

F1 Ricciardo out, Lawson in at RB

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How Palou scored his hat-trick

CONGRATS



WHAT A YEAR!

What an incredible year it has been!

A huge congratulations to all the teams, drivers, and participants for their outstanding performances throughout the 2024 season. We're incredibly proud to have played a part in fuelling these thrilling moments by providing Sunoco race fuels to the championships. This year has been truly amazing, and we're honoured to support such talent and passion across the racing community. As we look ahead, we're already excited about what the 2025 season will bring. Here's to even more exhilarating races, unforgettable achievements, and continued success in the year to come!



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Celebrating a special success with two legends of the 1970s

Winning the Formula 1 world championship and the Indianapolis 500 are two of the biggest achievements in motorsport and only a handful of teams and drivers have managed both. Just two constructors have taken those successes at the top of the single-seater ladder in the same season, and McLaren did so 50 years ago.

The break in the F1 season therefore seemed like a great opportunity to look back at McLaren's remarkable 1974 and talk to some of the key people involved (page 16). And, perhaps best of all, Autosport was able to join McLaren's Heritage team for a special day at Pembrey with the M16 and M23 chassis involved in the triumphs of Emerson Fittipaldi and Johnny Rutherford.

McLaren was a winner in IndyCar this year, too, though it was Chip Ganassi Racing's Alex Palou who came away with the title, his third in four years. Joey Barnes explains how he did it in our season review (P30) – and picks out the top 10 drivers of the campaign.

We've not completely ignored modern F1, though! As Daniel Ricciardo apparently waves goodbye to F1 (p4), we speak to someone who has resurrected his career. Nico Hulkenberg has been one of the stars of F1 this season and he chats to Alex Kalinauckas on p24.

The World Rally Championship seemed to be heading Hyundai's way until a dramatic Rally Chile last weekend. Tom Howard reports on Toyota's revived chances and a win for Kalle Rovanpera on p36.

Several titles *were* decided in the UK last weekend, including British GT and GB3, which are in our National section (p53).



Kevin Turner

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Cover image
JEP

PIT & PADDOCK

- 4 Lawson replaces Ricciardo for rest of 2024
- 6 Andretti steps back from front role
- 8 Porsche exclusion hits Tandy title bid
- 11 Obituary: Rupert Keegan
- 13 Opinion: Alex Kalinauckas
- 15 Guest column: Tom Gamble

FEATURES

- 16 McLaren's remarkable 1974
- 24 F1 2024's midfield star
- 30 IndyCar review: Palou's hat-trick

RACE CENTRE

- 36 Rovanpera reignites Toyota's WRC hopes
- 42 World of Sport: ELMS; Formula Regional European; NASCAR Cup; DTM; MotoGP

CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 55 Magnussen to tackle Walter Hayes
- 56 TOCA Junior car completes first test
- 58 TCR UK to join the BARC for 2025
- 60 National reports: Spa; Brands Hatch; Snetterton; Kirkistown; Loton Park

FINISHING STRAIGHT

- 70 What's on this week
- 72 From the archive: 1992 British GP
- 74 My favourite team-mate: Jorg Muller

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PIT + PADDOCK

Lawson in as Red Bull finally drops Ricciardo

FORMULA 1

The RB Formula 1 team has replaced Daniel Ricciardo with reserve driver Liam Lawson for the six remaining rounds of the 2024 season. The 22-year-old New Zealander will take over starting at this month's United States Grand Prix in what appears to be the end of the road for Ricciardo in F1.

Lawson was set to walk as a free agent if Red Bull hadn't offered him a seat by the end of September, and had shown enough potential in private testing and in the five grands prix in which he deputised for the injured Ricciardo last year. Last month's Singapore GP looks set to have been the last for Ricciardo, who bows out of F1 after 257 starts, which yielded eight wins and three pole positions.

As a Red Bull junior, Ricciardo made his F1 debut in 2011 for HRT, before moving on to Toro Rosso and then Red Bull's main team in 2014. He took seven of his eight grand prix wins for the squad alongside Sebastian Vettel and then Max Verstappen before leaving for Renault and later McLaren, which dropped him at the end of the 2022 season after two frustrating years.

Ricciardo was brought back as a Red Bull reserve last year and replaced a struggling Nyck de Vries halfway through 2023 at its satellite team. He was seen as a back-up option to put pressure on an unconvincing Sergio Perez. But, after failing to reach Red Bull's target of consistently beating team-mate Yuki Tsunoda, it was clear that the 35-year-old Australian was no longer ticking all the boxes required to be reunited with Verstappen at the main team. Even so,

Perez's long-term future remains doubtful despite receiving a vote of confidence during the summer break. The Lawson announcement made no mention of 2025, with Red Bull keen to keep its options open within its driver line-ups across both squads.

Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko told Autosport the team was interested in retaining Ricciardo in a non-driving role. "We have had a conversation and it is clear that we are interested," said Marko.

"He is one of the most popular Formula 1 drivers, especially in the United States, but he wants time to consider his entire future. I don't think he will enter any other racing category. On the other hand, if he is no longer actively racing, will he still want these PR activities at all? It is a decision for him to decide how he wants to shape his future life."

Ricciardo said he was not keen on becoming a reserve again, with the prospect of a Red Bull return his



CAREZZEVOLI/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



CAREZZEVOLI/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



Lawson with RB team
chief Laurent Mekies

main motivation upon his 2023 comeback. “Obviously, last year it made a lot of sense to keep one foot in the door and the big picture was to try and get back at Red Bull,” he explained. “I’m not going to restart my career. I’m also 35 and I still showed the pace that I’ve had over the years, but it’s obviously been evident that it’s been harder for me to show it every weekend. I also want to leave the sport with good memories of it and it doesn’t [become] just a grind and I’m out in Q1 every weekend.”

Speaking to the *F1 Nation* podcast, Red Bull team boss Christian Horner said that Ricciardo’s exit had been triggered by a lack of consistency that had already tested Marko’s patience earlier in the campaign. “He started the season roughly, and then Miami was a weekend of two halves,” said Horner. “The Friday and Saturday morning was fantastic, and it looked like the Daniel of old defending against the Ferraris and outdriving the car. But then the Saturday afternoon and the Sunday were disastrous. So even around Barcelona [in June], Helmut wanted him out of the car, and there was already a lot of pressure on him there.”

FILIP CLEEREN



Renault’s first F1
project was landmark
turbo RS01 of 1977

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Renault brings an end to its F1 engine manufacturing

FORMULA 1

Renault has decided to pull the plug on its long-time Formula 1 engine operations ahead of the new rules era for the 2026 season.

Following months of speculation about the future of the French manufacturer, it announced on Monday that it would supply Alpine with engines for only one more season before an expected tie-up with Mercedes for the team as a customer. The company’s F1 engine factory at Viry-Chatillon near Paris will be transformed into an engineering centre to help contribute to cutting-edge technology of future Renault and Alpine cars. Alpine has insisted that all current staff at Viry would be guaranteed jobs under its new Hypertech Alpine guise.

The alternative projects that have been marked out for Viry include the development of a future Alpine supercar, work on battery technology, and R&D on electric motor

technologies. Viry will also continue to contribute to Renault’s other motorsport activities, including Alpine’s World Endurance Championship programme, Formula E and rally raid efforts for partner manufacturers, and customer projects.

Despite abandoning its F1 engine, Alpine has said that it will not turn a blind eye to grand prix racing. “Following the consultation process and dialogue with the employee representatives at Viry-Chatillon, Alpine has decided to establish an F1 monitoring unit,” the statement said. “This unit will aim to maintain employees’ knowledge and skills in this sport and remain at the forefront of innovation for Hypertech Alpine’s various projects.”

Renault’s plans to end its F1 engine project have led to vocal protests by Viry staff members, who travelled to the Italian Grand Prix to stage a peaceful protest and demanded talks with Renault CEO Luca de Meo. The employees felt that axing its F1 programme was unwarranted given the progress made for 2026, and that it would damage France’s technology industry. But the cost savings involved in switching to a customer supply as well as concerns over competitiveness have moved de Meo and new advisor Flavio Briatore to the decision.

The momentous decision spells the end of a 47-year era of Renault engines on the F1 grid. Since 1979, its involvement has resulted in 178 grand prix wins, making Renault the third most successful engine manufacturer in F1 history.

JONATHAN NOBLE



Advisor Briatore
part of decision

S BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Andretti steps back from team owner role

FORMULA 1/INDYCAR

Michael Andretti is taking a step back from his ownership role of Andretti Global, but will remain a key part of the organisation as an ambassador and advisor.

As part of a major leadership change, Group 1001 CEO Dan Towriss will take control of the business Andretti co-founded in 2002. Andretti Global provided a statement to confirm the updates following initial reports on the overhaul.

“Michael’s goal has been to transition to a more strategic role with Andretti Global and focus less on the operational side of the race team,” it read. “Michael and Dan Towriss have been working closely on developing this new structure, one which Michael is excited to see take shape under Dan’s guidance. Michael remains engaged and will continue to serve

as a strategic advisor and key ambassador. We will have more to share in the coming weeks, after Michael and Dan have had an opportunity to speak to the team.”

Towriss originally entered IndyCar as a sponsor with Group 1001 and Gainbridge for Zach Veach in 2018. He remained a key part of the Andretti team following an early split from Veach, even bolstering his investment into the squad.

The Andretti and Towriss partnership has continued to move forward ever since, with the two pushing for a way into Formula 1 in 2021. After being unable to acquire a current F1 team, the two formed Andretti Global with a focus on entering the series as a constructor. That effort has been met with plenty of roadblocks, as the organisation seeks an opportunity to become the 11th team – and bring



HINKLE/PEC

General Motors onto the grid.

Since Towriss began his involvement with Andretti, the organisation has broadened its presence across the motorsport landscape, including the IMSA SportsCar Championship and Extreme E

in addition to its squads in Formula E, IndyCar and Indy NXT. Gainbridge is also involved in NASCAR, with Andretti’s son Marco driving in select Truck Series races.

JOEY BARNES

[P30 INDYCAR REVIEW](#)

Ekstrom leaves Audi for star-studded Ford line-up

DAKAR RALLY

Versatile Swedish tin-top hero Mattias Ekstrom is the latest ‘Hollywood’ recruit to Ford’s 2025 Dakar Rally line-up after ending his 24-year stint as an Audi works driver.

The German marque last week confirmed the departure of the 46-year-old Ekstrom from its ranks, and paid tribute to a driver who won two titles and 23 races

across a 17-season full-time stint in the DTM. He also diversified with Audi equipment into the World Rallycross Championship to win the 2016 crown, and was on the driver line-up for the manufacturer’s first Spa 24 Hours victory in 2011. Post-DTM, Ekstrom was champion in the inaugural Pure ETCR electric touring car series in 2021 with Audi sister marque Cupra, and gave Audi its first stage win

on the Dakar Rally in 2022.

“Mattias has never concentrated solely on racing,” said Audi motorsport chief Rolf Michl. “He has always helped to drive projects forward, support our developers and promote the teams he has worked with.”

Ekstrom now steps into the M-Sport run Ford Dakar line-up alongside Audi’s 2024 event winner Carlos Sainz Sr, 2014 victor Nani Roma and Mitch Guthrie Jr. The quartet will all each pilot the Blue Oval’s Raptor T1+. Ekstrom’s first competitive outing in the car is on the Rallye du Maroc over the coming week, before the Dakar takes place in January in Saudi Arabia.

“I have had four tries at Dakar so far, and now I can say that I have some experience to be able to aim for the top,” said Ekstrom, whose best finish on the event is ninth in 2022. “I am in it to win it and I hope we will have very successful and great years ahead.”

Ekstrom’s springboard into Audi came from his success in his domestic Swedish Touring Car Championship, winning the 1999 crown aged 21 in an A4 quattro.



AUDISPORT

Palou joins Mercedes team for Indy 8 Hours

GT

Three-time IndyCar champion Alex Palou might be yet to conquer the Indy 500, but he gets another chance to add to his two wins on the Indianapolis road course this weekend. The Spaniard will turn out in the Intercontinental GT Challenge finale at the Brickyard driving a Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Palou's two sportscar starts to date this season came with regular employer Chip Ganassi Racing aboard a Cadillac V-Series.R LMDh, at the Daytona and Le Mans 24-hour classics. His third, at the Indianapolis 8 Hours on Saturday, comes at the wheel of a factory-backed Merc fielded by the Lone Star Racing squad with works drivers Luca Stolz and Fabian Schiller as his team-mates.

His friendship with fellow countryman Daniel Juncadella, a member of the Mercedes GT3 roster, forged the links that have resulted in Palou's first GT3 race since a short programme of Super GT outings in a McLaren 720S GT3 with Team Goh in 2019. He attended the Indy IGTC



IndyCar champ will have eight hours to check famed Indy scoreboard

fixture in 2022 to cheer on his mate, who took victory with a Merc run under the Craft-Bamboo Racing banner. But the team running the car was Lone Star from Dallas.

"I went to cheer Dani two years ago when he raced in Indianapolis, and I wanted to do the race if there was a chance," said Palou. "I received this excellent opportunity through AMG with a chance to win. While I will have to learn the characteristics of the car, Indianapolis is a track that I know very well. I am really looking forward to

having fun and fighting for the win."

A total of 25 cars are entered for Indy. Not on the list is joint points leader Laurens Vanthoor, winner of the Bathurst and Nurburgring IGTC rounds with Manthey, after Porsche opted not to send a factory-backed team to the US. Ayhan Guven, who was part of the Manthey line-up in the first two races and is tied with Vanthoor at the top of the points, will race a Pro-Am class Porsche 911 GT3-R for GMG Racing.

GARY WATKINS



Rossi hammers Carpenter deal

INDYCAR

Former Indianapolis 500 winner Alexander Rossi has switched to Ed Carpenter Racing for the 2025 IndyCar season in what has been described as a "multi-year" deal. He will line up alongside 2023 Indy NXT champion Christian Rasmussen, who remains on board for his first full season.

Rossi, 33, joins after spending the past two seasons with Arrow McLaren, taking ninth in the points in 2023 and 10th this year, with just two podium finishes. He replaces Rinus VeeKay at the Chevrolet-powered ECR squad, with the Dutch

one-time race winner on the market for a seat for the 2025 season.

"I'm honoured that Ed and the entire ECR ownership group recognise the value I can bring to the team," said eight-time IndyCar race victor Rossi. "Their commitment to excellence, along with the power of Chevrolet and the ambitious plans they have for the future, made this opportunity impossible to pass up."

In addition to Rossi and Rasmussen, who contested 14 of the 17 races this season, team principal Carpenter will occupy a third entry for his traditional crack at the Indy 500.

JOEY BARNES

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Exclusion provides hammerblow to Tandy title shot

IMSA

The IMSA SportsCar Championship title hopes of Nick Tandy and Mathieu Jaminet have taken a blow after their Porsche 963 LMDh was stripped of third place in last month's Indianapolis 6 Hours. The points loss mean they go into the Petit Le Mans series finale at Road Atlanta next week 124 rather than 14 points behind Felipe Nasr and Dane Cameron in the sister Porsche Penske Motorsport entry.

Tandy and Jaminet were demoted to the rear of the results of the penultimate round of the IMSA series after the wiring loom on the #6 PPM entry was found to have been modified outside of the homologation.

They took 10th-place points in the 11-car GTP field after the #40 Wayne Taylor Racing Acura ARX-06 that finished fourth in the hands of Louis Deletraz and Jordan Taylor was also penalised. The Acura was demoted to 11th and last in class after the brake ducts on the car were found to have been modified. Tandy's and Jaminet's loss was also Nasr's and Cameron's gain. They moved up from ninth to seventh in the results and with it gained an extra 20 points.

Tandy has conceded that a championship victory for him and his French team-mate at Petit on 12 October is now "extremely unlikely". IMSA's scoring system means that any car taking the green flag at the start of the race accrues points.

"We have to finish second even if Felipe and Dane are classified last, depending a bit on what happens with the points from qualifying," said Tandy. "It's such a shame because it was all set up to be such an amazing finale. Whoever finished in front of the other would have pretty much won the championship."

"But Petit Le Mans is still one of the big races you want to win, and Mathieu and I will be going there to do that. We've been the form car in the series since Sebring and I think we have a good chance even if the championship looks like a long shot now."

Both PPM and WTR were fined \$10,000 for their technical indiscretions.

GARY WATKINS

Abt to Lambo fold after quarter-century with Audi



DTM

The Abt team is leaving Audi after 25 years in the DTM to join forces with Lamborghini for its 2025 campaign in the series. It brings to an end a relationship that yielded no fewer than five drivers' titles with Audi.

Abt moves over to run a pair of Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2s as Audi winds down its customer

racing department with the R8 LMS GT3 Evo II. The team forged a relationship with the Italian marque, like Audi part of the Volkswagen group, this season with a programme centred on the Nurburgring 24 Hours.

"The participation at the Nurburgring was the first step in this direction," said Abt motorsport director Martin Tomczyk. "We enjoy working with Lamborghini, so it was a logical step for

us." Rouven Mohr, Lambo's chief technical officer and acting motorsport boss, added that "to be able to work with the most successful team in this series makes us very proud".

Drivers for the Abt Huracans have yet to be confirmed. Whether Grasser Racing and SSR, Lamborghini's current DTM teams, will continue in the series remains unclear.

GARY WATKINS



FORMULA 4 British boy wonder Freddie Slater clinched the Italian Formula 4 title with the second of his two wins in the series' 'away' round at Barcelona last weekend. The victories took his tally to 13 from 17 races, while he is also on two from six in the Euro 4 mini-series, which he also leads. The Prema Racing-run 16-year-old missed out in the finale of the Spanish triple-header – Slater was leading when a car problem struck and dropped him to fourth in a race where Australian Jack Beeton finally won, after seven second places! **Photograph by ACI Sport Italia**

New track hosts Hungary return

MOTOGP

MotoGP will finally return to Hungary next year for the first time since 1992 at the new Balaton Park Circuit. Located on the edge of Lake Balaton, the 2.5-mile circuit opened in 2023 and is owned by Chanoch Nissany, the Israeli who took part in FP1 for the 2005 Formula 1 Grand Prix with Minardi and who is the father of long-time Formula 2 racer Roy.

The announcement of the race, which will take place on 24 August, also came with news of modifications to the track to bring it up to standard for the top flight of motorcycle racing. The first sector – a fast straight into a right-hand corner and three left turns – will remain unchanged, while the long right-hander of Turn 7 will have some of the infield carved out to offer extra run-off.

A chicane at Turns 8 and 9, with a



hairpin at Turn 10, will remain, with another chicane added along the track's long back straight to limit speed and introduce more overtaking opportunities.

The largest changes to the track come in the final sector, where Turns 13 to 16 will be cut off in favour of another of another chicane and a straight run onto the start/finish straight, where it is estimated that speeds will hit 300km/h (186mph).

The track, which has hosted regional Formula 4 and TCR car races, will also stage a World Superbike round on 27 July.

TOM JEFFRIES

BROWNING: F2 AT HITECH

Williams sporting director Sven Smeets has said that its protege Luke Browning will race in Formula 2 with Hitech GP in 2025. Browning, who has been with the Silverstone team since 2022, is contesting the last three F2 rounds of this season with ART Grand Prix. "It's great to prepare for next year because he's going to stay with Hitech for F2," said Smeets. "[They] are three circuits he doesn't know from F3. I said to him, 'The more kilometres you can do, the better.'" Browning's seat at ART came in place of fellow Williams junior Zak O'Sullivan, about whom Smeets said: "Between them and ART something happened. They eventually said, 'We cannot continue with each other.'"

KING STILL HAS A CHANCE

Briton Harry King scored a win and a second place at the Red Bull Ring last weekend to give himself an outside chance of the German Porsche Carrera Cup title at this month's Hockenheim finale. King took victory in the first race in his Allied Racing car, before chasing home Dutch teenager Flynt Schuring – younger brother of Porsche LMGT3 young gun Morris – in the second. Series leader Larry ten Voorde took a third and a fourth.

GIROLAMI'S EURO CROWN

Franco Girolami became TCR Europe champion for a second time at Valencia last weekend. The 32-year-old Argentinian took his Monlau Motorsport Cupra Leon to his fourth win of the season in race one to beat Aurelien Comte (Cupra) and Ignacio Montenegro (Honda) in the standings.

SELLERS PETERS OUT

One of IMSA's longest-serving driver pairings is to finally be broken after nine years and two GTD class titles, with Bryan Sellers set to leave Paul Miller Racing at the end of this season. Sellers and Madison Snow have raced together since 2016, winning titles in 2018 in a Lamborghini Huracan and 2023 in a BMW M4. Sellers is to become programme manager at GT World Challenge America Corvette team DXDT Racing.

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Keegan (below) pushes on
in Hesketh during 1977
German GP at Hockenheim



Rupert Keegan 1955-2024

OBITUARY

Rupert Keegan, who has died aged 69 after a long illness, was once hailed as the next James Hunt. The similarities were obvious: they both started out with a habit of crashing Formula Fords, rose rapidly through the single-seater ranks to Formula 1, and enjoyed the playboy lifestyle.

The other parallel was that they both took their first steps in F1 with Hesketh, Hunt in 1973 and Keegan four years later. But whereas future world champion Hunt's career kicked on, Keegan's never did. Hesketh was now a shadow of its former self, though Keegan had a strong debut season, qualifying for all 12 of the grands prix he entered. His year aboard a Hesketh-Cosworth 308E would be the pinnacle of a stop-start grand prix career. It went downhill after a move for 1978 to Surtees, for whom he drove the TS19 and TS20, over the remainder of a stint in F1 that didn't conclude until 1982 but yielded just 25 starts and no points.

Yet Keegan was a race winner in F1, and a champion to boot. He triumphed in the 1979 Aurora-sponsored British F1 Championship, undoubtedly the strongest of its three seasons. When his BS Fabrications-run Arrows A1 finished, it won, with the exception of a dramatic finale at Silverstone. Second was enough for the title.

The Aurora success failed to kickstart his career in F1 proper: a further 12 participations with a RAM Racing-run Williams FW07 in 1980 and one of RAM's own March 821s two years later yielded just seven starts.

Keegan was racing full time in sportscars in 1982, undertaking a largely unsuccessful season in the world sportscar championship with a works-run Lola-Cosworth T610 shared with Guy Edwards. They were fifth at the Le Mans 24 Hours the following year in a Porsche 956 co-driven by John Fitzpatrick, while Keegan notched up a trio of WSC podiums in 1984 with Fitzpatrick's eponymous team. A short-lived return to single-seaters in CART Indycars in 1985 and 1986 brought the curtain down on his career.

Keegan can be regarded as an underachiever in F1. He arrived after winning Britain's premier Formula 3 title in 1976 in another dramatic finale: he and season-long rival Bruno Giacomelli, both on the front row at Thruxton, had a coming together before the first corner. With neither scoring, Keegan was champion.

When he pitched up at Hesketh at the start of the European F1 season, the team reckoned they had a star on their hands. "We really thought Rupert had a big future in F1," recalls Dave 'Beaky' Sims, team manager at Hesketh. "He was very positive and always up



SCHLEGELMILCH/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

for it, and you have to remember that that year's Hesketh was no more than an average car."

The high points for Keegan in his debut F1 season included fifth in opening qualifying at Silverstone, though he slipped to 13th. At a very wet Österreichring a month later, he ended up just out of the points in seventh.

Keegan won his debut race in a Ford Escort Mexico in 1973. He progressed to single-seaters in Formula Ford, driving a Hawke DL11 backed by father Mike's British Air Ferries airline. A graduation to F3 in 1975 aboard a March-Toyota 743 followed, with the same car retained for the start of 1976. A new Hawke – Mike Keegan had taken over the marque – was then quickly ditched in favour of a Chevron B34 for the championship run-in.

Keegan made a couple of comebacks. Among them was a fourth Le Mans 24 Hours start, driving for the reborn Lister marque in 1995.

