoon as a result, and was threatening George Russell along with Tsunoda before the Mercedes retired, which secured the 10th position he might have got anyway.

Gasly, meanwhile, stayed on the two-stopper, showing strong pace trailing Lance Stroll and Carlos Sainz in the first stint. Deep into the middle stint, he used his eight-laps-younger medium tyres to close in on the ailing Mercedes pair, getting Russell once he'd dropped back from Hamilton. After Gasly's last stop for softs, Ocon waved him in front before he passed Hamilton to take seventh.

**Stroll helps Aston score big**

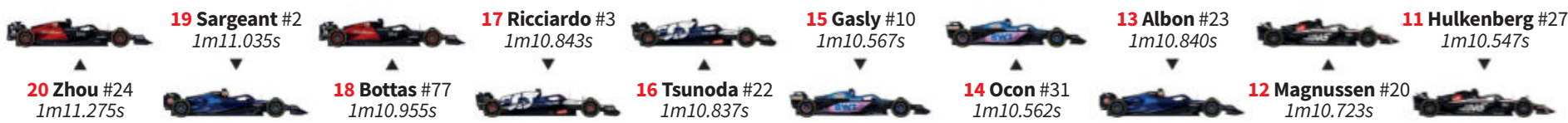
Aston Martin's Lance Stroll scored his best grand prix finish since Australia in April with a battling drive to fifth at Interlagos.

At the start, he struggled with "a lot of wheelspin and very little traction", which meant losing ground to Lando Norris, Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso in the first getaway, for which he had lined up a net second after Charles Leclerc's formation lap crash. He then lost out to George Russell and Sergio Perez at the

restart. Stroll was trapped in Hamilton's DRS train while Alonso escaped ahead, but he eventually battled past the two Mercedes in the second stint, having resisted Carlos Sainz's close attentions in the first. From there, mirroring the most common tyre strategy, he chased Perez from a distance, closing as the Red Bull battled Alonso late on.

"The last few races have been tough but [10 points] is a real reward," Stroll said.





FREE PRACTICE

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Sainz	1m11.732s
2	Leclerc	1m11.840s
3	Russell	1m11.865s
4	Hulkenberg	1m11.928s
5	Albon	1m12.044s
6	Stroll	1m12.136s
7	Gasly	1m12.184s
8	Zhou	1m12.481s
9	Sargeant	1m12.579s
10	Magnussen	1m12.592s
11	Alonso	1m12.615s
12	Hamilton	1m12.638s
13	Tsunoda	1m12.714s
14	Ricciardo	1m12.778s
15	Ocon	1m12.779s
16	Verstappen	1m12.793s
17	Bottas	1m13.012s
18	Perez	1m13.056s
19	Norris	1m13.629s
20	Piastri	1m13.838s

WEATHER Cloudy, air 31-32C track 38-42C

RACE QUALIFYING

POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Verstappen	1m10.727s
2	Leclerc	1m11.021s
3	Stroll	1m11.344s
4	Alonso	1m11.387s
5	Hamilton	1m11.469s
6	Russell	1m11.590s
7	Norris	1m11.987s
8	Sainz	1m11.989s
9	Perez	1m12.321s
10	Piastri	no time
Q2 11	Hulkenberg	1m10.547s
12	Ocon	1m10.562s
13	Gasly	1m10.567s
14	Magnussen	1m10.723s
15	Albon	1m10.840s
Q1 16	Tsunoda	1m10.837s
17	Ricciardo	1m10.843s
18	Bottas	1m10.955s
19	Sargeant	1m11.035s
20	Zhou	1m11.275s

WEATHER Variable, air 25-32C track 28-38C

SPRINT QUALIFYING

POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Norris	1m10.622s
2	Verstappen	1m10.683s
3	Perez	1m10.756s
4	Russell	1m10.857s
5	Hamilton	1m10.940s
6	Tsunoda	1m11.019s
7	Leclerc	1m11.077s
8	Ricciardo	1m11.122s
9	Sainz	1m11.126s
10	Piastri	1m11.189s
Q2 11	Magnussen	1m11.727s
12	Hulkenberg	1m11.752s
13	Gasly	1m11.822s
14	Bottas	1m11.872s
15	Alonso	no time
Q1 16	Ocon	1m12.388s
17	Stroll	1m12.482s
18	Zhou	1m12.497s
19	Albon	1m12.525s
20	Sargeant	1m12.615s

WEATHER Clear, air 27-28C track 41-45C

SPRINT RACE 24 LAPS – 64.22 MILES

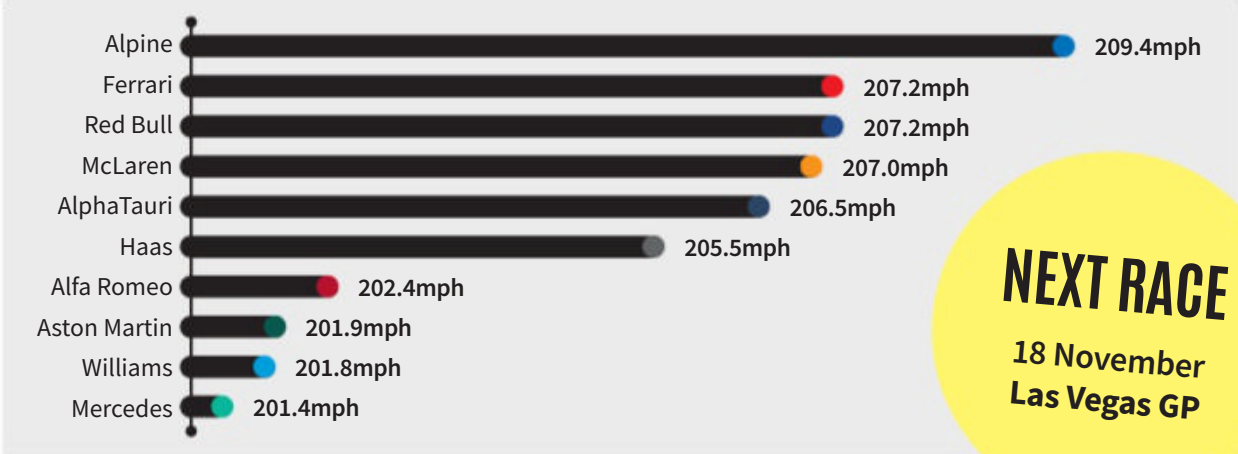
POS	DRIVER	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRE	FASTEST LAPS
1	Verstappen	30m07.209s	24	Su	1m14.540s
2	Norris	+4.287s		Su	1m14.647s
3	Perez	+13.617s		Su	1m15.008s
4	Russell	+25.879s		Su	1m14.422s
5	Leclerc	+28.560s		Su	1m15.411s
6	Tsunoda	+29.210s		Sn	1m15.532s
7	Hamilton	+34.726s		Su	1m15.276s
8	Sainz	+35.106s		Su	1m15.362s
9	Ricciardo	+35.303s		Sn	1m15.460s
10	Piastri	+38.219s		Su	1m15.463s
11	Alonso	+39.061s		Su	1m15.477s
12	Stroll	+39.478s		Su	1m15.467s
13	Gasly	+40.621s		Su	1m15.209s
14	Ocon	+42.848s		Su	1m15.536s
15	Albon	+43.394s		Su	1m15.598s
16	Magnussen	+56.507s		Mu	1m15.464s
17	Zhou	+58.723s		Sn	1m15.837s
18	Hulkenberg	+1m00.330s		Mu	1m15.472s
19	Bottas	+1m00.749s		Sn	1m15.738s
20	Sargeant	+1m00.945s		Mn	1m15.496s



WEATHER Clear, air 29-31C track 45-48C


WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 127.932mph
FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 129.517mph

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



NEXT RACE
18 November
Las Vegas GP

STARTING GRID



10 Piastrì #81
no Q3 time



9 Perez #11
1m12.321s




8 Russell #63
1m11.590s



7 Sainz #55
1m11.989s



6 Norris #4
1m11.987s




5 Hamilton #44
1m11.469s



4 Alonso #14
1m11.387s



3 Stroll #18
1m11.344s



2 Leclerc #16
1m11.021s



1 Verstappen #1
1m10.727s

RESULTS ROUND 20/22 (71 LAPS – 190.06 MILES)						FASTEST LAPS				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES	POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	1h56m48.894s	68	Su, Su, Mn, Sn	1	Norris	1m12.486s	-	61
2	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+8.277s	3	Su, Sn, Mn, Su	2	Verstappen	1m13.422s	+0.936s	68
3	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+34.155s		Su, Su, Mn, Sn	3	Ricciardo	1m13.866s	+1.380s	68
4	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+34.208s		Su, Su, Mn, Su	4	Stroll	1m14.007s	+1.521s	67
5	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+40.845s		Sn, Su, Mn, Su	5	Perez	1m14.124s	+1.638s	55
6	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+50.188s		Su, Mn, Su	6	Ocon	1m14.206s	+1.720s	53
7	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+56.093s		Su, Su, Mn, Sn	7	Tsunoda	1m14.231s	+1.745s	64
8	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+1m02.859s		Su, Su, Mn, Su	8	Piastrì	1m14.310s	+1.824s	66
9	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	+1m09.880s		Su, Sn, Mn, Su	9	Sainz	1m14.406s	+1.920s	59
10	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+9.841s		Su, Su, Mn, Su, Sn	10	Alonso	1m14.442s	+1.956s	54
11	Logan Sargeant (USA)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+26.208s		Mn, Sn, Sn, Sn	11	Gasly	1m14.521s	+2.035s	48
12	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+29.960s		Sn, Mn, Su, Su, Su	12	Hamilton	1m14.739s	+2.253s	59
13	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+1m09.961s		Sn, Su, Mn, Su	13	Russell	1m14.934s	+2.448s	55
14	Oscar Piastrì (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	-2 laps/+3.636s		Su, Mn, Su, Su	14	Hulkenberg	1m15.036s	+2.550s	66
R	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	57 laps-overheating		Su, Su, Mn, Su	15	Bottas	1m15.731s	+3.245s	20
R	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	39 laps-overheating		Sn, Sn, Mn	16	Sargeant	1m15.738s	+3.252s	51
R	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	22 laps-overheating		Sn, Sn, Mn	17	Zhou	1m16.232s	+3.746s	17
R	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	0 laps-accident		Sn	R	Magnussen	no time	-	-
R	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	0 laps-accident		Su	R	Albon	no time	-	-
NS	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	hydraulics/electrics		Sn	NS	Leclerc	no time	-	-

WEATHER Clear, air 21-23C track 39-41C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 97.623mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 132.977mph


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

GP GRID PENALTIES

RUSSELL, OCON

and GASLY

Two-place penalties for driving unnecessarily slowly in the pit exit in GP qualifying

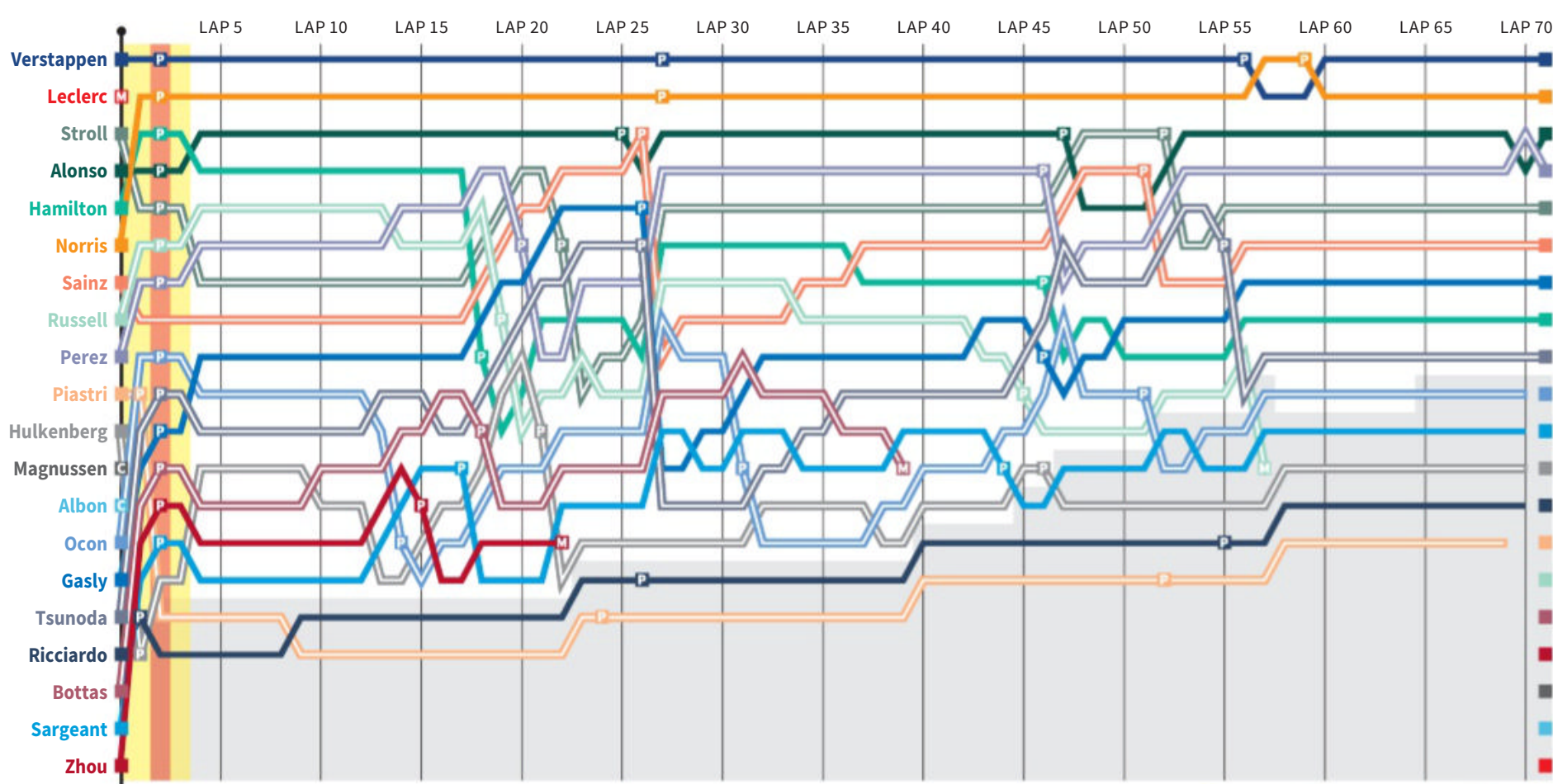
524

Verstappen is the first driver to score more than 500 points in one F1 season

13

Norris has now matched Nick Heidfeld's record of 13 GP podiums without a win

LAP CHART



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin + Penalty Car lapped Safety car Virtual safety car Red flag

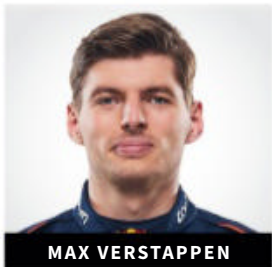
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BRAZILIAN GP DRIVER RATINGS

A double delivery of maximum scores for Norris and Alonso, sealed by a searing first start and super-canny late-stages racing nous respectively

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

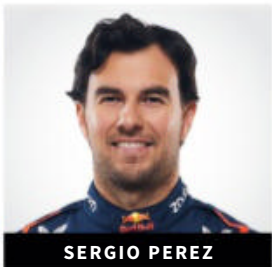
RED BULL



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **1st** — Result **1st**

9 Leclerc's disappearance eased action-packed first start, then second phase of second start made key difference when Norris hit wheelspin. Deployed electrical energy smartly to maintain lead when Norris attacked on lap eight. Then pulled away and was as in command as ever.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **9th** — Result **4th**

6 Gains a mark for climbing past Sainz at original start, then Stroll at second. Also put in decisive passes on the two Mercedes. Could not pass Alonso, or even mirror his traction-gaining wide lines, for so long, then defended fresh air on last lap, which gave Alonso the only chance he needed.

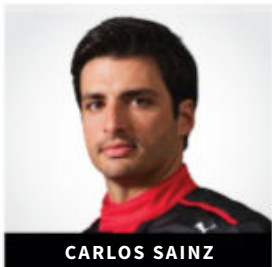
FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **2nd** — Result **R**

N/A No score because car had dramatic problem on formation lap, which led to wince-inducing shunt without ever seeing a racing lap. An engine electrics command problem killed power steering, which pitched him off. Restarted car before issue repeated and he pulled off.



CARLOS SAINZ

Started **7th** — Result **6th**

8 Event-long clutch problem meant he dropped behind Russell and Perez at first start. Wasn't happy with second start but held ground well. Couldn't pass Stroll despite feeling slightly faster. Fought past Mercs neatly, then gap to Stroll doubled while adapting to "sticky" downshifts issue.

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **5th** — Result **8th**

5 Excellent first start, where he went around the Astons, but then locked up on Norris's outside at Turn 1 at the second, aiding Alonso's pass. Fell back with tyre-hurting rear sliding, with a DRS train soon forming. Had Russell swarming at times, with little he could do as Perez and Sainz came through.

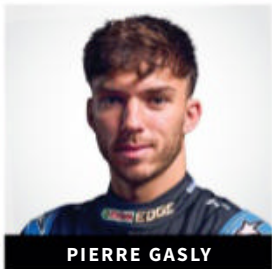


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **8th** — Result **R**

5 Positive progress at both starts boosts his score. Followed Hamilton closely in first stint. When he lost contact, Perez swiftly came past. Closed on Hamilton in second stint before having to lift-and-coast to mitigate rocketing engine temperatures. This issue eventually forced his retirement.

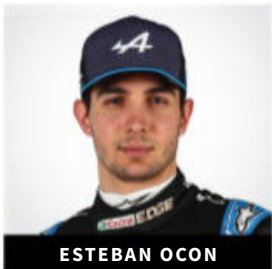
ALPINE



PIERRE GASLY

Started **15th** — Result **7th**

8 Did well to back off as start crash erupted ahead, then at restart launched past Tsunoda and Ocon. Kept pace with Sainz and Stroll, with better first-stint tyre management than Ocon. Used second-stint tyre offset to close on Mercs – passed ailing Russell, then nailed Hamilton in final stint.

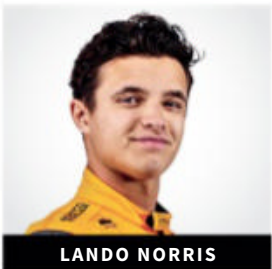


ESTEBAN OCON

Started **14th** — Result **10th**

6 Excellent reflexes kept him away from start crash, but then at second getaway felt a clutch problem was behind Gasly shooting past. Quickly apparent that he'd need Alpine's back-up three-stopper if tyre degradation couldn't be managed. That meant a battling race, ending up as top lapped runner.

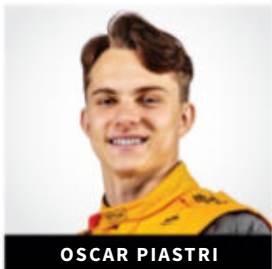
McLAREN



LANDO NORRIS

Started **6th** — Result **2nd**

10 Tremendous first start, nailing three cars, cements maximum score as it was brilliant. Could not replicate it at restart due to second phase wheelspin, before he mounted surprise attack on Verstappen, boosted by new softs. Felt second assault wasn't worth risking tyres for.



OSCAR PIASTR

Started **10th** — Result **14th**

5 Gets par score by default since there was nothing he could do about Turn 1 shunt – he was rear-ended by Magnussen's wreckage and picked up rear wing, floor and rear brake duct damage. McLaren could only repair first two, so he had a long afternoon dealing with brakes not working properly.

