

# F1 More US GP drama as Leclerc stars

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24 OCTOBER 2024

# AUTOSPORT

## UNITED STATES GP

## Ferrari dominates latest F1 farce

Brilliant Leclerc leads 1-2 but Verstappen-Norris controversy strikes again

'That is incorrect, what Max did'

LANDO NORRIS

'They complain about a lot'

MAX VERSTAPPEN



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DRIVERS  
OF 2024

PLUS

Tanak victory keeps WRC title fight alive





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# Another close fight but is this really what we want to see?

Let's start with the positives. Ferrari's form in last weekend's United States Grand Prix showed that there are three teams currently in contention at the front of Formula 1, a situation nobody but the most optimistic fan would have predicted back in March. Charles Leclerc's eighth GP win was well taken (see page 12).

And now for the not-so-positive. Without wanting to sound like a broken record, it is very disappointing that we can no longer enjoy an F1 title fight in which the main protagonists race each other fairly and don't end up off the road. We didn't get satisfactory on-track battles in 2021 and we aren't in 2024, either.

As Alex Kalinauckas argues on p9, Max Verstappen appears to have perfected the art of running deep into a corner and forcing a rival off-track without censure. It's pretty easy to have your front axle ahead at the apex if you don't intend to make the corner. And at Austin last weekend, he even managed to do it twice *and* make it so that the other driver got a penalty! Great for his championship points score, not so wonderful for anyone who enjoys fair motor racing.

Speaking of which, it's also time for our British Touring Car review this week (p38). It really says something when the BTCC frontrunners could teach F1 a thing or two about clean contests and sportsmanship, but the title fight between Jake Hill and Tom Ingram displayed the sort of class Autosport likes to see. Marcus Simmons talks to some of the key figures to find out how Hill took his first crown – and picks out his top 10 drivers of the season.

Here's hoping we get to see proper racing in Mexico this weekend...



*Kevin Turner*

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## PIT & PADDOCK

- 4 F1 scraps fastest lap point
- 6 Single-seater stars head to Macau
- 8 Mexican Grand Prix preview
- 9 Opinion: Alex Kalinauckas
- 11 Opinion: Stefan Mackley

## RACE CENTRE

- 12 United States GP report and analysis
- 28 Tanak win keeps WRC title fight alive
- 32 World of Sport: ELMS; DTM; Super GT; TCR World Tour; MotoGP

## FEATURES

- 38 How Hill finally conquered the BTCC
- 48 TOCA supports season review
- 54 FIA Motorsport Games preview

## CLUB AUTOSPORT

- 65 MRL plans GT3 series after pilot race
- 66 Turkington and Morgan to contest Birkett
- 68 British Rally title showdown preview
- 69 Opinion: Stefan Mackley
- 70 National reports: Brands Hatch Festival; Silverstone; Oulton Park; Mondello Park

## FINISHING STRAIGHT

- 78 What's on this week
- 80 From the archive: 1968 French GP
- 82 My favourite car: Armin Schwarz

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# PIT + PADDOCK

## Fastest lap point scrapped as 2026 cars given boost

### FORMULA 1

Formula 1 will scrap the fastest lap point for 2025 and has given the 2026 cars more downforce to ease performance concerns.

The fastest lap point was introduced in 2019 to spice up the action and give drivers who finish in the top 10 something extra to race for. It also unlocked some strategy options for teams to try to deny their direct rivals the extra point.

But the fastest lap point never really delivered on its promise to improve the spectacle, and usually fell prey to drivers who happened to have a large gap to the car behind them, so they could make a late pitstop for fresh tyres to collect the point.

The rule was further put under the spotlight at last month's Singapore Grand Prix, where RB's Daniel Ricciardo snatched the point away from McLaren driver Lando Norris. Norris is involved in a title fight with Max Verstappen, driving for RB's parent team Red Bull, which reignited discussions over alleged collusion between the two squads. F1 will now do away with the extra point from the 2025 season onwards, restoring the 25 points for a race win as the maximum a driver can score in a grand prix.

The FIA's World Motor Sport Council rubber-stamped the rule change as it gathered last week to discuss a wide range of topics across the championships it sanctioned.

The governing body also approved plans to double the amount of free practice time reserved for young drivers. From 2025, teams will have to hand a Friday first practice session to a rookie driver on two weekends per car, up from one session per car. The move comes in the wake of plans for a rookie sprint race at Abu Dhabi's post-season test being called off for 2024, with F1 set to revisit the idea for 2025 instead.

As discussed in the most recent F1 Commission, the council also agreed to a raft of changes and refinements to the all-new 2026 F1 technical regulations. An outline for the next generation of F1 cars was revealed ahead of the Canadian Grand Prix in



Ricciardo grabbed fastest lap point on his last F1 start

June but, following concerns expressed about their likely performance level, work began on making potential tweaks.

The FIA's head of single-seater matters Nikolas Tombazis says the new version of the regulations should make the cars around one second per lap slower than the current challengers, and two seconds per lap quicker than under the previous iteration of the rules that was presented to the teams in Montreal.

"There has been an increase of performance of the car by probably about 50 points of downforce," he said. "This has brought the performance from what maybe was minus 40% compared to current cars, to around minus 15% in terms of downforce. In terms of performance, the resulting lap time of the cars is very close to current cars."

The changes made in the latest draft of the regulations include several alterations to the front wing, more scope for devices around the front floor and a larger diffuser. The new cars won't run as close to the ground as the current generation of venturi-based machinery.

The FIA has also made further tweaks to the sporting and financial regulations for 2026. One notable change is an offset to the cost cap for Sauber, which will run as Audi in 2026, to compensate for the higher salaries of its staff in Switzerland. Sauber has long argued its staff costs are a big handicap due to the much higher wages and cost of living in Switzerland compared to teams in the UK and Italy. The FIA has agreed that Sauber's situation is not fair and will work on a cost cap offset based on independently available salary data.

FILIP CLEEREN & JONATHAN NOBLE







Lotterer (standing) could leave Porsche as world champion

## Lotterer out as Porsche shakes up endurance squads

### WEC/IMSA

Three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Andre Lotterer has been dropped from Porsche's factory World Endurance Championship squad as part of a revamp of its 2025 LMDh line-up. The German is leaving the Porsche Penske Motorsport team along with fellow WEC driver Frederic Makowiecki and new IMSA SportsCar Championship title winner Dane Cameron.

What was described by Porsche as a "tweak" of its

roster across its WEC and IMSA programmes involves reducing the full-time line-up from three to two drivers in the former series. Kevin Estre and Laurens Vanthoor, who lead the WEC points with Lotterer, will drive the #6 963 LMDh as a duo, while Michael Christensen, who shares this year with Makowiecki and Matt Campbell, will race #5 with Julien Andlauer. The Frenchman has been promoted to the PPM squad after impressing in the Proton customer 963.

Campbell will return to

the IMSA ranks after a solo season in WEC to team up with Mathieu Jaminet in #6. Cameron's seat alongside Nasr in #7 will be taken by Briton Nick Tandy, who moves over from the sister car.

Jaminet and Campbell will respectively join the #5 and #6 crews for Le Mans and, according to Porsche's press statement, "selected races". Estre and Vanthoor will drive the #6 and #7 IMSA cars at the longer races that make up the Michelin Endurance Cup segment of the series.

Makowiecki, 43, is leaving Porsche after 11 seasons largely in its GT ranks, which included a GTE Pro class win at Le Mans in 2022. He and Porsche have "agreed to conclude their collaboration".

Porsche stated that Lotterer and Cameron's contracts expire at the end of this year, but did not specifically state that they are leaving the manufacturer. Porsche was unwilling to clarify whether the drivers will continue their relationship with the marque.

**GARY WATKINS**

## Pourchaire gets Peugeot test chance

### WEC

Sauber Formula 1 reserve Theo Pourchaire will be given an outing in Peugeot's Le Mans Hypercar at the World Endurance Championship rookie test in Bahrain next month. A first chance in a sportscar comes at the end of a season in which he has raced in Super Formula and IndyCar with Impul and Arrow McLaren respectively.

The 2023 Formula 2 champion will drive a Peugeot 9X8 2024 on 3 November along with former F2 sparring partner Clement Novalak. Novalak has been given the opportunity



Pourchaire's eclectic 2024 will now take him to sportscars

after a first season in sportscars with Inter Europol in LMP2, which included a second in class at the Le Mans 24 Hours. They will share the two LMHs with Paul di Resta and Malthe Jakobsen, who took part in the rookie test with Peugeot in 2022 and 2023 and has now

been promoted to a race seat for 2025.

Alpine academy member Victor Martins will drive an Alpine A424 LMDh at the test in Bahrain and Arthur Leclerc, who is a Ferrari F1 development driver, a 499P LMH.

**GARY WATKINS**





TRIENITZ/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

## Rising stars lead entry for new-look Macau Grand Prix

### MACAU

Three Formula 3 race winners are among a raft of drivers from the series to effectively step down a level of the single-seater ladder to contest next month's Macau Grand Prix, while Italian F4 conqueror Freddie Slater is among the stars to graduate upwards.

F3 cars have traditionally contested the Macau World Cup event, but organisers revealed earlier this year that they would swap to Formula Regional machinery for the 2024 edition on 17 November, saying it was "a natural consequence of the evolution of the junior single-seater landscape".

However, the change has not stopped a host of this year's F3 racers from appearing on the 27-strong entry list announced this week, and these drivers include championship frontrunners Oliver Goethe and Dino Beganovic.

Red Bull junior Goethe finished an eventual seventh in the standings after foregoing his slim chance to take the title by skipping the Monza finale and instead replacing F1-bound Franco Colapinto at MP Motorsport in F2. He will now continue with the Dutch squad for another Macau attack after taking ninth in last year's GP.

Ferrari Driver Academy member Beganovic, meanwhile, will again race for Prema, and rounding out the F3 victors so far signed up is Mari Boya (Pinnacle), who was fourth in Macau in 2023. Other F3 competitors entered include 2022 British F4

champion Alex Dunne, who moves across to Prema from MP, and Noel Leon (Pinnacle).

Multiple current Formula Regional European Championship drivers have also been confirmed, including James Wharton (ART) and Tuukka Taponen (R-ace), who are second and third in the points ahead of this weekend's Monza finale.

Meanwhile, progressing to Formula Regional competition will be Slater, who this week is tackling the final shootout for the Silverstone Autosport BRDC Award. As well as driving for Prema in Macau, Slater has also been formally confirmed at the squad for FRECA next season. "I'm just super, super happy to stay with Prema for another year," said the 16-year-old. "My journey just started but hopefully this means many more years to come with this great team."

Alongside the F3, FRECA and F4 graduates, Super Formula Lights race winners Rikuto Kobayashi and Jin Nakamura (both with TOM'S) are among a Japanese contingent tackling the event. There are two unconfirmed drivers on the entry, with both MP and PHM having a seat available.

Ferrari World Endurance Championship Hypercar drivers Antonio Fuoco and Yifei Ye are on the 23-strong entry for the GT World Cup at Macau. They will drive Ferrari 296 GT3s for AF Corse and Harmony Racing respectively. All five former winners of the event – Maro Engel, Laurens Vanthoor, Edoardo Mortara, Augusto Farfus and Raffaele Marciello – will take part.

**STEPHEN LICKORISH & GARY WATKINS**

## Yelloly joins Honda family

### IMSA

Increased involvement of the Honda Racing Corporation USA in the Acura IMSA SportsCar Championship helped persuade Briton Nick Yelloly to join the Honda brand for next season. It was "one of the pieces of the puzzle" that led him to leave BMW after six years as a factory driver.

"The GTP programme has taken a big hike with HRC coming more on board, with more personnel from HRC working with Meyer Shank Racing," said Yelloly (below), who was announced as part of the MSR line-up with Renger van der Zande as his team-mate last week. "That was something I felt was quite exciting. I know how good a team MSR is after racing against them in 2023, so a lot of things came together to sway my decision."

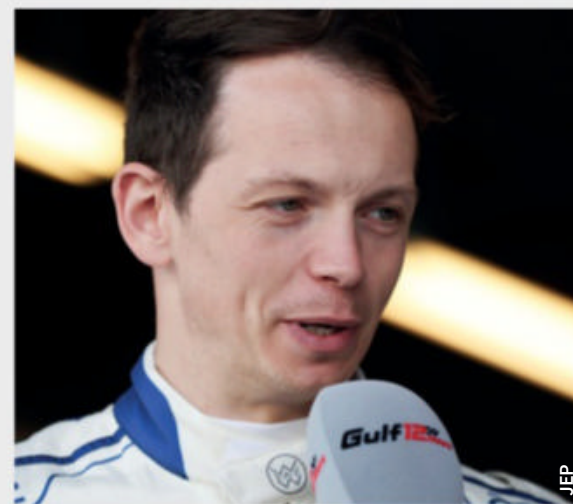
"It was a particularly big decision to leave BMW after so long. But I wanted to see how I performed in a new environment."

Yelloly, 33, explained that his goal now is to add a Daytona 24 Hours victory to his triumphs at the Nurburgring and the Spa endurance classics with BMW in GT3 machinery. He hopes that one day Honda will take the Acura ARX-06 LMDh to the Le Mans 24 Hours so he can complete the set.

"I want to win Daytona and Le Mans, so I have all four of the big 24-hour races on my CV," he explained. "I feel I will be fighting for the win at Daytona and for the IMSA championship next year, and the hope is that in the future Acura or Honda will go to Le Mans."

The full-season drivers in the second MSR ARX-06 will be Tom Blomqvist and Colin Braun, who will be reprising their race-winning 2023 partnership.

**GARY WATKINS**



JEP





**NASCAR** Tyler Reddick became the first NASCAR stock car racer to flip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in 24 years during last weekend's Cup contest. The 23XI Racing Toyota driver escaped unscathed but risks being eliminated from the playoffs. Penske Ford's Joey Logano gambled on making his fuel last as others stopped to win the race and become the first driver to make it into the Championship 4. **Photo by Motorsport Images**

## FINE FOR CROWD INVASION

Organisers of Austin's United States Grand Prix have been fined €500,000 by the FIA for an early track invasion by spectators, of which €350,000 is suspended. At the end of the race at the Circuit of The Americas, throngs of spectators entered the track on the start/finish straight while cars were still coming on their cooldown laps after taking the chequered flag.

## PULLING'S FORMULA E TEST

Alpine Formula 1 Academy drivers Sophia Florsch and Abbi Pulling will get their first taste of Formula E machinery when they compete in the all-female test with Nissan next month. The afternoon session at the Ricardo Tormo Circuit in Valencia on 7 November has been designated for female drivers, with F3 driver Florsch and F1 Academy points leader Pulling set to test the all-electric championship's new Gen3 Evo car.

## BOURDAIS FOR BAHRAIN

Sebastien Bourdais will return to the Ganassi Cadillac World Endurance squad for the series finale in Bahrain next month. The IMSA regular with the team will share its solo V-Series.R LMDh with Earl Bamber and Alex Lynn as he did in Qatar in March.

## STATUS QUO AT FERRARI

There will be no changes to Ferrari's factory Hypercar class line-up in the WEC next year. Confirmation of the status quo in the two works 499P Le Mans Hypercars for a third season follows the announcement of contract extensions for Antonio Fuoco, Nicklas Nielsen and Miguel Molina.

## KING IS NOT CROWNED

Briton Harry King missed out on the German Porsche Carrera Cup title at the Hockenheim finale last weekend. The Allied Racing driver finished second to Huub van Eijndhoven in race one to keep his hopes alive, but ninth second time out thanks to contact while leading meant Larry ten Voorde took his fourth title by 28 points over King. Team GP Elite's Ariel Levi inherited his first series victory in the finale.

# More changes for WRC 2025?

## WRC

The World Rally Championship technical rules for next year could face yet another U-turn, with the prospect of hybrid power being removed from Rally1 cars.

This latest twist in a long-running saga over the regulations has been triggered by a change to the hybrid unit user guide from control supplier Compact Dynamics.

Hybrid power was set to remain in place until the end of 2026 before the FIA proposed a raft of changes to the cars for 2025 in February, including the removal of hybrid. WRC teams pushed back against the changes, resulting in the current Rally1 regulations staying put in what was seen as a U-turn from the FIA.

However, Compact Dynamics' new safety guidelines stipulate that if the 130kW hybrid unit suffers three shock errors over 15G or one over 25G, it has to be stripped apart and sent to the supplier



for a full repair, instead of a reset on-site.

Teams believe the change, brought in at the Acropolis Rally Greece in September, will significantly raise hybrid unit repair costs, with M-Sport arguing it would no longer be financially viable. Toyota and Hyundai have both agreed to remove hybrid power from the cars if it will safeguard M-Sport's involvement.

An FIA e-vote has since been held, with a decision yet to be announced.

The controversial points system could also change, with a proposal set to be voted on at the next Motor Sport Council.

**TOM HOWARD**

**AUTOSPORT**

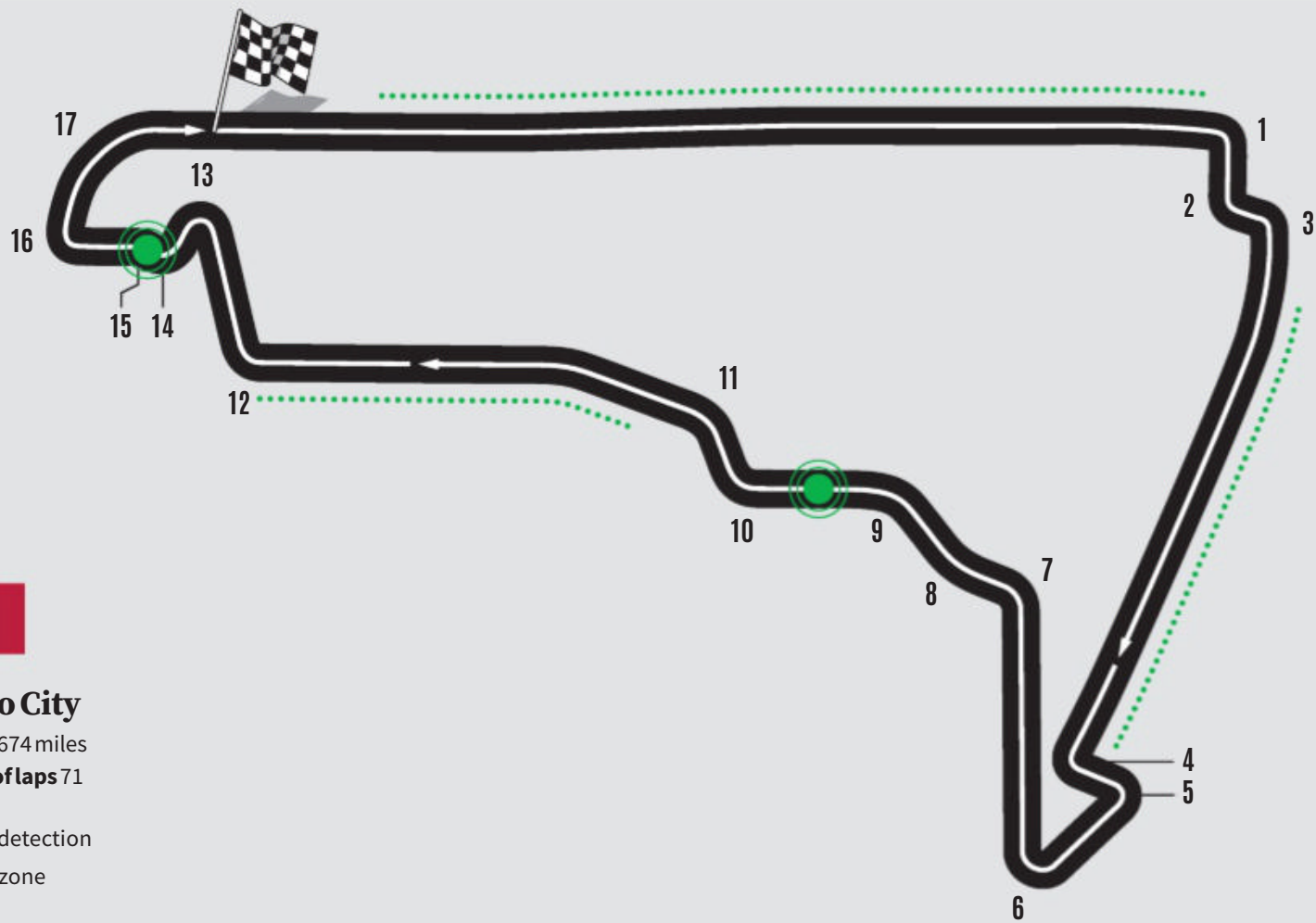
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**Mexico City**  
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Number of laps 71

DRS detection  
 DRS zone

UK START TIMES

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FP1 1930 FP2 2300

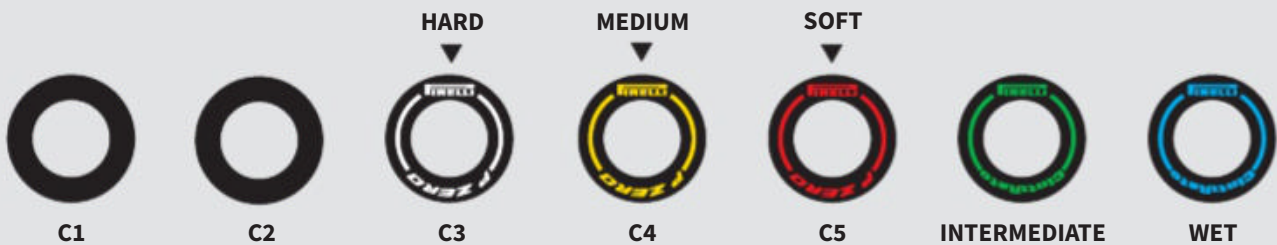
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QUALIFYING 2200

**Sunday 27 October**  
RACE 2000

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CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	354
2	Norris	297
3	Leclerc	275
4	Piastri	247
5	Sainz	215

Constructors

1	McLaren	544
2	Red Bull	504
3	Ferrari	496
4	Mercedes	344
5	Aston Martin	86



MEXICO CITY STATS

Previous winners

2023	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2022	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2021	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2017	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
1992	Nigel Mansell	Williams
1991	Riccardo Patrese	Williams

**2023 POLE POSITION**  
**Charles Leclerc**  
1m17.166s

**POLE LAP RECORD**  
**Daniel Ricciardo**  
1m14.759s (2018)

**RACE LAP RECORD**  
**Valtteri Bottas**  
1m17.774s (2021)



Podiums

Lewis Hamilton	6
Max Verstappen	5
Nigel Mansell	4
Riccardo Patrese	4
Ayrton Senna	4
Denny Hulme	4
Jack Brabham	4
Alain Prost	3
Gerhard Berger	3
Valtteri Bottas	3





# Max is playing rules to perfection

*You may consider Max Verstappen cynical, but his success against Lando Norris in Texas was a clever reading of driving standards rules that urgently need revision*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

**I**f you want to understand how brilliant – genius, even – a Formula 1 driver Max Verstappen is, watch exactly how he attacked Lando Norris at the start of the 2024 United States Grand Prix. And then ‘defended’ against him late in the race.

Both the Turn 1 and Turn 12 Verstappen vs Norris battles were essentially the same cynical tactic from the world champion.

Here rises the spectre of the 2021 Brazilian round. And how heading into Interlagos’s Turn 4, with Lewis Hamilton bearing down in arguably the Briton’s greatest ever F1 win, Verstappen steamed on with the inside line he’d taken in defence. Both flew into the run-off and the Red Bull remained ahead.

There are differences here to Brazil 2021 – but they matter. At Austin, Norris did complete the outside overtake off-track. However, McLaren didn’t order him to give the place back and attack again. When this writer asked him why not, team principal Andrea Stella explained that “for us, there was no need to give back the position” – because of Verstappen’s tactic.

For Hamilton in that Interlagos classic, he was able to pass a short while later anyway and went on to win. Verstappen wasn’t even investigated in that case and here – in doing what the 2021 Mercedes couldn’t in a different run-off – Norris was penalised five seconds.

After he’d said, “the defending car goes straight at the apex” of Verstappen’s Texas move, was this Brazil 2021 repeated for Stella?

**“The FIA can help solve this problem. It needs to enforce another ‘Max Verstappen rule’”**

“That was extreme because of the speed at which Max missed the apex in Brazil,” he replied. “If you turned into Max, it was a big crash at the time. This one was a much slower speed so it could be a more benign situation. But defending by going off the track? This cannot be permissible.”

Yet the Brazil point remains pertinent. After a little digging, it became clear that although the speed specifics of Turn 4 Brazil and Turn 12 Austin are different, McLaren insiders are convinced that Verstappen’s manoeuvre here is of the same class as Brazil 2021.

Class is the key word. Because Verstappen is so good, he’s perfected essentially the same tactic within F1’s current racing rules guidelines approach first introduced in 2022. That is a huge problem. The cynicism of what’s happening sours the taste of what was otherwise another brilliant F1 race.

The main dispute is how F1’s 2024 ‘Driving Standards Guidelines’ – a copy of which Autosport has seen – just don’t cover what he’s doing. And that is: turning defence into attack. A la Brazil 2021. The point where cunning eases into crafty in a giant run-off area.

While you can head to Autosport.com to read a full outline of the DSG, the key point here is that Norris’s move fulfilled two of the three outside attack requirements covered in the document. And it only failed to meet the third of them because Verstappen dived to reach the apex first.

Here, GPS trace data becomes critical. Looking at the lap in question and the tour before, Norris braked at the same point each time and made the corner, obviously, the first time. The only car that braked later was Verstappen’s in the clash that had them both off the road.

Norris was penalised because he overtook off the track. But in adding “Car 4 had little alternative other than to leave the track because of the proximity of Car 1, which had also left the track” to explain why Norris was only given a 5s penalty and not 10s, the stewards’ argument is badly undermined. Given their acknowledgement of the Red Bull’s presence, what happened was either the fair outcome or surely *Verstappen* should have been penalised for forcing Norris off and sliding off the track himself.

In his defence, echoed by team boss Christian Horner, Verstappen said in the post-race press conference: “It’s very clear in the rules: outside the white line, you cannot pass.”

The Austin race was a penalty-fest, but George Russell’s sanction for how he passed Valtteri Bottas is important here. He was essentially penalised for doing what Verstappen did, but as the attacker the whole time. Verstappen’s move doesn’t comply with two points of the *inside* overtake guidelines and only meets the first because he shoots to the apex.

As the rules don’t cover attacking as a form of defence, all the responsibility still lies with Norris. That’s the genius of Verstappen’s moves. He’s forcing the issue by racing to the apex – so the original attacker either chooses to crash or will lose out under the rules.

The FIA can help solve this problem. It surely now needs to enforce another ‘Max Verstappen rule’. While the short-lived 2016 edition dealt with dubious moving under braking, the governing body must codify how turning defending into attacking is specifically legal or outlaw the race-to-the-apex dive art Verstappen has perfected. It should do one or the other before the next race in Mexico – but these things tend to be handled in the winter.

A third option would be to scrap the guidelines entirely and start again. Because they are being stunningly, cynically exploited at the moment. And that just isn’t right. ❄️

➔ P12 US GP REPORT



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# A marketing challenge

*Formula E has created a problem for itself by allowing a gap of several weeks between races in the 2024-25 calendar the series announced last week*

STEFAN MACKLEY

**I**wouldn't put it in as a TBD with the date secured if I wasn't highly confident that we're over the line already, at least technically over the line if not contractually over the line. I have high confidence that it will go ahead."

As comments go, those made by Formula E CEO Jeff Dodds back in June have perhaps not aged well. Particularly after last week's revised calendar announcement.

When the original 2024-25 Formula E calendar was revealed, this writer asked why a TBD remained on the calendar and just how confident Dodds was that a venue would in fact be announced for the proposed 8 March date, thus creating a 17-race schedule for the first time.

Fast-forward four months and the latest World Motor Sport Council meeting held last Thursday has confirmed that the upcoming Formula E campaign will be made up of 16 races, with no venue found for the TBD slot.

On the face of it, 16 races at 10 different locations, consisting of city street and permanent race tracks including the Homestead-Miami Speedway and a truncated version of the Jeddah circuit used by Formula 1 – both for the first time – represent a diverse and strong offering. But there can be no escaping the chasm that losing a race in March has created. A two-month gap now exists between the double-header in Saudi Arabia and the standalone US outing.

What's just as concerning is that this is the second year in a row where a race has been lost from the calendar, the Hyderabad E-Prix having been dropped last season after the newly elected local government, which had vehemently opposed the event, came into power.

In that instance a gap of six weeks appeared, which understandably left drivers, teams and fans frustrated, as any momentum built from the opening rounds seemed to ebb away. Generating 'noise' has been both one of Formula E's strengths and weaknesses, especially since Dodds took the helm 18 months ago. For six months of the year, races and the storylines produced by them have helped to create headlines and bring the all-electric championship to the world's attention. But for the other half of the year, when no racing takes place, the championship almost seems to go into hibernation.

Not having a race for two months during the season is certainly not going to help with that, even if it allows teams more time to

get on top of the new Gen3 Evo machines.

"None of us wants to see that size of gap during the season," says McLaren team principal Ian James. "Will we use it to our advantage? Of course, we'll do whatever we can to continue to develop and in a way it's an opportunity to learn from the first events that we've had with this new [Gen3 Evo] car and new approach. So we won't waste any opportunity that comes through that. But would we rather be racing? Of course we would."

Formula E organisers were quick to spin the news about the lack of a 17th race on Thursday, boasting about the 16 confirmed races and insisting that "work is already under way to build and maintain engagement with fans all season long, with more details to be announced in the coming months".

A vague statement, in part due to things still being very much up in the air about an as-yet-unannounced event that will be held on the date originally slated as the TBD. A variety of options are on the table, some more likely than others. The most outlandish of them all could be a non-championship race.

Given that F1 looked at the idea of an all-rookie race at the end of the current season, it's not beyond the realms of possibility that Formula E might actually go down that route. The championship is already hosting an all-female session on the final afternoon of Valencia pre-season testing next month. Offering those same drivers the chance to compete in a race, even if unofficial, would certainly be one way to generate headlines during the mid-season gap.

All of this remains speculation, however, and the fact of the matter is it will most probably be a fan event of some kind,

where drivers sign autographs, pose for pictures and talk about how much they would rather be racing.

As proven over the past decade, Formula E is not afraid to go against convention and push traditional boundaries. It has introduced initiatives such as Fanboost, whereby fans could decide by voting which driver they would like to see get an extra surge of power during a race.

