

AUTOSPORT

Newey speaks out

Red Bull's design genius on...

- F1's rules
- Red Bull's advantage
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Plus

Verstappen's top 10 wins so far

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Two key figures behind Red Bull's F1 domination

Is Adrian Newey the greatest Formula 1 designer? Fans of Colin Chapman and Gordon Murray would doubtless disagree but, given Newey has produced dominant cars for three different teams across four decades, he has to be in the debate.

Of course, no modern F1 team's success is down to one person and, as Newey tells Alex Kalinauckas in this week's issue, building a design team and structure at Red Bull has been one of his most rewarding achievements so far (see page 18). He also has some interesting views on the current (and future) F1 rules...

Another key element to Red Bull's recent level of achievement is Max Verstappen. The Dutchman helps us pick out his best 10 F1 wins so far on p24. You might not agree with all of his choices, but it's not a surprise that the top drive comes from his intense 2021 contest with Lewis Hamilton. It's not just the fans who like a close fight!

There were some hard-fought battles last weekend. The Daytona 24 Hours was decided by just 2.1 seconds (p30), while Thierry Neuville won an epic Monte Carlo Rally battle with Sebastien Ogier (p38).

The Formula E double-header in Saudi Arabia was less frantic, but Nick Cassidy still surprised himself with his performances for Jaguar (p44). Stefan Mackley was there to see the Kiwi take the points lead – and investigates how the racing could change during 2024 (p15).

The Porsche Junior programme is one of the most successful in motorsport. Stephen Lickorish takes a look at how the winner is chosen and talks to the latest victor on p66.



Kevin Turner

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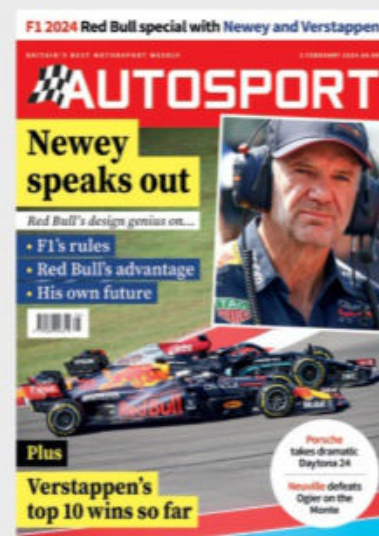
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PIT + PADDOCK



MAUGER

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Leclerc and Norris extend deals at Ferrari and McLaren

FORMULA 1

Ferrari and McLaren have renewed the contracts of their respective talismanic Formula 1 drivers Charles Leclerc and Lando Norris. But both teams have been notably vague on the finer details. Leclerc has recommitted to Maranello for “several more seasons” to supersede a deal due to expire at the end of this year. Meanwhile, Norris has a new “multi-year” agreement in Woking to replace his existing paperwork that spanned 2022 to 2025.

The two teams secured their services to thwart any Red Bull, Mercedes and Aston Martin advances. Both would be appealing prospects to partner Max Verstappen, even though Daniel Ricciardo is already on the Red Bull books and ready to replace Sergio Perez. Leclerc and Norris were seen as heirs to Lewis Hamilton’s throne at Mercedes should the seven-time champion not stay beyond 2025. And it is known that Aston executives sounded out the interest and availability of Norris and Leclerc

as potential successors, or partners, to Fernando Alonso. Links to those three teams will inevitably resume in due course but have been quashed for now.

The case for Norris staying put at McLaren, which recruited him as a junior driver in 2017 and afforded him an F1 debut two years later, is clear. Team principal Andrea Stella oversaw an overhaul of the technical department that paved the way for major upgrades to transform the MCL60 from an early-2023 backmarker into a car regularly capable of making the Red Bulls sweat. That’s what could be achieved with the existing resources. But McLaren has since constructed and calibrated its new on-site wind tunnel plus completed coup signings Rob Marshall (long-time Red Bull chief engineering officer) and David Sanchez (Ferrari head of vehicle concept). Both have finished periods of gardening leave and set to work on 1 January.

“In the back of my head every now and then was, ‘Are we improving as much as what I feel like we should, am I giving

myself the best opportunities?’” said Norris. “But with how we turned things around, and how Andrea turned things around last year... Now, where am I most confident that I can actually achieve a world championship? If you asked me the beginning of last year, maybe it wouldn’t



Leclerc stays in red,
Norris in orange

have been McLaren. But now I think I'm more confident than ever in saying it's going to be McLaren."

Ferrari and McLaren may be keeping quiet on the exact length of the new contracts because they contain break clauses, so the actual end date isn't set in stone. Leclerc was rumoured to have signed a five-year deal, split into a fixed three-year term plus an option for another two. At the time of the announcement, team boss Fred Vasseur said: "We know [Leclerc] for his incessant desire to push himself to the limit and we appreciate his extraordinary abilities when it comes to fighting and overtaking in a race. We are determined to give Charles a winning car."

Keeping schtum may also be part of Ferrari's protracted negotiations with Carlos Sainz. The Spaniard has stated that he wants a new contract before the start of this season to allow him to enter with a clear head. That's now only four weeks away. Maranello's deliberate avoidance in specifying the duration of Leclerc's new deal is because it's a sensitive part of its long-term strategy. In other words, a five-year deal confirms Leclerc as the fundamental asset around which the team will build for the next-generation rules cycle starting in 2026. In turn, Sainz (who is believed to be after a two-year extension) is tacitly confirmed as the number two driver, despite having fared well against Leclerc during their three seasons as team-mates.

That Sainz has done so will allow the 2023 Singapore Grand Prix victor to negotiate better terms. But as talks drag on, there are whispers that Alex Albon is a serious alternative. The Williams racer is believed to be out of contract at the end of 2024. If Vasseur does pursue the Thai-Brit, Sainz could take Leclerc's place as part of the Red Bull, Mercedes and Aston rumour mill. And, after his father claimed a Dakar Rally victory for the manufacturer this month, Audi is another prospect ahead of its 2026 arrival.

MATT KEW, JONATHAN NOBLE & ROBERTO CHINCHERO



OSAKA IN MIX FOR EXTRA GP IN JAPAN

FORMULA 1

Osaka, the third-most populous city in Japan, is in contention to join the Formula 1 calendar. But alarm bells need not immediately sound, since city chiefs say that their race would co-exist alongside the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka (whose contract expires this year) rather than replace it.

The Osaka tourism bureau has formally announced its intention to seduce F1, with a delegation attending the 2023 Singapore GP. A representative told Autosport: "F1 will be the perfect catalyst for



Osaka to become an international tourist city."

While the project is in its early stages, and no formal negotiations have begun, F1 has encouraged the city to press on with its proposal. A final race location has not been decided and nothing has been ruled out, so a street circuit or permanent track are in the frame. Or it could use a hybrid-style venue around the Osaka Expo

site, which is being constructed for 2025 on Yumeshima Island.

"The circuit itself may be difficult to make [profitable], but if you consider the entire city, I think it has potential," said the representative. "At this point, I cannot say how many years from now we are aiming to make it happen. I think it will be a long-term plan."

JONATHAN NOBLE & KEN TANAKA



Bearman is Ferrari reserve

FORMULA 1

Ferrari has added Formula 2 star Ollie Bearman to its pool of F1 reserves. The Briton, who will remain with Prema Racing for his second season in F2, will job-share with factory-contracted World Endurance Championship drivers Antonio Giovinazzi and Robert Shwartzman to provide cover for their calendar clashes.

Bearman has driven for Ferrari behind closed doors at Maranello, and deeply impressed Haas during his two FP1 outings for the team in Mexico and Abu Dhabi last season.

The former Aston Martin

Autosport BRDC Young Driver Award finalist was put straight to work, and was due to drive the 2022 Ferrari F1-75 at Barcelona yesterday (Wednesday) as part of a three-day Pirelli tyre test.

Bearman was joined by Arthur Leclerc, who sampled top-flight machinery for the first time. The younger brother of Charles is dovetailing a campaign in the Italian GT Championship alongside his new role as a Ferrari development driver. Despite leaving the team's junior programme, he will be responsible for plenty of the F1 simulator work to correlate car set-up and upgrades.

MATT KEW

Ghastly name, strong techies for 'VCARB'

FORMULA 1

The Formula 1 team formerly known as AlphaTauri has been renamed Visa Cash App RB, but the relaunch of the Red Bull junior squad was somewhat calamitous.

For starters, one staffer was too trigger-happy on social media so prematurely revealed the new name via the team's official Instagram account. And, although Visa represents the arrival of another blue-chip sponsor, the final moniker has courted plenty of criticism for being too long, too fiddly, and too weak to be worthy of the top flight. F1 has been dragged into the mire for rubberstamping the final draft, albeit the championship itself has taken to referring to the set-up as 'RB' only. The team is also considering the 'VCARB' chassis prefix for

cars created during this deal.

While the marketing department has taken plenty of flak, those responsible for populating the technical division appear to have excelled themselves. This will help Visa fare better than rival payment operator MasterCard when it took on title sponsorship of Lola very briefly during 1997.

Tim Goss, who quit as FIA technical director only weeks ago, has been appointed chief technical officer, reporting to new team boss Laurent Mekies. A period of gardening leave means he will not punch in until October. Ex-Lotus and McLaren aerodynamicist Guillaume Cattelani joins from Red Bull Technology as deputy technical director under Jody Egginton. And long-time Enstone employee Alan Permane, who left Alpine last summer owing to a disagreement with Renault



management over the time required to transform the team into one capable of winning races, enters as racing director.

Team CEO Peter Bayer, also formerly of the FIA, said: "The appointments of Guillaume and Alan will boost capability in design and

development of our cars and in performance at the track. Then, with Tim's arrival in October, we will have put in place the key elements of a structure designed to take us on the next phase of our journey and ensure long-term success."

MATT KEW

New F2 challenger completes teams' shakedown

FORMULA 2

Formula 2 technical director Pierre-Alain Michot professed himself happy with "a good first step" after teams completed a shakedown with their new-for-2024 Dallara chassis at Barcelona last week. All 11 teams logged laps with the first new car F2 has introduced since 2018.

The Dallara F2 2024 boasts radically revamped aerodynamics in a bid to boost racing, and improved safety credentials. A total of 649 laps were completed across six hours on track, and Michot said that he was "quite happy with the running achieved" as teams build towards the first official test in Bahrain from 11-13 February. He confirmed that there were "no red flags, which means

that all cars have performed as expected".

"The purpose of this shakedown was for the teams to understand how the new car operates, to make sure that all systems are working fine together and to understand how everything behaves," Michot explained. "There are still a few little things to adjust ahead of the first official test session, but that's normal. With 11 teams, there are 11 different ways of working. This enables us to learn even more about this car."

Prema Racing's F2 rookie Andrea Kimi Antonelli logged 53 laps, the most of any driver. ART Grand Prix's Victor Martins, a race winner last year, noted that the new car's feel was not significantly different to the outgoing model, which has given him confidence that "I will be able to put my experience to good use for the new season". The 2022 Formula 3 champion added: "I like it when straight away, you can push, you get the confidence. Honestly, I'm happy."

The first races of the 14-event season take place in Bahrain on 1-2 March.

JAMES NEWBOLD



Loake, Lindblad and Slater join SuperStars

BRDC

Three newcomers have joined the British Racing Drivers' Club's SuperStars programme, which aims to help young talent on and off track, for 2024.

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award winner Joseph Loake and Red Bull Junior Arvid Lindblad, who will graduate to FIA Formula 3 with Rodin Motorsport and Prema Racing respectively, plus Prema's Formula 4 UAE series leader Freddie Slater are the new SuperStars. They have all 'graduated' from the junior BRDC Rising Stars, and join 10 others who remain on the scheme.

Ollie Bearman is continuing in Formula 2 and has been named as Ferrari F1 reserve (see p5), while Zak O'Sullivan steps up to F2 as last year's F3 runner-up. O'Sullivan's fellow Williams protege Luke Browning remains in F3 after winning the 2023 Macau Grand Prix, and will race against reigning GB3 champion Callum Voisin.

Tom Gamble continues as a McLaren



Loake (centre) and Voisin (right) join Rees (left) as BRDC SuperStars

factory driver in GT, while Seb Priaulx has started his IMSA GTD Pro season in a Porsche with pole and second place at the Daytona 24 Hours. Louis Foster will undertake a second season in Indy NXT, and Harry King remains in the Porsche Supercup. Yet to confirm their 2024 plans are GB3 ace Matthew Rees and reigning Carrera Cup GB champion Adam Smalley.

Ex-Bentley works driver Andy Meyrick remains on board as SuperStars director to guide the young talents for another season.

"The British Racing Drivers' Club has always been a strong supporter of young drivers and this year's list of BRDC SuperStars is testament to that," said club president David Coulthard. "Andy Meyrick and the team have done a brilliant job over the years to help nurture and guide these talents and mould them into professional racing drivers. There is no doubt that we will be seeing the names of some of these SuperStars on the Formula 1 grid in the coming years."



Inaugural World Final is delayed

TCR

The organisation behind the TCR category has delayed its inaugural 'Formula Ford Festival of tin-tops' to the end of the 2024 season. The TCR World Ranking Final, which has now been given an FIA title, was scheduled for the start of March at the Algarve Circuit.

The initial plan was to invite drivers from TCR's multitude of regional and national championships based on a points-scoring index of results, with competitors from the TCR World Tour effectively gaining an automatic entry. But TCR rights owner WSC has now

barred World Tour competitors. And with the FIA Motorsport Games taking place in October, it was decided not to overload the calendar.

Competitors who registered for the Portimao event will gain an automatic entry for the postponed Final, which will take place at an undisclosed venue 'in the last third of the year'.

WSC president Marcello Lotti said: "When it became clear we would be hosting two 'world finals' in the same year, we had to look at what was best to resolve that, from a sporting perspective and for our competitors, and moving the event for us makes the most sense."

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No plans for Le Mans Honda attack

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Honda has no plans in the near future to go to the Le Mans 24 Hours with the Acura brand's ARX-06. Expanding the LMDh prototype programme beyond the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America has slipped further down the list of priorities with its full Formula 1 return in 2026, according to Honda Racing Corporation boss Koji Watanabe.

There were hints last year that bringing the Honda Performance Development organisation that has mastermind Acura's sportscar programmes since 2007 under the HRC umbrella could open the door to the ARX-06 racing in the World Endurance Championship and at Le Mans. But

Watanabe has stressed that there "are no plans at this time" for such a move, though he conceded that he wasn't saying "it won't happen forever".

"First of all, we will continue to run IndyCar with the limited manpower we have," said Watanabe. "In the USA, IMSA is in high demand, and our priority is to win there. Since a few members of the US team will be involved in the F1 project, we will not consider [a Le Mans entry] until things have settled down there."

The prospects of the Acura appearing at Le Mans are further complicated by marketing and sporting considerations. The ARX-06 would almost certainly have to race as a Honda because Acura is exclusively a North American brand.

Nor would an IMSA team be able to pitch up at Le Mans without entering the full series. The Automobile Club de l'Ouest has been very clear about that.

An expansion of the IMSA programme from the current two cars run by WTRAndretti is unlikely for next year, according to HRC US boss David Salters. He said that the organisation "is very happy where it is right now" in terms of factory participation, but didn't rule out selling cars in the future. "I don't know about next year, but we would like to build some customer ARX-06s," he said. "It would have to be the right team or teams because these cars are super-sophisticated, and then it has to make business sense."

GARY WATKINS

Cadillac to field Lynn, Bamber as duo

WEC

Cadillac plans to run only two drivers this year in its solo V-Series.R LMDh in the six-hour races that make up the bulk of the World Endurance Championship. Earl Bamber and Alex Lynn (right) will drive as a duo at the Chip Ganassi Racing-run squad except at the 10-hour Qatar season-opener next month, the Le Mans 24 Hours and the Bahrain 8 Hours curtain-closer.

The General Motors marque had previously stated that a decision would be made on the third seat previously occupied by Richard Westbrook on a race-by-race basis over the course of the season. Now team boss Chip Ganassi has revealed the two-driver plan.

"We're only looking for an extra driver for Qatar, Bahrain and, of course, Le Mans," said Ganassi. "We want to keep it simple, and hope that two drivers is the fastest way.

You're going to see some familiar drivers sprinkled in there like before."

That comment suggests that Ganassi's IMSA SportsCar Championship regulars Sebastien Bourdais and Renger van der Zande are the primary candidates to fill the third seat in Qatar or Bahrain. They would not be available for Le Mans in June on the assumption that Ganassi gets a second entry again.

GARY WATKINS





WRC Toyota's new contender for the World Rally Championship's hotly contested WRC2 class made its debut on last weekend's Monte Carlo Rally, with three of the four GR Yaris Rally2s running the full distance. Finn Sami Pajari's (above) was the top finisher – fifth RC2 car home – but ran outside the WRC2 classification. Stephane Lefebvre claimed fifth in WRC2, one spot ahead of Jan Solans, while Bryan Bouffier drove the other. **Photograph by McKlein**

LAGUNA RESPONDS TO NOISE LAWSUIT FROM LOCALS

INDYCAR/IMSA

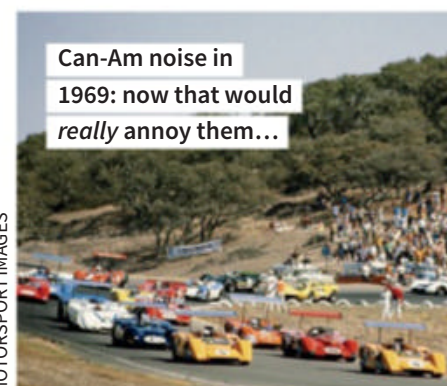
The management of revered IndyCar/IMSA venue Laguna Seca has responded to a lawsuit filed by a group of disgruntled locals, who are seeking a reduction in its usage and noise.

The California circuit, constructed in 1957, is owned by Monterey County, which signed a long-term concession agreement with the non-profit Friends of Laguna Seca (FLS) in July last year to secure its long-term financial future.

On 12 December, a group called Highway 68 Coalition filed a lawsuit against Monterey County, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors and FLS, alleging nuisance issues for residents, including increased noise and traffic. FLS counters that H68C is 'attempting to interrupt its stewardship and improvements of the Laguna Seca Recreational Area'.

"We live here too and share the same concerns as our neighbours about noise and traffic," said FLS president Ross Merrill. "Our team of experienced business and community leaders are eager to move forward to revive this staple in our community for decades of future success and revenue generation for Monterey County."

CHARLES BRADLEY



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Aston begins track-testing

WEC/IMSA

Aston Martin has started testing ahead of its return to the pinnacle of sportscar racing in the World Endurance and IMSA SportsCar championships next year. On-track development began last month with the AMR Pro trackday machine out of which the new Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercar is being developed.

Aston Martin endurance racing head Adam Carter described the Silverstone run as an "early systems test" before the definitive LMH to be fielded in the WEC and IMSA by Heart of Racing begins testing later in the year. Driving duties were handled by "a well-trusted member of the Aston Martin Racing family", he said.

Carter explained that there is "some fundamental software work we can do" with the AMR Pro, which is based on the design of the original Valkyrie race car



ASTON MARTIN

scheduled to join the WEC in 2021. "It will be very intensive testing because the platform already exists so we can crack on and push hard with some very focused objectives," he said.

Carter added that the 2025 Valkyrie LMH announced last October remains "on programme". It will hit the track towards the end of the second quarter of this year. Next year's Valkyrie LMH, like the original racer planned for 2021, will be a non-hybrid powered by the six-litre normally aspirated V12 developed by Cosworth.

GARY WATKINS

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Cook joins Speedworks as Butcher takes break in GTs

BTCC

British Touring Car Championship star Josh Cook has lined up a seat with the expanded four-car line-up of Toyota squad Speedworks Motorsport for 2024. But Rory Butcher, the team's highest-profile driver of the past three years, has elected to take a BTCC 'sabbatical' after a tough 2023.

Cook moves to the Cheshire operation after five years behind the wheel of Honda Civics run by BTC Racing/One Motorsport, where the 32-year-old scored 16 of his 18 BTCC race victories. He will race one of two Corolla GR Sports to be fielded under the LKQ Euro Car Parts with Synetiq banner, alongside a brace entered by Toyota Gazoo Racing UK. LKQ backed the One Hondas taken to podium finishes in 2023 by Cook and Aiden Moffat. No other drivers have been confirmed by Speedworks.

"It's been a great few years with One Motorsport," said Cook. "I want to give a nod to them and

Steve Dudman [One principal] for the amount of time we've spent together. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have been on the grid for all those years.

"This is a bit of a change, but the new challenge is exciting, and it gets me driven and excited to come back for this year and put together a campaign to challenge for the title."

Cook is a long-time friend of new Speedworks head of racing Danny Buxton, who was team boss of BTC and One for an 18-month period through 2022 and 2023. "I'm excited to work with Christian [Dick, team principal], Danny and John [Gilbert, Speedworks shareholder]," he added. "They've got a fairly comprehensive testing plan in place, and they've done a lot of development of the car over the winter. The results at the minute from testing look to be very positive."

Cook plans to continue working with his long-time engineer, the unrelated former Super Nova F3000/GP2 techie Mick Cook.

Butcher (below) is effectively seeking to recharge his batteries by returning to his GT roots, and is targeting the 24-hour races at Spa and the Nurburgring plus historic racing.

"As much as the car wasn't a championship-winning car [in 2023], if I was on my A-game I believe I could finish in the top six," he said. "But sometimes when you're not in the right frame of mind you attract things like incidents and punctures.

"It's 100% the right decision for me at this time, but I've got unfinished business and want to come back. I don't believe I'm any slower than I was in 2022 [when he was fifth]."

MARCUS SIMMONS

Strife could put Kostecki out

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

Newly crowned Australian Supercars champion Brodie Kostecki looks set to sit out the 2024 season following a split with the Erebus Motorsport team.

The 26-year-old, who took his first title in the series after a season-long battle with Shane van Gisbergen, is understood to have had a major disagreement with team management. After the departure of Will Brown from the team at the end of last season to join Triple Eight, Erebus now faces the possibility of going into 2024 with two new drivers: Jack Le Brocq, who signed with the team last summer; and perhaps Todd Hazelwood.

Autosport understands that there have been tensions at Erebus for some time, with Kostecki reportedly having a major fall-out with the squad on the eve of The Bend round in August last year. Ironically, that weekend was his best performance, scoring maximum points by winning all three races.

It has been reported that Kostecki is under contract to Erebus for the remainder of the 2024 season and, as things stand, it looks unlikely that he would be released to join another team to participate even as a co-driver in the Sandown 500 or Bathurst 1000.

Kostecki has been linked with a future in NASCAR and has already competed in a Cup race with Richard Childress Racing, at Indianapolis last August. He was scheduled to participate in up to five Cup events this year in a joint-venture entry between Erebus and RCR.

Kostecki has strong links with businessman Peter Adderton, whose MobileX mobile phone company backed his NASCAR debut, is undergoing major growth through its links with Walmart, and looks to be ideally placed to back any potential full-time switch to NASCAR.

PHIL BRANAGAN



EDGE PHOTOGRAPHICS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Van Kouwen became a top-liner in British F3 during 1985...



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Gerrit van Kouwen 1963-2024

OBITUARY

On talent, Gerrit van Kouwen – who died last Friday of aggressive cancer at the age of 60 – should have swelled the Netherlands' slim club of serious F1 racers. Yet beyond Formula Ford and F3, *De Vliegende Hollander's* progress stalled.

