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2000 LAUNCH SPECIAL

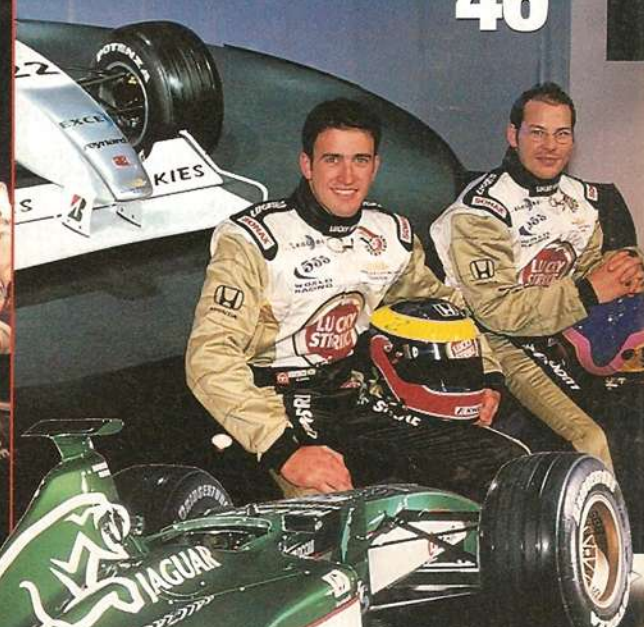
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New Jag ready to
scratch reputations

Cover photos:
LAT

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SPEED OFF BLOCKS GAVE BUTTON EDGE IN WILLIAMS SHOOT-OUT

How Britain's new Formula 1 star convinced Frank Williams to gamble on youth. By Andrew Benson

Jenson Button's ability to adapt instantaneously to the demands of Formula 1 has made him the youngest British Grand Prix driver of all time.

The 20-year-old has been picked by Williams-BMW as Ralf Schumacher's team mate after he won a shoot-out with his Brazilian rival Bruno Junqueira at Barcelona at the weekend. Formula 3000 front-runner Junqueira will be the team's test driver.

performance when he tried the car for the first time at Jerez, southern Spain, two weeks ago and again at Barcelona at the weekend.

After three days of frustration as oil system problems with the new BMW engine stranded Button and Junqueira in the pits, the Englishman was 0.16s faster than his rival, even though he was trying left-foot braking for the first time.

Williams technical director Patrick Head said: "It wasn't an easy decision - our problem was that

"We couldn't ignore how quickly he adapted to everything" PATRICK HEAD

Williams had expected to give the race drive to Junqueira, who was the choice of members of the team's engineering staff. However, Button convinced team boss Frank Williams to take a chance with his

Bruno had experience of 11 of the 16 tracks and had more mileage but we couldn't ignore how quickly Jensen had adapted to everything.

"I don't want to give the impression of damning one by

SCHUEY JR 'WILL BE PATIENT'

Ralf Schumacher has said he is prepared to be patient while waiting for Williams to achieve success in its new partnership with BMW - but has not ruled out winning a race this year.

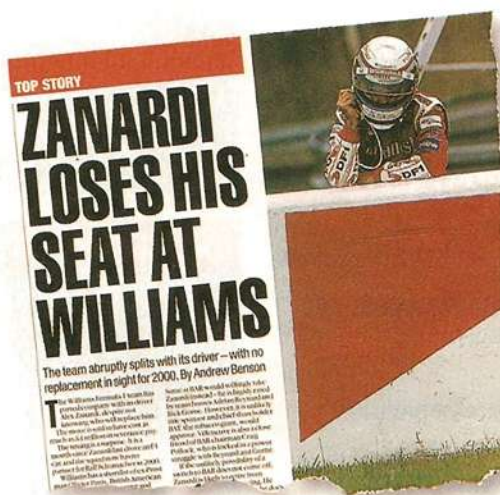
The 24-year-old German said he is not frustrated by the problems BMW has been having with his new engine, but admitted 2000 will be a difficult year for the partnership.

The Williams that will carry

Schumacher's hopes in 2000, the FW22, was unveiled on Monday in Barcelona. The German claims the engine is already better than the Supertec customer Renault engine the team used in 1999.

"I am ready to be patient," he said. "I knew there were some problems with the engine, that was why I have not tested in the last weeks.

"The engine is already better than



Zanardi's departure, broken by AUTOSPORT, gave Button his chance

praising the other. I think they are both outstanding.

"We were surprised and enormously impressed by Jensen. He first put himself in contention with his performance for us at Jerez.

Up until then I was favouring Bruno, but Jerez made the decision difficult for us. Frank wanted to hold out and give Jensen a further try. But we still hadn't seen them in comparable circumstances. Jensen came here to Barcelona and tried left-foot braking for the first time and you saw the result. That was very impressive."

Team boss Frank Williams

only told Button that he had the drive 25 minutes before Monday's car launch.

The youngster said: "When Frank told me I had the job I couldn't believe it. There was a tingling all over my body. I walked out and just said: 'Dad, I'm a Formula 1 driver!'

"I haven't set goals. I just want to do as much testing as possible.

"Sitting on the grid with Michael Schumacher, who is my hero, I'm sure I'll be nervous, but I'm here to race, not be in awe of them."

Junqueira said: "Frank told me that Jensen was going to drive but not to be upset because the technical staff wanted me. He had taken the decision for Jensen."

Williams explained: "In the opinion of the mechanics, Bruno had a better understanding of the car, but Jensen represents the better long-term opportunity given his age and the length of time he will have to drive, and he is clearly a great talent."

Button is thought to be on a one-year contract, worth in the region of £300,000. Williams has options on him for a further two years. That would leave the team free to take Champ Car sensation Juan Pablo Montoya, its former test driver, if he does not perform.

Button's father revealed that he had rejected an approach from McLaren 12 months ago.

The 20-year-old got an immediate

Ralf Schumacher is prepared for a trying year, but isn't entirely lacking in optimism





Q&A JENSON BUTTON

How does it feel to get the drive?

"I was extremely nervous when I woke up, more nervous than I had ever been before. When Frank told me I was all tingly. I saw my Dad and he started crying, and I had a tear in my eye as well."

Are you worried about being too young for F1?

"I really have no reservations at all about coming into F1 at this age. I'm looking forward to doing my best job for the team. When you are ready for F1, you are ready, irrespective of your age, and I feel I am ready."

Do you feel you have a lot to live up to, following in the footsteps of Nigel Mansell and Damon Hill?

"I just want to be myself and do whatever I can."

"I haven't set any goals. I just want to test as much as possible"

JENSON BUTTON

glimpse of the new pressures he faces when he was deluged with requests for interviews, photos and TV appearances, but the team is anxious that he concentrates on the daunting prospect of preparing for a Grand Prix debut in six weeks.

Williams lost three days of testing at Barcelona last week to oil system problems with what was planned to be the engine it would take to the first race. A fix allowed the team to test at the weekend, when the drivers did 47 laps between them. BMW said it is confident it has solved the problems. ■

FIVE YOUNGEST BRITS

Jenson Button

Born January 19, 1980

Debut: Australian GP, March 12, 2000

Will be **20 years and 53 days old**.

Peter Collins

Born November 6, 1931

Debut: Swiss GP, May 18, 1952

Was **20 years and 194 days old**.

Chris Bristow

Born December 2, 1937

Debut: British GP, July 18, 1959

Was **21 years and 228 days old**.

Stirling Moss

Born September 17, 1929

Debut: Swiss GP, May 27, 1951

Was **21 years and 252 days old**.

Rupert Keegan

Born February 26, 1955

Debut: Spanish GP, May 8, 1977

Was **22 years and 71 days old**.

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Fifth Column p27
Button feature p42



Ladbroke's

IF YOU REQUIRE ANY HELP - PLEASE ASK STAFF
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JENSON BUTTON TO WIN:
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 100/1
A GRAND PRIX 4/1
A PODIUM FINISHER 1/2
QUALIFY ON POLE 8/1
AUSTRALIAN GP 66/1
BRITISH GP 50/1

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Button and Schumacher will be team mates this year. The bookies rate the Englishman's chances in GP racing (above)

Upbeat Jaguar squad shows

Jaguar unveiled its first Formula 1 car this week amid great optimism about its chances of success in the world championship.

The launch, at the Lord's cricket ground in London, came just four days after Jaguar driver Johnny Herbert set the fastest time at the most recent Barcelona test.

The Briton set a best time of 1m21.87s, which was faster even than David Coulthard in a '99 McLaren fitted with the 2000 Mercedes engine and rear end.

Herbert was, though, 0.86s off the pace set by Michael Schumacher in a '99 Ferrari earlier in the week.

Herbert said: "I am pleased with the car. There are still a few things to sort out, but we are making good progress and I am looking forward to the start of the season."

Technical director Gary Anderson is equally pleased. "We are more advanced than we were at this stage last year," he said. "Also, we have already done a lot of running with the new chassis."

The car has run reasonably trouble-free in testing, although there are still problems. Eddie Irvine suffered a huge crash at Barcelona last week when a water pipe came loose at 125mph.

The former Ferrari driver lost control of the car and smashed into the barriers, damaging the Jaguar's front and rear. He was extremely lucky not to be injured. His helmet visor flicked open and he was hit in the face, close to his eye, by a flying piece of gravel.

Irvine is not getting on as well with the car as Herbert. He does not like understeer, and has been handicapped by a lack of power steering, which he got used to at Ferrari. Power assistance is expected to be fitted to the car at this week's Silverstone test.

The car is painted in a livery that is largely metallic green. The colour scheme is the result of tests to see what will show up best on TV.

BARCELONA TIMES

1 Michael Schumacher (Ferrari F399)	1m21.01s*
2 Johnny Herbert (Jaguar R1)	1m21.87s
3 Giancarlo Fisichella (Benetton B200)	1m22.00s
4 David Coulthard (McLaren MP4-14)	1m22.13s*
5 Eddie Irvine (Jaguar R1)	1m22.83s
6 Alexander Wurz (Benetton B199)	1m23.00s*
7 Giancarlo Fisichella (Benetton B199)	1m23.12s*
8 Jenson Button (Williams-BMW)	1m23.34s
9 Bruno Junqueira (Williams-BMW)	1m23.50s
10 Alexander Wurz (Benetton B200)	1m24.84s

* = '99 car

Stewart to step down as chairman

Jackie Stewart will be stepping down as chief executive and chairman of Jaguar this year.

The Scot will still play a role in the life of his formerly eponymous team, but Ford's Neil Ressler will take control as chairman.

"There will be no new chief executive, only a new chairman," Stewart said. "I am staying on the board and will go to most of the races. I shall work with the drivers and continue to play a big part in the strategy of the team."



Stewart

The move comes as no surprise to many F1 insiders. When Stewart sold his team to Ford last year, paving the way for re-naming it Jaguar, it was expected that he would eventually take a less high-profile role.

Stewart believes that the internal restructuring will have a positive effect on the Jaguar squad in its debut season. "The team is well structured and capable of doing the things we want in the future."

When a car looks good, it usually is, and this car looks particularly good."



Jaguar's livery has been designed to make the maximum impact on TV

BMW takeover bid could give Ford control of two F1 teams

Ford could be poised to take on a major role in two Formula 1 teams.

The US car giant, which already owns the Jaguar team, is preparing a bid for Williams' engine supplier BMW, AUTOSPORT has learned.

If the proposed bid were to succeed, Ford would have a significant influence at Williams, in addition to its total control of Jaguar. Williams is starting a five-year exclusive contract with the German car maker this season.

High-level discussions about the bid have already taken place within Ford, which is extremely keen to do a deal with BMW. It has never

cracked the German market, and a takeover of BMW would solve that problem at a stroke for the company's ambitious president Jac Nasser. However, Ford refused to comment.

In the long term, the move could even spell the end of one or other of the Grand Prix programmes. However, if Ford were to succeed with a bid it could just as easily decide to continue with the two distinct brands competing in F1.

It is not the only company in the frame to take over BMW, which is running with heavy losses following its takeover of the British

Rover marque. Fellow American giant General Motors, the only car company in the world larger than Ford, is also interested, as is BMW's huge German rival, Volkswagen.

BMW is not even officially for sale, but it is considered to be vulnerable because of the problem with Rover. Some company directors are believed to feel that a buy-out is unavoidable – possibly by the end of the year.

The company would not be a cheap purchase, despite its losses. Its brand has enormous prestige value, and the price has already been put in the region of £18.75-

31.25 billion (US\$30-50 billion).

Even at that price, BMW would still be appealing to Ford, because of the boost it would give its new owners in the luxury-car market. BMW sells about 500,000 cars a year, which is way above even the 250,000 target that Jaguar is aiming to achieve in the next three to four years. The British firm currently sells about 80,000 cars a year.

Ford has led the trend for car manufacturers to become more deeply involved in F1. It bought the Stewart Grand Prix team last year, changing its name to Jaguar to suit Ford's own marketing needs.



its true colours



The car has run well in testing, and is fastest of the 2000 machinery



Quick test gives Benetton boost

Benetton's hopes of turning around its poor form of the last few years have received a boost.

The team's new Formula 1 car set the third-fastest time of a major test last week, narrowly shy of the new Jaguar-Cosworth R1. Both cars were beaten by Michael Schumacher's '99 Ferrari, which was fastest by nearly a second.

However, Benetton's Giancarlo Fisichella was encouraged by his best time of 1m22.00s, which was just 0.13s slower than Jaguar's Johnny Herbert.

The Italian completed a race distance of the demanding Barcelona track at the end of a four-day test of the new Benetton B200. He said: "We were able to learn a lot more about the car today, as we ran so many kilometres. It's amazing that on only my second day in the car I was able to finish a race distance. The car is starting to really fly now. I can't wait to get back in."

Fisichella improved his time by nearly two seconds overnight. His first day in the car produced a 1m23.75s. Team mate Alexander Wurz did the first two days' running. The car had relatively few reliability problems for such an early stage in its development. The team completed nearly 600 miles in its first four days on the track.

Benetton technical director Pat Symonds said: "This is very satisfying for a first session and bodes well for reliability."

The team has slumped from its position in the mid-'90s as the best in F1, when Michael Schumacher scored back-to-back titles. Last year was the worst in Benetton's history, the team finishing sixth in the constructors' championship.



Fisichella was delighted with the new car

Schuey worried about late timing of Ferrari launch

Michael Schumacher has hinted that he has concerns about Ferrari being the last top team to launch its new car this year.

Ferrari's new F320 will be unveiled on February 7, four days after McLaren starts testing its new MP4-15. The German star is worried that his team may not have enough time to iron out the machine's bugs.

"If the new car proves to be healthy and competitive," he said, "then the time that's left to us is more than sufficient. However, if it happens to have a large problem... Look, I'm not David

Copperfield so I don't know what would happen."

Schumacher's anxiety was eased by him setting the fastest time of the year around Barcelona last week in a 1999 car. His 1m21.010s was 0.012s faster than new team mate Rubens

A fast Barcelona test made MS optimistic



Barrichello had done earlier this month and nearly 0.7s quicker than the best time set by a 2000-spec car, Johnny Herbert's Jaguar.

Schumacher said: "The F399 has never been so good at Barcelona. It handled like a kart. Taking into account that the new car has to be better than the old one, we have every reason to be optimistic."

The 31-year-old believes the title fight will once again be led by Ferrari and McLaren, as it has been for the last two years. "It will be between us and McLaren. One step below us I see Jordan and perhaps Jaguar."

NEWS INDEX



BAR cautious about 2000 season



Ganassi tipped to make switch to Lola



Winkelhock joins Opel for DTM



Two-pronged US attack takes shape for Weaver



EUROC series postponed 'till autumn



Monte Rally in row over safety worries

CLUB AUTOSPORT



Rallycross ace Gollop to return



Star jockey in driver management

BAR keeps a lid on hopes fo

British American Racing is keeping a lid on its expectations for the new Formula 1 season after the embarrassment of ending 1999 as the worst team on the grid.

BAR started its debut year by predicting it would win a race, but it failed to score a point after struggling with poor reliability. This season, team boss Craig Pollock is determined not to make the same mistake twice.

"I don't want to say anything about our targets," said Pollock at the team's official launch on Monday. "We made mistakes last year, but we learned, and we hope not to repeat them. We'll let the pundits do the talking."

The car has been reliable in preliminary testing, but its pace has not been encouraging. Lead driver Jacques Villeneuve said: "Testing has gone flawlessly. There haven't been any real problems. It looks very positive and Honda has done a good job. We are still slow, but we have got the reliability."

"New [aerodynamic] bits have been designed and are ready to bolt on, and there are some more in the pipeline, so I am confident that it is going to get better."

BAR technical director Malcolm Oastler has played down fears about the car's lack of pace.

"We're very happy with the level of reliability of the car in the four major tests it has done. We're so much better prepared on that level than last year. Ultimate lap times weren't really the issue. We needed to know that the car would last, enabling us to develop it."

"The Honda engine is second generation, so it is lighter and smaller. It has enabled us to move the weight lower down in the car. That and the performance of the engine itself will be the main performance advantages. Aerodynamically, it is fairly similar [to last year's car]."

Honda technical director Kazutoshi Nishizawa said the Japanese company was preparing an evolution engine. It will be used next month at a test in Kyalami, South Africa.

The new livery carries only the Lucky Strike brand of title tobacco sponsor BAT. The team has lost its battle with F1's governing body over having dual liveries. The 555 brand is on the drivers' overalls.



Pollock

BAR launch p46



Ferrari: 'Tyre was not cause of Schuey crash'

Ferrari has dismissed suggestions that the accident in which Michael Schumacher broke his leg last year was caused by a tyre failure.

A Swedish newspaper has published a photograph taken by a spectator at Silverstone's British Grand Prix last year which seems to suggest that the Ferrari's front left tyre may have partly come off its rim as Schumacher plunged off the track at Stowe corner.

Ferrari has reiterated that rear brake failure caused the crash. The team has no reason to cover up a tyre failure. It would be to its

advantage if it was found there was not a failure on the car after all.

Chief engineer Ignazio Lunetta, who was Schumacher's race engineer last year, said: "When we looked at the tyre, we saw it was pretty heavily worn because of the heavy braking, but that's normal because the rear brakes were gone, not the front ones."

The first image from the on-board camera when the car entered the gravel trap at Stowe shows the Schumacher's tyre in its usual shape. This adds further weight to Ferrari's explanation.

An independent tyre expert told

AUTOSPORT that it was not unusual for a tyre to become temporarily misshapen in such extreme conditions.

● Ferrari has denied claims in the Italian press that it is trying to soften Michael Schumacher's image with a charm offensive.

The reports came after the German spoke of how he changed the nappies of his two young children and had plans to learn Italian after four years at Ferrari.

Schumacher is thought to be less popular with the team's avid fans, the tifosi, than previous Ferrari racing drivers.

BRDC denies deal for British GP is brewing

Silverstone's owning club has denied it is close to striking a deal to keep the British Grand Prix.

This week's *Independent on Sunday* claimed that the British Racing Drivers' Club had approached Octagon, the new owner of Brands Hatch Leisure, which has the rights for the GP from 2002. Silverstone's chief executive Denys Rohan said: "It is pure speculation. The dust is still settling from the recent forum."

BHL chief executive Rob Bain said: "There have been no discussions. The ball is in our court."

Fantasy GP game gets a new twist

AUTOSPORT's Fantasy Grand Prix returns this season, offering the overall winner a VIP trip for two to the 2001 Australian GP.

The easy-to-play competition features a few new twists this year, including a 'joker', which gives team managers double points from one nominated race.

You can enter the competition by phone - full details will appear in the magazine next week. As AUTOSPORT went to press last-minute details were being fine tuned - like Jenson Button's price!



The amateur photograph (right) shows Schumacher smoking off the track with what looks like a deformed tyre (above)



r 2000



Jacques Villeneuve (left) and Ricardo Zonta show off their new drive at the BAR launch ceremony

McLaren torpedoes rule changes

Radical rule changes planned for the 2001 Formula 1 season have been torpedoed by McLaren at the 11th hour.

The team has objected to the most significant modifications that would have been made to the cars in an attempt to improve safety while making it easier to overtake. The package was exclusively revealed in AUTOSPORT (January 6).

McLaren's objections were made last week at a final meeting to discuss the rules before they were presented for approval to a meeting of F1 team bosses this week.

McLaren managing director Martin Whitmarsh was said by observers at the meeting of the Technical Working Group think-tank to be "working to a strictly controlled agenda governing what he could approve and what he could not."

He and McLaren boss Ron Dennis were unavailable for comment. However, Dennis made it clear in an interview with AUTOSPORT earlier this month he believes F1 benefits from stable regulations.

Unanimity is needed if next year's rules are to be changed now. There may, however, still be a

chance that the original changes will go through. Historically, it has always been difficult for one team to hold out against all the others.

McLaren could find itself under political pressure from motorsport boss Max Mosley, who could also impose the rules on safety grounds.

McLaren's opposition has upset some high level insiders. However, others felt the changes needed more thought. "The proposed regulations were not right," said one designer. "They would not have done what everyone wanted them to do. It's better that they did not go through and we come up with something better for the future."

McLaren indicated before Christmas it would support the changes, which would have rid F1 cars of their stepped flat bottoms. These were to have been replaced by a tightly controlled curved underbody to increase downforce. The technicians also wanted to cut aerodynamic load by shrinking the rear diffuser.



Dennis



AUTOSPORT unveiled the plans on January 6

Audi tells F1 teams of ditched GP plans

German giant Audi has stamped on any lingering hopes in Formula 1 that it could enter the sport in the immediate future.

A week after it denied it was actively considering a Grand Prix return (AUTOSPORT, January 20), it has emerged that Audi has informed the F1 teams it has ditched any thought of racing in the sport's highest echelon.

The company, part of the huge Volkswagen group, has written a circular letter to all teams saying it is not going to enter F1. Audi had approached teams for advice last autumn during a feasibility project.

Audi had been expected to graduate after this season, when it is favourite to win the Le Mans 24 Hours sportscar classic. It has already dominated touring car racing in the past. However, it seems that as long as VW chairman Ferdinand Piech is in charge, Audi will not be in F1 - he believes there are better ways to spend such vast amounts of money.

Audi could still do a U-turn in the next few years. Piech is due to retire in two years, and the man earmarked to replace him is former BMW chairman Bernd Pischetsrieder, currently the boss of VW brand SEAT. The German is an F1 fan and took the decision for BMW to return to F1.

New Jordan looks handy in test



The EJ 10 made a promising start at Silverstone last week in a wet and cold first outing

The first test of Jordan's 2000 Formula 1 car has reinforced the team's optimism for the new year.

Heinz-Harald Frentzen put the new Mugen Honda-powered EJ 10 through its paces at the Silverstone National Circuit last week, doing a total of 90 laps.

Technical director Mike Gascoyne said: "It was a cold, wet day, but we were pretty pleased. I think Heinz is pretty happy."

Jordan is keen not to be drawn into the excessive claims often made by Grand Prix teams at this time of year, but Gascoyne would allow: "We know we haven't designed a dog."

Frentzen said: "I see these first

test days only as a roll-out. We just wanted to check out every function of the car, so I don't want to talk about the handling."

Asked about the performance of the car, he said: "It's tough to say, because the track was wet and cold. It's too early to say, but don't worry, it's going to be fine."

New driver Jarno Trulli had 'flu and is expected to drive this week.

The EJ10 had some minor electronic problems while the team sorted out niggles in its new TAG system. Jordan will continue testing at Silverstone until the car's official launch on January 31, after which the machine will run in Barcelona throughout February.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FORMULA 1

Former Prost driver Olivier Panis believes new Jordan signing Jarno Trulli will have the edge on his team mate Heinz-Harald Frentzen this year. "At least in qualifying, Jarno should be quicker," said Panis. "In the races, it depends a bit, but Jarno is also very strong there."

McLaren will launch its new MP4-15 2000 challenger at Jerez, Spain, on February 3, four days before Ferrari takes the wraps off its new car at its base in Maranello, Italy.

Minardi is to launch its new car on February 16 at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. The team is hoping to finalise its driver line-up this week. Brazilian Max Wilson and Argentinian Norberto Fontana are the two men in contention for a seat alongside Marc Gene.

Sauber has fitted an innovative suspension system to its new C19 Formula 1 car. Each wishbone has two mounting points to the chassis at the end of each arm instead of the traditional one. The car will be launched in Switzerland on February 2.

Toyota last week started building work on the expanded facility that will house its F1 programme. It will be run out of Toyota's motorsport base (TMG) in Cologne, Germany. The Japanese marque is building its own 50% wind tunnel in which it will design the car that will race in 2002. It has entered the 2001 championship but is expected to defer for a year.

The Australian Grand Prix organiser has painted a Qantas Boeing 747 in the race's colours to promote the event. F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone (below), Arrows driver Pedro de la Rosa and GP legend Stirling Moss were at the launch at Heathrow airport, London.



British F1 broadcaster ITV has won the sport's International Broadcaster of the Year Award. The prize is awarded by F1's governing body, the FIA, to the broadcaster whose coverage of their home GP was voted the best by the world's F1 broadcasters.

The inaugural Malaysian GP has won the prize for best Grand Prix of the year last season.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FORMULA 1

Australian Mark Webber has been busy testing electronic systems for Arrows at Silverstone in preparation for the team's 2000 car.

Jaguar test driver Luciano Burti's best time at a test in Jerez, Spain, was mis-recorded last week. The Brazilian Formula 3 ace set a best time of 1m25.0s, which put him just 0.14s slower than race driver Johnny Herbert.

Paul Morgan, co-founder of Mercedes' F1 engine builder Ilmor, is to give a talk on Grand Prix racing on February 18. The event will be at Yorkshire Air Museum. Call 01423 887313 for further details.

TOURING CARS

Honda is testing its brand new challenger for this year's British Touring Car Championship at Croft all week. After a day of wet-weather running on Monday, driver James Thompson said: "We did over 100 miles and the car ran faultlessly. It's better in the wet already."



Racing for Children held its annual kart race at London's Daytona Raceway on Sunday. Charity patron Anthony Reid (above) and Ford BTCC team mate Alain Menu both took part and helped raise more than £8500 for underprivileged children.

Legendary Swedish touring car team boss Picko Troberg has stepped back from the series for the 2000 season after suffering a mild heart attack. Troberg, the manager of ex-BTCC champ Rickard Rydell, has also put his historic Mini racing activities on hold.

Former British F3 National Class champion Phillip Scifleet will race a touring car in his Australian homeland this year. Scifleet, who took the 1998 title, will contest the new V8 Supercar Lights series in a Holden Commodore.

CHAMP CARS

New team owner Morris Nunn has completed his buy-out of driver Tony Kanaan's contract from the Brazilian's former team Forsythe Championship Racing. Nunn is also believed to have secured Hollywood cigarettes backing, the Brazilian firm defecting from PacWest's Mauricio Gugelmin.

Ex-racer Stefan Johansson has shelved plans to enter the series as a team owner for a year.

Ganassi closes in

Four-time Champ Car title winner Chip Ganassi Racing seems poised to make a switch to Lola chassis after a two-day try-out last week at Sebring.

Reigning champion Juan Pablo Montoya and 1996 top dog Jimmy Vasser compared the British company's B2K/00 against the latest car from Reynard, which has supplied chassis for all four of Ganassi's title runs.

Both lapped quicker in the Lola than they did in the Reynard, with the Colombian's time rumoured to be faster than any he has set before at the Florida airfield track. However, Brazilian Cristiano da Matta confused the issue by pipping both the other drivers in his PPI Motorsports Reynard.

Montoya said: "I think it [the Lola] is a good chassis. It's going to be very difficult to decide. Both Lola and Reynard have produced very good cars. I think it's going to be a very good competition."

Ganassi added: "It's a little early yet. You don't want to make a knee-jerk reaction. At this point it's hard to say which way to go."

The other factor to take into account is that the team was unable to run both cars back-to-back on the same day because of new Champ

Car testing rules.

These impose a limit on a team's number of test days during the winter. To count as a single day, a driver may run only one chassis/engine combination.

That meant that Montoya and Vasser shared the Reynard one day and the Lola the next.

A better indication is likely to come this week, when Ganassi's newly Toyota-powered team tests the Lola at the Phoenix oval alongside Team Green, Newman-Haas Racing, Penske, Patrick Racing, Team Rahal and Forsythe Championship Racing.

Montoya said: "Phoenix will be very interesting because everybody will be there."

SEBRING TIMES

1 Christian Fittipaldi (Lola-Ford)	50.3s
2 Cristiano da Matta (Reynard-Toyota)	50.8s
3 Juan Pablo Montoya (Lola-Toyota)	50.9s
4 Richie Hearn (Reynard-Toyota)	51.0s
5 Max Papis (Reynard-Ford)	51.1s
6 Jimmy Vasser (Lola-Toyota)	51.1s
7 Alex Tagliani (Reynard-Ford)	51.3s
8 Kenny Brack (Reynard-Ford)	51.3s
9 Gil de Ferran (Reynard-Honda)	51.5s
10 Helio Castro Neves (Reynard-Honda)	51.5s

(Times are drivers' bests through December '99 and January 2000)



Montoya (main pic) maintains Lola (left) and Reynard (right) chassis are very closely matched

Dan R Boyd

Zanardi linked to Nunn for CART comeback

Dumped Williams Formula 1 driver Alex Zanardi could be back in the CART Championship Series by the end of the year.

That's the talk in the US, where sources suggest that the Italian could line up in the new team formed by Mo Nunn, the man who engineered Zanardi to two Champ Car titles with Chip Ganassi Racing.

Nunn's priority is a single Reynard-Mercedes effort for Brazilian Tony Kanaan, but he is believed to be able to expand to a two-car line-up before the end of the season.

Ganassi has given Zanardi his vote of confidence following the latter's disappointing year in F1.



Zanardi

Ganassi. "It's ridiculous to spend that amount of money and not treat

The team boss criticised the Williams squad for favouring Zanardi's 1999 team mate Ralf Schumacher.

"What I don't understand about F1 is why they don't have two number one drivers," said

their drivers as two number ones. I think that is a flaw in the way they operate over there.

"It seems to me that McLaren is the only team which doesn't really do that. Even they do it to a degree."

Ganassi added that the door is open to Zanardi for 2002, after his contracts with existing drivers Juan Pablo Montoya and Jimmy Vasser expire at the end of next year.

"The guy's a friend and he can certainly do the job," said Ganassi, "but as far as him driving for me again, that's a much larger question that I'd have to think about."



Former World Champion Jacques Villeneuve (above) was among the F1 stars who braved the famous Hahnenkamm downhill ski course in Kitzbuhel, Austria last week. He was joined in the charity event by Damon Hill and BMW test driver Jorg Muller.

Sutton

Herta gives Swift first run at Laguna

Swift's new Champ Car has hit the track at Laguna Seca in California.

New Forsythe Championship Racing signing Bryan Herta ran a few laps with a Honda-powered 011c, but was prevented from further mileage by fog and rain.

"It's been a remarkable effort by everyone at Swift to get this car on the track in a short period of time," said Herta. "It looks like we have something to work with."

Brazilian supersub Roberto Moreno also got his first run with Patrick Racing, which has signed him as a full-time driver for 2000.



on Lola deal



Euro tin-top series plans revived

Super Touring racing has been given a reprieve in continental Europe thanks to an Italian-led organisation which is to run a 10-round series.

The European Super Touring Cup has been officially sanctioned by the FIA, motorsport's governing body, and will comprise six rounds in Italy and four in other countries.

German-led moves to establish a pan-European series failed just before Christmas due to the failure to attract suitable TV deals and the lack of the required level of competitor support.

Undeterred, the Nordauto and CiBiEmme teams – which run the official Alfa Romeo and BMW squads respectively in Italy – have set up International Sports Communications to try and revive the category.

The 10 rounds will feature double-header races, with cars running on Michelin control tyres and success ballast used to prevent any runaway title runs. TV coverage with Eurosport is being negotiated.

'Foreign' rounds include visits to Magny-Cours in France, the A1-Ring in Austria, Brno in the Czech Republic, as well as a race around the streets of the Slovenian capital city Ljubljana.

The Ljubljana event was held last year for the first time, BMW star Johnny Cecotto winning a combined touring car and sportscar

event for the CiBiEmme team.

The Venezuelan, formerly a German and Italian touring car champion, has recently been linked with a full-time CiBiEmme drive alongside latter-day team leader Emanuele Naspetti.

It would mark a full-time return to competition for Cecotto, who was left on the BMW sidelines last season.

Other members of the CiBiEmme squad are likely to be leading privateers Massimo Pigoli and Stefano Gabellini.

Alfa's Italian champ Fabrizio Giovanardi stays at Nordauto in his bid for a third successive title.

Fabian Peroni, who drove a semi-works 156 last year, will join the line-up. The third driver could be ex-CiBiEmme ace Fabrizio de Simone or the recently unemployed Antonio Tamburini.

Total grid sizes are hoped to be as high as 25 cars at some venues.

SUPER TOURING DATES

April 2	Mugello (I)
April 30	Enna-Pergusa (I)
May 14	Zeltweg (A)
June 11	Monza (I)
June 25	Imola (I)
July 16	Magny-Cours (F)
July 23	Misano (I)
September 3	Ljubljana (SLO)
September 17	Brno (CZ)
September 24	Valllunga (I)

Teams worry for BTCC future

Leading British Touring Car Championship manufacturers have called for swift action to clarify the future of the series.

Britain's premier tin-top category was thrown into confusion last week, after news leaked that British Motorsport Promoters will take over the running of the series from TOCA in 2002.

Honda Motorsport Europe motorsport manager William de Brackeleer said: "The series and participants have been taken hostage by the organisers. We have to find a solution."

Vauxhall sports boss Mike Nicholson echoed his comments: "I have no idea where this leaves the championship. We are not privy to negotiations, but it's in everybody's interests to get it sorted," he said.

TOCA's new 'low-cost' Super Touring regulations for 2001 found universal praise last May, but now seem unlikely to be adopted. A Super Production category seems increasingly likely.

Honda's de Brackeleer said: "The NSC racing is as good as the BTCC when we had 25 cars, and it opens the door to more manufacturers."



Alfa Romeos and BMWs will form the backbone of the new series

Indy Lights champ in frame to graduate

Reigning Indy Lights champion Oriol Servia is on the verge of signing with Cal Wells' PPI Motorsports Champ Car team.

The Spaniard had a second test in the team's Reynard-Toyota 2KI at Sebring last week, and looks set to join Cristiano da Matta in the squad.

Servia, who took the Lights crown with the dominant Dorricott-Mears team, is being backed for the move up by Formula 1 team Minardi's Spanish sponsor, Telefonica.

The deal will mean the only Champ Car drive unfilled is the second seat at Dale Coyne Racing.

IRL PREVIEW

Squads fear need for mid-season chassis switches

Indy Racing League teams could be forced to run different makes of cars to stay competitive.

That's the fear of former Grand Prix driver and IRL team owner Eddie Cheever after his first test with the new Riley & Scott chassis last week in preparation for this weekend's season opener at Disney World, Florida.