GARY WATKINS

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Max versus the FIA, episode two

The Red Bull driver knuckled under when the governing body previously slapped him with a community service penalty. Things may go differently this time

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

“You won’t believe who’s coming.” It’s the oddly petrol-fume-stinking pitlane of the Moulay El Hassan circuit ahead of the 2019 Marrakech E-Prix. The Atlas Mountains are twinkling to my right. These are the early days of Formula E’s Gen2 era.

Amid the manufacturer influx party upon which the electric championship is guzzling, that means pretty much anyone could be coming. Wayne Rooney? Boris Johnson? Liz Hurley? Idris Elba has driven the Gen1 car at the previous Paris E-Prix, something Johnson had also done during a flying visit to the controversial Battersea round in 2015. Heady days.

“...Max Verstappen – serving his community service for shoving Esteban Ocon.” Governing body the FIA has slapped Verstappen – then ‘just’ a five-time F1 race winner – with this punishment as a result of the ugly confrontation in the Interlagos paddock a few months earlier.

Some in the FE paddock felt that this part of Verstappen’s punishment – he was also required to attend a later winter stewards’ training seminar in Geneva – made the championship look bad. But the timing was far more important than any imagined slight. Verstappen’s community service had been designed so that he could witness, while F1 was off, exactly how FIA-appointed stewards spend race weekends at high-level international events and adjudicate accordingly.

“Verstappen has far from an unblemished record, but here he is acting with deft judgement”

So, Verstappen spent that day shadowing the event stewards – appointed, as ever, to act independently on the FIA’s behalf. After a tour of the Marrakech track’s race control facilities and with lunch in FE’s giant team-and-crew catering tent, he sat at the stewards’ tables during live sessions and for any required hearings. He was not made available for FE PR purposes, but did speak to FIA media staff at the day’s end. Having witnessed an E-Prix in which DS Techeetah driver Jean-Eric Vergne hit Sam Bird in an audacious move for the lead at Turn 1 and spun, and the two BMW Andretti drivers Antonio Felix da Costa and Alexander Sims spectacularly took each other out of the lead fight much later, Verstappen was left to reflect how “it’s interesting to see it from the other side”.

Autosport understands he privately expressed his opinions on certain incidents from the day to the panel that included

ex-F1 racer and regular grand prix steward Tonio Liuzzi, but didn’t do so during any formal decision-making process.

In 2024, Verstappen faces a second FIA-mandated community service sentence – this time for swearing during the pre-event press conference for the 2024 Singapore GP. If Verstappen’s appearance in Marrakech was a surprise, it will be even more so if he acquiesces this time around. Then, this was a clever but light-touch penalty given the seriousness of what Verstappen did to Ocon in Brazil. Now, having failed to act when Verstappen used ableist and other offensive language after a crash with Lance Stroll in practice at the 2020 Portuguese GP, the FIA has got itself into a mess over something that just did not require intervention.

As Verstappen pointed out, F1 press conferences aren’t for kids. It’s supposed to be a professional setting that will allow F1 fans a greater understanding of what is a very complex motorsport discipline. It has been diluted greatly due to the presence of TV broadcasters because they pay for access in the paddock, but drivers should still be allowed to express themselves as they wish. Language is included in the International Sporting Code, but this push is a bizarre act of self-harm stemming from the governing body’s very top – FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem.

The most absurd element is that Ben Sulayem is calling for something that is already happening – F1 broadcasts filter out driver swearing. So, Verstappen is in open revolt, with Lewis Hamilton saying “I hope Max doesn’t do it [the community service]” during the post-Singapore qualifying press session his 2021 title rival was already boycotting. Verstappen has far from an unblemished record on his statements in F1 – in and out of the cockpit. But here he is acting with deft judgement. He’s not refusing to speak to the media, simply doing his own press conferences away from the FIA setting. It will be interesting to see if he keeps this approach up after F1’s second mid-season break in as many months when the championship reconvenes at Austin.

The US never misses a chance to make its point as a bastion of free speech, which makes the next race’s setting particularly interesting for Verstappen’s stand. And, given what happened in 2018-19, we can expect the organisation of any community service to be some way off, but where F1 is heading next is an important part of the current debate. A point recently made to Autosport is that many new F1 fans in the US have been drawn in partly because *Drive to Survive* takes an unvarnished approach to driver expression. The drivers can swear in a way you never see in America’s ultra-sanitised sports presentation.

Now the FIA seems to be trying to stop grown adults being who they are. That not only doesn’t make sense, but it also appears to risk undoing much of the good work F1 has done in expanding its fanbase into a lucrative growing market in recent years. ✎



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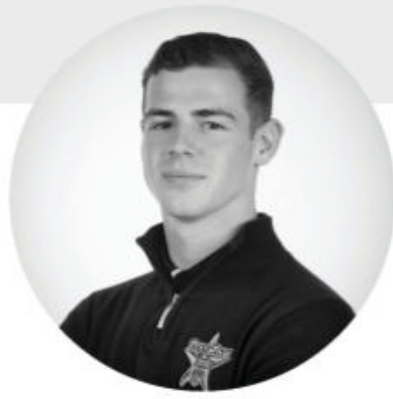


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Making most of a factory chance

The BRDC SuperStar and McLaren Motorsport factory driver has been keeping busy this year...

TOM GAMBLE

I've done nearly 20 races so far this year as a McLaren factory driver, so it's been a lot. We started out finishing up the Asian Le Mans Series in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. That's a great championship to keep you sharp over the winter.

Then I went to do the Daytona 24 Hours. It was a real honour to be asked by the Inception team to do that race. It's one of my favourites. It's always good fun and we were on for a pretty good result there, but we had an unfortunate mechanical issue not too long from the end which cost us a chance of a podium.

I've also raced in British GT and we've had a strong season. We've had a really fast car thanks to Optimum Motorsport, who have been doing a phenomenal job. We've come close to a win a few times now, but our goal is to keep improving and work with (amateur driver) Mark Radcliffe. Fingers crossed we can go again next year and challenge for the championship.

I'm also racing in the GT World Challenge Europe. I'm really thankful to the Garage 59 team for asking me to drive alongside Benji Goethe in both the Sprint and the Endurance championships. It's another one where we've come close to a good result a few times, but just not really had much luck. At a few of the Sprint rounds, like Brands Hatch, we had strong pace, but didn't quite have things go our way. Then in the Endurance Series, we had a decent race in the Spa 24 Hours. We had a little bit of misfortune when the rain started to come – it put our pitstop strategy out of sync and so we ended up dropping a lap. That put us out of contention for a really good result, but just to finish that race with the car not missing a beat was really positive. We're a bit out of the championship hunt now, so the plan for the rest of 2024 is just to try and get some good results and set us up for next year.

If the Balance of Performance favours you a bit, then it can really enhance your chances of getting a good result. If that's the case for us, then we need to capitalise on that whenever it comes. The final race in Jeddah is going to be a new one for everyone. I've driven it quite a lot on the sim in the past, so I've got a bit of experience on knowing where it goes, but driving on the simulator is completely

different to driving it in real life, especially when the walls are real! With nearly 50 cars on the grid, it's going to be a bit of a chaotic one. It will be interesting to see how it goes – it could be a lot of red flags and safety cars, so fingers crossed that's not the case, but I think we all know how that might go!

It's been a fun past two years as a McLaren Motorsport factory driver. Last year was cool to be given my first contract. We didn't have too much racing, but that gave me a lot of time to do

“The simulator is different to driving it in real life, especially when the walls are real!”

development work with the team. I was still getting a lot of laps in, keeping me sharp, so I was ready to go at any given opportunity.

When I did get the chance to race I was able to prove myself, so I've got a lot more programmes this year. The team have been putting a lot of work in. We've got the new Trophy EVO car coming, which is going to be really good, and I'm excited to see how that takes off. I think it's a big step up from the previous model. Then we're always developing the GT3, trying to make that as fast as possible. We're up against some big manufacturers that are putting out very quick cars, so it's been interesting.

Before this it was all about turning up to the weekend and doing your job and that was it really. You'd worked with the team to develop the package you've got, but now we're developing the car. Now I can feed back on the race weekends straight to the manufacturer, whereas before you never really did that. McLaren is always looking to improve the car and seek out areas where we can capitalise. The feedback is important.

I've raced since I was six or seven years old, so it's kind of all I've ever known. I've done a lot of simulator work for F1 teams prior to joining McLaren and I was always used to providing useful feedback. I'm still quite young (27), so it's been valuable for me to have this experience.

I'm proud to be part of the BRDC SuperStars programme. It's good they offer so much advice on how you can improve on being a professional driver. I know there's stuff that I've still got to work on and having people like Andy Meyrick there to offer advice, as someone who's done all of this in the past, has been helpful. The programme offers drivers things that we can do to make us not just better on track, but off track too, whether it be with media or training, they can offer anything to help, which is really special. ✨



Gamble has had a strong season in British GT

JEP

F1 in 1974

5 WINS

DRIVERS' TITLE
Emerson Fittipaldi

CONSTRUCTORS' TITLE
McLaren's first

JEP



McLAREN
CELEBRATION

50

YEARS ON

Indycar in 1974

4 WINS

USAC DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Runner-up (Johnny Rutherford)

When McLaren conquered F1 *and* Indy

Fifty years ago this week, McLaren scored its first two Formula 1 titles – in the same year as it won the Indianapolis 500.

Time for a special get-together

KEVIN TURNER

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY JOEY BARNES,
TOM HOWARD AND ALEX KALINAUCKAS

O

nly Lotus and McLaren have managed to win the Formula 1 world championship and America's greatest race, the Indianapolis 500, in the same season. After Lotus's 1965 double with Jim Clark, McLaren managed the feat twice in the 1970s with two truly great single-seaters that followed soon after the death of team founder Bruce McLaren.

We're at Pembrey with McLaren's Heritage team, the M16C/D in which Johnny Rutherford won the 1974 Indy 500, and one of the M23s that helped Emerson Fittipaldi to his second F1 crown a few months later. Both cars are the work of designer Gordon Coppuck, who joined McLaren when its total staff numbers had only just got into double figures, and follow the same basic concept.

McLaren's first Indycar, the M15 of 1970, was decent but not a winner. Work in the wind tunnel persuaded Coppuck that Colin Chapman's approach with that year's F1 world championship-winning Lotus 72 – side radiators and a chisel nose in particular – could work on ovals, though he avoided such complications as anti-dive suspension or inboard brakes *a la* Lotus. Coppuck also cleverly integrated front and rear wings, which got McLaren around a ban on aero appendages.

The M16 was ready for 1971 and immediately impressed Penske lead driver and engineer Mark Donohue, so a combined Penske-McLaren force descended upon Indy. "We had a collaboration with Penske, and Mark had done a little bit of testing before we got to the Speedway so we had a little grounding," says mechanic Hughie Absalom, who had joined McLaren in 1969. "We were the top dog and the general paddock talk was that we had made all the other cars obsolete. We even gave AJ Foyt a wing to play with to keep him on side!"

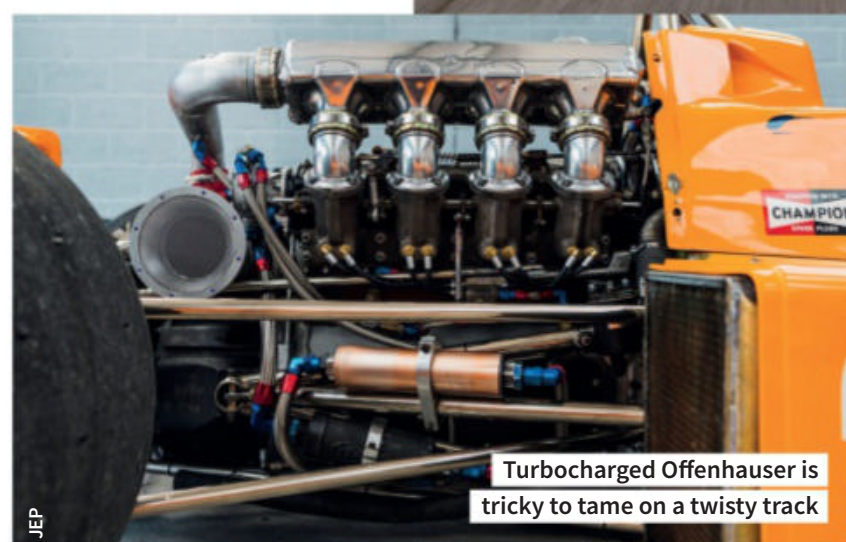
Works driver Peter Revson took pole in a McLaren 1-2-4 and Donohue led in Penske's car before gearbox woes struck. Just over a month later, Donohue took McLaren's first Indycar victory as a constructor at Pocono, then won again next time out at Michigan. After years of dominating Can-Am and winning in US F5000, McLaren had arrived on the ovals.

Donohue then took McLaren's first Indy 500 win as a constructor with Penske's car in a race of attrition in 1972 as Coppuck pushed on with the M16's development. At the same time, he was applying the same 'chisel' idea in F1.

"The M16C had been under development while I was also designing the M23 for F1," Coppuck told Autosport in 2020.



More gear changes needed in Wales than at Indy!



Turbocharged Offenhauser is tricky to tame on a twisty track

"Things we'd discovered on the M16B and ideas we had in the season were investigated in the winter and went into developing both cars – Indycar and F1. We were learning new things in the wind tunnel and it was quite an exciting time."

Before the arrival of pop-off valves to limit turbo boost in the interests of safety, McLaren's Johnny Rutherford unofficially averaged 200mph at Indy. The combination of the M16, turbocharging and slick tyres has pushed things forward rapidly – in 1970 the pole speed had been 'only' 170mph... Rutherford took pole in 1973 at over 198mph. He was a contender in the race until an exhaust header cracked and he fell to ninth, although Roger McCluskey took his McLaren to third in an event overshadowed by huge crashes and three fatalities.



Cockpit 'protection' got Emmo's attention in 1974



Experienced Rutherford quickly gelled with M16

McLAREN
CELEBRATION
50
YEARS ON

*“The M16 was typical McLaren
– very easy to work on – and
Johnny was the perfect fit”*

By 1974, Coppuck had redesigned the suspension to eradicate understeer, Indycar had given up trying to ban wings, fuel tank rules had been tweaked for safety, and the consistent McCluskey had brought McLaren's first Indycar title in Lindsey Hopkins's M16. McLaren also finally committed more to Indycar, having only previously contested selected races.

“Up until 1974 we'd only done the 500-mile races and then us four mechanics spent the rest of the time helping the F1 guys and Can-Am, but you can't beat experience so doing more races helped,” remembers Absalom. “The M16 was typical McLaren, very easy to work on, and Johnny was probably the first of the experienced oval racers we'd had. He was the perfect fit.”

The 1974 M16C/D now looked a lot like the M23 in which star signing Fittipaldi would contest the F1 season. Rutherford won at Ontario Motor Speedway but a blown engine on Pole Day limited him to 25th on the grid for the Indy 500. Being second quickest during the Month of May nevertheless indicated he would be a threat. “That was a technical situation with a new chief steward in Tom Binford,” said Rutherford in April 2024. “He didn't hold the same rules that the previous chief steward had. We scuffed a piston during the practice that morning [in qualifying]. The guys hustled to the garage and in 58 minutes they turned the car around with a new engine and everything, and came back out to get in line. We were in line with plenty of time, but Binford said no, that we had had to be in line when the qualifying started. So, we were put back to the third day of qualifying.

“I had second quickest time and think if we had been able to race Foyt for the pole position, we could have won it. But we had to start 25th. My car was so good that, when they dropped the green flag, in 12 laps I was running third.”

The race quickly boiled down to a fight between Rutherford and poleman Foyt's Coyote. Rutherford caught Foyt and got ahead when the Coyote had a slow pitstop. The battle raged until Foyt >>

McLaren M16C/D-5

YEARS

1973-77

KEY DRIVER

Johnny Rutherford

ENGINE

Drake-Offenhauser-McLaren 2.6-litre
straight-four monoblock single turbo

POWER

850bhp @ 9000rpm
(varies depending on boost allowed)

WINS (ALL 1974)

Indianapolis 500
Milwaukee 150
Pocono 500

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

2nd (1974)

McLAREN'S REMARKABLE 1974

was black-flagged for leaking oil, leaving Rutherford to win by 22 seconds from Bobby Unser's Eagle, the only runner not to be lapped, and scoop \$245,000.

"I raced AJ until his car failed him and oil lines came loose and I was covered up with oil," added Rutherford. "I had to back off from him and watched for oil on the track.

"I knew I could pass him anytime I wanted to. I was faster through the turns than he was. My thinking was, 'Let's give the fans a show and we'll race one another.' I'd pull up beside him down the front straightaway and let him have the line into the corner. Once he pulled in the pits and was out of the race, then I got serious about trying to finish rather than serious about racing."

"We'd gone there with a purpose and the purpose was to win," adds Absalom. "We were achieving Bruce's dream."

Autosport described the victory as a "tremendous achievement that puts McLaren among the really elite teams in the history of motor racing".

Indy was conquered – as would Milwaukee and Michigan in the subsequent weeks – but what about F1? After six rounds of the 15 championship races, Fittipaldi led Ferrari pairing Clay Regazzoni and Niki Lauda by two and three points respectively, having taken wins in Brazil and Belgium with chassis 5, our test car.

"Turning his concept from an Indycar to an F1, the concept obviously evolved, and there's lots of aspects of the tub and the aero package that carry over," explains McLaren chief operating officer Piers Thynne. "But one of the really interesting things about the M23 is it was in F1 when there was the first mandated side impact panels on the sides of the chassis. This was an important point where safety was being looked at seriously in F1, and they form part of a deformable structure inboard of the radiator ducts. This chassis rolled out at the beginning of 1974 when the livery changed from Yardley."

The M23 had proved fast and won races in 1973 – in Revson's and Denny Hulme's hands – but arguably only got the top-line driver it needed when Fittipaldi arrived after ending his time at Lotus. He brought Marlboro sponsorship with him and McLaren was now ready for a title tilt.

"The M23 was a very conventional car, very easy to work on and very easy to get the set-up," recalls Fittipaldi, now 77. "The first test was at Paul Ricard in December [1973] and I was very fast – the car was easy to drive.

"McLaren had very good logistics and planning – like at Monaco we had the shorter wheelbase car; we had three different wheelbases. Gordon and Alastair Caldwell were the most technical people and kept the car competitive in 1974 and 1975. The M23 was a strong car, very fast and stable in fast corners, with a very good

weight distribution. It was an amazing car to drive and, with [team manager] Teddy Mayer, Alastair and Gordon, McLaren was always ahead and making the car consistent all year."

Nevertheless, Lauda and the Ferrari 312B3 were the quickest combination of 1974 – as nine poles from the 15 GPs would eventually prove – and a first and a second in the Netherlands and France put the Austrian in command in July, with Regazzoni just behind. Fittipaldi also had a problem – the M23's rear suspension was struggling to get the most out of Goodyear's wider and stiffer rubber, particularly on bumpy tracks. So, just as with the M16, Coppuck went back to the drawing board. Constant developments and tweaks were key to keeping both the M23 and M16 at the forefront.



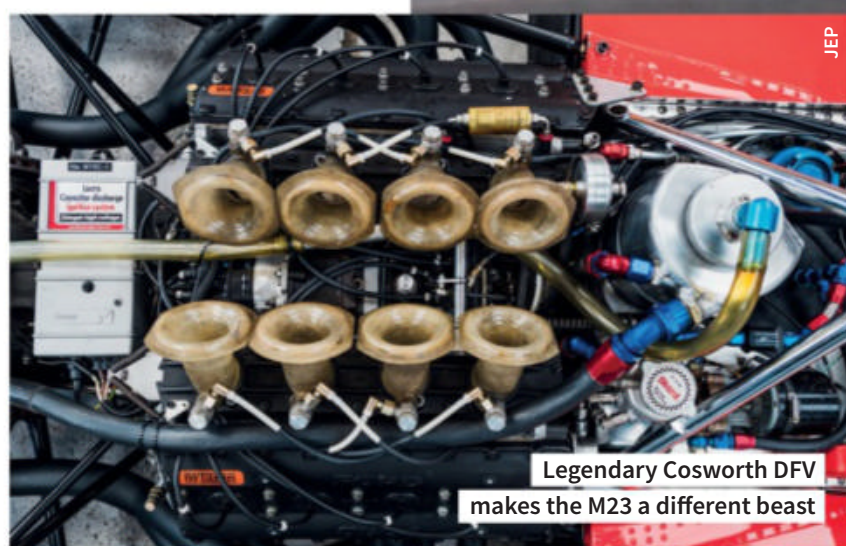
M23 was near the start of F1's safety push



Fittipaldi believes McLaren was the best-organised team of the era



M23 perhaps more refined but things still simple



Legendary Cosworth DFV makes the M23 a different beast

McLAREN
CELEBRATION
50
YEARS ON



“The M23 was a strong car, fast and stable in fast corners, with a very good weight distribution”

With a little help from a packed pitlane that delayed erstwhile leader Lauda after a puncture, Fittipaldi beat both Ferraris with the revised M23 at Brands Hatch, finishing second to Jody Scheckter's Tyrrell 007. But retirements in Germany and Austria left him on the back foot again with three races to go.

A close second to old team-mate Ronnie Peterson's Lotus 72 at Monza and victory at Mosport catapulted the Brazilian onto equal points with Regazzoni going into the Watkins Glen finale. Scheckter was also in contention, while a string of retirements had ended Lauda's championship bid.

Fittipaldi qualified only eighth – two spots behind Scheckter and one ahead of Regazzoni – but quickly moved forward despite an early skirmish with his fast-starting Ferrari rival. “It was the only night I only slept three hours – it was enormous pressure,” says Fittipaldi. “We surprised Ferrari because we dropped the rear wing for the race. On full tanks the car was good and on the main straight I slipstreamed Clay – he was never expecting a McLaren to pass in a straight line because the Ferrari was very fast. I went to the inside, he tried to push me on the grass, I turned the steering wheel to say, ‘If that's the game we're going to crash,’ and he got scared, I passed him and I never backed off.”

With Regazzoni struggling with suspension issues throughout on his way to 11th, Fittipaldi followed Scheckter for much of the race, enough to take the title, and was gifted fourth when a broken fuel pick-up pipe halted the Tyrrell. Fittipaldi thus secured his second world title by three points.

Despite Hulme's struggle to score consistently heavily for McLaren, the F1 points system of the time – which rewarded only the highest placed driver from each team per race – helped McLaren pip Ferrari in the constructors' contest.

Fittipaldi and the M23 was also the closest thing Lauda and his 312T would have to a rival in 1975 but, intriguingly, there was a chance that McLaren's F1 and Indy stories could have been even >>

McLaren M23-5

YEAR

1974

KEY DRIVERS

Emerson Fittipaldi
Denny Hulme

ENGINE

Nicholson-McLaren three-litre Cosworth Ford DFV V8

POWER

465bhp @ 10,250rpm

WEIGHT

575kg

WINS (ALL FITTIPALDI)

Brazilian GP
Medici GP (Non-championship F1 race)
Belgian GP

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1st (Fittipaldi)
7th (Hulme)

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1st



more intertwined that year. “I tested Johnny Rutherford’s car after Watkins Glen [in 1974], it was a Goodyear test,” reveals Fittipaldi. “I liked the car, it was perfect. I was quick the second day and they asked me to drive in 1975, but the monocoque was 2mm and I said, ‘I’m not going’. And it took 10 years to go back to Indy, when there was carbon fibre, and that’s why I’m still here!”

Given it was capable of well over 200mph in an era when the safety push was only just beginning, Fittipaldi’s view of the M16 is perhaps unsurprising. But what about the perspective of a current pilot?

McLaren’s trusted Heritage driver Rob Garofall is on hand at Pembrey to steer both of Coppuck’s designs. He agrees with Fittipaldi on the accessibility of the M23. “It’s brilliant,” says

Garofall, who has driven around 80 McLarens. “It’s a DFV Cosworth engine, so it’s very easy to drive.

