

# AUTOSPORT

## Le Mans 24 Hours 2024 preview

Your essential guide as Ferrari  
takes on Porsche and Toyota  
in bumper entry

FREE  
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LE MANS  
SPECIAL



**PLUS**

**F1** What's going on at Alpine?

Chandhok surprised at the **Indy 500**



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# The next big race and the struggles of an F1 team

We've just had the Monaco Grand Prix and Indianapolis 500, which can mean only one thing. It's time for the third of motorsport's Big Three events: the Le Mans 24 Hours.

We've got our traditional free 52-page guide this week, covering all the contenders, with Porsche, Ferrari and Toyota the current favourites. Next week, we'll bring you the latest from the Test Day to see what's changed ahead of the race on the 15-16 June.

In this magazine, Alex Kalinauckas talks to Bruno Famin (page 18) to find out what is going on at Alpine, which seems to be having so many staff changes at the moment it's hard to keep up with (p4)!

F1 pundit Karun Chandhok took time away from the GP scene to visit the Indy 500 last month and was pleasantly surprised by what he found. He outlines the things European racing could learn from America's biggest motorsport event on p24.

There was plenty of drama in the major contests last weekend. Scott Dixon emerged from a frankly chaotic Detroit IndyCar race to take the points lead (p36), while fellow legend Sebastien Ogier was denied on the very last stage as the World Rally Championship visited Italy (p30). Events at the Nurburgring 24 Hours were so controversial that the result remains provisional (p40)...

A special anniversary race for Lotus Elan 26Rs, a look back at Super Saloons, and reports from Silverstone, Knockhill, Spa and Shelsley Walsh are just part of our 17-page National section covering the best of UK club racing.



*Kevin Turner*

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**NEVER MISS  
AN ISSUE**

Special deals for  
Autosport p52

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**FREE WITH THIS ISSUE**



## LE MANS SUPPLEMENT

Porsche's battle to take its 20th victory, Le Mans newcomers and our team guide covering all the entries are just part of our free 52-page guide on the 92nd running of the 24 Hours.



# PIT + PADDOCK



## Ocon to split with Alpine for 2025; Doohan, Schumacher wait in wings

### FORMULA 1

Esteban Ocon is on the Formula 1 driver market for the 2025 season after Alpine decided not to renew the Frenchman's expiring contract.

Amid a tough start to the season for the struggling team, Ocon had already been exploring alternative options for next season and beyond. But his controversial collision with team-mate Pierre Gasly at the recent Monaco Grand Prix, which left Alpine's team management furious,

appears to have accelerated that process. Ocon will continue to drive for the team for the remainder of this season, starting with this weekend's Canadian GP.

"It's been a significant period of my life to be racing at this team in Formula 1," said Ocon. "While I've been here for five years as a full-time racing driver, my professional career started at Enstone back when I was a teenager [when he was part of the Gravity-led Lotus Junior stable], so it will always be a special place for me. I will announce my plans very soon but, in the

meantime, my full focus is on delivering on track for this team and having a successful remainder of the season."

Ocon has raced with Alpine since 2020, when it competed until the Renault banner. He delivered the French manufacturer a victory at the 2021 Hungarian GP, which was also his maiden F1 win. He has also taken two further podium finishes, although this season the Alpine has not been a competitive car.

Team principal Bruno Famin, who had talked of 'consequences' for the Monaco collision, said: "We still have 16 races to complete in 2024 together with a clear objective: to continue to work tirelessly as a team to push for the best on-track results. We wish Esteban the very best for the next chapter of his driving career when that moment comes."

Ocon's impending Alpine exit is the next step in what has been a lively silly season so far. For 2025, Gasly is likely to stay put, although like Ocon he too is out of contract at the end of the current campaign. Alpine could turn to its current roster of reserve drivers, including ex-F2 star Jack Doohan or World Endurance driver Mick Schumacher, to replace Ocon, while Zhou Guanyu has been linked to the seat after seeing his chance to stay at Sauber dwindle.

So far Haas has shown the most interest in Ocon's services as it weighs up whether or not to retain Kevin Magnussen alongside





## FERRARI TECH BOSS IS NEXT ASTON TARGET

### FORMULA 1

Ferrari Formula 1 technical director Enrico Cardile has been approached by Aston Martin over a possible switch to the team.

Aston Martin team owner Lawrence Stroll is continuing his push to turn his Silverstone-based squad into winners. An earlier, personal approach to snap up Red Bull's departing designer Adrian Newey appears not to have been successful, so now Cardile is emerging as one of Aston's next targets to further beef up its technical structure.

Cardile has played a



large part in Ferrari's upswing in form with the SF-24 as technical director on the chassis side. Meanwhile, Newey continues to be linked to Ferrari. A move there, even as a super-consultant, could overshadow its current technical chiefs.

Newey is taking his time before deciding whether or not to return to F1 in March 2025. Speaking to the Italian

media, Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur remained tight-lipped on any efforts to sign the 65-year-old design guru.

"I speak to everybody in the paddock when we meet, because we are well educated," he joked. "I don't want to make any comment because every single answer could be interpreted. The most important for me is the stability of the group."

**ROBERTO CHINCHERO**



rookie Ollie Bearman, who is likely to be promoted to a full-time seat next year. Ocon could also be a back-up option for Sauber, which will become Audi in 2026, if it fails to secure its long-time number one target Carlos Sainz to partner Nico Hulkenberg. Sainz is currently evaluating whether to commit his long-term future to Audi or accept a drive that Williams has offered him to be team-mate to Alex Albon.

In the background, Renault CEO Luca de Meo is continuing his efforts to accelerate Alpine's return to the front of the grid. It is understood that de Meo has lined up controversial former Renault team boss Flavio Briatore for a consultancy role at the team. According to French newspaper *L'Equipe*, the 74-year-old's role would entail helping the team's recruitment drive to bolster its Enstone headquarters and its engine plant at Viry-Chatillon rather than a more hands-on role.

Alpine has declined to either confirm or deny the arrival of Briatore, who gained infamy for his role in the 2008 Singapore GP crash scandal.

**JONATHAN NOBLE & FILIP CLEEREN**

**➔ P18 TROUBLES AT ALPINE**



## Ire over red-flag tyre rules

### FORMULA 1

Leading Formula 1 drivers are calling for changes to the red-flag tyre rules in the wake of an uneventful Monaco Grand Prix.

Last month's race was red-flagged on lap one after a crash involving Sergio Perez and both Haas drivers. Under the stoppage all drivers were allowed to change tyres, negating the need for mandatory pitstops later on and starving the race of any strategy. The top 10 from qualifying finished in the same positions.

Several drivers have urged the FIA to revisit the red flag rules. "Our strategy was ruined as we

had to put the medium on to the end and everyone had a free stop," said sixth-placed Max Verstappen. Lando Norris, who finished fourth, added: "The red flag ruined any other opportunities that might have come my way with strategy and tyre-saving, so a bit of a shame."

Fernando Alonso hoped the issue would return to the agenda after previous discussions didn't amount to anything: "If you remove that excitement of a pitstop, then Monaco becomes nothing. Maybe it reopens the conversations of not changing tyres or being obliged to have the same tyre or something."

**FILIP CLEEREN**



# Formula E boss not ruling out Ferrari entry

## FORMULA E

Formula E CEO Jeff Dodds has hinted that the series has held talks with Ferrari over the Italian marque joining the all-electric championship in some capacity.

Discussions have arisen as Ferrari prepares this month to open its first electrification plant, where it will produce its own batteries and fleet of electric vehicles, beginning with its first all-electric car by the end of 2025. The project has included a significant investment of €500million and the creation of 250 jobs, all of which has led to potential contact with FE. When asked whether talks had been held with Ferrari, Dodds replied: “Maybe.

“Clearly, I’d rather have them in than not in. It would elevate the championship. Whether it’s exponential or game-changing would remain to be seen, but clearly they sit on a branch of their own.”

When approached for comment on



whether it had any interest in joining FE, a Ferrari spokesperson said: “Our focus today is on F1 and [World] Endurance – and [we] have recently announced we will be taking the race where we never have before – water [a sailing project].”

Meanwhile, Lola Cars has become the fourth manufacturer to commit to FE’s Gen4 ruleset, although powertrain partner Yamaha’s future remains undecided.

The British marque announced in March that it would return to motorsport for the

first time in more than a decade as a powertrain supplier in FE, starting with the 2025 season alongside Abt. At the time, Lola Cars only confirmed its participation in FE until the end of the Gen3 Evo era in 2026, but announced this week a four-year extension of its involvement.

Yamaha has yet to formally confirm a continuation into the next era of FE, but a spokesperson said: “We are actively considering to commit Gen4 era.”

**STEFAN MACKLEY**

# Saudi gets 10-year deal for prime WRC slot

## WRC

The World Rally Championship will return to the Middle East in 2025 following the announcement of a new 10-year deal with Saudi Arabia.

The WRC has been eyeing a return for some time to the region, which it last visited in 2011 for Rally Jordan. Rally Saudi Arabia is set to host the final round of next year’s expected 14-event championship in November, and could be set to hold that berth for the next five years at least.

The rally will be held around Jeddah, with stages featuring a mixture of mountain and desert roads. A test event is likely to be held early next year as part of the Middle East Rally Championship.

“From 2025 we will proudly host Formula 1,



Formula E, Extreme E, the Dakar Rally and now WRC and Rally Saudi Arabia in the Kingdom – an extraordinary accomplishment,” said HRH Prince Khalid Bin Sultan Al Abdullah Al-Faisal.

A move into the Middle East is part of the WRC’s plan to complete a set of events

covering all regions and terrains, and comes in addition to its US project planned for 2026.

The championship has stated that Saudi Arabia’s burgeoning automotive market is attractive to current manufacturers and stakeholders. “We haven’t

been to the Middle East since 2011, so for us it’s a completion of the story of our calendar,” said WRC Promoter chief Simon Larkin. “We think it will be an amazing event, and with a motorsport culture that largely grew up on rallying.

“It didn’t grow up on F1 or other sports. Rallying is way more in the heart and soul of your average Saudi motorsport fan and we think we will see that there.”

F1’s Saudi Arabian GP raised discussions about the nation’s human rights issues and prompted accusations of sportswashing. “We think a lot of these obstacles are gone,” added Larkin. “Things like women being able to drive, it’s in the rear vision mirror and we can’t hold things against people forever, a lot of countries have things from the past.”

**TOM HOWARD**





**GT3** BMW has taken the wraps of the evolution version of its M4 GT3 racer due to come on stream next season. The updates to a car that was released to customers for the 2022 season are focused upon driveability and feature revised aerodynamics, including a rear wing with a greater range of adjustability. The M4 GT3 EVO also features new anti-roll bars front and rear, larger rear brake discs and an easier-to-adjust differential. The list price for the car, which was unveiled ahead of last weekend's Nurburgring 24 Hours, is €578,000 less taxes, which converts to £492,000 – so start saving now! **Photograph by BMW**

## Rib injuries remove Pin from Iron Dames Le Mans GT line-up

### LE MANS 24 HOURS

Mercedes junior Doriane Pin has stood down from her drive with the Iron Dames Lamborghini LMGT3 squad at the Le Mans 24 Hours with rib injuries that forced her to miss the second part of the Formula Regional European by Alpine double-header at Spa at the end of last month.

The 20-year-old (right), who was scheduled to make her second Le Mans start, was subsequently diagnosed with fractures to the ribs and forced to withdraw from the all-female crew of the Iron Lynx-run Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2 at the blue-riband round of the World Endurance Championship on 15-16 June. Pin wasn't involved in any kind of accident

during the Spa FRECA event, and Iron Lynx is unsure how the injuries were sustained.

Iron Dames regular Rahel Frey will take the vacant Iron Dames seat alongside Michelle Gattling and Sarah Bovy for Le Mans. The Swiss, who is contesting the European Le Mans Series with the Italian entrant in a Porsche, had already been drafted into the line-up for the Spa round last month when Pin was on duty in the clashing F1 Academy event in Miami. She was scheduled to contest the remainder of the WEC post-Le Mans as Pin focused on her single-seater commitments.

Pin will miss the Zandvoort FRECA event this weekend and is set to return to action in F1 Academy at Barcelona on 22-23 June.

**GARY WATKINS**



TEE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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## Middle East cars to run in FRegional Macau GP

### MACAU GRAND PRIX

Formula Regional cars from the Middle East championship have been selected to contest the inaugural running of the Macau Grand Prix for the category this November.

The FIA announced at the end of last month that the race would no longer be run for Formula 3 cars, as it was from 1983-2019 and once more in 2023, and that the switch was being made to FR. With the FR series around the globe being run for different spec chassis-engine combinations, this raised the tricky prospect of performance balancing, but now FIA single-seater strategy and operations chief Francois Sicard has opened up to Autosport on his plan.

A deal has been done with FR Middle East promoter Davide de Gobbi, whose Shanghai-based Top Speed company has overseen the rise of its hugely successful 'winter' series in the UAE to almost 30 cars, run for the Tatuus chassis – as used in the European championship – but with the Alfa Romeo turbocharged engine.

"It was not possible to keep the F3 because we are going to switch to the new generation of car for 2025, so for logistical reasons it was not possible to have the cars in Macau," explained Sicard. "At the same time we were questioning if it is still relevant to carry on F3 in Macau. It was [in 2019 and 2023] just an extra race added to the FIA F3 Championship, which is not the philosophy of the Macau event."

Sicard wants to open up the race to drivers from the European, Middle East, Japanese, Oceania and Americas FR series, plus allow drivers stepping down from F3 or up from Formula 4.

"We wanted to recreate the idea of the F3 race – to have the best drivers from all the junior categories in the world," he said. "Two years ago I wanted to do this already. We knew that the F3 concept as it is recently was good, but we were missing something. We hope we have drivers from all regions. We will go through a selection process and the idea is to have a diversity of drivers from everywhere."

Sicard hopes to add further showcase races for FR and F4 cars in the future.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**

## Pirro becomes Single Seater Commission president



### FIA

Five-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Emanuele Pirro has been installed as the new president of the FIA Single Seater Commission.

The 62-year-old Italian (left), who recently left McLaren, where he headed up the team's junior driver programme, replaces ex-F1 team boss Giancarlo Minardi. Pirro's role has not been officially announced

by the FIA but he is known to have taken the reins last month. He becomes the second ex-Benetton F1 driver to take charge, after Gerhard Berger. Others at the helm have been current F1 chief Stefano Domenicali plus the late Barry Bland and Bob Fernley.

Pirro is viewed as a more hands-on president than Minardi. He was called in by the FIA as a 'trouble-shooter' to the stewards

during the chaotic 2015 European F3 season, while his links to single-seaters include sons Goffredo and Cristoforo, who respectively work as Prema Racing F4 team manager and Sauber F1 performance engineer.

Minardi is understood to be just one victim in a clear-out of Commission members by the FIA. Pirro's fellow Audi sportscar hero Allan McNish remains.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**



Castroneves took the reins in Detroit from Blomqvist (below)



## Blomqvist benched by MSR

### INDYCAR

British IndyCar rookie Tom Blomqvist has been benched by Meyer Shank Racing following his first-corner shunt in the Indy 500. He was replaced for last weekend's Detroit round by four-time 500 winner Helio Castroneves, who stayed on in the cockpit following what was planned as a one-off outing in MSR's extra car at Indy.

Castroneves, who has a minority ownership role at MSR, will remain on board for this weekend's round at Road America. The Brazilian explained that the decision was made to cement the #66 car's position in IndyCar's Leaders Circle,

which pays out more than \$1million for those that place in the top 22 spots (of the 25 eligible cars) at the end of the year.

"Let's stop the bleeding first and then consider what's happening moving forward," said Castroneves, who called time on his full-time IndyCar career last season. "But as of right now, we just want to make sure we put the car into some positions to get in the top 22 and then we can continue."

The 49-year-old reiterated Blomqvist's place in the team by stating that "he will be with us as long as he wants" but, when asked about when he expects Blomqvist back behind the wheel of his IndyCar this year, Castroneves was non-committal.

Castroneves was classified 25th out of 27 in Detroit, and qualified in the same position. Team-mate Felix Rosenqvist finished eighth from 22nd on the grid.

Meanwhile, two-time IndyCar champion Josef Newgarden has completed a 'multi-year' extension to his contract beyond the end of this season with Team Penske, hard on the heels of his second successive victory in the Indy 500.

**JOEY BARNES**



## MARQUEZ SET FOR FACTORY DUCATI SEAT FOR 2025

### MOTOGP

Marc Marquez is to return to a factory MotoGP team in 2025, with Ducati deciding to give the eight-time world champion the seat over Jorge Martin.

Ducati looked set to promote Martin – the 2023 runner-up and current championship leader – from the Pramac satellite team to its factory squad, and *Gazzetta dello Sport* broke the news on the eve of last weekend's Italian GP. While this meant Marquez (below) was likely to switch from Gresini to Pramac on a factory bike, he told the media it was "not an option", scuppering Ducati's plans.

For Marquez, staying with Ducati meant a factory bike at Gresini or moving to the works team. The former looked unlikely, as either Pramac or VR46 would get Ducati factory exclusivity in 2025. Ducati, therefore, has had no choice but to go back on its decision and give Marquez the works seat alongside Francesco Bagnaia.

The dominoes continued to topple early this week. Martin has switched to Aprilia on a multi-year deal, while outgoing factory Ducati rider Enea Bastianini looks set to move to Tech3, from where star rookie Pedro Acosta has been promoted to the factory KTM line-up.

**LEWIS DUNCAN**



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## VAUTIER'S COYNE CAMEO

Frenchman Tristan Vautier returned to the IndyCar grid in Detroit last weekend for a surprise outing with Dale Coyne Racing – seven years after his last start in the series. The 34-year-old, who has won Sebring 12 Hours and Intercontinental GT Challenge titles in the intervening years, ran as high as third in the chaotic race before numerous dramas dropped him back to 18th, one spot behind team-mate Jack Harvey. DCR will need another driver this weekend at Road America, with Vautier off to Le Mans in his role as reserve driver for Cadillac.

## ZIDANE KICKS OFF LE MANS

French football legend Zinedine Zidane will drop the flag on this month's 92nd running of the Le Mans 24 Hours. The 51-year-old, a World Cup winner with France who managed Real Madrid to three UEFA Champion League titles, has been named as official starter for the double-points World Endurance Championship round.

## SLATER EXCLUSION WOE

British Formula 4 sensation Freddie Slater has a diminished lead in the Italian championship after last weekend's Imola round, following his exclusion from victory in race one. The Prema Racing driver snatched the lead from Van Amersfoort Racing's poleman Hiyo Yamakoshi into Tamburello at an early safety car restart, but his car was later found to have an irregularity with its front wing. Prema has appealed. Yamakoshi won again in race two, while Slater's fight for third with Jack Beeton ended with both spinning in a collision at Tosa, and Slater penalised out of the points. In the finale, Slater passed Yamakoshi early on, and the Japanese eventually had to pit due to damaging his front wing on a kerb.

## FAGG LIT UP IN JAPAN

Briton Charlie Fagg took his maiden GT300 class victory in last weekend's Super GT round at Suzuka (below). The 24-year-old is sharing a D'Station Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 with veteran Tomonobu Fujii.



ISHIHARA/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



JOERG MITTER/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

# Coventry opens discussions to join World Rallycross schedule

## WORLD RALLYCROSS

Street racing could return to the Midlands next year after the World Rallycross Championship announced that it has entered discussions with the organisers of MotoFest Coventry and is targeting an event from 2025.

A proposed layout has already been drafted, and a feasibility study conducted by circuit designer Driven International has been submitted to the FIA World Motor Sport Council for approval. A period of consultation will take place involving local residents in the coming months.

The event, which would come 35 years after the last edition of the Birmingham Superprix for Formula 3000, follows WRX's inaugural city-centre race in Hong

Kong last November. Rallycross Promoter managing director Arne Dirks said that this had "encouraged us to explore further metropolitan locations". An inaugural visit to Australia at an undetermined location will conclude the 2024 calendar, which gets under way in Sweden next month.

Dirks said that WRX and MotoFest Coventry director James Noble had "a common vision – to bring maximum entertainment to as many people as possible in a dynamic downtown setting".

Noble added: "We have made no secret in the past of our ambition to host competitive motorsport on Coventry Ring Road and, having successfully delivered closed-road time trials, we are now driving forward with the next phase of that plan."

**JAMES NEWBOLD**

# Stewart-Haas team to close its doors

## NASCAR

NASCAR Cup Series heavyweight Stewart-Haas Racing is pulling out of competition at the end of 2024.

The team ran co-owner Tony Stewart to the title in 2011, and Kevin Harvick took the crown in 2014. But after winning 26 races from 2018-20, it has been victorious just four times since then. The retirements of Harvick and Aric Almirola

from full-time racing at the end of last season were accompanied by the loss of some of SHR's major backers.

In a joint statement, Stewart and Gene Haas said: "The commitment needed to extract maximum performance while providing sustainability is incredibly demanding, and we've reached a point in our respective personal and business lives where it's time to pass the torch."

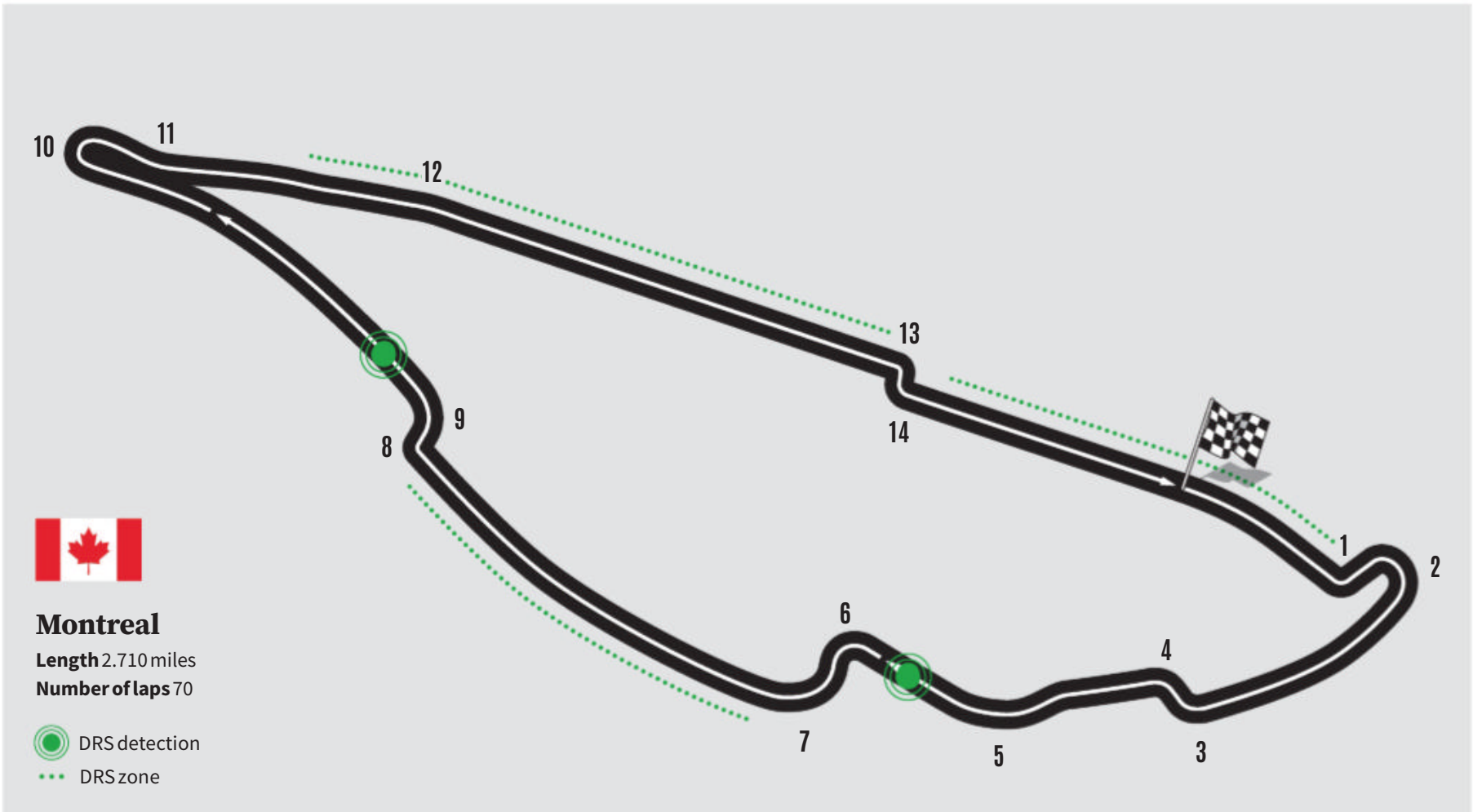
With four full-time Fords in SHR's stable, that leaves doubt over the futures of drivers Chase Briscoe, Noah Gragson, Josh Berry and Ryan Preece, as well as staff including veteran crew chief Rodney Childers.

Fellow Ford team Front Row Motorsports, which is planning an expansion to three full-time cars, has announced that it hopes to buy one of the SHR charters.

**JIM UTTER & NICK DEGROOT**



F1 CANADIAN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



Montreal

Length 2.710 miles  
Number of laps 70

DRS detection  
 DRS zone

UK START TIMES

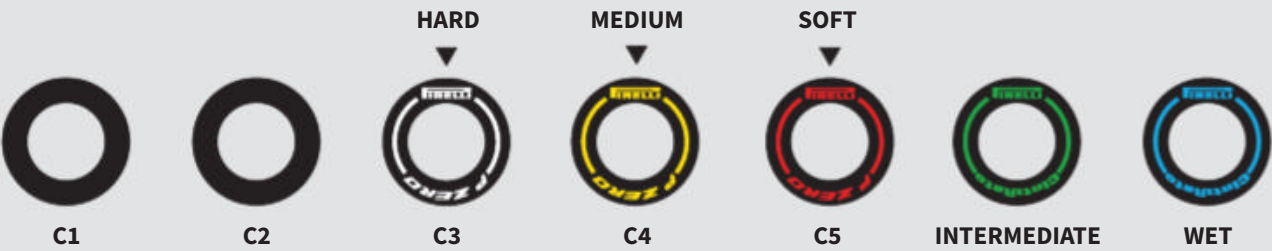
Friday 7 June  
FP1 1830 FP2 2200

Saturday 8 June  
FP3 1730  
QUALIFYING 2100

Sunday 9 June  
RACE 1900

CATCH THE RACE LIVE  
SKY SPORTS F1  
BBC RADIO 5 LIVE  
  
TV Highlights  
CHANNEL 4 0020 (Monday)

TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers			Constructors		
1	Verstappen	169	1	Red Bull	276
2	Leclerc	138	2	Ferrari	252
3	Norris	113	3	McLaren	184
4	Sainz	108	4	Mercedes	96
5	Perez	107	5	Aston Martin	44



MONTREAL STATS

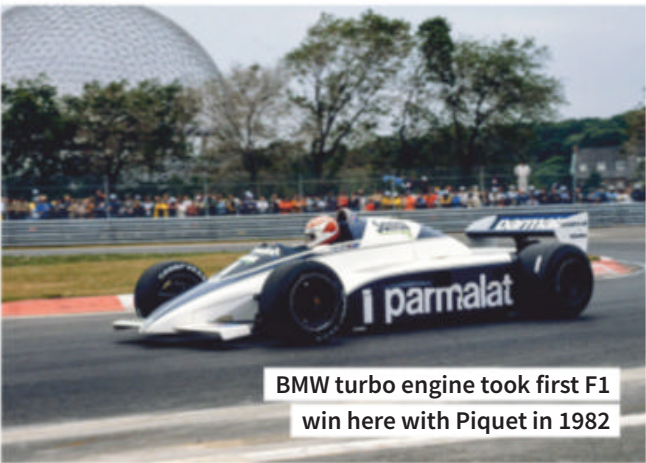
Previous winners

2023	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2022	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2017	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Daniel Ricciardo	Red Bull
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Lewis Hamilton	McLaren

2023 POLE POSITION  
Max Verstappen  
1m25.858s

POLE LAP RECORD  
Sebastian Vettel  
1m10.240s (2019)

RACE LAP RECORD  
Valtteri Bottas  
1m13.078s (2019)



Montreal podiums

Lewis Hamilton	10
Michael Schumacher	8
Sebastian Vettel	7
Ayrton Senna	6
Alain Prost	5
Fernando Alonso	5
Ralf Schumacher	3
Damon Hill	3
Nelson Piquet	3
Nico Rosberg	3



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# What options now for Andretti?

*Stymied in its attempts to join the F1 grid as an 11th entry, the American squad's best bet seems to be buying an existing team – and that chance appears vanishingly small*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

**H**ad Andretti been among the myriad applicants to join the Formula 1 grid 15 years ago, it surely would have managed to beat some of the pretenders to an entry. It wouldn't have taken much back then: a semi-competent technical operation, some facilities larger than a broom cupboard, and an initial 'yes' to taking a Cosworth V8 for a year or two. That said, only two of the four teams granted entries that year possessed all three qualities...

Perhaps Andretti would have made the cut during the 2014 application process too, when Haas won the tender to join for either 2015 or 2016. F1 wasn't in particularly good health at that time: Caterham had gone to the wall; Marussia required a last-minute bail-out; and money troubles would later befall Lotus, Williams, Force India and Sauber.

That period in the early days of the turbo-hybrid formula does lend credence to F1's modern-day reticence to open the field up to an 11th entry. Even Andretti Cadillac had to respect that point of view when its entry application last year was sent back.

But F1 is not the same stilted, fussy environment that it was under Bernie Ecclestone, the teams beholden to divide-and-conquer tactics from above to maintain a sense of parochiality; it's become a different place under the Liberty stewardship, one that's more open to change and evolution in almost every facet. Except one, as Michael Andretti's squad has found to its detriment.

## “F1 has become a different place under the Liberty stewardship, one that's more open to change”

A key ally has also wavered. FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem told Reuters last week that “I would advise [Andretti] to go and buy another team, not to come as the 11th team”, a swing in attitude. It has been suggested that Ben Sulayem's volte-face is part of an effort to quell the fire between the FIA and FOM, particularly as a new Concorde Agreement is in the works; a unified front from governing body and commercial rights holder could control the aspirations of teams much more effectively.

The 2026 edition of the Concorde Agreement segues neatly into the other issue that Andretti has to contend with: a hike in the anti-dilution fee. Currently set at \$200million to offset the potential revenue hit taken by other teams with an 11th entrant, the growth of F1 has meant that this fee (in the existing teams' opinion) would not offer an adequate substitute for the reduction in any TV money,

prize payments, or potential loss of sponsors. Therefore, the fee seems set to rise to \$600m.

Despite snaring Pat Symonds's services from F1, Andretti's hopes of becoming an 11th team on the grid appear to be dwindling. An appeal to the US senate might offer some progress, but the laws governing anti-trust and anti-competition are complex when it comes to a privately funded sporting championship. The bipartisan letter sent to the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice – spearheaded by Democrat Amy Klobuchar and Republican Mike Lee – appears to hinge on the idea that F1 has denied Andretti and Cadillac on the basis that they are US brands, writing: “It is possible that such a refusal to deal – especially if orchestrated through a group boycott – could violate US antitrust laws.” But in a court of law, “possibly” doth butter no parsnips.

The ‘buy a team’ crowd has got its wish. It appears that Andretti's sole shot at a spell in F1 is through persuading somebody to part company with a highly valuable entry. But here's the kicker: who wants to sell? RB's rebrand to a bland two-lettered moniker has made it largely self-sufficient and the perfect vehicle for businesses who don't want to fully commit to owning a team, hence its attractiveness to financial service providers Visa and Cash App. Haas has also offered recent assurance that its team is not up for sale. Andretti has tried to buy Haas out on multiple occasions and has been rebuffed on each – so why would that change?

That leaves Alpine. Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo has said that the team is not for sale, and the *raison d'être* of its Alpine rebrand was to accelerate the growth of its reborn sportscar arm through its F1 efforts, even though it's not really worked out as such. And there are many conflicting rumours about the team's future in F1; recent suggestions are that de Meo has asked ex-team principal Flavio Briatore to end his post-Crashgate period of disgrace to assist the team in finding new investors. There's something fitting if his services have indeed been engaged to help with a sale rather than just scoping out investment. He was at the helm through the start of its successes, the Schumacher years, and the Alonso years. But he was also with the team at its lowest moments and, as one of the key architects of Benetton's and Renault's title wins, he might be well served to help the team into its next life.

That's all conjecture, but Alpine seems like it would be the most obvious option. It's possible, if Andretti can make a considerable offer, and it would at least allow the mooted Andretti-Renault tie-up to happen until Cadillac rocks up in F1. Regardless, it seems that the opportunity for Andretti to become an 11th team, even in 2028, is an ever-closing door. Haas or Alpine will remain on Michael Andretti's shopping list, but an F1 team is a rare market item – and there's a big queue waiting for one to appear on the stall. ❧



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# Does Ducati's move make sense?

*The decision to elevate Marc Marquez to the factory squad will have repercussions beyond the loss of Jorge Martin's talents. In big-picture terms, it's surely worthwhile*

LEWIS DUNCAN

**T**ech3 rookie Pedro Acosta described the situation as a “soap opera”. Autosport’s revelation on Monday that Ducati had made a U-turn on its decision to promote Jorge Martin to its factory team in favour of Marc Marquez wasn’t followed by an *EastEnders*-style cliffhanger outro. But it was the shock the 2025 rider market was waiting for, the fallout of which being fast-moving and far-reaching.

Martin had been told prior to last weekend’s Italian Grand Prix that he was Ducati’s guy for 2025. Last Sunday afternoon, he was told otherwise. Jilted, Martin went straight into Aprilia’s loving arms and penned a multi-year deal. It’s a massive coup for the Italian marque – the laughing stock of the grid not five years ago – and a move that it wasted no time in ensuring would come to pass.

At the time of writing, Ducati’s official announcement on Marquez’s promotion from Gresini to the factory team has not happened, but that isn’t necessary to see the power the eight-time world champion has displayed this past week. Ducati thought it could have its cake and eat it, with Martin getting the factory seat and Marquez getting a works bike at Pramac. Marquez said Pramac was “not an option” and Ducati management was thrown a curveball. At that moment, it was clear that Ducati was going to have to give up something precious.

A quick glance at the statistics this year will make you understand why Martin walking to another manufacturer is a hard pill to swallow. Two grand prix wins and three sprint victories have given him an 18-point championship lead. After seven rounds, he is scoring an average of 24 points per weekend. Martin has been the most consistent rider in 2024 so far.

Marquez, by comparison, has had no wins, three GP podiums and five sprint podiums (which matches Martin’s total sprint tally) and is at a 19-points-per-round pace. But this is after seven rounds in total on a Ducati that is, in theory, less competitive than Martin’s because it’s the 2023 version. Martin, of course, has also ridden a Ducati since 2021.

Martin is operating at a high level and is probably just hitting his stride as a top MotoGP rider. But the ceiling for Marquez on a Desmosedici appears incredibly high. And Marquez has the pedigree of six MotoGP world titles to show what he is capable of when operating at his best.

After four miserable years at Honda since badly breaking his arm in 2020, it’s easy to forget how dominant Marquez was on a bad RC213V in 2019 when he won his sixth world title.

Throw in the marketing value of Marquez – something Ducati CEO Claudio Domenicali was all too aware of – and it makes the decision to promote him a no-brainer. A study published in 2023 by Epsilon Technologies and Far Consulting showed Marquez

was five times more popular on social media than any other rider. The purists may not like it, but Marc Marquez has selling power that Jorge Martin will probably never have. And for a manufacturer like Ducati, that is a consideration as vitally important as competitiveness is. If you were the boss who let Marquez walk to a rival manufacturer with whom he wins races and the championship, you’ll be kissing your chunky pay packet goodbye not long after.

## “Ducati has already annihilated the delicate ecosystem it had with its rider stable”

But Ducati will have several storms to weather now with this decision. Immediately, Francesco Bagnaia won’t be hugely happy at the influence Marquez already has within the manufacturer after just seven rounds on the bike. And by extension, his mentor Valentino Rossi – with whom Marquez is an arch nemesis – will be even less happy.

Marquez and Bagnaia have already had a couple of flashpoints on track in 2024. In Portugal they collided late on in the grand prix, while they banged fairings in a wonderful battle for victory at Jerez. There’s a Rossi/Lorenzo dynamic brewing that Ducati will have to manage eventually. On top of that, Martin is now fully out for himself in 2024, which could lead to more needle, ss could the possibility that Ducati stops updating his GP24 to avoid more secrets going to Aprilia. It will also be intriguing to see whether any factory mechanics go from the Pramac garage to Gresini when racing resumes at Assen later this month.

Ducati’s decision also likely points to Pramac walking away to become a Yamaha satellite partner, which in turn will mean VR46 (so Rossi will be satiated a little at least) will get factory exclusivity as Ducati’s satellite team. There’s also the Fermin Aldeguer problem. When he signed his factory deal, it looked like he would make his MotoGP debut with Pramac. If Pramac walks, Aldeguer’s future will require some thought.

These are all headaches Ducati will surely gladly accept if it means having the best rider of the past decade in its factory colours. It has already annihilated the delicate ecosystem it had with its rider stable, but to maintain that at the expense of losing Marquez would be as naive as it would be stupid. 🍷







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SCAN ME



# YOUR SAY

*There's no other sporting contest in the world that requires such a high level of precision. It's relentless, lap after lap*

JAMES BOLTON

## In defence of the Monaco Grand Prix

This might shock you, but I really enjoyed the Monaco Grand Prix. The reason is it's such an immense test of human concentration.

Every driver has to be totally focused because one tiny error can put them out of the race. There's no other sporting contest in the world that requires such a high level of precision. In other sports there are breaks, moments to have a drink and gather your thoughts, and in motor racing the other circuits have straights where the driver can take a breather, even if it's just for a few seconds. Not so at Monaco. It's relentless, lap after lap. We're fortunate to see such a mighty test of human endurance in Formula 1.

Better camera angles are desperately needed to capture the astounding speed of the cars, and making it a mandatory two-pitstop race would add to the thrill of the Monaco GP.

But if you imagine yourself in the very hot cockpit of a 1000bhp single-seater, with 19 other cars desperate to pass you at any opportunity, it's already thrilling enough.

**James Bolton**  
Fleet

## Quick-fix suggestion

Make each driver at Monaco use a set of hard, medium and soft tyres, and team-mates can't start on the same tyres.

**Peter Holmes**  
By email

## Tyres are at the root of the problem

I've read multiple times in recent weeks about how the Imola and Monaco tracks failed to deliver a decent grand prix.

Imola is a great race track – WEC had a fabulous race there recently. Monaco is, as we all know, a quirky one... but it's so special and always a race weekend to look forward to.

The fundamental problem is the cars are too big, too heavy and most importantly driven on tyres that you cannot race flat out on. The modern F1 race tyre is a catastrophe – in-car shots show drivers never remotely close to the limit. This



means mistakes are rarely made and the whole visual experience is a yawn-fest.

Let's hope the new rules address all these issues, with tyres the top priority.


**Tim Richardson**  
Marlborough

*To be fair to Pirelli, it was strategy rather than tyre degradation that led to many drivers lapping that far off the limit at Monaco this year – ed*


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# WHAT'S GOING

*Ninth in the championship with just two points and conflict between its two drivers.*

*Things aren't looking*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY



**motorsport**  
**IMAGES**

**E**ven before he took himself out of the 2024 Monaco Grand Prix in an aggressive swoop on team-mate Pierre Gasly, it had become clear that something had changed in Esteban Ocon's relationship with Alpine. This is Ocon-Alpine – the sensational winning combination of the 2021 Hungarian GP, with more than a little help from his then team-mate Fernando Alonso...

Ahead of the action getting under way in Monaco, Ocon had only spoken vaguely of how "if you do a good job on track there should be nothing stopping you in the future" in terms of remaining with the team beyond 2024. His lack of encouragement for his employer spoke loudest in the cramped press room. Earlier in

2024, Alpine team insiders had suggested that Ocon's hollering celebrations at escaping Q1 at the Australian and Japanese races had not gone down well internally.

This all reflects the painful place in which Alpine found itself as the season commenced. After warning, via Gasly, that "we just might need to be a little bit patient" at the February launch of the A524, testing revealed the car to be slow and overweight. What had been clear to Ocon and Gasly in December simulation sessions was playing out in reality.

A week later in Bahrain, Alpine announced that technical director Matt Harman and head of aerodynamics Dirk de Beer would be departing. At that first round, the Alpine drivers had locked out the last row of the grid. Even braced for a tough start, team principal >>



# ON AT ALPINE?

*good for a team that has won the title in living memory. But big changes are happening*



Beaten black and blue: Gasly leads Ocon in Miami. The pair are mired in the midfield – on a good day





Monaco, pre-race. There was less bonhomie afterwards, with Ocon finding himself in hot water

HONE

## PAST SUCCESS



First of back-to-back titles in 1994 in Benetton guise



Fortune favoured Ocon for victory in Hungary, 2021. Result hasn't been repeated



STEVEN TEE/RENAULT F1

Two more followed with Alonso as Renault in 2005-06



SUTTON



Bruno Famin nevertheless called that result “a shock”.

