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Chandhok helps Autosport delve into F1's driving secrets

Modern cars and halos make it quite tricky to see today's drivers at work, but dig a little deeper and it's still possible to discern differences in style, even among the top drivers in Formula 1.

This week Alex Kalinauckas has teamed up with Sky F1 pundit Karun Chandhok to analyse the approaches of the drivers in the top five teams from the 2023 constructors' championship (page 16). Not only is it enlightening in terms of explaining some of the trends we see among the current aces, but it also shows how the challenges change slightly across eras and even at different points of a weekend.

Before launch season begins in the world of F1, two major events kick off this week. The Monte Carlo Rally opens the World Rally Championship and, with reigning champ Kalle Rovanpera only committing to a part-campaign, the door is open for others. We ask whether Toyota's Elfyn Evans is ready to take the title in the face of an invigorated Hyundai challenge in our preview, which starts on p26. Tom Howard is your guide to what's new, including the baffling points system (p32), and visits Hyundai's WRC HQ (p36).

The Daytona 24 Hours is again the IMSA opener. As well as the burgeoning GTP top class, the GTD category is packed with manufacturers. And two of the biggest American automotive names – Mustang and Corvette – are finally squaring up in the tightly contested category. Gary Watkins tells the story of how both programmes came about on p40, while Charles Bradley talks to Dane Cameron about his IMSA return with Porsche and Penske on p46.



Kevin Turner

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PIT & PADDOCK

- 4 Cadillac secures Daytona pole
- 6 Madrid gets 10-year Spanish GP deal
- 8 Porsche plans new engine for Le Mans
- 11 DTM eyes mixed-power grids
- 13 Opinion: Matt Kew
- 14 Opinion: Rachit Thukral
- 15 Feedback: your letters

FEATURES

- 16 Driving secrets of F1's best

WRC PREVIEW

- 26 Evans to take his chance?
- 32 What's new in WRC this season
- 36 Hyundai's renewed challenge

DAYTONA 24 HOURS PREVIEW

- 40 Mustang vs Corvette at Daytona
- 46 Cameron returns for IMSA title push

RACE CENTRE

- 50 World of Sport: Dakar Rally; Formula Regional Middle East and Oceania

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 59 Lotus back in British GT with new team
- 60 BTCC winners Lloyd/Jelley to Carrera Cup
- 62 The end of Brighton Speed Trials
- 65 Opinion: Stephen Lickorish
- 66 Rating the new series of 2023...
- 69 ...and what's coming up this year

FINISHING STRAIGHT


- 70 What's on this week
- 72 From the archive: 1971 Canadian GP
- 74 My favourite track: Christophe Bouchut

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Action Express car will start at the front



Cadillac claims 1-2 on Daytona grid as records take a tumble in the cool

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Cadillac has claimed first blood in the battle for this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours. The US marque locked out the front row with its two V-Series.R LMDhs for the IMSA SportsCar Championship curtain-raiser as Action Express driver Pipo Derani smashed the unofficial track record at the Daytona International Speedway to grab the pole.

The Brazilian got down to a 1m32.656s lap during the 15-minute GTP class qualifying session at the end of last weekend's three-day Roar pre-event test. That gave him a margin of just 0.071s over Sebastien Bourdais in the Ganassi-run sister car.

Best of the rest behind the Caddys was Porsche driver Felipe Nasr, who ended up 0.2s down on Derani's pole mark in the fastest of the Penske team's two 963 LMDhs. The nine cars from four manufacturers

that took part in GTP qualifying were covered by just 0.9s at its conclusion.

All nine were faster than the old qualifying mark set by Oliver Jarvis when he took pole with a 1m33.685s for the Rolex-sponsored 24 Hours in 2019 aboard his Mazda RT24-P Daytona Prototype international. That broke the long-standing record set by PJ Jones driving a Toyota-engined Eagle MkIII in 1993, admittedly on a subtly different variant of the 3.56-mile DIS 'roval'.

Derani's pole is nearly a second and a half quicker than at last year's inaugural race for the LMDh-based GTP class, when Tom Blomqvist set a 1m34.031s at the wheel of the Meyer Shank Racing Acura ARX-06 that controversially went on to win.

Twelve months' worth of development of the new breed of hybrid prototype racer and favourable conditions played a part in

the fast times. "Obviously, the Cadillac was flying out there today," said Derani. "It was just a privilege and a pleasure to drive such a car – really well balanced."

He credited ambient temperatures barely into double figures and a tailwind on the back straight for at least part of the improvement from last year. "We weren't really talking about what was possible, we were just trying to maximise the tools that we had," he explained. "I was quite surprised [by the time], but I think the conditions were perfect for that – cold, the tyres were working well, and obviously for qualifying you're running low fuel."

But comparing the qualifying times this year with last isn't straightforward, because the Balance of Performance designed to create a level playing field in GTP has been changed since 2023. IMSA started out with what might be termed a base BoP this time



WTRAndretti Acura gets taken to limit

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DAYTONA GTP GRID

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Pipo Derani (Cadillac)	1m32.656s
2	Sebastien Bourdais (Cadillac)	1m32.727s
3	Felipe Nasr (Porsche)	1m32.876s
4	Connor De Phillippi (BMW)	1m33.022s
5	Louis Deletraz (Acura)	1m33.100s
6	Filipe Albuquerque (Acura)	1m33.347s
7	Nick Tandy (Porsche)	1m33.381s
8	Jesse Krohn (BMW)	1m33.499s
9	Tijmen van der Helm (Porsche)	1m33.506s
10	(Porsche)	no time



GALSTAD



GALSTAD

Priaulx grabbed GTD
Pro pole in 'Rexy'

last year: all cars were allowed to run at the 1030kg minimum weight in GTP and a maximum power of 500kW (670bhp). The BoP evolved through last season and has continued to do so into 2024.

Cadillac's V-Series.R was the lightest car in the field: it was again running at 1030kg and was allowed 510kW. The Porsche was running 21kg heavier last weekend, though admittedly with a 519kW power maximum.

The two WTRAndretti Acuras, which took fifth and sixth in the times, were given a minimum weight of 1072kg but were allowed 520kW, the upper limit allowed in the rules. The BMW M Hybrids fielded by the Rahal team, which took fourth and eighth, were running at 1031kg and 514kW.

The Proton Competition Porsche 963 didn't take part in qualifying after Neel Jani hit the barriers at the Turn 5 hairpin in the last of the six Roar test sessions. The car will start 10th, at the back of the GTP pack. Pole in LMP2 was taken by Ben Keating in the best of the United Autosports ORECA-Gibsons. GT Daytona Pro qualifying honours went to Seb Priaulx in the AO Racing Porsche 911 RSR, while the top spot in regular GTD went to Parker Thompson in the Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3 entry.

GARY WATKINS

➔ P40 DAYTONA PREVIEW

MERC GETS LONG-TERM ALLISON DEAL

FORMULA 1

Mercedes Formula 1 technical director James Allison has signed a long-term contract extension with the eight-time constructors' champion.

The Briton, who joined the Brackley operation from Ferrari in 2017, had taken on an overarching role as chief technical officer. This, in part, enabled him to spend less time travelling. But amid the protracted ground-effect struggles for the W13 and W14 cars, he retook day-to-day control of the technical department in April last year. This came as part of a mutual job swap with



ETHERINGTON

Mike Elliott, who has since left Mercedes. Allison's new deal cements his position in the leadership structure ahead of the major 2026 F1 regulation changes.

"F1 has brought me a lot of good fortune, but none greater than answering Toto [Wolff, team boss]'s call to join Mercedes," said Allison.

Wolff added: "Put simply, he is the most impressive technical

leader in our sport. His gladiator spirit, along with his knowledge, experience and determination, make him second-to-none.

"Since joining in 2017, he has been a key ally and sparring partner for me personally. We can challenge each other openly and honestly; an embodiment of our 'tough love' culture."

MATT KEW &
JONATHAN NOBLE



SUTTON

Corruption probe looming

FORMULA 1

Singapore says that its Grand Prix will not be impacted by a corruption probe surrounding ex-government minister and event promoter Ong Beng Seng. Transport minister Subramaniam Iswaran has recently resigned while facing 27 charges in relation to interactions with Beng Seng, who owns the rights to the GP and is chairman of the promoter.

Singapore's Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) believes Iswaran may have received kickbacks from property tycoon Beng Seng, including flights on a private plane and tickets to the GP,

for which Iswaran was an advisor. Iswaran has rejected this and issued a statement making it clear that he is determined to clear his name. Beng Seng has not been charged with any wrongdoing, but the case has attracted huge regional interest given Singapore is a country that prides itself on a lack of corruption.

The country's Ministry of Trade and Industry clarified: "The terms of all the agreements were considered carefully by the government. There is nothing to suggest as of now that either the F1 contracts or other contracts were structured to the disadvantage of the government."

JONATHAN NOBLE

Madrid gains 10-year deal to host Spanish GP

FORMULA 1

The Spanish Grand Prix will move to Madrid in 2026 with a 10-year contract that commits the race to the country's capital until 2035. The new deal means that the event will leave Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya, its home since 1991.

F1's initial announcement on Tuesday morning made no mention of the current venue, but it is understood that the Barcelona authorities are still in discussions about the future and that a second event in Spain has not been completely ruled out.

A hybrid 5.47km circuit featuring street and non-street sections will be built around the IFEMA fairgrounds and convention centre to the north-east of Madrid, close to the airport. The track, still subject to FIA approval, will feature 20

corners, with a predicted lap time of 1m32s. It will have what F1 calls a "premium" paddock building. The venue, well-served by public transport, will initially have a capacity of 110,000, which will be increased to 140,000 over the first half of the contract.

IFEMA, which opened in 1991, is operated by a consortium of public bodies, consisting of the city council of Madrid (31%), the regional administration of the community of Madrid (31%), the Madrid chamber of commerce (31%), and the Montemadrid Foundation (7%), so the local authorities are fully behind the project.

The Madrid area previously hosted the F1 championship at the Jarama circuit on 10 occasions between 1968 and 1981.

"Madrid is an incredible city with amazing sporting and cultural heritage, and

today's announcement begins an exciting new chapter for F1 in Spain," said F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali.

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem stressed that the venue will have a keen focus on sustainability: "As we build towards the introduction of

the FIA 2026 F1 regulations, which have been framed with net zero carbon by 2030 in mind, it is pleasing to see that the local organisers have placed a sharp focus on environmental sustainability in their plans for the event."

ADAM COOPER



Di Resta part of Peugeot Hypercar driver swap

WEC

Paul di Resta has swapped cars as part of a reshuffle of Peugeot's World Endurance Championship line-up for 2024. The Scot is moving over to the share the #94 car with Loic Duval and Stoffel Vandoorne.

Ex-Force India and Williams Formula 1 driver di Resta has effectively exchanged places in the Hypercar class squad with

Nico Muller. Last season the Swiss was teamed with Duval and Gustavo Menezes in #94, and this time will line up alongside Jean-Eric Vergne and Mikkel Jensen in #93.

Peugeot Sport technical director Olivier Janssonie described the driver crews as "an important part of the jigsaw." He explained that the swap around was part of a drive "to improve everywhere we can".

"We are lucky to have six highly talented

drivers, so we decided to optimise each car by grouping together the drivers in terms of their set-up preferences, the aim being to deliver improved performance," explained Janssonie. "The standard in the WEC is such that you cannot afford to neglect any aspect."

Peugeot has yet to officially launch its 2024 WEC programme and reveal the extent of the upgrades to its avant-garde Le Mans Hypercar.

Di Resta is going to have a busy 2024. Already part of the United Autosports IMSA SportsCar Championship assault, he will now also contest the European Le Mans Series in one of the Anglo-American team's ORECA-Gibson 07s. He has been brought in to replace Filipe Albuquerque, who will be concentrating on his IMSA GTP campaign with WTRAndretti. Le Mans 24 Hours class winner Fabio Scherer has already been announced for the #23 entry that di Resta will pilot, but the spot for the silver-rated driver has yet to be filled.

GARY WATKINS



Martins at ART; new Red Bull juniors for MP

FORMULA 2/3

French single-seater powerhouse ART Grand Prix has finally come clean that it has retained Victor Martins for a full-on assault on this year's Formula 2 title. Not that this will come as a surprise to anyone. After all, he has been a long-time protégé of team boss Sebastien Philippe, won the 2020 Formula Renault Eurocup and 2022 Formula 3 titles with ART, starred as an F2 rookie with the squad last year, and took part in the post-season test.

The 22-year-old Alpine F1 protégé, who clearly outpaced 2023 champion team-mate Theo Pourchaire – and indeed the whole of the rest of the field – on qualifying averages last year, now steps up to become the experienced half of the ART line-up. It's an intriguing combo here, with last year's F3 runner-up Zak O'Sullivan in the sister car.

As if addressing his rookie shortfalls, Martins (pictured) proclaimed: "I will not have my eyes solely focused on the standings: I want to correct mistakes from



last year, manage the championship over time and always strive to obtain the best possible result, whether the circumstances are favourable or complicated."

Elsewhere in F2, Czech Roman Stanek has committed to remain at Trident for his sophomore season, while Van Amersfoort Racing's Mexican F3 midfielder Rafael Villagomez strengthens his relationship with the Dutch squad by stepping up.

Just across the Netherlands from VAR, MP Motorsport has recruited two newly

appointed Red Bull Juniors for its F3 team. German Tim Tramnitz was third in Formula Regional European last season, while Pole Kacper Sztuka snatched the Italian F4 crown from under the noses of the Prema battalions with a late-season winning spree. Sztuka only did one of the post-season F3 tests with MP – at Imola – but shone on his first taste of the car.

Tramnitz's fellow FRegional graduate, Peruvian Matias Zagazeta, has taken a slot at Jenzer Motorsport for the season.



Mercedes picks up Pin for F1A

F1 ACADEMY

Promising sportscar talent Doriane Pin is, as anticipated, embarking upon her first full season in single-seaters in the all-female F1 Academy. But the surprise is that she has joined the junior programme of the Mercedes F1 team.

Pin took championship honours in the Ferrari Challenge in 2022, and used that as a springboard into the World Endurance Championship LMP2 class as an Iron Dames protégée last year with Prema Racing. The Frenchwoman performed very respectably, before shifting into Prema's Formula 4 line-up

for some end-of-season South East Asia series outings. She has continued into this year's UAE F4 championship, in which she lies eighth after two rounds.

The 20-year-old Pin is not the only driver in the Prema F1 Academy line-up with a strong pedigree in mixed-gender racing. The Italian team last week also confirmed regular Formula Regional European points scorer and Ferrari Driver Academy prospect Maya Weug.

Meanwhile, Haas will back American Chloe Chambers, winner of a reversed-grid Toyota FR Oceania race last year, as she joins the F1 Academy grid with Spanish squad Campos Racing.

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Porsche plots major engine upgrade for Le Mans

WEC/IMSA

Porsche could introduce a major revision of the V8 engine that powers its 963 LMDh as early as the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. The German manufacturer has revealed that it is working on an upgrade and is now in negotiation with the organisers of both the World Endurance Championship and the IMSA SportsCar Championship about when it can bring it on stream.

The planned updates are centred on a new crankshaft for the 4.6-litre twin-turbo unit. It appears to be an attempt to overcome the vibration issue that has affected the reliability of the car since its introduction in WEC and IMSA last season.

But Porsche has admitted that it doesn't know whether it will be able to introduce the new engine this year or next.

"The last discussion point with IMSA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest [which jointly runs the WEC with the FIA] is whether we can introduce it in 2024 and not the following season," said 963 project chief Urs Kuratle. "If the answer is no, we are not running it, and [if the answer is yes] we are not sure when we are running it for the first time.

"Changes like crankshafts have a massive lead time and we must have the first pieces to do endurance testing. Definitely we will not run it at any race before Le Mans; if we introduce it at Le Mans, we are not sure yet."

If and when Porsche introduces the revised engine, it will have to come on stream at the same time in all its cars – the factory Penske and customer entries – because only one homologation is allowed in LMDh. That could mean as many as six cars at Le Mans, and four for the following weekend's Watkins Glen IMSA round.

Kuratle's reticence to commit to a timeline for the introduction of the engine is because updates in the new era of LMDh and Le Mans Hypercars have to be applied for and signed off by the rulemakers. What is not clear is whether the updated engine would count as one of the five so-called 'evo joker' performance upgrades.

GARY WATKINS

Ireland plans triple-venue WRC rotation from 2025



WRC

Ireland has chosen three different host locations to rotate a prospective round of the World Rally Championship from 2025.

Motorsport Ireland president Aidan Harper said that no presentation from the prospective venues in Limerick, Kerry and Waterford was "head and shoulders" above the other. The rally

still requires funding for its bid. An application to the Irish government is under way to secure €15million spread across three years, which Motorsport Ireland hopes will return €300m to the economy.

Ireland featured on the WRC schedule in 2007 and 2009 (left), and there has been no round in the British Isles since Rally GB in 2019.

"Our decision is that with such a strong rally heritage

throughout Ireland and having experienced an overwhelming display of a 'can do' attitude from everyone, it would be wrong to limit this spectacle to one location," said Harper. "So we propose to use all three locations and move from one to another."

Saudi Arabia is also thought to be in the frame for 2025, with Argentina tipped for a return.

TOM HOWARD



SLATER ON TOP AGAIN; AL AZHARI CLAIMS DOUBLE

FORMULA 4

Hotly tipped British talent Freddie Slater extended his Formula 4 UAE Championship lead with another race win in last weekend's second round at Yas Marina. And it now looks as though Dubai starlet Keanu Al Azhari will be his main rival.

Slater got pipped for pole for the opening race by Mercedes F1 protege Alex Powell, his team-mate in the Prema-run Mumbai Falcons squad. But, following an early safety car, he soon got past the Jamaican-American before pulling clear. Meanwhile, their team-mate Kean Nakamura-Berta and Yas Heat Racing Academy ace Al Azhari both came to grief on the first lap, pitted for repairs, caught the field under the safety car – and then raced into the reversed-grid top 12.

Al Azhari used that in race two to take an early lead from Alpine F1-backed Nakamura-Berta, while Slater stormed through from 12th on the grid to complete the podium.

It was the drivers from the glitzy island of Palm Jumeirah versus Redditch in the safety car-infested finale, but Al Azhari held firm to beat Slater, with Nakamura-Berta in third.

Deagen Fairclough beat Hitech team-mate Gabriel Stilp in fourth and fifth positions.



Rossi set for multiple programmes

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

Seven-time MotoGP champion Valentino Rossi will race in the GT World Challenge Europe this year alongside his maiden campaign in the World Endurance Championship in the new LMGT3 class. But how many of the 10 GTWCE weekends the BMW factory driver will contest has yet to be announced.

The Belgian WRT team with which Rossi will remain for his third full season of car racing has revealed that Rossi is part of plans for the GTWCE, in which it will run multiple BMW M4 GT3s across the Endurance and Sprint Cup legs of the series. But it is waiting to announce his full programme at the official launch

of its GT activities with BMW next week.

Team boss Vincent Vosse, whose operation will also field the factory BMW M Hybrid V8 Le Mans Hypercars in the WEC this year, explained that Rossi's 2024 programme "will not just be the WEC – there will be more races".

Rossi has already been announced as part of WRT's line-up for next month's Bathurst 12 Hour, the opening round of the Intercontinental GT Challenge, and Vosse stressed that Rossi's appearances outside the WEC in 2024 will be "more than just that".

There are no clashes between the WEC and GTWCE this season, which in theory would allow Rossi to contest both segments of the Stephane Ratel Organisation-run series for a third consecutive season. But Vosse played down that prospect. "In theory he could do all the races, but at the moment that is not the plan," he said. Vosse refused to divulge whether Rossi's GTWCE campaign would be centred on the five Endurance Cup rounds.

WRT will announce the driver combinations in its two WEC M4s next week. So far only Rossi and Augusto Farfus have been confirmed.

GARY WATKINS



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ABU DHABI 6 HOURS Charlie Robertson left it late to take GT4 victory in last weekend's Abu Dhabi 6 Hours. To the last corner of the final lap, in fact... Robertson, sharing a Century Motorsport BMW M4 with Ravi Ramyeed, denied the Simpson Motorsport BMW at the last gasp. Third was the Speedworks Motorsport-run Toyota GR Supra of historic aces Michael O'Brien, Samuel Harrison and Ben Tusting with Kavi Jundu. Overall victory went to the Car Collection Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3-R of Dennis Marschall, Loek Hartog and Dustin Blattner. **Photo by JEP**

Mixed power in the frame for DTM

DTM

The DTM is unlikely to adopt hybrid power in future, but series boss Thomas Voss has teased a scenario in which combustion cars compete against electric vehicles. Under the previous ITR regime, the DTM conceptualised DTM Electric, based on 1000bhp single-make cars, to start in 2024. But this was dropped following the series' sale to the ADAC.

At the recent Autosport International Show, Voss told Autosport that car makers had expressed interest in an electric series with scope for development – unlike the previous DTM Electric concept – and believes that recent automotive trends make a hybrid pivot unlikely.

“To attract the car manufacturers, you should have a series and a car which is a manufacturer car,” he said. “This is what DTM stands for, and this is what we are requested. We have to start now to develop something for 2028, 2030 or whatever. And this is what we’re doing.

“In case of hybrid cars, especially the German manufacturers all tell us, ‘We are doing LMDh cars, they are too expensive to run in the national series’, so they want to stay with GT3. Their future for road cars is battery-electric in Germany, so hybrid



cars I don't think will come to DTM.”

Voss believes there will be a crossover point where combustion cars running on synthetic fuel – something he targets “as soon as possible” – can race “in parallel” with electric cars, as the World Rallycross Championship is set to do in 2024. “I don't think that combustion engine cars will stop and then the electric car will come,” he added. “There is room enough for that.”

The DTM currently runs on fuel from Shell with 50% renewable components.

JAMES NEWBOLD

VAXIVIERE IN P2 AT DAYTONA

Alpine WEC driver Matthieu Vaxiviere has been added to the line-up of AF Corse's LMP2 ORECA-Gibson 07 for this weekend's Daytona 24 Hours IMSA season-opener. The Frenchman, who will continue with the squad in the European Le Mans Series, shares the car with Ferrari factory pilots Nicklas Nielsen and Lilou Wadoux, plus Luis Perez Companc.

NEUBAUER AT FERRARI

Ferrari has another addition to its roster of factory drivers. Frenchman Thomas Neubauer, 24, took the overall Ferrari Challenge World Finals title in 2022 and last year won the support race for the 488 Challenge Evo, a round of the European series, at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

NEW WILLIAMS JUNIORS

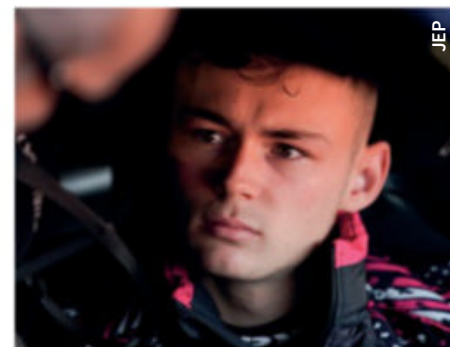
The Williams Formula 1 team has recruited two more drivers to its Academy for 2024. Alessandro Giusti, the 17-year-old French F4 champion of 2022 who claimed sixth in last season's Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine, is now on the books. He will stay in FRECA this year and has moved to top team ART Grand Prix. Joining him is 13-year-old Japanese karting ace Sara Matsui.