Middle son of a De Meern car breaker, van Kouwen's gentle persona, boundless enthusiasm, insatiable appetite to learn and intense loyalty endeared him to everybody he worked with. He was banned for autocrossing a VW Beetle underage at 15, yet topped a Zandvoort driving course a year later alongside police drivers. He won a Marlboro Crossle 32F FF drive, and his ASN granted an exemption – as for Wim Loos and Jan Lammers – enabling him to race before he could hold a road licence.

In 1982, after buying engines from David Minister, van Kouwen earned the first of two successive Dutch and Benelux championships in a Van Diemen, guided by Kees van der Grint. In September 1983, Lola's Mike Blanchet loaned him a T642E

ahead of Zandvoort's EFDA Euroseries decider. He thrashed Harald Huysman and Manuel Reuter to win in the rain.

With Festival aspirations, van Kouwen entered two Champion of Brands rounds, winning one. At the big event, a holed radiator thwarted his Final charge while fourth. For 1984, armed with a T644E, van Kouwen won the European crown again and six championship rounds in Britain with Danny Blundell's Fleetray team. He was invincible at the Festival, scooping a £5000 jackpot as the only driver to lap inside 49s.

Van Kouwen moved up to British F3 in 1985 with Pegasus Motorsport, and took his breakthrough win at Silverstone's British Grand Prix support round. Two more victories gave him fifth in the points. Ironically, he improved to fourth in 1986, despite splitting from the equipe mid-season after a Thruxton victory, but mysteriously scored no further points with Swallow Racing.

A BMW Nederland M3 touring car programme was ineffective against Ford Sierra RS500s, which he subsequently raced. Spasmodic German F3 outings added little to his CV. Business was good meanwhile. Astutely run by Gerrit with brothers Ed and Martin, the VAKO building demolition company, into which the family firm morphed, became the city of Utrecht's preferred contractor, then was sold.

Devoted to his British wife Suzy, their children Sian, Ethan and Ellie, and granddaughters Rylie and new-born Olivia, Gerrit will be remembered as a humble achiever – and great bloke!

MARCUS PYE

...after taking maiden win in British GP support



MOTORSPORT IMAGES

SCHURING IN WEC PORSCHE

Porsche Supercup race winner Morris Schuring has joined the Manthey team's LMGT3 World Endurance Championship line-up for 2024. The 18-year-old Dutchman will line up in the #91 Manthey EMA Porsche 911 GT3-R together with factory driver Richard Lietz and Yasser Shahin, owner of The Bend circuit in Australia and a two-time champion in the pro-am GT World Challenge Australia.

PERERA, PIN IN LAMBOS

Over at Iron Lynx, the Italian team has firmed up its WEC LMGT3 line-ups for its pair of Lamborghinis. Marque specialist and works driver Franck Perera finally gets his WEC break in one of the Huracan GT3 EVO2s, alongside Matteo Cressoni and Claudio Schiavoni. In the sister Iron Dames car, Doriane Pin replaces Rahel Frey and will dovetail the series with her F1 Academy programme with sister team Prema. The Mercedes protegee joins Michelle Gattling and Sarah Bovy.

MORE RECRUITS FOR F3

Another batch of drivers for the FIA Formula 3 Championship has been confirmed in the past few days. Rodin Motorsport has completed its line-up with Pole Piotr Wisnicki, who made his F3 debut with PHM Racing last season and now lines up beside Callum Voisin and Joseph Loake. PHM has recruited Swiss Josh Dufek and Thai Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak. Both step up from Formula Regional, in which Inthraphuvasak is currently racing in the Middle East series with the German squad.

ANDROS CROWN TO PANIS

Aurelien Panis (below) has become the last-ever champion of the Andros Trophy, the French ice-racing series that is being put, ahem, on ice after 35 seasons. Panis clinched the crown last weekend at Super Besse in his Audi A1 over Renault Zoe racer Jean-Baptiste Dubourg. But it was Dorian Boccolacci who triumphed in the final round over Panis, 16-year-old single-seater hotshot Theophile Nael and rally legend Sebastien Loeb.



BADE/SICAUD



CONGRATULATIONS FELIPE!

In 2011 British F3 Champion Felipe Nasr won the Sunoco Daytona Challenge which awarded him the prize of driving the #6 MSR Daytona Prototype in the 2012 Rolex 24 At Daytona. Felipe stunned everyone with his amazing speed resulting in 3rd overall.

This year his talent took the Team Penske Porsche 963 to a hard fought overall win with co-drivers Dane Cameron, Matt Campbell, and Joesef Newgarden.

Huge congratulations to Felipe from your Sunoco family!





The value of a name

While it's important to acknowledge F1's commercial imperatives, when the official title of a team stirs unprecedented ire, something has surely gone awry

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

AlphaTauri's rebranding as Visa Cash App RB and the outcry that followed were as predictable as the new name was underwhelming. One element of this was the various headlines decrying it as the worst Formula 1 team name ever, including in *The Guardian* newspaper.

More than ever in F1, teams are used as branding exercises. It's not new – think Benetton in the 1990s. But the fashion house at least owned the team that is now Alpine, unlike Alfa Romeo with Sauber in the last five years of that 'branding exercise'.

Those two utterly uninspiring words sum up the problem around the team-name storms that have become the second off-track saga of the nascent 2024 season. These follow Guenther Steiner's departure from Haas and the journey that team is now on. The thinking behind them is also simply off-putting to many F1 fans.

The VCARB rebrand makes sense from a commercial point of view for its Red Bull parent operation. Leaving snarky Minardi arguments aside, there was no point even returning to Scuderia Toro Rosso for a team that in many ways is being moved closer to the UK-based divisions of Red Bull's main squad. Red Bull GmbH is doing all this, ultimately, because it wants a better return on investment than the ninth and eighth places AlphaTauri achieved in the first two years of the new ground-effect era.

Here we've hit on another dull business phrase, especially

“The past few weeks have contained plenty of off-putting developments to many F1 fans”

as Minardi becoming Toro Rosso was then part of Dietrich Mateschitz's passion project and originally dedicated to developing young driver talent. Really, this is an element for which Red Bull doesn't get enough credit. But with its junior supply pipeline seemingly no longer functioning as it used to – evidenced by Liam Lawson being off the grid, despite his stellar performances in place of the injured Daniel Ricciardo last year – what is VCARB about now? The name alone, surely, says it outright: cash.

The past few weeks have contained plenty of off-putting developments to many F1 fans. Taking a broadside swipe: who cares about Haas now that Steiner is gone? Regardless of his achievements, or lack of them, his approach to team principalling provided considerable entertainment in F1's off-track churn. Now, because of the massively lengthy lead times required to turn an F1

results ship around, the debate swings towards Haas adding less to F1 with its X factor gone. It's the reverse of the argument for keeping Andretti (a name steeped in motorsport lore, after all) out of the championship – that a new squad must add value to mitigate the financial hit to the other teams of an 11th joining. It was a point Steiner himself made time and again last year.

The Madrid street track joining the calendar in 2026 makes it yet another identikit circuit (TV helicopter shots aside) coming to the already packed schedule. Yes, such events bring the action to cities where it's easier for fans to attend, then enjoy other delights in surrounding metropolises. And there's also an environmental argument that new purpose-built tracks should no longer be considered given the resources they require to build and the added travel needed to attend. But F1's street track swell makes so many races look too similar given the considerable safety features regulated in their construction. New Monaco events these are not. The identity problem of individual races is something Formula E struggled to manage in its early years. And that championship is now making a move to visit more purpose-built facilities.

But these things are happening because the short-term drive for cash is so important. That's not new and ultimately it's a fact of life. But in these instances, it comes with a risk of alienating long-term motorsport fans. Some are already very disillusioned and, because there's no guarantee of another *Drive to Survive* or pandemic escape boom coming, that is a problem in the longer term.

F1 has changed. It has always been about change. But too much else of what attracts people to it seems to be in the process of being forgotten. Inspiration has a massive value too.

The Alfa point is pertinent. Its official FIA entry list team title is Stake F1 Team Kick Sauber, with that last word being so historic. Before Audi with its many motorsport accolades arrives, that venerable name is something fans could galvanise themselves around, although admittedly in smaller quantities than with a title-winning team. But we can predict here that this won't happen with the new name. As soon as the season gets rolling, then whatever TV term takes off – something that's actually not so simple in this case, given gambling advertising restrictions in many markets, hence the requirement for the whole Kick thing – that'll be how Sauber is known. The floodgates were opened by the Alfa acceptance.

Again, hard business logic will be behind it. For however much sanctimonious columnists wail, media outlets in an ever more strangulated market can't afford to give clicks away in the SEO-dominated online world. This mirrors the ruthlessness of F1 itself, where technological, financial and even political battles all add to the championship's intrigue. But it's a people passion at its heart. That cannot be forgotten, especially if those fans relied on to build the boom are indeed more needed in the coming years. 🏁



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Formula E's overtaking conundrum

The relative lack of place-swapping action in the opening races of 2024 contrasts with events last year. But will a return of peloton racing be the way to address the issue?

STEFAN MACKLEY

While “that was a better race than Mexico,” as someone told this writer, was probably subjectively true, it was hardly a ringing endorsement given the lack of action in the Diriyah E-Prix double-header last weekend.

Yes, the opening Formula E race in Saudi Arabia featured a three-way battle for the win, at least until half distance, while in the sequel new championship leader Nick Cassidy had to climb from third to take victory, but they were hardly classic contests that will go down in people's memories. Away from the top positions, it was very much a case of line-astern racing, where positions remained unchanged for large portions of the race, nor were there any safety cars to throw in an unexpected twist.

Processional races in motorsport are nothing new – there were certainly enough of them in Formula 1 last season – and are more common than many enthusiasts would probably care to admit. Let's not forget, though, that without the dull races, we'd have less to appreciate when a really good one comes along and has us glued to the action.

The conundrum with Formula E is that at various points last year there were plenty of races where drivers changed positions every lap and quite literally hundreds of overtakes took place, a stark contrast to the three races of 2024 so far.

Before we go any further, let's be clear that a 'change of position' is a more apt description for what took place at many points last year, rather than what motorsport fans would consider an 'overtaking move'. With drivers moving off the racing line to activate Attack Mode – a process that's mandatory twice in every race and which gives drivers an extra boost of energy for eight minutes – losing spots to drivers behind is inevitable. The 403 'overtakes' for example in Portland last year, as blazoned across social media by the championship, is a case in point.

Motorsport fans could rightly argue that it's manufactured drama, which to a certain extent it is, but on the other hand it's a strategic tool that has become a crucial element of any race – something similar to a pitstop, for example. On that last point, fast-charging pitstops are currently lined up to be used at the Misano E-Prix double-header in April, and could be what the championship needs to spice up races again.

The bigger question, though, is why the dull races so far? Attack Mode was used last season, yet the three opening races in last year's campaign provided generally exciting entertainment. The two Diriyah races in particular were a highlight, as double-winner Pascal Wehrlein climbed from starting positions of ninth and fifth, while there was plenty of action throughout the field.

Qualifying almost became an irrelevance last season, with drivers winning from way back on the grid, including Antonio

Felix da Costa in Cape Town (11th) and Mitch Evans in Berlin (ninth), while three of Cassidy's four wins came from eighth or lower in the starting order.

Yet even before a wheel had been turned in Diriyah, drivers were fully aware of how important qualifying would be in 2024. The biggest difference from last year is that teams and drivers now have 12 months of racing the Gen3 car – which was new for last year – under their belts, meaning they have generally

“The challenge remains finding a balance between processional and wildly-over-the-top races”

maximised their packages, including energy efficiency.

Last term it also became apparent that leading the race from the front was generally not the place to be at most tracks, with the Gen3 machine aerodynamically quite draggy. It meant races turned into something more akin to cycling, where drivers would move up and down the peloton – the further back they were in the order, the more energy they could save due to the strength of the slipstream. It's why at Portland drivers went five-wide at points as they lifted and coasted into corners in a bid to fall back into the pack, only wanting to be towards the front in the closing laps.

But this only became an issue on tracks where energy management was high and the slipstream effective – the former was not a major issue in Diriyah, while the thinner air in Mexico meant the latter was never critical.

With more energy-demanding and wider, faster tracks coming up on the calendar, the likelihood is that we will see more entertaining races this season, but there's no guarantee. And Formula E's biggest challenge remains in ensuring that it finds a balance between processional and wildly-over-the-top races.

As Andretti team principal Roger Griffiths says: “It's hard to say whether it [peloton racing] is going to return or not. It really comes down to the FIA simulations around how many laps they want to run. The more energy management that we have to deal with, I think the more fun the races become. I'd hope that we can get back to more challenging racing, I think that's what fans want to see. Hundreds of overtakes during the course of a race rather than perhaps a dozen or so, it's the spectacle that Formula E has become and it would be good if we can maintain that.”

P44 DIRIYAH E-PRIX REPORT



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2024 Race Season

20 & 21 April - Silverstone Spring Start

15 June - Cadwell Park

7 July - Donington SeeRed

31 August - Mallory Park

2024 Speed Season

5 May - Curborough Speed Trials

12 May - Wiscombe Park Hill Climb

8 June - Harewood Hill Climb

30 June - Shelsley Walsh Hill Climb

21 July - Blyton Sprint

3 & 4 August - Vintage Prescott Hill Climb

7 & 8 September - Loton Park Hill Climbs

28 September - Prescott Long Course Hill Climb

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PICTURES OF THE WEEK

OPINION **PIT + PADDOCK**

➔ **P38 MONTE CARLO REPORT**

Spectacular fireworks and flares
illuminate Thierry Neuville's way
to Monte Carlo Rally victory



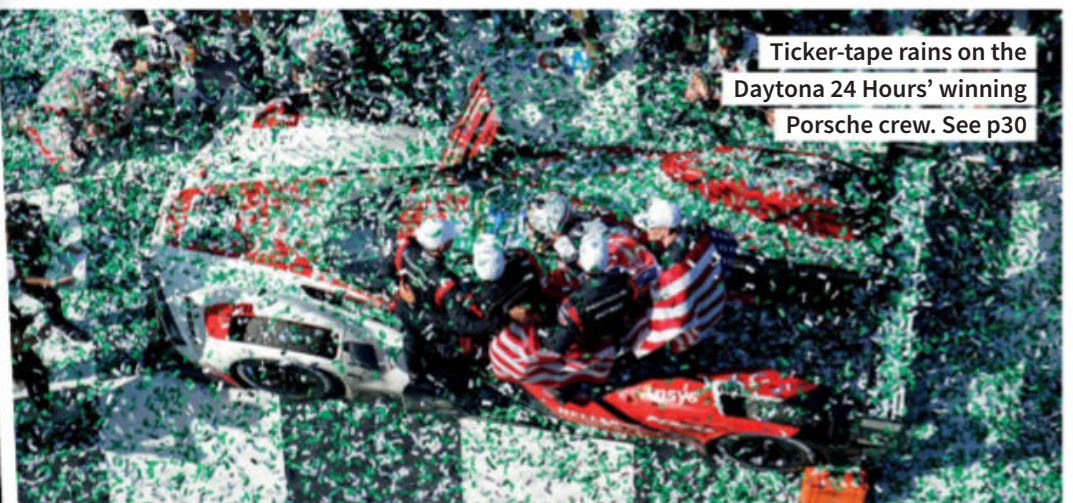
MICHAEL JURTIŃ / @WORLD / REDBULL CONTENT POOL

Mitch Evans's Jaguar
I-TYPE 6 lights up the
Riyadh night. See p44



STALEY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Ticker-tape rains on the
Daytona 24 Hours' winning
Porsche crew. See p30



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Newey has seen it, done it, won it, so is a perfect fit for overseer-cum-mentor role

ADRIAN NEWEY

THE KING OF F1 DESIGN

Adrian Newey won titles at Williams and McLaren before helping to build the Red Bull powerhouse. And he's not done yet...

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

 PHOTOGRAPHY RED BULL AND  **motorsport
IMAGES**


he list of Formula 1 accomplishments not featuring the influence of Adrian Newey gets ever-smaller. And in 2023, the Red Bull RB19 finally wrestled the mantle of 'F1's most dominant car' away from the 1988 McLaren MP4/4. For the second time since Newey's switch from the Woking team in 2006, Red Bull is dominating grand prix racing.

Newey has been in his current post of chief technical officer since joining the team. His role means he sits above current technical director Pierre Wache, but isn't overly involved in the squad's process side of its day-to-day engineering, preferring to concentrate on development aspects. Team principal Christian Horner recently explained how Newey's role has "evolved over the last few years", and that he "has the ability to come in, come out and work on other projects, and that's part of the evolution of any team".



Wache explains how this works. With every new Red Bull and subsequent in-season car development plan, Newey is "coming from sideways and trying to help us or challenge us on different aspects and in different aspects of the team – it could be

“Normally with people with plenty of success, their idea is the best. But he's not like that”

mechanical design, aero or vehicle dynamics”.

“He's irreplaceable,” adds the Frenchman. “I would say [Newey's work is] more challenging [ideas] than [agreeing]. But I think it's good. Because when you have a step back, you see different things. He also has a different background to all of us and some knowledge that we don't have because we didn't experience that. He's a very smart person and he's still very open-minded. Normally with people with plenty of success, their idea is the best. But he's not like that. He's working as a mentor and challenging us.”

In his evolved role, Newey remains a regular on the pitwall for Red Bull at race events throughout each F1 season, still stalking the race grids looking at and analysing other designs. And at last season's GP in Mexico City, Autosport got the chance to sit down with him for an exclusive interview.

In a wide-ranging conversation – where his softly spoken nature briefly has to compete with the racket of a vacuum cleaner as the team's hospitality unit is prepared for race day guests, at an event Max Verstappen will go on to win for the third successive year – we learn how he views Red Bull's journey to its current F1 position.

And, most pertinently, what that all means for both the championship's future and Newey's own. >>



Newey was a designer for Fittipaldi at close of F1's previous ground-effect era



There were high points at Leyton House, but team's promise went unfulfilled

NEWKEY ON...

Preparing for F1's new ground-effect era

"At the first level it's sitting down and trying to understand the opportunities within the regulations, which can be as simple as loopholes to explore," explains Newey on how he approaches understanding new F1 rulesets. "But, more often than not it's not a loophole – it's just trying to understand how within these rules what we can create to fill the best overall package. It's not just the aerodynamics, it's also the mechanical layout etc.

"I must admit when I first saw the early draft of these regulations, which would have been in 2020, I was quite depressed by them. They seemed very prescriptive. Other teams felt that as well and so we managed to get a bit of relaxation on some of those restrictions. But then with those restrictions in mind, once we got into the details, then there was much more room for interpretation within the various boxes, gradient slopes and so forth than it appeared at first sight. And I think that was visible at the start of 2022, when obviously teams arrived with a variety of visually very different solutions.

"An advantage I do have is that in my early career I worked as an aerodynamicist, mechanical designer and race engineer, giving me experience in all three of our disciplines. So, having gone through the regs with the guys, I sat down and worked on the overall architecture of the car and then drew the front and rear suspension together with the surrounding nose, chassis and bodywork of what became RB18. It is these areas where it's about trying to balance the often conflicting requirements of mechanical design, aero and vehicle dynamics and something I very much enjoy the challenge of. It is also crucial to try to get these areas right at the start of a new regulation period. If you

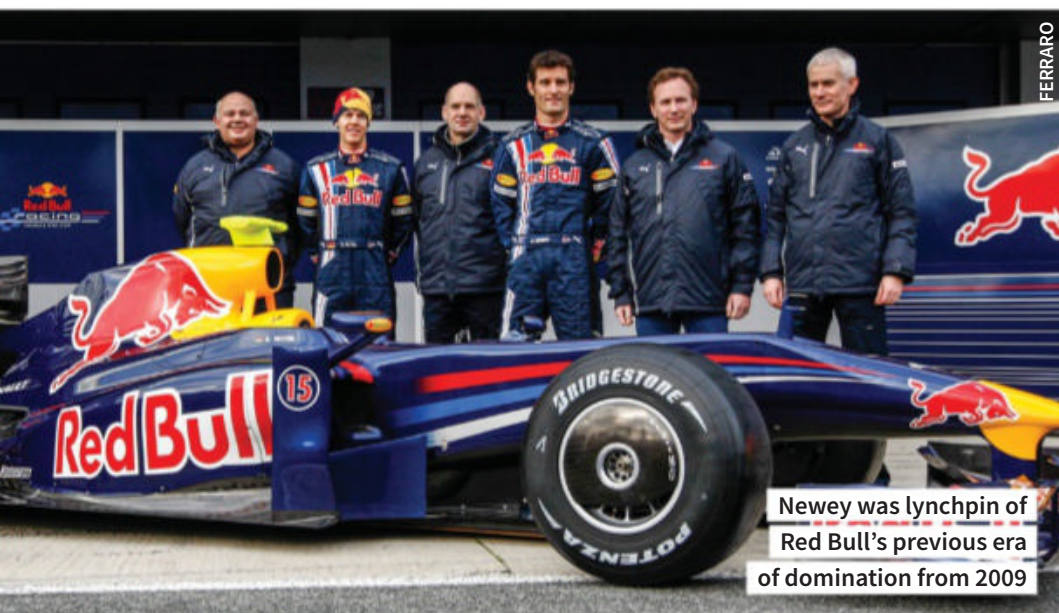


Celebrating Damon Hill's 1996 title triumph on Suzuka podium

do, you can then evolve year to year rather than having to completely change the car for a subsequent year. RB19 was very much an evolution of RB18, RB20 will be a third generation evo – just as RB5 spawned the evolutionary approach that lasted through to RB9. Now, of course, everyone is starting to converge – through [2023] particularly. And that will probably continue through to the end of 2025, when these rules cease."

Newey is intriguingly placed to comment on the nuances of F1's current ruleset. After all, he was working as a designer for the Fittipaldi squad when the championship's last ground-effect era ended in 1982, having just finished studying aeronautics and astronautics at Southampton University.

This led Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton to say "knowing that Adrian did his thesis on ground-effect cars, it's no surprise what he has done and created" when Red Bull's current purple patch really took off midway through the 2022 campaign. Newey's project was, however, specifically focused on sportscar ground-effect aero.



Newey was lynchpin of Red Bull's previous era of domination from 2009

"I enjoy regulation changes. It gives the opportunity to look at things from a fresh perspective"

But Red Bull's success in this F1 era is far from the first time a team deploying Newey's knowledge has vaulted to the front of the field after a major rules reset. There was his eventual nailing of the 1995 wing and floor rules that swept Williams to the 1996 and 1997 titles after the Benetton/Michael Schumacher success interregnum in the mid-1990s, then McLaren's 1998-99 titles with Mika Hakkinen after Newey had joined ahead of the move to narrow cars for 1998. And, of course, there was Red Bull's first period of domination with Sebastian Vettel in the upper-aero-stripped cars from 2009.



Design wizard quit
Williams to join
McLaren in late 1996

“I enjoy – and this is at a personal level, as opposed to speaking for the team – regulation changes,” Newey says. “Because it gives a chance to look at new avenues, providing it’s, if you like, a creative set of regulation changes. So, I do enjoy that fact and the opportunity to look at things from a fresh perspective.”

“Now that we are into the third year of these regs, it’s very much about lots of very detailed evolution. But it’s still rewarding when we find bits and pieces here and there. Of course, the increments, certainly for us, seem to be getting smaller and smaller. Whether somebody else manages to find some big leap or not, we’ll find out.”