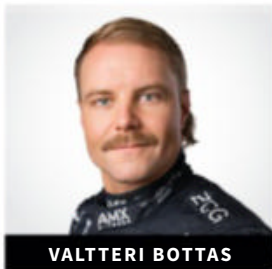
ALFA ROMEO



ZHOU GUANYU

Started **20th** — Result **R**

5 Was "working together" with Bottas in early stages – in that he stayed close behind – as Alfa targeted points after start crash. But race was over on lap 24 when engine temperatures climbed to a point where team was unwilling to risk bigger problem and potential impact on remaining two races.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **18th** — Result **R**

6 Stayed out of trouble in early chaos, but wondered if he picked up debris that contributed to climbing engine temperatures that forced his retirement – a tech issue that Alfa is remaining tight-lipped about at this stage. Was following Ocon's possible points path before DNF.



Norris held off Hamilton to maintain second place at the restart

ASTON MARTIN



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started 4th — Result 3rd

10 Left too much room for Norris at first start, but excellent later racing recovers him a maximum score. Did well to hold Perez’s recovery initially, and defensive driving in last stint was superb, his wide lines to gain traction so canny. *Just* had enough to repass Perez and hold on.



LANCE STROLL

Started 3rd — Result 5th

7 Lost out to Hamilton and Alonso at first start, then Russell and Perez at second, which hurt his race. But Stroll’s pace after his first pitstop was impressive – he cut past the two Mercedes, then could run in clear air behind Perez and ended up within seven seconds of Alonso’s podium.

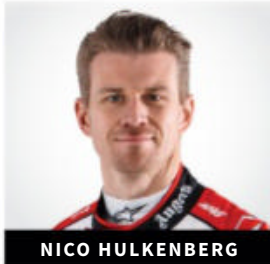
HAAS



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Started 12th — Result R

4 Could have used the big area of free space to his left to avoid his team-mate being squeezed with Albon’s Williams on outside of Turn 1, but was a very close-call situation that stewards rightly called a racing incident. That’s only reason his mark is lower than the rest, but not by much.



NICO HULKENBERG

Started 11th – Result 12th

6 Was sandwiched by Magnussen and Albon approaching Turn 1, where he braked early and Albon contact triggered shunt that eliminated his team-mate. From the restart he scythed his way past Sargeant and the Alfas, which boosts his score on another tough day managing tyres.

ALPHATAURI



DANIEL RICCIARDO

Started 17th – Result 13th

6 Another driver with race ruined by start crash – although he was “ducking my head”, his rear wing couldn’t and it got smashed by Albon’s errant wheel. Restarted a lap down since he didn’t complete second lap behind safety car. Strong pace gathering tyre data for Tsunoda earns bonus mark.

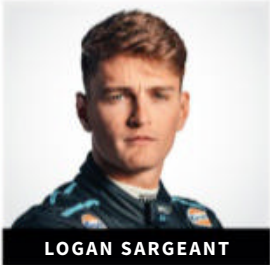


YUKI TSUNODA

Started 16th — Result 9th

6 Can’t score higher because of his gaffe putting left-side wheels on the grass approaching Turn 10 in first stint, which temporarily cost a spot to Bottas. But his gains from starting 16th were otherwise impressive, boosted by the early crash ahead and fresh soft tyres for the restart.

WILLIAMS



LOGAN SARGEANT

Started 19th – Result 11th

6 Avoided first-start incident, then safety car laps meant he could shed medium tyres and do the restart with new softs. Was among those jumped by Hulkenberg at second start, but repassed the German veteran and held him off to the flag, ending up outside points and well adrift of Ocon.

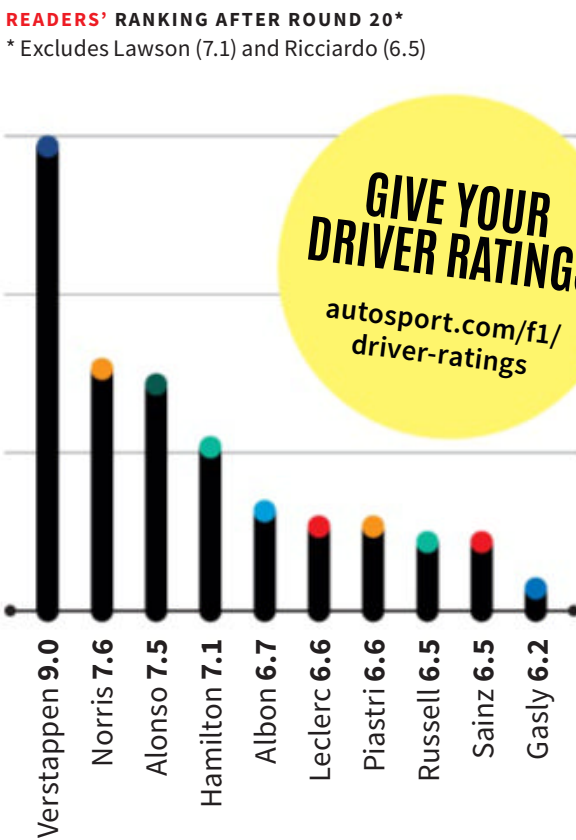
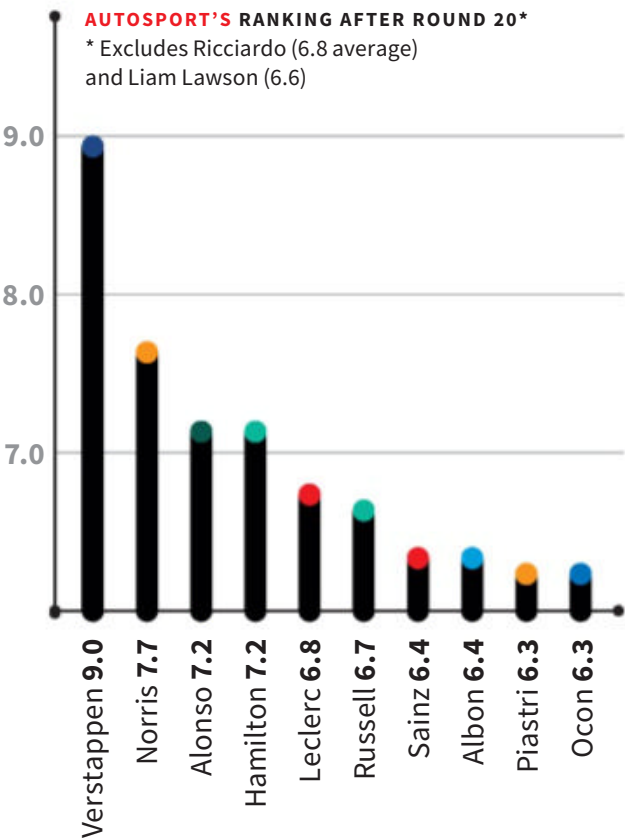


ALEX ALBON

Started 13th — Result R

5 Made “one of the strongest starts on the grid”, but when he came alongside Hulkenberg the pinch with Magnussen to the other Haas’s left meant Albon got tipped into Magnussen and the contact ended his race immediately. Was left to rue what might have been, points-wise.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



GIVE YOUR DRIVER RATINGS
[autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings](https://www.autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings)

FORMULA 1'S BIG QUESTION

THIS MAN MUST BE SLOWED DOWN!



*So says a vocal – and perhaps newly arrived – section of the F1 fanbase.
But pegging back Max Verstappen and Red Bull risks damaging
the entire philosophy of the sport*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS, JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE, GARY WATKINS, CHARLES BRADLEY

Motorsport: is it pure sport, or merely entertainment? As ever in life, the reality is somewhere in the middle.

After the epic title fight between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen in 2021 was followed by a Ferrari resurgence in early 2022, before Red Bull and its star took full control of Formula 1's pecking order, the championship's entertainment factor has waned of late.

As impressive as Verstappen's march to a new record of consecutive victories this term has been, domination rather strangles sport. In 2023, F1 TV audiences are down, with its senior management now pointedly plugging social media engagement figures as an alternative success metric.

But this isn't new territory for F1, and there are many instances in the championship's history of dominant

teams being hobbled by rule changes deliberately introduced to shake up the competitive picture. Sometimes, regulation tweaks introduced for other reasons, such as safety, have made the difference. But the truth is all motorsport is a direct product of ruleset strength.

In other categories such as sportscars or touring cars, mandated performance balancing is widespread. This has been an additional conversation regarding F1 in 2023, with an evaluation taking place over engine equalisation.

Seeing as it's being talked about aplenty in 2023 – a year where Balance of Performance changes had a major impact on the result of the Le Mans 24 Hours – here we present the historical cases of top F1 teams being slowed by rules changes. Plus, we ask, is it really now time to slow down Red Bull and Verstappen?



SLOWING DOWN... THE PESKY GARAGISTES

The ban on skirts for 1981

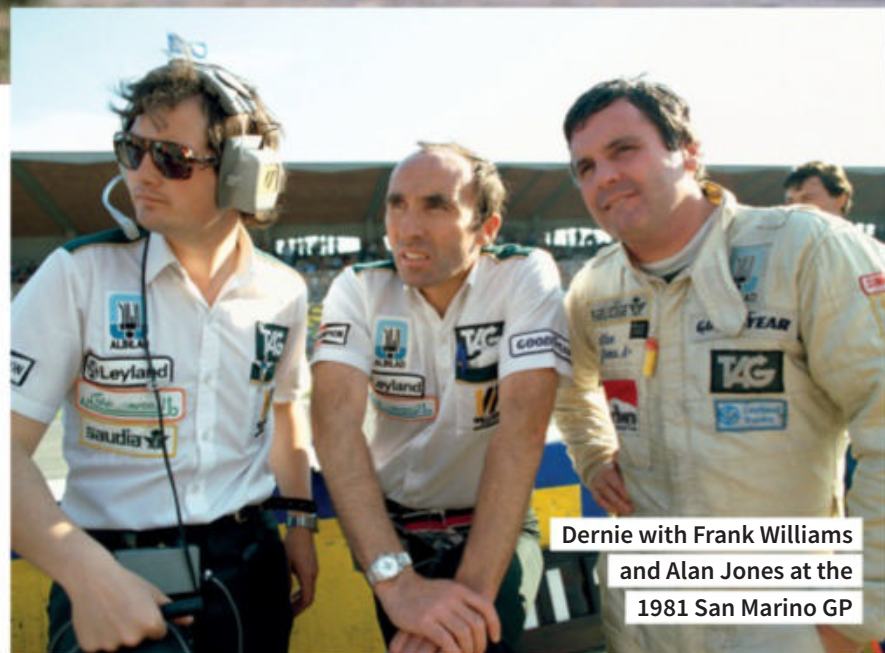
The ban on sliding skirts was a flashpoint in the battle for the control of Formula 1 that could have split it right down the middle. A breakaway series looked a real possibility at times during what became known as the FISA versus FOCA war of 1980-81. Ranged on one side were FISA, the sporting arm of the FIA, and the grandee manufacturer teams, including Ferrari and Renault. On the other was FOCA, led by Bernie Ecclestone, and the garagistes.

There's an argument that banning skirts for 1981 was driven by the grandees who had the ear of FISA president Jean-Marie Balestre. At least it's one pedalled by the garagistes. They, put simply, were better at aerodynamics than the not-so-mighty factories, who had something to gain if the wings of the Cosworth-powered teams were quite literally clipped. Renault already had a power advantage with its V6 turbo, and Ferrari had its own forced induction engine in the pipeline.

More than 40 years on, Frank Dernie, head of aerodynamics at Williams at the time, has no doubt who was behind the ban. "It was absolutely politically motivated," he says. "Balestre had his mates at Renault and Ferrari. I think those teams put a lot of effort into lobbying FISA; they had the idea that if you removed sliding skirts, they would suddenly start doing all the winning."

Dernie's view isn't contradicted by long-time FIA man Gabriele Cadringer. He didn't join the governing body until January 1982, but he was working as a scrutineer the previous year and has an understanding of the machinations leading up to the ban on a full-skirted aero ground-effect set-up.

"To be honest that point is true," says Cadringer. "The British teams exploited ground effect better than Ferrari, Renault and Alfa Romeo, who were always more focused on their engines.



But there was a safety problem. Those skirts were considered dangerous because if one stuck in the up position the car suddenly lost downforce."

Dernie argues to the contrary. He maintains that rock-hard suspension necessary to control the aero platform after the ban was far more dangerous than what came before. "After that, the first time we had stable cars again was following Ayrton Senna's death in 1994," he says, referencing the introduction of a stepped underfloor and plank.

For all the bad press that Balestre has received over the years, particularly in the pages of Autosport, he did have a genuine concern for safety. Fast-forward a couple of years, and his decision in October 1982 to reduce speeds with the introduction of a flat-bottom rule to do away with ground-effect tunnels. You will find arguments from period claiming that this change was the idea of the grandees. Not so, says Cadringer, who points out that Ferrari team boss Marco Piccinini voted against the move in the forerunner of the World Motor Sport Council.

The argument that banning skirts was a move designed to slow the FOCA-aligned teams holds water. But it's part of a complex story during arguably the most tumultuous period in F1. **GW**

SLOWING DOWN... WILLIAMS

The electronics ban for 1994

As the growth of technology accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s, the influence of driver aids in Formula 1 began to expand in tandem. Active-suspension developments had been explored in the 1980s by Lotus, but swelled in popularity as the championship entered its next decade. Once traction control and anti-lock brakes had been added into the mix, by 1993 the cars had hit a peak of technological advancement.

Williams had been the biggest adopter of driver aids at the start of the 1990s; its 1991 FW14 featured early versions of traction control and a semi-automatic gearbox, before the FW14B of 1992 came with active suspension installed along with refinements to its other software. Although other teams followed suit, the FW14B was crushingly dominant in Nigel Mansell's hands and the team missed out on pole position just once all year. Mansell had the 1992 title wrapped up by August with five races to spare, leaving the other teams having to invest heavily to match Williams's electronics prowess.

The team's follow-up, the FW15C, was built around active suspension rather than a retrofit of a passive car. Drivers Alain Prost and Damon Hill could opt for fully automatic gearshifts when required following changes to the transmission, and also benefited from the active ride's malleability; while the suspension would react to track-surface variations to maintain a consistent aero balance, the drivers could override this with a button to stall the diffuser to gain more performance on the straights. McLaren had responded with its MP4/8, an active-ride car that came with its own electronic bells and whistles, and Benetton had now included driver aids in its B193 where the previous car did not. Ferrari and Lotus had also pursued active-suspension systems, albeit to a lesser effect.

There were even more innovations being developed; Williams trialled a continuously variable transmission (CVT) gearbox to keep the engine at its peak power output for longer without the need for stepped gearchanges, and Benetton added four-wheel steering to its car. But the FIA feared that the increasing popularity of driver aids was becoming unsustainable, costly and dangerous. Alessandro Zanardi's huge crash in practice at Spa following an active-suspension issue on his Lotus only underlined the FIA's decision to ban driver aids for 1994.

The decision ended Williams's dominance of F1 for a time, with Benetton having a better handle of the non-active formula for 1994 and 1995, before Williams returned to the front for the following two seasons. **JBL**



Williams FW15C
was pinnacle of F1
driver-aid wizardry



Farcical US GP was
Ferrari's sole victory
of 2005 season

SLOWING DOWN... FERRARI

Changes to tyre rules for 2005

A curious case, this one. There can be no doubt that Formula 1 enthusiasts and stakeholders were getting sick of the metronomic success of one team and one driver – in this case the early-2000s superteam domination of Michael Schumacher and Ferrari. F1 had been regularly tinkering with its qualifying format and, from 2003, points allocation with a brief to improve the spectacle. But the move to endurance tyre use for 2005 – one set permitted per car for qualifying and the race, with changes allowed only for considerable damage or punctures – is more complex a case than the rule changes deliberately setting out to curb Ferrari's title run from 2000.

Bridgestone supplied Ferrari plus minnow teams Jordan and Minardi, with the rest of the field on Michelins. The Japanese company's rubber not only wore more than Michelin's over a stint, but they were also harder compounds to compensate, and so Ferrari was doubly hobbled in lacking instant qualifying grip. As early as post-season testing in 2004, the team feared it was in trouble, and so it fast-tracked the F2005 to replace the F2004M with which it had contested the early rounds in 2005. But that car didn't match rivals Renault and McLaren aerodynamically, even though Ferrari insisted it was a step on from its famed predecessor. Its sole victory came in the US Grand Prix farce.

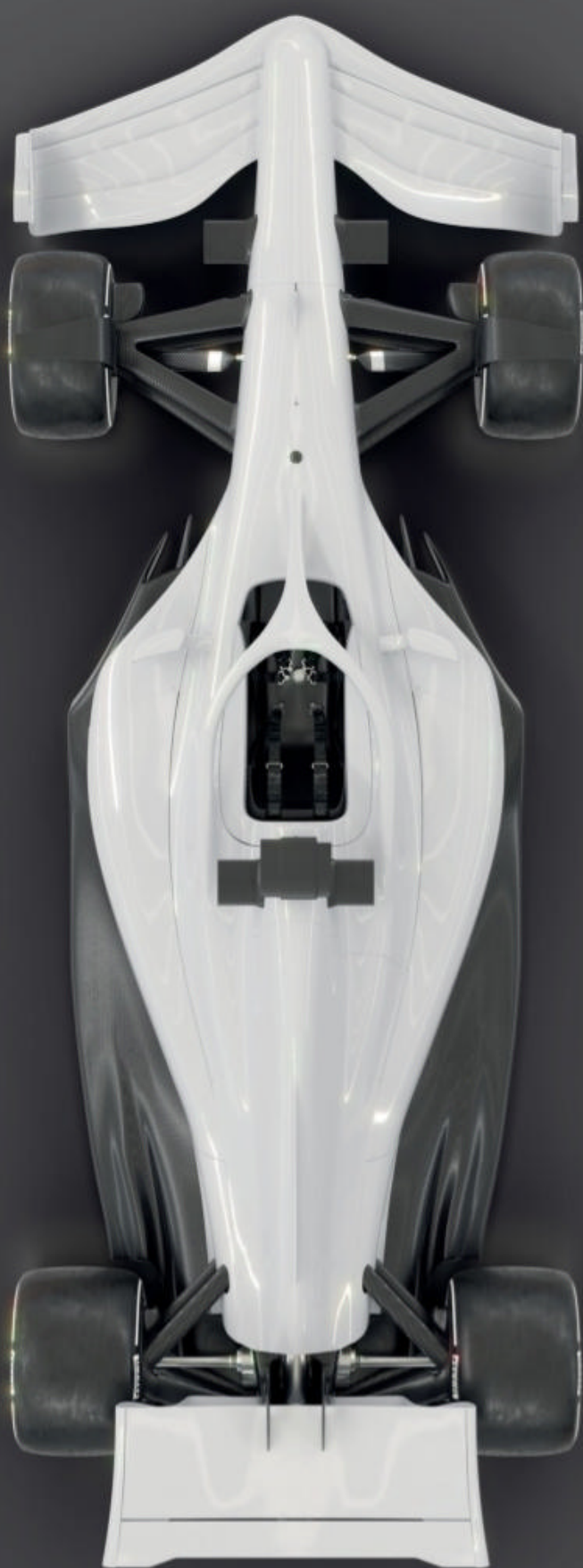
There are two important strands underpinning the whole saga, both of which involved the FIA. Back then, the governing body was ever trying to reduce speeds, a desire turbocharged in 2004 by Williams driver Ralf Schumacher's Indianapolis crash and then Sauber racer Felipe Massa's shunt in Montreal. It therefore forced through the endurance tyre requirement on safety grounds.

At the same time, the FIA, the Bernie Ecclestone-helmed F1 organisation and the teams were locked in various battles over the championship's overall future – primarily, the drive to reduce costs that eventually led to F1 adopting a sole tyre supplier for 2007 and ending the Bridgestone-versus-Michelin war. These wranglings also took in Indy 2005 and it all formed a path back to in-race tyre changes returning for 2006. There had been a campaign by drivers – as well as headline-grabbing comments from Ferrari – to suggest that this approach was safer.