“It’s more mechanical than the later cars. So, you’ve got a lot more response from the suspension – the aero back then was in its infancy, almost. It’s a much more mechanical car to drive than the more modern cars, where you’re relying on downforce and ground effect. You really feel that’s where the expression ‘driving through the seat of your pants’ comes from because you’re feeling everything through your bum when you drive it. But we can drive that car a lot closer to its potential than some of the other cars.”

The M16 is a little more tricky, despite the fact that it’s also ‘only’ running about 450bhp today compared to the 700-800bhp (depending on boost levels) in period. The small Welsh circuit





Two of McLaren's greatest cars stand together... at Pembrey!

JEP

“The engines make the cars feel very different. I can't feel any similarities between the two”

is a long way – geographically and in layout – from the superspeedways on which the M16 excelled.

“It's a very industrial kind of build,” says Garofall. “It's designed to go through corners at 180mph, so Pembrey with no diff in the back and solid rear axle – it's not the easiest car in the world to drive. It's got a turbo the size of a dustbin! So you've got not a lot of power and then all of a sudden a *lot* of power. It's a bit lively.

“It's got huge lag – you put the foot to the floor and then count a few seconds and you wait, then it just arrives.”

Considering how similar the two cars superficially appear, Garofall says they feel completely different: “Because the engine in the Indycar is quite an old design [with its origins dating back to the 1930s] and the DFV, in its time, was state of the art, that really makes the cars very different in feel. I can't see or feel any similarities really between the two.”

Both the M16 and M23 kept evolving beyond 1974, with up-and-coming designer John Barnard assisting Coppuck, and in 1976 McLaren did it again. Rutherford's second Indy win was followed by James Hunt's remarkable F1 title at the famous Fuji finale, more than five years after the concept had first hit the track. Rutherford finished second in the Indycar standings three times with the M16, unreliability cruelly denying him at the end of 1976, but two poles, two victories and a second at the Indy 500 alone underlined the car's superspeedway credentials.

“The M16 was the best flat-bottom car to ever run the Speedway,” concludes Rutherford. “It really filled all the gaps and it was a good, good car, fun car to drive. It was perfect for me.” ❄



Thynne (middle) listens to Garofall

How McLaren's legacy is helping its future

“For everybody in the team to be part of something – winning the Indy 500 in 1974, the world championship in 1974 – they have that legacy on a day-to-day basis. Legacy is one thing we cherish because not everyone has that.”

McLaren chief operating officer Piers Thynne is a driving force at McLaren's Technology Centre, but he also loves heading trackside with some of the marque's famous past racers. More than that, he believes the team's history can play an important role today as McLaren strives to add more titles to its F1 tally of 12 drivers' and eight constructors' crowns.

“The legacy is hugely important to each and every one of the team, because we are forging forward in our 61st year of competing in motorsport,” he says. “And it's really important to us delivering performance week in, week out on our current F1 car. But we are part of something, and that's important that we are able to look over our shoulder and see the legacy of what's happened in the past.”

Heritage projects also help provide training and experience for those set to work on the F1 team now that specific and busy test teams are no longer an option. “Under the cost cap you divide it between labour and adding performance to the car,” explains Thynne. “Our systems, culture and process in Heritage, though slightly more relaxed, are the same as our F1 team.”

Thynne's enthusiasm extends beyond the F1 machinery and includes the M16, which Autosport selected as the greatest Indycar of all time in 2020. “It was a very advanced chassis for its time,” he enthuses. “And the aerodynamic package then evolved through 1973 into 1974, where the safety regulations were changed and only inboard fuel tanks were allowed, with various geometry changes that allowed the speeds to increase.”

“OUR SYSTEMS AND PROCESS IN HERITAGE ARE THE SAME AS OUR F1 TEAM”

But the M23, which ultimately won three world titles and 16 world championship GPs for McLaren, remains a favourite. “I have a fantastic view from my office,” says Thynne. “I have a model of this car on the shelf and I can look at the model and the car behind it all in one view. I take huge inspiration from this. And one of the things that we've done in the last 12 months is bring Heritage from an offsite facility back inside the MTC.

“One of the things we personally enjoy as the Heritage team is being allowed and trusted to take these cars out and ensure that they are alive. All of our heritage cars we rebuild on a regular basis and ensure they can run for many years to come.”

HULKENBERG IN F1

AGE: 37

STARTS: 221

BEST RACE RESULT: 4th

POLES: 1 (2010 Brazilian GP)

FASTEST LAPS: 2

BEST CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION: 7th (2018)

POINTS: 554

LAPS RACED: 11,574

TEAMS: Williams,
Force India, Sauber,
Renault, Racing Point,
Aston Martin, Haas



Another eight points added
at Silverstone towards
his current score of 24



BAGNALL/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

INTERVIEW

THE INDELIBLE HULK

A few years ago his F1 career looked over. But Nico Hulkenberg has shone this year with Haas and is now set to lead Audi on its entry to the sport's pinnacle. At 37, he's far from finished...

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Battling a podium-bound McLaren; resisting Fernando Alonso's faster Aston Martin for an age; holding off a Red Bull to score two more precious points for Haas in the 2024 constructors' battle. No wonder Nico Hulkenberg sees his starring Singapore Grand Prix drive as "redemption".

It came one week on from the unseen gaffes right at the end of the Azerbaijan GP that cost him an even better result. But, more than anything else, it's a reminder of how good Hulkenberg has been – again – in F1's crowded midfield. Since his full-time return to F1 with Haas at the start of last year, he has been superb.

Last year, Hulkenberg was able to get to grips with rear-end sliding, a bugbear from his earlier F1 career, and was able to shine in qualifying. But races were generally a tortuous affair, as the Haas VF-23 chomped through its tyres and Hulkenberg and team-mate Kevin Magnussen would drop through the pack. This year's VF-24 is much improved. The American squad's first year without Guenther Steiner at the helm has featured a car with which the team and its drivers can now race, and Haas's upgrade plan has unlocked further performance. Magnussen went so far as to claim: "It's the first time in Haas's history that we brought upgrades to the car that made it faster."

For Hulkenberg, this means a current points score of 24 (from Haas's total of 31) versus nine (and 12 for Haas) across all last term.

And the team is in an almighty scrap with RB for sixth place in the constructors' championship. That just three points separate them with six races left in 2024 underlines why new Haas team principal Ayao Komatsu was so angry with Hulkenberg getting "flustered" at the end in Baku. There, his late wallstrike and lack of reaction to the non-activation of the safety car meant that Franco Colapinto, Lewis Hamilton and temporary team-mate Ollie Bearman all snuck ahead.

Three days before this, Hulkenberg is waiting for us in the Haas hospitality in Baku. He's as perfectly presented as ever – the ease of his situation with those prized Haas points and his long-term Audi future wafting along warmly with him. To think again that this was a driver facing F1 career oblivion in 2019 is staggering.

It's not just on track where Hulkenberg has been one of the stories of 2024. His part in the 2025 driver market jamboree may have ended all of five months ago, but he remains a major piece of the complex overall picture. The 37-year-old German is still the only confirmed Sauber driver for next season, and he has a contract that will cover its transformation to Audi the following year. Six years on from his rejection by Renault, Hulkenberg will lead a massive OEM in its first foray into F1 racing.

"I think I'm driving well," he offers after a long pause and a laugh, considering, perhaps, all that's happened this year. "I've taken my lessons from last year. Then, obviously, the Saturdays really stood out – it was very obvious for everyone. But Sundays, you couldn't >>


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really do much because the package wasn't competitive on a Sunday and that was a fundamental car issue.

"I feel this year that I've stepped up my race performances as well in terms of consistency, in terms of tyre management. But not just me, together with the team – we've really put a big emphasis on that over the winter and earlier in the year and kind of really improved on that side a lot compared to last year. So, yeah, on a whole, happy and good."

Komatsu is far more effusive when asked to describe Hulkenberg's form in 2024. "Brilliant," he replies. "He just gives us a reference. He rarely makes mistakes. Once in several races, he makes, let's say, one significant mistake in one of the free practice sessions, but that's it. He's very professional, he's self-critical as well. And if he makes mistakes, he owns up to it. If you count how many times he's going to

"I FEEL THIS YEAR I'VE STEPPED UP MY RACE PERFORMANCES IN TERMS OF CONSISTENCY, TYRE MANAGEMENT"

Q3 [eight so far versus eight in the whole of 2023] for us, it's amazing and also the number of points he scored. So, he's been brilliant."

The highest points of Hulkenberg's 2024 season so far are his back-to-back sixth places at the Red Bull Ring and Silverstone. In Austria, he spiritedly held off Sergio Perez's Red Bull late on; in Britain his pace on ageing soft tyres was key.

In 2023, the closest Hulkenberg and Haas got to this was seventh in Australia. And in order to grab better and more consistent points finishes in 2024, something Haas did back in Bahrain pre-season testing ended up being critical. This was time spent concentrating almost exclusively on high-fuel race simulations. The aim was to see whether the VF-24's aerodynamic platform stability had improved, assess exactly what difference the team could make with differential, brake bias and engine braking settings adjustments, and understand how the drivers' differing treatment of the tyres in pushing later or earlier would impact their life over a stint. Haas went through 15 long-run stints across the opening two days, before both Magnussen and Hulkenberg did a full race simulation on the final day.

"A good learning experience for us," Hulkenberg attests. "We don't, obviously, in race weekends have a lot of practice to play around with that. So, it was good, but at the same time because the car and the aero

Hulkenberg beat Perez's
Red Bull to sixth place
in June's Austrian GP



HONE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



characteristic was so fundamentally different, we were not in the same boat anymore as last year. It was immediately better.” Komatsu insists “yes, the car is better, so it’s easier to manage”, but “from his [Hulkenberg’s] side as well, I think his understanding is much better” when it comes to working the current Pirellis, as a result of this time spent in testing.

“Because we’ve been focused on it from day one, I think he knows how much time on tyre management will make a difference,” adds Komatsu. “So, he’s much more open to input as well. So, on the long run sustained running, I think he’s better. Qualifying, I think same, but ‘same’ as in ‘very good’.

“We had to do that race practice – tyre management – in pre-season testing. Last year, of course we were trying to get him to do the management, but he’s not totally bought into it because he hasn’t experienced how much difference it’s going to make. And then obviously on race weekends the main things we do is an FP1 high fuel run and FP2 high fuel run. It’s not a back-to-back test or anything. So, it’s very difficult for everyone, including himself, to accept this is a result of this action. This is why we just focused on it in pre-season testing because you can get answers doing back-to-back to back-to-back – with different driving styles, different settings, different >>



The logo for Autosport Plus, featuring a checkered flag icon, the word 'AUTOSPORT' in white on a red background, and 'PLUS' in blue on a black background.

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Top 10 finishes, like here in Singapore, unlikely to come so easily after Sauber switch

ways of introducing tyres.”

Hulkenberg’s previous reluctance to focus on such an approach comes through when he asks: “Did we have to do that much in hindsight? Maybe not.” But it’s clear that he’s feeling the benefit now: “It was good and if you do low fuel runs in testing, for me anyway, that’s not very useful – I don’t need it. So, I liked the way we approached that.”

Asked why Hulkenberg hadn’t wanted to focus on tyre management on his F1 return in early 2023, Komatsu explains: “You’ve got to believe that it’s going to have such sensitivity. You’re telling the driver, ‘You’ve got to lose tenths in certain corners’. How painful is that? But then you’ve got to understand, ‘If you do this, you see the payback in a good way. If you don’t do it, this is the result of it.’ But unless you experience it and see on the data – feel it back-to-back

– it’s very difficult to accept it black and white.

“I don’t think tyre management was ever his strength. If you look at the previous races he used to do with Renault, I don’t think it was his strength and obviously these tyres are so sensitive. So, again, when he came back in 2023 in the pre-season testing, of course, we didn’t have the same focus, right? But this winter, for me, there was no option.

“It’s not optional. It’s not conditional. It’s just, ‘No, we’ve got to understand this one. We’ve got to get the drivers to experience it – the consequences, positive or negative – then they will buy into it. Then they know why they’re doing what they’re doing.’”

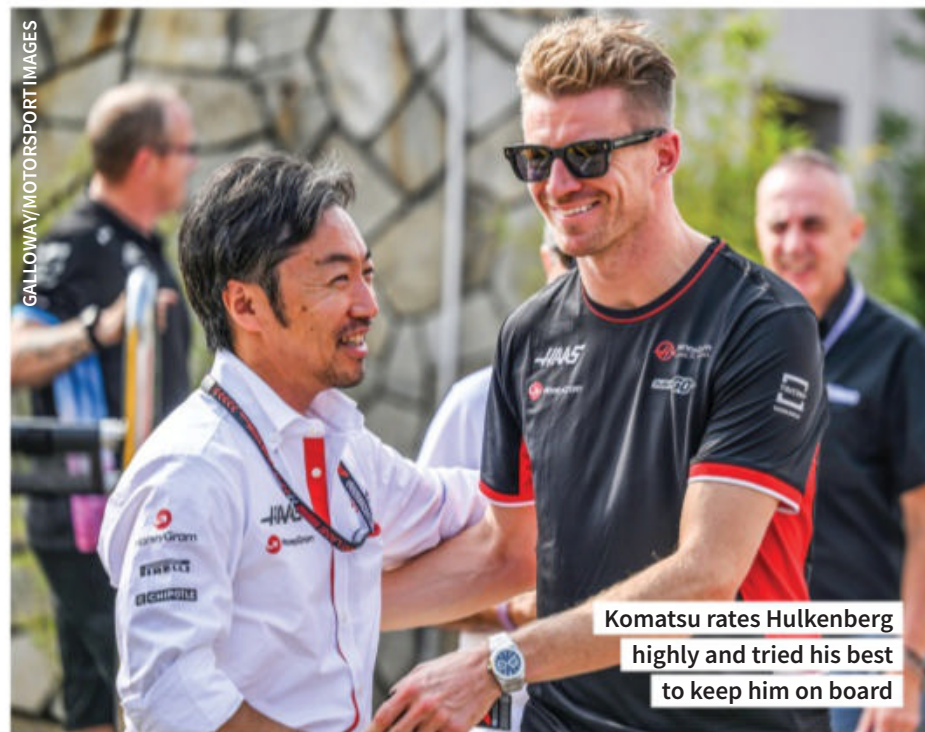
For Haas insiders, another key aspect of Hulkenberg’s year-on-year gains has been his effort away from the track. He plays this down as, “Two zoom calls – not that hard!”, but it’s clear that his time spent away from the team means he returns focused on exactly where they should start each race weekend to quickly kick on with car set-up and managing the tricky tyres.

The Hulkenberg-Haas partnership now only has quarter of a season left to run. Soon, it will be Sauber benefiting from his efforts. Komatsu says he has “nothing to regret because I tried my best” when the topic of Haas keeping Hulkenberg’s services for 2025 is broached, and won’t be drawn on why it didn’t happen. It seems most likely that Audi’s offer was one that team owner Gene Haas was unwilling to match.

Given how badly Sauber has struggled this season – and the long lead times on turning car performance around that Haas knows only too well – Hulkenberg will surely struggle to score similar headline results when he returns to Hinwil for the first time since 2013.

Nevertheless he still “feels good about the decision”, and is benefiting from the “comfortable and luxurious situation to be in to have it [his long-term F1 future] nailed down so early. It’s not always been like this for me. I know the other side more actually than being so early on! So yeah, that’s good, but obviously work doesn’t start there until next year.”

A Hulkenberg-Audi partnership is enticing for motorsport



Komatsu rates Hulkenberg highly and tried his best to keep him on board

“YOU’RE TELLING THE DRIVER,
‘YOU’VE GOT TO LOSE TENTHS IN
CERTAIN CORNERS’. HOW
PAINFUL IS THAT?”



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



A return to Le Mans for 2015
winner isn't on the radar,
but "never say never"

GILBERT/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

aficionados. The thought of future success in other categories, in particular. Regarding Le Mans, where his race win with Audi sister marque Porsche in 2015 remains his most recent victory, he will only say: "Never say never, but it's not something that is really on my mind or that's on my bucket list." Even so, he appreciates how an Audi link "offers opportunities".

He acknowledges "probably, yes" when asked whether this is the last big swing of his F1 career. But, given how close it came to ending in 2019, his position is remarkable. "I don't know where I will be in a few years' time once I call it a day," he concludes. "But I also think it should not be on my mind now. I should be very in the present, focused to maximise every weekend, to get the most out of this because this is the most kind of valuable and fruitful days and years in my career."

Given how Hulkenberg is achieving with Haas, and is soon to be among Audi's more considerable resources, these are the final chapters of a career worthy of much respect playing out. Harping on about that record of 221 races without a podium is unwarranted. F1 is all the better for Hulkenberg's long story. 🏆



TEE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

MAGNUSSEN REACHES THE POINT OF PUNISHMENT

"It was a weekend off, a little extra bonus weekend off with the family. I watched some of the races in my gym on Sunday. I tried to switch my mind off."

In case you were wondering, that's how Kevin Magnussen spent the 2024 Azerbaijan Grand Prix weekend – when he should have been racing for Haas. In reaching the 12-point threshold on his licence for an innocuous tap against Pierre Gasly's Alpine at Monza, the Dane became the first Formula 1 driver to serve a ban under the current rules.

It triggered plenty of debate. First, Magnussen also received a 10-second penalty that cost him ninth place in what was an otherwise excellent display at Monza – he was effectively punished twice for the same infraction. He still feels that the stewards were "punishing ridiculous things", but the whole point of penalising poor driving is to have a deterrent, and this needs consistency. As Mercedes driver George Russell – also a Grand Prix Drivers' Association director – argued: "We need to set a bit of a precedent as well for the junior series."

Perhaps the most convincing point was Gasly arguing that Magnussen should not have received any penalty points for their clash. He brought it up with the FIA during the Baku drivers' meeting, and the governing body is now beginning the first steps of a review of the rules on penalty points. But Autosport understands that any change would be minimal. When officials pointed out the number of times Magnussen had been the subject of stewards' decisions in 2024 (17 – ahead of Lance Stroll on 15 and Alex Albon and Max Verstappen on 14), the drivers were said to be satisfied that the numbers meant something had to be done.

Magnussen should now finish his F1 career on 186 GP races. His loyalty to Haas earned him a career extension into 2024, with Gene Haas understood to have resisted calls for his replacement. But you can expect him to stay on in a non-racing capacity – Autosport understands possibly as reserve driver for some races at least – in the team's new era in 2025.



SEASON REVIEW

ANOTHER SPANISH AMERICAN SUCCESS

Alex Palou is surely one of the IndyCar greats. Here's how the Chip Ganassi Racing star took his third title in four years in 2024

JOEY BARNES

PHOTOGRAPHY **MOTORSPORT IMAGES**

The odds entering the 2024 IndyCar season were never favourable for Alex Palou. For starters, the attrition of what is arguably the most competitive racing category in the world meant no driver had won the championship twice in succession in over a decade. If that weren't enough, six of the final eight rounds all took place on ovals – a track discipline that had yet to yield a trip to Victory Lane for him. And then, too, was the unknown of the unprecedented mid-season debut of IndyCar's hybrid engine.

No matter, the Spaniard was his usual unflappable self. Although

the performance wasn't quite on par with his stout 2023 title run of five wins and a finish no lower than eighth, the precision Palou continued to demonstrate on a weekly basis with Chip Ganassi Racing was almost surgical. He stormed to three wins – including the \$1 Million Challenge, a non-points round at The Thermal Club – plus four additional podiums and three poles en route to hoisting the Astor Cup Trophy for the second consecutive season, and third time over the past four years.

The occasional beatdown Palou has been known for never truly came this past campaign. The first of his two points-paying



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victories came at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's road course layout, where he recovered from a bad start from pole with sensational in-lap and out-lap strategy to vault into the lead on the penultimate round of pitstops before marching on to a 6.6106-second victory. He took his other points-paying win of the year at Laguna Seca, where he led early but was left to pull off a wondrous pass in the Corkscrew on Colton Herta – reminiscent of a similar move Alex Zanardi put on Herta's father, Bryan, nearly 30 years ago. It wasn't all as straightforward, though, since Palou was forced to fend off rivals on a late restart in the chaotic, caution-filled affair before crossing the finish line 1.9780s ahead of Herta.

Palou's daunting level of consistency took a hit, his streak of 23 consecutive top 10 finishes in points-paying races coming to an end with a mediocre 16th on the streets of Detroit in early June. That blemish was followed by three more mediocre results outside the top 10, including an uncharacteristically self-inflicted mistake that



NELSON



GALSTAD

“THE PRECISION PALOU CONTINUED TO DEMONSTRATE ON A WEEKLY BASIS WITH GANASSI WAS ALMOST SURGICAL”

led to him crashing his Honda-powered Dallara out of the opening race of the double-header weekend at Iowa Speedway. Per usual, though, he was unfazed and rebounded to combat the woeful outings with 13 top fives through the 17 points-paying rounds, matching his mark from a year ago.

There were, of course, moments of anxiety near the closing stages. In the penultimate race of the year, the second act of Milwaukee's double-header, Palou stopped on the inside of the track during pace laps just moments before the green flag. He was eventually put on the hook and towed back to the paddock, where his team went to work and found the culprit was a battery issue. Upon fixing it, he returned 29 laps down but gained valuable points as the attrition-filled contest elevated him eight positions. In turn, he went into the season finale at Nashville Superspeedway with a »

33-point lead over Will Power, the only other driver who remained in contention for the title once the race started. And Palou was left starting 24th while Power's late attempt was from fourth on the grid. But any last-gasp heroics by Power quickly vanished when a faulty seatbelt forced him to pit his Chevrolet-engined Team Penske machine. In the end, Power's problem relegated him to 24th and gave Palou, who finished 11th, a clear path to the title.

"We've been lucky to have some great drivers on the team over the years," says team owner Chip Ganassi, who also ran Dario Franchitti, the previous back-to-back champion in 2009-11. "You want to make the obvious comparisons, but I don't know that you can. At his age to be doing what he's doing, having the experience that he has, especially with the series the way it is now with some ovals, these guys aren't exactly ovalmeisters that are excelling in the series today. There are better oval racers out there. I'm sure he'll tell you that. So it's an interesting series now. To have a guy like Alex on your team. I mean, three championships in four years..."



He's in pretty rarefied air right now, as they say. His name has to be among and certainly in the conversation of the great drivers."

Although Power was the only other driver in title contention in Nashville, his seatbelt troubles opened the door for Herta to take centre stage with a thrilling maiden oval win that ascended the Andretti Global driver to a career-best second in the overall standings. The outing served as an exclamation point for Herta, who came into his own and rebounded in style after finishing an underwhelming 10th in the championship in each of the previous two years. The California native's other win came on the streets of Toronto, holding off team-mate Kyle Kirkwood and Chip Ganassi Racing's six-time champion Scott Dixon to break a 41-race winless drought that dated back to May 2022. He led the third-most laps of the year (305) and matched champion Palou with six podiums, while also scoring a career-best 11 top-fives.

When it comes to drivers wondering what could have been, though, that onus likely falls to Team Penske's Scott McLaughlin. The ex-Supercars legend took a significant step forward and captured his first oval victory in the opening race of the Iowa double-header, and then validated his talents even further by bagging another in the nightcap of Milwaukee's two-race weekend. His 637 laps led during the season were a series-high, with team-mate Power the next closest with 366. McLaughlin also set the mark with a series-leading seven podiums in points-paying rounds. But that number could have been even higher if not for his role in Team Penske's push-to-pass scandal in St Petersburg, which wiped away his third-place result, along with team-mate Josef Newgarden's win. The decision regarding the penalties, which also included Power being docked 10 points, came 45 days after the race and led into the third round of the championship at Barber Motorsports Park. >>

ROUND BY ROUND

St Petersburg

1 Pato O'Ward
2 Will Power
3 Colton Herta
A dominant drive by Newgarden – he leads 92 laps to the top step of the podium. Then it is wiped away 45 days later after data reveals he and Team Penske team-mate McLaughlin – who finished third – illegally used overtake on restarts. Both are disqualified, promoting O'Ward to the win.