Rewind to the beginning of 2022, and the talk across the F1 field was of porpoising impacting the performance of the new ground-

effect machines. But not at Red Bull, which was quickly on top of the phenomenon after the opening test at Barcelona.

Sources have suggested that one important reason for this was Newey’s early career experience helping Red Bull’s current designers avoid the pitfalls other teams fell into; to not, for example, chase the peak downforce levels that simulations had indicated Mercedes’ ‘zeropod’ approach could produce – because a stable platform was more important for retaining overall downforce.

Does Newey agree with this suggestion? “Probably a bit – in as much as through age, if you like, I was around [back then],” he replies. “And so learning from that perhaps gave me a bit of an advantage in terms of knowing that this is potentially going to be a problem. And that we needed to, the team, make sure that the design approach took that into account.”

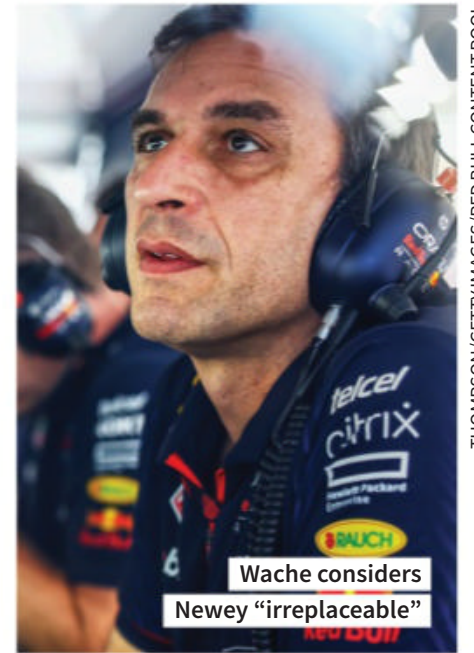
NEWEY ON...

Red Bull’s current car advantage

Such efforts at Red Bull early in 2022 were rewarded handsomely when it was finally able to lighten the RB18 and see off Ferrari’s faltering challenge. Then, for the RB19, it refined the concept, with the other teams all finally abandoning the different design paths of the early new ground-effect era to, in effect, copy Red Bull’s approach.

Still the team went on to blast the opposition on an unprecedented scale last year, the dominance secured against the backdrop of its reduced aero testing allowance, first by the sliding scale rules introduced in 2021, then with its penalty for breaching the cost cap that year.

But putting the question of the RB19’s key strengths to Newey gets a surprising response, plus more insight into how Red Bull had first viewed the new rules ahead of 2022. “Crikey!” he exclaims, albeit still softly. “We’ve tried to concentrate on race performance over qualifying performance. That’s something we adopted as a philosophy when we were researching and designing the RB18. And that was really on the basis that it did look as if the aerodynamic regulation changes were going to make overtaking easier. And, ➤



Wache considers
Newey “irreplaceable”

THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

You’re going to need a bigger trophy cabinet – RB19 amassed ‘silverware’ on a vast scale



MCCAFFREY/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



therefore, race performance would become relatively more important compared to qualifying had been previously. So, that was something we had to look at.

“So, what are the 19’s strengths? Typically we’ve had good tyre deg. Not necessarily in all races the best tyre deg, but on average we’ve had good tyre deg. And, generally, we’ve managed to have a car that’s competitive regardless of circuit layout. Some circuits, or some natures of circuit, we’re more competitive than others. But with the exception of Singapore [where Ferrari’s Carlos Sainz took the only non-Red Bull victory of 2023], which we made a bit of a mess of, then we’ve also had a decent level of consistency.”

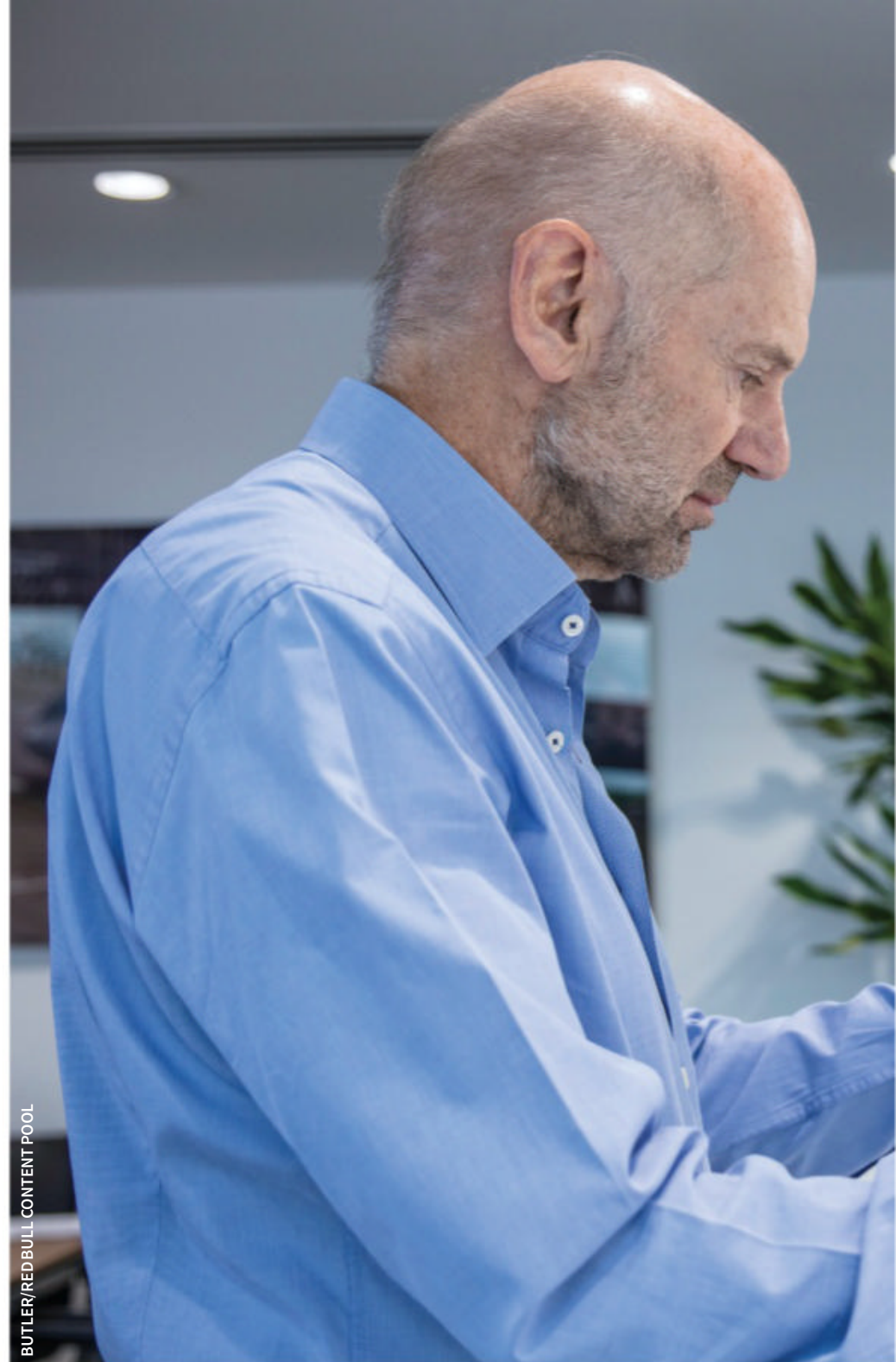
Of any weaknesses in the RB19, which Wache and Verstappen have explained concern mainly bumps, kerb-riding and low-speed corners, Newey says “typically at the very high downforce circuits we tend to, for whatever reason, have less of an advantage than at the more medium to low downforce circuits”.

NEWHEY ON...

How F1 has changed

Newey’s first job as an F1 technical director was in 1990 with the fledgling Leyton House/March squad, before he joined Williams as chief designer midway through that year. This was after being forced to choose between accepting a lesser role at the now failing Leyton House team or leave – “effectively I was sacked”, as Newey put it in his 2017 autobiography.

In those subsequent 32 years, he’s helped secure 12 constructors’ championships. For Newey, the biggest change in how F1 teams operated in that time concerns how design departments – and the squads overall – have expanded in size.



“Through the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the sizes of the engineering team in an F1 team didn’t grow hugely,” he explains. “I think when I was at Leyton House we were five engineers and that was it. At Williams we were probably up to 20 or so, maybe 25.

“But then the computer age really kicked in and that, more than budget perhaps, was the thing that changed the whole way we go about researching and designing a car. None of that was possible before the computing power that started to happen somewhere around the mid-1990s and things really started to change. Coupled with budgets going up, it led to this mushrooming of engineering teams in all F1 teams. And that I would say was the sea change.”

NEWHEY ON...

How Red Bull has changed

Although Newey’s role within Red Bull’s design team has altered through the years, with the squad keen to highlight how he now mentors its younger engineers, his influence on its working practices remains. As the 20th anniversary of his departure from McLaren approaches, he explains how the growth of F1 teams overall led to his initial reshaping of Red Bull’s technical department as it expanded from what had been the Stewart and Jaguar entries before 2005.

“You then take that growth [begun by the impact of computing power],” he says. “It’s then obviously how you make sure that you’re getting the right people – because it’s ultimately still a people sport. So, on the engineering side, it’s about trying to make sure that we had a really good quality of talent on the engineering team across the disciplines. And then the ethos of how that team then works.

“We try to run a very inclusive, very flat structure as much as possible. Every F1 team has the three disciplines [aero, mechanical design and vehicle dynamics], and certainly when I first started at Red Bull, those three disciplines were in different rooms – one was even in a different building. So, building a mezzanine, getting everybody sitting together, trying to reduce the meeting culture and

Old-school drawing board for Newey, yet his skillset remains as relevant as ever

“Active aero only got a bad name when wings were falling off in the 1960s. We’re well beyond that now”

senior F1 designer recently told Autosport this should be considered a “fudge” for the increased electrical output of the new engines possibly leaving cars unable to run at full power for a whole lap. But Newey says active aero “doesn’t concern me. I don’t think that’s a bad thing. Trying to drive for greater aerodynamic efficiency is clearly a good goal. And why should active aero not be part of that? There’s a huge amount of road cars you see with spoilers lopping up and down on the boot lid and so forth. So, why not have that in racing? Active aero only got a bad name when wings were falling off back in the 1960s. We’re well beyond that now. Active aero has to be the future of road cars, so I think it’s appropriate that F1 should be displaying its power.”

NEWHEY ON...

His F1 future

Last May, Newey signed a new deal with Red Bull that ties him to the team for the long term. He says he’s therefore “absolutely” pleased to be continuing his current work. But his description of the only time he felt close to leaving – and F1 overall – in 2014, as Red Bull’s first era of success ended, actually increases pressure for 2026. If it all comes down to engine performance once again, the team should reflect how its destiny, plus that of one its star employees, is now in its own hands.

“At Leyton House in the late 1980s, we were on a tiny budget,” Newey concludes. “And as a team we were a bit up and down and inconsistent. But we had some good results and had we been allowed to continue to grow and have proper funding, I don’t know where it would have got to. [Former Autosport editor] Ian Phillips was the team principal, then we were responsible for how the team grew. And when I then joined Williams and McLaren, they were two great teams that had won races and championships way before I ever arrived. So, there was very little required on the infrastructure side – it was really just about trying to bring a bit on the design side.

“Whereas that’s why I joined Red Bull [to build a technical team]. It was a bit of a career risk, but I wanted to again be involved with the development of the team at the start. So, having been involved in the start and been involved with Christian and Helmut

[Marko] in how we developed the team, then why would I want to walk away from that? The only time it came close was in 2014 and that was for completely different reasonings. It was very simply at that time we had a power unit which wasn’t performing, which happens of course. And there didn’t seem to be a huge desire from the manufacturer [Renault] at the very top level to put the investment in to turn that around.

“So, you’re then in a bit of a depressing position where, as we all know, to win championships you’ve got to have the three key factors of driver, chassis and engine – and if one of those is weak you won’t win...”

the email culture a little bit to encourage people to actually talk to each other, was something that we tried to do. How that compares to other teams today, I cannot comment. But that’s something we’ve tried to do – make it an inclusive environment.”

Here there are obvious parallels with what Red Bull wants for its rebranded junior team in 2024, when Visa Cash App RB’s aerodynamics department is expanded to work more closely with the senior squad. But in terms of operating practices in the very prescriptive current ruleset, and within the new cost cap restrictions, Newey explains that this “changes the make-up [of car design] slightly”: “You have to be very disciplined and I think that’s where we as a team have improved. That the discipline we now have within the team and the methodology to be able to really explore those small gains relentlessly is, as we’ve matured as a team, something we’ve become stronger at.”

NEWHEY ON...

F1’s 2026 rule changes

Because Newey has such a successful track record through so many F1 regulation changes and Red Bull’s current dominant position, much is expected of the combination in the 2026 rules reset. The changes mainly focus on the engines, where the importance of electric power and sustainable fuels will be increased. But it was striking how Red Bull lobbied last year for additional investigations into how these will work in reality – the team is set to produce its own engines for the first time via its new Powertrains corps, in partnership with Ford.

One of the most hotly debated elements of the upcoming rules concerns the expanded use of active aero in the chassis regulations. One



F1 is “well beyond” wobbly wings of yore



Red Bull’s triumphant triumvirate of Marko, Horner and Newey

MULLAN/GETTY IMAGES/REDBULL CONTENT POOL

FORMULA 1
MAX VERSTAPPEN

GREATEST F1 WINS...



Red Bull's reigning three-time world champion helps Autosport 'correct' our ranking of the best successes of his Formula 1 victories to date

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

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“ It's tough to remember all of them!” That's what happens when you put a Formula 1 driver who's clinched 54 grand prix victories on the spot. After Autosport had ranked Max Verstappen's top 10 race wins when he hit 50 with his Austin triumph last year – he took 181 races to reach that target, compared to Lewis Hamilton's 185 and Michael Schumacher's record-holding 153 – we were due to interview the Dutchman at the next event in Mexico.

After covering the many topics of his historic F1 season, we deployed a prop: a printed list of the races we'd selected for an article exclusive to Autosport.com. He didn't hesitate, asking for our pen to “mark what I think was my best”. And so, here we present Verstappen's own picks.

There's one important caveat: Verstappen was only reworking our original selection (see panel), so there's every chance that with a clean slate he might make some different choices. Our long-list 'near-misses' of the 2017 Mexican GP, 2018 Austrian GP or 2023 Belgian GP, for example. He also switched out our choice of the 2022 Japanese GP, which we'd included to represent his wet-weather brilliance when a victory as wild as the 2019 German GP had missed out.

What's clear is that Verstappen considers his best battling drives as more worthy than races he dominated, whereas we'd had several events he'd utterly dominated higher up. It's also important to consider how our list had been compiled by taking in Verstappen's various experience levels at the time, the respective machinery at his disposal, the challenges he faced on any given weekend, as well as the nature of his successes. We'd also factored in his opposition strength and championship circumstances at the time of each win.

A couple of his most famous triumphs are also missing – ultimately because Verstappen didn't make the critical difference. These are the 2021 Abu Dhabi GP and 2016 Spanish GP, although in a chat post-interview in Mexico he agreed he'd also discount his first F1 success, given it required the dominant Mercedes pair to first collide.



VERSTAPPEN'S OWN PICKS OF HIS TOP 10 WINS

POS	YEAR/RACE
10	2020 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix
9	2019 Austrian GP
8	2020 70th Anniversary GP
7	2021 Austrian GP
6	2017 Malaysian GP
5	2023 Miami GP
4	2021 Mexican GP
3	2023 Japanese GP
2	2022 Belgian GP
1	2021 United States GP

AUTOSPORT'S VERDICT ON TOP 10 VERSTAPPEN WINS!

POS	YEAR/RACE
10	2017 Malaysian GP
9	2019 Austrian GP
8	2020 Abu Dhabi GP
7	2020 70th Anniversary GP
6	2023 Miami GP
5	2021 Austrian GP
4	2022 Japanese GP
3	2022 Belgian GP
2	2021 Mexican GP
1	2021 United States GP



Check out an upcoming episode of the Autosport podcast to hear our explanations of why we've reworked Verstappen's own homework...
[autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)



2020 ABU DHABI GP

RED BULL RB16 STARTED 1ST

10

Verstappen start	119
Verstappen win	10

The 2020 Abu Dhabi race was far from a classic GP. We called it a “turgid and lifeless” affair, with Verstappen utterly dominating from pole. But it was a statement drive to a 10th F1 win, Verstappen in the process beating two examples of what should be remembered as one of the greatest F1 cars of all time: the Mercedes W11.

These had been given a cut in engine output due to fears over MGU-K fires hitting customer units in practice (and Sergio Perez’s Racing Point in the race), but Mercedes insisted that this wasn’t enough to explain its shock fourth defeat of the season. Instead, the critical factor was missing pole to Verstappen, when Mercedes drivers Lewis Hamilton and

Valtteri Bottas failed to get their soft tyres into the required operating window.

In the race, Verstappen was in command from the off and in rebuilding his lead after a pitstop under the safety car, which had been called to cover Perez’s stricken car and erased a 3.3-second advantage built in just nine laps over Bottas. Verstappen pulled off a masterful tyre-management drive, his preferred style in turning a car so much earlier in corner entry allowing him to open the wheel at the apex and take stress off the rubber. It had long been a part of his game, but in the seasons that followed this contest it finally got the recognition it deserved. Yes, Hamilton was recovering from COVID-19 and Bottas isn’t a top-tier rival, but this was also a confidence-boosting win that supplied critical momentum to Verstappen’s first title-winning season in 2021.

2019 AUSTRIAN GP

RED BULL RB15 STARTED 2ND

9

Verstappen start	90
Verstappen win	6

“A good day for F1”, declared the issue of Autosport that contained our report of this race. It was the event where Verstappen’s passing aggression on long-time leader Charles Leclerc demonstrated his calculated battling brilliance and in the process showed that F1’s rules at the time were not anti-racing. After all, this was just two races on from Sebastian Vettel losing his Canadian GP victory to a penalty for forcing Lewis Hamilton towards a wall.

The difference here was that the stewards felt that Verstappen wasn’t out of control and hadn’t been off the road as Vettel had, and that Leclerc trying to hang on around the outside was a factor in the clash that sent the Ferrari off. The incident occurred at Austria’s sharp, uphill Turn 3, one lap after Leclerc had been passed at the same spot but powered out of the corner to retake the lead. Verstappen didn’t let him do that again.

Verstappen had started second and fell to seventh with a poor launch and Turn 4



lock-up. But that’s not enough to cost this win a spot on the list, for two reasons.

One was how excellent Verstappen was in maintaining his tyres while closing a 15s gap to the leader, even as he passed Lando Norris and Kimi Raikkonen, overcut the lift-and-coast (for engine temperatures) hobbled Hamilton, and nailed Vettel and Valtteri Bottas.

The other was that race-winning pass against a seriously rapid rival armed with the 2019-spec Ferrari engine grunt on a track with few corners. It sealed the win and set an early marker in what sets Verstappen apart in his generation’s talent peak. It was also Red Bull’s first win with Honda power.

2020 70TH ANNIVERSARY GP

RED BULL RB16 STARTED 4TH

8

Verstappen start	107
Verstappen win	9

There was one element of Verstappen's 2020 campaign that really stood out. This was how, on so many occasions when Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas were unleashing the Mercedes W11's full might, only he could keep them in sight – armed with the inferior Red Bull RB16.

That scenario played out at F1's muted 70th Anniversary celebration amid the height of the pandemic keeping crowds away from Silverstone. But there was a critical difference here: Verstappen caught, passed and beat the Black Arrows pair.

He did so in part thanks to Red Bull getting him through Q2 on the hard tyres. Back then, your Q2 rubber was what you started on, and this was the best race tyre on a weekend when Pirelli had brought a compound range a step softer than those so famously tested in the British GP one week earlier. That gave Verstappen a strategic edge when the early safety car Mercedes had feared never arrived, and Verstappen had quickly jumped Racing

Point supersub Nico Hulkenberg.

Once the Mercedes drivers had pitted out of his way to shed the medium tyres, Verstappen attacked. After so amusingly rebuffing Red Bull's call to back off from Hamilton early in the first stint with his "I'm not just sitting behind like a grandma" quip, he actually lapped quicker than his rivals even as his ageing hards wore further.

He jumped Hamilton when he did finally pit, and would have got Bottas too but for a slightly slow Red Bull service. No matter, Verstappen was past in three more out-lap corners. The Mercedes was just unable to be pushed on the hards through a combination of its huge downforce levels eating into the fragile Pirellis in Silverstone's fast corners, the day's scorching temperatures, and the raising of tyre pressures to avert further blowouts after the incidents of the previous weekend.

From there, Verstappen romped clear, pulling away when back on the hards for his third stint (in between, he'd taken the same medium compound the Mercedes pair had unsuccessfully worked hard to protect in the first stint) to win by 11.3s over Hamilton. Bottas fell back, rueing his shorter middle stint.



2021 AUSTRIAN GP

RED BULL RB16B STARTED 1ST

7

Verstappen start	128
Verstappen win	15

A week earlier, in the Styrian GP also at Red Bull's home track, Verstappen had blown away

Lewis Hamilton through a combination of better one-lap speed and race tyre wear – Red Bull had finally solved what had been something of a regular issue against Mercedes early that season, and before its rival could use car upgrades to get back on terms for pure pace.

Second time around, team and driver worked hard to fettle the RB16B into another fine set-up window, with the tyre compounds a step softer than the previous weekend. Mercedes didn't manage to do this, allowing Lando Norris to qualify ahead, and it was he who Verstappen initially romped clear of, after nailing the start and early safety car restart ahead of the slippery McLaren.

This was as assured as Verstappen looked across an entire weekend in all of 2021.



2017 MALAYSIAN GP

RED BULL RB13 STARTED 3RD

6

Verstappen start	55
Verstappen win	2

"I was sick there as well," Verstappen says of Malaysia 2017 as he

re-marks our work, in typical racing driver style doing the top picks first. More illness to come later... He scored this win – his second in F1 – on the weekend he turned 20 years old. It included factors that have kept others off this list, such as the two Ferrari drivers losing out on starting first and second due to qualifying and pre-race engine air intake dramas, and Mercedes being all at sea with the aerodynamic balance of an upgrade package.

But Red Bull at this stage still had a qualifying power deficit to Mercedes, which took pole with Lewis Hamilton, and so this offers mitigation that we couldn't apply to our 'near-miss' long-list selections of Verstappen win choices.

In F1's final race at Sepang, Verstappen held off Valtteri Bottas's Turns 1-5 assault. Then, his RB13 finally more of a match for Mercedes in race trim, he caught and passed Hamilton for the lead. For all Hamilton complained of his engine "de-rates" in the skirmish, this was the Briton near the peak of his F1 powers, and so Verstappen's tenacity



to pass is a factor in why this race earned a position on our list.

After getting to the lead, Verstappen impressively dropped Hamilton by more than half a second per lap to the end of the race's opening third, after which he maintained his lead to the sole round of pitstops, then extended it. His winning margin was 12.8s, but his 22.5s gap to team-mate Daniel Ricciardo caps our call to select this Verstappen win instead of the three 'near-misses', especially given he was still relatively inexperienced racing at the front.