So, for 2006, Ferrari's and Bridgestone's disadvantage was removed at a stroke and, indeed, the Prancing Horse battled 2005 victor Renault for that year's championships. **AK**

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SLOWING DOWN... RENAULT

Mass dampers banned in 2006

"We won the championship, even if they didn't want us to."

That's how Fernando Alonso feels even 17 years on from the biggest argument of his 2006 title-winning campaign for Renault: the mass-damper saga. Here the political manoeuvring is much clearer cut, following a 2005 season in which the Spaniard and Renault had stormed to the front of the F1 pecking order at Ferrari's expense.

The device – a weight inside a tube with a spring on either side – had been pioneered by Renault late in 2004 and used during the 2005 campaign. It improved car stiffness sensitivity and therefore pace, and was later copied by rivals including the resurgent Ferrari and newcomer Red Bull. But Renault's competitors were struggling to fine-tune the system and gain the estimated 0.3s per lap the Enstone squad reckoned it was worth. A lobbying effort to the FIA therefore commenced, with cost and safety concerns cited.

The FIA decided to ban mass dampers on 'moveable aerodynamic device' grounds ahead of the 2006 German GP, where Renault's pace rather disappeared as it competed without the system around which the R26 had been conceived. Yet the Hockenheim stewards approved it, only for the FIA to query the ruling and send the matter to its Court of Appeal. In a hearing ahead of the Turkish GP nearly a month later, that ruling was revoked and mass dampers declared illegal.

"It was a device that we ran through the season," says Alonso. "At one point, we felt the political pressure on the dominant position that we had, like often happens in Formula 1, [meant] it was banned. It was a surprise I remember, but it didn't change too many things in the car."

Indeed, an assessment by Autosport in our 14-21 December 2006 magazine edition concluded that, with Renault's pace corrected for the 0.3s mass-damper loss at subsequent events, Alonso's 2006 points total would have increased by just two. The championship instead swung on race circumstances such as rain, incidents and reliability failures.

Alonso's Italian GP engine failure also negated another controversial FIA call from the day before, that he'd impeded Felipe Massa's Ferrari in qualifying. This had led the eventual champion to fume that "I don't consider F1 anymore like a sport". **AK**

Mass-damper
ban was applied
mid-season



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HRT leads Lotus
and Virgin at
Suzuka in 2010

COATES/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

SLOWING DOWN... ALL THE RICH TEAMS

Mosley's plan for two-tier F1 in 2010

Formula 1's modern-day inclusion of a cost cap has redefined the battle lines, with the intention of compressing the field through the resources the teams have at their disposal. But the current \$135million plus add-ons dwarfs the FIA's early attempt to introduce a cost cap for the 2010 season, which was pegged at a lowly £40million. This was entirely optional, with bonuses granted to those teams that aligned with the cap; they could expect unlimited testing and more technical freedom, with what was effectively a proto-DRS earmarked for the front and rear wings, along with the removal of rev limits for their engines.

This came amid a tender process to welcome new teams onto the grid, tempted by the reduced spend offered by the cap. But many of the existing teams rejected those plans on the grounds that it would create a championship with two sets of rules. Ferrari attempted to veto the plans but, when its hopes to gain an injunction were not upheld, it joined the other Formula One Teams Association (FOTA)-aligned squads in threatening to withdraw. The FIA and Bernie Ecclestone eventually conceded defeat on the two-tier technical plans, but the FOTA teams began to develop plans for a breakaway championship to strongarm the governing parties into dropping the cost cap altogether.

Eventually, the teams, after a walkout from an FIA Technical Working Group meeting, worked with ringmaster Ecclestone to sign a new Concorde Agreement, bringing an end to the two-tier/cost-cap formula and ending the war between the FIA and FOTA. But the new teams that had already signed up to F1 under the initial cost-cap promise were hampered significantly in setting up new operations in an era of very loose controls on spending. In essence, it produced a two-tier formula after all: the better-funded F1 teams with nine-figure budgets, and the underfunded new operations in the forms of Virgin (later Manor), Campos (later Hispania) and Lotus (later Caterham). None of those teams survived past 2016, and never strayed far from the back. **JBL**

“The FIA's early attempt to introduce a cost cap for the 2010 season was pegged at a lowly £40m”

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SLOWING DOWN... MERCEDES

Changes to rear-floor rules for 2021

By 2021, Mercedes had clinched seven successive world title doubles. During that run, the squad had some of its most significant developments banned: what Lewis Hamilton had dubbed its “party” qualifying engine modes; and dual-axis steering. Mercedes had also successfully negotiated a whole aero ruleset change brought in, although poorly conceived, for 2017 to improve the show it was dominating.

But nothing had the impact on Mercedes’ form like the rear-floor rule tweaks introduced for 2021. This led its W12 successor to 2020’s W11 – F1’s fastest ever car – to be beaten by Red Bull’s RB16B in the 2021 drivers’ championship. Although that ending still required the Abu Dhabi officiating debacle to occur...

“We lost the 2021 drivers’ championship for many reasons,” says Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. “One was the final race, but we also lost it because those regulations were set in place in order to reduce the advantage we had. 2020 was a super dominant year for us. I think it was the best car we ever had. And then towards the end of the season they change the regs by cutting the floor out.”

That’s not quite the picture. The 2021 rear-floor changes stemmed from the cost-saving measures needed for F1 teams to survive the COVID-19 lockdowns. In May 2020, the FIA received unanimous support from the teams to carry over car designs into 2021. But changes had to be made to reduce downforce as Pirelli’s 2019 tyres, still in use after the teams had rejected development to make the rubber more durable for 2020 (something that happened anyway after tyre safety issues in early 2021), needed support from the speed gains the teams carried on making.

The floor changes got unanimous support too. But, despite initial thinking being that it would hurt the high-rake approach pioneered by Red Bull, in fact it was the Mercedes and Aston Martin teams running low-rake designs that were most impacted. The naturally downforce producing high-rake design made the cut less of a problem. By the time Mercedes realised the implication of rule tweak for its 2021 design – revealed with major rear sliding in pre-season testing – it was too late.

“At Silverstone we unlocked more of the potential of the car and got back into the championship,” concludes Wolff. “But these regs were clearly targeted to re-establish the pecking order.” **AK**



Mercedes was back in the fight at Silverstone in 2021

ETHERINGTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Engine convergence has brought stability and good competition to IndyCar

INDYCAR

How Indycars became a spec formula

In the halcyon days of the CART World Series, constructors such as Chaparral, Galles, Lola, March, Penske, Reynard and Swift did battle from 1979 until the early 2000s. Cosworth, Chevrolet, Mercedes, Honda and Toyota were among the title-winning engine manufacturers.

Several years after the 1996 split that divided Indycars into two series came the beginning of its route to spec chassis when, in 2003, Indy Racing League boss Tony George demanded new rules for less-expensive cars and production-based engines. Dallara and G Force were the only two manufacturers to build chassis (Falcon was approved but the project never got going), and over time the Italian marque prevailed.

The subject is clouded by the split and reunification of Indycars. Technically, the last non-Dallara IndyCar victory was recorded by Will Power’s Panoz DP01 at Long Beach in 2008, but this was a round of the Champ Car World Series and a true spec series. The final non-Dallara IRL win was Scott Dixon’s Panoz GF09B at Watkins Glen in 2006 for Chip Ganassi Racing.

Ganassi managing director Mike Hull explains: “When we entered the Indy Racing League version of IndyCar racing, we were a stalwart of the G Force/Panoz car – it was a great product. But what happened was Don Panoz had less and less customers, which really affected its ability to react to create the product necessary to be the car to beat in IndyCar.”

IndyCar only became a spec series for Dallara DW12s in 2012 but, in truth, it effectively had been for years since Dallara won the numbers game. “It used to be that we worked inside a sea-freight container and now we work inside a shoebox,” quips Hull. “But what it has done is allowed us to expand the internal resource to learn how to go racing. If you have a car that has a gazillion horsepower and unlimited innovative areas to work on, you just bite off the big chunks.

“When you have a race car that’s very finite, what you have to concentrate on is your people and the systems in place to

WEC

The WEC's BoP through the back door

Someone from the Automobile Club de l'Ouest once said that there would never be Balance of Performance in the top class at the Le Mans 24 Hours. This writer is certain of it. When it was said and by whom, he isn't sure, though he has a good idea of the latter. But a good 10 years on, the BoP is an integral building block of the Hypercar class at the French enduro and in the World Endurance Championship. It's arguably even the foundation stone of what we are trumpeting as a new golden age.

The BoP allows cars built to different rulesets to race together in the WEC and, potentially, in the IMSA SportsCar Championship. But it wasn't the announcement of the LMDh category in January 2020 as an alternative route into the WEC that made balancing the cars a necessary evil. That came six months previously.

There was no place – and no need – for the BoP in the original Le Mans Hypercar rulebook for four-wheel-drive prototypes published in December 2019. It came in after a group of manufacturers – Aston Martin, Ferrari and McLaren – went back to rulemakers the ACO and the FIA in February the following year, arguing that the regulations as they stood made for a category that was too costly. One of the new proposals on the table was to allow a manufacturer to rework a road-going hypercar or super-sportscar to go up against the LMH prototypes.

Aston opted for the Adrian Newey-inspired Valkyrie as the basis of a WEC challenger, a car that went onto the backburner the following year and is now about to be resurrected. An understanding of the challenges of racing what was and is still intended to be a rear-drive non-hybrid against all-wheel-drive machinery explains why the British manufacturer made the introduction of the BoP a condition of its entry.

The organisers and Toyota had no choice but to agree. The Japanese manufacturer, incumbent in the WEC since 2012, was the only other major OEM with an LMH project on the go. It was a case of needs must. “We have never been happy with the BoP,” says Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon. “But we had to accept it; we had to compromise because we needed competitors.”

The same logic applied in the dying days of LMP1 after Audi and then Porsche had withdrawn and left Toyota as the last manufacturer standing. BoP crept in through the back door as the rulemakers promised the privateers a fighting chance against the lone factory in 2018-19. It was billed as an Equivalence of Technology, the means by which petrol and diesel-powered hybrids had been equated from 2014, but it was BoP by any other name.

The arrival of the BoP at the top of the sportscar tree was meant to be temporary, but no one could have predicted how the sands would shift. BoP was here to stay. **GW**



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Penske-Mercedes won
1994 Indianapolis 500

make your car better – all the small details suddenly became very important.”

IndyCar introduced manufacturer aero kits between 2015 and 2017, in an attempt at car differentiation, but this spiralled out of control to the tune of tens of millions of dollars and served only to make the cars downforce-heavy and hard to race.

On the engine side, after a variety of engine types and sizes were allowed across the CART and IRL years, IndyCar became a spec Honda series from 2006-11 due to Chevrolet and Toyota pulling out. But Chevy returned with Ilmor for 2012 – along with a shortlived Lotus/Judd effort – and the rulebook currently mandates 2.2-litre V6 engines with twin turbos (Honda ran a single turbo in 2012-13). It remains a Chevy-Honda duopoly, with a common electrical hybrid element that will add 150bhp next season.

“We have stability now because we have two very well-developed engines that means you get convergence over time,” says Honda chief David Salters. “There are always small differences that you work hard to find an advantage with, although some parts are spec and there’s a limited number that we can change to keep the costs down. There’s still good competition between us, and that happens within a sensible, cost-controlled budget.” **CB**



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CONCLUSION

Is it time to slow down Red Bull and Verstappen?

“Wanting to slow Red Bull this year shows a massive lack of knowledge of the history of Formula 1. I could imagine someone who has only been interested in F1 for three or four years thinking [the domination] is unusual. But that’s bollocks. It isn’t unusual at all.”

Those are the words of famed F1 engineer Frank Dernie, scotching an argument gaining ever more traction with every Max Verstappen 2023 victory – that Red Bull’s relentless march is too tedious, that something must be done. In short, changing F1’s rules to try to ensure competitive parity.

“Is it time to slow down Red Bull and Verstappen?”

That question is being asked in these pages precisely because it’s being done so elsewhere: on social media platforms by fans, and in F1 race weekend press conferences to drivers and team personnel. It combines with, as we’ve covered, historical precedents of dominant squads being hobbled by rule changes – even though the reality has often been far more complex, with regulation tweaks bound up in the leviathan of motorsport decision making, than such simple recollections often suggest. And then there’s the cohort of new F1 followers, harvested from Netflix and the 2021 title saga – with a healthy dose post-pandemic enthusiasm masking the end of Mercedes’ domination and a plethora of alternative storylines added in – who are encountering the cold reality that sometimes one team just smashes the rest, that not every F1 campaign is an epic.

Posed as it is, that question ultimately breaks down into two: should the Red Bull RB19 have its advantage slashed by a specific rule change, or does F1 need to take Balance of Performance inspiration from other series? For both, and the overarching philosophical debate too, the answer is no – an utter rejection of the suggestion. Firstly because, as Dernie notes, this is not virgin territory for F1.

“Red Bull has got the best car, but the gap from its car to the others, there have been many times when the gap has been much bigger,” explains the long-time Williams engineer. “Because the cars are so reliable now and Max is brilliant, they are winning a lot. But they are not winning by the kind of margins we’ve seen in the past. I remember one race at Brands Hatch [in 1986] where Nigel Mansell and Nelson Piquet [both driving for Williams] lapped everyone twice – except for McLaren’s Alain Prost who was P3. And he was in sight of being lapped for a second time by the end.”

F1 already has a minor form of performance balancing that arrived in 2021 – the sliding scale regarding aerodynamic testing and development based on constructors’ standings. It’s “a kind of balance, not balance of performance but balance of allocation”,



“We don’t want to have any help. We want to close the gap by our own means. And we like this challenge”

notes Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur, who feels that’s “enough”.

F1 also has major rule changes for chassis and engine designs already planned for 2026, really just two years away. And F1 even conducted a PR policy of embracing Red Bull’s bid to win all 22 races this year prior to September’s Singapore GP, with Liberty Media CEO Greg Maffei quipping “short of breaking his leg, a la Tonya Harding, I’m not sure what we can do”, while hastily pointing to alternative metrics of viewership other than the downtrending TV figures. There is hope that the idea of embracing greatness will pay off in the short term, although of course that needs commentators on all platforms to avoid spouting off at every slightly dull race or Red Bull win. Fat chance...

But, more fundamentally than all of that, such a drastic intervention goes against F1’s meritocratic ethos. It is simply up to Red Bull’s rivals to do a better job. Wonderfully, at least publicly, they seem to be onside with that. “I’m not a big fan of the Balance of Performance or any kind of artifice like this,” concludes Vasseur. “It’s not the DNA at all of F1.”

“I agree,” says McLaren team principal Andrea Stella, speaking alongside Vasseur at Monza in September. “We don’t want to have any help. We want to close the gap by our own means. And we like this challenge. And that’s what we want for the next couple of years.”

“As a team principal, I don’t want to jump on the bandwagon that others have done in the past of saying we need to change the regulations because we can’t continue with the dominance of a team,” states Mercedes’ Toto Wolff. “If a team dominates in the way Max has done with Red Bull, then fair dos. This is a meritocracy. As long as you comply to the regulations – technical, sporting and financial – you just need to say, ‘Well done and it’s up to us to catch up’. If that takes a long time, then it takes a long time. But I remember people crying foul when it was us. Entertainment follows sport and not the other way around. You can’t be WWE and just script content. We don’t want to be scripted content.”

Good. But now it’s up to Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes and co to make the difference, to create the F1 spectacle and intensity we know can exist because we’ve seen it so recently. It can happen – it just needs to be reached in the right way. No intervention, no BoP. **AK**



At the start,
Cadillac man
Bamber locks up
spectacularly on
the run into
Turn 1...

WEC BAHRAIN

Toyota's title after first-lap drama

The polesitting #8 crew of Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa didn't have to break too much of a sweat to lift the drivers' crown in the wake of the #7's early spin

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  motorsport
IMAGES

There wasn't really much doubt in Bahrain that Toyota was going to seal another World Endurance Championship drivers' crown to go with the manufacturers' title it took last time out at Fuji.

If there was a question mark, it was over which of its two crews was going to make it five in a row for the Japanese manufacturer. The shame for a championship that hasn't quite delivered the intended spectacle in the maiden season of its so-called golden age, the Le Mans 24 Hours excepted, was that any uncertainty was pretty much removed at the first corner.

As Sebastien Buemi accelerated out of the opening sequence

of corners and up the hill to Turn 4 at the start of last Saturday's Bahrain 8 Hours, he could see mayhem in his mirrors. The first-corner dramas that he feared so much that he could barely sleep the night before affected team-mate Mike Conway rather than him. The #7 Toyota GR010 HYBRID Le Mans Hypercar was tapped into a spin by a locked-up Cadillac V-Series.R LMDh with Earl Bamber at the wheel, and suddenly Buemi and team-mates Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa had a second hand on the end-of-season Hypercar championship trophy.

The grip of the first hand that had been resting on the silverware since Le Mans, when Buemi and co took second place, had tightened



after qualifying when Hartley claimed pole position and the point that goes with it. Now the drivers of #8 only had to finish third, even if Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez took a maximum in this points-and-a-half eight-hour race.

In the event, #8 appeared to win with relative ease, finishing 47.5s up the road from the sister car to give Buemi and Hartley their fourth world titles and Hirakawa a second to go with the one he claimed as part of this trio last year. There was really no way back for the #7 crew after the first lap on a day when #8 had a narrow performance advantage in the internecine Toyota battle.

A fourth Toyota 1-2 of the season wasn't as straightforward as it

looked, however. The run to the championship by #8 could have been derailed by a clutch issue, while #7 encountered a problem with one of the driveshaft torque sensors that was similar but not quite the same as the one that restricted it to ninth place in the Algarve in April.

The winning GR010 repeatedly lost time in the pits in the final stages of the race, four seconds here, five seconds there. Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon used the word "critical" to describe the problem at one point, though the total time loss probably wasn't much more than 10s.

The clutch wasn't opening, which meant the team couldn't use the starter motor to get going in the pitlane. Instead it had to bump >>



Buemi pulled out a gap to the chasing pack in the opening laps

start the twin-turbo V6 by getting rolling under power from the front-axle hybrid system. It wasn't as easy as expected. "We had to pull the car with the front, but the problem was that the cold tyres meant the fronts were spinning and the rears were not rotating," explained Vasselon. "The tyres were dragging and not cranking the engine. In the end we went to start in second, which was better."

The sister car simply lost pace over the second half of the race, long after it had made it up to second late in hour two, as a result of the issue with the torque sensor. An electronic issue inside the sensor caused the problem in Portugal; this time the sensor around the driveshaft broke in half and was hanging free over the second half of the race.

"We were questioning whether to stop and properly disconnect it or take the risk and have it rip off," said Vasselon, who explained that the second option would have almost certainly resulted in immediate

"Vasselon described the race as 'quite intense' as a result of the issues for each of the Toyotas"



Penalty cost best-of-the-rest Jota Porsche the chance of a podium

retirement. "We were looking at the pitstops: it was hanging but it was staying in one place, so we went for it."

At the Portimao 6 Hours, the #7 Toyota had to complete the race at much reduced power. This time the power loss was much less, as a result of new protocols introduced since then to monitor power delivery in the event of such a failure. "We are working more precisely in terms of back-up now, but it is not exactly like normal," explained Vasselon. "So to make sure we have no gain when these kind of things happen we have to detune the car."

Vasselon described the Bahrain 8 Hours as "quite intense" for Toyota as a result of the issues for each of the GR010s. He was also unhappy about the first-corner incident, pointing out that Bamber was locked up for a good 100 metres and asking "is this club racing?". He also suggested that Toyota didn't have it as easy as it looked, problems or no.