“What I said at that time was true,” he says in Miami’s Hard Rock Stadium, a few hours before NFL mega-star quarterback and (minority) Alpine investor Patrick Mahomes will arrive in the team’s hospitality tent. “We were not expecting to have a very good car. From that to being on the last row, yeah, it was a shock. But let’s see the positives. The shock is good for the team, because everybody realised that we had to change our way. Change our philosophy, our mindset. And it brings added points to what we are doing: changing the mindset in order to push harder to work harder and better.”

With Harman and de Beer gone – Famin claims “we said that Dirk and Matt had resigned, but if they resigned we knew or we understood that we will not continue together” – a technical department reshuffle followed. Famin implemented a three-pillared model, with technical directors Joe Burnell (engineering), David Wheeler (aerodynamics) and Ciaron Pilbeam (performance). Famin calls this a “much more horizontal organisation now to enable everybody to bring their own skills and ideas”.

Then suddenly, the chance to bolster that technical team further appeared. David Sanchez – the former Ferrari head of vehicle concept – was available for immediate employment. This was just four months after he’d joined McLaren as its technical director. But when Sanchez was decided to be, in the words of McLaren principal Andrea Stella, “more senior” than the Woking team’s own three-pillared technical department apparently warranted, the relationship fizzled out after just three months. But McLaren didn’t stand in the Frenchman’s way to re-sign with another squad immediately and so Famin “made contact very quickly”. “And we saw that we were on the same line,” he continues. “I think both parties are very happy.”

Three races on from Sanchez’s Alpine arrival being announced ahead of the Miami GP, he’s had time to evaluate Enstone’s facilities and operating strengths. And weaknesses. Famin said last month at Imola that Sanchez had identified some “very weak points”, but “good people” too. For those he joined at Enstone, Famin insisted, there was nothing new in such points. But his feeling is that Sanchez possesses

*“Being overweight was not the major problem of the car. It’s that we lacked downforce and we had difficulties to make the tyres work for quali”*

a “very accurate view of what will help to go faster”.

“I’m quite happy with the reaction [to the technical structure changes],” Famin says in Miami. “We made some changes. Very happy with having David Sanchez on board. He found that we made the first steps of changes on the technical direction and there was a good reaction from the people. Everybody is now conscious that we need to change and everybody is pushing.”

In the same timeframe, Alpine also scored two points finishes – in Miami and Monaco, one point each from Ocon and Gasly – elevating it above point-less Sauber in the constructors’ championship. Famin feels that these are symbolic of the efforts Alpine has enacted since the scale of its tough 2024 challenge was revealed.

“Part of the plan is being implemented, because we know that the car was a bit overweight at the start of the season,” he says. “Here for the first time, and faster than planned and scheduled, we will have the two cars at the minimum weight. We brought two upgrades on the aerodynamic side [before that].

“We were not particularly overweight, but it was a matter of 0.2 seconds. The fight is tough now. Every small gain is good to make and this is what we are doing. The weight – people talk a lot about the car being overweight – it was not the major problem of the car. The major problem is that we lacked downforce and we had difficulties to make the tyres work for quali. Better to get the minimum weight but it was not the major issue. This issue has



been solved faster than expected and I’m happy with the direction of the team – pushing hard to do everything faster.

“In Shanghai we had the new floor, we were supposed to have only in Miami. We were able to, with the guys at the factory pushing hard, make one for Shanghai [the race before]. It’s a good sign, but it’s a small part of the gap we need to fill. And it will take time.”

Famin’s plan now is to unleash as much potential in the A524 in the opening weeks of summer. This is before the 2026 chassis rules are revealed by the FIA imminently. After this point – and reflecting what paddock sources suggest will be an expected grid-wide trend of evolution car designs in 2025 as a result – Alpine will switch as much of its resources as possible to nailing the start of F1’s next new era.

But, given Alpine’s lowly constructors’ championship position and the millions of dollars in prize money that it will forfeit should it remain in ninth place – it was fifth, fourth and sixth in 2021-23 – will that satisfy Renault CEO Luca de Meo? He made a rare appearance in the Jeddah paddock at the start of the season to see the race team’s struggles first-hand.

“Everybody knows Formula 1,” Famin replies to this question. “There are no more small teams in Formula 1, thanks to the attractivity [sic] of Formula 1 for three to four years. A lot of investors are coming to Formula 1, including Alpine – we are very happy to have our new investors [Mahomes, Travis Kelce and co].

“This is money coming to all the teams. No more small teams, everybody fighting or improving his position. And the fight is very tough, very difficult and this is what is exciting.

“But there is no truth, no rule, otherwise it will be too easy. There is no magic recipe to come from the midfield to the podium. Everybody will apply it, but unfortunately it’s not the case and we need to fight and that takes time, and everybody knows how difficult it is.”

When reports that Alpine was possibly up for sale (with the condition that a new owner retained Renault engines) surfaced after April’s Japanese GP, these were hotly refuted. But this hasn’t stopped rumours about the same topic continuing to swirl in the F1 paddock.

Plus, there remains the situation with the Andretti organisation, which is still on the outside looking for a way in. With the discussion over raising F1’s dilution fund contributions to \$600million for new teams wanting in for 2026, then rising to \$700m from 2028, suddenly paying closer to a \$1billion for a guaranteed entry and existing facilities – such is the going rate for teams in the cost cap era – makes a mite more sense. Still, Renault would have to agree to sell up.

At the same time, and although Famin insists “we want to take our time”, Alpine also has a big driver line-up problem to solve. At the time of writing, the team was understood to be considering how to discipline Ocon for his Monaco misstep. And, with Ocon parting ways with the team at the end of the season and Gasly out of contract, >>



Alpine can't remain stationary in the hyperactive 2024 driver market.

Ocon was already entertaining considerable interest from both Haas and Sauber, although it has been suggested that his Monaco actions may well play into the thoughts of any team considering snapping him up. Gasly has for some time appeared to be more secure where he is already, but he too is desirable for other teams should their preferred options not work out.

Then there's Alpine's roster of Academy drivers – including F1 reserve Jack Doohan – and Mick Schumacher. The former Haas F1 racer is currently impressing Alpine at its World Endurance Championship Hypercar squad.

"Mick is making an incredible job in endurance," says Famin, who confirms he is "one of the possibilities" for Alpine to sign for 2025. "And what is very impressive is his mindset. Of course, he's fast, but everyone knows he's fast and in endurance it's not always useful to do a very good lap time because then you have the Balance of Performance on top and you have to be careful with performance.

"Where Mick has been really incredible is in his adaptation to the endurance mindset. We used to say single-seater drivers are selfish and Mick, from the very first minute, has been very open, very cooperative. Really helpful for his team-mates [Nicolas Lapierre and Matthieu Vaxiviere], ready to learn everything specific for endurance. A super mindset, super team spirit."

The emphasis Famin places on such an approach is obvious. With little else to talk about given the team's current car plight and with F1's notoriously long lead times for enacting actual change, it's a sensible plan. But, at the same time, elements of what Famin says clash with traditional motorsport outlooks. Take, for instance, his reaction to our discussion over the 30th anniversary this year of Enstone's 1994 drivers' world title with Michael Schumacher, as Benetton.

"Yeah, it was Enstone but it was a different story," Famin claims. "I'm not sure Red Bull is celebrating the Jaguar victory [*when was that?! – ed*] or, I don't know how many years ago, Tyrrell victories. We have inherited or bought some companies, but it's not really

our legacy. I think we need to look at the present and at the future, and I don't think we are going to celebrate that. It will be even a bit counterproductive because, again, we need to push hard and to see what we need to do to improve. And not just to congratulate ourselves, saying '30 years ago some of the people here have been world champion in a totally different context'. It's not the right time."

Of the team's upcoming 20th anniversary of its 2005 world title double with Alonso, as Renault, it's the "same thing". "I'm focused on [turning the race team around]," insists Famin. "If the Renault brand wants to celebrate something, I'm very happy. On the Formula 1 team, being where we are, the work we need to do, everything we need to implement to improve the situation, I really want to send a signal out saying that we need to change for better.

"For more agility, more efficiency. And not to say, 'Hey, we have been world champions 30 years ago, look how good we are.' We are not good. We need to improve."

*"I refuse to comment. I'm looking ahead. I'm not looking back, OK? I know that I inherited a situation. The situation was not good enough for designing a good car"*

For a team that has a proud history since its arrival in F1 as Toleman in 1981, this is rather jarring, particularly because the squad has been keen to celebrate its roots as Team Enstone in the past. And yet, there's a quite significant chunk of cold, F1 logic shining out at the same time. Only the next championship really matters.

There is, however, something illogical in what Famin said in response to a question at Imola, asking where exactly he felt the team had gone wrong. "I'm not sure I'm super-interested in knowing the answer to that question," he said. "I'm looking ahead."

This reflects his stance back in Miami, when ex-Alpine team boss Otmar Szafnauer's response to Famin's "the car we have now is the result of previous management" comment to F1's official website was relayed by Autosport. Szafnauer's position is that when he left nearly a year ago at the start of the 2023 F1 summer break, only then "is when they started on next year's car". Szafnauer is adamant that decisions made following his exit led to the A524's mediocrity.

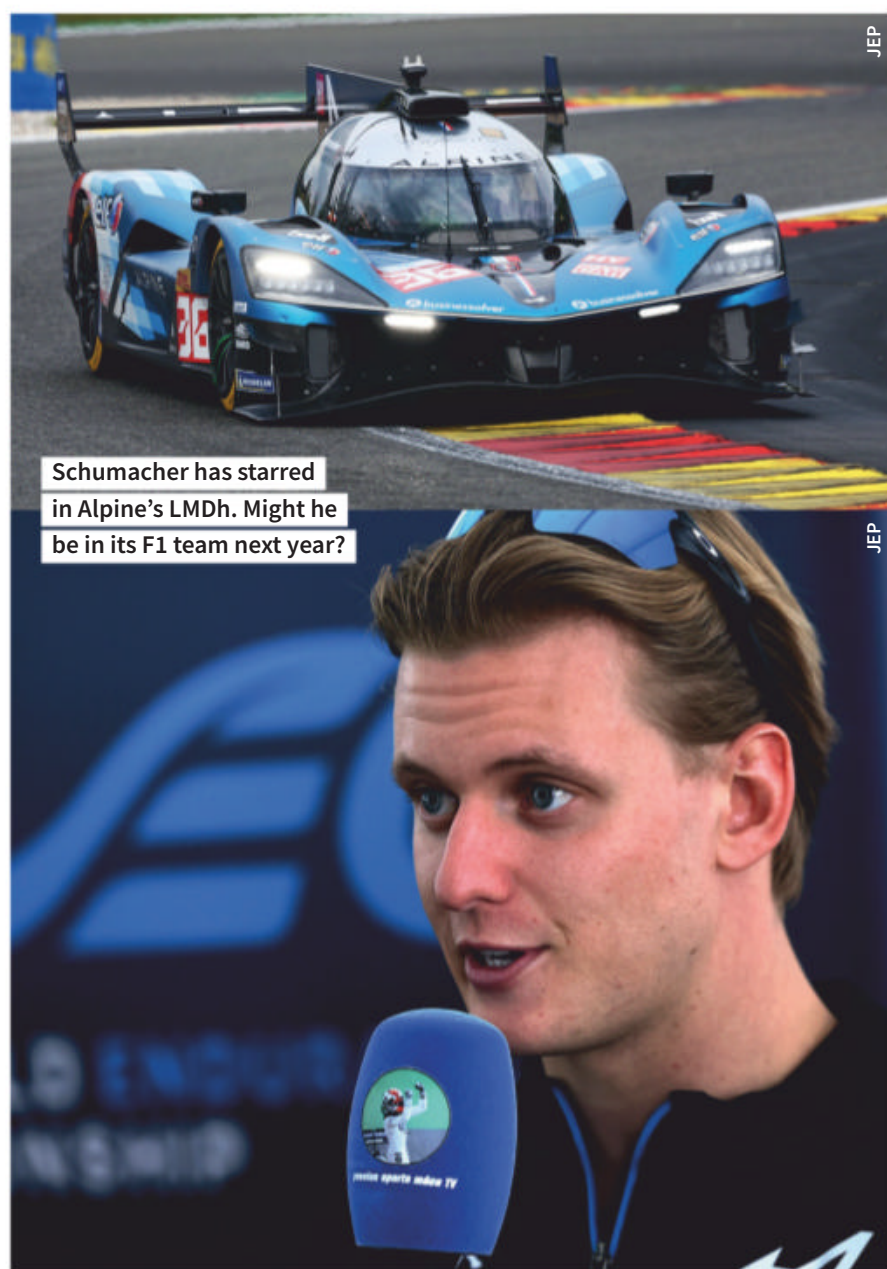
"I refuse to comment," is Famin's response. "I'm looking ahead. I'm not looking back, OK? I know that I inherited a situation. The situation was not good enough for designing a good car for 2024 and that's all I know. But I don't... I want to spend my time in looking at how to improve the car and the team, not in other things."

But Famin has no regrets in Alpine pursuing what back at the launch was called, by Harman, a car "new from front to back". This is because, he says, "it's a fact that our car [in 2023] was quite different from the others, which are lower, stiffer". "We couldn't get much more gain from that philosophy," he adds. "Now we're exploring new paths of course to make the gains we need.

"For sure it's not the year we're aiming for. And we want to fight much further ahead. It was quite clear during the winter that we were not reaching our goals in terms of performance gains. That's why we were a bit cautious during the launch about performance.

"We knew it would be difficult, we have not developed the car enough. We made progress, but not enough compared to the competitors. That's why we are back here. And of course, we are not happy with that and we are making changes to resolve the situation." Just last week, Alpine sacked operations director Rob White...

The intent is clear. Only future success matters for Alpine but, throughout its time since Renault bought back the team for 2016, that message has been offered time and again. And with Famin refusing to publicly acknowledge the team's previous failings, this presents a concern. All will be forgotten if his plan comes off, but Alpine has to get there first. ❧



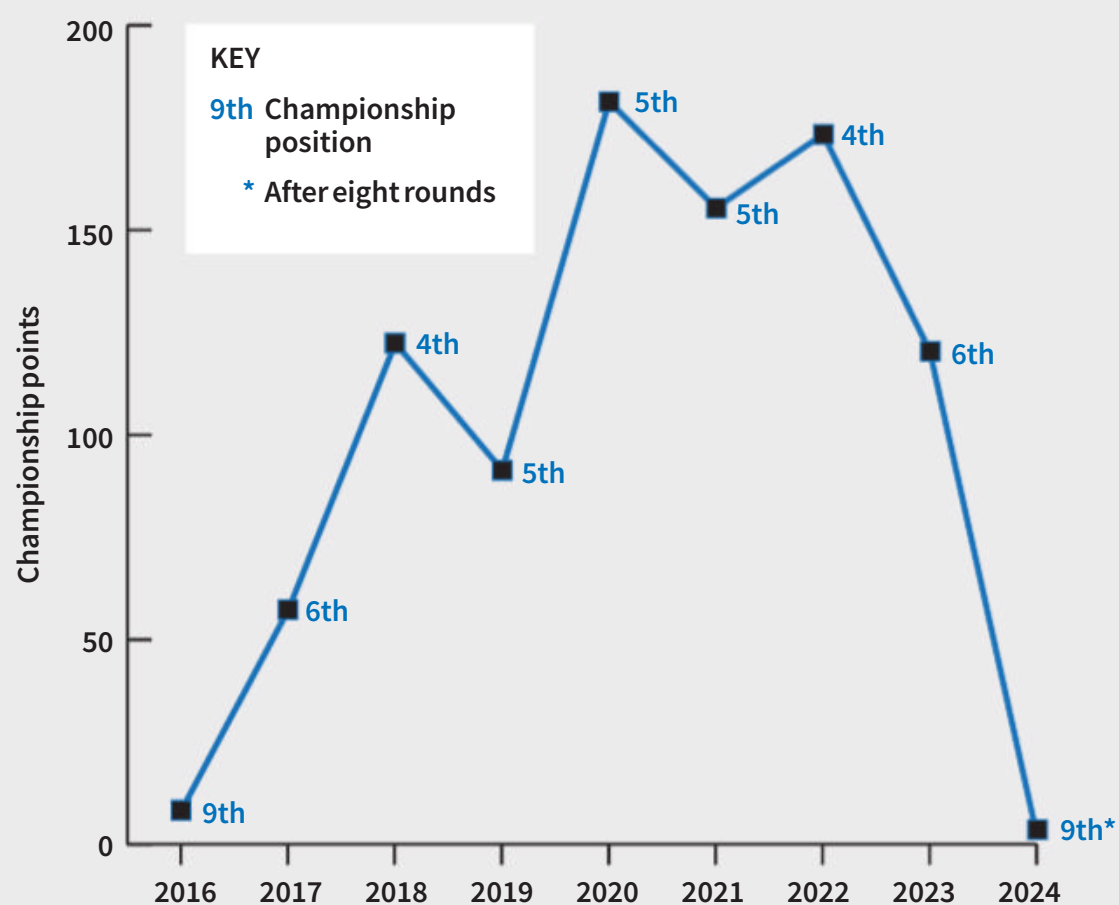


Making a point:  
Ocon finally put  
Alpine on the score  
board in Miami,  
finishing 10th



## RENAULT/ALPINE'S FORM

Renault made good initial progress after it bought Team Enstone and returned to Formula 1 in 2016. But things stalled and have gone backwards in recent times.







# An F1 racer's view of the Indy 500

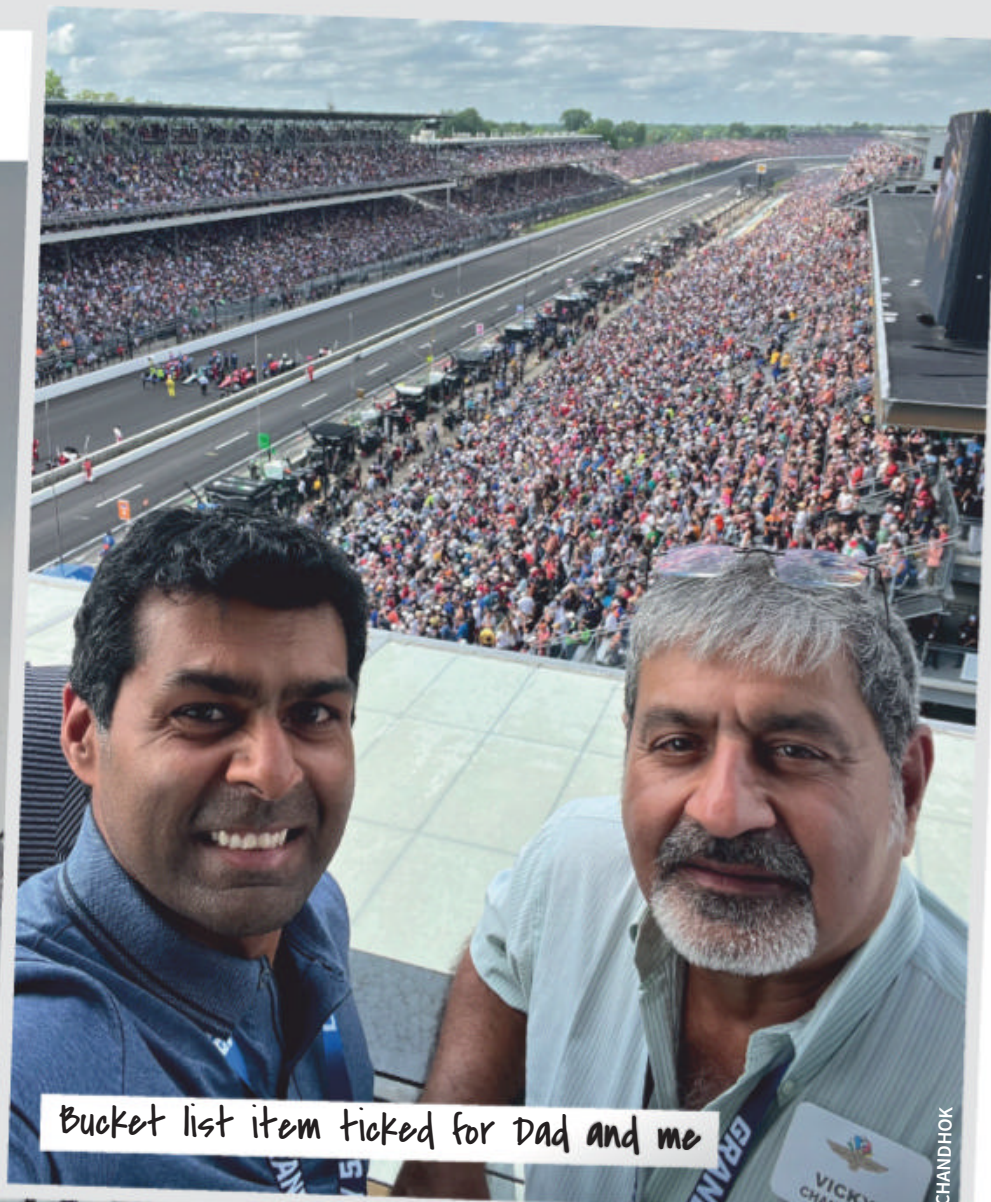
*One of Sky Sports' pundits missed the Monaco Grand Prix to visit America's  
greatest race – and was surprised by some of the things he found*

KARUN CHANDHOK



TONS/MOTORSPORTIMAGES





L

ike everybody else, I have a bucket list of things that I keep creating. And, like most people, the rate at which the list grows generally exceeds the rate at which we actually do the things on it. With work and family commitments, time is the most valuable commodity and, unless we proactively decide to

do something, that bucket list will only go one way.

In the past year, my mum passed away quite suddenly when she was just 65, and I also turned 40 in January. These two events have been a catalyst for me deciding to set the realistic goal of ticking off just one thing from my list every year.

Top of the list was to go to the Indianapolis 500, and I thought it would be a cool thing to do with my dad as he had never been to the race either. The last time we went to a race meeting together purely as fans on a father-son day out was the 1996 Formula 3000 race at Silverstone won by Kenny Brack. Weird sidebar – we ended up sitting next to Kenny at Indy and watching the race, which amused all three of us!

Three-time Indy 500 winner and my official trip advisor Dario Franchitti gave me a heads-up that ‘Carb Day’ was an absolute must. He also offered the excellent tip that, while flights to Indy could be astronomical, flying to Chicago was a much cheaper option with an easy three-hour drive down.

‘Carb Day’ is the final practice session before the race. It’s the last time that the teams and drivers will have a chance to test their race engines and gearboxes while finding a set-up that works. It’s also known as a ‘general admission day’ for the fans so, irrespective of what ticket you have, fans are free to wander into any seat in any grandstand around the oval. It really was quite something to see 100,000 people turn up for what was essentially a warm-up session.

The fan access on the whole was one of the biggest surprises of the weekend for me. The paddock was completely open for people to wander around and see the cars in the garages, and the drivers were regularly at different tents in the fan zone, which was just adjacent to the paddock. The thing that blew my mind was that fans were also able to buy tickets to go into the pitlane during the live session! We were wandering around with hundreds of other people literally 10 feet away from where the cars were driving in for their fuel and tyre stops.

As the weekend unfolded, I got the sense that the 500 is

**“The fan access was one of the biggest surprises. The paddock was completely open for fans to wander around”**

more than a motor race to these fans. It’s a family tradition, almost an heirloom that gets passed down, and they’re very protective of its position in the world of sport. The fans weren’t there for the selfies and ‘Insta-tweeting’ – they were truly emotionally invested. The guy next to me in the grandstand said he’d been in the same seat for 42 years, someone else told me they used to sit in the same seats with their dad and now had their son with them, while the family behind us proudly showed off their icebox with winning driver stickers for the past 18 years that they had been bringing it in.

I was also very pleasantly surprised at how many women were in the stands, wearing the merch of their favourite team or driver. It seemed like a 60-40 split of men and women, a closer ratio than we see in other forms of motorsport. »





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We headed up to the outside of Turn 1 for the session and it really is a breathtaking sight to see the cars hurtle down the straight and launch into there at 235mph on full throttle. I noticed where the spotters were on the roof of the grandstand and figured it would be a smart move to sit just below them. Watching how the draft worked from up high was fascinating as you can truly see how the cars not only get dragged closer and past their competitors into Turn 1, but also how that momentum gained carries all the way to Turn 3.

Heading down to stand by the fence at the lower level of the grandstand gives you an incredible sense of the speed and energy coming from the cars, which reminded me of standing on the bank at the Becketts complex at Silverstone.

The pitstop challenge in the afternoon sounded like a bit of silly showbiz but I was completely wrong. The atmosphere was utterly brilliant, with the drinks flowing, music blasting and the amphitheatre around the pitlane going wild. The teams also take it seriously, with the top ones using separate road-course spec cars with special set-ups to focus on the start. I got the impression that the morale boost for the mechanics ahead of the big race seemed to be worth much more than the \$50,000 prize. Josef Newgarden's winning crew certainly carried that confidence into the race.

I spent the day off from track action on Saturday wandering around the paddock. All day long people kept walking up to me and saying, "Welcome to Indy", "Great to have you here", "Thank you for coming", which was quite confusing to be honest – but in a good way. You never hear drivers, mechanics or engineers from F1 or World Endurance Championship teams proactively welcoming people from other categories into the paddock and offering to show off their cars or talk you through the challenge of racing. There were also plenty of former European racing engineers and mechanics who have made the trip across the pond, so it was nice to catch up with familiar faces.

I never had to learn about the challenge of getting a car dialled in for Indianapolis in my driving career. To think that the teams get a car from Dallara, an engine from Chevy or Honda and away they go is too simplistic. It was fascinating to understand about the level of detail in terms of getting the car set up right, the huge range of options on suspension geometries and aero, the complexity of choosing the correct tyres and measuring every single tyre to 1/32 of an inch so you avoid any manufacturing tolerances, as well as the detail in taking out any friction from the gearbox and drivetrain. Teams such as Penske run a car on a seven-post rig pretty much all the time and have their own full-scale wind tunnel – facilities to rival any F1 team.

Race day started cloudy with the prospect of a thunderstorm looming. The F1 rage has clearly spread wildly across America and the number of people gathered around phones, tablets or



Friends reunited: with Dario Franchitti and Mario Andretti





Pitstop challenge win foreshadowed what would follow for Penske

## “Dario invited me to hitch a ride for the winner’s parade, which was a very cool way to do a lap around the track”

televisions dotted across the paddock for the start of the Monaco Grand Prix was a strong indicator of that.

One of the nice things about the Indy 500 weekend is that there are several points at which they pay respect and honour their past winners. Videos are constantly playing on the big screens of the Andrettis, Unsers, AJ Foyt or Rick Mears, and throughout the week they are treated with a god-like respect by the organisers and fans that their achievements truly merit.

Dario kindly invited me to hitch a ride in the back of his pick-up truck for the winner’s parade, which was a very cool way to do a lap around the 2.5-mile track. The special tribute to the late Gil de Ferran was particularly moving as his friend Simon Pagenaud led a parade of former winners in Gil’s 2003 race-winning, Penske-run G-Force machine.

While clearly a concern, the weather predictions from the organisers were incredibly accurate, with the big screens around the track telling people about the window of when they had to avoid the grandstands due to lightning. They predicted that the storm would be from 1230 until 1400 and unbelievably it went »

Simon Pagenaud drove Gil de Ferran’s G-Force in tribute to his late friend



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from 1228 until 1357 – wish I had that level of accuracy when going for my bike rides in the English summer.

Roger Penske and his eponymous organisation took over the IndyCar series and the Speedway a few years ago and the meticulous planning with clinical execution was incredible to see. As the last raindrop fell, the jet engine drying machines instantly hit the track. I was told that Roger had made a pre-emptive move to rent six of these beasts from NASCAR when he saw the forecast; a small insight into a brilliant man who runs an empire of 70,000 employees producing a group-wide turnover of more than \$39 billion per year!

By the time the cars rolled onto the grid, the track was dry, the sun came out and, most importantly, all 349,000 fans cheerfully took their seats despite their wet socks.

The energy on the grid of an F1 grand prix or at Le Mans is truly special and is the one thing that never gets old, no matter how many times I've been fortunate to experience it. But that



## “There’s a positivity to the Indy 500 that is unique. The huge amount of love and respect for F1 was refreshing”

moment at Indy when the American national anthem begins was unlike anything I've ever felt. The biggest sporting arena on the planet had 349,000 people in absolute pin-drop silence while the anthem was sung, turning to an explosion of cheers from the crowd and the fighter jets doing their flypast above. Quite extraordinary.

The race itself turned out to be worth the wait, with a brilliant four-car scrap for the win in the final 50 laps. The radio scanners make it a fun way to follow the race if you're a geek like me who wants to listen to the strategists and team radio chatter. The fans are able to choose to listen to any of the 33 cars or the commentary, which makes it very easy to follow along with the big screens.

I was watching from the inside of the start/finish straight with a great view of Turns 1 and 4, and seeing Newgarden and Pato O'Ward duke it out just below us for those final five laps was sensational. I've always had a lot of respect for the drivers in IndyCar as I think that anyone who races wheel to wheel at those speeds is very brave. I love the left-field stories that we don't get in European racing, like the brilliantly talented Scott McLaughlin going from V8 Supercars with no single-seater experience to pole position at the Indy 500 in a short time, or NASCAR star Kyle Larson hopping into an IndyCar and running strongly in the top six.

There's a positivity to the Indy 500 that is unique. When I went to Le Mans, I found too many people in the paddock or media centre or fans constantly saying, “This is real racing – so much better than F1” and I've always hated that. I've been lucky to race in F1 and Le Mans and they're both brilliant but different and can co-exist in the world of motorsport together.

What I found refreshing about going to Indy was that people all had a huge amount of love and respect for F1, and there was none of the “This is a much better race than the Monaco GP borefest” that I was expecting. They love the 500 but they also wanted F1 back at the ‘Brickyard’ too.

I came away from the weekend with a proper reminder of why I love this sport. Brilliant racing until the final corner, passionate people, and a community in the paddock and grandstands who welcome outsiders with open arms. 🍷



# RACE CENTRE

WRC

## Tanak takes surprise win as drama strikes Ogier

*Toyota's part-timer looked set for a fifth victory in Italy before problems on the final stage, handing the win to Hyundai's Ott Tanak as the top two proved the class of the field*

TOM HOWARD

PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN

Victory in Sardinia has lit the blue touch paper on Tanak's title challenge







When the World Rally Championship chose Sardinia to trial its new 48-hour format, few could have predicted the concoction of drama, joy and heartbreak that conspired to produce the joint closest victory in series history. Two tenths of a second – it's barely a blink of an eye. But that was the margin by which Hyundai's Ott Tanak and Martin Jarveoja took victory after a puncture three kilometres from the end of the 266.12km event denied Toyota's Sebastien Ogier a record fifth Sardinia win.

You could be forgiven for thinking we've been here before. Flashback to 2019... Tanak, then driving for Toyota, was on the brink of victory in Sardinia when a steering issue in the final stage handed Dani Sordo's Hyundai a shock win. Five years on, the very same Sassari stage that had rendered Tanak speechless and dejected delivered unexpected joy. Ogier had also tasted defeat on this stage before, losing the win by 0.7s to Thierry Neuville in 2018.

For those who believe in karma, there was another interesting strand to this tale – the previous record smallest WRC winning margin was when Ogier beat his now Toyota boss Jari-Matti Latvala by 0.2s in Jordan 13 years ago. "It is really cruel for Seb to lose it like this," admitted Tanak. "I have been there before myself. I have lost a safe victory on this stage – I know how bad it feels."

Tanak may have felt bad for his unfortunate rival, but this first win in his second spell at Hyundai truly ignited the Estonian's title aspirations after a somewhat difficult start to the season. The 2019 world champion expected Sardinia's rough gravel stages to offer a more intense rally thanks to the trialling of the WRC's new shorter format. The idea behind the 48-hour concept is to allow event organisers flexibility with formats in the future instead of being locked into running a standard 300+km itinerary. Compared to last year, the rally was 54km shorter, with action starting later on the Friday afternoon and finishing at the usual Sunday lunchtime and bookending a brutal 14-hour Saturday, without a midday service.

"Clearly here the road position is crucial, so we need to be in the rhythm immediately; in some ways more intense," predicted Tanak. "It's obviously very busy, there is no free time at all with very short nights. It's not easy, but it's bit more exciting probably."

The drivers largely backed a move to try something new, but most agreed that there were elements that were not optimal. "Honestly, I like it, it is also not perfect, but it's a first try," nodded Ogier. "The idea of first and second pass of stages in >>

**"It is really cruel for Seb to lose it like this. I've been there before myself. I know how bad it feels"**





Ogier denied record  
fifth Sardinia win  
by a puncture

the same loop is not ideal, with the risk that the stage could become blocked. I am convinced that it could be a good format. It doesn't change how we do the race, but to recover from an issue on a short rally is nearly impossible."

Ogier was once again correct to point out the little room for error. After shakedown that was derided by all as a "Mickey Mouse" stage, held in an unusual slot of Friday morning, the action began a matter of hours later. It was the eight-time world champion, starting from a beneficial fifth on the road, who set the pace, winning two of four stages to end the loop 4.5s faster than Tanak. But it wasn't plain sailing for the four-time Sardinia winner. "It has been tough," related Ogier. "We went for an aggressive choice on tyres and we were on the limit to be honest, but I think managing them is one of my strengths. There was a sensor issue, and we nearly didn't restart, which was scary."

A win on stage two without the use of hybrid power showed signs that Tanak was going to be a real factor here. The hybrid issue reared its head before stage four but, according to Tanak, the "strong Hyundai engine helped us out". More importantly, he'd come up trumps in the fight for road position for Saturday.

Team-mate Sordo held a solid third (albeit 33.2s down on Ogier), ahead of Toyota's Takamoto Katsuta (+34.5s), while road sweeper and championship leader Thierry Neuville performed admirably, facing the worst of the conditions to sit 3.4s from third. The Belgian dropped 28.1s alone in the opening test due to road cleaning. "That has been the hardest day you can imagine, the worst stages to get through – luckily it was only a half-day," said the Hyundai star after incredibly winning stage four by 3.7s from Tanak.

Neuville's championship rival Elfyn Evans wasn't so fortunate, as a difficult afternoon struggling for pace began with a left-rear puncture in stage one. Like Toyota team-mate Ogier, he'd gambled on taking five tyres, which left him on a knife edge for the rest of the loop. The Welshman summed up his day simply as "bad". But it was his struggles for speed that would be an ongoing story through the rally, heading into Saturday 57.3s adrift.

Evans did fare better than Adrien Fourmaux, who ran as high as third in his M-Sport Ford after the first pass through the stages, before his rally began to unravel. In stage three, the repeat of Osilo-Tergu, the Frenchman picked up a left-rear puncture before grinding to a halt in stage four and retiring with an alternator issue. Fourmaux rejoined the rally on Saturday only to suffer a myriad of problems. "The rear roll bar was broken so the car was lazy from the rear and then the front roll bar was broken and that broke the brake pipe, so I lost the brakes," said Fourmaux, who would go on to enjoy a stronger Sunday, leaving with three points. "Then after that the car was just a boat or like driving a Citroen 2CV."

After a four-hour sleep, the crews were tested to their limits on Saturday. The stages became heavily rutted, exposing large rocks and bedrock, creating a high puncture risk that meant survival was key. Sordo even declared the Tempio Pausania stage as "destroyed", while Tanak admitted it felt like he was driving without power



Another podium for  
Sordo, who has no more  
planned outings this year



Ogier praised by team boss Latvala for his ability to up his game when things go awry



## “The rear roll bar was broken then the front roll bar was broken. It was like driving a 2CV”

steering such were the conditions in stage eight (Tula).

Brutal conditions aside, it was Neuville who created the big talking point. The Belgian quickly climbed to third to build on his impressive Friday, but his hard work came crashing down when he went off the road in stage eight, beaching his i20 N on a bank. “I lost concentration for a fraction of a second,” muttered a frustrated Neuville. “It was simply a left over crest where in the morning I thought I was a bit slow. It stuck in my mind that I had to go faster, and the next corner was just behind, and I was still accelerating.”

Team-mate Sordo was among the first to come across the stricken i20 N, which prompted an unusual reaction from the Spaniard: “I see Thierry and I was really disappointed. Honestly, I don’t know why he needs to take this amount of risk.”

Katsuta had inherited third following Neuville’s exit, but the Japanese was the next domino to fall. His GR Yaris’s transmission developed an oil leak, which Toyota attempted to fix in the midday tyre fitting zone. But on stage nine the issue proved terminal, handing Sordo third and Evans fourth. “In this kind of rally, I don’t understand why we don’t have a midday service because it is very important, and at the same time drivers and co-drivers, we don’t have time to eat and no time to rest,” complained Katsuta. “A whole day in the car is not nice. It was very difficult conditions and very tough for the car.”

At the front, the battle between Ogier and Tanak took centre stage. Tanak had emerged with a 0.1s rally lead when Ogier suffered a puncture on Saturday’s opening test. An Evans-like tyre gamble forced Ogier to be careful without a spare. But a fastest time on the



Eight-time champion couldn’t quite believe Hyundai’s risk aversion

next test, stage six, put Ogier back in the lead. It was short-lived, as Tanak responded to lead by 3.5s at the end of the morning.

Ogier reclaimed the lead in the afternoon, which coincided with Tanak revealing that his Hyundai team had asked him to “be safe and not push”. It was an order Ogier found hard to believe. “Even if they told him, I don’t know why he’d respect that to be honest,” opined Ogier. “We are having a nice fight. Why give up?”

The Hyundai team judged the extra risk required to continue to challenge for the win was too much, after losing Neuville in its pursuit of manufacturer points. “I will never ask a driver to slow down but the discussion we had was about risk versus reward,” answered Hyundai boss when asked to explain the call. “I could feel from his [Tanak’s] feedback that increasing the risk level was simply unreasonable given the level of confidence he has in the car.”

Tanak added: “Clearly after Thierry went out we had only two cars left, and with the championship on the table it is clear you can’t risk to lose another car. Nobody said I couldn’t fight Seb, but I was told not to take any risk.”

The instruction didn’t have a significant effect on the battle anyway, because Tanak struggled for confidence across the afternoon stages. Three stage wins from four put Ogier into a 17.1s lead and on course for a fifth Sardinia win, to pull one clear of Sebastien Loeb in the record books. >>





Career-best fifth-place  
finish for M-Sport's  
Gregoire Munster

## “It’s very frustrating, we’re not feeling at one with everything. There is no satisfaction”

Ogier’s performance, particularly without a spare tyre, drew high praise from Latvala: “He wants to win so much, again, you saw the passion and the fight is there. When situations are difficult, or he is stressed, he seems to turn out even better.”

Ogier and Tanak were in a class of their own, picking up 18 and 15 Saturday points respectively as the dependable Sordo held third (2m12.8s down, with 13 points), ahead of a frustrated Evans, grateful to be fourth to claim 10 Saturday championship points over Neuville, who failed to score. “It’s very frustrating, we’re not feeling at one with everything,” explained Evans. “There is no satisfaction in what we have done, but at the same time it [the points] is something.”

Latvala felt his driver was “thinking too much about the championship”, but respected that his title hopeful was still in the fight. “I do respect that when it doesn’t go well, Elfyn is still consistent,” he said. “Personally, what I did was when it didn’t go well, I attacked more and then I ended up crashing. But of course, you cannot win the championship without victories.”

From the outside most people expected Ogier to cruise to victory on Sunday, but there was a final dramatic twist. With 12 Super Sunday points on offer, Tanak and the returning Neuville lit up the timing screens while Ogier, not competing for the drivers’ championship, saw his rally lead reduce.

Heading into the final Power Stage, Ogier had a 6.2s margin over Tanak and was on course to take the spoils until his puncture struck in the final two miles. Ogier wrestled through the Sassari stage, which was more akin to Safari Rally Kenya, to fall agonisingly 6.4s slower than Tanak.

But the eight-time champion was nevertheless gracious in defeat, putting the moment into sharp context. “That is motorsport sometimes, you have to accept that s\*\*\* happens,” he said. “There was nothing I could have done different. At least I’m happy for it to go to my friend Ott as he has done a strong rally.”

Tanak was parked up and convinced that he was set for second place before realising he’d hit a surprise jackpot. “In the end, it’s just a bunch of emotions,” he sighed. “Obviously, it’s very positive as we were not focusing at all [on the win] and were just focused on the Sunday points, but we didn’t gain any

points by winning the rally [under the new rules].”

Tanak’s focus on Sunday points was worthwhile, picking up 11. He trailed Neuville, who bounced back from Friday’s error superbly to take the maximum 12 points on offer by topping the Sunday standings and winning the Power Stage. “There is nothing to be proud of with the overall result,” admitted Neuville. “We need to dig a bit deeper to understand why I lost concentration for a moment. But when it’s about bouncing back, we have always been quite strong.”

‘Safe hands’ Sordo once again delivered a podium in third, which may have been his last WRC rally of a 20-year career, after completing his stated two-event Hyundai programme for 2024. “I don’t know at the moment this year – I don’t have any more planned, so let’s see,” summed up the Spaniard.

As for Evans, there was a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel following a stronger run on Sunday that netted him an extra eight points. The Toyota driver finished fourth, ahead of M-Sport Ford contender Gregoire Munster, who carefully and quietly scored a career-best fifth to edge impressive WRC2 class winner Sami Pajari (see panel, right).

“We have to count ourselves lucky to take this many points away from the weekend,” concluded Evans, who sits tied with Tanak, 18 points behind championship leader Neuville.

