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Commanding Norris helps McLaren ends its long wait

When McLaren took its eighth Formula 1 constructors' title, the cars were silver, Ron Dennis was still at the helm and Lando Norris hadn't been born. It's been a long wait for the second-most successful team in championship history, and there was a feel-good factor to McLaren clinching its ninth crown in Abu Dhabi last weekend.

Zak Brown's squad has been through an impressive transformation and the pace of the MCL38 since May's Miami Grand Prix has made the season more interesting than anyone expected. Congratulations to McLaren - and Ferrari for coming close to ending its own long wait.

The way Norris absorbed pressure to win the season finale and clinch McLaren's prize (page 16) indicates he is ready to fight Max Verstappen for the drivers' championship from the off in 2025. Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes farewell was also suitably impressive on Sunday, boding well for his move to Ferrari. If the four top teams can all be in the mix next season, then 2025 can't come soon enough - though be sure to look out for our 2024 F1 review with our bumper Christmas double issue next week (19/26 December).

The 2024-25 Formula E season kicked off in dramatic style in Brazil last weekend. Stefan Mackley was there to see Mitch Evans go from last to first (p32), while Gary Watkins brings you the latest from the Hyundai World Endurance launch (p38). Tom Howard describes Thierry Neuville's rough road to the 2024 World Rally crown in our season review (p44) and Stephen Lickorish celebrates a decade in the TOCA paddock by picking out his 10 best drivers (p64).

















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Cover image Zak Mauger/Motorsport Images

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PIT + PADDOCK

Perez tipped for exit as Lawson and Tsunoda wait

FORMULA 1

The Formula 1 paddock was still waiting to learn of the fate of Sergio Perez as Autosport went to press, in the wake of Red Bull crunch talks following last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix to determine its 2025 driver line-ups.

Perez signed a two-year contract extension earlier this year but, as is well documented, his enduring struggles in the RB20 alongside Max Verstappen have made Red Bull think twice on keeping the 34-year-old in the car. While Perez is well-liked and is also well-supported by Mexican backers, his alarming form has led to Red Bull slumping to third in the 2024 constructors' championship, which not only reduced Red Bull's prize money but has also impacted staff bonuses.

Red Bull held talks on Monday to make a final decision over its four-car line-up across Red Bull Racing and RB. But while a formal decision could be delayed further, all signs point towards Red Bull having made the decision to come to a financial settlement with Perez to cut him loose.

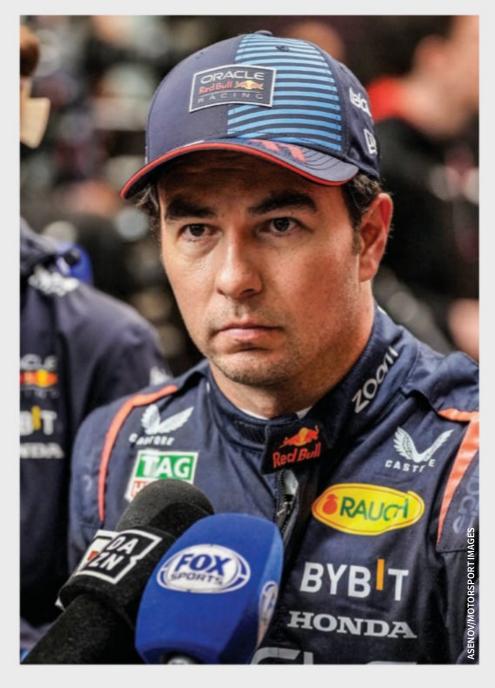
Team principal Christian Horner said over the weekend that the team would discuss the best way forward with its shareholders and with Perez. "Obviously those discussions will happen between Checo and the team," he said. "Now we have got the season out of the way, we'll sit down with him and reflect on the season – and obviously where it's gone wrong – and collectively work out what is the right and the appropriate way forward."

Red Bull was initially interested in Williams stand-in Franco Colapinto, but a tougher spell featuring several costly crashes has cooled the team's interest in meeting Williams's asking price. Instead the team is likely to turn to its own driver pool and decide between RB drivers Liam Lawson and Yuki Tsunoda.

Tsunoda has the benefit of four years' F1 experience with Red Bull's satellite team, but it is understood that Red Bull believes Lawson to be a much better fit to handle the pressures of fighting on F1's frontlines alongside Verstappen. Tsunoda has generally had a slight edge over the New Zealander on outright pace in their 11 grands prix together, but Lawson is seen as a safer bet to thrive in what has proved a tough environment for other drivers, with the team impressed by his attitude, calmness and technical feedback.

Both drivers were pressed into action on Tuesday during F1's post-season test at the Yas Marina circuit, with Tsunoda getting his





first proper run in a Red Bull F1 car while Lawson completed the Pirelli tyre test day for his current RB team. Red Bull junior and F2 runner-up Isack Hadjar and Super Formula driver Ayumu Iwasa also took part, with Frenchman Hadjar the favourite to fill the seat at RB vacated by either Lawson or Tsunoda.

Horner was keenly aware of the need to have a solid, regular points scorer as Verstappen's team-mate, with 2024 constructors' world champion McLaren as well as Ferrari both fielding evenly matched drivers. Verstappen won the title with 437 points, while Perez only managed 152 and finished eighth in the standings. Red Bull ended up 77 points shy of McLaren in the constructors' championship, and 63 adrift of Ferrari.

"I think you can see the importance of having two drivers scoring on a regular basis in the constructors' championship," Horner acknowledged. "It is crucial. Ferrari will be strong with their line-up next year [when Lewis Hamilton joins Charles Leclerc]. McLaren have a strong line-up [Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri]. Mercedes will have an inexperienced driver [Andrea Kimi Antonelli alongside George Russell] in one of their seats. So for our team, it's very important that both of our drivers are delivering, and there's not a significant gap."

Speaking in Abu Dhabi, where he retired with a clutch failure, Perez was adamant that he would see out his contract and remain with Red Bull. But after the race he altered his stance and admitted for the first time that his future was not totally settled.

"Well, at the moment, I don't know," he said. "I just know I've got a contract to race next year. Unless something changes in the coming days, that's going to be the situation for next year. We're going to be talking in a couple of days. We will discuss what is the situation for both parties and see if we're able to reach an agreement. Like I say, I've got a contract for next year."

JONATHAN NOBLE & FILIP CLEEREN

After last winter's non-event of a silly season, the post-season test at Abu Dhabi on Tuesday of this week gave F1 aficionados their first glimpses of the new driver/team combinations for 2025. And luckily, our friends at Motorsport Images got these photos through in time for us to go to press.



SAINZ OF THE (TOP OF THE) TIMES Ferrari refugee Carlos Sainz sported an incognito white lid for his first run-out at his new home at Williams. The Spaniard put the Mercedes-powered machine fastest in the morning session, a mere 0.126 seconds clear of ex-team-mate Charles Leclerc.



MERCEDES' GREAT HOPE Andrea Kimi Antonelli was still suffering from the illness that sidelined him from the F2 finale, so Frederik Vesti filled in for the morning running. But the Italian was in the pit garage making himself comfortable before a planned run in the afternoon.



...AND SAUBER'S GREAT HOPE The helmet colours give away the fact that F1 finally has a Brazilian back on the grid. Just two days after clinching the F2 title on the Yas Marina circuit, Gabriel Bortoleto got down to work in his new environment with the Sauber squad.



HONDA ACCORD? After four years with the team currently known as RB, Yuki Tsunoda's first test with Red Bull came at the behest of engine supplier Honda. But with the unfolding situation at the senior team (see left), it was also effectively an audition for a promotion.



NORMANDY'S AMERICAN LANDING Esteban Ocon even missed the final GP with Alpine so that the Northern Frenchman could get his first test with Haas on Tuesday. He propped up the times during the morning session, so was likely settling in and not on performance runs.

Le Mans splits classes in qualifying tweaks

LE MANS 24 HOURS

The Le Mans 24 Hours will have a new qualifying system for 2025. An extra round of Hyperpole sessions has been added on the Thursday evening and, crucially, the Hypercar class cars will be on their own on track throughout the procedure.

Previously the fastest eight cars from each of the three categories went through from a one-hour session on Wednesday evening to 30 minutes of Hyperpole qualifying the following day. Now a larger number will progress: 12 LMP2s and LMGT3s from one half-hour session, and 15 Hypercars from another.

Hyperpole on day two of track running in Le Mans week will now comprise H1 and H2 of 20 and 15 minutes' duration respectively for both sets of cars. The fastest eight cars from each of the LMP2 and LMGT3 classes in H1 will go on into H2, while in Hypercar the quickest 10 will go to the final shootout.

The move, said race organiser and WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, "will offer competitors and spectators an ever more spectacular experience". And it should also banish the age old excuse about 'traffic in the Porsche Curves' to the history books. A Hypercar driver on his quick lap can no longer be baulked by a car from one of the other classes.

Hyperpole was introduced at Le Mans in 2020 and a variation thereof came on stream over the rest of the WEC season this year.

Entries for Le Mans opened last week, with the full entry to come after the conclusion of the Asian Le Mans Series (see p9) in mid-February.

GARY WATKINS



Bruni reaches the end of the road with Porsche

WEC

Four-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner Gianmaria Bruni is leaving Porsche's factory roster after eight seasons. The departure of the Italian passed without fanfare when the German manufacturer published its full list of drivers last weekend – with his name missing.

There was no place for Bruni as a full factory driver, nor as one of its so-called

contracted drivers, who do not have the same works status. It brought the curtain down on a stint that included his fourth Le Mans class win, in GTE Pro, in 2022 with the factory Manthey team.

Bruni (below) was a big-money signing by Porsche from Ferrari ahead of the 2017 season, but he failed to go on to match his successes with the Italian marque. He took a pair of World Endurance Championship class titles driving Ferraris in 2013 and 2014 as the kingpin of its GT programme, but never finished better than third in GTE Pro with Porsche.

The 43-year-old leaves Porsche after two seasons in which he did not have a factory seat after the end of GTE Pro at the conclusion of the 2022 season. Instead, he was placed with the Proton Competition squad racing its customer Porsche 963 LMDhs in WEC and, in 2024, the IMSA SportsCar Championship. He also took the GTE title in the European Le Mans Series with the German team in 2022.

With the departure of Bruni, Andre Lotterer, Frederic Makowiecki and Dane Cameron, Porsche now has a reduced squad of 14 factory pilots. Julien Andlauer has joined it from the contracted list after his promotion to the Porsche Penske Motorsport 963 operation. Nico Muller, who was announced back in August, is the other addition: the Swiss is racing for the Andretti squad, which uses the Porsche powertrain, in Formula E in 2024-25.







FORMULA 1 Fittipaldi, Scheckter, Schumacher... The Leclerc brothers joined an exclusive club in Abu Dhabi last weekend when they both took part in a grand prix race weekend. Arthur Leclerc, younger brother of Charles and this season's Italian GT Endurance co-champion, replaced Carlos Sainz at Ferrari for FP1. But Leclerc Sr was worried that he wouldn't drive due to sickness and then a battery problem. "I got food poisoning and I couldn't sleep all night," said Charles. "But obviously the huge motivation of the day was doing FP1 with my brother. This was a dream that came true, for all of our family that travelled from Monaco to see that." **Photo by Sutton/Motorsport Images**

Fourmaux joins Hyundai line-up

WRC

Adrien Fourmaux has joined Hyundai to pilot its third entry on a full-time basis in the World Rally Championship next year.

The five-time WRC podium finisher had been expected for several months to leave M-Sport Ford to join the South Korean marque. With co-driver Alex Coria, he signed off their five-year stint with M-Sport by winning the Masters Show at last weekend's WRC celebration at Monza.

Fourmaux and Coria now join an experienced driver line-up at Hyundai that includes newly crowned world champion Thierry Neuville and 2019 title winner Ott Tanak. It represents a change in strategy for the third car from Hyundai, which narrowly lost the manufacturers' title to Toyota this year. Traditionally the seat has been shared across multiple crews, with Esapekka Lappi, Dani Sordo and Andreas Mikkelsen all contesting part-time programmes this year. Hyundai has refused to rule out drives for the trio should it expand to four cars in 2025.

"As a driver, you're always looking to grow and push yourself, and this feels like the right step at the right time," said Fourmaux, who will drive an i20 N Rally1 car on this weekend's Rallye National



Hivernal du Devoluy in France, where he comes up against Toyota's Kalle Rovanpera.

Hyundai will begin next season with its 2024 car rather than run its heavily revised 2025 challenger on the Monte Carlo Rally. "That event is a very special challenge and it is not won on pure outright pace, so we think it is better to keep on using the car that we understand and know how to set up," said team principal Cyril Abiteboul.

Oliver Solberg has ruled himself out of the seat at M-Sport by joining Printsport to drive a Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 in WRC2. TOM HOWARD

P44 WRC SEASON REVIEW

CAREY GRANTED NEW ROLE

Ex-Formula 1 CEO Chase Carey has returned to series owner Liberty Media. Carey stepped down from the CEO role ahead of the 2021 season, passing the baton to former Ferrari team boss Stefano Domenicali, and remained a chairman until 2022. The 71-year-old will serve on the executive committee of Liberty's board, although Autosport understands that he won't be actively involved on a day-to-day basis in the running of the series, which remains Domenicali's remit.

HOST OF F2 SIGNINGS

As well as Luke Browning and Dino Beganovic at Hitech (see p8), a host of new recruits for the 2025 Formula 2 season have been named in the past few days. Most notably, Alpine junior Gabriele Mini remains with Prema Racing for his graduation after finishing as F3 runner-up this season. Red Bull protege Oliver Goethe has parlayed his late-season F2 outings with MP Motorsport into a full campaign; ditto Max Esterson with Trident, where he is joined by the Italian team's F3 racer Sami Meguetounif. Toyota starlet Ritomo Miyata has switched to ART Grand Prix, and Roman Stanek has gone to Invicta Racing, from whence Kush Maini is on his way to DAMS.

WILLIAMS JUNIOR UP TO F3

Meanwhile, one step down in the world of F3, next season's grid now has yet another graduate of the Formula Regional European class of 2024, with Williams junior Alessandro Giusti joining MP Motorsport for his rookie campaign in the series. Hitech GP has completed its line-up with Josh Dufek.

LOWDOWN ON LOWDON

Cadillac has named Graeme Lowdon as team principal ahead of its F1 entry in 2026. Lowdon (below), who formerly served as CEO for the Manor F1 squad, has been given the role after helping lay the foundations of the team. The 59-year-old Briton was part of the previously unsuccessful bid between GM and Andretti F1.



Magnussen joins BMW Hypercar line-up

WEC/IMSA

Kevin Magnussen has decided that he wants to be a sportscar driver after all. Nearly three years after he jumped ship from Peugeot's nascent World Endurance Championship squad to rejoin Haas in Formula 1, the Dane has been announced as a driver for BMW's LMDh programme.

The German manufacturer took the wraps off
Magnussen's signing last
week. What it has yet to
reveal is whether he will
be racing in the WEC with
WRT or the IMSA SportsCar
Championship with the Rahal
team. So far we only know
that he will race a BMW M
Hybrid V8 for the first time
at the Daytona 24 Hours
season-opener in January.

"After 10 years in F1, I am embarking on a new and exciting chapter, and I look forward to taking on the challenge in the most innovative and advanced sportscars in the history of endurance racing," said the 32-year-old, echoing the words he used while wearing Peugeot kit early in 2022.

The 2013 Formula Renault 3.5 title winner signed to race for Peugeot after his first stint at Haas came to an end following the 2020 season: the deal was announced in February 2021, 18 months before the first race for the 9X8 Le Mans Hypercar. He then made a late return to F1 in 2022 when a seat became available after Haas dispensed with the services of Nikita Mazepin following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Magnussen is no stranger to sportscars. He contested the full IMSA series with the Ganassi Cadillac squad, driving its DPi-V.R, in 2021 and won one race. There was also an appearance at the



Le Mans 24 Hours in LMP2 sharing a High Class Racing ORECA with his father Jan.

GT stalwart Maxime Martin, meanwhile, has opted to leave BMW for a second time. The 2016 Spa 24 Hours winner – Valentino Rossi's regular team-mate for the past two seasons – is leaving for what has been described as a new challenge. His two spells with BMW sandwiched five years at Aston Martin.

GARY WATKINS

Browning steps up with Hitech and Beganovic

FORMULA 2

Hard on the heels of his Formula 1 FP1 debut at last weekend's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Luke Browning has been named by Hitech GP as one of its drivers for next year's Formula 2 season.

The 2022 Aston Martin BRDC Autosport Award winner therefore continues his association with a team with which he won the GB3 title (also in 2022), the 2023 Macau Grand Prix and claimed third place in this season's Formula 3 standings. He then moved up to F2 for the final three rounds with ART Grand Prix. He is joined in the Hitech line-up by Dino Beganovic, the Swedish Ferrari protege also stepping up from F3 after spending almost his entire car racing career to date with Prema.

That's the good news for Hitech, but the bad is the expulsion of its 2024 F2 title contender Paul Aron from the results of the

first race at last weekend's Yas Marina finale.

The Estonian's third place on the road on
Saturday was not enough to keep him in the
frame for the crown anyway, and he was
later excluded when, according to the

later excluded when, according to the stewards' report, "the DRS actuator... was found to have been modified to extend the length of the piston by one millimetre, allowing a wider opening of the DRS wing."

Hitech's representative at the hearing "did not deny that the car was non- compliant. He stated that there was a problem with the DRS actuator during qualifying and the team therefore changed it to a different one from their spare parts. The team representative also claimed not to know why this DRS actuator was modified."

Aron was also ordered to start Sunday's race, for which he had qualified third, from the pitlane. "As such an offence can only be committed by a deliberate act to modify the part in question, the stewards consider that an additional penalty to the disqualification of car 17 from race one is appropriate," the report summarised.



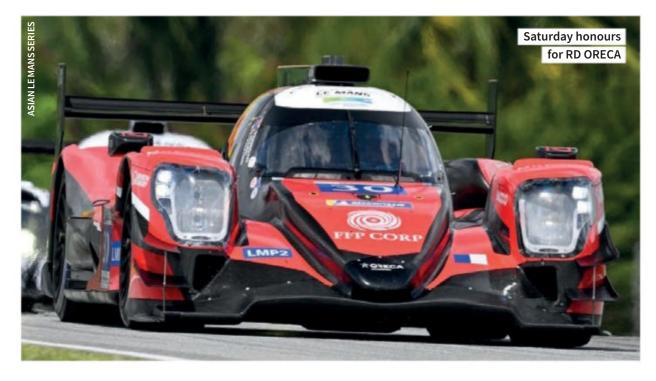
Dumas team takes glory on LMP2 debut

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES

A debut win for Romain Dumas's RD Limited LMP2 team was the highlight of Sepang's opening double-header in the Asian Le Mans Series, for which the reward is a prized Le Mans 24 Hours invitation.

Tristan Vautier kept the RD ORECA 07 in the lead in the last stint on degenerating tyres. After an interrupted first stint for Fred Poordad, RD had cycled James Allen and Vautier into the car, but Vautier was reeled in by a charging Matthieu Vaxiviere (AF Corse ORECA). Vaxiviere grabbed the lead at the penultimate corner of the last lap but ran wide at the final hairpin, allowing Vautier to pounce. They flashed across the line side by side, 0.055s apart.

In Sunday's race, an inspired Harry King (Pure Rxcing ORECA) sliced past the AF car of Patrick Byrne to take the lead. Rain fell with 100 minutes to go, teasing the teams. Some pitted for wets, such as Pure as King relayed Louis Deletraz, but soon regretted the decision and pitted again.



That allowed Proton Competition's polewinning ORECA of Tom Dillmann, sharing with Vlad Lomko and Giorgio Roda, into the lead on slicks. Then the rain came back with a vengeance, triggering another flurry of stops in which a rear wheel of Dillmann's car wouldn't seat and the lead was lost as the car tumbled to fourth.

Algarve Pro Racing's ORECA now moved ahead, Malthe Jakobsen in the car after stints from Michael Jensen and LMP2 rookie Valerio Rinicella. But the rain, now torrential, triggered a red flag with around 50 minutes to go. With no restart APR took the win from Allen/Poordad/Vautier and the second APR ORECA of Alex Quinn, Olli Caldwell and Kriton Lendoudis.

LMP3 honours in both races went to the Ultimate Ligier of Stephane Lemeret, Matteo Quintarelli and Bence Valint. In GT, it was the Car Guy Ferrari of Daniel Serra, Esteban Masson and Yudai Uchida on top on Saturday. An early collision for Uchida ruled the Ferrari out on Sunday, won by Winward Racing's Mercedes of Rinat Salikhov, Gabriele Piana and Jules Gounon, although Gounon never got to drive!

DAVID ADDISON



Brown back to single-seaters

FORMULA REGIONAL

Australia's newly crowned Supercars champion Will Brown is to step back to single-seaters to contest the Formula Regional Oceania series in New Zealand over the southern hemisphere summer.

Brown (left) won the 2016 Australian F4 series before moving into tin-tops, and explained that he tried to put a deal together eight years ago to compete in what was then called the Toyota Racing Series to further his open-wheel career. "Single-seaters are a bit of an itch I want to scratch and there's no better place to do it than in this championship," he said. Scoular and Indy NXT's Josh Pierson.

"I was watching Formula 2 and F3 races earlier this year and thought it would be great to race in a competitive field of single-seaters once again."

Brown will only contest three of the five rounds: at Taupo, Hampton Downs and the New Zealand Grand Prix at Highlands Motorsport Park - each of these venues is owned by Tony Quinn, a shareholder in the Triple Eight team for which Brown drives in Supercars.

Other drivers confirmed for the series, which kicks off at Taupo on 11-12 January, include GB3 racer Patrick Heuzenroeder, British F4 contender Zack



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DeLeon lands WSR BMW chance as Morgan switches to Excelr8

BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship field continues to take shape for 2025, with a driver with rear-wheel-drive roots landing a car he really feels he can do something with and effectively replacing a competitor who has gone the opposite way.

Crowd favourite Daryl DeLeon, whose entertaining handling of Cupra Leon machinery for Team Hard in 2023 and Un-Limited Motorsport this year prompted observers to suggest that here is a BTCC star of the future, has secured a plum drive with West Surrey Racing, where he will line up alongside newly crowned champion Jake Hill in a four-car team of BMW 330i M Sport machinery. Leaving WSR is 11-time race winner Adam Morgan, who joins 2022 champion Tom Ingram and veteran Tom Chilton at Excelr8 Motorsport to race a Hyundai i30 N Fastback.

The capture of 19-year-old DeLeon by WSR takes team boss Dick Bennetts back to

DeLeon with Bennetts

- and WSR trophies

his halcyon 1980s-90s days running young talents in Formula 3. "He has a lot of the raw potential and determination that we've seen in a number of young drivers that have gone on to achieve great things in our cars and beyond," he said of the Anglo-Filipino, who won the 2022 Radical SR1 Cup title and also was crowned 2023 British Endurance champion in a GT Porsche. "I can't believe it's all becoming official," gushed DeLeon. "Walking up and down the paddock, a team like West Surrey and BMW is a team I've always wanted to move to. To get something over the line is surreal. I really want 2025 to start tomorrow, so it's going to be a long winter.

"They've won championships, and the history of the team is amazing. Dick has worked with Ayrton Senna, Mika Hakkinen... I know it's going to be beneficial for me as a driver."