HONDA PROMOTES CHAMP

Honda has promoted reigning Super Formula Lights champion Iori Kimura into the senior Super Formula series for this season. Kimura joins B-Max Racing in place of ex-GP2/F2 race winner Nobuharu Matsushita, who is focusing on Super GT. Euroformula Open race winner Juju Noda also gets her chance, with TGM Grand Prix.

PATTERSON: BTCC TO GT4

Ex-Team Hard British Touring Car Championship driver Dexter Patterson is to switch to the GT4 European Series in 2024. The Scot (below) has joined Stoke-based Mahiki Racing's line-up with the brand-new Lotus Emira GT4. Patterson joins Steven Lake in the Pro-Am class, with the Silver attack led by reigning Carrera Cup GB Pro-Am champion Max Bird and Mini graduate Jordan Kerridge.



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The perils of F1's road car quest

Active aero, set to be part of 2026's rules, will have a laudable effect, but it's a sticking-plaster solution to deal with an issue that really shouldn't have arisen

MATT KEW

To justify and secure an existence amid the climate crisis, the professional motorsport world is bearing down on two goals. First, carbon neutrality to show everyone that at least these series don't come at a cost. Second, reasserting racing as a live technical testbed for innovations that can soon enough trickle down into the wider road car industry to bring about a greater good.

Formula 1 – working to be net carbon zero by 2030 – has done well to repeatedly achieve the latter over the decades. See driver aids, semi-automatic gearboxes, carbon fibre construction and so on. Although these innovations didn't necessarily all debut in the top flight, it's where they cemented their pioneering reputation.

It appears that active aerodynamics will be next on that list. While DRS has featured in the championship since 2011, the front wing is now also expected to morph into a moveable device as part of the regulatory overhaul for 2026. Of course, automotive manufacturers have already dabbled in this area. The Porsche 959 and Volkswagen Corrado of the late 1980s were early adopters; high-performance road cars increasingly make use of it and, in the name of efficiency, some models now incorporate plates that automatically cover up brake ducts and intakes to help minimise drag. But, in the main, active aerodynamics might still be viewed as being in their infancy.

“Moveable devices are a quick fix for an engine framework that calls for more electric power”

F1 can shortly begin developing them in double-quick time.

Red Bull chief technical officer Adrian Newey explains: “F1 has been good a way to popularise things on road cars. If you look way back, things like disc brakes, slightly more recently carbon fibre sportscars, fake or real carbon fibre trim etc. All those things that a buyer in the high street wants an association with, and manufacturers provide that association. Active aero has to be the future of road cars [to boost efficiency], so I think it's appropriate that Formula 1 should be displaying the power of it.”

This time around, though, it's more an unhappy accident that F1 will be at the forefront of proliferating another potentially game-changing technology. The reason for the 2026 rules adopting more active aerodynamics is because of fears over the limited powertrain. They are, at best, a sticking-plaster solution.

The next-generation engine regulations, which were devised with little attention being paid to the chassis concept, will ditch the expensive Motor Generator Unit-Heat. Despite getting shot of this major element, the electrified part of the hybrid engine must now cough up 50% of the total power. Given those heightened demands, teams initially simulated sudden speed losses in a straight line. Some reckoned drivers were having to downshift. While F1 and the FIA said this car data model was outdated, that hasn't stopped drag-slashing active aero from entering the picture to help compensate.

Red Bull technical director Pierre Wache frames the issue: “You cannot put patch on patch on patch to achieve something. You have to look at the problem with a bigger view and say, ‘How do I sort this out and how do I solve my problem? What car characteristic do I need to achieve something?’ If you need a patch to solve some things you can still do that afterwards, but you don't start with a patch first. Otherwise, it never works...”

“They didn't think through the full concept [of these new regulations] at the same time. So first, they defined the engine regulations and now we have to cope with that on the chassis side to compensate for the issue we have.”

The consequences of incorporating active aerodynamics are laudable: preserving the straightline performance of F1 machinery, eventually improving the environmental credentials of road cars. But the origins are wrong. Rather than this being another example of F1 showing the automotive industry the road ahead, the championship rolled over for it. Moveable devices are a quick fix for an engine framework that calls for more electric power – but this shift was only the result of bowing to the demands of potential competitors Audi and Porsche. One of those never ultimately signed up.

The problem with F1 taking its lead from the road car industry is that the latter is facing an identity crisis of its own. Engineers have far too little sway. Instead, manufacturers are being compelled by governments to fall in line with rapidly approaching, hastily devised legislation that is dictating the move away from internal combustion. As well, us consumers have far too much influence while we subscribe to the belief that bigger, and more, is always better. To convert that into cash, board rooms have forgotten that the customer isn't always right. The outcome is the roads being littered with the rolling contradiction that is electric crossovers.

F1 must always keep one eye on the road car market. It's vitally important that the series remains at least somewhat relevant to the wider world to validate its very existence. The problem comes when F1 thinks it's at the mercy of the automotive industry. Especially one that's as confused as it is now. 🚗



A victory that needed to happen

Audi's move to focus entirely on Formula 1 has been controversial. Just as well its Dakar win shows it's well able to dramatically up its game to overcome a challenge

RACHIT THUKRAL

Audi has faced a heavy backlash for the way its motorsport division has been run over the past few years. The decision to phase out all its existing programmes and go all-in on Formula 1 has aggrieved even the most loyal fans of the German marque. Since Audi has enjoyed immense success in sportscar racing, they argue that pulling out of the DTM and factory GT3 competition, and U-turning on LMDh, weakens the very foundations upon which Audi Sport has been built.

Formula 1 may be in rude health and enjoying unprecedented popularity, but Audi doesn't have a rich history in petrol-powered single-seater racing – except the MotorSport Vision F2 and Formula Palmer Audi spec categories. And since the 1930s in its Auto Union guise, it has never competed in grand prix racing. So the decision to put all its weight behind its upcoming project has been puzzling for a number of onlookers.

Another argument put forward by the naysayers is that Audi is forgoing the prospect of outright victories in legendary races such as the Le Mans 24 Hours to trundle around in the midfield of a grand prix. F1 has always been a hard nut to crack for big car makers and, with the exception of Mercedes and Renault, no mainstream manufacturer has lifted the constructors' title since it was established in 1958. Toyota, Honda, BMW and Jaguar have all tried their luck at the pinnacle of motorsport, only to realise that their corporate structures didn't allow them to outgun professional and slick race teams.

While it's only natural to question whether a big corporation like Audi can adapt to the fast-paced world of F1, you only need to look at the way it turned around its Dakar Rally programme as proof that it can end the hegemony of Red Bull, Mercedes and Ferrari. Audi's second appearance on the Dakar last year was nothing short of a failure. Instead of making a major leap after a year of running the complex RS Q e-tron, it took a step backwards in both performance and reliability. Carlos Sainz Sr and Stephane Peterhansel were forced to retire from the event, while Mattias Ekstrom salvaged 14th place in the sole surviving machine.

Heading into 2024, it was clear that Audi was planning to pull the plug on its cross-country programme. This left a real possibility that it was going to return empty-handed from Dakar after three years of trying, unless it managed to win this month's 46th running of the event. You can only imagine the questions that would have been asked should Audi have entered F1 in 2026 after its last factory programme had been a failure. That simply wouldn't have been acceptable for a company with the history and prestige of Audi, not after three years in competition. Just look at fellow Volkswagen Group marque Porsche, which is now doubling down on its Formula E team after missing out

on the championship yet again last year.

So Audi engineers went back to the drawing board to undertake a top-to-bottom rework of the RS Q e-tron, overhauling everything from chassis, transmission and bodywork to the software that helped manage the electric and combustion powertrains. From the very beginning it became clear that the homework had paid off. While rivals were faltering one after the other during the first week,

“When Audi formally announces its exit from rallying, hardly anyone will question its decision”

Sainz put in a series of impressive performances to take the lead on the sixth stage. When Prodrive's Sebastien Loeb was emerging as a serious threat at the beginning of the second week, the Audi trio united to assist Sainz's bid for victory, assuring he safely made it to the finish.

When Sainz finally reached the bivouac at Yanbu, most of the focus was on how he had defied his age to win Dakar at 61. But just as significant was a historic triumph for Audi, which was finally able to win the rally at the third time of asking. This means that when it formally announces its exit from rallying, hardly anyone will question its decision. It won Dakar fair and square against rivals including Prodrive and Toyota, and also added to its legacy in rallying, four decades after Stig Blomqvist won the 1984 World Rally Championship title at the wheel of a Quattro.

With the Dakar Rally out of the way, Audi can now shift its entire focus to F1. It is devoting significant resources to its new project, hiring key staff to bring the employee count more in line with the top teams, and expanding its engine-building facility in Neuberg. In Sauber, which has history as a full works operation from its BMW days, Audi has a partner team that understands the ins and outs of F1, plus a factory equipped with the latest equipment for chassis and aero development.

It won't be an easy game though, and even Sauber technical director James Key has admitted that it won't be until 2027 that the “final product” is ready. So if Audi isn't competitive straight out of the gates in 2026, don't draw any immediate conclusions. It will eventually find its way in what is its most ambitious racing project ever. 🏁

P50 DAKAR REPORT

YOUR SAY

John Webb was, without any doubt, the best ever race facility operator and motor racing promoter. May he be remembered as the true father of British national racing

ALAN WILSON

Remembering John Webb

John Webb was, without any doubt, the best ever race facility operator and motor racing promoter (see *Pit + Paddock*, 18 January, for Autosport's obituary – ed).

I worked for/with him from 1978 to 1983 as track manager of the four circuits and as an MCD director, and respected his total commitment to the business and sport of racing.

The many race series, events and promotions he created will never be surpassed, while together with Silverstone's Jimmy Brown and Thruxton's Sid Offord he totally controlled British racing and grew it into the major sport that exists today. May he be remembered as the true father of British national racing.

RIP John Webb. With the greatest respect to you, and your ever supportive wife, Angela. Thank you.

Alan Wilson

By email

Is Formula E's pay-to-view switch a mistake?

Thank you for your excellent preview to the Formula E season (Autosport, 11 January). It's a shame that many of us will miss out on the races.

The decision to make live qualifying and races pay-to-view only seems odd (was the financial deal with TNT and Discovery really that good?). The only crumb on the table for those of us who don't sign up is the chance to watch the races seven days later. I doubt that I'll bother as, by then, I'll have had the chance to read your report on Autosport.com or in Autosport!

Formula E might take note that even the higher profile Formula 1 offers subscription-free highlights within hours of the live qualifying and race.

Formula E is in danger of shutting out first-time viewers who tune in out of interest. It seems like a mistake to me.

Anita Morrish

By email

Sad to be denied free Formula E race action

It seems during the festive period I missed the announcement that Formula E would disappear behind a lofty paywall. Sadly



the 2024 Mexico City ePrix (above) is the first race I have not watched due to this. Thankfully there's an in-depth report in your pages (Autosport, 18 January) so that I can 'live' the race in a passive form at least.

Perhaps Formula E should look into providing an extended highlights package on free-to-view. Seems to have worked for a certain other formula.

Robb Wildash

By email

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THE ROTATION MASTER



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THE LIMIT FINDER



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THE BRAKING KING

FORMULA 1

DRIVING SECRETS OF F1'S BEST

‘Max Schumacher’, ‘George Hakkinen’, ‘Oscar Button’ – there’s plenty of past echoing in how several of the current crop produce their best results behind the steering wheel.

But what exactly does it take to be successful in the championship’s current era?

KARUN CHANDHOK AND ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

Intro and methodology

These days in Formula 1, it's generally harder to see driving style characteristics than you once could – certainly in the 1970s or the 1980s, and perhaps into the 1990s and 2000s. With every era of the championship that's got more aerodynamics-dependent, it's become a little bit trickier to see big differences.

In the 1970s, you could see huge variations in the way the drivers would unleash the cars. Jackie Stewart's smooth inputs versus, say, the spectacular Ronnie Peterson. You could see a difference in pretty much every corner. Fast forward to the 1980s, and quite big variations in the way drivers used the turbo engines were detectable. Think Ayrton Senna with the anti-lag and the way he developed his throttle technique. There's even a contrast into the 1990s, when aero was really starting to be a big performance differentiator. But the cars were still much smaller, agile and edgy, and you could see the difference between Michael Schumacher and Mika Hakkinen. Then there were the different driving styles within the same team – Jean Alesi, for example, compared to Gerhard Berger at Ferrari.

Over time, two things happened. The first concerns the Pirelli tyres coming in for 2011. Fundamentally, the drivers all had to somewhat converge in their driving style as a result. With the Bridgestones and Michelins, or the Goodyears of previous eras, they were able to brake and lean on the tyres on corner entry. Particularly in the Bridgestone and Michelin tyre war days of the early 2000s, there was a lot of grip and support from the front axle. As soon as the Pirelli era arrived, that went away.

The other change is how the aero has developed. The modern cars are incredibly aero-sensitive – especially since F1 went to the much bigger cars from 2017 onwards. With these, drivers must be very careful not to slide them around too much. And the weight has gone up too, so as soon as a slight slide starts, or there's even a little bit of movement, the pendulum effect of this extra weight must be countered. Any sliding also leads to overheating these very temperature-sensitive tyres.

This all means that the drivers are somewhat limited in their creativity, because ultimately race driving is an art form.

So much of driving in F1 nowadays is about getting the feel of

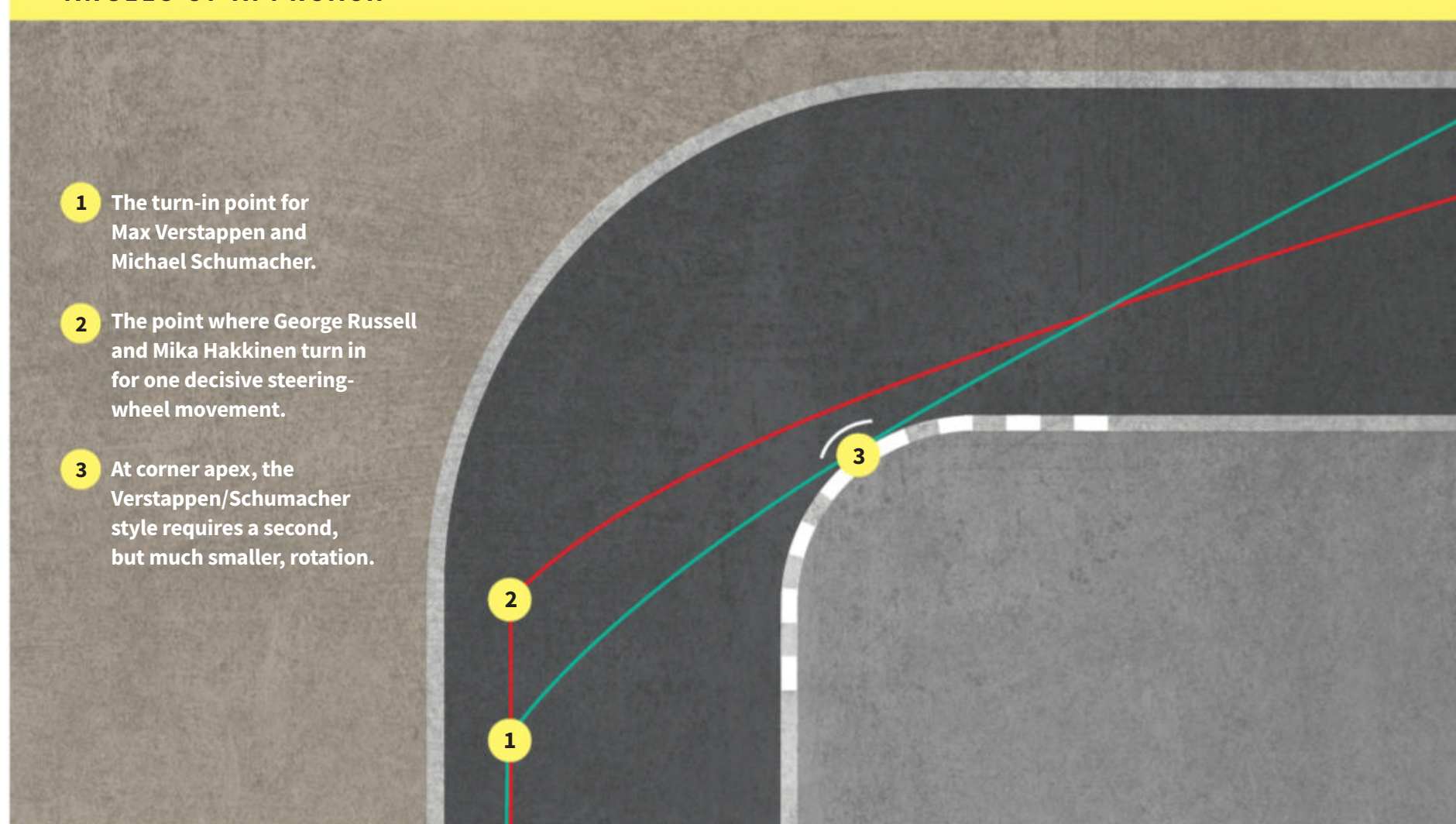
the tyre and just trying to work it into a sweet spot and not overdo things. The drivers all must be so careful, even in qualifying, because the Pirellis don't let you overdrive the tyre at all. And qualifying performance also comes down to confidence. If a driver is not confident to lean on the car, the top times are just not going to happen.

For this exercise of assessing the varying driving styles of the current F1 field, the tyre management requirements and slower lap times over longer stints mean we're concentrating specifically on a driver's actions behind the wheel at full chat in qualifying (see page 19 for race driving style differences). To make our assessments, we've studied multiple flying laps from each driver of the leading crop across the 2023 season. We also checked each at different venues – particularly the requirements for fast, flowing tracks such as Suzuka, in contrast to the point-and-squirt, slower overall nature of a street circuit like Singapore. Onboard video footage makes up our primary study, but we've also used GPS trace data to confirm elements of what we're seeing.

The main element for assessing each driver's style is their approach to the corners. So much of the difference between why someone is quick, and why someone isn't, really starts at braking and corner entry. This first phase of the corner sets it all up. The middle phase of the corner is all about settling the car, and the third and final phase is largely dependent on engine driveability, car traction ability and what tyre grip is available. You might see cock-ups and drivers wheel-spinning in the last two parts, but really the differences between one driver and another in a particular corner start when they first get on the brakes and initially turn the wheel. That sets up everything that happens from there on in: what line they're on, and then the knock-on effect of that element, plus the speed they carry to the apex in the deceleration phase.

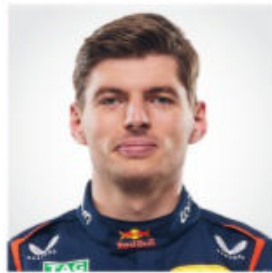
You can't see a driver's feet with onboard video, but you can judge, based on their hands and trajectory, how much they're able to steer the car on the brakes. The balance of steering input and the way they load up a car under braking is a key part of what we're looking at. Here's what we make of the drivers from the top five teams of 2023... >>

ANGLES OF APPROACH



Max Verstappen

Verstappen, famously, has incredible ability where a car is moving around, but he's actually got unbelievable car control on corner entry. That's where he's doing all his winning, because he can steer the car and carry a huge amount of speed into the apex in the medium/slow-speed corners.



He does his by steering the car with his feet. He comes off the throttle, gets on the brakes and gets the rear of the car rotating – after an early steering input – and balances the car on the edge of grip. He can cope with the rear movement that an extremely responsive front end creates, which means he's done a whole load of steering before even getting to the apex. When he's there, he can actually release the steering lock. You can often see that Verstappen has already got fewer degrees of steering lock compared to Sergio Perez at an apex, all because he's steered the rear of the car on the way in. The steering lock release also comes with a benefit for tyre wear in the races – there's less lateral g in the acceleration phase – and it all comes back to the corner approach. Verstappen is usually also inch-perfect in terms of using the full width of the track and judging its edge, especially in places like Suzuka.

Everything is done in a very controlled manner. He's able to live with this rear movement and not only just live with it – love it. That's the style he's developed. It's actually very reminiscent of Michael Schumacher at the peak of his powers in the 1990s. Michael had shown that strength at Benetton and Ferrari, and it's why none of his team-mates could live with him. Including, intriguingly, Jos Verstappen.

The difference with Max and Michael is that Verstappen is a bit smoother with his steering inputs. If you watch his hands on the wheel, he's actually quite soft with his movements. He's not aggressive with the way he turns the wheel. But on street tracks that comprise short, sharp 90-degree corners, that style doesn't have as much of an advantage because here a car needs to be provoked – by getting it to rotate sharply and turned more aggressively. This is why we saw Perez outpace Verstappen at places such as Baku in 2023.

Sergio Perez

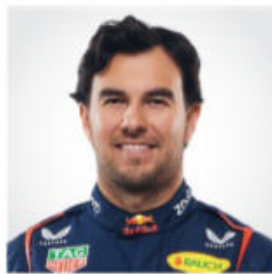
Here we do have to consider the importance of corner exit, as this was Perez's big strength in his days at Sauber and later with Force India/Racing Point. It was his ability to control wheelspin at corner exit by having good modulation and good throttle control. It all helped him with the tyres because he was one of the few drivers who gained on the way out of a turn.

The trouble is now, while he's still doing that well, he's come up against a team-mate in Verstappen who is a, also doing the same thing, and b, even if he isn't necessarily doing it as well as Perez, what Verstappen gains on corner entry more than negates any small loss on the way out.

Perez is definitely more aggressive with his steering than Verstappen, judging by the way he turns the steering wheel on his first inputs. That pays him back on the street circuits where he has historically gone so well, because extra aggression with the wheel in such short, slow corners gets rewarded, because these big cars generally understeer in these corners.

Interestingly, at the start of his major downturn in performance against Verstappen last year, Perez admitted that he was trying to alter his driving style, presumably to try to replicate what his team-mate had shown was possible. That's a very difficult thing to do, because Verstappen seems to be able to cope with the sharp turn-in phase better than anyone else, so to suddenly be able to deal with that responsiveness when first turning the wheel is a tall order.

In Qatar for example, Perez seemed like he was overdriving on the way into corners by going in a bit too hot. It meant his mid-corner speed was then way lower and he lost out on the exits. It seemed like a driver who was desperate to make up the time to his team-mate but couldn't quite find the right rhythm to do it. It's a quest against Verstappen that many before have gone on but failed. >>



GRANT

Verstappen can carry an incredible amount of speed into the apex

RACE DRIVING STYLE



ETHERINGTON



In the races, it's about tyre management. That means, since nowadays the Pirelli problem is thermal, 'How do you still drive around as quickly as possible without overheating and overwearing the tyres (or not)?'

Onboard with the drivers in the races, they've all got four numbers on their dashboard for the four tyres, and they're keeping an eye on these indicators that go green, orange and red as the tyre temps rise and fall.

To go as fast as possible without overloading the tyre, the first thing to determine is where is most critical on each track in terms of tyre wear and tyre temperature. This is what each team tries to determine in the opening practice sessions and then gets their drivers to work on best tyre management practices, which we'll come to, in the corners of concern. A driver must work it out on the first day of each event, because they've still got to go around very quickly.