Long Beach

1 Scott Dixon
2 Colton Herta
3 Alex Palou
Dixon uses the only caution to switch to an alternate strategy, which vaults him into the lead but forces him into fuel conservation. Despite late hounding by Herta, who is on the opposite strategy and able to maximise his pace, the six-time series champion holds him off in a defensive masterclass.

Barber

1 Scott McLaughlin
2 Will Power
3 Linus Lundqvist
In the wake of Penske's overtake scandal that blows up earlier in the week, McLaughlin blocks out the noise and storms to victory. He leads a 1-2 for the team after fending off Power on a late restart with two laps to go. Rookie Lundqvist captures the maiden podium of his career.

Indianapolis GP

1 Alex Palou
2 Will Power
3 Christian Lundgaard
Polesitter Palou recovers after falling behind early, using his in and out-lap prowess to secure the lead during the penultimate round of pitstops. Power is a distant second at 6s back, with Lundgaard finishing third. Palou takes over the championship lead as a result.

Indy 500

1 Josef Newgarden
2 Pato O'Ward
3 Scott Dixon
An instant classic features two lead changes on the last lap as O'Ward passes Newgarden in the approach to Turn 1, and the two-time series champion responds with a brave outside pass of his own into Turn 3 to secure the lead and become a back-to-back Indy 500 winner.

Detroit

1 Scott Dixon
2 Marcus Ericsson
3 Marcus Armstrong
Dixon captures the 58th victory of his career after once again depending on his fuel strategy mastery, aided by an afternoon of carnage that features eight cautions consuming 47 of 100 laps. Ericsson's late charge runs out of time but he collects his first podium in Andretti colours.



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“THESE GUYS AREN’T EXACTLY OVALMEISTERS THAT ARE EXCELLING IN THE SERIES TODAY”



McLaughlin took command at Barber, winning from pole

TONS

HYBRID’S BUMPY MID-SEASON DEBUT

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Among the many focal points from a frantic season was the unprecedented mid-season debut of IndyCar’s hybrid engine. A collaborative effort between Chevrolet, Honda and the series paired the stalwart 2.2-litre, twin-turbocharged V6 internal combustion engine with an electrical low-voltage (48V) motor generator unit (MGU) and a 320 kilojoules-per-lap supercapacitor energy storage system (ESS).

The first-of-its-kind unit created another tool for drivers, with the ability to deploy and harvest energy for up to an additional 60bhp. Combined with push-to-pass on road courses and street circuits, the output exceeded 120bhp, bringing the grand total to more than 800bhp.

The transition was far from smooth when it was dropped in at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course, with issues hindering Scott Dixon’s title hopes under pace laps. While Pato O’Ward fended off Alex Palou to claim the first win of a new era for IndyCar, the lack of passing due to the hybrid components’ additional 120lb of weight only added to concerns.

Qualifying for Iowa Speedway’s double-header featured more woes as the unit failed to activate for some drivers. At Portland, O’Ward expressed how “the racing has taken a big step down just looking at Mid-Ohio, Toronto. Just opened doors to less fights on track.” As the technology continued to be learned, the on-track product gave way to record passing numbers in St Louis (676 total passes, 254 for position), Milwaukee (763 total passes in race two; 326 for position in race one), and Nashville (653 total passes, 237 for position).

Road America

1 Will Power
2 Josef Newgarden
3 Scott McLaughlin
 Power ends a two-year winless drought after overcutting his team-mates during pitstops en route to leading a Team Penske sweep of the podium. It is the 42nd victory of Power’s career, which puts him into a tie with Michael Andretti for fourth on the all-time wins list.

Laguna Seca

1 Alex Palou
2 Colton Herta
3 Alexander Rossi
 Palou perfects a flat-out strategy to grab the lead from Herta with a stout pass in the Corkscrew. Despite a late restart with four laps to go, the reigning series champion is able to steadily break away and score his second win of the season, with Herta nearly 2s back.

Mid-Ohio

1 Pato O’Ward
2 Alex Palou
3 Scott McLaughlin
 The debut of IndyCar’s hybrid unit doesn’t present many passing opportunities throughout the field, but a battle between O’Ward and Palou is plenty enthralling. Palou momentarily stalls exiting the pits, which allows O’Ward the chance to make a run at the exit into Turn 1 and never look back.

Iowa 1

1 Scott McLaughlin
2 Pato O’Ward
3 Josef Newgarden
 McLaughlin dominates to take his first oval win, while Palou makes an uncharacteristic mistake and crashes out after 175 of 250 laps. The lack of passing opportunities due to the repaved corners is evident – O’Ward can only follow McLaughlin to seize second, with Newgarden third.

Iowa 2

1 Will Power
2 Alex Palou
3 Scott McLaughlin
 Power takes advantage of a lucky early caution to catapult from a 22nd-place start into the race lead, where he is able to hold firm ahead of Palou for the 43rd win of his career. Robb goes airborne in a horrific crash on the final lap after clipping a fuel-starved Rossi.

Toronto

1 Colton Herta
2 Kyle Kirkwood
3 Scott Dixon
 Herta ends a 41-race winless streak by leading 81 of 85 laps from pole, while also giving Andretti a 1-2 result with Kirkwood in tow. In a massive accident, Ferrucci climbs a stationary O’Ward in Turn 2 and gets airborne into the catch fence before landing upside down on the track.

Amid the turmoil, McLaughlin responded by blocking out the noise, claiming one of his five poles of the year en route to an authoritative victory. McLaughlin's three wins tied him with Power and Pato O'Ward of Arrow McLaren for most in the series in 2024.

If the podium result in St Petersburg was upheld for McLaughlin with how the rest of the season transpired, he would have drawn level with Palou at season's end with 540 points, but claimed the championship via tiebreaker by virtue of having more wins. In the end, though, he finished third in the title race and was the benchmark among the Penske trio for the second straight year.

Despite missing out on a proper chance to fight for the crown

“THAT EMOTIONAL INDY 500 LOSS FOR O’WARD IGNITED A FIRE FOR THE SECOND HALF OF THE SEASON”

in the final race, Power's resurgence was welcomed after enduring a winless 2023. The 43-year-old Aussie ended a drought that went back to Detroit 2022 by leading a Penske 1-2-3 sweep of the podium at Road America. He stormed to two more victories at Iowa and Portland for 44 in his illustrious career. Uniquely, though, the all-time pole record holder in the series failed to seize a top spot in qualifying for the first time since 2008.

There was no shortage of drama surrounding O'Ward. The young Mexican was credited with the victory in St Petersburg once Newgarden was disqualified. The two were tangled in an instant classic just three months later in the Indianapolis 500, with O'Ward



pulling off a last-lap pass on Newgarden to take the lead, only to lose the race in heartbreaking fashion as Newgarden responded with a courageous outside pass into Turn 3 moments later to claim back-to-back victories in 'The Greatest Spectacle in Racing'.

That emotional loss for O'Ward ignited a fire for the second half of the season, which included claiming the first win of IndyCar's hybrid era at Mid-Ohio after outduelling Palou. Then came the race where 'Pato who?' was born when he took a commanding victory in the opening race at Milwaukee less than 24 hours after Penske Entertainment CEO Mark Miles shared controversial comments regarding his popularity, notably as it related to IndyCar getting beaten to the punch by NASCAR to get a race in Mexico. But a mixed bag of results left nothing more to play for than fifth in the title race.

While Dixon finished a lowly sixth in the championship, he displayed flashes of his brilliance throughout, especially with a masterclass in fuel-saving on the streets of Long Beach. The Kiwi snatched a second victory by dodging the divebomb carnage in Detroit, which put his win total at 58 (second all-time).

For Newgarden, the two-time series champion's year could only be defined by Indy 500 glory and a complementary win in St Louis after a controversial restart. Too many mistakes and miscues proved to be the Tennessee native's downfall and he tumbled to eighth in the championship, directly behind Andretti Global's consistent but winless Kyle Kirkwood.

There were eight different winners from four different teams once the dust settled on the season. Even with the parity, Palou's resilience and fortitude proved too much for anyone to overcome. Unlike his titles in 2021 and 2023, this one stands apart in being his first earned since becoming a father. Palou put it simply by saying: "I wouldn't change anything that I'm living at the moment."

ROUND BY ROUND

St Louis

1 Josef Newgarden
2 Scott McLaughlin
3 Linus Lundqvist
Newgarden's trickery is on display after lagging on the penultimate restart with less than 10 laps to go, sparking a multi-car crash that collects Power, who shows his ire by flipping off his Penske team-mate. At the final restart, Newgarden makes a clean getaway to lead a Penske 1-2 from McLaughlin.

Portland

1 Will Power
2 Alex Palou
3 Josef Newgarden
Power passes polesitter Ferrucci at the start into Turn 1 and remains untouchable, leading 101 of 110 laps and delivering a beatdown by nearly 10s over Palou, and more than 23s on Newgarden. Dixon crashes on the opening lap after being forced off track by Kirkwood.

Milwaukee 1

1 Pato O'Ward
2 Will Power
3 Conor Daly
Less than 24 hours after Penske Entertainment CEO Mark Miles questions O'Ward's popularity in the sport as to why IndyCar isn't racing in Mexico, the young Mexican surges to an emphatic victory at the historic one-mile oval. He leads 133 of 250 laps en route to fending off a hungry Power.

Milwaukee 2

1 Scott McLaughlin
2 Scott Dixon
3 Colton Herta
Battery issues plague Palou in the warm-up laps and threaten his hold on the crown. Power leads early on but fails to take advantage of Palou's issues, spinning mid-race. McLaughlin holds on amid a late charge by Dixon, collecting his second oval win and seventh overall victory of his career.

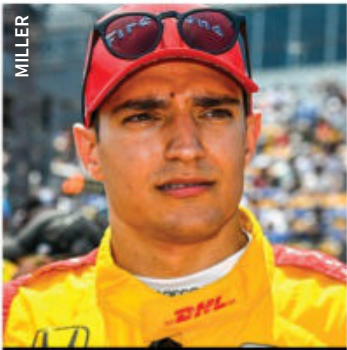
Nashville

1 Colton Herta
2 Pato O'Ward
3 Josef Newgarden
Palou steadily climbs up the field from 24th to finish 11th and claim his third crown, while rival Power falls behind with a faulty seatbelt. Herta hounds O'Ward as the two navigate through lapped traffic, pulling off the winning pass with five laps to go en route to his first oval win.



AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS


MILLER



ALEX PALOU

1 Another stunning display at the sharp end was ignited with an exhibition win at Thermal. Added two more triumphs at the Indianapolis road course and Laguna Seca, while also finishing 13 of 17 rounds in the top five.

GALSTAD



SCOTT McLAUGHLIN


2 A breakthrough performance with a maiden oval win in Iowa was joined by another at Milwaukee. If not for being disqualified for illegal overtake use in St Petersburg, he could have grabbed championship glory.



COLTON HERTA

3 Established early consistency before briefly derailing in the Indy 500 and blundering in Detroit, but got back on track with a masterful drive in Toronto. Closed out with a dramatic late push to capture his first oval win in Nashville.


GALSTAD



WILL POWER

4 A return to form was established early with three runner-up results before capturing three wins, including a dominant drive at Portland. Despite being the all-time pole winner, failed to claim a top spot in qualifying for the first time since 2008.


GALSTAD



PATO O'WARD

5 Two corners separated him from glory in the Indy 500, but he still managed three wins, including outduelling Palou at Mid-Ohio. Three additional runner-ups helped mitigate a campaign plagued by seven results of 15th or worse.


OWENS/PEC



SCOTT DIXON

6 Six-time champion delivered a masterclass in fuel-saving and defence in Long Beach. But even another trip to the top step of the podium in Detroit couldn't overcome poor results, namely the hybrid issue that hit at Mid-Ohio.


SKIBINSKI/PEC



JOSEF NEWGARDEN

7 The year began with a black cloud after being stripped of victory in St Petersburg due to illegal overtake use. Rebounded with another last-lap pass to win his second consecutive Indy 500, but it was another year of feast or famine.

MILLER



KYLE KIRKWOOD

8 Frustrating year of no wins was balanced with consistency after five top-fives and 13 top-10s, including a runner-up in Toronto. Any questions of his oval prowess outside of the Indy 500 ended with pole-to-fourth-place in Nashville.


GALSTAD



SANTINO FERRUCCI

9 Quietly one of the strongest performers of the year, he – along with a Team Penske technical alliance – helped lead AJ Foyt Racing out of the depths of racing hell with 11 top-10s, including a pair of fourths in Milwaukee.

MILLER



RINUS VEEKAY

10 Driving for one of the few entries not affiliated in a technical alliance with one of the 'Big Four', he was a key pillar for Ed Carpenter Racing's uptick in pace and showcased it by seizing a career-best seven top-10s.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP																				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	PTS
1	Alex Palou (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing	4	3	5	1	5	16	4	1	2	23	2	4	4	2	5	19	11	544
2	Colton Herta (USA)	Andretti Global with Curb-Agajanian	3	2	8	7	23	19	6	2	4	11	5	1	5	4	22	3	1	513
3	Scott McLaughlin (NZL)	Team Penske	27	26	1	6	6	20	3	21	3	1	3	16	2	7	8	1	5	505
4	Will Power (AUS)	Team Penske	2	6	2	2	24	6	1	7	11	18	1	12	18	1	2	10	24	498
5	Pato O'Ward (MEX)	Arrow McLaren	1	16	23	13	2	7	8	8	1	2	6	17	26	15	1	24	2	460
6	Scott Dixon (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing	7	1	15	4	3	1	21	6	27	4	4	3	11	28	10	2	17	456
7	Kyle Kirkwood (USA)	Andretti Global	10	7	10	11	7	4	5	5	8	7	16	2	22	10	12	8	4	420
8	Josef Newgarden (USA)	Team Penske	26	4	16	17	1	26	2	19	25	3	7	11	1	3	26	27	3	401
9	Santino Ferrucci (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises	9	21	7	27	8	9	15	9	10	6	11	20	12	8	4	4	6	367
10	Alexander Rossi (USA)	Arrow McLaren	6	10	25	8	4	5	18	3	6	8	15	NS	19	12	7	6	15	366
11 Christian Lundgaard (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) 312; 12 Felix Rosenqvist (Meyer Shank Racing) 306; 13 Rinus VeeKay (Ed Carpenter Racing) 300; 14 MarcusArmstrong (Chip Ganassi Racing) 298; 15 Marcus Ericsson (Andretti Global) 297; 16 Linus Lundqvist (Chip Ganassi Racing) 279; 17 Romain Grosjean (Juncos Hollinger Racing) 260; 18 Graham Rahal (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) 251; 19 Pietro Fittipaldi (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) 186; 20 Sting Ray Robb (AJ Foyt Enterprises) 185; 21 Kyffin Simpson (Chip Ganassi Racing) 182; 22 Christian Rasmussen (Ed Carpenter Racing) 163; 23 Nolan Siegel (Dale Coyne Racing/Juncos Hollinger Racing/Arrow McLaren) 154; 24 David Malukas (Meyer Shank Racing) 148; 25 Jack Harvey (Dale Coyne Racing) 143; 26 Conor Daly (Dreyer & Reinbold Racing/Cusick Motorsports/Dale Coyne Racing/Juncos Hollinger Racing) 119; 27 Agustin Canapino (Juncos Hollinger Racing) 109; 28 Theo Pourchaire (Arrow McLaren) 91; 29 Katherine Legge (Dale Coyne Racing) 61; 30 Tom Blomqvist (Meyer Shank Racing) 46; 31 Ed Carpenter (Ed Carpenter Racing) 45; 32 Toby Sowery (Dale Coyne Racing) 45; 33 Callum Ilott (Arrow McLaren) 39; 34 Luca Ghiotto (Dale Coyne Racing) 27; 35 Helio Castroneves (Meyer Shank Racing) 26; 36 Kyle Larson (Arrow McLaren/Rick Hendrick) 21; 37 Takuma Sato (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) 19; 38 Tristan Vautier (Dale Coyne Racing) 12; 39 Juri Vips (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing) 11; 40 Colin Braun (Dale Coyne Racing) 10; 41 Hunter McElrea (Dale Coyne Racing) 6; 42 Ryan Hunter-Reay (Dreyer & Reinbold Racing/Cusick Motorsports) 6; 43 Marco Andretti (Andretti Herta Autosport with Marco & Curb-Agajanian) 5.																				

RACE CENTRE



WRC

Rovanperä reignites Toyota's title challenge

After the bodyblows of Finland and Greece, the Japanese car giant's hopes of winning the manufacturers' crown were put back on track by its young star

TOM HOWARD

On a weekend where protests over freedom of speech and notional times grabbed the headlines, Kalle Rovanperä let his driving do the talking in Chile. The reigning and two-time world champion claimed a fourth win from his partial World Rally Championship campaign, offering a lifeline for Toyota as it reignited hopes of reeling in Hyundai for a fourth consecutive manufacturers' crown.

But this was not a straightforward 15th career win for Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen. Chile's loose gravel roads initially seemed to unsettle the Finn. His driving style, which has conquered the toughest of WRC rallies, was

unable to deliver its usual blistering speed. It appeared that Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans had the edge as the Welshman dared to clinch a maiden win from a difficult campaign.

Then Mother Nature intervened to turn the rally on its head. As history has proved, when conditions become adverse Rovanperä not only survives, he thrives. Thick fog and rain did its best to test the WRC's aces to their limits and it was Rovanperä who emerged from the gloom to secure victory by 23.4 seconds from Evans. "The win actually feels like a good one," reckoned Rovanperä. "I don't think I took any big risks [in the fog]. Of course, you need to push and keep going even in the really difficult conditions, but I didn't really feel anything too bad – for sure it was a really clever drive."

Loose gravel seemed to unsettle the champion, but he thrived when the weather turned...



...and he overhauled Evans, who'd been gunning for a maiden 2024 victory



Tanak initially struggled in his Hyundai, then late tyre gamble backfired



Toyota crew celebrates the reversal of fortune that domination in Chile brings

It was a victory that relieved mounting pressure on Toyota after what team principal Jari-Matti Latvala labelled as two “devastating Sundays” in Finland and Greece that had seemingly delivered a hammerblow to the team’s title hopes in both the drivers’ and manufacturers’ championships. For Toyota, the response couldn’t have gone any better: a 1-2 on Saturday and in the rally overall; a 1-2-3 on Super Sunday; and a 1-2 in the Power Stage. Its domination of Rally Chile halved Hyundai’s advantage to 17 points with two rounds remaining. “This result really gets us back in the fight for the manufacturer title,” declared Latvala. “It is a big relief for us and for the Japanese side that we still have a chance.”

Toyota’s determination to turn its fortunes around wasn’t the

only hangover from the Acropolis Rally. Any thoughts that an FIA stewards’ decision to hand Sebastien Ogier a suspended €30,000 fine – for stage-end interview comments in Greece directed at rally organisers over hanging dust – would be swept under the carpet were quickly quashed. If anything, the flames had been fanned further by the FIA’s wider clampdown on driver comments, resulting in Formula 1 world champion Max Verstappen receiving a community service order for swearing in a Singapore Grand Prix press conference.

Ogier and Hyundai star Ott Tanak took a leaf out of Verstappen’s book by staging a similar protest, issuing short responses to questions at stage-end interviews in shakedown and throughout >>



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Hard luck for Fourmaux, who was running in third when alternator repair went awry



Friday's six stages. For Ogier, it was all about making a point, which his relative silence at stage-end achieved. "Today I don't feel like I want to talk and like I say, I'm sorry for all the people that deserve better than that, but we have been told by the top of the FIA to shut our mouths, so it's a bit sad," explained Ogier.

Tanak went as far to suggest that "it's really difficult to know how to act" and that drivers are living in "strange times", adding: "You need to be very careful what you say and how you express your emotions – they are not really allowed for the moment."

The FIA declined to issue an official response to the protest when asked by Autosport.

Ogier may have offered little to the media on Friday, but his driving certainly provided plenty to talk about. The eight-time world champion lit up the timing screens to surge into an early lead thanks to a blistering time on the opening stage. Officials then cancelled the test on spectator safety grounds after championship leader Thierry Neuville, Tanak and Ogier had completed their runs. Notional times were awarded to the rest of the field, a matter that would rear its head later in the day.

Ogier's time in the lead was short-lived. The Toyota part-timer knocked a tyre off the rim when his GR Yaris slid wide and clipped a bank in stage three. For the second rally in succession an early issue realistically ended his victory hopes after losing 1m45s to change a wheel. The Frenchman ended Friday in ninth.

It had quickly become evident that the Hyundai i20 N was not a fan of Chile's loose gravel roads. Neuville and Tanak struggled to tame the car, starting at the top of the order. The issues were

"You need to be very careful what you say and how you express your emotions"

not purely down to road position, since Esapekka Lappi was also seemingly unable to find grip and the confidence to push. Neuville likened it to "driving on ice" such were the grip levels, while Tanak told his engineers after stage one that "a top-six or top-eight is the maximum, it was not driving at all".

But Tanak is not one to give up easily, especially at an event where he headed undefeated following triumphs for Toyota in 2019 and M-Sport Ford last year. He made set-up changes between stages to bring his Hyundai more into the window and, while he didn't set a fastest time, he ended Friday with a 0.4s lead over Evans, or so he thought.

That 0.4s advantage turned into a 3s deficit when Evans was handed the rally lead after Toyota requested that the stewards review the notional time awarded for stage one. The initial notional times issued were based off Neuville's effort, which was slowest. After reviewing the times posted in the second pass of the stage, Evans, Adrien Fourmaux (M-Sport Ford) and Sami Pajari (Toyota) were handed new times. This prompted Hyundai to protest the decision, but stewards declared the reallocation of times was "fair and reasonable".

Heading into Saturday's six stages Rovannerp sat in third, 10.1s behind after a Friday during which he had struggled to wrangle speed from his GR Yaris. The world champion's struggles were plain to see when he made a rare error in stage four, overshooting a corner, which required a quick grab of reverse. It came as a surprise to many, but not Rovannerp. "I'm happy the day is over," he sighed. "The way you need to drive these roads is completely opposite to how I drive on gravel, so it's really not working, but also the set-up makes for a not so comfortable feeling."

Countryman Pajari, who had received a shock call-up to replace benched Toyota regular Takamoto Katsuta, did impress in only his second Rally1 start to occupy fourth. That would eventually translate to a commendable sixth come Sunday. The equally impressive Gregoire Munster made the most of a return to a venue that offered him a Rally1 debut last year to hold fifth in his M-Sport Ford. This would become seventh at the rally finish.

Neuville managed to limit the damage to sit sixth, ahead of >>



Neuville compared lack of grip to "driving on ice", but still salvaged fourth place

Lappi, who was delayed by a delaminated right-rear tyre in stage four to add to his struggles. A lack of tyres prematurely ended Martins Sesks' return to Rally1 with M-Sport when he too clipped a bank and took two tyres off the rim while carrying only one spare. The Latvian rejoined the rally to continue his learning experience, which included a bizarre rear-wing failure on Sunday.

But perhaps the biggest hard-luck story belonged to Fourmaux. The Frenchman was sitting third at Friday's midday service before an alternator issue struck ahead of stage four. While attempting to repair the problem he damaged a water pipe as he replaced the fan, resulting in the M-Sport driver picking up a one-minute penalty for being six minutes late to stage four. Incredibly, he managed to coax

“I’m a competitor and as long as the opportunity came up I tried to fight for it”

a stage-winning time out of his wounded Puma on stage six. Penalty aside, he would have been 2.2s adrift of Evans's lead. “It is a shame the car let us down on Friday and we had a one-minute penalty, but at the end I’m pleased with what we have done on this rally,” stated Fourmaux, who went on to recover to fifth.

