

# F1 2025's best driver line-up

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# The best of the BTCC show how it should be done

Absolute class. In the past, the British Touring Car Championship had built a reputation for overly aggressive driving and shunts, but the title-deciding battle between Jake Hill and Tom Ingram at Brands Hatch last weekend was a great example for the rest of motorsport.

Just three years after we had a Formula 1 championship contest in which the main two protagonists couldn't go side-by-side through a corner without one or both ending up off the road, Hill and Ingram put on brilliant displays in races two and three – the racing was tough but fair. Either one would have been a worthy champion, but Hill's hard-won success means that all of the Big Four from the past few years now has a BTCC title to their name. Congratulations to Jake, his family and supporters, and West Surrey Racing.

Of the other two members of that club, Colin Turkington put in one of the great supporting roles to help Hill, and Ash Sutton underlined why he is still a strong contender to become the first driver to win five BTCC titles with a dominant display in the wet finale. The camaraderie between the rivals afterwards merely served to give many another reminder of why we became fans of the sport in the first place. Marcus Simmons was there to witness one of the great BTCC showdowns and speak to the contenders (page 36).

Will we get an F1 title fight this year? The fact that we're asking the question at all is largely thanks to the incredible progress made by McLaren over the past 18 months. Jake Boxall-Legge explains how the team has done it and what could come next on p16.



*Kevin Turner*

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# PIT + PADDOCK

Bearman was one of those to run in Abu Dhabi 2023 rookie test



## F1 rookie race plan canned, but could

### FORMULA 1

Formula 1's plans to host a rookie sprint race during the Abu Dhabi post-season test in December have been abandoned for 2024, but the idea is set to be revisited in the future.

The concept of a sprint event for young drivers on the Tuesday after the season-

closing Abu Dhabi Grand Prix at Yas Marina looked set for approval, with all major stakeholders in favour of the idea to give newcomers more relevant mileage in current F1 cars. The idea of turning the regular post-season rookie test into a race was first discussed in July, with a 10-car sprint featuring one entry per team proposed. The plans were further fleshed

out and then discussed during last week's F1 Commission meeting, but the consensus was that F1 and governing body the FIA would leave themselves with too many logistical headaches to be solved. Therefore, it was agreed that more time was needed to properly flesh out the concept and any organisational roadblocks.

"The concept of a 'rookie race' to be added to the 2024 post-season test schedule at Abu Dhabi was discussed," a report from the Commission meeting stated. "While the concept received widespread support, it was determined that due to timing and organisational constraints, the event would not take place in 2024, and discussions will continue to formulate a potential concept and plan for 2025."

The outline of the plan was for a short qualifying session before the race, fitted around the regular Pirelli tyre testing element to the day. But off the back of a gruelling 24-race calendar, ending with a triple-header of Las Vegas, Qatar and Abu Dhabi, there were too many obstacles.

The race would have been the first non-championship F1 race for world championship teams since the 1983 Race of Champions at Brands Hatch. Along with the International Trophy at Silverstone,



Rosberg and Arnoux at front at start of the 1983 Race of Champions

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



# Silverstone ELMS fixture could herald UK return for WEC

## ELMS/WEC

Silverstone has outlined an ambition to once again host the World Endurance Championship after a return of the European Le Mans Series in 2025 was revealed last week. The ELMS is run by WEC co-organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, and the fixture will be the first international endurance race on British soil since 2019.

The ELMS will visit Silverstone on 14 September next year, replacing Mugello on a six-round schedule that is otherwise unchanged. It is a significant development given the absence of top-line endurance racing from Britain since the COVID pandemic played havoc with the international motorsport calendar in 2020 and 2021. The WEC/ELMS double-header set for the 31 August-1 September weekend in 2020 was one casualty, the Blancpain GT Endurance Cup fixture another.

Silverstone boss Stuart Pringle revealed that he had been working to bring international sportscar racing back to Britain ever since 2020. "I've been trying for a while after COVID got in the way," he said. "But, of course, it takes two to tango. In '21 and '22 the WEC decided to run a shorter programme of events, and that was important to them. There was a logic there even if it didn't fit out agenda.

"The aspiration to bring WEC back to Silverstone is most definitely there – absolutely we want a race in the future. I hope that a successful ELMS weekend will remind the Automobile Club de l'Ouest why we should have a round of the WEC. We have to prove that



Pringle wants the WEC back

SUTTON

there is an appetite for top-level endurance racing in the UK."

How Silverstone might fit into the WEC calendar in the future isn't clear. The schedule has returned to eight races for 2024 and the series management has hinted at aspirations to go to nine or maybe even 10 events in the future, which could open the door. Silverstone always favoured a late August or early September date, but that would appear to be unlikely with the current make-up of the calendar.

"It would have to be whatever works for the series; we understand that," said Pringle, who suggested that he would like to revive the Silverstone WEC/ELMS double-header. "We are unusual in that we have two fully operational pitlanes, which allows us to run two major series at once in a harmonious way. I think those efficiencies are very much appreciated."

Next year's Silverstone 4 Hours ELMS race will be supported by the Michelin Le Mans Cup.

GARY WATKINS

➔ P15 OPINION



The UK's last international endurance race – 2019 WEC round at Silverstone

## be on for 2025

that event was the traditional curtain raiser to the European F1 season in the 1970s.

### TWEAKS MADE TO 2026 REGULATIONS

The F1 Commission did agree to changes to the all-new technical regulations for 2026, which were a source of concern from the teams when a first outline was presented in June and were then further refined in the FIA Technical Advisory Committee. It was agreed that the 2026 cars will get more aerodynamic performance than in the original proposals, to address worries that they were set to be too slow.

The FIA statement described these amendments as "following extensive collaboration between the teams and the FIA over the last few months".

The F1 Commission also finalised the 2026 sporting and financial regulations and confirmed that there will be three separate three-day tests ahead of the 2026 season to help teams get up to speed with their all-new power units, which will be particularly valuable for new engine manufacturers Audi and Red Bull-Ford.

All changes are still subject to approval by the FIA's World Motor Sport Council, which gathers on 17 October.

FILIP CLEEREN



# Rossi could drop WEC in race scaledown

## WEC

Valentino Rossi plans a significant cutback in his racing next year. That gives the BMW factory driver a stark choice: to compete in either the World Endurance Championship or the GT World Challenge Europe.

The admission by the seven-time MotoGP champion that he wants to contest no more than 10 or 11 races in 2025 represents a change of position from earlier in the year. Back in May, Rossi insisted that he intended to continue in both WEC and the Endurance Cup leg of the GTWCE with the WRT BMW squad, while nibbling back from the 16 races on his programme this year.

"I realised that is too many and I am in the same situation as in MotoGP," said the 45-year-old Italian, who announced in July that he will become a father for the second time. "I'm tired and my partner, Francesca, gets angry because I am always on the road."

"For 2025 my goal is to run 10 to 11

races: I will have to decide whether to do GTWCE or WEC. One is a world championship, so winning the title has special prestige, but in the Stephane Ratel Organisation races [GTWCE] the racing is really good with only GT3 cars."

The figure of 10 or 11 races suggests that one option for Rossi is to return to a full

campaign in the GTWCE, combining the enduros with Sprint Cup rounds as in 2022 and 2023. No decisions have been taken, however, according to WRT boss Vincent Vosse. "It's something that is up in the air," he said. "It is a decision that has to be taken: does he do WEC or GTWCE?"

**GARY WATKINS & FRANCESCO CORGHI**



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# Lapierre hangs up helmet to become Alpine chief

## WEC

Four-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner Nicolas Lapierre has retired with immediate effect to take up the role of sporting director with the Alpine team with which he has been racing in this year's World Endurance Championship. It means the 40-year-old Frenchman is bowing out on a high: he took a podium in his final race aboard the French manufacturer's A424 LMDh at Fuji last month.

"It is time for me to hang up my helmet and end this chapter of my life," said former Toyota LMP1 driver Lapierre in a short social media post last Wednesday that preceded the announcement of his new role with Alpine. "It was great to finish this journey on the podium and spray the champagne once more. It was



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

an honour for me to live for my passion, with so many years doing what I love."

Two days later came the news from Alpine that Lapierre is moving into a management role with the Signatech-run WEC squad, which he joined in 2016.

As well as taking three

of his LMP2 wins at Le Mans, a pair of WEC class titles and two overall wins in 2022 with Alpine, he was also lead development driver on the A424.

"Alpine has always shown a tremendous amount of confidence in me, not least by giving me the chance

to develop the A424 and then start this first season behind the wheel," he said. "After expressing the wish to end my career as a professional driver, I am delighted to confirm that I am continuing the adventure with the team, but this time on the other side of the pitwall."

In his retirement statement, Lapierre thanked multiple players from a career in which he was a race winner in GP2 and A1 Grand Prix single-seaters, and in the WEC with both Toyota and Alpine. Among them was the late Jean-Paul Driot, whose DAMS team he enjoyed his biggest open-wheel successes with.

Jules Gounon, Alpine's official reserve driver, will replace Lapierre for next month's Bahrain WEC finale alongside Mick Schumacher and Matthieu Vaxiviere.

**GARY WATKINS**





**HISTORICS** Tom Kristensen raced a Porsche for the first time since winning the 1997 Le Mans 24 Hours with the Joest Racing WSC95 when he turned out with McLaren Racing boss Zak Brown in his 935 JLP-3 run by United Autosports at the Estoril Classics last weekend. They finished third in the GT2 class in mixed conditions, but they were less fortunate with the Ford Cologne Capri RS3100 from Brown's fleet in the Heritage Touring Cup. Kristensen overtook a dozen cars on a damp track inside the first 10 laps before worsening brake issues resulted in retirement. **Photographs by EMI Photography-Emidio Copeto**

## Heart of Racing to continue GT3 programme alongside Valkyrie

### WEC/IMSA

The Valkyrie Le Mans Hypercar will not be the only Aston Martin that the Heart of Racing squad runs next year. It is planning to continue with the Vantage GT3 on two fronts, with its respective LMGT3 and GT Daytona programmes in the World Endurance Championship and IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America.

Heart of Racing boss Ian James insisted that it was important to maintain Aston Martin's presence in the GT ranks with the Vantage alongside the Valkyrie AMR-LMH programme, which will encompass two cars in WEC and one in IMSA in 2025.

"The LMH is obviously our halo programme, but HofR has always been about giving people opportunities," said the expat Brit. "It gives opportunities for people to move up. Roman [De Angelis] came along as a silver [-ranked driver] and moved up to gold."

James explained that HofR will have the capacity to run in both prototype and GT machinery next year. The WEC Hypercar assault will be run by the new operation being set up in Brackley, while its Vantage would be fielded by AMR/Prodrive. The solo IMSA Valkyrie will be run from the team's Arizona base and, most likely, a single Vantage rather than this year's two from Florida.

**GARY WATKINS**



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## Rovanpera 'recharged' for full-time WRC return

### WRC

Kalle Rovanperä feels "recharged" and ready to make a full-time return to the World Rally Championship for 2025 after expanding his motorsport horizons this season.

The two-time World Rally champion made a surprise decision to conduct a part-time WRC campaign this year, stating a desire to scale back temporarily following his second consecutive world title in 2023. But the factory Toyota driver has remained a key part of the Japanese manufacturer's WRC effort this season, contributing four wins from his seven starts to date in Kenya, Poland, Latvia and Chile.

Away from the stages, the 24-year-old has made the most of his free time by taking in

several extracurricular motorsport activities including drifting and a successful move into circuit racing. His stint in the Porsche Carrera Cup Benelux has yielded wins at Imola and the Red Bull Ring.

When Rovanperä made his decision to go part-time this year, he maintained that he would return to the WRC on a full-time basis for 2025 with Toyota. Speaking to Autosport at Monza last weekend, where he was competing in a one-off appearance in the Porsche Carrera Cup Italy, Rovanperä says he is prepared to face an expanded 14-round WRC season next year.

"I think my batteries have recharged, yes," he said. "I am ready to come back and race a full season, even though it will be even longer and harder."

While Rovanperä is ready to make a full-time return to rallying, he is keen to do more circuit racing in the future. "As far as plans for 2025 are concerned, for sure I will do the whole season with Toyota in the WRC," he added. "After that, I don't know anything yet about a possible track programme. I would certainly still like to race on the track."

Toyota will be without Rovanperä for the penultimate round of the WRC season, next week's Central European Rally, but the Finn will contest the Killarney Historic Rally in Ireland (30 November) in a Toyota Starlet.

Rovanperä took a best result of sixth at Monza from the 33-car field, with Keagan Masters clinching the Carrera Cup Italy title.

**TOM HOWARD**

## Huff back in TCR Audi to bid for 12th Macau victory



### MACAU GUIA

British touring car veteran Rob Huff is to bid for a record-extending 12th win in Macau next month.

The 2012 World Touring Car champion, who has been competing this season in the British Touring Car Championship, is returning to the Audi fold one year on from being denied a TCR World Tour title at the Macau finale. He will

join Spanish team Volcano Motorsport to race an RS3 LMS TCR in the final two rounds of the World Tour, starting with next week's stop at Zhuzhou in China.

"Detlef [Schmidt, Audi TCR boss] asked me if I'd like to do what we didn't manage to do last year, which is win Macau," said Huff. "I've got a great relationship with China and winning in Macau. The BTCC is over and done with

[for 2024], and now I can be fully focused on the last two rounds of TCR World Tour. I'm excited for it and it'll be good fun."

Huff, who hopes to be back in the BTCC Toyota line-up of Speedworks Motorsport for 2025, dashed straight from last weekend's Brands Hatch finale to take part in the Modena Cento Ore rally with pal Richard Meins in a Jaguar E-type.

**MARCUS SIMMONS**





**TCR SPAIN** Up-and-coming British tin-top ace Jenson Brickley claimed his first TCR Spain victory at Valencia last weekend to retain his lead in the series. The 20-year-old, who will represent Team UK in this month's FIA Motorsport Games, took his Brickley Motorsport Cupra Leon to second place, but was promoted to victory when on-the-road winner Ignacio Montenegro was penalised for a collision that took out Eric Gene, son of versatile racer Jordi Gene. Montenegro made amends by muscling through the reversed grid to win race two in his Honda, the Argentinian leading home Gene and Brickley. One round remains, at Barcelona next month. **Photograph by TCR Spain**

## Sharp steps up with Rodin

### FORMULA 3

Recently crowned GB3 champion Louis Sharp is to step up to the Formula 3 Championship in 2025.

The Nottingham-born New Zealander, a finalist in the Silverstone Autosport BRDC Award, is to remain with Rodin Motorsport for his graduation. That's no surprise, because his main backer is Rodin team owner David Dicker.

"Having the new chassis will provide a level playing field for the rookies, and Louis has shown throughout his British F4 and GB3 campaigns how quickly he adapts to new cars and tracks," said Rodin F3 team manager Sam Waple.

With post-season testing – still in the outgoing Dallara F3 2019 car – kicking off at Jerez this week, Sharp is one of a host of driver announcements for 2025. Finnish Ferrari protege Tuukka Taponen moves up



from Formula Regional European to join ART Grand Prix, where Laurens van Hoepen remains for a second season. Ugo Ugochukwu and Brando Badoer also graduate from FRegional into Prema Racing's line-up, with Badoer now joining Ugochukwu as a full member of McLaren's junior driver programme.

Charlie Wurz moves over to Trident, where he is joined by FRegional ace Noah Stromsted, McLaren junior Martinus Stenshorne remains at Hitech GP with Gerrard Xie stepping up from GB3, and Mari Boya stays at Campos Racing.

## SLATER MISSES OUT...

US-Indian racer Akshay Bohra denied Freddie Slater the Euro 4 crown at last weekend's season finale at Monza. A spin in race one meant Slater finished fifth, while American-Jamaican Prema Racing team-mate Alex Powell won from the US Racing car of Bohra. Another Prema driver, Alpine junior Kean Nakamura-Berta, won race two from Bohra, with Slater penalised from fourth to ninth for contact. Bohra clinched the title in style with victory in the finale, while Italian F4 champion Slater failed to finish after a first-lap off.

## ...BUT JOINS F3 TEST

Slater made a big step up to F3 for post-season testing, which kicked off at Jerez as we went to press. The 16-year-old Brit is driving with Rodin Motorsport. His management has strong links with the team, including running Lando Norris in its former guise as Carlin in F4, F3 and F2.

## NO DTM CHANGE AFTER ALL

The DTM has opted for an unchanged calendar for the 2025 season, visiting the same six German circuit plus two 'away' rounds at Zandvoort and the Red Bull Ring. A bid from the Vila Real street circuit in Portugal fell through because of worries over potential accident damage and travel costs, while the Salzburgring track in Austria will instead host a round of the second-tier ADAC GT Masters. "We would not want to run a DTM race at the Salzburgring without trying it out," explained ADAC motorsport boss Thomas Voss.

## SPECIAL FORMULA E TEST

Formula E's four-day pre-season test at Valencia will end with the final afternoon devoted to running for female drivers only. This repeats a similar test held at Diriyah in 2018, and all 11 teams will be required to run one driver, and encouraged to field two. Although Katherine Legge, Michela Cerruti and Simona de Silvestro are the only females to have taken part in FE races, this year's Berlin rookie test did feature Alice Powell and Marta Garcia.

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## Alliance to bring in new car maker

### BTCC

British Touring Car Championship teams' title winner Alliance Racing is planning to replace its Ford Focus ST machinery with an entry from a manufacturer not currently represented in the series – but not until the 2026 season.

The team, which runs in NAPA Racing UK guise, carried out an intense winter of development on the Focus in 2022-23, allowing Ash Sutton to storm to his fourth title last year, but was overtaken this season by the gains made on the rival Hyundai and BMW weaponry. "Something is happening and we'll run the Focus next year," said Alliance team owner Pete Osborne. "But I'm pretty sure that something else will be here for 2026."

When asked whether this would be a front-wheel-drive saloon – as BTCC inside sources suggested – as opposed to the hatchback shape of the Focus, Osborne

replied: "Correct. And the good thing about it is that it'll fetch a new manufacturer into the paddock. That's the exciting thing for the BTCC as a championship – it shows they can use it as a platform."

Osborne confirmed that work is already under way on the mystery car, led by Sutton's engineer Antonio Carrozza with support from James Mundy, Paul Ridgway and Rich Townsend, the engineers of Dan Cammish, Dan Rowbottom and Osborne's son Sam respectively. "We tried to do it for next year," he said, "but in realistic terms we ran out of time a month or a month and a half ago, and I'm not prepared to risk not doing it right. But the engineering boys will be working on the Focus this winter so it goes out with a bang. We need a bit better aero for it."

Although 2026 is the final year of the NGTC regulations, the next generation cars will be an evolution of the current machines. Osborne said this is the "right thing to keep costs down and not try and reinvent the wheel". He added that the fourth-generation Focus, which first appeared in 2020, will be up for sale to customer teams for 2026.

Osborne's well-known aspirations to compete in GT3 and the Le Mans 24 Hours could also intriguingly tie in with the new BTCC car. "The manufacturer that we're talking to would like us to do a GT3 car and take it to Le Mans," he said. "If we can prove to them that we can do it with a touring car, then the door could be open to do that project as well."

MARCUS SIMMONS



Osborne (left) celebrates third teams' title on trot

## ROCKY MORAN SR 1950-2024

### OBITUARY

Rocky Moran Sr scored the biggest win of his career at the 1993 Daytona 24 Hours with Toyota. Yet he might have notched up a victory of arguably equal stature a dozen years before with the same All-American Racers team. The Southern Californian, who has died aged 74, was on course for a debut win in the CART Indycar series at Watkins Glen in 1981 when he ran out of fuel.

Moran led 21 laps aboard one of AAR's Eagle-Chevrolet 81s from seventh on the grid and looked set for victory, only to splutter dry with three laps remaining. He was still classified sixth, which, when a stop-start Indycar career petered out in the same year that he won at Daytona, still equalled his best finish in the series – he repeated the sixth at Long Beach in 1988 with a Gohr Racing March-Cosworth 87C.

Moran made a further 23 CART starts, including three at the Indy 500, though rarely did he find a drive with a top team. AAR boss Dan Gurney did, however, invite him back for his sportscar programmes with Toyota. He was a regular, though never a full-timer, from 1986, first in the Japanese marque's IMSA GTO programme and through into its ascent to the GTP ranks. The Daytona victory came aboard one of AAR's Eagle-Toyota MkIIIs shared with PJ Jones and Mark Dismore.

Moran's son, Rocky Jr, also raced single-seaters, winning a couple of Formula Atlantic races in 2001-02.

GARY WATKINS



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# F1 2025's best driver line-up?

*According to Williams boss James Vowles, his team's pairing for next year's eagerly anticipated season tops the list. Here's how we reckon the field actually stacks up*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

**“I**n 2025, I think we have the best driver line-up on the grid.” Williams team boss James Vowles caused quite the social media stir with this line in a recent edition of the *Beyond The Grid* podcast. It was something of a throwaway remark

considering Vowles's subsequent in-depth chat about his lofty wider ambitions for his squad, but it was nevertheless revealing.

And, given the reaction to Vowles's comment on his estimation of how Carlos Sainz will slot in alongside Alex Albon next year, it's another reminder of how F1 fans love a changing driver market. The rare stability from 2023-24 will go unreplicated for next year, with at least seven teams set to get to work with at least one new driver.

Weighing past achievements, known strengths and weaknesses, plus the potential of the various rookies set to join the grid next year, produces an interesting debate on how the changed 2025 field is indeed set to benefit the 10 F1 squads – not just Williams. We can even come to a clear ranking too ahead of next year.

Given it still only has Nico Hulkenberg signed on for 2025, Sauber must take the bottom spot by default. But if Sauber were to re-sign Valtteri Bottas for what would be an expected one-year deal ahead of its Audi works rebranding in 2026 – and not go for Franco Colapinto or McLaren junior Gabriel Bortoleto – that would automatically elevate the team two places in this ranking

## “It's another reminder of how much F1 fans love a changing driver market”

given his past F1 successes. Then would come two teams featuring rookies – Alpine and Haas. The reason for having the American squad ahead is that Jack Doohan's lack of junior titles counts against him and Alpine when it comes to comparing the other line-ups that include rookies. Ollie Bearman's results in the points in his 'one-off' 2024 F1 appearances for Ferrari and Haas provide enough insight that he can likely survive at the top level, too.

RB is tricky to rank for several reasons, but we'd have it seventh so far due to Yuki Tsunoda's ongoing performance inconsistencies, plus Liam Lawson's current low sample size of races. Aston Martin is easier because, while Fernando Alonso continues to deliver very well for the green team – as evidenced by his clear ninth place (by 38 points) and nine top-eight finishes this year (Lance Stroll on three) – his team-mate's results continue to hold the team back.

Stroll has contributed more than 50% of a leading team-mate's points total just once in the nearly four seasons since the Racing Point rebrand. That was his 79.1% of Sebastian Vettel's 2021 haul, which became just 35.9% of Alonso's 2023 total. Their difference is 38.7% so far in 2024 in the Spaniard's favour.

We've got Mercedes fifth in this comparison. How highly Mercedes itself rates Andrea Kimi Antonelli is indicative, plus he's racked up junior titles the other 2025 rookies don't have, such as his 2023 European Formula Regional championship. Bearman's record comes closest. Boosting the squad too is George Russell. His highs in pure speed since being promoted to Mercedes in 2022 have resulted in a 38-31 (sprints included) qualifying record against Lewis Hamilton. And, but for the various miscalculations in Mercedes' Spa starting weight, Russell would have delivered one of the best wins of the current campaign, highlighting his flourishing racecraft.

Another Red Bull team that's hard to rank is its eponymous one, because Max Verstappen's prowess pulls it up so high and Sergio Perez's ongoing underwhelming results in a top-class car drag it back down. We've therefore got it fourth.

