F1 driver market Is Sainz really going to Audi?

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CHINESE GP

Norris stars as Verstappen wins again

McLaren ace splits the Red Bulls on F1's return to Shanghai





PLUS Toyota beats Porsche and Ferrari in Imola drama



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A feast of motorsport even if F1 again proved predictable

A dramatic few moments that removed leading contenders, a rain shower that changed the course of the event, and a masterclass from one of the all-time greats. Last weekend's motorsport featured all of the above – and that's before we get on to Formula 1's return to China.

As Tom Howard describes on page 40, a three-way contest for Croatia Rally honours was settled in the space of just a few minutes, World Rally legend Sebastien Ogier emerging victorious.

Ferrari qualified 1-2-3 for the World Endurance Championship encounter at Imola (above) but made the wrong calls amid changeable conditions. Gary Watkins was there to see Toyota play all its cards correctly to win (p30), while James Newbold reports on how the same showers impacted the hard-fought LMGT3 battle (p36).

Scott Dixon has proved his class *many* times over the past two decades, but even his main IndyCar rivals were impressed with how he maintained such strong pace at Long Beach while saving fuel (p46).

There should be more entertainment this weekend, with the British Touring Car Championship kicking off Donington Park. Marcus Simmons talks to Colin Turkington about his renewed efforts to defeat fellow four-time champion Ash Sutton on p54, and picks out the other stories to look out for this season (p58), while Stephen Lickorish is your guide to the supporting cast (p62).

Oh yes, and the 2024 Chinese Grand Prix. Well, the winner was far more predictable than any of the above, but kudos to Lando Norris and McLaren for splitting the Red Bulls (p14)...







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PIT & PADDOCK

- 4 Red Bull: Sainz has big Audi offer
- 6 Formula 1 points to be tweaked
- 8 FIA denies conflict with WRC teams
- 11 Opinion: Alex Kalinauckas
- 12 Guest column: Tom Chilton
- **13** Feedback: your letters

RACE CENTRE

- 14 Chinese GP report and analysis
- **30** WEC: Toyota steals Ferrari's race
- **40** Ogier takes late Croatia victory
- **46** Dixon's Long Beach IndyCar miracle
- **50** World of Sport: IMSA; TCR World Tour; Australian Supercars; NASCAR Cup

BTCC SEASON PREVIEW

- 54 Turkington's renewed quest for fifth title
- 58 Stories to watch this season
- **62** The best of the TOCA supports

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 73 Obituary: Alan Minshaw
- **74** Mini Challenge to run guest car
- **76** Hesketh reunion for special anniversary
- 78 Antipodean F5000s could race in UK
- **79** National reports: Knockhill; Donington Park; Silverstone; Snetterton

FINISHING STRAIGHT

- **86** What's on this week
- 88 From the archive: 1972 Monza 1000Km
- 90 My favourite car: Gordon Shedden

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PIT + PADDOCK

Red Bull won't match 'lucrative' Sainz Audi offer

FORMULA 1

Fernando Alonso's contract renewal at Aston Martin has appeared to kick Formula 1's silly season into another gear, with the focus now shifting to fellow Spaniard Carlos Sainz.

Aston Martin could have been a possible avenue for the on-the-move Ferrari star. But with Alonso staying put, that means the options are narrowing for him. Sainz is understood to have had a firm offer from Audi on the table for some time, but has also been exploring other options as Red Bull mulls over whether to renew Sergio Perez's expiring deal or make a change in the seat alongside Max Verstappen.

Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko confirmed that the squad has been holding talks with Sainz regarding a possible return to its fold, but revealed that Audi has made a sizeable offer for his services. "We're talking to him, he's having his strongest season in F1, but he has a very lucrative offer from Audi that we can't match or beat," Marko told the Austrian newspaper *Kleine Zeitung*. "We know him from the Toro Rosso days, even back then he drove with Max [in 2015 and early 2016]. But it really hurt him back then when we backed Verstappen at Red Bull and not him."

Marko is referring to Red Bull's decision to promote Verstappen to the main team rather than Sainz, who then left for Renault in 2017. Both drivers' families also endured strained relations at Toro Rosso that impacted the team's atmosphere.

Perez's improved displays in 2024, with three runner-up spots to Verstappen across the first five races, have improved the Mexican's chances of staying on board. Team boss Christian Horner noted that the 34-year-old seems "more relaxed" this season now that he is no longer focused on Verstappen's performances as opposed to his futile entertaining of a title bid at the start of 2023.

With RB's Daniel Ricciardo enduring a difficult start to 2024 and team-mate Yuki Tsunoda seemingly not on Horner's radar, the momentum has started shifting back towards Perez staying put. But while Perez has hinted at a quick resolution, Horner said that the team won't be rushed into a decision on its 2025 driver line-up.

"Not very [close], I'm afraid," he said at last weekend's Chinese Grand Prix. "It's incredible that we're at race five and there's so much talk already about drivers for next year. We're in a situation where we're very happy with our two drivers, but we don't need to make a final decision about the line-up until much later in the year. Checo has been driving exceptionally well so far this season.





Of course, he would like to make an announcement tomorrow, when we as a team aren't in a particular rush. We just want to make sure that the level of consistency that Checo started with this season maintains. And in due course, we'll evaluate those options."

While Red Bull's behind-the-scenes power struggles appear to be locked into a holding pattern for now, Mercedes chief Toto Wolff still seems to entertain the idea of Verstappen leaving the squad as a result, and remains first in line to snap up the Dutchman. And while Wolff admitted that Verstappen leaving Red Bull for the underperforming Mercedes in 2025 would not make much sense, the Austrian felt that the Silver Arrows would become a much more attractive proposition for the 2026 regulations shift.

"If I was Max, I would stay at Red Bull in 2025," Wolff conceded. "But I am not Max. It is the quickest car, but there are other factors. He is the one that is going to trigger more dominoes to fall afterwards. Everybody is waiting on what he is going to do."

Horner appeared bemused when told that Wolff was continuing to court Verstappen, who has a contract until 2028 but is understood to have certain exit clauses if key members of the team leave, including Marko. "I don't think Toto's problems are his drivers," Horner snapped back. "He's probably got other elements that he needs to be focusing on rather than focusing on drivers that are unavailable. Have you spoken to Max about this? Because if you speak to Max, it's not about pieces of paper at the end of the day. We know that he has a contract to the end of 2028. It's about how he feels in the team, the relationship he has in the team and the way he's performing."

FILIP CLEEREN



Antonelli completes first Merc F1 test

FORMULA 1

Mercedes protege Andrea Kimi Antonelli has completed his maiden Formula 1 test at the Red Bull Ring in the 2021 W12.

Antonelli, who is competing in Formula 2 with Prema Racing this season, is being readied by Mercedes with a view to potentially replacing Ferrari-bound Lewis Hamilton in 2025. The 17-year-old Italian is set for a rigorous testing programme in two-year-old Mercedes machinery at a

variety of European circuits.

Antonelli's run-out in Austria (above), in which he completed 500 kilometres over two days, was an acclimatisation test before he is thrown into the Brackley squad's more relevant but flawed 2022 ground-effect car, which is trickier to drive.

"It's been an incredible experience," said Antonelli. "It was great to feel the power and downforce. I loved every second of it. It was really good fun and I want to thank all the team for their hard work."

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff indicated that the team's likely inability to fight for world championships in 2025 could boost the cause of Antonelli, who could gain experience without the pressure of racing for wins.

Antonelli will return to F2 action at Imola next month. He sits ninth in the standings in his rookie season alongside Prema team-mate Ollie Bearman, who starred on his F1 race debut in Jeddah with Ferrari.

FILIP CLEEREN



Bid to add video ruling on jumped starts

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 teams and bosses are to discuss a change to the jumped-start rules in a bid to tidy up a grey area.

The definition of a jumped start is entirely based on whether any movement is detected by FIA-supplied transponders before the start signal is given. There have been several occasions where it has appeared that cars did move before the red lights went out but were not sanctioned because the sensors did not detect it, most recently Lando Norris in the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

The Norris incident triggered the debate in recent weeks about whether the regulations should be updated, with



changes to be discussed at this week's F1 Commission. One option is to include video evidence in addition to the current sensors. It is understood that if the F1 Commission hits a level of eight of the 10 teams backing it beyond the FIA and FOM, then the rule tweak could come into force

as early as next week's Miami GP.

Sources suggest that not all teams are in favour, with some concerned about subjectivity. Instead, they believe that efforts should be focused upon improving the sensitivity and accuracy of the sensors.

JONATHAN NOBLE

Toyota eyes third car, but not until 2026

WEC

Toyota is evaluating an expansion of its presence in the World Endurance Championship – and not just for the Le Mans 24 Hours.

The Japanese manufacturer has revealed that an additional GR010 HYBRID Le Mans Hypercar, run under a different banner to the two Toyota Gazoo Racing factory entries as per series rules, is already under discussion for a full championship campaign. But it wouldn't happen until 2026. It is already too late to press the button on an extra car for next season.

"We see what Ferrari is doing with its customer or satellite car, and we like that," said Toyota race director Rob Leupen. "Clearly running an extra car gives you more possibilities, so it is is something we are looking into. We are reviewing it."

But Leupen stressed that it is already too late to make the decision for next year. "If we were going to do it next year, we would have had to have made the decision already, and at the moment nothing is decided," he explained. "It cannot be a short-term decision because we know what the lead times for all the components would be in the current circumstances."

Leupen explained that if the decision was made to have an extra GR010 on the grid, he favours going the Ferrari route. AF Corse, the factory team, also runs the third car driven by works drivers Yifei Ye and Robert Shwartzman as well as Robert Kubica on what is officially a customer basis. That would mean the car being run in-house from the WEC team's Cologne HQ.

Asked whether there would be room for an additional Toyota with a



continued expansion of the Hypercar field for next year, when it looks certain that manufacturer teams will have to field two cars, Leupen pointed to Ferrari and Porsche. The German manufacturer has the largest full-season presence in Hypercar with the two Porsche Penske Motorsport factory 963 LMDhs, plus customer teams Jota and Proton Competition running

three between them. "How many cars does Porsche run? How many cars does Ferrari run?" he asked. "So why should we not run three?"

The last time Toyota ran more than two cars came in 2017 when it entered an additional TS050 HYBRID LMP1 for Le Mans and, by way of preparation, the Spa 6 Hours WEC round the month before.

GARY WATKINS

Changes to F1 points system to be put to vote

FORMULA 1

A proposal to change Formula 1's points system looks on course to get the support it needs to go through, with top teams making clear that they will not block it.

As exclusively revealed by autosport.com ahead of last weekend's Chinese Grand Prix, F1, its teams and the FIA are to discuss a revision at a meeting of the F1 Commission this week to offer rewards down to 12th place for 2025. It comes amid concerns that the effective current lock-out of the top 10 positions by the leading five teams leaves so few opportunities for the midfield sqiads to score.

The current allocation of points for the top seven positions will remain unchanged, but eighth to 12th would score 5-4-3-2-1. This means that it should offer little



impact to the leading teams and the points-based entry fee they must pay to the FIA each year. For the proposal to be implemented for 2025, it will need to earn a simple majority support from the teams as well as the FIA and FOM.

Ferrari boss Fred Vasseur said: "I'm not against. And coming from Alfa Romeo, I understand sometimes the frustration that you are doing a mega weekend, but if there is no DNF in front of you then you finish P11 and the reward is zero." RB boss Laurent Mekies added: "We think it's ticking all the boxes with virtually no downside, so hopefully it will go through."

If applied to 2024, it would mean no extra points for Red Bull or Ferrari, a big leap for Haas above RB from five points to 17, and points for non-scorers Williams (five), Alpine and Sauber (two apiece). For the drivers, it would leapfrog Fernando Alonso above George Russell to seventh, with only Pierre Gasly, Valtteri Bottas and Logan Sargeant yet to get off the mark.

JONATHAN NOBLE

Habsburg in line for Alpine return at Spa 6 Hours

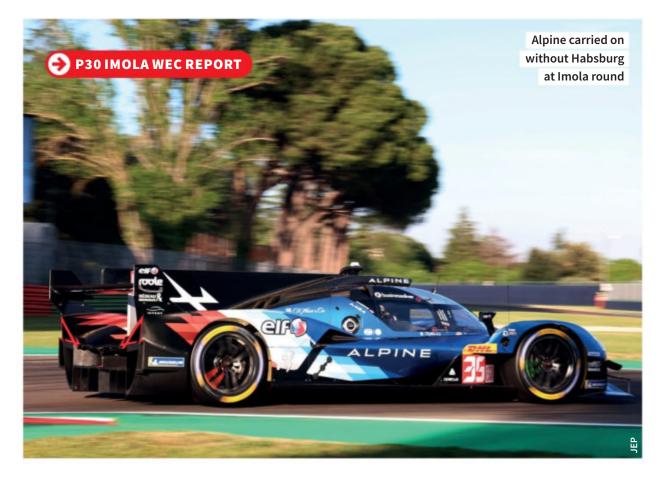
WEC

Ferdinand Habsburg could be back in action with the Alpine World Endurance Championship Hypercar team in time for the next round at Spa in mid-May. Team boss Philippe Sinault dropped some heavy hints at Imola last weekend that the Austrian's recovery from back injuries sustained at Motorland Aragon last month will allow a quick return to the cockpit.

"We are expecting good news from Ferdy this week," said Sinault. "We hope he can be with us as soon as possible. His environment, the personal one and the medical one also, is very good."

Asked specifically whether that meant it was likely that Habsburg will rejoin Charles Milesi and Paul-Loup Chatin in the #35 Alpine A424 LMDh for the Spa 6 Hours on 11 May, Sinault suggested that a decision could be imminent. "We will have a clearer view at the end of this week," he said.

Sinault confirmed that the accident, in which Habsburg sustained two fractured

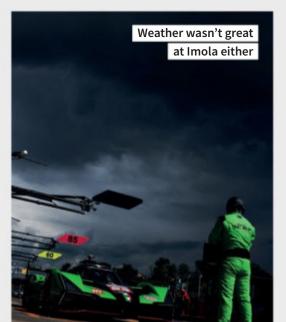


lumbar vertebrae in a head-on impact at Turn 7 of the Motorland Aragon circuit, was caused by a problem with the car. "We continue to investigate, but we had a technical issue," he said. "Everything is under control. We have worked very hard after this accident, but now it is OK."

The accident curtailed an endurance test, but Sinault insisted that it wasn't a major problem for Alpine and the Signatech team as they build up towards the Le Mans 24 Hours in June. He revealed that the solo car present in Spain had already completed 26 of the planned 30 hours and that the test was still a productive one.

Jules Gounon, the team's official reserve driver, filled in for Habsburg at Imola.

GARY WATKINS



Lambo hit by wet enduro test

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Lamborghini and the Iron Lynx team are confident about the reliability of the SC63 LMDh heading into the Le Mans 24 Hours, despite rain interrupting their only planned endurance simulation before the event in June.

"A lot of rain" hit an attempt at a Le Mans distance run for the new-for-2024 prototype at the Algarve Circuit in late March, Iron Lynx team principal Andrea Piccini revealed. "It was not ideal, but we don't think it will be a problem," he said. "We've finished a 10-hour World Endurance Championship race at Qatar and a 12-hour IMSA SportsCar Championship race at Sebring, so the reliability seems good. More important for us is to work on the performance of the car. That is our focus."

Piccini did not put a figure on the mileage the Lambo achieved in Portugal, but he stressed that the test still had value. "Quite often you have to race in the rain at Le Mans," he said, "and we did get some dry laps, probably about a third of the running."

Piccini explained that the WEC schedule does not allow time for another endurance run before Le Mans.

GARY WATKINS

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WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

The FIA is not at war with manufacturers over the 2025 World Rally Championship technical regulations, with harmony not far away, according to FIA road sport director Andrew Wheatley.

The WRC is facing uncertainty over its technical rules for next season after the FIA proposed changes that have been strongly opposed by manufacturers. While teams have been largely supportive of the majority of the FIA's vision, Toyota, Hyundai and M-Sport Ford collectively wrote to the governing body requesting that the existing Rally1 technical rules remain in place until the end of 2026. The tweaks to the rules for 2025 include the removal of hybrid power, a reduction

in aero via a modified rear wing, and a smaller-diameter air restrictor.

Manufacturers believe that the FIA should focus on the 2027 rules, and have raised concerns about the short timeframe and outlay of resources to develop revised Rally1 cars for 2025. Speaking at last week's Croatia Rally, team bosses labelled the rules limbo as a critical situation that needs resolution so car makers can communicate the WRC's direction to their boards.

The FIA is confident that it is edging closer to a compromise, with May now the target to deliver its decision to teams ahead of the June World Motor Sport Council.

"We have another World Motor Sport Council coming in June where we have to make the preparations six weeks before," said Wheatley in Croatia. "We are meeting constantly with the manufacturers and exchanging ideas. There is an impression that there is a war between the FIA and the manufacturers and there is not. We had a meeting in Geneva that wasn't 100% negative; we had a very good two-day discussion about a number of topics."

A non-hybrid Rally1 car will take part in the WRC for the first time on Rally Poland in June under new rules for this year.
European Rally Championship event winner Martins Sesks will pilot a revised M-Sport Ford Puma before jumping into a hybrid version of the car for the round in Latvia in July, as part of a two-round programme supported by WRC Promoter.

TOM HOWARD

P40 RALLY CROATIA THRILLER

Iron Dames sticks Pin into FRegional

FORMULA REGIONAL

Mercedes Formula 1 protegee Doriane Pin is to compete in the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine this season alongside her F1 Academy and World Endurance Championship programmes.

The 20-year-old Frenchwoman, who won both races of the F1A Jeddah opener on the road, will line up as part of a two-pronged Iron Dames team alongside reigning F1A champion Marta Garcia. The Spaniard had already been confirmed on the FRECA grid by Prema Racing, the sister team to the Iron Lynx squad that operates the Iron Dames programme. Instead, Iron Dames will now run alongside the Prema line-up of Ferrari F1 junior Rafael Camara, McLaren protege Ugo Ugochukwu, and James Wharton.

Pin only began her singleseater career last November with Prema in F4 South East Asia, and also competed with the team in the UAE series in January and February 2024.

The FRECA season kicks off at Hockenheim on 11-12 May, meaning that straight away there is a clash with the WEC's Spa 6 Hours, where Pin will be replaced in the Iron Dames Lamborghini by Rahel Frey.

"It's fantastic to take another important step in single-seater racing together with Iron Dames and Mercedes," enthused Pin (right).



MOTORSPORTIMAGES



OTAGO RALLY The recent Otago Rally in New Zealand, which kicked off the Asia Pacific Rally Championship, was won by local Jack Hawkeswood in a Toyota GR Yaris. But as a wild guess we reckon our readers would prefer to see a picture of none other than Kris Meeke in a Ford Escort RS1800, which he drove to seventh overall and first in class. The rally covered 276km over 16 gravel stages around Dunedin on the South Island. **Photograph by Steve Ritchie**

Sutton heads final test runs

BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship finished its pre-season testing programme at Donington Park last Tuesday ahead of this weekend's opening round at the same venue, with reigning champion Ash Sutton topping the times in his NAPA-liveried Alliance Racing Ford Focus ST.

Sutton (right) had popped in a lap 0.098 seconds clear of team-mate Dan Cammish when a thunderstorm with an hour to go forced the competitors to scurry for the refuge of their pit garages for the remainder of the day. "The times are a little bit irrelevant, we're just going through changes to the car like everyone else," said Sutton. "Is it the perfect car to go into qualifying with? No, but I'm still pleased that we've shown strong pace."

The Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N team occupied third and fourth places,



with Tom Chilton ahead of 2022 champion and morning session pacesetter Tom Ingram. Dan Rowbottom (Alliance Ford) was fifth, ahead of Jake Hill in the leading West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport, and the top Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla of Rob Huff.

WSR, which went straight from Donington to Pembrey in a bid to find two days of dry testing, had given up on its hopes of running Bobby Thompson in its fourth BMW at the opening round as we went to press, but is working on getting him out for round two at Brands Hatch.

MARCUS SIMMONS

PORSCHE APPEALS

Porsche has lodged an appeal against the exclusion of Antonio Felix da Costa from his victory in the Saturday leg of the recent Formula E double-header at Misano. The Portuguese was thrown out for an ineligible throttle damper spring.

NO IRELAND FOR WRC

Ireland's bid to join the World Rally Championship calendar for 2025 has hit the buffers after its attempt to gain the necessary funding from the Republic's government failed. The bid hinged on securing €15million, but the country's minister for sport advised that at least six months were needed to undertake economic assessments of the rally, and that was too late for the WRC's end-of-March bidding deadline.

BOYA LEADS F3 TEST

Campos Racing's Mari Boya topped three days of testing at Barcelona last week for the FIA Formula 3 Championship as the series gears up for its European phase. Teams used the second morning on Thursday for qualifying simulations, and Spaniard Boya headed Leonardo Fornaroli (Trident) by 0.033 seconds, with Hitech GP's Williams junior Luke Browning 0.046s adrift in third.

KING ON THRONE AT IMOLA

British Porsche ace Harry King took a double win in the opening round of the German Carrera Cup supporting the World Endurance Championship opener at Imola last weekend. While King (below) led the second race all the way, he finished third in the first. But on-the-road winner Larry ten Voorde was penalised for his move to take the lead from Ariel Levi, who in turn was excluded due to insufficient fuel being available for a sample.



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F1's racing and rules problem

Lack of action at the front while battles thrill further back, plus the need to clarify poorly worded regulations, are issues that have to be addressed

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

he best action in last Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix
- brilliant, determined racing between Lance
Stroll and Kevin Magnussen, the two drivers who
had produced the most cack-handed errors of
the main event - concerned last place.

Up front, race winner Max Verstappen had basically nothing to do in claiming his 58th GP career victory. But as the third season of Red Bull's latest dominant streak unfurls, there is now no uncertainty. The rules reset, heralded as the start of a new era of brilliant racing, has half-failed. Or half-worked, for some.

Half-worked in the sense that the performance gap between the whole field is smaller than in the previous ultra-highdownforce era, and following the car in front is easy, even as the dirty air factor swells again. Half-failed in the sense that since Red Bull lightened its initial ground-effect concept, there has been no regular multi-team scrap at the front.

That is far more on the opposition. And not every motor race needs to be an unpredictable, electrifying scrap with a different winner each time. Formula E had that at the start of its Gen2 era. And after eight different winners in eight races that season, the lack of emotive discussion points that chaos masks was apparent. But different winners, even if this requires regular, more straightforward races, would still amount to a great F1 season – think 2010 or 2021. And, ultimately, that's what it needs.

"F1 is at a point where much of what's made it very much better has made other elements worse"

F1 is at a point where much of what has made it very much better has made other elements worse. The cost cap has massively improved team financial health, but traps the underperforming into elongated defeat. And, apparently, shuts the field to interested outside parties.

So far, this is subjective, but what absolutely makes F1 worse is ongoing sporting rules shambles. And there was much of this last weekend at Shanghai. It was an event that perhaps was always going to mean many stewards' rulings. A second race always has the potential for more racing drama than a normal weekend, while the new, controversial and temporary track surface this year meant the drivers had to implement careful tyre preparation plans, and Shanghai's wide pitlane invites movement even as it gets more confined.

Also, the track's layout is actually quite pleasingly brutal. It could catch out a driver pushing solo – Carlos Sainz in Saturday qualifying and so nearly Fernando Alonso in the GP – and invites battles if the cars are close enough.

Overall, we counted eight instances of rules focus last weekend. These are headlined by the 1m45s it took for the virtual safety car to be activated while Valtteri Bottas's Sauber was stranded in the Turn 11 run-off.

Now, the FIA and the independent stewards it appoints are doing a better job at explaining why certain decisions have been taken so far this term. The stewards' bulletins are, overall, more detailed – for instance, in explaining why Aston Martin's protest against Carlos Sainz being allowed to rejoin after he'd crashed in Saturday qualifying was dismissed. Here, the stewards revealed that a team-approved move to clarify the rule in question that would have prevented this protest getting going just wasn't enacted after the 2023 season.

In the case of Article 39.6 and crashed cars rejoining under their own steam, Autosport sources have indicated that, at least privately, the governing body is admitting its own oversight and is committed to making the recommended change from the 2023 Belgian GP. This is that the words "outside assistance" are to be added to Article 39.6 after all, team agreement to do so coming at that Spa event. This is set to occur at the next Sporting Advisory Committee meeting. These gatherings occur a minimum of six times per year, with the next scheduled for mid-June. But if a repeat situation occurs, say at the Miami round next up, then the Shanghai verdict stands as a precedent.

Autosport also understands that the situation where Alonso's sprint penalty for clipping Sainz was added to his race time, despite him being out of the race, is also due to be reviewed in the next SAC meeting as per the stewards' suggestion. After all, Daniel Ricciardo will now take a grid drop to Miami for seemingly the same sanction after he unwisely chose to repass Nico Hulkenberg in the aftermath of his rear-ending from Stroll, but then retired much further from the end of the GP than Alonso did in the sprint. This rule – Article 54.3 – is also likely to be formally changed in the next rules update. On these apparent loopholes, it has been suggested that recent staffing turnover at the FIA contributed to the rejoining rule update not being passed.

Many and complex rules decisions are to be expected in a technical sporting discipline. That basic elements are not enacted – and other areas are deemed so vague that the stewards are asking for assistance – just isn't. It is, however, good to hear that progress on the specifics outlined here is coming. Fixing such exasperating elements would go some way to cooling the current agitation with F1's rules overall.



Right at home in the BTCC

Ahead of the new season, the Excelr8 Motorsport driver and tin-top veteran reflects on his career so far and what it means to compete at the pinnacle of UK racing

TOM CHILTON

was never a small boy – I was Mr Round, I was huge, I was so big I couldn't fit in a kart! Tillett, who made the seats, couldn't make one big enough for me to fit in. So I started off drifting Ford Escort Mk2s at eight years old, and at that age we went with family friends to Brands Hatch to watch the British Touring Car Championship. I absolutely loved it. We sat with a picnic blanket to the side of Druids where you can see the cars coming down through Paddock Hill. I remember seeing someone punt someone off into the gravel and thinking, 'This is brilliant - there's always crashing, it's always exciting to watch'. At that age you get nervous even thinking about driving a car like that - it's fine going sideways in a field for a bit of a laugh, but I never thought I'd actually be racing in the best motorsport championship in the UK.

And here I am. I've been doing it for over two decades, effectively a third of the BTCC's life. I'm part of the furniture. I've driven a lot of the cars, a lot of the different regulations. I love the BTCC. It's so ridiculously close, and I feel that now, with the regulations, you've got to be on your A-game the whole time. You've got your youth pushing the old guys like me really hard.

This year, my third with Excelr8 Motorsport and their Hyundais, I've now got Barry Plowman engineering me, Matt Neal's old engineer. We're the oldest, most experienced pairing on the grid, against my team-mate Tom Ingram and his engineer Spencer Aldridge, who are one of the youngest. I feel that as a team now we're so strong. It's not just the cars - the whole package involved with the team, all the people who work on the PR and marketing, pushing every single avenue as hard as possible. If the sponsors are happy, we can make the cars faster and we're happy.

I spent 2012 to 2016 out of the BTCC and in the world championship. I was not sure when they were originally



changing the regulations to NGTC. The suspension was very strange - it got softer and softer, and it didn't look like a race car to me. I knew when it started off some cars would be faster and some slower, and then they've got to get the balance of performance right, and I didn't want to get involved in the politics of that, because if you were on the wrong end of the stick you could drive your heart out and be last. So I got the sponsorship together with Aon, at first with the Ford and then with the Chevrolet alongside Yvan Muller, and it was amazing being with Yvan – a superstar, my hero. I learned so much off that guy, he is incredible.

That was a big step for me, moving forwards into the TC1 regulation, which in my opinion were the greatest front-wheeldrive touring cars ever to have been on this planet. I've got two in my garage at home – an old Chevy, and my old Citroen from when I was with Sebastien Loeb Racing in 2016-17. Sebastien said, 'Tom, I'm clearing out the garage, would you like a Citroen?', and when I told him, 'Yeah, I'd like my one', he told me that it had been his before I raced it. So he said I could have Yvan's one, and put my pedal box and stickers on it. I did the Nordschleife, Macau, the best circuits in the world. It's cool, whereas before I could just say I'd won in England and Scotland and that was it!

Coming back to the BTCC in 2017 felt like I was coming home, and I'm a family man with four boys. When you're doing world championships, motorsport is tough because you're away a lot, whereas this I can leave on Thursday night or Friday morning and come back Sunday night. And it says a lot that I've stayed with Excelr8 for a third season. Justina and Antony Williams, the owners, are pushing the hardest and in the best way. They're so proactive, so good at evolving, happy to take advice or criticism in making the team stronger year on year. With the move to Dynamics, we now have a bigger factory in the middle of the country, a wealth of knowledge, a bigger pool of being able to get the best engineers and mechanics. We're now trying to make it like an F1 team in the BTCC, but so are NAPA Racing, and West Surrey Racing are world class as we all know!

I'm very fortunate to have been team-mates with many top British and world champions – and even a world rally champion! But I do genuinely think that at the moment Tom Ingram and Ash Sutton - and Yann Ehrlacher in the world series, who is a superstar – are the best front-wheel-drive touring car drivers. To be team-mates with one of them [Ingram] makes it harder for me. The older I get, the faster I was! But I keep pushing. I never stop, I want to be on their level. We're friends, we have a laugh, and out of all my team-mates Tom Ingram, and Tom Coronel in the WTCC as well, are probably the most fun I've had the pleasure of working with.

P54 BTCC PREVIEW



The Lotus 107 was a great little car in all its forms - the original in '92 was beautiful in green and yellow, the B in red, white, green and yellow with the trick active...

CHRIS ADAMS

Warwick's finest and Herbert's favourite

Very good stuff in the 11 April issue. My particular favourites are Derek Warwick's greatest races and Johnny Herbert's favourite car. The Lotus 107 was a great little car in all its forms - the original in '92 was beautiful in green and yellow, the Bin red, white, green and yellow with the trick active... who remembers the surfboard at the pit stops?! The Mugen 107C was good, but the 109, when it eventually arrived, could have saved Lotus in my opinion... that and Eddie Irvine knowing what a brake pedal was at Monza!

Chris Adams By email

Confidential information

In Autosport 18 April on page 63 you mention the "mysterious driver 'Rollo Tomasi'". There is an American author of this name but, perhaps more significantly, he is a character (or more accurately a plot device) in that excellent crime film LA Confidential.

You might think that I need to get out more often, but I did spend a wonderful Sunday at Goodwood and I am still after many years a Monoposto Club steward.