Much of the talk heading into Chile had been about how the South American nation's abrasive roads were tyre killers, as evidenced last year when Toyota's tyre decision sensationally backfired. While tyres were a factor, it wasn't tyre wear that dominated the conversation – the weather had other ideas. Friday's sunshine was replaced by overnight rain and thick fog.

Stages more to his liking and the curveball of wild weather meant Rovanger quickly overhauled Tanak on stage eight. That was the same stage where Ogier's luck went from bad to worse and his hopes of a record-equalling ninth drivers' title appeared to be over. The Toyota driver clipped a rock, which broke a bolt in his front suspension and forced him into a ditch 400 metres from the stage finish. “Many people have told me I would not do the championship a favour if I won not competing the whole season, so in that way it is positive,” offered Ogier. “At the end of the day I’m a competitor and as long as the opportunity came up I tried to fight for it.”

Evans appeared to be relishing the stages and conditions that he felt were “reminiscent of Rally GB”, and two stage wins moved his lead over Rovanger out to 13.6s before thick fog and rain closed in. The fog was at its worst on the mountainous stage 11, reducing visibility to 20 metres, with Evans facing the worst of the conditions. An unfortunate “double whammy” resulted in him



Ogier recognised that winning the title as a part-timer wouldn't be a good look

conceding the lead to Rovanger. Evans deployed his soft tyres but couldn't use them to their potential due to the poor visibility and duly dropped 24.1s. “It [fog] is part of rallying, it's always a challenge,” pointed out Evans. “There were moments where it was on the edge in terms of overall event safety, but it is the way it is.”

Taking advantage of the soft tyres he'd saved for the much wetter than anticipated final stage, Rovanger opened up a 15.1s margin over his team-mate and scored the 18 points on offer, with Evans settling for 15. Tanak's gamble for hard tyres backfired in the wet conditions, leaving the Estonian 33.6s adrift in third to earn 13 points at the end of Saturday. “They say ‘no rain expected this evening’ – completely wrong information,” grumbled a frustrated Tanak. “Everything is difficult in this life, still you need to be on it.”

Tanak did score three more points than championship leader Neuville, who performed an impressive damage-limitation job to climb to fourth and pick up 10 points.

Thick fog and muddy conditions continued into Sunday's four stages, before relenting for the Power Stage, but Rovanger managed to hold his nerve to claim victory ahead of Evans, Tanak and Neuville. Rovanger, who has more wins this year than in his 2023 run to the title, almost added the icing on the cake with a trademark Power Stage triumph, only to be denied by the returning Ogier by 0.129s. To add further gloss to Toyota's 13 stage wins from 16, Ogier topped the Super Sunday classification from Rovanger and Evans.

“The Friday stages were really different compared to Saturday and Sunday, so I was expecting I could be a bit more comfortable,” explained Rovanger. “Of course, the weather played a big part on that as we could take some bigger time gaps and really try to be fast in the difficult conditions.”

Hyundai has often led the way on Super Sundays this year, but in Chile it was firmly on the back foot, compounded by Lappi's retirement after stage 15. Damage incurred to the front of the i20 N prematurely ended the final WRC outing for Lappi's retiring co-driver Janne Ferm. “We knew that coming here would be a difficult rally with our drivers being one and two on the road and Esapekka lacking rhythm,” said Hyundai technical director Francois-Xavier Demaison, in place of the absent team principal Cyril Abiteboul. “I think we minimised the loss.”

Chile proved that there is plenty of life still in the title fights, with a rejuvenated Toyota now snapping at the heels of Hyundai, while Tanak reduced Neuville's advantage from 34 to 29 points, applying pressure on the Belgian. “We have done what we needed but we need to make sure we get things [the title] done quickly as there is still a manufacturers' championship to fight for,” said Neuville.

Although it appears that the championship is Neuville's to lose, Tanak is not giving up just yet. “Obviously it is a very big gap, but Thierry is not safe yet,” he warned. 🏆



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MCKLEIN

CONTROVERSY HITS
WRC2 TITLE FIGHT



The WRC2 championship battle is likely to go down to the wire after Yohan Rossel claimed victory and survived a post-event protest into a notional time that helped secure the win. Rossel came through a titanic four-way battle against fellow title contender Oliver Solberg, Nikolay Gryazin and Gus Greensmith to claim a second win of the season to boost his hopes.

Rossel's Citroen team-mate Gryazin set the pace on Friday to lead Solberg by 10.2 seconds, with Rossel in third a further 1.3s back. The battle came alive on Saturday as Rossel leapt to the lead with a stunning time on stage seven. But after stage nine Solberg found himself leading the pack, extending his advantage over Rossel to 14.5s before the Skoda driver's victory hopes were dealt a blow by a puncture suffered in the fog that descended on stage 11, costing him a minute and a half to change a wheel.

Solberg had headed to Chile knowing a victory would seal the WRC2 title in what is his final round of the year, and rejoined the stage ahead of Rossel, who felt he was hindered by the recovering Fabia. The stewards agreed and issued Rossel a revised time, knocking 40s off his effort to move the Citroen driver back into the lead overnight. It was an advantage he maintained, despite receiving a 10s jump start penalty, to claim the win by 17.3s from team-mate Gryazin, while Greensmith was third in his Skoda.

Fourth-placed Solberg lodged a protest to re-evaluate Rossel's notional time, stating that he "didn't hinder him in any way and also there was so much fog and it was raining – there was no dust either so I don't really know why he complained".

The stewards deemed the protest was inadmissible "because under the FIA International Sporting Code, it is not permissible for the Stewards to review/re-hear their decisions through a protest".

Solberg has a 12-point lead over Rossel, but will have to rely on events outside of his control to keep his title hopes alive. Rossel and Sami Pajari (15 points adrift of Solberg) remain in contention, with the pair set to complete their final rounds at the Central European Rally and Rally Japan respectively.

RESULTS WRC ROUND 11/13, RALLY CHILE, 26-29 SEPTEMBER

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Kalle Rovanner (FIN) Jonne Halttunen (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	2h58m59.8s
2	Elfyn Evans (GBR) Scott Martin (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+23.4s
3	Ott Tanak (EST) Martin Jarveoja (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+43.9s
4	Thierry Neuville (BEL) Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	+1m01.1s
5	Adrien Fourmaux (FRA) Alexandre Coria (FRA)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+2m02.7s
6	Sami Pajari (FIN) Enni Malkonen (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+2m39.7s
7	Gregoire Munster (LUX) Louis Louka (BEL)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+2m47.7s
8	Yohan Rossel (FRA) Florian Barral (FRA)	DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2	+8m31.4s
9	Nikolay Gryazin (RUS) Konstantin Aleksandrov (RUS)	DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2	+8m48.7s
10	Gus Greensmith (GBR) Jonas Andersson (SWE)	Toksport WRT 2 / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+8m52.1s

OTHERS

24	Martins Sesks (LVA) Renars Francis (LVA)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+38m54.7s
36	Sebastien Ogier (FRA) Vincent Landais (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+1h27m03.1s
R	Esapekka Lappi (FIN) Janne Ferm (FIN)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20 N Rally1	SS15-acc damage

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 Pulperia 1 (12.25 miles)	Ogier 9m59.1s	Ogier	Evans +7.1s
SS2 Rere 1 (8.29 miles)	Evans 6m44.4s	Ogier	Evans +3.2s
SS3 San Rosendo 1 (14.49 miles)	Rovanpera 12m20.5s	Evans	Rovanpera +5.6s
SS4 Pulperia 2 (12.25 miles)	Ogier 9m52.3s	Evans	Tanak +6.1s
SS5 Rere 2 (8.29 miles)	Ogier 6m35.9s	Evans	Tanak +0.9s
SS6 San Rosendo 2 (14.49 miles)	Fourmaux 12m05.4s	Evans	Tanak +3.0s
SS7 Pelun 1 (9.72 miles)	Evans 10m35.0s	Evans	Tanak +7.1s
SS8 Lota 1 (15.93 miles)	Rovanpera 15m23.8s	Evans	Rovanpera +1.8s
SS9 Maria las Cruces 1 (17.65 miles)	Evans 17m04.3s	Evans	Rovanpera +11.3s
SS10 Pelun 2 (9.72 miles)	Evans 10m23.8s	Evans	Rovanpera +13.6s
SS11 Lota 2 (15.93 miles)	Neuville 15m57.1s	Rovanpera	Evans +5.5s
SS12 Maria las Cruces 2 (17.65 miles)	Fourmaux 17m17.3s	Rovanpera	Evans +15.1s
SS13 Laraquete 1 (11.57 miles)	Ogier 12m12.8s	Rovanpera	Evans +19.3s
SS14 Bio Bio 1 (5.46 miles)	Ogier 4m46.7s	Rovanpera	Evans +20.3s
SS15 Laraquete 2 (11.57 miles)	Ogier 12m08.6s	Rovanpera	Evans +19.5s
SS16 Power Stage Bio Bio 2 (5.46 miles)	Ogier 4m29.2s	Rovanpera	Evans +23.4s



NEXT REPORT
Central European Rally
24 October issue

Rovanpera feels good about
"a really clever drive"

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Neuville 207; 2 Tanak 178; 3 Ogier 166; 4 Evans 161; 5 Fourmaux 140; 6 Rovanner 114; 7 Takamoto Katsuta 80; 8 Dani Sordo 44; 9 Pajari 41; 10 Lappi 33.
WRC2 1 Oliver Solberg 123; 2 Rossel 111; 3 Pajari 108.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 482; 2 Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 465; 3 M-Sport Ford World Rally Team 245.

Ried leads the field from pole into the first corner of the four-hour race

Electric charge from Proton

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES
MUGELLO (ITA)
29 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 5/6

When the chequered flag dropped at Mugello, it was greeted first by the same Iron Lynx-Proton ORECA-Gibson 07 that had taken the race start from pole position. But to say the 4 Hours of Mugello was a lights-to-flag affair for Jonas Ried, Maceo Capietto and Matteo Cairoli couldn't be further from the truth.

The 2024 European Le Mans Series had featured four different winners from four races before it arrived at the undulating Tuscany circuit for the first time, and on Sunday it got a fifth. Prior to the weekend, Iron Lynx-Proton hadn't exactly enjoyed a stellar campaign, with a best finish of seventh and two retirements. But at Mugello, things clicked. The team was on the pace in practice and Cairoli captured pole on Saturday, which allowed Ried to start the race from the front on Sunday.

The opening stages, however, were headlined by Clement Novalak, Inter Europol Competition's gold-rated Frenchman making quick work of his silver adversaries in the opening hour. But when a safety car bunched up the pack, an alternate strategy with a shorter second stint promoted the ORECA's of Algarve Pro Racing, Iron Lynx and Panis Racing to the top three positions. At the restart, it was Capietto's time to shine, and the 18-year-old Frenchman passed Algarve Pro's Olli Caldwell and took back the race lead.

That was just in time for the most-talked-about moment of Sunday's contest. After another safety car restart, a pair of LMGT3 Porsches run out of the same stable came to blows in spectacular fashion. On the very fast run down to the first corner, Iron Dames driver Rahel Frey miscalculated a move on Proton Competition's Claudio Schiavoni and clipped the Italian's rear bumper. This pitched Schiavoni into the concrete wall at high speed, obliterating the front of the Porsche. Several drivers

had to take avoiding action as Schiavoni's car bounced back across the track, but thankfully he wasn't collected and walked away unharmed. A red flag was called to allow track workers to clear the devastation, after which the race was lengthened by 20 minutes.

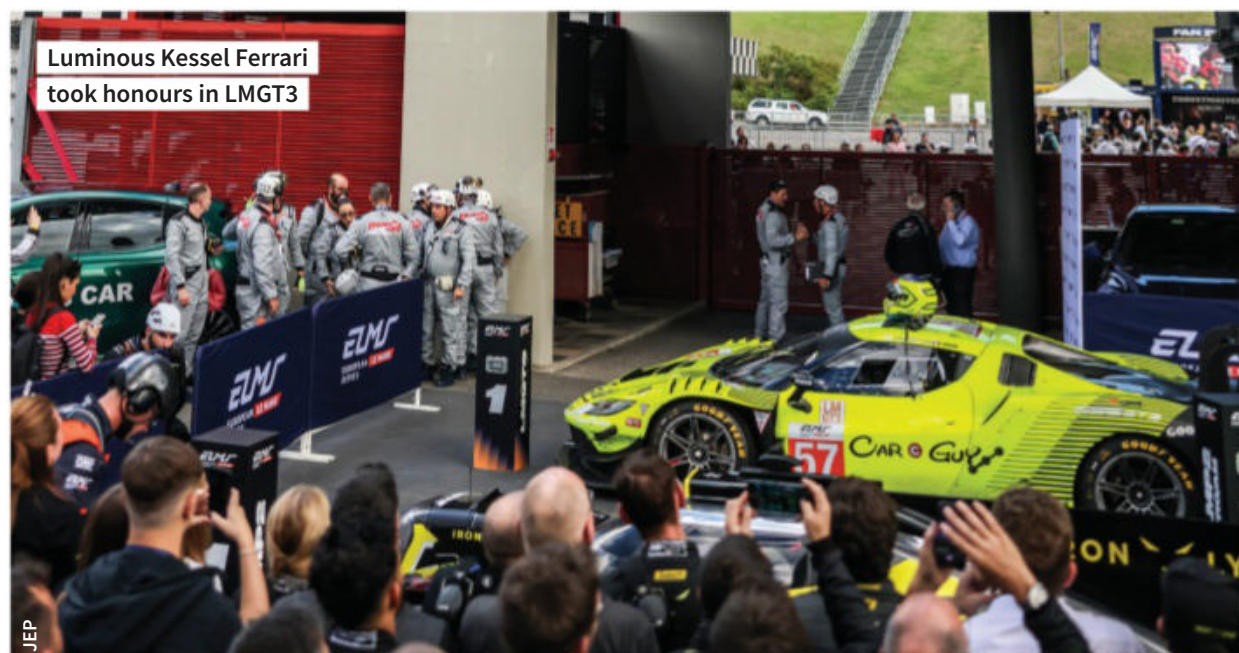
Out front, little changed. Capietto made way for Cairoli, but the Lamborghini factory driver proved why he's held in such high regard and extended the gap over the chasing pack. When the flag dropped after 4h20m, he crossed the line 6.6 seconds ahead of Algarve Pro's Alex Lynn in the car he shared with Caldwell and Matthias Kaiser. A late move from Luca Ghiotto secured third place for him, Novalak and Oliver Gray in the Inter Europol entry, with Panis Racing trio Charles Milesi, Arthur Leclerc and Manuel Maldonado finishing fourth. AO by TF crew Robert Kubica, Louis Deletraz and Jonny Edgar, winners last time out at Spa, rounded out the top five.

Richard Mille by TDS captured their second class win of the season in LMP2 Pro-Am, taking full advantage when AF Corse threw away the lead when Alessio Rovera collided with an LMGT3 runner and became stranded in the gravel.

LMP3 and LMGT3, meanwhile, were both decided deep in the final hour. In a fuel-save thriller, Team Virage Ligier driver Gillian Henrion completed a final stint of an hour and 20 minutes to beat RLR M Sport by less than a second. Gael Julien chased down the leader after a late fuel splash, but just came up short.

Daniel Serra, meanwhile, wrestled his way past Grid Motorsport by TF Aston Martin driver Lorcan Hanafin to take Kessel Racing's second class victory aboard the Swiss squad's yellow Ferrari 296 GT3.

DAVEY EUWEMA



It all clicks for Camara as Wharton wins

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN BARCELONA (ESP)
28-29 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 9/10

The Circuit de Catalunya provided a perfect weekend for Prema Racing in the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine, with James Wharton utterly dominant in both races and team-mate Rafael Camara wrapping up the title with one round still remaining at Monza.

After a mid-season purple patch thrust him into a fight for the points lead with fellow Ferrari protege Camara, Tuukka Taponen and the R-ace GP team have gone off the boil on recent weekends. But the Finn bounced back to qualify third for Saturday's race behind the Prema pair. Poleman Wharton got away well to lead by an ever-lengthening margin, the Australian winning by almost seven seconds.

Part of that was down to Taponen getting the jump on Camara to take second at the start, and then mounting a race-long, stoic defence from the faster Brazilian to keep



Wharton leads as
Taponen (sideways)
is taken out of race

DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY

his title hopes flickering. In turn, Camara was shadowed throughout by the Van Amersfoort Racing car of Brando Badoer, with Noah Stromsted and Theophile Nael not far adrift of this trio either. No places changed and this was the top six order.

Taponen's chances looked hopeless when he qualified 11th on Sunday – with Camara fourth – and were finally snuffed out at Turn 1 on the opening lap. Badoer thought he saw a gap inside Matteo De Palo, but his fellow Italian took his line. The contact spun De Palo into Taponen, with Liu Ruiqi caught up as collateral damage. All three were out, with Badoer penalised 10s.

Wharton pulled away to win by a 'mere'

five seconds, with ART Grand Prix's Williams F1 junior Alessandro Giusti (eighth on Saturday) this time in second place. The Frenchman had to defend throughout from Pedro Clerot, the VAR driver making up for a Saturday race where he was eliminated thanks to first-corner contact with Stromsted. Clerot equalled his FRECA best with third, holding off his jubilant compatriot Camara to the finish.

A strong qualifying performance gave G4 Racing's former British F4 racer Kanato Le the foundations to take fifth ahead of Stromsted (Race Performance Motorsport), with Enzo Peugeot surviving a clash that forced out Roman Bilinski to take seventh.

Chastain steals playoff thunder

NASCAR CUP KANSAS SPEEDWAY (USA)
29 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 30/36

It was heartbreak for Kyle Busch and elation for Ross Chastain last Sunday at Kansas Speedway. The non-playoff drivers once again stole the show, and these two Chevrolet pilots battled back and forth late in the race. Both entered the race without a win this year and both were eager to change that.

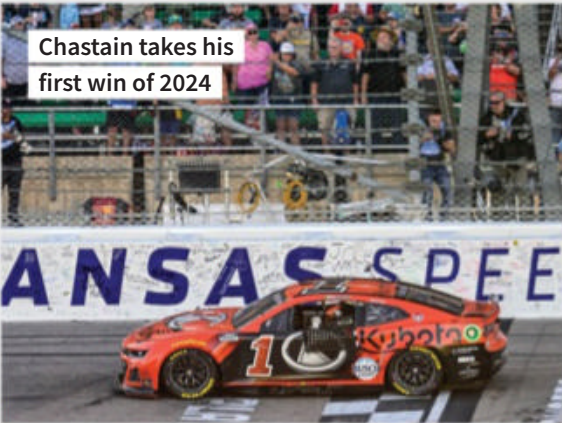
Busch appeared to have the upper hand, only to spin from the lead with 31 laps to go while trying to lap Chase

Briscoe. He was put in an awkward aero spot exiting Turn 2, losing control while trying to make an outside pass. A despondent Busch later remarked that he was feeling "numb" in a bewildered interview. Martin Truex Jr then took control of the race on pitroad but, on the final restart with 20 laps remaining, Chastain surged ahead and snatched the lead back from the inside line. He proceeded to hold off a charging William Byron to become the 17th different driver to win a Cup race this year.

"It's a huge deal," said eighth-generation farmer Chastain after taking a bite out of a freshly smashed watermelon. Trackhouse Racing are known as 'disruptors' in the NASCAR garage and that's exactly what Chastain did in Kansas, stealing the win and ensuring none of the playoff drivers will enter the ever-perilous Talladega safely locked into the next round.

Below the cut-line after the first of three races in the Round of 12 are regular season 'champion' Tyler Reddick, Daniel Suarez, Briscoe and Austin Cindric.

NICK DEGROOT



NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

WEEKEND WINNERS

- EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES MUGELLO (ITA)**
- LMP2** Matteo Cairoli/Maceo Capietto/Jonas Ried Iron Lynx-Proton (ORECA 07)
 - LMP2 Pro-Am** Mathias Beche/Gregoire Saucy/Rodrigo Sales Richard Mille by TDS (ORECA 07)
 - LMP3** Gillian Henrion/Bernardo Pinheiro/Julien Gerbi Team Virage (Ligier JSP320)
 - LMGT3** Daniel Serra/Esteban Masson/Takeshi Kimura Kessel Racing (Ferrari 296 GT3)

- FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN BARCELONA (ESP)**
- Races 1 & 2** James Wharton Prema Racing

- NASCAR CUP KANSAS SPEEDWAY (USA)**
- Ross Chastain Trackhouse Racing (Chevrolet Camaro)

- INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN BARCELONA (ESP)**
- Race 1** Nico Menzel/Gustav Bergstrom Car Collection (Porsche 911 GT3-R)
 - Race 2** Vincent Abril/Nicola Marinangeli Spirit of Race (Ferrari 296 GT3)



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Bortolotti was supreme on a drying circuit on Saturday to swing things in his favour



Bortolotti ends his drought to grab series lead before finale

DTM
RED BULL RING (AUT)
28-29 SEPTEMBER
ROUND 7/8

Factory Lamborghini driver Mirko Bortolotti scored a victory and a fourth-place finish in the penultimate round of the DTM season at the Red Bull Ring to take a 15-point lead into this month's Hockenheim decider.

Ahead of the Austrian weekend, Bortolotti had not yet registered a race win in 2024, a statistic that put him at a particular disadvantage over points leader Kelvin van der Linde. But in the first of the two races at the picturesque Spielberg venue, the Italian put that right with a commanding drive from fourth on the grid in his SSR Performance-run Huracan GT3 EVO2 to swing the championship fight in his favour.

On a damp but drying track, Bortolotti passed the similar Lamborghini of Maximilian Paul at the start to move up to third, before dispatching the HRT

Mercedes of Arjun Maini on lap five of 38 to claim second. He then closed in on Maro Engel at a rate of knots, seizing the race lead two laps later when the Winward Mercedes ran wide into the uphill Turn 3.

The 34-year-old went on to establish a seven-second advantage in the opening stint, which meant that he was able to rejoin the track in front despite not taking the earliest opportunity to switch to slick tyres. Towards the closing stages, Engel was able to come back and challenge Bortolotti, but the Lambo driver crossed the finishing line with over a second in hand to clinch his first victory in the series since the September 2023 Sachsenring event.

Engel was followed by fellow Mercedes drivers Maini and Luca Stolz, while the top five was completed by Ayhan Guven in his Manthey EMA Porsche. A torrid wet qualifying session left van der Linde 17th on the grid and, despite putting in a solid recovery drive, the Abt Audi driver could only climb as high as eighth at the finish.

Bortolotti started Sunday's race from

pole position and did everything right in the first half of the contest to build a comfortable buffer over the Schubert BMW of Rene Rast. But things started to go wrong for Bortolotti in the pitstop cycle, with a combination of a tardy service and slow out-lap dropping him to fourth place.

First it was Rast who got the overcut on him in the pits, before Thomas Preining (Manthey EMA Porsche) passed him on track into Turn 4 to demote the Lambo to third. Maini was next to jump ahead, leapfrogging him with a late pitstop.

All of that left Preining and Rast to battle for victory, with the Austrian putting up a tough fight in the closing stages. Ultimately, three-time champion Rast was able to prevail by 0.6s to claim his second victory of the year, while Maini finished third to complete a double podium.

Bortolotti ended up almost 15s down on race winner Rast in fourth, but crucially he finished one spot ahead of van der Linde. The South African's race was once again compromised by a poor starting position after he qualified 11th, with fifth the best he could achieve after an impressive charge through the field.

Engel, likewise, was left with a lot of ground to make up from 13th on the grid, but an eighth-place result means the Mercedes driver remains firmly in the hunt for his maiden DTM title.

RACHIT THUKRAL

WEEKEND WINNERS

DTM

RED BULL RING (AUT)

Race 1 Mirko Bortolotti
SSR Performance
(Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2)

Race 2 Rene Rast
Schubert Motorsport (BMW M4 GT3)



For full results visit motorsportstats.com



Preining caught Rast in closing stages on Sunday

BMW

Boom and bust for Martin allows Bagnaia to profit

MOTOGP

MANDALIKA (IDN)

28-29 SEPTEMBER

ROUND 15/20

Jorge Martin returned to his Sunday best with victory in the Indonesian Grand Prix but, while the 2024 MotoGP world championship leader scooped the biggest prize of the weekend, it was Francesco Bagnaia who scored more points overall to chip away at the Spaniard's advantage.