It's a delicate line, though. Novel concepts can either be applauded or seen as nothing more than cheap gimmicks. The jury is still out on just what side of the fence the 8 March event will fall on, but the bottom line is there can be no real substitute for a race. All of which means Formula E's second decade is off to a bumpy start before the season has even got under way. 🏁

## 2024-25 FORMULA E CALENDAR

VENUE	DATE
Sao Paulo (BRA)	7 December
Mexico City (MEX)	11 January
Jeddah (SAU)*	14-15 February
Miami (USA)	12 April
Monte Carlo (MCO)*	3-4 May
Tokyo (JPN)*	17-18 May
Shanghai (CHN)*	31 May-1 June
Jakarta (IDN)	21 June
Berlin (DEU)*	12-13 July
London (GBR)*	26-27 July

\* Double-header events



# RACE CENTRE



FORMULA 1

## FERRARI DOMINATES AS F1 TITLE FIGHT GETS UGLY AGAIN

*Charles Leclerc was imperious around Austin but it was another day  
when on-track nonsense failed to do Formula 1 justice*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS


PHOTOGRAPHY



motorsport  
IMAGES

MAIN IMAGE: GALLOWAY





Leclerc claimed his third win of the season in style, although the focus was diverted

**J**ust past the halfway stage of Formula 1's 2024 United States Grand Prix, Will Joseph told his McLaren charge Lando Norris that they were facing a "Germany Situation". But, given how he went on to win last Sunday for Ferrari, the Austin story was in fact about how Charles Leclerc pulled off another successful 'Austria Situation' for the Scuderia.

For Austin 2024, read Austria 2022. Both included sprint events, where Red Bull's Max Verstappen won the shorter contest and Leclerc triumphed in the pukka GP race.

At the Red Bull Ring two years ago, Leclerc and his team-mate Carlos Sainz diced hard early on in the sprint, which allowed Verstappen precious time to escape and win. In the Austin sprint edition, they engaged in an even more brutal battle.

Quizzed after his team's eventual GP 1-2 – something Ferrari would have taken at Austria 2022 too but for Sainz's late engine failure – team boss Fred Vasseur insisted "they did a good job".

Hardly convincing, with McLaren team principal Andrea Stella

claiming "if they hadn't fought with each other, they would have been able to win" the sprint Verstappen ultimately edged.

On average stint pace in the sprint – once the two SF-24s had stopped being thrown at each other – Red Bull had just a 0.009-second average lap time advantage. Essentially nothing, even with Verstappen having had the benefit of driving in free air to help with Austin's classic rear-tyre thermal degradation quest and the two Ferrari drivers were treating their mediums anything but gently in the critical early-stint phase.

Anyway, Leclerc had come into the main Texas contest acknowledging he'd "been struggling a little bit with the feeling with the car". Sainz was only the second Ferrari in sprint qualifying and from there scrapped savagely to be the one that chased down and beat Norris in the sprint, then shone brighter in GP qualifying.

But, just as with Austria 2022, where he "worked quite a lot on my driving" – specifically there on how to better treat medium Pirellis over a race stint – Leclerc kept at it.

At the end of the 19-lap Austin sprint contest, where all the drivers >>



ran the mediums that had been predicted to be key to the race result after all but Sauber had burned one of only two hard compound sets per car in Friday practice, Pirelli engineers clocked tyres close to 100% wear across the grid. This gave vital information on exactly how long the mediums would last, albeit with the variable that around 60kg of GP fuel weight was missing from the first race.

In 2024, of course, teams can alter car set-ups post-sprint – ahead of GP qualifying. Leclerc feared that as ride heights went down across the grid as the teams realised the Austin plank wear issue was much reduced with the track resurfacing for this year, “the others would improve a lot more” with such changes. In reality, for what turned out to be his main rival for much of the race – Verstappen – the opposite occurred.

After the sprint, the Dutchman had a bigger rear-wing arrangement fitted “for race set-up” – per Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko. But, as this combined with the other set-up settings that ultimately determine a car’s aerodynamic balance, it “seemed to engineer into the car a bit more understeer”, revealed team boss Christian Horner. “That then sort of killed the front tyres – compared to [the sprint], where we didn’t have any understeer and the car was very quick,” he added.

But, before that mattered, there was the small issue of how neither Leclerc nor Verstappen was starting the GP contest on pole. That was Norris’s position – cemented when George Russell crashed his Mercedes at the penultimate corner in GP qualifying (see page 15).

Fortune might have aided McLaren on a track Stella expected his squad to “struggle most” of the final six. But as Vasseur sagely noted, overtaking is “not a drama in Austin” – starting with its famed, sharply uphill, Turn 1 hairpin. The one where the 2015 world title fight between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg got a little too close for comfort.

When the lights went out for the 56-lap main event, Norris reacted well and quickly moved over to cover Verstappen. But, although he’d come far on the inside line, there was still room enough to petulantly chuck a cap through what little space there was left. And Verstappen didn’t hesitate.

He squeezed his RB20 into the gap Norris had left “driving like a muppet”, per the Briton, and ran his title rival brutally wide on exit. Both cars were forced off track and Norris was left to reflect how “I can’t just dive up the inside of someone, run off and then keep the position in normal running, but for some reason, it’s completely OK in lap 1 and Turn 1”. For his part, Verstappen said “there was a gap on the inside, so I went for it”.

As they squabbled, on the inside Leclerc was gleefully steaming through to lead on the plunging run down to the Esses sequence – having been on third-starting Sainz’s inside when the Spaniard “got the worst of it” and had to check up behind the brief leaders.

Over the race’s laps 7-24 phase, where Leclerc was Monza metronomic in the 1m39s Verstappen couldn’t regularly replicate, the Monegasque’s average pace was 1m39.528s as he leapt clear. Verstappen was shipping 0.524s a lap at his 1m40.052s average.



Red Bull’s ace ran the McLaren off on the exit

ETHERINGTON

## “AS THEY SQUABBLED, ON THE INSIDE LECLERC WAS GLEEFULLY STEAMING THROUGH TO LEAD TO THE ESSES”

But he was doing so in front of Sainz, not Norris, as the Spaniard had been able to nip ahead of his former McLaren team-mate and set off after Verstappen on the opening tour. He’d finished that with a gap of 0.6s to the Red Bull, which was already trailing Leclerc by 1.7s.

But the first lap hadn’t been without a bit more angst, as Sainz dived to Verstappen’s inside at Turn 12 at the end of Austin’s main straight – the scene of so much controversy still to come. Verstappen held on and both cars shot off into the run-off and the Red Bull stayed ahead.

An Autosport enquiry to the FIA revealed that this, along with his shove on Norris at Turn 1, was assessed by race control officials. But, in both cases, it was decided not to escalate them to the stewards for further appraisal. This is why no timing screen messages noting the incidents ever arrived.

Those initial early gaps weren’t to matter, as Hamilton’s awful Austin weekend ended when he lost the rear of his W15 at lap two’s conclusion at the exact same spot Russell had had his very similar incident in GP qualifying. This was just before Leclerc made a rare GP error and locked up briefly at Turn 1.

The safety car was called to cover the Mercedes’ recovery, with the



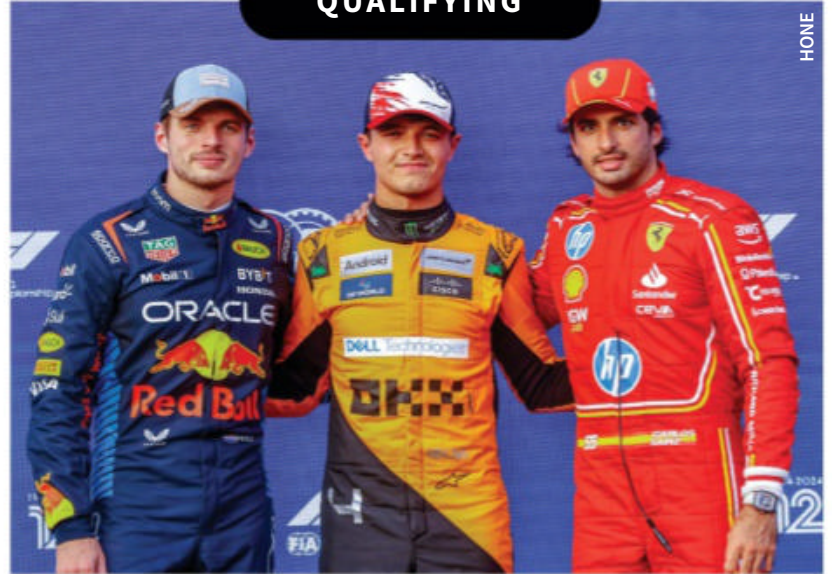
Disconsolate Hamilton leaves the scene after beaching his Mercedes

MAUGER



## QUALIFYING

HONEY



It's clear why Lando Norris reckoned the lap that netted him pole position at Austin was "the best of my career". The McLaren hadn't been the happy package of Singapore. Team principal Andrea Stella had feared the significant wind factor of this place was putting the MCL38s on edge, but his squad's efforts "to adapt to the wind" paid off come Q3 and the setting sun of last Saturday evening.

Ride heights had been lowered across the grid post-sprint, which in McLaren's case meant Norris was in for a very bumpy ride in the weekend's second qualifying session. Having been encouraged by engineer Will Joseph to "trust the car and don't overload the combined" – which meant not going too aggressive on the requirements to brake and turn at several Austin corners – he set off.

Norris knew McLaren was "a bit down to Red Bull" in Austin's "faster corners" – the not resurfaced Esses and the corners leading up to the last. He therefore had to "risk that little bit more". The result was a bouncing, "bottoming", per Norris, wild and on-the-edge lap. The Esses were particularly jumpy for the Briton. Then at the plunging Turn 19 penultimate left, he saved a wild snap on the exit kerbs.

"It was close, it was on the edge, but it's what I needed," Norris said afterwards.

Verstappen was still to come. He shipped time to Norris in the straight-heavy middle sector, but again it was Turn 19 where pole was decided. In sprint qualifying the evening before, Verstappen's perfectly judged commitment had resulted in a 3mph gain to Mercedes' George Russell and the critical 0.012-second

difference for that session. A day later, Verstappen turned in "probably a bit late, tried to carry a bit more speed". His wider line meant he had to downshift gathering things up and the previous 0.2s gap he'd built to Norris in the track's longer and other fast turns was completely gone. Norris led by 0.031s.

It can never be known if Verstappen would have toppled his title rival on the second Q3 runs had Russell not crashed at Turn 19 – Mercedes' previous form disappearing in the added Saturday heat, with Lewis Hamilton the shock Q1 faller. But the Dutchman had been 0.17s up at the end of sector one and, although Norris's first sector two was mighty, Verstappen surely would have adjusted at Turn 19.

The yellows covering Russell's crash thwarted everyone else, but particularly Ferrari's Carlos Sainz. He felt that the lower track temp made the car come alive and he'd just charged to run 0.15s adrift of Verstappen – and 0.02s up compared to Norris's run one at this point – in the first sector. But he had to settle for the third he'd banked on run one ahead of Charles Leclerc in the other Ferrari.

A good start for Norris from pole, but what's that coming up the hill? Is it a Verstappen?



MAIN IMAGE: SBLOXHAM



Leclerc must be laughing as he takes decisive lead

neutralisation lasting until the start of lap six. Restarting, Leclerc had hit the gas at Turn 19 on the tour before and, while Verstappen initially went with him, no Turn 1 lunge was forthcoming this time.

Instead, Leclerc shot back to be 1.3s ahead, with Sainz still 0.735s adrift of Verstappen. Sainz stayed in DRS range until lap eight, but here "for a lap I had some sort of issue that meant that I had very little power at the exit of the corners". He complained over the radio that he could smell fuel – potentially a worrying leak. Ferrari "didn't see something clear in the data" of what was occurring, per Vasseur. He added: "It came back to normal. It was strange but I don't know yet [what caused the issue, in his post-race media briefing]."

The result was that at the start of lap nine, Verstappen was 1.55s clear and Sainz was "most importantly" out of DRS threat. "And then you are in that 1.5-3s gap that is the worst for tyres and car balance," Sainz added. "Which meant I just had to settle until the pitstop windows."

Behind, although it appeared he was being significantly dropped, Norris was doing likewise. "Lando, because of losing the time at the start," said Stella of Norris's consistent run in the low-1m40s post-restart, "needed to accept that he needed to control the pace in the first [real] part of the stint."

Norris dropped to a maximum of 3.76s back from Sainz and was 3.5s adrift when Ferrari went aggressive and strategically attacked Verstappen with an undercut attempt. On lap 21, Sainz came in to switch to the hard tyres.

Verstappen was brought in to do the same four tours later and duly >>



SPRINT RACE



Scrap out of Turn 1 gave Norris his chance to make amends for qualifying

The sprint race for the 2024 United States Grand Prix was all very familiar. Red Bull's Max Verstappen started on pole having produced a confident SQ3 final lap the night before and won by a chunk in front of the bumper Austin crowd. The RB20 even looked to be back to its predictable, smooth and connected best.

But there were critical differences in the second time in two years that Verstappen led every lap of this 19-tour contest – particularly his 3.9-second victory margin versus 9.5s in 2023. The

**“Norris had just enough momentum to reach the start of the Esses ahead of the Mercedes”**

others were right with him.

At the start, Verstappen easily covered the inside line of the sharply uphill Turn 1 left, but the main action came just behind the Red Bull – with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc squeezing the other front row starter, George Russell. Their close proximity on a wider line meant McLaren's Lando Norris could immediately bounce back from his “shocking” last SQ3 lap that had left him starting fourth. Norris stayed tight on the inside line and gained massively when Russell and Leclerc ran close. Norris had just enough momentum to reach the start of the Esses ahead of the Mercedes and was suddenly chasing his title rival.

Norris stayed in DRS range for the first three tours but, while this was on the tense side – McLaren



Russell and two Ferraris in pursuit

telling him Verstappen was “potentially” hurting his rears excessively – the action just behind was enthralling. Carlos Sainz and Leclerc were adding even more scarlet spurts to Texas as they fully wrung the red necks of their SF-24s in an intra-Ferrari battle lasting five laps. Sainz cut and Leclerc thrust – the latter off the track at the braking-turning requiring Turn 15. Finally, Sainz got through with a neat dive here, outdragging his team-mate away.

By this stage, Norris had fallen to 1.4s back from Verstappen and, although he rallied with Russell breathing down his neck, he couldn't get close enough to attack.

Verstappen was finding that he could just “go a little bit faster without having to worry with the balance of the car” and so in the

high-speed corners such as Turn 19, the Dutchman was pulling a critical few tenths each time, while in sector two Norris generally reversed the Red Bull's gains in the first sector's Esses.

Russell had one look at passing Norris into Turn 12 at the end of the main straight on lap six, plus Turn 15 a few moments later, but

was easily rebuffed. The Mercedes then tumbled back through the hotly pursuing Ferraris and was just ahead of team-mate Lewis Hamilton at the flag. The second Mercedes driver had been pushing too hard on the mediums trying to stay close to the Ferraris early on, while Russell was doing the same to outrun them.

Tyre degradation would define Norris's final laps. All the leaders were running mediums that had been used in sprint qualifying, but Norris's had done an extra lap. This and his early efforts to catch Verstappen left him with “tyres completely finished by the end” and contributed to his last-lap Turn 1 lock-up that let Sainz by.

Leclerc chased but DRS from the first Ferrari aided Norris to Turn 12 and he then smartly shut the door on Turn 15's inside line, which caught out Leclerc and got pointlessly investigated. Behind the two Mercedes came the impressive Haas pair, Kevin Magnussen and Nico Hulkenberg, while Liam Lawson's defending of 16th enraged Fernando Alonso, who got jumped by Alex Albon.



Sprint win was sweet for Verstappen



emerged 4.3s behind. Fears he'd need repairs for a "bit of an issue" Red Bull had spotted in its data that was highlighted by Gianpiero Lambiase were unfounded as that "was relative to the understeer that he had in the car, so [the message] was really about how much front wing to put into the car for the hard tyre [at the service]", per Horner.

Leclerc, with a 10.7s lead when Verstappen stopped, stayed out only one more tour to lap 26 – having urged his engineer, Bryan Bozzi, not to "leave me out too long" after Sainz had come in.

"For me, there wasn't a lot of reasons for me to go still longer," Leclerc later said of this point, where how his big Baku stint one lead disappearing post-pitstop was rather relevant. "And when you have cold tyres, you don't want to have pressure from behind because you just want to bring the tyres nicely up to temperature. I did not want to find myself in that scenario and I made it clear."

## "WE ALREADY KNEW BEFORE THE RACE THAT FERRARI WAS VERY LIKELY THE BEST CAR"

Leclerc rejoined with a 6.4s net lead over Sainz, while Norris and his trailing team-mate Oscar Piastri now ran at the head of the field.

Norris finally came in for hards on lap 31, Piastri passed by Leclerc in an uncontested, DRS-assisted Turn 12 swoop on lap 31, plus with that major tyre life advantage of the Ferrari's fresh mediums. The Australian, who eventually finished fifth, was pitted on lap 32.

But while they'd been pounding around on their ageing mediums, the McLaren duo had been doing something that ultimately ended this event as a strategy contest. This was consistently setting personal bests in the low 1m39s bracket Leclerc had owned earlier, even with that old rubber.

"In the middle of our first stint, we were struggling a little bit with tyres," Stella revealed. "But the tyres started to go better – I think when the graining cleaned. We could put together some green sectors and lap times. Then we decided it was not a two-stop, it should be a one-stop."

Pirelli had insisted throughout the build-up that this would be a two-stop event. But the timing of the Hamilton safety car ended up being critical. Coming so early in the race, it meant "that those who had started on mediums could extend their stint, while it also meant the tyres were put under less stress during the crucial early stages, when the cars are running with a heavy fuel load", per Pirelli motorsport boss Mario Isola.

This combined with the major track evolution factor at this largely resurfaced track. Autosport understands the Circuit of The Americas will be asked to resurface the rest – mainly through the bumpy Esses section – for 2025.



The final two-stop killer was the 2024 sprint rules and the permitted set-up changes, as the cars and drivers, with some notable exceptions, were just better at tyre management overall on Sunday.

When Norris pitted, Leclerc – who soon "adjusted" to his own one-stop along with all the other leaders – enjoyed a 7.4s lead over Sainz. They still had 24 laps left to run and these played out in different ways for the red cars.

Sainz knew he'd "boxed really early for that hard tyre", but "from then on, I felt really comfortable, very confident, and we were very quick again". This meant, after it had initially risen in the first eight laps after the eventual winner's pitstop, he cut Leclerc's lead down to 4.6s by lap 47. After this, they had to lap a gaggle of backmarkers and the lead stabilised.

It was even extended at the flag, ending at 8.6s, where Leclerc claimed stint two "was all about managing behind". Stella, meanwhile, reckoned "the two Ferraris did not necessarily need to push 100%".

"We already knew before the race that Ferrari was very likely the best car," he added.

As brilliant as both Ferrari drivers were last weekend – aided by what is understood to be a front wing upgrade allowed to be undeclared in the official car presentation submissions because it remained the same aero shape, with the gain coming in another form – that isn't what this event will ultimately be remembered for. Because it got ugly, yet again, between Verstappen and Norris.

The McLaren had come out of the pits with a six-lap-life tyre advantage and a 6.6s gap to close to the Red Bull. At a rate of 0.516s >>







How  
Verstappen's  
defence drove both  
the Red Bull and  
McLaren off the  
track at Turn 12

BAGNALL

each time, Norris got that down to DRS range in 12 tours.

A thrilling battle then played out, with a very bitter ending. After four laps with DRS but no attack, Norris first had a look at Turn 12 on lap 47 – Verstappen had just locked up at Turn 11 – then they fought through Turns 13-16. Next time by, Norris had another Turn 12 feint, then Turn 1 suddenly became another attacking spot.

Verstappen began defending the tight inside line here before both had moments of peril on lap 50, Norris with a Turn 9 rear snap and Verstappen a Turn 12 lock-up. On lap 51, Norris's Turn 12 attack soon became a Turn 14 thrust that brought him oh-so-close with the Red Bull.

Then, on lap 52, it happened. Norris had finally been able to stay really tight to Verstappen through the Esses having again made the Red Bull close off Turn 1's inside. Norris shot onto the main straight with just a 0.4s deficit and then with a 12mph top speed advantage via DRS, was finally able to truly pounce.

Verstappen had jinked a bit left the previous time here, but now he went way further towards the inside. Norris's speed took his front wheels clearly ahead before he braked at roughly the same piece of asphalt he'd done so on lap 51. Verstappen didn't.

GPS trace data reveals that Verstappen braked significantly later, which sent him shooting towards the apex. This is a critical element,

## “IF ANYTHING, WE THOUGHT THE INVESTIGATION SHOULD BE FOR MAX PUSHING LANDO OFF THE TRACK”

as, per F1's 2024 Driving Standards Guidelines, these state a driver attacking on the outside as Norris was, must “have the front axle at least alongside with the front axle of the other car” at the apex. Verstappen's latest example of turning defence into attack made sure this didn't happen.

Inevitably, Verstappen slid long and both drivers were completely off the track in the run-off, from which Norris powered around the outside to finally, disputedly, get ahead.

Just as with their lap-one clash, there was a radio exchange of views, plus a pretty dodgy subsequent late chop by Norris to defend a Verstappen attack at Turn 1 at lap 53's commencement. Soon a penalty was handed down for the Turn 12 run-off incident. To Norris.

When Autosport asked Stella why McLaren hadn't ordered Norris to quickly cede the position back to Verstappen to avoid all threat of that 5s penalty, he replied: “Because on the pitwall and under my responsibility – but there was complete agreement by all the people involved in this interpretation – this situation did not need to be investigated. And if anything, we thought the investigation should be for Max pushing Lando off the track. For us, there was no need to give back the position.”

Norris afterwards said that what was “incorrect is what Max did”. Verstappen and Horner, meanwhile, could only point to previous examples of drivers being penalised for overtaking off-track – as Verstappen was here in 2017 – as a deflection defence.

For Verstappen this was still “a great result” and a race from which “we learned a lot”. For Norris, the ending, added to the two points he shipped finishing only third in the sprint, was a “momentum killer” for his title hopes.

Still, at least Leclerc was left feeling “we couldn't have dreamed for better” as the Texas sun beat down and the champagne rose. 🍾



Ferrari for Ferrari:  
Leclerc and Sainz soak  
in their moment

HONE

**NEXT  
F1 REPORT**

Mexican Grand Prix  
31 October issue



## TRACKSIDE VIEW

No head for heights:  
an Alpine spins at  
COTA's Turn 1 high point



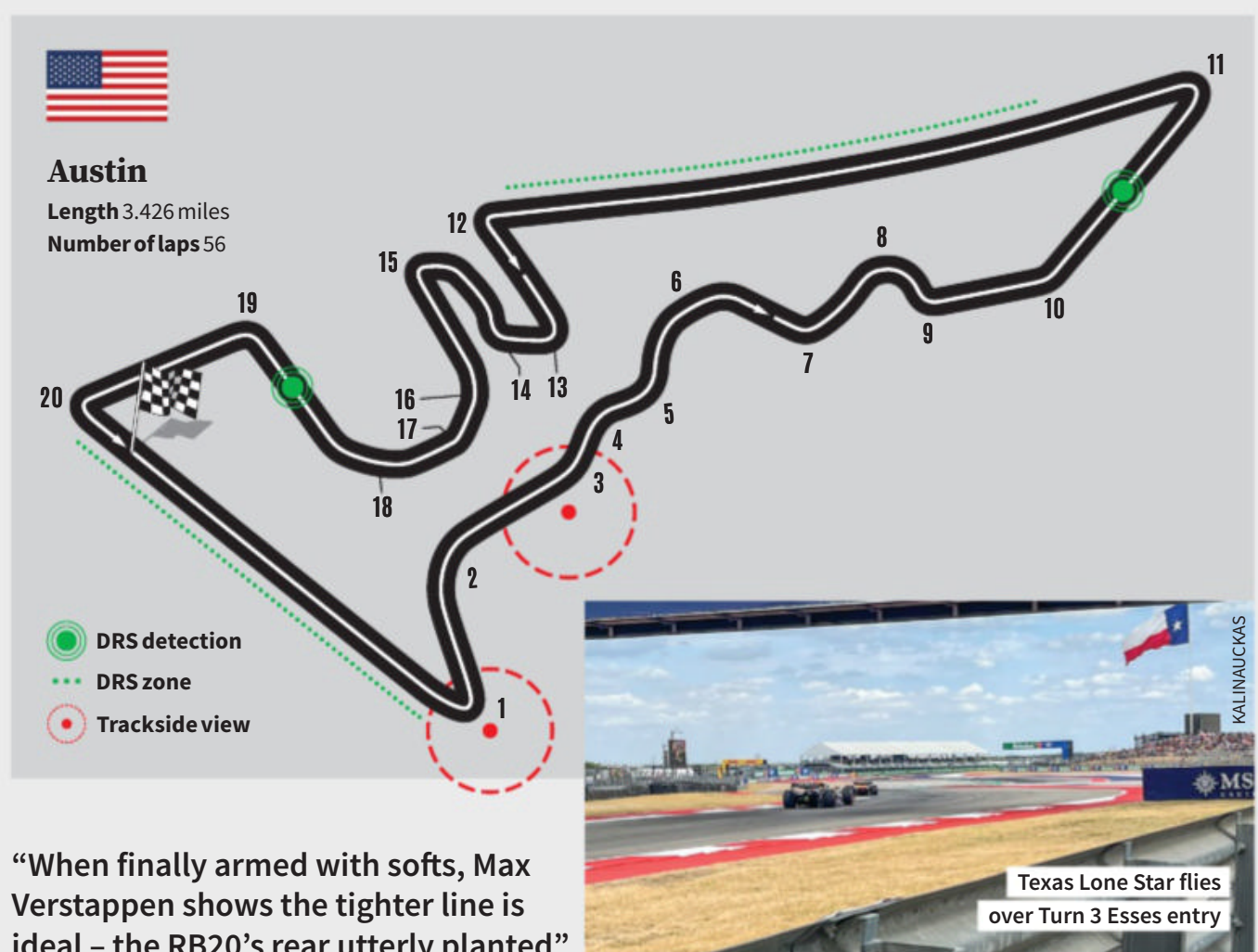
KALINAUCKAS

You can't miss the giant US and Texan flags at the Circuit of The Americas. The former flies gigantically above the already towering Turn 1 left-hand hairpin. It's here Autosport heads for the sole practice offering of the United States Grand Prix weekend, because there's even more elevation to be found.

Specifically, a photographer's tower that overlooks the Austin track's opening corner and provides a stunning vista across the rolling plains that lead up to south of Texas's capital city. We've repeated our trip here from 2023, where the slow-speed oscillations on the bad bumps across Turn 1's apex had left the ground-effect cars bouncing comically. But for this year at Austin, the section running from Turn 16-Turn 3 and the Esses' commencement had been resurfaced to remove this issue – new jet-black asphalt freshness baking under the blazing sun.

At this stage of the weekend, there are plenty of clouds blowing over; this provides shade relief to everyone watching but an added challenge for the drivers.

"At least the bumps have gone," we mutter as cars slither and squirm out of Turn 1 on sighter laps. Pirelli insiders had suggested that Turn 1 was comfortably the slipperiest point of the resurfacing work and now the drivers were finding out just how much. Although the only bouncing now comes on the tighter line through



**"When finally armed with softs, Max Verstappen shows the tighter line is ideal – the RB20's rear utterly planted"**

the various cambers around Turn 1's apex – to be expected with the corner traversing the hill's crest – the cars just won't turn in initially nor stay stable under acceleration.

Nico Hulkenberg's Haas snaps violently sideways the first time through, while Pierre Gasly's Alpine and then the two Mercedes cars are just understeering off into the run-off. Lando Norris is still doing this at the 10-minute mark.

The problem is trying to carry too much speed in with tyres that

haven't been sufficiently warmed from the preparation tours – always a challenge here given the need to protect the rears for the final turns. Gasly even spins his Alpine before Russell does likewise in the W15.

Two lines begin to emerge – those sacrificing speed on the tighter one and grappling with the rears kicking up on exit, and those still trying to make the wider approach work. When finally armed with softs at the halfway point, Max Verstappen shows the former is

ideal – the RB20's rear utterly planted on exit.

The Red Bull is easily the most stable car at Turn 3 and the devastatingly fast opening left of the Esses – where we head for FP1's final third. It skips off the inside kerb with a definite thud, but it's not squirming and sparking like the others – particularly the Mercedes. This, surely, we conclude, is the best place to watch ground-effect F1 cars in action.

**ALEX KALINAUCKAS**

KALINAUCKAS



## RUSSELL RESCUES SIXTH FROM MERCEDES' HIT AND MISS WEEKEND

George Russell rescued a solid sixth place for Mercedes after starting from the pitlane following his Turn 18 qualifying crash, as the Brackley team's inconsistency again reared its head.

Russell and Lewis Hamilton both showed pace in sprint qualifying that suggested Mercedes could contend for pole, but Hamilton's sole flying lap was hindered by a yellow flag prompted by Franco Colapinto's Turn 12 off.

Russell dropped behind the Ferraris in the sprint owing to tyre degradation, falling from second to fifth, while Hamilton suffered with rear graining. But qualifying for the GP was even worse; Hamilton failed to clear the Q1 hurdle, blaming a set-up issue encountered after fixing a front suspension problem that lingered through the sprint. Russell made Q3, but his crash meant that he had to take older-spec components, necessitating a pitlane start.

Hamilton was out of the race by the end of the second lap after beaching his car at the same corner, but Russell went long on the hard tyres and passed Sergio Perez on the mediums to collect sixth.

"When we're in the window, we're there," Russell reflected. "When we're not, it bites. And that happened to me [in qualifying]."

"Russell had insane pace," Red Bull's Helmut Marko told Sky Germany. "Had he started at the front, it could have been different..."



ETHERINGTON



TEE

## Lawson cooks up a storm at Alonso's expense

Liam Lawson celebrated his return to F1 with ninth – and a new rivalry, as he managed to earn the ire of Fernando Alonso over the course of the weekend.

Their spat kicked off in Saturday's sprint race. In their battle over 15th, Lawson saw Alonso looming large in his mirrors and moved across to cover the line before moving back into the usual position for the Turn 12 braking zone.

This forced Alonso to drop deep while passing, which allowed Lawson to achieve a switchback into the next corner and park his car on the apex to ensure the Aston Martin could not throw its nose down the inside. "The AlphaTauri [sic] is such an idiot," Alonso exclaimed of the RB driver, audibly upset at the robustness of Lawson's defence.

The two were seen afterwards 'in discussion' over the sprint race events. "On the straight, I think

we nearly crashed, like I did with Lance [Stroll] two years ago, at 300-something [km/h], and then he squeezed me out of the corners to the track limits," added Alonso.

Alonso got his own back slightly in qualifying after overtaking Lawson on their Q1 out-laps, disrupting the Kiwi enough for him to note "he's doing exactly what he said he'd do" over the radio. "He said he would screw me, and I guess he kept his word," Lawson explained afterwards, although it didn't stop the RB driver from logging the third-best time in the first qualifying phase.

Lawson impressed in the race and dispatched Lance Stroll around the outside of Turn 6. The New Zealander then put a tidy move on Alonso on lap 11 into the Turn 12 braking zone and then covered off all bases in the following corners. Alonso kicked up the dirt in Turn 14 in an effort to find a way back past.