2023 MIAMI GP

RED BULL RB19 STARTED 9TH

5

Verstappen start	168
Verstappen win	38

There were 42 tours remaining of a 57-lap contest when Verstappen reached second place behind team-mate Sergio Perez, after starting down in ninth. He was there thanks to Charles Leclerc's Q3 crash ensuring those drivers who had messed up their opening efforts in the final qualifying segment – such as Verstappen – couldn't improve. Perez secured pole, and it looked like his race to lose.

That was because five races into 2023, it was clear how much of a performance advantage the Red Bull RB19 had over its rivals. That explained why few opted to fight Verstappen hard as he sliced through the field on his rapid rise – his double pass on Leclerc and Kevin Magnussen was nevertheless a highlight.

Verstappen had bought into Red Bull's idea of running a contra-one-stop strategy. He started on the hard tyres and went deep into the race, with Perez unable to do so from pole due to the risk of an early safety car ruining such an approach. The fact that there wasn't one boosted Verstappen, but really it was his brilliance and Perez's comparative weakness that made the difference.

Perez was too conservative out front in the



early laps, and so barely had a four-second lead by the time Verstappen arrived in second place. Then when Perez was on the hards, Verstappen reversed the gains the Mexican had made. Therefore, when Verstappen did finally come in on lap 45, his ensuing Turn 1 pass on Perez was a formality – there was just 1.6s between them when the world champion rejoined.

The win came with a big psychological impact, boosting Verstappen's season and cracking Perez's confidence. Next up in Monaco, Perez crashed in qualifying and then failed to reach Q3 in the five following non-sprint sessions against the clock. This defeat really did for Perez's 2023 title hopes as much as victory enhanced Verstappen's own.



2021 MEXICAN GP

RED BULL RB16B STARTED 3RD

4

Verstappen start	137
Verstappen win	19

"Some motorsport moments are just magic. Bits of driving that are just

spinetingly good, showcasing supreme skill, flair and sheer bloody-mindedness." That's how this author described Verstappen's Turn 1 double-pass on Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas at the start of the 2021 Mexican GP in our report of that event, just five races out from the season's thrilling climax.

The brilliance of the moment combined with the pressure building on Verstappen's first real attempt to win a title. And that pressure – with just 12 points separating him and Hamilton at this stage – had only gone up when AlphaTauri

and Red Bull messed up tow tactics on the final Q3 runs in Mexico City and spoiled things for all their drivers bar Pierre Gasly.

Bottas started on pole, but Hamilton's better launch wrecked Mercedes' plans for them to work together because it meant the Briton could not get a tow to Turn 1. Instead, this went to the grateful Verstappen, who then pulled off arguably the best pass of his F1 career after starting third.

Armed with Red Bull's bigger maximum-downforce rear wing – needed in the thin high-altitude air – he bravely chose to brake later than the Mercedes pair and steamed around the outside of both to claim the lead. Verstappen's efforts to just stay within track limits on the corner exit encapsulated how on the edge this pass was.

Daniel Ricciardo then tapped Bottas out of contention, which led to crashes in the pack and

an early safety car, after which Verstappen nailed the restart, then just roared clear. Even while managing engine and brake temperature requirements through plenty of lift-and-coast, he was still able to lap regularly 0.3s clear of Hamilton. That turned Mercedes' attention to rebuffing Sergio Perez, and Verstappen even had spare capacity to initially thwart Bottas's efforts to take the fastest lap late in the race.

We had this race as our original number one choice because, although it only contained one moment of action, that double-pass was sublime. Verstappen could have easily messed it up and retired, handing Hamilton a 25-point swing and shock lead in the standings. But he didn't. He was finally approaching peak Verstappen – calmer, slightly more mature, supremely confident.

2023 JAPANESE GP

RED BULL RB19 STARTED 1ST

3

Verstappen start	179
Verstappen win	48

‘How could a wet-weather win like the 2019 German GP not make the cut?’, we hear you cry. That event, after all, cemented Verstappen’s long-held status as an F1 wet-weather great. But it also contained a shocking start, a clumsy spin, and might have been won by Charles Leclerc or Lewis Hamilton had they not crashed. No such incidents featured in Verstappen’s rainmaster drive at Suzuka in 2022, which sealed his second crown (after various post-race rules sagas for Leclerc and the FIA), and we had in our original selection. But here Verstappen went rogue, as is his wont, by swapping his first Suzuka triumph out for his second with one red pen stroke. We’d want his wet-weather brilliance recognised but, as this is Max’s choice, here’s what happened on the day at what remains a track that really separates F1’s best from merely its good.

After a relatively sluggish start – something Red Bull’s drivers encountered across 2023 due to its unpredictable getaway system – Verstappen had the McLaren pair of Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri



swarming. He saw the Australian off on the approach to Turn 1, but needed to be brave at Turn 2 to wrestle back his lead from pole. It was actually rather Suzuka 2022-esque – a year earlier, he’d been equally feisty in seeing off Leclerc’s attack at the same spot from a wet start.

From there in the 2023 race, Verstappen bolted clear before having to do that again at the early safety car restart. His initial pace over Norris was around 0.5s faster on average each time. The Briton was also slowed during the virtual safety car period

activated by Sergio Perez’s second accident of the day, helping Verstappen build a lead of almost 10s.

He doubled it thereafter, just missing a pre-weekend target of wanting Red Bull to win by 20s (according to team boss Christian Horner) to provide a statement response to its Singapore GP defeat. The RB19 was on territory it loved, with Verstappen getting stuck into the corner types where he excels, all while being able to run softer tyres than the McLarens for most of the race despite Suzuka’s abrasive surface and high-energy layout.

2022 BELGIAN GP

RED BULL RB18 STARTED 14TH

2

Verstappen start	155
Verstappen win	29

Verstappen had already picked his second F1 career win at Spa as his best in his march to the 2022 crown, as the challenge of Ferrari and Charles Leclerc imploded. For the race itself, Verstappen started 13th (technically, after Pierre Gasly’s issue ahead) thanks to his grid penalty for changing gearbox, energy

store, control electronics and internal combustion engine. He was among a host of drivers to do this, including Leclerc.

Verstappen got stuck in to gain three spots at the first corner, then lost his move on Alex Albon at Les Combes as he wisely backed away from Lance Stroll rejoining. Once the race restarted from an early safety car, he just tore up the rest of the midfield to reach the podium positions by the end of lap eight of 44. He couldn’t get past Sergio Perez so rapidly, but did eventually with a lap-12

slipstream pass. What was quite incredible about this sequence was that Verstappen, even with all his overtakes (boosted by Red Bull’s straightline prowess and ability to traverse Eau Rouge’s fearsome compression with a lower ride height than the rest), made his soft starting tyres last longer than Perez’s mediums.

After the pitstops, Verstappen caught and passed early leader Carlos Sainz, then headed off to claim his stunning 29th F1 victory untroubled thereafter.





1

Verstappen start	136
Verstappen win	18

The pressure factor in many of Verstappen's best F1 wins flows through this list. He rocked up at Austin after a run of three races without a win since delivering in the face of heavy pressure of a different kind – in front of his home crowd at the first Dutch GP since 1985. The Monza crash with Lewis Hamilton followed, then the Russian and Turkish GPs went to Mercedes.

In Turkey, Red Bull getting its set-up wrong for optimal tyre use had been a critical factor, but in Texas it aced its decisions, with Mercedes forced into running a higher-than-ideal ride height due to the track's fearsome bumps. The hot conditions all weekend also boosted the RB16B, while the Mercedes W12 tended to struggle more on the Pirellis when the temperatures climbed.

But the heat amplified another element of why this win was good from Verstappen. He “didn’t feel well – I had all sorts of trouble going on”. Team boss Christian Horner opens up on an illness that also impacted Sergio Perez: “Max was so sick, he was starting to have double vision at some points.”

In the race, Verstappen blew the start from pole as Hamilton got forcefully ahead at Turn 1, and



was lucky that it was Perez behind to avoid dropping to third at Turn 2. But then Red Bull made two aggressive pitstop calls, helped by Perez's early presence meaning Hamilton couldn't go really long in the first stint, before the Mexican's battle with the illness dropped him back. These undercut Verstappen back ahead, and set up a thrilling chase for the win as his rival recovered with a tyre life advantage.

And this is where the pressure factor really tells, as Verstappen learned from caning his second-stint hards too early. He kept enough life in his next set that he was able to hold off Hamilton's charge. “The way in which he managed those tyres and soaked up the pressure from Lewis,” says Horner. “That was truly outstanding.”

But why is it Verstappen's top pick? Well, as he says, “we were not supposed to win that one...”

RACE CENTRE

DAYTONA 24 HOURS

Porsche tips tactical balance to beat Cadillac

Penske-run 963 shared by Felipe Nasr, Dane Cameron, Matt Campbell and Josef Newgarden edged it after Action Express's roll of the dice fell short

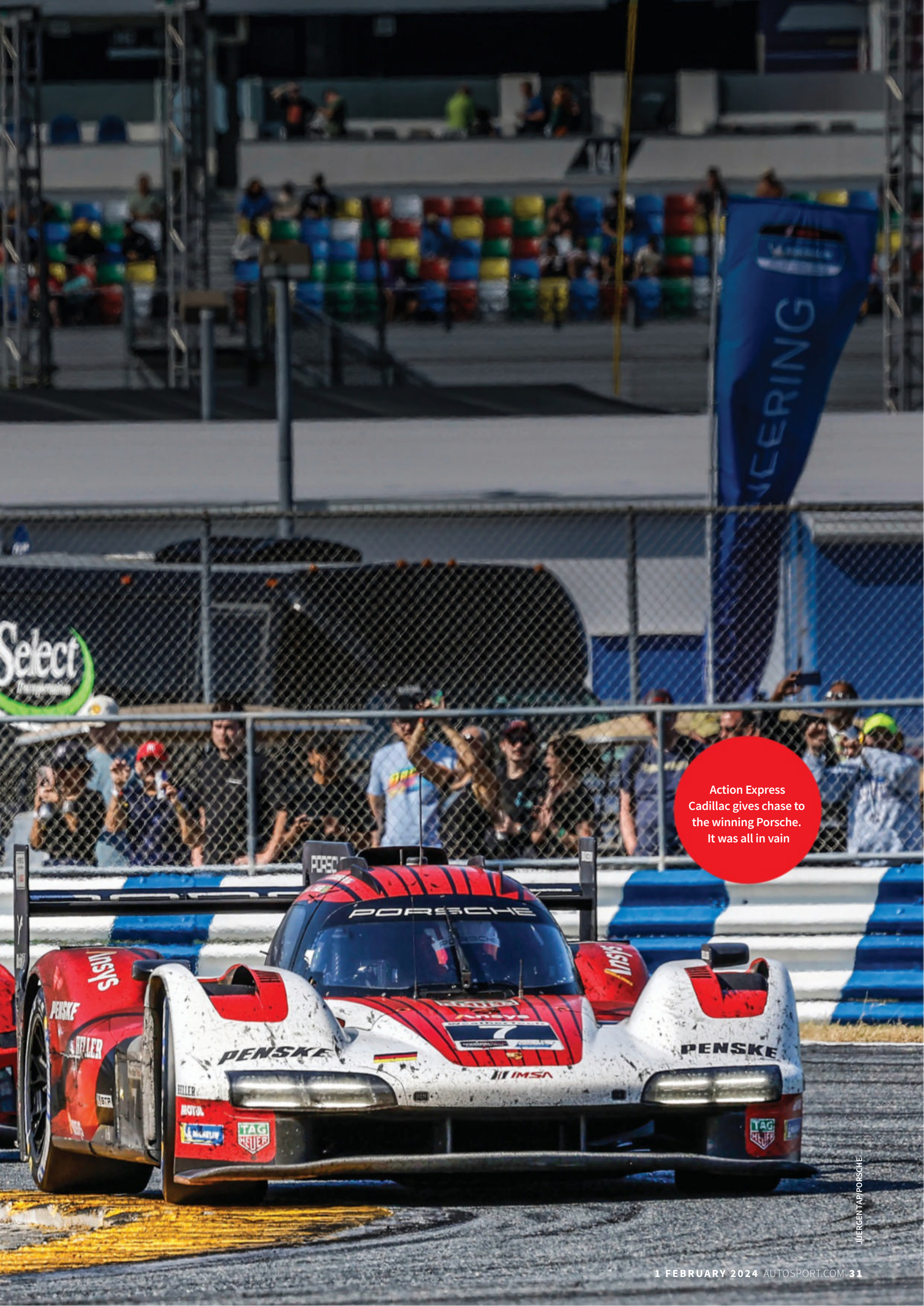
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Action Express
Cadillac gives chase to
the winning Porsche.
It was all in vain

Celebration time for (l-r) Newgarden, Cameron, Nasr and Campbell



Porsche claimed a first outright victory at the Daytona 24 Hours since 2003 – and its first with a prototype since 1995 – after coming out on top in a late strategic battle with Cadillac. The American marque’s Action Express Racing squad rolled the dice at the penultimate round of pitstops, only for a final-hour safety car to undo what had appeared to be a tactical masterstroke. It was then the turn of Porsche Penske Motorsport to make the aggressive call when the leaders pitted for the final time under yellows. That, and a faultless performance from Felipe Nasr over the 32-minute sprint to the flag, finally ended the long victory drought.

Nasr prevailed in the Porsche 963 LMDh he co-drove with Matt Campbell, Dane Cameron and Josef Newgarden by the slimmest of margins. Tom Blomqvist, in the Action Express Racing Cadillac V-Series.R LMDh shared with Jack Aitken and Pipo Derani, was a tad over two seconds behind at the flag. But if not for the 15th and final safety car of the opening round of the IMSA SportsCar Championship, the finishing order would almost certainly have been the other way around.

It wouldn’t be quite right to say that the winning Porsche and the solo Action Express Caddy were easily the fastest things over the course of (almost) 24 hours of the 3.56-mile Daytona International

Speedway ‘roval’ last weekend. But two cars that led the majority of laps between them – 592 of the 791 completed in the GTP class – were just that when push came to shove in the closing hours.

“If not for the final safety car, the order would almost certainly have been the other way around”

It was pretty much clear at breakfast time on Sunday that the race for victory was going to be between these two cars. On 19 hours, the 963 with Nasr at the wheel led the Caddy pedalled by Aitken by 14 seconds. What’s more, Nasr and then Campbell were able to rebuild a handy lead when that advantage was wiped out by safety car number 14 during the following hour.

In the cool morning conditions, the Porsche was the faster car. But as the cloud that had threatened overnight rain burned off, the balance subtly changed. Blomqvist, who took over the V-Series.R with almost exactly three hours to go, started to nibble into the



#40 Acura didn't quite have pace but made it home third

Porsche's advantage, again with Nasr driving after a double stint from Campbell. The Brit, going for a hat-trick of victories after two with the Meyer Shank Racing Acura squad in 2022 and 2023, was pretty much with the leader when the team brought him in early for what would be his penultimate pitstop.

Action Express decided to roll the dice in the knowledge that the Porsche was, according to Derani, "the more raceable" car. That was a reference to the slight edge it enjoyed over the Caddy in terms of acceleration and straightline speed – the American car had the lowest minimum weight of the four GTPs in the >>

DANES DUKE IT OUT FOR LMP2 HONOURS

Era's ORECA won battle in LMP2...



LMP2 turned into a battle of the Danes at Daytona. Christian Rasmussen came out on top when he went head to head with Malthe Jakobsen to seal the class victory together with Era Motorsport team-mates Ryan Dalziel, Connor Zilisch and Dwight Merriman, and restrict Algarve Pro Racing to a second consecutive Daytona runner-up position.

The Era ORECA-Gibson 07 and the identical CrowdStrike Racing by APR example co-driven by Colin Braun, Toby Sowery and George Kurtz were running out of synch for the final third of the race and swapping the lead back and forth on pitstops, but Rasmussen managed to establish a proper lead right at the end of the 20th hour. The Era car would stay there for all bar one lap, with the reigning Indy NXT champion holding a comfortable 13s advantage when the final safety car was called.

The disappearance of that gap with the caution wasn't the only problem facing Rasmussen at the end. During the final stop a mechanic had somehow contrived to swipe off the right-side mirror. It wasn't what was wanted going into a last-gasp dogfight. Jakobsen did have a look up the inside of his compatriot going into Turn 3 as the race went green. He wasn't able to get the job done and instead ended up tipping one of the BMW LMDhs into a spin. Rasmussen, who is about to embark on a partial season of IndyCar racing, never came under threat again on the way to a 6.8s victory.

Rasmussen posted an impressive performance, as did 17-year-old stock car driver Zilisch. So much so that prototype stalwart Dalziel volunteered to give up his place in the rota to allow his two young team-mates to drive the final nine stints between them.

Felipe Massa made it onto the podium in his first sportscar endurance race, taking third in the Riley Motorsports ORECA he shared with Colin Braun, Felipe Fraga and Josh Burdon. Fraga was fifth in the queue when the race went green, but was up to third inside two laps after first passing Tom Dillmann's Inter Europol car and then the Tower Motorsports entry driven by Scott McLaughlin.



...with APR version in hot pursuit



“We had the quicker car but knew it was going to take something special to get ahead”

field, but also the lower maximum power allocation under the Balance of Performance. Put simply, the team knew that overtaking the Porsche was always going to be difficult.

The target when the Caddy pitted what turned out to be three laps before the Porsche was to get the undercut. The plan worked – just. Blomqvist was still behind when Nasr left the pits but, with his Michelins already up to temperature, he was able to pull level around the outside on the front stretch as the leader completed his out-lap and then seal the deal through Turns 1 and 2.

The V-Series.R had claimed pole in Derani's hands in cool conditions at the previous weekend's Roar test, but perhaps more significantly had topped all four sessions in the more representative conditions of race week. With the sun out, Blomqvist was able to edge away. He extended the lead to



as much as three and a bit seconds at one point, though was less than two to the good when one last safety car was called after Parker Thompson pulled up in the exit of the pitlane with his GT Daytona class Vasser Sullivan Lexus RC F GT3 in flames.

Nasr was always going to need less fuel than Blomqvist when the cars descended upon pitlane for their final stops under yellows. Those three laps he had in hand over Blomqvist were always going to count, but Penske opted to short-fuel him: he left the pits with 5% less energy in his tank than Blomqvist. The tactic worked: the Porsche ended up sitting pretty at the front of the queue waiting for the race to go green.

Nasr held on at the restart and managed to eke out an advantage of a second inside six laps. It came down to under a second before Blomqvist hit traffic on what turned out to be the last couple of laps.

IT'S RISI'S TIME AT LAST IN GT DAYTONA PRO

Risi Competizione had been trying to collect a Daytona 24 Hours victory with Ferrari on and off since 1998 and its initial steps as Doyle-Risi Racing with the 333 SP. Now it has finally added one to its class and overall wins from the other big enduros – Le Mans, Sebring and Petit Le Mans – in GT Daytona Pro with the all-factory driver line-up of James Calado, Alessandro Pier Guidi, Davide Rigon and Daniel Serra.

The team's victory with the Ferrari 296 GT3 over AO Racing's Porsche 911 GT3-R shared by class pole winner Seb Priaulx, factory driver Michael Christensen and Laurin Heinrich is probably best described as comfortable. That resulted from two factors: the high rate of attrition in Pro, and Risi's decision to set up the car for the heat of the day.

The problems encountered by their rivals in the 13-car class explained why Risi enjoyed a lap lead



through the penultimate hour, the set-up choice why Serra wasn't really troubled over the dash to the flag when that advantage was removed by the final safety car. Serra pulled half a minute on Heinrich and, with the overall race winner crossing

the line between the two cars, the Ferrari was classified one lap ahead.

Serra had already shown the daytime pace of the Ferrari at the start: he started from 11th in the mixed grid of Pro and regular GTD cars but was up into the lead inside four laps. Risi was always there or thereabouts through the night, and the task for the team's drivers was to stay on the lead lap until the conditions came to them. “We set the car up for the warm conditions, not the night – that was always our plan,” said Calado. “The car wasn't great during the night, the front end was washing out, but on Sunday morning the balance returned and the race started to come back to us as we knew it would.”

The Porsche did lead at various stages through the race, for 31 laps in total to the Ferrari's 215, but wasn't on the pace of the class frontrunners. The



Tribulations hit the pair of BMWs

This race actually finished at least one lap early: the chequered flag fell 24 hours after the race should have started rather than when it actually did, nearly two minutes late. That explained the Porsche's winning time of 23 hours, 58 minutes and 24.7 seconds.

"We knew we were going to need less fuel, but we short-fuelled the car to make sure he got out ahead," said PPM boss Jonathan Diuguid. "Felipe had commented that he had nothing for the Cadillac the stint before; he felt that second last set of tyres lacked grip. But we put him in a position to win and he executed. It was ebb and flow all day, but if you look into it, the Cadillac and the Porsche were on top. It came down to execution at the end of the day."

"It was a great call from PPM, just to give me the opportunity to be in the lead again," added Nasr. "Then it was down to me to hit the fuel numbers and keep the #31 behind. I just kept



Works Cadillac was quick but fell by the wayside

the focus until the finish line."

Nasr certainly had a lot of focusing to do over the final third of the race. Penske opted to concentrate its efforts on the Brazilian and Campbell, leaving its other two drivers out of the rotation after Newgarden vacated the car at 0530. Nasr would go on to complete three double stints over the remainder of the race after taking over from the 2023 Indianapolis 500 winner.

Action Express knew all too well that its bid for a first Daytona victory since 2018 had been undone by the final safety car. "That last yellow really did for us," said Derani. "We had the quicker car but we knew it was going to take something special to get ahead of the Porsche. The team did that with a great call to bring Tom in early but it wasn't to be. Close but no cigar."

The win made it a big day for Porsche after two years of travails with the 963 during testing in 2022 and its first year of racing in IMSA and the World Endurance Championship in 2023. "I said to someone in Victory Lane, if only people knew what we have been through," said Diuguid. "To see our group succeeding in a big race like this is huge."

Porsche ended up taking the win and, with the sister car crewed by Nick Tandy, Mathieu Jaminet, Kevin Estre and Laurens Vanthoor, fourth behind the only one of the two WTRAndretti >>



Winning Ferrari heads third-placed BMW in GTD Pro fight

last genuine competitor for Risi fell by the wayside approaching two hours to go. The Paul Miller Racing BMW M4 GT3 in which factory drivers Sheldon van der Linde, Neil Verhagen and Madison Snow were teamed with Bryan Sellers was second and still in with at least a sniff of victory when it

needed a second change of front brakes. The right-hand disc didn't seat properly, which delayed getting the wheel on. Van der Linde also had an off as a result of the problem, and suddenly BMW's chance was gone. Not that the team really thought it had anything for the Ferrari at that stage.

The Miller BMW still finished third in Pro, though behind the top two in the regular GTD class in which Winward Racing reprised its 2021 victory, this time with Daniel Morad joining team owner Russell Ward, Philip Ellis and Indy Dontje at the wheel of the squad's Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Acura ARX-06 LMDhs to finish. The second 963 was one of five cars to stay on the lead lap to the end, but ultimately didn't have the pace of the top three when it mattered.

The car was hit by a series of penalties through the race for what IMSA described as "failure to adhere to the controlled powertrain parameters". What that actually meant was that the car was sporadically operating outside the torque curve laid down in the BoP. The four violations were for two slightly different issues, but the cause was almost certainly the same: Penske believed it was the result of an incorrectly calibrated driveshaft torque sensor.