Morgan, meanwhile, took eight of his BTCC wins with a front-wheel-drive Mercedes A-Class run by his family Ciceley Motorsport team before switching to the BMW in 2021. The Lancastrian's arrival at Excelr8 means that the team's three drivers confirmed for next season have amassed more than 1200 starts in the series.

"I've had four good years in rear-wheel drive, but as I get closer to the end of my career it's a really good box to tick to go to the best front-wheel-drive team in the paddock," explained 36-year-old Morgan. "Tom Chilton was my team-mate in 2021, and I've got Tom Ingram there as an absolute benchmark. I'm really excited."

MARCUS SIMMONS

BEARMAN HEADS TO SUZUKA FOR SUPER FORMULA TEST

SUPER FORMULA

Formula 1 newcomer Ollie Bearman is due to take part in this week's post-season Super Formula test at Suzuka.

Bearman (below) will drive for Toyota-powered team KCMG on the final 'rookie' day of the three-day test tomorrow (Friday) in a bid to learn Suzuka ahead of next April's Japanese Grand Prix. Andrea Kimi Antonelli was also set to test with Rookie Racing, only to pull out due to the fever that sidelined him from the F2 finale in Abu Dhabi.

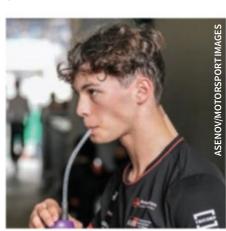
Other international drivers to feature in the Suzuka test include Formula 2 podium finisher Juan Manuel Correa, GB3 racer James Hedley (both Kondo Racing) and former Jota Sport World Endurance man Oliver Rasmussen (Impul).

There are also several notable clues to how the 2025 Super Formula grid will form, with Sacha Fenestraz lining up at TOM'S, Ukyo Sasahara moving over to Kondo and Igor Fraga taking over from the retiring Naoki Yamamoto at Nakajima Racing. Nissan Super GT driver Mitsunori Takaboshi is testing for Impul in the car raced this year by Yuji Kunimoto, who has also announced his exit from Super Formula.

New Super Formula Lights champion Shun Koide takes over the B-Max Racing car raced this year by Iori Kimura, who appears to have been dropped from the Honda roster.

A total of 19 cars are entered for the test, with TGM absent amid strong speculation the team is set to switch from the Honda camp to Toyota.

JAMIE KLEIN





New attitudes to challenge Max

Indications that Verstappen's rivals have learned to shift the power dynamic against the four-time world champion up the prospects of an enthralling fight next year

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

or once amid the ugly on-track clashes that somewhat marred the 2024 Formula 1 season in some quarters, while galvanising it in others, Max Verstappen had a point in raging at his penalty for whacking McLaren's Oscar Piastri at the start of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. That clash should have gone down as a racing incident. Those dramatic spins, wrecked races and sassy team radio responses should have been a combined punishment enough.

On consistency in F1 stewards' rulings, Autosport gleaned further information in Abu Dhabi about the upcoming changes to the 'Driving Standards Guidelines' document that were postponed to a 2025 introduction in Qatar the previous weekend.

Rather than clamping down solely on Verstappen's tactic of turning defence into attack when running on the inside into a corner and under attack from the outside, the guidelines are now set for wider revisions encompassing the existing scenarios on racing they cover, after the lengthy discussions with the drivers. As a reminder, these are just overtaking on a corner's inside and outside, and how those approaches apply to chicanes and S-bends.

Changes to cover drivers no longer having to give room from apex to exit when solely attacking on the inside were revealed by the drivers in Qatar. But Autosport understands the DSG wording will now also expand to cover the over-aggressive defence Verstappen has perfected (by doing it at a lower speed) since

"Like Nico Rosberg in 2015-16, Verstappen is fuelled by point-proving"

racing Lewis Hamilton in Brazil in 2021. While it is understood that outlawing this specifically has not been agreed, it will be established that in such circumstances a driver must at least stay on the circuit (as Verstappen also didn't at Austin this year).

But come 2025, it won't just be how Verstappen drives that really matters. Because, as this season petered out, his rivals were showing that they're starting to handle what's often thrown their way. Norris went from shoved off and holding no case at Austin to getting far enough ahead on the same outside line in Mexico that Verstappen copped a penalty (only the first of their two clashes in short succession there mattered given how the second was so egregiously Verstappen's fault). Norris outlined his main takeaway from going toe-to-toe with Verstappen in Abu Dhabi. "Mexico was a bit of a turning point when it was proved that not everything he does

is perfect," he explained in the post-race press conference.

Norris had delayed this for the defeated Ferrari drivers by being so classically effusive in discussing McLaren's constructors' success with TV crews beforehand. They'd already been kept waiting for Yas Marina third-place finisher Leclerc needing to film a post-race scene for the forthcoming F1 film. So many narratives of the 2024 campaign combining just as the year ended...

But it must be remembered that Norris finally reducing the wiggle room in the then unclarified DSG wording was the key to the battle outcome changing. And Norris wasn't alone in altering his attitude towards Verstappen as the 2024 season ended. George Russell had begun the weekend engaging the world champion in a war of words following their Qatar quarrel. He went too far at times, but Russell's suggestion that "people have been bullied by Max for years now" implies he is not going to back down in any on-track action between the pair.

After Norris had declared "I don't" when asked if he believed in the value of momentum from season-ending wins, Leclerc, sitting alongside and another who's shown Verstappen plenty of firmness in battle this year, agreed. He added this was because "there's been quite a lot of examples on our side where we finished a year strong and then the beginning of the year after we've been struggling".

But with most teams set for evolution rather than revolution on car design with the 2026 regulations reset now so close, it's tantalising to think there could be a four-way scrap for next year's titles among the leading teams.

And, for all its fine work, had small margins gone differently in Qatar, Red Bull might have ended 2024 without a dry-weather win since Spain back in June. This highlights how Verstappen could again be beatable when the action resumes in Australia in March. He, however, has long learned that becoming a champion is a 365-day pursuit – not just during the racing season. Like Nico Rosberg in 2015-16, Verstappen is fuelled by point-proving and the memory of previous successes or failures really does matter under pressure.

Here is where momentum becomes important for all drivers – as it can drive them through their off-season preparations handily, the winning feeling galvanising thoughts on just how tough it's going to be to beat even a vulnerable Verstappen. It's where racing markers meet memories. And neither Verstappen nor Piastri will forget what happened in Abu Dhabi last weekend. The former was apparently so concerned he didn't "want to have any weird feelings or whatever going into the break". Hence the apology.

Piastri's assertion that "there was no overlap into the corner" highlights the sense he felt he had to make a point back to Verstappen. That's title contending already.

P16 ABU DHABI GP REPORT



Is new Attack Mode a step too far?

The effectiveness of Formula E's all-wheel-drive Attack Mode is vividly obvious on track. We'll have to see how strategies adapt and its use plays out before reaching a verdict

STEFAN MACKLEY

saw him for about two corners and then I was trying to spot him but then I was like, 'S***, he's in the lead. This thing is powerful." Mitch Evans's victory from last on the grid in the Formula E Sao Paulo E-Prix season-opener last weekend was certainly a surprise to the Kiwi, his Jaguar team and many others, but a close second was the impact of the new Attack Mode.

After dropping to the fringes of the top 10, a few positions ahead of team-mate Evans, Nick Cassidy became the first driver to activate the 350kW mode on lap seven, which for the first time provides all-wheel drive courtesy of the new Gen3 Evo machine. Armed with the extra power after going off-line, the performance advantage it offered was clear to see immediately. Cassidy moved up into the lead inside a lap, having faced almost no resistance from those he had passed.

During pre-season testing and ahead of the race itself, drivers and teams had dubbed the new technology as "a gamechanger" that would dramatically alter the strategic elements of races – but perhaps no one appreciated exactly how big a difference it would make.

During the last two years of the Gen3 era, drivers would often take both Attack Modes – as required by the rules, and introduced in 2018-19 – at the earliest opportunity, in theory to get it out of the way such was its lack of effectiveness.

"The thing I like about Attack Mode this year is there is a clear difference between the two modes [350kW and 300kW] and the difference is that big that it gives you the possibility to attack and move up," said Mahindra driver Edoardo Mortara. "I have the feeling in the past seasons you were sometimes taking the Attack Mode more to defend. Now it's very much an Attack Mode that will give you the possibility to attack the others.

"I think as a driver it actually makes it better. I think it makes it less chaotic. The thing I could see is that when drivers were recognising that you were coming in Attack Mode, they were almost letting you through because there is no point fighting someone that has such a big advantage."

Mortara raises a good point about the lack of resistance from defending drivers, who in previous seasons may have tried harder to block cars in Attack Mode, which resulted in contact. Yes, there were two red flags and a safety car during the race in Brazil, but none of those were related to the use of Attack Mode.

While Cassidy was the first to use the opening Attack Mode, he and Evans were some of the last to use the second that coincided after a red flag. Strategically, it allowed them to cycle to the front of the field, as it did with the McLaren pair of Taylor Barnard and Sam Bird, who finished third and fourth.

Cassidy would likely have challenged for the podium places



but for his accident with Pascal Wehrlein, but warns that the new Attack Mode could become something of a lucky bullet.

"We've got to be careful that races aren't won on luck," said Cassidy. "We still want the best car to win, we want to put on a great show, we want entertainment. This is me speaking from a driver's point of view, but I hope that the day we're fastest in qualifying and we're fastest in the race and we do a good strategy that we win, and right now it looks very extreme. We've got to be careful about the luck factor that's probably going to be there this season."

So is it overpowered? There's no doubt that it is, but perhaps a bigger question is: does it detract from the show? As already explained, such is the advantage of using it that drivers ahead are not inclined to put up a robust defence, creating fewer incidents but also maybe less interest.

Its use in Sao Paulo was also the first time that drivers and teams witnessed its deployment in a race situation, and as such, was far from optimised. With more races and data to study, it's not inconceivable to think that it will become more refined as drivers take the extra boost on the same laps, therefore effectively cancelling its use. And while strategically it makes sense to hold on to use until the end, doing so could create its own problems.

"If you leave it quite late and you have a safety car and everyone's bunched up and you still have an attack, it could be a gamechanger and you could pass a lot of guys," said Sebastien Buemi, who was the last to take his second activation and finished seventh. "But when you leave it long, if you cannot finish the Attack Mode before the end of the race, you get disqualified so it's again going to be a compromise between how much risk you want to take."

P32 FORMULA E SAO PAULO REPORT



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Dear reader,

Autosport will celebrate its 75th birthday in 2025 and will start an exciting new era as it does so. As well as marking the special occasion on autosport.com and the Autosport Podcast, the magazine will begin a significant new chapter of its life.

From January, Autosport magazine will become a monthly publication. News and reports from all the big motorsport events will appear on our website, while in-depth and premium articles – including interviews, track tests, historic features, analysis and opinion – will be in the magazine, which will also feature incredible photography on high-quality paper. "We shall feature personalities, their activities and their cars," wrote founding editor Gregor Grant in the first issue of Autosport, and we still hold the same aims and values today.

The media landscape has changed considerably since the first weekly issue appeared on Friday 25 August 1950. Live TV, streaming, websites and social media means coverage of major series can be consumed almost instantly. A print title is no longer the main place to find out what has happened, but we believe it can still surpass other types of media when it comes to the who, how and why.

Autosport has always tried to cover the full breadth of motorsport, and the magazine will continue to do so. Formula 1, sportscar racing, touring car competition, rallying, the junior single-seater ladder and UK club motorsport will all be covered in the premium monthly.

Subscriber rates will change to reflect the move from weekly to monthly for 2025 and subscribers will be contacted soon about our new offers.

As well as creating a special magazine, we will expand our coverage across online, podcast and video platforms during 2025. We're also pleased to confirm that we will launch a National motorsport newsletter so you can keep track of all the best stories from UK club competition. That means there will be many more ways to enjoy Autosport than ever before – or that could possibly have been imagined in 1950.

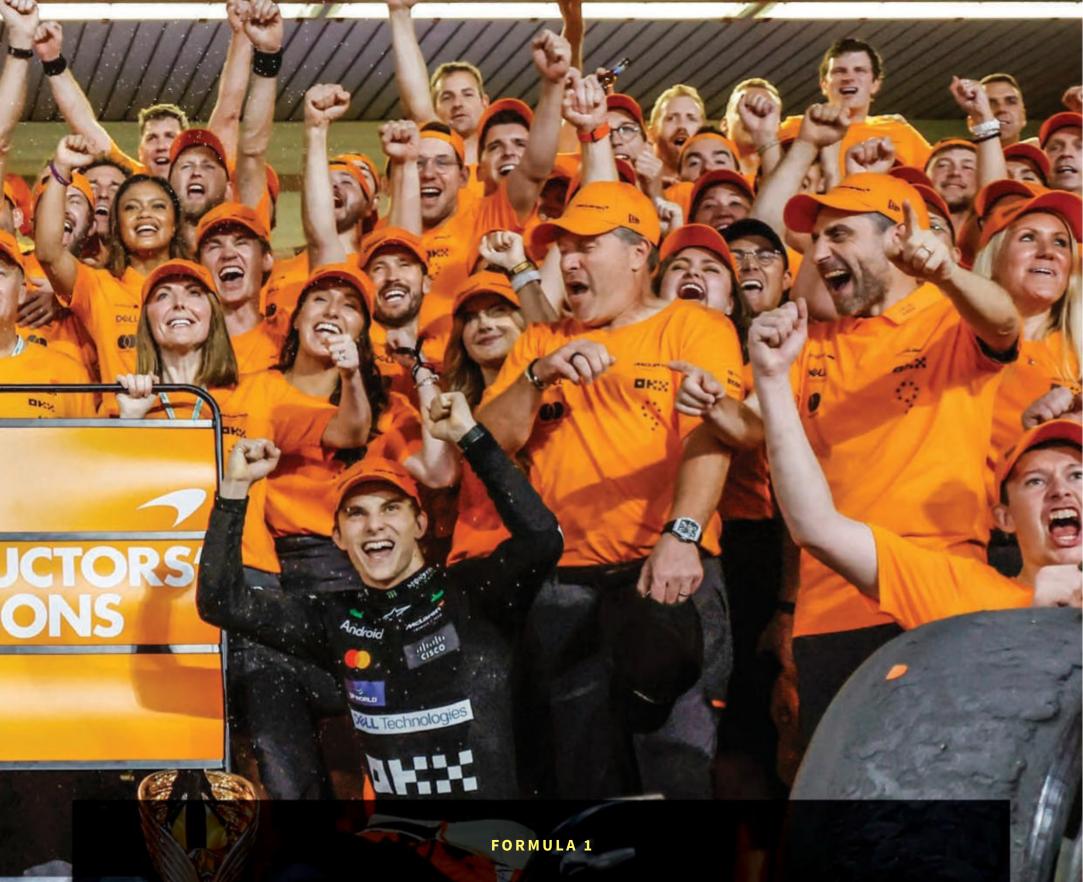
Thank you to you, the reader, for helping us to reach this landmark and embark on a new-yet-familiar Autosport era. We hope you'll enjoy it as much as we will.











NORRIS DELIVERS MCLAREN'S CROWN

A Verstappen-Piastri clash put the pressure on the Briton, but he held his nerve to beat two charging Ferraris and clinch the constructors' title for McLaren

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY



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RACE CENTRE ABU DHABI GP

he entrance to the McLaren pit garage stank of champagne, barely 20 minutes after Lando Norris had crossed the line to take victory in the Abu Dhabi season finale. His fourth win sealed the team's first constructors' crown since 1998, and the whiff of the fizz was fittingly reminiscent of Norris himself just seven months ago, when he bounced into the Miami Grand Prix press conference fresh from his maiden Formula 1 triumph.

So much has happened since then. Both Norris and McLaren became title contenders – the former for the first time at this level, the latter for the first time in a generation. Both made mistakes, both learned and rebounded convincingly.

"Proud is my biggest thing," Norris reflected. "Of course, I'm happy I finished the season this way, but I'm way more happy for the team."

The nerves as McLaren lined up 1-2 ahead of Carlos Sainz – leading the challenge for Ferrari in its tricky task of toppling McLaren for its first F1 title of any kind since 2008 – weren't helped by what happened to Oscar Piastri in the other MCL38 at the start. The Australian, starting second, got turned around – as world champion Max Verstappen made it one final blow to orange bodywork this season – at Turn 1.

Norris had made the perfect launch from his hard-won pole (see panel, p21). Piastri's was fine, and initially it seemed handy for McLaren





that this would mean no danger of a repeat of Monza's first-lap argy-bargy with Norris. Verstappen had powered past Sainz for third off the line, and attempted to improve this further.

The Red Bull driver dived for the inside, but Piastri, insistent that "there was no overlap into the corner", closed the door. With Verstappen pinched on the inside kerbs and understeering, contact was inevitable, and both were turned around. Although Verstappen was blamed by the stewards for causing the collision – the Dutchman was slapped with a 10-second penalty to serve at his pitstop – in truth it was a racing incident. He was aggressively ambitious as ever, but Piastri could have given him more space and seemingly chose not to.

They fell to 14th and last respectively as the pack powered past and headed for the rapid left-right swoops through Turns 2 and 3. Here, Sainz, who'd lifted to avoid the spinning Verstappen and then gratefully nipped through, was starting what would be a race-long chase of Norris.

"Oscar was super-unlucky," the Briton said of his team-mate's misfortune. "He got taken out in Turn 1. For a minute, my heart was like, 'Oh God, it's not looking as likely' [that McLaren would win the constructors']. But if I just kept my head down and kept focused, I knew I could deliver and do what I'd got to do."

This was to beat Sainz and seal that longed-for title without needing any other points permutations from the results of either Ferrari driver. And, thanks to Sainz having to hesitate in passing the Turn 1 drama, Norris led by 1.9s at the end of lap one of 58.

But before Norris could really start getting to work on extending that lead through the opening stint on the medium tyres – all the

frontrunners had started on this compound – the race was neutralised by a virtual safety car activation on the second lap. This was called because what was likely Sergio Perez's final F1 race had been ended by Valtteri Bottas clipping him around at Turn 6. Bottas had been demoted by a Kevin Magnussen dive as they ran in the lower points places, and the contact spun Perez to the back of the pack, before he pulled over at Turn 10 with his clutch burning out.

Once Perez's Red Bull had been cleared, Norris stretched a margin of 2.8s ahead over Sainz by the end of lap three. The gap between the two friends first held, then gradually started to increase.

It was almost immediately a two-horse race. Pierre Gasly had started fifth, risen to third, and George Russell's Mercedes was bottled up behind the Frenchman's Alpine. Gasly was keeping Russell lapping in the high 1m29s and low 1m30s, while the two leaders stretched away to be 12.3s clear at the end of lap 13, with Norris lapping in the high 1m28s.

Pirelli motorsport boss Mario Isola explained after the race that there was "not too much" tyre management going on at this stage, with "slightly less degradation than predicted" and the level of graining "quite low". Unlike the previous weekend in Qatar, here it was all about keeping the rear tyres alive with minimal sliding and precise corner exits. "The dirty air is painful – even at three seconds, two seconds [behind]," Norris explained. "To do that for a whole stint and stay that close is impressive [from Sainz]."

For that is what Sainz did, keeping to a maximum of 3.5s back from Norris for the race's opening quarter. Only for the six laps leading up to the 21st did the gap between them stretch to above four seconds



"THE WHOLE SEASON WAS IN THE LAST STOP. WE COULD HAVE LOST A PLACE TO CARLOS AND THE CHAMPIONSHIP"

when, even with Sainz's impressive efforts, the dirty air factor came to bear on the Ferrari's medium tyres.

On lap 25, with the gap actually back down to 3.8s as Norris's pace crept back up to the 1m29s, Ferrari acted and pulled Sainzin. The redclad mechanics turned him around in 2.2s and then it was up to the Spaniard, with the power of the undercut considerable in a thermal degradation race. "I did a very fast out-lap to try and get within DRS or within range of trying to overtake Lando after the pitstop," Sainz explained about this critical phase. "Also, in case they had a half a second to a second slower pitstop, that could put us within reach."

McLaren had little choice in its response, with Norris called in to pit immediately next time around. Essentially, its "whole season was in the last pitstop", reckoned team principal Andrea Stella. "We could have lost gap started to increase, hitting 3.2s by the end of lap 36. "We were »

a position to Carlos and we could have lost the championship," he added of a service where McLaren turned Norris around in 2.0s.

The race still hung in the balance as Norris powered out of the pit exit tunnel. Sainz's searing in-lap and out-lap - mainly the former, where he gained 0.7s alone – had cut Norris's lead to 2.1s, and the Ferrari had the hard tyres fired up and working. Norris had it all to do, including the fine balance of not overstressing the rubber or risk a late collapse. "It's a very difficult thing to judge with these tyres," said Sainz. "To use the first three laps to extract the peak of the tyre or to save that to the end of the race."

Ultimately, Sainz chose the latter - something Norris spotted rapidly on his second lap on the hard rubber. "I knew he probably pushed a good amount out of the pitlane to try and get me," the Briton explained. "I didn't have the finest in-lap. I started to struggle a lot with the tyres. And I saw already in Turn 2 and Turn 3 – a place you save the tyres – that he saved immediately, which gave me some comfort and allowed me to start saving at the same time. It's a difficult one: if he had pushed too early, he would have gone off a cliff and maybe so would I."

With the leaders lapping now in the low 1m28s, the difference between them held at that near-two-second mark. Then, as Norris reached the 1m27s bracket and Sainz initially couldn't go with him, the



RACE CENTRE ABU DHABI GP



more expecting to push Norris at the end of the race on degradation," explained Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur. "But it didn't happen."

Ferrari didn't consider trying a two-stopper with Sainz thanks to the big gap the two leaders had by this stage because most of the teams, as Isola said, had "already committed [to a one-stop] before the start of the race". Indeed, each of the leading teams had only one set of useable mediums available, with two new hards reserved, said Isola, "as an emergency and also if the degradation was higher than expected". "If you stay close you don't know what would happen also," added Vasseur.

Each of the leading duo had moments of worry to the end. Norris was struggling with dirty air himself when lapping traffic going into the final 10 laps of the season. Sainz thought he'd picked up a second puncture in the space of seven days after running over debris from another Bottas Turn 6 crash – this time a major smash with Magnussen that likely signed off his F1 career. "We saw nothing, it's why we didn't pit him," Vasseur explained. "I think he went on some 'pebbles' in Turns 6, 7, after the crash of Magnussen, Bottas. A week after Qatar he was a bit stressed and under pressure with the puncture."

McLaren asked Norris what he'd prefer in the event of a late safety car – "He considered some difficult options", said Stella – regarding staying out on his ageing hard tyres or maybe taking new ones if the Ferrari inevitably did "the opposite to what we do" (Stella again).

But it was a fear that didn't play out. Norris eased clear to win by 5.8s, throttling back on the final lap, where Sainz was still "pushing like hell" for Ferrari. Having been a tiny 0.05s faster on the medium tyres in the laps after the VSC, Norris held a 0.184s average laptime advantage on the hards, bar his final tour, completed as he eased off to savour the win.

"McLaren and Lando, with a hard tyre, they were just one or two tenths quicker," Sainz concluded, with the McLaren's increased downforce on the rear wing package it introduced last month at Interlagos also a boon to tyre preservation at tracks such as this. "On the medium, I really strongly believed we had a chance. Little by little with the hard, it just seemed like it was getting tougher and tougher. And that's where I think the weakness of our car started to also appear and the strengths of the McLaren started to appear again. And it slipped away from us..."



