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WHY 2018 IS MAKE-OR-BREAK FOR RICCIARDO



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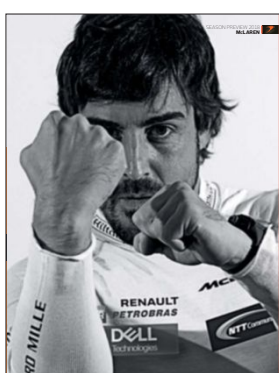
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It's the hope that fills you the moment you think someone might be going to the front of the pack. Fernando Alonso will be going to the front of the pack when he goes obviously beating that first pole position with a Renault motor in the back of his McLaren this year. There are reasons to be optimistic, and he tells us in this exclusive interview.

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A crucial season is finally upon us



Anthony Rowlinson

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This is a big year for Formula 1, most likely a defining one in terms of framing its future shape and direction of travel.

We're used, after a season of Liberty's being at the helm, to the sport being owned by an ambitious, marketing-savvy media giant; under their tenure a far more open atmosphere has blossomed within the paddock, for which they deserve great credit.

Last season, though, Liberty got a little lucky as we were treated to a right old ding-dong between Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel for most of the year.

When the track action's right, it does a lot to quiet dissent, and it bought Liberty some time to begin rolling out their plans for taking F1 to the people. They unshackled social media coverage and staged the London Live event – both big steps toward the goal of 'massively engaged fans'. For this season (though not in the UK) they release an ambitious 'OTT' streaming service to revolutionise how fans watch F1 [see James Allen's new column on p32].

All of this has been welcome and there's much more to come. But, to burgle a once-ubiquitous US slogan: "where's the beef?" Where's the 'killer riff' that articulates what F1 should become?

The absence of an easily understood mission statement matters, because F1 faces pressures like never before. The rise of Formula E – though not yet a competitor – raises questions about powertrains,

sustainability and relevance. Meanwhile ever-spiralling costs, amid talk of enforced budget control, remain troubling; elsewhere in the issue Force India COO Otmar Szafnauer talks of 450 staff being "about right" for a mid-grid team, while we learn of Mercedes employing nearer 1,500. Huge numbers for what remains an essentially simple sport.

Some might even consider the higher figures 'bloated' – a word which, sadly, can be applied to the current generation of F1 car. Stunning to watch up close – and this year they will be the fastest ever – they're also behemoths: capable of awe-inspiring performance by bludgeon, rather than artistry.

Our own Peter Windsor discusses this weighty topic in his column on page 26; it's precisely the kind of thorny nettle that Liberty and the FIA must grasp, unflinchingly, to ensure F1's future health.

We hear that the likes of Ross Brawn and Pat Symonds are framing the template for a 2021-generation F1 that should increase simplicity *and* improve spectacle – while also preserving all of those talented F1 workforces. Not easy – but when has anything in Formula 1 ever been *easy*.

Ahead of what promises to be a thrilling season, we await developments. Hungrily.

Anthony Rowlinson
Creative content director

Contributors



NICO ROSBERG

With hard-hitting views on his former rivals – including Lewis – the 2016 world champion gives us his thoughts on the season ahead (p34)



STEVEN TEE

As McLaren's official team photographer, Tee enjoys a close working relationship with our cover star Fernando Alonso. Portraits on p98



THOMAS BUTLER

When we took a handful of fortune cookies to Nico Rosberg (p34), Thomas shot his reaction to every question hidden inside



ANTHONY PEACOCK

With a fondness for fast cars and all things Italian, Anthony relished talking to Charles Leclerc about the new Ferrari Portofino (p108)

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A new season dawns

The first test at Barcelona was beset by bad weather, which punctuated running for every team. But when I looked at the forecast, there was a chance the sun would appear on the morning of the second day.

In the last couple of years it's been impossible to stand in the spot where I took this shot, because they had removed a lot of the Armco barriers, but they were back in place this year.

I'm looking back towards Turn 10, the tight left-hander at the end of the back straight, and just as Sebastian Vettel came into view, the sun broke from behind the clouds and cross-lit the scarlet Ferrari.

After that there was very little sunshine for the rest of the test.



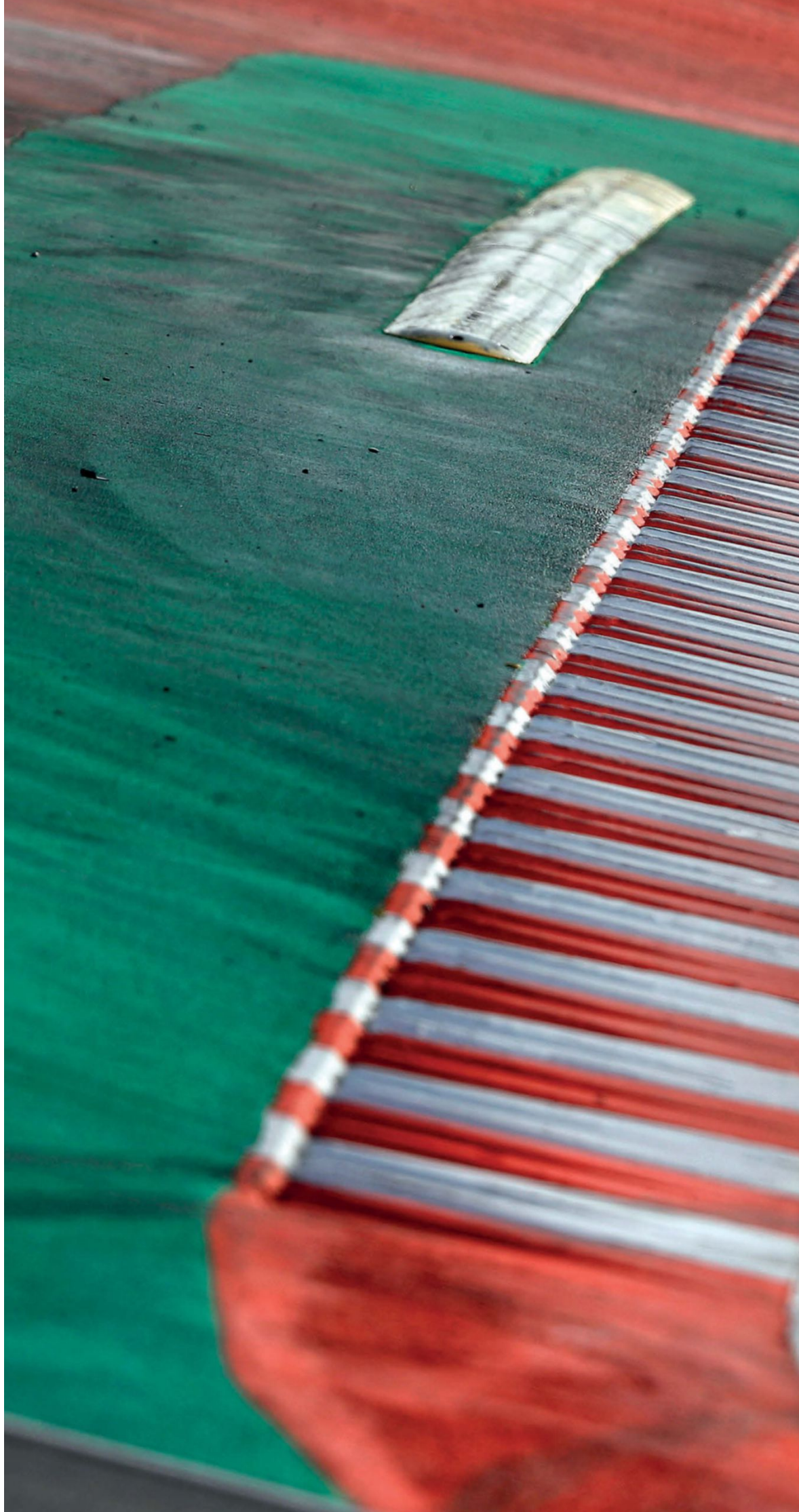
Photographer

 LAT IMAGES: Steven Tee

Where Barcelona, Spain

When 9.15am, Tuesday
27 February 2018

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII,
600mm lens, 1/1000th @ F8







A ray of hope

I'm hoping the new partnership between Sauber and Alfa Romeo will lift the little Swiss team off the back of the grid and take them further into the mid-field this season.

Shooting in the morning towards the rising sun, I was positioned on the exit of Turn 2 to capture rookie Charles Leclerc getting to grips with his 2018 machine.

The test was one of the coldest I've known and it was very unusual to have a day effectively cancelled because of the snow and there was further limited running with heavy rain the next day.

I knew this fleeting glimpse of the sun wasn't going to last long, so I was glad to capture it.



Photographer

 **LAT IMAGES:** Glenn Dunbar

Where Barcelona, Spain

When 9.25am, Tuesday
27 February 2018

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII,
24mm lens, 1/3200th @ F10

Papaya sparkles

As a consequence of McLaren and Honda's disappointing 2017 performance, the team have occupied the garage at the end of the pitlane for the first pre-season F1 test.

The one upshot is the garage isn't in the shade of the main grandstand opposite the pitlane, so the team enjoys the benefit of the afternoon sunlight cascading into their garage.

I was holding my camera over Stoffel Vandoorne's cockpit, shooting on a wide angle lens, just before he was due to leave the pits. The sunshine streamed over the top of the screens (that are put up to hide the car from the opposition) and really lit up the team's new 'Papaya Spark' paint job.



Photographer

 **LAT IMAGES:** Steven Tee

Where Barcelona, Spain

When 3.55pm, Monday
26 February 2018

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII,
35mm lens, 1/500th @ F5.6



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Fresh out the box

There's always a frisson of excitement when the new Formula 1 cars emerge from the pitlane for the first time.

Standing between the exit of Turn 2 and the acceleration zone at the right-hander of Turn 3, you can quickly get a sense of which new cars handle the best.

From the very first morning, it was clear the Mercedes (driven here by Valtteri Bottas) and the Ferrari looked the quickest on-track. When we head to Melbourne for the first GP, I think it will be a continuation of last year for the two top teams.

From what I saw trackside, I think Red Bull and McLaren have improved too, so it augers well for a competitive season.



Photographer

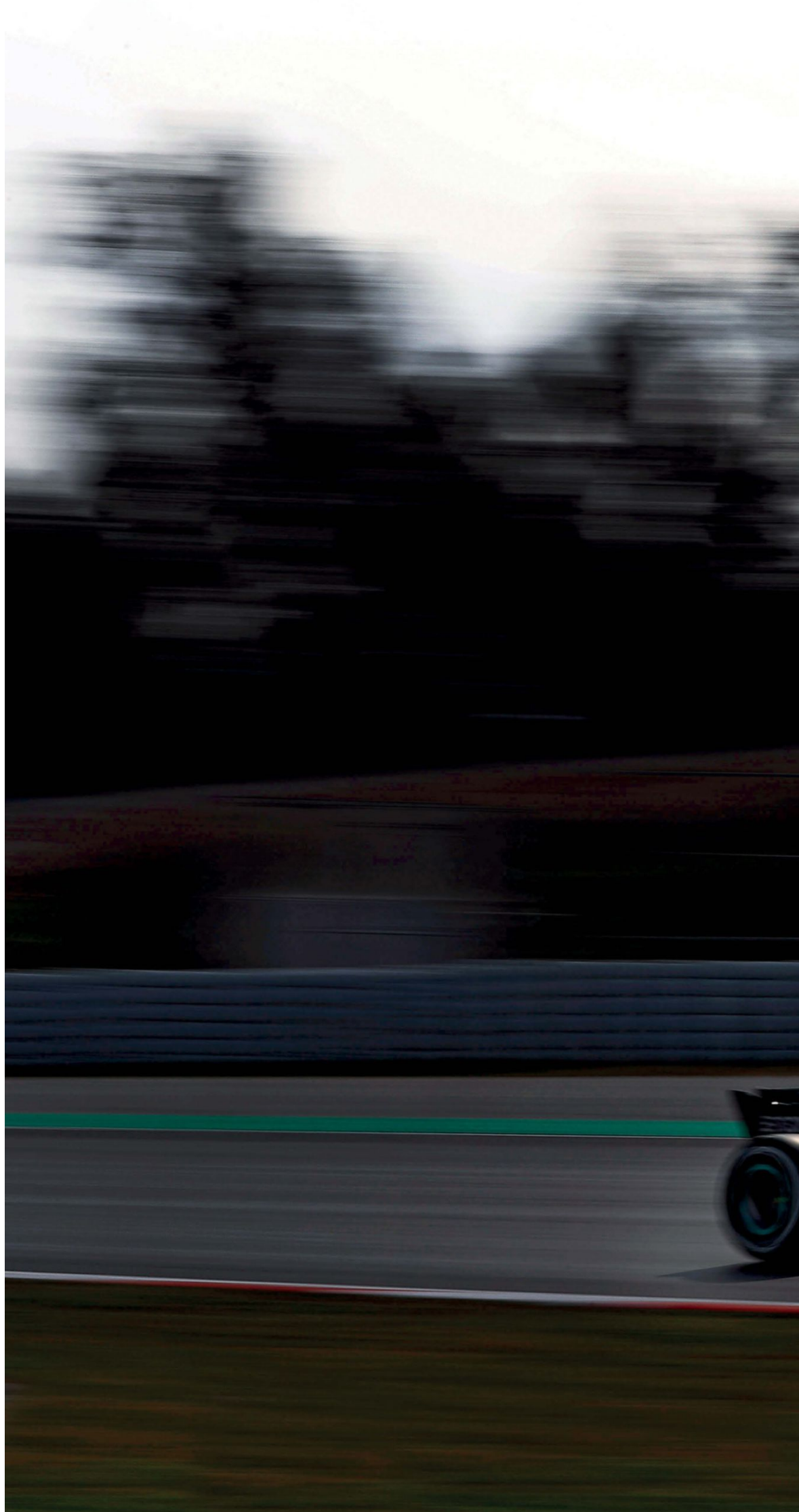


LAT IMAGES: Steven Tee

Where Barcelona, Spain

When 9.35am, Monday
26 February 2018

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII,
200mm lens, 1/85th @ F20









Start your engines


The exit of the pitlane at the Barcelona circuit slopes away quite steeply towards Turn 1. Just before the drop, there is an area where drivers practice their starts and engineers capture the data they need for clutch settings, grip levels and the effect that has on traction.

You can see that a Williams has accelerated away after a practice start and a Ferrari has just moved into position.

There's just enough sunlight to pick out the deep scarlet red livery on the Ferrari and it highlights the curvaceous design at the rear of the chassis. Because I'm positioned so low to the ground you can also make out the car's rake and the plank that sits under the floor.



Photographer

 **LAT IMAGES:** Glenn Dunbar

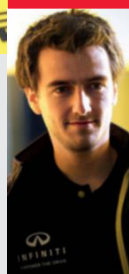
Where Barcelona, Spain

When 3.47pm, Tuesday
27 February 2018

Details Canon EOS-1DX MkII,
600mm lens, 1/2500th @ F6.3

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

From aerodynamic and component design to performance engineering, three INFINITI Engineering Academy winners helped bring Renault F1's new car to the track for the first time



“I'M REALLY PROUD OF SEEING PARTS I DESIGNED ON THE TRACK”

DAMIEN TURLEY
INFINITI ENGINEERING ACADEMY
EUROPEAN WINNER

The thrill of witnessing a freshly launched Formula 1 car run for the first time is unbeatable. The almost imperceptible changes in the sculpting of the bodywork, the slight shift in the engine noise, the tweaks to the livery and the sheer possibilities of this new car have a unique magic. What if you're tied to that 25,000-piece work of high-speed art by something more than just being a fan?

Suppose you are a member of the team. Now suppose that you are one of the three personnel on site. Let's say a trio from three different continents, who a year earlier had nothing more in common than being engineering students who applied for the INFINITI Engineering Academy.

Take Damien Turley, the winner of the INFINITI Engineering Academy Europe, who has spent the months building up to the first run working in composite design at Renault F1, including the design of the suspension gaiters.

“I discovered Formula 1 in 2004/5, when Renault really started to be a thing and won 2005 and 2006 with Fernando Alonso – that was amazing for me,” he says shortly after the new car has completed a successful first day of running. “I'm really proud of seeing parts I designed out on the track today.”

INFINITI Engineering Academy USA region winner Matthew Crossan works in the performance group at Enstone. He has been deeply involved in preparing for the first test.

“One of the things I worked on in my first few months here is the track mapping work, trying to update the correlation. With the track resurfacing, there's a lot to do, so it's not just a case of 'go get the coffee'. If you mess up, the car is not going to be as well set-up as possible.”

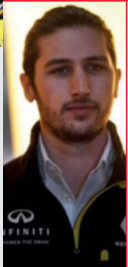
The third member of the trio is Jacob Denobo, winner of the Asia Oceania INFINITI Engineering Academy.

“I'm working in the aero department, mostly focused on aerodynamic testing,” says Denobo. “So I spend a lot of time in the windtunnel either setting up new technologies or doing data measurements, data mining.”

Once this trio has completed their six months at Enstone, they will switch to a second half-year placement in the INFINITI European Engineering Centre in Cranfield to focus on automotive projects. In their place, the other four regional winners of the INFINITI Engineering Academy, currently at Cranfield, will head to Enstone.

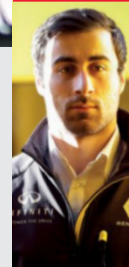
Entries for the next INFINITI Engineering Academy intake are now open, and the initiative is evolving. There's still seven regional finals in Europe, each featuring 10 candidates drawn from those who apply, but this time a team from Harvard University specialising in analysis of fast decision making will be involved.

Three successful candidates played a role in bringing the Renault R.S.18 from blank CAD screen to a successful track debut in Barcelona



“THERE’S A LOT OF TRACK WORK TO DO; IT’S NOT A CASE OF ‘GO GET THE COFFEE’”

MATTHEW CROSSAN
INFINITI ENGINEERING ACADEMY
USA WINNER



“I’M WORKING IN THE AERO DEPARTMENT, FOCUSING ON TESTING”

JACOB DENOBO
INFINITI ENGINEERING ACADEMY
ASIA OCEANIA WINNER

The finals themselves will also be held partly on grand prix weekends. Just as before, they will be held over two days, but this year the 10 will be whittled down to three on the first day, and the remaining candidates will participate in challenges in the build-up to the race in the Renault garage, motorhome and the pitlane.

“This is an exception that FOM is giving to INFINITI, because usually partners or sponsors are not allowed to do anything at the track – it’s off limits and used only for racing purposes,” says Tommaso Volpe, INFINITI Engineering Academy director. “But because the programme is so powerful and attracts so much media attention, FOM agreed to it.”

With the seven regions covering every corner of the globe – Europe, USA, the Middle East, China, Mexico and Asia and Oceania – it certainly does bring greater diversity to F1. And, what’s more, it also allows both Renault F1 and

INFINITI the chance to identify and attract high-quality engineering talent.

“There are a lot of demands on recruitment for young engineers,” says Renault chief technical officer Bob Bell. “The beauty of this scheme is that the selection process for it is so tough and there’s such a large number of applicants from all over the globe. So we really do get the best

of the best and there is no other way we could realistically do that.”

Which brings us back to where we started – the fact that these young engineers are able to make a tangible impact on the creation of real-life grand prix cars. Not bad for a journey that starts simply by uploading your CV to the INFINITI Engineering Academy website.



HOW TO APPLY

If you’re a current engineering student and fluent in English, then get your CV and application in for the 2018 Infiniti Engineering Academy for the chance to win a year-long work placement at both the Renault F1 Team and at Infiniti’s Technical Centre in Cranfield (six months at each).

For more information visit
<http://academy.infiniti.com>



WHO CAN STOP THE BIG THREE?

01 Mercedes vs Ferrari vs Red Bull – is that the shape of Formula 1 2018? It looked rather like it after the initial stages of pre-season testing in Barcelona.

Of course, it is difficult to glean too much precise information about competitiveness from running at an exceptionally cold (and recently resurfaced) Circuit de Catalunya – too many variables apply.

But it did not escape anyone's notice that when the teams were going through the homework of proving their cars, focusing on little other than making sure



Unusually cold conditions brought testing to a temporary halt

they worked over the initial stages of testing, before the complications of true performance runs, the big three occupied the top of the timesheets.

The usual provisos apply: the cars' specification was unknown. The weather was unexpectedly cold – there was even snow. All will have major upgrade packages for the first race. But Red Bull-Mercedes-Ferrari on day one of testing and Ferrari-Mercedes-Red Bull on the second, each separated by fractions and well clear of the rest of the field, then Lewis Hamilton ending the test fastest by 0.3secs from Sebastian Vettel, tells its own story.

If so, this would not be a surprise. They are, in essence, the only teams with the resources to mount a title campaign. McLaren, the only other team close, are working through the growing pains of starting with a new engine manufacturer. More of which in a moment.

So there is every reason to believe the big three will take up in Melbourne somewhere close to where they left off 2017 in Abu Dhabi.

Each has continued their own development path with their 2018 car. Mercedes have refined their low-rake, long-wheelbase philosophy, while hoping to address their narrow set-up window and issues that affected the car on slow-speed tracks; Ferrari have lengthened the car a little to boost aerodynamic efficiency but stuck true to their high-rake, high-sidepods philosophy which gave them such pace and flexibility. And Red Bull have learned the lessons of their slow start to 2017.

Relative competitiveness may hang on engine performance and reliability.

Mercedes – already the standard-setters on both pace and reliability – are ducking questions as to whether they have hit 1,000bhp on their test beds in the factory, which rather suggests they have.

Ferrari, as is their wont these days, are saying very little. And Red Bull team boss Christian Horner is already expressing “concern” over partner Renault’s plan to focus on reliability first and only introduce performance upgrades when teams take their second engines.

Horner said: “Our expectation and goal is to try to reduce the gap to the cars ahead of us. Mercedes are the benchmark, the favourite. If rumours of 1,000bhp are correct, that is going to put them in a mighty position. But we have made good progress and we hope to be a challenger team particularly at circuits that play to our strengths.

“Reliability has been a big priority for Renault so they are coming into the year better prepared. Hopefully that will allow their focus to start to centre on performance.”

Renault Sport boss Cyril Abiteboul, however, points out that a focus on reliability does not necessarily mean performance will not improve.

“Reliability and performance and competitiveness go hand in hand,” he said. “Last year we had to reduce the performance potential of the engine because of reliability. So the target is to start the season reliably so we can use the engine to its full potential, which we were not able to do last year. So from a performance perspective the engine should be performing better.

“When they are reliable, components open up more options in terms of performance. When you work on reliability, you work on performance also.”

Abiteboul says the Renault performance at the start of the season “will be comparable to the end of last year when we were using the engine at its maximum potential, which has not happened on many occasions, except maybe in Abu Dhabi. Look at Mexico, Interlagos and Abu Dhabi, you will see a huge spread of performance and Abu Dhabi was the best compromise.”

Even so, Renault do have other concerns. Mercedes engine boss Andy Cowell is sticking resolutely to the

“MERCEDES ARE THE BENCHMARK, THE FAVOURITE. IF RUMOURS OF 1,000BHP ARE CORRECT, THAT IS GOING TO PUT THEM IN A MIGHTY POSITION”

CHRISTIAN HORNER

desire to use only three engines all season. He says: “We think overall it is better to create a power unit that does have the required durability and doesn’t lose significant performance through that life. If you work on the assumption that you are not going to win one race then you are potentially throwing the championship away.”

But Renault are already talking about the possibility of strategic penalties. Abiteboul says: “I’m accepting you need to optimise your potential. If it is better for everyone to use four engines rather than three, in which case we make that decision, but it is too early.

“First I want to see where we are sitting in the pecking order, in terms of mileage, reliability, performance against what we have measured on the dyno and priorities set for the Renault team, which is what matters the most.”

RENAULT LAY DOWN THE LAW

02

Engine performance and reliability are not the only bone of contention between Renault and their leading team ahead of the season. Last September, Renault told

Red Bull they had no intention of remaining as engine supplier after 2018. Red Bull pointed out that Renault’s contract with Formula 1 dictates they have to if Red Bull make that request. Now Abiteboul is saying Red Bull have only until the end of May to make a decision.

“We are not going to hang around forever,” he said. “There will be a deadline for Red Bull Racing to define what they want for the future.

It is in the sporting regulations. I believe it is by the end of May when there needs to be some clarity as to which manufacturer is supplying which customer team. So that, as far as we are concerned, will be our deadline.”

Should Renault get their way, Red Bull’s alternative for 2019 is to use Honda engines. The Japanese company are still in their honeymoon period with junior team Toro Rosso, having parted company with McLaren after three seasons of poor performance and reliability.

Over the first two days of pre-season testing, it escaped no-one’s attention that the Toro Rosso-Honda completed more than twice as many miles as the McLaren-Renault, as Fernando Alonso and Stoffel Vandoorne were hit by a series of annoying reliability niggles.

Alonso was pitched into the gravel trap when his car shed a wheel on his sixth lap of testing, and Vandoorne ►



Relations between Renault and Red Bull, already rocky, are unlikely to improve this season

was consigned to the garage when an exhaust clip came loose and led to overheating in the engine bay.

McLaren set strong headline lap times, but they were on hypersoft and supersoft tyres when everyone else was on softs and mediums. The naked lap times therefore looked bad for McLaren, but the mood in the team remained resolutely positive. Both drivers said the car felt good and insisted they believed it had excellent potential [see Alonso Long Interview, page 98].

The sense of relief at McLaren at having ditched Honda remains palpable, but how long it lasts remains to be seen. McLaren's chassis can now be directly compared with a rival's for the first time since 2014, when they were embarrassingly off the pace.

McLaren's design team say they are "excited" by this. Aerodynamics chief Peter Prodromou – formerly of Red Bull – elaborated thus: "It is a very positive thing that we have two first-class teams to measure ourselves against and that is a very strong motivating factor."

McLaren spent much of last season telling people that they believed their car was, on balance, a match for the Red Bull. But up and down the pitlane, while people agreed that it was a good car, there was scepticism as to whether it was quite as good as McLaren believed.

Was the Honda engine as bad as McLaren led people to believe? Or were they deluding themselves? A wider question for 2018 will be whether McLaren have made a terrible error in giving up a net \$100m or so for not much performance gain. And that will only become clear from a) Honda's performance with Toro Rosso; and b) McLaren's pace in comparison with Red Bull and the factory Renault team – also fast in early testing.

McLaren executive director Zak Brown summed up the team's situation himself: "If we're 0.9secs off Red Bull, that wouldn't look good, I agree. We don't want to hide.

“ WE WELCOME AND ARE EXCITED ABOUT THE PRESSURE THAT COMES WITH HAVING THE SPOTLIGHT ON US. WE WILL ONLY WANT TO HIDE IF WE'RE 0.9SECS OFF RED BULL ”

ZAK BROWN



LAT IMAGES: GLENN DUNBAR, SAM BLOXHAM

The move to Renault engines means the McLaren chassis can be properly compared with rivals for the first time

It's show time. The beautiful thing about motor racing is hundreds of millions of people get to see how you do. That's part of the adrenalin.

"This team has won the second greatest number of championships, so we welcome and are excited about the pressure that comes with having the spotlight on us. We will only want to hide if we're 0.9secs off Red Bull."

Brown must hope his words don't return to haunt him. ▶

F1 DIGEST THE MONTH'S BIG STORIES AT A GLANCE

05.02.18 Liberty announce 'grid kids' initiative for all grands prix

07.02.18 FIA tighten boundaries on 'oil burn' engine tricks



15.02.18 Robert Kubica reveals he will drive for Williams in F1 in Spain, Austria and Abu Dhabi

19.02.18 Ex-McLaren aerodynamicist Doug McKiernan joins Williams as chief engineer

20.02.18 McLaren to switch fuel supplier from Castrol to Petrobras in 2019



20.02.18 Formula 2 driver Jack Aitken named as Renault's reserve



22.02.18 Force India deny they are up for sale

23.02.18 FIA issue new directive on engine equality for customers

27.02.18 F1 launches new web streaming service

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HAVE WILLIAMS GOT IT WRONG?

03 It was a quiet winter in Formula 1, with Williams' driver choice the only major story. Since the team came out of hibernation, Claire Williams has been busy defending the choice of Sergey Sirotkin over Robert Kubica, saying they believe the Russian will surprise [see Sirotkin feature, page 76]. But privately the team know that having two 'pay drivers' does not look good.

Much was made of the fact that Sirotkin was chosen after impressing in the post-season test in Abu Dhabi. At Yas Marina, Kubica's struggles in getting the tyres to work for one qualifying-style lap gave Williams cold feet over their original plan to sign him for a fairytale return from the rally accident that curtailed his career in 2011.

Abu Dhabi is a notoriously difficult track for tyres. Its lack of abrasiveness makes it hard to generate the core temperature needed to make them work at their best. This is what Kubica struggled with.

He assured the team he would get on top of it by the start of the season, but the engineers felt they could not afford to take the risk. So a penny for private thoughts at Williams when on day two of testing Kubica was 0.3secs quicker.

Was it impossible to make a comparison because they were on different programmes? Or was Kubica just that much quicker?

Barcelona has long corners which work the tyres hard – even allowing for the new surface that is smoother and has reduced degradation *and* the cold temperatures at that test. Generating core temperature is not usually an issue at this circuit. So was this actually the true comparative pace of the drivers, not disguised by the vagaries of one unusual track?

It's way too early to say that. Insiders say Kubica did well in his brief outing at Barcelona, but not noticeably better than

Sirotkin or Stroll. However, it raises another question: what happens if it emerges over the course of Kubica's testing this year – some pre-season, some in-season, and three Friday practice sessions – that he actually is faster than both the race drivers?

Williams chief technical officer Paddy Lowe was asked exactly that question not long after Kubica set that time on the second day of pre-season testing.

Lowe paused. For 13 seconds. Before saying: "There is no answer to that question."

“INSIDERS SAY KUBICA DID WELL IN HIS BRIEF OUTING AT BARCELONA, BUT NOT NOTICEABLY BETTER THAN SIROTKIN OR STROLL”

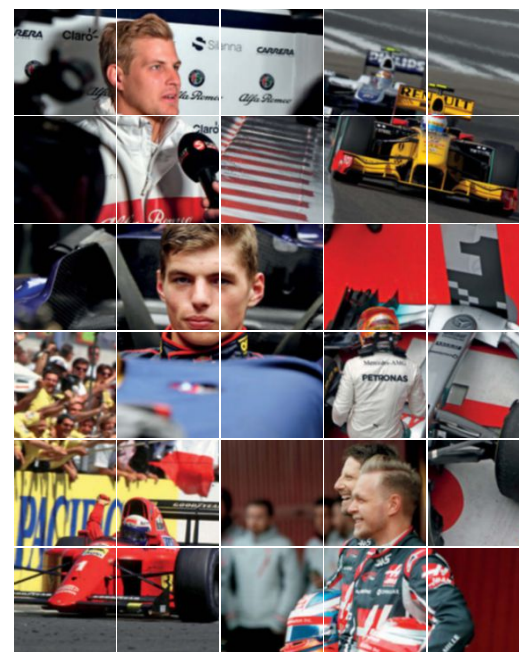


The relative pace of Sirotkin and Kubica during Barcelona testing threw up fresh doubts over Williams' choice

F1 MASTERMIND

Your chosen specialised subject: the world's greatest sport

- Q1** Three other Swedes have started more GPs than Marcus Ericsson. Who are they?
- Q2** Which current team won six of the 16 Portuguese Grands Prix to have been held?
- Q3** Who was the first Russian to race in F1, when he started the 2010 Bahrain GP for Renault?
- Q4** Only two drivers have ever won the world championship without starting a race that season from pole position. Who are they?
- Q5** Where did Max Verstappen make his F1 practice debut for Toro Rosso?
- Q6** Jacky Ickx and which other Belgian driver have pole positions to their name?
- Q7** How many lights-to-flag victories were there in 2017: 5, 6 or 7?
- Q8** True or false: Alain Prost's 1990 win at Paul Ricard is the only time that Ferrari have triumphed at the French circuit?
- Q9** Who were Sauber's drivers in their first season in Formula 1 in 1993?
- Q10** Who has the best finishing position in a GP: Romain Grosjean or Kevin Magnussen?



1 Ronnie Peterson, Jo Bonnier, Stefan Johansson 2 Williams 3 Vitaly Petrov 4 Denny Hulme (1967), Niki Lauda (1984) 5 Japan 2014 6 Thierry Boutsen 7 5 8 False, Lauda won in 1975 9 JJ Lehto, Karl Wendlinger 10 Both have finished second



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THE RACER'S EDGE

PETER WINDSOR

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Today's F1 machines feature many modern compromises such as a (quieter) turbo hybrid power unit and safety measures including the halo

racing being at the top of the automotive pyramid, the results are clear to see: by the time the 2018 rulebook has had its say, F1 cars differ from one another mainly in the architectural details (by which I mean aero-generated deflectors and barge boards, as distinct from the sort of art that separates a Giovanni Bertone from an Ugo Zagato). The cars are big and heavy, as Lewis says. They're very safe (in relative terms); and they're also technically sophisticated in a socially acceptable sort of way.

They are, indeed, the F1 equivalent of bland and faceless SUVs. They are the inevitable result of crash structures, regenerative devices and lowest common denominators. In one sense – the

public-offering sense – that's possibly a good thing. Kids these days covet a hot-spotted, wifi-friendly luxury SUV much more than they do the latest Caterham or Ariel Atom.

In another sense – in terms of what the public want to see from their F1 drivers and cars – it's illogical. Think overtaking, agility, creativity and the fundamentals of what used to be good design: low centre of gravity, low roll centres, lightweight and high stiffness. We're today so far away from where we were and that's before we've even discussed the question of engine noise.

It makes you wonder what the past 50 years or so of automotive engineering have been all about. What was the point of Colin Chapman building the cars he did if everyone was ultimately going to go out and buy an SUV with the frontal area of a brick, or a 'city car' with a centre of gravity somewhere near the cloud base?

The answer for F1? Reduce the minimum weight limit, for one thing. Shave it by 100kg, or maybe 200kg. Set new, smaller maximum dimensions around cars that don't have to be built around anything more than a pure, noisy racing engine and logical safety structures.

Highlight the genius of F1's engineers through the precision of computer-aided design and simulation and tyre/vehicle/aero dynamics rather than through batteries and regenerative devices; F1 fans are never going to be wowed by fuel-saving and energy conservation: for one thing they never get to touch or feel it; for another, that sort of stuff is for sportscars or Formula E, not for Formula 1 sprints.