Jock Gardner Haslemere



AVE YOUR SAY GET IN TOUCH

Autosport editorial

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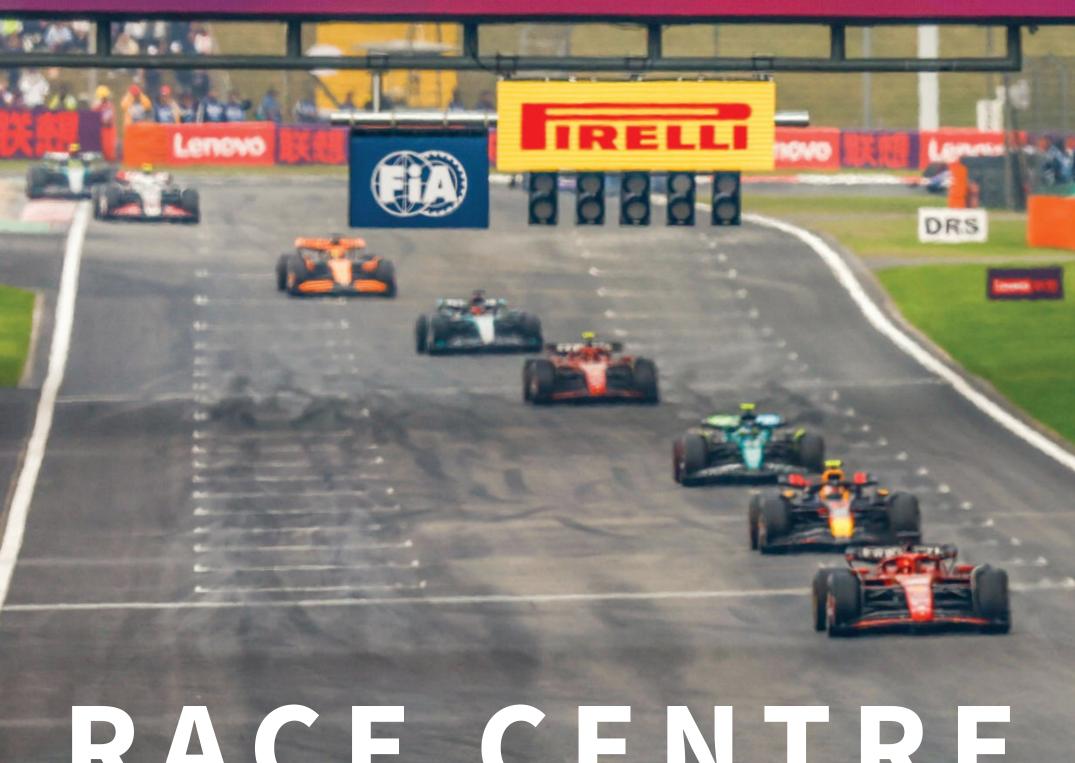


autosport









RACE CENTRE

FORMULA 1

NORRIS SURPRISES HIMSELF AS VERSTAPPEN DOMINATES

The British driver shone in second place behind the world champion on a weekend when his McLaren team had expected to struggle

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE







uch has changed in the Formula 1 landscape since the championship last arrived on Chinese shores in 2019. The long-awaited end to that hiatus, extended by the lingering effects of COVID-19 restrictions enforced in the nation, offered a fitting period of introspection to consider how F1 has moved on since. Very different cars aerodynamically now grace the field, while F1's last visit also coincided with the start of its modern-day boom and entrance into the cultural zeitgeist, rather than sitting on the fringes as a niche sporting discipline.

Empires have fallen and risen in that five-year span. The Lewis Hamilton-led Mercedes hegemony feels like a distant memory, compared to the contemporary dominance from Max Verstappen and Red Bull. Case in point: Verstappen had never won the Chinese Grand Prix before this season, his machinery previously never really anything better than the third-best car on the grid at that point. In today's context, it's really no surprise that he managed to end that barren spell last weekend.

Neither is it a surprise that he did so with a lead that bordered on the unassailable, even when considering the impact of two safety car periods upon his advantage. Getting a better start than team-mate Sergio Perez probably did about 90% of the work, and those hoping for a first-lap contretemps between them (purely in the hope of pitching their magazine editors a 'Bulls in a China strop' headline) were left with a sense of disappointment. There's always next year.

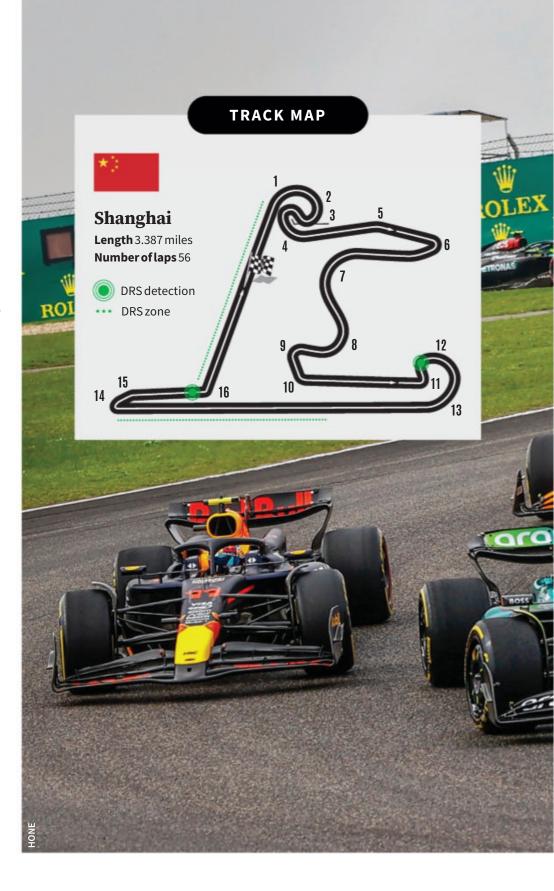
Perez not only failed to find parity with Verstappen into the first corner, but also found Fernando Alonso cruising around

"I KNEW THAT IF I WAS PARALLEL TO SOMEONE IN TURNS 1 AND 2, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK"

the outside with great momentum. The Spaniard's Aston Martin scampered from its third-place grid slot like a scalded cat and immediately attempted to disrupt Red Bull, and getting between Verstappen and Perez helped the Dutchman and hindered the Mexican.

But that wasn't the defining factor in Verstappen's win; you might argue that turning up to the track on race day was more than sufficient. Facetiousness aside, there were several aspects to consider as expected challengers faltered and those considered out for the count had flattered, owing to the conditions prevalent around the Shanghai circuit. It severely hampered any iota of a challenge for victory, but it added handfuls of spice to the battle for the other podium positions.

In the lead-up to the weekend, Ferrari had been touted as a



challenger to Red Bull at Shanghai. It was expected that, on a lower-grip surface and with temperatures not expected to push the mercury too high, the front-limited nature of the circuit would start to instigate graining as the tyres began to slide laterally across the asphalt. What nobody knew was that the circuit had been slathered with a bitumen paint; and it wasn't until the teams and drivers arrived that they noticed a darker hue to the track. It didn't exactly offer bountiful grip, and during the wet sprint qualifying was actually rather slippery. But it reduced the roughness of the road enough to ensure that the tyres weren't being mechanically worn away at too much, nullifying the effect of graining entirely. Ferrari therefore found itself further back than perhaps much of the paddock had anticipated.

Aston Martin, in the meantime, dazzled in qualifying through Alonso's efforts and had now earned vital track position. Its form





has reversed from 2023, with the AMR24 perhaps less effective on Sundays relative to its one-lap pace. The veteran Spaniard had pressed his early charge into action but, at the end of the opening lap, Verstappen was already 1.6 seconds up the road and dropping the field.

"The same with Lewis [in the sprint race] – I was P2 when Lando [Norris] went off and I said, 'OK, I may try to lead the race for at least one lap'," Alonso revealed. "Today, I passed Checo and thought, 'OK, I will do it again' but I had no choice or opportunity. Hopefully one day soon. The wind direction changed this morning so in Turns 1 and 2 it was a headwind. So I knew that if I was parallel to someone in Turns 1 and 2, I had the opportunity to attack. So I was very aggressive."

Even if you could charitably suggest that Alonso's early interloping had restricted Perez's pace in the early phases of the race, the second Red Bull driver did not find speed to reverse the arrears once he passed the two-time world champion on the fifth lap. In the first stint, Perez was losing around 0.6s to 0.7s per lap to his team-mate on average. At the point where they both pitted on lap 13, the gap was big enough for Red Bull to double-stack without any fear of repercussions: 9.6s separated Verstappen and Perez.

Red Bull was committed to a two-stop strategy; it had used a medium compound and had two sets of hards to see out the rest of the 56-lap GP. But it appeared that, given Perez's deficit to Verstappen, both McLaren and Ferrari sensed blood in the water and began to circle. Alonso was already ceasing to be a factor, as the man himself had predicted prior to the race, and Norris had put a move on him on the seventh lap to firmly place McLaren in the podium hunt.

A podium was already up for grabs, then, but could Perez be



beaten for the runner-up step on the rostrum? Both Red Bulls found themselves in traffic owing to their early stops but, given the RB20's obvious superiority, it was surely a simple enough job to steal past those in the top six sporting worn medium tyres. For Verstappen, that duly proved to be the case and he got past Charles Leclerc and then race leader Norris as the two were already considering defecting to one-stop strategies – in Ferrari parlance, this was relayed to Leclerc as "Plan D". The Monegasque found wear on the medium tyres to be lower than expected, so felt enfranchised enough to comply. >>>



Perez had to get past Carlos Sainz, which he managed moments before the Ferrari driver made his own stop at the end of lap 17, but was over 10s behind Norris – albeit catching the Briton thanks to the tyre offset between them; Norris and Leclerc both continued to go long on their opening sets of tyres.

A virtual safety car was manna from heaven at that point, triggered when Valtteri Bottas's Sauber ground to a halt on lap 20 when its Ferrari power unit popped its clogs. Norris had mentally anticipated it, but it did not take effect until he had rounded the final corner on his 21st lap; a sweary tirade issued from within his neon yellow crash helmet because he was convinced he'd missed the boat. Leclerc took the opportunity to pit for hard tyres, but Norris earned a reprieve by the stranded Sauber being stuck in gear, extending the yellow-flag period further.

"I knew it; it was obvious it was going to be a VSC," Norris reflected. "But it just didn't come out. So I was saying to myself, 'I bet it's going to come out as soon as I go around the last corner', and it literally did! Even my engineer said it, I said it to him. Luckily, it stayed out a long time and then it obviously went to safety car."

Norris therefore pitted on the next lap and stayed ahead of Leclerc, before the VSC was upgraded to a physical safety car. Knowing that Verstappen's considerable lead was about to be wiped out, Red Bull performed another double-stack manoeuvre before catching the Mercedes-AMG GT safety car. This locked in Verstappen's lead but, for Perez, his earlier deficit allied to the reduced penalty of VSC pitstops meant that he'd shaken out in fourth behind Norris and Leclerc.

"It took a long time, I found, to get the first car cleared," Verstappen reckoned while trundling behind the safety car, attempting to chivvy Bernd Maylander along with the positioning of his Red Bull. "I felt like we drove one more lap behind the safety car for nothing..."

"YOU USE SO MUCH OF YOUR TYRE. YOU PUT SO MUCH ENERGY INTO THEM THAT THEY NEVER REALLY COME BACK"

It eventually retreated to the pitlane at the end of the 26th lap, but all hell rather broke loose in the midfield upon the restart as Verstappen compressed the field through Turn 14. Running sixth, Alonso misjudged his braking slightly and caused George Russell and Oscar Piastri to check up. Daniel Ricciardo just about caught the brake pedal but could do little about his nudge to Piastri's rear, where he caused minor lacerations to his countryman's floor.

Lance Stroll's effort to avoid contact was significantly less obvious, apparently focusing more on the corner apex than on the RB ahead of him. The Aston Martin went into the back of Ricciardo's car and wiped out almost half of the diffuser, leaving sprinklings of debris at the corner. When green flag running resumed, Kevin Magnussen's clumsy attempt to pass Yuki Tsunoda caused terminal damage to the second RB, which needed a clean-up effort to extract from the circuit. The safety car subsequently emerged once again.

Verstappen had dropped the pack and crossed the start/finish line on the lap 27 restart almost a second clear of Norris, and would have to go through the same rigmarole while Tsunoda's car was being packed up. The second restart, this time on lap 32, was much cleaner and Verstappen repeated the same procedure; at the end of that lap, he'd already broken clear of the DRS range to Norris's McLaren.

There was no competition for first place, but plenty for second.



JTTON





Norris had the benefit of Leclerc keeping Perez honest, and didn't need to sink energy or tyre life into a tete-a-tete battle while the field was still tight. His pace remained strong and, in the following laps, he maintained a deficit of between 0.3s to 0.6s per lap to Verstappen in his first racing laps on the hard compound.

In the meantime, Perez struggled to breach Leclerc's defences and was losing more and more time to the cars ahead. It took the Guadalajara-born driver eight laps to make his move into Turn 6, with the next objective to reclaim second from Norris, but he'd already used up a chunk of the hard tyres' vitality in the battle over third.

Perez was 5.6s behind Norris at this juncture, although a poor final sector from the McLaren helped bring this down to 4.1s at the end of lap 42. That should have been the incentive Perez needed to further whittle away at the arrears, but Norris instead responded and proceeded to reinstate a five-second-plus margin over the following tours to fortify his position.

"At that point the gap was already quite big and, given how good his pace was on the first stint in terms of degradation, I knew it was going to be close," Perez recalled of his game of wits with Norris. "But once we basically had the same pace, and once you go by the car ahead and you start fighting for... I don't know how many laps we ended up fighting between Charles and myself, but it's really game over. You use so much of your tyre. You put so much energy into them that they never really come back."

Norris and Perez were, effectively, in lock-step over the final 15 laps. Their laptime traces, following that iffy 42nd tour from Norris, effectively overlap with a slight advantage in the McLaren driver's >>>



Red Bull completed a century of F1 pole positions through championship leader Max Verstappen, who prevailed in more standard conditions relative to Friday's sprint qualifying to assert his authority over the field. His first lap of Q3, a 1m33.977s, would have been good enough to cement pole anyway, although he admitted that the drop in pace relative to his Q2 best was "confusing" and suspected the wind was to blame. Regardless, he stepped up his efforts later on with a final 1m33.660s to put the front-most grid position under lock and key.

The battle over second was much more thrilling as track condition peaked at the end of the session. Fernando Alonso had provisionally occupied the other front-row slot after the opening array of laps, before the second-place slot machine rolled around in the following order: Carlos Sainz, then Charles Leclerc, then Oscar Piastri, then Lando Norris, then Alonso again, languidly coming to rest with Sergio Perez. In reverse order, those drivers occupied the top seven positions on the grid with fractions of time between them.

Sainz was lucky to make the final part of qualifying after dropping his Ferrari into the wall in Q2. He had nudged the

gravel on the exit of Turn 16 with his rear-right wheel and spun, meandering sideways into the opposite barrier. His front wing parted company with his car, but he was able to recover under a red flag and maintain his

"Sainz was lucky to make the final part of qualifying after dropping his Ferrari into the wall in Q2"

participation with nothing more than a few scratches. Aston Martin nonetheless protested, in the hope that Sainz would have his times chalked off.

George Russell's was the sole Mercedes in Q3 and could only claim eighth, after Lewis Hamilton's Turn 14 lock-up resigned him to a Q1 exit; set-up tweaks to improve low-speed performance had not paid off over a single lap, while Hamilton and Russell also diverged slightly from each other's similar sprint set-ups. Haas's Nico Hulkenberg and Sauber's Valtteri Bottas completed the top 10, the Finn dumping Lance Stroll out of the Q3 reckoning late on into the second phase.





The elements conspired to rain chaos upon the sprint qualifying session in Shanghai; a sparkinduced flame scorched a patch of parched grass at Turn 7 before a deluge burst through the smoggy clouds at the end of the second qualifying phase. Could that, and the resulting jumbled order in a rain-affected SQ3, really stop Max Verstappen? Not on your life.

Instead, the seas parted on a more serene Saturday morning, even though Verstappen had three quality drivers on the grid standing between himself and a sprint win. Lando Norris, whose pole lap was erroneously deleted prior to a hasty reinstatement, was shaded at the start by countryman Lewis Hamilton and the two drew into the opening corner side by side. Hamilton held the inside of the

"Could the jumbled order in a rain-affected SQ3 really stop Max Verstappen? Not on your life"

winding corner complex and offered Norris two options: back out, or run out of road.

Norris unwisely chose the latter. It sank the McLaren driver down to seventh, presenting Verstappen with his first gain in position. The next two took time to arrive, as the wrong hybrid power setting on the championship leader's Red Bull expunged the energy stored in his battery and required the flick of a few switches on the steering wheel. Once the energy regeneration and deployment issues had been fixed, Fernando



Alonso was next to fall with a routine DRS pass at the end of the seventh lap, lifting Verstappen into second and with a 1.8-second gap to the leading Hamilton.

A surprising statistic: Hamilton had never led a lap of a sprint race before. He has now led eight, although that final full lap was characterised by a Turn 14 error that cost him almost a second to Verstappen, offering a very easy DRS gift for the next lap. There, Verstappen punished that mistake with a pass at the same corner, ending the creeping inevitability that he would get into the lead once his power unit had been given its new command.

Unleashed, the Dutchman spent the next 10 laps building a hefty lead over Hamilton, gathering over a second per lap to crush the faintest hopes of a fightback and Hamilton's first victory since 2021. A fraction more than 13s separated the 2021 title rivals at the flag, demonstrating the chasm in performance that has grown

between Red Bull and Mercedes over the past three years.

The battle for third was hotly contested, with Alonso's race pace not befitting of his qualifying efforts, and drawing the Aston Martin driver towards a three-way tussle between Carlos Sainz, Sergio Perez and Charles Leclerc. Sainz had seen an opportunity to bat off Perez's challenge with a move on his compatriot Alonso and, after a few aborted efforts to pass, made a brave attempt through Turn 7. Their cars akimbo through the medium-speed turns, Sainz and Alonso eventually made contact – the Aston Martin came off worst with a puncture – and the pair emerged too deep into the Turn 9 outside kerb, opening the door for Perez. Leclerc also broke past Sainz later on, although the two Ferraris battled perhaps too fiercely over an eventual fourth. Norris, Oscar Piastri and George Russell completed the scorers, the Mercedes man making a soft-tyre gamble work out.



favour in the general effort to rebuild that gap. Perez was resigned to scoring third place.

"We were on a reasonably aggressive two-stop, which was the fastest race, and it looked like Lando and Charles had committed to a one-stop," explained Red Bull team boss Christian Horner. "And then the safety car came out at just the wrong time. We effectively had to convert to go on to the same strategy as them for the second half of the race, which cost Checo track position."

It's a nice sentiment from Horner, but Perez's opening stint put him in that position; had he reduced his deficit by half and started

"MCLAREN EXPECTED A WEEKEND OF 'DAMAGE LIMITATION' RATHER THAN SPLITTING THE RED BULLS"

chalking up laps around 0.3s-0.4s off Verstappen's pace, there might not have been such a convenient gap for Norris to drop into.

Verstappen's final margin of victory over Norris stood at 13.773s. It effectively matched that of his sprint race domination, although the championship leader reckoned that tinkering following the Saturday race offered "an improvement compared to the sprint race even. It just made my life a bit easier."

McLaren shared Norris's surprise that it had been able to chalk up a podium on a circuit it expected to struggle at. Citing deficiencies in low-speed sections and the longer-radius turns, two particularly prevalent cornering profiles at the Shanghai venue, McLaren admitted that it expected a weekend of "damage limitation" rather than splitting the Red Bulls at the flag.

Team principal Andrea Stella reckoned that McLaren had benefited from the overcast conditions, explaining "the fact that there was no sunshine helped keep the rear tyres under control", and this strengthened Norris's management of tyres in clean air.

Leclerc had attempted to exploit that gap between the Red Bulls too, but Ferrari comparatively struggled during the second phase of the race. Had graining been a factor, Ferrari can contend with this much more easily owing to its compliance and new-found confidence in tyre management. That didn't come to pass, and instead both Leclerc and Sainz experienced difficulties in getting the SF-24 to mesh with the hard tyres.

"It's a bit strange, because the strength of this car since the beginning of the year is it's very solid in all conditions with all tyres," Leclerc said. "Today is a bit an outlier because as soon as we put on the hards, we were half a second off."

Sainz had the tougher task of the two Prancing Horse jockeys and had stopped four laps before the VSC, so he had to carry his hard tyres for 39 laps. Team principal Fred Vasseur even suggested



that the Spaniard had been "too conservative" at the start of the stint and "was a bit scared to do a very long stint", but praised his efforts nonetheless.

It was in losing positions at the start that Vasseur reckoned was the biggest compromise, referring to the Ferraris allowing the Mercedes of Russell to trickle through in the opening corners. Russell provided some degree of adversarial needle to Sainz during the final stint, but the Ferrari driver had enough in the bag to ensure that the Briton's challenge subsided.

Regardless, Ferrari had not been the thorn in Red Bull's side as predicted; suggestions were that the current cars and the resurfaced asphalt had ensured that the Chinese circuit was far less front-limited than it had been in the past, and so linking Ferrari to a victory challenge proved folly.

So it goes that Verstappen barely faced a single threat in a weekend where he showed devastating control over the rest of the field. Fourth on the grid in the sprint could not derail him, and leading from pole in the full-fat Grand Prix left him to do nothing but shadowboxing at the front of the order.

Given Red Bull's potency in Miami on the evidence of the two races held there, his dominance is very much set to continue. McLaren, however, has upgrades planned for its trip to Florida – given it beat one Red Bull in China, what chance it can take the other? Norris reckons he can feel a win brewing, but Miami might be a trifle too early for the papaya team.





MIXED WEEKEND AT SHANGHAI FOR MERCEDES PAIR

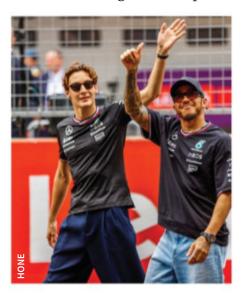
Lewis Hamilton recovered from 18th on the grid to ninth in the Chinese Grand Prix, with the two Mercedes drivers' fortunes near reversed from the sprint race as George Russell mixed it much higher up.

Hamilton's lowly starting spot stemmed from a set-up adjustment following his second place in the sprint. It was aimed at addressing low-speed understeer, but contributed to his hairpin lock-up and Q1 exit.

In the GP, he got trapped on the inside line through Turn 1, which meant he couldn't gain ground on his soft tyres. He eventually began a steady climb through the lower order, making several neat passes through the swoops of the second sector. He pitted under the virtual safety car and chased on after the second restart, all while struggling with overheating rear tyres.

Russell, eighth in the sprint, jumped the squabbling Ferraris on lap one before Charles
Leclerc came past and the
Briton pitted ahead of Carlos
Sainz on the two-stopper on lap
11. Mercedes reckoned this was too early, but the safety car put
Russell back on a tyre-life par with most and he chased Sainz to the flag, a chunk back.

"Where we had put the cars in terms of their set-up after the sprint, P6 and P9 was the best prediction from our pre-race simulations," team boss Toto Wolff said afterwards, also hoping that a Miami update eliminates the need to make such set-up experiments for the W15's "knife-edge" sweet spot.





Stroll and Ricciardo slam each other after safety car shunt

Daniel Ricciardo and Lance Stroll were left frustrated for different reasons following their crash at the first restart of the Chinese Grand Prix. The Aston Martin hit the back of the RB, lifting it up and eventually causing its retirement with diffuser and floor damage.

Stroll was hit with a 10-second penalty after the stewards decided that he "was predominantly to blame for the collision" for failing to anticipate "the pace of the cars in front, particularly car #3, and should have prepared to brake accordingly".

The Canadian served this at a fourth pitstop, where he went back onto hard tyres – he had run this compound earlier before pitting following the collision for a lengthy front-wing change. The incident undid his pursuit of points following a positive early start.

Ricciardo's race was always set to feature a drop from the ninth place he occupied at the time of the clash. He had run two sets of medium tyres up to this point and had not pitted during the initial race neutralisation.

Stroll reacted to the crash with an "idiot just slammed on the brake" team radio message and later called the penalty "a joke". This enraged Ricciardo when the Australian was informed of Stroll's words as he faced the media with the race still ongoing.

"I'm doing my best not to say what I want to say, but f*** that guy," said Ricciardo. "And I'm being nice, too! But if that's what he thinks..."

Stroll said "it's just because of the fact that I hit the guy" when he'd said the penalty was a joke. "There was a really odd concertina effect that I would have liked to see the stewards take into consideration maybe a little bit more."

Ricciardo was handed a three-place grid drop for the next round in Miami after he took it upon himself to repass Nico Hulkenberg during the second safety car, after the Haas had got ahead while Stroll was sending Ricciardo airborne.



Zhou becomes first Chinese F1 driver to race at home

Zhou Guanyu was left to reflect on an "emotional journey" to becoming China's first Formula 1 driver and the first to race in his home grand prix.

The Sauber driver was up and down the results through the weekend, but made it a positive ending with a series of passes following a late stop for soft tyres in the GP. He said Sauber thought he'd "be able to keep the position we were in if we didn't stop, so we gambled",

but he only ended up 14th, having pitted from 13th. His left-front-wing endplate also blew off as he passed Kevin Magnussen during his charge, evoking memories of a similar incident in Melbourne qualifying.

In the other C44, Valtteri Bottas was chasing Nico Hulkenberg in the battle to make the points when what Sauber ascribed to a "drivetrain issue" stranded him in the Turn 11 run-off on lap 20.



Q&A

NICO HULKENBERG HAAS DRIVER

Another weekend with a result in the GP points – you must be pleased.

Yeah definitely, especially after how it went [in the sprint, where Hulkenberg suffered badly with medium-tyre degradation] and in sprint quali. It was a

quali. It was a good reaction and recovery, and it shows that everything has to be perfect for us to put ourselves in that position. We did that, close to perfect sessions, and one point is all that's available with one of the top five teams' cars not where it should be. That's all there is at the moment.

Did you end up with your set-up spot-on after the sprint race?

Spot-on. I think with more time you would continue working and try to improve it, but with the limited time and running that we

have, that is what you have.

What was your view behind the Stroll/ Ricciardo hairpin

restart shunt?

It looked pretty spectacular going into Turn 14. All I could see was Lance was not slowing down enough and he really lifted up Daniel. I went around the corner, I looked back and don't see them anymore, but I saw everyone coming on my back so I just

continued because, as far as I'm concerned, they crashed and I couldn't tell if they could continue or not.

Anything unusual going on with how the cars braked ahead of them?

Maybe Lance got caught off-guard a bit. The concertina effect is quite big, especially at safety car restarts, and he maybe had some cold brakes and didn't have the full stopping power.

How are you feeling ahead of the team's first 2024 home race?

Yeah, Miami is a supernice venue, a very special one for sure as one of our home races. So, we go there with good vibes, expect a hot weekend and we'll see what we get.



ALONSO IN THICK OF THE ACTION ON WAY TO SEVENTH

Fernando Alonso's Chinese Grand Prix was dominated by tyres – a day after his battles in the sprint for Aston Martin.

For both races he started third, but in the main event he blasted past Sergio Perez at the long first corner to grab second. He briefly "thought it would be nice to lead the race for a lap", but his early push to stay ahead of one Red Bull left him lacking pace as the stint wore on. His focus switched to the chasing McLarens once Perez had got back ahead on lap five, before Alonso was the first of the frontrunners to pit. He was then serviced again under the neutralisation, where he was given soft tyres – Aston lacked any more hards, and a 33-lap stint on mediums was optimistic.

Aston team boss Mike Krack explained: "We had quite high deg in the sprint and we were concerned if we could make a two-stop work [in the GP].

"Then when the safety car period got extended [following the Lance Stroll/ Daniel Ricciardo and Kevin Magnussen/ Yuki Tsunoda shunts], you could not make use of the soft in that time. Then it was limiting the damage."

Alonso fell from fifth to 12th with his late third stop to go back to the medium tyres. He then rose to finish seventh, his charge including a jaw-dropping last-corner save while pushing behind Lewis Hamilton.



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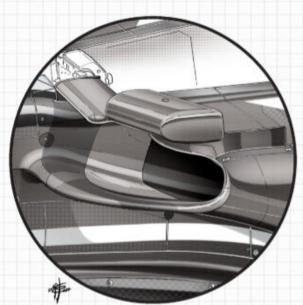




DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA





HAAS PRESSES ON WITH UPGRADES BOOST

A new floor and revised engine cover headlined the upgrades that Haas took to the Chinese Grand Prix, marking the team's obvious shift in mentality under its new management structure. Last year's larger upgrades were put on hold until October's United States GP and arguably did not work. This time, however, the team has got to work pressing new parts into service early.

New floor fences and edges were produced for Shanghai, which the squad expected to offer a notable boost in downforce and driveability as it looked to continue a run of solid results from the opening rounds of the 2024 season. A new engine cover was also produced in an effort to tighten up the rear end, with a size reduction to the rearmost exit. Haas compensated with larger cooling louvres, which it stated in its pre-event technical notes "allows improved performance all over the cooling polar slope, as it reduces the lower energy flow impacting the rear end of the car".

Further changes to the VF-24 included a reconfiguration of the wing elements situated at the rear corners, and a new mirror with a smaller housing to reduce drag.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

ASTON CONTINUES WITH SUZUKA TWEAKS

Aston Martin introduced a package of revised sidepods among its Japanese Grand Prix updates. These included a brand-new floor, which it retained for the Shanghai weekend, deciding against any further upgrades in China.

Part of the rationale behind the push to get it ready for Suzuka was to avoid tacking on upgrades at sprint weekends, given that this was a point of struggle last year when an upgrade was scheduled for Austin. These sidepod changes were designed to link up with the new floor and feature rounder edges with a crease along the top designed to direct airflow around the face of the sidepod and towards the undercut. The overall impact is to increase general load, with the intention of retaining Aston Martin's strong qualifying qualities but drawing further performance out of the AMR24 in the race.