So, they spend a lot of time adjusting their aggression at the wheel in terms of

both car speed and tyre load. They're linked, because the faster you go, the more load you put on, and that limits how much a particular tyre can be leaned on. If it's the rear, that's harder to do because every time the power

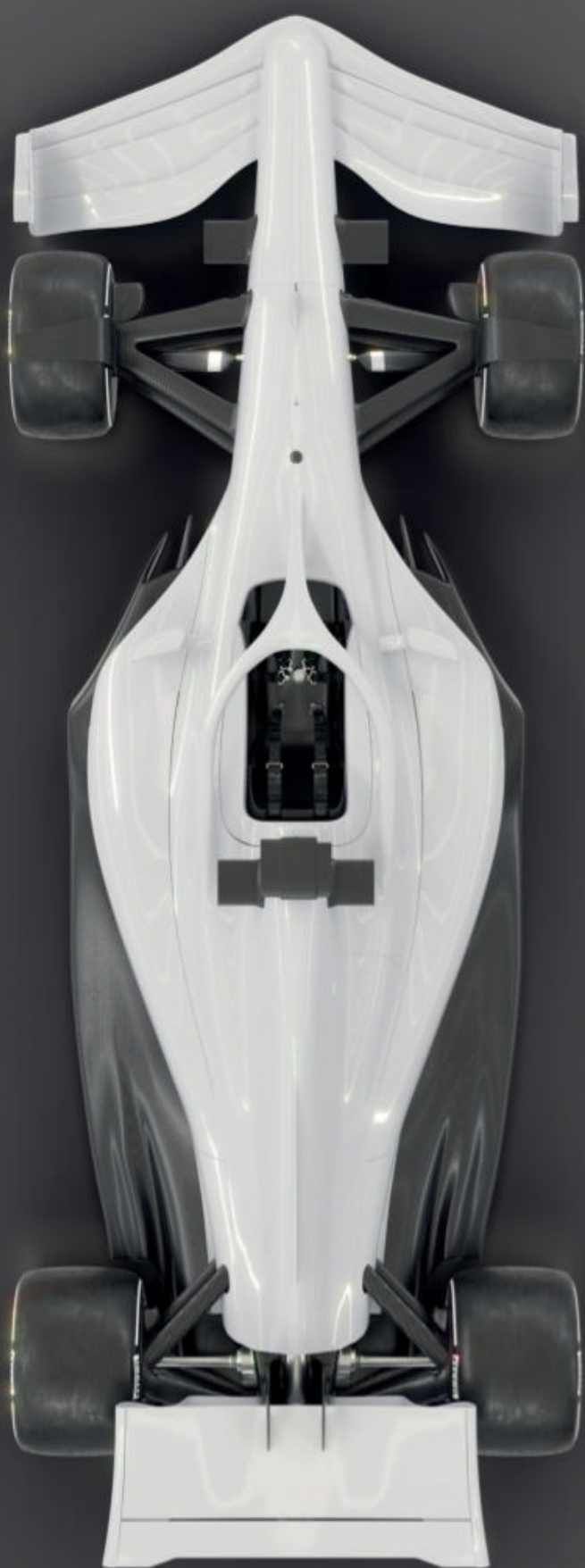
“THE SMOOTHER DRIVERS WILL BENEFIT GENERALLY ON TYRE WEAR”

goes down, it's putting energy in the rear tyres. Drivers therefore must control the wheelspin and sliding. So the smoother drivers will benefit generally on tyre wear.

When inevitably the tyres start to wear and go off in terms of grip and temperature, the car is consequently moving around more. That means less grip and the car isn't doing what anyone ideally wants it to. Here, the adaptable drivers are the ones who gain more because although the car is not performing perfectly, they can still drag a lap time from the situation.



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Lewis Hamilton

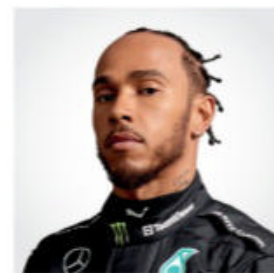
Hamilton is a driver who – whatever the car, tyre, conditions, track, grip level – is adaptable. It's arguably been his greatest strength throughout his entire career.

His style has evolved. Back when he first arrived in Formula 1 in 2007, he was tremendously aggressive at the wheel – in a controlled way. He also had superb confidence on the brakes, and that's still one of his massive gifts. Hamilton takes a lot of his driving cues from what the car is like under braking. If it's good and stable, he relies quite heavily on that for the next phase of the corner – more so than some others. From high speed to a big stop, his car is just on the edge of under-rotation. It's not quite locked up, it's not quite snatched, but he's got great feel to hold it perfectly.

Hamilton has also gone through different phases in terms of his driving style. He's gone from that early aggression and adapted his style to the weaknesses of the Pirellis. And he did it very effectively.

During the midway stage of his Mercedes title run in 2017-18, he also recognised that getting his style right and peaking on a Sunday was what was going to win him world championships, because driving style considerations can also be applied through a weekend. And, while of course he remained devastatingly fast in qualifying, he clearly toned back some of that aggression to make sure that he focused on tyre management in races. Subsequently, for Hamilton this really took a step forward in 2018 and onwards.

He's a competitor who drives with his heart as well. When it comes to the big occasions, Hamilton's got this innate ability to take it up a notch and raise his game. Take the 2021 Brazilian Grand Prix, for instance, and how he bounced back from so much adversity amid all the pressure of a tight title battle.



Superb confidence on
the brakes is a key
Hamilton strength

George Russell

Russell could be described as the Mika Hakkinen of this era, thanks to his straight line trajectories through corners. Like Mika, and actually how Kimi Raikkonen did too at his peak, Russell will go a little bit deeper on the straight, then do a slight turn, which then blends into a hard turn. It makes for very straight lines and stems from very decisive inputs at the wheel.

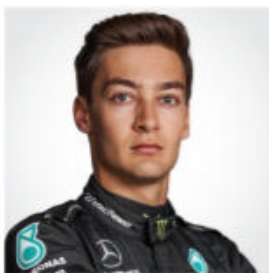
It's a very smooth and fast method, especially in this Pirelli era of being unable to load up the front axle too much. Just watching his hands, you see that strong input made on entry, and then he too can open up the wheel to take the lateral load off when accelerating.

Russell has a rather a minimalist driving style, but in a different way to some others in his class. It's much more determined and seems to come from a clear idea in his mind of what he wants to do when he gets to a corner. That's, 'I'm going to brake here, I'm going to turn the wheel, the car is going to respond, and that's just what I'm going to do'.

Compared to Hamilton, it's overall a bit smoother in terms of steering inputs – because there's really just one clean movement. He doesn't creep towards an apex like, say, his team-mate does more. Hamilton has always been happy with more rear instability than most, but the trajectory that Russell takes naturally has the rear of the car more planted anyway.

Russell does a lot of the corner rotation and a lot of the steering in that decisive first input. And because of this, from the apex onwards, if the car is sliding when on the power, it doesn't hurt him so much. He's got less lateral g, so he's still accelerating out of a corner, but not overheating the tyres. It all comes from very strong self-confidence in that first steering input. But that requires a car where the front end responds and has a rear that's calm.

If Russell was racing in the tyre war era – perhaps with Michelins – you suspect he'd be devastating, as Raikkonen was in his McLaren years. >>



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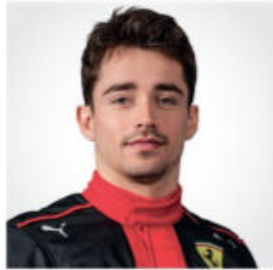
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Charles Leclerc

Leclerc's style contains something fascinating. He has a two-stage process – 'little turn, big turn'. It's almost like he's warning the car about what's coming because he prefers much more rear movement.



He does one turn and almost takes a pause, especially in the medium/low speed, but not so much in the high speed where a driver is just leaning on the downforce. He hates understeer and, whenever it's an understeering car balance for the weekend for Ferrari, Carlos Sainz typically ends up being quicker. If the rear is as he wants, the way Leclerc turns the wheel is complementary. Because when the rear of the car is moving, he does that first steering input to know that the rear is with him. If it is, he can put more lock on. If not, he will have to adjust and slow down in that middle part of the corner.

He's also balancing with his feet. That first movement tells him how much to modulate the brakes – does he need to hang onto the brakes a bit more, or can he start coming off as he does that more pronounced steering input? When he's got an understeering balance, he's got to hold onto the brakes more to get the front to turn.

Leclerc's steering action is actually very smooth – he's not throwing it around like a rally car, but the big rear movement does mean some micro-corrections to balance it out. This will come as a surprise to some, but when Leclerc himself speaks about an aggressive style, it's again controlled aggression. Yet he will also bully a bit of rotation in and then, when he does, he's got the confidence and car control to live with the rear.

That all makes him a superb qualifier – maybe even F1's best. He can extract the maximum amount of performance from the tyre in qualifying, but it does mean he's closer to the limit of grip. This may explain some of his famous shunts because the car is quite often more on the edge of falling off the cliff of grip than others.



Leclerc's style is notable for his 'little turn, big turn'

Carlos Sainz

Sainz also seems to do this subtle two-stage process but, before we declare this a Ferrari-determined trait, he also did it in his previous home at McLaren, and Pierre Gasly also deploys this for Alpine. Sainz's version is more progressive – he winds the lock on more in quite a smooth way. Compared to Leclerc, Sainz loads up the front axle by turning in slightly earlier.



He wants a stable rear end, and that's where his strength is. He's also always chasing the front of the car – in a Jenson Button-esque way – and Sainz enters the corners always with a bit of understeer. Ultimately, over one lap, an understeering car is never normally quicker. But if you can find the sweet spot of the balance – like Button used to, and Sainz did in Singapore to get pole last year – you can really extract performance because it keeps the car balanced better. At tracks where the rear tyres start to overheat by the end of a lap, if you're chasing the front end it's really beneficial.

At places such as Monza, where Sainz was also brilliant in 2023, you must slightly underdrive. If drivers go charging in with low downforce, they just start sliding. And if Sainz gets a car with a stable rear end, as Ferrari had at Monza and Singapore last year to give him that controlled responsiveness of the front, he's able to get the rotation he wants and the lap times tumble.

A lot of this comes down to car aero platform and set-up, and Ferrari has a bit of a problem because, of its two drivers, one likes a car that's edgy on entry, and the other one wants a car where he turns in and just wants the rear to be calm.





GRANT

Lando Norris

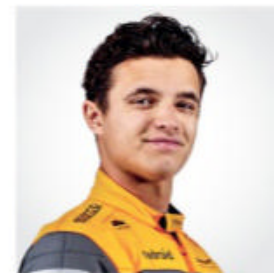
Norris's style is rather reminiscent of Lewis Hamilton's, which would actually make them handy team-mates. There's an energy about the way they drive – in the way they load up the tyres. There's a reasonable amount of movement going on, but they're happy and confident in their ability to have the car moving around overall.

For Norris, everywhere he goes there's an aggression with the way he turns the wheel. It's just edgy. The car is alive, it looks like it's working, but Norris has this inner confidence that when the car is doing that, he doesn't back out of it and can hang on and go.

On the downside, it does mean that he's on this knife-edge where, with the Pirellis, there's not much give. And that's why we sometimes see mistakes – like in Qatar or Abu Dhabi last year. Perhaps if Norris was driving in F1's Bridgestone tyre era, he'd be even more brilliant in qualifying than he is now. Back then the tyres had more give, and such elasticity of grip doesn't exist with the Pirellis. There's a definite edge and you'll fall off it if you overload and overheat the rear tyres.

But Norris's risky, edgy approach is actually why he's really good at street tracks. Again, the Hamilton comparison is pertinent – they've got that aggression required for the short corner types. In Monaco or Singapore, and even the last sector of Abu Dhabi as well, they have the car just constantly on an edge and moving around. They've just got the supreme confidence in their ability that they can live with that.

But overall, a running element across the season for Norris is that there's just a bit more edge to the way he drives. That energy translates, crudely, as: 'Come on you bastard, get in, get some grip'. He dominates the car into doing what he wants it to do.



HONE

Team-mates having different requirements of a car sets a challenge for teams

Oscar Piastri

Watch Piastri's hands at the wheel in contrast to Norris's style and there's just a calmness. It almost looks as if Piastri's hands are moving slower. It's rather like watching Jenson Button or Alain Prost in terms of smoothness and precision. There's no snappiness, no edginess. He just drives in a very smooth way, especially in the very fast corners.

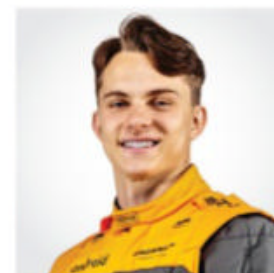
It's a fascinating insight because in some ways, McLaren has got a line-up like it did just over a decade ago. It's got a Hamilton-Button situation again, or even going further back to Ayrton Senna-Prost, when it comes to the contrast of edgy and smooth. And again in these days, the team has got two drivers who are pushing each other hard.

Typically, other than when required by rule or kit changes, there's an inherent style that carries through a driver's entire career, irrespective of what car they're driving. Last year was Piastri's first season at the top level but, in Formula 2 and Formula 3 before, his smoothness stood out in those categories too. There would be races with really high tyre degradation in the junior categories where he really shone, and it's just carried over into F1.

The calmness in the way he drives is a reflection of his personality too. He's a very calm kid – unflappable. You don't hear him complaining, he's just so mellow.

Piastri is amazing in the high-speed corners, like his manager Mark Webber used to be. That smoothness helps in the high-speed turns. And Piastri is also impressive in terms of peaking at the right times of an F1 weekend. Sometimes last year he was a bit anonymous in the opening practice sessions, then he just chipped away and was right there come qualifying.

Clearly race pace was a weakness when compared to Norris in 2023, but having a year of experience under his belt will be invaluable this season. »



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Fernando Alonso

Alonso's adaptability screams out. He's had to change his driving style four times across his storied F1 career (for getting the best out of Michelins, then Bridgestones, the grooves to slicks change, then into the Pirelli era) and he's won across motorsport disciplines too.

That's why it's tough being his team-mate. This is especially so in a non-leading F1 team, where the car is never going to be perfect. At Aston Martin last year, when it slipped behind its rivals adrift of Red Bull, Alonso and Lance Stroll were having to wring the AMR23's neck a bit more to get performance out compared to their rivals, and the gap between them just got bigger. That also centres on another Alonso strength: he's always supremely confident.

There's an energy and an aggression to how he drives a car. It's a manner that says, 'I'm just going to dominate you, car, you are my slave' – in a way that Nigel Mansell, Senna or Schumacher used to do too. Alonso just bullies the car into doing things that you don't expect it to. There's a hustle to his hands, it looks fast, and it is fast, because he's got that controlled aggression going on constantly.

In terms of driving lines, Alonso doesn't actually use all of the width of the track in some places. He just finds his own way of pivoting and rotating a car around. He also rather drifts into a corner. He often comes to the middle of the road down a straight, then he goes back to the racing line. He's not doing a Scandinavian flick, but it seems to be just his way of setting himself up psychologically for a corner.

Alonso is also just incredibly intelligent. He plays with the steering wheel toys much more than his rivals. He's always flicking settings – brake balance and migration, engine braking, differential. Often a lot of drivers just adjust the brake balance, but he'll make changes elsewhere too.



Lance Stroll

Stroll always puts many inputs into the steering wheel – there's a lot of energy going on compared to Alonso. This was much more apparent in his early days at Williams, and he has calmed it down over time, but he's still generally got a lot of movement on the wheel.

Even before he commits to a corner, while getting on the brakes, his hands are already moving. They seem like slight oscillations on the steering wheel and it can't be very stabilising for the car. They're very small movements, so it's fine details, but through corners Stroll is always making multiple steering inputs from entry to the apex – he's not just making clear movements. In the high-speed turns, his hands seem to do a lot more work than others'. Where Alonso is just very clearly one strong movement that is dominating the car, Stroll's energetic movements seem like questions, not commands.

But Stroll has got a turn of speed. There's no doubt about it, even though he's a driver who needs to feel confident to extract that speed. Confidence clearly contributed to his ballooning gap to his team-mate in 2023. In qualifying their average gap was over 0.3 seconds and, in the races, Alonso can extract performance on a more consistent basis too. Stroll has days such as at Austin where his race pace was superb but, across the season on the whole, the gap between the two in terms of race pace wasn't close.

Stroll's driving style energises the front tyres very well, which is why he is often so good in the wet. But for tyre management races, it just doesn't make things predictable. On a long run, he's not always necessarily on the same bit of asphalt each time. You see some variation in terms of line and entry points – it's not always the same turn-in point into a corner, for example. And some of that comes from the corner pre-movement he displays. ✎



Alonso stands out for his adaptability, controlled aggression and confidence



Head to [autosport.com](https://www.autosport.com) to see the full list of driving style features for the 2024 F1 field...

GRANT



THE RACE TO REPLACE ROVANPERA

With the reigning champion only committing to a part-season, the door is open for someone else to top the pile in 2024. Can Toyota's Elfyn Evans defeat a renewed Hyundai attack?

TOM HOWARD

The World Rally Championship is still reeling from the shock announcement that world champion Kalle Rovanpera has gone part-time for 2024. As the dust begins to settle, one thing is clear – the title race is set to be one of the most unpredictable in recent memory.

There may only be a disappointing eight Rally1 cars on the entry list for this weekend's Monte Carlo curtain-raiser, but the intrigue surrounding the title fight has rarely been higher thanks to Rovanpera's mic drop at the end of 2023. The WRC's 23-year-old superstar has seemingly forsaken the chance to go for a hat-trick of crowns to "recharge my batteries". In the meantime, he will contest a half-season with Toyota, starting with round two in Sweden, before returning for a full-time championship attack in 2025.

This highly unusual decision has thrown the proverbial cat among the pigeons. Logic would dictate that last year's championship runner-up, Elfyn Evans, is now the favourite to go one better and end Britain's wait for a first champion since the late Richard Burns in 2001. But motorsport is hardly ever decided by logic and Evans, Toyota's new team leader, is rightfully not getting carried away by the situation he now finds himself in. "Of course [the title] is always the aim but we start on zero points, and you can take nothing for granted," points out the eight-time WRC rally winner. "Everybody is improving all of the time."

"We can't assume that because we ended 2023 on a high that things are going to be rosy in Monte. It's going to be tough and



BANKS/MCKLEIN

Rovanpera's part-season could actually make Evans's championship challenge harder

THE BIG THREE DRIVER STATS

ELFYN EVANS

Team Toyota Gazoo Racing

Co-driver Scott Martin

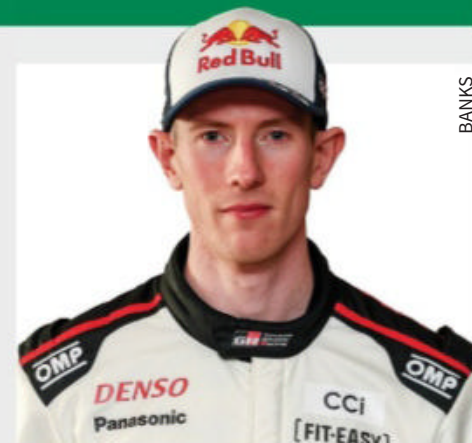
WRC starts 131

Wins 8

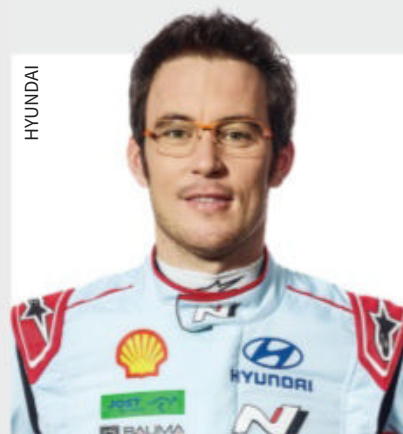
Podiums 30

Best champ pos

2nd (2020-21, 2023)



BANKS



HYUNDAI

THIERRY NEUVILLE

Team Hyundai Motorsport

Co-driver

Martijn Wydaeghe

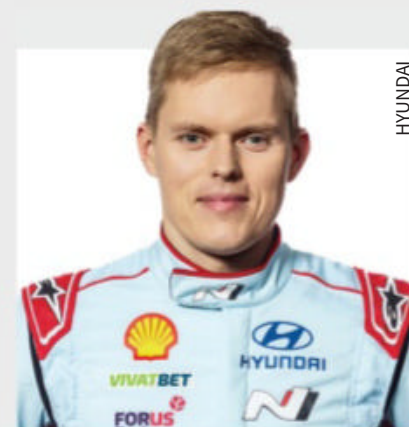
WRC starts 155

Wins 19

Podiums 63

Best champ pos

2nd (2013, 2016-19)



HYUNDAI

OTT TANAK

Team Hyundai Motorsport

Co-driver

Martin Jarveoja

WRC starts 149

Wins 19

Podiums 46

Best champ pos

1st (2019)

“We can’t assume that because we ended 2023 on a high that things are going to be rosy in Monte”

we know the Hyundai is a strong car and they have a strong driver line-up with Ott [Tanak] and Thierry [Neuville]. It’s definitely going to be difficult. The championship is very open in terms of how competitive it is and anybody in the top-flight cars can be on the podium almost on every rally. So even though there aren’t as many cars as we would like in the premier class, it still doesn’t mean that the speed is any less. It’s still very difficult to reach the end of the weekend victorious.”

But there is every reason to believe that the Welshman will be locked in to the 2024 title fight. His Toyota team has produced the car to beat since the launch of the hybrid Rally1 era, and last year, such was its dominance, the GR Yaris won nine of the 13 rounds. The reigning manufacturers’ champion has continued to refine its machine during the off-season.

“As we know the regulations are tight in terms of scope for development, but of course the team is always working to improve and there hasn’t been a huge change since Japan [scene of the 2023 finale],” adds Evans. “We are always working on little steps but there has been no huge revolution, but of course everyone is working all the time and continually improving.” »

SEASON PREVIEW

McMASTER/McKLEIN



First priority for newly black-liveried Toyota squad will be the constructors' crown



But Toyota and Evans are likely to face an even stronger challenge from Hyundai, which has focused on addressing its i20 N's reliability concerns, as well as shaving weight from its challenger (see page 36). The South Korean marque has also added extra firepower to its driver line-up in the shape of 2019 world champion Tanak, who rejoins the fold after a year at M-Sport. A hungry Tanak joining five-time championship runner-up Neuville means that the team now has two drivers in the fight for the title against Evans.

In addition to Hyundai's clear effort to wrestle the titles away from Toyota, there is also the WRC's radical new points system that has already divided opinion (see p32). Evans has made it clear that he's not a fan of the new format, designed to spice up Sundays by adding a new tactical element to events. The unknowns surrounding exactly how to extract the most from the WRC's move to split the distribution of championship points across Saturday and Sunday remains to be seen.

One aspect that appears to be in Evans's favour is the GR Yaris itself. He struggled to adjust to its demands in 2022, a season that Evans ended winless. But last year he managed

to unlock its pace, resulting in wins in Croatia, Finland and Japan, and was closer to Roanpera. A continuation of this will be essential for a serious title bid.

"Of course, 2023 was a nice progression from the struggles we had in 2022 – that was a positive but when you're not winning you're never really that happy," admits Evans. "But still I scored three wins, which is the most for me in a season. I think it shows that we're moving in the right direction and of course we want more in 2024, but it's not going to be easy to achieve that as we know the competition is tough. But I'm ready to give it our best shot."