HOW SAFETY AND TECHNOLOGY HAS RE-SHAPED F1

Lewis Hamilton was very politically correct when we spoke about it – as the world champion inevitably has to be in this world of Liberty, visibility and F1's new and unfamiliar role on Wall Street – but there was no denying his underlying tone. He's a racing driver, after all.

So when I asked Lewis about starting a race in a big, heavy F1 car that weighs about 820kg (with a full load of fuel), this is what he said:

Politically correct segment:

"I'll try to steer away from the negativity, but cars are getting heavier and heavier every year, and that obviously affects the braking zones. The brakes are on the limit and they're not developing them because of the current rules. The physical demands on the driver are greater, which is a step in the right direction, but I hope they don't get heavier than they are now. Next year, with the new 80kg driver rule, I can basically be a body-builder. I can have the beach look I want..."

Racing driver segment:

"...but there are parts of the lighter, more nimble cars from the past that I prefer. They're



Lewis Hamilton has spoken of his joy of racing cars that are lightweight and agile

easier for overtaking and to manoeuvre in combat. The heavier the car, the slower it is."

Inevitably there are plenty of sides to this. Safety and modern technology demand space and weight; the F1 show and the drivers – well, the racing drivers – prefer light and small.

Ross Brawn, I'm fairly confident, favours

a return to the latter. It won't be easy for him, because trying to keep Liberty's F1 business model in one piece while simultaneously pacifying Ferrari, Mercedes and Red Bull is a bit like fly-fishing on a motorcycle in a force-ten gale.

They was an F1 time, of course, when there was much more scope for creativity in shape and form. A Lotus 49 looked very different from a 550kg BRM H16 (which, with 50 gallons of race fuel on board – 171kg – still managed to weigh less than a 2018 F1 car).

It all changed when safety activist Ralph Nader decreed that an ugly 911 Porsche (with much thicker and bigger front bumpers) was infinitely preferable to a 911 with no such appendages. That's what killed Lotus road car sales in the US.

Fifty years on, a lot more than Lotus Elans have died, even if lives have been saved. And, motor



Thus the key issue: sadly for us, motorsport isn't run by one, centralised, body, up there at 30,000ft, enabling F1 to do its thing while the WEC and Formula E address other aspects of engineering (and other audiences) in a logical, co-ordinated way. It's run by commercial rights holders who by definition think only within their own boxes, oblivious to what else is out there. Anyone with a feel for management will tell you that F1 and Formula E should be working in harmony, sharing commercial, promotional and technology advances for the benefit of all, but there's no way that's going to happen now even if Liberty do own a stake in Formula E.

The FIA sold off Formula E and as a result,

F1 has developed a sort of bipolar existence in which it feels obliged to mix 'energy-efficient' engines with the concept of being the 'ultimate' form of motorsport. It's a bit like those Hollywood

“ IT MAKES YOU WONDER WHAT THE PAST 50 YEARS OF ENGINEERING HAVE BEEN ABOUT. WHAT WAS THE POINT OF COLIN CHAPMAN BUILDING THE CARS HE DID IF EVERYONE WAS GOING TO BUY AN SUV? ”

lunches, where suntanned producers pick at iceberg salads as they vainly dissect the best of the current movies in order to mix the plus points into the next big blockbuster. It rarely works but it requires much less effort than genuine creativity.

As a result, F1 has neither one thing (a pure race car) nor the other (the ultimate in eco-friendly technology). We race, instead, with the dreaded compromise, the equivalent of the SUV: love the eight-speed gearbox with in-car connectivity; shame about the excessive weight, the huge dimensions and the consequent agility of the elephant in the room.



The all-electric Formula E series should be working in harmony with Formula 1, sharing commercial and technology benefits





UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

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Performance gain was rapid, as is normal in the early stages of any new set of regulations. But as this early understanding develops there will always be certain design constraints that have been built into the configuration of the car in the concept stage – and which cannot be unrolled mid-season. With the experience gained from those early design space explorations, the 2018 cars are more able to incorporate significant architectural changes to unlock performance.

In formulating the 2017 regulations there was a deliberate desire to leave the barge board area, the space in front of the radiator inlets, as an area for performance differentiation, but I think few realised just how fruitful an area this would be.

The freedom that the relatively clean sheet of paper that 2018 brings has allowed the teams to exploit this area fully. Since the majority of aerodynamic performance still relies on windtunnel testing and there is a limit of 65 runs per week imposed by regulations, the target is always to achieve a high hit-rate per run.

In the early days of new regulations one might hope for around 1.5 or more points of downforce gain per 100 runs. As the rules mature and new areas become less productive this will tend to tail off. At this still relatively immature stage of the regulations I would expect everyone to be hitting the higher figures, and therefore significantly more performance to be available on the 2018 cars.

Just how much is never easy to say, but these days it's common for development work on a new car to start shortly before the previous model makes its track debut. So if development of the 2018 cars started in week seven or so of 2017 and the first race configuration was finished by Christmas, then even allowing for the 2017 car to be back in the tunnel for in-season development, we might expect gains approaching ten per cent in pure downforce.

Using our reasonably well-established rule of thumb that a one per cent increase in downforce at a sensible lift-to-drag ratio will improve lap times by a tenth, we can expect a full second from aerodynamic development alone.

While aerodynamics may be the prime performance gain it's not the only one. In ►

TESTING IS THE FIRST CHANCE TO RANK THE TEAMS

As this issue hits the newsstands or floats through the ether to your tablet, the teams are busy packing the freight that is bound imminently for Australia and the opening round of what promises to be an exciting season.

While the fans deplore the hiatus of the winter, for those involved in the research, design and production of the new cars, that break is never long enough. Anyone watching the documentary on McLaren's fraught winter of 12 months ago (if you haven't seen the series, it's worth taking a month's subscription to Amazon Prime) will realise that no end of Gantt charts, machine shop loading schedules and optimism do not guarantee a smooth car build.

Whatever the trials and tribulations of car build and the ups and downs of testing on the newly resurfaced Barcelona, we still look forward with anticipation to calculating the relative pecking order of the teams.

The introduction of significant new chassis and bodywork regulations for 2017 came surprisingly late – it was only in a meeting of the teams on



Mercedes will continue to unlock performance from their '18 car (bottom) compared with 2017 (top)

11 February 2016 that they accepted the Strategy Group's conclusion that changes were required and recommended what we now have, by a narrow majority. This after they had voted by a large majority *against* a change of rules for 2017.

Some exploratory work had been done before this, but since the scale model windtunnel tyres that are so necessary for experimental aero development weren't available to the teams until that March, the development of this very different aerodynamic package was necessarily limited, before it hit the track early last season.



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McLaren's relationship with their new power unit supplier Renault will undoubtedly go through growing pains before harmony is achieved



LAT IMAGES: CHARLES COATES

“AS FANS, WHAT WE WANT FROM THE NEW SEASON IS UNPREDICTABILITY AND CLOSE RACING. AT THIS STAGE NONE OF US CAN TELL FOR SURE, BUT IN MY MIND THE SIGNS AUGUR WELL FOR A CLASSIC SEASON”

these days of unfettered power unit development I think we can expect improvement here as well.

One hopes that this may lead to natural parity of performance between the manufacturers, but with Mercedes having produced an all-new engine it's likely that they have maintained an advantage. Hopefully the other competitors have risen to the challenge. Renault, with McLaren joining Red Bull as elite customers, and their works team starting to feel the benefits of fresh investment, should have as much influence on the intensity of the competition as Ferrari will.

In reality it is this question that will probably determine more than any what quality of racing we can expect to see this year. Red Bull suffered in 2017, as they had done in 2015, from a car that lacked performance at the start of the season but developed into an able, if fragile, contender.

McLaren will have to go through the growing pains of a new power unit supplier and this may take a little while before chassis and engine teams beat as one. Having gone through this a few times myself I've never found the basic mechanical engineering involved in a change of

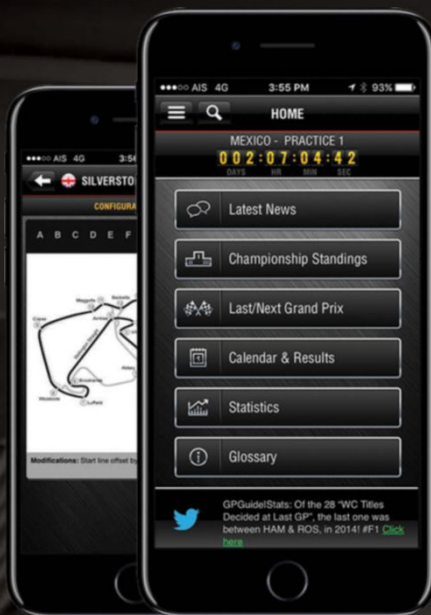
engine supplier to be a problem. More often it's learning the ways your new partner expresses things and the methodologies they apply that takes some time to shake down. If both these teams aren't challenging from the outset, it doesn't mean they won't be as the season matures. We've discussed in a previous issue the likely effect of the new tyre compounds available this year, but it's perhaps worth

pointing out that the new softer compounds will allow race strategy to play a larger part in the outcome of races.

I like this since it's one of the few areas where a profusion of money doesn't reap as much reward as an agile mind. As fans, what we want from the new season is a level of unpredictability and close racing – but is that what we will get?

At this stage none of us can tell for sure, but in my mind the signs augur well for a classic season. I fear for the effect of increased downforce on close racing, but I'm optimistic that time and maturity will narrow the deficit between the teams.

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STRAIGHT TALKING

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channel like BBC or ITV would help to keep F1 front of mind for the terrestrial viewer – much like BBC *Match of the Day* does for the Premier League. They could expect to get three to four million watching F1 highlights on either of those channels. It acts as what is known in the industry as “barker content”, exposing people to F1; if they like it enough they may be converted to paying for it on Sky.

However, in Italy Sky placed that secondary package on a channel they control. They could do the same in the UK, although there is some debate about what exactly ‘free-to-air’ means in the UK’s modern digital TV landscape. That will be a crucial decision, which British F1 fans will learn about at some point later this year.

For those who can afford to pay to watch F1, there is no question that Sky provides a great service. All the practice sessions are live, there is a lot of wrap-around programming and the presentation team, skippered by my old colleague Martin Brundle, is sharp.

But what about those who cannot afford it? Many people don’t

even attend a grand prix in person, even in their own country, and for many the main reason is cost.

Liberty Media’s ownership strategy is based on bringing the sport closer to the fans. They want to make money, but they want to do it at races by offering them more for their money; as well as a race, there is music, food, a festival at each grand prix.

But what about on TV? Without reaching for their wallets, F1 fans can follow the sport in greater depth than ever before thanks to websites and social media. There’s a whole generation of young followers who don’t watch a 90-minute GP live on TV, but stay across it through social feeds and eSports.

The newly announced F1 Live OTT streaming platform is a great step in the right direction and at between £6 and £9 a month looks priced correctly, but it’s not available in the UK or Italy. In response Sky have lowered the price of the F1 pass on NOW TV, their OTT platform, to £16 per month.

I recently hosted an F1 business forum in London at which a prominent F1 sponsor spelled out how she and her peers see this developing situation. To be involved as a sponsor in F1 today means making the most of the digital and social media opportunities and cutting through with creative content and imaginative social media strategy.

But they also believe that what underpins F1’s massive reach is that global TV audience. The paywall, which can cut an audience down to around ten to 20 per cent of its free-to-air size, is as much a concern to them as to the poor downtrodden F1 fan.

WORRYING TIMES FOR BRITISH FANS

I worry for the British Formula 1 fan.

This will be the last season when he or she will be able to watch races live on free-to-air TV before the sport disappears behind a paywall on Sky Sports in 2019, with only highlights plus the live British GP required to be on a free-to-air channel.

Channel 4’s three-year shared rights deal with Sky, to cover half the races live and the rest as highlights, comes to an end in November.

Compared with the past decades of exclusively live F1 coverage on the BBC or ITV, the numbers have been modest in this share model. But it has at least provided access to the ordinary F1 fan who can’t – or won’t – pay to watch a race.

Sky’s exclusive deal, one of Bernie Ecclestone’s final acts and worth close to \$1 billion from 2019 through to 2024, takes the sport behind a paywall in the UK for the first time. Bernie took advantage of a bidding war between Sky and BT Sport for live rights and dramatically raised the annual revenue for F1 TV rights in the UK. But the pact the two broadcasters made on bidding in the Premier League rights auction shows those days are gone.



Sky’s F1 coverage is superb, but from 2019 all races, bar the British GP, will be behind the paywall

In France and Spain F1 has hidden behind a paywall for a few years, although the return of the French GP has triggered a modest reversal of that trend; terrestrial network TF1 will host some live races this season.

2018 sees Italy going in the opposite direction as F1 goes deeper behind a paywall on Sky Italia and this could provide some pointers for what F1 fans in Britain might expect next season.

From Melbourne the *tifosi* will have to watch the first 13 races of the season on Sky Sport, Italy’s Sky channel. The Italian GP will then be live on free-to-air channel RAI, before a handful of live races, mainly in the US times zones, will also be aired on Tv8, a free-to-air station, controlled by Sky.

This mirrors a crucial detail about Sky’s deal in the UK; it is in *their* gift (not F1’s) to decide which channel will get the package of live British Grand Prix and highlights of the other rounds.

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1983	LAMBORGHINI JALPA P350 TARGA Red/Cream, 1 Of 35 RHD Cars, Featured In Many Articles, Original Tools, Books & Spare Wheels, Award-Winning Example, 40,000m.....	£99,950

ROLLS ROYCE & BENTLEY

16	PHANTOM DROPHEAD COUPÉ Diamond Black Over Andalusian White/Seashell Hide, VAT Q, R' Camera With Top View, Lounge Seats, RR Monogram In Headrests, Bamboo Cashmere Headlining, TV Func, 6,000m.....	£319,950
13	PHANTOM SERIES II Diamond Black/ Seashell Hide, Sliding Roof, Rear Theatre, TV, Visible Exhausts, Camera Pk With Top View, 6 DVD Changer, Dynamic Pk, 9,000m.....	£189,950
11	PHANTOM Darkest Tungsten/Light Grey Hide, 21" Part Polished Alloy Wheels, Sliding/Tilting Sunroof, Rear Lounge, TV Function, Visible Exhausts, F' & R' Camera System, 37,000m, Stunning.....	£134,950

PORSCHE

54	CARRERA GT GT Silver/Ascot Brown Leather, Bucket Seats, Luggage Set, Air Con, Porsche Online Pro Radio, Full History File, Totally As New, 599m From New.....	£POA
63	991 TURBO S Wrapped Nardo Grey (Jet Black)/Agate Grey Leather, Electric Tilt & Slide Sunroof, 18 Way Memory Seats, Sport Chrono Pk Plus, BOSE, TV Tuner, 27,000m, Stunning.....	£96,950
65	991 GT3 RS 4.0 Ultraviolet/Black & Grey Alcantara, 918 Bucket Seats, Front Lifting, Sound Pk Plus, Clubsport Pk, Carbon Interior Pk, PCM With Nav, Electronic Damper Control, 6,000m, As New.....	£179,950
65	991 GT3 RS 4.0 LHD GT Silver/Black Alcantara & Leather, 918 Spyder Bucket Seats, RS Pedals, FI Exhaust, Clubsport Pk, PCCB, Front Lift, Dynamic Engine Mounts, Massive Spec, 4,500m.....	£179,950
66	991 GT3 RS 4.0 LHD Lava Orange/Orange Alcantara & Black Leather, Silky Black Alloys, PCCB, Front Axel Lift, 918 Bucket Seats, Sports Exhaust, Michelin Decals On Tyres, Sports Exhaust, 8,000m.....	£174,950
17	MACAN GTS White With Black Leather & Alcantara, PCM With Navigation, Panoramic Roof, Carbon Fibre Interior Pk, 21" Sport Classic Alloy Wheels, R' Camera, Switchable Sports Exhaust, 1500m, As New.....	£62,950
16	CAYMAN GT4 Voodoo Blue/Black Leather&Alcantara, 918 Bucket Seats, Porsche Ceramic Brakes, Sport Chrono Plus, PCM With Nav, Electronic Damper Control, Carbon Interior, Sound Pk Plus, 7,000m, As New.....	£91,950

OTHERS

14	McLAREN P1 Volcano Yellow/Black Alcantara & Leather, Exposed Carbon Exterior, 20" Lightweight Alloys In Stealth, Carbon Roof Snorkel, Meridian Sound System, UK Supplied, 1 Owner, 1,500m.....	£1,495,000
17	McLAREN 720S LAUNCH EDTN Glacier White/Black Leather, Lux Spec, Carbon Fibre Upgrade Pk 1, Front Lift, Visual Carbon Structure, Soft Close Doors, Carbon Fibre Intakes, Carbon Fibre Structure.....	£234,950
17	McLAREN 675LT SPIDER Chicane Grey/MSO Black Alcantara, H/Seats, Carbon Steering Wheel, £65,000 Of MSO Visual Carbon, Front Lift, Meridian Sound System, MSO Orange Pin Stripe, Stunning, 1,100m.....	£309,950
67	McLAREN 570S SPIDER Ventura Orange/Black & Orange Alcantara, Front Lift, Super Lightweight Alloys In Stealth, R' Camera, Luxury Pk, Orange Brake Calipers, As New, 200m.....	£179,950
65	McLAREN 650S LHD Brilliant Silver/McLaren Orange, Sat Nav, Parking Sensors, Carbon Side Intakes, Great Spec, Delivery Mileage.....	£129,950
05	TVR SAGARIS Midas Pearl Yellow/Black Leather, 18" Spider Alloy Wheels In Black, Sat Nav, Aluminium Stalks, Clear Spoiler, Fibreglass Shell, Superb Example, 1 Of 200 Made, 53,000m.....	£59,950
16	ASTON MARTIN V12 VANTAGE S SPITFIRE 80 EDTN Duxford Green/Tan Leather, 1 Of 8 Worldwide, Tribute To The RAF Supermarine Spitfire 80th Anniversary, 680m, As New, Great Investment.....	£249,950
59	ASTON MARTIN V12 VANTAGE Onyx Black/Obsidian Black Leather, 700W Aston Martin Premium Sound System, Silver Contrast Stitching, 10 Spoke Alloys, Full AM Service History, 22,000m.....	£79,950
61	MERCEDES-BENZ SLS Matte Designo Allantite Grey Magno/Classic Red Designo Leather, Black Twin Spoke Alloys, COMAND w/Nav, Carbon Interior Pk, R' Camera, Immaculate, 31,000m.....	£144,950
61	MERCEDES-BENZ SLS ROADSTER Obsidian Black/Saffron, Sat Nav, R' Camera, Aircar, Blind Spot Assist, 10,000m FSH, As New.....	£144,950
15	MERCEDES-BENZ AMG GTS Designo Diamond White/Black Nappa Leather, Premium Pk, Panoramic Roof, Burmester Sound System, R' Camera, 8,000m, As New.....	£78,950
66	MERCEDES-BENZ G63 AMG Palladium Silver/Black Leather, Designo Exclusive Pk, Rear Entertainment, Sunroof, Harman Kardon Sound System, Privacy Glass, TV Tuner, 6,000m, As New.....	£104,950

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What does the 2018 Formula 1 season hold for its main players? We asked 2016 world champion Nico Rosberg for his prophecies and he didn't hold back...

NICO
ROSBERG

FORTUNE TELLER

WORDS
JAMES ROBERTS
PICTURES
THOMAS BUTLER

Nico Rosberg breezes into his Monaco office and immediately spots a bowl of red foil-wrapped packets. "What are these?" he says quizzically.

In his absence we've delivered twenty handmade fortune cookies, each containing a question related to the 2018 season, to his desk.

No longer constrained by the shackles of an F1 team's PR machine, the 2016 world champion is uniquely qualified to deliver razor-sharp insights and can say exactly what he thinks – and we're in for a treat. "This is a first for me," he says. "To be grilled like this on my sport."

There's just two problems: "I've come straight from the dentist and the right side of my mouth is numb," he says. "And how are we going to break these cookies without making a mess?"

Delight crosses Nico's face as we offer him a table brush with which to banish crumbs; he unpeels the first packet and question within. ▶



CAN ANYONE STOP LEWIS HAMILTON?



“I know someone who did,” he smiles.

There’s absolutely no doubt in Nico’s mind that his former nemesis will win the season-opening Australian GP and the world championship this year. “It’s not what you want to hear, is it? And he’s very good at that track too.”

After starting 2017 in Ferrari’s shadow, Mercedes – and Lewis is particular – took advantage of the poor reliability suffered by Sebastian Vettel to win the world championship with two races to spare. With his knowledge of how Mercedes operate, Nico believes they’ll be unstoppable again in 2018 and that Lewis will claim a fifth drivers’ title.

“Ferrari started development of last year’s car earlier than Mercedes. They were very strong in the winter, but then they lost out through the year. That’s a worry for them. They need to pounce again this winter.

“But [Mercedes team boss] Toto [Wolff] has made some further staff movements internally and with [technical director] James Allison bringing some fresh ideas and thinking, I don’t see how they are going to be beaten.”

If the challenge to Mercedes isn’t going to come from another team, the question is whether Lewis can be threatened internally, just as he was when Nico beat him to the championship in 2016. Rosberg’s advice to Valtteri Bottas is to seize on his team-mate’s weaknesses.

“Lewis would have off-weekends and moments of inconsistency,” he says. “Sometimes his weekend can be affected by how he arrives at the track. He can lose momentum in practice and be

on the back foot. Valtteri needs to seize on those down moments and try to extend them – before he gets his flash of brilliance back.”

During Lewis and Nico’s intra-team fight in 2016, the competition was so brutal between the pair that it led to a poisonous atmosphere, something Wolff has described as “nuclear war”. Wolff has since stated that the arrival of the more outwardly placid Bottas has benefitted Lewis and the whole team, but Nico takes a different view.

“All I can say is that since 2014 [the start of the 1.6-litre hybrid era] no one came close to us. Now, suddenly, Ferrari was on a level with Mercedes and even leading the way for three-quarters of last season. I know internally what level Lewis and I pushed each other to. It was ridiculous, such an extreme, close to perfection level, but the whole team benefitted from that – and we were untouchable. I would say it worked pretty well.”

Bottas admitted he under-performed in 2017 and, like Nico before him, was never 100 per cent happy with his seat, so if he has any chance of beating Lewis he’ll have to raise his game.

“Last year he got dropped into deep water and it led to inconsistency,” says Nico. “Now he needs to start being consistently close to Lewis, which he can do – he’s got the skills.

“The problem is Lewis is quite fast,” he adds with a fair degree of understatement. “He’s also one of the best of all time, so you need to push pretty hard to beat that. I think Valtteri is going to beat him more often than last year but not enough to win a championship.” ▶

“THE PROBLEM IS LEWIS IS QUITE FAST. HE’S ALSO ONE OF THE BEST OF ALL TIME, SO YOU NEED TO PUSH PRETTY HARD TO BEAT THAT. I THINK VALTTERI IS GOING TO BEAT HIM MORE OFTEN THAN LAST YEAR BUT NOT ENOUGH TO WIN A CHAMPIONSHIP”



Nico reveals who, if anyone, can stop Lewis, whether Ferrari can step up another gear and if McLaren will make a return to the podium



IS RED BULL THE WRONG PLACE TO BE?



If Ferrari had poor reliability in 2017, the situation wasn't so grave as the failures that afflicted Red Bull. Brakes, battery, hydraulics and power unit problems all conspired against them, but there were some highs. Dan Ricciardo scored a memorable win in Baku and Max Verstappen took late-season victories in Malaysia and Mexico, wowing fans with his daredevil driving.

"Oh, he's so good for the sport, isn't he? He's just awesome," enthuses Nico. "If Max crashes out of a race even I'm disappointed, because from then on the race is just a little bit more boring. You know he's just going to go for it and he'll create opportunities. Look at Austin last year against Kimi [Räikkönen] – only Max would have gone for that [when he cut the inside of Turn 17 on the final lap for third, but was subsequently penalised]. There's no other driver on the grid who would have even thought of trying a move there, let alone make it stick."

A resurgent Red Bull with Max and Dan challenging for wins is something many would like to see in 2018, but will the team continue to be hampered by their power unit? With that in mind, Rosberg is surprised Verstappen committed to Red Bull (albeit with the incentive of a big-money deal) until the end of 2020.

"It was a strange decision because it's not the best car, and the two teams with the best cars were rolling out the red carpet for him. So, it's odd if all you want to do is win. He had all the cards in his hands and I don't know what the convincing factor was? Why commit so quickly?"

"I don't see him being world champion at Red

Bull because Mercedes are such an incredible powerhouse and Ferrari are up there too. Do Red Bull have any rising talents coming through their aerodynamics department? I know Adrian Newey isn't working there full-time..."

Actually, they do. Having started in Red Bull's CFD department, Craig Skinner was appointed chief aerodynamicist in January. Given their resource and the stability in the regulations you would expect Red Bull to close the gap in '18. But will it be enough to convince Dan to stick around after his contract expires at the end of this year?

"It's not an easy one for him," says Rosberg. "He was the rising star, then this other, *younger*, rising star comes along and starts to put some pressure on him. Dan has the most to lose because he's rated very highly and next year there are two faster teams with vacant seats."

One of those is Mercedes, the other is Ferrari...

IS THIS KIMI RÄIKKÖNEN'S LAST YEAR IN F1?



There was a flash of brilliance during Monaco qualifying last season when Räikkönen threaded his Ferrari around the sinuous streets to secure the 17th pole position of his career (and his first since 2008). His mysterious shuffling down to second in the race said a lot about his

position in the team and the focus on 'number one' Seb Vettel. But the fact that Kimi doesn't consistently challenge his team-mate probably keeps the team dynamic – and Vettel – happy.

"Yes, but you start to lose performance when there is too much of a gap," says Rosberg. "If he wants to stay on with Ferrari, then it's up to him really. They can have their number one and two but he needs to be better than last year as he was a little too far off Vettel, on average."

If Räikkönen does underperform, one of Ferrari's options next season is the reigning F2 champion Charles Leclerc. Managed by Nicolas Todt, the 20-year old makes his debut this year with Sauber, who now carry Alfa Romeo branding and enjoy Ferrari technical support.

Leclerc not only showed great speed last year, he demonstrated immense fortitude in coping with the death of his father.

"It was impressive what he did and no one can imagine what he's been through," says Nico, who won the feeder championship (then GP2) himself in 2005. "He's one of the next big hopes for the future. He deserves a seat in F1 and it should be possible for him to beat Marcus [Ericsson] in his first year, but would Ferrari put him in a race seat in 2019? They've never done something like that before. Are they going to start now?"

With Kimi as a dutiful, if reluctant, number two, Seb should be clear to take the fight to Mercedes. There is much at stake – if Hamilton does win, he'll surpass Vettel's four titles. Can Vettel suppress those fleeting moments of fury he sometimes displays, such as the Baku incident?

"That was down to too much self-confidence," says Rosberg. "Because he always thinks the other guy must be at fault. It can't be him that has made a mistake."

"I think he has too much self-belief, a bit like [Michael] Schumacher. In one way it's a strength, because it gives you a really solid armour in that intense environment, but it can be a weakness since you think the other guy is always at fault and you don't question yourself as much."

"HE'S JUST AWESOME. IF MAX CRASHES OUT OF A RACE EVEN I'M DISAPPOINTED, BECAUSE FROM THEN ON THE RACE IS JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE BORING. YOU JUST KNOW HE'S GOING TO GO FOR IT AND HE'LL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES."



WHO WILL WIN F1'S FIERCEST RIVALRIES?



The most important thing a team will instruct their driver to do is *not* to collide with their team-mate. Constructors' championship points, which ultimately lead to prize money, are too valuable to a Formula 1 team – especially in the oh-so-tight midfield. So when Force India's Sergio Pérez and Esteban Ocon collided with each other, not once, not twice, but at three separate races last year (Baku, Montréal and

Spa) serious disciplinary action had to follow.

Rosberg has been there. He remembers all too well the aftermath of his coming-together with his Mercedes team-mate on the opening lap of the 2016 Spanish Grand Prix.

“Oh, let me tell you, it was *intense* and there were serious consequences for further ‘mis-doings’... but what can Force India do to stop them hitting each other again? I suppose they could impose team orders all year. At Mercedes, with me and Lewis, they could never have done that because it would have been the biggest shitstorm in the world – but Force India are not racing for wins.

“Esteban is a Mercedes-backed driver, but if he wants to impress to have a chance at the

vacant 2019 seat then he really needs to beat Sergio clearly this year. The problem is that Sergio is pretty good – he's better than people give him credit for.”

How Force India handle their drivers this year is something we put to their chief operating officer Otmar Szafnauer elsewhere in this issue [see ‘Some Like It Hot’ on page 68] but there could just as equally be a highly fraught and ultra-competitive intra-team tussle down at Renault in 2018.

When Carlos Sainz replaced Jolyon Palmer from Austin onwards last year, Nico Hülkenberg realised he had a fight on his hands. The advantage that he held over Palmer in qualifying over the first 16 races was an average ▶

of 1.1 seconds – against Sainz it was just 0.2. Remarkably, since he made his debut in 2010, the Hulk hasn't yet scored a podium finish.

“But there's a reason for that, isn't there?” asserts the 2016 champ. “It's not just by coincidence. What Nico hasn't done quite so well is to get all the team bosses on his side and maybe that's the thing that's stopped him from getting a top drive.

“He needs to look at his approach, work ethic and character – they're called social skills aren't they? I don't want to criticize him, he's an awesome driver and actually it will be very close between him and Carlos. Last year I would have said, easy, Nico will have the upper hand, but at the final four races last year Carlos was very impressive so I think it's going to be a close call.”

SHOULD WILLIAMS RACE ROBERT KUBICA?



Rosberg has a vested interest here, because he has been actively helping Kubica to try to secure a race seat, seven years after the horrific rally accident that nearly cost the Pole his life and reduced the mobility in his right arm.

Kubica and Sergey Sirotkin both did the end-of-season Abu Dhabi test and, after sifting through the data, Williams decided to give Sirotkin the race seat and retain Kubica as a test and reserve driver. The line-up of Sirotkin and Lance Stroll ensures Williams have the youngest pairing on the grid, with a combined age of 41.

“The inexperience is going to make it a bit of an uphill struggle for those guys,” says Nico, “although you've got to remember that Sirotkin did well at the Abu Dhabi test and he knows how to drive a racing car. But Robert is going to help with setup. It was a great experience working



“HE [FERNANDO] HAS TO LOOK AT OTHER THINGS TO SATISFY HIS WILL OF WINNING. AS THE FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ISN'T AN OPTION, THE NEXT BEST CHALLENGE FOR HIM IS TO BE THE BEST ALL-ROUNDER IN THE WORLD”

with him – and massive respect for his fight, it's so impressive and the story can go even further.”

In one of the fortune cookies we've planted a little joke, but the smiling emoji we placed at the end of the question defeated the office printer. Nico holds the question up to our photographer and pulls a face. It reads: 'Stroll and Sirotkin: Williams' worst ever driving pairing since Rosberg & Nakajima?'

“That's not nice, but I forgive you,” he says.

The concern for Williams is that their inexperienced driver line-up won't necessarily guarantee points finishes to help towards the all-important constructors' championship prize money – but both drivers bring their own cash.

“[Chief technical officer] Paddy [Lowe] lives and breathes those calculations and this is the choice they've made based on them. I know that whatever cash Sirotkin is bringing, that is a lot of lap time when you put that into development.

“They also have Dirk de Beer working on aero now and he designed the best aerodynamics in F1 last year [with the 2017 Ferrari], so he could be the key to them having a good year. I hope they can move forward.”

“Yes, but he's doing races like the Indy 500 and Le Mans because he has no hope in F1,” says Rosberg. “So he has to look at other things to satisfy his will of winning. As the Formula 1 world championship isn't an option, the next best challenge for him is to be the best all-rounder in the world.”

The past three years have been miserable for everyone concerned with both McLaren and Honda, but from 2018 the Japanese manufacturer unites with Toro Rosso, while McLaren have secured a new engine supply deal with Renault.

“As a fan it would have been amazing to see McLaren-Honda win again, but it's been one of the disasters of the past few years,” says Rosberg. “Why did it fail? I just think that Honda underestimated the challenge and didn't have the necessary skill set or infrastructure. I do hope that they can finally make good progress with Toro Rosso.

“But will Fernando Alonso win a grand prix in 2018? No. Will he finish on the podium?” After a long pause, Nico decides that maybe Fernando will. “One third place, why not?”

WILL McLAREN RETURN TO THE PODIUM?



Fernando Alonso has a diary that is bursting at the seams. In 17 weekends between 8 April and 29 July, he's only going to have three when he's not at the wheel of a McLaren-Renault F1 car or a Toyota LMP1 sportscar. Alonso, who has already competed in the Daytona 24 Hours this year, is dovetailing F1 with the World Endurance Championship. In Brazil last year, McLaren team boss Eric Boullier memorably joked: “If he could, he would race 52 weekends a year.”

While Rosberg has spent a leisurely afternoon talking through every question, he's placed the pieces of paper neatly in order on his desk and carefully decanted the crumbs into a single heap. He's also seasoned his responses with opinions on a wide range of subjects. On the halo he says: “I don't like the look of it, but would have loved to race with it.” Of F1's new owners, Liberty Media, he adds: “They are smart people and are refreshing and rethinking everything.”

Finally, the last question is directed at him. He breaks open the cookie and reads it aloud. ‘Lewis and Valtteri crash into each other and they break a toe each. Toto calls. What do you say?’

“I say, ‘I'm sorry, but I've already signed for Ferrari...’” 🍪

2018 IN NUMBERS

An unparalleled statistical round-up of the season ahead – 18 numbers that will define Formula 1's major talking points from Australia to Abu Dhabi

733

kilograms, the new minimum weight for car and driver to allow for the addition of the halo



28

Toro Rosso driver Brendon Hartley's official permanent Formula 1 number

4

races in 2018 are scheduled to be 53 laps long: France, Italy, Russia and Japan



3977.62

The race miles needed to complete every lap of every GP in 2018

45

The total of penalty points at the start, shared between 13 of the 20 drivers

41

The combined age of Williams's driver line-up (Sirotkin 22, Stroll 19)

1

fewer power unit per driver for the year, down from 4 to 3



3

Frenchmen on the 2018 grid – Esteban Ocon, Romain Grosjean and Pierre Gasly – making it the best-represented country



997

The world championship F1 races that will have been run by the conclusion of the 2018 Abu Dhabi GP

35

days covering a cluster of five mid-season races, running from France through to Hungary

10

The number of minutes that race start times have been put back for 2018

25

The number of consecutive points finishes Lewis Hamilton has racked up

10

years since the last French Grand Prix was held. Felipe Massa won the race (at Magny-Cours) in a Ferrari

8

team line-ups have remained unchanged since the last race of 2017 – Sauber and Williams are the only ones that have one new driver each



6

The number of seasons Lewis Hamilton spent at McLaren and will have spent at Mercedes come the end of 2018

0

For the second season running, no new venues are being raced on for the first time

21:24



The sunset time at Silverstone for the British Grand Prix race day

7

The number of GP winners on the grid at the start of 2018: Lewis Hamilton, Kimi Räikkönen, Sebastian Vettel, Valtteri Bottas, Fernando Alonso, Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen

BACKSTAGE PASS

WORDS ANTHONY ROWLINGSON
PICTURES PAUL RIPKE, STEVE ETHERINGTON

An F1 launch is when teams finally go public with the fruits of their previous months' labours. But rarely do they allow sight of their inner workings in the final pre-launch hours. *F1 Racing* got a glimpse with Mercedes



LEWIS HAMILTON inserts an index finger into either side of his mouth, stretches his face, pokes out his tongue and goes: “BLEEEEEEEEEERRRRRRGGGHHH!”