Leclerc charges from the back to third

Amazingly, Charles Leclerc made it two Ferraris on the podium despite starting 19th thanks to an engine battery-change penalty Vasseur said was needed due to the part "losing performance" as it was charged before FP1, combined with his exit from Q2 due to abusing track limits.

Leclerc gained 11 spots on the opening tour, blasting past slowstarting rivals off the line and at Turn 1, then swooping around Lewis Hamilton and Lance Stroll at Turns 4 and 5 like they weren't there, before zapping Liam Lawson, Bottas and Perez at Turn 6.

This is what heaped pressure on Norris's pitstop for McLaren, since any issue would have meant the 14-point final margin swinging in Ferrari's favour, with Leclerc suddenly on to score too and Piastri at this stage uncertain to do so. "Watching the TV screens I saw Charles was P8 after lap one, so I was a little bit nervous," Norris joked of this sensational turnaround for the second Ferrari.

After the VSC, Leclerc then tore ahead of Magnussen, Fernando Alonso and Nico Hulkenberg before getting to just 1.1s behind Russell. He undercut the Mercedes with a pitstop six laps earlier, after which he passed Gasly with a DRS run into Turn 6 to gain the net third.

Leclerc rose to a real third when Hamilton finally pitted, and completed a 38-lap stint on the hard tyres, with his pace only starting to





"MY FIRST LAP RECOVERED BASICALLY EVERYTHING THAT WE'VE HAD SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEKEND"

trail off compared to the leaders relatively late on. That was after he'd had initial doubts about such a long distance on the white-walled rubber. "My first lap recovered basically everything that we've had since the beginning of the weekend," Leclerc said. "So, I don't have any regrets."

Hamilton brilliantly deprives Russell of fourth

 $Leclerc finished 4.6s \, ahead \, of \, his \, soon-to-be \, team-mate \, Hamilton, \, who \, signed \, off \, on \, his \, 12 \, seasons \, at \, Mercedes \, with \, a \, brilliant \, recovery \, drive.$

A combination of a Mercedes out-lap timing error and Magnussen knocking a downforce-obstructing bollard into his path late in Q1 meant Hamilton started 16th, with camera crews and photographers packing his garage and pitbox ahead of the start.

Hamilton made up places with his launch, and around the rest of the opening lap he gained in the incidents – although Verstappen was back ahead of him out of Turn 6. The Mercedes been the only car starting on the hard tyres, which meant an early safety car would have been disastrous, but the VSC came just too early to tempt anyone in.

The seven-time champion was 12th when the VSC was called. After this he passed Lawson and was trailing Verstappen by almost four seconds when the 2024 title winner pitted, with the Mercedes inevitably running the longest opening stint of the race. Hamilton emerged from his pitstop in seventh, with a 17.7s gap to close to Russell, and with Hulkenberg and Gasly in between. He only just got back out on the medium rubber in front of old foe Alonso.

Russell's Mercedes had emerged from its pitstop on lap 26, still behind Gasly but now in a net fifth. Russell then swiftly dispatched the Alpine at Turn 9 and ran a net fourth, with Leclerc already three seconds to the good at this stage.

As Hamilton erased the gap to his team-mate by 0.77s each time >>

QUALIFYING

"It might look glorious for now, but I think we're still going to have a tough fight," reckoned Lando Norris after McLaren had finished 1-2 in FP2 at Yas Marina, and before it did so again in FP3. He was not wrong about the challenge the team would face in qualifying and, inevitably, the opposition was one Max Verstappen of Red Bull.

After struggling badly in FP2 with the understeer he so detests, the Dutchman and his squad settled on a set-up choice that would put him out of kilter with his rivals but would provide the best shot of settling his car's ongoing balance problem. This was to run a sleeker rear wing and lower-downforce arrangement. These aligned to give him the pointy front end he prefers but, with the random gusts of wind striking as crosswinds from left to right last Saturday, they also left him vulnerable.

Verstappen was able to head the suddenly beatable McLarens in both Q1 and Q2, as Norris's predictions regarding the field closing up with the most powerful engine modes and low fuel came true. In Q2, Verstappen was so comfortable he progressed with just a single run on the soft tyres and so had two goes on new tyres for Q3.

On the first run in the final segment, he set the provisional pole time at 1m22.945s, but caught a crosswind at just the wrong

"It might look glorious for now, but I think we're still going to have a tough fight"

time traversing the final corner and half-spun. Verstappen held the lurid slide, with the briefest of lifts, but Norris's time on used softs came in just 0.004 seconds down. On the final runs with the grip advantage of new rubber, he improved to a 1m22.595s. With Verstappen running last of the pack, Norris's main challenge came from team-mate Oscar Piastri, running ahead in the other McLaren.

Piastri had lost his opening 1m22.985s for running slightly wide over the Turn 1 exit kerb. While a similar infraction kept Charles Leclerc from Q3, Piastri's lap was reinstated.

Yet this experience meant Piastri "gave a little bit more margin than I wanted to" and so he "lost a decent amount of time through Turn 1". This was a tenth he never got back on Norris, with the Briton's subsequent further gains at Turns 5, 6 and 16, after the Australian had been better through the off-camber double lefts of Turns 13 and 14, resulting in their 0.21s difference.

Behind, Verstappen suddenly wasn't improving as adjusting his front wing "a bit" meant, he felt, "everything was made worse". He ended up going 0.053s slower than his personal best overall. This opened the door for Carlos Sainz to move his Ferrari into third and for Nico Hulkenberg to temporarily star in fourth for Haas, before his penalty for overtaking in the pit exit tunnel late in Q1 came to bear.





over the 22 laps to the final tour, a warning was issued by team boss Toto Wolff to keep their final battle clean. After closing in with DRS, Hamilton made his move with a bold around-the-outside swoop at the long, fast Turn 9 'hairpin'. Russell gave him enough space on the exit and Hamilton was through, celebrating on the grid with the podium finishers ahead.

"He was driving great," Hamilton said of Russell. "Obviously, he started a lot further ahead so to catch up was tough. He was putting in good laps so it took perfection – I had to really put together the best laps that I could possibly do. I only caught him right on the last lap and was like, 'It's now or never', so I just went for it."

Verstappen signs off with sixth

Having emerged from Turn 1 much better off than Piastri, Verstappen was handed his penalty shortly after the VSC ended. He ranted about "stupid idiots" in officiating offices, but later said he'd "apologised to Oscar" because "I wanted to try and get out of [the move]".

Verstappen served his sanction at his pitstop for hard tyres on lap 29, by which point he was a net sixth. He overhauled Stroll, Alonso Hulkenberg and Gasly thereafter to recover this at the flag, finishing 12.3s behind Russell.

But, for all Red Bull's effort in selecting a lower downforce rear-wing package to cure his practice understeer issues, the team ultimately reflected that it lacked McLaren's winning pace



"OSCAR NEVER GAVE UP. HE CAME BACK TO SCORE A POINT THAT COULD HAVE BEEN VERY IMPORTANT"

last Sunday. "After the qualifying, we were more optimistic," said Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko. "But on the mediums, the speed was not as expected. On the hard, it was reasonable. But the speed was not on the level of McLaren."

Piastri keeps at it to aid McLaren's title

Piastri later had to serve his own penalty. This was for clattering into Franco Colapinto at Turn 6 as the VSC ended, which gave the Williams driver a puncture and "some damage" to his floor – although the cause of his later retirement was an engine issue.

The incident also left Piastri with two big flatspots on his medium tyres and he pitted for hards at the end of lap four, ensuring he'd need the emergency second set of that compound when he stopped again on the 32nd tour. By this point he'd made it back to the points, then had to rise again after emerging 15th once he'd served his penalty. He carved past Stroll and Jack Doohan and – bar a wild off catching a sudden snap of oversteer at Turn 11 on lap 45 as he chased Yuki Tsunoda – ultimately rose to 10th, passing the RB and Alex Albon's Williams too by the end.

McLaren insiders suggested that the atmosphere Stella had called "pretty cool, chill, calm, focused" ahead of Sunday, even with all the pressure of those title-less years, endured in its garage even after the Turn 1 clash with Verstappen. "Oscar

never gave up," Stella concluded. "And he came back to score a point that could have been very important – if not decisive in case of a swap between Carlos and Lando."

That wasn't to be, either. McLaren's constructors' crown was sealed with its first visit to the top step of the Yas Marina podium since 2011. And Ferrari's wait for a title goes ever on.

SEASON REVIEW

19-26 December Christmas double issue



They've got their formation finish at least. The Leclerc brothers are running line astern for Ferrari out of the W Hotel that straddles sector three at Yas Marina.

Arthur is in Carlos Sainz's SF-24, as one of six rookie/reserve drivers (excluding new Alpine racer Jack Doohan) taking part in this one-hour session, for which Autosport has wandered down to the Turn 14 off-camber left-hander made famous by the controversial finish to the 2021 finale here.

"My younger brother and I had one dream: to become professional drivers"

Charles occupies his usual Ferrari cockpit, having made way for Ollie Bearman back in Mexico City.

He's been effusive the day before on this unusual situation – the Leclerc brothers are the first to appear in an F1 world championship weekend session for the same team (the 1971 Argentinian GP in which the Fittipaldi brothers turned out for

Yas Marina
Length 3.281 miles
Number of laps 58

Lotus was non-championship). Charles has recalled how my "younger brother and myself had only one dream, which was to become professional drivers".

"Obviously my younger brother didn't have the same chance as me, as he had to stop his career for four or five years because my parents couldn't really afford to do that for both of us," he added. "And I know

how much it meant for my father to be able to restart Arthur's career [before he died in 2017]. And when he did that, he was so happy. It's very special also for that – for how much my father gave to us to pursue our dream. And to see two Leclercs in F1 Ferraris is special."

Less special is how the elder Leclerc misses the first half of FP1 due to the battery problem aboard his SF-24, plus the illness that's kept him up all the previous night. But Charles does eventually get out and ends up topping the session. Arthur completes an early stint with a large aerodynamic-load measuring rake fitted in front of the rear wheels of Sainz's car, then gets stuck into a series of push-cool-push efforts and a late performance run on soft tyres, where he finishes 1.9 seconds and 17 places behind his elder brother in the FP1 classification.

We're also keen to see how the weekend's real debutant – Doohan at Alpine – is getting on in the car Esteban Ocon recently vacated. There's no aero rake monstrosity for his opening long run, which he follows with a rather brief stint on the soft tyres that puts him just 19th.

It's notable how Doohan, as well as Isack Hadjar in Max Verstappen's Red Bull, are regularly running tighter over the inside kerb of Turn 14 in front of our vantage point – something many of the other rookies are doing as well. The older hands, meanwhile, aren't climbing onto the raised edges unless on cooldown laps – instead sweeping in from wider out on approach, clipping the apex and keeping the speed higher overall.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



BOTTAS AND COLAPINTO BOW OUT EARLY

Valtteri Bottas and Franco Colapinto both said goodbye to F1 – for the time being, at least – with somewhat miserable outings in Abu Dhabi that ended in retirement.

In Formula 1's under-used DNF tombola, Colapinto's number was called first: surprisingly, this was not from the fallout from his floor damage and puncture sustained in his clash with Oscar Piastri, but through a suspected power unit issue that prompted Williams to bring the young Argentinian into the garage.

"It just hasn't been the last couple of races I wanted: really unlucky, but it's part of F1," Colapinto mused post-race. "It still was my dream come true."

Bottas endured an error-laden final race for Sauber. He was apportioned blame in the Turn 6 clash with Sergio Perez and given a 10-second penalty, and later created a further incident with Kevin Magnussen at the same corner after the Dane had gone for his second pitstop. Bottas locked up and went into the side of the passing Magnussen. This caused terminal damage to the Finn's car, and he limped back to the pitlane with broken suspension.

As he could not serve another 10s penalty, a five-place grid penalty will be applied to Bottas's next F1 start... whenever that ends up being. "Maybe I can ask them if they can change it to a fine," he joked.





Alpine climbs mountain and beats Haas to sixth

Pierre Gasly's fine run to seventh ensured that Alpine's late assault on sixth in the world constructors' championship came to fruition, with Haas unable to outscore the French squad by the six points it needed to reclaim the position it held earlier in the season.

Alpine's job was made easier when Nico Hulkenberg's excellent fourth on the grid was diluted by a three-place grid penalty for overtaking in the pitlane in qualifying, and the Oscar Piastri-Max Verstappen incident ahead allowed Gasly to rise to third in the order, he and Hulkenberg separated by George Russell.

Gasly absorbed early pressure from Russell and managed to maintain good pace during the opening of his hard-tyre stint, which briefly kept him ahead of the Mercedes when Russell eventually pitted. It was inevitable that the faster cars behind Gasly would eventually break past but,

as long as he finished ahead of Hulkenberg, Alpine would complete a mission that suddenly burst into life with its double podium in Brazil.

Haas likely needed both
Hulkenberg and Kevin Magnussen in
the points, but the Dane's rise to ninth
at the start and subsequent two-stop
strategy was derailed by the Turn 6
spin thrust upon him by the locked-up
Valtteri Bottas. Magnussen pitted
twice more, taking soft tyres on each
occasion, to claim the fastest lap of
the race – and deny any of the top 10
a chance for an extra point.

"Sixth in the constructors' was unthinkable at the start of the year," Gasly enthused. "The first part of this season was very tough for all of us in the team with an underperforming car, but very proud of the reaction of the guys and managing to bring that much performance to give me a car in the last few races which allowed me to perform really strongly."

I BROUGHT HIM TO MCLAREN WHEN I JOINED MCLAREN SO I TOLD HIM BEFORE THE RACE WHAT ABU DHABI TOOK FROM OUR HANDS IN 2010, HOPEFULLY TODAY GIVES SOMETHING BACK TO YOU. AND IT DID, SO I'M HAPPY FOR HIM. HE DESERVES IT, HE'S A VERY CLEVER GUY AND MCLAREN IS AN EXAMPLE FOR MANY TEAMS NOW.

Fernando Alonso's 'self-effacing' recollection of being involved with Andrea Stella's move from Ferrari to McLaren in 2015. For his part, Alonso claimed ninth after successfully making up ground late on with a two-stop strategy.





LAWSON'S WEEKEND UNDONE BY LOOSE WHEEL

Liam Lawson's outside shot at points was derailed by a loose wheel after his front-left was not attached properly during his scheduled pitstop. The RB driver needed an extra visit to attach it properly, and also took a 10-second stop-go penalty for his team's error.

The Kiwi's pitstop was paused as an apparent problem emerged during the tyre change, but he was sent out regardless when the light was triggered green. The subsequent stop and penalty took him out of points contention, although his race was ended a lap early by a power unit issue.

"When I turned right to come out onto the track, I could see then that it was sparking and shaking," Lawson said of the incident.

Team-mate Yuki Tsunoda's points chances were effectively over on lap one when he caught the anti-stall at the start of the race.

One more Red Bull nightmare a 'summary' of Perez's season

If Abu Dhabi was to be Sergio Perez's last race for Red Bull, then his tenure at the team ended with him plumbing new depths of disappointment – although this was not entirely his fault.

While being overtaken at Turn 6 on the opening lap of the race by Charles Leclerc and Kevin Magnussen, Perez was knocked into a spin by Valtteri Bottas and later pulled up at the side of the road with an apparent repeat of the clutch issue he faced in Qatar – again, after spinning at the Losail race.

Perez contended that there was an issue with the car before that, citing upshift troubles in the opening

corners before the problem proved terminal. "The engine was damaged before the touch," the Mexican explained. "Every time I changed the clutch, the clutch slipped, I think we had the problem before. Then came the contact but, when I recovered the car, the clutch was stuck.

"This end of the race is a good summary of the season."

This concluded a miserable run of results for Perez in 2024, who scored just nine points in the final eight races of the year. In the same timeframe, team-mate Max Verstappen scored 134 points.



Q&A



JACK DOOHAN ALPINE F1 DEBUTANT

How did you find your first race?

It was great. Super-happy for the experience, a lot of knowledge and so much learned, and supergrateful for every lap, for the experience, and to the team. There's learning to be done on the hard tyre, happy to finish on the same pace as others.

What could you take from that experience?

Learning how much to push on the first 20 laps on that hard tyre on the second stint. I passed [Valtteri] Bottas, who was struggling quite a lot on the hard and I didn't really know how much to push. I didn't

want to overcook it on my first race and lose out to [Kevin] Magnussen. I think you can push more and use the tyre a little bit more.

What was the thing that was harder, and what was easier?

My thumbs were working harder. They weren't really working too well at the end of the race, to be honest. So that was weird, something I wasn't expecting. Easier? I think nerves, they were less than I was expecting. The team just made it so seamless.

How much did Pierre Gasly help you for this weekend?

I think he assisted me where he could. We stayed quite late on Friday night together, an hour after curfew. You know, looking over our out-lap procedures together, looking at what others are doing, how it compares to us. He's obviously a class driver. I look forward to learning a lot from him and being able to be a great pairing for next season.

How did you find the first-lap chaos?

I'm grateful that I stayed out of trouble. Ideally I would have liked to maybe have taken advantage of the chaos a little bit more. My goal was to stay out of trouble and just stay clean – and we did so, and took the first medium tyre quite a long way. It's good experience before Australia [2025 season opener].





DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA

RB: DESIGNS ON 2025 WITH NEW FRONT WING

After running out of steam in its bid to take sixth position in the constructors' championship, RB put one eye on 2025 and tried out a new front wing with a view to running a version of it next season.

This wing had a very different treatment to the outboard section, most notably with a curved leading edge to its front wing – versus the more angular design characteristic of the team's cars through the past couple of seasons. The new wing has completely revised geometries for each element; the mainplane has a shorter chord length, while the second element has been made larger to offset this.

The attachment points to the endplate are also very different. That second element tapers in at the leading edge at the point it curls up to join the endplate, presumably to offer more control of the airflow emanating from this area.

"It's more load, and we think a little bit more user-friendly," explained racing director Alan Permane. "Some of the development has gone into making it more driveable. This isn't an aero-elasticity update. It's a through-corner balance characteristic change. It's something that we've been working on for 2025; I wouldn't say we've brought it forward, but it just happens to coincide here. It certainly can be carried over to next year though."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



SAUBER KICKS ON DEVELOPMENT WITH REAR FLOOR MODIFICATION



Sauber continued its end-of-season flurry of late developments as it hoped to gather some data on a new floor in an effort to be much more competitive in 2025. This featured a change to the rear part of the floor to open up the diffuser volume, which the team stated in its pre-event technical notes was "aiming to improve the flow characteristics by reducing the losses in critical ride height conditions".

The team also changed the lower deflector on the rear brake duct cluster of wings to improve diffuser performance through controlling the tyre 'squirt' – a series of vortices produced by the interaction between the air and the tyre's deformation in contact with the road. "I think it was clear for a long time what were the limitations and what needed to be improved," said trackside engineering director Xevi Pujolar. "[The new] floor in Vegas [last month], we could see there that everything was working better. What we have here is just another step."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

FREE	PRACTICE	1
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	CLeclerc	1m24.321s
2	Norris	1m24.542s
3	Hamilton	1m24.806s
4	Russell	1m25.165s
5	Gasly	1m25.333s
6	Hulkenberg	1m25.373s
7	Colapinto	1m25.382s
8	Magnussen	1m25.444s
9	Drugovich	1m25.471s
10	Perez	1m25.483s
11	Alonso	1m25.504s
12	Lawson	1m25.563s
13	Bottas	1m25.611s
14	Hirakawa	1m25.874s
15	Hadjar	1m25.877s
16	Zhou	1m25.921s
17	lwasa	1m26.121s
18	A Leclerc	1m26.179s
19	Doohan	1m26.304s
20	Browning	1m26.519s
WEATH	ER Sunny, air 28-2	9C track 37-38C

FRE	PRACTICE	2						
POS	DRIVER	TIME						
1	Norris	1m23.517s						
2	Piastri	1m23.751s						
3	Hulkenberg	1m23.979s						
4	Sainz	1m24.099s						
5	Hamilton	1m24.119s						
6	Leclerc	1m24.201s						
7	Bottas	1m24.230s						
8	Magnussen	1m24.235s						
9	Albon	1m24.269s						
10	Tsunoda	1m24.497s						
11	Lawson	1m24.503s						
12	Gasly	1m24.517s						
13	Russell	1m24.534s						
14	Perez	1m24.555s						
15	Zhou	1m24.557s						
16	Alonso	1m24.574s						
17	Verstappen	1m24.598s						
18	Stroll	1m24.686s						
19	Doohan	1m24.961s						
20	Colapinto	1m25.265s						
WEATHER Night, air 26-27C track 27-30C								

FREE	E PRACTICE 3								
POS	DRIVER	TIME							
1	Piastri	1m23.433s							
2	Norris	1m23.626s							
3	Hamilton	1m23.823s							
4	Verstappen	1m23.844s							
5	Sainz	1m23.871s							
6	Russell	1m24.075s							
7	Hulkenberg	1m24.093s							
8	Magnussen	1m24.094s							
9	Leclerc	1m24.098s							
10	Perez	1m24.283s							
11	Tsunoda	1m24.343s							
12	Albon	1m24.378s							
13	Gasly	1m24.408s							
14	Doohan	1m24.434s							
15	Alonso	1m24.453s							
16	Bottas	1m24.479s							
17	Lawson	1m24.519s							
18	Stroll	1m24.531s							
19	Zhou	1m24.668s							
20	Colapinto	1m24.766s							
WEATHER Sunny, air 29-30C track 35-37C									

issue

Red Bull					208.2mph
Williams (207.0mph	
Haas 🕳 🚾			205.9mph		
Mercedes —			2 05.7mph		
Sauber			205.6mph		
Aston Martin		204.7mp	oh		
RB C		204.5mph			
Ferrari 🛑 💮	9 20)3.7mph			
McLaren 💮 💮	0 203.3m	ph			
Alpine 🛑	202.6mph				

QUA	LIFYING 1		QUAL	IFYING 2		QUAI	IFYING 3	
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m23.302s	1	Sainz	1m22.985s	1	Norris	1m22.595s
2	Bottas	1m23.481s	2	Verstappen	1m22.998s	2	Piastri	1m22.804s
3	Sainz	1m23.487s	3	Hulkenberg	1m23.040s	3	Sainz	1m22.824s
4	Verstappen	1m23.516s	4	Gasly	1m23.086s	4	Hulkenberg	1m22.886s
5	Gasly	1m23.548s	5	Norris	1m23.098s	5	Verstappen	1m22.945s
6	Perez	1m23.559s	6	Piastri	1m23.199s	6	Gasly	1m22.984s
7	Magnussen	1m23.632s	7	Alonso	1m23.268s	7	Russell	1m23.132s
8	Piastri	1m23.640s	8	Russell	1m23.283s	8	Alonso	1m23.196s
9	Russell	1m23.678s	9	Bottas	1m23.341s	9	Bottas	1m23.204s
10	Norris	1m23.682s	10	Perez	1m23.379s	10	Perez	1m23.264s
11	Hulkenberg	1m23.722s	11	Tsunoda	1m23.419s	WEATH	ER Night, air 25-26	C track 26-27C
12	Stroll	1m23.729s	12	Lawson	1m23.472s			
13	Lawson	1m23.733s	13	Stroll	1m23.784s			
14	Tsunoda	1m23.735s	14	Leclerc	1m23.833s		A	
15	Alonso	1m23.794s	15	Magnussen	1m23.877s		F1 SEA	NO2
16	Albon	1m23.821s					DEL	IOON
17	Zhou	1m23.880s					REVI	FW
18	Hamilton	1m23.887s						
19	Colapinto	1m23.912s					19-26 Dec	ember
20	Doohan	1m24.105s					Christmas	

		5			
	ON STATS				
DRIVE CHAM	ERS' IPIONSHIP		PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Verstappe	en	437	1	1
2	Norris		374	1	1
3	Leclerc		356	1	1
4	Piastri		292	1	2
5	Sainz		290	1	1
6	Russell		245	1	1
7	Hamilton	ı	223	1	2
8	Perez		152	2	2
9	Alonso		70	5	3
10	Gasly		42	3	3
11	Hulkenbe	erg	41	6	4
12	Tsunoda		30	7	3
13 14	Stroll		24	6 2	8
15	Ocon Magnuss	on.	23 16	7	7
16	Albon	EII	12	7	7
	Ricciardo		12	8	5
18	Bearman		7	7	11
19	Colapinto		5	8	9
20	Zhou		4	8	12
21	Lawson		4	9	5
22	Bottas		0	11	9
23	Sargeant		0	11	12
24	Doohan		0	15	20
CONS	TRUCTORS	,			
	IPIONSHIP				PTS
1	McLaren				666
2	Ferrari				652
3	Red Bull				589
4 5	Mercedes Aston Ma				468 94
6	Alpine	I CIII			65
7	Haas				58
8	RB				46
9	Williams				17
10	Sauber				4
QUAL	IFYING BAT	TLE			
Vers	tappen	23	1	Perez	
Ham	nilton	5	19	Russell	
riall				Kussett	
Lecl	erc	14	9		
Lecl Lecl	erc	14 1	0	Sainz Bearmar	า
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DEC	ULTS ROUND 24/2	// /FO LADS 100 1	E MILES		
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	1h26m33.291s	58	Mn, Hn
2	Carlos Sainz (ESP)	Ferrari	+5.832s		Mn, Hn
3	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+31.928s		Mn, Hn
4	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+36.483s		H n, M u
5	George Russell (GBR)	Mercedes	+37.538s		M u, H n
6	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	+49.847s		M n, H n
7	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+1m12.560s		M n, H n
8	Nico Hulkenberg (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	+1m15.554s		M n, H n
9	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m22.373s		M u, H u, H u
10	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m23.821s		Mn, Hn, Hn
11	Alexander Albon (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+11.251s		M n, H n
12	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	RB-Honda RBPT	-1 lap/+14.738s		M n, H n
13	Zhou Guanyu (CHN)	Sauber-Ferrari	-1lap/+17.304s		Mn, Hn, Hn
14	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap/+18.473s		M u, H u, H u
15	Jack Doohan (AUS)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+26.555s		M n, H n
16	Kevin Magnussen (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	-1 lap/+1m17.597s		Mn, Hn, Hn, Sn, Su
17	Liam Lawson (NZL)	RB-Honda RBPT	55 laps/engine		M n, H n
R	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Sauber-Ferrari 30 lap	s-accident damage		M n, H n
R	Franco Colapinto (ARG)	Williams-Mercedes	26 laps-engine		M n, H n
R	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda RBPT	0 laps-accident		M n

WEATHER Night, air 25-27C track 26-30C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 131.884mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 137.946mph.