# 6

A double points finish in the sprint and Nico Hulkenberg's eighth place in the grand prix lifted Haas two points ahead of RB in the battle for sixth in the constructors' standings.



GALLOWAY





## PEREZ FAILS TO BREAK DOWN MIDFIELDERS

Sergio Perez spent both of his races at Austin stuck behind some of the more traditional midfield runners en route to seventh in the grand prix.

The Mexican missed out on sprint race points after losing time in Yuki Tsunoda's wheeltracks, which let the Haas duo of Kevin Magnussen and Nico Hulkenberg scamper out of his clutches.

Tsunoda reprised that role during the grand prix, which stalled Perez's early progress, although the Red Bull driver eventually got past on the 17th lap. After stopping, Perez emerged behind Franco Colapinto, who provided a stern defence despite the hard tyre delta between them – the Argentinian was yet to stop.

Colapinto eventually gave way, electing not to damage his tyres further, but Perez was now 25 seconds behind Oscar Piastri. Russell then passed Perez, who had started ninth, with two laps to go, snatching sixth.

## Albon compromised at Turn 1, Colapinto scores a point

Alex Albon thought Williams would retire his car after damage sustained in his Turn 1 clash with Esteban Ocon, as the two coalesced at the uphill pinch-point.

During the contact, Valtteri Bottas knocked Albon's diffuser as the field closed up, which Albon explained made the car "really bad, particularly through left-handers. I'm not too sure why we didn't [retire]."

A spin in sprint qualifying cost Albon the chance to join team-mate Franco Colapinto in SQ3, and the Anglo-Thai ended up using it as an extended test session to trial set-ups for Sunday's grand prix – although he at least managed to interlope on the ill-tempered battle between Liam

Lawson and Fernando Alonso.

In the other car, Colapinto was the master of his own fate in pushing for a hard-tyre start for the grand prix, and earned a point for his troubles. The Argentinian defended well from Sergio Perez in the middle phase of the race and, after stopping, pounced on Yuki Tsunoda's Turn 1 spin and Pierre Gasly's hard-tyre struggles to get into the top 10.

A bid to double his score by taking the fastest lap was denied by Esteban Ocon's late stop for softs, which was motivated by Alpine's four-point deficit to Williams in the constructors' standings. "It wastes tyres – take care of the planet!" Colapinto joked after the race.

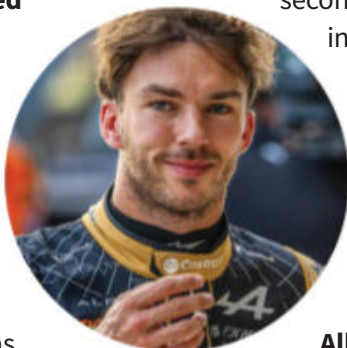


### Q&A

#### PIERRE GASLY ALPINE DRIVER

##### Are you disappointed to finish 12th?

Yeah, it wasn't good enough. We haven't executed in the best way. We made a good start. I was in P6, managing the tyre, where everything was looking good. Then Haas played their cards and decided to put the pressure on with one [Kevin Magnussen]. We just fell for it and reacted when the



medium was the better compound for the race. We had a slow pitstop, lost four or five seconds in the pits, exited in the traffic and struggled massively on the hard.

##### What do you think of the penalty for passing Alex Albon off-track?

I don't agree with it, but I accept it. The FIA always has the last word, but I'm sure we're going to talk about it. I'm side by side with Alex at the apex,

I expect him to at least leave me 20cm of race track so I can leave my inside wheel on the line. But if he goes on the line, the best I can do is be on the kerb as I'd rather avoid contact.

##### Was it a positive weekend overall?

There are some positives. In qualifying, we have some potential. There are conditions where the car seems to work. The first stint felt like it was well managed and the pace was there to hang on to that sixth place. But the hard tyre was very bad, so there are clearly things to

understand. I'm frustrated right now, but looking at where we were at the last two races, there's definitely some improvement.

##### Does it feel like a turning point?

That's the positive, I'll say that. I agree. Today we didn't do the best job in the race and still finished P12, not too far from P10, so it clearly gives us hope that if we execute a stronger race we might have one or two chances to fight for that last point. It's very frustrating as a team when you see Williams get that last point. With different decisions we could have been there, but that's F1.



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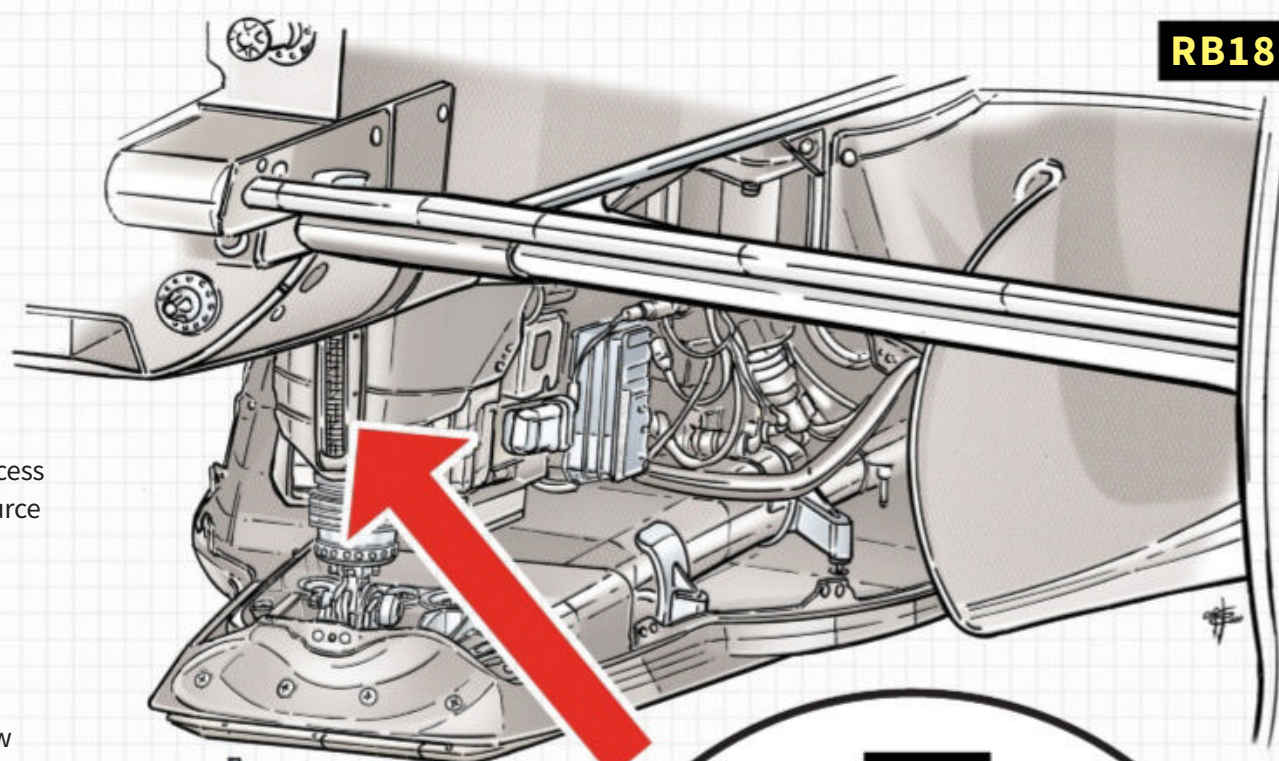
## CASE CLOSED ON RED BULL 'BIB' UPROAR

The Austin weekend opened with acrimony over Red Bull's floor as it became apparent that the team had a device to adjust the front section (known as the 'bib') height from within the cockpit. Its rivals became aware of this because the bib section is an open-source component. All teams have access to the relevant documentation for open-source components in a central FIA folder.

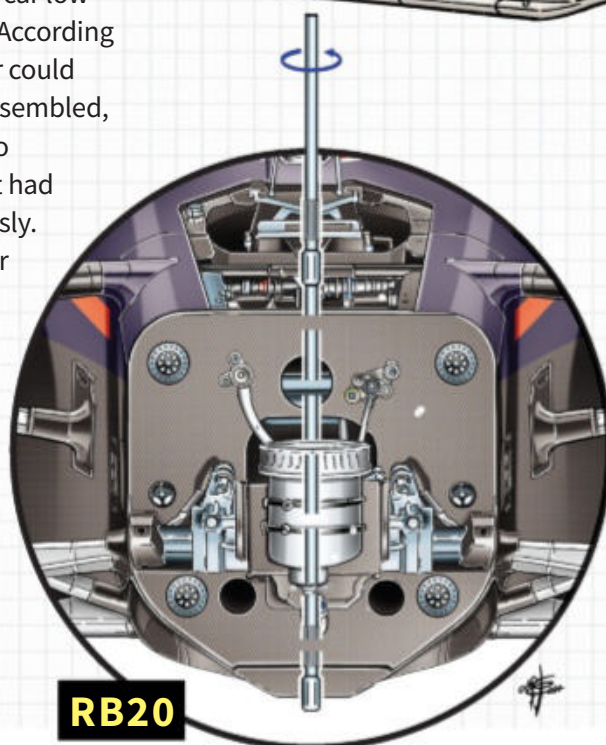
The suggestion was that the team could theoretically change the floor height from qualifying to the race, thus bypassing parc ferme regulations. In theory, an adjustable device would allow a team to run the car low in qualifying and raise it for the race. According to Red Bull, however, the bib adjuster could not be used while the car was fully assembled, although McLaren implored the FIA to investigate further and determine if it had been used during parc ferme previously.

The FIA later considered the uproar over Red Bull's bib adjuster a closed chapter, as the governing body could find no evidence that the system had been used between qualifying and race. Max Verstappen's number one mechanic Ole Schack was seen showing the FIA how the system could be accessed through the bulkhead, but only with a socket on the end of a long metal rod.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



**RB18**



**RB20**



**RB19**

**BIB DEVICE HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE SINCE 2022**

## RED BULL CHANGES PATH WITH UPGRADES

The controversy over Red Bull's front 'bib' adjustment device rather overshadowed the effect of the upgrades that it brought to Austin. Max Verstappen revealed that the team had effectively plotted an

entirely new course after its woeful Monza outing, telling Dutch media that "everything that was planned had to be thrown in the bin".

The team introduced a new edge wing to the floor with a cambered

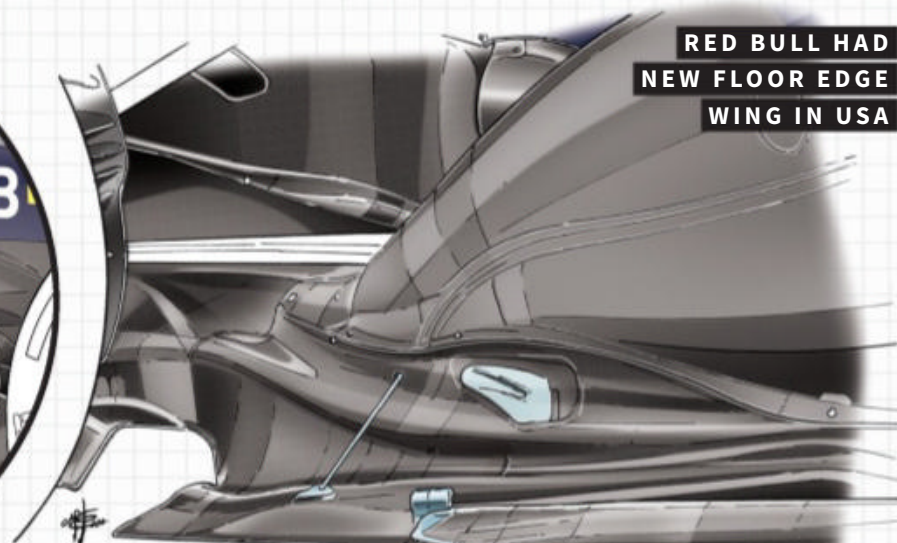
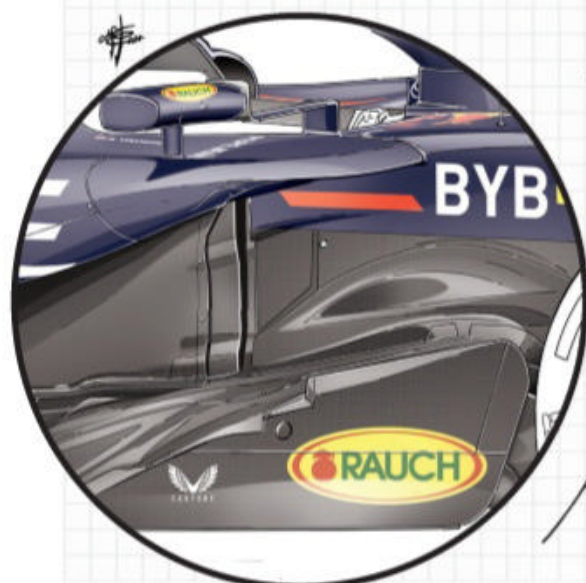
(raised) trailing edge, stating in its pre-event notes that "more local load is generated while maintaining flow stability". The vorticity at the edge should also strengthen the airflow ahead of

the rear tyre to limit tyre squirt entering the diffuser.

The team also revised the profile of its sidepods, reworking the floor junction to the vertical inlet to ensure it could get more out of its more streamlined bodywork package and reduce the use of cooling louvres over the top.

Team principal Christian Horner reckoned that the Austin upgrades had not only added performance to the car but also given Red Bull a better understanding of the RB20 after a mid-season dip in form. However, the decision to introduce slightly more understeer into the set-up post-sprint caused the team slightly more grief on the harder compound tyre.

**JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE**



**RED BULL HAD NEW FLOOR EDGE WING IN USA**





19 Lawson #30  
no Q2 time



17 Hamilton #44  
1m34.154s



15 Colapinto #43  
1m34.062s



13 Stroll #18  
1m33.759s



11 Hulkenberg #27  
1m33.544s



20 Russell #63  
1m32.974s



18 Zhou #24  
1m34.228s




16 Bottas #77  
1m34.152s



14 Albon #23  
1m34.051s



12 Ocon #31  
1m33.597s



FREE PRACTICE 1		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Sainz	1m33.602s
2	Leclerc	1m33.623s
3	Verstappen	1m33.855s
4	Norris	1m33.868s
5	Piastri	1m33.908s
6	Hamilton	1m33.963s
7	Russell	1m34.093s
8	Magnussen	1m34.096s
9	Alonso	1m34.112s
10	Tsunoda	1m34.313s
11	Hulkenberg	1m34.364s
12	Gasly	1m34.375s
13	Lawson	1m34.443s
14	Albon	1m34.618s
15	Stroll	1m34.619s
16	Perez	1m34.638s
17	Ocon	1m34.806s
18	Bottas	1m35.041s
19	Colapinto	1m35.248s
20	Zhou	1m37.219s

WEATHER Sunny then cloudy, air 26-27C track 32-33C

SPRINT QUALIFYING		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Verstappen	1m32.833s
2	Russell	1m32.845s
3	Leclerc	1m33.059s
4	Norris	1m33.083s
5	Sainz	1m33.089s
6	Hulkenberg	1m33.183s
7	Hamilton	1m33.378s
8	Magnussen	1m33.398s
9	Tsunoda	1m33.802s
10	Colapinto	1m34.406s
Q2 11	Perez	1m34.244s
12	Gasly	1m34.363s
13	Stroll	no time
14	Alonso	no time
15	Lawson	no time
Q1 16	Piastri	1m34.881s
17	Ocon	1m34.917s
18	Albon	1m35.054s
19	Bottas	1m35.148s
20	Zhou	1m36.472s

WEATHER Sunny then cloudy, air 28C track 30-32C

RACE QUALIFYING		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
Q3 1	Norris	1m32.330s
2	Verstappen	1m32.361s
3	Sainz	1m32.652s
4	Leclerc	1m32.740s
5	Piastri	1m32.950s
6	Russell	1m32.974s
7	Gasly	1m33.018s
8	Alonso	1m33.309s
9	Magnussen	1m33.481s
10	Perez	no time
Q2 11	Tsunoda	1m33.506s
12	Hulkenberg	1m33.544s
13	Ocon	1m33.597s
14	Stroll	1m33.759s
15	Lawson	no time
Q1 16	Albon	1m34.051s
17	Colapinto	1m34.062s
18	Bottas	1m34.152s
19	Hamilton	1m34.154s
20	Zhou	1m34.228s

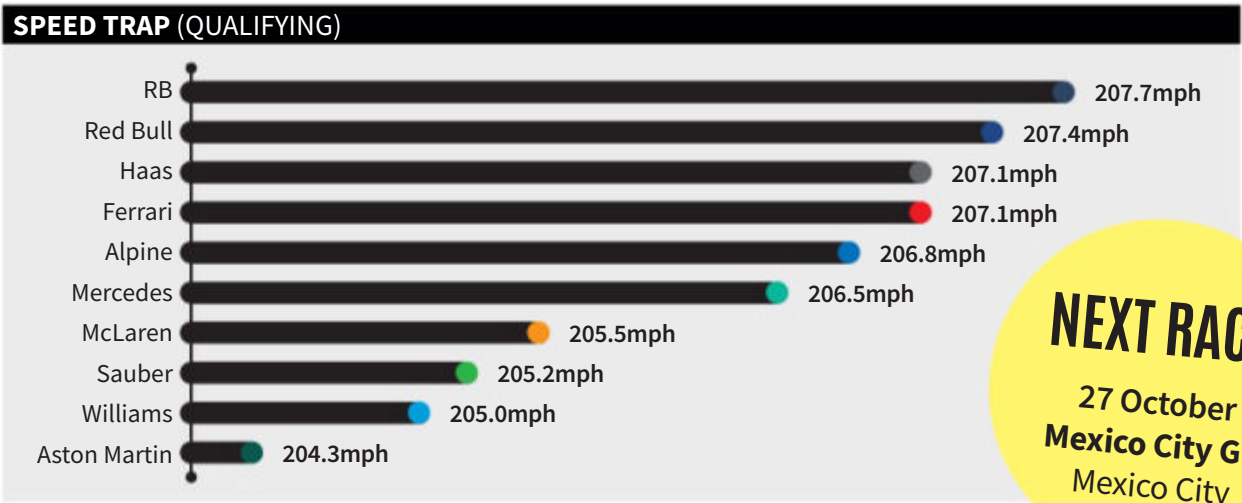
WEATHER Sunny, air 29-30C track 32-35C

SPRINT RACE 19 LAPS – 64.89 MILES					
POS	DRIVER	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRE	FASTEST LAPS
1	Verstappen	31m06.146s	19	M	1m37.463s
2	Sainz	+3.882s		M	1m37.552s
3	Norris	+6.240s		M	1m38.045s
4	Leclerc	+6.956s		M	1m37.748s
5	Russell	+15.766s		M	1m38.301s
6	Hamilton	+18.724s		M	1m38.372s
7	Magnussen	+25.161s		M	1m38.602s
8	Hulkenberg	+26.588s		M	1m38.746s
9	Perez	+29.950s		M	1m38.452s
10	Piastri	+37.059s		M	1m37.567s
11	Tsunoda	+38.363s		M	1m39.136s
12	Colapinto	+39.460s		M	1m39.335s
13	Stroll	+41.236s		M	1m39.532s
14	Gasly	+41.995s		M	1m39.438s
15	Ocon	+42.804s		M	1m38.835s
16	Lawson	+44.008s		M	1m39.237s
17	Albon	+44.564s		M	1m39.198s
18	Alonso	+46.807s		M	1m39.250s
19	Zhou	+52.842s		M	1m39.705s
20	Bottas	+54.476s		M	1m39.642s



WEATHER Sunny, air 28-29C track 37-40C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 125.172mph  
FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 126.532mph



NEXT RACE

27 October

Mexico City GP

Mexico City

SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	354	1	1
2 Norris	297	1	1
3 Leclerc	275	1	1
4 Piastri	247	1	2
5 Sainz	215	1	2
6 Hamilton	177	1	2
7 Russell	167	1	1
8 Perez	150	2	2
9 Alonso	62	5	3
10 Hulkenberg	29	6	6
11 Stroll	24	6	8
12 Tsunoda	22	7	7
13 Albon	12	7	9
14 Ricciardo	12	8	5
15 Magnussen	8	8	9
16 Gasly	8	9	7
17 Bearman	7	7	11
18 Colapinto	5	8	9
19 Ocon	5	9	9
20 Lawson	2	9	15
21 Zhou	0	11	14
22 Sargeant	0	11	12
23 Bottas	0	13	10

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP		PTS
1 McLaren		544
2 Red Bull		504
3 Ferrari		496
4 Mercedes		344
5 Aston Martin		86
6 Haas		38
7 RB		36
8 Williams		17
9 Alpine		13
10 Sauber		0

QUALIFYING BATTLE			
Verstappen	18	1	Perez
Hamilton	5	14	Russell
Leclerc	12	6	Sainz
Leclerc	1	0	Bearman
Norris	15	4	Piastri
Alonso	14	5	Stroll
Gasly	8	9	Ocon
Albon	3	0	Colapinto
Sargeant	0	13	Albon
Ricciardo	5	12	Tsunoda
Zhou	1	17	Bottas
Magnussen	3	13	Hulkenberg
Hulkenberg	0	1	Bearman

GP qualifying sessions only, not sprints. Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative lap time for reasons outside their control

WINS		POLE POSITIONS	
Verstappen	7	Verstappen	8
Leclerc	3	Norris	6
Norris	3	Leclerc	3
Hamilton	2	Russell	2
Piastri	2		
Russell	1		
Sainz	1		



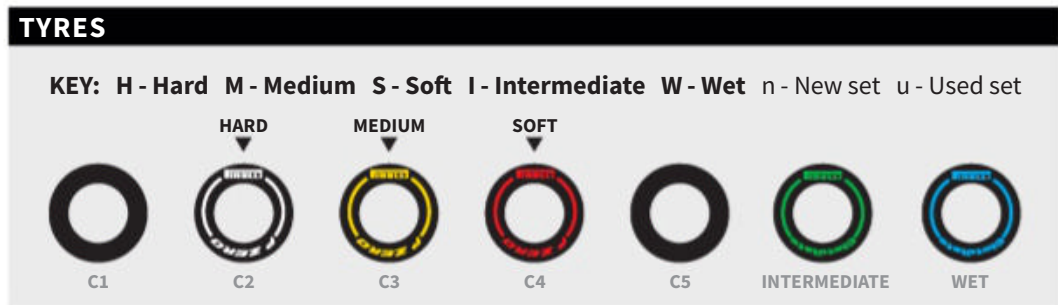


GP RESULTS ROUND 19/24 (56 LAPS – 191.63 MILES)					
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	1h35m09.639s	51	Mn, Hn
2	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+8.562s		Mn, Hn
3	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+19.412s		Mn, Hn
4	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+20.354s	5	Mn, Hn
5	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+21.921s		Mn, Hn
6	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+56.295s		Hn, Mn
7	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+59.072s		Mn, Hn
8	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m02.957s		Mn, Hn
9	Liam Lawson (NZL)	RB-Honda RBPT	+1m10.563s		Hn, Mn
10	Franco Colapinto (ARG)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m11.979s		Hn, Mn
11	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m19.782s		Mn, Hn, Mn
12	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m30.558s		Mn, Hn
13	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap/+1.726s		Mn, Hu
14	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	RB-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+8.212s		Mn, Hn
15	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap/+16.983s		Hu, Mn
16	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+18.092s		Mn, Mn, Hn
17	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap/+34.333s		Mu, Hn
18	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+42.112s		Mn, Hn, Su
19	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Sauber-Ferrari	-1 lap/+49.240s		Mu, Mu, Hn
R	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1 laps-accident		Hn

WEATHER Sunny, air 29-30C track 43-44C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 120.827mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 126.705mph.

FASTEST LAPS				
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Ocon	1m37.330s	-	53
2	Colapinto	1m37.611s	+0.281s	46
3	Russell	1m37.656s	+0.326s	42
4	Norris	1m37.679s	+0.349s	55
5	Sainz	1m37.763s	+0.433s	42
6	Leclerc	1m37.834s	+0.504s	39
7	Piastri	1m37.883s	+0.553s	42
8	Lawson	1m38.091s	+0.761s	54
9	Verstappen	1m38.117s	+0.787s	42
10	Magnussen	1m38.210s	+0.880s	56
11	Gasly	1m38.311s	+0.981s	55
12	Hulkenberg	1m38.404s	+1.074s	51
13	Perez	1m38.514s	+1.184s	45
14	Albon	1m39.084s	+1.754s	54
15	Tsunoda	1m39.193s	+1.863s	54
16	Stroll	1m39.214s	+1.884s	54
17	Alonso	1m39.261s	+1.931s	52
18	Zhou	1m39.272s	+1.942s	53
19	Bottas	1m40.575s	+3.245s	53
20	Hamilton	no time	-	-



LAP CHART																				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Norris	Verstappen	Sainz	Leclerc	Piastri	Gasly	Alonso	Magnussen	Perez	Tsunoda	Hulkenberg	Ocon	Stroll	Albon	Colapinto	Bottas	Hamilton	Zhou	Lawson	Russell
G	4	1	55	16	81	10	14	20	11	22	27	31	18	23	43	77	44	24	30	63
1	16	1	55	4	81	10	20	22	11	14	27	44	18	30	24	43	77	23	63	31
2	16	1	55	4	81	10	20	22	11	14	27	18	30	24	43	77	63	23	31	
3	16	1	55	4	81	10	20	22	11	14	27	18	30	24	43	77	23	63	31	
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49	16	55	1	4	81	11	63	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	31	18	23	77	24	
50	16	55	1	4	81	11	63	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	31	18	23	77	24	
51	16	55	1	4	81	11	63	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	31	18	23	77	24	
52	16	55	4	1	81	11	63	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	18	23	77	31	24	
53	16	55	4	1	81	11	63	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	18	23	77	31	24	
54	16	55	4	1	81	11	63	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	18	23	77	31	24	
55	16	55	4	1	81	63	11	27	30	43	20	10	14	22	18	23	77	31	24	
56	16	55	4	1	81	63	11	27	30	43	20	10								

KEY: 1 Classification 1 Lap number 3 Safety car lap  
G Starting grid 24 Lapped 23 Pit entry  
63 Overtook 23 Overtaken Retirement

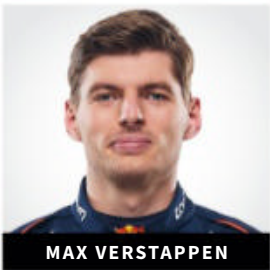


# UNITED STATES GP DRIVER RATINGS

*F1 returnee Lawson completes a high-scoring quartet alongside the Ferrari duo and the reigning world champion, while Hamilton brings up the rear*

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

## RED BULL



Started **2nd** — Result **3rd**

**9** Almost impenetrable defence against Norris eventually paid off. Race day performance tailed off versus sprint, and overcommitment against Norris at Turn 1 cost lead. Car positioning was good, but probably over-extended in final showdown. Looked unassailable in sprint.



Started **9th** — Result **7th**

**4** Didn't get full suite of Red Bull upgrades, but still a below-par showing. Lost Q3 lap good enough for eighth through track limits, and made heavy weather of passing Tsunoda and Colapinto. Caught and passed by Russell at the end, having shipped over 30 seconds to top five.

## MERCEDES



Started **17th** — Result **R**

**2** Poor luck or poor driving? Probably both. Up to 12th by end of first lap, but in the gravel by end of second lap in largely unforced error. Had "no grip" in Q1 elimination, suffered with graining in the sprint, and felt sprint pole went begging with yellow flag. A nightmarish weekend.



Started **20th** — Result **6th**

**6** Weekend of wildly different fortunes. Qualifying crash sloppy to force pitlane start, but he worked perfectly with strategy in race. Made progress with overtakes, enjoyed benefits of contra-strategy, and capped it off with Perez pass. Hit with five-second penalty for forcing Bottas off.

## FERRARI



Started **4th** — Result **1st**

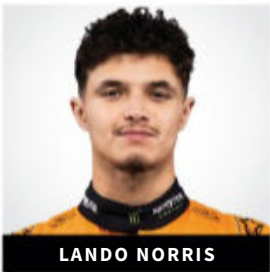
**9** If this was purely on the race, it'd be a 10 – but conservatism in sprint and fourth on grid costs a point. Otherwise, decisive into Turn 1 and built commanding lead off the back of that. Lost a smidgen of time to Sainz on hard-tyre stint, but knew tyre advantage would pay off at the end.



Started **3rd** — Result **2nd**

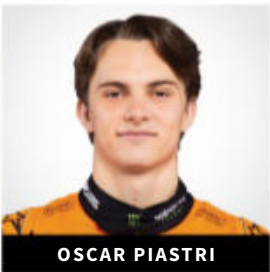
**9** Got boxed in on opening lap, so could not enjoy same fortune as Leclerc. Battled through power unit issues to keep tabs on Verstappen, and exploited undercut to emerge ahead after stops. Perfectly judged tyre life in sprint, and forced Norris into an error with last-lap pressure at Turn 1.

## McLAREN



Started **1st** — Result **4th**

**8** Did he defend hard enough at Turn 1, and should he have given Verstappen the place back? Hard tyre pace was electric and put him in podium contention and fierce battle with title rival. Last-lap sprint-race lock-up cost second to Sainz after aching start. Reckoned qualifying lap was "perfect".



Started **5th** — Result **5th**

**6** Couldn't find same magic on hard tyres that let Norris challenge Verstappen. Didn't hit car's maximum in qualifying, and had solid if unspectacular race running on his own. SQ1 elimination through track limits and sprint penalty for forcing Gasly off were avoidable errors.

## ASTON MARTIN



Started **7th** — Result **13th**

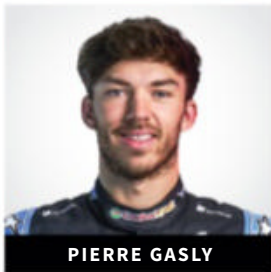
**5** Reaching Q3 was better than expected having missed out in sprint, but race pace was lacking and he dropped through the order. Lost three places at start after getting boxed in, and then lost places to a Haas, RB and Williams to show Aston's alarming lack of form.



Started **13th** — Result **15th**

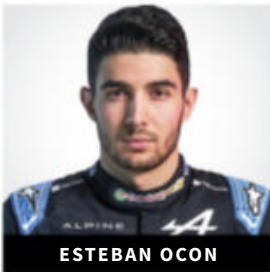
**4** An anonymous weekend. Passed by Lawson on outside at Turn 6 and then went into the gravel to lose further places. Defence against Albon was good, particularly in Turn 14-15, but did little else of note. Made Q2 by the skin of his teeth, although car regression is mostly to blame.

## ALPINE



Started **6th** — Result **12th**

**6** Stellar in qualifying. Looked lively in opening stint preserving sixth place. Reckoned Alpine was duped by Haas into pitting early for hards. Pace evaporated on second stint in phase where medium was better. Hit with five-second penalty for passing Albon off-track.