“Love it, Lewis,” purrs photographer Paul Ripke. “Now, finger up your nose please.”

“WHAT?! No way man. *No way!* I’m not

putting my finger up my nose.”

He relents and places the tip of his right index digit on the very edge of a nostril.

“That’s it Lewis,” Ripke encourages, popping frames with his Leica. “These will be great.”

The levity is welcome as the end of a long ‘media assets’ haul approaches for Lewis, Valtteri Bottas and a host of troops from the Mercedes F1

comms and marketing machine.

This is the day on which much of the bounty with which the team will feed partners, journalists and their own content-hungry channels is harvested. Studied portraits, candid asides, ‘hero poses’, video Q&As for partners. All must be ticked off a very long list on this one locked-in day. And it’s no small undertaking.



Mercedes' time and motion plan: a snapshot

	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Shakedown and track	LH VB	Car run 1 morning	Car run 2 afternoon
Filming and photography	Junction 11 studio		Silverstone until midnight
Comms	F1 Racing magazine	Media wing: Toto and Lewis	F1 Racing magazine Live Q&As online
Drivers & Management	LH VB TW JA	Press conference Shakedown Press conference Shakedown	Race bay briefing Daimler OnAir LH Malaysian media, shakedown, filming & photography, comp winners, partners PET meeting Malaysian media, shakedown, filming & photography, comp winners, partners

W09 REVEAL

It's 'hero' time for Lewis



“THE DAYS OF NEW-CAR ROLL-OUTS BEHIND FACTORY DOORS SEEM LAUGHABLY DISTANT AND AMATEURISH NOW”



New kit partner = new pics

We assemble, cold and early, at a purpose-built photographic studio just off the M40 motorway in Oxfordshire, about 20 miles from Mercedes' team HQ in Brackley. 'We' on this day comprises Mercedes' two race drivers, a stylist for each of them (yep, hair 'n' make-up), a 15-strong TV crew, two stills photographers plus their assistants, sundry entourage members,

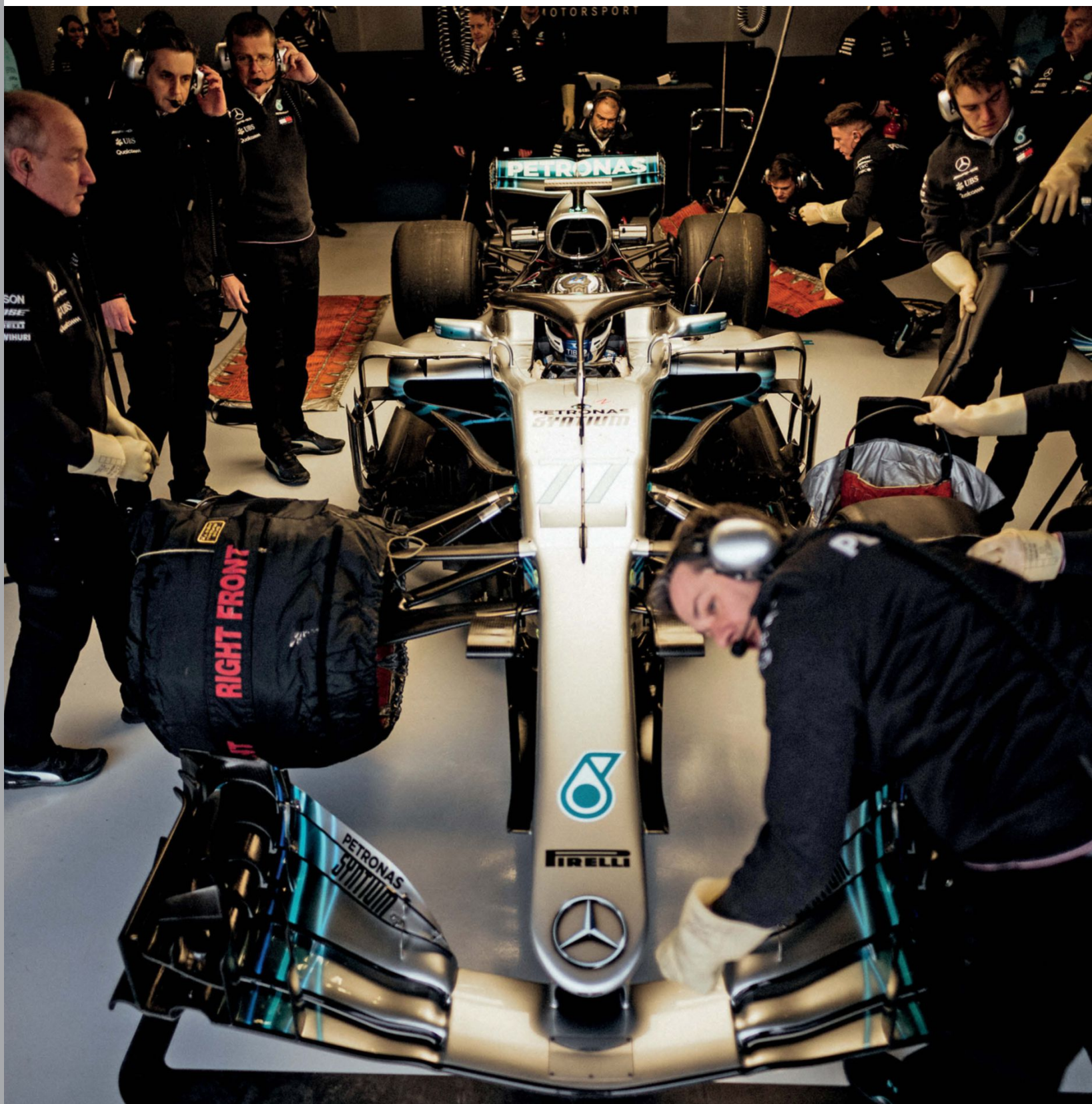
caterers, three Mercedes F1 cars (2014, '15 and '17 championship winners)... and *F1 Racing*.

It's a grand gathering and serves to remind how important is 'the message' conveyed by manufacturer-backed F1 teams. Yes, the sport is still about racing – men and cars fighting it out on track. More than ever, though, that activity must serve wider empires. It must add lustre to

brands. It must help sell.

The days of new-car roll-outs behind factory doors seem laughably distant and amateurish now. An F1 team's launch and the activity that precedes it is a mighty sophisticated undertaking – media engineering, if you will.

That needn't – mustn't – equate to chaos, however. Indeed, what's most striking about



these 24 pre-launch-into-real-launch hours is how tightly scripted they are. That's not in itself a surprise – F1 is a rarefied realm, where thousandths of a second really do matter; but what *is* eye-catching is the extent of filigree-fine planning that has gone before.

Mercedes' ever-attentive comms chief (an ex-F1 Racing staffer, no less) allows a glimpse of the

58-column spreadsheet, according to which the pre-launch-into-launch-into-Barcelona-first-test plan is choreographed.

"Every five minutes for the car [the new W09] is scheduled," he informs. "Tonight [the Wednesday before the first run, at Silverstone] is the final build and then it fires up on Thursday. Everything is right up against the clock."

Immutable those deadlines may be, but there's a mood of quiet industry among Mercedes comms. So long as the spreadsheet-hymn sheet is adhered to, nothing too untoward will happen, it seems. Some 'events', however, can never be accounted for...

"There's make-up on his Nomex!" cries one stylist, suddenly, mid-morning, as she frets over

**“AN F1 TEAM’S LAUNCH IS
 A MIGHTY SOPHISTICATED
 UNDERTAKING – MEDIA
 ENGINEERING IF YOU WILL”**



Media briefly aligned pre-launch



“So whaddya think, Lewis?”



Bottas awaits first fire-up



a smudge of foundation powder on an item of driver kit. “Don’t worry,” chimes a colleague. “I have another.” And lo, a replacement flame-retardant undergarment is proffered, still wrapped in its packaging, while the original is taken away for a scrub. The thought occurs that if the media and marketing divisions of Mercedes F1 can operate with such seamless ‘you-throw-it-

and-I’ll-catch-it’ efficiency, how joined up must the rest of the team be?

Let the scorecard be our guide: Mercedes’ onslaught on Formula 1 since their return as a manufacturer team in 2010 has been nothing short of daunting for their rivals. From that tentative first season with Michael Schumacher and Nico Rosberg, through to their (and Nico’s)

first win at the 2012 Chinese GP, via Hamilton’s arrival for ’13 and on into hybrid-era domination, they have become the definitive modern F1 team.

After four straight team-driver title doubles, this year they’ll gun for a fifth pair. Only Ferrari and Michael Schumacher from 2000-2004 have ever achieved that degree of domination. Not that you’d sense this is a team on the cusp of record-equalling ▶



Past title-winning machines



All smiles between the drivers

greatness. Co-ordinated confidence, yes; giddy anticipation, no. Hamilton, of course, has seen it all before, over the decade since his first title with McLaren in 2008: wonder-boy then, mature global sporting icon now, and while he is a Zen-like presence amid his acolytes, his sheer starriness adds a frisson to the activity of those about. This is, after all, *Lewis Hamilton, four-*

time world champion and while Mercedes' F1 effort is the summation of 1,000-plus employees' energies, late nights and talents, the aces at the wheel are the poster boys.

And none more so than Hamilton, whose polished ease in front of the lens – so evident today – is the product of many years' training allied to the will and ambition to become

something very special: perhaps the most famous racing driver of all time.

Yet for all his eminence, there's no evidence of outrageously diva-ish demands. He's particular about his choice of tunes while posing for the cameras (Kendrick Lamar is a must) and his coiffure needs constant buffing. Beyond that, not much. A request for a breakfast omelette causes



New helmets are on display too

“FOR ALL OF HIS EMINENCE, THERE’S NO EVIDENCE OF OUTRAGEOUSLY DIVA-ISH DEMANDS FROM LEWIS”

a momentary kitchen kerfuffle (“We haven’t got any eggs!”) and, later, he rolls his eyes at one too-familiar question for a partner Q&A (“Jeez, how many times have I answered this?”). But thereafter he’s good as gold. Indeed, his diligent responses to script prompts for partner ‘collateral’ offer some little-heard insights. Lewis makes an extremely rare reference to the racial challenges he faced as he rose through the ranks – “Generous people were prepared to believe that a driver from a different ethnicity could make it” – then he offers an intriguing glimpse into his future: “I don’t think I have anything to prove as a racing driver, but in the fashion world and music, there’s a lot. And in the humanitarian field, too – giving something back.”

When Bottas’s screen slot arrives (timed to the minute, of course), his answers to the same set of questions reflect his lower altitude in the motorsport stratosphere: “I still have so much to prove,” he says. “I still haven’t achieved many of the goals in my career.” Quite a statement from a man who’s driving for the best team in F1, for which he won three times last year. And if it speaks of commendable ambition it also

exposes the almost insurmountable challenge ahead – one which any team-mate of Lewis Hamilton must face: beating him. Hostilities thereto haven’t *quite* yet commenced – though they very soon will. It’s launch day tomorrow and Bottas will be first to drive the W09. After that it’s testing, racing, *fighting*.

Some time after 6pm, both drivers melt into the night in chauffeured limos, as the still-hard-at-it worker bees remain glued to laptops and tablets. This exit-stage-right of the lead players is planned, naturally: drivers need R&R; their supporting cast must continue to ensure that the show goes on.

So when the first W09 fires up shortly after 9am on 22 February, 2018, and Bottas heads out for the install laps of a barely-above-freezing Silverstone, it’s no surprise that Mercedes’ social accounts are primed and ready – as are the nearly 200 media assembled above the garages in the Silverstone Wing.

As with so much of the latter-day Mercedes F1 engagement, effective delivery of a brief has been made to look easy. And therein, perhaps, lies the secret of their success. 

LAUNCH CONTROL

Formula 1 car launches have taken place in myriad venues over the years. Some in glamorous locations, others less so...



Arrows roll out the FA/1 into a snowy Silverstone pitlane
20 January, 1978



The Benetton B200 is revealed to the world’s press in Barcelona
18 January, 2000



The Spice Girls get the McLaren party started at Alexandra Palace
13 February 1997



The McLaren MP4-26 is unveiled at the Kaisersaal in central Berlin
4 February 2011



LAT IMAGES: ANDY HONE, STEVE ETHERINGTON

TEAM PROFILE MERCEDES

Name Mercedes AMG

Petronas Motorsport

Address 5a Reynard Park,
Brackley, Northants,
NN13 7BD, UK

Chassis F1 W09 EQ Power+

Power unit Mercedes-Benz

Team principal

Toto Wolff

Technical director

James Allison

First GP France 1954

Races started 168

Wins 76

Poles 88

Fastest laps 56

Points 3,718

Drivers' titles 6

Constructors' titles 4

2017 Championship

Position 1st

Points 668

Wins/podiums 12/14

Poles 15

Fastest laps 9

Races in points 20

Since the new 1.6-litre hybrid power unit era started in 2014, Mercedes have won every championship. Expect that dominant form to continue with their brand new F1 W09 EQ Power+

F1 RACING SAYS...

Mercedes will be striving to match Ferrari's record of five successive double world titles in 2018. Amid relatively stable regulations, you would not bet against them doing so. After gradually taming their 'diva' W08 last season, technical chiefs are confident that any 'awkward' characteristics will not make it on to the W09. In the cockpit, Lewis Hamilton arguably reached his best level yet in 2017, as Valtteri Bottas's arrival cleared the tension present when Nico Rosberg partnered the Briton. Even if Ferrari – and perhaps Red Bull – produce a more consistent challenge, Mercedes have all the tools at their disposal to fend off their rivals and get the job done again.

OUR TIP: Mercedes to make it five out of five (and ten out of ten in drivers' and constructors' titles)

DRIVER LINE-UP



LEWIS HAMILTON
Car number 44

Born Tewin,
United Kingdom
DoB 07.01.85 (age 33)
Height 1.74m
Debut Australia 2007
Races started 208
Wins 62
Podiums 55
Poles 72
Fastest laps 38
Points 2,610
Championships 4
2017 position 1st



VALTTERI BOTTAS
Car number 77

Born Nastola,
Finland
DoB 28.08.89 (age 28)
Height 1.73m
Debut Australia 2012
Races started 97
Wins 3
Podiums 19
Poles 4
Fastest laps 3
Points 716
Championships 0
2017 position 3rd



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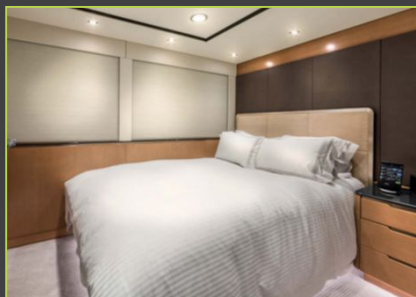


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YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

KIMI RÄIKKÖNEN

The Iceman speaks out – yes, really, he does – on his favourite drink (water, obv's), stupid questions, and what he actually remembers about winning the world title...

WORDS JAMES ROBERTS

PHOTOS  LAT IMAGES: LORENZO BELLANCA

Time, it's said, passes very quickly for those who wait. Not so for those waiting to secure an interview slot with either of Ferrari's world champion drivers, since those opportunities present themselves only rarely – and when they do, the window creaks open but fleetingly. Thus *F1 Racing* arrives for our brief encounter with Kimi Räikkönen armed with a wad of question cards, but mindful of Shakespeare's rumination on time's fickleness:

Time is like a fashionable host/That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand/And with his arm outstretch'd, as he would fly/Grasps in the comer.

With lunch beckoning, a deadline that is inviolate in Ferrari's unreconstructedly Italian world, will we be able to ask all our questions? Or will our legendarily reticent interviewee motor his way flat-out through the whole stack in a torrent of monosyllables?

When Kimi claps eyes upon the question cards set before him, the auguries are not good, for his immediate reaction is "How many!?" and his initial responses are... terse. But, as you'll soon discover, the Iceman warms to the line of enquiry and in some responses is almost effusive. There's a touch of sarcasm to enjoy too.

In even better news, the lunch bell clangs without our interview coming to a ragged and inconsequential termination. Kimi is enjoying himself enough to declare that his midday repast can wait...

Felipe Massa has retired from F1. Did you enjoy working together as team-mates?

Alan Stoner, UK

He's retiring again, so let's see if it actually happens or if we will see him in the first race next year. I always had a good relationship with him, a great atmosphere when we were at Ferrari together.

We won two [constructors'] championships for the team as team-mates and I think it was a great time. Obviously, he was very fast, very good, but I wish him all the best if he ends up not racing in F1 any more. We will see what comes in his life in the future.

What was the first car you drove?

Kamil Zlotkowski, Poland

A Lada.

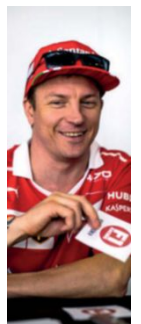
F1R: Was it fast?

KR: It was okay... [smiles]

Do you think you will ever return to the WRC?

Kerry Millward, UK

Maybe some races. For fun. I hope so anyway. ▶





F1
RACING
KIMI RÄIKKÖNEN

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70
1947-2017


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ups



YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Would you consider racing in the Indy 500?

William Jonson-Smith, UK

Probably not any more. It's a nice race and, yes, some years back I would have, but not now. [See what we mean? Not messing about, is he?]

You own an MXGP [Motocross World Championship] team... how often do you practice MX yourself?

Sebastian Hoehne, Germany

As often as I can, but obviously I'm a bit too busy. I'd like to do more later in life, but at the moment living in Switzerland is not the easiest place to practice. In the summer break there is more time as in the winter the weather can be a bit changeable.

What's your favourite song to sing on karaoke?

Matt Croucher, UK

I haven't sung for a long time, for a number of years now. But it would be some Finnish song.

F1R: We understand that you're actually planning on

opening a karaoke bar in Helsinki?

KR: No comment. [smiles]

Who was your hero growing up? James Hunt?

Samuel McCarthy, UK

I didn't really have a hero, but I did find out about James for the first time, maybe when I was eight or nine. Then there were Finns racing, [Keke]

Rosberg, and then after that the two Mikas [Häkkinen & Salo] and JJ [Lehto] – so I was hoping they would do well, but I never really had a hero as such.

It's ten years since you won the title, what do you remember of winning?

Rob McAlees, UK

It's a long time ago. Obviously it was a great day but it wasn't just about the day, it was the whole year. There were some great moments, some not very nice moments, but in the end it

worked out okay and I was very happy with it. But – I don't know – I haven't really thought about it too much. It doesn't really change my life today, thinking about it.

What is your favourite drink?

Jose Roberto Teijeiro, Brazil

I drink water a lot [He says deadpan]. If you need to pick out one. Beer is a different story, as is milk or other stuff.

F1R: We had an email this

morning about you endorsing Hartwall's Original Long Drink... [which, incidentally, is a refreshing mix of Finnish premium gin and grapefruit soda]

KR: Yup, it's good. But my favourite is what you drink of the most, which is water.

F1R: [We can play this game too...] Sparkling or still?

KR: More still lately, but I like sparking as well... [1-0 to Kimi]

In terms of physical stress, between WRC and F1, which is the most demanding?

Maurizio Sicco, Italy

They are two completely different categories. As a purely physical thing, you have to say F1, but the other side of rallying is hard because of the amount of time driving. You are doing a full

week of receiving and it can be more than 12 hours a day in a car with the notes, checking them. You spend so long sitting down in the car during the build-up and also in the rally – that's quite tiring. Also, thinking and making notes, that's much more tiring than I would have expected. Plus it can be early morning or late evenings – you don't sleep a lot. They always say sleep as much as you need, but that's hard in rallying.

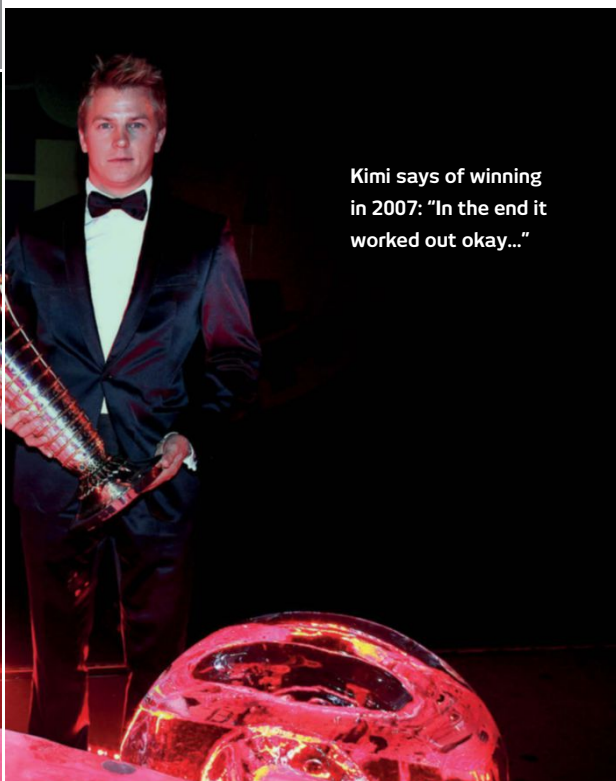
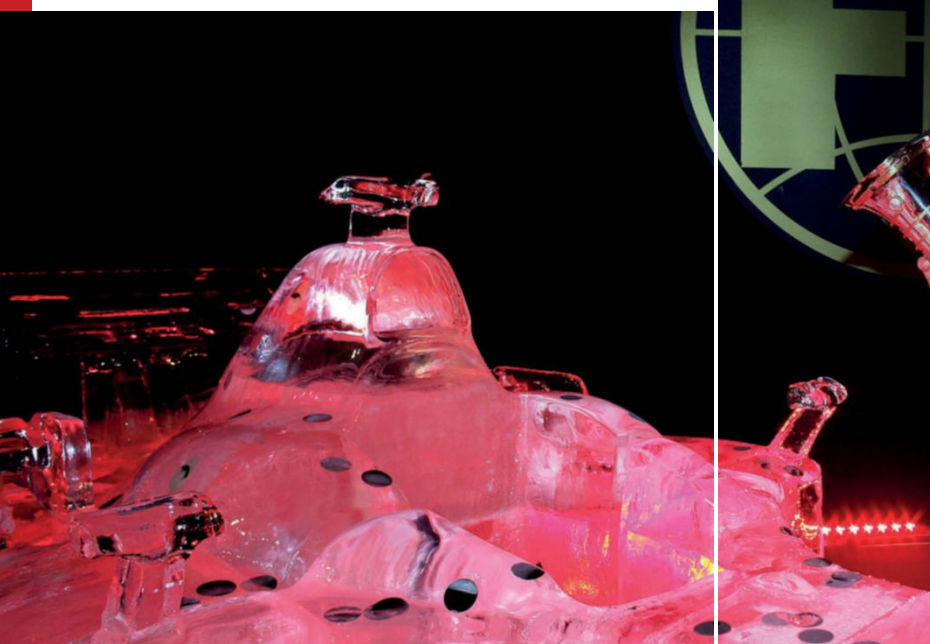
What are your thoughts on last season?

Steve Bates, Ireland

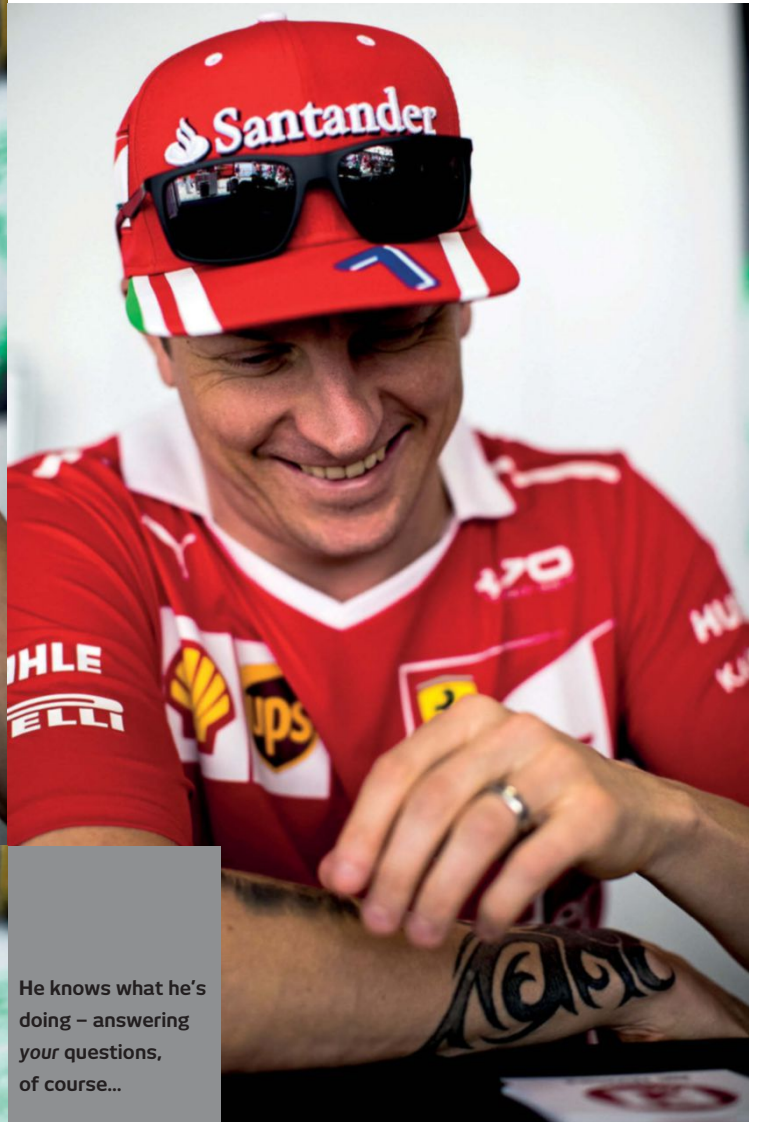
It was not enough for what we want, but as Ferrari we want to win both championships. We just need to tidy up things and not

make mistakes, nor have issues on any side, not from our side as drivers or from the team side. These are just small things which in the end played a big part last year on who won the championship and which way it went. ▶

“ WE JUST NEED TO TIDY UP THINGS AND NOT MAKE MISTAKES. THESE ARE JUST SMALL THINGS THAT PLAYED A BIG PART LAST YEAR ”



Kimi says of winning in 2007: "In the end it worked out okay..."



He knows what he's doing - answering your questions, of course...





Would you be interested in doing the World Rallycross Championship when you are done with F1?

Glen Sweeting, UK

Yeah, I haven't had time to drive the car yet but I've been offered it on a few occasions. It looks fun, they are similar cars to rally cars but they have more power and I think it would be very nice to try one at least.

What made you want to become an F1 driver?

Kirsty Burns, UK

I don't think there was one thing. I was interested in racing and anything to do with engines. In the end I never thought I would

make F1 as we never had money, but then luckily I got good people behind me with Dave and Steve Robertson. And they made it possible because without them, there was no chance. I was always thinking I'd do go-karts for years and years and get a little bit of money out of it, but I didn't have the budget to drive racing cars. Luckily friends and family helped, I did Formula Renault – and with a bit of talent, a year later I was in F1.

Is Seb Vettel a good friend outside of racing?

Breffni McCarthy, Ireland

Yes, I know him quite well from the past, we used to live close to each other and we used to play some sports together outside of the racing. We fly together and

work closely together at races.

“ I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD MAKE F1 BECAUSE WE NEVER HAD MONEY, BUT THEN LUCKILY I GOT GOOD PEOPLE BEHIND ME WITH DAVE AND STEVE ROBERTSON ”

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS



You face questions from the press quite frequently. From what country do you get the most stupid questions?

Marty Ellison, USA

[laughs] All of them are on an even level... all the same.



Who has been your fastest team-mate?

Matt Lloyd, UK

That is very difficult to say because it's hard to compare team-mates. I've had some very good team-mates in my career, some very fast ones, but I don't think you can put them in order – everyone is different.

What are your ambitions for the new season?

Ryan Bell, USA

Obviously I want to be fighting at the front every weekend, to be able to fight for the championship in 2018. I think we started pretty badly in 2017 – a personal feeling

on my side – we're not really happy where the setup was and it took quite a long time to figure it out. Since then it's been better but then we had too many DNFs for many different reasons. But I think, as a team, we've come a long way from year to year. 🍀

Want to get involved? For your chance to ask drivers questions, sign up at: f1racing.com/global-fan-community

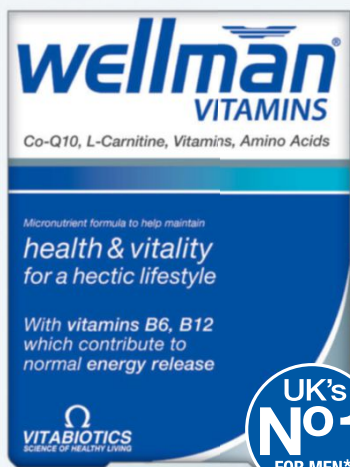
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VITABIOTICS



LAT IMAGES: ANDY HONE; STEVEN TEE; CHARLES COATES

TEAM PROFILE FERRARI

Name Scuderia Ferrari
Address Via Abetone Inferiore n. 4, I-41053, Maranello (MO), Italy
Chassis SF71-H
Power unit Ferrari
Team principal Maurizio Arrivabene
Technical director Mattia Binotto

First GP Monaco 1950
Races started 949
Wins 229
Poles 213
Fastest laps 244
Points 7,182.5
Drivers' titles 15
Constructors' titles 16

2017 Championship
Position 2nd
Points 522
Wins/podiums 5/15
Poles 5
Fastest laps 7
Races in points 19

Ferrari emerged as a serious threat to Mercedes last season, only to fumble late on with poor reliability and *that* crash on the opening lap of the Singapore GP. Can they threaten Mercedes this year?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Ferrari's bid to challenge Mercedes for both titles in 2017 started so well. After three victories from the first six races, Sebastian Vettel held a 25-point advantage over Lewis Hamilton in the drivers' standings, while Ferrari edged Mercedes in the constructors' championship. And despite the embarrassing low of Azerbaijan, Vettel entered the summer break with his lead intact. But then came the disastrous Asian leg of the championship, with technical problems and driver errors combining to give Hamilton a clear run to the finish. A quality control specialist was brought in over the winter to get on top of the issues and oversee a renewed effort.

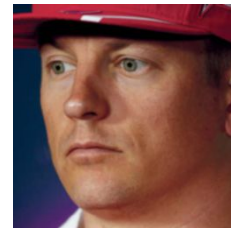
OUR TIP: Ferrari will win more races but once again will fall short of the holy grail of the title.

DRIVER LINE-UP



SEBASTIAN VETTEL
Car number 5

Born Heppenheim, Germany
DoB 03.07.87 (age 30)
Height 1.76m
Debut USA 2007
Races started 198
Wins 47
Podiums 52
Poles 50
Fastest laps 33
Points 2,425
Championships 4
2017 position 2nd



KIMI RÄIKKÖNEN
Car number 7

Born Espoo, Finland
DoB 17.10.79 (age 38)
Height 1.75m
Debut Australia 2001
Races started 270
Wins 20
Podiums 71
Poles 17
Fastest laps 45
Points 1,565
Championships 1
2017 position 4th





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STICK OR TWIST?

Dan Ricciardo has a huge year ahead of him at Red Bull: he has to beat tyro Max Verstappen – or leave

WORDS ANDREW BENSON
PORTRAIT  LAT IMAGES: ANDY HONE





DANIEL RICCIARDO



is starting a year that will define the rest of his life in Formula 1.

And it could be the most important of his life, as the Australian seeks not only to fend off the growing challenge of Red Bull team-mate Max Verstappen, but do so while making the first big career choice he has ever faced.

Ricciardo has been a member of the Red Bull driver programme since 2008 but he is out of contract at the end of 2018. It is the first time in a decade – and the first ever since he made it to F1 – that he has been free to make up his own mind about where his destiny lies. Does he stick or does he twist? And on what factors will that decision depend?

Ricciardo remains in the very top echelon of Formula 1 drivers, along with Fernando Alonso, Lewis Hamilton, Sebastian Vettel and Verstappen. But last year was the first in which there was a perception that his personal momentum had slowed a little.

A half-season in 2011 with HRT was followed by two intermittently impressive years with Red Bull junior team Toro Rosso before what he describes as his “breakthrough year” with the senior team in 2014.

Arriving as the new team-mate to a four-time world champion, Ricciardo was expected by many to slip into the role Mark Webber had generally played – of valiant number-two and general whipping boy.

Instead, he ended up comprehensively beating Vettel – out-qualifying him almost two to one, at an average pace differential of 0.298 per cent; beating him eight-three in races where a direct comparison could be made, by 71 points; and finishing an impressive third to the German’s fifth in the championship.

But it was not just the stats that impressed that year. He also took three victories, the best was by far a spectacular performance in the wet-dry Hungarian Grand Prix. That win in Budapest was sealed with an overtake on Fernando Alonso’s Ferrari with three laps to go. At the time it seemed almost preposterous in its audacity. But Ricciardo has since made that super-late lunge, just on the edge of control, his trademark.

It was the year that defined the Ricciardo blueprint – an elegance of style, blistering pace in qualifying and a tigerish aggression and outlandish opportunism in races.



Ricciardo drove the first laps in the testing-liveried RB14 at Silverstone in mid-February

“RICCIARDO REMAINS IN THE VERY TOP ECHELON OF DRIVERS, ALONG WITH ALONSO, HAMILTON, VETTEL AND VERSTAPPEN. BUT THE PERCEPTION IS HIS MOMENTUM HAS SLOWED”

So good was Ricciardo in 2014 that he effectively drove Vettel out of Red Bull. By mid-season Vettel recognised that his market value was in danger of dropping if he carried on getting whopped, and accepting Ferrari’s offer to replace a disaffected Alonso.