Buemi was able to pull away from the chasing pack after the start: he was five seconds up on Miguel Molina in the #50 Ferrari 499P LMH after just six laps. If there was ever a threat to the Toyota hegemony last weekend, it came in the sixth hour when Antonio Felix da Costa was closing on Lopez for the runner-up spot aboard the Jota team's customer Porsche 963 LMDh. The Portuguese got to within 12s of the second-placed Toyota before a penalty derailed the challenge and removed the chance of a third Porsche podium of the season.

Porsche was again best of the rest in Bahrain, Jota taking over the baton from the Penske factory team that had taken third at Fuji in September. The car qualified down in ninth in Will Stevens's hands as the result of a braking glitch, but the Brit came out of the first-corner melee in sixth, quickly made it up to fifth, and then took Michael Christensen for fourth on lap 18 to top the Porsche order.

Ten laps later he was up to third ahead of Molina, who had dropped behind team-mate Alessandro Pier Guidi after 12 laps. Stevens almost immediately fell back to fourth when a recovering Conway came past, but it would be the first of five passes on a Ferrari by the Jota car last weekend.

Yifei Ye would repeat the move on #50, now with Antonio Fuoco at the wheel, after taking over from Stevens and beginning his own charge that took him onto the tail of James Calado in the #51 Ferrari. Da Costa continued the good work after taking over the controls of the #38 Porsche. The #51 car had lost time in the pits, so when da Costa got the better of a post-pitstop battle with Nicklas Nielsen in #50, he was able to establish himself in third and set off after the Toyotas. >>

WRT TAKES LMP2 WITH 'WRONG' CAR

Robert Kubica, Louis Deletraz and Rui Andrade never looked likely to lose their hold on the LMP2 championship lead after arriving in Bahrain 33 points clear. But the WRT crew didn't appear likely winners of the race, either. Yet they ended up celebrating the title with their third victory of the season courtesy of some bad fortune for their rivals, most pertinently their team-mates in the sister WRT ORECA-Gibson 07.

Deletraz inherited the lead at the final pitstop when there was an issue with the left-front wheelnut on the car driven by Sean Gelael, Ferdinand Habsburg and Robin Frijns. The team couldn't get the airgun on the nut: it first swapped guns before the replacement was given an almighty whack. More than 20 seconds were lost, and with it a first victory of the season for the #31.

The winning car had what Deletraz called "a tough week". The Swiss had qualified the car only 10th in class. The #41 car wasn't as quick as #31, which was held in the pits for a speeding infringement during the first full course yellow, and wouldn't lead the race until after the fateful final stops.

Four of the 11 P2 cars in this, the last outing for the class in the WEC outside of Le Mans, led on Saturday. WRT, however, was sure that it was only racing a car that never topped the order. The Belgian team's ORECA's were on a 10-stop strategy along with the Jota car driven by



Wheelnut woe cost
Gelael/Habsburg/Frijns
first win of the season

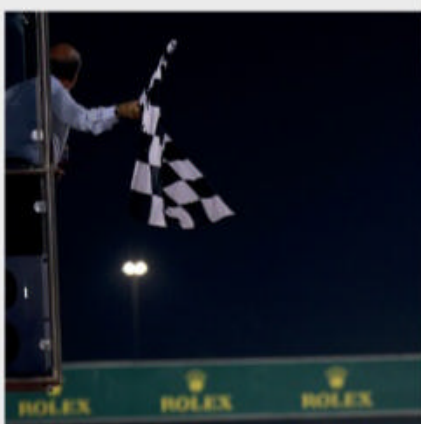
David Heinemeier Hansson, Pietro Fittipaldi and Oliver Rasmussen, while the others were on 11-stoppers. Its theory on a day that there were no safety cars proved correct: the Jota car took the final podium spot, respectively 50s and 40s behind the top two.

There was another potential winner, however, possibly two. They were the United Autosports entries that had divvied out top spot in the times in every session of practice and qualifying. Both cars were involved in the first-corner shenanigans, and both were penalised during the race on the way to eighth and ninth-place finishes.

Tom Blomqvist put the car he shared with Oliver Jarvis and Josh Pierson on pole, only to receive multiple hits on lap one: Phil Hanson in the sister car ended up driving across his nose. Both cars needed replacement front and rear body sections, while Hanson, who shared with Filipe Albuquerque and Freddie Lubin, was handed a one-minute stop/go for an unsafe rejoin and contact with the Vanwall LMH.

The Blomqvist car did subsequently lead the race, but an early stop for the body repairs almost certainly ruled out the 10-stop strategy it would have needed to win. It was subsequently handed a 90s stop/go for running under the minimum permitted tyre pressures, the same penalty that did for the Vector Sport ORECA that had led the first 60 laps in Gabriel Aubry's hands.

WRT's nearest rival for the title, the Inter Europol crew of Albert Costa, Fabio Scherer and Jakub Smiechowski, ended up sixth. Twice Costa came to a halt on the track as a result of an electrical glitch that was eventually traced to the onboard camera.



Race victory and
title for Deletraz,
Kubica and Andrade

Ferrari belied
lack of outright
pace with return to
the podium for
Molina/Nielsen/
Fuoco



The gap to #7 came down from 16 to 12s ahead of the next round of stops before da Costa went off at Turn 1. He was adjudged to have then rejoined the track unsafely right in front of the GTE Am class D'Station Aston Martin and given a drive-through penalty. Stevens secured fourth ahead of #51 after retaking the controls and then closed down on Fuoco, crossing the line just under a second behind.

There was no disappointment on Jota's part, however. Team principal Sam Hignett pointed out how far the team has come after getting its 963 two races late at Spa in April. "If you'd told me back then that we'd be fighting with Ferrari for a podium and finishing only nine tenths behind after eight hours of racing, I would have taken that," said Hignett, who then made reference to the humble location of the team's workshops. "We're the boys from the farmyard racing against the might of Maranello."

If there was any disappointment in the Jota camp, it resulted from da Costa's penalty and its severity. Hignett pointed out that vision out of a modern prototype is limited in the era of the HANS device and that drivers had been told by race control not to rejoin the track on the exit of Turn 3 if they went onto the asphalt run-off at the first corner. Coming back at a sharp angle, he reckoned, was always going to cause problems.

Ferrari was back on the podium with the #50 shared by Molina, Nielsen and Fuoco after a race away at Fuji despite, said technical director Ferdinando Cannizzo, "not having the fastest car today, or even the second fastest". The 499P was a definite third in the pecking order behind the Toyota and the Porsche last weekend.

Ferrari was pretty despondent following the opening day of free practice after its two cars ended up eighth and ninth in an opening period affected by high winds and then rain, and only 10th and 11th in the more representative evening session. The car lacked both straightline speed and traction on the low-speed hairpins that proliferate on the 3.36-mile Bahrain International Circuit.

But Ferrari got its head down and came up with a set-up focused on getting the most out of its Michelin tyres, not the 499P's strong suit this year, on the abrasive track surface.

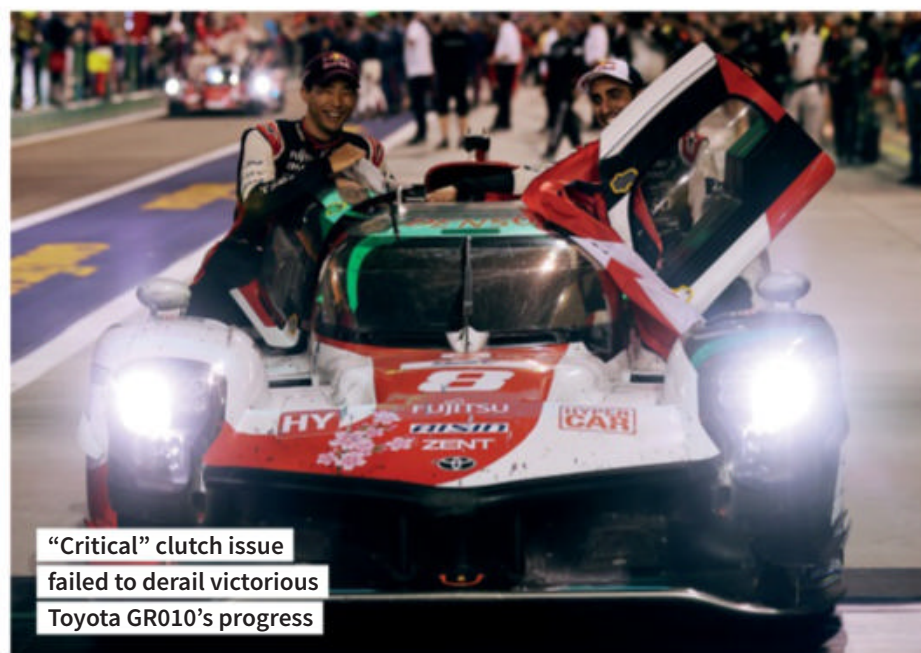
"We never give up," said Cannizzo after the race. "We are proud of the results because we were able to play with the strategy in a way to get on the podium. We were working hard to see how we could

manage our pace, our set-ups, our pitstops, our energy, everything, to give us the possibility to beat the other cars even though they were faster than us over a single lap."

That strategy included changing three tyres – rather than the more normal four or two – on a pair of occasions as Ferrari and the AF Corse team looked into how best to stretch its allocation of 26Michelins over the eight hours. Cannizzo even went so far as to say that Ferrari had the most consistent car over a double stint in Hypercar.

The #50 managed to finish on the same lap as the Toyotas, whereas both its cars had been a lap down at Fuji. There wasn't much between the two Ferraris on Saturday, nothing at all after the penultimate round of pitstops, when they appeared to make faint contact on two occasions. Pier Guidi, who'd taken over from Antonio Giovinazzi a lap earlier than Fuoco had replaced Nielsen, ended up overtaking the sister car on the dirt when he arrived on its tail with the warmer tyres. Ferrari told its drivers to immediately reverse the positions two corners later in the name of fairness. "We asked them to swap positions because it was not a proper overtake," said Cannizzo.

Pier Guidi faded to sixth at the finish, dropping behind the best-placed of the Penske Porsches shared by Laurens Vanthoor, Kevin



"Critical" clutch issue
failed to derail victorious
Toyota GR010's progress



CADILLAC PROMISE DASHED

This looked like a wasted opportunity for Cadillac to finally make it onto the podium in a regular World Endurance round and restore the momentum that has drained away since Earl Bamber, Alex Lynn and Richard Westbrook did get a top three at the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. There was every reason to believe that the Ganassi-run V-Series.R would return to form in Bahrain, before it all went wrong at the first corner.

Lynn had put the Caddy third on the grid, a season's high qualifying position. The Brit had achieved that on the Michelin hard tyre, the Toyotas ahead of it on the faster medium as they squabbled over the all-important point for pole. A significant chunk of the seven-tenths deficit could be put down to a choice of tyres that came with a risk: Toyota would have to use its mediums over a full stint in the race.

The Cadillac Racing squad also went into the WEC finale believing that it had a good race car; the Caddy has generally been second best at looking after its tyres this year after Toyota.

"It was a really positive day," said Lynn at the end of Friday, a day when he also topped the times in final free practice. "We were quick on

one lap and we're quick on the long run, too. We're motivated to have a good day tomorrow."

It couldn't have been much worse, as it turned out. Bamber insisted that he wasn't trying to be heroic at the first corner when he locked up, but the mistake and the incident it triggered had multiple repercussions for the Caddy: the car dropped to seventh, the nose was damaged, the tyres flat-spotted and the

"FP3 and qualifying showed we had a podium car. It is a missed opportunity"

stewards enraged. The New Zealander was deemed to have caused a collision and handed a one-minute stop/go. The car was already a lap down after an hour, and trailed home 11th, three laps down, after encountering an undisclosed problem that may or may not have been linked to the first-corner biff.

"FP3 and qualifying showed we had a podium car," said Cadillac Racing team manager Stephen Mitas. "If we'd had the same car today, I think that result would have been possible, so it is an opportunity missed."

"We are proud of the results because we were able to play with the strategy to get on the podium"

Estre and Andre Lotterer. The #51 Ferrari, whose drivers retained a remote chance of the title coming into Bahrain, was afflicted by a rear damping issue that robbed the car of grip and wasn't fully understood in the immediate aftermath of the race.

The Porsche factory team took its hat off to Jota on a day that the British squad had the fastest 963 and the one with the fewest issues, though rising brake temperatures were a concern at the end. The #6 car might have had a shot at the podium had Vanthoor not been delayed by the first-corner dramas. Estre had qualified the car fourth, but his Belgian team-mate completed the opening lap down in ninth. He then sustained nose damage as he fought his way back through the field, losing the car more seconds when it was changed at the second stop.

Both Penske Porsches were fighting various electronic glitches right through the race. "Today there was eight hours of constant radio calls with the ops room," said 963 project leader Urs Kuratle. "It was really a busy race for us."

The electronic issues included a problem with the speed limiter on the #5 car driven by Christensen, Dane Cameron and Frederic Makowiecki. It was pinged for speeding during both the full-course-yellow virtual safety cars, receiving a five-second penalty each time, and ended up a distant seventh.

There wasn't much to say about Peugeot, except that its 9X8 LMH wasn't a competitive proposition in its current form courtesy of the slow corners that proliferate in Bahrain and that it finished ahead of the Proton Porsche. But that was only because the German team's entry shared by Neel Jani, Harry Tincknell and Gianmaria Bruni had to be nursed to the finish thanks to a brake overheating problem. ❄



It had all looked so good for the #2 Caddy...



Victory at last for
Iron Dames crew
Gating, Frey and Bovy

IRON DAMES TAKE LONG-AWAITED GTE AM SUCCESS

The all-female Iron Dames crew finally notched up a first GTE Am victory at the last time of asking. Sarah Bovy, Michelle Gating and Rahel Frey took a narrow victory aboard their Porsche 911 RSR in the final race for the class before it is superseded by LMGT3 in 2024.

No one begrudged the achievement for a trio that had been knocking on the door of a victory since the back end of 2022, but there was an element of good fortune about the narrow triumph for their Iron Lynx-run Porsche. The crews of the Aston Martin Vantage GTEs that finished second and

third both left Bahrain in the knowledge that this was a race they might have won.

The TF Sport-run D'Station Aston shared by Liam Talbot (a late replacement for team boss Satoshi Hoshino), Tomonobu Fujii and Casper Stevenson ended just five seconds in arrears after the eight hours. The margin was about the time lost in the pits at the penultimate stop when Fujii handed over to Stevenson for the final two hours: the Japanese initially stopped in the wrong box!

The Aston, which had received a power break under the Balance of Performance

for this race, more or less got on terms with the Porsche in Gating's hands in the final hour. Stevenson had closed down a gap of just under 30s, but by the time he got to the back of the leader he'd "pretty much used up his tyres and brakes", reckoned TF boss Tom Ferrier.

The Heart of Racing Aston, entered under the NorthWest AMR banner and run by the AMR/Prodrive set-up, ended up third, a further half-minute or so behind. The car driven by Ian James, Alex Riberas and Daniel Mancinelli lost a shot of victory when the last-named ran into the back of the Prema LMP2 ORECA with Bent Viscaal at the wheel. But for the resulting drive-through, it would have been in the mix for the win at the finish.

The Iron Lynx Porsche shared by Matteo Cressoni and Alessio Picariello, but not crucially Claudio Schiavoni, led the most laps in class. The Bronze-rated driver felt unwell before the start, which he had been nominated to take, but the hope was that he might recover in time to drive before the finish. That proved not to be the case, and the team parked the Porsche with two hours and 20 minutes to run, the minimum drive time for the Bronze in an eight-hour race.

The Corvette Racing entry in which Ben Keating, Nicky Catsburg and Nico Varrone took the class title with two races to run was never in the hunt in Bahrain. A BoP hit blunted the competitiveness of the Chevrolet Corvette C8.R. The car finished a lap down in seventh, the second time it has missed out on a podium this season.



Runner-up D'Station
Aston had unfortunate
pitlane slip-up

RESULTS	WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 7/7, SAKHIR (BHR), 4 NOVEMBER (8 HOURS – 249 LAPS – 837.352 MILES)				
POS	DRIVERS		TEAM / CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	Sebastien Buemi (CHE) Brendon Hartley (NZL) Ryo Hirakawa (JPN)		Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	8h01m25.308s
2	Mike Conway (GBR) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)		Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	+47.516s
3	Miguel Molina (ESP) Antonio Fuoco (ITA) Nicklas Nielsen (DNK)		Ferrari AF Corse / Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	+1m36.286s
4	Will Stevens (GBR) Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT) Yifei Ye (CHN)		Jota / Porsche 963	Hypercar	+1m37.248s
5	Laurens Vanthoor (BEL) Kevin Estre (FRA) Andre Lotterer (DEU)		Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963	Hypercar	-1 lap
6	Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA) James Calado (GBR) Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)		Ferrari AF Corse / Ferrari 499P	Hypercar	-1 lap
7	Michael Christensen (DNK) Dane Cameron (USA) Frederic Makowiecki (FRA)		Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963	Hypercar	-2 laps
8	Loic Duval (FRA) Gustavo Menezes (USA) Nico Muller (CHE)		Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-2 laps
9	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA) Paul di Resta (GBR) Mikkel Jensen (DNK)		Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8	Hypercar	-2 laps
10	Neel Jani (CHE) Gianmaria Bruni (ITA) Harry Tincknell (GBR)		Proton Competition / Porsche 963	Hypercar	-2 laps
11	Earl Bamber (NZL) Alex Lynn (GBR) Richard Westbrook (GBR)		Cadillac Racing (Ganassi) / Cadillac V-Series.R	Hypercar	-3 laps
12	Rui Andrade (PRT) Robert Kubica (POL) Louis Deletraz (CHE)		Team WRT / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-11 laps
13	Sean Gelael (IDN) Ferdinand Habsburg (AUT) Robin Frijns (NLD)		Team WRT / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-11 laps
14	David Heinemeier Hansson (DNK) Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA) Oliver Rasmussen (DNK)		Jota / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-11 laps
15	Filip Ugran (ROU) Bent Viscaal (NLD) Juan Manuel Correa (USA)		Prema Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-11 laps
16	Doriane Pin (FRA) Mirko Bortolotti (ITA) Daniil Kvyat (RUS)		Prema Racing / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-12 laps
17	Jakub Smiechowski (POL) Fabio Scherer (CHE) Albert Costa (ESP)		Inter Europol Competition / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-12 laps
18	Matthieu Vaxiviere (FRA) Julien Canal (FRA) Charles Milesi (FRA)		Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-12 laps
19	Tom Blomqvist (GBR) Josh Pierson (USA) Oliver Jarvis (GBR)		United Autosports / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-12 laps
20	Phil Hanson (GBR) Freddie Lubin (GBR) Filipe Albuquerque (PRT)		United Autosports / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-12 laps
21	Andre Negrao (BRA) Memo Rojas (MEX) Olli Caldwell (GBR)		Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech) / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-13 laps
22	Sarah Bovy (BEL) Michelle Gatting (DNK) Rahel Frey (CHE)		Iron Dames (Iron Lynx) / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-17 laps
23	Liam Talbot (AUS) Casper Stevenson (GBR) Tomonobu Fujii (JPN)		D’Station Racing (TF) / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-17 laps
24	Ian James (GBR) Daniel Mancinelli (ITA) Alex Riberas (ESP)		NorthWest AMR (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-17 laps
25	Thomas Flohr (CHE) Francesco Castellacci (ITA) Davide Rigon (ITA)		AF Corse / Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-17 laps
26	Takeshi Kimura (JPN) Esteban Masson (FRA) Daniel Serra (BRA)		Kessel Racing / Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-17 laps
27	Christian Ried (DEU) Mikkel Overgaard Pedersen (DNK) Julien Andlauer (FRA)		Dempsey-Proton Racing / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-18 laps
28	Ben Keating (USA) Nico Varrone (ARG) Nicky Catsburg (NLD)		Corvette Racing (Pratt & Miller) / Chevrolet Corvette C8.R	GTE Am	-18 laps
29	Michael Wainwright (GBR) Riccardo Pera (ITA) Ben Barker (GBR)		GR Racing / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-18 laps
30	Luis Perez Companc (ARG) Lilou Wadoux (FRA) Alessio Rovera (ITA)		Richard Mille AF Corse / Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-18 laps
31	PJ Hyett (USA) Gunnar Jeannette (USA) Matteo Cairolì (ITA)		Project 1 – AO / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-19 laps
32	Franck Dezoteux (FRA) Simon Mann (USA) Kei Cozzolino (JPN)		AF Corse / Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-20 laps
33	Tristan Vautier (FRA) Esteban Guerrieri (ARG) Ryan Briscoe (AUS)		Floyd Vanwall Racing Team / Vanwall-Gibson Vandervell 680	Hypercar	-32 laps
R	Ahmad Al Harthy (OMN) Michael Dinan (USA) Charlie Eastwood (GBR)		ORT by TF / Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	217 laps-engine/overheating
R	Gabriel Aubry (FRA) Ryan Cullen (IRL) Matthias Kaiser (LIE)		Vector Sport / ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	216 laps-throttle sensor
R	Matteo Cressoni (ITA) Claudio Schiavoni (ITA) Alessio Picariello (BEL)		Iron Lynx / Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	163 laps-withdrawn/drive time