When developing both sidepods



and floor, a car will experience a certain pressure field around the new components. Changing the geometry of one will affect the other, and the intention is to shape these to ensure more favourable efficiency. JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



| FREE | PRACTICE | |
|------|------------|-----------|
| POS | DRIVER | TIME |
| 1 | Stroll | 1m36.302s |
| 2 | Piastri | 1m36.629s |
| 3 | Verstappen | 1m36.660s |
| 4 | Perez | 1m36.690s |
| 5 | Hulkenberg | 1m37.101s |
| 6 | Magnussen | 1m37.118s |
| 7 | Ocon | 1m37.213s |
| 8 | Albon | 1m37.229s |
| 9 | Ricciardo | 1m37.238s |
| 10 | Bottas | 1m37.530s |
| 11 | Zhou | 1m37.626s |
| 12 | Tsunoda | 1m38.006s |
| 13 | Leclerc | 1m38.090s |
| 14 | Sainz | 1m38.284s |
| 15 | Sargeant | 1m38.286s |
| 16 | Norris | 1m38.630s |
| 17 | Russell | 1m38.806s |
| 18 | Hamilton | 1m38.839s |
| 19 | Alonso | 1m38.936s |
| 20 | Gasly | 1m39.276s |

WEATHER Cloudy, air 25-27C track 40-41C

| | RACI | QUALIFY | ING |
|----|------|------------|-----------|
| | POS | DRIVER | TIME |
| Q3 | 1 | Verstappen | 1m33.660s |
| | 2 | Perez | 1m33.982s |
| | 3 | Alonso | 1m34.148s |
| | 4 | Norris | 1m34.165s |
| | 5 | Piastri | 1m34.273s |
| | 6 | Leclerc | 1m34.289s |
| | 7 | Sainz | 1m34.297s |
| | 8 | Russell | 1m34.433s |
| | 9 | Hulkenberg | 1m34.604s |
| | 10 | Bottas | 1m34.665s |
| Q2 | 11 | Stroll | 1m34.838s |
| | 12 | Ricciardo | 1m34.934s |
| | 13 | Ocon | 1m35.223s |
| | 14 | Albon | 1m35.241s |
| | 15 | Gasly | 1m35.463s |
| Q1 | 16 | Zhou | 1m35.505s |
| | 17 | Magnussen | 1m35.516s |
| | 18 | Hamilton | 1m35.573s |
| | 19 | Tsunoda | 1m35.746s |
| | 20 | Sargeant | 1m36.358s |

WEATHER Clear, air 23-24C track 31-34C

| ٠ | | | |
|----|------|------------|-----------|
| L | SPRI | NT QUALI | FYING |
| | POS | DRIVER | TIME |
| 53 | 1 | Norris | 1m57.940s |
| | 2 | Hamilton | 1m59.201s |
| | 3 | Alonso | 1m59.915s |
| | 4 | Verstappen | 2m00.028s |
| | 5 | Sainz | 2m00.214s |
| | 6 | Perez | 2m00.375s |
| | 7 | Leclerc | 2m00.566s |
| | 8 | Piastri | 2m00.990s |
| | 9 | Bottas | 2m01.044s |
| | 10 | Zhou | 2m03.537s |
| 22 | 11 | Russell | 1m36.345s |
| | 12 | Magnussen | 1m36.473s |
| | 13 | Hulkenberg | 1m36.478s |
| | 14 | Ricciardo | 1m36.553s |
| | 15 | Stroll | 1m36.677s |
| 21 | 16 | Gasly | 1m37.632s |
| | 17 | Ocon | 1m37.720s |
| | 18 | Albon | 1m37.812s |
| | 19 | Tsunoda | 1m37.892s |
| | 20 | Sargeant | 1m37.923s |
| | | | |

WEATHER Variable, air 18-22C track 24-29C

NEXT RACE

5 May **Miami GP**

| SPR | INT RACE | 19 LAPS - 64.2 | 4 MIL | ES | |
|-----|------------|----------------|-------|------------|--------------|
| POS | DRIVER | FINISHTIME | LED | TYRE | FASTEST LAPS |
| 1 | Verstappen | 32m04.660s | 11 | M u | 1m40.331s |
| 2 | Hamilton | +13.043s | 8 | M n | 1m40.420s |
| 3 | Perez | +15.258s | | M u | 1m41.065s |
| 4 | Leclerc | +17.486s | | M u | 1m41.003s |
| 5 | Sainz | +20.696s | | M n | 1m40.962s |
| 6 | Norris | +22.088s | | M n | 1m40.951s |
| 7 | Piastri | +24.713s | | M u | 1m41.107s |
| 8 | Russell | +25.696s | | S u | 1m41.505s |
| 9 | Zhou | +31.951s | | M u | 1m41.502s |
| 10 | Magnussen | +37.398s | | M u | 1m42.092s |
| 11 | Ricciardo | +37.840s | | M u | 1m42.234s |
| 12 | Bottas | +38.295s | | M u | 1m42.140s |
| 13 | Ocon | +39.841s | | M n | 1m42.191s |
| 14 | Stroll | +40.299s | | M u | 1m42.258s |
| 15 | Gasly | +40.838s | | M n | 1m42.017s |
| 16 | Tsunoda | +41.870s | | M n | 1m42.056s |
| 17 | Albon | +42.998s | | M u | 1m42.389s |
| 18 | Sargeant | +46.352s | | M u | 1m42.516s |
| 19 | Hulkenberg | +49.630s | | M u | 1m42.315s |
| 20 | Alonso | 17 laps-damage | | M u | 1m40.537s |

Miami International Autodrome

WEATHER Cloudy, air 20-21C track 26-28C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 120.152mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 121.533mph

| Haas 🚛 | | | | 2 09.2mph |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Aston Martin 🛑 | | | | 209.2mph |
| Williams 🕳 | | | 208.0mph | |
| RB 🚾 | | | 208.0mph | |
| Red Bull | | | 208.0mph | |
| Ferrari 🛑 | | | 207.4mph | |
| Mercedes 🚾 | | | ph | |
| Sauber Sauber | | 206.5mph | | |
| McLaren 🗰 | 205.1mph | | | |
| Alpine 🗰 | 204.6mph | | | |

| SEA | SO | N STATS | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----------------|-----|----------------|--------------|
| | | | | | |
| | IAM | RS' PIONSHIP | PTS | BEST FINISH | BEST QUAL |
| | 1 | Verstappen | 110 | 1 | 1 |
| | 2 | Perez | 85 | 2 | 2 |
| | 3 | Leclerc | 76 | 2 | 2 |
| | 4 | Sainz | 69 | 1 | 2 |
| | 5 | Norris | 58 | 2 | 3 |
| | 6 | Piastri | 38 | 4 | 5 |
| | 7 | Russell | 33 | 5 | 3 |
| | 8 | Alonso | 31 | 5 | 3 |
| ! | 9 | Hamilton | 19 | 7 | 7 |
| 1 | 10 | Stroll | 9 | 6 | 9 |
| 1 | 1 | Tsunoda | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | 2 | Bearman | 6 | 7 | 11 |
| 1 | .3 | Hulkenberg | 4 | 9 | 9 |
| 1 | <u> 1</u> | Magnussen | 1 | 10 | 13 |
| 1 | .5 | Albon | 0 | 11 | 12 |
| 1 | 16 | Ocon | 0 | 11 | 13 |
| 1 | 17 | Zhou | 0 | 11 | 16 |
| 1 | 18 | Ricciardo | 0 | 12 | 11 |
| 1 | 9 | Gasly | 0 | 13 | 15 |
| 2 | 20 | Bottas | 0 | 14 | 10 |
| 2 | 21 | Sargeant | 0 | 14 | 18 |

| | STRUCTORS' APIONSHIP | PTS |
|----|-------------------------|-----|
| 1 | Red Bull | 195 |
| 2 | Ferrari | 151 |
| 3 | McLaren | 96 |
| 4 | Mercedes | 52 |
| 5 | Aston Martin | 40 |
| 6 | RB | 7 |
| 7 | Haas | 5 |
| 8 | Williams | 0 |
| 9 | Alpine | 0 |
| 10 | Sauber | 0 |

| QUALIFYING BAT | TLE | | |
|-----------------------|-----|---|---------|
| Verstappen | 5 | 0 | Perez |
| Hamilton | 1 | 4 | Russell |
| Leclerc | 2 | 2 | Sainz |
| Leclerc | 1 | 0 | Bearman |
| Norris | 4 | 1 | Piastri |
| Alonso | 4 | 1 | Stroll |
| Gasly | 0 | 5 | Ocon |
| Sargeant | 0 | 4 | Albon |
| Ricciardo | 1 | 4 | Tsunoda |
| Zhou | 0 | 5 | Bottas |

Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control. Excludes sprint qualifying sessions.

1

3 Hulkenberg

| WINS | |
|---------------|---|
| Verstappen | 4 |
| Sainz | 1 |
| FASTESTLAPS | |
| Leclerc | 2 |
| Verstappen | 2 |
| Alonso | 1 |
| POLEPOSITIONS | 5 |
| Verstappen | 5 |

Magnussen





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STARTING GRID —





1m34.604s















| RE | SULTS ROUND 5/ | 24 (56 LAPS – 189. | .56 MILES) | | |
|-----|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----|--|
| POS | DRIVER | TEAM | FINISHTIME | LED | TYRES |
| 1 | Max Verstappen (NLD) | Red Bull-Honda RBPT | 1h40m52.554s | 51 | Mn, Hn, Hn |
| 2 | Lando Norris (GBR) | McLaren-Mercedes | +13.773s | 5 | M n, H n |
| 3 | Sergio Perez (MEX) | Red Bull-Honda RBPT | +19.160s | | Mn, Hn, Hn |
| 4 | Charles Leclerc (MCO) | Ferrari | +23.623s | | M n, H n |
| 5 | Carlos Sainz (ESP) | Ferrari | +33.983s | | M n, H n |
| 6 | George Russell (GBR) | Mercedes | +38.724s | | \mathbf{M} n, \mathbf{M} n, \mathbf{H} n |
| 7 | Fernando Alonso (ESP) | Aston Martin-Mercedes | +43.414s | | Mn, Hn, Sn, Mn |
| 8 | Oscar Piastri (AUS) | McLaren-Mercedes | +56.198s | | \mathbf{M} n, \mathbf{M} u, \mathbf{H} n |
| 9 | Lewis Hamilton (GBR) | Mercedes | +57.986s | | Sn, Mn, Hn |
| 10 | Nico Hulkenberg (DEU) | Haas-Ferrari | +1m00.476s | | Mn, Hn, Hn |
| 11 | Esteban Ocon (FRA) | Alpine-Renault | +1m02.812s | | Mn, Hn, Hn |
| 12 | Alexander Albon (THA) | Williams-Mercedes | +1m05.506s | | \mathbf{M} n, \mathbf{M} n, \mathbf{H} n |
| 13 | Pierre Gasly (FRA) | Alpine-Renault | +1m09.223s | | M n, H n, H n, M n |
| 14 | Zhou Guanyu (CHN) | Sauber-Ferrari | +1m11.689s | | \mathbf{M} n, \mathbf{H} n, \mathbf{H} n, \mathbf{S} n |
| 15 | Lance Stroll (CAN) | Aston Martin-Mercedes | +1m22.786s | | Sn, Mn, Hn, Mn, Hu |
| 16 | Kevin Magnussen (DNK) | Haas-Ferrari | +1m27.533s | | Hn, Hn, Mn |
| 17 | Logan Sargeant (USA) | Williams-Mercedes | +1m35.110s | | Sn, Mn, Hn |
| R | Daniel Ricciardo (AUS) | RB-Honda RBPT | 33 laps-accident damage | | M n, M n |
| R | Yuki Tsunoda (JPN) | RB-Honda RBPT | 26 laps-accident | | Sn, Mn, Hn |
| R | Valtteri Bottas (FIN) | Sauber-Ferrari | 19 laps-engine | | M n, H n |

WEATHER Cloudy, air 20-22C track 26-30C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 112.748mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 124.665mph

| FAST | TEST LAPS | | | |
|------|------------|-----------|---------|-----|
| POS | DRIVER | TIME | GAP | LAP |
| 1 | Alonso | 1m37.810s | - | 45 |
| 2 | Verstappen | 1m38.406s | +0.596s | 33 |
| 3 | Zhou | 1m38.633s | +0.823s | 42 |
| 4 | Norris | 1m38.751s | +0.941s | 33 |
| 5 | Gasly | 1m39.198s | +1.388s | 40 |
| 6 | Leclerc | 1m39.384s | +1.574s | 33 |
| 7 | Perez | 1m39.388s | +1.578s | 33 |
| 8 | Stroll | 1m39.444s | +1.634s | 37 |
| 9 | Piastri | 1m39.739s | +1.929s | 18 |
| 10 | Sainz | 1m39.764s | +1.954s | 19 |
| 11 | Russell | 1m40.112s | +2.302s | 39 |
| 12 | Albon | 1m40.790s | +2.980s | 34 |
| 13 | Hulkenberg | 1m40.815s | +3.005s | 32 |
| 14 | Hamilton | 1m40.835s | +3.025s | 34 |
| 15 | Ocon | 1m40.937s | +3.127s | 33 |
| 16 | Ricciardo | 1m40.994s | +3.184s | 16 |
| 17 | Sargeant | 1m41.000s | +3.190s | 14 |
| 18 | Magnussen | 1m41.077s | +3.267s | 45 |
| 19 | Bottas | 1m41.276s | +3.466s | 11 |
| 20 | Tsunoda | 1m41.593s | +3.783s | 11 |

RACE BRIEFING

SPRINT PENALTY

ALONSO 10-second penalty and three licence points for causing a collision with Sainz

GP GRID PENALTY

SARGEANT required to start from the pitlane – car modified under parc ferme conditions

GP PENALTIES

STROLL 10s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Ricciardo

MAGNUSSEN 10s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Tsunoda

SARGEANT 10s penalty and two licence points for overtaking under safety car conditions

RICCIARDO Three-place grid drop for next race and two licence points for overtaking under safety car conditions

| LA | LAP CHART | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------|-------|---------------|------------|--------|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|-------|----------|------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 2 |
| | Verstappen | Perez | Alonso | Norris | Piastri | Leclerc | Sainz | Russell | Hulkenberg | Bottas | Stroll | Ricciardo | Ocon | Albon | Gasly | Zhou | Magnussen | Hamilton | Tsunoda | Sargeant |
| G | 1 | 11 | 14 | 4 | 81 | | | 63 | | 77 | | 3 | 31 | | | | 20 | | 22 | 2 |
| 1 | 1 | 14 | 11 | 4 | | | | _ | _ | _ | | | 23 | | 3 | | 24 | _ | | 2 |
| 2 | 1 | 14 | 11 11 | 4 | | | | $\overline{}$ | _ | _ | | | 23 | | 3 | | 20 | = | | 2 |
| 3 | 1 | | 11 | 4 | | | | | | | | | 2323 | | 3 | | 20 44 | = | | ١ |
| 5 | 1 | _ | 14 | - | | | | | | | | | 23 | | 3 | | 44 | _ | | |
| 6 | 1 | 11 | 14 | 4 | 81 | 63 | 16 | 55 | 18 | 27 | 77 | 31 | 23 | 10 | 3 | 22 | 44 | 20 | 24 | 2 |
| 7 | 1 | 11 | 4 | _ | | | | | | _ | _ | | 23 | | 3 | 22 | 44 | 20 | 24 | 2 |
| 8 | 1 | 11 | 4 | | | - | _ | | | | | | 10 | | | 44 | | 2 | 22 | |
| 9 | 1 | 11 | 4 | | | 16 | _ | | | | | | | | 20 | | | | 22 | |
| 10 11 | 1 | 11 11 | 4 | _ | _ | 16 55 | | | | | 20 10 | | | | 77 77 | | | _ | _ | |
| 12 | 1 | 11 | 4 | | 81 | | 3 | | 14 | | | | | | 31 | | | _ | _ | - |
| 13 | 1 | 4 | | | 81 | | 3 | _ | _ | _ | | | 77 | | _ | _ | | | 2 | 1 |
| 14 | 4 | 16 | 1 | 81 | 55 | 11 | 14 | 63 | 3 | 20 | 18 | 27 | 77 | 31 | 44 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 2 | 1 |
| 15 | 4 | 16 | 1 | 81 | 55 | 11 | 14 | 63 | 18 | 20 | 27 | 77 | 31 | 44 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16 | 4 | 1 | _ | | | | | | | | | | 31 | | | 23 | 3 | 24 | 2 | 1 |
| 17 | 4 | 1 | | | | | _ | _ | | | | | 44 | | | 3 | 23 | 24 | 2 | 1 |
| 18 19 | 4 | 4 | | | | | _ | _ | | | | | 44 44 | _ | 3 22 | | 24 24 | 2 | 10 10 | |
| 20 | 1 | 4 | | | | 63 | | | | - | | | 3 | _ | 23 | | 24 | | 20 | |
| 21 | 1 | 4 | | | | 63 | | | | | | | | | 23 | | 2 | | 20 | |
| 22 | 1 | 4 | | | | 63 | | | | | | | 18 | | | 2 | 44 | 10 | | |
| 23 | 1 | 11 | 4 | 16 | 14 | 81 | 63 | 55 | 27 | 3 | 31 | 18 | 22 | 23 | 2 | 24 | 44 | 20 | 10 | |
| 24 | 1 | 4 | 16 | 11 | 81 | 55 | 14 | 63 | 3 | | | | 31 | | | | | 24 | 10 | |
| 25 | 1 | 4 | | | | 14 | | | | | | | 44 | | | | | | 10 | |
| 26 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | | | | | | 18 | |
| 27 28 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2323 | | | | | | | |
| 29 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 23 | | | | | | | |
| 30 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 23 | | | | | | | |
| 31 | 1 | 4 | 16 | 11 | 14 | 55 | 63 | 81 | 3 | 27 | 44 | 31 | 23 | 2 | 24 | 10 | 20 | 18 | | |
| 32 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 23 | _ | _ | | | _ | | |
| 33 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | _ | _ | _ | _ | | | |
| 34 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | _ | _ | | | |
| 35 36 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| 37 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 10 | _ | | | | | | |
| 38 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 24 | = | | | | | | |
| 39 | 1 | | _ | _ | | | | | | | | | 24 | _ | | | | | | |
| 40 | 1 | | | | | | | | _ | _ | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| 41 | 1 | | | | | | | | _ | _ | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| 42 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | _ | | | | | | |
| 43 44 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 2020 | _ | | | | | | |
| 45 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | _ | _ | 20 | | | | | | | |
| 46 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | _ | = | | 20 | | | | | | | |
| 47 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | _ | = | _ | | 20 | | | | | | | |
| 48 | 1 | 4 | | | | | _ | _ | _ | | | | 20 | _ | = | _ | | | | |
| 49 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | _ | | | | 20 | | _ | _ | | | | |
| 50 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | | | | | | | |
| 51 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | | | | | | | |
| 52 53 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 20 10 | _ | _ | | | | | |
| | - | • | | -0 | | | | | | | | | _ | _ | _ | | | | | |
| 54 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 16 | 55 | 63 | 14 | 81 | 44 | 27 | 31 | 23 | 10 | 24 | 20 | 2 | 18 | | | |
| _ | 1 | 4 | | | 55 55 | | | | | | | | 10 10 | | | _ | _ | | | |



KEY: H-Hard M-Medium S-Soft I-Intermediate W-Wet n-Newset u-Used set

















1 Classification

KEY:

CHINESE GRAND PRIX DRIVER RATINGS

Putting together a perfect score was tough on a busy sprint weekend with rain and restarts thrown in – but Verstappen and Norris came closest

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

RED BULL



Started 1st — Result 1st

Misses perfect 10 by qualifying fourth for sprint, unable to switch on intermediate tyres. A used set for start of sprint and energy deployment issue held him back before he sealed win. Nailed GP start and restarts, with a lock-up, visor tear-off flapping about his air intake and late debris clip his only ruffles.



Started 2nd — Result 3rd

Felt traffic impacted last SQ3 effort. Struggled for traction early in sprint, then things fell his way with Sainz and Alonso battling. Qualified second for GP, blaming 0.3s gap to pole on poor rhythm. Bad start and pushing too hard early in each stint cost second as fortunes swung around VSC/SC.

MERCEDES



Started 18th — Result 9th

Sprint start positioning saw off Norris. Pulled away well but was never stopping Verstappen. Altered set-up to combat low-speed understeer contributed to Q1 mistake at hairpin exit. Steady climb in GP was chewing rear tyres, using gas to boost corner rotation. Great series of Turn 9 passes.

GEORGE RUSSELL
Started 8th — Result 6th

Blamed lost tyre temperature on first SQ2 run for exit. Fell back at sprint start then, as sole soft-tyred runner, passed Bottas and Magnussen in one lap before getting Zhou and a point. Headed Ferraris early in GP; fell back after pushing starting mediums too hard. Mercedes felt SC stops saved race.

FERRARI



Started 6th — Result 4th

Strong early GP pace helped make most of one-stopper, which needed the SC to work. SQ3 crash bent steering. Poor GP start and Sainz Turn 2 defence dropped him behind Russell. Did pounce well on Sainz there in the sprint battles. Turn 1 pass on Russell in GP was beautiful.



Started 7th — Result 5th

Couldn't get rear tyres warmed in SQ3. Lucky to get away with Q2 crash. Sprint attack on Alonso fine until he got run off. Borderline defence against Leclerc, then got the same at start of GP. Didn't have Leclerc's pace on medium rubber but was impressive on race's longest hard-tyre stint.

MCLAREN



Started 4th — Result 2nd

Built heat well in intermediate tyres to claim sprint pole. Paid price for hanging on too long alongside Hamilton at start, which left him sliding and overheating in pack. One-stop pace in GP was superb. Pulled clear of Leclerc after his SC pitstop gain, which was critical to holding off Perez.



Started **5th** — Result **8th**

Mistake and gearbox issue late in SQ3.
Behind Norris for most of sprint, his pace slower on the more durable rubber.
Also couldn't match Norris's GP pace, then Russell undercut him from fifth. Diffuser damage in first SC restart shambles.
Alonso caught hobbled car late on.

ASTON MARTIN



Started **3rd** — Result **7th**

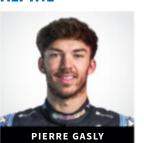
Took classy third in wet SQ3.
Matched it in Q3 despite Aston's dry deficit. Penalty for Sainz sprint contact caps his score. Superb at GP start to pass Perez, but pushing tyres early cost him in first stint. Lack of hards meant odd softs strategy around restarts. Made gains after late third stop.



Started 11th Result 15th

Qualified 20 combined places behind Alonso. Losing DRS meant 13th in sprint. Escaped penalty for shoving Hulkenberg in GP. Restart shunt with Ricciardo ended points hopes. Yes, Sainz's and Alonso's antics caused a chain reaction, but Stroll was alone in getting caught out.

ALPINE



Started **15th** Result **13th**

SQ1 result followed post-practice engine change after ERS issue. Almost squeezed by Ocon and Stroll early in sprint; Ocon later shoved him off. GP undone by 20s first stop, where his reaction to a brief 'go' signal meant the right-rear hit a thankfully uninjured mechanic.



Started 13th · Result 11th

Ended up with
Alpine's best GP
result of 2024.
Savagely dived
past his team-mate –
in attack and defence
– on way to 13th in
sprint. Chased Bottas
on the fringes of the
points early in the GP,
then was passed by
Hamilton after first
restart. Alonso's late
charge shuffled him
down to 11th.



WILLIAMS



Started 20th · Result 17th

Last in SQ1, saying he didn't get the best from the car. Lost touch with Albon in sprint after taking time to pass Hulkenberg. Spun on last Q1 lap. Ran at rear of GP on soft tyres early on. Pleased with pace on next stint on mediums, but couldn't fire up hards after the restarts and fell to last.



Started 14th-Result 12th

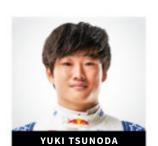
Gets bonus for escaping Q1 after failing to do so in SQ1.
Caught out by
Tsunoda in sprint and stayed behind. Felt lower GP wind helped car balance but, after jumping Ricciardo early, tyre deg was still an issue. Largely chased Ocon adrift of points on a weekend Williams struggled.

RB



Started 12th—Result Ret

Escaped SQ1
and Q1, feeling
his new chassis
had made a
noticeable difference.
Progress at sprint
start, then passed
Bottas late on. Lost
ground at GP start
with poor launch and
Gasly's Turn 6 attack.
Stroll shunt then put
him out. Penalised for
overtaking Hulkenberg
under second SC.



Started 19th — Result Ret

Struggled with the car's balance all weekend. Admitted he was to blame for SQ1 exit. Passed Hulkenberg late in sprint. Aced GP start against Hamilton, then made great Zhou/Magnussen double-pass before early pitstop. Finally muscled out of the race by Magnussen at first restart.

SAUBER



Started **16th**-Result **14th**

Inconsistent.
Made SQ3
impressively
when pressure
was on, but cracked in
Q1 with a lock-up.
Gained ground at
sprint start but lost
out in the GP. Moved
around the lower GP
order, but late stint
on soft tyres meant
attacking climb back
towards 13th where he
couldn't reach Gasly.



Started 10th—Result Ret

Made SQ3 in the tricky conditions, heading Zhou by a hefty 2.5s.
Knocked endplate against his team-mate on first sprint lap, which compromised pace. Dropped behind Stroll in GP. Was chasing Hulkenberg in scrap for last point when what Sauber called a "drivetrain issue" hit.

HAAS



Started 17th - Result 16th

Claimed decent
10th in sprint.
Felt weighbridge
call and traffic on
final flier led to Q1 exit.
Battled Zhou and
Hamilton early before
one-stop attempt
failed. Effectively
ended up on one
anyway following rash
Tsunoda shunt. Fight
against Stroll's faster
Aston later on was
well-judged, though.

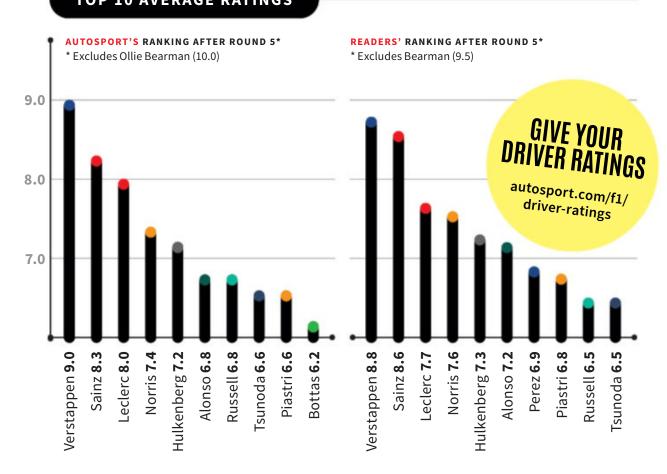


Started **9th** — Result **10th**

Fell short of SQ3, on wrong side of narrow split of progression.

Big tyre degradation meant fall from 13th to 19th in sprint. Super pass on Leclerc on first lap of GP, but Ferraris repassed before shove from Stroll. Hamilton and Alonso came past on otherwise great final stint preserving hard tyres.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS





HYPERCAR

LMGT3

Rain and strategy spell disaster for Ferrari

At the circuit named after its founder and his son, the Prancing Horse handed victory to Toyota in an eventful 6 Hours of Imola

GARY WATKINS

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY **JEP**



oyota triumphs in a World Endurance Championship race. Nothing unusual in that, of course. Yet the Japanese manufacturer didn't so much win the Imola 6 Hours as Ferrari lost it. The home marque was in the ascendent up the road from its factory last Sunday, only to throw it away. When rain arrived it got its strategy spectacularly wrong and its sparring partner nailed it spot-on as Mike Conway, Nyck de Vries and Kamui Kobayashi took an against-the-odds victory. Deep into the fourth hour, Ferrari was sitting pretty in 1-2 at the top

Deep into the fourth hour, Ferrari was sitting pretty in 1-2 at the top of the leaderboard, James Calado in the #51 Ferrari 499P Le Mans Hypercar ahead of Miguel Molina in the #50 sister factory car. Just after the clock hit four hours, the two factory cars and the satellite customer entry also run by AF Corse were in the pits having wet-

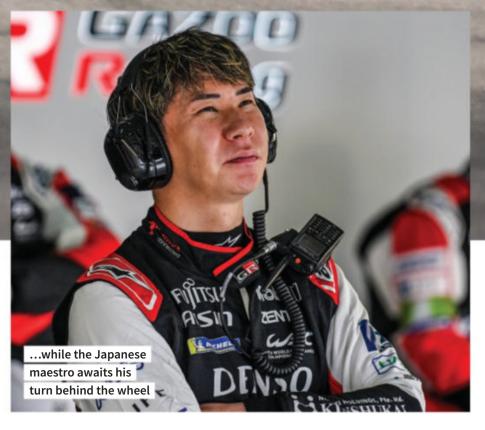
weather tyres bolted on. The problem was that the rest of the Hypercar field had long since taken grooved rubber, the majority four laps earlier. Suddenly the trio of 499Ps were down in sixth, seventh and eighth, Calado in the best-placed of them a minute and a half down on race leader Kobayashi's Toyota GR010 HYBRID LMH. The chance of victory for Ferrari in its back yard was gone.

It was a disastrous episode for Ferrari in front of a monster crowd at the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari – the three-day attendance was put at more than 73,000. It should have won this race easily, probably with a 1-2 result, perhaps even repeating the 1-2-3 of qualifying with the yellow independent car following, or in among the two red factory entries.

Antonio Fuoco, teamed with Molina and Nicklas Nielsen in #50,







had been six tenths up on best-of-the-rest Kevin Estre in the Qatarwinning Porsche 963 LMDh during Hyperpole qualifying. Over the dry portion of the race, it kept a margin of superiority around the 3.05-mile track. Ferrari maintained its top-three block to the first round of stops, Nielsen leading Antonio Giovinazzi (in the #51 car shared with Calado and Alessandro Pier Guidi) and Robert Kubica in the customer car that Robert Shwartzman had put second on the grid. The gap from first to fourth – the Porsche Penske Motorsport entry with Laurens Vanthoor at the wheel – was barely five seconds early on, before the Ferrari superiority was extended over the second stint. The 499P looked after its tyres better than its rivals at Imola, so much so that all three were able to open proceedings with a triple stint on the same set of medium Michelin rubber, though Nielsen got a new

left-rear at the first pitstop when falling pressure was detected.

But it all went wrong with the rain that arrived just before the second safety car of the race and intensified straight after it. Ferrari stopped too late with all three cars. It admitted that it misinterpreted the severity and persistence of the rain that soaked the track down at Rivazza, but left Tamburello initially bone dry. This error was compounded by a missed opportunity to split its strategies, and AF was in a better position to do so given the three cars under its umbrella. Ferrari held its hands up to both mistakes.

"We misjudged the situation; this is clear," said Giuliano Salvi, Ferrari's sportscar race and testing manager, who revealed that the team had been expecting the rain earlier. "Sometimes you look at the radar and you think it should rain and it doesn't, and "



you stop relying on the signal."

Salvi added that the message from the drivers was that they could handle the conditions on slicks. It became apparent that they could not when their rivals, Kobayashi in the race-leading Toyota included, started lapping upwards of 10s per lap faster after switching to the one spec of Michelin wet available. Ferrari conceded, too, that it should have played the percentages by splitting its strategies. Salvi revealed that it was actually in the plan. "We need to understand why this way to split didn't go through," he said. "At the moment there has not been the time to see and understand [what happened], but we need to revise our chain of communication, because we missed certain scenarios."

Salvi was happy to admit that Sunday was "a shitty day" for Ferrari, but stressed that there were positives to take away from Imola, not least that the car was competitive in a way it wasn't first time out in the WEC this season in the Qatar 1812Km in March. There was a helping hand from the Balance of Performance for last weekend, but he explained that there had been some good work post-Qatar: "For sure we developed the car in a proper way – the car was behaving very well." It should be pointed out, as well, that the characteristics of Imola didn't make it natural 499P territory – unlike the Circuit de la Sarthe at Le Mans, scene of the car's only victory last year.