The American marque has built a new car for 2000, as have rivals Dallara and G-Force.

Each car could prove to be quicker on different types of oval, according to Cheever.

"The problem is we run on three different types of oval," he said. "Short ovals, which need a lot of downforce; mile-and-a-half ovals, where you need to have as little drag as possible; and then the Indy 500 where you need a compromise between the two. I can see us running two types

of car to suit different tracks, which is a real pain in the ass."

If teams do switch mid-season, it will hike up the budget. The IRL prides itself on its low-budget philosophy.

Cheever was pleased with the new R&S chassis after the test at Walt Disney Speedway. "It has real potential," he said. "It's just a pity it's a month and a half late. You need a perfect set-up for the race here and we're probably 1,500 miles behind our competitors."



Cheever

The 1999 Le Mans 24 Hours race-winning BMW V12 LMR



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After 48 cars had completed official practice,
Martin Brundle's Toyota topped the grid with
BMW in second place.

At the end of the second hour of the race, the
fuel-efficient BMW of Kristensen, Muller and
Lehto was in the lead, at which point eleven cars
from six manufacturers were all on the same lap.

Throughout the Saturday afternoon and
evening the lead swapped frequently between
the Toyotas and BMWs. As the race moved into
Sunday there remained one Toyota in a BMW
sandwich. Just after 3.00am, the second Toyota
driven by Boutsen crashed out.

As daylight returned, the two BMWs led,
separated by three laps. Just after 11.00am, a roll
bar link on Lehto's car broke, allowing the lead to
pass to Dalmás, Martini and Winkelhock.

Despite a last charge, from Katayama in the
dying stages, the No 15 BMW hung on to take a
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Winkelhock joins Opel in DTM

BMW stalwart Joachim Winkelhock is returning to his touring car roots by joining Opel for the DTM 2000 this year.

The former British Touring Car Champion has signed a two-year deal with Opel to race its Astra-based V8 coupe in the new tin-top series.

The move ends the German ace's 10-year association with BMW, during which he also won the German Super Touring crown and last year's Le Mans 24 Hours.

The 39-year-old said: "It's a great challenge for me to start a new DTM career with Opel. I look back on a fantastic time with BMW, and I'm grateful to them for letting me go. We have not split with any acrimony and I feel I can still walk in at BMW whenever I want."

Winkelhock decided to return to touring cars in preference to remaining in sportscars with BMW in the American Le Mans Series.

BMW Motorsport

director Gerhard Berger said: "We acknowledged that Jo's preference was with touring cars, and as we do not have that sort of programme at the moment, we thought it would be good to let him go. But who knows, he might be back if we build a touring car."

The one-time AGS Formula 1 driver will be part of the Holzer Motorsport works Opel team. He joins Uwe Alzen, Manuel Reuter and Eric Helary and Steffen Schulz in the nine-car squad that will take on Mercedes in the German-based DTM this year.

Insiders feel it is vital for the DTM to attract the big German names if it is to be an immediate success. Reigning BTCC champion Laurent Aiello is still talking to Opel about a drive.

Opel motorsport boss Volker Strycek (right) welcomes Winkelhock aboard



Volvo denies entry into German series

Volvo has denied that it has any involvement in a plan to take the marque into the revived DTM touring car series this year.

Top German team Zakspeed Motorsport has been rumoured to be building a Volvo C70 Coupe racer for the series.

The Swedish marque's motorsport boss Anders Kull said: "I'm not aware of any involvement from Volvo at all. I've read about the Zakspeed rumours, and if they present us with a study we'll have a look, but that's as far as it goes."

He added, however, that the German-based series for V8-engined coupes could feature in future plans. "We're having talks about what to do next, and the DTM could be a possibility," he said.

It is now almost certain that Mercedes and Opel will be the only manufacturers in the DTM this year.

BMW has denied rumours that it has carried out a feasibility study. A spokesman said: "There are no plans in the pipeline to do the DTM at the moment. But [motorsport director] Gerhard Berger is interested in touring cars and can't rule it out in the future."

The Abt Sportsline team's plans to field three privateer Audi TT Coupes still hang on whether a rules dispensation is granted to accommodate them.

Scottish clan makes giant leap into BTCC

A team of Scottish club racers has made a massive leap up to contest the independents' class of the British Touring Car Championship.

Pro Motorsport will run one of last year's Nissan Primers for 40-year-old Glaswegian Colin Blair.

Pro, set up by long-time racing enthusiast Derek Palmer, finished one-two in class in last year's Scottish Modified Saloon series, with Blair piloting one of the team's Ford Escort RS Cosworths.

Palmer said: "I just enjoy motorsport and being involved in it, and the BTCC is something I've always wanted to do. It's prime time to do it now, because privateers have got a very good chance."

"Using an unknown driver [Blair] who I know can cut the mustard should give us more recognition than using an established one."

Pro will test its Nissan for the first time at Albacete in Spain next month.

"The car will be fitted with the new aerodynamic package in time for the test," said Palmer, "so it will give us an ideal opportunity to familiarise the team and driver with it."

"I think young Matt Neal [Nissan's top independent] will give the works teams something to worry about and we'll be right on his tailgate."

Audi loses champ Ekstrom to Volvo

Reigning Swedish Touring Car Champion Mattias Ekstrom has switched teams to join the works Volvo S40 squad.

The 21-year-old has left the Audi team with which he narrowly won last year's title to join Swedish veteran Jan Nilsson in the Volvo line-up.

With the withdrawal of the Volvo team from Britain and Australia, the Swedish marque's home outfit will gain from added attention. Nilsson has stepped down from team management duties to concentrate on his driving.

Ekstrom's place in former rallycross ace Tommy Kristoffersson's works-backed Audi A4 squad has been filled by ex-British Formula 3000 star Fredrik Ekblom.

The STCC champion in 1998, Ekblom finished a brilliant third in his privateer Team West Coast BMW 320i last year, and is expected to be Ekstrom's strongest challenger.

With at least 20 cars committed to the season, the STCC is the world's strongest Super Touring series.

The other works-supported teams from Nissan, Honda, Chrysler and Opel will be joined by a Ford Mondeo for double Nordic Formula 3 champion Pontus Morth.

BERNARD UNETT

Three-time British Touring Car Champion Bernard Unett has died of cancer. He was 63.

Unett won the BTCC in 1974, '76 and '77 driving Hillman Avengers, taking two outright victories in the multi-class series. He also won the Production Saloon series in '75 driving a Hillman Hunter.

He began his association with Hillman in '53 as an apprentice, before becoming a road tester.

He began his motorsport career in the early '70s with the Rootes saloon car team, which he remained with as it switched from Chrysler to Talbot and eventually to Peugeot.

After winning his touring car titles he became a test driver for the Sunbeam Lotus and the Peugeot 205 T16 Group B rally teams.

Unett was forced into retirement by a back injury suffered in a shunt in '88, which ended his direct involvement in the sport.

Many of his contemporaries rated Unett as a great talent who could have been a major star in single-seaters. But he only dabbled in that form of the sport, and was a confirmed tin-top racer.

AUTOSPORT sends its condolences to his wife, Joan, and his family.

Bernard Unett won three titles in a Hillman Avenger



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Junqueira plans to fight back in F3000

Brazilian Bruno Junqueira believes he can make it to Formula 1 next year by winning the Formula 3000 International Championship.

The 23-year-old lost out to Briton Jenson Button for a Williams-BMW F1 drive, so will return to the team's junior F3000 team Petrobras, for which he raced in 1999. He keeps his testing role at Williams.

"It's still positive in that my career is moving forward and every year I make progress," he said. "I will put everything into my F3000

season and also I will hopefully get more miles in the Williams car and get in F1 next year."

He does not believe he was outperformed in the Williams shoot-out at Barcelona last week. "I think I did a very good test," he said. "I don't think Jenson beat me, though I didn't beat him either. He ran slightly quicker but it was 6.30pm when the air was cooler."

The decision for Junqueira to return to Petrobras means that his countryman Mario Haberfeld has decided to join Fortec Motorsport. He had been tipped to join

Petrobras if Junqueira won the chance to race for Williams.

Haberfeld won the British Formula 3 title in '98, but failed to score a point when he raced with McLaren's junior team West Competition in last year's F3000 series. He said: "I'm looking forward to a fresh start and I'm not even thinking about last year. I have never lost my confidence - and I think I proved what I could do when I set fastest time with Fortec in a test at Jerez late last year."

Haberfeld will work with F3000 engineer Paul Crosby, who

produced race-winning cars for the DAMS and Paul Stewart Racing teams in the early-'90s.

German Andreas Scheld will drive Fortec's second car. The 23-year-old raced in last year's German STW Cup, but missed the second half of the season after breaking his legs in a shunt.

AUTOSPORT WEBSITE

Catch all the latest news and times from the Jerez F3000 test only on www.autosport.com

Junqueira will race for Petrobras in F3000 again this season



Scheld (left), Haberfeld (in car) and Fortec boss Richard Dutton are all confident for the year ahead

Ayari will race on with Martello

Formula 3000 veteran Soheil Ayari will continue in the international championship for a fourth season.

The Frenchman has linked up with British entrant Martello Racing, which is entering the series after winning last year's inaugural national F3000 title in Italy.

Martello has forged a partnership with experienced Italian team Coloni, which had been facing expulsion from the international F3000 series after failing to score any points last season. This year's entry has been limited to 30 cars and only last year's top 14 teams -

and Martello - were eligible.

Martello boss Andy Chisholm said: "It makes sense for us to team up with Coloni. We haven't finalised the structure of the team yet, but obviously it's a boost to have a proven winner like Soheil."

Ayari has won two F3000 races since '97. He finished seventh in the championship last year.

● Belgians Jeffrey van Hooydonk and Yves Olivier will test with Team Witmeur KTR at Jerez this week. Van Hooydonk was with KTR in 1999; Olivier graduates from the German F3 series.

Manning gets first Arden run

Rising British star Darren Manning has had his first Formula 3000 outing with his new team, Arden International.

The 24-year-old believes he can boost Arden's fortunes after it originally failed to qualify for this year's F3000 International Championship. The team got an entry when it took over a division of Italian team Draco.

Manning, whose deal was predicted in AUTOSPORT (January 13), said: "There is massive potential here. Arden has put

together a solid package with strong engineering and I expect to be on the pace from the start."

The All-Japan Formula 3 champion shook down his Lola at Silverstone's infield Stowe Circuit last week. He is likely to miss the first day of this week's test at Jerez because he will be driving for the British American Racing Formula 1 team, for which he is official test driver.

Team boss Christian Horner said: "Darren has been like a breath of fresh air."



Manning

Astromega signs up Nissan star

Spanish teenager Fernando Alonso will drive for leading team Astromega in this year's Formula 3000 International Championship.

The 18-year-old won last year's European Open Formula Nissan title, and part of his prize was a test with the Minardi Formula 1 team.

He impressed the Astromega squad when he took part in an F3000 test last year.

Team manager Sam Boyle said: "We know Fernando has great potential. He is less experienced than many, but he has great natural aptitude and we are confident he will emerge as a frontrunner."



Part of Alonso's prize was a Minardi test

Manning shook down the Arden car at Silverstone



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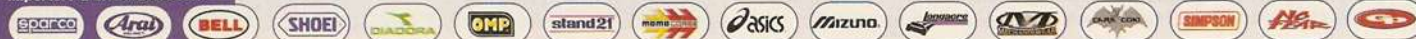
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Weaver doubles up in America

British sportscar racer James Weaver is bidding for a championship double in America's top two sportscar series this year.

The 44-year-old has signed to join Champion Racing's line-up for its Porsche-engined Lola B2K in the American Le Mans Series.

He will combine the deal with his long-standing commitment to the Dyson Racing team, driving its Reynard-Ford 2KQ in the rival Grand-Am championship.

When the schedules clash, in the ALMS races at Sebring and Road Atlanta, Dyson will take precedence.

Weaver said: "I wanted to do more than just Grand-Am. For me 20 races in a season simply equates to twice as much fun as 10."

Champion Racing team manager David Maraj believes Weaver, who will share with Trans-Am ace Dorsey Schroeder, will be vital in sorting the radical new Lola chassis before its debut at Sebring in March.

He said: "I think James is one of the best sportscar drivers in the world. He'll be instrumental in getting the project up and running quickly."

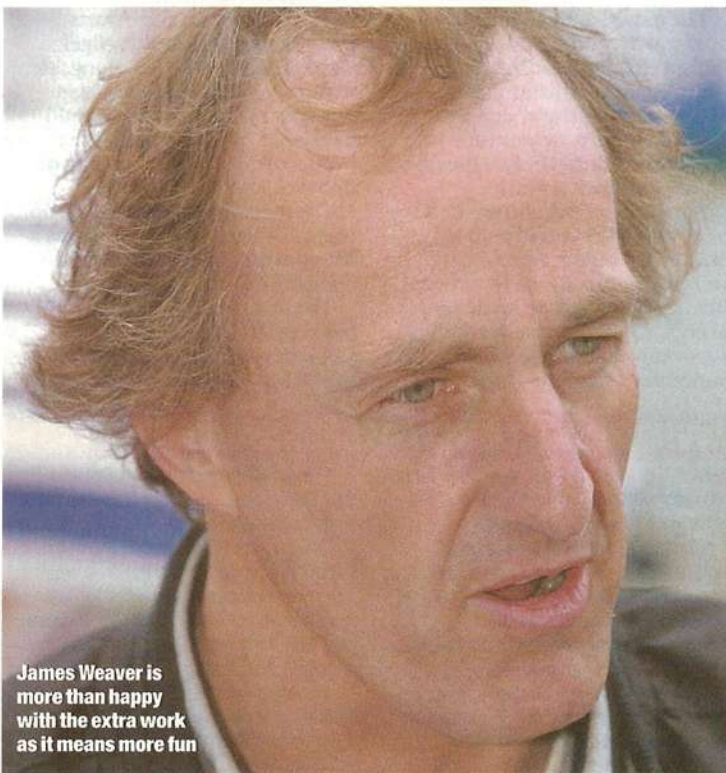
Weaver will be in the unique position of racing both the new sportscars from British chassis manufacturers Reynard and Lola.

The former United States Road Racing champion said: "I'm looking forward to finding out the

differences between the two cars.

"I think both these two marques have the expertise to build cars that may even be better than the various works chassis.

"I can certainly win the Grand-Am series and we should be competitive in the ALMS. Having said that, my luck in terms of titles hasn't been great, so we'll have to see."



James Weaver is more than happy with the extra work as it means more fun

John Brooks

BMW backs Team Schnitzer

BMW is putting its full weight behind Team Schnitzer's American Le Mans Series campaign with the Le Mans-winning V12 LMR this year.

The two-car assault was expected to be a primarily privateer effort due to the German marque's Formula 1 commitments. But BMW is now developing the engine and tuning the cars for US tracks.

Schnitzer scored six wins from eight starts in the ALMS last year, as well victory at La Sarthe.

BMW motorsport director Gerhard Berger said: "We stand a great chance this season. The

competition in ALMS will be harder, but we only just missed out in '99."

Finnish star JJ Lehto and German Jorg Muller will team up in the lead entry, with American Bill Auberlen confirmed for the second car.

The driver for the fourth seat remains undecided.

British BMW ace Steve Soper, who won three ALMS races last year, could yet be called up. Other rumours link Williams Grand Prix refugee Alex Zanardi to the seat.

A BMW spokesman said: "Steve is on our list, but there's no decision yet and others are in the frame."

Magnussen rejoins works Panoz effort

Former Grand Prix driver Jan Magnussen is to rejoin the works Panoz sportscar team for the American Le Mans Series this year.

The Dane will partner David Brabham in the lead LMP Roadster S for the US-based championship, in which he finished sixth last season.

The move counters reports that the former Stewart Grand Prix driver might switch to Audi's ALMS squad.

"I've agreed to continue with Panoz," he said. "It's pretty much a done deal now - I've just got to sign the actual contract. I've never had any contact with Audi."

The full Panoz Motorsports driver line-up is expected to be confirmed within the next week.

Magnussen was aiming to revert to single-seaters full-time in 2000, and had been talking to the Forsythe or PPI Motorsports Champ Car teams.

He is now hoping for an opportunity to land a drive in the series during the season. He found a similar opportunity when he replaced American PJ Jones in the Patrick Racing Reynard-Ford for the final four road course events in 1999.



Magnussen



Audi continued the test programme for its revised R8 Le Mans racer last week, gaining experience of hot conditions at Kyalami in South Africa

NEWS IN BRIEF

FORMULA 3000

New Benetton Formula 1 test driver Hidetoshi Mitsusada is believed to have signed to race in F3000 for Gabriele Rafanelli's World Racing Team. The Japanese contested some rounds of the series in 1998.

South American Formula 3

winner Leonardo Nienkotter is favourite to join French F3 runner-up Jonathan Cochet in Draco Racing's squad for the Italian F3000 Championship.

US RACING

Former Champ Car racer Scott Pruett starred in testing for his first NASCAR Winston Cup race last week. He was third fastest in Ford's official pre-Daytona 500 session at the 2.5-mile superspeedway. Fellow rookie Stacy Compton also caused a stir by topping the times in his Melling Racing Taurus.

Double Daytona 500 winner

Sterling Marlin topped the test for General Motors teams earlier in the week in his Sabco Chevrolet Monte Carlo. Bobby Hamilton was second.

Italian supercar builder de Tomaso is the first European marque to take advantage of new rules for this year's Trans-Am silhouette sportscar series. The Huffaker/Qvale team is running a Mangusta as non-American cars are admitted for the first time. Sometime Champ Car racer Memo Gidley has been linked with the drive.

Leading Toyota Atlantic team

Mike Shank Racing has signed Argentinian comingman Martin Basso for the 2000 season. Basso, who raced in the South American F3 series last year, was highly impressive in a test on the combined Homestead oval and infield course.

SPORTSCARS

The American Le Mans Series'

Adelaide race on New Year's Eve this year will qualify the overall and class winners for a place in the 2001 Le Mans 24 Hours.

The Grand-Am series has moved its Trois Rivières street race in Canada to July 30. It avoids a date clash with the ALMS Mosport Park round on August 6.

The French ROC marque, which built a 3.5-litre Group C challenger in 1991, is tipped to return to the sport at the Le Mans 24 Hours this year. The team plans to order a Reynard 2KQ sports racer, and is thought to be aiming to fit a Volkswagen-badged engine.

Four-time Le Mans winner Henri Pescarolo's La Filière team is tipped to run a Sodemo-built Peugeot twin-turbo V6 engine in a Courage C52 at the classic endurance race this year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

SPORTSCARS

SportsRacing World Cup Lights champ Angelo Lancelotti is set to graduate to the SR1 class this year in a Conrero Riley & Scott-Judd. Ex-Italian Formula 3 champion Thomas Biagi is also expected to join the team's two-car attack.

The Solution-F team is to run the new Courage C60 chassis in the European rounds of the SRWC and American Le Mans Series. Team boss Philippe Gache and South African Gary Formato will drive.

British ex-Formula 3000 racer Dino Morelli is looking to resurrect his career by moving into the sportscar arena this season.

The FIA GT Championship has increased its TV coverage deal with satellite channel Eurosport. At least two rounds will be screened live, with the rest in a one-hour highlights programme.

Sportscar veteran Bob Wollek is expected to link up with Wolfgang Kaufmann in a Freisinger Porsche 911 for this year's FIA GT series.

FORMULA 3

British F3 champion Marc Hynes received his trophy (below) at the Motor Sports Association's awards night last week.



Rising star Andre Lotterer has joined champion German F3 team Bertram Schafer Racing. The 18-year-old dominated last year's Formula ADAC junior series and also shone in Formula Renault.

Argentinian Juan Manuel Lopez is the latest driver to negotiate for a seat with British F3 champion team Manor Motorsport. Lopez raced in Italy last year with Prema Power.

Manor signing Antonio Pizzonia has been linked with a defection to the Renault UK-backed Promatecme squad. Team boss John Booth scotched the talk. "I chatted to his dad last night, and everything was normal," he said on Monday.

British F3 series newcomer RC Motorsport has 'sprung' the January testing ban. The Italian squad has gained official clearance to run at Monza this week on ineligible Pirelli tyres because it is primarily a shakedown and PR exercise.

EUROC forced to ac

The new EUROCC roadster series has been hit by delays, forcing its postponement until the end of the year.

The move has been blamed on hold-ups in production of the Dallara chassis because of the "tight financial situation" of most of the teams say the organisers. The series will now kick off with a race in the autumn before the first full season starts in 2001.

But there are plans to create a mini-series this year to help EUROCC get off the ground. The Octagon group, the new owner of Brands Hatch, will promote the EUROCC Champions series. It will support rounds of the World Superbike Championship.

Just five or six cars are being lined up for the first of these races, but EUROCC's founders, Willi Weber and Jochen Neerpasch, are planning to attract star drivers. Former world champion Nigel Mansell is top of the list, alongside motorbike stars like Max Biaggi.

A spokesman said: "We would have been happier to start the proper series, but it is better to do things this way."

The mini-series will be made up of six 20-minute races, including a round at the Brands Hatch World Superbike event on August 6.

The main series will get live TV coverage from German channel SAT1, despite rumours it will show the DTM2000 series instead.



WENDLINGER TO STAY IN SPORTSCARS

FIA GT champion Karl Wendlinger is to stay with the works ORECA Chrysler Viper GTS-R this year.

The ex-Grand Prix driver had planned on switching over to the new one-make EUROCC series – until it was put on ice this week.

The Austrian will now do a full American Le Mans Series campaign, as well as racing in the classic 24 hour endurance races at Daytona and Le Mans.

The 31-year-old's co-champion from last season, Olivier Beretta, has also cemented his deal to continue.

Team boss Hughes de Chaunac said: "We're delighted to have kept our most successful drivers for another year. Olivier knows the Viper better than anyone, and Karl has settled into the team very well."

The duo will share an ORECA car at Daytona next weekend, joined by Dominique Dupuy.

Capelli reunited with Ferrari

Former Ferrari Grand Prix driver Ivan Capelli is to be reunited with the marque when he enters this year's FIA GT championship.

The 36-year-old will race a GT3-spec Ferrari 360M in the newly named N-GT division of the pan-European series.

The car is being run by the Supertech team of Ferrari one-make series stalwart Franco Scapini, who will share driving duties.

Capelli appeared in a Supertech F355 in the Valtellina Gold Cup sportscar race last autumn, and he says the 360M can take on the pack

of customer Porsche 911 GT3-Rs.

"On paper we can beat the Porsches," he said. "The car looks good, but we won't know for sure how good it is until we start testing. The 355 was a strong car, and I take for granted the 360 will be better."

A second 360 for Swedish veteran Anders Olofsson is expected to join the series later in the season run by the Belgian Windericx team.



Capelli

Collard joins DAMS to race new Cadillac

Double SportsRacing World Cup champion Emmanuel Collard has joined the DAMS team's semi-works Cadillac Northstar LMP squad.

The Frenchman is linking up with the team for its mixed programme in the SRWC, the American Le Mans Series and the Le Mans 24 Hours.

The ex-Benetton Formula 1 test driver left the JB Competition Ferrari team to race in America.

The 28-year-old said: "I wanted to be involved with a big manufacturer like Cadillac, and we've got a great year lined-up."



Works Lister driver Julian Bailey shook down the new GT2 cars at Silverstone last week. He will share with Jamie Campbell-Walter in the FIA GT Championship

Docking signs Thai driver for British F3

The oldest team in the British Formula 3 Championship has signed its first driver for 2000.

Alan Docking Racing won the title way back in 1976 and has now signed Thai Tor Sriachavanon to pilot one of two Dallara-Mugens.

The 27-year-old drove for Manor Motorsport last season. Docking said: "The aim for us is to get him operating in the top 10 regularly. At times last year he hooked up and did a pretty good job."

ADR is closing on a deal to run British teenager Westley Barber in its second car.



cept setback



Hopes for the new EURO-C roadster series are receding

Muller holding fifth title on ice

British Touring Car Championship star Yvan Muller has taken his fifth successive ice racing title – as long as he turns up for the final round.

The Frenchman took victory at Serre Chevalier to make his Andros Trophy score unassailable. There is only one round left – this weekend at Super Besse – in which drivers can score points.

However, the finale at the Stade de France in Paris carries a negative points score of 100 points if a driver fails to attend.

This is the second title that Muller has taken in Team Snobek's Opel

Astra. His major challenger was team mate Jean-Philippe Dayraut.

"This fifth Andros title is as sweet as the others," said the 30-year-old. "It wasn't more difficult, because I'm further ahead in the points than I've ever been. But some people are waiting for my downfall, and I think I definitely put them right – which is very satisfying."

Muller has made only one slip-up all season, when a moment of over-exuberance at L'Alpe d'Huez handed a rare victory to Dayraut.

He stays at Vauxhall for this year's BTCC series.

Top teams close on line-ups

British Formula 3 Championship teams Promatecme and Stewart Racing are on the verge of completing their driver line-ups in the wake of Jenson Button's move to the Williams Formula 1 squad.

Both teams were in the hunt for Button, who was set to sign for Promatecme before being snapped up for the sport's top flight.

Fellow Briton Matt Davies is thought to be certain to complete a deal with Promatecme this week to drive for the Renault UK-backed team alongside Spider Cup champion Andy Priaulx.

The move would mark Davies as a

title favourite after he took fifth in the standings in his rookie season.

Team boss Serge Saulnier would say nothing except: "I cannot tell you anything for the moment. We should make an announcement at the end of the week."

Stewart, meanwhile, is expected to announce shortly that it will run Indian Narain Karthikeyan and South African rookie Tomas Scheckter, who won the EFDA Euroseries title last year.

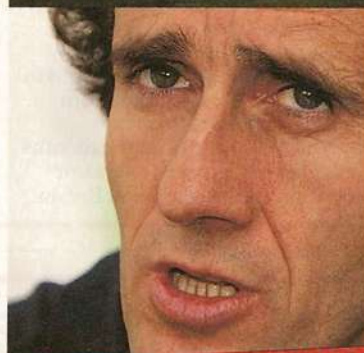
A team spokeswoman said: "We hope to be able to make an announcement soon. Discussions are ongoing."

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Monte blasts FIA safety

The Monte Carlo Rally faces an uncertain future after event officials were openly critical of FIA Safety observer Jacek Bartos' decision to cancel a stage.

Bartos, who attends all WRC events, was concerned by the positioning of spectators near the start of SS6, the first test to run on the second leg.

Unconfirmed reports suggested that although fans were behind safety tape, they were still standing on the outside of two fast corners.

In a prepared release, the Automobile Club de Monaco said it "did not approve this decision" and argued: "alleged unruly behaviour of the crowd ... tends to normalise itself once the first car is running."

The club went on to describe Bartos' decision as "hasty" and said: "The sporting management is therefore becoming difficult to assume, once this notion of risk, which is part of motor racing, is not accepted anymore."

WRC regulars viewed the AC de Monaco's reaction with disdain (see panel), and

seasoned insiders expect the FIA to take a dim view of such public criticism of its safety policy.

FIA President Max Mosley said: "We think this was an 'after-lunch' press release. Whoever wrote it has probably come to regret it since."

However, he added: "We will examine the observer's report, other on-the-spot reports and the video footage. It is too early to say if any action will be taken."



Mosley

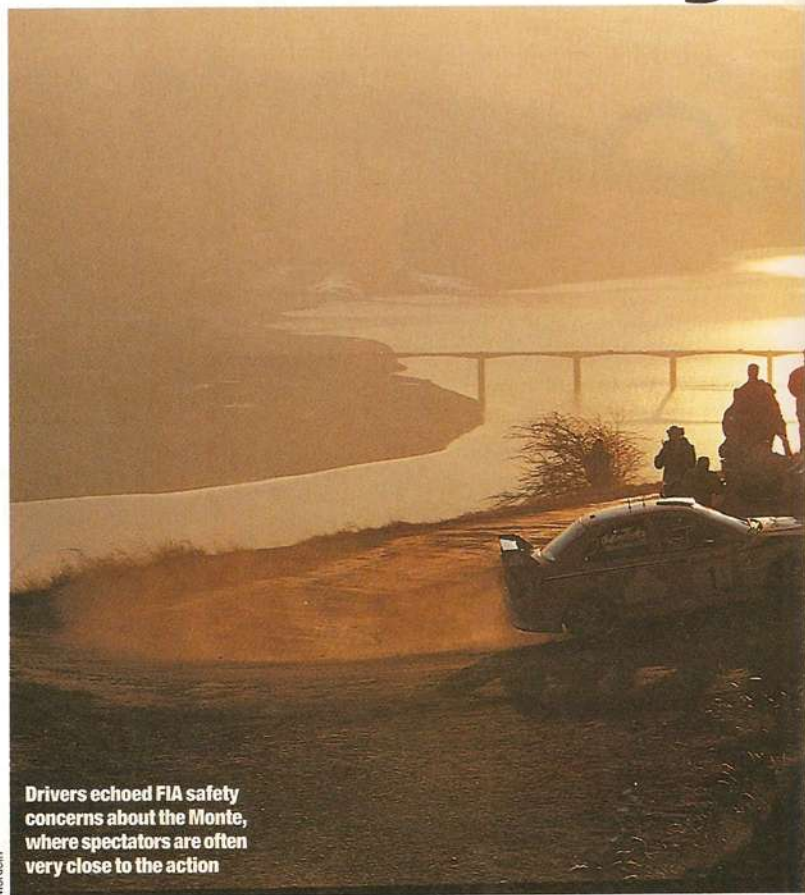
He did argue, though, that Bartos "is very experienced and never makes hasty decisions."

The Monte Carlo Rally has changed much in recent years to keep it in line with world championship trends (including dropping its famous Concentration Run), but the AC de Monaco still lies some way behind the likes of Catalunya in organisational matters.

It would be a major shock if the Monte were removed from the WRC calendar altogether, given the importance of the event's name, not to mention the Grand Prix organised by the same club.

But the event might be forced to accept outside assistance from other organisers in future.

The row comes just two months after drivers attacked spectator control on the Rally Great Britain.



Drivers echoed FIA safety concerns about the Monte, where spectators are often very close to the action

Teams probe parc ferme start fiasco

Peugeot and Subaru are both satisfied they have found the cause of their embarrassing second-morning exits in Monte Carlo.

The Peugeot 206s of Gilles Panizzi and Francois Delecour, and Richard Burns' Subaru Impreza all failed to start in parc ferme in Gap. They retired on the spot, handing Tommi Makinen a decisive advantage on the opening round of the world championship.

Burns was left fuming by the incident, which was particularly galling since the 1999-specification Impreza had shown itself well capable of challenging Makinen for victory.

"We've thrown points away," he said afterwards. "Tommi was having to push hard everywhere, judging by his lines. I'm bitter to have handed Tommi 10 points on a rally where I felt utterly comfortable and competitive."

"The only thing I can take away is that our car/tyre combination showed well on dry asphalt, where we've struggled before. Okay, it was colder than the other tarmac rallies but it gives me hope for Spain and Corsica."

"I know the new car is going to

be quicker still, but we need to get points on the board now."

Both Peugeot Sport and Prodrive have since tested the cars in question and come with wildly differing conclusions. Peugeot is putting its failure down to electrical revisions for 2000, while Subaru engineers think that heavy traffic in Gap, before parc ferme, might have created engine conditions that resulted in the motor flooding the following morning at the start.

Although the third 206 of

Marcus Gronholm also failed to make it beyond Gap, Peugeot's chief engineer, Michel Nandan, insisted on Monday that the Finn's problem was different.

"He had a transmission problem," said Nandan. "That affected the engine, but the engine did start, so it was not the same as Gilles and Francois."

Prodrive Chairman David Richards said: "It was a real shame for Richard. I was very confident he was going to be Tommi's biggest rival there."



Peugeot has blamed electrical problems for leaving its 206s stranded in parc ferme

COLD COMFORT

How can a £400,000 rally car fail to start in cold weather when your trusty Renault 5 fires up first time, every time?

Peugeot believes that its 206s were the victim of an earthing fault, caused by revisions to the engine bay layout.

Chief engineer Michel Nandan said on Monday: "We changed this to increase accessibility to some parts under the bonnet, because there isn't much room."

"We used this revised earthing for the starter during our first tests, and it worked perfectly. But we have since discovered that in lower temperatures, the electrical parameters change and so the starter motor lost power."

Prodrive believes that slow progress in heavy traffic before parc ferme clogged the Impreza's racing spark plugs.

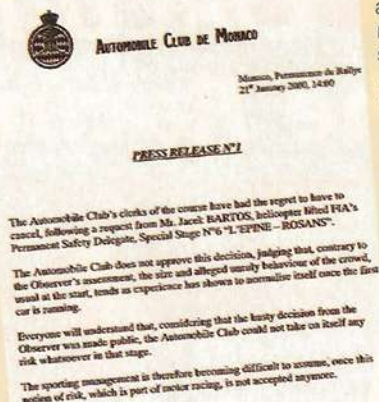
Team chairman David Richards said: "Hard racing plugs aren't designed for sitting in traffic, and it just flooded itself overnight. Once this engine floods, it's particularly difficult to start and with the boxer engine layout, it's also very hard to access the spark plugs themselves."



Verdict



REACTION



Team officials and drivers were stunned by the AC de Monaco's press release (above).

Prodrive chairman David Richards said that his reaction was one of astonishment.

"It's suicidal from the AC de Monaco," he said. "It's so blinkered, when you look at the substantial amount of progress that has occurred in the WRC. You have to wonder where they've been for the last five years."

However, he stopped short of saying that the Monte should face exclusion for its stance on safety. "It would be a big loss," he



Richards

said. "I think we should look at that as a last resort. I think we must make them understand the situation. All of our livelihoods depend on safety, I'd say the whole future of the world championship does."

"Other rallies have taken the lead on this – events like Catalunya have really shown what can be achieved."

"For Monte Carlo not even to acknowledge that it's an issue is extremely naive," he added.

Ford team boss Malcolm Wilson was equally concerned. "I support Jacek Bartos 100%," he said. "Safety has to be paramount from a manufacturer's point of view. If there were a bad accident we couldn't have Ford drawn into that situation."

"I drove past the start of that stage and we actually set the trip running in the car to measure the spectator traffic. There were 3.8km of parked cars, on both sides of the road. Carlos and Luis actually started the camera rolling when they drove through, and they thought it was awful."

World champion Tommi Makinen said: "The cars are so quiet these days that spectators cannot hear us very well. Sometimes, when you're running as first car on the road, it can be quite bad."

McRae boss says Focus is stronger

Colin McRae's team boss says that his Focus WRC has improved, despite the Scot's last-stage engine failure in Monte Carlo.

Malcolm Wilson said: "I'm very disappointed for Colin, of course, but Carlos (Sainz) scored our best finish since Portugal of last year."

"We are making progress and I'm determined that the car will be reliable for Sweden."

McRae said that he was "gutted" at the failure, which occurred just 20km from the finish.