Sardinia 2024 will most likely be forever written into the record books for its grandstand finish, but the rally could also be the moment that sparks Tanak’s quest for a second world title. 🏆



Evans frustrated  
but still buoyed by  
decent points haul



PAJARI MOVES INTO WRC2  
CONTENTION WITH WIN



Sami Pajari managed to tame Sardinia’s brutal gravel stages to claim a second career WRC2 win and ignite his title aspirations. Pajari and co-driver Enni Mäkelä bounced back from a disappointing retirement in Portugal in style as the pair took a comfortable victory by 32.3 seconds from the Citroen of championship leader Yohan Rossel and Benjamin Boulloud.

Pajari briefly lost the lead to former M-Sport Rally1 driver Pierre-Louis Loubet on Friday before ending the day with an 18.3s lead. A technical issue with his Skoda Fabia on Saturday ended Loubet’s hopes.

Once in front, Pajari steered the new Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 to its second consecutive win following Jan Solans’s maximum score in Portugal. The 22-year-old Finn extended his lead to 54.7s heading into Sunday’s four stages, before cruising to victory in class and sixth overall.

“We knew the pace was there, we just needed to put it together,” said Pajari, who moved from 11th to fourth in the championship standings. “The team was doing a good job, and the car is really fast, so we just needed a good driver to finish it. It feels like all the pieces are coming together.”

Rossel produced a heroic effort after dropping almost two minutes to a puncture that demoted the Frenchman from fourth to 18th in class. Rossel then rattled off eight consecutive stage wins to clean-sweep Saturday before going on to secure second from Solans by 7s. The result extended his championship lead to 23 points over Solans.

Title contender Oliver Solberg was set to contest the event as a non-points scoring round, but was forced to withdraw on medical grounds before the start. The Swede had to seek attention for an allergic reaction.

In the Junior WRC, Diego Dominguez claimed his second career win by 47.5s from Ali Turkkan, while FIA Rally Star driver Max Smart finished third.

RESULTS WRC ROUND 6/13, RALLY ITALY SARDINIA (31 MAY-2 JUNE)

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	<b>Ott Tanak</b> (EST) <b>Martin Jarveoja</b> (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	3h06m05.6s
2	<b>Sebastien Ogier</b> (FRA) <b>Vincent Landais</b> (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+0.2s
3	<b>Dani Sordo</b> (ESP) <b>Candido Carrera</b> (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+2m25.8s
4	<b>Elfyn Evans</b> (GBR) <b>Scott Martin</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+2m37.8s
5	<b>Gregoire Munster</b> (LUX) <b>Louis Louka</b> (BEL)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+6m42.9s
6	<b>Sami Pajari</b> (FIN) <b>Enni Mäkelä</b> (FIN)	Printsport / Toyota GR Yaris	+7m13.4s
7	<b>Yohan Rossel</b> (FRA) <b>Arnaud Dunand</b> (FRA)	DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2	+7m45.7s
8	<b>Jan Solans</b> (ESP) <b>Rodrigo Sanjuan</b> (ESP)	Teo Martin Motorsport / Toyota GR Yaris	+7m52.7s
9	<b>Martin Prokop</b> (CZE) <b>Michal Ernst</b> (CZE)	ORLEN Jipocar Team / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+10m05.4s
10	<b>Kajetan Kajetanowicz</b> (POL) <b>Maciej Szczepaniak</b> (POL)	ORLEN Rally Team / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+10m09.3s

OTHERS

15	<b>Adrien Fourmaux</b> (FRA) <b>Alexandre Coria</b> (FRA)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+16m43.4s
36	<b>Takamoto Katsuta</b> (JPN) <b>Aaron Johnston</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+41m28.1s
41	<b>Thierry Neuville</b> (BEL) <b>Martijn Wydaeghe</b> (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+50m12.6s

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 <b>Osilo-Tergu 1</b> (15.94 miles)	Ogier 17m18.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +7.7s
SS2 <b>Sedini-Castelsardo 1</b> (8.24 miles)	Tanak 9m57.9s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +1.8s
SS3 <b>Osilo-Tergu 2</b> (15.94 miles)	Ogier 16m43.9s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +4.7s
SS4 <b>Sedini-Castelsardo 2</b> (8.24 miles)	Neuville 9m32.9s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +4.5s
SS5 <b>Tempio Pausania 1</b> (7.48 miles)	Tanak 9m52.1s	<b>Tanak</b>	<b>Ogier</b> +0.1s
SS6 <b>Tula-Erula 1</b> (14.05 miles)	Ogier 19m03.7s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +2.2s
SS7 <b>Tempio Pausania 2</b> (7.48 miles)	Neuville 9m37.5s	<b>Tanak</b>	<b>Ogier</b> +2.2s
SS8 <b>Tula-Erula 2</b> (14.05 miles)	Tanak 18m46.4s	<b>Tanak</b>	<b>Ogier</b> +3.5s
SS9 <b>Monte Lerno-Monti Di Ala’ 1</b> (15.74 miles)	Ogier 15m13.1s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +3.3s
SS10 <b>Coiluna-Loelle 1</b> (9.03 miles)	Ogier 9m11.3s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +9.7s
SS11 <b>Monte Lerno-Monti Di Ala’ 2</b> (15.74 miles)	Ogier 15m01.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +16.2s
SS12 <b>Coiluna-Loelle 2</b> (9.03 miles)	Evans 9m03.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +17.1s
SS13 <b>Cala Flumini 1</b> (7.80 miles)	Neuville 8m06.5s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +13.1s
SS14 <b>Sassari-Argentiera 1</b> (4.41 miles)	Neuville 5m01.4s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +6.6s
SS15 <b>Cala Flumini 2</b> (7.80 miles)	Tanak 7m54.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	<b>Tanak</b> +6.2s
SS16 <b>Sassari-Argentiera 2</b> (Power stage) (4.41 miles)	Neuville 4m55.0s	<b>Tanak</b>	<b>Ogier</b> +0.2s



Hyundai maintains  
its lead in the points

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DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP

- 1 Neuville 122;  
2 Tanak 104; 3 Evans 104;  
4 Ogier 92; 5 Fourmaux 74;  
6 Katsuta 52; 7 Kalle  
Rovanpera 36; 8 Sordo 27;  
9 Esapekka Lappi 23;  
10 Munster 16.

- WRC2** 1 Rossel 71;  
2 Solans 48; 3 Oliver  
Solberg 43.

MANUFACTURERS’  
CHAMPIONSHIP

- 1 Hyundai Shell  
Mobis WRT 269;  
2 Toyota Gazoo  
Racing WRT 256;  
3 M-Sport Ford World  
Rally Team 131.





Dixon won a messy race to take the points lead as he chases a seventh crown

INDYCAR

# Dixon the master amid Detroit drama

*Chaos reigned around the tight street course – and, predictably, so did Ganassi's six-time IndyCar champion*

CHARLES BRADLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY



**W**hen all around is chaos during an IndyCar street race, the smart money goes on two drivers: Scott Dixon and Marcus Ericsson. Add extreme fuel saving into the equation, and there's only one winner – and that's six-time series champion and now 58-time race winner Dixon. That the Kiwi veteran's Chip Ganassi Racing machine crossed the finish line 0.86 seconds ahead of Ericsson's similarly Honda-powered Andretti Global entry doesn't tell the tale of a caution-packed, dry-wet-dry race, where 47 of the 100 laps were run behind the pace car.

It was meant to be a simple two-stop strategy, but only the lead duo and fourth-placed Kyle Kirkwood stuck to that plan. They smartly eschewed going to rain tyres when a mid-race shower briefly soaked the track, and Dixon took advantage of a caution with 44 laps left to make his final stop before most of his rivals.

The only one smart enough to follow his lead was his fellow countryman Marcus Armstrong, who scored a career-best finish

for Ganassi in third, then ran out of fuel on the slowing-down lap, while Dixon was even able to do a burnout on his way to Victory Lane. "I actually ran out of fuel as I came across the line," confessed Armstrong, still the apprentice to Dixon the master.

Just seven days on from the Indianapolis 500, the paddock journeyed just under 300 miles northeast to its shortest and bumpiest track on the schedule. The 1.645-mile downtown Detroit track boasts only five more corners than Indy's fabled oval and, with an average pole speed 136mph slower, this was the series' starkest contrast in driving challenge.

After the majesty of Indy's race for the ages, Detroit's racing degenerated into a doleful crashfest. Following yellow after yellow – eight in all – Bryan Herta, one of the most sensible heads in the paddock, summed it up best: "I hate this."

The track resides in the shadow of the imposing towers of General Motors' Renaissance Center, which forms its global HQ – for now, at least, until it moves out next year and the buildings





Another fuel-sipping masterclass. He's now done this 58 times

LEVITT



Ericsson rose to second but by then Dixon was gone

ABBOTT

## “We’re one of the best series. We shouldn’t be driving on top of each other every single restart”

could get demolished. But its blend of tight confines, unforgiving walls and some boneheaded driving contributed to a race that was borderline dross at times and left you wondering if they shouldn’t blow this up instead. “We’re one of the best racing series in the world,” mused Ericsson. “We shouldn’t be driving on top of each other every single restart.”

As a light rain shower sprinkled the track, polesitter Colton Herta – who started his Andretti Global car on used primary tyres – led the slick-shod field to green, with reigning champion Alex Palou (on used softer alternate rubber on his Ganassi car) drafting him down the long straight before ducking to the outside of the first turn without finding a way by.

Team Penske’s Will Power was tagged into a spin from seventh position by a combination of Theo Pourchaire (Arrow McLaren) and Christian Lundgaard (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) at the opening turn, stranding another six cars behind him, which included Santino Ferrucci (AJ Foyt Racing) and the McLaren entries of Pato O’Ward and Alexander Rossi (who was the quickest of them to extricate himself from the nose-to-tail shemozzle, rejoining 16th). Power required a new rear wing and rejoined last.

After the restart, Kirkwood (his Andretti car on alternate tyres) passed Penske’s Josef Newgarden (primaries) for fourth at Turn 3, as Lundgaard (alternates) pulled a strong-arm move on Dixon at Turn 8 for sixth. He then passed Newgarden two laps later at Turn 1.

Keen to take advantage of his softer tyres, Palou got busy with his push-to-pass as soon as it became available to put Herta under pressure. But Palou soon tumbled from second to sixth by the end of lap 10, as his used alternates grained terribly. He soon pitted and consigned himself to at least a three-stop strategy.

Herta extended a 4s lead over Penske’s Scott McLaughlin, with

Kirkwood now the frontrunning driver on alternates in third, ahead of the charging Lundgaard, who was the next driver to suffer a huge drop-off in grip. Newgarden passed Lundgaard with a forceful move at Turn 8, and Lundgaard pitted just before Kyffin Simpson collected Helio Castroneves after Ferrucci continued his quest to alienate the rest of the paddock by punting the four-time Indy 500 winner into a spin at Turn 5. “Everybody checked up but I just couldn’t stop,” he explained.

At the restart on lap 22, Herta led McLaughlin, Kirkwood, Newgarden and Dixon. Herta pulled clear of McLaughlin by 3s, while Kirkwood held off Newgarden and Dixon. From ninth on the grid, Ericsson soon passed Pourchaire – who then bailed into the pits to jettison his alternates – for sixth.

More drizzle began to fall on lap 29, making this tricky track even more treacherous. Newgarden passed the struggling Kirkwood for third at Turn 3 on lap 32 but a third caution was required when McLaughlin crashed out of second place at Turn 1, slamming the tyrewall and falling two laps down.

That opened the door for all the frontrunners to pit under caution, on Detroit’s unique split pitlane, in which half the cars pit to the left side and the other half to the right. Newgarden suffered a refuelling fumble, which plunged him to 19th.

The early stoppers came to the fore, with Lundgaard now in front from Palou, Agustin Canapino (Juncos Hollinger Racing), Power and Felix Rosenqvist (who had pitted his Meyer Shank Racing entry early on after suffering a puncture).

Then the rain truly arrived with a vengeance, with cars struggling to stay on track even under yellow on their slicks. Herta didn’t pit for wets at the first opportunity, sacrificing much of his track position to those who did when he finally bailed.

Race control now had a tricky decision over when to go green again, with Lundgaard, Kirkwood, Power (who had to give up three spots for failing to keep up with the queue), Dixon, Ericsson, Romain Grosjean (Juncos Hollinger Racing) and Rinus VeeKay (Ed Carpenter Racing) staying out on slicks on the greasy track. Palou led the wet-shod runners from Canapino, Herta, O’Ward, Rosenqvist and Pourchaire. >>





**“Bryan Herta, one of the most sensible heads in the paddock, summed it up best: ‘I hate this’”**

Story of a difficult day  
in Detroit. Power (12)  
took four penalties

The race restarted on lap 41 on a drying track, with Kirkwood attacking Lundgaard and passing him for the lead at Turn 3. VeeKay spun at the corner exit, after contact from Power as they both passed Romain Grosjean, bringing out *another* caution period and another penalty for Power.

In the pitstops that followed, Newgarden ran over a wheelgun, which dragged his car perilously close to Lundgaard’s pitcrew, whose jackman suffered a cut leg that required patching up by the medical team. Kirkwood stayed out to lead Dixon, Ericsson and Grosjean at the restart on lap 46. Rossi and Armstrong, who had bailed on their wets for slicks, were next up, and Rossi zoomed past Grosjean for fourth at Turn 3.

Poleman Herta, who had dropped to ninth, crashed out at Turn 5 after an ill-advised lunge on Palou put him onto the wetter side of the track. He locked up and sailed into the tyrewall, losing a lap while the safety crew retrieved him.

As the race ticked into its second half, Kirkwood led the lap 53 restart from Dixon, Ericsson, Rossi, Grosjean, Armstrong, Lundgaard, Palou and O’Ward, with everyone now back on slicks. But the green didn’t last long – Lundgaard smashed into Grosjean at Turn 3, forcing Armstrong to a halt too. Further back, the lapped Herta smashed into Ferrucci.

Dixon rolled the dice and gave up his second place by pitting under this yellow, dropping to 13th but clearly shooting for the finish without pitting again and banking on more cautions. As so often with him and strategist Mike Hull, it proved to be the race-winning call.

Sting Ray Robb (AJ Foyt Racing) was the next car in the wall, assisted into the Turn 5 barrier by a grumpy McLaughlin. That sent everyone except Dixon, Armstrong and series returnee Tristan

Vautier (Dale Coyne Racing) into the pits, with Kirkwood rejoining fourth on the road, ahead of Newgarden (who served a drive-through penalty for his second pitstop disaster), Rossi, Palou, Ericsson, Power and O’Ward.

The next attempted restart claimed Newgarden, who clipped the back of Kirkwood, and reigning champion Palou ran into his spun Penske car and got stuck. The following restart with 26 laps to go was far more successful, with Kirkwood passing Vautier for third and then having to bang wheels to lap Linus Lundqvist. Another Ganassi car, that of Armstrong who was running a legitimate second, then defended hard from Kirkwood as Dixon pulled out a 4s lead and was then able to save fuel out front.

Despite repeated attempts to pass, Kirkwood had to give up on his designs for second, and his pace fell away. That allowed a charging Ericsson – “I had no fuel concerns, I could push hard” – to pass him with just over 10 laps to go. His other team-mate, Herta, unlapped himself from Dixon and, much to the leader’s disgust, sat in front of him rather than pulling away. “The way that I might save fuel is different to him,” revealed Dixon. “He was getting me very out of sync.”

Dixon asked his team to complain to Honda about Herta’s tactics, which backed him up towards the now battling Armstrong and Ericsson. Dixon attacked Herta hard at Turn 3, with Herta allowing him through at the next turn before pitting.

That freed Dixon, as Ericsson kept up his attacks on Armstrong, finally making it through with two laps to go at Turn 3. By then, Dixon was 2.3s clear for his second win of the season to take the championship lead. “Got the blue light with two to go, that’s not good,” Dixon said of his fuel warning system. “It was a little tighter than I thought it was going to be on fuel. But we were totally fine.”

Ericsson scored his best result of the campaign so far, with Armstrong 4s back for his best-ever IndyCar finish, ahead of Kirkwood, who was left to rue that Dixon “got a little lucky with those cautions that came out” in his final stint.

Behind them, Lundgaard charged back after his Grosjean clash, surging up to fifth before a last-lap splash-and-dash promoted Rossi back to fifth, while Power (who served four penalties for various offences) beat O’Ward to sixth. Rosenqvist, Ferrucci and Pourchaire rounded out the top 10, with Lundgaard down in 11th.

Palou’s dramas restricted him to 16th, his worst result since a clash with Ericsson at Road America in 2022, so he loses his points lead, with Herta finishing 19th and McLaughlin 20th.

Newgarden suffered the typical Indy 500 winner’s hangover. Following two terrible pitstops and a spin, he lost several laps after brushing the wall and breaking his left-rear suspension. Proving a week is a long time in IndyCar, he was classified 26th. 🍷



Armstrong scored his  
best result with a  
fine third for Ganassi



## FOSTER WINS AGAIN IN INDY NXT



Paul Hurley/PEC

Briton Louis Foster took pole and led every lap to capture victory in Detroit and move closer to the Indy NXT championship lead as other title contenders struggled.

Andretti Global driver Foster was thrust into safeguarding the top spot on multiple restarts as mayhem struck. Yet he was relatively unchallenged during the race, which featured four cautions for 14 of 45 laps, including a chequered-yellow finish.

HMD Motorsports rookies Caio Collet and Callum Hodge finished second and third, while Myles Rowe put in a gritty performance to finish fourth from 19th.

Foster now sits second in the table, 25 points behind leader Jacob Abel, who finished fifth. The other championship contender, Nolan Siegel, was hit with a half-shaft problem before the green flag even waved, with repairs putting him three laps down. He finished 18th and dropped to third in points, 44 behind Abel.

“I was just managing the gap,” said Foster after his fourth series win and second in a row. “If he [Collet] got too close, I would push a bit more. If he backed up a bit more, I would back up as well. I wasn’t too worried about it. I have a good spotter in my ear telling me what was going on. I was pretty comfortable in that position.”

One sentiment that will stay with the 20-year-old was the victory coming in the 500th race for Indy NXT, formerly Indy Lights. Ahead of the IndyCar race, Colton Herta, who had won the 400th, shared a moment with Foster. “It’s a great award to get and shows the longevity of the series,” said the happy winner (below).

JOEY BARNES



RESULTS INDYCAR ROUND 6/15, DETROIT (USA), 2 JUNE (100 LAPS – 164.500 MILES)			
POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	2h06m07.9684s
2	Marcus Ericsson (SWE)	Andretti Global/Dallara-Honda	+0.8567s
3	Marcus Armstrong (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	+4.9129s
4	Kyle Kirkwood (USA)	Andretti Global/Dallara-Honda	+6.1249s
5	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Arrow McLaren/Dallara-Chevrolet	+8.9532s
6	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	+10.1045s
7	Pato O’Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren/Dallara-Chevrolet	+11.4821s
8	Felix Rosenqvist (SWE)	Meyer Shank Racing/Dallara-Honda	+15.4998s
9	Santino Ferrucci (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises/Dallara-Chevrolet	+18.2882s
10	Theo Pourchaire (FRA)	Arrow McLaren/Dallara-Chevrolet	+18.8912s
11	Christian Lundgaard (DNK)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Dallara-Honda	+23.3158s
12	Agustin Canapino (ARG)	Juncos Hollinger Racing/Dallara-Chevrolet	+27.3674s
13	Pietro Fittipaldi (BRA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Dallara-Honda	+28.3686s
14	Rinus VeeKay (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing/Dallara-Chevrolet	+29.4122s
15	Graham Rahal (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing/Dallara-Honda	+30.1565s
16	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	+39.0438s
17	Jack Harvey (GBR)	Dale Coyne Racing/Dallara-Honda	+46.3377s
18	Tristan Vautier (FRA)	Dale Coyne Racing/Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
19	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Global with Curb-Agajanian/Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
20	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
21	Sting Ray Robb (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises/Dallara-Chevrolet	-1 lap
22	Linus Lundqvist (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	-1 lap
23	Romain Grosjean (FRA)	Juncos Hollinger Racing/Dallara-Chevrolet	-3 laps
24	Kyffin Simpson (CYM)	Chip Ganassi Racing/Dallara-Honda	-4 laps
25	Helio Castroneves (BRA)	Meyer Shank Racing/Dallara-Honda	-5 laps
26	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske/Dallara-Chevrolet	-6 laps
27	Christian Rasmussen (DNK)	Ed Carpenter Racing/Dallara-Chevrolet	24 laps-engine

Winner’s average speed 78.251mph. Fastest lap Herta 1m02.7094s, 94.436mph.

**Q31** Herta 1m00.5475s; 2 Palou 1m00.6995s; 3 Newgarden 1m00.9607s; 4 McLaughlin 1m01.3344s; 5 Dixon 1m01.3905s; 6 Kirkwood 1m04.2926s.  
**Q2** Herta 1m00.2304s; Kirkwood 1m00.3994s; Dixon 1m00.5864s; McLaughlin 1m00.6007s; Palou 1m00.6561s; Newgarden 1m00.7055s; 7 Pourchaire 1m00.7342s; 8 Power 1m00.7612s; 9 Ericsson 1m00.8505s; 10 Ferrucci 1m01.0351s; 11 Lundgaard 1m01.1663s; 12 O’Ward 1m03.0479s.  
**Q1 – GROUP 1** Pourchaire 1m00.7000s; McLaughlin 1m00.7935s; Newgarden 1m00.8844s; Kirkwood 1m00.8962s; Power 1m00.9537s; Ferrucci 1m01.2906s; 13 Rasmussen 1m01.3930s; 14 Grosjean 1m01.4933s; 16 Rossi 1m01.5905s; 18 VeeKay 1m01.6040s; 21 Lundqvist 1m01.6297s; 24 Vautier 1m02.2091s; 27 Simpson 1m01.7770s\*.  
**Q1 – GROUP 2** Palou 1m00.3478s; Lundgaard 1m00.4142s; Herta 1m00.5731s; Ericsson 1m00.7537s; O’Ward 1m01.0292s; Dixon 1m01.0722s; 15 Fittipaldi 1m01.3684s; 17 Canapino 1m01.5566s; 19 Armstrong 1m01.7406s; 20 Rahal 1m01.1336s\*; 22 Rosenqvist 1m01.7441s; 23 Robb 1m01.8454s; 25 Castroneves 1m01.9687s; 26 Harvey 1m02.1185s. \* = grid penalty.

**CHAMPIONSHIP**  
**1** Dixon 216; 2 Palou 198; 3 Power 185; 4 O’Ward 160; 5 Rossi 150; 6 Kirkwood 148; 7 Herta 147; 8 McLaughlin 141; 9 Rosenqvist 140; 10 Newgarden 128.



Herta led early on from pole but was another in the wars

**NEXT  
REPORT**  
Road America  
13 June issue





## Scherer Audi and fog are the winners

### NURBURGRING 24 HOURS NURBURGRING (DEU) 1-2 JUNE

The Scherer Sport PHX Audi team won the 52nd edition of the Nürburgring 24 Hours with Frank Stippler, Christopher Mies, Ricardo Feller and Dennis Marschall, in what will be remembered as an extremely unsatisfactory race for the 240,000 spectators. A net seven hours and 22 minutes were driven under green before the race had to be stopped due to foggy conditions, never to get going again.

The Scherer Audi was out front at the time of the interruption, in a lead that reflected the course of the race. On Sunday, only five more laps were completed behind the safety car to enable 44 drivers to complete their mandatory laps. Officially, the race was not stopped, but the chequered flag was waved early.

This led to a protest by the seventh-placed Rowe BMW team, which was among several cars to pit during those five laps under safety car. The protest was rejected, but Rowe intends to appeal the result, which will therefore remain provisional. The team aims to replace the chequered flag with a red flag. In this case, the times for the next pitstop would be added, which would grant Rowe's all-star line-up of Raffaele Marciello, Maxime Martin, Marco Wittmann and Augusto Farfus the victory.

Even without the appeal, the race set negative standards in several respects: at eight hours and 57 minutes, including the safety car laps, it was the shortest net driving time in the race's history. With 50 laps completed, it was also the shortest distance ever covered. In both instances, the record from 2021 was beaten, when 59 laps were completed in 9h30m.

Second place went to the 'Grello' Manthey

EMA Porsche of Laurens Vanthoor, Kevin Estre, Ayhan Guven and Thomas Preining, which was running third at the time of the red flag. Due to the added pitstop times in case of a red flag (the cause for the Rowe appeal), the second-placed RMG BMW driven by Dan Harper, Max Hesse and Charles Weerts was demoted to third at the restart, which it kept during the five safety car laps on Sunday.

The race was decided in the first part on Saturday evening. The conditions were extremely difficult on several occasions, with tyre choice playing a decisive role. Right at the start of the race, several GT3 cars had to pull into the pits after starting on slicks or cut slicks – the correct choice for the formation lap, but the wrong one for the start of the race.

The opening stages were characterised by a duel between Farfus and Estre. Behind them, Harper produced some



HRT car was best  
Mercedes, in fourth

GRUPPE PHOTOGRAPHY/MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG





‘Nurburgring 9 Hours’ went to the Scherer PHX team, but there’s an appeal over the result

GRUPPE PHOTOGRAPHY



real fireworks. After taking pole position, the BMW M4 GT3 of the ‘Gen2K’ youngsters had started on the wrong tyres and had to pit after the formation lap. Harper then fought his way up through the entire SP9 (GT3) field to third position.

At the first pitstop, ‘Grello’ dropped back a little because Este stayed out one lap longer on wet-weather tyres and lost half a minute. This left the Rowe BMW of Robin Frijns, Sheldon van der Linde, Dries Vanthoor and Farfus alone at the front of the field. But after just over three hours, their race was over. Van der Linde was involved in an accident, for which a lapped Porsche was ultimately held responsible.

This opened up the battle for victory once more. Rain started to fall again on Saturday evening, which led to different tyre choices and confronted the drivers with the most difficult conditions imaginable, with different sections of the track either wet or dry every single lap.

Cut slicks proved to be the optimal choice at this stage, but did not work equally well on all cars. The beneficiary of this phase was the Scherer Audi, which took the lead thanks to an outstanding stint by Stippler.

The ‘Grello’ team made a mistake with slicks and had to abort a stint prematurely. Meanwhile, the Abt Lamborghini joined the fight for victory thanks to a strong stint by Kelvin van der Linde, but lost ground again in the final stages of the rain when it was switched onto rain tyres for a stint, ultimately finishing fifth.

The Haupt Racing Team Mercedes also

TOP SIX RESULTS NURBURGRING 24 HOURS (DEU) (50 LAPS – 788.456 MILES)			
POS	DRIVERS	CAR	TIME
1	Frank <b>Stippler</b> / Christopher <b>Mies</b> / Ricardo <b>Feller</b> / Dennis <b>Marschall</b>	Audi R8 LMSEvo II	23h05m27.680s
2	Laurens <b>Vanthoor</b> / Thomas <b>Preining</b> / Kevin <b>Este</b> / Ayhan <b>Guven</b>	Porsche 911 GT3-R	+0.603s
3	Dan <b>Harper</b> / Max <b>Hesse</b> / Charles <b>Weerts</b>	BMW M4 GT3	+5.399s
4	Luca <b>Stolz</b> / Maximilian <b>Gotz</b> / Daniel <b>Juncadella</b>	Mercedes-AMG GT3	+5.646s
5	Kelvin <b>van der Linde</b> / Marco <b>Mapelli</b> / Jordan <b>Pepper</b>	Lambo Huracan EVO2	+6.168s
6	Julien <b>Andlauer</b> / Klaus <b>Bachler</b> / Sven <b>Muller</b> / Alessio <b>Picariello</b>	Porsche 911 GT3-R	+6.723s

joined the fight for victory. It was one of the three Mercedes-AMG GT3s that had been fitted with the wrong tyres at the start and had to come in. Gradually, HRT worked its way back into the leading group, and Luca Stolz, Maximilian Gotz and Daniel Juncadella finished the race in fourth.

The other Mercedes machines, which had been in the hunt for overall victory, dropped out, with the GetSpeed car retiring in the aftermath of a breathtaking scene of four drivers attempting a four-wide through Antoniusbuche, the fastest section on the track. Race winner Feller moved over to get the side draft from Vincent Kolb’s Herberth Porsche, but failed to notice the GetSpeed Mercedes of Fabian Schiller, who squeezed into the gap. Kolb spun at 170mph, but only had a slight impact and the other two cars had to come into the pits. The fourth car, not directly involved, was the Frikadelli Ferrari, which went on to finish 12th.

It was pure luck that nothing worse

happened. Nevertheless, the GetSpeed crew was out of the running for victory, as the repair took one and a half laps, and further repair stops followed later.

The other GetSpeed Mercedes was part of the extended leading group, but retired after an accident at Metzgesfeld involving Adam Christodoulou – who shared with Lucas Auer, Philip Ellis and Mikael Grenier – just half an hour before the race was stopped.

The race did not go according to plan at all for Aston Martin. The Walkenhorst Vantage GT3 of Christian Krognes, Kuba Giermaziak, David Pittard and Nicki Thiim had a puncture right at the start and lost considerable time. The best Aston was the sister car in 19th overall.

The Glickenhau-SCG driven by Thomas Mutsch, Franck Mailleux, Come Ledogar and Lance David Arnold needed a gearbox change and finished 66th. Nevertheless, it was enough to win the SPX class.

HEIKO STRITZKE





Acura took the  
honours in Detroit

## Taylor divebombs Porsche for victory

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY

motorsport  
IMAGES

**IMSA SPORTSCAR**  
**DETROIT (USA)**  
**1 JUNE**  
**ROUND 5/11**

When the green flag waved to commence Saturday's 100-minute IMSA SportsCar race on the streets of downtown Detroit, two teams and manufacturers with strong local ties seemed almost certain to sweep the honours. Porsche Penske Motorsport and Corvette Racing by Pratt Miller Motorsports appeared to have dominant cars in their respective GTP and GTD Pro categories. Each locked out the front row and led convincingly for long stretches, but once again the unpredictability of temporary tracks was on full display, and neither was able to equate speed with victory.

Instead, an opportunistic pass by WTR with Andretti Acura driver Ricky Taylor on the Porsche 963 of Mathieu Jaminet with 26 minutes remaining proved decisive. Taylor and Portuguese team-mate Felipe

Albuquerque went on to become the fifth different winning GTP combination from the first five races of the season.

The early stages were controlled by pole-winning Englishman Nick Tandy, who was looking to continue his string of success after winning at Laguna Seca. His hopes seemed to have been shattered after uncharacteristically blotting his copybook by picking up a penalty for avoidable contact after punting Daniel Serra's Conquest Racing GTD Pro Ferrari at Turn 3. But a smart switch of strategy committed Tandy to a longer first stint, which allowed him to regain the lead after all the other contenders had made their one and only scheduled pitstops. Then came a massive slice of good fortune when a full-course caution was called for a separate incident moments after he had committed himself to entering the pitlane.

The timing was perfect, allowing Jaminet to resume in the lead with a little less than an hour remaining. Team-mate Felipe Nasr,

who had taken over from Dane Cameron in the sister 963, ran second, only to suffer misfortune when he picked up a right-rear puncture, which necessitated a second stop.

A tenacious opening few corners had vaulted Albuquerque from fourth on the grid to second, where he remained until the pitstops. The Acura lost a position to Nasr after the Porsche ran one lap longer on its opening stint, but co-driver Taylor regained the place when the Brazilian pitted for a second time, and then kept the pressure on Jaminet at the restart.

The Frenchman looked to have matters under control until experiencing a momentary lapse of concentration under heavy braking for Turn 3 at the end of the long main straight on Jefferson Avenue. By the time he noticed Taylor was diving to the inside, it was too late. Taylor was gone.

Cadillac Racing's Sebastien Bourdais and Renger van der Zande couldn't quite match the leader's pace and had to settle for a disappointing third on a track that encircles General Motors' world headquarters in the Renaissance Center.

GM's other hopes rested on the Corvette/Pratt Miller GTD Pro team. Unfortunately, pole-winner Antonio Garcia suffered an alternator failure on the opening lap, while Nicky Catsburg unwisely left the door open to Ben Barnicoat's Lexus at Turn 3 shortly after a restart, having taken over from Tommy Milner in the sister Z06 GT3.R. The Englishman needed no second bidding. Catsburg tried too late to slam the door, resulting in heavy contact that allowed Laurin Heinrich to sneak past in the AO Racing Porsche and claim a second victory in a row for himself and Seb Priaulx.

**JEREMY SHAW**



At least Porsche  
took GTD Pro class

LEVITT



# Alesi and Sasahara end barren streak

**SUPER GT**  
**SUZUKA (JPN)**  
**2 JUNE**  
**ROUND 3/8**

TOM'S Toyota duo Ukyo Sasahara and Giuliano Alesi scored their maiden Super GT win in last weekend's third round of the season at Suzuka. Victory for their GR Supra ended a poor run of form for both drivers, who had finished no better than sixth since they paired up at the start of last season in what has become firmly established as the second car in the title-winning TOM'S stable.

Sasahara and Alesi were fortunate to benefit from a late penalty for the ostensibly quicker Rookie Racing Toyota of Nirei Fukuzumi and Kazuya Oshima. That came for an unsafe release after the second round of mandatory pitstops in the three-hour race, and dropped Fukuzumi from the lead to fourth place.

Sasahara had led throughout the first two stints from pole ahead of the Rookie car, which was started by Fukuzumi and taken over for the middle stint by Oshima, who was all over the tail of Sasahara before getting the jump on the TOM'S car at the second stops. Fukuzumi had been six seconds



Winning Toyota heads  
Rookie car through  
lapped GT300 traffic

clear of Alesi at the time of the penalty, and ended up 11s in arrears at the chequered flag, initially dropping to fourth before charging back to second.

Completing the podium were ARTA Honda pair Ren Sato and Hiroki Otsu, who made it three third-place finishes in as many races for the brand new Civic Type R-GT. Otsu held on by just half a second at the finish to claim the place ahead of the best of the Nissan Zs, the Impul car of Bertrand Baguette and Kazuki Hiramine.


Fifth for the 'senior' TOM'S Toyota of Sho Tsuboi and Kenta Yamashita means the pair now have a seven-point lead in the standings over NISMO Nissan duo Mitsunori Takaboshi and Atsushi Miyake,

who could only manage eighth after their win last time out at Fuji.

The #23 NISMO car suffered an even more dismal race; Katsumasa Chiyo made an uncharacteristic mistake after taking over the Nissan from Ronnie Quintarelli, misjudging his braking at the final chicane and making contact with Toshiki Oyu's Cerumo Toyota.

The result of that was retirement for Oyu and a drive-through penalty for Chiyo, who came home for the final point in 10th place.

**JAMIE KLEIN**

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# Fuel drama makes Austin *allegro*

**NASCAR CUP**  
**ST LOUIS (USA)**  
**2 JUNE**  
**ROUND 15/36**

Austin Cindric picked up a surprise NASCAR Cup victory last Sunday when his Team Penske Ford stablemate Ryan Blaney ran out of fuel in the final laps.

Blaney, the reigning series champion,



Late win for Cindric

looked primed to pick up his first win of the 2024 season after surviving a late-race duel for the lead with Christopher Bell's Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota. When Bell fell back with an engine issue, Blaney moved out to a sizeable lead over Cindric, but it all disappeared with two of 240 laps to go when the #12 Ford fell off the pace.

Out of fuel, Blaney slowed quickly, and Cindric inherited the lead. The 25-year-old son of Team Penske president Tim Cindric thereafter held off Denny Hamlin (JGR Toyota) by 3.844 seconds to pick up his second career win, the other coming in the 2022 Daytona 500.

Brad Keselowski ended up third after recovering from a loose wheel on his RFK Ford in stage one that required him to pit twice and fall to the rear of the field. Tyler Reddick was fourth from Joey Logano and Austin Dillon. Bell, who had won stages one and two, limped home seventh.

**JIM UTTER**

## WEEKEND WINNERS

**IMSA SPORTSCAR**  
**DETROIT (USA)**  
**GTP** Ricky Taylor/Filipe Albuquerque  
WTR Andretti  
(Acura ARX-06)  
**GTD Pro** Laurin Heinrich/Seb Priaulx  
AO Racing  
(Porsche 911 GT3-R)

**SUPER GT**  
**SUZUKA (JPN)**  
Ukyo Sasahara/Giuliano Alesi  
TOM'S (Toyota GR Supra)

**NASCAR CUP**  
**ST LOUIS (USA)**  
Austin Cindric  
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)

**INDY NXT**  
**DETROIT (USA)**  
Louis Foster  
Andretti Global

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# Bagnaia bags a brace to close on Martin

**MOTOGP**  
**MUGELLO (ITA)**  
**2 JUNE**  
**ROUND 7/21**

Reigning title holder Francesco Bagnaia was in impeccable form throughout the Italian Grand Prix weekend, clinching a double win on his home turf to slash Jorge Martin's championship lead by more than half.

Bagnaia had already made it clear during the previous round at Barcelona that he would not let Martin run away with the championship, but the factory Ducati star's final-lap mistake in the sprint race in Spain was seen as a blot on his copybook. So the first priority for the Italian was to set his sprint record right, which he did in Tuscany by taking an impressive 1.5-second win over the Gresini Ducati of Marc Marquez.

The key to Bagnaia's success on Saturday was his brilliant launch from second on the grid, immediately overcoming polesitter Martin's Pramac Ducati to snatch the lead. On a track where overtaking is notoriously difficult, Bagnaia had no trouble keeping his rivals at bay, his win made sweeter by a rare error from Martin – the undisputed king of sprints in 2024 – who crashed out at the start of lap eight of 11.

While Bagnaia's sprint win was impressive, repeating that success in the full-distance GP was going to be quite another task, particularly when he was forced to start from fifth after picking up a three-place grid penalty for impeding Alex Marquez in Friday practice. But the double champion was able to repeat his sprint tactics, again taking the lead early on after

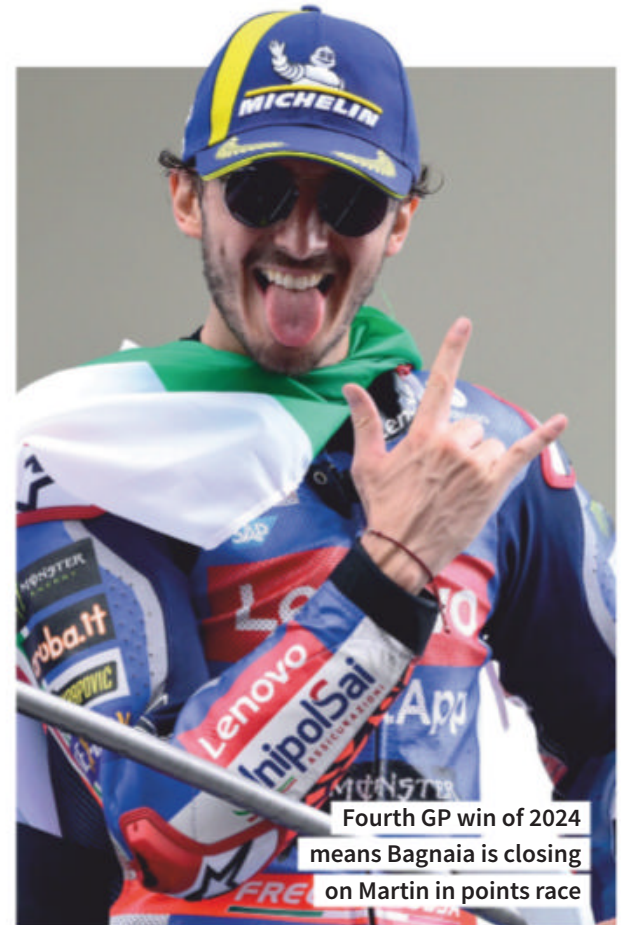


Blistering opening lap was key to Bagnaia's success at Mugello

a superior launch from the middle of the second row. Crucial to his brilliant first lap was the way Bagnaia positioned his bike on the outside into Turn 1, which gave him the inside line into the following left-hander, where he dived past polesitter Martin.

For the remainder of the race, Bagnaia was able to dictate the pace out front, although there were several occasions when Martin got too close for comfort. In particular, with two of the 23 laps to run, the Pramac rider was able to bring the gap down to under 0.3s, but the 27-year-old was able to respond to the Spaniard's pace and secure his fourth GP win of 2024.

Like with the sprint, there was a late bonus for Bagnaia, showing how the tide is shifting towards him in the title fight. Going into the final corner, his team-mate Enea Bastianini came out of nowhere and stole second position from Martin with the chequered flag in sight, taking four crucial points away from Bagnaia's chief title rival.



Fourth GP win of 2024 means Bagnaia is closing on Martin in points race



Bastianini (right) makes late move on Martin to secure team 1-2

“Bastianini came out of nowhere and stole second, taking four crucial points away from Martin”





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It also brought double delight for Ducati, as the factory team celebrated its first GP 1-2 of the season. Further, it was a morale-lifting result for Bastianini.

Behind the leading trio of GP24 Ducatis, Marc Marquez came home fourth on last year's Desmosedici. The six-time champion spent much of the race trying to overtake Bastianini for third but couldn't stay in front after finally making a move on him on lap 18. Bastianini went on to repass Marquez with two laps to go, before taking second from Martin.

Tech3's rookie sensation Pedro Acosta was once again KTM's top runner on a weekend in which he secured a factory promotion for 2025. The 20-year-old finished fifth at the end of a lonely race, leading two more Ducatis: the Pramac-run bike of Franco Morbidelli and the VR46 machine of Fabio Di Giannantonio.