Ferrari wasn't actually leading the race when the rain came. Giovinazzi had handed over to Calado under green-flag conditions, while the rest of the field gained time stopping during the virtual safety car that immediately followed and then led into the second safety car of the race. Nielsen, meanwhile, had been jumped by an opportunistic de Vries straight after a Full Course Yellow, the third of seven over the incident-packed six hours. The Toyota driver simply reacted quicker when the race went green. The AF customer car, driven by the two Roberts and Yifei Ye, was down in seventh before the pivotal stages of the race. The reason was that Kubica landed an early drive-through penalty for exceeding the 80km/h (50mph) FCY speed limit.



Kobayashi led by six seconds on the wet circuit from Estre after the trio of Ferraris made their belated stops for grooved rubber. The Japanese driver had a clear edge when the conditions were at their wettest. He drew the #7 Toyota away from the Porsche, stretching the lead to as much as 20s. The Toyota stopped for slicks before the Porsche – Kobayashi didn't have a choice, the car was close to exhausting its energy allocation for the stint – and Estre's two extra laps on wets allowed him to close to within eight seconds.

Estre edged towards the Toyota, but his charge could be described as a phantom one. Race control informed the team early in the final hour that the Porsche had been given a five-second penalty for overtaking during the hour-four safety car. It meant that the Frenchman would have had to pull that gap on the Toyota to seal the victory had he actually made it past. PPM, however, opted not to tell the driver. There was no point in blunting his motivation, it thought, in the expectation that those extra two laps completed by the Toyota after the last pitstop would come into play.

"We were a bit confused what was going to happen," explained Estre, who was informed of the penalty with five laps to go after clipping the gravel at Variante Villeneuve and told that discretion was now to be





"We talked about whether we would need a splash at the end. The Porsche was catching up fast"

the better part of valour. "We were saving fuel and the Toyota stopped two laps before us. Either they were going to have to save a lot more fuel than us or they were going to have to pit again for a splash."

The same thought process was going through the minds of the engineers in the Toyota camp. "We talked about whether we would need a splash at the end," related Kobayashi. "The Porsche was catching up fast. I just needed to survive."

Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director David Floury was effusive in his praise of Kobayashi after the race. "When we started the final stint we were scratching our heads a bit, wondering how we were going to manage it," explained Floury. "Kamui did a fantastic job saving energy while staying in front. We did the job today. The team did the perfect execution and Kamui was brilliant at the end."

Porsche was far from despondent to miss out on the victory. It had low expectations coming into Imola, believing it would be its worst race of the season for the 963: the car didn't like having its ride height picked up for the bumps and kerb-bashing that is key to a good lap time. "We would have taken this result before the weekend," said Estre. "When we came here a month and a half ago for testing we knew it was going to be a hard one, and it became even harder with the [BoP] changes after Qatar. Our tyre degradation was higher than the Ferrari and a bit higher than the Toyota. In a dry race we could have been P4 or P5."

Kobayashi took the chequered flag almost exactly two seconds ahead of the Porsche, which became 7.1s once the penalty had been applied. The second PPM Porsche shared by Matt Campbell, Frederic Makowiecki and Michael Christensen ended up third, a further 18s in arrears. Porsche, unlike Ferrari, did opt for a two-pronged strategy when the rain came and Campbell was the loser there, staying out for two more laps than the sister car.

9X8 = TWO POINTS FOR REVISED PEUGEOT ON DEBUT

A couple of points for the heavily revised Peugeot 9X8 at Imola may not sound like the kind of result the French manufacturer was looking for on the car's debut. Not after it missed out on second place with the original iteration of its Le Mans Hypercar at Qatar for the want of a few litres of fuel. But it reckoned that it had got the most out of the car on Sunday, at least the #93 entry shared by Nico Muller, Mikkel Jensen and Jean-Eric Vergne that chalked up a score with ninth position.

"I think we maximised what we could do with the pace of the car," said Peugeot Sport technical director Olivier Jansonnie. "On the positive side we are quite happy with our strategy when the rain was coming and putting on the rain tyres at the right moment."

Peugeot knew it would be up against it at Imola with the Balance of Performance the new car had been given – 31kg up in weight and 10kW down in power on the old wingless Pug. "The BoP had to change, that was clear, but we were not expecting it to be that tough," continued Jansonnie.

He explained that he was surprised at the BoP for the new Peugeot, dubbed simply the 9X8 2024, while stressing that he wasn't criticising the FIA and the Automobile Club de l'Ouest. Jansonnie pointed out that Peugeot Sport only knows the numbers for his car and that only the rulemakers have a global picture.

Peugeot knows that it still has work to do dragging performance out of a car that has come through more than 12,000 miles of testing so far. They have been focused on reliability over the course of four endurance simulations aimed at preparing the car for the big one in June, the Le Mans 24 Hours. "We have

"The BoP had to change, that was clear, but we were not expecting it to be that tough"

a lot to learn with this car," Jansonnie explained. "I am not saying we are starting all over again, but there is a lot to learn on the set-up."

Loic Duval, who came home 14th in #94 after it was delayed in the first-lap accident and then by a bodywork-damaging puncture, reckons there's still some "digging into pure performance to be done". The question is whether the heaviest car in the Hypercar field at Imola needs a little bit of help from the rulemakers as well.







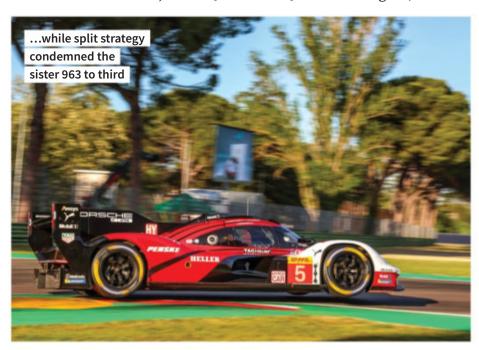


Fourth place was as good as it got for Ferrari, Fuoco's late charge on slicks snatching the position from Brendon Hartley in the second Toyota at Tamburello on the final lap. The Kiwi had stopped a lap before Kobayashi, so had an even tougher job eking out his energy. It was another low-key weekend for reigning WEC champions Hartley, Sebastien Buemi and Ryo Hirakawa on the way to fifth. Hartley spun in qualifying, Buemi got bottled up behind Rene Rast in the best of the WRT BMW M Hybrid V8s in the early stages, and there were a couple of slow pitstops.

The BMW that Rast shared with Robin Frijns and Sheldon van der Linde ended up an encouraging sixth, the car's pace and position representing a big step forward on Qatar. Van der Linde might have been within sniffing distance of the two cars ahead of him at the end, rather than a lap down, but for a double whammy of a botched final pitstop. Van der Linde locked up the rear as he headed for his pit stall, and the resulting manoeuvres to get the car into position resulted in a drive-through penalty.

The second Ferrari came home seventh after making an extra pitstop: Pier Guidi stayed on wets on taking over from Calado with more than an hour to go, and then had to come in with 40 minutes left to change to slicks. He finished one place up on the 'indie' Ferrari, which struggled on the damp surface on slicks in the closing stages.

Peugeot notched up some points on the debut of its new 9X8 2024 LMH with Nico Muller, Mikkel Jensen and Jean-Eric Vergne (see



"I don't think we should get overexcited because it was a race decided on a tyre call"

panel, p33), while Cadillac rescued a point from the weekend with its solo Ganassi-run V-Series. R driven by Alex Lynn and Earl Bamber. The third quickest package in Qatar fell down the pecking order at Imola, though it might have finished deeper into the points but for rear-wing damage sustained in a first-lap accident at Tamburello and then a puncture resulting from debris.

Isotta Fraschini driver Jean-Karl Vernay triggered the incident when he locked up as the field concertinaed ahead of him. He tagged Matthieu Vaxiviere's Alpine A424 LMDh, which bumped BMW's Marco Wittmann and Peugeot driver Paul di Resta. Wittmann was the big loser: 54 minutes went west to bodywork and suspension repairs. The car made the finish only to be disqualified for not entering parc ferme under its own power.

The Jota Porsche team didn't have a good day at the office, its two 963s coming home 11th and 13th at the end of a weekend during which they failed to get close to the factory cars. Phil Hanson, Oliver Rasmussen and Jenson Button might have been in the points had not the windscreen wiper failed on the last-named, while Callum Ilott went off twice in the sister car he shared with Will Stevens and Norman Nato. The team suspected that the offs weren't entirely his fault and were investigating a possible technical problem post-race.

Lamborghini expressed satisfaction with 12th position after another clean race for its solo SC63. Ditto Alpine, which got both its A424s to the chequered flag in 13th and 15th positions, which became 15th and 17th after both cars were penalised because Jules Gounon and Nicolas Lapierre failed to achieve the minimum drive time.

Toyota was certainly satisfied with the result, if not its performance in comparison to the Ferrari. Floury was under no illusions, however, that the champion team for the first three seasons of the Hypercar class is fully back in the mix. "I don't think we should get overexcited because it was a race decided on a tyre call," he said. "If you look at pure pace on fastest lap times, Ferrari is four tenths faster than us. It is not something we are happy with."



HYPERCAR

LMGT3

M4 pair keep going as rival hopes go west

The Belgian WRT team is the king of strategy, and that helped its BMWs to a 1-2 in a challenging race at Imola

JAMES NEWBOLD

W

RT believes that it didn't have the fastest car in the World Endurance Championship's LMGT3 class at Imola, but superb race management delivered a first series win for its BMW M4 GT3 as Augusto Farfus, Sean Gelael and Darren Leung led a team 1-2. Their #31

machine, qualified fourth by reigning British GT champion Leung, didn't hit the front until lap 139 and led for a total of just 46 laps – 72 fewer than the championship-leading Manthey-run PureRxcing Porsche that finished third. But at several junctures in the weather-affected 6 Hours, WRT got the critical decisions right.

First of these was the timing of Leung's second pitstop on lap 57, when he handed over to Gelael. It came seconds after completing his 1h45m minimum driving time, having been ordered to slow his pace in the closing laps of his double stint to stretch his energy allocation. "We weren't pegging him back enough," revealed WRT's GT programme manager Kurt Mollekens. "So we went, 'OK Darren, we need to lose six seconds on this lap' – it was five, but we gave it a bit of margin. He ended up being five seconds, so that was perfect."

Poleman Alexander Malykhin controlled the early phases in the PureRxcing Porsche and pitted on the same lap as Leung, handing over to Joel Sturm, but was fractionally under on his drive time and would have to return to the cockpit later. An opening-lap safety car called for the Hypercar chaos that required the field to drive through the pits – which doesn't count towards driving time – was crucial, according to Sturm. "It was [less than] one minute he was to do left in the car, so we were a bit unlucky with that," he said.





Similarly impacted was Francois Heriau's AF Corse Ferrari 296. He'd overtaken Leung, but pitted one lap sooner and stayed aboard to trail Sturm, holding up Valentino Rossi (in for Ahmad Al Harthy in the #46 WRT BMW) until the Frenchman eventually swapped to Simon Mann. This offset strategy lifted Gelael to third and, while Mann passed Rossi to take second following the next cycle of stops, he had to stay in the car when WRT could plug in factory drivers Maxime Martin and Farfus – just as the weather began to turn. The timing of the first driver changes had impacted the following stints profoundly. Mollekens noted: "That was what it was all about – getting your bronze through their driving time over two stints."

The timing of a Full Course Yellow, when Sturm had just pitted from the lead, appeared to hand PureRxcing a lifeline. Malykhin completed his time under the caution, before relaying Sturm for another single stint still in the lead. But when he handed over to Klaus Bachler the Porsche took on wet-weather tyres, only to ditch them again after the Austrian's first 15-lap stint. The tide





"I don't think we had the fastest car today. If the race had been full dry, we would have been P3, P4"

was turning – in the three laps before Bachler pitted, he lost 11.524s to Farfus. "At that moment we thought it's going to rain more," Sturm shrugged. "It was the safer decision."

"That was key, keeping them out on the slicks," noted Mollekens. "But speaking to Maxime and Augusto, it wasn't easy."

The Porsche was never able to challenge the BMWs the rest of the way, although Sturm believes Manthey "didn't really have the pace advantage [of qualifying] today so we knew it would be quite difficult to win". Third, he added, "was definitely the best we could do".

The battle for victory therefore came down to a straight fight between the BMWs. "It was pretty much a guessing game on how could you push," reflected Farfus. While sector three was "extremely wet", the middle sector was almost bone dry.

Mollekens explained that Farfus "had a bit more pressure and a bit more temperature" in his Goodyears and, after Martin straightlined the Tamburello chicane, he made the move stick into the Variante Alta. But Farfus hadn't actually needed to pass on-track. Rossi had sped under an FCY, and Martin had to serve a drive-through penalty, which meant he finished 22.8s behind.

"I don't think we had the fastest car today," Farfus said. "If the race would have been full dry, we would have been probably around the edge of the podium, P3, P4. We stayed calm, didn't panic on the radio and this is what made the difference."

The cars that finished fourth and fifth were also culpable of FCY speeding and provided an entertaining climax. After taking over the Ferrari from Mann, Alessio Rovera was the fastest driver on the track in the closing stages and caught Alex Riberas's Heart of Racing Aston



Martin Vantage, which had been on the fringes of the podium all afternoon. Both cars plunged into the gravel contesting the entry to Tamburello with a little over 10 minutes to go, but Rovera claimed the place before the Aston was penalised a further 10s post-race for refuelling with the engine running.

The United Autosports McLaren 720S GT3 Evo of Josh Caygill, Nico Pino and Marino Sato also stuck with slicks and unleashed blistering pace in the closing stages, despite an ineffective windscreen wiper, to finish sixth ahead of TF Sport's Corvettes, which had shown leading pace in Friday's practice sessions. "It wasn't a real picture," team boss Tom Ferrier explained, due to malfunctioning torque sensors, but he described himself as "fairly chirpy" after an encouraging race showed "a step forward" over its bow with the Z06 GT3. Rin Qatar.

P39 FULL RESULTS



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| | SULTS WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 2/8, DRIVERS | IMOLA (ITA), 21 APRIL (205 LAPS – 625.314 MILES) | CLASS | TIME |
|----|--|---|----------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Mike Conway (GBR) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Nyck de Vries (NLD) | Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID | Hypercar | 6h00m34.717s |
| 2 | Laurens Vanthoor (BEL) Kevin Estre (FRA) Andre Lotterer (DEU) | Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963 | Hypercar | +7.081s |
| 3 | Frederic Makowiecki (FRA) Matt Campbell (AUS) Michael Christensen (DNK) | Porsche Penske Motorsport / Porsche 963 | Hypercar | +25.626s |
| 4 | Nicklas Nielsen (DNK) Antonio Fuoco (ITA) Miguel Molina (ESP) | Ferrari AF Corse / Ferrari 499P | Hypercar | +31.469s |
| 5 | Sebastien Buemi (CHE) Brendon Hartley (NZL) Ryo Hirakawa (JPN) | Toyota Gazoo Racing / Toyota GR010 HYBRID | Hypercar | +33.777s |
| 6 | Rene Rast (DEU) Sheldon van der Linde (ZAF) Robin Frijns (NLD) | BMW M Team WRT / BMW M Hybrid V8 | Hypercar | -1lap |
| 7 | Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA) Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA) James Calado (GBR) | Ferrari AF Corse / Ferrari 499P | Hypercar | -1lap |
| 8 | Robert Kubica (POL) Robert Shwartzman (ISR) Yifei Ye (CHN) | AF Corse / Ferrari 499P | Hypercar | -1lap |
| 9 | Nico Muller (CHE) Mikkel Jensen (DNK) Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA) | Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8 2024 | Hypercar | -2 laps |
| 10 | Alex Lynn (GBR) Earl Bamber (NZL) | Cadillac Racing (Ganassi) / Cadillac V-Series.R | Hypercar | -2 laps |
| 11 | Phil Hanson (GBR) Jenson Button (GBR) Oliver Rasmussen (DNK) | Jota / Porsche 963 | Hypercar | -2 laps |
| 12 | Mirko Bortolotti (ITA) Edoardo Mortara (CHE) Daniil Kvyat (RUS) | Lamborghini Iron Lynx / Lamborghini SC63 | Hypercar | -2 laps |
| 13 | Will Stevens (GBR) Callum Ilott (GBR) Norman Nato (FRA) | Jota/Porsche963 | Hypercar | -5laps |
| 14 | Paul di Resta (GBR) Loic Duval (FRA) Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL) | Peugeot TotalEnergies / Peugeot 9X8 2024 | Hypercar | -6laps |
| 15 | Charles Milesi (FRA) Paul-Loup Chatin (FRA) Jules Gounon (FRA) | Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech) / Alpine A424 | Hypercar | -6laps |
| 16 | Jean-Karl Vernay (FRA) Antonio Serravalle (CAN) Carl Bennett (USA) | IsottaFraschini(Duqueine)/IsottaFraschiniTipo6CompetizioneLMH | Hypercar | -14 laps |
| 17 | Matthieu Vaxiviere (FRA) Nicolas Lapierre (FRA) Mick Schumacher (DEU) | Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech) / Alpine A424 | Hypercar | -15 laps |
| 18 | Darren Leung (GBR) Sean Gelael (IDN) Augusto Farfus (BRA) | Team WRT / BMW M4 GT3 | LMGT3 | -18 laps |
| 19 | Ahmad Al Harthy (OMN) Valentino Rossi (ITA) Maxime Martin (BEL) | Team WRT / BMW M4 GT3 | LMGT3 | -18 laps |
| 20 | Alex Malykhin (BLR) Joel Sturm (DEU) Klaus Bachler (AUT) | Manthey PureRxcing / Porsche 911 GT3-R | LMGT3 | -19 laps |
| 21 | Francois Heriau (FRA) Simon Mann (USA) Alessio Rovera (ITA) | Vista AF Corse / Ferrari 296 GT3 | LMGT3 | -19laps |
| 22 | Ian James (GBR) Daniel Mancinelli (ITA) Alex Riberas (ESP) | Heart of Racing Team (Prodrive) / Aston Martin Vantage GT3 | LMGT3 | -20 laps |
| 23 | Josh Caygill (GBR) Nico Pino (CHL) Marino Sato (JPN) | United Autosports / McLaren 720S GT3 Evo | LMGT3 | -20 laps |
| 24 | Tom van Rompuy (BEL) Rui Andrade (PRT) Charlie Eastwood (GBR) | TF Sport / Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R | LMGT3 | -20 laps |
| 25 | Hiroshi Koizumi (JPN) Sebastien Baud (FRA) Daniel Juncadella (ESP) | TF Sport / Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R | LMGT3 | -20 laps |
| 26 | Ryan Hardwick (USA) Zacharie Robichon (CAN) Ben Barker (GBR) | Proton Competition / Ford Mustang GT3 | LMGT3 | -21 laps |
| 27 | Clement Mateu (FRA) Erwan Bastard (FRA) Marco Sorensen (DNK) | D'Station Racing (TF) / Aston Martin Vantage GT3 | LMGT3 | -21 laps |
| 28 | James Cottingham (GBR) Nicolas Costa (BRA) Gregoire Saucy (CHE) | United Autosports / McLaren 720S GT3 Evo | LMGT3 | -21 laps |
| 29 | Thomas Flohr (CHE) Francesco Castellacci (ITA) Davide Rigon (ITA) | Vista AF Corse / Ferrari 296 GT3 | LMGT3 | -21 laps |
| 30 | Claudio Schiavoni (ITA) Matteo Cressoni (ITA) Franck Perera (FRA) | Iron Lynx / Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo2 | LMGT3 | -22 laps |
| 31 | Arnold Robin (FRA) Timur Boguslavskiy (RUS) Kelvin van der Linde (ZAF) | AKKODIS ASP Team / Lexus RC F GT3 | LMGT3 | -22 laps |
| 32 | Esteban Masson (FRA) Takeshi Kimura (JPN) Jose Maria Lopez (ARG) | AKKODIS ASP Team / Lexus RC F GT3 | LMGT3 | -23 laps |
| 33 | Yasser Shahin (AUS) Morris Schuring (NLD) Richard Lietz (AUT) | Manthey EMA / Porsche 911 GT3-R | LMGT3 | -34 laps |
| EX | Marco Wittmann (DEU) Dries Vanthoor (BEL) Raffaele Marciello (ITA) | BMW M Team WRT / BMW M Hybrid V8 | Hypercar | -42 laps |
| R | Neel Jani (CHE) Harry Tincknell (GBR) Julien Andlauer (FRA) | Proton Competition / Porsche 963 | Hypercar | 167 laps-MGU |
| R | Giorgio Roda (ITA) Mikkel Overgaard Pedersen (DNK) Dennis Olsen (NOR) | Proton Competition / Ford Mustang GT3 | LMGT3 | 82 laps-diffuser |
| R | Sarah Bovy (BEL) Doriane Pin (FRA) Michelle Gatting (DNK) | Iron Dames (Iron Lynx) / Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo2 | LMGT3 | 33 laps-floor/electrical |

 $In each car, first-named driver started the race. \textbf{Winners' average speed} \ 104.051 mph. \textbf{Fastest lap Fuoco} \ 1 m 31.794 s, 119.627 mph. \textbf{LMGT3 Rovera} \ 1 m 42.257 s, 107.387 mph.$

QUALIFYING

1 Fuoco 1m29.466s; 2 Shwartzman 1m29.885s; 3 Pier Guidi 1m29.953s; 4 Estre 1m30.101s; 5 Campbell 1m30.385s; 6 Kobayashi 1m30.410s; 7 Rast 1m30.600s; 8 Hartley 1m30.652s; 9 Ilott 1m30.656s; 10 Andlauer 1m30.692s; 11 Hanson 1m31.322s; 12 Lynn 1m31.397s; 13 D Vanthoor 1m31.549s; 14 Vandoorne 1m31.651s; 15 Vergne 1m31.748s; 16 Bortolotti 1m31.862s; 17 Chatin 1m31.980s; 18 Lapierre 1m32.054s; 19 Vernay 1m33.575s; 20 Malykhin 1m42.365s; 21 James 1m43.058s; 22 Al Harthy 1m43.099s; 23 Leung 1m43.105s; 24 Bovy 1m43.151s; 25 Roda 1m43.229s; 26 Shahin 1m43.399s; 27 Heriau 1m43.523s; 28 Flohr 1m43.650s; 29 Cottingham 1m43.835s; 30 van Rompuy 1m43.897s; 31 Mateu 1m43.947s; 32 Koizumi 1m44.108s; 33 Hardwick 1m44.118s; 34 Caygill 1m44.291s; 35 Robin 1m44.347s; 36 Schiavoni 1m46.254s; 37 Kimura no time.

CHAMPIONSHIP Hypercar drivers

1 Lotterer/Estre/L Vanthoor 56; 2 Kobayashi/Conway/de Vries 40;

3 Makowiecki/Campbell/Christensen 39; 4 Ilott/Nato/Stevens 27; 5 Fuoco/Molina/ Nielsen 25; 6 Kubica/Shwartzman/Ye 22.

$Hypercar\,manu facturers$

1 Porsche 57; 2 Toyota 48; 3 Ferrari 31; 4 BMW 17; 5 Alpine 15; 6 Peugeot 4; 7 Lamborghini 3; 8 Cadillac 2; 9 Isotta Fraschini 0.

LMGT3 drivers

1 Malykhin/ Sturm/Bachler 54; 2 Farfus/ Leung/Gelael 37; 3 Riberas/

Mancinelli/James 37; 4Al Harthy/Martin/Rossi 36;

5 Mateu/Bastard/Sorensen 24; 6 Rovera/Heriau/Mann 21.

Ogier strikes as rivals hit late drama

A three-way fight for victory was turned on its head in a handful of minutes – and it was the eight-time champion who emerged triumphant

TOM HOWARD

PHOTOGRAPHY McKLEIN

A

t a time of uncertainty over the technical rules for the World Rally Championship next year, the intense fight for victory on Rally Croatia provided a great advert for the series. Toyota's Sebastien Ogier emerged victorious from a tense and dramatic three-way fight

with title contenders Thierry Neuville and Elfyn Evans, to become the fourth different winner of 2024 from as many events.

To continue the numerical symmetry, this was Croatia's fourth appearance on the WRC calendar. It will, however, forever be associated with the death of the much-loved Craig Breen in a testing crash and, one year on, the talented Irishman was in the thoughts of the WRC fraternity, while Hyundai paid tribute by adding the Irish colours to the front and roof of its cars.

While Croatia triggers emotions, the rally itself over the past four years has provided gripping fights for victory thanks to its demanding, changeable-grip asphalt roads. And yet again it delivered a thriller. Truth be told, Ogier wasn't expecting to record a 59th career win given his road position. Even sitting 11.6 seconds adrift of Neuville's Hyundai heading into the final day, the eight-time world champion continued to downplay his chances. But such was the drama of the final day, and Ogier and co-driver Vincent Landais managed to survive the several wild moments served up to shoot from third to score a shock triumph, Ogier's 100th career podium.

"These [100 podiums] are things that you never think you will reach in your life, so I take that with pleasure and a smile," reflected Ogier. "It has been a tough one, it has been a very eventful weekend. We knew coming here the starting position would be not in our favour, so we had to go for the risk option. I have done a couple of small mistakes this weekend and managed to not have too big a consequence, and a bit of luck was on my side."

Risk-versus-reward strategies are familiar in motorsport and Croatia offered up a perfect example. It was pure luck as to whether the slightest of mistakes were punished severely or not.

One aspect that was predictable was the advantage of starting at the top of the road order, since with every pass more and more dirt was dragged onto the road surface. This meant that championship leader Neuville and title rival Evans were presented with the best conditions. Neuville hammered that advantage home on the first stage to post a time 6.6s faster than Evans's Toyota,



despite reporting a "hell of a lot of understeer" from his i20 N. While Neuville was clearly not totally comfortable with his car's handling, the time set the tone of the day and Ogier, starting sixth on the road, declared "it was impossible" to match Neuville's pace.

That was the biggest margin the Belgian would have across the morning loop, but three wins from four stages put the Hyundai driver – albeit a frustrated one – into an 8.6s lead over Evans, with Ogier already 21.5s in arrears.

"I have to be so smooth and clean," said Neuville after stage four, before going on to extend his lead to 10.1s after the next test, which followed a tyre-fitting zone, and where light snow began to fall. "There is no way for me to push, otherwise it doesn't work. I would like to go faster. It's very dangerous to be honest as we had no information from the route note crew and, at that speed we are going, there are plenty of surprises. You have to trust your feeling and keep your eyes wide open. Nobody told us it was going to snow in there."

On stage six came one of two small errors that would prove costly for Neuville. A rock lying in the middle of the road knocked a tyre off the rim, resulting in his lead being reduced to 0.1s. The momentum swung towards Evans, who moved into a 1.6s lead heading into the final stage of the loop.

Friday ended with one of the rarest of eventualities triggered by an impressive response from Neuville, who "had to give everything"



"You have to trust your feeling and keep your eyes wide open. Nobody said it was going to snow"

to claw back the time. As both crews returned to service, the rally lead was shared; Neuville and Evans couldn't be split, stopping the clocks with identical overall times after more than 70 competitive stage miles.

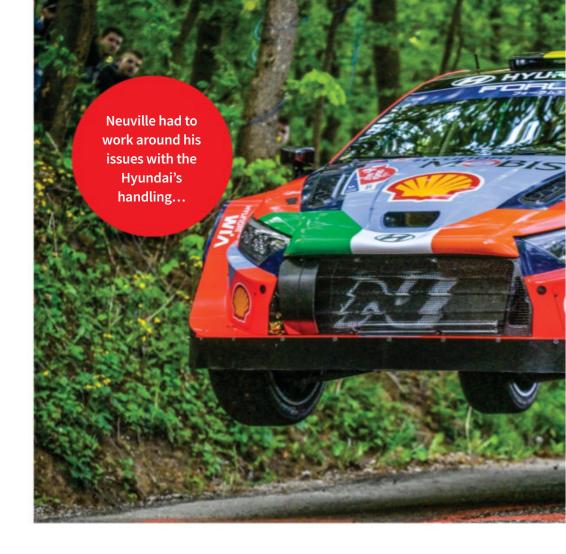
"It was looking like it was going to be a tough day for us because Thierry was so strong on the first stage, and I thought our chances were not going to be so great," said Toyota team principal Jari-Matti Latvala. "But the drivers improved over the day and eventually having exactly the same time with Thierry and Elfyn is something special."

While Evans felt he "had left some time on the table", he believed that the battle at the front outlined why the current rules are a success. "We know that the technical formula has worked for many years now and the cars and the battles are always close – like I've always said that side works," he argued, hinting at the discussions surrounding proposed changes for next year.

While the sharing of the rally lead took the spotlight, headlines were also spared for Ogier, who delivered a stunning stage eight >>>







"The level of competitiveness is mindblowing and this fight has been pretty amazing"

win by 9.2s from M-Sport driver Adrien Fourmaux, who unlocked the pace of his Ford Puma, which was debuting an upgraded rear wing. The effort ensured that the fight for the victory was a threeway battle, Ogier ending Friday 6.6s behind.

All three Hyundai drivers reported handling issues with their i20 Ns and, while Neuville was able to work around his issues, Ott Tanak and Andreas Mikkelsen struggled. Tanak, desperately needing to kick-start his season, declared he "struggled more than in Monte Carlo", before small improvements in the afternoon helped his cause. Tanak ended the day 41.1s adrift and 11.6s ahead of Fourmaux, who managed to keep pace with the 2019 world champion.

The top six was completed by Toyota's Takamoto Katsuta, unhappy with his performance ahead of a frustrated Mikkelsen, who was struggling to tame his Hyundai's nervous rear end. The Rally1 field was completed by M-Sport's Gregoire Munster, who enjoyed a trouble-free run in his Ford.

With significant rain forecast, the feeling in the service park was that Saturday would be akin to effectively starting a whole new rally. Focus switched to tyre strategies, with Toyota opting for packages slightly more focused towards wet weather than Hyundai and M-Sport. The rain largely stayed away from the stages, with only small light showers arriving, meaning the roads across the eight stages were mostly dry. This played into Neuville's hands – he







managed to open up a 4.7s lead by the time the crews headed to midday service. But Evans refused to fold as the titanic scrap showed no signs of relenting. And when a rain shower arrived in stage 13 he pounced, taking 6.7s out of Neuville to move into a 2s lead.

Neuville responded again as his deft tyre management came to the fore across the remainder of the afternoon, held on dry roads. He won the final three stages to retake the lead, carrying a 4.9s advantage into Sunday, and claiming 18 provisional points in the process to Evans's 15 points. Although enticed by the prospect of a rally victory over his title rival, there was unusual extra motivation at play between Neuville and his co-driver Martijn Wydaeghe that proved expensive for the navigator.

"It started on the recce because the last stage of the Saturday loop is 9.11km, so I said at the start if you are able to do two fastest times on that stage, I was to buy a [Porsche] 911, but that was maybe a most stupid decision I took in my life," rued Wydaeghe after Neuville duly delivered on the stages in question.

"I was very happy when we got the message that we were fastest," smiled Neuville. "I think everybody knew [about the promise]."