If Bagnaia had the statistical upper hand in Indonesia – the first of five flyway events that will shape the outcome of this year's title race – then Martin was comfortably superior in terms of outright speed around the Mandalika International Circuit. And yet, although he demolished the opposition en route to pole position and claimed an empathic lights-to-flag victory in the more lucrative full-length grand prix, Martin's feats were negated by a clumsy crash and failure to score in the sprint race.

As such, with Bagnaia and Martin barely crossing swords on track during this latest chapter of their simmering – if not exactly roaring – title battle, it was largely honours even come Sunday night, with the Pramac Ducati man's erstwhile 24-point advantage whittled to 21 with five rounds to go.

Martin's pace was certainly evident on Sunday when the Spaniard kept his cool amid lingering pressure, from the attentions of a feisty Pedro Acosta on track and the 'ghosts' of past mistakes haunting him mentally... He never looked anything less than in control to secure his first haul of 25 points for a race victory since the French GP at Le Mans back in May. To say Martin's victory was very much-needed would be an understatement. He threw away the chance of a valuable double victory with his crash from the lead

of Saturday's sprint encounter, an error compounded further by Bagnaia capitalising fully by winning.

Having already thrown down the gauntlet to his rivals by putting a huge 0.5 seconds between himself and second-placed Marco Bezzecchi in qualifying, Martin came into the sprint with a target fixed firmly on his back. But his biggest enemy would prove to be himself when his reach for the apex at the tricky Turn 16 on the opening lap asked too much of a Ducati GP24, which simply folded the front in protest. He exited stage left as the field – now led by Bagnaia – streamed by. Although Martin quickly scrambled to remount and rejoin the race, the scant 13-lap race distance made any recovery back to the points a tall ask.

To his credit, Martin channelled his

red mist into a fine fightback that left rivals standing as he scythed up the order. He came up just short of earning any reward, Martin taking 10th at the flag, with only the top nine scoring points.

Up at the front, Bagnaia accepted the fortuitous circumstances to reel off his fifth sprint victory of the season. The Italian maintained a low profile for the first half of the weekend as he chased set-up and battled tyre issues on his works Ducati, but his rise from fourth to second on the opening lap of the sprint made him the big beneficiary of Martin's slip.

A typically steadfast effort robust enough to keep pursuers at arm's length followed, though Bagnaia always had company from behind, first from Marc Marquez and then from Enea Bastianini. The reigning champion had just enough in hand to beat



Martin celebrates
his third grand prix
victory of the year



Martin led both races
from pole but his sprint
effort did not go to plan



Marquez's challenged
was halted by bike issues



Bagnaia reduced points
deficit from 24 to 21



Acosta starred again
on his Tech3 KTM

his Ducati team-mate to the flag by 0.1s.

On Sunday, however, the combination of a poor start and a cautious opening few laps consigned Bagnaia to the fringes of the top five for much of the afternoon.

By contrast, Martin's quest for redemption quickly went to plan as he built a buffer over the chasing pack. The only rider to match his pace was Acosta, who got the gap ahead down to just 0.6s before thinking better of risking a third crash in three races and settling for a fourth podium of his rookie season.

Bagnaia eventually came through for third, largely thanks to Bastianini crashing out just as it appeared that he might get in the mix for victory. That dealt Bastianini's already slim title hopes a potentially terminal blow and, with technical issues spelling a fiery end to Marquez's weekend too, what was a four-horse championship battle suddenly looks down to just two candidates now.

In the supporting categories, David Alonso put one hand on the Moto3 crown after a final lap charge past Adrian Fernandez and David Munoz earned the CFMoto Aspar rider his ninth win of 2024. In Moto2, Aron Canet left rivals standing to clinch a second win of the season for Fantic Racing, while second for Ai Ogura moves the MT Helmets-MSI rider 42 points clear at the top of the standings.

OLLIE BARSTOW

RESULTS **MOTOGP ROUND 15/20, MANDALIKA (IDN), 29 SEPT (27 LAPS - 72.158 MILES)**

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	41m04.389s
2	Pedro Acosta (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+1.404s
3	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	+5.595s
4	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Pramac Ducati	+6.507s
5	Marco Bezzecchi (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+6.772s
6	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	+11.330s
7	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+13.203s
8	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+14.862s
9	Johann Zarco (FRA)	LCR Honda	+15.151s
10	Raul Fernandez (ESP)	Trackhouse Aprilia	+21.079s
11	Alex Rins (ESP)	Yamaha	+33.633s
12	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+43.696s
R	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Ducati	20 laps-accident
R	Augusto Fernandez (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	19 laps-technical
R	Joan Mir (ESP)	Honda	12 laps-accident
R	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	11 laps-technical
R	Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	8 laps-accident
R	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	0 laps-accident
R	Alex Marquez (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	0 laps-accident
R	Jack Miller (AUS)	KTM	0 laps-accident
R	Luca Marini (ITA)	Honda	0 laps-accident
NS	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	Trackhouse Aprilia	accident/injury

Winner's average speed 105.408mph. **Fastest lap** Bastianini 1m30.539s, 106.264mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Martin 1m29.088s; 2 Bezzecchi 1m29.623s; 3 Acosta 1m29.671s; 4 Bagnaia 1m29.745s; 5 Bastianini 1m29.792s; 6 Quartararo 1m29.848s; 7 Zarco 1m29.942s; 8 Di Giannantonio 1m29.963s; 9 Morbidelli 1m30.107s; 10 Vinales 1m30.418s; 11 R Fernandez 1m30.524s; 12 M Marquez no Q2 time.

QUALIFYING 1 Zarco 1m29.995s; R Fernandez 1m30.062s; 13 Espargaro 1m30.110s; 14 A Marquez 1m30.243s; 15 Rins 1m30.293s; 16 Miller 1m30.385s; 17 Marini 1m30.395s; 18 Nakagami 1m30.430s; 19 Binder 1m30.582s; 20 Mir 1m30.698s; 21 A Fernandez 1m31.086s.

SPRINT RACE (13 LAPS - 34.743 MILES) 1 Bagnaia 19m41.354s; 2 Bastianini +0.107s; 3 M Marquez +1.701s; 4 Bezzecchi +3.072s; 5 Morbidelli +5.967s; 6 Acosta +6.210s; 7 Vinales +6.664s; 8 Zarco +6.938s; 9 Di Giannantonio +7.706s; 10 Martin +9.104s; 11 Miller +9.618s; 12 Quartararo +9.843s; 13 Binder +11.118s; 14 A Marquez +12.418s; 15 Rins +12.579s; 16 Espargaro +12.952s; 17 Nakagami +13.351s; 18 Marini +15.496s; 19 R Fernandez +29.895s; R A Fernandez 11 laps-accident; R Mir 1 lap-accident.

Winner's average speed 105.873mph. **Fastest lap** Bastianini 1m30.189s, 106.676mph.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Martin 366; 2 Bagnaia 345; 3 Bastianini 291; 4 M Marquez 288; 5 Acosta 181; 6 Binder 173; 7 Vinales 162; 8 Espargaro 127; 9 Bezzecchi 125; 10 Di Giannantonio 122.

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ducati 537; 2 KTM 263; 3 Aprilia 247; 4 Yamaha 93; 5 Honda 51.



Just two riders now
left in realistic
title contention

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- Provide support and assistance to Build and Test department to implement 5s standards, parts and information management
- Provide support and assistance to Build and Test department in the overall journey towards Lean Manufacturing

The Person

- Minimum of undergraduate or post graduate degree, at 2:1 or above
- Good understanding of Lean Manufacturing / Six Sigma tools and principles
- Knowledge of mechanical assembly and mechanical testing methods of metallic and composite parts
- PC literate with good working knowledge of MS office (Excel, Word)
- Proven record of leadership skills, persuasiveness, negotiation, a good listener who is able to coach others
- Proactive and confident to identify, discuss and address issues at different levels of organisation

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- Contributing to improving overall car and driver performance development.
- Contribution to developing engineering processes and procedures.

Role Dimensions

- The Race Engineering group sits alongside the Vehicle Performance and Strategy/Sporting groups within the Technical department.
- The role will involve significant collaboration with other groups within the team.
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- Travel to race and test events is required on an ad-hoc basis.

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TCR UK gets another new home for 2025 season

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CHAMPIONS CROWNED!

Collards claim British GT title,
Sharp secures GB3 glory and
Ryder seals British Hillclimb
honours on weekend
of deciders



New **TOCA Junior** car
takes to the track

Jan Magnussen to tackle
Walter Hayes Trophy

Franchittis and Lotterer
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Ex-F1 driver Magnussen will race the same livery he won with in 1992

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Magnussen to tackle Walter Hayes Trophy

FORMULA FORD 1600

Ex-Formula Ford Festival winner Jan Magnussen will return to the junior single-seater category in the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone next month.

The veteran of 24 Formula 1 starts and four Le Mans 24 Hours class wins will take part in the FF1600 extravaganza on 2-3 November at the wheel of a Van Diemen RF78 run by Mike Gardner's GT Race & Trailers operation. Like the Foundation Racing RF92 in which Magnussen won the Festival at Brands Hatch 32 years ago, the older Van Diemen will be liveried in the colours of Duckhams, the British oil brand.

The Walter Hayes will be Magnussen's

second FF1600 outing since his Festival victory, which was won from the back of his heat after he was excluded from qualifying. The Dane, now 51, contested the 50th anniversary Festival in 2021 in a Low Dempsey Racing Ray GR14, but the WHT will be his first outing in a Van Diemen since 1992.

Magnussen revealed that the Silverstone outing in the RF78 came up purely by chance. His son Luca is friends with Gardner's stepson Giancarlo, which resulted in an introduction when Magnussen was racing at the Silverstone Festival in August.

"Luca and Giancarlo are karting buddies and were hanging out when I came over to do the Festival," said Magnussen. "That's how I got to meet Mike and Giancarlo's mother. He

was telling me about all the Formula Fords he's involved with and was showing me some pictures, and the subject of the WHT did come up. But it was all a bit of a coincidence.

"After the weekend, he contacted me, and said, 'Look I've got a car, why don't you come over and do the WHT?' I don't see myself as a historic racer, but I love driving the old cars when the opportunity comes up. I'm really looking forward to the WHT. The RF78 is a bit before my time, but the car looks super-cool."

Magnussen raced a Ford-engined Turner GT in the Historic Tourist Trophy and a Shelby Daytona Cobra in the International Trophy for Classic GT cars at the Silverstone Festival, sharing with Nikolai Mortensen.

GARY WATKINS

Jeff-Hall targets move into single-seaters

GINETTA JUNIOR

Ethan Jeff-Hall is aiming to move into single-seaters next year after clinching the Ginetta Junior championship last weekend at Brands Hatch.

Despite struggling for pace at the finale, the R Racing driver took the title with a race to spare after a season-long fight with team-mate Chase Fernandez and Charlie Hart of Elite Motorsport.

"It's a great feeling," said

Jeff-Hall. "We've had an issue with the car all weekend but we managed to come back to fourth in race one ahead of our championship rivals and then it was sort of damage limitation really.

"We only did 15 test days before the first round and throughout the season we have been learning as we're going," he added.

The 16-year-old, who took six wins during his first year of car racing and also became



Prize money may help Jeff-Hall to make jump up

CIK-FIA OK World Karting champion last month, is now eyeing up single-seaters after being given £50,000 to help with his career for

winning the Junior title. "The aim is to be in something like GB4 or F4 but it all depends on the budget," said Jeff-Hall.

STEVE WHITFIELD

Successful first test for new TOCA Junior car

TOCA JUNIOR

The new TOCA Junior car completed a successful first test at Anglesey last week, with the category's instigator Dave Beecroft getting behind the wheel.

The Chevron B1417 was launched in August but had yet to be tested on track until Beecroft completed over 300 laps of the Welsh venue. Considering the car has been designed for the new series – which will support the British Touring Car Championship next year – featuring a range of bespoke parts, Beecroft was delighted with how the maiden test went.

“It’s like any new car, you always have concerns but a lot of planning went into it and that really pre-empted anything going wrong,” explained Beecroft. “We didn’t have any issues, it ran cool, the brakes worked well and it handles well – it couldn’t have gone much better. Every time we came into the pits, we parked it up and it just sat there



as if it had been to the shops.”

The day began in wet conditions and Beecroft was keen to put the car through its paces and drive it more aggressively than would normally be the case. “I was doing things to the car to make it react,” he added. “In the wet, I was drifting it through the corners and having a lot of fun with it. The car feels absolutely great and feels like a proper race car as opposed to a saloon car that’s been converted.”

Beecroft said that other examples of

the B1417 are in build and that the initial car will be on display again this weekend at the Brands Hatch BTCC finale. He said then “it’s going to be pounding around and we’ll let some other people try it”.

Beecroft added he is pleased by the amount of interest in the new category and said announcements will be made soon of further teams formally pledging to join, to follow in the footsteps of Graves Motorsport and Toro Verde.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Endurance Cup set to be added to British GT



BRITISH GT

British GT is planning to introduce an Endurance Cup to encourage one-off entries at the larger tracks, Autosport understands.

The series is capped at 36 full-season competitors, but in 2025 there is space for six additional cars at the venues that can cater

for bigger grids. Those circuits are Silverstone, Spa and Donington Park, which is due to host two races, all sites where one-off entries are common.

But they have previously been non-point-scoring cars, so the Endurance Cup is a way of formalising the extra crews by staging a separate four-round

championship. The idea was discussed with team bosses last week ahead of the Brands Hatch finale.

The Endurance Cup would be held alongside the overall GT3 and GT4 championships, which include rounds at smaller venues such as Oulton Park, Snetterton and Brands.

ED HARDY

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Barwell duo aren't expecting to be on next year's BGT grid



Collards admit it's unlikely they will be able to defend GT3 title

BRITISH GT

Newly crowned British GT champions Rob and Ricky Collard are unlikely to defend their title in 2025 due to the cost of racing.

The Barwell Motorsport drivers clinched the title at last weekend's Brands Hatch season finale, finishing five points ahead of Sandy Mitchell and Alex Martin in the sister Lamborghini Huracan. But the emotions were bittersweet because the Collards' plans for next year are uncertain.

When asked if he and son Ricky will be co-drivers at Barwell again in 2025, Collard Sr said: "I think that's probably unlikely. I can't see – unless we get a massive sponsor – how that can happen."

It is actually common for the champions to not continue as co-drivers the following year, with Jonny Adam and Derek Johnston the last to remain together for 2017.

"This could be my last ever race," added Collard Jr. "I would love to stay with Barwell and Lamborghini, I would love to race with my dad and the dream situation would be for us to try and defend this title."

"But, unfortunately, it is financially impossible. So if there's any teams out there looking for a British GT champion to spearhead their championship next year, I'd love to get in contact."

The Collards scored fewer victories than Martin and Mitchell in 2024, but a run of only top-five finishes is what has given the #63 Huracan the title.

"Rob and Ricky have been a little bit more consistent than us," said Mitchell. "There's a couple of points throughout the season that stand out. But everyone has one or two things that they look back on, which probably could have gone more their way."

ED HARDY

Winner Caygill plans more British GT

BRITISH GT

World Endurance Championship driver Joshua Caygill is hoping to contest British GT full-time in 2025 after winning the 2024 season finale at Brands Hatch last weekend.

The 35-year-old was making his series debut with Alex Buncombe in the RJN McLaren and they never lost position from pole to take victory. Caygill's main campaign this

year has been in the WEC's new LMGT3 class, driving a United Autosports McLaren, but he is now planning to increase his presence on the national scene.

"I would love to be in British GT," said Caygill, who claimed a Pro-Am podium at this year's Spa 24 Hours. "British GT is a championship that I've fancied having a pop at for the last two, three years, but the opportunity never came, so I jumped at the chance when it did."

It was RJN's first win since the opening 2020 race, and this year was very stop-start for the squad, which skipped the four rounds before Brands.

"It's really amazing," said Buncombe, whose last series victory came in 2012 – also at Brands. "We've had an up-and-down year, more down than up, but to come back for the last round and win, it feels like I've won the championship."

ED HARDY

MINI CHALLENGE CALENDAR

The Mini Challenge JCW and Trophy calendars for next year have been revealed, with the top JCW category again appearing at seven of the 10 British Touring Car events, all at different tracks. The Coopers of the Trophy division will then be in action at the Brands Hatch (Indy), Thruxton and Donington Park (Grand Prix) BTCC fixtures. The rest of its schedule features races at Snetterton, a planned Croft Mini Festival, Silverstone and the November Brands Truck meeting.

PARKER AND SCHLUP TO US

Legends frontrunners Jack Parker and Oli Schlup will join Will Gibson in tackling the World Finals event at Virginia International Raceway next month. Gibson retained his UK title at Oulton Park last weekend, narrowly beating Parker, while Schlup was sixth in the final standings. Both Parker and Schlup will be fielded by Mickel Motorsport at the American event.

JOHN BOWERS 1948-2024

The sudden death of John Bowers following the final flight leg of his pilgrimage from Australia to Spa last Wednesday has numbed the historic racing fraternity. Bowers bought Lotus 25 R4 from John Dawson-Damer's estate. Under his patronage, Andy Middlehurst won five Monaco GP Historique races and nine Goodwood Revival Glover Trophy showcases with preparation by Jim Clark's period mechanic Bob Dance and latterly Lewis Cullington at Classic Team Lotus. "I'm devastated," said Middlehurst, who won the HGPCA's 1500cc V8 class at Spa, racing at the behest of John's daughter Kate and son Colin.

THE RS500 CONTINUES

The first of three continuation models (below left with the original) of the Andy Rouse Engineering Ford Sierra RS500 Group A machines of the 1980s has been completed. The continuation cars are being built by CNC Motorsport and the first was assembled by Alan Strachan – a mechanic on the RS500 in period – and his son Andrew.



TCR UK to join BARC roster for 2025 season

TCR UK

TCR UK will join forces with the British Automobile Racing Club next year as it seeks to strengthen its position as a feeder series to the British Touring Car Championship.

The series, which will conclude its two-year contract with the British Racing & Sports Car Club at its title showdown on the Silverstone International circuit next weekend, has unveiled a seven-round calendar for 2025, beginning with a return to Donington Park on 22-23 March.

Two events will run alongside the BARC-administered British Truck Racing Championship, at Snetterton in September and November's Brands Hatch season finale. TCR UK will also reprise its British GT support slot at Donington's Grand Prix circuit in April, before taking in rounds at Silverstone, Croft and Oulton Park.

"To move forward, TCR UK needs to be part of a bigger picture, where we can be at bigger events," explained championship



It is hoped greater links with BTCC will help boost grid numbers in TCR UK

promoter Stewart Lines. "The people at BARC, they see that TCR has got a lot of potential to grow and be a feeder series to the TOCA grids. TCR and BTCC do not compete against each other – they're going to complement each other because the idea is to work together to find the new generation of touring car drivers."

The Civic Cup – which, like TCR UK, is promoted by Lines's Maximum Motorsport organisation – will also join the BARC fold and the two series will forge a new relationship with BARC's Junior Saloon Car Championship and its sister Track Action series. All three categories will be on the TCR

UK bill except at its British GT support round.

"TCR UK is a good place to be for all these budding touring car drivers, and we'll be working with Dave Beecroft [JSCC coordinator] to help the Juniors," said Lines. "The fixture list purposely isn't clashing with British Touring Cars, which enables the people in the BTCC paddock to work in our paddock."

BARC chief executive Ben Taylor added: "We are delighted to welcome TCR UK to the BARC family and look forward to working with Stewart and the team to grow the championship further."

MARK PAULSON

Title for Thompson but only after helping rival



Lotus Cortina driver took the win in both races

CTCRC

Lotus Cortina driver Ian Thompson clinched the Pre-'66 Touring Car Championship at Thruxton last month after assisting another driver to get back on track.

Thompson, whose last title success was in European Endurance

Karting in 1995, returned to racing 18 months ago after breaking his back in a Caterham crash. With three overall wins this year, he was in title contention at the final Pre-'66 round and two class wins would be enough, provided there were three starters in his class to avoid half-points being awarded.

Three were present but Keith Wright suffered clutch failure in qualifying, so loaded up and left.

"A car went past, which was the third Cortina, on a trailer," said Thompson. "So I ran after him: 'Where are you going to? You can't go home! Get the car off the trailer – we'll fix it.'"

MARK PAULSON



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Friend/Simmons clinch BHRC win on Trackrod after close battle

HISTORIC RALLYING

Ben Friend and Cliff Simmons claimed a fine victory on last weekend's ninth round of the British Historic Rally Championship, the Trackrod Historic Cup.

On an event using the spectacularly fast Yorkshire forests, Friend took his Ford Escort Mk2 to the narrowest of victories after a fiercely competitive rally. Half a dozen crews could have won the event and the result was in doubt until the very end of the deciding Langdale stage, but Friend turned in a blistering performance through the deciding 10 miles to emerge victorious by six seconds.

The top four crews finished the rally covered by less than 10s, and it was Seb Perez and Gary McElhinney who boosted

their title bid with second place despite engine problems on their Porsche 911. Their service crew changed a rocker and had the car sorted for the final two stages, allowing Perez to fly through the Dalby stage and get very close to Friend.

Previous leaders Dan Mennell and John Roberts were right in contention in third after a major battle with Richard Hill and Patrick Cooper in two more Escorts.

Friend said: "We had a massive moment in that last stage, but that's because we did have a really big push. It's a nice big shock to win, really. I'm well chuffed."

Mark Higgins retired his Triumph TR7 V8 with a double puncture after the intercom failed and sent the car into a moment on the opening Cropton stage on Saturday.

PAUL LAWRENCE



Governing body lobbies for change

MOTORSPORT UK

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers hosted a fringe event at Labour's party conference in Liverpool last month, to highlight how the sport can play a role in pioneering changes needed for the UK to become net carbon zero.

One of the governing body's central messages was for increased focus to be placed upon developing sustainable fuels. MPs, party members and key industry figures attended the event, which

was designed to showcase the importance of motorsport in the wider transport sector.

In an open letter to delegates, Chambers said: "We, in the motorsport industry, are aware of our responsibility in evolving the sport towards a zero-carbon future, and working with the new government to come up with practical solutions to make that goal a reality.

"Electric vehicles are clearly part of the solution to achieve net zero. But EVs are not the only answer, and the transformation cannot

happen overnight. Instead, we should be focusing on policy that supports investment and innovation in an eclectic mix of opportunities, including sustainable fuels.

"One thing that is key to remember is that the carbon footprint of any product needs to be considered over its entire lifecycle, not just at the point of use. This is where sustainable fuels come in as they enable the existing impact of the current fleet of UK vehicles to be offset for the remainder of their usable life."

HILLCLIMB CALENDAR

The 2025 British Hillclimb Championship will follow a similar format to this year's competition, with 14 events across the UK. The same venues remain on the BHC schedule with two visits to Prescott, Shelsley Walsh, Harewood and Doune along with single events at Craigtanlet, Gurston Down, Bouley Bay, Val des Terres, Wiscombe Park and Loton Park. The season opens at Prescott in late April and runs for six months until the deciding rounds at Loton Park at the end of September.

SUPERKART CHAMPIONS

Division 1 Superkart driver Lee Harpham confirmed his Super Series champion status at Oulton Park last Saturday with another win, bringing his tally for the season to nine. In the F250 Mono class, the battle went down to the wire. Paul Platt was nudged off track in the first race and finished a lowly ninth, while rival Lee Plain took maximum points. Race two was void due to accidents and time constraints, before second in the final was enough for Plain to take the Super Series for the fifth time in a row.