EACT	TEST LAPS			
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Magnussen	1m25.637s	-	57
2	Hamilton	1m27.278s	+1.641s	44
3	Norris	1m27.438s	+1.801s	52
4	Piastri	1m27.690s	+2.053s	51
5	Sainz	1m27.765s	+2.128s	55
6	Verstappen	1m27.765s	+2.128s	56
7	Alonso	1m27.948s	+2.311s	51
8	Zhou	1m27.982s	+2.345s	56
9	Leclerc	1m28.018s	+2.381s	51
10	Russell	1m28.195s	+2.558s	56
11	Stroll	1m28.604s	+2.967s	42
12	Lawson	1m28.751s	+3.114s	52
13	Doohan	1m29.121s	+3.484s	56
14	Hulkenberg	1m29.152s	+3.515s	17
15	Tsunoda	1m29.200s	+3.563s	41
16	Gasly	1m29.251s	+3.614s	30
17	Colapinto	1m29.411s	+3.774s	5
18	Albon	1m29.438s	+3.801s	46
19	Bottas	1m29.482s	+3.845s	14
20	Perez	notime	-	-



RAC	7.	2 D I	44	NG
N-1		2 1		

FP1

FELIPE DRUGOVICH replaced
Stroll at Aston Martin; RYO
HIRAKAWA replaced Piastri
at McLaren; ISACK HADJAR
replaced Verstappen at Red Bull;
AYUMU IWASA replaced Tsunoda
at RB; ARTHUR LECLERC replaced
Sainz at Ferrari; LUKE BROWNING

replaced Albon at Williams

GRID PENALTIES

HULKENBERG three-place penalty for overtaking two cars in the tunnel on pit exit road ALBON and COLAPINTO five-place penalty – additional restrictednumber components used LECLERC 10-place penalty –

additional power unit elements used

RACE PENALTIES

VERSTAPPEN 10-second penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Piastri **PIASTRI** 10s penalty and two licence

PIASTRI 10s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Colapinto

BOTTAS 10s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Perez, and a five-place grid drop and three licence points for causing a collision with Magnussen **ZHOU** 5s penalty for a false start

STROLL 5s penalty for leaving the track without a justifiable reason multiple times

KEY:

G Starting grid

1 Overtook

LAWSON 10s stop/go penalty for being released from a pitstop in an unsafe condition

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	2
		_		nec							_			_			_			
	orris	Piastri	nz	Verstappen	sly	Russell	Hulkenberg	Alonso	Bottas	rez	Tsunoda	Lawson	oll	Magnussen	nc	Hamilton	Doohan	Albon	Leclerc	
_	Z		Sainz		Gasly					Perez			Stroll		Zhou					
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43 Pit entry

23 Retirement

1 Classification 1 Lap number 27 VSC lap

43 Lapped

30 Overtaken

ABU DHABI GP DRIVER RATINGS

Norris ends the season with full marks following a flawless performance, on a weekend when Hamilton, the Ferrari pairing and Gasly also starred

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

RED BULL



Started 4th — Result 6th

Copped a
10-second
penalty for
first-corner dive
on Piastri, although
reckoned he tried
to back out of it.
Overcame this with a
solid drive through the
order, but stalled out
once he got to sixth.
Didn't improve on final
Q3 lap, which he put
down to struggles
with balance issues.

SERGIO PEREZ

Started 10th — Result R

A culmination of his season: outqualified by a Sauber, mobbed by others into Turn 6, then knocked out of the race by said Sauber. Little to go on race-wise and didn't do anything particularly wrong, but just a miserable weekend. Time away from F1 would do him the world of good.

MERCEDES



Started 16th — Result 4th

Not entirely the way he'd want to leave Mercedes but enjoyed a stellar drive with alternate one-stopper. Qualifying issues largely out of his control, but knuckled down. Found hard tyres difficult, yet maintained a steady pace and came alive on the mediums at the end.

6

GEORGE RUSSELL
Started 6th — Result 5th

Toiled behind
Gasly for too
long, but
eventually
overcame the Alpine
driver even when
overcut attempt didn't
work out. Lost time to
Ferraris over second
stint and fell out of
touching distance, and
then got dispatched by
Hamilton on the final
lap. Not a bad day, but
not a stellar one.

FERRARI



Started 19th—Result 3rd

Mesmerising opening lap to get up to eighth with perfect car positioning amid chaos ahead, as 10-place grid drop was worsened by a lap time deletion in qualifying. Carved through order to get up to third, although ran out of momentum – and tyres – in efforts to get closer to Sainz.



Started 3rd — Result 2nd

Did almost everything right, but still wasn't enough to help Ferrari to the constructors' championship.
Couldn't get close to Norris in opening laps, and perhaps overpushed in undercut attempt to whittle the gap down – but the McLaren driver absorbed the damage.

MCLAREN



Started 1st — Result 1st

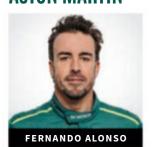
Flawless all weekend. Norris reeled off a convincing pole and controlled the race. Good start carried him clear of Piastri-Verstappen collision, and steamed clear of DRS in opening laps. Got VSC restart right, and managed everything expertly to the end.



Started 2nd—Result 10th

Unlucky to be caught by Verstappen in Turn 1, but too eager to make up places with Colapinto contact at Turn 6 and took a 10-second penalty. Compromised strategy meant he got stuck behind Alonso. Spent too long trying to pass Tsunoda in final stint to lose a chance for ninth.

ASTON MARTIN



Started 8th — Result 9th

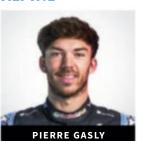
Had ground to make up late on with two-stop strategy and broke into the top 10. Harried Hulkenberg early on, but couldn't find a passing opportunity. Cycled into eighth after first pitstops, kept DRS from Piastri's reach, then reeled off late passes on Tsunoda and Albon to clinch ninth.



Started 13th - Result 14th

Started well to get up to ninth on opening lap, but progress derailed by five-second penalty for track limits. Defended well from Magnussen in middle portion of the race, and worked his way past Doohan and Tsunoda in the final half. Some decent elements but undone by penalty.

ALPINE



Started **5th** — Result **7th**

Rounded out
Alpine's
smash-andgrab sixth in the
championship with
superb drive. Rose to
third after avoiding
first-corner clash
ahead. Couldn't
contain faster cars
long-term, but did
everything right
to ward off a late
Hulkenberg charge. An
excellent end to 2024.



Started 17th – Result 15th

Hard to gauge.
Didn't put a
foot wrong at
any point in
the weekend, but
lacked pace and
was easy pickings
for fellow midfielders
in the grand prix.
Showed promise
with Gasly-matching
pace in FP3, but very
much a learning
weekend for the
Australian debutant.



WILLIAMS



Started 18th - Result 11th

Managed long second stint well, but ran out of life in his hard tyres to stay in the points. Pulled off tidy move on Zhou after their pitstops, emerging ninth as two-stoppers Alonso and Piastri pitted, but couldn't keep them at bay. Half a second off fastest time in Q1, but wrong side of Q2 cut-off.



Started 20th — Result R

Under a tenth shy of Albon in qualifying, but close session meant 19th on the grid – although that was moot with a gearbox penalty. Could show little as puncture and floor damage from Piastri's hit from behind put him to the rear of the order. Engine issue forced an early bath.

RB



Started 11th - Result 12th

Smacked with anti-stall at the start and lost ground. Brought himself into play with one-stop strategy and canny switchback defences in Turn 9 but didn't have the tyres to keep Alonso and Piastri at bay. Passed by two-stopping Stroll late on, but regained place due to Canadian's penalty.



LIAM LAWSON
Started 12th - Result 17th

Race undone by loose wheel, yielding 10-second stop/ go penalty. Looked good value for points with first stint ending inside top 10, but botched pitstop forced second trip to the pitlane – then a third to serve a penalty. Reckoned it was one of his best races until that point.

SAUBER



Started **15th** – Result **13th**

False-start
penalty cost an
outside shot at a
point. Missed out
on escaping Q1 by a
tenth, and had a slow
pitstop to contend
with along with his
five-second drop.
Cleared Doohan with
patience in first DRS
zone to avoid role
reversal, and started
catching one-stopping
Tsunoda by the end.



Started 9th ——Result R

Shine taken off qualifying heroics in clumsy final race for Sauber. Pinged for Turn 6 collision with Perez to earn 10-second penalty, then took himself out with a lock-up at Turn 6 to spear into Magnussen. Hardly the way he'd want to end his F1 career, if this is indeed the end.

HAAS



Started 14th - Result 16th

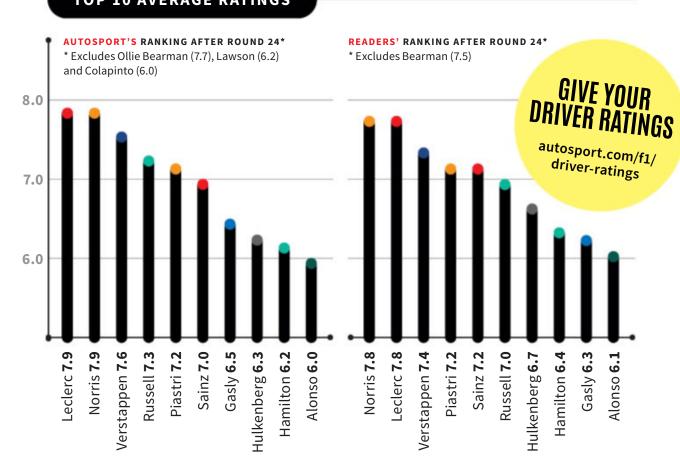
Flying start
carried him into
the points, but
slow early
pitstop proved costly.
Pass on Bottas after
his second stop looked
easy, but the Finn's
nerf at Turn 6 made
possibly final F1
race miserable.
Took soft tyres at
the end and at least
consoled himself
with fastest lap.



Started **7th** — Result **8th**

Hurt himself with three-place grid drop after qualifying an impressive fourth due to overtaking on pit exit; regardless, did everything he could to help Haas beat Alpine, but to no avail. Warded off Alonso threat in opening laps and managed lengthy one-stop stint on hard tyres to stay ahead.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



Evans makes history with last-to-first charge

Jaguar's veteran pulls level on most Formula E wins as the new Gen 3 Evo era gets off to a dramatic start in Sao Paulo

STEFAN MACKLEY

ormula E's two previous visits to Sao Paulo both produced memorable and enthralling races and this year's edition, which played host to the start of the 2024-25 campaign, could go down as one of the championship's most compelling events. In a contest where Porsche's reigning champion Pascal Wehrlein and Nissan star Oliver Rowland both seemed to have the fastest outright packages on the day, it was Jaguar and Mitch Evans who ended the first race of the new Gen3 Evo era on top in the most unlikely of circumstances.

The 1.82-mile street circuit is a happy hunting ground for Evans – the Kiwi won the inaugural event in 2023 before claiming the runner-up spot last season after being passed for the lead in the final few corners. His remarkable victory last weekend from last on the grid – a feat never achieved before in Formula E history – underlined the chaotic and dramatic nature of a season-opener that featured two red flags and a frightening airborne accident for Wehrlein.

Evans's weekend began in troubled fashion when his Jaguar ground to halt in the final minutes of the opening practice session due to a software issue, and the problem repeated itself in the qualifying groups. It meant Evans was unable to set a lap, which consigned him to 22nd and last on the grid while putting doubt in his mind that he would even complete the full race distance.

"Lining up on the grid I was first of all just hoping to see the chequered flag," said Evans after his 13th victory in Formula E, which moves him joint top of the all-time winners' list with Lucas di Grassi and Sebastien Buemi. "There was definitely some concern there but, once the race started, I had to forget about it and just hope from that side it was all fine."

Evans immediately made progress to find himself 15th at the end of the opening lap, and gained another three places on the next tour before a safety car was deployed to retrieve the stricken cars of Jake Hughes and Nico Muller. The Maserati MSG and Andretti drivers had separate accidents at Turn 6 after checking up in avoidance

All smiles and the spoils: winner was as surprised as anyone

because of cars ahead during the early-race scramble.

Several places in front of Evans, Jaguar team-mate Nick Cassidy became the first driver to take one of two mandatory Attack Modes on lap seven after racing resumed. Cassidy dropped to the fringes of the top 10 as he armed himself with the 350kW mode, which this season activates all-wheel drive – the technology also used in qualifying duels and the start of races.

The power of the new system became apparent immediately as



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES



the Kiwi moved into the lead after a lap, with Evans acknowledging how impactful the performance advantage could be if used efficiently. "[The start] really changed my race quickly because I was starting to get into the mid-pack and started to shift my focus to optimise this race even more," said Evans. "Once guys started taking Attack Mode, it was quite eye-opening how much progress people were making so I just wanted to try and be clever with that. I went with my gut a little bit, timed it all pretty good."

While Cassidy remained at the front on lap 12, Evans made less progress once he activated his first Attack Mode because those around him also now had the extra power, negating any advantage. It meant that Evans was 10th when the first red flag was deployed on lap 21 after Jake Dennis's Porsche-powered Andretti car came to a stop in the run-off at Turn 1. The 2023 Formula E champion, who had started third, suffered a technical problem that left the Porsche-powered car in a 'red state', whereby it was in an unsafe condition and, as per the regulations, required a race-stoppage.

The red flag greatly benefited Evans and Cassidy, now in sixth, since they remained the leading runners yet to activate the second Attack Mode. In theory, that gave them a strategic advantage. Both drivers retained their positions off the line at the standing restart, with Cassidy taking the final four minutes of his Attack Mode on lap 24. Just two laps later he had moved into second position behind long-time leader Rowland.

The Nissan driver had taken the lead of the race both times off the

"Lining up on the grid I was first of all just hoping to see the chequered flag"

line, first against polesitter Wehrlein – whose qualifying effort was three seconds faster with the new car than nine months ago – and again against the second Porsche of Antonio Felix da Costa at the restart. Rowland had pulled a gap of more than three seconds to the chasing pack, but his race unraveled when he was slapped with a drive-through penalty for overpower usage, which had also afflicted team-mate Norman Nato and the Nissan customer McLaren machines of Taylor Barnard and Sam Bird.

"It [overpower] comes from the start," said Rowland, who led 17 laps in Brazil, more than double managed by any other driver. "I was unaware that the other three had got it and I got what they got on the second start. It's due to speed basically. The first start I was closer to Turn 1 so I didn't get to the speed where there was a problem. It's the transition from front to rear [powertrains], so the second start when I pushed more to Turn 1, I got it."

Rowland's penalty, as well as the team miscalculating energy saving in the middle part of the race, meant he limped home in 14th on a day when victory could well have been within his grasp.



"It's a sickening feeling whenever you see a car upside down so I'm just glad Pascal is OK"

With new leader Cassidy's Attack Mode complete, he soon came under pressure from Evans, who had taken his final boost of power two laps later than his stablemate and swept into the lead before Turn 1 on lap 29. Da Costa demoted Cassidy at the same spot a lap later, and the Jaguar driver immediately came under threat from behind by Maximilian Guenther's DS Penske and Wehrlein into the Turns 4/5 chicane.

Guenther was pushed into the wall on the outside when he went three-wide with Cassidy and Wehrlein, before damaged suspension sent the Jaguar into the side of the Porsche, flipping Wehrlein over as the roll hoop of the car made heavy contact with the Turn 6 barrier. Another red flag was immediately deployed to aid the German, who was uninjured and extracted himself from the car once it was overturned, before being taken to hospital for precautionary checks. He was visibly shaken by the incident.

"It's kind of a sickening feeling whenever you see a car upside down so I'm just very glad he's OK," reckoned Cassidy, who was cleared of any wrongdoing by the stewards post-race and who briefly rejoined proceedings after his car was repaired before suffering a software issue.

With four laps remaining, taking the race total to 35, Evans





headed da Costa at the rolling restart and was able to manage his remaining energy levels to claim a scarcely believable win. "I probably thought it was done out of the last corner on the last lap," related Evans. "The whole race was very unpredictable and in the last four laps with this guy breathing down your neck, you don't know what could happen. It would have been nice to have a calmer end to the race but I got it done so I guess that's what matters."

Behind da Costa, Barnard became the youngest podium finisher in Formula E history in just his fourth start, while team-mate Bird finishing immediately behind ensured that McLaren left Brazil leading the teams' championship. The recovery of the papayacoloured cars had been, arguably, even greater than Evans's performance after both drivers served their drive-through penalties for overpowering.

The McLaren pair rejoined off the back of the field, both conserved vast amounts of energy in the hope of a safety car, and refrained from using their second Attack Modes until later than everyone else. After using their extra energy to great effect, the British duo found themselves third and fourth at the final restart, with Barnard holding 3% more energy than Evans and da Costa in front. With Bird having taken the decision to not challenge Barnard in order to protect his team-mate, the younger McLaren driver was ultimately unable to launch a race-winning challenge.

"Honestly, not really," said Barnard when asked whether the win was achievable. "I was limited by temperature and by tyre grip. I tried, I really did try. At the end Sam was helping me to keep this third position, so thanks to him. I gave it my all at the end to gain some more positions but unfortunately it was not possible."



MAHINDRA'S DOUBLE DELIGHT

Edoardo Mortara and Nyck de Vries secured a double points finish for Mahindra in the opening race, the 18-point haul matching the team's best-ever start to a campaign from 2023. Mortara made it through to the qualifying duels and from seventh eventually finished fifth, while de Vries climbed from 21st to seventh before being promoted one further place at the expense of Norman Nato, who received a five-second penalty for an out-of-position restart.

TOUGH DEBUT FOR LOLA-YAMAHA

The new Lola-Yamaha Abt partnership began point-less in Sao Paulo when home hero Lucas di Grassi was forced to retire as early as lap five with a software issue, having only missed out on the qualifying duels by less than 0.2 seconds. Formula E rookie Zane Maloney was able to finish his first race down in 12th in the sister car after serving a drive-through penalty for overpower usage during Attack Mode.

DS PENSKE LEFT FRUSTRATED

Despite both DS Penske drivers making it through to the qualifying duels, Jean-Eric Vergne and Maximilian Guenther endured a difficult afternoon. Vergne was eventually classified ninth after the Frenchman activated his second Attack Mode just as a red flag was deployed, negating its effect. Guenther was forced to change his front wing during the second red flag after his collision with Cassidy and was only able to recover to 11th in the four-lap dash.

TICKTUM AND KIRO OFF THE MARK

The newly rebranded and now
Porsche-powered Cupra Kiro team
(below) scored points, with Dan
Ticktum classified eighth, while
team-mate and full-season rookie
David Beckmann retired on lap 29
due to suspension damage after
hitting the wall four laps earlier. The
German was credited with the fastest
lap of the race – a 1m12.219s over
three seconds quicker than
last season's fastest.



RESU	JLTS FORMULA E ROUN	ND 1/10, SAO PAULO (BRA), 7 DECEMBER (35 LA	PS - 65.429 MILES)
POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Mitch Evans (NZL)	JaguarRacing/JaguarI-Type7	1h45m14.758s
2	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	Porsche/Porsche99X Electric	+0.384s
3	Taylor Barnard (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-40RCE 05	+0.844s
4	Sam Bird (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-40RCE 05	+1.158s
5	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M11Electro	+1.800s
6	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	Mahindra Racing/Mahindra M11Electro	+2.640s
7	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 7	+2.997s
8	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	Cupra Kiro / Porsche 99X Electric WCG3	+3.683s
9	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Penske / DS E-TENSE FE25	+4.216s
10	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	Maserati MSG / Maserati Tipo Folgore	+4.779s
11	Maximilian Guenther (DEU)	DS Penske / DS E-TENSE FE25	+5.093s
12	Zane Maloney (BRB)	Lola-Yamaha Abt / Lola T001	+6.212s
13	Norman Nato (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-40RCE 05	+7.174s
14	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 05	+11.385s
15	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 7	34 laps/acc damage/software
R	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche/Porsche99X Electric	29 laps-accident
NC	David Beckmann (DEU)	Cupra Kiro / Porsche 99X Electric WCG3	29 laps-acc damage/suspension
R	Jake Dennis (GBR)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric	19 laps-software
R	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Lola-Yamaha Abt / Lola T001	5 laps-software
R	Jake Hughes (GBR)	Maserati MSG / Maserati Tipo Folgore	1 lap-accident
R	Nico Muller (CHE)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric	1 lap-accident
NS	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 7	software

Winner's average speed 37.300mph. Fastest lap Beckmann 1m12.219s, 90.847mph.