A drive-through followed an initial warning, while the subsequent violations resulted in a couple of 10s penalties. Porsche's efforts to keep within the power curve, which included three downloads of new software, would blunt the performance of the car for much of the race. There was also a change of nose and tail as the result of minor on-track skirmishes, while Estre went off track twice in the latter stages.

Penske may have had a second car in the game at the end, but Cadillac, which entered only two V-Series.Rs this year compared with last year's three, had all its eggs in one basket. The Ganassi-run Cadillac Racing entry that Sebastien Bourdais had qualified second to Derani was right in the mix for the first third of the race: it was the fastest of the 10 cars in GTP on the averages.

It all went wrong for the Ganassi car, in which Bourdais was joined by Renger van der Zande, Scott Dixon and Alex Palou, in hour nine when the Frenchman had to go wide at the Turn 3 hairpin to avoid a GTD car and ran over some debris. A cut tyre sent him off circuit – but not into the barriers – at Turn 5, the second of the infield 'horseshoes'. The slow lap to the pits was followed by a drive-through, dropping the car two laps off the lead.

Ganassi's Caddy had got back on the lead lap by hour 13, when van der Zande coasted onto the Turn 1 apron. The car was returned to its garage and retired with what Cadillac described as a "mechanical powertrain issue".

Acura was attempting to make it four Daytona wins in a row last weekend, but WTRAndretti was sceptical about its chances from the get-go even with a two-car entry for the first time. The ARX-06 was the heaviest of the four LMDhs currently racing in IMSA. Its minimum under the BoP was 1072kg, a whopping 42kg more than the Cadillac. It also represented a 26kg increase from the end of last season. The highest power figure allowed in class clearly wasn't sufficient compensation.

The #40 entry that came home third in the hands of Jordan Taylor, Louis Deletraz, Jenson Button and Colton Herta wasn't a truly competitive proposition across the full race duration, even if there were times in the cooler conditions of the night when it was



“This is one of the biggest wins we’ve had. Now we’ve got to go for the big one at Le Mans”

right there. Overall, it was a good half a second off on race pace. WTRA tried mixing it up on strategy: that and regular safety cars kept the car on the lead lap. But the team could do nothing about the Porsche and the Cadillac ahead of it at the finish.

“With what we were given for this race,” said team owner Wayne Taylor, referencing but not naming the BoP, “we knew we had no chance, but we said if we execute properly and the drivers do a good job and don’t make any mistakes, we could maybe get a podium. Third place feels like a win.”

The #40 car did suffer a delay with an electronic problem during the night that dropped it off the lead lap. Deletraz had already pressed every button possible and was out of the car when he pulled the external kill switch. That sparked the car into life, so he jumped back in and continued to the end of his stint.

The sister #10 car driven by Filipe Albuquerque, Brendon Hartley, Ricky Taylor and Marcus Ericsson didn't see the finish. The car was running third in hour nine when it ground to a halt with no power while Albuquerque was at the wheel. The car had to be returned to the paddock on a flatbed and part of the wiring loom changed with a loss of more than two hours. There was little to be gained in continuing, and the car was parked in hour 22.

Porsche took fifth and sixth with its two customer teams, Proton Competition finishing on the lead lap, JDC-Miller MotorSports two down. The German team was handicapped by floor damage sustained early in the race, while the JDC-Miller squad lost time in the final hours when the driver-side door kept opening on track.

BMW got both its Rahal-run M Hybrid V8 LMDhs to the finish, but not without problem, and they crossed the line in seventh and eighth places. The #25 needed the gearbox oil cooler replacing after it was most likely damaged by a stone and then a change of rear brakes, ending up 13 laps down. The sister #24 BMW stopped on track during the night with an electrical issue that was rectified simply by changing the steering wheel. The problem was that an attempt to tow the car back to the pits failed, meaning it had to be put on a flatbed. It ended up 15 laps in arrears. Daytona perhaps wasn't the disaster that it appeared at the house of BMW. Both cars briefly led and the M Hybrid was on a par with the Acuras on pace.

A first IMSA enduro win for Penske since it returned to sportscar racing with Acura in 2018 means that thoughts have inevitably turned to another big enduro on the other side of the Pond. “This is one of the biggest wins we’ve had,” said team founder Roger Penske. “Now we’ve got to go for the big one at Le Mans, you know that.”



RESULTS DAYTONA 24 HOURS, IMSA SPORTSCAR ROUND 1/11, DAYTONA (USA), 27-28 JANUARY (791 LAPS – 2815.96 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME	GRID
1	Felipe Nasr /Dane Cameron /Matt Campbell /Josef Newgarden	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	GTP	23h58m24.723s	3
2	Pipo Derani /Jack Aitken /Tom Blomqvist	Whelen Cadillac Racing (Action Express)	Cadillac V-Series.R	GTP	+2.112s	1
3	Louis Deletraz /Jordan Taylor /Colton Herta /Jenson Button	Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti	Acura ARX-06	GTP	+14.989s	5
4	Nick Tandy /Mathieu Jaminet /Kevin Estre /Laurens Vanthoor	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963	GTP	+15.387s	7
5	Neel Jani /Gianmaria Bruni /Alessio Picariello /Romain Dumas	Proton Competition	Porsche 963	GTP	+44.479s	10
6	Richard Westbrook /Tijmen van der Helm /Phil Hanson /Ben Keating	JDC-Miller Motorsports	Porsche 963	GTP	-2laps	9
7	Connor De Phillippi /Nick Yelloly /Maxime Martin /Rene Rast	BMW M Team RLL	BMW M Hybrid V8	GTP	-13laps	4
8	Jesse Krohn /Philipp Eng /Augusto Farfus /Dries Vanthoor	BMW M Team RLL	BMW M Hybrid V8	GTP	-15laps	8
9	Dwight Merriman /Ryan Dalziel /Connor Zilisch /Christian Rasmussen	Era Motorsport	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24laps	21
10	George Kurtz /Colin Braun /Toby Sowery /Malthe Jakobsen	CrowdStrike Racing by APR	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24laps	13
11	Gar Robinson /Felipe Fraga /Josh Burdon /Felipe Massa	Riley	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24laps	14
12	Jakub Smiechowski /Tom Dillmann /Pietro Fittipaldi /Nick Boulle	Inter Europol by PR1 Mathiasen Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24laps	12
13	John Farano /Michael Dinan /Ferdinand Habsburg /Scott McLaughlin	Tower Motorsports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-24laps	23
14	Ben Keating /Nico Pino /Ben Hanley /Pato O'Ward	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-26laps	11
15	Eric Lux /Kyffin Simpson /James Allen /Sebastian Alvarez	DragonSpeed	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-27laps	19
16	PJ Hyett /Paul-Loup Chatin /Matthew Brabham /Alex Quinn	AO Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-38laps	17
17	Daniel Serra /Davide Rigon /Alessandro Pier Guidi /James Calado	Risi Competizione	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD Pro	-58laps	35
18	Michael Christensen /Laurin Heinrich /Seb Priaulx	AO Racing	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD Pro	-59laps	24
19	Russell Ward /Philip Ellis /Indy Dontje /Daniel Morad	Winward Racing	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD	-60laps	53
20	Simon Mann /Francois Heriau /Miguel Molina /Kei Cozzolino	AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	-60laps	40
21	Madison Snow /Bryan Sellers /Neil Verhagen /Sheldon van der Linde	Paul Miller Racing	BMW M4 GT3	GTD Pro	-61laps	50
22	Manny Franco /Albert Costa /Alessandro Balzan /Cedric Sbirrazzuoli	Conquest Racing	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	-61laps	31
23	Alessio Rovera /Onofrio Triarsi /Charles Scardina /Riccardo Agostini	Triarsi Competizione	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	-61laps	36
24	Mike Skeen /Mikael Grenier /Kenton Koch /Maximilian Gotz	Korthoff/Preston Motorsports	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD	-61laps	54
25	Rahel Frey /Michelle Gatting /Sarah Bovy /Doriane Pin	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	GTD	-61laps	42
26	Adam Adelson /Elliott Skeer /Jan Heylen /Frederic Makowiecki	Wright Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-62laps	55
27	Adam Christodoulou /Salih Yoluc /Rui Andrade /Scott Andrews	Lone Star Racing	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD	-62laps	56
28	Jarett Andretti /Gabby Chaves /Scott Hargrove /Thomas Preining	Andretti Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-63laps	41
29	Mario Farnbacher /Ross Gunn /Alex Riberas	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo	GTD Pro	-64laps	48
30	Antonio Garcia /Alexander Sims /Daniel Juncadella	Corvette Racing by Pratt Miller Motorsports	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R	GTD Pro	-65laps	32
31	Mike Rockenfeller /Harry Tincknell /Christopher Mies	Ford Multimatic Motorsports	Ford Mustang GT3	GTD Pro	-65laps	51
32	Giorgio Sernagiotto /Roberto Lacorte /Antonio Fuoco /Eddie Cheever	Cetilar Racing (AF Corse)	Ferrari 296 GT3	GTD	-69laps	33
33	Andrea Caldarelli /Franck Perera /Jordan Pepper /Mirko Bortolotti	Iron Lynx	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	GTD Pro	-70laps	34
34	David Brule /Alec Udell /Trent Hindman /Julien Andlauer	Kellymoss with Riley	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-72laps	59
35	Klaus Bachler /Kerong Li /Anders Fjordbach /Larry ten Voorde	MDK Motorsports	Porsche 911 GT3-R	GTD	-73laps	27
36	Frederik Schandorff /Brendan Iribe /Ollie Millroy /Tom Gamble	Inception Racing (Optimum)	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo	GTD	-75laps	39
37	Tommy Milner /Nicky Catsburg /Earl Bamber	Corvette Racing by Pratt Miller Motorsports	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R	GTD Pro	-76laps	44
38	Patrick Gallagher /Robby Foley /Jake Walker /Jens Klingmann	Turner Motorsport	BMW M4 GT3	GTD	-80laps	52
39	Aaron Telitz /Frankie Montecalvo /Parker Thompson /Ritomo Miyata	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	GTD	705laps-engine fire	26
40	Misha Goikhberg /Loris Spinelli /Devlin DeFrancesco /Sandy Mitchell	Forte Racing	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	GTD	-115laps	30
41	Joey Hand /Dirk Muller /Frederic Vervisch	Ford Multimatic Motorsports	Ford Mustang GT3	GTD Pro	650laps-mechanical	46
42	Kyle Marcelli /Danny Formal /Graham Doyle /Ashton Harrison	Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	GTD	-148laps	29
43	Ricky Taylor /Filipe Albuquerque /Brendon Hartley /Marcus Ericsson	Wayne Taylor Racing with Andretti	Acura ARX-06	GTP	601laps-withdrawn	6
44	Oliver Jarvis /Marvin Kirchhofer /James Hinchcliffe /Alexander Rossi	Pfaff Motorsports	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo	GTD Pro	532laps-powertrain	37
45	Lance Willsey /Joao Barbosa /Nolan Siegel /Jonny Edgar	Sean Creech Motorsport	Ligier-Gibson JSP217	LMP2	510laps-bodywork	22
46	Nico Varrone /Anthony Mantella /Thomas Merrill /Charlie Eastwood	AWA	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R GTD	GTD	508laps-electrical	38
47	Sebastien Bourdais /Renger van der Zande /Scott Dixon /Alex Palou	Cadillac Racing (Ganassi)	Cadillac V-Series.R	GTP	423laps-mech powertrain	2
48	Ben Barnicoat /Jack Hawksworth /Kyle Kirkwood /Mike Conway	Vasser Sullivan	Lexus RC F GT3	GTD Pro	397laps-overheating	25
49	Katherine Legge /Sheena Monk /Tatiana Calderon /Stevan McAleer	Gradient Racing	Acura NSX GT3	GTD	368laps-electrical	28
50	Corey Lewis /Ryan Hardwick /Dennis Olsen /Giammarco Levorato	Proton Competition	Ford Mustang GT3	GTD	367laps-accident damage	49
51	Orey Fidani /Matt Bell /Lars Kern /Alex Lynn	AWA	Chevrolet Corvette C8.R GTD	GTD	308laps-power steering	43
52	Ian James /Roman De Angelis /Zacharie Robichon /Marco Sorensen	Heart of Racing Team	Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo	GTD	303laps-electrical	58
53	John Potter /Andy Lally /Spencer Pumpelly /Nicki Thiim	Magnus Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo	GTD	294laps-acc dam/w'drawn	57
54	Matteo Cressoni /Claudio Schiavoni /Romain Grosjean /Matteo Cairolì	Iron Lynx	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2	GTD Pro	293laps-gearbox	45
55	Maro Engel /Kenny Habul /Jules Gounon /Luca Stolz	SunEnergy1 (75 Express)	Mercedes-AMG GT3	GTD Pro	193laps-fuel pressure	47
56	Dennis Andersen /Seth Lucas /Laurents Horr /Scott Huffaker	MDK by High Class Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	185laps-accident damage	18
57	Daniel Goldburg /Paul di Resta /Bijoy Garg /Felix Rosenqvist	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	128laps-accident damage	15
58	Luis Perez Companc /Nicklas Nielsen /Lilou Wadoux /Matthieu Vaxiviere	Richard Mille AF Corse	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	107laps-engine	20
59	Steven Thomas /Mikkel Jensen /Hunter McElrea /Charles Milesi	TDS Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	58laps-accident	16

In each car, first-named driver started the race. **Winners' average speed** 117.461mph. **Fastest lap** Blomqvist 1m35.554s, 134.123mph. **LMP2** Braun 1m39.392s, 128.944mph. **GTD Pro** van der Linde 1m45.771s, 121.167mph. **GTD** Molina 1m45.839s, 121.089mph.



WRC

Neuville hits new highs to defeat Monte master Ogier

The Hyundai star put on a brilliant display to start the WRC season in style.

In his own words, he achieved perfection on his way to victory

TOM HOWARD

Motorsport is renowned for its never-ending desire for perfection, and to beat the king of Monte Carlo Sebastien Ogier on his home turf it's a prerequisite. This is what Thierry Neuville achieved to score perhaps the greatest of his 20 World Rally Championship victories to date.

The Hyundai driver delivered a statement win to defeat Ogier and Toyota in a gripping head-to-head at the Monte Carlo season-opener, sending a message to his rivals that he is very much a contender to take Kalle Roivanpera's crown.

"It was an amazing team effort to come here and take the victory, but not only taking the victory but being the boss this weekend," smiled Neuville. "The whole team has done a great job. Winning with a good margin in the end is a special feeling."

Roivanpera's decision to go part-time this season was still being felt as the teams returned to the mountains surrounding Gap after a two-year hiatus, as the WRC went in search of a more traditional

Monte featuring the famous snow and ice-covered roads. The weather didn't want to play ball, resulting in one of the driest events on record, but there were still plenty of ice patches to offer a proper Monte Carlo challenge to crews. Even striking local farmers blocking various motorways were unable to prevent this rally from being an absolute Monte classic.

It's fair to say that there are plenty of hot topics in the WRC. The two creating the most headlines provided a backdrop to proceedings. A new points structure ratified by the FIA designed to spice up rallies, particularly on the final day, divided opinion in the service park. The structure is somewhat complicated, with points now awarded to the top 10 at the end of Saturday via the 18-15-13-10-8-6-4-3-2-1 scale. These can only be secured by finishing the rally on Sunday, when the top seven fastest crews across the final day can score points (7-6-5-4-3-2-1). This allocation is then added to the 5-4-3-2-1 bonus points on offer for the Power Stage.

The majority of the drivers are not in favour of the system,



Neuville and co-driver Wydaeghe bagged a maximum points tally under new system



Championship-focused Evans had to be given a bit of a hurry-up

with Ogier perhaps the most vocal, stating: “These new rules make no sense. I cannot understand. I hope I’m wrong, but so far I see only inconvenience of changing that system. You devalue completely the victory, you make it complex and nobody will really understand from the wider public, except [if] you are a nerd and really into rally.”

In a contrasting view, M-Sport boss Richard Millener welcomed the change: “I think it’s great. Nobody likes change, but I think we have to change. This is a big change, but I think it has brought in a lot more strategy.”

Hyundai boss Cyril Abiteboul joked that he would have to consult Chat GPT when asked whether he had run any simulations to factor in the new points system before the rally.

The points system is all part of wider plan to improve the WRC, which includes a discussion regarding its future technical pathway that’s been partially triggered by there being only eight Rally1 cars on the entry list at Monte Carlo. While the entry is the lowest for

some time, the old adage that “you only need two cars to make a great race” once again came true.

Amid this challenging period for the WRC, Monte Carlo proved that the love for rallying is as strong as ever as thousands of fans flocked to the mountains for Thursday night’s stages. Fireworks and flares lit up the night sky to create a Bonfire Night on steroids scene, forging a vision that sent social media into a frenzy.

Toyota’s new team leader Elfyn Evans emerged through the crowds having lit up the timing screens with his pace to lead

“These new rules make no sense. I cannot understand. I see only inconvenience”

the rally by 15.1 seconds from Neuville. Ogier, battling a road becoming increasingly dirty, was third, 21.6s adrift.

The big talking point was Hyundai, whose three cars all suffered throttle mapping issues, but it was new signing Ott Tanak who fared the worst. “The problem has got really bad now,” grimaced Tanak, who ended Thursday in fourth, 22.8s behind Evans.

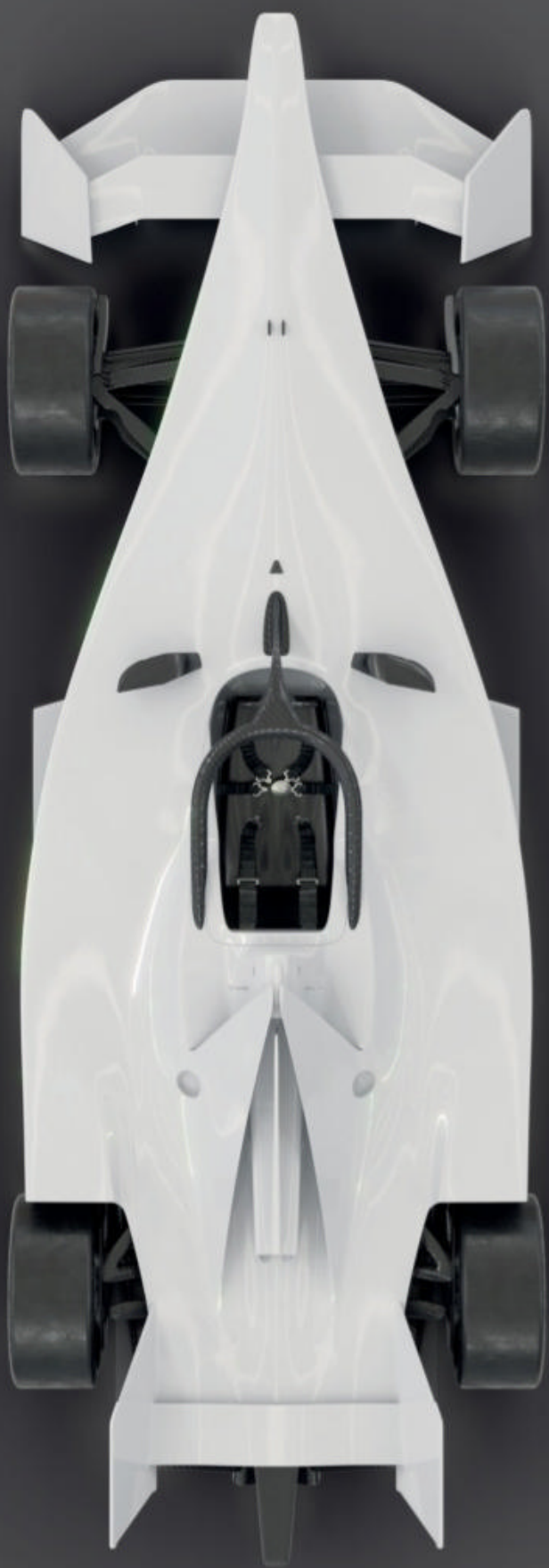
Tanak’s rally hopes suffered a more costly blow when action resumed early on Friday morning. A patch of ice at a left-hander in stage three caught out the Estonian, resulting in his i20 N slowly sliding off the road and into a ditch. Luckily, spectators were on hand to push him back onto the road, but at the cost of over 40s.

Tanak wasn’t the only driver to suffer on that sheet of ice. Team-mate Neuville was lucky to only brush a snowbank, while Toyota’s Takamoto Katsuta dropped more than five minutes after skating further into the ditch. M-Sport’s Gregoire Munster also dropped time at the same corner.

“It was just my mistake, so stupid,” said Katsuta, who was the »



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Emotions ran high for Ogier, who revealed he was coping with personal loss

“I think Elfyn knew he was not able to fight for the victory so he’s thinking about the championship”

first to now benefit from the new points structure. “I will try to finish the stages and see what I can do.”

The prospect of largely dry asphalt stages populated by small patches of ice provided a tougher challenge than if they were blanketed in snow and ice. It created a headache around tyre choices, and increased the importance of route note crews to advise on rapidly changing conditions before each pass.

Neuville had the bit between his teeth on stage four and appeared set to overhaul leader Evans, but his run was punctuated by a wild spin. The Belgian was very lucky to emerge with bent steering. “There must have been some gravel or something that I didn’t have in my notes, but it was a big surprise,” he related.

While Evans didn’t add to his stage win tally, he ended the morning loop with a 10.7s lead over Ogier, who kickstarted his bid for a 10th Monte Carlo win by stunning the field by 11.2s on stage five. It prompted an unusual reaction, with Ogier close to tears. “I was struggling so far – I am having a tough week, but I am trying my best,” offered Ogier.

Friday afternoon represented the start of an Ogier-versus-Neuville head to head with the pair trading fastest stage times. Evans was unable to match their pace, but managed to cling onto to his rally lead. Even so, Ogier’s stage eight win slashed the deficit to 4.5s, with a fast Neuville poised 16.1s adrift.



Rally1 returnee Fourmaux impressed with controlled drive to fifth for M-Sport

McKLEIN



MCKLEIN

Ogier's drive proved that he is the "master" of navigating icy sections according to Toyota team boss Jari-Matti Latvala. Evans on the other hand was lacking confidence, but was thinking about his championship bid given that Ogier is running a partial campaign. "Of course, we are driving quickly, but I'm not willing to increase the risk level to catch him," explained Evans.

Tanak held fourth (+1m13.6s), ahead of the impressive Adrien Fourmaux, who delivered a controlled drive on his return to Rally1 with M-Sport. New Hyundai signing Andreas Mikkelsen continued to adjust to his i20 N on his Rally1 debut in front of Munster.

Saturday was dominated by the Ogier-versus-Neuville show. Evans, hampered by a hybrid issue in stage 10, struggled to find the confidence to push and lost his grip on the lead to an inspired Neuville. The Hyundai driver delivered a devastating blow in a frosty stage nine to take a stunning 18.8s out of Monte master Ogier, and was 9.6s faster than Evans. A modest Neuville said his effort was "decent". It was more than decent. It propelled him into the fight and caused some concern for Ogier, who declared that his information was simply "too safe".

Ogier responded to win stage 10, but Neuville ended the morning 5.1s ahead of Evans, with Ogier 7.7s adrift to create a thrilling three-way fight.

It quite quickly turned into a two-horse race in the afternoon as Ogier and Neuville became locked in a tense scrap. Evans stuck to his mantra of not taking extra risks, a smart call with points on offer at the end of Saturday.