Winners’ average speed 104.359mph. **Fastest lap** Kobayashi 1m50.139s, 109.918mph. **LMP2** Milesi 1m54.598s, 105.641mph. **GTE Am** Picariello 1m58.394s, 102.254mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Hartley 1m46.564s; **2 Kobayashi** 1m47.053s;
3 Lynn 1m47.265s; **4 Estre** 1m47.712s; **5 Fuoco** 1m47.739s;
6 Pier Guidi 1m47.828s; **7 Makowiecki** 1m47.946s;
8 Bruni 1m47.964s; **9 Stevens** 1m48.555s; **10 di Resta** 1m48.987s; **11 Muller** 1m49.502s; **12 Guerrieri** 1m50.682s;
13 Blomqvist 1m52.290s; **14 Milesi** 1m52.561s; **15 Frijns** 1m52.898s; **16 Aubry** 1m52.903s; **17 Albuquerque** 1m52.992s; **18 Viscaal** 1m53.033s; **19 Costa** 1m53.086s;
20 Bortolotti 1m53.191s; **21 Fittipaldi** 1m53.320s;
22 Deletraz 1m53.580s; **23 Negrao** 1m54.023s; **24 Bovy** 1m58.692s; **25 Talbot** 1m58.982s; **26 Al Harthy** 1m59.161s;
27 Kimura 1m59.162s; **28 Keating** 1m59.412s; **29 James**

1m59.683s; **30 Flohr** 1m59.761s; **31 Ried** 2m00.063s;
32 Perez Companc 2m00.279s; **33 Hyett** 2m00.446s;
34 Wainwright 2m01.275s; **35 Schiavoni** 2m01.547s;
36 Dezoteux 2m02.646s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

Hypercar drivers **1 Hartley/Hirakawa/Buemi 172**;
2 Lopez/Kobayashi/Conway 145; **3 Fuoco/Molina/ Nielsen 120**; **4 Pier Guidi/Giovinazzi/Calado 114**; **5 Lynn/ Bamber/Westbrook 72**; **6 Lotterer/Estre/Vanthoor 71**.
Hypercar manufacturers **1 Toyota 217**; **2 Ferrari 161**;
3 Porsche 99; **4 Cadillac 79**; **5 Peugeot 67**;
6 Glickenhaus 36; **7 Vanwall 10**.

LMP2 drivers **1 Deletraz/Kubica/ Andrade 173**; **2 Costa/Scherer/ Smiechowski 114**; **3 Lubin/ Hanson 104**; **4 Habsburg/Frijns/ Gelael 94**; **5 Pierson/Jarvis 92**; **6 Heinemeier Hansson/ Rasmussen/Fittipaldi 84**.
GTE Am drivers **1 Keating/ Catsburg/Varrone 173**;
2 Gatting/Frey/Bovy 118;
3 Rigon/Castellacci/Flohr 91;
4 Ried/Andlauer/Pedersen 80; **5 Al Harthy/ Eastwood/Dinan 65**; **6 Barker/Wainwright/Pera 64**.



Golden Brown as Huff makes big move for title

TCR WORLD TOUR
SYDNEY MOTORSPORT PARK (AUS)
4-5 NOVEMBER
ROUND 7/9

After local hero Will Brown had won the first two races, Rob Huff claimed the finale as the TCR World Tour joined forces with the Australian series at Sydney Motorsport Park. Comtoy Audi driver Huff's high-scoring weekend puts him just a point behind Hyundai's Norbert Michelisz with two rounds remaining.

In a wet-to-dry qualifying session, a switch to slick tyres at the right moment put the GRM Peugeot of Ben Bargwanna on pole ahead of Brown's Audi, with Hyundai's Mikel Azcona the best of the international drivers in third.

In the first race, Brown quickly dispatched Bargwanna for the lead and bolted, before an early safety car for a stricken car reset the field. The green flags flew again just as the rain fell, with the bulk of the field dramatically piling into the run-off at Turn 1, causing a red flag.

After the restart, with everyone now on

wet tyres, Brown went on to win ahead of Azcona and the Lynk & Co of Yann Ehrlacher, but penalties for weaving after the safety car lights went out dropped Azcona and Ehrlacher to third and sixth respectively. Ma Qing Hua was promoted to second in his Lynk & Co, with Huff fourth.

In the reversed-grid second race, Thed Bjork (Lynk & Co) took the lead from the front row over Nestor Girolami's pole-sitting Honda for two corners before running wide. Girolami was now under attack from the fast-starting Peugeot of Aaron Cameron, who soon passed, but then it was determined that the Aussie had jumped the start.

Girolami soon stopped with a transmission problem, causing a safety car. At the restart, Bjork and Michelisz collided

at Turn 1 while battling for second, leaving Cameron ahead of Huff and Brown. Brown overtook Huff on lap nine of 17 and Cameron on lap 13 to take his second win in a row, with Huff and team-mate Frederic Vervisch completing an all-Audi podium following Cameron's penalty.

In the final race, Brown crept before the start and then bogged down. Huff charged into the lead, while Cameron mounted Vervisch's second-placed Audi and went off at Turn 1.

Huff held off Brown for 17 laps of green-flag running to secure his second win of the season, while Michelisz picked up second place after Brown's jumped start penalty was applied. The field now stays in Australia for Mount Panorama this weekend.

NEIL HUDSON



KALISZ/RACE PROJECT/TCRAUSTRALIA

Supra stars crowned after Nissan spins out

SUPER GT
MOTEGI (JPN)
5 NOVEMBER
ROUND 8/8

TOM'S Toyota pair Sho Tsuboi and Ritomo Miyata were crowned champions in a dramatic conclusion to the Super GT season at Motegi.

Tsuboi and Miyata only needed to finish second in the final race of the season to guarantee themselves the title, even if their nearest rivals in the championship, NDDP Nissan duo Katsumasa Chiyo and Mitsunori Takaboshi, won the race from pole. That looked like a virtual certainty for most of the race, with poleman Chiyo storming away from the field and Takaboshi then

leading comfortably, with Miyata running second but being chased by the NISMO Nissan of Tsugio Matsuda.

But the arrival of rain late in the race threw a spanner in the works, and eventually led to Takaboshi spinning away the lead at Turn 8 and getting stuck in the gravel. That allowed Miyata to secure a third win of the season for the #36 TOM'S GR Supra, earning his first GT500 title to add to his Super Formula crown, as well as a second for Tsuboi.

Matsuda and Ronnie Quintarelli finished second, with the Real Racing Honda of Koudai Tsukakoshi and Nobuharu Matsushita third after a late switch to wet tyres. Honda's only title contender, the ARTA car of Nirei Fukuzumi and Hiroki Otsu, finished 12th in the final race for the NSX-GT.

JAMIE KLEIN



motorsport.tv

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Blaney beaten but claims crown

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
5 NOVEMBER
ROUND 36/36

Ross Chastain interrupted the 2023 NASCAR Cup championship battle to win last Sunday’s season finale at Phoenix Raceway as Ryan Blaney claimed his first series title and second consecutive for Team Penske.

Chastain, who was eliminated early in the playoffs and led just one lap in the previous nine races, turned out to be too tough for the 2023 title contenders. He dominated most of the race, the Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet leading 157 of the 312 laps, but lost his lead during the final round of green-flag pitstops.

Chastain passed Kyle Larson’s Hendrick Motorsports Chevy on a wild restart with 30 laps to go to reclaim the lead, and held off a late charge from the Ford of Blaney to earn his second win of the 2023 season.

Sunday’s race is the first time since the

current playoff format debuted in 2014 that the series champion did not win the season finale.

Once Chastain had re-established himself as the leader, Blaney emerged from a fierce back-and-forth battle in the final 20 laps with Larson to take over second position and the championship lead, which he held until the finish. It’s Blaney’s first title in his first appearance in the Championship 4, and the fourth Cup Series for team owner Roger Penske.

Larson finished third in the race, while team-mate and fellow title contender William Byron was fourth after taking pole position and winning the opening stage, and Stage 2 winner Chris Buescher (RFK Ford) rounded out the top five.

The other title contender, Christopher Bell, was knocked out of contention when he blew a brake rotor and slammed the wall on lap 108, causing extensive damage to his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota.

Also at Phoenix over the weekend, Cole Custer used a daring three-wide move at

the start of overtime to take the lead and win Saturday’s Xfinity Series season finale, which also handed him the 2023 championship, his first.

It took four overtimes, but Christian Eckes finally emerged as the winner of Friday night’s Truck Series finale. Ben Rhodes limped home in fifth, but that was good enough to allow him to claim the title, his second in three seasons.

JIM UTTER

WEEKEND WINNERS

TCR WORLD TOUR
SYDNEY MOTORSPORT PARK (AUS)
Races 1 & 2 Will Brown
MPC Racing (Audi RS3 LMS TCR)
Race 3 Rob Huff
Comtoy Racing
(Audi RS3 LMS II TCR)

SUPER GT
MOTEGI (JPN)
Sho Tsuboi/Ritomo Miyata
TOM’S (Toyota GR Supra)

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
Ross Chastain
Trackhouse Racing (Chevrolet Camaro)

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Classic Team Lotus members and supporters pose with three of the very earliest designs

KEEPING THE LOTUS LEGEND ALIVE

Classic Team Lotus provides a vital link from the successful F1 team to the present day. Here's how it celebrated the marque's 75th anniversary with a hectic Goodwood Revival outing

STEPHEN MOSLEY

Classic Team Lotus holds a unique place in the world of historic motor racing. Established in 1992, it overlapped the active years of the original Team Lotus and, with Clive Chapman – son of marque founders Colin and Hazel – at the helm, it provides a direct link between today and the glory days of the Hethel squad.

The spirit of the 'garagista' still pervades CTL, with 22 team and privately owned cars (11 of which were to be raced) in its care at the Goodwood Revival earlier this year. Normally, the operation would run six to 10 cars at this kind of event, but 2023 is a special year. The Revival was celebrating 75 years of Lotus with a parade of examples representing the company's 'Colin and Hazel' era, from the recently completed replica of their first trials car up to 1983's Type 92 – and being driven by some famous faces including Johnny Herbert and Karun Chandhok. This made it the ideal occasion for seeing what it takes to run a major historic racing team at a high-profile event, so Autosport travelled to Sussex for a very hot, and occasionally

wet, weekend in September to join them.

Running any historic car tends to bring a particular set of problems with it. Demonstrating or competing in an old racing car even more so, not least because they may have unique features or have been designed to requirements that do not promote longevity. An increasingly busy season, the creeping extension of which has eroded the opportunities for off-season maintenance, has forced a rolling programme of preparation for major events. Consequently, a flexibility to demands on Classic Team Lotus's time has to be maintained if challenging schedules are to be met. One illustration of this is that Clive Chapman was only informed early this year that Lotus would be the featured marque at Goodwood.

Amid this tight timeframe, CTL's achievement in fulfilling the obligations for the event is all the more remarkable when you consider that the Mk1 replica was only started in February, the Mk3 and Type 27 had to be recommissioned, the new-build Colotti



MAIN PIC: CLASSIC TEAM LOTUS

STEPHEN MOSLEY

“The 56B is only running because of COVID – the team needed something to do as there weren’t any events”

gearbox on the iconic Rob Walker/Stirling Moss Type 18 arrived just in time to be fitted, the Type 16 (an ex-Graham Hill car) had a major gearbox rebuild, and Andrew Beaumont’s Type 22 was still in need of a ratio change when it arrived at the circuit. Yet all of the cars were in the paddock on the Wednesday, Thursday was given over to preparation, and on Friday the public came through the gates. Among the more unusual cars they were able to see was the 56B turbine machine from 1971.

“The 56B is only running because of COVID – the team needed something to do as there weren’t any events taking place,”

explains Chapman. “Colin was looking at it as a [alternative] power source because he didn’t want to have to pay Cosworth for their engines. Colin was really excited by the turbine and would have been up for electric cars.”

CTL’s commitment to support so many cars at Goodwood led to four trusted ‘volunteer’ mechanics being brought in to supplement the eight-strong core team. Among them was the inaugural recipient of the Simon Diffey Heritage Motorsport Apprentice Award, Emilia Brown, previously seconded to CTL through the scheme. In recognition of the outstanding team effort at this year’s Revival, Classic Team Lotus was proud to be awarded the Simon Diffey Spirit of Goodwood Trophy.

Talking to Chapman, it’s apparent that he maintains an overview throughout the event, while team manager and CTL co-founder Chris Dinnage takes responsibility for detailed planning and preparation. Having built a strong team around them, there is little need for micromanagement and, while »



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Chandhok (left) and Herbert receive final guidance ahead of Goodwood's Lotus parade

considered conversations take place, no direct instructions are seemingly given – and it's never felt there's a need to. Mark Hicks, who joined CTL three years ago after a distinguished career covering multiple Formula 1 teams and the Bentley Le Mans programme, when pressed, describes the world of historic motorsport as “more relaxed [than F1] but more chaotic”.

Within this chaos, CTL operates with slick precision, the cars in its care allocated to the various mechanics who take responsibility for them during the event. This includes ensuring that schedules for fuelling and positioning pre-race are met, along with providing timing and pitlane support, plus, of course, addressing any problems that may arise. If there is time between these activities, then each member seeks to help the others. With 10 customer cars racing and 21 in the parade, where slow-speed running exacerbates cooling issues under the blazing sun, such self-motivation is essential.

Dinnage, who has spent over 41 years at Team Lotus and CTL, perhaps provides a clue to the roots of this work ethic when he recalls the team dynamics during the last hurrah for the black-and-gold cars in the 1980s. “There were only 20 team members at the circuit and 80 at the factory,” he recalls. “We all worked together and you were encouraged to think for yourself.”

Unexpected problems ensure there are a couple of late nights at Goodwood, but the scheduling of the races helps, allowing Saturday to be allocated for general preparation. Tim Gardiner spends an uncomfortable day in the heat rebuilding the rear of Beaumont's Type 18 after a driveshaft failed, but non-starting engines and fading clutches are more of a theme. Both the Type 22 and one of the Type 79s have problems when firing up, the

“Historic racing is all about relationships rather than winning at all costs”

former due to a stuck starter motor burning out, while the latter is simply temperamental when warm. With no suitable spares, and no obvious problems with the recalcitrant Cosworth DFV, the pragmatic solution in each case is to push-start them.

Meanwhile, the Type 77 – an F1 race winner in 1976 with Mario Andretti at the wheel – and Type 88B (which was banned from F1 competition in 1981) are both suffering from inconsistent clutch pedals. A diagnostic assessment of the hydraulic systems leads to the formulation of a plan. The seals in the master cylinder of the 88 are thought to be at fault but deemed manageable for the demonstration runs. A solution would be implemented on the return to the workshop. But the 77 has a leaking union at the rear and this needs to be fixed on site. While the crowds around him slowly fade away, or stand watching as Spitfires chase overhead in the gathering dusk, Hicks finds himself lying under the car with a torch and small rotary cutter. For some, Saturday's activities finish at 2030 in a near-deserted paddock when the 77 is once more declared fit for service.

After spending more time with the team members, and speaking to them about their experiences, a different facet to their work becomes apparent, something beyond the cold record of results – which this year includes a podium for Beaumont in his 18 in the Richmond and Gordon Trophies contest. When asked about the best thing related to her job, Brown replies: “When a driver has a smile and wants to talk about the race.” Dinnage similarly mentions how “historic racing is all about relationships rather than winning at all costs”. And Nick Woodward has developed such a good friendship with the owner of the ex-Moss Type 18 that he now always looks after it at events.

Reflecting on what defines CTL's core identity, one word keeps occurring: “continuity”. To take a purely practical view, it means there is an unparalleled technical resource to call upon for the maintenance and repair of racing cars with ultimate historic accuracy. On an emotional level, there must also be something to working with a team that does more than appropriate a marque's history, or which may exist merely as a shade of past glories. The ultimate stamp of authenticity though is that it is still headed by a member of the Chapman family. With the next generation taking the wheel of various cars during the demonstration laps, it looks like those crucial historic links will remain unbroken for some time to come. 🏁



Type 88 needed some attention after suffering a faulty clutch

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- The validation testing technician will be responsible to perform laboratory-based tests, using a range of rigs and equipment to ensure a variety of car components and systems are qualified and/or signed off, complying with relevant test specifications.
- They will be expected to take full ownership of the tests performed working closely with our engineering department to support development and production tests to ensure our car runs safely and reliably in every weekend race as well as supporting performance development.

The Person:

- The successful candidate will have strong technical knowledge of test equipment, procedures, and best practices, being able to operate the rigs in our Validation Testing facility. Experience of using servo hydraulic test machines, controllers and data logging is essential.
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- Site management and mark out in accordance with event CAD plan
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- Ensuring permanent communication with the Event Marketing team and commercial development teams to adapt to specific experience and client requirements
- Reviewing event management plans including traffic, crowd and sustainability
- Managing expenditure in accordance with the agreed budget

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- Extensive experience in a similar role at a fast faced, dynamic organisation; sport and/or live entertainment industry experience essential
- Proven event operational experience with a track record of organisation, attention to detail, planning, and successful delivery on time and on budget
- Recent on-site experience in an operational role
- CAD Design experience- minimum foundation level of AutoCAD
- Highly independent, performance driven and comfortable working in a global environment, under pressure and to tight deadlines but within a team environment
- Confidence and ability to manage multiple initiatives simultaneously
- Experience of working globally or across multiple territories

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- We're looking to appoint a Head of Customer Engineering to lead technical support at the very core of our business. Enhancing relationships amongst our championship-winning customers, the Head of Customer Engineering will play a pivotal role – ensuring our unrivalled customer service is upheld with the very highest level of engineering support, diagnosis, and development.

The role and responsibilities include:

- Delivering innovative engineering solutions from initial concepts through to production.
- Fault diagnosis and resolution.
- Mentoring junior engineers.
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- We're looking to bring a group of self-motivated team players together with an enthusiastic and positive attitude – all sharing our determination to deliver the very best results.
- You should be educated to degree level in motorsport or automotive engineering, and have a minimum of three years' experience within the industry.
- Knowledge of the latest manufacturing techniques and materials is essential, with a thorough understanding of motor vehicles and their systems.
- You should have experience of data logging and analysis software, and be confident in delivering a consistently high level of performance and quality in a time-sensitive environment.
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Role Overview:

- The number one is accountable for the car – meaning that the front- and rear-end mechanics, all report to them. In turn, the number one liaises with race engineer, chief mechanic and the team manager.