Engine failure on the rally's final stage robbed Colin McRae of third in Monte Carlo

Thiry sets up further outings in Corolla

Bruno Thiry is likely to drive a Grifone-run Toyota Corolla WRC again this season, after his fighting fifth in Monte Carlo.

The Belgian is trying to piece together a limited programme in the car. He is already hoping to contest the Rally of Luxembourg in July.

"The organiser there is quite keen," said Thiry, "and it's a nice event with some good roads. But ideally, I'd like to be competing again before then."

Swedish officials praying for snow

Dry weather conditions are giving organisers of the world championship's next round, the Rally Sweden, a potential headache.

The Swedish relies on hard, cold roads and preferably heavy snow to minimise environmental damage.

But the roads near Karlstad were reportedly bone dry as we closed for press, and with the event only three weeks away, some team officials are becoming concerned.

The rally had to be cancelled in 1990 due to warm weather.

Health problems likely to keep team boss out

Peugeot rally team boss Jean-Pierre Nicolas missed the Monte Carlo Rally because of ill health, and might not return until the Safari next month.

The Frenchman went into hospital for an operation on his intestine one week before the opening round of the 2000 season.

Peugeot Sport chief Corrado Provera said: "We're missing him terribly. But he will return as soon as he is ready, not before."

AUTOSPORT wishes Nicolas a swift and full recovery.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former WRC Gp N frontrunner Uwe Nittel returned to the series on the Monte Carlo Rally. The German led the category in his Mitsubishi Lancer until fuel pump failure intervened. He has entered the Swedish, and hopes to contest a full programme this season.

FIA technical delegate Gabriele Cadringer finished 56th on his latest attempt at the Monte Carlo Rally. The Italian was driving a SEAT Ibiza TDI.

The sole British privateer on the Monte, Nigel Heath, was forced to retire on the second morning. He and Chris Patterson had hit differential problems during the previous evening, and repairs sent the Subaru crew one minute OTL.

Juha Kankkunen's navigator, Juha Repo, only just made the start of the Monte after recovering from 'flu. The Finn was even "rested" during the pre-event shakedown, where Ken Rees co-drove for the four-times world champion.



British championship-winning co-driver Kaj Lindstrom (right) picked up the silverware from MSA boss John Quenby at the association's annual dinner last weekend. Driver Tapio Laukkanen is still trying to shake off a dose of Christmas 'flu.

Former British Rally Championship Production Cup winner Marko Patti has tested the Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VI he will use on this year's series. "It's a very good car, run by the same winning team of 1997," he said. "I feel very confident we can do it again."

The Volkswagen Golf turbodiesel, which finished second overall on last year's Manx International Rally, will no longer be seen on the British Rally Championship. The car is destined for Austria.

Former British champion Mark Higgins was scheduled to test his new Vauxhall Astra in mid-Wales early this week. "I'm very much looking forward to it," he said. "The Vauxhall is very light and fast, and we're testing now because we want to be as well prepared for the championship as possible."

Reigning British champ Tapio Laukkanen expects to test his new Golf early next month, although plans to run the car in France have reportedly now been scrapped. Mileage in Wales seems more likely. VW has yet to confirm a second driver for 2000.

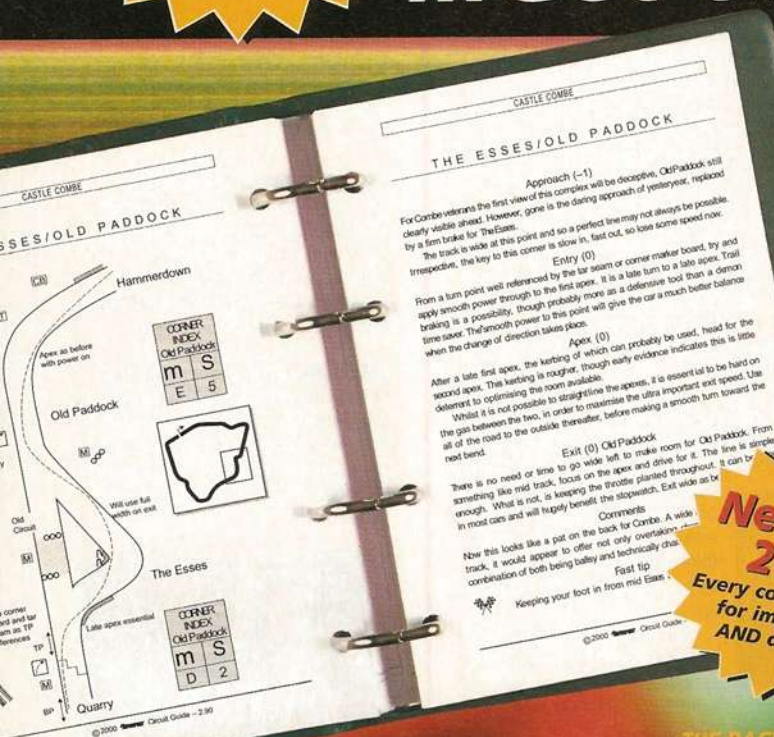
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BRC could stick with F2 in 2001

The Mobil 1 British Championship is considering shunning World Rally Cars in 2001 and opting for a smaller category than its current formula instead.

A manufacturers' meeting last week decided to wait for the FIA's forthcoming "Division Two" blueprint, which could come within the next month. A further meeting on February 14 will then discuss the new proposals in detail, and formulate the way ahead for the British series.

Manufacturer representatives have been lobbying for a cheaper

formula, with a price ceiling of around £50,000 per car. Rumours suggest that the FIA's idea of "Division Two" will be based around a 1600cc engine.

Other proposals include one backed by Vauxhall boss Mike Nicholson, that would return the BRC to standard Formula Two, without expensive kit car engines and transmission technology.

If the Motor Sports Association decides to adopt either proposal, it would be faced with the awkward decision of whether to still admit the current crop of turbocharged,

four-wheel drive Group N cars.

Since drivers like David Higgins and Dom Buckley have used such machines to harry the F2 kit cars, they could boast a performance advantage over the new formula.

The current line-up of events would also query the wisdom of removing a sizeable percentage of their entry lists.

Industry insiders have suggested that the FIA's proposals are "extremely unlikely" to break cover for at least six months, which could leave any decision-making process desperately short of time.

FORMULA TWO LONG?

1995

The first F2 championship was won by Alister McRae and Nissan, although they had to fight off opposition from Gwyndaf Evans and Gregoire de Mevius. But the rallies themselves could still be won by four-wheel drive cars.



McRae lifted spoils in Nissan Sunny

1996

Utter dominance from Gwyndaf Evans and Ford, in the last season to feature "ordinary" F2 cars instead of expensive kit machinery.

1997

The best BRC year of the decade. Five drivers went to the Isle of Man with a chance of the title: Mark Higgins emerged victorious.

1998

Martin Rowe kept his nose ahead of Gwyndaf Evans and Alister McRae to claim a popular win.

1999

Tapio Laukkanen romped to the title with a round to spare

A return to standard Formula 2 regulations has been mooted by Vauxhall



Dakar hit by massive accident

Jean-Louis Schlesser won the Paris-Dakar-Cairo rally, but his success was overshadowed by a huge accident that wiped out the entire Mitsubishi team and the Nissan of Gregoire de Mevius.

The Belgian rally ace, and Pajero drivers Kenjiro Shinozuka, Miguel Prieto and Carlos Sousa, strayed one kilometre off the recommended route and flew over a 35-metre drop on the blind side of a sand dune.

Sousa, his co-driver Joao Manual Luz and Shinozuka's navigator Dominique Serieys were seriously injured and all eight crew members had to be airlifted to hospitals.

Luz underwent surgery to save the use of his legs, and other injuries ranged from concussion to cracked vertebrae.

The 22nd running of the event had already been hurt by a terrorist threat in Niger that forced organiser TSO to airlift the entire rally. An injured African child on an early stage and adverse press in the important French market will prove difficult obstacles to overcome.

Mitsubishi bosses are already questioning the wisdom of returning for another attempt. "The regulations need looking at quickly," said team manager Ulrich Brehmer.

Miguel Prieto examines the remains of his Mitsubishi



Portuguese Peugeot stalwart Aduzilo Lopes is the first privateer to get a 206 WRC. He'll use the car on his national series and selected WRC rounds this year

Gp N costs will hit privateers

British championship Group N teams could be put off registering for series points by an entry fee price hike, according to one leading competitor.

Paul Barrett, whose Canterbury-based team lifted the Production Cup title with David Higgins last year, is concerned that manufacturer-rate entry fees will add £10,000 onto privateer budgets that have already been stretched by television fees.

"We knew about the TV fees and that they had to be paid up front," he said. "That's fair and proper. But we're also being asked to pay

manufacturer entry costs to each round. I'm not so sure about that, when you consider that we can't actually compete in a manufacturers' championship.

"I've worked out we'll have to pay about £27,000 in registration and entry fees before we even get across the line in Wales," he added. "It's going to be tough for us, and I'm sure other Gp N teams are thinking the same."

The large up-front costs are said to be deterring many Gp N privateers from trying to upset the manufacturer F2 cars in the overall series standings.

AUTOSPORT

GIVE BUTTON TIME

Amid all the euphoria surrounding Jenson Button's fairy tale graduation to Formula 1, it's important to sound a note of caution: don't expect too much of him.

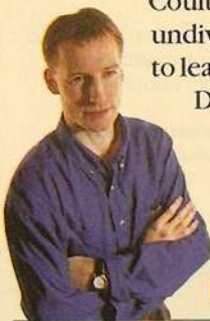
That's all very well, you say, but hasn't AUTOSPORT been trumpeting his cause for the past three weeks? Erm, guilty as charged. But it's one thing to say 'Give him a chance', quite another to demand instant heroics.

Michael Schumacher made an immediate impact, and the German's meteoric rise is at the root of Frank Williams' willingness to gamble on Button. But Schumacher entered F1 with thousands of miles of sportscar testing, and racing, under his belt. His was an unknown talent merely because nobody in F1 could see beyond the end of their nose.

Button, by contrast, has neither Schumacher's experience, nor the ultra-competitive equipment enjoyed by Williams predecessors Nigel Mansell, Damon Hill and David Coulthard. What he DOES have, is the undivided attention of a media gravy train eager to leave the station at which it was dumped by Damon Hill.

The 20-year-old needs time to acclimatise if his career is not to be damaged, like that of Jos Verstappen, by flying too high too soon. Button has everyone's support. Now he needs some patience.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK



Burns has shone but been let down by his Subaru

Although it was ultimately to end in failure, Richard Burns' drive on the Monte Carlo Rally marked him out as favourite for this year's world championship.

Despite the fact that it was only the Englishman's third visit to the event, he showed confidence and pace through every one of the treacherous kilometres he contested.

Once again, his car let him down in the most unexpected fashion. It seemed that Burns was within striking distance of Tommi Makinen when he retired, and poised to take the lead.

If the unreliability of the Subaru again denies Burns a world title, it will be truly an injustice.

Carla Botham
Barrow-in-Furness



Letter of the week wins a copy of Jim Bamber's latest cartoon collection, *The Pits 7*, priced £4.99 and available now from all good bookshops, or telephone: 01795 414817. PLEASE ENSURE YOUR ADDRESS IS INCLUDED ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Caught in the spin

It would be a cruel waste of talent if Williams were to shun Juan Pablo Montoya in place of the over-hyped Jenson Button.

I can only hope that, if this is the case, another top Grand Prix team will employ him, very much as Ferrari did with Gilles Villeneuve when he was rejected by McLaren in 1977.

It seems that Formula 1 is run increasingly as a PR exercise, with drivers chosen on the basis of their headline-grabbing abilities rather than their skill behind the wheel.

Button should be wary of what happened to Jos Verstappen, a highly rated but inexperienced driver put in a team alongside Michael Schumacher in '94. He was almost completely written off before the end of his first season in F1.

If Button does possess the talent to be an F1 star, he should be given the opportunity to develop it further in the lower formulae, rather than in the glaring spotlight of a Williams F1

seat. There any less-than-convincing performance could end his top-line career before it had even started.

Colin Wright
Bury St Edmunds

Starter kit

A word of advice for the Peugeot World Rally team. The AA, like other motoring organisations, operates a very useful and reliable service called "home start." This is designed to get your car going if it refuses to leave your driveway. After the laughable performance on the Monte Carlo Rally - where all three cars refused to fire up - Peugeot boss Corrado Provera could do well to give them a call.

Only a couple of snags, though. I don't think they do multiple call-outs, you can only use them a certain number of times a year, and they may take longer to arrive than the 15 minutes allowed to start at the beginning of a leg. *Zut alors...*

Bill Corner
Rotherham

Jos Verstappen might have been given too much too early





Foulston will leave happy fans at Brands

True or Foulston?

I am not unhappy that Nicola Foulston has left Brands Hatch. Ever since she took over the circuit, motorsport has taken a back seat to commercial ventures.

The circuit offers an unparalleled view and should be holding quality meetings on a regular basis.

If Foulston had been serious about motorsport at Brands Hatch, rather than her balance sheet, she would not have let major championships pass up the opportunity to race on the excellent Grand Prix circuit.

At least there is no pretence anymore that the track is anything other than just another asset of a major corporation.

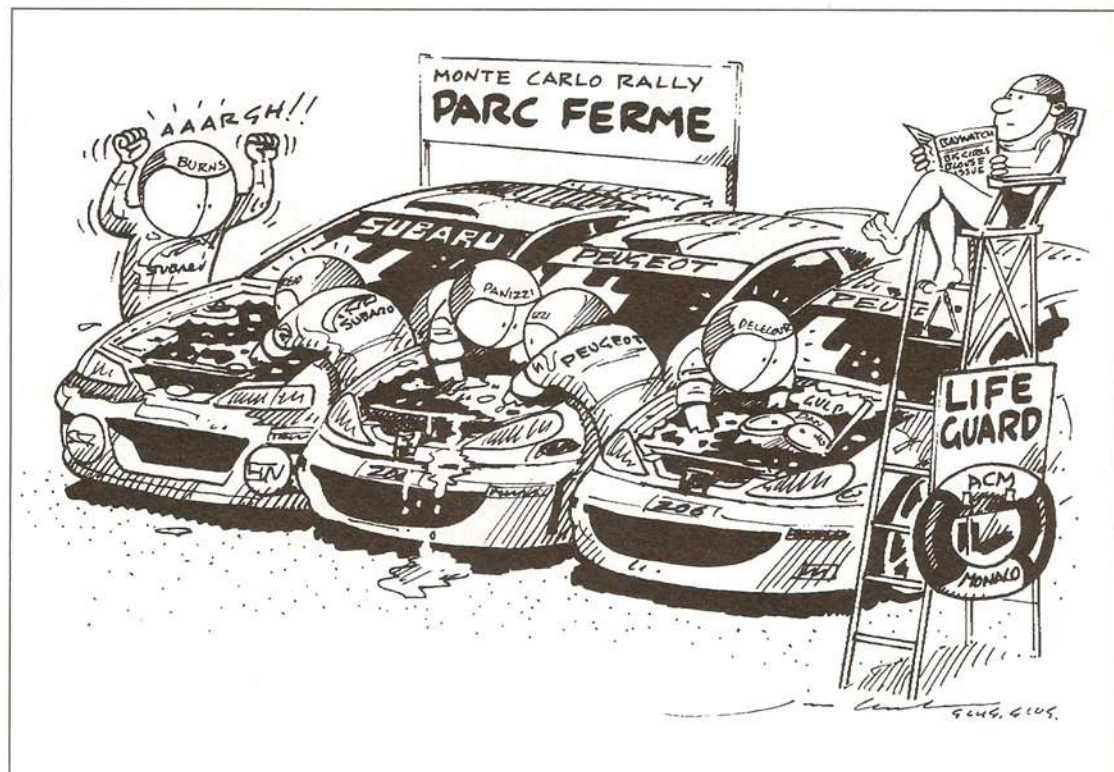
It was interesting to read in the article announcing her departure that the highlights of her time in charge included a stock market flotation and a huge increase in the share price. Sadly, there was no mention of the track's greatest races.

Good luck Nicola in your next commercial venture. Just don't take over another race track.

Steve Butler
via e-mail



Will Hockenheim be altered for the better?



On the wrong track

When I heard that the Hockenheim circuit was to be shortened, I saw a perfect opportunity to replace those horrible straights.

However, it would appear that they are attempting to produce a circuit even more pathetic than the dreadful A1-Ring in Austria. Mickey Mouse strikes again!

Similarly, I would love to see the British Grand Prix at Brands Hatch again, but not if it means the loss of the challenging dip before Hawthorn's and the introduction of an awful dog-leg at Clearways.

Stick to Silverstone, and leave Brands as it is - a real racing circuit.
Barry Boor
via e-mail

Don't knock it

A mass of memories came flooding back to me after I read your recent article on issue number one of

AUTOSPORT. The reason was that I have bought the magazine since that very first issue.

Your reference to the BRMs at Silverstone reminded me that I was standing at Club Corner that very day. After the warm-up lap the tannoy announced, "The flag is up - and they're off." I said loudly to the group around me, "...except for Raymond Sommer..." and the commentator repeated those exact words as the car was pushed away.

I very much enjoyed the trip back through time, but I don't think that you should have knocked the first issue quite as you did. I remember what a great innovation it was and an immediate success.

AUTOSPORT has always been compulsory reading for me, the only disadvantage being that I'm obviously 50 years older now!

Fred Wallis
Marbella

XMAS PRIZE WINNERS

The following winners of our 1999 Christmas quiz each receive a pair of tickets to this year's British Grand Prix at Silverstone:

Dr GMF McElligott	London
Mr A Brooks	Surrey
Jenny Etheridge	Leicester
John Senior	Evesham
Michael Key	Newcastle-under-Lyme

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WHAT THE PAPERS SAY WITH ANTHONY PEACOCK

Surely one man's arrival on the world scene will not be feted in the same way until the second coming. Or so you would believe if you opened up the papers on Tuesday morning and learnt that Williams had signed up Jenson Button. Our intergalactic correspondent even tells us that young Jenson has made virtual page 233a of the Zog Car Club Gazette.

Back to more terrestrial reports. "Jenson Button the go-kart ace joins big boys," says *The Times*. What's the fuss about? He has apparently raced in Formula 1 already, because the paper's picture of his Formula Ford was apparently taken "in the Australian Grand Prix."

"Button up for a high-speed drive into the history books," says *The Daily Mail*. "Just hours after bursting into tears at the news that his lifelong wish had been granted," it writes, "Jenson

Button focused on becoming the youngest world champion in Formula 1 history."

The youngster is not the apple of everybody's eye. Former champion and Williams driver Jacques Villeneuve tells *The Sun*: "No experienced driver would go there anyway." *The Sun* also delights in pointing out that Button failed his driving test first time round.

Who cares? *The Times* hails him as

"One man's arrival will not be feted in the same way until the second coming"

"the best potential talent in Formula 1 for a generation."

The other main event was the Monte Carlo Rally, and its good to see the world championship finally starting to

get the sort of recognition it deserves in the national press. The 68th Monte - "the oldest and arguably the most prestigious rally of all," according to *The Guardian* - laced the sort of drama that Euripides would be proud of. "Richard Burns wasted little time in proving his world championship credentials," reported *The Independent*, but what's the use of that if your car won't start on day two?

Colin McRae's problems threw his pre-event interview with *The Express* into stark relief. "I am just looking at this as a new year," he states, "and the chance to get everything right."



Britain's boy racer hits the big time

Speaking of general rectitude, *The Daily Mail* looks at "Iron" Mike Tyson's itinerary. "Yesterday he was spending his more of his booty having spent his first day in London looking at a £600,000 Williams sports car." I think not. McLaren, possibly?



promising *adj.* 1. showing
promise of favourable
development or future success.

1989 David Coulthard Formula 1 title contender with McLaren 1990 Gareth Rees 1996 British F3000 Champion 1991 Oliver Gavin 1995 British Formula 3 Champion 1992 Dario Franchitti CART Champ Car title contender 1993 Ralph Firman 1996 British F3 Champion 1994 Jamie Davies F3000 race winner 1995 Jonny Kane 1997 British Formula 3 Champion 1996 Darren Turner Formula 1 test driver for McLaren, Jordan and Arrows 1997 Andrew Kirkaldy runner-up 1998 EFDA Euroseries Championship 1998 Jenson Button BMW WilliamsF1 Team driver

CONGRATULATIONS FROM AUTOSPORT





NIGEL ROEBUCK

It is Monday afternoon as I write, and of course the story of the moment is Jenson Button's signing for Williams. When I spoke to FW and to Patrick Head last week, both were keen to stress that no decision had been taken, that a further test would be required to determine the identity of Ralf Schumacher's team mate in the coming season.

I didn't disbelieve them. Head, while clearly impressed by Button's initial outing in the car at Jerez, was at pains not to praise the youngster too highly, for, apart from anything else, this would not have been fair to Bruno Junqueira, who had yet to drive the Williams-BMW when it was working properly. Everything would depend on the outcome of the test at Barcelona.

In common with most of my colleagues, however, I felt that the wind was blowing Button's way, that it would take something unexpected for Junqueira to get the ride. On Sunday morning Bruno's best time, in 26 laps, was 1m23.50s; in the afternoon Jenson ran 21 laps, his fastest 1m23.34s.

For all the hype about this being 'a shoot-out', it is pretty unlikely that sixteen-hundredths of a second tipped the scale in Button's favour. More crucial, I am sure, was a feeling in the team that here, perhaps, was one of those talents which comes along only two or three times in a generation, that the opportunity to sign Jenson could not be passed up.

Although Williams has become known as a team which favours experienced drivers, so Frank has admitted to a sinking feeling that morning at Spa, in 1991, when Michael Schumacher appeared in a Formula 1 car for the first time. "Immediately, it was obvious he

was bloody special - and he was driving for EJ, not me..."

Others had the same impression, and one of them - Flavio Briatore - wasn't slow to act. At once he set about separating Schumacher from his Jordan contract, and, lo, by the time of the next race, at Monza, Michael was a Benetton driver.

Even more than in the case of

It seemed to me that what the team needed was Montoya, but that, at least for 2000, was out of the question, for Juan Pablo remains firmly contracted to Chip Ganassi.

When Stefan Johansson joined Alain Prost at McLaren in '87, he knew that it was for one season only, that Senna would be arriving in '88, and he accepted the

rungs on the ladder, hop from F3 to F1 without even breaking into a sweat.

I knew, too, that Jenson's Prost test, shortly before Christmas, had made a powerful impression on Alain and others in the team, not least because he had so quickly got down to good times, and done so without making any mistakes. Given that Prost, like Jackie Stewart, is a man somewhat underwhelmed by the overall level of talent in contemporary F1, his reaction to Button's performance carries unusual weight.

While it delights me to see another Englishman among the GP drivers, so it is difficult not to feel a measure of sympathy for Junqueira - for the opportunity to come into F1 with a top team rarely arises, and he obviously gave a good account of himself.

After the somewhat abortive session at Jerez, Patrick Head said how impressed he had been by the calm of both Button and Junqueira in circumstances which could have caused nerves to unravel. Persistent oil system problems with the Williams-BMW led to whole days of virtual inactivity at Jerez, and it was the same at Barcelona last week.

Not until Sunday did the car run satisfactorily, and by then time was indeed pressing, for the following morning the new FW22 was to be launched, the identity of the sponsor - and the number two driver - to be announced.

If there were no surprises in the end, you have to wonder how Montoya, preparing to defend his CART title, will have responded to the news of Button's signing. At Goodwood, in the autumn of '98, P Head confirmed to me that the Williams drivers for '99 were to be Alex Zanardi and Schumacher Jr, but he made a point of stressing Montoya's potential.

"Had we been able to keep Jacques [Villeneuve]," Patrick said that day, "we probably would have gone with Juan Pablo alongside him, but, having made the decision to run Alex - who hasn't been in F1 for several years - we thought it wouldn't be very sensible to have a first-year new guy in the other car, and that's why we've chosen Ralf. Having said that, Montoya is obviously hugely talented; he's going off to CART now, but he must have a great future in F1 at some point - with us, I hope."

Yes - if there's a place for him. ■

"It delights me to see another Englishman among the GP drivers"

Schumacher, though, Williams must have been haunted down the years by his failure to sign another driver who turned out rather well. Ayrton Senna's first F1 test, at Donington in the summer of '83, was in a Williams, after all, yet the following season he made his Grand Prix debut in a Toleman, and 10 years would pass before he finally signed for Frank.

Shortly before the New Year, I had an informal chat with Williams, and when the question of his second driver arose, various names - all previously mooted, and none of them very exciting - came up.

situation with equanimity. "Who turns down a McLaren drive?" he said. "Even if it's not for long?" In the same way, a likely Williams scenario for this season looked to be Ralf Schumacher, plus a temporary number two - who could perhaps stand aside for Montoya in 2001.

Then Frank said, "What about Button? Do you think he's ready for F1?" This was out of the blue, and I had to say I couldn't answer - I hadn't seen enough of him. That said, though, the belief has always been that a racing driver of really immense natural ability can skip



Button (left) and Junqueira both tested for Williams but the Englishman pipped his rival to the drive

Bernard Sutton



Michael Schumacher was snapped up by Benetton in '91 when his talent shone

WHAT'S ON

THE TRACK

SUN JANUARY 30

Indy Racing League

Delphi Disney World Indy 200 (USA) round one of 10

THE BOX

THURS JANUARY 27

BRITISH EUROSPORT 2200-2300

Monte Carlo Rally

FRI JANUARY 28

ITV2 1930-2000 AUTOSPORT

International

SAT JANUARY 29

BBC 1 1320-1350 Monte Carlo Rally

CHANNEL 4 1100-1130 Champions

of the Future

ITV Meridian 1350-1420

AUTOSPORT International

SKY SPORTS 2 1200-1300

Max Power, 2200-0000 Indy

Racing League

SUN JANUARY 30

ITV 1600-1730 AUTOSPORT

International, (Check local press

for regional variations)

SKY SPORTS 2 0430-0530

Max Power

MON JANUARY 31

SKY SPORTS 3 1230-1530 World

Motor Sport, 1900-2200 World

Motor Sport

TUES FEBRUARY 1

CHANNEL 5 0235-0455 FedEx

Season Review

SKY SPORTS 1 1100-1200

Max Power

SKY SPORTS 2 1530-1830 World

Motor Sport

SKY SPORTS 3 2300-2330 A To Z

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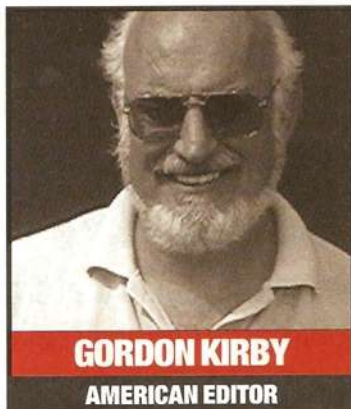
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See page 360



GORDON KIRBY
AMERICAN EDITOR

Alex Zanardi's dispiriting odyssey with Williams F1 is now formally finished. Sad to say, I expected this from the beginning. When he first admitted to me in July of 1998 that he was talking to Williams about going back to Formula 1, I was filled with foreboding, primarily because I believed he was considering the move for all the wrong reasons.

"His fluid, artistic style didn't adapt well to the brutal methods required"

Rather than looking pragmatically at where Williams was in its historical development, it seemed to me that Zanardi was ready to return to Europe because he had become a family man. He wanted to raise his new-born son at home in Europe, and he wanted to respect his wife's wishes to stay away from oval tracks.

After winning the CART championship in '97, Zanardi was on his way to a second title, so why not use that notoriety to return to the safer, more profitable world of F1? During the summer of '98, all conversations with the Italian about any shortcomings that might

Fall guy left out on a limb

After three years in Champ Cars, Alex Zanardi was flavour of the month – things aren't so sweet now



Double champ: Zanardi dominated CART in his three years in the US

exist at Williams were quietly rebutted or rejected. He believed the team was just as good as ever, and ready to rebound from any signs of decline.

Now, Zanardi has become the most spectacular victim of the team's unfortunate fade from the sharp end of the grid. Each of Damon Hill, Jacques Villeneuve and Heinz-Harald Frentzen got a taste of this, but nobody suffered as much as Zanardi. Not only was his sensitive, thoughtful personality antithetical to the team's approach, but his car was spectacularly unreliable, a factor that is always a mark of a team in decline.

This is not to say Zanardi didn't stumble himself. He simply didn't come to terms with those dreaded, grooved tyres. Nor did his fluid, artistic style adapt well to the brutal methods of braking, turning and power application which are required in a modern F1 car. I wonder if such drivers as Juan-Manuel Fangio and Sir Stirling Moss would feel at home in today's cars.

Last week, I talked to an old friend of mine who is a software and data analysis expert. He worked with Williams during the active suspension era and has broad experience with top teams across all forms of the sport – F1, Champ Cars, sports cars, and 500 cc motorcycle racing. This fellow is a long-time friend of Williams and Patrick Head, so I won't use his name.

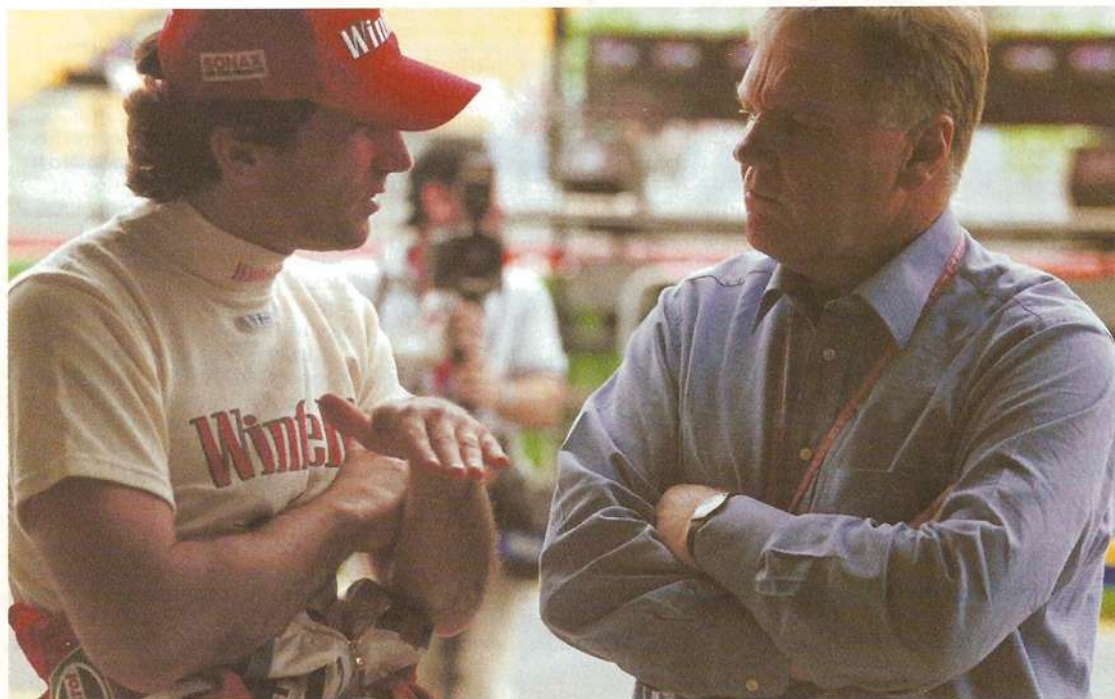
"I have to say I think Williams made a terrible mistake when they let Adrian Newey go," said my boffin friend. "They just haven't been able to replace him, have they?"

"I like and respect Frank and Patrick a great deal, but I have to say that they're at different stages of their lives. They're not the young, totally committed guys they once were," he said.

Meanwhile, what will Zanardi do? Will he sit out the year, retire, or return to Champ Cars? Mo Nunn, who engineered Alex's car for his three very successful years with Ganassi's team, hopes Zanardi will drive for his new Mercedes-powered outfit later this year. Right now, Nunn is trying to complete a deal for Tony Kanaan to lead his new team, and says it's impossible for him to run a second car until later in the year.

"I've said to Alex maybe he could test for us, and maybe do a few races later in the year. If he wants to do it, I'd love to have him."

Frentzen proved last year that there is life after Williams. Maybe Zanardi will demonstrate the same resurgence later this season. ■



Master and servant: Zanardi joined Williams hoping that the team would soon be back up to speed, but Head saw fit to sack him



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Moo-ve over – unfortunately for Stig Blomqvist's mechanic, the cow didn't as he was driving the Sierra Cosworth from Mombasa to Nairobi the morning before scrutineering on the 1987 Safari Rally. The hapless spannerman rolled and wrote one of Ford's finest off



THEN AS NOW

10 YEARS AGO



The Ferraris were quickest at Ricard

The interim Ferrari 640s of Alain Prost and Nigel Mansell were quickest in a test at Paul Ricard (AUTOSPORT, January 25, 1990). The new pairing finished over one second ahead of Philippe Alliot's Ligier JS33 and the Benetton B 189 of Alessandro Nannini.

Plans for a proposed non-championship Formula 1 race at Donington Park continued to gain strength. Although yet to receive official sanction, a tentative date was set for mid April with many teams expressing an interest in competing.

20 YEARS AGO

Tyre manufacturer Goodyear stepped in to resolve the impasse between the warring USAC and CART organisations – the governing bodies of American single-seater racing (AUTOSPORT, January 24, 1980). The Akron giant threatened to reduce its contribution to both series unless they reached agreement to race together.

Meanwhile, veteran racer Ken Smith took his March 79B to victory in the opening heat of the New Zealand Grand Prix, held at Pukekohe. Race two was won by Steve Millen in his Ralt RT1. Future Grand Prix drivers Andrea de Cesaris and Huub Rothengatter claimed top-four spots in both events.

30 YEARS AGO

Jean-Pierre Beltoise and Henri Pescarolo, driving a Matra 630/650, were clear winners of the Buenos Aires 1000km race (AUTOSPORT, January 22, 1970). Closest rivals Jochen Rindt and Alex Soler-Roig chased the duo hard before settling for second in their Porsche 908.

Plans were unveiled for the new Paul Ricard circuit in southern France. The advanced venue, which would hold sportscar and Formula 2 races in 1970, seemed poised to host the 1971 French Grand Prix.

40 YEARS AGO

Enzo Ferrari expressed his delight after new signing Wolfgang von Trips impressed in his first drive in a Ferrari Dino 246 Formula 1 car at Modena (AUTOSPORT, January 22, 1960). Over 300 cars edged toward southern



Von Trips caught the eye of Enzo Ferrari

France as the Monte Carlo Rally started from nine diverse European departure points including Glasgow, Oslo and Frankfurt.