Albon/Sainz really slots into third – high, but not Vowles high. And if this was a ranking of how cerebral drivers can make a key difference to F1 teams, the likely winning line-up is indeed Albon/Sainz. What caps Williams's 2025 driver line-up potential compared to the two ahead is how both Albon and Sainz are yet to prove that they're clear number one, star drivers.

Easily the top 2025 line-up in another ranking is McLaren, but what holds it back here is actually one of its strengths: in Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri, the team has two young drivers still climbing their way to the F1 summit. In Piastri, he's not even completed two full F1 seasons. Although excellent in Singapore, Norris's wall strikes betrayed again that mistakes still creep in just too often for the 24-year-old. For instance, Verstappen wasn't doing that when he enjoyed a massive car advantage. And 23-year-old Piastri is yet to really nail things consistently in qualifying.

For the top spot, Hamilton's seven world titles make the critical difference. Because, if Ferrari can get into title consideration as it did in early 2022, he has shown he can cut it in a championship battle – even against Verstappen approaching his top form in 2021. What Hamilton has struggled with of late is qualifying speed. That's around Mercedes struggling to get the best results out of the tricky 2024 Pirellis. Here, however, Charles Leclerc comes into his own – his reputation as F1's best qualifier exists for a reason.

F1 fans came into 2024 starved of narratives on the driver market front, but 2025 is already being discussed as rivalling 2021 in terms of interest levels, given how many teams have won this term amid all the intriguing chop and change. 🍷





# Another Bathurst classic?

*Ten years after what's widely regarded as the greatest edition of the 1000-kilometre Aussie enduro, this weekend's race has all the ingredients to be a belter*

PHIL BRANAGAN

A decade is a long time in motor racing but, in the land of Supercars, it's maybe a little bit difficult to acknowledge that the 2014 Bathurst 1000 did not happen just yesterday.

Even for an event known for its great finishes, the 2014 edition was possibly the greatest. At a minute less than eight hours in length, it was certainly the longest, due to an unprecedented number of crashes, 10 safety car appearances and a 63-minute red flag period to repair a damaged racetrack.

Think of the unlikeliest of final laps storyboards you may have seen in Formula 1 history. Jenson Button winning from dead last in Montreal in 2011? Not even close. Riccardo Patrese spinning away a maiden world championship grand prix win and then reclaiming it in Monaco in 1982? Humbug.

What we saw a decade ago was the two cars that started last and second-last on the grid fighting tooth and nail for the win, with just two of the 1000 kilometres remaining – with one of the teams begging, then cajoling, its star driver, after coming from a lap down, to ease off and save fuel. Right behind him, having driven from last not once but twice after the car was crashed by a co-driver twice his age, was a 22-year-old rising star, asking his team when the car in front was going to run dry. And the car that eventually did come second – which itself was crashed twice – took the flag more race tape than automobile.

Times change but many of the players have not. Jamie Whincup was the man at the point of that race 10 years ago; he will be back this year, with the same Triple Eight team, of which he is now a co-owner. The man who snatched the win

away from him, Chaz Mostert, will be there too, now in a Walkinshaw Andretti United Ford Mustang. Second on that day, way back when, was James Moffat, then in a Nissan but now a Tickford Ford co-driver. Third place a decade ago went to Walkinshaw driver Nick Percat, who will race this time around for Matt Stone Racing.

For all those changes, and even if 2023 race winner Shane van Gisbergen has moved on to NASCAR, the name of the game remains the same: beat Triple Eight and you will likely be in the hunt for a win. That was exactly the case at Sandown last month when the team's Chevrolet Camaros dominated the 500km race, Will Brown and new co-driver Scott Pye edging out Broc Feeney and Whincup for a 1-2 finish. To rub salt into the wounds of the opposition, T8's wildcard entry, piloted by the now 50-year-old Craig Lowndes and rising star Cooper Murray, finished fifth.

Mistakes will be crucial. Some of the fancied runners – Mostert, both Erebus Motorsport and Dick Johnson Racing entries – took themselves out of contention for the win at Sandown with self-inflicted mistakes or mechanical dramas, while the previously unfancied PremiAir pair of James Golding/David Russell took third place. Youth is all well and good but, sometimes, there is no substitute for a safe pair of hands.

There will be other curveballs. This will be the second Bathurst 1000 for the Gen3 Chevrolets and Fords, introduced at the start of last season. But at Bathurst a year ago the cars raced on the softer of Dunlop's control tyres, which led to a build-up of marbles from mid-race and a one-line race track. This time the cars will be on Dunlop's sturdier control rubber, but there will be another variable – a new, softer wet tyre – so if it rains, the teams will be driving into the unknown.

Likewise, there is a new Virtual Safety Car regulation to deal with. Even though it has featured widely in other forms of the sport, the VSC for Supercars was introduced only at Sandown, and it took some of the teams time to adjust their race strategies; how will they cope on the longest track on the calendar?

And then most teams will have to take into account new driving combinations; of the 26 cars entered only seven will feature the same pair of drivers as a year ago. And those are just the known unknowns, rather than the unknown unknowns, which Mount Panorama always seems to throw up.

Perhaps we will give the last word to the co-driver who took third place in 2014. Asked if he had ever seen a race like that one, he replied: "I've never even *heard* of a race like that one!"

That driver was Oliver Gavin who, in his long career, had seen just about everything there is to see in motor racing. Bathurst can be like that – roll on this weekend's 2024 edition. 🏁







# A step towards a proper return

*The absence of a top international enduro from UK shores gets ever more frustrating with the passage of time. So an addition to Silverstone's 2025 schedule is good news*

GARY WATKINS

**A**t the start of every season in recent times I've let out a sigh, one that involves the exhalation of more air each time. Each year my exasperation grows as I go into another new season knowing that I won't be reporting on a major international endurance race in my home country. How can that be? It's not right that a nation so central to international motorsport, one that has supplied more winners of the Le Mans 24 Hours than any other, has not had a place on the calendar of any of the long-distance sportscar series since 2019.

That's why I'm something approaching overjoyed that Silverstone will put that right next September when it hosts a round of the European Le Mans Series. I can't be more committed than that because it's the race that neither I nor many of the 50,000 Brits who travel to the Le Mans 24 Hours each year wanted. A round of the World Endurance Championship is what we would really like to see gracing the majesty of the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit.

But the ELMS is better than nothing, and just as importantly it's a start. Silverstone boss Stuart Pringle makes no secret of the fact that he wants the WEC back at some point. He hopes, and so do I, that next year's Silverstone 4 Hours will be a step down that road.

We all know why Silverstone disappeared from both the WEC and ELMS calendars in 2020, along with the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup and its sister Sprint Cup series. The COVID pandemic played havoc with the international motorsport calendars in 2020 and on into 2021 and beyond. That only the Sprint Cup has returned to our shores is down to a number of factors.

Silverstone missed out on a quick WEC return in 2020 when it lost out to Spa to host the first post-lockdown race in the August of that year – and it was the Belgian venue's by right because it had been due to hold a race in May. The problem for British fans of sportscar racing was that for 2021 the WEC downsized from eight to six races. When the music stopped, Silverstone didn't have a bum on a seat.

The continued absence of the GTWCE Endurance Cup, known up until 2019 as the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup, is more complicated. The schedule returned to its regular five races in 2021, but Silverstone was missing from a series of which it had been one of the mainstays.

Brexit played a role here, series boss Stephane Ratel revealed at the end of 2020 when the final calendar for the following year was confirmed. He explained that there was resistance from smaller teams racing on the GTWCE undercard – the series comes as the headliner of a full package of events – to undertake a trip across the Channel with the increases in red tape resulting

from the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.

It wasn't a problem for the teams racing in the main event, which is why the Sprint Cup made a quick return to Britain with its annual Brands Hatch fixture in August 2021 and has been back every year since in its traditional early-season slot. The Sprint Cup grid travels alone and sits at the top of a bill made up of national-level British series at Brands.

## “We should be thankful that some kind of sportscar racing returned with the Sprint Cup”

We should be thankful that some kind of sportscar racing returned to Dear Old Blighty with the Sprint Cup. I wouldn't diss the fixture at Brands: what's not to like about a short and sharp two-day meeting at what for me will always be the world's greatest circuit? I'm just saying that two one-hour sprints are different to a full-blown enduro of four, six or however many hours. Sportscar racing is, for me, a long-distance discipline, and has to be when its premier race, that one in France on the middle weekend of June, goes twice around the clock.

I'm not sure about the Endurance Cup returning to Britain any time soon, but there has to be a chance for the WEC. That, however, is probably going to revolve around an expansion of the calendar. Series bosses have talked about increasing the number of races to nine or perhaps even 10, though the manufacturers are urging caution.

There are only three races in Europe on the schedule – the same number as in the inaugural year of the series, in case anyone was wondering – and they are loaded into April, May and June. So Silverstone would have to fit in there somewhere, and it should be remembered that the British track was lobbying for an end-of-summer calendar slot when we were having to put up with snow in April.

There are many questions that need asking about the WEC calendar. Does it require more than eight races? That's one of them. Another is whether it really needs two events in front of minuscule crowds in the Middle East, though, of course, we know that money talks.

And does Britain have a God-given right to host big sportscar races just because it pretty much always has? Probably not, but that's not going to stop me hoping that Silverstone will be back on the WEC calendar in 2026, 2027 or whenever. 🍀







# HOW McLAREN ROSE TO CHALLENGE RED BULL

*The squad has remarkably gone from struggling at the start of last season to leading the F1 constructors' points*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE





Norris did well to qualify as high as 11th last year in Bahrain – then race was marred by six pitstops

**L**ando Norris was fortunate to make it out of the first phase of qualifying at the 2023 Bahrain Grand Prix. He was settling in for his fifth season with McLaren, the team that had picked him up as a junior driver and supported his path to Formula 1, but his loyalty to Zak Brown's orange army was surely tested when the MCL60 first emerged on track.

Norris set exactly the same time as Logan Sargeant in Q1 but, since the Briton set his first, he progressed into the next stage. New team-mate Oscar Piastri fell at the first hurdle – the Australian rookie had qualified down in 18th for his first F1 weekend.

There was a feeling that Norris was punching above his weight when he lined up 11th on the grid, but reliability was ultimately poor when it came to the race. Norris needed six pitstops to keep hydraulic pressure in the car, while Piastri's race was done early with an electrical issue. McLaren had expected to struggle when 2023 kicked off, but surely not to this magnitude.

It all seems like such a long time ago. Last time out, Norris took the MCL60's successor, the MCL38, to victory in Singapore with a 20.9-second margin over Max Verstappen. McLaren leads the constructors' championship by 41 points, while Norris is 52 off the drivers' championship lead with six of 24 events to go. It was surely unfathomable a year and a half ago.

In reality, McLaren's progression from nailed-on Q1 exits to beating the likes of Red Bull has its genesis in a decision taken in September 2022. All teams had to conform to a 15mm change in floor height regulations for 2023, and McLaren had progressed with the design of its new car to satisfy the modified rules. Yet it saw that the direction in which it had gone was not offering the expected

performance needed to make the desired progress.

The team therefore had to change tack quite late on into the development process. It meant that the launch-spec MCL60 was effectively still a beta-test model, with a heady upgrade glide path planned for the first half of the year to make the car much more competitive. New team principal Andrea Stella, promoted from within after Andreas Seidl left for Sauber, noted that he was "not entirely happy for what is the launch car".

A new floor for April's Azerbaijan GP laid the foundation for future upgrades; the subsequent Austrian GP package was extensive and included an all-new floor, sidepods and engine cover. Over the first two thirds of the year, every single aerodynamic part on the MCL60 was changed. And, with McLaren's new wind tunnel now available, the team got further upgrades for September's Singapore GP before pinning its full focus on 2024.

There were issues with the MCL60 to iron out; Stella surmised that some of the upgrades had made the car harder to drive. Fixing that, further increasing the baseline performance, and adding some star players to its cast has laid the basis for this year's MCL38 to take centre stage on the approach to the final part of this season.

### McLaren's progression in 2024

In truth, the MCL38 didn't immediately present itself as a Red Bull-beating prospect in the opening races. But it became one, thanks to the upgrade package for May's Miami GP. And, at the 110th attempt, Lando Norris finally became an F1 race winner at the Floridian circuit. It was an auspicious victory, thanks to a well-timed safety car, but sometimes you need to rely on luck for a breakthrough.

There's a Stella characteristic prevalent here: the urbane Italian likes to frame exploitable moments of a race *and* points of





MAUGER

## MIAMI UPGRADES



“The team could have theoretically won all five races in the Monaco-Canada-Spain-Austria-GB stretch”

the Monaco-Canada-Spain-Austria-Britain stretch, but instead those quickfire European races offered no wins thanks to a mix of driver and procedural errors, or through the efforts of other pilots.

The Hungarian GP was probably another turning point. The team orders saga could be charitably described as a ‘learning experience’, but it overshadowed just how dominant the team could be over a weekend. In the aftermath, it learned to minimise risk and be a smidgen more decisive with strategic calls.

There was also the point of Norris’s iffy starts. He lost the lead into the first corner in both Spain and Hungary, and later Zandvoort.

Stella noted that this was an “opportunity” for the team to work with Norris, and determine whether it was a driver issue or that the car was prone to bogging down off the line. Norris’s Zandvoort win rather took the pressure off, since he caught and passed Verstappen anyway; he hadn’t got the start right, but he’d managed to mentally devalue it with that victory.

In Singapore last month, he got away perfectly.

McLaren is now making the most of its car, and its strengths came to the fore in Singapore. What makes the MCL38 so potent on circuits like that is its efficiency – it seems to have found the holy grail of blending high downforce with lower drag than its rivals. The suspension package seems to have the best of both worlds, too: stiff enough to keep the underbody working effectively, but not so much as to completely rid the car of any compliance. That was evident from Norris’s kerb strikes at Marina Bay, where he seemed to generally glide through them without unsettling the rear.

“I think if I look at previous races, at this high level of downforce, »



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES

improvement as “opportunities”. The team had an opportunity to win the race in Miami, and it took it with both hands. In building a car with room for development, there are further ‘opportunities’ to tack on performance. And, when it comes to both the team and drivers practising their craft at the track, there is no failure – only an ‘opportunity’ to do something better next time.

McLaren had given itself the car to compete against the best, but it also gave itself these ‘opportunities’ to tighten things up over the next few rounds. The team could have theoretically won all five races in

MCL38’s strengths paid dividends last time out in Singapore, where Norris picked up win number three



## MCLAREN'S ASCENT

we seem to be very competitive,” was Stella’s verdict. “The car has been strong in this configuration. You know, I always make the examples of Hungary and Zandvoort – even Hungary was a relatively dominant victory in itself, like Zandvoort and like this one.

“So at the moment, it’s more than that the car in this configuration, I think it has the better aerodynamic efficiency across the grid. While at low drag, the efficiency of Ferrari, Red Bull is much more comparable to our car.

“We know we have invested much more at this level of downforce than we’ve done at lower downforce, even though I’ve said already after races like Spa and Monza, we’ve definitely made a step forward in terms of retaining downforce when we reduce the level of drag.”

That latter point was evident at Monza and Baku; although Ferrari won its home race, McLaren had the faster car but perhaps didn’t count on the Prancing Horses taking a successful punt on a one-stop strategy.

### Stella’s new management constellation

Much of the team’s growth comes from the renewed technical structure that Stella laid in place shortly after taking over. The decision to do away with a single technical director was taken when the 2023 car came out of the blocks in glacial fashion. Erstwhile team principal James Key carried the can, which gave Stella the chance to change the departments in his image. He began by installing former Adrian Newey acolyte Peter Prodromou to lead the aerodynamics side, and went into the



Stella (left) has strengthened team tech structure by bringing Marshall (right, with Brown) on board



market to hire leaders for the remaining two pillars.

And it was, on the face of it, a successful shopping trip: Stella and Brown had courted the services of Red Bull’s Rob Marshall for the engineering and design department, and Ferrari’s David Sanchez to handle the performance and concept side.

It didn’t quite go to plan when Sanchez eventually joined. The Frenchman felt that, in his lengthy period of gardening leave, the role had strayed far from what he was hired to do. So Sanchez left after just three months to join Alpine, forcing Stella to reshuffle again: he’d handle the residual performance duties himself, installed Marshall as chief designer, and promoted Neil Houldey to Marshall’s prior role.

Perhaps it was serendipitous that Sanchez’s hiring didn’t work out, since having Marshall in the more senior role has undoubtedly given the team a clear direction with its development path – and a bit more initiative to truly test the boundaries of the technical regulations.

With the technical side of the team freshened up and firing on all cylinders, McLaren has also given the trackside workforce a boost with the addition of Will Courtenay – like Marshall, a signing from Red Bull. Having served at the Milton Keynes squad as head of race strategy, Courtenay becomes McLaren’s sporting director and will

be tasked with ensuring that the team is equally scrupulous at the races.

The signing of Courtenay suggests that McLaren has recognised that sure, you can build the fastest car, but strategy and trackside operations need to be given the same attention to ensure no results are left on the table. And, when a team is starting to win more frequently, it’s often that they get the pick of the talent in the future. Don’t be surprised if more star names come through the doors of the McLaren Technology Centre in the near future.

### Pushing the limit of flexi-wings

Exploiting the effects of aeroelasticity has been part of F1 ever since aerofoils-on-stilts became *a la mode* in the 1960s. A wing that can change shape and shed some drag in a straight line offers very clear performance benefits, something that the FIA has wished to keep in check with a series of static load tests.

There’s a bit of a grey area, however; wings are not infinitely inflexible, and will naturally bend when aerodynamic load is applied. That’s the area that McLaren has sought to tap into with its front wing, seeking to maintain the requisite rigidity to pass the tests while being



Perfect getaway was followed up by 21s advantage at the flag in Norris's Singapore triumph



able to induce a few extra millimetres of tilt.

The effect was evident enough for the likes of Ferrari and Red Bull to 'seek clarification' from the FIA, the usual political rigmarole that essentially tells the governing body 'ban it, or we build it'. The FIA's technical department had been monitoring front wing flex since the Belgian GP with additional onboard cameras, but without the intention of banning anything unless any extreme solutions emerged. In effect, Red Bull and Ferrari were told that McLaren and Mercedes – which had also pursued a similar solution – were in the clear.

McLaren's 'mini-DRS', however, was not granted such regulatory latitude. The rearward-facing onboard camera of Oscar Piastri's car in Baku rather caused a stir in the paddock as the lower corners of the upper rear wing flap appeared to shift upwards on the straight. In short, this was producing an effect like DRS, in that it reduced the frontal area and induced a stall thanks to the enlarged slot gap.

Although the wing had passed all load tests levied upon it, the FIA sought to avoid any confrontation from the other teams by asking McLaren to modify the design for future races. This wing configuration was not used in Singapore but, for races such as the Las Vegas GP, McLaren will not be able to reap the benefits of it. Stella does not believe that it'll make too much difference, but it'll be a loss nonetheless.

Chasing these innovations through pushing the absolute extremities of the envelope buoyed Norris, who was pleased to see the team rise to the occasion of fighting at the front. "I'm proud, I'm happy with what the team are doing – they're pushing the limits," the Bristolian declared. "That's what you've got to do if you want to fight at the top, and fight against people who are also known for doing such things and exploring every area possible.

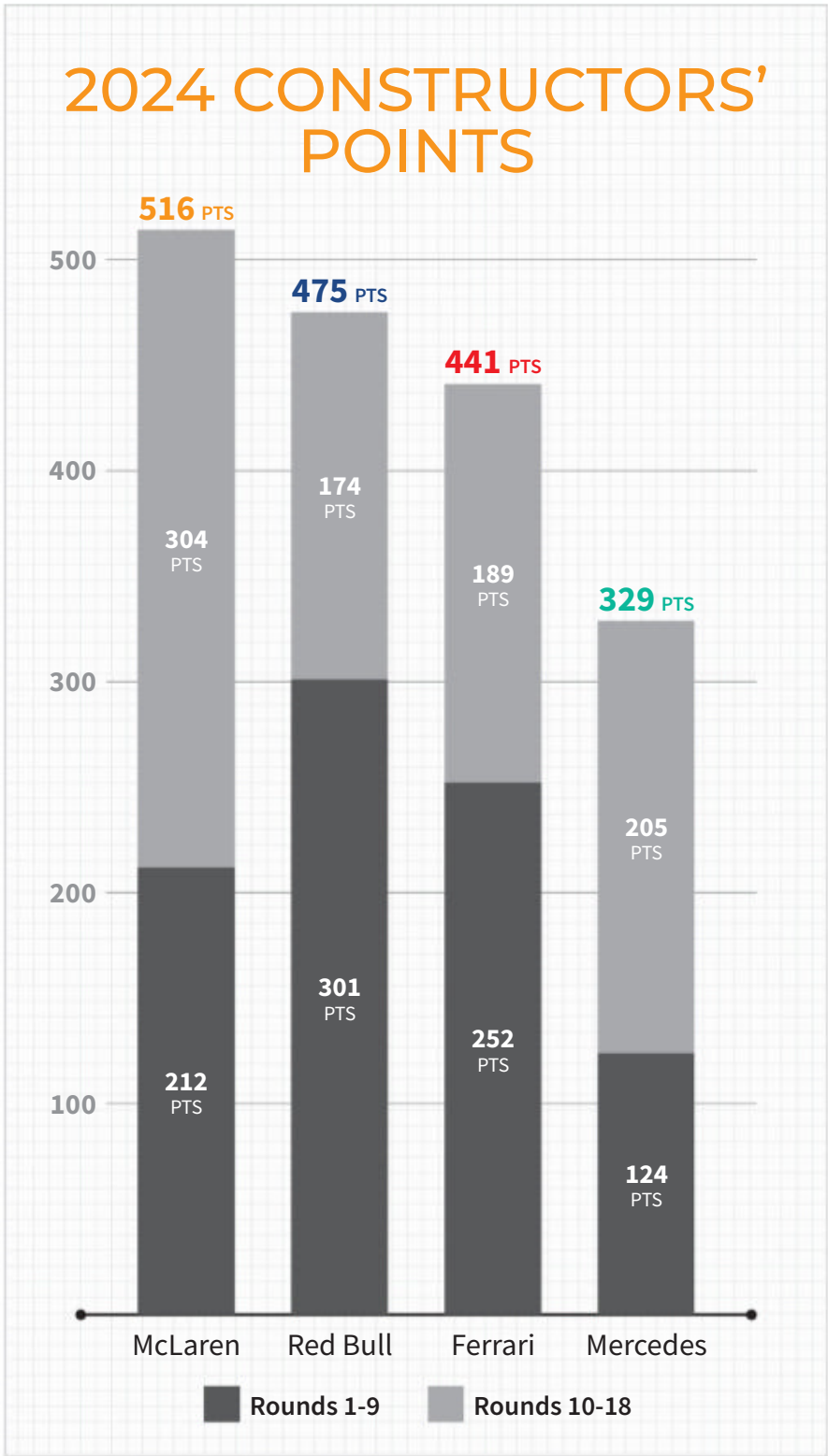
"We've not been in situations where we could do that in the past but now we're in that position so I'm very happy. It's a cool thing to see, in my opinion. There's so many rules, there's so many things in place, but teams, including us, are finding ways to just explore and look at different things that other people have not thought of." »

"I'm proud, I'm happy with what the team are doing – they're pushing the limits"

## 'MINI-DRS' UPGRADE







Is there further room for development?

With six rounds left, it's fair to say that most teams have probably got one more upgrade package in mind before they fully divert resources to their 2025 challengers. Keeping the development going into the business end of the season can yield benefits if next year's car is an evolution of the current concept, but pulling away tightly restricted resources from the future is nonetheless a risk.

McLaren is currently in the process of weighing up those risks. Don't mistake that for indecisiveness, however, because it already has new items in the pipeline. Instead, it's symptomatic of a greater issue that other teams have found with their development.

Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull have all introduced upgrades this year that, for myriad reasons, haven't stuck around. The performance benefits in simulations and in the wind tunnel have all been apparent

“We need to trust the process. We need to trust the way we've been working so far”

enough for the teams to begin production, but the deleterious effects of them rarely become apparent until they hit the circuit. Note Ferrari's Barcelona floor, for example: the peak downforce numbers were higher in the wind tunnel, but it also began to instigate bouncing through high-speed corners that put the tyres under more varied load. This made the SF-24 much more difficult for the drivers to handle.

McLaren doesn't want to be caught standing still as, in F1 parlance, to stand still is to go backwards. Equally, it does not want to introduce a new floor that strips the MCL38 of its advantages and sets Norris back in the battle for the drivers' title. It has already watched Red Bull do that.

Over the season, Red Bull has upgraded its aerodynamics in an initial effort to continue the RB20's impressive turn of pace at the start of the year. Again, the performance yield may have been evident in simulations, but the real-world addition of a new floor and associated bodywork made the car much harder to drive.

It was assumed that, when Sergio Perez started to struggle, he was simply repeating his 2023 lapse in form. It wasn't until Verstappen became increasingly raucous on the radio about the handling ills



One that got away? Ferrari's brilliant strategy call denied the faster McLarens a 1-2 at Monza



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Verstappen (left) was beaten at home by Norris; congrats for the Briton's Hungary pole position (right)

with which he was saddled that Red Bull started to take notice. Perez had simply been more sensitive to the changes, and may have been an indicator of what was to come.

Recent fixes to the RB20 seem to be helping, and any further signs of renewed competitiveness will likely expedite McLaren's decision to make a final development push. After all, the Woking squad cannot bank on capitalising on a Verstappen off-day if the Red Bull team is back in the ascendancy.

"We do have some stuff in the pipeline, and obviously, when you have this kind of performance on track, you may approach things from a cautious point of view in terms of development," Stella mused. "But at the same time, we need to trust the process. We need to trust the way we've been working so far. I've said already that we have taken our time to make sure that once we deliver trackside, we have done the due diligence. So, I don't think this will change our plans.

"In F1, I'm not sure you can back off too much, because backing off means that the others may catch up. And we don't know what the plans of the others are. Red Bull, we see that in a track in which they

thought they would not have been very competitive, ultimately, they were potentially second best [in Singapore].

"And I think we haven't seen Ferrari [at its best], as even in P1, P2, they seemed to be as fast as us."

Norris is still an outside bet for this year's title – 52 points is a big gap to close in the remaining six rounds – but McLaren has been on the receiving end of a similar swing before. Taking the margin as effectively two wins' worth of arrears, you can enter Kimi Raikkonen's 17-point deficit to Lewis Hamilton with two races remaining in 2007 as a comparable margin. The laconic Finn, with thanks to the two McLaren drivers taking points off each other, managed to sit a point clear after the Brazil finale to take his sole championship crown.

In other words, it's doable. But McLaren must, in this final quarter of the year, put everything it has learned together if it is to be successful with Norris and simultaneously close out the constructors' championship versus Red Bull and Ferrari. Who'd have thought we'd be saying that 18 months ago? 🍌

## CAN THE TEAM STICK WITH 'PAPAYA RULES'?

When "papaya rules" was first aired over McLaren team radio at the Italian Grand Prix, in the wake of Oscar Piastri's first-lap pass on Lando Norris for the lead of the race, it was very apparent that this would immediately become one of F1's most quotable phrases.

This was a reference to the team's rules of engagement. It had been wondered whether McLaren would start to apply some degree of team orders to aid Norris's title efforts, since Piastri had got closer to his more experienced team-mate's level of performance and the request in Hungary for Norris to let the Australian past had been somewhat laboured.

Zak Brown offered the best explanation of what the statutes of papaya rules include. "Papaya rules are it's your team-mate; race him hard, race him clean, don't touch." That effectively gives the two McLaren drivers carte blanche to race and pass each other, so long as they do not cause any considerable strife.

In some respects, that's great to see. It's the

antithesis of the years dominated by Ferrari, where Rubens Barrichello was often hung out to dry with team orders in favour of Michael Schumacher. But taking a more pragmatic view, the sacrifices that Barrichello made usually got the job done.

McLaren wants to retain a harmonious relationship between Norris and Piastri. It wants to win the title by doing the 'right' thing and not having to rely on Piastri making way, but there may come a point where the team no longer has the freedom to do that *[like on lap one at Monza! – ed]*.

If it comes to the crunch this year, McLaren will likely make the call if the situation arises. As much as it'll hurt Piastri, he's ultimately a team player and will recognise the importance of helping Norris to win a title. Furthermore, it might earn him some leeway next year if he's got his own championship campaign to consider.

Norris has led the team on the driving front for the past few years, but Piastri is – on outright pace terms, at least – Norris's equal. The Melbourne's earlier disadvantage to Norris in managing tyres is

all but gone, and the difference now seems to lie in consistency and qualifying performance. Case in point: Norris has five grand prix poles this season, while Piastri has none. If Piastri could find a tenth per lap in qualifying, he'd have a handful of poles to his name, and by association more points on the board by not becoming mired in early traffic.

Assuming McLaren remains at the top of the field, next season should herald the arrival of both drivers on completely equal terms. How Stella, Brown and co manage the drivers' relationship will be of paramount importance, lest it end up with a Senna/Prost, or Hamilton/Alonso type situation.

It helps that the drivers are, currently, not antagonistic to each other. Norris has his moments of spikiness, but he's a genial figure who seems to get on well with other people. Piastri, for his part, has a laid-back nature with a sense of humour drier than the Sahara. It shouldn't come to blows, but an internal title fight has turned lesser drivers into self-absorbed, paranoid souls with an axe to grind. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.



# NOT SUCH A ZANEY MOVE

*A young F1 junior is giving up on his F2 title shot to make the move to Formula E with Abt, Lola and Yamaha. We talk to Zane Maloney and explain why it could make sense*

STEFAN MACKLEY

**W**ith a population of just over a quarter of a million people and its remote Caribbean location, it's not surprising that Barbados is hardly well-known for its motorsport heritage. But Zane Maloney's exploits have begun to change that. The young Barbadian cut his teeth at the family-owned Bushy Park Circuit – the island's primary facility for racing. And in two months' time the 21-year-old is to make his Formula E debut with the Abt team at an interesting juncture in his life.

Maloney has worked his way up the junior single-seater ranks to Formula 2 and, in theory, is just one big leap away from F1. Along the way, his abilities have not gone unnoticed by motorsport's upper echelons. He was previously on Red Bull's books and has been part of Sauber's Academy this year. During a barren season for the Swiss squad in F1, the only time its distinctive black-and-green colours have been at the sharp end of a grid on a grand prix weekend have been courtesy of Maloney, who mathematically remains in F2 title contention after an up-and-down campaign.

A double win in the Bahrain season-opener and five further podiums have kept Maloney in the hunt, but a 34.5-point deficit with just 78 available across the remaining two rounds means that realistically it's unlikely that Maloney will be able to mount a comeback against leader Gabriel Bortoleto. He will still compete in the upcoming Qatar event in his regular car with Rodin Motorsport at the end of November, but even if that weekend were to bring the title further within reach, he will miss the Abu Dhabi finale due to a clashing commitment with Formula E's season-opener in Brazil on 7 December.

"I think it's been a good year – we struggled for maybe one or two rounds on pace and then it's things outside of our control

that happen in championships in general," reflects Maloney. "Maybe we had a bit more of that this year than what we had hoped for, so that kind of put us on the back foot.

"Until the last couple of rounds, we were in the fight. But I'm now moving my focus over to this [Formula E] opportunity. It's been a year of being in the fight, being out of the fight, but I've always pushed as hard as I can and the team have been doing a great job. I feel like I'm driving at a very high level. We won't have that championship to show for it, but I think everyone who needs to know what happened this year knows, and that's the main point."

***"It's been a year of being in the fight, being out of the fight, but I've always pushed as hard as I can"***

As far back as 2019 when he won the British F4 title with Rodin's predecessor Carlin, Maloney's career has been on an upward trajectory. He stayed with the same team to race in Euroformula Open in 2020 before he finished fourth with R-ace GP in the Formula Regional European Championship the following season. Then it was on to Formula 3 in 2022 with Trident – Maloney only just missed out on the title in his rookie season to Victor Martins after a late surge that yielded victories in each of the last three feature races. Even so, he beat 2025 Haas F1 driver Ollie Bearman and Bortoleto's closest F2 challenger Isack Hadjar, who turned out for Red Bull in FP1 at Silverstone, and earned a place on the Red Bull programme for his return to Rodin Carlin for his graduation to F2 in 2023.


Winning the F2 title this season would still likely not have meant a seat at the pinnacle of the sport for Maloney, as the case of fellow Sauber Academy driver Theo Pourchaire proves. The Frenchman claimed the crown last season after finishing runner-up in 2022, but it did nothing to elevate his position as a candidate to join the F1 grid. That may change in the highly unlikely event that Pourchaire is selected above Bortoleto, Valtteri Bottas and Franco Colapinto to partner Nico Hulkenberg at the team next year, but the 21-year-old currently appears to be something of a forgotten man. He has been left in limbo around an IndyCar drive with Arrow McLaren and his career has lost all momentum.

A move into Formula E is also somewhat logical for Maloney. For the last two seasons, he has acted as Andretti's reserve and »



Experience accrued in rookie test sessions for Andretti will be useful





Being in at  
the start of a  
new Formula E  
team could have  
long-term benefits  
for Maloney




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development driver, taking part in rookie test sessions and gathering a wealth of data ahead of his debut this December. He will now follow fellow F2 race winner Taylor Barnard full-time into the championship this season – the 20-year-old Briton made three appearances for McLaren last term in place of the injured Sam Bird and, after impressing with two points finishes in Berlin, has been signed up for the 2024-25 campaign.

With manufacturer involvement, quality drivers and ever-increasing car speeds, Formula E has begun to turn itself into a desirable destination for young drivers with talent but perhaps not

*“It’s clear that in any championship at a professional level there’s a lot more drivers than there are seats”*

the opportunities or backing of their contemporaries to reach F1. But moving into Formula E doesn’t mean that any hope of an F1 seat is completely out of the question. That is evidenced by drivers including Alex Albon, who jumped from Nissan before the 2019 season got under way to Toro Rosso, and Nyck de Vries, who joined AlphaTauri after winning the title in 2021.

“It’s clear that in motorsports in general now, in any championship at a professional level there’s a lot more drivers than there are seats,” argues Maloney. “So I’m just grateful to get this seat with this amazing team and I’m looking forward to the opportunity to do the best job I can.”

Rookies have generally struggled to get to grips with Formula E’s unique style of racing, which features peloton-style contests, all while having to conserve energy to fine margins. While Maloney, yet to start a Formula E race, will be the least experienced driver on the grid, he will compete alongside championship stalwart Lucas di Grassi who, with 131 starts, has missed just one race in the category’s 10-year history.

The Brazilian endured his worst season in the championship last term, scoring just four points and being comprehensively



A double winner in Bahrain F2 opener







beaten by Abt team-mate Nico Muller, who has left for Andretti and become a Porsche factory driver. But in di Grassi, Maloney will have a strong benchmark to compare himself against and, perhaps more importantly, learn from. That knowledge could become key as Abt embarks on a new journey with powertrain suppliers Lola and Yamaha.

This season also coincides with the start of the Gen3 Evo era, with cars running a softer Hankook tyre than last year, while all-wheel-drive will be used in certain situations such as qualifying duels, start of the race and Attack Modes. It means the new version of the car is several seconds faster than its predecessor but, with it being something of a new starting point for all teams and drivers, could be the perfect opportunity for Maloney to make his mark.

The Abt/Lola/Yamaha partnership is highly unlikely to be challenging for wins from the outset or possibly even podiums, but Maloney will be aware of this and, to some extent, it means his debut campaign will be under less scrutiny. On the flip-side, being involved in a project from the outset and helping to lay the foundations could pay huge dividends for his career, not only in Formula E, but further afield in motorsport.

"[Four-wheel drive] changes the balance of the car, it changes how you have to drive the car," Maloney explains. "I guess it all depends on how each team adapts to that, and I think as it's new, it's also good for me because everyone's learning it and it's not just me. It's one thing that everyone's a rookie at, which is cool. I drove it a bit in the past couple of weeks and, yeah, it is very different. It's going to take time to understand and perfect how to be fast with the four-wheel drive and 350kW, and I'm sure that's one of the main topics for most teams down the grid right now."

"For us it's a bit more than that, of course, coming in as a new manufacturer [with Lola and Yamaha]. But we're flat-out at work trying to come into the start of the season as high up the grid as we can be, even though we don't know where that is right now." ❄



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WRC

## INSIDE THE WRC'S SEARCH FOR THE NEXT FEMALE STAR

*Autosport joined a panel of experts to oversee the inaugural Beyond Rally Women's Driver Talent Programme to help select the World Rally Championship's next female superstar*

TOM HOWARD

**“I**t's easier to dream about doing something when you have seen someone doing it.” Those are the words of champion co-driver Reeta Hamalainen, and strike at the core of what the World Rally Championship is trying to achieve with its new women's talent development programme. This global search aims not only to unearth the next top female rally driver, who could one day follow in the footsteps of four-time WRC rally winner Michele Mouton, but also break down the barriers to entry for women in rallying.

Following an intense three-day training camp in Poland last month, three drivers are now no longer dreaming of competing in the WRC. Lyssia Baudet (21, Belgium), Claire Schonborn (25, Germany), and Suvi Jyrkiainen (24, Finland) are now preparing to compete in the WRC's penultimate round of 2024, next week's Central European Rally, in the WRC3 class. And for one of the trio a life-changing prize is on offer – a fully funded Junior WRC campaign piloting a Ford Fiesta Rally3 car.

Female participation in the WRC, compared to other motorsport

series, has been relatively high. Mouton's run to finish runner-up in the 1982 WRC title race smashed the glass ceiling, proving women could achieve success at the top level of motorsport.

In the four decades since, this level of success has yet to be replicated, but it doesn't mean the talent isn't out there. Female success has been notable on the co-driver front, with Hamalainen winning the 2022 WRC2 co-drivers' title, and Enni Malkonen now competing in the top Rally1 class with Toyota alongside Sami Pajari after winning the 2022 WRC3 co-drivers' crown.

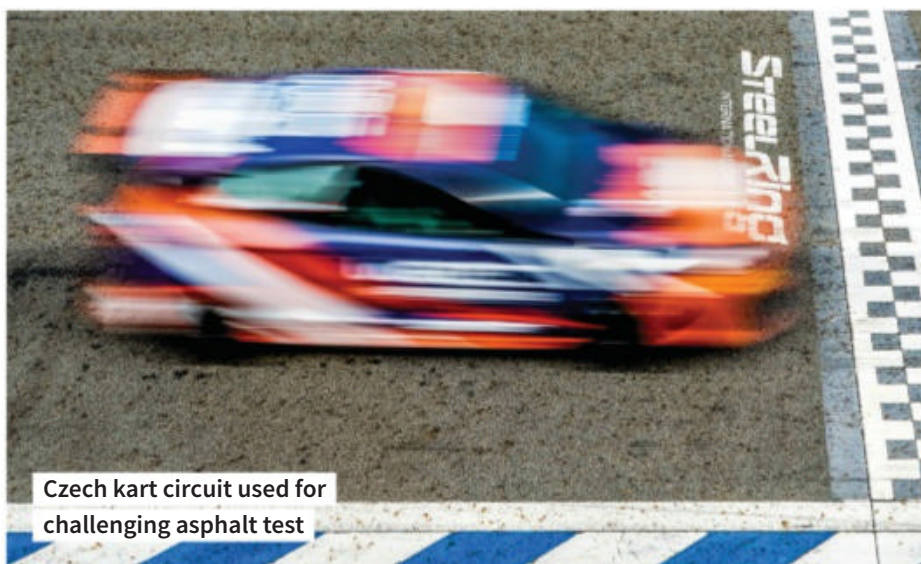
The WRC believes that the driving talent exists, and has put its money where its mouth is by committing funding to unearth its new female superstar. This latest talent search initiative is distinct from the FIA Rally Star programme – funded by the FIA – which fielded four crews in this year's one-make M-Sport Ford Fiesta Rally3 Junior WRC. This has already enjoyed success, with Romet Jurgenson and Slim Oja winning the JWRC title at their first attempt.

“I think we are missing women participating in rallying a lot,” says WRC Promoter sporting director and talent programme





ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: WRC



Czech kart circuit used for challenging asphalt test

This group was assessed by a panel of experts that included Autosport – enlisted to assist with media training. Each candidate undertook six modules (fitness; media and PR; mechanical skills and technical knowledge; pacenote making and recce; asphalt driving; and gravel driving), receiving a score from one to five (five being the best).

A jury made up of Thul, Burcu Cetinkaya (rally driver and FIA women in motorsport chair), Pernilla Solberg (FIA

*“There is potential that is not discovered yet and maybe we can find somebody like Michele Mouton”*

chairman Peter Thul. “We have fantastic co-drivers but I think there is potential that is not discovered yet and maybe we can find somebody like Michele Mouton. We have to encourage female participation as we believe there is hidden potential. We are not looking for the best PowerPoint presentation; we are looking for the best driver, but it is also about attitude and motivation.”

The concept was born a year ago but, in order to properly execute its plan, the WRC postponed the talent search until this year. The programme, set to run annually in the future, attracted applications from across the world. They were whittled down to 15 finalists of varying ages, experience levels and backgrounds.

Joining Baudet, Schonborn and Jyrkiainen were Emma Chalvin (23, France), Ann Felke (22, Germany), Joanna Hassoun (20, Lebanon), Mako Hirakawa (27, Japan), Hannah Jakobsson (20, Sweden), Luz Marina Santos Ramos (18, Spain), Nuria Pons Garcia (21, Spain), Aoife Raftery (23, Ireland), Madelyn Tabor (22, USA), Alexandra Teslovan (18, Romania), Hanna Lisette Aabna (18, Estonia) and Dorka Zagya (19, Hungary).

WRC Commission president, former rally driver), Maciej Woda (M-Sport Poland managing director) and Isolde Holderied (1994 and 1995 FIA female world rally champion) were tasked with taking the tough decision of selecting three winners...

The process begins at M-Sport Poland's workshop in Krakow where the fitness, media, mechanical skills and pacenote training modules are completed. The finalists are split into three groups of five, rotating through the modules. Led by M-Sport trainer Marek Olszewski, the candidates are put through a rigorous series of physical assessments, ending with a bleep test endurance examination.

While one of the groups undergoes the fitness evaluation, another gathers around the Ford Fiesta Rally3 they will drive over the next two days as Woda explains the inner workings of the car the drivers will need to master. Theory test completed, a practical examination pitches the drivers in a challenge to successfully change a wheel as quickly as possible – a process crucial to conquer when competing for real on the stages. >>



Outside of the main workshop, another group faces a media training challenge headed by Hyundai Motorsport's senior press officer Nicoletta Russo with assistance from Autosport and *Auto Hebdo*. Here the candidates are offered advice on how to best represent themselves when dealing with journalists, before heading into a makeshift television studio to put what they learned to practice in front of the cameras facing questions from Autosport.

The contrasting backgrounds of the candidates soon emerge. Baudet reveals that her parents initially tried to steer her away from motorsport and into other sports, but a passion for four wheels eventually prevailed. Raftery, who competes in the Junior ERC, explains how she had taken inspiration from late compatriot Craig Breen. Felke started out as a co-driver, funding that journey on her own, before turning to driving. Jyrkiainen by contrast has a rich rally background and reveals that her mother, Minna Sillankorva – a WRC points scorer driving a Lancia Delta in 1991 – is her motorsport heroine and inspiration.

Her response is among the limited exceptions when the finalists are asked for their female motorsport heroines. Mouton is by far the most common answer, further outlining that she remains an inspiration. There's one constant from all the candidates: an overwhelming determination to not only succeed but inspire.

The concluding module of the first day edges the finalists a step closer to getting behind the wheel. Hamalainen is joined by former

*“All these young women are so motivated and passionate about this sport and it really shows”*

co-driver Tanja Geilhausen to run through all the key aspects to conducting a recce of stages and pacenote making. Using an onboard video from one of the camp's driver trainers, William Creighton, the finalists are offered valuable information to ensure the best preparation for tackling the stages.

“I really appreciate being a part of this programme, because for me it's a really big thing if I can inspire somebody to come into this sport because all sports, not just rallying, need both boys and girls,” adds Hamalainen. “All these young women are so motivated and passionate about this sport and it really shows. They have really focused on what the experts are trying to tell them and that's rewarding to see. If we can get at least one female into this sport, it then becomes easier.”

The Czech Republic's Steel Ring kart circuit provides a crucial component of the programme – a challenging asphalt test driving the Fiesta Rally3 against the clock. Each driver is given three recce laps before conducting five fast runs of the course, which features a mixture of tight corners, hairpins and fast, flowing sections. Joining the drivers in the co-driver seat to offer advice and assess their skills



Comparing notes for the media evaluation



Skills assessed from the co-driver's seat

are 2023 Junior WRC champion Creighton and two-time Norwegian champion Eyvind Brynildsen.

“There are girls with a range of different experiences and for me the most impressive thing has been seeing those with limited experience adapt to the car,” says Creighton. “Some have never used a sequential gearbox and never driven four-wheel drive, but they get out there and they show aggression. They want to slide the car and use the four-wheel drive. It's been really nice to see that, I've been really impressed.”

To mimic what they will face in the future, Autosport is on hand to conduct stage-end interviews in front of a TV camera, to further test the candidates' media skills. While all are seemingly unfazed by this, the reactions once again bring home the sheer adrenalin and excitement only an opportunity to drive a rally car can produce.

“Maybe I was too much in a rallycross mode [with the tail of the car stepping out] but it's OK,” beams Chalvin after her first experience of a 4WD rally car. “I had a lot of fun, I just want to do more!”

Once asphalt duties are completed, each driver conducts a recce



Schonborn, who only made her rally debut this year, on the asphalt test



Stage-end interviews echo real-life experience

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: WRC





Former circuit racer Baudet impresses on tricky, technical Polish gravel stage

of a tricky narrow asphalt stage that was once part of the Czech Republic rally championship. This puts their pacenote skills to the test and offers a taster of the Central European Rally held on roads across the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany.

The final chance to sway the jury comes in the form of a gravel driving test on a 1.1km technical stage, featuring a series of junctions, hairpins and tricky muddy conditions. “This is quite a tricky gravel road in Poland and I must say in the morning it was really slippery,” says Brynildsen. “The girls did an amazing job and proved quite a lot of skills. They are impressing me all the time; when we give them advice, they follow it.”

Such is the level of competition that the jury faces an incredibly difficult call before eventually deciding to make the WRC dream a reality for Baudet, Schonborn and Jyrkiainen. “It’s about trying to see which one of the 15 girls will do best at the Central European Rally,” says Solberg when explaining the decision-making process. “It’s one thing to be a huge talent driving, but it’s also a difficult event and you want them to feel they can go there and be confident.”

But having overseen the training camp, Solberg is totally convinced by the initiative: “I wish there had been something like this when I started my career. To have professionals come in and train them in driving, media, how to work on the cars, fitness and how to prepare yourself, it’s just amazing. I really hope with this programme we can inspire and start something so we can find a new female top driver. If we can do this as a yearly thing, this is a door opener for years to come.”

For Baudet, Schonborn and Jyrkiainen, there’s little time to bask in the glow of winning a dream WRC drive. The work is on to prepare for a chance to clinch the potentially life-changing season in the Junior WRC in 2025. All eyes will be on the Central European Rally to see how these rising stars perform in the heat of battle.