Main Responsibilities:

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- Ensure all cars are built to the exact same standards and specifications according to build manuals and procedures.
- Working to tight timelines while at race, test and factory builds.
- Work from supplied job lists covering build and re-prep.
- Keep accurate records of all car lifed parts fitted and replaced during all events.
- Attend and support all race events and selected test events.
- Assist with garage infrastructure build and pack up following guidance from logistics.
- Pit equipment maintenance and manufacture. (Possible fabrication work).

Qualifications, skills and experience required:

- Demonstrate strong leadership skills.
- Work unsupervised if required.
- Be a good team player and able to lead number 2 mechanics.
- Able to use and understand technical drawings.
- Have extremely high attention to detail.
- Comfortable travelling to international destinations for work.
- Hold a full UK driving licence.
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Role Dimensions:

- With a particular emphasis on business partnering, you will focus on encompassing, budgeting, forecasting and reporting on the overall commercial income statement, but more importantly, the performance of individual elements of that support stable growth, facilitating investment into our business and performance.
- The role has a small number of direct reports at different stages of their careers, but will also be a senior figure across the company, working closely across all functions. Whilst transactional responsibility and series specific business partnering falls to separate teams, this role requires a significant degree of collaboration with those teams to ensure our targets are appropriately set and managed to.
- This role requires flexibility, working in a fast-paced multi-tasking environment and comfortable dealing with high volume of workload. You will be the first point of contact for Director/Head of level colleagues and all those with budget ownership responsibilities.

Principal Accountabilities:

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- Knowledge of the latest manufacturing techniques and materials is essential, with a thorough understanding of motor vehicles and their systems.
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More details revealed about new **TOCA Junior** series



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SMEDLEY LAUNCHES LOW-COST ELECTRIC KARTING INITIATIVE

KARTING

A new low-cost electric karting initiative designed to “democratise” motorsport on a global scale has been launched by former Ferrari Formula 1 engineer Rob Smedley.

Global Karting League aims to cut the cost of aspiring racers’ karting careers by up to 96%, enabling a 1000-fold increase in participation. It seeks to create 50 national ‘hubs’ worldwide, the first being already operational in the UK. Youngsters aged 6-17, who may have tried indoor leisure karting, can take their first steps into motorsport with a training plan leading to rookie and then national contests. Once more hubs are established, international championships will be a final step on the ladder before graduation to cars.

Run on an arrive-and-drive basis, each category uses identical 48-volt electric karts with drivetrain and battery designed in-house, leaving the price unchanged at each stage. Performance is similar to traditional karts, with power outputs restricted at entry level.

“We believe the world’s fastest driver hasn’t raced – yet,” said Smedley (below). “We want to simplify the grassroots of the sport; we want to make it more equal; we want to open up the participation [so] that we get more talent coming through from a more diverse cohort.

“To build a credible pathway, the kids have to have the same experience that they would have in [conventional] karting. We’ve used an electric drivetrain so we can have much better parity across all the karts, so the biggest differentiator is the kids’ talent.”

MARK PAULSON



Rear-wheel-drive saloon for new TOCA Junior series

TOCA

More details have been announced about the new TOCA Junior series set to be introduced in 2025, with it due to feature a rear-wheel-drive saloon and be operated by the organisers of the successful Junior Saloon Car Championship.

While the new British Touring Car support series is still awaiting Motorsport UK approval, amid tight restrictions around the number of junior racing permits, TOCA was keen to reveal more information about the proposed championship ahead of a planned launch next spring. The car is then due to be on display at BTCC events throughout 2024.

A bespoke chassis has been created by JSCC coordinator Dave Beecroft and his team, while the rollcages will be built by Custom Cages – which has worked on the Ford Focuses that have been the car to beat in the BTCC this season. The TOCA Junior car will be powered by a 1.8-litre engine, feature race suspension on separate front

and rear subframes and will meet all of the latest safety regulations.

TOCA chief executive Alan Gow explained that a rear-wheel-drive car was chosen to help attract a wider pool of drivers. “It’s important because people who go through TOCA Juniors aren’t always going to stay in touring cars,” he said. “They’ve come out of karting, which is rear-wheel drive, and a lot of them are on an open-wheel trajectory or going to sportscars or whatever. If it was a junior series purely focused on junior touring car drivers, then we may have gone down the front-wheel-drive route.”

Gow said that “three or four organisations” contacted him about running the new series but he chose to work with Beecroft because he “has a lot of experience in knowing what is needed for a junior saloon championship”.

Beecroft said he has been working on the project for the past 14 months and received a wealth of enquiries within the first hour of an email address for those interested in the championship being sent out.

He will continue to operate the Citroen Saxo-based Junior Saloons category – which has enjoyed record entries this year – alongside TOCA Junior, believing they cater for very different drivers. “JSCC is a budget championship more for dads and lads and smaller teams and that will carry on exactly as it is now,” Beecroft explained, “while TOCA Junior is going to be higher-level for professional teams.”

MARCUS SIMMONS & STEPHEN LICKORISH



New category will be run by team behind Junior Saloons

RICHARD STYLES

MGCC FORMALLY DEPARTS CIRCUIT RACING SCENE

MGCC

The MG Car Club has formally confirmed that it will no longer organise circuit racing meetings or championships, but it will continue to hold events across other disciplines.

The club has been a stalwart of the circuit racing scene since the 1950s, but has taken the decision amid rising costs and dwindling competitor numbers, and the Cadwell Park meeting in July was its last standalone event. Its championships have since been seeking new homes, with many joining either the Equipe Classic Racing or Classic Sports Car Club portfolios.

“A huge effort was involved in running our last year of circuit racing,” read a statement. “It wouldn’t have been possible without support from chairman, Dave Tynan, and the MGCC Board, Equipe Classic Racing’s John Pearson and Rob Cull, Joe East of MotorSport Vision Racing and the championships’ competitors and coordinators.

“Although circuit racing may be moving on, there will be continued coverage in *Safety Fast* [the club magazine] and the MGCC will remain a Motorsport UK club. It will continue organising sprints, hillclimbs, autotests, autosolos etc and continue to encourage new generations to develop their skills through motorsport.”



Current Clio Cup car to race in the UK in new MSVT category

CLIO CUP GB

A championship for the latest specification of Clio Cup machinery is set to run in the UK for the first time in five years next season after MotorSport Vision Trackdays announced plans to launch a new series.

There has not been such a category since Renault UK withdrew its backing of the British Touring Car-supporting Clio Cup at the end of 2019 and the proposed replacement from Renault Sport Racing was canned amid the coronavirus pandemic. But now the current fifth-generation machinery is to make its UK debut in a new Clio Cup GB series, provided it gets approval from governing body Motorsport UK.

A provisional calendar has been released, comprising seven events with two races and qualifying all held on a single day in a bid to reduce costs.

It is due to start at Silverstone in April, and also features two visits to Brands Hatch – the first in support of the GT World Challenge Europe in May – alongside trips to Anglesey, Snetterton, Donington Park and Oulton Park.

More details about the series are set to be released in the coming weeks but MSVT, which operates successful categories such as EnduroKa, has bolstered its team by bringing former Mazda MX-5 coordinator Mandy Andrew into its fold.

“Previous iterations of Clio Cup have offered a genuine proving ground for drivers aiming to reach a higher level of competition, whether in tin-tops or GT racing,” said championship coordinator Stuart Garland. “And this new addition is a great opportunity for those who’ve raced with us previously to pursue their racing dreams to an even higher level.”

Derek Bell Trophy name to return as HSCC revamps series

HISTORICS

The Derek Bell Trophy is returning to the Historic Sports Car Club’s portfolio next year, with organisers reverting to its previous name after running under the Aurora Trophy title for the past five seasons.

The series will continue to cater for high-powered single-seaters, including Formula 5000, F2 and F1 Atlantic machinery, while it will also be a home for Classic F3 and Classic FF2000 cars. A six-event

calendar – including the HSCC’s Brands Hatch Super Prix and Oulton Park Gold Cup fixtures, alongside visits to Snetterton, Donington Park, Croft and Silverstone – has been revealed, and there will be additional hospitality on offer for drivers next year.

“The Derek Bell Trophy is a wonderful series for some of the most spectacular cars in historic racing,” said HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. “We’re delighted to reaffirm the club’s support for the category and



look forward to a bumper season with new initiatives including race weekend hospitality and a calendar that should appeal to the drivers.”

Hyetts win Paul Ricard 24-hour VdeV race in Tiga

HISTORICS

Ecurie Rosbif Hyett – Ross Hyett and sons Nick and Charlie – scored an eight-lap victory in last weekend's annual VdeV 24-hour race at Paul Ricard in a Sports 2000 Tiga SC83 prepared by Trevor Foster's Pegasus Classic Engineering.

For Hyett Sr, 70, second and third in Group C2 at Le Mans in 1989 and 1990, the achievement was special. "For a father to do that with his boys, against very strong opposition, sharing a car powered by a 135bhp [Ford Pinto] engine, was a fantastic team result," he said.

"We had everything thrown at us. Low cloud, torrential rain, and an hour behind a safety car with a Chevron B16 and a Porsche RSR chucking perishing cold water all over me. We led from the eighth hour and the car did not miss a beat [over 469 laps]!"

Nonetheless, the Hyetts survived a couple of dramas. "I was sideswiped by an RSR and,



with 30 minutes to go, Charlie was hit by a backmarker, which wrecked a rear wheel," said Hyett Sr. "He limped to the pits but there was no other damage. Fortunately, we had a 12-lap lead."

The Porsche 930 of Pascal Duhamel/Sebastien Crubile was classified second, while reigning champions Chris Snowdon/David Houghton/Mike Fry/Josh Law (Tiga SC84) battled home sixth after Law took a whack from a B16. The Rover SD1 of Brits Nick Sleep/Alex Montgomery/Alex Taylor finished 16th, second in class to Equipe Europe's BMW 635 CSi.

MARCUS PYE

TRIBUTES TO WILLIAMS

Tributes have been paid to Radical Cup UK driver Mark Williams, who has died suddenly. He finished ninth in this year's standings and Radical's awards night last weekend was postponed as a mark of respect. Williams's wife Nicola said: "In 2018, Mark ventured into the world of Radicals for a 'hobby' outside of work. And what he gained was a racing family. Some of our closest friends are now trackside. Mark had love, respect and admiration for everyone in the racing world."

MERC YOUNG DRIVER TEST

British drivers James Wallis and Aaron Walker are among those due to be taking part in the Mercedes-AMG Young Driver Test at Valencia, which starts today (Thursday), with both driving for the GetSpeed squad. Wallis has raced a Mercedes in British GT this year and also teamed up with Walker and GetSpeed for an International GT Open podium at Monza. Walker has raced for the team for much of the year in the GT World Challenge Europe.

FIRST BRITISH F4 SIGNING

Karting graduate Rowan Campbell-Pilling has become the first driver confirmed as racing in British Formula 4 next season after being announced at Argenti Motorsport. The 16-year-old was among the racers taking part in the category's 2024 driver test day at Snetterton at the end of last month.

RABAGLIATI'S 700 UP

Formula Junior Historic Racing Association chairman Duncan Rabagliati (below) achieved another milestone at the recent Algarve Classic Festival when he started his 700th race in the unique Alexis HF1 built by Bill Harris and Alex Francis for 1960. 'The Flying Carrot', as the BMC-engined machine is nicknamed, has been Rabagliati's principal steed since he first raced it at Lydden Hill in September 1989. Rabagliati, who won his class in this year's Lurani Trophy, credits much of the car's success to spannerman Iain Rowley "who has kept it going".



REDWATER IMAGES

Praga squad Idola Motorsport to move into single-seaters in GB4

GB4

Successful Praga squad Idola Motorsport is set to move into single-seater competition next year and plans to join the GB4 grid.

The team claimed the Praga Cup UK title last year with Jimmy Broadbent and Gordie Mutch and is now seeking to expand from its traditional background in prototypes. It has worked closely with single-seater squad Arden in the past and has placed several of the team's single-seater graduates into Pragas.

It has now bought one of Evans GP's

Tatuus machines and has begun a testing programme ahead of its planned GB4 entry in 2024.

"We spent the last year evaluating the next step for the team, and felt that a single-seater approach was the best solution as we hope that the application of principles in aerodynamic-dependable prototype racing could be transferred to single-seaters," said Idola owner and technical director John Whatley. "We look forward to understanding the GB4 car more over our winter testing schedule and hope to bring a competitive package to the beginning of the 2024 season."



Moyers and Eastwell at odds on final collision

FF1600

Walter Hayes Trophy victory contenders Michael Eastwell and Michael Moyers have disagreed over their crash while battling for the lead of last weekend's Silverstone final.

Eastwell led all seven laps of the main event in his KMR Spectrum until it was red flagged to recover stranded cars. At the restart, Moyers moved into the lead at Brooklands before Eastwell pulled back alongside exiting Luffield. The pair then headed side-by-side into Copse before they collided, with the Simon Hadfield Motorsport-run Medina Mk2 of Moyers sent into the gravel and retirement, while Eastwell was able to continue after losing several positions.

Moyers, the event winner in 2017 and 2018 with KMR Sport, believes that Eastwell should have conceded the position into the corner. "I was on the outside where the grip is [in the wet], so I was going to send it around the outside and he's left his braking way too late - he didn't want to give the lead up," said Moyers. "As soon as I saw him brake late, I knew what was coming because you're



Eastwell (92) and Moyers nearly came together in semis

STEVE JONES

just going to lose control and stuff it into the side of me."

Eastwell managed to finish the race second behind winner Chris Middlehurst and, while he apologised to Moyers, he believed it to be a racing incident, with the officials also taking no action.

"Apologies to him but I think it was a bit 50/50 if I'm brutally honest," said Eastwell. "Neither of us wanted to give up. I was fully alongside going into Turn 1 and he didn't want to give it up."

Earlier in the day, the pair had

almost come together at Brooklands as Eastwell just held Moyers off to win the second semi-final.

Autosport understands that, following the final race, a mechanic from KMR Sport and one from the Simon Hadfield team were involved in a physical altercation that was referred to the officials, but they did not alter the final classification. Moyers added: "At the time I can understand why tempers flared a little bit, but a shame to see it and no one wants to see any of that."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Smyth targets full FF1600 campaign in 2024



JEP

FF1600

Walter Hayes Trophy debutant Jason Smyth is targeting a full season of Formula Ford 1600 competition next year.

The 17-year-old, son of 2010 Kent Formula Ford Festival winner Neville Smyth, was one of the

frontrunners at this year's Silverstone event despite it being only his sixth ever race meeting.

He claimed victory in a wet heat - his first win - and was battling in the leading pack in the semi-final before being involved in a collision with reigning Festival winner Rory Smith

and Josh Fisher, which eliminated Smyth.

"We've just bought a Van Diemen JL12," said Smyth. "Wayne Boyd drove it in the Hayes, so me and dad are planning on rebuilding that and doing [a full season] next year with Bernard [Dolan's team]."

STEFAN MACKLEY

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Fassbender makes Fiesta six-hour debut as Rabbitts hop to victory

MONDELLO PARK

Hollywood film star Michael Fassbender was the focal point of last weekend's Mondello Park Fiesta six-hour race, where he teamed up with ex-Formula 1 drivers Tommy Byrne and David Kennedy.

It was former double winners Team Barrable, comprising newly crowned Fiesta champion Michael and his two sons Rob and Peter, who annexed pole position. The Fassbender/Byrne/Kennedy car could only qualify 17th, before Byrne had to take avoiding action with a spinning car on the opening lap and they eventually finished ninth.

"This race was always on the list to do," said European Le Mans Series driver Fassbender. "I have been trying to get here

for the last four years, when I met Tommy in Daytona, but I was always busy!"

In the closing stages of the race, the three Rabbitt brothers – Barry, Shane and Keith – had snatched the lead with an innovative strategy. With the safety car staying out longer than expected to clean up an oil spill, they pitted three times in four laps to refuel and change tyres, without falling off the lead lap.

Barry Rabbitt took the wheel for the final 45-minute stint, before Rob Barrable in second closed a 46-second gap down to just 15s in the final half an hour. But, when a safety car was called with just five minutes to run, it was game over. The LOH Team of Michael and Victor Cullen, as well as Dave Maguire Sr and Jr, completed the podium.

LEO NULTY

Thrills and spills in Silverstone supports

WALTER HAYES TROPHY

A late call-up at Silverstone provided James Clarke with the chance to forget about a difficult end to his successful Clubmans Sports Prototype season after a stub axle failure during the Brands Hatch finale.

After taking pole for Saturday's Pumpkin Smash race on the support bill of the Walter Hayes Trophy, Clarke was initially held to account

by the Radical SR10 of Alastair Smart until Smart lost all traction, which allowed the Phantom PR22 driver to ease to victory by over half a minute.

Elsewhere, not even the marshalling error that forced George Line to take the restart of the second Monoposto race from the pitlane could halt the Dallara F308 man's dominance in the Tiedeman Trophy.

Frankie Wilde's stunning ex-Team Rosberg Audi R8

looked set to star in the Historic Sports Car Club's Allcomers races, but Will Schryver's Royale RP37 made it hard work for the local man. Track conditions and traffic combined on Saturday to help Wilde and Schryver trade places when the Audi went into the gravel in the haste to stay in touch. Sunday's dry running gave Wilde the opportunity to show what the Audi could do, and he won comfortably.

STEVE HINDLE

MODIFIED FORD CALENDAR

The Modified Ford series will run a nine-weekend calendar in 2024, which includes MotorSport Vision's Navarra circuit in Spain. It has negotiated a discounted ferry crossing from Plymouth to Santander for the October event. A first visit to Castle Combe and a trip to Knockhill for the circuit's 50th anniversary celebrations are further highlights, along with a regular appearance at Brands Hatch's Ford Power Live. The schedule also takes in Silverstone's International and National layouts, Oulton Park, Snetterton and the Donington Park Grand Prix circuit.

STRATOS SHAKEDOWN

Seb Perez thrilled Yorkshire rally fans on Sunday by taking his Lancia Stratos out on the Malton Forest Rally as a final shakedown event ahead of the Roger Albert Clark Rally. It was the first time in the UK forests for the Stratos since 2017 and Perez used the day to get used to the Italian supercar, ahead of the five-day marathon at the end of this month.

RAC AWARD FOR SUMMERS

The Royal Automobile Club has awarded its prestigious Simms Medal to Alex Summers for the design and build of his ground-breaking AFS P4t hillclimb car. "This award is very special and I couldn't have done it without my family," said Summers, who spent seven years on the project. The P4t made its debut in March this year at Loton Park and, by the end of the season, Summers had joined a select group of engineers and drivers to score points in the British Hillclimb Championship in a car of their own design and build.

CAMERON THROWN OUT

Andrew Cameron was disqualified from the second semi-final of the Walter Hayes Trophy on Sunday and handed four penalty points on his licence after physically assaulting Pascal Monbaron. The pair had collided on the final lap exiting Luffield, with Cameron "pushing the driver with both hands" after getting out of his own car (below).





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Walter Hayes Trophy victory at last for Middlehurst

SILVERSTONE
HSCC WALTER HAYES TROPHY
4-5 NOVEMBER

Chris Middlehurst cut a forlorn figure just two weeks ago at the Formula Ford Festival, where the Team Dolan driver was left bitterly disappointed having shown strong pace at the blue-riband event – but, once again, just missed out on the grand prize.

Despite having never stood on the Walter Hayes Trophy podium since his first outing in 2010, there have been chances of victory over the years at the Silverstone event as well, and last weekend it finally came together for the 28-year-old.

On paper, Middlehurst finished just 0.366 seconds ahead of Michael Eastwell, both having started on the front row for the scheduled 15-lap finale and having led at various points. But, as ever with the Walter Hayes Trophy, the raw stats belied a showdown full of drama, incidents and controversy, and which was held on a damp but ever-changing track surface.