Started **12th** — Result **18th**

**5** Scarcely had chance to shine after Turn 1 collision with Albon. Ended up at the back. Was severely compromised and couldn't take medium tyres any deeper into the race. Snatched fastest lap point from Colapinto at the end on softs. Behind Gasly all weekend, but had been sans upgrades.





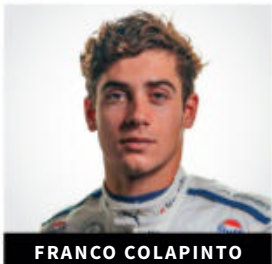
GALLOWAY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

WILLIAMS



ALEX ALBON

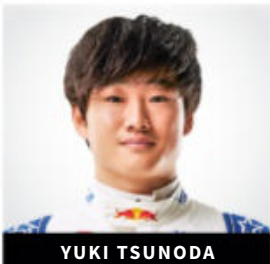
**4** Not much of a way to celebrate 100 races. Fluffed sprint qualifying with Turn 19 spin, and dropped out in Q1. Largely had nowhere to go in Ocon Turn 1 clash, which forced a two-stopper and left him out to dry. Not aggressive enough in battle with Stroll and Gasly.



FRANCO COLAPINTO

**8** Lost a place at start, but grew into the race on alternative strategy. Defended well from Perez before wisely ceding position when it started to hurt his tyres. Employed medium tyre offset to clear Gasly and broke into top 10. SQ3 appearance also noteworthy, even if he did overcook his tyres.

RB



YUKI TSUNODA

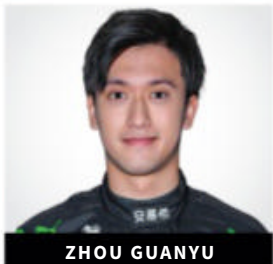
**5** Impressive start lifted him to eighth, and soaked up Perez attack for 16 laps. Medium-hard strategy didn't work out versus Lawson's hard-medium, frustration leading to Turn 1 spin while on cusp of top 10. Sprint race defence versus Perez similarly stout, but ultimately came to nought.



LIAM LAWSON

**9** A 60-place grid penalty didn't deny him chance to make statement in qualifying, with third fastest in Q1. Made up six places in opening two laps, and long opening stint on hard tyres helped overcut Tsunoda. Dispatch of Gasly vital for points finish. Bullied Alonso with lap 11 pass.

SAUBER



ZHOU GUANYU

**3** Saved from starting last by Lawson penalties and Russell pitlane start. Made up some ground in opening laps thanks to chaos ahead, but undid good work with Turn 1 spin after carrying too much speed uphill. Unable to recover from there, suffering tyre drop-off in middle stint.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

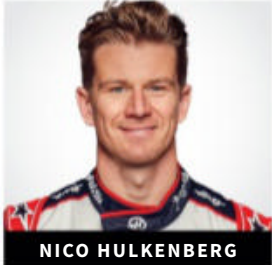
**5** Outqualified Hamilton, so that's something. Performed as expected in 2024 grid's worst car, and late strategy switch to one-stopper forced a 40-lap stint on hard tyre. Lucky to make qualifying after brake fire at end of sprint forced repairs in the break.

HAAS



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

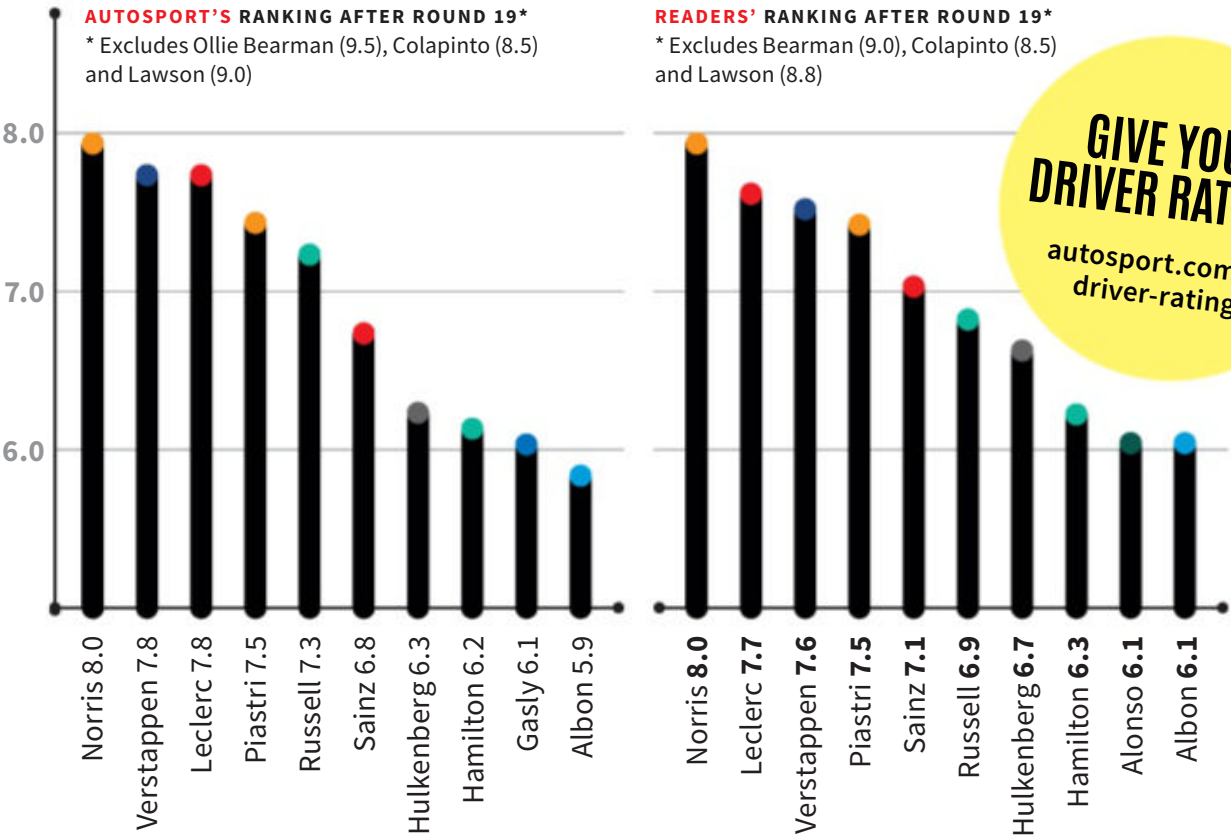
**8** Made up a place on Hulkenberg in sprint despite running older-spec car before parc ferme reopened, and outqualified team-mate to break into Q3. Looked good value for top-10 result, but two-stopper took points chance away. Defence against Tsunoda and racecraft in second stint very impressive.



NICO HULKENBERG

**7** Got better of two Haas strategies, as one-stop paid off. Dispatched Alonso after safety car, and going long ensured his undercut was untroubled by Gasly. Sixth on sprint grid was exceptional, but a poor start forced him into battling Tsunoda to score. Lock-up on final Q2 lap cost a top-10 berth.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



**GIVE YOUR DRIVER RATINGS**  
[autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings](https://www.autosport.com/f1/driver-ratings)



# Tanak delays Neuville's coronation

*The Belgian must wait until the final round in Japan to become champion as his Hyundai team-mate kept his own slim title hopes alive*

TOM HOWARD

PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN

**I**n tennis terms the Central European Rally represented the first real match point moment for Thierry Neuville in his relentless 12-year quest to lift the World Rally Championship title. The scene was set perfectly. An asphalt rally where being first on the road is an advantage, featuring stages in Germany not a million miles from his and his Hyundai team's home. But one thing that the WRC can guarantee in spades this season is unpredictability.

As has often been the case for Neuville – a five-time championship runner-up – the Belgian was made to wait for glory again as fate intervened while on course for a career-defining moment. Neuville only needed to outscore team-mate Ott Tanak by two points to seal rallying's ultimate prize. But after a wild Sunday, during which even world champions made errors, it was his nearest rival that triumphed to take the title fight to next month's Japan finale.

"Obviously we came here with the hopes of winning the drivers' and co-drivers' titles in Germany, and a lot of supporters came down to line the stages to live an incredible moment with us, but unfortunately it wasn't to be," said Neuville.

The phrase 'it wasn't to be' was apt for several drivers as the Central European Rally was, in the words of eventual winner Tanak, "very demanding". It was demanding on several levels, with crews completing stages in the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria. Throw in multiple surface changes, unpredictable weather and increasingly dirty roads and you have the perfect recipe for a challenging event.

The start was, however, predictable as Toyota's Sebastien Ogier ended Thursday's two Czech stages following the ceremonial start in Prague with a 0.9-second lead over Neuville. The surprise was the driver in third spot as Hyundai's Andreas Mikkelsen, who

had previously struggled to tame the i20 N on asphalt, come to the fore. A decision to go his own way on set-up rather than following Neuville and Tanak helped the Norwegian, facing an uncertain future for 2025, come alive.

But Mikkelsen's bright start faded by stage five. Having dropped to sixth overall, he drifted wide on the leaf-covered road and clattered a fence that tore the front from his i20 N, resulting in retirement. Mikkelsen did rejoin the rally on Saturday, only for a puncture to end any hopes of Super Sunday points.

By stage four, nearly half of the Rally1 cars had suffered hybrid failures. Toyota's rising star Sami Pajari, making his first Rally1 outing on asphalt driving a fourth GR Yaris, was the first to lose the hybrid boost before Mikkelsen and the M-Sport duo Adrien Fourmaux and Gregoire Munster lost the use of hybrid following particularly hard landings from the same jump in Strasin 1, the longest stage of the rally at 16.6 miles.



Evans ended up as top Toyota driver in second spot



Neuville's wait will go on for at least one more month





Tanak kept clear of trouble for his 21st WRC victory, taking the title fight to Japan next month

## “We came here with the hopes of winning the titles in Germany, but it was not to be”

The lack of hybrid was the least of Fourmaux’s concerns, the Frenchman strangely 1m33.4s off the pace in seventh overall come the end of Friday. Frustrated, he declared that he was struggling with “everything” on the car and that “something was wrong”, which required a thorough investigation.

At the front, Neuville – who has had to engage damage limitation mode starting first on the road for the last seven consecutive gravel rallies – was thriving with the road position advantage on asphalt. The Hyundai hauled itself into the rally lead by the end of stage five before going on to extend Neuville’s lead over Ogier to 6.4s on slippery roads that were hard to judge, made even worse by light drizzle. With Tanak a further 1.4s back in third and Toyota’s Elfyn Evans only 15.1s in arrears, the battle for victory was tight, but Neuville knew if he could maintain this display the world title would be his come Sunday.

But the rally gods chose not to shine on Neuville on Saturday as fog made the morning stages that straddled the Germany/Austria border wet, and like driving on ice. The conditions were responsible for several drivers making unscheduled trips to the scenery, including Neuville.

Neuville’s lead had been reduced to 0.5s after Tanak produced a stunning time to win stage nine but, according to the 2019 world champion, “Cyril [Abiteboul, Hyundai team boss] didn’t like our first stage time and we started to get some messages”. Abiteboul clarified these were made with the manufacturers’ title fight with Toyota in mind, reminding Tanak of the risks he should avoid.



Katsuta returned and scored useful points for Toyota

Tanak’s effort briefly elevated his i20 N to second ahead of Ogier before the Estonian dropped his pace too much in stage 10 and fell back behind the Toyota that was only 2s adrift of leader Neuville.

The 2024-spec Neuville has rarely made an error, a loss of concentration in Sardinia being his only real mistake. It’s why he is leading the championship, having scored points in every round. However, in stage 12, he made two mistakes. A 360-degree spin after touching the wet grass was recovered quickly, but moments later he careered off the road, luckily onto a large grass run-off area. In an effort to return to the road, he became briefly stuck in a ditch. More than half a minute was lost as he dropped to fourth and effectively his hopes of sealing the world title evaporated.

“It was a long corner and you don’t see the exit very well because it is uphill and when I entered the corner, it turned more than my pacenotes told me,” explained Neuville. »





Ogier flew before infuriating himself with a late error

Now resigned to bringing the car home, Neuville wasn't the only driver to be caught out. Ogier, who inherited the lead, survived a small moment, but admitted "it was easy to make a mistake", while M-Sport duo Fourmaux and Munster both enjoyed trips into fields, now with working hybrid units. Fourmaux's was the most spectacular as he skidded onto the grass and brushed the trees. However, the mysterious issue with his car came to light. M-Sport had made wholesale changes overnight but didn't change the front differential, which had developed a fault that effectively changed the Puma to a rear-wheel-drive-only version. His day came to an end when he lost the rear in stage 10.

The battle for the rally victory turned into a three-way fight. Tanak reduced Ogier's advantage to 1.1s after stage 12 before Ogier reeled off two stage wins to end the day with a slender 5.2s margin, while an under-the-weather Evans was third, 14.0s in arrears. It was looking very good for Toyota in the manufacturers' battle, with Ogier picking up 18 provisional Saturday points and Evans 13.

The WRC's new points system is complex and divides opinion, but it has certainly ensured that Sundays are no longer sedate affairs – a conveyor belt of action and chaos is a better description as crews fight for 12 crucial Super Sunday points.

Hyundai has been the master of this new discipline, while it has been a weakness for Toyota. The latter proved true again as another 'black Sunday', as Toyota team principal Jari-Matti Latvala calls them, unfolded. First Toyota lost Pajari, who had been highly impressive to head into Sunday sitting the top six. However, the young Finn came into a left-hander in stage 15 too fast, resulting in his GR Yaris finding a ditch and being pitched into a roll.

With every pass, the stage became increasing dirty, aided by the placement of anti-cut devices or the lack thereof. Efforts to curb

## “I feel angry with myself in the moment and I'm very sorry for the team, I tried my best”

cutting this year had been praised by the drivers earlier in the event, but conditions were evolving fast in the opposite direction for the leading runners.

This would prove to be the downfall of rally leader Ogier as the eight-time world champion made costly mistakes for the third event in succession. He lost the rally lead in the first pass through Am Hochwald, where he misjudged the braking at a junction and ran onto the grass, handing a 1.9s advantage to Tanak. This gap was reduced to 1.5s before the second pass that proved even more damaging. Six hundred metres into the penultimate stage of the rally, Ogier was caught out on the dirt at a fast right and clattered into the trees.

Normally a master of controlling his emotions, Ogier let out screams of anger as he clambered from the car. It was the only stage where route note crews were not allowed to pass to provide up-to-date road evolution information to the drivers. "I feel angry with myself in the moment and I'm very sorry for the team, I tried my best," said Ogier. "It was really my main target to help them achieve the manufacturers' title."

With the shockwaves caused by Ogier's accident, Abiteboul once again reminded Tanak of what was at stake and his driver duly delivered a steady Power Stage time, missing out on the bonus points, to seal a 21st WRC victory and perhaps one of the toughest of his career.

"It is never easy but I'm happy to come out without mistakes," said Tanak, who took the victory by 7s from Evans, with Neuville third.

The returning Takamoto Katsuta, benched for Rally Chile, finished fourth but impressed throughout and proved to be a life-saver for Toyota after claiming the maximum 12 Super Sunday points. Despite Ogier's late exit, Toyota actually decreased Hyundai's lead in the manufacturers' title race to 15 ahead of the Japanese finale, but it could have been even closer.

For Neuville, it wasn't the title coronation he'd dreamed of, but he will take a 25-point lead over Tanak into the decider. The WRC title battle is most certainly not over, but it's very much a case of championship point to Neuville. One thing that is for certain: a Hyundai driver will win the championship for the first time.



Title-fighting Hyundai crews joined by Martin and Evans on podium

**NEXT REPORT**  
Rally Japan  
28 November  
issue



GRYAZIN AGAIN AS WRC2  
TITLE FIGHT NEARS CLIMAX



The WRC2 title will either be won by Sami Pajari or Oliver Solberg after Yohan Rossel’s hopes faded away in dramatic fashion at the Central European Rally. Rossel required a victory to keep his title bid alive, but only after last month’s Chile win was finally rubber-stamped following a stewards’ hearing on the eve of the rally.

An FIA petition led by the world motorsport governing body’s road sport director Andrew Wheatley prompted Rally Chile stewards to review a protest from Solberg’s Toksport Skoda team over a notional time issued to Rossel that helped him to victory. Although new evidence, not available for the original hearing, was examined, the petition was dismissed.

While the stewards’ hearing went in Rossel’s favour, the start of the rally didn’t as his victory bid was derailed on stage two. Rossel was fortunate to get away with a wild brush with a bank that pitched his Citroen C3 Rally2 onto two wheels. A roll was avoided but damage to his right-rear wheel cost him 32.5 seconds. Rossel recovered to fifth before two off-road excursions on Saturday resulted in a loss of more than 14 minutes, leaving him outside the top 10.

The rally was won by his Citroen team-mate Nikolay Gryazin (above), who delivered a commanding victory after taking the lead on stage four. Gryazin took his second win of 2024 by 2m23.9s from Filip Mares, with Miko Marczyk third.

Title contender Solberg survived two trips to the grass run-off to finish second on the road in the Rally2 class, 16.5s behind Gryazin, but the Swede wasn’t registered for WRC2, having already completed his seven points-scoring rounds in Chile.

Solberg could still lift the crown if Pajari doesn’t finish either first or second in November’s Rally Japan finale. “In the title fight I do feel a little bit more positive,” said Solberg, who will follow events in Japan from home. “Normally when I watch, it goes good for my competitors, so maybe I will disappear somewhere!”

RESULTS WRC ROUND 12/13, CENTRAL EUROPEAN RALLY, 17-20 OCTOBER

POS	DRIVER / CO-DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	<b>Ott Tanak</b> (EST) <b>Martin Jarveoja</b> (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20N Rally1	2h37m34.6s
2	<b>Elfyn Evans</b> (GBR) <b>Scott Martin</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+7.0s
3	<b>Thierry Neuville</b> (BEL) <b>Martijn Wydaeghe</b> (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20N Rally1	+39.8s
4	<b>Takamoto Katsuta</b> (JPN) <b>Aaron Johnston</b> (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	+1m21.0s
5	<b>Gregoire Munster</b> (LUX) <b>Louis Louka</b> (BEL)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+3m41.9s
6	<b>Nikolay Gryazin</b> (RUS) <b>Konstantin Aleksandrov</b> (RUS)	DG Sport Competition / Citroen C3 Rally2	+9m17.6s
7	<b>Oliver Solberg</b> (SWE) <b>Elliott Edmondson</b> (GBR)	Toksport WRT 2 / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+9m34.1s
8	<b>Filip Mares</b> (CZE) <b>Radovan Bucha</b> (CZE)	ACCR Toyota Dolak / Toyota GR Yaris Rally2	+11m41.5s
9	<b>Mikolaj Marczyk</b> (POL) <b>Szymon Gospodarczyk</b> (POL)	privateer / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+12m10.6s
10	<b>Kajetan Kajetanowicz</b> (POL) <b>Maciek Szczepaniak</b> (POL)	Orlen Rally Team / Skoda Fabia RS Rally2	+12m20.3s

OTHERS

20	<b>Jourdan Serderidis</b> (GRC) <b>Frederic Miclotte</b> (BEL)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+22m10.6s
31	<b>Andreas Mikkelsen</b> (NOR) <b>Torstein Eriksen</b> (NOR)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT / Hyundai i20N Rally1	+43m20.0s
32	<b>Adrien Fourmaux</b> (FRA) <b>Alexandre Coria</b> (FRA)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team / Ford Puma Rally1	+47m45.1s
R	<b>Sami Pajari</b> (FIN) <b>Enni Malkonen</b> (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	SS15-accident
R	<b>Sebastien Ogier</b> (FRA) <b>Vincent Landais</b> (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT / Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	SS17-accident

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 <b>SSS Velka Chuchle</b> (1.58 miles)	Ogier 1m49.3s	<b>Ogier</b>	Katsuta +0.6s
SS2 <b>Klatovy 1</b> (7.32 miles)	Neuville 6m00.2s	<b>Ogier</b>	Neuville +0.9s
SS3 <b>Klatovy 2</b> (7.32 miles)	Ogier 5m54.0s	<b>Ogier</b>	Neuville +3.2s
SS4 <b>Strasin 1</b> (16.58 miles)	Evans 13m25.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	Neuville +0.3s
SS5 <b>Sumavske Hostice 1</b> (10.47 miles)	Tanak 9m24.5s	<b>Neuville</b>	Ogier +2.7s
SS6 <b>Klatovy 3</b> (7.32 miles)	Katsuta 5m47.8s	<b>Neuville</b>	Ogier +3.3s
SS7 <b>Strasin 2</b> (16.58 miles)	Neuville 12m59.0s	<b>Neuville</b>	Ogier +6.9s
SS8 <b>Sumavske Hostice 2</b> (10.47 miles)	Ogier 9m12.5s	<b>Neuville</b>	Ogier +6.4s
SS9 <b>Granit und Wald 1</b> (12.46 miles)	Tanak 10m51.8s	<b>Neuville</b>	Tanak +0.5s
SS10 <b>Beyond Borders 1</b> (15.12 miles)	Evans 12m50.2s	<b>Neuville</b>	Ogier +2.0s
SS11 <b>Schardinger Innviertel 1</b> (10.78 miles)	Ogier 9m23.8s	<b>Ogier</b>	Tanak +4.5s
SS12 <b>Granit und Wald 2</b> (12.46 miles)	Tanak 10m34.8s	<b>Ogier</b>	Tanak +1.1s
SS13 <b>Beyond Borders 2</b> (15.12 miles)	Ogier 12m33.6s	<b>Ogier</b>	Tanak +4.1s
SS14 <b>Schardinger Innviertel 2</b> (10.78 miles)	Ogier 9m03.5s	<b>Ogier</b>	Tanak +5.2s
SS15 <b>Am Hochwald 1</b> (7.56 miles)	Fourmaux 6m09.2s	<b>Tanak</b>	Ogier +1.9s
SS16 <b>Passauer Land 1</b> (9.24 miles)	Katsuta 7m24.1s	<b>Tanak</b>	Ogier +1.5s
SS17 <b>Am Hochwald 2</b> (7.56 miles)	Evans 6m09.4s	<b>Tanak</b>	Evans +9.4s
SS18 <b>Passauer Land 2</b> (Power Stage) (9.24 miles)	Katsuta 7m22.3s	<b>Tanak</b>	Evans +7.0s



DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

**1** Neuville 225; **2** Tanak 200;  
**3** Evans 185; **4** Ogier 166;  
**5** Fourmaux 146; **6** Kalle Rovanpera (Toyota) 114; **7** Katsuta 102;  
**8** Dani Sordo (Hyundai) 44;  
**9** Pajari 41; **10** Munster 37.  
**WRC2** **1** Solberg 123; **2** Yohan Rossel (Citroen) 111; **3** Pajari 108.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

**1** Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 526;  
**2** Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT 511;  
**3** M-Sport Ford World Rally Team 267.





Nicolas  
Lapierre's Cool  
Racing team became  
the only two-time  
winner in the 2024  
season

# Cool finale as ELMS titles run to the wire in Portugal

**EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES**  
**ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT)**  
**19 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 6/6**

Lorenzo Fluxa, Ritomo Miyata and Malthe Jakobsen stood tall in the 4 Hours of Portimao, the European Le Mans Series season finale. In a grandstand conclusion to a tightly contested season, two of the championship battles were decided on the very last lap of the race.

It says much about the unpredictable nature of LMP2 this season that the Cool Racing trio became the first repeat overall winners, having also claimed the Barcelona season opener back in April. Here, a United Autosports drive-through penalty for contact with Panis Racing gifted them the lead. Miyata and then Jakobsen did not relinquish it, the car finishing 2.5 seconds up on the AO by TF ORECA of Jonny Edgar,

Robert Kubica and Louis Deletraz.

That second place for the Tom Ferrier-led squad was enough for Edgar, Kubica and Deletraz to be crowned champions as nearest rival Inter Europol Competition finished fourth. The title is Edgar's first in endurance racing since making the switch from single-seaters, it's a third for Kubica and a fourth for Deletraz in four years. Also, it marked a second consecutive success for Kubica and Deletraz together after they claimed the final LMP2 title in the World Endurance Championship last year.

Inter Europol, meanwhile, was left disillusioned by the outcome of the finale, pointing to an improper 10-second pitstop penalty as key to their defeat. It was initially handed to Sebastian Alvarez, Tom Dillmann and Vlad Lomko for an alleged Virtual Safety Car infringement. That was eventually rescinded, but only after it had already been served. This, crucially, put

the Polish-flagged squad behind AO by TF – a setback they would not overcome.

Championships in all three remaining classes were also decided at Portimao, each in decidedly dramatic fashion. AF Corse successfully retained its crown in LMP2 Pro-Am after a bold strategic attempt at an upset from Algarve Pro Racing was only foiled on the last lap. APR's Alex Quinn tried to significantly extend his final fuel stint to grab the class win that would have landed them a shock title. However, Quinn was overtaken by Proton Competition's Bent Viscaal on the final lap, which in turn gave AF Corse the crucial two-point advantage to seal the title with fourth place. The Italian squad was put in that position thanks to the efforts of Matthieu Vaxiviere, who had fought his way past Richard Mille by TDS's Mathias Beche in a battle that had seen the two repeatedly come to blows.

Even more dramatic was the conclusion to the LMGT3 championship battle, which wasn't decided until the very final corner. It was only then that Iron Lynx driver Andrea Caldarelli passed Iron Dames' Michelle Gattin for the lead, in a move that looked like it might have been orchestrated. That was because the scenario played out in such a way that Caldarelli, Hiroshi Hamaguchi and Axcil Jefferies required a win to deny fifth-placed Kessel Racing the title.

In LMP3, meanwhile, a late-race charge meant RLR M Sport driver Gael Julien rose past both of his direct championship rivals from Eurointernational and Team Virage to finish second behind outgoing champion Cool Racing, securing the title for himself, Michael Jensen and Nick Adcock in the process.

**DAVEY EUWEMA**





# Bortolotti seals DTM crown after wobble

**DTM**  
**HOCKENHEIM (DEU)**  
**19-20 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 8/8**

Factory Lamborghini driver Mirko Bortolotti clinched his maiden DTM title with a fifth and a second-place finish in the Hockenheim decider. Having missed out on the crown in both 2022 and 2023, the Italian finally claimed the big prize at the third time of asking after outgunning Kelvin van der Linde and Maro Engel in a three-way fight.

Bortolotti arrived at the former German Grand Prix venue with a healthy 15-point lead in the standings, but his advantage was overturned by van der Linde in the opening leg. The South African, representing Abt Sportsline on its final weekend with Audi, claimed pole position by two tenths of a second and then set about converting that into a third race win of the season. A resurgent Lucas Auer in the Winward Mercedes kept him honest throughout the race, even leapfrogging him in the pits with an overcut, but van der Linde was able to strike back at Turn 2 to reclaim the lead.

Bortolotti, meanwhile, climbed up to fourth on the opening lap, having qualified a frustrated seventh in his SSR Performance Lamborghini. But in the second stint, Auer's Winward team-mate Engel barged his way past at Turn 8, sending Bortolotti wide off the track. With van der Linde going on to win the race over Auer, the Abt driver was able to take a two-point lead in the standings at the mid-point of the season's final weekend.



Qualifying again proved to be the key on Sunday, with Bortolotti leading a front-row lockout for SSR Performance and van der Linde struggling to fifth in an effective role reversal between the pair. This already put Bortolotti back in front in the title race, but the championship was essentially decided in his favour when van der Linde dropped to 11th on a disastrous opening lap due to what he described as a lack of grip. Handicapped by 20kg of success ballast, the 28-year-old was never really in a position to fight his way back to the front and would go on to slip further back to 12th.

Aware that his chief rival wasn't in the reckoning, Bortolotti played it safe in the race, staying out until lap 19 of 37 before completing his stop. That allowed the similar Lamborghini of Luca Engstler to come through on tyres that were already up to temperature and snatch the lead from him, before streaking away by two seconds. The 34-year-old came back at Engstler in the final quarter of the race and put him under real pressure for the lead, but the German held his nerve to clinch his first victory since the Oschersleben opener. However, the job was done for Bortolotti, who celebrated his first championship success in any category since his triumph in what was then known as the Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup in 2017.

Behind Engstler and Bortolotti, Rene Rast crossed the line in third to help Schubert BMW secure the teams' title. Engel finished way back in 10th in the last of the championship-contending cars,

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

#### ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT)

**LMP2** Lorenzo Fluxa/Ritomo Miyata/  
Malthe Jakobsen  
Cool Racing (ORECA 07)

**LMP2 Pro-Am** Giorgio Roda/Rene Binder/  
Bent Viscaal  
Proton (ORECA 07)

**LMGT3** Andrea Caldarelli/Hiroshi  
Hamaguchi/Axcil Jefferies  
Iron Lynx (Lamborghini  
Huracan GT3 EVO2)

**LMP3** Miguel Cristovao/  
Manuel Espirito Santo  
Cool Racing (Ligier JSP320)

### DTM

#### HOCKENHEIM (DEU)

**Race 1** Kelvin van der Linde  
Abt Sportsline (Audi R8 LMS Evo II)

**Race 2** Luca Engstler  
Grasser Racing (Lamborghini  
Huracan GT3 EVO2)

### LE MANS CUP

#### ALGARVE CIRCUIT (PRT)

Audunn Gudmundsson/Colin Noble  
Team Thor (Ligier JSP320)

### INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN

#### MONZA (ITA)

James Kell/Dean Macdonald  
Greystone GT (McLaren 720S GT3 Evo)

### NASCAR CUP

#### LAS VEGAS (USA)

Joey Logano  
Team Penske (Ford Mustang)



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having been compromised by an overnight Balance of Performance adjustment. But that was enough for his employer Mercedes to clinch the manufacturers' championship as all three titles went to different brands.