ANNIVERSARIES

Jan 27: George Follmer (b 1934), Moreno Soli (b 1951), Bob Dayson (b 1939)

Jan 28: Nick Carr (b 1953), Philippe Siffert (b 1971), Ian Taylor (b 1947, d June 7, 1992), Bernd Rosemeyer (d 1938)

Jan 29: Hans Ferti (b 1960), Wolfgang Konig (b 1953), Jody Scheckter (b 1950), Patrick Snyers (b 1958), Paul Warwick (b 1969, d July 21, 1991)

Jan 30: Rudolf Caracciola (b 1901, d Sept 28, 1959), Bernard Dudot (b 1939), Ferdinand Porsche (d 1952)

Jan 31: Mauro Baldi (b 1954), Jo Bonnier (b 1930), JJ Lehto (b 1966), Rick Wilson (b 1953)

Feb 1: Christian Geistdorfer (b 1953), Bjorn Skogstad (b 1961), David Warnock (b 1962)

Feb 2: Roy Woodhouse (b 1933), Tony Shelly (b 1937)

Feb 2: Roger Williamson (b 1948, d 1973), Roy Woodhouse (b 1933)



Scheckter, 50



Dudot, 61



Lehto, 34

ARMCHAIR ENTHUSIAST

British Rally Championship Review

By BHP. Distributed by Duke Video (01624 640000)

Priced £12.99

From claggy mud to polished tarmac, the British Rally Championship is an arena which tests drivers' skills to the maximum.

Film company BHP, responsible for the championship's round-by-round TV coverage on Channel 4, has produced a stunning video of the season's highlights.

It lasts for over two hours but you're left wanting more at the finish.

Clever camera angles, in-car footage, interviews, and a punchy script all keeps you interested.

The season review succeeds in conveying the atmosphere as well as the facts. The pity is that achievements of Group N cars are not correctly documented – but this is a political issue which is no fault of the film-makers.

That aside, this is the best British championship video yet. Once again, it makes use of amateur

footage to capture the accidents the professionals missed and results graphics at the end of each round allow you to see how the title race developed.

This video is the next best thing to actually sitting inside the car. Some of the offs – Martin Rowe and Tapio Laukkanen in Ulster, and Mark Higgins on the Isle of Man – are best witnessed from inside the cockpit.

The microphones attached to the drivers and co-drivers also allow you to learn some interesting vocabulary in Finnish.

In-depth interviews with the drivers tell you what is happening in an even more eloquent way, and the video is a fabulous memento of Britain's most spectacular championship.

It's priced £12.99 and is available direct from Duke Video by phoning 01624 640000. Alternatively, visit your local shop. **Anthony Peacock**



All the best British rally action from last year caught on video

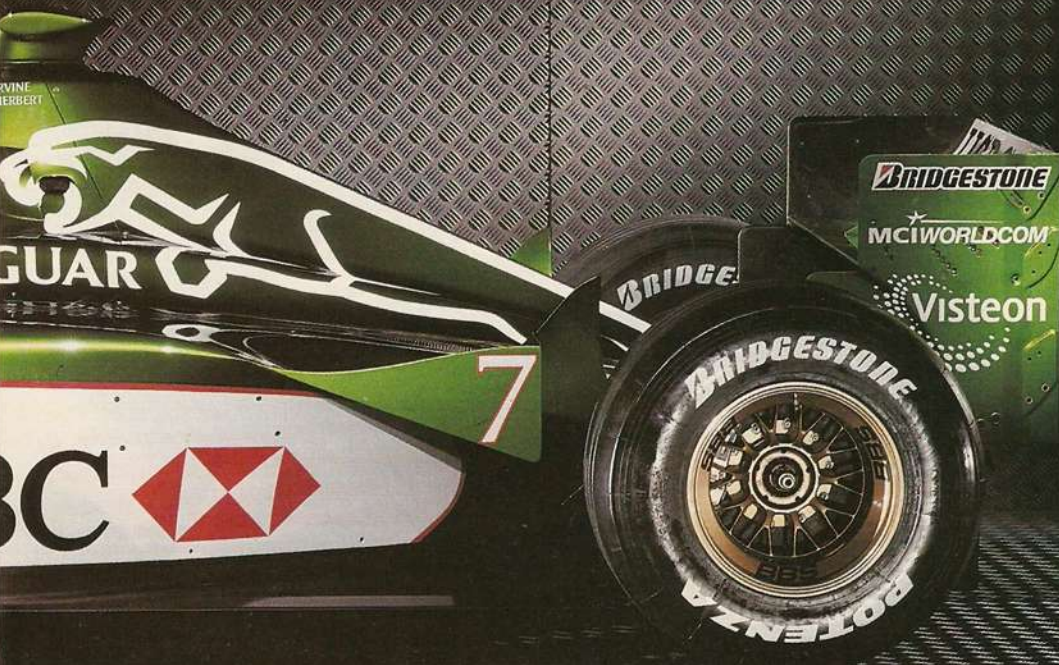
GRAND PRIX 2000

ADDING THE JAGGED EDGE





Jaguar's launch made much of the all-English charisma now boosting Ford power and Stewart know-how. But will it go faster for it?



The lean mean green machine was paraded at Lords in its new colour scheme – inspired by the artist's impression published in *AUTOSPORT* on November 19, 1998. Inset: drivers Herbert (left) and Irvine in attendance



An ideal world would have two institutions sacred to all Englishmen: cricket and Jaguar. That was the scenario painted by the marque's boss Wolfgang Reitzle as he launched the new R1 in cricket's most hallowed vaults.

"Lords is as important to the cricket fan as Silverstone, Le Mans and Indy together are to the racing fan," he said. "It is the spiritual home in the same way that the race track is the spiritual home of Jaguar."

The John Bullish talk of tradition and the strains of Shirley Bassey's "history repeating itself" diverted attention from the fact that Jaguar is a brand new team with everything to prove in Formula 1.

Even so, there were reminders of past glories from the sportscar era, such as a line-up of Le Mans-winning cars that included the legendary D-type and the 1988 XJR LM.

The transfer of sporting heritage will filter down to the road cars, as every model in the range receives a sporting variant prefixed "R" – just like the green-and-white car that shrugged off its wraps last Tuesday.

Purists may be disappointed in the abundance of white on the

"The race track is the spiritual home of Jaguar"

WOLFGANG REITZLE

livery, but there are many areas where it's not good to be *too* green. The wealth of experience in the team – from Jackie Stewart to Eddie Irvine – should build on the progress made by Stewart last year.

When you add massive support from global manufacturing giant Ford, the sport's leading engine constructor, all the ingredients appear to be in place.

There's only one thing that money can't buy. Charisma. "Jaguar has an emotional appeal," said Reitzle "that only one other constructor, which has traditionally raced in red, can match."

Time will tell if he is right. ■

UNDER THE SKIN OF THE BIG CAT

The team has once again drawn heavily on the previous season's McLaren design to update last year's Stewart. The resulting Jaguar looks as if it could have plenty of bite. By Andrew Benson

PRE-SEASON TALK – ONE YEAR AGO

Stewart-Ford 1999 results: one win, three podium finishes, fourth in constructors' championship

AUTOSPORT: "The Stewart team is targeting the might of Williams with its new Formula 1 car."

Alan Jenkins (technical director): "I would be surprised, not just disappointed, if the car wasn't a significant step. Every part represents a big step, and the engine will be a quantum leap. I wouldn't be surprised if it was as good as anything out there."

AUTOSPORT: "The SF-3 represents the first product of a team newly empowered by the wisdom of experience, as well as the resources to back up the gung ho of partner Ford."

Paul Stewart (managing director): "I'm in more of a position to do something about problems. We're positioned to attack, whereas we entered last year in an extremely defensive mode."

TWO YEARS AGO

1998 results: eighth in constructors' championship

AUTOSPORT: "Stewart knows it needs to take giant leaps very quickly to achieve its ambitious goals, and that is why the team's technical department has pushed the boat out, incorporating as much high technology as it can into its new car, the SF-2."

Andy le Fleming (chief engineer): "We had to take a step forward. There is an element of risk, and there may be reliability issues later on, but it's something we have to do now."

AUTOSPORT: "More than one team member admits to wondering whether the new car is a step too far in the

context of the team's reliability record in '97, but if it works you can be sure that the rest of Formula 1 will be hot on Stewart's heels."

Jackie Stewart (team chairman): "I want constant top 10 performances and top six finishes so we get more than 10 points in the season. But it's not easy when you're up against major players such as Sauber and Prost."

THREE YEARS AGO

Stewart-Ford '97 debut year: one podium, ninth in constructors' championship

Alan Jenkins (technical director): "We haven't gone for an entry-level car in any respect. We've gone for a car we could happily wheel out alongside any on the grid. You can't do it any other way."

Jackie Stewart (team chairman): "I'm not going to commit to being in the middle, the back or the front. I know we can't be on the front row."

Paul Stewart (managing director): "We feel like we've met the expectations that we set ourselves. We now have to

confound the sceptics and produce the results."

AUTOSPORT: "Jackie Stewart is a pragmatic man who has passed on his sense of the achievable to his son, and neither they, nor anyone in the team, is under any illusions as to the size of the task ahead of them."





ENGINE

Last year's Ford engine, built by the company's Cosworth specialists, attracted envious glances from rival teams, and there looks likely to be more of the same in 2000.

The V10 was the lightest on the grid at a reputed 99kg, and the second most powerful with an estimated 810-20bhp. Only McLaren's Mercedes unit had more grunt, and then only just.

Cosworth's Formula 1 project leader, Nick Hayes, is notoriously cagey about his products. He will allow, though, that the new engine is a revision of the old one and improved in most areas. So it will be lighter and more powerful.

FUEL TANK

Tank size was one of Stewart's biggest weaknesses last year – it simply wasn't big enough. It had been designed with the thought that most races would feature at least two fuel stops, but with the harder tyres, it turned out that teams often made less stops than in 1998, and therefore a larger tank was an advantage.

This turned out to be a constant bug-bear for the team throughout the season, and cost them a fair number of points to better equipped teams. As a result, this year's tank is much larger, allowing much greater flexibility.

Exactly how large the tank remains a closely-guarded secret, because it is such an important aspect of race strategy.

AERODYNAMICS

The new Jaguar-Cosworth R1 is a logical development of its predecessor, the Stewart-Ford SF-3, which itself drew heavily from the ultra-successful 1998 title-winning McLaren-Mercedes MP4-13. It is little surprise, then, that the new Jaguar bears a strong resemblance to the '99 McLaren MP4-14.

The nose is relatively low in Formula 1 terms, and the large barge boards follow a trend that McLaren perfected in '98 and Stewart pursued in '99. They look to be an exact copy of those that were taken to the Japanese Grand Prix by McLaren last year but not used (see drawing). The rear aerodynamics of the Jaguar look very similar to last year's McLaren. The sidepods are perhaps a little higher, but the inward sweep of the lower bodywork, commonly known as the Coke-bottle shape, is just like McLaren's, as is the shape of its outward curve up from the floor of the car.

Technical director Gary Anderson says: "You recognise what you want to do better. Any racing car is a logical development [of its predecessor]. We couldn't come in with this bright new concept and say: 'Let's do it, it's going to revolutionise it,' because we're not strong enough yet [as a company]. I'm trying to get the team strong enough so we can do those things, and it will happen."

OVERALL DESIGN

Technical boss Gary Anderson is very proud of his new baby, particularly, he claims, because it includes a lot of ground-breaking technology. What those new bits are, though, he will not say.

Part of the aim of those new parts was to simplify the overall layout of the car. F1 machines are now operated totally by hydraulics and electronics, and as such they are necessarily very complex. What Anderson and his team have tried to do with the R1, he says, is to use the high technology to make the car easier to operate and avoid unnecessary complication.

Included in all these changes, as with any other new car, are a lighter weight, a lower centre of gravity and a better weight distribution. These were all areas in which the last Stewart was already strong.

Jaguar's new barge boards (main picture) are based upon ones McLaren decided not to use in the Japanese GP last year (diagram). The Big Cat also sports similar Gurney flaps (1) as McLaren. The boards differ from other designs by running further forward and sloping into the chassis (arrow)

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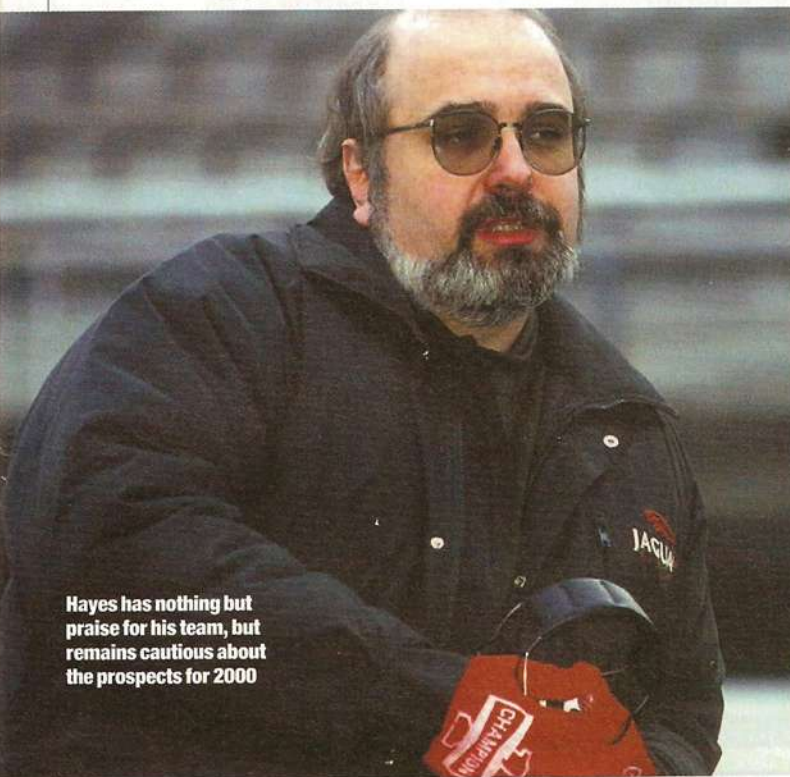


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POWER STEERING



Hayes has nothing but praise for his team, but remains cautious about the prospects for 2000

Nick Hayes is the guiding force behind the engine powering Jaguar's first F1 car. By Andrew Golby



Johnny Herbert drove to victory in Germany last year, powered by Hayes' CR-1 engine

different from every other F1 engine, whose principle would be obvious to a rival designer if he saw it, even a photograph. For that reason, Hayes has been extremely reluctant to talk about his engine's specification, or to allow it to be photographed, though pictures are now starting to filter out.

"You could describe the CR-2 as 'still radical'," says Hayes. "There are

that the engine is easier to drive.

The CR-2 will rev to 18,000 on 'selected occasions' this season, whereas the CR-1 peaked at around 17,500. "I can't confirm that we'll race at 18,000," says Hayes, "but we'll use that limit when we need to."

The CR-2 now runs 450 kilometres between rebuilds, an increase of around 50 per cent from the earliest days of the Zetec-R. "We've worked hard to make it durable," says Hayes, "which is the key to a lot of things. Mostly, it allows you to get more out of the car because you can do more testing."

Despite the radical tag, he says Cosworth's engine has reached its high state of development through painstaking work. "I keep hearing how our secret is that the engine's got linerless bores and a beryllium block, but the secret is that we chase and try to improve every detail. If we think we can reduce a major component's weight by a couple of grams, we do it. It's what you have to do to win."

During the closed season, Cosworth has boosted both its facilities and its engineering team, a clear indicator of how things have changed since Ford acquired the F1 engines side of the business halfway through last year. "The Ford side of things has been fantastic," says Hayes. "Until then, we had to do things which were good for the profitability of the business. Now we have the very clear objective, which is repeated all the time, that we're in this to win."

So will they? Maybe, but you won't wring frothily confident claims from Hayes. He's much more likely to tell you the engine's still too heavy, too big and not powerful enough. "I'm not confident," he insists. "You can't say we're in a better state than we were at this time in other seasons, because we've got more things on the go. It's more correct to say that I'm hopeful for success this year, and I think we can do at least as well as last year. Of course, we're aiming for better." ■

Nick Hayes is part of a team. He wants that on the record straight away. He might be Cosworth Racing's F1 programme director, charged with putting a winning engine in the back of Eddie Irvine's new Jaguar race car, but there's a team of people back at base in Northampton whose jobs, he insists, are every bit as critical as his own.

"There's no way one bloke can take the plaudits for producing a modern grand prix engine," he insists. "You need the best efforts of hundreds of people. If you want to give me credit, say I had something to do with assembling the best team in the business."

About three years ago, Hayes, his team and his engine were responsible for some of the biggest clouds of white smoke seen on a racing circuit. Their early V10 engines broke more often than

"Now we have the very clear objective that we're in this to win" NICK HAYES

most, and showed a liking for public display. More recently, things have improved. Last year's Cosworth CR-1 was the smallest and lightest engine on the grid, and acknowledged by its rivals as one of the best. At the end of last season, BMW's Gerhard Berger was telling people he expected the Cosworth to be the best engine on the grid for 2000.

For the debut Jaguar season, Hayes and his Cosworth team have produced what most pundits believe is F1's most radical engine. It's a three-litre V10 like all the rest, again believed by rivals to be the smallest and lightest on the grid, though it's an all-new unit, designated CR-2. Like the CR-1, the new engine is believed to contain one vital mechanical 'tweak',

some things on it which are quite different from what other people do. It isn't any smaller than last year's engine, but it is certainly lighter. We're saying the CR-2 weighs 97 kilograms against 100 for last year's, even though this year we've included a few extra components, which I can't talk about."

Though Hayes won't talk details, he will let a few other points slip about his new engine's performance and design.

Cosworth is chasing more driveability and a wider power band this season, because making the power more accessible has become relatively more important as cornering grip has reduced over recent seasons. In early testing, Johnny Herbert has already noted

The '99 Stewart-Ford SF-3 was much photographed last season, but the CR-1 engine that powered it was rarely seen on film. This year's CR-2 has also been kept away from inquisitive lenses in order to keep the wraps on key design innovations



DUNDROD,
TOURIST TROPHY

1950

This was the event that convinced the marque that an emerging Stirling Moss was more than simply a young tearaway.

Moss beat the factory Jaguar team in appalling conditions, driving an XK120 that he had borrowed especially for the race in Northern Ireland. Among racers and public alike, attitudes towards him changed immediately.

"Jaguar wouldn't give me a car before Dundrod because they thought I was going faster than I should," he said with deadpan delivery. "In fact, no one would lend me a car – MG, Morgan, nobody. That night, Sir William [Lyons, boss of Jaguar] signed me up to lead the factory team the following year, so it was my biggest break up to that point. I suppose one would say it was the biggest win of my career up to then, too."

He had borrowed the car from a journalist named Tommy Wisdom. "They would sell him one, but not me," Moss laughs. After Dundrod, scraping about for drives would be a thing of the past.



Moss rocked the sportscar world by beating the Jaguar works squad



THE CAT'S WH

Think of Jaguars in competition and two eras spring to mind. The 1950s, when the Coventry marque made Le Mans a home from home, and the Group C days when it returned to conquer the great race once again.

In between those years, Jaguar was not a force in international motorsport. It has even gone through hugely embarrassing times, namely British Leyland's disastrous XJ6 touring car project in the '70s. Now, after stepping out of the racing limelight for the best part of a decade, Jaguar is back – and in the biggest arena the sport has to offer.

The Formula 1 project could be described as a cynical marketing ploy by Jaguar's owner, Ford, which is using the evocative name to get the maximum publicity for its investment. Whether this means the British public gets behind Jaguar like it did at Le Mans 10 years ago is yet to be seen. The bottom line is that they probably will, as long as Jaguar starts winning.

Any success will add to a great tradition. Here are five victories – not necessarily the most famous, but nevertheless some of the most significant in Jaguar's heritage. ■

Against the odds, the big V12 XJSs ran faultlessly, one eventually getting the better of the BMWs. The win was crucial as a springboard to further success



LE MANS 24 HOURS

Snapping up Stirling Moss for the 1951 season was a vital move for Jaguar's aspirations to win Le Mans. The great man never actually won the race for the marque – or for any other for that matter – but he played his part in Jaguar's success.

Moss remembers the Reims 12

Hours of that year as a more important race for Jaguar. There, the new C-Type scored its first big win, which also marked the first for a car fitted with disc brakes.

He has fond memories of the C-Type. "It was more user friendly than the D-Type," he says, "if not as

stunning. Still, I preferred it."

The team went on to Le Mans full of confidence – and with good reason. Moss absolutely flew in the early stages, and after just two hours he was a full lap ahead of Froilan Gonzalez's Talbot, eventually breaking the lap record three times.

His race came to an end when the oil pressure plummeted, but the pacemaker had done his job. Peter Walker and Peter Whitehead took over a lead they would never lose to notch up the first of Jaguar's five Le Mans victories of the '50s. The marque's golden era had begun.

1951

The '51 win at Le Mans was the first for the C-Type, and it began a haul of five Jaguar victories there that decade



ISKERS

As Jaguar prepares to enter the lion's den of racing – Formula 1 – it will be looking to build on its distinguished racing heritage. Damien Smith looks back over the Coventry marque's golden years in sports and touring car competition

1984

SPA 24 HOURS

Tom Walkinshaw Racing's Jaguar XJSs were the cars to beat in the European Touring Car Championship, but they were not expected to last over 24 hours. BMW always ruled the roost at this classic race – until Walkinshaw, Win Percy and Hans Heyer pulled off one of the surprise results of the season.

Percy remembers the race fondly as one of his greatest moments in the sport. Sadly, he believes it is also a race everyone forgets when they think of Jaguar's great victories. "No one gave us a chance against BMW," says the veteran. "The V12 engine was thought to be too heavy and tough on the transmission to last the distance."

Incredibly, the winning XJS ran faultlessly throughout, a puncture being the only delay for the Big Cat.

The two Jaguars wisely made a cautious start, and the tactics eventually paid off as the cars moved up the order. One XJS crashed out, but its sister car worked its way into the battle for the lead, joining the Beemers of Alain Cudini/Dany Snoeck/Thierry Tassin and Hans Stuck/Dieter Quester/

James Weaver. The battle raged throughout the night, broken up by lengthy safety car periods.

Typically, Spa was throwing up the worst conditions for night racing: heavy rain and fog. Percy remembers the team sending a man up to the top of the hill with a flashlight. When the XJS approached, he would turn it on to give the drivers a braking point before the chicane!

The turning point in the battle came when Cudini rolled and Quester went off in avoidance. Both continued, but now the XJS was in control.

When Walkinshaw crossed the victory line, he made important history. This was Jaguar's first 24 Hours win since the 1957 Le Mans, and it was also the biggest victory to date for its famous V12 engine.

The relevance of that win and the whole XJS programme was massive, according to Percy. "It was the basis of Jaguar's further involvement in the sport," he says. TWR eventually moved on from touring cars and took Jaguar on to the next great chapter in its sporting history: Group C sports prototypes and a return to Le Mans.



1986

SILVERSTONE, WORLD SPORTS PROTOTYPE CHAMPIONSHIP

It was only a matter of time before Jaguar won a Group C race. TWR had kicked off its programme in 1985, and now, in its second year, the team was beginning to fire on all cylinders. How fitting that the first Group C victory should come on home ground at Silverstone.

The Silk Cut-sponsored XJR-6Cs had caught the imagination of British fans, who turned out in their thousands for the 1000km race. They were rewarded with a classic race

and a convincing victory.

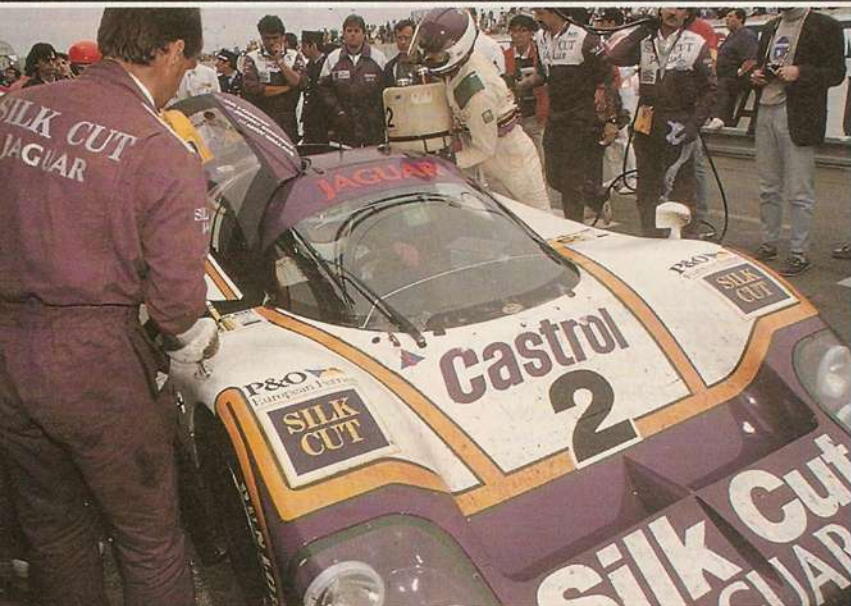
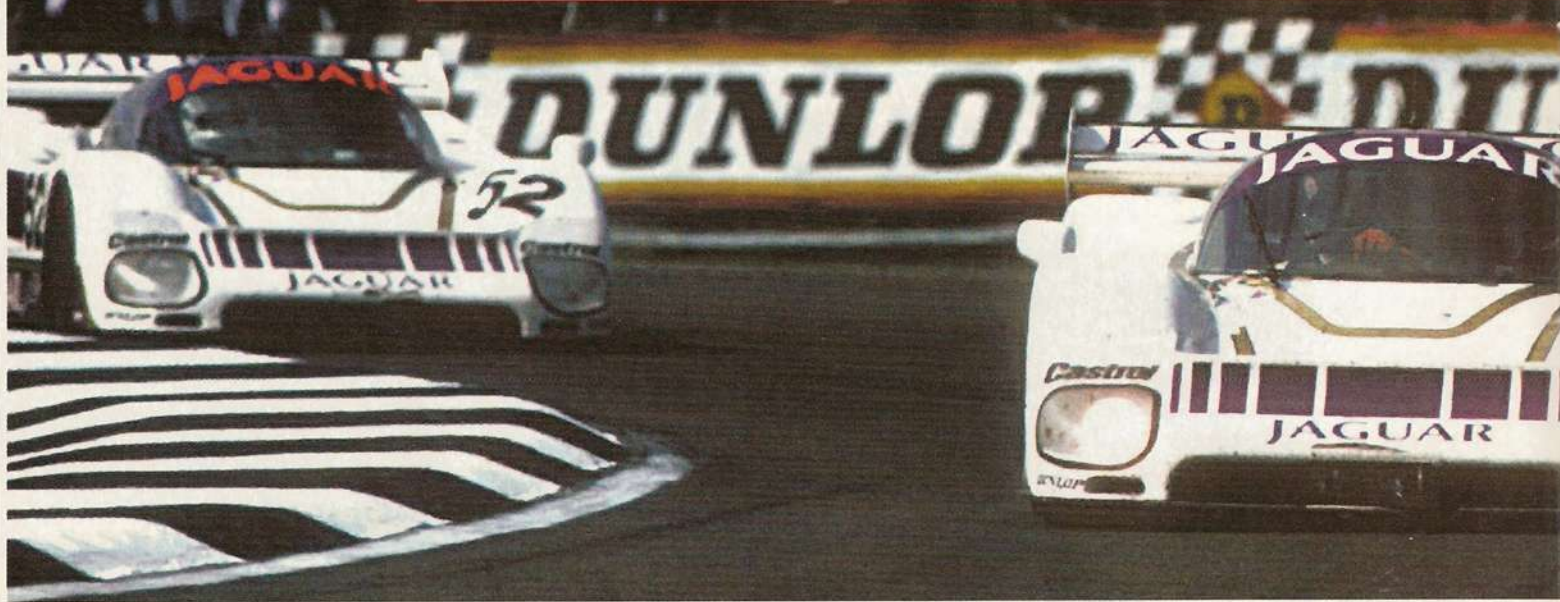
These were classic days for sportscar racing. Jaguar was up against a horde of Porsche 962s, including the great Rothmans-sponsored factory team. Then there was the stylish Martini Lancia squad with fiery Italian drivers Alessandro Nannini and Andrea de Cesaris.

In terms of racing speed, the Jaguars and the Lancia held the upper hand over the Porsches at Silverstone. The question mark was

reliability. Would the quickest cars still be there at the end?

Back in '86, Silverstone was still a flat-out blast, and the battle between the Lancia and the lead Jaguar of Derek Warwick and Eddie Cheever was some sight. Both cars and driver pairings were evenly matched. Neither team gave an inch.

Cheever remembers how hard he and Warwick drove that day. "Derek and I desperately wanted to get back into Formula 1, and we were using



Top left: the winning Jaguar leads the Porsche that would take second place. Below left: Wallace brings the Big Cat in for some pit work on the way to victory. Below, l-r: Jaguar boss Sir John Egan, Andy Wallace, Johnny Dumfries, Jan Lammers and Tom Walkinshaw take the plaudits of a delighted crowd at Le Mans





sportscars to vent our frustrations," he says. "We probably drove a tad too aggressively. It was more like a GP than an endurance race."

Eventually, the pace told on the Lancia and its V8's fuel pressure began to drop, as did de Cesaris' speed. Warwick and Cheever were home and dry. Two laps behind, Derek Bell and Hans Stuck could only hope the Jag would break and hand the victory to Porsche. This time it didn't happen. Jaguar was back.

Left: the Derek Warwick/Eddie Cheever car leads the fellow Jaguar of Jean-Louis Schlesser and Gianfranco Brancatelli. Below, l-r: team boss Tom Walkinshaw and drivers Cheever and Warwick take a bow after their remarkable performance. The British squad had pulled off its first Group C victory on its home ground of Silverstone in an enduro run at a frantic pace



1988

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Tom Walkinshaw had always maintained you needed three goes before you could crack Le Mans. The 'Tomcats' had starred in both 1986 and '87, but Jaguar had just a single fifth place to show for it. Surely, '88 had to be their year.

The team was certainly taking no chances. Five XJR9LMs took the start, and stories abounded before the start that one would be used as a 'hare' in an attempt to break the works Porsches. Before the race, Walkinshaw would not admit to any such idea.

If there was going to be a Jaguar to push the pace, it looked like being the number two car. Dutchman Jan Lammers charged from the start, hounding Hans Stuck, who was driving for Porsche. On lap seven Lammers took the lead.

Throughout the race, car number two was Jaguar's best hope, and it battled fiercely with the two works Porsches. Once Bob Wollek's pace-setting 962 retired, it was a two-car battle: the Jag of Lammers, Johnny Dumfries and Andy Wallace against the Porsche of Stuck, Derek Bell and Klaus Ludwig.

With the pace being so hot, both teams were taking everything to the limit. Early on, Ludwig tried to eke out an extra lap before pitting and lost time when he ran out of fuel. From there, the car was always chasing.

The demise of the Wollek Porsche left the Jaguar with a comfortable cushion, but the race was heading

for a dramatic climax. It began to rain on Sunday morning, giving Stuck his cue for a typically brilliant drive on slicks. Then Ludwig unlapped the 962 by passing Dumfries, meaning the two cars were on the same lap for the last few hours.

The duel raged on into the afternoon as the Porsche closed in on the Jag. The huge crowd of British fans were subdued, feeling the same pangs of nervous tension that Walkinshaw and his team were suffering in the pits.

They need not have worried. Lammers, Dumfries and Wallace drove superbly, as they had throughout, to hold off the Porsche challenge. On the final lap, the team choreographed the two remaining Jaguars left in the race to join the leader for a formation finish.

The celebrations began, and Walkinshaw will remember those moments forever. "I don't think I've ever seen anything like it in my life," he said later.

"Words fail you when you're asked to explain it. It all became so emotional, grown men with tears running down their faces. You could feel the emotion oozing out of everywhere. You could touch it. It was something which I had never experienced before."

Jaguar had won the Le Mans 24 Hours for the first time in 31 years. It was, and always will be, one of the greatest moments in British motorsport history.

LE MANS



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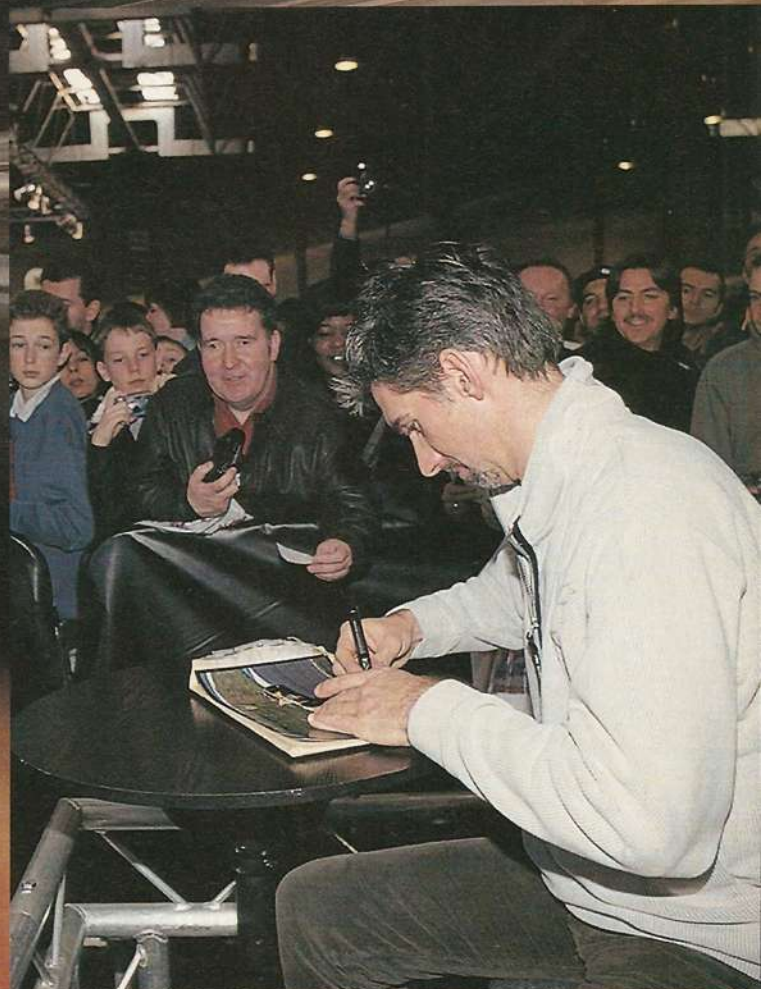
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GRAND PRIX 2000



Fast-forward Button

The Somerset Kid's zoom to the top echelon of motorsport has given many pause for thought. He's set to be the youngest Briton to take the F1 grid, but is it too much too soon? After all, there's no rewind in Formula 1. By David Tremayne

When Michael Schumacher first drove a Formula 1 car for Jordan at Silverstone in August 1991, the team was moved to leap out and wave at him as he sped by on his fourth lap in an attempt to slow him down.

"His speed suggested he was driving over his head," managing director Trevor Foster recalled of the event. "Gary [Anderson] and I tried to slow him down, but when he came in and we talked to him, he didn't understand what we were talking about."

There is a common thread in all the hoopla about Jenson Button's similarly impressive performances since he stepped into an F1 car late last year. At Jerez recently, on his first acquaintance with the Williams-BMW, his initial outing yielded a time only nine-hundredths slower than the pace David Coulthard was then setting. Patrick Head apparently went to some lengths to calm excited mechanics before Button returned to the pits.