AN ‘AWESOME’ YEAR

Understandably, Ricciardo remembers 2014 fondly. “I will always say it was awesome,” he says, “and it is hard to replicate that. It was the year I went from being an F1 driver to being one of the top-regarded drivers through a lot of people’s eyes. That set me up.”

From there, Ricciardo just built further. There were no wins in 2015 and he ended the year behind team-mate Daniil Kvyat on points. But that was down to nothing more than the skewed reliability record, a fact underlined when Kvyat was unceremoniously demoted to Toro Rosso after four races of 2016. Even with Verstappen as his new team-mate, Ricciardo continued to excel.

He should have won early in the season in Spain – only for the team to split strategies

and end up gifting the win to Verstappen – and in Monaco, where a tyre mix-up in the pits let in Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes. He did eventually score a victory in Malaysia and he both out-qualified and out-pointed Verstappen over the season. Ricciardo so impressed onlookers that no less a luminary than Alonso picked him as the best driver of the year.

But then came 2017. Verstappen turned the tables in qualifying, and did Ricciardo 13-7 over the season. Ricciardo admits to having “over-driven” under pressure from Max.

Team boss Christian Horner is quick to defend Ricciardo, saying that knowledge of how good the older man is over one lap simply underlines the level Verstappen was at. Despite the head-to-head numbers, on pace there was almost nothing to choose between them, the gap averaging out at 0.03secs over the season – and only 0.015secs if Baku, where Ricciardo crashed in Q3, is discounted.

In races, the impression is that Verstappen had the upper hand. He won two races to Ricciardo’s one and lost some good results in the first part of the season to poor reliability. Yet Ricciardo had eight other podiums, Verstappen

only two, and Verstappen retired seven times to Ricciardo’s six, and Dan ended up 32 points ahead in the championship.

In short, then, although few would argue that Verstappen was overall the more impressive in 2017, it would be wrong to say that a firm picture had formed as to who was definitively the stronger driver. It’s all to play for in 2018.

Horner describes his line-up as “the strongest driver pairing in Formula 1. Max and Daniel push each other to such high limits and that’s tremendously exciting for us.” He also describes Ricciardo as “a phenomenal driver” who is “absolutely ready for a championship challenge if we can provide him with the tools to do the job”.

MAX AMBITION

Despite this, there is a general feeling in Formula 1 that Red Bull is slowly becoming Max Verstappen’s team. Last autumn, Horner talked of the Dutchman being able to “build a team around him”. Shortly afterwards, it was announced that he had extended his contract – which at that stage already ran until the end of

2019, a year longer than Ricciardo's – until the end of 2020.

The motivator was Red Bull's belief that Mercedes were chasing Verstappen, who had a clause in his contract allowing him to leave at the end of 2018. Although it was unlikely the team would perform so poorly as to allow its conditions to be met, Red Bull offered him a huge pay bump, making him the third-best-paid driver in F1 this year, behind Hamilton and Vettel.

Although Ricciardo admits he was "surprised by the timing" of Verstappen's deal, he has said he has no concerns for now about the team favouring one over the other. But he has also repeatedly emphasised Verstappen's youth, and that he has room to grow in experience and therefore expertise more than some of the other drivers – the implication being Ricciardo knows beating him is not going to be easy.

The risk for Ricciardo is that Verstappen continues the momentum from 2017 and takes another step forward, increasing the marginal gap he extended over his team-mate. If he does so, that could have two major effects on Ricciardo's future – it might harm his appeal to other teams, and could potentially consign him to a de facto support role if he were to stay at Red Bull.

On the other hand, if Ricciardo can resolve some of the issues he believes affected his form in 2018 and level the qualifying score while maintaining his strong race form, it would have the opposite effect.

Horner has said he wants Ricciardo to sign a new contract and stay on. "Early in the new year, once we've seen how the car's performing, then it's our priority to make sure that we retain Daniel in the team until at least 2020," he says.

"It's also a critical time in his career. He's 28 years of age. This next step is going to be crucial for him and we just want to make sure we give him the right car to be able to deliver his potential."

If he stays, though, he will have to partner Verstappen and he may well feel that is something he does not want to do – either in terms of performance or if he feels the team is navigating too far in that direction.

If he leaves, the most obvious destination for Ricciardo is Mercedes. Not only would it potentially be a step up in competitiveness and



give him a shot at the title that, right now, it cannot be said his current team can guarantee. But it would also allow Ricciardo the chance to test himself against Hamilton, something he has said he would like to do.

GETTING HAMMERED?

Beat Hamilton, and all questions about where exactly Ricciardo stands as a driver would evaporate. On the other hand, if the idea of taking on Verstappen lacks appeal, then Hamilton at Mercedes is hardly likely to be an easier challenge.

Mercedes F1 boss Toto Wolff has been open about the fact that Ricciardo is on his list for 2019. But, rather like Red Bull, he wants to "see how the first third of the season pans out, whether our car is good enough and strong enough, and then we will analyse and then take the right decisions".

Ricciardo is one of three main options at Mercedes, assuming Hamilton stays, while the others are to keep Valtteri Bottas or promote their protégé Esteban Ocon from Force India.

The word on the street is that Wolff is leaning towards Ocon. That's as long as the Frenchman takes another step forward in 2018 – ie decisively beats team-mate Sergio Pérez after what can perhaps be termed as a 1-1 draw last year, with the Mexican shading the first half of the season and Ocon the second. If Ocon does not progress, Mercedes could yet stick with

Bottas – but that would require the Finn to perform strongly in the first half of 2018 in a way he did not in the second half of 2017.

A year or so ago, Ricciardo and Verstappen were at the top of Ferrari's wish-list, but Vettel's signing until 2020 has now shifted the ground at Maranello. They are committed to the German, and it is believed they would not – and some believe could not, contractually – sign a direct rival who would undermine what is believed to be Vettel's guaranteed number-one status.

Ferrari's plan is to promote Charles Leclerc alongside Vettel in 2019 as long as the Formula 2 champion proves himself in his debut season at Sauber. If not, they may well stick with Kimi Räikkönen for another year.

Renault are an option, though. They are known to be very keen on Ricciardo. Nico Hülkenberg is heading into the last season of a three-year deal, and Carlos Sainz is on a one-year – and potentially longer – loan from Red Bull. Either way, there is a seat available there, should Ricciardo be interested.

But would he be? On the one hand, being the number-one driver for Renault's factory assault has an appeal, but even the French team themselves have said they do not expect to be challenging for the title until 2020 – so it might be a competitive step backwards. Of the other teams, only McLaren would be a realistic option, but the level of their appeal very much depends on where they shake out in their first season with Renault engines.

There are even question marks over Red Bull. Renault have made it clear they do not want to continue supplying engines beyond this season – although they are contractually obliged to if Red Bull ask them. But their other option, Honda, is of limited appeal unless the Japanese manufacturer massively steps up its level now it has switched to Toro Rosso.

So even assuming Red Bull do dangle a contract in front of Ricciardo, he may not be that keen to sign it. And that's without considering the Verstappen factor. In the end, it all comes back to the fact that beating Verstappen this year – or at least not being obviously beaten by him – is the key to the next phase of Ricciardo's career, wherever that may happen to be. 🍔

Andrew Benson is BBC Sport's chief F1 writer

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'SURPRISED BY THE
TIMING' OF VERSTAPPEN'S
NEW DEAL, HE HAS NO
CONCERNS ABOUT THE
TEAM FAVOURING ONE
DRIVER OVER THE OTHER”





LAT IMAGES: STEVEN TEE; ANDY HONE; GLENN DUNBAR

TEAM PROFILE RED BULL

Name Aston Martin
Red Bull Racing
Address Bradbourne Drive,
Milton Keynes, MK7 8AT, UK
Chassis RB14
Power unit Renault
(Tag Heuer)
Team principal
Christian Horner
Chief technical officer
Adrian Newey

First GP Australia 2005
Races started 244
Wins 55
Poles 58
Fastest laps 54
Points 3,888.5
Drivers' titles 4
Constructors' titles 4

2017 Championship
Position 3rd
Points 368
Wins/podiums 3/10
Poles 0
Fastest laps 2
Races in points 20

A slow start left Red Bull significantly adrift of Mercedes and Ferrari early in 2017, but they made big strides throughout the season. Will they continue where they left off?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen knew they were in for a tough start to 2017 after the first couple of days of pre-season testing. But rapid development throughout the campaign, particularly on the chassis front, gave both drivers confidence for a 2018 title assault. Power unit unreliability remains the main concern but Renault (badged TAG-Heuer) claim to have moved closer to Mercedes and Ferrari performance. After all, Verstappen beat Lewis Hamilton in a straight fight in Malaysia, and utterly dominated proceedings in Mexico. If Red Bull hit the ground running with their new chassis, and Renault produce an all-round competitive engine, Ferrari may have a new rival.

OUR TIP: Red Bull will be pushing Ferrari to be second-best to Mercedes once more.

DRIVER LINE-UP



DANIEL RICCIARDO
Car number 3

Born Perth,
Australia
DoB 01.07.89 (age 28)
Height 1.78m
Debut Britain 2011
Races started 129
Wins 5
Podiums 22
Poles 1
Fastest laps 9
Points 816
Championships 0
2017 position 5th



MAX VERSTAPPEN
Car number 33

Born Hasselt,
Belgium
DoB 30.09.97 (age 20)
Height 1.81m
Debut Australia 2015
Races started 60
Wins 3
Podiums 8
Poles 0
Fastest laps 2
Points 421
Championships 0
2017 position 6th





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SOME
LIKE IT



WORDS STUART COOLING
PORTRAITS THOMAS BUTLER

Force India COO **Otmar Szafnauer** has the unenviable task of laying down the law to Formula 1's spiciest driver pairing, Sergio Pérez and Esteban Ocon. We took him to Pérez's favourite Indian restaurant for a (medium-hot) grilling...

HOT

Few other words can convey so pithily last season's developments at Force India, F1's punchiest equipe. Retina-sizzling livery? Check. Owner fighting extradition to India? Check. Drivers not just at loggerheads in the garage but hitting one another on-track? Check.

As chief operating officer, Otmar Szafnauer straddles the line between business and engineering (he's got qualifications in both); Vijay Mallya might own the team, but Otmar runs it day-to-day, having fulfilled that beat at Honda and British American Racing before that, with a brief interregnum during which he developed the forerunner of the official F1 app.

And as a resident these past 20 years of the affluent Northamptonshire locale drawn within easy reach of Silverstone, Szafnauer, like many members of the local motorsport community, is a regular diner at the venue for today's lunch appointment: the Khushboo in Brackley.

An Indian restaurant like no other (apart from

the speaker on the wall whispering soft hits of the 1980s into the convivial atmosphere), the Khushboo is a cauldron of motor racing fever and what Jilur, the proprietor, describes as "banter". Its walls are lined with images of the sport, many of which have been playfully defaced by rivals. A large picture of a Red Bull F1 car, for instance, is peppered with stickers including a Mercedes three-pointed star and a Lotus logo, while a whiteboard bears autographs and a mocking directive to "eat at the chippy instead".

A large Mexican flag is pinned to the ceiling and a spangly ten-gallon hat is perched behind the bar. Turns out that not only is Sergio Pérez a frequent visitor (team-mate Esteban Ocon isn't; with furrowed brow, Jilur says "that boy needs some curry inside him"), he has his own selection of favourites enshrined within the menu as a shared meal, the 'Checo's Fiesta'.

Kicking off with poppadoms, accelerating through the Karun's Special starter (think pizza with an Indian-spiced twist, the brainchild of ex-F1 driver Karun Chandhok) and then looping around pots of chicken bakara, chicken tikka masala and butter chicken served alongside sag paneer and tarka daal – with generous helpings of pilau rice, peshwari and plain naan to keep the sauce within track limits – this is not only a spicy culinary lap, but one after which you won't take the chequered flag unstuffed.

No need to proceed further into the menu. This chicken-based choice swerves one of Otmar's food foibles; not only is he averse to



lamb, he claims to be able to detect it even in proportions so minute that they'd flummox a homeopath: "I once went to [technical director] Andy Green's house for dinner. He'd made a lasagna with maybe five per cent lamb mince in there. I could still taste it!"

As the background music segues from Kajagoogoo's *Too Shy* to Feargal Sharkey's *A Good Heart*, we close our menus, loosen our belts, take a sip of Kingfisher, and prepare for the fiesta. Hopefully *F1 Racing's* line of questioning won't leave Otmar naan the wiser...

Throughout this team's many identities – they began as Jordan in 1991 – Szafnauer and his predecessors have been presented with a very similiar menu of challenges.

Money, for one: the team have punched above their financial weight in recent years, but that's partly a dividend from building prudent technical partnerships (such as taking an engine and gearbox from Mercedes), partly a consequence of rivals

Ocon and Pérez, just before one of their two contretemps in Belgium underperforming. Wisely recognising that this latter variable can't be relied upon to fall in their favour,

the team announced an investment programme last year with the aim of consolidating their grip on fourth in the constructors' championship, and – whisper it – possibly gunning for third.

In essence this involves increasing headcount and investing in the obsolete ex-Jordan windtunnel to bring it up to date, rather than operating a satellite aero team at Toyota's facility in Germany. It won't involve a huge recruiting spree – more a gentle inflation from around 400 to a figure Otmar describes as "the right size for our operation", about 425. But it won't be happening as soon as had been anticipated.

"The plans are in place but there are a couple of things that have to happen before we can bring them to fruition," says Otmar. "And before that, we have to build a car and go racing. As



LAT IMAGES, STEVEN TEE, OTHER PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK



The Khushboo, the venue for Szafnauer's grilling, is well-known amongst the local F1 fraternity

you know, we have a limited amount of financial resource and budget, and at this time of year we spend quite a bit of that – all of the cashflow we get in is going towards the car and development. I don't think we'll be able to implement the plan until the latter half of this year."

This is an oblique reference to the sport's unusual commercial structure, under which teams receive their contracted share of the revenues in ten monthly instalments from March onwards, leaving the less well-funded teams close to the edge for at least two months in the year – just as spending on new-car development spikes. In previous seasons Force India have had to secure cash advances – in effect payday loans, albeit without a usurious rate of interest, one hopes – from former FOM chief Bernie Ecclestone, and as recently as 2015 they ran so short of cash that the car build was delayed and they missed the beginning of testing.

This season they passed the crash tests and hit the track on schedule – helped by the new car being mostly carried over from last year's, which was 95 per cent new – but in the post-Bernie era they've had to go without the advance.

"Well, for whatever reason, that \$10million advance we used to get didn't happen this year. Which makes it even more... challenging, but we'll figure it out. And the fact that we didn't get that advance means we'll be better off throughout the rest of the year."

Szafnauer's declamation is interrupted by Jilur as he manifests himself with a plate bearing the Karun's Special starter, announcing: "This is the spiciest thing you'll eat today."

"Even if it's good, we can't tell Chandhok," says Otmar in a stage whisper. Jilur hoots with laughter and withdraws to the kitchen. ▶

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MERCEDES

Lewis Hamilton v Valtteri Bottas

Chicken Tikka Masala

A popular dish with a rich and slightly sweet sauce. Less spicy than before.



FERRARI

Sebastian Vettel v Kimi Räikkönen

Lamb Passanda

Mildly spiced with a nutty, creamy sauce.



RED BULL

Daniel Ricciardo v Max Verstappen

Chicken Jalfrezi

Hot-fried with chillis for a fresh taste and unpredictable heat.



FORCE INDIA

Esteban Ocon v Sergio Pérez

Chicken Phaal

Our hottest offering, in a thick and spicy sauce. Curry connoisseurs liken it to chewing on a live hand grenade.



WILLIAMS

Lance Stroll v Sergey Sirotkin

Beef Dopiaza

The dopiaza name roughly translates as "double onions", so although this curry is only medium-hot it can all end in tears.



RENAULT

Nico Hülkenberg v Carlos Sainz

Lamb Madras

An old favourite on the menu, now with added spice.



TORO ROSSO

Pierre Gasly v Brendon Hartley

Lamb Rogan Josh

Richly hued and generally only medium hot, but the presence of dried red chillies can lead to blow-ups.



HAAS

Romain Grosjean v Kevin Magnussen

Lamb Dhansak

A sweet and sour dish of variable spiciness, depending on location.



MCLAREN

Fernando Alonso v Stoffel Vandoorne

Prawn Patia

Both hot, sweet and sour, this dish is an adventure on the tongue all season long.



SAUBER

Charles Leclerc v Marcus Ericsson

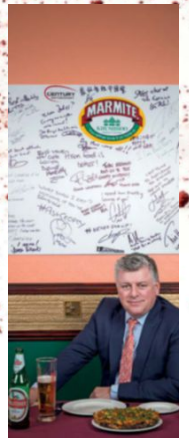
Chicken Korma

A new recipe, richer than before but still mildly flavoured.





“EVERYONE WANTS TO SEE THE DRIVERS RACING. BUT AS I SAY TO OUR DRIVERS, THERE ARE 18 OTHER GUYS OUT THERE – DON’T WORRY ABOUT ONE GUY, BEAT THE OTHER ONES”



Let’s broach the spiciest topic on the menu: how Otmar plans to keep Pérez and Ocon in check, for they squandered at least one podium finish last year by hitting one another, building to a rancorous peak in Belgium with a shunt that caused Ocon to receive death threats from angry Mexican fans. Team press attaché Will Hings coughs and his eyes bulge as if he’s inhaled a

chunk of lime pickle.

“What happened was we were quite soft at the beginning,” says Otmar, “quite civilised in telling them, and when softly-softly didn’t work, we had to be a little more...” He forks a corner of Karun’s Special and chews it ruminatively.

“...brutal about the boundaries. Once we’d got to that point, and there was absolutely no racing between the two, we relaxed it a bit. So what we’re going to do is start the season as we ended last year, because that seemed to work. When you start off like that you can relax it, whereas it’s harder to go the other way.

“Everyone wants to see the drivers racing. But as I say to our drivers, there are 18 other guys out there – don’t worry about one guy, beat the other ones. I get it that drivers are judged on how well they did against their team-mate, because they’re the only other guy with the same equipment. And if both drivers are similarly competent, they’re going to be close on track. But the team comes first. You get zero money for where the drivers finish in the championship. *Nothing.*”

There’s nothing left on the plates, either, but Jilur whisks away the spent crockery and returns bearing metal pots bubbling with a rainbow of spicy-looking emulsions. “Checo doesn’t like *really* hot curries,” he says, reassuringly. “But his father likes them nuclear strength!”

An apt description for what happened in spite of team management’s best efforts during 2017, as low-level aggravation between Pérez and Ocon (such as a squabble over track position behind

Daniel Ricciardo’s Red Bull in Canada, played out over team radio but broadcast on TV) escalated into full-on combat. Ocon put Pérez in the wall in Baku, and the two barely spoke to one another until Belgium, where they hit one another again – not once, but twice.

You have to wonder what sort of conversations incidents such as these generate – not only between the two collisions but afterwards.

“Spa was the straw that broke the camel’s back,” says Otmar, gently pursuing the remnants of butter chicken with the tail end of his naan.

“We were very clear with them that this could never happen again, ever. And that we have a plethora of ways that we can ensure it doesn’t happen – and all those ways are detrimental to the driver. We spelled out the ways we were going to do it and they understood.

“There are contractual means, but also ways of separating them on-track that are completely under our control. If they keep crashing into one another at the start because they’re qualifying next to one another, we’ll just cut the gearbox seal on one of them and he’ll go five places back. Nobody *wants* to do that, but the communication of that as a potential action was effective. Once the drivers had realised their silliness after Belgium, it was fine and we didn’t have to go there.”

Otmar’s tone suggests that he will have no compunction in going ‘there’ if he has to, during the new season. And if he’s that firm when thoroughly replete – well, let no one be in doubt about the consequences of any argy-bhaji...



Otmar signs on the Khushboo’s famous whiteboard wall...

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LAT IMAGES: STEVEN TEE; CHARLES COATES; GLENN DUNBAR

TEAM PROFILE FORCE INDIA

Name Sahara Force India F1 Team
Address Dadford Road, Silverstone, Northants, NN12 8TJ, UK
Chassis VJM11
Power unit Mercedes-Benz
Deputy team principal Robert Fernley
Technical director Andrew Green

First GP Australia 2008
Races started 191
Wins 0
Poles 1
Fastest laps 5
Points 987
Drivers' titles 0
Constructors' titles 0

2017 Championship
Position 4th
Points 187
Wins/podiums 0/0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 1
Races in points 19

Force India impressed again in 2017 as they retained fourth position, despite major regulation changes. Can the Silverstone-based team continue their record of punching above their weight?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Upsetting the establishment with limited resources has been the norm for this well-run racing team. Last season they weren't expected to perform as well as they did, given the significant regulation change, but once again they finished fourth in the constructors' championship and with a fancy pink livery to boot. As *F1 Racing* closed for press there was continuing speculation about an ownership takeover and a change of name. Current owner Vijay Mallya is restricted in movement, so deputy team principal Bob Fernley is his right-hand man at races, while Otmar Szafnauer looks after the day-to-day business of the team. That includes managing the feuding team-mates Sergio Pérez and Esteban Ocon.

OUR TIP: Another concerted push for fourth, but they'll be under more pressure from Renault and McLaren.

DRIVER LINE-UP



SERGIO PÉREZ
Car number 11

Born Guadalajara, Mexico
DoB 26.01.90 (age 28)
Height 1.73m
Debut Australia 2011
Races started 134
Wins 0
Podiums 7
Poles 0
Fastest laps 4
Points 467
Championships 0
2017 position 7th



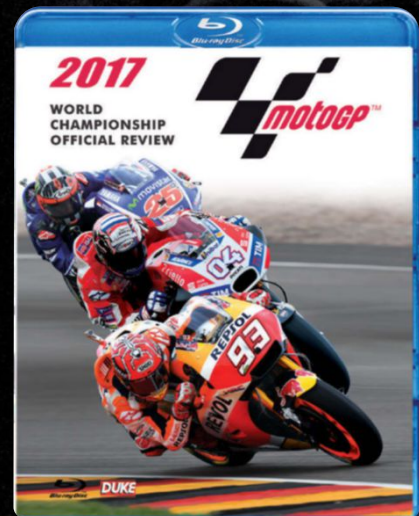
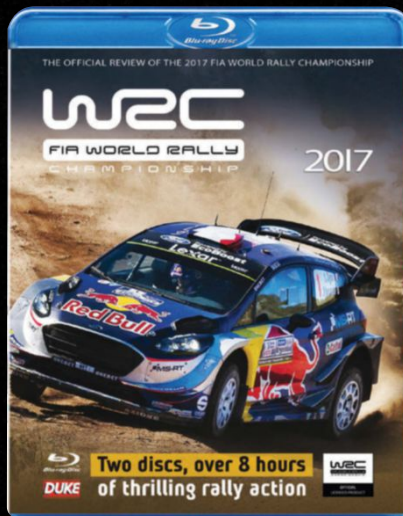
ESTEBAN OCON
Car number 31

Born Évreux, France
DoB 17.09.96 (age 21)
Height 1.86m
Debut Belgium 2016
Races started 29
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 87
Championships 0
2017 position 8th





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A BEAST FROM THE EAST?

Russian rookie Sergey Sirotkin arrives in Formula 1 with a point to prove – and with Robert Kubica waiting in the wings at Williams, he's got to prove it fast

WORDS ANTHONY ROWLINGSON

PICTURES  LAT IMAGES: GLENN DUNBAR

ON A FRIGID Barcelona Monday, it couldn't pass without comic mention that the arrival of a new Russian driver in Formula 1 coincided with the passage of the 'Beast from the East' weather front through much of Europe.

But that chilly blast was no laughing matter for F1, cocooned though it is from most real-world happenings, since chunks of the first three days' running were wiped out. Indeed, so bracing was it at the Circuit de Catalunya that the small throng who assembled behind the Williams garage on 26 March to capture the thoughts of Sergey Sirotkin after his first run in the Williams FW41 could talk of little but how wretchedly cold it was.

The main man showed no signs of distress, however, looking commendably upbeat as he emerged from the womb of the Williams garage into the bitter early evening. He even managed to

crack a joke: "Will I enjoy driving in these conditions tomorrow [his second test slot]? Huh! Of course you enjoy driving Formula 1. It doesn't matter what programme you do. But for sure we didn't get the max from the day."

The moment captured a pragmatic directness, somewhere south of blunt but well north of vanilla, and it was entirely in character according to one compatriot who knows Sergey well.

Dmitry Belousov has worked with Sirotkin since his 2013 Formula Renault 3.5 season, in his capacity as executive director of SMP Racing – a programme established with the explicit intent of unearthing a racing star from Russia or eastern Europe. "Sergey is a very determined character," says Belousov, "as you will see this season. He is very talented and a worker, too. But more than anything, he is very strong mentally."

Even in the snapshot back-of-the-garage moment after a largely abortive first afternoon

in his 2018 race car, a hint of this quality was manifest. Some drivers would be more wide-eyed after their 'first day at school'; others more downbeat at the weather-induced lack of competitive lapping. Sirotkin? Phlegmatic – immediately compartmentalising the experience just past, while processing it for the next.

Perhaps we should expect nothing less of this 22-year-old who can boast 'engineering degree' on his CV alongside the racing record. A wealthy background and SMP support have eased the path to F1 beyond conventional imagining (his place at Williams owes something to a stipend estimated to be around \$20m), but the silver spoon feeds a native hunger and intelligence.

"Last year, being out of racing as reserve driver for Renault nearly killed him," confides Belousov. "He really had to learn to be patient."

Having been given his F1 break, Sirotkin is in no mood to wait any longer. During the



Sirotkin brings great determination as well as a decent budget



off-season he relocated from Russia to live within 20 minutes' commute of Williams HQ. And by all accounts the team can't keep him away, as he has availed himself daily of their fitness facilities while building a rapport with engineering staff.

His academic fluency in engineering matters has already impressed Williams chief technical officer Paddy Lowe. "He understands technical things very quickly," notes Lowe, "and he's a very clever guy. He also has a fantastic work ethic and is very mature for his age. He's a pleasure to work with."

Deputy team boss Claire Williams is another fan: "He's a lovely guy," she says, "and I think he's going to impress people this year as he's incredibly keen to prove his talent. I definitely hope that he does. When we announced him I think some people were surprised, but if we didn't have faith we wouldn't have put him in the line-up. He was chosen after the most exhaustive evaluation we have ever done."

A race card that boasts consecutive third-place finishes in the GP2 championship in 2015 and 2016 leaves little doubt that Sirotkin knows how to turn a wheel, as do three wins along the way. "Sergey has done a very solid apprenticeship in motor racing," says Lowe, "and the SMP programme is really tremendous. So he's ready to make that step up to F1 and it's exciting to see what we'll be able to do."

All very on-message, but Sirotkin will surely face greater challenges this season than a forbidding weather front – not least of which may come from within the team.

It's a matter of record that his drive was secured relatively late in the day after the team had completed evaluation of the post-season tests that pitched him against Robert Kubica, now Williams' third driver.

Despite Kubica's being very much the fans' favourite for the race seat – his comeback from a life-threatening injury is among F1's greatest ever feel-good stories – Robert's pace proved



All eyes are now on how Sirotkin compares with Kubica on pace



inconclusive. He found it impossible to generate sufficient 'core' heat in the Pirellis on the ultra-smooth Yas Marina Circuit, preventing him from setting sufficiently quick one-lap times. Doubts were raised, therefore, about his ultimate pace. Kubica offered assurances that with time and testing he'd unlock more speed by perfecting tyre preparation, but Williams found themselves incapable of making the romantics' choice. They opted instead for Sirotkin, comfortable in the knowledge that he had hit every target set and would bring a sackful of dollars, if signed.

Nonetheless, a funny little thing happened on the Tuesday afternoon of Barcelona, as Kubica settled into his first FW41 run in near-freezing conditions. It wasn't that Kubica set a headline best lap time of 1:21.495s, more than three-tenths faster than Sirotkin's then best of 1:21.822s; temperatures and track conditions were so out of the ordinary they rendered direct comparison almost – but not entirely – moot.

No, more significant was Lowe's response to the question of how Williams might react should Kubica – currently confined to a test and reserve role – prove to be their fastest driver.

A 13-second silence followed *F1R*'s innocently posed question, before Lowe simply answered: "There is no answer to that question."

Not yet, anyway. 🚫

"MORE SIGNIFICANT WAS PADDY LOWE'S RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION OF HOW WILLIAMS MIGHT REACT SHOULD KUBICA PROVE TO BE FASTER"





LAT IMAGES: ANDY HONE; ZAK MAUGER; OTHER PICTURES: WILLIAMS F1; SUTTON IMAGES

TEAM PROFILE WILLIAMS

Name Williams
 Martini Racing

Address Station Road,
 Grove, Oxfordshire,
 OX12 0DQ, UK

Chassis FW41

Power unit Mercedes-Benz

Deputy team principal
 Claire Williams

Chief technical officer
 Paddy Lowe

First GP Argentina 1978

Races started 673

Wins 114

Poles 128

Fastest laps 133

Points 3,553

Drivers' titles 7

Constructors' titles 9

2017 Championship

Position 5th

Points 83

Wins/podiums 0/1

Poles 0

Fastest laps 0

Races in points 17

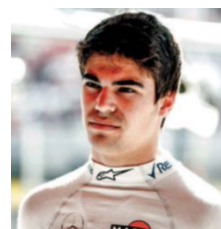
Once again Williams will start a new season with a rookie in one seat as Russian Sergey Sirotkin joins youngster Lance Stroll for 2018. How will the team manage without Felipe Massa's years of experience?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Williams enjoyed a mini-resurgence at the start of the current turbo era, exploiting Mercedes' initially huge power unit advantage to take successive third places in 2014 and 2015. But with engine performance levels converging, they have slipped back into the midfield. They face another challenge in 2018, as Lance Stroll (19) and Sergey Sirotkin (22) form the youngest line-up on the grid, raising questions over development potential. Many fans hoped to see Robert Kubica land one of the seats, but he ultimately had to settle for a reserve role, which will involve several test and practice runs. Paddy Lowe, in his second year as Chief Technical Officer, brings vast technical experience.

OUR TIP: A tough fight in the midfield lies ahead: can a new car concept compensate for raw drivers?

DRIVER LINE-UP



LANCE STROLL
Car number 18

Born Montréal, Canada

DoB 29.10.98 (age 19)

Height 1.82m

Debut Australia 2017

Races started 20

Wins 0

Podiums 1

Poles 0

Fastest laps 0

Points 40

Championships 0

2017 position 12th



SERGEY SIROTKIN
Car number 35

Born Moscow, Russia

DoB 27.08.95 (age 22)

Height 1.74m

Debut Australia 2018

Races started 0

Wins 0

Podiums 0

Poles 0

Fastest laps 0

Points 0

Championships 0

2017 position n/a



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PRESSURE?





WORDS JAMES ROBERTS
PORTRAITS DREW GIBSON

WHAT PRESSURE?

Nico Hülkenberg vs Carlos Sainz is likely to be a scrap to savour in the midfield this year... not that The Hülk seems in the least bit ruffled







DARK DECEMBER IN LONDON. F1 RACING IS MAKING THE JOURNEY ALONG PICCADILLY TO MEET **NICO HÜLKENBERG** AND DISCUSS TEAM-MATES, SCORCHING QUALIFYING PACE AND WHAT MIGHT JUST BE HIS TOUGHEST INTRA- TEAM CHALLENGE YET, IN 2018.

Time's tight – F1 schedules wait for no man – and we're itching to get our interview started, but – *error* – we've made the mistake of handing Nico a copy of *F1 Racing* before starting chatting. And he has become somewhat engrossed, flicking intently through page after page of our December 2017 issue devoted to a certain red team.

"Nico, hello... Coo-ee."

No response.

"We're celebrating Ferrari's 70th anniversary in the issue," we venture.

"I can tell," he says, without glancing up. "There's a lot of red."

Hülkenberg looks every inch the off-duty, on-duty F1 star on this 'sponsor day' for team watch partner Bell & Ross: groomed flaxen hair, black team jacket and grey jeans. He's perched on a blue-grey sofa in front of a mirrored table on the first floor of a watch boutique in Burlington arcade, in the heart of London's sumptuous Mayfair. Twinkling lights lift the city out of the murky

winter gloom, as shoppers vie with commuters for pavement space in the pre-Christmas throng.

"Doing any Christmas shopping while you're in town?" we probe, trying to prise Nico away from the mag.

"Not really. I was in the factory yesterday and I'll be in there again tomorrow for an 8am meeting."

That's an early start from London before driving the 70 or so miles up the M40 to Renault's HQ in Enstone, Oxfordshire.

"We'll have an end-of-season technical debrief, then a chat about performance, the new car, team structure, a little bit of brainstorming with all the different departments. I have a few marketing commitments now and tomorrow, then into late December it gets quiet."

He pauses again, surveys his surroundings, then declares in a fabulously F1 moment: "I don't know where my champagne has gone..."

Hülkenberg can afford a celebratory mood

after a strong year and a determined flourish in the final race of last season. His sixth in Abu Dhabi – and ten championship points – edged Renault ahead of Toro Rosso for sixth in the constructors' standings. That bang brought a lot of buck: the difference in prize money between sixth and eighth is just under \$12million.

If the result brought audible relief from race engineer Mark Slade at the chequer, Hulk's cool response – "That's what I'm here for" – spoke also of his calm authority.

"Given our season with all the problems we had, we needed to deliver," he admits. "So there was pressure, yes. Sixth is better than seventh. Fifth is better than sixth. We all know that."

But for a 'works' team, with explicit ambition founded on significant investment, results *matter*. Renault's Enstone factory still resembles a building site as it undergoes much-needed redevelopment and cash is being spent in less obvious ways, too. Reputable engineers, including Red Bull's Ciaran Pilbeam have been signed, along with – controversially – the FIA's ex-tech director Marcin Budkowski, who will start work in April. These are all signs of a team fully intent on working their way up the grid.

"We have a good bunch of people, both at the race track and back in the factory," says Hülkenberg, who can look ahead to his second Renault season with justifiable optimism. "It's a good working environment and it's what I expected coming to a manufacturer team – it's a bigger operation. All of a sudden you represent a global brand. I had an impression of that when I raced for Porsche at Le Mans: they put in money and make an investment, but they also have high ambitions – and I have some back.

"I made this point only yesterday – and with that comes *pressure*. It's the nature of the sport which is a performance environment, but I have no problems with that."