“There are so many girls with so much experience in rallying, so the level was really high,” says Schonborn, a German hillclimb winner who only made her rally debut earlier this year. “I didn’t think about being one of the three girls, so yes, I am so happy!”

Former circuit racer-turned-rally driver Baudet adds: “It’s



Winning trio Schonborn, Baudet and Jyrkiainen

amazing, I feel like I’m in a dream. But I know that it’s only the start of the adventure and I have a lot of work to do, but I’m ready for this and I’m very thankful.”

“I cannot imagine myself there in the WRC, but maybe you know it will sink in in a few days,” says Jyrkiainen, who finished runner-up in the 2023 Finnish Rally Championship Ladies Cup.

Aside from competing against the clock, there is a bigger-picture story at play here. Inevitably with these talent search competitions, there are always those who agonisingly just miss out.

For those who were unsuccessful, in what proved to be a tough decision for the jury, valuable knowledge has been gained to kick-start their careers, plus there is the second edition of the programme next year. But what is encouraging is that, before a wheel has been turned at the Central European Rally, the initiative has already proved one thing: there is a pool of talented female rally drivers out there just waiting for an opportunity. 🏆



# COLOSSUS

## OF SUPER TOURING



JEP

*In RML's 40th anniversary year, it's time to look back at its BTCC Super Touring titles for Vauxhall and Nissan with founder Ray Mallock*

MARCUS SIMMONS

In a motorsport context they were soulmates, as well as being good friends. Ray Mallock and his number one pilot David Leslie were cut from the same cloth – engineering-driven, yet both excellent development drivers and racers in their own right, neither of whom ever carried the hype and momentum to take them as far as peers of similar, or even inferior, ability. After they had shared an Aston Martin AMR1 in the 1989 Le Mans 24 Hours, Mallock, by then 38 years old, retired from the cockpit as a professional – he still races now as a 73-year-old for fun – because he knew everything was safe in the hands of his Scottish pal.

“Looking back on it, it was a bit bonkers thinking I could combine being engineering director of the works Aston programme as well as being the development driver and race driver – it's too much,” laughs Mallock, whose Ray Mallock Limited company this year has been celebrating its 40th anniversary (and which we will go into in detail in next week's Autosport). “But I was fortunate enough to have David there, so I was confident to hand over the baton

as development and lead driver. That worked out OK really...”

It did, but in a different sphere to what Mallock would have imagined. RML, with Mallock and Leslie at the wheel for Ecurie Ecosse, had come close to winning the Group C2 title in the world sportscar championship before Aston came calling with its project in the Group C top flight. Then a radical revamp of the regulations calling for 3.5-litre Formula 1 engines meant “we were left with an insurmountable challenge of creating a brand new engine from scratch. We didn't have a budget to create a Formula 1 engine. Group C was incredibly popular – it was getting more popular than F1, and I think that was the worry...”

After working with Nissan at the 1990 Le Mans 24 Hours, RML needed a change of tack. It would lead to British Touring Car Championship victories at the height of the 1990s Super Touring era with both Vauxhall and Nissan, and begin a tin-top dynasty that continued with multiple World Touring Car Championship titles with Chevrolet, and goes on today with RML as the supplier of spec subframes, suspension and steering systems to the entire



Mallock's  
Formula Junior/  
Clubmans nous  
smoothed switch  
to 1999 Nissan's  
beam axle



Mallock stipulated Leslie  
and Reid Nissan driver line-up

BTCC field, a deal it has held since 2016.

"It was the realisation that we needed to get back into a manufacturer-backed race programme," reflects Mallock. "As Group C was dwindling, Super Touring and BTCC was on the up." Scottish coal magnate Hugh McCaig, the latter-day patron of Ecurie Ecosse, was key. "I was busy knocking on the doors of all the relevant manufacturers that I thought might be interested," continues Mallock, "and it was Vauxhall that took the most interest, and we were able to stitch a deal together for 1992 whereby they loaned us two ex-works Dave Cook cars and engines.

"Hugh put up the budget for David to run in one car, and we had



Support from Dunlop  
crucial to foundation  
campaign in 1993

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

*"It was a bit bonkers thinking I could combine being engineering director, development driver and race driver"*

some good gentlemen drivers in the other car – Bobby Verdon-Roe, Harry Nuttall, Alex Portman. We were fortunate to have some good drivers with budgets, and we were able to persuade Dunlop to support us – no one else was really interested in Dunlop, but that was part of our stitching the programme together and we couldn't have done it without Dunlop's help. We were their lead partner and development team."

At the time, Yokohama was the tyre of choice in the BTCC, including on the factory Vauxhall Cavaliers run by Cook's team for John Cleland and Jeff Allam. Dunlop's determination to keep a toehold with Mallock would pay off big time shortly afterwards, when Audi went the Super Touring route with four-wheel-drive machinery and romped to countless championships worldwide on the company's tyres...

RML's toe-in-the-water exercise in 1992 netted seventh in the final BTCC standings for Leslie, and for 1993 the team went its own Cavalier-shaped way. In large part this was again due to philanthropy from Vauxhall, but there was an ulterior motive. "It was our first full RML design, and Vauxhall kindly allowed us to use the funds from selling those ex-works cars to put into our own cars, because I was able to persuade them that we could create a better car for 1993 by starting from scratch," recalls Mallock. "Part of that was creating a new gearbox with Xtrac. I knew Mike Endean very well, and between us we came up with what was their first Super Touring gearbox – a six-speed sequential."

This was groundbreaking for Super Touring, and had the full support of Leslie, who had become used to the concept from his days in gearbox karting. "That allowed us to drop the whole engine by something like three inches," says Mallock. "That ground-up design was all about lowering the centre of gravity of the car, getting the torsional rigidity right, getting the suspension right. All the fundamentals. It was instantly quick."

Mallock is not the most demonstrative of men – calm serenity is more his style – but his tale of a March 1993 test at Snetterton on the eve of the season opener brings a lump to his throat. It is made all the more poignant in light of Leslie's fatal accident as a passenger in a private aircraft in 2008, at the age of 54: "It must have been our >>



first proper run with the car, but we had a misfire for most of the day – something on the ignition. And we just couldn't get it to run cleanly. Right towards the end of the day we made some change to the software and David said, 'That's it, the engine's running cleanly, let's put a set of tyres on it'. So we put a set on, and he came round Coram so quickly – it still sets the hairs on the back of neck off now. Visibly quicker than anything else that had been going round that day. And he came across the line to the top of the timesheets. That's when we knew we had a good car. It makes me emotional thinking about it."

RML was on its way. Leslie dropped back to eighth in the 1993 standings, but the BTCC had taken a huge leap forward in competitiveness and it included a breakthrough win at Thruxton. Off the back of this, the company became Vauxhall's works team for 1994. To Mallock's chagrin – and something he would correct three years later with Nissan – he could not retain Leslie, because Cleland and Allam were the factory-contracted drivers.

That's not to say that Mallock did not enjoy running these two tin-top veterans, and indeed Cleland's finest hour was to come: after placing fourth in the 1994 standings, he claimed the 1995 crown. "The '94 car that John and Jeff drove was a direct descendant of the '93 car that David had developed," says Mallock. "And the '95 car was again a very logical development but with the addition of the front spoiler and the rear wing. Suddenly we had some downforce. Those Cavaliers all had David's fingerprints on them if you like."

The introduction of aero had come in the wake of the Alfa Romeo rumpus in 1994. "The rules changed for '95, quite rightly, to allow a levelling up so we could have a homologated rear wing and front bumper," says Mallock. "That gave us the opportunity to draw on our sportscar experience. On the [Aston] AMR1, the front downforce... we were able to use a very similar concept on the '95 Cavalier and it instantly gave the grip we were looking for."

"We took the car out at Brands and John did a couple of warm-up laps, and I remember him coming in and saying there's something wrong with his dash! It had just given him a time that was about a second quicker than we'd ever done before. The car was instantly hooked up and he could get straight into the apexes, all of the things you want to have in a front-wheel-drive touring car all of a sudden clicked in. So that was the groundwork for that championship."

Allam had been dropped for 1995 by Vauxhall, which replaced him with the talented but inexperienced James Thompson. More change arrived for 1996, with the Vectra replacing the Cavalier, and Mallock was looking for a new challenge: "I was frustrated that we weren't able to get the Vectra going better than we did. I think I was missing having David Leslie doing the development work!"



Mallock (centre) and Leslie had professional and personal bond

Nissan Motorsports Europe, which was competing in the German Super Touring Cup, was looking to bring the Japanese manufacturer back into the BTCC for the first time since 1994. Crucially, it already had Anthony Reid, one of Mallock's main targets, on board. Alec Poole, the genial Irishman who had won the BTCC in 1969 and was now head of NME, was keen to get a deal over the line. "Alec had been talking to us about whether we'd be interested in going with Nissan," remembers Mallock, "and as the season went on I said, 'Yeah, could be interested depending on what the driver line-up would be', and he said, 'Well, who do you want in the car?' I said, 'David and Anthony', and he said, 'OK, we'll do that'. That's what made the change, to have more influence over the drivers and how we ran the cars."

Reid had already impressed Mallock during his stint in Japan's Super Touring series racing an RML-built Cavalier with HKS: "He was very helpful in the development of those cars. After every



Cleland's 1995 title-winning Vauxhall drew on world sportscar aero experience





1993 Cavalier was RML's first ground-up design, pioneering use of sequential gearbox

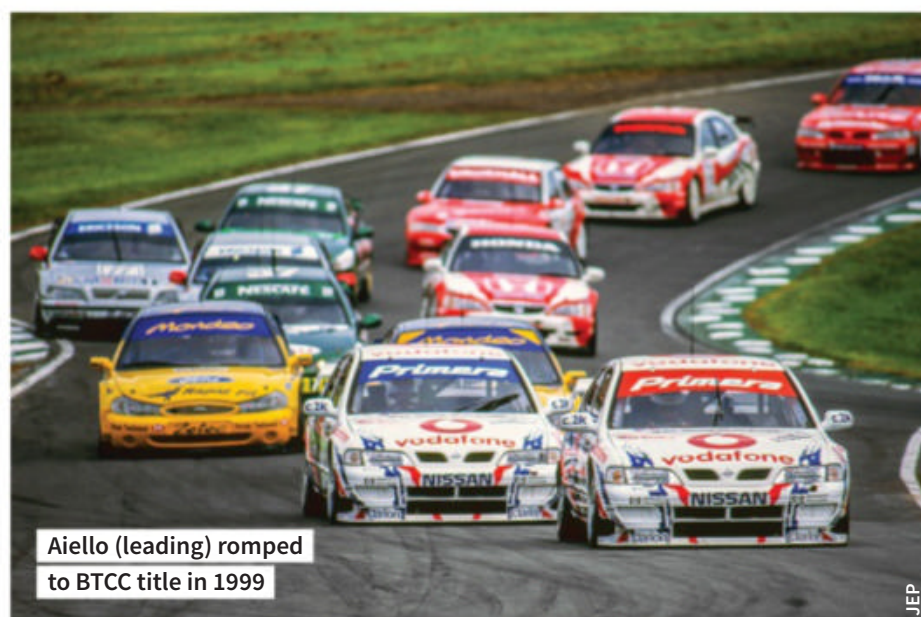
## *“He came round Coram so quickly – it still sets the hairs on the back of neck off now...”*

test and race he would send me a detailed report back. They were running their own dampers over there, and they were on Michelin tyres [by 1996 every non-Audi works team in the BTCC was aligned with the French company] so it was a parallel development programme almost, which was very helpful. Anthony knew our cars and I knew Anthony – that’s why I wanted him in the car.”

RML’s first Primera, for 1997, was clearly quick, but lacked reliability. “That particular engine had some idiosyncrasies about it and it needed an understanding of that kind of engine,” says Mallock of a powerplant whose build and development was passed from John Judd’s Engine Developments to AER and back again. “It wasn’t a very good engine, but in the end it was.” By 1998, Reid was able to run champion Rickard Rydell close for the BTCC title, but that summer it had been announced that he would be joining Alain Menu in a Ford superteam for 1999. Poole actively began courting Peugeot’s star driver Laurent Aiello to join Leslie, and finally got the deal done with the Frenchman.

Along with Aiello came his Peugeot engineer Ludovic Lacroix to bolster Mallock’s RML lieutenants Phil Barker and Stuart Ayling plus the late NME technical chief Ricardo Divila. “They just acted very professionally, got their heads down,” says Mallock. “Ludo worked closely with people like Stuart and Phil to understand what we were doing. And of course it coincided with us going to beam axle as well, so that was quite a big change.”

This was forced upon RML by the new-model Primera for 1999, and had caused consternation among the technical department. But not Mallock, who had grown up with his father Arthur using the concept on his hugely popular Mallock U2 customer cars in Formula Junior and then Clubmans, and knew that it would provide “very precise control of camber and toe angles. I think it’s a great system, and so it proved to be! I love live axles – I drive my Formula Junior Mallock reasonably regularly and love the way it handles and the way it puts its power down. Beam axles are great in my



book, and so it proved to be in ’99 BTCC.”

Aiello stormed to the title, but Nissan was pulling out of the BTCC at the end of 1999. Mallock got very close to a deal to produce a Super Touring MG for 2000. “We’d had our guys on it, we’d have drawn up the rollcage, the chassis would have been done, the suspension would have been laid out,” he reveals. “We’d got quite a long way down the road. But this was when Rover and MG were being sold and split up to BMW and the Chinese, and Martin Birrane [by now the new owner of British constructor Lola] was in the midst of that financial deal with Phoenix [which handled the takeover].

“We were just about to sign this deal, and Martin got on the phone to the marketing director David Bowes, who was in my office, and said, ‘You need to come out of Ray’s office now’, and he told him that this deal was going to Lola and not to us. David said, ‘I’m sorry Ray, it’s not going to happen, it’s going to Lola’. We’d been carrying all the guys for months and doing all this design work on a handshake, and it didn’t happen.”

As it happened, Super Touring had just one more year in the BTCC, an MG deal *did* happen with Lola for the subsequent BTC Touring ruleset in 2001 but proved short-lived, and RML moved back into the growing world of endurance racing with Saleen. But for eight years at the height of the BTCC’s greatest era, it had been the gold standard. 🏆



# RACE CENTRE



BTCC

## Hill scales the heights after epic Ingram duel

*Tom Ingram was most pundits' favourite to claim a second BTCC crown, but local boy Jake Hill put in the drive of his life to achieve his ambition*

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP

**A**mid all the irritating bells-and-whistles of modern motorsport, the defining moment of the British Touring Car Championship climax at Brands Hatch featured a tremendous example of classic 1960s sportsmanship, as if Jake Hill and Tom Ingram were still going at it in front of the 'frightfully good show' audience of their Goodwood Revival joust last month. Yes, Hill pushed his hybrid-turbo power boost button to complete the move, but so did Ingram in his vain attempt to defend – so their resorting to 2020s gimmickry cancelled each other out.

What was beautiful to this title-winning blast was its immediate prelude. Hill swept his West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport around the outside of Ingram's Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30

N Fastback at Surtees, the wet track perhaps helping him to find relatively good grip the long way around this cambered, climbing left-hander. There are plenty of drivers who, in the same situation, would have run Hill out of road on the corner exit. But Ingram isn't one of them, and he allowed just enough room for the BMW – as long as its right-hand wheels were on the kerb. Side by side they approached the right kink before Pilgrim's Drop, and here Ingram moved for the apex – but again, he left just enough room for Hill to nip the inside kerb and remain alongside. The move was completed at Hawthorn's with Hill on the inside line and, although Ingram attempted to fight back at Westfield, it was a forlorn hope.

Ladies and gentlemen, the BTCC has a new champion. Where Hill was delirious, Ingram appeared absolutely devastated not to



Dynamite with a Laser Beamer: an emotional Hill receives the plaudits



take his second crown. And then there was Ash Sutton, knocked out of title contention in race one last weekend, but reminding everyone of his magical powers in wet weather by dominating that finale to the tune of over 10 seconds. Appropriately, these three BTCC superstars of 2024 collectively ruled last weekend's season sign-off, with one win apiece.

There's a fourth, of course, as Hill would readily acknowledge. Much of four-time champion Colin Turkington's final 19-point deficit to third-placed Sutton in the standings was down to his playing the game for his team-mate, in doing so forfeiting his own slender chances. Last time out at Silverstone, Turkington had moved his BMW aside for the Laser Tools-liveried sister car, and he did so again at Brands in race one, then dutifully sat behind

it in the sequel. "I just have to thank everybody, and specifically my team-mate Colin," acknowledged Hill. "He's helped me so much to achieve this. He's played an amazing team game."

Predictably, Turkington had set himself up for this role by claiming pole position. With a surfeit of hybrid access owing to his lowly pre-weekend sixth place in the championship, and with a driver of his calibre in the 3 Series on the GP circuit, that should have been a given. That he did so by a mere 0.036 seconds over Ingram – allowed just one second per lap of hybrid to Turkington's 11 – was down to an effort that the Northern Irishman candidly explained could have been better. "There were a couple of places I could have hooked it up a bit better but obviously it was fast," he reckoned. "A few wee moments where I was fighting the car a »



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There was no stopping Ingram in race two. Here he dives inside Hill to claim the lead



bit. Qualifying is so stressful now you have to pole it three times!”

The new-for-2024 three-phase qualifying format to which Turkington was alluding nearly caught out Ingram. The 2022 champion did a terrific job to get his Hyundai onto the front row, but would have fallen at the Q2 hurdle had Adam Morgan, going great guns last Saturday in his WSR BMW, not had what would have been the second fastest lap disallowed for a track-limits offence. With competitors allowed one new set of soft Goodyear tyres for the weekend, to use in one race, qualifying was a war of strategy. “We used our worst set of tyres in Q2,” explained Ingram, “and saved the new set for Q3.”

Over at Alliance Racing’s NAPA Ford Focus ST garage, its main title attacker Sutton had set the quickest time of all in Q3, only to have that struck off for track limits. He regrouped and clocked a lap good enough for third, but his own tyre strategy only worked for that initial effort. “The pace in the car was phenomenal,” he enthused. “But Aron [Taylor-Smith] was entering Turn 1 on the inside as I was on the brakes and in the back of your mind is, ‘Is he going to be in the way?’ To be fair he wasn’t, but it took my focus off, and a little bit of oversteer pushed me wide.” Sutton had gone for new soft tyres on the front only, which was “good for one lap but overpowering for the rear axle after it”.

And down in sixth, behind the Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla of mathematical title shot Josh Cook and Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra of Taylor-Smith, was Hill. Like Ingram,

## “It looked like he locked the rear axle up and had no option but to go right, and collected them both”

he was on 1s per lap of hybrid, but counterintuitively he was “pretty happy with it. The car was fantastic all the way through qualifying but unfortunately I just had a slight issue with the rear, and it didn’t quite stay with me through Q3. It feels like the left-rear damper has let go.”

Hill was right to be happy, because his sixth-place starting position left him in the perfect spot to exploit what happened on the opening lap of the first race at the Druids hairpin. Had that damper not failed, and his qualifying position been better, his title hopes could have been left in tatters within half a minute of Sunday’s race action starting...

While Turkington used the rear-wheel-drive traction of the BMW to get away in front, and Hill moved ahead of Taylor-Smith into fifth, Cook got mixed up with Sutton and Ingram. Sutton got a superb start to squeeze ahead of Ingram into Paddock Hill Bend, then Cook got a run on Ingram on the exit. The Toyota and Hyundai made side-to-side contact up the hill. Then, into the braking zone, Cook suddenly speared sideways down the inside of Sutton, who darted left in apparent avoidance, tangled with Ingram and was left marooned in the gravel with broken left-front suspension. Morgan was assisted from behind into heavy contact with Cook’s stricken Toyota, and in turn was assailed by the innocent Rob Huff, the BMW so badly damaged it would not reappear until the final race. Ingram was down to 10th but still running with a healthy Hyundai.

Such is the esteem in which Cook is held – “We know Josh is not a numpty,” asserted Ingram – that most onlookers assumed there was something wrong with his Toyota. “From my side it looked like he outbraked himself, caught out by me and Tom,” said Sutton, whose last hopes of the 2024 title evaporated in that gravel trap. “But he has said he had a puncture. It’s happened now, it’s irrelevant.” Speedworks did affirm that the puncture had caused the incident, and most were willing to give Cook the benefit of any doubt.

“Ultimately Ash was incredibly focused on getting past Tom because he thought that was his only chance to try and win this championship, and then Josh had a bit of a run,” recounted Hill, who was sitting right behind the shenanigans. “It looked like he just locked the rear axle up and he had no option but to go right, »







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and obviously collected them both. And I was delighted. And then me and Colin got into a safe situation and he very kindly made the switch with me. And not only did that help us bag our manufacturers' championship for BMW with us being 1-2, but it helped me build that few points' lead."

Hill, indeed, had experienced his Moses Red Sea moment – or champions' luck – by gleefully slipping past the chaos and rising from fifth to second, behind only his highly altruistic team-mate. After the inevitable safety car, Turkington stayed out front for a lap and a half before Hill had put sufficient distance between

## “You just want to try and go and win the race. But I just had to sit in third really...”

himself and the chasing PMR Vauxhall of Mikey Doble to allow the switch to take place in safety.

In hindsight, that was just in time because few could have predicted that a stunning charge from Ingram would bring him up to third place, and then onto Turkington's rear bumper with a very long four laps of the GP circuit still to go. It was all down to hybrid strategy, and Ingram used his single lap of power boost to get so close as to nudge the white BMW through Hawthorn's. But Turkington – himself running out of his six-lap hybrid allocation – did a sterling job to hold on, and allow winner Hill to stretch a five-point advantage.

Now we were down to two title contenders. From the initial six, Sutton, Cook and Turkington had all fallen out of the equation, along with Dan Cammish, who had put in an excellent race from 10th on the grid in his Alliance Ford to demote Taylor-Smith three laps from home for the honour of lead medium-tyred runner home in fifth, behind Doble.

Ingram's pace in that opener hinted at domination in race two, particularly in light of the cool, blustery weather and the obligation for the top 10 to all run medium tyres. The rear-wheel-drive BMWs would surely struggle to get heat through the driven axle, and so it proved. Ingram pulled off a marvellous manoeuvre on Turkington around the outside of Hawthorn's on the opening lap, then dived down the inside of Hill into Paddock Hill Bend the next time around. Sure enough, Ingram rattled off a couple of fastest laps as he extended his advantage early doors, but crucially the bonus point for that was negated by Hill just about gaining a lap-leader point moments before the Hyundai went past, to leave him one ahead into the showdown.



Sutton's title hopes were dashed in the opening race...

Ingram, ebullient as he emerged from his car, could scent a title victory; Hill could only offer a less convincing “we're still there...” To be fair, once the first few laps had been rattled off, there was nothing to choose between the Hyundai and the chasing BMWs, and Hill had eroded the deficit to just over a second two-thirds of the way through the race when he deployed his only lap of hybrid. Turkington sat behind him. “You just want to try and go and win the race,” laughed a man who did appear to have a lot of pace – had he been free to use it. “But I just had to sit in third really.”

Some way adrift, Cammish came home fourth ahead of the thrilling Sutton, who sliced his way up from 19th to fifth in the first four laps. This set up one of Cammish's best displays as an Alliance Ford driver: winning a fight with Sutton. The reigning champion dived down the inside at Westfield with three and a half laps remaining, but ran wide and Cammish got the cutback to squeeze back in front at Sheene Curve. The battle was then called off, Alliance mindful that it needed the points for its ultimately successful bid to win the teams' championship, although it was BMW that claimed the manufacturers' crown.