A chance of an elusive maiden victory in the event looked to have slipped through Middlehurst's grasp, though, as he checked up behind the polesitting Spectrum 011C of Eastwell through Becketts on the second



lap. The briefest of contact, which “bent the steering slightly” on his Van Diemen LA10, allowed second-row starters and multiple event winners Joey Foster and Michael Moyers to move ahead further round the lap into Luffield.

Despite the jockeying for positions being as fierce as ever, the top order remained largely unchanged over the following laps as Eastwell held station at the front of the field from Moyers. However, multiple cars

off at the Brooklands/Luffield complex, including a heavy shunt into the barrier for Oldfield Motorsport's Spencer Shinner at the former bend, meant a safety car and subsequent red flag on lap seven, with the rerun set to be held over nine tours.

From fourth, Middlehurst lost another position at the restart to double Castle Combe champion Luke Cooper (Swift SC20), but the complexion of the race changed into Copse at the start of lap two.



Middlehurst (16) sweeps into a lead he would never relinquish

STEVE JONES

Two-time Walter Hayes Trophy winner Moyers had made a late dive for the lead into Brooklands several corners earlier and moved ahead of Eastwell, but taking the wider, wet racing line into Luffield allowed Eastwell back up the inside and led to a drag race into Copse. Fighting for the same piece of Tarmac, the pair made contact, with Moyers pitched out of the race as Eastwell lost momentum and was at the mercy of the chasing pack.

Through the mayhem, Middlehurst found himself back into second, with the Wayne Poole-run Van Diemen RF99 of Josh Fisher in the lead, having remarkably climbed from 24th on the original starting grid following a semi-final penalty (right).

But, with his tyre pressures set too high, Fisher began to struggle for grip following a safety car to retrieve Moyers's Medina and the decisive moment of the race came on lap seven. Eastwell, now in third, made a move for the lead on the inside of Brooklands with Middlehurst to the outside of Fisher. Middlehurst's momentum carried him around the outside and meant he had the inside line into Luffield. He hit the front as he slid onto the wide line through Luffield, taking a lead he wouldn't relinquish.

"At the restart I dropped back, but >>

SEMI-FINAL WOES FOR SMITH AND SMYTH

Reigning Formula Ford Festival winner Rory Smith and sensational Walter Hayes Trophy debutant Jason Smyth both had their weekends cut short following a crash in the first semi-final.

Smith had started from pole in the 12-lap bout, courtesy of winning his heat – when he finished ahead of eventual 2023 Walter Hayes Trophy victor Chris Middlehurst. The Medina JL18 driver led until the halfway point of the semi-final before Middlehurst moved to the inside heading into Copse and took the lead.

The loss of momentum brought Smyth and Josh Fisher into the mix heading down into Maggotts, as Fisher's Van Diemen RF99 made contact with the rear of Smyth's Team Dolan-run Ray GR14 on the straight. The contact pitched Smyth broadside and into the side of Smith on the left, with both cars sustaining heavy damage and were eliminated on the spot.

"I was literally driving in a straight line, hadn't even hit the brakes yet and then Jason just came across the front of me, but obviously I think all the action happened behind him," said B-M Racing driver Smith. "I feel a bit robbed there, I can't lie to you, but it's the Hayes and anything happens."

Smyth, who was competing in only his sixth-ever meeting, added: "None of us have touched the brakes going into there yet. I was just thinking about braking, but we were definitely flat-out on the throttle. Nothing I could have done."

Fisher went on to win the semi-final, overtaking Middlehurst around the outside into Brooklands three laps from home after starting 14th and described it as "one of the best drives I have ever done" immediately post-race. But the Wayne Poole Racing driver was slapped with a five-second penalty and three penalty points for the collision, which was increased to 10s after he appealed the decision, dropping him to 12th.



STEVE JONES

Smyth took victory in a wet heat race

His lowly starting spot was the result of being tipped into a spin by Smyth from pole on the opening lap of the second heat heading into Copse. Smyth went on to win ahead of KMR Sport drivers Josh Le Roux and Jacob Tofts, as Fisher was seventh.

Fisher's penalty meant Middlehurst headed the semi-final from Joey Foster, who had finished fifth in his heat, and Julian van der Watt. The South African was still recovering from severe injuries suffered in a crash at Kyalami earlier this year when the brakes on his car failed.

In the second semi-final, Michael Eastwell took a lights-to-flag victory having repeated the performance from his heat, albeit in much drier conditions. Heat one winner Michael Moyers shadowed him in the semi-final, and the pair almost collided into Brooklands as Moyers looked to the inside – a foreshadowing of what would happen in the final – as Jonathan Kotyk completed the podium.

Moyers had won his heat having been promoted to pole after Hugh Esterson, brother of 2021 Walter Hayes Trophy winner Max, and two-time Castle Combe champions Luke Cooper and Felix Fisher were all stripped of their fastest laps "for not respecting yellow flags". Cooper, Esterson and Fisher was the order behind Moyers at the finish.

STEFAN MACKLEY



Fisher was stripped of semi-final win after Smyth incident

STEVE JONES

then I got past Cooper and then just thought, 'Right, I'm going for this now, I'm not going to be bullied around,' said Middlehurst. "I didn't want anyone else to win the race, I really wanted to. I've been doing it such a long time I thought now is my chance. It means a lot."

For Eastwell, whose last race came in the 2022 edition, it was back-to-back runner-up finishes, having been promoted up a spot 12 months ago with a post-race penalty for Max Esterson. But it was a bitter-sweet moment for the KMR Sport driver, having never been headed prior to the stoppage and believing he had the pace to win until

the collision with Moyers (see News).

He said: "We led so much of the race, whether the red flag hadn't happened, whether we would have just cruised off into the sunset... because I feel like we had the pace and we have all weekend. This one is a bit of a tough one to swallow."

Somewhat under the radar and arguably the recovery drive of the day had come from South African Andrew Rackstraw, who completed the podium and made it a KMR Sport 2-3. The Spectrum 011C driver had found the gravel at Copse on the opening lap of his heat, which meant he needed to advance through both the

Progression and Last Chance races on Sunday – winning each convincingly from sixth and 21st on the grid.

An original starting position of eighth for the final was improved to fifth for the nine-lap dash. He demoted Cooper a spot following the safety car restart, and then relegated Fisher into Copse on the final lap for a podium finish.

"The wins at the beginning [of the day] it didn't mean a lot but it was what we had to do," he said. "Today was just about fighting and we did fight. We just missed it but there's always next year so we'll try again."

Fisher was left to finish fourth having shown impressive pace across the weekend on what may be his final Walter Hayes Trophy appearance, while last year's winner Joey Foster was a frustrated fifth after taking avoiding action in the Moyers/Eastwell incident and plummeting down the order. The Firman RFR20 driver was a noticeable absence at the Formula Ford Festival two weeks ago and was a late entry to the Silverstone event after being convinced to "defend our number one" – an honour that will go to Middlehurst in 2024. "This was my year," said the event's latest conqueror. "I'm going to be back next year and get #1 on the car and try and go for it again. It's addictive. You can't just say I've won it, that's it, it's never-ending."

STEFAN MACKLEY



RACING RETURN FOR TURNER AT WALTER HAYES

Three years after his horrific crash during the Walter Hayes Trophy, which left him with life-changing injuries, Colin Turner was back out at Silverstone and competing in the event for the first time since the incident.

At the wheel of his Merlyn Mk20A, Turner – who had both legs amputated following the 2020 crash – competed in four races across the weekend with Sunday also marking his 73rd birthday. The Scot had attended the 2022 edition of the event and completed demo laps in Nigel Grant Racing's Merlyn used by Callum Grant, and has since competed in several races this season including at Croft, Anglesey and Silverstone.

"It means a lot [to be back racing here] because these are the people that looked after me," said Turner, who still uses conventional pedals

despite his prosthetics.

"All the marshals – I've not had time to go round to the medical centre but some of the people in the medical centre have moved on – but the whole place at Silverstone, mainly the marshals but all the drivers who come here have supported me. I'm grateful for all that they have given me and done for me. I love racing and I was determined to prove that I could race with prosthetics."

He finished 15th and last in the Carl Hamer Trophy for cars manufactured between 1967-81. Victory in the 12-lap finale went to Joe Ahrens in his Royale RP26 after withstanding late pressure from the Merlyn Mk11A/20 of Matthew Wrigley, the pair having finished in the same positions in the pre-final the day before.

Mike Gardner (Crossle 35F) incredibly jumped into the lead



from fifth on the opening lap at Brooklands, with Formula Ford stalwart Rick Morris leading next time through as a six-car battle formed. A light rain shower made conditions tricky as Ahrens hit the front on lap five of 12 on the exit of Luffield, before building a gap of 1.5 seconds.

This was gradually whittled

down by Wrigley, who looked to the inside of Brooklands on the final tour, but finished 0.473s behind at the flag. Jake Shortland's Lola T440 completed the podium after passing Morris on the penultimate lap at Brooklands, with Simon Hadfield also demoting Morris.

STEFAN MACKLEY

WEEKEND WINNERS



STEVE JONES

WALTER HAYES TROPHY**Heat 1** Michael Moyers (Medina Mk2)**Heat 2** Jason Smyth (Ray GR14)**Heat 3** Michael Eastwell (Spectrum 011C)**Heat 4** Rory Smith (Medina JL18, above)**Progression race** Andrew Rackstraw (Spectrum 011C)**Last Chance race** Andrew Rackstraw (Spectrum 011C)**Semi-final 1** Chris Middlehurst (Van Diemen LA10)**Semi-final 2** Michael Eastwell (Spectrum 011C)

Final (9 laps) 1 Middlehurst; 2 Eastwell +0.366s; 3 Rackstraw; 4 Josh Fisher (Van Diemen RF99); 5 Joey Foster (Firman RFR20); 6 Logan Pacza (Ray GR15). **Class winners** James Clarke (Van Diemen RF90); Joe Ahrens (Royale RP26). **Fastest lap** Rackstraw 1m08.154s (86.65mph). **Pole** Eastwell. **Starters** 36.

JANET CESAR MEMORIAL TROPHY**Pre-final** Callum Grant (Van Diemen RF91)**Final** James Tucker (Swift SC92F)**CARL HAMER TROPHY****Pre-final & Final** Joe Ahrens (Royale RP26, below)

STEVE JONES

HSCC ALLCOMERS CLOSED-WHEEL**Race 1** Will Schryver (Royale RP37)**Race 2** Frankie Wilde (Audi R8)**PUMPKIN SMASH RACE**

James Clarke (Phantom PR22, below)

MONOPOSTO TIEDEMAN TROPHY**Races 1 & 2** George Line (Dallara F308)

STEVE JONES

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

STEVE JONES

Tucker did just enough
to win from Ames and
Street in final

HISTORIC FINAL GOES THE WAY OF TUCKER – JUST

While the main focus over the weekend was on the grand final of the Walter Hayes Trophy, the Janet Cesar Memorial Trophy once again proved to be a fitting support act and arguably provided the pick of the racing at Silverstone.

Come the end of the 12-lap contest, James Tucker was the victor but Alex Ames pushed him all the way until the chequered flag, the winning margin of only 0.058 seconds underlining how competitive the racing had been.

Tucker was only able to line up fourth on the grid, a position he earned by occupying the same spot in Saturday's wet pre-final. He, like everyone else, had given best to Callum Grant's Van Diemen RF91 after he climbed from sixth on the grid and passed Ames for the lead into Becketts on the final lap.

And it was Grant, twice a winner of the Janet Cesar Memorial Trophy for cars produced between 1982-98, who led proceedings initially in a dry final, but he soon had the attentions of Tucker to worry about.

Last of the late brakings, Grant had held the lead by running deep around the outside into Brooklands on lap six and attempted the same a tour later after Tucker had moved ahead into Brooklands. But, with too much momentum, Grant tipped himself into a 360-degree spin and out of contention as he quickly rejoined eighth. Somewhat ironically, Tucker had done the same a day earlier in the pre-final, but now Grant's spin had given the Swift SC92F driver vital breathing space at the head of the field.

Ames occupied second from Richard Tarling (Reynard 89FF) and James Clarke (Van Diemen

RF90), the latter the victor of the same race 12 months earlier. But a lead gap of 0.4s was whittled down by Ames over the following lap and he proceeded to pressure Tucker, probing at his defences most notably around the outside into Brooklands but unable to edge ahead.

With a better exit out of Luffield for the final time, it became a drag to the line, with Tucker just doing enough for victory over Ames's Van Diemen RF90.

"That was a proper race – just great, hard racing," said Tucker. "There were a couple of wheel-to-wheel [moments], but it's Formula Fords, you've got to be racing close to be racing."

Ames admitted: "I was trying to suss out James where I was a bit quicker than him and I think I left it a lap too late."

Third-placed Sam Street was also left wondering what might have been. The Swift SC92F driver had been towards the head of the field in the pre-final but had spun at Luffield before another off-road incident put him out and left him starting 22nd. But he made scintillating progress up the order, reaching sixth as early as lap five, albeit more than 3s behind the leaders.

He was promoted to fifth via Grant's spin and, with Clarke moving ahead of Tarling in their battle for third, it allowed Street to close in. He jumped into fourth at Becketts on lap nine and third at Copse on lap 11, and finished less than half a second away from victory.

Clarke took fourth from Tarling, with Benn Tilley sixth as Grant was left to rue his mistake down in seventh, just 3.66s behind Tucker.

STEFAN MACKLEY



STEVE JONES

Grant won the wet
pre-final contest

Smith demolishes opposition for Trucks title on crash-filled weekend

BRANDS HATCH
BARC
4-5 NOVEMBER

Ryan Smith was crowned British Truck Racing champion for the eighth year in a row at last weekend's seasonal finale, but the heavy mob did not cover themselves in glory at Brands Hatch. They lost two of their five planned contests to crashes, including one that ended the meeting early and cost the Legends drivers their last race.

Wet qualifying and a muddled, unrepresentative grid was followed by a shambolic first Truck appearance on Saturday, which ended with two red flags, a single racing lap and no result declared. Stuart Oliver's faint Division 1 championship hopes were dashed when he collided with Division 2 title contender Paul Rivett, and the rerun only lasted until lap two.

Oliver was out for the day with damage, but Rivett reappeared for race two and won his class. Division 2 rival Adam Bint was close behind despite starting from the pits after another stoppage, which he triggered by getting stuck on the grass. Smith won from fifth on the grid, leaving Tom O'Rourke second for his best result of the year, and David Jenkins third.

In case any doubts remained, Smith put the title well out of reach of the rest on Sunday morning, easily overcoming Jenkins, who reported that he hadn't fully committed to dry settings. Smith almost lapped Rivett and Bint, who collided at one stage and fought to the end, finishing third and fourth in class.

Smith's third win soon followed, with Simon Reid and namesake Bradley Smith trailing behind. A red flag for a truck off at Paddock saved Rivett's race, his mechanical issues resolved before the restart. He finished third in Division 2 behind Bint and John Powell.

Disaster struck only seconds into the finale when a spinning Steven Powell's

MAN clouted the Iveco of Reid and launched it into the barriers at Hailwood Hill, where it came to rest on top of the Armco. The race was stopped immediately and, after a period of deliberation, the meeting was declared over. This meant Rivett became Division 2 champion on the basis of more class wins, after he and Bint set off from the grid equal on points.

Jack Parker's last day as 'supersub' for the injured John Mickel earned him a perfect score as winner of all three Legends races on Saturday. After winning both heats, as top scorer he started the final 19th. He was into the top 10 within a lap and took the lead on lap four of 12, fending off Ben Higgins and Oli Schlup. Meanwhile, points leader Will Gibson kept his score ticking over with sixth, third and fourth place finishes to take a still healthy advantage into day two.

Chris Needham won both of Sunday's heats, Gibson making certain of the title with a top-10 finish in the first of these. The returning Mickel started from pole and was in the mix before a clash and spin dropped him to 20th. He reported feeling more at home with every lap, but still short of 100%. A clean finish was the target for the final, but the race was canned following the Trucks' disastrous last outing.

With four drivers still in the running, Junior Saloons points leader Daire Flock protected his position by leading the first race from start to finish. He was helped by having a second chance following a four-car shunt that brought the first attempt to a red-flagged halt. Closest title challenger Cameron Pratt-Thompson was second in a race that finished behind the safety car.

Flock didn't win second time out, but second to Oskar Dix in a slightly fraught encounter was more than enough. Jack James was heavily involved in the contest until contact sent him briefly off track. Pratt-Thompson was roughed up in traffic in the early stages, but survived and came



through to a close third.

Matt Simpson's late-season charge up the Pickup Trucks points table continued with a runaway win in Saturday's race. Easily fastest in qualifying but sixth on the usual randomly selected grid, he was in front before the end of lap one and stayed there. Third-placed Reece Jones retained his grip on the points lead, with main challenger Dale Gent finishing behind.

Simpson won again in race two, which was shortened when Chris Brockhurst plunged off at Paddock. Jones played it safe in sixth to secure his second Pickups title, which was lucky as his machine fell sick in race three and struggled to the flag in 17th. Simpson's luck also ran out in this one, bent steering after contact at Graham Hill Bend





restricting him to second behind championship runner-up Gent.

Alex Keens achieved his first Mini Challenge Trophy rookie class victory of the year and took the overall top step as a bonus when he headed home Saturday's race, the first of three to decide who would be champion.

Second-placed Maximus Hall, who graduated into the series this year and has also sampled the JCW class during the season, took pole and had high hopes of victory. But plans for a late fightback were spoiled by a caution period and finally red flags, which brought an early finish after Katia Loggie crashed. In the title fight, Tom Ovenden stayed out of trouble and finished seventh, losing a little of his points lead.

The title was Ovenden's in race two, which was won on the road by Hall before a penalty was applied for "taking an unfair advantage" that handed the win to Jack Byrne. "I had good pace but had my championship head on," said fifth-place finisher Ovenden, "but I didn't know where my championship rivals were until the team told me back in the pits."

The first five in an exciting third race were covered by less than a second, and it was a delighted Nathan Edwards who snatched victory by half a length from Hall. Sam Gornall took the lead in a 10-car train around one-third distance, but lost two places when his car jumped out of gear in front of the pits near the end.

BRIAN PHILLIPS



Ovenden wrapped up
Mini Challenge honours

WEEKEND WINNERS

BRITISH TRUCK RACING

Races 1, 2 & 3 Ryan Smith
(Daimler Freightliner)

LEGENDS

Races 1, 2 & 3 Jack Parker
Races 4 & 5 Chris Needham (below)

JUNIOR SALOONS

Race 1 Daire Flock
Race 2 Oskar Dix

PICKUP TRUCKS

Races 1 & 2 Matt Simpson
Race 3 Dale Gent

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Race 1 Alex Keens
Race 2 Jack Byrne
Race 3 Nathan Edwards



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

SEASON REVIEW

VOISIN VICTORIOUS IN GB3'S CLOSEST TITLE FIGHT

The Rodin Carlin sophomore sealed the spoils, but there was no shortage of rivals to keep him on his toes

STEVE WHITFIELD

 PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  motorsport
IMAGES


Voisin finally secured the title at Donington



After impressing as a single-seater rookie last year, Callum Voisin remained in the GB3 Championship with Rodin Carlin in 2023 with the sole aim of winning the title. And, while the 17-year-old delivered on that expectation, he was pushed all the way by British Formula 4 graduates Alex Dunne and Joseph Loake.

Fast but error-prone in 2022, Voisin entered his sophomore campaign with a steelier approach, and it was his improved consistency that proved key, only failing to make the podium at one of the eight events.

"That was probably the main focus compared to last year, just staying consistent," points out Voisin. "The highs were really high last year but then the lows were way too low. I think we've done that relatively well."