Evans is most certainly ready, despite a rocky off-season that created headlines courtesy of a bike accident that injured his ribs. It forced him to miss December's FIA Gala and sit out a test in

BANKS/McKLEIN



Return of Tanak to Hyundai has upped the ante for title hopeful Neuville

CAN A HYUNDAI DRIVER *FINALLY* WIN THE DRIVERS' CROWN?

Kalle Roanpera's decision not to contest the full season may have eliminated a title contender, but Thierry Neuville believes that the championship fight will be just as tough in 2024.

The five-time WRC runner-up will not only face a challenge from Toyota's Elfyn Evans, but will have to deal with a renewed threat from within the Hyundai team following the return of Ott Tanak. One aspect that is universal in all forms of motorsport is that drivers always want to beat their team-mates, and on this occasion it will be crucial for his title hopes.

"I mean, the job is still the same and if Kalle is out, Ott will be in for sure," predicts Neuville. "I've always said that when Ott is in the team it was an extra motivation to push. With Ott I have had three years working with him and it has never been a real issue and we have been performing well. I don't see any issue for the future, especially with the

team structure and the management in place.

"I have always been hungry for the title. I have more chance in the upcoming years than I have had in the past, except maybe 2018 when we were very close. We know how to do it.

"We have set up the team as such to take out the maximum, so I think we have better chances this year for sure. But the fight will be tough again. There is no reason why it should be much easier than other years."

One area that could hinder Hyundai's charge is the i20 N, which Neuville feels is yet to perform to his liking on asphalt. "There are some points to improve but on gravel we are really close to something very good, but on Tarmac for me it is not how I would like it," he warns.

There can be no doubting Tanak's hunger for a second title. It's the very reason why he's opted to rejoin Hyundai – he has been convinced that the



Evans (with co-driver Martin) is ready to take the next step



Hyundai has a formidable driver line-up for this season

FABIEN/HYUNDAI

service park. There's no doubt that extra pressure will naturally come from being team leader, but it's nothing he can't handle, according to his Toyota team boss Jari-Matti Latvala.

"Yes, he is coping with the pressure well – you rarely see him showing emotions or anger," reckons Latvala. "Sometimes you might see him a bit nervous during an event, which is when he is

"He is coping with the pressure well. His concentration is one of the highest I'd say in the championship"

order to recover. But recover he has. The clean bill of health was confirmed by a successful pre-event Monte Carlo test.

"The feeling is getting better all of the time," he affirms. "It was not the ideal off-season, but nonetheless we're over the worst of it and the feeling in the car is fine, so that's the important thing and that will be the last we need to hear about it now."

With no concerns over his health, there are two big questions facing Evans this year. The first is, will he cope as Toyota team leader? The 35-year-old is one of the coolest and calmest characters in the service park. It seems that only something seismic can shake such a focused, meticulous and determined character. Evans has faced plenty of pressure from being involved in title fights before, and is now one of the most experienced in the

very quiet, but he is concentrating also. His concentration is one of the highest I would say in the championship. He is always in a mode where he wants to concentrate 110%."

The second question is whether Evans is ready to take a world title. Finishing runner-up in three of the past four seasons suggests he's more than ready to make the next step. In 2020 and 2021 he lost out to arguably the greatest driver in the championship's history in Ogier, while last year he was edged by once-in-a-generation talent Roanperera. Neither will be contesting the full campaign.

Latvala is adamant that his driver has the ingredients to succeed, but believes the fact that Roanperera isn't doing a full season could actually harm Evans's bid. "He is definitely ready, there is no question," adds Latvala. "For me, the difficulty >>

factors that prompted his departure in 2022 with a year remaining on his contract have been resolved. After a challenging 2023 at M-Sport, the 2019 champion believes that this new-look Hyundai, under the leadership of Cyril Abiteboul and technical director Francois-Xavier Demaison, can deliver.

"We had all the people but we didn't have the structure [in 2022]," says Tanak. "Structure-wise and general approach-wise, a lot has changed. We have a team principal, we have a technical director, and things are starting to take shape. When I left, I gave them the message, 'If you have this fixed then give me a call and we can work together.' They have done everything we spoke about. The vision and how to achieve things seems to be quite clear."

Tanak will once again be in the same machinery as Neuville, fighting for the same outright goal in their intra-team battle. In three years together across 2020-22, Tanak beat Neuville



Questions remain over the car's pace on sealed surfaces

2-1 in terms of championship positions. "For sure, there will be some competition and it can get a bit more spicy and interesting but previously we were still able to work together," concludes the Estonian. "It will be quite intense but I'm sure it will work out."

One of the key storylines will be how Abiteboul can manage his two stars. "When the season starts there will be absolute parity of parts, information,

opportunity and contractual rights and privilege to both drivers," states Abiteboul. "We have identified a milestone during the season where we will review the situation and possibly change our internal code of conduct. The drivers are aware of this. There will be conflict, there will be tension and I'm doing everything I can do now [to address this]. I'm not waiting for Monte Carlo or later in the season to discuss our strategy."



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Tanak took three wins for Hyundai in 2022 and was championship runner-up

WRC 2024 ENTRY LIST RALLY1

NO	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	TEAM (CAR)
8	Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)
11	Thierry Neuville/Martijn Wydaeghe	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)
4	Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)**
6	Dani Sordo/Candido Carrera	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)**
9	Andreas Mikkelsen/Torstein Eriksen	Hyundai Motorsport (i20 N Rally1)**
13	Gregoire Munster/Louis Louka	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team (Puma Rally1)
16	Adrien Fourmaux/Alexandre Coria	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team (Puma Rally1)
18	Takamoto Katsuta/Aaron Johnston	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1)
33	Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1)
17	Sebastien Ogier/Vincent Landais	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1)*
69	Kalle Rovannerpa/Jonne Halttunen	Toyota Gazoo Racing (GR Yaris Rally1)*
37	Lorenzo Bertelli/Simone Scattolin	Privateer entry (Toyota GR Yaris Rally1)***

*Partial campaign; **Sharing the third car; ***Competing in Rally Sweden

now is he is a little bit alone in our team now fighting for the title. When you know you have a team-mate who is also fighting for the title it is boosting yourself to do a better performance, and now he is missing that and fighting with two guys [Tanak and Neuville] who are getting support from a third driver. I think the pressure in that sense will be pretty high to try and win the title. To win a title you also need some luck. He has all the elements, but he needs things to go in the right way with luck as well.”

Latvala’s point is a valid one when you consider Hyundai’s line-up (see panel, p28) and the fact that Toyota’s second full-time pilot Takamoto Katsuta is still developing and is yet to record a WRC win. It has resulted in Latvala admitting that the manufacturers’ championship is Toyota’s priority, a stark opposite to the view of Hyundai boss Cyril Abiteboul, who declared the drivers’ title as the number one goal.

“Of course, our cards on the table are a bit different than previous seasons when we’ve had two drivers being able to fight for the championship and we have only one now,” reflects Latvala. “It is one against two Hyundais. At Hyundai the third-driver role is to support the other two drivers, and in our team we are more concentrated on a fair fight, so that is why we have to adjust our approach. The first target is to try and get the manufacturers’ title and if we achieve the drivers’ title that is a massive bonus. We are realistic and we know it is going to be a lot more difficult to achieve the drivers’ title this year than in previous years.”

While in Latvala’s eyes the drivers’ title is a bonus, becoming world champion will be Evans’s primary objective, and this year is perhaps his best opportunity yet to join the pantheon of WRC champions. Given the expected challenge from Hyundai, a world title will be thoroughly deserved and every bit as difficult to secure, despite Rovannerpa’s absence. 🍀

M-SPORT’S YOUNG GUNS READY TO FIRE

M-Sport has reshuffled its pack for 2024, opting for a young driver line-up that it hopes can cause some upsets aboard its Ford Pumas.

The British squad scored two victories last year through star signing Ott Tanak, but ultimately a mixture of misfortune and reliability issues ended a partnership that promised so much, with the Estonian rejoining Hyundai for 2024.

Replacing such a big name as Tanak is difficult. Talks were held with several drivers, including three-time World Rally winner Andreas Mikkelsen, before the Norwegian opted to join Hyundai to pilot the third car alongside Esapekka Lappi and Dani Sordo. In the end, M-Sport promoted Adrien Fourmaux and Gregoire Munster from its WRC2 programme.



A second crack at piloting a Puma full-time in the WRC’s top tier is a just reward for Fourmaux, who impressed after being demoted to Rally2 last year, following a challenging 2022 littered with errors. “It was my goal last year to get back in the Puma for a full season so I’m really happy to be back in the Rally1,” smiles Fourmaux (left), who dominated last year’s British Rally Championship. “Now we have to do our best to get the most out of it.”

Munster’s opportunity follows Puma Rally1 outings in Chile and Central Europe last year. He finished the latter in seventh, and that impressed the team. “I’m eager to start in Monte Carlo, and the goal for 2024 will be first to get some good results and increase the pace rally after rally and try not to make any mistakes,” says the 25-year-old.

While the line-up is relatively inexperienced,

M-Sport team principal Richard Millener believes that podiums are not out of the question this year: “I don’t think we would be doing our job properly if we said we were not aiming for a podium.

“Adrien has a point that he wants to prove and we look forward to seeing how he will go. He is a lot stronger mentally and has better driving consistency. But we’ve also got to be sensible and think about consistent results over this year as not everyone is doing a full season. It does actually give us an opportunity to cause some upsets.

“Gregoire had a good season with us last year and knows the team very well. I think it’s exciting to have two youngsters in the team.”

M-Sport has addressed some of the reliability issues with its Puma and intends to debut a new rear wing later this year.



WHAT'S NEW FOR 2024

The big news is a new – and very complicated – points system. Time to have a look at this and the other tweaks for the upcoming campaign

TOM HOWARD



NEW POINTS SYSTEM SET TO SHAKE UP RALLIES

Arguably the biggest change heading into the 2024 season is the FIA’s decision to introduce an all-new points scoring system.

Points will be awarded under the scale of 18-15-13-10-8-6-4-3-2-1 to those in the top 10 at the end of Saturday, but only to those crews who reach the final classification of the rally at the end of Sunday. The Saturday points of any crew who fail to finish on Sunday will be awarded to the next best-placed pairing. Additional points will be awarded for a separate classification based purely on the Sunday stages to the top seven, on a 7-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

The prime reason for the new system is to prevent drivers from cruising through Sunday’s stages preserving tyres for the end-of-rally Power Stage. Points for the Power Stage will remain unchanged, with the five fastest drivers receiving bonus points, from five for the winner to one for fifth.

The winner of the rally will, as usual, be determined by combined overall times from the start of the event, and there is still a maximum possible 30 points available at each round. But the new system raises the potential for the winner to leave the weekend without the biggest points haul.

It has sparked plenty of debate among drivers and team bosses...

WRC POINTS SCORING SYSTEM			
POSITION	SATURDAY POINTS*	SUNDAY POINTS	POWER STAGE
1	18	7	5
2	15	6	4
3	13	5	3
4	10	4	2
5	8	3	1
6	6	2	-
7	4	1	-
8	3	-	-
9	2	-	-
10	1	-	-

*POINTS ONLY AWARDED IF SUNDAY IS ALSO COMPLETED



ELFYN EVANS
Toyota driver
“I can’t say I’m huge fan and I think it has devalued the value of an event win a little bit, in that somebody who finishes fourth in a rally can still have the opportunity to walk away with more points than the rally winner. It’s complicated. It’s difficult to work out who is doing what and, if you come away from a rally weekend with only 18 points, it’s not going to feel like such a rewarding rally victory.”



OTT TANAK
Hyundai driver
“Let’s see how it works out. In terms of approach, it won’t change anything as you need to take the maximum from everything. It’s always easy to criticise but generally let’s say the meaning of victory is quite a lot less, so it’s not a big difference anymore if you are winning or second. It just gets a bit more complicated as well. I guess for us as the drivers it doesn’t really change anything. For sure, it means that you have to maximise on Sunday.”



THIERRY NEUVILLE
Hyundai driver
“It’s going to add more excitement and a bit of strategy as well. But for sure the drivers that are going to start with a good road position are going to be securing already a big amount of points on the Saturday night, so for those with a bad starting position you need minimum Saturday and Sunday to catch back some time, and this will not be possible anymore.”



ADRIEN FOURMAUX
M-Sport-Ford driver
“I think it will make the championship tighter for sure and it will make the drivers push on the Sunday. If you lose something on Saturday, you can still score points on Sunday or the opposite: if you have a really bad Sunday, you still have your points from Saturday [if you reach the finish]. You can score more points if you get to the end all the time, but you can also lose a lot if you retire.”



CYRIL ABITEBOUL
Hyundai team principal
“We’ve been brainstorming with other teams and the FIA, and we came up with a proposal to split the weekend into two parts. There is a level of complexity having gone through the promoter, the FIA and the WRC Commission, and it’s a bit more complex than initially designed. But as long as it still achieves the effect of making Sunday more exciting than what is has been, I will be a happy man. Let’s see how the WRC community can take advantage of this opportunity to tell a new story, which hopefully can be a positive effect in capturing a new type of fan. We need the casual fans that Formula 1 has been capable of capturing by testing new things like this.

“There are a few things that probably need to be looked into and taken into consideration. For example, the road orders need to be considered, in particular, this year with the situation we have in the championship, and also tyre allocation. But it’s important we don’t have any kneejerk reaction about an attempt from the sport to improve one of its weaknesses.”



RICHARD MILLENER
M-Sport team chief
“I think it’s great. Nobody likes change, but I think we have to change. WRC, as a whole, hasn’t done any changes since the introduction of Power Stage points, and they were a great change, but then we kind of went stale and stagnant for five years. This is a big change, but I think it has brought in a lot more strategy. It’s probably a slight advantage for us with our line-up. We can have a strong Friday and Saturday, maybe from an advantageous road position, and then we can reassess on Saturday night. There’s more strategy from the teams because at the moment it’s very much driver related, which is great, but team sports work when the whole team is involved. I think this is a really good step. It’s not the only one we need to make.”



JARI-MATTI LATVALA
Toyota team supremo
“It’s very different, the points system now. It means that there are basically two different competitions. It’s slightly complicated, and I hope over the year we start to understand it better and realise the system and how it goes. In the beginning I think it’s difficult to say exactly what is the best approach. We will see over the year and we now need to learn it over the first few rallies. It’s something different, but it’s the same for everybody. Let’s hope that the competition is now stronger on Sunday, but on Sunday there will be a risk, but you can’t risk too much.” >>

SEASON PREVIEW



TOYOTA

TOYOTA JOINS THE WRC2 PLAYGROUND

WRC2 will welcome a new player in 2024 – Toyota is joining the fray with its new GR Yaris Rally2 car. The Japanese marque has been developing the machine since 2022 in order to join the thriving customer market, which includes Rally1 rivals Hyundai and M-Sport Ford alongside Skoda and Citroen.

The GR Yaris Rally2 made its public debut at Rally Japan in 2022 and has since undergone an extensive 15,000km development programme. For its WRC bow on the Monte Carlo Rally, it will be driven by Sami Pajari, Stephane Lefebvre,

Bryan Bouffier and Jan Solans.

It all means an even more intriguing WRC2 battle. Toksport Skoda will be led by Oliver Solberg, last year’s runner-up Gus Greensmith and 2019 champion Pierre-Louis Loubet, who rejoins the second tier after a Rally1 stint with M-Sport in 2022 and 2023. Citroen will be represented by Yohan Rossel, Nikolay Gryazin and Marco Bulacia, while M-Sport and Hyundai are not represented in the class on the Monte and have yet to reveal their plans, although Teemu Suninen is strongly linked with a seat at the South Korean marque.

NON-HYBRID RALLY1 CARS NOW ELIGIBLE

Non-hybrid Rally1 cars can now compete in the World Rally Championship, after the FIA World Motor Sport Council agreed to a WRC Commission proposal to allow entries without the control plug-in system. Instead, they will have to carry the weight of the full EV system as ballast, and won’t be eligible for manufacturers’ championship points.

Running without the 100kW Compact Dynamics hybrid unit will result in a reduction of approximately 100bhp, plus lower cost. It also opens the doors for Rally1 cars to compete in regional rallies. “It essentially creates a step between Rally2 and Rally1 and it’s something the manufacturers have supported,” explains FIA road sport director Andrew Wheatley.

Teams are also now limited to using a maximum of three new hybrid units in 2024 – down from nine – to cut costs. But drivers will no longer incur a five-minute penalty for changing an engine between pre-rally scrutineering and the first time control, a rule that impacted Ott Tanak on Rally Estonia last year.



M-SPORT

LATVIA TO MAKE DEBUT, POLAND RETURNS



SZABO/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

The WRC’s 13-round calendar has undergone a shake-up for 2024, with the biggest changes a maiden visit to Latvia and the return of Poland.

The Baltic nation has earned a promotion from the European Rally Championship and its gravel stages will fill the July slot usually held by neighbouring Estonia, which has been unable to secure funding to remain on the calendar and will join the ERC.

Poland rejoins the WRC for the first time since 2017, effectively replacing Mexico to host round seven. The only other changes are the Monte Carlo Rally’s return to Gap as its host, while Safari Rally Kenya has moved from a June slot to host the third round in March. The calendar comprises four asphalt rounds, eight gravel rallies and one snow event.

WRC 2024 CALENDAR

RD	RALLY	DATES	SURFACE
1	Monte Carlo	25-28 Jan	asphalt/ice
2	Sweden	15-18 Feb	snow
3	Safari Rally Kenya	28-31 March	gravel
4	Croatia	18-21 April	asphalt
5	Portugal	9-12 May	gravel
6	Italy/Sardinia	30 May-2 June	gravel
7	Poland	27-30 June	gravel
8	Latvia	18-21 July	gravel
9	Finland	1-4 Aug	gravel
10	Greece	5-8 Sept	gravel
11	Chile	26-29 Sept	gravel
12	Central Europe	31 Oct-3 Nov	asphalt
13	Japan	21-24 Nov	asphalt

NEW LOOKS FOR WRC TEAMS

Unusually, all three WRC Rally1 teams have undergone significant changes to their liveries for the 2024 season. Toyota has dispensed with its traditional red, white and black colours for

a matte black look on the latest iteration of its GR Yaris. Hyundai has undertaken a noticeable reworking of its livery, featuring its factory sky blue and orange colours that adorn a lighter

i20 N. M-Sport has replaced its Fords' electric blue livery of 2023 with a striking white-and-blue paintjob that harks back to some of the Blue Oval's famous colour schemes of the past.



THULLIER/HYUNDAI MOTORSPORT GMBH



M-SPORT



RAINAMO/TOYOTA



Hyundai's vast 16,000sq m home in Alzenau, Germany

SOUL TO SEOUL BACK TO LIFE

Hyundai chief Cyril Abiteboul reckons the South Korean marque pumps more money into the WRC than anyone else. But he knows that success is about the human side as much as resources

TOM HOWARD

PHOTOGRAPHY HYUNDAI

Pressure is not confined to tyres at Hyundai Motorsport ahead of the 2024 World Rally Championship. The South Korean marque boasts an experienced new line-up of drivers, who are all proven as rally winners, so expectation levels are high as it aims to break Toyota's stranglehold on the series.

Given the investment to lure 2019 world champion Ott Tanak back to the fold after a year at M-Sport, while adding three-time rally winner Andreas Mikkelsen to its pool of drivers for its third car, there is no hiding from the fact that it's time to deliver. And that's something that is welcomed by its leader Cyril Abiteboul. "The pressure will be higher for sure, but that is also what is making it exciting," smiles the Frenchman. "An extra amount of pressure is driving us to do what we do. I welcome it."

"This year, we want to target more frequent wins, which we hope to achieve with our refreshed driver line-up and improved Hyundai i20 N Rally1 Hybrid. Also, given the nature of the 2024 season, we believe we can fight for the drivers' title."

For the past three years, Hyundai has witnessed rival Toyota sweep all before it. A hat-trick of WRC drivers' and manufacturers' titles has established the Japanese marque as the team to beat. While Hyundai's 2019 and 2020 manufacturers' titles seem a long time ago now, there is every reason to believe the sky-blue-and-orange cars can break Toyota's hold this year. More importantly, the reasons not to succeed for a team Abiteboul believes has the biggest budget in the WRC are running out.

This is thanks to a methodical strategy being carried out by the former Renault Formula 1 boss, who was hired last year to turn around the team's fortunes. Abiteboul is working through

"The pressure will be higher for sure, but that is also what is making it exciting. I welcome it"



Hyundai has lured 2019 world champion Ott Tanak (right) and co-driver Martin Jarveoja back for 2024

a carefully constructed plan of changes designed to bring success. "There's no silver bullet in motorsport," he points out. "I can share with you that I have a tracker of all the organisational changes I want to make, and it's something like 28 lines in my table."

So how many of these changes has Abiteboul achieved in his 12 months in charge? "Not enough actually, it's probably in the region of five," he answers. "It's all about people and organisation, and in the past I think there was too much of a feeling that it was all about money. We probably have the biggest budget in rallying but our performance shows that it's not just about money. I want to move slightly in the direction of looking after people and organisation, and not just that we have financial resources available."

Those five changes have already significantly strengthened Hyundai to a point where it should be able to push Toyota much harder in 2024. The first task completed was to shore up the team's

Team principal Cyril Abiteboul is working through a 28-point plan to take Hyundai to the top of the WRC



technical side. Renowned WRC engineer Christian Loriaux was moved from a consultant role to become WRC programme manager, and the team's 2022 interim leader Julien Moncet was moved back to his role as powertrain boss. Francois-Xavier Demaison, one of the gurus behind the all-conquering Volkswagen Polo WRC car from 2013-16 and a former Williams F1 employee, was snapped up to fill the critical technical director role.

With the core team structure in place, Abiteboul has now assembled arguably the strongest and most experienced driver line-up. Tanak has rejoined five-time title runner-up Thierry Neuville, who scored Hyundai's two wins last year. The pair will be supported by a third car shared between Esapekka Lappi (who moves to a part-time role), the championship's safest pair of hands belonging to veteran Dani Sordo, and reigning WRC2 champion Mikkelsen – the Norwegian rejoins the top flight for the first >>



Hyundai's i20 N has been upgraded



time since leaving Hyundai at the end of 2019.

So Abiteboul can comfortably remove the ‘improve technical team’ and ‘strengthen driver line-up’ bullet points from his table. The next target is to enhance the i20 N Rally1, which appears to be the final piece of the jigsaw. But this is not a simple job, because WRC Rally1 regulations are already strict as to what teams can alter/improve on their cars. On top of that, significant upgrades require teams to use limited homologation jokers to make them a reality. Testing is restricted to 21 pre-event tests for manufacturer teams – seven per driver – so the premium on ensuring an upgrade is worth spending a joker upon is high. Hyundai has used jokers to improve the reliability of its 2024 i20 N, which has also undergone a weight-saving programme over the off-season.

“There are still some things that we need to align – the car is the elephant in the room,” Abiteboul states. “The drivers are important, but the car is as well. We are doing one step for sure with the homologation joker, but we need to do more of these steps in order to give the guys the car they really need to fight for the manufacturer championship. It’s very clear that last year we suffered with reliability issues. However, we have made a key upgrade to rectify this, and it has since been through a thorough analysis and validation process. Another weakness of the car was its weight in certain configurations, and again this has been addressed.”