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# Safety car helps SARD Toyota end winless streak

**SUPER GT**  
**AUTOPOLIS (JPN)**  
**20 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 6/8**

The SARD Toyota team ended a four-year win drought as Yuhi Sekiguchi and Yuichi Nakayama took advantage of a well-timed safety car period to win at Autopolis. In an eventful three-hour race featuring four caution periods, the Toyota GR Supra rose from 10th on the grid to score an unlikely victory. Sekiguchi charged up to fourth in the opening stint, but the key to SARD's win was the third safety car interlude that came just as Nakayama exited the pits after his final stop. Sekiguchi had handed over to Nakayama at the first stops, while main rivals, led by the #23 NISMO Nissan, all had driver changes to complete in the second stops. Ronnie Quintarelli had just taken over



the #23 Nissan Z from Katsumasa Chiyo, who had experienced two leads of more than 15 seconds wiped out by the first two safety cars, when the caution was called, dropping him behind Nakayama. The SARD driver then pulled away to the tune of nine seconds before the final safety car period that effectively ended the race. Behind Chiyo and Quintarelli, the sister NISMO car of Mitsunori Takaboshi and Atsushi Miyake was third thanks to a late pass by Miyake on Naoki Yamamoto's Team Kunimitsu Honda Civic Type R-GT. TOM'S Toyota pair Sho Tsuboi and Kenta Yamashita finished seventh to take a two-point lead into the final two races. **JAMIE KLEIN**

## WEEKEND WINNERS

**SUPER GT**  
**AUTOPOLIS (JPN)**  
Yuhi Sekiguchi/Yuichi Nakayama  
SARD (Toyota GR Supra)

**TCR WORLD TOUR**  
**ZHUZHOU (CHN)**  
**Race 1** Mikel Azcona  
BRC Racing (Hyundai Elantra N)  
**Race 2** Ma Qing Hua  
Cyan Racing (Lynk & Co 03 FL TCR)

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# Azcona breaks duck as Ma lands popular home win

**TCR WORLD TOUR**  
**ZHUZHOU (CHN)**  
**19-20 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 6/7**

Mikel Azcona claimed his first win of the season in the first TCR World Tour race held in China at the Zhuzhou circuit, while Ma Qing Hua claimed a crowd-pleasing first victory on home soil with a last-lap pass on Nestor Girolami. The Lynk & Co Cyan Racing team looked set to dominate after Santiago Urrutia led a 1-2-3 lockout in qualifying, with team-mates Thed Bjork and Yann Ehrlacher right behind. The weather changed before the race,

with rain arriving and then getting heavier throughout. Urrutia, who is not in title contention, immediately let his team-mates past, but it was soon clear the Hyundai of Azcona had better pace in the wet. Azcona overtook all three Lynk & Cos and built a seven-second lead. The 2022 world champion then claimed a long overdue first victory of the season and put himself back in title contention. Second was the Honda of Esteban Guerrieri, who capitalised on the slow wet pace of the Lynk & Cos, passing both Ehrlacher and Bjork with a daring move at Turn 3 with four laps remaining. In the second race, Hyundai's Girolami started from pole, while Ma's Lynk & Co

harried the Argentinian the whole race. The Chinese driver then made his move on the final lap with an aggressive pass at Turn 4 to claim a popular home win. Rob Huff finished ninth and seventh, recovering from a pair of 15th-place starts after he was blocked in qualifying. Huff was treating the weekend as a familiarisation session with the Volcano Motorsport Audi team ahead of Macau. With points leader Norbert Michelisz having a conservative weekend, finishing seventh and eighth, the Hungarian's lead is just 10 points over Guerrieri, with seven drivers in contention going to the Macau finale. **NEIL HUDSON**





## Marquez overcomes his own hurdles

**MOTOGP**  
**PHILLIP ISLAND (AUS)**  
**20 OCTOBER**  
**ROUND 17/20**

By his own admission, Marc Marquez is a master of making his life difficult. But if he can still win despite the obstacles he threw into his own path – literally – in Australia, then heaven help his rivals when he steps up from a year-old Gresini Ducati to the factory bike in 2025.

After exploring various methods for missing out on the front row of late, the Spaniard finally nailed qualifying. That there was zero dry practice outside the timed sessions played right into his hands. That's because Marquez, like Pramac Ducati's Jorge Martin, can find the limit right out of the box – a decisive factor as FP1 was cancelled for rain and FP2 was damp.

Martin grabbed a stunning pole by over half a second. Even Marquez was unsure of his chances as he pulled up next to the points leader ahead of the green lights on Sunday. Which was the moment he decided to remove a tear-off. A necessary breach of etiquette, he explained, because a “big insect” had met its end in the middle of his visor. In keeping with the Marquez script, the tear-off couldn't just disappear on the stiff breeze. No, it had to settle under his bike, and then, after frantic efforts while the last riders took their places, under his rear tyre. A staggering piece of bad luck no traction control system was going to handle.

Marquez had to live with it, inevitably taking off in a cloud of smoke and wheelspin. He was 13th entering the first corner, his chances seemingly shot.

Just how the eight-time world champion ended up tackling Enea Bastianini for sixth

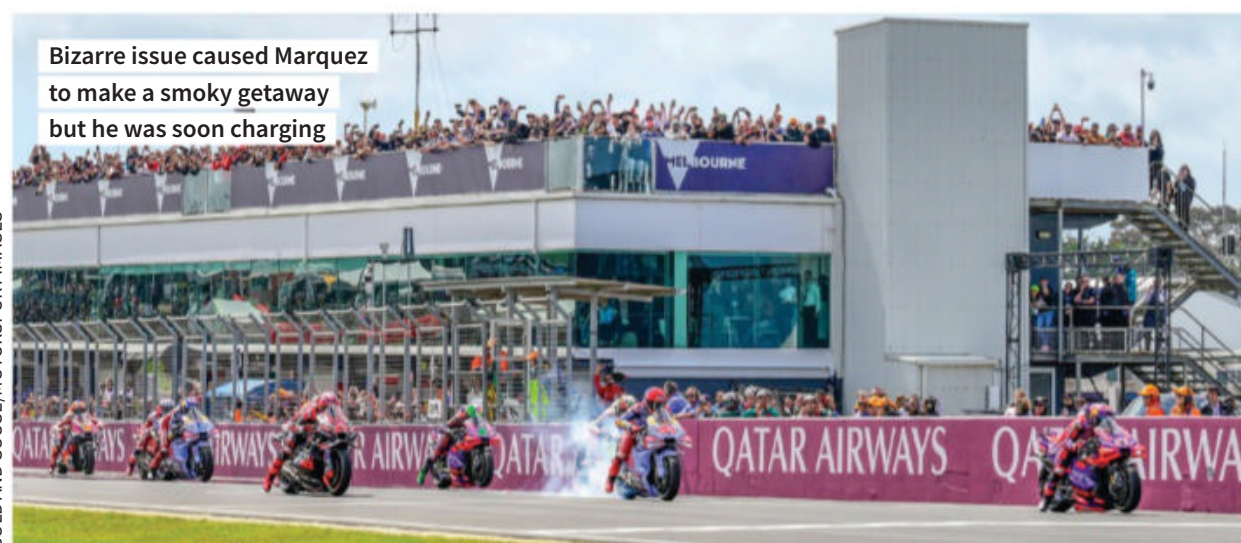
on the way into the third turn was a source of mystery even to him. Yes, there were mistakes up ahead, but even a slow-motion replay doesn't quite reveal the sorcery by which he surged through the pack. If nothing else, it was a masterpiece of track positioning.

Crucially, leader Martin wasn't pushing to make a break in a long race for which the field had little tyre information. So by the time Marquez sailed past Franco Morbidelli's Ducati for third on lap six of 27, Martin was less than two seconds ahead. It was very much game on.

Francesco Bagnaia and Marquez stayed together, just behind Martin, and on lap 12 we were treated to an increasingly rare wheel-to-wheel battle among MotoGP's chief protagonists. Bagnaia swept past Martin at Stoner, only for Martin to muscle back through at Miller. Bagnaia was forced to pick up the bike and an opportunist Marquez seized that moment to grab second.

By half-distance, Martin and Marquez were edging ahead into a race of their own. Marquez stalked his countryman until lap 24, when he pounced at Miller once more.

But Martin wouldn't lie down. Next time into Doohan, he snatched back the lead. But later that same lap, Marquez decided enough was enough. The move into Miller was aggressive, causing both riders to go wide. But the wrong-footing meant Marquez could exit with a focus on speed rather than defending the counter into Siberia. That earned him a crucial couple of yards on







Bagnaia struggled for form but is still in title contention



Martin led early on after his stunning pole position lap

which he built an advantage big enough to hold to the flag and seal a victory that must rank above those he scored at Aragon and Misano this season.

Bagnaia faded dramatically and was 10s down on Marquez at the end with his tyres shot to pieces.

Marquez’s daily drama on Saturday was a first-corner braking mistake for the sprint. He recovered fast, but the shorter race meant Martin could let all his pace loose at the front. Thus Marquez had to settle for second, while Bagnaia had to live with his team-mate Bastianini sailing past to complete the podium.

Now 20 points down on Martin, Bagnaia has much to ponder. Robbed of dry practice time and all the Ducati data that comes with it, he never got it together in Australia. Can he learn to just jump on the bike and fly like his rivals do? And can he handle Marquez in the same garage next year?

The most dramatic incident of the weekend was a high-speed sprint crash at Doohan involving Marco Bezzecchi (VR46 Ducati) and Aprilia’s Maverick Vinales. While both escaped serious injury, Bezzecchi was unimpressed by Vinales showing him the middle finger as the Italian lay motionless in the initial aftermath.

And Pedro Acosta? KTM’s star rookie ran off the road when it mattered in practice on Friday, thus missing out on Qualifying 2. He then fell in the sprint – a tumble that put him out of action for Sunday.

**RICHARD ASHER**

**RESULTS** **MOTOGP ROUND 17/20, PHILLIP ISLAND (AUS), 20 OCT (27 LAPS – 74.624 MILES)**

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Marc Marquez (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	39m47.702s
2	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+0.997s
3	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	+10.100s
4	Fabio Di Giannantonio (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+12.997s
5	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Ducati	+13.310s
6	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Pramac Ducati	+15.434s
7	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+15.450s
8	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	+16.636s
9	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+18.757s
10	Raul Fernandez (ESP)	Trackhouse Aprilia	+19.345s
11	Jack Miller (AUS)	KTM	+19.932s
12	Johann Zarco (FRA)	LCR Honda	+20.295s
13	Alex Rins (ESP)	Yamaha	+22.210s
14	Luca Marini (ITA)	Honda	+24.239s
15	Alex Marquez (ESP)	Gresini Ducati	+24.591s
16	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+30.499s
17	Augusto Fernandez (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+30.533s
18	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+30.765s
19	Marco Bezzecchi (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+45.393s
R	Joan Mir (ESP)	Honda	25 laps-accident
R	Lorenzo Savadori (ITA)	Trackhouse Aprilia	17 laps-pain/injury
NS	Pedro Acosta (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	Sprint accident/injury



Marquez enjoys third GP win of 2024

**WEEKEND WINNERS**

**MOTO2**  
**Fermin Aldeguer**  
Speed Up (Boscoscuro)

**MOTO3**  
**David Alonso**  
Aspar Team (CFMoto)

**Winner’s average speed** 112.512mph. **Fastest lap** M Marquez 1m27.765s, 113.369mph.

**QUALIFYING 2** 1 Martin 1m27.296s; 2 M Marquez 1m27.890s; 3 Vinales 1m27.991s; 4 Bezzecchi 1m28.375s; 5 Bagnaia 1m28.478s; 6 R Fernandez 1m28.498s; 7 Morbidelli 1m28.622s; 8 A Marquez 1m29.009s; 9 Rins 1m29.059s; 10 Bastianini 1m29.996s; 11 Binder 1m30.290s; 12 Di Giannantonio 1m30.336s.

**QUALIFYING 1** R Fernandez 1m29.397s; Bastianini 1m29.545s; 13 Marini 1m29.727s; 14 Zarco 1m29.786s; 15 Acosta 1m29.817s; 16 Miller 1m29.909s; 17 A Fernandez 1m30.149s; 18 Mir 1m30.448s; 19 Quartararo 1m30.635s; 20 Espargaro 1m31.808s; 21 Nakagami 1m31.835s; 22 Savadori 1m32.213s.

**SPRINT RACE** (13 LAPS – 35.930 MILES)  
**1 Martin 19m13.301s; 2 M Marquez +1.520s; 3 Bastianini +4.368s; 4 Bagnaia +6.879s; 5 Morbidelli +9.623s; 6 R Fernandez +15.249s; 7 Di Giannantonio +15.905s; 8 Espargaro +19.280s; 9 A Fernandez +21.126s; 10 Marini +21.194s; 11 Quartararo +21.379s; 12 Rins +21.483s; 13 Mir +23.528s; 14 Nakagami +34.055s; 15 Savadori +38.324s; R Bezzecchi 11 laps-accident; R Vinales 11 laps-accident; R Binder 11 laps-accident; R Acosta 10 laps-accident; R Miller 7 laps-accident; R A Marquez 5 laps-accident; R Zarco 4 laps-accident.**  
**Winner’s average speed** 112.155mph. **Fastest lap** Martin 1m27.831s, 113.284mph.

**RIDERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Martin 424; 2 Bagnaia 404; 3 M Marquez 345; 4 Bastianini 331; 5 Binder 192; 6 Acosta 181; 7 Vinales 171; 8 Morbidelli 151; 9 Di Giannantonio 150; 10 Espargaro 136.

**CONSTRUCTORS’ CHAMPIONSHIP** 1 Ducati 611; 2 KTM 285; 3 Aprilia 267; 4 Yamaha 104; 5 Honda 60.



**NEXT REPORT**  
Thailand GP  
31 October  
issue





SEASON REVIEW

BTCC

# HILL CAN MOVE ANY MOUNTAIN

*Jake Hill became the British Touring Car champion of 2024, and a lot of factors went into his defeat of Tom Ingram, Ash Sutton and the rest*

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



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This year's patient, measured approach didn't stop Hill racking up highest number of race wins







**T**o win the British Touring Car Championship, you don't have to drive at ten tenths all the time. For Jake Hill in 2024, it was all about driving at eight fifths.

Confused? Well, let's explain... Hill had a reputation as a naturally gifted driver who could sometimes overreach in his bid to attain the unattainable, who was always on the limit. This season he banished that to the extent where, remarkably, he finished in fifth position in eight of the 30 races. When that result offers you 11 points to the 20 of the race winner, those points soon stack up: eight fifths equal more than four wins.

"I just needed to try and cut out a couple of little mistakes," Hill admits as he basks in the afterglow of his first ever title in car racing. "Cast my mind back to 2023, and Croft was a prime example – I like to think that I've got pretty good car control, but I spun in two races that weekend and cost myself a load of points, just trying too hard when the car's not underneath you. That was a very valuable lesson in the sense that 'if the car's not there mate, don't chase it, you've just got to take what you can'. The ironic thing that I did learn a big lesson from was in that race two where I did spin, where I was trying to chase [Dan] Rowbottom, if I'd stayed where I was I would have got reversed-grid pole and won like Colin [Turkington, team-mate] did. Let's try and iron out those little bits – take what you can because ultimately that's going to be worth more than binning it."

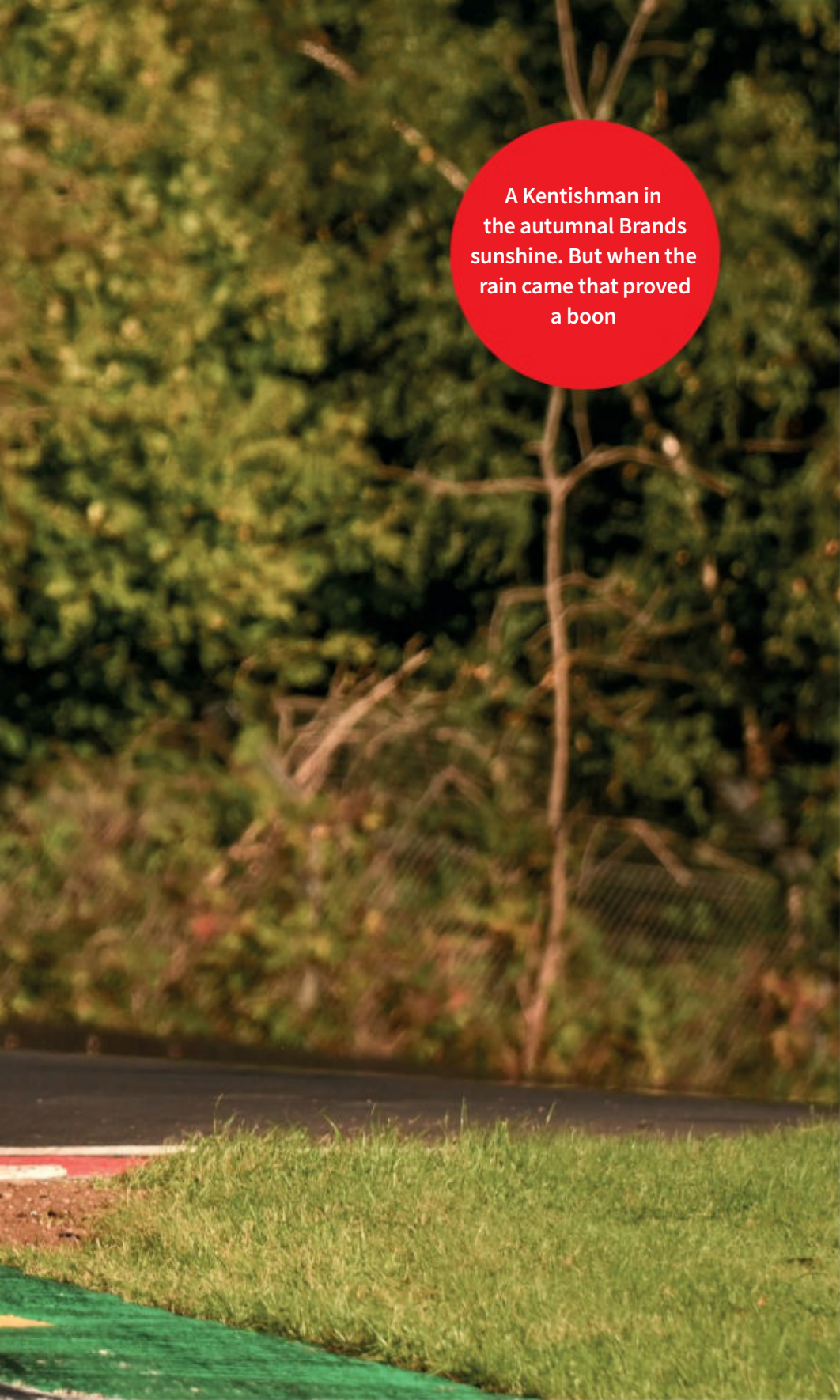
The new approach added up to Hill's Laser Tools-liveried West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport claiming 29 finishes, 28 of them in the points, 26 in the top six. The only DNF came at Brands Hatch

in May, when steering failure as a result of repeated contact from others speared him off the road at the Druids hairpin.

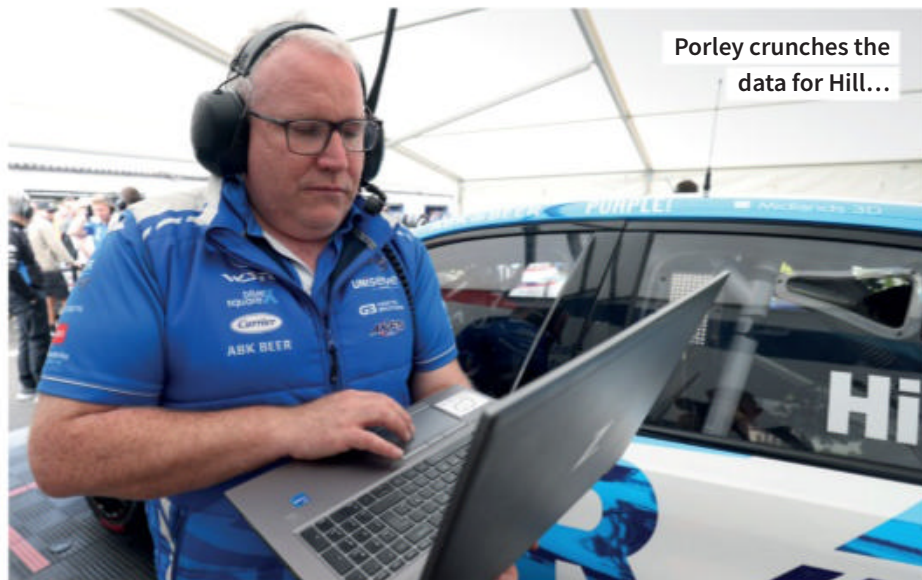
But, of course, while the old saying that 'the most important nut is the one behind the steering wheel' holds true, the car has to be pretty good too. WSR went to work over the winter refining the 3 Series, while a new evolution of the old faithful B48 BMW powerplant was developed by long-time engine partner Neil Brown Engineering. "We all felt that the front grip we were getting just wasn't enough from the 2023 car," continues Hill, "and also the engine... They'd used that same block for the last five years, and it was just getting a bit long in the tooth. We managed to go to the newer two-litre BMW engine that was available, and that just gave a more stable platform throughout. It was definitely not a Hyundai beater in a straight line, but it was a lot better. Those were the two massive areas where we improved the car, and also the weight distribution. Dickie [Dick Bennetts, WSR boss] managed to really pull some strings with getting it better, and all those things pointed in the right direction."

Hill's long-time engineer Craig Porley, with whom he has worked since 2020, admits that development-wise "we were left with no choice with the fantastic job that Alliance did last year. They moved the game forward, and anyone wanting to compete with that had to do the same." In 2023, of course, Alliance's NAPA-liveried Ford Focus STs showed crushing domination, enabling Ash Sutton a relatively easy run to the title. For 2024, over at Tom Ingram-led Excelr8 Motorsport, there was a big leap forward with development of the Hyundai i30 N Fastback. There was too on the BMW at WSR, although it took longer to become evident.





A Kentishman in the autumnal Brands sunshine. But when the rain came that proved a boon



Porley crunches the data for Hill...



...but at Thruxton his driver just needed to kick the chicane tyre stack...



...which was clearly the key to a double haul of victories

**“I THINK THE MENTALITY SIDE OF IT, THAT’S WHERE IT’S REALLY SHOWN, THAT YOU CAN BOUNCE BACK”**

Here, also, it’s worth pointing out that, while Ingram’s engineer Spencer Aldridge very much leads development on the Hyundai, and ditto Sutton’s man Antonio Carrozza on the Ford, at WSR the technical chief on the BMW has long been John Waterman, who looked after Turkington from 2020-23. This puts the achievements of Hill and Porley in perspective, in the sense that their title was won with a car that wasn’t necessarily developed around that driver.

“West Surrey and John Waterman did a fantastic job with the car upgrades over the winter,” acknowledges Porley. “I did a bit with them, but predominantly it was John and Steve Buckle [chief mechanic] and Dick on that side, and NBE did a fantastic job with the engine. We were hoping to take steps forward, but what we weren’t expecting was the first lap out in pre-season testing – it was evident that we had a very different race car with all of the changes. There were signs that it was going to be a fast race car, but it was a step back to go forwards. Pre-season testing was probably the hardest we’ve been through in really working hard to find a new operating window for the car. We got it into a sensible place for

the start of the season, but Brands [in May] was an example where it just didn’t work for us. We went back to the drawing board a little bit, and the rest was history from Snet on. That’s when our season really took off. We wouldn’t be where we are now without the changes on the car, that’s for sure.”

“After Brands I was feeling pretty low,” reflects Hill. “We were slow. Colin and Adam [Morgan, in the third of the WSR BMWs] managed to make it work. It’s the first time I can honestly say we were a bit lost with it. Me and Craig dug ourselves into a bit of a hole. We don’t really know what went wrong. Then the steering failed in race two. We came back super-strong. I think the mentality side of it, that’s where it’s really shown, that you can bounce back. It was so early in the season that we just needed to have a blinder. Those damp, wet conditions went on to become my favourite this year. And at Snetterton the car really was just so wonderful to drive.”

Snetterton, indeed, is where Hill crushed his opposition in qualifying, and sped to victory in each of the first two races. >>



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It was a resounding turnaround from a pretty dismal performance at Brands, and showed mental strength. Part of the reason for this, reckons Hill, is down to his fiancée giving birth to their son in November last year. “Completely, yeah,” he agrees. “You don’t necessarily realise you’ve changed at the time, but after a couple of rounds I noticed that I was thinking about things differently. It’s the mentality side that changes – Craig noticed it, so did Mark [Blundell, Hill’s manager] pretty early on, and obviously it was a positive. I think I’ve just chilled out even more. Those angry spikes I’d get in the car if I was being beaten up a little bit, and then you would end up making a mistake or firing

**“THOSE ANGRY SPIKES I’D  
GET IN THE CAR, THEY JUST  
DON’T REV ME UP ANYMORE”**



someone off, they just don’t rev me up anymore. Nice and calm all the time. Of course things still annoy you every now and then, it’s just how you react to them.”

So much of sport is down to psychology, and this could arguably be applied to the effect of a change in weight distribution of the BMW. Since the introduction of the hybrid system for 2022, WSR had been bemoaning that the restrictions on where the kit could be located were more detrimental to the rear-wheel-drive 3 Series than its front-driven opposition. Over the winter of 2023-24, BTCC organiser TOCA didn’t so much as give concessions to WSR; instead it relaxed the regulations for the whole field on hybrid placement. Now, in the BMW, the hybrid could be moved further towards the rear and lower.

“Everyone had to carry the weight of the hybrid, but it was where that weight was going, and that really hurt us,” explains Porley. “From pre-hybrid, through the various small regulation changes like where we were allowed to put ballast in the car, it was just constantly working against us and we had a 2% shift in weight distribution from pre-hybrid. TOCA listened as they do when we showed them the numbers, showed them the facts, and that allowed us to make the shift – we’re still not back to where we were pre-hybrid, but we’re closer to it, and that’s had a huge effect on the car. I think that’s where it had such an effect on us having to rework the set-up, but unfortunately going back

to pre-hybrid set-up didn’t work either, so we had to find a new path and fortunately we got there.”

The final piece of the jigsaw was wet-weather set-up – and let’s face it, if you’re going to compete in the BTCC, this is quite important... The rear-wheel-drive BMW isn’t supposed to be at its best in slippery or greasy conditions, but Hill reckons that he and Porley had “actually found this sort of magic set-up and way of going about it at Silverstone in 2023, when we won the first race and we were leading the second by a country mile until the boost sensor failure. It was coming, and as we developed the car a little bit more over the winter it made it even easier in the wet, in the way that the engine was so much more driveable in those sort of wet conditions. When it was torrential like it was in race three at Silverstone [2024], the BMW still suffers quite badly. But when it’s that normal wet or greasy conditions, my God we’re fast.”

“The engine has been a massive part of it,” adds Porley. “We hope we can find a little bit more over the off-season, because Swindon do a fantastic job on the Hyundai engine and everyone else has to play catch-up, and that’s what motorsport’s all about. We’ve got a target on our back now, but equally we’re not resting on our laurels. We’ve got gains we need to make to take it to Excelr8 and Alliance.

“Some of it was the engine and some of it was we found a few little tricks that worked for us in the wet. It’s an interesting battle in the wet. If it’s a greasy circuit and we’re all out on slicks, then we >>

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Donington National

**R1** Tom Ingram  
**R2** Tom Ingram  
**R3** Aiden Moffat

Newly developed Hyundai is a weapon out of the box, allowing Ingram to win wet opener from pole. Hill loses second to Sutton late on as his tyres fade. Ingram wins early battle with Sutton in dry second race before both demote early leader Hill. Morgan leads finale, but then lock-up allows Huff and Moffat through. Huff fades, and it’s Moffat who wins from Turkington and Sutton.

### Brands Hatch Indy

**R1** Colin Turkington  
**R2** Colin Turkington  
**R3** Ronan Pearson

Crushing domination from Turkington. He claims pole and then his BMW cruises home in race one to beat Cook and Sutton. He doubles up later in the second race, in which Ingram wins a high-cholesterol scrap with Sutton for second. It’s another Scottish reversed-grid triumph at the end of the day, Pearson taking his maiden win from team-mate Chilton, with Sutton third.

### Snetterton

**R1** Jake Hill  
**R2** Jake Hill  
**R3** Rob Huff

This time it’s Hill on form. After a poor Brands, he takes pole and wins the opener from Thompson, who is on his sole outing of 2024 with WSR and passes Sutton. Hill is magnificent in wet second race, overcoming a 10s penalty – and then some – to beat Cammish and Cook. On drying track, veteran Huff takes first win of comeback season after intra-Toyota fight with Moffat and Cook.

### Thruxton

**R1** Jake Hill  
**R2** Jake Hill  
**R3** Ash Sutton

Poor start from poleman Ingram, who can’t see the lights, gives Hill the jump in opener and he beats Cammish and Sutton. Ingram recovers to win race two, but penalty for skipping chicane drops him to third behind Cammish, so it’s another victory for Hill. Morgan leads early in finale before Sutton comes through for first win of 2024 from Cammish and Ingram.

### Oulton Park

**R1** Tom Ingram  
**R2** Josh Cook  
**R3** Jake Hill

More chicane-skipping controversy for Ingram, but this time he keeps his win in race one after early fight with Sutton, with Cammish third. Cook blasts from eighth to the lead within a lap in race two on the soft tyres. Ingram is left in his wake, while Hill nabs third late on from Cammish. Great drive from Hill in finale takes him past Taylor-Smith for second, then Doble on last lap for win.



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Ingram versus Sutton  
was a recurring theme,  
here at Brands Indy

**“THE BIGGEST THING WAS IF  
ANYONE WAS GOING TO BE BRAVE  
ENOUGH TO GO ONTO SLICKS”**

get murdered by the front-wheel-drives. If it's a greasy circuit and we're all out on wets, I'd say the balance shifts towards the rear-wheel-drives if we look after our tyres, whereas if it's sensibly wet then it's a reasonably even fight, but, as we saw at Silverstone, in monsoon it goes to front-wheel-drives. So it's a really funny dance that you do – how wet and what tyres you're on in those conditions.”

This is why, at showdown time at Brands Hatch on 6 October, confidence was swelling within the Hill garage. The steady drizzle since mid-afternoon had turned things around. Yes, Hill had taken victory in race one, but only after a first-lap shemozzle at Druids had eliminated Sutton and Josh Cook and delayed Ingram, and then Turkington had moved over for his title-chasing team-mate. In the second race, Ingram was blisteringly quick, passed both BMWs and took victory so that he entered the finale just one point adrift of Hill. The Hyundai was clearly a quicker car, and Ingram is always superb at Brands.

Now, though, the track was wet, but not massively so. “The biggest thing was if anyone was going to be brave enough to go onto slicks,” recounts Porley. “Everyone keeps an eye on each other in those circumstances. But from our point of view we were confident

that we had to stay with the wets. The reason why we thought we could have the advantage above Tom was based on Silverstone race two, where in very similar conditions we had the legs on him.

“The thing in those conditions is that the new wets that were introduced a few years ago, they're very much like working with a slick, whereas the old wets were quite forgiving, they lasted a long time and there was quite a big operating window with the pressures. These new wets are very peaky and the pressures prove to be critical. One of the things Jake said to me on the grid before race three at Brands was just, ‘Please, please get the pressures right’. There's nothing like putting the pressure on me! Had I got it wrong, there's every chance we would have gone backwards in that race. I've never felt that kind of pressure to get it right, flicking back through my notes to see what adjustments we'd made in similar conditions. »

## ROUND BY ROUND

### Croft

**R1** Colin Turkington  
**R2** Josh Cook  
**R3** Tom Chilton

Turkington's reputation as ‘King of Croft’ is embellished with pole and his 15th win at the venue, with Ingram and Cammish chasing home. Toyotas play tyre strategy well again, with Cook winning race two on softs after great move on Huff. Turkington spins down field after contact from Sutton. He's in the barriers with Ingram clash in finale, won by Chilton from Cammish.