Sixth in the championship, then, can be considered a starting point – the minimum respectable placing for a team in year two of a ground-up rebuild. Now they need to kick on.

The biggest stumbling block in the pursuit for points in 2017 was reliability. Last season, Renault-powered cars picked up 300 extra ▶



Hülkenberg is quietly confident going into 2018, despite being faced by his toughest team-mate yet



CLEAN SHEET

Beating a team-mate in qualifying at every race is ultra-rare: only three drivers have achieved it in the past 25 years...



Fernando Alonso 2008

Fernando Alonso was paired at Renault with rookie Nelson Piquet Jr. Result: 18-0 to Alonso in qualifying, with a best place of second to Piquet's seventh.



Mark Webber 2002

In his debut year with Minardi Webber was partnered with Alex Yoong, who he trounced 15-0, and Anthony Davidson in Hungary and Belgium. Webber won those two quallie battles as well.



Michael Schumacher 1992

In his first full season at Benetton, poor Martin Brundle was on the receiving end of Schumacher's 16-0 drubbing.

engine-related grid penalties compared to those for Mercedes and Ferrari. "The speed is there, but it depends on what our ambitions are," continues Nico. "We competed for decent points in the midfield but we want to progress and we want to get to the front, so we have to improve.

"Reliability compromised many races and it cost us positions, points and possibly a position in the constructors' championship. That's one of the highest priority items for the team."

Abiteboul, meantime, has spoken about Renault as title challengers in 2020-21, by which time Nico will be 34. One monkey he would like to have off his back by then, for any kind of challenge to arise, is his lack of a podium finish, despite having been in F1 since 2010. There have been three fourths but still no medallion.

Few doubt his speed, however. Taking last year as an example, Hülkenberg was 1.1s quicker in qualifying across the 16 races he entered with Jolyon Palmer as a team-mate.

"Really?!" he demands, as a grin develops. "That's a lot! One second too much..." When Carlos Sainz replaced Palmer for the final four


races, Nico was still quicker, but the average was down to 0.2secs. His response? Silence.

Still, across the season he had a 100 per cent qualifying record against his two team-mates, – not something that happens often (see sidebar).

"You're the first to see it that way," he says. "Most people count it as 19-1 because in Austin I had a car problem and wasn't able to participate. But it *would* have been 20-0." No confidence issues evident here, then...

"I have to say, I'm quite satisfied with the job I've done in qualifying last year," he continues. "It goes back to these new cars where I feel I can exploit the limit more, I can push more and it somehow suits my driving style."

The prospect of a great intra-team battle at Renault will be one of the intriguing narratives of 2018, but will Nico do anything different to ensure he stays on top?

"I'm just going to keep doing my job," he says, phlegmatically "and I'm going to keep doing it good. Me and Carlos have had four race weekends together and we have both learned a little bit about each other. It's going to be tight." 

"ME AND CARLOS HAVE HAD FOUR RACE WEEKENDS TOGETHER AND WE HAVE BOTH LEARNED A LITTLE BIT ABOUT EACH OTHER. IT'S GOING TO BE TIGHT." 

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TEAM PROFILE RENAULT

Name Renault Sport
Formula One Team
Address Whiteways
Technical Centre, Enstone,
Oxfordshire, OX7 4EE, UK
Chassis R.S.18
Power unit Renault
Managing director
Cyril Abiteboul
Chief technical officer
Bob Bell

First GP Britain 1977
Races started 341
Wins 35
Poles 51
Fastest laps 31
Points 1,383
Drivers' titles 2
Constructors' titles 2

2017 Championship
Position 6th
Points 57
Wins/podiums 0/0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Races in points 10

Renault will have their hands full in 2018 as they try to break away from the midfield, while also supplying engines to big names Red Bull and McLaren. Do they have the resources to manage?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Renault's full-scale return to Formula 1 took some time to gather momentum, but an upward trend was clear to see over the second half of last season. Nico Hülkenberg claimed a handful of useful points finishes as developments from Enstone and Viry-Châtillon gradually came through, while Carlos Sainz added to the driving talent with an early switch from Toro Rosso. The biggest problem, though, was reliability and that's the team's first major area to improve for 2018. Renault have gathered plenty of the ingredients required to succeed and a top-four push is a sensible target, but regular podiums appear to be some way off. The most intriguing narrative in 2018 will be the duel between the drivers.

OUR TIP: Renault to be involved in a year-long scrap for fourth with Force India and McLaren.

DRIVER LINE-UP



NICO HÜLKENBERG
Car number 27

Born Emmerich,
Germany
DoB 19.08.87 (age 30)
Height 1.84m
Debut Bahrain 2010
Races started 135
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 1
Fastest laps 2
Points 405
Championships 0
2017 position 10th



CARLOS SAINZ
Car number 55

Born Madrid,
Spain
DoB 01.09.94 (age 23)
Height 1.77m
Debut Australia 2015
Races started 60
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 118
Championships 0
2017 position 9th





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THE LONG WAY ROUND THE LO

Former Red Bull protégé **Brendon Hartley** is surely Formula 1's comeback king – booted out of the programme in 2010, he's reached the top the hard way and intends to enjoy himself this time



CV BRENDON HARTLEY

Toro Rosso racer

Age 28

Born Palmerston North, New Zealand

2017 World Endurance champion with Porsche; Le Mans winner; joins Toro Rosso for final four GPs

2014-16 Competes with Porsche in WEC, winning the title with teammate Mark Webber in 2015

2012-13 Drives in European Le Mans Series; completes a day's testing for Mercedes

2010 Racing in Formula Renault 3.5, he is dropped from the Red Bull Young Driver programme

2009 Appointed Red Bull's and Toro Rosso's test and reserve driver

2008 Drives in British F3 and takes a podium at the Macau Grand Prix

2007 Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup champion

Unless **Niki Lauda** threw a rattlesnake into Lewis Hamilton's cockpit just before the start, it's difficult to imagine anyone having a more exciting 2017 United States Grand Prix than Brendon Hartley. The Kiwi's Formula 1 debut yielded what seems, on the face of it, a solid if unspectacular 13th, but since he'd been parachuted into the Toro Rosso team a few days before the race, having last driven a single-seater in 2012, the consensus was that the boy did well. Brendon handled his surprise gig with equanimity, not looking out of place in cockpit or garage. That proved useful.

There's an eight-year interval between Brendon's Toro Rosso drives. Let's rewind...

It's December 2009 and there are optimistic Christmas lights in the motorhomes at a dark Jerez as teams gather for the young drivers' test. Brendon is, logically, Red Bull's next cab off the rank, having made his F1 testing debut the previous winter and spent 2009 as the official reserve for both Red Bull teams. The problem for Brendon is that he hasn't been winning races, whereas another Red Bull apprentice by the name of Daniel Ricciardo has been pulling up trees in British F3. It's Daniel who gets three days to himself in the race-winning RB5. Brendon gets to share the STR4.

Hartley and Ricciardo were – and are – good friends but in Jerez their demeanours couldn't be more different: Brendon talks about the physical and mental challenges of jumping into an F1 car without much preparation; Daniel's laughing and bewitched by the experience: he's so happy he wants to do something anatomically impractical with his car. Unsurprisingly, it's Daniel who knocks it out of the park in Jerez. Six months later Brendon and Red Bull part company.


Back to the present. If Hartley felt aggrieved at getting kicked to the kerb, he's diplomatic about it now, with a directness that's jarring in an F1 paddock. "I guess I wasn't ready," he concedes. "I had some success in the early days. I became the reserve driver, had my first F1 test at 18 and I guess I just didn't deal with the pressure. I stopped enjoying it. I wasn't happy."

At 28 Brendon now looks like a man who is enjoying it, comfortable in his own skin, cheerfully confessing

to being nothing like ready to drive an F1 car when he arrived in Austin. He maintained that level of cheery nonchalance throughout the mad days that followed, alternating F1 and WEC weekend after weekend, picking up a second WEC title for Porsche in Shanghai, and inking a 2018 F1 deal. Alongside the comeback of a certain lugubrious Pole, Brendon's return to the fold is the feel-good story for the new season – because everyone likes it when a nice bloke triumphs.

Having been dropped in 2010 by Dr Helmut Marko, éminence grise of the Red Bull motorsports programme, Brendon was the one who initiated contact last summer – not vice versa. It was a brave call since Marko has the sort of penetrating gaze that can crack walnuts. Even Red Bull, however, cannot produce drivers with cookie-cutter regularity. This year it found itself in the rare situation of demand outstripping supply. After four seasons and a poor 2017, Red Bull decided to jettison Daniil Kvyat. Pierre Gasly won the GP2 title and was due his shot – but when Toro Rosso also had to sacrifice Carlos Sainz to get out of its Renault contract, the cupboard was bare.

While no-one saw Brendon coming, with hindsight, it's a good fit. It's also worth noting that this year Toro Rosso becomes something like a works outfit. Honda in F1 and Porsche in WEC may be worlds apart – but it can't hurt having a driver with experience of developing a works programme from the ground-up. It's a point of view Brendon is happy to endorse: "Working with Porsche made my transition to F1 quite smooth because it's a similar number of people involved; very similar structure in terms of engineering [and] pressure... At Porsche, I was very heavily involved in the development on every level, so at least I have some experience from that point of view."

The other thing Le Mans-winning, double world champion Hartley has that his teenage self didn't is confidence. Not the brittle, cocky sort but the steadier, more reassuring type that comes from having been there, done that. It's unusual now to see a mature driver heading into a rookie season – but F1 won't be poorer for someone that came the long way round. 



LAT IMAGES: ZAK MAUGER, CHARLES COATES

TEAM PROFILE TORO ROSSO

Name Red Bull Toro Rosso Honda
Address Via Boaria 229, 48018 Faenza (RA), Italy
Chassis STR13
Power unit Honda
Team principal Franz Tost
Technical director James Key

First GP Bahrain 2006
Races started 226
Wins 1
Poles 1
Fastest laps 1
Points 382
Drivers' titles 0
Constructors' titles 0

2017 Championship
Position 7th
Points 53
Wins/podiums 0/0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Races in points 10

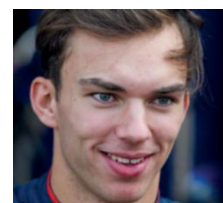
Toro Rosso and Honda form an all-new alliance after last year's engine merry-go-round. Will late-2017 Formula 1 debutants Pierre Gasly and Brendon Hartley be able to display their potential?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Toro Rosso ended up with Honda after last year's protracted engine saga. Evidently, the manufacturer's return to grand prix racing has manifestly not gone to plan. 2015 was terrible, before glimpses of progress in 2016, and another disaster in 2017 with an overhauled power unit. What 2018 will bring is anybody's guess. Honda are unlikely to find the magic bullet required to join Mercedes, Ferrari and Renault in short order, but a new working environment could provide them with the freedom they need to flourish in the future. Toro Rosso, though, are no more than a guinea pig in the process. If Honda get their act together, the engine will move up to Red Bull. If not, only the junior team will suffer.

OUR TIP: Toro Rosso will be hamstrung by continuing Honda troubles and two drivers who are inexperienced in Formula 1.

DRIVER LINE-UP



PIERRE GASLY
Car number 10

Born Rouen, France
DoB 07.02.96 (age 21)
Height 1.77m
Debut Malaysia 2017
Races started 5
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 0
Championships 0
2017 position 21st



BRENDON HARTLEY
Car number 28

Born Palmerston North, New Zealand
DoB 10.11.89 (age 28)
Height 1.84m
Debut USA 2017
Races started 4
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 0
Championships 0
2017 position 23rd



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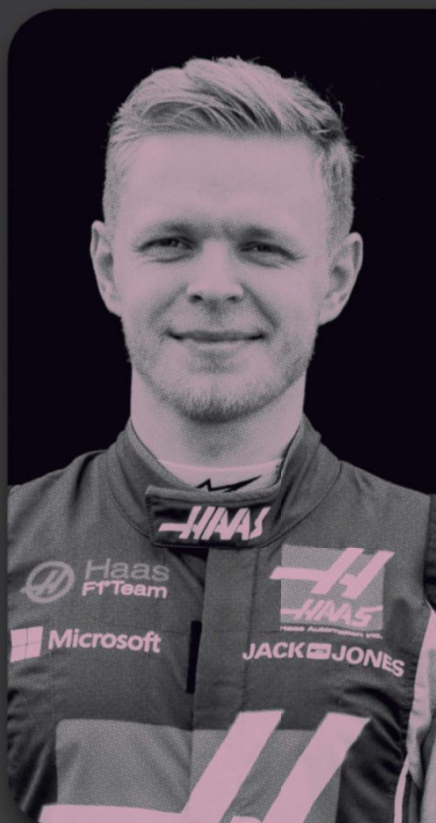
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DOUBLE TROUBLE



F1 SUPERLICENCE

Name
Magnussen, Kevin

D.O.B.
05-10-92

From
Roskilde, Denmark

Car number



Current
penalty
points

6

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Just like his father Jan, also a one-time McLaren protégé, Kevin Magnussen exudes a laid-back demeanour. In any wheel-to-wheel – or even *face-to-face* – confrontation, K-Mag is unruffled. Take last year's Hungarian Grand Prix as an example, after which Magnussen picked up two penalty points on his superlicence as a result of a *contretemps* with Renault's Nico Hülkenberg.

On lap 62 Hülkenberg attempted to pass Magnussen on the outside of Turn 2 – and in the words of the stewards was “a little ahead” – when Magnussen continued to use the full width of the track, forcing the Renault off.

Pre-empting the stewards' judgement, a still-furious Hülkenberg approached Magnussen in the TV pen, gatecrashing a live interview to congratulate him sarcastically on being “the most unsporting driver on the grid”. K-Mag's instant rejoinder was the stuff that memes are made of: “Suck on my balls, honey.”

On track Magnussen has a bad-boy reputation because he's a hard-nosed, give-no-quarter racer, something that the fans love to see – but something which can also get him into trouble with the FIA stewards.

Of the current drivers on the grid, Magnussen has accrued more penalty

points on his superlicence than anyone else, 14 in total (four from 2014, four from 2016 and six last year).

Points are removed after 12 months, so his current tally is six, but if he notches up 12 within a year he'll earn a one-race ban. The first 'live' point on his superlicence expires on 30 April, 2018, 12 months on from when he was given a penalty for “leaving the track and failing to rejoin as instructed” at Turn 2 in Sochi.

Last year he accrued his other points in Canada (when he overtook Stoffel Vandoorne behind the Safety Car) and in Austin, when he was deemed to have impeded Sergio Pérez in qualifying.

PENALTIES IN 2017

Left the track and failed to rejoin as instructed

1 point

Russian GP

Overtook behind the Virtual Safety Car

2 points

Canadian GP

Forced another driver off-track

2 points

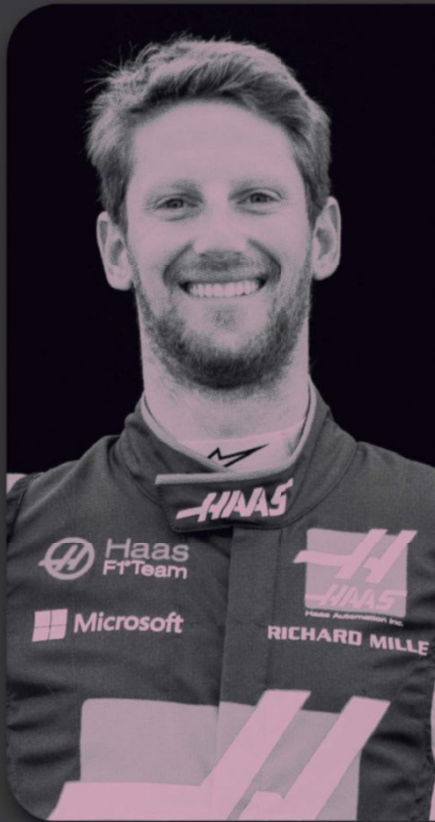
Hungarian GP

Impeded another car in Turns 12/13

1 point

US GP

Haas drivers Kevin Magnussen and Romain Grosjean could be considered the bad boys of F1. They both have six penalty points on their F1 superlicences going into the new season – and if that figure reaches 12 within a 12-month period then one or both of them will be facing an unwanted one-race ban...



F1 SUPERLICENCE

Name
Grosjean, Romain

D.O.B.
17-04-86

From
Geneva, Switzerland

Car number



Current
penalty
points

6

ROMAIN GROSJEAN

Like his Haas team-mate, Grosjean is generally a relaxed and happy soul out of the car, but as soon as the visor's down his feisty *doppelgänger* bursts from its shackles.

Early in his career he was characterised as the wild boy of F1 and given a £40,000 fine – and a one-race ban – for initiating a first corner pile-up at the 2012 Belgian GP.

That season Grosjean was involved in seven first-lap crashes in 12 races, and subsequently became the first driver to be banned since Michael Schumacher in 1994.

In 2014 the FIA introduced the penalty points system for superlicence

holders, and although no driver has yet received the mandatory one-race ban for totalling 12 points in a 12-month period, like his team-mate Magnussen, Grosjean is halfway there.

He's calmer than he used to be. We're much more likely to hear him whingeing about his brakes/tyres/handling/another competitor* (*delete as appropriate) than we are to witness him colliding with a rival. Even if that radio traffic does lead to a frank exchange with his team principal Guenther Steiner, who told him to "shut up" in the closing stages of the US GP last year.

Grosjean's first 'live' points on his

superlicence will expire in April this year, 12 months on from the three he was given for "failing to slow for double yellows" in qualifying in Shanghai. The severity of the three points was highlighted by the stewards, who found that Grosjean "made no attempt to significantly reduce his speed" in a potentially dangerous situation.

His other points-attracting misdemeanours in 2017 came in Mexico, when he overtook the McLaren of Fernando Alonso off-track (one point), and in Brazil when he collided with Force India's Esteban Ocon at Turn 6 (two points).

PENALTIES IN 2017

Failing to slow for double yellows
3 points
Chinese GP

Gaining an advantage off-track
1 point
Mexican GP

Causing a collision
2 points
Brazilian GP



LAT IMAGES: ANDY HONE, GLENN DUNBAR

TEAM PROFILE HAAS

Name Haas
 F1 Team
Address 4001 Haas Way,
 Kannapolis,
 NC 28081, USA
Chassis VF-18
Power unit Ferrari
Team principal
 Guenther Steiner
Technical director
 Rob Taylor

First GP Australia 2016
Races started 41
Wins 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 76
Drivers' titles 0
Constructors' titles 0

2017 Championship
Position 8th
Points 47
Wins/podiums 0/0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Races in points 11

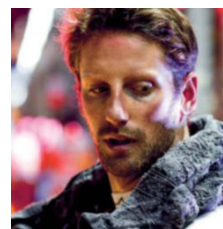
Haas scored more points in their second season but remained eighth overall as they struggled for consistency. Do they have the know-how to establish themselves in the midfield?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Haas initially looked set to improve on eighth position in their sophomore season, as both Romain Grosjean and new team-mate Kevin Magnussen contributed to the points tally. However, with occasional standout results came crushing lows, given the VF-17's bemusing rollercoaster form. Grosjean's ongoing brake woes and radio outbursts only added to the problems. Haas beat Renault, Sauber and Manor in 2016, and McLaren and Sauber in 2017. But if Renault and McLaren jump clear of the midfield group in 2018, as predicted by Grosjean, Haas could find themselves in a battle to stay off the back row, with Sauber and Toro Rosso-Honda their likely adversaries.

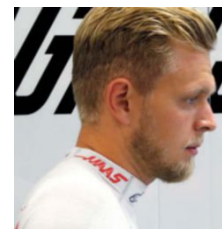
OUR TIP: Haas will slip towards the back of the grid as McLaren improve on 2017.

DRIVER LINE-UP



ROMAIN GROSJEAN
Car number 8

Born Geneva, Switzerland
DoB 17.04.86 (age 31)
Height 1.80m
Debut Europe 2009
Races started 122
Wins 0
Podiums 10
Poles 0
Fastest laps 1
Points 344
Championships 0
2017 position 13th



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN
Car number 20

Born Roskilde, Denmark
DoB 05.10.92 (age 25)
Height 1.74m
Debut Australia 2014
Races started 60
Wins 0
Podiums 1
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 81
Championships 0
2017 position 14th





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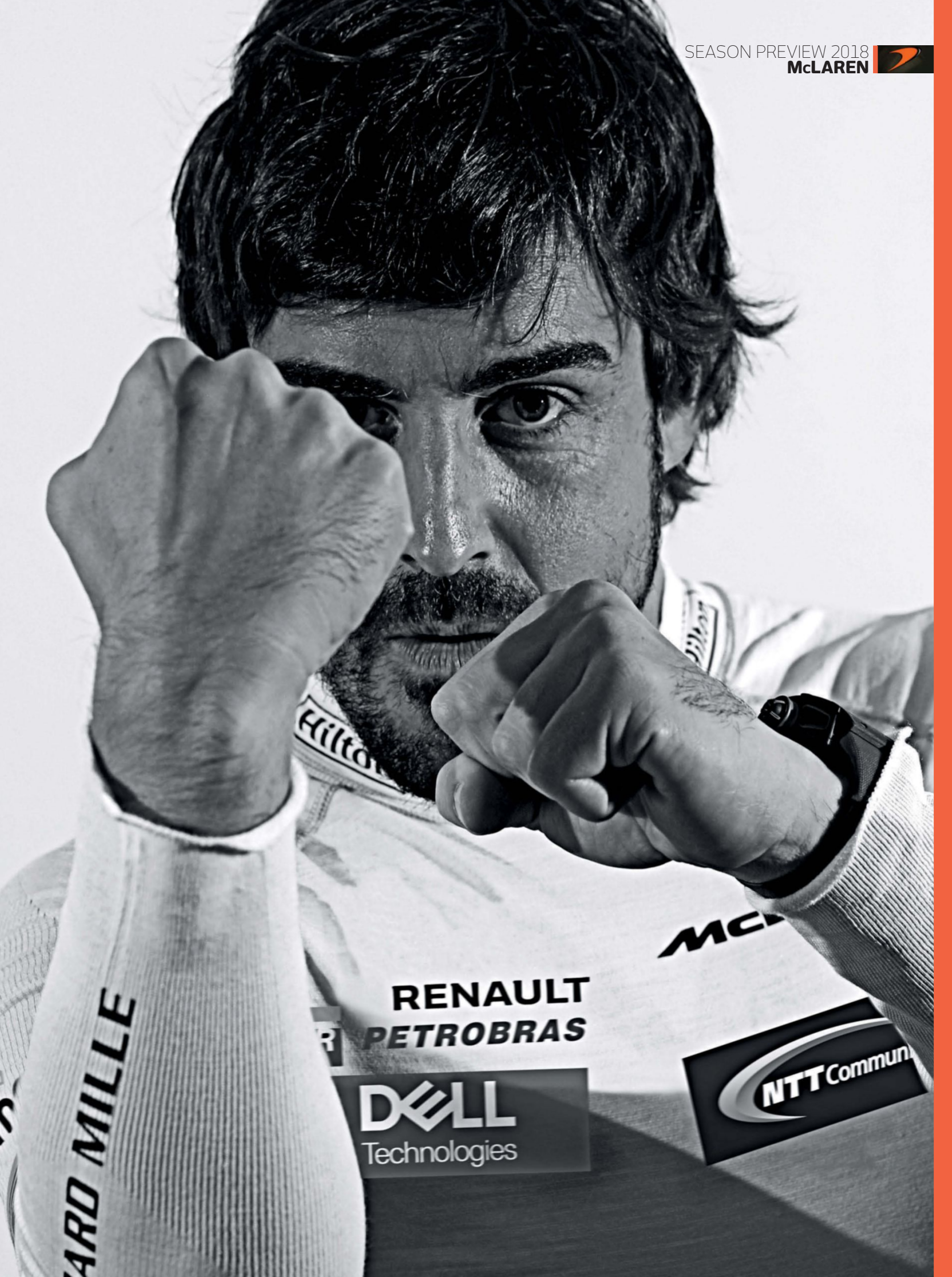
RECRUITMENT DRIVEN BY PASSION

THE LONG INTERVIEW

It's the hope that kills you: the fervent wish that somehow, maybe, Fernando Alonso will be racing at the front of F1 again, where he so obviously belongs. Well, true believers, with a Renault motor in the back of his McLaren this year, there are reasons to be optimistic, as he tells us in this exclusive interview

INTERVIEW ANTHONY ROWLINSON PORTRAITS  LAT IMAGES STEVEN TEE

THIS IS
FERNANDO
ALONSO



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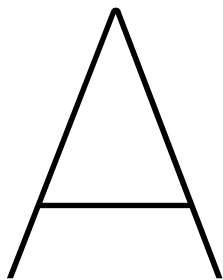
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THE LONG INTERVIEW



RAGING BULL. The fighter pure. The ultimate competitor. The fire and fury of a double world champion who looked set to become the naturally dominant successor to Michael Schumacher.

Then came Vettel and Red Bull; then came Hamilton and Mercedes. Different authors, same story: total world domination. Even fired-up

Ferrari and Fernando couldn't beat that challenge – though how hard they tried from 2010-2013.

It's 11 seasons since Fernando won a world title; nearly five since he won a grand prix – romantics will remember his '13 victory lap of the Barcelona circuit, with Alonso's fist gripping a *Bandera de España*, which fluttered from the cockpit.

He was a hero to the Catalan throng that day; he remains a hero to his global army of fans, whose passion for his combative style remains undimmed, despite the past three fallow years spent driving a flaccid McLaren-Honda.

They worship at the Alonso temple when they hear tales of "fist-shaped holes" being punched in the walls of McLaren's hospitality unit during a spleen-venting session after a lost big result at last year's Singapore GP. They thrill to the ultra-combative dice with Lewis Hamilton at the Mexican GP for *ninth place*, simply because they know it's Alonso and Hamilton wheel-to-wheel and even if Hamilton has a far superior machine, Fernando will never capitulate.

A boxer, but not a bruiser. A fighter too skilled to need low blows. A driver in the Mansell mould: pugnacious, fearless, compelling. A sky-rocket in need of a match. Light the blue touch paper; retire in haste.

How frustrating, then, has been the abortive McLaren-Honda partnership, one born amid such optimism?

"To race with no hope... that is the worst thing," says

Alonso, that expressive face calm and serious as he allows the gravity of his words to settle.

"It has been a challenge for all of us – not only on the technical side. How strong can you be mentally when it feels that even when things aren't going right, they get even worse? Like in Singapore, one of the three races we targeted last year for a good result. For a second you are in third place, then you have a crash in the first corner, even when you were not involved at any point. On those kinds of days you have to stay cool, you have to stay focused."

Dare we suggest, though, that these lost years might represent the calm before the storm? That Alonso in 2018 spec is a compressed spring, ready to unleash his energy given even a half-decent McLaren-Renault MCL33 with which to work?

McLaren exec director Zak Brown certainly believes so – he confesses to being "amazed" by the sheer hunger for motorsport Alonso has shown via his forays into IndyCar and sportscar racing (not to mention sneaky under-the-radar karting competitions, entered under a *nom de plume*).

And in just a couple of weeks we're going to find out...

F1 Racing: How good can McLaren be with Renault power?

Fernando Alonso: I think I'm happy. I'm confident that this year we can turn things around and go back to the place that we belong. McLaren as a team mean 'success'. Normally even a bad year for McLaren is third or fourth in the constructors' championship – never ninth [as they were in 2015 and 2017].

F1R: So you're hoping for what you might call a 'normal' season in 2018?

FA: Yes – back to normality, back to this normal feeling of getting to every grand prix and preparing through practice and qualifying and knowing that you should be in the top

five – and if you do well you could be on the podium. And if you do something really special, you could even be a winner. That motivation and that preparation have been the things I've missed... But these are things that I hope to have this year. That's the biggest expectation.

F1R: Your best results these past three seasons have been three fifth places. Did you ever think 'I can't do this any more'?

FA: [Alonso pauses to gather his thoughts. Then a deep breath and a grin...] Yes, I did think about the possibility of changing series and stopping Formula 1...

After I did the Indy 500 last year, when I came back there were a couple of races in Austria, Silverstone, when I thought 'maybe next year I could try a different series; I could do full commitment to the Triple crown and do Indy and Le Mans and maybe that's the best thing'.

But I felt it was not the time for me to step out – not right now, not after these results, not with this feeling... I knew I

such clever engineers, so much tech, that we know if we are losing 10 milliseconds in a slow corner or 40 milliseconds in high-speed corners. We understand braking, traction, we know everyone's tyre pressures – we do those calculations every weekend and if you remove the losses that we see on the straights, then actually we are okay – we could be up at the front. I don't know if we will be winning, but close to the performance of the Red Bulls or something like that.

That was quite encouraging and a way of finding a positive sign in the last two years, when we knew that we had a lack of power. We have also been weak on the chassis side, but last year was much stronger. This is what stopped me from making the decision to stop F1.

Winning the triple crown [the Monaco Grand Prix, Le Mans and the Indy 500] would make me feel very proud if I achieved it one day, but if I stopped F1 now I will regret it for the rest of my life.

F1R: And any driver only has a short period of time where success and being competitive is possible...

FA: Yes, but I have so much self-confidence. Every time I raced in the smaller categories before F1, we were delivering the result. So I knew that in F1, we just needed a car in the range of two, three, four tenths of the top ones... And with that, we will play.

At some circuits we will lose; at some circuits we will beat the others; at some circuits we will play with the strategy to overcome the deficit. But you are in the game. It was the same for me at Indianapolis.

F1R: Your race at the 500 was one of the highlights of last year. What was it really like?

FA: At first it was difficult. I was not comfortable because the car felt weird – set up to turn left, asymmetric suspension – and I was not feeling confident after the first turn. And there were two million people watching on YouTube! That was a huge number for a test. ▶

THERE IS UNFINISHED BUSINESS FOR ME AND McLAREN TOGETHER. AND I THINK THIS YEAR IS THE TIME ALL THESE THINGS WILL CHANGE. I FEEL PRETTY SURE ABOUT THAT



would regret it for the rest of my life and that I would have this *bad taste* [he almost spits out the words] for the rest of my racing career.

So definitely I still want to succeed. There is unfinished business for me and McLaren together. And I think this year is the time all

these things will change. I feel pretty sure about that.

F1R: What makes you feel that way?

FA: The chassis side is finally progressing as we wanted, with momentum and with things moving in the right direction. So if we just could have a good power unit, that would be the solution. In F1, everything is on the table. You have

The Indy 500 (below right) was a much-needed distraction for Alonso in 2017



THE LONG INTERVIEW



And I was thinking 'maybe I'll jump in the car and I won't like it. Maybe I won't feel competitive. Maybe I won't like the feeling. Maybe I won't 'feel' the car... But then it would be very difficult to say that we would not be racing in three weeks' time. Because we'd announced officially that we were racing!

But quickly I started to feel the self-confidence again. It woke up all my racing senses. Suddenly it was 'Indianapolis? I like this! Maybe I can do some more go-karts or Le Mans.'

F1R: And had you forgotten how that felt?

FA: To be honest, yes. I hadn't felt it for a while, but now I feel we could do a very good season if we have a good package this year, because I am sure I will be able to put in the 'extra' that I have put in all my career.

That has been the most difficult thing to give to the team over the past three years: the commitment, the work, simulator feedback. That's something that comes naturally for a racer. But to give the extra, when you're in Mexico and you have a power unit change and starting last because of a 35-place engine penalty, things like the extra two-tenths or moves in the race – or maybe a magic start – don't come out.

F1R: Where do they come from, those special moments?

FA: It's not conscious. It's just how you feel on the day. Maybe in the strategy meetings on a Sunday morning you see the graphs, you see the simulations, and they say you will finish fourth – but you feel that you will finish higher, even if there are no mathematic reasons – but you *feel* it. And then it starts to become real.

F1R: It must be tough when you know that even on a special day the best you can hope for is fifth or sixth...

FA: You know, in difficult times you learn a lot more than in easy times and in the past three years we've made the whole team and ourselves stronger than ever. We are more ready to take the challenge if we are competitive this year than we were three years ago. Now we have very young, very talented people coming from other teams – Ferrari, Red Bull – and these three years have made us very strong and united as a group. I believe we are ready for bigger things.

F1R: And what about you, personally? How do you keep motivated as a sportsman when your machinery holds you back? That's a very particular aspect of Formula 1...

FA: To be honest with you, it has not been easy. There have been ups and downs, highs and lows. Not in the race weekend itself, because when you go through practice and you start the meetings with engineers, prepare your qualifying runs and so on, the competitive sportsman inside you wakes up and you are ready to take any challenge.

But between races it has been difficult. I had to push myself a little bit more to stay focused and to stay in the game. I don't like losing – I like winning, in anything I do in life not only motorsport, so every Sunday night when I've been getting back from a race, I have not been happy.

I always think things will change for the next race and we will score some points and we will do better – even if I know that's not totally true. I have that feeling all the time, I never stop dreaming. The hunger for winning is always there so it has not been difficult to motivate myself.

F1R: Did you have to think back to better years and remind yourself 'I know I am better than this'?

FA: Actually, no. I never did that. I always felt strong and competitive against [McLaren team-mates] Jenson or Stoffel. My own motivation and confidence was never a problem, so I didn't have to look back.

[But there's a little confession coming, which Alonso offers *after* toying with the idea in his mind for a moment...]

You know, I do occasionally look back at some of my past races because I want to enjoy them a little bit. On some of the F1 channels they broadcast races from many years ago – the whole race – and that's a nice way to relax for an hour or so.

F1R: What's it like watching yourself?

FA: [Huge, flashing smile] Amazing! Yeah, really amazing because obviously you don't recognise yourself. You see the race completely differently from the inside. You don't analyse things in the same way from the outside. Maybe you can hear a commentator getting stressed because you're losing time... but you remember that you were saving tyres, or maybe you had a little problem one lap. When you watch like this it helps you understand some of the questions from the media and how the race looks so different from outside the car.

F1R: Any particular races?

FA: Not really... but the good times, when we were winning. I remember in 2005 with some cars being on pole position – Toyota or BAR – then they would stop on lap eight or lap 11 but we knew we had fuel until lap 16, so even if we were fifth, it was quite a nice feeling inside.

F1R: Your good friend Robert Kubica told us last year that being faced with difficulty and a massive challenge [his recovery from a near-fatal injury] had made him a better driver. Has a different kind of adversity made *you* a better driver?