Extracting the best from the i20 N will fall under the remit of the 270 staff employed at the team’s Alzenau factory in Germany – a facility Autosport was invited to visit during the off-season. For a powerhouse the size of Hyundai, locating its vast motorsport base in a small traditional Bavarian town with a population of 19,000 might seem strange. But the reason for setting up camp here is its proximity to Hyundai Motor Europe’s headquarters in nearby Frankfurt, which coincidentally boasts Germany’s largest community of expat Koreans (approximately 5300) and a hub of firms from the nation, including tech giant Samsung.

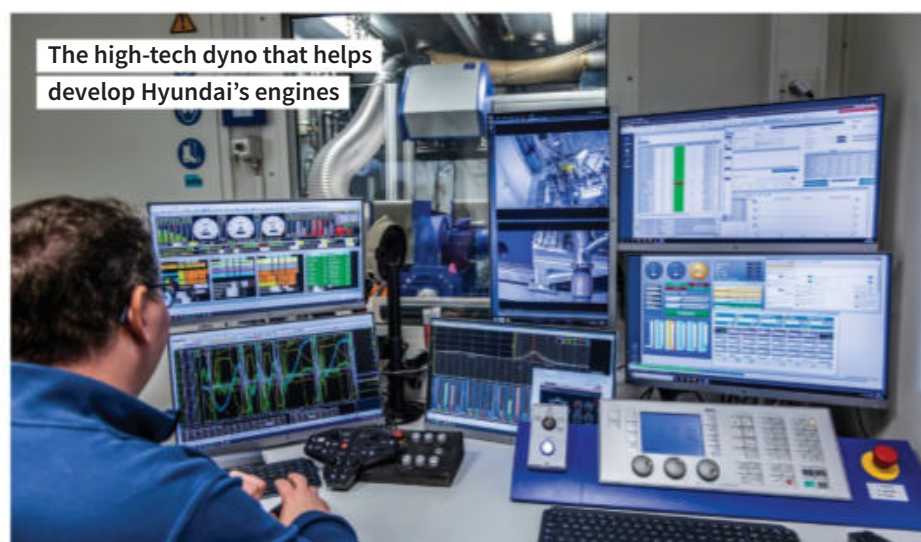
Ever since Hyundai elected to rejoin the WRC in 2014, the team has been based in a rented workshop that used to be occupied by a solar panel firm. In the past decade this has doubled in size to a vast 16,000 square metre facility where Hyundai’s WRC machines

are designed and constructed, alongside its customer rallying and TCR business. It’s obvious that the WRC is Hyundai Motorsport’s core business; the reception area is dominated by a glitzy trophy cabinet featuring its most prized WRC silverware. The rally theme continues with a large electronic board counting down the months, days and hours to the next rally, just like the timing screens hanging above the cars during WRC events that notify mechanics of the time remaining during services.

The scale of the facility is difficult to comprehend until seen first-hand, but according to Abiteboul there is a need for even more space. “It’s very much what we need in terms of place and set-up and space, but actually despite the size we are already short of space in certain locations,” he reckons. “It’s typical motorsport – you always want more, and if we had a bigger place we would be struggling for space. I think the one thing that we need to look at, once we have a view for the future regulations in 2027, is the sort of capacity that we need to deliver.”

What is pertinent is that Hyundai clearly cares about its history and its own motorsport journey. There is a selection of its cars in the customer racing workshop, including examples from its first unsuccessful foray into the WRC, represented by the Motor Sport Developments-run Hyundai Coupe F2 car (1998-99) and the Accent





The high-tech dyno that helps develop Hyundai's engines

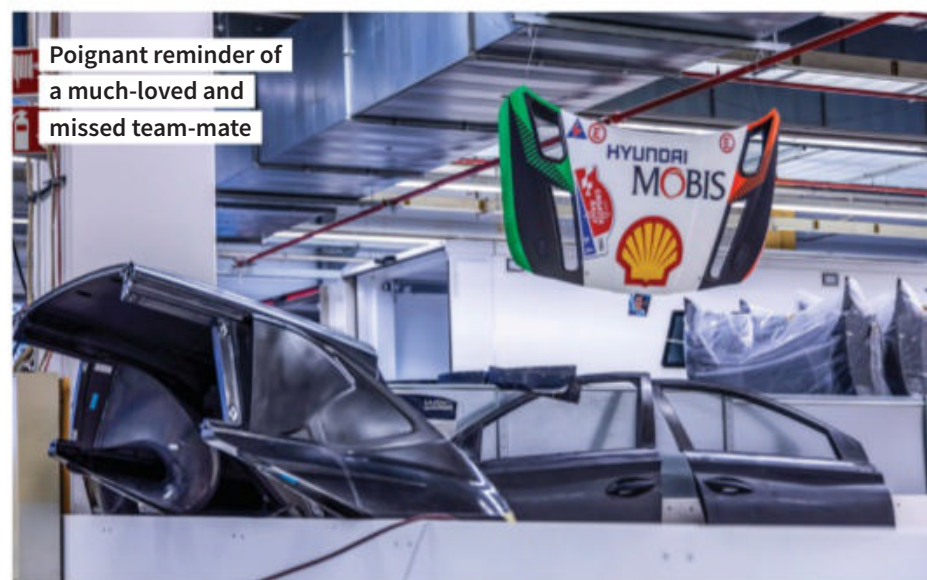


Engines can take three weeks to build from scratch

WRC (2000-03). These reminders of the past represent Hyundai's policy of keeping a working example of every car it has produced.

Adjacent to this is a similarly large workshop devoted solely to the WRC team. It's here where the i20 Ns are designed, constructed, fettled, repaired and prepped to do battle in the world's harshest terrains. Again, this constant theme of history is ever-present. The pristine working bays are plastered with images from past rallies and triumphs. But this is juxtaposed by a poignant reminder of the human side of this business and the loss the team suffered last year. In the middle of the workshop hangs a bonnet overlooking all the bays. It's from one of the two i20 Ns that featured a memorial tri-colour livery in Croatia last year, paying tribute to talented Irishman Craig Breen, a much-loved member of this team, whose life was tragically cut short in a testing crash.

The bonnet hangs above a busy workshop that is divided into several sections. One portion is allocated to recce cars and the test team, the WRC event team is situated adjacent, while on the far side is the powertrain/engine workshop – home to 40-50 staff. It is here where engines and gearboxes are built – a process that can take three weeks from scratch. The department also houses damper and engine dynos where suspension and power units are rigorously tested. The two engine dynos can put power units and



Poignant reminder of a much-loved and missed team-mate

“It's typical motorsport – you always want more, and if we had a bigger place we'd be struggling for space”

hybrid systems through the most extreme of tests, mimicking temperatures from the freezing cold of Sweden to the heat and humidity of Sardinia and Kenya. No stone is left unturned in this process to produce the perfect engine. An example of a steering wheel from a WRC car is connected to the dyno software to recreate exactly the settings and engine maps a driver would select during certain events at the touch of a button.

But it's back in the main workshop area where the cars are assembled, and Hyundai can thank the building's previous occupants for a piece of technology that saves mechanics a whole heap of time. It is simply called the Megamat, and there are three of them. This ingenious electronic contraption resembles something conceived by Wallace and Gromit, but it's essentially a smart elevator that can retrieve components. Originally it was used to retrieve solar panels and bring them to the workshop floor from an 11-metre-high storage room in the building. Hyundai has replaced solar panels by storing a plethora of components from lights, screws, washers and everything in between in this vertical Aladdin's cave. A mechanic simply keys into the Megamat what he requires, and within seconds this device has gathered the items from the storage area and they are placed on a tray to collect. There is no need to walk to a storage department, saving time and energy when building or repairing cars.

The tour is completed by a walk through the design office, where engineers sit behind their computer screens poring over data while using the latest CAD software to design components – and ultimately cars – that Hyundai hopes will have an edge over their rivals. And this highlights the crux of its quest for glory. All the ingredients have been assembled. Now, as Abiteboul says, it's time to deliver: “Success in 2024 will be our focus, and we are confident that we have the right pieces in place for this to be a reality.”



BATTLE OF TWO TITANS HITS IMSA

Car manufacturing behemoths Ford and Chevrolet will fight it out across 24 hours at Daytona with their respective, and iconic, V8 muscle cars, the Mustang and Corvette

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**





GALSTAD

Two of the biggest manufacturers in the world are finally turning up at the biggest motor racing party in the world. Ford and Chevrolet, two marques with rich racing pedigrees, are belatedly pitching up in GT3 with factory programmes in the 19th season of the category. Each is arriving with an iconic V8 muscle car: Ford with the Mustang; Chevrolet with the Corvette. To say they go head to head for the first time on home ground in the IMSA SportsCar Championship's season-opening Daytona 24 Hours isn't quite right. That would be to ignore the nine other manufacturers represented in the GT Daytona classes this weekend.

The two American marques have decided at exactly the same time to go up against Ferrari, Porsche, Lamborghini, BMW *et al* in a division that has enjoyed boom times for much of its existence for many of the same reasons. Among them is the ability for Ford and Chevrolet to now take on the challenge of the Le Mans 24 Hours by racing in the World Endurance Championship with GT3 machinery in LMGT3. So, too, is the fact that both are going racing to show off their latest products: the seventh-generation

Mustang has arrived in the 2024 model year, while the latest Corvette to wear the halo Z06 badge – the mid-engined C8 version – went on sale in 2022.

But there are differences: the Mustang programme is all-new, the Corvette an extension of an existing one that has already extended into the latest era. The GM marque was allowed to race on with its GTE-rules C8.R Corvette in down-specced form in GT Daytona Pro for the past two seasons.

It would be easy to interpret Chevy's decision to build the Z06 GT3.R as a continuation of Corvette Racing campaigns that stretch all the way back to 1999 and the debut of the C5-R GTS racer at Daytona. (It would pitch up at Le Mans for the first time as part of its maiden full season of racing the following year.) That's not quite the case. The Corvette programme, as was, that straddled four generations of the machine, two different classes (GTS/GT1 and GT2/GTE) and five distinct racing cars was a full-on works programme. Corvette Racing, run by the Pratt Miller organisation that has long since dropped the ampersand from the middle of its name, developed the cars and went racing. The sale of »



GALSTAD

SEASON PREVIEW

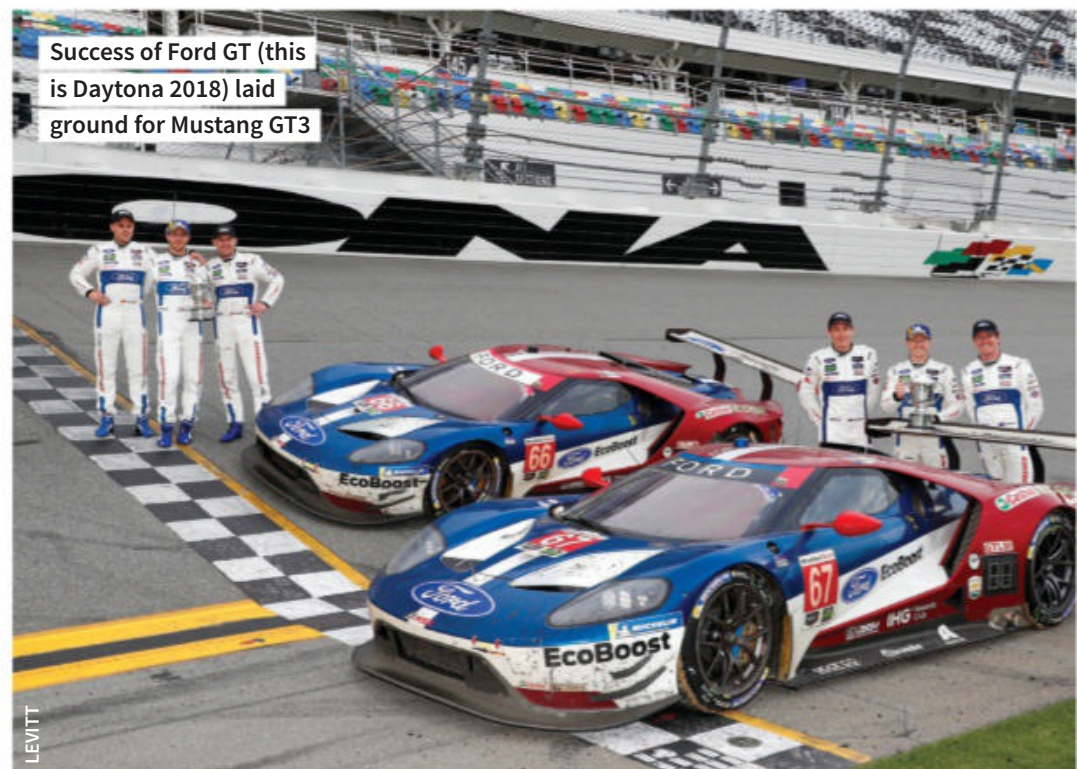
machinery to customers was an afterthought, with the exception of the cars raced by the likes of GLPK/ Carsport Holland and Phoenix in the FIA GT Championship, and more recently Larbre Competition in the WEC's GTE Am division.

Those were factory chassis that were surplus to requirements. But this time it's different.

That explains why Laura Wontrop Klauser, boss of sportscar racing at Chevrolet parent General Motors, says the decision to finally develop a new car for the category, announced in November 2021, "wasn't taken lightly". Chevrolet isn't just going racing as a factory in the GTD Pro class; it is also building cars for customer teams that will race around the globe. It has to. The requirement to sell 20 cars over the first two seasons of a new GT3 contender was firmed up in the 2020 ruleset. GT3, its architect-in-chief Stephane Ratel has always insisted, is first and foremost a customer racing platform.

"We were really excited by the opportunity as the Corvette road car goes more global to have a race programme that complements that," says Klauser. "Was the time right to go to the customer GT3 platform? The answer was yes. There was clearly the influence that our core programme in GTE, and GT2 and GT1 before that, was no longer available, but what IMSA did by having the GTD Pro class was really great, so we could keep a presence with a factory-supported team. It was kind of perfect timing where we were with the production car and how close the tie-in is with the Z06 road car. It seemed like the stars aligned."

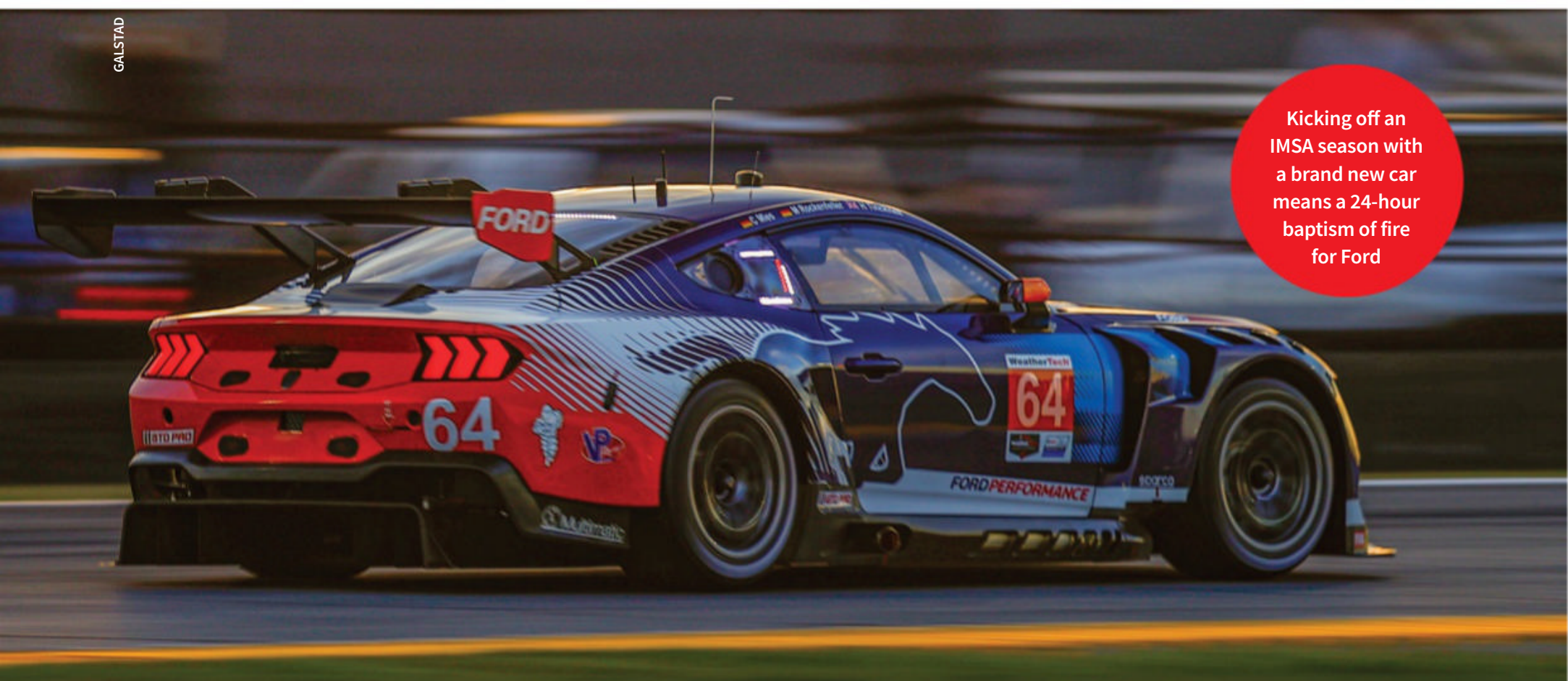
Ford offers similar rhetoric. Mark Rushbrook, the company's

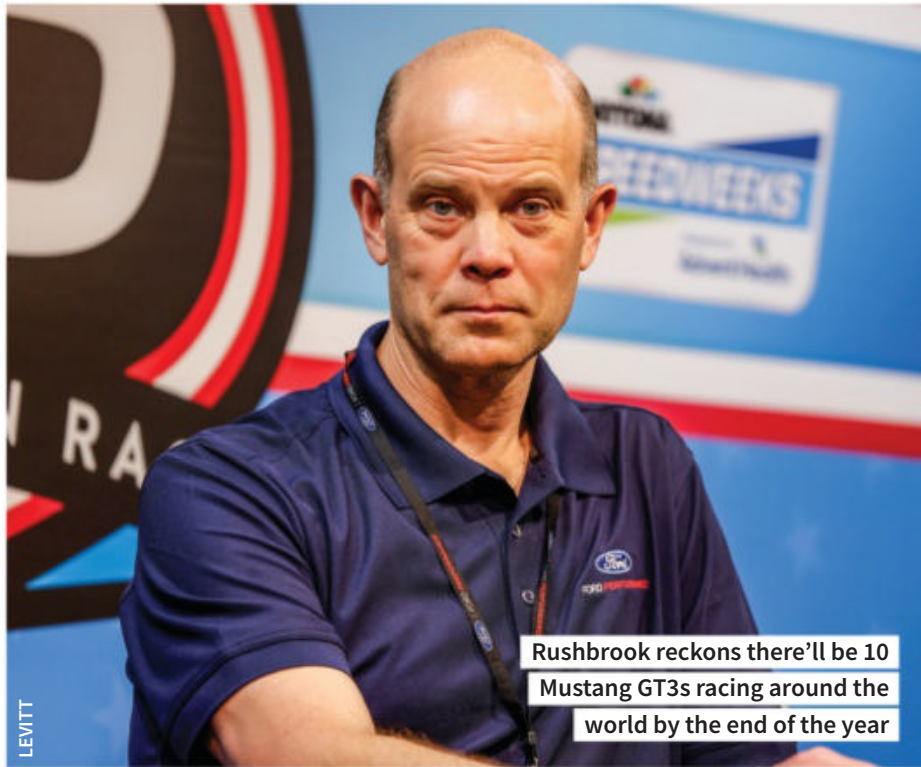


motorsport director, says the chance to go racing around the world with the new Mustang presents an "opportunity to tell a very compelling story about our product". The Ford GT that raced in GTE in the WEC and in GT Le Mans in IMSA – and took class honours at Le Mans in 2016 and then at Daytona in 2017 and 2018 – laid the ground for the car simply called the Mustang GT3 racing this weekend.

"We loved the race programme with the Ford GT from 2016 through 2019," he says. "At the time with the two separate GT classes it limited what we were able to do. We were always watching for or hoping to see the global convergence of the classes. We were looking for the right opportunity to continue in global sportscar racing. When we saw that convergence would be happening, when we saw GTE/GTLM would be ending and there would be an opportunity with GT3 to race around the world in so many great series, including as a factory in IMSA and customer racing everywhere else, it made it a very interesting place. It was very good timing in the sense that we had the all-new seventh-generation Mustang coming out. It all did come together. I wouldn't say it was a no-brainer because there was a lot of hard work to get it approved. But it was approved, and here we are."

Ford announced its GT3 entry with the Mustang at Daytona two





“We were looking for the right opportunity to continue in global sportscar racing”

years ago. Little more than a year later came the revelation that it would be returning to Formula 1 in 2026 in conjunction with Red Bull Racing. The Blue Oval has what Rushbrook describes as a “quadrant strategy” when it comes to motorsport. F1 is one quarter of that plan; its rallying activities in the World Rally Championship with M-Sport and now also at the Dakar Rally, plus a line of electric demonstrators, including SuperVan 4 (which debuted at the 2022 Goodwood Festival of Speed), represent two more. Going racing with the Mustang makes up the final 25%: the world’s best-selling sportscar is not only racing in GT3, but also in GT4 with a new-for-2024 machine, V8 Supercars in Australia and NASCAR, where the manufacturer has swapped to the Mustang sportscar silhouette for 2024.

“Those four different quadrants are very full and very complete,” states Rushbrook. “Does that mean we are not going to add anything in the near future? No, not necessarily. But we are satisfied with that for now.”

Ford Performance Motorsport has again partnered with Canadian-headquartered Multimatic Motorsports for the project. It developed both road and race versions of the Ford GT and ran the car in WEC – that was a Multimatic team running out of workshops near Silverstone, even if the name on the entry was Ford Chip Ganassi Team UK; the ‘real’ Ganassi team ran only the IMSA cars. Now it has been responsible for turning the Mustang into a GT3 car and will run the factory GTD Pro team in IMSA from its facility in Mooresville, North Carolina.

“We have such a great relationship with Multimatic as a company and the individuals involved that goes across a lot of motorsport programmes but also a lot of road programmes,” explains Rushbrook. “Larry [Holt, Multimatic’s motorsport boss] and his team were the first call.”

And the call did go that way: from Ford HQ in Detroit to Multimatic in Toronto. Just like it did with the Ford GT, recalls Holt. “I was thinking coming up to the 50th anniversary of Ford’s 1966 Le Mans victory that the time was right for them to do something, but it wasn’t actually my idea – they came to me,” says Holt of the project that resulted in the Ford GT after a brief look at what could be done with the Mustang to the GTE rules. “This time it wasn’t me saying we should do a GT3 on the new Mustang, they came knocking on my door again.” >>

ELSEWHERE AT DAYTONA...

WAYNE TAYLOR RACING DOUBLES UP

Wayne Taylor Racing has won the Daytona 24 Hours four times in the past seven years, and on each occasion it did so with a single-car entry. The bad news for the opposition in the GTP class is that it’s now running two. Equally foreboding is the fact that it has linked up with Andretti Global for its expanded full-season assault with Acura’s ARX-06. WTRAndretti, short for Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti, has a new depth of engineering resource behind it, so important in the new era of LMDh hybrids. The driver line-up is mouthwatering, too. Among its number are a Formula 1 world champion and an Indianapolis 500 winner in Jenson Button and Marcus Ericsson respectively, and three-time Le Mans 24 Hours victor Brendon Hartley. That’s not counting the successes of its full-time drivers: Ricky and Jordan Taylor, Filipe Albuquerque and Louis Deletraz are all sportscar champions at or near the highest level.