The gamble was not lost on Hyundai team principal Cyril Abiteboul: "We were all smiling, laughing, holding our breath and biting our nails as we could see that he was pushing very hard. I think it's good as you need to want something in sport today. I think Thierry wants it more than other drivers. But my gosh, the level of competitiveness is mindblowing and indeed this fight between Thierry and Elfyn has been pretty amazing."

Evans felt that "it didn't need a lot of rain for it to swing to our favour", but ultimately came up short, while Ogier could count himself fortunate to end the day in third. He was 11.6s adrift after a couple of wild moments, the most eyebrow-raising triggered by a small jump in stage 11.

"It was a massive moment, it was close to a crash," said Ogier, who picked up 13 points while heading Tanak (10) and Fourmaux (8), who continued to impress, winning stage nine to sit fifth overall.



"I braked too much over a small jump but still I surprisingly had a small kick from the rear and then suddenly I had a massive oversteer into the corner and I felt like I was drifting on snow or gravel. I kept the pedal down and total lock and it was nearly not coming back."

It seemed that the victory would be played out between Neuville and Evans, since Ogier hadn't totally gelled with his GR Yaris on Sunday morning. Evans's decision to select more hard tyres initially paid off, cutting the gap to Neuville to 2.6s in stage 17. But the rally turned on its head following the first run through the Zagorska Sela-Kumrovec test, which would also host the end-of-rally Power Stage.

In the space of eight minutes, Neuville, Evans, Fourmaux and Tanak all endured off-road excursions. First, Tanak was incredibly

"I had massive oversteer. I kept the pedal down and total lock and it was nearly not coming back"

lucky to return from scaling a grass bank at speed – he described it "as more than a moment". But his rivals were not so lucky.

Fourmaux had driven quickly and smartly across the challenging road conditions, before a compression caught out the Frenchman. His Ford Puma clipped an anti-cut device, which damaged his steering arm, necessitating a 16-minute repair at the side of the stage. Crucially he remained in the rally and ending up winning the Power Stage thanks to his handiwork.

"It was a really small mistake and big consequence," said Fourmaux, who left Croatia still third in the championship after salvaging 13 points. "It was a bit frustrating but at the end of the day it's rally. At the end I think it makes a good story as we fixed the car at the side of the road and then we did the fastest time on the Power Stage."

Incredibly, Neuville and Evans were also caught out, effectively extinguishing their victory hopes in an instant. A late pacenote contributed to Neuville sliding heavily into a grass bank, which ripped the rear wing from the Hyundai, costing him over 20s and the rally lead. "I tried my best to avoid it, but we were just far too late and when I got the pacenote I immediately hit the brakes, but the corner was so much tighter and there was nothing I could do," he sighed.

Evans also lost traction clipping a bank with the Toyota's right-rear that pitched the GR Yaris into a spin. Around 20s were conceded, but the Welshman remained in second. Ogier took advantage of the eight minutes of madness to move into a shock lead.

"I am just so disappointed with my tyre choice this morning, it was quite a big error to go so brave," added Evans. "Of course, the



spin happened as a result of the hard tyre on the rear, so it was definitely a mistake to go with that choice today."

Neuville remained in the fight with an "undriveable" Hyundai featuring a rear wing similar to an open Formula 1 DRS flap, and had to settle for third overall.

Evans managed to haul his damaged GR Yaris to 6.4s away from Ogier after the new leader survived a scare in the penultimate stage. As is the case with Toyota, there was no decision to play the team orders game to help Evans. Asked if he was prepared to give the win to Evans, Ogier said: "Of course, if you pay a lot. May the best man win, that's what sport should be." Evans replied: "I'm not sure I can afford Seb's idea of a lot of money."

In truth there wasn't a lot Ogier could do to help Evans by virtue of the points system. And so Ogier held his nerve to secure a surprise win by 9.7s from Evans, with Neuville 45.8s adrift in third. Evans and Neuville both scored 19 points from the new system to ensure that the Hyundai man continues to lead Evans by six points in the standings. Tanak was the biggest winner of the WRC's scoring method with 20 points, one fewer than Ogier. Evans felt that his battle with Neuville yielded no reward due to the points system.

Neuville was clearly frustrated to let what would have been one of his finest victories slip away, but is aware that the championship battle is about to get harder. "Despite not scoring many points today we were still the third best performer and equal with Evans," he concluded. "We can't say it was a disaster. I'm happy to still be in the lead because it is no secret that from Portugal [in May] onwards it is going to be tough for us with several gravel rallies in a row." "





WRC2: GRYAZIN LEADS CITROEN 1-2



Nikolay Gryazin ignited his WRC2 title hopes with a dominant run to victory as Citroen scored a 1-2 with its upgraded C3 Rally2 car. Gryazin and co-driver Konstantin Aleksandrov were never headed across the 20 demanding asphalt stages, taking a comfortable 38.2-second victory from DG Sport team-mate Yohan Rossel.

Gryazin and Rossel proved to be the class of the field, opening up a gap of more than two minutes to third-placed Pepe Lopez. Gryazin was even able to ease off across Saturday afternoon after Rossel lost 35s to tyre damage.

A first victory of the season has hauled Gryazin into third, three points behind tied championship leaders Rossel and Oliver Solberg, who chose not to compete in Croatia.

"It feels really nice, especially with all the work we did before the event," said Gryazin. "I have this pace all the time, I just need to get like this more often. I need to remember this feeling."

Finland's Sami Pajari (Toyota) and Britain's Gus Greensmith (Skoda) finished the Rally2 class in third and fourth, but the pair elected not to register to score WRC2 points. Greensmith's reason was down to the high risk of punctures on the asphalt stages. "It was definitely a good choice," said Greensmith.

In Junior WRC, FIA Rally Star driver Romet Jurgenson and Oja Siim claimed a maiden victory in their Fiesta. The Estonian, making his second JWRC start, beat FIA Rally Star team-mate Taylor Gill by 2m35.1s. The FIA Rally Star programme is funding four crews in this year's JWRC.

"I cannot believe it," said Jurgenson.
"It's great, and I feel incredibly proud
of the whole team. Taylor finishing
second shows that the FIA is doing
the right thing, and these kind of
programmes are really working.

"For myself, the weekend has been really strong, and the pace has been there without really pushing too much."

| RE | SULTS ROUND 4/13, RALLY CROATIA | , 18-21 APRIL | |
|------|---|--|------------|
| POS | DRIVER / CO-DRIVER | TEAM/CAR | TIME |
| 1 | Sebastien Ogier (FRA) VincentLandais (FRA) | Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 | 2h40m23.6s |
| 2 | Elfyn Evans (GBR) Scott Martin (GBR) | Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 | +9.79 |
| 3 | Thierry Neuville (BEL) Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL) | Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i 20 N Rally 1 | +45.89 |
| 4 | Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST) | Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i 20 N Rally 1 | +58.69 |
| 5 | Takamoto Katsuta (JPN) Aaron Johnston (GBR) | Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 | +1m55.5s |
| 6 | Andreas Mikkelsen (NOR) Torstein Eriksen (NOR) | Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i 20 N Rally 1 | +4m01.0s |
| 7 | Gregoire Munster (LUX) Louis Louka (BEL) | M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1 | +5m11.0s |
| 8 | Nikolay Gryazin (RUS) Konstantin Aleksandrov (RUS) | DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2 | +9m21.3s |
| 9 | Yohan Rossel (FRA) Arnaud Dunand (FRA) | DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2 | +9m59.5s |
| 10 | Sami Pajari (FIN) Enni Malkonen (FIN) | Printsport/Toyota GRYaris | +10m22.7s |
| отне | ERS | | |
| 17 | Adrien Fourmaux (FRA) Alexandre Coria (FRA) | M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1 | +17m04.8s |

| STAGE TIMES | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| STAGE | FASTEST | LEADER | SECOND |
| SS1 Krasic-Sosice 1 (14.68 miles) | Neuville 12m42.3s | Neuville | Evans+6.6s |
| SS2 Jaskovo-Mali Modrus Potok 1 (5.89 miles) | Evans 5m05.0s | Neuville | Evans+4.9s |
| SS3 Ravna Gora-Skrad 1 (6.29 miles) | Neuville 5m49.6s | Neuville | Evans+8.4s |
| SS4 Platak 1 (10.33 miles) | Neuville 8m47.5s | Neuville | Evans+8.6s |
| SS5 Platak 2 (10.33 miles) | Neuville 8m47.4s | Neuville | Evans+10.1s |
| SS6 Ravna Gora-Skrad 2 (6.29 miles) | Evans 5m50.3s | Neuville | Evans+0.1s |
| SS7 Jaskovo-Mali Modrus Potok 2 (5.89 miles) | Ogier5m00.3s | Evans | Neuville+1.6s |
| SS8 Krasic-Sosice 2 (14.68 miles) | Ogier 12m49.8s | Neuville and Evans | |
| SS9 Smerovisce-Grdanjci 1 (9.77 miles) | Fourmaux 10m18.6s | Neuville | Evans+0.8s |
| SS10 Stojdraga-Gornja Vas 1 (12.91 miles) | Ogier 12m29.6s | Neuville | Evans+0.8s |
| SS11 Vinski Vrh-Duga Resa 1 (5.46 miles) | Neuville 4m31.9s | Neuville | Evans+1.7s |
| SS12 Pecurkovo Brdo-Mreznicki Novaki 1 (5.66 miles) | Neuville 4m47.5s | Neuville | Evans+4.7s |
| SS13 Smerovisce-Grdanjci 2 (9.77 miles) | Evans 10m27.7s | Evans | Neuville+2.0s |
| SS14 Stojdraga-Gornja Vas 2 (12.91 miles) | Neuville 12m28.9s | Neuville | Evans+2.3s |
| SS15 Vinski Vrh-Duga Resa 2 (5.46 miles) | Neuville 4m31.8s | Neuville | Evans+4.0s |
| SS16 Pecurkovo Brdo-Mreznicki Novaki 2 (5.66 miles) | Neuville 4m47.2s | Neuville | Evans+4.9s |
| SS17 Trakoscan-Vrbno 1 (8.17 miles) | Katsuta 6m55.9s | Neuville | Evans+2.6s |
| SS18 Zagorska Sela-Kumrovec 1 (8.85 miles) | Tanak 8m11.9s | Ogier | Evans+9.1s |
| SS19 Trakoscan-Vrbno 2 (8.17 miles) | Katsuta 7m01.6s | Ogier | Evans+6.4s |
| SS20 Zagorska Sela-Kumrovec 2 (Power Stage) (8.85 miles) | Fourmaux8m01.7s | Ogier | Evans+9.7s |



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Neuville 86; 2 Evans 80;

3 Fourmaux 59; 4 Tanak

53; 5 Ogier 45; 6 Katsuta 45;

7 Kalle Rovanpera 31;

8 Esapekka Lappi 23;

9 Mikkelsen 14;

10 Oliver Solberg 12.

WRC2: 1 Rossel 43; 2

Solberg 43; 3 Gryazin 40.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 176; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 169; 3 M-Sport Ford World Rally Team 96.



INDYCAR

Dixon's masterclass on the streets of Long Beach

In a race defined by a battle of opposing strategies, the New Zealander demonstrated why his Ganassi team believes the six-time IndyCar champion is so special

JOEY BARNES



cott Dixon is inevitable. At least that's how it often seems, and how it was after the 43-year-old New Zealander delivered a masterstroke performance that combined massive fuel saving with mindful defence and pace to win the Grand Prix of Long Beach.

The 27-car field was divided into two groups on opposing strategies after the caution came out on lap 15 of 85 when rookie Christian Rasmussen's Ed Carpenter Racing Dallara-Chevrolet spun and collided with the wall in Turn 4. That set up an option for race leader Will Power to head a small contingent of drivers down pitroad two laps later. The group featured Dixon, 2023 race winner Kyle Kirkwood and Marcus Armstrong, among others.

In turn, Josef Newgarden, Power's Penske team-mate, was promoted to the race lead and – after the race restarted on lap 19 – held the top spot ahead of Marcus Ericsson and Colton Herta until they pitted between laps 30 and 32. During the time Newgarden was out front, Dixon was able to move ahead of Power on lap 24, which elevated him as the leader on the alternative strategy before taking the overall lead after those ahead came in for their first pitstops.

The two opposing strategies danced around each other on the 11-turn, 1.968-mile temporary street circuit until the building of anticipation heightened with a crescendo of drama with Dixon out front on lap 62 but then Newgarden, fresh off a pitstop four laps prior, on a furious charge. Newgarden cut a deficit of 5.3s to nearly nothing, stalking the rear wing of Dixon, who was carefully controlling the throttle to save fuel, with 13 laps to go.

Dixon continued to methodically control the pace of his Chip Ganassi Racing machine, coasting into the entry of the corners before throttling off and resisting the urge to use the push-to-pass boost that would drink up more fuel. Unable to find a route around Dixon, Newgarden remained closely behind, but the





pace slowed enough that it brought the Andretti Global car of Herta and Alex Palou, Dixon's Ganassi team-mate, into the

mix for a four-car battle for the win.

The race took on a new complexion on lap 77 when Newgarden pulled close to Dixon's gearbox entering the Turn 11 hairpin leading to the long front straight on Shoreline Drive. What originally appeared to be Newgarden setting Dixon up for a passing attempt on the straight resulted in a nudge from behind by Herta, who hit and lifted Newgarden's rear wheels off the ground and engaged his anti-stall function, letting Herta and Palou pass him and dropping him to fourth.

That incident allowed Dixon breathing room as he navigated lapped traffic. Herta was able to pull to within 0.4s of the lead with two laps remaining. But Dixon was given clearance on the last lap to use all the push-to-pass he had left and pulled away to win the 49th edition of the Grand Prix of Long Beach (and

40th Indycar race there) by 0.9798s over Herta, with Palou claiming the final step of the podium.

"That was fun," smiled Dixon. "It was definitely a bit sketchy in the fact that the pressure was coming hard and strong. I knew they would burn their tyres off pretty quickly with kind of a 10-lap offset. They had to close a 10 or 12-second gap. The abuse was coming thick and fast.

"We could have had the status quo there with Josef. We had over a hundred seconds of [push-to-pass] left. I think he was down to 20s by the time he even got to me. Even to get that out, they weren't trimmed out, we were trimmed – that would

"They came on the radio saying, 'Go flat-out, overtake, whatever you need.' That was nice to hear"

have made it difficult to pass.

"Once you get into the confinements of the corners, it's really tough. Obviously, the incident between Colton and him backed him up a little bit. We were OK once we got past a couple people in traffic. I would say I didn't get the number consistently, so I was a little worried about that. We have a light that comes on that gives you a couple of laps' heads-up that you're actually going to run out of fuel. I didn't see it with two laps to go. They came on the radio saying, 'Go flat-out, mix one, overtake, whatever you need.' That was definitely nice to hear at that point because the stress level was pretty high. To get after it for the last two laps without a concern was big."

Although this is only the second time Dixon has won at Long Beach, the signature drive provided another stamp on a legendary career in what is now 57 victories, only 10 behind all-time wins leader AJ Foyt's mark of 67. While those accolades certainly >>>



have a special meaning for Dixon, his mind – and the dedication of Sunday's win – was with Sir Colin Giltrap, who died last week. Giltrap, a fellow New Zealander, aided the early racing careers of Dixon and other countrymen.

"Yeah, definitely a big loss to lose Sir Colin," added Dixon.
"He was a huge help for myself, and pretty much outside of motor racing as well, but any Kiwi that's raced internationally is because of him and his family. To have the foresight, as he did, at young ages to help. For me, it was definitely a huge help. I had an investment group that of course out of 14 or 15 people, you're going to have people that disagree. He had enough clout to straighten out the people that weren't agreeing. Forever in debt to him and his family. What Colin has done for motorsport and many people around the world is huge. It's a sad week."

While Newgarden was able to finish fourth and Andretti Global newcomer Ericsson fifth, the next highest finishing driver on Dixon's alternative strategy was Power in sixth. Kirkwood ended up seventh, ahead of Juncos Hollinger Racing's Romain Grosjean in eighth. Polesitter Felix Rosenqvist (Meyer Shank Racing) and Arrow McLaren's Alexander Rossi claimed ninth and 10th respectively.

Reigning Formula 2 champion Theo Pourchaire, who made his IndyCar debut behind the wheel of the #6 Arrow McLaren entry in substituting for the injured David Malukas, put together a respectable performance and finished 11th after starting 22nd (see panel, right). The 20-year-old Frenchman was the biggest mover of the race.

When looking how the pair of opposing two-stop strategies played out, Mike Hull, CGR's managing director who also serves as Dixon's race strategist, was aware what the target was after the initial pitstop on lap 17. "We knew that we had to get to lap 51 to



get to the end," Hull said. "Some people chose the strategy that we did. We weren't the only people that did. Those first 15 or 16 cars, they were kind of split in half. We chose the strategy we did knowing what fuel mileage we had to get, but we also assumed there was going to be some yellow to help us, which there really wasn't much today."

Dixon's ability to stretch his final stint to 34 laps is something that even astonished Palou, the reigning and two-time champion in North America's premier open-wheel championship. "Once he took it, I was like, 'He's going to make it work'," Palou said. "It's super-tough if you know the numbers he has to get, what he has to do driving-wise. You see other people did it; Power, I think, is the second driver that did it. It's tough, man. I don't know how. Probably he has an extra fuel cell that I don't know yet [smiling]. Yeah, that's it. I'm joking obviously, just in case."

Herta echoed Palou's thoughts, still bewildered during the post-race press conference on Dixon's drive. "I still don't completely know how Dixon made it to the front," Herta admitted. "I imagine he pitted on yellow and did 34-lap stints, 33-lap stints. I mean, that was pretty impressive. Sometimes you need a little bit more than just speed in IndyCar racing. We saw that today."

Rob Edwards, chief operating officer of Andretti Global and race strategist for Herta, already had a plan in place that wasn't going to be deviated with their "go/no-go lap for making an early stop or not". Edwards further noted he was prepared to keep Herta on the same strategy as Newgarden, but then stated that "anyone other than Scott wasn't going to pull that off" when it came to the alternative strategy.

Although chances for victory appeared grim late in the running with the pace shown by Newgarden and Herta, Dixon's skill proved to be the ultimate equaliser. "It worked out and Scott did what he had to do," Hull continued. "The most amazing thing about Scott Dixon is that he can run fast laps and understands how to modulate the throttle in order to get the mileage he needs to get. He looks at it as an average, so if he's making sure that he can run a fast lap, he gives up the fuel, but the next lap he works hard to economise the effort to make that happen without losing a lot of time on the race track. Someday people will look back at Scott Dixon and realise how special he is."

As Hull kept eulogising about Dixon's performance on the streets of California, he began to reflect on the characteristics that have epitomised his entire career: "He never gives up. He understands what he has to do. He understands the strengths and weaknesses of his race car. He understands strategy almost from a global perspective as opposed to a landscape perspective. He is part of the team. It's almost like he's with us when we're calling the race and what makes him so special is he, still to this day, takes the time to re-craft himself every time we go racing."



POURCHAIRE IN AT THE DEEP END



Arrow McLaren team principal Gavin Ward knew that making an IndyCar debut on the streets of Long Beach would be anything but easy for Theo Pourchaire. But the reigning Formula 2 champion delivered a stout performance and charged from 22nd on the grid to finish a respectable 11th. "We dropped Theo in about as much in the deep end as he could be dropped," laughed Ward.

Pourchaire, a reserve and test driver for Sauber's F1 team, received the opportunity to compete as the Arrow McLaren team continues to play musical chairs with its #6 Dallara-Chevrolet while David Malukas remains sidelined with a wrist injury.

Pourchaire kept the car clean all weekend and learned what racing in IndyCar – and on a tight American street circuit – is all about.

"The racing in IndyCar is amazing," enthused Pourchaire. "The races are really tough physically. I feel OK. It was difficult because it was the first one, but in the end I'm quite happy about my performance physically as well.

"It's so tough. We're fighting for a tenth of a second or even less. I enjoyed it. Fighting with cars, going out of the pitlane on cold tyres, overtaking them; it's so cool. And yeah, I hope to be back."

And the next chance could come as soon as this weekend at Barber Motorsports
Park if Malukas isn't medically cleared to drive. "We will have time to know what will happen in the future," he said, "but we have to enjoy this one."



| RESU | JLTS ROUND 2/15, LONG | G BEACH (USA), 21 APRIL (85 LAPS – 167. | 280 MILES) |
|------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| POS | DRIVER | TEAM/CAR | TIME |
| 1 | Scott Dixon (NZL) | Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda | 1h42m03.1416s |
| 2 | Colton Herta (USA) | Andretti Global with Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Ho | onda +0.9798s |
| 3 | Alex Palou (ESP) | Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda | +1.7664s |
| 4 | Josef Newgarden (USA) | Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet | +3.9735s |
| 5 | Marcus Ericsson (SWE) | Andretti Global / Dallara-Honda | +4.3769s |
| 6 | Will Power (AUS) | Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet | +15.7639s |
| 7 | Kyle Kirkwood (USA) | Andretti Global / Dallara-Honda | +16.1788s |
| 8 | Romain Grosjean (FRA) | Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet | +18.0433s |
| 9 | Felix Rosenqvist (SWE) | Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda | +18.8155s |
| 10 | Alexander Rossi (USA) | Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet | +32.0915s |
| 11 | Theo Pourchaire (FRA) | Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet | +33.4409s |
| 12 | Marcus Armstrong (NZL) | Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda | +40.8207s |
| 13 | Linus Lundqvist (SWE) | Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda | +42.0003s |
| 14 | Rinus VeeKay (NLD) | Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet | +44.4325s |
| 15 | Agustin Canapino (ARG) | Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet | +51.3156s |
| 16 | Pato O'Ward (MEX) | Arrow McLaren / Dallara-Chevrolet | +52.9961s |
| 17 | Graham Rahal (USA) | Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda | +1m02.5190s |
| 18 | Sting Ray Robb (USA) | AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet | +1m05.5898s |
| 19 | Kyffin Simpson (CYM) | Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda | -1lap |
| 20 | Nolan Siegel (USA) | Dale Coyne Racing / Dallara-Honda | -1lap |
| 21 | Santino Ferrucci (USA) | AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet | -1lap |
| 22 | Tom Blomqvist (GBR) | Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda | -1lap |
| 23 | Christian Lundgaard (DNK) | Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda | a -1lap |
| 24 | Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA) | Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda | a -1lap |
| 25 | Jack Harvey (GBR) | Dale Coyne Racing / Dallara-Honda | -2 laps |
| 26 | Scott McLaughlin (NZL) | Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet | 71 laps-gearbox |
| 27 | Christian Rasmussen (DNK) | Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet | 14 laps-suspension/accident |
| | | | |

 $\textbf{Winner's average speed} 98.350 mph. \textbf{\textit{Fastest lap Ericsson}} 1m07.7690s, 104.543 mph.$

Q31Rosenqvist1m06.0172s;2 Power1m06.0211s;
3 Newgarden1m06.1059s;4 Herta1m06.3784s;
5 Ericsson1m06.4039s;6 Palou1m06.5444s.
Q2 Palou1m05.9103s; Herta1m06.0064s;
Newgarden1m06.0179s; Ericsson1m06.0546s;
Rosenqvist1m06.0674s; Power1m06.1914s;
7 Lundgaard1m06.2107s;8 Dixon1m06.2219s;
9 Armstrong1m06.2404s;10 Kirkwood1m06.2672s;
11 McLaughlin1m06.3504s;12 Rahal1m06.5757s.

Q1-GROUP 1 Rosenqvist 1m06.3372s; Herta 1m06.5245s; Dixon 1m06.5941s; Power 1m06.6388s; Palou 1m06.7243s; Rahal 1m06.7910s; 13 Rossi 1m06.8349s; 15 Blomqvist 1m07.0325s;

17 **Lundqvist** 1m07.1022s; 19 **Fittipaldi** 1m07.1284s;

21 **Rasmussen** 1m07.3332s; 23 **Harvey** 1m07.6865s; 25 **Robb** 1m09.5850s.

Q1-GROUP2Armstrong1m06.1509s;

Ericsson1m06.1768s; Kirkwood 1m06.2285s; McLaughlin1m06.2786s; Lundgaard 1m06.3587s; Newgarden1m06.4123s; 14 O'Ward 1m06.4572s; 16 Grosjean1m06.4706s; 18 VeeKay 1m06.7415s; 20 Canapino1m06.8481s; 22 Pourchaire 1m06.9722s; 24 Ferrucci1m07.1851s; 26 Simpson1m07.3125s; 27 Siegel1m07.5848s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Newgarden 87; 2 Dixon 75; 3 Herta 72; 4 Palou 63; 5 Power 61; 6 O'Ward 54; 7 Rosenqvist 50; 8 Kirkwood 45; 9 Rossi 44; 10 McLaughlin 40.





IMSA SPORTSCAR LONG BEACH (USA) 20 APRIL ROUND 3/11

Sebastien Bourdais and Renger van der Zande employed the perfect blend of speed and strategy to score a finely judged victory last Saturday in Long Beach. It was the second time in three years the Franco-Dutch pairing had emerged on top on the unforgiving California streets for Chip Ganassi's Cadillac Racing IMSA SportsCar Championship team.

Curiously, it seems to be a case of feast or famine for Bourdais at the legendary venue. He won three of five outings for Newman Haas Racing in the CART/Champ Car days, taking the chequered flag consecutively from 2005 to 2007, but had only one second-place finish to show from 10 IndyCar Series starts between 2011-21.

Two years ago, Bourdais won from the

pole on his prototype debut at Long Beach, despite an early spin that meant he had to pass every other car to regain his lost advantage. And then last year his hopes of a repeat win were dashed when an issue with his Cadillac's brake-by-wire system caused him to crash at the first corner.

The Frenchman was bound and determined to make amends. A problem with his car's hybrid system meant he had only five minutes to post a qualifying time on Friday afternoon, and he was further angered by some traffic on his best lap, which left him only third on the grid.

Bourdais charged past Nick Yelloly's BMW M Hybrid V8 on the first lap of the race, but had to be content to follow the similar Action Express Cadillac of polesitter Pipo Derani through the opening stint of the 100-minute race. The critical moment came when Derani peeled off into the pitlane after 35 minutes for what would be his only pitstop.

As Derani took on left-side tyres only and handed over to co-driver Jack Aitken, Bourdais completed one more circuit before ducking into the pits, whereupon the Ganassi team opted to take on fuel only. Their pitstop times were virtually identical, but the extra lap on hot Michelin tyres – plus not having to warm up the left-side rubber on the out-lap – proved to be the difference. Van der Zande was able to take the lead during the pitstop sequence and narrowly retain his advantage to the finish.

Dane Cameron/Felipe Nasr and Nick Tandy/Mathieu Jaminet finished third and fourth for Porsche Penske Motorsport, while Mike Rockenfeller and Gimmi Bruni employed a slightly different strategy, running longer before taking on service, to vault from 10th to fifth in another Porsche 963 fielded by Proton Competition.

The BMW of Yelloly/Connor De Phillippi also ran long but was thwarted by the unfortunate timing of a full-course caution, then knocked completely out of contention following a fracas with some slower traffic at the hairpin.

With GTD Pro not included on the Long Beach roster this year, British pairing (and 2023 class winners) Jack Hawksworth and Ben Barnicoat were split up as their Vasser Sullivan Lexus team elected instead to field its pair of cars in GTD. Regular driver Parker Thompson once again displayed the RC F GT3's potency by establishing a new lap record in qualifying, just ahead of usual co-driver Frankie Montecalvo.

Canadian Thompson controlled the early part of the race before handing over to Barnicoat, who romped to an emphatic win over the Turner Motorsport BMW of Patrick Gallagher/Robby Foley.

JEREMY SHAW



Michelisz still **Hungary for** success in Italy

TCR WORLD TOUR VALLELUNGA (ITA) 20-21 APRIL ROUND 1/7

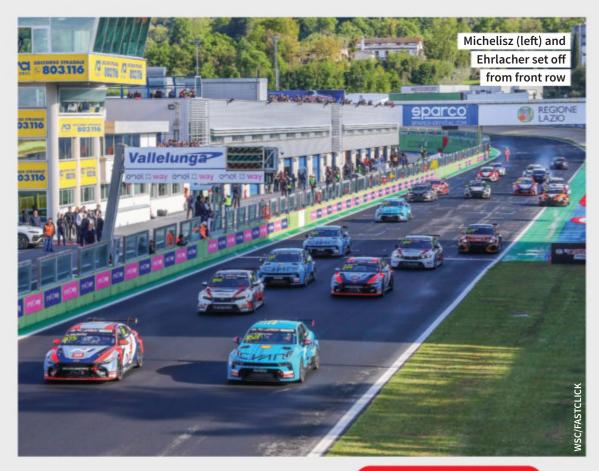
Hyundai Motorsport's BRC Racing Team customer squad took pole and won both races with its newly upgraded Elantra N TCR at Vallelunga, with reigning champion Norbert Michelisz converting pole to victory in race one, before new signing Nestor Girolami turned the reversed-grid pole to a race two win.

Michelisz left it until the final moment in qualifying to pull out a time 0.2 seconds clear of Lynk & Co Cyan Racing's Yann Ehrlacher to snatch pole, which the Frenchman said he'd not have been able to beat.

Heavy rainfall in the afternoon meant the field started on a slippery track, but dry enough that all opted for slicks. Michelisz didn't get away well and fell behind Ehrlacher, but then drafted past him on the straight on lap three of 15 when Ehrlacher put a wheel on the painted line and lost traction.

Esteban Guerrieri, returning to touring car competition after competing in the World Endurance Championship last year, briefly threatened for second in his Honda Civic, run by new team GOAT Racing, whose team manager is former world tin-top race winner Pepe Oriola. But Guerrieri's challenge quickly faded, and he settled into the final podium spot.

In the second race, Girolami, who'd deliberately targeted the top 10 reversed grid knowing he didn't have the pace of his Hungarian team-mate,

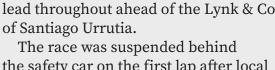


launched off the line well and kept the lead throughout ahead of the Lynk & Co of Santiago Urrutia.

The race was suspended behind the safety car on the first lap after local racer Filippo Barberi, who'd first jumped the start from 15th on the grid by some margin, and even briefly got ahead of Michelisz in 10th, slid off at Turn 3 and collected the Audi of Moroccan Sami Taoufik. The two collided again at Turn 8 and stopped on circuit, both requiring recovery. The race resumed for less than half a lap before another contender from the local Coppa Italia Turismo series, Victor Fernandez, spun and hit the barriers at Turn 3.

Once the race got going again, Girolami and Urrutia pulled away from an exciting battle, with the Honda of Marco Butti holding back the Lynk & Co of Ma Qing Hua, and the Honda of Guerrieri just behind.

Former WTCR champion Ehrlacher



Michelisz congratulated by BRC's tin-top legend team boss Tarquini

WEEKEND WINNERS

IMSA SPORTSCAR

LONG BEACH (USA)

Sebastien Bourdais/ Renger van der Zande Chip Ganassi Racing (Cadillac V-Series.R)

GTD Ben Barnicoat/Parker Thompson Vasser Sullivan (Lexus RC F GT3)

TCR WORLD TOUR

VALLELUNGA (ITA)

Race 1 Norbert Michelisz BRC (Hyundai Elantra N TCR) Race 2 Nestor Girolami

BRC (Hyundai Elantra N TCR)



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

was given a mechanical black flag and pitted to secure his bonnet, which had come loose after contact at the Turn 11 hairpin at the start of the race. Though he was able to stay on the lead lap, he could only recover to 14th.