FA: Definitely yes. Because the way you have to drive and maximise the package is different. When I was winning, some of the races meant pushing in the first stint and then after that taking care of the car and not riding kerbs too aggressively, or

September 2005 and Fernando still had some work to do to claim his first title





“
**IN DIFFICULT
TIMES YOU LEARN
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IN THE PAST THREE
YEARS WE'VE MADE
THE WHOLE TEAM
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STRONGER
THAN EVER**
”

THE LONG INTERVIEW



on the pitstops trying to brake 20 metres earlier because you don't want to hit a mechanic or overshoot the marks. That's the 20 per cent margin or whatever you have in hand when you have a dominant package. That probably slows down your learning curve, because you're not so demanding of yourself and your mental capacity or your physical capacity. When you're having a difficult time, you upgrade your driving style every single day.

F1R: Are there specific aspects of your driving that you have improved in that past year or so?

FA: Yeah, definitely – the level of understanding of the tyres is greater than ever, so we've had to adapt to that. In recent years the tyres were very fragile and we couldn't push them too much. Or they might under-perform at the end of a lap or at the end of a stint. Last year we came back to a more normal tyre that you can push all the way.

F1 has actually evolved a lot and drivers are much more prepared now: you have to perform at the maximum in every part of the race – every lap, every overtaking move, every fuel-saving technique. You're always around the optimal driving style from Friday to Sunday. For example, if you were an iPhone you would have a software update every six months; now a Formula 1 driver does that every month – especially when you are running at the back, because you need to find something extra.

F1R: Lewis has always had 0.2s advantage over his team-mates



2017's Indy sojourn got a lot of publicity and allowed Fernando to reveal his ambitions

in qualifying – apart from you. Does it frustrate you to watch his success when your own car has been so uncompetitive?

FA: No it doesn't frustrate me... too much! When you're fighting for the world championship with someone and he gets the title, that's frustrating. You start thinking 'I deserve it more'. But I don't have that feeling when I'm not in the championship fight. Actually, I think Lewis really deserves the championships he's having now. He had more talent than the numbers showed at the beginning. Now it's a bit easier for him, because his car is dominant, but he's equal with Sebastian [both have four world titles] and that's fair.

F1R: But what about when you lost the 2012 world title to Sebastian in Brazil? The camera found you and focused on your expression. You'd lost the title by three points and you looked absolutely shell-shocked...

FA: Yeah... Well... I was waiting for Felipe [Massa]. He had tried to help me as much as he could and he was hugging his family. I didn't know that the camera was there... and I was just 'not there'. 2012 was probably my best season in F1 on a personal driving level, and I definitely believe we deserved that one... but it wasn't possible. It doesn't frustrate me but I know that the numbers are a little bit unfair with us. Maybe this year we'll get some luck back.

F1R: Your McLaren results don't seem to have affected your popularity if your social media following is anything to go by [2.5m Twitter followers and counting]...

FA: I know – it's amazing. I've even asked some of my guys about it because anywhere else – soccer, tennis or whatever, if you have three bad years everything goes down: your popularity, sponsor commitments, your fan base... But that's not the case. Maybe it's my [in-car] radio broadcasts. They seem to be quite popular! For whatever reason, people seem to be close to me and probably they also feel that we deserve more. In 2010 and 2012, for many people I should have won those championships. That's nice. They give you something back. Even if they don't give you the trophy, they give you the love. 🍷





“ YOU HAVE TO PERFORM AT THE MAXIMUM IN EVERY PART OF THE RACE - EVERY LAP, EVERY OVERTAKING MOVE, EVERY FUEL-SAVING TECHNIQUE. YOU'RE ALWAYS AROUND THE OPTIMAL DRIVING STYLE FROM FRIDAY TO SUNDAY ”



LAT IMAGES: ANDY HONE, GLENN DUNBAR

TEAM PROFILE McLAREN

Name McLaren F1 Team
Address McLaren Technology Centre, Chertsey Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4YH, UK
Chassis MCL33
Power unit Renault
Racing director Eric Boullier
Chief technical officer - chassis Tim Goss

First GP Monaco 1966
Races started 821
Wins 182
Poles 155
Fastest laps 154
Points 5,146.5
Drivers' titles 12
Constructors' titles 8

2017 Championship
Position 9th
Points 30
Wins/podiums 0/0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 1
Races in points 7

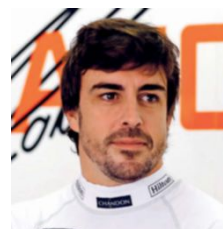
McLaren and Fernando Alonso's patience with Honda finally ran out last season, leading to a Renault tie-up for 2018. Will this on its own be enough to return the team to the podium?

F1 RACING SAYS...

Honda took a gamble with an all-new power unit design for 2017, but this spectacularly backfired. McLaren knew during pre-season that they were in serious trouble and, with little sign of improvement in the races that followed, a split was inevitable. McLaren eventually agreed a deal to link up with Renault, which they hope will yield a return to the front of the grid. Having repeatedly claimed that they had one of the best chassis in the field over the past three seasons, the team now have a chance to prove it. While a title challenge may be too much to hope for at this point, even a podium finish would give a huge amount of satisfaction to the hard-working crew members at the McLaren Technology Centre.

OUR TIP: McLaren will make a return to the podium but we fear the win drought (since Brazil 2012) will continue.

DRIVER LINE-UP



FERNANDO ALONSO
Car number 14

Born Oviedo, Spain
DoB 29.07.81 (age 36)
Height 1.71m
Debut Australia 2001
Races started 290
Wins 32
Podiums 65
Poles 22
Fastest laps 23
Points 1,849
Championships 2
2017 position 15th



STOFFEL VANDOORNE
Car number 2

Born Kortrijk, Belgium
DoB 26.03.92 (age 25)
Height 1.76m
Debut Bahrain 2016
Races started 20
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 14
Championships 0
2017 position 16th





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FERRARI'S NEXT WORLD CHAMPION

Charles Leclerc might be slipping quietly on to the back of the grid with Sauber this season, but great things are expected of him down Maranello way...

WORDS ANTHONY PEACOCK PICTURES AMY SHORE

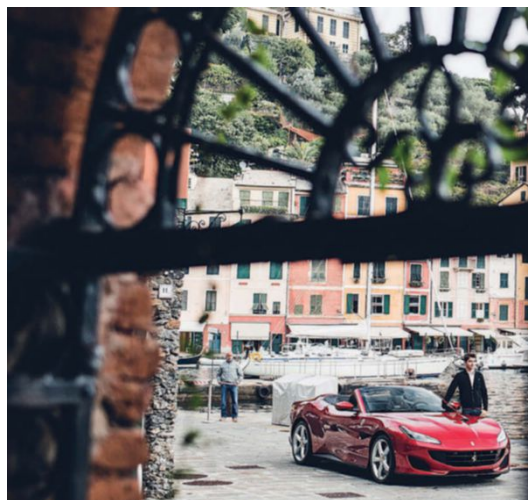


The Cinque Terre, jammed into the northwest corner of Italy on the Ligurian coast, is a famous touristic sprawl of five villages that form a pastel symphony of Latin loveliness: all brightly coloured houses, hidden beaches, rustic trattorias and kilometres of switchback roads that hug the Mediterranean.

The village of Portofino isn't actually one of the celebrated quintet – it's located about an hour away, closer to Genoa – but it has the same hallmarks and arguably even more visitors, attracted by highlights such as the underwater 'Christ of the Abyss': an enormous bronze submerged statue, designed to protect scuba divers and fishermen.

Portofino's proximity to the French border also means it's familiar territory to anybody well-acquainted with Monaco. Such as Sauber's Charles Leclerc, one of the few motorsport champions to hail from the principality.

Leclerc had never visited Portofino before – give him time, he's only 20 – but when the occasion arose to drive the new Ferrari Portofino on the roads that inspired its creation, he was never going to say no. The Portofino is the successor to the California: a V8-powered drop top with hints of Daytona to the voluptuous styling, born to be driven roof-down on roads that offer a 360-degree panorama of sky, sea, cliffs and asphalt. With Ferrari also supplying the powerplant to Leclerc's Sauber C37 (a current unit this time, rather than a year-old version as was the case in 2017) the association is an obvious one. Felipe Massa came to Ferrari from Sauber and Kimi Räikkönen started with the Swiss team, so it's a path well-trodden – and



Charles is on pole position to replace the 2007 world champion when the Kimster finally retires.

Despite being probably the least flashy person to come from Monaco, Charles always enjoys being at the wheel of something red with plenty of horsepower (592 in the case of the Portofino).

"Driving a Ferrari is always special, isn't it?" he points out. "It's an amazing car with an amazing noise. I like road cars, but obviously for me it's mostly about racing cars.

"Portofino is beautiful and it actually feels quite familiar, if you come from Monaco. It's almost like an Italian version of Monaco, with the same sort of buildings and streets."

But it's time to debunk a myth: that the roads of Monte Carlo are somehow paved with gold. Not every Monegasque is born with a huge bank account and the luck of a professional gambler. Charles explains the common misconception.

"It's actually the foreigners who have the real big money in Monaco, not the ordinary Monegasques," he says. "My friends from Monaco itself are just normal people, like me. Obviously, my family had some money to start my career in karting, but only until 2010, when it ran out. It was then that my friend Jules Bianchi introduced me to his manager Nicolas Todt, and Nicolas provided the funding for me to carry on. Otherwise I would have stopped, definitely."

What direction would his life have taken then? It probably wouldn't have led to the sublime moment of driving a car with a prancing horse on the nose, while standing on the threshold of an F1 career that might just turn out to be stellar.

But it would certainly have led to something good anyway; a life less ordinary. Charles is a

"MY FAMILY HAD SOME MONEY TO START MY CAREER IN KARTING, BUT ONLY UNTIL 2010, WHEN IT RAN OUT. THEN MY FRIEND JULES BIANCHI INTRODUCED ME TO HIS MANAGER..."

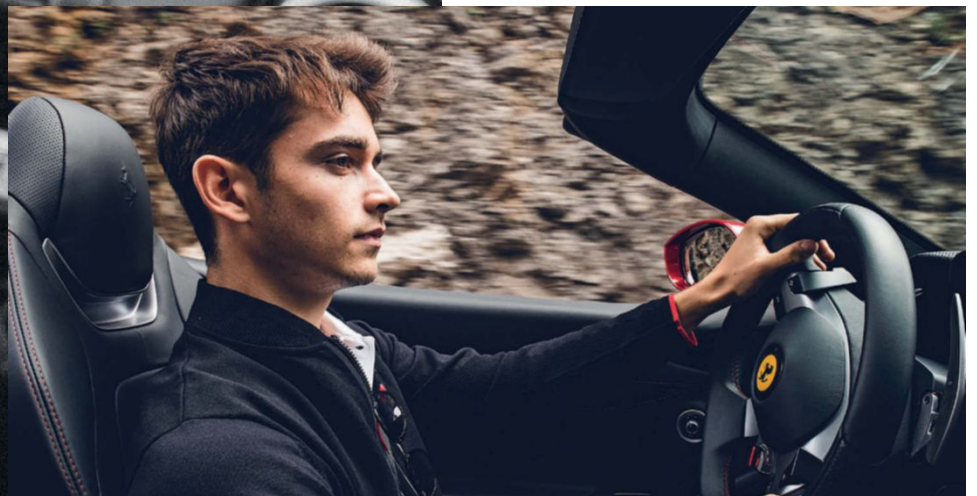
**Leclerc
caught the
eye of Ferrari;
they've
backed him
through
the junior
formulae**

quiet and hard worker, determined to better himself. While a significant number of born and bred Monegasques are ordinary, unprivileged people – as Charles tells us – it must still feel quite strange growing up surrounded largely by brash foreigners, displaying almost unimaginable wealth. There's an element that would inevitably make you bristle with a sense of vague injustice: “why them and not me?”

And there are two possible reactions to that, broadly speaking. One is to surrender to bitterness, envy and spite. The other is to use it as a motivation. To work hard and prove that you don't need money to succeed.

“If I had been forced to stop back then?” muses Charles. “I liked school, so I would have continued there, and I would have liked to have been an engineer probably – working with cars – or an architect working on houses.”

He didn't stop, of course. Yet Charles wasn't to know that the continuation of his career was to mark the most difficult period of his life. That there were to be tragic endings, as well as beginnings. In quick succession, Charles lost Bianchi in 2015 and then his own father last





year: two people who had each been a *sine qua non* of his career.

A lot has been said and conjectured about that time; how Charles perhaps felt a burning need to succeed for both of them. The disarming truth is that it removed the urgency.

“Of course, I wanted to do well for them,” remembers Charles. “Not so much when I was in the car, because then I was just concentrating on trying to win. Outside the car it struck me every time. But probably that actually took a bit of pressure off me in the end because it made me realise that there was more to life than just motorsport. Before, I had been all about that.”

And now it can be all about that again. He’s infectiously enthused about his move to Sauber, fizzing with excitement about the facilities, the people, the opportunity, and the engine. Especially that engine and everything it stands for. With the crimson Alfa Romeo branding cloaking a heart transplanted from Maranello (in an exclusive Swiss clinic) this is now undoubtedly Italy’s second team.

“I think Italy became special for me when I first entered the Ferrari Driver Academy,” says Charles. “And of course, like everyone else, I spent a lot of time in Italy when I was racing in karts: I’ve spent more time there than anywhere else. I speak Italian and I love Italian food: just the simple things really, pasta and pizza.”

Refreshing that there’s no zealous mention of the ubiquitous poached salmon and gym that makes up the bulk of a modern grand prix driver’s diet. And that’s very much a part of Charles’s success: he’s not a man to overcomplicate anything.



Doing a great job with Sauber this season could unlock the key to a Ferrari seat in 2019

“It’s actually quite a strange feeling, to be where I am now,” he reflects. “On the one hand, it’s a dream come true. On the other hand, you’ve been so focused on the work to deliver that dream, you don’t really realise it’s happened.”

This won’t be like any other season for him, though: the expectations are higher. This much he will have been told by his much-missed friend Jules, while his outings in free practice and testing with Haas and Ferrari will have got him used to the level of performance.

But also, he’ll be dealing with a very different competitive situation. He’s been used to sailing into the distance, controlling each race from

the front, winning the GP3 and Formula 2 championships on his first attempts.

While Sauber seem to have taken a distinct step forward, this year obviously won’t be like that. Charles realises already that this mental reset will form his biggest challenge.

“First of all, the goal is to improve the car from the beginning to the end of the season,” he says, pragmatically. “The step up to Formula 1 is going to be quite a big one, with all the data and set-up changes that are possible, it’s a bit of a different story to F2. But I’m pretty confident. Obviously, it’s a different situation to what I’ve been used to before, but you just have to start the season with a different mindset.”

The reward for getting it right might be the biggest prize in F1. In a year’s time, the scarlet Ferrari he could be driving might still be roofless (sort of) but have rather more than the 320kph top speed offered by the voluptuous Portofino. And from there? The sky’s the limit... 🏁

“THE STEP UP TO FORMULA 1 IS GOING TO BE QUITE A BIG ONE, IT’S A BIT OF A DIFFERENT STORY TO FORMULA 2. YOU JUST HAVE TO START THE SEASON WITH A DIFFERENT MINDSET”



TEAM PROFILE SAUBER

Name	Alfa Romeo Sauber F1 Team
Address	Wildbachstrasse 9, 8340, Hinwil, Switzerland
Chassis	C37
Power unit	Ferrari
Team principal	Frédéric Vasseur
Technical director	Jörg Zander
First GP	South Africa 1993
Races started	352
Wins	0
Poles	0
Fastest laps	3
Points	465
Drivers' titles	0
Constructors' titles	0
2017 Championship	
Position	10th
Points	5
Wins/podiums	0/0
Poles	0
Fastest laps	0
Races in points	2

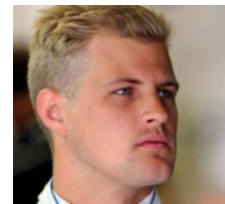
Sauber enter 2018 with fresh enthusiasm, thanks to an Alfa Romeo tie-up and the signing of Formula 2 champion Charles Leclerc. The Swiss team are aiming to move off the back of the grid this year

F1 RACING SAYS...

Sauber often found themselves cut adrift of the field in 2017, as they struggled with a year-old Ferrari power unit and an underdeveloped chassis. Frédéric Vasseur took over from Monisha Kaltenborn as team principal midway through the season and steadied the ship, ditching a planned Honda partnership in favour of stronger Ferrari relations, which led to an Alfa Romeo tie-up. Further optimism comes from the signing of Ferrari-backed Formula 2 champion Charles Leclerc, meaning incumbent Marcus Ericsson will have nowhere to hide. A current-spec engine should provide a boost, but the chassis also needs significant work, meaning Sauber are still likely to face a slow route back to the midfield.

OUR TIP: Alfa Romeo investment and an exciting rookie should reinvigorate the team and take them off the back row.

DRIVER LINE-UP



MARCUS ERICSSON
Car number 9

Born Kumla, Sweden
DoB 02.09.90 (age 27)
Height 1.74m
Debut Australia 2014
Races started 76
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 9
Championships 0
2017 position 20th



CHARLES LECLERC
Car number 16

Born Monte Carlo, Monaco
DoB 16.10.97 (age 20)
Height 1.79m
Debut Australia 2018
Races started 0
Wins 0
Podiums 0
Poles 0
Fastest laps 0
Points 0
Championships 0
2017 position n/a



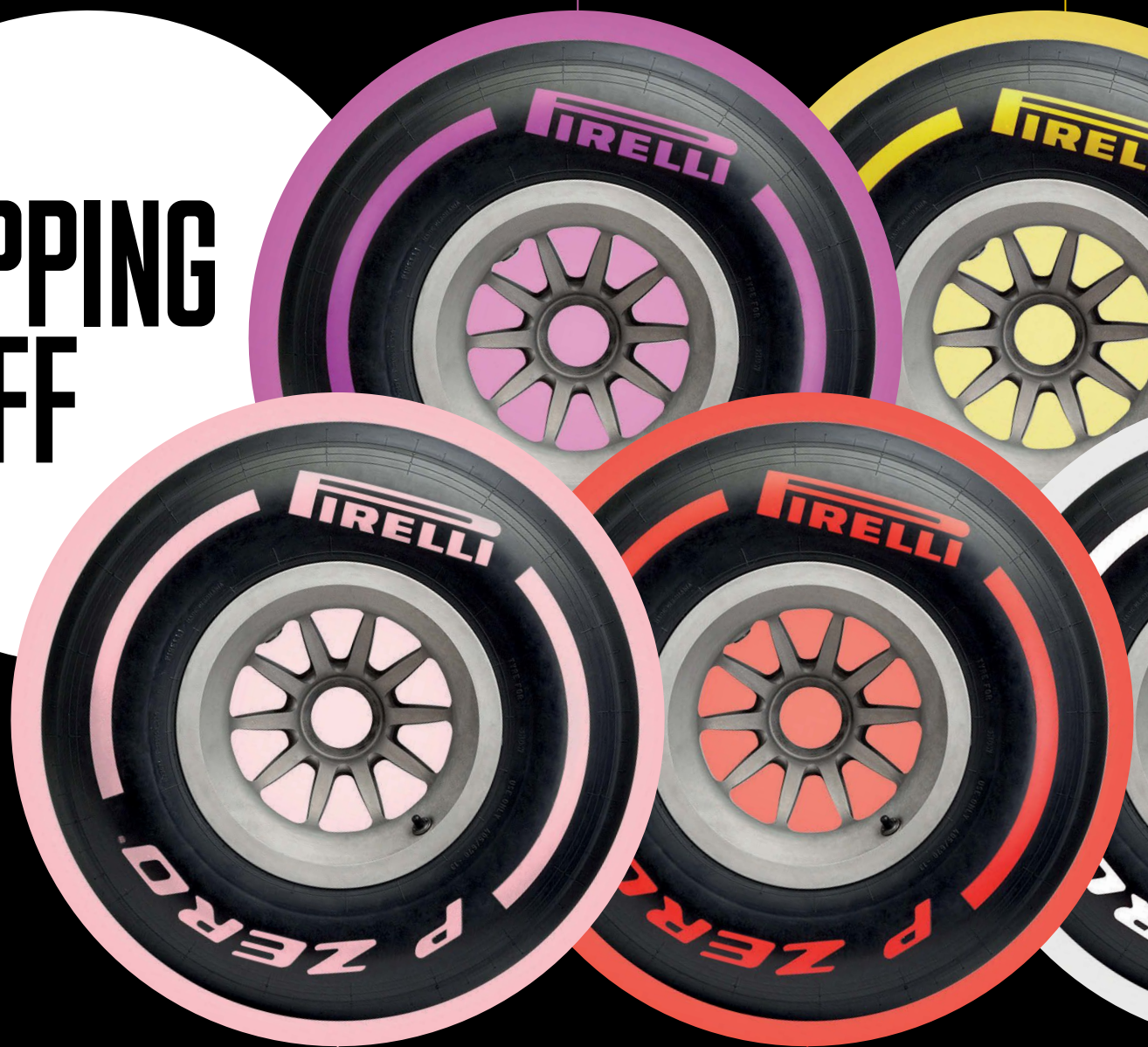
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Soft

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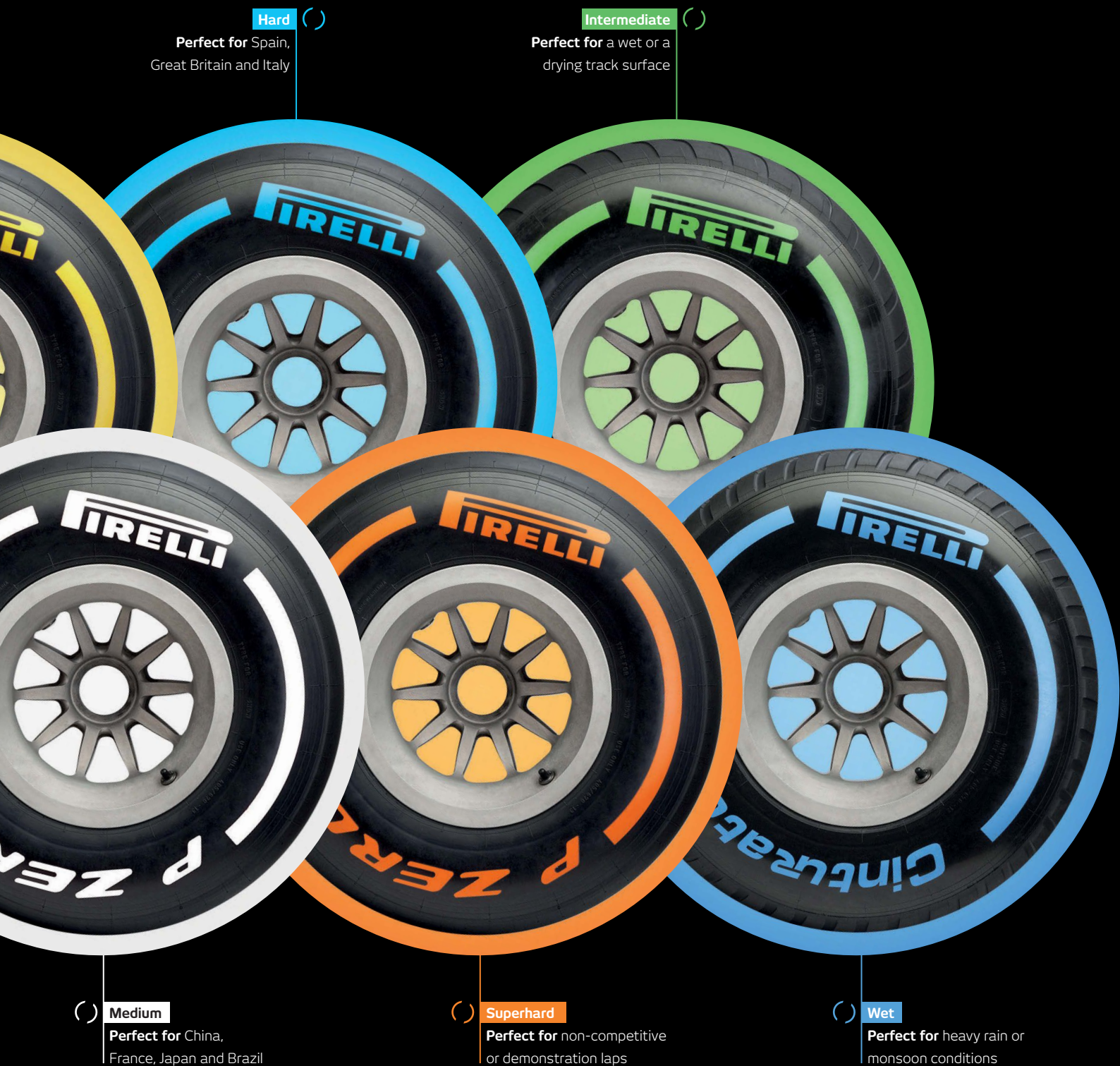
Hypersoft

Perfect for Monaco, Austria and Russia

Supersoft

Perfect for Bahrain, Mexico and Abu Dhabi

Major laptime gains are predicted this season – in the region of three seconds per lap – and some of that will come from Pirelli's redeveloped family of tyres



Hard ()

Perfect for Spain,
Great Britain and Italy

Intermediate ()

Perfect for a wet or a
drying track surface

() **Medium**

Perfect for China,
France, Japan and Brazil

() **Superhard**

Perfect for non-competitive
or demonstration laps

() **Wet**

Perfect for heavy rain or
monsoon conditions

After a conservative first year with F1's new regulations, not only have Pirelli tweaked all of the compounds for 2018, but there are also two new options: the pink-coloured hypersoft and orange-coloured superhard.

The hypersoft slots in at the aggressive end of the range (see above) and promises to be a second a lap faster than the ultrasoft, which itself has been revised to go half a second a lap faster than in 2017.

"For 2018 we have moved all the range one step softer," says Pirelli's racing manager, Mario Isola. "The target is to have more than one stop; added to the development of the cars, we're ready to see new records."

Along with the usual two wet compounds, Pirelli will again make available three dry-weather tyres at every race but the choice will now come from seven options, rather than the previous five.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Round 1		Australian GP 25 MARCH
Round 2		Bahrain GP 8 APRIL
Round 3		Chinese GP 15 APRIL
Round 4		Azerbaijan GP 29 APRIL
Round 5		Spanish GP 13 MAY
Round 6		Monaco GP 27 MAY
Round 7		Canadian GP 10 JUNE
Round 8		French GP 24 JUNE
Round 9		Austrian GP 1 JULY
Round 10		British GP 8 JULY
Round 11		German GP 22 JULY
Round 12		Hungarian GP 29 JULY
Round 13		Belgian GP 26 AUGUST
Round 14		Italian GP 2 SEPTEMBER
Round 15		Singapore GP 16 SEPTEMBER
Round 16		Russian GP 30 SEPTEMBER
Round 17		Japanese GP 7 OCTOBER
Round 18		United States GP 21 OCTOBER
Round 19		Mexican GP 28 OCTOBER
Round 20		Brazilian GP 11 NOVEMBER
Round 21		Abu Dhabi GP 25 NOVEMBER

2018 CIRCUIT GUIDE

It's a 21-race epic this year – Azerbaijan is on the move and the French GP returns after a decade off

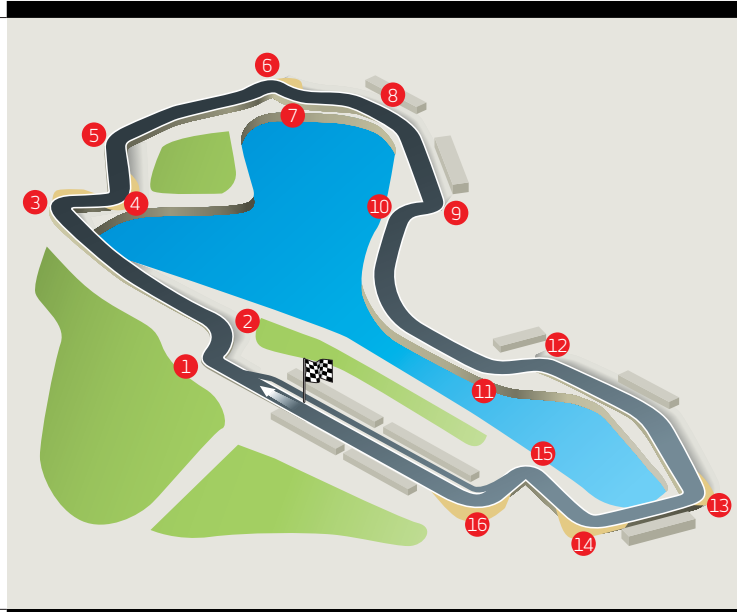
COMPILED BY KYLE FRANCIS AND LUKE BARRY PICTURES  LAT IMAGES: SAM BLOXHAM; LAT ARCHIVE





Round 1
AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX
Melbourne, 23-25 March

Laps 58
Circuit length 3.295 miles
Race distance 191.117 miles
Lap record 1m 24.125s
Michael Schumacher (2004)
First GP 1996
F1 races held 22
Race start (UK) 6.10am



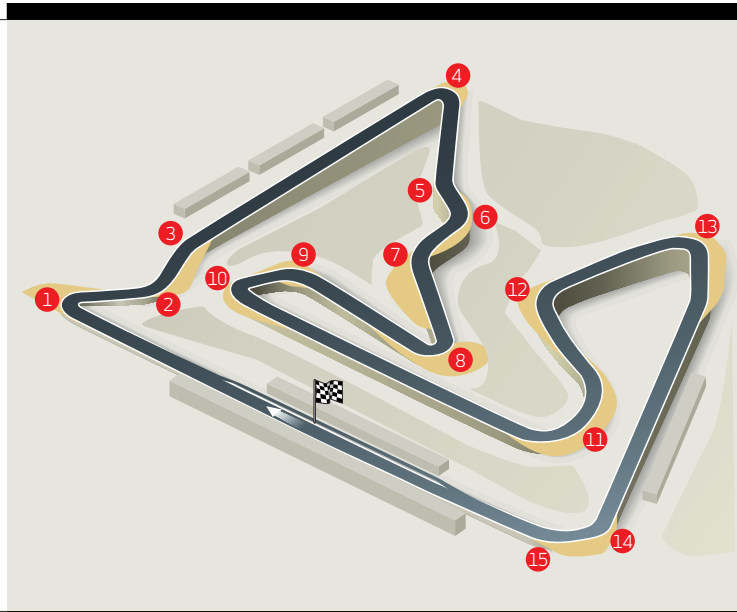
Classic Race **1997**

Pre-race favourites Williams fell short when Jacques Villeneuve shunted at Turn 1, while teammate Heinz-Harald Frentzen was chasing down Michael Schumacher and David Coulthard when a brake disc exploded. Coulthard took McLaren's first win since 1993.



Round 2
BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX
Sakhir, 6-8 April

Laps 57
Circuit length 3.36 miles
Race distance 191.53 miles
Lap record 1m 31.447s
Pedro de la Rosa (2005)
First GP 2004
F1 races held 13
Race start (UK) 4.10pm



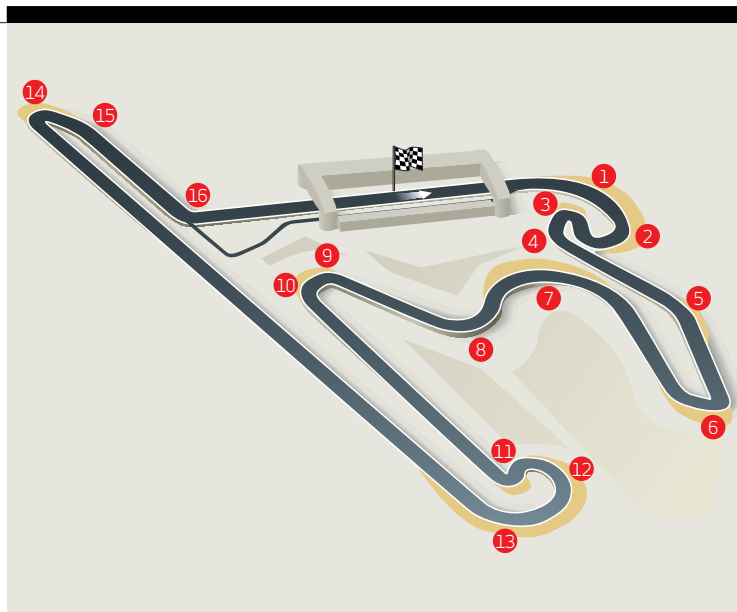
Classic Race **2006**

The opening race of 2006 set the template for the season as reigning champ Fernando Alonso went toe-to-toe with Michael Schumacher. Kimi Räikkönen raced from the back of the grid to third, while debutant Nico Rosberg set fastest lap after spinning his Williams at Turn 1.



Round 3
CHINESE GRAND PRIX
Shanghai, 13-15 April

Laps 56
Circuit length 3.39 miles
Race distance 189.56 miles
Lap record 1m 32.238s
Michael Schumacher (2004)
First GP 2004
F1 races held 14
Race start (UK) 7.10am



Classic Race **2007**

Lewis Hamilton squandered a 12-point championship lead by retiring in China. Starting from pole in changeable conditions that made strategies difficult to predict, he stayed out too long on worn wet tyres as the track dried... and slid off into a gravel trap as he finally pitted for slicks. ▶



Round 4 AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX

Baku, 27-29 April

Laps 51

Circuit length 3.73 miles

Race distance 190.17 miles

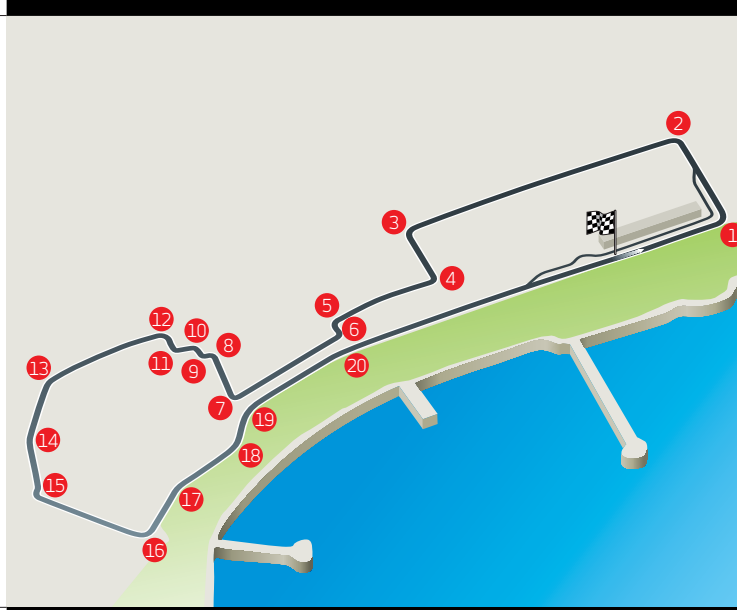
Lap record 1m 43.441s

Sebastian Vettel (2017)

First GP 2016

F1 races held 2

Race start (UK) 1.10pm



Classic Race 2017

It all kicked off behind the Safety Car as Sebastian Vettel hit Lewis Hamilton, feeling that Lewis had brake-tested him. The moment of madness cost both men the victory – Daniel Ricciardo took that – and left Vettel at a huge psychological disadvantage in the championship battle.