PORSCHE HAS WEIGHT IN NUMBERS

Porsche was represented by the two factory Penske entries when the 963 LMDh made its debut at the start of the new GTP era at Daytona this time last year. Now its bid for a first overall victory at the 24 Hours since 2003 – and a first with a prototype since 1995 (excluding Porsche-powered Rileys!) – is bolstered by a pair of customer cars from Proton Competition and JDC-Miller MotorSports. That’s significant given that the indies running the German prototype have proved that they can compete at the same level as both arms of Porsche Penske Motorsport. Proton was best Porsche at last year’s Petit Le Mans IMSA curtain-closer at Road Atlanta, while over in the World Endurance Championship Jota led the Stuttgart marque’s charge at the Bahrain finale. Endurance Racing can so often be a numbers game, and Porsche has twice as many cars as each of its rivals. >>



SEASON

PREVIEW

#4 Corvette will be shared by Tommy Milner, Nicky Catsburg and Earl Bamber



GALSTAD



Holt, though, has long had a keen interest in both the GT3 class and going racing with the Mustang: “I’d always wanted to do a GT3 Mustang with Ford.” Multimatic has previously built two versions of the car to GT3 regulations with Ford blessing rather than backing: one, produced out of its FR500C developed for what was then known as the Grand-Am Cup, raced in the FIA GT3 European Championship in 2008; and then a car commissioned by the Belgian Marc VDS squad that took to the track in 2011. He reckons there have been something approaching 10 Multimatic Mustang racers, from a first car that raced domestically in Canada to the GT4 variant that took class honours in last year’s British GT Championship. Slightly nearer the beginning than the middle was a tubeframe GTS-1 racer driven by *Beverly Hills*, 90210 star Jason Priestley among others in 1996-98.

Work began in earnest on the project ahead of the Daytona 2022 announcement. “Before that it was a case of doing a feasibility study and asking the question, ‘Can a big car like the Mustang be made to be competitive with a Ferrari with the Balance of Performance?’” recalls Holt. “Work properly began straight after the announcement; up to then it was really just a concept.”

The first car was up and running just over a year later. After a brief shakedown close to base in Mooresville, testing began at Sebring the week after the IMSA/WEC double-header weekend.

That first car completed more than 14,500 miles before it was retired at the end of last year.

“That car tested all over the place; it was the car we brought to Europe for customers to try,” says Holt. “It was looking a bit shaggy by the end, but that was the idea. We only changed stuff that broke. We used it to undertake a kind of rolling endurance test, and I can say that we didn’t have any major failures.”

Homologation of the car was completed in November, and the Multimatic team will race chassis #4 and #5 at Daytona. It will be joined on the grid by Proton Competition, the longtime Porsche team with which it forged a link in 2021. It placed Harry Tincknell, who remains under contract with Multimatic after racing as part of the Ford GT and Mazda Daytona Prototype international programmes, at the team and effectively ran the 911 RSR over the remainder of that year’s WEC and the following season. Tincknell stays on board with Multimatic and will race one of the Mustang GT3s in GTD Pro.

Proton will run a car in the regular GTD class for pro-am line-ups in a full IMSA programme alongside its WEC assault with the Mustang. Again Holt said that the idea for Proton to come on board wasn’t down to him. “I was thinking ‘how am I going to get a WEC entry?’ when Christian [Ried, Proton boss] rang me,” he remembers. “I knew that a team that had been in the WEC since the beginning was unlikely to be turned away.”

The other confirmed customer going into the 2024 season is the Italian Dinamic Motorsport squad. It has also swapped over from Porsche to fly the Ford flag in the GT World Challenge Europe with a pair of cars, one to be raced in the Pro class and crewed by a roster of factory drivers. Further announcements will follow, but Holt expects that there will be 10 Mustang GT3s racing around the world by the end of this year. “We’ve got nothing to announce just yet,” says Rushbrook, “but if we had 20 cars sitting here today we could sell every one of them.”

Chevrolet will also be represented in the GTD class in IMSA, with two Z06 GT3.Rs run by Canadian team AWA Motorsport. The marque’s representative in WEC will be the British TF Sport squad, GTE Am champion in 2022. US squad DXDT Racing, meanwhile, will field a solo car in the GTWC America.

The GM brand remains “very excited about getting cars into all the series in Europe”, according to Klauser. “How that will look



“It’s been positive for a brand-new car. All the little problems we have had have been just that: little”

and which one will come first is still being figured out. The next round of announcements will be about 2025, but you might see some more Corvettes catch the tail end of the season.”

What came to be known as the Z06 GT3.R was given a shakedown at GM’s Milford proving ground in October 2022, with testing beginning in earnest at Daytona straight after last year’s 24 Hours. Tommy Milner, who stepped back from a full-time racing role in 2023 to lead development of the GT3, reckons that he alone has completed about 5000 miles in the car.

“It’s been positive for a brand-new car,” reckons Milner. “We haven’t done a start-to-finish 24-hour test, but we have put close to 24 hours on the car without having to change anything. All the little problems we have had have been just that: little.”

But the onerous task for a manufacturer bleeding a new car in IMSA is that the season kicks off with the longest race of the season.

“A normal IMSA race of two hours and 45 minutes would be just perfect for your first race, but no it has to be a 24-hour race!” laughs Holt. “I could say that we have done everything we can and are confident, but that would be a newbie thing to claim. I’ve been to Daytona too many times before to say that.”



RESURGENT LMP2 CONTEST

The LMP2 class may have disappeared from the World Endurance Championship, but it’s booming everywhere else, IMSA included. Those facts are undoubtedly connected. An entry that’s up in quantity and quality in North America now boasts United Autosports among its number: its WEC P2 squad has effectively switched over to the US. Also joining from the WEC is Inter Europol, class winner at Le Mans last year. Star drivers in what is a fully pro-am class – there must be a bronze-rated driver in the full-season crew and a silver at the enduros – include ex-F1 and Peugeot WEC racer Paul di Resta, and Felix Rosenqvist and Pato O’Ward from IndyCar.



MASSA IS BACK

Felipe Massa, the winner of 11 grands prix, is back racing internationally for the first time since his two-season Formula E career came to an end in 2020; he has plied his trade at home in the Brazilian Stock Car Championship since. The former Sauber, Ferrari and Williams F1 driver is racing in LMP2 aboard a Riley Motorsports ORECA-Gibson 07 thanks to friend and Stock Car sparring partner Felipe Fraga: the Riley regular made the introduction. It will be Massa’s first sportscar race, not counting an outing in the Porsche GT3 Cup in his homeland.



THE COMPETITIVENESS OF GTD

The arrival of Ford’s and Chevrolet’s new GT3 racers may be the headline stories in GT Daytona going into the season, but they are just part of an ultra-competitive field made up of machinery from 11 manufacturers in a two-pronged class that’s up in numbers, too. There are 36 cars in total – 13 in Pro and 23 in regular GTD.



SEASON
PREVIEW

Cameron is back home in IMSA and has joined the strength of the #7 Porsche

RETURN OF THE DAYTONA PROTOTYPE KING

Dane Cameron has conquered IMSA's top class for Acura and Corvette. Now he's back with Porsche, teaming up with Felipe Nasr

CHARLES BRADLEY

Porsche's inaugural campaign with its 963 in the IMSA SportsCar Championship last year took a while to get into its stride, so the Penske-run operation made a big call to retrieve Dane Cameron from its World Endurance Championship line-up to bolster its American efforts.

The softly spoken 35-year-old Californian, a former rising star in open-wheel racing, has become renowned as one of the world's finest sportscar racers. After falling from the ladder to IndyCar, despite winning the Star Mazda crown in 2007, he became something of a sportscar racing nomad. It was an IMSA GTD class championship in 2014, driving a Turner Motorsport BMW Z4, that propelled him to a seat with Action Express Racing in its top-class Corvette Daytona Prototype for 2015, and he took the overall title at the second attempt with team-mate Eric Curran.

Cameron then moved to Penske's factory Acura programme



in 2018 and claimed his second DPi title alongside Juan Pablo Montoya a year later. His vast experience made him one of Penske's first hires for its Porsche 963 project, and he warmed up for his WEC campaign with some LMP2 outings for the team in 2022, sharing with ex-Formula 1 racer Felipe Nasr. They are now reunited in Porsche's #7 IMSA GTP 963, after Cameron contested last year's Daytona 24 Hours and Sebring in the sister car. Australian young gun Matt Campbell switches places with him to race in the WEC.

"It feels like coming home, for sure," reckons Cameron. "Doing WEC was something that I really wanted to try, especially to do it with Porsche and Penske in the overall category – that was really a personal goal of mine. That said, it's nice to be back in IMSA, somewhere I've spent a lot of time and had a good bit of success. It's a bit of a change, but it's a great calendar with lots of classic American race tracks, so I'm looking forward to it nonetheless."

So why the switch? "Ultimately the team decides who goes where and does what, but I put my hand up for WEC, to give it a shot," he replies. "It was an opportunity that doesn't come around

"It's nice to be back in IMSA, somewhere I've spent a lot of time and had a good bit of success"

a lot in motor racing, and I enjoyed the experience of doing it. What was disappointing about it was to miss out on a couple of podiums here and there, because we were close at Spa and Monza. At the end they said 'maybe come back here' – so it's fine. They place us where they think it's the best fit. I'm happy that I got to do it with this group, just like I'm happy to be back here now."

Cameron claims he's benefited from the experience of racing in the global series and is ready to reacclimatise to American prototype competition. "It's a different format and a different style," he admits. "There's things that I've learned [in WEC]; I'm better for it as a driver, that's for sure. And it also checked off a lot of tracks from my list, so that's nice to have in my pocket as well. Things are naturally a little different between the two groups that are running the cars, so I can lean into that. I think it's good to have both perspectives."

He's frank about the struggles the team encountered last year, »



Nasr is happy to be paired with Cameron again



“Having Dane coming across from WEC, we’re going to be in contention right away”

but is encouraged by the progress made, which included three races wins on the IMSA side, although he didn’t get to taste any success personally.

“It definitely was a big learning curve,” reflects Cameron. “To build the structure of both [WEC and IMSA] teams and how to run a race weekend, divvying up things, I think there were some growing pains at the start of the year, but we really made some good strides. I think the team is set up in a much better place. Hopefully that can give us another step forwards now that the dust has settled. The cars are running much more like normal now, far fewer stoppages, and it’s feeling like a normal race team again – that’s a great step.”

One aspect he won’t have to worry about this year is the performance balancing act between Le Mans Hypercars and LMDh racers that WEC must deal with. It will be a straight fight between all-LMDh machinery from Acura, BMW, Cadillac, Porsche and, for most of the longer-distance races, Lamborghini.

“By the way the results went, it was clear that it was difficult if you were in the other [LMDh] category,” says Cameron, once reminded that in IMSA there’s no restriction on voicing an opinion about BoP. “Having a year’s worth of information, I hope things can go easier on that side this year. It seems, from the distance I was at, that it went pretty well in IMSA. I think the sanctioning bodies always feel happier after having the cars on track for a year and they can have more confidence in that type of thing.

“But it’s just simpler if you don’t have the two different categories. I think it’s fair to say that the two [types of cars] were more different than people expected, I believe that will continue to improve on the WEC side. On the IMSA side, it all seemed very calm – like it did at the end of DPi. Just small adjustments.

“As you learn the car, and slight differences emerge, I think that’s OK. If you’re constantly trying to micro-manage those little differences, then you can get out of synch. In DPi, you just knew one car would be strong here, and another would be strong there. You’d go about your weekend, and if the track didn’t favour you, you’d go about getting all the points you could. If it favoured you, you’d do everything to win to benefit from your package.”

Cameron teams up with Nasr for 2024, and the pairing has some history together. “He was my replacement!” laughs Cameron. “When I came to Penske the first time, he took the [Action Express] seat that I vacated. We first drove together in Penske’s P2 car and we spent a lot of time together through the 963’s development phase and we get on really, really well. Looking forward to having him through this season, because he was always one of the biggest pain in the asses to race against when we were in different cars! We have good respect for each other.”

He’ll be pleased to hear that the feeling is mutual from Nasr’s side, too... “It’s great to have Dane back,” enthuses the Brazilian, who got 39 F1 starts under his belt with Sauber. “A great guy to have in the team, super-easy to work with. He has a lot of experience in IMSA and knows all the tracks pretty well. I’m pretty sure we can work well together and be fighting for the





Monza was one of Cameron's two fourth places in 2023 WEC

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

championship. With the team running in two championships, the information flow is always quicker, so having Dane coming across from WEC, we're going to be in contention right away."

Nasr is also honest about what the 963 lacked compared to its IMSA rivals last year. "We scratched our heads at some times, and at others we'd roll out of the truck and it was great!" he recalls. "With our car, due to reliability problems, we only really started our season at halfway. Then the podiums came, and the win at Road America was really cool. At times, though, we felt completely lost. We were out of the window with the car, we didn't know how to operate to get into it, but then it felt like we got closer and closer since halfway. It's been quite a year for the project – new car, new team, new regulations – and we have so much more experience under our belts now after many ups and downs. We're better in every way, certainly in terms of how to optimise our car."

The season starts with America's biggest sportscar race – it's one that Nasr has won in GTD with Porsche, but victory has always eluded Cameron at the Daytona 24 Hours. "We feel well prepared," declares Nasr. "Constant running is the only way you can really optimise everything for this race. You have to understand the tyre warm-up, degradation and the balance shift between stints, especially if you're double-stinting the tyres, or changing left-sides or right-sides only. All of that is so valuable, which is what we focused on in testing."

"It's kind of a locked homologation – it puts much more focus on your systems, your electronics, set-up philosophies – so we have to run through all of this now, because when we hit the race weekends, there's not so much time to try things. If we can get it right now, so the car is operating inside the window of where we want to run, it makes our lives easier as drivers. Then it's just a case of being consistent and staying on top of everything."

Make no mistake, after a first season that missed the target of 'Penske perfection with German efficiency' – especially in the longer races – the expectation level here is amped for 2024. ✎



It's just 12 months since Newgarden's prototype debut

GALSTAD/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

INDY 500 WINNER NEWGARDEN ADDS STAR APPEAL

IndyCar ace Josef Newgarden made his Daytona 24 Hours debut in the LMP2 class last year, a few months before his greatest victory to date in the Indianapolis 500 for Team Penske. The 33-year-old from Nashville's enthusiasm was lit by his maiden prototype experience, and he later accepted the offer to join Penske's Porsche IMSA GTP line-up in the season-closing Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta as an 'endurance extra'.

"That was tough," he admits. "It's a phenomenal track, one of my new favourites in North America, I loved how old-school it is. It's very punishing, there's no rest, you can't take it easy. It was intense, the traffic was non-stop because of the size of the track and the field size."

After his in-at-the-deep-end experience, Newgarden has had far more seat time available as he joins Dane Cameron, Felipe Nasr and Matt Campbell in the #7 963 this week at Daytona.

Speaking to Autosport during testing, he adds: "It's been a good learning experience, to get the cadence and the processes down

before we come back for the real thing. For me, stepping into the programme to do my part, do a great job to help them, I'm really encouraged. Winning Daytona would be a big deal for everybody, winning any of the endurance events – including Sebring or Petit. I'm excited and honoured to be a part of it."

Newgarden also points out that Daytona's 3.56-mile road course poses a totally different challenge to the majestic swoops of Road Atlanta. "It's a fun track, but it's not super-complex when you look at the layout," he points out. "There's a lot of straightaway but it's really thrilling because it's super-high speed in a lot of respects. The infield is slow, but the Bus Stop stands out as one of those make-or-break corners, the way you deal with traffic exiting that in the race will be so important."

"It's a fun change-up for me because it's different to wherever we go in IndyCar. The challenge of being successful over 24 hours is something I'm not used to, so I'd love to succeed at that."



PORSCHE

Sainz didn't win any stages across the two weeks, but kept things together to claim victory for Audi

Sainz and Audi are electric

DAKAR RALLY
SAUDI ARABIA
5-19 JANUARY

Carlos Sainz Sr added a fourth Dakar Rally victory to his illustrious CV with a mature performance from start to finish in his electric-powered Audi. The 61-year-old Spanish hero didn't score a single stage win during the two-week marathon in Saudi Arabia, but such was his consistency that he took the overall honours by 1h20m from the Overdrive Toyota of Guillaume de Mevius, with Prodrive star Sebastien Loeb finishing a further nine minutes back after late drama.

Sainz had already established himself as the firm favourite going into the final few days of the event, although Loeb kept the pressure up by winning stage 10 and slashing the Audi's advantage to 13 minutes. This set up a two-way showdown in the 420km test around Al-'Ula, the last

real chance for any driver to stage an upset before a relatively short and straightforward dash on the final day. While Sainz could make it easily to the finish line, with Audi team-mates Mattias Ekstrom and Stephane Peterhansel running in close company in case of any problems, Loeb's Prodrive Hunter came to a halt just 132km into the stage when he hit a big piece of rock hidden from sight after a dune.

It took more than an hour before another Hunter driver arrived on the scene with the parts Loeb needed to repair his car, allowing Sainz to run away with the lead and become the oldest Dakar winner, surpassing his own record set four years ago.

It was the perfect swansong for Audi, which looks set to end its cross-country rally programme after just three years to put all its weight behind its Formula 1 entry with Sauber in 2026. Few had expected the German manufacturer to win this year's Dakar with its radical prototype, which

combines the powertrains it used in DTM and Formula E, especially after it appeared to take a step back in both speed and reliability in 2023. But the refreshed RS Q e-tron was a cut above the rest, especially in Sainz's hands, while Ekstrom and Peterhansel also illustrated the speed of the car by winning three stages between them.

Audi's victory came at the expense of nine-time World Rally champion Loeb, whose pursuit of a maiden Dakar triumph continues after eight participations. The Frenchman was easily the fastest driver, winning five of the 12 stages, but early setbacks combined with suspension drama on stage 11 meant he again missed out on the top prize. His team-mate Nasser Al-Attiyah didn't even make it to the finish, the Qatari calling it quits after being eliminated from two successive stages in week two with reliability gremlins.

Toyota couldn't contend for overall victory after losing Al-Attiyah to Prodrive, although it did win four individual stages. Three of those wins were scored by the customer Overdrive team, with stage one winner de Mevius finishing runner-up after capitalising on Loeb's woes, and Guerlain Chicherit ending up fourth after two consecutive stage wins in the second week.

Behind Martin Prokop's Ford, Dakar rookie Guy Botterill and 2009 winner Giniel de Villiers were the best representatives of the factory Toyota team in sixth and seventh after Lucas Moraes lost two hours on the penultimate stage with reliability woes.

RACHIT THUKRAL

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Ferrari junior Taponen is some Finn special

**FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST
YAS MARINA (ARE)
20-21 JANUARY
ROUND 2/5**

Ferrari protege Tuukka Taponen proved he will be a force in his rookie season of Formula Regional European this season by taking two superb poles and wins in the second round of the Middle East series.

The Finn, who has joined R-ace GP for 2024 after a season with Prema in Italian F4, also showed excellent racecraft in a spellbinding period of the opening race. Taponen's comfortable lead over team-mate Martinus Stenshorne had been reined in by a safety car, and the aggressive Norwegian battled in front at the restart, before Sainteloc Racing's reigning Spanish F4 champion Theophile Nael zapped both of them. But Taponen quickly worked back to the front and went on to win from Stenshorne and Nael.

Frenchman Nael had tagged PHM



Racing's pre-weekend points leader Taylor Barnard into a spin on the opening lap. A 10-second penalty relegated him to eighth, but ironically promoted him to third on the reversed grid for the next race. He used that to sweep brilliantly around the outside of poleman Ugo Ugochukwu at the first corner before driving to victory. Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak (PHM) was second, while Ugochukwu was eliminated in a tangle with the sister Prema-run Mumbai Falcons car of James Wharton. This promoted their team-mate Rafael Camara, before he was passed by Pinnacle Motorsport's Mari Boya, who repeated his third place from the opener. Taponen and Stenshorne also got ahead of Camara on the final lap.

Following his first-race woe, Barnard had started this race 16th and was up to seventh – behind Taponen and Stenshorne – when a bracket failed on a rear trackrod, forcing him out. He was on the front row for the finale, and had to defend mightily throughout a safety car-infested race to win a ferocious fight with Stenshorne and Wharton and claim third place.

Up front, Taponen was the master of pace and the safety car restarts to win from Nael and move into the series lead over Stenshorne, with Barnard slipping to third in the points. The results were still provisional as we went to press pending scrutineering checks on Nael's car.

Bilinski denies Mansell late on

**FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA
TAUPO (NZL)
20-21 JANUARY
ROUND 1/5**

Roman Bilinski was the star turn of the Toyota Formula Regional Oceania series' opening round at Taupo, taking two wins and a second place, plus the coveted Denny Hulme Memorial Trophy.

The Hulme trophy – the silverware awarded to the Kiwi legend for his 1974 Argentinian Grand Prix victory – was on offer for the final race. Bilinski lay third

early on as M2 Competition team-mate Liam Sceats led the way, with Christian Mansell second – the Giles Motorsport driver had topped qualifying, but started fifth due to a grid penalty following a rather adventurous reversed-grid race.

Mansell made a great move on the fifth lap to pass Sceats, on the outside into the Turns 12-13-14 S-bends. Five laps later Bilinski got past the New Zealander at the same place, on the inside. He then hunted down Mansell and, with three laps remaining, replicated his Sceats move to grab the lead from the Australian FIA F3 racer.

Sceats finished third, from fellow Kiwi Alex Crosbie and Michael Shin.

Bilinski had earlier led throughout the opener to dominate from Mansell and the M2 car of South Korean GB3 racer Shin, while Kaleb Ngatoa passed Sceats after an early safety car to take fourth.

Crosbie, the reigning New Zealand Formula Ford champion, led most of the second race, before M2's Gerrard Xie got past the Giles car with two and a half laps remaining. Bilinski, from eighth on the reversed grid, also demoted Crosbie, who then had to hold off Sceats and Canada's US F4 champion Patrick Woods-Toth.



WEEKEND WINNERS

DAKAR RALLY

1 Carlos Sainz Sr/Lucas Cruz (Audi RS Q e-tron E2) 48h15m18s; 2 Guillaume de Mevius/Xavier Panseri (Toyota Hilux Overdrive) +1h20m25s; 3 Sebastien Loeb/Fabian Lurquin (Prodrive Hunter); 4 Guerlain Chicherit/Alex Winocq (Toyota Hilux Overdrive); 5 Martin Prokop/Viktor Chytka (Ford Raptor); 6 Guy Botterill/Brett Cummings (Toyota GR DKR Hilux); 7 Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy (Toyota GR DKR Hilux); 8 Benediktas Vanagas/Kuldar Sikk (Toyota Hilux); 9 Lucas Moraes/Armand Monleon (Toyota GR DKR Hilux); 10 Mathieu Serradori/Loic Minaudier (Century CR6-T).