Aprilia didn't have the pace to challenge the Ducatis or Acosta, with Maverick Vinales and Aleix Espargaro finishing a distant eighth and 11th respectively. Both lost places from their starting positions, with Vinales's drop particularly staggering given he qualified on the front row. Even so, all four bikes from the Noale-based marque picked up championship points, with Trackhouse duo Raul Fernandez and Miguel Oliveira crossing the finishing line in 12th and 14th respectively.

Alex Marquez (Gresini) and Brad Binder (KTM) rounded out the top 10. Yamaha's Alex Rins was the only rider on a Japanese bike to end up in the points, and his final position of 15th seemed underwhelming given he had progressed into Q2 and lined up 10th at the start. Johann Zarco was the highest-placed Honda finisher in 19th in another bruising outing for the Tokyo-based marque, with factory rider Joan Mir and LCR's Takaaki Nakagami crashing out.

RACHIT THUKRAL

RESULTS    MOTOGP ROUND 7/20, MUGELLO (ITA), 2 JUNE (23 LAPS – 74.959 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	40m51.385s
2	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Ducati	+0.799s
3	Jorge Martin (ESP)	PramacDucati	+0.924s
4	Marc Marquez (ESP)	GresiniDucati	+2.064s
5	Pedro Acosta (ESP)	Tech3KTM	+7.501s
6	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	PramacDucati	+9.890s
7	Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA)	VR46Ducati	+10.076s
8	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	+11.683s
9	Alex Marquez (ESP)	GresiniDucati	+13.535s
10	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+15.901s
11	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+19.182s
12	Raul Fernandez (ESP)	TrackhouseAprilia	+20.307s
13	Marco Bezzecchi (ITA)	VR46Ducati	+20.346s
14	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	TrackhouseAprilia	+23.292s
15	Alex Rins (ESP)	Yamaha	+23.613s
16	Jack Miller (AUS)	KTM	+28.417s
17	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	KTM	+28.778s
18	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+30.622s
19	Johann Zarco (FRA)	LCRHonda	+31.457s
20	Luca Marini (ITA)	Honda	+32.310s
21	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Aprilia	+46.724s
R	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCRHonda	9laps-accident
R	Joan Mir (ESP)	Honda	6laps-accident
R	Augusto Fernandez (ESP)	Tech3KTM	4laps-rearfender

Winner's average speed 110.081mph. Fastest lap Bagnaia 1m45.770s, 110.926mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Martin 1m44.504s; 2 Vinales 1m44.687s; 3 M Marquez 1m44.784s; 4 Bastianini 1m44.880s; 5 Bagnaia 1m44.547s\*; 6 Morbidelli 1m44.896s; 7 Acosta 1m45.028s; 8 A Marquez 1m45.208s; 9 A Espargaro 1m45.236s; 10 Rins 1m45.296s; 11 Oliveira 1m45.377s; 12 R Fernandez 1m45.458s. \* = grid penalty.

QUALIFYING 1 Morbidelli 1m44.726s; R Fernandez 1m44.868s; 13 Binder 1m44.994s; 14 Di Giannantonio 1m45.007s; 15 Quartararo 1m45.076s; 16 Bezzecchi 1m45.218s; 17 Mir 1m45.728s; 18 Zarco 1m45.813s; 19 Miller 1m45.824s; 20 A Fernandez 1m45.893s; 21 P Espargaro 1m45.943s; 22 Savadori 1m46.200s; 23 Nakagami 1m46.265s; 24 Marini 1m46.698s.

SPRINT RACE (11 LAPS – 35.850 MILES)

1 Bagnaia 19m30.251s; 2 M Marquez +1.469s; 3 Acosta +4.147s; 4 Morbidelli +5.421s; 5 Vinales +7.693s; 6 Binder +8.271s; 7 Di Giannantonio +8.571s; 8 A Marquez +8.846s; 9 A Espargaro +8.984s; 10 R Fernandez +10.085s; 11 Bezzecchi +10.199s; 12 Miller +13.988s; 13 Rins +14.137s; 14 P Espargaro +18.259s; 15 Zarco +18.309s; 16 Nakagami +19.374s; 17 A Fernandez +23.060s; 18 Savadori +24.596s; 19 Marini +25.587s; R Martin 7 laps-accident; R Mir 4 laps-withdrawn/vibration; R Bastianini 2 laps-accident; R Quartararo 1 lap-accident; R Oliveira 1 lap-accident.

Winner's average speed 110.284mph.

Fastest lap M Marquez 1m45.198s, 111.529mph.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Martin 171; 2 Bagnaia 153; 3 M Marquez (right) 136; 4 Bastianini 114; 5 Acosta 101; 6 Vinales 100; 7 Binder 85; 8 A Espargaro 82; 9 Di Giannantonio 74; 10 A Marquez 51.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ducati 241; 2 KTM 140; 3 Aprilia 138; 4 Yamaha 36; 5 Honda 19.

WEEKEND  
WINNERS

MOTO2

Joe Roberts (below)  
American Racing Team  
(Kalex)

MOTO3

David Alonso  
Aspar Team  
(CFMoto)



NEXT  
REPORT

Dutch TT, Assen  
4 July issue



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- Maintain a clean and tidy working environment throughout events

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- Overseeing the complete design, code, test, release, and maintenance of data analysis applications.

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- Experience of procurement project management advantageous.
- MCIPS qualified or working towards MCIPS qualification required as a minimum.
- Experience in the negotiation, implementation and ongoing management of Framework Agreements & Statement of Works.
- Experience of generating fact-based insights through analysis using tools and techniques to provide strategic direction, and to be able to present to stakeholders where required.
- Ability to influence and drive behavioural change both internally and with suppliers.

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- Responsible for supporting the Parts & Stores Team leader and RTS manager with enquiries regarding part supply from our technical partners.
- Communicate component delivery requirements from the Haas plans back to our technical partners and govern this to ensure dates are adhered to.
- Support the planning activities of Haas as required throughout the season.

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- Communicate effectively with program participants, addressing inquiries and providing necessary information before, during and after the program.
- Foster a positive and engaging environment for all participants, documenting feedback form
- Assist the STEM Program Facilitator in facilitating STEM program activities, including checking in on students to ensure understanding during activities, helping to set up for various activities, etc.
- Provide support to instructors and participants during program sessions.
- Manage and update the CRM system (Salesforce) to track participant data and program metrics.
- Input prospect contact information to ensure our CRM database includes all potential school and community programs as opportunities.

#### The ideal STEM Program Coordinator- Summer Intern will have:

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lead with Spa success



Bumper grid of **Elan 26Rs**  
for special Equipe race



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GARY HAWKINS

Elans lead the way, while other Equipe grids are expected to be big

# Over 30 Elan 26Rs set for 60th birthday celebration

## EQUIPE CLASSIC RACING

Over 30 Lotus Elan 26Rs are set to take part in a celebration contest from Equipe Classic Racing at Silverstone this weekend for the model's 60th birthday.

A total of 34 of the Elans had entered at the time Autosport closed for press, with Equipe also relaxing its rules that normally ban pro drivers to enable them to take part. Separate trophies will be awarded to the top pro and amateur finishers, while Sam Tordoff, Gordon Shedden, Rory Butcher and Scott Mansell are among some of the pros set to take part in the hour-long contest on the Grand Prix layout.

Working on the race alongside Tony Thompson Racing has been special for Equipe partner Rob Cull, whose father – who died last year – helped to develop the initial 26Rs. Cull has been building a replica of the 26R his father ran in period and is working hard to get it ready for this weekend as a special tribute.

Cull said that there is a mix of 26Rs set to be on the grid, with some of them period race cars such as Robin Ellis's Shapecraft model, which has a continuous racing history, and the early Bourne-bodied examples. "There's the more modern ones that have been converted and the new builds, plus we've got some really good historic race cars with us as well," said Cull.

"Having 34 26Rs all together is going to be brilliant – it's never been done before. Having them racing on the Silverstone GP circuit in little herds of five or six cars battling together is going to be an amazing sight. My dad was immersed in that era and it's been a life-long passion for me to own and race a 26R, so I'm uber-excited about it."

This is not the first celebration race that Equipe has hosted. It has run special grids for major milestones for the MGB, but Cull said the 26R contest has really captured drivers' imaginations. "It's a genuine David and Goliath car," added Cull, who said some entries have been received from drivers travelling over from Europe.

"A lot of what we do is converted road cars, like MGBs. Having built this one from scratch, everything is just designed to go racing – there's nothing on it that you don't need. Most people that have raced these cars say they're just awesome. You get a lot of bang for your buck with them and there's an excitement around the car and an excitement around the event."

Large grids are also expected among some of Equipe's other categories in action at Silverstone – its GTS and Libre divisions are set to feature fields in the mid-forties, while 30 cars are due to race in the Equipe 70s series.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

## SOPER AMONG GRID FOR HSCC'S NEW TIN-TOP SERIES

### TOURING CAR LEGENDS

Tin-top ace Steve Soper is among the entries for the first round of a shortened schedule for the Historic Sports Car Club's new Touring Car Legends series at Donington Park this weekend.

The category's inaugural season was originally due to feature five events, but this was scaled back to two – with Brands Hatch in July joining Donington – to allow time for interest to grow. The series chiefly caters for Group A touring cars of the 1980s and early 1990s, while Group 2 machines from the 1970s are also welcome.

Soper is due to share Toby Partridge's BMW E30, which is one of five M3s on the initial 10-strong entry at Donington. Other cars include a trio of Ford Sierra RS500s and Paul Eaton's Holden Commodore.

HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne explained earlier this year that the club had been approached by several drivers enquiring about a series for the cars, leading to Touring Car Legends being developed. "We've been approached because we enforce driving standards, make appropriate use of eligibility scrutineering and cost [is affordable]," he said. "I think this year is a year of discovery for it. The members run the series or championship – they're at the heart of all of this – and we have to listen to what they want."

The HSCC opted to drop plans to run the series at the Oulton Park Gold Cup event to avoid clashing with Motor Racing Legends' similar category, and Dee-Crowne described 2024 as a time for "investigating" the best format moving forward.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Eaton's Commodore is another Donington entry

STEVE JONES





**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS**

The 50th anniversary of Pilbeam Racing was celebrated at Curborough last week. Several machines were on display, including the 1977 F1 LEC designed by Mike Pilbeam. Some machines took to the course, including the 1172 Formula Virage (left) of 1961 driven by Pilbeam’s son, F1 engineer Ciaron. A second event is planned for later this year.

**Photograph by Rick Wilson**

# Adam concedes chances of fifth title have gone

**BRITISH GT**

Four-time British GT champion Jonny Adam has played down his chances of a fifth overall title in 2024 due to the pace of his Blackthorn Aston Martin Vantage. Adam narrowly lost out on another championship last year when driving a 2 Seas Mercedes alongside James Cottingham, before moving to Blackthorn for 2024. The team was only founded in 2022 but has already become a partner team of Aston Martin Racing, with factory driver Adam joining the project as it embarks on its maiden British GT season. The squad’s youthfulness caused Adam to adjust his expectations heading into the season and, after four rounds, he is already 61.5 points



Blackthorn is still getting up to speed in British GT

off the championship lead, with eighth at Silverstone his and team-mate Giacomo Petrobelli’s best result. “This is building blocks for the future,” said Adam, who claimed outright GT3 titles in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019, all at the wheel of Vantages. “When you look at teams like Barwell and 2 Seas, they’ve done the championship, especially Barwell, for a long time.

“The goal for me personally is to get Blackthorn on the podium, or get a race win, before the season finishes. The car on paper should be pretty good at Snetterton [in July] and we’ve always gone well at Brands Hatch [September’s season finale]. “The good thing for us is we come back to Donington in September, so it will be a good benchmark.”

**ED HARDY**



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# Packed Miglia and Se7en grids set to star on Thruxton’s BTCC bill

## MINI 7 RACING CLUB

Around 70 entries are expected across two Mini 7 Racing Club grids as its categories make their latest appearance at Thruxton in support of the British Touring Car Championship this weekend.

Each of the Miglia and Se7ens fields are due to feature over 30 cars and provide slipstreaming action around the Hampshire speedbowl in two 20-minute races apiece. Former BTCC drivers Andrew Jordan and Jeff Smith are among the Miglia frontrunners, while race winner Endaf Owens is returning, and reigning Miglia champion Aaron Smith has a busy weekend in store as he

plans to contest both divisions.

The Se7en S-Class is set to boast four members of the Page family with Giles, Andrew, Jonathon and Matthew all battling for honours.

“We’re really thrilled with that number of entries,” said the club’s commercial manager Colin Peacock. “It’s a big highlight of the year for us – who doesn’t want to see a grid of 35 Minis?!”

“What we’re thrilled about is the economy isn’t booming but the popularity of the club shows we’ve got a formula and car that people like to drive. The Miglias is one of the most competitive club championships in the country.”

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

## F1 TEAMS AT GOODWOOD

Six Formula 1 teams will attend this year’s Goodwood Festival of Speed event, including Alpine, Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes, Red Bull and Williams. The event will be held a week after the British Grand Prix over 11-14 July, with F1 drivers Alex Albon and Logan Sargeant set to attend and drive Keke Rosberg’s 1982 title-winning Williams FW08 up the hill. Red Bull’s Adrian Newey-designed RB17 hypercar will also make its first public appearance.

## KARTING TRIUMPHS

Following on from his success in the French Superkart GP at Magny-Cours, Lee Harpham bagged the British Superkart GP at Donington Park last weekend. Starting from the front row, Harpham took the lead at the end of the opening lap from the fast-starting Carl Hulme, and won from Jack Tritton and Hulme. In the F250 Mono class, Paul Platt remained unbeaten to win the 0 plate. The Super Cups in F450 and F125 Open went to Kevin Ridley and Ollie Holmes.

## LINES BACK TO DRIVING

TCR UK promoter Stewart Lines will return to the driving seat in the championship’s Oulton Park round this weekend. The former British Touring Car driver will race MPH Racing’s Gen 1 Audi RS3 LMS, which has been taken to three podium finishes in the past two years by Brad Hutchison. Lines was a regular in TCR UK’s inaugural season in 2018 before his Maximum Motorsport operation took over its promotion.

## MILLAR EYES REVIVAL

One-time Ginetta Junior champion and British GT racer Aston Millar is targeting a 2025 Goodwood Revival entry after a second run out in his father Richard’s Jaguar Mk1 in the Mike Hawthorn Challenge at Silverstone. Restoration specialist Millar Sr rebuilt the 1956 ex-Derek Goodacre car before sharing with his son at Oulton Park in April. The 19-year-old BRDC Rising Star ran solo at Silverstone, qualifying second and finishing third (below).



# Charity karting race for MNDA returns

## THRUXTON

The Racing4Charity karting event in aid of the Motor Neurone Disease Association will return to Thruxton after a one-year break, featuring a star-studded line-up.

The two-hour event, organised by ex-Formula 1 driver David Brabham and Bill Williams, whose brother Gideon died from MND in 2022, will be held today (Thursday) at Thruxton’s kart

track ahead of this weekend’s British Touring Car round.

BTCC drivers Tom Chilton and Dan Rowbottom will compete, as will British GT father-and-son duo Rob and Ricky Collard and a line-up consisting of current GB3 and GB4 drivers. A total of 13 teams are set to enter.

An auction will be held on both Thursday and Saturday for motorsport memorabilia, including an e-scooter from Pure

Electric signed by Williams F1 driver Alex Albon.

“The recent loss of Rob Burrow [ex-Rugby League player] to MND has brought back all the memories of losing our friends, Gideon, Neil [Cunningham] and John [Wickham] far too soon, to MND,” said Williams. “It is our honour to run this race in their memory and our thoughts are with Rob’s young family at this very sad time.”

**STEFAN MACKLEY**



# MIDGET & SPRITE CHALLENGE COULD GROW FURTHER

CSCC

Organisers of the Classic Sports Car Club's Midget & Sprite Challenge believe even further growth is possible after a 29-car entry at Silverstone last weekend was its highest turnout for more than a decade.

Now in its 48th season, the championship switched to the CSCC this year after the MG Car Club ceased its racing operations. With many MG Midgets and Austin-Healey Sprites already racing in the CSCC's Swinging Sixties series, an additional class was created to cater for such cars. That alone attracted eight entries.

"The synergy with the CSCC is what's done it," said chairman John Collinson. "It was definitely the right decision for us to make. They had quite a few Midgets in their Swinging Sixties, we had quite a few Midgets, and the plan was to be the series to race if you've got a Midget.

"It's building momentum. The season started quite early for us so there were a few cars that weren't quite there. I don't think 30 will be our limit. I'm pretty confident that, going forward, we'll have a few more."

MARK PAULSON



## US muscle cars prepare for special SpeedFest Ford vs Chevy races

AMERICAN SPEEDFEST

US muscle cars from Ford and Chevrolet will go head to head in two special races at this weekend's American SpeedFest, with a diverse range of machines set to take part.

A points-scoring system has been devised for the two 20-minute Ford vs Chevy contests at Brands Hatch that not only takes into account finishing positions, qualifying performance and fastest laps, but there is also the chance for fans to get involved.

"I'm really pleased – all the exhausts are going to be open headers so it's going to be loud and good fun," said organiser Simeon Chodosh. "We've got some nice tote bags with branded goodies and we will go round and find some different families at random and ask them to come down to our marquee and choose their favourite car. At the end of the weekend, we will add up all the points."

Chodosh will be captaining the Chevy contingent at the wheel of his Corvette, with the team consisting of a mixture of historic Corvettes and Camaros. Boss Mustang pilot Chad Donner will head up the Ford faction, which includes a variety of Blue Oval models such as Bruce Carter's Maverick and Jimmy Hibberd's Thunderbolt. A pair of Plymouths have also been invited to bolster the Ford ranks, with the field being split into three groups based on experience and car speed, and the top finishers in each group will score points.

While Chodosh admitted that a couple of date clashes and cars not quite being ready in time is likely to mean the field dips just below 30 entries, he is still delighted with the turnout. "It's created something really special," he added, describing the "banter" in the WhatsApp group of drivers.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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**PRAGA TOPS MOTO FEST** Alastair Boulton's Praga R1T topped the times for last weekend's closed-roads sprint at the 10th anniversary edition of MotoFest Coventry. Despite initially having trouble getting off the line as the car normally does rolling starts, he set the fastest time on Sunday, but was closely followed by the nimble Caterham of Matt Bramall, who only had a fraction of the power. Chris Edwards in his remarkable self-built Mazda 323 GTX was the star of Saturday – he was quickest all day despite running on road-legal tyres. **Photograph by Joy Richings**

MICHELIN AT FESTIVAL

Michelin has been named as official tyre partner for this year's Silverstone Festival. The company will curate a special display at the 23-25 August event that celebrates Michelin's history and future innovations, with many of the cars present taking part in a parade around the Northamptonshire circuit. The Michelin Ferris wheel will also be in attendance.

BROWN COMBE CORRECTION

The Castle Combe report in last week's Autosport (30 May) incorrectly stated that Dan Brown was only victorious in one of the 750 Motor Club's Hot Hatch races at the Wiltshire circuit. While the Honda Civic Bali ace was originally disqualified from the opener for overtaking under yellow flags, he later successfully appealed the decision and was reinstated as the victor. We apologise for the error.

PETER WARE 1948-2024

Former Lydden Formula Ford 2000 and Formule Libre champion Peter Ware died last week, aged 76. A qualified motor mechanic, Ware first met racing buddy Brian Davis when they studied at college in their teens. Peter was a frontrunner in both local series in the 1980s with a Lola T580, then an F3 Ralt RT1, both prepared at his SEAT dealership, The Motorist Centre at Hersden, near Canterbury. Our thoughts are with sons Nathan and Jamie, third wife Carol – to whom he was married for 30 years – and many friends in the sport.

PERCY BACK RACING

John Percy broke an 11-year layoff when he raced his ex-John Hilbery Lenham MG Midget (below) for the first time in Saturday's Midget & Sprite Challenge double-header at Silverstone. The Ringwood driving instructor last raced John de Ritter's Formula Ford 2000 Delta T79 in 2013. He finished 15th in last weekend's second leg, supported by talented equestrian eventer daughter Melissa, who has tested the Lenham with a view to sharing it.



New Ultimate Mini series joins up with CSCC's Special Saloons

CSCC

A new series aimed at cars competing in the Brands Hatch Mini Festival's annual Fastest Mini in the World races kicked off at Silverstone last weekend. The Ultimate Mini Racing Series is sharing a grid with the Classic Sports Car Club's Special Saloons & Modsports category in its inaugural season and is open to all classic Minis, with classes from stock historic to silhouette specials. Silverstone's race attracted the past two Fastest Mini victors: Richard Billingham's Vauxhall turbo-powered spaceframe and Harvey Death's V8-engined version.

"Our series was a natural fit," said the CSCC category's Danny Morris, noting the Special Saloon roots of many of the cars. "Obviously they're a lot 'more special' now, and it's a much freer series in terms of modifications. But we thought it would be lovely to have them out." After qualifying fifth overall, suspension problems prevented Death from starting, but Billingham finished the first race fourth and led the second encounter before fading to fifth. The UMRS is also set to join the CSCC at its Brands Britannia meeting on 25-26 August and the following month at Snetterton.

MARK PAULSON





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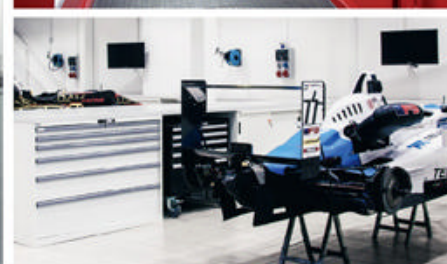
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# BMW victories go the way of Cook at Oulton Park

750MC

Paul Cook (E46 M3) claimed a brace of overall and Class M1 victories in the BMW Car Club Racing Championship in front of a large BMW Live crowd at Oulton Park last Saturday, repeating his double victory from Donington Park. He finished ahead of Wayne Lewis in his similar M3 before the duo teamed up to take third overall in the annual 'Ultimate BMW Race' that concluded the day's track action.

Defending BMW Car Club Racing champion Steve Schweikhardt earlier won twice in Class 6, as the remaining divisional wins were shared by Clive Watson (E46 Compact) and David Aspden (Z3) in M2, then Gareth Thomas and William Lake in Cup.

Victory in the Ultimate BMW Race went the way of Kevin Clarke (E46 M3 CSL) for the third time running.

Mack Priestwood overcame a Silverstone success penalty to lead home a huge field of 116 Trophy cars, with a mere 2.9-second margin to Brands Hatch winner Matthew Highcock after the 90-minute encounter. Peter Keen rounded out the podium after Anthony Seddon/Alan Corfield were penalised for breaching track limits.

Rob Welham and Tom Gadd traded F1000



victories ahead of double podium finisher Matt Higginson, as Welham also broke Richard Mitcham's 2011 lap record with a spectacular 1m33.695s (103.43mph) effort.

Historic 750 Formula produced some impressive racing, helped by new regulations that have balanced Climax-engined machines with Reliants. Multiple 2023 winner John Village (Village V2) exchanged bouts up front with Lyndon Thruston (HCS Mk2) in the opener, before a minor tangle at Shell Oils. Ready to reap the rewards was a delighted Juerg Schneider, who duly claimed his maiden

win in the charmingly titled Arthur JSG and made for a happy commute back to Switzerland.

Although Phil England exploited the superior traction of his Class A Subaru Impreza to good effect and challenged the lead pair in the early stages, both Armed Forces Race Challenge victories went the way of Mark White (Honda Civic) from Alexander Smith (Integra). David Russell claimed Class C twice in his synthetic-fuelled E36 BMW, with Doug Inglis (Mazda MX-5) doing the same in D.

**JAMES WINSTANLEY**

## Close battles despite low Clio Cup GB entries

MSVR

The new-look Clio Cup GB series launched at Brands Hatch last Saturday with just six entries, three of them the latest Gen5 machines, with three Gen4 models running in a guest class.

A small field on the full Grand Prix circuit diminished the spectacle, but close competition promised a brighter future. There were wins for ex-Mini Challenge Cooper class man Nicky Taylor and Clio veteran Ben Colburn, as last year's top Junior Saloon Car

driver, Daire Flock, finished second in both races.

"I drove the car for the first time on Friday, and going into qualifying today on slicks was a complete unknown," said Taylor. Less than a second covered the top three after 12 laps of the opener, supporting Colburn's assertion that this showed how good the championship could be.

A demon start helped Colburn to a 1.6s winning margin in race two, but Flock and Taylor were never more than a few feet apart.

Supporting the Clios, three



out of four Caterham races were won by a combined total of 0.084s, only Phil Jenkins bucking the trend with an untypical 10.5s advantage for the first of two wins in the 420R class.

Also in action was Sports 2000 with a 30-plus entry, with reigning champion Michael Gibbins overcoming

electrical problems to storm from 22nd and last in the Duratec classes to take the race-one lead, only to slither on an oil-soaked track and hand the advantage to Josh Law. Gibbins gained revenge by swooping past Law on the last corner of the last lap in race two.

**BRIAN PHILLIPS**



It was not a trouble-free event for Southcott's Midget or Light's Capri



## Southcott on song as he bounces back for victory

**SILVERSTONE**  
**CSCC**  
**1 JUNE**

Andy Southcott bounced back from losing out in a dramatic conclusion to last Saturday's first Special Saloons & Modsports race at Silverstone with a stirring drive to win the second.

Fifty years since the launch of Super Saloons (see p68), pioneer Mick Hill's son Greg put up the Mick Hill Memorial Trophy for the event, which fittingly attracted a spiritual successor to Hill's Ford Capri V8 in Simon Light's more modern version. But it was Danny Morris's Cosworth-powered Peugeot 309 Thundersaloon that set the pace in qualifying, ahead of Southcott's Vauxhall-motivated spaceframe MG Lenham Midget, the monstrous Austin-Healey 3000 – complete with Chevrolet V8 – of James Plant and fourth-fastest Light.

Morris and Southcott broke away in the opener but neither would win. The 309

slowed at around two-thirds distance, its mysterious Thruxton gremlins returning. Then Southcott – who had lapped everyone but Plant – dramatically ground to a halt at Luffield with the finish line almost in sight as its tank ran dry. So, returning after a long layoff, a delighted Plant scored his chimaera's first victory. Light, recovering from an early off, pitted on the final lap with a fuel leak, handing second to 'Baby Bertha', Joe Ward's original Super Saloon.

The pacesetting quartet all starting the rematch from the rear half of the grid made for an entertaining pursuit. Incredibly, Southcott usurped Richard Billingham's leading Mini Clubman by the end of the first lap before escaping to a 39-second victory. The others worked harder, but the Healey had long expired when Morris was cruelly denied second by more cut-out drama on the final tour, leaving Light and Ward to fill the top three. Bill Lancashire (Morgan +8) twice headed Mark Chilton's rebuilt Nissan Skyline in

the concurrent Future Classics.

Jack Robinson also experienced motorsport's highs and lows as he scored a maiden Jaguar Championship victory before retiring early from the sequel. Starting 10s behind the track-sharing MG Trophy field, the Jaguars entertained as their handicap unwound. Robinson's XK led the XJSs of Colin Philpott and Tom Lenthall through the field, their pace slightly quicker than the leading MG ZR 190s but with overtaking ability hampered by lengthier braking. The trio moved ahead in the latter stages, then Robinson eased clear as Philpott managed a vibration.

Light contact with Andrew Harper's supercharged S-type pitched Robinson into a spin at Copse in race two, the strain enough to blow his already heavy-breathing engine. Philpott built a margin before Lenthall cleared the fast-starting S-type, as both XJSs again overhauled the leading MGs. Graham Ross twice saw off the challenges of Adam Jackson and Sam Meagher for MG spoils.

A packed field of MG Midgets and Austin-Healey Sprites entertained in two races where Paul Sibley ruled supreme. James Hughes's Frogeye Sprite was twice a class-winning second after eventually breaking free from thrilling scraps with Pippa Cow, Ian Burgin and – in the first race – Will Sharpe, who claimed third on his Midget's championship debut after previous Modsports run-outs. The position would have been Martin Morris's following a brilliant recovery from last after outbraking himself when briefly ahead on the opening lap, but his engine threw a rod through the block on the final tour.

Heading a 1-2-3 for the Lotus Elan,



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MICK WALKER



## WEEKEND WINNERS

SPECIAL SALOONS & MODSPORTS/  
FUTURE CLASSICS**Race 1** James Plant

(Austin-Healey 3000-Chevrolet)

**Race 2** Andy Southcott

(MG Lenham Midget-Vauxhall)

## JAGUAR CHAMPIONSHIP/MG TROPHY

**Race 1** Jack Robinson (Jaguar XK)**Race 2** Colin Philpott (Jaguar XJS)

## MIDGET &amp; SPRITE CHALLENGE

**Races 1 & 2** Paul Sibley (Midget)

## CLASSIC K/MIKE HAWTHORN CHALLENGE

Malcolm Johnson (Lotus Elan GTS, above)

## SWINGING SIXTIES

Stephen Pickering (Sunbeam Tiger, below)

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

Malcolm Johnson overcame his 20s pitstop penalty for winning Classic K's previous round. Polesitter Johnson was beaten away by Rob Griffiths, debuting a similar car that led until beyond the stops, when Andrew Tate took over. Johnson pitted earlier and had reduced his deficit to under 5s when Tate emerged. Blistering pace, including the fastest lap, helped him ahead within two laps. The Minis of Joe Ferguson/Tom Bell and Liam Sullivan/Alice Hughes both retired when running third, leaving lap-down Graeme Brown to take his first top-three position.

Stephen Pickering elected not to stop his Sunbeam Tiger when the Swinging Sixties pit window opened near the end of a safety car period and, taking advantage of a clear track, he defeated erstwhile leader Geoff Taylor's TVR Griffith by 12s. Nicholas King's glorious Aston Martin DB4 was third after poleman Steve Hodges' Lotus 7 expired in the closing stages. Best of the smaller cars was Sam Polley (Mini Marcos), who edged Ian Burgin's Sprite by just 0.061s.

MARK PAULSON



**GSM DARTS TO SILVERSTONE** "I saw it come up at auction and thought, 'Why not?'" said Vaughan Thomas of his GSM Dart. "An old South African [driver] and an old South African car." Based on Ford Anglia/Cortina running gear, with fibreglass bodywork, a version was also built in Kent and known as the Delta. But Thomas's is a 1964 South African original, powered by a Cortina 1500 GT Pre-Crossflow engine. "It's a very heavy, underpowered car relative to the Cortinas but I'm having fun," he added.



**MIDGET'S WINNING RETURN** Multiple champion Paul Sibley made a winning return to the Midget & Sprite Challenge – in a car that hadn't seen action for 28 years! The late Chris Montague, carburettor specialist and ex-Formula 3 racer, built the Midget with features including inboard suspension and F3 brakes, and used it to win the class title in 1996. Sibley acquired the car, which he had long admired, from Montague's family last year and completed its rebuild less than 48 hours before its comeback.



**TASMIN BACK ON TRACK** Five years after a Brands Hatch prang, Ian Wilson returned his TVR Tasmin to action in Special Saloons & Modsports. Damage to the 3.6-litre Speed Six-powered car was largely repaired within weeks but an undetected ECU problem prevented Wilson starting the next round. Illness, lockdowns, work priorities and life in general then delayed the TVR specialist's full overhaul. Wilson finished fifth in Saturday's opener before he parked up later on with a long brake pedal.



# Mini Cooper Cup headlines Scottish action

**KNOCKHILL**  
**KMSC**  
**1-2 JUNE**

Robbie Dalgleish carved a sizeable chunk out of Jason Ballantyne's Scottish Mini Cooper Cup points lead after a near-perfect weekend at Knockhill.

The championship only raced on Saturday, running the anti-clockwise version of the Fife circuit on a weekend that used both configurations, but produced action aplenty across the three races. Having missed the season-opener at Kirkistown in March, Dalgleish knew he needed to make the most of the day and took two class wins from pole and a third to reduce the deficit to Ballantyne to 15 points, although Dalgleish now leads on dropped scores.

Dalgleish led race one early on, with Oly Mortimer close behind before a puncture curtailed the latter's chances. That elevated Ballantyne to second after brilliantly squeezing past Ian Munro around the outside of Clark. Ballantyne chased down Dalgleish but a final-lap mistake at Clark dropped him behind Jack Irvine and Chad Little to fourth at the flag.

A roll for Ross Foster stopped the second race early on, with Irvine seizing the Cooper lead at the restart, but it wasn't long before Dalgleish got the initiative back on the inside of Clark. Ballantyne then grabbed second from Irvine and successfully chased down Dalgleish, who began to run into gearbox trouble, hampering straightline speed. A superb middle-of-the-road defence allowed Dalgleish to claim his second triumph of the day, with Ballantyne minimising the damage with second ahead of Irvine.



Mortimer charged from the back to fourth and completed his recovery by winning the partially reversed-grid final race as Ballantyne limited the damage further by beating Dalgleish to second at the line by just 0.023 seconds.

"I've used up all of my dropped scores already, so it was really important for me to maximise this weekend," said Dalgleish.

The supercharged Mini Cooper R53 cars took the overall spoils, with Jamie Blake beating Rich Flett in races one and two before the Cooper-only finale.

While Ron Cumming dominated three of the four Modsports races, the action behind was as frenetic as could be, with Sunday's clockwise races taking centre stage. Fading brakes prevented a clean

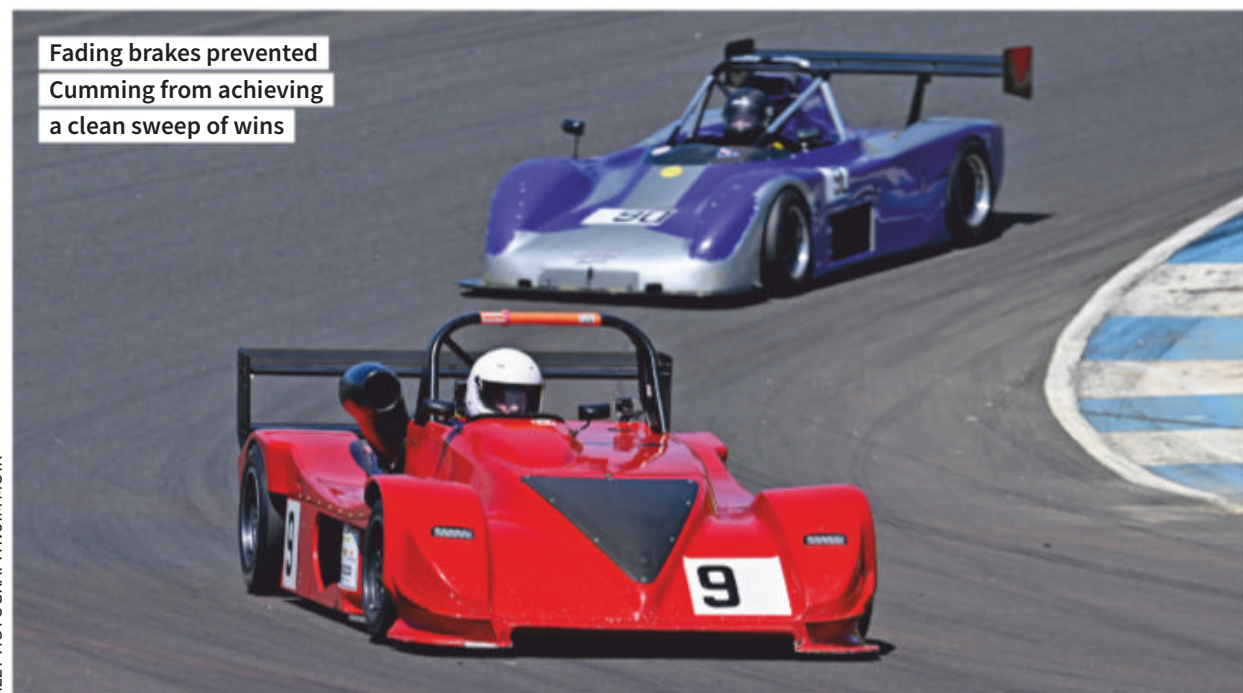
sweep for Cumming's Nemesis Kit Car, giving the BMW of Cameron Brydon race two spoils, but it was the Classes F and G battles that produced the entertainment.

Class G was an all-Mini affair, with Adam Kindness and Adam Morrison going toe-to-toe for the majority of the 15-minute third race before Morrison was sidelined with an engine issue. Until then, the pair had swapped positions several times as each used the slipstream down the main straight and into the braking zone of McIntyres. Kindness eventually came out on top, and he doubled up again later, while Morrison was victorious on Saturday.

The BMW of Shaun Davidson dominated Class F but the battle for second was heavily disputed between the Audi TT of David Robb, Iain Blackley's Ford Puma and the Honda Civic of Harvey Gillanders. Each took turns in second in the finale, but it was Robb who came out on top in the end.

Dave Cockell proved unbeatable in both directions at the wheel of his 2.2-litre Ford Escort Cosworth, taking a pair of victories among the visiting Modified Fords, beating Tom Ovenden each time. The straightline speed of his Escort meant that Cockell was largely unchallenged in the opening race on Saturday but two safety car interventions on Sunday meant Ovenden remained close.

Ovenden challenged at each restart, but his RSR Escort Mk1 was no match for Cockell, who easily came home triumphant. Josh Payton (Cortina Mk2) and Andy Robinson (Falcon) each







picked up a podium.

An impressive field of 25 cars made the trip north for a pair of Darlington & District Motor Club Northern Saloon & Sports races, with Matty Cobb taking both wins in his Radical-based VW Beetle. Lapped traffic complicated life towards the end of race one on the reverse layout, but the clockwise direction proved more to Cobb's liking, as he stormed to victory by nearly a full lap.

Andrew Morrison was Cobb's closest challenger in race one in his SEAT Leon TCR, while Scott Hubel finished second on Sunday in his Peugeot 205.

**STEPHEN BRUNSDON**

### WEEKEND WINNERS

#### SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP

**Races 1 & 2** Jamie Blake (R53)

**Race 3** Oly Mortimer (Cooper)

#### KMSC MODSPORTS

**Races 1, 3 & 4** Ron Cumming (Nemesis Kit Car)

**Race 2** Cameron Brydon (BMW M3)

#### MODIFIED FORDS

**Races 1 & 2** Dave Cockell (Escort Cosworth)

#### DDMC NORTHERN SALOON & SPORTS

**Races 1 & 2** Matty Cobb (VW Beetle)

#### SCOTTISH LEGEND CARS

**Races 1, 2, 3 & 4** Stewart Black

**Race 5** Matthew Pape

**Race 6** Steve Whitelegg

**For full results visit:** [speedhive.mylaps.com](http://speedhive.mylaps.com)

## SCOTLAND'S 'TWO' CIRCUITS OFFER VARIETY

When the popular Ingliston circuit on the outskirts of Edinburgh closed in 1994, Scottish motorsport was dealt a crucial blow. Already suffering from fewer resources than its siblings south of the border, it now had to make do with a single venue for club racers up and down the country.

That single venue remains but, with the guidance of Knockhill Racing Circuit, two different circuits continue to exist in Scotland, courtesy of the unique 'twin track', which returned to operation in 2014 following a 30-year hiatus.

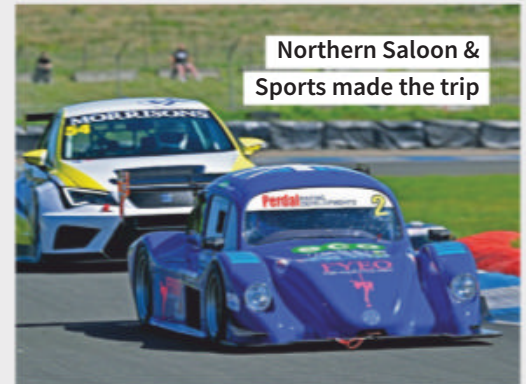
Although the reverse direction configuration created – and perhaps continues to create – split opinion among competitors, the fact remains that Scotland desperately needs variety of circuit to attract local and visiting clubs for years to come.

Knockhill's director of events Stuart Gray believes the twin track is able to deliver the unique selling point, while preserving the circuit's tradition. "We've actually had an anti-clockwise configuration since the 1970s," Gray said. "But it fell out of favour with the club at the time, so it was only until after the financial crisis in 2009-10 that we investigated bringing it back because the circuit had been losing a lot of customers."

Gray adds that, due to safety regulations evolving over the years when the reverse configuration was not in use, the track itself also had to be altered.

"We had to shorten the circuit, bringing the hairpin apex forward more," Gray explained. "The majority of the track is 10 metres wide but at the hairpin, it is now 30 metres wide, but this has allowed the anti-clockwise configuration to be used."

Both clockwise and anti-clockwise layouts were in use on consecutive days last weekend as Knockhill welcomed the



visiting Modified Ford series and Darlington & District Motor Club's Northern Saloon & Sports. The appeal of two distinctly different layouts at the same venue indeed proved to be a deciding factor, with Gray revealing that both categories specifically requested to run on the twin track meetings.

Also in action were the Scottish Legend Cars Championship, which is run by the Knockhill Motor Sports Club, with six races being held across the two days. Reigning champion Stewart Black won four of the six contests, including a rare maximum score of 600 points on the reverse layout on Saturday, a configuration he revealed he 'didn't particularly like!'