Round 5 SPANISH GRAND PRIX

Barcelona, 11-13 May

Laps 66

Circuit length 2.89 miles

Race distance 190.82 miles

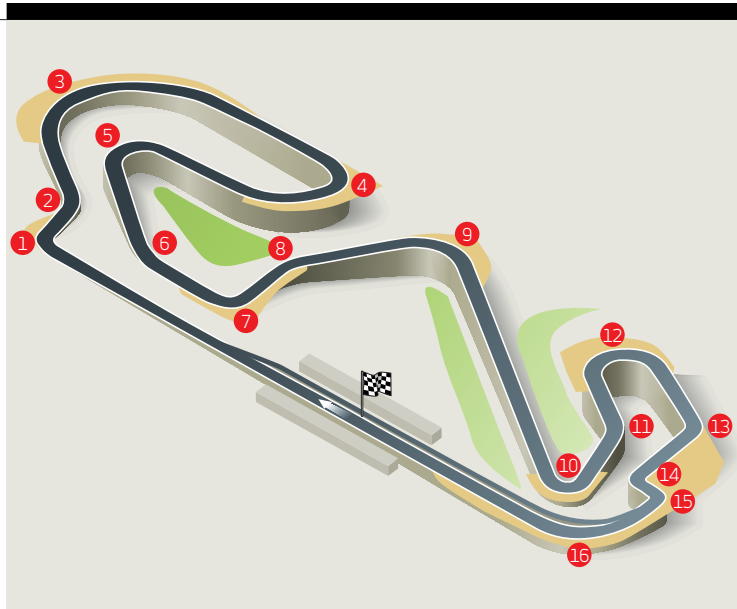
Lap record 1m 21.670s

Kimi Raikkonen (2008)

First GP 1991

F1 races held 27

Race start (UK) 2.10pm



Classic Race 2012

After eight barren years, Williams became winners again. Pastor Maldonado made the most of his surprise pole position by driving an impeccable race, staying close enough to Fernando Alonso to undercut him at his second pitstop and then keeping the Ferrari at bay until the flag.



Round 6 MONACO GRAND PRIX

Monte Carlo, 24-27 May

Laps 78

Circuit length 2.07 miles

Race distance 161.73 miles

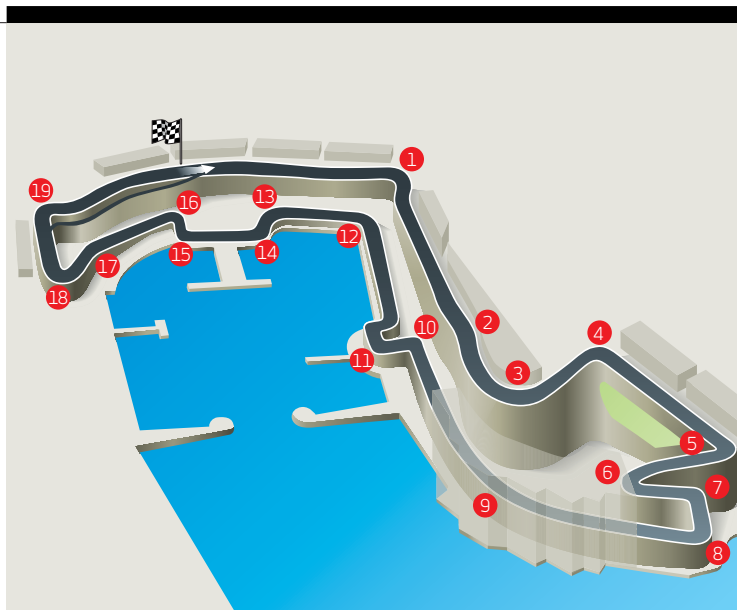
Lap record 1m 14.820s

Sergio Perez (2017)

First GP 1950

F1 races held 64

Race start (UK) 2.10pm



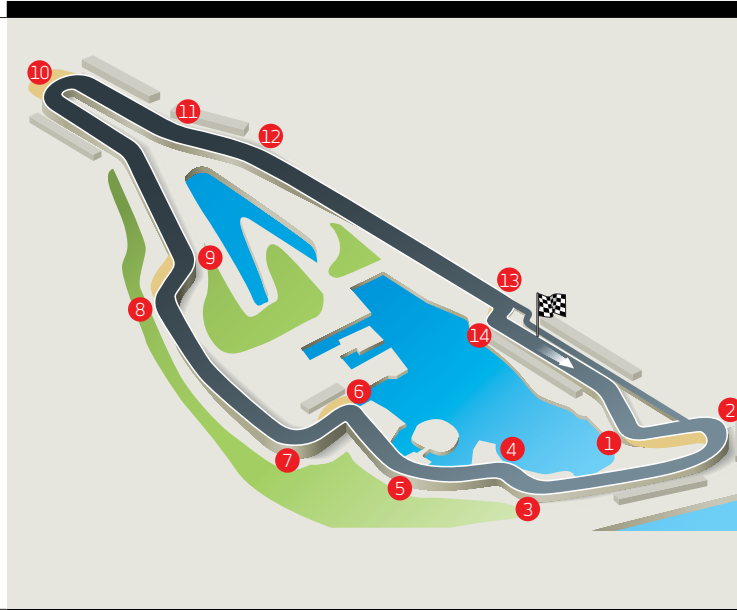
Classic Race 1984

Monaco '84 might have been only half a race, but it was incident-packed. Nigel Mansell grabbed the lead from polesitter Alain Prost then crashed out, and when the race was red-flagged on lap 32, newcomers Ayrton Senna and Stefan Bellof were bearing down on Prost...



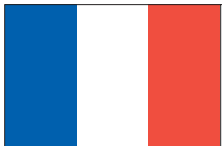
Round 7
CANADIAN GRAND PRIX
Montréal, 8-10 June

Laps 70
Circuit length 2.71 miles
Race distance 189.69 miles
Lap record 1m 13.622s
Rubens Barrichello (2004)
First GP 1978
F1 races held 38
Race start (UK) 7.10pm



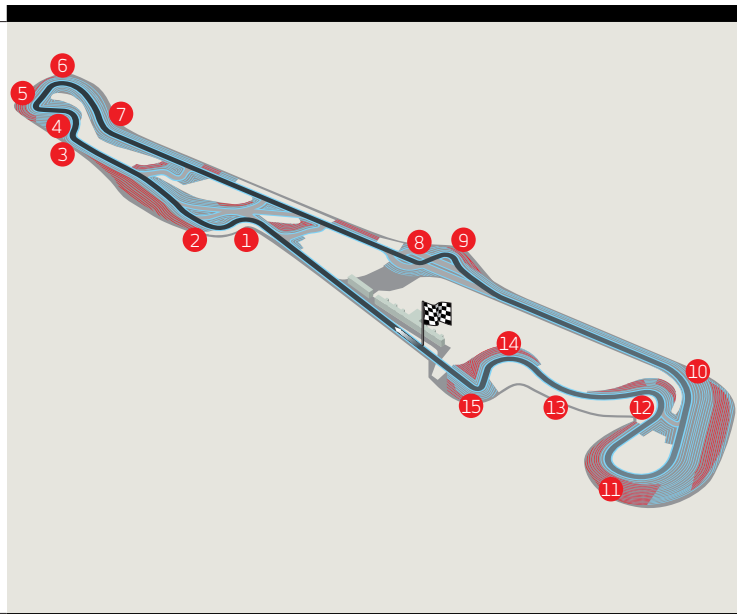
Classic Race **2011**

In one of F1's craziest ever races, wet-weather master Jenson Button refused to let a two-hour red-flag period – or a clash with team-mate Lewis Hamilton and subsequent drive-through – stop him. Forcing leader Sebastian Vettel into a crucial error, he sealed the win a lap from home.



Round 8
FRENCH GRAND PRIX
Paul Ricard, 22-24 June

Laps TBC
Circuit length 3.64 miles
Race distance TBC
Lap record N/A
First GP 1971
F1 races held 14
Race start (UK) 3.10pm



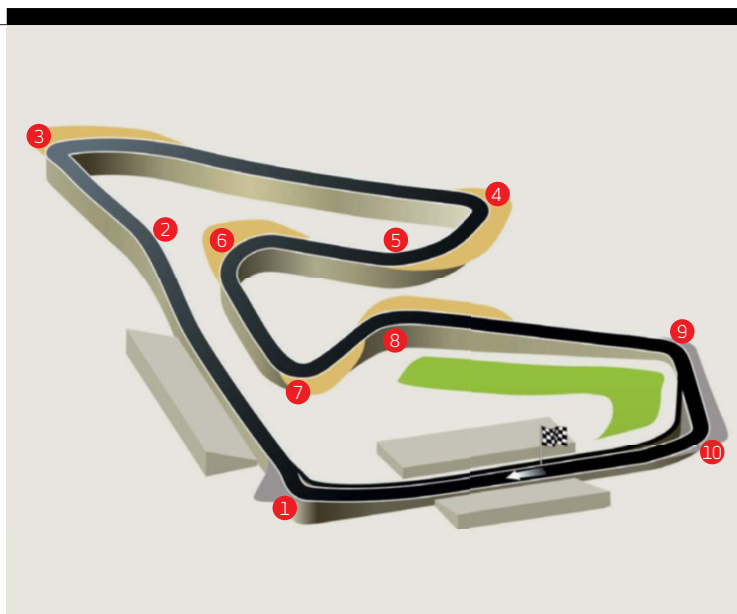
Classic Race **1990**

A heartbreaking race for lowly Leyton House, whose drivers failed to qualify for the previous round but ran 1-2 in France thanks to a no-stop strategy. Engine trouble cut down first Mauricio Gugelmin, then Ivan Capelli – who led 45 laps before Alain Prost went by.



Round 9
AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX
Spielberg, 29 June-1 July

Laps 71
Circuit length 2.69 miles
Race distance 190.42 miles
Lap record 1m 07.411s
Lewis Hamilton (2017)
First GP 1970
F1 races held 29
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



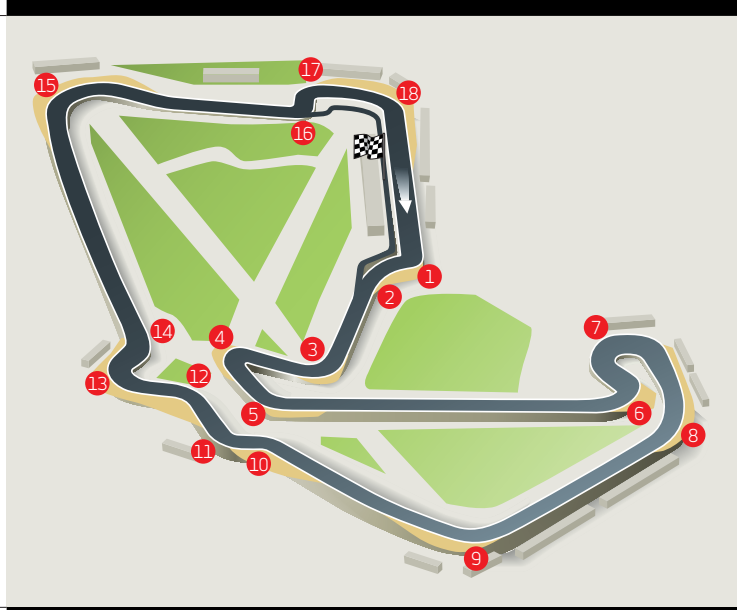
Classic Race **1976**

In the absence of Niki Lauda (in hospital) and Ferrari (protesting James Hunt's reinstatement as winner of the Spanish GP), other players took centre stage. Hunt could only manage fourth place from pole position as John Watson took what would be Penske's only F1 win.



Round 10
BRITISH GRAND PRIX
 Silverstone, 6-8 July

Laps 52
Circuit length 3.66 miles
Race distance 190.26 miles
Lap record 1m 30.621s
 Lewis Hamilton (2017)
First GP 1950
F1 races held 51
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



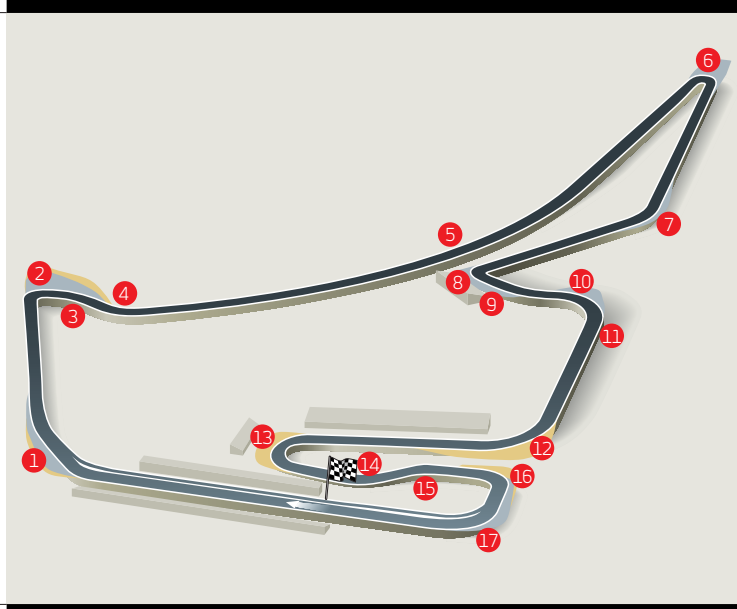
Classic Race **2008**

Lewis Hamilton was at his best in this grand prix, braving the sodden conditions and executing a perfect race strategy. Timing the switch to intermediates exactly, Hamilton laid waste to the field in his McLaren to take the first of his five wins at home – by over a minute.



Round 11
GERMAN GRAND PRIX
 Hockenheim, 20-22 July

Laps 67
Circuit length 2.84 miles
Race distance 190.42 miles
Lap record 1m 13.780s
 Kimi Raikkonen (2004)
First GP 1970
F1 races held 35
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



Classic Race **1982**

Five years after making his grand prix debut, Patrick Tambay took his first win in bittersweet circumstances – he was the replacement for Gilles Villeneuve. Nelson Piquet led until he collided with Eliseo Salazar, then leapt out of his Brabham in a rage and attacked the hapless Chilean.



Round 12
HUNGARIAN GRAND PRIX
 Budapest, 27-29 July

Laps 70
Circuit length 2.72 miles
Race distance 190.53 miles
Lap record 1m 19.071s
 Michael Schumacher (2004)
First GP 1986
F1 races held 32
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



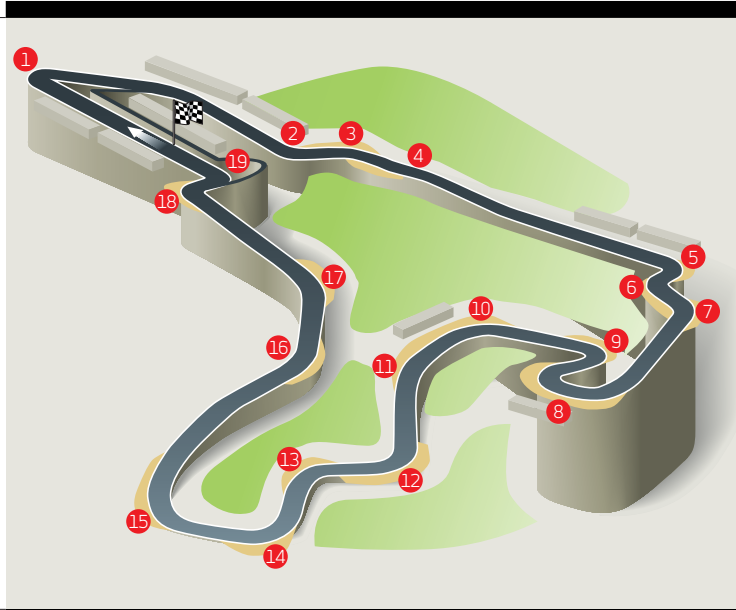
Classic Race **1997**

Nobody expected reigning world champion Damon Hill to score a win in the underpowered Arrows A18 in 1997. But for once the package was on song and he led until his throttle began to misbehave just three laps from the flag, handing victory to Jacques Villeneuve.



Round 13
BELGIAN GRAND PRIX
Spa-Francorchamps, 24-26 August

Laps 44
Circuit length 4.35 miles
Race distance 191.42 miles
Lap record 1m 46.577s
Sebastian Vettel (2017)
First GP 1950
F1 races held 50
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



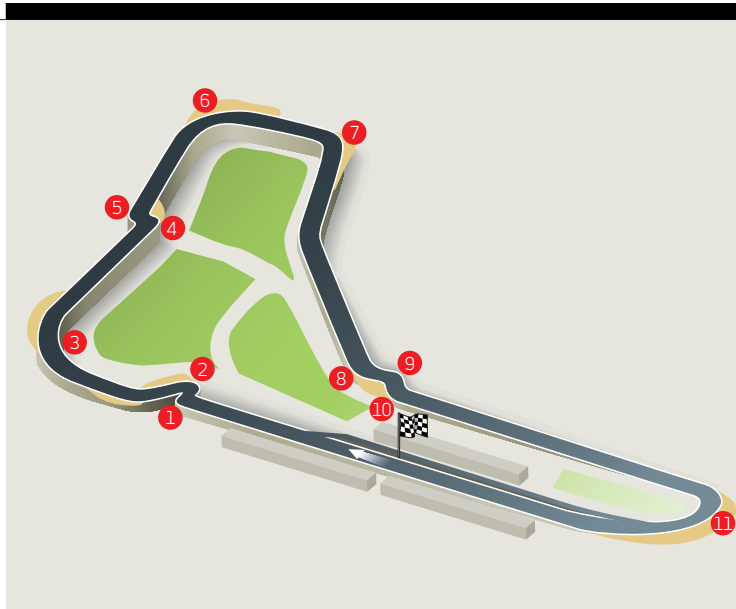
Classic Race **1998**

Who can forget the massive 12 car pile-up of 1998? Emerging unscathed were the two Jordans of Damon Hill and Ralf Schumacher, who finished first and second. David Coulthard and Michael Schumacher had an altercation in the pit lane after colliding in the wet



Round 14
ITALIAN GRAND PRIX
Monza, 31 August-2 September

Laps 53
Circuit length 3.6 miles
Race distance 190.59 miles
Lap record 1m 21.046s
Rubens Barrichello (2004)
First GP 1950
F1 races held 67
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



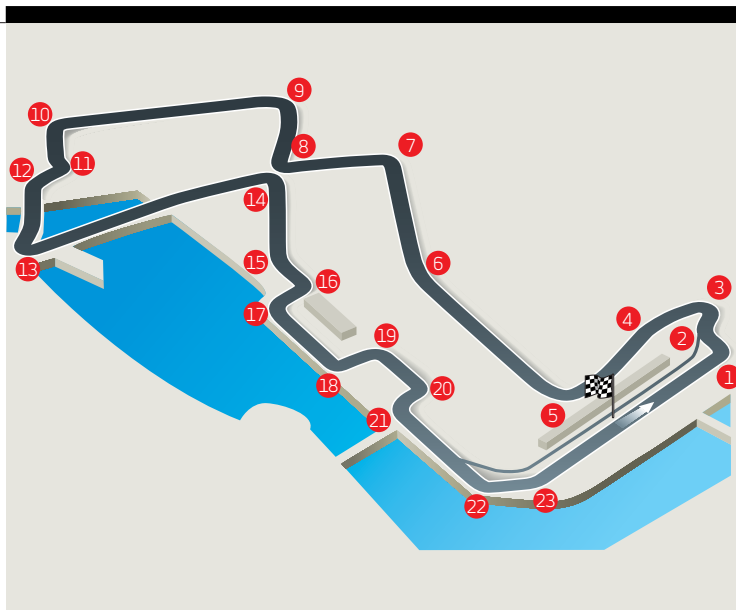
Classic Race **1971**

Monza has provided some of the closest finishes in F1 history, of which this was the tightest. Peter Gethin took what would be his only grand prix victory, crossing the line just a thousandth of a second ahead of Ronnie Peterson. Just 0.6 seconds separated the top five.



Round 15
SINGAPORE GRAND PRIX
Marina Bay, 14-16 September

Laps 61
Circuit length 3.15 miles
Race distance 191.90 miles
Lap record 1m 45.008s
Lewis Hamilton (2017)
First GP 2008
F1 races held 10
Race start (UK) 1.10pm



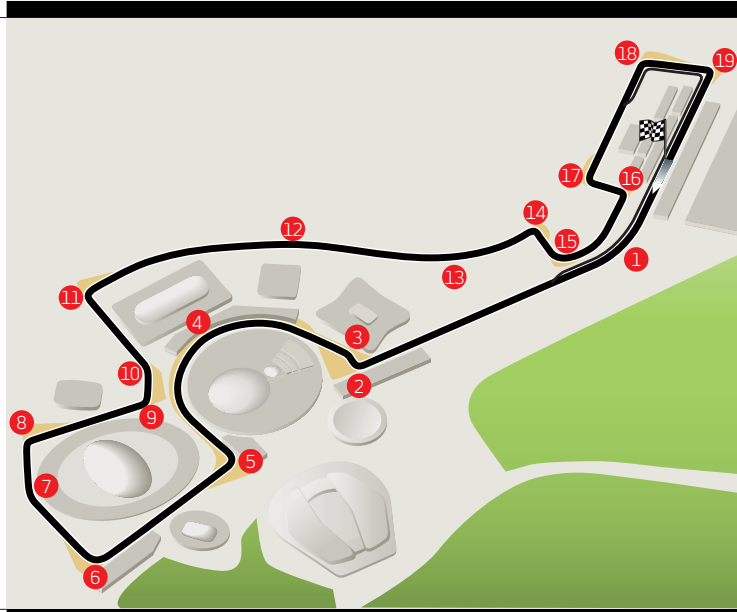
Classic Race **2008**

Fernando Alonso rose from 15th on the grid to win after a Safety Car period shuffled the pack – and Ferrari bungled erstwhile leader Felipe Massa's pitstop. It was subsequently revealed that Alonso's team-mate had orders to crash deliberately, bringing out that crucial Safety Car...



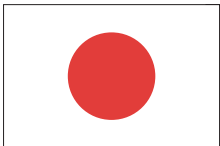
Round 16
RUSSIAN GRAND PRIX
 Sochi, 28-30 September

Laps 53
Circuit length 3.63 miles
Race distance 192.47 miles
Lap record 1m 36.844s
 Kimi Raikkonen (2017)
First GP 2014
F1 races held 4
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



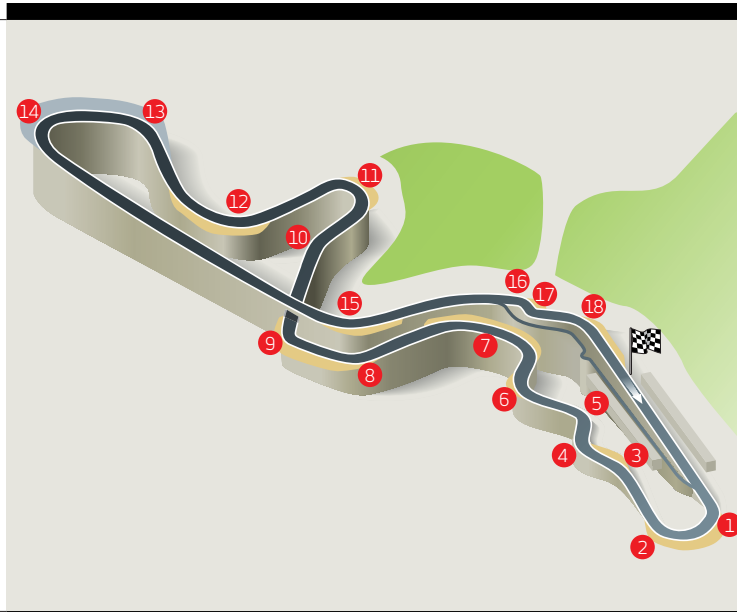
Classic Race **2015**

In the context of an event that's yet to generate much excitement, Kimi Räikkönen's final-lap dive on Valtteri Bottas for third place in 2015 is one of the most memorable Sochi moments so far. As a consequence, Sergio Pérez slipped past to put his Force India on the podium.



Round 17
JAPANESE GRAND PRIX
 Suzuka, 5-7 October

Laps 53
Circuit length 3.61 miles
Race distance 191.05 miles
Lap record 1m 35.540s
 Kimi Raikkonen (2005)
First GP 1987
F1 races held 29
Race start (UK) 6.10am



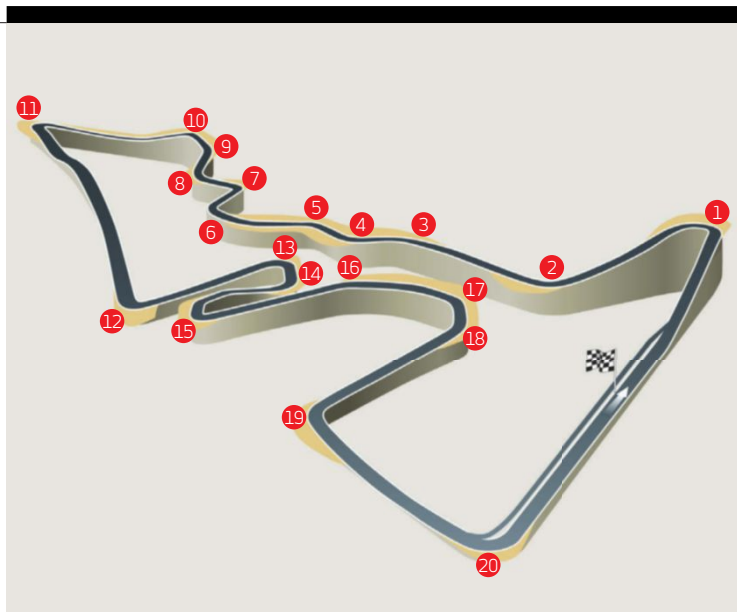
Classic Race **1990**

After Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost collided controversially the previous season, sparks were inevitable at some point in 1990. Nobody expected Senna to deliberately crash into Prost, but that's what happened at Turn 1... ultimately enabling Nelson Piquet to win for Benetton.



Round 18
UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX
 Austin, 19-21 October

Laps 56
Circuit length 3.43 miles
Race distance 191.63 miles
Lap record 1m 37.766s
 Sebastian Vettel (2017)
First GP 2012
F1 races held 6
Race start (UK) 7.10pm



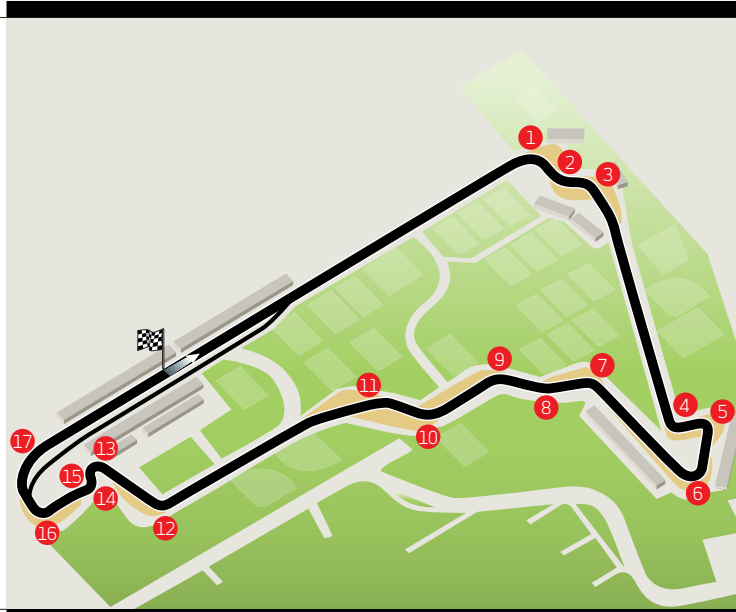
Classic Race **2015**

This grand prix was one of Nico Rosberg's last rolls of the dice in 2015. Up against it in the title race, he knew a win over Lewis Hamilton would keep him in the hunt. In the damp conditions he lost the rear when exiting Turn 15, and handed Hamilton both the race and the championship.



Round 19
MEXICAN GRAND PRIX
Mexico City, 26-28 October

Laps 71
Circuit length 2.67 miles
Race distance 189.74 miles
Lap record 1m 18.785s
Sebastian Vettel (2017)
First GP 1963
F1 races held 18
Race start (UK) 7.10pm



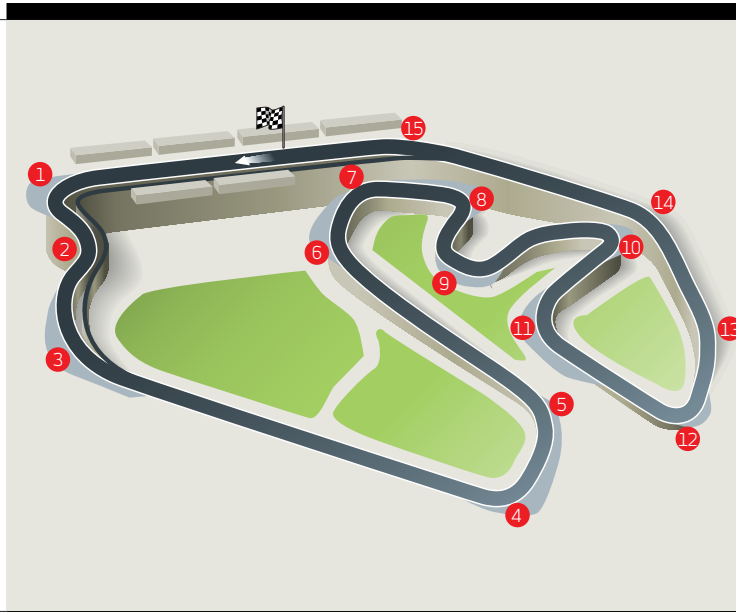
Classic Race **1990**

Alain Prost secured his second win for Ferrari, but this race will forever be remembered for his team-mate's actions. Nigel Mansell was battling Gerhard Berger's McLaren for second, and seized it by audaciously sweeping around the outside of the ultra-fast Peraltada bend.



Round 20
BRAZILIAN GRAND PRIX
Interlagos, 9-11 November

Laps 71
Circuit length 2.68 miles
Race distance 190.08 miles
Lap record 1m 11.044s
Max Verstappen (2017)
First GP 1973
F1 races held 35
Race start (UK) 7.10pm



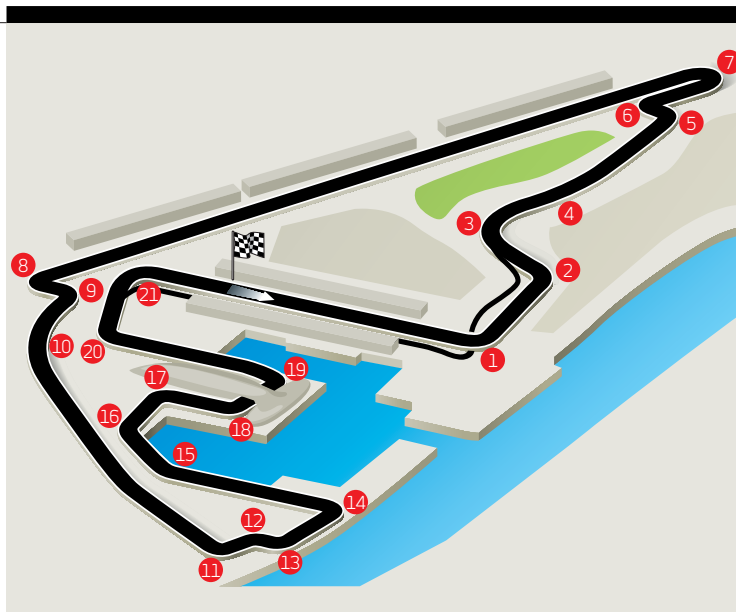
Classic Race **1991**

Ayrton Senna was so desperate to finally claim victory at his home event that even his McLaren's ailing gearbox couldn't stop him. Driving without fourth gear, an exhausted Senna dug deep to win by 2.9 seconds from Riccardo Patrese, and nearly passed out on the podium afterwards.



Round 21
ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX
Yas Marina, 23-25 November

Laps 55
Circuit length 3.45 miles
Race distance 189.74 miles
Lap record 1m 40.279s
Sebastian Vettel (2009)
First GP 2009
F1 races held 9
Race start (UK) 2.10pm



Classic Race **2016**

Lewis Hamilton did everything he could to win the world title, leading from pole position – but his team-mate Nico Rosberg was far enough ahead in the points not to need the win. So Lewis tried to engineer his own miracle by backing Rosberg into the chasing pack, to no avail. 🏆

BRANDS HATCH DONINGTON PARK OULTON PARK SNETTERTON CADWELL PARK

2018 MSV SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

MotorSport Vision (MSV) is gearing up for a superb season in 2018, with a thrilling programme of major national and international race meetings at its five famous race circuits. Discounted advance tickets and the best grandstand seats are available online from our website.

31 March-2 April	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Donington Park
31 March/2 April	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Oulton Park
1/2 April	British Truck Racing Championship	Brands Hatch
7/8 April	British Touring Car Championship	Brands Hatch
13-15 April	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch
28/29 April	British Touring Car Championship	Donington Park
4-6 May	Donington Historic Festival	Donington Park
5-7 May	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Oulton Park
5/6 May	Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup	Brands Hatch (GP)
19 May	Vintage Motorsport Festival	Oulton Park
19/20 May	Historic Wolds Trophy	Cadwell Park
25-27 May	Motul FIM Superbike World Championship	Donington Park
26/27 May	Masters Historic Festival with Historic F1	Brands Hatch (GP)
26/27 May	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Snetterton
27 May	Family Funday	Oulton Park
9/10 June	American SpeedFest VI	Brands Hatch
9/10 June	British Touring Car Championship	Oulton Park
15-17 June	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Snetterton
24 June	Vintage Motorsport Festival	Donington Park
30 June - 1 July	Legends of Brands Hatch Superprix	Brands Hatch (GP)
20-22 July	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)

21/22 July	Convoy In The Park	Donington Park
22 July	Vintage Motorsport Festival	Cadwell Park
28/29 July	British Touring Car Championship	Snetterton
4/5 August	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Brands Hatch (GP)
4/5 August	Donington Classic Motorcycle Festival	Donington Park
11/12 August	DTM (German Touring Cars)	Brands Hatch (GP)
17-19 August	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Cadwell Park
19 August	Festival Italia	Brands Hatch
25-27 August	The Oulton Park Gold Cup	Oulton Park
2 September	Festival of Porsche	Brands Hatch
8/9 September	British Truck Racing Championship	Snetterton
14-16 September	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Oulton Park
22/23 September	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Donington Park
23 September	Vintage Motorsport Festival	Snetterton
29/30 September	British Touring Car Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
12-14 October	Bennetts British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
3 November	Neil Howard Stage Rally and Fireworks	Oulton Park
3/4 November	British Truck Racing and Fireworks	Brands Hatch
18 November	North Humberside Stage Rally and Fireworks	Cadwell Park

** All events and dates subject to change*

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FINISHING STRAIGHT



Some readers feel that our sport faces more pressing issues than the aesthetic qualities of the halo

Get over it

Goodness, what a lot of meeping going on about the aesthetics of the halo. 'Herald the death of spectator interest in F1', eh?