Everyone in British motorsport has very forcefully been put in mind of how Jackie Stewart performed when he graduated to the big time. However, now that Williams has signed Button to partner Ralf Schumacher they are all asking the

same question: is 20 too young to make the jump to F1?

"Maybe it is," concedes Ken Tyrrell, who gave Stewart his big chance and went on to nurture many other young racers. "But Emerson Fittipaldi was only 25 when he won his first world championship. So it can be done. Every now and then one pops up, though the odds are against it."

"The things that count against such young drivers are age and lack

"We won't really know if he can cope until after a race or so"

STIRLING MOSS

of experience," he adds.

Sir Stirling Moss, like Tyrrell, is excited about Button's prospects, having himself broken into F1 at the age of 21. "It's a remarkable reward for a promising young man. I know what it was like myself when nobody would give me a reasonable chance to begin with. I am very happy for him. Of course it's asking a lot of him, but occasionally people such as myself or Jimmy Clark come

along who could accept the ensuing problems. We won't really know if he can cope until after a race or so, and it's a tremendous responsibility both for Jenson and for Williams. He will need maturity and ability, but if, as you say, he has that maturity it will be very good for him."

When Stewart first tested a Formula 3 car for Tyrrell at Goodwood, he consistently outperformed Bruce McLaren. "I felt he was going far too quick," Tyrrell admits. "To be faster than Bruce was quite exceptional. I said, 'Look, the sun is shining, it's a lovely morning and you have all day.' But he didn't know he was going quick. If Button has got that, bloody good luck to him! Wouldn't it be great!"

Plenty of people are ready to criticise the bold decision to let Button loose in an F1 car. "It's too soon," is a familiar comment. But he is in F1, and without apparently overstretching himself he has been going remarkably fast. F1 is full of drivers who never do that - ever.

Stewart is unconvinced. "Personally, I think it is too soon," he says. "You can't go from kindergarten to university. Jenson can drive the car, he drives very well, but there's more to it than that. I'm not saying he won't be a superstar, but this isn't the right way to do it. There's no rush to do this."

Button knows he has benefited from odd circumstances, and he can handle criticism. The downside will come if the Williams-BMW fails to deliver the goods. F1 memories are notoriously short, and a bad season could bury his career. Ask Alex Zanardi what it's like when things - and people - turn against you. Tyrrell, however, believes a "quiet" season may be advantageous.

"He will get a year's training in F1, ready for when the team will be competitive in 2001. It's a risk Frank ought to take - and which he wants to take."

Button's background is similar to Jarno Trulli's, who gave singular karting performances and joined F1 with Minardi then jumped to Prost. However, it was difficult for Trulli because Minardi did very little testing, whereas with Williams-BMW Button will get plenty.

"In my first season of F1," says Trulli, "the first thing I was thinking when running the car was to get experience, to learn the car. When I jumped to the Prost I had many days of testing, so I was driving much more on the limit."

The Italian believes Button can make the graduation and that it is the right decision. "Sometimes you don't have many chances and then all your chances come together, so you must use them if you really



JENSON BUTTON DIARY



Barclay/Sutton

Button makes his Supernova F3000 test

NOVEMBER 8 The 19-year-old gets his first taste of Formula 3000 power with the crack SuperNova team in testing at Jerez in Spain.

NOVEMBER 9 He goes sixth fastest overall and is quickest rookie on his second day of F3000 running, this time with Fortec Motorsport.

NOVEMBER 12 Button drives a Formula 1 car for the first time when he tests a McLaren-Mercedes MP4-14 at Silverstone – his prize for winning the McLaren AUTOSPORT Young Driver Award in '98. In just 15 laps he seems at home in the F1 environment, and the Woking team is impressed.

NOVEMBER 21 Piloting his regular Promatecme Dallara-Renault F399, Button finishes an excellent second as a rookie at the Macau Grand Prix, but he is a long way behind fellow Brit and winner Darren Manning.

NOVEMBER 28 Button again has to settle for the runner-up spot in the second leg of the Asian F3 trip, again losing out to Manning in Korea – but this time it's close.

DECEMBER 2 AUTOSPORT exclusively reveals that Alex Zanardi will not be retained by Williams in 2000.

DECEMBER 9 Button says he will commit to another season of British F3 rather than move up to F3000. He will either stay at Promatecme or move to Stewart Racing.

DECEMBER 14 Williams team leader Ralf Schumacher is reported as saying he'd prefer to keep Zanardi.

DECEMBER 15 Button looks certain to stay on with Promatecme as the seat

comes with an F1 testing role with Prost. This is preferred to the Stewart deal, which is thought to include a chance to test the Jaguar F1 car.

DECEMBER 17 He tests for Prost at Barcelona and makes a very good impression. He seems assured of a test seat for 2000 and there are rumours of a race deal in 2001.

JANUARY 10 Williams announces that Button will race for the second seat in a shoot-out at Jerez against test driver Bruno Junqueira.

JANUARY 14 Button stuns onlookers as he immediately sets competitive times at Jerez. The team is massively impressed, but unreliability woes mean that running is truncated and Junqueira does not get a fair chance

to shine. The decision is postponed pending more running at Barcelona.

JANUARY 19 Barcelona testing continues, but the new Williams-BMW package proves unreliable due to an oil-system problem. The team stays on over the weekend just to sort out the driver shoot-out before its launch on Monday. Button celebrates his 20th birthday.

JANUARY 23 The contenders finally run over 20 laps each at Barcelona. Button outpaces the more experienced Junqueira by 0.16s

JANUARY 24 The Somerset youngster is picked by Williams for the race seat in 2000. When he leaves the grid in Melbourne he will become the youngest British GP driver of all time.



Above: he comes second to Darren Manning at the Macau Grand Prix – but is closing the gap. Right: he impresses the Prost squad when he tests in its F1 car



Barclay/Sutton



Ken Tyrrell (left) thinks it can be done; Jackie Stewart believes it's too soon

◀ want it. In Italy, we say the train is passing and you must catch it. You don't know if it will come again!"

Ron Dennis is renowned for preferring experienced drivers and detesting hype. "I have tremendous respect for Frank's judgement," he says cautiously. "It's a difficult decision. I am sure if Jenson has the opportunity to race a Williams that

All photographs: LAT

"I'm sure Jenson will make every effort to rise to the challenge" RON DENNIS

he will make every effort to rise to the challenge."

If he fails, Button won't be the first hotshoe to go cold. The Armco is littered with the debris of broken promise. Names such as Mike Thackwell, Jos Verstappen and Jan Magnussen spring to mind. Button has maturity and focus reminiscent of the late Tony Brise – and similar tenacity. He'll need it all, given the

Zanardi saga. Much will depend on his standing with the Williams management – which itself will be a product of his pace. There aren't many 20 year-olds who could step so coolly into this inferno without getting hot under the collar, but with his ability, acumen and remarkable inner confidence Jenson Button looks as if he could be one of them. ■



Jarno Trulli also joined the fast track early with Minardi in 1997. Limited test time made his season a learning experience



Fittipaldi in '72, about to be the youngest world champion aged 25. Button wants his crown

GRAND PRIX 2000

IF AT FIRST YOU DO





W'N'T SUCCEED...

After a rookie season best forgotten, a humbled and determined BAR is back to put things right.
By Anthony Peacock



Elford/LAT

No gimmicks, no razzmatazz: in stark contrast to last year's glitzy launch, BAR's drivers and team personnel joined with executives from engine supplier Honda to host a sober presentation of the team's new car for the forthcoming season

This time it was different. This time there was no extravagant hyperbole, no dancing girls, no dry ice or mechanical cradles.

BAR invited ridicule among the Grand Prix world last year when it launched its schizophrenically-liveried cars amid prophecies of winning its first race. In truth, the new high-fliers on the paddock crashed and burned in a harder and more humiliating fashion than Icarus himself.

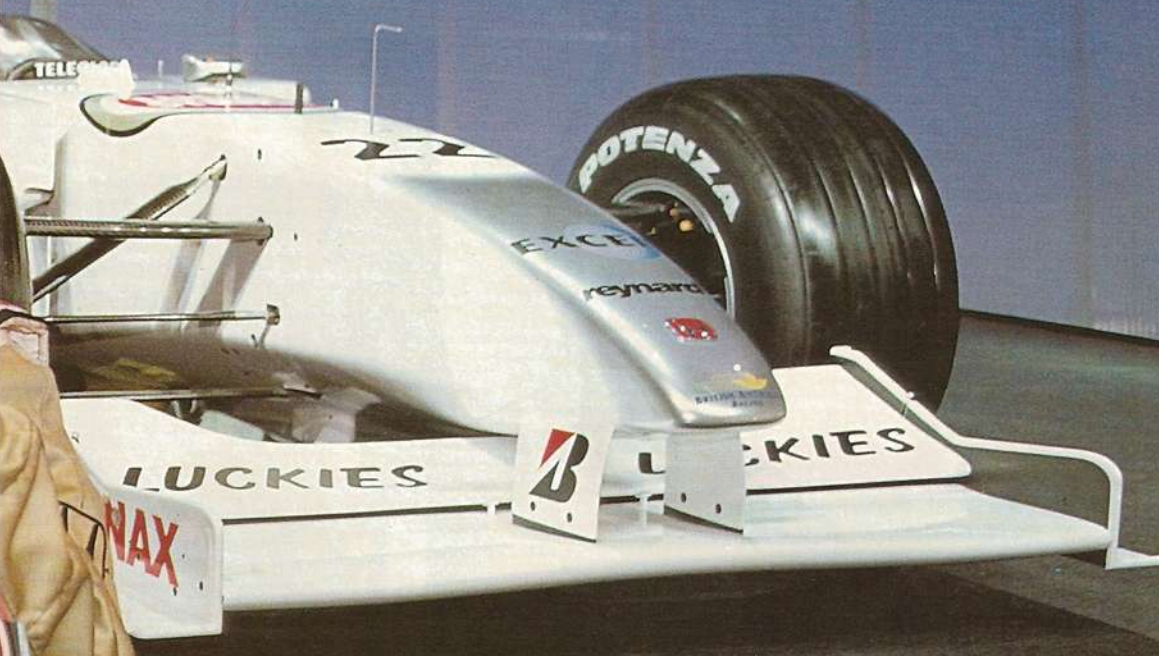
So it was a sadder and a wiser team that presented itself at London's Queen Elizabeth II conference centre earlier this week. Joint team principal Craig Pollock refused to make any grandiose predictions. He limited himself to saying: "We made mistakes. We must learn from them, not repeat them."

This year could mark a new dawn, and appropriately enough it comes from the east. Honda returns to Formula 1 seven years after it left, taking with it a grand slam of six consecutive constructors' titles with Williams and McLaren.

Now it falls to BAR to become what many would call the undeserving beneficiaries. Yet if there were ever a team ideally placed to take advantage of the situation, it would be the Bracknell-based outfit.

It has one of the best drivers out there in Jacques Villeneuve, and a generous sponsorship package. The management team of Pollock and Adrian Reynard have agreed to put their differences behind them and move forward from the chastening experience that was 1999.

Spread out against the soft curves of the BAR 02's bodywork, the red disc on the Lucky Strike logo looks like nothing more than the rising sun of the Japanese flag. Every member of the team will be fervently hoping that it is the sign of a brighter future ahead. ▶



Coates/LAT

Supporting regular drivers Ricardo Zonta and Jacques Villeneuve (main pic) at the launch were rising star and test driver Darren Manning (above, left) and former F3000 racer Patrick Lemarié, who is the team's development driver



Elford/LAT

Then there were three: can the combined talents of Pollock, Reynard and engine manufacturer Honda redeem BAR?

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A second season in Grand Prix racing is said to be tougher than the first, but BAR hopes to put 1999 behind it with the help of returning Japanese giant Honda. By Mark Hughes

ENGINE

The new Honda V10 was unveiled in Japan last October. It is fundamentally different to the Mugen-Honda in this year's Jordan, by being lighter and smaller. It is, in effect, a "second generation" unit set to compete with the Mercedes, although it is some way down on power for now compared to McLaren's engine. A second step will be tried out at next month's test in Kyalami, South Africa. "It is definitely a good engine," said Honda technical director Kazutoshi Nishizawa, "but it is the base engine, not the evolution yet. For a base engine it is amazing, but the evolution needs to be a step forward, and the same goes for the car."

OVERALL

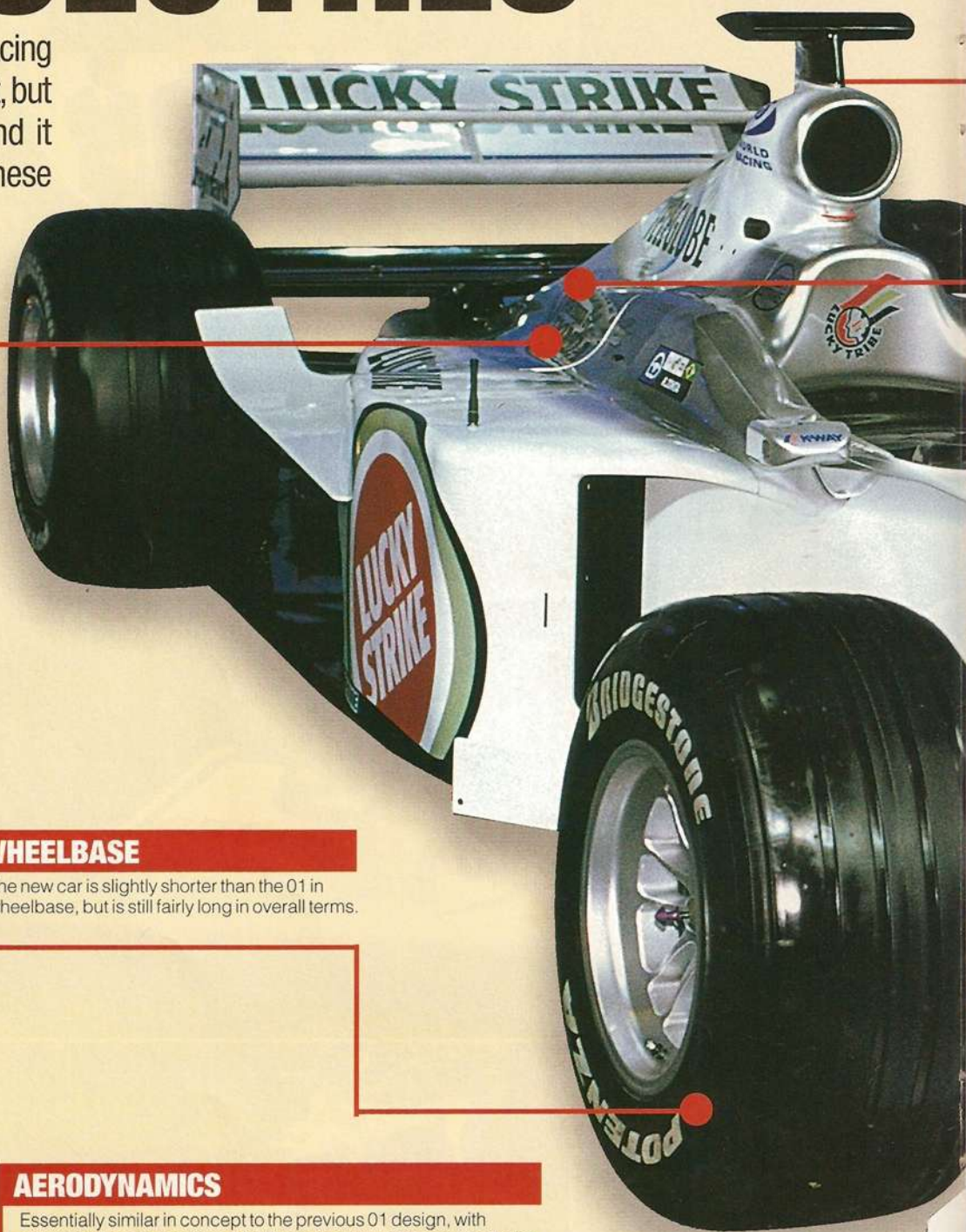
The 02 is a development of last season's design, with particular emphasis placed on reliability. BAR's biggest problem in 1999. Speed-wise, the new car has not shone in its initial tests. The lighter engine gives more scope for the positioning of ballast to lower car's centre of gravity. Smaller dimensions allow much better airflow around the car's rear wing.

WHEELBASE

The new car is slightly shorter than the 01 in wheelbase, but is still fairly long in overall terms.

AERODYNAMICS

Essentially similar in concept to the previous 01 design, with sidepods, barge-boards and diffuser largely unchanged in shape and size. Technical director Malcolm Oastler says that aerodynamics were not the problem of last year's unreliable machine, but the drivers have expressed disappointment with the grip of the 2000 car and an aerodynamic development package is already being prepared. It will be tried in testing next month.





PRE-SEASON TALK – ONE YEAR AGO

1999 results: no points finishes, 11th in constructors' championship

Malcolm Oastler (chief designer): "It's conservative. We're trying not to take too many steps in the dark with it. We've tried to build a simple, functional car, and I think that's worked out quite well. We're pretty happy with it."

Jacques Villeneuve (driver):

"Everything is in place to do well - the budget, the technical level and the stability. It will be a challenge, but we are sure we will be fighting for the top

places. BAR will be a top team; we truly believe that."

Jock Clear (chief engineer): "Our immediate aim is to beat Williams and Benetton, and then see where it leaves us. We'd like to beat them by a comfortable margin. Hopefully, that will put us up with McLaren and Ferrari."

AUTOSPORT: "BAR's track debut ended without the completion of a single flying lap. Villeneuve managed two installation laps, but the car stopped on its first full circuit with suspected transmission problems."

Robert Synge (team manager): We are pretty pleased with the car's performance. We certainly didn't expect it. We're very happy because now we know the car has massive potential."

AUTOSPORT: "Inevitably, there were some embarrassing moments, with a major gearbox failure, a broken wing and an engine cover which proved reluctant to stay put."

EXHAUST

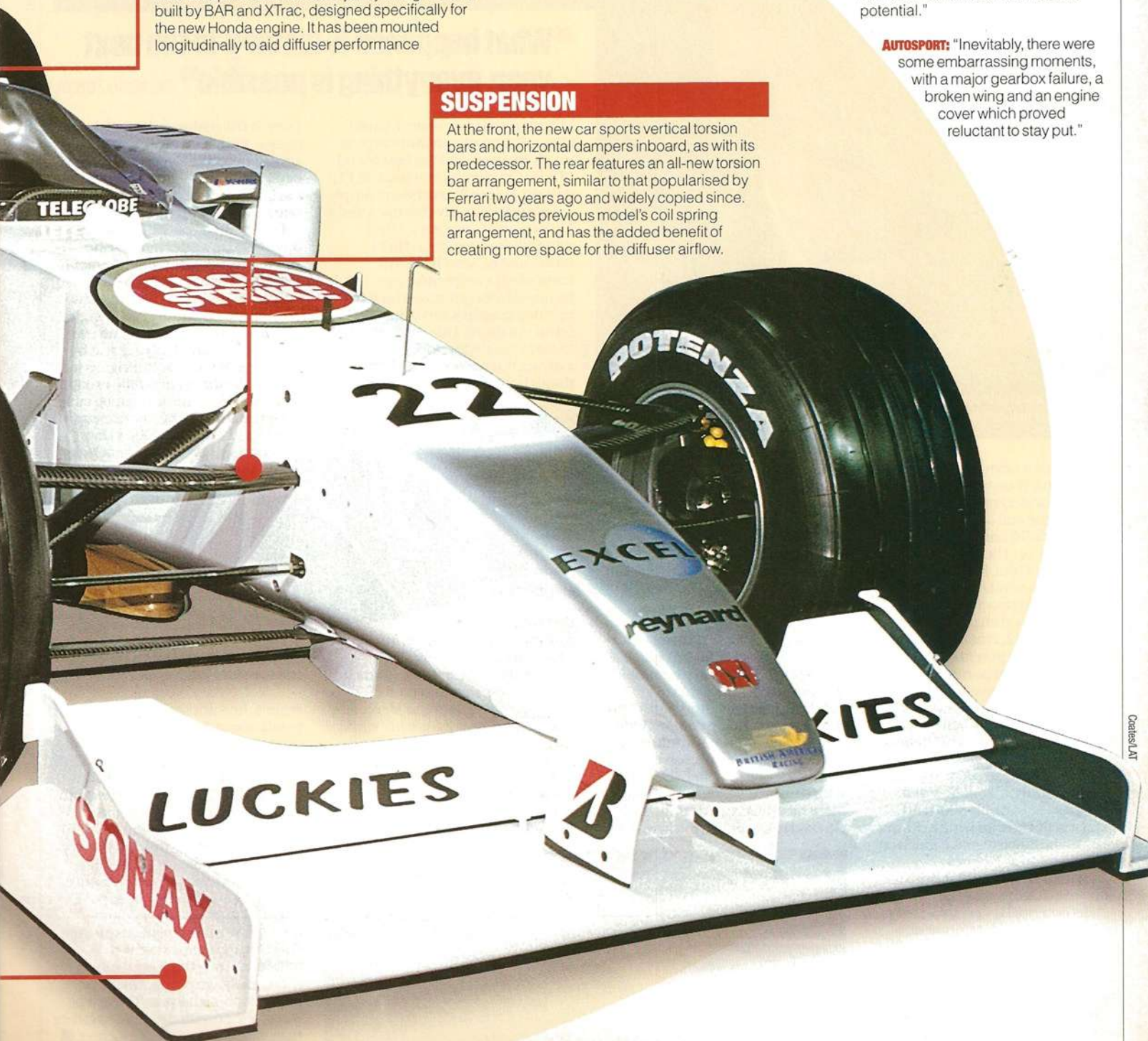
Conventional routing exits round the gearbox. Honda engineers claim this arrangement suits their engine better than the short-pipe 'periscope' system used by Ferrari, Prost and others.

GEARBOX

New six-speed unit has been jointly designed and built by BAR and XTrac, designed specifically for the new Honda engine. It has been mounted longitudinally to aid diffuser performance

SUSPENSION

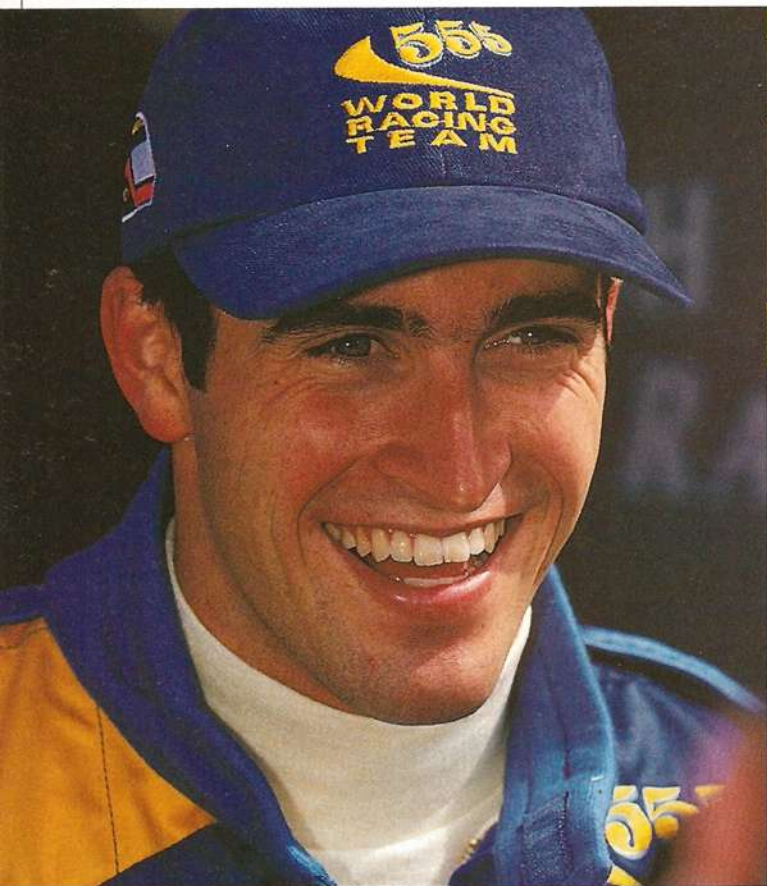
At the front, the new car sports vertical torsion bars and horizontal dampers inboard, as with its predecessor. The rear features an all-new torsion bar arrangement, similar to that popularised by Ferrari two years ago and widely copied since. That replaces previous model's coil spring arrangement, and has the added benefit of creating more space for the diffuser airflow.





The mark of Zonta

His first year in F1 was tough, but Ricardo Zonta still made an impression. Now comes the crux. By Andrew Benson



Despite a string of setbacks and difficulties last season, Zonta says he has the ability to put the past behind him and look optimistically towards his second year with BAR



At times last year, Zonta (back) was up with Villeneuve (front), but not often enough

“What happened is history. In the next year, everything is possible” RICARDO ZONTA

Villeneuve as team mate, a world champion on whom the team was totally focused, and the best friend of boss Craig Pollock to boot. In F1, though, sympathy is in short supply.

“Ricardo is totally charming and a fun person,” Gorne says. “He’s relatively inexperienced in F1 terms, and he’s not been in a particularly competitive car. Jacques is totally focused on what he’s doing and it’s survival of the fittest out there. That’s where Ricardo has to develop as a driver, but we’re doing things behind the scenes

Damon Hill mid-way through last season. Perhaps a more convivial atmosphere like Jordan would have been the place for him to thrive. Certainly the politically-charged one at BAR last year was not.

In the middle of ’99, he turned down Jordan’s offer because he wanted to pledge his commitment to the team that had given him his big break. His loyalty was ‘rewarded’ when team boss Craig Pollock tried to renegotiate his contract on less favourable terms. Only a threat by his manager Geraldo Rodrigues to discuss the matter in public brought Pollock back to the negotiating table.

Gorne admits “the unnecessarily protracted renewal of Ricardo’s contract certainly did not help.”

But if Zonta has



Former Grand Prix driver John Watson was watching a sportscar race in California at the end of 1998 when Ricardo Zonta first caught his eye. The silver Mercedes GT in front of him, he thought, was “dancing in a way I last remember seeing with Ayrton Senna”.

Watson, world championship runner-up in ’82, is not the only man to believe in the potential of this Brazilian who was buried in Formula 1’s also-ran file in ’99. One experienced Jordan engineer who worked with Zonta when he was the team’s test driver in ’97 believes that the young man had the best car control he had ever seen.

Zonta is only 23, but he was a champion in Formula 3000 and sportscars before arriving in F1 last year. Yet he failed to make much of an impression as Jacques Villeneuve’s team mate at British American Racing last year.

“His potential is very good,” says BAR motorsport development director Rick Gorne, “but it is still untapped. Neither side has been able to give each other the best, and we haven’t been able to get it out of him.”

This is not a boss paying lip service to an expendable employee.

Gorne and other members of BAR genuinely believe in his potential. They saw it last year. At times he was every bit as quick as Villeneuve. The problem was that it was not all the time.

“He is not lacking anywhere,” says team manager Robert Sygne. “Corner for corner he is as quick as Jacques, if not quicker; the problem was putting it all together.”

Many believe the Brazilian let his problems get on top of him a little in ’99. His debut season would have tested anyone. Two massive accidents, one of which left him with damaged ligaments and out for three races, were bad enough. He also had to cope with the hard-nosed

that should give him a better chance. More personal support, basically.”

There is a big carrot for Zonta if he does well. He is still under contract to McLaren and Mercedes, whom he impressed greatly while their test driver in ’98. If he does well, matches Villeneuve and perhaps even more, there could be a drive on offer there.

Zonta clearly still has his fans – Jordan tried to recruit him to replace

For Zonta, much depends on the new car and more personal support from the team

regrets, he’s not saying. “It is difficult to talk about this,” he offers. “But now I understand a bit more about the team and how political it is in F1.”

This will be a tough season for BAR, with a new Honda engine and the continuing struggle between bosses Pollock and Adrian Reynard. But their driver says his aim is to try to put the troubles of ’99 behind him and concentrate on the future. “I’ll forget everything,” he says. “I will start the season very open-minded. What happened is history. Forget it and the next year is different. Everything is possible.”

It is, as Sygne puts it, “make or break” for him this year. Those who like to see potential exploited rather than wasted hope for the former. ■

A championship-winning season with Mercedes in sportscars in 1998 smoothed Zonta's path into F1



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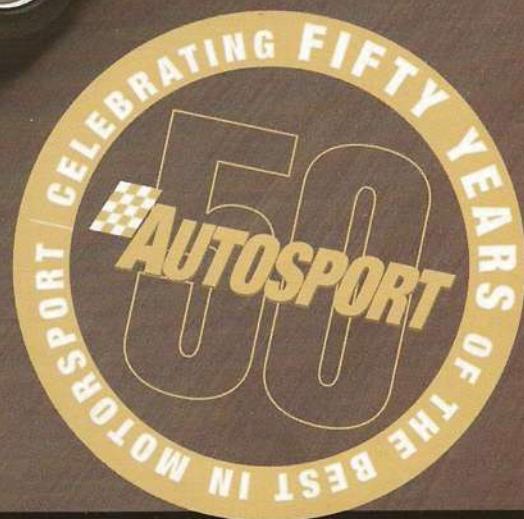


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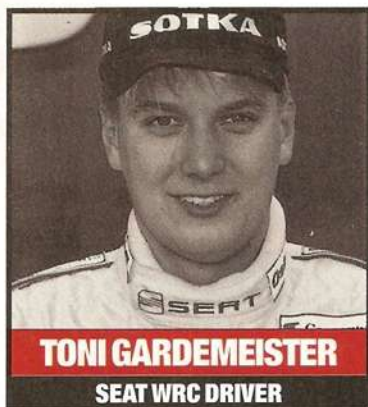
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TONI GARDEMEISTER

SEAT WRC DRIVER

The rises and falls of a Monte zoomer

The SEAT man was surprising in third until trouble set in and he settled for fourth

Strange though it might seem, fourth place on the Monte Carlo Rally was a bit disappointing for me. I've only been to the event once before – last year, in a SEAT Ibiza kit car – so when I looked at the results sheets and saw I was running third, it was a bit surprising. I was determined to hold the place, because it would have been more satisfying than the third I scored in New Zealand last year.

Monte Carlo is a strange event. It's much shorter than it used to be, but it's still very famous in Finland. When you think of how many times Tommi [Mäkinen] and Juha [Kankkunen] have won the rally, you can see why it has a high profile. At the last service, some Finnish fans turned up with a big flag on the end of a fishing rod. I think they got it into every TV interview!

The rally started well for me. Pirelli and SEAT have done a lot of work on set-ups, and the car was excellent over the first few stages. This is the most important part of the Monte Carlo Rally, because you can find a lot of time when other guys are still trying to get the car perfect. It was particularly good to

be ahead of Tommi after the first stage, even if it didn't last for long.

I can already see how much my new team mate Didier [Auriol] has improved the Cordoba WRC. He's a very good guy, very professional in testing, and he has asked for a number of improvements that will happen before too long. For Monte, we worked hard on transmission settings, because the differentials are crucial when road conditions

"I suddenly felt I couldn't trust the car, and I started to slip backwards"

switch from dry tarmac to sheet ice.

The key is to be comfortable with what the car's going to do. That way, you can forget about what it's doing and concentrate on reading the conditions. Our ice-note crews are very important, and I'm pleased I used their information well.

People tell me that Monte Carlo is

all about experience. That's probably true, because I know I can be quicker again there next year. There were a lot of places where I couldn't remember the road at all, and of course there are always slight changes to the route every year anyway. I'd be worried if they decided to allow us only two passes over the stages in recce instead of three. With just two, I don't think younger drivers would have such a good chance to impress against the older guys, and it would be hard to write perfect notes, too.

On the last day, things went wrong for me. I don't know why – we'll have to look at the data. I suddenly felt I couldn't trust the car, and I started to slip backwards. First Colin [McRae] passed me, then Juha. Instead of a podium place, I was fighting to stay in the points. Colin retired on the last stage, but I still wasn't too satisfied with fourth.

It's Sweden next, and we've done a lot of work there already. Pirelli's tyres feel much better than last year, when they struggled, but we won't know how good they really are until we can compare times.

I've got a couple of targets for this year: we have to fight to win a rally,

and I've got to beat Juha. We've had battles in New Zealand and now Monte Carlo, and he's got the better of me both times. I want to show him what I can do soon! ■

FACTFILE

Name Toni Gardemeister

Age 24

Nationality Finnish

- First competed in an Opel Ascona in 1993
- Brief stint with Nissan, but has driven SEATs since '98
- Scored the Cordoba's best finish, third, on his debut in the car in New Zealand last year
- Has kept co-driver Paavo Lukander since his first WRC event

Icy conditions make a good set-up essential for the Monte Carlo Rally, and SEAT had done its homework

GRAND PRIX 2000

WILLIAMS' BABY —





AND THE FW22

The team launched its new car, complete with BMW motor, but no one noticed. By Mark Hughes



Don't squeeze: Ralf Schumacher is no longer the baby of the team now he has young Button to push around. The new team mates looked relaxed at the launch of the Williams FW22 (left) but the young Englishman's real work is yet to begin

It was cold, but the morning sun shone brightly at Circuit de Catalunya, Barcelona on Monday as hundreds of press, photographers and film crews began arriving through the gates from around 9am.

No cars were running, nor were they scheduled to until the afternoon. The crowds had come only partly to see the new Williams FW22 unveiling. Of more interest to most was the hoped-for identity of the second Williams driver.

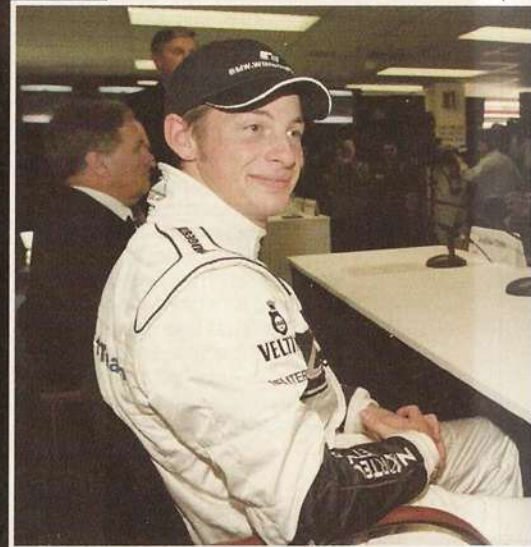
"It's got to be Button after all this, hasn't it?" said one Fleet Street man hopefully. "My day is going to be complete hell if it's Junqueira."

"I've heard it's not going to be announced until this afternoon," said another. Indeed, that was the original plan, with Williams and Head hoping to further analyse the data from the previous day's tests of each driver, before making a decision.