QUALIFYING 1 Wehrlein 1m09.851s; 2 Rowland 1m09.950s; 3 Dennis 1m09.906s; 4 Guenther 1m10.351s; 5 da Costa 1m10.107s; 6 Nato 1m10.114s; 7 Mortara 1m10.461s; 8 Vergne 1m10.486s; 9 Vandoorne 1m12.046s; 10 Cassidy 1m12.055s; 11 Ticktum 1m12.047s; 12 Buemi 1m12.068s; 13 Frijns 1m12.161s; 14 di Grassi 1m12.100s; 15 Muller 1m12.176s; 16 Bird 1m12.113s; 17 Barnard 1m12.423s; 18 Hughes 1m12.154s; 19 Maloney 1m12.550s; 20 Beckmann 1m12.310s; 21 de Vries 1m12.317s; 22 Evans no time.

TEAMS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 McLaren **27**; 2 Jaguar Racing 25; 3 Porsche 22; 4 Mahindra Racing 18; 5 Envision Racing 6; 6 Cupra Kiro 4; 7 DS Penske 2; 8 Maserati 1; 9 Lola-Yamaha Abt 0; 10 Nissan 0; 11 Andretti 0.





FORMULA 2 YAS MARINA (ARE) **7-8 DECEMBER**

ROUND 14/14

Gabriel Bortoleto was crowned Formula 2 champion following a pair of second-place finishes in Abu Dhabi. The Brazilian arrived at the season-ending event with only a half-point lead over Isack Hadjar and with Paul Aron still in with a mathematical chance, but kept his nose clean to top the table in a title battle that fizzled out with appalling luck for Hadjar at the start of the season-defining feature race.

Sauber F1-bound Bortoleto qualified his Invicta Racing car second behind ART Grand Prix-run Alpine junior Victor Martins. This meant he started Saturday's reversedgrid sprint race from ninth, with both of his title rivals ahead. But the biggest movers at the start were team-mates to two of the title rivals. Hadjar's Red Bull and Campos Racing stablemate Pepe Marti jumped from fourth to first, while Kush Maini (Invicta) sliced from eighth to second via a threewide move into the Turns 6/7 chicane.

Maini's progress had included a move into Turn 1 that pincered Hadjar between himself and Ritomo Miyata, damaging the front-wing end fence on the Frenchman's car, but he plugged on with the title on the line. Ahead of him, Bortoleto had climbed to fifth amid the early drama and methodically picked his way through to second, although Marti was out of reach en route to his maiden F2 win. Aron rose to third, but it was not enough to keep him in the championship picture, and then his weekend was soured when his Hitech GP car was found to have an illegal DRS actuator (see Pit & Paddock).

Ollie Bearman was next on the road, but a track-limits penalty dropped the Prema Racing man behind F2 newboy Dino Beganovic (DAMS). The Swede's defence repelled the advances of Hadjar, who was classified fifth ahead of Luke Browning.

The gap between Bortoleto and Hadiar was now a still-slender 4.5 points, but the challenger stalled from third on the grid at the start of the feature race, and had to be

WEEKEND WINNERS

wheeled into the pitlane before finally joining the race two laps down. Bortoleto had jumped into an early lead following a tardy start for Martins, and was unaware of Hadjar's fate, later explaining that he "didn't understand" what had happened.

While Bortoleto stormed clear on the supersoft tyres, Maini was unable to match his team-mate's pace and acted as a rolling roadblock for the rest of the pack, with Joshua Durksen on his tail ahead of the pitstops. Durksen gambled on an early stop to ditch his rubber in favour of the medium compound, and the AIX Racing-run Paraguayan and Martins got the undercut on Bortoleto, who struggled to get heat into his fresh tyres when he pitted a lap later.

Bortoleto was unable to pass Martins until a few laps from the finish. But, while Durksen took a superb first feature-race victory, second place was enough for the crown. Joining the pair on the podium was veteran Richard Verschoor (MP Motorsport) who, on his supersoft tyres, used the alternate strategy to storm through and pass Martins on the final lap. Bearman was fifth on his F2 swansong, while Marti was another on the alternate strategy and rose to sixth.

Once he had rejoined, Hadjar's forlorn chase to 19th place meant he completed the rest of his race within a second of Durksen covering the same distance, and 5.2s quicker than Bortoleto. He never gave up, but it was a case of what might have been. **SAM HALL**



Typhoon TOM'S pair crowned in delayed finale

SUPER GT SUZUKA (JPN) 8 DECEMBER ROUND 8/8

TOM'S Toyota pair Sho Tsuboi and Kenta Yamashita clinched the Super GT title with another faultless performance in last weekend's postponed Suzuka finale.

From pole, Tsuboi and Yamashita scorched to a third win of the season in the 300km race, rescheduled from its usual late August date due to a typhoon, to cap off a dominant season aboard the #36 Toyota GR Supra. The three bonus points from qualifying were enough for Tsuboi and Yamashita to put the title beyond the reach of their rivals, with Tsuboi taking his third GT500 crown in the space of four years – all with TOM'S – and Yamashita his second.

Yamashita had to withstand pressure in the second stint of the race, first from the NISMO Nissan Z of Atsushi Miyake, who looked in a strong position to challenge for victory after a storming opening stint from team-mate Mitsunori Takaboshi. That was until Miyake spun exiting Degner Curve just as the second



of two full-course-yellow periods ended, dropping him to sixth.

Real Racing Honda driver Kakunoshin Ohta was promoted to second, and made an ambitious lunge on Yamashita at the final chicane with four laps to go, but in the end Ohta fell 1.5 seconds shy of victory in the car started by Koudai Tsukakoshi.

Completing the podium was the Impul Nissan of Bertrand Baguette and Kazuki Hiramine, which started 15th and last but made huge progress through the pitstop phase with superior tyre warm-up on a chilly December day. That put Hiramine in a position to pass the Team Kunimitsu Honda of Naoki Yamamoto around the

outside of the chicane for what became the final podium spot. Yamamoto and team-mate Tadasuke Makino nevertheless cemented second in the standings with fourth, while seventh was still enough to promote NISMO pair Miyake and Takaboshi to third overall.

Ronnie Quintarelli bowed out of Super GT with eighth in the NISMO Nissan with Katsumasa Chiyo after what the Italian said was his best stint of the year.

JAMIE KLEIN

Pulling champ - for second time

F1 ACADEMY
YAS MARINA (ARE)
7-8 DECEMBER
ROUND 7/7

Abbi Pulling was crowned F1 Academy champion for the second time in Abu Dhabi. After apparently sealing the deal the previous weekend in Qatar, the midweek addition of a third race at Yas Marina to replace the cancelled Losail leg left her needing one more point in the Emirates.

This was laid to rest in qualifying, when



the Alpine-backed Rodin Motorsport driver stormed the session to secure all three pole positions for the weekend and the six points that went with them.

The remainder of the event was far less straightforward for Pulling than her two wins and a second place indicate. She started alongside Chloe Chambers in all three races, and Campos Racing's Haas protegee took the lead in the first two before dropping back with individual errors.

In the first race, this came on lap one when the American spun at Turn 9, while a lock-up into Turn 12 in race two sent Chambers into the run-off, gifting an unmissable opportunity to Pulling. Contact for Chambers with Doriane Pin at the first corner of the final race dropped both to the back of the field, where Chambers remained, while Pin, who was third behind Hamda Al Qubaisi in race one in her Prema Racing car, recovered to sixth.

A poor set-up was blamed for Pulling's struggles in race three, won by Prema's Ferrari-backed Maya Weug from the Briton.

SAM HALL

WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER GT

SUZUKA (JPN)

Sho Tsuboi/Kenta Yamashita TOM'S (Toyota GR Supra)

F1 ACADEMY

YAS MARINA (ARE)

Races 1 & 2 Abbi Pulling – Rodin Motorsport Race 3 Maya Weug – Prema Racing

ASIAN LE MANS SERIES

SEPANG (MAL)

Race 1

LMP2 Tristan Vautier/James Allen/ Fred Poordad RD Limited (ORECA 07)

LMP3 Matteo Quintarelli/Stephane Lemeret/Bence Valint Ultimate (Ligier JSP320)

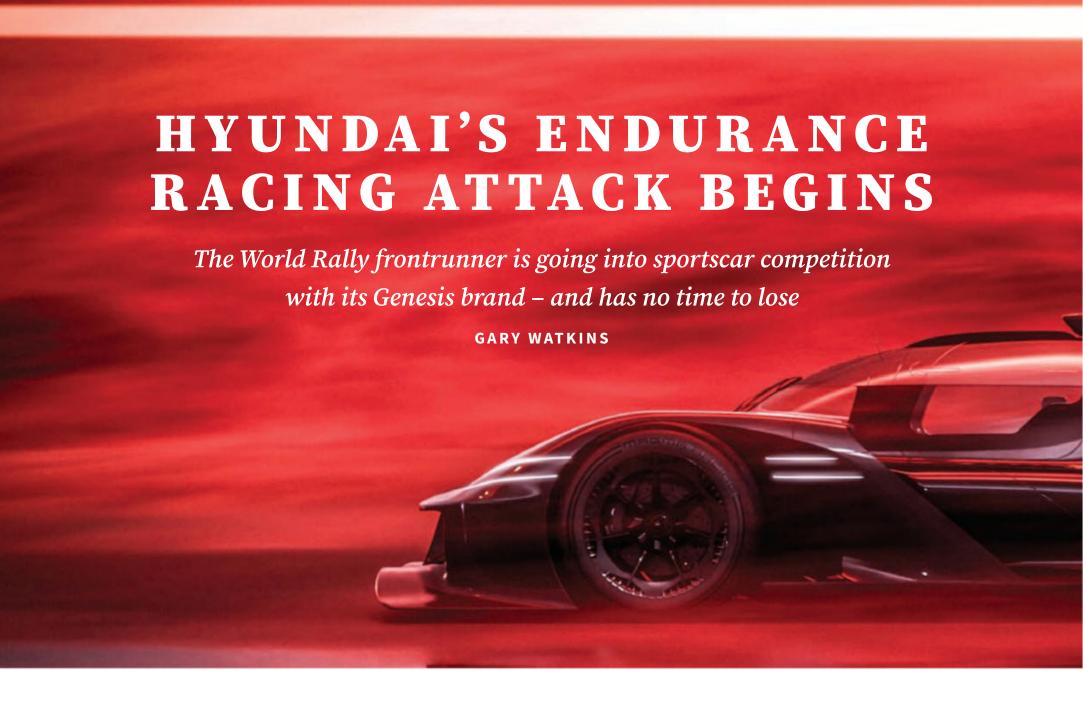
GT Esteban Masson/Daniel Serra/ Yudai Uchida Car Guy (Ferrari 296 GT3)

Race 2

LMP2 Malthe Jakobsen/Valerio Rinicella/
Michael Jensen
Algarve Pro Racing (ORECA 07)
LMP3 Quintarelli/Jemeret/Valint

GT Jules Gounon/Gabriele Piana/ Rinat Salikhov Winward Racing (Mercedes-AMG GT3)





ou might not have even heard of Genesis when it announced in September that it was building an LMDh prototype. And for good reason: Hyundai's premium brand is not yet 10 years old. That explains why it has been absent from the world of motorsport until now. But the time was right for an entry into the World Endurance Championship in 2026 and the IMSA SportsCar Championship the year after.

There was no point in going racing before there was something to promote, points out Luc Donckerwolke, chief creative officer of Genesis Motors since the foundation of the brand. He describes its motorsport entry in the top echelons of sportscar racing as "a natural evolution" for a marque that was announced in 2015 and hit the market with its first car two years later.

"Racing and not having products that are close to the products you race, there is a disconnect, a lack of believability or credibility," he says. That is changing with a new line of performance models carrying Magma badges from which a race team to be known as Genesis Magma Racing takes its name. "It is very important for us to race and get a return on investment," Donckerwolke continues. "I don't just mean in terms of marketing, but also in terms of technology and knowhow as well as inspiration for the designs."

That is why the respective Hypercar and GTP classes of WEC and IMSA are described as a natural fit for Genesis's motorsport aspirations, he says: "Endurance racing is highly compatible with our core brand values." Genesis is a style-led car maker: Donckerwolke points out that he has 1200 designers under him at three studios around the world. Top-line endurance racing today allows a manufacturer to import its styling DNA into its race car.

"The first one is the direct relationship to our line-up of cars," says Donckerwolke of the reasons why Genesis chose endurance racing over other categories – he admits that Formula 1 and Formula E were discussed. "It is the technology, but also the aerodynamic research is more applicable than if you do open-wheel racing. That is a completely different discipline. The learning is difficult to transfer

into normal vehicles. This is why we believe in endurance."

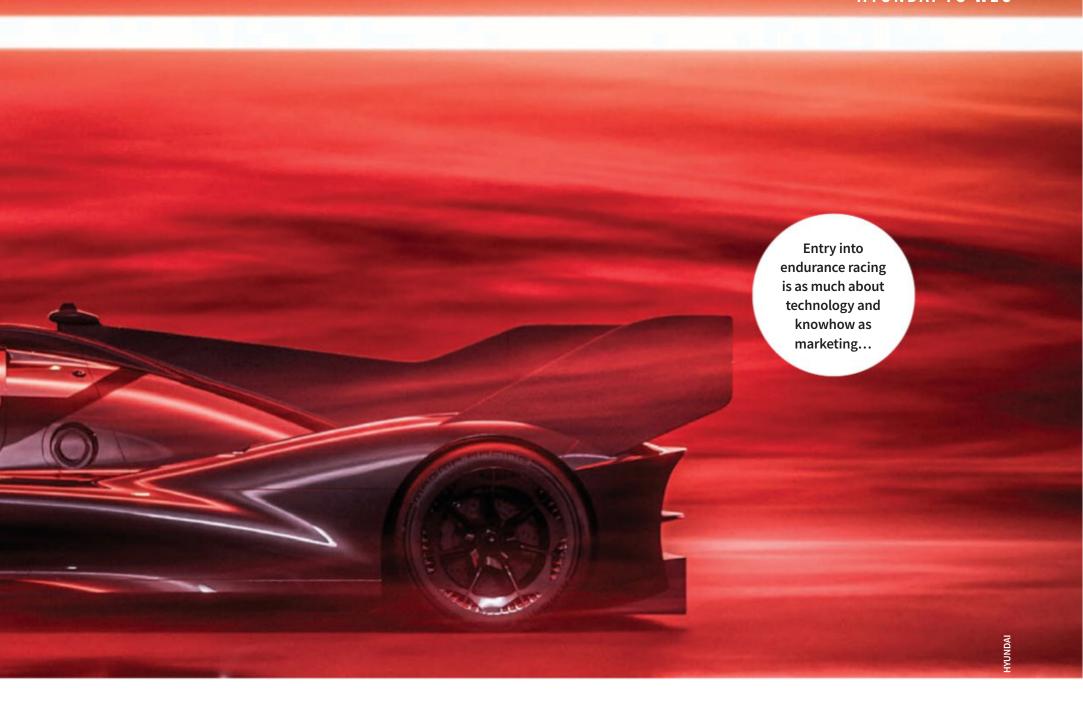
Genesis has been evaluating its first foray into motorsport for more than a year. It coincided with Hyundai Motorsport, the organisation that has masterminded the South Korean manufacturer's World Rally Championship campaigns of the past 11 seasons and developed its line of TCR touring cars, taking a deep dive into the endurance racing regulations. Rumours had abounded about a possible Hyundai entry before it emerged that its real interest lay in the future hydrogen rules: Hyundai is one of the few manufacturers to sell a road car powered by a fuel cell: the Nexo SUV.

Two things derailed a Hyundai entry using a car built to the hydrogen rules now scheduled for a 2028 introduction. The first was the decision to allow combustion-engined hydrogen prototypes, announced in 2023, and the second was the FIA's announcement early this year that hydrogen vehicles competing in international motorsport will have to store the fuel in liquid form. The Nexo uses gaseous hydrogen.

Quite how Hyundai's examination of hydrogen fits into the narrative of the Genesis programme isn't entirely clear. What is apparent is that it has come together late. The sign-off of the project didn't come until the beginning of September, which Donckerwolke describes as the point of no return if a car to be called the Genesis GMR-001 Hypercar was to be ready for 2026. He reveals he had been due to meet with Genesis's leadership on the last Friday of August, but that the meeting was cancelled due to conflicting agendas.

"I was forced to send an email on Friday afternoon: basically my email was, 'It is now that we have a slot to enter endurance, we will be racing to this calendar and this is the level of investment'," he recalls. "It was the longest weekend of my life, waiting for an 'Are you out of your mind?' or a 'Yes'. On the Tuesday it was a 'Yes'." A quick decision was important: "Either we decided yes or we made an already very tight timeline impossible."

The short timeframe involved in the project, 16 months from sign-off to homologation at the end of next year, was the catalyst >>>







for many of the key project decisions. The first is that Hyundai opted to go down the LMDh route rather than developing a Le Mans Hypercar for its entry into the WEC and IMSA.

Hyundai Motorsport director Cyril Abiteboul, whose Frankfurtbased operation is leading the LMDh programme, has revealed that the initial thought from company headquarters in South Korea was to go the LMH route. That would have involved a ground-up design rather than producing its challenger around French constructor ORECA's chassis spine already used as the basis of the Acura ARX-06 and Alpine A424.

"The initial expression of interest from corporate headquarters was to have bit more freedom and authority on the design," explains Abiteboul, who will take the team principal role of the GMR operation. "But I said it depends on what kind of timing we are talking about. If you give us three years, yes, if you give us one year, it's a no-go."

What the former team principal at both the Caterham and Alpine F1 squads describes as a "hyper tight" schedule also explains the "staged approach" to Genesis's entry into endurance racing. It makes sense to join the WEC first, he adds, because GMR will be an

autonomous in-house operation whereas the marque will seek a partner team to work with when it enters IMSA.

He explains that he wanted GMR to be "as close as possible to the product" during its first year of racing. "I don't want to have any filter or firewall between us and the car," he says. "That is behind the decision to do WEC [first]; we know that in IMSA we will never be able to do it in a such a way."

Abiteboul reveals that Genesis has been looking for short-cuts as it readies itself for its first race early in 2026. That includes the development of the internal combustion engine that will make up the GMR-001's power unit along with the off-the-shelf energyretrieval system mandated in LMDh. A twin-turbo V8 will be based on existing technology employed in the 1.6-litre turbo inline four that powers the Hyundai i20 N Rally1. Genesis has confirmed that the engine capacity will exactly double that at 3.2 litres.

"If you look at where our competitors were when they started their programmes they already had an engine up and running," he says in reference to the likes of Porsche and BMW using variants of engines already used respectively in LMP2 and the DTM. "So that is why we decided to go for the short-cut by using the WRC engine as the base









engine. It may sound a bit strange, but it is a good short-cut."

He adds that it is a "short-cut that has been used by other people", a reference to the twin-turbo V8 that powered the Glickenhaus 007 LMH that competed in WEC in 2021-23. Its V8 was developed by Pipo Moteurs in France, which formerly worked with Hyundai on its Rally1 programme and still does on its Rally2 powerplant.

Hyundai motorsport technical director Francois-Xavier Demaison explains that many of the key components will carry over from the rally engine in modified form. "We can say that the pistons, the cylinder liners, conrods, the combustion chamber and all the valve train is a one-to-one from the rally engine to the LMDh V8, but modified, of course," says Demaison. "We will have to change the cylinder spacing, for example, but the main parts of the engine will be very similar just to avoid any issues. We don't have time to fail."

So much so that Hyundai Motorsport opted to begin work on the engine in advance of the programme's sign-off. Demaison reveals that this process began in the middle of the summer. The aero programme started around the same time. Donckerwolke sent stylists from its European design office to ORECA in Signes near Paul Ricard to begin development of the body shape. The message is loud and clear: there isn't time to waste.

Genesis also has a team to establish, or rather it needs to turn the operation that won this year's WRC drivers' title with Thierry Neuville into a race team. (Hyundai looks likely to outsource its WRC team

"We want to give an opportunity to drivers to be part of what we are in the process of building"

after next season.) The IDEC Sport LMP2 team, which took third in class at Le Mans this year, was announced as a partner when Genesis took the wraps off the programme in Dubai last week, but it is not an Audi/Joest or Porsche/Penske type relationship.

IDEC is part of what Genesis is billing as its trajectory programme. It is a means by which it trains personnel for the WEC team: staff from Frankfurt as well as new recruits will be embedded at IDEC for its assault on the LMP2 class of the European Le Mans Series with an ORECA-Gibson 07 in Genesis colours. "I want to be independent as soon as possible," points out Abiteboul. "We are going to work with people who are going to make us self-sufficient in the future. The end game is to have that autonomy."

How long the trajectory programme runs for isn't clear, but the link with IDEC will continue. GMR will be based on a new business park built alongside Paul Ricard's Mistral Straight by its parent company IDEC International.

The trajectory programme is also about nurturing future driving talent. Logan Sargeant, who lost his Williams drive after August's Dutch Grand Prix, Indy NXT race winner and three-time W Series champion Jamie Chadwick, and Porsche Supercup racer Mathys Jaubert will drive the ORECA. "We want to give an opportunity to drivers to be part of what we are in the process of building," explains Abiteboul. "There will be a very strong connection with those drivers, so maybe there is a future between them and ourselves for 2026 onwards."

Abiteboul stresses that there is no mechanism in place by which they will automatically join Andre Lotterer and Pipo Derani, the first GMR drivers announced for the WEC programme. "We want to keep it a bit loose," he says. "We are giving them the opportunity, the platform, and then we will see."

Hyundai insists it is in endurance racing for the long haul. That means at least until the end of 2029, when the current rules cycle ends. Just how ambitious it is becomes apparent when it talks about a future beyond that. It's already evaluating what comes next.

P44 HOW NEUVILLE TOOK THE WRC CROWN



DERANI'S BIG ROLL OF THE DICE

He had good offers and a strong career in IMSA, but the Brazilian decided he wanted a different challenge instead

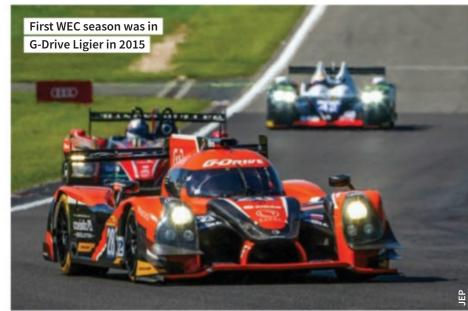
GARY WATKINS

t was, by any standards, a bold decision and significant risk. Those are the terms used by Pipo Derani when he describes his decision in the summer to refuse a new contract with the Action Express Racing IMSA SportsCar Championship squad. It was, after all, the team with which he scored a pair of titles in North America and two of his four Sebring 12 Hours victories. But the Brazilian had a new goal: to chase glory in the World Endurance Championship and its blue riband event: the Le Mans 24 Hours. It looks like the gamble has paid off, because from 2026 he'll be doing just that as part of the Hyundai Genesis brand's exciting new LMDh programme.