And now it was all down to this. With the one-point gap, it was a straight head-to-head between Hill and Ingram. In the Laser Tools garage, a helmeted Hill hugged each and every one of the folk who work on his car before climbing aboard, mindful of how much they have contributed to a story that should never have been accessible to someone of such limited financial means. Next door at Excelr8, Ingram strode through a crowd of well-wishers and then stood contemplatively, alone, in the corner, absent-mindedly smoothing back his hair, watching on the TV monitor the Carrera Cup's attempts to navigate the wet GP circuit. >>







Turkington fight  
with Taylor-Smith  
scotched his back-up role

On the out-laps to the grid, Ingram skated off the road at Surtees. No grip. But still, surely from one place back at the start he could get past a BMW that would be bound to be slithering around in the early laps, and build a cushion for title number two...

That did indeed appear to be the case. From the reversed-grid seventh, he was already past Hill at Paddock for sixth, then surged past Cammish off Clearways for fifth. When Turkington got bumped wide by Taylor-Smith at Druids, Ingram was fourth and now Hill had no one to help him.

"Tom put another set of front tyres on after the two laps to the grid, so at the start of the race he was strong," said Hill. "He had all the traction in the world for those first three laps, and my pressures were still coming up. We've done this so many times now, we know what window we need to be in with the car, and Craig [Porley, Hill's engineer] played a crucial role yet again in delivering me an amazing wet car, as he has done pretty much every time this year. You think about all the wet races I've actually won this year, and it's a huge credit to Craig."

Sure enough, Ingram was soon floundering. That Hyundai has been absolutely mighty all season, and it's easy to forget that there was one occasion when it looked distinctly mediocre: in wet qualifying at Snetterton in May. Clearly there is a window of wetness that the car just doesn't like. Hill went past on the fifth lap of 15 to grab third place, and by the finish Ingram had dropped behind Cammish and Turkington for a distant sixth.



Hill's championship is  
his first in car racing

## "Initially I was thinking, 'God he's got me, what am I going to do here?' I thought, 'Just stay calm'"

"Just a massive lack of grip, so I couldn't get it stopped, I couldn't turn it, I couldn't get off the corner," mused a desolate Ingram. "I just felt like I was on an old tyre right from the get-go. Frustrating, disappointing, but it's one race out of 30, isn't it? It's just that this one race out of 30 was the one we needed. I don't think we can be disappointed overall this year because we've done fantastically."

Up front. Well, what did you expect? No one bets against Sutton in the wet, especially when he's armed with a decent amount of hybrid. Sure enough, he dived inside Cook at Graham Hill Bend on the fifth lap, Taylor-Smith's eagerness to follow through inadvertently stymying Ingram even more by allowing Hill to slip easily past the Vauxhall as it lost momentum.

Hill didn't need to pass Cook for second, but when the Toyota got sideways at Graham Hill Bend he was able to comfortably slip through into Surtees. "Initially I was thinking, 'God he's got me, what am I going to do here?'" recounted Hill of his fight with Ingram. "Is he just going to drive off into the distance again like he was sort of doing in race two? I thought, 'Just stay calm', and I saw that his pace halted after the end of the second lap, and I thought, 'Hang on, it's coming', and then it started to swing massively in my favour with the car, and I was just laser-focused with it."

After passing Cook, Hill saved a huge slide on the GP loop: "To be honest I'd used the tyre pretty hard to get that move done with Tom, and then the car felt so stable I just kept pushing until I got Josh. I just wanted to be safe, to have that security there points-wise. And then the rears started to fall off. First of all I thought I had a puncture, and then I just trod really carefully – I went a lot slower through the next four or five corners and realised the rear was OK, it was just going away, and then I kept it calm."

'Calm' is the right word and one that, rightly or wrongly, has not often been applied to Hill in the past. His financial struggle throughout his career is a large contributory factor. With everything in place since his move to WSR in 2022, Hill and his pal Porley have turned a rough diamond into a beautiful gem. As darkness fell at Brands, the champagne-drenched engineer cried amid manhugs: "We finally tamed him, didn't we?"



## SUTTON: WE SHOULD HAVE WON ALL THREE



Ash Sutton was pretty much taking the Michael in the last race at Brands. When he passed Josh Cook for the lead, there were nine and a half laps to go. When he took the chequered flag, he was 10.269 seconds in front.

Form apart, it was a tough weekend for Sutton, whose father was taken ill on Saturday and who spent much of the night before race day travelling to visit him. The Suttons are a close-knit family, and everyone in the BTCC paddock was wishing them well.

There's no doubt now that the Alliance Racing squad's 2022-23 winter of development of the Ford Focus ST has been caught up – and more – by the 2023-24 tweaks by Excelr8 Motorsport and West Surrey Racing to the Hyundai and BMW respectively. But Sutton reckons that work done before the final three race weekends of the season mean the car is still a force.

"It was mega," beamed Sutton. "Today's a 'what if?' day unfortunately. If we didn't get taken out in race one, I'm confident that we had the pace to win all three races. The car's just been mega all weekend. To fight back from last to fifth and then turn that reversed-grid third into a win by some margin, awesome!"

"The plan is to try and move forward [over the winter]. We didn't want to hand that title over, and it hurts. I want to take that back from Jake. Next year we'll be coming back stronger if we can, find some more pace in the car, develop it more if we can, and try and sign off that fifth title I'm chasing..."

The NAPA squad also enjoyed good form from Dan Cammish, who ended up tied for fourth on points with Turkington (but behind on wins countback), while Sam Osborne has made a huge step forward since Rory Butcher was taken on board to coach him, and has finished in the top 10 in eight of the nine races under the Scot's watch.

## RESULTS BTCC RD 10/10, BRANDS HATCH (GBR), 6 OCT R1 (18 LAPS – 43.797 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	<b>Jake Hill</b> (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (S)	30m59.950s
2	<b>Colin Turkington</b> (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (S)	+1.105s
3	<b>Tom Ingram</b> (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (S)	+2.142s
4	<b>Mikey Doble</b> (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (S)	+3.375s
5	<b>Dan Cammish</b> (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (M)	+9.906s
6	<b>Aron Taylor-Smith</b> (IRL)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra (M)	+10.861s
7	<b>Daryl DeLeon</b> (PHL)	Unlimited Motorsport / Cupra Leon (S)	+11.891s
8	<b>Dan Rowbottom</b> (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (M)	+14.558s
9	<b>Tom Chilton</b> (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (M)	+15.390s
10	<b>Andrew Watson</b> (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (M)	+18.942s
11	<b>Dan Zelos</b> (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (M)	+19.925s
12	<b>Sam Osborne</b> (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (M)	+20.815s
13	<b>Chris Smiley</b> (GBR)	Restart Racing / Cupra Leon (M)	+23.562s
14	<b>Nick Halstead</b> (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N (M)	+51.694s
15	<b>Scott Sumpton</b> (GBR)	Restart Racing / Cupra Leon (M)	-1 lap
R	<b>Aiden Moffat</b> (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (M)	10 laps-puncture/off
R	<b>Ash Sutton</b> (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST (S)	0 laps-accident
R	<b>Josh Cook</b> (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (S)	0 laps-accident
R	<b>Adam Morgan</b> (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport (M)	0 laps-accident
R	<b>Rob Huff</b> (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport (M)	0 laps-accident

**Winner's average speed** 84.77mph. **Fastest lap** Ingram 1m30.641s, 96.64mph.

**Q3** 1 Turkington 1m29.333s; 2 Ingram 1m29.369s; 3 Sutton 1m29.463s; 4 Cook 1m29.582s; 5 Taylor-Smith 1m29.820s; 6 Hill 1m29.825s.

**Q2** Sutton 1m29.326s; Cook 1m29.411s; Taylor-Smith 1m29.430s; Turkington 1m29.431s; Hill 1m29.440s; Ingram 1m29.462s; 7 Doble 1m29.618s; 8 DeLeon 1m29.780s; 9 Morgan 1m29.871s; 10 Cammish 1m29.895s; 11 Moffat 1m30.137s; 12 Rowbottom 1m30.891s.

**Q1 – GROUP 1** Sutton 1m29.247s; Taylor-Smith 1m29.409s; Ingram 1m29.416s; Hill 1m29.601s; Cook 1m29.748s; Morgan 1m29.754s; 13 Huff 1m29.872s; 14 Watson 1m30.045s; 16 Zelos 1m30.391s; 18 Osborne 1m30.707s.

**Q1 – GROUP 2** Turkington 1m29.589s; Doble 1m29.736s; Rowbottom 1m29.841s; DeLeon 1m29.959s; Moffat 1m30.012s; Cammish 1m30.076s; 15 Chilton 1m30.083s; 17 Smiley 1m30.496s; 19 Sumpton 1m31.134s; 20 Halstead 1m32.479s.

**GRID RACE 2** Decided by result of Race 1.

**RACE 2** (15 LAPS – 36.498 MILES)

1 Ingram (M) 22m59.111s; 2 Hill (M) +1.421s; 3 Turkington (M) +1.763s; 4 Cammish (M) +6.016s; 5 Sutton (M) +7.708s; 6 Taylor-Smith (M) +16.292s; 7 Cook (M) +16.646s; 8 Moffat (S) +16.920s; 9 Chilton (M) +17.763s; 10 Osborne (S) +19.285s; 11 Watson (M) +22.127s; 12 Smiley (S) +23.387s; 13 DeLeon (M) +24.409s; 14 Zelos (S) +24.693s; 15 Sumpton (S) +27.912s; 16 Huff (M) +27.930s; 17 Halstead (S) +40.370s; R Rowbottom (M) 12 laps-puncture; NC Doble (M) 9 laps; NS Morgan damage.

**Winner's average speed** 95.27mph.

**Fastest lap** Ingram 1m30.326s, 96.98mph.

**GRID RACE 3** Decided by result of Race 2, with top seven reversed.

**RACE 3** (15 LAPS – 36.498 MILES)

1 Sutton 25m36.184s; 2 Hill +10.269s; 3 Cook

+11.730s; 4 Cammish +17.148s; 5 Turkington +18.339s; 6 Ingram +21.707s; 7 Osborne +23.001s; 8 Watson +23.945s; 9 Moffat +24.360s; 10 Morgan +26.688s; 11 Doble +27.161s; 12 Taylor-Smith +28.569s; 13 Zelos +28.969s; 14 Chilton +31.603s; 15 Rowbottom +31.815s; 16 Smiley +36.646s; 17 DeLeon +40.686s; 18 Sumpton +42.798s; 19 Halstead +46.948s; R Huff 9 laps-loss of power. **Winner's average speed** 85.53mph.

**Fastest lap** Sutton 1m40.667s, 87.01mph.

**TYRES** (S) = soft; (M) = medium; everyone on wets in race 3.

**CHAMPIONSHIP**

1 Hill 421; 2 Ingram 413; 3 Sutton 365; 4 Turkington 346; 5 Cammish 346; 6 Cook 327; 7 Taylor-Smith 224; 8 Morgan 201; 9 Huff 195; 10 Chilton 187.

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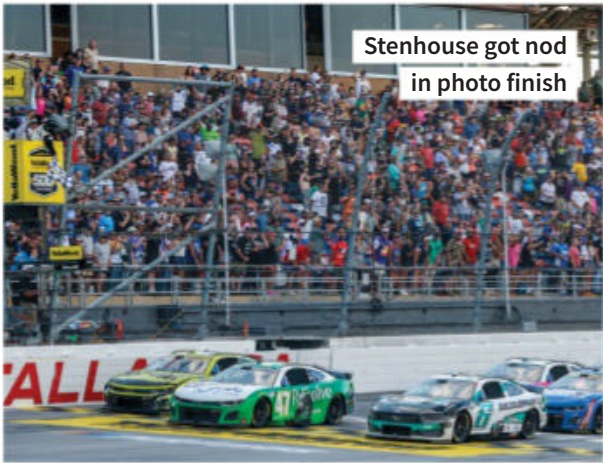


# Stenhouse wins a three-wide Talladega classic

**NASCAR CUP**  
**TALLADEGA (USA)**  
**6 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 31/36**

Ricky Stenhouse Jr became the 18th different winner of the 2024 NASCAR Cup season when he beat Brad Keselowski and William Byron to the finish line in a three-wide photo finish at Talladega. It was a dramatic ending to an action-packed race, with just 0.006 seconds between Stenhouse and Keselowski at the chequered flag.

It was also his first victory since winning the 2023 Daytona 500, 65 races ago. Stenhouse won despite a significant hole in the left-side door of his JTG Daugherty Racing Chevrolet, evidence of his near-miss just a few laps earlier. The race was pushed



into overtime when leader Austin Cindric spun after an awkward shove, igniting a massive 23-car pile-up that forced a red flag.

Before that, the race was relatively clean, although Daniel Suarez spun early while trying to blend back into the line after being lapped. Stage two ended with heavy impacts for Ross Chastain and Ryan Blaney.

Byron was the highest-placed playoff driver and is now locked into the Round of 8. Entering Charlotte's elimination race, Chase Elliott is on the bubble, with Joey Logano, Suarez, Cindric and Chase Briscoe out.

**NICK DEGROOT**

**WEEKEND WINNERS**


**NASCAR CUP**  
**TALLADEGA (USA)**  
Ricky Stenhouse Jr  
JTG Daugherty Racing (Chevrolet Camaro)

**INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE**  
**INDIANAPOLIS (USA)**  
Sheldon van der Linde/Dries Vanthoor/  
Charles Weerts  
Team WRT (BMW M4 GT3)

**EUROCUP-3**  
**JEREZ (ESP)**  
**Race 1** Christian Ho  
Campos Racing  
**Race 2** Bruno del Pino  
MP Motorsport

**BRAZILIAN STOCK CARS**  
**BUENOS AIRES (ARG)**  
**Race 1** Daniel Serra  
Eurofarma RC (Chevrolet Cruze)  
**Race 2** Gabriel Casagrande  
A Mattheis Vogel (Chevrolet Cruze)

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# WRT BMW squad makes it two in a row at Indy

**INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE**  
**INDIANAPOLIS (USA)**  
**5 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 4/4**

Crossing the line first, yet not winning the race. That was the scenario faced by Wright Motorsports Porsche trio Laurin Heinrich, Elliott Skeer and Adam Adelson at the end of last Saturday's Indianapolis 8 Hour. Instead, a five-second penalty for the Ohio squad handed the win to Team WRT BMW line-up Sheldon van der Linde, Charles Weerts and Dries Vanthoor.

WRT, 2023 winner at the Brickyard, dominated much of the opening half of the Intercontinental GT Challenge finale

and ran 1-2 at the halfway point, but a series of safety cars and strategic swings meant that Wright's green-and-yellow 911 GT3-R became a potent threat for victory in the final four hours. That feeling only became stronger when WRT's second M4 GT3 fell foul of a diffuser failure and Heinrich looked to be able to fend off the Belgian squad's challenge as darkness fell.

That was until Wright's penalty for impeding another competitor on pitroad. Suddenly, Vanthoor had a clear objective: get within 5s of Heinrich at the flag, and the win was his. In a tense finale, the two factory aces traded tenths of a second back and forth until the pendulum swung in Vanthoor's favour and the Belgian

crossed the line 4.740s behind Heinrich. As a result, WRT became the first team to take back-to-back wins at the event. Wright finished second, with Mercedes team GruppeM Racing completing the overall podium courtesy of Maro Engel, Jules Gounon and Mikael Grenier.

Fourth went to the Racers Edge Motorsports Acura, in which former IndyCar racers Zach Veatch and Gabby Chaves were in the line-up, while Alexander Sims and Tommy Milner anchored DXDT Racing's Corvette to fifth.

Weerts clinched the IGTC drivers' title, and Porsche earned the manufacturers' crown for the third time.

**DAVEY EUWEMA**



# Bagnaia again but Acosta provides the fireworks

**MOTOGP**  
**MOTEGI (JPN)**  
**5-6 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 16/20**

As Francesco Bagnaia took another chip out of Jorge Martin's lead in the seemingly endless 2024 MotoGP title race, Pedro Acosta reminded us in Japan that world championship battles are sometimes just a tad overrated.

Here was a young man unburdened by any of that narrative. A phenomenon who came to Motegi in form, looking to defy the limitations of his KTM and simply win the Japanese Grand Prix for the sake of that considerable honour. Hunting for that breakthrough victory he's been able to smell since the first round of his rookie season.

The almost offensively talented Spaniard nailed pole position for the first time. And he would line up right beside Bagnaia, leader of the dominant Ducati hordes on his red factory Desmosedici GP24. Then, after losing the sprint lead and wresting it back from Bagnaia, Acosta dropped the bike into the gravel trap with four laps remaining.

Would Sunday bring redemption for what he called a "stupid mistake"? Would he throttle back?

Again, Acosta lost the lead to Bagnaia at the start. And once more, he bit the dust pushing that fraction too hard. Eager to line up a move on Bagnaia, he lost control at the final corner of lap three. Game over. Zero points.

Motegi is a KTM-friendly track, but that only meant the Austrian bikes were a little closer than usual to their rivals from across the Brenner pass. Acosta still had to defy his ride's limitations in the most literal sense. And pleasingly for those holding tickets for the next race in Australia, he vowed to keep doing so. "I'm not going to accept that Ducati is better than KTM," remarked the 20-year-old with box-office stubbornness after the second fall.

"We know we're not at Ducati's level.

But we saw that they're not untouchable. There are times in life when you have to gamble. And even more so when 'Pecco' [Bagnaia] is in front. He's not going to risk it, but I am."

We will never know if a prudent Pecco would really have allowed precocious Pedro to beat him in Japan. Thanks in part to Acosta's self-destructions, Bagnaia scored his eighth GP win of the season and also took the sprint. And yes, he closed the points gap on Jorge Martin (Pramac Ducati) from 21 to 10.

This weekend it was Martin's turn to make a costly mistake – but it didn't come in the race. Uncomfortable on the bike for most of the weekend, he fell in the crucial final phase of qualifying. That put him 11th on the grid and firmly on the back foot.

Fortunately for Martin, he put in a reasonable damage limitation in the sprint, finishing fourth behind Marc Marquez.

Then, claiming to have learned valuable lessons following the eight-time world champion's Gresini Ducati, Martin rediscovered rocketship mode for Sunday. He placed himself well over an opening lap described as a "jungle" by VR46 Ducati rider Fabio Di Giannantonio, and passed Brad Binder (KTM) for second moments after Acosta's early fall.

Then came a cat-and-mouse stalemate as Martin shadowed Bagnaia home. As Martin said afterwards, Bagnaia is a "master of this kind of situation" and made sure he did just enough to keep ahead as both battled tyre wear. The Spaniard was happy enough with his haul given the qualifying setback.

Marquez also spent the races working his way up the field after qualifying strife. He'd set a lap good enough for pole on Saturday and thought he was sitting pretty in the garage as fine drizzle sprinkled the track. Thanks to a technical glitch in the stewards'







Martin, Bagnaia and Marquez all had reasons to smile

room, he was blissfully unaware that the lap had been cancelled for a track limits violation. That left Marquez ninth on the grid and fuming, claiming he would have ventured out again had he known about the infringement right away.

Two third places represented solid recovery work for Marquez, who like Martin emerged from the “intense” opening lap of the GP well up on his grid position.

Bagnaia’s team-mate Enea Bastianini had a solid weekend after a hefty crash in Friday practice. He qualified fourth, fought off Marquez to take second in the sprint, then followed him home in the GP.

Maverick Vinales completed the front row for Aprilia but did his usual fading trick in the races, while Franco Morbidelli (Pramac Ducati) secured a pair of solid fifths after passing Binder late in the GP.

The home marques had Sundays to forget, with Honda’s Joan Mir rammed from behind by Alex Marquez while in the points, and Yamaha’s Fabio Quartararo losing 11th when his fuel ran dry in sight of the line. At least Takaaki Nakagami (LCR Honda) could grab three points at his last home race as a full-time MotoGP rider.

RICHARD ASHER

RESULTS **MOTOGP ROUND 16/20, MOTEGI (JPN), 6 OCTOBER (24 LAPS – 71.597 MILES)**

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	<b>Francesco Bagnaia</b> (ITA)	Ducati	42m09.790s
2	<b>Jorge Martin</b> (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+1.189s
3	<b>Marc Marquez</b> (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	+3.822s
4	<b>Enea Bastianini</b> (ITA)	Ducati	+4.358s
5	<b>Franco Morbidelli</b> (ITA)	Pramac Ducati	+17.940s
6	<b>Brad Binder</b> (ZAF)	KTM	+18.502s
7	<b>Marco Bezzecchi</b> (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+19.371s
8	<b>Fabio Di Giannantonio</b> (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+20.199s
9	<b>Aleix Espargaro</b> (ESP)	Aprilia	+30.442s
10	<b>Jack Miller</b> (AUS)	KTM	+31.184s
11	<b>Johann Zarco</b> (FRA)	LCR Honda	+31.567s
12	<b>Fabio Quartararo</b> (FRA)	Yamaha	+32.299s
13	<b>Takaaki Nakagami</b> (JPN)	LCR Honda	+33.003s
14	<b>Luca Marini</b> (ITA)	Honda	+35.974s
15	<b>Raul Fernandez</b> (ESP)	Trackhouse Aprilia	+39.321s
16	<b>Alex Rins</b> (ESP)	Yamaha	+40.839s
17	<b>Remy Gardner</b> (AUS)	Yamaha	+59.547s
R	<b>Pedro Acosta</b> (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	12 laps-accident
R	<b>Maverick Vinales</b> (ESP)	Aprilia	11 laps-accident
R	<b>Augusto Fernandez</b> (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	6 laps-accident
R	<b>Lorenzo Savadori</b> (ITA)	Trackhouse Aprilia	1 lap-technical
R	<b>Alex Marquez</b> (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	0 laps-accident
R	<b>Joan Mir</b> (ESP)	Honda	0 laps-accident

**Winner’s average speed** 101.885mph. **Fastest lap** Martin 1m44.461s, 102.809mph.

**QUALIFYING 2** 1 **Acosta** 1m43.018s; 2 **Bagnaia** 1m43.264s; 3 **Vinales** 1m43.441s; 4 **Bastianini** 1m43.539s; 5 **Binder** 1m43.661s; 6 **Morbidelli** 1m43.828s; 7 **Di Giannantonio** 1m43.998s; 8 **Bezzecchi** 1m44.073s; 9 **M Marquez** 1m44.136s; 10 **A Marquez** 1m44.263s; 11 **Martin** 1m44.303s; 12 **Quartararo** 1m44.497s.

**QUALIFYING 1** **Morbidelli** 1m43.746s; **Quartararo** 1m44.005s; 13 **R Fernandez** 1m44.122s; 14 **Miller** 1m44.193s; 15 **Espargaro** 1m44.202s; 16 **Zarco** 1m44.302s; 17 **Mir** 1m44.498s; 18 **A Fernandez** 1m44.547s; 19 **Rins** 1m44.552s; 20 **Marini** 1m44.648s; 21 **Nakagami** 1m44.886s; 22 **Savadori** 1m45.422s; 23 **Gardner** 1m45.594s.

**SPRINT RACE** (12 LAPS – 35.798 MILES)

1 **Bagnaia** 21m01.074s; 2 **Bastianini** +0.181s; 3 **M Marquez** +0.349s; 4 **Martin** +2.498s; 5 **Morbidelli** +4.326s; 6 **Di Giannantonio** +4.446s; 7 **A Marquez** +11.444s; 8 **Miller** +11.875s; 9 **Vinales** +11.947s; 10 **Bezzecchi** +12.299s; 11 **R Fernandez** +14.559s; 12 **Quartararo** +14.645s; 13 **Marini** +15.886s; 14 **Zarco** +16.170s; 15 **A Fernandez** +20.522s; 16 **Rins** +24.415s; 17 **Savadori** +25.482s; 18 **Gardner** +32.620s; R **Mir** 11 laps-accident; R **Espargaro** 9 laps-accident; R **Acosta** 8 laps-accident; R **Nakagami** 4 laps-accident; R **Binder** 2 laps-electrical.  
**Winner’s average speed** 102.194mph. **Fastest lap** Acosta 1m43.825s, 103.438mph.

**RIDERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 **Martin** 392; 2 **Bagnaia** 382; 3 **Bastianini** 313; 4 **M Marquez** 311; 5 **Binder** 183; 6 **Acosta** 181; 7 **Vinales** 163; 8 **Morbidelli** 136; 9 **Bezzecchi** 134; 10 **Di Giannantonio** 134.

**CONSTRUCTORS’ CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 **Ducati** 574; 2 **KTM** 275; 3 **Aprilia** 255; 4 **Yamaha** 97; 5 **Honda** 56.



Martin charged through to score important points

**NEXT REPORT**  
Australian GP  
24 October  
issue



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# Six-hour Donington Park race scheduled

## EQUIPE CLASSIC RACING

Equipe Classic Racing will run a six-hour historic race at Donington Park next year, designed to recreate the spirit of the early Spa Six Hours contests.

While the Belgian event has become increasingly dominated by Ford GT40s – the machines represented a quarter of this year's entry – these cars will be banned from taking part in Equipe's race, which instead is open to the smaller-engined pre-1966 FIA-spec GTs that are synonymous with the organiser. The 5 July race is open to teams of between two and four drivers all competing in the same

car and refuelling from the pitlane.

"We're trying to recreate the heady days of the early Spa Six Hours but do it our way, which is affordable club racing," said Equipe partner Rob Cull. "It allows people who can't afford to do the Spa Six Hours the chance to do a six-hour race and enjoy that."

"The GT40s just dominate proceedings and I think it's gone away from what it was. You can get bullied by the GT40s as they hunt in packs and tend to destroy people's races – if you're not a super-experienced driver, it can be lethal in the dark."

While Equipe's race will be open to pro drivers, Cull said that standards will be

strictly policed to avoid unnecessary collisions. Cull added that "a big party" will be held after the race on the Saturday night, before Equipe's regular categories are in action on the Sunday.

Entries have been priced at £3500 and Cull is optimistic of achieving a full grid, especially as interest is already proving high. "We had nine entries in the first two hours on Monday [last week, after the race was first announced to Equipe members]," said Cull, with priority being given to existing Equipe racers. "It's super-exciting and we're expecting to be oversubscribed."

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

## Victory on Nordschleife seals Everard the title

### HISTORICS

British driver James Everard recently won the German Tourenwagen Golden Era title after claiming victory at the final round on the Nurburgring Nordschleife in his Group A BMW M3 E30.

Everard had a number of Early DTM class wins at previous rounds on the Nurburgring Grand Prix circuit, Red Bull Ring and Spa in a series that attracts drivers including Mucke Motorsport boss Peter Mucke, period star

Kris Nissen and German GT champion Sebastian Asch (son of two-time DTM runner-up Roland). But in his first race on the Nordschleife, Everard's victory there was his first overall success and enough to clinch the championship.

"We did a little bit on the sim beforehand but not enough, and of course you have the fear on the Nordschleife, but when the pressure's on you learn it fast!" said Everard, who managed five laps aboard his



Range Rover the day before.

Running a full race-spec 2.3-litre engine and Drenth gearbox, plus Group A suspension, the Vink Motorsport-prepared car qualified third, behind Asch's Ford Sierra RS500 and the ex-World Touring Car Championship Honda

Accord Euro R of Peter Rikli.

After chasing Rikli for second, Everard "passed him at 151mph", and was catching Asch before the RS500 suffered a blowout. "You just had to be brave, and I was confident I knew where I was going," added Everard.

**MARK PAULSON**



# Sherwood avoids injury in roll over barrier

## BRITISH F4

British Formula 4 racer Jack Sherwood escaped injury after a dramatic crash at Brands Hatch last weekend during which his car rolled over the top of the Westfield barrier on the circuit's Grand Prix loop.

Rodin Motorsport driver Sherwood had enjoyed a storming start to the third F4 race, and had surged into the lead in the early laps. He was looking well-placed to score a maiden victory when a sudden left-rear puncture led to him spinning off the track and his car was launched into a series of rolls, ending up on the other side of the barrier. Sherwood was able to walk away unharmed and said this was testament to the strength of modern single-seaters and their halo cockpit protection devices.

"I just turned in, had a puncture and that caused me to spin," explained Sherwood. "And then the punctured wheel rim dug in and, unfortunately, I flipped. Without



the halo, I wouldn't be here [uninjured], so big thanks to that."

Despite the severity of the crash, Sherwood's thoughts had quickly turned to the day's concluding race. "The first thing I did was get out of the car and have a look at it," he said. "When I saw the amount of damage, I was like, 'Ah, we can't go out for race four' – I was a bit frustrated about that. It did a tub and there was quite a bit of damage."

Sherwood said the incident was

representative of a season in which he has not been able to convert his pace into strong results and finished fifth in the final standings. "Considering we've had the pace to win all year and not got a win – the loss of the first place was the thing that really hurts," he concluded. "But that's just the way the cookie crumbles sometimes. It was kind of the story of our year – pace was mega but results didn't quite come."

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

# ROKiT to launch new sim racing competition



**BRITISH F4**

A new version of ROKiT's sim racing competition will be held next year, and this time five winners will receive prize drives.

British Formula 4 champion Deagen Fairclough was the inaugural winner of the Racing Star shootout in 2022 and received a fully

funded season in the series last year. He then retained ROKiT's backing for his all-conquering campaign with Hitech this season.

The new ROKiT Racing Drivers competition will be much bigger in scale and will be a global contest, with anyone aged between 14 and 18 around the world who has access to some form of simulator

able to enter.

The series each of the winners will compete in has yet to be determined since it will depend upon a range of individual factors, including age. More details about the competition will be revealed in the coming months.

**STEPHEN LICKORISH**

**P60 OPINION**



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New Mini series owners  
want to boost JCW grids



## Beauchamp and Caudle to take over Mini Challenge next year

### MINI CHALLENGE

Long-serving Mini Challenge coordinator Rhea Beauchamp and current clerk of the course Luke Caudle will take over the series next year as promoter Antony Williams steps aside, and will use it as an opportunity to try to boost JCW grids.

Beauchamp and Caudle will work with a yet-to-be-appointed third key figure, who will be responsible for the technical side of the championship, particularly in assisting new teams get to grips with the cars.

"I've been doing this for 21 years and I always say my heart's the Mini Challenge, it's in my blood," said Beauchamp. "From Antony's perspective, he needs to focus more on touring cars [Excelr8 Motorsport] and his business outside of motorsport.

"We've got a three-year plan, we're going to be looking at how we can make it more

cost-effective for the customer. We're keeping entry fees the same for next year, which is fantastic, and we're looking to develop some new ideas, like getting discounted parts packages for them."

Considering Williams's long involvement with the series, Beauchamp added it was important that others with plenty of experience of the Mini world would take over the reins. "Luke and I have been on the ground, we've been listening to the customers," she said. "We know what they want, we know how the paddock runs and I'm really excited to start our new venture."

Several prospective drivers attended last weekend's Brands Hatch finale to get a feel for the series. "We've been inviting them to soak up the atmosphere, and we gave a presentation," said Beauchamp. "They then had the chance to meet some of the teams."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

### HICKTON STEPS UP TO JCW

Mini Challenge Trophy title contender Harry Hickton made his JCW debut last weekend at Brands Hatch. Hickton took over the Excelr8 Motorsport car of champion Dan Zelos, who was again in BTCC action, and achieved a best result of sixth in the opener. Also joining the grid was two-time Mini champion Lee Allen, who finished 12th in race two on his return to the series for the first time in over a decade.

### BRITISH F4'S SCHEDULE

British Formula 4 has confirmed its 2025 schedule and it will again visit Zandvoort, in July, after holding its first overseas event at the Dutch circuit this year. The series will continue to feature at eight of the 10 British Touring Car meetings, this time skipping the Brands Hatch Indy and Croft fixtures. Oulton Park therefore returns to the calendar, while there will again be a separate Silverstone Grand Prix circuit trip as the second round in May.

### CHRIS MOUNT

Tributes have been paid to long-standing scrutineer Chris Mount, who died last week. Mount began scrutineering in the 1970s and enjoyed lengthy associations with the British Racing Drivers' Club, the MG Car Club and MotorSport Vision Racing. He also served as deputy chief scrutineer at the British Grand Prix and helped train scrutineers around the world.

### NEW NAVARRA DEBUTS

Several UK categories were among those taking part in the first racing event at the revamped Navarra circuit in Spain (below) last weekend. The track joined MotorSport Vision's portfolio at the end of 2022 and has since undergone a raft of improvements, including a recent lengthening of the layout by 650 metres. Modified Fords, Trackday Championship and Trackday Trophy were among the series getting an early chance to sample the new configuration.



## Johnson first confirmed GB3 driver

### GB3

American Nikita Johnson will return for a full-time tilt at the GB3 Championship next season with Hitech GP.

The 16-year-old became the youngest race winner in the single-seater category when he triumphed in the partially reversed-grid race at Zandvoort. He had missed the opening two rounds due to not being old enough to compete.

Johnson, who took another win at the Brands Hatch season finale with VRD by Arden, also finished runner-up in USF Pro 2000 this term following his second place the previous year in the USF2000 Championship – both junior series on the pathway to IndyCar.

Meanwhile, VRD has confirmed that it will run exclusively under its own name from next season. It first joined GB3 in 2022

via a collaboration with Arden.

Team principal of the American squad, Dan Mitchell, said: "It is an honour to be given this opportunity by GB3 and [championship organiser] MSV to compete in what I believe is the premier development formula for young drivers. Maintaining and strengthening our presence in the championship is vital for us as we establish ourselves further in Europe."





## Solberg claims victory in Ireland on Defender Rally Challenge

### RALLYING

Petter Solberg returned to off-road action last weekend as the 2003 World Rally champion claimed victory on his debut in the final round of the Defender Rally Challenge in Ireland.

The Norwegian driver took part at the wheel of a Land Rover 90, complete with Castrol Edge livery, and claimed class victory by more than a minute on the Clare Forestry Rally despite having only driven a handful of kilometres in the machine prior to the event.

"I wasn't so sure what to expect from this car and this championship, but that was so much fun," said Solberg. "The car was nice to drive, really interesting. You know me, I would always like a little bit more testing before an event but, when this one started, I was feeling happy with the car straight away.

"We had a puncture on the first stage and, with only one spare tyre, I took it steady in the second one – I didn't want to retire because we ran out of spares.

After that I took two spares, so we didn't have to worry about that at all.

"The stages were quite challenging and slippery in places with the rain and the weather coming in – but I have really enjoyed this event.

"It was also fantastic to compete with such a great group of drivers and co-drivers. The enthusiasm, passion and enjoyment we saw today is what our sport is all about – the Defender Rally Challenge is rallying at this level at its best.

"Of course, we want rally cars to be fast, but there's also a time when a driver likes to sit comfortably as well – that's certainly the case with this Land Rover 90! We have the heater, the air conditioning, it's probably the most luxurious rally car I ever drove.

"I want to say a very big thanks to my co-driver John [Tomley] and to the whole Bowler Motorsport Team for making this happen. Ireland's a country which loves the sport of rallying, so it's totally my kind of place. It's been fantastic to meet so many fans and have such a great day."

## PHILPOTT EYEING UP A SWITCH TO V12 POWER IN 2025

### CSCC

Newly crowned Jaguar champion Colin Philpott is weighing up a switch to V12 power aboard a new XJS shell for his title defence next year.

Philpott's Powerbell concern ran Rodney Frost to the 2017 Jaguar title, under its former Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club guise, but the Slough racer had not claimed the crown himself in nearly a decade of trying, despite numerous close calls.

After an eventful opening race at Snetterton at the end of last month, where contact pitched him off at Murrays, two mid-pack finishes were enough for Philpott to clinch the title, having won seven of the season's 14 races in his straight-six engined car.

"I've been close [previously]," said Philpott. "I want to carry that #1 next year and I'm building another one, but I'm not sure whether to go V12 like James Ramm and Guy Connew because they're good for the historic stuff [as well]. It'll probably be a 12."

MARK PAULSON



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**NEW LOOK FOR FESTIVAL** Nearly 50 rally cars from across the history of the discipline took part in the Historic Rally Festival last weekend. The demonstration special stage event had a fresh look this year, with a move to largely gravel stages in the Apley and Willey estates in Shropshire. Notable cars included the ex-works Lancia 037 of David Kedward (above), which has just completed a restoration after 20 years in storage. **Photograph by Paul Lawrence**

BURGIN BY JUST A POINT

Two class wins and fastest laps at Snetterton last month sealed the MG Midget & Sprite Challenge for Ian Burgin and his Austin-Healey Frogeye Sprite. Class C runner Burgin overcame gearbox gremlins to edge last year’s champion, Class D man Hugh Simpson, by just a single point as the pair matched each other’s results at the season finale, twice finishing second and third overall to Paul Sibley.

DRAMA IN F2 TITLE DECIDER

Luke Wrench was crowned BriSCA Formula 2 stock car world champion after an eventful World Final at Smeatharpe Stadium, near Taunton, at the end of last month. Polesitter Charlie Guinchard had set the pace and held a commanding lead when he was taken out of the race by backmarker Shea Fegan. That handed control to Matt Stoneman who duly took the chequered flag, only for his car to fail post-race scrutineering and promote Wrench to victory.

AN UNKNOWN HISTORY

The unique Aerofan Mk1 Clubmans car finished fourth as an invitee in Sunday’s wet 750 Formula race at Mallory Park with Phil Hart. Unused, he believes, for at least 20 years and currently powered by a Formula Ford 1600-spec Kent engine, Hart bought the project from Jon Lee around three years ago. Adam Bennett appears to have raced it in 1972, but beyond that its history is unknown.

LOTUS ELEVEN DEBUTS

David Rose’s Lotus Eleven clone turned heads on its Historic 750 Formula race debut at Mallory Park last Sunday. Crafted in the early 1980s by Andrew Denton in New Zealand, the 742cc Coventry-Climax engined machine (below) is “a toolroom copy” of Cliff Allison and Keith Hall’s car, which finished 14th in the 1957 Le Mans 24 Hours. It was subsequently raced by Diane Dugmore in South Africa. Rose took a best result of ninth in the second race at the weekend.



O’Donovan bags a hat-trick of British Rallycross titles in Wales

BRITISH RALLYCROSS

Reigning champion Patrick O’Donovan entered last weekend’s penultimate round of the British Rallycross Championship at Pembrey knowing a brace of wins would secure his third straight crown. Driving the Peugeot 208 WRX with which he recently claimed the European Rallycross title, becoming the first British driver in 30 years to win the crown, O’Donovan delivered another crushing performance in South Wales after topping every practice session, heat and both finals.

Unique to the Pembrey circuit, the rallycross layout was used in both directions across the two days, while the heavens opened in the latter stages on day two.

Ian Barrett delivered his strongest performance to date with his revised ex-Johan Kristoffersson Volkswagen Polo, and qualified second on the grid for Saturday’s final, but he was spun out at the first corner by six-time title winner and second-row starter Julian Godfrey, who was disqualified for the incident. Steve Hill took advantage of the mess to climb to second, and the 74-year-old held on throughout to finish as runner-up to O’Donovan, with title protagonist John McCluskey third. On Sunday, it was McCluskey and Godfrey who joined O’Donovan on the front row of the grid for the final and, despite both of the chasing drivers having off-circuit excursions in the wet and slippery conditions, the race running order ended as it started.







# Giving drivers a ROKiT boost

*After Deagen Fairclough's British F4 domination with ROKiT's support, the company is now seeking to help more underfunded potential stars*

STEPHEN LICKORISH

**T**he sight of Deagen Fairclough standing on the top step of a British Formula 4 podium clutching a trophy has been one of the defining images of this season. After all, it's one that has been seen 14 times during an unprecedented campaign of domination during which he has broken multiple records. Even with the title already wrapped up, it was a sign of Fairclough's character that he still registered another two wins at Brands Hatch last weekend, again demonstrating his wet-weather prowess, to add further gloss to his performance and take those new records just a little bit more out of reach for the next generation.

Yes, it has not been the strongest of line-ups for British F4 but, if you discount the reversed-grid races – where Fairclough was often starting outside the top 10 and regular safety cars limited his potential to progress – he won 14 of the other 20 races. Regardless of the quality of the opposition, that is some achievement. Yet, despite the frequency of those successes, it could so easily have been different drivers instead enjoying those victories. Quite simply, Fairclough would not be on the British F4 grid were it not for ROKiT and the Racing Star competition it held in 2022. The contest pitted sim racers against each other in a series of rounds as they battled for what is a very rare ticket in motorsport: a fully funded season of real-life racing. At the time,

**“He’s a lovely kid. We put him in a single-seater and it was an instant, ‘Wow, this kid’s quick!’”**

Fairclough was competing in Fiesta Junior, but his family's working-class roots meant there was little prospect of him ever progressing onto the staggeringly expensive single-seater ladder. That was until he was chosen as ROKiT's Racing Star.

“He doesn't come from a rich family,” says ROKiT chairman Jonathan Kendrick. “They brought him up properly – he's respectful, he's a lovely kid and he's not arrogant, he's humble. We just fell in love with him. We put him in a single-seater and it was an instant, ‘Wow, this kid's quick!’ He's just blossomed from there.”

Fairclough's maiden single-seater campaign was certainly eye-catching. He delivered some breathtaking performances but also got caught up in a few incidents before partnering his undoubted speed with better decision-making in the second

half of the season to end up third in the standings. With a switch to the Hitech squad and retaining ROKiT's support, he was unsurprisingly one of the favourites for this year's title. But Fairclough has not forgotten how fortunate he is to be on the grid. “I'm so, so grateful to all of them for setting up that competition – I wouldn't be here without them,” he states.

“If I look back two years ago, I would have never expected myself to be at this point because motorsport financially is really hard. When we were karting, we couldn't even afford wets when it rained – that's probably helped me this year! It [winning ROKiT Racing Star] has changed my life. I was very fortunate and I put so much hard work into making sure I won that competition.”

That effort has certainly been rewarded, particularly as Kendrick is keen to support his young star in climbing further up the ladder. “He's the perfect representative for ROKiT,” declares Kendrick, who has been involved in motorsport for 50 years and started out working for Goodyear. “He's got a great personality and is very appreciative of everything he's got. I think he can go all the way and we want to support him as much as we can to get him there.”

That's a journey Kendrick is now keen to embark upon with more stars of the future. A second competition will be held next year (see News), which will have a global reach and offer an incredible five prize drives (the series has yet to be determined, and will vary slightly depending upon each winner's individual circumstances). Investing in the original Racing Star initiative was a huge gamble for Kendrick – there was certainly no guarantee that success would follow. But, having seen what is possible with Fairclough, he is determined to now help others.

“There's got to be the next Ayrton Senna or Lewis Hamilton somewhere out there,” says Kendrick of his ambition to “democratise” motorsport. “So we invented ROKiT Racing Star with my friend Bob Fernley to try to give a kid a chance, who would have never, ever had a chance. Now we are launching it again, ROKiT Racing Star version 2.0.”

More details of the new ‘Racing Drivers’ competition will be revealed over the coming weeks ahead of its launch next spring. Fairclough has certainly set a very high bar for those who follow in his footsteps, but he's also demonstrated what is possible if given the right opportunity. Any initiative that helps such underfunded drivers get a chance to realise their ambitions has to be commended, so it's good news for the sport as a whole that the original Racing Star contest was not a one-off. And, as for Fairclough, his attention will soon switch to another potentially career-defining shootout as he takes his place in the Silverstone Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award final later this month full of confidence after such a remarkable campaign. 🏆



# Methley's Cobra proves too super for its rivals

**SILVERSTONE**  
**EQUIPE SUPER SPRINT**  
**5 OCTOBER**

David Methley and his AC Cobra were among the stars as the Equipe Super Sprint returned last weekend, bringing its unique format to Silverstone.

The schedule features each driver participating in qualifying as well as three heats and a final, with the speed of each car/driver combination determining the sessions in which they compete. With each race just 10 laps long, it ensures that the drivers are pushing throughout and allows cars of similar performance to race against each other.

Methley won the final for the fastest machinery aboard his 4.7-litre Cobra, but was lucky to reach the decider unscathed after an off-track excursion at Becketts in his first race threatened to derail his event. Come the final, however, the 71-year-old led the way throughout, with the only real challenger being Richard Plant in his Morgan. "I was a bit lucky and having a much larger engine than everyone else did help, too!" Methley joked. "The start was key where I was side-by-side with the Morgan coming out of Copse, but I could just use my power out of the corner to get away."

While Methley made the most of 440bhp from his Ford V8 small-block, Plant's defensive work kept the Ford Escort RS2000 of Martin Reynolds behind him. Reynolds tried to squeeze around the outside of Plant on numerous occasions but, ultimately, to no avail. "I used what I learned from the earlier races," explained Plant. "I tried to



The Cobra was king of  
Equipe's Super Sprint

back him up, use a gear lower for Copse and then just use the torque. I was on the limit; the car can't go much faster than that."

A dramatic last lap brought an entertaining end to the second final of the day, which resulted in Harvey McBrien coming away with the spoils, narrowly beating fellow MGB racer Babak Farsian and Ed Keen's Mini. McBrien had an average getaway at best and a three-car train formed between McBrien, Farsian and Keen. A late-race safety car dragged the field back together for a short sprint to the line and it appeared to be anyone's race.

Keen stormed his way to the front to take the lead going into Brooklands on the final tour only for his gearbox to jam in second. By the time he had persuaded the gearbox to cooperate, he had dropped to third on the line. "I managed to work my way back up from fifth after a backmarker made me drop back on the safety car restart," explained Keen. "I was side-by-side with Harvey on the last lap and managed to take the lead into Brooklands but, coming out of

the last corner, I couldn't get out of second gear – I had the same problem earlier in the race as well."

Can Bitirim claimed victory in the slower final in his MGB Roadster. Bitirim managed to open a gap on the run towards Becketts after avoiding the commotion at Copse and, from then on, was never challenged by any of the other runners. "I have to be honest, even though I had the fastest lap time, it should have been a train," said Bitirim, who finished up two seconds clear of fellow MGB racer James Topliss. "I think the race was won at the first corner."