"I think Elfyn knew that he was not able to fight for the victory so he is thinking about the championship, and by thinking about that he perhaps went into his comfort zone," reasoned Latvala, "and it can happen that when you go into this comfort zone you slow down more than you think."

Latvala also issued a wake-up call to Ogier after he had lost time to Neuville. The eight-time WRC champion duly followed the order. Two stage wins followed, including the incredible milestone of a 700th WRC stage victory, which was enough to wrestle the lead away from Neuville by a mere 0.8s.

But there was a final twist. Neuville responded in the darkness of stage 14 with something special that made everyone sit up and take notice. In his own view, it was simply perfection. This is a rare phenomenon in rallying. He took 4.1s out of Ogier to carry a 3.3s lead into Sunday. Neuville admitted that he was spurred on by the thought of beating Ogier, and claiming the 18 points now on offer for leading on Saturday night: "I was faster than him also in the morning loop so we decided to go for it and we had the perfect stage, it was brilliant." Asked whether he had been thinking about the points, or simply beating Ogier, Neuville replied: "A bit of both!" >>

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Ogier knew he had a battle on his hands: “Thierry did a good stage. It looks like we need to try harder. We are still in this fight.”

Evans’s victory bid seemed over after he admitted “the feeling” in his GR Yaris was not there, but was looking to make the most of the Super Sunday format. “The new format is sort of like the start of a new day, so we will treat it like that,” he predicted.

Evans did provisionally take 13 points into Sunday. The Toyota driver joined Tanak, who continued to battle engine issues, Fourmaux, Mikkelsen (who survived a wild off on stage nine), the recovering Katsuta, and WRC2 runners Pepe Lopez, Nikolay Gryazin and Yohan Rossel as the points scorers.

The perfection Neuville found on Saturday was on display

“I knew the time was going to be good, and that is the greatest feeling you can get”

on Sunday. A fastest time on stage 15 prompted Ogier to effectively concede defeat. Neuville wasn’t finished though. He made the most of this harmony between himself and his i20 N to complete a clean sweep of Sunday’s stages and bag the maximum Sunday points, plus the Power Stage bonus five points, resulting in a perfect 30-point haul.

His defeat of Ogier by 16.1s to claim a second career Monte Carlo win almost left Neuville lost for words. “I don’t know what to say to be honest, it was such a great weekend,” he said. “We knew when you come here you always have to count on Seb to be there for sure. We wanted this victory. I had a big smile on my face when I drove through the stages and I knew the time was going to be good, and that is the greatest feeling you can get.”

Neuville’s boss Abiteboul declared that his driver is the strongest he’s ever been – an ominous thought for his championship rivals. “I hope that maybe what happened this weekend is also because he is a stronger person, stronger driver and stronger competitor than he has ever been,” declared Abiteboul. “For sure, to me it is certainly the case since I have joined the team.”

Ogier was gracious in defeat. At the finish he explained the reasons behind his stage five emotions, which made his performance even more commendable. “Well done to him, he has been really fast this weekend,” acknowledged Ogier, who took five points for being third fastest on Sunday. “For me it’s been a rollercoaster of emotions. I struggled a lot on Friday especially. It was hard to say goodbye on Monday to a person who was very important to me, who basically launched my career in motorsport



Tanak could only manage fourth place on his return to Hyundai

MCKLEIN

and who bought me my first kart.

“I think I can be proud. I never gave up the whole weekend. I seriously thought about whether to start this rally or not, so at the end I really did it as I have engagement with my team and I need to stay professional and you can see that it wasn’t easy.”

Although no fan of the new points system, Evans benefited from the format to claim six points for being the second fastest driver across Sunday, in addition to his two Power Stage points. It means Evans, who finished third outright, trails Neuville by nine points in the championship.

“The end result is not so bad and ultimately not so far off the target, but given the position we were in on Friday evening it is obviously a disappointing weekend,” summed up Evans. “I guess this time this new points system has been kind, but I’m sure there are some losers on the system as well.”

The hobbled Tanak finished fourth, ahead of the impressive Fourmaux, and the pair claimed the same positions in Sunday’s classification. Mikkelsen finished sixth but left the weekend with three points fewer than Katsuta, who was seventh overall and fifth on Sunday to highlight a quirk in the new scoring system.

Munster, who claimed a first top-three time on stage nine, also picked up a point thanks to the new format (appearing in 11th place in the points table). He rejoined the rally on Sunday after beaching his Puma against the barriers in stage 12.

Points systems and the WRC’s future pathway discussions aside, Monte Carlo 2024 will be remembered as the time Neuville succeeded in finding perfection. ✨



Fireworks and flares provided extraordinary scenes in evening stages

MCKLEIN

ROSSEL TOPS WRC2 CONTEST



On a weekend when there was plenty of discussion regarding the merits of Rally2 potentially being the future pathway for the World Rally Championship, WRC2 showcased the entertainment it can deliver courtesy of a three-way victory fight that ended in a final-stage showdown.

Citroen driver and local favourite Yohan Rossel snatched the win in the most dramatic of circumstances thanks to a blistering run up the famous Col de Turini final stage.

The Frenchman had started the final day in third behind Skoda driver Pepe Lopez and 6.9s adrift of Citroen team-mate and leader Nikolay Gryazin. The trio had been locked in a rally-long fight since Thursday.

Lopez grabbed the lead at the end of Thursday, but after stage two the lead swapped eight times between the Spaniard and Gryazin. Gryazin took a 0.2s advantage into Sunday's three stages but this was where Rossel, who held third for the majority of the rally, came to the fore.

A stunning victory on the penultimate stage lifted Rossel to second, 0.9s behind Lopez, to set up a final-stage showdown. Rossel ensured that there was a home-grown winner for the crowd to cheer by beating Lopez to the tune of 4.9s to snatch a remarkable victory.

"It's crazy," said Rossel. "My tyres were completely dead. It's an incredible feeling."

The defeated Lopez added: "It's a pity not to win this rally because we fought a lot, but it is what it is. We did our best."

Gryazin was left to settle for third, 11.4s behind the second-placed Fabia but ahead of Hyundai driver Nicolas Ciamin. Sami Pajari, driving the new Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 on its WRC debut, came home in fifth. The Finn showed flashes of speed driving Rally2's latest contender.

Pajari led fellow Toyota drivers Stephane Lefebvre and Jan Solans. Oliver Solberg won four of Friday's six stages before a double puncture on Saturday ended the Skoda ace's hopes.

RESULTS ROUND 1/13, MONTE CARLO RALLY, 24-28 JANUARY

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Thierry Neuville (BEL) Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	3h09m30.9s
2	Sebastien Ogier (FRA) Vincent Landais (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+16.1s
3	Elfyn Evans (GBR) Scott Martin (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+45.2s
4	Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+1m59.8s
5	Adrien Fourmaux (FRA) Alexandre Coria (FRA)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+3m36.9s
6	Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) Torstein Eriksen (NOR)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+5m34.6s
7	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN) Aaron Johnston (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+8m28.5s
8	Yohan Rossel (FRA) Arnaud Dunand (FRA)	DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2	+10m29.8s
9	Pepe Lopez (ESP) David Vazquez (ESP)	Mapo Motorsport / Skoda Fabia RS	+10m33.8s
10	Nikolay Gryazin (RUS) Konstantin Aleksandrov (RUS)	DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2	+10m45.2s
OTHERS			
20	Gregoire Munster (LUX) Louis Louka (BEL)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+34m40.0s

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Thoard / Saint-Geniez (13.06 miles)	Evans 12m12.9s	Evans	Tanak +5.2s
SS2 Bayons / Breziers (15.65 miles)	Evans 14m00.0s	Evans	Neuville +15.1s
SS3 St-Leger-les-Melezes / La Batie-Neuve 1 (10.36 miles)	Neuville 9m18.3s	Evans	Neuville +9.8s
SS4 Champcella / Saint-Clement 1 (11.10 miles)	Ogier 9m53.2s	Evans	Neuville +18.8s
SS5 La Breole / Selonnet 1 (11.38 miles)	Ogier 10m10.8s	Evans	Ogier +10.7s
SS6 St-Leger-les-Melezes / La Batie-Neuve 2 (10.36 miles)	Neuville 9m09.0s	Evans	Ogier +9.7s
SS7 Champcella / Saint-Clement 2 (11.10 miles)	Neuville 9m49.6s	Evans	Ogier +8.6s
SS8 La Breole / Selonnet 2 (11.38 miles)	Ogier 10m26.3s	Evans	Ogier +4.5s
SS9 Esparron / Oze 1 (11.68 miles)	Neuville 12m12.5s	Evans	Neuville +6.5s
SS10 Les Nonieres / Chichilianne 1 (12.45 miles)	Ogier 11m27.2s	Neuville	Evans +0.9s
SS11 Pellafol / Agnieres-en-Devoluy 1 (13.28 miles)	Tanak and Neuville 12m40.0s	Neuville	Evans +5.1s
SS12 Esparron / Oze 2 (11.68 miles)	Ogier 11m23.0s	Neuville	Ogier +2.2s
SS13 Les Nonieres / Chichilianne 2 (12.45 miles)	Ogier 11m32.4s	Ogier	Neuville +0.8s
SS14 Pellafol / Agnieres-en-Devoluy 2 (13.28 miles)	Neuville 12m47.8s	Neuville	Ogier +3.3s
SS15 La Breole / Selonnet 3 (11.38 miles)	Neuville 10m31.8s	Neuville	Ogier +8.0s
SS16 Digne-les-Bains / Chaudon-Norante (11.81 miles)	Neuville 11m10.2s	Neuville	Ogier +13.5s
SS17 La Bollene-Vesubie / Col de Turini (Power Stage) (9.20 miles)	Neuville 9m50.4s	Neuville	Ogier +16.1s

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Neuville 30; 2 Ogier 24; 3 Evans 21; 4 Tanak 15; 5 Fourmaux 11; 6 Katsuta 9; 7 Mikkelsen 6; 8 Gryazin 3; 9 Lopez 2; 10 Rossel 1. **WRC2** 1 Rossel 25; 2 Lopez 18; 3 Gryazin 15.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 46; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 45; 3 M-Sport Ford World Rally Team 13.



New Zealander is
very happy with his
“dream start” to life
with Jaguar



FORMULA E

Cassidy surprises himself to storm to the top in Saudi

The new Jaguar recruit didn't expect much from the double-header weekend, but a win and a third means he now leads the Formula E standings

STEFAN MACKLEY

 PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

“**H**istorically I've struggled here a little bit so I'm not expecting big things.” Nick Cassidy's pre-event comments did little to offer much encouragement that he would continue his promising start to the 2024 Formula E season in Saudi Arabia. Yet come the end of the Diriyah E-Prix double-header, the Kiwi had not only walked away with his first win for Jaguar, but also the lead in the drivers' standings after two well-measured drives in varying circumstances.

The foundation for Cassidy's win in the second race was laid down in qualifying when he made it as far as the semi-final duels and a starting position of third. On a street circuit where dust and dirt was prevalent off the racing line, as well as energy management being less critical than at other venues, overtaking was at a premium. As in the season-opening Mexico City E-Prix, where Cassidy had finished third on his Jaguar debut, strategic use of the two mandatory Attack Mode activations proved decisive.

After maintaining his starting position, Cassidy began to make progress as early as lap four when polesitter Oliver Rowland, who had dropped to second place off the line, took his first Attack Mode activation and was followed a lap later by leader Robin Frijns. Both Rowland's Nissan and Frijns's Envision Racing Jaguar fell behind Cassidy, who began to increase his pace at the head of the field, extending his advantage to 1.6 seconds. This would likely have been enough to retain the lead when taking his first Attack Mode.

As it was, Frijns took his second activation at the same time as Cassidy's first on lap seven of 36. When Cassidy took his final Attack Mode just six tours later, he comfortably retained the lead, having this time built a gap of almost 2s to the Dutchman. Such had been the intense pace between the leading pair during the early stages that Frijns later admitted they “were almost killing each other” on energy consumption, with the gap to Rowland reaching as much as 6s at one stage.

Rowland, who had taken his first pole since Seoul in 2022, admitted that he “probably didn't quite have the confidence that I had the [energy] efficiency” to match Cassidy and Frijns, and instead focused on consolidating third. But with a net race lead and energy at a critical level, Cassidy began to slow his pace, and gradually backed Frijns up into Rowland and the rest of the chasing pack, which included McLaren's Jake Hughes, DS Penske's Stoffel Vandoorne and the second Nissan of Sacha Fenestraz.

As he managed his pace over the second half of the race, Cassidy's lead was never more than a few tenths of a second over the remainder of the contest, yet he never faced a »



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Polesitter Vergne leads at start of the first race

serious test from Frijns or Rowland, and the podium places remained unchanged until the chequered flag.

“I didn’t always feel that,” replied Cassidy when asked whether he had the lead under control in the latter stages. “My energy target was super-low, him [Frijns] and I were going at it at the start, but it was nice to be able to drive like that and try and make a difference, and I think we did.”

The ex-Envision driver added: “It’s the dream start [to life with Jaguar]. I hadn’t had a podium here or Mexico before. I think my best result at this track was sixth across the last six races. It’s definitely above expectations. It’s not really been a track for me for whatever reason so I genuinely thought I would struggle. Like every race, though, I work as hard as I can and try to be better.”

Cassidy had secured another rostrum 24 hours earlier in a recovery drive of sorts after starting seventh, but arguably it should have been his team-mate Mitch Evans who was the one to stand on the podium, and quite possibly the highest step of all.

Jaguar’s other Kiwi had qualified second and took the fight to poleman Jean-Eric Vergne and reigning Formula E champion Jake Dennis in the first half of the 37-lap race. But Evans was left aggrieved with DS Penske ace Vergne after the pair made contact on lap four when Evans rejoined from taking his first Attack Mode activation. “Vergne pushed me into the wall,” complained Evans.



Race-two finish was close, but Cassidy wasn’t challenged too hard

“It’s not been a track for me for whatever reason so I genuinely thought I would struggle”

“The next corner was essentially mine but with that contact, it gave him the momentum – how that wasn’t a penalty I don’t understand.”

Evans found himself in third once the rest of the Attack Mode activations had played out, but with more power than Vergne and Dennis ahead, and set about gaining places. He demoted Vergne into Turn 18 for second on lap 12 and attempted the same move on Dennis’s Andretti Porsche two laps later.

After running out of his Attack Mode boost heading onto the starting straight, Evans was left to make a late lunge up the inside that briefly put him into the lead before he ran wide and dropped to second. The 90-degree right would prove to be Evans’s undoing two more times, the next moment coming on lap 16 when, after going defensive against Vergne, he ran wide once more and dropped to third.

Cassidy soon moved up to fourth, but with both Attack Modes still to take was at risk of losing places over the remaining laps. Despite the Jaguar team suffering from radio problems, they were able to communicate for Evans to let his team-mate ahead. In turn, he was able to build a big enough margin to eventually come out fourth just in front of McLaren’s Sam Bird.

During this phase, Vergne in second had pulled a small gap, but the Frenchman was forced to critically save energy, allowing Evans the opportunity to make a move on the final lap. The Jaguar driver dived up the inside again into Turn 18, but overshot the corner and was left unhappy with what he deemed to be a “double move” under braking from Vergne. The error allowed Vergne to retain second and Cassidy moved up to third, with Evans also dropping behind Bird to finish fifth.

Things went from bad to worse the next day for Evans, who failed to make it through the qualifying group stage ahead of the second race after “finger problems” with his car. Ultimately, it meant he could only climb to 10th in the final classification such was the difficulty in overtaking, and he now trails new team-mate Cassidy by 36 points after just three races. >>

Dennis trusted his gut in race one and his reward was victory



BAGNALL

Evans's misfortune in the opening race and Vergne's drastic energy saving in the closing stages meant Dennis took a comprehensive win by more than 13s, the second-largest winning margin in the all-electric championship's history.

Dennis had started third on the grid but made a sluggish getaway and initially dropped behind Sergio Sette Camara, the ERT driver the star of qualifying in taking fourth.

The Brazilian launched up the inside of Evans as the pair just avoided contact, but a slight loss of momentum allowed Dennis to regain the position and clear off into the distance with Vergne and Evans.

The pivotal moment that "won us the race", according to Dennis, was when he ignored his team's radio call to take his first Attack Mode on lap five while leading, instead deciding to run a lap longer. This was in a bid to rejoin ahead of Evans and possibly Vergne, who had already completed one Attack Mode each. "That's one of the good things with the team is they sort of allow me to do my own race and have faith in my decisions behind the wheel," related Dennis.

The strategy worked. Dennis found himself in second and, when the second Attack Modes were completed on lap eight, the Briton kept the net race lead. Dennis was only headed again after he misjudged his braking at Turn 18 and Evans briefly took the lead, and was left to take the first win of his title defence, as well as the fastest lap on the penultimate tour.

But just 24 hours after his crushing victory, Dennis endured a torrid race, claiming he was "shocked why we were so bad today" after failing to score any points in race two. He could only start 14th on the grid after failing to progress beyond his qualifying group, with his final effort scuppered by a red flag. But he lamented a lack of one-lap pace, stating "the red flag didn't ruin our weekend to be honest, we weren't making the duels even if I finished that lap. Just pure pace over one lap was nowhere, but we proved in the race that we were quick again."

Although he finished 10th on the road, in the final points-scoring position, as well taking as another point for fastest lap, Dennis was handed a five-second penalty post-race for overtaking under yellow flags. This occurred after Evans took his Attack Mode activation on the exit of Turn 18, where yellows were present. Norman Nato and Sette Camara were also found guilty of the same offence, with the penalty dropping Dennis out of the points. "Mitch took Attack Mode and instead of stopping and waiting for him I just continued on my normal racing line," explained Dennis, who also lost his point for fastest lap as a result of being outside the top 10.



BAGNALL

"A good thing with the team is they allow me to do my own race and have faith in my decisions"

"It's difficult for the officials to judge, it's difficult for me to judge. Thankfully I had no one behind so I could have stopped, but if it happened to the guys in front who were battling, it would have been an absolute disaster because they would have had to stop, which would have caused a big incident."

Pascal Wehrlein, the championship leader heading into the event after his season-opening Mexico City E-Prix victory, finished both Diriyah races in the points but failed to feature in the lead battles. The Porsche driver started sixth for the opener, but a poor launch meant he finished the first lap down in ninth and he could only recover to eighth. For the sequel, Wehrlein failed to progress beyond the group stages and started 10th, but he made steady progress, demoting Bird on the exit of Turn 18 after the McLaren driver had tried to pass Vergne.

Wehrlein soon made short work of the double champion, sweeping ahead into Turn 1 for seventh. This is where he finished and he now sits second in the standings, 19 points behind new championship leader Cassidy.

Cassidy's pessimism ahead of the event stemmed from the fact that he had failed to stand on the podium in either Mexico City or Diriyah in three years of Formula E, yet he heads to the next round in Sao Paulo with a top-three hat-trick. Post-victory, he admitted that he "was due a bad day". His rivals will be hoping that it comes sooner rather than later given his impressive start to life with Jaguar in 2024. *W*

EARLY END FOR BIRD

Sam Bird was forced to retire from the second race after glancing the Turn 12 barrier and damaging his suspension when running inside the points, but McLaren team-mate Jake Hughes matched Bird's opening-race result by finishing fourth in the sequel.

DARUVALA'S DUELS DEBUT

Formula E rookie Jehan Daruvala made it through to the qualifying duels for the first time in his fledgling career, lining up fifth on the grid for only his third race. After holding position in the points, the Maserati MSG driver began to fall back in the closing stages of the second race and retired with brake failure.

INVESTIGATION CONTINUES

The FIA and Formula E team ERT revealed in Saudi Arabia that they are still investigating a battery failure that occurred in the season-opening Mexico City E-Prix on Sergio Sette Camara's car. The Brazilian came to a stop on the instillation lap and was unable to start after the "battery kind of exploded". "It's a type of failure we haven't seen before and one we don't expect to see again," said a team statement. Sette Camara claimed his first points of the season with ninth in the opening Diriyah race.

BUEMI A NON-STARTER

Sebastien Buemi was unable to start the second race in Diriyah after his Envision machine suffered extensive damage in a qualifying crash earlier in the day. Buemi (below) lost control into Turn 1 and went head-on into the barrier, stating later that he'd misjudged the braking zone when he received a radio message from the team. It ended a dismal weekend for the 2015-16 champion, who finished outside the points in race one.



RESULTS ROUND 2/10, DIRIYAH (SAU), 26-27 JANUARY (37 LAPS – 57.731 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Jake Dennis (GBR)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	45m56.452s
2	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Penske / DSE-TENSE FE23	+13.289s
3	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+13.824s
4	Sam Bird (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+14.620s
5	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+15.174s
6	Norman Nato (FRA)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+15.661s
7	Maximilian Guenther (DEU)	Maserati / Maserati Tipo Folgore	+16.267s
8	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+16.387s
9	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	ERT / ERT X24	+26.606s
10	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+26.968s
11	Jake Hughes (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+27.021s
12	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+27.472s
13	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+27.973s
14	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	DS Penske / DSE-TENSE FE23	+28.366s
15	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M10 Electro	+29.397s
16	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+29.885s
17	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M10 Electro	+30.419s
18	Nico Muller (CHE)	Abt / Mahindra M10 Electro	+30.884s
19	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Abt / Mahindra M10 Electro	+31.188s
20	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	Maserati / Maserati Tipo Folgore	+31.541s
21	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	ERT / ERT X24	+1m04.712s
R	Sacha Fenestraz (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	12 laps-accident damage

Winner's average speed 75.398mph. **Fastest lap** Dennis 1m11.399s, 78.168mph.

RACE 1 QUALIFYING

1 Vergne 1m12.062s; 2 Evans 1m12.134s; 3 Dennis 1m12.079s; 4 Sette Camara 1m12.611s; 5 Nato 1m12.475s; 6 Wehrlein 1m12.610s; 7 Cassidy 1m12.821s; 8 Guenther 1m12.892s; 9 Bird 1m13.147s; 10 Hughes 1m13.207s; 11 Vandoorne 1m13.167s; 12 Frijns 1m13.272s; 13 Buemi 1m13.186s; 14 Rowland 1m13.350s; 15 Fenestraz 1m13.294s; 16 Muller 1m13.531s; 17 di Grassi 1m13.729s; 18 Ticktum 1m13.446s; 19 Mortara 1m13.791s; 20 da Costa 1m13.367s*; 21 Daruvala 1m14.054s; 22 de Vries 1m14.254s. * = grid penalty.

RACE 2 (36 LAPS – 56.181 MILES)

1 Cassidy 43m51.868s; 2 Frijns +1.192s; 3 Rowland +1.875s; 4 Hughes +2.931s; 5 Vandoorne +3.397s; 6 Fenestraz +4.598s; 7 Wehrlein +4.816s; 8 Vergne +5.195s; 9 Guenther +5.709s; 10 Evans +6.866s; 11 Mortara +10.116s; 12 Dennis +11.240s; 13 Muller +14.462s; 14 da Costa +17.960s; 15 de Vries +19.295s; 16 Nato +25.235s; 17 di Grassi +25.639s; 18 Sette Camara +26.564s; R Ticktum 32 laps-accident damage; R Daruvala 25 laps-brakes; R Bird 22 laps-accident damage; NS Buemi qualifying accident.

Winner's average speed 76.846mph. **Fastest lap** Dennis 1m10.296s, 79.395mph.