Derani points out that success in the WEC is "the one thing missing" from a bulging sportscar CV that also includes victories at the Daytona 24 Hours and the Petit Le Mans enduro at Road Atlanta. "There wasn't much more I could do in America," says the 31-year-old. "I had got to the point in my career where I wanted to race in the WEC rather than fight for more wins and another championship in IMSA. I wanted a new challenge, I didn't want to get complacent.

"That's why I decided to take charge of my own destiny. I said to myself, 'If I don't leave now, I will never leave.' The contract on offer wasn't a short one. If I had signed for how long the team wanted, the opportunity to move to the WEC was going to get slimmer and slimmer. I had to roll my sleeves up and make a decision for my future. I didn't want to have regrets in a few years."

Racing for outright honours in the WEC's top class is where Derani, who has always raced under his nickname Pipo rather than his birth name Luis Felipe, had imagined he'd be in the years to come when he was taking his first steps in sportscar racing 10 years ago. That was the vision he mapped out after taking part in a couple of European Le Mans Series rounds in 2014 with the Murphy Prototypes squad in LMP2 and getting picked up by Russian entrant G-Drive Racing, then running in partnership with OAK Racing, to contest a full WEC season the following year. "My expectation was that I





"I said to myself, 'If I don't leave now, I will never leave.' I didn't want to have regrets in a few years"

would do maybe one or two more years in P2 to set myself up for the move to LMP1," he explains. "But it didn't work out that way; sometimes in life things take a turn."

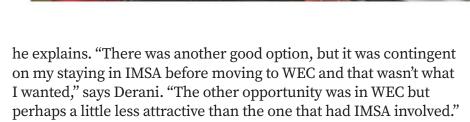
That turn was a move to Extreme Speed Motorsports for the WEC in 2016. The US team was also contesting the IMSA enduros with the Ligier-Honda JSP2, and before the WEC campaign kicked off Derani became a winner of both the Daytona and Sebring endurance classics. "Within a blink of an eye I had created a name for myself in America," he recalls. "I didn't expect that to happen, but you can say my career took a positive turn."

After a couple more years with ESM, which included Sebring victory number two in 2018, Derani moved to the Action Express Cadillac team. Two more wins at Sebring followed, in 2019 and 2023, with his two championships coming in 2021 and 2023.

But he never stopped racing in the WEC. There were three races driving for Ford in GTE Pro, two outings (one LMP2, the other LMP1) with Rebellion, and then two part-seasons racing for Glickenhaus. "That played a part in fuelling my desire to race full-time in the WEC," he explains. "My racing background is in Europe, so I felt at home in WEC."

But Derani didn't have a home for 2025 when he told Action Express that he would be leaving at the end of the season. It was a decision that really was a roll of the dice. The contact with Hyundai Motorsport, the organisation masterminding Genesis's entry into sportscar racing's big time, didn't come until later. But when it did, he felt it was the right move for him. And there were other offers,

Glory at Daytona in Ligier-Honda in 2016



Derani flanked by Jack

Aitken (left) and Alexander

Sims after Sebring win in 2023

The Genesis deal appealed straight away. "Everything happened quickly," he continues. "I was in the middle of negotiations with other manufacturers, but I thought, 'This is it'.

"What an opportunity, because I will be helping to develop a car from scratch as well as being part of a new team being built from the ground up. That has more value for me than putting myself in a car that someone else has already developed. It is going to be very rewarding putting my stamp on the car."

Derani's career has sort of come full circle with his signing for Genesis. "It has taken me almost 10 years to come back to where I believed I was going to be in 2016 or 2017," he laughs. "I'm very thankful for what I was able to achieve in America, but it feels like I have been working 10 years for this opportunity."





SEASON REVIEW

WRC

NEUVILLE'S THREE STEPS TO SUCCESS IN TURBULENT SEASON

The Hyundai star finally ended his long wait for the World Rally crown after a campaign that featured controversy and drama to the end

TOM HOWARD

PHOTOGRAPHY McKLEIN



ix winners, a controversial new points systems, the joint-closest winning margin, champions making uncharacteristic errors, a mid-season regulations 'hokey cokey', young guns coming to the fore and a title decider for the ages. That was the 2024 World Rally Championship in a nutshell. But ultimately it was the year that transformed the WRC's nearly man Thierry Neuville into a world champion, alongside co-driver Martijn Wydaeghe.

The Belgian has strived for 17 years to achieve his childhood dream and that dream is now reality – he is the 20th WRC drivers' champion. Hyundai's first drivers' world rally champion repeated the feats of the great Sebastiens Loeb and Ogier to win the title by leading the championship from start to the finish. This epitomised the 2024-spec Neuville, who not only showed the speed that's been ever-present, but this year had a much tougher steely resolve, coupled with a pragmatic approach, resulting in remarkable consistency and fewer errors. "It is the best reward we can get for all the hard work we have put in over the last few years," acknowleged Neuville. "It has been a nice but challenging journey."

Before a wheel had been turned, the 2024 title race took on a different complexion, with reigning champion Kalle Rovanpera

"IT IS THE BEST REWARD WE CAN GET FOR ALL THE HARD WORK WE HAVE PUT IN OVER THE YEARS"

opting not to defend his crown and instead contest a partial campaign with Toyota. Heading into the season, it seemed that the battle would be a three-way fight between Neuville, his returning Hyundai teammate Ott Tanak and Toyota's three-time title runner-up Elfyn Evans, who was joined by Takamoto Katsuta as the second full-time driver, with eight-time champion Ogier running a partial campaign.

A decision to employ a complex points system to spice up Sundays added another variable to the mix. The top 10 crews at the end of Saturday could pocket 18-15-13-10-8-6-4-3-2-1, but those points could only be claimed by reaching the rally finish on Sunday, when another tranche of points were up for grabs. Sunday effectively became a whole new rally with points (7-6-5-4-3-2-1) awarded to the fastest >>>

REVIEW WRC

seven crews on the final day's stages in addition to the 5-4-3-2-1 points on offer for the Power Stage.

It ensured that drivers could no longer cruise through Sundays saving tyres for the Power Stage, which led to drama-filled climaxes. But it proved difficult to explain and was widely criticised, even labelled "a joke" by Ogier, who was among the majority of drivers who felt that it devalued the victory.

Whoever mastered the new points system would be rewarded handsomely, and that was certainly Hyundai, with Neuville leading the charge. A whopping 104 points of his 242 total came from the final day of events with team-mate Tanak delivering 98, while the best from Toyota was Evans's 76 points haul.

"We knew Sundays were crucial," reflects Neuville. "Despite being in the points we always pushed on Sunday so we risked a bit, especially in the beginning of the year, but we knew that those points we got were the most valuable. We were surprised by Toyota on Sundays – maybe they didn't have the speed to follow us because we were pushing really hard or they didn't understand how crucial those points can be."

Sundays proved decisive in the outcome of both the drivers' and manufacturers' titles. But mastering the system was just one element of Neuville's title season, which he has broken into three key steps.

It all began with a big push at the start of the year, highlighted by a stunning display in Monte Carlo where Neuville took out the maximum 30 points on offer. The feat wasn't repeated by any driver for the remainder of the campaign. The dominant display warranted high praise from Hyundai team principal Cyril Abiteboul: "I hope that maybe what happened this weekend is also because he is a stronger person, stronger driver and stronger competitor than he has ever been."

As the championship headed to Sweden in February, talk of the points system was rumbling on but it had been somewhat superseded by the FIA's proposal to safeguard the future of the WRC, which triggered a regulations debate. The plan was to remove hybrid power from, and reduce the aero of, the Rally1 cars for next year before a more significant rule shift for 2027. This ultimately led to teams writing to the FIA stating a wish for the regulations to remain stable moving into 2025 and 2026 and so the motorsport governing body made a U-turn. But, come the Acropolis Rally in September, an enforcement of Compact Dynamics' safety guidelines for hybrid units meant the future of hybrid power was again on the table, and this time a decision was made to remove it for 2025 due to spiralling costs to maintain and repair the units.

In Sweden the drivers' fears over the points system devaluing the victory were felt and it wouldn't be the only occasion. Esapekka Lappi, occupying a part-time role at Hyundai following the return of Tanak, scored only the second win of his WRC career, ending a six-and-a-half-year drought. In doing so, he picked up 19 points while Evans, who finished second, left the weekend with 24 thanks to his Sunday points haul.

That would be the high point of a difficult season for Lappi that delivered just a further 14 points from Kenya, Latvia, Finland and Chile while sharing the third car with Dani Sordo and Andreas Mikkelsen, the last-named also struggling to shine on asphalt rallies.





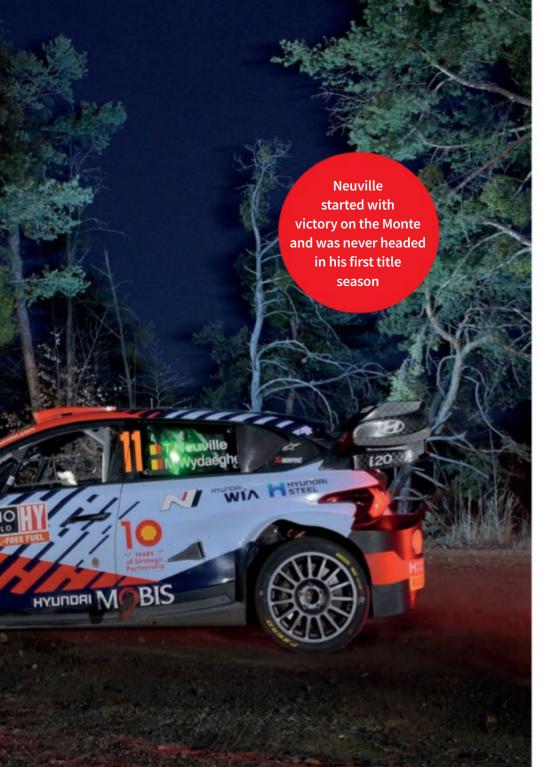
Also enjoying a high in Sweden was Adrien Fourmaux, who claimed a maiden podium by finishing third in his M-Sport Ford – a result that lifted the Rally1 returnee to third in the championship, above Tanak, whom he replaced at the Ford squad. Absent from the podium in fourth, Neuville maintained his plan, ending the weekend with a three-point lead, while Evans emerged as the early title challenger after Tanak's Friday crash into a snowbank.

Kenya was where Neuville encountered one of only two technical issues, a fuel-pressure problem meaning he joined the list of crews to suffer delays in the WRC's most arduous rally. But again, he salvaged 19 points, with 11 of those coming from Sunday.

The victory was taken by Rovanpera – the first of four triumphs for the Finn – as he produced a stunning drive, avoiding Kenya's pitfalls to lead home Toyota team-mate Katsuta. The rally was Katsuta's highlight, and a series of crashes resulted in the team benching him for Chile, before fighting back to strong results under immense pressure in Central Europe and the Japan finale.

Croatia proved how competitive this year's championship was









as Evans and Neuville sat tied for the lead after more than 70 miles on Friday. But the victory, the first of three, was claimed by Ogier after Super Sunday earned its reputation as catalyst for drama with both Evans and Neuville crashing, dropping them behind the Toyota star.

For championship leader Neuville, step two, and the most mentally testing part of the season, was on the horizon – seven consecutive gravel rallies where he would have to act as road sweeper. "I suffered and also mentally it was tough," he explains. "There were lots of part-time drivers and people jumping in who took all the victories away, but every time on Sunday we were there and we took a lot of points."

In Portugal he finished third and it was here where Evans's challenge began to falter and Tanak's ignited. Evans felt "everything he touched went wrong". Struggles for balance in his GR Yaris were compounded by a puncture and broken radiator, while co-driver Scott Martin was forced to read pacenotes from a back-up on his mobile phone after leaving his book at a time control. A six-point deficit to Neuville ballooned to 24. Three more second-place finishes followed, but Evans's lack of confidence to push his GR Yaris to the limit proved costly.

Tanak, on the other hand, scored his first podium of the year in Portugal off the back of disappointment after hitting a rock in Kenya. The Estonian followed Ogier, who took a record-breaking sixth Portugal win. "Let's say, we are not in a place with the car where I have the speed of the others, but at least we are not far away, and if we keep pushing, we should be in the fight," said Tanak at the time.

Tanak did haul himself into the title fight at the next round in Sardinia, where Neuville suffered a first major setback when he "lost concentration for a fraction of a second" and found himself beached in a ditch. But this is where his Sunday strategy came into its own to leave the Italian island event, which ran to a new 48-hour compact format, with 12 points.

That stat was overshadowed by the fact that Tanak snatched the win from Ogier as a final-stage puncture resulted in the joint-closest winning margin in championship history (with the 2011 Rally Jordan).

The normally reserved Tanak let out a roar as he triumphed by 0.2s.

Fast gravel rallies in Poland and Latvia particularly challenged Neuville's resolve but somehow he salvaged 14 points from the former, which produced one of the drives of the season. Rovanpera was at home repairing his jet ski when the call came from Toyota to pack his bags and head to Poland to replace the injured Ogier, who was involved in a road traffic accident during recce. Despite a rushed, limited preparation and sleepless nights watching onboards, Rovanpera blew away his rivals to score a second win of the year, while Tanak's victory

"I WAS WATCHING NHL FINALS AND THE NEXT MORNING I WAS WAKING UP FOR THE RECCE"

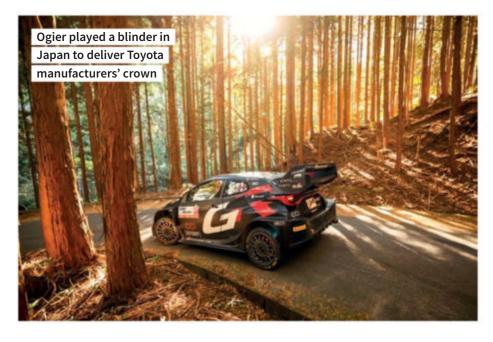
hopes were ended by a collision with a deer.

"I was watching NHL finals with my friend and the next morning I was waking up for the recce," said Rovanpera, who jetted from Poland the morning after the rally to Imola to prepare for his maiden circuit racing outing in Carrera Cup Benelux. "I have to say it was quite clever [the way he drove]."

Rovanpera delivered another dominant victory in Latvia's WRC debut, an event in which he was scheduled to compete. It was here where Neuville's frustrations of opening the road boiled to the surface, directing his anger at part-time drivers such as Rovanpera and the impressive Martins Sesks. The local boy scored two stage wins and cruelly missed out on a maiden podium in only his second Rally1 outing for M-Sport when a technical issue robbed him of >>>



"MAYBE [NEUVILLE] SHOULD STOP CRYING AND LEARN DRIVING FIRST ON THE ROAD"



third position during the final stage.

"We did a great job in the beginning of the year, and now there's no reward at all," complained Neuville. "We could have, whoever it is, Ott, Elfyn or myself, the winner of the championship at the end of the year winning maybe one rally."

Rovanpera and Ogier effectively told Neuville 'to get on with it'.

"That's just how it is, you need to take it," said Rovanpera. "Otherwise, if you don't want to do it, don't lead the championship." Ogier went a step further at the Acropolis Rally, saying "maybe he should stop crying and learn driving first on the road" after taking 45 seconds from the Hyundai driver despite starting one position behind sweeper Neuville.

Neuville refused to bite on the barb thrown out by Ogier, whose part-time season turned into more of a full-time campaign, emerging as Toyota's best shot at the drivers' title. Toyota persuaded Ogier to contest the remaining rounds after finishing second in Latvia and inheriting a victory in Finland following one of Toyota's 'Black Sundays'. Rovanpera was denied a home win yet again, rolling out of a dominant lead after hitting a rock that had been dragged out into the road on the penultimate stage. It was here where another rising Finnish star, Sami Pajari, finished fourth on his Rally1 debut for Toyota.

According to Neuville, the Acropolis Rally was the turning point and represented the start of the third part of his campaign – managing the gap, which stood at 27 points coming into the event. He held his nerve to take a second win of the season from the safe hands of team-mate Sordo as Hyundai locked out the podium. A turbo failure ended Ogier's victory hopes early on before he rolled on the final stage, triggering another "Black Sunday", as Toyota team principal Jari-Matti Latvala described it. It was at this point that he felt his team's manufacturers' title hopes were all but over. To add insult to injury for Ogier, who was clearly the fastest driver in Greece, he was handed a suspended €30,000 fine for comments directed at race control about poor visibility from hanging dust in the opening stage.

It seemed a strange punishment considering Tanak avoided sanction when he struck a promotional arch that had fallen on a stage in Latvia, before officials moved to halt the test, and suggested that race control was too busy having lunch to red flag the stage... Ogier and Tanak both vowed to reduce their interactions with the media at Chile's September round in protest against the FIA's widespread move in motorsport to punish negative comments and swearing by drivers.

In terms of the title race, Neuville's impressive Acropolis victory afforded him a 34-point lead over Tanak while Ogier's title prospects got fainter when he hit a rock in Chile. An error while leading in

ROUND BY ROUND

Monte Carlo Rally

1 Neuville/Wydaeghe

2 Ogier/Landais3 Evans/Martin

Neuville sets his stall out in spectacular fashion, scoring the only maximum points finish of the season under the controversial new system. The Hyundai driver wins nine of 17 dry asphalt stages to defeat Monte Carlo maestro Ogier by 16.1s, with another Toyota, driven by Evans, in third. A sheet of ice catches out Tanak on the 2019 champion's return to Hyundai but he recovers to fourth after an engine issue, ahead of the M-Sport Ford of Fourmuax.

Rally Sweden

1 Lappi/Ferm

2 Evans/Martin 3 Fourmaux/Coria

Lappi ends a six-and-a-halfyear WRC victory drought after a head-to-head fight with Katsuta ends with the Toyota driver finding a snowbank. Evans, fastest on Sunday, outscores winning Hyundai driver Lappi by five points as the new points system takes effect. Fourmaux claims a maiden WRC podium, benefiting from uncharacteristic crashes for early leader Rovanpera and Tanak. Points leader Neuville finishes a distant fourth.

Safari Rally Kenya

1 Rovanpera/Halttunen

- 2 Katsuta/Johnston
- 3 Fourmaux/Coria

Toyota responds to Hyundai's strong start with victory in Kenya thanks to a sublime drive from Rovanpera, the only Rally1 driver not to suffer any major delays. Katsuta recovers from punctures to finish second and Fourmaux, also affected by a puncture, finishes third. Punctures and a fuel pressure issue leave Neuville in fifth, while Hyundai team-mate Tanak tops the Sunday points after retiring thanks to hitting a rock while sitting second on Friday.

Rally Croatia

- 1 Ogier/Landais
- 2 Evans/Martin 3 Neuville/Wydaeghe

Final-day drama hands Ogier a first win of the season and a 100th career podium after Neuville (on stage 18) and Evans (stage 20) hit trouble. Neuville and Evans tie for the lead at the end of Friday after nearly 75 competitive miles. An inspired tyre call helps Neuville into a slender 4.9s advantage with Ogier 11.6s back in third. But errors on Sunday result in Evans dropping to second and Neuville to third. Set-up struggles leave Tanak way back in fourth.

Rally Portugal

1 Ogier/Landais

2 Tanak/Jarveoja 3 Neuville/Wydaeghe

Ogier surpasses WRC great Markku Alen to claim a record sixth Rally Portugal victory, his 60th WRC win, while Tanak kickstarts his season with his first podium of 2024. Neuville impresses as road sweeper to finish third and open up a useful 24-point lead over Evans in the championship. The Welshman encounters set-up issues, a puncture and an overheating issue, while co-driver Scott Martin leaves his pacenotes at a time control.



Central Europe, prior to a heavy crash on the penultimate stage that resulted in a retirement, sparked anger that is rarely seen from Ogier: "I was more angry due to the fact that I put a lot of effort into all these last races and everything was close to being perfect, but that's rallying. It needs just a fine mistake to ruin it all and it was hard to accept."

Central Europe was Neuville's first match point but two spins while leading handed nearest rival Tanak the victory, taking the title fight down to the wire in Japan. Although Neuville was the heavy favourite, he needed all his mental resolve to fight back from a turbo failure that left his title prospects hanging in the balance. Ultimately the title was decided when rally leader Tanak rolled on Sunday in what he described as a "complete f*** up". It was a big surprise to Neuville as he and Wydaeghe celebrated at the side of the road knowing the dream was reality.

Ogier put to bed a series of misfortune from Greece, Chile and Central Europe by taking advantage of a dramatic turnaround in the manufacturers' title race caused by Tanak's sudden exit. Toyota had trailed Hyundai by 15 points heading into Japan but found itself level heading into the Power Stage, where Ogier weaved his magic to deliver one of the drives of the season, win the test and snatch the title from under Hyundai's nose by three points. "I never lost the faith that I can still do it," smiled Ogier. "It was one of the best days of my career in terms of emotion to win the manufacturers' title on the Power Stage in the last minute."

There was a mixture of emotions at Hyundai. "Just as I feel it is deserved for Thierry, I feel it is also deserved that Toyota are where

they are, which is on top," admitted Abiteboul. "It is clearly painful for every single team member – just like I'm sure it was painful for them [Ott and Martin Jarveoja]. I want to believe we are all going to learn and improve from the accident."

Given the drama that unfolded, Evans's victory – his first of the season – almost went forgotten as the Welshman ended a difficult year on a high. "I actually think there was quite a bit missing, especially on the rougher gravel rallies, and that was the Achilles' heel – that side of the job needs to improve quite a bit," said Evans, reflecting on a year where he finished runner-up for the fourth time.

While Japan was the closing chapter for the title race, it also featured the end of a Fourmaux/M-Sport partnership that climaxed with a fifth podium. "It was a big challenge at the beginning of the year as the [team] were losing Tanak, the car was not reliable, so the future seemed to be quite dark, but then at the end I think we showed the light," said Fourmaux ahead of his move to Hyundai for 2025. "It has been a great season and a really good comeback in Rally1."

M-Sport remains hopeful that it can retain Gregoire Munster for 2025 after the Luxembourger showed flashes of speed during a challenging season that yielded fifths in Sardinia, Central Europe and Japan.

Such was the drama of 2024, it's fair to say that some may still be digesting the last 12 months when it all starts again in Monte Carlo in January, when for the first time Neuville will run with a new number: "It is no secret we have two number 1s on the car [he normally runs #11], but now it will only be one. I'm looking forward to it."

Rally Italy Sardinia

1 Tanak/Jarveoja

2 Ogier/Landais3 Sordo/Carrera

Tanak beats Ogier, who suffers a puncture in a dramatic final-stage showdown, to clinch victory by 0.2s, the joint smallest margin in WRC history. Sordo scores a podium on his second outing of the season in a new 48-hour format for the rally. Neuville retires on Saturday after losing concentration and running off the road, but fights back to score a maximum 12 Sunday points. Evans again struggles for confidence in his Toyota.

Rally Poland

1 Rovanpera/Halttunen

2 Evans/Martin

3 Fourmaux/Coria

Supersub Rovanpera scores one of the finest wins of his career while standing in at the last minute for Ogier, who is injured in a road traffic accident on the recce and hospitalised. The Finn wins nine of 19 stages to beat Toyota team-mate Evans by 28.3s. Fourmaux returns to the podium for a third time. Neuville battles to fourth while Tanak's victory hopes end after hitting a deer, but the Estonian nevertheless salvages 11 Super Sunday points.