On lap 11 of 17, Guerrieri clipped the rear of Ma's Lynk & Co and was able to get past the Chinese driver, who was then unsettled and passed by the chasing train and dropped to ninth. Guerrieri was handed a penalty postrace, which dropped him to eighth.

Michelisz now leads the standings on 61 points ahead of Hyundai team-mate Mikel Azcona, who was fourth in both races, with rookie Butti in third before the series resumes at the Marrakech street circuit on 3-4 May.

NEIL HUDSON

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Home boy Heimgartner tops in NZ

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS TAUPO (NZL) **20-21 APRIL ROUND 3/12**

Andre Heimgartner and Will Brown shared the race wins in two completely different races on Supercars' return to New Zealand for the category's maiden event at the Taupo International Motorsport Park circuit.

In diabolical conditions in Saturday's opening race, Heimgartner vaulted to the lead after a slick opening pitstop by the Brad Jones Racing pitcrew and stayed there, despite enormous pressure from Walkinshaw Andretti United's Chaz Mostert. When the WAU Ford Mustang shed a wheel after its second stop, Heimgartner took his first win in three years in his Chevrolet Camaro, ahead of Dick Johnson Racing Ford duo Will Davison and Anton de Pasquale.

Both Triple Eight Chevrolets struggled with tyre pressure problems, but on Sunday they put that to rights. Broc



Feeney picked off polesitter Matt Payne (Grove Racing Ford) and sped away, before Brown emerged from the pack to give chase. After a tense few laps, Brown found a way past to take his third win of the season from Feeney - a dramatic turnaround after the duo finished ninth and 21st respectively in Saturday's deluge.

De Pasquale took third again to claim the coveted Jason Richards Trophy just ahead of Heimgartner, who finished sixth behind Payne and the PremiAir Racing Chevrolet of James Golding.

If Mostert's problems were a setback

for WAU, the upside was the form of rookie team-mate Ryan Wood. The 20year-old took an assured fourth place on Saturday, and ran within reach of the lead group on Sunday to take 10th.

The return of Brodie Kostecki to racing after a two-round absence was low-key, in spite of qualifying a fine third for Sunday's race. He was 13th and 12th in the races, behind team-mate Jack Le Brocq, who took a fifth and an eighth.

Brown's win extends his series lead over Feeney, with Mostert in third.

PHIL BRANAGAN

Reddick emerges through wreck

NASCAR CUP TALLADEGA (USA) 21 APRIL **ROUND 10/36**

A late-race pit strategy by Toyota teams went wildly awry, but that didn't prevent Tyler Reddick giving the manufacturer a NASCAR Cup Series victory

With 36 of 188 laps remaining, the seven Toyotas made their final green-flag pitstop in an effort to stay together and decide the race's outcome among themselves. Just

last Sunday at Talladega Superspeedway.



four laps later, however, four of them were taken out of contention in a wreck.

Reddick remained unscathed and got pushed into the lead on the final lap before he was passed by Brad Keselowski and Michael McDowell entering Turns 1 and 2. Coming through the tri-oval towards the chequered flag, McDowell twice tried to block Keselowski's advance, but the second time his Front Row Motorsports Ford got turned into the wall, which triggered a wild multi-car wreck.

Reddick edged Keselowski's RFK Racing Ford at the finish line to earn the first win of the year for his 23XI Racing team, which is co-owned by Toyota driver Denny Hamlin and NBA legend Michael Jordan, and become the seventh driver locked into the 2024 playoffs with at least one victory.

Noah Gragson ended up credited with a third-place finish in his Stewart-Haas Racing Ford, from Ricky Stenhouse Jr and Alex Bowman. McDowell, who started on the pole, was 31st and led the most laps (36). "We're all going for it," he said. "Unfortunately, I just made a bad move there to put us in that spot." **JIM UTTER**

WEEKEND WINNERS

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

TAUPO (NZL)

Race 1 Andre Heimgartner **Brad Jones Racing** (Chevrolet Camaro)

Race 2 Will Brown Triple Eight Race Engineering (Chevrolet Camaro)

NASCAR CUP

TALLADEGA (USA)

Tyler Reddick 23XI Racing (Toyota Camry)

BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS

INTERLAGOS (BRA)

Race 1 Cesar Ramos **Ipiranga Racing** (Toyota Corolla)

Race 2 Gaetano Di Mauro Cavaleiro Sports (Chevrolet Cruze)

EUROCUP-3

SPA (BEL)

Race 1 Javier Sagrera MP Motorsport

Race 2 Cancelled due to rain



For full results visit motorsportstats.com



BEAMING WITH A BEEMER

Colin Turkington has gone four seasons without a BTCC title. But the series' elder statesman is fired up and ready to go for a record-breaking fifth crown

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP AND Motorsport

even stars from the 2024 British Touring Car
Championship turned up a couple of weeks ago to
do battle at the Goodwood Members' Meeting, but
one of its most celebrated didn't, even though he's
a regular at the Sussex circuit's retro extravaganzas.
For four-time champion Colin Turkington, Goodwood was one

For four-time champion Colin Turkington, Goodwood was one event too many in what has been an intense warm-up around the UK's humble clubbie scene. No public-school-type house points this time for the down-to-earth Northern Irishman; instead it's been a diet of Mazda MX-5 Supercup at Silverstone, Classic Sports Car Club BMW action at Donington, a Mini Se7en outing also at Donington, and back in the MX-5s at Snetterton.

Goodwood was wedged in between BTCC official tests at Croft and Donington Park, and the 42-year-old Northern Irishman also has the junior autograss career of older son Lewis – following in the wheeltracks of Dad for his fledgling steps in racing – to attend to. "I didn't want to completely disown my family, so I opted out of Goodwood this time around!" he laughs.

Even so, the opening round of the BTCC this weekend, where Turkington remains once again with West Surrey Racing and its squad of winter-developed BMW 330e M Sports, will be his fifth race event of the season. The preceding four have hardly been a success, not helped by mechanical problems at the CSCC weekend that forced him mid-meeting into another car, or a duff choice of rain tyres on a drying track in the Mini. But results weren't the important thing.

"I've made a conscious effort to get myself race-ready because as you know testing's one thing, driving around by yourself, trying to improve the car and setting lap times etc," he explains. "But when the lights go out for a race, you're in a completely different mindset and a different headspace, so I just wanted to get back in the groove and normalise as much as possible that race environment. You spend six months over the winter not in race mode. I'm just trying to be as ready as possible, as prepared as I can be."

Turkington has already said that the new-for-2024 BMW powerplant, an evolution of the existing B48 unit developed by Neil Brown Engineering, "is probably what excites me the most" for 2024 after recent seasons in which he and his team-mates have wanted for straightline speed, especially when running in the pack. Alongside a facelift on the 3 Series' bodywork, WSR team





boss Dick Bennetts has also spoken of "chassis work, development dampers – a lot's gone on under the skin of the car".

And Turkington is optimistic. Lest we forget amid the excitement over 2023 dominator Ash Sutton and his quest for a record-breaking fifth BTCC crown, the reigning champion is not the only driver in the field with that target...

"We're very confident that we've moved our package on with the new engine and made a step forward on that side, but any gain that we have made – or potentially made – will all be relative to what level the competition has moved onto as well," ponders Turkington. "So in all honesty we won't probably know until the first race, when everything is at flat-chat, when you're pushing to 100%. Through winter testing you tend to be more focused on chassis work and development, and handling. And even the first race weekend... It tends to be the first three weekends, I find, before you see a proper, true pattern of the pecking order. The first race weekend can sometimes be an anomaly.

"Unfortunately as well, it would have been great to do a complete back-to-back, to have one car sitting in 2023 spec with last year's engine, last year's bodywork, last year's weight distribution etc. Obviously there are new tyres for this year as well. That would have been the dream scenario, but we're not able to do that, so at the moment we're just going off feeling really."

Testing began well with a dry private day at Snetterton, before the official sessions at Brands Hatch, Croft and Donington featured mixed weather, about 50-50 wet-dry. As a result of this, last week the BMWs were loaded up in the paddock at the East Midlands circuit and, instead of heading south back to WSR HQ in Sunbury, went west to Pembrey, where... it rained on the first day, but at least it was fine on the second.

It's not only been about fettling the cars, because Turkington has been reacclimatising to returning engineer Dan Millard, with whom he worked in his most recent title-winning season in 2019. Since 2020, it had been John Waterman – part of the WSR technical

team that conceived the NGTC version of the 3 Series and who has led development in recent seasons – on his car.

"I guess the thinking was just a refresh really, sort of a new voice in my ears again, a different brain overseeing my campaign and what I'm doing," reasons Turkington, whose four seasons with

"I've made a conscious effort to get race-ready. When the lights go out, you're in a different mindset"

Waterman yielded two runner-up championship finishes and two fourth places. "I had good success with John – we just missed out there on a few occasions. That was a super-strong relationship, but I just thought that for me to try and progress and try and find another level, that it was worth a switch-up; somebody as well bringing different ideas and thoughts to the table.

"When Dan left us he then worked on the Infiniti, and he was at Speedworks last year with the Toyota [engineering George Gamble]. So Dan's fully up to the speed. He's not new to the team, but when you bring somebody in who hasn't been there for four years or so, he comes back in with knowledge from within the paddock, and that can be useful."

All the teams have had to trial the tweaks to the boost regulations, effectively doubling the circa 30bhp surge from the hybrid via the addition of a turbo boost facility. Although this was not installed on the BMWs for the initial tests, it was on board in time for the second official run-out at Croft. "It was a really nice surprise," enthuses Turkington. "That instant power delivery from the hybrid deployment is what I had imagined in my head it was going to be at the beginning of 2022 [when hybrid was "



introduced]. You can really feel the step up in grunt, and then, when you come off the button, it's almost like pulling out of the slipstream and hitting a brick wall!

"Definitely it's going to aid overtaking, it's going to be a big advantage in terms of lap time. If you have a lot of seconds or a lot of laps it's going to help you make progress, but still you've got to pass the car that's in front of you. Always with touring car racing, track position is key. And we've also seen in recent years that if you're starting near the front of the pack, you're up and away. A lot of times we would lose out, and this is any car, cars in general, you lose out in the pack. Just when you lose that bit of front downforce it costs you lap time, it costs you grip, and then you're sort of using your hybrid to make up for that. Certainly it's a big step in the right direction, so I'm excited to see how it plays out."

Whatever happens, he's likely to find himself in the vicinity of team-mate Jake Hill, as he has been so often since the hardcharging Kentishman joined WSR for 2022 – and beat the elder



statesman to third in the championship in both their seasons together. Nice, unassuming guy that Turkington is off the track, the metaphorical horns have been in evidence on occasion when they've been doing battle. But presumably, regardless of this, there's a cooperation off the track for the team's common good?

"Yeah, in honesty there is," reflects Turkington. "When you go into a race weekend, depending on the time of the year and what's at stake etc, you're working hard to beat each other, and the end goal is to beat everybody else. We're very much aware that the manufacturers' championship is something we really want to get a hold of again this year, so that requires us both to be up there consistently scoring big points and outscoring the likes of NAPA, Hyundai and Toyota.

"Obviously we're at different stages of our careers, Jake and me, and Jake does remind me of myself from 10 or 15 years ago, whatever the age gap is $[it's\ 12-ed]!$ I can see exactly where he's at in his career, and he's super-hungry. We have a good relationship. Obviously it's spiked up a few times out on track, but I think that's quite normal, whether it's from go-karting to Formula 1. It's a good sign, because any time we've clashed or whatever, we've been at the front of the pack, we've been fighting each other for wins, and that's exactly again where we need to be this year.

"I think we've learned over the first two seasons together – I feel that maybe Jake has learned a bit more – that we do need to work together, particularly in the early stages of the season. A championship's never won on those first few race weekends. It's just about understanding the bigger picture and not taking unnecessary risks with each other. So I think we're in a better position to do that now. Maybe in the beginning Jake saw me as the direct enemy, but I think now we both understand that we all need to work together."

It's worth pointing out here that Hill had rarely been part of a big team. "That's completely true," agrees Turkington. "He'd always just been fighting for himself, and that's the mindset that

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you're completely locked in. He's been very fast these past two seasons, so no doubt that will continue."

The contribution of Adam Morgan, who joined the WSR fold for 2023 after his family Ciceley Motorsport team pulled out of the BTCC after running BMWs in 2021-22, should not be underestimated either, especially since he brought Bennetts' fellow Antipodean, engineer Steve Farrell, with him.

"Adam and Steve were a big asset straight away when they moved from Ciceley, and immediately I can think of two fairly

"If I do a Matt Neal and get to 30 years I'll be massively and pleasantly - surprised!"

major set-up items that they had on their car at Ciceley that we then explored and saw good potential in," reveals Turkington. "Adam's one of the top-drawer drivers in BTCC, so of course they're adding massive value. Steve's quite experimental. He's not afraid to think outside the box and do something a bit different, and that's great for us all, because if we all just spend time fine-tuning the car, then we sort of make baby steps forward, but if people are looking at avenues that we haven't been before, there could be big potential. That's what we need to do to get to the next level."

You can tell the desire is there. For this year, Turkington has abandoned his usual habit of using the tradition from the 1990s Super Touring days - when he fell in love with the BTCC as a youngster - of carrying a car number to reflect his championship position of the year before. This year he runs as #20, because "it's my 20th season in the BTCC. I started in 2002 but I missed a few in the middle doing other things. For me it was just a nice way to tip



my hat to BTCC and say thanks for 20 years of a career, and good memories, good times." He also quips that 20 is "the years I want to be, it's my mental age!"

But don't make the mistake of assuming that this means he's cruising into retirement: "If I do a Matt Neal and get to 30 I'll be massively - and pleasantly - surprised! I'm still as determined, and the will to win is just as much as it ever was. Unfortunately, when you win it, it makes you crave it even more, as the other guys can verify. I wouldn't be signing up for it again if I didn't think I was capable, or had a car that wasn't capable of doing it. My sights are fully set on doing the best I can. I think it's very difficult to say you're going to win it - everybody wants to win it - but my target this year is just to give it my all and do the best I can. That's stood by me in previous campaigns, so yeah, I'll give it my best shot."

Don't be too surprised if he's carrying #1 again next year. After warming up for 2025 at some freezing cold club events, of course. * SEASON PREVIEW

BTCC PREVIEW

THINGS TO WATCH IN THE BTCC

Hybrid and turbo boost, a new qualifying system, a punitive tyres tweak...

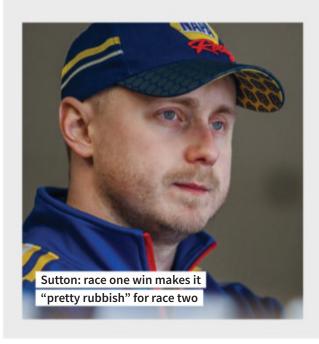
There's a lot to get to grips with in 2024

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY **JEP**



SUTTON: WINNERS COULD COME FROM OUTSIDE TOP 10



Along with the changes to the push-button boost regulations and qualifying format, new tyre rules for BTCC 2024 have fallen somewhat under the radar. But they are significant enough for reigning champion Ash Sutton to believe that there's a very real chance of the winner of race two on a Sunday coming from outside the top 10 on the grid.

For this season, anyone finishing in the top 10 in race one must use the hardest available tyre compound from their allocation for race two. That won't impact Donington this weekend, where only the medium Goodyear is in use. But it will come into play for round two at Brands Hatch, where it's the medium with the soft as the option tyre. And it will hugely impact round three at Snetterton, where all three compounds must be used in the

three races. Anyone using the medium or soft to finish in the top 10 in race one will therefore be forced onto the hard for race two.

Furthermore, while the construction of the Goodyears remains the same as in 2023, the compound has been revised to comply with new EU regulations on chemicals, and this has had the byproduct of widening the delta between the soft, medium and hard. This has brought joy to BTCC organiser TOCA, mindful that 11 of the 20 events since hybrid replaced success ballast in 2022 have featured the same winner in races one and two.

"Now that the hybrid is such a big difference, and we have that rule change where we have to go on the next hardest tyre available for race two, if you win race one you're in a pretty rubbish position





for race two," reckons Sutton. "If you're in P11 you've got full deployment and a free choice of tyre, and suddenly you could have a win on the cards. If someone's got the car underneath them and the deployment, you could be looking at up to a second a lap difference, and there's no way you can overcome that."

Sutton also predicts that the new IndyCarstyle three-stage qualifying format will be tough to conquer, especially when mixed with the hike in boost. Only 12 will progress to the second phase, six to the final shootout: "Yes, 100%, and that's the idea of it. It's designed to make you struggle. There's some [short] tracks that are going to be really difficult to qualify at – Brands Indy, Knockhill, Silverstone."



WILL THE BOOST TWEAKS REALLY WORK?

A doubling of 'overtaking' boost is the headline tweak of the sporting regulations over the 2023-24 winter. Where during 2022 and 2023 the push of a button gave you roughly 30bhp extra from the hybrid, that's now doubled by the addition of turbo boost.

West Surrey Racing BMW star Jake Hill believes it will make a big difference in qualifying – even more so on shorter circuits where lap times are closer, due to the boost being limited to 15 seconds per lap at all venues, deployed at a minimum of 115km/h (70mph). "It is huge," emphasises Hill. "It's an easy five tenths we think. It's going to make quite a big difference, especially in qualifying where we're separated by a couple of tenths."

In races, Hill reckons it will succeed in series organiser TOCA's bid to allow drivers to clear

a boost-less car in front, rather than just get an overlap. "If you enable it at the right time, you should quite easily clear someone. Races are going to be very difficult – there'll be such a big difference between people with and without it. If we are going to be at the front, you're going to struggle at times."

Bearing in mind rear-wheel-drive cars tend to be relatively stronger on tyre grip later in a race, could this benefit the BMWs? "For sure," agrees Hill. "Also in the long corners where you can enable it because the speed's high enough. Coppice is a prime example here [Donington] – we can get on it [the boost] basically at the apex, whereas front-wheel-drive cars may run out of traction, so there are some benefits to being a rear-wheel-drive car. But hey, until we go racing we won't know."

NUMBERS ARE DOWN FOR 2024

British Touring Car Championship boss Alan Gow was happy for the field to reduce to 23 or 24 for this season, but financial realities mean that the season will kick off this weekend with 20 or 21.

BMW team West Surrey Racing was still working on a deal to try to get the highly rated Bobby Thompson onto the grid in its fourth car at the time of writing (see *Pit & Paddock* for the latest). But even if this is successful, it's likely to only be for the opening part of the season pending more budget.

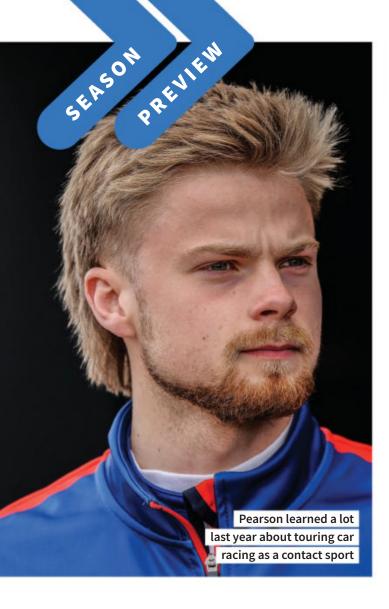
After the collapse of Team Hard at the end of



2023, team principal Tony Gilham announced plans to return with a two-car team of Cupra Leons. This has now reduced to a one-car effort for Daryl DeLeon and morphed into Unlimited Motorsport under the direction of club racer Bob Sharpless, although Gilham was still in evidence at last week's Donington test. Here, the team's motorsport was anything but unlimited, DeLeon managing to get out for a sighter lap in the afternoon just as the heavens opened.

With One Motorsport on what owner Steve Dudman has described as a 'planned pause' for 2024, the other casualty is the third Vauxhall Astra from Power Maxed Racing, which expanded from two cars only last year. "There's no one out there with budget," said PMR chief Adam Weaver. "The costs are runaway, and it's nerve-wracking to be honest."

Thompson isn't the only driver sniffing around. Two-time race winner Senna Proctor was at Donington, but said the rise in budgets during the hybrid era – his last season was 2021, the final season before hybrid – is shifting his focus to working on a commercial package for 2025.



THE OTHER TITLE RACE TO WATCH

The Jack Sears Trophy, for drivers who haven't scored an overall BTCC podium finish, looks like a three-way fight in 2024 – between a driver who took a sensational rookie pole position in 2023 (Mikey Doble), one who actually scored a third place (Sam Osborne), and one who *did* stand on the podium on his debut weekend (Ronan Pearson).

Confused? Well, Pearson's third place at Donington was taken away when his car failed the ride-height test and given to Osborne, who everyone was happy to be given a JST exemption for this year because he didn't physically stand on the podium. While Doble is given an 'upgrade' from his old 2017 Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra to the 2021 weapon raced last year to the JST title by Andrew Watson (a good omen?), Osborne and Pearson stay put in the Alliance Racing Ford and Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai camps respectively.

Scottish youngster Pearson also gave up a third to team leader Tom Ingram last August on his home ground at Knockhill, and impressed everyone by earning his spurs in a juicy battle with Ingram and Ash Sutton the following month at Silverstone.

"There are things you've got to do for the bigger picture and that's why we're still here," reflects the former Mini Challenge starlet. "At the time you're full of emotion, full of adrenalin, but when you strip it back you think, 'Who's going to remember in a year's time who finished third?' Hopefully over my career in touring cars I'll have many podiums at Knockhill, so it doesn't make a difference!

"And the Silverstone race, when you're in that pack you can show what you can do. When you're in the ratpack if you like, it's really hard to get out of. When you're in the ruck and you're getting knocked around left, right and centre, that's the nature of touring car racing, and I wouldn't change that, but it just means that we've got to do a better job to be at the front."

Pearson adds that the JST is "the main aim.
As long as we're not eligible in 2025, we've done
a good job. Mikey and Sam are quick guys, we've
got a lot of respect for each other, and we raced
doorhandle to doorhandle last year in that ratpack.
Some of these guys taught me how much I can use
the front and rear bumper last year if I'm honest.
More of the same this year would be grand!"

A RESTART WITHOUT A SAFETY CAR

Amid the declining grid, the BTCC has its first new team since 2019, even if it's full of familiar faces. Hence the name, Restart Racing, is highly appropriate. Team chief Ben Taylor, lead driver Chris Smiley and backer Pete Jones have a relationship dating back several years. Taylor engineered Smiley to his solitary BTCC race win in 2018 with BTC Norlin Racing, where Taylor's father Bert was team manager. After the Taylors

split with BTC at the end of 2020, they moved into TCR UK under the Restart name and Smiley won the 2022 title. The collapse of Team Hard made two Cupra Leons available, and Smiley's 2023 team-mate Scott Sumpton has made the move into the BTCC to complete the line-up.

"It's easy to see everything sitting here and think it's all just turned up overnight, but it's taken a lot of work," says Smiley. "I'm very proud of the guys. We've only had the car three or four months, and we've completely rebuilt it. We've massively changed the front bumper and aero kit on the car. It's definitely better; how much better we're not sure yet. We're not a million miles away time-wise. I haven't driven one of these properly for a few years, so there's a little bit of time in me as well."

Under Taylor Jr, veteran engineer Geoff Kingston (whose CV covers Formula 1, Group C and Super





THE CAR MOVING FORWARD IS A TOYOTA?

Toyota team Speedworks Motorsport has created a lot of headlines with the quality of the driver line-up in its expanded four-car squad: 2012 World Touring Car champion Rob Huff joins reigning Jack Sears Trophy king Andrew Watson in the Toyota Gazoo Racing GB arm; multiple race winners Josh Cook and Aiden Moffat reprise their 2023 partnership from One Motorsport in the 'sister' LKQ effort. But what about progress on a Corolla GR Sport that was somewhat disappointing last term?

"We've had a big focus on weight reduction, weight distribution, aerodynamics, so a real big push over the winter," says Speedworks boss Christian Dick. "Early form in testing suggests we've made progress in every area. It's hard to say quite how much until we know what everyone else is doing, but so far positive signs."

Former lead engineer Paul Ridgway oversaw this development until December, when he parted ways with Speedworks. Taking up the cudgels are Andrew Sayer, who has joined from the Proton Porsche LMDh team and will look



after Huff, long-time Speedworks man Jack Coker (who ran Rory Butcher in the second half of 2023 and now takes over on Watson's car) and Dick himself. Bolstering the engineering strength are Mick Cook and Steve Brady, who have crossed over from One to respectively continue with the unrelated Cook and Moffat.

One area that hampered Speedworks in 2023 was straightline speed, on its first season with a bespoke Toyota engine produced by Neil Brown Engineering. "We hamstrung ourselves a little



bit with under-bonnet engine temperatures last year, so that's given us more scope to push," declares Dick. "Certainly over the winter NBE and ourselves have had a big knuckle-down and looked at all the areas we needed to improve and could improve.

"We haven't got a weak link in the team. The drivers are strong, and have jumped in and adapted to the Corolla really quick, and are full of praise and positive feedback about the chassis that they've got underneath them."

Touring) and Tom Hunt have moved across from Team Hard, where they ran Nic Hamilton and Dan Lloyd respectively in 2023. Carrera Cup-bound Lloyd, another driver backed by Jones, is a helping hand behind the scenes, while among the staff are personnel from Hard and One Motorsport (formerly BTC). "The more experience we have, the better it's going to be," sums up Smiley. "I definitely think the potential's there."



| BTCC | ENTRY LIST | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| NO | DRIVER | TEAM | CAR |
| 1 | Ash Sutton | Alliance Racing | Ford Focus ST |
| 27 | Dan Cammish | Alliance Racing | Ford Focus ST |
| 32 | Dan Rowbottom | Alliance Racing | Ford Focus ST |
| 77 | Sam Osborne | Alliance Racing | Ford Focus ST |
| 3 | Tom Chilton | Excelr8 Motorsport | Hyundai i 30 N |
| 14 | Ronan Pearson | Excelr8 Motorsport | Hyundai i 30 N |
| 22 | Nick Halstead | Excelr8 Motorsport | Hyundai i30 N |
| 80 | Tom Ingram | Excelr8 Motorsport | Hyundai i 30 N |
| 11 | Andrew Watson | Speedworks Motorsport | Toyota Corolla GR Sport |
| 12 | Rob Huff | Speedworks Motorsport | Toyota Corolla GR Sport |
| 16 | Aiden Moffat | Speedworks Motorsport | Toyota Corolla GR Sport |
| 66 | Josh Cook | Speedworks Motorsport | Toyota Corolla GR Sport |
| 18 | Daryl DeLeon | Unlimited Motorsport | Cupra Leon |
| 19 | Bobby Thompson* | West Surrey Racing | BMW 330e M Sport |
| 20 | Colin Turkington | West Surrey Racing | BMW 330e M Sport |
| 24 | Jake Hill | West Surrey Racing | BMW 330e M Sport |
| 33 | Adam Morgan | West Surrey Racing | BMW 330e M Sport |
| 29 | Scott Sumpton | Restart Racing | Cupra Leon |
| 222 | Chris Smiley | Restart Racing | Cupra Leon |
| 40 | Aron Taylor-Smith | Power Maxed Racing | Vauxhall Astra |
| 88 | Mikey Doble | Power Maxed Racing | Vauxhall Astra |
| *unconfirmed as we went to press | | | |

SEASON PREVIEW

TOCA SUPPORTS PREVIEW

THE SUPPORTING STARS AIMING TO STRIKE GOLD

Three of the regular BTCC support series also begin their seasons this weekend and there are plenty of potential title contenders to follow

STEPHEN LICKORISH

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

Autosport's Porsche Carrera Cup GB season preview last year began with the words: "There have been some incredibly close Porsche Carrera Cup GB title battles over the years and the 2023 contest could be another to add to that list." Yet that's not how it played out. Instead, Adam Smalley steamrollered his way to glory, and several of his expected rivals departed the series after tough starts to their campaigns.

But there are even more signs that things really could be very close this time around. For example, an influx of British Touring Car race winners has ensured plenty of interest in the championship for 2024. Dan Lloyd, George Gamble and Stephen Jelley have all been Porsche frontrunners in the past and have been tempted to return to one-make competition for this year. "I'm mega excited to be back here – it feels like I'm coming back to my roots; I think a lot of people forget I did a lot of Porsche and GT racing," says Lloyd, who was fourth in the standings in 2013 and has joined up

with Toro Verde for 2024. "It looks like an exciting year for the championship as well – really competitive with a lot of Pros, and it creates that bit of buzz with a few of us going to it [from the BTCC].

"It's nice to be in a one-make series, where it's all down to me. It comes with a bit of pressure but it's pressure I'm happy to have."

Lloyd points out that a lack of dry pre-season testing means he goes into the campaign "a little bit on the back foot" as he readjusts to GT machinery after eight years in tin-tops. "My focus is to get some points banked at Donington Park and learn as much as I can and go from there," he states. "I'm certainly not going to underestimate the competition."

That competition does not just include BTCC returnees, as plenty of other talented drivers have been attracted onto this year's grid. Joining Gamble at Century Motorsport – which won last season's teams' title – is 2021 British GT4 champion Will Burns, back racing after a year on the





sidelines following the birth of his daughter. After enjoying success with Century in the past, he is looking forward to the new challenge. "I'm just trying to get up to speed with a completely different car to what I'm used to," says Burns. "British GT has got ABS so they tell you to smash the brakes as hard as you can and, if you do that in the Cup car, you flatspot all your tyres. It's a very niche driving style you need but, each lap that goes by, it will start clicking."

Other eye-catching names on the grid include 2021 British Formula 4 conqueror and GB3 frontrunner Matthew Rees (one of Jelley's Team Parker Racing stablemates), while Formula Ford ace Andrew Rackstraw is dovetailing his single-seater exploits with a Porsche campaign at JTR. He is joined by new Porsche GB Junior James Wallis and, given Smalley continued a long run of triumphs for scholarship winners, the former GT Cup and British GT racer certainly cannot be discounted.

But, while there are so many new and returning names in this year's mix, there are still a few familiar faces from last season, too. Josh Malin was one of the surprise performers on his way to third in the standings, despite only joining from the third round after replacing Gus Burton at Century. "I went to Thruxton, which is my local track, and just thought, 'I'm back in the car, heck let's go and enjoy it', and I finished second and third in my first rounds back after 10 months!" Malin recalls. "It was quite a shock but also quite humbling because of all the support I had. Had I been told I would have finished third doing three-quarters of the season, I would have thought you're having a laugh. It's given me good confidence going into this year and, hopefully, I can replicate those results."