RACE 2 QUALIFYING

1 Rowland 1m10.055s; 2 Frijns 1m10.329s; 3 Cassidy 1m10.295s; 4 Vandoorne 1m10.627s; 5 Daruvala 1m10.786s; 6 Hughes 1m10.994s; 7 Fenestraz 1m11.077s; 8 Vergne 1m11.112s; 9 Sette Camara 1m10.986s; 10 Wehrlein 1m10.946s; 11 Buemi 1m11.152s; 12 Guenther 1m10.993s; 13 Bird 1m11.165s; 14 Evans 1m11.042s; 15 Dennis 1m11.228s; 16 Ticktum 1m11.307s; 17 Muller 1m11.368s; 18 de Vries 1m11.327s; 19 Mortara 1m11.386s; 20 Nato 1m11.390s; 21 di Grassi 1m11.806s; 22 da Costa 1m11.662s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Cassidy 57; 2 Wehrlein 38; 3 Vergne 33; 4 Dennis 28; 5 Evans 21; 6 Guenther 20; 7 Frijns 19; 8 Buemi 18; 9 Rowland 18; 10 Hughes 18.

TEAMS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Jaguar Racing 78; 2 DS Penske 47; 3 Porsche 38; 4 Andretti 37; 5 Envision Racing 37; 6 McLaren 30; 7 Nissan 26; 8 Maserati 20; 9 ERT 2; 10 Mahindra Racing 0; 11 Abt 0.



**NEXT
REPORT**
Sao Paulo E-Prix
21 March issue



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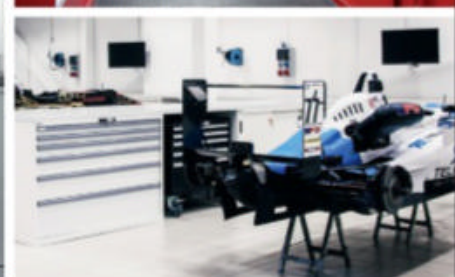
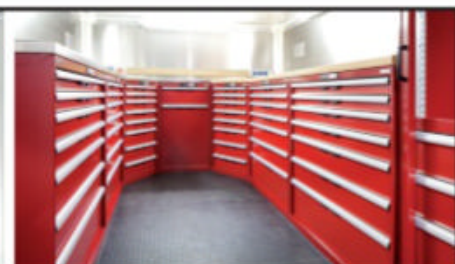
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Audi claims the ‘other’ 24-hour race

DUBAI 24 HOURS
DUBAI (ARE)
27-28 JANUARY

Audi may no longer have a works-supported GT programme, but in the right hands its R8 LMS GT3 Evo II remains a competitive force. That fact was proven once again in the Dubai 24 Hours as the German marque secured its fourth victory in the flagship round of the Creventic-run 24H Series. The Eastalent Racing Team, with drivers Christopher Haase, Markus Winkelhock, Gilles Magnus, Simon Reicher and Mike Zhou, claimed victory by 96 seconds over the Proton Huber Competition Porsche of Sven Muller, Rinat Salikhov, Sergei Borisov and Victor Shaytar.

After a two-week postponement (due to shipping delays caused by attacks on cargo vessels by the Yemen-based Houthi group in the Red Sea) meant a clash with the Daytona 24 Hours, the entry list contained 23 GT3 entries after the withdrawal of 2022 winner WRT’s BMWs. Several contenders fell by the



wayside and Eastalent’s crew controlled the race from the front, with the top two at half distance unchanged at the finish.

Another Audi that looked a likely contender retired early due to steering problems that had cut short its efforts in qualifying. The Sainteloc car featuring 2009 Le Mans GT2 class winner Pierre Kaffer had claimed pole, but was overtaken before the end of a frantic opening lap by the GetSpeed Mercedes of Fabian Schiller, which went out during the night with gearbox woes while in podium contention. Also out of luck was the Attempto Racing Audi that had DTM winner Ricardo Feller on its driving strength, forced out by a failure on the right-rear corner on

Sunday morning, while the car that had been Sainteloc’s closest rival in qualifying didn’t even turn a lap in anger – Leipert Motorsport’s Lamborghini developed a fuel leak before the start.

British GT title-winning squad Century Motorsport upheld BMW honour with third overall and pro-am honours with Carl Cavers, Lewis Plato, Jack Barlow and Jake Rattenbury, while its second crew took am class spoils in fifth with Michael Johnston, Chris Salkeld, Darren Leung and Sean Gelael.

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Roman is emperor in New Zealand

FORMULA REGIONAL OCEANIA
MANFEILD (NZL)
27-28 JANUARY
ROUND 2/5

Roman Bilinski was supreme again to take his second double win in two weekends as bad weather struck the Toyota Formula Regional Oceania field at Manfeild.

The Anglo-Pole’s victory in the finale was anti-climactic when red flags were unfurled a few laps early. The race had started with all but one of the field on wet-weather tyres, but the rain began to fall again,



and it became so wet that the risk of aquaplaning was too great to continue.

M2 Competition driver Bilinski had led all the way under pressure from Christian Mansell (Giles Motorsport). MTEC Motorsport’s Tommy Smith ran third, while Liam Sceats (M2) made an early pass on Kaleb Ngatoa (Giles) for fourth. A late spin for Smith dropped him to fourth and promoted Sceats to third.

Bilinski had also led Mansell in Saturday’s dry opener, before an electrical glitch on the sixth lap dropped the Australian to 10th. Alpine F1 protege Nicola Lacorte moved up to second, and Sceats completed an M2 1-2-3 by winning a race-long all-Kiwi fight with Ngatoa for third. Mansell charged back into contention and was on Ngatoa’s tail by the chequered flag.

Mansell stormed from fourth on the reversed grid into the lead of the wet race two within a lap, and beat Ngatoa and Smith. Bilinski went off avoiding a first-lap incident and had to pit to have his rain light fixed.

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Major upgrades for
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After a decade, RAM
will swap Mercedes
for BMW in 2024

RAM RACING



RAM switches to BMW as Marciello/Ferguson stay

BRITISH GT

RAM Racing will switch to a BMW M4 GT3 in the British GT Championship this season as it retains Raffaele Marciello and John Ferguson in an unchanged driver line-up.

The Silverstone-based squad has used Mercedes machinery since it joined British GT in 2015, but that will change after a decade. During the off-season, Marciello – who is widely considered one of the top GT drivers in the world – moved from being a factory Mercedes driver to join the works BMW outfit and its line-up in the top-tier LMDh class of the World Endurance Championship.

“I’m really happy to be back in British GT with John and RAM Racing,” said Marciello, who made his British GT debut last year. “It’s a big year ahead, being my first as a BMW works driver, and there’s a lot to learn.

“It will be a big challenge for myself and the team to switch car from the Mercedes-AMG to the BMW M4 GT3, and to find the

right set-ups for the tracks. We had a good season overall last year, and we already know the areas where we can improve, so I’m expecting big things for us in British GT this season.”

The BMW M4 also had success last term in British GT, with the same model winning the GT3 title in the hands of Dan Harper and Darren Leung. Ferguson, meanwhile, continues in British GT for a fourth successive season, his third in GT3, having taken a win at Snetterton and seventh in the 2023 standings.

“This is a big year for RAM Racing, and I feel we’re in a great position to hit the ground running,” said Ferguson. “Last year was a big rebuild, working toward being back with two cars for 2024, and the decision to switch to the BMW is logical. The M4 showed how strong it was by winning the championship last season, and it will be a force to be reckoned with again this year.

“To keep Lello alongside me is a huge bonus. He’s the best GT3 driver in the world and we were working so well together by the end of last year that going the extra mile to ensure the partnership continued made a lot of sense.”

RAM will also run a Mercedes for Harry George and Luca Hopkinson for its maiden assault on the GT4 class. George made his British GT debut last year with Enduro Motorsport, while Hopkinson moves up from Ginetta Junior.

Elsewhere, father-son duo Richard and Sam Neary will continue in British GT with a GT3 Mercedes at Abba Racing.

GINETTA JUNIOR DRIVER SCHWARZE MOVES TO GB3

GB3

Hugo Schwarze will graduate to single-seaters and the GB3 Championship in 2024, remaining with Elite Motorsport having finished as runner-up in Ginetta Junior with the team last year.

The 17-year-old German claimed two wins last term in his first year of car racing, having moved up from karting, and tested the GB3 car at Circuito de Navarra and Silverstone ahead of racing in the championship this season.

“My aim is to go as far as I possibly can in single-seaters, which is why I’ve chosen to race in GB3,” said Schwarze, who completes Elite’s GB3 driver line-up by joining McKenzie Cresswell and Jarrod Waberski.

“The series has proven to be very competitive and a stepping stone for higher single-seater championships, which is also my aim.

“It was quite a late decision to do Ginetta Junior last year but, after my first tests, it was clear that we were going to be running at the front. Due to it being only my second season in motorsport, I had a lot to catch up on in terms of racecraft compared to the other drivers.

“I progressed throughout the season with Elite, working hard with the entire team. I am ready to continue my steep learning curve in what will be a tough, but I’m sure an exciting, year.”

● Omologato has become the official timing partner for both GB3 and GB4 in 2024. As part of the deal, the new Omologato ‘One to Watch’ Award will be created for both series, rewarding standout drivers with a prize timepiece at each event.



Marciello (l) and Ferguson stay put

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



GB3 for Schwarze with Elite in 2024

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

MSV to extend its Navarra track amid upgrades

MSV

MotorSport Vision has announced a raft of upgrades to its Navarra circuit in Spain this year, including the introduction of a new sequence of corners.

MSV took over the operation of the track at the end of 2022 and completed significant redevelopment work to its infrastructure last year, such as improving the race control building and a refurbishment of the paddock restaurant. But the track's layout itself is the focus of the latest two-stage improvements.

Work is already beginning on removing bumps and resurfacing some sections, while the Turn 6 left-hander is being reprofiled to become a much faster corner. Then, during the circuit's summer break in July and August, the track is to be extended with a new straight added to the middle of the lap that will lead into a banked hairpin. The new sequence will take the circuit's length from 2.44 to 2.85 miles.

MSV chief executive Jonathan Palmer explained that the changes were designed to make the lap more flowing after he sampled the track at the wheel of a GT3. "It was great fun, with some exciting elevation changes, but it was clear to me that it could



Major works at Navarra, while Brands barriers have moved back (inset)

be even better by changing the layout to make it faster and more flowing – there were too many slow corners," he said.

"We then went a stage further and got Driven International to produce on-board simulations with F4, F1 and GT3 cars, to ensure that the new corners would achieve what I wanted for a range of cars, which was particularly for the new T12/T13 S bend to be really fast, just requiring a lift on the throttle, or a light brake – these are always the most exhilarating corners to drive!

"These changes will really help to establish Circuito de Navarra as not

just a good circuit, but a great circuit, for drivers and riders alike."

A number of UK championships are due to visit the Spanish track this year. It plays host to the opening British Superbike round, while categories such as Modified Fords, Trackday Championship and Trackday Trophy are also due to visit.

Navarra is not the only one of MSV's venues to have undergone developments recently. Work to move back the barriers on the approach to Druids at Brands Hatch has also been completed, following the repositioning of spectator fencing in this area at the end of last year.

PalmerSport shootout for GT Academy drive

GINETTA GT ACADEMY

PalmerSport has teamed up with Ginetta to offer a fully funded drive in the entry-level GT Academy this year, a prize estimated to be worth around £100,000.

Those who have taken part in PalmerSport's driving experience days at Bedford Autodrome have been invited to sign up to one of the 64 places across two assessment days at the venue. Successful applicants will take the wheel of Caterham, Ginetta G56 and PalmerSport's own sports-

prototype machinery, and the top driver from each day will then progress to a shootout, which will include a funded ARDS test.

The competition is open to any PalmerSport customer aged over 25 and who has never held a race licence. It costs £1500+VAT to enter.

"I am really pleased to be able to offer the winner of the PalmerSport talent spotting programme a full season's drive in the Ginetta GT Academy," said Ginetta managing director Amy Tomlinson, who made her own race debut in the



A £100,000 prize Ginetta drive is up for grabs

series last year. "We are extremely passionate about helping people take that first step onto the motorsport ladder and the GT Academy is a superb place to start.

From racing in the GT Academy, the winner will be able to further develop their skills in a fun and competitive environment."

South African impressed en route
to WHT podium last year



Carrera Cup and United FF1600 for Walter Hayes Trophy ace Rackstraw

PORSCHE/UNITED FF1600

South African Andrew Rackstraw, who starred at last November's Walter Hayes Trophy, will contest a dual 2024 campaign in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB and United Formula Ford.

Rackstraw, who was third in last year's Global Touring Car championship (South Africa's premier series) has joined JTR for the Carrera Cup after testing with the squad in November. He will also contest non-clashing rounds of United FF1600 with KMR Sport, as well as the Festival and Hayes, where he impressed on his way to third overall via the progression and last-chance races last year.

"The test went super-well – I was quite comfortable in the car," said Rackstraw, whose tie-up with JTR has been assisted by fellow South African Jayde Kruger,

who won the 2014 British Formula Ford title with the team. "It felt like where I needed to be at this stage in my career."

The 22-year-old is targeting the Carrera Cup's Pro category title. "My goal is to try and win the championship," he said. "Obviously that will be very hard, but I can't afford to be learning because we don't have budget for many years ahead. I've never shied away from a challenge and that's why I'm so excited. It's so, so competitive – just talking about it gives me goosebumps!"

Having driven a variety of machinery in his homeland, Rackstraw is not concerned about switching between a GT and single-seater. "More track time at circuits I haven't been to is perfect," he said. "But still, the Walter Hayes and Brands Hatch Festival I want to win."

MARK PAULSON

DARYANANI TO FORTEC...

British Formula 4 racer Kai Daryanani has moved to Fortec Motorsport for his sophomore season in the series. The Indian finished 24th in last year's standings with Virtuosi, taking a best result of sixth, while he was also a race winner during a partial GB4 campaign. He is currently gaining further experience in the F4 UAE series. "We believe he has the ambition and motivation to develop as a young driver, and we are excited to work with him and watch his progression throughout the year," said Fortec's Oliver Dutton.

...AS TAYLOR JOINS FOR GB4

Fortec has also got a GB4 recruit this week with Australian Jack Taylor joining the squad after racing in the Indian Formula 4 series. He was also selected to take part in a Ferrari Driver Academy shootout. "It's a big move, coming from Australia, but that just shows how hard he is willing to work to follow his dreams," said Fortec's Oliver Dutton. "He's a young driver with lots of potential and it will be good to see him develop throughout the season."

LOLA MOULDS UP FOR SALE

A collection of original Lola moulds and various fibreglass panels is being auctioned online by W&H Peacock. The sale follows the liquidation of TW Mouldings, which bought all the items – including single-seater and sportscar parts – directly from Lola founder Eric Broadley in 1990. Bids can be submitted until 7 February.

EQUIPE DRIVERS SIGN UP

Equipe Classic Racing has been encouraged by the significant number of registrations it has already received for the 2024 season, including over 30 drivers signing up for its special 60th anniversary Lotus Elan 26R (below) race at Silverstone in June. "Five of our drivers are going out to build Elans for the race," said Equipe partner Rob Cull, who has also been impressed by nearly 50 drivers registering for the MG Cup for its first year within the club's portfolio.



Fiesta and GB4 racer Smith to Parker

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Former Fiesta Junior champion Sid Smith and ex-British GT frontrunner Lee Mowle are among Team Parker Racing's Porsche Carrera Cup GB drivers for this year.

Smith moved into single-seaters last season after winning the Fiesta title in 2022, and finished eighth in the GB4 standings. His switch to sportscars takes him to a team that his 2017 Le Mans class-winning father Rob drove

for in the Blancpain Endurance Series.

"It's a completely new challenge – it's always been a dream of mine to race GTs," said Smith Jr. "We wanted to do the Carrera Cup and Team Parker is the best team for that. We have that connection where my dad's done some racing with the team. He knows that they're lovely guys who take racing seriously."

Smith made his Porsche race debut at Portimao last weekend in the Sprint

Challenge Southern Europe. Mowle, who finished third in the 2015 British GT standings but stepped back from racing modern machinery over the past two years, was also in action in Portugal ahead of his Carrera Cup Am class bid.

Meanwhile, Hugo Ellis will continue at Team Parker after joining the squad partway through last year, and British GT4 frontrunner Seb Hopkins was also part of its Algarve line-up, twice topping the tiny Cayman division.

Terrestrial TV deal for BRC after six years

RALLYING

Highlights of the British Rally Championship will be shown on terrestrial television in the UK for the first time in six years this season. An hour-long programme will be shown at “prime time” on ITV4 after each of the six 2024 BRC events, alongside an end-of-year review show. Each of the highlights episodes will be repeated multiple times and be available on ITV streaming service ITVX. This comes as part of a revamp of the series after it has struggled with tiny entries in recent years, with its calendar overhauled to focus on UK mainland events in a bid to reduce costs. The programmes will be produced by governing body Motorsport UK in partnership with Globecast, which has provided coverage of a number of sporting events. “We are delighted to announce this groundbreaking return to mainstream television for the British Rally Championship,” said series manager Reece Tarren. “Our dedication to promoting the championship has ensured top-tier visibility



for both competitors and sponsors. “This sensational partnership with ITV4 and ITVX opens up a whole new audience for the series, allowing almost every home in the country to watch the championship drama unfold from the comfort of their sofa, captivating rally fans old and new.” Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers added: “Like many fans of rally, I recall when all the drama and excitement from

the heroes of the BRC was beamed to our homes week in week out. Motorsport UK, as custodians of the BRC and rally in the UK, take seriously our obligation to promote rally as a discipline and inspire the next generation of talent into the sport. “Working in partnership with ITV and securing prime time payout is a key part of our strategy to maximise the visibility of the BRC and create a halo for the sport in the UK.”

Tweaks for Masters series as pre-2015 GT3s eligible



GT TROPHY Masters Historic Racing has announced several tweaks to its GT Trophy, including the introduction of pre-2015 GT3 machines. The modern series was introduced last season and was initially created as a place for previous-generation GT4 cars to compete alongside older one-make ‘Cup’ machinery, such as Lamborghinis from the Super Trofeo series. Masters is now widening the category’s reach in a bid to boost grid numbers. As well as admitting GT3 cars, it is extending

eligibility criteria to include Cup cars dating back to 1999 so that it incorporates the Porsche 996 Cup and Ferrari 360 Challenge. A Balance of Performance-style system is also being introduced to achieve greater parity, while there will be increased track time.

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One-make series the aim for creators of MEV kit car in future

750MC

Kit car manufacturer MEV is targeting a one-make championship for its Mazda MX-5-based cars, with the latest model hitting the track this year.

The MEV Exocet R Mk3, based on the MX-5 Mk3, is set to debut in the 750 Motor Club's Sport Specials Championship, joining Mk1 versions in the MEV-dedicated Class C. But MEV directors Stewart and Sylvia Mutch, who each compete themselves, aim to launch their one-make series – initially running alongside Sport Specials – next year.

"The goal for this year is to get the Mk3 on track, blueprint it and turn that into a standard across the board," said Stewart Mutch, who has been assisted by MX-5 ace

Ben Short with testing and development.

"We've got a good relationship with 750MC, and what I would like to do is take it away from a load of other kit cars and make it our own one-make.

"What we found with the Exocets that are racing is, because we are so close together and looking like we're having a lot of fun, the cameras seem to gravitate towards us. It's a different concept from your typical Lotus 7-style car, going to the spaceframe chassis, and I think it will be a lot more appealing for a lot more people."

MEV's new rotary-engined Exocet RX, based on the Mazda RX-8, could also race later this year. Marque regular David Hughes is targeting an October debut at Silverstone's six-hour Birkett Relay race.

MARK PAULSON

NEW HERITAGE DIRECTOR

Jonathan Kennard has been appointed as heritage director at Williams Racing, 16 years after serving as a test driver with the Formula 1 team. Williams Heritage was created in 2014 to manage, preserve and celebrate a fleet of cars that date back to 1978, when the team began as a constructor. Kennard's professional racing career included a victory in British F3, and competing in the Le Mans 24 Hours, GT1 World Championship and Historic F1. "My extensive involvement in racing, both as a driver and in historics, has prepared me well for this role," he said.

RENNISON TO RETURN

Ex-rallycross star Mark Rennison will drive a Group B Ford RS200 at the brand-new Lydden Legend Festival. Rennison became the youngest-ever British Rallycross champion in 1987 at the age of 23, won it again in 1988, was the first to win the title in a Group B car, and is still the only driver to win every round in a campaign. The event takes place on 19-21 July. "I can't remember the last time I drove a top rallycross car – it's been a long time," he said.

CELEBRATION FOR VATANEN

The achievements of Ari Vatanen were celebrated in Northern Ireland last week when £25,000 was presented to the 1981 World Rally champion to support a school in Nairobi in Kenya, while further on-the-night donations were gathered for the Southern Area Hospice. Finnish legend Vatanen spoke of how Ireland was an important part of his career and reflected on everything from the Pikes Peak movie *Climb Dance*, to a near-fatal accident in Argentina in 1985 with Peugeot.

All-female driver line-up set to tackle Formula Ford

CLASSIC FF1600

Teenaged sisters Grace and Murron Parkington, along with Isla MacKenzie, will team up to compete in the Classic Formula Ford 1600 Championship in a three-car team this year.

The trio will race three pre-1981 Crossles from Ballpark Motorsport, the team headed by Ian Parkington, father of Murron and Grace, who are currently 15 and 16 years old.

Parkington has extensive experience as a racer and race engineer over more than two decades. The cars will be based at Ballpark Engineering in Lancashire. "I'm delighted that Grace and Murron want to go racing," he said. "It's a brilliant sport and it has given me so much pleasure and excitement over the years.

"All of the girls support the Women in Motorsport initiative, and we hope to use the team as

a platform to encourage more young females to consider motorsport, either as a hobby or as a full-time career."

The team will use three cars with famous histories, including the Crossle 25F raced by Tiff Needell, the Crossle 32F used by Eddie Irvine, and Julian Bailey's Crossle 40F.

The Classic FF1600 season starts at Snetterton in April, the first of six planned meetings.

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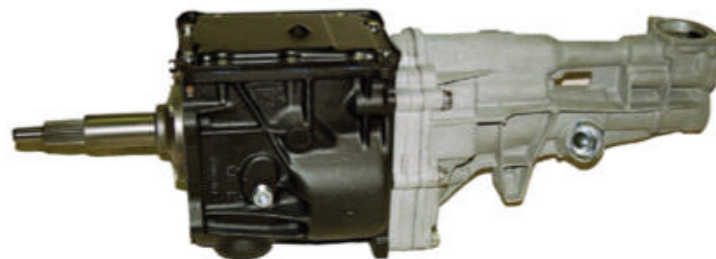
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MX-5 star Foden among influx to Audi TT category

BRSCC

Mazda MX-5 champion Steve Foden will remain with Rob Boston Racing as he is one of 41 drivers to have already registered for the Audi TT Cup ahead of the British Racing & Sports Car Club category's first year with championship status.

Foden, whose dominant 2023 title-winning campaign was the culmination of a seven-year spell in MX-5 Mk1 machinery, will be joined in a three-car team by Club Enduro and Britcar Trophy frontrunner Will Stacey and series regular Morgan Wroot.