### Knockhill

**R1** Colin Turkington  
**R2** Jake Hill  
**R3** Rob Huff

Once again it's Turkington all the way in the opener, with Cook beating Morgan to second after both demote Taylor-Smith. Turkington goes to medium tyre in race two and is happy with third, but has no answer to ‘softs’ duo Hill and Rowbottom. After a miserable day, Ingram gets into reversed-grid mix and loses out in splendid fight for win with Huff in finale, with Chilton third.

### Donington GP

**R1** Colin Turkington  
**R2** Ash Sutton  
**R3** Dan Cammish

Turkington makes it a hat-trick of all-the-way first-race wins, while Sutton and Hill get better of Cook to join him on the podium. It's wet for race two, and Sutton passes Turkington on opening lap to claim honours, with Hill third. Ingram is up to second, but stone through radiator puts him out. He charges from the back to second in a finale won by Cammish.

### Silverstone

**R1** Tom Ingram  
**R2** Jake Hill  
**R3** Tom Ingram

Ingram wins opener on a soggy day, but has to hang on from Hill, who is let through by team-mate Turkington. Cammish claims third. Ingram doesn't have pace in race two, so Hill leads home Turkington, with Cook in third. Final race is so wet it almost doesn't happen, but monsoon abates slightly for Ingram to win a very close battle with Sutton. Cook is third as BMWs struggle.

### Brands Hatch GP

**R1** Jake Hill  
**R2** Tom Ingram  
**R3** Ash Sutton

Opening-lap Sutton/Ingram/Cook drama gives Hill a path through to second, then he is let through for victory by Turkington, who solidly defends from recovering Ingram. BMWs can't hold back Ingram in race two, where Hill is second from Turkington. Rain before final race is prelude to utter domination by Sutton, while Hill picks them off to claim second ahead of Cook.



“Tom is an immensely talented driver but Jake played it sensibly. By lap two there was [Dan] Cammish and Ingram ahead, and I could just see from the car positioning from Jake and the throttle pick-up and everything on the TV footage, the nerves finally settled and I thought, ‘Yeah, we’ve got this’. And he just started picking people off from there on. We settled into a rhythm. It got a bit dicey with Cook and I was straight on the radio saying, ‘Mate, we don’t need the position, let him have it unless I tell you otherwise’, and fortunately the next lap Cook made a mistake and Jake was through without any dramas. The first thing I said was, ‘Don’t go after Ash

“I THOUGHT, ‘WELL IF YOU’RE HAVING TO DO THAT MATE, YOU’RE SCREWED’, IN THE NICEST WAY POSSIBLE”

[Sutton, who won the race] – we don’t need it, just hold fire’. He listened, and the rest is history as they say.”

“I was pretty calm,” reckons Hill. “I genuinely was. The way me and Craig go about it is you have to be patient. Initially we knew we might suffer a bit, but if you just give it two or three laps, everything will come right. And also I’d heard that Tom had to put another new set of fronts on after the two laps to the grid. I thought, ‘Well if you’re having to do that mate, you’re screwed’, in the nicest way possible. I was so happy with the conditions that had come – they’re just me through and through. Tom shot off, and then the BMW came alive, and his car started falling off quite a bit. And also no one was exploring the proper wet lines in places, and we did him round the outside of Surtees where there’s just so much more grip. I was a bit surprised that a few of them weren’t doing it, because it’s an awful lot quicker.”

For all the success of his patient, measured approach, Hill still claimed the title with the most race wins of anyone – eight versus six for Ingram, five for Turkington and three for Sutton. It’s a balancing act of risk versus reward. For example, had he not divebombed poor old Mikey Doble for a race-winning move on the last lap at Oulton Park in June, his path to the title would have been just that little bit harder. “You have to do it while it’s there for the taking,” Hill points out. “We’re here to do a job, we’re not here to



Turkington took four poles, including here at Knockhill...

make friends. I felt sorry for Mikey, but sometimes you have to be a bit of an arsehole when it comes to these things. That’s another side of the mentality that’s changed this year – there’s no holds barred, if it’s on I’m doing it, simple as that. And ultimately it got me those couple of extra wins or points here and there. I probably didn’t need to do a couple of those moves, but when it comes down to it, we always know how tight this championship is, and as we found out a couple of points can really be the difference.”

“He’s just shown that maturity this year that we’ve been trying to drill into him,” smiles Porley. “It has been like working with a different driver. What’s won him the championship has been his race three performances. Before, we’ve often done well in race one and two, and it’s then gone to pot a little bit, not always our own fault. This year there’s been so many times where he’s just settled without getting into a fight that he doesn’t need to get into, and picked up points for fourth or fifth. Equally you’ve got the flipside of races like Oulton, where he just bided his time, let the two Vauxhalls use their hybrid, and sat there waiting, kept his tyres good and then got it on the last lap in a great way.

“The work we’ve done with Jake has been five years in the making [since the driver and engineer first linked up in their AmD Honda days in 2020], and that’s what made it as emotional as it was and a prouder achievement. It’s been a long old slog to get there and we’ve managed to do it.”

P48 TOCA SUPPORTS REVIEW



...while Cook’s Scottish weekend didn’t all go to plan

DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP		
POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR
1	Jake Hill (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport
2	Tom Ingram (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N
3	Ash Sutton (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST
4	Colin Turkington (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport
5	Dan Cammish (GBR)	Alliance Racing / Ford Focus ST
6	Josh Cook (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport
7	Aron Taylor-Smith (IRL)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra
8	Adam Morgan (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport
9	Rob Huff (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport
10	Tom Chilton (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N
11	Dan Rowbottom (Alliance Racing Ford Focus ST) 186;	
12	Mikey Doble (Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra) 148;	
13	Aiden Moffat (Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla GR Sport) 138;	
14	Andrew Watson (Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla GR Sport) 120;	
15	Sam Osborne (Alliance Racing Ford Focus ST) 93;	
16	Ronan Pearson (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 77;	
17	Chris Smiley (Restart Racing Cupra Leon) 70;	
18	Daryl DeLeon (Unlimited Motorsport Cupra Leon) 48;	
19	Dan Zelos (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N)	



AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



JAKE HILL

1 While the WSR brains trust unlocked what they could from the BMW, Hill tapped into his own skills to finally become the complete BTCC driver. Generally nailed the vagaries of tyre strategy. His speed and racing skills did the rest.



TOM INGRAM

2 Had it not rained in the afternoon of 6 October, he'd likely be a two-time BTCC champion. The Hyundai was monster quick, except in a certain window of wetness. Fantastic season-long performance and superb racecraft as ever.



ASH SUTTON

3 Seems a bit wrong to put him here, but Hill and Ingram were both superb. Sutton did what he could with an ageing Ford Focus and, when it allowed him to, he put in some staggering performances to remind us of his class.




COLIN TURKINGTON

4 The four-time champion hasn't been crowned since 2019, but at age 42 he can still be blindingly quick, as evinced by four poles and the Goodyear Wingfoot Award for qualifying. Perfect team player to aid Hill's quest.



JOSH COOK

5 Did a wonderful job with new-build Toyota initially beset by teething problems. Two wins owed much to tyre strategy, but from post-Thruxton round four to pre-finale Brands he was outscored only by Ingram and Hill.



DAN CAMMISH

6 Very inward-looking driver who managed to eradicate the peaks and troughs of 2022/23 to get a superb level of consistency and move onto the flanks of the title fight. The next target is to keep the consistency while rediscovering the peaks – but not the troughs.



ROB HUFF

7 Forget his position in the points table. Huff claimed two victories on his return to the BTCC after 19 years away, and both were magnificent displays of racecraft. The Toyota wasn't the best car, and he had to make the transition after many years in TCR machines.



ARON TAYLOR-SMITH

8 The ever-cheerful Dubliner hit a new peak in his second-time-around BTCC career as Power Maxed Racing coaxed more speed out of the venerable Astra, especially in second half of the season. There or thereabouts and dominant Independents title.



TOM CHILTON

9 There were times when the veteran looked absolutely a contender, but too often something would go wrong with his car or there would be a strategy miscue, or just plain good old-fashioned bad luck. Three podiums were topped by strong Croft win.



ADAM MORGAN

10 Impossible to split from Rowbottom, so we'll base it on points position... Put in some sparkling qualifying efforts to prove that there were three contenders in WSR BMWs, but did not get the rub of the green in races. Deserved more than his one podium.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	PTS
3	3	5	4	R	12	1	1	9	1	1	5	5	3	1	6	16	5	5	1	5	3	3	5	2	1	5	1	2	2	421
1	1	4	7	2	18	6	16	4	4	3	3	1	2	4	2	4	3	R	10	2	5	R	2	1	4	1	3	1	6	413
2	2	3	3	3	3	3	20	5	3	5	1	2	16	18	4	5	4	6	5	4	2	1	R	4	12	2	R	5	1	365
4	5	2	1	1	8	8	15	7	9	7	7	20	7	15	1	9	14	1	3	9	1	2	7	5	2	R	2	3	5	346
8	6	10	18	7	5	4	2	13	2	2	2	3	4	5	3	6	2	9	7	8	8	11	1	3	5	4	5	4	4	346
6	4	9	2	16	11	14	3	3	5	6	6	8	1	8	8	1	7	2	4	R	4	4	4	6	3	3	R	7	3	327
7	11	14	10	10	4	12	12	15	10	9	8	7	5	3	5	7	13	4	11	12	9	8	3	12	9	9	6	6	12	224
14	7	7	15	4	10	7	18	11	8	8	4	4	17	7	13	17	9	3	6	R	6	5	8	11	7	6	R	NS	10	201
18	9	6	11	R	9	9	14	1	12	10	9	10	11	12	7	2	6	8	12	1	7	7	15	17	11	7	R	16	R	195
11	R	11	6	6	2	15	5	6	6	11	R	6	R	R	9	8	1	14	9	3	16	12	16	7	R	12	9	9	14	187

44; 20 **Bobby Thompson** (West Surrey Racing BMW 330e M Sport) 34; 21 **Scott Sumpton** (Restart Racing Cupra Leon) 20; 22 **Nick Halstead** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 7.  
**MANUFACTURERS** 1 BMW 818; 2 Ford 795; 3 Hyundai 694; 4 Toyota 644. **TEAMS** 1 NAPA Racing UK (Alliance) 724; 2 Team Bristol Street Motors (Excelr8) 609; 3 Team BMW (WSR) 560; 4 LKQ Euro Car Parts with SYNETIQ (Speedworks) 497; 5 Evans Halshaw Power Maxed Racing 427; 6 Laser Tools Racing with MB Motorsport (WSR) 412; 7 Toyota Gazoo Racing UK (Speedworks) 367; 8 Restart Racing 181; 9 Duckhams Racing with Bartercard 85; 10 Zeus Cloud Racing with WSR 34. **INDEPENDENT DRIVERS** 1 Taylor-Smith 564; 2 Doble 466; 3 Smiley 396; 4 DeLeon 354; 5 Sumpton 342. **JACK SEARS TROPHY** 1 Doble 490; 2 Osborne 437; 3 DeLeon 360; 4 Sumpton 343; 5 Pearson 299; 6 Halstead 299; 7 Zelos 147.



SEASON REVIEW

# THE IMPRESSIVE CONQUERORS OF THE BTCC'S UNDERCARD

*While there was utter domination in some of the TOCA support categories, others boasted nervy title battles that went right down to the wire*

STEPHEN LICKORISH



BRITISH FORMULA 4  
DEAGEN FAIRCLOUGH



PORSCHE  
CARRERA CUP GB  
GEORGE GAMBLE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP



MINI CHALLENGE  
DAN ZELOS

PORSCHE SPRINT  
CHALLENGE GB  
SEB HOPKINS





Knockhill marked the start of Gamble's title fightback

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

The storming drive that clinched George Gamble the Porsche Carrera Cup GB title was certainly a memorable one. He was simply unstoppable in tricky wet conditions for the Brands Hatch finale as he passed a succession of rivals to charge towards a title he eventually won quite comfortably by seven points, despite virtually nothing separating the top four heading to Kent. Yet that impressive display was far from the only example of Gamble blasting through the field – a feat that proved key to his title success.

The first recovery job came at Brands earlier in the year. Clutch failure in the first race put Gamble on the back foot but he surged up the order from 13th to fourth to salvage five vital points in race two. There was then an even more dramatic comeback at Donington Park later in the season after a bizarre qualifying clash with title rival Will Martin left Gamble with a broken radiator and starting last. But he rose to eighth in the opener and then got on the podium in the second contest on a weekend where he gained 20 places. “I think, if I didn’t lose my splitter in the second race, I could’ve fought for the lead there,” says Gamble.

However, the one setback he struggled to recover from came at Croft when Martin clattered into Gamble at Clervaux in the first contest and left the Century driver in the barriers. “That was a bit of a killer really but, from that point onwards, we were on a constant comeback,” adds Gamble. “We were 30 points behind and then we led it into the final round – so it’s been a bit of a roller coaster. You’re always negative after something like that [Croft]. When we got to Knockhill and the pace was strong, then I thought, ‘Let’s just go for it every round’, and it worked out. The odds were against us, but we still managed to do it.”

Gamble’s strong second half of the year coincided with a reversal in fortunes for early pacesetter Martin. The Eden Race Drive competitor began the campaign with six podiums in the first eight races. But it turned sour from Knockhill, as track-limits penalties and a clash with Stephen Jelley halted his charge. His strife allowed the much-improved Hugo Ellis (Team Parker) and Charles Rainford (CCK Motorsport) into the mix, even



STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	George Gamble	105
2	Charles Rainford	98
3	Hugo Ellis (left)	95
4	Will Martin	93
5	Matthew Rees	62
6	Harry Foster	55

if they too struggled for consistency at times. That all meant Brands was essentially a winner-takes-all shootout and each of the contenders had a spell in the prime position. But Martin ruled himself out when he spun into the gravel at Paddock when leading the opener. Ellis then struggled far more in the rain of race two and Rainford just had no answer to Gamble’s blistering performance. It was the perfect tonic for the Midlander on his return to the championship after a tricky Toyota British Touring Car campaign last season. “After such a tough year last year, it was such a relief to be back at the front and building that confidence,” he says.

Some of the Pro-Am runners also played cameo roles at the front as class champion Angus Whiteside and Abbie Eaton each took outright wins during a season in which virtually everyone’s fortunes fluctuated wildly.



Martin was flying high after Croft event before his season unravelled

“WE WERE 30 POINTS BEHIND AND THEN WE LED INTO THE LAST ROUND – SO IT’S BEEN A ROLLER COASTER”



PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

While four drivers arrived at the Porsche Carrera Cup GB Brands Hatch finale separated by as many points, it was actually the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB that had the closest finish. Seb Hopkins prevailed over Max Coates by just a solitary point at the end of a season that boasted plenty of close races. Ultimately, a couple more fastest laps for Coates or fewer poles for Hopkins could have made all the difference.

The introduction of the more powerful, more aerodynamic and more exciting RS version of the Cayman added a new dimension to the series for this year. But it was Team Parker’s Hopkins, who had previous Porsche experience in British GT, that stole the early advantage and his pole at the Snetterton opener was a sign of things to come. In fact, he always set the first or second fastest time in qualifying throughout the season, which gave him a great platform to build from.

But it was Coates’s consistency and lack of errors that kept him in the

“TO COME ACROSS THE LINE BY JUST ONE POINT, THAT’S ALL IT TAKES”

hunt. Matters came to a head between the pair in the second race at Oulton Park, when Hopkins made a wildly ambitious lunge on Coates into the chicane, but succeeded only in clattering into the Graves Motorsport driver and putting himself out. Worse was to come in the officials’ room as Hopkins was not only given a six-point deduction for the clash but also a 10-place grid penalty for the next round at Croft. “In hindsight, if that incident had never happened, we would’ve been going into the Croft weekend with a really healthy points gap,” says Hopkins. “It did make it a bit more difficult than it should’ve been. I started 11th for the first race at Croft but it was my drive of the year going from the back to second place.”

Hopkins describes getting pole in North Yorkshire, ahead of his grid demotion, as a “message to the others”. A win and a second in the other two races certainly got his title bid back on track, only for another DNF – this time following a tangle with Toby Trice at the Donington Park hairpin, which was deemed a racing incident – to threaten to undo all the hard work. “To pick myself back up from that was very difficult,” Hopkins admits.

Coates was also impressive in the wet conditions at Silverstone and had a fantastic scrap with Toro Verde’s Tom Bradshaw in the second contest. Despite missing out by the narrowest of margins, he still arrived in Kent with a 10-point advantage. But it was Coates’s turn to err as an optimistic move around the outside of Bradshaw at Druids resulted in contact and a damaged car dropped Coates back. And, although he closed on Hopkins initially in the finale, it was not enough to end his title drought. “There was no other goal



Qualifying pace was key to Hopkins’ success



PORSCHE

STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Seb Hopkins	187
2	Max Coates	186
3	Will Jenkins (left)	178
4	Tom Bradshaw	166
5	Ethan Hammerton	121
6	Oliver Cottam	105

than to win the championship, second was not good enough,” concludes Hopkins. “To come across the line by just one point, that’s all it takes – it doesn’t matter if it’s [the winning margin] 30 points or one.” Bradshaw and Hopkins’s stablemate, Will Jenkins, also arrived at Brands still just about in contention but, despite them both winning four times (bettering Coates’s three), they could not quite get on terms with the lead duo.



Coates and Hopkins got a bit too close for comfort at Oulton

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP



MINI CHALLENGE



STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Dan Zelos	731
2	Max Hall (left)	679
3	Nathan Edwards	654
4	Jamie Osborne	645
5	Dominic Wheatley	619
6	Tom Ovenden	591

More Mini Challenge glory for Dan Zelos always looked the most likely result heading into the season. With two titles already to his name and the field lacking established frontrunners and instead mainly comprising young drivers still learning the ropes, further Zelos domination was on the cards. And, while Zelos did indeed end up taking the spoils, there were several surprising elements to the year for the Excelr8 Motorsport driver.

“We never expected to win the title with a round to spare and never expected to get an opportunity to race in British Touring Cars,” he says. Zelos sealed the spoils at the penultimate Knockhill event after a super consistent campaign during which his worst finish was fifth. But the early coronation only arrived after team-mate Max Hall suffered driveshaft failure in Scotland. “I had no idea it was even possible going into the final race!” Zelos continues. “I went out all guns blazing to fight hard but didn’t really have to.”

While that fourth place unexpectedly netted him the championship,

“I WENT OUT ALL GUNS  
BLAZING TO FIGHT HARD  
BUT DIDN’T REALLY HAVE TO”



Zelos retained his place at the head of the Mini field

his impressive results over the past few years enabled him to finally get a BTCC call-up with Excelr8 – an opportunity he grabbed with both hands.

Before that, Zelos faced a few threats in the early part of the Mini season and there were some entertaining races, including a thriller at Snetterton where he made a series of impressive overtakes that culminated in a last-lap Bomb Hole move on Hall to seal his third win of the weekend. “Going into round one, we felt we had a good advantage over the rest of the field, but the rest of the field very quickly caught up,” adds Zelos. “A couple of drivers I’d been coaching in the Coopers for a number of years, so I had no doubt they’d get up to speed quickly and sometimes they used a few of my own tricks!”

Hall was one of those young whippersnappers and signalled his intent by taking two wins around Brands Hatch Indy. But a driveshaft problem in the middle Kent race, allied to tangling with Lydia Walmsley at the preceding Donington Park event, left him already on the back foot in the title battle. Another to grow stronger as the year progressed was fellow Excelr8 rookie Nathan Edwards, who also scored five victories and just pipped Jamie Osborne to third in the standings, albeit still well adrift of Zelos.

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Deagen Fairclough was not lacking any confidence heading into the British Formula 4 season. Ahead of the first round, he made it clear the title was his target and told Autosport: “We’re here to break records.” Well, Fairclough is a teenager of his word and sure enough produced a campaign of unprecedented domination to secure the championship with five races to spare.

Some of the statistics surrounding the Hitech driver’s season are just staggering. Winning 14 of the 20 non-reversed-grid races is impressive, as is starting on pole for 15 of the 20 races where the order was based



Fairclough broke series’ win record en route to title

on qualifying, and he only once finished outside of the top five. Record after record tumbled and the title never looked like it was going anywhere else. Although, by his very high standards, Fairclough’s year did not get off to the best of starts. “Having that mistake in qualifying in the first round put us P3,” he recalls. “I was a little bit gutted because all of the days prior to the first round that we had testing I was P1. That set me back a little bit but then, in the first race, we jumped them all at the start and won.” And he never looked back from that point onwards.

There were a few slight hiccups along the way, such as a couple of clashes with his closest rival, Rodin’s Alex Ninovic, at Brands Hatch and Snetterton, and getting caught up in a first-lap tangle on the Silverstone Grand Prix track, while Fairclough was denied another win when his car conked out at Thruxton. But these were all minor blips as he subsequently rocketed clear of the rest.

Ninovic was the only one who could really take the fight to Fairclough, and did triumph five times, but lacked the consistency to match the pacesetter. Reza Seewooruthun (Hitech) and James Higgins (Rodin) were the only other drivers to prevail in non-reversed-grid bouts.

STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Deagen Fairclough	583
2	Alex Ninovic	360.5
3	Reza Seewooruthun	272
4	James Higgins	269.5
5	Jack Sherwood	230
6	Leo Robinson	164



AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



CHARLES RAINFORD

**10** Given how close the Carrera Cup contenders were heading to the Brands Hatch finale, all four deserved a spot in our top 10. Fine margins separate their performances but, inevitably, one must be bottom of the quartet, and that is Rainford. He did finish runner-up in the standings but scored fewer wins than the rest (George Gamble also won twice, but also scored maximum points for top Pro entrant another two times) and Rainford was the only previous frontrunner with the continuity of staying at the same squad as 2023.



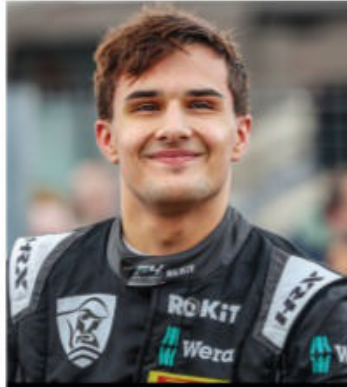
HUGO ELLIS

**9** Next of the Carrera Cup protagonists is Ellis. The Team Parker racer was contesting his third Porsche season but took a notable step forward to fight more established rivals. His best result last year was one podium, but underlined his improvement by scoring the most non-reversed-grid wins of all (three). Ultimately, Ellis lost too much ground at the Donington Park opener, where he had to take avoiding action from Sid Smith and damaged his car, which also put him at the back when race two was run at Brands.



WILL MARTIN

**8** Martin is the highest-placed of the defeated Carrera Cup pack, thanks to his early-season form. Despite striking a late deal to return to the GB series after a year in North America, and signing with Dino Zamparelli's new Eden Race Drive squad, Martin enjoyed a flying start. Team and driver gelled instantly to win straight out of the box and enjoyed another three strong weekends to build a commanding lead. But it all went downhill thereafter and spinning off at Brands finale summed up the second half of his campaign.



ALEX NINOVIC

**7** Much has been written about Deagen Fairclough's British Formula 4 dominance, but it is also noteworthy just how far Ninovic finished ahead of the rest in second in the standings. The Australian was the only one able to get in the same postcode as the Hitech racer at times, and they enjoyed some intense scraps, but he could not consistently challenge Fairclough as the season went on. Massive 222.5-point deficit means he cannot be higher, but five wins and 88.5 points ahead of third is still meritorious.



MAX HALL

**6** It was easy to forget at times that this was Hall's first full season in the JCW Minis and that he is only 17 years old. Having made his debut at the end of last year, the Cooper graduate was immediately on the pace and was a double winner at just the second event at Brands. Some early clashes and reliability misfortunes dented any ambitions of matching runaway points leader Dan Zelos, but five wins and a further three second places still marked Hall out as a potential star of the future.



ZANE MALONEY

**5** Another year and another example of Coates falling agonisingly short of winning a title among the TOCA supports. Understandably devastated to finish just one point shy of Seb Hopkins in the Sprint Challenge, but that is still a tremendous achievement, especially when you consider Hopkins was the category pacesetter. The eventual champion's better qualifying record (average race-one position was 1.33 compared to Coates's 4.33) means he edges ahead in our rankings.



SEB HOPKINS

**4** The reality is Hopkins should have won the Sprint Challenge title more comfortably – and he admits his attempted move on Coates at Oulton Park made his task far trickier. Was supreme in qualifying and the Porsche series' point-scoring system (with its narrow margins between each finishing position) naturally keeps title battles close. But, ultimately, the fact he only prevailed by one point means he is fourth of the champions in our top 10, despite battling more experienced rivals.



GEORGE GAMBLE

**3** Considering how close the Carrera Cup title battle was, it might seem strange for Gamble to be five places ahead of any of his rivals. But the manner in which he clinched the glory in the Brands rain was a true champion's drive. How he continually responded to any setback during the season was also mightily impressive as he gained almost 50 places from his starting positions during the year – no mean feat in a series where overtaking has historically proven to be pretty challenging.



DAN ZELOS

**2** Normally, dominantly wrapping up a title in August and not finishing a race lower than fifth would guarantee you a number one spot in our top 10. But, unfortunately for Zelos, his impressive Mini results came in the same year Fairclough did something very abnormal and reset record after record in British F4. Take nothing away from Zelos – it was a brilliant campaign, but his win percentage of 38% compared to Fairclough's 47% means he has to drop back to second this year.



DEAGEN FAIRCLOUGH

**1** There was only ever one contender to finish top of the pile this year. Fairclough was near-faultless all season and it's a measure of his character that he still notched up the wins long after the British F4 title was secured. He was particularly impressive in the rain, which he in part attributes to his family's limited funding meaning he never had wet-weather tyres during his karting years, and was quite simply a pleasure to watch. Even though his opposition was not the strongest, it was still a masterclass.





# LET THE GAMES BEGIN AGAIN

*Motorsport's 'Olympics' is back for its third edition this week and it's bigger than ever*

TOM JEFFRIES

**F**ollowing an expanded 2022 event, the FIA Motorsport Games is being scaled up again for the 2024 edition, which kicks off this week. It will be the third iteration of what's colloquially known as the 'Olympics for motorsport' – an FIA-run competition in which teams compete for their country in a diverse mix of motorsport events.

Much of the 2024 event will take place at Valencia's Circuit Ricardo Tormo. It's a track that's perhaps better known for motorcycling than cars – it has hosted MotoGP annually since 1999 – but until 27 October it'll play host to many of the 26 categories (up from just six in the first iteration and 16 for the second). Among the regulars, such as Formula 4, GT and TCR, new events include

Single Make GT (basically a one-off event of the Ferrari Challenge), plus a new F4-specific Esports race.

The 2022 Games catered for Rally2, Rally4, and Historic Rally categories. All three return, but this time there are asphalt and gravel-specific contests for each category (along with the combined), offering drivers more avenues in which to compete. These will take place in and around the Ricardo Tormo circuit, with gravel taking in six stages, a Super Special Stage and a medal stage for the top three, while Tarmac will have eight stages, a Super Special Stage and the medal stage. This makes it 14 for the combined rally, with an additional two Super Special Stages and a seven-mile medal stage, adding up to a maximum of nearly 140 miles.

The Esports category has also been expanded with the new F4 competition. The FIA already runs the FIA F4 Esports Global Championship within *iRacing*, but its F4 contest at the Games will use the Spa layout because *iRacing* does not have a model of the Valencia track. Meanwhile, Esports GT, which runs on *Assetto Corsa Competizione*, will be racing at a virtual Circuit Ricardo Tormo.

Two other changes come in Off-Road and Karting, where new Mini classes have been added for drivers aged from eight to 12. The inclusion of much younger drivers in these two arrive-and-drive categories is important to the Games, according to Stephane Ratel, founder and boss of promoter SRO.

"We want to promote youth and diversity, and to go down to a younger age exactly embodies what the Motorsport Games is about," he says. "We want as many countries represented, we want as many categories represented. Motorsport is very often perceived as very expensive, with all the luxury and sparkles of Formula 1. For the general public, it seems not accessible, while the FIA



Ratel stresses the Games' focus on youth, diversity and accessibility

BENICHO/SRO



## 2024 EVENTS

CIRCUIT  
GT

In the GT class teams of two will take to the track in hour-long races. Drivers will use GT3 machinery and conduct a driver swap midway through the race. Team UK scored one of its two medals in the class in 2022, with Sam Neary and Ian Loggie behind the wheel of a Mercedes-AMG GT3. This time Chris Froggatt and James Cottingham will represent the UK, driving a Ferrari 296 GT3.



## GT SPRINT

Single drivers will take to the track in a GT3 car for the sprint, which will last at least 40 minutes. Eight drivers, including Spaniard Daniel Juncadella and Turkey's Ayhan Guven, will compete, while 2023 British GT champion Darren Leung represents the UK.

## SINGLE MAKE GT

New for 2024, Single Make GT is essentially the Ferrari Challenge category. Bronze-rated drivers will take part in a 30-minute-plus-one-lap race around Ricardo Tormo in a Ferrari 296 Challenge car, with Welshman James Owen taking part for the UK.

## FORMULA 4

One of the most popular classes, drivers compete in identical Tatuus F4 chassis around Circuit Ricardo Tormo. Future Mercedes F1 driver Andrea Kimi Antonelli won last time around, showcasing the competitiveness of the field.

## TOURING CAR

TCR returns after a successful run in 2022. Brit Jenson Brickley looks to be in a good place for a medal – he's currently leading the TCR Spain standings and took a first and a third at Ricardo Tormo just three weeks before the Games.

## DRIFTING

The most-subscribed car class of 2022, drifting once again features in the Games. Last year's Motorsport UK Drift Pro Champion Lwi Edwards will be the UK's entrant, behind the wheel of his BMW E36 LSX.

## RALLY

## RALLY2 AND RALLY4

Both Rally2 and Rally4 have three options for drivers to compete in – just gravel, just asphalt, or a mixture of the two. Stages will take place in and around Circuit Ricardo Tormo, for 100km (gravel), 110km (Tarmac), and an additional 11km medal stage for the top three drivers.

This year  
more than 700  
competitors from 85  
countries will take  
part in the Games

Popular F4 class won in  
2022 by future Mercedes  
F1 driver Antonelli

*“As the Games is developing it's more successful in the grassroots categories. It needs to be affordable”*

and motorsport has to be for everyone.”

And that highlights another aspect of the Games – accessibility and equality are behind a lot of the decisions made. “We started with GT [in the 2018 FIA GT Nations Cup] with these big expensive cars, but as the Games is developing it's more successful in the grassroots categories,” adds Ratel. “And if you're talking grassroots, it needs to be affordable.”