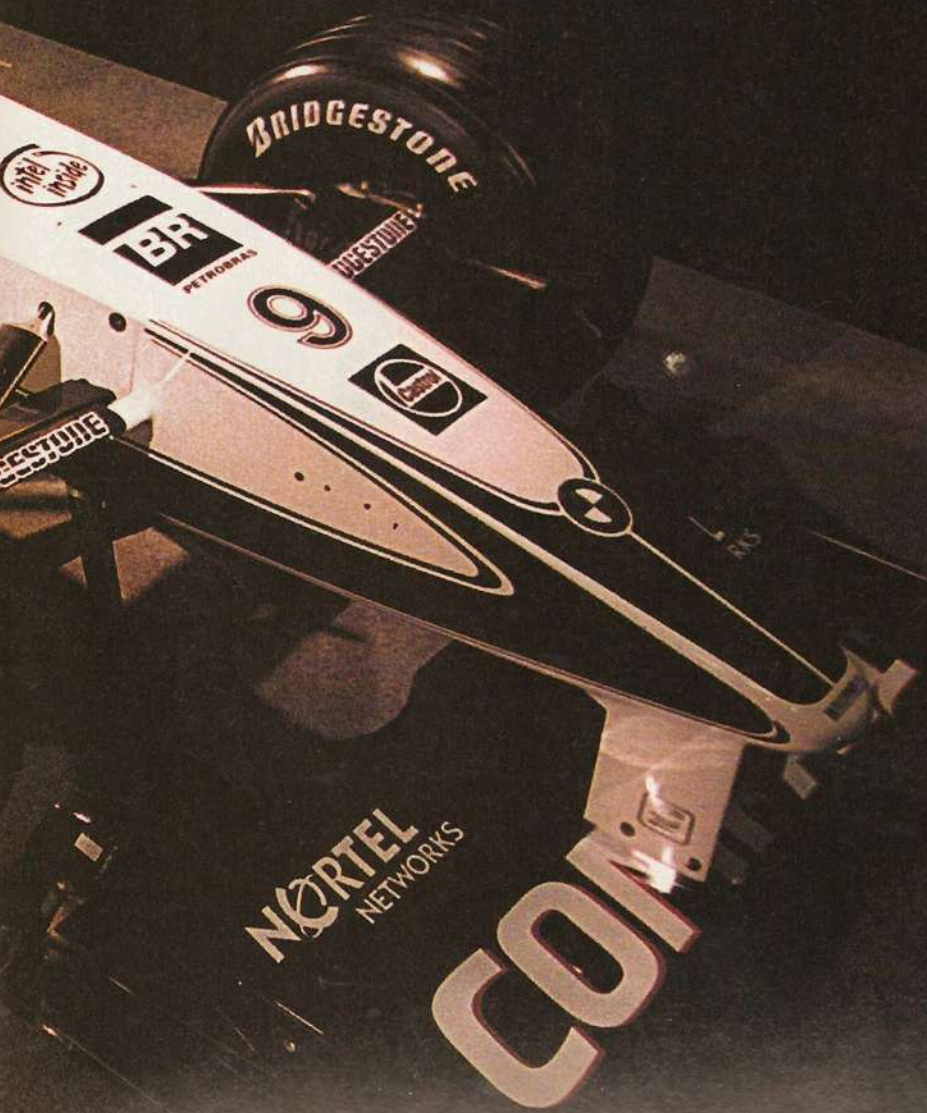
The high-powered performance was unfolding on-site, behind doors just feet away. The drama of the new F1 season had truly begun, weeks before the first race was even due.

Tension was brought to fever pitch as various Williams and BMW personnel could be observed in heated discussion in the minutes leading up to the scheduled 10.30 start. The reason soon became apparent – the launch had been delayed 45 minutes. Hitchcock couldn't have choreographed it better.

Jenson Button, 20 years old, was informed of his fate at 10.30am. Forty-five minutes later he was ushered on to a stage, blinking at the flash lights. The beginning of an F1 career. The FW22 sat in a pit lane garage below, ready for unveiling. But we'd already seen the best bit. ▶



Golden boy: Button's rise from Dinky toys to Formula 1 has been meteoric and he was still taking in the news at the launch



EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES

In most respects, the new Williams FW22 represents a progression from last year's car, albeit powered by a completely different engine. By Mark Hughes and Giorgio Piola

GEARBOX

Williams has produced its first seven-speed gearbox for the FW22. It is mounted longitudinally, as introduced on last year's car. This is now a universal feature of F1 cars in order to maximise the working area of the diffuser.

SUSPENSION

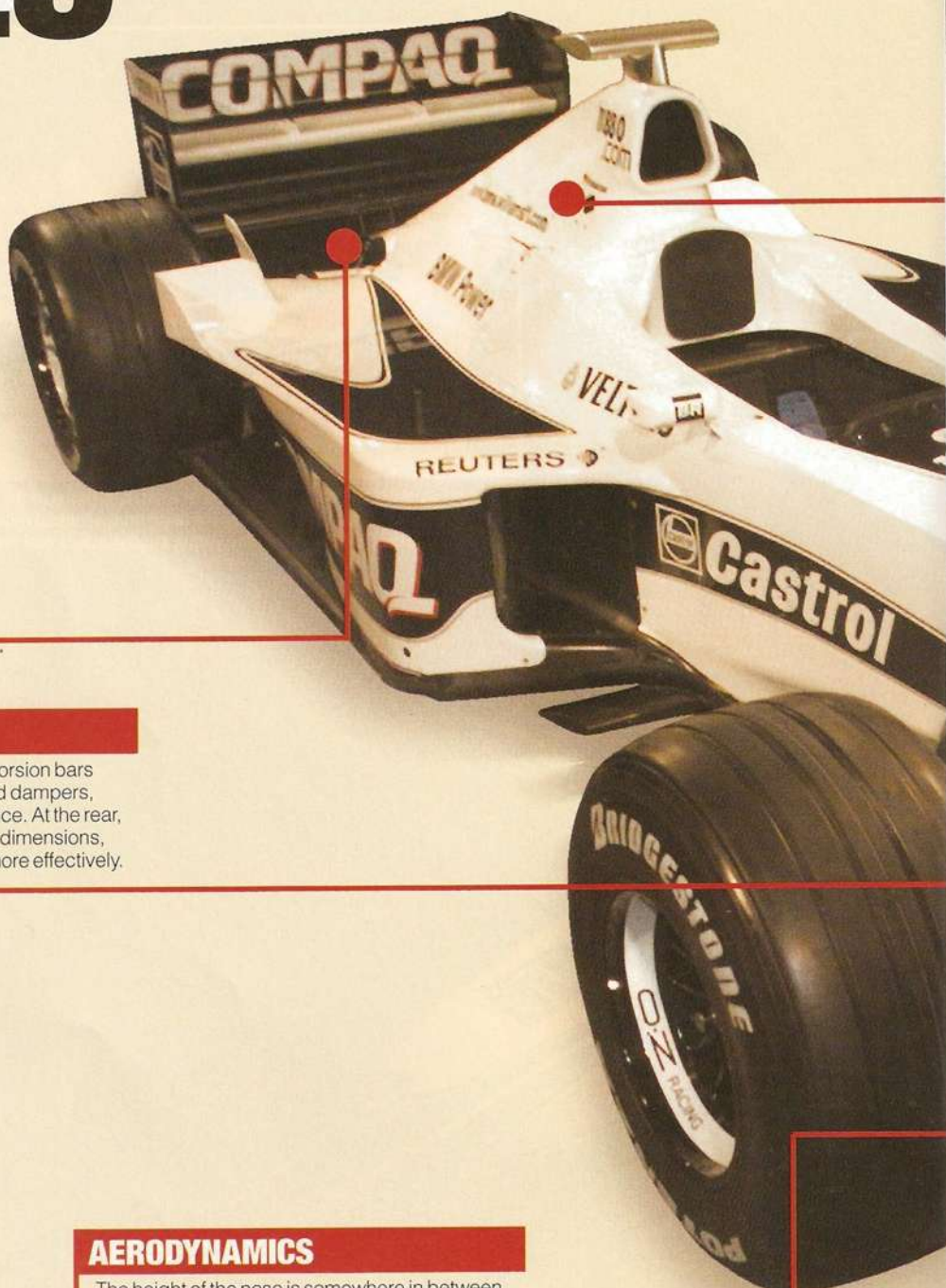
The front suspension has vertical torsion bars working through horizontal inboard dampers, which is standard F1 design practice. At the rear, there are torsion bars for compact dimensions, allowing the rear diffuser to work more effectively.

LAYOUT

The FW22's wheelbase is 7cm longer, dictated by a slightly longer engine. "That change doesn't really make a great deal of difference," says chief designer Gavin Fisher, "because we have enough scope to move weight distribution around with ballast." The team has managed to keep the unballasted weight about the same as in '99, despite rules requiring an extra skin of kevlar on the outside of the chassis to strengthen the cars. The oil tank has been placed between the engine and the chassis, as opposed to between engine and gearbox, a layout pioneered by Stewart in '97.

AERODYNAMICS

The height of the nose is somewhere in between the low level of that on the McLaren and the high position adopted by Ferrari. The latter allows better airflow to the lower body but at the expense of raising the centre of gravity, so the FW22 is a compromise between the two approaches. The diffuser is similar in shape to that of the car's predecessor, but has slightly altered dimensions due to slight differences in engine size. The sidepods are higher than the low-line sidepods of the FW21 due to the increased cooling requirements of the BMW engine. A number of new parts will be introduced at next month's test in Kyalami, South Africa.



ENGINE

The new BMW V10 has been designed to give the manufacturer experience and knowledge of current F1. As a consequence, there is a steady flow of development planned during the season. The engine is similar in size and power to the Supertec Williams used last year, but a smaller, lighter new-generation motor is expected for 2001. Williams has worked hard on reducing the time it takes to change the engine.

PRE-SEASON TALK – ONE YEAR AGO

1999 results: three podium finishes, fifth in constructors' championship

Frank Williams (chairman and managing director): "I always felt the humiliation of 1998 did us a lot of good. There are a lot of very, very determined people at the factory who have worked very hard this winter to sort out the problems. I have a lot of confidence in what they have produced."

Patrick Head (technical director): "We have made a big push this time, not just to catch up but to be ahead of some of the others. We want to be an extra step ahead."

Patrick Head: "We went through all the aspects of the car and set ourselves clear targets [for improvement]. From what I have seen of things, just about all those targets have been achieved or exceeded."

AUTOSPORT: "The team has reviewed every aspect of its design process for the FW21, which has almost nothing in common with its unsuccessful predecessor, the FW20."

AUTOSPORT: "Despite the optimism, no one is under any illusions that taking the fight to McLaren and Ferrari will not be tough."

TWO YEARS AGO

1998 results: three podium positions, third place in constructors' championship

Patrick Head (technical director): "We're aiming to try to be at the top. We have the equipment in terms of the driver, engine and tyres to be able to win a championship, so we expect to try and do that."

AUTOSPORT: "Williams feels it has enough strength in depth to be able to ensure there are not too many ill-effects from Adrian

Newey's departure. However, after working with him for seven years, they are well aware that he will give McLaren a considerable boost."

AUTOSPORT: "Observers were impressed with the new Williams, saying it appeared to be particularly good in quick corners, where it seemed very stable and well-balanced. Speed-trap times add to the impression that the car's aerodynamics are strong."

Jacques Villeneuve (driver): "Most Williams cars are competitive straight out of the box, so I'm pretty confident."

THREE YEARS AGO

1997 results: eight wins, six podium finishes, first in constructors' championship

AUTOSPORT: "Williams-Renault underlined its status as red-hot pre-season favourite when Jacques Villeneuve set a sensational time on his first day's testing in the new FW19."

Jacques Villeneuve (driver): "The car's neutral, easy to work with and has a good baseline. I'm very confident."

Patrick Head (technical director): "I don't know whether we've improved the car or not yet. We know the results from the wind tunnel, and they are certainly better. We've also done various things which we consider will be an improvement. But whether it will make the car quicker or not, I don't know. Only the testing will show."

OVERALL

The FW22 is a logical development of the modified FW21 as raced in the second half of last season. Because the engine is not yet a "mini" generation unit, the car's aerodynamics are largely unchanged, even if 95% of the parts are new. The weight distribution is also similar to that of the FW21 – largely dictated by the characteristics of hard-compound grooved tyres.

When Adrian Newey walked away from Williams and headed for McLaren, his Midas touch went with him; Williams' winning streak ended as surely as McLaren's began. It reflected well on the man widely believed to be the best aerodynamicist in the Formula 1 pit lane, yet it hardly reflected fairly on the men left to carry on his work at Williams – Geoff Willis and Gavin Fisher, respective chiefs of aerodynamics and design.

Neither their FW20 nor 21 designs delivered their drivers to the top step of the podium in the last two seasons, making this the longest barren spell Williams has suffered since it first began winning 21 years ago. However, there is the mitigating factor that these were the two seasons the team had to make do with customer Supertec engines in an era of manufacturer dominance.

The jury is still out on whether the design team has what it takes to step into the big shoes vacated by the former boss, but the BMW-powered FW22 might begin to stack the evidence in its favour. Willis has been aware of the increased responsibility on his shoulders from the day Newey left. "I'd worked with Adrian pretty closely for many years," he says, "and it was interesting going from a situation where you were making [aerodynamic] decisions with somebody else as a backstop to making them entirely yourself. It was more of a challenge, and with

"I'm sure our learning curve will be steep and fairly public, but one always aims high" **GEOFF WILLIS**

that the pressure increases too."

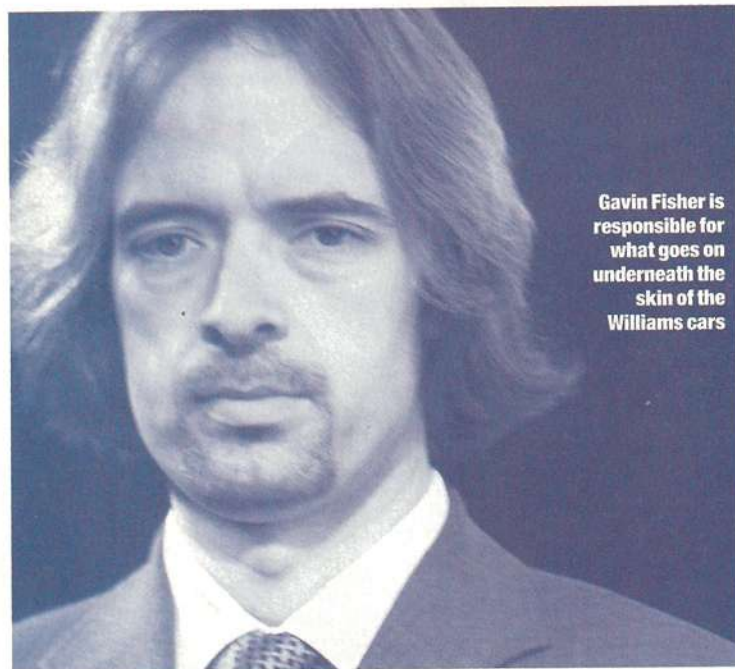
His desk sits no more than 10 feet from that of his partner Fisher. At 35, he's five years younger than Willis, and his look is more grungy than the crisp neatness of his colleague.

Their backgrounds are dissimilar too. After gaining an engineering MA from Cambridge, Willis got his grounding working on hydrodynamic research projects for underwater bodies, leading to a position as hydrodynamicist for an America's Cup yachting team. Water and air flow according to the same principles; those of fluid dynamics. He was in the vanguard of using the computerised application of this – Computational Flow Dynamics (CFD) – and in 1990 introduced the concept to F1 after being taken on by the Leyton House team. There, he worked alongside Newey for the first time, and soon he followed him to Williams.

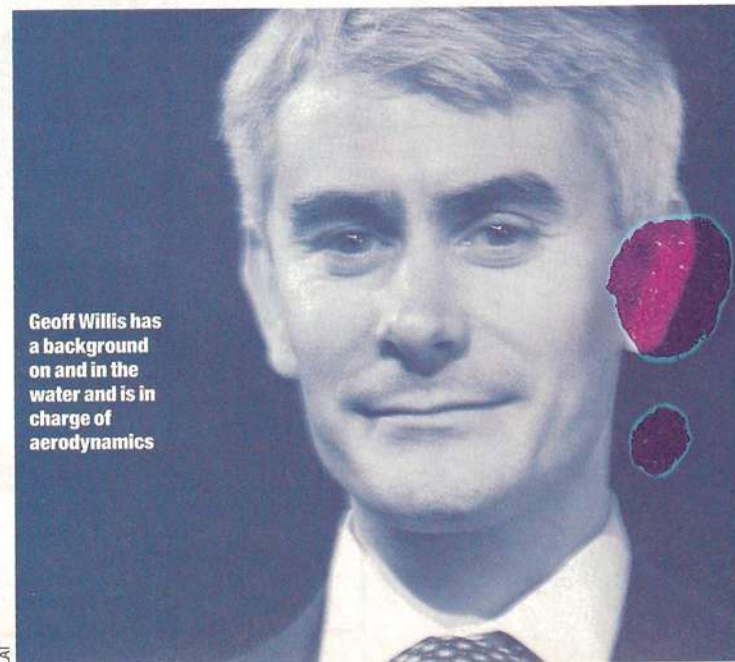
By then, Fisher had already been there for a couple of years. Armed

SHAPE SHIFTERS

Do the Williams designers Geoff Willis and Gavin Fisher have the power to metamorphose the team's waning fortunes? Mark Hughes looks for answers



Gavin Fisher is responsible for what goes on underneath the skin of the Williams cars



Geoff Willis has a background on and in the water and is in charge of aerodynamics

with a first-class honours degree in mechanical engineering, he spent a few years working in a design consultancy before gaining the position of designer at Williams. His expertise is mechanical.

These are very specialised dissimilarities; they are only different within the context of broad similarity. Both, for example, take in pastimes of the action variety. They each have mountain bikes, while Fisher's love of two wheels extends to motorised versions. His colleague still feels the pull of the water and he competes for Wallingford Rowing Club.

They get on well and, according to Willis at least, work easily together. "Gavin is very positive," he says, "and very straightforward. It's easy to dovetail in with him. We work in a fairly integrated way. Broadly speaking, if you can see it on the outside of the car, it's my responsibility, plus things like cooling systems. The overall layout in terms of weight distribution, structures, fuel load, suspensions, hydraulics etc is Gavin. It pretty much splits down the middle.

"It's a slightly different structure to how it worked when Adrian was here. Now there are two people thinking the car through instead of one. Before, there was a triangle of three, with one at the top and two just under. Now you've got two at the top, all overseen by Patrick [Head] of course, just as before. Everyone had to get used to slightly different roles, but it helped that there was a lot of strength in depth; a



Newey's innovation put Williams on top

lot of the people who were working in design and construction here 10 years ago are still doing so now."

The pair's first combined work, the '98 FW20, was criticised for being too conservative. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the increase of responsibility and a consequent strong desire not to mess up, they based it strongly on Newey's '97 championship-winning FW19. This was at the time of the new narrow track/grooved tyre regulations, changes which, in hindsight, can be seen to have created the possibility of fundamental re-evaluation.

No one better demonstrated this than Newey. His first McLaren was radically different to his last Williams in terms of wheelbase, weight distribution and underbody shape. He opted for an aerodynamic/mechanical trade-off unthought of by anyone else when he chose wider front tyres in order to claw back mechanical grip lost to the new regs. He more than made up for



With Newey in control, the '98 McLaren MP4-13 was given a truly radical design



After Newey left, the first Willis/Fisher car was the FW20 (top) which, although conservative in design, later came good. The FW21 (above) was more progressive

Now that Williams has BMW power, the Fisher/Willis partnership must perform



the consequent limitation of the airflow with the underbody shape. By common consensus his MP4-13 was the most aerodynamically effective machine of the year.

Nonetheless, Williams eventually found the sweet spot of the FW20, and towards the end of the season it was performing well, especially so given its power deficit to the manufacturer-powered teams. It was far from a disastrous debut for the Willis/Fisher partnership.

Last year's FW21 was a more progressive design, lighter pre-ballast, allowing for a lower centre of gravity, and featuring extremely narrow rear bodywork, low

"We've got to go out there with the feeling that we have a car that can win races." GEOFF WILLIS

sidepods and an exhaust which, uniquely among the '99 cars, exited into the diffuser rather than on top of it. It was probably too progressive, because from mid-season on, a modified version with wider rear bodywork and conventional exhaust routing proved more competitive. Ralf Schumacher took it to second at Monza and only a

puncture deprived him of victory at the Nurburgring. All this against a backdrop of a yet greater power deficit and weight penalty courtesy of its dated customer engine.

Willis is cautious when assessing whether the FW22 will make a strong case for the current Williams technical team, aware of the newness of the BMW relationship.

"We've got to go out there with the feeling that we have a car which can win races. But we have to have a realistic proviso of when we get the car and the engine working the way we want it. BMW's current engine is a Supertec-generation one and isn't the target to which they are aspiring. We're probably also going to have the usual problems you get when any two groups of people work together for the first time.

"I'm sure our learning curve will be steep and fairly public, but one always aims high. In terms of car performance I want the car to be better than last year's, and there's no reason why it shouldn't be." ■

Normal service has been resumed

Towards the end of '99, it looked like Tommi Makinen would have a few challengers in his chase for a fifth world title this year. The Monte supported this theory until fate intervened. By John McIlroy

Even Tommi Makinen had to admit that he'd have liked more competition on the Rallye Monte Carlo. The four-times world champion got his bid for a fifth crown off to the perfect start with a dominant victory, made all the easier by the bizarre retirements of all three Peugeots and Richard Burns' Subaru before the start of the second leg.

Since only Gilles Panizzi and Burns seemed capable of living with the Finn's pace, the event lost much of its interest during its second and third days and at times, we were relying on the characteristic blend of long stages and unpredictable weather to throw up odd results.

A bad event for the Brits became an awful one when Colin McRae's engine exploded without warning halfway through the last stage. It was, perversely, one of few familiar occurrences on a rally that had its share of surprises.

LEG 1

Thursday's opening two stages typified Rallye Monte Carlo. The majority of their 55km was bone-dry asphalt, but in the shade, the roads were glistening. The final six, icy kilometres of straights and downhill hairpins into the packed town of Entrevaux were a real challenge on slicks.

Accordingly, many cars arrived at first service in St Andre les Alpes with battle scars. That much was expected. Richard Burns turning up in the lead wasn't.

He'd been second fastest on the opener to Panizzi, who fired a warning shot from the Peugeot camp by eclipsing everyone by at least five seconds. In the second test, the Englishman nicked back 14s from the 206 driver and although Tommi Makinen was fastest overall, the number three Subaru's consistency had earned it a six-second lead.

"It was incredibly slippery," said Burns. "You couldn't have stood up on the road down to Entrevaux."

His two main rivals had suffered problems in that second test - Makinen picked up a vibration from one of Michelin's ATS mousse inserts and Panizzi had clouted a wall less than a mile from the finish and knocked the 206's left-rear wheel way out of line.

Peugeot's other French hope, Francois Delecour, clipped exactly the same rock and emerged with slightly heavier damage and a few seconds lost. However, he was hardly his usual ebullient self because of a stomach upset.

Ford's problems were more mechanical than medical. Carlos Sainz felt he was pushing as hard as he could at this stage of his experience with the Focus WRC ▶



Gard of honour: SEAT's Gardemeister upheld the Spanish make's reputation with fourth position



"You couldn't have stood up on the road down to Entrevaux" RICHARD BURNS



Point to prove: Loix rallied to sixth place

◀ (he was 11th), and Colin McRae was concerned: "It feels like it doesn't have any grip," he said. "Even on the drier road, there are bits in shade that are greasy." The Scot was still fourth, however.

Toni Gardemeister had started superbly, even beating Makinen in the opening stage and surviving two spins in SS2 to hold down seventh at service. SEAT new-boy Didier Auriol had been within seconds of the young Finn in SS1 and even though he dropped time with a rear differential problem in SS2, still held ninth.

Typically, there were a few surprises from the privateer ranks. Bruno Thiry held third after SS1 in his Grifone Corolla but he dropped back to eighth when he took it too cautiously over the Entrevaux ice. Swiss driver Olivier Burri and Dane Henrik Lundgaard were others to post fast times.

Burns nabbed another three seconds from Makinen in the third

test, but attention had already turned towards the two stages that closed the day's action. In contrast to the generally pleasant conditions elsewhere, the final pair were coated with thick ice.

The Englishman played it safe – perhaps too much so, he later admitted – and lost the lead as a result as Makinen gambled on half-stud tyres and took 21s from his young rival.

"It was bloody slippery near the end," said the Finn. "On these tyres, it wasn't so nice on the really icy bits. I'm glad to have got some time back off Richard."

Burns was far from despondent. "It's only a few seconds," he said.

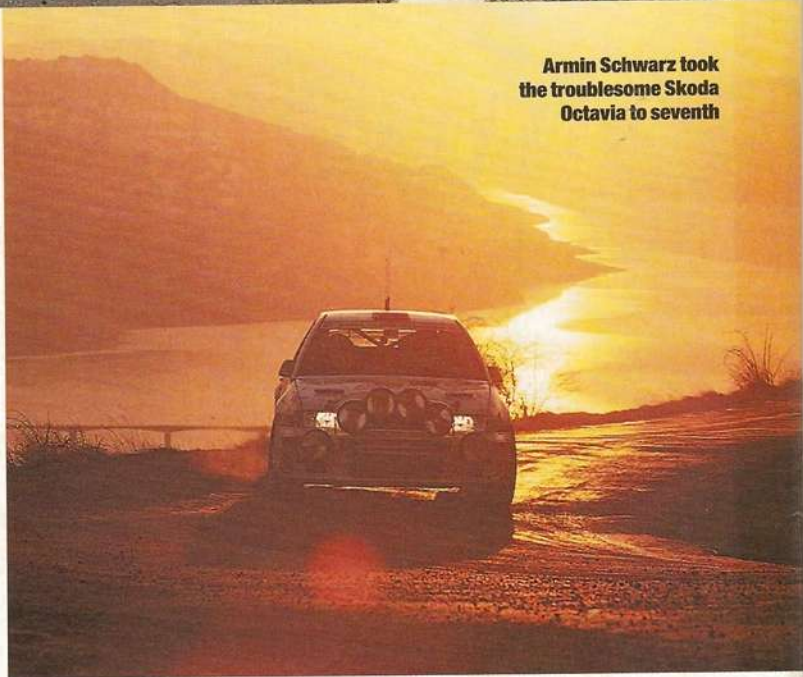
Panizzi felt his Peugeot's engine management system was more suited to dry tar than ice, but he was still in touch with the leaders as crews returned to Gap.

No one else was at the same race. Gardemeister impressed with his level-headed attitude and occupied sixth overnight, behind Delecour and Sainz, but they were a minute and a half adrift of the lead battle.

At least Gardemeister was ahead of his team mate – who didn't help his cause by spinning, stalling and then locking his Cordoba's centre differential by accident – and one of the Fords. McRae's efforts had been thwarted by steering problems and even a change of rack before the final stage didn't help matters. He ended the day in seventh.

Other works drivers hadn't enjoyed the cleanest of runs, either. Marcus Gronholm's Peugeot

Armin Schwarz took the troublesome Skoda Octavia to seventh



developed centre differential trouble in the early stages, while the Skoda of Armin Schwarz was plagued by engine management and turbo glitches.

RESULTS AFTER SS5

1 Makinen/M'maki	1h 22m 34.1s
2 Burns/Reid	+12.3s
3 Panizzi/Panizzi	+30.6s
4 Sainz/Moya	+1m 51.1s
5 Delecour/Grataloup	+2m 04.9s
6 G'meister/Lukander	+2m 21.4s

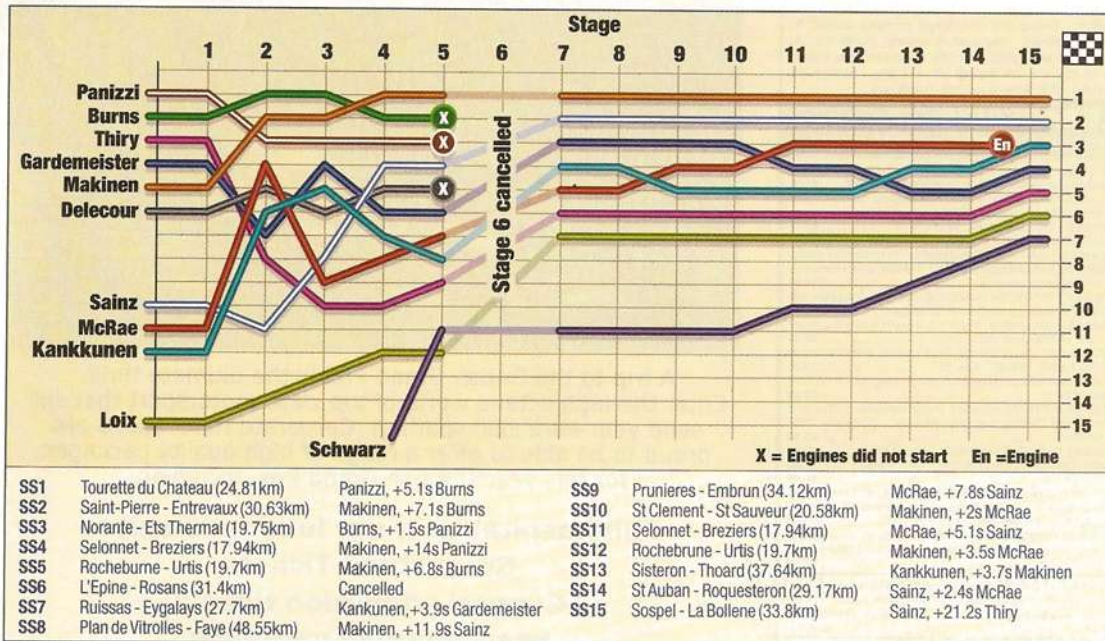
LEG 2

It was almost over before it had begun. As Makinen pulled out of

parc ferme on Friday morning, Burns reached for the starter switch on his Impreza's dashboard – and nothing happened. The Subaru's motor was willing to turn over but couldn't be persuaded to fire up.

The disappointed Englishman could do nothing but slam the door, get a lift to service at Tallard and watch the mechanics trying to start the car later in the day. "We can't afford to give away points like this," he fumed. "It should have been 10, at least six, and now it's nothing."

He should at least have had the comfort of knowing that Panizzi might prevent Makinen from taking a maximum score, but the Frenchman had fought an equally futile battle to awaken his 206 from



its overnight slumber. Amazingly, all three Peugeots failed to make it out of Gap under their own steam. It was a PR nightmare of colossal proportions for the Velizy team, far removed from the pre-event hype and the fears of rival teams.

The day's first stage was cancelled due to vast numbers of spectators, and even though Makinen ceded a handful of seconds to his pursuers in SS7, his nearest rival was now Sainz, nearly two minutes adrift. Even the Finn was a bit bemused at how straightforward victory looked. "It's not so nice now," he said, "because the gap is big and yet I still have to push hard."

Sainz struggled with brakes in SS7 and lost a few seconds to Gardemeister, but the real man on a charge was Kankkunen. His fastest time gave Subaru renewed hope. An inspired extra cut in his Pirellis

had given the veteran's event fresh impetus: suddenly, third was a possibility and the runner-up spot couldn't be dismissed either.

The longest stage in the event, the 48km Plan de Vitrolles-Faye, was next up and Makinen emerged with a further 13s added to his cushion. Sainz had opted for Michelin's softest rubber and paid the price. "It was moving a lot near the finish," he said. He'd only eked out an extra six tenths of a second over Gardemeister.

SEAT's wunderkind had almost equalled the double world champion, despite a broken rear brake disc, a bent rear wheel and various body damage after he grazed the Vitrolles scenery twice in the first two miles.

"Sometimes the brakes worked, sometimes they didn't," he said with a wry grin. "It made the hairpins interesting."

Kankkunen had got to within 10s of him then failed to get enough heat into his Pirellis before the icy section on Vitrolles. He dropped nearly half a minute as a result. He still wasn't out of reach of McRae, either, but the Scot was becoming more frustrated by the stage.

Gearbox problems had blighted his efforts in L'Epine-Rosans, so Ford changed the offending unit. In Vitrolles, the new one started to balk on the downchange. "This is stuff that should have been sorted out last year," he said. "But I'm not far behind Juha and I'll certainly try to get in front of him."

Thiry's hopes had taken a nosedive thanks to tyres that were far too hard, and he was coming under faint pressure from Freddy Loix. The second Mitsubishi driver had failed to get the hang of ice notes during the opening leg, but "a big meeting and different

THE CARS



MITSUBISHI

Makinen's effort is based on a Lancer which features only mild tweaks compared to last year. The main change the use of an active rear differential in Monte conditions for the first time.



SUBARU

Prodrive has elected to stick with its WRC99 model until at least Portugal. As such, the car differed only slightly from last season, with slight adjustments to the gearbox and suspension.



FORD

New-spec Focus featured a Cosworth-tuned engine for the first time, aerodynamic revisions and changes to the rear anti-roll bar (the latter modification was mainly in the interests of service access).



SEAT

The Cordoba E2 has changed since Didier Auriol arrived. He has worked to create more effective differential settings. The car also used Magneti Marelli engine management for the first time.



SKODA

The next-generation Octavia has a different spec of engine, although its management system proved somewhat troublesome. Czech team has also introduced new springs and dampers.



PEUGEOT

All three 206s were fitted with active front differentials for the first time (Gilles Panizzi used one in San Remo last year), as well as revised engine management.

"Sometimes the brakes worked, sometimes they didn't"

TONI GARDEMEISTER

Old master: Kankkunen just pipped protege Gardemeister with a measured run to third



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information" improved his pace. Mäkinen chose soft tyres for Friday's final two stages and admitted he'd been "way too cautious" in the first of the pair, where Sainz snatched back nearly half a minute. The Mitsubishi ace restored his pride with a quick time on the last test to end the day nearly two minutes in front.

Sainz was far from safe in second, either: Gardemeister's consistently strong showings kept him within 25s of the Spaniard, and McRae was showing his usual dogged determination. He overcame his gearbox problems to set a cracking time on the last stage, leapfrog Kankkunen and keep the SEAT driver less than 20s away.

Subaru's only hope had gone off the rails during the late afternoon, but he was still fifth and ready to pounce if the frontrunners hit trouble. Thiry rounded off the top six as crews returned to Gap for the final overnight halt.

RESULTS AFTER SS10

1 Mäkinen/Mäki	2h 45m 24.0s
2 Sainz/Moya	+1m 50.5s
3 Gardemeister/Lukander	+2m 15.8s
4 McRae/Grist	+2m 32.7s
5 Kankkunen/Repo	+3m 03.2s
6 Thiry/Prevot	+4m 11.3s

LEG 3

Mäkinen peered out of his Mitsubishi at a freezing Tallard service area. "What the hell are you doing up at this time of the morning?" he demanded. "There's nothing to report anyway."

He was nearly right: his lead looked secure and as is normally the case in such situations, he seemed to reel off kilometres at ease on his way to a second Monte win.