FORMULA REGIONAL MIDDLE EAST YAS MARINA (ARE)

Races 1 & 3 Tuukka Taponen
R-ace GP
Race 2 Theophile Nael
Sainteloc Racing

FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA TAUPO (NZL)

Races 1 & 3 Roman Bilinski
M2 Competition
Race 2 Gerrard Xie
M2 Competition



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- Experience working in NASCAR or IndyCar or similar motorsport series.
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Experience of the following tools:

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- To analyse and interpret race data on behalf of Pirelli and your allocated motorsport team(s)
- To produce clear, factual reports in a timely manner
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- To work as an effective team member in relation to the Trackside Engineering team
- To take initiative and solve problems through statistical analysis and regular liaison and discussion with colleagues, line managers and race team representatives.
- To identify and undertake training and development activities as required to enable you to fulfil the role, keep your knowledge and skills up to date and to fulfil your own potential
- To undertake any other activities commensurate with the role to ensure the success of Pirelli Motorsport
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End of the road for Brighton Speed Trials

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RATING THE NEW CHAMPIONSHIPS

We reflect on last year's additions
and what's in store for 2024



Anglesey bans EVs
from its trackdays

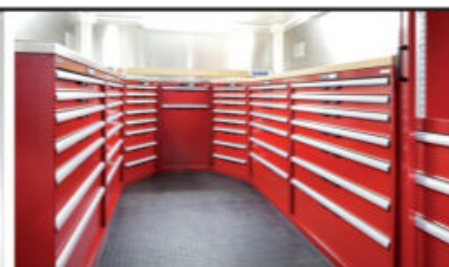


Lotus back on the
British GT grid



BTCC race winners
to Carrera Cup

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Two Emiras will be
raced by Mahiki
this season



MAHIKI

Lotus back in British GT with new team Mahiki

BRITISH GT

The Lotus name will return to the British GT Championship this season for the first time in more than seven years, with new team Mahiki Racing set to field two new Emira GT4s.

The British marque was last represented in the series by an invitational entry in 2017, while Lotus's most recent GT4 appearance came a year earlier with the Evora, the same model that scored the last of Lotus's British GT wins in 2015.

Mahiki, which will also run the Emiras in the GT4 European Series, has been founded in partnership with Aim Technologies. The company is owned by Steve Lake, who is set to drive one of the cars in British GT and in Europe, and has competed in the Lotus Cup Europe and Radical Challenge. "We've got a history of working with Lotus so it felt the right sort of car brand to go with," said Lake. "It's British as well, iconic,

it's got a great racing history.

"I don't really have any doubts the car is going to be good. We tested it and made sure we were comfortable with it; the balance of the car feels quite nice. Unless there's something fundamentally wrong, we should be able to make it go round the track quite well.

"We didn't really consider anything else to be honest. If you look at the grid, you can go and be another customer driver, buying a McLaren, but that's almost boring. We thought, 'Let's pick something new, let's stand out and make it more than just another race team.'"

Lake will be partnered by 2020 Mini Challenge champion Nathan Harrison, while the second car will be raced by Ian Duggan and Gordie Mutch. Duggan is the only one of the quartet with British GT experience – he raced a Toro Verde Ginetta last year – while Mutch won the Praga Cup title in 2022.

Also on the GT4 grid this season will be Pro-Am pairing Ian Gough and Tom Wrigley, who remain together for a second campaign. They will share a Century Motorsport-run BMW M4 after scoring two wins last year with Race Lab's McLaren Artura.

The nine-race season is due to get under way at Oulton Park on 1 April but is without a title sponsor after Intelligent Money this week ended an association with the series that began in 2020.

STEFAN MACKLEY



Gough (left) and Wrigley
will stay together in GT4

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

F4 RIVALS SHARP AND MACINTYRE MOVE UP TO GB3

GB3

Reigning British Formula 4 champion Louis Sharp and last year's runner-up Will Macintyre will both graduate to GB3 this season with Rodin Motorsport and Hitech GP respectively.

New Zealander Sharp pipped British driver Macintyre to the F4 title last season by just 13 points after their championship battle went down to the final race of the year at Brands Hatch.

Sharp will remain with the newly rebranded Rodin squad after its split with founder Trevor Carlin, who oversaw the team's 2023 GB3 title with Callum Voisin.

"Rodin took me to the F4 title and also has a great record in GB3, winning that drivers' title as well as mine in 2023," said Sharp. "In terms of career progression and further success, I really could not hope to be with a better team. I wouldn't be racing if I wasn't aiming to win, so back-to-back titles is certainly the aim.

"However, it is a new category, so I've got to take that into account. Even so, I definitely want to be fighting at the front, and fighting for the title."

Macintyre also remains with the same team he competed with in F4 – Hitech claimed the 2022 GB3 title with Williams F1 Academy driver Luke Browning. "There are new tracks and a new car to learn which is great, and, despite the competition level, I hope that I can be challenging for podiums and wins again in 2024," he said.

Also joining the GB3 grid this season is Australian Patrick Heuzenroeder, who will race with JHR Developments after making six race starts with Elite Motorsport last term.



F4 champion Sharp
graduates to GB3

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Lloyd and Jelley set for Porsche returns in 2024

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

An influx of British Touring Car Championship racers is set to liven up the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season, with Dan Lloyd already confirmed and fellow race winner Stephen Jelley also closing in on a place on the grid.

For Lloyd, it represents a return to the series in which he initially made his name as the Porsche GB scholar in 2012. He has been recruited by Toro Verde, where he will be joined by Jack Butel, his team-mate at the Excelr8 Hyundai BTCC squad in 2022. Meanwhile, Jelley looks set to rejoin Team Parker Racing, his local Leicestershire team where he raced for many years in the Carrera Cup and BTCC.

Lloyd, 31, was a Carrera Cup race winner with Parker in 2012 and 2013 before heading down the GT3 route and then into touring cars. The deal reunites him with former Parker engineer Julian Westwood, who now runs the Toro Verde operation.

"I'm really excited about it," said Lloyd. "I've got a good history with Porsche, and traditionally I was more of a GT driver than a touring car driver. I was looking at all opportunities, and I'd been talking with Toro Verde for a month. It's a big decision



Lloyd will drive for Toro Verde, while Jelley is eyeing Parker return

to step away from touring cars, but the right one for me at this time. I'll put everything into this."

Jelley, 41, who won seven Carrera Cup races with Parker across 2010 and 2011, has spent the past three seasons with the West Surrey Racing-run BMW squad. But the downturn in the house-building market, in which his family's business operates, has forced him to readjust his horizons. He is set to race the car of multiple Am class champion Justin Sherwood, who is prioritising son Jack's British Formula 4 campaign.

"The BTCC [budget] figures are just

so crazy these days at a time when the building industry, where a lot of my sponsors come from, is on its knees," said Jelley. "I just have to keep responsible with my racing and offer the best value for money. I thought about whether stopping motorsport at this level was the thing for me, but I decided I'm a bit sad really and didn't want to! And I really wanted to drive again for a team that I've got such a long relationship with."

While Lloyd and Jelley will run for overall honours, Butel will compete in the Pro-Am class.

MARCUS SIMMONS

New Heroes of FF1600 series for pre-'93 cars

BARC

A new series for pre-1993 Formula Ford 1600 cars will run over three one-day events this year, administered by the British Automobile Racing Club.

The Heroes of FF1600 Sprint Cup takes its name from Wayne Pearson's popular Facebook group and is the idea of former Historic FF1600 and Formula Palmer Audi champion Richard Tarling. Together with Steve Deeks and series coordinator Ian Temple, Tarling sought to create an affordable series that, through sponsorship,

offers additional returns for its competitors.

"When I first started racing, there was a bit of prize money, you could win some things – you got something back for your entry," explained Tarling. "It's always going to cost money, but there's got to be something back the other way as well."

Series-long and weekend prizes include a test in a more modern car with Simon Hadfield Motorsport for the best young driver, British Superbike tickets, racing equipment and parts, with more – including a



Tarling is key figure behind new mini-series

headline prize – to be announced. Cars will be split into classes for pre-'93, pre-'87 and pre-'82 machinery, with an extra invitational class for original Kent-engined pre-'99 cars. A limited number of full-season entries are available for a reduced price of £999.

"We've had a very good response so far," reported

Tarling. Among the first to commit is Clubmans Sports Prototype ace and sometime FF1600 competitor James Clarke. Each round will comprise two 15-minute races, beginning with the Ian Taylor Trophy, in memory of the first Formula Ford Festival winner, at the Thruxton Historic in June.

MARK PAULSON



Malcolm Wishart 1948-2024

OBITUARY

Scot Malcolm Wishart, who died last week from cancer, was one of those wonderful gentlemen racers who competed for the love of the sport and its people, unencumbered by the pressures of a victory speech he had not considered writing.

A banker by profession, Wishart was honoured to be elected Deacon Convener of the Trades of Glasgow in 2006, then Lord Provost. As a weekend warrior, he enjoyed circuit racing and speed hillclimbing over 50-plus years.

He started racing a Fairthorpe at Ingliston in the late 1960s, then joined the super-competitive Clubmans class on the Scottish hills with a Gryphon C73 in 1982, progressing to a Mallock Mk20/21B, then a Mk27/29 in which he set the

High Auldgirth course record in July 1997.

Following a break, Wishart returned with a Pilbeam MP62, then entered British Hillclimb rounds in 2003 with the ex-Rob Turnbull Gould-DFR GR37-04.

A switch to Historic Formula Junior in 2009 presaged a very happy association with the Cooper T65 that he hillclimbed initially, setting a bunch of Class E2 lap records, then raced as far afield as New Zealand and the USA from 2010-18.

Subsequently, Wishart raced the ex-Bob Gerard 1954 Cooper-JAP Mk8 in 500 Owners Association events, and the unique Fiat-powered Faranda FJ in which he won Class A of the 2022 Lurani Trophy and made his final race start at last April's Goodwood Members' Meeting. He is survived by wife Aileen and daughter Emily.

MARCUS PYE

ROBINSON TO BRITISH F4

Ginetta Junior race winner Leo Robinson has become the second driver announced as part of JHR Developments' British Formula 4 line-up. The Anglo-Algerian switched to the Danish F4 series part-way through last year and never finished off the podium in the 10 races he contested.

FESTIVAL OF SPEED THEME

Goodwood has announced that 'Horseless to Hybrid – Revolutions in Power' will be the theme of this year's Festival of Speed. The 11-14 July event will commemorate the 130th anniversary of the 1894 Paris-Rouen Trial that is regarded as the world's first competitive race, and look at the different ways cars have been powered since. Other anniversaries being celebrated at Goodwood include 50 years since Niki Lauda's first grand prix victory, 50 years since Shadow's Can-Am title and 40 years since Joest's first Le Mans triumph.

TOLMAN LOLA TO QATAR

Tolman Motorsport will run an ex-Helmut Marko Lola T212 in Qatar in March in a Peter Auto Classic Endurance Racing contest that supports the opening round of the World Endurance Championship. The car will be driven by Gary Furst. Chris Tolman said: "With the growth of our restomod and restoration division over the past year, we've missed being regularly in the paddock and are delighted to be back at such a prestigious event."

CROSSE GETS TV OUTING

The Crossle Car Company featured on Sunday's edition of the BBC's long-running *Antiques Roadshow* TV programme, recorded at Ebrington Square in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, last year. Flanked by a 47S Sports Proto Cup car and a new 90F Formula Ford (below), presenter Fiona Bruce interviewed Caroline Crossle, daughter of the late founder John – who built his first eponymous racing car in 1957 – and reviewed a showreel of Crossles in action. Bruce closed the show from the cockpit of the 90F.



Nigel Edwards 1953-2024

OBITUARY

British historic racing has suffered a huge loss with the death, last Thursday, of highly respected Motorsport UK scrutineer Nigel Edwards. He had battled cancer for two years, remaining positive while working at November's Walter Hayes Trophy event.

Sussex-based Edwards enjoyed competing in a self-prepared Road Sports-spec Lotus Elan through the 1990s, hanging up his helmet around 20 years ago. Rivals recall his black machine sporting a 'Gurney bubble' to accommodate his lanky frame.

A popular official with a sound technical knowledge, Edwards took up scrutineering to put something back into the sport, which he did with efficiency, pragmatism and grace. As the Historic Sports Car Club's chief scrutineer in recent times, he was also a busy FIA Historic Technical

Passport registrar.

With his bristling moustache, shock of hair and mischievous grin, Edwards was instantly recognisable in Historic Formula 2 paddocks, in which he was omnipresent.

Once his day's work was done, Edwards' campervan was a popular paddock backdrop for social evenings at which competitors were invited to enjoy his favourite beer, Morlands' Old Speckled Hen.

MARCUS PYE

Historic Brighton Speed Trials event to end

BRIGHTON SPEED TRIALS

The 118-year history of the Brighton National Speed Trials has come to an end after the organising Brighton & Hove Motor Club pulled the plug last week at a meeting with landowner Brighton & Hove City Council, conceding that the seafront event on Madeira Drive was no longer financially viable.

Reduced revenue, ranged against steeply rising costs, were blamed for the event's axing. The reduction in paying spectator attendance since the terraces above the course and arches were closed in 2013 hit council and club accounts, while the worsening road surface and necessity to install and remove costly safety barrier infrastructure for one day has resulted in entries dwindling.

"For some it was the only event they participated in," said a BHMC spokesperson. "For others, it was a focal part of their motoring year, entering high-powered



vehicles which roared along the seafront to the enjoyment of the crowds. Its appeal to young and old alike was intimacy. Spectators could get up close to the cars waiting in the paddock, talk to the drivers, take wonderful pictures and feel very involved.

"Despite Brighton & Hove Council's help, the new road layouts, the closing of the terraces, and the enormous cost involved in providing required safety measures, the committee had to make the heartbreaking decision that the 2023 event was the last. The club has [run it] at a loss for a number of years

and cannot continue to do so."

Long staged for cars and motorcycles, the Brighton National Speed Trials had a chequered past, including several competitor fatalities, the most recent a sidecar passenger in 2012. A six-figure insurance claim by BHCC following a high-speed incident at the 2022 event has yet to be resolved. The course has been over a standing-start quarter-mile with a two-litre limit on single-seaters since Simon Law's fatal 1993 crash in Tony Marsh's Rovercraft.

MARCUS PYE

Igoe wins again on Brands Hatch Winter Stages



CIRCUIT RALLYING

Michael Igoe and Will Atkins were never headed in their Citroen C3 Rally2 on the way to victory on last weekend's Brands Hatch Winter Stages round of the Circuit Rally Championship.

From a three-second lead on an icy and frosty opening stage, Igoe was

20s clear of rallycross ace Patrick O'Donovan and Jack Morton in their Hyundai i20 R5 by half-distance. O'Donovan's aspirations ended on stage five, when he hit a chicane and picked up a five-minute penalty, promoting reigning champions John Griffiths/Emma Morrison into second with their Ford Fiesta R5. Despite

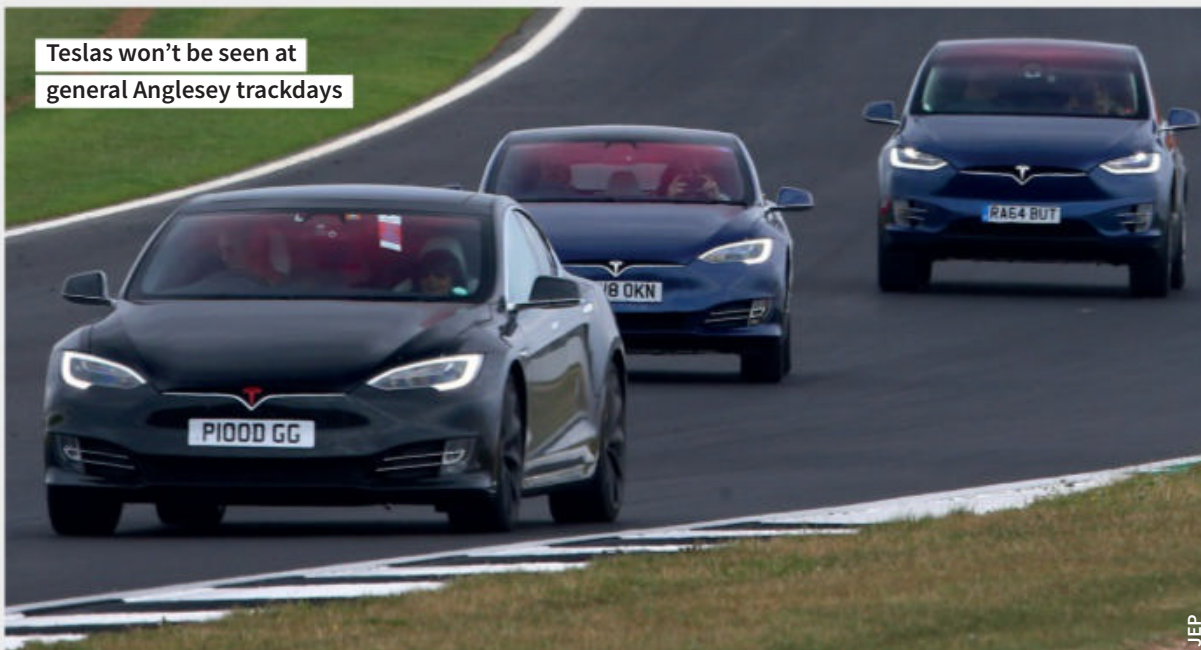
O'Donovan setting the quickest time on the three remaining stages, he had to settle for 12th place.

Both Griffiths and Ollie O'Donovan/Ashleigh Morris (Hyundai) were held up on stage one, when Darrell Taylor's Fiesta Rally2 stalled at a hairpin, but O'Donovan Sr fought back to snatch third.

PETER SCHERER

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Anglesey bans electric and hybrid vehicles from its trackday events

ANGLESEY

Anglesey Circuit has banned electric and hybrid vehicles from taking part in general trackdays at the venue amid concerns about dealing with any safety issues that arise.

Bosses of the Welsh track say that such cars are welcome on circuit at manufacturer-supported test days or – where relevant – at race events, when there is better infrastructure in place to deal with any fires and other safety concerns.

Anglesey has “never encouraged electric and hybrid vehicles on trackdays”, but general manager Annette Freeman said that a few have appeared recently, leading to the decision to implement a ban.

“We’ve always been an environmentally friendly circuit and welcome manufacturer testing of electric vehicles – we’ve had Mahindra come here – and that’s not an issue because they are fully supported,”

she explained. “They bring all the bells and whistles to deal with any issues and it’s much more controlled. When you get to race meetings, it’s a fully supported event, all the cars are under permit and it’s a controlled environment.

“For trackdays, you don’t have that level of scrutineering. We’re seeing so many EVs on the road but, driving one on the track, the pressures and stresses on the car are very different to the road. It’s not that we are anti-electric or anti-new technology, but you have to be prepared for it.”

Freeman said the fundamental concern is knowing how to respond to a problem with a specific type of car since the procedures can vary: “As a circuit, we don’t have the equipment or training at the moment to deal with that situation. I don’t want to put participants, marshals and medics where they can’t respond to an incident.”

STEPHEN LICKORISH

New manufacturer-backed rally series

STELLANTIS RALLY CUP

A new manufacturer-backed rally series that will be held across rounds of the Irish Tarmac Rally and British Rally championships has been announced for this season.

The Stellantis Motorsport Rally Cup IRE & UK will feature Rally4 models of the Opel Corsa and Peugeot 208, both of which have featured in the JBRC in recent years, and is open to

drivers of all ages. They will battle it out for a prize fund worth €75,000, while the highest-ranked driver aged under 26 at the start of this year will receive funding towards a campaign in the Junior class of the European Rally Championship in 2025.

The new eight-round series will be held across a mix of surfaces, and its calendar includes four BRC events (Severn Valley Stages, Grampian Forest Rally, Rali Ceredigion

and the Cambrian Rally) alongside another four ITRC rounds (West Cork Rally, Killarney Rally of the Lakes, Donegal International Rally and the Cork 20 International).

“Both Ireland and the UK have really been missing this kind of series which welcomes all drivers but also offers the progressive youngster an opportunity to further their careers,” said series registrar Raymond Moore.

GINETTA’S AMERICAN MOVE

A new one-make Ginetta series is being launched in the US this season for entry-level G56 GTA models, and the 10-race calendar will include contests at the Road Atlanta, Virginia International Raceway, Mid-Ohio and Watkins Glen venues. “With the introduction of this dedicated racing series, we aim to provide North American customers with an elevated level of support and service as we expand our brand beyond the UK,” said Ginetta managing director Amy Tomlinson.

AUSSIE KARTER TO GINETTAS

Successful Australian karter Ruben Dan has become the latest driver revealed as part of Elite Motorsport’s Ginetta Junior line-up this season, after the team followed the teenager’s progress over the past two years. “I’m the first Australian to compete in Ginetta Juniors and want to gain as much experience as possible,” said Dan. “I reached the final six in the Ginetta Junior Scholarship last year and have tested with Elite numerous times.”

ROSS’S TAUPO TREBLE

Steve Ross returned to New Zealand’s Formula 5000 Tasman Cup winners’ circle with a three-from-three haul at Taupo last weekend in the ex-Sarich Brothers/Quicksilver Racing 1973 McRae GM1. As in Saturday’s rain-affected preliminary heat – in which all 10 competitors started on slicks – Kevin ‘Keram’ Ingram (Lola T332) led the chase in Sunday’s feature finale, shadowing Ross home. Tony Galbraith (T332) completed the podium. Period Kiwi heroes Graeme Lawrence and Kenny Smith presented the trophies.

STARS IN NEW ZEALAND

Other features of the Taupo event last weekend included a celebration of Holden and several demonstration runs from cars, such as Shane van Gisbergen’s Bathurst-winning Chevrolet Camaro. The Historic Touring class also included Greg Murphy driving a Zakspeed Ford Escort Mk2, and Steve Richards in a Nissan Skyline GTS-R HR31 (below).



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Getting off the ground

Starting a new series is never straightforward, but the increasing complexity of modern road cars is making it even more challenging

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Launching a new series is always a challenge. And, as you can read about over the next few pages, the fairly modest numbers achieved by many of 2023's fresh club racing categories demonstrate that it is especially hard when the economic climate is tricky. After all, there are many hurdles to overcome. Selecting a reliable car to race. Putting together an attractive calendar to tempt competitors. Identifying a gap in the market that is big enough to secure a decent grid and not so small it is of little interest. But there is also another growing problem that organisers are facing: the ever-increasing complexity of modern cars.

Take the 120 Coupe Cup that began last year as an example. The 750 Motor Club sensibly took the decision to launch this alongside a sprint version of its 116 Trophy, which was a proven concept and plenty of cars were out there to ensure grids would still be full even if it took a while for the 120s to prove a hit. This therefore gave organisers vital time to hone the development of the new cars without worrying about small entry numbers. And that was just as well, as things were not smooth sailing with the two-litre BMW E82s that were built from 2011.

"The 120s had a few gremlins, which is often the way with the first year of a new series," says 750MC competitions secretary Giles Groombridge. "They have an intelligent oil pump that

"It is little wonder that so many club competitors are now going down the arrive-and-drive route"

drops the oil pressure to improve fuel economy when on the throttle for a long period of time." While that is a very sensible idea for the roads, it is just not compatible with the flat-out demands of racing the cars on track. "As cars become more and more sophisticated, they're going to be less easy to turn into race cars," adds Groombridge, who believes this is going to be a major problem moving forwards.