I'm much more worried about the effect on spectator interest of F1 disappearing from free-to-air channels. But the halo makes an easy scapegoat I suppose.

It looks fine. Really. Now can we kindly get over ourselves?

Daniele Gibney

By email

Fernando hears the drums

With the news that Fernando Alonso will contest both the F1 world championship and the WEC this year, is this not a sign of a complete lack of faith in the McLaren team?

Alonso doesn't want another year in F1 completely wasted, and his interest in endurance racing is a sign of what's to come if McLaren and new partner Renault do not deliver the goods. But is Alonso still capable of winning a world championship in F1?

Granted, he's had some poor cars in the intervening years, but if he wants to continue in F1 then a return to Ferrari beckons; they need to replace that "laggard" Kimi Räikkönen anyway.

Andrew Byng

By email

Goodbye grid girls

I felt like I had to write in following the vitriolic response to the decision to no longer use grid girls. I was delighted to hear

this announcement, not because I have anything against glamour or tradition, but because of the massive under-representation of women in F1.

As a lifetime fan it's always made me sad when I think of my nieces – where do they see themselves when they watch it on TV? Not as a driver, not as an engineer, and not running the teams. If they're pretty enough, they get to be a grid girl.

I appreciate that it's fun and glamorous and they interact with the teams and guests, but I don't believe it's acceptable that this is the only area of F1 that women can be a majority in.

Claire Williams, Susie Wolff and Monisha Kaltenborn have done brilliant work representing women in F1, but we have a long way to go.

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Grid girls are only a symptom of the problem rather than the cause.

There are so many alternative options – what about fans, or youth groups, or charity workers? I'd love to see young racers (of both genders!) experiencing the grid.

Sarah Hunt

By email

Taking Liberties

So, 'What a' Liberty have jumped on the PC brigade's bandwagon by banning grid girls from F1. What will happen at the Moulin Rouge if this ban on girls at events continues? Can't see the French doing that, though – can you?

John Smith

By email

Salty Lauda

After reading *They Ask The Questions* in the February issue, I couldn't help but laugh. Lauda's answers were salty and funny.

It reminded me of a restaurant chain in the States called Dick's Last Resort where the bar staff insult the patrons. Maybe Niki missed his calling.

Brian Curtis

By email

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THIS MONTH

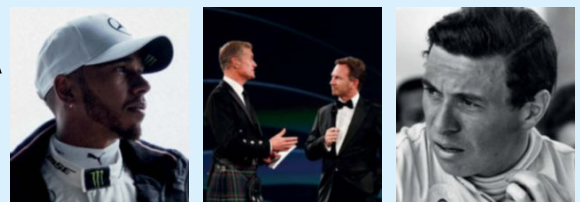
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NEXT MONTH*



- THE MERC BOYS**
Lewis and Valtteri sideways in a C63
- HORNER & DC**
Talking Red Bull, then and now
- JIM CLARK**
We remember a legend 50 years on

ON SALE

APR 12

- > Wolff & Neubauer: being a Merc boss 50 years apart
- > We chat to Toro Rosso 'new' boy Pierre Gasly
- > Now That Was A Car: Jim Clark's Lotus 25
- > Part five of our series on the history of Ferrari

THE CANADIAN GRAND PRIX

Montréal, Canada, 8-10 June 2018



The circuit is on an artificial island

LAT IMAGES; GLENN DUNBAR; OTHER PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK.

WHY VISIT?

Montréal is a sports-loving city that fully embraces the grand prix when the event is in town. The track is located on a man-made island, the Île Notre-Dame, in the middle of the St Lawrence river and is easily accessible by the underground metro system – it's a veritable model for sustainable city-centre racing.

The race is always action-packed because the narrow track has a lot in common with a street circuit – it's lined by unyielding concrete walls that instantly punish any mistake made by the drivers. Most races feature at least one appearance by the Safety Car.

If you're a Lewis Hamilton fan, then you should consider Montréal as must-visit grand prix. He scored his first Formula 1 victory at the Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve and has won the last three consecutive races held in Montréal.

Away from the racing action, Canada's second city is a great place to visit. It is steeped in history, home to contemporary bars and cafés and has plenty of other events going on, such as music concerts and art festivals.

Along with Melbourne and Austin, Montréal is one of the outstanding venues of the season so far as Formula 1 folk are concerned.

WHAT TO SEE

Mount Royal

Great for a hike or mountain bike ride, the 750-foot peak is a favourite with locals and tourists for its views over downtown Montréal and various winding routes around the famous 700 acres of greenspace. From the top there's a great view of the St Lawrence river and downtown.

Botanical Gardens

Need a break from the busy city? Head to this 190-acre public park, which includes a Chinese garden complete with artificial mountain, plus a Japanese garden and teahouse.



Notre Dame



Botanical Gardens



Mount Royal



Old Montréal

Old Montréal

A glimpse into Canada's colonial history, this quarter-mile-square area dates back to 1605 and is packed with cultural significance. Some of the buildings date back to New France.

Here you can take in walking tours, and the small area means it is easy to stroll around at a comfortable pace while a local expert will provide the best insight into the area's rich history. Visitors often cite Old Montréal's resemblance to an old European conurbation, which makes this small corner of the city striking in comparison with the rest of the modern metropolis.

FAST FACTS

Currency £1 = \$1.7 Canadian Dollar

Timezone GMT -5

Plug Type A

Weather 18C / cloudy

Flight time London to Montréal, 7hrs

Notre Dame

The 190-year-old basilica is truly one of the most magnificent sights in Montréal. From the outside its two towers, on either end of the front façade, stretch 200 feet upwards.

On the inside the floor, walls and ceiling all shine with a deep blue and gold finish. It costs \$6 (about £3.50) to enter but what you will find is well worth the outlay. For those who want to hear more about the building's rich history, we recommend taking the 'And Then There Was Light' tour, which costs \$10.

Rue St Paul

This mile-long strip of cobbled street is the oldest in Montréal and home to a vast array of shops and restaurants. Your stroll along the famed heart of Old Montréal will be lined with magnificent architecture and punctuated with landmarks such as the Bonsecours Market and Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel.

THOMAS COOK SPORT BREAK DETAILS

Ticket & 4-night hotel break from £749pp*

YOUR BOOKING INCLUDES

- A great choice of hotel accommodation with daily breakfast
- Weekend General Admission ticket
- Welcome bottle of wine in room
- Merchandise pack including bag, sun cream, poncho, pen, earplugs, ticket wallet and lanyard
- Service charges and taxes

YOUR BOOKING DOESN'T INCLUDE

- Return circuit and airport transfers
- Thomas Cook Sport representatives (Thomas Cook Sport will provide an itinerary and contacts before departure, but there will not be a Thomas Cook Sport representative in resort)

Please note: Owing to the location of the track, public transport is the best option for race goers. The Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve is serviced by the Montréal subway system (STM) with the Jean-Drapeau metro situated at the track.

Optional Extras (at a fee)

- Upgraded ticket

Please note: all packages are subject to availability and confirmation at the time of booking

WHERE TO STAY

Les Suites Labelle

Perfectly placed for tourism on the edge of Downtown and Old Town, in a vibrant area offering great restaurants, bars, clubs, shops and boutiques.

Travelodge Hotel Montréal Centre

An ideal combination of convenience, comfort and cost, the Travelodge is the ideal location for exploring Montréal.

*pricing correct at time of press

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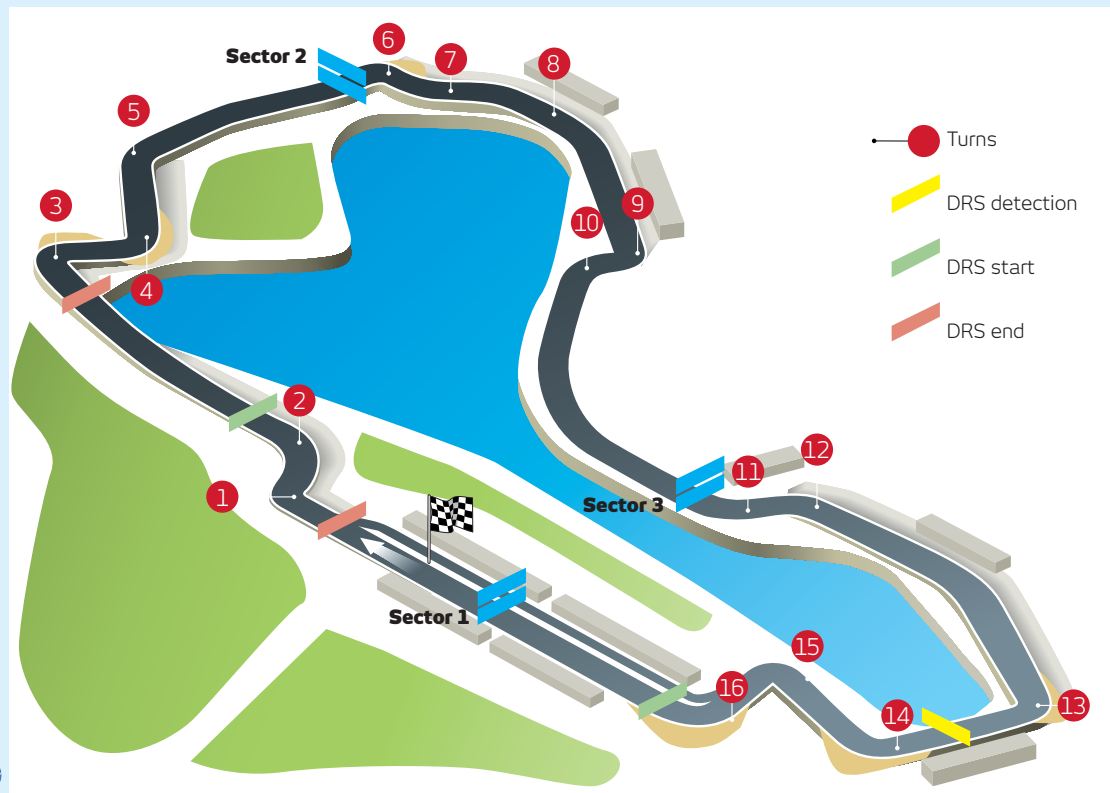
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FINISHING STRAIGHT

THE AUSTRALIAN GP



RACE DATA

- Circuit name** Albert Park
- First grand prix** 1996
- Number of laps** 58
- Circuit length** 3.295 miles
- Race distance** 191.117 miles
- Lap record** 1m24.125s
Michael Schumacher (2004)
- F1 races held** 22
- Winners from pole** 9
- Tyres** UltraSoft, supersoft, soft

TV TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

- Friday 23 March**
- Practice 1** 01:00
- Practice 2** 07:00
- Saturday 24 March**
- Practice 3** 03:00
- Qualifying** 06:00
- Sunday 25 March**
- Race** 06:10
- Live coverage** Sky Sports F1
- Highlights** Channel 4

LAT IMAGES: STEVE ETHERINGTON; STEVEN TEE; ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDRIDGE

THE MAIN EVENT

Formula 1 first set up camp in Australia, in 1985, at the Adelaide street circuit, but after a push from Melbourne businessman Ron Walker and the Victoria state government, the event transferred to Albert Park. It quickly established itself as a favourite among drivers and fans.

For visitors a party atmosphere, in a beautiful location, is guaranteed year-on-year. For those following in Europe, early alarms have become the norm at the start of a new season, but there is a peculiar charm about the experience.

Fans willing to get up early over the years have been treated to some thrilling races. A temporary, technical track, with little room for error, can catch out the very best drivers, while the early autumn weather has thrown rain into the mix on several occasions.

After misfortune at recent Australian GPs, Daniel Ricciardo will again be looking to crack a national record – an Australian is yet to triumph on home soil.

CLASSIC RACE: 2002

An airborne frontrunner, eight cars out on the first lap, Kimi Räikkönen's maiden podium and a superb result for minnows Minardi – this race had talking points aplenty.

A fast-starting Ralf Schumacher attacked Rubens Barrichello into Turn 1, but their paths crossed, sending the Williams over the back of the Ferrari and sparking chaos behind them. Michael Schumacher kicked off his charge to a fifth title with victory, and home boy Mark Webber gave Minardi a dream points finish on his debut.



THE LAST FIVE WINNERS HERE...



2017
Sebastian Vettel
Ferrari



2016
Nico Rosberg
Mercedes



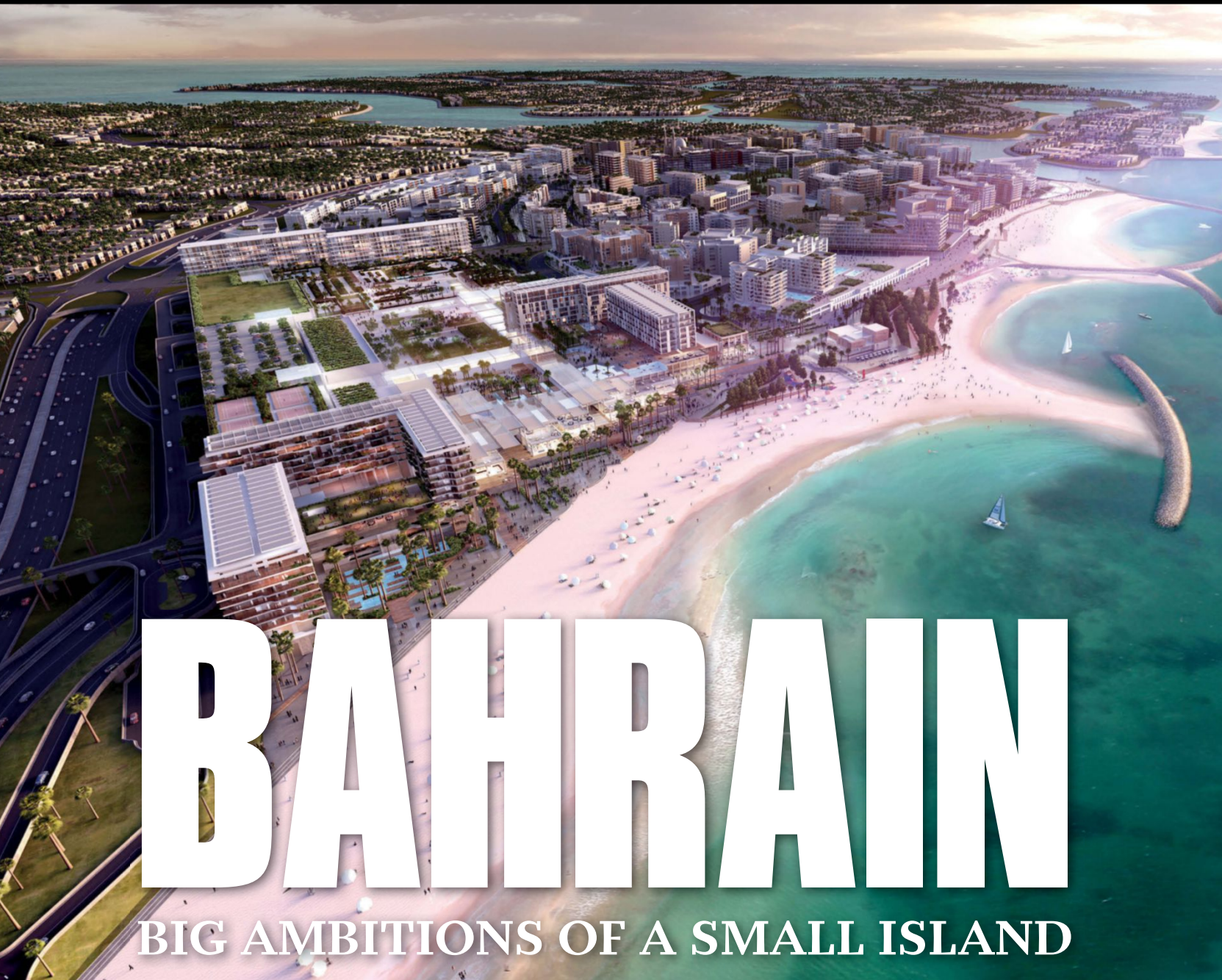
2015
Lewis Hamilton
Mercedes



2014
Nico Rosberg
Mercedes



2013
Kimi Räikkönen
Lotus



BAHRAIN

BIG AMBITIONS OF A SMALL ISLAND

WHEN one thinks of the Bahrain Grand Prix, most fans would tend to place it in the category of the ‘new’ grands prix, together with an emerging group of diverse countries seeking to establish themselves on the race calendar and grow motorsport in their regions. Whilst elements of that may remain true, the Bahrain International Circuit is entering its 15th year of operation, putting it in the top half of the most established races on the F1 calendar.

Taking in the views from the top of the iconic Sakhir tower, you can see not only how the circuit has developed over the years, but also get a feel of a more mature and confident place which has found its niche in the sport and has matured to join the grown-ups.

WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES

The F1 track itself remains largely unchanged since 2004, and, given the whole circuit was purpose-built from scratch without limitation on space, its facilities from a racing

point of view are up there with any F1 circuit. Since its first race, the ambition of the circuit, under the patronage of the Kingdom’s Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, has been relentless. The mantra of “Don’t let your size limit your ambition” flows throughout the BIC and the team behind it. It aims to be the home of motorsport in the Middle East and deliver a better experience year after year, according to the circuit Chief Executive, Sheikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa.

“Every year, we try and improve the experience for everyone who comes here for F1”, says Sheikh Salman. “The only way you can do that is being constantly critical of your work, looking through every detail of how the race week is run and always seeking to do better.

“Ultimately, there are 21 races on the calendar and we have to differentiate ourselves. Fortunately, I have a passionate team at the BIC who all share that vision and hopefully when fans come here they can see that.”



Bahrain is now well-established on the Formula 1 calendar and the circuit aims to be the home of motorsport in the Middle East



“Every year, we try and improve the experience for everyone who comes here for F1”

-Sheikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa



Sheikh Salman is a recognisable face in the world of motorsport, having been part of the BIC project since the very beginning. Helped by the fact that he is himself a petrolhead, and reportedly an accomplished driver too, there are few race promoters who get so involved with the sport at every level. Walking through the paddock with him takes an age as team principals, drivers, journalists and other Formula 1 folk engage with him.

LIFE OUTSIDE F1

What is obvious at the BIC, and something they are keen to point out, is that it is about more than just F1. In 2012 the BIC opened its karting track; typically of the approach here, it was built to a standard which has enabled it to host two CIK-FIA World Championships. Two years later came the floodlights and the hosting of night races on the main track, and the following year the first off-road Land Rover Experience in the Middle East. Combine all of that

with its NHRA-affiliated drag strip, plus extensive driving experiences, and it's not hard to see why it claims to be the home of motorsport in the region.

“We host over 350 events here every year,” says BIC Chairman Arif Rahimi. “It's crucial for us to ensure we have a sustainable business model and that means we can't just rely on F1. The developments we have put in over the years are a testament to that aim, and it's great now to see a hub of activity all year round.”



Away from the circuit, Bahrain has a rich and varied mix of cultures, and visitors to the Island will have no shortage of hotels from which to choose



BAHRAIN BEYOND THE BIC

Life outside of the track mirrors the development of the BIC. Bahrain, as a country, has not taken a 'build and they will come' approach, but a measured approach to development and tourism. The main difference compared with many of its neighbours is the rich history of a small kingdom island with historic links across the world, including a 200-year relationship with the UK, with which it retains close ties. The 2300BC fort and museum are must-sees to learn about the island's history, and for a flavour of the local culture, the Souq in Manama offers a superb sensory experience.

KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

At the same time the island has kept up to date with modern tourism. The glamour of the Sofitel, located almost adjacent to the track, and the Ritz Carlton in Seef are well known

to regular visitors. With the recent addition of The Four Seasons, and new arrivals including the Jumeirah Royal Saray in Seef and the Wyndham Grand in Juffair, there is no shortage of options for the discerning traveller.

There is also a growing restaurant scene. The well-established Meat Co in Adliya offers a superb range of options, whilst the recently opened Foundry restaurant – also in Adliya – has become the latest hip venue in town, with a vast array of sumptuous cocktails and varied menu options catering for all tastes.

Overall, one gets the impression that Bahrain has grown in confidence over the years and is keen to demonstrate that to the world. While a significant proportion of its fan base comes from the GCC region, international visitors are beginning to recognise Bahrain as a destination of choice for a fly-away grand prix. It's not hard to see why.



The Formula 1 2018 Gulf Air Bahrain GP

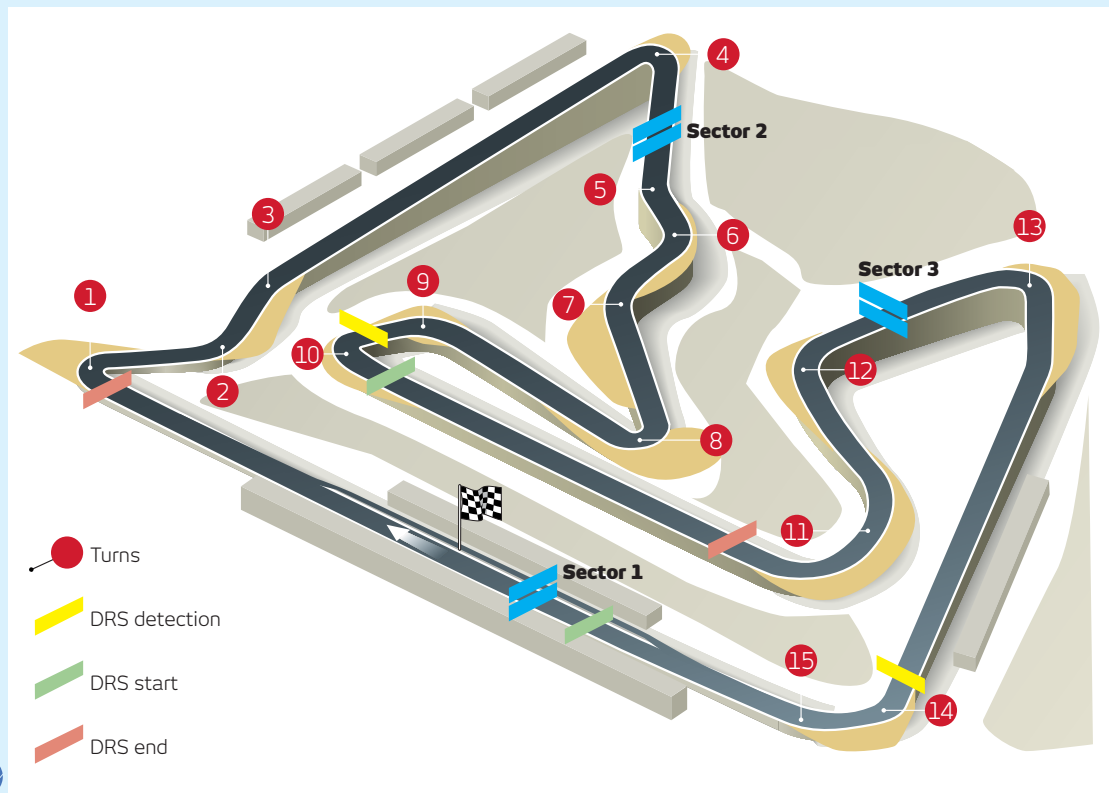
Runs from April 6-8. Ticket,
hotel and flight packages
cost from £1,399pp.

Visit www.bahrainf1.co.uk
for more information



FINISHING STRAIGHT

THE BAHRAIN GP



RACE DATA

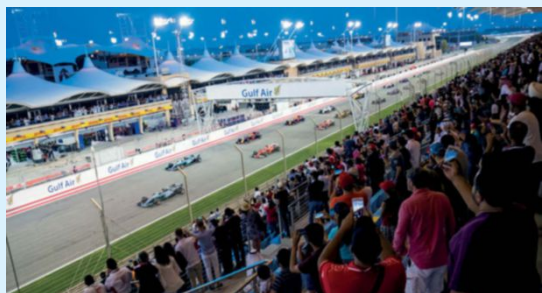
- Circuit name** Bahrain International Circuit
- First grand prix** 2004
- Number of laps** 57
- Circuit length** 3.36 miles
- Race distance** 191.53 miles
- Lap record** 1m31.447s
Pedro de la Rosa (2005)
- F1 races held** 13
- Winners from pole** 5
- Tyres** Supersoft, soft, medium

TV TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

- Friday 6 April**
- Practice 1** 12:00
- Practice 2** 16:00
- Saturday 7 April**
- Practice 3** 13:00
- Qualifying** 16:00
- Sunday 8 April**
- Race** 16:10
- Live coverage** Sky Sports F1 & Channel 4

LAT IMAGES: STEVE THERINGTON; GLENN DUNBAR; ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDREDGE

THE MAIN EVENT



While Sepang was the first of Hermann Tilke's new-era venues to join the Formula 1 calendar in 1999, the Bahrain International Circuit initiated a flurry of Tilke-designed additions from the 2004 season onwards. His company has now built or modified 12 tracks on the 2018 F1 calendar.

One of the most successful and popular of that generation, the Bahrain International Circuit, twists through the Sakhir desert, an environment that requires teams to develop mitigating strategies against the dust and heat.

A state-of-the-art floodlight system was installed for the circuit's 10th anniversary in 2014 when Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg memorably scrapped for victory. It has been a night race ever since, following in the footsteps of the Singapore Grand Prix and the twilight Abu Dhabi round.

Bahrain also staged the season-opener in 2006 and 2010, and was set to do the same in 2011, only for the event to be cancelled owing to civil unrest.

CLASSIC RACE: 2010

Through it was met with a collective sigh by many fans eager to see a repeat of the previous season's topsy-turvy form, the 2010 Bahrain Grand Prix proved unique in at least one way and is worth reappraising as a classic.

Seven-time world champ Michael Schumacher made his comeback with Mercedes as the grid swelled to accommodate three new teams. Running for the first (and so far the only) time on Bahrain's longer 3.9-mile layout, Sebastian Vettel signalled Red Bull's strength by leading from pole position, but a spark plug failure cost him performance. Fernando Alonso charged through to lead a Ferrari one-two on his first outing for the Scuderia, with Lewis Hamilton third.



THE LAST FIVE WINNERS HERE...



2017
Sebastian Vettel
Ferrari



2016
Nico Rosberg
Mercedes



2015
Lewis Hamilton
Mercedes



2014
Lewis Hamilton
Mercedes



2013
Sebastian Vettel
Red Bull



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For use with G29 & G920 Driving Force Racing Wheels (PS4 & Xbox One)

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This add-on gear shifter is to accompany the G29 Driving Force wheel that was featured in last month's 'F1 Upgrades' [*F1 Racing*, March]. While you can use the wheel's paddle shifts to change gear, the bespoke shifter adds an extra dimension of realism for driving video games – particularly as the G29 kit comes with a clutch pedal.

The six-speed shifter (with reverse gear) is a natural extension of the wheel, with the same high-quality design. Like the wheel it has secure, durable mounts to minimize movements during shifting.

We'd recommend this for games with high-performance road and sportscars, such as those in *GT Sport*, but for the very quick changes required for modern F1 machinery in *F1 2017*, then, you're probably best sticking with paddle shifts. If you have the top-of-the-range G29 wheel, this is a perfect extension.



LAST CORNER PRINTS

Price from £40

www.last-corner.com

A new selection of exquisite motorsport prints are available to adorn your office or sitting room walls. Last Corner Prints offer a range of either classic or contemporary F1 cars, as well as iconic machines from both Le Mans and rallying. Created

by French artist Alex Pieuussergues, these prints are available in a wide selection of sizes and formats and are all printed on high quality German Hahnemühle Rag 308gsm paper.

There is also a limited edition series of A2 prints, such as the 1976 James Hunt McLaren M23, that are all signed by the artist. Prices start around £40 plus P&P for an unframed A3-sized print.

MV AGUSTA F4 LH44

Price £53,900

www.mvagusta.com

The second of Lewis Hamilton's collaborations with motorcycle manufacturer MV Agusta takes him into superbike territory.

Based on the existing F4 RC, the F4 LH44 features engine modifications and a titanium exhaust to liberate 212bhp (up from 205bhp) from the screaming 998cc four-cylinder radial-valve engine. Engine management software, including an inertial measurement unit, promises to reduce the possibility of the beast spitting you off.

The LH44 swaps race-replica decals for Lewis's preferred Candy Apple Red paintwork, complete with panther logos. Oh, and the Pirelli Diablo tyres are custom, too, with red sidewalls. Just 44 examples of this hand-built model are being made.



**ALFA ROMEO 8C 2300
MONZA 1:8 SCALE**

Price £7,940

www.amalgamcollection.com

This beautiful 1:8 scale model is a replica of Tazio Nuvolari's victorious 1932 Monaco GP car. The highly-detailed Amalgam model, in beautiful Italian blood red carrying Nuvolari's race number 28, is a breathtakingly beautiful evocation of the golden pre-war era in grand prix racing.

Using contemporary photographs and digital scan data, Amalgam has perfectly re-created this fine example of Italian engineering including every minute detail of the engine bay. At 1:8 scale this hand-built model is around 60 cms long and is displayed on a black leather base with a plaque verifying its unique number in this limited edition of 199 models. Pre-orders are being taken now for delivery in May.



**SPEED READ
F1**



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STUART CODLING

SPEED READS: FORMULA 1

Author Stuart Codling

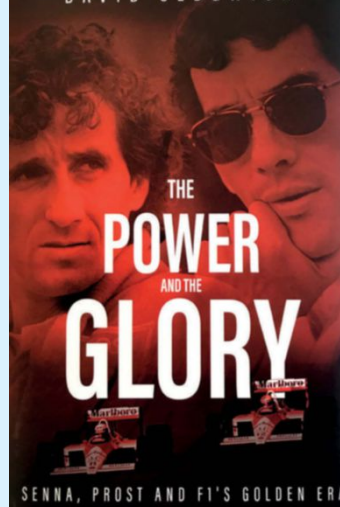
Price £12.99

www.quartoknows.com

One of a series that includes topics such as car design and the Porsche 911, this book acts as a snappy introduction to its subject matter: "The Technology, Rules, History and Concepts Key to the Sport".

That means a breezily written tour through the sport's history by our very own 'Codders'. The info arrives in bite-sized chunks, focusing on people as well as technology. It's concise but you can deposit this book with someone who knows nothing about subject and leave them with a glow of understanding as to why you love F1 so much.

DAVID SEDGWICK



SENNA, PROST AND F1'S GOLDEN ERA

THE POWER & THE GLORY

Author David Sedgwick

Price £19.99

www.pitchpublishing.co.uk

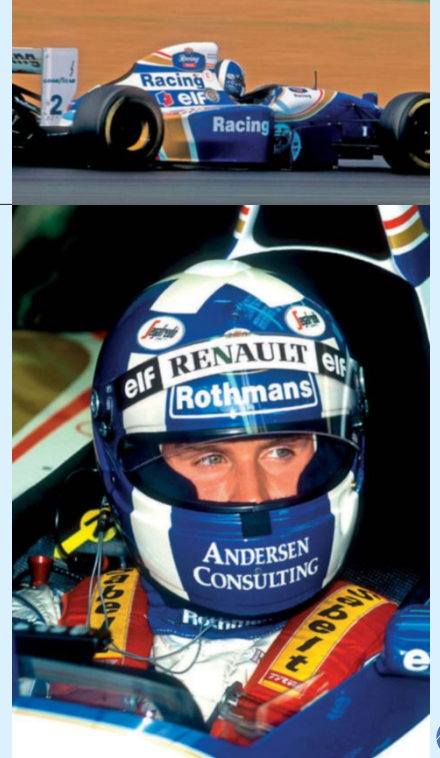
Some of the Formula 1's most memorable races are brought to life in this new book by David Sedgwick. By weaving the two careers of Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost together, this book's focus is on their great rivalry over the course of the 1980s – and their last on-track meeting at the Bercy kart race in Paris in 1993.

For many F1 fans this will be a familiar journey through the controversial moments between the pair, but for a younger generation who never saw Prost and Senna race, this is a good insight into the great rivalry the pair had.



DAVID COULTHARD ME AND MY LID

When proud Scot Coulthard made it to F1 a Saltire unsurprisingly adorned his helmet. The origins of the design go back a long way



LAT IMAGES. OTHER PICTURES: MALCOLM GRIFFITHS



My original helmet design was done in 1982 by a guy called Brian Smith, who my father used to sponsor in long-circuit karting. He'd retired after an accident at Cadwell Park and was now acting as my mechanic. I did my first race with just a white helmet, then the next time out I got

it out of the bag and found he'd painted a Saltire on it – with 'Budgie' written on the front. That was my nickname...

I kept the basic design throughout my whole racing career, although it went through a few modifications. At Williams the Segafredo logos

weren't especially well integrated into the flag – the 'halo' McLaren came up with later was more elegant. But then again Frank Williams had been to a Catholic boarding school in Scotland and always liked to have a little bit of fun at the expense of the Scots!



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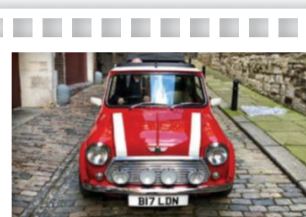
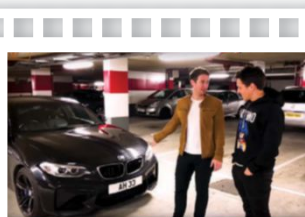
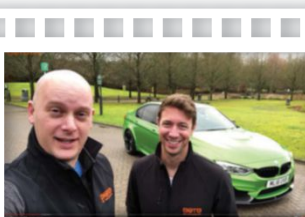
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