But it was Loake who grabbed the early advantage. He stunned by winning from pole on his debut at Oulton Park ahead of JHR Developments stablemate Matthew Rees, another second-year driver eyeing a title bid. After joining Arden VRD on the eve of the season, James Hedley took a commanding wet-weather win in race two ahead of Voisin, who began his assault with two podiums. Dunne made a low-key start to his attempt to follow up his British F4 title from 2022 with another crown, the Hitech GP driver losing ground with an off in race two. The curtain-raiser had provided a hint of the fluctuating fortunes the lead contenders would experience over the rest of the season.

Voisin's team-mate John Bennett was the next to star when he converted a double pole into his first two single-seater victories at a slippery Silverstone, but cruelly he was denied both triumphs by post-race penalties, the second of which resulted from contact that spun Dunne into retirement. Loake was the beneficiary – he inherited both wins to extend his points lead, while Voisin salvaged a best result of third.

Loake ended a difficult visit to Spa-Francorchamps with just second in the reversed-grid race, while his two main rivals hit form. After taking a double pole, Voisin was no match in the races for Dunne, who kick-started his season with two comfortable victories, but a pair of seconds was enough for Voisin to overhaul Loake. Next up, it was Dunne's turn to assume the points lead at Snetterton after Voisin was again unable to convert pole into victory in the second race, in which he was taken out by Douglas Motorsport's Tymek Kucharczyk.

The second half of the season started slowly for the three main contenders, who were put in the shade at Silverstone by Rees and McKenzie Cresswell. Voisin added another podium to reclaim the points advantage before the final contest succumbed to poor weather.

Both Loake and Voisin enjoyed an important return to form at Brands Hatch, with Loake beating his rival to victory in race one.



GB3 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	WINS	PTS
1	Callum Voisin	Rodin Carlin	2	484
2	Alex Dunne	Hitech GP	5	466
3	Joseph Loake	JHR Developments	4	417
4	McKenzy Cresswell	Elite Motorsport	1	390
5	Matthew Rees	JHR Developments	1	370
6	James Hedley	Arden VRD	2	347

“THE HIGHS WERE REALLY HIGH LAST YEAR BUT THEN THE LOWS WERE WAY TOO LOW”

The pair went wheel to wheel at the start of race two, this time Voisin prevailing to finally take his first win of 2023.

“It was long overdue,” reckons Voisin. “We came close many times. We’ve not been the quickest all the time but we’ve picked up points where we can and I think that’s why we’ve been leading the championship.”

Dunne suffered another non-finish after contact with Rees as he tried to recover from a disappointing qualifying, leaving him 42 points behind. Needing a big performance at GB3’s first ever trip to Zandvoort, the Irishman delivered exactly that with a dominant victory brace in the first two races, while Voisin recovered from a collision in qualifying to salvage two top-seven finishes.

“I think we’ve had good pace on the English tracks but we’ve sometimes had a bit of bad luck – for whatever reason, I’ve shone a bit more on the European tracks,” relates Dunne. “There’s always been just little things, and because the grid is so close those things look bigger than they are.”

Four points now separated the championship’s top three, but Voisin made the best use of just six corners of green-flag running

in Zandvoort’s reversed-grid race to gain 10 places to fifth. That gave him a 13-point cushion over Loake heading into the final round, with Dunne a further four points adrift.

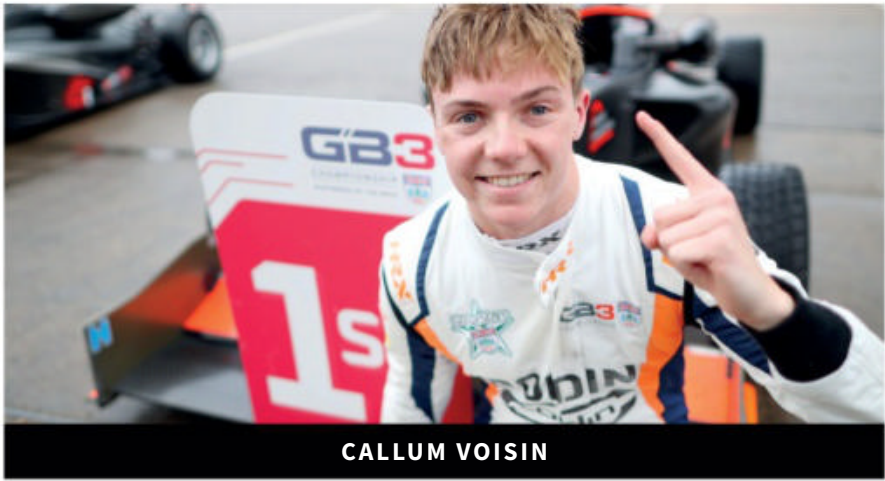
“We made the best out of a bad situation,” sums up Voisin. “We made up positions when we had to, and that’s all you can really ask for. To only concede one point [to Loake] over the weekend was a miracle.”

Voisin produced his best performance of the season at the Donington Park decider, taking his fifth and sixth poles to secure the Jack Cavill Pole Position Cup for the second consecutive year. He led home Rees in race one for a second win of 2023. Dunne finished third, while Loake struggled to 10th after a first-corner collision with Cresswell.

Dunne needed to beat Voisin in race two to retain any realistic title chances, and pounced on a mistake from his rival to complete a feisty overtake and record his fifth victory, while Loake’s championship hopes were extinguished in eighth.

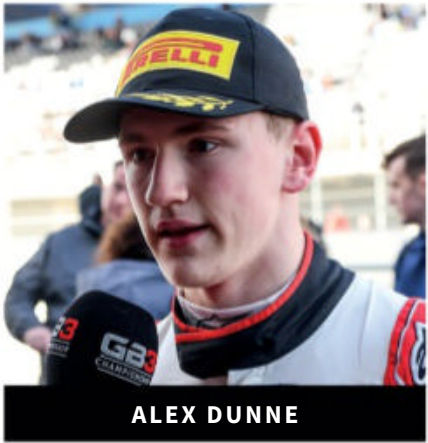
“I was never expecting to be in the top three in the championship this year,” admits Loake. “I do have to be >>

AUTOSPORT’S TOP FIVE GB3 DRIVERS



CALLUM VOISIN

1 Won fewer races than his main rivals but had fewer off days, making no major errors while accumulating the most poles and podium finishes. Strongest of the title contenders when it mattered at the Donington decider, which is why he edges Dunne into number one spot.



ALEX DUNNE

2 Took the most wins of anyone, and was untouchable at Spa and Zandvoort, but couldn’t deliver those peaks elsewhere. Some average qualifying performances and incidents not entirely of his own making proved costly in the end, despite his efforts to recover ground at the final two events.



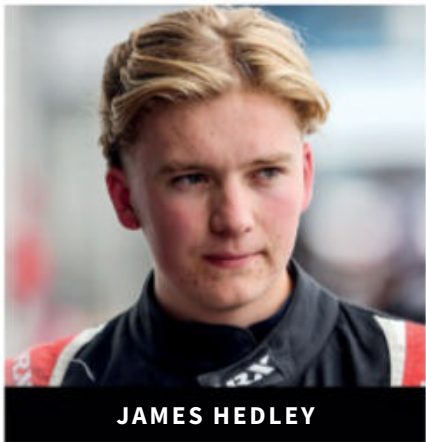
JOSEPH LOAKE

3 Exceeded even his own expectations by fighting for the title from the start, winning twice as many times as Voisin and often putting his team-mate Matthew Rees in the shade, but was also inconsistent and crucially was not able to deliver his best form at the final two rounds.



McKENZY CRESSWELL

4 The lost fourth title contender, who matched the consistency of the championship’s top three from the second round onwards. He scored more points than anybody else during his late-season podium run, but was disappointed to only visit the top step once despite a big step up in performance from 2022.



JAMES HEDLEY

5 A switch to a third team in two years yielded more success for Hedley, despite a truncated pre-season spent trying to find the budget to race. Two fine early wins kept him in the title hunt before being hampered by incidents and inconsistency, but it was a largely solid campaign nonetheless.



“I WAS NEVER EXPECTING TO BE TOP THREE IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP THIS YEAR – I HAVE TO BE QUITE PROUD”

quite proud of what I’ve done.”

Voisin started from 22nd in the reversed-grid climax, and made up 10 places to run directly behind Dunne before a mid-race safety-car period. Dunne made up two more spots at the restart, but it mattered not, with 12th for Voisin enough to seal the crown.

“It’s really difficult to put into words,” muses Voisin. “We’ve made the most of it. We got better towards the end of the season and it’s brilliant to finish on a high.”

Reinvigorated by a switch to Elite Motorsport for 2023, Cresswell would have been in the thick of the championship fight throughout had it not been for a disastrous weekend at Oulton Park, where he scored just four points. Podiums at the next two rounds followed, and a win and a stronger second half of the season kept his remote title hopes alive until the final round. By contrast, Rees began as one of the title favourites but, despite being one of the most consistent qualifiers, he only won once.

Kucharczyk looked a dark horse at the beginning of the year thanks to some rapid pace, which initially secured him a double pole at round two only for his car to fail post-qualifying scrutineering. He scored two mid-season podiums and his Snetterton collision with Voisin cost him a third but, grappling with budget issues, the popular Pole’s form tailed off in the final three rounds.

Elsewhere, Daniel Mavlyutov took four reversed-grid race wins for Hillspeed, with team-mate Gerrard Xie, Elite’s Oliver Stewart and Noah Ping (Arden) also taking a race three victory over the campaign.

There was no rest for Voisin following his title success, heading straight to Imola for a two-day FIA Formula 3 test before joining fellow finalist Loake at Silverstone for the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver assessment days. “It’s going to be a long winter trying to find the budget, but winning the title has done a tremendous amount of good,” concludes Voisin of his 2024 F3 hopes. 🏆



Sophomore driver Mills proved virtually unstoppable in GB4 this year with family KMR squad

MILLS MAKES IT LOOK EASY WITH DOMINANT GB4 TRIUMPH

GB4’s sophomore season was a one-sided affair, with Tom Mills taking the title in crushing style for family team KMR Sport. Mills was the only driver in the field who continued from last year, and he used that experience to record 10 wins across the first six events, beating outgoing champion Nikolas Taylor’s 2022 tally, to seal the crown with a meeting to spare.

The first race of the season proved to be an outlier, with Mills pipped to victory by team-mate and series debutant Jeremy Fairbairn after a thrilling dice between the pair. Mills responded by winning a wet race two to claim the championship lead,

“I’M MUCH MORE MATURE NOW. LAST YEAR SOME OF THOSE RACES I PROBABLY WOULDN’T HAVE WON”

which he would ultimately not relinquish.

Despite budget issues only keeping him on the grid on a round-by-round basis, Mills continued to notch up the wins. Seventh in the reversed-grid race at Brands Hatch secured him the title, with KMR also clinching the teams’ spoils for a second year in a row.

“It means a lot,” says Mills of his title success. “It’s been a lot of work this year to keep going meeting-on-meeting. Even

at Oulton, we still didn’t have the budget for the next round. It was just thanks to the results there that we managed to piece it together.

“As a second-year driver, everyone has been expecting me to win. It shows coming back does work, you learn so much. I’m much more mature now. Last year some of those races I probably wouldn’t have won because I would have made some mistakes, but this year I’ve taken it in my stride a lot better.”

With Mills sitting out the Donington Park finale, Cooper Webster (Evans GP) scored an emphatic victory hat-trick to secure runner-up spot in the standings. The Australian, who is currently second in the points in the S5000 series in his homeland, also won twice earlier in the campaign at Snetterton, the only round where Mills was put in the shade, and finished second on six occasions.

“It’s good to have a whole round where I was the quickest,” Webster says of his Snetterton performance. “I’m really proud of how the whole season’s gone, especially the first time on these tracks.”

Liam McNeilly took two reversed-grid triumphs and third in the table for single-seater newcomer Fox Motorsport, while GB4 scholarship winner Colin Queen (Fortec) visited the podium on 10 occasions but missed out on the top step.

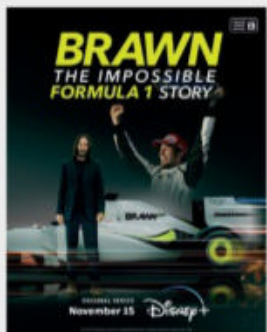


GB4 DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	WINS	PTS
1	Tom Mills	KMR Sport	10	505
2	Cooper Webster	Evans GP	5	494
3	Liam McNeilly	Fox Motorsport	2	419
4	Colin Queen	Fortec Motorsport	0	379
5	Aditya Kulkarni	Fortec Motorsport	0	256
6	Harry Burgoyne	Graham Brunton Racing	0	256

FINISHING STRAIGHT



Formula 1's real-life fairytale



DOCUMENTARY SERIES

BRAWN: THE IMPOSSIBLE FORMULA 1 STORY

Released: Disney+ 15 November

The story of Brawn GP is possibly the biggest fairytale in the history of Formula 1, with Honda selling the team to Ross Brawn for £1 before it went on to win both the drivers' and constructors' world titles in 2009. Disney and Keanu Reeves tell the story perfectly in the new four-part series *Brawn: The Impossible Formula 1 Story*.

In the winter of 2008, the Honda team

was seemingly dead and buried, but 12 months later the squad was world champion. Remarkably, *Brawn: The Impossible Formula 1 Story* manages to do justice to this tale and then some.

Since launching in 2019, covering the previous year's campaign, *Drive to Survive* has been widely credited as being a large factor in the increased interest levels in F1, and its influence is tangible here.

Acting as host, *The Matrix* star Keanu Reeves interviews a wide range of relevant personalities, including those you would have expected such as team owner Ross Brawn, world champion Jenson Button and CEO Nick Fry, and some you may not, with the informative and engaging former Brawn GP legal director Caroline McGrory a particular highlight.

The reason why McGrory's insight is crucial is that the 2009 season also featured the creation of the Formula One Teams Association [FOTA], with the potential of a breakaway championship to rival F1 a very real threat. While the on-track action is left largely to the drivers and Brawn himself, McGrory explains the details of FOTA's dealings with then-F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone and former FIA president Max Mosley, both of whom are painted as the villains of the piece for the most part.

Another 'pantomime villain' is former

Ferrari chairman Luca di Montezemolo, who accuses Brawn GP of "going too far", describes the team's car as "illegal" and is largely disparaging of the squad.

Despite following a relatively similar formula to *Drive to Survive*, this documentary avoids the criticism that blights the Netflix series – the bending of the truth to create a compelling narrative. This could be because the truth of 2009 is so intriguing that extra spice was not needed, but it is certainly refreshing to see the actual events recounted rather than a storm created from nothing.

Four hour-long episodes is the perfect runtime to tell this story, with each offering providing a clear and distinct part of the story, with Honda's exit, Button's wins, the closing of the chasing pack and, ultimately, title success all being given their moment in the sun. In fact, the only major plot that spans multiple episodes is the looming threat of the FOTA breakaway championship.

Approaching *Brawn: The Impossible Formula 1 Story*, there were concerns over whether a Hollywood actor who few, if any, had recognised as being an F1 fan should be handed the reins on an unscripted documentary such as this. For anyone who saw Martin Brundle's interview with Machine Gun Kelly on the Brazilian Grand Prix grid, these fears need no further



Brawn did pretty well with his £1 investment

Very much an F1 fan, Reeves takes in the lines of the Brawn BGP 001

DISNEYPLUSUK



Reeves, with Button, proves an engaged, and engaging, host

explanation! But by the end of the introduction to episode one, these fears are washed away, with Reeves's passion and enthusiasm evident. Watching the A-listers speak in such a candid way to interviewees, including Ecclestone, proves without doubt that he is a fan.

On the candid aspect, it is only right to suggest some level of parental guidance on this one, with the language used throughout proving to be on the more robust side at times, with a C-bomb dropped at least once and plenty of effing and jeffing.

There has been much anticipation surrounding this documentary, and you will not be left wanting. The story is told in great detail, with much fondness, and previously unheard anecdotes make the near-four hours fly past. It is also never a bad thing to see one of the most beautiful F1 cars of all time once again! Clear a day in the diary, grab the popcorn and enjoy.

SAM HALL



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



Autosport's Brazilian Grand Prix review

Martyn Lee is joined by Matt Kew in Brazil, along with our F1 reporter Filip Cleeren, to look back at the winners and losers in the 2023 Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos.



[youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom](https://www.youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom)



Brazilian GP video review: Alonso's defensive masterclass

The wait goes on for Lando Norris to take his first Formula 1 win, while Max Verstappen scored his 17th victory of the season at Interlagos. Joining Martyn Lee are Matt Kew and Sam Hall as they break down what happened at the Brazilian Grand Prix – including a star turn from Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

MotoGP

Malaysian Grand Prix

Round 18/20

Sepang, Malaysia

11-12 November

TV Live TNT Sports 2,

Sat 0630, Sun 0630

TV Highlights ITV4,

Mon 2000

TCR World Tour

Round 8/9

Mount Panorama, Australia

11-12 November

▶ Livestream YouTube,

Sat 0515, Sun 0150, 0510

World Rallycross

Round 5/5

Hong Kong, China

11-12 November

▶ Livestream Rally.TV



UK MOTORSPORT

Anglesey BRSCC Race of Remembrance

10-12 November

Race of Remembrance, Clubsport Trophy





FINISHING STRAIGHT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Lotus mechanics take stock, and refreshment, examining and readying for recovery Jim Clark's abandoned Lotus-Climax 25 during the closing stages of the 1963 Monaco Grand Prix. Entering the shot is the BRM P57 of reigning champion Graham Hill, who's heading for victory in the opening round of the Formula 1 championship, staged well into the year on 26 May. Polesitter Clark had been deposed by Hill and team-mate Richie Ginther at the start and was obliged to battle hard, particularly with his fellow Briton, to regain the lead. Clark then pressed home his advantage, looking well in control until a seized transmission brought his race to an abrupt halt at three-quarters distance, allowing Hill to take the first of his famous five wins in the principality.



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SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Ascari A410/KZR-1

Through his work as *Top Gear*'s 'Stig' between 2003 and 2010, Ben Collins experienced some of the greatest road-going machinery on the planet. But in his day job as a racing driver, the 48-year-old was hardly starved of incredible technology either. There is one racing car that stands out above the rest as his favourite – and no, it's not the BMW 330d from *Top Gear*'s 2007 Britcar 24 Hours adventure.

"That's easy, the Ascari LMP1, or LMP900 it [the class] was called," says Collins at his long-awaited British GT return last month. "The two years I had with the fastest car in the world almost. It was an F1 engine with huge downforce.

"On a bumpy track in the dry, you had wheelspin in first, second and third from the Judd engine, which was a V10 screaming thing. Huge brakes, speeds of 200mph nearly everywhere. We were racing at circuits all around the world like Monza and Le Mans; that was a really special time."

While racing the A410 for Team Ascari

in the 2001 FIA Sportscar Championship, Collins and team-mate Werner Lupberger took fourth in the standings and bagged a memorable victory at Donington Park with a winning margin of close to a minute. Despite



a second place at Monza and a trio of fourth-place finishes potentially leading to a feeling of what could have been, Collins can't speak highly enough of the Ascari that he took to sixth in the 2002 Sebring 12 Hours and raced twice at the Le Mans 24 Hours. Both ended in retirement, with fuel pump issues in 2001 and suspension failure in 2002, when the A410 was renamed the KZR-1.

"I did two seasons of that in a car that was just so lively and had no power steering," he recalls. "You had a sequential shift, but it was a really physical battle and unbelievably satisfying. That was the pinnacle of what I raced. I think the only thing you can say would be a step up from that would be a Formula 1 race. That was awesome and I loved it."

SAM HALL



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

1993 special

REVISITING THE PEAK OF F1'S HIGH-TECH ERA

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