The 2020 Ginetta GT5 Challenge title winner is now planning a full season with Dino Zamparelli's new Race Drive squad, and is seeking to claim that elusive first win and launch a championship charge. "The competition, as always, is going to be incredibly strong so I'm prepared for a big championship fight," says Malin, who points out that, while Race Drive may be a new team, it has plenty of Porsche experience among its engineering ranks. Joining Malin at the operation is Harry Foster, who will be seeking to build upon his maiden series race win in the penultimate 2023 round at Silverstone.

Predicting who will end the year on top is incredibly tricky – even the Pro-Am ranks feature the likes of Walter Hayes Trophy winner Oliver White and former W Series driver Abbie Eaton – but all the ingredients certainly seem to be in place for a genuinely close fight after last season's battle somewhat fizzled out.







One of the most memorable sights of British Formula 4 last year was Deagen Fairclough rocketing up the order in the opening laps of races. The Fiesta Junior graduate threw caution to the wind with some of his moves and gained quite a reputation. After securing his place on the grid by winning ROKiT's sim racing shootout, he was eager to show he deserved to be in the series. But even Fairclough admits he was "too eager" at times. "I think I was a little bit reckless at the start!" he says. "We could have potentially got the title last year if I had the right mindset."

Fairclough says he has learned plenty from a campaign in which he took three wins and five further podiums, despite being the sole JHR Developments driver for some of the year – a tough task for a rookie going up against four-car squads and their mountains of data. He now feels that he is "more chilled" after joining the powerhouse Hitech GP team for this season.

"I don't want to give too much away!" he smiles when asked about what he has changed for 2024. "But it's just staying consistent and not having those DNFs is so crucial. At Snetterton, we had a DNF and we had negative points from it. We were only third in the championship at the end, so if we had a few more points, we could have been in the fight. But it was my debut year in single-seaters. I'd gone from rubbing doors to having to leave space everywhere. But now I've done a full season, I've done the UAE championship, there's so much I've learned and I'm feeling the best I've ever felt to go into a season of racing."



There is certainly no denying that Fairclough is one of the favourites this time around, and he is determined to replicate Alex Dunne's victorious 2022 campaign with Hitech. "The title is definitely the goal – I'm not really aiming for anything less," he states. "We're here to break records."

Fairclough is likely to face plenty of opposition from within his own team this year. Mika Abrahams is another sophomore F4 racer and joins after an improving campaign with Fortec in which he grew stronger after being too young to contest the opening three events. Meanwhile, Reza Seewooruthun was one of just five drivers to triumph in Ginetta Junior last season.

Rodin Motorsport is also likely to pose a major threat, with all four of its



racers having plenty of F4 experience. Early F1 Academy points leader Abbi Pulling will return to the British championship for the rounds that do not clash, while Jack Sherwood moves across from Chris Dittmann Racing and Alex Ninovic swaps from the Spanish series, in which the Australian was 10th in the 2023 standings. But James Higgins – sixth last year in British F4 with Fortec - is perhaps most likely to spearhead Rodin's line-up. Originally, he was keen to graduate to GB3 for this year but was persuaded to take a full F4 title tilt. "Although last year didn't go the way we wanted it to, I think I still showed what I could do," says Higgins, who took four poles and two wins. "I thought, 'job's done, we'll move on.' But it completely wasn't. Moving up too quickly can be a bad thing. I'm not learning anything new – I know the tracks, I know the car and now I know the team – so there's no real excuses if you look at it that way, so we will definitely try to get the title."

Others to watch out for include Mercedes junior Yuanpu Cui at Argenti Motorsport, while it will also be fascinating to follow the progress of Maxwell Dodds at Virtuosi. The former Ginetta Junior racer has spent two years on the sidelines and only secured his F4 seat on the eve of the season, but would like to spring a surprise as he gets up to speed. As will new squad Xcel Motorsport and its lead driver Zack Scoular. After all, Fairclough was not expected to perform so impressively last year, so who knows which contender could emerge as an unexpected star of British F4's latest line-up?

MINI CHALLENGE

The Mini Challenge was all about one driver last year. Dan Zelos returned to form in spectacular style and blitzed the opposition en route to his second series title. Now, having again been unable to make the progression to British Touring Cars, he has elected to remain in the series and try to collect more silverware.

But it has been a difficult off-season for Excelr8 Motorsport's reserve BTCC racer. Towards the end of last year, a close family member was diagnosed with Parkinson's, and Zelos will now be seeking to raise money and awareness for the Parkinson's UK charity at BTCC events. "It puts things into perspective," he says of the shock news. "For us to look elsewhere with so much going on didn't feel right. We've had a lot of good times with Excelr8 but there wasn't a seat available in the BTCC; the next best place to be is to continue as their reserve driver and compete in the Mini Challenge."

Yet, despite being a proven Mini master, Zelos says "there's always things you can learn from every season – you can never be perfect" as he embarks on a sixth campaign racing the JCWs. He is undoubtedly one of the favourites for the title, but is expecting a far tougher challenge, especially from within his team. "Last year I was the standout driver in Excelr8," states Zelos. "This year I can see that it's

going to be very different. We've got some really quick rookies coming in – I've made a rod for my own back by helping them get up to speed!"

Zelos expects Nelson King - third last year with Graves Motorsport - and Dominic Wheatley to be competitive, while reigning Cooper champion Tom Ovenden and Nathan Edwards (fifth among the Coopers in 2023) could also figure strongly. But Zelos has been particularly impressed by Max Hall so far in testing. "I think he might be the surprise at round one," says

"LAST YEAR I WAS THE STANDOUT DRIVER IN **EXCELR8. THIS YEAR** I CAN SEE IT'S GOING TO BE VERY DIFFERENT"

Zelos, who also reckons NAPAbacked Jamie Osborne will pose a threat.

A new JCW Sport class has been introduced for this year and has attracted five drivers as an intermediate step between the Coopers and the JCWs, while a new grid-setting format has been introduced, with qualifying now determining starting places for two of the three races. Considering Zelos was only defeated once in qualifying all year in 2023, that is perhaps ominous news for the rivals attempting to dethrone him.



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- Solid technical background in car / system design / operation / build / preparation.
- Work to a consistently high standard in stressful and time sensitive situations.

Equipment and Applications:

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- Good problem solving abilities
- PC literate

Personal Attributes

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- Ability to work effectively under pressure
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- Collaborate with the design, performance, and test engineering teams to identify the most efficient and effective methods of delivering the agreed objectives within a test programme.
- Maintain clear and concise records of test outcomes, working with the test engineer(s) to ensure we accurately report our findings and store information for future retrieval.
- Champion planned servicing and maintenance of our test equipment to ensure we maintain the highest practicable levels of operational efficiency across the season.

Candidate Profile:

- Demonstrable experience of working in a high-performance engineering environment.
- Experience in delivering experimental results in support of a fast-paced programme with immovable deadlines.
- Ability to collaborate and negotiate to deliver results across different departments.
- Ability to read engineering drawings, build fixtures and verify setups for experiments.
- A proven ability to take the initiative.
- Curious, committed to continuous learning, and ability to adapt quickly to change.

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Key Responsibilities:

- Updating MSV's circuit and event social media channels (primarily Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and responding to queries
- Assist with the management of MSV's media accreditation system, maintaining relationships with key journalists and photographers throughout the season
- Contribute to race weekend web and social media cover across MSV's digital platforms. Days will be repaid in lieu for weekend work
- Contributing to MSV's editorial output online and in print (including web stories, press releases and race event programmes)
- Assisting with creative strategies to boost MSV's online presence on social media - including expansion on to new platforms

Qualifications and Experience:

- Excellent writing skills, with good grammar, spelling and attention to detail are essential to the role
- Prior experience writing professional motorsport articles is essential

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- Create and maintain good communication with the whole department to ensure we continue to progress.
- Maintain and promote the highest standards of quality and workmanship on all components and projects.
- Execute the day-to-day tasks, providing a flexible approach and dedication to our continued development.

Professionalism

- To investigate and implement new techniques.
- Provide flexible attendance and attitude to work, both in line with the requirements of the role and any specific requirements of the projects.
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- Ensuring the department presentation is to the standard of a world class facility.
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- You will expand your knowledge, learning a wide range of skills and techniques such as harness manufacture, sensor calibration and the assembly of Electronics parts all whilst in a training environment. You will be set tasks and phase tests in line with your NVQ requirements which will be assessed at regular intervals over the year. Alongside this you will be involved with manufacturing current F1 components whist adhering to our work orders and timing plans.

Over the course of your apprenticeship, you will gain knowledge and become competent in the following disciplines:

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OBITUARY

Alan Minshaw, whose racing career spanned six decades, has died aged 88, having been in declining health for some time. Only by suffering a heart attack at his beloved Oulton Park's Gold Cup event, where expert medical care was at hand, did he enjoy several bonus years.

A natural salesman, Liverpudlian Minshaw identified a lucrative niche market for mail order go-faster equipment and racewear. Having founded Demon Tweeks in 1971, he built a trusted brand empire from a one-man band, pioneering an industry, and put more back into grassroots motorsport than anybody else.

Minshaw started competing at Aintree in 1958, in a Morris Minor convertible, before moving on to a Downton-tuned Mini, which enabled him to sample a wide range of sporting disciplines while providing road transport in his work selling Fram Filters.

Sportscars followed, including a Turner-Climax, a factory-supported

Reliant Sabre and an 1150cc Lotus 23 sponsored by Charles Bridges' Red Rose Motors of Chester. But his big adventure was accompanying Ted Worswick, driving one of the latter's ex-works Austin-Healey 3000s (PJB 828) to the 1966 Targa Florio in Sicily, a world championship round, then competing.

Minshaw's first taste of single-seater racing then came when he converted an obsolete Formula 3 Brabham BT9 for Formula Ford in 1968, entering it as the Black Jack Special.

His easy charm and work ethic was channelled into Demon Tweeks – a name doubtless inspired by the scruffy monosyllabic mechanics in *Catchpole*, Barry Foley's Autosport cartoon strip – established in an old smithy at Tattenhall, near Oulton, with a satellite shop in the circuit's paddock.

As business boomed, Minshaw owned and raced a remarkable range of cars. As 1974 Triplex Production Saloon champion in a Chrysler Avenger, he became the third owner of Tony Hazlewood's hairy DAF-Oldsmobile V8, in which (renamed Volvo 66, with BDX engine), he sponsored the late Tony Sugden.

With ongoing Manchester Liners backing, Minshaw continued to compete in an Opel Commodore, before graduating to the British Saloon Car Championship in 1979. A fixture for a decade, culminating in a BMW E30 M3, he won his class and finished second overall in 1983 in a VW Golf GTI.

Historic racing then beckoned, and Minshaw was seen twirling the wheel of a Maserati T61 'Birdcage', Jaguar C and D-types, Chevron B8s – having famously cancelled his order for one in 1968 – an ex-Jack Brabham Tasman Brabham BT4 and a monstrous Chevrolet Malibu with energetic aplomb, sharing his passion with racer sons Jon, Jason and Guy.

British Racing Drivers' Club life member Alan is survived by his wife Annette and seven children, plus a 53-year business legacy. Demon Tweeks flourishes under Jon's leadership, supplying thousands of product lines worldwide from its Wrexham HQ.



MARCUS PYE



MINI CHALLENGE

A guest car powered by sustainable fuels will be introduced into the new JCW Sport class of the Mini Challenge this year, the first step towards the category's goal of moving entirely away from traditional petrol by 2028.

The car will run on products featuring an ever greater percentage of renewable sources. It will be operated by series bosses and available for drivers seeking to sample the new JCW Sport class – designed to help bridge the gap between the existing Cooper and JCW divisions – as well as those looking to highlight their green credentials. It is due to be raced by Hannah Chapman, who last competed in the JCW category in 2022, in this weekend's Donington Park season-opener.

"Sustainable fuels are going to be a key part of the landscape in motorsport in the coming years, particularly at national level," said series promoter Antony Williams. "Our goal as a championship is to work towards having all cars running on 100% sustainable fuels in the next three to four years, and certainly by the start of the 2028 season.

"The first stage of this is the development car that we will run in the JCW Sport class this season, which will start the year running on a significant proportion of sustainable fuels. Over the year, we will then reduce the amount of fossil fuels required and work on introducing the new fuel for

2025 as work continues."

Chapman is due to be one of five drivers running in the JCW Sport class for its inaugural event. They also include scholarship winner Albert Webster and former GB4 racer Dylan Hotchin.

Another driver to secure a place on the grid this weekend is 2017 Cooper champion Matt Hammond, who had been aiming to graduate to the top JCW category and has now joined up with Williams's Excelr8 Motorsport team.

Back-to-back Bradley wins in Sandown

SPRINT

The third annual Sandown Sprint attracted 90 entries to the south-east coast of the Isle of Wight last weekend to compete on a course totally made up of closed public roads.

Damien Bradley retained his title as the overall winner for the second year running in his highly developed Subaru Legacy, which features a 2.2-litre engine and a huge AET turbo that produces up to 800bhp. He set the quickest run on both days, with the overall result decided by the fastest run from Saturday and Sunday.

Bradley's 34.91s time on Saturday was the event best on the course that begins on Fort Street before turning



east for a long dash down Culver Parade on Sandown's seafront road, split up by a couple of chicanes and a trip around a roundabout in front of thousands of spectators on the promenade.

Event sponsor and 2022 winner Will Nicholls finished second in his Ford Fiesta R5 rally car, 2.03 seconds behind Bradley. Nic Olson impressed in his 1981 Lotus Esprit S3, which has been a winner in 750 Motor Club Roadsports and Classic Sports Car Club races in the past, to finish third.

The event, organised by the Isle of Wight Car Club, catered for 15 classes from road cars up to Group B machines, including a Ford RS200 and Lancia 037. The ex-Peter Day Fiat 500 Special Saloon, a Pontiac ASCAR, an ex-Petter Solberg Subaru and an Austin 7 Special demonstrated the variety on display.

JOSH BARRETT



F3 victor Stenshorne and rising star Wharton to make GB3 debuts

GB₃

FIA Formula 3 race winner Martinius Stenshorne and young Australian rising star James Wharton will make their GB3 Championship debuts this weekend at Silverstone.

Stenshorne was runner-up to Andrea Kimi Antonelli in Formula Regional European last season, and as an F3 rookie claimed victory in the Australian sprint race last month with Hitech GP. But the 18-year-old Norwegian will drive for Chris Dittmann Racing at Silverstone.

"Silverstone is one of the most famous tracks on the calendar, but also one of the toughest, and getting experience will be really valuable to take forward to the future," said Stenshorne, whose father Martin competed in the World Rally Championship. "It's going to be a learning experience, with a new car and a new track, but I'm confident we will get a lot out of the weekend."

Meanwhile, ex-Ferrari junior Wharton will race with Fortec Motorsports. The 2023 UAE F4 champion has also won races in Italian and German F4 plus Euro 4.

"It will be such a great experience to drive a new car on a new track and, surely, will be quite challenging with no testing," said Wharton, whose main programme this season is in FRegional with Prema Racing. "But I feel I can do a good weekend, and stepping into something new is always a great learning process."

Over in GB4, Dutchman Bas Visser will make his car racing debut this weekend with Graham Brunton Racing.

Wallis Sr's racing baptism at Donington

BOXSTER CUP

Nick Wallis, father of newly selected Porsche Carrera Cup GB Junior driver James, made his racing debut in the Boxster Cup at Donington Park last weekend.

It turned out to be a dramatic debut, after a blown engine in testing necessitated a change of car for race day. Things then went from bad to worse for Wallis. After being involved in a collision in the opening race, he was a non-starter for the sequel.

"With James now sorted for this year, I had time on my hands and always fancied having a go myself," said Wallis Sr.

"I hadn't even sat in the car before qualifying, then got taken out in the race by one of the leaders [who was later excluded]. So now I am on the Porsche ladder too, like James."

Former British GT and GT Cup racer Wallis Jr's Carrera Cup campaign gets under way this weekend when he will make his debut with JTR.

The Porsche Club Championship was also in action at Donington Park and celebrated its 40th anniversary. Porsche legend Bill Taylor won the first-ever event at Snetterton on 20 April 1984. PETER SCHERER

PETROL INSTEAD OF DIESEL

A new specification of Ford Focus hit the track in the Focus Cup at Donington Park last weekend, with petrol rather than diesel powering the car raced by Simon Walton. "It's a car for 2025 and this year's champion will get a fully paid season racing in it," he said. "We plan to run a class for petrol cars alongside the diesels next year. The car doesn't feel a lot different, but has more power and potential. It needs some work on the brakes, though."

DUCKMAN BACK RACING

Former Production Touring Car champion Gary Duckman had his first race for more than six years last weekend at Donington Park, when he joined 16-year-old son and race debutant Lewis in a Renault Clio in the Trackday Trophy. The pair finished fourth in class during the 45-minute race. "I had wanted to race with Lewis as he had done well in karting," said Duckman Sr.

MCNEILLY'S NEW JOURNEY

British teenager Liam McNeilly has signed with ex-IndyCar driver James Hinchcliffe's management company, Speed Group, following his move into the USF Juniors Championship this year. McNeilly previously competed in GB4, finishing third overall last season, and was a winner in the US category's opening round at NOLA Motorsports Park. "They have a huge amount of experience in the US motorsport sector and, as a driver coming from the UK, it's important to get the help and advice I need to push my career forward in the US," he said. "Having the right people around me is important."

LANCIA 037'S RARE OUTING

Dave Kedward gave his 1983-built Lancia 037 a rare competition outing on the British Isles at the Sandown Sprint last weekend. The car ran in its period works livery and Rally Safari-specification, with which Kenyans Vic Preston Jr and John Lyall took the car (below) to sixth in the fourth round of the 1984 World Rally Championship.



Hesketh back to Silverstone 50 years from win...

HISTORICS

The Hesketh 308 Formula 1 car in which James Hunt won the 1974 BRDC International Trophy at Silverstone was given a 50th anniversary demonstration run during the Vintage Sports-Car Club meeting on Saturday in the hands of Historic Formula Ford champion Callum Grant.

After making their F1 debut in 1973 with a March 731, Hesketh and Hunt were victorious the following year in the non-championship race at Silverstone with the Harvey Postlethwaite-designed 308, despite the gear-knob coming off mid-race.

"Until the gear shift broke, it was the easiest race we'd ever had," recalled team founder Lord Alexander Hesketh as he watched the demonstration at Silverstone. "It's wonderful because my wife, my children and my grandchildren have never seen it going out."

Hunt famously went on to score the squad's only world championship grand prix victory at Zandvoort in 1975 before the team folded three years later.



"I [initially] bought a March," Hesketh continued. "A very highly trained doctor, Harvey Postlethwaite, was actually going to work for Robin [Herd, March co-founder], so we craftily removed him from behind the drawing board while we took delivery of the monocoque. I went and bought a couple of DFVs in Northampton and the rest is history.

"It was a quick car, it became a quicker car. We should have won the British GP here [in 1975] but had the airbox knocked off in the [Jody] Scheckter crash and still came fourth."

Despite having plenty of experience driving historic F1 cars for Mirage

Engineering, Grant said that the opportunity to demo such a famous car had been "a privilege". "Everybody has watched *Rush* [the movie] haven't they?" he added. "Everybody knows the story, even people who aren't into F1 know this car. This opportunity came up because James [Hagan, the car's owner] is in Australia, so they offered it to me.

"I don't know what lap times I was doing, but I imagine they were about 30 seconds a lap quicker than a Formula Ford. It was unreal, so fast. It's off to Monaco in two weeks so we didn't want to take too much risk."

STEVE WHITFIELD

Rare Citroen Le Mans replica races with the VSCC



VSCC

Tom De Gres and Hans Ciers drove a rare and possibly unique Citroen C4 Roadster in the Vintage Sports-Car Club meeting at Silverstone last weekend.

The stripped-down special is a faithful replica

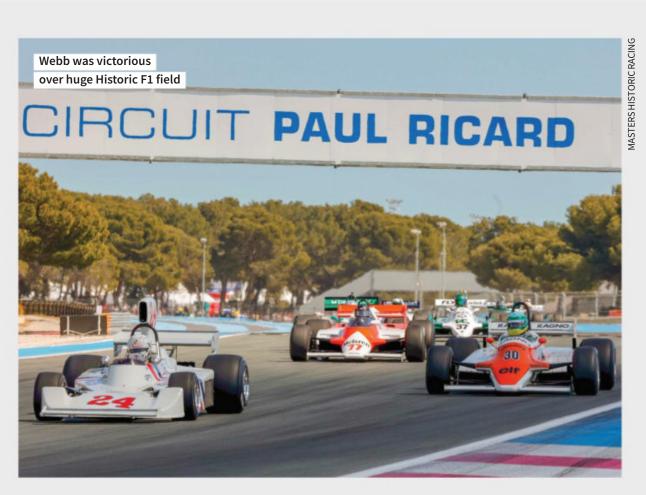
of a car that went to Le Mans in 1930 and 1931 but failed to qualify.

The replica was built by British racers Celia Stevens and Antonia Loysen as a way of getting an entry for the Le Mans Classic, and it has been a regular in the Classic for several years, more recently in the hands of sometime Formula Junior racer De Gres.

The VSCC outing may well have been the car's first race appearance in the UK. It finished 14th in the slow scratch race for pre-war cars.

PAUL LAWRENCE





...as marque is also in the spotlight with Webb's Paul Ricard glory

MASTERS HISTORIC RACING

While Hesketh was celebrated at Silverstone last weekend with a demo of 308-1, Oli Webb caused a sensation when he won the second leg of the Masters Racing Legends seasonopener at Paul Ricard in a sister car.

From a record 40 entries in a Monaco GP Historique warm-up for some, Irishman Mike Cantillon won Saturday's race – centrepiece of the GP de France Historique event – in his Williams FW07C.

Cantillon was chased home by Belgium's Werner d'Ansembourg (Brabham BT49), American reigning champion Ken Tyrrell (Tyrrell 011) and Christophe d'Ansembourg (FW07C). Jamie Constable (011) and Webb won their divisions in fifth and seventh places respectively.

From 11th on Sunday's reversed grid, Cantillon threaded through the pack to lead by lap 10 of 13, but contact with a lapped car ended his race. Webb, who started fifth and used his racecraft to lead, screamed to a resounding victory from the Pre-'78 set.

Martin Stretton (Tyrrell 012) finished a close second, clear of Christophe d'Ansembourg. Tyrrell, Constable and Simon Fish (Arrows A4) completed the top six. Frenchman Guillaume Roman (Ensign N175) pipped Peter Williams (LEC CRP1) to second of the pre-78 runners.

Steve Brooks (Peugeot 90X) scored a
Masters Endurance Legends prototype
double, Saturday's opener after hydraulics
problems stopped leader Kriton Lendoudis's
908. From the back, the Greek chased down
and passed Brooks on Sunday, before he
fought back to complete his double. Fellow
Briton Michael 'Barry' Birch enjoyed a
splendid weekend in the P2 division,
winning both days in his Ligier JSP217.

STEPHANE PLOMBPIED

Hardman realises ERA racing dream

VSCC

Former vintage MG racer Tom Hardman achieved a long-held dream by racing an ERA at Silverstone last Saturday.

Hardman got the chance to race ERA AJM1, one of the two cars owned by his friend Ben

Fidler, and contested the Patrick Lindsay Memorial race.

Hardman, who most recently raced the MG Belle Vue Special, has hillclimbed AJM1 over the past two years but had never raced an ERA before. "I saw them racing as a boy and this was a 25-year dream to get to

race one," said Hardman, who finished the contest that commemorated ERA's 90th anniversary in seventh place.

"My first time on a track in an ERA was in testing at Silverstone on Friday morning, and I'm continuing to be very cautious."

PAUL LAWRENCE

SCOTTISH LEGENDS ENGINE

A new engine has been introduced to Scottish Legends for 2024, running alongside the series' stalwart 1250cc, four-cylinder powerplant. The Yamaha MT-09 motorcycle-derived motor is thought to be around 30kg lighter than the older, air-cooled Yamaha XJR unit, boasting a smoother exhaust note thanks to its inline-three configuration. As well as saving weight, the new engine provides a superior torque curve and is mated to a six-speed sequential gearbox. The MT-09 was used by eight of last weekend's 30 entrants at Knockhill, and it powered Daniel Clark to victory in the Sunday final.

DAVE ALLAN TROPHY RACE

Entries for the annual Dave Allan Trophy race on a strong Castle Combe programme on 6 May are still available. Open to any saloon, sports or GT car – split into four classes by lap times: under 1m13s, 1m16s, 1m23s and over 1m23s – it is a 40-minute event that honours former Honda tester Allan.

CTCRC'S DOUBLE POINTS

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club stages its first-ever double points meeting at Cadwell Park this weekend, with more than 100 entries across four grids. Pre-'66 Touring Cars account for 30 entries alone, while the combined Classic & Historic Thunder grid stands at 24. Among the British Automobile Racing Club categories in action, the 2CV Championship features 29 cars, and the Mini Se7en Racing Club has raised 43 entries across its two grids.

HIBBERD DEBUTS LOTUS

Andrew Hibberd debuted a Formula Ford 1600 Lotus 61 at Snetterton last Saturday. Acquired from American Nick Grewal, the 'wedge' has subsequently been completely rebuilt in distinctive Hexagon tobacco brown (below). "After one shakedown session on Friday, I'm pleased with it," said Hibberd, who took a best result of seventh and was also a Formula Junior class winner in Norfolk in his Lotus 20.



F5000 grid set to get boost from Down Under

HISTORICS

The Historic Sports Car Club is expecting an influx of Formula 5000 machinery from Australia and New Zealand this year, for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic, with the cars joining its revamped Derek Bell Trophy.

The series caters for high-powered single-seaters and is reverting to its previous name, having run under the Aurora Trophy moniker in recent seasons. HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne believes around a dozen Antipodean F5000s are set to make the journey to the UK to compete in the category's headline Brands Hatch Superprix and Oulton Park Gold Cup events in July and are due to be shipped over imminently.

"We used to entertain cars from New Zealand and Australia every year," said Dee-Crowne. "Obviously, that stopped when we went through COVID and this is the first year they're coming back. It's really exciting – they are a firm favourite with everybody because they're so evocative. They used to race in the Gold Cup back in the day, so it's really important to get them back."



Between 1973 and 1975, F5000 succeeded F1 as the category the Gold Cup was awarded to, with F1 drivers Peter Gethin, Ian Ashley and David Purley taking the spoils.

Dee-Crowne added that the additional F5000s from overseas are likely to help bolster numbers of the machines based in the UK that also take part. "There will be a resurgence in our own F5000 drivers when they have someone to race against," said Dee-Crowne, who added that next weekend's season-opener on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit is

due to feature a significant number of F5000s, even before the extra cars arrive from Down Under.

In addition to the new name, the Derek Bell Trophy – which is home to F2 and FAtlantic machinery as well as the F5000s – is also going to feature hospitality packages in a new awning for this season as organisers attempt to boost its fortunes. "There's been a lot of investment in the series and chair Mike Bainbridge has been instrumental in being forward-thinking," said Dee-Crowne.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Summers and Harrison demo F5000 machines

HISTORICS

British Hillclimb Championship contender Alex Summers drove his father Richard's Lola T140 Formula 5000 at Silverstone last Sunday.

Summers took part in the F5000 demonstration sessions during the Vintage Sports-Car Club race meeting and was only able to do so because the opening British Hillclimb round at Prescott, scheduled for the same day, had been postponed due to the waterlogged venue.

Summers last raced the car in the Aurora Trophy final at Silverstone in

October 2021, but has since kept his focus on hillclimbing in his DJ Firestorm. "It's a lot of fun to drive," he said of the early wingless Lola.

His father Richard has also raced the car, but only occasionally due to their hillclimbing commitments, having purchased the machine in 2007.

At the same meeting, another hillclimber, Jolyon Harrison, also took his own F5000 Surtees TS8 onto a track for the first time during the demo.

One of 13 cars originally built by 1964 F1 world champion John Surtees and his team, Harrison's



car started life as a Mike Hailwood chassis, which was crashed in Australia and was then rebuilt.

"This is a new experience for me," said Harrison, who has owned the car for about a decade but has kept it only for hillclimbing, notably at Harewood in Yorkshire. "I'm running it on 10-year-old wets," he said at Silverstone. "I don't think the hillclimb slicks would last very long on the circuit!"

PAUL LAWRENCE



Clark and Black on top as Knockhill racing season begins in style

KNOCKHILL KMSC 20-21 APRIL

Knockhill's 2024 circuit racing season started in entertaining fashion last weekend, with a packed Scottish Motor Racing Club schedule boosted by additional Knockhill Motor Sports Club Super Lap Scotland, Modsports and Scottish Legends contests. Healthy grid sizes were a fitting tribute to the Fife circuit's 50th anniversary year, with the changeable weather doing little to dampen competitors' enthusiasm, despite myriad safety-car interludes.

The mood around the Scottish Legends paddock was particularly buoyant thanks to a bumper entry of 30 cars – a record for the series – with Saturday's first round featuring Stewart Black, Daniel Clark and Steve Whitelegg locking out the podium places in each of the three races.

The weather changed for the worse for round two on Sunday, with inclement conditions facing the drivers in both heat races and the final. Yet Black and Clark – the latter of whom lamented his lack of wet tyres – still dominated.



Reigning champion Black took both heat wins from Clark, but was unfortunate to succumb to a first-lap incident in the final, the stramash paving the way for Clark to scythe his way through the field. He duly swept to victory on a drying track, building a mammoth 7.8-second gap to runner-up Maxim Popelyushko at the chequered flag. Whitelegg added to his burgeoning trophy collection in third.

Ron Cumming almost stole the show thanks to his comeback drive in race three of the Modsports championship. Lindsay McCracken looked odds-on for a double victory but was overhauled by Cumming's Nemesis Kit Car two laps from home.

Cumming, who snapped a driveshaft heading to the race-two grid, started from the back in the third race as damp asphalt gave way to a treacherous, fully wet surface. Undeterred, the veteran racer sliced through the spray to deny McCracken's Radical SR3 just before the chequered flag, adding to his Saturday win.

The Mini Cooper drivers started their season at Kirkistown in March with a typically competitive showing, with three winners from three races. Round two was more of the same, and Daniel Patterson continued where he left off in Northern Ireland by winning race one. Former champion Robbie Dalgleish claimed second race honours, while Jamie Blake took both wins in the small Cooper S class.

Oly Mortimer hit the grass at McIntyre on the opening lap of the partially reversed-grid finale, gifting Ian Munro and Jack Irvine a significant gap up front. Then a safety car interlude bunched the pack and set up a thrilling battle for the lead, with Mortimer launching a superb

WEEKEND WINNERS

SCOTTISH LEGENDS CARS

Races 1 & 6 Daniel Clark

Races 2, 3, 4 & 5 Stewart Black

KMSC MODSPORTS

Races 1 & 3 Ron Cumming (Nemesis Kit Car)
Race 2 Lindsay McCracken (Radical SR3)

SCOTTISH MINI COOPERS

Races 1 & 2 Jamie Blake (Cooper S)
Race 3 Jack Irvine (Cooper)

SCOTTISH CLASSIC SPORTS & SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Graham (Triumph TR8)

SCOTTISH C1 CUP

Races 1 & 2 Murray Scott

SCOTTISH FIESTA ST CUP

Races 1 & 2 Gerry Hendry

SUPER LAP SCOTLAND

Ian Bonthrone (BMW M4)

For full results visit: smart-timing.co.uk

move at Duffus Dip to grab the advantage midway through. Mistakes from the chasing Chad Little and Dalgleish gave Irvine and Munro breathing room to secure podium positions. But Mortimer's delight at his recovery drive was shortlived when both he and Munro were penalised 30s for yellowflag infringements, gifting Irvine the spoils.