**MACIEJ HAMERA**

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### EQUIPE SUPER SPRINT

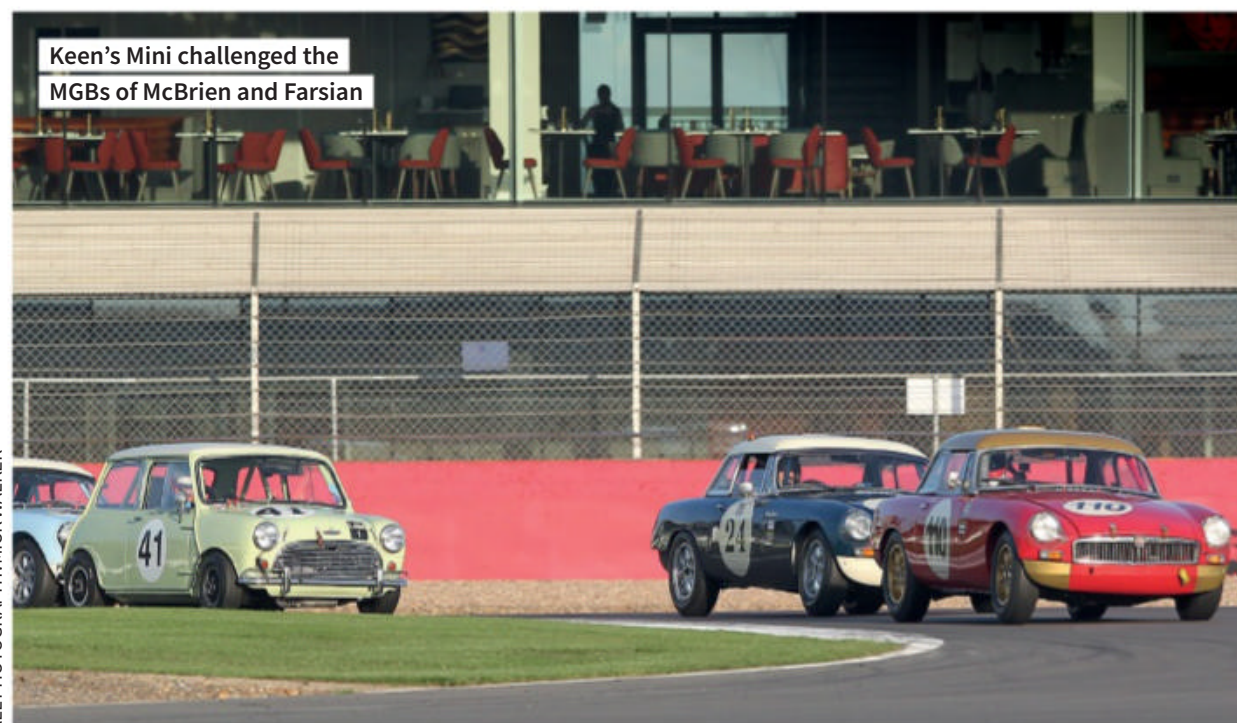
- Races 1, 4 & 7** David Methley (AC Cobra)
- Race 2** Rob Cull (TVR Grantura Mk3)
- Race 3** Tim Greenhill (MGB Roadster)
- Race 5** Paul Whight (Lotus Elan 26R)
- Race 6** Andrew Cahill (Lotus Elan 26R)
- Race 8** Joel Hopwood (Lotus Elan 26R)
- Race 9** Mark Cloutman (Austin A40)
- Final 1** Can Bitirim (MGB Roadster, below)
- Final 2** Harvey McBrien (MGB Roadster)
- Final 3** David Methley (AC Cobra)

### BCV8s/MG CUP

Jordan Spencer (MGB GTV8)



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



Keen's Mini challenged the  
MGBs of McBrien and Farsian



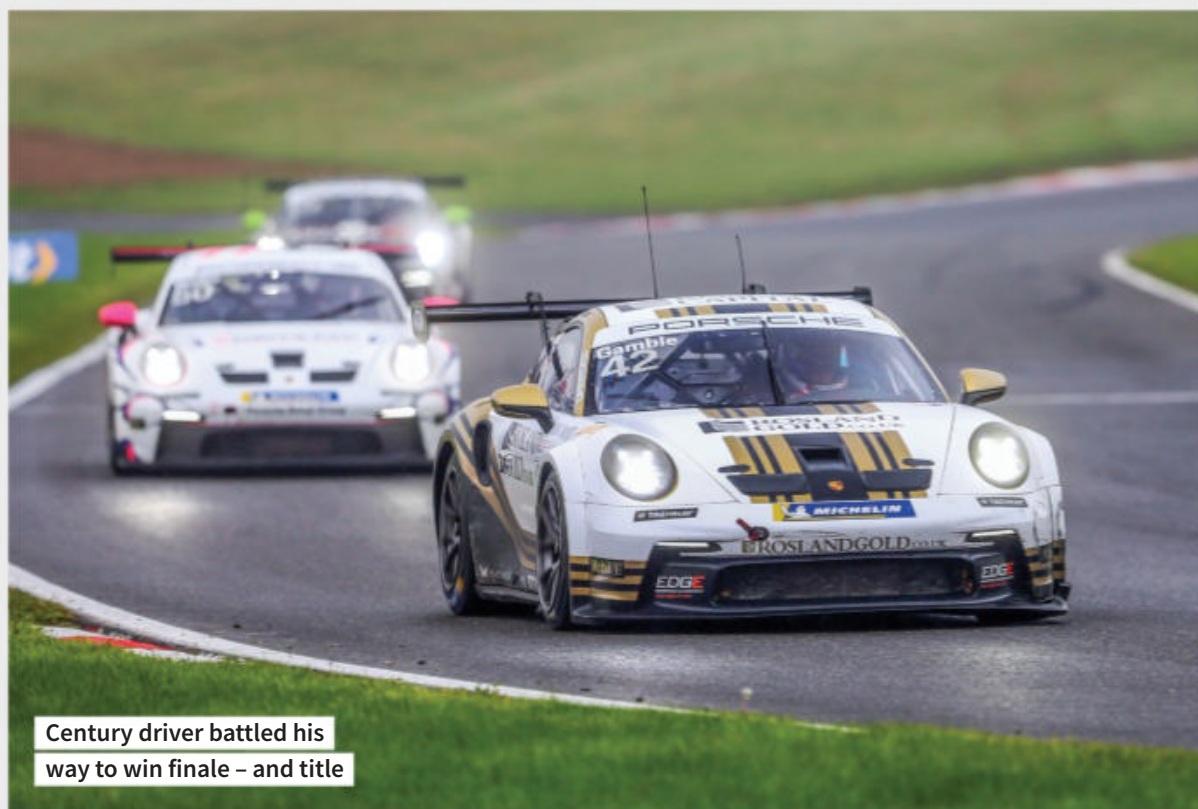
# Gamble shines bright amid the Brands gloom

## PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

The final Porsche Carrera Cup GB standings state that George Gamble claimed the title by a relatively comfortable seven points. But that does not reflect a dramatic Brands Hatch decider in which fortunes between the four key contenders constantly changed.

To illustrate how quickly roles reversed, Eden Race Drive pilot Will Martin had looked destined to build a decisive points lead while he led the opener with Gamble languishing in sixth. But things turned on their head when Martin, who aggressively battled Charles Rainford on the first lap, suddenly spun into the Paddock Hill Bend gravel and effectively ended his hopes.

Hugo Ellis of Team Parker began challenging Rainford (CCK Motorsport) after the resulting safety car and pounced when Rainford dipped a wheel off the track through Clark Curve. But the pair also had Martin's team-mate Harry Foster on their tails, and he executed brilliant consecutive passes to prevail, while Rainford also snuck ahead of Ellis at Surtees. At this point, it was advantage Rainford – especially as



Century driver battled his way to win finale – and title

pre-event leader Gamble failed to progress from sixth. “It was such an awesome and chaotic race,” enthused Rainford. “I knew I didn’t have the pace to win the race, something wasn’t quite right. I made a mistake and Harry and Ellis got past me.”

Next to wrest the advantage was Ellis. He maintained his third-place grid slot at the start of the wetter second contest and was crucially ahead of his remaining rivals. But the one on the march was Gamble. His Century Motorsport machine was unstoppable in the Kent gloom and he dived past Rainford at Paddock Hill Bend. Further around lap three, Ellis ran slightly wide at Stirlings and Gamble was through.

With Gamble also setting the fastest lap, he now had the points he needed to prevail, yet he continued his charge. On lap eight of 17, he demoted Dan Lloyd at Sheene and, two tours later, Gamble blasted past James Wallis at Clark Curve to ensure he sealed the title with a win.

“It’s crazy, then I was two [points] back so I had that pressure off instead of leading into race one,” smiled Gamble. “It was nice to be able to go out there and just send it and to do it in such a style. I’m over the moon.” After a year of ups and downs, it was a true drive of a champion.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

# Just one point decides the close Cayman contest

## PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

One point was all that separated Seb Hopkins and Max Coates at the end of a close Porsche Sprint Challenge GB fight as Coates’s wait for a TOCA title goes on.

Coates held a 10-point lead heading to Brands Hatch, but saw that dwindle after an opener in which Hopkins finished second

while Coates could not progress from fourth in a contest that ended behind the safety car. But the championship-defining moment came in race two when Coates challenged Tom Bradshaw around the outside of Druids, only for the pair to come to blows and Coates’s Graves Motorsport machine slipped back to ninth. Up ahead, Hopkins lost the lead off the line to Team Parker

stablemate Will Jenkins, but second reduced Coates’s advantage to a solitary point.

With Hopkins starting second for the finale, and Coates ninth, the destiny of the title looked to be a somewhat foregone conclusion. But Hopkins made a dreadful launch to initially slip to fourth, before repassing Ethan Hammerton, while Coates ended the opening lap fourth. But Coates could never quite challenge his rival and slipped back as rain began to fall, meaning Hopkins *just* prevailed.

“The first half of the race was a lot more nerve-wracking and it was not plain sailing,” admitted a delighted Hopkins. In contrast, Coates was disconsolate: “I couldn’t have done much more – I just didn’t have the pace.”

Jenkins won all three races and, had he been able to replicate that form across the season, he could well have been snapping far closer at Hopkins’s and Coates’s heels.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Hopkins (left) did just enough to defeat Coates (right) in Caymans

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP



# More wins for Fairclough at finale

## BRITISH F4

Deagen Fairclough ended the British Formula 4 season just as he started it with a dominant win in the Brands Hatch finale as he took his victory tally to a remarkable 14, although the weekend will be remembered for a crash for Jack Sherwood (see News).

Hitech GP driver Fairclough began the event in typical fashion with a double pole and converted the first of those to an untroubled win. The second race was the



The sun set on a record-breaking Fairclough display

rearranged Silverstone reversed-grid contest, and Leo Robinson (JHR Developments) shot clear to win after Thomas Bearman struggled to get off pole.

Sherwood was then on a mission in the 'Brands' reversed-grid bout and a great getaway sent him from sixth to third, before he went around the outside of Rowan Campbell-Pilling into Hawthorn. He then made another great move on Ella Lloyd at Surtees and looked set for a maiden win until a puncture sent him spinning at Westfield, with his car rolling spectacularly over the barriers. Sherwood escaped injury, and Rodin Motorsport team-mate Alex Ninovic inherited the spoils.

There was time for one more red flag in the finale as the drivers braved slicks on an increasingly wet track and were spinning off left, right and centre. The race was halted, and thereafter Fairclough put in another storming drive to end his record-breaking season with a final flourish.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

# Edwards and Hall enjoy Mini glory

## MINI CHALLENGE

There were not many racing laps across the first two Brands Hatch Mini Challenge contests, but there were enough to suggest some excellent action was possible. And, sure enough, the wet finale proved to be an entertaining end to the season – and was safety-car-free.

Excelr8 Motorsport driver Nathan Edwards maintained his lead at the start, but team-mate Max Hall had a poor launch, enabling Josh Porter to grab second. And he was soon under attack from Dominic Wheatley, with Porter sent sideways at Paddock Hill Bend at the start of lap two. He somehow held on but, further around the lap, he was

forced out wide at Surtees and dropped back. Hall then put Wheatley under pressure for the rest of the race, but in turn had to watch his mirrors with Jamie Osborne and Tom Ovenden lurking. It was tense but Wheatley just held on.

Earlier, Hall won an opener that featured two cautions – the second arriving belatedly after the drivers had already completed one lap past Recticel barriers that littered the track following an off for Albert Webster. Edwards also won race two after Wheatley and Lydia Walmsley had a close battle in the early stages. Wheatley then went off at Surtees, and Walmsley later also lost out to Hall after several wheel-banging moments.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Edwards pulls clear in race three as the pack squabbles behind

## RACE RESULTS

### PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

**Race 1 (17 laps) 1 Harry Foster;** 2 Charles Rainford +1.233s; 3 Hugo Ellis; 4 James Wallis; 5 Dan Lloyd; 6 George Gamble. **Fastest lap** Will Martin 1m26.748s (100.98mph). **Pole** Martin. **Starters** 22. **Race 2 (17 laps) 1 Gamble;** 2 Wallis +5.491s; 3 Stephen Jelley; 4 Will Burns; 5 Lloyd; 6 Andrew Rackstraw. **FL** Gamble 1m36.364s (90.90mph). **P** Lloyd. **S** 22. **Points 1 Gamble 105;** 2 Rainford 98; 3 Ellis 95; 4 Martin 93; 5 Matthew Rees 62; 6 Foster 55.

### PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

**Race 1 (12 laps) 1 Will Jenkins;** 2 Seb Hopkins +0.546s; 3 Tom Bradshaw; 4 Max Coates; 5 Joe Marshall; 6 Oliver Cottam. **FL** Jenkins 1m29.045s (98.37mph). **P** Hopkins. **S** 23. **Race 2 (14 laps) 1 Jenkins;** 2 Hopkins +0.706s; 3 Bradshaw; 4 Marshall; 5 Ethan Hammerton; 6 Oliver Meadows. **FL** Hopkins 1m29.258s (98.14mph). **P** Hopkins. **S** 23. **Race 3 (14 laps) 1 Jenkins;** 2 Marshall +1.233s; 3 Hopkins; 4 Coates; 5 Hammerton; 6 Cottam. **FL** Jenkins 1m29.789s (97.56mph). **P** Jenkins. **S** 23. **Points 1 Hopkins 187;** 2 Coates 186; 3 Jenkins 178; 4 Bradshaw 166; 5 Hammerton 121; 6 Cottam 105.

### BRITISH FORMULA 4

**Race 1 (13 laps) 1 Deagen Fairclough;** 2 Reza Seewooruthun +0.282s; 3 Leo Robinson; 4 Jack Sherwood; 5 James Higgins; 6 Rowan Campbell-Pilling. **FL** Fairclough 1m24.397s (103.79mph). **P** Fairclough. **S** 20. **Race 2 (14 laps) 1 Robinson;** 2 Seewooruthun +1.452s; 3 Alex Ninovic; 4 Martin Molnar; 5 Fairclough; 6 Sherwood. **FL** Ninovic 1m24.791s (103.31mph). **P** Thomas Bearman. **S** 18. **Race 3 (4 laps) 1 Ninovic;** 2 Ella Lloyd +0.771s; 3 Molnar; 4 Abbi Pulling; 5 Fairclough; 6 Zack Scoular. **FL** Sherwood 1m25.465s (102.49mph). **P** Lloyd. **S** 20. **Race 4 (10 laps) 1 Fairclough;** 2 Robinson +4.445s; 3 Seewooruthun; 4 Ninovic; 5 Higgins; 6 Kai Daryanani. **FL** Fairclough 1m35.047s (92.16mph). **P** Fairclough. **S** 19. **Points 1 Fairclough 583;** 2 Ninovic 360.5; 3 Seewooruthun 272; 4 Higgins 269.5; 5 Sherwood 230; 6 Robinson 164.

### MINI CHALLENGE

**Race 1 (7 laps) 1 Max Hall;** 2 Nathan Edwards +0.605s; 3 Marlo Cordell; 4 Dominic Wheatley; 5 Lydia Walmsley; 6 Harry Hickton. **FL** Edwards 1m37.604s (89.74mph). **P** Edwards. **S** 18. **Race 2 (11 laps) 1 Edwards;** 2 Hall +2.294s; 3 Jamie Osborne; 4 Walmsley; 5 Lewis Selby; 6 Wheatley. **FL** Edwards 1m37.653s (89.70mph). **P** Walmsley. **S** 18. **Race 3 (9 laps) 1 Edwards;** 2 Wheatley +1.807s; 3 Hall; 4 Osborne; 5 Tom Ovenden; 6 Walmsley. **FL** Walmsley 1m46.675s (82.11mph). **P** Edwards. **S** 18. **Points 1 Dan Zelos 731;** 2 Hall 679; 3 Edwards 654; 4 Osborne 645; 5 Wheatley 619; 6 Ovenden 591.

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





## Champion Hendry ends Knockhill season on a high

### KNOCKHILL KMSC 5-6 OCTOBER

Gerry Hendry wrapped up his maiden Fiesta ST Cup title last weekend by taking a pair of victories as the curtain fell on the Scottish Motor Racing Club season at Knockhill. With nine wins from 12 races, Hendry's triumph didn't come as a huge surprise to many, but the final round of the year presented the newly crowned

champion with perhaps his biggest challenge in the form of teenaged sensation Sophie Kinghorn.

Persistent rain was a constant on Sunday, and Hendry led away from pole at the start of race one, while Lorn Murray got the better of Kinghorn into Duffus Dip. With ST Challenge honours at stake, Kinghorn went on the attack and grabbed second from Murray around the outside of Clark Corner at mid-distance before beginning her pursuit of Hendry.

Behind, Kieren Preedy and Broddy Orr scrapped for fourth before coming to blows at Leslie's on the seventh lap. Orr went spearing into the McIntyre's gravel, while Preedy was out with broken steering. The race was red-flagged a couple of laps later, and Hendry declared the winner.

It was a similar story at the start of the second race, with Hendry building a healthy lead and Kinghorn this time fending off Murray to run second. A brief safety car interruption for Stewart Scott going off at McIntyre's bunched the pack up again. Kinghorn, whose pace was matching Hendry's, produced a strong late surge and got to within a car length of the champion on the final lap, missing out on a maiden win by just 0.219 seconds and leaving Hendry a relieved winner.

"Really glad to come away with both wins this weekend," said Hendry. "I got a big challenge at the end and I think, if Sophie had another lap, she might have had me." Murray, who had completed the podium in the first race, missed out on the ST Challenge title to Kinghorn, while Orr made up for his race-one incident by taking third place in the second encounter.

When Stewart Black headed back to the paddock before the end of the opening Scottish Legends Cars final on Saturday, few could blame him for feeling a little sheepish. Brake failure approaching the hairpin was hardly his fault but, by







Black won Legends title again after contact



Duncan's Radical won a Modsports encounter



Scottish C1 Cup went down to the wire and Scott did just enough

slamming into the back of chief title rival Ben Mason, he had damaged not only the back of the #8 Coupe but also his own chances of repeating his 2023 crown.

The car Mason has shared with Steve Whitelegg and Nick Bridgeman throughout the season won the 'team' element of the championship, but Black's two wins across the weekend ensured he still claimed another individual drivers' title. Ryan McLeish won the Saturday final after a driveshaft failure had taken him out of Saturday's opening heat. Mason was then in his element in damp conditions and duly took the remaining two wins on Sunday to round off the season in style.

The visiting Pickup Truck Racing Championship put on a spectacular show on its first trip north of the border since 2021. The tail-happy trucks produced close action over a quartet of races, after which points leader and ex-British Touring Car driver Matt Simpson had extended his margin at the top of the standings.

After taking victory in race one, things looked to be going to plan for Simpson, but an opening-lap incident took him out of race two, won by Ryan Hadfield, on Sunday. Hadfield was leading the third contest, but gearbox trouble forced him out with three laps to go, handing Simpson another win. Simpson then rounded off the weekend with a third victory. "I love Knockhill," he gushed. "I'd come here

more often but it's just too far north!"

A bumper 22-car grid graced the Scottish Mini Cooper Cup finale, with the supercharged R53 models stealing the show. On her return after a hiatus, Ashleigh Morris humbly stated that she "wanted to stay out of everyone's way" and, by taking pole position and victory in the opener, she impressively did just that. Fellow guest driver Ross Wilkinson was second in the first race and led for large parts of the second but ran too deep at the hairpin, handing Jamie Blake the spoils.

After missing the opener with mechanical issues, Blake needed to beat nearest rival Rich Flett to secure the Cooper S Cup title, which he duly did. In the Cooper class, Oly Mortimer clinched his 10th SMRC title by taking all three wins in his last full-season campaign for a while.

As expected, the Scottish C1 Cup title fight went down to the wire as season-long rivals Murray Scott and Dan Martin went toe to toe. Scott took command in the opener to put one hand on the trophy but still had to come through race two unscathed, while Martin had to win after finishing fifth in the first encounter. Martin won the final bout, but Scott had done enough in fourth to be crowned, despite a near-miss late on avoiding a spinning Ayden Wilson.

In slightly less nervy fashion, Shaun Davidson won the Knockhill Motor Sports

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### SCOTTISH FIESTA ST CUP

Races 1 & 2 Gerry Hendry

### SCOTTISH LEGENDS

Race 1 Matthew Pape

Races 2 & 4 Stewart Black

Race 3 Ryan McLeish

Races 5 & 6 Ben Mason

### PICKUP TRUCKS

Races 1, 3 & 4 Matt Simpson

Race 2 Ryan Hadfield

### SCOTTISH MINI COOPER CUP

Race 1 Ashleigh Morris (R53)

Race 2 Jamie Blake (R53)

Race 3 Oly Mortimer (Cooper)

### SCOTTISH C1 CUP

Race 1 Murray Scott

Race 2 Dan Martin

### KMSC MODSPORTS

Race 1 Andy Forrest (Radical SR1)

Race 2 Gordon Duncan (Radical PR6)

Race 3 Andrew Gallacher (Mitsubishi Evo 8)

### SCOTTISH CLASSIC SPORTS AND SALOONS

Race 1 Andrew Graham (Triumph TR8, below)

Race 2 Alastair Baptie (MGB GTV8)



For full results visit: [smart-timing.co.uk](http://smart-timing.co.uk)

Club Modsports title. Andy Forrest and Gordon Duncan took overall victories in races one and two respectively in their Radicals. Davidson, driving a BMW Compact, edged out Class G's Adam Morrison by finishing second in Class F during the third and final race.

Morrison had done well just to make it to the season finale after writing off his Mini Cooper in September's penultimate round. With nearly every part replaced bar the engine, it took two class wins and a second, but Davidson's excellent consistency all year proved the difference.

A dominant force all season, Iain Mitchell wrapped up the Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons title in the best way possible. He brought his Vauxhall Nova home to a pair of Class A victories, completing a 100% success record for the season. Class E pair Andrew Graham (Triumph TR8) and Alastair Baptie (MGB GTV8) took an overall win apiece.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON





Jennings and co-driver  
Caton took Porsche GT3  
to victory in GT Cup

# G-Cat and Topcats on the prowl as titles are decided

**SNETTERTON**  
**MSVR**  
**5-6 OCTOBER**

G-Cat Racing took three wins as the GT Cup season drew to a close at Snetterton last weekend, but the titles went the way of Topcats Racing. Charlotte Gilbert and Tom Rawlings were crowned overall champions ahead of team-mates Fraser Fenwick and Warren Gilbert, with the last-named also taking the Sprint Challenge glory.

Shamus Jennings gave the G-Cat Porsche 911 its first triumph in Saturday's sprint contest after Rawlings pitted from the lead. A frenetic scrap ensued behind between Paul Bailey (Lamborghini GT3), Tom Walpole (KTM GT4) and Warren Gilbert's Lamborghini Super Trofeo, but Rawlings picked off the trio and recovered to second.

Fenwick, driving solo in the subsequent

endurance race, took a comfortable win to deny the Jennings/Greg Caton pairing, while Charlotte Gilbert and Rawlings were hampered by a 10-second penalty for a false start but finished third ahead of Bailey and David Brabham, who put in a blistering final stint.

Another Brabham charge set up a thrilling late lead battle following a safety car period in Sunday's enduro, but Caton resisted the pressure to give G-Cat another victory. Jennings climbed from fourth to take his second sprint win of the weekend in the finale, while Warren Gilbert led home wife Charlotte in second.

Simon Clark sealed the Porsche Club Championship in a truncated final race. He was edged to fifth in the opener by James Caley, while main rival Mark McAleer led before tumbling down the order with brake issues, allowing son Jake to take the win in a 997 ahead of Cayman duo Bill Caley and

Chris Dyer. Slippery conditions resulted in only four laps being completed in the sequel, with Caley winning ahead of father James, and Clark taking a crucial fourth in his 997 behind Mark McAleer.

Mike Thompson scored his fifth win of the season in the Boxster Cup opener, while Scott Evans prevailed in an early tussle with Ben Grewcock before snatching second from Darren King on the final lap. Ryan Charters, meanwhile, finished two places ahead of title rival Wayne Gregory in seventh. Chaos ensued in the decider after several cars spun off on oil, bringing out the red flags, with Grewcock eventually declared the winner ahead of Evans and King. Charters was penalised for a collision, which spun both King and Thompson, and left him ninth, with Gregory crowned champion in 12th.