"It was actually Dave Percy from Urban Design & Consult, our main sponsor, who suggested it," said Foden, who will drive

the ex-Paul Maguire car, having tested a different TT at Donington Park before Christmas. "It's 275bhp, it's got a rear-wing element – it looks a little bit like a mini touring car. It's got the aero, it's got the [turbo] boost, it's got a semi-slick, and I was just massively impressed with the speed of it. My driving skills could probably do with a bit of front-wheel-drive experience as well, to develop me as a driver.

"It's going to be a learning year. If I can come away with one podium, I'd consider that a 'win', given how many years we've been in rear-wheel drive. Anything more than that would be a bonus."

Other names switching to the TCR UK support category include Legends racer Charlie Budd, former MG Trophy

frontrunner Paul Luti and 2022 Civic Cup champion Matt Luff, who reunites with Area Motorsport after a year in the Fiesta ST240 championship.

A total of 41 drivers have already registered for the Audi contest, including 34 signing up to the Brands Hatch opener within a few days of entries opening. BRSCC chairman Peter Daly believes promoting the category at the club's Driven by Racing event at Silverstone last November has helped generate interest, while adding the championship status has also helped tempt drivers in.

"The cars are very reliable with a proven engine and gearbox, and the interest's been great," he said. "We've been trying over the last few years to have a pathway so people can join in and do Mazdas and go to this step. We believe these cars could be as popular as the MX-5s have been."

**MARK PAULSON &
STEPHEN LICKORISH**

UWR Morgan set to race in Clubsport Trophy

BRSCC

The University of Wolverhampton Racing outfit is set to switch its Morgan racing programme to the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Clubsport Trophy series this year.

Two cars provided by the Morgan Motor Company were converted into racing specification by UWR students and campaigned in the Morgan Challenge. Last year, the effort was realigned from Morgan's marketing programme to development and engineering, where

graduates are more likely to be employed.

Focusing on a single CX +4, team manager and driver Shane Kelly took four overall wins and the class title. The next step is to develop the car further, taking advantage of Clubsport's power-to-weight-based regulations.

"With the Challenge, we couldn't really do much more," explained Kelly. "We won Class 2. Looking at the regulations, as a new [modern] car, we found the regulations were hampering us really.

"With Clubsport, we



can lower the car, we can tweak a few things. And there's 45 cars on the grid, and we'll probably be the only Morgan, so we'll stick out like a sore thumb, which will be great."

UWR will also continue to field its Praga R1 in the Zeo Prototype series, where Jessica Hawkins and Kelly scored an overall victory and three class wins last year.

MARK PAULSON

Ex-British GT
racer Wallis has
selected JTR as his
team after being
chosen as new
Junior



HOW PORSCHÉ IS PREPARING ITS NEW JUNIOR FOR THE BIG STAGE

James Wallis has some sizeable footsteps to follow in as the next Porsche Carrera Cup GB Junior, having impressed in a gruelling selection process

STEPHEN LICKORISH

PHOTOGRAPHY PORSCHÉ

The list just keeps getting longer. Josh Webster, Charlie Eastwood, Dan Harper, Harry King and now Adam Smalley have all won the Porsche Carrera Cup GB championship during their two seasons as the Porsche GB Junior. That run of success proves that Porsche is pretty good at picking out stars of the future and, at the end of last year, it was time for the next Junior to be chosen.

Nothing is left to chance when it comes to the meticulous process of selecting the new Junior, but it proved to be a particularly tricky decision this time around thanks to the quality of the drivers applying. Even before getting down to the final four, who took part in an intense shootout at Silverstone at the start of November, some notable drivers had to be eliminated from the running – including the likes of GB3 race winner Matthew Rees and GB4 dominator Tom Mills. This left Porsche Sprint Challenge GB champion Joe Warhurst, British GT contenders James Wallis and Josh Rowledge, also the 2022 Ginetta Junior conqueror, and European GT4 frontrunner Tom Edgar as the finalists. But, heading to Silverstone, there was no clear favourite for the coveted prize, worth £85,000 per year towards the Junior's Carrera Cup budget along with a host of money-can't-buy experiences and support from Porsche.

As with all of the final four, Wallis wanted to be as prepared as possible for each element of the selection process. And this included the interview with members of the Carrera Cup organising team that helped whittle down the 12-strong shortlist to the four who would make the final. The 18-year-old enlisted the help of his school headmaster to practice the scenario of being interviewed in slightly intimidating circumstances. Then, after making the cut, he sampled the current Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car to get his head around the machine, which contrasts greatly to the Mercedes-AMG GT3 with which he scored a best result of sixth in British GT last year. "I had never driven a car without ABS, so it was different to me," admits Wallis, who was confident of being in a strong position in terms of the fitness assessments. "I'm quite active with my sport outside of racing and I'm a big hockey player



Wallis prepared as much as he could for the shootout

“What we want to see is a driver's progress – we're not looking for the finished article”

and I did the England Hockey pathway for a while.”

And his preparation even extended to some media training earlier in the year. “Before I entered the scholarship, I did half a day with Louise Goodman in June and it worked super well that she was interviewing on the shootout day,” says Wallis. “Everything fell into place!”

But, for all his preparation, one element that always remains a variable for the shootout is the weather. And that November day proved to be very wet, cold and miserable. Yet that was just what Wallis wanted. When he previously tested the Porsche, it was also in wet conditions and he therefore had an idea of what to expect, even if the risk of making a costly mistake was far higher.

The constantly changing conditions did not just pose a challenge for the drivers either, it also complicated matters for those doing the assessing. “One pair had worse conditions than the other but we're confident that we're able to assess them all individually on their merits,” explains Porsche GB motorsport manager James MacNaughton. “We have two cars on the day with identical set-ups. Each car has its own mechanic, engineer and driver coach but each car is also driven by each driver coach before they go out. Although all four drivers didn't have the same conditions, we are able to directly compare two drivers with each other.

“We're not looking at [outright] lap times because we don't have judges of fact to judge track limits. What we want to see is a driver's progress – we're not looking for the finished article, we're looking for someone that can take advice.” >>



Rain added another variable to the mix



However, with just two cars circulating at a time, it meant the circuit was slow to dry even when the rain did stop falling. But the Porsche engineers did not alter the run plan for the conditions, it remained exactly the same, just wet weather rubber was used instead. This in turn gave a different way of looking at the drivers' skills. The wets do not have a peak performance like dry tyres do, so a driver could improve throughout a new-tyre run, rather than the best time coming early on before the tyres started to wear. This meant the finalists had to stay focused at all times.

And that did not just apply to when they were on track. The day began at around 0700 when body composition tests were conducted, and assessments continued over the next 10 hours. Goodman's wide-ranging media session included what proved to be a particularly tough question about Porsche's Formula E drivers, while a plethora of fitness tests were carried out, including the brutal treadmill running of the VO2 max, alongside numerous different push-ups/planks and grip assessments. The finalists were also examined in another way as they were psychometrically profiled to ensure they have the right temperament and character

“Nick Tandy has so much experience of those cars and a background in Ministox and that clicked with me”

to succeed on and off the track.

With so much data and information to peruse, and an evenly matched quartet of drivers under the microscope, it's no wonder the judging panel had a difficult task on their hands. “It was very competitive – the four drivers that were there, they all gave it absolutely everything,” says MacNaughton. “Each one of them had strengths and weaknesses, and the driving element was very good from all of them. At the end of the day, all the respected experts in each field came together and gave me their debrief on how each candidate had performed and then I always ask them to rank the finalists from first to fourth and they all found that quite difficult this year.” But, in the end, it was Wallis who emerged as a “clear



HOW STUTTGART'S FINEST ARE THRIVING IN BRITAIN

New Porsche Carrera Cup GB Junior James Wallis will clearly have a fight on his hands to enjoy success in the series this year as a wealth of top drivers are queueing up to also join the grid. Among the most interesting of those confirmed so far is perhaps British Touring Car race winner Dan Lloyd, who is returning to the championship having been the scholar himself over a decade ago and is part of an influx of BTCC competitors. It is not just new drivers – Porsche GB motorsport manager James MacNaughton says at least one new team is now due to be participating, too.

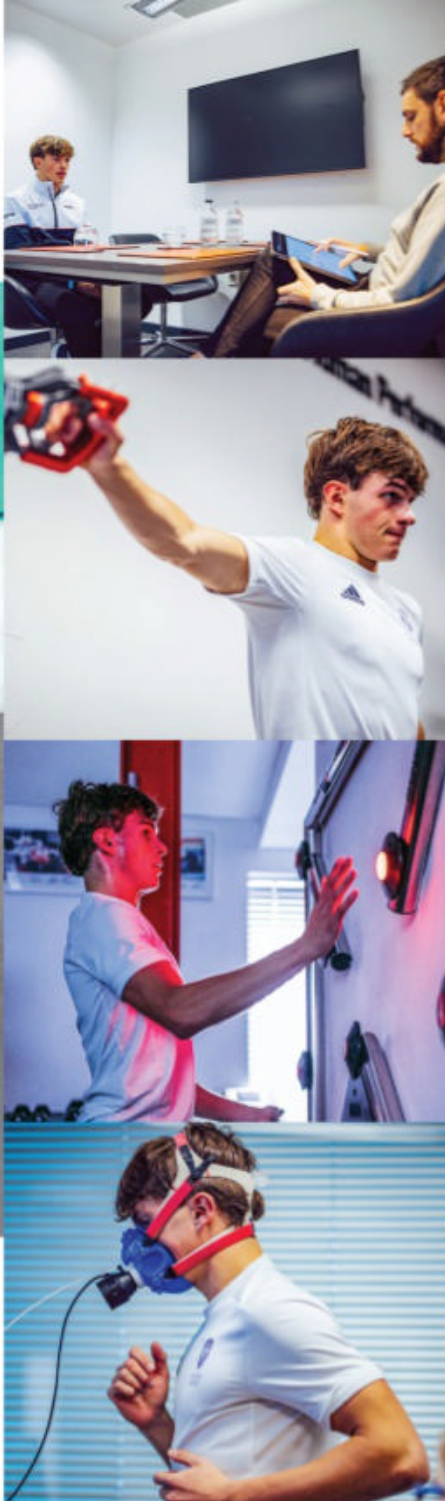
But the popularity of the Carrera Cup GB is just one success story for Porsche in the UK. Taking a wider view of the company, it sold a record number

of road cars here last year – despite the somewhat gloomy economic situation – a figure that beat Porsche's German home market for the first time.

Yet, MacNaughton is not taking anything for granted and is constantly looking at improving Porsche GB's motorsport offering. For example, it is tweaking the rules in the Carrera Cup's Am class for this year to enable drivers to use ABS for the first time in a bid to make the championship a little less daunting for gentleman drivers. A new hospitality structure is also set to be a major talking point. The modular construction will enable Carrera Cup and Sprint Challenge drivers, at the BTCC rounds where both are competing, to all congregate in the same place. “It's going to look like something from a



Wallis impressed in a range of driving, psychometric and fitness tests at Silverstone



winner” and outgoing Junior Smalley had the task of revealing Wallis as the chosen one by reading his name out of the golden envelope at Porsche’s Night of Motorsport awards event.

Three months have now passed since that announcement – and another three remain until the Carrera Cup GB campaign begins – but plenty of work has been going on behind the scenes to prepare Wallis for the season ahead. One of the first decisions he had to make was which team to run with – and, given the previous success of Juniors, he was flooded with offers.

“It’s a really important decision – you can’t over-estimate what a difference it can make,” says MacNaughton. “That’s why the decision is so difficult, there’s a lot of good teams there. They’re all ever so slightly different in the way they approach doing their job, so he really can choose what he feels is best for him.”

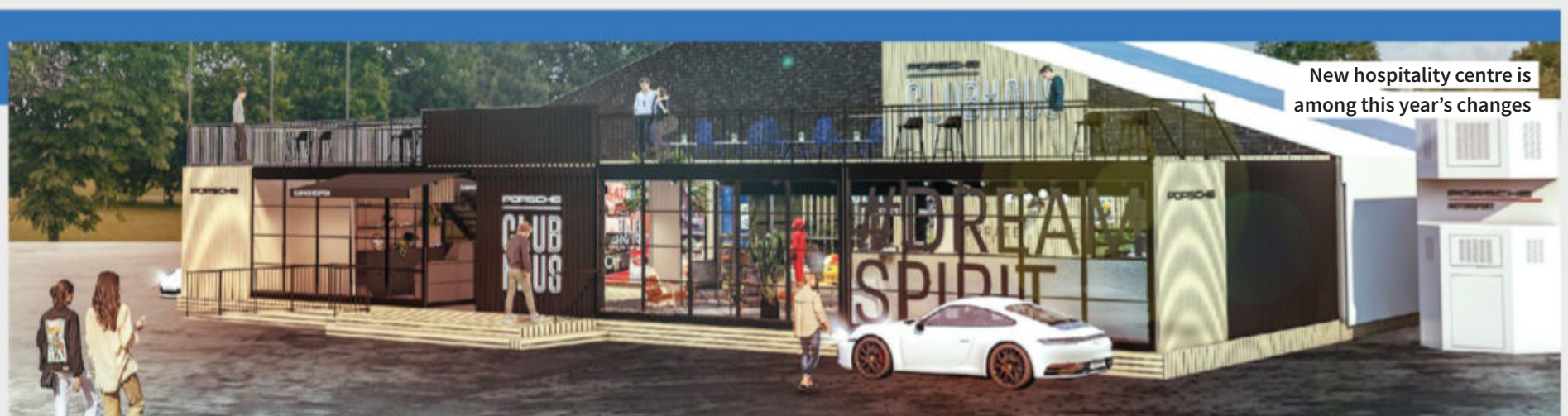
After testing with Porsche factory driver Nick Tandy’s JTR squad at Snetterton late last year, Wallis decided that was his preferred choice, the team having previously enjoyed success with Harper

in 2019. “I just felt as if JTR is Porsche only [it does not run cars in other categories] and Nick having so much experience around those cars,” says Wallis of the reasoning behind his decision. But there was another factor that also played a part. Prior to his British GT and GT Cup exploits, Wallis began his racing career on the short ovals in Ministox – just like Tandy. “Nick has got a background in Ministox and that just clicked with me, and I really like how it’s a family team,” Wallis adds.

Team chosen (and retro livery selected, which he thinks will be a “crowd favourite”), Wallis is now being truly immersed in the Porsche world as he will also be representing the brand off the track. “We put him on a course called ‘Welcome to Porsche’ at the Experience Centre and that’s a course any new Porsche employee goes on,” explains MacNaughton. “Everyone gets to drive all of the road cars – some on the road, some on the handling track. He drove the Taycan, the Panamera, the Cayenne, the Macan, the 911 and the 718 on that day. There’s also a classroom element to give people a background and understanding of the history and heritage of Porsche and not just from motorsport. We feel it’s very important James understands the brand very well as he’s a brand ambassador for the next two years.”

He has also been taking advantage of the facilities at the Porsche Human Performance Centre to complement his school sport. “I’ve spent six or seven days up there already,” says Wallis. “It’s good, and they give you a nutrition, fitness and hydration plan.”

But things became that little bit more real last weekend, when Wallis made his Porsche race debut and contested the Sprint Challenge Middle Eastern series in Abu Dhabi. Given all of his limited running so far has been in the wet, he chose this to get some dry experience at the wheel of a car from top outfit Lechner Racing. A best result of fifth was achieved, but more important was the learning he banked. That was just another vital step on Wallis’s Porsche journey and, with a star cast of rivals in the Carrera Cup GB assembling, he knows he faces a “fierce” battle to ensure his name is another added to the list of title-winning Juniors. ✱



New hospitality centre is among this year’s changes

film set has landed in the paddock!” laughs MacNaughton.

And speaking of the Sprint Challenge, it is a significant year for the Cayman category as well. The upgraded RS version of the 718 Cayman GT4

Clubsport is being introduced and this represents a major step forward in performance. With the older model also still being allowed, another big increase in grid sizes could be on the cards to follow the 63% rise in 2023, when the championship made the

full-time move onto the BTCC support bill. And, with its season not beginning until late May to accommodate the delivery schedule for the new machinery, there is still plenty of time for more intriguing announcements.

FINISHING STRAIGHT



SUTTON

Perspectives on Audi's, and one Audi's, place in sportscar history

BOOK REVIEWS

AUDI R8: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF R8-405

Ian Wagstaff, RRP £69

AUDI AT LE MANS

Lars Krone & Alexander von Wegner, RRP €59

This was the year that Audi was meant to make its return to the pinnacle of the sportscar racing. But its LMDh programme was canned before the car put its wheels on the race track. Funny, then, that now two books should appear about the German manufacturer's successes at the Le Mans 24 Hours and beyond.

Works on other great sports-racing cars, Porsche's 917 and its 956/962 Group C and IMSA GTP design among them, are two a penny. Yet Audi's line of ultra-successful



prototypes, which won Le Mans no fewer than 13 times, has been largely ignored. That has been put right to some extent with the publication of Ian Wagstaff's *Audi R8: The Autobiography of R8-405* and *Audi at Le Mans* by Lars Krone and Alexander von Wegner.

Neither of these two very different works are what the sportscar world has been waiting for, however. Wagstaff's contribution, which follows his modest 2011 work on the R8 in Veloce's WSC Greats series, is one of Porter Press's run of 'Great Car' books focused on a particular chassis (with a financial contribution from the owner thereof). Krone and von Wagner cover the full scope of Audi's prototype programme from the R8R and R8C that took it to Le Mans for the first time in 1999 through the all-conquering R8 and on to

the various turbodiesels to bear the R18 name that took the marque up to its hasty departure from the LMP1 division at the end of 2016. It is, however, a semi-official work in the Audi Tradition series; Krone and von Wegner work for the Speedpool communications agency that has a long-standing involvement in Audi's motorsport programmes.

Wagstaff's book offers little insight into the gestation of the R8, just 12 pages to be precise. But just in case you'd forgotten what was happening at the turn of the new millennium when the R8 was beginning its competition career, there are six pages on the events in the real world (think George W Bush and Dr Harold Shipman) and other sporting realms (Sir Steve Redgrave and Tiger Woods).

You do get a detailed history of #405's competition history, from its second place on debut at Le Mans in 2000 with Allan McNish, Stephane Ortelli and Laurent Aiello through its campaign with Emanuele Pirro and Frank Biela in the second half of that year's American Le Mans Series, before it became the first R8 to be fielded by Champion Racing the following season. Even so its career is done and dusted by the time the book is just over halfway done.



McNish (with
Ortelli and Aiello)
was runner-up at
Le Mans in 2000

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Autosport's top 10 Benetton drivers

Italian fashion house Benetton was officially a Formula 1 constructor for 16 years between 1986 and 2001. During those years a host of big-name drivers passed through Team Witney/Team Enstone. Some were on the way up... others were heading in the other direction. What can't be denied is the impact that this team had on F1 and the legacy it's left behind. Autosport's Chief Editor Kevin Turner is joined by Damien Smith, author of *Benetton: Rebels of Formula 1*, to rank our top 10 Benetton drivers of all time.



Motorsport boss Ullrich was initially lukewarm, it's claimed, about idea of racing at Le Mans

There are some nuggets, such as the story of the wheelbearing issues faced by Audi on the R8's Le Mans debut. But the book is rounded out by over-blown profiles of each driver to race #405, some admittedly lovely studio shots of the thing and details of the car's career in the historic ranks.

Audi at Le Mans does have some filler – including a contribution from your writer as someone who was there to witness Audi's successes – but it does offer a deep delve into the origins of Audi's long-running sportscar programme. It offers a real insight and there are previously-unseen photos of early wind tunnel models. Ditto for the stillborn 2017 R18.

An official book it may be – and you

do get a bit of PR puff about technology transfer from racing to the road – but it is warts-and-all in places. It reveals, for example, that when company chairman Franz-Josef Paefgen raised the idea of going to Le Mans, it wasn't met with enthusiasm by Audi Sport boss Wolfgang Ullrich. And that nearly 20 years on, he was caught by surprise when his board decided to axe the LMP1 programme.

Audi at Le Mans isn't an easy read: English isn't the first language of either of the authors and the text is littered with needless capital letters. But on the information contained within its covers, it outscores *Audi R8: The Autobiography of R8-405* heavily.

GARY WATKINS

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Formula Regional Middle East

Round 3/5

Dubai Autodrome, Dubai

3-4 February

Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 0925, 1255, Sun 0625

Toyota Formula Regional Oceania

Round 3/5

Hampton Downs, New Zealand

3-4 February

Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 0300, 2300 Sun 0300

Asian Le Mans Series

Round 2/3

Dubai Autodrome, Dubai

4 February

Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sun 0830



Asian Le Mans Series

FINISHING STRAIGHT





FINISHING STRAIGHT

FROM THE ARCHIVE

The Al Holbert/Chip Robinson Porsche 962 leads the 74-car field away for the formation laps of the 1987 Sebring 12 Hours. Come the green flag, the #16 Dyson-run 962 shared by Price Cobb and Vern Schuppan grabbed a fleeting advantage, but once the #14 Holbert Racing car took charge it led the race for 10 hours before being demoted by a broken turbo behind the #86 Bayside Disposal Racing 962 of Jochen Mass and Bobby Rahal, which limped to the flag nursing a misfire. In a plucky third place was the short-lived, financed-on-a-wing-and-a-prayer Primus Motorsport squad's 962 (somewhat obscured in this image, lined up in sixth), shared by Chris Kneifel, Elliot Forbes-Robinson and Brian Redman – turn the page to read who the British sportscar great picks as his favourite team-mate.



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Jacky Ickx

Jacky Ickx is a Le Mans legend and Ferrari Formula 1 hero, but to have British sportscar lionheart Brian Redman acknowledge him as his favourite team-mate means a lot.

The story of their partnership began when they teamed up for the Kyalami 9 Hours at the end of 1967, winning by the handsome margin of 13 laps in a JW Automotive Mirage-Ford M1.

That led to Redman joining Ickx in a JWA Ford GT40 for much of 1968, when the Lancastrian notched the first of his four manufacturers' titles (he later won two with Porsche and another with Ferrari) in what is today known as the World Endurance Championship. Although he'd later become renowned for his partnership at Porsche with Jo Siffert – “another great, brilliant driver” – Redman regards Ickx as his most influential team-mate.

“I recall my first time driving at Daytona,” says Redman, “I just couldn't go flat on the banking, no shame, my foot kept twitching throughout practice. I asked Jacky if he was driving flat onto the banking, and to be honest... ‘Yes, Brian,’ he replies in a deadpan manner, ‘Of course I'm going flat.’”

They won the 1968 BOAC 500 together at Brands Hatch, beating the Gerhard Mitter/Ludovico Scarfiotti Porsche 907 by 22 seconds, but it was their success in the Spa 1000Km later that year that is



PHIPPS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

ingrained as one of Redman's favourite moments in his long racing career.

“The best first lap that I ever saw was in Spa in the rain,” he declares. “Yes, it was Jacky's home circuit and he'd won the saloon race in the morning in a Mustang also when it was pouring down. But he came past the pits in our GT40, through Eau Rouge, up the hill, gone. And it all went quiet. In the pits, we assumed there'd been a big accident that had held the rest of the field up. Then the second-placed car came past, driven by a very well-renowned wet-weather driver in a Porsche, and he was 38s behind. In one racing lap! That was amazing.”

They won by a lap. And there were further successes together at Ferrari in 1972-73. To this day, they remain firm friends and reunite at historic racing events from time to time.

CHARLES BRADLEY



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

The big questions of F1 2024

KARUN CHANDHOK ON THE KEY TOPICS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD



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