"It's not easy to switch between the two directions; it's two completely different circuits and I think that's what is good about the reverse direction," Black said.

"You're at the same venue but it's two different tracks and they demand a different style of attacking the lap.

"The strange thing is that I don't actually like the reverse direction, I prefer the normal direction!"

Black was beaten in the second Sunday heat by Matthew Pape, while Black's nearest title rival in the absence of Daniel Clark, Steve Whitelegg, won the final. Black, on his preferred layout, had to be content with a third and a second to round off his weekend.

**STEPHEN BRUNSDON**







Hitech driver had to fight off Bennett twice

# Kucharczyk's brace of victories hands Pole championship lead

SPA  
GB3  
1-2 JUNE

Hitech's Tymek Kucharczyk moved into the lead of the GB3 Championship after his "best weekend" in the series at Spa, where the Pole secured a brace of wins.

He claimed victory in Saturday's two races, the first one in particularly dominant style, and then kept his nose clean in a chaotic finale on Sunday. He rose from 12th on the partially reversed grid to fourth and, with pre-race championship leader Louis Sharp among those in strife, took the championship initiative as a result.

Kucharczyk claimed his third pole position of the year with a record-breaking lap in qualifying, though JHR's John Bennett earned pole for race two, the grid for that contest formed by each driver's second quickest times.

Despite a damp track, race one was a relatively straightforward affair for Kucharczyk, who led every lap and gently built a lead, finishing 1.8 seconds ahead of Bennett, with Sharp taking third for Rodin Motorsport. The result actually extended the Kiwi's points lead over team-mate

Ugo Ugochukwu, who finished fourth, ahead of the second Hitech car of Will Macintyre and the VRD Racing by Arden entry of Noah Ping.

While the race two result was broadly the same, with the top-five being a carbon copy of the earlier event, Kucharczyk had to work much harder for his second triumph. On a now largely dry circuit, he had two goes at snatching the lead from Bennett across the opening tours, before making a move stick around the outside of Les Combes on lap three of seven.

It was a perfectly timed manoeuvre as seconds later the safety car was deployed with two cars stranded. A good restart came to nothing when the race was neutralised for a second time after Ping and Elite's McKenzie Cresswell came to blows at La Source, and the race ended under caution. Bennett was second, having held off an earlier challenge from Sharp.

That result moved Kucharczyk into second place in the standings, but his rise up the order in the finale put him top of the pile. Macintyre's third win of the year ensured Hitech claimed a clean sweep across the weekend, while the team has now won six on the trot.

Macintyre went from fifth on the top-12 reversed grid to victory after passing team-mate Gerrard Xie, who finished second, while Ping survived a skirmish with Sharp and Ugochukwu to earn third. The trio battled hard for the final podium spot and it ended with a collision at Bruxelles as Ping went for the inside. The Rodin drivers both retired, while Ping picked up a five-place

## RACE RESULTS

### GB3

**Race 1 (8 laps) 1 Tymek Kucharczyk;** 2 John Bennett +1.811s; 3 Louis Sharp; 4 Ugo Ugochukwu; 5 Will Macintyre; 6 Noah Ping. **Fastest lap** Macintyre 2m31.115s (103.70mph).

**Pole** Kucharczyk. **Starters** 22.

**Race 2 (7 laps) 1 Kucharczyk;** 2 Bennett +0.452s; 3 Sharp; 4 Ugochukwu; 5 Macintyre; 6 Kanato Le. **FL** Ping 2m18.065s (113.46mph). **P** Bennett. **S** 22.

**Race 3 (9 laps) 1 Macintyre;** 2 Gerrard Xie +0.838s; 3 Ping; 4 Kucharczyk; 5 Le; 6 McKenzie Cresswell. **FL** Macintyre 2m17.160s (114.20mph). **P** Hugo Schwarze. **S** 22.

**Points 1 Kucharczyk (below) 183;** 2 Macintyre 174; 3 Sharp 170; 4 Ugochukwu 155; 5 Bennett 148; 6 Cresswell 127.



For full results visit: [gb-3.net](http://gb-3.net)



Macintyre sealed Hitech a perfect hat-trick

grid penalty for his next event.

That and further dramas ensured there were three safety car appearances during the race, but Kucharczyk still managed this impressive rise to fourth, a result that gives him a nine-point lead at the top of the standings over Macintyre, as the Hitech duo capitalised on Sharp's late misfortune.

"It's the best weekend I've had so far in the championship," was Kucharczyk's summary. "I'm super happy to have got the championship lead, we've been working so hard with Hitech to make that car fast, and it really was."

**RICHARD RANDLE**



# Two more wins for Summers as Ryder crashes

**SHELSLEY WALSH**  
**BRITISH HILLCLIMB**  
**1-2 JUNE**

A dramatic day of hillclimbing played out under the sunshine last Sunday at Shelsley Walsh, and through it all Alex Summers kept a cool head to drive a perfect weekend and claim two more British Hillclimb Championship victories.

However, the other big talking point was a high-speed accident that befell former points leader Matthew Ryder in his Gould GR59. Like several others, he fell foul of a hill that offered low levels of grip after the record wet winter.

Summers was mighty, with the DJ Firestorm now back to its best. After earlier delays, it was fast approaching 1900 when he fired the car up the side of the Teme Valley in 23.33 seconds to make it four run-off wins in the last five.

Having run within 0.13s of Summers' 22.78s in the first run-off, Ryder set out on his second class run in a bid to qualify well for the day's second shootout. However, the Gould ran fractionally wide on the exit of Crossing and touched the barriers enough to cause a rear puncture. Still going at a prodigious speed, the Gould then skittled up the barriers all the way to the Esses, where it sideswiped the Recticel barriers. To everyone's great relief, Ryder stepped out shaken but unharmed although he would play no role in the day's second run-off.

Instead, it was Will Hall who stepped up to take the fight to Summers, having netted third in the opener. Hall was four tenths away from Summers in second to wrap up



No one got near Summers at Shelsley Walsh

a strong weekend in his Gould GR59.

"It's been an emotional rollercoaster but I'm so pleased to have the car back where it should be," said Summers, who had his 90-year-old grandfather Bill on hand to see him win having also been a victor at Shelsley in his younger days.

While savouring his double win, Summers was quick to acknowledge the widespread relief that Ryder was unharmed. "He's a top guy and it's a long season – he'll come back fighting," he said.

Dave Uren and Trevor Willis both drove mighty weekends to overcome equipment not on a par with the very best, with Uren taking a brace of fourth places and Willis topping a fine day with a storming third at the end of the afternoon, just 0.01s behind Hall's second-placed 23.75s climb.

Jack Cottrill turned in his best-ever BHC performance to bag fifth place in the second run-off in his Cosworth-engined DJ Dallara. Significantly, he pipped Wallace Menzies by 0.07s as the reigning champion

battled to get his Gould GR59 back to where he wanted it to be.

Two sixth places was hardly what Menzies might have expected before the season started but the Scot was pleased with the progress they made with set-up following his Craigantlet accident. "I underperformed in the last run-off and the time doesn't reflect where we're at," he said. "We're now in a lot better place with the car."

Cottrill, meanwhile, was one of the other stars of the day, having overcome a steering issue that kept him out of the first run-off. "We sorted it out for the second run-off and I'm very happy with that," said Cottrill.

**PAUL LAWRENCE**

## HILLCLIMB RESULTS

### ROUND 6

**1 Alex Summers (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Firestorm) 22.78s;** 2 Matthew Ryder (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 22.91s; 3 Will Hall (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59) 23.50s; 4 Dave Uren (3.5 Gould-NME GR55B) 23.74s; 5 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS-RTE 28) 23.76s; 6 Wallace Menzies (3.3 Gould-Cosworth GR59M) 24.19s; 7 Paul Haines (1.3t Gould-Suzuki GR59) 24.31s; 8 Sean Gould (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 24.35s; 9 David Warburton (1.6 Gould-Suzuki GR59) 24.75s; 10= Graham Wynn (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59J) & Zach Zammit (1.3t Empire-Suzuki Wraith) 24.77s.

### ROUND 7

**1 Summers 23.33s;** 2 Hall 23.75s; 3 Willis 23.76s; 4 Uren 24.30s; 5 Jack Cottrill (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Dallara) 24.54s; 6 Menzies 24.61s; 7 Haines 24.91s; 8 Warburton 25.20s; 9 Richard Spedding (1.6 GWR-Hayabusa Raptor 2) 25.26s; 10 Zammit 25.37s.

### POINTS

**1 Summers 64;** 2 Ryder 57; 3 Hall 53; 4 Willis 43; 5 Uren 42; 6 Gould 31.

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



Ryder suffered crash pushing for run-off spot



Lulham has impressed with five wins since joining the Radical Cup UK grid this year



## RADICAL CUP UK

# From sim honours with Verstappen to real-life success

*After conquering many of the largest races in the virtual world, Chris Lulham is now the early pacesetter in this year's Radical Cup UK*

STEPHEN LICKORISH

**M**ax Verstappen's sim racing exploits once again hit the headlines last month, when the Dutchman combined winning the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix with achieving virtual Nurburgring 24 Hours glory over the same – very hectic – weekend. And another driver who was part of the sim success for his Team Redline squad was Chris Lulham. The 21-year-old Briton has seen first-hand how much effort the three-time Formula 1 champion puts into his Esports competitions and enjoys racing alongside him.

“His dedication is unparalleled – you can see why he is where he is,” says Lulham of his illustrious team-mate. “He really pushes to make the time for it [his sim racing], and he’s not exactly got a lot of free time! I feel like this year Max is involving himself a lot within the team, even micromanaging different things as well as being the main image. He’s competing whenever he can.”

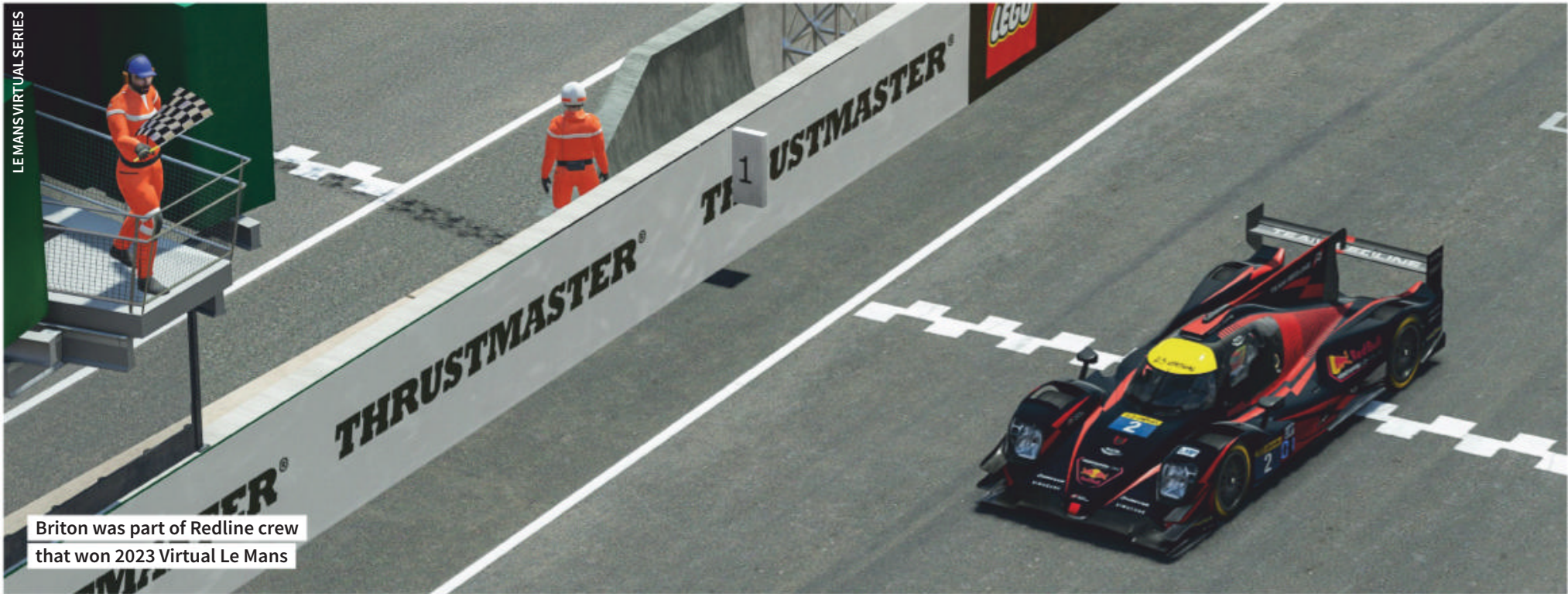
Lulham has become an established fixture of the Redline

operation, since stepping up his Esports involvement following his A-Level exams. “I was sort of proving myself in the sim platform and a few people from Redline, including Max, noticed me and took me in and, since then, I’ve improved a lot as well,” he says. “I still went to uni then but, honestly, when I was at uni, I spent most of my time in my flat sim racing! I don’t regret it.”

Since then, he has conquered some of the largest contests in the sim racing world, including taking the spoils in last year’s Virtual Le Mans 24 Hours. But Lulham is now seeking to add some real-life success to his virtual victories. He has been competing in the Radical Cup UK this year and has so far been the pacesetter, with triumphs in five of the six races to date.

He describes the SR3 in which he competes as having great cost per performance. “It’s the fastest thing you can get into for this budget,” he adds, relishing the challenge of taking on physical rivals on track.





## *“In the sim, it’s very much tunnel vision, which can lead you to building up a lot more nerves”*

Lulham is able to take full advantage of his Esports experience and says there is plenty of crossover between the real and virtual worlds. “Technically, it’s very similar – the driving, the inputs, even the level of competition,” he explains. “The competitions I compete in, if you have a slight off day and you miss two tenths on your quali lap or even a tenth, then that’s the difference between you having an excellent race and you being P20. The margins are very similar. Obviously, you’re putting a lot more on the line with a real race car but physically, set-up wise, I’ve found it to correlate really well and a lot of my knowledge is transferring.”

He even says he finds himself under more pressure for his larger sim events. “There’s a lot more elements to distract you – even the noise, the smell, the wind, whatever, there’s so many different factors to focus on,” Lulham reveals about his Radical races. “Whereas, in the sim, it’s very much tunnel vision, which can lead you to building up a lot more nerves.”

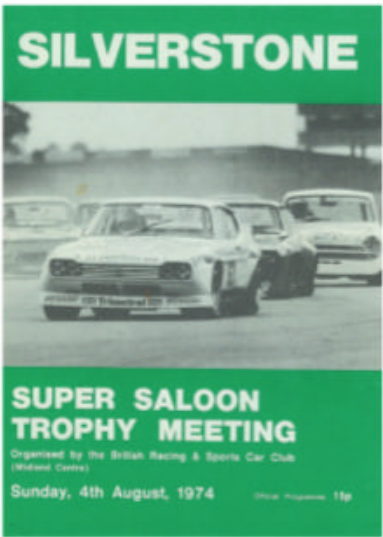
There has certainly been no evidence of nerves with some of his dominant performances so far with Valour Racing in the Radical. But Lulham is taking nothing for granted and still expects a strong fight with stablemate Luke Hilton, the 2023 Fiesta Junior frontrunner who finished as runner-up in Radical’s World Finals at the Algarve Circuit at the end of last year.

And perhaps Lulham’s confident start to the season can further be explained by the previous car outing he had back in 2019. He tackled the Silverstone round of British F4 with Fortec Motorsport, taking a best result of fifth. Lulham had enjoyed a successful karting career on the world and European stage yet was never able to mount a sustained attack on the single-seater ladder. “We didn’t have the budget for a full season anyway, so I knew it was probably just going to be a one-off thing,” he admits. “I didn’t really have any plans at that point. Around that time, I was heading into my exams so I was just dabbling in sim racing. And, when my exams finished, I pushed a bit more and around that time when I finished my exams was when I joined Team Redline.”

Lulham is now seeking to establish himself as a leading light in the real racing world, in addition to his sim prowess. And that starts by securing Radical glory. “The goal is to win the title but I’m sure Luke’s not going to make that easy for me,” he concludes.

Should he indeed be successful, Lulham is already optimistic of further opportunities as he attempts to follow in Verstappen’s footsteps and build a glittering real-life racing CV. 🏆





SUPER SALOONS

# THE SHORT-LIVED SUPER SERIES

*Top names in stunning machines filled spectator banks, but the Super Saloon era, which began 50 years ago, was brief*

MARCUS PYE

Last Saturday's Classic Sports Car Club Mick Hill Trophy races at Silverstone turned the clocks back 50 years to the birth of Britain's Super Saloon movement he and Tony Hazlewood masterminded in 1974. Hill and Hazlewood loved brawny American V8 engines, and became fan favourites for wrestling mighty cars built around them in their spare time.

Both learned the hard way, saddling 'bargains' prone to breakages. Hill's ex-Richard Scantlebury 'Janglia' – a Jaguar-engined Ford Anglia 105E – had a voracious appetite for diffs

until he put a Jag rear end in it, before making an evo version. Hazlewood's apprenticeship was served in the ex-Doc Merfield 'Fraud' Cortina Mk1, with 4.7-litre V8 power.

Derbyshire GPO engineer Hill and Dave Steeples then built a Lola-suspended 4.7-litre Ford Capri, while High Wycombe agricultural equipment designer Hazlewood and Ray Kilminster took an innovative approach. Starting with a new DAF 55 coupe shell and March Formula 2 suspension, they exploited prevailing Special Saloon regulations by installing a 4.3-litre aluminium Oldsmobile V8 up front and a Hewland FT200 transaxle in the



rear. Friendly dust-ups ensued in 1972, when Hill racked up wins and Hazlewood spins!

An RAC regulation change enabled Hazlewood to go from 10in to 16in-wide rear wheels for 1973, which transformed the short-wheelbase DAF. He lapped Thruxton at over 100mph – a tin-top first – in October, while fighting with Gerry Marshall's Dealer Team Vauxhall Firenza. Hill added massively to his win tally, meanwhile, and was plotting a new six-litre Chevrolet-powered Capri at sponsor Tricentrol's behest.

As British Racing & Sports Car Club, British Racing Drivers' Club and British Automobile Racing Club Special Saloon championships were divided by engine capacity, from under 850cc up, Hazlewood and Hill aimed to unite the V8 'hybrids' against their quickest rivals.

Announced in August 1973, October's Westwood Cup race backed by Hazlewood's brother Gerry's lawnmower-manufacturing concern whetted appetites at the BRDC's Silverstone Grand Prix circuit finale. While mechanical dramas and an earlier Esso Uniflo championship race forced withdrawals, David Howes won in his AMC Javelin. Marshall's DTV Firenza and Hazlewood's DAF chased hard. Colin Hawker's wailing Cosworth DFV-engined Toleman's Delivery Service Capri delighted among them.

The Super Saloon Drivers' Association was duly formed and by November a six-round 1974 series – as more championships were not being sanctioned – was unveiled. Hill and Hazlewood would steer it, with BRSCC chief Peter Browning and Brian Mayes of Tricentrol key allies.

But the timing was bad. The miners' strike-enforced energy crisis had resulted in a three-day manufacturing week being introduced and brought down Edward Heath's Conservative government by the spring. Motorsport, like everything, was in limbo.

Brighter days loomed, but corporate purse strings were cut, so title sponsorship did not happen. And dates and venues changed dramatically. John Player cigarettes branded the openers, at Snetterton and Mallory Park on Easter Sunday and Monday – ambitious given the cars' highly strung nature. Nothing changes...

Hill won at Snett, from Tony Strawson in his previous Capri and Nick Whiting's immaculate Escort-FVC, prepared by future F1 technical chief brother Charlie. Having wrecked his BRM V8-engined Escort at Silverstone six months previously, Dorset timber merchant John Turner withdrew its sensational looking and superbly built Skoda-Chevrolet S110R successor – F5000 Leda-based – in the preliminaries. Halfshaft failure sidelined Hazlewood's DAF, now owned by Corbeau Equipe's Colin Folwell.

Hotfoot from an Ingliston double in his Escort-Chevrolet, Scot Doug Niven – Jim Clark's cousin and a fellow borders farmer – raided Mallory, beating Whiting, Tony Sugden (Escort-BDE) and Scot Bill Dryden's SMT Firenza. Niven was chasing leader Hill and had to go ploughing when a puncture pitched the Capri into the Devil's Elbow barrier. Hill was then unbeatable at Mondello Park in June and Ingliston in July, where Ian Richardson's 7.6-litre Chevrolet Corvair filled the Edinburgh showground circuit.

A deluge swamped Silverstone's quality entry in August. Australian past master Frank Gardner's 7.4-litre Chevrolet Camaro beat Howes, from the back, their Group 2 monsters followed by Hill and Turner's increasingly wieldy Skoda. But brake failure destroyed Marshall's F5000 Holden/Repco-engined Vauxhall



*“Hazlewood and Hill aimed to unite the V8 ‘hybrids’ against their quickest rivals”*

Ventora 'Big Bertha' four months after Frank Costin's creation debuted. Marshall escaped serious injury, but from its remains emerged the ominous Firenza-esque 'Baby Bertha', on last Saturday's podium with Joe Ward up.

Hill notched wins five and six at Castle Combe and Thruxton, while Richardson succeeded in October's Westwood Cup race. The BARC's November Thruxton TV meeting featured the Super Saloon showdown of the season as Hill and Turner traded the lead repeatedly at record pace. Mick won by 0.2 seconds but, maddeningly, their titanic scrap was not broadcast!

Rising costs and little remuneration meant Hill and Turner tried F5000 in 1975, John having sold the Skoda to Irishman Arthur Collier. Hill would return, building the F5000 Trojan T102-based VW Beetle – later campaigned by Niven and Jeff Wilson, now with period F1 Iso Marlboro-underpinned Cortina-Chevrolet Mk3 'superloonatic' Dave Taylor.

Hazlewood also made a comeback after Demon Tweaks founder Alan Minshaw bought the charismatic DAF, now Andy Wilson's. Hazlewood's subsequent Jaguar XJ8 – its 7.6-litre Surtees Chevrolet V8 in the passenger space – won a Silverstone clubbie in Gordon Mayers's hands. Hill took it on before it was fire damaged, but the Skoda V8 was destroyed in a transporter blaze in George 'Welly' Potter's ownership. Meanwhile, Hazlewood's Templar Tillers business supported Hawker's magnificent DFVW, Alain de Cadenet's Gordon Murray-designed Duckhams Special Le Mans contender that rarely fulfilled its potential cloaked in a glorious 1600 fastback shell.

Ultimately, Superloons' decline was probably hastened by Marshall's imperious dominance in Baby Bertha, exacerbated by a dull 1975 British GP support race. The big-buck works-backed monster toppled the ingenuity of indomitable men in sheds, underdogs whose self-funded bolides were often hamstrung by unreliability. Alec Poole could beat Marshall in Derek McMahon's F2 Rondel-based Skoda-BDX, but the 'Chimp' – a Chevron-chassised Hillman Imp caricature in which Jonathan Buncombe impressed – was outlawed. The category soldiered through 1976 before the Donington GT championship brought fresh excitement and wilder cars to entertain fans, and thus an exciting but brief era was over. ❧



# FINISHING STRAIGHT

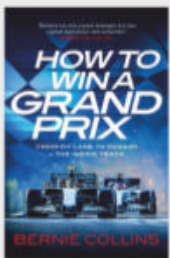
Force India  
strategy engineer  
Collins talks shop  
with Perez at 2016  
Hungarian GP



SUTTON

motorsport  
IMAGES

## Deep-dive read for detail devotees



**BOOK REVIEW**  
**HOW TO WIN A GRAND PRIX: FROM PIT LANE TO PODIUM - THE INSIDE TRACK**  
Bernie Collins  
RRP £22.00

Formula 1 nerds, rejoice, for in *How to win a Grand Prix*, Bernie Collins delivers a level of insight that digs deep into the complex world of the championship and delights in the details.

There's a lot of reading material available for those who could be described as casual fans, where the fundamentals are explained and there is a minimal level of digging done to give a satisfying feeling that you've learned something by flicking through the pages.

What Collins has done here is take a real risk by appealing to the hardcore audience, going all-in on the details and granting an access-all-areas pass to the pitwall and the inner workings of McLaren and Force India/Racing Point/Aston Martin, as they were during her time at those teams.

Even more impressive than taking this gamble to play to those of us of a slightly nerdier persuasion is that this has been achieved without entirely alienating those more casual fans.

From setting the scene with a whistle-stop tour of how she found herself in F1, Collins introduces various topics and

themes that will become crucial later on, with the narrative, while told in a largely chronological way, getting more detailed and complicated as the book progresses.

But there is a cost in appealing to a hardcore audience, and it's that *How to win a Grand Prix* is far from being a page-turner. Interesting and informative, beyond question, but the level of detail that you're required to take in means that from roughly a third of the way in, you would be best served taking this a chapter or two at a time. As Collins would doubtlessly agree, this would be made all the better with a cup of tea – so long as it has proper milk in it!

One of the most compelling aspects of *How to win a Grand Prix* is discovering exactly what a strategist does and how they interact with the rest of the team.



Collins reflects on toll  
taken by F1's relentlessness

Anyone who's played *F1 Manager* and thinks that a quick assessment of tyre life and calling your driver into the pits at the first sign of rain or a safety car is the extent of the role will be in for a rude awakening.

Just about the only aspect that trumps this is when Collins reflects on the nature of travelling the world, and especially the personal toll that this takes, with the ever-increasing calendar ramping this up yet more. There is a frank moment of reflection on how unhappy she was, without realising it at the time, at McLaren, and the reasons given for calling time on her annual round-the-world tours will ring true to anyone who has worked in F1's unique environment.

Given the title, there is naturally a chapter devoted to Collins's sole F1 victory, this coming with Sergio Perez in the 2020 Sakhir Grand Prix on the outer loop layout of the Bahrain International Circuit. This is where all the strands are pulled together and everything seems like a swan – smooth and calm on the surface, but with everything out of view paddling like crazy.

If you are looking for an easy read that you can enjoy on a beach during the summer months, there are probably better options out there. But if you've just put the kids to bed and fancy picking up a book rather than turning on the television, this is certainly an enjoyable and informative read.

**SAM HALL**



## WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL  
MOTORSPORT**Canadian Grand Prix**  
**F1 World Championship**  
**Round 9/24**

Montreal, Canada

**9 June****TV Live** Sky Sports F1,  
Sun 1855**TV Highlights** Sky  
Sports F1, Sun 2230,  
Channel 4, Mon 0020**IndyCar****Round 7/15**

Road America, USA

**9 June****TV Live** Sky Sports Mix,  
Sun 2030**Indy NXT****Round 5/12**

Road America, USA

**9 June****TV Live** Sky Sports Mix,  
Sun 1805**DTM****Round 3/8**

Zandvoort, Netherlands



Canadian Grand Prix

SBLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

**8-9 June****TV Live** Premier Sports 2,  
Sat 1215, Sun 1215**Formula Regional**  
**European by Alpine****Round 3/10**

Zandvoort, Netherlands

**8-9 June****TV Livestream**  
via YouTube.com**TCR World Tour****Round 3/7**

Mid-Ohio, USA

**8 June****NASCAR Cup Series****Round 16/36**

Sonoma, USA

**9 June****TV Live** Premier Sports 2,  
2000

## UK MOTORSPORT

**Oulton Park BRSCC****8 June**Audi TT Cup, Civic Cup,  
Fiesta Junior, Fiesta  
ST240s, TCR UK**TV Livestream**

via YouTube.com

**Thruxton BARC****8-9 June**BTCC, British F4, Mini  
Challenge Trophy,  
Mini Miglia, Mini Se7en,  
Porsche Carrera Cup**TV Live** ITV4, Sun 1100**Brands Hatch MSVR****8-9 June**Bernie's V8s/Historic  
Outlaws, Ford v Chevy,  
Legends, NASCAR Euro  
Series, Pickups, SpeedFest  
Silhouettes**TV Livestream**

via YouTube.com

**Donington Park HSCC****8-9 June**Classic FF1600, Derek  
Bell Trophy, Griffiths Haig  
Trophy, Guards Trophy,  
Historic FF1600, Historic  
FF2000, Historic Formula  
Junior, HRS/HTC/70s,  
Touring Car Legends**Snetterton MSVR****8-9 June**

Ferrari Challenge UK

**Silverstone MSVR****8-9 June**Equipe (70s/BCV8w,  
Elan 60, GTS, Libre,  
MG Cup, Pre-'63/50s),  
GT/SCC, Monoposto**Mondello Park MPSC****8-9 June**Fiesta STs, Fiesta Zetecs,  
Formula Sheane,  
Formula Vee, Future  
Classics/Minis, Global  
Lights, HRCA, Irish  
Touring Cars, Strykers,  
Superkarts

autosport.com/podcast

**Formula 1 insights from Liberty Media boss**

This week we welcome Greg Maffei onto the James Allen on F1 podcast. Maffei is the CEO of Liberty Media, and the man who had his eye on F1 for many years before he bought it. F1 has changed a lot in the seven years since, bringing in millions of new, younger fans. But how does Liberty get the right balance between them and long-standing fans, who maybe aren't so keen on all the showbiz? Maffei reveals how F1 plans to have a more direct relationship with its fans, and which new countries could soon host grands prix. Allen is joined in the studio by Autosport F1 editor Jon Noble and *Financial Times* sports reporter Sam Agini.



British F4

JEP



## FINISHING STRAIGHT



### FROM THE ARCHIVE

A young Jochen Rindt raises a fist as he perches precariously on the front of the Ferrari 250LM in which he has shared victory in the 1965 Le Mans 24 Hours. His partner Masten Gregory

and most of the car are hidden from view by the mass of North American Racing Team members joining him for the celebratory ride, following an unexpected win for the unfancied and outdated car that benefited from

the failures of the works Ferraris and the factory Ford effort. The man in the hat straddling the right front headlight is Ed Hugus, who may or may not have taken a stint behind the wheel during the night. Hugus's

claim to have played an active role remains unproven and contentious. Little could anyone know that Ferrari's ninth Le Mans win in 17 years would also be its last – until the 100th anniversary edition in 2023.









Oliver in DN4, and (below, right)  
with designer Southgate

## Shadow DN4

**T**here were times during the 1960s and 1970s when Formula 1 machines weren't always the fastest cars in the world around a road course. Big-banger sportscars sometimes grabbed that accolade, and few provided bigger bangs than the machines of the Canadian-American Challenge Cup.

Can-Am's no-holds-barred heyday ran from 1966 to 1974, and Jackie Oliver was the era's final champion. Driving the Tony Southgate-designed Shadow-Chevrolet DN4, the Briton won four of the five rounds, leading team-mate George Follmer to a 1-2 in the standings.

Despite starting 48 world championship F1 grands prix for Lotus, BRM, McLaren and Shadow, it's two sportscars that come to mind when the 81-year-old is asked to pick a favourite. "It has to be the Shadow or the Porsche 917," says Oliver, who won the 1969 Le Mans 24 Hours with Jacky Ickx in a JW Automotive Ford GT40.

"The DN4 is the most successful car of my career. I preferred those cars to the F1 cars. The early Can-Am Shadows were a bit difficult to drive, but when Tony designed the car it had more downforce and was light, so it was nice."

Following the 1973 domination by Mark Donohue's turbocharged Penske-run Porsche 917/30, fuel restrictions were put in place for 1974, but Oliver concedes that



SUTTON

the cars were becoming too fast and expensive and that "the regs were no longer fit for purpose". Can-Am had a two-year hiatus in 1975-76 and when it returned it was in a different form, with cars based on F5000 machinery.

That meant the DN4's career was curtailed though, bizarrely, Oliver did drive one to victory in the Mosport round of the 1976 world sportscar championship, the non-scoring 800bhp Shadow and ex-Can-Am McLaren M20 of Follmer limiting the newer Porsche 936 of Ickx to third.

Oliver was key in getting a collection of Shadows together for this year's Goodwood Members' Meeting, where he was reunited with his DN4, and Festival of Speed. "The cars are unique," adds Oliver. "To be able to see them, hear them, and drive them at my age on a circuit I know – it's fantastic to be able to do it."

**KEVIN TURNER**



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

## MAGNIFICENT MONTREAL

CAN McLAREN AND FERRARI KEEP THE PRESSURE ON RED BULL?

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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# COMPETITION HOTS UP AS HYPERCAR HITS NEW HIGH

**T**he much-discussed new ‘golden age’ of sportscar racing has definitely arrived. We reckon there are *at least* 14 genuine contenders for outright victory at this year’s Le Mans 24 Hours, and the field arrives following a first win in the modern era by a customer team.

Porsche now has a much better understanding of its 963 than it did 12 months ago and has already won a 24-hour race this year, at Daytona. Gary Watkins assesses the big hitters on page 4 to see whether the German marque can beat Ferrari, Toyota et al to score a record 20th win in the greatest race.

The recent success of Jota at Spa shows that a privateer can really compete in the Hypercar era, so we also remember the occasions on which Porsche’s customers have beaten the factory effort at Le Mans on p10.

There are plenty of returnees and newcomers to the Circuit de la Sarthe this year. James Newbold takes a look

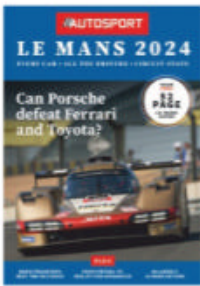
at the chances for BMW, Alpine and Lamborghini (p18), while McLaren finally makes it comeback in the new and hard-fought LMG3 category (p28).

Felipe Drugovich has tasted Le Mans success in the virtual world and he tells Stephen Lickorish how that experience is helping him ahead of his debut in the real thing (p22). Kyffin Simpson and Alex Quinn have taken more conventional routes, but are still set to star on their debuts in the LMP2 class (p26).

There’s also our traditional team guide, circuit info and full entry list. Enjoy!



*Kevin Turner*  
**KEVIN TURNER**  
EDITOR



**COVER IMAGE**  
Ehrhardt/Motorsport Images

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FOLLOW THE EVENT WITH AUTOSPORT

EDITORIAL







HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

# CAN PORSCHE WIN AGAIN AT LA SARTHE?

*A record-extending 20th victory looks on. But in a year of intense competition in the Hypercar ranks, that doesn't mean it will necessarily happen*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES



US arm of Penske-run Porsche team scored a landmark Daytona 24 Hours win in January

GALSTAD





**O**ne year ago, when Porsche made its first bid for outright honours at the Le Mans 24 Hours in six years, it didn't look like a potential winner. Not in the run-up to the centenary running of the French enduro nor during the race itself, although it would be wrong to say that the 963 LMDh was some kind of also-ran. Twelve months on, it's a different story. The manufacturer is on a roll as it bids for win number 20 at Le Mans. The tide has truly turned for the German manufacturer's latest sportscar programme.

Porsche arrives at Le Mans having won two of the first three rounds of this year's World Endurance Championship, and has been competitive in all of them. It has also won a twice-around-the-clock endurance race: the American arm of the Porsche Penske Motorsport squad took victory in the Daytona 24 Hours, the opening round of the IMSA SportsCar Championship. What's more, its customer teams have shown that they are in the mix, too. The British Jota team took victory last time out in the WEC at Spa last month, but on another day it might have been Proton Competition collecting the laurels with its 963 LMDh. That is significant. Porsche is going to Le Mans with six cars entered in the Hypercar class; or to put it another way, double the number of any of its rivals.

Porsche has come a long way since this time last year when it was, says LMDh programme manager Urs Kuratle, "swimming against the tide". The 963 might have been the first LMDh to hit the track in January 2022, but it endured a difficult development period that continued into its maiden campaigns across the WEC and IMSA. Neither should it be forgotten that both arms of PPM were still very new racing teams.

"Last year at this time both the IMSA and WEC teams were trying to keep their heads above the water, just trying to survive," says Kuratle. "That sounds a bit dramatic, but it really was a bit like that. Now the current is not so strong. With the improvements we have made in terms of performance and reliability, but also within our teams operationally, we are going to Le Mans thinking we can win this one, that we will be in the fight. That wasn't the case last year."

### WHAT'S CHANGED AT PORSCHE?

There has been no silver bullet, no magic modification to the car: Porsche has chosen not to invoke any of the five so-called 'evo' joker performance upgrades allowed over the lifespan of a Le Mans Hypercar class racer. Rather, the upturn in performance and results have come from the passing of time and hard work in testing – miles, miles and more miles. Ferrari, winner at Le Mans last year, gives almost exactly the same answer when it is asked how its 499P LMH has become a competitive proposition on all circuits. The modern breed of hybrid prototypes are complex pieces of kit. A lot goes into understanding what makes them tick.

"It wasn't the case that we introduced one thing, and bam, we found half a second," explains Kuratle. "You cannot say this or that was the working point we had to overcome."

It didn't help that the Porsche continued to struggle with reliability into its maiden season. None of the four cars – three from



Porsche scored its first Hypercar WEC win at Qatar season opener





How many of the eight major makes in Hypercar will contend for win? No answer to that one yet

JEP

PPM and one from Jota – on the grid at Le Mans last year went through the race cleanly, and two of the three cars to see the chequered flag were last-lap specials sent out at the end to ensure a classified finish.

Porsche has also made significant strides on reliability in the past 12 months, which has had a knock-on for performance. It was finally able in the months post-Le Mans 2023 to put in the kind of trouble-free testing it needed to wring speed out of the 963.

“The understanding that we have of vehicle dynamics is completely different to a year ago because we were worrying about reliability,” says Thomas Laudenbach, boss of Porsche Motorsport since the end of 2021. With a reliable car, finally Porsche is “now worrying about performance”, he adds.

Porsche began to understand where and how “to put the car in the window”, says Laurens Vanthoor, part of the winning crew from Qatar in March along with Kevin Estre and Andre Lotterer that goes

into Le Mans leading the Hypercar points. “The electronics were part of it, but so too was understanding what direction we need to take to make the car work, so that includes the mechanical set-up in terms of aero and ride height. It has been a mix of everything, improving our software and just grasping what the car needs, joining the dots if you like.”

### CAN THE PRIVATEERS BEAT THE FACTORY?

That may seem like a non-question after the events of the Spa 6 Hours. Not only did Jota win the race, but Proton led more laps than anyone else. The ability to race the works squad on equal terms is a big reason why the two customer teams on the WEC grid signed up for the challenge in the first place.

“We got into this because we knew we would have a chance,” says Jota boss Sam Hignett, whose team has expanded to two 963s for 2024. “And the reason is that we have equal equipment. But we are racing against a factory team at the end of the day and pound notes count. Going to two cars has doubled our learning, but they have two teams and are out racing every other weekend. Being at their level every weekend is a challenge.

“But, as we all know, it takes a dose of good luck to win Le Mans. You can only control your circumstances, strategy, traffic management and all those things, up to a point.”

Spa proved Hignett’s point. Jota’s wasn’t the fastest Porsche, or even the fastest privateer Porsche, yet still came out on top.

### IS FERRARI THE FAVOURITE PRE-LE MANS?

It probably has to be, and not just because it goes into the 24 Hours as last year’s winner. The 499P has also on average been the quickest car so far this year. Only at Le Mans was that the case last season in race conditions when James Calado, Alessandro Pier Guidi and Antonio Giovinazzi took the laurels.

That the Prancing Horse doesn’t now have a victory to its name this year – which would be a first in a regular WEC race – is purely down to circumstance. It called the conditions wrong when ►



Ferrari is fastest on average in the WEC

JEP



rain arrived at Imola, a race it was dominating, and its bid for victory at Spa was undone by the race stoppage – and subsequent controversial restart. The cars that finished ahead of the two factory 499Ps got lucky because they had pitted just before the red flag.

Ferdinando Cannizzo, technical director on the 499P programme, doesn't dispute that the shortest odds sit next to Ferrari's name. "In theory you can say that because we won last year," he says. It is theoretical, he argues, because of the increased competition in 2024. "It will be very difficult with more manufacturers and the incredible number of cars on track," he explains. There are now three more major manufacturers with the arrival of BMW, Alpine and Lamborghini, and in total eight more entries in Hypercar.

But Cannizzo also admits that Ferrari has taken a step forward since last year: "We have improved in all areas and understand the car better, on the tyres, the engine and systems controls." He points out that the 499P would probably have struggled at a track like Imola – a very different proposition to Le Mans – last year, yet it was the quickest car on home ground in April.

What effect the improvements in the 499P as a raceable package will have at Le Mans isn't clear. The car looks after its tyres better now than in 2023, but the Circuit de la Sarthe is a low-degradation circuit that doesn't place a premium on rubber conservation. That was one of the reasons why Ferrari emerged as a force at the 24 Hours this time last year.

Ferrari got both its cars to the finish in 2023 without serious reliability dramas. (The delay for the car that finished fifth resulted from an errant stone or piece of debris puncturing the hybrid system cooler at the front.) But it wasn't confident of a clean run because in testing it had never completed anything approaching 24 hours. Calado revealed over the winter that Ferrari's computer simulations gave the car only a 38-40% chance of finishing the race without issue.

Now Ferrari is much more confident, and has an extra bullet in its gun with the AF Corse-run satellite entry. "We have made excellent work on reliability," says Cannizzo. "We have confidence that the reliability is there, but we still have to be very attentive."

Strong race execution led Toyota to win at Imola



### WHAT ABOUT TOYOTA?

It would be unwise to rule out the winner of the five editions of Le Mans from 2018 to 2022, one that has also taken a quintet of WEC drivers' and manufacturers' titles in a row. "With the success and number of years we have been competing there it would be strange if we were going to Le Mans thinking we couldn't win it," says Sebastien Buemi, part of the winning Toyota line-up on four occasions. "We know the race, we know how to win it."