Entry fees are surprisingly low – it's €800 (around £670) to enter either of the Esports categories, while the four-hour Karting Endurance category costs less than €4000 for a team of three – and Mercedes will partner the games, with the Mercedes AMG GT3 becoming the exclusive car for the Esports GT category. It's all part of that push towards the grassroots of motorsport, with F4, Karting, Karting and Auto Slalom, and Cross Car







**HISTORIC RALLY**

Historic Rally has two categories – for cars produced between 1970 and 1975, and between 1976 and 1981. As with Rally2 and Rally4, drivers can compete on gravel, Tarmac, or both.

**OFF-ROAD  
CROSS CAR (SR/JR/MINI)**

Cross Cars are bike-engined off-road buggies, with races taking place on a purpose-built facility next to the Aspar circuit where the karting will take place. The addition of the Mini category offers drivers as young as eight the chance to compete.

**KARTING  
SPRINT (SR/JR/MINI)**

The Karting element expands, with Senior, Junior and – new for this year – Mini classes, again offering a race for drivers between eight and 12 years old. Races are 15km (Mini), 25km (Junior) or 30km (Senior).



**ENDURANCE**

Twenty-four teams of three drivers will take on the four-hour endurance karting race at the Aspar Circuit in Valencia. Karts are supplied by the FIA, allowing for an arrive-and-drive approach to determine the best team.

**ELECTRIC STREET  
AUTO SLALOM**

Mixed-gender teams will take part in an event similar to auto solo in an FIA-supplied FWD electric street car. This year that'll be the Hyundai KONA Electric N Line.

**KARTING SLALOM**

Also open for mixed-gender teams, drivers aged between 14 and 16 will compete in 20kW electric karts. Two teams race simultaneously on identical courses.

**ESPORTS  
GT**

Easily the most popular class of 2024, the Esports GT class will use *Assetto Corsa Competizione*. British racer Kieran Prendergast will fly the flag, hoping to follow the gold medal scored by James Baldwin last time around.

**F4**

Another new category, the F4 Esports category will use *iRacing*. British sim racer Matt Caruana will represent the UK. The FIA and *iRacing* launched a Global Esports championship earlier in 2024.

Mini all being arrive-and-drive. This helps smaller countries or competitors with modest budgets, since the cost of shipping cars, mechanics and everything else a race team needs is removed. Ratel believes this also means that running the events themselves costs less, and encourages more people to join the Games. “The cost of organisation is lower than organising the cost of the bigger categories, where you need track rental, marshals – it’s a far bigger organisation to organise circuit racing than it is to organise karting, or Auto Slalom, or Esports,” he says. “It’s essential. We want youth, we want diversity, we have quite a lot of female drivers. It’s exactly what the Games were designed for.”

This push for equality extends to the nations. In a departure from the Olympics, ASNs (national sporting authorities) can only send one entry per event, with mixed-gender squads mandatory for team events such as Karting Endurance or Slalom. This not only keeps costs down but allows smaller countries to compete more fairly with larger ones – no stacking the deck with multiple people from the same ASN to increase their odds. Encouragingly, this approach is enticing even more countries to enter the Games. From an initial 20 in the 2018 Nations Cup, 49 entered the 2019 Motorsport Games, 72 entered in 2022 and a whopping 85 will be featuring in 2024. Of these, 114 drivers and 70 nations will be taking part in Esports, while there will be 136 Karting competitors.

Far from being a struggle to get smaller countries involved, it’s getting countries with a richer motorsport heritage involved that is a challenge. “I would say that the large ASNs are often a bit blase,” reckons Ratel. “They have a lot of motorsport, and they have not completely embraced the FIA Motorsport Games yet. Some of them did – the UK, Germany, some of them are very active. Spain of course is hosting the games. But some others are still not very into it, while many smaller motorsport countries that



Tom Coronel won tin-top gold in 2022 – and this year his son Rocco is due to race a kart



Italy topped the medals table in second running of the Games in France in 2022



you would never imagine would even be present with two drivers are coming with 10, and that is a great satisfaction for us.”

The UK is one of the most active ASNs at the Games. It had the third-largest delegation in 2022 with 19 drivers (Belgium sent 22, while Spain sent 26 and hosts France 14 – this year they’re only sending eight). This time 25 competitors from the UK will be taking part in 16 categories, with team captain

Chris Froggatt leading the charge.

It all points towards an event that’s growing. There’s still room to expand, with Cross-Country Rally a potential event for 2026. It’s not to say that everything has had such an emphatic response, though: Truck Racing and a Rally All-Stars category were both slated for 2024 but dropped due to lack of interest. “Truck Racing was a bit complicated, in terms of the number of participants, so we have postponed it,” explains Ratel. “We’ll see next edition if it will be

## “Nothing comes overnight. In motorsport, when you launch something new, it takes time”

possible to get enough competitors from enough nationalities.”

It’s perhaps little surprise that Truck Racing has had to be delayed given that the European Truck Racing Championship has drivers from just five countries, with two of those – Hungary and Portugal – only having one driver each in the field. Five of the seven circuits the series visits have no home drivers, and the cost of renting or transporting trucks, not to mention running them, will also have been considerable.

While Truck Racing may not have a large following in Spain, the Games are very open to the idea of adding events that fit the host country’s passion for sport. “I would say a bit like the Olympics, which have a number of categories that are selected by the host city or host country – it could be the same with the Motorsport Games,” says Ratel.

So far, the games have all been held in Europe – first Rome with Vallelunga, then Marseille with Paul Ricard, and now Valencia with Ricardo Tormo. As the event draws an increasingly global interest, moving away from Europe must be seen as the next step.

The Race of Champions – which has held just seven of its 33 events outside of Europe – announced recently that Sydney will be its host in 2025. That the not-too-dissimilarly-run ROC, where teams of professional drivers compete for their country, is still running more than 30 years after its inaugural event will surely provide some measure of confidence to the Games.

Ratel is confident that the Games will become an intrinsic event in motorsport. “Nothing comes overnight,” he says. “In motorsport, when you launch something new, completely new, it takes time. I think the progress in only three editions is there, and I believe that it will become a very major event in the motorsport calendar.”

With more than 700 competitors from 85 countries, plus partnerships with Mercedes and Hyundai, that “major event” status Ratel and the FIA are after seems to be on the way. 🏁





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MRL runs successful pilot race for GT3 Legends series

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## Festival double for Smith



Oldfield Motorsport driver  
takes victory, but faces  
Middlehurst appeal



BRC contenders prepare  
for **Cambrian** decider



British racer wins at  
**Ferrari** world finals



**BTCC** champions to tackle  
club racing contests



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A total of 23 GT3s from 2006-15 took part in the pilot race at Silverstone

# GT3 Legends series off to a strong start

## MRL

The new GT3 Legends series due for launch next year looks set to fly, judging by the success of a pilot race run at Silverstone last Saturday.

A total of 23 early-generation GT3s, run across three classes covering 2006-15, lined up as promotor Motor Racing Legends signed off its 2024 season. The series is the creation of Shaun Lynn – historic racer, car collector and father to Hypercar ace Alex – who bought MRL earlier this year.

After a transitional season, Lynn has now fully taken the reins from Duncan Wiltshire, who has already stepped into a new role as

chairman of the Royal Automobile Club.

“There’s a lot of interest, and people have told me they’ve already sold cars,” Lynn told Autosport. “We’re bringing new blood to the classic scene. We’ve got an exciting calendar for next year, including a couple of European events, followed by some good stuff in the UK. There’s much to look forward to.”

The 50-minute pilot race was won by Matt Holme and Andrew Jordan in an ex-Callaway-run Corvette. “This series looks very good, there’s quite a bit of buzz about it,” said Jordan.

“To have this amount of cars for the first race is impressive. It’s an opportunity for teams and for MRL. There’s definitely a

shift going on in historics, not just with GT3. Look at Peter Auto with their Endurance Legends series featuring early to mid-2000 cars, and these being a little newer than that. If I was coming into historics now, I would relate to these cars more than a Lotus Cortina. It’s an age thing.”

MRL’s newly appointed CEO was also at Silverstone. Pierre-Antoine Lecoutour previously spent 10 years running Peter Auto in Europe and has been tasked by Lynn, who describes 2025 as a “building year”, to expand MRL’s historic remit. “A lot of credit to Duncan and his team,” said Lynn. “Race promotion is a lot of work, for no money!”

**DAMIEN SMITH**

## British Army support could continue for 2025

### BRITISH GT

Speedworks Motorsport boss Danny Buxton has revealed he is keen to continue a partnership with the British Army first formed ahead of this season’s final British GT round at Brands Hatch.

Speedworks, which competes as Toyota Gazoo Racing, collaborated with the Army for the two-hour season finale last month where the

GR Supra GT4 was run in a camouflage livery. Historic racer Benjamin Tusting was running seventh after 40 minutes, but an unscheduled pitstop due to a holed radiator caused the car to finish 10 laps down despite series veteran Michael O’Brien claiming fastest lap.

“To have the British Army involved for next year would be a dream come true,” said Buxton. “The combination



has been brilliant and the crew have been faultless.

“We’ll do a deep dive and look at the value the Army has had from this experience and

create a package for 2025. From my side, I’m buzzing – just apart from the [Brands] result and what could have been.”

**ED HARDY**



# HILL TO PARTNER GINETTA RACER HART IN FUN CUP

BRSCC

Recently crowned British Touring Car champion Jake Hill will tackle this weekend's Fun Cup finale alongside Ginetta Junior frontrunner Charlie Hart.

Rookie pairings who win on their Fun Cup debut receive a £10,000 prize, and that is the target for Hill and Hart, who was third in this year's Ginetta standings, at Oulton Park.

"I helped coach Charlie for Elite over the last three years," explained Hill. "His dad Chris [a past Fun Cup champion] said, 'Look, Fun Cup have put on a prize of 10 grand if a new pair come in and win a race'. So he was like, 'Do you want to do it with Charlie?' And I said I've always wanted to have a go at one."

"We're just going to go and have fun. It will be really nice as well to race with a lad that I've coached. I've never done that yet, so I'm looking forward to that, and Charlie boy's a good lad."

The duo are part of a 30-car grid, featuring several other high-profile names as well as regular pacesetters. British GT stars Phil Keen and Ian Loggie are also on the entry, along with former BTCC ace Anthony Reid.

MARCUS SIMMONS &  
STEPHEN LICKORISH



RICHARD STYLES



Turkington has previously driven 325ti on trackdays

BMW CAR CLUB GB

## BTCC team-mates Turkington and Morgan enter Birkett in BMW 325tis

750MC

Colin Turkington will team up with fellow BMW British Touring Car racer Adam Morgan to contest this weekend's Birkett Relay at Silverstone.

Turkington and Morgan will be joined by BMW Car Club committee member Paul Laramy in a trio of BMW 325ti machines for the six-hour contest, which has scratch and handicap prizes. Four-time BTCC champion Turkington has previously driven a 325 on trackdays and is looking forward to a rare outing on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit and the chance to sample endurance racing.

"I'm good friends with Neil McDonald, who runs the BMW Car Club GB race series," explained Turkington of the Team BMW entry. "Neil's been asking me for a few years if I would like to do the Birkett but, for some reason, it hasn't worked out in the past."

"I'm really looking forward to it – it's an

opportunity to do a bit of racing with a bit less pressure and I can just go and enjoy the event. I'm not quite sure what to expect; I'm not sure I've ever done an endurance race before – my whole career has been sprint racing. The relay seems like a completely unique way to go racing and hopefully the handicappers look on us favourably!"

Turkington is not the only BTCC champion on the entry list, however. Tim Harvey will return to the Birkett for the first time since he was part of a Chevron B8 team that enjoyed scratch success in 1986. He will be part of a four-car squad of Suzuki Swifts, built for the 750 Motor Club's new Swift Sport Challenge series, which also comprises Ryan and Scott Parkin, Adam Blair and Dan Silvester. Away from the track, a road-going Swift will be converted into race specification during the contest, to illustrate how accessible the category is.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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Welsh wizard called the right strategy in Imola rain

## Owen enjoys Ferrari world final success

### FERRARI

An inspired tactical decision helped Briton James Owen to victory in the Ferrari Challenge world finals at Imola last Sunday.

Owen, who races in the Am class with the Meridien Motorsport - Engstler team and will represent Team UK in this year's FIA Motorsport Games, crossed the line first in his 296 Challenge in a dramatic, rain-affected race interrupted by a red flag. The 38-year-old Briton was crowned Am champion for the event that brings together cars from Ferrari's one-make challenge series, while Bence Valint took the Pro title with third.

Owen, who is in his second year of racing, called for wet tyres shortly before the reds. He persuaded his team to make the change during the stoppage before progressing rapidly up the

leaderboard. He moved to the front when the rain intensified in the final minutes, forcing the leaders to stop for wets.

"Before the red flag the track was wet in sector two and everyone was tip-toeing along," explained Owen. "I thought that, if I were on wets, I'd be able to gain track position and then hold people off in sectors three and one."

"When I was in the pitlane during the red, the team were saying, 'Are you sure about this?' It was a gamble because I'd really gone for it over the first couple of laps and was up to fourth in Am."

"It hadn't actually started raining at the restart but, in the wet sector, everyone was squirming around. Halfway around the third lap, it started to hammer down. Everyone else was hanging on for dear life and I was able to get into the lead."

GARY WATKINS

## Historic FF1600 champion Shinner eyes more modern race outings

### FF1600

Historic Formula Ford champion Spencer Shinner would like to tackle more events in modern machinery next year, despite a difficult Formula Ford Festival at Brands Hatch last weekend.



Shinner was part of Oldfield's Festival line-up

GARY HAWKINS

The 21-year-old retired after 21 laps during Sunday's grand final after a tough Saturday meant he had to compete in the Last Chance race having failed to break out of his semi-final. "I just didn't get into the flow," said Shinner following his semi-final performance, where he finished 14th, just outside of the automatic qualification spots for the final.

The Cornwall-born driver was full of praise for the 2013 Oldfield Motorsport Van Diemen JL13 that he drove at the weekend, adding: "I would like to do more in modern cars next year, it's nice to keep a challenge."

Having landed the Historic Formula Ford crown this season, Shinner also spoke about how he "would like to defend his title next season" but said it's a case of "balancing the racing budget with university fees as well".

JACOB AWCOCK

### TATE'S NEW ROLES

Former Donington Park managing director Christopher Tate will become chair of the Motorsport UK Council, succeeding Tom Purves, and take a place on the governing body's board of directors at the start of next year. Tate has held a variety of positions within motorsport and already sits on several Motorsport UK committees. "There are important years ahead for motorsport everywhere, and there is much to be done – I look forward to it," he said.

### WEST AT BMW SUMMIT

Jason West has won this year's Ramair BMW Championship, the first year it has run with the Classic Sports Car Club and without Kumho sponsorship. West has taken class glory before, but never the overall title. The M3 E46 driver was positive about the series' 2024 growth and also the switch away from control tyres – and he has his own unusual source, purchasing used British Touring Car tyres from a team.

### BRSCC BMW SERIES SHARE

Five of the British Racing & Sports Car Club's BMW 1 Series Supercup cars ran as an invitation class on the Compact Cup grid at Silverstone earlier this month as a prelude to the categories joining forces next year. Pacesetter Matt Parkes set a time 1.5 seconds faster than Compact Cup polesitter Steven Dailly in qualifying, although the margin was narrower in the races when the Supercup cars started from a secondary grid.

### REMEMBERING VAN KOUWEN

The life of Gerrit van Kouwen, winner of the 1984 Formula Ford Festival who died earlier this year, was celebrated at last weekend's Brands Hatch contest. The event was named after the Dutchman in consultation with his family, who were in attendance, including wife Suzy and brother Martin. He said: "We didn't expect so many people [to remember him] and, as a family, we're very proud." A replica of van Kouwen's winning Lola T644E (below) was put on display and also took to the track.



GARY HAWKINS





JEP

## Four-way fight for BRC spoils

### RALLYING

The outcome of the British Rally Championship will be settled in a spectacular four-way contest on Saturday's Cambrian Rally in the forests of North Wales.

William Creighton, Chris Ingram, Osian Pryce and Keith Cronin are all in contention over 60 stage miles, which will be held in Clocaenog and Alwen. Ford Fiesta Rally2 drivers Creighton, Pryce and Cronin will take on Ingram's

Toyota Yaris Rally2 (above).

Creighton and Ingram head the points, and victory for either would clinch the title. However, Pryce and Cronin are still in contention and the format of normal points scores being multiplied by 1.5 for the finale leaves the contest open.

If Pryce wins with Creighton second, Pryce would be champion, while Cronin needs Creighton and Ingram to finish lower down the order for a shot at his fifth BRC crown.

"There are a lot of variables

to the final but, of course, we will give it our best shot," said Creighton, who took victory last time out on Rali Ceredigion.

Ingram, who has scored three wins this season (on the North West Stages, Grampian and 'other' Rali Ceredigion) added: "The only plan is to try and deliver my best performance. I need to avoid any mistakes and drive well."

Pryce, BRC champion in 2022, said: "There's four of us going for the title and, because of the way the points system

works, it gives us all a chance."

Cronin, however, says his chances are slim, admitting: "It would require Will, Chris and Osian to all have really bad days in the office and that's not going to happen."

Joining the entry will be World Rally champion Stig Blomqvist, who will drive a Mini Cooper S. Organised by Ian Hunt, the outing for Stig and co-driver Paul Morris is in celebration of 40 years since Blomqvist's 1984 WRC crown.

PAUL LAWRENCE

## Caterham champions crowned

### BARC

Caterham Motorsport and the Caterham Graduates Racing Club brought their respective seasons to a close at Donington Park last weekend, with 19 races taking place and champions being crowned.

The destiny of the 310R Championship went down to the wire, with Harry Cook claiming the title against season-long rival Taylor O'Flanagan. The latter led after dropped scores heading into the meeting, but a hat-trick of wins

for Cook gave him the glory.

Paul Goldstein claimed a brace of titles over the weekend, first in Roadsport before a recovery drive from the back of the grid in the Graduates Sigma 135 category secured another. Bruno van Dyke, an Academy frontrunner, moved up to Roadsport for the season finale and romped to a pair of wins.

Victory in the Autumn Trophy, an amalgamation of the two Caterham Academy classes, went to White Group champion Paul Oggelsby from Dean Burden and Alex Coombes.



OLLIEREAD

In the Seven UK Championship, less than half a second covered the top two in each race. William Smith and Harry Senior won the opening races before Samuel Smith, who had come second on both occasions, headed the finale.



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# Highs and lows of the Festival

*A commemoration off-track was somewhat overshadowed by events on it after another controversial conclusion*

STEFAN MACKLEY

**T**here's a unique atmosphere in the paddock immediately following any Formula Ford Festival, one that consists of disappointment, hard luck stories and no shortage of 'what if' scenarios.

Drivers and teams that have spent days testing, battling through heats and semi-finals to come within reach of the ultimate prize and a place in history leave empty-handed as there can only be one winner. This year, for the time being at least, Josh Smith added to his triumph in 2018 with Oldfield Motorsport and, in many ways, it was perhaps fitting that it was his car that should win.

The triumphant Van Diemen sported a tribute livery and the same '200' number with which Gerrit van Kouwen had claimed his own Festival victory 40 years ago. The likeable Dutchman was an ever-present figure at the Brands Hatch blue-riband event, only missing the 2020 edition because of COVID-19 restrictions and last season's fixture due to the illness that would ultimately claim his life earlier this year.

To celebrate the memory of van Kouwen and his achievement four decades ago, the event was named after him, while a replica of his 1984-winning Lola T644E was put on display in one of the garages and also took to the track in a demonstration run over the weekend. His family were in attendance, including wife Suzy. This writer had the privilege of speaking with his brother Martin,

**“The whole situation has left a somewhat bitter taste in the mouths of many”**

who recalled the experience of supporting his older sibling at Brands as a 12-year-old, when van Kouwen became the first man to set a lap under the 49-second barrier at the Festival.

The final in many ways proved to be a fitting tribute, consisting of several changes for the lead, controversial incidents and an outcome that remained unknown until the chequered flag – and even after it! The race was helped by a new initiative implemented by the organising British Racing & Sports Car Club, which was to add laps run behind the safety car back onto the total race distance. It meant that the scheduled 20-lap final was extended by five laps, a move certainly welcomed by fans and drivers for a contest that lasted nearly 30 minutes.

What was noticeable, however, was that despite entries being slightly up on last year generally, the number of top-quality

drivers at the front of the field was perhaps lacking compared with other editions. Two-time winner Niall Murray was a no-show due to other commitments in Ireland, while there were no entries from Kevin Mills's frontrunning outfit. Nor was there any presence from the Team USA Scholarship.

Even so, the likes of two-time victors Rory Smith and Joey Foster were competing, and the latter could well have won the event outright for the third time but for an incident, the fallout of which is set to rumble on for a few more weeks.

The Firman driver ended up in the gravel at Clearways having tried a move to the outside of leader Josh Smith. The matter was looked at by the clerk of the course, then the stewards at the behest of runner-up Chris Middlehurst, but both sets of officials came back with a verdict of no further action being necessary.

The reigning Walter Hayes Trophy (WHT) winner, who will look to defend his crown next month, now plans to take the matter to the National Court in a situation similar to what happened at the Silverstone event two years ago. In that scenario at the WHT, on-track winner Max Esterson was handed a five-second penalty for a similar incident with Tom Mills. That also went to the National Court, with the appeal unsuccessful.

While there are parallels between the two, there are also crucial differences. Both took place on a long, sweeping right-hand bend with the leading car on the inside but the optimal racing line in wet conditions being at the very edge of the track. In the case of Esterson versus Mills, however, the latter had placed his car much further alongside, before the American lost control briefly and slid into his opponent, making contact, and forcing him off.


In last weekend's incident, at no point did Foster's front wheels move past Smith's rear tyre, nor did Smith lose control or make any contact – although it could be argued there would have been had Foster not taken to the gravel. If anyone should feel aggrieved, it is Foster. Instead, the appeal is being taken up by Middlehurst who, although directly behind the incident, was in no way impeded by what occurred ahead.

Middlehurst made it clear that Smith should have been penalised just as he had been for an incident at Clearways during the heats. In that instance, Smith had moved to the inside of leader Jason Smyth and forced him off, but the pair were directly wheel-to-wheel and a penalty for Smith – in the form of a one-place grid drop for the semi-final – was merited.

Regardless, the whole situation has left a somewhat bitter taste in the mouths of many and capped off an event that showcased both the good and the bad of Formula Ford. 🏁

➔ **P70 FESTIVAL REPORT**





# Smith seals second Festival victory amid protest

**BRANDS HATCH**  
**BRSCC FORMULA FORD FESTIVAL**  
**19-20 OCTOBER**

Torrential rain, controversial collisions, off-track feuds and a provisional winner characterised the 2024 edition of the Formula Ford Festival last weekend at Brands Hatch.

The annual blue-riband event, which this year was named in honour of Gerrit van Kouwen to mark the 40th anniversary of his own Festival victory after the Dutchman passed away earlier this year, provided plenty of drama that is set to rumble on for several more weeks.

For now, at least, Josh Smith added to his Festival success in 2018 after claiming the spoils for Oldfield Motorsport ahead of reigning Walter Hayes Trophy victor Chris Middlehurst, but with the latter likely to appeal the result.

Smith's path to the final had been one of controversy as early as the dry third heat, which he won having taken pole position in a wet qualifying. The former British GT driver, who only contested one FF1600 event this year in preparation for the Festival, initially lost the lead off the line to fellow front-row starter Jason Smyth as the pair began to gap the field.

But, when Smyth missed a gear change

into Clearways due to a problem with the gear linkage, Smith moved to the inside before edging his rival off into the gravel. The Van Diemen JL13 driver, who was sporting an homage livery to van Kouwen, was handed a one-place grid drop for the semi-final as punishment, demoting him to second, where he would eventually finish having recovered from as low as fourth at one stage.

Middlehurst's journey to the final had come via two victories, the Van Diemen LA10 driver edging Luke Cooper and Morgan Quinn in the second heat before dominating the second semi-final, which was held in possibly the wettest of the conditions on Sunday. Smyth, who recovered to second in the heat after his excursion, finished four seconds adrift.

It left Middlehurst on pole for the final followed by Team Dolan team-mates Jordan Kelly and Smyth. For Bernard Dolan's outfit, the weekend was ultimately a case of what could have been, with four of the squad's cars inside the top five on the grid for the final, Quinn finding himself fifth behind Smith.

Kelly, last year's National Formula Ford champion who had won both the opening heat and first semi-final comfortably, found himself in the lead coming out of Druids on the first lap.

Foster charged up from  
22nd before going off



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: GARY HAWKINS





Middlehurst (r) finished second but plans to appeal the result and Smith's victory

Middlehurst had run slightly wide in the wet conditions before slotting into second ahead of Smyth, and the recovering Smith, who had briefly dropped to fifth behind the fast-starting Cooper.

The complexion of the race then turned on its head approaching Clearways on the second lap, with Smyth diving to the inside of Middlehurst. The 18-year-old moved in front but clipped the rear of his team-mate Kelly ahead, which sent both of them spinning. "We're really good friends and he's the last person I would want this to happen to," said an apologetic Smyth.

With Middlehurst forced to check-up to avoid the melee ahead, Smith took the initiative and surged from fourth into a lead that, ultimately, he would not relinquish. Middlehurst maintained second from Hugh Esterson and Cooper, and kept the new leader in arm's reach during the opening half of proceedings, slowly reducing a gap that never exceeded one second.

The race's biggest threat began to materialise from behind, though, in the shape of Joey Foster. The two-time outright Festival winner in 2003 and 2017 had only started 22nd for the final, having found himself in the Clearways gravel during the semi-final after taking avoiding action.

The Firman driver had claimed fourth >>

## ROLLER COASTER WEEKEND FOR REIGNING WINNER



Rory Smith had to battle from the back in each race

Two-time Festival winner Rory Smith was left to rue a combination of bad luck and costly mistakes as he ultimately failed to become the first driver to win back-to-back events despite being one of the favourites.

The Medina Sport JL18 driver claimed pole for the opening heat in dominant fashion but disaster struck as he approached the grid before the race even began. "I was just getting some heat in the rear tyres and pulling up to the box on my last burnout when the driveshaft failed," he said. "It's never happened before, it was just a freak failure."

It meant he had no option but to pull off to the side of the track and watch as the other cars began the race without him, and he was forced to compete in the Progression race just a few hours later to stand any chance of racing on Sunday.

After starting 23rd and needing to finish as high up as possible to give himself a better grid position for Sunday's semi-final, he produced a stunning display to win the race in just 12 laps. Back in 22nd for the opening semi-final held in wet conditions, Smith showcased his prowess as one of the strongest drivers at the event as he made his way up to third and challenged eventual final winner, Josh Smith.

But a small lapse in concentration had dire consequences with just one corner remaining. "I was just trying to be sensible, I wasn't planning to do a crazy lunge [into Clearways] but he [Josh Smith] made a small mistake," said Rory Smith. "I thought, 'If I go to the outside and get good traction out of the last corner, I might be able to overtake'. I just misjudged it, dropped a wheel in the gravel, and was lucky to even get back on the track. I'm gutted."

Crossing the line in 13th meant he agonisingly missed out on automatically progressing to the final by one spot, and instead lined up on the front row for the eight-lap Last Chance race. It was a contest he dominated, giving himself a starting grid position of 25th for the final.

Despite having benefited from an incident-filled race with two safety cars on a wet track, he crossed the line in sixth place and was left to rue what could have been.

"We struggled a bit for pace, I think the track changed quite a bit [from earlier in the day]," he said. "We've got two nice laurels and two trophies in the back of the truck, so you'd think we've had a great weekend, but it doesn't feel like that."

**JACOB AWCOCK**



What could have been for Smith without car issue?



in the second heat after a broken front anti-roll bar left him just seventh in a wet qualifying but, after deciding to save his new set of tyres for the final, unlike most, Foster was on a charge. He moved into fifth at the expense of Quinn on lap nine on the outside line into Paddock Hill and passed Esterson, who had dropped behind Cooper, two tours later.

His progress was momentarily halted by the first of two safety cars, though, after fellow Firman driver Leanne McShane became stranded on the inside of Clearways. As Smith and Middlehurst pulled away at the restart on lap 15, Cooper was slow to react and was demoted immediately by Foster on his now favoured outside line into Paddock, performing the same move on Middlehurst just a tour later.

However, any assault on Smith had to wait, after Kelly found himself in the Paddock barrier at the top of the hill having gone off at high speed, but was unhurt. A second safety car was required, with six laps left after five tours were added to compensate for the time lost under both cautions.

Foster immediately launched his car to the outside of Smith at Paddock, but carrying too much speed into the bend meant he ran slightly wide and had to slot back in behind having shown his hand. "I knew I had to make it count," rued Foster.

He continued to probe at Smith's



Smyth and Smith nearly tangled in the heats

defences and, on lap 22, spied a gap on the outside into Clearways but one that began to diminish as Smith moved across, and Foster found himself in the gravel. After flooring the throttle so as not to get stuck, Foster rejoined into the path of Smyth, who had been running sixth after his earlier incident, and the collision sent both into the gravel and retirement.

With the stranded cars covered by local yellow flags for the remaining three laps, it meant a potential overtaking spot was off limits for Middlehurst, who was now back in second ahead of Cooper, Esterson and Quinn. With Smith covering the inside line into Paddock, the order remained the same until the chequered flag, at least on track.

"It seems like Josh ran Joey off the road – he did that a few times this weekend and

the clerk should look at that," said Middlehurst. The runner-up lobbied the officials to look into the incident, with a verdict of no further action, a view shared by the stewards four hours after the chequered flag, with it noted that Middlehurst "advised that he wished to take the matter to the National Court".

"I was just trying to make the car as wide as I could and I couldn't believe it when Joey came up behind, he had amazing pace," said Smith. "He was right behind me [into Clearways] and then he wasn't." When asked if he had made contact, he said: "Not at all, there's not a blemish on the car."

Team boss James Oldfield added: "I can't believe we've won it again, this was just an idea six months ago."

STEFAN MACKLEY

## HIGH, WIDE AND HANDSOME PROVES THE DIFFERENCE IN HISTORICS

Darwin Smith produced an incredible defensive display in treacherous conditions to claim victory in the Historic Final, beating Tom Hawkins by just over half a second after a race-long tussle.

As the lights blinked out, Smith shot off the line, jumping from third to first before the braking point of Paddock Hill Bend. Polesitter Tom McArthur looked to redeem himself after a poor

start and positioned himself on the outside but a lapse in concentration led to him skating off into the gravel, dropping down the order and eventually retiring later in the race.

After his storming start, Smith began to come under pressure from Hawkins, who had also charged up from fourth on the grid to slot into second by the end of the opening lap. Hawkins began to pile the pressure on

over the 15-lap affair, looking down the inside of Paddock Hill multiple times, but Smith was wise to his moves and placed his car perfectly to allow him to swoop back around into the lead each time.

Smith, who had even led the weekend's dry opening heat in his Van Diemen RF90 after a wet qualifying left him second on the grid, ran faultlessly to keep Hawkins's Swift SC95 at bay. "He was behind me from lap three and he never left," said an elated Smith (right) following his victory. "We kept the high, outside line [following testing] and it worked well today and kept him behind."