Rally Latvia

1 Rovanpera/Halttunen

2 Ogier/Landais

3 Tanak/Jarveoja

World champion Rovanpera dominates Latvia's debut on the WRC calendar to win comfortably by 39.2s from the returning Ogier. Local hero Sesks grabs the headlines with two stage wins but is denied third place by a technical issue on his Ford Puma. Tanak, although hampered by hitting a collapsed promotional arch, inherits third. A frustrated Neuville, hampered by road position, sees his championship lead reduced to eight points.

Rally Finland

1 Ogier/Landais

2 Neuville/Wydaeghe 3 Fourmaux/Coria

A final-day roll robs a dominant Rovanpera of victory on home soil, handing Ogier a third win of the season. Rovanpera's 45.8s lead is wiped out after hitting a rock in the middle of the road on the same stage team-mate Evans crashes, after an earlier driveshaft failure extinguishes his podium hopes. Neuville gains in his title bid when Tanak crashes heavily. Ogier emerges as Neuville's nearest title rival. Rally1 debutant Pajari finishes fourth.

Acropolis Rally Greece

1 Neuville/Wydaeghe

2 Sordo/Carrera

3 Tanak/JarveojaHyundai completes

Hyundai completes a stunning podium lockout in one of the toughest Acropolis Rallies in recent years. Neuville survives an engine issue and stays cool under pressure. The Belgian ignores Ogier's mind games to win as the points lead over the Frenchman extends to 34 points. Ogier recovers from losing two minutes to a turbo failure to sit second, but rolls on the final stage, meaning Toyota's manufacturers' title tilt takes a hit.

THRILL AND SPILLS AS PAJARI CLAIMS WRC2 CROWN

Picking a WRC2 champion was a tough prospect, such was the talent that lined up to take on the WRC's second tier. Toyota added spice by joining the fray with its all-new Yaris Rally2, led by Printsport ace Sami Pajari, who ultimately emerged from a three-way fight as champion.

Citroen man Yohan Rossel won in Monte Carlo in a dramatic final-stage thriller, but Oliver Solberg (Skoda) showed his hand with a commanding win on the Swedish snow. Punctures in Kenya resulted in Solberg finishing second behind Gus Greensmith, before a high-speed crash in Portugal dented his bid. Pajari, second in Sweden, also exited Portugal in unceremonious fashion as Jan Solans claimed Toyota's first WRC2 win. Now Rossel led the championship from Solberg thanks to his second place behind Citroen team-mate Nikolay Gryazin in Croatia.

Pajari mounted his charge with a victory in Sardinia that triggered a run of five consecutive podiums, including wins in Poland and Greece. The latter delivered an extraordinary spectacle as Pajari and Estonian rival Robert Virves ended the rally on identical overall times, Pajari winning on countback with a faster stage-one time.

Pajari still trailed Solberg by three points after the Swede scored resounding victories in Latvia and Finland. A victory in Chile would have sealed the title for Solberg but, slowed by a puncture, he was judged to have held up title rival Rossel in a stage affected by thick fog. A nominal time was awarded to Rossel that launched the Frenchman from third to the lead and ultimately victory, while Solberg settled for fourth after a failed protest.

Rossel had the chance to claim the title at the Central European Rally only for a wild off-road moment in stage two to effectively end his chances. So it came to a strange climax in Japan, with Solberg leading Rossel by 12 points and Pajari by 15. But both Solberg and Rossel had completed their seven points-scoring events and were therefore absent, and Pajari needed to win or finish second to seal the crown. He and co-driver Enni Malkonen, competing together for the final time, delivered with a measured drive to second behind a dominant Gryazin.





Rally Chile

1 Rovanpera/Halttunen

- 2 Evans/Martin
- 3 Tanak/Jarveoja

Rovanpera tames challenging foggy conditions to record a fourth win of the season by 23.4s from team-mate Evans as Toyota closes the gap to Hyundai in the manufacturers' battle. Rovanpera stars when conditions become treacherous to jump from third into the lead. A puncture followed by an impact with a rock ends Ogier's title bid, while Tanak closes the gap to Hyundai team-mate Neuville to 29 points.

Central European Rally

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja 2 Evans/Martin
- 3 Neuville/Wydaeghe
- Neuville misses an opportunity to seal the championship with two costly spins while leading the rally. Ogier makes an error on Sunday, handing Tanak the lead before the Toyota crashes out of the rally entirely on the penultimate stage. Neuville finishes third but the championship lead is cut to 25 points after Tanak claims his second victory of the year from the ever-

consistent Evans.

Rally Japan

1 Evans/Martin

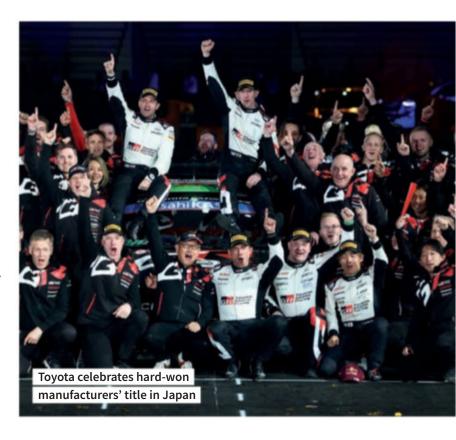
3 Fourmaux/Coria

Neuville needs six points to

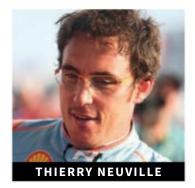
2 Ogier/Landais

by three points.

seal the title in Japan but a turbo failure dents his hopes before launching a stunning Saturday fightback from 15th to seventh. Tanak crashes from a comfortable lead to hand Neuville the crown, and Toyota and Hyundai head into a final-stage shootout for the manufacturers' title. Evans inherits the rally win, while an Ogier Power Stage success helps Toyota snatch the manufacturers' title from under the nose of Hyundai



AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



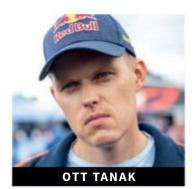
Achieved his dream by leading title race from start to finish. Scored two impressive victories but mastered new points the best, and speed and consistency were rewarded. Displayed a much stronger resolve under intense pressure, resulting



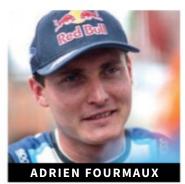
Contested only seven rallies but led all of them. Scored the most wins with four, more than his tally from a full 2023 season.
Best was in Poland, as late replacement for injured Ogier.
Made errors, crashing in Sweden and Portugal. Rock in road robbed him in Finland.



Persuaded to extend his partial campaign to 10 rounds and found himself in drivers' title hunt, also critical in manufacturers' fight. At 40, delivered his very best to score three wins and top the stage-wins chart (52), but mistakes and misfortune blighted the end of the year.



No issues with speed on return to Hyundai but consistency was lacking. Two wins helped him take the drivers' title fight down to the wire. The season was littered with crashes and misfortune, the most notable in Japan, which was costly in the manufacturers' fight.



Revelation of the season on return to Rally1 with M-Sport.
Faster and mentally strong, he delivered five podiums, including a career first, and got the most from his Ford Puma. Scored points in every round, a feat only matched by champion Neuville.



in fewer errors.

Scored more second place finishes than anyone but often didn't have the edge or confidence to go for wins. A technical issue before crashing out ended a strong bid in Finland, before he inherited a win in Japan to end year on a high and runner-up in the points.



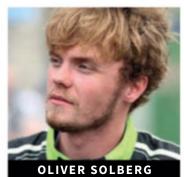
Pace in WRC2 caught the attention of Toyota, handing him three
Rally1 outings. Impressed on debut to claim a stage win, and finished fourth in Finland and sixth in Chile. Ultimate prize is promotion to Toyota's Rally1 programme on a full-time basis next year.



Turned heads on his debut in Poland to finish fifth in non-hybrid M-Sport Puma. Pace almost delivered a podium on home soil before a technical issue slowed him on the final stage. But Sesks did score two stage wins, earning himself another run-out in Chile.



Once again proved to be fast and consistent and among the safest hands in service park. Only contested three rallies but finished no worse than fifth, scoring valuable podiums and points in Sardinia and Greece in what could be his final season in WRC.



Without Chile bad luck could have been WRC2 champion, racking up 57 stage wins compared to Pajari's 24. Edges Esapekka Lappi here, whose season was largely forgettable but did include a second WRC victory in Sweden.

DRI	DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP																
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	PTS
1	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	1	4	5	3	3	41	4	8	2	1	4	3	6	242
2	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	3	2	4	2	6	4	2	5	R	18	2	2	1	210
3	Ott Tanak (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	4	41	8	4	2	1	40	3	R	3	3	1	R	200
4	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	2	-	-	1	1	2	-	2	1	16	36	R	2	191
5	Adrien Fourmaux (FRA)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team	Ford Puma Rally1	5	3	3	17	4	15	3	4	3	21	5	32	3	162
6	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	7	45	2	5	29	36	8	6	41	30	-	4	4	116
7	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally1	-	39	1	-	31	-	1	1	R	-	1	-	-	114
8	Gregoire Munster (LUX)	M-Sport Ford World Rally Team	Ford Puma Rally1	20	23	15	7	R	5	7	9	49	R	7	5	5	46
9	Dani Sordo (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 N Rally1	-	-	-	-	5	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	44
10	Sami Pajari (FIN)	Printsport/Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota GR Yaris Rally2/Yaris Rally1	12	6	-	10	R	6	9	12	4	4	6	R	8	44

11 Andreas Mikkelsen (Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT Hyundai i20 N Rally1) 40; 12 Esapekka Lappi (Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT Hyundai i20 N Rally1) 33; 13 Oliver Solberg (Toksport WRT 2 Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 27; 14 Nikolay Gryazin (DG Sport Competition Citroen C3 Rally2) 24; 15 Martins Sesks (M-Sport Ford World Rally Team Ford Puma Rally1) 22; 16 Yohan Rossel (DG Sport Competition Citroen C3 Rally2) 14; 17 Kajetan Kajetanowicz (Team RaceSeven Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 9; 18 Gus Greensmith (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 8; 19 Robert Virves (Team RaceSeven Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 7; 20 Georg Linnamae (RedGrey Team Toyota GR Yaris Rally2) 7; 21 Jari-Matti Latvala (Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT Toyota GR Yaris Rally2) 6; 22 Jan Solans (Teo Martin Motorsport Toyota GR Yaris Rally2) 6; 23 Lauri Joona (TGS Worldwide Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 5; 24 Mikko Heikkila (Step-Five Motorsport Toyota GR Yaris Rally2) 4; 25 Roope Korhonen (Rautio Motorsport Toyota GR Yaris Rally2) 3; 26 Filip Mares (ACCR Toyota Dolak Toyota GR Yaris Rally2) 3; 27 Josh McErlean (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 2; 28 Pepe Lopez (Mapo Motorsport Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 2; 29 Jourdan Serderidis (M-Sport Ford World Rally Team Ford Puma Rally1) 2; 30 Miko Marczyk (Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 2; 31 Hiroki Arai (Ahead Japan Racing Team Skoda Fabia RS) 2; 32 Fabrizio Zaldivar (Team RaceSeven Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 1; 33 Martin Prokop (Jipocar Team Skoda Fabia RS Rally2) 1.

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Seewooruthun graduates with Argenti

GB₃

Reza Seewooruthun will graduate to GB3 with the new Argenti and Prema partnership in 2025, while race winner Will Macintyre return to Elite Motorsport for his sophomore campaign.

Seewooruthun raced in British Formula 4 this season, in which he finished third overall with two wins and six further podiums with Hitech upon his switch to single-seaters. Before that, the Dorset 18-year-old raced in Ginetta Junior in 2023 and also finished third in the standings.

The move comes as GB3 welcomes its newfor-2025 Tatuus MSV GB3-025, which features DRS and will be raced on four European

circuits, including Monza for the first time.

"With the arrival of the new car for the 2025 season, it was great to be speaking to Argenti and Prema and hearing about their plans for developing the new chassis and for testing the car," said Seewooruthun. "A new car on new tracks is a real reset for everyone and I think that working with Argenti and Prema it will be the perfect opportunity for me to develop and demonstrate my adaptability.

"The partnership and discussions have been continuing for some time now but it's great to have finally signed on the dotted line. I am really looking forward to seeing the new car and getting some miles under my belt."

Meanwhile, Macintyre's return to Elite

moves him back into the environment in which he claimed the runner-up spot in Ginetta Junior in 2022. The 17-year-old finished fifth in the GB3 standings this year with Hitech, with three wins and three further podiums, and was 2023 British F4 runner-up with the same team.

"My aim is obviously to win the drivers' title," said Macintyre. "I enjoyed a pretty positive first year in GB3, showing very good pace and results as well as leading the series. I learnt a lot and, overall, the season made me a faster and a more mature driver.

"I have a close relationship with everyone at Elite thanks to running with them earlier in my career and we enjoyed much success together."

Slater and Cuthbert to continue with R Racing

GINETTA JUNIOR

Ginetta Junior frontrunners Alfie Slater and Max Cuthbert will remain in the category this season with reigning champion squad R Racing.

Slater, younger brother of single-seater star Freddie, secured an overall pole position at Snetterton and a podium finish at Brands Hatch in his maiden campaign before narrowly missing out on the Winter Series crown.

Cuthbert also starred in the Winter Series, setting the pace in qualifying and taking a maiden top three result as he landed the rookie class title.

A new addition to the Ginetta paddock for 2025 will be Cameron Pratt-Thompson in the GT Championship with SVG Motorsport. He made his



car racing bow in the Junior Saloon Car Championship two years ago, with an impressive campaign ending with him finishing as runnerup in the standings.

Successful 2024 drivers Nick White and Mike Taylor will also be on the GT grid. White won the GT Am class crown this year and will step up to a Raceway Motorsport-prepared G56 GTP8. Taylor, meanwhile, will progress to the GT series after taking the rookie GT Academy title.



Marshalling points and testing penalties for Swift Sport Challenge

SWIFT SPORT CHALLENGE

More details have been revealed about the 750 Motor Club's new Swift Sport Challenge, including interesting initiatives such as giving additional points to drivers who complete a day's marshalling and removing a couple of qualifying times for those who take part in Friday testing.

The new series, for Mk1 models of the Swift built between 2006 and 2010, is designed to be a low-cost and accessible entry point into motorsport. But, as well as focusing on developing the right specification for the car, the 750MC is also using it as the chance to trial several new concepts that could potentially be rolled out to other categories.

"I do like the idea of encouraging people to marshal," explained 750MC managing director Giles Groombridge. "The feedback we always have whenever a driver does a day's marshalling is they learned a lot – it's very beneficial for people to see things from the other side of the fence.

"We're trying to put some new ideas around it to make it a little bit different but keep it as affordable as possible. We will see what the feedback is and how it plays out."

A championship point will be awarded to a driver for each day's marshalling they complete, up to a maximum of three, while the two fastest times for any racer who tests 24 hours before the event will be removed in a bid to discourage expensive Friday testing.

Davanti tyres have been chosen for use after a variety of rubber was trialled at Silverstone earlier this year. Davanti's Protoura race tyre was found to be "stable" and worked well in all conditions, and a pair of the tyres will be given away at each round.

Groombridge said there has been strong interest with seven Swifts built. "Based on the orders we've had for kits, we think we'll have about 18 to 20 at the start of next year," he estimated. "They're tough little cars and that was the thinking behind it."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

OLDER MK2 GOLFS SET TO RETURN TO PRODUCTION GTI

PRODUCTION GTI

Older Mk2 models of the VW Golf will return to the Production GTI series next year to race alongside more modern Mk5s in a bid to boost grid numbers.

The category was originally created for classic Mk2s, but gradually more and more of the newer cars began to enter and it has solely featured these Mk5s in recent years. But organisers have now worked to tweak the specifications of the cars to ensure that the faster Mk2 drivers are able to fight with those towards the rear of the Mk5 field.

"There were several people with Mk2s that wanted to race with us over the past few seasons but didn't want to become a mobile chicane for the Mk5s," said MotorSport Vision Racing commercial and competitions manager Joe East. "The clever changes made by promotor Rob Sadler to the Mk2 technical regulations, in areas such as the differential and gear ratios, allow the Production Mk2s to narrow the gap to the Mk5s. In addition, there is the modified Mk2 class for the more powerful normally aspirated Mk2 that is capable of mixing within the Mk5 class."



STEPHEN LICKORISH





COURAGEOUS WILTSHIRE Former F3 Cup and now prototype racer Stuart Wiltshire has bought the Nissan-powered Courage C52 that took Alex Caffi, Andrea Montermini and Domenico Schiattarella to sixth place in the 1999 Le Mans 24 Hours. The car had been in Xavier Micheron's Ascott Collection and Aaron Scott drove it at Donington Park last week, following a shakedown at Turweston Aerodrome (above). It was handed over to ERA Motorsport, which will now run the machine in Peter Auto Endurance Racing Legends. **Photo by Steve Glendinning**

500cc F3 cars to race at landmark Silverstone Festival next year

500CC F3

A new race for 500cc Formula 3 cars on the Sunday of next year's Silverstone Festival is among the special attractions at the event, which will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the world championship British Grand Prix.

Half-Litre Club members competed at the venue throughout the motorcycle-engined cars' contemporary era, supporting the 1948 GP at Silverstone on their debut. Two heats and a final are due to be held next August and response to the initiative, brokered by indefatigable racer Duncan Rabagliati with Festival prime mover Nick Wigley, has been phenomenal

from the 500 Owners Association.

"We already have towards 70 expressions of interest," said 500OA racing secretary Gordon Russell. "The ultimate entry may not be that high but we are confident of attracting the largest historic field to date."

Another 75th anniversary to be celebrated in 2025 is Castle Combe's and the Wiltshire circuit will again host the season opener in April. The exciting calendar moves on to Wiscombe Park and Mallory Park in May, Anglesey in early June, then Croix-en-Ternois at the end of the month, followed by Silverstone and a finale to be decided.

MARCUS PYE



MIKE HAYSELDEN 1946-2024

Yorkshire motor trade legend, successful racer and longtime Barnsley FC director Mike Hayselden, winner of Britain's fourth Formula Vee championship in 1970, has died aged 78. He joined father Tom's business, appointed a Volkswagen agent in 1972, and the eponymous concern thrived under his dynamic leadership since 1989. Like many VW specialists, Hayselden eagerly espoused Formula Vee and, driving a self-built Monaco chassis, was dominant in 1970. He won 12 races straight and shattered lap records in beating Ronnie Grant and F1-bound Brian Henton to the crown.

BLACK GETS RALLY1 TEST

Callum Black said the chance to drive a Ford Puma Rally1 car at M-Sport's test track last week was an incredible experience. Black and co-driver Jack Morton earned the opportunity by being the highest Ford finisher in this year's Asphalt Rally Championship, in which they took the overall title for a second time. "It's been one of the best days ever," said Black. "I don't think there will be many people in the world that ever get such an opportunity. I tried to make the most of it and just loved every second."

HILTON BOOKS INTO GB4...

Radical Cup UK racer Luke Hilton will switch to single-seaters next year as Douglas Motorsport's first GB4 driver. Hilton was previously a Fiesta Junior frontrunner and said the move was "incredibly exciting". The ADM squad has also revealed its first signing for next season with United Formula Ford 1600 runner-up Jason Pribyl now progressing to slicks-and-wings machinery.

...AS LAY TRIES MARCH F2

Another Radical racer who could be moving to single-seaters is James Lay. The double Radical Cup UK champion tested Keith Bisp's ex-Alex Ribeiro March 762 Formula 2 machine at Donington Park last week (below). "It's surprisingly forgiving and so easy in some ways, with a very crisp gearbox," said Lay of his first single-seater experience.



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More Silver Fern success for Ford and Shanks

HISTORIC RALLYING

British crew James Ford and Neil Shanks repeated their 2022 Silver Fern Rally success last month when they triumphed again in the gruelling New Zealand event.

Comprising 52 stages totalling almost 1000 kilometres over seven days, the route took crews and cars to the edge over smooth and remote gravel tracks resembling race circuits and mountain passes with giddying views. There were also river crossings to navigate and crests to fly over with snowcapped mountains in the background.

Ford and Shanks were brave and committed from the get-go, building a good lead in their Viking-built Ford Escort Mk2. The big push, though, had consequences. After surviving the first off, which caused gearbox damage with battered bodywork front and rear, the second incident literally ripped the axle out of the car. They were able to get assistance quickly, backing off latterly



to consolidate their lead – lost only briefly to the Mazda RX-7 of Marcus van Klink – to eventually win by four minutes.

"We couldn't have done it without the lads, a massive team effort to keep us going," said Ford. "I think the event was a lot harder than 2022, longer stages and road sections. We didn't have time to eat in the evening, apart from one good Chinese takeaway, but it was a great event!"

Kiwi honour was upheld by Robbie and Amy Stokes, who were surprised to take second after their RS1800 Escort was finished very late. Third, after a great battle with 2023 British Historic Rally champion Roger Chilman, was Robert Gough in a brand-new Viking Escort on his first ever Silver Fern. Neighbours Chilman and Gough found themselves 12,000 miles from home, unwittingly pitched against each other.

British success ran though the field as 13 of the 14 UK crews that started made the finish. More British winners were found in the 1600cc historic category: David and Douglas Young won the class in their Escort Mexico, while second were Tony Jardine and co-driver Duncan Jordan in a Toyota Corolla AE86. TONY JARDINE

David Gurney Brown 1936-2024



OBITUARY

David Gurney Brown, who has died aged 88, started racing cars later than most, but is fondly remembered for his tall, moustachioed stance, gentle nature and taste in fine machinery.

The Kentish commercial landlord and motorcycle dealer sponsored Damon Hill's two-wheeled racing career before he switched to Formula Ford, taking his first steps towards the 1996 F1 world championship.

Having decided to race himself, Brown became synonymous with Brabhams. He initially acquired a BT23 and a BT21, sold to long-time pal Richard Kendle.

Brown raced several of Ron Tauranac's iconic designs over 15 years, from a Formula Junior BT6 to the ex-Gerard Racing/Henri Pescarolo F2 BT30, which he fitted with a correct 1600cc FVA engine.

Undeterred by a heavy Silverstone shunt, Brown graduated to Historic F1, driving a V12 BRM P126 and the distinctive March 721-derived Eifelland.

MARCUS PYE



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THE TOP 10 BTCC SUPPORT STARS OF THE PAST 10 SEASONS

Our Group National Editor Stephen Lickorish has now notched up a decade in the TOCA paddock. Here's his pick of the standout drivers from that era

STEPHEN LICKORISH

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY **JEP**

here have been 258 drivers who have triumphed in a race in one of the support categories at a British Touring Car Championship event in the past 10 seasons. That's a truly staggering number and certainly makes picking the best 10 of these a very tricky task.

Given that 39 of those 258 drivers also won one of the regular TOCA championships, Autosport has decided not to include anyone who failed to win a title in the final 10. But that still leaves a significant number to choose from (and some talented racers on the sidelines, see overleaf).

This is very much a personal selection of the drivers who have stood out the most from their time on the BTCC undercard and does not reflect what they have gone on to achieve. It has also been a tricky balance to strike between those who rapidly rose the ladder and those who spent several seasons racing in the TOCA categories.