"We haven't had the fastest car this year, but we have still been scoring points and the #7 car won at Imola, not because we were fastest but because we executed a good race. We know that is important at Le Mans. You have to make the right decisions on strategy and stay out of trouble. You need the stars to align."

Buemi's point about Toyota knowing how to win at Le Mans is significant. There were times before its winning sequence that it threw victory away – former Toyota Gazoo Racing technical boss Pascal Vasselon once said "we seem to find new ways to lose



Last overall Le Mans win for Porsche was 2017 with LMP1 919 Hybrid, its 19th in the race





Caddy has “confidence” it will be in with a shout, says Lynn



Peugeot verdict on hopes rests on BoP

Le Mans” – but since it got into its stride there have been years when it arguably shouldn’t have won, most notably in 2021 in the first year of the GR010 HYBRID LMH when the Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe team had to think on its feet to overcome a fuel system problem.

### WILL LE MANS BE A THREE-HORSE RACE?

Almost certainly not. It would probably be too much to expect each of the nine makes – or the eight major manufacturers not counting minnow Isotta Fraschini – to be in the fight for victory, but the big three are at least expecting Cadillac to be in the hunt. That’s based on its form at Le Mans last year and in the WEC since.

The best of the flotilla of Cadillac V-Series-R LMDhs took the final spot on the podium at the 24 Hours last year. but the sister car run by the Ganassi squad might have done even better. The visiting IMSA entry ended up fourth after a trio of delays. But this car had the pace to run with the manufacturers ahead of it. And this year Caddy has been competitive in two of three races.

Cadillac, represented by two cars from Ganassi and another IMSA team on an away day in the form of Action Express Racing, is heading into the race believing it is going to be a contender.

“We going there with confidence,” says Alex Lynn, who shares Ganassi’s solo full-season WEC entry with Earl Bamber and IndyCar champion and race debutant Alex Palou. “I think we will be good there, as we were last year. Everyone turns up at Le Mans with their best foot forward, so we won’t know how good until we get there, probably not until the race starts.”

If Porsche, Ferrari and Toyota are expecting Cadillac to be a contender, then the General Motors marque is also casting an eye over its shoulder at others who could be in the mix. Alpine is one that Lynn singles out. “They made really big strides with their car at Spa and we know the spine of that car is very good,” says Lynn, the last point a reference to its partnership with ORECA. The French constructor has also been responsible for the IMSA-only Acura ARX-6 LMDh, a winner of the Daytona and Road Atlanta (last year) and Sebring (this year) enduros in North America.

### WHAT ABOUT BALANCE OF PERFORMANCE?

The answer to that is that it’s difficult to tell for the moment. The table for Le Mans was published on Monday, and there is the odd significant change from Spa for what the rulemakers regard as a separate BoP to that of the rest of the WEC, courtesy of the unique characteristics of the Circuit de la Sarthe. But it included the new “power gain” component, the introduction of which had been tentatively set for the Imola round in April.

Power gain is another tool with which the organisers can balance the cars: it has been conceived to more accurately match acceleration and straightline speeds. The maximum power allowed to each car is adjusted above or below a certain speed: it will be 250km/h (155mph) for Le Mans rather than the 210km/h (130mph) had it been introduced at Spa or Imola, again a reflection of the

Le Mans circuit layout and the speeds attained.

Ferrari appears to be a winner in the regular BoP: the 499P has lost 10kg in minimum weight and gained a couple of kilowatts in maximum power, but is the biggest loser on the power gain. It faces a 1.7% reduction above the magic figure, approximately 11bhp.

Porsche has gained a little weight and lost a little power, but is unaffected by power gain. Toyota has lost weight and power, while the big winner appears to be the new Peugeot 9X8 2024. It is down 18kg, still races at 508kW (681bhp), and has a plus 0.9% power gain.

The new BoP methodology, which is more reactive than before, aims to create a narrow performance window into which all cars fit. The FIA and the Automobile Club de l’Ouest have refused to divulge its size, but it is understood that they are aiming for 0.4% differential between the fastest and slowest cars – just over 0.8 seconds on a 3m30s lap – and to have the fastest LMH and LMDh cars within 0.2%. What isn’t known is what scope there is for change between this weekend’s Test Day, practice and qualifying, and the race itself.

### WHAT EFFECT WILL THE ABSENCE OF TYRE WARMERS HAVE?

The ban on pre-heating tyres before they are put on the car at the start of last season was a controversial one. So much so that, after a spate of accidents at Spa, there was a volte-face. Tyre warmers were allowed back on a one-off basis for the 24 Hours in 2023.

The absence of tyre warmers has been a non-topic so far this season. That’s perhaps not surprising given that the opening race took place in the Middle East and that Spa was run in unusually hot conditions for a high-altitude venue known for its fickle weather. Whether it will become one at Le Mans will no doubt depend on the weather and specifically the temperatures at night.

Lynn reckons that the teams and drivers are now just plain better at getting heat into the rubber. “It’s not an issue anymore,” he says. “It’s just come down to everyone learning what each tyre does and doesn’t do. We’ve all got better at warm-up.”

Yet it could change the dynamic of the race, and in particular the length of time that the softest of the three specifications available from Hypercar tyre supplier Michelin is used. Mitigating the time lost warming up the tyres on an out-lap is going to be crucial. Without tyre warmers, that could lengthen the period in which the soft is the tyre to be on, potentially extending it on Saturday evening and bringing its usage forward on Sunday morning.

Some cars seem to have a liking for the soft, the Cadillac for example. Lynn, using the medium, only just snuck into the Hyperpole qualifying session for the 10 quickest cars in the first session in 2023, but on the soft mandated for the final round he put the car on the front row. “We feel comfortable on that tyre,” he confirms. “When the soft tyre comes into play we are more competitive.”

Whether a race with more soft usage will help Porsche or its rivals remains to be seen. But everything points to the German manufacturer making a genuine bid for Le Mans win number 20. 🇫🇷



Porsche's "limited enthusiasm" for Joest's challenge with the WSC95 was palpable



HYPERCAR LMP2 GTEAM

# WHEN PORSCHE PRIVATEERS BEAT THE FACTORY

*With Jota and Proton proving competitive with their 963s, we take a look at when Porsche customer squads managed to come out on top in the 24 Hours*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES



## 1997 JOEST DOUBLES UP AGAINST THE GT1

**J**oest Racing had won the Le Mans 24 Hours for Porsche in 1996 after doing a deal to run its pair of stillborn WSC95 LMP prototypes. Good job the arrangement allowed it to keep the winning car. Fast forward 12 months, and it didn't have a lot of option but to turn out at the French enduro with the chassis it now owned if it wanted to continue racing. The result was another victory, not like the previous year ahead of a pair of factory cars, but this time in front of two McLarens. Joest saved Porsche's bacon with its solo entry driven by Tom Kristensen, Michele Alboreto and Stefan Johansson.

There was a stark choice facing Joest ahead of 1997. It had lost its primary programme with Opel in tin-tops on the collapse of the International Touring Car series, and a proposed attack on the new FIA GT Championship with a pair of customer Porsche 911 GT1s had fallen through. So it was dust off the WSC95, chassis #001 that had started life as a Jaguar XJR-14, or sit on the sidelines.

Porsche had seen the value in allowing Joest to revive the WSC95 project for 1996. Its 911 GT1, a parts-bin special conceived to meet the challenge of the McLaren F1 GTR, would be going into its first start at Le Mans, and having a couple of LMPs on the grid would be a nice complement. It went back into the wind tunnel with a project that had been axed at the start of 1995 and helped hone the car into a competitive proposition.

Now, however, it was offering no support to its long-time customer. The 911 had been race-proven over a short programme of events post-Le Mans in 1996, and now there was a new evo version of the 911 styled after its 997-shape 911 that was just going on sale. Porsche motorsport boss Herbert Ampferer was pretty outspoken about Joest's return to Le Mans with its WSC95. And in a negative way.

"It wasn't that they tried to hinder us," says long-time Joest technical director and then team boss Ralf Juttner. "They couldn't really. But you could sense limited enthusiasm on the factory's part."

There were those at race organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest who also didn't want Joest at Le Mans. Not after it had made a basic administrative error. Joest had received an automatic entry for winning the previous year's race – one of the first such to be awarded – and it interpreted this as meaning it didn't have to go through the normal entry procedures. Wrong!

Autosport was well briefed on the plans Joest had for



*"That's all we could do: just try to stay on the lead lap and not give them any breathing space"*

the WSC that year and had written about them. So when the entry list came out without the WSC95, there was a call from the magazine offices in London to the team's HQ in Germany asking what had happened. When a well-informed journalist explained to Joest technical director Juttner that all the paperwork still had to be completed as usual, it was time for another long-distance phone call, only this time from Germany to France. Juttner reveals that there were those at the ACO who weren't prepared to overlook the mistake.

The WSC95 proved competitive despite the advances made by the GT1 contenders. Porsche would go nearly four seconds faster in qualifying with the evo version of the 911 GT1 than with the original in 1996.

"People were telling us that all the old LMPs wouldn't have a chance," recalls Juttner, who concedes that even though Alboreto put the car on pole, Joest knew it would have a battle on its hands to match the latest Porsche in the race. "We were expecting them to be quicker than us and they had a bigger fuel tank. We had to overcome that: our plan was to do triple stints on the tyres, which was unusual at that time."

A quadruple was even more unusual, but that's what Kristensen was asked to do in his marathon stint during the night. Joest was the better part of a lap down on the leading factory 911 GT1 Evo shared by Yannick Dalmas, Emmanuel Collard and Ralf Kelleners by this point. But crucially the WSC95 was on the lead lap.

"That's all we could do: just try to stay on the lead lap and not give them any breathing space," explains Juttner. "One small issue and their advantage would have been gone."

As it turned out, the factory Porsche had a big issue after it had put the WSC95 a full lap down. A gearbox oil leak in the closing stages resulted in a fire that brought its race to a premature end. The Joest car swept through to give Porsche its 15th outright Le Mans victory.

"We weren't as quick as the new GT1, so we got lucky," says Juttner. "But we aimed to keep them under pressure and that's what we did. Maybe that played its part."





## 1985 OLD CAR WINS AGAIN AS WORKS TEAM RETURNS

**J**oest Racing had upheld Porsche honour at Le Mans in 1984 when the Rothmans factory cars stayed away over a dispute concerning the future direction of the fuel rules for Group C. But then there were plenty of other customers to do that: Porsche 956s filled out positions one to seven at the chequered flag. Twelve months later, with the works team back, Porsche Group C cars took the top five places. And once again Joest with 956, chassis #117, sat at the top of the order.

Fuel mileage was the key to its success with Klaus Ludwig, Paolo Barilla and Louis Krages, the German who raced under the pseudonym 'John Winter', that year. The allocation for Le Mans under the Group C regulations had been cut from 2600 to 2210 litres. Fuel saving was more important than ever before, and Joest had an immediate advantage in this respect. Ludwig, Barilla and 'Winter' were driving a 956, whereas the factory had the new Group C version of the long-wheelbase 962 that had been racing in IMSA since the previous season.

"That was the first difference, and a big difference," says Reinhold Joest. "The 956 had less understeer than the 962." It allowed the drivers of long-serving #117 to adopt a more economic driving style.

Yet the winning Porsche was no ordinary 956. The Joest team built its own Porsche flat-sixes, or rather engine man Michel Demont built them himself at the German marque's motorsport headquarters in Weissach. Joest tweaked the aerodynamics of the car, producing its

own seamless one-piece undertray to replace the three-part unit that came as standard.

"They were all small points," says Joest, "but they came together to give us a better car. We really worked on the details. That is always the secret at Le Mans."

Joest had a gameplan, and stuck to it. The winning 956 ran as little downforce as possible and the tallest fifth gear available to maximise straightline speed down the Mulsanne Straight. What's more, the drivers were instructed to turn down the boost and lean off the fuel mixture on this long chute – uninterrupted in those days by chicanes – and coast when they picked up the required slipstream. And then coast again after the hump down to Mulsanne Corner.

Joest ended up winning by three laps, with the best factory car down in third. It inevitably led to some finger pointing. The late Domingos Piedade, Joest's team manager at the time, had an answer for them. He always said he pointed a finger back, "the middle finger", he claimed. He even drew an erect digit on the piece of paper stuck over the meter on the winning car's fuel rig to keep prying eyes away.







1979  
MUSEUM ENTRY NOT ENOUGH TO STOP KREMER

**S**portscar racing was in the doldrums at the back end of the 1970s. The Group 5 silhouette GT formula hadn't taken off as expected, and there was waning interest in the Group 6 prototype category. Porsche only dusted off its 936 design because it had landed a late sponsorship deal – and rolled one car out of its museum. No wonder the Kremer Racing team went to the 24 Hours brimming with confidence with the new K3 version of its take on Porsche's 935 Group 5 racer.

It reckoned it was more than a match for anyone else, the rest of the mostly Cosworth-powered prototype field and the other 11 935s of various iterations lined up against it. Its confidence was borne out by victory for Klaus Ludwig and the Whittington brothers, Don and Bill.

"We really went there believing we could win; we felt the factory with its 936 was the only real opposition," says Achim Stroth, team manager at Kremer for a period spanning four decades. "The air-to-air intercooler on the K3 meant the engine didn't lose power over the race distance, so we

were always going to be ahead of the 935s running air-to-water." And as for the rest of the prototype field? "We were a long way ahead of them after half the race."

Kremer had qualified third behind the two 936s, in the hands of Bob Wollek and Jacky Ickx, but the two works Porsches were in trouble early on. A misfire, wheels rubbing on the hubs and a dramatic puncture for Brian Redman in the car shared with Ickx were among their initial woes. Both cars would retire: Wollek and Hurley Haywood with engine failure; Ickx and Redman for receiving outside assistance.

The Belgian, already a four-time Le Mans winner, had been stranded out on the circuit when the alternator belt snapped. The 936 did get going again, but only after Ickx was given a replacement to fit by a Porsche mechanic. Some say it had to be thrown across the track, others that it was handed over when he was given some sustenance. It was secreted inside a baguette, go the stories. Whatever, the ruse was spotted and disqualification followed.

On Sunday morning, the Kremer car headed the field by 15 laps, more than an hour's worth of lead. That was just as well because all that time disappeared when an injector belt failed, stranding Don Whittington, the elder of the brothers, on the Mulsanne Straight. The Kremer Porsche carried a replacement belt, but the driver damaged it trying to fit the thing. That looked to be that for the German team, but Whittington somehow effected a Heath Robinson repair using a spare alternator belt and gaffer tape to get back to the pits after a 79-minute lap.

That should have handed victory to Dick Barbour Racing's GTX-class 935, only for a wheel to jam on in the pits. The only way to get it off was to remove the hub! So Kremer won one of the craziest runnings of the Le Mans 24 Hours ever. It might have come to be regarded as even more crazy had the Barbour car won. Among its drivers was Hollywood legend Paul Newman.

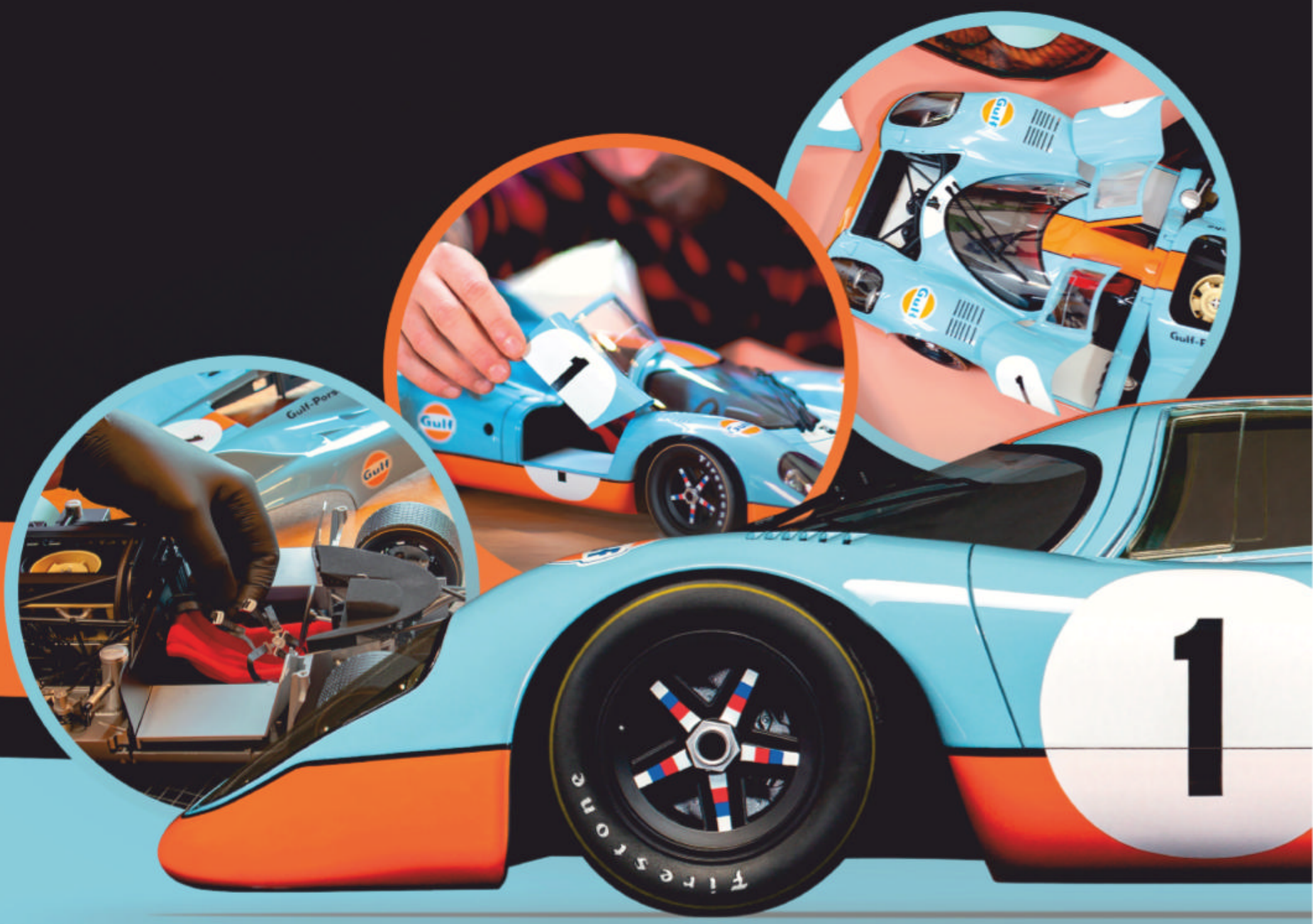






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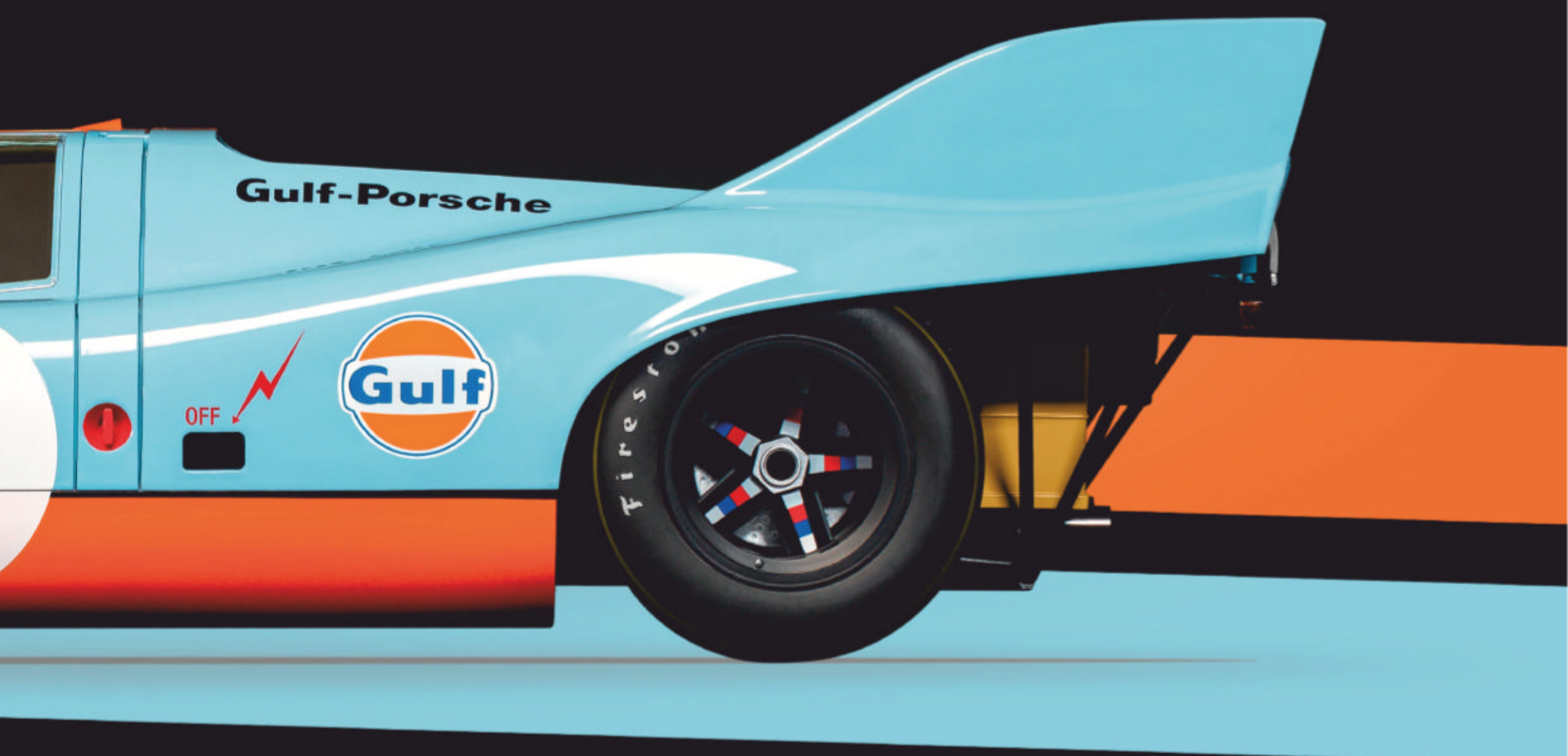
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Practice makes perfect:  
performance of PPM  
crew is analysed in detail  
at mock-up pitbox

HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

# PORSCHE'S QUEST TO FIND AN EDGE OFF-TRACK

*Gaining tenths at pitstops has always been vital, but it counts now more than ever.  
That's why Porsche has taken the drilling of its pit crew to new levels*

GARY WATKINS

**N**o stone has been left unturned as Porsche bids to return to the winner's circle at the biggest race on the endurance calendar. Three times per week at the Mannheim headquarters of the Porsche Penske Motorsport World Endurance Championship squad, the two pitstop crews – and one spare – gather at a specially created replica of a Le Mans pit stall to practise their craft.

Porsche is looking for one of the marginal gains that cycling guru Sir David Brailsford sought while at the helm of the multiple Tour de France-winning Team Sky squad and before that on the British Olympic team. It is aiming to find one of the tiny percentage points that can all add up to turn a team's fortunes.

The pursuit of perfection has always been part of motorsport. But Porsche has been given new impetus to achieve it in the pits by the nature of modern sportscar racing. There is less to be gained

on track in an era where the regulations lay down strict criteria for downforce, drag and engine performance, where scope for development is limited and the Balance of Performance then brings the participants closer together again.

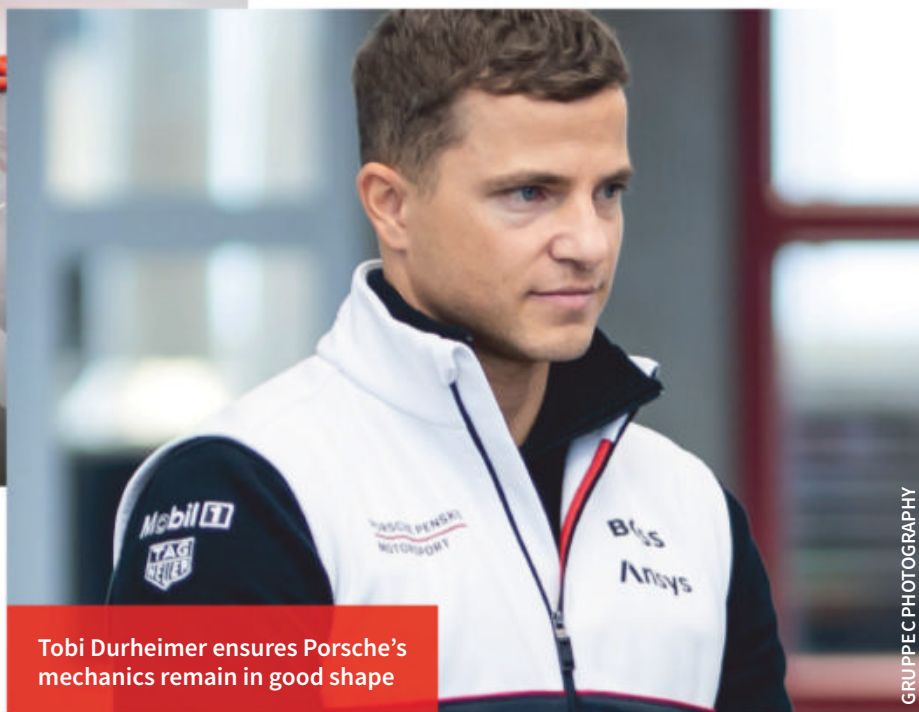
"There's less you can do to differentiate yourself out on the track these days: you can't bring a new bodywork kit to the next race because everything is strictly controlled by homologation," says Urs Kuratle, boss of the 963 LMDh programme at Porsche and before that operations manager of the 919 Hybrid LMP1 WEC squad in 2014-17. "Pitstops have always been an important part of the game, but that's even more the case today."

Porsche set out to find one of the sought-after marginal gains last year when it got its mini Le Mans pitlane up and running after the European arm of PPM moved into its new 4700sq m facility in the wake of the Sebring 1000 Miles season-opener in March. A





A pitstop at Le Mans last year. Only four can work on the car



Tobi Durheimer ensures Porsche's mechanics remain in good shape

*“There is a lot of rotation, which stresses the hips and shoulders the most. So they have to be warm”*

strict routine was set in place during the summer. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the four mechanics (two wheel gunners and two tyre handlers) who are allowed to cross the white line into what is known as the working lane come together at 11:30.

What follows each time isn't just made in the hope that practice will make perfect – it is a carefully analysed session. It only starts, however, after the wheel change mechanics have fully warmed up. That's important, says Tobi Durheimer, business and operations manager of PPM in Mannheim.

“For the wheel changers the actions are undertaken with a low centre of gravity,” Durheimer explains. “There is also a lot of rotation, which stresses the hips and the shoulders the most. So they have to be warm.”

Durheimer points out that the warm-up – which replicates the routine undertaken in the pitbox before a car stops during a race

weekend – is also significant in avoiding injuries. Last year, PPM had to call on members of the spare crew over the course of the race at Le Mans. A car that comes through the 24 Hours at Le Mans without problem or delay will have to make 30-odd pitstops, though not all involving a tyre change.

Each of the three crews will typically undertake two simulated stops back to back before an analysis of each is undertaken. The mock pit has four cameras, one on each corner, and the crew watches back the stops before going again.

“The aim is to give immediate feedback to the mechanics,” explains Durheimer. “During this short break, we can say, ‘At the left front you were moving your hand in that way and not this way, or you were touching the tyre incorrectly’. We look at it with a detailed eye to gain an advantage.”

This year the WEC will visit two circuits – Interlagos and Austin – that run in an anti-clockwise direction. That has resulted in a change of choreography that fits all track layouts. “We wanted the crew to be making the same movements so that we didn't have to change procedures for different tracks,” says Durheimer. “That gives you benefits in terms of training.”

PPM doesn't only practise scheduled pitstops. The same rules limiting the number of mechanics working on the car in pitlane – the four allowed to “intervene” according to the rulebook – apply if it needs to undergo repairs light enough to avoid being pulled back into its box.

“An irregular stop might mean a change of bodywork,” says Durheimer. “As soon as we start doing that, the whole choreography changes. Normally we have two guys for each axle. Once there is a bodywork involved, there will be two mechanics doing the body change and only two on the tyre changes. We're getting pretty fast now changing the nose or the tail.”

The Mannheim facility, described by PPM as a motorsport hub, has its own gym. Training is an important part of the practice regime of the pitstop crews.

“We do a lot of circuit training to improve the heart rate, flexibility and mobility,” explains Durheimer. “The mechanics will have been up for 36 hours by the end of the race at Le Mans, so they have to be able to regulate their bodies even when they are tired. There could be a time when the driver makes a late call to come into the pits, perhaps with a puncture.”

That's what PPM does to hone its skills in the pits, but the question is how much time can it win? It reckons on average it has gained two tenths per stop since this time last year. Not a lot but it all adds up, and PPM insists that it's not finished yet! 🇫🇷





HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

# M PEOPLE – MOVING ON UP?

*Starting one year later than its LMDh rivals means that BMW's WEC Hypercar programme has been mixed so far. But there are reasons to anticipate that its Le Mans return with WRT can be memorable*

JAMES NEWBOLD

**I**t has taken outright victories at the Spa and Nurburgring 24 Hours, the Bathurst 12 Hour and Macau's GT World Cup. There have been countless titles in GT racing, and the honours have kept on coming since its move into prototypes in 2021. Now comes WRT's long-awaited chance to tackle the Le Mans 24 Hours in sportscar racing's top category. And it will do so with an illustrious partner in BMW.

The 2024 race is a significant anniversary for the Bavarian marque: it's 25 years since its famous victory in 1999, when the Schnitzer-run V12 LMR of Yannick Dalmas, Jo Winkelhock and Pierluigi Martini prevailed over Toyota after several fancied manufacturer efforts fell by the wayside. That's a scenario that BMW motorsport boss Andreas Roos would be only too happy to see repeated with the M Hybrid V8 LMDh as the marque embarks on its first attempt at Le Mans since 2019, when its M8s ran in GTE Pro.

"We are really aware of it, it's a great topic," Roos replies when asked to what degree BMW is conscious of the anniversary. "It could be a very nice anniversary after 25 years to be back on the top step once more, so we will try everything to make it happen. But you know how hard it is.

"For sure we want to be on the top step again at some point," he continues, before the downplaying of expectations that has been *de rigueur* since challengers to Toyota began to stack up last year. "But we also have to be realistic."

On paper, there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about

a union that appeared unlikely as recently as 2021, when WRT was shaping up to run Audi's LMDh programme.

Roos was himself heavily involved in that Audi project, which was ultimately canned to make way for the manufacturer's looming entry into Formula 1 with Sauber. As project manager of factory motorsport at Audi, he would under different circumstances be shaping up for a second assault on Le Mans with a car that was set to be based on the same Multimatic LMP2 platform as Porsche's 963.

But fate had a different German manufacturer in store for Roos. WRT's partnership with BMW was announced in 2022, mere months after Roos was appointed to his current role as the replacement for the outgoing Mike Krack, who had become Aston Martin F1 team principal. And after winning a second WEC LMP2 title in three years in 2023, and just missing out on adding to the Le Mans class victory it secured on its debut in 2021, the ace Belgian squad run by Vincent Vosse is stepping up to make its mark in Hypercar. Roos says "the history of WRT speaks for itself", and its strong record in LMP2 can only be beneficial for BMW in its preparations.

"Every lap at Le Mans that you can get with anything, it's experience," points out Vosse, who himself is celebrating the 25th anniversary of his first participation in the 24 Hours at the wheel of a Roock Racing Porsche 911 GT2, which he drove to finish 20th overall in 1999. "It would be better to have already a year's experience with the Hypercar, but that's not the case."

But BMW isn't starting totally from zero. Unlike fellow WEC



The BMW M Hybrid V8 LMDh is all set to thrill fans at Le Mans for the first time

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Vosse debuted at Le Mans in the same year BMW scored its famous overall win



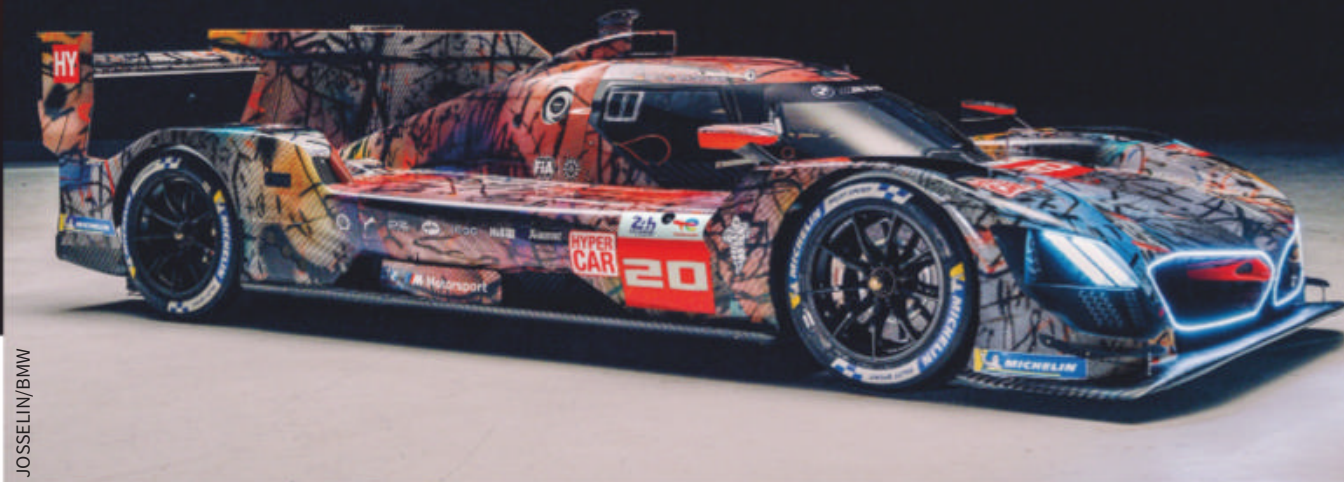
*“Everything went wrong at Spa. We got a lot of penalties and we were at the wrong end of everything”*

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



WRT supremo Vincent Vosse will mastermind BMW's Hypercar attack

The #20 BMW will add to the rich history of Le Mans art cars



JOSSELIN/BMW

top-class newcomers Alpine and Lamborghini (see panels), both embarking upon their first 24-hour races with their respective mounts, BMW can at least draw on a year's worth of running in the IMSA SportsCar Championship with Rahal Letterman Lanigan. It has already notched up a first victory during that period, albeit as the beneficiary of Porsche failing a post-race plank inspection at Watkins Glen last June.

Roos says that having the car now running on both sides of the Atlantic has increased BMW's rate of data-gathering such that it is “generally easier for us now” to identify and quickly iron out problems, although WRT's only 24-hour test at Motorland Aragon was, Vosse admits, “not perfect. The car is reliable when it comes to the main things but there are still sometimes a few gremlins here and there. But everyone has those.”

The WEC season so far has been mixed for BMW. Cadillac's disqualification from the Qatar opener meant the Munich marque emerged with points, but Roos wasn't satisfied with the weekend. “Not everything went perfectly,” he remarks. “We struggled a bit.”

Imola next time out was far more encouraging. Roos says BMW made “a good step” as the #20 crew of Robin Frijns, Rene Rast and Sheldon van der Linde – who will be easy to spot at Le Mans,

running an art car livery created by Julie Mehretu – placed sixth after occupying a place in the top 10 throughout. The sister #15 car of Marco Wittmann, Dries Vanthoor and Raffaele Marciello was out of contention from the off thanks to being caught up in the first-lap Tamburello melee, which required a 54-minute pit visit to repair suspension and bodywork damage. Avoiding such calamity is always crucial in the modern era of the 24 Hours.

“There were a lot of small things which could be improved, and I think we showed already at Imola that we learned a lot after Qatar; we made a lot of improvements,” reflects Roos. But the most recent round at Spa was plagued by “too many mistakes and penalties”, which meant neither car made the top 10. Rast was penalised for contact with Phil Hanson's Jota Porsche, Frijns for passing an LMGT3 car outside track limits, and Marciello for engaging reverse in the pits. “Everything went wrong somehow,” says Rast. “We got a lot of penalties and were always at the wrong end of everything.”

But the treble DTM champion rightly pointed out that “pace-wise, we were in the mix”. Sure enough, Roos reckoned “on pure pace, we again made some steps”, and pointed to the fact that “our cars are fastest in the first sector and fastest in the last sector” as an encouraging sign on the circuit that more closely resembles ▶





Former Audi man Andreas Roos brings a wealth of experience to BMW assault

*“The Le Mans circuit is not technical or difficult... it’s not the end of the world not knowing the track”*



BMW does have some enduro miles under its belt in IMSA competition

Le Mans than any other on the WEC calendar.

Vosse was clear pre-event that WRT would “not be destabilised” by whatever happened at Spa and predicted “we should take another step forward at Le Mans” as its learning curve continues apace. Frijns, part of WRT’s 2021 Le Mans-winning LMP2 line-up that prevailed by 0.7 seconds after the sister car suffered a freak final-lap electrical glitch while leading, notes that “we are still exploring things” on the set-up. “It’s a very complex car to learn,” adds the Dutchman, who calls LMP2 “very basic” by comparison. “A lot more people are involved in it to get the car running smoothly.”

Vosse wisely hasn’t changed WRT’s winning formula too much. The infrastructure and engineers in place “didn’t change massively from what we had in LMP2”, points out Frijns, a team stalwart

whose only season not racing with WRT since 2015 came amid the pandemic-impacted 2020 campaign.

Roos has full faith in his driving line-up, which comprises three event rookies, and regards them as “the perfect combination”. In addition to Frijns, Vanthoor is also a Le Mans class winner – he claimed GTE Am spoils on his event debut in 2017 in a JMW Ferrari 458 – while Rast has a best finish of second in LMP2 from his five Le Mans outings, which include one as part of Audi’s LMP1 roster in 2015. Of those who have not raced at Le Mans, former Mercedes ace Marciello and two-time DTM champion Wittmann are recent winners of the Spa 24 Hours, while van der Linde is a two-time Nurburgring 24 Hours runner-up. Both he and Wittmann have also raced the M Hybrid V8 at Daytona, so are used to the feeling

## ALPINE STAYING ‘HUMBLE’

Alpine produced its most competitive World Endurance Championship performance with its new A424 LMDh at Spa, but that’s not reflected by the results. The ORECA-based car’s best finish remains the seventh place earned on its debut in Qatar thanks to canny fuel strategy, but in Belgium the Signatech-run cars were top 10 contenders from the off.

After cracking Hyperpole for the first time, the #35 machine of Charles Milesi, Paul-Loup Chatin and Jules Gounon placed ninth while the sister #36 entry of Nicolas Lapierre, Mick Schumacher and Matthieu

Vaxiviere got scuppered by pitting just before the red flag and was a lap down at the restart. They finished 12th, but only five drivers set a lap faster than Vaxiviere – and four were in Porsches...

The French team will target a respectable showing at Le Mans, where it hopes that Ferdinand Habsburg will be fully

recovered from fractured vertebrae sustained in a Motorland Aragon test crash that led to reserve driver Gounon filling in at Imola and Spa. But ‘respectable’ is about the summit of its ambitions. Bruno Famin, VP of Alpine Motorsports, is clear that “we have a lot to learn and we’re approaching it in a very humble way. The start

of the season has been quite in line with what we expected: not easy.”

Alpine had a disastrous race at Imola, where both cars were embroiled in a first-corner accident. But even without that, Famin says “the pace was not there”. And although Spa is the WEC circuit with the greatest similarities to Le Mans, it isn’t like-for-like

since the French track is far less abrasive on tyres.

“Ultimately, you only know if you are good when you are at Le Mans,” says Milesi. “And you can only really see it during the race, because you don’t know what the others are doing.”

Famin maintains that “we have to be realistic” given the weight of opposition in the Hypercar category, and identifies finishing with both cars as “the main objective”. Fortunately, he considers reliability “not our main concern” but adds that the competition will need to hit a collective “disaster” in order for the Alpines to land up on the rostrum.







## LAMBORGHINI'S LEARNING MISSION



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

of bringing the Michelin tyre up to temperature from cold in less-than-ideal conditions. That vote of confidence has instilled belief in the crews, the 2022 DTM champion explains.

"Just to have the chance from BMW to take us without experience I think is already hats off to them," van der Linde enthuses. "We know a lot of manufacturers who say, 'You need experience to be here, we can't take you right now, we'd rather take someone who is a bit older and more experienced who has done it before.'"

Van der Linde correctly points out that the vagaries of multi-class racing are "nothing new to us", and the South African doesn't expect to have too much difficulty finding his way around the Circuit de la Sarthe: "I haven't driven there before, but I think there are more difficult tracks to learn."

Vosse doesn't expect it to be a significant impediment either. "It's not technical, it's not difficult," he reckons. "It's always nice to have experience at Le Mans, but it's not the end of the world not knowing the track."