DOUBLE DREAMS STILL ON

A runner-up finish at a curtailed Cork '20' International Rally was good enough to hand Keith Cronin the Irish Tarmac Rally Championship and keep his dreams of a domestic double alive. In torrential rain, Cronin – who is in contention to lift the British Rally Championship title later this month at the Cambrian Rally – did what was asked of him by shadowing the winning Skoda Fabia RS Rally2 of Callum Devine.

CSCC WINNERS AT SPA

Sam Polley (Mini Marcos) and Connor Kay (TVR Tuscan, below) mastered treacherous conditions to win the Classic Sports Car Club's Swinging Sixties races at the Spa Six Hours event. Top qualifier Kay struggled without windscreen wipers or headlights until the pitstops on Thursday. Polley's wipers failed en route to Friday's grid, but Kay howled through to win.



Hart's spin gifts Franchittis and Lotterer Spa Six Hours win

**SPA SIX HOURS
ROADBOOK
26-28 SEPTEMBER**

Scots Dario and Marino Franchitti and Belgo-German Andre Lotterer emerged new winners in an extraordinary climax to Saturday's 31st Spa Six Hours. In a race from bright sunshine into darkness, peppered with safety car interludes in intermittent rain, Olivier Hart defended a 30-second advantage over Lotterer and looked assured of repeating the DHG Ford GT40 squad's 2022 win with father David and Nicky Pastorelli. With 15 minutes remaining, however, the young Dutchman spun into the Pif-Paf gravel bed and Lotterer snarled past.

Starting one of 19 GT40s, a quarter of the field, from ninth, IndyCar legend Dario had eased their Wolfe Manufacturing-run car past Belgians Nico Verdonck – who qualified Marcus Graf von Oeynhausen's on pole – and Eric van de Poele in Ford chief Jim Farley's to lead by lap 27. Sportscar pro Marino kept it smooth before Porsche Penske Motorsport's World Endurance Hypercar championship leader Lotterer, fresh from Fuji victory, took over.

Remarkably, the race was led for 13 laps by the Ginetta G4R of Danes Nicolai Kjaergaard, Palle Birkelund Pedersen and Alexander Weiss, which started 11th. The 1760cc Lotus twin-cam engined GTP was chased down by Pastorelli before young Hart jumped in, and was back to second when a front hub failed, throwing a wheel at the Bus Stop. As one gallant run ended, the Lotus Elan of Ben Barker, Rory Butcher and last year's winner Gordon Shedden moved into contention.

'Flash' went second when Hart Jr tripped up, surprising Lotterer. "I thought, 'That's OK', when I saw the GT40 off," said Andre, who had just set fastest lap. After a last brief yellow to retrieve Hart, the triple Le Mans winner calmly drove four more to the

chequer. Hart repassed the yellow Elan but was distraught in his dad's arms afterwards.

"That was very special," said Marino Franchitti on the podium, and the Scottish brothers-in-law led Lotus trio were equally jubilant with a class-winning third as the champagne flowed. GT40s filled the next eight places, Chris Harris/Gary Pearson/Alex Brundle, Luco Sanchez/Nick Salewsky/Michael Funke, Olly Bryant/Joe Twyman/Phil Keen – virtually brakeless for the last two hours – and Fred Wakeman/Mike Grant Peterkin/Andrew Smith on the same lap.

Second GT was Goncalo Gomes/James Claridge/James Denty's Elan in a fine 12th, but Frank Stippler started the Kolb family's Shelby Cobra hard en route to GTS12 gold over the quickest Jaguar E-types. A stellar GTS11 performance resulted in Keith Ahlers/Billy Bellinger/Christian Bock in Keith's fabled Morgan +4 TOK 258 triumphing by 15.7s over the Bates brothers' Porsche 911, having traded places for an hour.

Third on his open-wheeled debut in

Friday's Masters Formula 1 opener – behind Matt Wrigley (Tyrrell 011) and the robust Werner d'Ansembourg's Brabham BT49 – Olivier Hart appeared to drive Fred Fatien's GP Extreme Arrows A3 to a brilliant wet win over title clincher Wrigley on Saturday, only to be bumped to sixth for contact. Three-time grand prix winner Thierry Boutsen, in a stunning ex-Tom Pryce Shadow DN5, thus rose to fourth.

Driving his ex-Jack Brabham 1960 F1 title-winning Cooper T53 beautifully, Rudi Friedrichs twice topped a magnificent Historic Grand Prix Cars Association field. Tim Child led Friday's chase in his Scuderia Veloce Brabham BT3/4, Graham Hill's 1964 Tasman race winner, after challenger Maxime Castelein (Lotus 18) crashed.

Saturday's wet stanza was better still, for with Friday's front-engined victor Mark Shaw's Scarab out, John Spiers drove his ex-Jean Behra Maserati 250F like the wind, monsterring Friedrichs to the chequer. Two wonderful class battles resulted in Nick Taylor (Lotus 18) pipping Alex Morton



PETERBAKER/RETRO-SPEED



Shedden/Barker/Butcher Elan (r) was among the giant-killers

PETERBAKER/RETRO-SPEED



Wrigley won the opener and Masters Historic F1 title

PETERBAKER/RETRO-SPEED



Late disappointment for Hart led to joy for Franchittis and Lotterer

(Lotus 21) among the 1500cc four-cylinder cars and Ian Nuthall shading Paul Grant in their customary Cooper-Bristol duel.

HVM's Classic F2 and F3 Interseries illustrated the 1970s' path to F1. Having aquaplaned off on the plunge to Eau Rouge in F2 qualifying, Matthew Watts (ex-Norman Dickson March 772) charged through to win on Friday, beating Wolfgang Kaufmann (782) and Alex Kapadia (762). A broken drive flange ended early leader Mark Charteris's Spa debut in his ex-Brian Henton 782. After Watts spun on Saturday, Charteris set fastest lap chasing Kaufmann. Julian Stokes (ex-Peter Westbury Brabham BT30) earned 1600cc honours.

F3 poleman Andy Smith (ex-Helmut Henzler March 783) won Friday's mixed-condition races, principally with Italian Davide Leone (ex-Marcello Rosei 783). Tristan Gommendy chased initially in the ex-Marcel Wettstein Argo JM10, then drove it superbly in the twisty middle sector to split them second time out.

Lurani Formula Junior champion Clive

Richards staved off fellow Lotus 22 pilot Manfredo Rossi di Montelera on Friday, but went off on Saturday's soggy formation lap. Undeterred, he pitted, changed a rear wheel and screamed back to sixth. Rossi had his hands full in beating rainmeister Stuart Roach (Alexis Mk4). Adrian Russell won both front-engined tussles in his ex-Roach Condor, Saturday's a thriller with Chris Astley's Elva 100, Ray Mallock (U2) and Nick Taylor (Elva).

Olivier Hart, alongside his father, won a gutsy Masters Historic Sports Cars dust-up with Nigel Greensall – finishing John Spiers' McLaren M1B – grazed by Lola T70 starter Hart Sr. After Chris Ward retired Chris Fox's T70, when its Chevrolet V8's oil pressure dived, Goncalo Gomes (ex-Guy Edwards/Ray Mallock Lola T296) and Ben Mitchell (ex-Chris Amon Elva-BMW Mk8S), relayed by James Claridge and Dion Kremer respectively, toppled more big bangers.

Greensall (in Spiers' TVR Griffith) narrowly led the Gentlemen Drivers GT race until a tyre delaminated and Julian Thomas (Shelby Daytona Cobra) blasted clear. Thomas then outran Olivier Hart in Abraham Bontrup's Cobra.

New Zealand's national anthem rang out after Roger Wills (ex-Bruce McLaren Lotus 15) won a splendid Motor Racing Legends 1950s' sportscar scrap with Lukas Halusa's Jaguar D-type – second at Le Mans in 1954 – and Greensall, who later rotated in Spiers' Lister Knobbly. Rudi Friedrichs' hot Alvis shook off Robert Beebee's Frazer Nash and Chris Mann's sonorous straight-eight Alfa Romeo in the Pre-War set.

MARCUS PYE



Watts (l) and Kaufmann shared Classic F2 spoils

WEEKEND WINNERS

31ST SPA SIX HOURS

(106 laps) **1 Dario Franchitti/Marino Franchitti/Andre Lotterer (Ford GT40);** 2 David Hart/Nicky Pastorelli/Olivier Hart (GT40) -1 lap; 3 Ben Barker/Rory Butcher/Gordon Shedden (Lotus Elan 26R); 4 Chris Harris/Gary Pearson/Alex Brundle (GT40); 5 Luco Sanchez/Nick Salewsky/Michael Funke (GT40); 6 Olly Bryant/Joe Twyman/Phil Keen (GT40); 7 Fred Wakeman/Mike Grant Peterkin/Andrew Smith (GT40); 8 Pedro Macedo Silva/Jose Monroy (GT40 Roadster); 9 Will Nuthall/Tony Wood/Michael Lyons (GT40); 10 Richard Meins/Chris Lillingston-Price/Rob Huff (GT40). **Class winners** Barker/Butcher/Shedden; Frank Stippler/Alexander Kolb/Vincent Kolb (Shelby Cobra); Keith Ahlers/Billy Bellinger/Christian Bock (Morgan +4 Super Sports); Pierre-Etienne & Emeric Bordet (Marcos-Volvo 1800GT). **Fastest lap** Lotterer 2m39.343s (98.30mph). **Starters** 77.

MASTERS F1

Races 1 & 2 Matt Wrigley (Tyrrell 011)

HGPCA PRE-'66 GP CARS

Races 1 & 2 Rudi Friedrichs (Cooper-Climax T53)

CLASSIC F2 INTERSERIES

Race 1 Matthew Watts (March-BMW 772)
Race 2 Wolfgang Kaufmann (March-BMW 782)

CLASSIC F3 INTERSERIES

Races 1 & 2 Andy Smith (March-Toyota 783)

FJHRA HISTORIC FORMULA JUNIOR

Race 1 Clive Richards (Lotus 22)
Race 2 Manfredo Rossi di Montelera (Lotus 22)

MASTERS SPORTS CARS

David & Olivier Hart (Lola-Chevrolet T70 Mk3B)

MASTERS GENTLEMEN DRIVERS

Julian Thomas (Shelby Daytona Cobra)

MRL RAC WOODCOTE TROPHY

Roger Wills (Lotus-Climax 15)

MRL PRE-WAR SPORTS CARS

Rudi Friedrichs (Alvis Firefly Special)

CSCC SWINGING SIXTIES/CLASSIC K

Race 1 Sam Polley (Mini Marcos)
Race 2 Connor Kay (TVR Tuscan)

MASTERS ENDURANCE LEGENDS

Stuart Wiltshire (Peugeot 908)

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Friedrichs' Cooper was unstoppable in HGPCA races

Collards seal GT3 title as RJN wins at Brands

BRANDS HATCH
BRITISH GT
28-29 SEPTEMBER

Father-and-son Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini pairing Rob and Ricky Collard clinched the 2024 British GT3 title after finishing fifth in last Sunday's two-hour Brands Hatch season finale.

With race winners Alex Buncombe and series debutant Josh Caygill ineligible for points in their RJN Motorsport McLaren, it left the Collard family five points ahead of Sandy Mitchell and Alex Martin, who finished second on-track in an anti-climactic title decider but collected a maximum score in the sister Barwell Huracan GT3 Evo2.

The Collards are the second father-son pairing to claim the GT3 crown, after Jim and Glynn Geddie in 2011, and Collard Sr is now a two-time series champion after winning the title with Mitchell in 2020. "It feels so unreal and it hasn't sunk in yet," said former BTCC ace Rob, who joins Jonny



Collard Sr (right) is now a two-time champion



Fifth on the road was enough to claim top spot for father-and-son

Adam and Andrew Howard as the only drivers to win the GT3 crown multiple times. "I'm absolutely delighted that I've been able to win for a second time. To win it with my son is absolutely a dream come true and quite emotional when we got out the car."

The duo arrived at Brands Hatch with a 24.5-point championship lead. Such a large margin had never been overturned on the final day before, despite title deciders often throwing up surprises. That happened on Saturday when the Collards' Huracan suffered an engine failure in first practice, meaning they managed just eight laps across the opening two sessions compared to 68 for the sister Lambo.

Collard Sr said it "unbuckled all of our hard work for the season" and put them "massively on the back foot" for qualifying,

but the champions-elect still started a respectable sixth, while Mitchell and Martin were third. The latter pair needed to finish first or second to stand any chance of winning the title, while a top-five or top-nine finish, respectively, would suffice for the Collards.

Both Lamborghinis gained a position on the second lap, Martin overtaking Morgan Tillbrook (Garage 59 McLaren) down the inside of Paddock Hill Bend to claim second, while immediately behind Kevin Tse spun after contact from Mark Radcliffe (Optimum McLaren), who assumed fourth position. This put the race under safety car conditions and the green flag returned eight minutes in, at which point polesitter Caygill remained ahead of Martin, with Collard Sr circulating in fifth.

That became fourth after 24 minutes

NO SUB-OPTIMUM CONCLUSION THIS YEAR AS MEAKIN AND BROWN TAKE GT4 GLORY

Optimum Motorsport duo Zac Meakin and Jack Brown claimed a maiden British GT4 Championship title after winning the two-hour season finale at Brands Hatch.

The McLaren Artura drivers finished a stunning 74.372s ahead of title rivals Jamie Day and Mikey Porter (Forsetti Aston Martin), while Race Lab McLaren pair Callum Davies and Sai Sanjay took their first podium.

It comes a year after a flat battery at the Donington Park season finale lost Brown and former co-driver Charles Clark the 2023 title, despite leading for most of the season. "It feels unbelievable," said Brown. "It's what I've been working towards for the past 10

years. Last year was a massive letdown, but this year it's all been made up for."

Four crews arrived still contending for the title. Day and Porter led Optimum's pair by 3.5 points, with Team Parker Mercedes duo Seb Morris and Charles Dawson a further four behind. William Orton and Marc Warren were 13.5 off the top, but their Forsetti Motorsport Aston Martin retired on the opening lap when Warren hit the back of Marco Signoretti's Ford Mustang into Druids.

This left three fighting for the championship, yet Team Parker had slim hopes as Dawson ran fourth behind leader Day, Davies and Meakin, who had started on pole.

Meakin reclaimed second 12 minutes in

with by overtaking Davies down the inside of Druids, creating a thrilling battle between himself and Day for the lead. The fight was aggressive at times as Day delivered a robust defence, which earned him a black-and-white warning flag for driving standards, but at the half-hour mark Meakin was finally ahead with a move at Surtees.

The eventual champion gained 20 seconds before the hour, as driver swaps happened under a full-course yellow due to a GT3 crash. This became a safety car for the restart and Optimum had gained a lap by default after pitting early, with Brown rejoining just ahead of the overall race-leading RJN McLaren.

Optimum boss Shaun Goff called it

RACE RESULTS

GT3
(64 laps) 1 Josh Caygill/Alex Buncombe (McLaren 720S GT3 Evo); 2 Alex Martin/Sandy Mitchell (Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO2) +0.524s; 3 Morgan Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton (McLaren); 4 Richard Neary/Sam Neary (Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo); 5 Rob Collard/Ricky Collard (Lamborghini); 6 Andrew Howard/Tom Wood (Aston Martin Vantage AMR GT3 Evo). **Fastest lap** Wood 1m24.031s (104.24mph). **Pole** Caygill/Buncombe. **Starters** 14. **Points 1 Collard/Collard 182;** 2 Mitchell/Martin 177; 3 Adam Smalley/Shawn Balfe 140; 4 Phil Keen/Ian Loggie 103.5; 5 Tom Gamble/Mark Radcliffe 86.5; 6 Clutton/Tillbrook 76.5.

GT4
(62 laps) 1 Zac Meakin/Jack Brown (McLaren Artura GT4, below); 2 Jamie Day/Mikey Porter (Aston Martin Vantage AMR GT4 Evo) +1m14.372s; 3 Callum Davies/Sai Sanjay (McLaren); 4 Luca Hopkinson/Harry George (Mercedes-AMG GT4); 5 Colin White/Thomas Holland (Ginetta G56 GT4 Evo); 6 Aston Millar/Freddie Tomlinson (Ginetta). **FL** Michael O’Brien (Toyota GR Supra GT4 Evo) 1m31.643s (95.58mph). **P** Meakin/Brown. **S** 17. **Points 1 Meakin/Brown 171.5;** 2 Porter/Day 164.5; 3 Seb Morris/Charles Dawson 136; 4 William Orton/Marc Warren 124; 5 Tom Wrigley/Ian Gough 84; 6= Charlie Robertson/Ravi Ramyeed & Erik Evans/Marco Signoretti 72.5.



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



when Collard overtook Radcliffe on the inside of Paddock Hill Bend, with Richard Neary (Abba Mercedes) following through moments later. The 55-year-old was on a charge and Paddock was the prime overtaking spot. A few laps later, Collard passed Tillbrook there for third.

Collard soon closed in on the nose-to-tail battle for the lead, and was just a second behind Caygill after 48 minutes. Just a minute later, the race was under a full-course yellow after Simon Orange crashed his McLaren heavily into the Stirlings tyre barrier. All cars made their mandatory pitstops under the FCY – this benefited the Collards, who were serving a 20s compensation penalty for winning the previous race at Donington Park – before the field was bunched up behind the safety car for the restart.



Collard Jr had therefore dropped only to fifth once the race resumed with a little over 40 minutes to go, while Buncombe led Mitchell, Marcus Clutton (in for Tillbrook) and Sam Neary (in for father Richard). But another FCY followed shortly afterwards due to a three-car GT4 collision at Stirlings, which left a 12-minute sprint to the finish. The top four all held station, Buncombe withstanding pressure from Mitchell to score RJN’s first win since the 2020 season-opener at Oulton Park after a stop-start season with multiple drivers. Clutton and Tillbrook completed the podium.

The focus was largely on Collard Jr who, despite ceding fifth position to Radcliffe’s co-driver Tom Gamble into Paddock, was still able to clinch the championship. The Collards were soon pushed back up to fifth overall when the Optimum pairing received a post-race 37s penalty because Radcliffe’s stint was seven seconds too short.

“It’s a huge relief,” said an emotional Collard Jr. “It was not the start to the weekend that we wanted and then everything was up against us and we still managed to get the result that counted. We’re British GT champions and it’s insane to be able to say it. It just shows that, if you put the hours in and get a dream, the dream can become a reality.”

ED HARDY

“overdue luck”, but the drama wasn’t over yet. Just a few minutes after the restart, Matt Cowley, Gordie Mutch and Matt Nicoll-Jones all collided at Stirlings. The subsequent FCY turned into a safety car and left a 12-minute dash to the end. Yet Brown remained well clear to claim a fourth victory of the season, which resulted in a seven-point championship win.

Porter finished 3.142s ahead of Sanjay, who just held on from the charging RAM Racing Mercedes of Luca Hopkinson and Harry George. The Team Parker Mercedes came home eighth after serving an extra 15s in the pitstop for its second-place finish at Donington.

ED HARDY



A battling opening stint by Meakin put Optimum duo in reach of the title



Fifth win of the season helped Sharp claim back-to-back UK single-seater titles

GB3 crown goes to Sharp during Brands title-deciding showdown

BRANDS HATCH
GB3
28-29 SEPTEMBER

Rodin Motorsport's Louis Sharp clinched the 2024 GB3 Championship in last weekend's deciding race at Brands Hatch. The British-born New Zealander, who is one of four finalists for this year's Silverstone Autosport BRDC Young Driver Award, followed in the footsteps of Luke Browning by winning both the British Formula 4 and GB3 titles, but he is the first driver to achieve the feat back-to-back.

Sharp headed into the final event with a 33-point lead over JHR Developments' John Bennett, with Hitech GP duo Tymek Kucharczyk and Will Macintyre also in contention. But the quartet were upstaged early in the weekend by Elite Motorsport's McKenzie Cresswell, who qualified on pole for race one and duly converted it into his second victory of the campaign after resisting a first-corner challenge from Bennett.

Sharp ran wide on the first lap

at Graham Hill Bend while battling with Kucharczyk and slipped to eighth before recovering one place late on when Hitech's Gerrard Xie crashed with rear-suspension failure.

Elite's Hugo Schwarze matched his best result by coming home fourth behind Kucharczyk, while Macintyre's remote title chances came to an end as he finished fifth. VRD by Arden's Nikita Johnson climbed from 12th to sixth, and reigning champion Callum Voisin – making a one-off series return for Rodin following his race-winning FIA F3 campaign – followed his team-mate Arthur Rogeon home in ninth.

Having taken pole for race two, Sharp notched up his fifth win following an early safety car period, while Bennett finished behind him to ensure the championship fight went down to the wire. Kucharczyk again completed the podium places, but the Polish racer's title hopes were extinguished.

Cresswell lost two places at the start before finishing fourth ahead of team-mate Jarrod Waberski, while Rogeon made an opening-lap pass on Schwarze before coming home sixth. Schwarze lost further ground to VRD's Noah Ping, who made up six places to seventh, while an optimistic early lunge from Macintyre resulted in both his team-mate Xie and James Hedley – making a GB3 return with Chris Dittmann Racing – retiring.

There was an early safety car period in the partially reversed-grid finale after VRD by Arden team-mates Shawn Rashid and Ping collided shortly after the start, as Schwarze spun out with a puncture at Druids.

RACE RESULTS

GB3

Race 1 (15 laps) 1 McKenzie Cresswell; 2 John Bennett +0.473s; 3 Tymek Kucharczyk; 4 Hugo Schwarze; 5 Will Macintyre; 6 Nikita Johnson. **Fastest lap** Bennett 1m19.097s (110.74mph).

Pole Cresswell. **Starters** 20.

Race 2 (14 laps) 1 Louis Sharp; 2 Bennett +0.476s; 3 Kucharczyk; 4 Cresswell; 5 Jarrod Waberski; 6 Arthur Rogeon.

FL Kucharczyk 1m19.266s (110.51mph).

P Sharp. **S** 20.

Race 3 (17 laps) 1 Johnson; 2 Callum Voisin +0.178s; 3 Rogeon; 4 Waberski; 5 Macintyre; 6 Patrick Heuzenroeder.

FL Voisin 1m19.950s (109.56mph).

P Johnson. **S** 20.

Points 1 Sharp 478; 2 Bennett 456; 3 Kucharczyk 443; 4 Cresswell 376; 5 Macintyre 372; 6 Waberski 286.

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

Champion: Sharp came out on top at Brands



Ginetta and GB4 titles wrapped up in finales

BRANDS HATCH
BRSCC
28-29 SEPTEMBER

Ethan Jeff-Hall, Linus Granfors, Mike Taylor and Julian Wantling all secured titles on the final day of the season among British GT's support series at Brands Hatch.

In Ginetta Junior, Jeff-Hall prevailed in his fierce championship fight with R Racing team-mate Chase Fernandez as Isaac Phelps took a lights-to-flag win in the opening bout, though he had to resist a number of lead challenges.

Fernandez was the first to make a lunge into Stirling's but slipped back to seventh after bouncing across the grass. Charlie Hart then tried a move on his Elite Motorsport team-mate but ended up sliding through the gravel, and a resulting pitstop ended his remote title hopes.

Preptech's Henry Joslyn was the next to apply pressure on Phelps but could not find a way by, the front two having pulled clear of a frenetic intra-team R Racing battle for third. Alfie Slater prevailed to complete the podium, while a visibly frustrated Fernandez lost out late on to Jeff-Hall and Marcus Saeter to finish sixth.

Phelps led again in the sequel, but this time ran wide when defending from Hart, who swept by for his second win of the season. Despite making an early error and slipping down the order, Jeff-Hall clinched the title with ninth.

The final race provided another thriller, with Hart and Fernandez trading places at the front of an eight-car lead train, but Joslyn pounced on their squabble to move ahead before edging Hart at the finish for his fourth victory of 2024.

Fortec's Granfors wrapped up the GB4



crown despite failing to convert his fifth and sixth poles of the season into victories. An opening-lap mistake in race one left him third, while Harry Burgoyne kept his title hopes alive by taking his second consecutive win ahead of KMR Sport team-mate Lucas Blakeley.