While Groombridge says plenty of work has been undertaken to develop a low-cost solution to the difficulties with the BMW 120s, the challenge posed by the growing number of areas of a modern car that are controlled by ever more complicated computer systems is going to be much harder to fix. And that is especially the case with the rapid increase in electric and hybrid vehicles on the road.

This topic is, incidentally, in the news in another way at the moment following Anglesey circuit's decision to enforce a ban on EVs taking part in trackdays at the Welsh venue. It is important to stress that circuit bosses are not against such cars racing at Anglesey, but instead have greater concern about them featuring at trackdays when there is less infrastructure in place should anything go wrong. But, returning to the issue of complexity of cars, it is perhaps little wonder that so many club competitors are now going down the arrive-and-drive route as the regular man or woman on the street no longer has the knowhow to turn up at circuits and run these cars themselves.

There are, of course, other factors that explain why so few new club racing categories are being started in 2024. Another key consideration is the growing cost of hiring circuits. This in turn means clubs simply cannot afford to be wasting expensive track time on a new series that may not initially attract large entries.

Take a look at the four clubs that are launching additional offerings for this year, and all of them can do so without requiring extra race dates. Equipe Classic Racing has space for its new Equipe F2 Atlantic series as it is no longer administering all of the old MG Car Club categories. The Historic Sports Car Club regularly features guest series at its events, and is starting to amalgamate some of its divisions, so has room for its Touring Car Legends creation. MotorSport Vision Trackdays is aligned with the leading UK circuit operator so securing track time is less of a challenge. And several categories have departed from the British Automobile Racing Club portfolio so it has the capacity to run the new Heroes of Formula Ford 1600 Sprint Cup mini-series. In a similar vein, the Classic Sports Car Club has bolstered its ranks with a number of existing championships joining the fold for 2024, so it has put its own tentative plans to develop a new series on hold.

Yet, alongside concerns about the complexity of cars and the cost of track time, there is another simple explanation for the caution of organisers and diminished number of new offerings for this season: 2023 was a bumper year for new categories. Having 10 launch in the space of one campaign is a lot and, until these become more established and achieve a more permanent position within the club racing scene, organisers are reluctant to add more. Ultimately, while it is important clubs continue to evolve and develop new ideas, these fresh categories have got to be justified in an environment where there is still a huge amount of club racing in the UK. With the growing focus on controlling costs, perhaps that message is finally coming through loud and clear. 🏁

➡ P66 RATING THE NEW 2023 SERIES

2023

Rating the new championships

A whole multitude of different club categories were launched last year, with varying success

Stephen Lickorish and Mark Paulson

Legends Elite Cup

★★★★☆

The Legends proved a popular addition to the British Touring Car bill at three events last year, with packed grids and plenty of dramatic racing. And the idea of running a mini-championship across the trio of appearances worked well.

Tweaks are being made for this year, when the Legends are back thrice more, as the points from these events will also count for the overall championship. This is intended to ensure drivers contest the full season and not just the headline-grabbing BTCC outings.



Ginetta GT Championship

★★★★☆

Ginetta has a pretty good track record when it comes to introducing new championships, but the Ginetta GT category was not exactly a huge hit. Featuring classes for a middle-of-the-range spec G56 and the old GT5 G40s, just 16 cars were averaged across the season and, at times, it barely mustered double

figures. Boosting its fortunes is unlikely to be the work of a moment and it may take several years of development for the numbers to pick up. Ginetta has put plenty of prospective drivers behind the wheel of the GT Pro G56, but how many actually sign up to the series remains to be seen.





Audi TT Cup Racing

★★★★☆

There was a time, prior to the start of last season, when the potential grids for the British Racing & Sports Car Club’s new Audi TT Cup Racing category looked like they could be massive. Parts kits to build cars for the series were sold at a rapid rate and scores of machines were being prepared. It was therefore somewhat disappointing that ‘just’ 16 made it onto the grid for the opening round and it peaked at 22 later in the year. Now, let’s be clear, these are very respectable numbers for a newly launched class, just not quite as stunning as anticipated.

But there are plenty of encouraging signs of for this season. Established squads such as Rob Boston Racing are set to join the fray, while its place as a permanent support category to TCR UK will help boost its profile as it also achieves championship status. The affordability and pace of these sportscars are key selling points and the BRSCC could certainly still be onto a winner here. One of its key tasks now is to persuade everyone who has built one of these TFSI-version TTs to race on its grid, as a number could be found in other categories and clubs in 2023.

Bell Sport Challenge Series

★★★★☆

Any series that is dedicated to modern Ferraris is always going to have a very limited pool of competitors to draw upon. And it was perhaps therefore no surprise that MotorSport Vision Racing’s new category attracted an average grid that only just crept into double figures. But Bell Sport & Classic is a Ferrari specialist

and, if anyone can tempt owners of the machines from Maranello onto the track, it would be its experts. New to the realm of series promotion, undoubtedly experience gathered from 2023’s inaugural season will help refine the offering moving forward. MSVR believes it was a very solid start and has been working to ensure the numbers will be stronger this time around.



Evolution Trophy

★★★★☆

The British Racing & Sports Car Club’s decision to launch a series to house a collection of new concepts that are not yet ready to stand on their own two feet with bespoke races made a lot of sense. As can be seen across this feature, enjoying instant success with a fresh offering is rare and therefore having somewhere where they can race, prove their worth and build interest without the expense of running standalone grids is logical. In 2023, the Evolution Trophy was supposed to feature machinery from the Classic VW Cup, Mazda MX-5 Mk4



Trophy, BMW 1 Series Supercup and Cooksport Renault Cup, however only one BMW appeared at one event all year. While the series averaged a decent 19 cars overall, none of these individual categories really looked close to breaking out and going solo. That is now the key issue moving

forward. If, by the end of this year, there is still no standout consistently attracting low-to-mid-teens, then the purpose of the series is diminished. To prove its worth, there must be progression for at least some of the classes, otherwise the Evolution Trophy may well need to evolve itself.



Miata Trophy

★★★★☆

On the surface, MotorSport Vision Trackdays’ decision to launch a new Mazda MX-5 category seemed like a cunning ploy to steal competitors from rival clubs. But MSVT insists the series originated from its Trackday Championship and Trackday Trophy series, which were regularly oversubscribed and contained 22 MX-5s among the registered drivers. It therefore decided to create its own series for the sportscars to free up space on its other grids. Although the overall average was an encouraging 22 – one of the highest among this feature – the fact 57 different racers competed across the course of the season demonstrates that plenty wanted to give it a go. Now the key question is how many of those that sampled the Miata Trophy in 2023 will be back this year – and, more importantly, will they commit to entering more rounds?

116 Sprint Trophy & 120 Coupe Cup

★★★★☆

Out of all of the additions to the club racing marketplace in 2023, it was the 750 Motor Club's combined 116 Sprint Trophy & 120 Coupe Cup grid that achieved the highest average, with 31 cars. And that was possible to predict beforehand, given the growing popularity of the BMW 116s. The sister enduro series topped the 750MC's average grids tables and plenty wanted to race the machines over shorter sprint contests, too. Unsurprisingly,

this has been granted championship status for 2024.

But things were not quite such plain sailing for the other BMWs among the 120 Coupe Cup ranks. No more than five appeared at any one event as a number of teething troubles (see page 65) made for a tricky inaugural campaign, and that reduces the star rating.

Meanwhile, a growing number of the new MK Cup 200 cars featured as part of the Sports 1000 field, helping to bolster grid sizes.



Mini Challenge Clubsport

★★★★☆

While Mini Challenge Clubsport is a new championship, there is a very familiar feel to it because a category along similar lines used to exist a few years back. And it was certainly among the most popular (re)introductions of 2023.

The combination of more club-level Cooper drivers – now the Cooper-based Mini Challenge

Trophy features three British Touring Car events and has stepped up a notch – along with Cooper S cars and pilots of Minis that do not fit in other categories, proved a hit, averaging 22 cars. And there is no reason why that should not continue to be the case, especially with minor tweaks to improve intercoolers and a bespoke new rear wing for the Cooper Ss.

Britcar Prototype Cup

☆☆☆☆☆

Britcar had tried – unsuccessfully – to operate a prototype series nearly a decade ago and decided to have another crack for 2023. It was aimed at the Pragas that had previously raced on their own grid, alongside other invited prototypes such as LMP3s. But, sadly, the new series lasted an even shorter time than the previous attempt.

Six cars turned up for the Silverstone opener (five Pragas and a Radical), with former Marussia Formula 1 tester Rodolfo Gonzalez among the slim entry. Yet that proved to be as

far as the series got. The subsequent Brands Hatch event was called off with the intention to build interest later in the year, but this never materialised and left a sizeable hole in the British Automobile Racing Club's schedules.

Prototype racing has been a tricky form of motorsport to crack in the UK – the LMP3 Cup did not last long, while the Open Sportscar Series is among the other categories to disappear in recent times. And this Britcar offering is further evidence of how Europe seemingly remains king for these machines.



Racing Hondas

★★★★☆

Club Time Attack's new initiative, partly filling a void left by TCR UK and Civic Cup returning to the British Racing & Sports Car Club, allowed any Honda to compete through a class structure based on power-to-weight ratios. In practice, that meant Civics, mostly EP3 models, with a couple of FN2s and EKs also in action. Beginning with fields of a dozen cars was a reasonable if underwhelming start, while the races tended to be dominated by one or two cars.

However, attracting former British Touring Car racers James Kaye and Mark Lemmer to a couple of rounds was a fillip, and a massive sponsorship injection from Tegiwa Imports is set to provide a major boost for 2024. A sold-out 34-car field, tempted by fully funded entry fees, has been announced, while a tweak to the class structure will allow even more powerful cars – up to 240bhp/tonne – into Class A. Public grid walks, autograph sessions and the introduction of a Paddock Club this year are further innovations set to enhance this season's calendar of eight double-headers mainly at Tunerfest and Modified Live events.

2024

A snapshot of what's planned

After last year's influx of new categories, just a small number of additional series are due to be launched this season

Stephen Lickorish and Mark Paulson



Clio Cup GB

Of the tiny number of completely new categories being launched this season, the most intriguing has to be Clio Cup GB. It has been five years now since a championship for the current version of the popular hatchback has been part of the UK's racing scene and, in that time, there have been a couple of unsuccessful attempts to create a Clio Cup

for the fifth-generation machines.

This latest one comes from MotorSport Vision Trackdays, which intends to use it as a category its entry-level racers can aspire to. Interest has been modest so far, but the reputation of the Clio for producing quality racing and being a well-regarded proving ground could help to draw more drivers in.

Touring Car Legends

There is not exactly a shortage of places where owners of historic touring cars can go to race. But the Historic Sports Car Club does feel there is still space for a new category dedicated to machines of the 1970s-90s. This covers the popular Group A era, alongside older Group 2 cars – and attracting BMW CSLs, Nissan Skylines and Ford Sierra Cosworths is what the organisers have in mind.

This series was created off the back of interest from competitors and is set to feature a mix of race formats. Across each double-header weekend, there is due to be a 20-minute sprint and a longer 40-minute mini-enduro. More details about the new category are expected to be revealed imminently.

Equipe F2 Atlantic

Equipe Classic Racing has grown into a major race series promoter in its own right in recent years and is now expanding in a new direction with its first foray into historic single-seaters. It believes there is a gap in the market for a category dedicated to 1970s Formula 2 and Formula Atlantic machinery with more of a UK-focused calendar and has already attracted an encouraging number of registrations.

Having someone of the experience of Martin Stretton on board with his



March is a great vote of confidence in the new series, and Equipe could potentially be onto a winner here, while it is also diversifying in other ways by welcoming the more modern MGs of the MG Cup to its ranks.

Heroes of FF1600 Sprint Cup

While one Formula Ford 1600 series was culled with the British Racing & Sports Car Club deciding to axe its National contest, another is born in the form of the Heroes of FF1600 Sprint Cup. The three-round series is aimed at pre-1993 machinery, but pre-1999 original Kent engine-cars will also be allowed on an invitational basis.

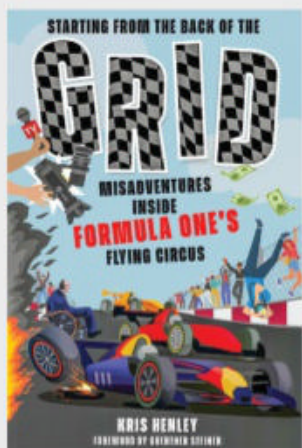
Administered by the British Automobile Racing Club, the

series kicks off at the Thruxton Historic in June – a potential clash with the BRSCC Super Classic round at Donington Park, which draws on much the same pool of cars. Further rounds take place at Oulton Park and Croft, with all events featuring two 15-minute races on a single day. Organisers believe a package of sponsorship, prizes and other initiatives will serve the new series well.



FINISHING STRAIGHT

Misadventures in Formula 1 media



BOOK REVIEW STARTING FROM THE BACK OF THE GRID

Kris Henley
RRP £25

Although there is a rich library of in-depth and extremely informative motorsport-

related books, there are few that you would genuinely describe as being page-turners. One notable exception would be former Haas F1 boss Guenther Steiner's fantastic *Surviving to Drive*. It's perhaps appropriate then that Kris Henley's *Starting from the Back of the Grid* shares this accolade, given that Steiner provides the foreword.

One of the questions that you get asked most in this job is, 'How can I create a career in motorsport journalism?', or words to that end. The stock answer is that there is no specific route, with some people – like this reviewer – going to university, spending time in the junior formulas and/or in national championships where you make contacts before getting that 'big break', while others take wildly different routes. Talk to any member of Autosport's staff and it's unlikely that you will hear the exact same path repeated.

Starting from the Back of the Grid enforces this message with aplomb. After all, if Henley was able to rise from a rubbish tip

in Hong Kong to work in one of the most glamorous settings in the world, there is nothing stopping anyone willing to put in the hard yards from making a similar journey.

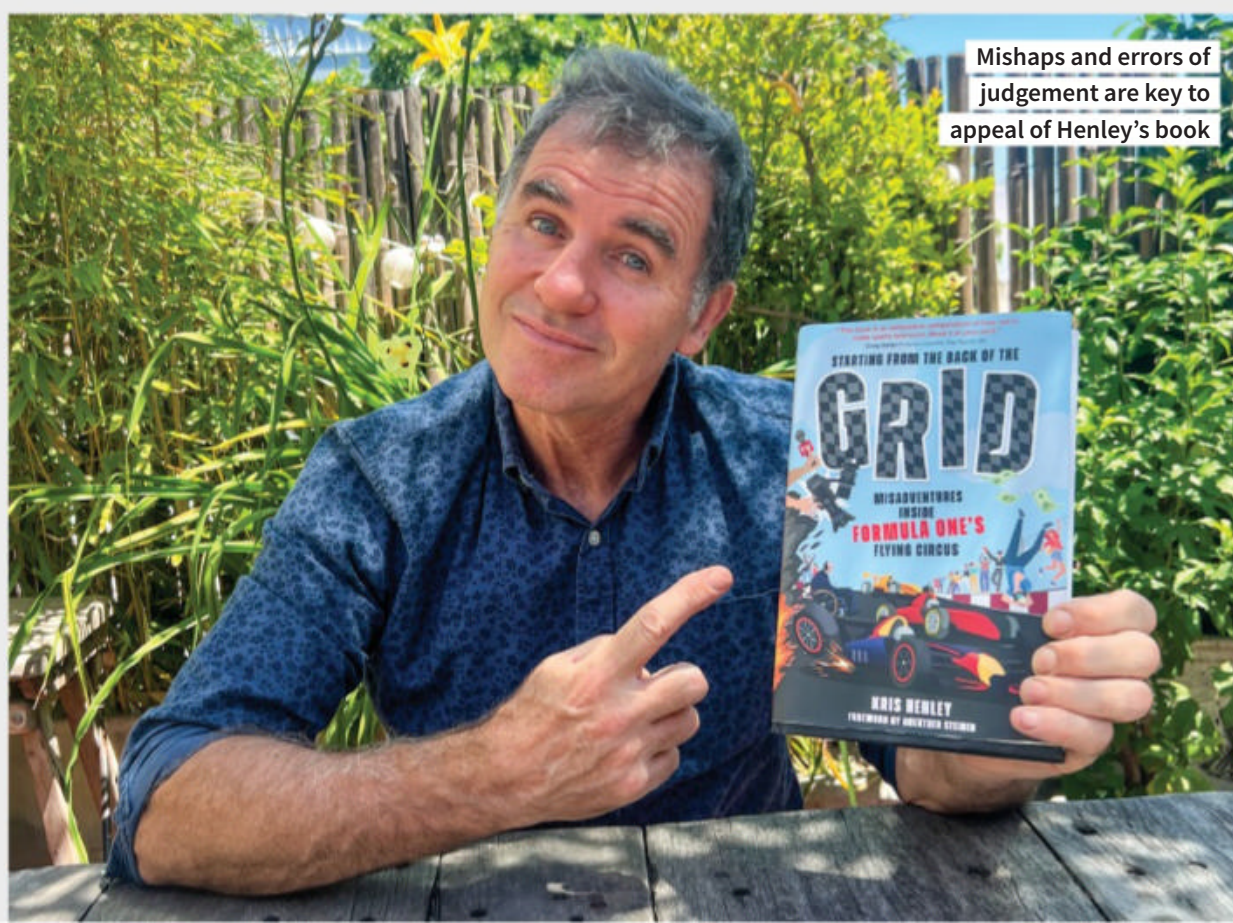
That said, *Starting from the Back of the Grid* is certainly not a book that should be taken as a step-by-step guide to forging a career in F1 – far from it!

This is more a tale of how even with everything going wrong, a significant amount of bravado and luck can just about save the day.

What immediately strikes you about this book is the honesty with which it was written. While you suspect that there are more than a few stories that remain undisclosed, the way that certain encounters are explained is highly amusing, including a significant number of instances in Hong Kong when attempting to find that elusive breakthrough. There is an unfiltered rawness to the recollections, and this is one of the factors that makes this one of the most engaging motorsport books on offer.

Much like *Top Gear* or *The Grand Tour*, the errors of judgement and the mishaps along the way are what make this what it is.

But it's the structure of *Starting from the Back of the Grid* that truly makes this a book that cannot be put down. Rather than rattle off the full story of what happened in Hong Kong with Star TV in one hit, this is interspersed with more recent jaunts in the F1 paddock. There is also a through line – the conclusion of which shall not be revealed here – of an incident ahead of the 2021 Abu Dhabi





Banter with Bernie – Henley shares a joke with former F1 supremo Ecclestone

JOSÉ MARIA RUBIO

Grand Prix, where Henley practically sees his life flash before his eyes as his sole camera makes a rapid descent to the hard, unforgiving floor.

It must have been tempting for Henley to order things chronologically, but this jumbled-up nature provides the reader with bitesize chunks of the story and leaves you always wanting more.

Should anyone from within the F1 paddock read *Starting from the Back of the Grid* – and they should! – there will doubtless be moments where they chuckle to themselves and recall a moment where they made a similar error. This writer certainly did!

But to those on the outside looking in on what often appears to be a very polished world, Henley pulls back the curtain and reveals some of the warts, wrinkles and quirks that are thrown up at almost every grand prix event.

This, then, is not a guidebook on how to forge a career in motorsport media. More than anything, this is a thesis on what mistakes to avoid in the process. Engaging, entertaining and laugh-out-loud funny, if we ran a rating system here, this would get full marks!

SAM HALL



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



World Rally Championship 2024 season guide

There's plenty of intrigue surrounding the 2024 World Rally Championship season, which begins this weekend with its annual visit to Monte Carlo. Join host Bryn Lucas and Autosport WRC reporter Tom Howard as they discuss all the key storylines, including the new points system. Title contenders Elfyn Evans and Thierry Neuville share their views on the new season, while M-Sport boss Richard Millener explains how the Ford team plans to approach the year with an all-new driver line-up.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Formula E
Rounds 2/10
Diriyah, Saudi Arabia
26-27 January
TV Live TNT Sports 1, Fri 1600, TNT Sports 3, Sat 1600

Toyota Formula Regional Oceania
Round 2/5
Manfeild, New Zealand
27-28 January
Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 0305, 2325, Sun 0300



Daytona 24 Hours IMSA SportsCar
Round 1/11
Daytona, USA
27-28 January
Livestream via IMSA.tv, Sat 1835

Dubai 24 Hours
Dubai Autodrome, UAE
27-28 January
Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 0830

Monte Carlo Rally World Rally Championship Round 1/13
Monaco
25-28 January
TV Live TNT Sports 1, Thurs 1930, TNT Sports 3, Fri 0745, 0915, 1045, TNT Sports 2, 1345, 1515, 1700, TNT Sports 4, Sat 0700, 1000, 1300, 1600, Sun 0600, 0730, 1100
TV Highlights TNT Sports 1, Fri 2200, TNT Sports 4, Sat 2230, TNT Sports 3, Sun 2145. Red Bull TV, Fri 2100, Sat 2100, Sun 2100



Daytona 24 Hours



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Even those keen to boost current Formula 1 grid sizes by allowing teams to run an additional car might boggle at the *five* works machines entered by BRM for the 1971

Canadian Grand Prix at Mosport Park: #28 George Eaton (*loving the cheeky wave – ed*), #31 Helmut Marko, #15 Peter Gethin, #16 Howden Ganley and #14 Jo Siffert. In contrast to the previous two rounds, won by

Siffert (Austria) and Gethin (Italy), Canada was a washout – Ganley crashed in the warm-up, front-row starter Siffert could manage no higher than ninth, Marko was 12th, Gethin 14th and Eaton 15th.



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Mid-Ohio

It's been over a decade since Christophe Bouchut last raced at his favourite circuit. And while the 1993 Le Mans 24 Hours winner reckons the 2.258-mile Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course is “not the biggest, not the most beautiful circuit”, he adds that the track’s combination of corners, elevation and challenging braking zones “brings me a lot of pleasure to drive there”.

“This is a mix from a normal circuit with a street circuit,” he continues. “If you do a mistake then you go in the wall. But I’m more talking about some elevation, some angle of corners, than for this reason [of risk versus reward] why I like this circuit.”

Bouchut favours tracks where drivers can attack corner entries, rather than finding that they gain time largely from carrying speed onto straights and only having “to think about all the exit of the corners”. The 13-turn Mid-Ohio layout favours his late-braking style. “I like to push the car on the limit and to accelerate very early,” he explains. “You can’t do it on many circuits, you need a certain angle of the corner. And Mid-Ohio, it’s possible to be like hell on the corners, no compromise.”

Another element Bouchut appreciates at Mid-Ohio is the fact that, at the first and last corners in particular, “you don’t really know where the limit is, you think you are able to give again more each lap



after lap”. And the Frenchman’s strong record at the place certainly helps too.

Bouchut has two class poles and victories from as many appearances at the FIA Grade 2 track in the American Le Mans Series, in 2010 and 2012. Both successes with Level 5 Motorsport alongside team owner Scott Tucker netted outright podiums. Significantly, Bouchut says the 2010 triumph in Level 5’s ORECA was also his 100th race win.

“The circuit gives me back the pleasure I take to drive there,” he smiles. “When I raced with Level 5 in the USA, I had many other drivers driving very well with me, and then I had always a big difference there. And then I won also my 100th race on that circuit, so for all these reasons it is my favourite.”

JAMES NEWBOLD



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Ford
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