So what will be possible? There is encouragement to be taken from Cadillac's showing last year, not only as the leading LMDh entrant at the finish, but also because it showed excellent pace with its Dallara-based chassis. BMW has Dallara as a chassis partner, which Roos says is "a positive thing". "I don't see any reason why we should be less competitive than the Caddy last year," muses Vosse, before cautioning that "when you compare to last year, the level is even higher". Setting expectations isn't straightforward while the Balance of Performance remains unclear. "It's tough to set any goals because you never know what to expect," Vosse expands. "You can do a great race and finish 10th, but you can also do a great race and finish third."

There's a recognition that emulating Ferrari last year by winning at the first attempt will be a tall order. "We know that it will be tough to fight for the win," predicts Vosse.

"You can't force a win at Le Mans," agrees Roos, who as head of track engineering on Audi's LMP1 programme from 2012 until it ceased in 2016 tasted Le Mans success three times. "You need a good team, you need fast drivers, you need a reliable car, you need a fast car, and then you need a big portion of luck."

But for all the downplaying, Roos acknowledges "we have the ingredients" to put on a good show. And at Le Mans, things can change quickly. "To beat the competition today, which is set by the three – Toyota, Porsche, Ferrari – it's going to be tough," says Vosse. "But you never know."

And if anyone should know how unpredictable Le Mans can be, after its 2021 experience, it's WRT... 🇫🇷

Lamborghini has yet to crack the top 10 in the World Endurance Championship with its single-car SC63 LMDh fielded by Iron Lynx. The Ligier-based car's development was set back by a test crash at Paul Ricard, and motorsport boss Giorgio Sanna's unexpected departure hardly helped matters.

Sanna's role is being performed on an interim basis by chief technical officer Rouven Mohr, who admits that prior to the Qatar opener "we had more or less two performance tests".

The WEC entry assigned to Edoardo Mortara, Mirko Bortolotti and Daniil Kvyat has a best finish of 12th to date. This came at Imola before a rear axle problem at Spa led to the car's first retirement.

Preparation for Le Mans isn't helped by the fact that Lamborghini's second entry there only races part-time, in the IMSA SportsCar Championship's enduros.

Le Mans will in fact be just the second race in the SC63 for Romain Grosjean and Matteo Cairoli (Andrea Caldarelli got a third when he replaced Mortara at Spa due to a Formula E clash) after an encouraging run to seventh at Sebring.

Running two cars for the first time will be a bigger challenge, says Iron Lynx boss Andrea Piccini. "Two cars is not just double the work. It's probably four times more. Concentrating on just one car, which we've done until now, is one thing. Having two to manage will require a much bigger effort. The first thing will be to get to the end with both."

Piccini makes no bones that Iron Lynx is "learning race after race" as it grapples with the nuances of a car "more complicated to manage" than

**"WE WOULD BE ARROGANT TO THINK WE CAN FIGHT FOR THE WIN OR PODIUM"**

the ORECA-Gibson 07 its partner team Prema ran last year in LMP2. But he's hopeful that the additional testing at Le Mans will help Lamborghini get closer to the pack. Piccini points out that "so far the track where we were most competitive was Imola, which was the only track where we had tested". Still, targets are modest: "It would be nice to get at least a top-10 finish. We would be arrogant to think we can fight for the win or the podium. This isn't realistic."



Felipe Drugovich is on the F1 sidelines, but that doesn't mean he isn't busy. Now a tasty chance at Le Mans awaits

HYPERCAR

LMP2

GTE AM

# THE CHALLENGE OF GOING FROM VIRTUAL TO REALITY

*Aston Martin F1 reserve Felipe Drugovich will be making his Le Mans 24 Hours debut this year – sort of...*

STEPHEN LICKORISH

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES





Victory at Le Mans in 2023!  
Crowd looks a bit thin though...

**G** lance at this year's Le Mans 24 Hours entry list, and the number of past overall race winners in the Hypercar ranks alone is pretty staggering. Obviously, there is Ferrari's triumphant trio from 2023 seeking to retain their crown. Then five of the six Toyota drivers enjoyed success during the period when the Japanese manufacturer faced limited opposition. Elsewhere, Porsche has the likes of Andre Lotterer and Nick Tandy in its line-ups, Chip Ganassi Cadillac boasts Earl Bamber, and even Peugeot has Loic Duval. And so the list goes on.

Aside from the obvious, there is also a Le Mans conqueror of a very different kind among the crew of the #311 Action Express Cadillac V-Series.R LMDh. Aston Martin Formula 1 reserve Felipe Drugovich has twice won the virtual version of the race, topping the 2022 and 2023 editions of the contest for Max Verstappen's ace Redline squad in a computer-generated ORECA-Gibson 07. The most recent of those wins came alongside IndyCar star Felix Rosenqvist and sim racing aces Chris Lulham and Luke Bennett, while Formula E driver Oliver Rowland was among those in the line-up the previous year.

But 2022 Formula 2 champion Drugovich's desire to tackle the Circuit de la Sarthe for real long predates his Esports excellence. "It was the other way round," he states when asked whether his virtual victories fired his ambitions. "I always had the dream to race in real life – but, when I could, I did the virtual one."

Now he has the chance to put that simulator success into practice and tame the 8.5-mile circuit for real. Drugovich readily admits to believing that the virtual world is far from a 100% accurate depiction of the real race, but still thinks his online experience will come in handy when he heads out on track.

"It helps a lot in tyre management and traffic management," the 24-year-old reckons. "In a race with 60 cars, you're always going to be passing people so you need to lose the least time, but you can't take too many risks."

He therefore believes that you can learn a lot from the virtual race when it comes to choosing the best places to make those overtakes. And he also feels it has been very useful in introducing him to the mindset needed to succeed in a 24-hour marathon rather than a single-seater sprint. "Endurance racing, especially a 24-hour race, it really takes a different mentality to win it," Drugovich continues. "You need to take a bit of extra care than in other races – the mentality is similar in both real and virtual."

And, just because he was essentially tackling the online races for fun, there was certainly no lack of preparation beforehand. "We did it in a very relaxed way but, at the same time, it took quite

*"You need to take a bit of extra care than in other races – the mentality is similar in both real and virtual"*

a good bit of preparation," he explains. "These virtual races, we probably do a lot more laps in preparation than in real life. You prepare for two weeks or even a month before."

Now Drugovich is getting ready for a different sort of challenge. And, although he may be a 'real world' Le Mans rookie, next weekend's race will not be his first in real sportscars. The Brazilian has been competing in the European Le Mans Series this year with Vector Sport in its ORECA LMP2 machine alongside Ryan Cullen and Stephane Richelmi.

He is relishing learning the new discipline, even if he is less enthused about the pair of 10th places the Vector crew has so far managed after encountering a few bumps along the way. "I've really enjoyed these couple of races I did in ELMS," Drugovich says. "They didn't go well for us – we were struggling quite a lot as a team. It's a different environment sharing a car in a team – it's different but it's also nice."

As he continues to sit on the F1 sidelines, waiting for an opportunity to arise, the ELMS was a deliberate choice for ▶







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Drugovich's sportscar bow. Its short six-event schedule does not pose too many F1 clashes, which means it doesn't interfere heavily with his Aston Martin duties.

Le Mans was never part of that deal, but the legendary enduro was certainly in the back of Drugovich's mind and he was optimistic that his move into sportscars could open a few doors. And, sure enough, Cadillac came calling when Tom Blomqvist's IndyCar commitments left him unable to pilot the #311 with team regulars Jack Aitken and Pipo Derani as planned. But, before finalising the agreement, the American marque wanted its next potential star to sample the V-Series.R, and so Drugovich completed a test at Laguna Seca.

"That was quite a hard test – it was also a test for them preparing for the Laguna race and I only had two runs on the whole day," he states. "It was tough to get to know the car."

But from his limited running, Drugovich was still able to get a flavour of the Cadillac. "It's actually one of the most difficult cars I've ever driven," he continues, admitting that many people do not realise that the LMP2 machinery he has become used to actually boasts more downforce. "It's very difficult to drive because it's a very heavy car with a lot of horsepower and very low downforce compared to a P2 – it has a lot lower downforce. It's very tricky to drive but it's fun. The Cadillac with the V8 engine is very, very nice – the sound is amazing."

Only around 30 laps were completed on that "tough" day, so Drugovich recognises he still has a lot of learning to do in the build-up to the 24 Hours, but he does not want that to hold him back. "It's a long track and it takes a bit of time to understand it and how the tyres work as well," he says. "It's going to be hard to understand the car and the track together, but I'm very much looking forward to getting to grips with it and making the most out of it. In a race like this you just need to bring the car home in one piece. It's going to be hard but I'm really aiming to be at the front."

And Drugovich certainly believes he is part of a competitive entry, even if Cadillac has not exactly shone in the 2024 World Endurance Championship to date, given Aitken's and Derani's pace in the IMSA SportsCar Championship so far this year. "They've been really fast – in the first four IMSA races, they were on pole in three of them and second in the other one," he adds. "They had a messy Sebring [where Derani escaped injury after spectacularly crashing out of the lead, having clipped a GTD Ferrari] but they were fighting for the win in Daytona and very close in Long Beach and Laguna. I think they're on for a win and hopefully it's going to be at Le Mans."

They're good guys – it's always fun to have a Brazilian in the team, and I've known



Whelen Caddy led the way at Sebring before disaster struck

*"It's very difficult to drive: heavy with a lot of horsepower and low downforce compared to LMP2. Tricky, but fun"*

Jack from when we raced in F2."

Clearly Drugovich is excited to be part of such a line-up and, although he repeatedly insists that F1 remains the ultimate goal, he still would like this outing to be more than just a one-off. "It would be an alternative [to F1]," he says of a hypothetical future in sportscars with Cadillac. "Let's wait and see how it's going to be but I think it's an amazing brand. GM is such a massive company and they've got a very good car, they've got a good team working for them and they've always been really fast. I would be very happy to keep driving with them and hearing that V8 noise!"

But, above all else, he is just grateful for the chance to tackle Le Mans for real – and especially as part of a competitive top-tier Hypercar class as he battles that long list of past winners. "I'm really thankful for Action Express Racing, Whelen and Cadillac for the opportunity," he concludes. "It's not all the time they put a driver who's never been to Le Mans in the top category in a factory team, but I'm very thankful for the trust in me."

His past virtual Le Mans success is just one of a wealth of factors behind that trust. Now Drugovich just needs to prove that he is the real Le Mans deal and replicate the skill behind his virtual victories on the most unforgiving of true-life stages. 🇫🇷



Aston's reserve remains focused on an F1 future



KYFFIN SIMPSON



Quinn has already proved his pace in LMP2



Daytona outing helped Simpson get used to traffic



HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

# THE NEW FACES AMONG LE MANS' OLDEST CLASS

*The cars in LMP2 may not be the youngest in the 2024 field, but the category is still proving to be a launchpad for drivers trying to break into sportscar competition*

STEPHEN LICKORISH

**W**ith the Hypercar category continuing to attract exciting fresh entries in its fourth year and the new LMGT3 class sparking plenty of interest, LMP2 is very much the old stager among the Le Mans 24 Hours' current divisions. After all, the present generation of machinery was first introduced in 2017. But, while the class may be a little longer in the tooth than the others, there are still scores of Circuit de la Sarthe rookies who have been attracted to LMP2's ranks for 2024.

One of those is IndyCar racer Kyffin Simpson. The 19-year-old Caymanian finished 21st on his Indianapolis 500 bow last month with Chip Ganassi Racing, and his first bite of sportscar action last year featured a title-winning European Le Mans Series campaign as part of Algarve Pro Racing's entry. Now he is adding to an already very busy schedule – which has also featured a Daytona 24 Hours LMP2 outing with DragonSpeed – by joining Fabio Scherer and David Heinemeier Hansson in Nielsen Racing's Le Mans line-up. "It was supposed to be my one weekend off in a very

long period of racing, but to go to Le Mans, it's worth it!" he laughs. "I would love to win Le Mans, that's a goal of mine."

Simpson's preparations for his first Le Mans attack are not exactly ideal. With his focus on IndyCar, he will be at Road America this weekend for the latest round instead of taking part in the official Le Mans Test Day: "It will be a pretty big disadvantage considering I will be missing out on some valuable track time. But I will still have other practice sessions and I'm not too worried because we'll have 24 hours of racing to get up to speed!"

Fortunately, Simpson says switching between the seemingly very different Dallara IndyCar and the ORECA LMP2 challenger is not as tricky as you would expect. "I don't find it too difficult, luckily," he states. "The LMP2 car and the IndyCar are kind of similar in a lot of ways. How they feel to drive is very similar to me and they both have carbon brakes, so it's not like switching brake packages."

"The biggest challenge is probably just getting accustomed to the size and remembering where the edge of the car is at all times."





Simpson finds IndyCar Dallara similar to LMP2



ALEX QUINN

Obviously, you sit on the left side of the car in the LMP2, whereas the IndyCar you're sat right in the middle, so it's just remembering all that and being accustomed to being a bit further to the left."

While that's not a challenge faced by fellow Le Mans rookie Alex Quinn, the ex-British Formula 4 and FRenault Eurocup race winner – who played a key part in PR1/Mathiasen Motorsports' IMSA LMP2 title last year – does still have some adapting to do. At a recent Paul Ricard test with TF Sport, he found out the true impact of restricting the Gibson motor by 40bhp and the car becoming 20kg heavier for the category's Le Mans specification. "It was a bit of a shock," says the 23-year-old, who got the TF drive courtesy of the squad's partnership with AO Racing, with which he drove in the Daytona 24 Hours this January. "It felt like a completely different car."

"The key is going to be the first couple of practice sessions, getting out and up to speed as quick as I can without any mistakes," adds Quinn, who works on his family's farm when not racing.

Yet the TF ORECA is not the car that Quinn originally expected to be racing this year. He had agreed a deal to drive for United Autosports alongside Ben Keating in IMSA for 2024 when he was unexpectedly upgraded from a silver driver to a gold. Quinn describes that as being "a bit stressful at the time because we had everything sorted". Fortunately, he was able to find an alternative ride at Algarve Pro in the ELMS. But that unforeseen shift of plan

means Quinn is now partnered by Louis Deletraz for his Le Mans debut. The Swiss came within a lap of class victory in 2021 before throttle sensor failure robbed him in the cruellest manner possible, and he has since twice finished runner-up.

"There's a lot to learn and I'm in a fortunate position I've got Louis as a team-mate and he's a very quick driver," says Quinn. "It's very helpful having Louis as a team-mate and he's giving me the things I need to learn, like the slow zones and how to manage your time during the race weekend because it's so busy."

Simpson is also in the position of having team-mates with excellent Le Mans pedigree. Scherer triumphed last year in dramatic circumstances, after having his foot run over by a Corvette in the pits in the early stages. "I think I'm going to have to lean on their experience a lot to get myself up to speed," says Simpson. "As soon as I get there, I'm going to jump right into all the videos and data and everything they've learned over the previous weekend. Having them and all their experience [Heinemeier Hansson has tackled LMP2 at Le Mans eight times] will help me a lot."

He believes that mastering the intricacies of the 8.5-mile track is likely to pose the sternest test for his debut outing. "It's such a long track, there's so many difficult sections to figure out, and just figuring out how the traffic flows there as well is going to be interesting," he predicts. "Being in the middle class, you'll have people passing you but you'll also have to be passing a lot."

Simpson therefore says learning how to deal with the inevitable traffic is just one of the many useful lessons that can be drawn from practice on the simulator, something Quinn also cites as being an incredibly important tool. Ultimately, both have already demonstrated they know what it takes to win in LMP2, and are now keen to prove they can overcome their lack of experience and show how the old class has plenty of exciting new talent in its ranks. 🇫🇷

*"Being in the middle class, you'll have people passing you but you'll also have to be passing a lot"*



HYPERCAR LMP2 LMGT3

# McLAREN'S LONG ROAD BACK TO LE MANS

*Nearly 30 years since its famous debut win at the 24 Hours,  
McLaren returns as the stars align. Why has it taken so long?*

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  motorsport  
IMAGES



JEP





Kerb your enthusiasm: advent of GT3LM has paved the way for McLaren's first WEC entry this year

**M**claren is back at the Le Mans 24 Hours, 29 years after the F1 GTR's first-time-out, against-the-odds victory in 1995 – and 26 since a car bearing its name took part in the great race. Yet probably more significant are the 13 years since its sportscars started racing again in the international GT arena in 2011. It's taken a long time for one of the most famous names in motor racing to once again grace the grid for the French enduro. The absence finally ends with a trio of 720S GT3 Evos entered in the new-for-2024 LMGT3 class this year.

McLaren relaunched as a maker of road-going sportscars in 2009. Deliveries of the first fruit of what had become McLaren Automotive – as opposed to McLaren Cars in the days of the F1 – kicked off in 2011, the same year that the MP4-12C hit the track in a short schedule of races ahead of its full release the following season. The MP4-12C racer and its successors were built to the GT3 regulations, and it has taken until 2024 for the door to be opened to machinery from that class at Le Mans after a two-year phase-out of GTE.

It was perfect timing for McLaren. It had brought out an updated or evo version of the 720S GT3 at the start of 2023, and also launched the new McLaren Trophy one-make series for its Artura and 570S GT4-spec racers last year. Then its attention turned to Le Mans and the World Endurance Championship. "The timing was right," says Michael McDonagh, director of McLaren Special Operations and Motorsport. "I think the stars did align. When GT3 was allowed in, it was the perfect opportunity."

McDonagh suggests that McLaren should be racing at Le Mans and in the wider WEC against its competitors in the marketplace, the likes of Ferrari, Porsche, Aston Martin and Lamborghini. Its "peer group" is his description. "Le Mans is very important to us," he says. "It was the last piece in the jigsaw that gave us the triple crown [of wins at the Monaco Grand Prix, the Indianapolis 500 and the French enduro] so it is special to go back there."

A desire to go back has always been there in the Automotive era, before and after its GT3 and GT4 programmes were brought in-house in 2017. The first two McLaren GT3 racers, the 12C and the 650S, were developed independently under licence by Andrew Kirkaldy's CRS Racing squad, which spawned the Garage 59 team. It had a look at GTE early in the 12C programme when the FIA announced in 2012 that it would be merging the class with GT3. An engine development programme was started at Ilmor, though it was one that never reached the test bench before ►

*"Le Mans is very important to us. It was the last piece in the jigsaw that gave us the triple crown"*



McLaren's first GT3 racer arrived way back in 2011



the FIA dropped its plan. There was also a 650S GTE project that never made it off the drawing board.

The McLaren Senna was conceived as a both a trackday car and a GTE racer. That was plain to see when the car was unveiled at the Geneva motor show early in 2018: the car incorporated the 'leader' lights, which show when a car is running in the top three in class. McLaren has never talked publicly about its original aspirations for the Senna.

Finally, McLaren is back at Le Mans, with the GT3 Evos. That's how the manufacturer refers to the car now that it's launched the 750S, a kind of facelift-plus 720S. Two are fielded by United Autosports, which is contesting the full WEC, and one from the IMSA SportsCar Championship run by Optimum Motorsport under the Inception Racing banner. McDonagh stresses that the marque doesn't have a "God-given right to be there", despite its history at the race and its long involvement in GT3. The comment is a nod

*"We laid out our intentions, that it wouldn't be a one-off, that McLaren was intending to come back for good"*

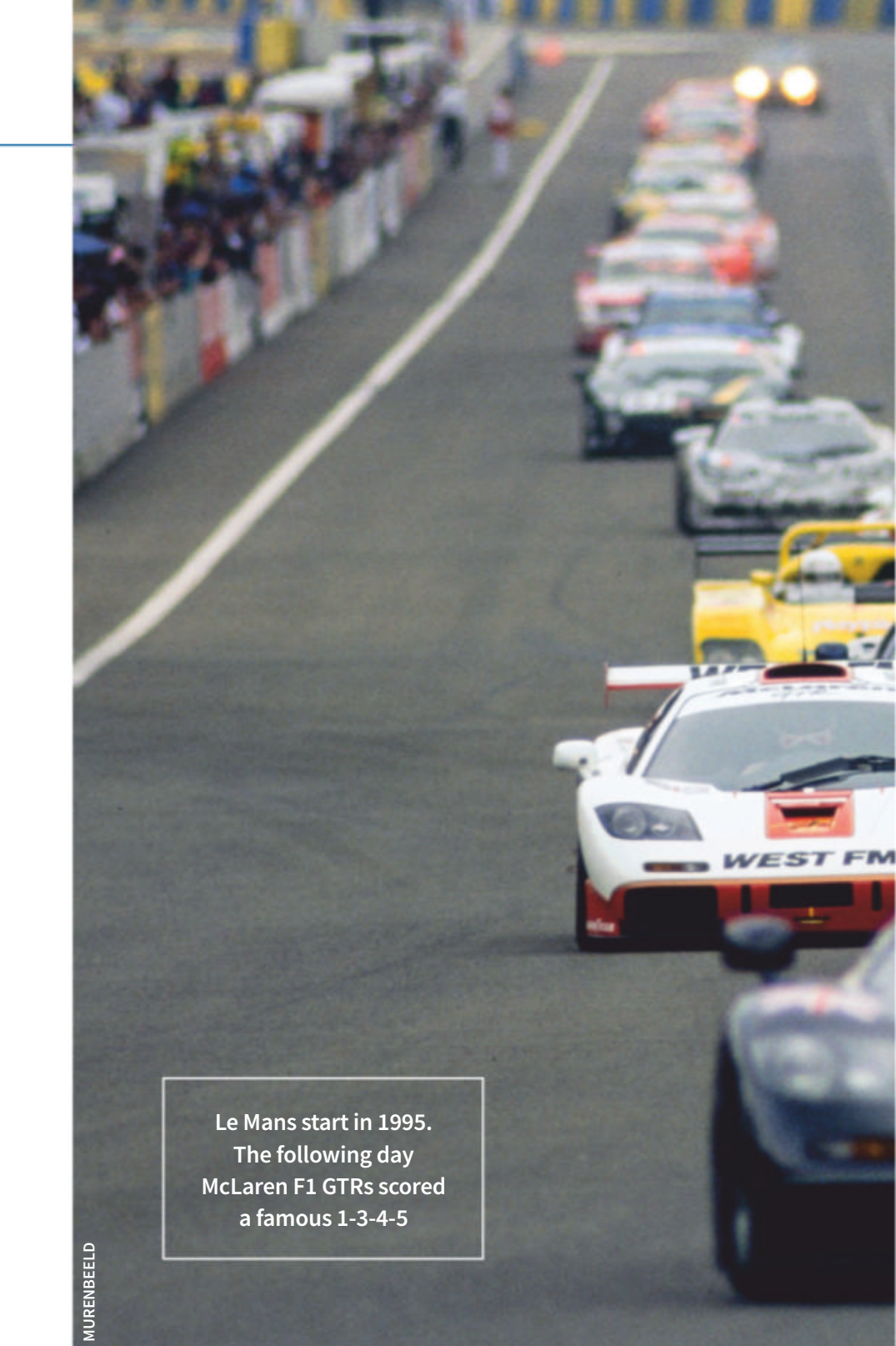
to the process McLaren had to go through to join the WEC grid.

McLaren found itself down the pecking order when it came to gaining an entry into the WEC. Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, which runs the WEC with the FIA, made it clear that those manufacturers involved in the Hypercar class of the series would be given priority.

That meant Ferrari, Porsche, BMW and Lamborghini, as well as Toyota and Cadillac sister marques Lexus and Chevrolet, had first dibs on what were to be two-car entries. Next up were long-time WEC participants Aston Martin and Ford, which was allowed to take the wraps off its new-for-2024 Mustang GT3 at Le Mans last year. It was unclear a year ago whether there would be space for another manufacturer. If there was, it appeared that McLaren was one of three candidates along with Mercedes and Audi.

McDonagh and his colleagues met with the ACO at Le Mans last year to make their case. "We laid out our intentions, that it wouldn't be a one-off," he says. "We made it clear that McLaren was intending to come back and to come back for good."

There was still a lot of work to be done; McLaren wouldn't find out whether its pitch had been successful until the same time, more or less, as the rest of the world on the publication of the 2024 WEC entry list right at the end of November. McLaren made its entry having announced at the start of the previous month that United Autosports would be its WEC partner. It was a significant



Le Mans start in 1995.  
The following day  
McLaren F1 GTRs scored  
a famous 1-3-4-5

MURENBELD

move given the Anglo-American squad's long and successful involvement in the LMP2 class of the series: it won the P2 title in 2019-20, and took category honours at Le Mans in the second of those years. The Leeds-based team had been set to disappear from the WEC along with the secondary prototype class. It had announced in June that the P2 WEC team would be switching over to the IMSA SportsCar Championship, but had never hid its aspirations to say involved in WEC, neither publicly nor in its dialogue with the ACO.

"We have a long history with the ACO in the WEC and the European and Asian Le Mans Series: we have won the ELMS, WEC and Le Mans and have been ever-present at the 24 Hours since 2017," says United boss Richard Dean. "I like to think we played



McDonagh says "Le Mans is very important" to McLaren

McLAREN



Dean reckons United was crucial to McLaren's entry success

JEP





a part in swinging the decision in McLaren's favour."

United was one of four teams that pitched for the right to run the WEC McLarens. They have never been confirmed by the manufacturer, but it can be revealed that the other three were Optimum, the Garage 59 squad that takes its name from the race number of the Le Mans-winning Kokusai Kaihatsu F1 GTR, and longtime Porsche entrant Project 1, which subsequently closed its doors over the winter.

McDonagh is insistent that Zak Brown, boss of McLaren Racing and also the co-owner of United, played no part in its decision. Both he and Dean point out the distinction between McLaren Automotive and McLaren Racing, which encompasses the Formula 1, Formula E and IndyCar teams.

"Zak wasn't even part of the discussions," says McDonagh. "We met with each individual team and we had internal criteria of how we would measure those teams and how they would work with McLaren, and United Autosports regardless of Zak came out on top. We selected them on their capabilities."

With confirmation of a potential entry only set to come out in late November, and the first round of the 2024 WEC in Qatar on the first weekend of March, McLaren and United had no choice but to start working on the project in anticipation of gaining entries. For McLaren that meant adapting the 720S to the differences between the LMGT3 and pure FIA GT3 rulesets, and for United recruiting staff – personnel from the P2 WEC team having largely moved over to run its cars in IMSA – and putting its budget and driver line-ups in place.

When McLaren joined the relevant technical working groups during the second quarter of last year, the idea of LMGT3 running what the ACO had dubbed "premium kits" – bodywork revisions to distinguish them from regular GT3 cars – was still on the table. That option quickly disappeared, but the rules for the WEC and ►




## **DID YOU KNOW?**

The F1 GTR wasn't the first McLaren to venture out on the hallowed asphalt of the Circuit de la Sarthe during Le Mans week. But 1995 was the race debut for the marque in the 24 Hours because the only previous attempt on the race by one of its cars ended in non-qualification by a massive margin.

The car that attempted to make the cut in 1981 was a McLaren, though most definitely a 'bitza' special. It was dubbed an M6 GT after the stillborn road car project that was canned following company founder Bruce McLaren's death in 1970 and did have the correct bodywork. But it was built around a monocoque from an M12 Can-Am Group 7 racer – a car borne of the M6 – that had been raced by John Surtees among others and powered by a 5.7-litre Chevrolet engine.

Put together by Z&W Enterprises for Canadian racer Paul Canary, the car didn't distinguish itself on track with drivers Herve Regout and Michel Elkoubi. It failed to break five minutes, more than 90 seconds off the pole, and failed to qualify.





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its associate series lay down a different and slightly smaller aerodynamic window to FIA GT3. More significant was incorporating the mandatory driveshaft torque sensors that control power output in LMGT3.

"We had those parts running on our development car in October," says McLaren Motorsport chief engineer Malcolm Gerrish. "We had to commit before we had the entries in place. The clever bit is what is behind the sensors, how we integrate them with all the systems on the car. It is not the work of a moment. There was a commitment from McLaren that we had to do it properly."

*"It took a lot of work to get here, but I'm happy with the driver line-ups we've ended up with"*

Dean reckons United had to "get creative" in piecing together its budget and driver line-up. There are no stars from the McLaren factory roster on its squad, nor the support that comes with the loan of a driver for the pro slot in a pro-am LMGT3 crew. Each of the other eight manufacturers racing in the class in WEC has placed at least one contracted driver with its team. "There's no doubt some of the other manufacturers have bigger chequebooks," says McDonagh.

Nicolas Costa, the silver-rated driver in the #59 entry, came into United's focus on the recommendation of ex-Formula 1 driver Taki Inoue. He'd seen the Brazilian race with his old mate Vincenzo Sospiri's sportscar team and reckoned he would be ideal for one of United's silver seats. The team gave him a try-out at Estoril before Christmas. He impressed and then, says Dean, "it was a case of working with him and his sponsors to make it happen".

"It took a lot of work to get here, but I'm happy with the line-ups we've ended up with," continues Dean. "I reckon we can match anyone out there in terms of our professionals, silvers and bronzes." 🇫🇷



## THE F1 GTR'S SURPRISE LAST HURRAH

Everyone remembers McLaren's winning debut at Le Mans in 1995, but a run of top-six results continued as the F1 race project wound down. Two long-tail McLaren F1 GTRs were on the entry for the 24 Hours in 1998, and one of them came away with fourth place in a year of massive manufacturer involvement. It was almost as much of a shock as the outright victory three years before.

The BMW-engined McLaren wasn't close to the pace of the new breed of GT1 machinery from Toyota, Porsche and Mercedes, nor the fastest of the open-top LMP

prototypes – the two McLarens in the race qualified 15 seconds off pole. More to the point, the privateer McLaren that came home in among the factories had a 57-year-old amateur among its drivers.

Steve O'Rourke, the manager of Pink Floyd who was an enthusiastic sportscar driver and entrant, had bought one of the 1997-spec F1 GTRs raced by the BMW factory Schnitzer team the previous year to field at both Le Mans and in the British GT Championship with the GTC Competition squad. Regular driving partner Tim Sugden and BMW-contracted Bill

Auberlen, whose deal with the team included the loan of a fresh six-litre V12 from his employer, were his team-mates.

They would end up driving more than 22 of the 24 hours between them. O'Rourke started the race, rattled down the barriers on the exit of Indianapolis, taking off a mirror, and only got back in for a further stint on Sunday morning. Legend has it that late on when a strong result looked on, he sidled up to team manager Michael Cane to ask if he could have another go. The reply was reputedly short and sweet: "Do you want to finish fourth?"

O'Rourke's early misdemeanour apart, the McLaren had a near-faultless race – it spent less time in the pits than any other car. And it was much nearer to the pace in race conditions than qualifying, recalls Sugden.

"The factory cars didn't go anything like as fast as in qualifying, but we were able to do very similar times," says the Brit. "I remember at the end one of the

**"STEVE O'ROURKE STARTED THE RACE AND RATTLED THE BARRIER AT INDIANAPOLIS"**

Nissan R390s was trying to catch us, but we were able to maintain a gap. I think they'd pretty much given up by the end."

There was one final twist, however. The GTC McLaren with Sugden at the wheel wouldn't restart at its final stop. The battery had gone flat, but as quick as a flash it was replaced by the chief mechanic.

"He told me afterwards for a reason that he couldn't explain that he'd gone and got a spare battery and the tools to fit it just before the final stop," says Sugden. "It was kind of serendipitous."





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# CLASS OF 2024 AT A GLANCE

GARY WATKINS, STEPHEN LICKORISH AND JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP 

## HYPERCAR



The top class brings together bespoke Le Mans Hypercars (four-wheel-drive hybrids and front-axle hybrids in the case of Isotta) that have been eligible to race at Le Mans since 2021, plus the LMDh prototypes that debuted last year. These are based on an LMP2 spine and incorporate a spec rear-axle hybrid system built by Williams Advanced Engineering, Bosch and Xtrac. The two philosophies are equalised under a subtly different Balance of Performance system for 2024. All cars use Michelin tyres.

## LMP2



Squeezed out of the World Endurance Championship by Hypercar’s booming popularity, LMP2 is the secondary prototype division for privateers running off-the-peg chassis produced by one of four constructors and powered by the spec Gibson V8. ORECA’s 07 fills out the entire grid for a second straight year, with the bulk of entries taken from the European Le Mans Series. Goodyear is the sole tyre supplier. Regular P2 line-ups must have at least one silver-rated driver, and Pro-Am entries a bronze.

## LMGT3



New-for-2024 class replacing GTE Am means GT3 cars, which are designed to be customer-focused and have ABS, get a long-awaited debut in the main event at Le Mans. Five manufacturers without eligible GTE cars have joined the grid alongside the four who were present last year. As before, all entrants are pro-am crews normally made up of one pro sharing with one silver and one bronze-rated driver under the FIA ranking system. All cars run on Goodyear tyres.



CADILLAC RACING (GANASSI) Cadillac V-Series.R

- 2 Earl **Bamber**  
Alex **Lynn**  
Alex **Palou**
- 3 Sebastien **Bourdais**  
Renger **van der Zande**  
Scott **Dixon**

Chip Ganassi Racing masterminds a one-car WEC assault for a second and final season: it will be parting ways with the General Motors marque at the end of 2023. Also like last year, the squad grows to two cars for Le Mans with the addition of its North American entry. But there is one change to the driver line-up across the two V-Series.R LMDhs developed with Dallara. IndyCar champion Palou comes into the full-season WEC entry alongside Bamber and Lynn, who are driving as a duo in the six-hour races. IMSA regulars Bourdais and van der Zande are again joined by IndyCar legend Dixon.



AUTOSPORT SAYS Third and fourth last year and a strong performance at Spa suggests Ganassi can take the fight to Ferrari, Porsche et al.

PORSCHE PENSKE MOTORSPORT Porsche 963

- 4 Mathieu **Jaminet**  
Felipe **Nasr**  
Nick **Tandy**
- 5 Matt **Campbell**  
Michael **Christensen**  
Frederic **Makowiecki**
- 6 Kevin **Estre**  
Andre **Lotterer**  
Laurens **Vanthoor**

The factory Penske team again runs three cars – it’s playing the numbers game that has worked for Porsche in the past by bolstering its two-car WEC squad with one of its IMSA entries. The WEC line-up has been tweaked, with Campbell swapping from the American programme to drive #5 and Cameron going the other way. The additional car is again handled by Tandy, Nasr and Jaminet (odd man out Cameron is the Le Mans reserve). The 963 LMDh, developed in conjunction with Multimatic, is unchanged from last year, but PPM on both sides of the Atlantic has got a handle on how to make it work on a range of circuits.



AUTOSPORT SAYS Daytona victory and competitive WEC showings every time out prove that Porsche is now ready to win.

TOYOTA GAZOO RACING Toyota GR010 HYBRID

- 7 Mike **Conway**  
Kamui **Kobayashi**  
Nyck **de Vries**
- 8 Sebastien **Buemi**  
Brendon **Hartley**  
Ryo **Hirakawa**

Toyota is back for a fourth crack at Le Mans with the GR010 LMH, but the difference this time is that it is not the defending winner after losing out to Ferrari last year. The car that took the drivers’ and manufacturers’ crowns in the first three years of the WEC Hypercar era is unchanged after undergoing significant revisions for 2022 and 2023. There’s one change in the driving roster, however. De Vries takes the seat earmarked for him in 2023 before he got what turned out to be a short-lived F1 opportunity with AlphaTauri. The Dutchman joins Kobayashi and Conway in place of Jose Maria Lopez.



AUTOSPORT SAYS Luck was involved in its Imola victory, but Toyota remains the king of Le Mans with five wins in six years.



HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

**ISOTTA FRASCHINI (DUQUEINE)** Isotta Fraschini Tipo 6 LMH Competizione

**11** Jean-Karl **Vernay**  
 Carl **Bennett**  
 Antonio **Serravalle**

A manufacturer whose limousines were once the vehicle of choice for Hollywood stars is relaunching after a 50-year hiatus with a new LMH and a WEC campaign. Technically Isotta has got everything it needs in place: Michelotto Engineering, for so long the force behind Ferrari's GT successes, has developed the Tipo 6 and brought in a line of top-notch partners. WAE Technologies and HWA, the architect of Mercedes' successes in the DTM, are among them. A late switch from the British Vector team to Duqueine was made for financial reasons, which explains the presence of Serravalle and Bennett alongside Vernay.



**AUTOSPORT SAYS** A finish and a clean race must be Isotta's first targets – evidence is mixed so far on whether it can achieve that.

**HERTZ TEAM JOTA** Porsche 963

**12** Will **Stevens**  
 Callum **Ilott**  
 Norman **Nato**

**38** Jenson **Button**  
 Oliver **Rasmussen**  
 Phil **Hanson**

A stalwart of the sportscar ranks, with 10 Le Mans podiums in LMP2 to its name, made the step up to the Hypercar ranks last year with a single Porsche 963 backed by car hire giant Hertz. The clearly stated ambition was to expand to two LMDhs in 2024 and Jota has delivered on its promise – and brought in a star name to drive the car. Button makes his third Le Mans start as part of a full WEC campaign alongside P2 graduate Hanson, class world champion in 2019-20, and Rasmussen. Stevens continues a long relationship with the British team and is joined in what has so far been the lead car by Ilott and Nato.



**AUTOSPORT SAYS** It's not just the Spa win that makes Jota a dark horse – it has been a contender almost from the get-go with the 963.

**BMW M TEAM WRT** BMW M Hybrid V8

**15** Dries **Vanthoor**  
 Raffaele **Marciello**  
 Marco **Wittmann**

**20** Sheldon **van der Linde**  
 Robin **Frijns**  
 Rene **Rast**

BMW is back at Le Mans gunning for overall victory as a factory after 25 years away. This is the maiden WEC campaign for its M Hybrid V8 LMDh, developed together with Dallara, in the WEC after a year in IMSA with the Rahal squad: a two-pronged effort in year one would have been over-ambitious given the car didn't run until late July 2022. The Belgian WRT team, so successful in the GT3 arena with Audi, runs the cars in WEC after making its mark in LMP2 from 2021. The driving roster boasts WRT stalwarts Vanthoor, Rast and Frijns, and BMW regulars Wittmann and van der Linde, while Marciello is a star incomer.



**AUTOSPORT SAYS** An upward trajectory since the start of the season suggests that BMW's target of a podium isn't out of the question.



LAMBORGHINI IRON LYNX Lamborghini SC63

19 Romain Grosjean  
Andrea Caldarelli  
Matteo Cairoli

63 Mirko Bortolotti  
Daniil Kvyat  
Edoardo Mortara

A long-time player in GT3 racing has entered the prototype arena with an LMDh developed in conjunction with Ligier. The other key partner is Iron Lynx, which fields solo SC63s in WEC and IMSA that come together for the big one at Le Mans. It took a majority shareholding in single-seater powerhouse Prema in 2021 to help fulfil its prototype aspirations: an LMP2 programme from 2022 prefaced the move up. Bortolotti and Caldarelli, stalwarts of Lamborghini's GT campaigns, are joined by star signings Grosjean, Kvyat and Mortara, while Cairoli gets a prototype break after years impressing in Porsche GT machinery.



AUTOSPORT SAYS Lambo will need to wring more performance out of the SC63 to get among fellow Hypercar newcomers BMW and Alpine.

ALPINE ENDURANCE TEAM (SIGNATECH) Alpine A424

35 Paul-Loup Chatin  
Ferdinand Habsburg  
Charles Milesi

36 Nicolas Lapierre  
Mick Schumacher  
Matthieu Vaxiviere

Alpine makes its top-flight sportscar return after a break following its two-year WEC stint with an old ORECA-Gibson LMP1 grandfathered to run in Hypercar. Now it has its own bespoke contender: the A424 LMDh developed in conjunction with ORECA. The Signatech team that brought Alpine back into endurance racing in LMP2 again masterminds the programme on track. Lapierre, Vaxiviere, Chatin and Milesi already had Alpine overalls in the cupboard, while Habsburg gets his big break after impressing in the P2 ranks. The headline-grabbing signing is Schumacher, son of Michael and Mercedes F1 reserve.



AUTOSPORT SAYS Strong reliability and progress on set-up pre-Spa suggest Alpine can be up there on the tails of the frontrunners.

FERRARI AF CORSE Ferrari 499P

50 Antonio Fuoco  
Miguel Molina  
Nicklas Nielsen

51 Alessandro Pier Guidi  
James Calado  
Antonio Giovinazzi

Ferrari returns to Le Mans as the reigning champion with an unchanged set-up. AF, for so long its factory partner in GT racing, continues to run the cars for the same driver line-up as last year. That means Calado, Pier Guidi and Giovinazzi get the chance to make it two in a row. The 499P LMH, developed in-house at Maranello, has no hardware upgrades, but Ferrari is more on top of the car than ever before. Its performances so far prove it is more competitive on a range of circuits than last season, though the racing gods have conspired to prevent it scoring a first victory away from Le Mans.



AUTOSPORT SAYS Last year's Le Mans performance and pace over the past two rounds of the WEC must make Ferrari a narrow favourite.



HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

**AF CORSE** Ferrari 499P

**83** Robert **Kubica**  
Robert **Shwartzman**  
Yifei **Ye**

A third 499P, liveried in the yellow made famous by the Ecurie Nationale Belge and Ecurie Francorchamps cars of yesteryear, bolsters Ferrari's full-season WEC attack. It is billed as a customer car, but is better described as a satellite entry that competes for points against the privateer Porsches in the FIA World Cup. It is run by AF, though by a separate structure to the works cars, and has two Ferrari-contracted drivers: Ye, signed up for 2024, and F1 reserve Shwartzman join grand prix winner Kubica.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Strong performances so far suggest this car can be a genuine threat.