Andrew Graham dominated a packed Classics field in his well-prepared Triumph TR8, twice finishing ahead of Barry Eastaugh's MGB GT. Eastaugh was initially pipped to the runner-up spot by Colin Calder in race two but the Ginetta G4 driver was hit with a 10s penalty. The race was red-flagged at mid-distance after Michael Anderson spectacularly rolled his Ford Fiesta, with Calder false-starting on resumption. The sanction dropped him to seventh despite some impressive overtakes.

Mercedes, Porsche and Lotus get off the mark as GT Cup begins

DONINGTON PARK MSVR 20-21 APRIL

Mercedes, Porsche and Lotus machinery all came out on top as the GT Cup season got under way last weekend with four races at Donington Park.

It was a dominant win for Richard Neary and his Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the first of the contests by more than 27 seconds, while Tom Rawlings retired his Lamborghini Huracan from second after just eight laps, which left the Lotus Evora of Jay Shepherd chasing Shamus Jennings (Porsche 911 GTR GT3). Shepherd eventually moved ahead around the outside at Redgate on lap 13 of 23, while Jennings retained third from the duelling Lamborghinis of Warren Gilbert and Paul Bailey.

Former British GT champion Ian Loggie, sharing the Mercedes with Neary, made a flying start in the second race, while Charlotte Gilbert and Jennings followed with all three holding position through a safety car intervention and into the pitstop window. With Neary taking over from Loggie and Greg Caton from Jennings, they had the top two places from Shepherd in third, until the Evora cut out, which promoted Rawlings, who was in for Gilbert.

Ex-Formula 1 driver and 2009 Le Mans winner David Brabham, sharing Bailey's Lambo, reeled in Rawlings to snatch third a lap from home. At the front, Caton had not only caught Neary but went into the chicane for the final time side-by-side for the lead. In a drag to the line, Caton took victory by just 0.146s, with Brabham, Rawlings and Legends star Miles Rudman (Porsche) completing the top five.

Shepherd and Neary ran nose-to-tail for the first eight laps of Sunday's enduro, before the Mercedes went straight on at



McLeans. Charlotte Gilbert pitted from second, but it was Caton, in for Jennings, who emerged as Shepherd's main challenger after the Evora lost time at the stop with a clutch issue.

Six laps from home, Caton surged ahead to claim a second win of the weekend, with Shepherd retaining second. Rawlings had lost out to Brabham into the chicane for third but was able to claim it back when his rival was penalised for a short pitstop, dropping him to fourth at the flag with Rudman a distant fifth.

Shepherd then finally got his win in the second sprint of the weekend, leading from lights to flag to head home Charlotte Gilbert and Bailey.

Both Porsche Club races featured a late duel between Simon Clark's 997 Carrera S and the 997 C2S of Mark McAleer. Clark built an early lead in the opener, with McAleer and son Jake heading the pursuit as they broke clear of a four-car battle for fourth. With time running out, the lead pair suddenly closed together before McAleer Sr dived ahead at Redgate with a lap to go to seal the win. Clark retained a clear second from McAleer Jr, while Pete Morris (997 C2S) managed to break free from the



chasing pack to consolidate fourth.

Clark managed to build a 2s lead on the opening lap of race two, with the McAleers once again his closest rivals, but the safety car was soon in action before racing resumed at the start of lap five of 19. McAleer Jr couldn't match the lead duo, but comfortably retained third and, although McAleer Sr was breathing down his neck over the final laps, Clark held on this time by just 0.394s.

For the second successive year, Andrew Southcott's MG Midget Lenham was a double winner in the opening rounds of the CNC Heads Sports/Saloons. He was in the clear from start, with Roddie Paterson a solitary second in his Caterham. Ric Wood's Nissan Skyline couldn't shake Connor Modro (Westfield) for third and the pair circulated together for the rest of the race, split by just 0.379s in Wood's favour.

It was a repeat for Southcott in race two but, after Paterson retired with a broken throttle linkage and losing coolant, Modro was second from lap five. Paul Masters in his Westfield and BMW racer Jas Sapra were a lap down and completed the top four.

Henry Riley was another double winner in the Production GTI races. He broke away in the opener, while a four-way battle raged for second, initially headed by Simon Hill. James Colbourne piled



BEST BATTLE: WOOD HOLDS MODRO AT BAY CNC Heads Sports/Saloons Championship sponsor Ric Wood may have been giving his Nissan Skyline a shakedown for the forthcoming Donington Park Historic Festival, but he battled hard against Connor Modro's Westfield in their first race of the weekend. "I had one chance to get him on the Craner Curves, but didn't take it," admitted Modro.



the pressure on Hill, briefly nosing ahead into Redgate on lap 12 of 15, before exiting via the gravel. Simon Vercoe therefore finished third on the road, but received a track-limits penalty, which dropped him to sixth and moved Richard Marsh up to complete the podium.

Hill managed to oust the fast-starting Riley on the second lap of race two but, after briefly extending his lead, he succumbed to the pressure on lap eight, while Colbourne also pounced a couple of laps later. As Riley eased clear to seal his double win, Hill managed to reclaim second from Colbourne, but they remained nose to tail, with Marsh a distant fourth.

After two early safety car interventions, Lewis Clark claimed a lights-to-flag victory in the first Focus Cup bout. Paul Taylor took second from Ian Mitchell at McLeans after the second restart, while Ion Baker snatched fourth from Simon Watts into Redgate on the last lap. It was a repeat for Clark in race two, where he saw off an opening-lap challenge before making good his escape. Rob Mason lost out in the initial skirmish – both Taylor and Baker got by on lap three, dropping him to fourth.

Perry Darling had built a substantial lead in the first Boxster Cup encounter, while Ryan Charters managed to take Wayne Gregory for second on the second



lap. Suddenly, with 14 laps gone, the lead duo were together and a lap later Charters led down the Craner Curves.

Gregory made it three for the lead but there was a collision at Coppice, allowing Charters to take his maiden victory from Darling and Darren King. Gregory retired to the pits and Darling was then excluded for the collision, moving Faye Noble-Evans to the podium. Gregory was in charge from the start of race two and headed Charters, Darling and Noble-Evans at the flag.

John Lyne (BMW E36) won the Trackday Championship race and Justin Roberts/ Nicole Drought (Honda Civic Type R) took the Trackday Trophy spoils.

PETER SCHERER

(Porsche 911 GTR GT3)

Race 4 Jay Shepherd (Lotus Evora)

PORSCHE CLUB

Race 1 Mark McAleer (997 C2S) Race 2 Simon Clark (997 Carrera S)

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Southcott (MG Midget Lenham)

PRODUCTION GTIs

Races 1 & 2 Henry Riley (below, right)

FOCUS CUP

Races 1 & 2 Lewis Clark

BOXSTER CUP

Race 1 Ryan Charters Race 2 Wayne Gregory

TRACKDAY CHAMPIONSHIP

John Lyne (BMW E36)

TRACKDAY TROPHY

Justin Roberts/Nicole Drought (Honda Civic Type R)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE JONES



Milestones celebrated as VSCC racing season starts

SILVERSTONE VSCC 20-21 APRIL

The Vintage Sports-Car Club is entering its 90th year in 2024, and it wasn't the only anniversary being celebrated as the club's new racing season got under way with two days of action at Silverstone.

It's also 90 years since English Racing Automobiles unveiled its first chassis – the R1A – at Brooklands. An ERA-themed Patrick Lindsay Memorial Trophy race was held to toast the occasion, and it didn't disappoint. Less than a second separated VSCC vice-president Nick Topliss (R4A) and Ian Baxter (Alta) throughout, with Topliss taking the win while Mark Gillies (R3A) finished behind the pair in third.

The Silverstone Trophy Race for VSCC specials was initially a three-way affair at the front before Theodore Hunt was forced to pit when the water cap on his Frazer

Nash popped open. That left Michael James (Riley 12/4 TT Sprite) to take the fight to Tim Llewellyn's Bentley 3/8, with James sneaking up the inside at Luffield to take the lead at the halfway stage before pulling away to take victory by 9s. Llewellyn lost 5s late on while negotiating lapped traffic, allowing Ben Maeers to close in and steal second in his GN Parker.

The Fox & Nicholl Trophy race for pre-war sportscars provided a thrilling race-long duel between Christopher Mann's Alfa Romeo 8C Monza and Ross Keeling, making his first VSCC appearance since 2022 in a Delahaye 135MS. Mann made his final pass for the lead with three laps remaining and prevailed by a slender 0.88s.

"Chris's car had that little bit more grunt, so coming out of the corners it just went away from me, but under braking I was getting him," said Keeling on his battle with Mann. "Then the tyres went and I was fully sideways. It's a lovely car to

drive, it's work in progress."

Geraint Owen and Frederic Harper headed the field in a pair of Kurtis 500s in the opening race for pre-1961 Grand Prix cars, but they were chased hard initially by Eddie McGuire's Scarab. McGuire passed Harper for second with six laps remaining but then spun out at Becketts, with Gillies profiting to finish third. Owen triumphed ahead of Harper again in the sequel, while McGuire made amends in third.

Charlie Martin won both of the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association's contests for slightly newer pre-1966 machines in a Cooper T53 ahead of Michel Kuiper's Brabham BT4. Rod Jolley climbed from seventh to edge Sam Wilson's Lotus 18 to the final podium spot in the opener, while Justin Maeers recovered from the back of the grid to pass fellow T53 driver Jolley for third in race two.

Alex Wilson took a lights-to-flag triumph in the 500cc Formula 3 opener in a Cooper Mk10, but his father Chris retired from third when his Martin F3 cut out. The Coopers of Simon Frost (Mk10) and Harry Painter (Mk7) also hit mechanical trouble when running in the top three. Simon Dedman (Erskine Staride Mk3) took second from Finlay Mackintosh, who gained three spots on the final lap in his Cooper Mk11. Wilson won again in race two, ahead of Painter and Dedman.

Theodore Hunt came from behind to win the fast scratch race in his Frazer Nash after a three-way battle with Michael James (Riley 12/4 Cotton) and Justin Maeers.

Despite the car briefly being "dead" after he "kicked the fuel pump off at one point", Hunt got back up to speed to take the lead away from James, who conceded



WEEKEND WINNERS

PATRICK LINDSAY MEMORIAL TROPHY

Nicholas Topliss (ERA R4A)

SILVERSTONE TROPHY

Michael James (Riley 12/4 TT Sprite)

FOX & NICHOLL TROPHY

Christopher Mann (Alfa Romeo 8C Monza)

HGPCA PRE-1961 GRAND PRIX CARS

Races 1 & 2 Geraint Owen (Kurtis 500C)

HGPCA PRE-1966 GRAND PRIX CARS

Races 1 & 2 Charlie Martin (Cooper T53)

5000A F3

Races 1 & 2 Alex Wilson (Cooper Mk10)

FAST SCRATCH FOR PRE-WAR CARS

Theodore Hunt (Frazer Nash TT Replica)

SLOW SCRATCH FOR PRE-WAR CARS

Nigel Dowding (Riley Brooklands)

GP ITALIA & LANCHESTER TROPHIES

Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (Frazer Nash Super Special)

FAST HANDICAP FOR PRE-WAR CARS

Charles Goldspink (Frazer Nash Acedes)

SLOW HANDICAP FOR PRE-WAR CARS

Sara Kelleway (Riley 12/4 Special)

RICHARD BELL MEMORIAL/ HAWTHORN INTERNATIONAL TROPHY

Martin Hunt (HWM, below)



For full results visit: theresults live.co.uk

second on the final lap to Maeers after a sideways moment. "I overcooked it, braking too late," said James. "I got onto the kerb and I thought, 'This is going to be bad.' I went full 180 here last year, so this was a little bit less nerve-wracking!"

Nigel Dowding led from start to finish in the pre-war slow scratch race in a Riley Brooklands, with a pair of Aston Martins piloted by Jonathan Lupton and Richard Braun next up behind him.

Saturday's pre-war scratch race was initially red-flagged due to a frightening incident for Sandford Andrews, who avoided serious injury despite being thrown from his Morgan Aero after spinning on oil and crashing at Woodcote. Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (Frazer Nash) won a restarted contest ahead of Bentley duo Oliver Llewellyn and Lewis Fox.

A VISIT FROM THE USA TO UK Ex-car journalist Mark Gillies again flew over from the USA to drive Dick Skipworth's green ERA R3A, scoring a pair of third places before a brake issue prevented any further running. "Once you get the hang of them, they're very user-friendly and very predictable, and they're amazing for their age," he said. "They've got a continuous racing history for 90 years and there's so few cars you can say that about."



DE LA ROCHE BACK IN ACTION WITH SMITH BUCKLER Richard de la Roche made a racing return at the wheel of his Smith Buckler and ran as high as third in the first 500cc Formula 3 contest before slipping to sixth. "I'd have pushed harder if I'd known I was third," he said, before taking fourth in the sequel. "It's good fun. When you are going into a corner everything's flapping, the wheels are going, but they really do respond."



MALLYA'S LONG INDIAN SUMMER PLANS Ex-Force India F1 team owner Vijay Mallya is planning to race more of his car collection this year after entering the pre-war scratch races in the Sunbeam Tiger, which set the land speed record in 1926 in the hands of Sir Henry Segrave. "I bought this car almost 30 years ago," he said. "With its long wheelbase and torque it's not the easiest in the corners but on the straights it's great fun. They [collection] are all going to be out and well campaigned during the year."

Aussie raider Murphy can't stop Ross

SNETTERTON HSCC 20-21 APRIL

Sunday's Road Sports contest, in which Australian Justin Murphy almost sprang a formbook upset, was among the highlights of last weekend's Historic Sports Car Club season-opener at Snetterton. For five years, the Milano-Holden and Ginetta G4 graduate has spasmodically attempted to tame his Historic Bolwell Nagari. This time he howled the five-litre Ford V8-powered Aussie stunner past Antony Ross's TVR 3000M from the 70s set and outsprinted it on the straights.

But there would be no dancing on the streets of Mordialloc, Victoria - where Campbell Bolwell made the car - as, having hit the front on lap two, pulling 131mph over the timing line, Murphy dropped it at Riches two laps later. "I'm such an idiot," he rued after kissing the inside barrier. "I'd backed off on the back straight to follow the TVR initially, so I could learn, then got too excited. I was standing on the brakes [front discs, rear drums], just not early enough!"

Ross, who pursued the HRS Morgan +8s of Simon King and Richard Plant on Saturday for category victory, thus took the chequer from Frazer Gibney (Lotus Elan) - whose jumped start from second went unpenalised after he was immediately swallowed by the pack - and John Williams's Porsche 911SC. Howard Payne (Europa) missed second gear off the line, but jostled back to a 70c class double over reigning champion Mark Leverett (Elan). Plant scratched from Sunday, fearing a holed radiator had overheated his Rover V8 engine, and King did too.

Loaned Adrian Reynard's spare car for



the season, Samuel Harrison aced Historic Formula Ford 2000 poleman Graham Fennymore on Saturday, the reigning champ hindered by a stuttering Pinto. Suffolk's Ben Glasswell, third on day one, kept eventual winner Fennymore focused on Sunday, when the brisk northerly wind through Riches flung them sideways. Harrison's trip over the exit kerb at Nelson presaged a holed radiator and retirement.

Simon Toyne dominated the Norman Greenway Trophy Historic FF1600 opener in his Lola T200, but does not race on Sundays. A cracking contest ensued in his absence, in which Scottish newcomer Neil Hose pipped Spencer Shinner, Ross Drybrough and Mark Wilkes in a Merlyn monopoly. Benn Simms trounced rivals in both Classic FF1600 rounds - the first restarted - in his stylishly reliveried Jomo.

Fifty years since the first Super Saloon championship opened here, Joe Ward won both Modsports/Special Saloons races in Vauxhall Firenza 'Baby Bertha', rarely

beaten in Gerry Marshall's hands in period. Five days after Demon Tweeks founder Alan Minshaw died (see News), Andy Wilson led the second in Minshaw's old DAF V8, originated by Tony Hazlewood, until its gears disappeared again. Dealer Team Vauxhall legend Gerry Johnstone declared it "very moving" to witness the monster he created chased back by Tony Davies - whose Firenza he also built, for Norwich's Phil Clarke - and Andy Willis's extraordinary Austin A30 V8.

Lotus drivers snared the top four places in Saturday's Historic Formula Junior race, Nick Fennell firing his ex-Jean Vinatier Ford France 27 away from pole, pursued by Andrew Hibberd and reigning triple champion Nic Carlton-Smith (Lotus 20s) and Michael Hibberd (Lotus 22), who had Dane Pierre Guichard's Australian Lynx in tow. Keith Pickering (Britannia) won a tremendous class scrap with Stuart Monument (Lotus 18) for sixth and C2 gold, while Italian Edoardo Guarino (Elva 100) outlasted quicker front-engined opposition.

Scot Dan Balfour's gamble to run long in his Chevron B8 in Sunday's Guards Trophy race paid off, for stopping last under a caution - after Sean McClurg's B6's BMW engine blew on the Bentley Straight and Ashley Hudson's Lotus 23B lost its oil at the Bomb Hole – gifted him almost a lap's lead. After a shower, Westie Mitchell's spin behind the rolling start safety car wasted son Sam's pole in their B8, but they bounced back strongly to third behind the Lenham of Rob and Ben Tusting. Fifthplaced Benn Tilley won the early class superbly in Paul Smeeth's 23B.

Stephen James pulverised Darlington & District Motor Club Northern Saloon and Sportscar opposition, starting race





70s & HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS

Race 1 Simon King (Morgan +8)

Race 2 Antony Ross (TVR 3000M)

HISTORIC FF2000

Race 1 Samuel Harrison (Reynard SF79)

Race 2 Graham Fennymore (Reynard SF81)

HISTORIC FF1600

Race 1 Simon Toyne (Lola T200)

Race 2 Neil Hose (Merlyn Mk20)

CLASSIC FF1600

Races 1 & 2 Benn Simms (Jomo JMR7)

${\bf HISTORIC\ MODSPORTS\ \&\ SPECIAL\ SALOONS}$

Races 1 & 2 Joe Ward

(Vauxhall Firenza 'Baby Bertha')

HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR

Nick Fennell (Lotus 27)

GUARDS TROPHY

Dan Balfour (Chevron-BMW B8)

NORTHERN SALOONS & SPORTS CARS

Races 1 & 2 Stephen James (Caterham 7 S3)

MONOPOSTO F3

Races 1 & 3 George Line (Dallara-VW Spiess F308)
Race 2 Tony Bishop (Dallara-VW Spiess F308/11)

MONOPOSTO M1000/2000/CLASSIC/1800

Race 1 Chris Woodhouse (Jedi-Suzuki Mk6)
Races 2 & 3 Matthew Haughton (Jedi-Suzuki Mk7)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

two from the pits for extra fun. Tim Bishop completed both Caterham 1-2s. Gary Bowers (BMW 135) and Ian Towers (MK Striker), then Scott Hubel (Peugeot 205 T16 clone) and Andrew Wareing (ex-Paul Berman/Brian Brady Lola S2000-based Lotus Europa-Duratec), led the respective pursuits.

MARCUS PYE

MONOPOSTO MASSES PUT ON A SHOW

A gridful of high-downforce Formula 3 Dallaras, spanning F398 to F311 models, made a sensational sight as triple-headers opened the Monoposto Racing Club's 66th championship season in style.

With Mercedes HWA, Mugen-Honda, Renault, TOM'S Toyota, Toyota (one a Piedrafita Euroformula version), Vauxhall, VW Spiess and other VW engines on parade, plus three Moto 1400 Dallaras with Suzuki Hayabusa engines and a Tatuus FRenault, quick lappery was assured.

George Line (ex-Carlin F308-VW Spiess) grabbed pole with 1m08.398s (104.42mph), eight tenths quicker than Tony Bishop in a similarly powered F308/11. Line rocketed clear in Saturday's first race, outrunning James Williams (F311-VW) and Ashley Dibden (F307-Toyota), who pushed Bishop back to fourth. Dean Warren (F305-VW) and Jason Timms (fastest of the Moto 1400s in his Dallara 301) completed the top six.

Sunday's first race was red-flagged immediately when Malcolm Scott's F398-Vauxhall was collected by the unsighted Jasmine Shaw (F308-Mercedes). Both were unhurt, albeit Shaw was understandably shaken, as marshals set about removing Scott's very badly ravaged car and mopping up a huge pool of oil.

At the restart, Line bolted again but, when his battery flattened on the Senna Straight, cutting the engine, he parked at Riches, and Bishop beat Dibden and Williams by 20 seconds. Karl O'Brien was fourth, driving through from the back in the F311-VW brother Brendan had used on Saturday. Timms was fifth overall, while Line's 1m08.197s fastest lap was the event's best.

Line then dominated the final race, chased home by Bishop and O'Brien. Timms, fifth overall once again and



right on Williams's tail, made it three from three in Moto 1400.

The second group, from a total turnout of 46, was the domain of Moto 1000 Jedis. Matty Haughton's 1m11.501s (99.89mph) pole in Perpetuum's Suzuki GSXR-motivated car was 0.777s quicker than Nigel Davers in his BMW-powered version. Tom Wheatley (Mono 2000 Van Diemen-Ford Zetec RF99) and Will Cox (Mono Classic Ralt-Vauxhall RT3) were next up.

Haughton was unchallenged before his chain snapped, then Davers's gear cable broke, to the advantage of Chris Woodhouse (Jedi-Suzuki). Wheatley, Cox, Mat Jordan (RF99-Zetec), Sam Donn (Mygale-Zetec) and 1980s F3 racer Paul Hutson (Jedi-Yamaha) chased hard.

Haughton's team fixed up its entry, enabling Matty to blitz all-comers in Sunday's races. Wheatley and Woodhouse completed the first of the day's podium celebrations following race two.

Cox – who bagged three Classic golds – took second in the finale, clear of 2000 and 1800 victors Ian Hughes (Dallara-Renault F393) and Phil Davis (Van Diemen-Zetec RF98). Wheatley retired from the closer after a hairy excursion at Coram while second on Iap three.





BTCC to stream races live on TikTok in world-first agreement

LIVESTREAM BTCC

British Touring Car Championship fans around the world will have the opportunity to watch races live on TikTok this season thanks to a world-first agreement between series organiser TOCA and broadcast partner ITV Sport. The deal, which will complement existing free-to-air live coverage on ITV4, means that every race in the 2024 season will be streamed live and in full via the ITV Sport TikTok channel with no global restrictions.

"It's absolutely in line with our strategy, not just with social media but also with our entire broadcast strategy, of always putting the BTCC in front of as many 'eyeballs' as possible," said BTCC chief executive Alan Gow. "That's why we have never put the BTCC behind a paywall, for example.

"Whatever we can do to introduce new fans and viewers to the BTCC – and by extension to motorsport in general – is just fantastic for our championship and our sport."

Since its launch by China-based brand

ByteDance in 2016, TikTok has grown to become one of the most widely used social media platforms on the globe, with a reported 500million monthly active users and 23m in the UK alone.

A study by Reuters Institute last year found that 44% of 18-24-year-olds use TikTok regularly, and brands are increasingly employing the platform to reach a younger demographic – many of whom are less active on more traditional forms of social media such as Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter).

While other sports, such as the annual sailing series SailGP, have previously streamed live events to fans via TikTok, the deal with the BTCC and ITV Sports is believed to be the first time a major sporting organisation has streamed an entire season-long competition over the platform.

Other racing series have enjoyed success on the channel, most notably Formula 1, which has more than 8m followers and 251m likes on its videos. The Aston Martin F1 team also entered into a 'global partnership' with TikTok in 2021 and expanded the deal last year,

with a focus on creating content and influencer-led video for the team's fans. But so far no motorsport series has opened up live race coverage on the platform, something that could give the BTCC an advantage as it looks to build its fan base.

'Real-time' content is often prioritised on TikTok's algorithm, with live streams showing on the feeds of non-followers. It also allows users to create longer content than the traditional 10-minute limit on uploaded video.

Gow added: "The majority of TikTok users are aged 18-34 – which is almost precisely the age group that don't usually watch traditional motorsports on traditional TV. It's also the audience demographic that is so highly sought after for marketing and advertising.

"If we can introduce just a fraction of those monthly users to the BTCC then it's a complete win/win scenario. The potential is astronomical, so the knockon effect for our teams, partners and drivers is just enormous."

The platform is not without its challenges, however. The European





Commission recently launched formal proceedings to look into potential breaches of the Digital Services Act (DSA) by TikTok, and the US House of Representatives also passed a bill that could force the platform's Chinese owners to divest from the platform amid privacy concerns.

With both cases yet to reach their conclusions and research from market intelligence company Sensor Tower forecasting a decrease in follower rates for 2025, the future of the platform remains uncertain.

The first BTCC race of the season takes place this weekend (27-28 April) at Donington Park, with live stream available in full landscape view – don't worry about being forced to watch in portrait mode!

MARK PRYDE



Chinese Grand Prix review

For the first time in five years Formula 1 returned to Shanghai, and with it came one of Max Verstappen's most dominant performances yet. Joining Bryn Lucas are Filip Cleeren and Jake Boxall-Legge as they dissect the weekend's storylines, including a potential new points system extending to 12th.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Monaco E-Prix

Formula E Round 6/10

Monte Carlo, Monaco **27 April**

Live TNT Sports 3, Sat 1300

Spanish Grand Prix

MotoGP

Round 4/21

Jerez, Spain

27-28 April

Live TNT Sports 2, Sat 1330, Sun 1215

Highlights ITV4, Mon 2000

IndyCar

Round 3/15

Barber Motorsports Park, USA **28 April**

Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1800

Indy NXT

Round 2/14

Barber Motorsports Park, USA **28 April**

Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1605

DTM

Round 1/8

Oschersleben, Germany

27-28 April

Live Premier Sports 2, Sun 1030, 1215

NASCAR Cup Series

Round 11/36

Dover, USA **28 April**

Live Premier Sports 2, Sun 1830

NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 10/33

Dover, USA **27 April**

UK MOTORSPORT

Donington Park BARC

27-28 April

BTCC, British F4, Legends, Mini Challenge, Porsche Carrera Cup, Radical Cup

Live ITV4, Sun 1040

Livestream

via tiktok.com/@itvsport

Silverstone BRSCC

27-28 April

British GT, GB3, GB4, Ginetta GT Academy, Ginetta Championship, Ginetta Junior

Livestream

via britishgt.com

Oulton Park CSCC

27 April

Classic K/Jaguar Challenge,

MG Trophy/Jaguar Championship, Midget & Sprite Challenge, Morgan Challenge, Modern Classics/Future Classics, Swinging Sixties

Kirkistown 500MRCI

27 April

FF1600, Fiestas, Formula Sheane, Libre Saloons & GTs, Minis, Mazda MX-5s, Roadsports

Brands Hatch 750MC

27-28 April

116 Trophy, 116 Sprint/ 120 Coupe Cup, Armed Forces Challenge, Clio Sport, F1000, Historic 750 Formula, Hot Hatch, Mighty Minis, MR2s, Type R Trophy

Cadwell Park BARC

27-28 April

2CVs, CTCRC (Pre-'66, Pre-'83, Pre-'93/Pre-'03/ BOSS, Thunder), Hyundai Coupe Cup, JSCC, MGOC, Mini Miglia, Mini Se7en, Superkarts

British Drag Racing Championship

Round 1/6 Santa Pod 26-28 April



FROM THE ARCHIVE

The 1972 Monza 1000Km really should have been a cakewalk for the trio of works Ferrari 312 PBs driven by Jacky Ickx (#1, sharing with Clay Regazzoni), Ronnie Peterson (#2, with Tim Schenken) and Brian Redman (#3, Arturo Merzario), as they led the notably thin field away, but the sopping conditions meant proceedings were far from straightforward – at one point a GT-class De Tomaso Pantera was up front. Ickx and Regazzoni did manage to bring their misfiring car home for the win, Peterson and Schenken were third, nine laps down, while Redman/ Merzario had earlier aquaplaned out.







ordon Shedden has spent
much of his career in Honda
machinery, so it's no surprise
that his favourite car comes

from the Japanese manufacturer. But it's not the 2006 Integra in which he scored his first British Touring Car race win or the Civic with which he took his maiden crown.

The three-time champion swiftly picks the first Team Dynamics-built Type R version of the 'Next Generation Touring Car' Civic that arrived in 2015. "It probably has to be the first Civic Type R, with the RML spec parts," he says. "It was mega, really nice."

Shedden took four wins and seven other podiums to take a comfortable lead into the Brands Hatch season decider in 2015. Drama in race two meant Jason Plato was a real threat, and Shedden had to charge from 19th to fourth in the finale to secure the crown by four points.

He then took his third title the following year, scoring four victories as he overcame a deficit of 52 points at the halfway stage of the season. Shedden added three more wins with the Type R in 2017 before heading to World Touring Cars, while Dynamics introduced the FK8 version of the Civic for 2018.

"The Type R was so fast," adds the 45-year-old. "When they brought in the NGTC rules we had a very strong engineering team, with Barry Plowman

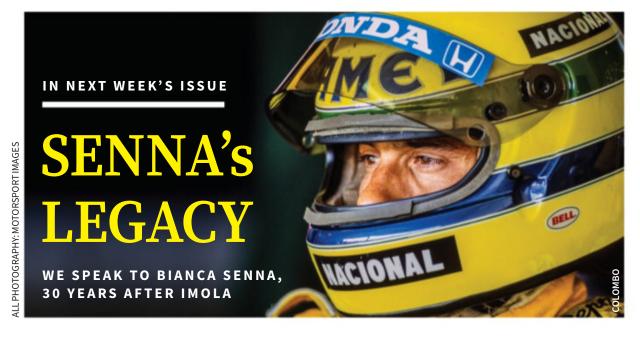


and Eddie Hinckley. They understood the concept better than anyone else. You look at how we were pegged back on boost – we'd have won every race otherwise!"

The original FK2 NGTC Civic had brought Shedden his first BTCC title in 2012, and took the 2013 crown in the hands of Eurotech privateer Andrew Jordan. But Shedden believes that the Type R version, which followed the successful Touring estate, moved things on considerably.

"The aero was better," he asserts. "And that was around the time teams started to realise you needed to make a bad engine to get more boost, which also helped with torque. The Honda engine was such a good road-car engine we never had any boost, so for Neil Brown Engineering it became about making the flow as bad as possible to get more boost."

KEVIN TURNER



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