The United Formula Ford Championship was also decided on Sunday, with Morgan Quinn securing his second title in three years. The Team Dolan Van Diemen driver recovered from a slow start in race one to pass Charlie Mann (Ray) before battling with the Van Diemen of Tom Nippers for victory. But second was enough for Quinn to become champion again after his chief rival Jason Pribyl lost out in a race-long battle for fourth with Ben Cox.

Nippers passed Quinn and Mann to win again on the road in a rain-hit and shortened finale, but a 10s penalty for being out of position at the start handed victory to Mann.

With his second Focus Cup title already in the bag, Lewis Clark ended a dominant campaign with his ninth and 10th wins of the season. Clark led home Jon Baker in the first two races but was forced to retire on



Jake McAleer (144) took  
a win in Porsche Club as  
dad Mark (14) hit issues

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD STYLES



## WEEKEND WINNERS

## GT CUP

**Races 1 & 4** Shamus Jennings  
(Porsche 911 GT3-R)

**Race 2** Fraser Fenwick (Lamborghini Super Trofeo)

**Race 3** Shamus Jennings/Greg Caton  
(Porsche 911 GT3-R)

## PORSCHE CLUB

**Race 1** Jake McAleer (997)

**Race 2** Bill Caley (Cayman)

## BOXSTER CUP

**Race 1** Mike Thompson

**Race 2** Ben Grewcock

## UNITED FORMULA FORD

**Race 1** Tom Nippers (Van Diemen RF01)

**Race 2** Charlie Mann (Ray GR20)

## FOCUS CUP

**Races 1 & 2** Lewis Clark

**Race 3** Alastair Topley

## SPORTS 2000

**Races 1 & 2** Joshua Law (MCR S2N, below)

## SNETTERTON SALOONS

Chris Murphy (BMW E36 M3)



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

the opening lap of race three, where the grid was decided by ballot.

Simon Walton benefitted from a clash between Alastair Topley and Thomas Brown to finish third in race one, while Topley held off Baker in the sequel before agonisingly grinding to a halt on the final lap. Topley bounced back by climbing from fourth to take a maiden win in the third contest, just keeping Walton at bay.

Michael Gibbins had already reclaimed the Sports 2000 crown prior to Snetterton, and he finished second in race one behind fellow MCR driver Joshua Law, who took his second win of the year. A five-place penalty for Patrick Sherrington after the race promoted former Ginetta Academy racer Mackenzie Walker to a podium on his debut.

Law triumphed again in race two, after Gibbins's car ground to a halt on the Bentley Straight while running behind him. Walker was therefore promoted to second ahead of Richard Johnson, who was the sole challenger to the dominant MCR S2Ns in his Lola T88/90.

STEVE WHITFIELD

## GILBERTS FINISH ON TOP



Charlotte Gilbert became the first female driver to win the overall GT Cup title last weekend, capping off a rapid rise since returning to racing four years ago.

The pairing of Gilbert and Tom Rawlings wrapped up the crown in Sunday's endurance race despite being hampered by gearbox issues. Gilbert had recovered from a pitlane start to second position before Rawlings retired shortly after taking over behind the wheel of the Lamborghini Super Trofeo. "We didn't get out in qualifying," said Gilbert. "We managed to get out in the endurance race with a gearbox that was untested and quickly discovered it didn't want to go from second to third so it was jumping."

Gilbert's success is her second in as many years in the GT Cup, after winning the GTC class title in 2023. "I'll take that," she added on becoming the first female champion. "It's nice for the family, it just feels like a fantastic thing to have. When I become an old woman, I can say I was a GT Cup champion."

"I had a massive gap in between. I raced in the TVR Tuscan Challenge many

years ago, and then took a long time out because I had two kids, and I stopped racing. I came back in 2020 in a Marcos.

"I've done three years in the Lamborghini, and I'd love to have a go at GT3. I'm going to be 53 next year, so the time is ticking. Whether that opportunity happens or not I don't know, but I would hate to look back and think that I never got that opportunity."

Gilbert's husband, Warren, completed a family double by winning the Sprint Challenge, putting the icing on the cake of an emphatic season for their Topcats Racing operation. "As a 60-year-old, I'm pretty pleased with that," he said. "We've all done a decent job. The cars have been amazing."

"Charlotte has progressed unbelievably. She has to be one of the fastest female drivers in the UK now – she's proved it, no mistakes and fast all the time."

"It's the best season we've ever had, and I have to say I've got the best team around me. Most of these guys have been doing this with me for 20 years, weekend warriors, volunteers. We're not an out-and-out race team, we're a garage. We've got three full-time staff and the rest are all people that have helped and are helping. It's pretty magical."

"As a team, we help others out if we need. Brian, my main guy, is on call for every team up and down the paddock. It's a bit special. I'm very proud of it."

"If we can get the budget or backing we can get Charlotte in a GT3 car. It would be great to do something with Tom and Fraser [Fenwick] – I think they can win British GT, they are that good."

STEVE WHITFIELD





# Popovic takes his Watson GT fight to the end

**CASTLE COMBE**  
**CCRC**  
**5 OCTOBER**

Doug Watson, Felix Fisher, Harrison Chamberlain and Jake Alden were crowned Castle Combe champions at Saturday's Grand Finals, but it is Watson's GT cliffhanger with Dylan Popovic, which went to the wire, that spectators will remember.

Polesitter Popovic (Ginetta-Chevrolet G50) filled the mirrors of Watson's Ferrari turbocar first time out, but could not breach his defences despite a landmark 1m06.462s (100.20mph) lap record. Alan Hamilton, debuting the ex-Jeremy Irwin/Oliver Bull Vauxhall Tigra, reset class C's in third.

Still one point behind, Popovic spun to last at Quarry on the decider's opening lap. Watson, in cruise mode, saw the purple Ginetta reappear on his tail on lap three, but prevailed after a scrape at a slippery Tower when Popovic dived into a semi-open door on lap 15 of 18. Great sportsmen, they accepted the racing incident verdict. Outgoing champion Jamie Sturges (Cupra TCR) was a solid third after Hamilton's engine failed and flame shot up alarmingly from behind the dash at Bobbies.



Despite Popovic's attacks,  
Watson's Ferrari won

Alex Walker needed to win both Formula Ford rounds with fastest lap to deny Fisher's title hat-trick, but Rory Smith won both, taking his total to six and securing second overall. Contact between Fisher and Luke Cooper sent Cooper into the infield at Avon Rise in the morning as they pressured Tom Nippers. "Dad [Brian] won three GT titles here, and me and [brother] Josh now have three each," said Fisher.

VW Golfer Chamberlain tied up the Saloons title with victory first time out, but couldn't pass Bill Brockbank's naturally aspirated SEAT in the second as Jack Boulton (Golf turbo) shadowed them. With Jez Williams's Peugeot 106 unclassified,

Wayne Rushworth drove his Jamaican-flagged MG ZR like never before to win class C and finish third in the opener. Welsh rising star Williams lapped quicker still to finish the sequel fourth.

Chased by Dan Brown's Honda, Craig Fleming finally broke the 71-second barrier in winning the Hot Hatch opener, leaving the record at 1m10.997s (93.80mph) on spectacular class F's last appearance. A broken gear linkage stopped Ross Parker's earlier Civic. Shaun Goverd's Citroen AX subsequently shaded Parker, using Brown's spare cable. Favourite Alden (Citroen Saxo) grabbed the title as rival Jason Stack (Renault Clio) was helped off

## Cowley wins 750 Formula humdinger at Mallory

**MALLORY PARK**  
**750MC**  
**6 OCTOBER**

Perhaps the most extraordinary lead battle in the 750 Formula's 75-year history embroiled nine competitors at Mallory Park on Sunday. With Bill Cowley driving the evolution of grandfather Bill's creation and Jake Doherty in grandad Bob Simpson's SS/F sharing the front row, both targeting



Place retained his  
number one spot

STEVE JONES

the runner-up spot, and Richard Rothery taking over the PRS from champion David Bartholomew, the stage was set.

Doherty, chasing his first win, dived inside poleman Cowley into Gerards on lap two and, when Bill could not hook second gear at the hairpin, he exited eighth. As Cowley recovered, Mark Windley (debuting the ex-Peter Bove Darvi 88P) and Rothery deposed Steve Booher (Darvi Mk5), then caught Doherty. Gerards was a battlefield. When Rothery slewed sideways, Matthew Twynham (Darvi) and Andrew Kemp (Racekits Falcon) went off in avoidance, then Windley clipped Doherty, breaking his suspension and careering into the bank.

Meanwhile, Cowley kept his head but lost his splitter over the Esses kerbs endeavouring to oust Rothery. With handling awry, Cowley slithered into second, then aced young Doherty by 0.968 seconds. Rothery, Matthew Unwin (Falcon)

and Richard Jenkins (Sheppard) completed the top six. Cowley won an attritious wet return bout from Booher, Kemp and Phil Hart (Clubmans Aerofan), who shaded Alan Bunter (Shark). Doherty non-started with a cracked brake disc.

Pip Hammond had to win the Classic Stock Hatch finale with fastest lap to have any chance of thwarting first race victor Stewart Place's title defence. After starting eighth, Hammond's trusty Vauxhall Nova was on poleman Place's bumper by mid-Gerards, and rounded the Peugeot there on lap two. Place shook off Lee Scott, but fell to third behind debutant Jack Bradburn, whose rise from 16th included fastest lap!

Andy Hiley's hopes of a fourth Sport Specials crown were scuppered by a broken throttle cable, plus lack of class starters restricting scores, as in Stewart Mutch's MEV Exocet split. Nigel Brown forged his Sylva Phaser ahead, but Stuart Thompson



WEEKEND WINNERS

CASTLE COMBE

CCRC GTs

Races 1 & 2 Doug Watson  
(Ferrari 488 Challenge)

CCRC FORMULA FORD

Races 1 & 2 Rory Smith (Medina JL18)

CCRC SALOONS

Race 1 Harrison Chamberlain (VW Golf turbo)  
Race 2 Bill Brockbank (SEAT Leon Cupra)

CCRC HOT HATCH

Race 1 Craig Fleming (Honda Civic EG)  
Race 2 Shaun Goverd (Citroen AX)

BARC COUPE CUP

Race 1 Dan Munro  
Race 2 Mark Ridout

CCRC MIGHTY MINIS

Race 1 Ian Slark (Super)  
Race 2 Greg Jenkins (Super)

MALLORY PARK

750 FORMULA

Races 1 & 2 Bill Cowley (Cowley MkIV)

CLASSIC STOCK HATCH

Race 1 Stewart Place (Peugeot 205 GTI)  
Race 2 Pip Hammond (Vauxhall Nova GTE)

SPORT SPECIALS

Race 1 Anton Landon (Cyana Mk2)  
Race 2 Andy Hiley (Chronos HR1S)

LOCOST

Race 1 Lewis Ward  
Race 2 Lee Emm

MA7DAS

Race 1 Ben Powney  
Race 2 Craig Land

HISTORIC 750 FORMULA

Race 1 John Village (Village V2)  
Race 2 Gegan Thruston (Rawson Special)

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



Clash with Cooper (left) did not derail Fisher's title bid

by Will di Claudio (Clio) at the Esses.

Colourful South Korean traffic jams characterised the top value Hyundai Coupe Cup contests. Hayling Islander Dan Munro, 17, dominated the opener, win eight of 2024, pursued by Mark Ridout and Formula Vee convert Neale Hurren. Fast starter Ridout held on later, after a safety car, fending off Munro and earning a lap record coaster. The effervescent Luca Staccini Anzanello watched their battle unfold.

David Kirkpatrick claimed Super Mighty Minis gold with fourth in the first leg, won by Ian Slark, who gapped Neven Kirkpatrick and Steve Rideout. Mighty

honours were not decided in Sam Slater's favour until the curtain closer, red-flagged after Morgan Harris and James Bryan were eliminated in a shemozzle at Quarry.

Graham Sheppard, Ben Butler, Slater and Olly Samways all led a furious six-car slipstreamer, from which Butler regained top spot a lap from home. "The most emotional race of my life – my mother passed away two weeks ago, so this is for her," said Butler, whose son Tao finished sixth. Slater, third behind Samways, earned the title while Super Mighty victor Greg Jenkins was first past the 'ice cream cone' gantry.

MARCUS PYE



Cowley (77), Doherty (5) and co put on a cracking show

(MK Indy) tagged him into Gerards during lappery, advantaging Anton Landon's Cyana. Hiley's Chronos lapped all bar Landon later, but it wasn't enough – and nor was Mutch's class win. Three of Thompson's opponents spun on the oily opening lap, and he staved off resurgent Colin Benham to grab another title.

With Locost champion Daniel Garrett absent, Lee Emm's sub-record 55.933s pole promised much, but both races were horribly wet. Lewis Ward's maiden win was over Rob Apsey and Ian Hardy (his

first podium, having led) and Emm in race one. Emm hounded down Ward, pouncing on the last lap of the season's gripless finale when Lewis touched the grass at Gerards, for his first win of 2024 and to secure second in the standings.

Ben Powney and Craig Land will go to Silverstone's Ma7da finale eight points apart after a win apiece. Tagged in the opener by 'Lando', whose radiator split after setting a 51.352s lap record, Lucas Batt finished second. Land outfoxed Powney in the wet race, when Ben Dade



Thruston's Rawson Special bit into Village's advantage

landed his first podium, having reached third from 10th by the Stebbe Straight.

John Village won the Historic 750 Formula opener from David Lewis (Jeffrey) and Swiss Juerg Schneider (Racekits Merlin). The toothy grin of Gegan Thruston's Rawson Special reflected its surprise at beating Village in the rainy sequel. Simon Gallon defeated Peter Marsh in a supercharged Austin 7 Monoposto duel, while John Moss bested Charlie Plain-Jones's Cowley among the 'regular' A7s.

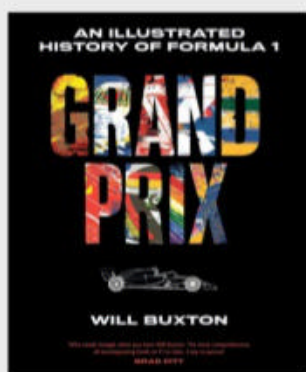
MARCUS PYE



# FINISHING STRAIGHT

Buxton's communication skills well employed swapping mic for written word

## F1's story related with passion, knowledge and enthusiasm



**BOOK REVIEW**  
**GRAND PRIX:**  
**AN ILLUSTRATED**  
**HISTORY OF**  
**FORMULA 1**  
Will Buxton  
RRP £25

You can't judge a book by its cover, or so they say. But that is not true of those where illustrations are expected to be the selling point. We're pleased to report, then, that *Grand Prix: An Illustrated History of Formula 1* certainly pops on the shelf, with the lettering of 'grand prix' showcasing famous helmets from various eras.

Should this not have piqued your interest, then the cover quote by none other than Brad Pitt may sway you into completing your transaction. But just in case you were still on the fence, inside the cover are another 10 review quotes singing Buxton's praises.

While this chunky book runs to 240 pages, it's surprising that Buxton has still been able to condense such an enormous amount of history and information between its covers. What comes as even more of a surprise is how user-friendly *Grand Prix: An Illustrated History of Formula 1* is, with topics including tyres, safety and regulations boiled down to either single or double-page entries.

Add this to the pages on the evolution of driver safety equipment and car design, which are compiled using imagery rather than words, and you begin to wonder why everything has always seemed so complicated.

At its core, this was Buxton's mission with this publication. When we requested a review copy, he said: "I wrote it as a way to hopefully and easily let new fans catch up with the 70 years they never witnessed. And it's a nice way to reminisce for the diehards."

Mission accomplished, and all in the opening 53 pages! Given that the 2026 F1 technical regulations run to a staggering

207 pages, it does show that this is not to be taken as the guide that will provide you with every tiny detail, but neither does it ever pretend to be that.

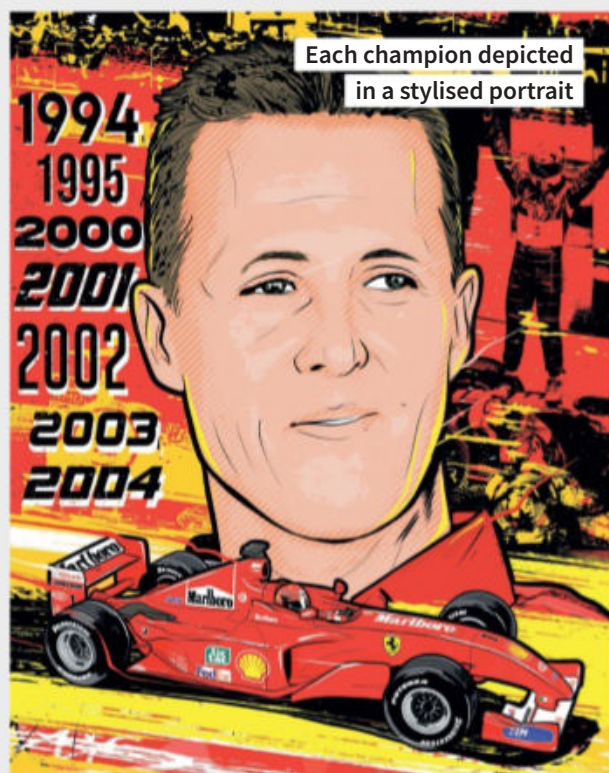
It is in the remainder of the book where Buxton really opens the taps and goes for it, providing a whistle-stop tour of 74 years of F1 history. There's an initial two-page overview of each decade, including key notes on regulation changes and any major plot lines. Again, this plays to the audience that Buxton has aimed for.

Following this, Davi Augusto's illustrations really come into their own, with each champion from the decade getting a highly stylised portrait listing their accolades, next to a page that gives a summary of their career. You may wonder how the careers of Michael Schumacher or Ayrton Senna could be satisfyingly explained in this limited word count and, after reading it, we're still trying to work that one out too, but Buxton again hits the bullseye. Every word that remained in the final edit has meaning and is absolutely necessary.





SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



DAVID AUGUSTO

In addition to the champions, Buxton selects a driver who failed to clinch a title, but whom he believes defined the era. Daniel Ricciardo, for example, is his pick for the 2010s and receives the same coverage as Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Max Verstappen.

Much like those high-profile names who adorn the opening pages, there is nothing we can do except heap praise on Buxton for a job incredibly well done.

**SAM HALL**



<https://audioboom.com/channels/5131646>



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### James Allen on F1 Podcast: Daniel Ricciardo – what was special about him and what went wrong?

This week we delve into the curious case of Daniel Ricciardo. He once rode a horse into the paddock at Austin, but will not be lining up there in at this year's US Grand Prix – or any other grands prix – after being dropped by Red Bull.

On this podcast we drill down into Ricciardo's very human story – what made him special, and what went wrong? We hear from a chief engineer whose job was to develop Ricciardo for his big-time 2014 move to Red Bull Racing, and from the Australian F1 TV host who's known Ricciardo since his early days.



## WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

**Bathurst 1000**  
Australian Supercars  
Round 10/12  
Mount Panorama,  
Australia  
**13 October**  
**TV Live** TNT Sports 3,  
Sun 0000

**Super Formula**  
Round 6/7  
Fuji, Japan  
**12-13 October**  
**Livestream**  
Motorsport.tv, Sat 0614,  
Sun 0614

**GT World Challenge**  
**Europe Sprint Cup**  
Round 5/5  
Barcelona, Spain  
**12-13 October**  
**TV Live** Sky Sports F1,  
Sat 1145, Sun 1230

**Petit Le Mans**  
IMSA SportsCar

**Round 11/11**  
Road Atlanta, USA  
**12 October**  
**Livestream** IMSA.tv

**NASCAR Cup Series**  
Round 32/36  
Charlotte, USA  
**13 October**  
**TV Live** Premier Sports 2,  
Sun 1830

**NASCAR Xfinity Series**  
Round 29/33  
Charlotte, USA  
**12 October**  
**TV Live** Premier Sports  
(streaming only), Sat 2000

### UK MOTORSPORT

**Oulton Park BARC**  
**12 October**  
2CVs, CNC Heads  
Sports/Saloons, JSCC,  
Monoposto, Track Action

**Silverstone BRSCC**  
**12-13 October**

Audi TT Cup, BMW  
Compact Cup,  
Civic Cup, Clubsport  
Trophy, Fiesta Juniors,  
Fiesta ST240s, Mini Miglia,  
Mini Se7en, TCR UK  
**Livestream**  
YouTube.com

**Silverstone HSCC**  
**12-13 October**  
'70s Roadsports, Classic  
FF1600, Derek Bell  
Trophy, Formula Junior,  
Guards Trophy, Historic  
FF1600, Historic FF2000,  
Historic Modsports/  
Special Saloons,  
Historic Roadsports,  
Historic Touring Cars

**Donington Park**  
**750MC**  
**12-13 October**  
116 Trophy, 116 Sprint  
& 120 Coupe Cup, 5Club  
MX-5s, Bikesports, Club  
Enduro, F1000, Formula  
Vee, MR2s, Roadsports,  
Sports 1000





#### FROM THE ARCHIVE

A Ferrari win at home is traditionally celebrated with an infectious joy that cannot fail to leave even the most non-partisan of observers unmoved, but the conclusion of the 1975 Italian

Grand Prix at Monza, the penultimate round of the season, was something else. Here, Clay Regazzoni receives a hero's welcome after dominating the race, while team-mate Niki Lauda's third-place finish secured

him the drivers' championship, and Ferrari the manufacturers' crown. What could have been a demonstration run by the scarlet pair starting from the front row was enlivened by Emerson Fittipaldi's

on-the-ragged-edge pursuit in the closing stages – the McLaren driver deposed Lauda from second place (although the Austrian wasn't going to fight for it) and spurred Regazzoni on to set the fastest lap of the race.









# Audi R8

Aside from scoring 14 wins from 32 starts aboard the Audi R8, including the first of his three Le Mans 24 Hours victories in 2005, Marco Werner picks the trailblazing prototype as his favourite car because of its significance to his career. His observation that “this car changed a lot for me” is spot on.

He’d been racing in Porsche Supercup for three years when backer Infineon, already an Audi sponsor, agreed a deal with the car maker that transformed his trajectory. Infineon would put more money into the pot for a third Joest-run works car at Le Mans in 2002, if Werner and Supercup team-mate Philipp Peter were on the driving roster. Werner’s performance in securing third on his Le Mans and R8 debut, together with Michael Krumm, impressed Audi’s top brass and was instrumental in bringing him into the fold full-time for 2003. It was a far cry from a visit to Le Mans in 2001 with Peter as guests of Infineon.

“We were watching with big eyes like children,” he recalls. “We said, ‘It’d be nice to drive here with the [Porsche] GT2.’ The year after we were sitting in the LMP1 and finished third!”

Werner describes the R8 as “really perfect for me”. It was a car he felt confident to quickly get on the limit in, and he enjoyed sliding it without the limitations enforced by traction control. The 58-year-old also praises



its V8 turbo engine, which “drove like a naturally aspirated engine”.

In 2003 he won four times to clinch the American Le Mans Series title, then won it again in 2004 after switching from Joest to Champion Racing. Sportscar racing’s ultimate prize followed in 2005, a year when Pescarolo had the faster cars but were let down by incidents and gearbox trouble. Given the circumstances, Werner regards it as his favourite Le Mans win. “We didn’t expect it, really,” he reflects. “We were too far away with our lap times in qualifying.”

When the R8 was replaced by the diesel R10 in 2006, Werner’s appreciation for a car that was defeated just once in six Le Mans starts grew further. Where the R10 “was too rear-heavy and undriveable on bumps”, he couldn’t fault the R8’s balance: “It was like driving a kart.”

JAMES NEWBOLD



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

# Johnny Herbert's greatest races

THE THREE-TIME F1 WINNER HELPS US PICK OUT HIS FINEST DRIVES



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