**PEUGEOT TOTALENERGIES** Peugeot 9X8 2024

**93** Jean-Eric **Vergne**  
Mikkel **Jensen**  
Nico **Muller**

**94** Stoffel **Vandoorne**  
Paul **di Resta**  
Loic **Duval**

Peugeot makes a second Le Mans appearance with its 9X8 LMH, now in heavily revised form. The design concept has been overhauled, which has resulted in the addition of a conventional rear wing. Changes to the driver line-up are less radical. Reserve Vandoorne has replaced Gustavo Menezes, Peugeot's star driver at Le Mans last year, while there has been a reshuffle of the crews. Muller has joined Vergne and Jensen, with Vandoorne lining up alongside di Resta and Duval.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Revised 9X8 hasn't yet impressed, but BoP help could change that.

**PROTON COMPETITION** Porsche 963

**99** Neel **Jani**  
Harry **Tincknell**  
Julien **Andlauer**

This GT stalwart that has been racing in the international endurance arena for nearly 30 years makes its first attempt on Le Mans in the prototype ranks – in both Hypercar and LMP2 – on what will be its 23rd participation. Its programme with the Porsche 963 didn't begin in either the WEC or IMSA until post-Le Mans last year. Jani, a Le Mans winner as a factory driver in 2016, is again joined by Tincknell, while Porsche-contracted Andlauer has been placed with Proton.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Proton proved that it can be a contender at Spa – a race it could have won.

**WHELEN CADILLAC RACING (ACTION EXPRESS)** Cadillac V-Series.R

**311** Pipo **Derani**  
Jack **Aitken**  
Felipe **Drugovich**

The American team, the winner of six overall IMSA titles with General Motors, again bolsters Cadillac's assault under the regulations that allow additional entries for the WEC blue riband. Team stalwart Derani is once more partnered by Aitken, who has moved up from the endurance-only driver to a full-timer in place of Alexander Sims. Aston Martin F1 reserve Drugovich comes in after taking his first steps in sportscar racing this year with an LMP2 programme in the ELMS.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Pace last year and IMSA form suggest they can be up there with Ganassi.





PROTON COMPETITION ORECA Gibson-07

9 Bent Viscaal  
Jonas Ried  
Maceo Capietto

LMP2 machinery no longer features in the World Endurance Championship and, unsurprisingly, the division’s Le Mans entry is slimmer as a result, but there’s still one new team to the fray, with Proton now having a presence in all three of the enduro’s classes. Ried, son of team owner Christian, and race rookie Capietto are currently 12th in the European Le Mans Series as Proton braves LMP2 for the first time, while Viscaal has a couple of previous Le Mans LMP2 starts.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Lack of experience in a strong field means Proton is unlikely to electrify.



VECTOR SPORT ORECA-Gibson 07

10 Patrick Pilet  
Stephane Richelmi  
Ryan Cullen

The addition of Porsche factory driver Pilet and 2016 LMP2 Le Mans winner Richelmi – back for his first attack since 2019 – alongside team stalwart Cullen signals that Vector could well be in the mix this year, even if it has only achieved modest ELMS results to date. The end of its proposed Hypercar partnership with Isotta Fraschini means LMP2 is now the British squad’s main focus, and it will be seeking to improve upon the seventh place it managed here last year.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** May not have the greatest form, but a good result is still possible.



AO BY TF ORECA-Gibson 07

14 Louis Deletraz  
Alex Quinn  
PJ Hyett

A partnership with American entrant AO means there is a completely new look to British squad TF Sport’s LMP2 line-up for this year. Hyett moves over from GTs to prototypes, while single-seater convert Quinn achieved IMSA success on his sportscar bow last season. But Deletraz is the key signing. He’s come close to winning LMP2 on so many occasions in recent years, and will be attempting to get his hands on the Pro-Am gold.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Pro-Am glory likely the chief focus given this line-up is probably a little weaker than TF’s frontrunning ELMS roster.



UNITED AUTOSPORTS ORECA-Gibson 07

22 Oliver Jarvis  
Nolan Siegel  
Bijoy Garg

23 Filipe Albuquerque  
Ben Hanley  
Ben Keating

United Autosports has endured a pretty barren LMP2 run since its 2020 triumph with Albuquerque, including a healthy dose of misfortune last year, but the #23 machine in particular could be a factor here. Keating enters after two GTE Am wins on the bounce and Hanley is currently starring in the ELMS. The sister car lacks experience aside from 2017 LMP2 victor Jarvis, with Siegel seeking to put his Indianapolis 500 ‘bumping’ behind him.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** The #23 crew likely has its sights set on more than just Pro-Am glory.





HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

**NIELSEN RACING** ORECA-Gibson 07

**24** Fabio **Scherer**  
Kyffin **Simpson**  
David **Heinemeier**  
**Hansson**

Nielsen's race lasted just 18 laps in 2023 before it crashed out, and an all-new line-up has been brought in this time around. Scherer was one of the heroes of last year's edition as he battled a broken foot and radio to take a remarkable victory. The Swiss will be joined by IndyCar racer and ELMS champion Simpson, and LMP2 regular Heinemeier Hansson – who was second in class back in 2013 – as the squad seeks to boost its fortunes.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Not hard to improve upon last season's showing, but tricky to judge by how much with intriguing new line-up.

**ALGARVE PRO RACING** ORECA-Gibson 07

**25** Olli **Caldwell**  
Roman **De Angelis**  
Matthias **Kaiser**

**45** Nicky **Catsburg**  
Colin **Braun**  
George **Kurtz**

Last year was a very successful one for Algarve Pro Racing, which ensured two Le Mans spots by winning the European and Asian Le Mans titles. It also topped the Pro-Am leaderboard in the French enduro and, with Kurtz and Braun now paired with established sportscar star Catsburg, a repeat result must be the objective. Sister car lacks experience, with IMSA GT frontrunner De Angelis set for his LMP2 bow alongside Le Mans sophomores Caldwell and Kaiser.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Crowdstrike #45 car looks safe bet as a leading Pro-Am contender.

**IDEC SPORT** ORECA-Gibson 07

**28** Job **van Uitert**  
Reshad **de Gerus**  
Paul **Lafargue**

With previous team regular Paul-Loup Chatin making a Hypercar move with Alpine, there is a refreshed line-up for the French squad, on class pole last year. Lafargue remains a fixture for his eighth Le Mans start with the family-owned operation, but alongside him are fellow LMP2 stalwart van Uitert and de Gerus, who has a third different team for his third attack. The trio are fourth in ELMS after a brace of fourths.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Improving on last year's sixth would be the goal, although there are stronger line-ups among the 2024 field.

**DUQUEINE TEAM** ORECA-Gibson 07

**30** James **Allen**  
Jean-Baptiste **Simmenauer**  
John **Falb**

Two punctures and a last-lap suspension failure still did not stop Duqueine taking a podium last year, but the presence of Neel Jani helped achieve that. The Swiss is back to the top class for 2024 and an all-new crew is in place. Allen joins after two Pro-Am victories on the bounce, but Simmenauer is a Le Mans rookie and Falb has not finished higher than seventh on his four previous attempts at the 24 Hours.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Tough to see a repeat Duqueine podium or Pro-Am win for Allen this time around, given the strength of the field.





DKR ENGINEERING ORECA-Gibson 07

33 Rene **Binder**  
Laurents **Horr**  
Alexander **Mattschull**

The Luxembourg squad is yet another team with a completely changed driver line-up for this year. Binder is the main signing after he took a podium for Duqueine in 2023, while Mattschull steps up from LMP3 and Horr moves across from IDEC, although he currently sits near the bottom of the ELMS Pro-Am table.  
**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Improving on last year's 15th is achievable, but unlikely challenger in Pro-Am.



INTER EUROPOL COMPETITION ORECA-Gibson 07

34 Vlad **Lomko**  
Clement **Novalak**  
Jakub **Smiechowski**

In a year of incredible stories, it was difficult to beat Inter Europol's unexpected LMP2 success in 2023. Now it's slimmed down to just the one car, and only Smiechowski remains from the victorious crew. Ex-BRDC British F3 champion Novalak is set for his Le Mans debut, while Lomko was previously in Cool's line-up.  
**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Tough to see the Warsaw bakery-backed team defending its win.



COOL RACING ORECA-Gibson 07

37 Ritomo **Miyata**  
Malthe **Jakobsen**  
Lorenzo **Fluxa**  
  
47 Frederik **Vesti**  
Matt **Bell**  
Naveen **Rao**

There are some, ahem, cool signings at the Swiss squad for this year, including 2023 F2 runner-up Vesti, Toyota reserve Miyata and Peugeot stand-in Jakobsen. But this means that, across the two cars, there are just two previous Le Mans starts between the drivers, so a lack of experience of the tough enduro could be a problem.  
**AUTOSPORT SAYS** So many unknowns for the promising Cool cars make predictions tricky.



PANIS RACING (TDS) ORECA-Gibson 07

65 Mathias **Beche**  
Scott **Huffaker**  
Rodrigo **Sales**

Another team to continue the theme of this year's LMP2 field by having a new-look line-up for 2024. Huffaker has plenty of IMSA LMP2 victories to his name, but this is the first time he tackles Le Mans in a prototype. He's joined by class regular Beche – LMP2 runner-up in 2012 – while Sales crashed out just 18 laps into last year's contest.  
**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Another in the Pro-Am mix, although there are stronger contenders.



AF CORSE ORECA-Gibson 07

183 Ben **Barnicoat**  
Nico **Varrone**  
Francois **Perrodo**

The Italian powerhouse continues to have a presence in all three divisions, with team regular Perrodo again joined by Barnicoat. Varrone completes the triumvirate of 2023 GTE Am winners in moving to LMP2, but the Argentinian's only prototype experience has come in LMP3.  
**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Last year's ELMS Pro-Am champion squad should be in the mix.





HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

**HEART OF RACING/D'STATION (PRODRIVE)** Aston Martin Vantage GT3 Evo

**27** Alex **Riberas**  
Daniel **Mancinelli**  
Ian **James**

**777** Marco **Sorensen**  
Erwan **Bastard**  
Satoshi **Hoshino**

Heavily upgraded Vantages tended by Prodrive-run Aston Martin Racing took a double podium in Qatar WEC opener and have shown pace at subsequent rounds without significant reward. Unchanged HoR line-up is benefiting from proper preparation for Le Mans, after joining WEC from Spa in 2023, and will target an improvement on last year's sixth place in GTE Am. D'Station boss Hoshino comes in for first appearance of 2024 WEC, replacing Clement Mateu alongside rookie Bastard and 2022 GTE Am winner Sorensen.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** There's no reason to suggest Aston won't be a factor in the LMGT3 battle.

**TEAM WRT** BMW M4 GT3

**31** Augusto **Farfus**  
Sean **Gelael**  
Darren **Leung**

**46** Maxime **Martin**  
Valentino **Rossi**  
Ahmad **Al Harthy**

Bike legend Rossi makes his debut in the main event, after winning on the Le Mans support bill last year, alongside fellow works driver Martin; the combination fresh from GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup win at Misano. Last year's GTE Am runner-up Al Harthy completes well-rounded crew. British GT champion Leung is a Le Mans rookie, but already a WEC winner after combining with former LMP2 regular Gelael and BMW factory gun Farfus to lead WRT 1-2 at Imola.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Two strong line-ups mean WRT will surely be contending for victory.

**PROTON COMPETITION** Ford Mustang GT3

**44** Christopher **Mies**  
Ben **Tuck**  
John **Hartshorne**

**77** Ben **Barker**  
Zacharie **Robichon**  
Ryan **Hardwick**

**88** Dennis **Olsen**  
Mikkel **Pedersen**  
Giorgio **Roda**

Ford is back at Le Mans for the first time since 2019 with new Multimatic-built Mustang GT3 run by German squad Proton. Performances in WEC so far have been low-key, which drivers attribute to getting LMGT3's mandatory torque sensors fully optimised. Both #88 and #77 scored points at Spa, but eighth remains best result to date. Third entry granted for ELMS GTE title win allows factory driver Mies to make belated Le Mans debut alongside Britons Tuck and Hartshorne.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Emulating Ford's debut GTE Pro victory from 2016 would be a surprise.

**AF CORSE** Ferrari 296 GT3

**54** Davide **Rigon**  
Francesco **Castellacci**  
Thomas **Flohr**

**55** Alessio **Rovera**  
Simon **Mann**  
Francois **Heriau**

Ferrari is seeking to add Le Mans to the 296's growing list of 24-hour accolades, after conquering the Nurburgring last year and Daytona in January, where Rigon was in the line-up. For his 10th Le Mans, the Italian is targeting a first win together with long-time duo Castellacci and Flohr, GTE Am runners-up at Le Mans in 2018. Rovera took Am win on debut in 2021 as part of AF Corse's sweep of both GTE categories. Fourth at Imola for #55 crew is the best result so far.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** AF Corse is prolific in GT classes at Le Mans and cannot be discounted.





UNITED AUTOSPORTS McLaren 720S GT3 Evo

**59** Gregoire **Saucy**  
Nicolas **Costa**  
James **Cottingham**

**95** Marino **Sato**  
Nico **Pino**  
Hiroshi **Hamaguchi**

Following LMP2’s exit from the WEC, the team of Richard Dean and Zak Brown has partnered with McLaren in a return to its GT3 origins. Spa was its best showing to date, with historic racing ace Cottingham the closest challenger to dominant Bovy. His #59 car led into the closing stages before a splash-and-dash dropped it to fourth. Pino, 19, is United’s only driver with Le Mans experience, third in LMP2 last year. Hamaguchi switches from Iron Lynx Lambo in ELMS to replace regular bronze Josh Caygill for Le Mans. **AUTOSPORT SAYS** United is gaining momentum at the right time for McLaren’s Le Mans return.



IRON LYNX/DAMES Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2

**60** Franck **Perera**  
Matteo **Cressoni**  
Claudio **Schiavoni**

**85** Michelle **Gatting**  
Rahel **Frey**  
Sarah **Bovy**

Iron Lynx was one lap away from Lamborghini’s first WEC victory at Spa in a topsy-turvy race determined by energy strategy, but eventual third place required red flags to recover from early losses. Lambo’s more likely contender is the all-female Dames entry, which still features Frey, who stepped in for Spa, because Doriane Pin has fractured ribs. Peerless early on at Spa, the Dames were unlucky not to get a podium and threatened to win both ELMS races in a Porsche. **AUTOSPORT SAYS** Bovy’s pace against the bronzes means Dames should be in the mix.



JMW MOTORSPORT Ferrari 296 GT3

**66** Larry **ten Voorde**  
Salih **Yoluc**  
Giacomo **Petrobelli**

British squad makes 15th Le Mans appearance, continuing unbroken streak dating back to its 2017 GTE Am victory, with two bronzes in totally different line-up from usual ELMS crew. Two-time Porsche Supercup champion ten Voorde makes rare outing not in a 911, for his first Le Mans appearance since 2020. Yoluc, the 2023 Asian Le Mans Series champ in LMP2, is among the quicker bronzes and won GTE Am in 2020. Petrobelli returns after debut with the team last year. **AUTOSPORT SAYS** Ten Voorde will have to do a lot of heavy lifting to keep JMW in it.



INCEPTION RACING (OPTIMUM) McLaren 720S GT3 Evo

**70** Frederik **Schandorff**  
Ollie **Millroy**  
Brendan **Iribe**

Automatic invitation as the best-placed bronze in IMSA’s GTD class in 2023 brings Iribe back for third Le Mans start after a year away. The bronze-rated American has raced GT3 McLarens for Shaun Goff’s Optimum team since 2020 with long-term coach Millroy, who partnered Iribe in Ferrari/Porsche Le Mans outings in 2021-22 that were collaborative efforts with Kessel and Project 1. Schandorff, another regular Iribe team-mate in recent years, makes second Le Mans start. **AUTOSPORT SAYS** If McLaren is in the ballpark, a strong result isn’t out of the question.





HYPERCAR

LMP2

LMGT3

**AKKODIS ASP TEAM** Lexus RC F GT3**78** Kelvin **van der Linde**  
Timur **Boguslavskiy**  
Arnold **Robin****87** Jose Maria **Lopez**  
Esteban **Masson**  
Takeshi **Kimura**

Spa 24 Hours-winning squad run by Jerome Polican makes first Le Mans start since 2014 with WEC newcomer Lexus. Expertise of Toyota veteran Lopez has helped with progress on venerable chassis, but 10th at Spa is the only point of a tough season so far. Van der Linde and Boguslavskiy return after missing Spa.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** We've yet to see signs that the Lexus can emulate its IMSA form in WEC.

**TF SPORT** Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R**81** Charlie **Eastwood**  
Rui **Andrade**  
Tom **van Rompuy****82** Daniel **Juncadella**  
Sebastien **Baud**  
Hiroshi **Koizumi**

Tom Ferrier's team is seeking to continue a streak of Le Mans podiums dating back to 2020 on its Corvette debut. Surprise Qatar pole remains the highlight with new-for-2024 machine so far, with a best result of seventh. Gearbox issue at Spa for #81 came just as it believed the race was falling into place, while Baud set fastest lap.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** All-rookie crew on #82 car suggests #81 is TF's best bet for a strong finish.

**GR RACING** Ferrari 296 GT3**86** Daniel **Serra**  
Riccardo **Pera**  
Michael **Wainwright**

Former GTE Am stalwart Wainwright makes 10th Le Mans start but his first in a Ferrari, run by his own GR team that now contests ELMS. His partnership with capable silver Pera runs into a third season and the addition of factory driver Serra, twice a GTE Pro class winner, makes GR a potential dark horse.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** If Wainwright can keep out of trouble, a repeat of 2023 podium is possible.

**MANTHEY (EMA & PURERXCING)** Porsche 911 GT3-R**91** Richard **Lietz**  
Morris **Schuring**  
Yasser **Shahin****92** Klaus **Bachler**  
Joel **Sturm**  
Alex **Malykhin**

Each of Manthey's entries has a WEC victory to its credit this season, although the #92 crew has the edge on points thanks to three podiums from as many rounds. Bronze and silver drivers in both cars are Le Mans rookies, but lack little for pace against their contemporaries. Lietz is eyeing his fifth class success in a 911.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** WEC form means Manthey has to be considered among the favourites.

**SPIRIT OF RACE (AF)** Ferrari 296 GT3**155** Jordan **Taylor**  
Conrad **Laursen**  
Johnny **Laursen**

Danish father-and-son pair up with Acura GTP ace Taylor, a GTE Pro class winner in 2015, after winning opening ELMS round alongside factory driver Nicklas Nielsen. Conrad Laursen makes his Le Mans debut aged 18 while his father, 60, was sixth in GTE Am on only previous start in 2016.

**AUTOSPORT SAYS** Matching Laursen Sr's previous Le Mans best would be a good result.





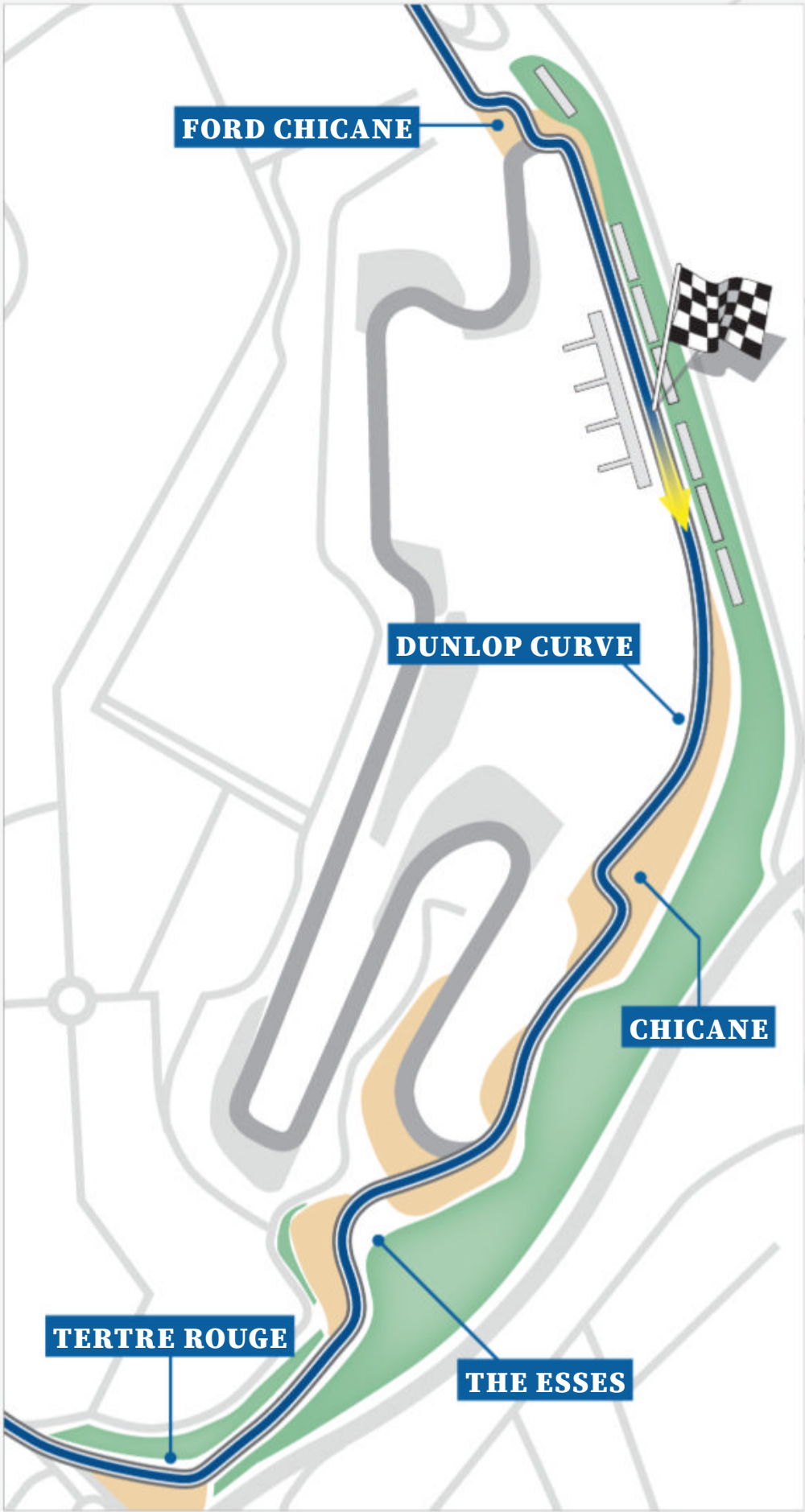
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# OVERTAKING SECRETS

*Porsche Penske Motorsport Hypercar driver Michael Christensen, a GTE Pro class winner at Le Mans in 2018, is your expert guide to overtaking at the Circuit de la Sarthe*

JAMES NEWBOLD



## TERTRE ROUGE

That's probably the most annoying place to be overtaken in a GT car because you lose some front downforce, don't get the good line and lose speed all the way down the straight. This makes it harder for us to overtake the GTs – because they don't like it! If you have bad tyres and they have good tyres, it might be quite hard to make it in time.

## DUNLOP CURVE

## CHICANE AND ESSES

It's going to be a challenge, and there will be annoying situations where you come with hot tyres, they're on cold tyres, you're blocked somewhat. Everyone will deal with that at some point, so it's about staying patient.



HEISE/PORSCHE



## MULSANNE STRAIGHT

You want to overtake down the straight because it costs you less time and it's safer, but it requires you having some top speed to do that. Sometimes you just don't have anything down the straights, so you can't outbrake them. You have to fight a little bit before, so they get a bad exit.

### Using the crown of the road

The reasoning for not going there is generally that you might pick up some debris. I would do it if I see a big loss in lap time, like if GT fighting is blocking you. I'm not sure if it's really that bad, but I'd rather not go there.



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Overtaking on the straight is safer and costs less time

## MULSANNE CORNER

## MULSANNE CHICANES

It gets so slippery with gravel on the track. I've seen it many times that people just go straight off in the wall or something weird. In an overtaking situation, you have to remember there's probably not that much grip out there.

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHIES

In any overtaking manoeuvre, especially in traffic, I always try to take margin. Maybe you don't get the last hundredth of a second out of it, but that's well-spent for such a long race. From the GT times, there were prototypes which were way more aggressive than others and you always knew who it was. The problem is that you will overtake that guy again, and they remember. If someone I knew wasn't going to be nice to me, I'm not going to be nice to them. That philosophy didn't really change driving the Hypercar. It's about respect.

## FORD CHICANE

## ARNAGE

## INDIANAPOLIS

If it goes wrong, you might end the race there. It's such high speed with load, the wall is close to you and then a 90-degree corner. You can't just release the brakes and go straight. But it's very rewarding when you overtake there. Approaching that point is always a little bit sketchy at these two right kinks, but it's just part of it. You have to go inside, outside and hope they give you space. The inside kerbs look flat, but they're not so you don't want to touch them. I prefer to be on the outside, but it doesn't always line up like that.

## PORSCHE CURVES

There are two real overtaking spots, three if a lapped car is really slow, but you can't overtake anybody in class, unless you're way faster. In GT traffic, you take the outside line in the first right-hander approach. It's quite dirty there if they run wide and you're pushed even wider. In the two lefts, you can't do anything; you have to be patient and wait for the next right-hander where you can take the outside. It's quite safe because it's very wide there, there's nothing to hit unless someone spins on the inside. The last one is Karting, the left, and there you can overtake on the outside if someone is *really* slow. It's risky, but you can lose a lot of time there.



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# MOTUL



# COVERAGE AND POINTS

JAMES NEWBOLD

## 2023 POLES (HYPERPOLE)

<b>HYPERCAR</b>	<b>3m22.982s</b>	Antonio <b>Fuoco</b>	Ferrari 499P LMH
<b>LMP2</b>	<b>3m32.923s</b>	Paul-Loup <b>Chatin</b>	ORECA-Gibson 07
<b>GTE AM</b>	<b>3m52.376s</b>	Ben <b>Keating</b>	Corvette C8.R

## 2023 FASTEST LAPS

<b>HYPERCAR</b>	<b>3m26.984s</b>	Antonio <b>Fuoco</b>	Ferrari 499P LMH
<b>LMP2</b>	<b>3m36.043s</b>	Robin <b>Frijns</b>	ORECA-Gibson 07
<b>GTE AM</b>	<b>3m50.439s</b>	Nico <b>Varrone</b>	Corvette C8.R



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## 2024 WEC STANDINGS



### HYPERCAR DRIVERS

POS	DRIVERS	PTS
1	Andre <b>Lotterer</b> /Kevin <b>Estre</b> /Laurens <b>Vanthoor</b>	74
2	Callum <b>Ilott</b> /Will <b>Stevens</b>	52
3	Kamui <b>Kobayashi</b> /Mike <b>Conway</b> /Nyck <b>de Vries</b>	46
4	Frederic <b>Makowiecki</b> /Matt <b>Campbell</b> /Michael <b>Christensen</b>	40
5	Antonio <b>Fuoco</b> /Miguel <b>Molina</b> /Nicklas <b>Nielsen</b>	40
6	Norman <b>Nato</b>	27


### HYPERCAR MANUFACTURERS

1	<b>Porsche</b>	83
2	<b>Toyota</b>	60
3	<b>Ferrari</b>	49
4	<b>Alpine</b>	23
5	<b>BMW</b>	21
6	<b>Peugeot</b>	10


### LMGT3 DRIVERS

1	Alexander <b>Malykhin</b> /Joel <b>Sturm</b> /Klaus <b>Bachler</b>	72
2	Augusto <b>Farfus</b> /Darren <b>Leung</b> /Sean <b>Gelael</b>	37
3	Alex <b>Riberas</b> /Daniel <b>Mancinelli</b> /Ian <b>James</b>	37
4	Ahmad <b>Al Harthy</b> /Maxime <b>Martin</b> /Valentino <b>Rossi</b>	36
5	Clement <b>Mateu</b> /Erwan <b>Bastard</b> /Marco <b>Sorensen</b>	30
6	Morris <b>Schuring</b> /Richard <b>Lietz</b> /Yasser <b>Shahin</b>	25


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LE MANS HYPERCAR			
NO	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR
2	Earl <b>Bamber</b> <small>(NZL)</small> Alex <b>Lynn</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Alex <b>Palou</b> <small>(ESP)</small>	Cadillac Racing (Ganassi)	Cadillac V-Series.R
3	Sebastien <b>Bourdais</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Renger <b>van der Zande</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Scott <b>Dixon</b> <small>(NZL)</small>	Cadillac Racing (Ganassi)	Cadillac V-Series.R
4	Mathieu <b>Jaminet</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Felipe <b>Nasr</b> <small>(BRA)</small> Nick <b>Tandy</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963
5	Matt <b>Campbell</b> <small>(AUS)</small> Michael <b>Christensen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Frederic <b>Makowiecki</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963
6	Kevin <b>Estre</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Andre <b>Lotterer</b> <small>(DEU)</small> Laurens <b>Vanthoor</b> <small>(BEL)</small>	Porsche Penske Motorsport	Porsche 963
7	Mike <b>Conway</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Kamui <b>Kobayashi</b> <small>(JPN)</small> Nyck <b>de Vries</b> <small>(NLD)</small>	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID
8	Sebastien <b>Buemi</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Brendon <b>Hartley</b> <small>(NZL)</small> Ryo <b>Hirakawa</b> <small>(JPN)</small>	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID
11	Jean-Karl <b>Vernay</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Carl <b>Bennett</b> <small>(THA)</small> Antonio <b>Serravalle</b> <small>(CAN)</small>	Isotta Fraschini (Duqueine)	Tipo 6 LMH Competizione
12	Will <b>Stevens</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Callum <b>Ilott</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Norman <b>Nato</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Hertz Team Jota	Porsche 963
15	Dries <b>Vanthoor</b> <small>(BEL)</small> Raffaele <b>Marciello</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Marco <b>Wittmann</b> <small>(DEU)</small>	BMW M Team WRT	BMW M Hybrid V8
19	Romain <b>Grosjean</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Andrea <b>Caldarelli</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Matteo <b>Cairolì</b> <small>(ITA)</small>	Lamborghini Iron Lynx	Lamborghini SC63
20	Sheldon <b>van der Linde</b> <small>(ZAF)</small> Robin <b>Frijns</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Rene <b>Rast</b> <small>(DEU)</small>	BMW M Team WRT	BMW M Hybrid V8
35	Paul-Loup <b>Chatin</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Ferdinand <b>Habsburg</b> <small>(AUT)</small> Charles <b>Milesi</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	Alpine A424
36	Nicolas <b>Lapierre</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Mick <b>Schumacher</b> <small>(DEU)</small> Matthieu <b>Vaxivière</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Alpine Endurance Team (Signatech)	Alpine A424
38	Jenson <b>Button</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Oliver <b>Rasmussen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Phil <b>Hanson</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	Hertz Team Jota	Porsche 963
50	Antonio <b>Fuoco</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Miguel <b>Molina</b> <small>(ESP)</small> Nicklas <b>Nielsen</b> <small>(DNK)</small>	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P
51	Alessandro <b>Pier Guidi</b> <small>(ITA)</small> James <b>Calado</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Antonio <b>Giovinazzi</b> <small>(ITA)</small>	Ferrari AF Corse	Ferrari 499P
63	Mirko <b>Bortolotti</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Daniil <b>Kvyat</b> <small>(RUS)</small> Edoardo <b>Mortara</b> <small>(ITA)</small>	Lamborghini Iron Lynx	Lamborghini SC63
83	Robert <b>Kubica</b> <small>(POL)</small> Robert <b>Shwartzman</b> <small>(ISR)</small> Yifei <b>Ye</b> <small>(CHN)</small>	AF Corse	Ferrari 499P
93	Jean-Eric <b>Vergne</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Mikkel <b>Jensen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Nico <b>Muller</b> <small>(CHE)</small>	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8 2024
94	Stoffel <b>Vandoorne</b> <small>(BEL)</small> Paul <b>di Resta</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Loic <b>Duval</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Peugeot TotalEnergies	Peugeot 9X8 2024
99	Neel <b>Jani</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Harry <b>Tincknell</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Julien <b>Andlauer</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Proton Competition	Porsche 963
311	Pipo <b>Derani</b> <small>(BRA)</small> Jack <b>Aitken</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Felipe <b>Drugovich</b> <small>(BRA)</small>	Whelen Cadillac Racing (Action Express)	Cadillac V-Series.R

LMP2			
9	Bent <b>Viscaal</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Jonas <b>Ried</b> <small>(DEU)</small> Maceo <b>Capietto</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Proton Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07
10	Patrick <b>Pilet</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Stephane <b>Richelmi</b> <small>(MCO)</small> Ryan <b>Cullen</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	Vector Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07
14	Louis <b>Deletraz</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Alex <b>Quinn</b> <small>(GBR)</small> PJ <b>Hyett</b> <small>(USA)</small>	AO by TF	ORECA-Gibson 07
22	Oliver <b>Jarvis</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Nolan <b>Siegel</b> <small>(USA)</small> Bijoy <b>Garg</b> <small>(USA)</small>	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07
23	Filipe <b>Albuquerque</b> <small>(PRT)</small> Ben <b>Hanley</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Ben <b>Keating</b> <small>(USA)</small>	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07
24	Fabio <b>Scherer</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Kyffin <b>Simpson</b> <small>(CYM)</small> David <b>Heinemeier Hansson</b> <small>(DNK)</small>	Nielsen Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
25	Olli <b>Caldwell</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Roman <b>De Angelis</b> <small>(CAN)</small> Matthias <b>Kaiser</b> <small>(LIE)</small>	Algarve Pro Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
28	Job <b>van Uitert</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Reshad <b>de Gerus</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Paul <b>Lafargue</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	IDEC Sport	ORECA-Gibson 07
30	James <b>Allen</b> <small>(AUS)</small> Jean-Baptiste <b>Simmenauer</b> <small>(FRA)</small> John <b>Falb</b> <small>(USA)</small>	Duqueine Team	ORECA-Gibson 07
33	Rene <b>Binder</b> <small>(AUT)</small> Laurents <b>Horr</b> <small>(DEU)</small> Alexander <b>Mattschull</b> <small>(DEU)</small>	DKR Engineering	ORECA-Gibson 07
34	Vlad <b>Lomko</b> <small>(RUS)</small> Clement <b>Novalak</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Jakub <b>Smiechowski</b> <small>(POL)</small>	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07
37	Ritomo <b>Miyata</b> <small>(JPN)</small> Malthe <b>Jakobsen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Lorenzo <b>Fluxa</b> <small>(ESP)</small>	Cool Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
45	Nicky <b>Catsburg</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Colin <b>Braun</b> <small>(USA)</small> George <b>Kurtz</b> <small>(USA)</small>	Crowdstrike Racing by APR	ORECA-Gibson 07
47	Frederik <b>Vesti</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Matt <b>Bell</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Naveen <b>Rao</b> <small>(USA)</small>	Cool Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07
65	Mathias <b>Beche</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Scott <b>Huffaker</b> <small>(USA)</small> Rodrigo <b>Sales</b> <small>(USA)</small>	Panis Racing (TDS)	ORECA-Gibson 07
183	Ben <b>Barnicoat</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Nico <b>Varrone</b> <small>(ARG)</small> Francois <b>Perrodo</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	AF Corse	ORECA-Gibson 07

LMGT3			
27	Alex <b>Riberas</b> <small>(ESP)</small> Daniel <b>Mancinelli</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Ian <b>James</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	Heart of Racing Team (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GT3
31	Augusto <b>Farfus</b> <small>(BRA)</small> Sean <b>Gelael</b> <small>(IDN)</small> Darren <b>Leung</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	Team WRT	BMW M4 GT3
44	Christopher <b>Mies</b> <small>(DEU)</small> Ben <b>Tuck</b> <small>(GBR)</small> John <b>Hartshorne</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	Proton Competition	Ford Mustang GT3
46	Maxime <b>Martin</b> <small>(BEL)</small> Valentino <b>Rossi</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Ahmad <b>Al Harthy</b> <small>(OMN)</small>	Team WRT	BMW M4 GT3
54	Davide <b>Rigon</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Francesco <b>Castellacci</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Thomas <b>Flohr</b> <small>(CHE)</small>	Vista AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3
55	Alessio <b>Rovera</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Simon <b>Mann</b> <small>(USA)</small> Francois <b>Heriau</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	Vista AF Corse	Ferrari 296 GT3
59	Gregoire <b>Saucy</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Nicolas <b>Costa</b> <small>(BRA)</small> James <b>Cottingham</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	United Autosports	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo
60	Franck <b>Perera</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Matteo <b>Cressoni</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Claudio <b>Schiavoni</b> <small>(ITA)</small>	Iron Lynx	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2
66	Larry <b>ten Voorde</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Salih <b>Yoluc</b> <small>(TUR)</small> Giacomo <b>Petrobelli</b> <small>(ITA)</small>	JMW Motorsport	Ferrari 296 GT3
70	Frederik <b>Schandorff</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Ollie <b>Millroy</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Brendan <b>Iribe</b> <small>(USA)</small>	Inception Racing (Optimum)	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo
77	Ben <b>Barker</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Zacharie <b>Robichon</b> <small>(CAN)</small> Ryan <b>Hardwick</b> <small>(USA)</small>	Proton Competition	Ford Mustang GT3
78	Kelvin <b>van der Linde</b> <small>(ZAF)</small> Timur <b>Boguslavskiy</b> <small>(RUS)</small> Arnold <b>Robin</b> <small>(FRA)</small>	AKKODIS ASP Team	Lexus RC F GT3
81	Charlie <b>Eastwood</b> <small>(GBR)</small> Rui <b>Andrade</b> <small>(PRT)</small> Tom <b>van Rompuy</b> <small>(BEL)</small>	TF Sport	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R
82	Daniel <b>Juncadella</b> <small>(ESP)</small> Sebastien <b>Baud</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Hiroshi <b>Koizumi</b> <small>(JPN)</small>	TF Sport	Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R
85	Michelle <b>Gatting</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Rahel <b>Frey</b> <small>(CHE)</small> Sarah <b>Bovy</b> <small>(BEL)</small>	Iron Dames (Iron Lynx)	Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2
86	Daniel <b>Serra</b> <small>(BRA)</small> Riccardo <b>Pera</b> <small>(ITA)</small> Michael <b>Wainwright</b> <small>(GBR)</small>	GR Racing	Ferrari 296 GT3
87	Jose Maria <b>Lopez</b> <small>(ARG)</small> Esteban <b>Masson</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Takeshi <b>Kimura</b> <small>(JPN)</small>	AKKODIS ASP Team	Lexus RC F GT3
88	Dennis <b>Olsen</b> <small>(NOR)</small> Mikkel <b>Pedersen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Giorgio <b>Roda</b> <small>(ITA)</small>	Proton Competition	Ford Mustang GT3
91	Richard <b>Lietz</b> <small>(AUT)</small> Morris <b>Schuring</b> <small>(NLD)</small> Yasser <b>Shahin</b> <small>(AUS)</small>	Manthey EMA	Porsche 911 GT3-R
92	Klaus <b>Bachler</b> <small>(AUT)</small> Joel <b>Sturm</b> <small>(DEU)</small> Alex <b>Malykhin</b> <small>(BLR)</small>	Manthey PureRxcing	Porsche 911 GT3-R
95	Marino <b>Sato</b> <small>(JPN)</small> Nico <b>Pino</b> <small>(CHL)</small> Hiroshi <b>Hamaguchi</b> <small>(JPN)</small>	United Autosports	McLaren 720S GT3 Evo
155	Jordan <b>Taylor</b> <small>(USA)</small> Conrad <b>Laursen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Johnny <b>Laursen</b> <small>(DNK)</small>	Spirit of Race (AF)	Ferrari 296 GT3
777	Marco <b>Sorensen</b> <small>(DNK)</small> Erwan <b>Bastard</b> <small>(FRA)</small> Satoshi <b>Hoshino</b> <small>(JPN)</small>	D'Station Racing (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GT3

**WEDNESDAY**  
**12 JUNE**  
**0900-1000**  
Fun Cup  
*Free Practice 1*

**1030-1115**  
Lamborghini Super Trofeo  
*Free Practice*

**1145-1245**  
Road to Le Mans  
*Free Practice 1*

**1400-1700**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Free Practice 1*

**1730-1815**  
Lamborghini Super Trofeo  
*Qualifying*

**1900-2000**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Qualifying*

**2030-2130**  
Road to Le Mans  
*Free Practice 2*

**2200-0000**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Free Practice 2*

**THURSDAY**  
**13 JUNE**  
**0900-1000**  
Fun Cup  
*Free Practice 2*

**1030-1050**  
Road to Le Mans  
*Qualifying 1*

**1105-1125**  
Road to Le Mans  
*Qualifying 2*

**1200-1245**  
Fun Cup  
*Qualifying*

**1315-1400**  
Lamborghini Super Trofeo  
*Race 1*

**1500-1800**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Free Practice 3*

**1830-1925**  
Road to Le Mans  
*Race 1*

**2000-2030**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Hyperpole*

**2200-2300**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Free Practice 4*

**FRIDAY**  
**14 JUNE**  
**0900-1300**  
Fun Cup  
*Race*

**SATURDAY**  
**15 JUNE**  
**0915-1000**  
Lamborghini Super Trofeo  
*Race 2*

**1035-1130**  
Road to Le Mans  
*Race 2*

**1200-1215**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Warm-up*

**1600**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Start*

**SUNDAY**  
**16 JUNE**  
**1600**  
**Le Mans 24 Hours**  
*Finish*



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