Granfors lost out at the start of race two to Blakeley, who went on to take a dominant fourth triumph, but second ahead of Alisha Palmowski was enough for the Swede to clinch the championship with a race to spare.

Finn Harrison climbed from fifth to take his second victory in the season-closing contest. Burgoyne lost his front wing in an early battle with Palmowski, who then held off Granfors to not only complete an Elite Motorsport 1-2 but also snatch championship runner-up spot from Burgoyne by a solitary point.

Taylor won the Rookie class title in the Ginetta GT Academy, but it wasn't plain sailing. He had to settle for second in race one after being passed by Harry Gamble before triumphing in race two. Taylor went

off the road twice in the finale and finished third but still became champion, while Gamble won again ahead of James Nicholas. Wantling, meanwhile, beat Marc Elman to the GTA class title.

Having already sewn up the Ginetta GT Championship at the previous round, McKenzie Douglass took his 13th win of the year in race one, but he was hampered by a puncture and mechanical gremlins in the other two contests, which allowed Nick White to take a victory brace.

STEVE WHITFIELD

WEEKEND WINNERS

GINETTA JUNIOR

Race 1 Isaac Phelps

Race 2 Charlie Hart

Race 3 Henry Joslyn

GB4

Race 1 Harry Burgoyne

Race 2 Lucas Blakeley

Race 3 Finn Harrison

GINETTA GT ACADEMY

Races 1 & 3 Harry Gamble

Race 2 Mike Taylor (below)

GINETTA GT CHAMPIONSHIP

Race 1 McKenzie Douglass

Races 2 & 3 Nick White



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





Porsche 991 GT3
Cup duo only took
the lead on the
penultimate lap

Late Porsche lead change makes it Lucky for some

SNETTERTON
CSCC
28-29 SEPTEMBER

The Slicks Series race at Snetterton last weekend looked a foregone conclusion, but David Harrison and Nathan Luckey defied expectations in their Porsche 991. The similar 991 Cup car of Charlie and Zak Fulk had built up a huge lead before the pitstops and appeared to have it in the bag.

The driver change put Luckey up against Charlie Fulk, and Luckey began taking chunks out of the leader before passing on the penultimate lap. Fulk was second, ahead of Dylan Popovic's Ginetta G50. Although Tom Walpole was ahead of the Ginetta in his KTM GT4, a hefty penalty for a pitstop infringement dropped him to fifth, behind BMW driver Niall Bradley.

Andy Southcott was a double winner in Special Saloons & Modsports in his

Millington-engined MG Lenham Midget, but it could have gone another way in race one. Southcott got a slow start as he began bedding in new brakes, allowing polesitter Dan Minton to build up a considerable lead in his Ford Escort Mk2. Once Southcott was comfortable, he set about reeling Minton in. Thomas Carey's Honda CRX was third, having avoided the spinning Lotus Elan of Paul Dolan.

Southcott was in the lead from 11th on the grid by the end of the first lap of race two. Carey was second and Martin Reynolds (Ford Anglia) held on for third, ahead of a terrific scrap between fourth-placed Andrew Willis in his Mustang-engined Austin A30 and Dolan.

The first BMW Championship race had an exciting opening tour, with five going for the lead at one point. It looked as if Michael Vitulli had the win, but he lost second gear, letting an increasingly quick

Nathan Wells through. Wells was aided by an electrical issue for Niall Bradley and puncture for Adrian Bradley.

Wells was initially demoted to second by a track-limits penalty before being reinstated, and he won race two in a more straightforward manner, holding off Jason West and Graham Crowhurst, who in turn were separated by the Open Series winners.

Chris Pittard (Caterham 7) topped both Open bouts and was followed home in race one by John Cutmore (Spire RB7), who later claimed victory in Magnificent Sevens, overcoming a 30-second pitstop infringement penalty and still winning by a minute.

Ollie Pratt (+4) had to wait until the final laps before leader Louis Ruff, in a smaller Class 2 car, was within passing range in the second Morgan Challenge race, after starting from the back. Brother William Pratt had earlier prevailed in race one.

In the Jaguar Championship, Jack Robinson's XK8 prevailed by good margins both times. In the concurrent MG Trophy, leaders Graham Ross and Adam Jackson followed him home both times after some early skirmishing, while Rodney Frost's XJS led the combative Jaguar chasing pack.

Tin Tops was set for a close finish after winners Colin and Steve Simpson in their Peugeot 206 played a waiting game but overcame Richard Bethell's Renault Clio in the latter stages. Bethell had held out in the less powerful car for a good chunk of the race, having timed his pitstop well. Early leader Andrew Windmill was hamstrung by a lengthy success penalty during his stop and could only finish fourth, behind Sam Nicolaou's Honda Civic.

New Millennium was less eventful on paper, but a win for Luke Yeomans's BMW M3 from only his second-ever race start



Robinson headed the
Jaguar Championship
grid on both occasions

WEEKEND WINNERS

SLICKS SERIES

David Harrison/Nathan Luckey
(Porsche 991 GT3 Cup)

SPECIAL SALOONS & MODSPORTS

Races 1 & 2 Andy Southcott (MG Lenham Midget)

BMW CHAMPIONSHIP/OPEN SERIES

Races 1 & 2 Nathan Wells (BMW M3 E46 GTR)

MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

John Cutmore (Spire RB7)

MORGAN CHALLENGE

Race 1 William Pratt (+4)

Race 2 Ollie Pratt (+4)

MG TROPHY/JAGUAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Jack Robinson (Jaguar XK8)

TIN TOPS & PUMA CUP

Colin Simpson/Steve Simpson (Peugeot 206)

NEW MILLENNIUM/TURBO TIN TOPS

Luke Yeomans (BMW M3 E36, below)

MIDGET & SPRITE CHALLENGE

Races 1 & 2 Paul Sibley (MG Midget)

SWINGING SIXTIES

Stephen Pickering (Sunbeam Tiger)

MODERN CLASSICS/FUTURE CLASSICS

Tom Barley (BMW 328i E36)

CLASSIC K

Malcolm Johnson (Lotus Elan GTS)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



RACING RETURN FOR TURNER SPORTS Mk1 The 'Tatty Turner' was a three-time Modsports champion in the early 1960s when driven by Pat Fergusson. It was so-called because it raced in basic unpainted polymer trim on its Mallory Park debut. New owner Mike Henney bought it only eight weeks ago after shipping it over from Canada after hearing it was due to be converted back to road-going spec. It made its return to racing at Snetterton in Classic K last weekend.



JAGUAR ALL BUT IN NAME Identical to the Jaguar XJ Series 1 apart from its trim, this Sovereign still has its Daimler door sills, although its front grille is from a Jaguar because the original curved, overhanging Daimler one with bonnet ornament "didn't look racy enough". Owner Tim Marrant raced it in Swinging Sixties and the Jaguar Championship, meaning it needed a change of wheels between races. The two series have different tyre requirements, with one set larger than the other.

was impressive. He passed the similar BMW of Jasver Sapra early on following the retirement of polesitter Nathan Wells, whose car was plagued by a throttle outage problem all weekend – he had already retired from the Slicks Series race. Front-row starter Niall Bradley also dropped out due to engine trouble. A late pitstop worked perfectly and Yeomans kept ahead of Sapra and series stalwart Danny Cassar's Honda Integra, which had come from near the back of the grid.

Turbo Tin Tops winner Chris Earle (Peugeot 208) had a more straightforward route to the top, although he did face strong opposition from the Abarth Assetto Corse of Andrew Marson mid-race.

Paul Sibley's MG Midget was the runaway winner of both Midget & Sprite Challenge races, heading race two by 56s.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER



STYLE OVER SPEED "You get people saying, 'that looks cool', but that doesn't make it go any faster!" is how Gary Cole sums up the appeal of his 1993 Citroen BX. It has the marque's hydropneumatic self-levelling suspension, which Cole has retained for on-track use. Having a car that sits down and stands up may look impressive, but it makes circuits with tight corners a real challenge, since the mechanism tends to lag behind the input from the car's movements.



Trophy racers put on a dazzling show at Kirkistown season finale

KIRKISTOWN
500MRCI
28 SEPTEMBER

The seasoned spectator at Kirkistown’s Colonial section has viewed a lot of close racing during at least two decades of watching from his chosen vantage point. He’s a man of few words, and only rarely are they complimentary. But last Saturday’s Emerson Fittipaldi Trophy for Formula Vee forced him to admit that he had just watched the best race he had ever seen. And, just over an hour later, he had to make the same admission after observing a Formula Ford 1600 battle for the Martin Donnelly Trophy. The final meeting of the Northern Ireland season had delivered – in spades.

The first of two Vee races produced a taster of what was to come with the top five deeply involved in a scrap that ended with Gavin Buckley crossing the line to take victory and the Vee championship, hotly pursued by Colm Blackburn, Jack Byrne, Anthony Cross, Kieran Hannan and Dan

Polley covered by a handful of fractions. The intensity increased when the second race started and, while it had to be red-flagged after just three laps when a midfield carambolage broke out, it became even more edgy. This time it was the wily Cross who took the honours – and the Fittipaldi Trophy – by less than half a second from Blackburn, Byrne and Buckley, who were covered by just 0.2s. After that, it seemed that the FF1600 brigade would have to do something special, and so they did. Jason Smyth built a convincing lead of almost a second over Stephen O’Connor in race one, while Jordan Kelly and David McCullough were millimetres apart in third and fourth, having been contenders earlier on.

A year ago, Smyth was on course for a ‘Donnelly’ victory until a spin on the final lap enabled McCullough to add to his impressive tally of wins. But the young Dubliner was determined not to repeat the exercise, and more or less led all the way. More or less because both Kelly and McCullough pressured him hard, both of them getting ahead several times, but never far enough to stay there.

It was millimetre-close for the full distance, prompting the seasoned spectator to remark that “this is going to end in tears”. Except that it didn’t, and a delighted Smyth took the flag, and the trophy, by just 0.2s from Kelly, with McCullough a further 0.2s adrift. For the record, Donal Downey placed fourth in his Ray, having stayed with the leaders for much of the time. He finished ahead of Pre-’90 winner Alan Davidson (Mondiale).

Elsewhere, there was a double victory for Michael Graham in Fiestas, where race one



WEEKEND WINNERS

- FORMULA VEE**
Race 1 Gavin Buckley (Sheane FV99)
Race 2 (Emerson Fittipaldi Trophy) Anthony Cross (Sheane FV93)
- FORMULA FORD 1600**
Race 1 Jason Smyth (Van Diemen RF00/JL12)
Race 2 (Martin Donnelly Trophy) Jason Smyth (Van Diemen RF00/JL12)
- MINI COOPERS/FIESTA ZETECs**
Race 1 Craig Gilmore (Mini)
Race 2 Peter Bennett (Mini)
- ROADSPORTS/LIBRE SALOONS & GTs**
Races 1 & 2 Jim Larkham (Radical PR6)
- HRCA HISTORIC SPORTS CARS**
Race 1 Bernard Foley (Crossle 42S)
Race 2 David Kelly (Crossle 9S)
- MAZDA MODI-5-CUP**
Races 1 & 2 Rob Kennedy
- For full results visit: speedhive.mylaps.com

was halted for a time after Megan Campbell put on an impressive aerobatic display at the Chicane, which left her with a broken finger and an even more broken Fiesta. The Fiestas shared a grid with the Minis, in which honours were even between Craig Gilmore and Peter Bennett.

There was another double for Radical pilot Jim Larkham in Roadsports, while Bernard Foley and David Kelly took their Crossles to a historic win apiece. The growing Mazda MX-5 field was also pretty impressive and resulted in a brace of victories for Rob Kennedy, with Francie Allen and Damian Moran in attendance. The saloon encounters were dominated by the Clune family, Oisin and Michael in their Hondas, while GT honours were shared by Wildcat drivers John Cardoo and Joe Yates.

RICHARD YOUNG

Ryder seals hillclimb title in style at Loton

**LOTON PARK
BRITISH HILLCLIMB
28-29 SEPTEMBER**

Matthew Ryder secured this year's British Hillclimb Championship with a resounding victory in the opening run-off at Loton Park on Sunday.

Ryder went to the Shropshire hill with one hand on the title, since it would have taken a massive turnaround in fortune for his remaining rival, Alex Summers, to come through and steal the crown. At the very least, Summers needed two run-off times underneath the existing hill record and, when Sunday dawned cold with the prospect of rain, he knew any slender remaining chance was gone.

Ryder, meanwhile, capped an incredible season to take his first BHC crown and join an illustrious list of previous champions. The Gould GR59 driver sealed his title in style with victory by 0.7 seconds in the first of the two run-offs, which ran in dry but cool conditions. He was the only driver to break the 43s mark and his 42.97s climb was the best of the day, but still some way adrift of Wallace Menzies's hill record of 41.76s.

"I wanted to attack like I've done all season, and not just pootle up the hill," said Ryder after the opening encounter. Summers (DJ Firestorm) gave it his best shot and ran second while Will Hall, Trevor Willis and Dave Uren packed out the top five. Johnathen Varley and Alex Coles were the stars in the smaller-engined cars, but outgoing champion Menzies was not in the run-off. He'd fallen foul of the conditions in the class runs and overshot the first corner,



Win in the opening run-off ensured Ryder was triumphant

albeit without any harm to his GR59.

The second run-off, which closed the season, was all about the weather as increasingly dark clouds moved in as the afternoon progressed. Knowing that the conditions were going to worsen, Summers had cleverly taken a modest approach to the class runs to only qualify sixth best. Importantly, that left him running ahead of most of his key rivals in the run-off and, just as he had surmised, the rain came at a critical point.

With spots of rain appearing on his visor, Summers stayed committed and fired in a 44.17s climb. Uren quickly chased him up the hill in 45.10s and then the rain came on harder and harder. Willis abandoned his run after a big slide and, by the time Menzies came to the line, it was pouring down. The Scot tried for the first two corners and then wisely backed out of it, rather than risk damaging the car. That left Ryder on the line as the fastest qualifier. But he sensibly elected not to run on slicks

HILLCLIMB RESULTS

ROUND 26

1 Matthew Ryder (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 42.97s; 2 Alex Summers (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Firestorm) 43.68s; 3 Will Hall (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59) 44.10s; 4 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS-RTE 28) 44.34s; 5 Dave Uren (3.5 Gould-NME GR55B) 44.59s; 6 Sean Gould (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 45.32s; 7 Johnathen Varley (2.0 GWR-TKD V8 Predator) 45.39s; 8 Alex Coles (1.3t Force-Suzuki TA) 45.48s; 9 Richard Spedding (1.6 GWR-Hayabusa Raptor 2) 45.77s; 10 Graham Wynn (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59J) 47.19s.

ROUND 27

1 Summers 44.17s; 2 Uren 45.10s; 3 Gould 45.30s; 4 Coles 45.75s; 5 Varley 46.89s; 6 Stuart Bickley (1.1 Force-Suzuki TA) 48.54s; 7 Spedding 48.87s; 8 Hall 52.40s; 9 Wallace Menzies (3.3 Gould-Cosworth GR59M) 58.04s; 10 Willis 62.71s.

POINTS

1 Ryder 204; 2 Summers 199; 3 Hall 168; 4 Menzies 148; 5 Willis 139; 6 Uren 118.

For full results visit: britishhillclimb.co.uk



Summers took a canny victory in the finale

on a now soaking-wet hill.

With his 11th win of the season, Summers ended the year with a perfect record of top-four finishes across 27 run-offs. "I could see the rain coming as I got to the top of the hill, and I was just praying that it would come down more," joked Summers. Young Coles starred with a 45.75s to take his best result in fourth ahead of Varley.

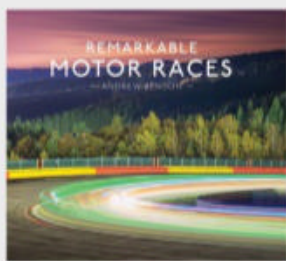
And so ended another fantastic season of top-level hillclimbing. Ryder was a worthy champion and the first person to congratulate him was his season-long rival Summers after a wonderfully sporting contest.

PAUL LAWRENCE

FINISHING STRAIGHT



The wide world of motorsport



BOOK REVIEW
**REMARKABLE
MOTOR RACES**
Andrew Benson
RRP: £25.00

Depending on the championships you follow, it's likely that you have a differing viewpoint on which motor race ranks at the top of the pile as a standalone event. Full disclosure: this writer would place Australia's Bathurst 1000 higher than most on his personal listing.

But having a conversation and coming up with a definitive ranking among a group of colleagues or friends can be more than a little difficult, with compromises meaning that no one is ultimately happy with the outcome. Step forward Andrew Benson and *Remarkable Motor Races*, a guide to some of the top picks – or so it had been hoped.

Starting with the positive, the Le Mans 24 Hours, Bathurst 1000, Monaco Grand Prix and Pikes Peak are all discussed in glowing terms, with input from legends

of those events, including Fernando Alonso, Jacky Ickx, Romain Dumas and Steven Richards.

By winding these quotes and previously available comments into the narrative of what makes these races so special, Benson eloquently expresses all the emotions that you would expect to feel sitting on the banks, waiting for the action to begin. This also extends visually, with an array of stunning photography, showcasing the brilliant and heart-stopping nature of motorsport at the highest level.

But we then come to what is a somewhat confusing aspect, which begins to become apparent in the chapter listing – this isn't really a book about specific big races, or one that is designed to aid in the great debate mentioned at the start.

Yes, there are some races talked about in great colour. You then have chapters on Brands Hatch, Goodwood and the Norisring, all of which are a single page and give the briefest of history lessons on the track. There is no mention of the *Remarkable Motor Races* that make these tracks special, aside from a mention that

Brand Hatch used to host Formula 1, and this gives the feeling that there weren't enough headline races with which to fill the pages.

On this note, where the Bathurst section is titled 'Bathurst 1000' and the Le Mans chapter is the '24 Heures du Mans', it does beg the question why other venues and their headline events don't get the same treatment, with Monaco and Indianapolis given their circuit titles and not the 'Monaco Grand Prix' or 'Indianapolis 500' – events that are the sole topic of discussion in each segment.

It should be added that this chapter titling peculiarity does not take away from the same strong content on these latter examples, but it does seem like something of an own goal.

A strength of this book is that it doesn't simply focus on F1 and could expand the pallet of a reader, who may only have followed the world championship. Aside from the most revered circuits, there are hillclimb events and rallying, although World Rally Championship fans should



The Monaco Grand Prix's 'remarkable' status extends way beyond the sport

SBLOXHAM/MOTORSPORTIMAGES



Bathurst 1000 – the tin-top pinnacle?

not approach with too much excitement: aside from the Dakar Rally, which is, of course, its own event, the other rallying offerings are largely limited to single-page entries. For the Acropolis and Monte Carlo rallies, with their long histories, to be given the same space as the London ExCel is somewhat baffling.

This is certainly a well-informed and interesting publication. There's a lot to like about it, not least the stunning imagery. But for the hardcore, already-initiated fans, this is maybe not it. It is, perhaps, an early stocking filler for someone who is looking to learn about the wider offerings to be had from motorsport.

SAM HALL



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GARY HAWKINS

Super Touring Power 2 – episode 2

In the second episode of a four-part series, Dre Harrison introduces another interview from Super Touring Power 2, the event that celebrated what many fans consider to be the golden era of touring car racing. Kevin Turner sits down with two legends of the sport: 1993 British Touring Car Championship runner-up Steve Soper, and 1989 and 1995 BTCC champion John Cleland.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Japanese Grand Prix

MotoGP
Round 16/20
Motegi, Japan
5-6 October
TV Live TNT Sports 2, Sat 0630, Sun 0515
TV Highlights ITV4, Mon 2000

NASCAR Cup

Round 31/36
Talladega, USA
6 October
TV Live Premier Sports 2, Sun 1830

NASCAR Xfinity

Round 28/33
Talladega, USA
5 October
TV Live Premier Sports (streaming only), Sat 2000

NASCAR Truck Series

Round 20/23
Talladega, USA

4 October

TV Live Premier Sports (streaming only), Fri 2130

Brazilian Stock Car Championship

Round 9/12
Buenos Aires, Argentina
6 October
Livestream Motorsport.tv, Sat 1800, Sun 1600

Intercontinental GT Challenge

Indianapolis 8 Hours
Round 4/4
5 October
Livestream YouTube

UK MOTORSPORT

Castle Combe CCRC

5 October
CCRC (FF1600, GT, Hot Hatch, Mighty Minis, Saloons), Hyundai Coupe Cup

Silverstone MSVR

5 October

BCV8s/MG Cup, Equipe Super Sprint

Brands Hatch BARC

BTCC, British F4, Mini Challenge, Porsche Carrera Cup, Porsche Sprint Challenge
TV Live ITV4, Sun 1030

Knockhill KMSC

5-6 October
Modsports, Pickups, Scottish (C1 Cup, Classic Sports & Saloons, Fiesta ST Cup, Legends, Minis)

Snetterton MSVR

5-6 October
Boxster Cup, Focus Cup, GT Cup, Porsche Club, Snetterton Saloons, Sports 2000, United FF1600
Livestream YouTube

Mallory Park 750MC

6 October
750 Formula, Classic Stock Hatch, Historic 750 Formula, Locost, Ma7das, Sport Specials

British Rallycross Championship

Round 5/6
Pembrey
5-6 October



Brands Hatch BTCC

JEP



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ivan Capelli's Ferrari F92A suffered a damaged undertray due to what Autosport described as bad bottoming problems in Friday morning practice for the 1992

British Grand Prix at Silverstone, and the Italian's general unhappiness with his car's handling was reflected in his 14th-place qualifying position. He was fighting for seventh place with the Footwork of Michele

Alboreto and Erik Comas's Ligier – a battle in which he came off worst – when the trio were among the many cars still at racing speed when fans staged a track invasion in celebration of home hero Nigel Mansell's victory.

Capelli's team-mate Jean Alesi retired after his fire extinguisher set itself off during what was another lacklustre race in a season to forget for Ferrari, summarised in our report as a team in “something close to crisis”.





Victory on the BMW V12 LMR's debut at the 1999 Sebring 12 Hours was the ideal start for Jorg Muller's partnership with JJ Lehto. Their breaking of a 29-year record for the closest finish in event history, together with Tom Kristensen and allaying concerns over gearbox durability, cemented the credentials of a collaboration that lasted three years with Muller's favourite team-mate.

"JJ was such a lovely, open-minded guy and a good person," reflects Muller. "Immediately we had a good connection and the same sense of humour."

They paired up three times in 1999, with Sebring success followed by painful near-misses at the Le Mans 24 Hours and Petit Le Mans while in winning positions. Muller and Lehto spent the majority of the 2000 American Le Mans Series together in Schnitzer's V12 LMR but, after defeating Panoz and the similar vintage Audi R8R at Charlotte and Silverstone, BMW was outclassed by Audi's new R8 and didn't see out the year.

The shoe was on the other foot in 2001 when their Schnitzer-run M3 GTR proved the class of the ALMS GT pack. Four wins together preceded Muller scooping the title when the duo was split for the final round to increase Schnitzer's chances against Alex Job Racing's Porsche.

Muller, latterly a two-time Nurburgring



24 Hours conqueror, reckons that "we were on the same level of speed and at that time there was not a number one guy". It helped too that Muller and Lehto had "no big differences" in terms of style and both could handle cars "which are not 100% fitting to your driving style". Lehto's preference was "he just wanted to do the qualifying all the time", laughs Muller, who was happy to leave him to it.

Even in adversity, their relationship thrived. "We had a few beers afterwards and that was it, we win and lose together," Muller says of Lehto's response to the momentary lapse of concentration three laps from the end of Petit Le Mans that ended with their car in the gravel. And against the R8's insurmountable advantage in 2000, Lehto never gave up.

"He had the fire all the time," reckons Muller. "You could really feel that we were enjoying what we are doing."

JAMES NEWBOLD



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