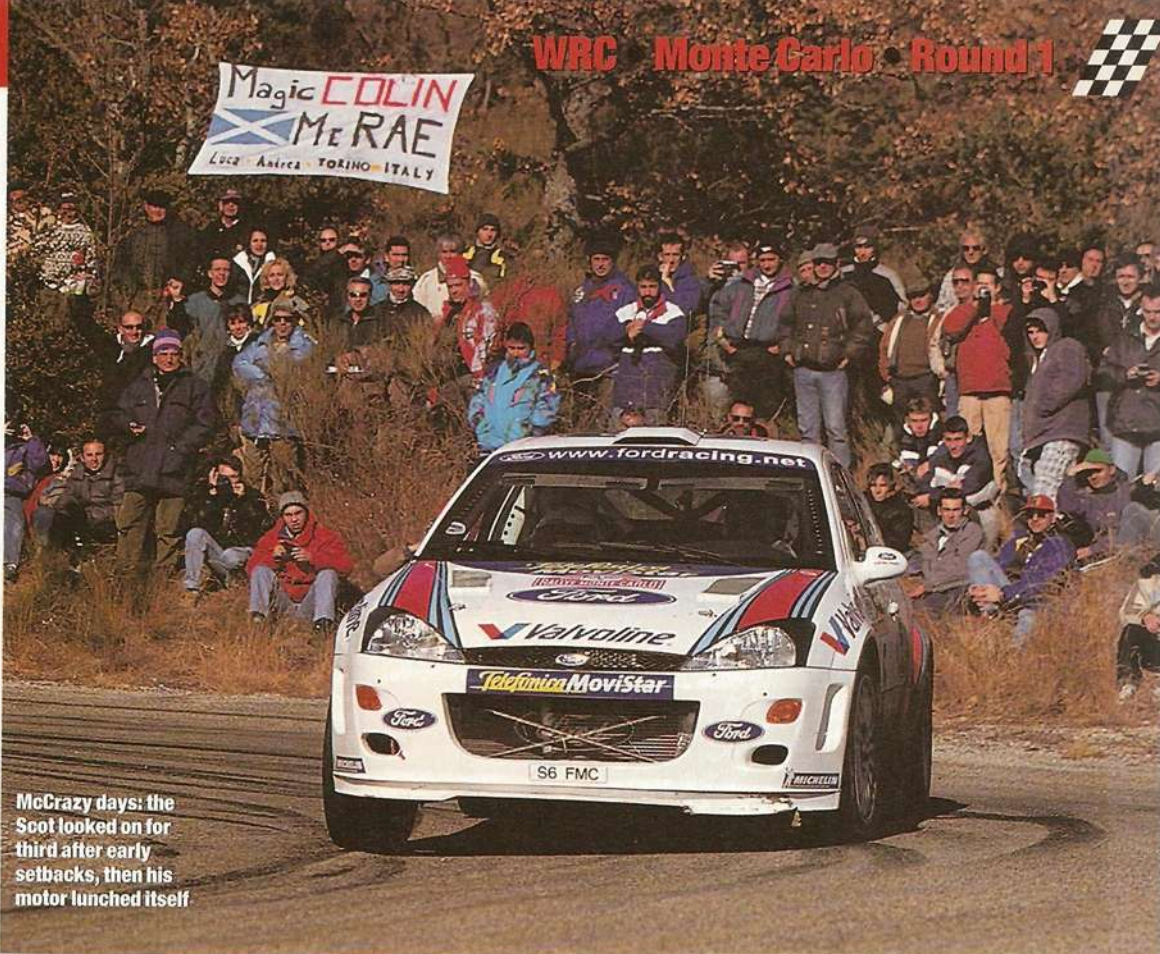
Things weren't so clear-cut behind him. Sainz was reasonably fast on the first of Saturday's five stages, Selonnet-Breiziers, but McRae was quicker still. Gardemeister was off the boil, so the Scot instantly moved up to third. "I don't understand it," said the Finn. "I couldn't trust the car."

He'd slowed down enough to allow Kankkunen a sniff of fourth and the sole remaining Subaru driver instantly upped the ante. In the day's second test, Rochebrune-Urtis, he took another 13s from Gardemeister to move to within half a minute of that position. The classic Sisteron was next.

Again, SEAT's young charge was unable to explain his lack of pace in the awesome 36km stage, but the results sheets told the much simpler truth: he'd ceded a minute to Kankkunen and dropped to fifth. "We had a half-spin," said Gardemeister, "but that was only 20s. Everything else felt good, but the time's not." It wasn't SEAT's day: Auriol, running eighth, retired shortly after with engine problems.

On Sisteron's icier sections, McRae said his Focus had slowed to walking pace but he still eclipsed his Spanish team mate and the

McRae days: the Scot looked on for third after early setbacks, then his motor lunched itself



RICHARD BURNS

A false start

I think I can actually say now that I've got the hang of the Monte Carlo Rally. It's just a real shame that I'll have to wait another year to prove it on the results sheet.

The French mountains provide a mixture of dry tar, sheet ice and snow that isn't found anywhere else in the world, and second-guessing conditions and tyre choice is the key to success.

It's taken two years of trying, but I've learnt how to interpret the information given to me by my ice-note crew, Robbie Head and Steve Turvey, and make best use of it. It makes a massive difference: on several corners, he actually advised me to put a couple of wheels off the road in search of better grip and a more effective line. If you can carry a bit more speed around the bends with patchy ice, your times soon start to fall.

It's also good to see that Pirelli and the Subaru team have made gains on the surface, where we struggled a bit last year.

That all added up to a great scrap with Tommi [Mäkinen] and Gilles Panizzi before Friday morning's disappointment. On the Subaru, we can actually select different engine mappings for cold starts. I don't even have to touch the throttle - I just press a button and it feeds in the right fuel mixture for the conditions.

For some reason or another, the car just refused to fire. Eventually, it flooded and even bump-starting it downhill couldn't do the trick.

I'm gutted, obviously. We can't afford to throw away 10 points like

Fire extinguished: Burns was chasing for the lead until his car refused to start



this, particularly to someone like Tommi. I already know that the new Impreza's going to be quicker still when it arrives in Portugal, but we need to use last year's model to rack up points now. That didn't happen last weekend.

Richard Burns



Autosport 

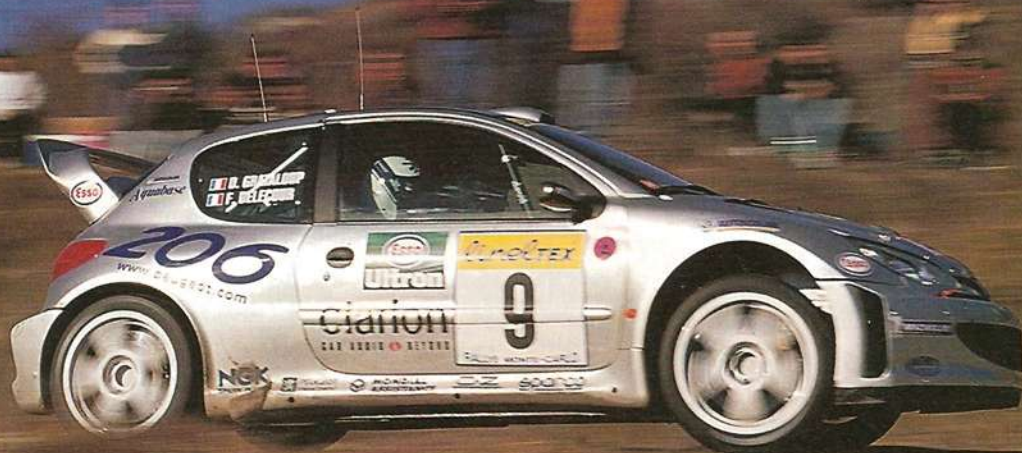


JOHN LLOYD
PAUL AMANDINI

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM



"I think it's important to get to the finish and get some points" COLIN McRAE



The lion sleeps tonight: the Peugeots were fast, but stubbornly refused to be woken on day two

◀ gap between the Fords now stood at 13s, with two stages to go.

Time for team orders? Didn't look like it. "I'm free to push for second," said McRae, but he added: "I think it's important to get to the finish and get some points, too."

When Sainz managed to stem the tide in the penultimate stage, the Scot decided to settle for four points. "We still pushed hard," he said, "but Carlos took a couple of seconds back so we'll just go for the finish now."

Fate had other ideas. Barely 14km into the last test, McRae's voice cracked over the Ford radio: he had a misfire. Within seconds he came on again. The engine had exploded, the Focus wasn't going anywhere and the sweet taste of Ford's best finish since Portugal last year had been soured at the last. It was galling enough to even merit sympathy from rival teams.

Kankkunen gave Prodrive some cheer with third, ahead of a frustrated Gardemeister, who'd driven superbly until a final day that he described as "bloody terrible".

Thiry notched up a couple of points on his debut in a Corolla, ahead of Loix in the second Mitsubishi. Schwarz fought on despite regular engine problems and posted a couple of third-fastest times on his way to seventh. Burri's Corolla, Gp N winner Manfred Stohl and the other Skoda of Climent rounded off the top 10.

At the front, though, Makinen's dominance was such that it was occasionally easy to forget that he was there at all. We've only just had the first round of a long season, but already the reigning champion's opposition is lying prone on the canvas. Can any of the top challengers haul themselves off the floor in time to land a telling punch in Sweden next month? ■

RESULTS

★ BritishEurosport

January 20-22, FIA World Rally Championship, Rallye Monte Carlo (MC), round 1 of 14

Pos	No	Driver/Co-driver	Car	Result
1	1	Tommi Makinen/Risto Mannisenmaki	Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution	4h 23m 35.8s
2	6	Carlos Sainz/Luis Moya	Ford Focus WRC	4h 25m 00.7s
3	4	Juha Kankkunen/Juha Repo	Subaru Impreza WRC99	4h 26m 57.2s
4	8	Toni Gardemeister/Paavo Lukander	SEAT Cordoba WRC	4h 27m 20.9s
5	18	Bruno Thiry/Stephane Prevot	Toyota Corolla WRC	4h 28m 24.2s
6	2	Freddy Loix/Sven Smeets	Mitsubishi Carisma GT	4h 30m 39.9s
7	11	Armin Schwarz/Manfred Hiemer	Skoda Octavia WRC	4h 33m 24.1s
8	20	Olivier Burri/Christophe Hofmann	Toyota Corolla WRC	4h 34m 17.2s
9	21	Manfred Stohl/Peter Muller	Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution (Gp N)	4h 44m 17.6s
10	12	Luis Climent/Alex Romani	Skoda Octavia WRC	4h 44m 25.3s
R	5	Colin McRae/Nicky Grist	Ford Focus WRC	Engine, SS15
R	7	Didier Auriol/Denis Giraudet	SEAT Cordoba WRC	Engine, SS13
R	3	Richard Burns/Robert Reid	Subaru Impreza WRC99	Engine, before SS6
R	9	Francois Delecour/Daniel Grataloup	Peugeot 206 WRC	Engine, before SS6
R	10	Gilles Panizzi/Herve Panizzi	Peugeot 206 WRC	Engine, before SS6
R	17	Marcus Gronholm/Timo Rautiainen	Peugeot 206 WRC	Engine, before SS6

Group A overall (A8): Makinen/Mannisenmaki; **A7:** Laurent Scherrer/Jean-Bernard Garcin (Peugeot 205 GTi), 5h 29m 45.6s; **A6:** Alain Pelletier/Jose Boyer (Citroen Saxo kit car), 5h 02m 09.6s; **A5:** No finishers; **Group N overall (N4):** Stohl/Muller; **N3:** Brice Tirabassi/Sabrina de Castelli (Peugeot 306), 5h 19m 20.9s; **N2:** Roger Grimaud/Jean-Christian Grimaud (Honda Civic VTI), 5h 30m 19.1s; **N1:** Thierry Chabanne/Isabelle Bernard (Peugeot 106 XSI), 6h 10m 54.4s. **Starters/finishers:** 80/59. **Rally leaders:** SS1, Panizzi; SS2-3, Burns; SS4-15, Makinen. **World Rally Championship - Drivers:** 1, Makinen, 10; 2, Sainz, 6; 3, Kankkunen, 4; 4, Gardemeister, 3; 5, Thiry, 2; 6, Loix, 1. **Manufacturers:** 1, Mitsubishi, 12; 2, Ford, 6; 3, Subaru, 4; 4, SEAT, 3; 5, Skoda, 1.

Next round: Swedish Rally (S), February 10-13.

Encouraging Sainz:
the Spaniard proved
best of the rest on his
first run in the Focus





Team Menard and Greg Ray proved unbeatable last year. They will want a repeat

RUNNING ROUND IN

As the fifth Indy Racing League season begins with the Delphi Indy 200 at Walt Disney World on January 29, it is still suffering from a lack of attention, with the exception of the Indianapolis 500.

That event continues to be the world's most famous race with race day crowds of over 400,000 fans filling the circuit to witness an American sports icon. However, once the Indy 500 is over, small crowds at its other races are very disappointing. Only Texas Motor Speedway's two events draw large crowds for the IRL events.

The schedule has also shrunk, rather than getting larger. The IRL will not race at Lowe's Motor Speedway in Charlotte, North Carolina, due to a number of circumstances. Chief among these is the fact that three spectators were killed after a wheel from Stan Wattles' car flew into the grandstands after it was hit by John Paul Jr's car last season. Dwindling crowd numbers also contributed. The race drew 73,000 fans in 1997, but bad weather the past two years dropped the crowd to 50,000 in '98 and 45,000 last season.

Two pitiful crowds at another Winston Cup venue - Dover Downs International Speedway in Delaware - have led to that facility being dropped too. Another venue

to suffer is Pikes Peak International Raceway in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It hosted two events in '99, but only a few people turned out to watch. The one-mile facility at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains keeps its June date, but August has been dropped.

As a result, there are only nine firm dates on the 10-race schedule issued. A September 10 date is listed with the venue "to be announced". That track is believed to be Nazareth Speedway, which also hosts a CART FedEx Championship Series event in April.

Also new to the series this season is the 1.5-mile Kentucky Motor Speedway, near Cincinnati, Ohio, which will host a race on August 27.

Compound a shrinking schedule with a legal battle involving former series sponsor Pep Boys, and the retirement of executive director

Leo Mehl, and things perhaps don't look as good as they could.

Before he bade the series *adieu*, Mehl said: "Sometimes you have to take a few steps backward before you can move forward." Unfortunately, if the IRL takes any

"The IRL has developed into a strong series"

AL UNSER JR

more steps backward, it will get dangerously close to ending up where it began in '96.

That'll be the bad news, then. Time for some happier tidings.

Al Unser Jr has left CART to join the IRL. The two-time Indy 500

champion returns to Rick Galles ECR Racing. Together, the two won the '92 Indy 500 and the '90 PPG Cup title in CART.

"The Indy 500 is an event that has played an important role in my life and family history, and I am thrilled that I am going to compete in it again," Unser says. "Whatever they run there on race day, over 400,000 fans will show up. It has a strong tradition and a strong heritage and I definitely want to be a part of it."

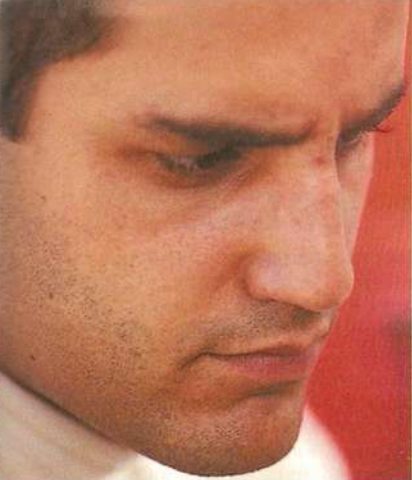
"We're going to try to bring some excitement to the IRL and if we can do that, it will be great."

He is sold on the IRL concept of open-wheel, oval track racing and signed a five-year contract. Unser originally raced for Galles in the early-'80s and then from '88-'93. He will drive a G Force/Oldsmobile/Firestone combination in 2000.

"I am really excited to be back

Unser Jr won the '92 Indy 500 with Rick Galles. The big race enticed him over to the IRL





Montoya will take on the IRL's best at Indy

with Rick," Unser said. "He gave me my first ride in the Indianapolis 500 in '83, and we have won every championship we have gone after. He runs a top-class organisation, and I know his system well.

"I won my first championship with him and my first Indy 500. We are so excited we signed a five-year deal. That makes us believe in each other very much."

His arrival has been met with open arms by fellow competitors.

"The first thing that comes to my mind is we should welcome him home," said '98 Indy 500 winner Eddie Cheever. "This is where he needs to be. The Indianapolis 500

needs to have all the Unsters participating in it that are available. Little Al is uniquely qualified to race in it. He has won it twice, and he comes from a family that you would have to say is the Royal Family of American Open Wheel Racing. I'm looking forward to beating him."

Unser calls himself a "38-year-old rookie" but his obvious his veteran experience and big-time name should infuse some much-needed interest into the series.

"The IRL has definitely developed into a strong, competitive series," he says. "We're excited about that

development cycle, the next phase went much more smoothly during the first open test at Walt Disney World Speedway in mid December.

Tony George, the president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and founder of the IRL, recalls:

"Throughout the paddock during that first test weekend, there was universal excitement for the new equipment. Our engine and chassis suppliers have worked hard to build these new cars, and the benefactors will be the racing fans."

Reigning champion Greg Ray is back to defend his crown with

"You have to move backwards in order to move forwards" LEO MEHL

and if we can bring some more excitement to it, that's great."

As the first major racing series to begin competition in the new century, the Indy Racing League will introduce some exciting new components. A new chassis, combined with a 3.5-litre, normally aspirated engine, will help lead the IRL into the 2000 season and into the future.

Unlike '97, when the new engines and chassis featured a long

Team Menard. Much like his predecessor at Team Menard, Tony Stewart, Ray can usually be found at the front of the field. Expect more of the same in 2000.

Kenny Brack, the '98 champ, has left to join Team Rahal in CART, but has been replaced at AJ Foyt Enterprises by Jeff Ward. The team will begin the season as a one-car outfit after second driver Billy Boat was not asked back.

Spare a thought, though, for Sam

INS AND OUTS

In ● Al Unser jr has left CART to join the IRL.

● A 3.5-litre, normally aspirated engine is in.

● CART teams remain out, although more and more – such as Walker Racing, Penske Racing and Target/Chip Ganassi Racing will make the jump and compete in the Indianapolis 500 in May.

● Kentucky Motor Speedway and possibly Nazareth are in.

● New sequential gearboxes built by Xtrac are in.

Out ● Kenny Brack, has left to compete for Team Rahal in CART.

● The 4.0-litre, normally aspirated engine is out.

● Lowe's Motor Speedway and Dover Downs International Speedway are both out.

● Fans continue to stay out of the grandstands at many IRL races, except the Indianapolis 500 and races at Texas Motor Speedway.

● The chassis that have been run in the series for the past three years are out. They are being replaced by newer ones from G Force, Dallara and Riley & Scott.

● The old Emco gearboxes with the H-shift pattern are out.

CIRCLES

The oval-based IRL seems to be shrinking rather than expanding. Can this season's big changes bring about a turnaround? By Bruce Martin

CALENDAR

January 29 Delphi Indy 200, Walt Disney World Speedway
March 19 Phoenix 200, Phoenix International Raceway
April 22 Las Vegas 500, Las Vegas Motor Speedway
May 28 Indianapolis 500, Indianapolis Motor Speedway
June 10 Longhorn 500, Texas Motor Speedway
June 18 Radisson Indy 200, Pikes Peak International Raceway
July 15 Atlanta 500, Atlanta Motor Speedway
August 27 Belterra Resort Indy 300, Kentucky Motor Speedway
September 10 TBA
October 15 Mall.com 500, Texas Motor Speedway



No matter what type of single-seaters are racing, or the names in them, the Indy 500 draw fans in hundreds of thousands

Schmidt. He showed all the promise of becoming a title contender, but was involved in a crash during a test session at Walt Disney World Speedway on January 6 which has, tragically, left him paralysed from the neck down.

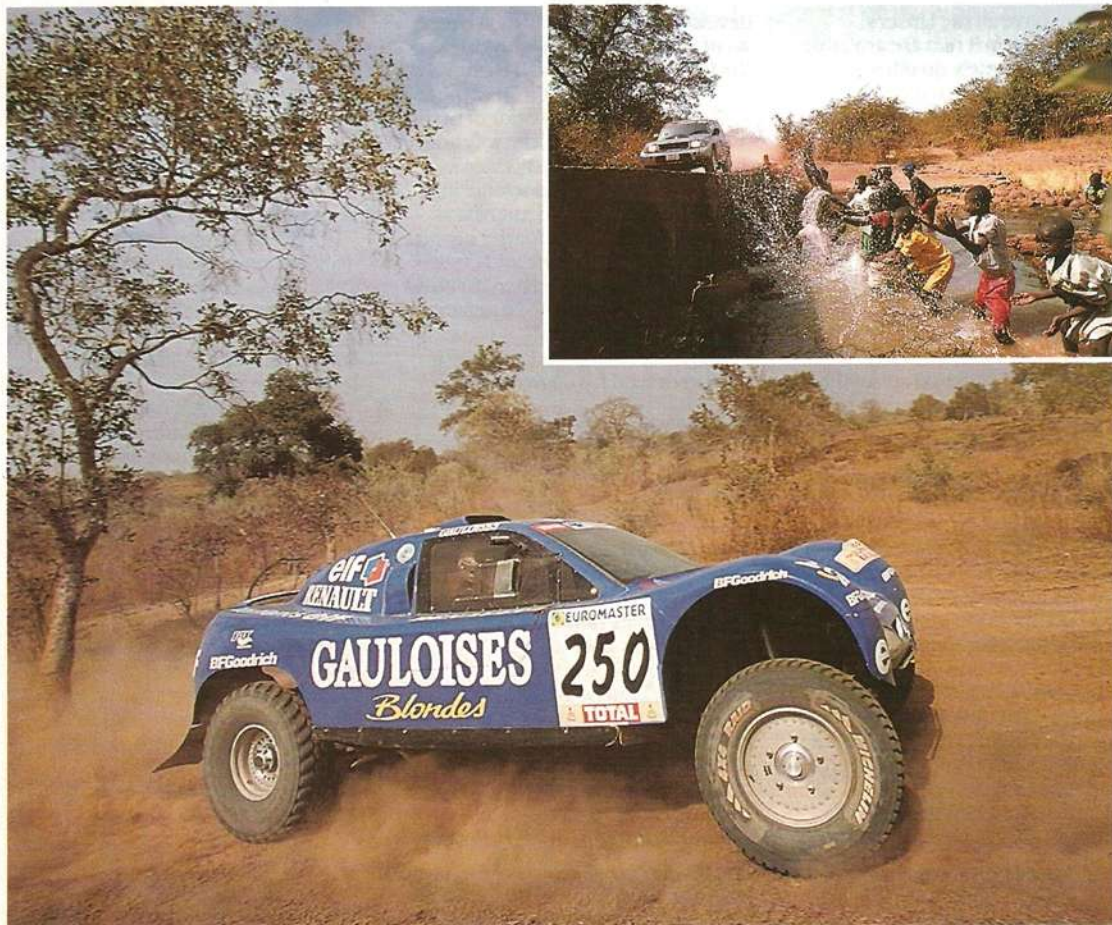
Other drivers who will pressure Ray and Unser include Scott Goodyear, a two-time winner last year for Panther Racing; Scott Sharp and Mark Dismore, winners of one race each in '99 for Kelley Racing; and Eddie Cheever, the only major driver using the Nissan Infiniti V8.

An exciting newcomer is 19-year-old Sarah Fisher, who has beaten the big boys in the United States Auto Club (USAC) midget series. She will drive for Walker Racing, a CART team that will run the entire IRL schedule in addition to full CART schedule with Shinji Nakano.

Walker has joined the IRL because he wants to race in the Indianapolis 500. In fact, this year's event should provide enormous interest as CART regulars Target/Chip Ganassi Racing will enter champion Juan Pablo Montoya and Jimmy Vasser in IRL equipment. Penske Racing is another CART team which is expected to compete in the world's biggest race, setting out the battle lines for an open-wheel civil war at the Brickyard.

However, after several years of experience with the equipment, the IRL teams will have a bit of an advantage against the top drivers from CART.

One thing is absolutely certain regarding the IRL series itself – it is sticking unerringly to his oval track philosophy. Unfortunately, off the track the series itself appears to be running around in circles, sometimes going nowhere in particular. ■



Rally winner Jean-Louis Schlesser played a waiting game as the event headed through the savannah of western Africa during the early stages. His Buggy would come to the fore as grassland gave way to flat-out desert sprints. Inset: Early leader Kenjiro Shinozuka's Mitsubishi crosses a bridge in Mali, despite the attentions of local children. His luck would run out big time in Libya

Schlesser is desert king

The French veteran's Buggy again beat the works teams. By Neil Perkins

Former double World Sportscar champion Jean-Louis Schlesser, driving his faithful Renault V6-engined Buggy, retained his crown as king of the desert when he clinched a second successive win on the Paris-Dakar-Cairo Rally.

The reigning World Cross Country champ hit the front when the shortened event headed onto the high-speed sand of southern Libya. Until then, he had given best to the Mitsubishi Pajeros for the first six sections through Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and into Niger.

The Buggy has a lower centre of gravity, better weight distribution, more power and a much higher top speed than the Pajeros and the new Nissan Terranos. It was the last factor which would prove decisive, as the Frenchman cruised through the Libyan and Egyptian deserts to take victory by over 12 minutes.

Seventeen special stages were planned in a route of 10,863km (6746 miles), but a terrorist threat was received when the contest reached Niamey in Niger. The entire competition was airlifted over 1200 miles by a trio of giant Antonov 124 cargo planes.

Savannah, village tracks, course

camel grass and 40-degree heat were replaced by sand-flats, dunes and icy cold nights under the stars.

Japan's Kenjiro Shinozuka had been the most consistent runner over the opening six legs, although Portugal's Carlos Sousa, Stéphane Peterhansel, Schlesser and Mitsubishi's Jutta Kleinschmidt all earned coveted stage wins.

The Libyan deserts were a different proposition. Heavy rain had settled the dust and packed the sand, and Schlesser made his move. He attacked on the first proper desert run and turned a six-minute deficit into a lead of more than 10 minutes. Only Peterhansel's Mega-Mitsubishi stayed in contention, the multiple Dakar bike winner deposing Shinozuka too.

A short distance into the next stage the contest was all but settled in Schlesser's favour. A series of tricky dunes and high-speed piste posed few problems for the first batch of six cars unleashed just after sunrise, but the next crews strayed a kilometre off the path and came across a massive dune.

Four cars (the Mitsubishi of Shinozuka, Miguel Prieto and Sousa and the Nissan of Gregoire de Mevius) plunged at speed off a

ledge into a 35-metre abyss. Sousa, his co-driver Joao Manuel Luz and Shinozuka's co-driver Dominique Serieys were seriously injured. All eight crew members were airlifted back to the stage start in Waha, onto Tunis and from there to hospitals in Paris and Madrid. Injuries mainly ranged from concussion to cracked vertebrae, but Luz required spinal surgery to save the use of his legs.

Jose Maria Servia beat team mate Schlesser into Egypt, but the Frenchman had an overall advantage in excess of 13 minutes. He tackled the last two stages of note with no problem.

"There's no point going at break-neck speed," said Schlesser. "I know where the Buggy's strengths are and we utilised them perfectly."

PARIS-DAKAR-CAIRO RALLY, JANUARY 6-23

Jean-Louis Schlesser/Henri Magne (Schlesser-Renault Buggy), 45h06m03s; 2 Stéphane Peterhansel/Jean-Paul Cottret (Mega-Mitsubishi), 45h18m36s; 3 Jean-Pierre Fontenay/Gilles Picard (Mitsubishi Pajero), 45h33m36s; 4 Jose Maria Servia/Jean-Marie Lurquin (Schlesser), 45h44m53s; 5 Jutta Kleinschmidt/Tina Thörner (Mitsubishi), 46h15m03s; 6 Hiroshi Masuoka/Andreas Schulz (Mitsubishi), 46h47m15s; 7 Bruno Saby/Yves Truelle (Ford Ranger), 47h49m18s; 8 Thierry de Lavergne/Jacky Dubois (Nissan Terrano), 48h45m31s; 9 Henri Pescarolo/Alain Guehennec (Nissan Patrol), 50h09m13s; 10 Ramon Vila Altimir/Rosendo Tourinan (Patrol), 51h52m29s.

Muller coolest on ice race trail

"That was a great race, one of the best wins I've had," said Yvan Muller after winning the latest round of the Andros Trophy at Serre Chevalier. His fifth victory of the ice racing season was also enough to virtually guarantee a fifth consecutive title.

The weekend had started badly for Muller. "On Saturday evening I thought I didn't stand a chance," he said. After a relatively poor showing in practice his Opel Astra developed a gearbox problem, and the man from Alsace was unable to complete the first heat.

Muller's Opel team mate and nearest rival Jean-Philippe Dayraut took advantage of the situation to take an early lead, but Muller was not to be beaten. Despite having to drive early in the second heat, "which is never very nice," he managed to avoid the slower cars and set a time which no one equalled. He repeated the operation the next morning in the third heat.

His 10-lap final was red-flagged when Eric Helary's Opel and Emmanuel Collard's Nissan collided early in the race. The Nissan mounted the snow wall, falling back in front of Herve Knapick's Saxo and taking both cars out, with only Helary able to take the restart. Muller completed the remaining laps without problems, taking the chequered flag for overall victory.

Dayraut was able to withstand the constant pressure from leading Nissan driver Jean-Pierre Malcher to win his 10-lap final, adding another second place to this season's impressive tally. He remains in second place overall.

Serre Chevalier, wide and flat, is Marcel Tarres' favourite track, and with his Citroen Xsara back on form he put in a good performance to take third place ahead of Malcher.

For the second time this season, victory in Promotion went to Nissan Micra driver Guyhem Dussaucy, ahead of Laurent Fouquet's Renault Clio.

Jacque Groom



Tarres was on song to finish in third

ANDROS TROPHY, ROUND 6 OF 8, SERRE CHEVALIER (F), JANUARY 22/23

1 Yvan Muller (Opel Astra), 46th in Heat 1, 1st in Heat 2, 1st in Heat 3, 1st in Final 2; 2 Jean-Philippe Dayraut (Astra), 1, 2, 4, 1(F1); 3 Marcel Tarres (Citroen Xsara), 2, 3, 4, 7, 2(F2); 4 Jean-Pierre Malcher (Nissan Micra), 8, 6, 2, 2(F1); 5 Pierre Colard (Peugeot 306), 5, 5, 3, 3(F1); 6 James Ruffier (Opel Tigra), 3, 7, 6, 5(F1); 7 Eric Helary (Astra), 4, 4, 5, 7(F2); 8 Dany Snoeck (Astra), 6, 5, 2, 8, 6(F1); 9 Julien Pressac (Renault Megane), 14, 17, 9, 4(F1); 10 Emmanuel Collard (Nissan), 7, 8, 7, 9(F2). **Points** 1 Muller, 597; 2 Dayraut, 571; 3 Ruffier, 553; 4 Helary, 547; 5 Malcher, 543; 6 Colard, 541. **Next round** Super Besse, February 4/5.

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80345/041

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80339/04



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Rolling Chassis

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50497/04

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80280/04

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80277/04



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Full International GRP N finished build last month. Full seam welded and extra strengthened shell, Safety Devices T45 welded in roll cage with welded Bilstein jacking points, 2 spares holder, Phil marks full GrpN engine with latest GEMS Management and antilag, st. steel exhaust, ATS limited slips front and centre, Helix clutch, Oh lens adjustable gravel suspension, full Ralliart bushes, exhaust, full underbody, protection sumps, props diffs, aero-equipped, Corbeau seats, Willans 3 inch, belts, full wiring loom with circuit breakers for bonnet, and 2 lower corner aero-lights all with EVO 6 pods. Professionally prepared and ready to rally, immaculate superb value.

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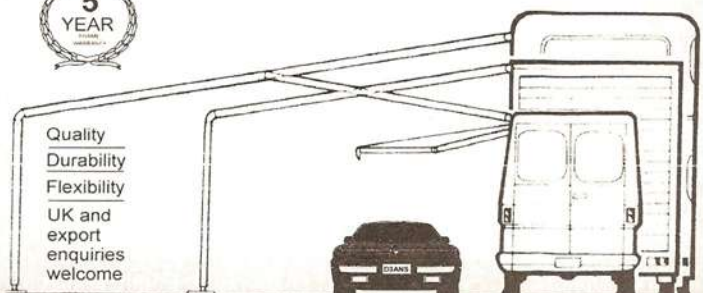
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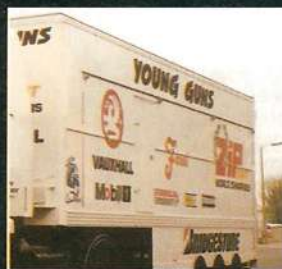
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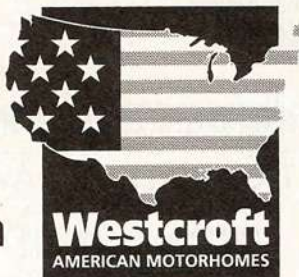
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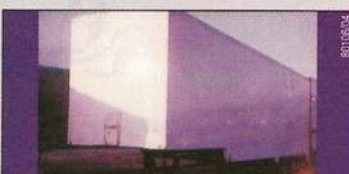
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Gollop returns to rallycross in Focus

Multiple British and European Rallycross champion Will Gollop will return to the sport later this season after a two-year sabbatical.

The 49-year-old's G-Tech concern is building a new car, based on the Ford Focus chassis, to World Rally Championship regulations.

Gollop plans to contest the machine in selected British and European events when it makes its debut in the second half of the year.

Although he hasn't raced since his third British title success in 1997, the '92 European champion has remained involved in the sport as a car builder in rallycross and the British GT series with the Lotus Esprit GT2 campaigned by Mike Youles and Ian Astley last year.

His G-Tech squad is shunning the Focus' Cosworth motor in favour of

its own turbocharged version of the Zetec engine used in the factory rally cars.

The engine will be longitudinally mounted in the chassis and, in common with his successful Peugeot machines of the past, will use a Quaife transmission.

Gollop said: "We've got ideas and we're going for it. I've never had

anything to do with Fords before, but this is a business decision.

"We want to sell customer cars, and, for whatever reason, there is more interest in Fords than in any other make."

The move is yet another shot in the arm for the sport, which is pulling out of a slump in popularity

(see panel). One of Gollop's chief rivals, six-times European champion Martin Schanche, has welcomed his return.

The 56-year-old said: "I heard he had the itch but didn't know he was scratching. He is a good competitor and builds a good car. The way that the European series is, we need every man we can get."