But here are the 10 we feel are the most exciting, impressive and successful drivers from the 2015-24 period. And for a longer version of this feature with more insight into each of them, be sure to check out an extended piece published on Autosport.com in the coming weeks.

Jamie Caroline

2015 Ginetta Junior champion **2017** British F4 champion

Choosing who should get the 10th spot was one of the trickiest decisions of this entire ranking since there were so many who deserved a mention. Ultimately, it boiled down to a battle between Caroline and Kiern Jewiss. Both won two titles, each prevailing in British Formula 4, while Caroline pipped Senna Proctor to the 2015 Ginetta Junior crown and Jewiss secured 2022 Porsche Carrera Cup GB honours.

But Caroline gets the nod because he delivered some truly standout performances en route to 2017 F4 glory and faced greater opposition than Jewiss, including Oscar Piastri and Logan Sargeant.

It was Caroline's sophomore season, so he understandably began as favourite, but the



Carlin driver was dominant during the first half of the campaign. "At Thruxton when he came from nowhere to win [he fell to seventh in the opener before charging back to become the first driver to take an F4 hat-trick] it was almost like a managainst-boys scenario," recalls team boss Trevor Carlin. "He didn't hit anyone or push them out of the way, but his sheer presence scared the living

s*** out of the kids! Just his force of nature, people seeing that shiny blue car coming up behind them, they panicked and got out of the way."

Although not all of Caroline's seasons have had such happy endings, Carlin still rates him highly. "Jamie is one of my favourite drivers because of his personality and character," adds Carlin. "He didn't quite have the funding to go all the way."

9

Deagen Fairclough

2024 British F4 champion

There is a strong argument that Fairclough was the most dominant of all the 39 drivers to have won BTCC support series titles in the past decade. He was victorious in 14 of this year's 20 non-reversed-grid British F4 races, won by

over 200 points, and the Hitech driver achieved it all in a crushing manner.

Yet, he finds himself only ninth on the list because of his limited opposition. This was not a strong year for British F4 and Fairclough was a class above. In reality, he was ready for the step up to GB3 before this season, but still delivered on track and continued to break records long after sewing up the spoils.

He matured during the course of a maiden single-seater campaign in 2023 that ended with him third in the standings for JHR Developments. Fairclough was only on the grid at all after winning ROKiT's Racing Star sim competition and was eager to impress. Too eager, in fact, as repeated clashes when trying to bounce back from poor qualifying performances put him at risk of losing his licence when he quickly accrued penalty points.

"The biggest stumbling block was how much the kid wanted to win," says JHR boss Steve Hunter, who describes some "brutal" lessons being taught. "His raw pace was fabulous."

The message was heard loud and clear and, by the season's end, he was already providing glimpses of the domination that was to follow. "I think he's developed into a bloody good little racing driver," Hunter concludes.





There are several similarities between Browning and Fairclough. Both came from humble backgrounds to compete in the expensive single-seater world. And both excel in wet weather, consistently demonstrating supreme car control. But the way their British F4 titles were achieved could not be more different.

While Fairclough's success never looked in doubt, Browning prevailed in the most dramatic of finales in 2020 when he spun on oil before a mid-race deluge prompted red flags that meant half points were awarded, and he therefore just defeated Zak O'Sullivan. How he was able to triumph, despite his tiny budget, is what elevates him ahead of Fairclough.

"It was a tough one because it was on a shoestring," reflects Fortec chief Richard Dutton. "We didn't have a lot of testing – he only did a couple of pre-season tests. He had a sponsor pull out as they couldn't bring guests because of COVID. But he got through it and won the championship."

Browning had shown flashes of pace the previous year with the small Richardson Racing squad, while one of the memorable moments of his two Ginetta Junior campaigns was a storming drive to fourth in the Knockhill rain in 2018 despite pitting mid-race to have his car checked.

"He's a standout star and I would love to see him in F1," adds Dutton of the Williams academy member. "He's a great guy and one of my favourite all-time drivers we've run." Considering Fortec's illustrious roll call of alumni, that is high praise indeed.



Adam Smalley

2018 Ginetta Junior champion2021 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion2023 Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion

Any driver who achieves the unprecedented feat of winning titles in three different BTCC support series is clearly pretty good. And Smalley has shown over the years that his consistent performances are more than just pretty good.

Smalley's success started with Elite Motorsport in Ginetta Junior in 2018, helping to put the team on the national racing map. After a season in the GT5 Challenge, he was then a regular GT4 Supercup contender over the next two years and netted the title in 2021, again with Elite. And he completed his treble with Porsche Carrera Cup GB glory for Team Parker Racing as the Porsche GB Junior driver in 2023. That last crown is the perfect example of his ultra-consistent results – he only finished off the podium twice all year. "Adam's always had a very mature head on him," says Elite principal Eddie Ives. "He's very calm, very good on feedback and very good at pulling the team together around him.

"He could be extremely quick in certain conditions on certain days, and we had some very nice steady championship wins with him because his average positions were so much higher than anybody else."

Although Smalley scored 24 wins in the TOCA support categories, and sits third on the 2015-24 list, they came across five frontrunning seasons and there were not always oodles of top-quality opposition in the GT4 Supercup. That, combined with fewer standout moments of brilliance than other drivers featured, is why he is not even higher in this ranking.

Ash Sutton 2015 Renault UK Clio Cup champion

Considering the Renault UK Clio Cup's reputation for producing close, entertaining racing and attracting some of the most highly rated talents attempting to climb the tin-top ladder, it is perhaps surprising that just one driver of the French hatchbacks has made the final 10. But what a driver that one is.

Sutton arrived in the Clio Cup in 2015 fresh out of single-seaters, having put in a couple of starring performances in British Formula Ford. But instead of the fascinating prospect of him racing against Lando Norris, Colton Herta, Dan Ticktum et al in F4, there was instead a change in direction to tin-tops with support from BTCC squad BMR. And Sutton instantly looked at home.

At the very first race of the season, he challenged Ant Whorton-Eales, someone who already had three years of Clio experience under his belt, in an aggressive style that would become synonymous with Sutton. Although he had to settle for second, Sutton had laid down a marker.

He continued to impress across the rest of the year and just pipped Whorton-Eales and Pyro team-mate Ash Hand to the title, while Clio master Paul Rivett was relegated down to fourth by the youngsters.

Sutton may have the fewest TOCA support wins (six) of any driver on this list, but it was still a very noteworthy season. The fact that he then graduated to the BTCC and could not add further success in the supports means he cannot really be ranked any higher.



THE F1 DRIVERS AMONG THE HONOURABLE MENTIONS



Inevitably, there are plenty of impressive drivers who failed to make the cut – including four who went on to race in Formula 1. McLaren star Oscar Piastri and Williams reject Logan Sargeant were both outpaced by Jamie Caroline in British Formula 4 in 2017, while new Alpine recruit Jack Doohan was a distant fifth to Kiern Jewiss the following year.

Elsewhere, Nicholas Latifi's unconventional path to F1 featured an unimpressive half-season in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB in 2015, where he achieved only one podium.

Alongside Jewiss, other British F4 champions who performed admirably but did not quite make the grade include Zane Maloney in 2019 and Matthew Rees, who starred in 2021 to win the title in his first season in cars. Alex Dunne was also dominant in 2022 but made too many clumsy errors to feature here. Another dominator that year was James Kellett, but a lack of Ginetta GT4 Supercup rivals snuffed his chances.

Perennial Renault UK Clio Cup frontrunner Paul Rivett was also considered as he was such a useful

THE MOST WINS



POS	DRIVER	WINS
1	Harry King (above)	33
2	Dan Cammish	30
3	Adam Smalley	24
4	Max Coates	22
5	Jamie Caroline	21
=	James Kellett	21
7	Dan Zelos	20
8	Dan Harper	18
=	Will Martin	18
10	Luke Browning	17
=	Tom Hibbert	17
12	Kiern Jewiss	16
13	Tom Wrigley	15
=	Louis Foster	15
=	Ant Whorton-Eales	15
=	James Hedley	15
17	Deagen Fairclough	14
18	Will Burns	13
19	Mike Bushell	12
=	Jamie Orton	12
=	Zak O'Sullivan	12
=	George Gamble	12

Note Does not include rounds that were not supporting the BTCC

benchmark for young hotshots to measure against. And, although he took a very hard-fought crown in 2018, only six wins in a four-year period were not quite enough.

One of his 2018 foes was Max Coates, who has consistently fallen just short of title success – including in the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB this season – but he can take comfort from sitting fourth on the winners' list. He was defeated by Jack Young in 2019, another teen who impressed but was a little too wild to dislodge any of the 10 ultimately selected.

Dan Zelos 2021, 2023 & 2024 Mini Challenge champion

Next up is another driver who has impressed in the tin-top ranks. Zelos has won three Mini Challenge titles in the past four years and has developed into a very accomplished racer.

The first of the Excelr8 driver's triumphs in 2021 came in hard-fought fashion after a season-long battle with team-mate Max Bird. It went right down to the wire, but Zelos did just enough to finish second in the nervy finale and beat Bird by seven points. In contrast, his other titles could not have been more different, with Zelos displaying utter domination, albeit against weaker fields.

He dug deep to bounce back from a tough 2022 campaign – in which he scored just three podiums – to qualify on pole for all bar one race the following season. And then this year he capped off his Mini career with another storming set of results to seal the title in August and be able to finally make his long-awaited BTCC debut.

"Success hasn't come easy though, and people



don't really appreciate all the hard work that Dan has put in in order for him to become the most successful driver in JCW history," says Excelr8 boss Justina Williams. "His drive and determination to be the best has not only been reflected in his results on track, but also in the way he helped the team around him to grow."

Zelos cannot be any higher than fifth in this ranking because of a few distinctly average Renault UK Clio Cup campaigns he endured upon graduating from Ginetta Junior.



2015 MSA Formula champion

Of all the drivers to appear in this list, none has seemingly been more destined for future stardom than Norris. Even before his maiden single-seater campaign began in 2015, there was already talk of him having the backing and the ability to be a future Formula 1 contender. And Norris duly delivered upon such high expectations.

That he won the 2015 MSA Formula (British F4) title was no surprise, not least with his sizeable budget, but the manner in which he prevailed certainly caught the eye. The series featured the strongest driver line-up in its 10 years as an FIA F4 championship, including the likes of future IndyCar victor Colton Herta and Autosport Award winner Dan Ticktum, yet Carlin racer Norris never

qualified outside the top two all season. And he sealed the crown despite having a disadvantage compared to many of his rivals.

"The biggest thing that stood out was it was quite obvious Lando didn't have the best engine that year, even in our team," says squad supremo Trevor Carlin. "It pissed him off a little bit, but it made him even more driven to perform. He was always down on the straights compared to his team-mates, so he won the title despite not having the best kit – he outperformed the car.

"You could always count on him to deliver a lap time when it mattered and that went through the whole season." It was certainly quite the way to open the category's new era. 3

Harry King

2019 Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion, **2020** Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion

King achieved something quite remarkable in 2020. He single-handedly changed the reputation of an entire championship. The Porsche Carrera Cup GB may have previously been renowned for attracting talented drivers, but it was not known for featuring the most exciting racing. Enter King. The manner in which he drove the car on the ragged edge and completed breathtaking passes won the series a whole new fanbase. Team Parker driver King even defeated the BTCC boys to be voted Autosport's National Driver of the Year.

"To me, Harry is the real deal," says team boss Stuart Parker. "That year was nothing short of phenomenal. The way he made the car dance – that win at Knockhill, where he lost a belt in the first race so had to start 10th and came through to win, it was just sublime and showed people you can overtake in the car. He just made it exciting and really Carrera Cup has had a buzz about it ever since."

King had been crowned Ginetta GT4 Supercup



champion with Elite Motorsport the previous year but could not make it a hat-trick in 2021. He only finished fourth in the Carrera Cup standings amid what Parker describes as a "compromised" campaign, when he also tackled the Porsche Supercup in a newer iteration of the 911 GT3 Cup machine. That result, combined with 2020's Porsche line-up not being the strongest, explains why King may have topped the past decade's wins list but is not at the head of our ranking.



Dan Harper

2019 Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion

Someone who 'only' won a single title may seem a surprising choice for such a high position on this list. And it was very difficult to separate King from Harper. But, in the end, the Irishman gets the nod for second place because he achieved his Porsche Carrera Cup GB championship in 2019 in just his second year out of junior racing.

It's only when you stop to think about it that you realise how impressive that achievement is. When Harper was selected as the Porsche GB Junior, he was just 16 years old and could not drive on a trackday in the car without an instructor. Yet Harper belied his lack of experience to instantly get on the Carrera Cup pace, qualifying third for his first race in 2018 with JTR.

"He didn't get a lap together so he qualified third, which is pretty spectacular for a 17-year-old rookie," says team boss Nick Tandy. "We looked through the data and, even on Brands Indy, he could have been on pole by a couple of tenths. We didn't have to teach him how to drive – he worked that out faster than anyone I've ever seen."

From that promising start, Harper – who also headed King in the two seasons they raced together in Ginetta Junior – got better and better, and it was no surprise when he comfortably won the title the following year. He may have not always been as spectacular to watch as King, but achieving what he did without years in sportscars beforehand was a remarkable feat.

THE CHAMPIONS

BRITISH FORMULA 4

YEAR	DRIVER
2015	Lando Norris
2016	Max Fewtrell
2017	Jamie Caroline
2018	Kiern Jewiss
2019	Zane Maloney
2020	Luke Browning
2021	Matthew Rees
2022	Alex Dunne
2023	Louis Sharp
2024	Deagen Fairclough

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

2015	Dan Cammish
2016	Dan Cammish
2017	Charlie Eastwood
2018	Tio Ellinas
2019	Dan Harper
2020	Harry King
2021	Dan Cammish
2022	Kiern Jewiss
2023	Adam Smalley
2024	George Gamble

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

2015	Tom Oliphant
2016	Tom Wrigley
2017	Callum Pointon
2018	Charlie Ladell
2019	Harry King
2020	Will Burns
2021	Adam Smalley
2022	James Kellett

GINETTA JUNIOR

2015	Jamie Caroline	
2016	Will Tregurtha	
2017	Tom Gamble	
2018	Adam Smalley	
2019	James Hedley	
2020	Tom Lebbon	
2021	Aston Millar	
2022	Josh Rowledge	

RENAULT UK CLIO CUP

2015	Ash Sutton
2016	Ant Whorton-Eales
2017	Mike Bushell
2018	Paul Rivett
2019	Jack Young

MINI CHALLENGE

2020	Nathan Harrison
2021	Dan Zelos
2022	Sam Weller
2023	Dan Zelos
2024	Dan Zelos

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

2023	Joe Warhurst
2024	Seh Honkins



There was no contest about who would end up on top. It simply had to be Cammish. He was an unstoppable force in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB in 2015 and 2016, the Redline racer winning 23 of the 32 contests to serenely glide to a title double. And he could easily have made it a hat-trick without a Porsche Supercup clash and a fire at Silverstone costing him dear in 2017.

"From having driven against him, his biggest asset is his pace on a qualifying lap," says Dino Zamparelli, who finished runner-up to Cammish in 2016. "He had the ability to just put a lap together when he needed it, which meant he was always top two on the grid. Very rarely you would see him outside of the top two and he gave himself a much higher chance of success in the races."

While those initial triumphs were impressive against strong opposition, perhaps Cammish's 2021 success was his best. He made the bold move to step back to Porsches after losing his Dynamics BTCC drive shortly before the season. He risked ruining his wonderful Carrera Cup legacy and the decision could have backfired spectacularly, especially when battling the likes of King, Jewiss and rising star Lorcan Hanafin. Yet Cammish dug deeper than ever before to just get it over the line. He only won thrice but the old master reminded everyone who was top dog and he was quickly snapped up by the NAPA BTCC powerhouse for 2022. A class act.

Dan Cammish

FINISHING STRAIGHT

Forget authenticity,

this all about fun



GAME MONSTER JAM SHOWDOWN Standard edition: £44.99 Big Air edition: £59.99

In a world where the vast majority of motor racing games focus on trying to feel as real as possible, *Monster Jam Showdown* is a refreshing change of pace and is certainly something that you enter into with a mindset of having fun.

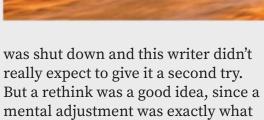
Recent 'simulators' have done a good job of removing this aspect in recent years, with success often requiring a serious mindset.

Indeed, in the marketing material for this release, fun is front and centre, with the first point highlighted being the "immediate arcade gameplay" and the "approachability" of this system. So how approachable is it?

You begin the a tutorial where you run through some familiar tests as the game really holds your hand – move forwards and backwards, then turn left and right, that sort of thing.

But then you come to the more particular aspects of the game, where you're taught to steer using both front and rear axles, and how to jump and perform a variety of stunts. The usual rules of gravity appear not to apply to Monster Trucks, with a forward somersaulting vehicle able to change the direction of its spin with a flick of an analogue stick.

On the first play, this feel was not something that gave a great deal of satisfaction given it was so far removed from the expectations of a modern game. In fact, *Monster Jam Showdown*



was required to get the most out of it.

The main focus of the game comes in a career mode which, as you would expect, gradually ramps up in difficulty and allows you to unlock different liveries and trucks. This mode comprises all the various challenges that you can complete on the game, from performing in a stunt arena to racing across landscapes that you definitely don't see on a Formula 1 game. But simply being first to the flag won't cut it here – you must register the highest score as well, meaning that mastering your four-wheel steering, drifting and stunt

work is crucial. Again, don't take this too seriously and get wrapped up in finding the perfect racing line – hitting apexes lap after lap is a fruitless pursuit.

Forty trucks are included in the base game, with an additional 26 available through either free or premium downloadable content. Across this number, there are then over 140 liveries to unlock and apply, meaning you can create a truck that properly stands out from the crowd.

The usual online competitions are available to test yourself against users around the world, but a personal highlight is that you can locally play with friends in a split screen mode. For those who were growing up in a PlayStation One or Two era, this will be a welcome call back to









a system that is rarely offered with modern games, given that creators would far rather you and your friend both buy separate copies to double sales. Gone are the days of FIFA or Star Wars Battlefront (the original releases!) where you would go to a friend's house after school and play games in a sociable way, rather than sit with a headset on your own. This sociable aspect teamed with the less serious nature doesn't make it a 10/10 by any stretch, but it certainly adds something that is all too often missing these days.

What are the final thoughts on this one? The best word that sums up *Monster Jam Showdown* is, unsurprisingly, 'fun'. That might sound slightly derogatory to those who feel that games should be enshrined in reality, but this offers a form of escapism with zero pressure of a bad performance potentially seeing you lose a race seat, or be dropped by your football club.

Spending time in the arena discovering the full roster of stunts – some of which will be found as the result of an impressive crash and save – must be some kind of therapy, as watching a few tonnes of heavy metal flying, twisting and turning certainly clears the mind of all other concerns.

Available on PS4, PS5, X Box Series X/S, X Box One, NSW and PC, there are plenty of options to dive in and crush some cars.

SAM HALL



Autosport Podcast: Abu Dhabi Grand Prix review

Ben Hunt and Jonathan Noble close out the 2024 season as they review the Abu Dhabi GP. They discuss Lando Norris's dominant victory and McLaren's first constructors' championship since 1998, the pitfalls the team had to face, such as Oscar Piastri being spun out on the opening lap, and whether it's been the best squad across the season. Other topics include Charles Leclerc's 16-place comeback to get on the podium and Pierre Gasly sealing sixth in the constructors' for Alpine.



Autosport Podcast: Q&A

The Autosport team fields some of your most pressing questions from the past week of action. If you want to send in your questions for next week's episode, reach out to us on YouTube, Instagram or our callout post at Autosport.com.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Gulf 12 Hours

Yas Marina, UAE

15 December

© Livestream

Motorsport.tv, Sun 0400

Brazilian Stock Car Championship

Round 12/12

Interlagos, Brazil

14-15 December

Divestream

Motorsport.tv, Sat 1700, Sun 1500

Autosport International

Birmingham NEC, UK **9-12 January**



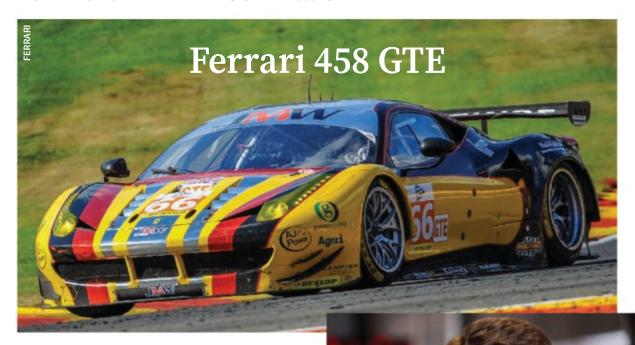


FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ronnie Peterson prepares for action at Monza in September 1977, but his Tyrrell team-mate Patrick Depailler has yet to jump aboard his P34. By now, the six-wheeler was a much less competitive proposition than it had been during its first season in 1976. Peterson and Depailler could only qualify 12th and 13th, although the Swede did at least pick up a point for sixth in the Italian GP. Depailler was out after 24 laps with an engine problem. A year later, Peterson – who returned to Lotus for 1978 – was caught up in a collision at the first turn. He suffered severe leg injuries, yet his life wasn't deemed to be in danger as team-mate Mario Andretti celebrated securing the world championship. But an embolism developed overnight and Peterson died the following morning, to the anguish of his many friends in F1.







winning 11 races during an accomplished British Touring Car Championship career that he elected to pause at the end of 2023. But the amiable Scot, also a handy historic racer who pedalled a Lotus Elan 26R to third in September's Spa 6 Hours, had also proven himself a force in GT racing before beginning his six-and-a-half-year BTCC run in 2017.

ory Butcher is best known for

Butcher still regards his 2016 season with Andrea Bertolini and Rob Smith in the European Le Mans Series with JMW Motorsport as "my favourite ever season of car racing". The Ferrari 458 GTE he raced that year "just ticks a few more boxes" for Butcher when selecting it as his favourite car over the Honda Civic FK2 he raced to three BTCC wins in 2019.

"What's amazing about the Ferraris of that era was the engine note," remembers Butcher of the 4.5-litre V8. "It was a car that would excite you. And then from a driving point of view, it had a really positive front end, it gave great feedback and, also with being mid-engined as well, the balance was great. It had nice aero and the fact that it didn't have ABS actually was a real plus-point for me."

Following a shootout at Snetterton in 2015, Butcher joined JMW as a silver driver for the final two races of that year before embarking on the full season in 2016. Disqualification on a technicality

after winning on the road at Silverstone, caused by a non-homologated splitter, lit a fire under the trio, which won three of the next four races. But JMW was cruelly denied the GTE title at the Estoril finale when gearbox glitches and Smith being T-boned by a spinning LMP3 car allowed Beechdean's Aston Martin to snatch the crown. "You couldn't really have written that story," he laments.

Yet Butcher still holds fond memories of a year in which "I walked away feeling a much more professional driver having worked with Andrea". Promotion to FIA gold status for 2017 nixed opportunities that had been in the pipeline, but there was one more outing in JMW's GTE-spec 458 at the Silverstone ELMS opener before grasping an opportunity to return to the TOCA package he'd supported as a Carrera Cup GB race winner.

JAMES NEWBOLD



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