Further back, the battle for the final podium place was hotly contested between last year's Historic winner Richard Higgins and William Liston, the former having started second while the



latter had climbed from 11th.

As the pair shot up the hill towards Druids, Liston looked to the inside but, with Higgins not expecting a Van Diemen RF88 to come alongside, he turned in and the pair made contact. Higgins was sent into a spin as both came to a halt just off the racing line, allowing Samuel Harrison in a 1971 Elden to move ahead and complete the podium in his first weekend in the car.

JACOB AWCOCK



Smith soaked up all of Hawkins's pressure



## WEEKEND WINNERS



## FORMULA FORD FESTIVAL

**Heat 1** Jordan Kelly (Van Diemen RF06, above)

**Heat 2** Chris Middlehurst (Van Diemen LA10)

**Heat 3** Josh Smith (Van Diemen JL13)

**Progression race** Rory Smith (Medina Sport JL18)

**Semi-final 1** Jordan Kelly (Van Diemen RF06)

**Semi-final 2** Chris Middlehurst (Van Diemen LA10)

**Last Chance race** Rory Smith (Medina Sport JL18)

**Historic final** Darwin Smith (Van Diemen RF90)

**Final (25 laps) 1 Josh Smith (Van Diemen JL13, below);**

**2** Chris Middlehurst (Van Diemen LA10)

**+0.143s; 3** Luke Cooper (Swift SC20); **4** Hugh

**Esterson (Ray GR); 5** Morgan Quinn (Van Diemen

**RF99); 6** Rory Smith (Medina Sport JL18).

**Fastest lap** Joey Foster (Firman) 1m01.491s

**(70.71mph). Pole** Middlehurst. **Starters** 30.



## MAZDA MX-5 CLUBMAN

**Race 1** Jamie Turner

**Race 2** Chris Dawkins

## MAZDA MX-5 SUPERCUP

**Races 1, 2 & 3** Aidan Hills

## MAZDA MX-5 CHAMPIONSHIP

**Race 1** Luke Pullen

**Races 2 & 3** Thomas Langford

## CITYCAR CUP

**Race 1** Richard Jepp (Peugeot 107)

**Race 2** Christopher Mackenzie (Citroen C1)

## EVOLUTION TROPHY

**Race 1** Tony Absolom (VW Golf Mk2)

**Race 2** Adam Marshall (VW Golf Mk5 GTI, below)



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

## DESTINATION OF MAZDA CHAMPIONSHIPS DECIDED

Eight Mazda MX-5 races spanning three different categories formed the bulk of the supporting programme at this year's Formula Ford Festival, with the outcome of all the championship titles still to be decided. The hardest fought was for the original Mk1 cars, and a final race showdown ended with Thomas Langford clinching both race and title.

The first of the championships to be settled was the Clubman class, which was secured by Jonathan Greensmith in a last-race turnaround. He triumphed on a bad day for Paul Bateman, who brought a narrow points lead to Brands Hatch. The first race was a chaotic affair on a damp track and helped second-place finisher Greensmith to close the gap to Bateman. Restarted after a crash, it also marked Jamie Turner's first race win. Bateman's car was hit twice after a slow start as the full grid scrambled towards the first corner and damage meant he played no further part.

Chris Dawkins won race two with a bold lunge at Druids, but Greensmith in second had done more than enough to beat Bateman to the title. The erstwhile points leader started 30th in his repaired car but failed to make enough progress.

In a relatively dry Supercup opener, defending champion Aidan Hills drove a tactical race at the head of a frantic field to maintain his top spot. Patrick Fletcher, runner-up in the points, was also second in the race.

Hills still needed to survive Sunday's pair of contests to retain the title and he sealed it by heading Oliver Allwood and Fletcher in the morning. Hills shadowed Fletcher for a while and even fell to third but benefited when his rivals had separate moments. The newly crowned champion completed a winning treble in the finale from eighth on a partially reversed-grid.

In the Mk1 Championship, Langford and Adam Sparrow arrived on equal points and in Saturday's race they survived a multi-car crash at Clearways, which caused a stoppage. Sparrow finished second after the restart, with his rival



third following an eventful race. Luke Pullen, an outsider for the title at that stage, triumphed.

Helped by a new clutch and gearbox fitted overnight, victory and fastest lap for Langford in race two lifted him two points clear of Sparrow in the title chase. A seemingly inevitable red flag interrupted the decider and, after a safety car restart, Sparrow went for broke at Paddock Hill but succeeded only in firing his car into the gravel trap. He was, however, first on the scene to congratulate Langford when he finished a winning drive.

The first CityCar Cup flying lap produced four casualties at Paddock and a red flag. A couple of tours into the restart the safety car was needed and, soon after it withdrew, another multiple incident, this time out of Graham Hill Bend, caused another stoppage. A result was declared with Richard Jepp the winner, but second man Stuart Bliss had done enough to be crowned champion. Race two had an immediate red flag and another that ended things early again, as Chris Mackenzie won narrowly, while Bliss slipped to third from an early lead.

VW Golfs dominated a pair of Evolution Trophy races, both of which were restarted after red flags. Tony Absolom's V6-powered Mk2 narrowly beat Adam Marshall's Mk5 in race one, and the tables were turned second time out.

**BRIAN PHILLIPS**





# A successful pilot and a cracking quadruple win

**SILVERSTONE**  
MSVR/MRL  
19-20 OCTOBER

The pilot race for the new GT3 Legends series and a remarkable winning streak shared top billing as Motor Racing Legends signed off its 2024 season in style on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit last weekend.

Matt Holme and Andrew Jordan in an ex-Callaway Chevrolet Corvette took the maiden victory for a series that next year will cater for the earliest generations of GT3 machinery, from 2006 to 2015. Yes, such cars are now rightly considered 'historic'. Jordan's charge in the second half of the 50-minute race on Saturday afternoon proved decisive, his 'Vette demoting the Lamborghini Gallardo shared by Jack Tetley and Nick Maton in the final minutes before sprinting away to a comfortable victory. A soloing Marcus Oeynhausens-Sierstorpff in an Audi R8 was third having led the early stages.

"It was brilliant fun," said Jordan, whose upbeat assessment of the pilot race summed up positivity surrounding MRL's new venture (see News). "I haven't had that much fun in a racing car for a long time. I look forward to some more fun next year."

The Historic Touring Car Challenge kicked off the Saturday action, with another three-car fight offering a great spectacle on a wet but drying track. Jonathan Bailey, having taken over from Andy Middlehurst in the 'Green Beast' Nissan Skyline, had too much power for Darren Fielding's BMW after the E30 M3 had emerged from the pitstops with the lead. Early pacesetter Ric Wood "killed" his tyres and retired, which left Toby Partridge and tin-top legend Steve Soper to inherit the final podium spot in their M3.

The three-hour Royal Automobile Club Pall Mall Cup ran into a pretty sunset on



Saturday evening, as Harry Barton and Oliver Reuben won for a second year in succession in the former's TVR Griffith. Barton set a rapid pace in the opening stint to establish his lead, then executed a perfect strategy to take their victory. They stopped relatively early compared to some of their Lotus Elan rivals to take the five-minute refuelling stop. That knocked them down the order but, in the final hour, Reuben cycled back through to the lead.

On Sunday, Richard Colburn gave his gorgeous Beta Tools Alfasud Sprint a glorious debut in the Historic Racing Drivers Club Allstars thrash, leading son James in an older Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint. Then an amazing winning streak began.

"I'll see you at teatime," joked Nigel Greensall to partner John Spiers at lunch, ahead of them hopping from Shelby Cobra to Ford Capri to Lister Knobbly to Ford Mustang in four consecutive races. Remarkably, they won all of them.

First, the duo conquered MRL's hour-long Pre-'63 GT race. Howard Spooner took

pole in his Jaguar E-type, but was ganged up on by not one but two Cobras before a dreadful downpour led to a sensible safety car deployment. When the rain ceased and, having lost out to both, Spooner found himself back in the lead after the stops, but was powerless to prevent Greensall steaming past. But he just held off Patrick Blakeney-Edwards, sharing Gregor Fiskens AC Cobra, to keep second.

Spiers and Greensall were admittedly lucky in the HRDC Gerry Marshall Trophy. Jack Moody was dominant in his Daily Express Rover, only to forget to shut his door when hopping out and back in again at the mandatory pitstop. A drive-through penalty handed the win to Greensall in Spiers's Hermetite Capri.

The hat-trick followed in the Stirling Moss and Woodcote Trophy. Spiers built a lead in his Lister Knobbly, then handed over to Greensall during a safety car interlude, Nigel completing the job without drama. The Lister Costin Chevrolet of Nick Jarvis and Scott Malvern might have made them sweat. But Jarvis spun on the opening lap and chose not to pit during the safety car, leaving Malvern with too much work. He charged to second and set fastest lap, but finished more than 40 seconds down.

The dynamic duo then completed their amazing quadruple in the Jack Sears Trophy, prevailing in a terrific three-way Mustang battle over Jack Ruddell and Matt Johnson/Robert Ross. "I'd like to thank the three teams that ran our four cars, which ran faultlessly," said Spiers. "That's not easy to achieve. It's a brilliant end to the season. Just a shame we have to wait five months before it kicks off again."

**DAMIEN SMITH**







**PERFECT PORSCHE** Said to be the 2010 British GT championship-winning car run by Trackspeed and driven by David Ashburn, this Porsche 997 was updated by Gregor Fiskien. “It was then bought by Andre Bezuidenhout, whose father was a great friend of David Piper,” said current owner Paul Phillips, who shared the car at Silverstone with Nigel Greensall. The Perfect Circle livery and green flash are a nod to Piper, whose Porsche 917 wore these colours to victory in the 1969 Kyalami 9 Hours.



**CALLAWAY CORVETTE** Run by Callaway, this 'Vette won the ADAC GT title in 2013 in the hands of Diego Alessi and Daniel Keilwitz, while Oliver Gavin also scored two wins in it in 2014. It was later sold to Norway, then JRT brought it to the UK this year. Following a Spa 24 Hours support race appearance, the MRL meeting marked its British debut. “We got a base set-up from Callaway for Spa, we’ve made one click on the damping since we’ve had it and that’s it – unusual for me!” said Andrew Jordan.



**MIGHTY MORGAN** This Morgan is one of two cars that scored shock wins in the European GT3 season double-header at Silverstone in 2009. Current owner Roger Whiteside, who shared the car last weekend with Harry Barton, bought the Aero Supersport and its prototype from the Morgan museum. After writing off the prototype, Whiteside transferred this car to his Chevron B8 preparer, Simon Pragnell at Foxcraft Racing. Whiteside plans to run the car in MRL’s new GT3 series next year.

## WEEKEND WINNERS

### GT3 LEGENDS

Matt Holme/Andrew Jordan (Chevrolet Corvette)

### HISTORIC TOURING CAR CHALLENGE

Andy Middlehurst/Jonathan Bailey  
(Nissan Skyline GT-R)

### RAC PALL MALL CUP

Harry Barton/Oliver Reuben (TVR Griffith, below)

### HRDC ALLSTARS & CLASSIC ALFA CHALLENGE

Richard Colburn (Alfa Romeo Alfasud Sprint)

### PRE-’63 GT

John Spiers/Nigel Greensall (Shelby Cobra)

### HRDC GERRY MARSHALL TROPHY

John Spiers/Nigel Greensall (Ford Capri)

### RAC STIRLING MOSS AND WOODCOTE TROPHY

John Spiers/Nigel Greensall  
(Lister-Jaguar Knobbly)


### HRDC JACK SEARS TROPHY

John Spiers/Nigel Greensall (Ford Mustang)



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





Johnson's  
Europa charged  
up to Pickering's  
Sunbeam in  
Swinging Sixties

## Tiger just outruns Lotus to secure Pickering gold

**OULTON PARK  
CSCC  
19 OCTOBER**

The Swinging Sixties contest came down to a fascinating scrabble for position between Stephen Pickering's Sunbeam Tiger and Malcolm Johnson's Lotus Europa as the Classic Sports Car Club season concluded at Oulton Park last weekend.

Pickering managed to overcome a 20-second pitstop penalty by stopping during a safety car period for the retrieval of Nicholas King's Aston Martin DB4.

Johnson, who was in the faster car overall and feeling confident, had already pitted when the incident occurred. He fought hard to regain the lead he earned before the stops and also had to contend with obstruction by a backmarker, gaining over 7s on the final lap to close the gap to Pickering to under 2s, but had to settle for the runner-up spot. Connor Kay was third in an MG Midget, having qualified on pole. He made up a lot of ground later on after losing out to quicker cars whose drivers made better tyre choices for the race itself.

Tyre choice played a major part in the

first BMW, Slicks and Open race, as qualifying had been on a wet track and the sun had since emerged. Nathan Wells quickly built up an unassailable lead in his BMW M3, although he was aided by a safety car that did not collect him while Stuart Amphlett's BMW bumper was retrieved. Leading Open driver Stephen Nuttall benefited from dry tyres in the second half of the race, finishing second, ahead of Slicks winner Dominic Malone's Porsche, whose rubber also came into its own.

Race two took place on a fully dry track and it was Nuttall who was unstoppable

## More Fiesta success for Kelletts

**MONDELLO PARK  
MPSC  
19-20 OCTOBER**


A week after his father Alastair won the UK Ford Fiesta ST240 title, William Kellett clinched the ultra-competitive Fiesta Zetec crown in the best possible fashion, by winning both races at the Mondello Park finale.

Kellett fought off a series of opponents to take the flag in an exciting opening contest by half a second. The second race, if anything, was even more of a thriller. Starting sixth, Kellett forged his way to the front and managed to hold off a strong challenge from championship rival Sean McGovern to take an impressive double win and, with it, his second Zetec title.

Driving his father's Dallara World Series machine, Darragh Daly charged to the front of a small BOSS Ireland grid to take a popular victory. Having fallen to

Daly, poleman Michael Connolly was also unable to hold off a late-race attack from Kian O'Brien, the Dallara-VW proving more nimble than the larger machines around the Mondello National circuit. Connolly looked far more assured in race two, but finally Daly found a way past, leading briefly before heading to the pitlane with mechanical woe. This handed Connolly the lead but he reeled off the final lap with one eye on the mirrors as O'Brien put on another late charge, although he ultimately had to be happy with second again.

Leo Richardson drove well to take the honours in the first Junior Mini Challenge race, despite huge pressure from Joshua Henry for the duration. Jack Fildes completed the podium having charged up from a lowly grid position. Henry then pipped Richardson off the line in the sequel and eased away for the win, clinching the title in the process. Logan Hoey followed him home, while the impressive Fildes once again scythed



Double win sealed Kellett  
Fiesta honours in style

his way through the pack to take third.

Already crowned as the champion, Michael Cullen blasted away from the Irish Strykers grid, seemingly headed for another dominant victory. In the closing stages, he slowed right down, but was still capable of holding Kevin McGrath at bay for the win. Cullen did it again in race two, crossing the line well ahead of the rest.

Cullen enjoyed further success in the Fiesta ST opener to take yet another win in a race that was restarted after a first-corner shunt. Class newbie Jack Connachy was second, with Derek Graham driving





Wells enjoyed two victories in Cheshire

STEVE JONES

this time, despite having spent the morning dealing with multiple electrical problems with his Caterham and starting far behind the BMW field. Malone was second, while BMW winner James Card was fourth in his M3. Wells had to retire after contact with Niall Bradley damaged the rear of his car.

But Wells was the winner of a somewhat chaotic New Millennium encounter, which was red flagged on the opening lap after a three-car scramble into Cascades ended up with Paul McGuinness's Abarth 500 upside down. Luke Yeomans in another BMW M3 was second in the restarted race, having made up enough time to take advantage of a short pitstop penalty for the similar car of Mark Smith and Arran Moulton-Smith.

The Future/Modern Classics race, run in dusk conditions, was also rather disjointed, although two of the three caution periods were due to cars breaking down, rather than crashing. Aidan Farrell and Porsche

preparer Richard Chamberlain held on for the win in their 911, as the red flag came out when Stuart Daburn's rapid TVR Tuscan got stuck in the Old Hall gravel when he had been running third. Russell and Elliot Paterson's Morgan was also impressive, leading early on before sealing second.

Steve Simpson's yellow Peugeot 206 took him to another Tin Tops win, but only after edging a race-long tussle with Adam Brown in his Fiesta. The Ford proved the better car to have during the damp qualifying session and Brown made the most of his pole position, holding off the more powerful 206 for several laps. The familiar Honda Integra of Nigel Ainge and Danny Cassar was not with them, having limped into the pits on the opening tour.

Elsewhere, Magnificent Sevens went the way of John Cutmore's Spire, which has been the car to beat all season.

**RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER**



Daly was a popular winner in BOSS Ireland opener

MICHAEL CHESTER

superbly to complete the podium. Points leader Ross Barnes led away in the second race, but an on-form Graham was soon past and away for his first ST win. Cullen was second at the flag, with Darragh McMullen third, but fifth was enough for Barnes to clinch his first title.

Scott Jackson was the driver to beat in Irish Legends, taking two strong wins, but Lee Malone was first across the line in race three, from Owen Lawlor and Gordon Brown.

Despite running a lower power ECU, courtesy of his pole position, Paul Parr

ran away and hid from his SEAT Supercup competitors in the early stages of their first race. Unfortunately for him, the red flags flew following an incident and, on the restart, he was outdragged by Dave Maguire. Parr was subsequently demoted again by the charging Paul O'Brien and, to add insult to injury, was later given a 10s penalty for a jump start, which dropped him to fifth. Stephen Wright took race two, from Parr and Maguire, who also clinched the championship.

**LEO NULTY**

## WEEKEND WINNERS



STEVE JONES

### OULTON PARK

#### SWINGING SIXTIES

Stephen Pickering (Sunbeam Tiger)

#### RAMAIR BMW/SLICKS SERIES/OPEN SERIES

**Race 1** Nathan Wells (BMW M3 E46 GTR)

**Race 2** Stephen Nuttall (Caterham Seven)

#### NEW MILLENNIUM & TURBO TIN TOPS

Nathan Wells (BMW M3 E46 GTR)

#### MODERN CLASSICS & FUTURE CLASSICS

Aidan Farrell/Richard Chamberlain (Porsche 911, above)

#### TIN TOPS

Steve Simpson (Peugeot 206 RC)

#### MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

John Cutmore (Spire RB7)

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

### MONDELLO PARK

#### FIESTA ZETEC

**Races 1 & 2** William Kellett

#### FORMULA BOSS IRELAND

**Race 1** Darragh Daly (Renault World Series)

**Race 2** Michael Connolly (Renault World Series)

#### JUNIOR MINI CHALLENGE

**Race 1** Leo Richardson

**Race 2** Joshua Henry

#### IRISH STRYKERS

**Races 1 & 2** Michael Cullen

#### FIESTA ST

**Race 1** Michael Cullen

**Race 2** Derek Graham

#### IRISH LEGENDS

**Races 1 & 2** Scott Jackson (below)

**Race 3** Lee Malone

#### SEAT SUPERCUP IRELAND

**Race 1** Dave Maguire

**Race 2** Stephen Wright



MICHAEL CHESTER

**For full results visit: [timing.ie](http://timing.ie)**



## Steiner spills the beans in new memoir



**BOOK REVIEW**  
**GUENTER STEINER**  
**– UNFILTERED**  
 Guenter Steiner  
 RRP £22.00

*Unfiltered* by name, unfiltered by nature. Guenter Steiner concedes he has never

been one to do things the traditional way and this memoir of his time with Haas follows that methodology, spilling more beans than is polite and using more colourful language than a Mike Bassett team talk.

From the formation of his initial idea for Haas to the conclusion of his time with the team – via a brief stroking of Eddie Irvine's ego – Steiner is his inimitable self throughout as he tells a story that seems fresh despite it being one that fans have watched play out in the very recent past.

For fans who have joined the F1 party in recent years, Steiner is simply the potty-mouthed leader of the Haas team who seems to feature on *Drive to Survive* more than even most drivers due to his distinctive character. But his involvement

in motorsport stretches far back beyond Haas, with his career really getting going in rallying in the late-1980s.

It is this longevity that is crucial to the early stages of what reads very much like a first-person storybook, with Steiner portraying himself as a fallible protagonist. And while it isn't an entirely black-and-white matter, team owner Gene Haas is cast as the antagonist of the piece – despite appearing a hero in the early stages.

It is the evolution of this relationship that really keeps the pages turning, with

significant developments each time the American is mentioned.

Yet reading *Unfiltered* in order on the first attempt is a difficult challenge, as those familiar with Steiner's story will want to leap to certain controversies or incidents. The aptly titled 'Hasta la Vista, Baby' closing chapter was where this writer started, as the full account of his departure from Haas is recounted.

Then there is 2021, with Nikita Mazepin's on- and off-track behaviour and a livery clearly inspired by the Russian flag. This



Steiner is famous for letting the expletives fly

GIBBONS/MOTORSPORTIMAGES



Known for  
straight talking,  
Steiner is true to  
form in this book.  
Diplomacy is in  
short supply

byGram  
F1 TEAM

HONE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

all preceded the events of early 2022 in Ukraine, which saw Mazepin and Uralkali's relationship with Haas abruptly end.

Although some of these topics were covered in Steiner's previous book, they are dealt with in more of a reflective way this time around, with considered thoughts offered rather than heat-of-the-moment reactions. What this new perspective allows Steiner is the opportunity to focus on the issues that had the most impact on the long-term success of the team, while giving smaller topics only a passing mention.

What makes this book so enjoyable is that you can only read it with the voice of the former Haas team principal running through your head. Far removed from the shackles of a race weekend and the responsibilities of putting the team first, Steiner is even more *Unfiltered* here than he was in the garage. Only on a couple of occasions does he say that he can't reveal certain names or details.

Whisper it quietly, but Christmas is beginning to approach and, if you're a Formula 1 fan, this book is something that we would totally recommend putting on your list to Santa.

**SAM HALL**



[youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom](https://youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom)



### Why Verstappen's move on Norris is more controversial than it seems – F1 US GP race reaction

Ferrari dominated in the USA, with Charles Leclerc leading a 1-2. The incident between Max Verstappen and Lando Norris was also a big talking point. Alex Kalinauckas and Mark Mann-Bryans caught up in the paddock after the race to chew over this year's US GP.



## WHAT'S ON

### INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

#### Mexican Grand Prix F1 World Championship Round 20/24

Mexico City, Mexico

**25-27 October**

**TV Live**

Sky Sports F1, Sun 1955

**TV Highlights**

Sky Sports F1, Sun 2300,  
Channel 4, Mon 0030

#### Thailand MotoGP Round 18/20

Buriram, Thailand

**25-27 October**

**TV Live**

BT Sport 2, Sun 0715

**TV Highlights**

ITV4, Mon 2000

#### NASCAR Cup Round 34/36

Homestead, USA

**27 October**

**TV Live** Premier Sports 2,  
Sun 1800

#### NASCAR Xfinity

Round 31/33

Homestead, USA

**26 October**

**TV Live** Premier Sports  
streaming, Sat 1930

#### NASCAR Trucks Series

Round 21/23

Homestead, USA

**26 October**

**TV Live** Premier Sports  
streaming, Sat 1630

#### Australian Supercars

Round 11/12

Surfers Paradise, Australia

**26-27 October**

**TV Live** BT Sport 3, Sat 0630,  
BT Sport 4, Sun 0400

#### Formula Regional European by Alpine

Round 10/10

Monza, Italy

**26-27 October**

**Livestream** YouTube

#### Brazilian Stock Cars

Round 10/12

El Pinar, Uruguay

**27 October**

**Livestream** on  
Motorsport.tv, Sat 1800,  
Sun 1500

### UK MOTORSPORT

#### Oulton Park BRSCC

**26 October**

Fiesta ST150, Fun Cup,  
Zeo Prototype Series

#### Silverstone 750MC

**26 October**

Birkett Six-Hour Relay

**Livestream** via  
[alphalive.co.uk](https://alphalive.co.uk)

#### Brands Hatch MSVR

**26-27 October**

Clio Cup GB, EnduroKa,  
Miata Trophy, MSVT  
Trackday Championship,  
MSVT Trackday Trophy

#### Silverstone 750MC

**27 October**

BMW Car Club, Clio Sport,  
Hot Hatch, Ma7da,  
Type R Trophy  
**Livestream** via  
[alphalive.co.uk](https://alphalive.co.uk)

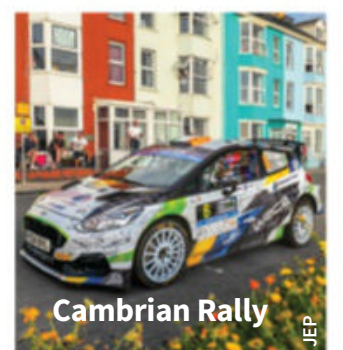
#### Cambrian Rally

British Rally Championship

**Round 6/6**

Llandudno, Wales

**26 October**











SCHLEGELMILCH



#### FROM THE ARCHIVE

World championship leader Graham Hill awaits the start of the 1968 French Grand Prix from his ninth-place grid slot at Rouen-les-Essarts, the spots of rain visible on his Lotus indicating that the dry running enjoyed by the earlier support races was definitely not going to extend to the day's main event. Hill and teammate Jackie Oliver had spent much of practice trimming back their rear wings, which at one point were exerting so much pressure that they were almost lifting the front wheels off the ground. After trying the car with and without its aerodynamic appendage in Sunday morning's impromptu, untimed practice session, Hill picked the former option for the race, and was in a comfortable fourth position when a broken driveshaft forced him to retire. A particular beneficiary of his exit was Jo Siffert, who pulled over next to where Hill had parked up so he could borrow his visor. While Jacky Ickx drove brilliantly to score his maiden grand prix win for Ferrari, the event is remembered chiefly for the appalling lap-three accident that claimed the life of Honda driver Jo Schlesser.

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## Skoda Octavia WRC Evo2

McKLEIN

**I**t would be all too easy for Armin Schwarz to pick the Toyota Celica GT-Four as his favourite car. After all, from a career that graced the World Rally Championship podium with four different manufacturers, it was in the Group A car on the 1991 Rally Catalunya that he scored his only WRC victory.

Yet the machine the German selects instead never won a WRC event. A third place on the 2001 Safari Rally may have been the Skoda Octavia's best WRC result, but Schwarz enjoyed rallying it more regardless. He's adamant that a podium would have been possible on the Monte Carlo Rally too, had it not been for the snowy conditions that had blighted much of the event giving way to increasingly dry asphalt on the final day.

At Toyota, Schwarz had been cast in a supporting role to Carlos Sainz, but upon joining Skoda in 1999 to lead the original Octavia's development there was no question he was the number one driver.

Although the Evo2 version that arrived in 2000 was still underpowered and "never was rated a potential winner", its long wheelbase made handling a strong suit and its durability meant that on "the tough rallies, the car was really good" too. Now 61, Schwarz observes that "compared to a Peugeot, a Citroen or a Subaru, it was a quite easy car to drive".



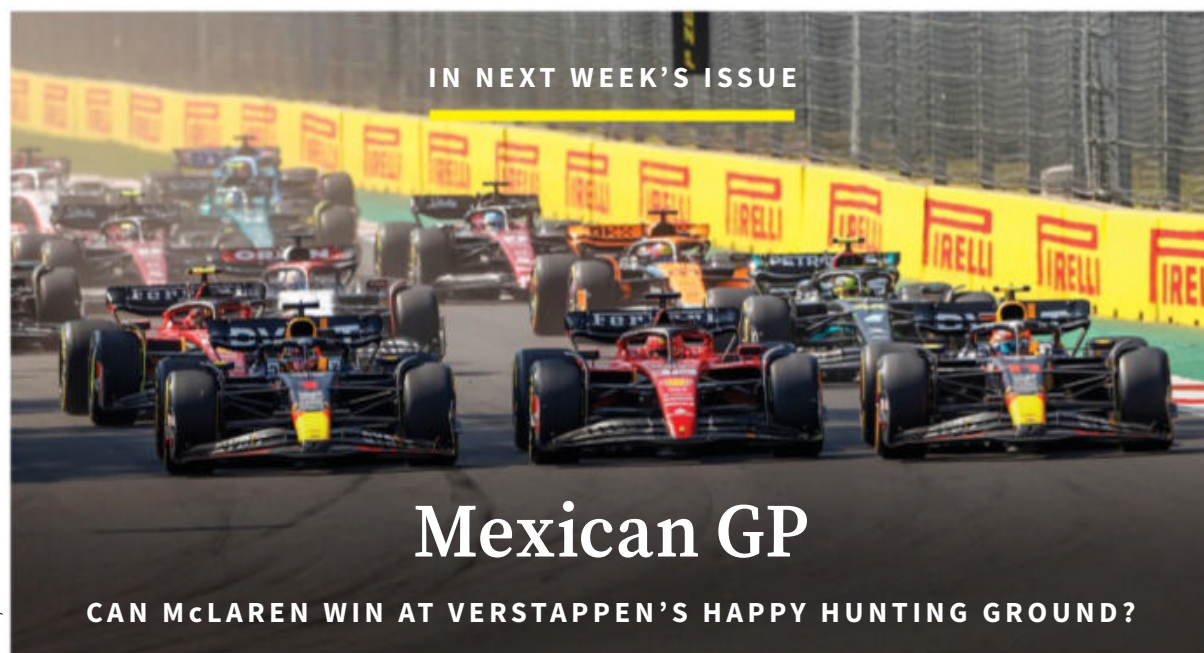
Schwarz had delivered Skoda's first-ever fastest stage time on Rally Catalunya in 2000 in "really bad weather", which he reckons was an indicator of what would follow on the 2001 Monte. "It was giving you a lot of trust in difficult conditions," he says.

And there could be few environments tougher than Kenya. Schwarz says his ploy of pushing from the Safari's 73-mile first stage, the first time a Skoda had ever led a WRC event, succeeded in putting rivals under pressure.

"That was the key to speed everybody up and more or less almost everybody ran into a big problem," Schwarz remembers. "We had a couple of smaller problems, but we kept it very linear until the end."

"I did all the development tests, there was a lot of trust on my shoulder. It was for me a chance that I took in 2001."

**JAMES NEWBOLD**



IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

## Mexican GP

CAN McLAREN WIN AT VERSTAPPEN'S HAPPY HUNTING GROUND?

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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd, 2 Stephen Street, London W1T 1AN, United Kingdom. Air freight and mailing in the USA by World Container Inc., 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records maintained at Motorsport Network Media UK Ltd, 2 Stephen Street, London W1T 1AN. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. Postmaster: Send address changes to Autosport, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc., 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

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London, EC1A 9PT.

**Tel:** +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.

Printed by William Gibbons

& Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary

Road, Willenhall,

Wolverhampton WV13 3XT.

ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport

is published weekly by

Motorsport Network Media

UK Ltd, 2 Stephen Street,

London W1T 1AN.

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Trading as Motorsport

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Publishing, trade and further

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