Schanche



Gollop's car is based on the Focus WRC

SHOTS IN THE ARM

Rallycross has experienced difficult times since its heyday in the 1980s, but a series of boosts to its profile in recent months (below) could bring back the glory days.

- Simplified three-class structure makes the sport easier to follow.
- Budget Stock Hatch regulations create entry-point class.
- Promise of Rallycross GP – one of the greatest rallycross events.
- New Blyton track provides a much needed extra venue.
- Spaceframe chassis rules slash cost of entering Supercar class.
- Will Gollop, most successful British driver, returns to the sport.

FACTFILE

Name Will Gollop

Age 49

British titles 3

- A 10-year alliance with Saab sealed the British class title in 1986.
- Broke into the big time with works-assisted rallycross MG Metro 6R4 in '86.
- Took first European win in Holland in '88. Finished third in '88, '89 and '90 championships.
- Lifted the '92 European title after battling throughout the season with Martin Schanche.
- Quit European scene after '96 and wins third British title in '97.
- Developed and ran successful Lotus Esprit GT2 contender in British GT championship.



He last raced when he won his third British title in 1997 in a Peugeot 306

F3 frontrunner to set up junior FFord arm

Formula 3 team Carlin Motorsport is creating a junior arm which will race in the Formula Ford Junior Zetec Challenge this year.

The three-year-old outfit, which ran highly rated Indian Narain Karthikeyan to two wins in the slicks-and-wings F3 series last year, is keen to build a staircase of talent similar to that used by rival teams Manor Motorsport, Stewart Racing and Fortec Motorsport.

Carlin has signed rising Japanese star Takuma Sato to head its F3 assault this year, and it is targeting a

Japanese rookie to drive for the FFord team in the new junior class.



Carlin

A second car is being considered.

Boss Trevor Carlin said: "The Japanese know that Europe is a good place to get experience. We've got a great driver in Sato and we wanted to find the next one."

Carlin is debating whether to use a Van Diemen or Mygale chassis for the campaign.

Carlin Motorsport is keen to find new single-seater talent such as Karthikeyan



P94 DUNWOODY TO MANAGE HAYES P96 F3's GOLDEN JUBILEE P99 PUMAS HEAD TO IRELAND P100 RALLY VERSUS ROAD CAR

HUMBLE PYE

Button's accession to F1 means the race is now on to find his successor

The fantastic news that Jenson Button has been chosen to partner Ralf Schumacher in the Williams-BMW Formula 1 team means the presence of MCLAREN AUTOSPORT BRDC Young Drivers in Grand Prix racing is doubled at last. We judges must have got it right.

Button may have just 44 car races under his belt at just 20 years of age, but boasts hundreds of kart events – with a brilliant start-to-win ratio. These better qualify him to take on the world's best than any in the arena through money over merit. Bravo, Sir Frank Williams!

Button's talent was plain when I first saw him race a Cadet kart at Clay Pigeon. An excited call from Jim Russell Racing school boss John Kirkpatrick when the (under-



Button's F1 potential was soon clear

age) had tried a car at Donington Park confirmed my suspicions.

After watching Button's first Formula Ford races, I ventured that he was the best British driver I'd seen since the late Tony Brise in the early-'70s. His meteoric progress, and that extraordinary touring car test in the '98 Young Driver finals, only strengthened that belief.

In wishing Button well, for as Britain's youngest ever Grand Prix driver his new task will be far more visible than Formula 3, I cannot help but ask who will be Britain's next F1 driver? The name on many lips is newly-crowned Young Driver Gary Paffett, set to unleash his special ability on an F3 career.

There is no shortage of aspirants. Indeed, the ladder from karting through the junior car ranks is as well trodden as ever.

Even so, I'm greatly encouraged that champion sportsmen like Richard Dunwoody are applying their business brains to support up-and-coming drivers (see right).

Derek Hayes, who beat team-mate Button on occasion in '98, and without a kart race on his CV, must have real ability too!



MARCUS PYE

Dunwoody begins new talent

Former champion jockey Richard Dunwoody has pledged to help single-seater star Derek Hayes rise to the top of the sport as the first of a crop of drivers he will back.

The motorsport enthusiast has turned to sports management after calling time on his horse-racing career in December.

Dunwoody Sports Management, set up with business partner and driver manager Craig Hutchinson, is already involved in football and horse-racing – where it represents trainer Jennie Pitman and top jockey Richard Quinn.

Formula Palmer Audi racer Hayes is the firm's first move into motor racing. Although Dunwoody said he was keen to promote other drivers, he pledged that his initial focus was on Hayes.

"We are not looking to work with others at his level," he said. "It would be good to find deserving drivers in lower formulae and perhaps a couple of karting prospects to manage."

Hayes, who beat Haywood Racing Formula Ford team mate Jenson Button to the Eurocup title in 1998, then won the FPA winter series, endured a difficult year in the one-make slicks-and-wings series last year.

The 22-year-old Ulsterman, who Hayes hopes to forget his difficult FPA year

impressed in a Formula 3000 test with the Petrobras team at Jerez in November, will return to the new-look European FPA series this year and is confident of title success.

He said: "Up to now, I've been doing all my own deals, but now I've got Richard and Craig behind me I can focus on the driving. I can't wait to get testing in March."

"On reflection, failure was good for me. I'm hungrier as a result. I know I'm as good as anyone. Last year was the year to forget, but this year I'm out to win."

Hayes will retain his links with team owner turned driver manager Dennis Rushen, the man who ran Ayrton Senna to the '82 Formula Ford 2000 British and European double championship.

Dunwoody, who has raced in Formula First single-seaters and the one-make Ginetta and Porsche Supercup series, has yet to finalise his own racing plans for the coming season.



Donnelly signs Irish racer Coleman

Leading single-seater team Martin Donnelly Racing has signed rising Irish star Robbie Coleman to his Formula Ford effort.

The Irish FFord frontrunner made his British debut with new team Sweeney-Hopper Racing in last year's FFord Festival, and seemed set to race with the outfit throughout this season.

He will now race a third MDR Van Diemen alongside compatriot Gary Turkington and Patrick Schoech.

Donnelly said: "Gary's confidence will spur Robbie on. I hope that Robbie will be pushing Gary as the season progresses."

Fellow Van Diemen outfits Aztec International and Alain Menu Motorsport have also confirmed their latest signings.



Donnelly

American single-seater racer Patrick Long, third in the French Campus series last year, will join FFord regulars Mike Harfield, Marius Erlandsen and Tom Potter at Menu Motorsport.

Gary Catt will stick with Aztec International for his second year in the series.



Coleman had his first drive in an MDR-run Van Diemen FFord at Silverstone on Friday

Haywood links up with Junior team

New Formula Ford Junior Zetec Challenge team Pulse Motorsport will link up with British champion Haywood Racing this year.

The Mygale outfit, run by karting team boss Derek Legge, will run two of the French chassis firm's 1999 cars in the new junior series.

It will share technical data with works-backed Haywood and act as a proving ground for new talent.

One place will be taken by Senior Intercontinental A karter Oliver Scullian. The 18-year-old has made the Fastrack finals for Elf's La Filiere programme in the last two years. The other place has yet to be filled.

Legge said: "We know lots of people from karting. We're looking to bring drivers on from that."

The team will run alongside other Haywood-supported outfits such as Team JLR and Andy Welch racing at test days.

Haywood boss Jim Warren said: "We'll be helping the team out with set-ups and technical advice."

Pulse will also be running a pair of cars in the new-look Renault Clio Cup this year. The team has signed ex-karter Frazer Powell and Legge's daughter, Katherine.



Warren



nt-backing scheme



Dunwoody (left) and Hayes shake on the deal that will see the champion jockey help the Ulsterman progress in his racing career

Ayles racers get first taste of Alfa NSC car

Gary Ayles Racing's National Saloon Championship rookies had their first taste of the team's new Alfa 156 car in Italy last weekend.

Former Vauxhall Vectra racer Gavin Pyper and Formula Renault Sport Star Cup champion Tom Ferrier tested the Bigazzi-built car at Mugello, near Florence.

Both drivers and team engineer Ian Blackman were impressed with the pace of the car, despite it being set up for the fast Thruxton circuit rather than the tight Italian track.

Pyper posted a best lap of 1m24.1s compared to Ferrier's 1m25.0s best effort. In race conditions, Super Production cars will lap in 1m23.5s.

Team boss Gary Ayles said: "The test was very successful. Both drivers got on well with each other and the car, and Ian was particularly impressed with its build quality."

The test was Ferrier's first taste of front-wheel drive tin-top racing.

The 18-year-old said: "It wasn't too bad after a few laps. I'm looking forward to driving it again soon."

The team is awaiting delivery of the car before testing resumes in Britain early next month.



Ayles

NEWS IN BRIEF

German Formula Junior bosses are keen to expand the BMW-backed single-seater series, which currently runs in Germany and Portugal, to other European countries. A pan-European contest for the slicks-and-wings cars is also being considered.



Newly-signed Promatecme Formula 3 driver Andy Priaulx (above) tested the ex-Roger Moen Honda Integra R for his former Renault Spider team Mardi Gras Motorsport at Silverstone last Friday.

Reigning US F2000 champions team Cape Motorsport has re-signed driver Aaron Justus to its three-car Van Diemen line-up for this season.

American Formula Renault 2000 racer Jeffrey Jones continued his domination of the US SCCA Winter National FF2000 series with pole and a race win for the Cape Motorsport team at Moroso Park in Florida last week.



Motorsport talent-backer Lars-Christian Brask (above left), was awarded with the BRSCC trophy at the club's annual dinner last weekend. Club official Don Truman and Max Mosley were also honoured with awards.

Formula Renault 2000 team Aztek Race Engineering is planning to run two Van Diemens in the new Formula Ford Junior Zetec Challenge series next year.

Formula 600 racer Jan Prowse is planning to race a car in the Renault Clio Cup series this year under the banner of his SupaBlast firm.

John Duke, the American driving talent-backer, has unveiled the calendar for the first year of his new US karting championship. Points scorers from the 10 rounds will enter an end-of-season shoot-out. The winner earns a fully-paid season with Paston Racing in Formula Renault 2000.

Welsh racing circuit Pembrey is in line for a European cash bonus if a bid by circuit bosses and the British Automobile Racing Club is successful. The move is part of the multi-million pound plans to renovate the 1.5-mile circuit.

Brookspeed Elise squad picks karter

British GT team Brookspeed Motorsport has signed European gearbox karter Johnny Cochran to head its twin Lotus Elise assault on the British GT series this year.

The 32-year-old gave the team its first car win in the Global Lights Championship in 1997.

Team boss Martin Braybrook said: "We've been keen to get him into GTs, and he's been trying to get the budget. We're delighted we've finally managed it. He's quick and he understands the set-up of the car."

The remaining three seats in the two-car squad have yet to be filled.

Lynch joins Ginetta GT squad

British sportscar marque Ginetta has targeted pop star Shane Lynch to join its two-car assault on the British GT Championship this year.

The 23-year-old *Boyzone* star, who has contested a handful of rallies and circuit races, will head the line-up in one of two new cars from the Sheffield-based marque.

The Ginetta G33 GT3 is being built by rally driver turned preparation expert Andy Dawson.

It will use a 400bhp Cosworth 2.0-litre engine and four-wheel drive transmission.

Former touring car driver Geoff Kimber-Smith will head the line-up

in the first chassis. The second car will appear later in the year.

Ginetta director Martin Phaff said: "It's a done deal for Shane to race. He's a class driver. We're delighted that we can push him up through the Ginetta series into GT racing."



The new Ginetta GT3 will race this year

FFord racer eyes switch to Fiestas

Former single-seater racer Nick Padmore is hoping to move disciplines to the Ford Fiesta series with his family-run outfit.

The 24-year-old finished third in last year's Kent County Formula Ford Zetec series but lacks the budget to continue in single-seaters. The move follows a successful test at Silverstone last November.

He said: "This is the cheapest way into TOCA. A top-three placing is realistic, but I'd love to win the title."

The car would be prepared by father Keith, a former Mini racer in the early 1980s.



Padmore will race the new-look Fiesta, unveiled at AUTOSPORT International earlier this month



NEWS IN BRIEF

The Jim Russell Racing Drivers' School will team up with privateer Formula Vauxhall outfit Marque Cars to enter five cars in this year's Formula Vauxhall series.



Single-seater racer Stephen Woodley (above) will race a Tatuus RC99 in BARC Formula Renault this year with Falcon Motorsport.

Formula Vauxhall privateers Stuart King and Daniel Welch will both race in the series this year.

A six man karting team of Fford aces, including Kristian Kolby and Jacky and Ricardo van der Ende, will race in the Jason Watt charity event at King's Cross Raceway on Saturday.

The Alfa Romeo Owners' Club will visit Spa-Francorchamps on May 5/6. A 62-car grid, with Dutch and German entries, is expected.



Renault Spider racer James Aspinall (above) will race in Radical BiDuros with Delta Motorsport this year.

This year's Sports 2000 dates are: Mar 8/12 Cuba; Apr 15/16 Snetterton; May 1 Cadwell; May 19/20 Spa; May 28/29 Donington; Jun 25 Mallory; Jul 22/23 Brands; Aug 28 Castle Combe; Sep 3/10 Brands GP; Sep 30/1 Nurburgring; Oct 21/22 Brands. South Africa, the USA and Zandvoort will host races.

Reigning 2CV champion Richard Dalton will race in the Ginetta series at Anglesey in June. Series bosses Martin Woodley and Martin Phaff will race in the one hour 2CV event.

This year's Endurance races for Historic Sports, GT and Saloon cars will be run at Jarama on May 17-19; Magny-Cours on June 2-4 and Valencia on November 10-12.

Barry Sewell and Tony Steele received their FIA GTP and Lurani Trophy championship spoils at the 1999 Historic Motorsport Awards at Ferrari's Modena HQ last Saturday.

The 750MC will host a two day Festival of Club Motorsport on August 12/13.

Five more Reynard F3000 chassis are expected to boost the British Sprint Championship this year.

The correct number for Thruxton testing details is 01264 772696.

F3 celebrates 50th year

Brands Hatch will host the 50th anniversary of International Formula 3's birth with a series of races for the pioneering 500cc cars on July 22/23.

The British Racing and Sports Car Club is working with the 500 Owners' Association to promote the event, which traces the roots of Britain's racing car industry.

Sir Stirling Moss is one of many racing legends who cut their teeth in the class, but a date clash with the British Racing Drivers' Club's International Historic Festival is

likely to limit the famous faces.

Swedish and US enthusiasts are expected to attend. Both countries boast strong 500cc followings.

Two races are planned, as well as a cavalcade of cars. Subject to Motor Sports Association approval, the event will be open to cars in sprint and hillclimb trim.

Woody Neale of the 500 OA said: "The Goodwood races in '98 and '99 were great, but this is especially appropriate. The Half-Litre Club evolved into the BRSCC and Brands was its centre, often staging pure 500cc meetings."



The 500cc Formula 3 cars that started the category will star at Brands Hatch this July

BARC unveils Classic Motorsport calendar

The British Automobile Racing Club has firmed up plans for its eight-race Classic Motorsport package.

The club will run its existing pre-'83 championships in a series of eight branded events at different circuits across the country.

The bill will be headed by the club's three touring car series for Classic Saloons, Historic and Post-Historic cars. The pre-'83 Formula Ford 2000 series is a regular feature.

The line-up also includes Thoroughbred Sportscars, Pre-'83 Sportscars and Classic Clubmans.

BARC competitions manager Dale Wells said: "We're hoping for a surge of interest. We'd like to see full grids, larger gates and greater spectator awareness."

Classic Clubmans promoter David Childs added: "Each meeting features a terrific mix. The BARC has given us the opportunity to have our own grids. We're proud to be part of it."



Post-Historic Touring Cars are on the bill

Irish supercars go it alone

The new V8 Supercars series will make its racing debut in Ireland this season without Royal Irish Automobile Club national status.

The governing body has lent its name to the rival RT2000 class, now in its second year.

However, interest in the new low-cost category for 350bhp Chevrolet V8-powered spaceframe cars suggests that they will outnumber RT2000s by mid-year. Most Supercar buyers are graduates of Group N and the popular Fiat Uno and Punto series.

"We will have seven cars here next month," said agent Michael

Clunes. "Clubs want V8 Supercars and spectators will love them."

Gordon Lauder, who developed the cars with short oval promoter Spedeworth, is working flat out on the first batch of kits. He said: "Our aim was bulletproof power on a budget. I believe this is the most cost-effective form of V8 racing."



Clunes beside his long-circuit machine



The startline grandstand at Brands Hatch was demolished last week as part of development work at the Kent circuit. The stand has stood since the late 1950s and will be replaced by a modern enclosure before the new season begins



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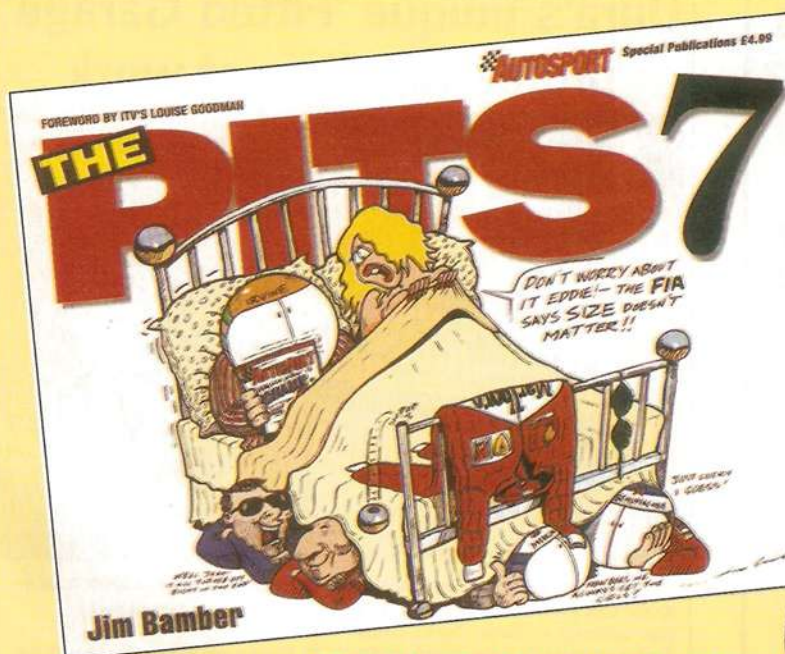
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MS1



Puma championship is go

A new international Ford Puma series has been announced for this year, as exclusively predicted by AUTOSPORT.

The Ford Puma Rally Championship will use identical works-prepared 1400cc Pumas, with a prize fund of £50,000 up for grabs. The winner will also get a factory drive in the 1600cc Puma on October's San Remo Rally, a test in a World Rally Car, and an invitation entry to the Race of Champions in December.

Five events in Britain and Ireland

will comprise the points-scoring rounds of the championship, while two foreign "shoot-out" events will be held for cash prizes only.

Former Irish tarmac Formula 2 Champion Liam O'Callaghan is running the new Puma series on behalf of Ford Racing.

He said: "This project is going a long way. We'd like to offer more European events in future, such as snow rallies."

Eight of the 150 bhp cars are expected to take part this year.

"In future, we'd like to look at doing

something with the Focus," said O'Callaghan, who is also in charge of the Irish Ford Ka Championship. "That way we'd end up with a true staircase of talent from the bottom to the top."

CALENDAR

Apr 29-30.....Rally of the Lakes
Jun 9-10.....Scottish International Rally
Jun 30-Jul 2.....Jim Clark Rally
Jul 22-23.....West 2000 Rally
Aug 12.....Silverstone Rallysprint
May 21.....Alsace Vosges Rally (F)*
Sep 9-10.....Tour of Flanders Rally (B)*
*Non championship events

Puma plan for Ireland



Ready to pounce: we announced the plan for an Irish-based Puma series on June 3 last year

New 205 campaign planned for UK

A one-make series with Peugeot 205s is aimed at emulating the heyday of the Peugeot Challenge.

The challenge, which spawned Subaru star Richard Burns, was at the forefront of national rallying from 1990 to '97.

National championship class-winner David Perrelet is behind the new series, which is aimed at the clubman. An entire season will cost no more than £7000, including the price of the car.

Perrelet said: "In most one-make championships, the car alone costs

over £10,000 to buy. The quality of the prizes attracts teams with high budgets, making it difficult for drivers with talent but no money to shine."

The new Peugeot 205 Challenge will allow Group B modifications, although there will be restrictions on items like tyres and shock absorbers.

"It will prove that exciting does

not mean expensive," added Perrelet, who won class B11 of the 1999 National championship in his own Keris Motorsport Peugeot 205.

Keris will give full build and technical support to competitors in this year's Peugeot Challenge.

The full calendar is yet to be finalised, but it will be issued along with the series regulations in March. A wide variety of tarmac and forest events are set to be included.



The 205 Challenge will live on

Buckley goes back to his Volkswagen roots

The team led by former Volkswagen works driver Dom Buckley has signed up for the new VW Polo Rally Challenge.

The Kelso-based outfit hopes to run a young Scottish driver. Buckley's brother, Neil, might also undertake a couple of rounds with the 112bhp machine.

"It's a different sort of challenge for us," said Buckley. "We're used to running big, powerful rally cars and now we are looking at the other end of the market."

McKinstry ready to defend his title

Newly-crowned National Rally Champion Kenny McKinstry is almost certain to defend his crown.

The Irishman is closing on a sponsorship package which will allow him to drive the same Subaru Impreza as last year.

He has also received an invitation to the Asia-Pacific Championship Rally of Canberra in May. "It's all down to money," he said. "I'd like to be able to do some Irish tarmac rounds as well, but the National championship seems most likely."

Lyll in state-of-the-art attack on Scotland

Aberdonian Brian Lyall will mount an all-out assault on the Scottish Rally Championship in his newly-acquired Subaru Impreza WRC98.

The 44-year-old won both the Mintex and Scottish crowns in 1997, but is unlikely to contest any National championship events this year. "It's not on the cards at the moment," he said. "The Scottish series will be my main focus."

Lyll will also contest his home Granite City event, dropped from the Scottish calendar for this year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Peugeot Super 106 Cup runner-up Martin Sansom has committed to a second season in the series. "I'd like to go one better this year," he said. "The prize of a British Rally Championship drive in the Peugeot 106 Maxi is too good to miss."

Lancia Delta driver Steve Smith will be entering his ex-Cerrato Lancia Integrale for the National Rallysprint series again next year. "I've not got time to do much else," said Smith "but there could be other things in the future."

The Ford Ka Rally Championship will use control Dunlop tyres this year on Speedline wheels. Silkolene oils and Mintex brakes will be other official suppliers to the championship. Series organiser Rob Arthur said: "It's another move to ensure that our series is the best in the country."

Former Skoda Trophy frontrunner Martin Newcombe has sold his Felicia and bought a Group N Honda Civic from Ulster tarmac driver Aiden McGrath. Newcombe will enter class N2 on the British series.

Peugeot Super 106 Cup co-driver Elin Wolland will sit alongside British Rally Championship competitor Natalie Barratt on next month's World Championship Rally Sweden.

The Wydean Forest Rally, which takes place on February 5, has received 200 applications for the 160 places available. Heading the entry for the BTRDA Championship's opening event, are the last two winners of the rally: 1999 victor Brian Bell in a Ford Escort WRC and '98 winner David Mann in a Mitsubishi.

The Wydean Rally celebrates its 25th anniversary this year with a special award. Organisers will donate a prize to the highest placed competitor who previously entered the event between 1975 and '85.

The 2002 Cape to Cape marathon will be run for two-wheel drive, normally aspirated Group N cars. The 30-day event, starting from Norway, will run through 24 countries and is the first rally to run through the entire land mass of Europe and Africa.

New Micra racers plan to go Dutch

Up to 20 Nissan Micras could be seen on the Pirelli National Rally in May, when the Dutch one-make championship comes to visit.

The joint fixture has been set up by British Micra series promoter Rupert Hopcraft. He said: "It's a great boost. We hope this co-operation starts a long relationship."

The Micra Challenge will run in the Formula 1400 class of every British championship round this year. "We are also looking at dates to go to Holland," added Hopcraft.

ALTER EVO

The standard Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VI is enough to make anyone feel like a rally driver, but change it into Group N spec and you'll turn all Tommi Makinen. By Anthony Peacock



Being quick is relative. It can mean Michael Schumacher setting pole position at Monaco in a Formula 1 car, or Concorde landing you in New York just three hours after you left London.

However, even in the height of the jet age, where rapidity is *de rigueur*, little prepares you for the sheer speed of a Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VI rally car. The raw figures of 0-60 mph in about 4 seconds and 147mph all-out are impressive, but you soon realise they are only abstract totems of performance.

It's the real-world, mid-range power which leaves you breathless. Consider this: 50-100mph in eight

seconds. That's the same time it has taken you to read these last two sentences. The take-up from rest is incredible, though not quite as effective as the way in which the Mitsubishi's cross-drilled brakes

acceleration where most supercars are dancing a lambada, the Evo VI holds its course in a devastatingly effective show of understatement. How good is it? Some say the road car's better than a Porsche 911.

"The Evo sucks you in faster than a turbocharged vacuum cleaner"

bring Japan's finest to a stop. Sixty mph to nought takes 2.5 seconds. Floor the Evo, and while it will shimmy slightly, there's no real drama as it catapults you gloriously towards the horizon. No matter that you're travelling at a rate of

Having exploded one myth, let us move rapidly (a habit with the Evo) to another: Group N rally cars are practically identical to their showroom equivalents. Not quite.

The amount of work done to transform a roadgoing Lancer GSR

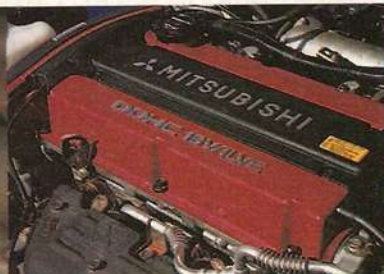
into a rally car makes it into an entirely different, fire-spitting beast.

A Gp N rally car starts life on one of the massive superferries which sail regularly from Japan. It comes into the country as a private import on temporary number plates. That makes it legal, but it can only be driven to a UK testing station for single vehicle approval. There, it is checked for conformity to UK laws, namely that the kilometre speedometer has been switched to miles per hour, and sundry items like a rear foglight and UK headlights added. Only then can it be issued with a registration document and a number plate.

Next stop is a preparation firm,



Ships have been known to run aground when these £600 light clusters are on



Gp N turbo restrictor used to keep Evo's huge power output in check



Standard suspension and stoppers are dumped for pukka rally items



Spoiler for a fight: double aerofoil rear wing more than just cosmetic



Variations on a theme – the rally car with its roadgoing sibling behind. Inset: Peacock in full flight ... leaving the car park



NO DODD-LING

The problem with journalists testing rally cars is that we only scratch the surface, or if we are unlucky, the whole bloody car.

That's why we thought National Rally Championship frontrunner Marcus Dodd would be better qualified to give a drivers' eye view of the Evo VI.

"One of the first things that strikes you is just how similar the road car is to the rally car," says the 28-year-old. "Over a long stage, you'd feel the difference, but on a short tarmac blast, the main thing you notice is the lack of competition seats!"

With Dodd throwing both cars around at speeds up to 140 mph you certainly needed something to cling on to. "The rally car is much nicer than I thought it would be," he adds. "It's astonishingly easy to drive, and certainly very quick in terms of acceleration and top speed. Off the line, there's not an awful lot in it between this car and my Ford Escort



"Then the back stepped out at 140," remarks Dodd. "Did it meself," replies Peacock

World Rally Car, but where you really notice is the time it takes to slow down, and change gear."

Dodd admits he'd find it difficult to step down after having driven a WRC, but said: "If I wanted a Group N

car, then this Mitsubishi would be my first choice. It's got all the ingredients a rally car needs, in that it's very controllable, and extremely reliable. I've really enjoyed driving it; it's been an eye-opener!"

K-SPORT PERFORMANCE

PRICES AND SPECIFICATION - Mitsubishi EVO VI GROUP N BUILD.

To strip the car to bare shell, remove all sound deadening etc: The shell is then sent to BAD Caps Limited for the fitting of a dedicated cage, (Multipoint) to FIA specification. T45 lightweight cage available at £4000 extra. Interior of car is then re-painted in white. At this time, the shell can be painted to customer's requirements at additional cost.

TO SUPPLY AND FIT THE FOLLOWING:

- 4 Preflex and springs (Gravel specification)
- 1 Single plate paddle clutch and clutch cover assembly (if required)
- 1 Group N exhaust system
- 1 Set of exhaust manifolds
- 1 Aluminium sump guard
- 1 Aluminium differential guard
- 1 Aluminium centre prop shaft guard
- 2 Under body guards
- 2 Fibreglass-Roller fuel tank protection
- 1 Plumbed in electric fire extinguisher system
- 1 Hand held fire extinguisher
- 1 Full set of competition engine and suspension bushes
- 1 Battery cut out switch (Electronic)
- 1 Turbo boost gauge (Digital)
- 1 Oil pressure gauge (Analog)

The build spec sheet contains 45 changes

where the real fun starts. The car is stripped to a bare shell. Items such as the roadgoing suspension and seats are junked. However, Gp N regulations state that all the interior trim has to be retained, right down to the sun visors and carpets.

Then comes the roll cage. A number of specialist firms produce a homologated roll cage for the Evo VI, which is welded in for extra safety. The cage also enhances the structural rigidity of the shell by minimising body flex.

The car builder's art comes into play properly at this point. The first job is to install the wiring looms and fuel lines, before the major parts go back in. The engine is fitted first, although the turbo must be fitted with a 32 millimetre restrictor to comply with international Gp N4 regulations. Then in go the transmission and drivetrain. The standard differentials can be replaced, provided the new ones have been homologated by the FIA, motorsport's governing body.

The next item to be fitted is the competition suspension, which has to be tough enough to withstand the rigours of a rutted Welsh forest. The exhaust system is replaced by a competition version, and the motor's vital electronic ECU "brain"

is also uprated to cope with the demands of rallying. Equally crucial are the new, dinner plate-sized brakes, which stop you with retina-detaching alacrity.

Inside, full competition seats and harnesses are a must. Likewise, you need a plumbed-in fire extinguisher, and the co-driver's best friend, a Coralba trip computer.

From start to finish, the whole process can take as little as three weeks. Bournemouth-based preparation firm K-Sport, which supplied the cars for our test, quotes the cost of the conversion at £25,500 plus VAT. Of course, you also have



Inside job: the interior has to remain fairly standard, apart from the cage and seats

to buy a new Evo VI road car, which can cost anything between £21,000 and £25,000 depending on which deal you get. Make no mistake: rallying is an expensive business. But the result is mind-blowing.

The Evo is a car that flatters you. Bad drivers seem all right, good drivers even better, and very good drivers out of this world. It's predictable, safe, and very solid.

It's no coincidence Mitsubishi has swept up the last four Gp N crowns with Gustavo Trelles and four drivers' world titles with Tommi Makinen. The Finn is renowned for many things, but mechanical sympathy is not one of them.

When it's time to hand back the keys, I feel only a twinge of regret. Yes, it's a thrill, but the Evo sucks you in faster than a turbocharged vacuum-cleaner. You want to brake later, corner harder. The car makes you feel invincible, but it's a fragile illusion. It can bite. So I walk away with it in one piece and a slowly-abating heart-beat, harbouring just a hint of relief. ■

Boiling Lancer: no matter how fast, the Evo hits the spot





No time like the present

The youngest driver ever to start a Grand Prix reckons that it's never too early to make your mark, and says Button could succeed, regardless of his tender years



MIKE THACKWELL

FORMER GRAND PRIX DRIVER

Just last week I was thinking that 20 years ago I did my first Formula 2 race. I can't believe it's that long ago. Now there is another young driver who is tipped as the next big thing: Jenson Button.

When I did Formula 1 I was so young. In fact, at 19, I was and still am the youngest driver to start a Grand Prix when I drove at Montreal in 1980. That was the same year Jenson Button was born.

Since I quit racing in the late '80s I have taken very little interest in the sport and have heard absolutely nothing about Button. But I know what he will need to make it.

I understand he knows the sport well through having raced karts. That is good. My father raced in the late-'50s and it meant that I grew up in the sport. Racing was a continuation of something I knew.

What I learnt is that F1 is such a fickle business. Button might not get that sort of opportunity with a team like Williams more than once. I turned down the works Ensign drive in '80 because I had a good money contract on the table in F2. That was a mistake. I was offered it when Clay Regazzoni went into the wall at Long Beach but was talked into staying in F2.

The timing of coming into F1 is a tough call, but if Button's got the talent, he'll do it – end of story. I wasn't good enough for F1 and that's why I didn't make it. I wasn't a complete professional because I wasn't that interested. I was a bit of a lad, refused to take the crap, and enjoyed smoking and drinking – I had the skill but I wasn't complete. In the end, you take your own road.

Making it in racing is like making it in music. You have to stick at it, and if you are good enough, you'll get there. You need the talent and the belief. If Jenson has the spirit, like a musician, he'll do it. He's got to do it himself. It must be in his character and you don't want too many people around you telling you what to do.

The most important thing you have to do is get plenty of miles under your belt, and racing is the best way to do that. You have to get in while you have the chance. Even if you come a cropper, it's worth doing it because you can never tell how it will work out.

In my generation you had drivers like Chico Serra, Alain Prost and Keke Rosberg. Prost went to



Thackwell made history at Montreal in 1980 as the youngest man to start a GP

All pictures: LAT

McLaren and struggled a little bit, but he did okay and made it stick. Chico stumbled into F1 too, but it never happened for him. He was quicker than Keke in Formula 3, but it was Keke who went on to be world champion.

The wrong way to go in is the way it happened to me. One-off outings are a mistake. You must make sure

“The timing of coming into F1 is tough, but if Button has the talent, he'll do it”

you get testing miles under your belt before you race which never happened to me. I was stupid because I was just standing in for other drivers when they got hurt.



He admits being a bit of a wide-boy, but reckons that all Button has to do is knuckle down

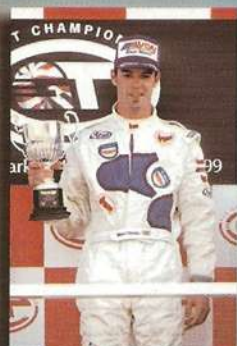
My accident at Thruxton in '81 had a profound effect on me. It changed my perspective. I had a big chip on my shoulder, I was arrogant – an obnoxious git. But then I hit the wall and it changed my life completely. I no longer cared about becoming world champion, I just wanted to race for the love of it. I started to look at other things and began studying, which I had never done before, and I did things like learning to fly.

It meant that I have enjoyed such an amazing life because I have done so many different things away from motorsport. I've driven dumper trucks, I've played in a band, I've taught in schools. I've just taken the last six months off to travel around the world and visit my friends. I've been doing a bit of bar work too.

I've got no regrets about my life. I had a fantastic 10 years racing cars and still love the sport, even if I don't follow it any more. It's like loving a woman. If you love her but you know it is time to move on, you have got to let her go. That way you will always love her. ■

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